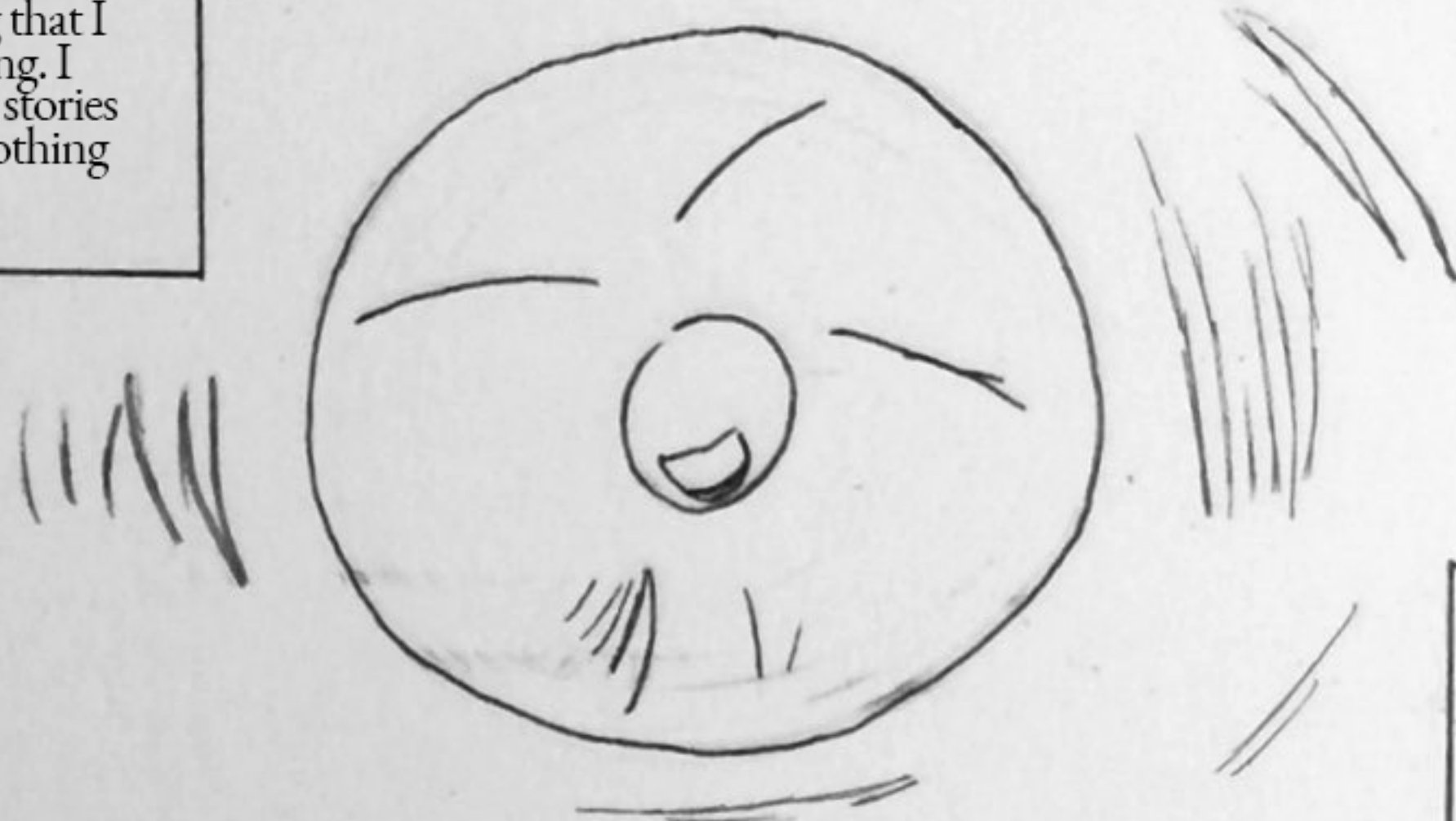
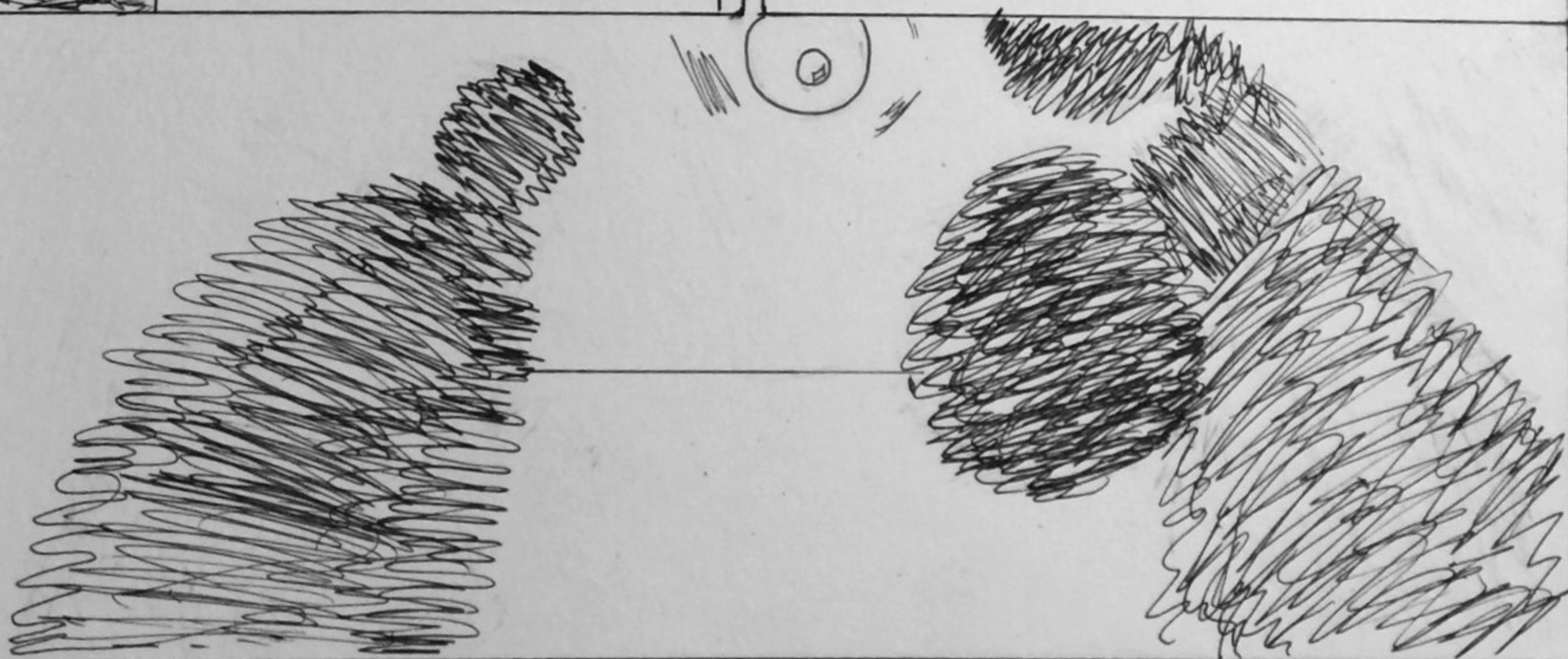
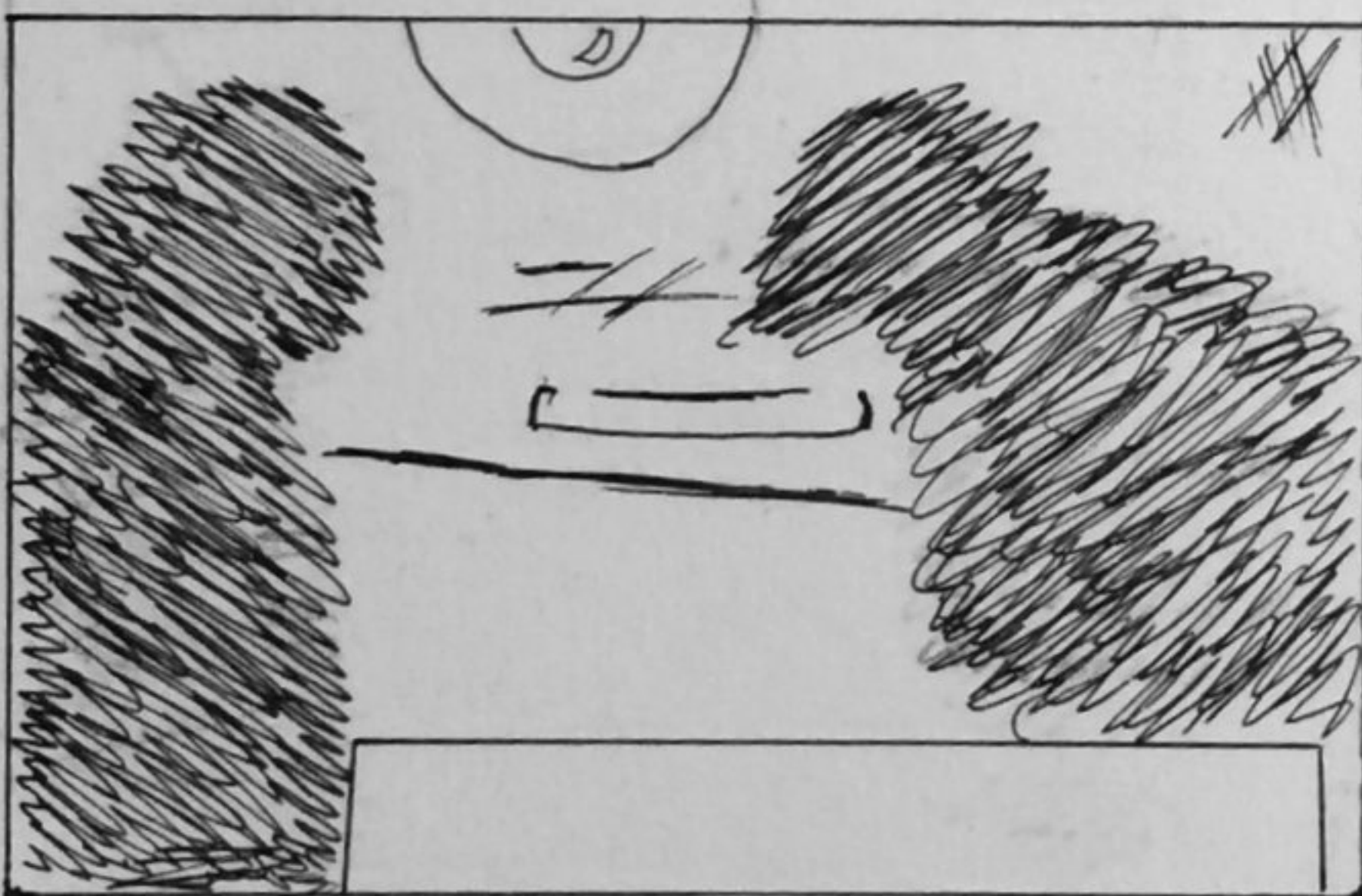
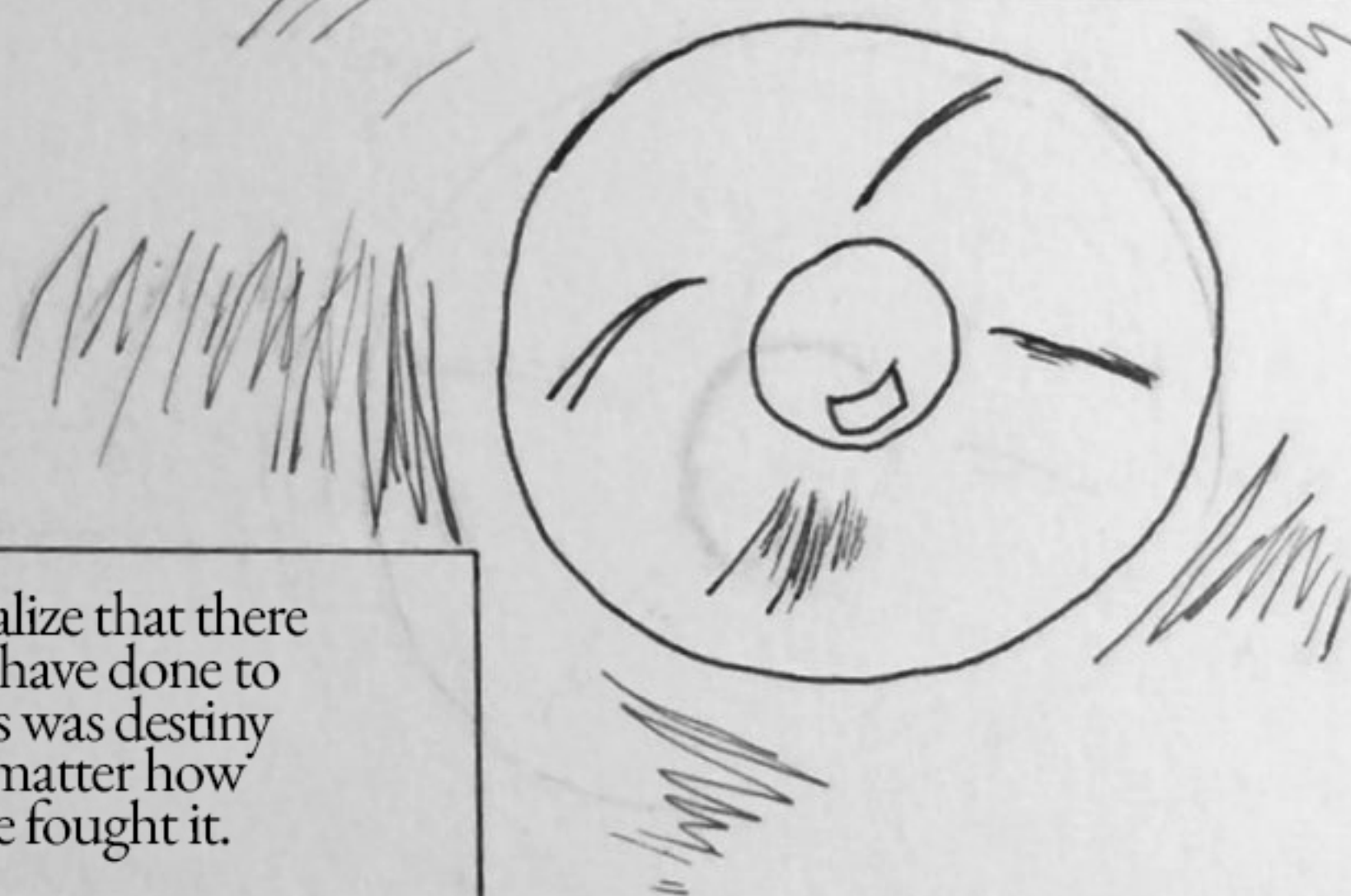


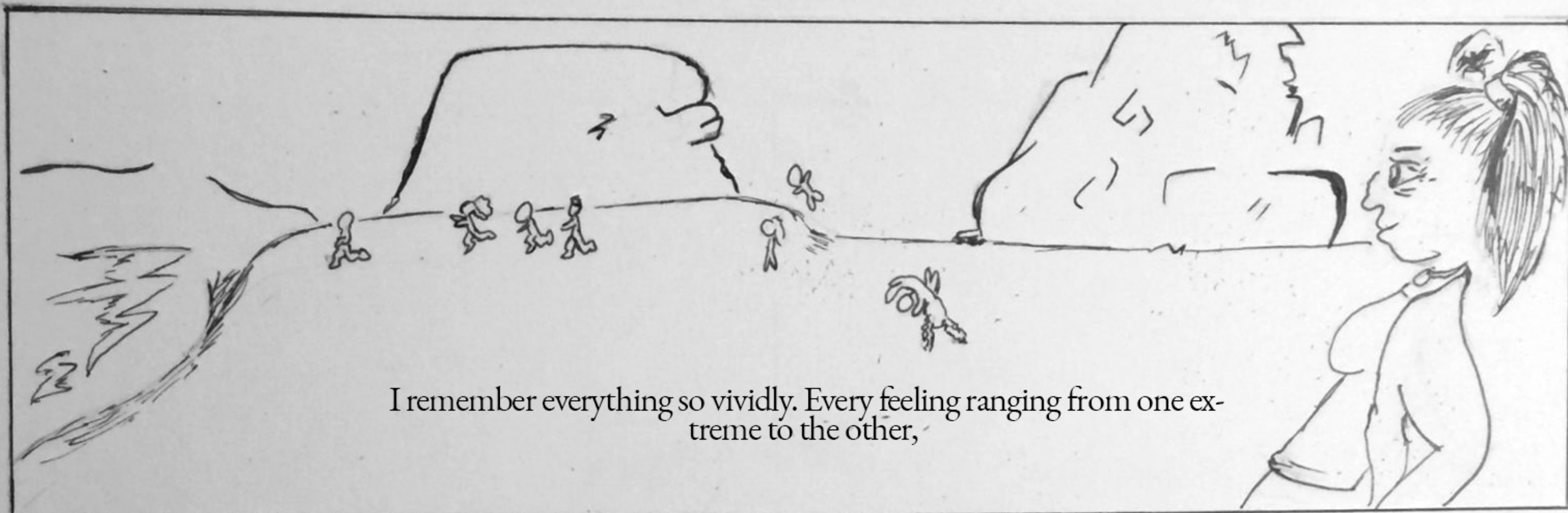
I never thought that everything that I had learned would be so wrong. I spent so much time hearing the stories of my ancestors long ago but nothing prepared me for this.



If someone had told me when I was younger that everything was going to go completely different, I would have scoffed in disbelief.

Now, laying here, I realize that there was nothing I could have done to change my fate. This was destiny from the start not matter how much I might have fought it.

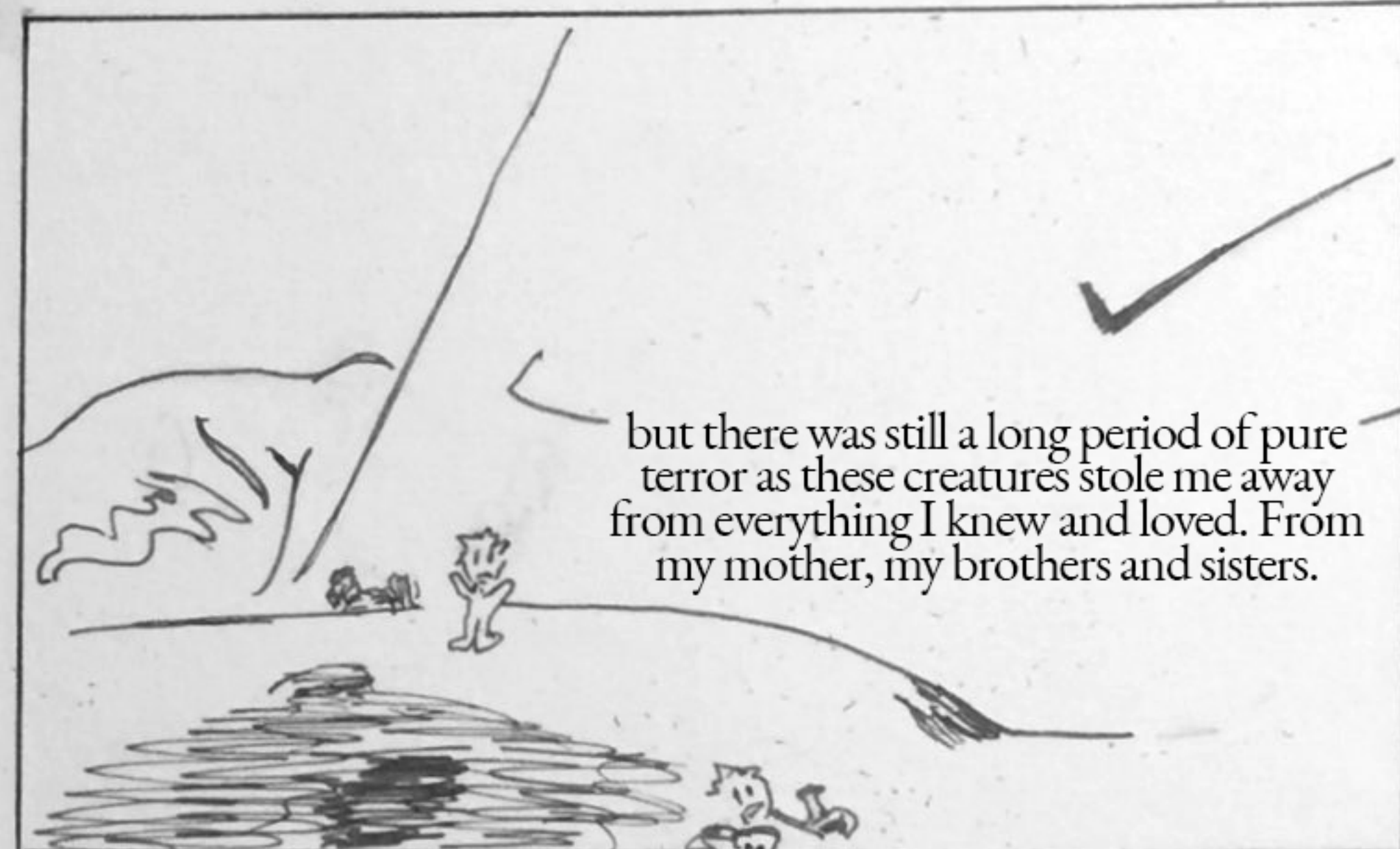




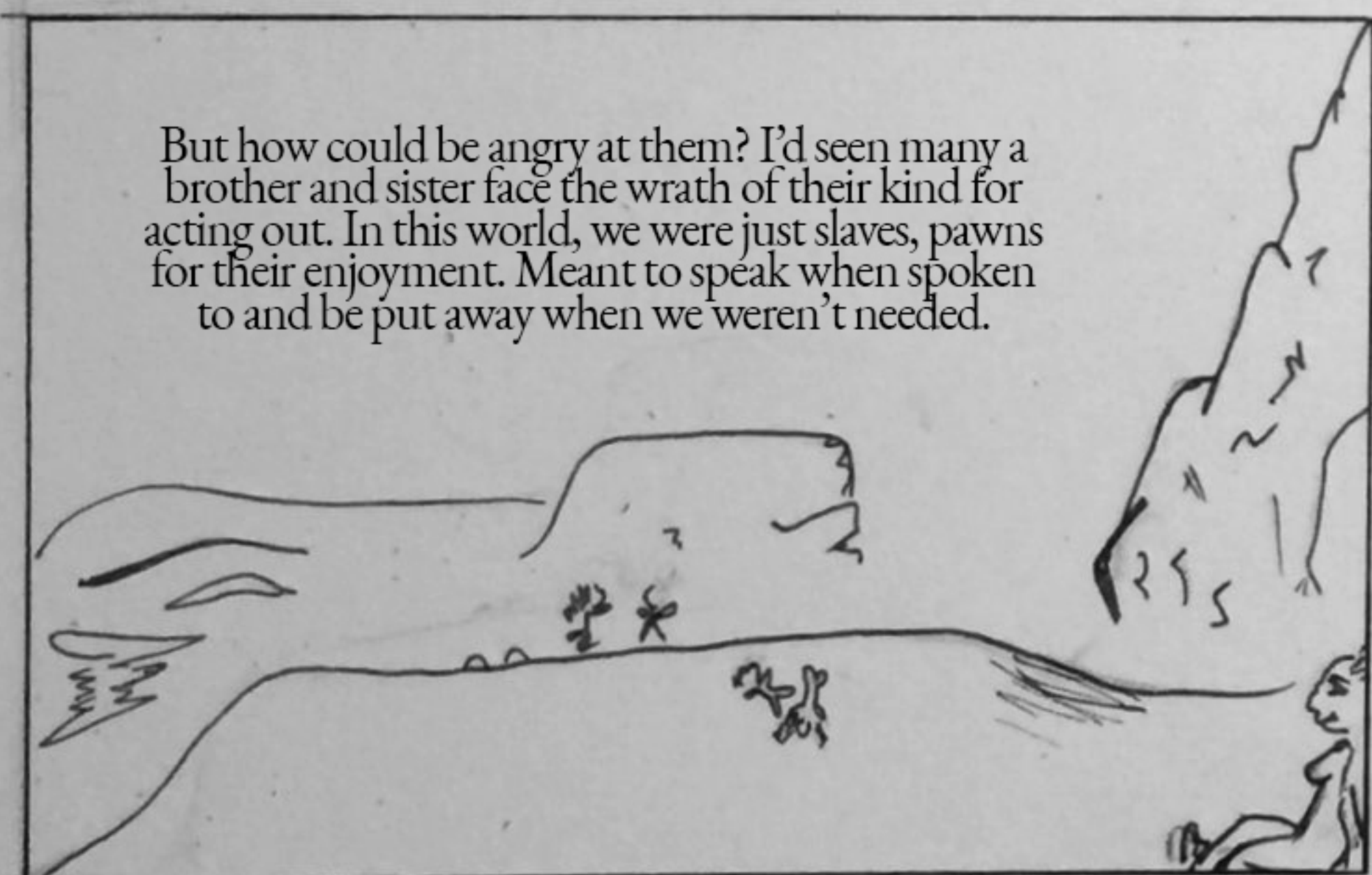
I remember everything so vividly. Every feeling ranging from one extreme to the other,



No one even fought for me, just letting them take me as if I was nothing. Expendable.

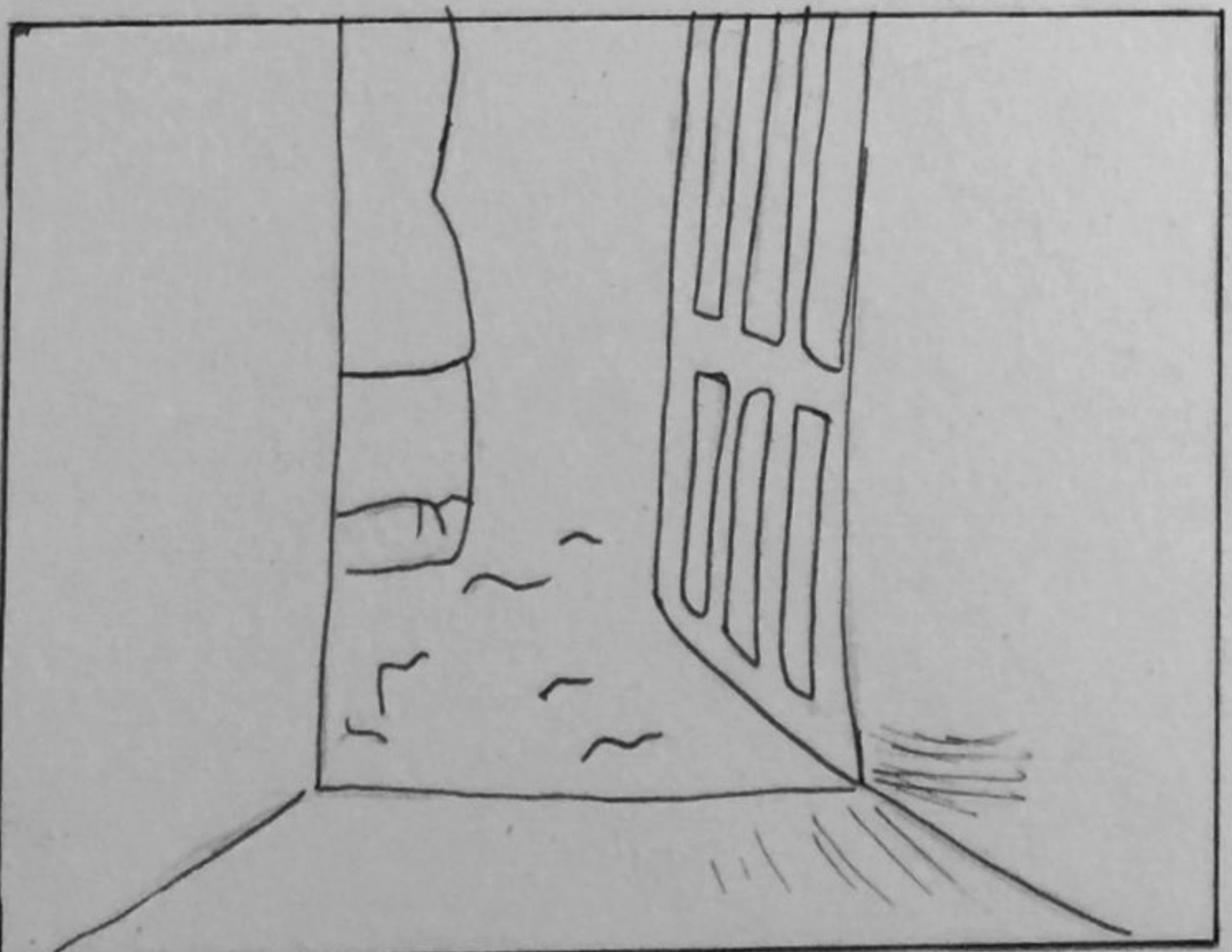
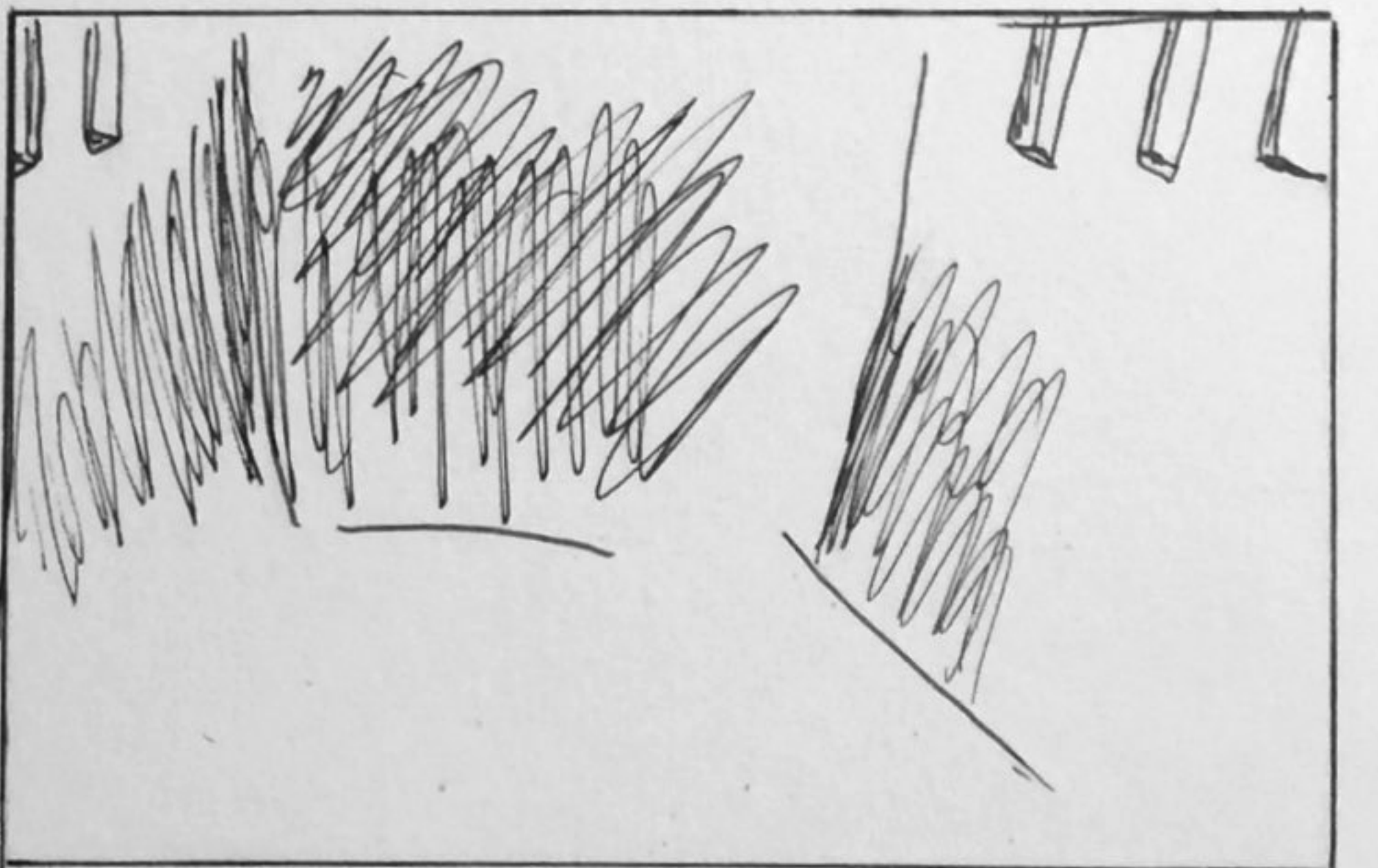
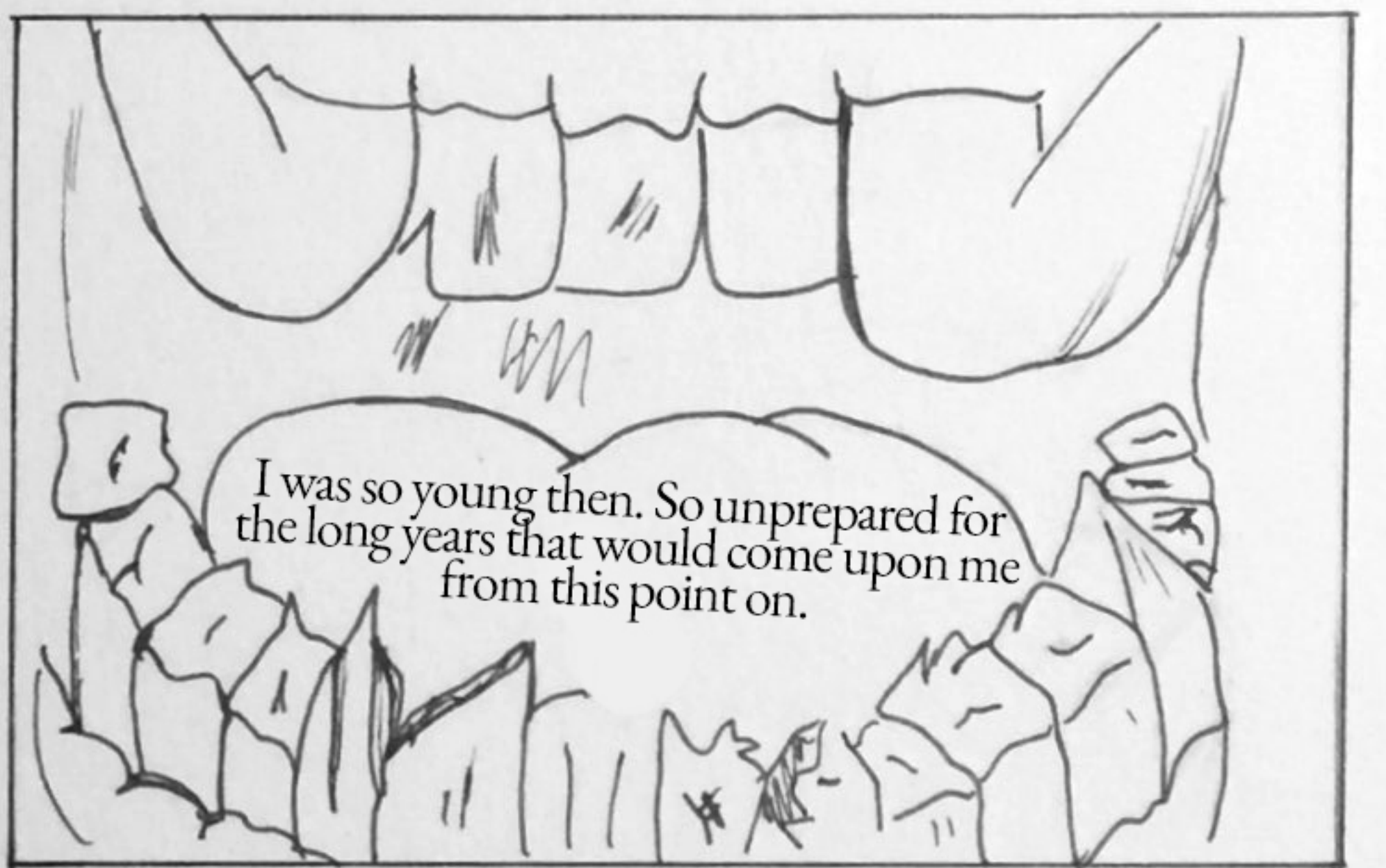
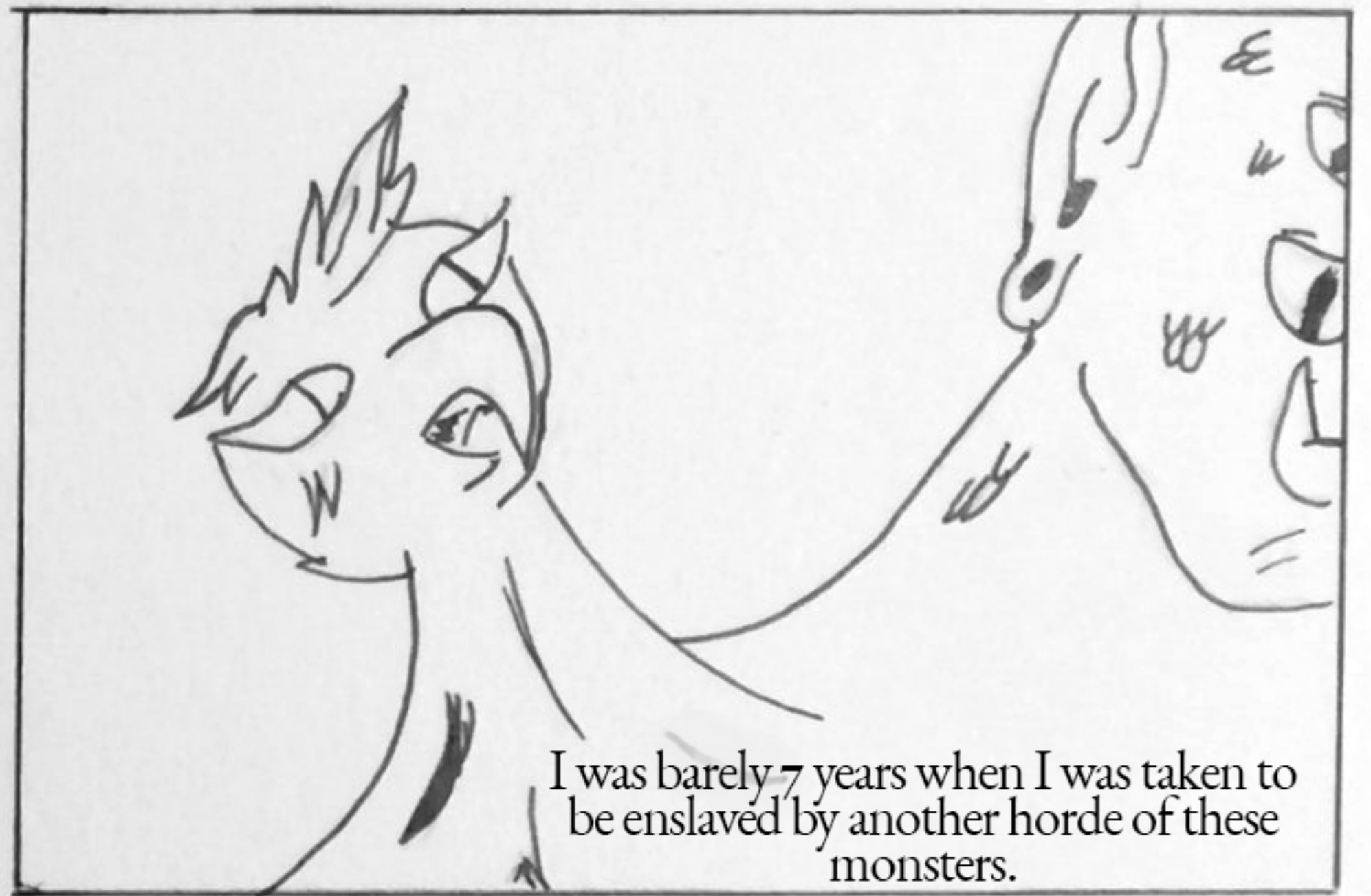
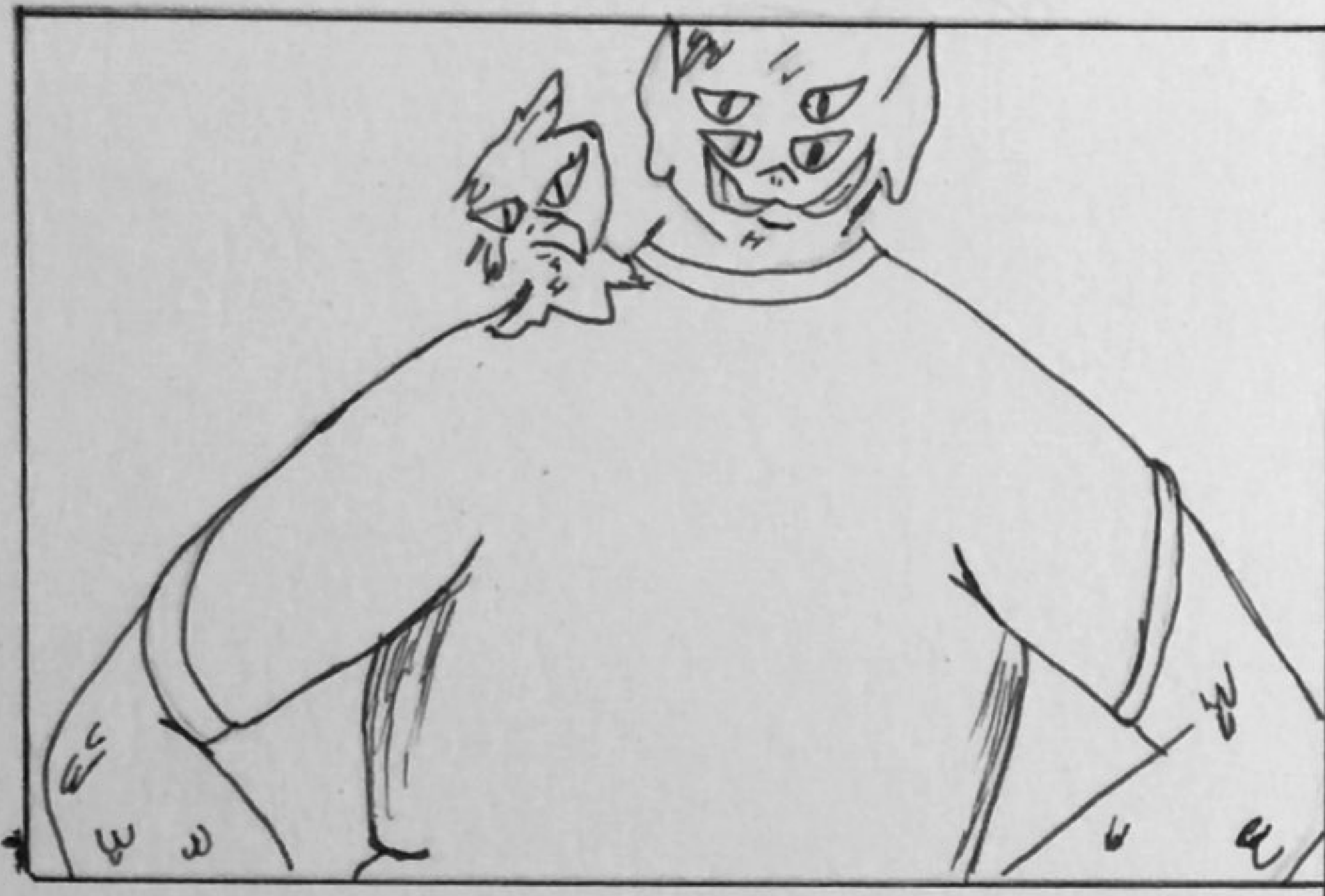


but there was still a long period of pure terror as these creatures stole me away from everything I knew and loved. From my mother, my brothers and sisters.



But how could be angry at them? I'd seen many a brother and sister face the wrath of their kind for acting out. In this world, we were just slaves, pawns for their enjoyment. Meant to speak when spoken to and be put away when we weren't needed.







This why they took me? To be
a slave to their young?



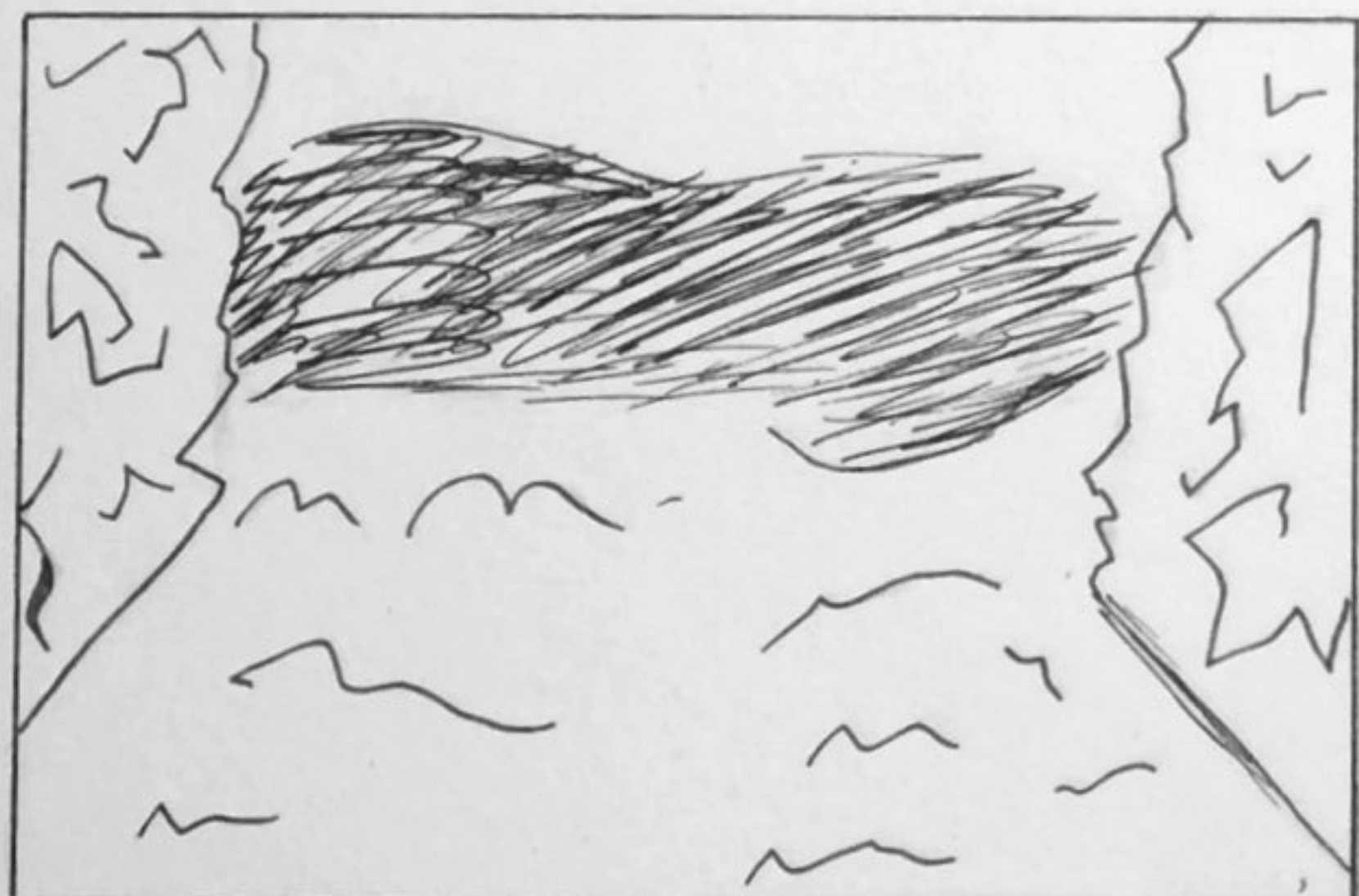
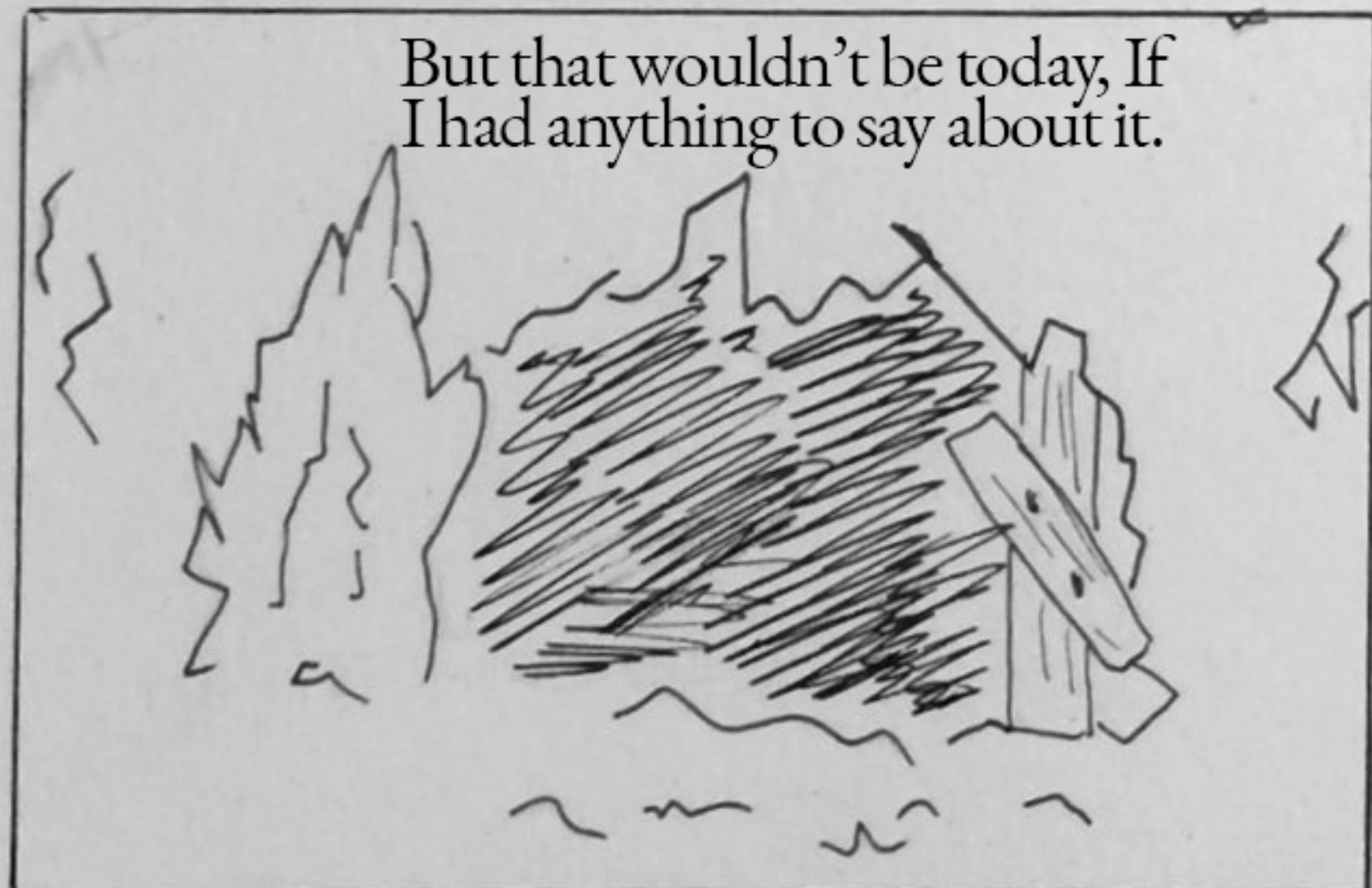
6 7 8 9 10



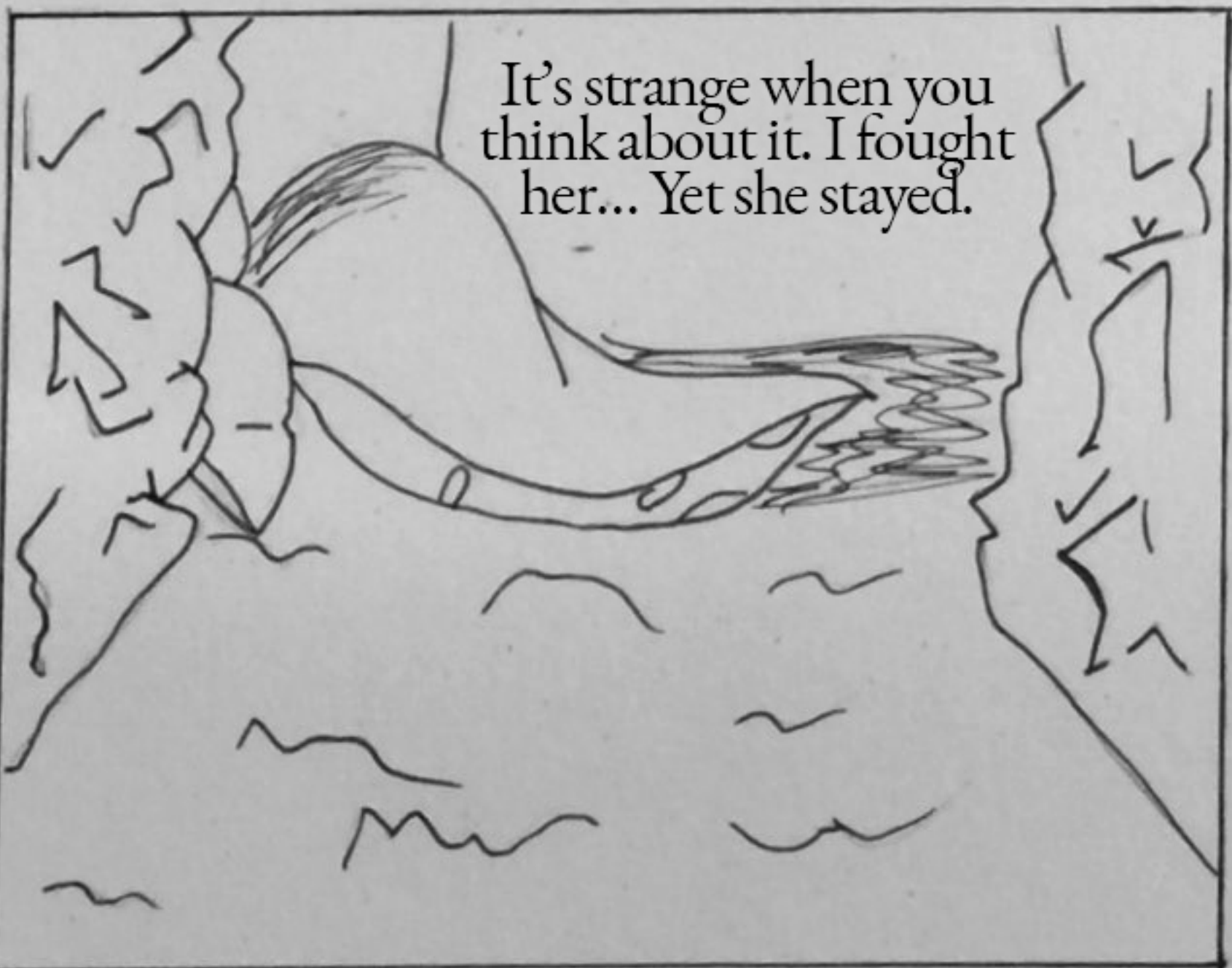
No, I wasn't going to let this happen without a fight. Even if it killed me.

[illegible]

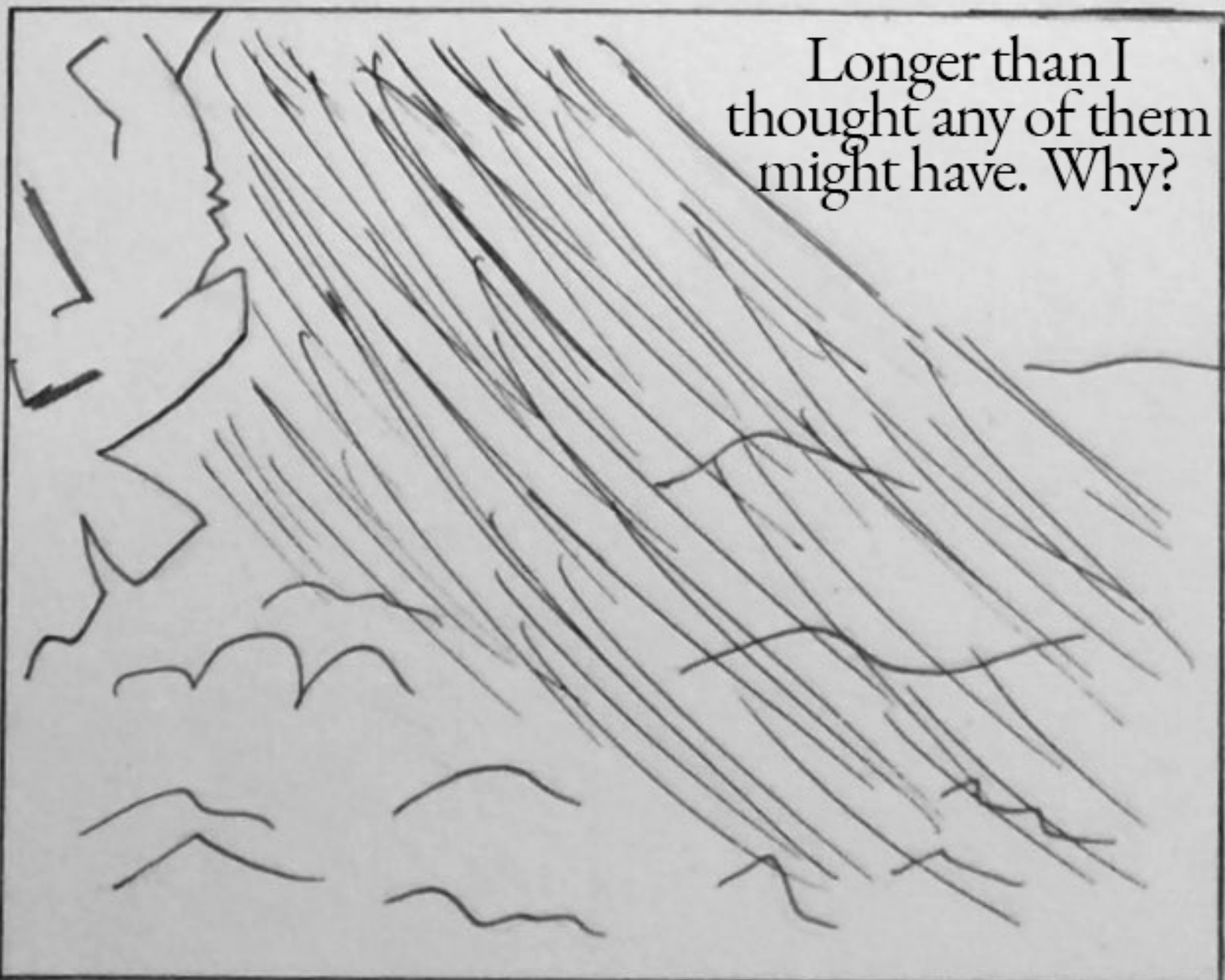
But that wouldn't be today, If
I had anything to say about it.



It's strange when you think about it. I fought her... Yet she stayed.



Longer than I
thought any of them
might have. Why?



But that was so long ago now.



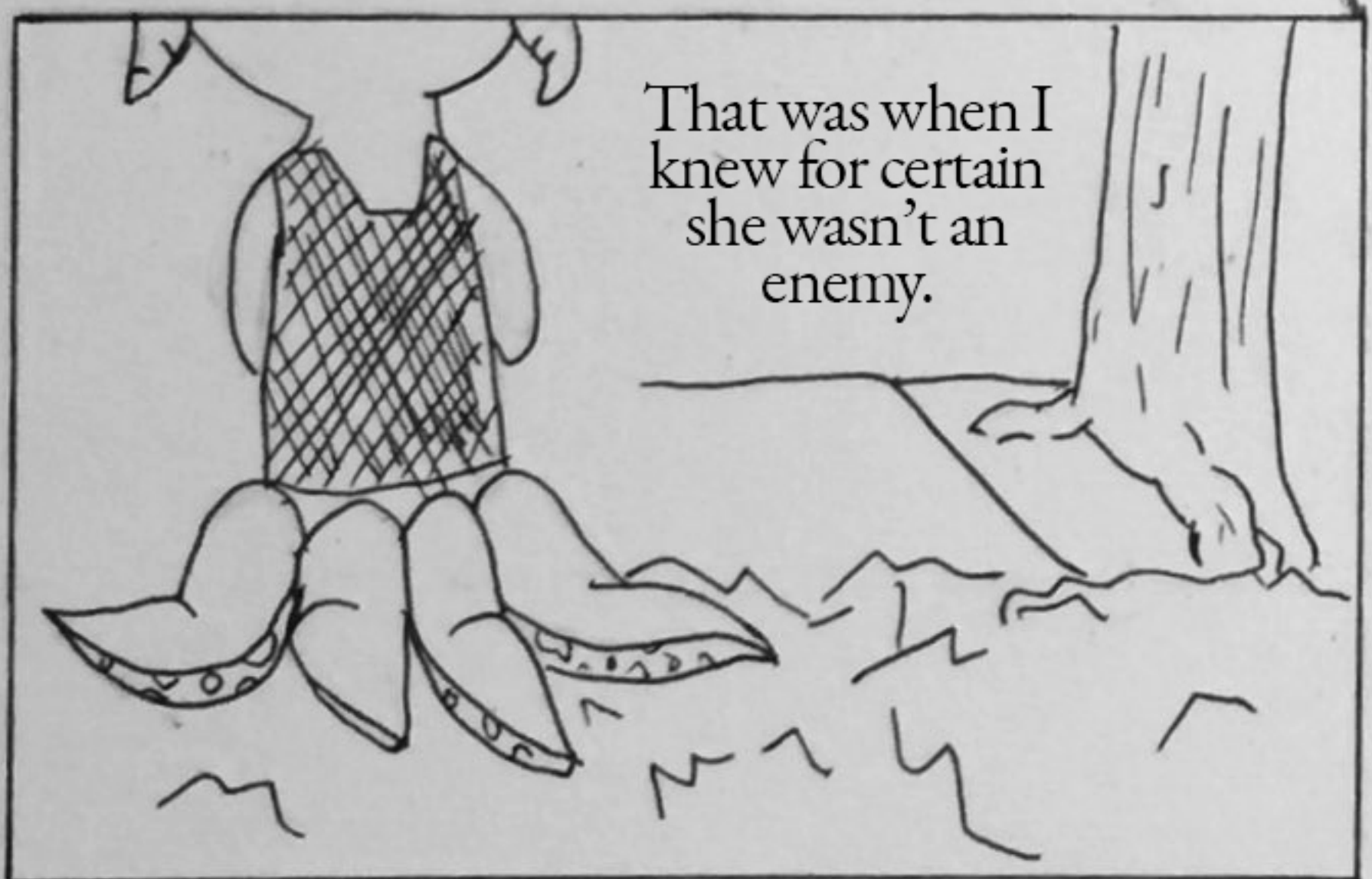
I've aged so much, yet she hardly looks any different.



Her eyes. Her eyes have stayed the same since the day I first day.



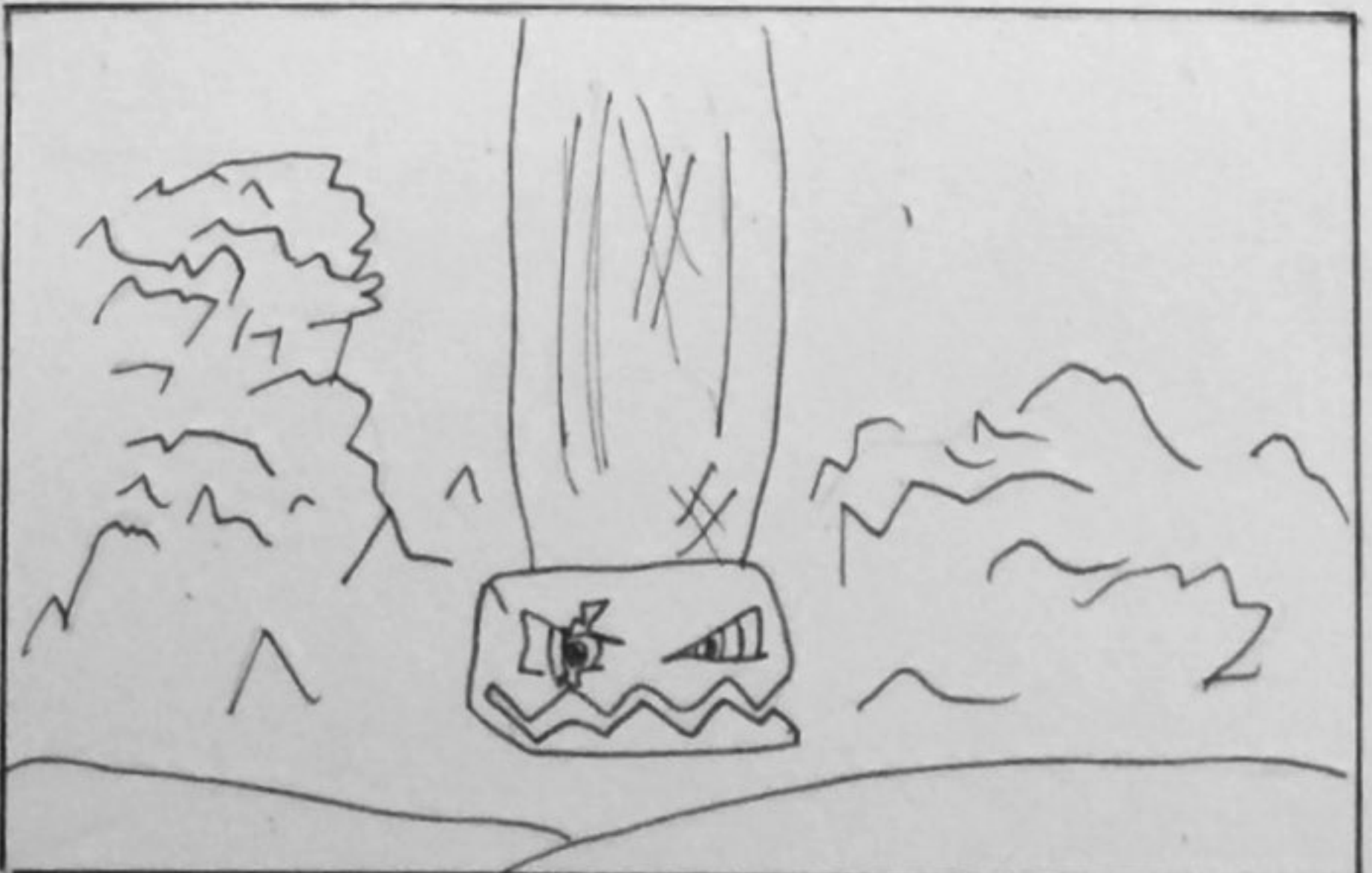
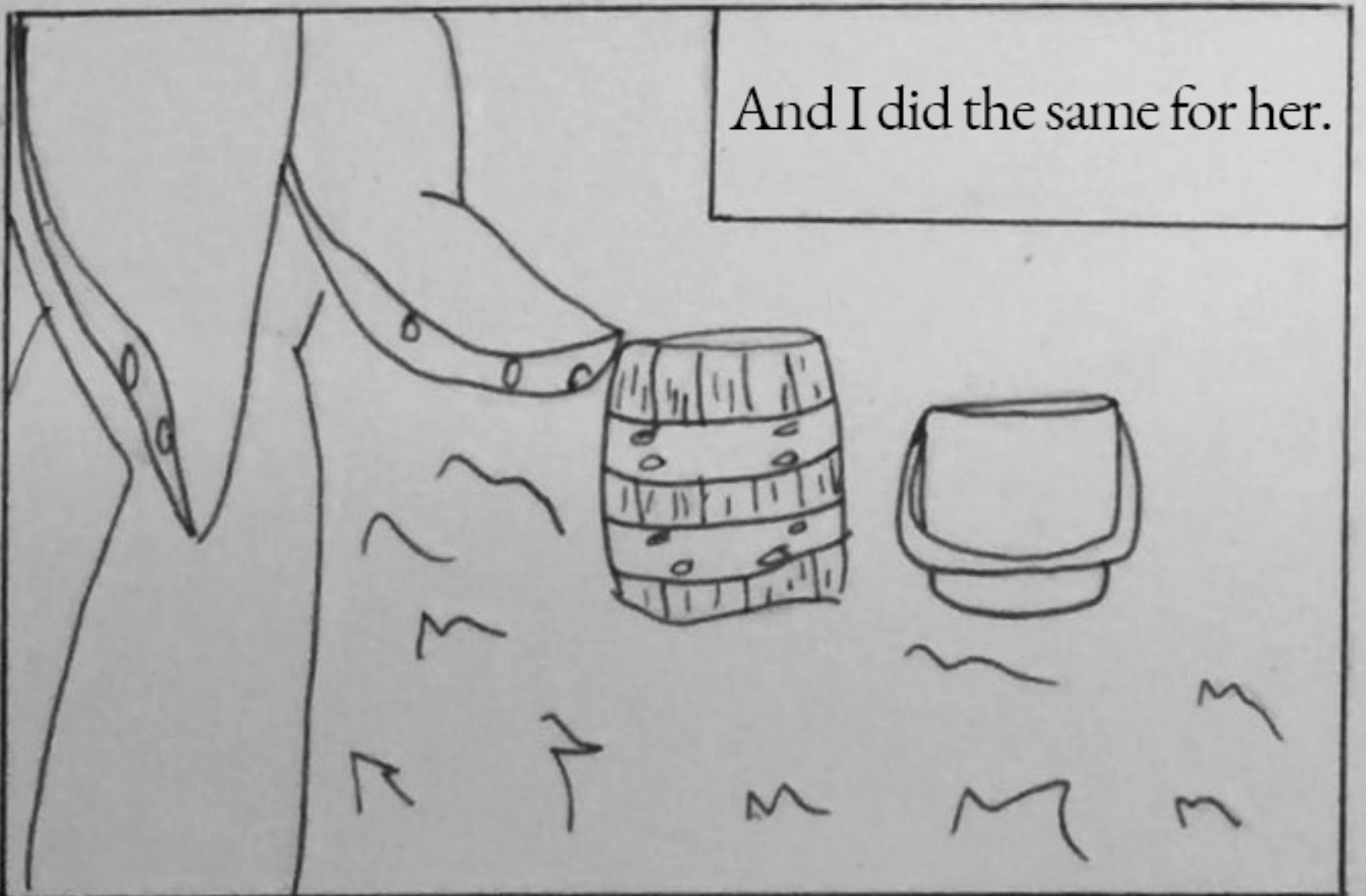
That was when I knew for certain she wasn't an enemy.



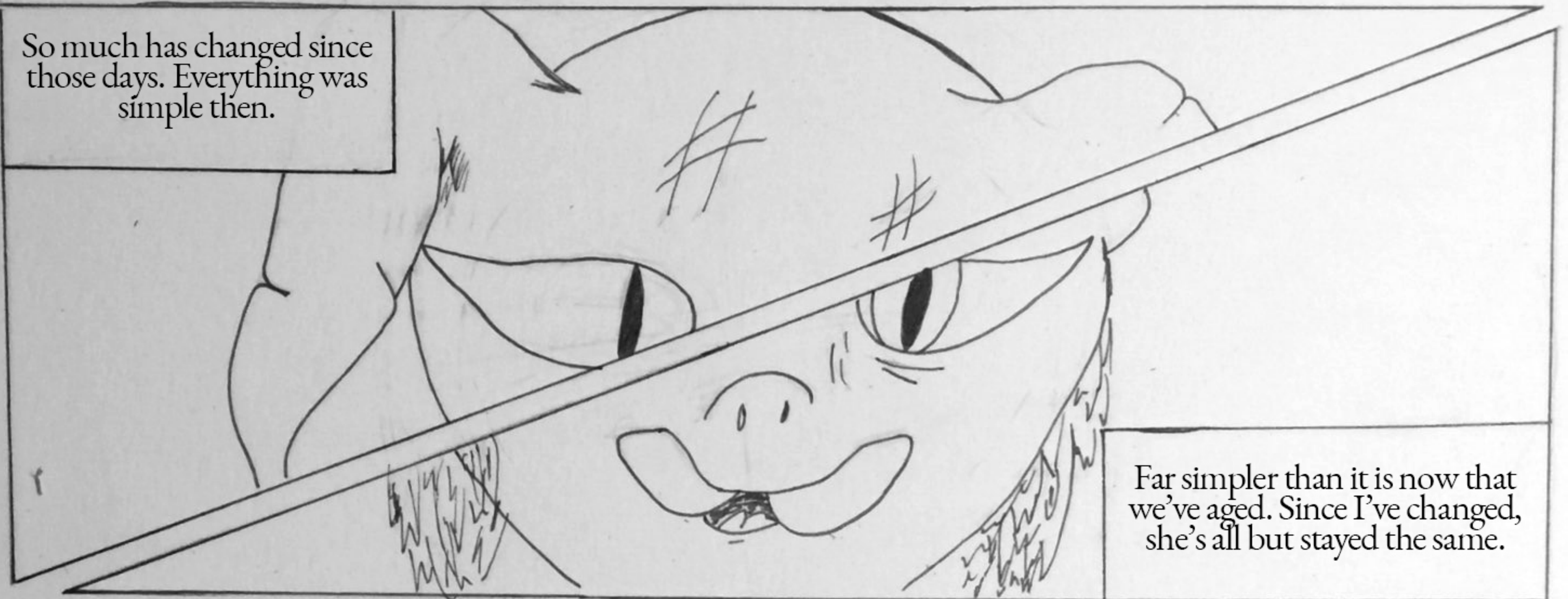
She protected me from then on



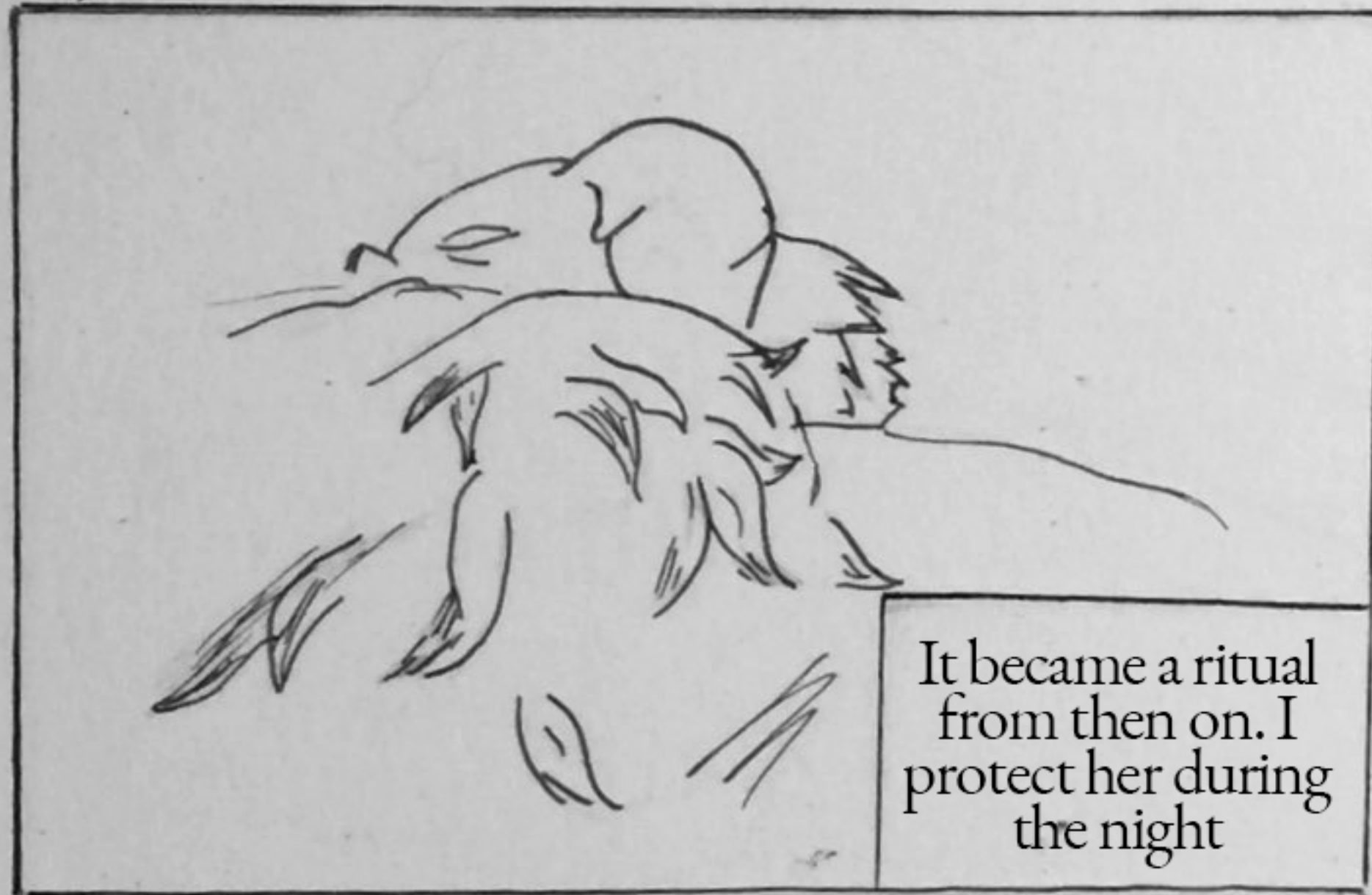
And I did the same for her.



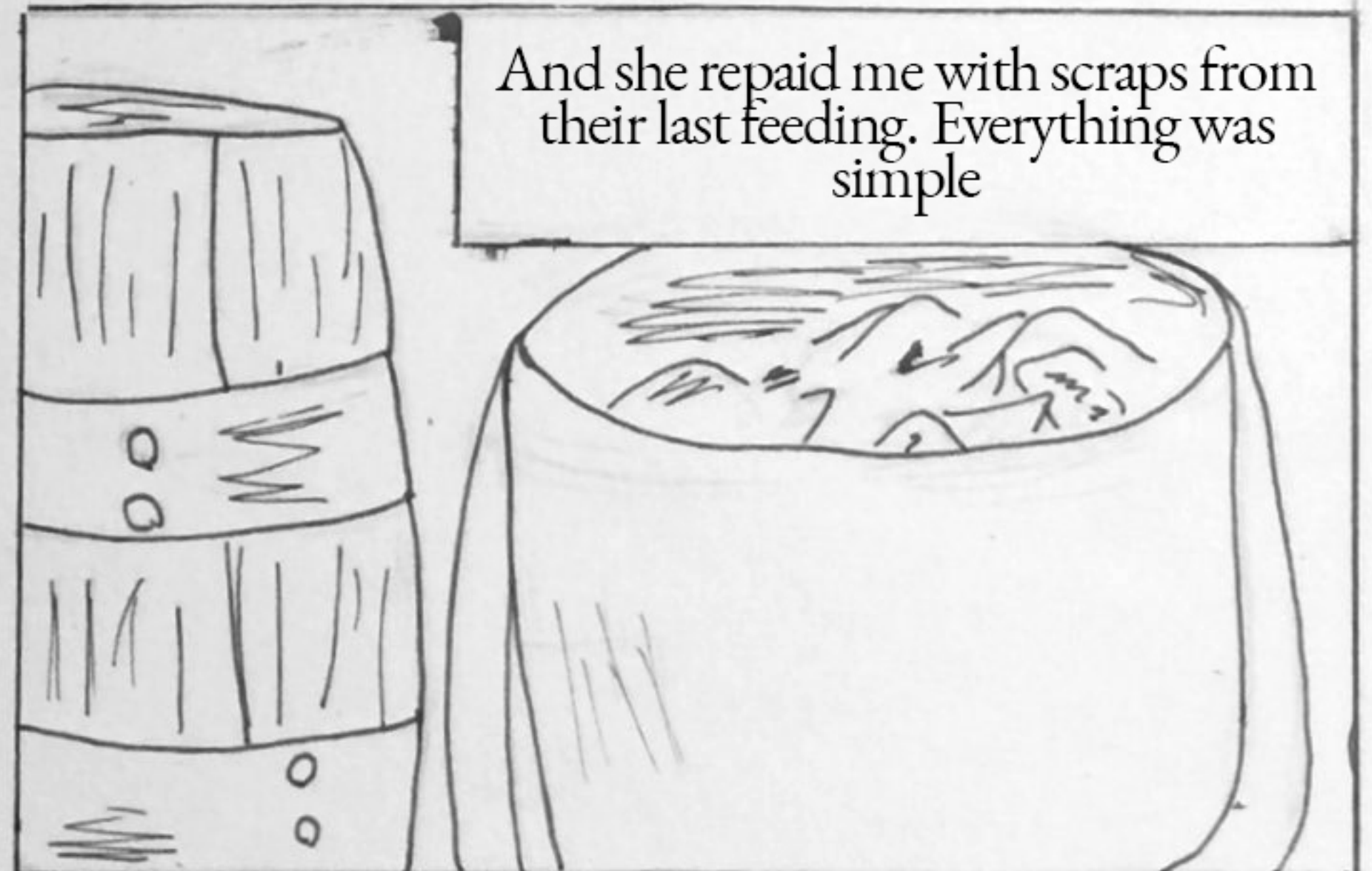
So much has changed since those days. Everything was simple then.



Far simpler than it is now that we've aged. Since I've changed, she's all but stayed the same.



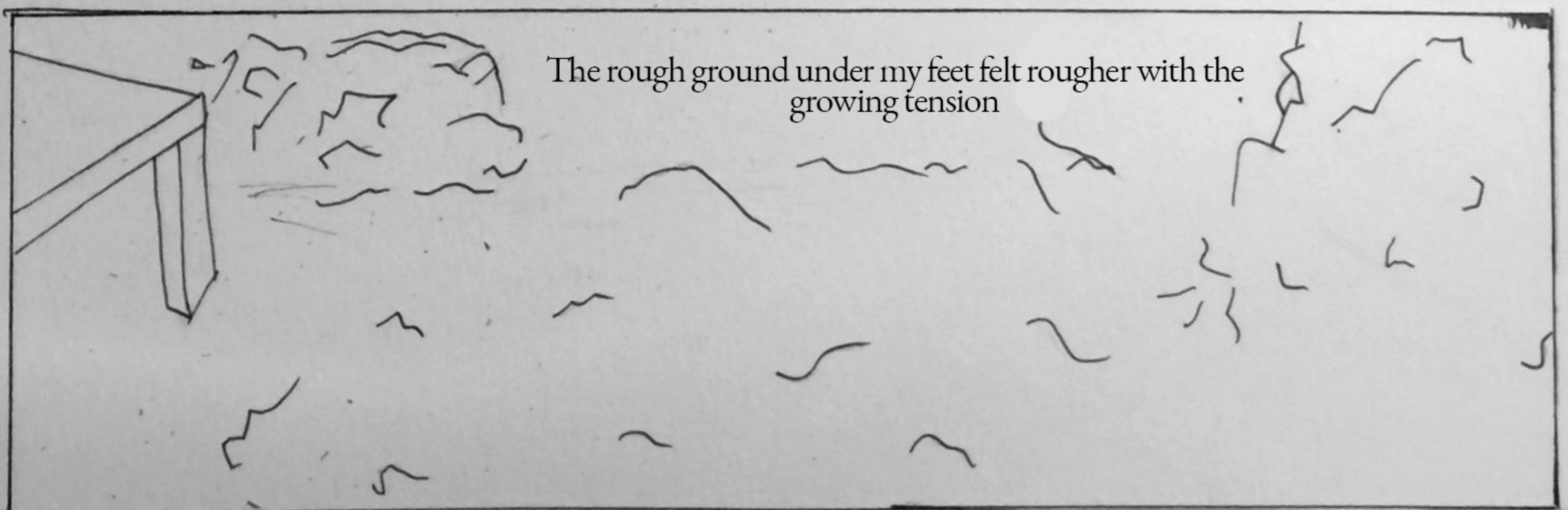
It became a ritual from then on. I protect her during the night



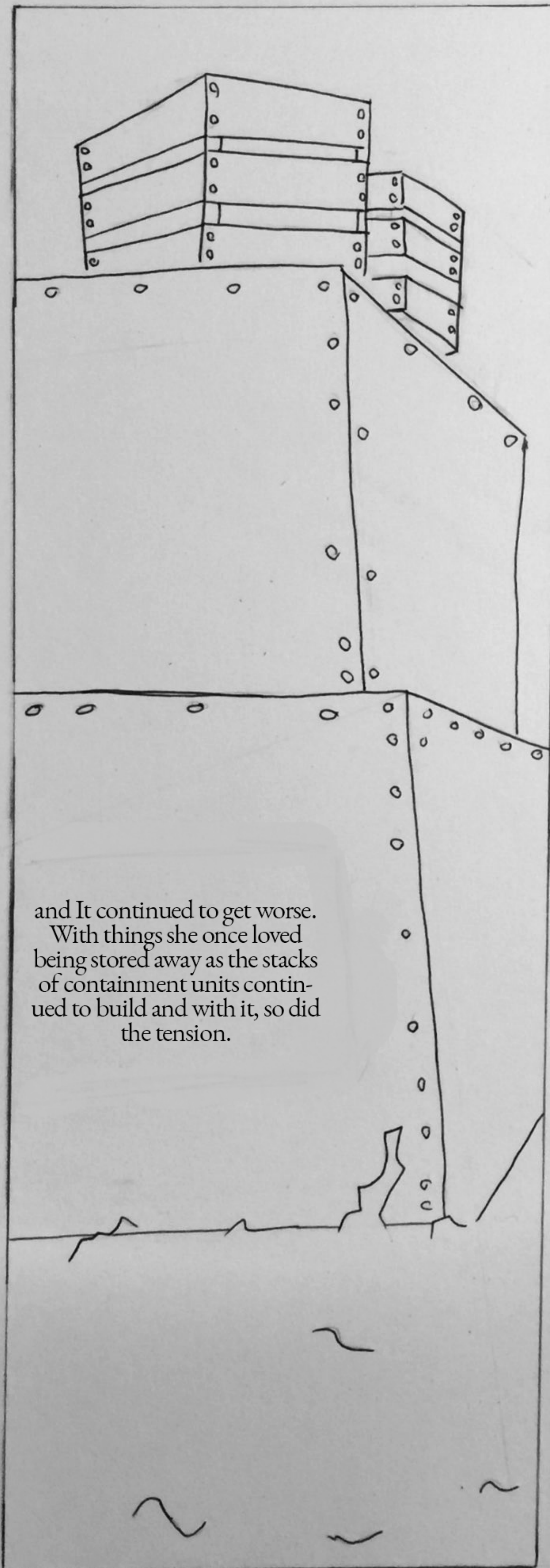
And she repaid me with scraps from their last feeding. Everything was simple



Until it wasn't anymore.

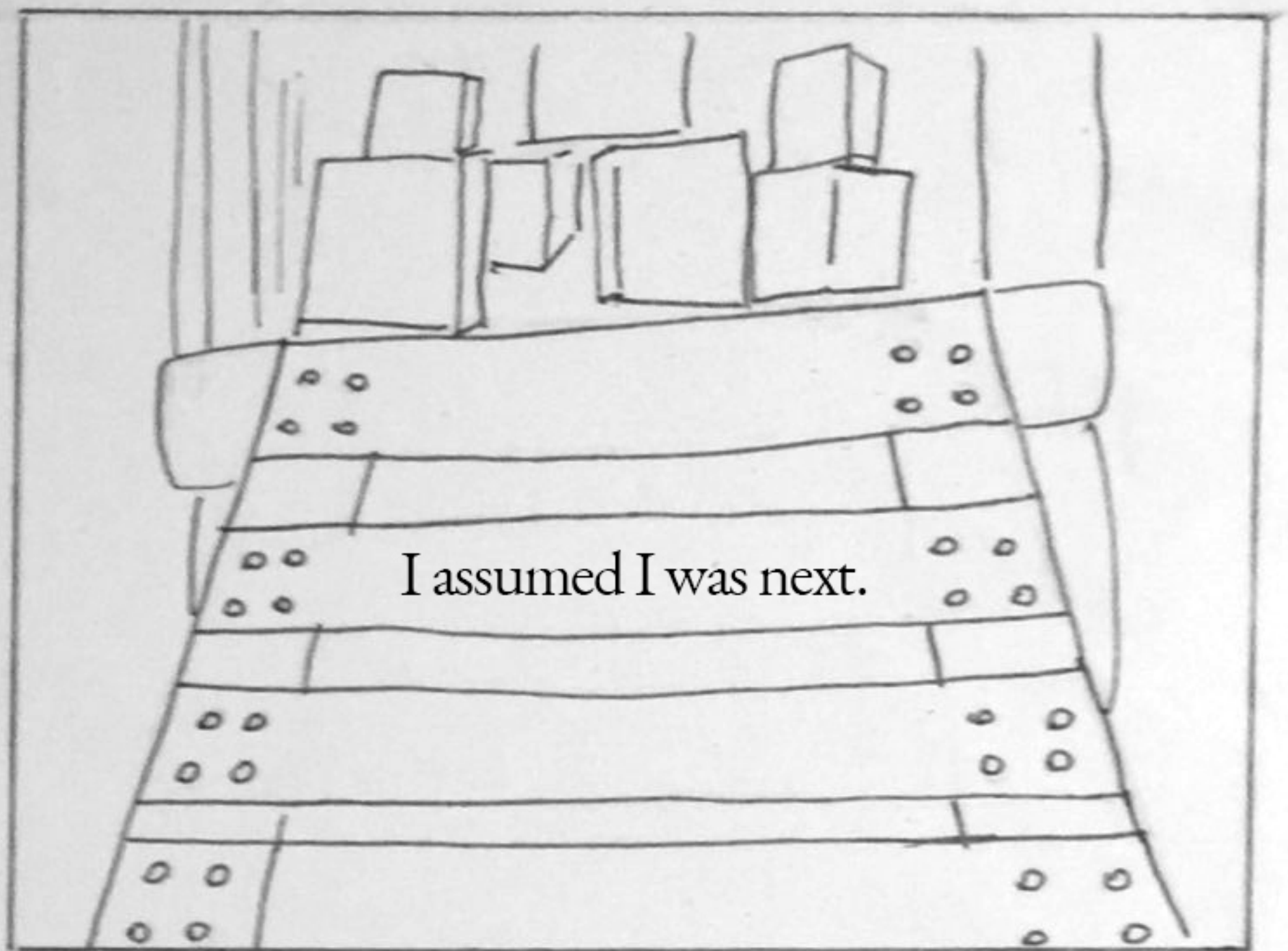


The rough ground under my feet felt rougher with the growing tension

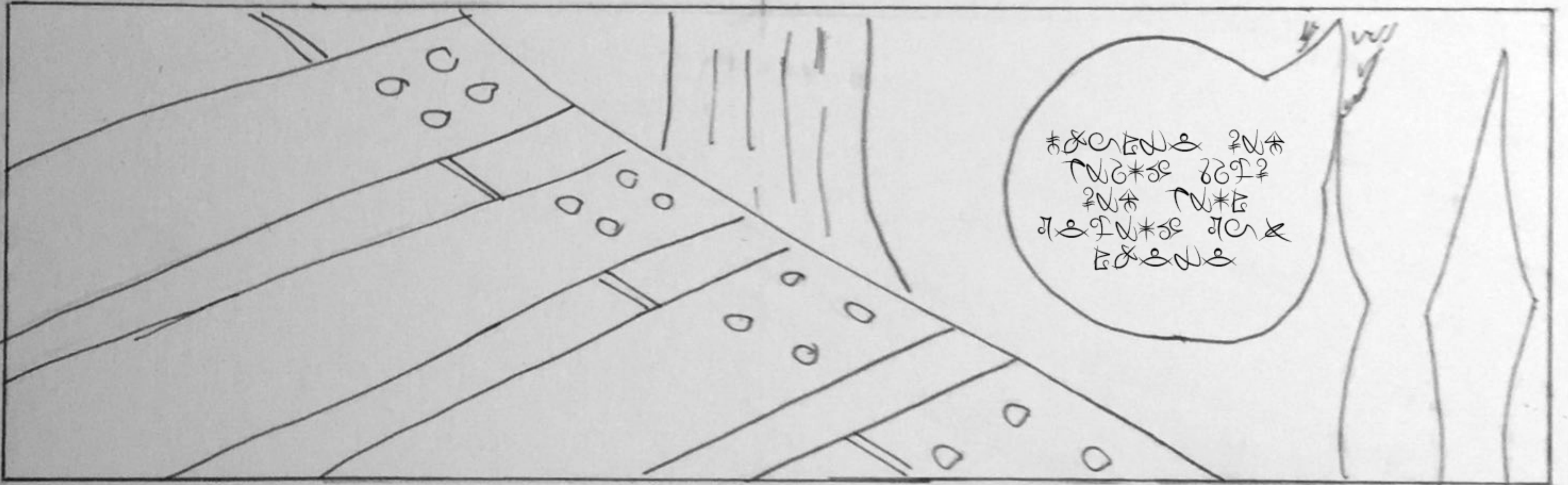




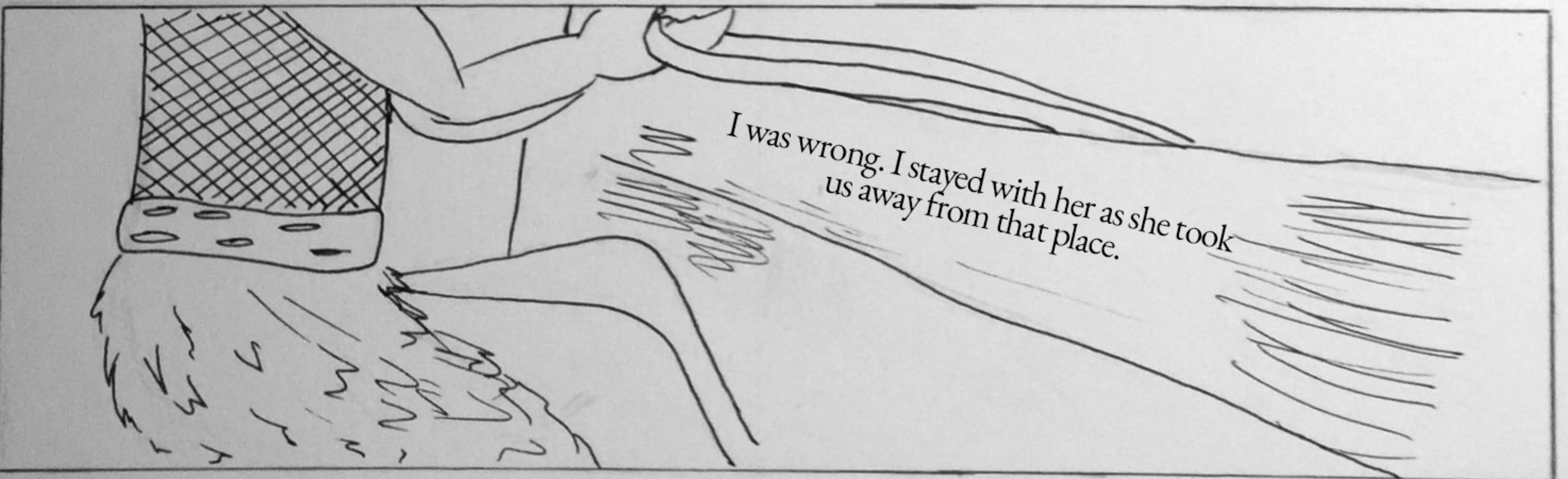
They started packing away the units after that.



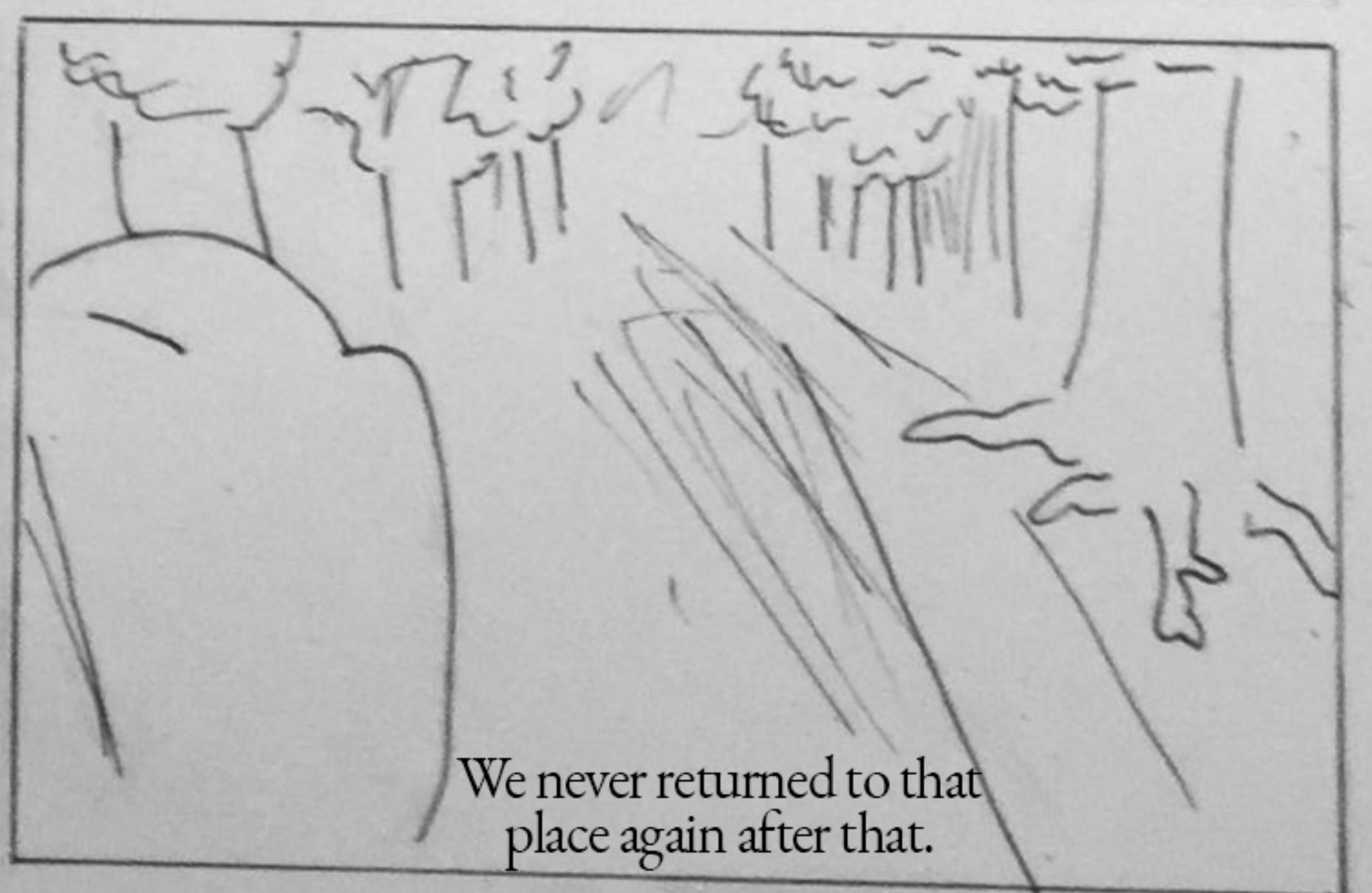
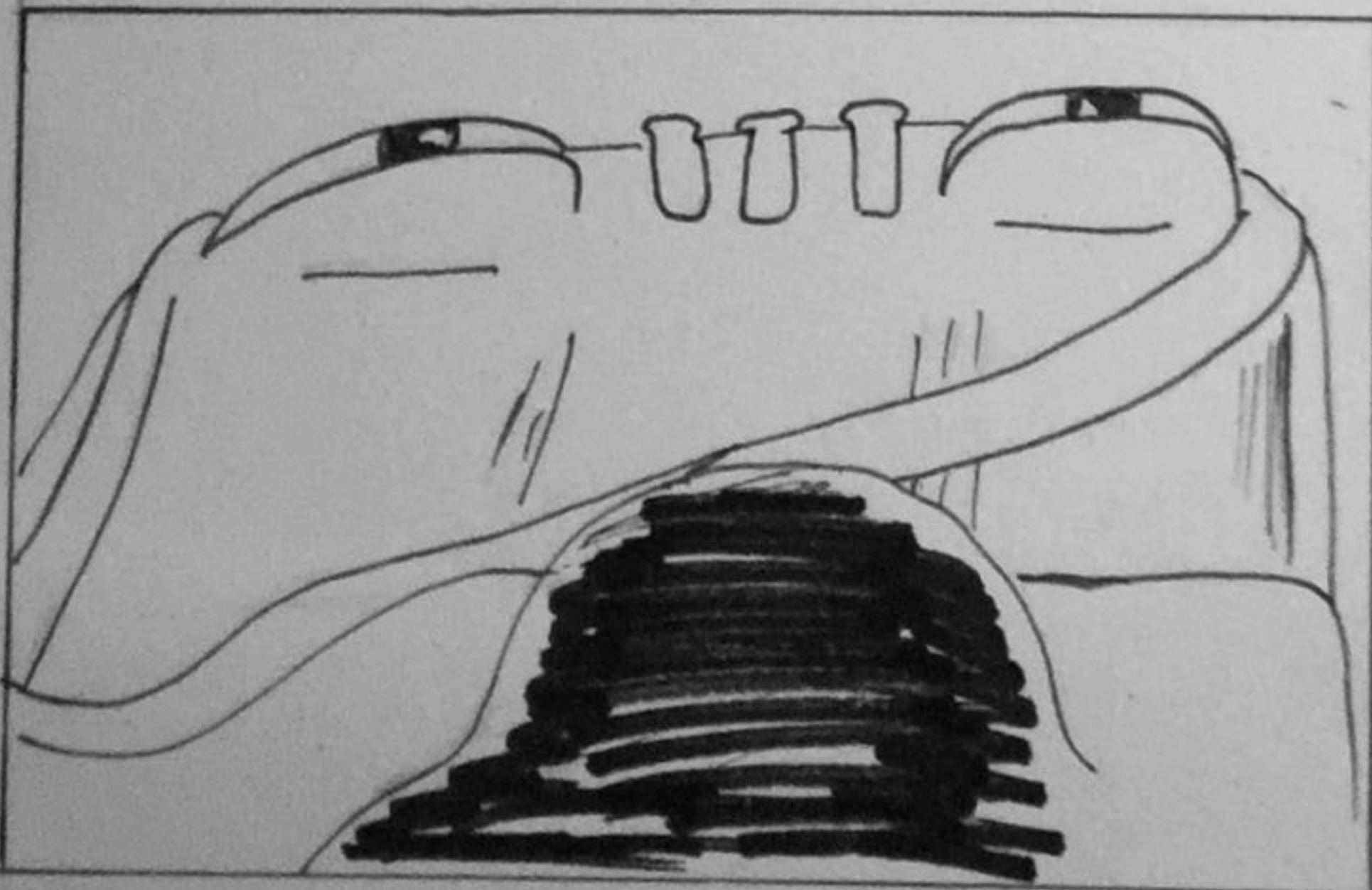
I assumed I was next.



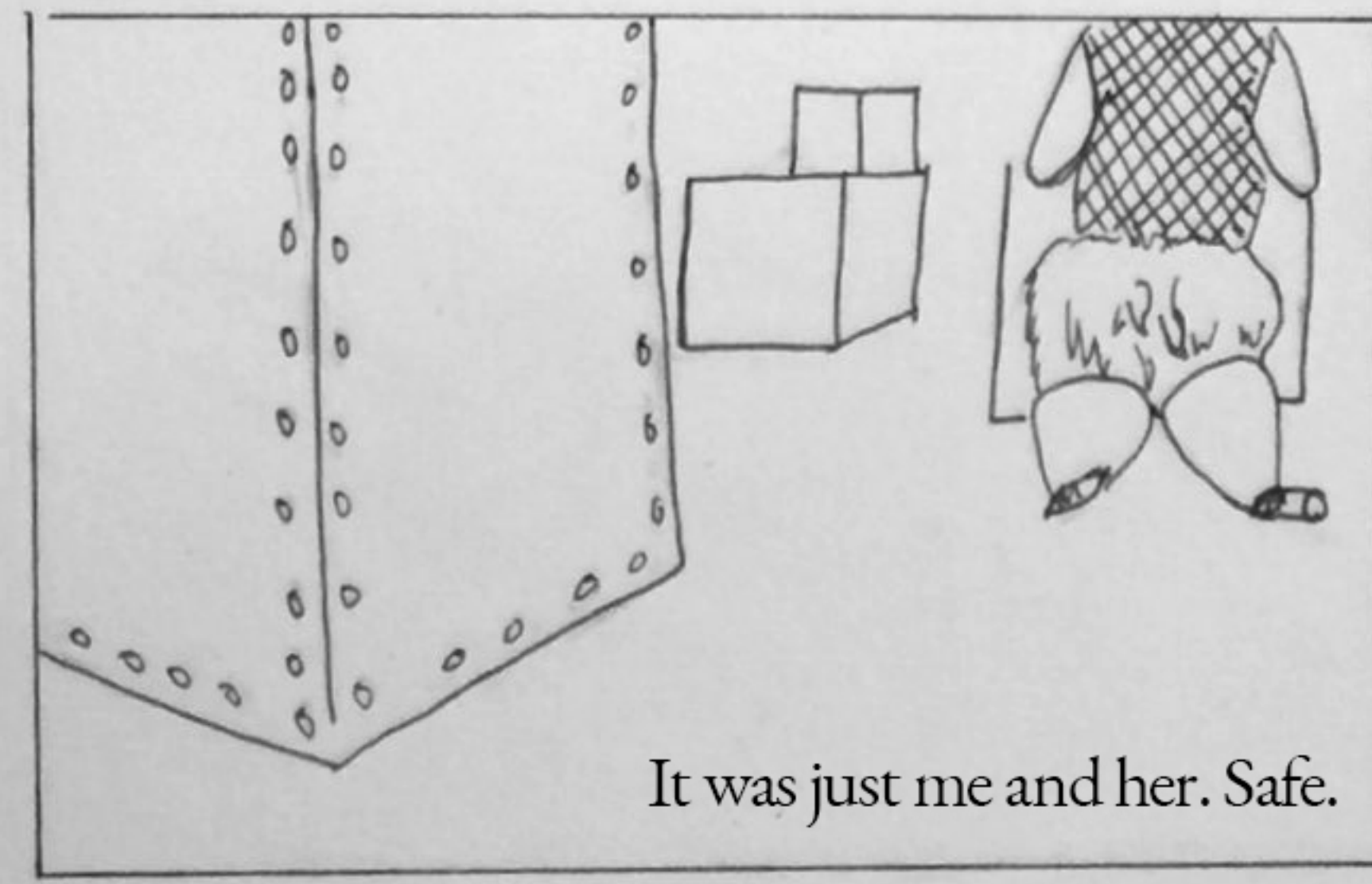
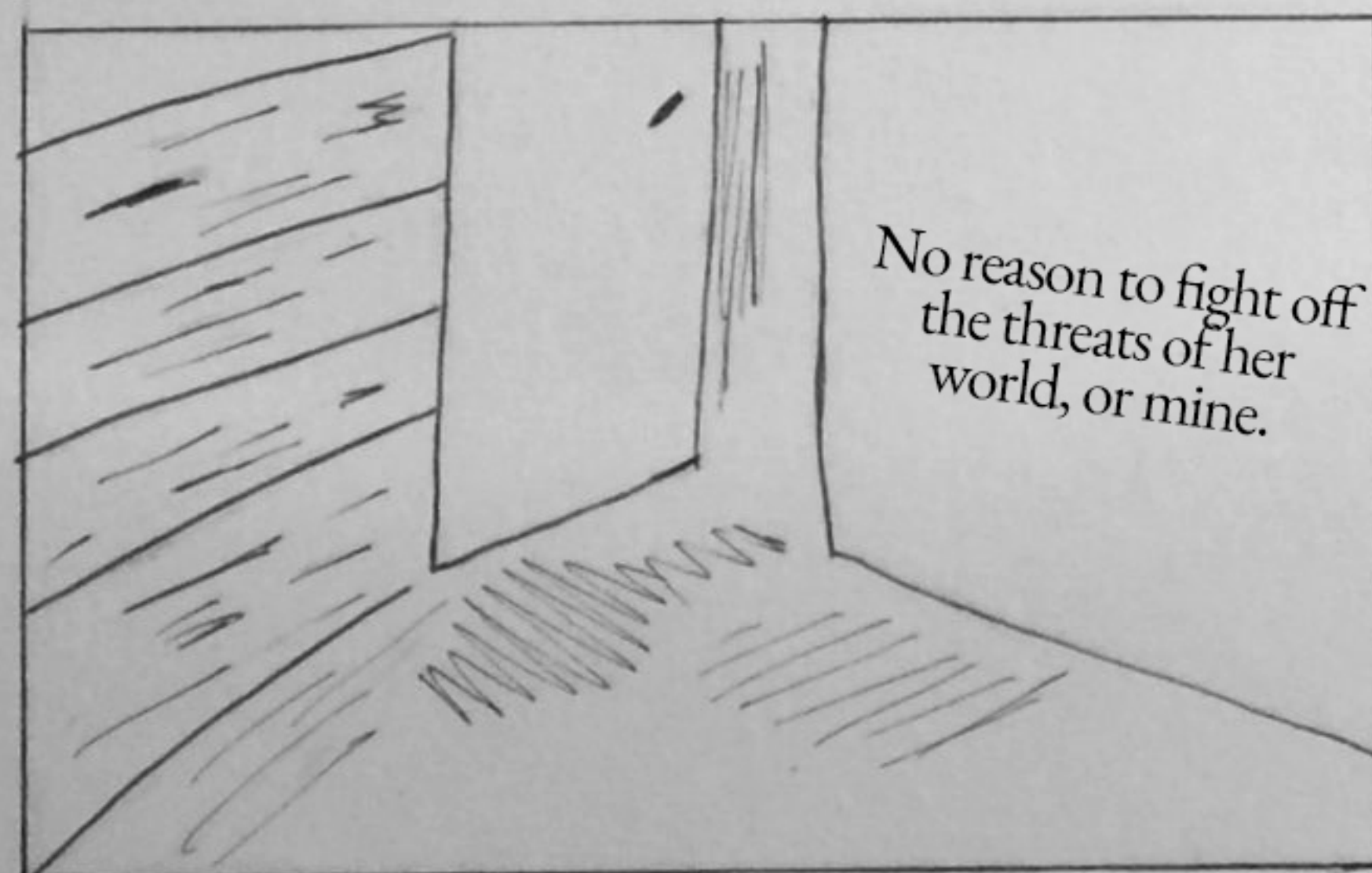
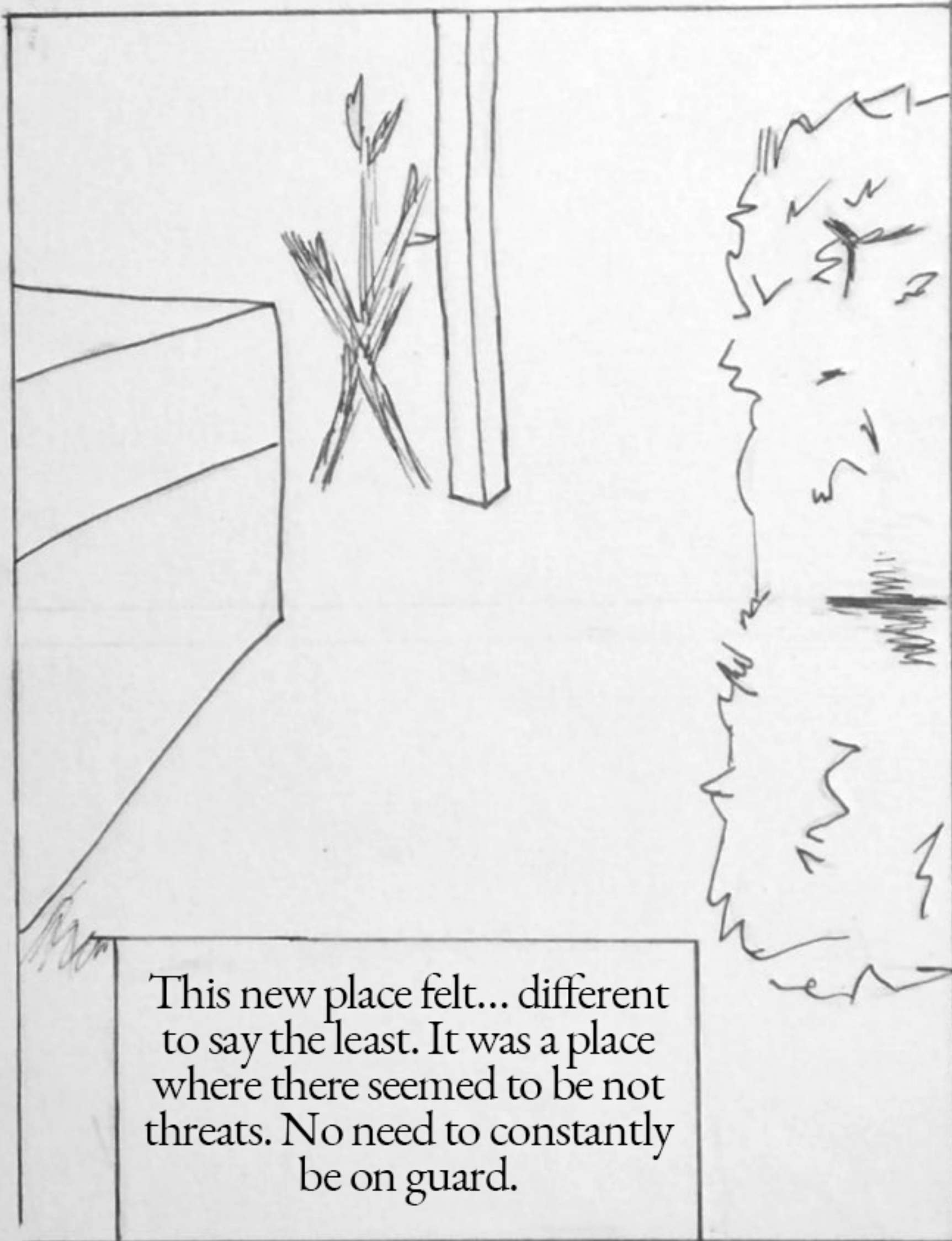
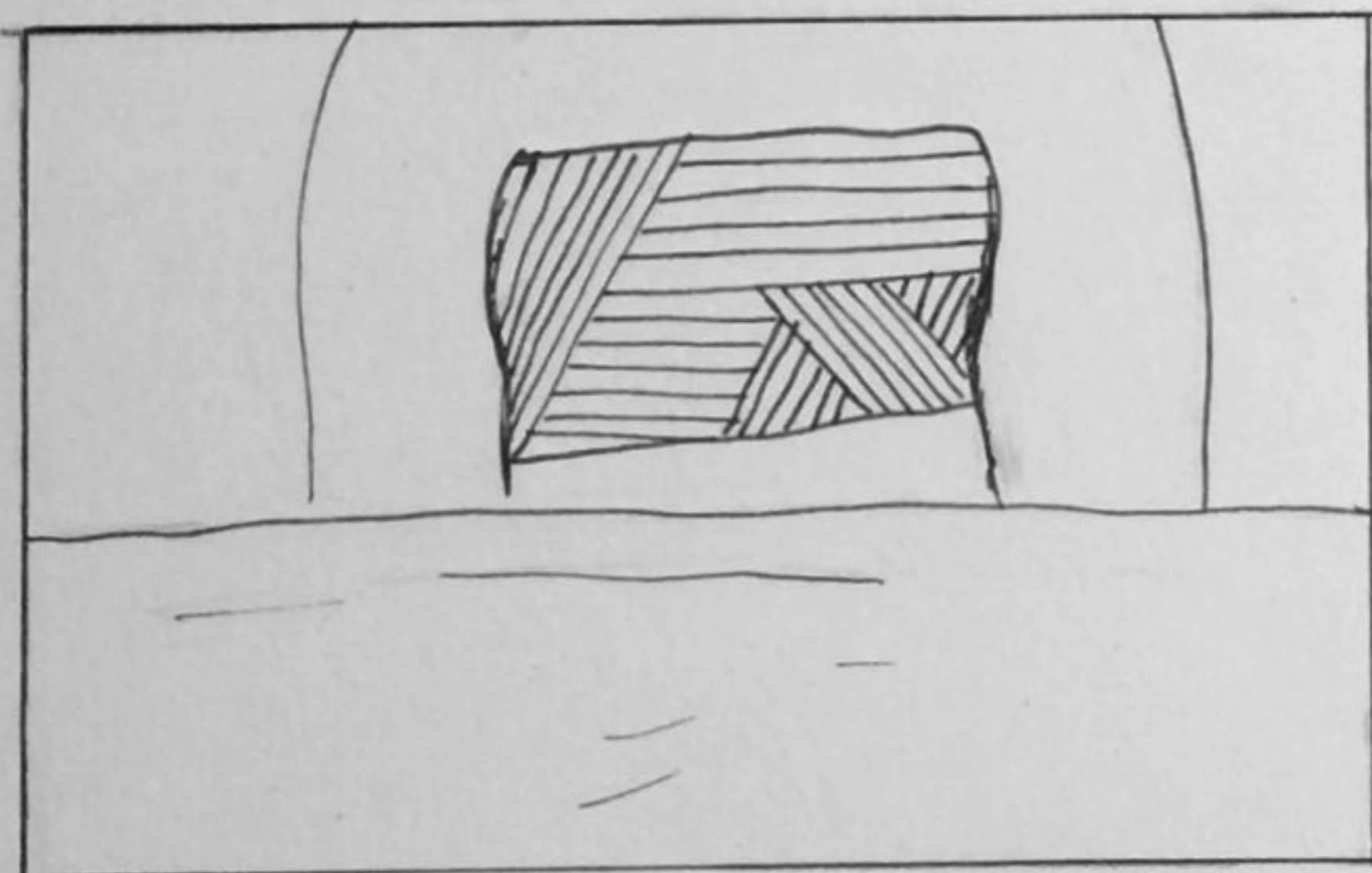
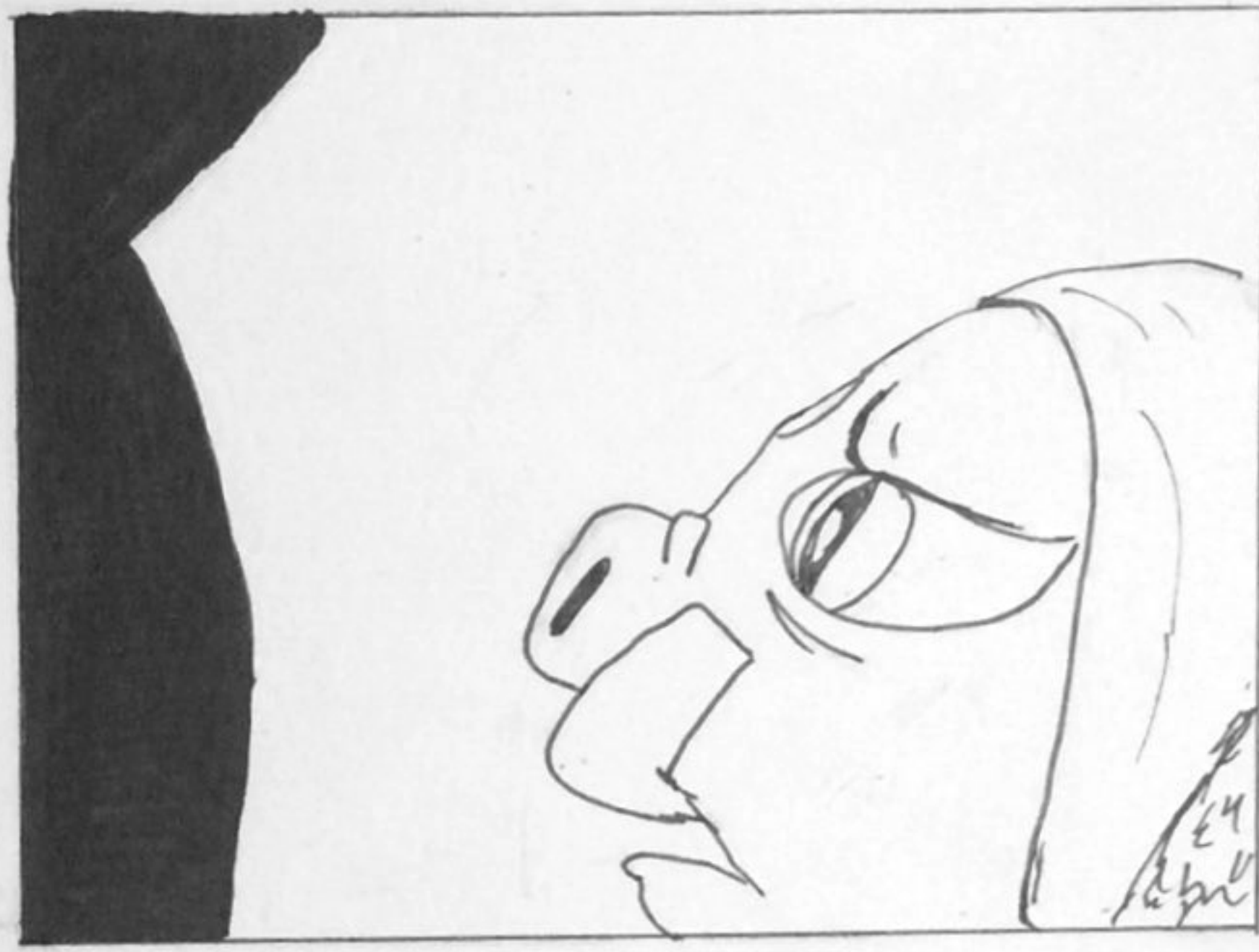
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ጥሪውን ለሰላም
ጥሪውን ለሰላም



I was wrong. I stayed with her as she took us away from that place.



We never returned to that place again after that.

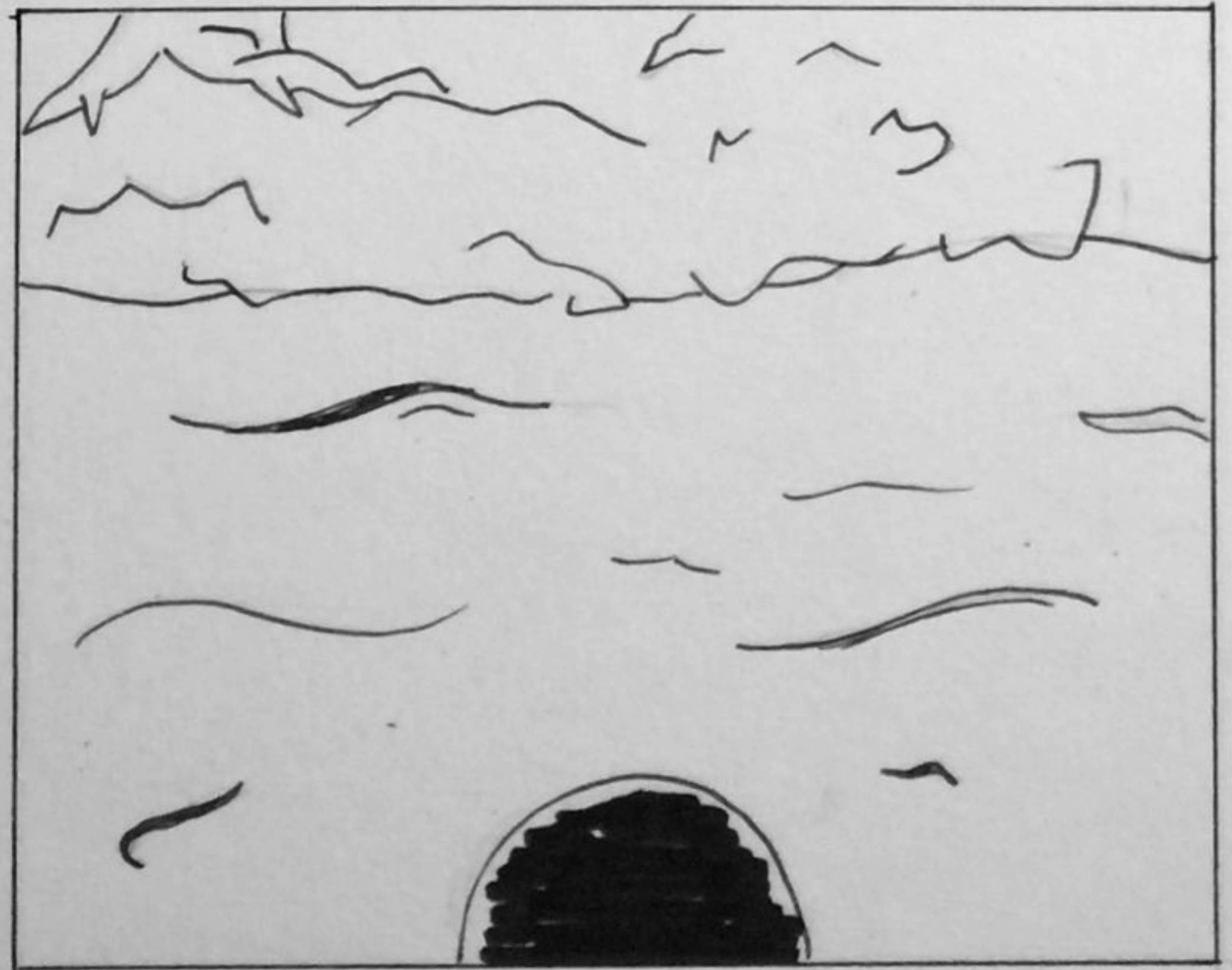
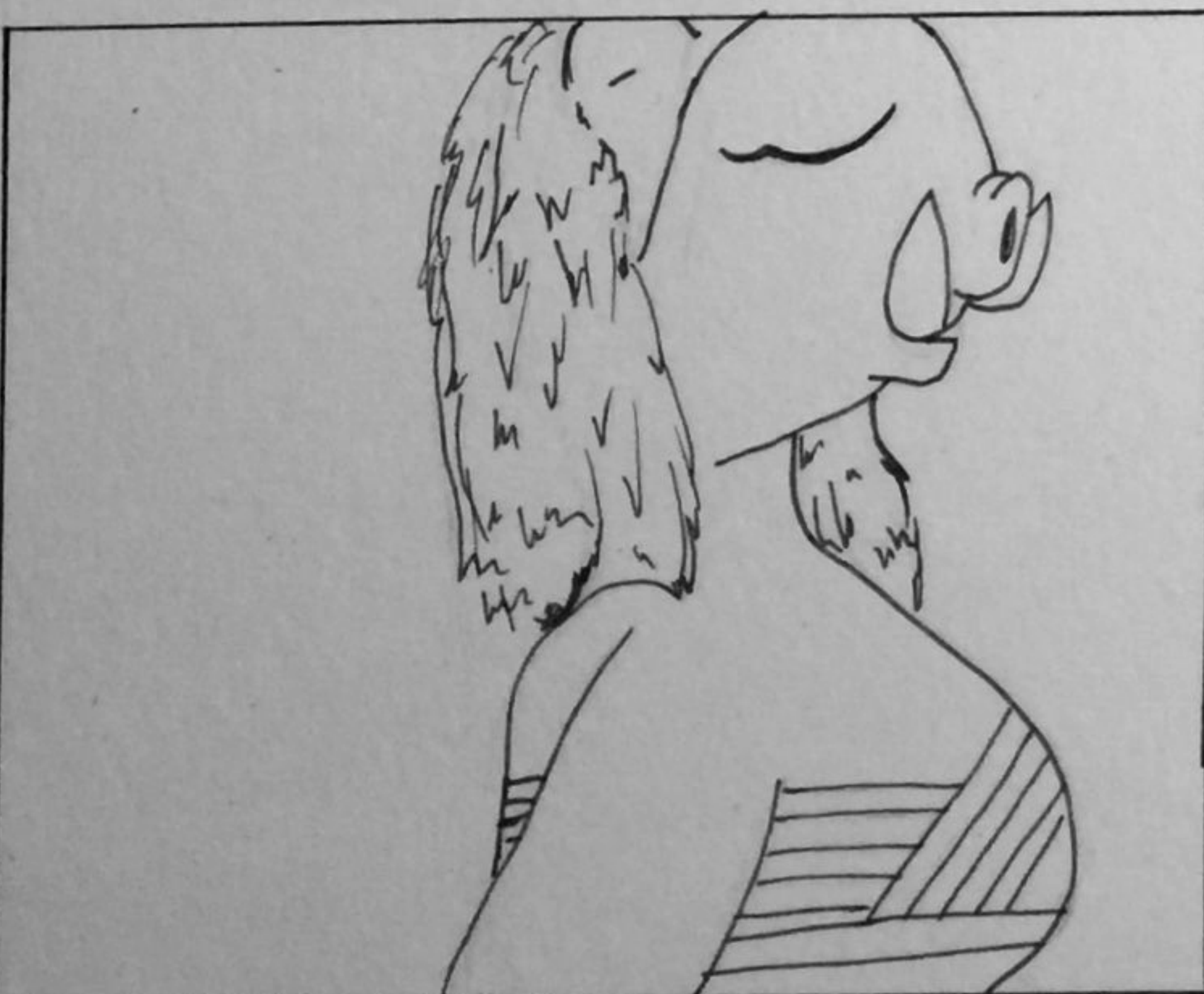
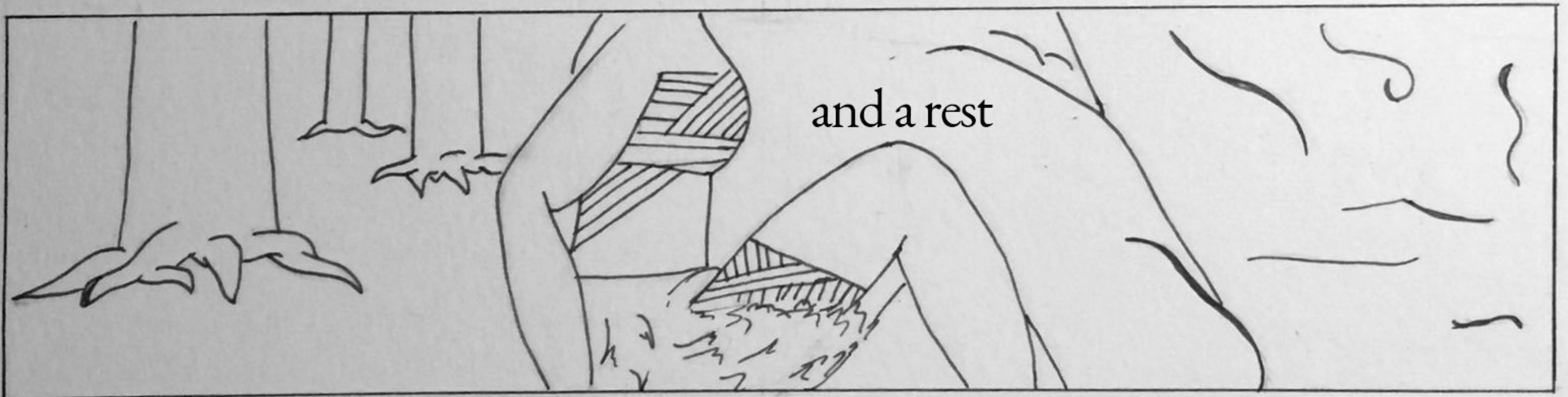
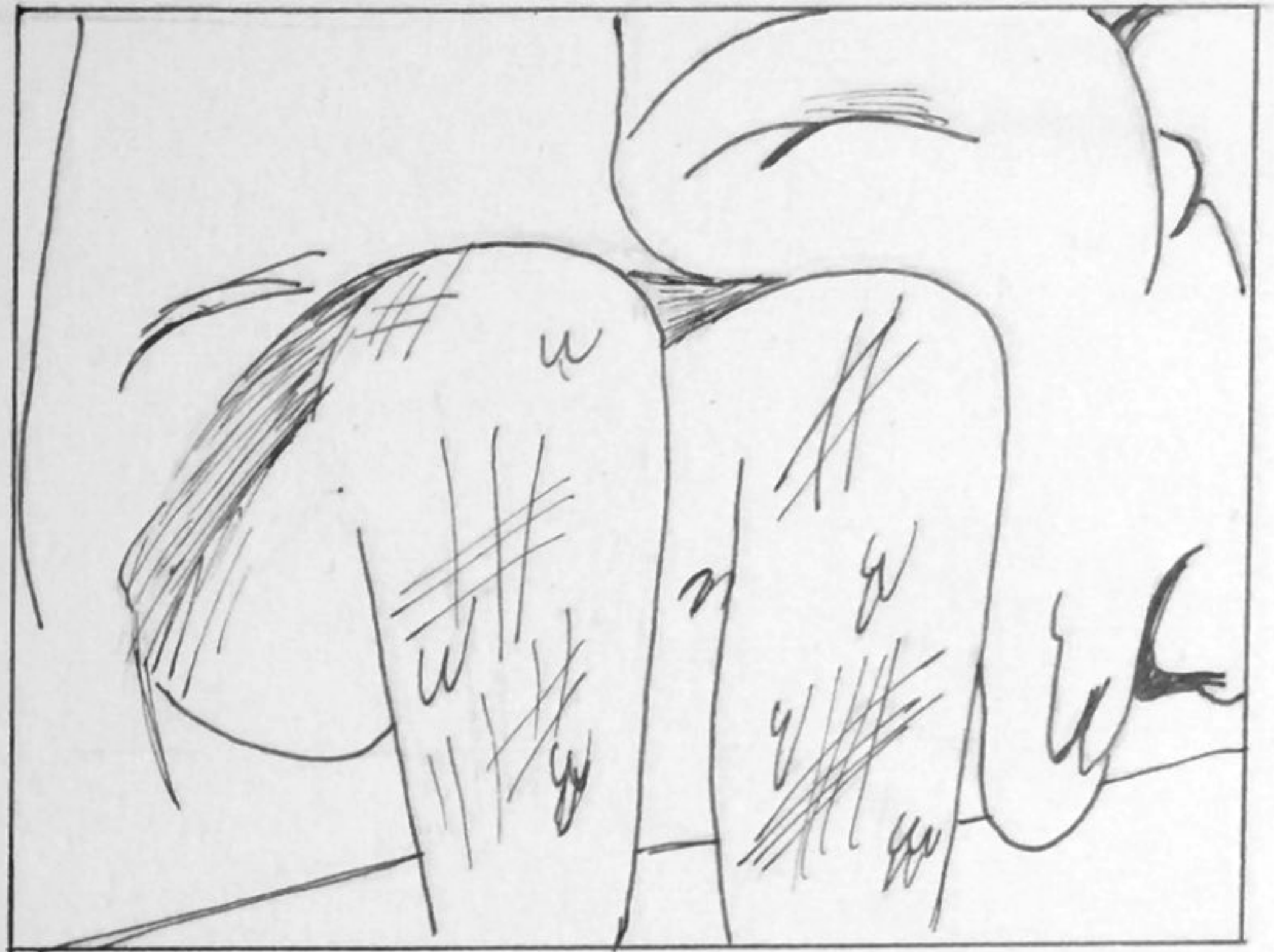
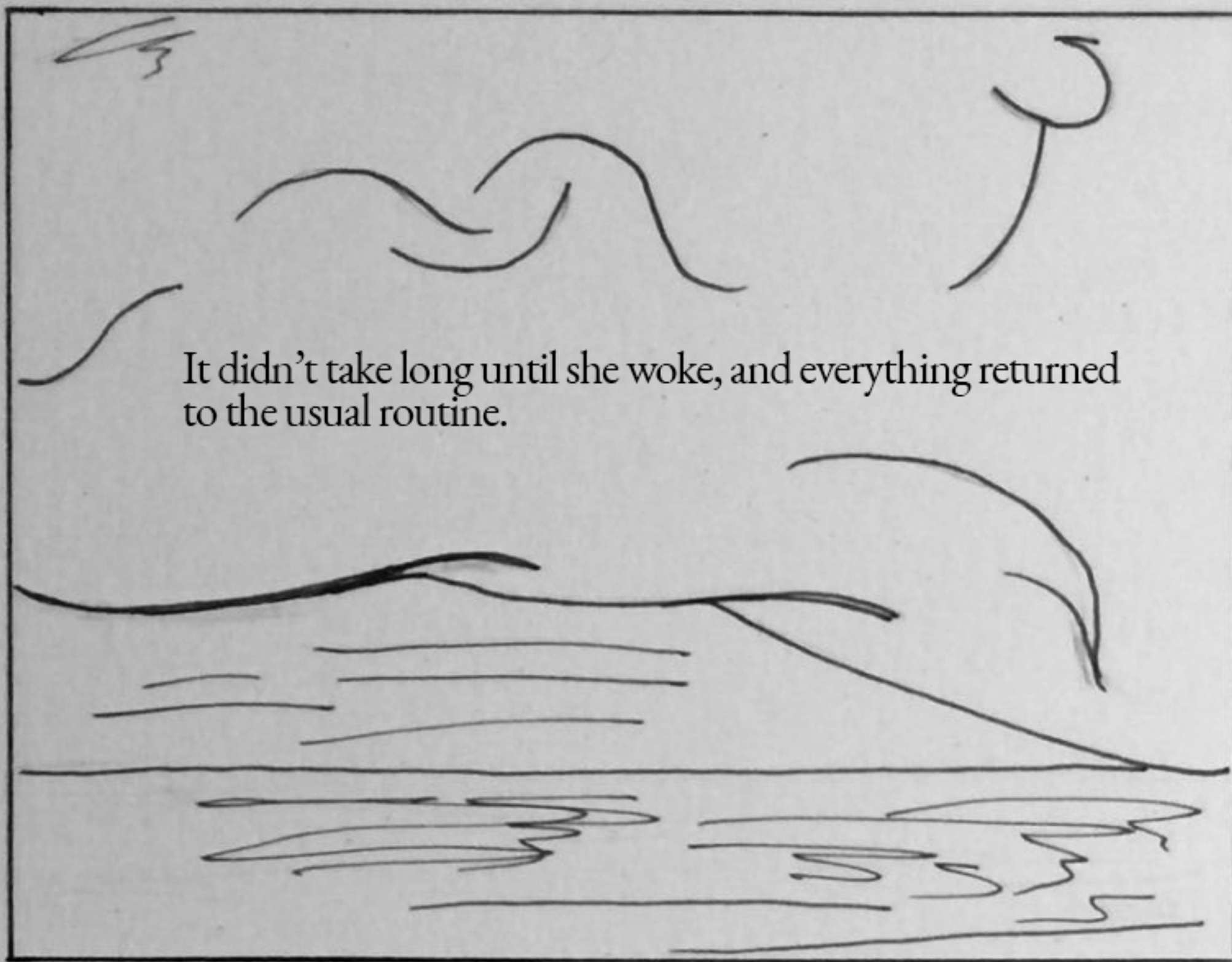


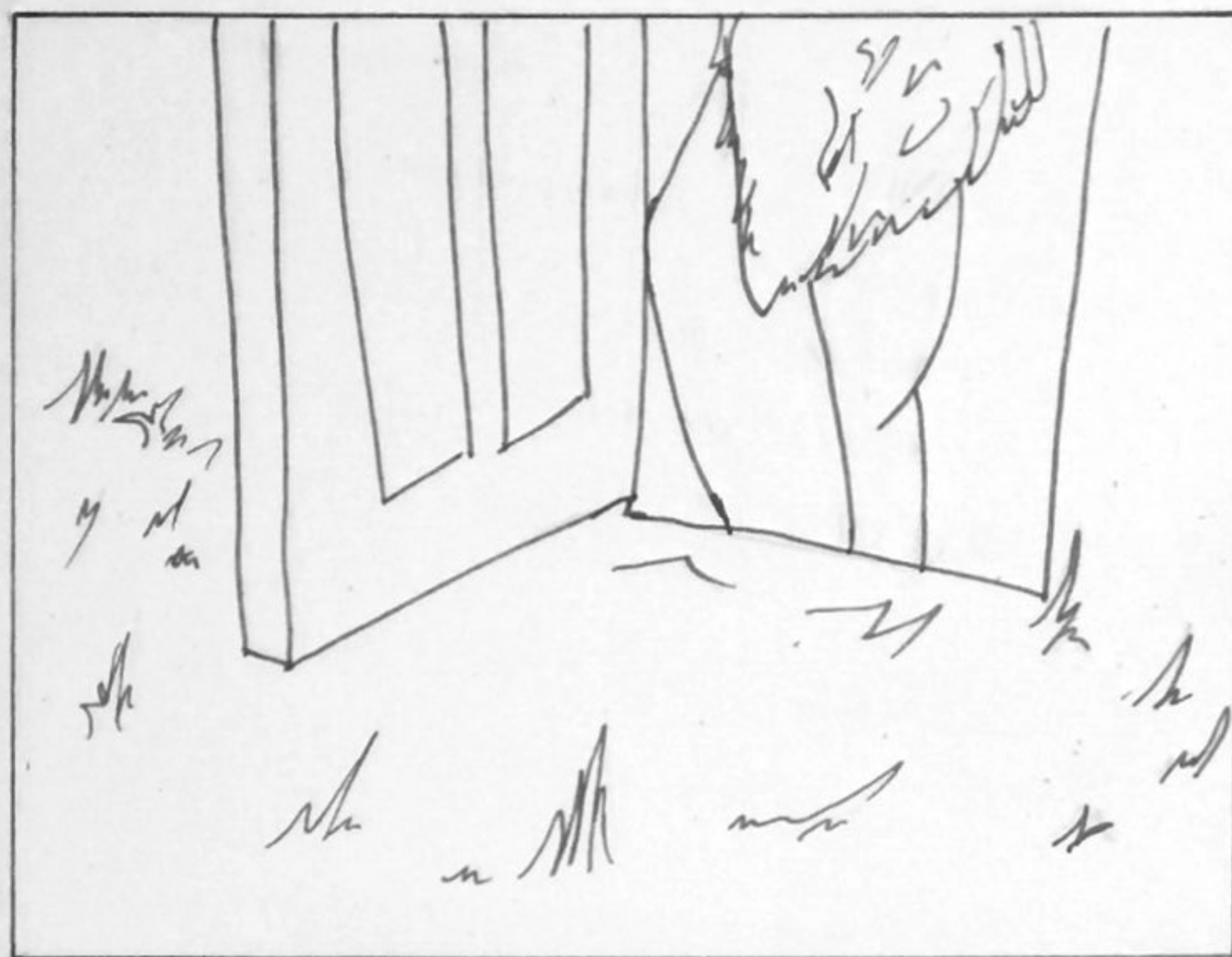
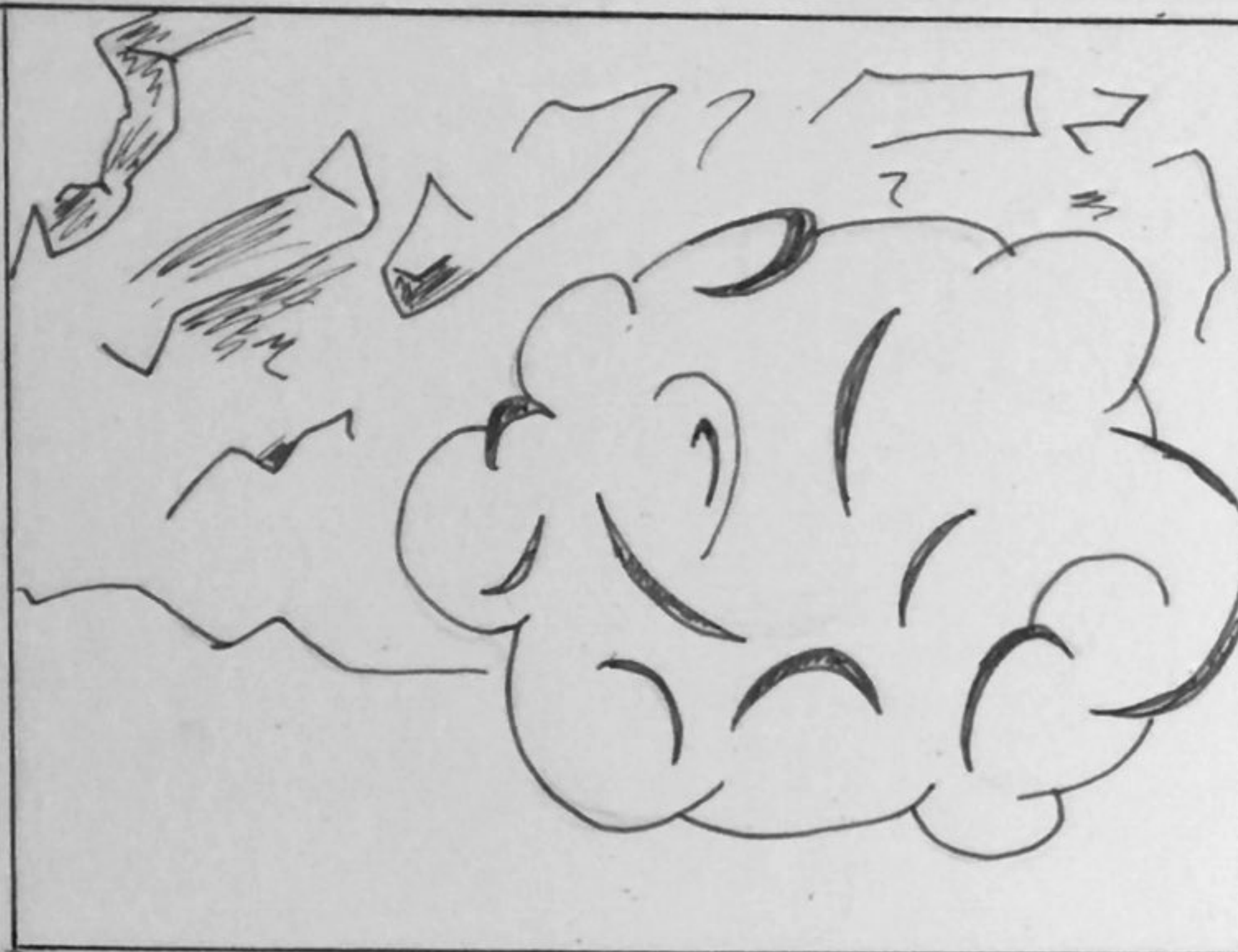
or at least that's what I believed until that night, when the most devilish sound filled our new dwelling. A threat to this peace. A threat... to her.

It was my job to protect her during the night. And that's what I was going to do.

It seems like whatever I tried didn't work. So I resorted to plan B. Get to her before it did.

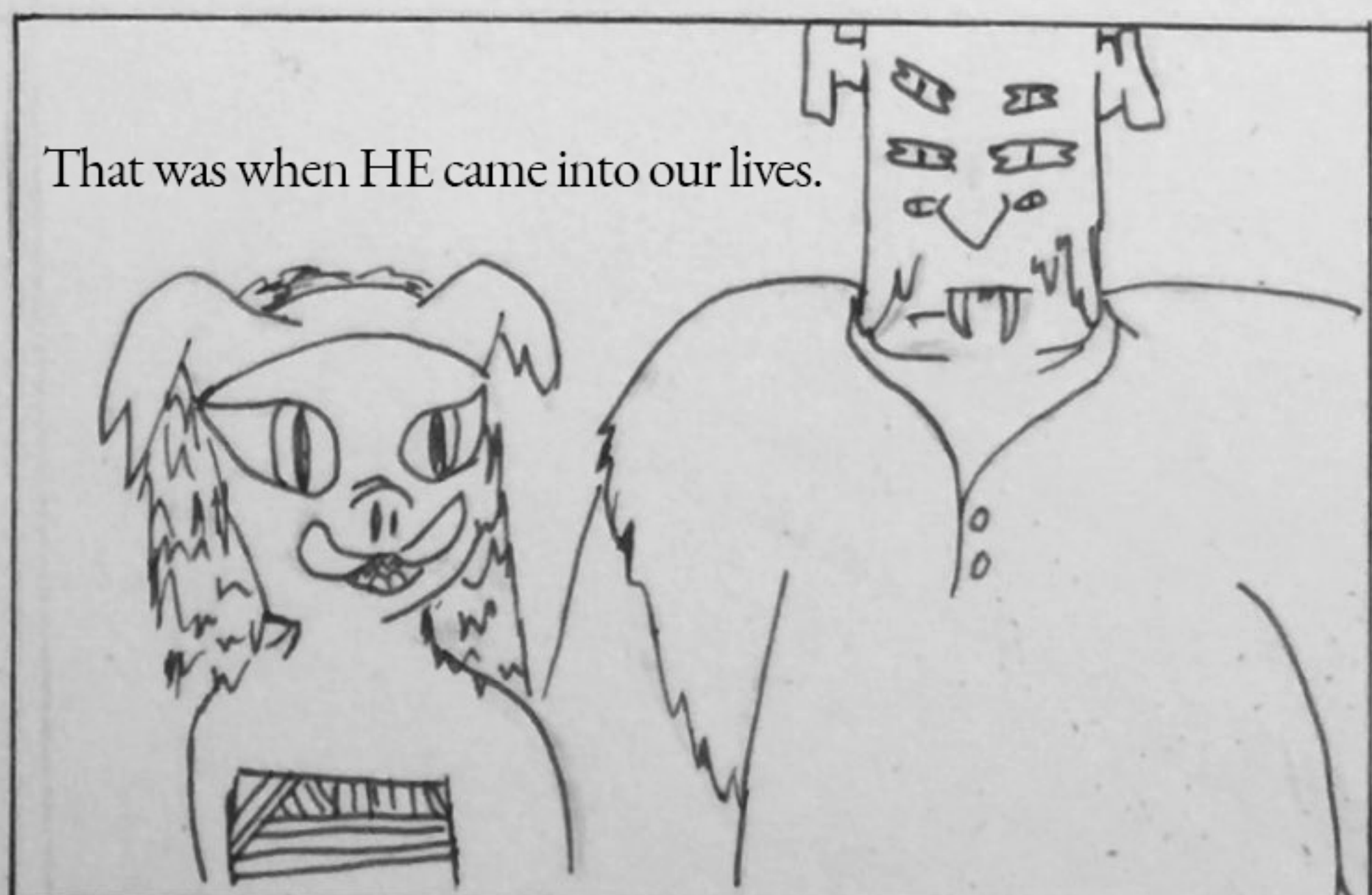
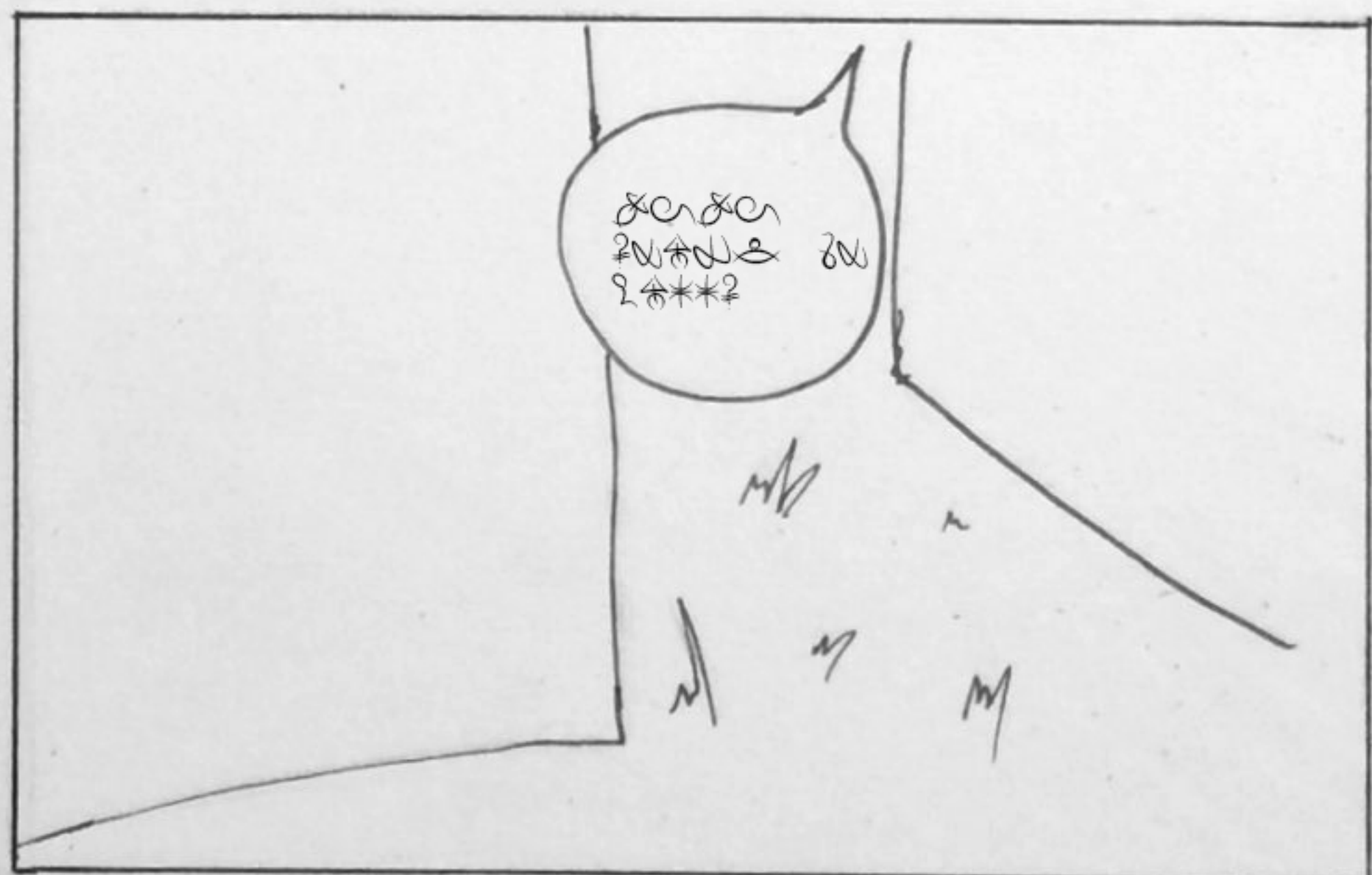
When I arrived she was still asleep, still safe. But I still stayed until morning. Like I had promised to do long before coming here.



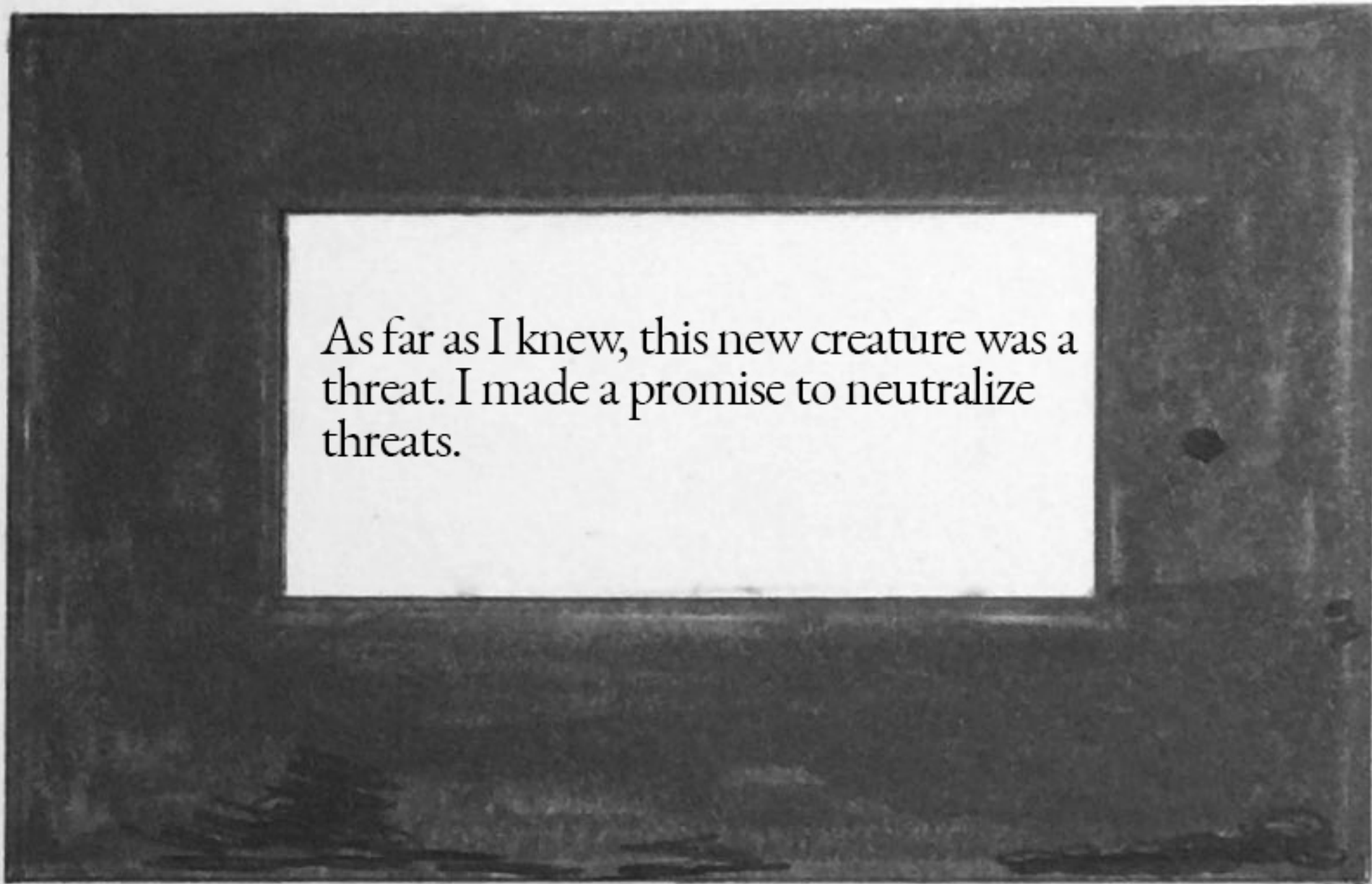
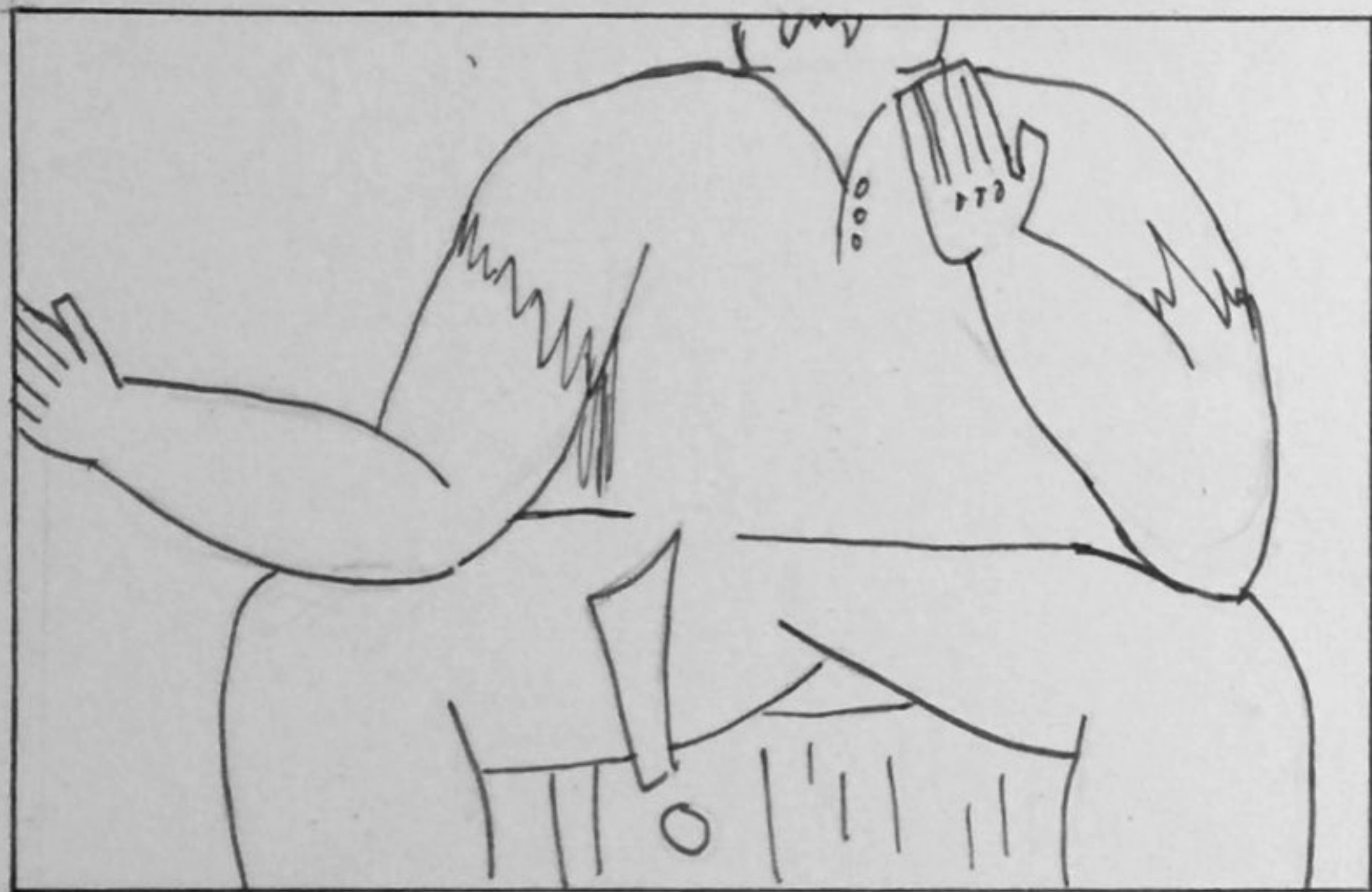
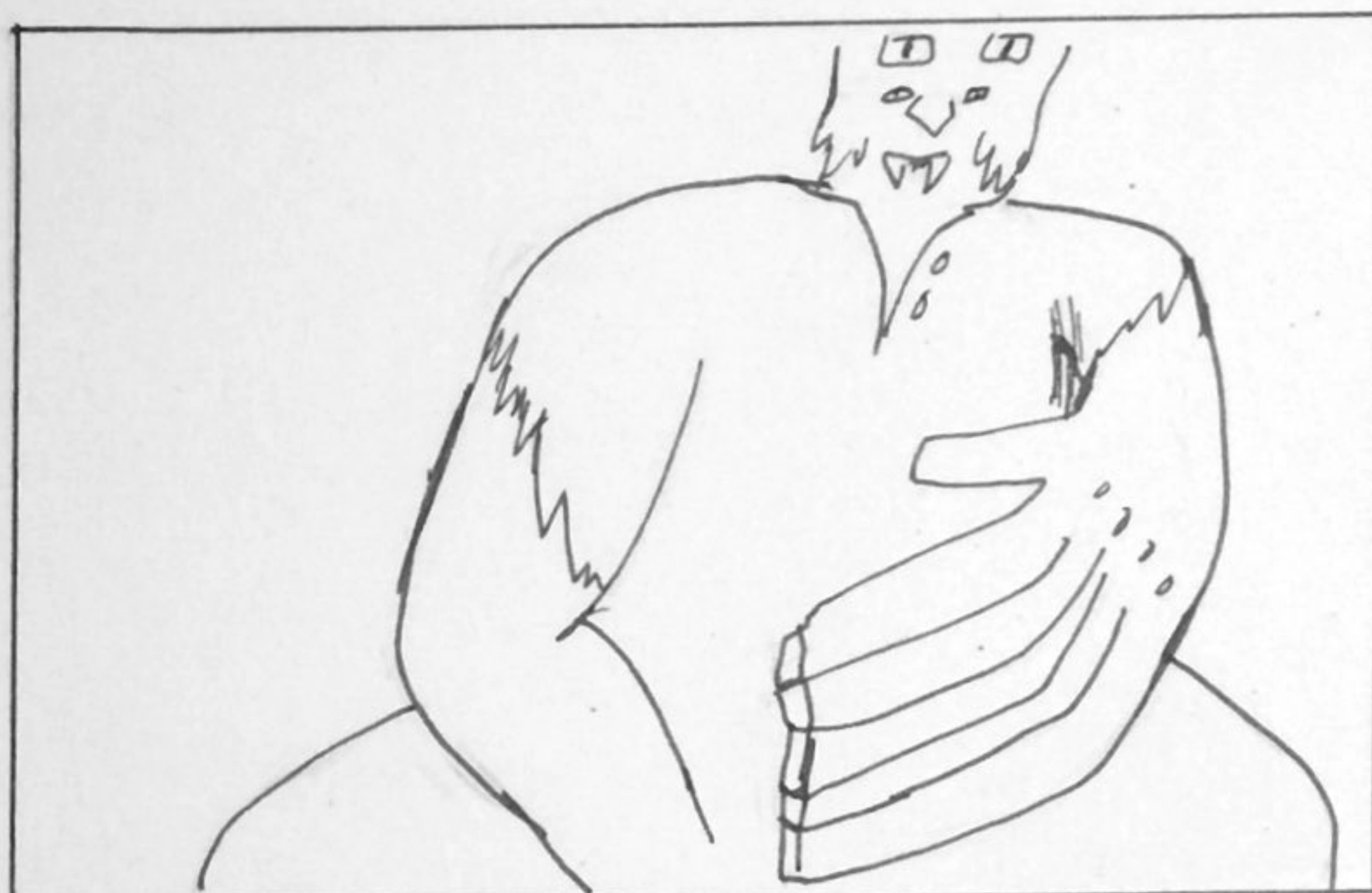


Everything was at peace. A calm and serene home where the two of us remained a constant.

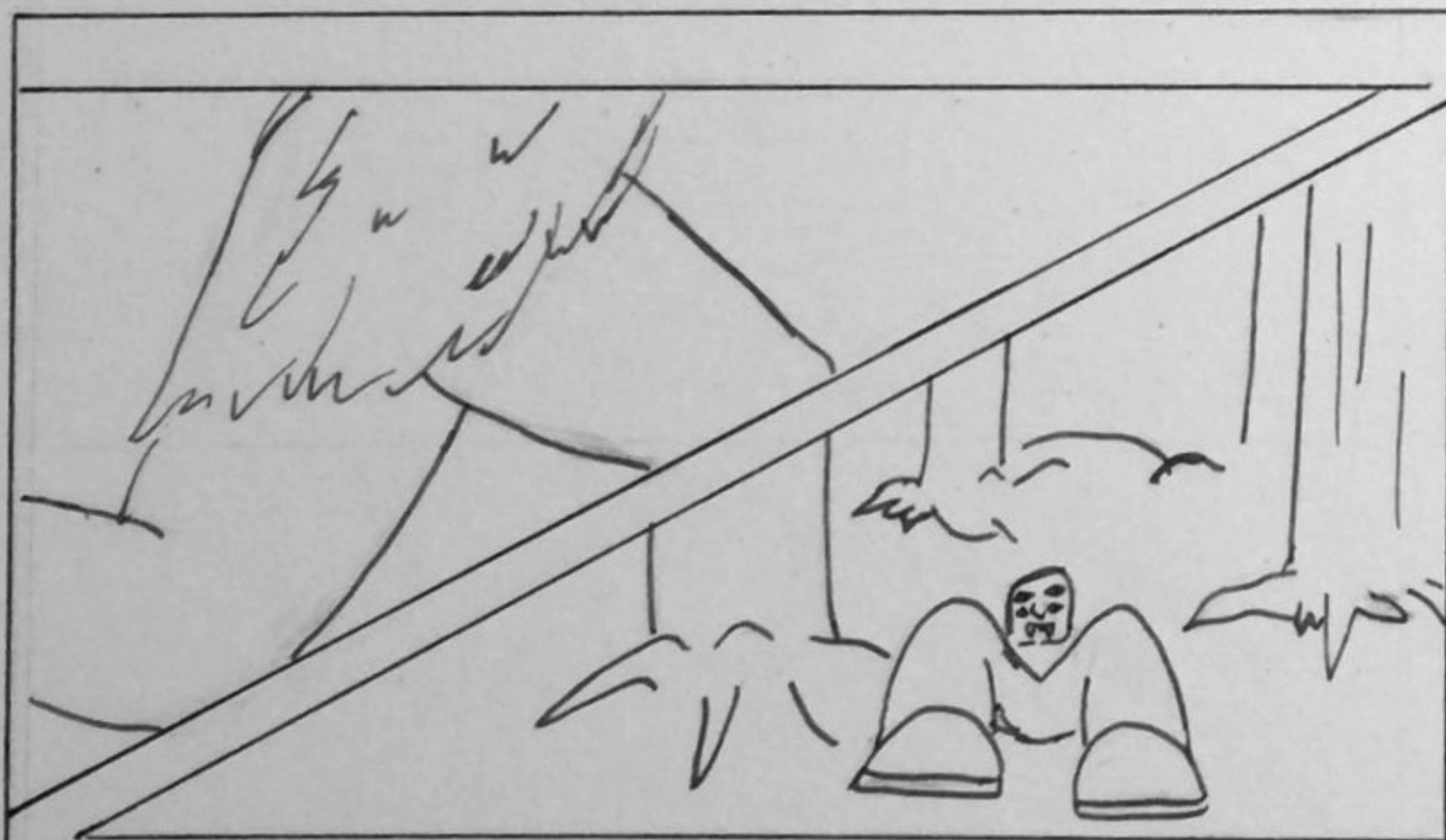
All of it in perfect balance and harmony...
Until something decided to tip the scales



That was when HE came into our lives.



As far as I knew, this new creature was a threat. I made a promise to neutralize threats.



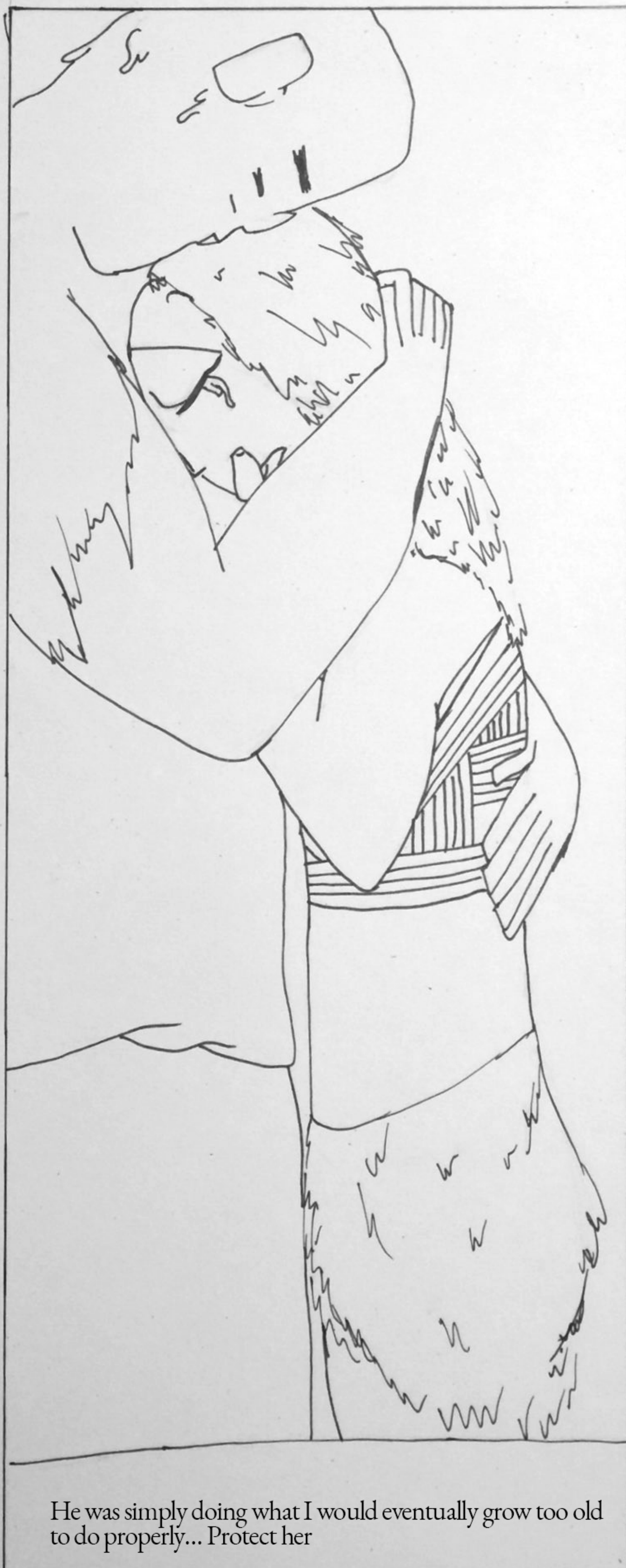
But it seemed very time I reacted violently, she was displeased. So I had to get clever.

Finding small ways to keep him farther away from her. Away from me.

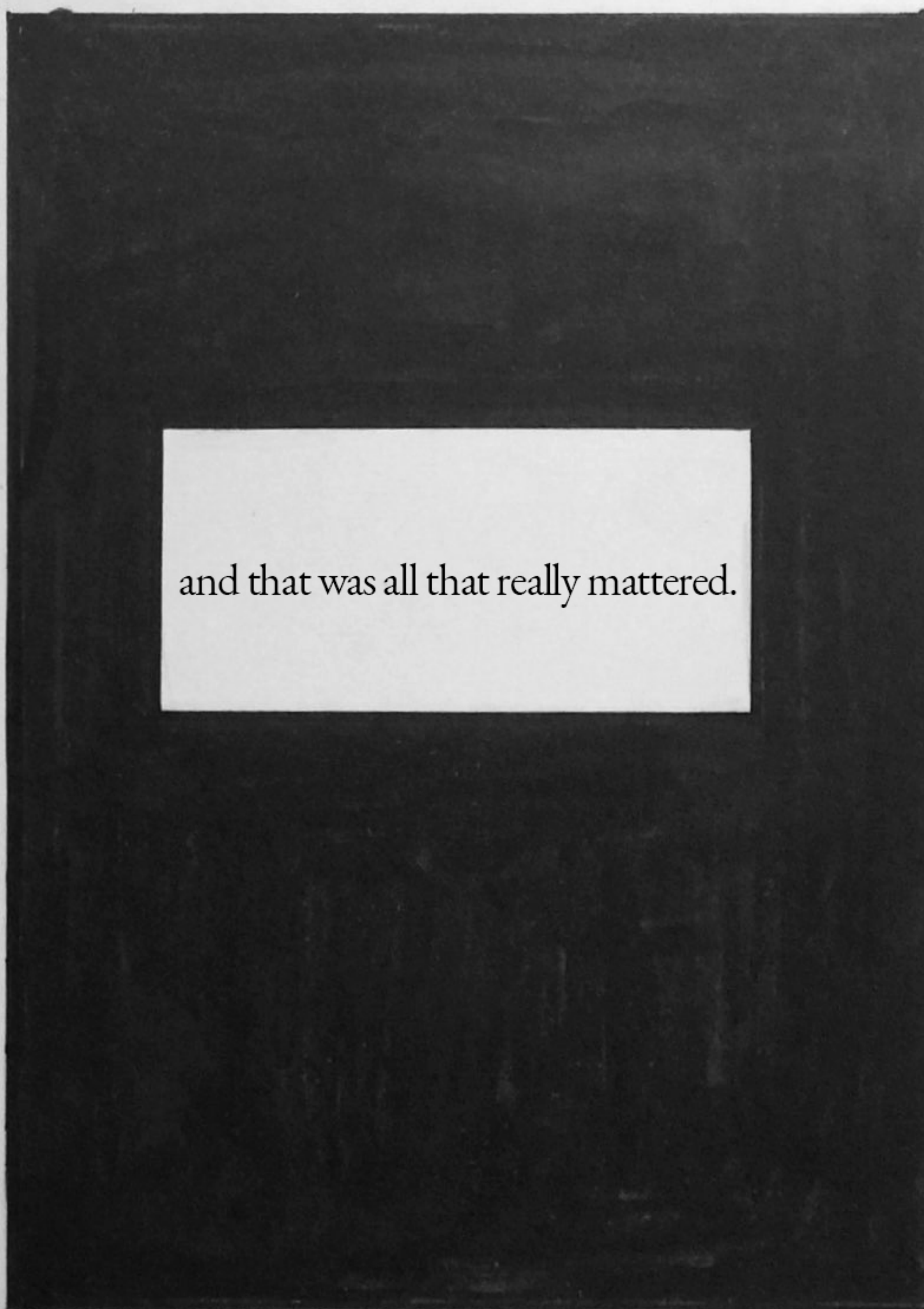
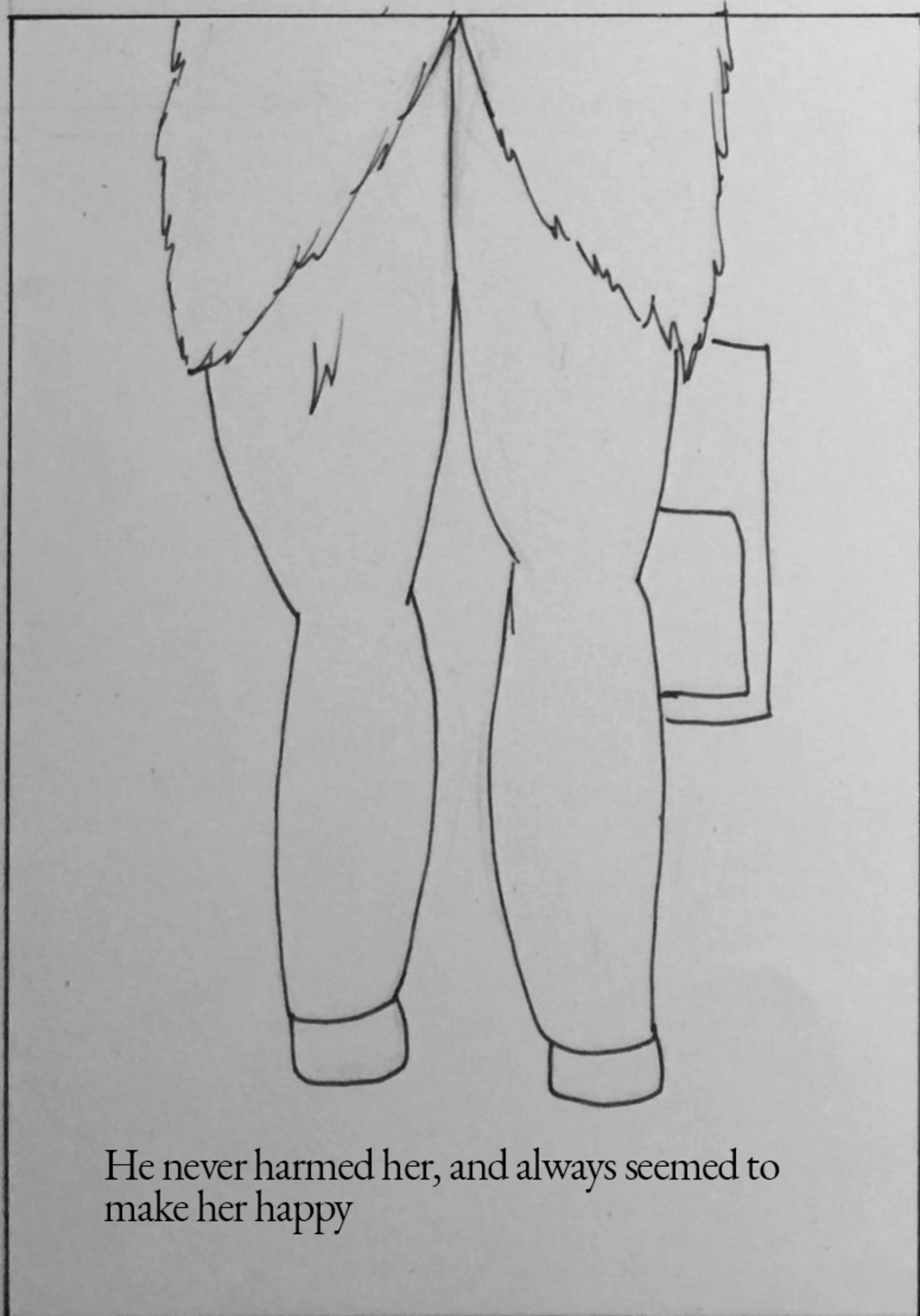
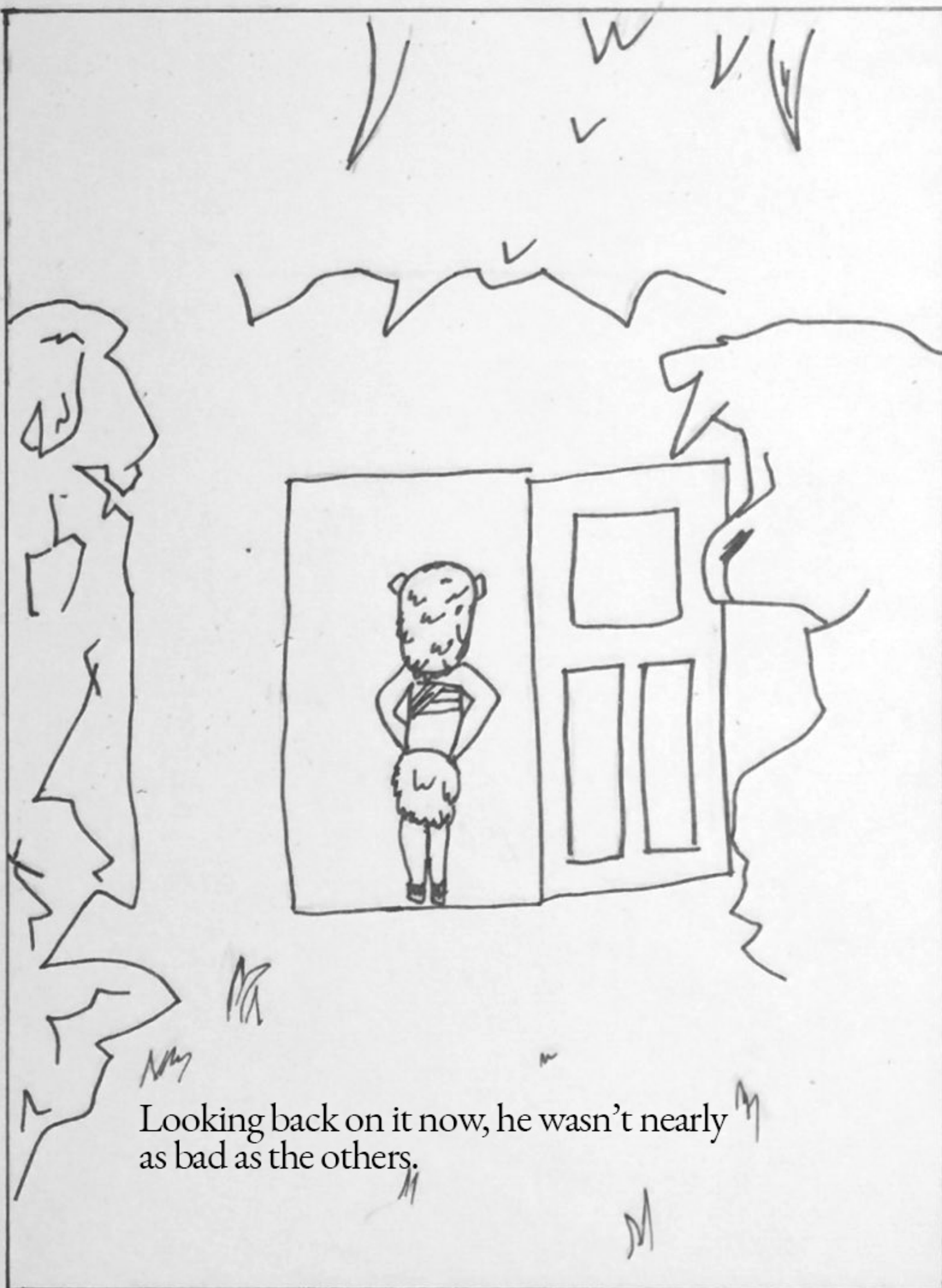


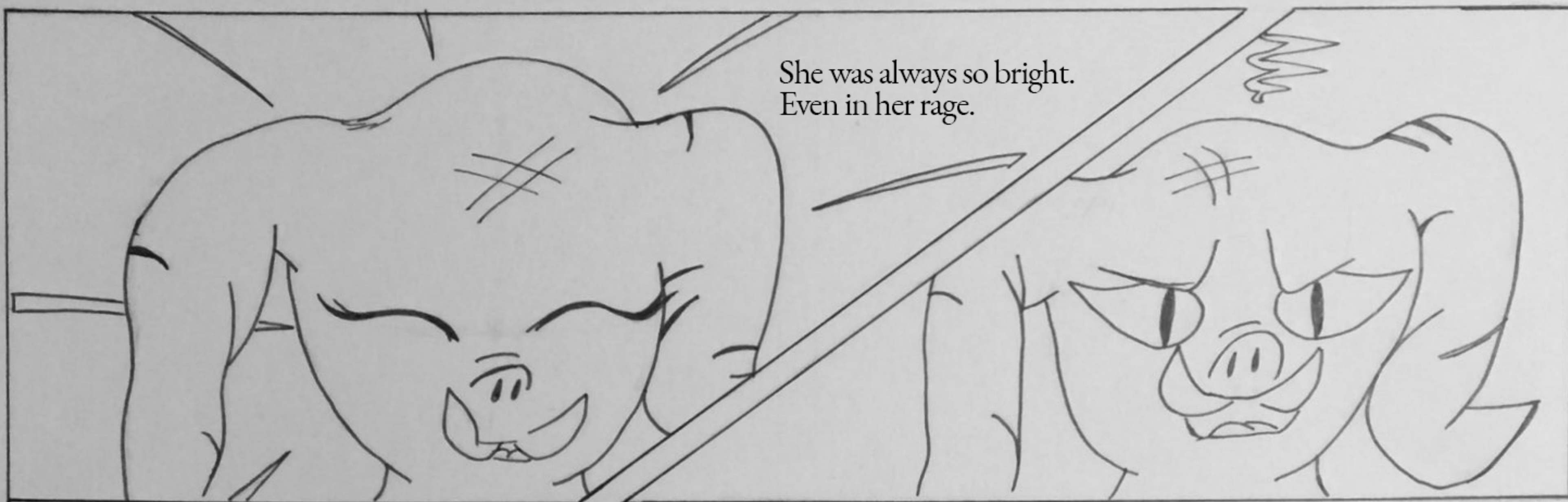


Looking back on it now in my old age, I regret not accepting him sooner. I didn't realize until too late that he wasn't a threat to me or her.

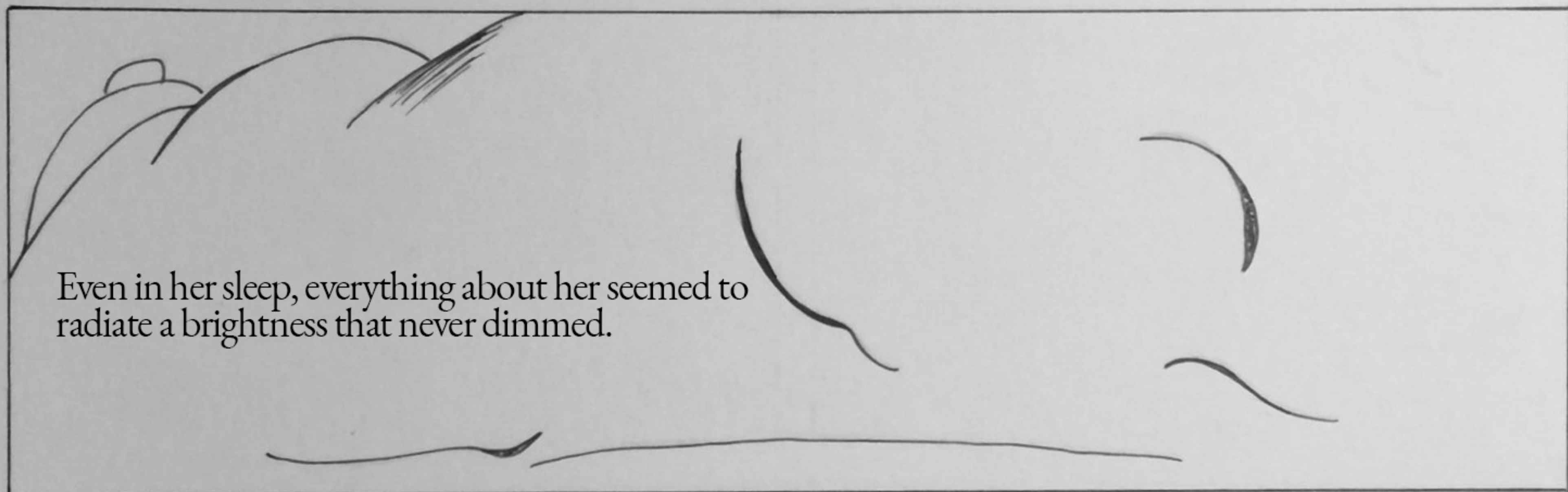


He was simply doing what I would eventually grow too old to do properly... Protect her

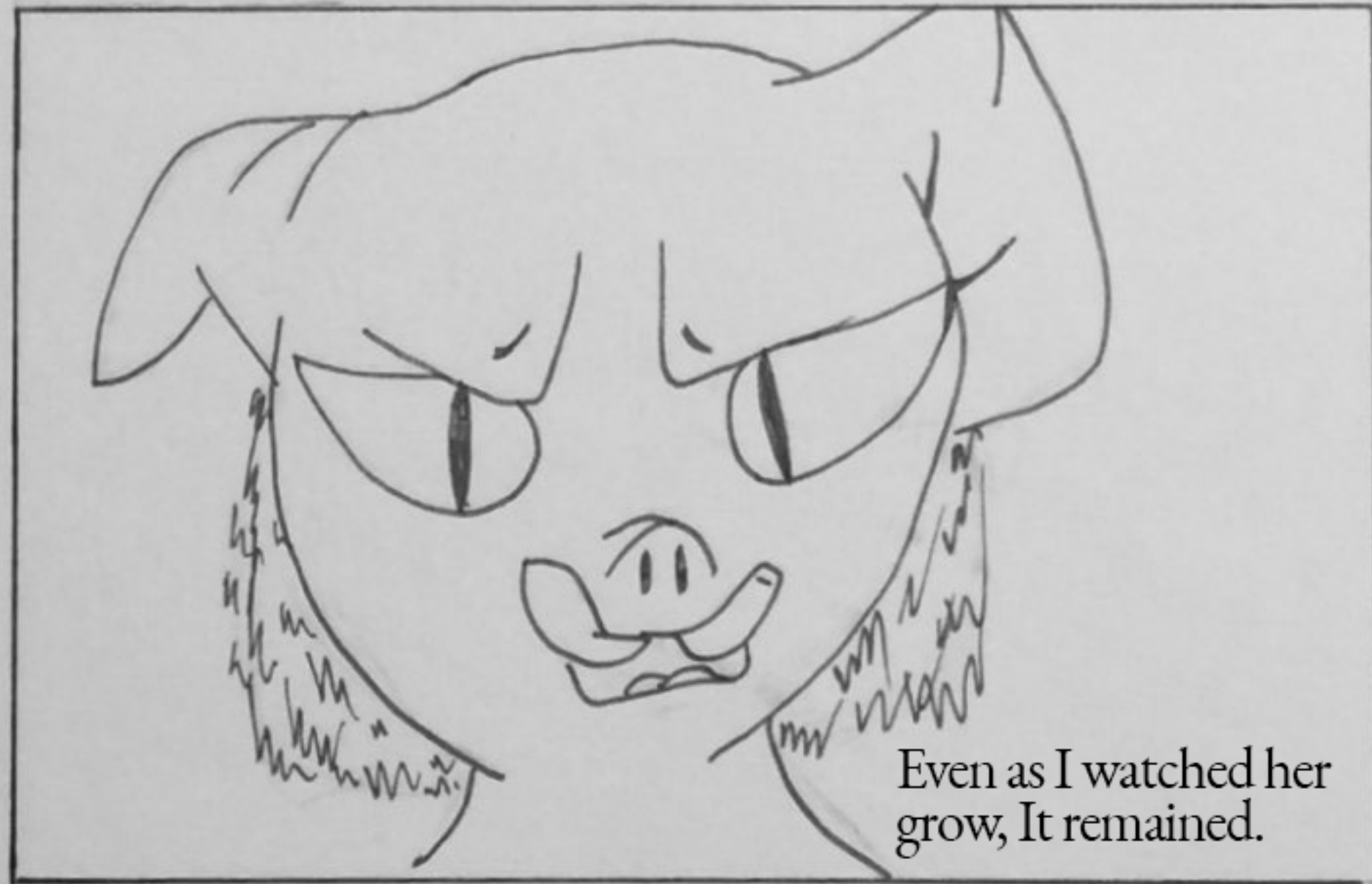




She was always so bright.
Even in her rage.



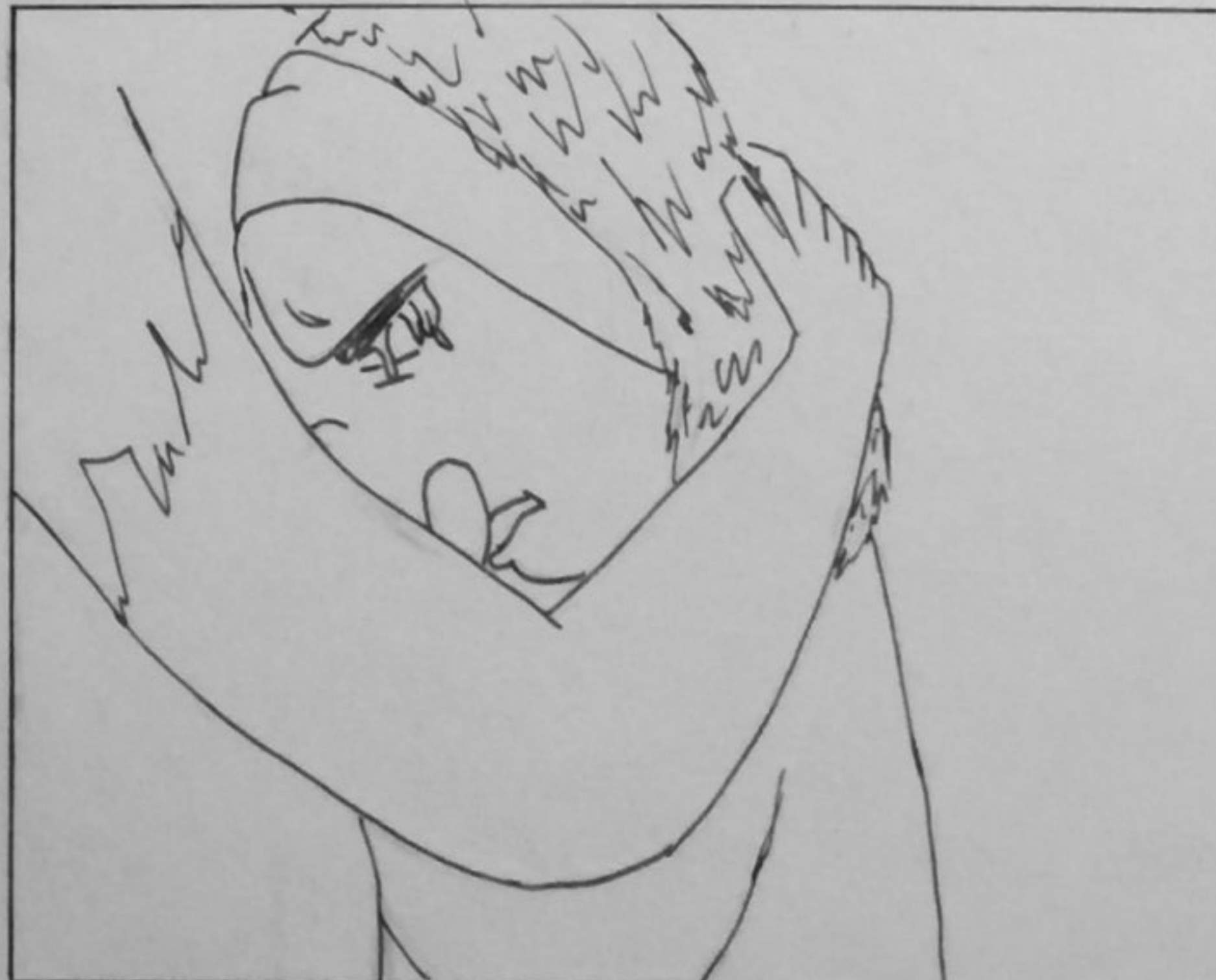
Even in her sleep, everything about her seemed to
radiate a brightness that never dimmed.

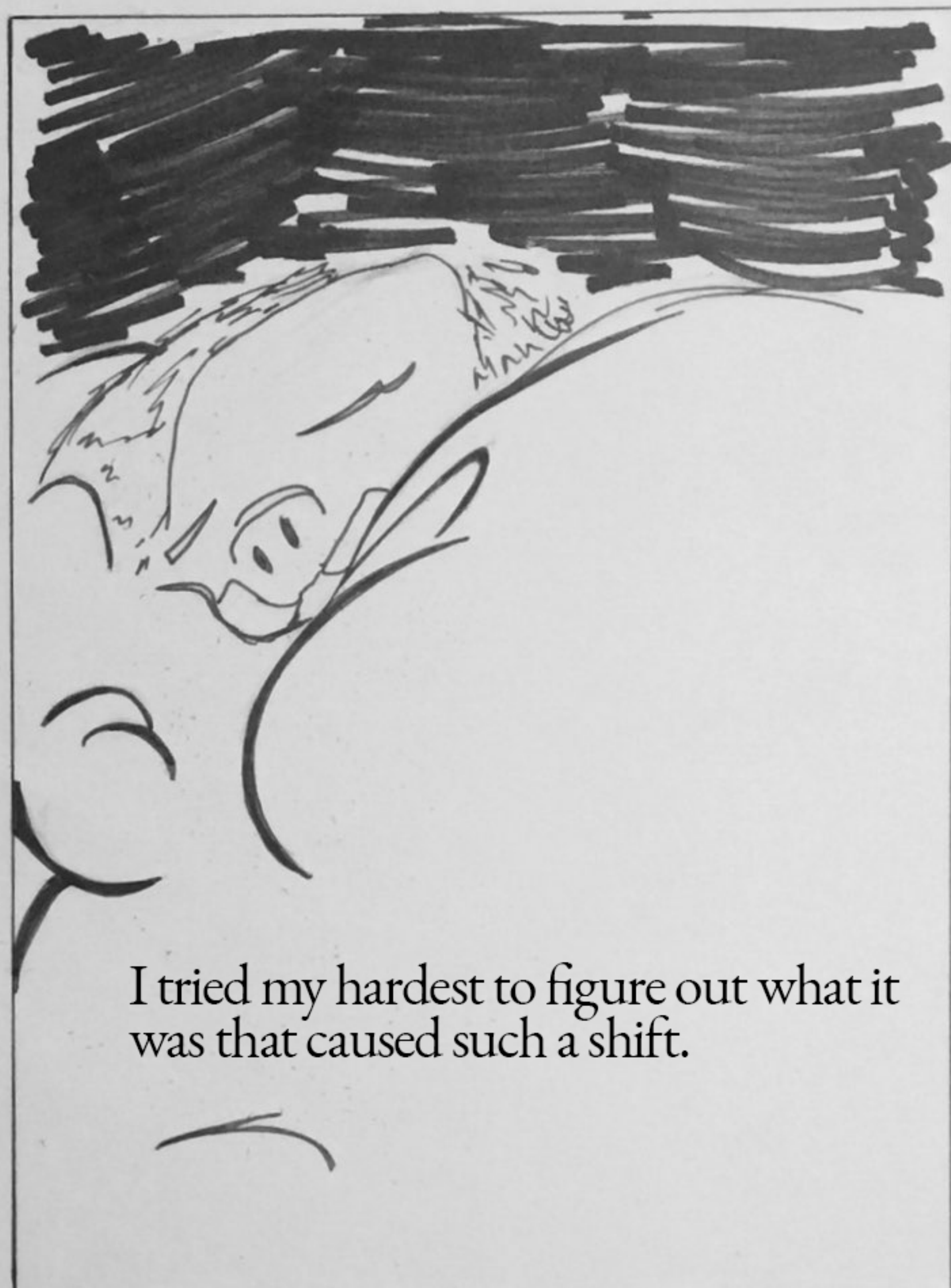
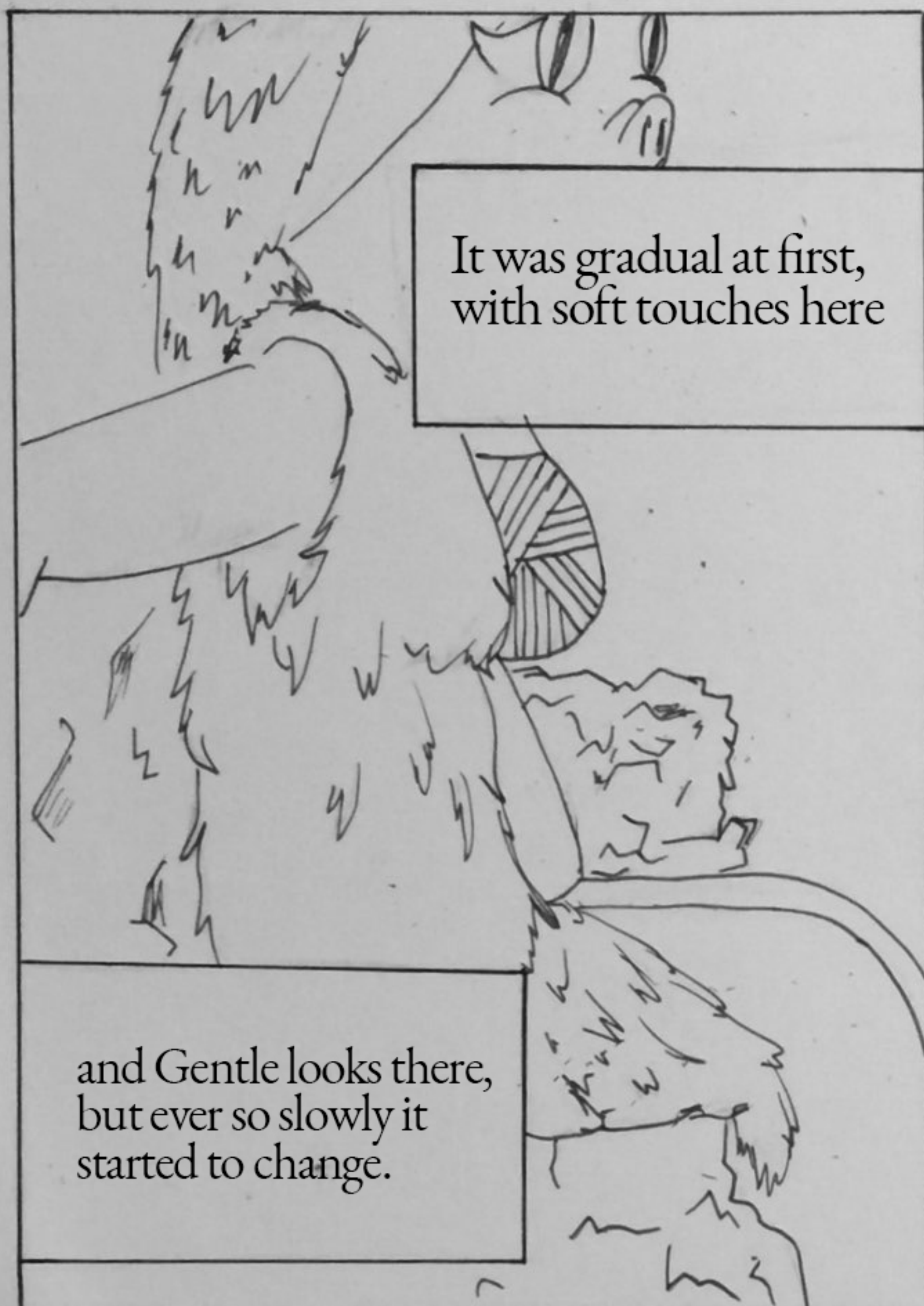


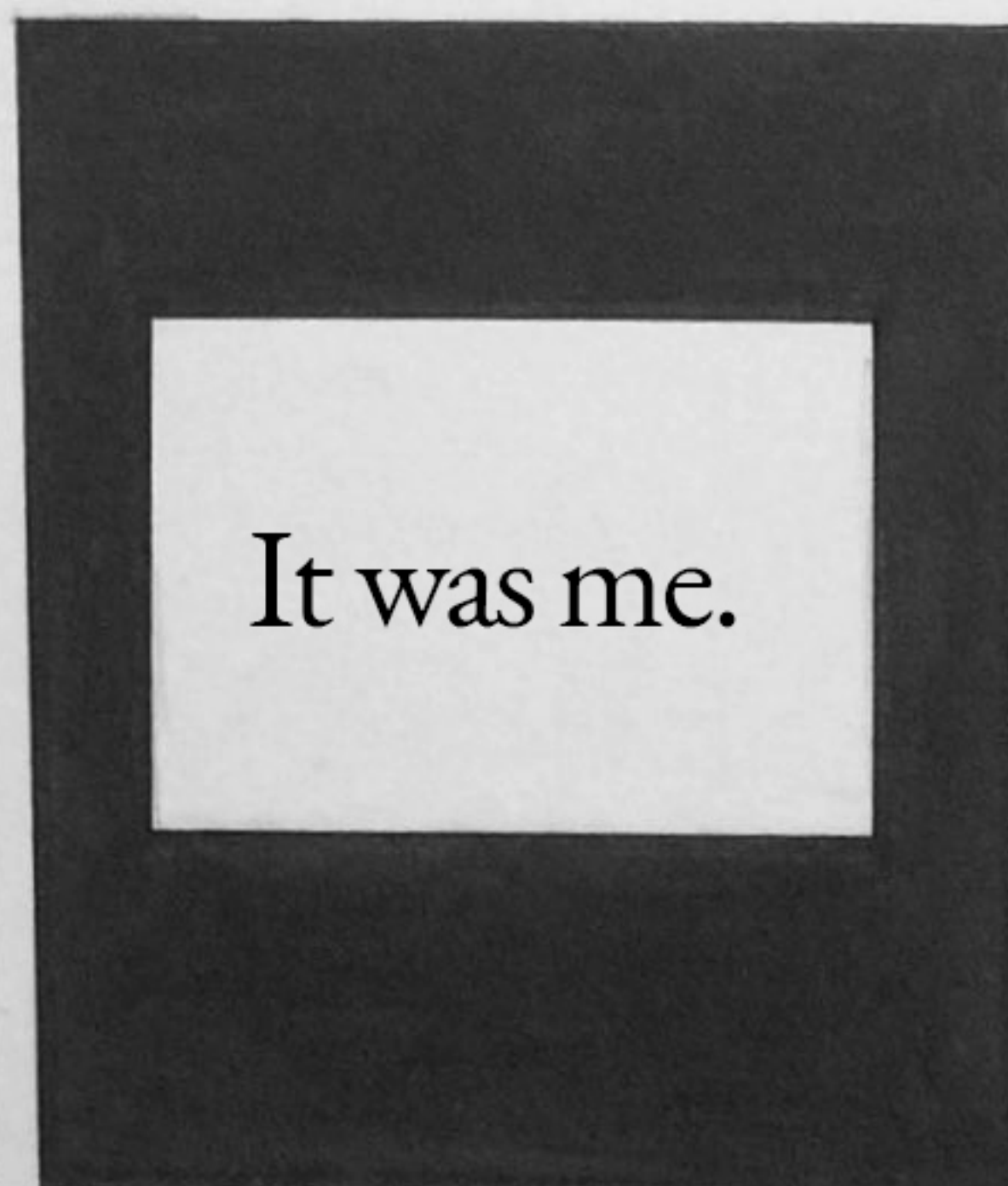
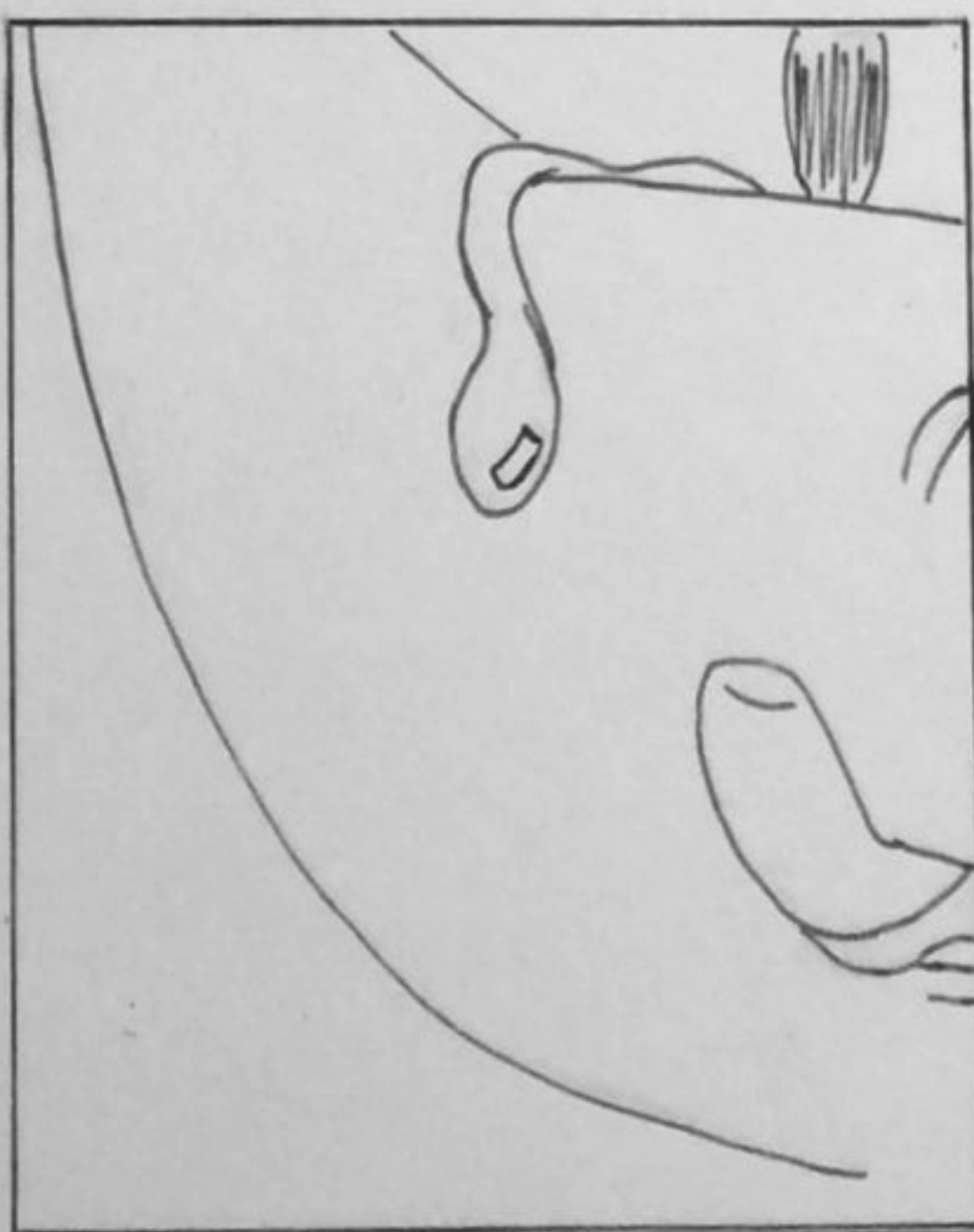
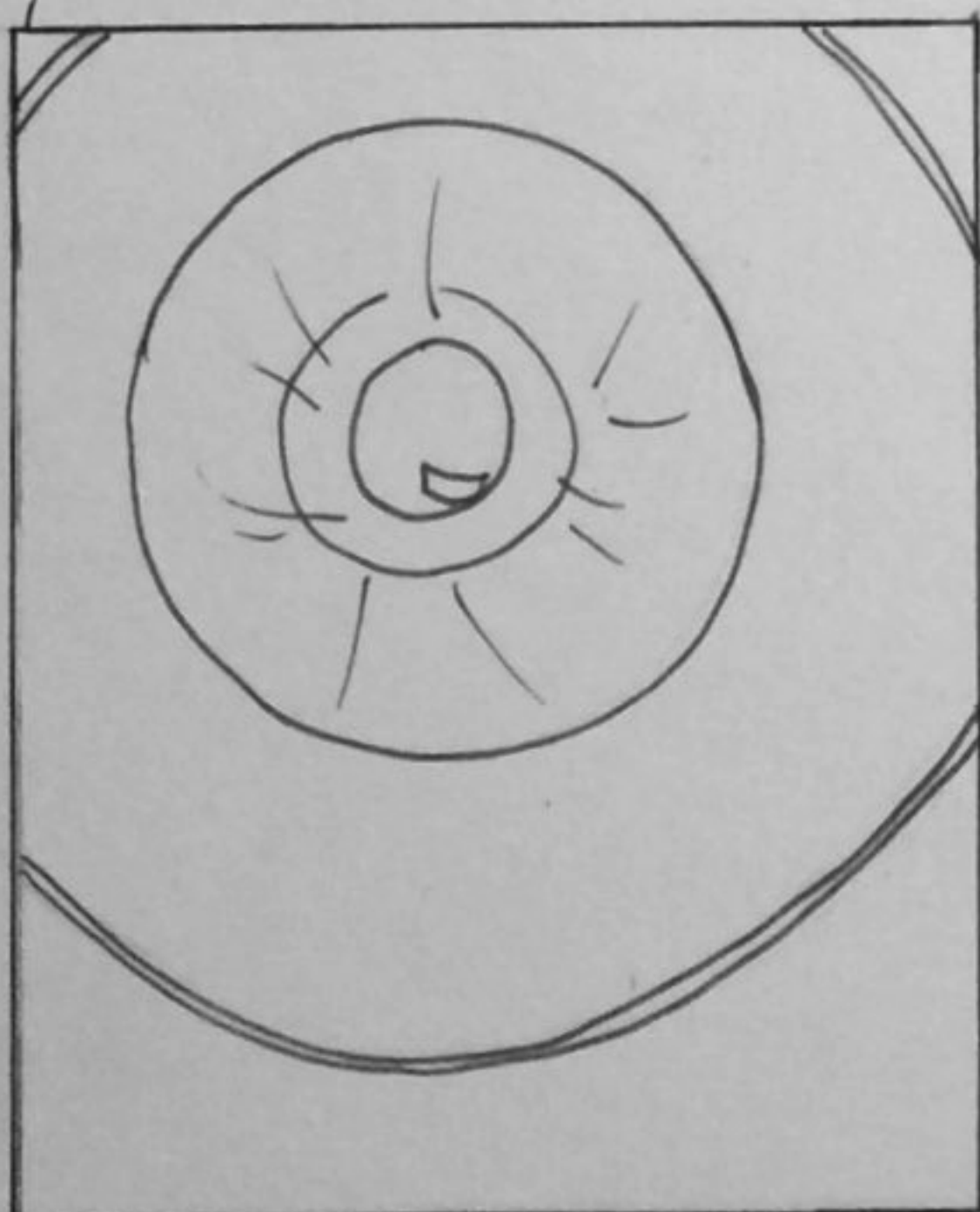
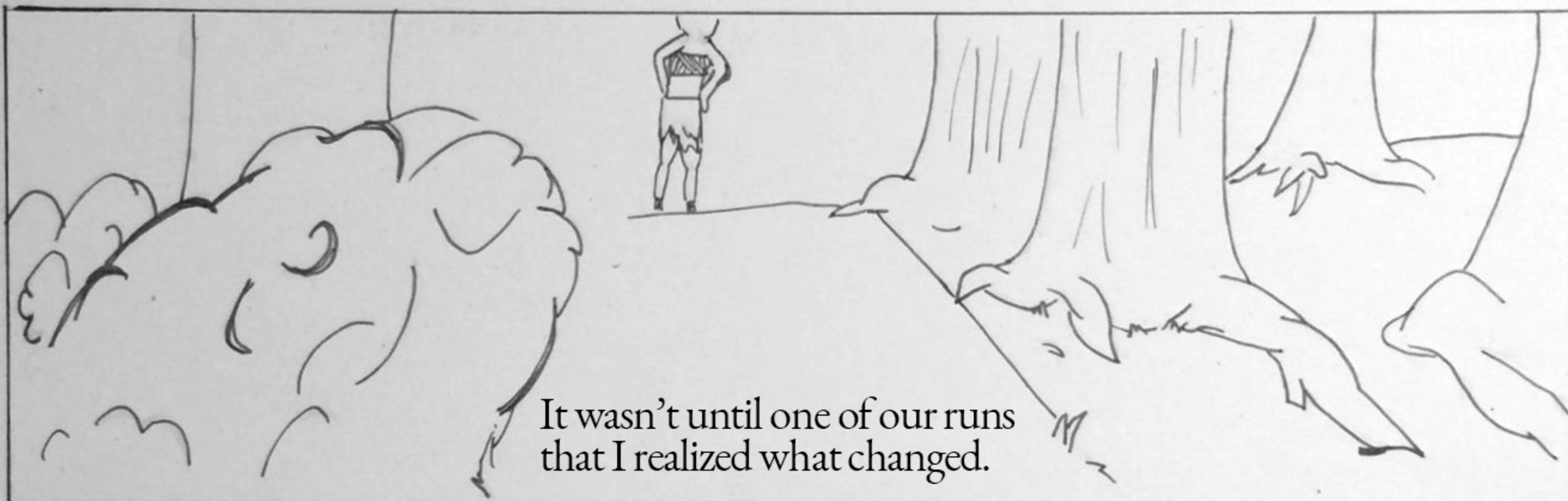
Even as I watched her
grow, It remained.



Until now, and I fear it is my fault.







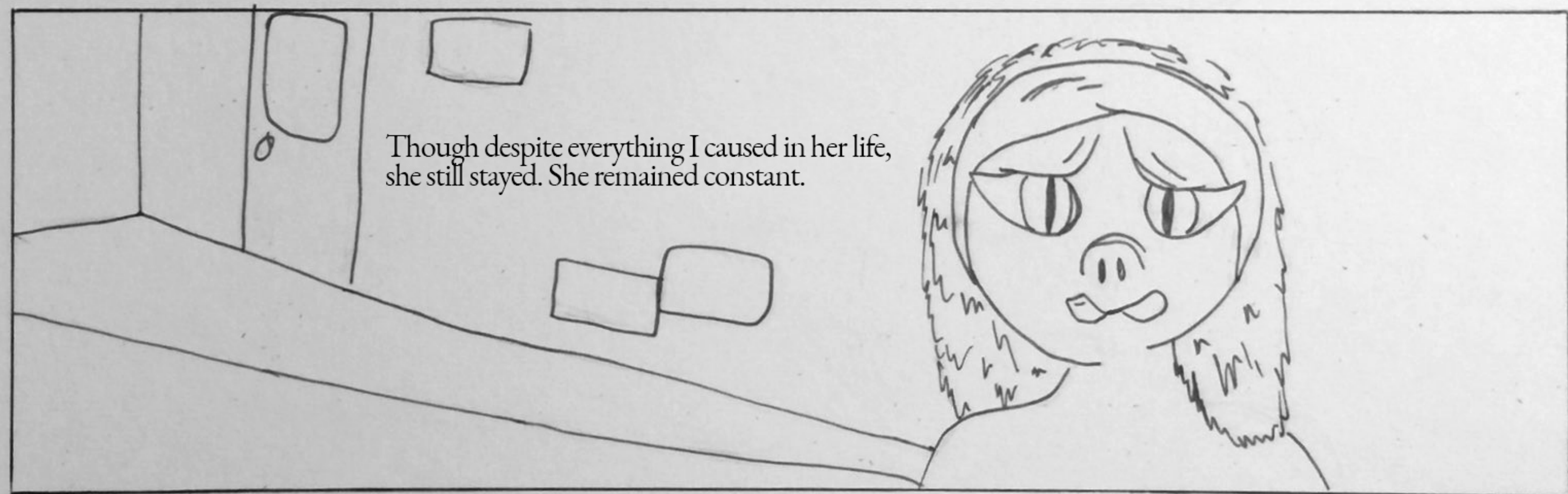
I had caused this all because of my aging body



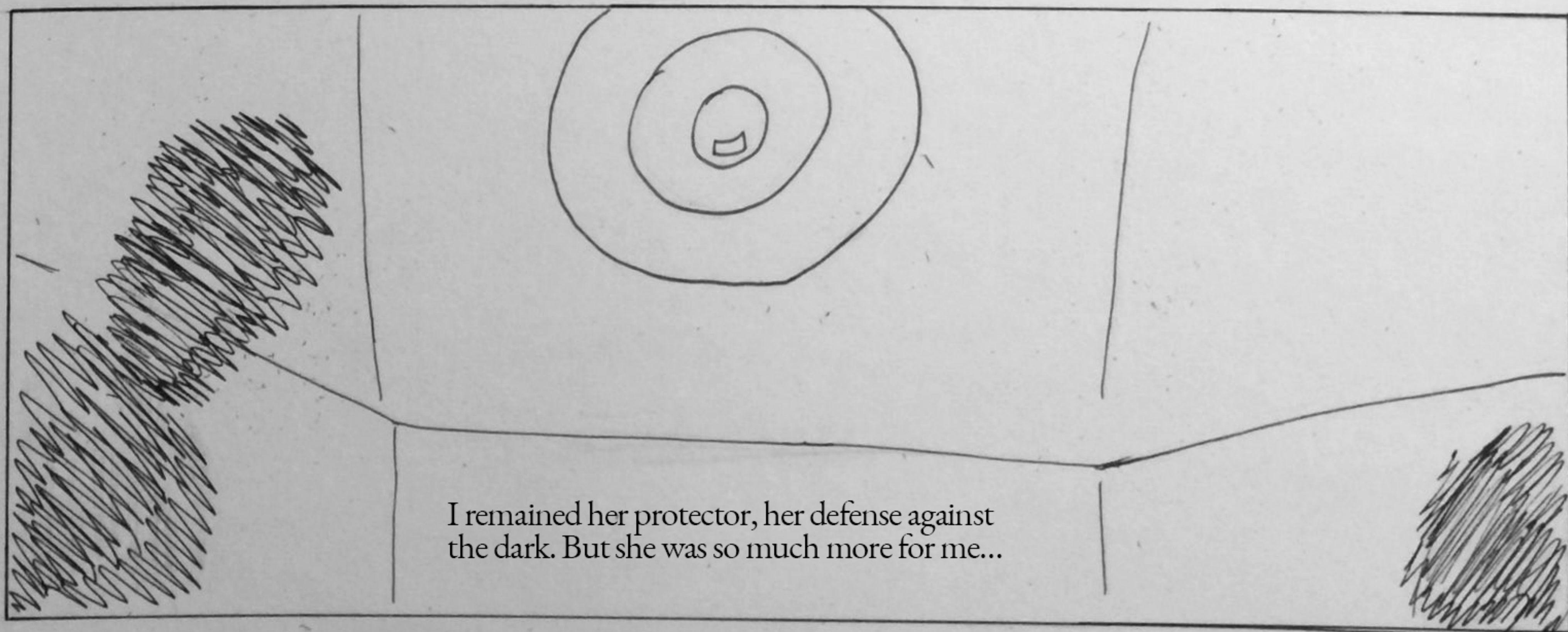
I caused her so much pain as she knew long before I that she would live forever and my life was only... Temporary.

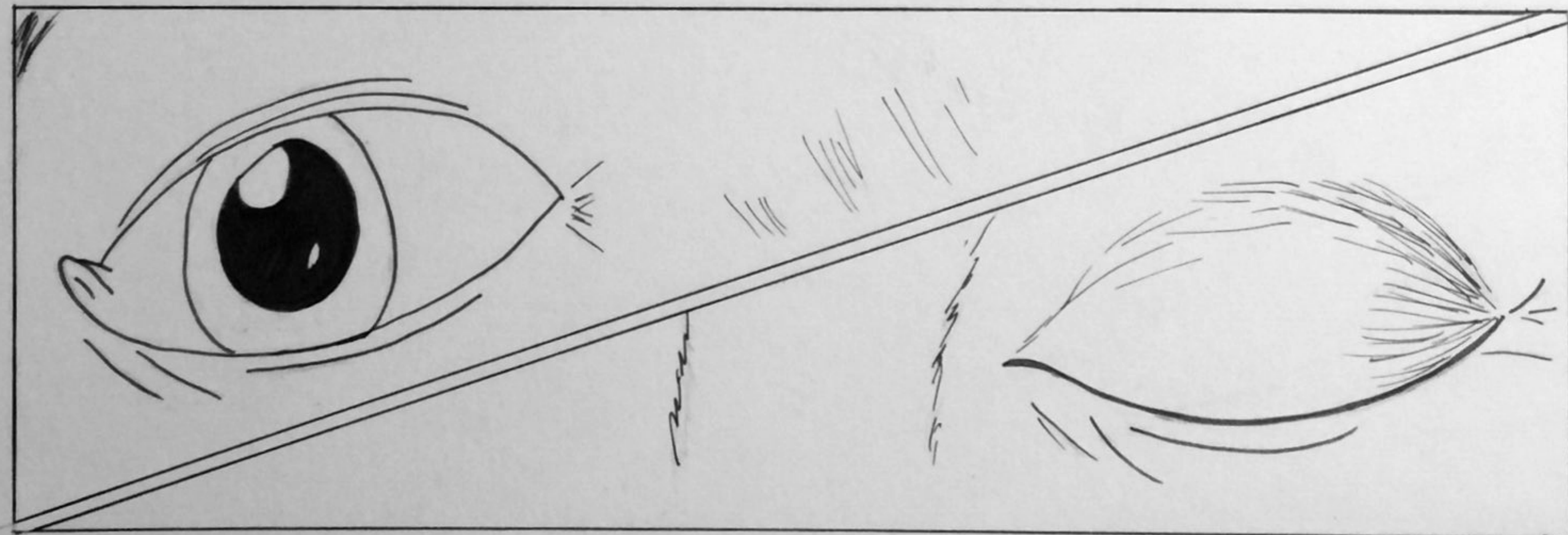


Though despite everything I caused in her life, she still stayed. She remained constant.



I remained her protector, her defense against the dark. But she was so much more for me...





She was my
best friend.