

THE DAY I

L O S T

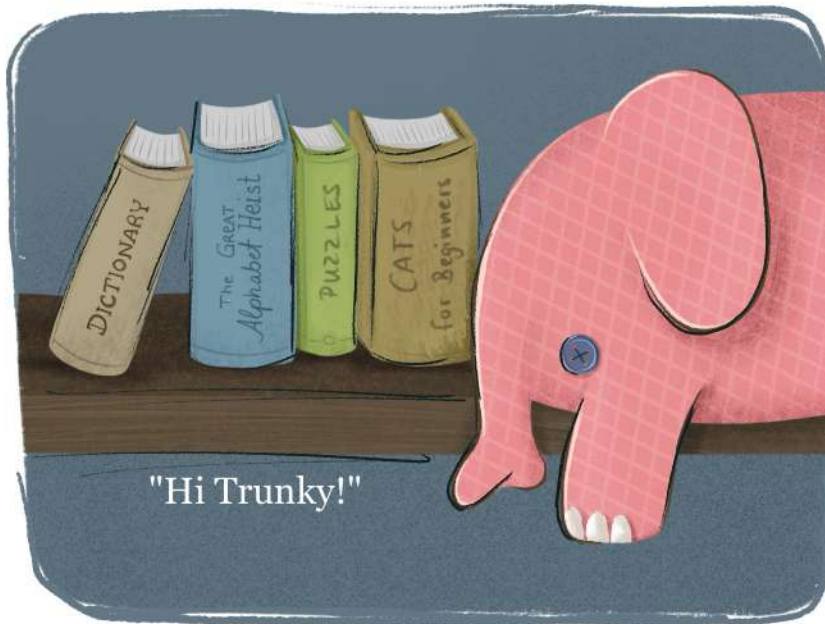
MY NAME



GILA VON MEISSNER



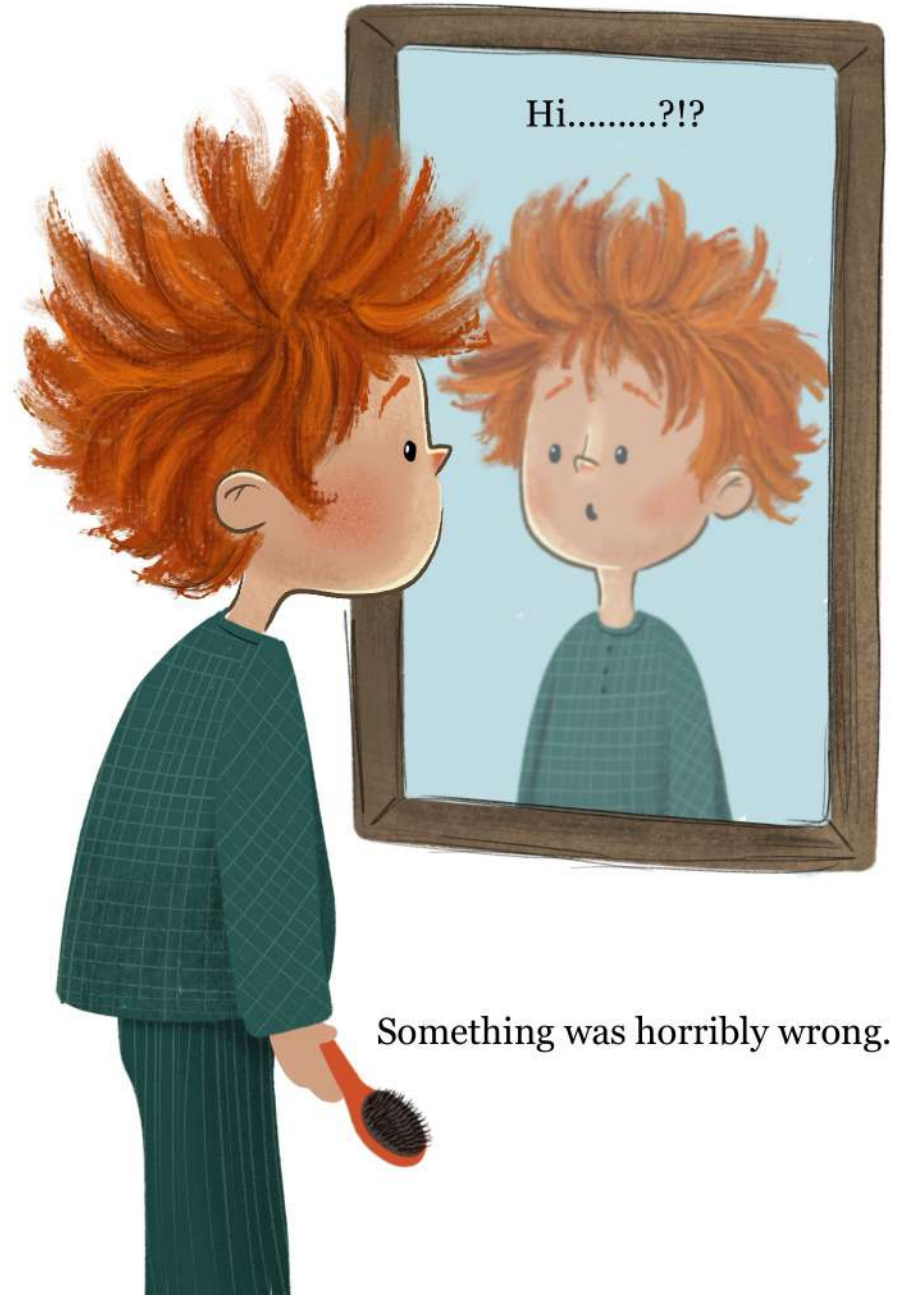
"Hi Princess!"



"Hi Trunky!"

Hi...!

Hi.....?



Hi.....?!?

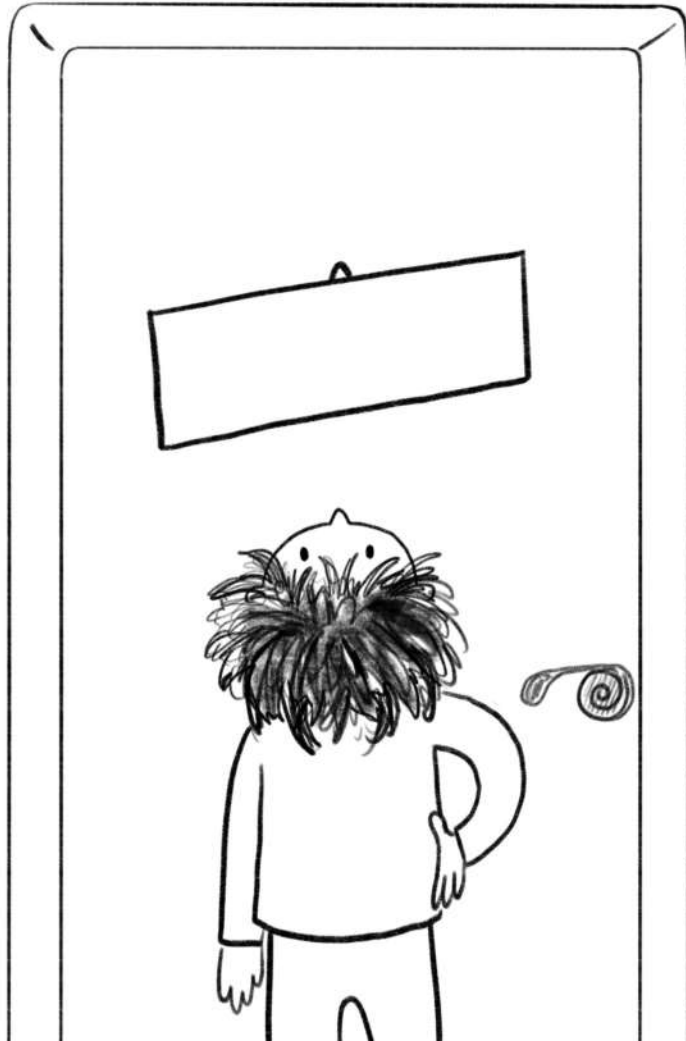
Something was horribly wrong.

My problem was clear: I lost my name. I lost myself.
And isn't that the same thing?

It wasn't on my bedroom door.

It wasn't in my books or on my backpack.

And when I checked my birthday cards from last month, every single one was blank.



Like I'd never existed at all.

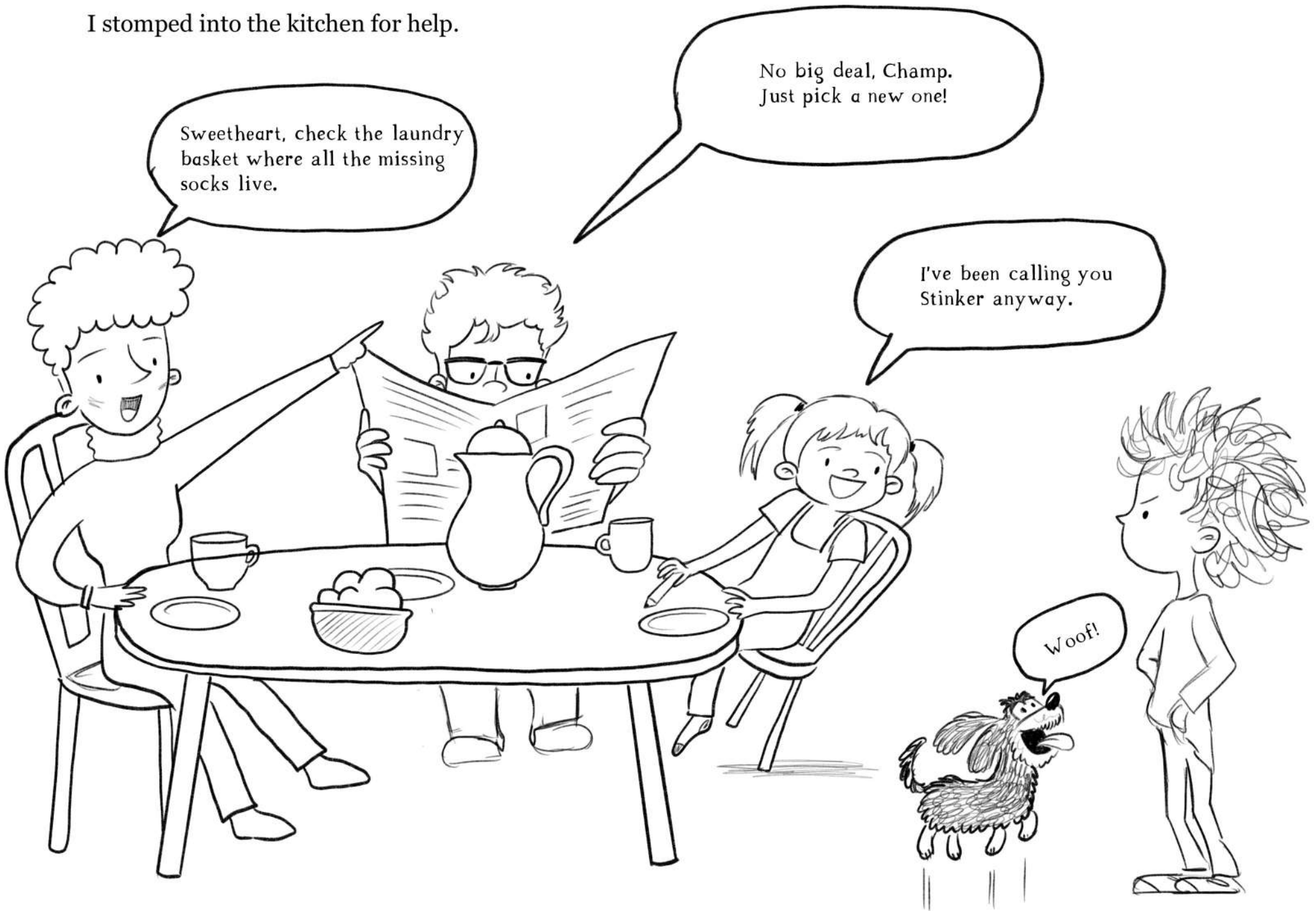
I stomped into the kitchen for help.

Sweetheart, check the laundry basket where all the missing socks live.

No big deal, Champ. Just pick a new one!

I've been calling you Stinker anyway.

Woof!



If my family wouldn't help, maybe the city would.

I threw open the door, scanning billboards, shop signs, and cracks in the pavement for a trace of me.

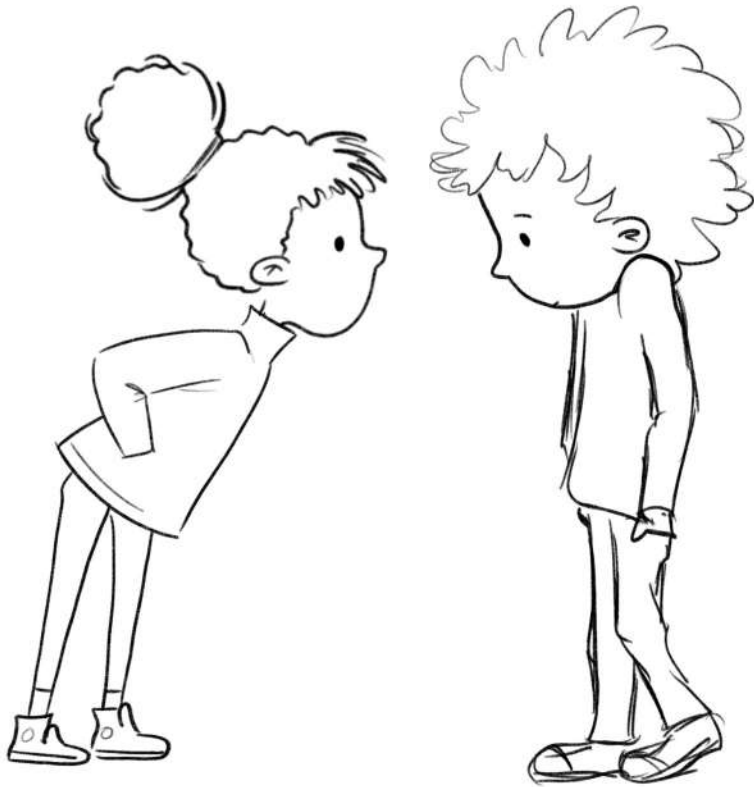


But the city buzzed past - horns blaring, strangers rushing by - and not one of them called my name.

I'd never felt so invisible.

So I borrowed hers.

It felt scratchy around the edges - like wearing undies a size too small.



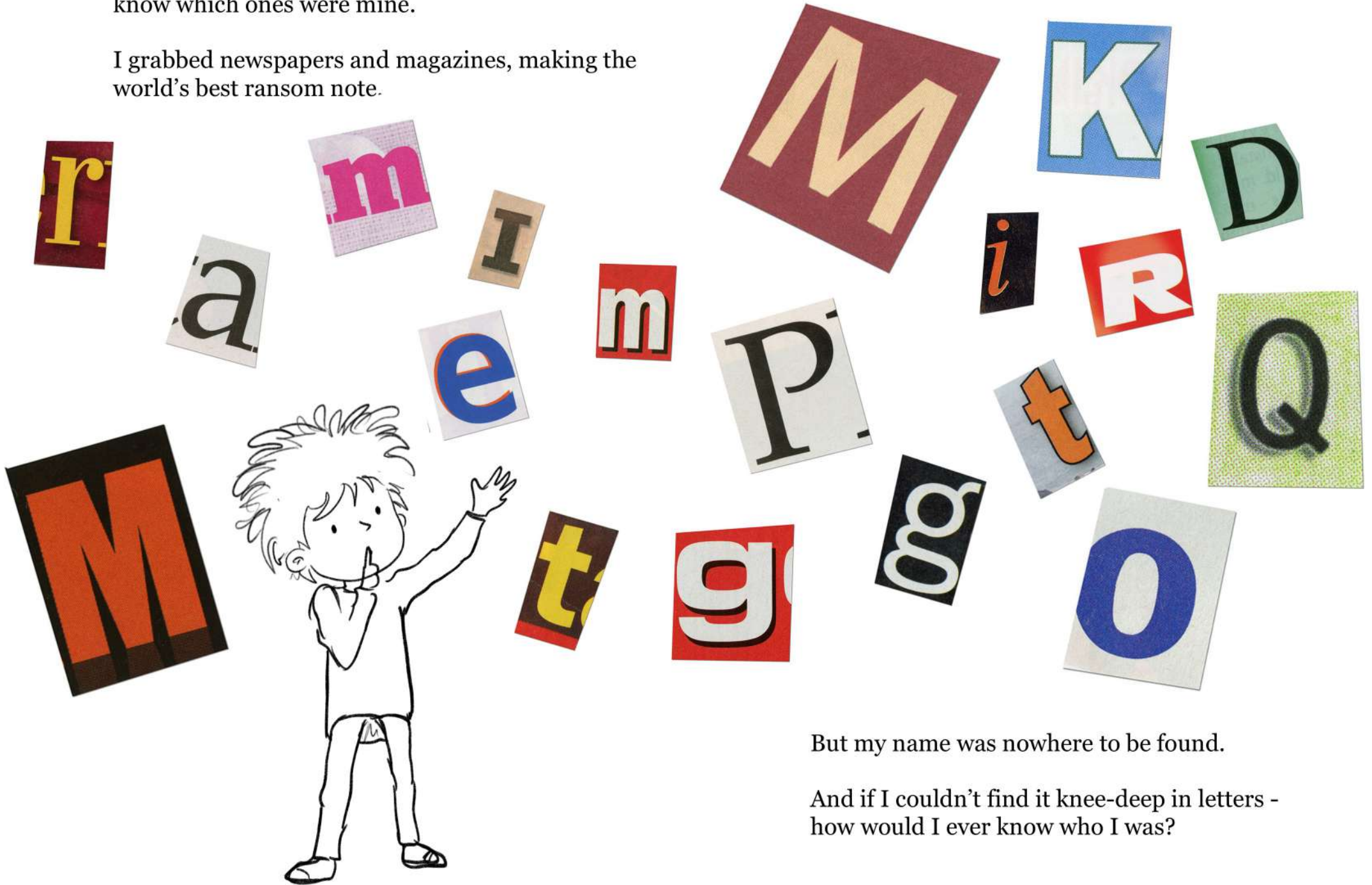
Turning a corner, I bumped into my friend Philia. She glared at me.

“You look like you could use a hand. Or a name.”



I was certain - if I could just see the letters, I'd know which ones were mine.

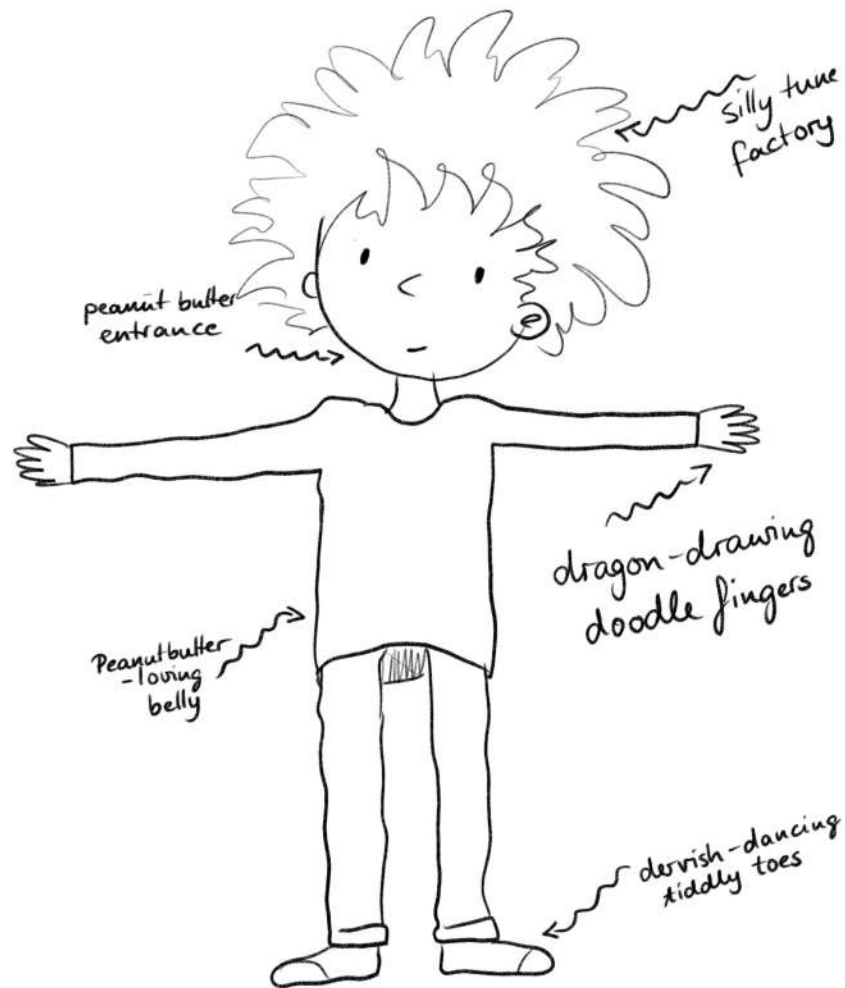
I grabbed newspapers and magazines, making the world's best ransom note.



But my name was nowhere to be found.

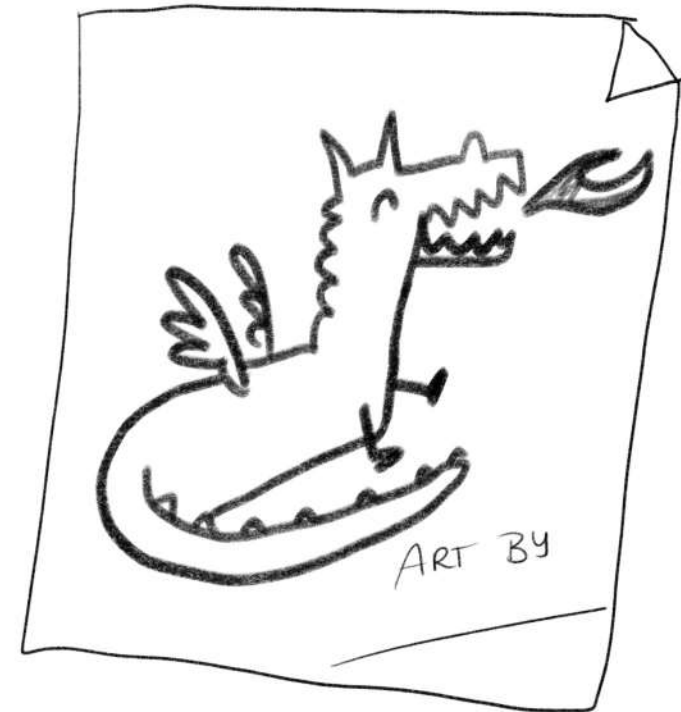
And if I couldn't find it knee-deep in letters - how would I ever know who I was?

Am I still me if I don't have my name?



I still like peanut butter sandwiches, drawing dragons, and dancing like a dervish.

I still laugh the same laugh and hum the same silly tune.



Maybe I hadn't lost myself - just those pesky letters.

Or maybe I hadn't found the right ones yet.

Dictionaries had more words than newspapers,
and nobody had more dictionaries than the
library.



I went from aardvark to zebra, circling every letter
that called my name.

But by the end, my head spun - and I still hadn't
found me.

What if I never found it?

The thought felt heavy - like a backpack full of rocks. My shoulders sagged as I shuffled past windows and graffiti-covered walls.

Maybe I didn't need my name anymore - or maybe it didn't need me.



I was heading home when I noticed something strange: stuck to a weathered door, a torn poster had letters that looked familiar.

I tugged the poster free. Two letters jumped out -
like they belonged to me.

Heart pounding, I pressed them to my chest.



Behind me, a stray cat pounced on a crumpled
flyer, tearing off another letter.

As I grabbed it, my fingers tingled.



I danced through the city, ignoring its buzz and blaring horns.

The letters called to me, leading me back home.



Hugging my newfound letters, I taped them to my bedroom door, one by one.

Seeing my name felt like reuniting with an old friend - but not as important as I thought.

That night, I slept soundly, my name pinned to
the door.

But I dreamed of letters swirling in the sky,
dancing free and wild.



Sometimes, names wander away - just to remind
us we're more than the letters that spell us out.