

THE SECRET OF THE FOREST

BY SYDNEY BASH

Chapter 1

Millie wanted three things when she grew up: to be a supermodel, a magical old mansion, and a punch buggy. A bright pink punch buggy! She thought the shape was funny, and that the color would make it funnier. It would bring her joy bringing others joy and laughter driving around.

For now, she was 10 years old, lived in a beach house, and had a red minivan. It'll do for now. Although she lived in a beach house, beyond her backyard was a forest. The forest actually had trails in her family's priority. There were three trails. The maple trail, lined with maple trees, the river trail, which is next to a river, and the power trail.

The only reason it was made was because a power line was put up there, and it needs easy access. The maple and river trails are both loops, but the power trail had a dead end. Millie always wondered what was on the other side of the power trail, at the dead end. Something on the other side seemed bright, and magical. Sometimes Millies swore she could hear some noises come from behind the trees, as if a small town was there.

When she tells her mom her idea, she says, "It's only animals, honey."

Her dad would joke, "Do you need your hearing fixed?" Then laugh like he was the funniest person in the world.

But Millie knew something was up. "I'm going on a hike, Mom. I'll be home by dinner!" she yelled upstairs, where her mom was folding laundry.

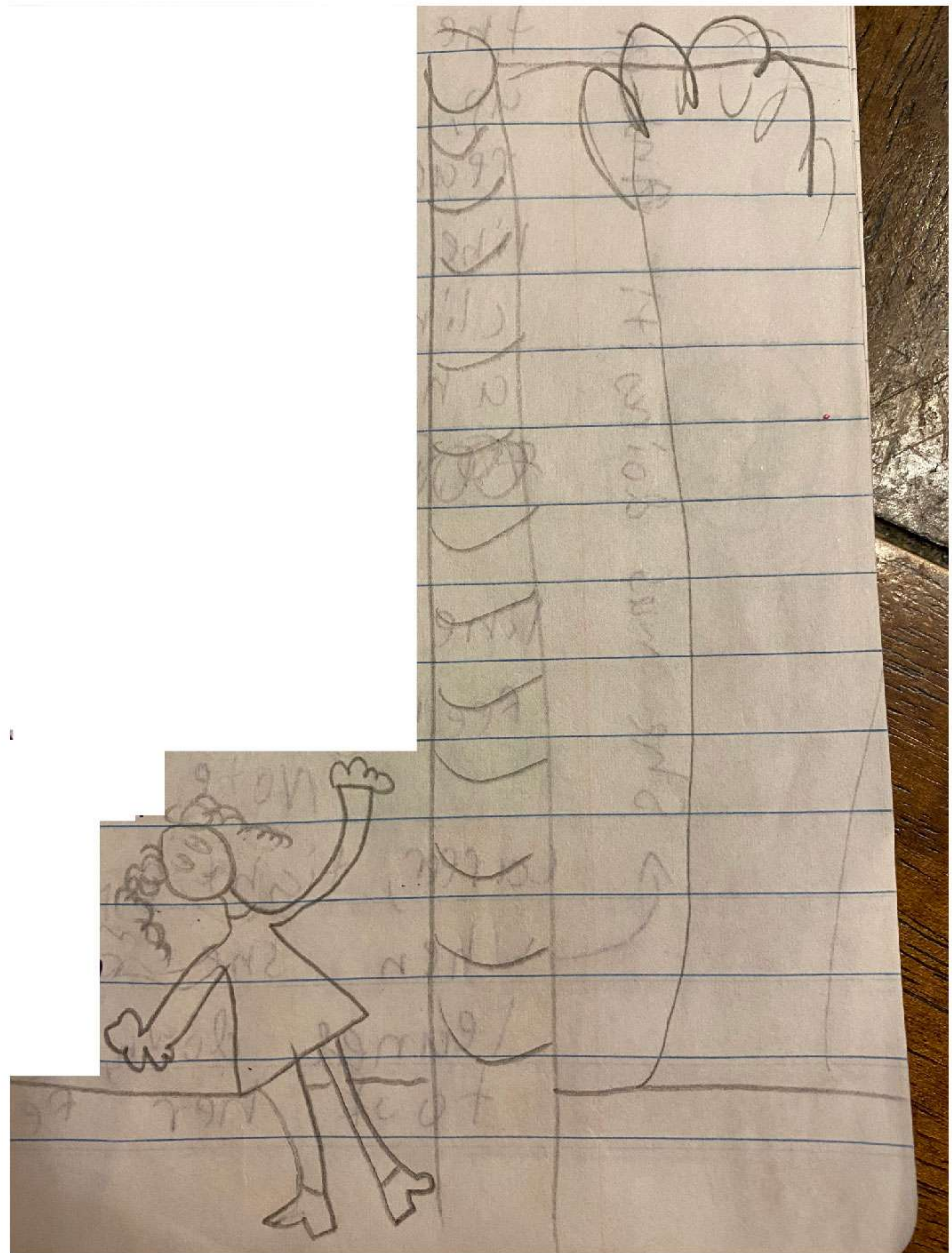
"Okay, keep your promise!"
Millie's mom replied.

And she was off! The hike was a mile long, and she had one hour to find clues. It took her ten minutes to get to the end. Then Millie looked up, up, up! That was it!

If she climbed the power line's pole, and walked across the wire, she would make it over. She saw another pole, not too far away. She could climb down there, take a look, and be home

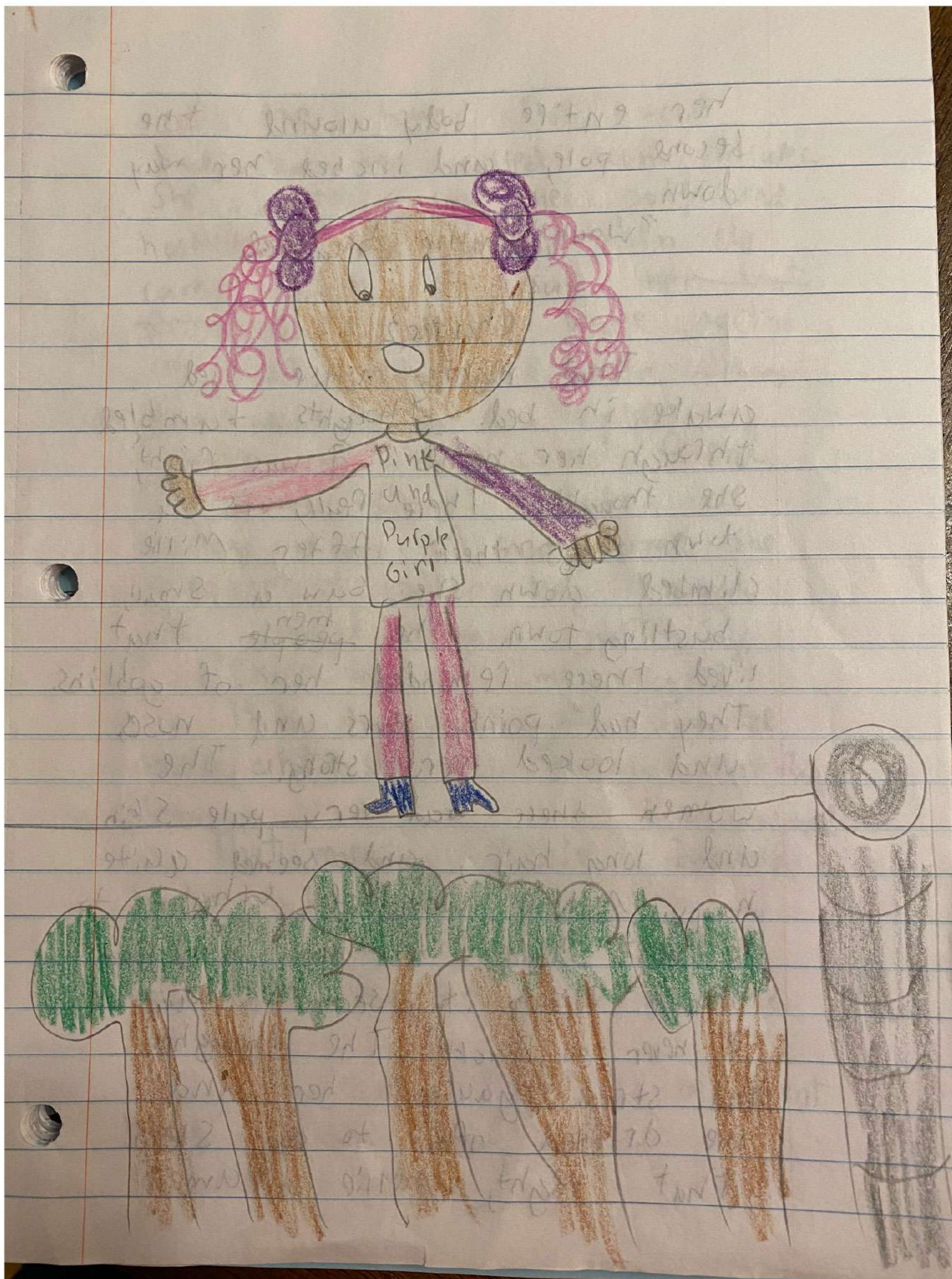
in time for dinner. Only, there was one problem. Millie had terrible balance, and she couldn't climb if her life depended on it. But, there were trees surrounding the wire. She would be fine, right? They could catch her if she fell. Plus, she *really* wanted to know what was on the other side. The pole seemed to have slots to put her feet in.

She decided to take a chance and do it! Once Millie put her foot in the first slot, she realized an important detail. She was wearing boots! They had small, 1 inch heels. Well, only her toes would go in the slots. She climbed up, up, up, one slot at a time.



When she reached the top, she grabbed the line with her hands. Then she climbed her feet up the pole, and placed them on the line. Presto! She was on the wire!

Mille walked on the entire line like it was a tightrope, feeling not the least bit scared!



“Note to self: possible future career, tightrope walker!” Millie thought. She was doing it! And in 1 inch heels! When she got to the end, she leaned down, grabbed the

line, and took her feet off. She wrapped her entire body around the second pole, and inched her way down.

“Woah,” Millie breathed.

Chapter 2

That night, Millie lay awake in bed. Thoughts tumbled through her mind. “I was right,” she thought. “There really is a town back there.” After Millie climbed down, she saw a small, bustling town. The men that lived there reminded her of goblins. They had pointy ears and noses, and looked very strong. The women there had very pale skin and long brown hair, and seemed quite happy. Millie wondered what to do next. “Should I tell Mom and Dad? Should I keep it a secret? Should I never go back?” The thoughts and stress exhausted her, and she drifted off to sleep.

That night, Millie dreamed of the town. She went back, but was called an intruder. She scurried up the pole, and hustled across the wire. When she came down, she saw Scooter. Millie woke up with a start. “That’s it! Scooter always knows what to do in a crisis.” Scooter was Millie’s best friend. She was often mistaken as a boy because of her name. She never let it bother her though. She would always just say, “Excuse me, but I’m a girl.”

This happy thought comforted Millie, and she fell into a peaceful sleep.

That morning, Millie’s Face Timed Scooter.

“Hey girl! What’s up?” Scooter said right after she picked up the call.

“I have VERY important news,” Millie replied.

“I’m listening.”

“Okay, you’ll never believe this, but there’s a town in my forest. I think it’s magic.”

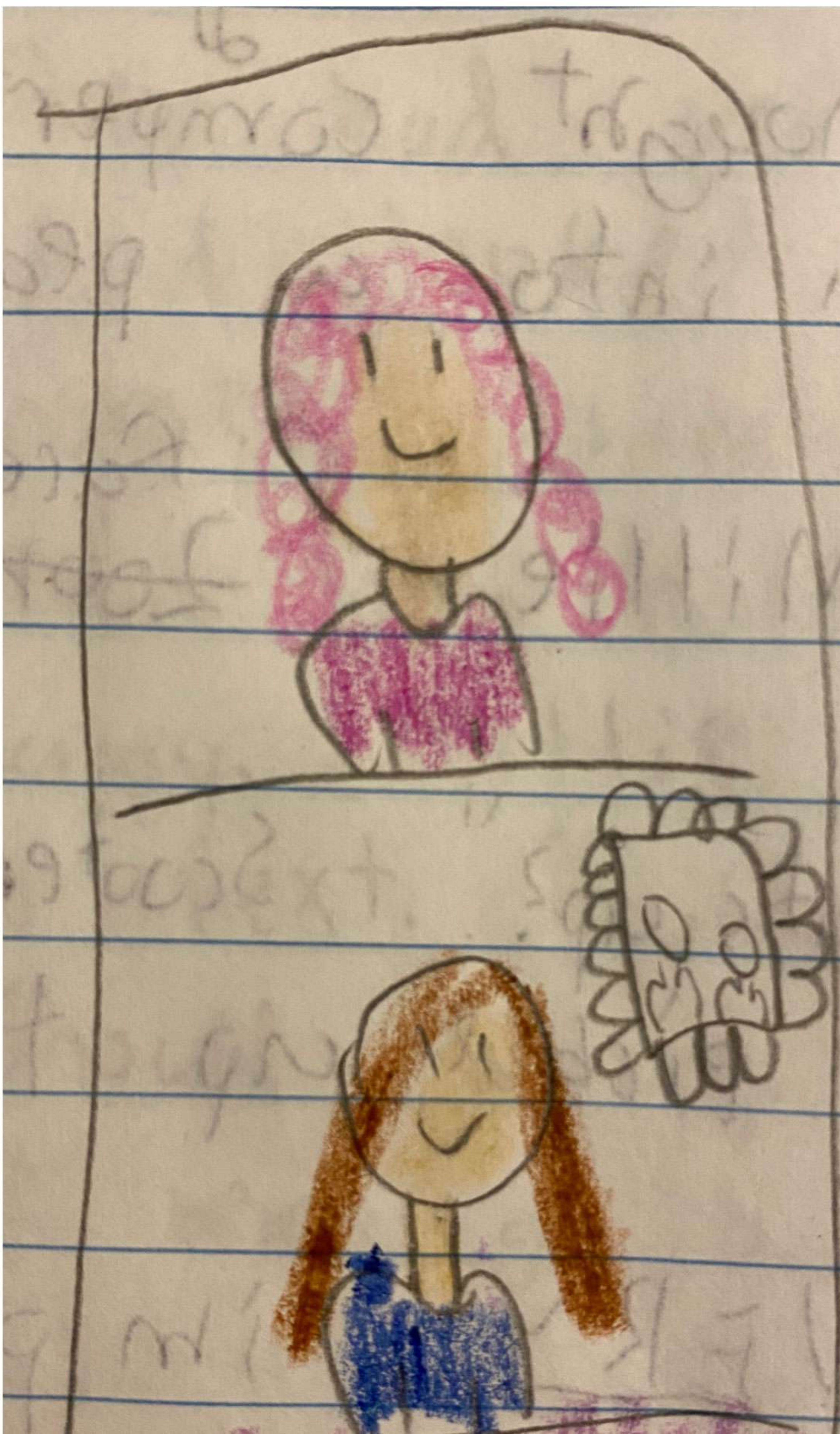
Scooter froze. “Did your screen freeze?”

“No, sorry. I knew it! You have magic in your property! You always struck me as the owner of magic,” Scooter exclaimed.

“Okay, 1: I don’t own this property, my parents do. 2: I certainly don’t own THEM, and 3: I don’t think that’s even in our property,” Millie pointed out.

“You mean your parent’s property,” Scooter teased.

“Whatever. Anyway, the men there look like goblins, and the women look like pale human women. And the children look like mini versions of their parents,” Millie told her. “I have no idea what to do about this.”



“Did you tell your Mom and/or your Dad?”

“No.”

“Why don’t you tell them?”

“They’d never believe me. I would have to show them it. Plus, I could get in trouble for climbing that. And they would NEVER--”

“Climb what?” Scooter

interrupted.

“Oh, sorry . . . I never told you. I climbed a power line to get past the trees.”

“Did you glitch? I thought I heard you say you climbed a power line.”

“I did say that. And I did do that!”

“Millicent Elizabeth Johanson! You climbed a power line!? And walked across it!?”

Millie nodded.

“You have the worst balance ever! And climbing? Forget it! Remember the time we went to a rock climbing course and you barely made it five feet?” Scooter was



obviously surprised.

“Okay, okay, sheesh! Yes, I did all that stuff. But that’s why I think it’s magic!

‘Cause I pulled it off! So, what do you think I should do?” Millie asked.

“Well, maybe disguise yourself as one of the kids.”

“No way! I live on the beach! It’s summer! I AM TAN!!! Not pale!”

“Could you tell them you’re really dirty?”

“I don’t think they’d buy it. I saw a washtub outside every house. The only way I could be dirty is be homeless and no one seemed homeless.”

“They have a good economy, don’t they?”

“Yep!” Millie exclaimed.

“They make it hard, don’t they?”

“Yup,” Millie said sadly.

“Maybe try to find someone you can trust. Do most people seem nice?”

“Yup!” Millie exclaimed.

“Can you say anything other than ‘Yup’”? Scooter asked.

“Yup! I mean yes.”

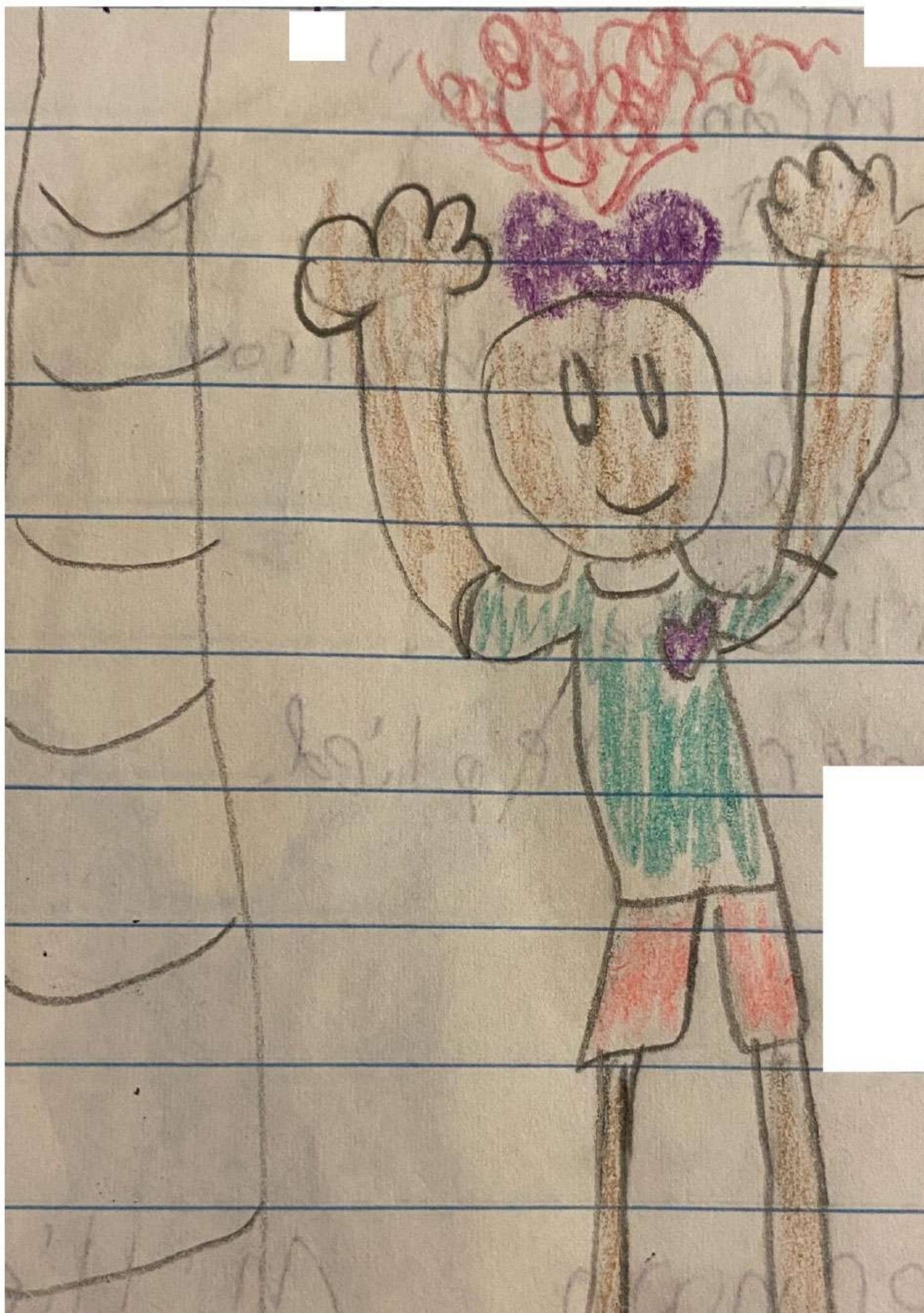
“Try that. I have to go but I’ll call you tomorrow morning,” Scooter said.

“Bye!” Millie said.

“Bye!” Scooter replied.

Chapter 3

That afternoon, Millie found herself back at the power line. Her parents were running a few errands helping her cousin plan her wedding, so she had the chance to go again. Millie wanted to try something. She climbed up the pole as quickly and carelessly as possible, then she ran as fast as her legs could take her across the power



line. Then, she jumped down. She had ZERO broken bones. She was 101 percent fine! She was right. The magic must’ve been keeping her safe. Millie heard a HUGE gasp next to her.

“Marbles!” She thought. “Someone must’ve seen me!” She felt a cold, boney hand on her wrist that pulled her behind some bushes. When she looked up, she

saw a whatever-they-are looming over her. He was five feet tall, and she was only four and a half feet tall. He was a pretty big, green, muscley guy. But his continence did NOT match his body. He looked as though he knew he needed to do something, but was afraid to do it. His eyes were darting all around, and his hands were fidgeting.

“Who are you?” Millie asked, a little too loud.

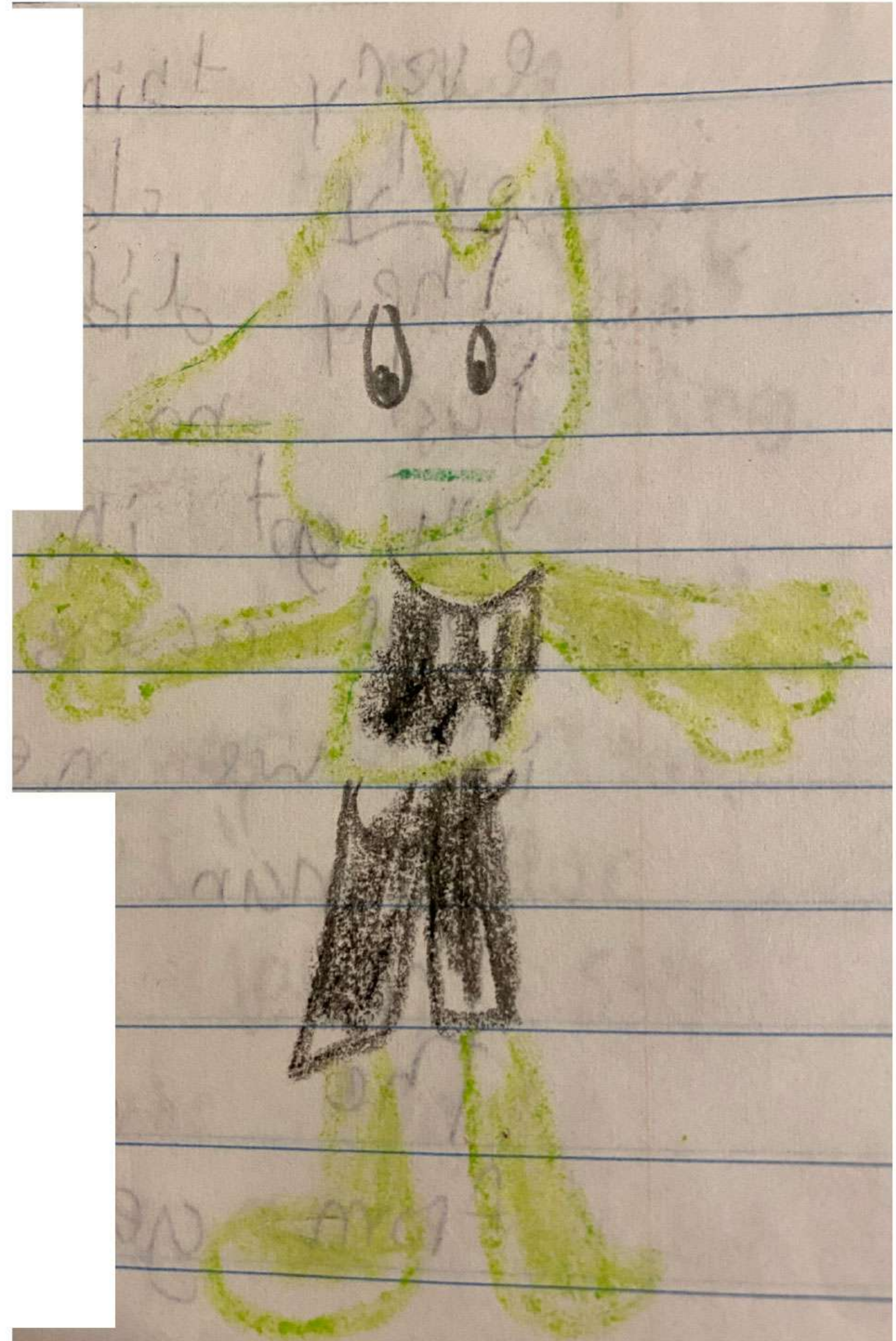
“Shh, shh, be quiet! I don’t want anyone to know you are here! You’re a human, right?” The goblin-y guy asked.

“Yup!” Millie replied enthusiastically. He looked over to a button on a big clock tower, what she assumed was in town square or something, and shook his head.

“I’m supposed to sound the human alarm, but you don’t look like a danger. You’re not, right?” He asked nervously.

“You think a danger is going to tell you that they’re a danger?” she asked. “But no, I’m not.”

“Okay, let me tell you everything. This town is the only clan of goblins. No other. They didn’t die or anything, there’s just no other clans. The way you got in here, the power line, is our access to the outside world, if we need it. Only one other human came into our village. Then made a story about us! The story got passed down from generation to generation and changed a little each time, until it morphed into what you



know now. My family thinks we're safe now, because most humans now believe we are just a story. But we have the human alarm, just in case," the goblin dude informed Millie.

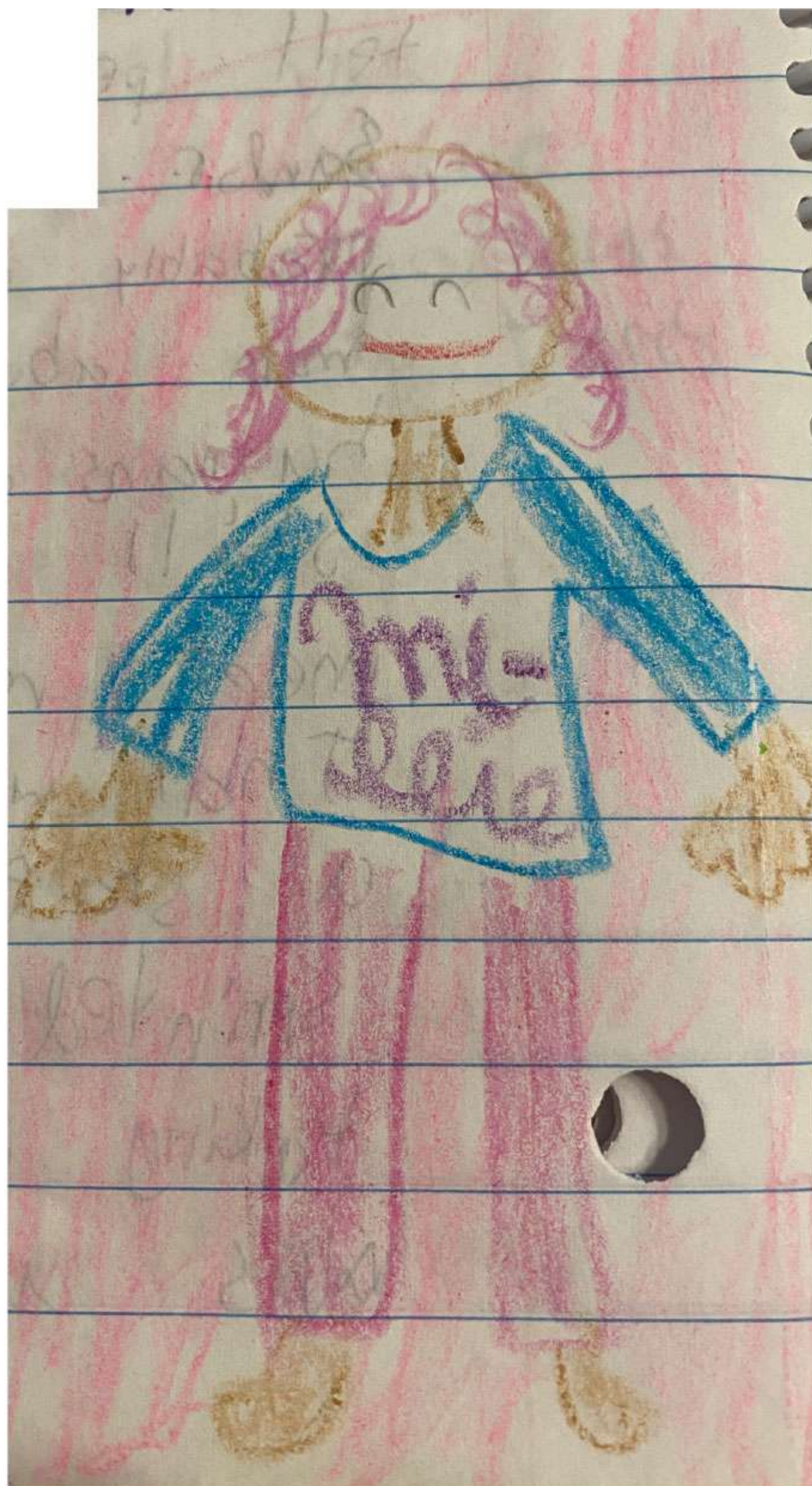
Millie needed time to take in this information. Then she realized something.

"I don't know your name."

"Oh yeah, I forget to tell people that a lot. It's Sandor," Sandor said. "Anyway, you should probably get going. I'll tell my mom about you. She doesn't think humans are betrayers or anything. She'll know what to do. Come meet me here again tomorrow?" That was more of a question than a statement. "Okay, bye!" Sandor sprinted away. Millie left, still taking in the information. "Weird," was all she could come up with.

Chapter 4

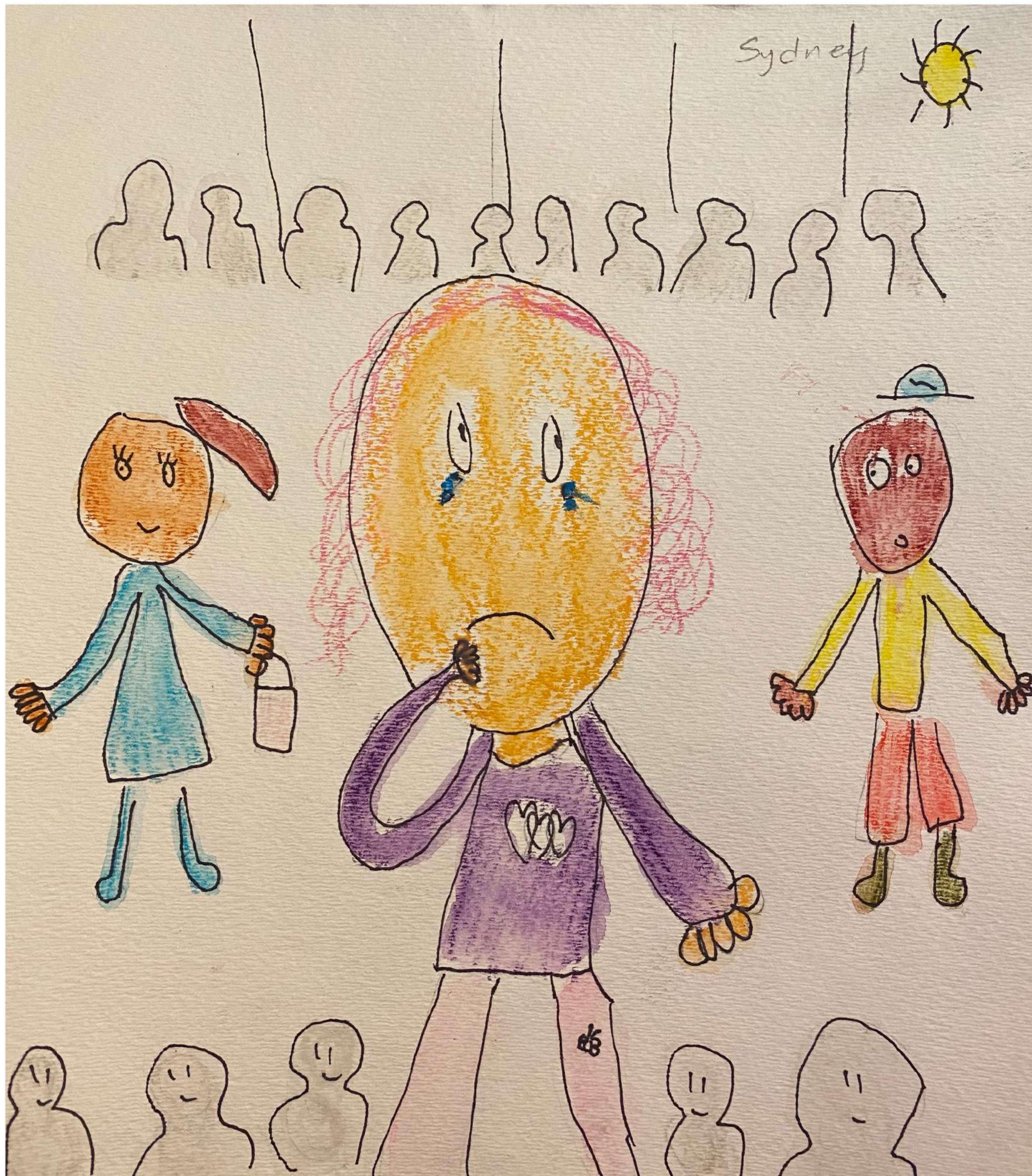
Millie lied on her bed, thinking. She called Scooter and told her the new



information. Scooter said that she never thought of JUST TAKING A PICTURE!!! But Millie didn't want to lose her phone on the power line. Although the magic supported her, it might not support her phone. Scooter was convinced that she should tell her parents.

"They're your PARENTS! You tell them a lot," she had said. Millie wasn't too sure. What if they hurt the goblins? But she was sure of one thing. Sandor gets easily scared. And very scared. He reminded her of her scariest moment.

It was summer, and she was five. Her family took her on a vacation to Chicago. They went to the Willis Tower. It was so cool! Millie was fascinated by it. Her parents had taken her to the Sky Deck, basically MADE of windows! She had so many questions. How does the glass not break? How many people are here? Why is there a bear on that man's hat? And why does that other man have "SOX" on his? Millie needed to see it all. So she did. And got lost. Too many people were there!



The ground was so far away! What if the glass broke? She was a very short five-year-old. She could barely see a thing! Millie didn't know if her parents were gone for twenty minutes or twenty seconds. All she knew was that it was too crowded, too noisy, and too high. She preferred the calm sound of crashing waves, even if it was loud, back at home. She didn't want to be anywhere high or noisy ever again. When her parents found her, they weren't mad at her for wandering off. They were just happy she was safe. And then, she had the BEST food she's ever tasted.

Thinking about this made Millie realize how much her parents loved her. Even if she wanted to achieve world domination, they would love her. She knew she had to tell them.

* One explanation later *

"That's just kinda cool," Millie's dad said. "I guess you don't need your hearing fixed!"

"I promise we will keep it a secret. Only the three of us and Scooter should ever know," her mom said. "You have permission to go back if it is okay with the goblins."

"Thank you SO much! They are fascinating creatures and I want to know more about them," Millie said.

"They probably feel the same about you," her dad added.

"I have a feeling our future is cool!" Millie exclaimed.

Epilogue

The next day, Millie went back to the town.

"There you are. I've been waiting all day!" Sandor exclaimed.

“I have school!” Millie said.

“Really? My mom just teaches me things in her spare time, which isn’t a lot of time, since she’s the mayor.”

“She’s the MAYOR?”

“Yes and she’s okay if you come as long as you don’t tell a billion people about us.”

“Done.”

“Great!”

Millie saw a car zoom by. “Is that a punch buggy? A bright pink one?” she asked.

“No idea what that is, but everyone owns one of those here,” Sandor replied.

Millie squealed. “So cool!”

