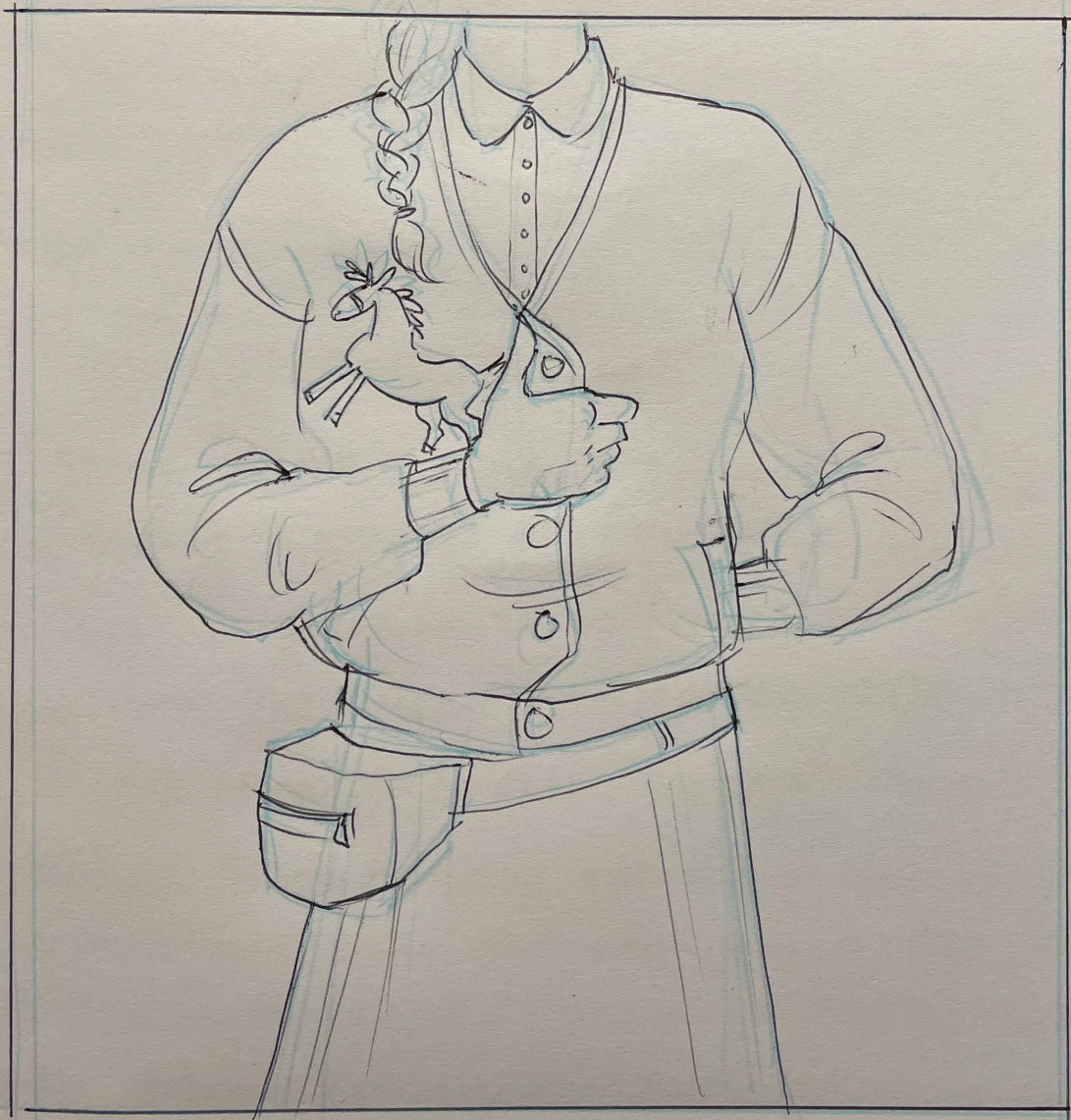
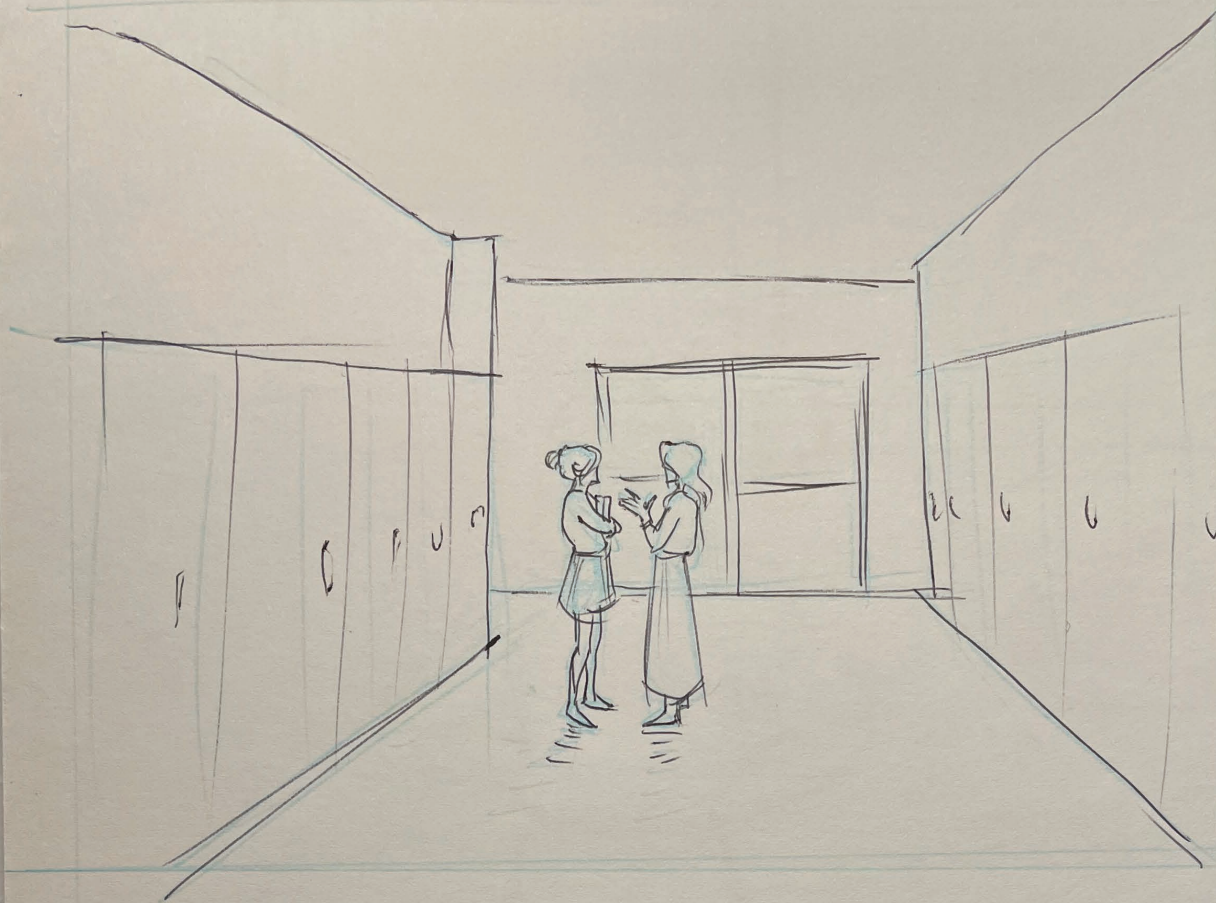


CHANTELLE



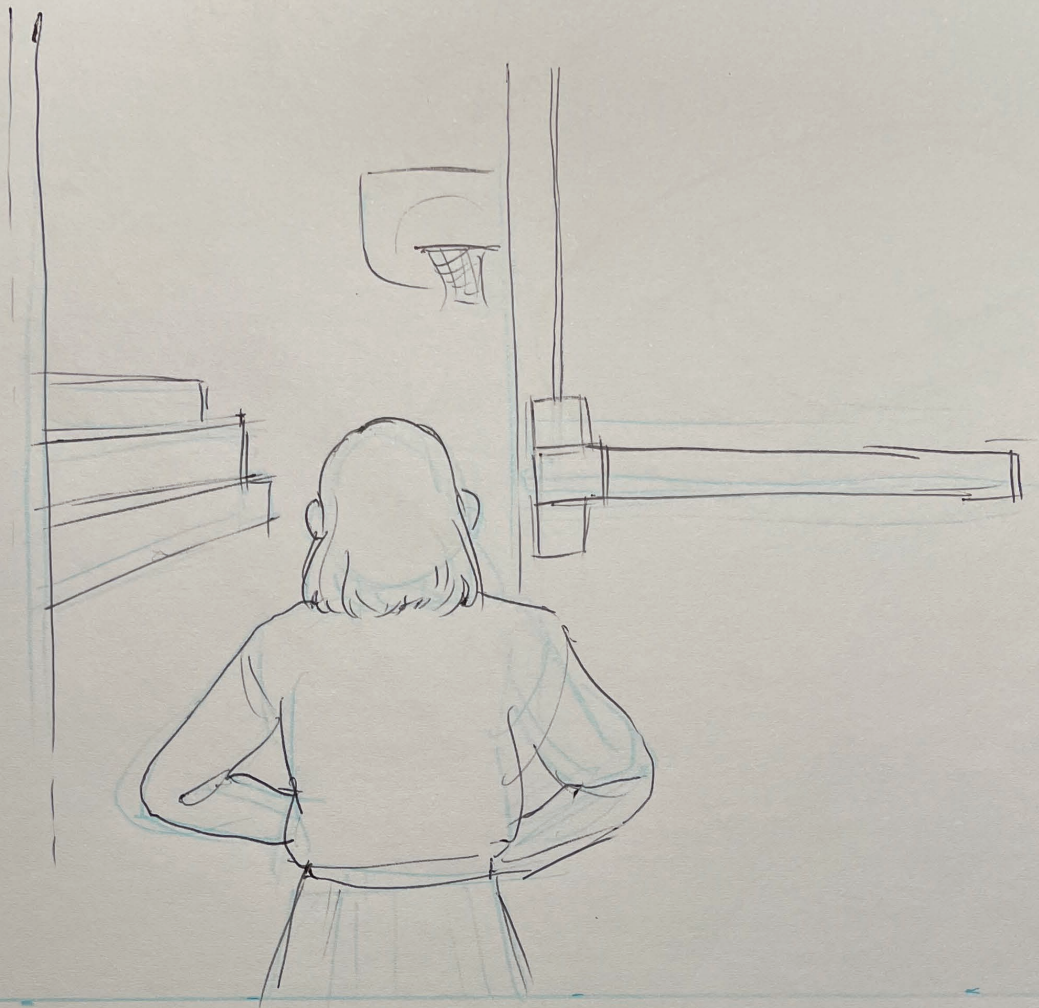




## CHAPTER ONE

AT SOME POINT IN THE 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE I FOUND MYSELF HAVING NOBODY TO SIT WITH AT LUNCH HOUR, AND AS I WAS NOT YET INCLINED TO EATING ALONE IN MY CAR, I FELL INTO THE FRIEND GROUP OF AN ACQUAINTANCE FROM THE SAME MATH CLASS. WE WERE A RAGTAG GROUP OF SOCIAL PARIAHS FOR WHOM HAVING NEXT TO NOTHING IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER WAS OUR ONE SHARED TRAIT, AND IT WORKED OUT SURPRISINGLY WELL. CHANTELE WAS SOMETHING ELSE, THOUGH. SHE WAS QUICK-WITTED AND ODD ENOUGH TO BE IMMEDIATELY INTERESTING. WE BECAME FAST FRIENDS OVER A SHARED INTEREST IN ART, VIDEO GAMES, AND TERRIBLE ANIME.

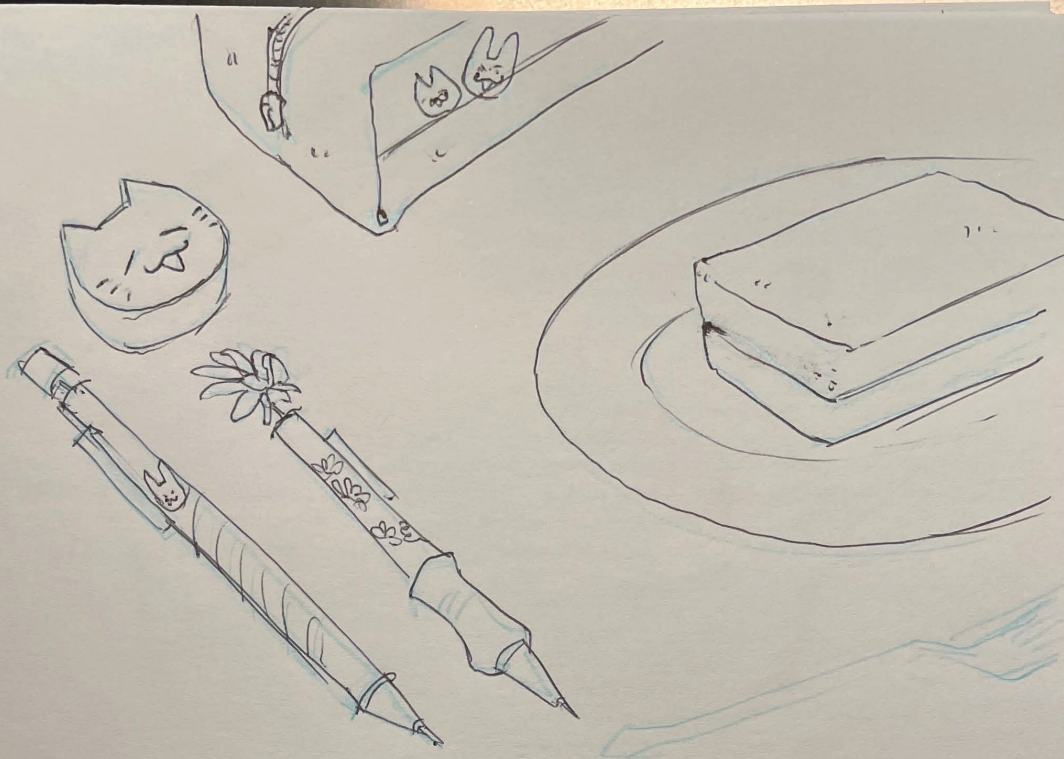




## CHAPTER TWO

SHE TOLD ME OF ALL THE TIMES THAT TEACHERS WOULD GET ON HER CASE FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN HOLIDAYS OR CEREMONIES LIKE REMEMBRANCE DAY. IT WAS GENERALLY AGAINST HER RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND SHE DIDN'T HESITATE TO DICTATE THAT FACT TO ANY TEACHERS WHO WOULD TRY TO GET HER TO JUST GO ALONG WITH THE CLASS. A FACT THAT DID NOT ENDEAR HER TO MOST TEACHERS.

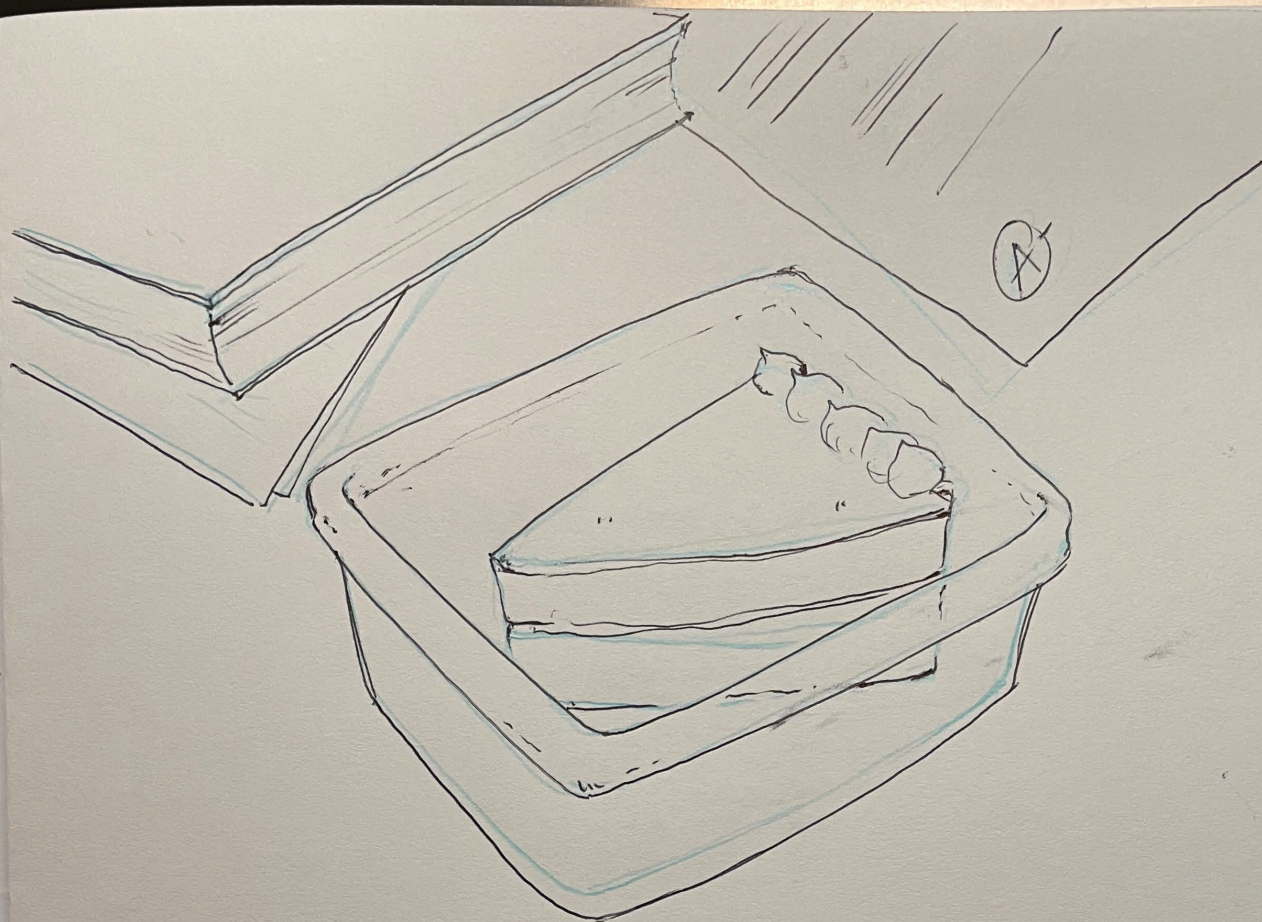




### CHAPTER THREE

NOTHING MAKES ME THINK OF MY FRIEND QUITE LIKE CLUNKY STATIONERY COVERED IN CUTESY SANRIO-TYPE CHARACTERS. SHE ALWAYS HAD A STEADY SUPPLY OF NEW ONES, AND WE ALL OOH-ED AND AAH-ED AT THEM IN CLASS. SHE DIDN'T CELEBRATE HOLIDAYS BUT ONCE SHE BOUGHT ME A HANDFUL OF THEM ALONG WITH SOME OTHER GIFTS AND WROTE IT OFF AS A "GRADUATION GIFT" THAT 'HAPPENED' TO COINCIDE WITH MY BIRTHDAY.





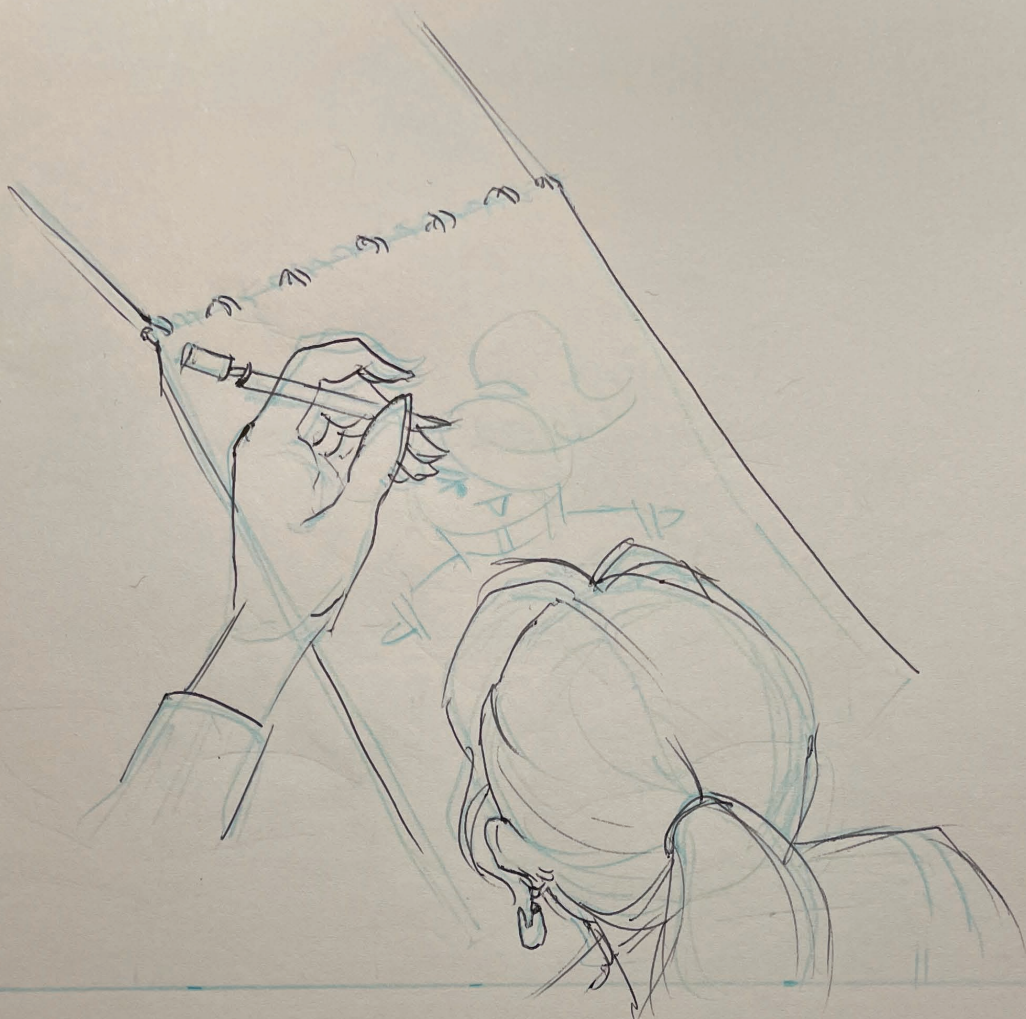
#### CHAPTER FOUR

"ARE YOU GOING TO INVITE THAT GIRL OVER AGAIN? WHAT WAS HER NAME ... THE ONE WHO LEAVES WEIRD NOTES ON THE FRIDGE EVERY TIME SHE'S OVER?"

"YOU'RE THINKING OF CHANTELL?"

"OH! YEAH, DON'T KNOW WHY I CAN NEVER REMEMBER HER NAME. TELL HER I HAVE MORE VEGETABLES TO SEND TO HER MUM. I HOPE THEY REALLY LIKE TOMATOES."

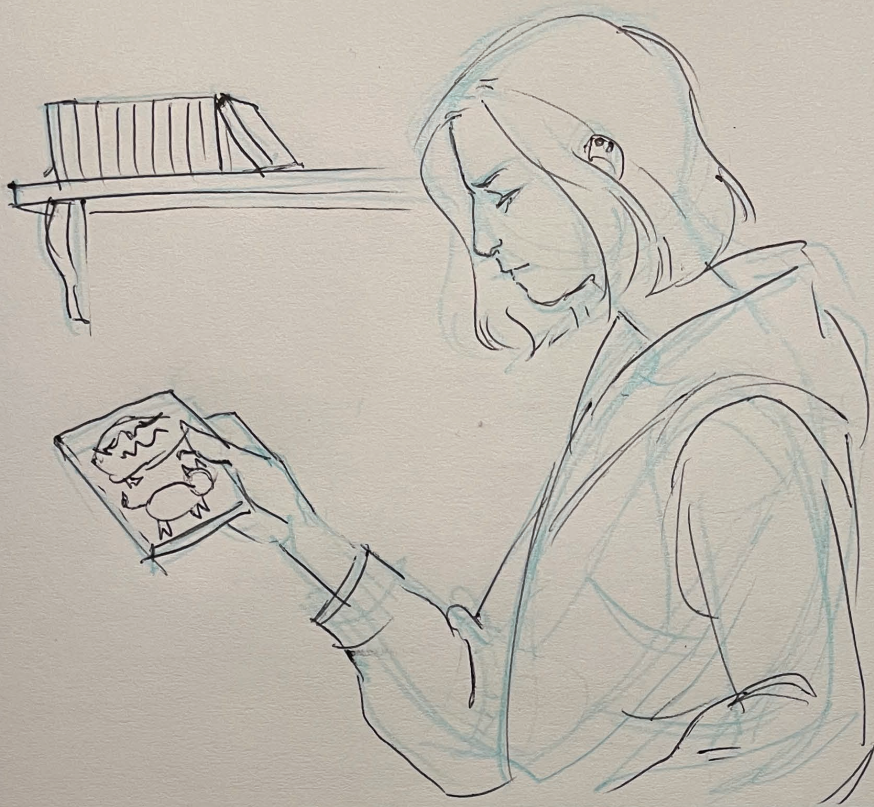




## CHAPTER FIVE

SHE WAS A DEEPLY CREATIVE PERSON WITH AN  
ABIDING LOVE FOR ART IN ALL ITS STRANGEST  
ITERATIONS WHO CONSTANTLY SEEMED TO BE  
STIFLED BY THE BOUNDS OF A PURITANICAL FAITH.  
I WONDER IF SHE EVER RECONCILED THAT FACT.





## CHAPTER SIX

RECENTLY I WAS TIDYING UP A DISPLAY SHELF, THINKING ABOUT MY COLLECTION OF NINTENDO DS GAMES, AND WAS REMINDED THAT 6 YEARS AGO NOW I LET HER BORROW MY COPY OF SOME OLD HARVEST MOON, AND I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE TO GET IT BACK. THE GAME DOESN'T MATTER TO ME, BUT EVERY TIME I LOOK AT THAT SHELF I THINK THAT I SHOULD TRY TO RECONNECT.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

"I HAVE TO GO BACK SOON, THOUGH, I HAVE TO BABYSIT FOR THE NEIGHBORS."

"BUMMER."

"NAH, THE KIDS ARE ADORABLE. THEY'RE ... THEY'RE SO CUTE I COULD JUST KICK THEM IN THE HEAD."

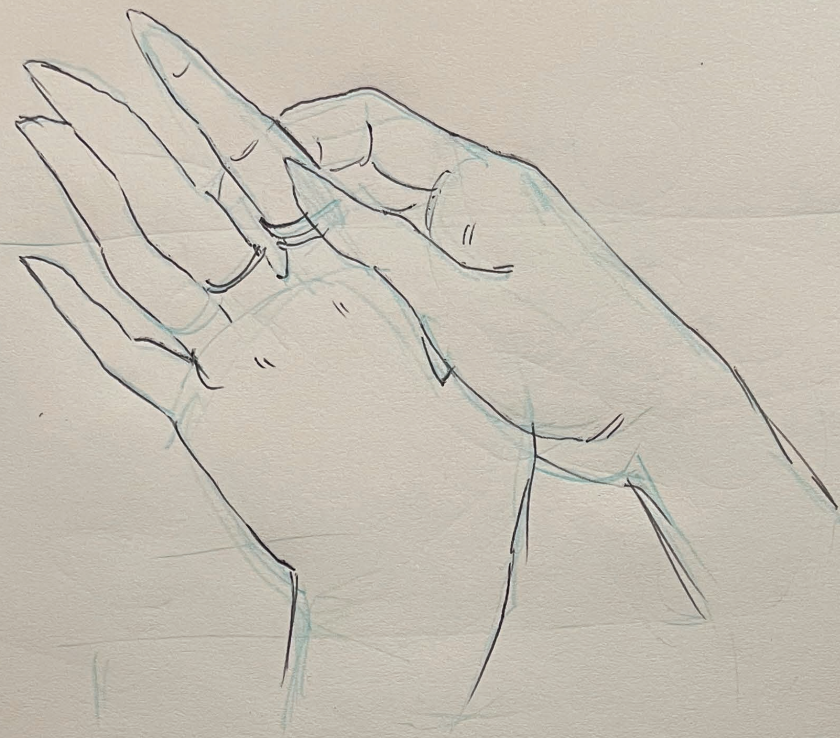
"ARE YOU SURE BABYSITTING IS THE RIGHT JOB FOR YOU...?"

"YES! I DIDN'T SAY I WOULD, JUST THAT I WANT TO."

"NOT HELPING YOUR CASE."

"YOU KNOW! LIKE HOW YOU WANT TO HUG AND SQUEEZE, LIKE, KITTENS?! IT'S AN INSTINCT!"





## CHAPTER EIGHT

"SO, YOU'RE THINKING OF GOING ALL THE WAY TO TORONTO?" SHE SCOFFED.

"I MEAN, I HAVE TO GO TO UNIVERSITY SOMEWHERE. IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD, CAN IT?" I SAID, TWISTING THE RINGS AROUND ON MY FINGERS WITH INCREASING SPEED, GLARING A HOLE IN THE WOODEN FLOOR.

"YOU CAN BARELY DRIVE TO THE STORE ALONE AND YOU'RE THINKING OF MOVING ACROSS THE COUNTRY? I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO WORK OUT, HON," SHE SAID, "NO OFFENSE."

"EITHER WAY I HAVE TO LEAVE, SO IF I'M GOING TO GO TO TOWN, MAY AS WELL GOIN A LINCOLN," I SAID, PUNCTUATING IT WITH A NERVOUS LAUGH. SHE WAS RIGHT, AND HAVING IT SAID OUT LOUD MADE IT FEEL AS IF IT HAD BEEN MANIFESTED, THIS WORRY, AND WAS NOW A PROPHECY ETCHED IN STONE.





by  
D. LOGGIANI