

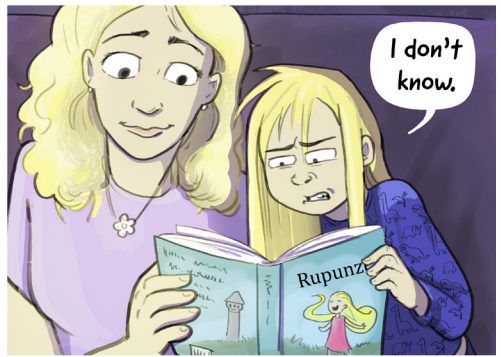
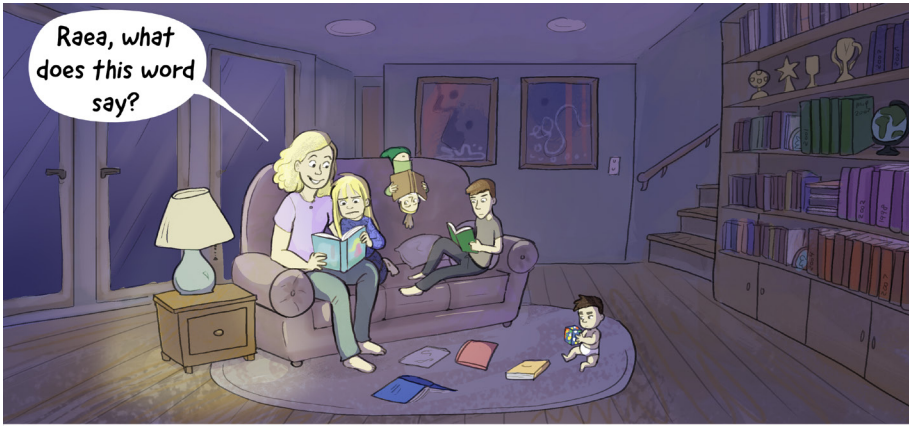
# Pumpkin



**RAEA GRAGG**

**For my best friend**







Mom, why can't Raea read?



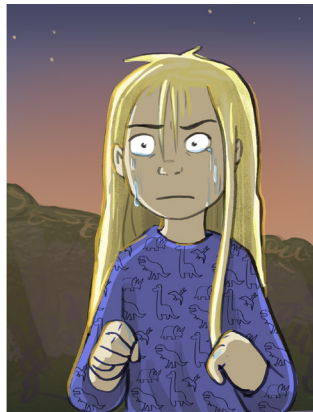
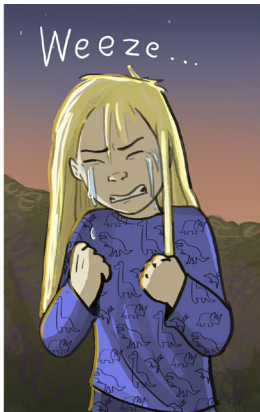
Did she run off again?

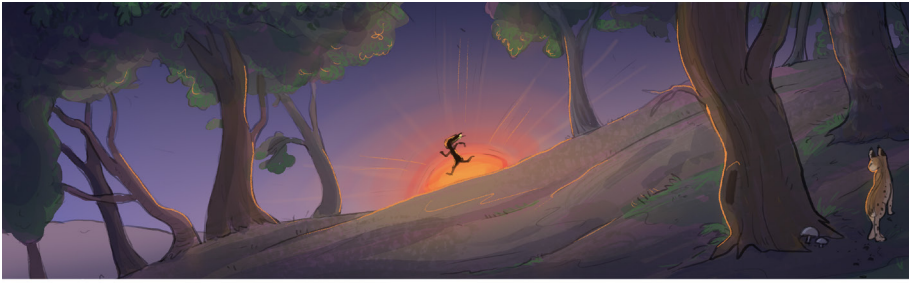


Maybe... she needs a goal... something to incentivize her.

I have an idea!



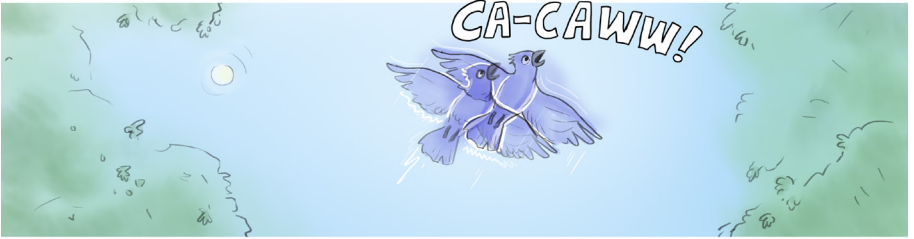


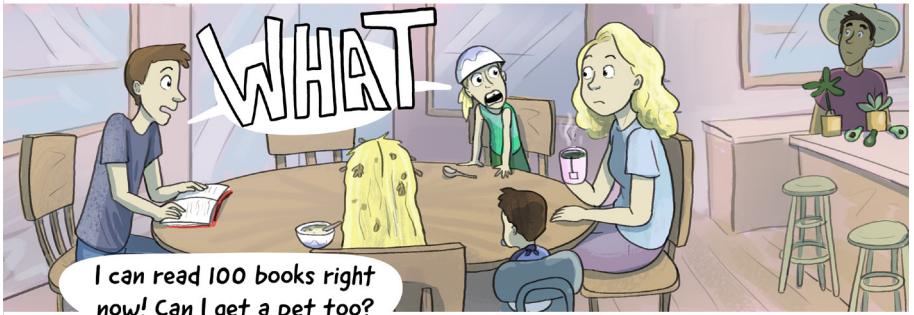
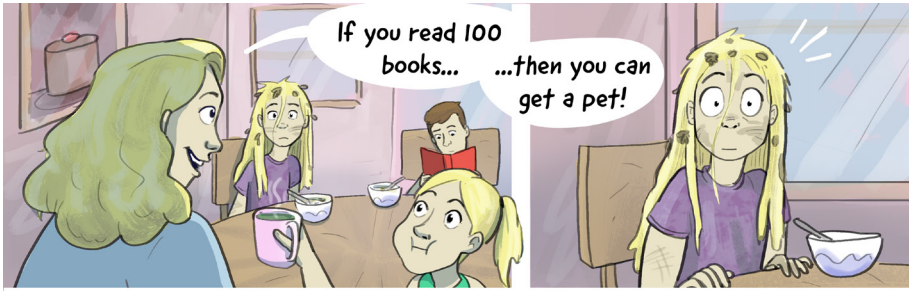














I know... but <sup>HOW?</sup> It's:

# IMPOSSIBLE

I can't read.

At all.

Well you're a great storyteller...

and books  
are just  
stories.

GIRLS!

Eyes on the  
whiteboard please.

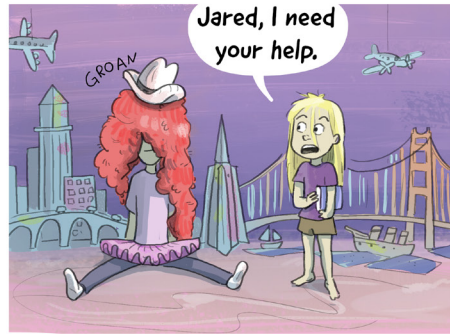
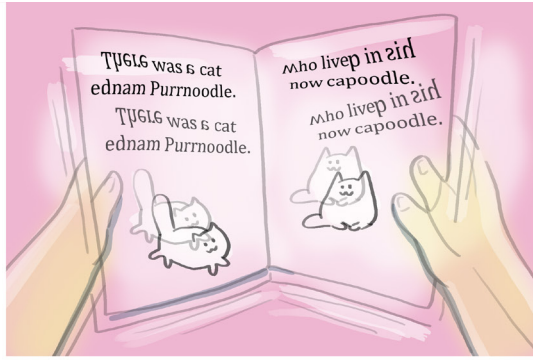
Hmm.

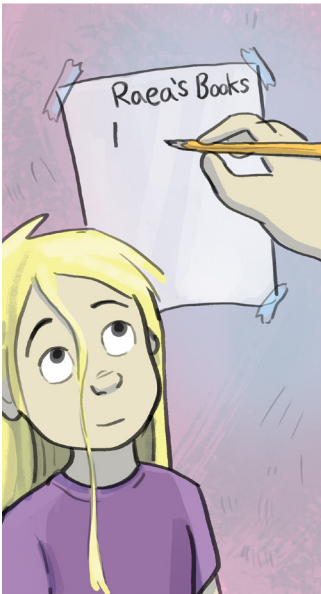
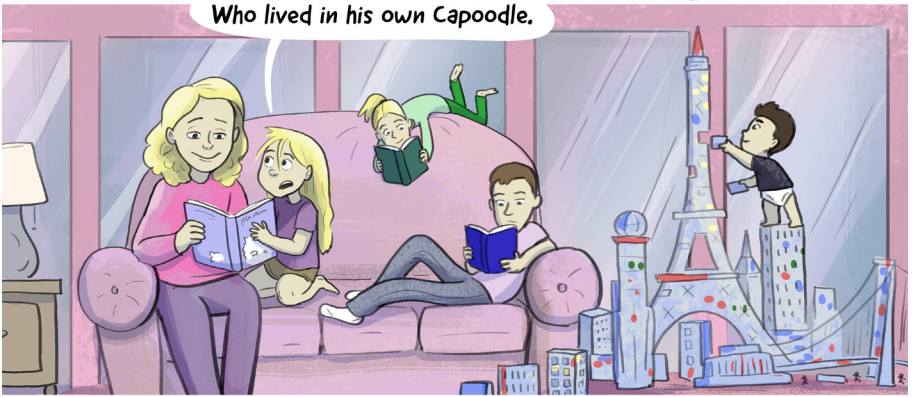
Samantha! We just got a new batch of babies. Are you up for more fosters?



Of course I am.

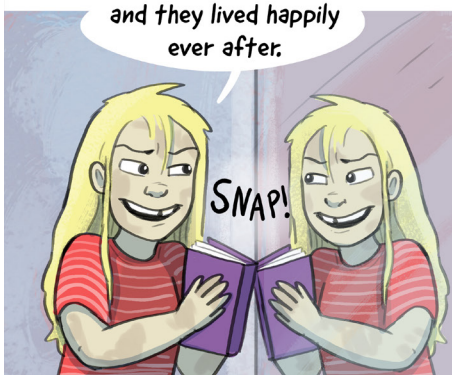


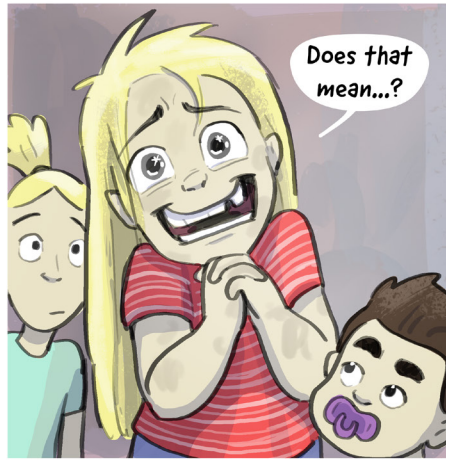
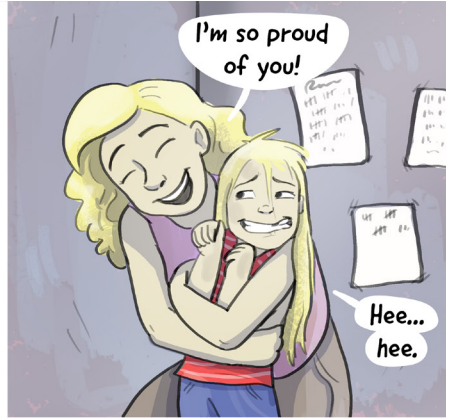


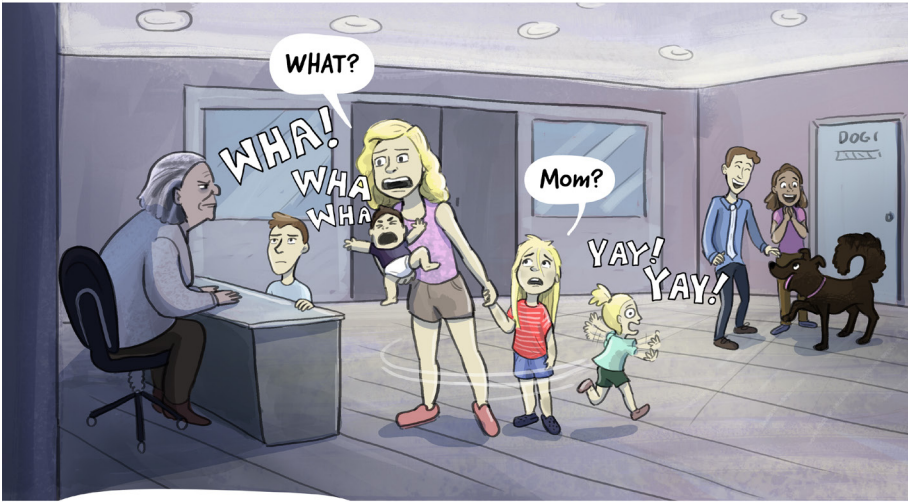
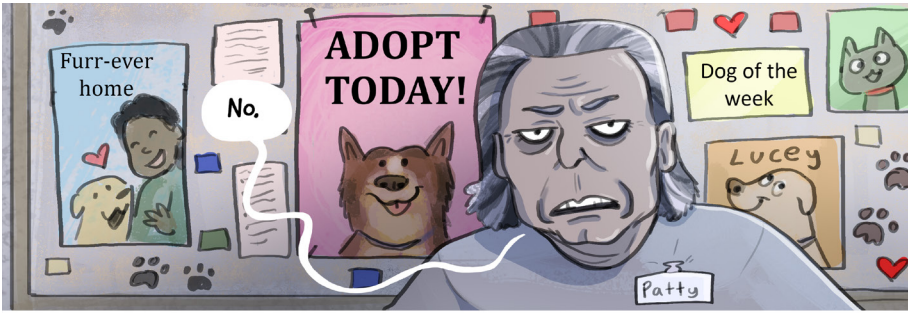


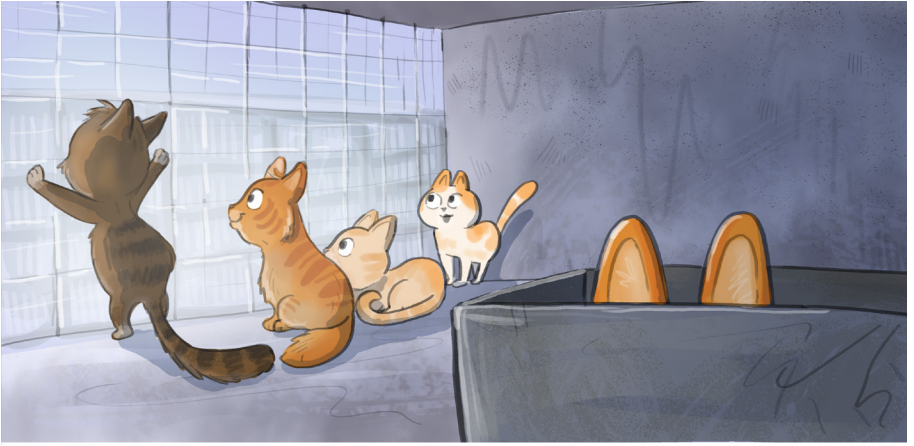


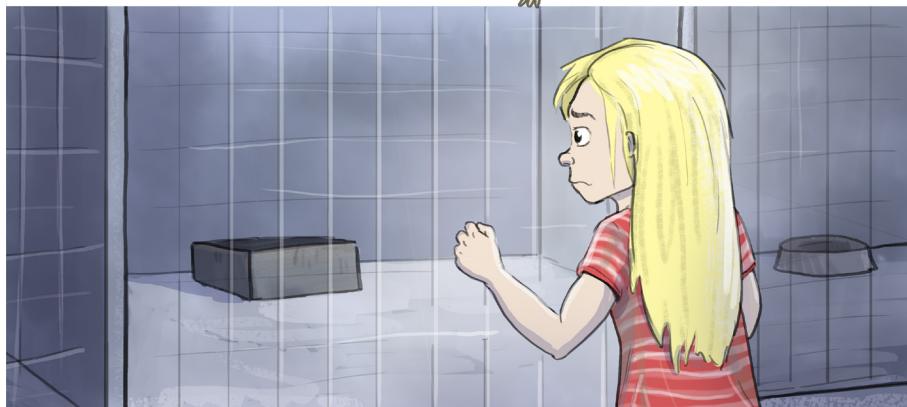




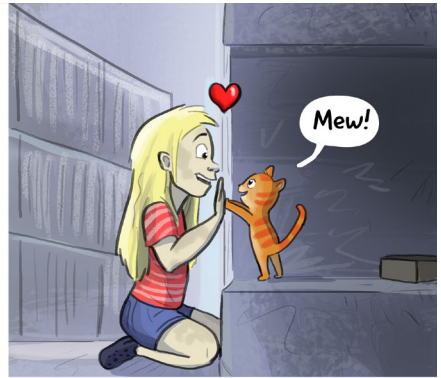




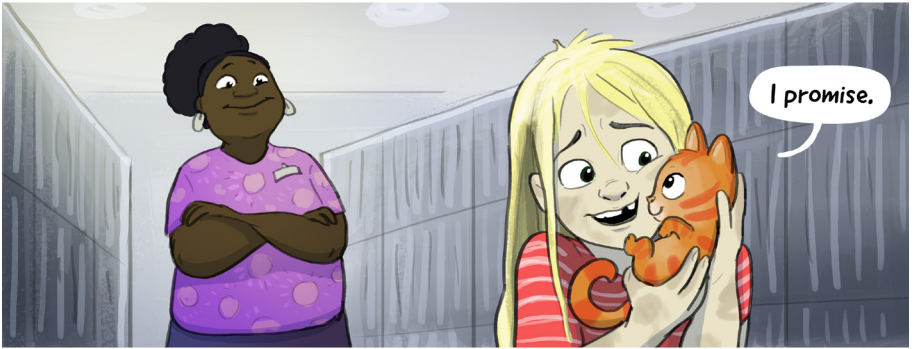




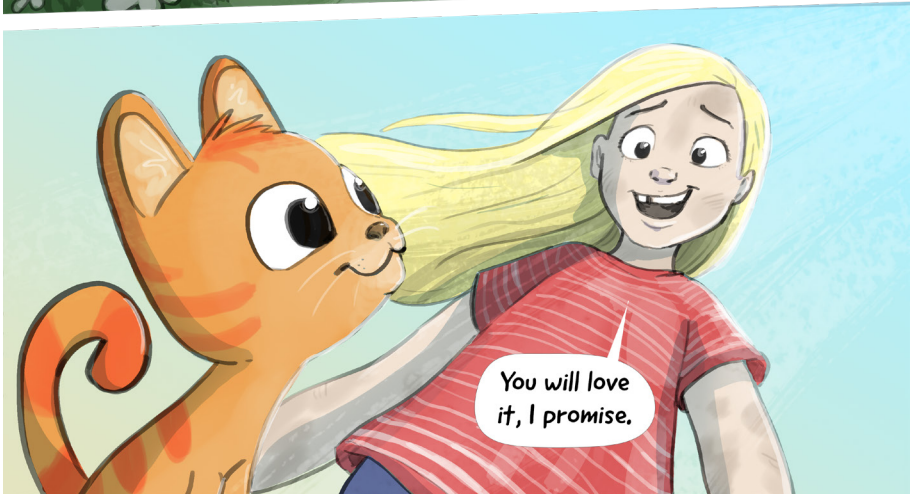


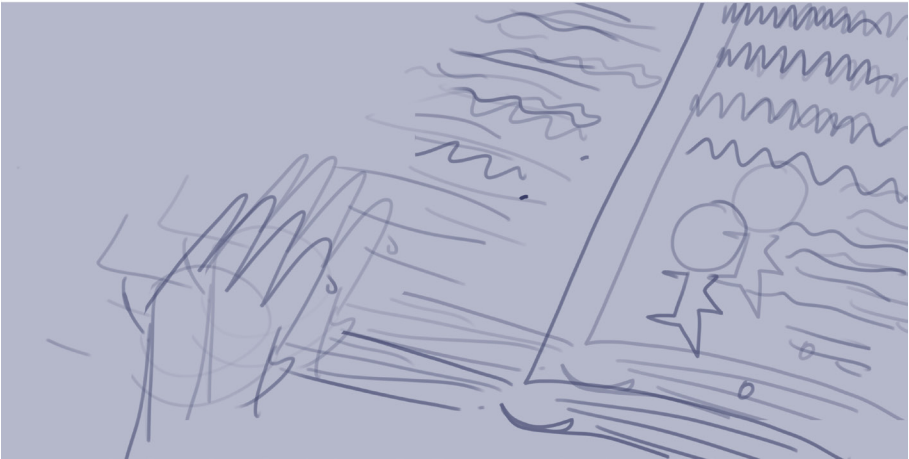
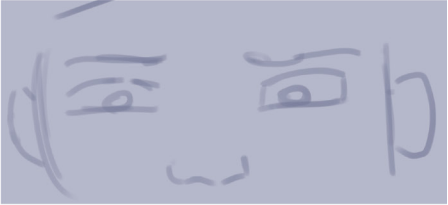
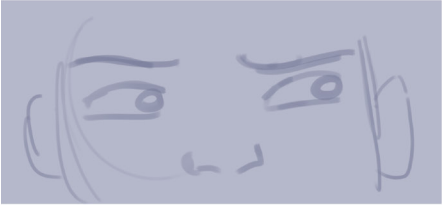




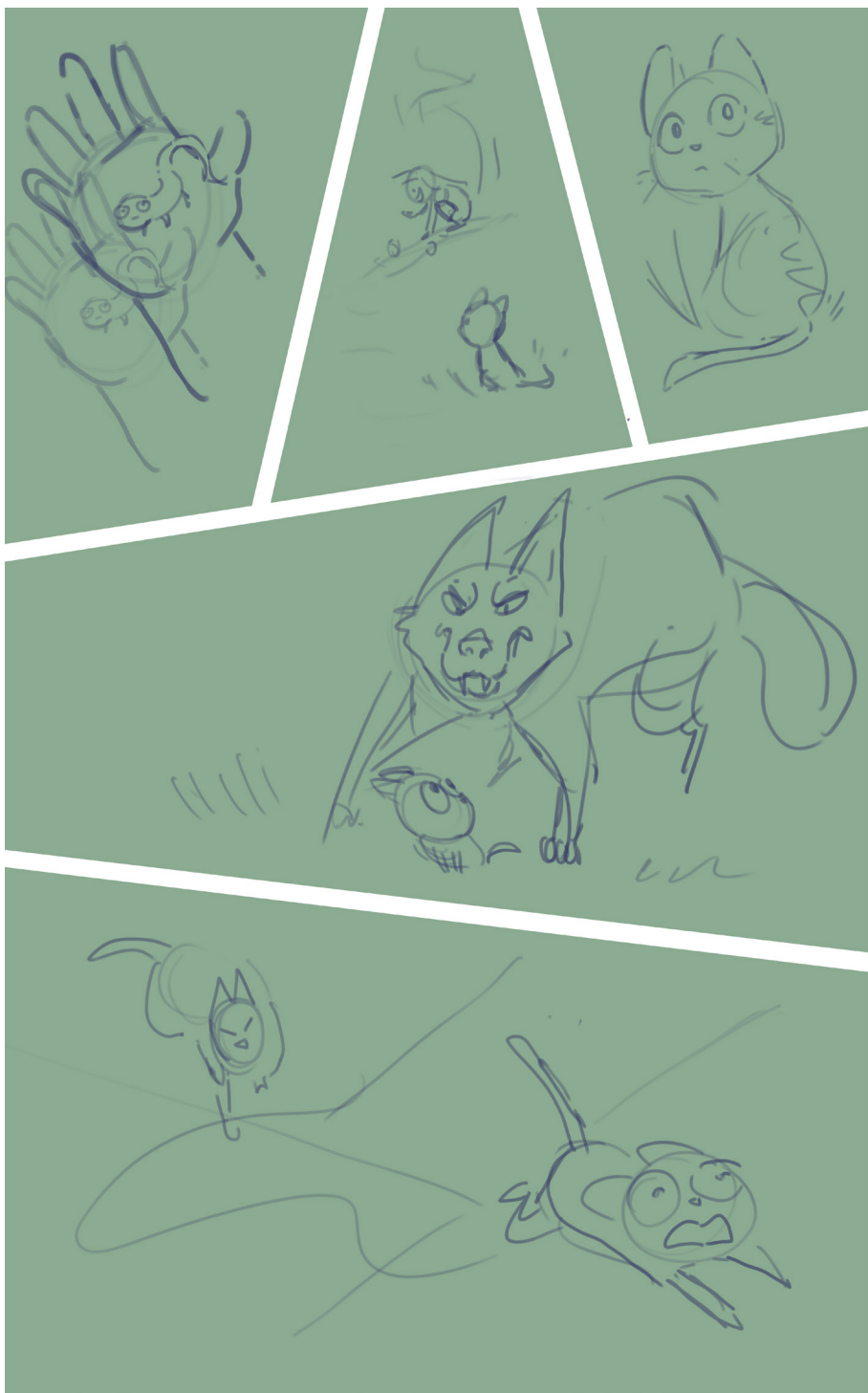
















YEAH! THAT'S  
RIGHT!

You leave  
Pumpkin alone!

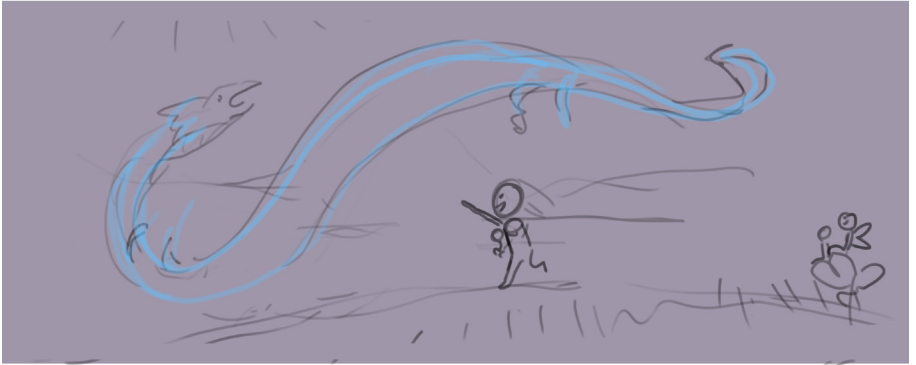




**RAEA! Sit down!**



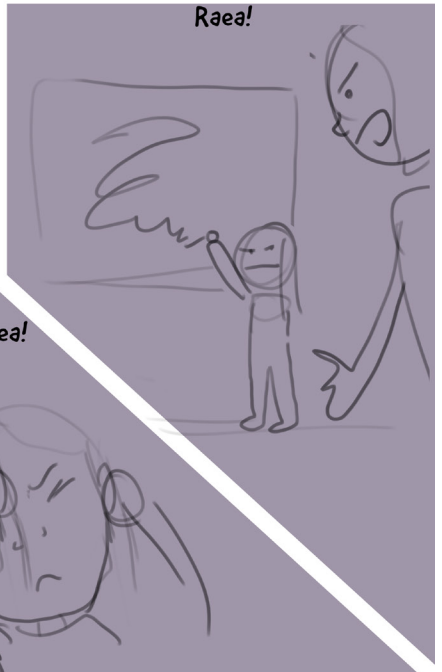
**Focus please.**



**Raea!**



**Raea!**



**Raea!**

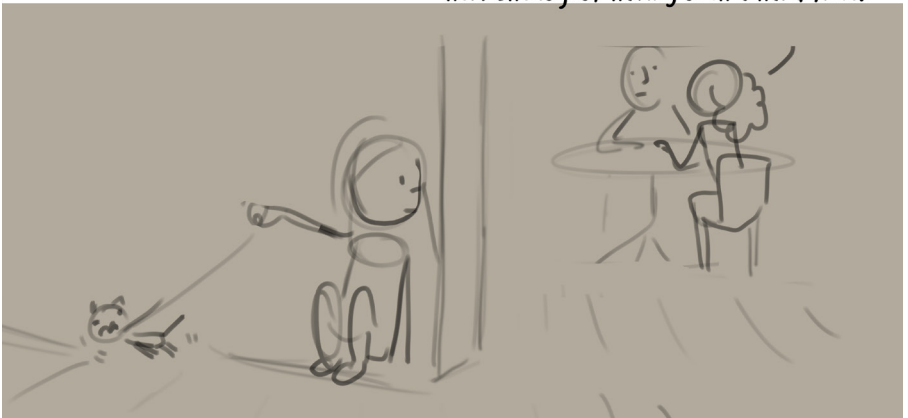


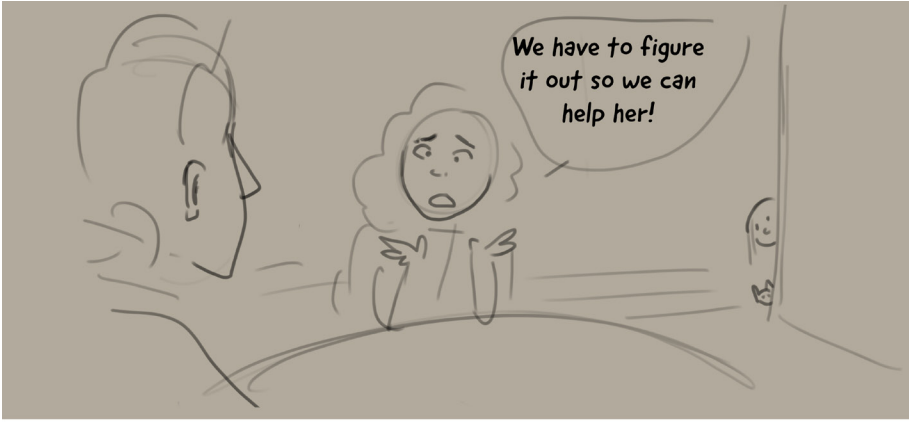
She's just different.



She is not like the other kids!

I think there is something wrong with her! She is just having such a hard time.





Oh no! Raea!

Wow, she didn't catch it!

It was an easy catch.

Ow.



Your mom is here to pick you up now.

Huh?



Wait... I can LEAVE SCHOOL?



I can't wait to see Pumpkin!

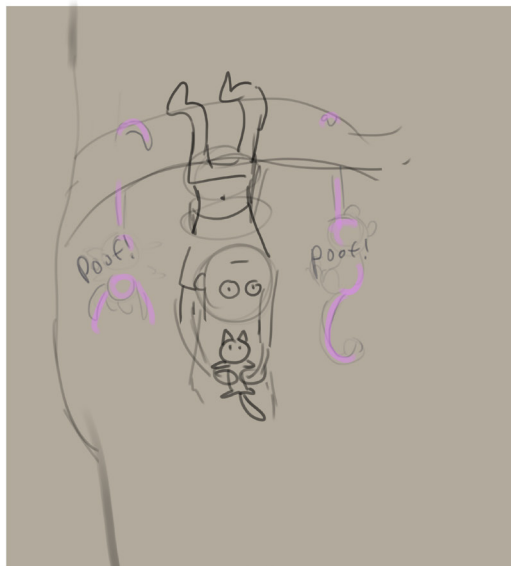
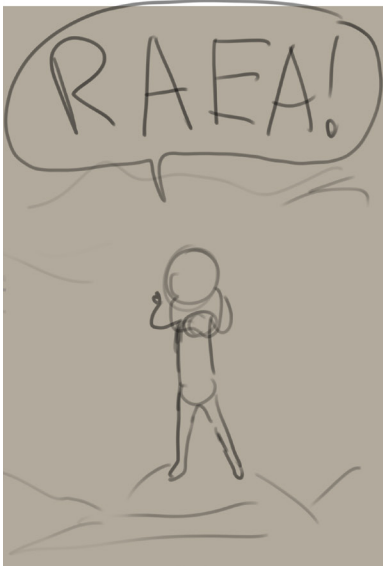
Mrs. Gragg, have you tested Raea for ADHD?



HIP-HIP HURRAYYY!

I'm home  
early!

MEOW!



What is it?



We're going to see  
a specialist.

Can Pumpkin  
come?



No Pumpkin has to stay here.

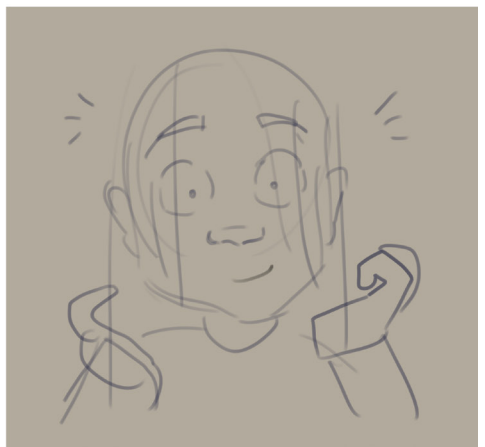


She has all the symptoms: can't focus,  
refuses to pay attention, won't sit  
still, avoids classwork.



I'd recomend  
medicine for her.









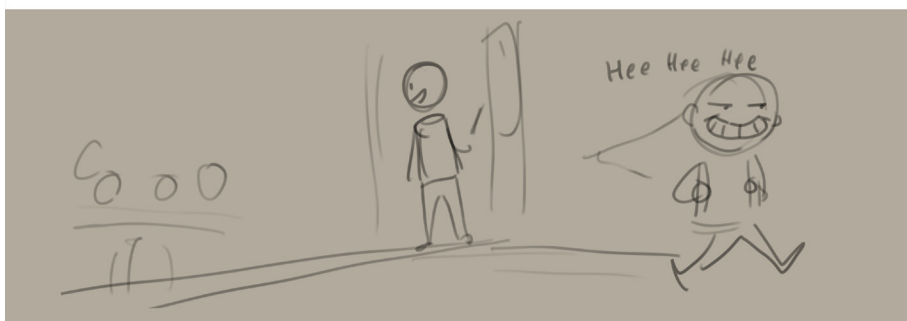
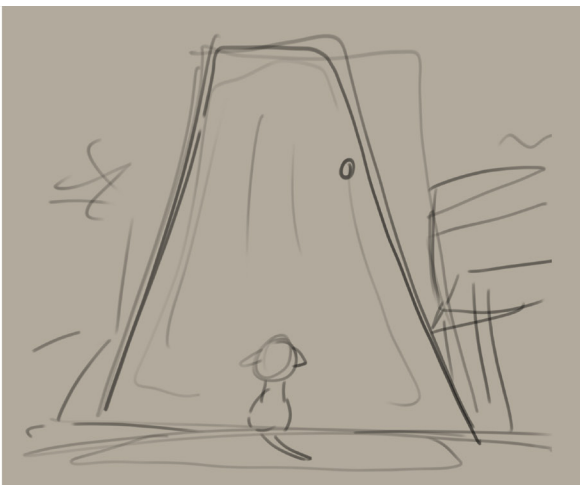


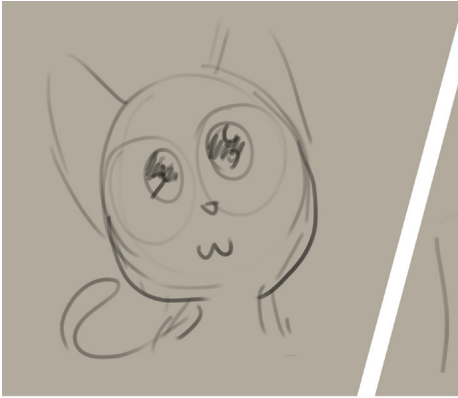
I don't feel good.



I stubbed my toe!







Mmhmm.





Meow?



I'm not going to take that anymore! It makes me a zombie!

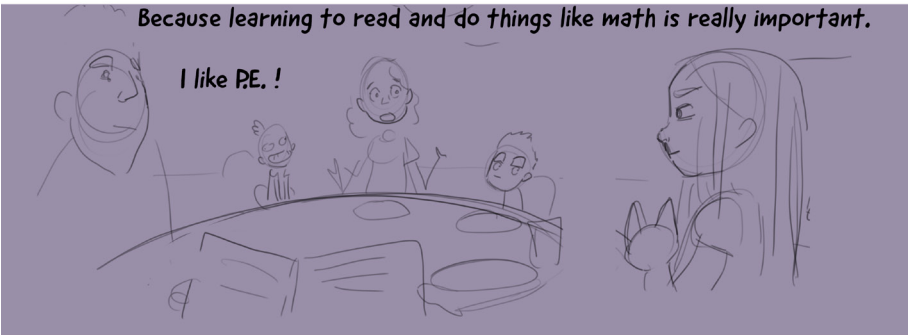


Ræa...

Why do I have to go to school?



Because learning to read and do things like math is really important.

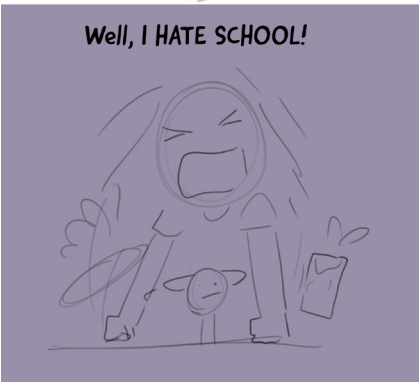


Mom's right.

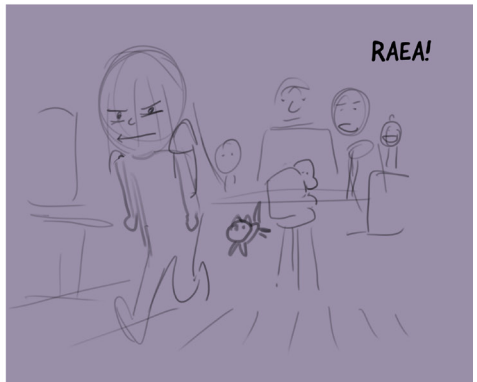
School is invaluable. Plus, reading is fun!



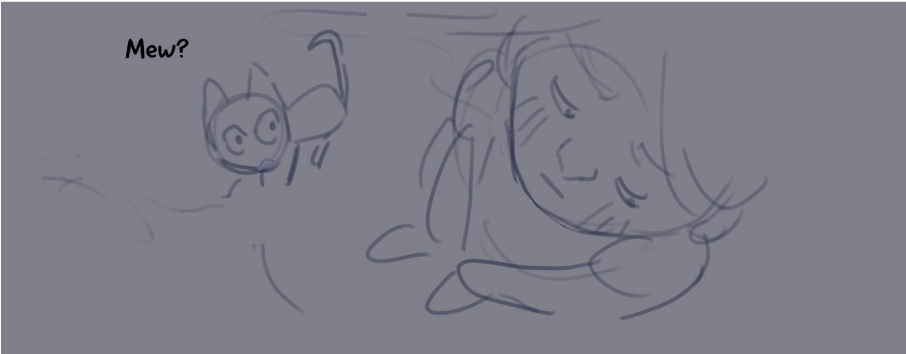
Well, I HATE SCHOOL!



RAEA!

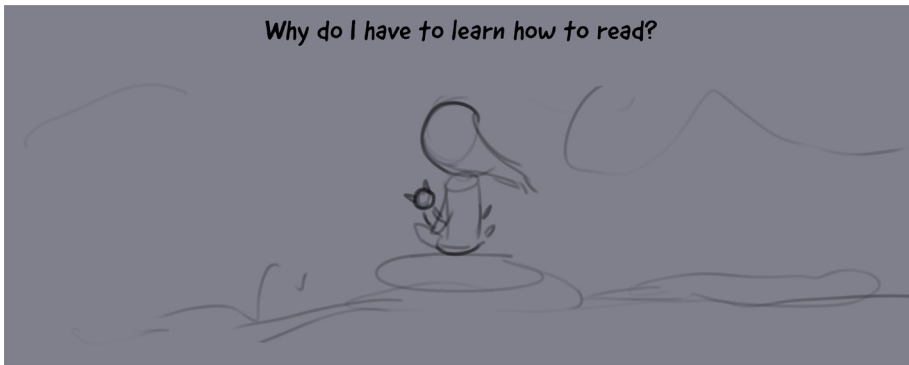








Why do I have to learn how to read?



It's a waste of time!



MEW!

Yeah! YEAH!  
That's right  
Pumpkin.

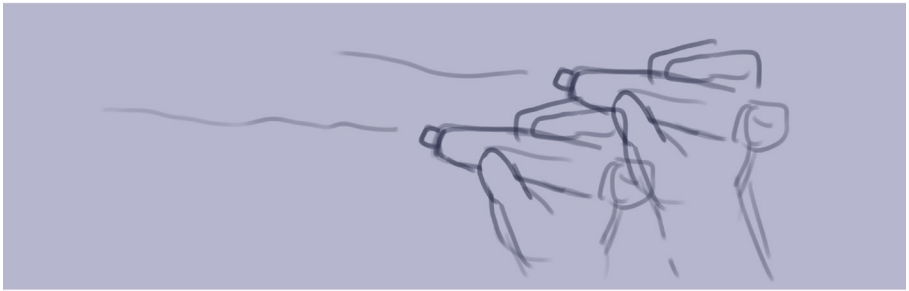
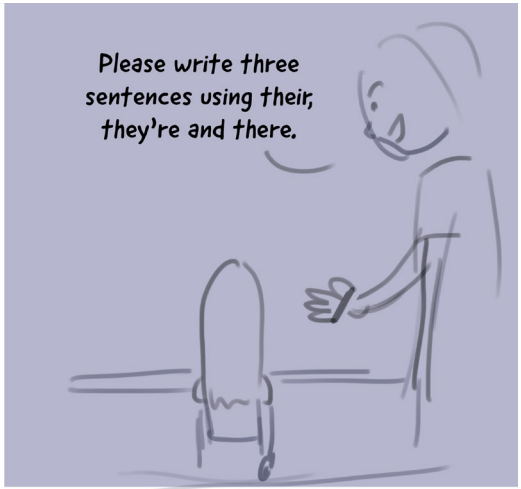


You're right!

I'll show them how  
useless it is!

MEW!







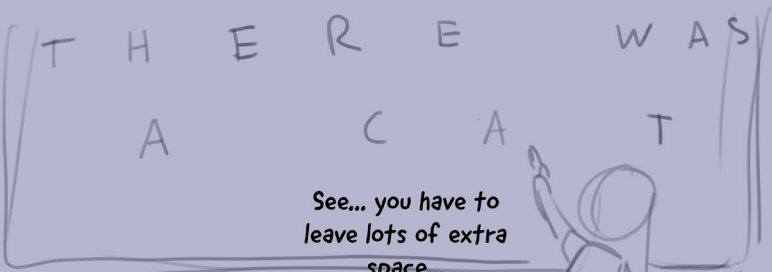
Everyone can learn,  
even you Raea.



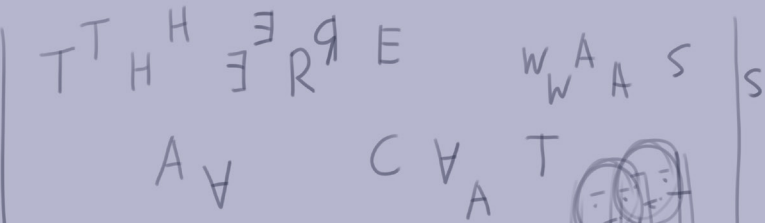
Just give  
it a try.



Fine. But I'm  
trying it my  
way.



See... you have to  
leave lots of extra  
space...



...for when the  
words move.



I think Raea needs to see an eye doctor.

But I took her to a pediatric ophthalmologist two years ago and she has 20/20 vision.

Well something is definitely wrong with her vision.



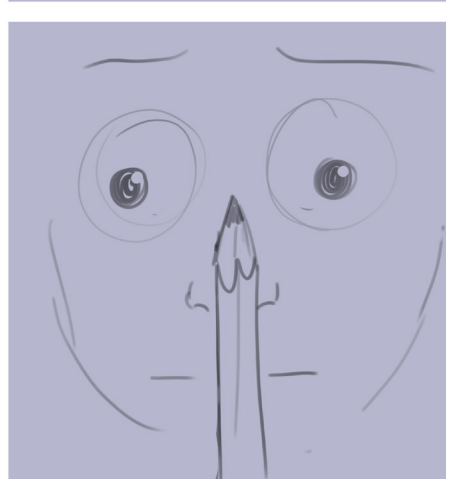
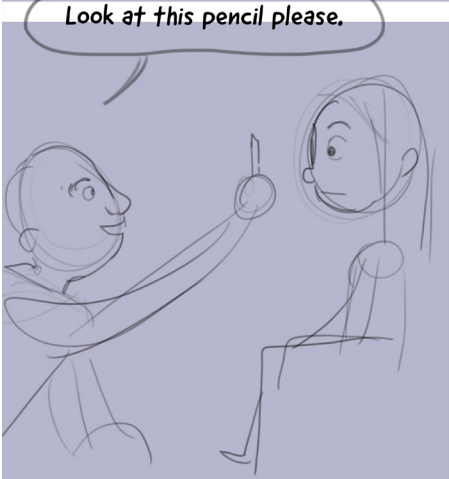
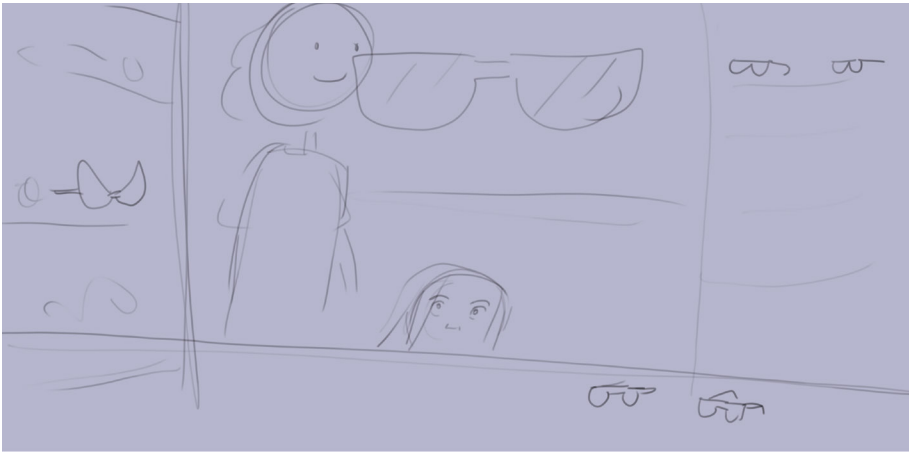
I can't wait to see Pumpkin!

Wait, Raea, we are going to an appointment.



WHAT?  
Another doctor?

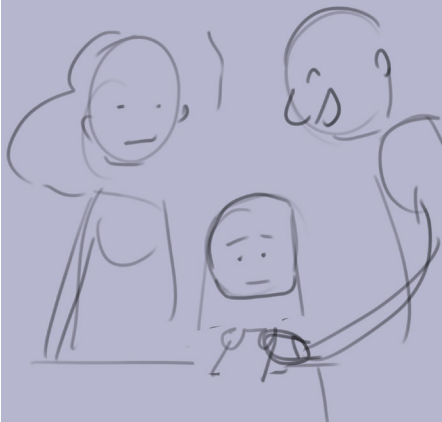




She has convergence insufficiency, or in more simple terms: double vision. One of the worst cases I've ever seen. I can't believe no one caught this.



With a year of vision therapy.



And prism glasses.



She should be able...



...to see normally.







I always thought  
we looked like  
this.



BUT WE ONLY HAVE  
ONE NOSE?!

MEW!



Pumpkin.



Everything...



is different...

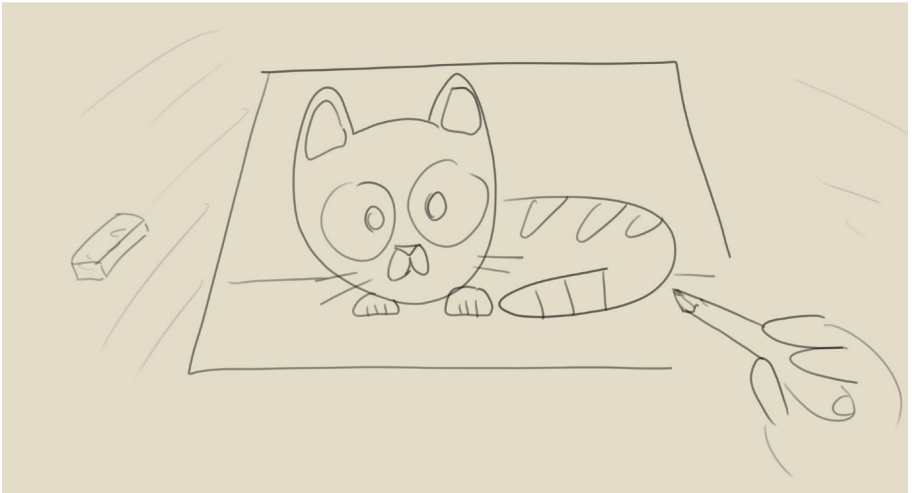
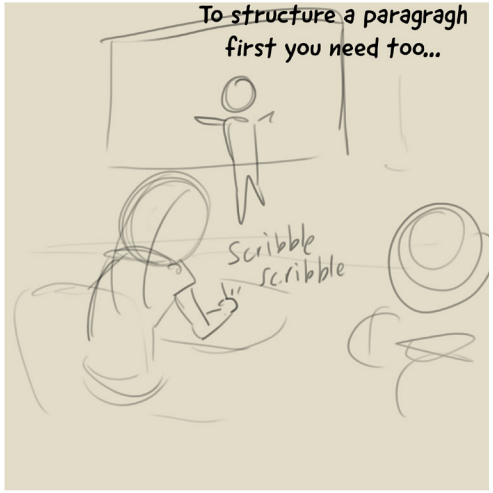
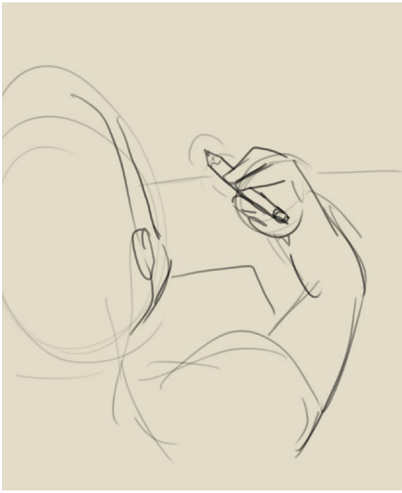


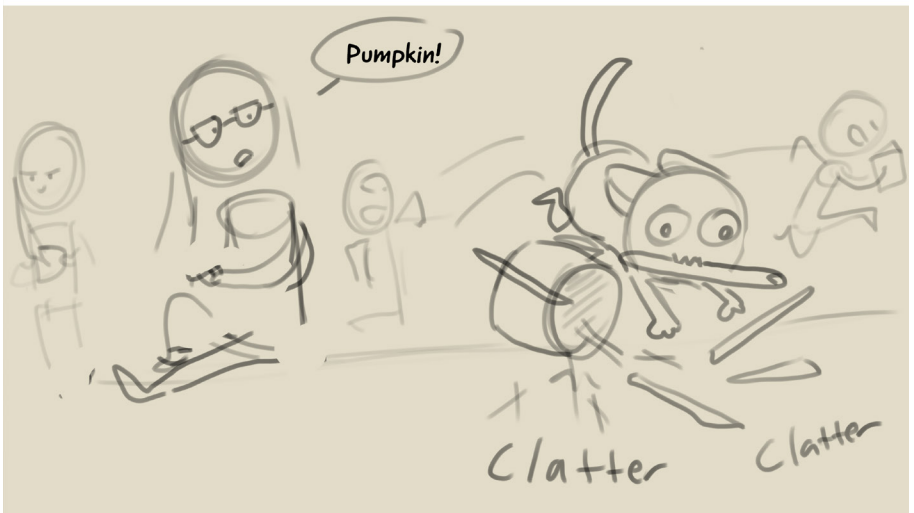
Does the world really  
look like this?

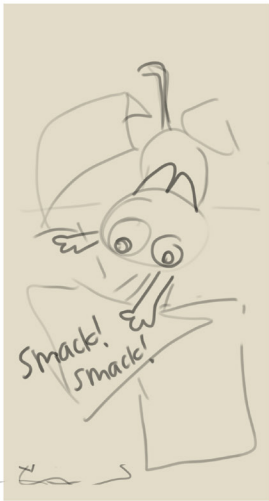


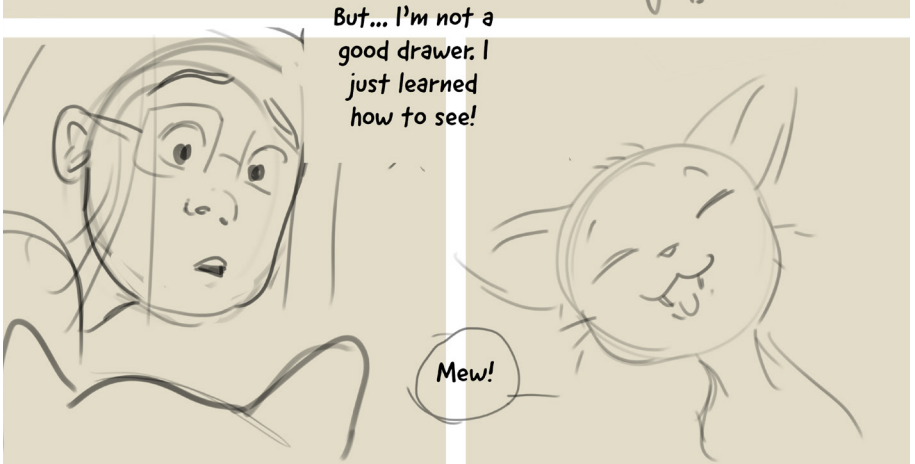
Mew.











Wait... so Raea went to multiple doctors was misdiagnosed several times, medicated for ADHD, which she doesn't have... only to be finally diagnosed with a common vision problem that affects 1 in 8 kids?



I just heard this crazy story.



You will not believe what I just heard.



Hey Laura you should hear about this kid.





# The New York Times

## Not Autistic or Hyperactive. Just Seeing Double at Times

As an infant, Raea Gragg was withdrawn and could not make eye contact. By preschool she needed to smell and squeeze every object she saw.

"She touched faces and would bring everything to mouth," said her mother, Kara Gragg, sniff them and touch their cheeks."

"She would go up to people,

Specialists conducted a battery of tests. The possible diagnoses mounted: autism spectrum disorder, neurofibromatosis, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety disorder.

A behavioral pediatrician prescribed three drugs for attention deficit and depression. The only constant was that Raea, now 9, did anything she could to avoid reading and writing.

Raea look! You're in the newspaper!



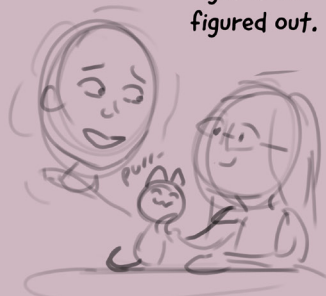
Everyone will be able to read your story now.

Cool!

Mew!



I'm so glad we got it all figured out.



Here do you want to read the article?



“Raea didn’t know how to describe it because that’s all she’s capable of now,” her mother said. “She felt like she had been telling us along that she couldn’t see, but nobody listened.”



I have a special story for you today. I'm here with nine-year-old Raea Gragg.

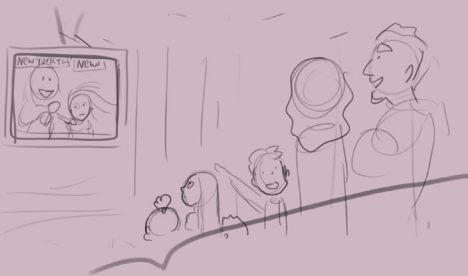


After years of  
misdiagnosis,

Raea is finally being treated with a  
seeing disorder called convergence  
insufficiency.



Aproximailty 13% of all  
school age students have C.I.  
but it usually goes unnoticed.

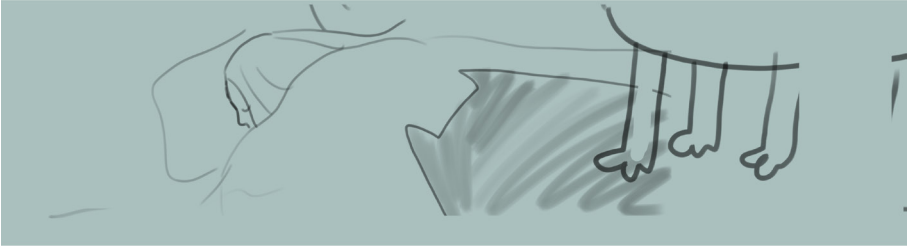


But now, thanks to her  
vision therapy and glasses.



Raea will be able to see and  
learn how to read.

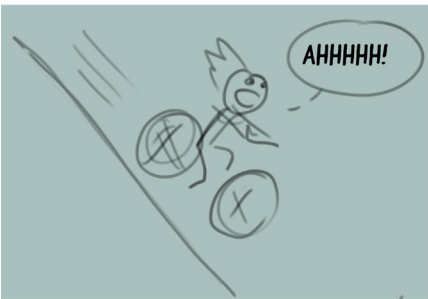






I love you bud, see you after school.





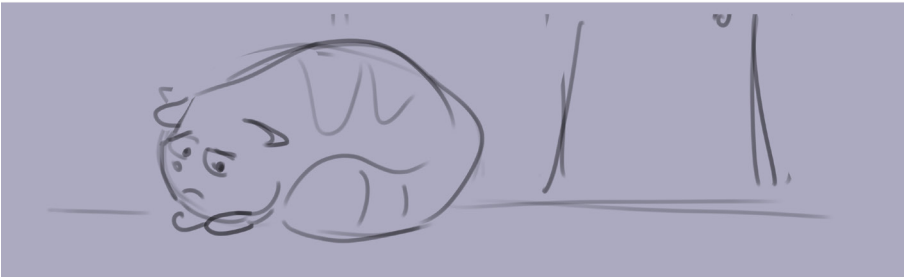


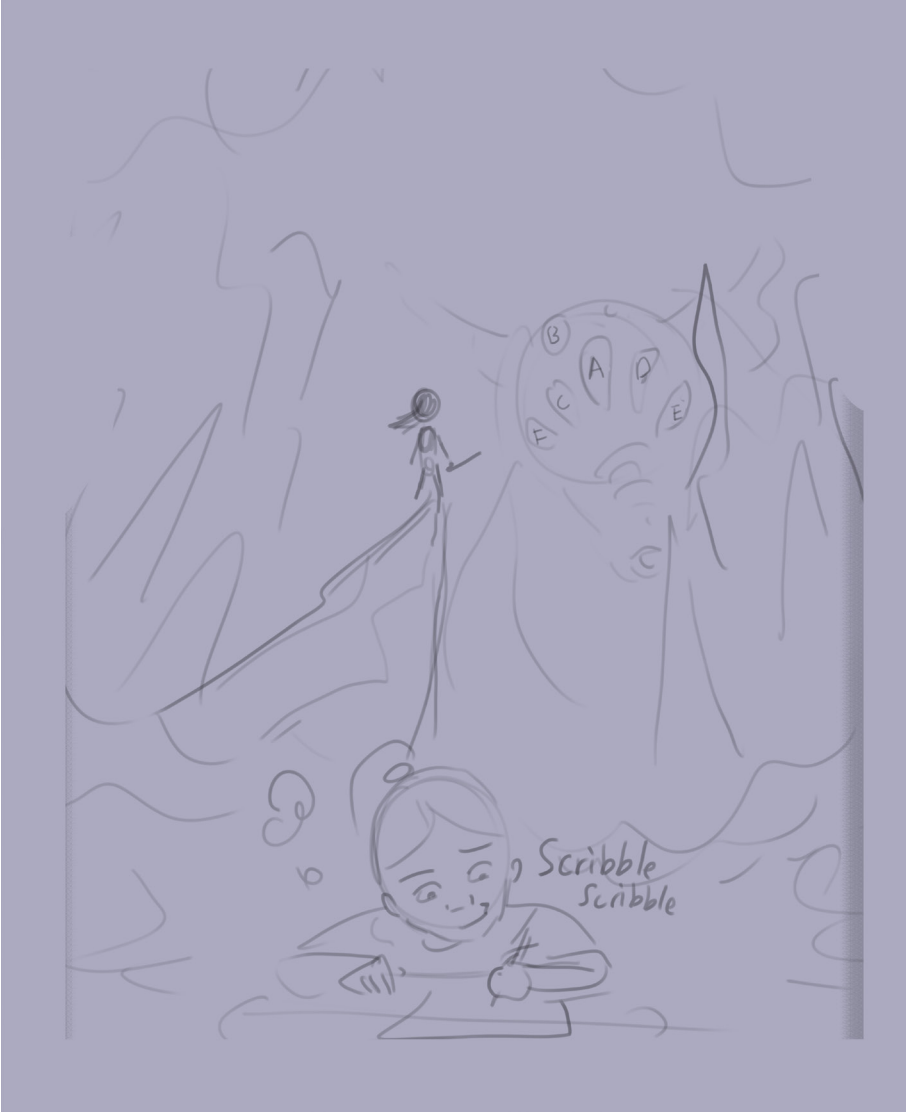
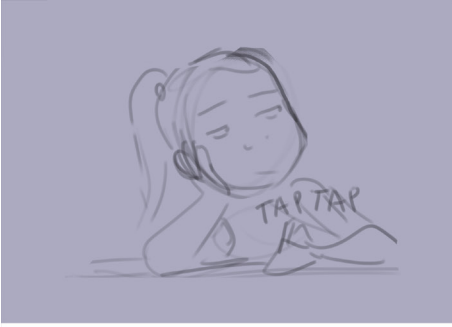
When will you be able to ride a bike like a normal person?

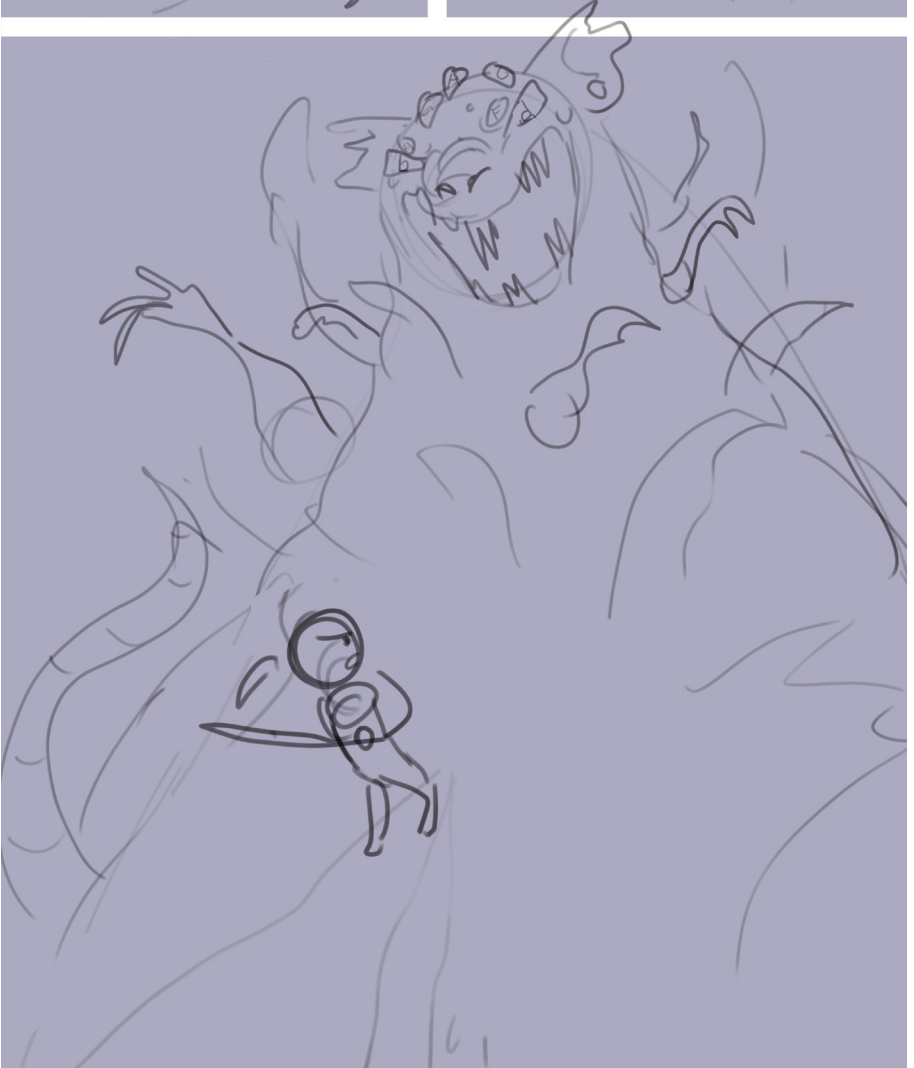


I guess... when I become a normal person.







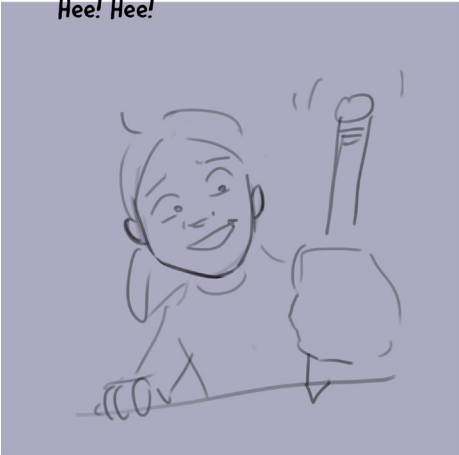








Hee! Hee!



Raea!



Book reports!  
You're up next!



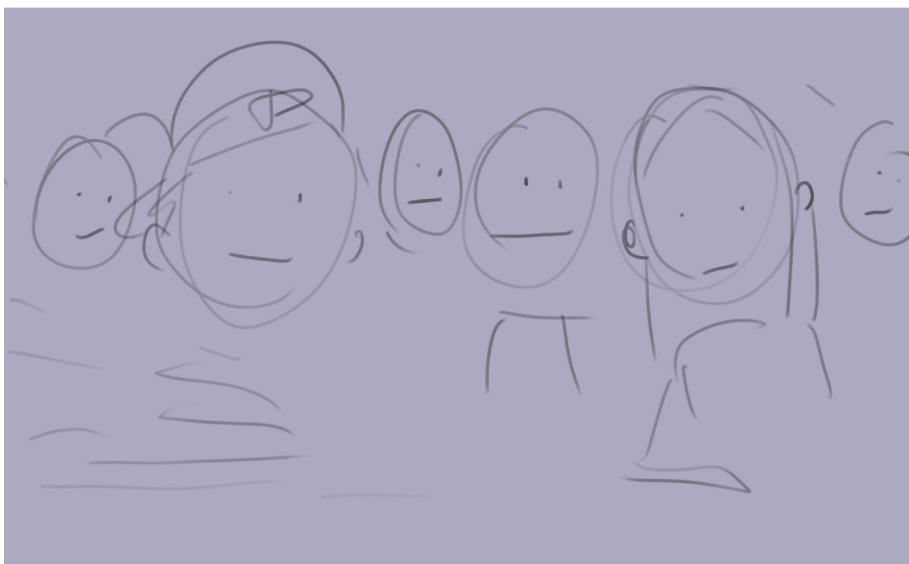
Thank you Johnny for telling the class about Victor Struse's, "The Living Legend of a Thousand Legions of Dragonsborne"



All right!

Book Report

Raea what book did you pick for this month?



My book is "Peek-A-Boo Goo" by Sandy Summers.



Oooooo

Picture books  
are for babies

That's not a  
chapter book!



Can she even  
read?

Class, quiet  
down please.



UGH! I can't wait to go home! School is the WORST!

It's not so bad. I love learning new things.

Well, that's because you're smart Jared!

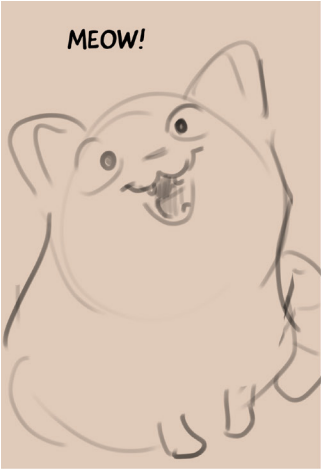
Thanks!

You are too you know.

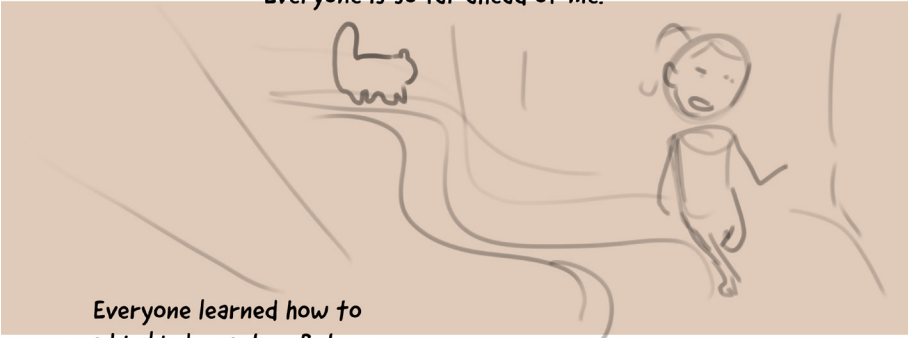
I'm... uhhh...

AHHH!

I don't think so.



Everyone is so far ahead of me!



Everyone learned how to read in kindergarten. But now here I am trying to read and I'm twelve!





Pumpkin!



You big goofball!



Hmm, I guess we are  
both not normal,  
Huh?



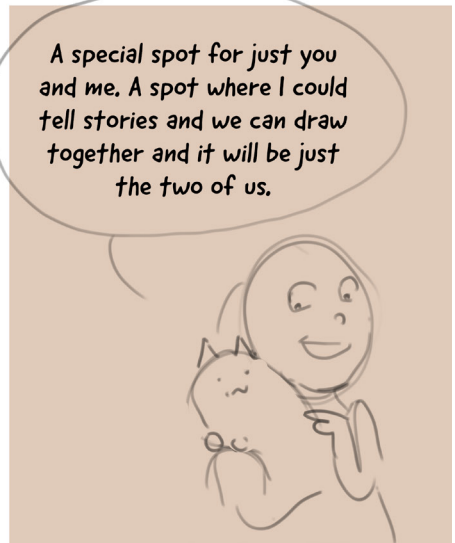
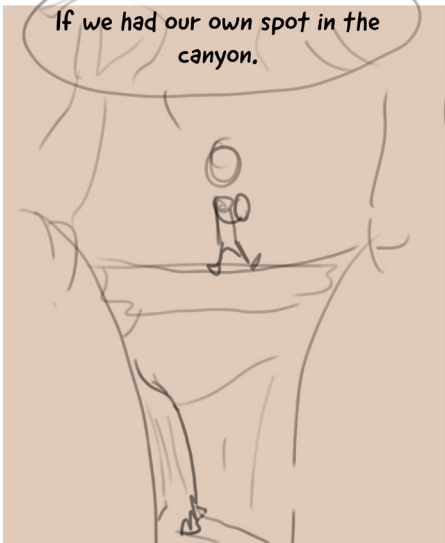
MEOW!

I love you Pumpkin.



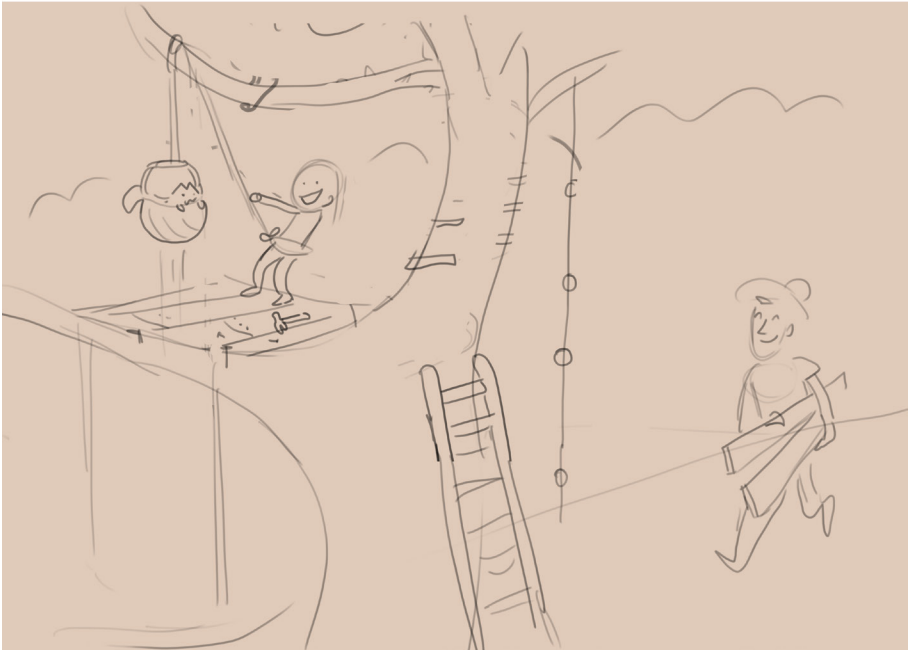
Gosh, when did you  
get so chonky?







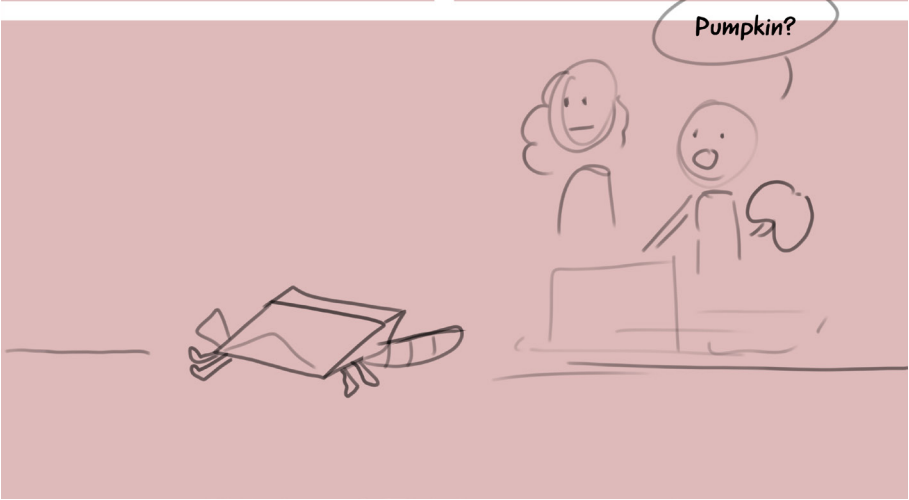
Let's build a treehouse studio!

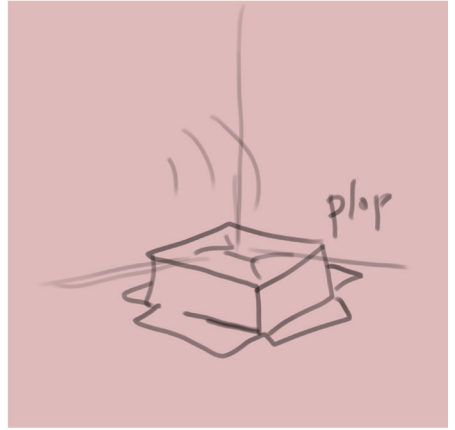


Wow! Look at all this cool stuff!

Who knew we had  
so many art  
supplies!











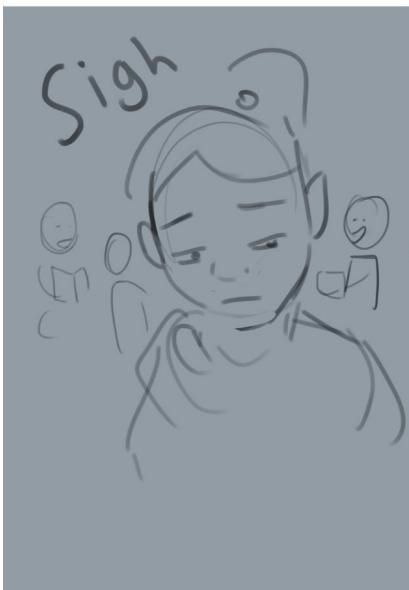
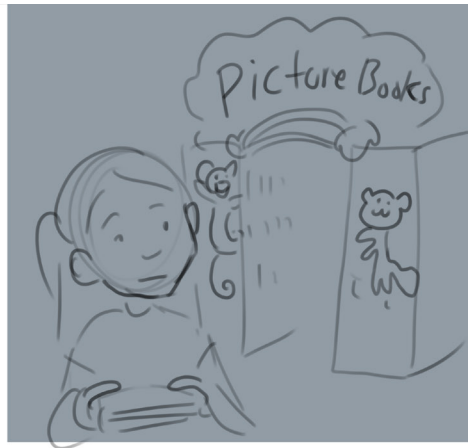






Okay everyone! Go pick your book for this month!





We have a new section in the library!



Comics and graphic novels!



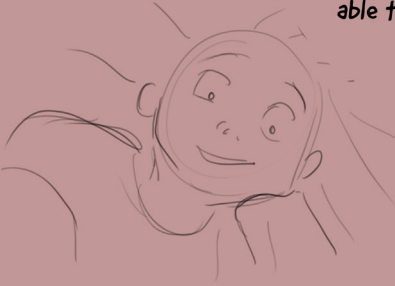


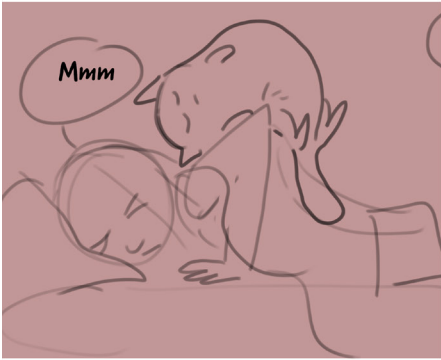
Pumpkin! Check  
this out!

It's a whole book  
but with  
drawings and  
words!



I might actually be  
able to read this.







Cool! A comic!



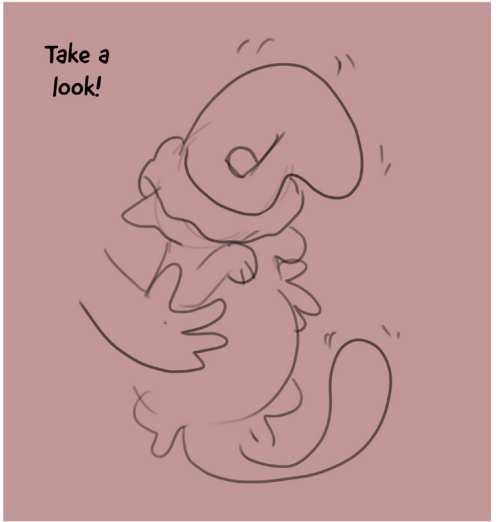
Thanks Mom and Dad!



Don't worry I got you something too.



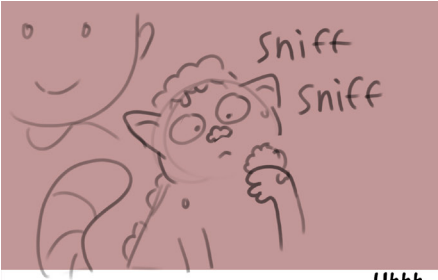
Here!



Take a look!



It's catnip!



Uhhh... Pumpkin, you alright?



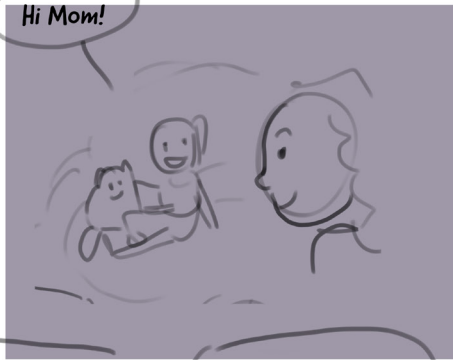






Hey Raea!

Hi Mom!



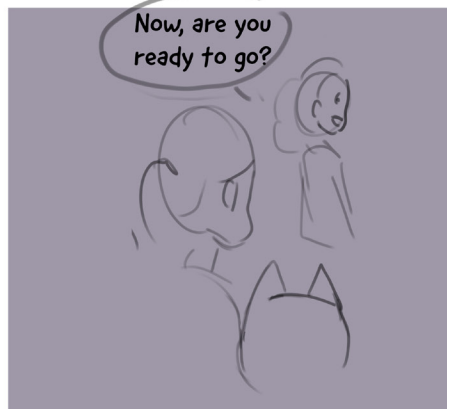
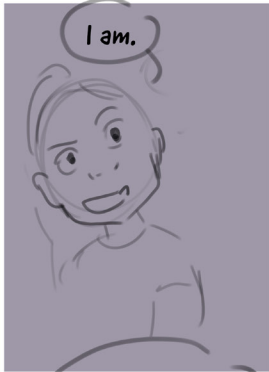
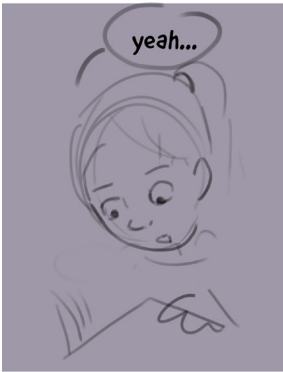
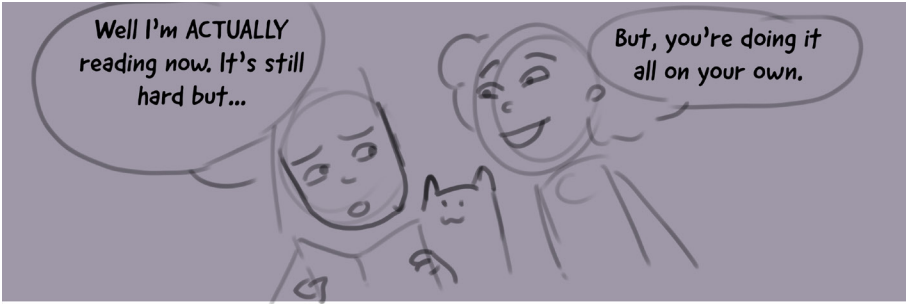
You know, I don't think I've seen you read this many books since your 100 book challenge!

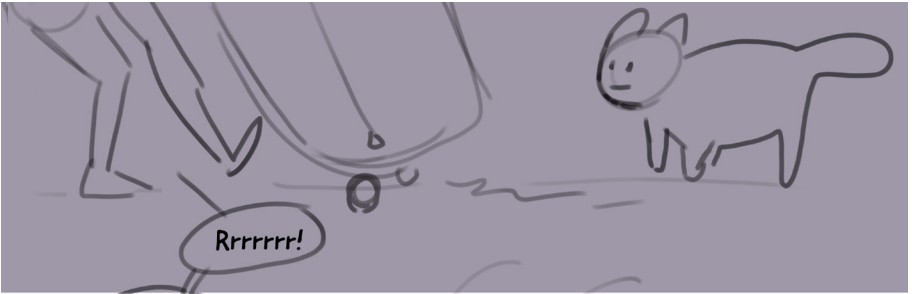
Oh yeah, well that was easy!

I just memorized a bunch of books and "read" them to you.

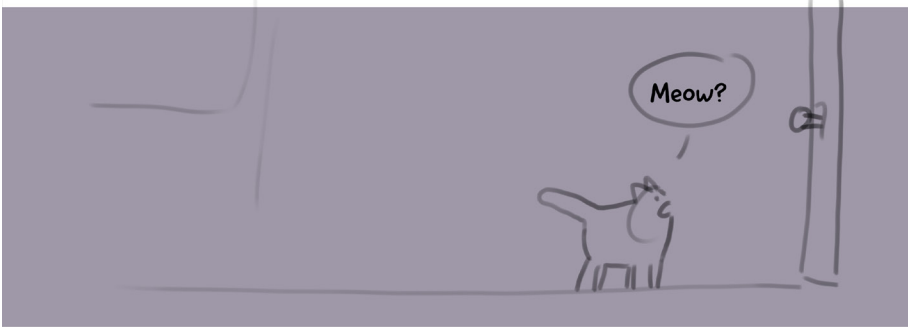


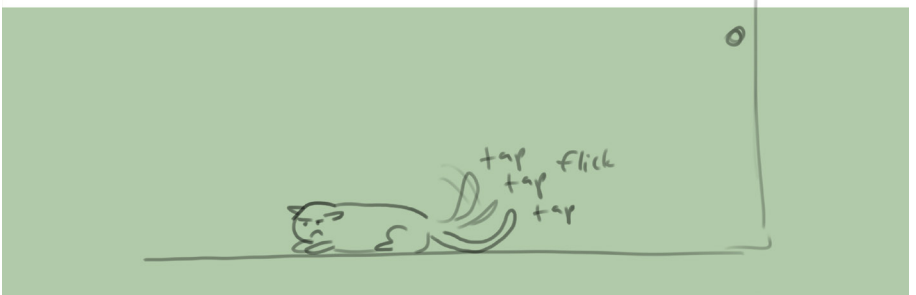
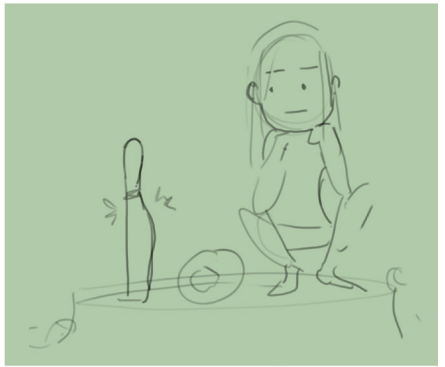
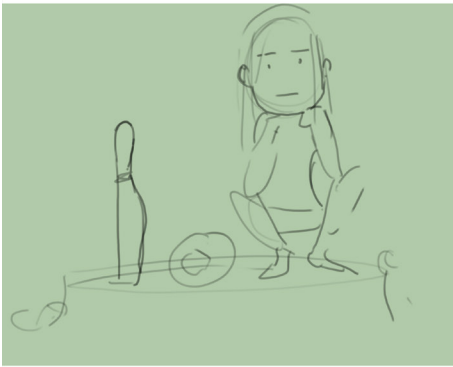
Wait.... you MEMORIZED them?







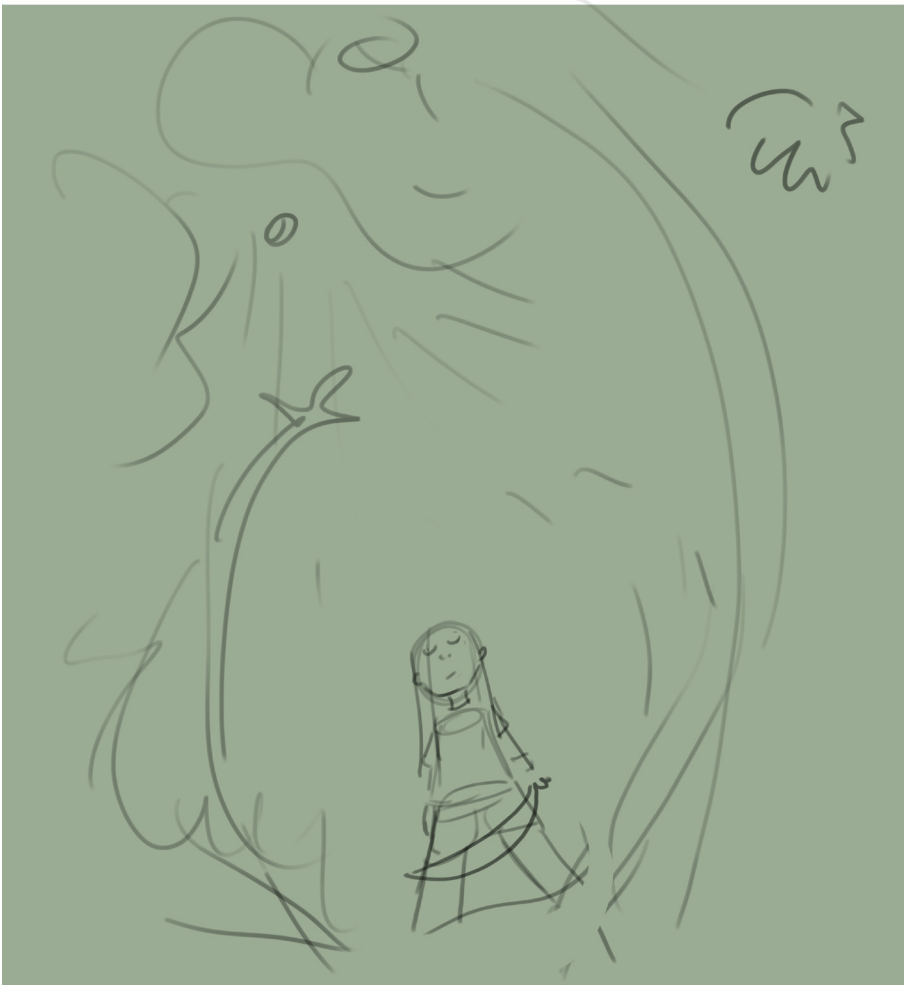
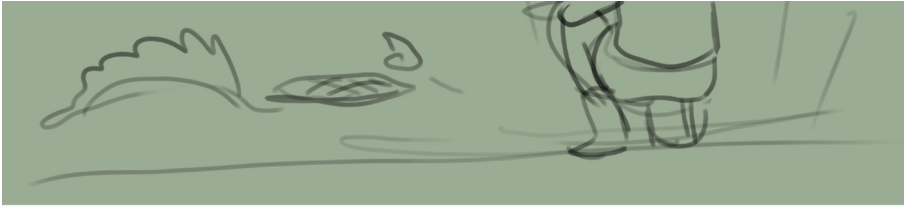


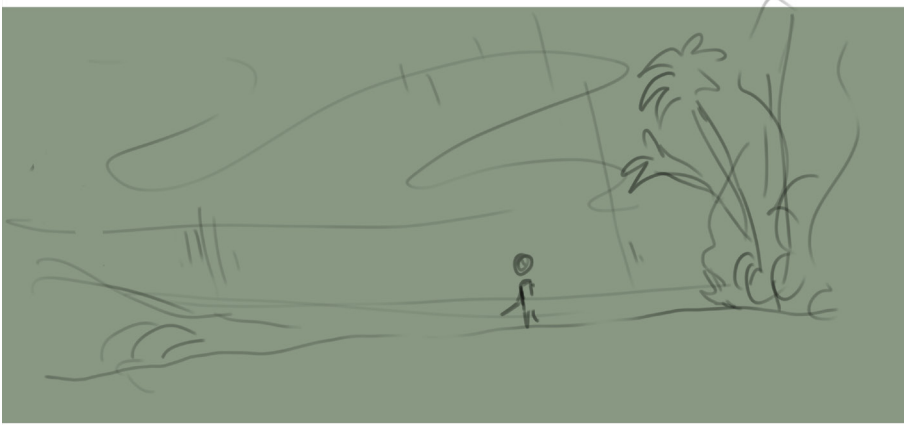
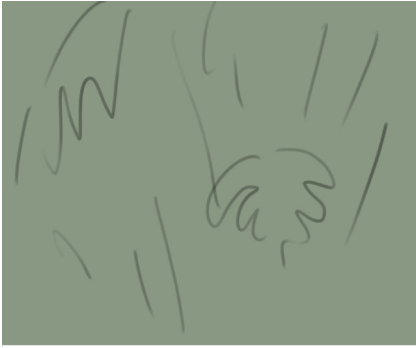


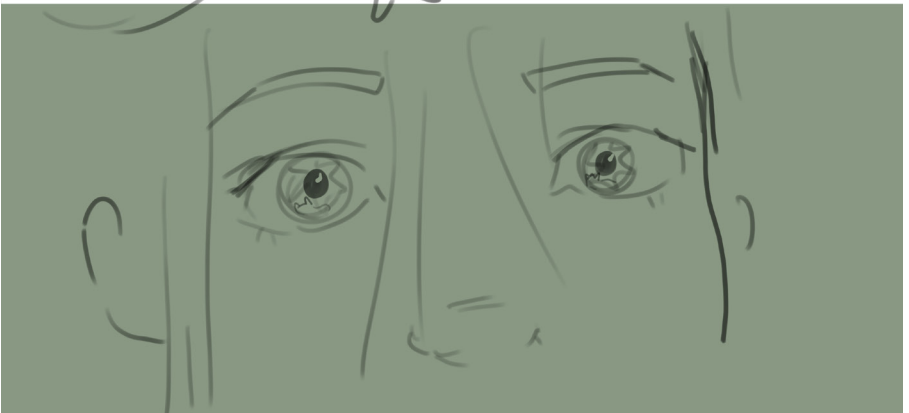
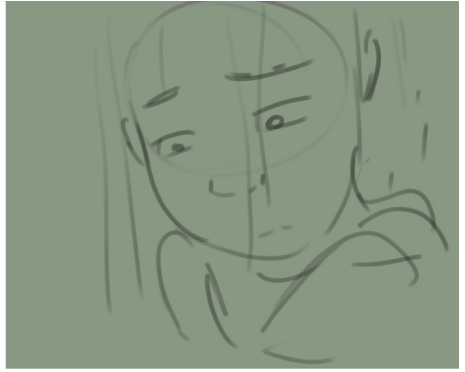


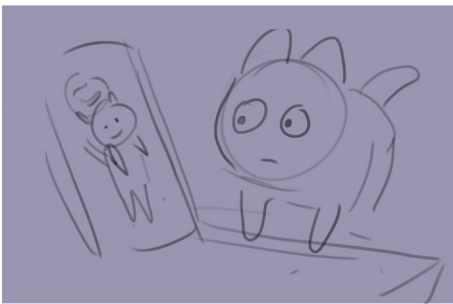


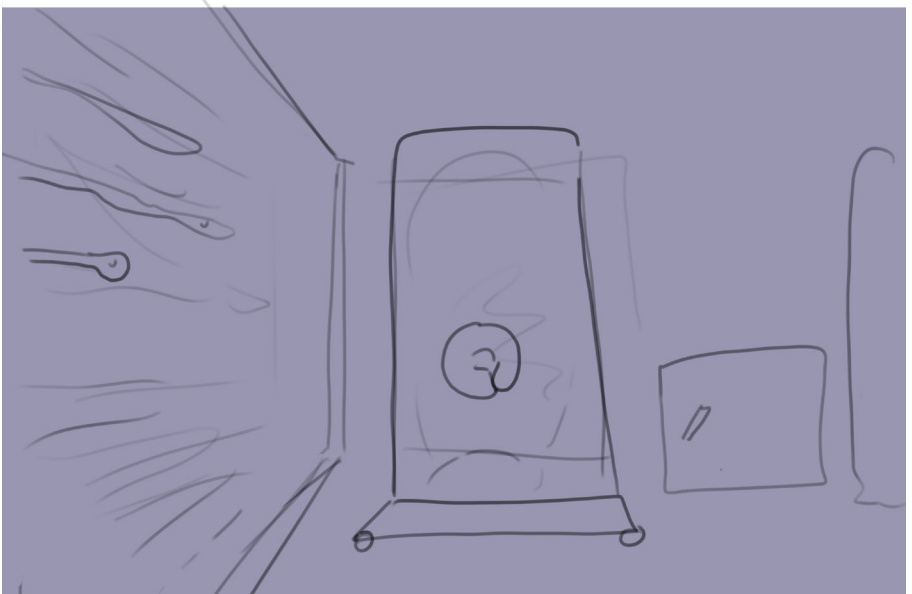
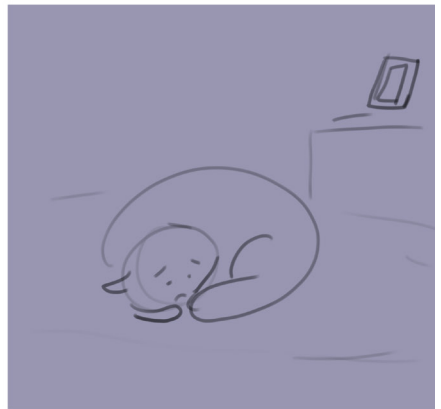
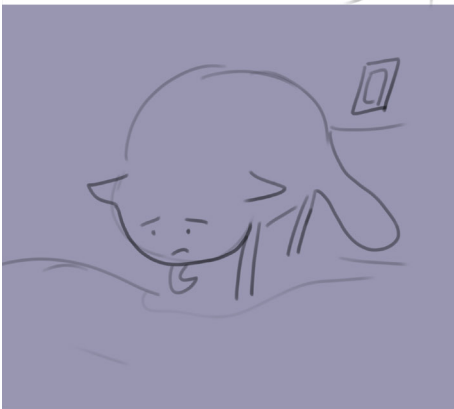
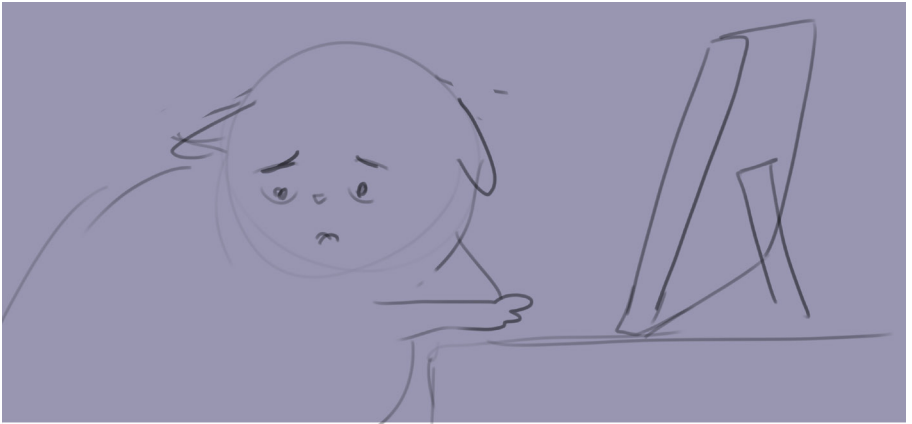


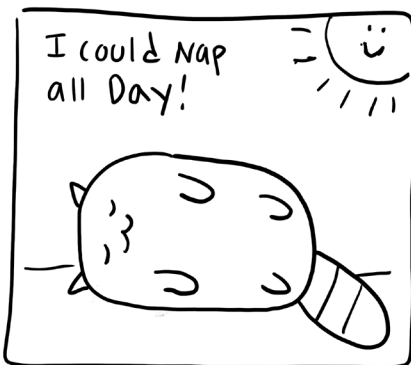
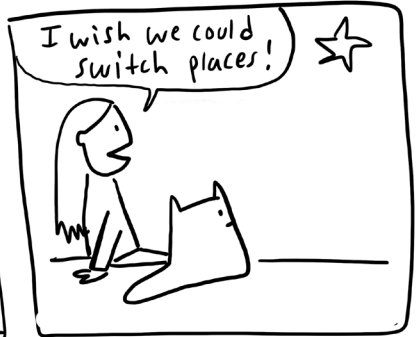
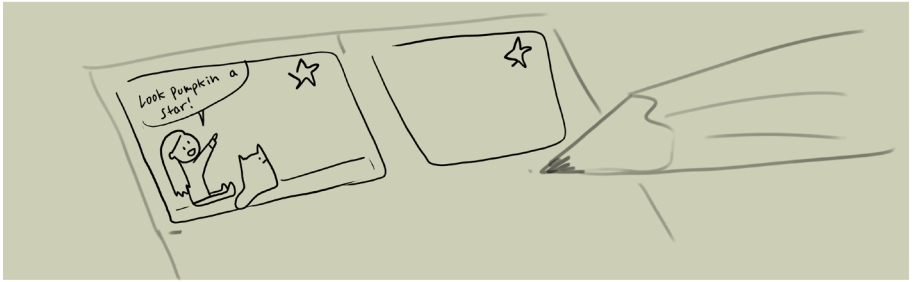


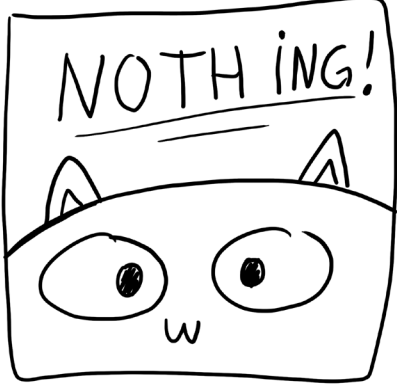
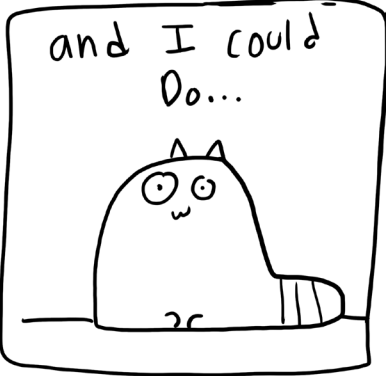




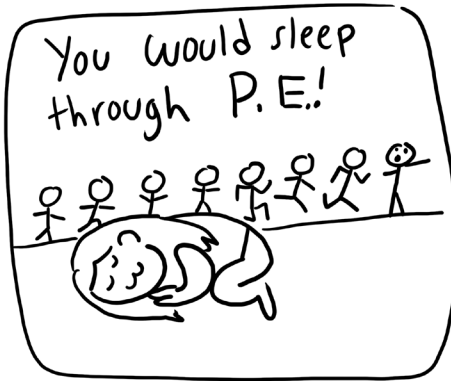
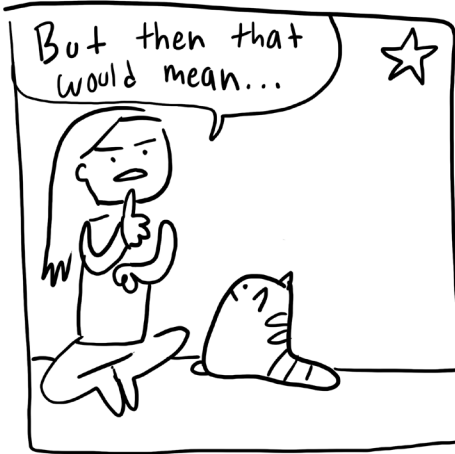


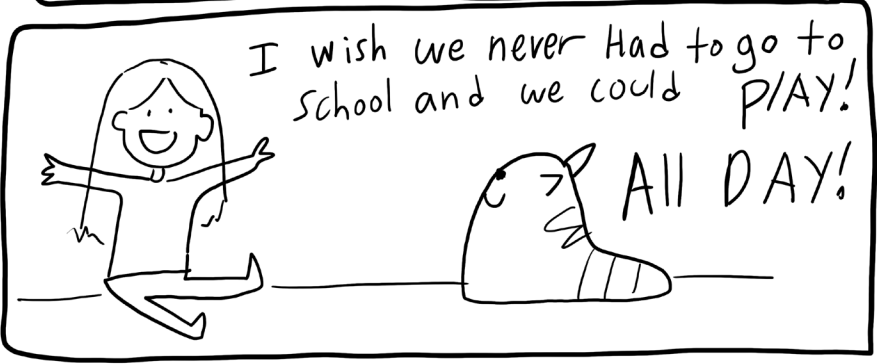
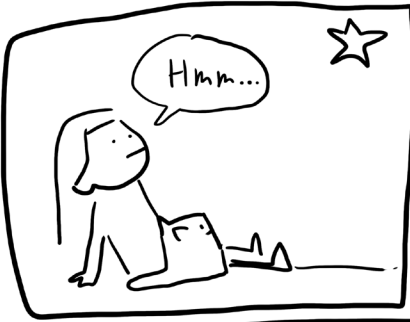










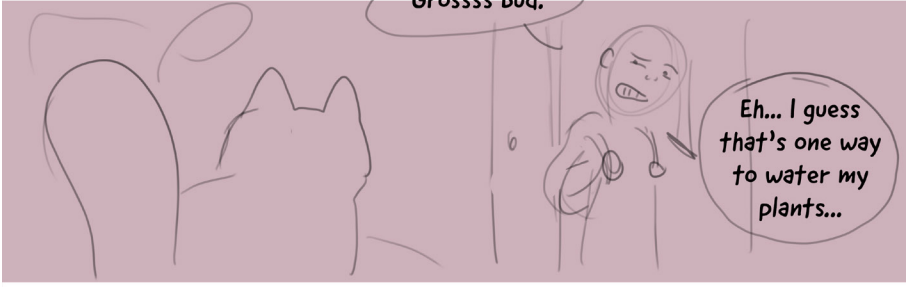


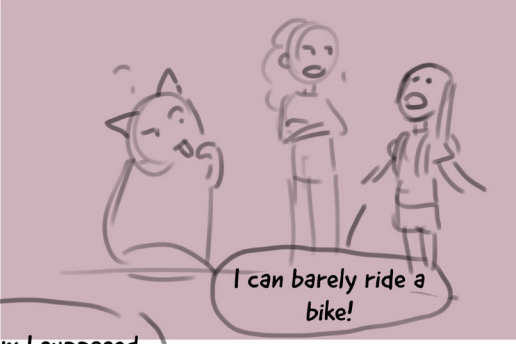






Grossss Bud.

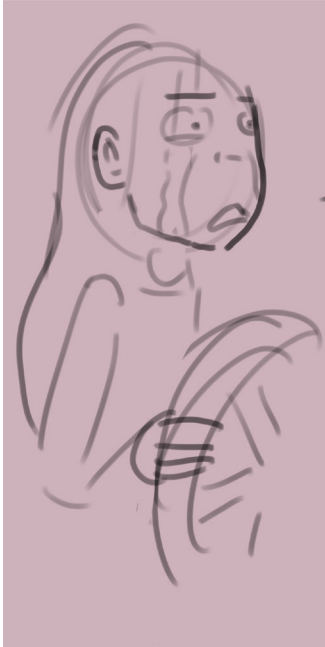
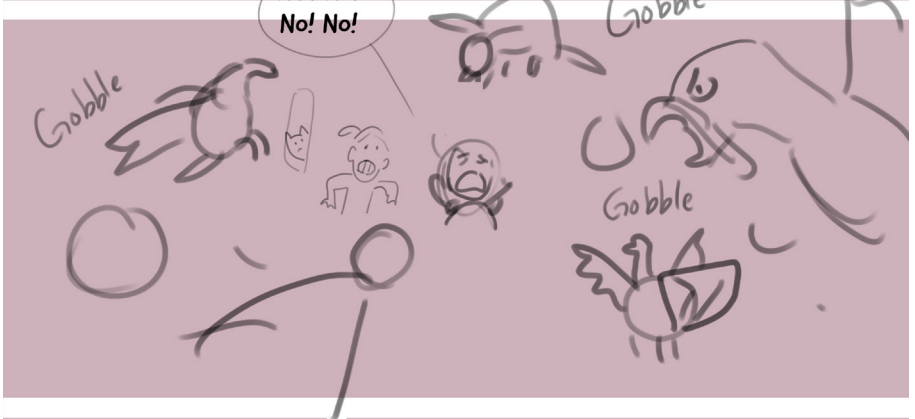
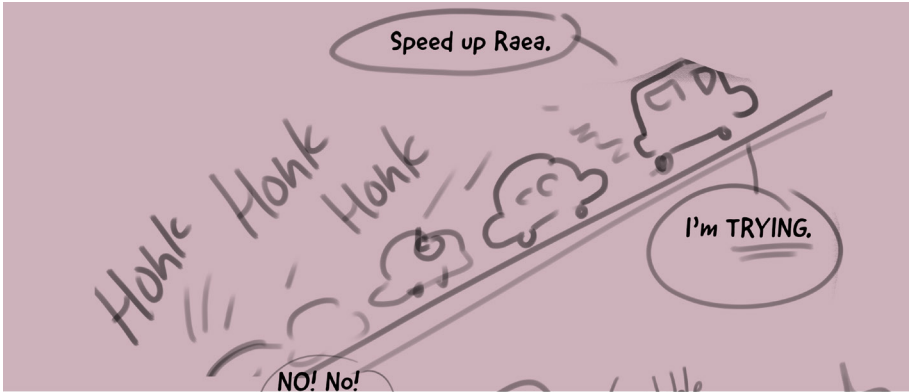












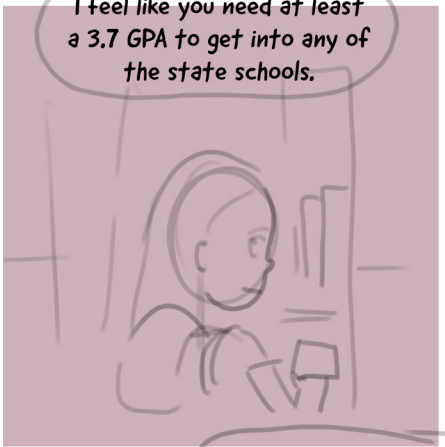




I feel like you need at least a 3.7 GPA to get into any of the state schools.



that seems pretty low to me.



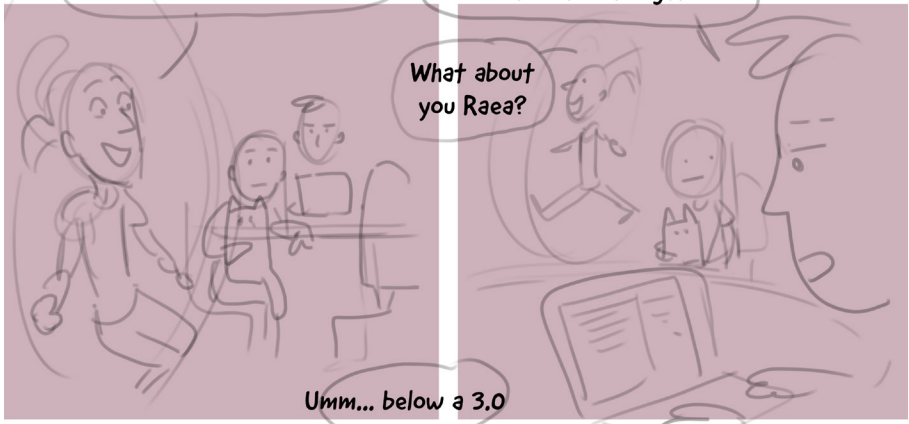
You really need straight A's to get into college.



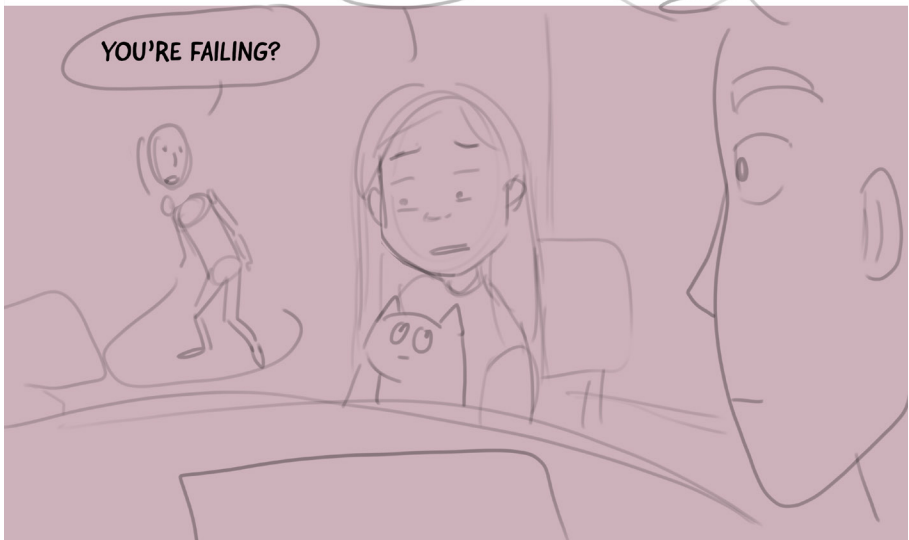


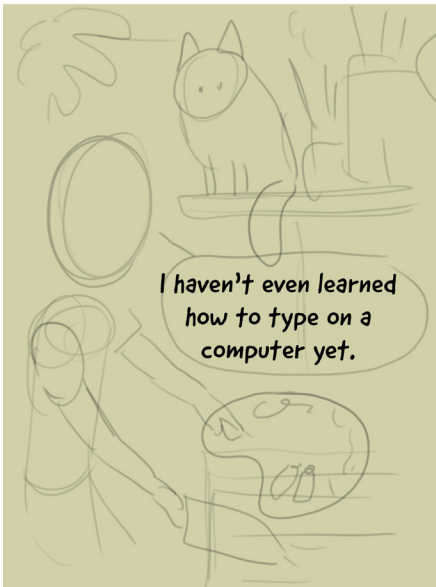
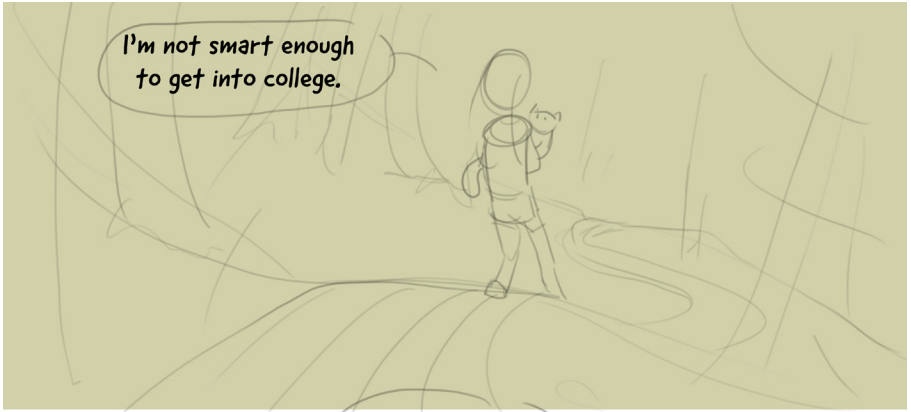
DANG! I only have a 4.0

That's still straight A's.



YOU'RE FAILING?



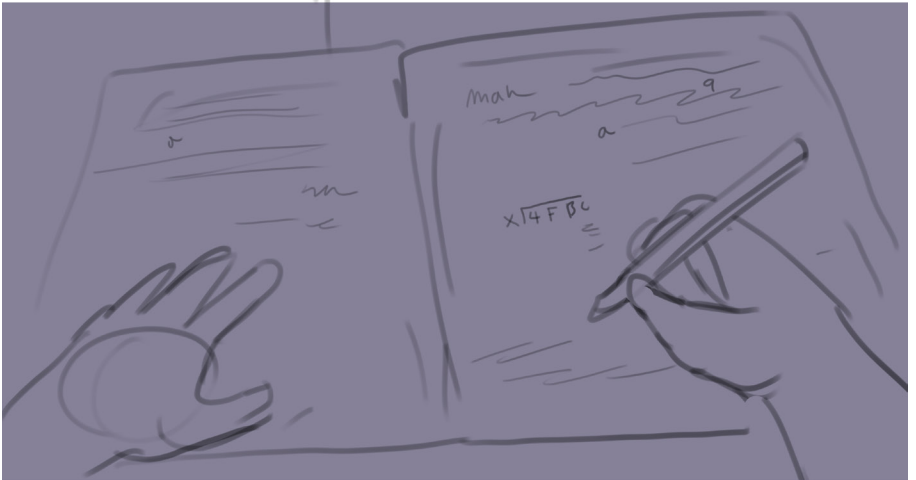


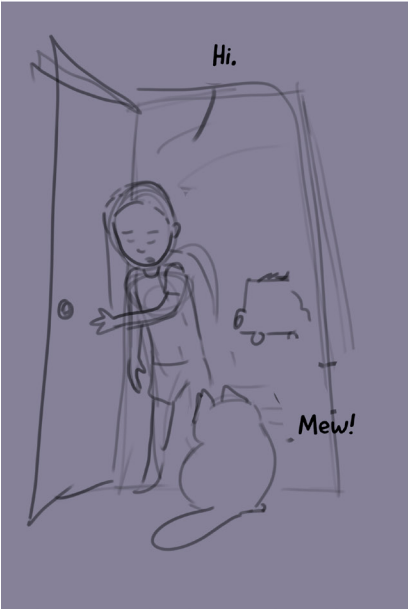


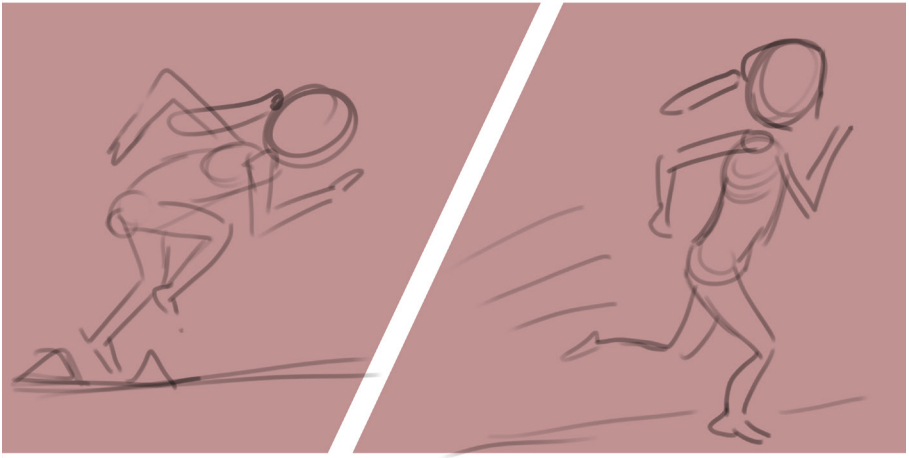


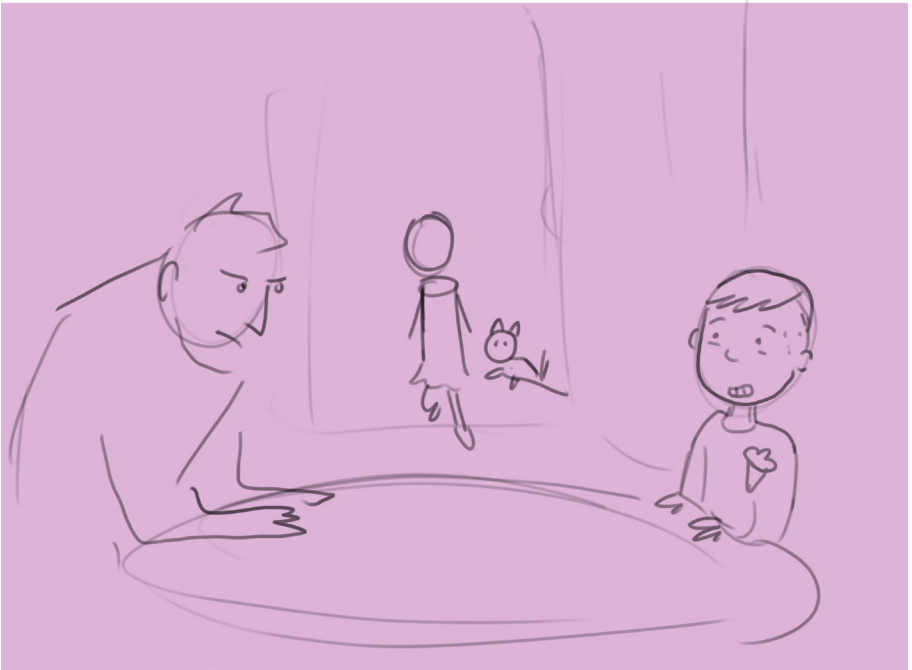
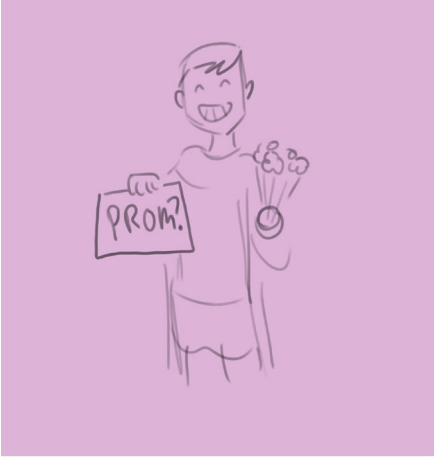














I'm so sorry, you should have told me you were allergic to cats!





I'm going to study biology.

Cool! I'm going for nursing!



I'm going to study computer science.



Meow?



MEOW!  
MEOW!  
MEOW!



Mew?



Hey bud.



MARRR-OWW  
Meow.  
Mew  
MEOW! Meow.

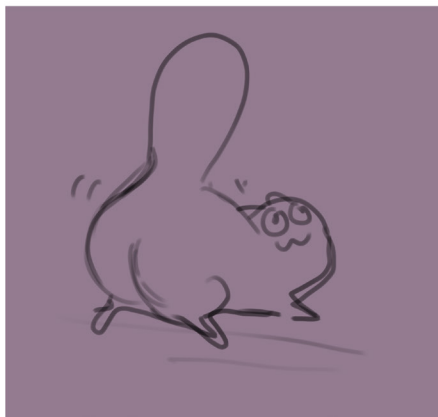
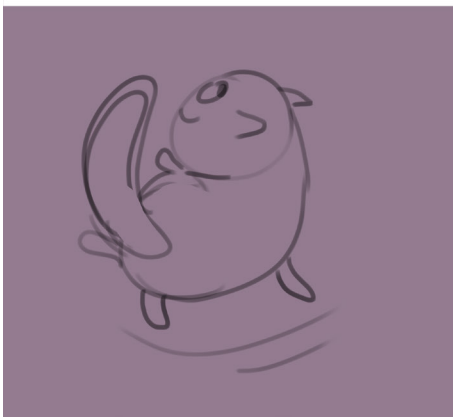
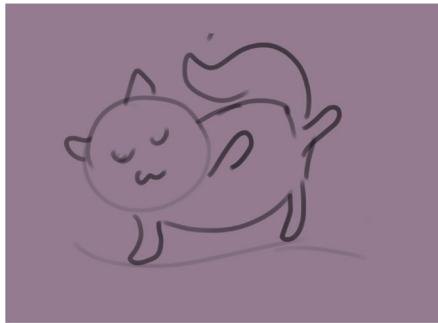
Prom was all right if  
that's what you're  
asking.

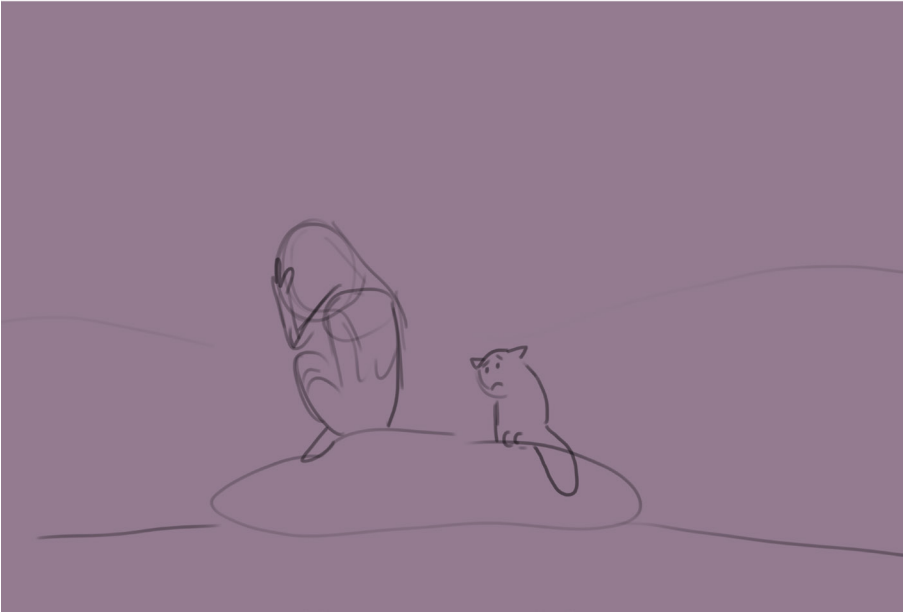
Except my vision problems are coming back...



Wow! I can't wait for  
college!







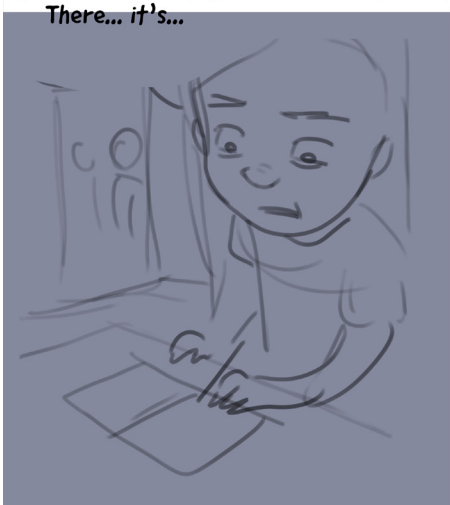
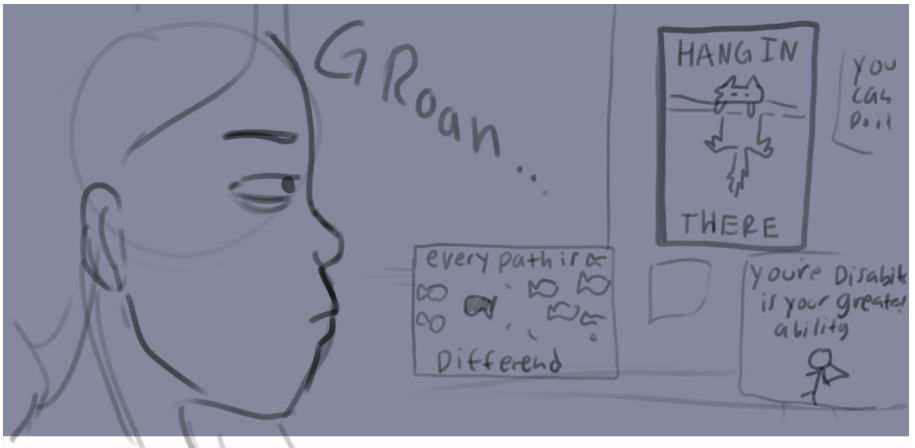


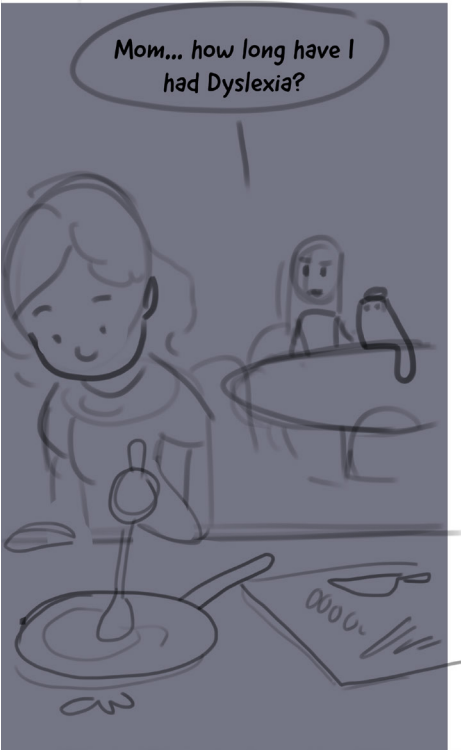
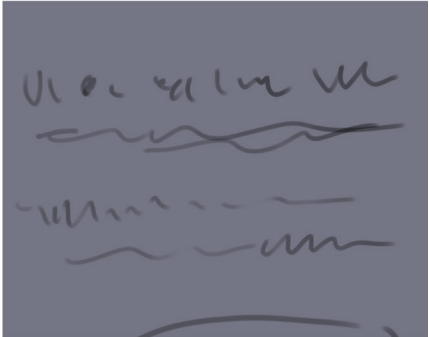
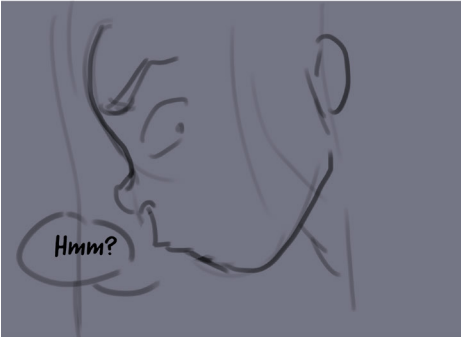
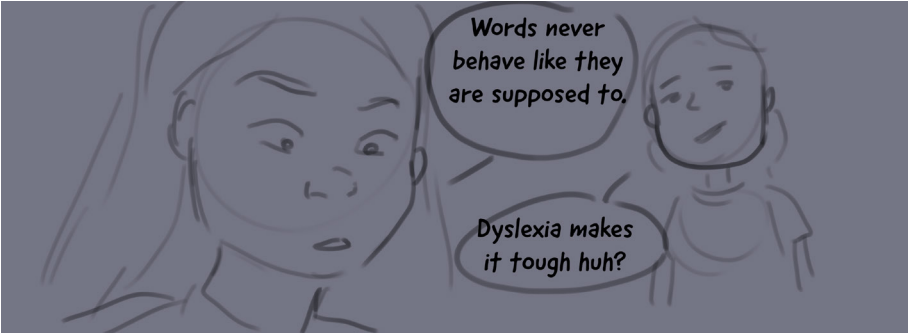
I know not... how to tell... um... thee who I am. Hateful to mee-self...  
and I written it. Um? I would tear a word.

Raea, that was incorrect.

Try again.

I know not how to tell you.  
Um... I know not how to tell  
you who I am.



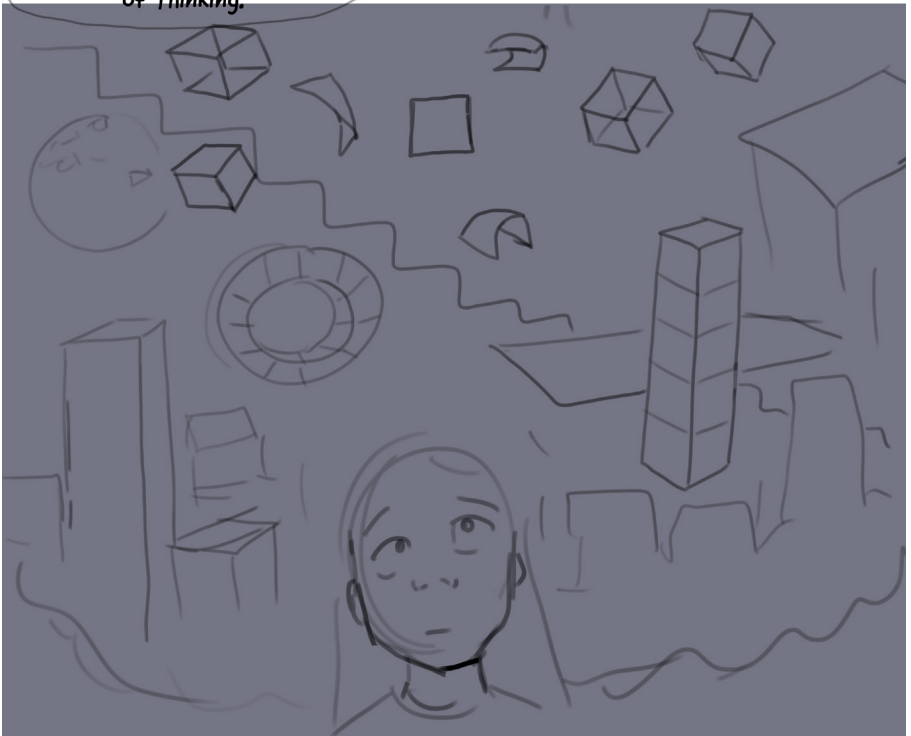
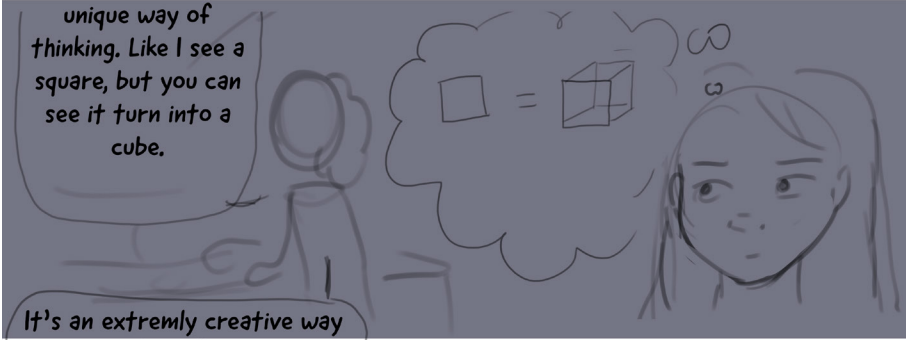




Your brain has a

unique way of

thinking. Like I see a square, but you can see it turn into a cube.



But since you see everything in every possible way it can be seen....

It makes seeing the difference between a lower case "b" and "d" very tricky.



So can we make it go away? The dyslexia? Like my vision problems?

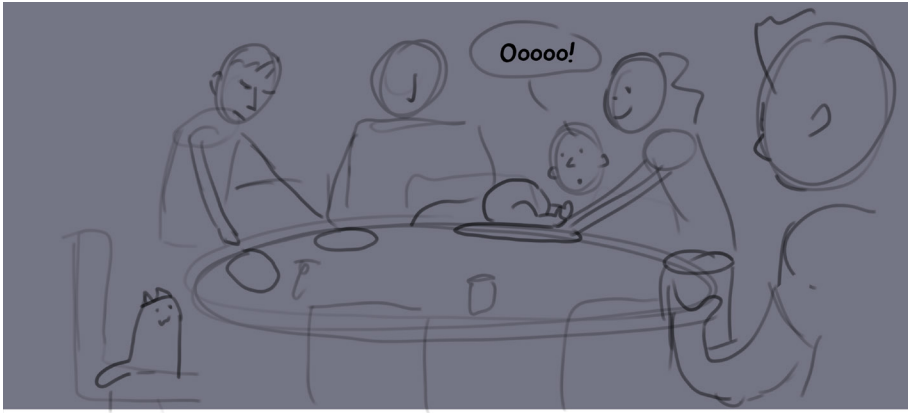


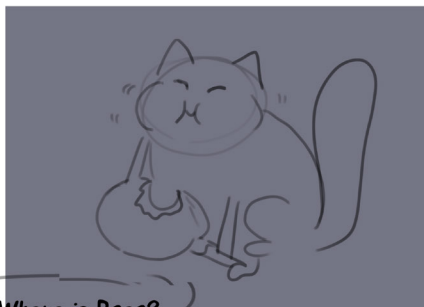
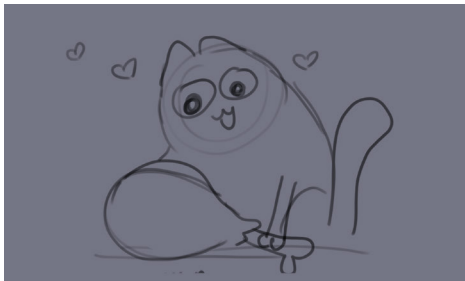
No.

It's how you think and there's nothing wrong with that Raea.

But it's not normal...



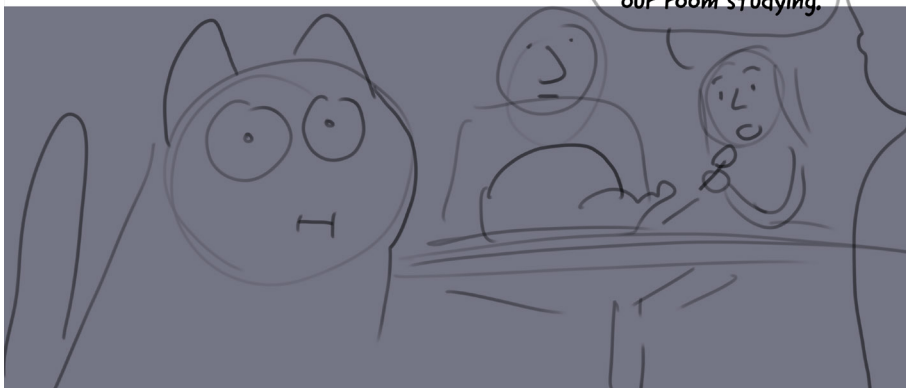


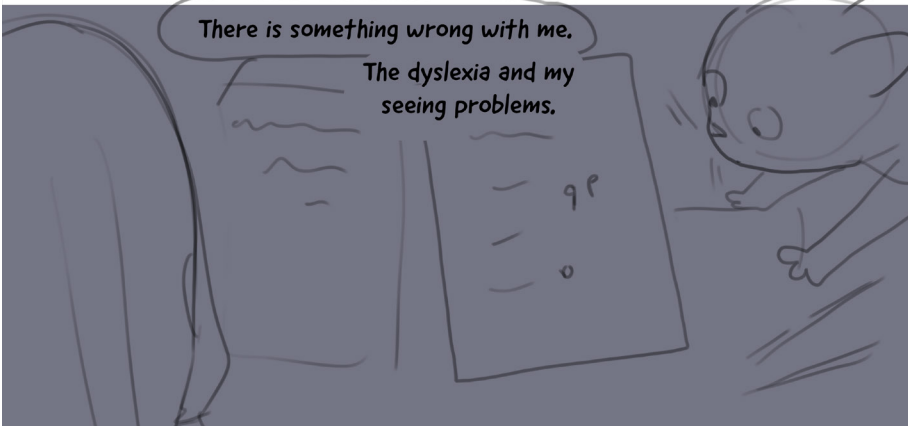


Wait! Where is Raea?

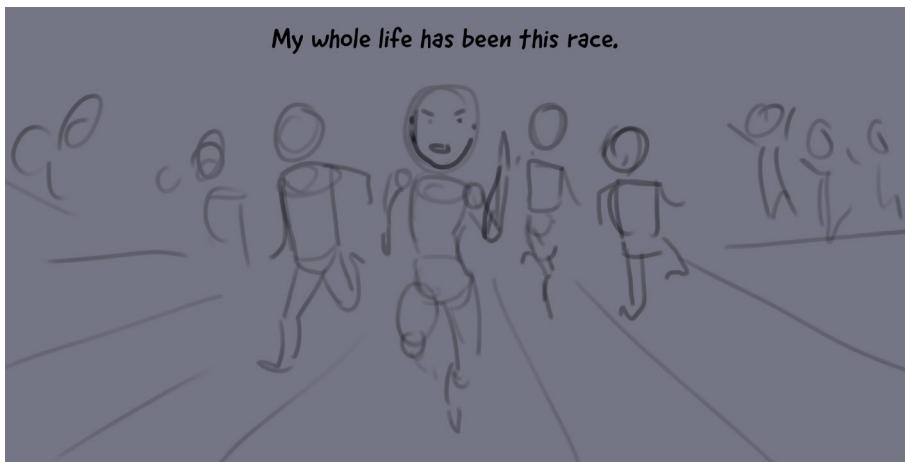


She is probably in our room studying.

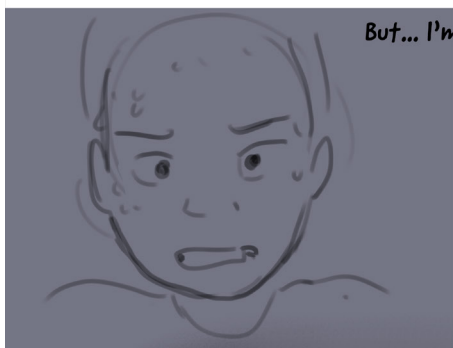




My whole life has been this race.

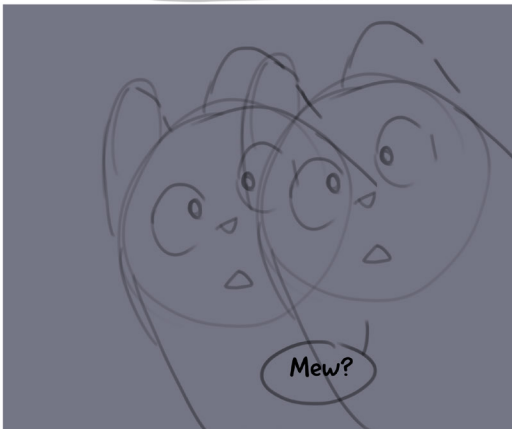


But... I'm just...



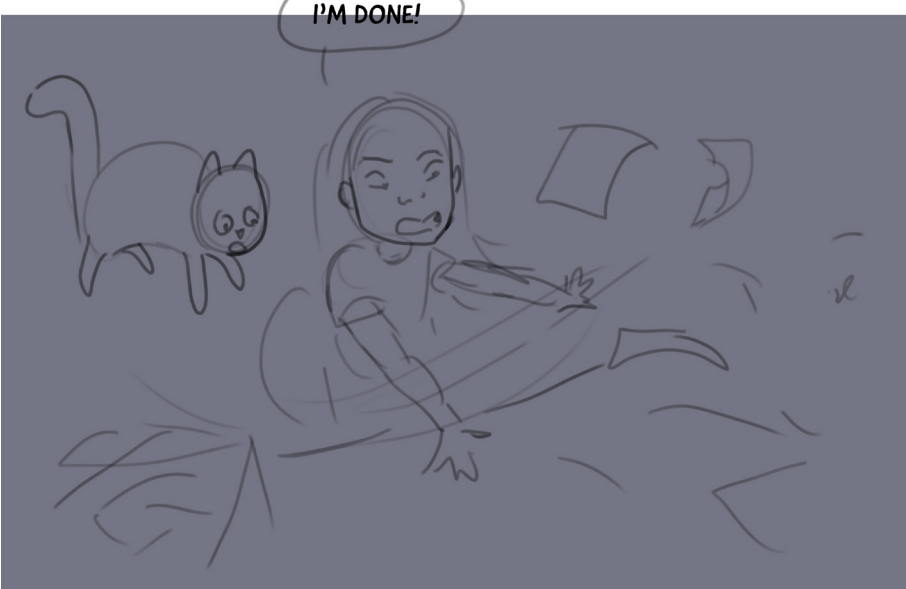
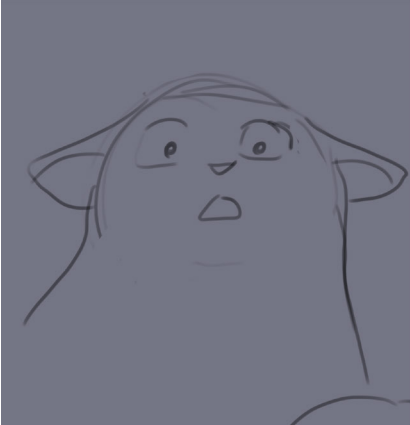
Different.

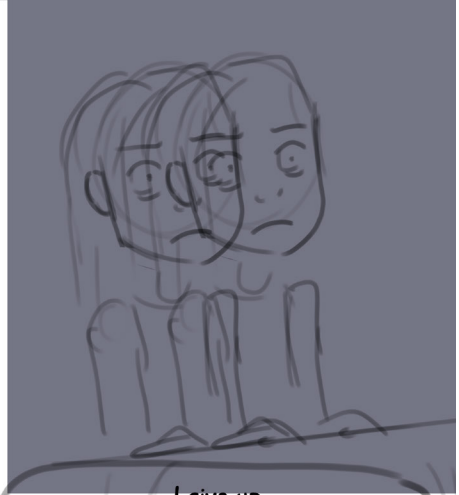
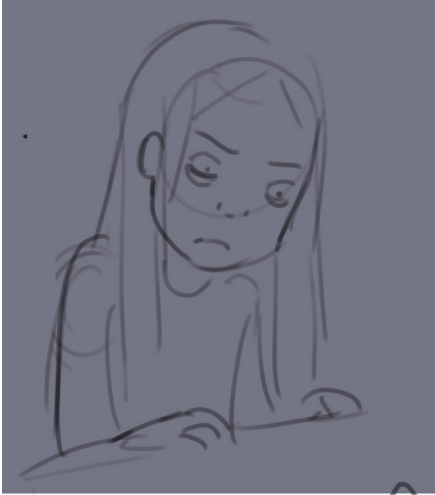






Meow?



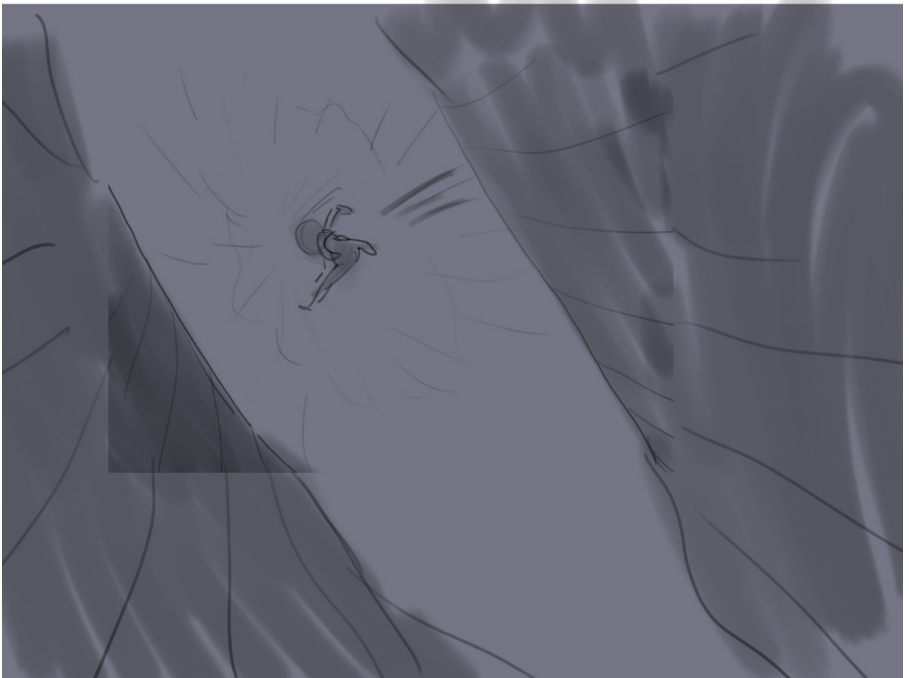
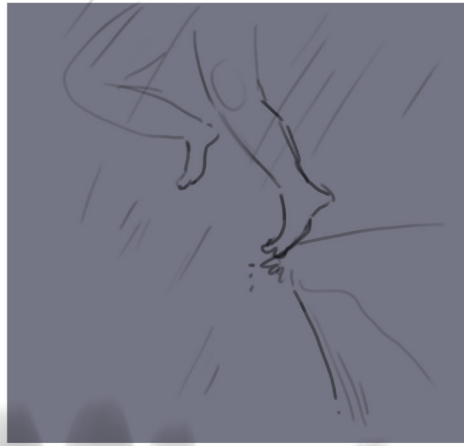
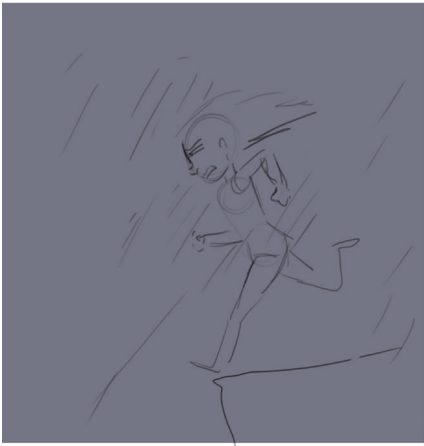


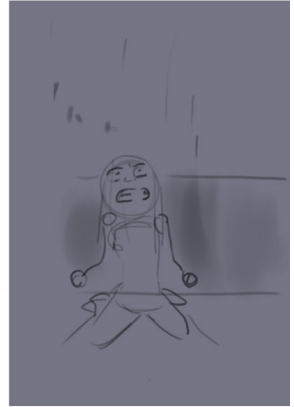
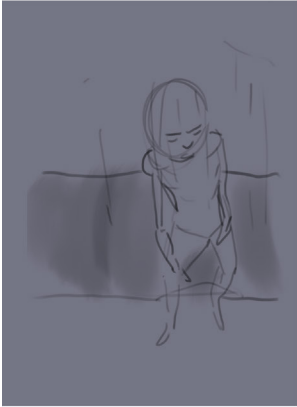
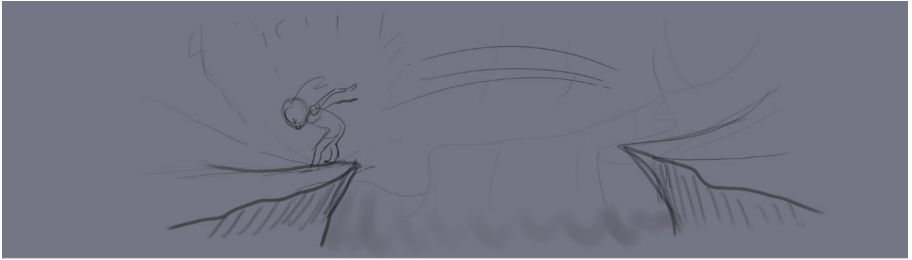
I give up.

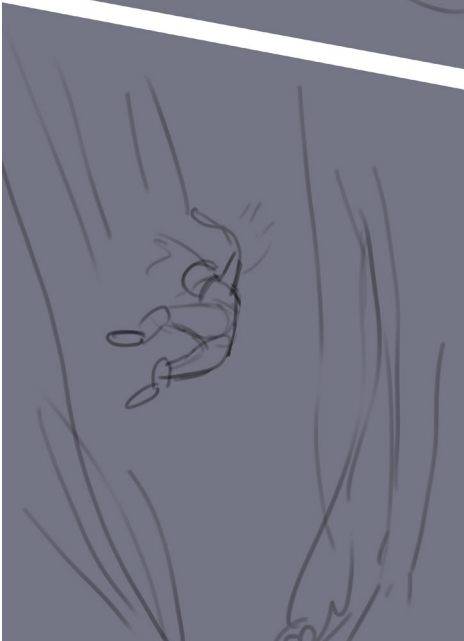
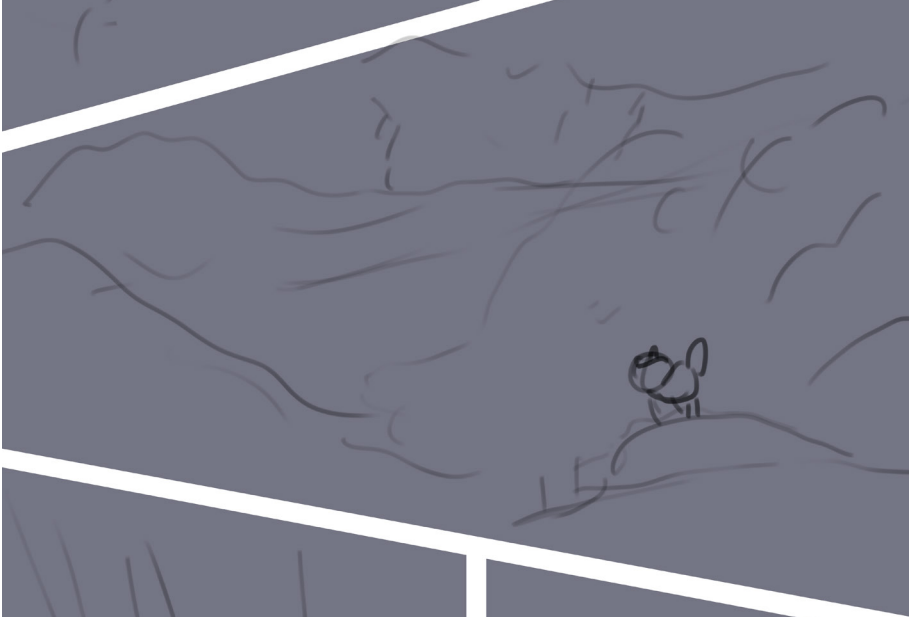
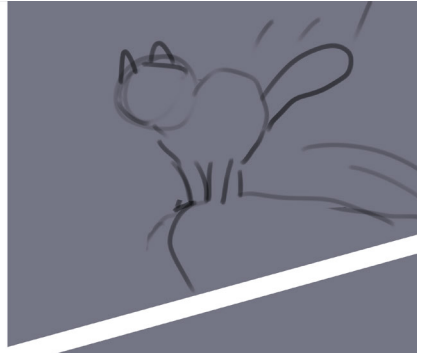
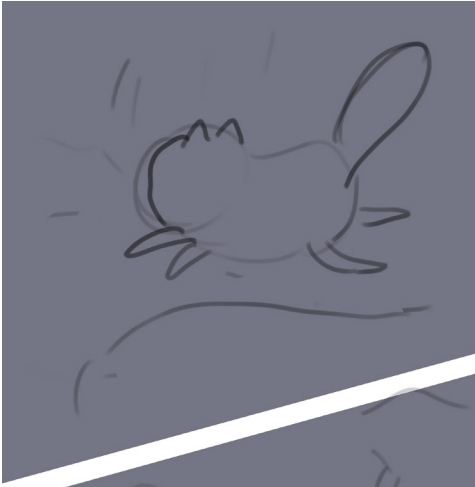


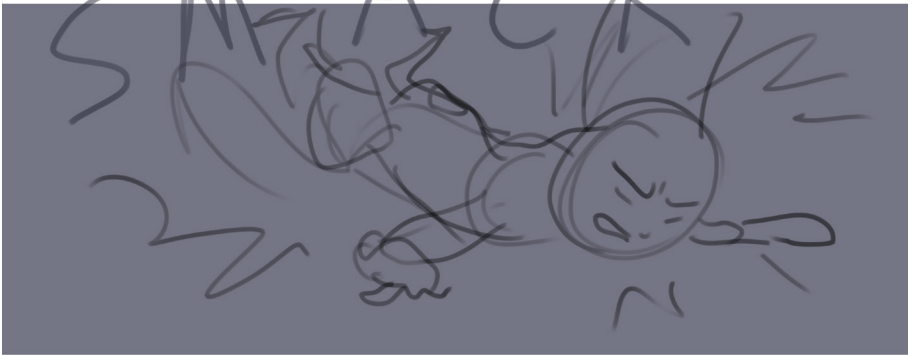
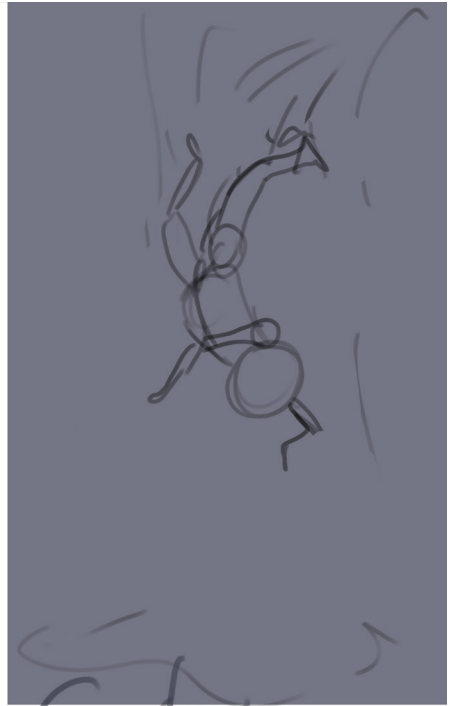




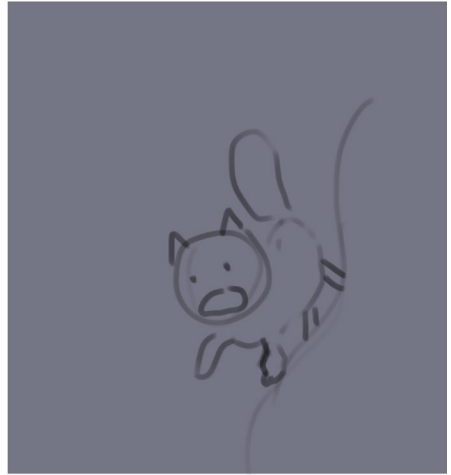


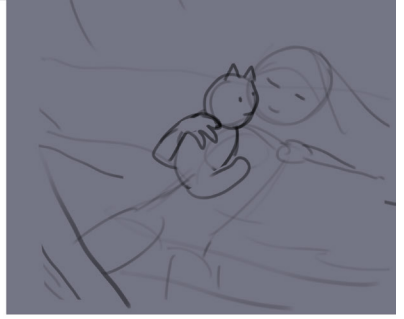
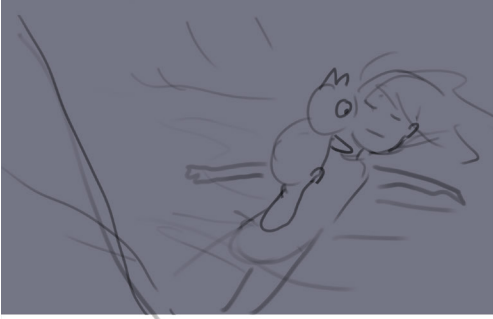












You're not going to let me give up?



Are you?



FINE.



I'm up. I'm up.













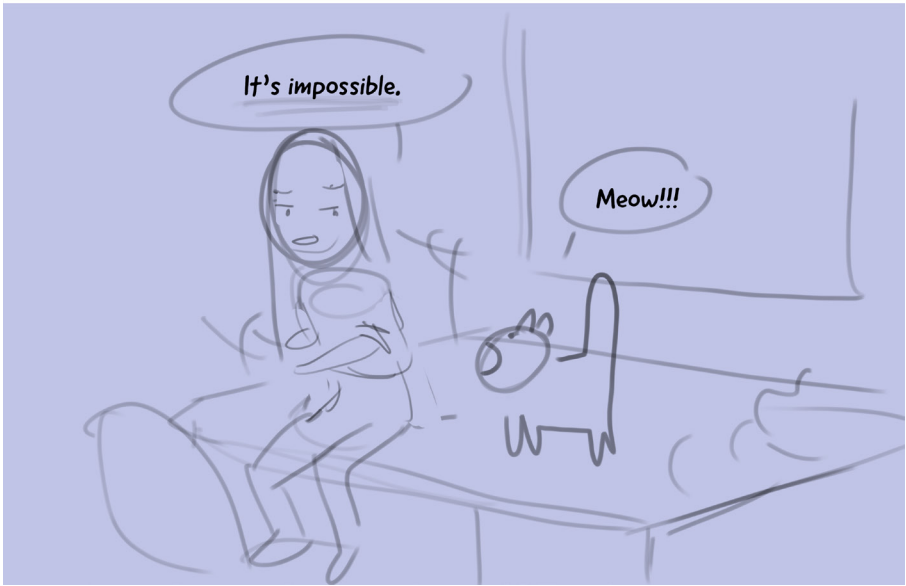
Um... Pumpkin, I learned to read five years ago and it's still a struggle! Plus, I can't type. And grammar forget about it.



Plus I HATE BOOKS (except comics)

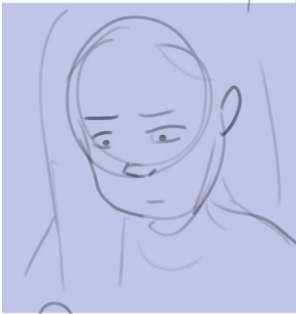
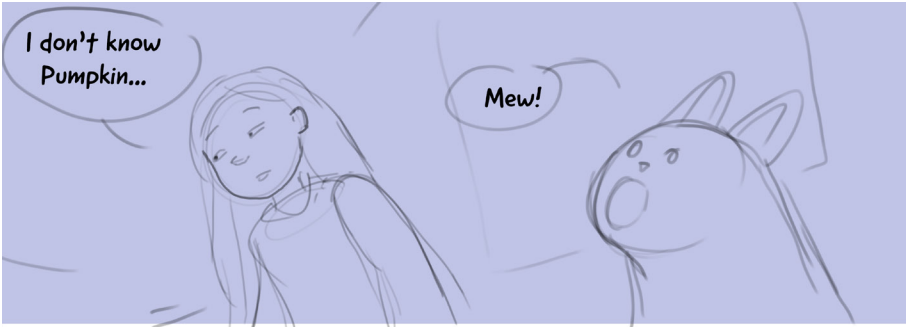


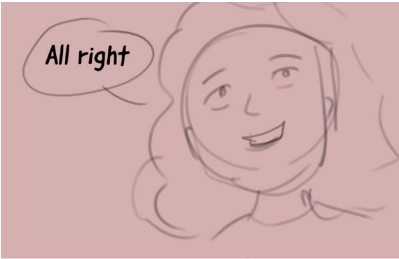
MARR-OWWWW!



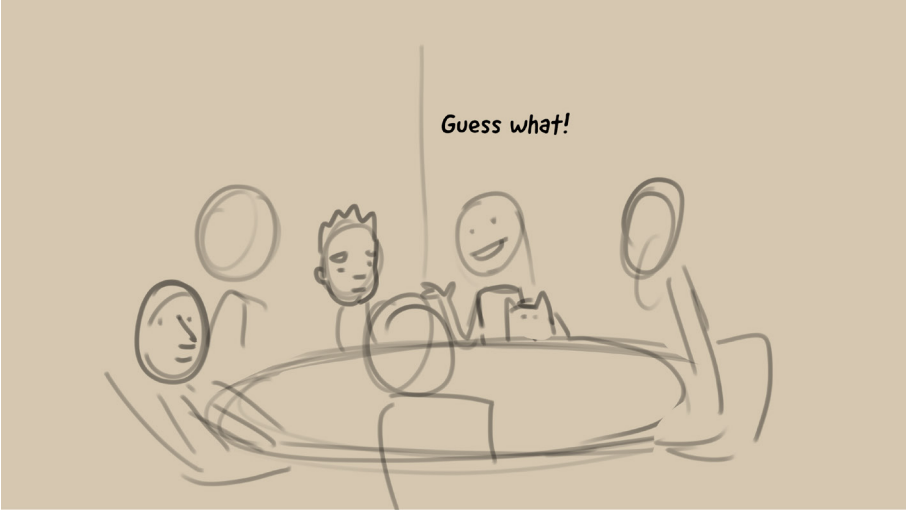
It's impossible.

Meow!!!





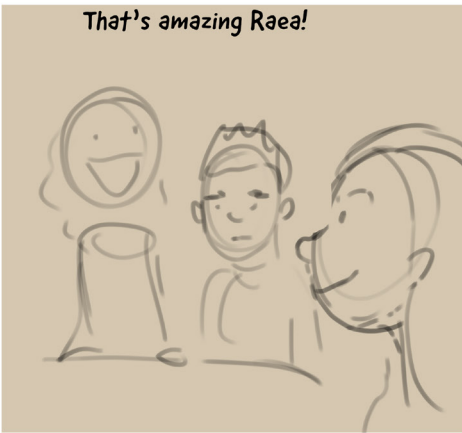




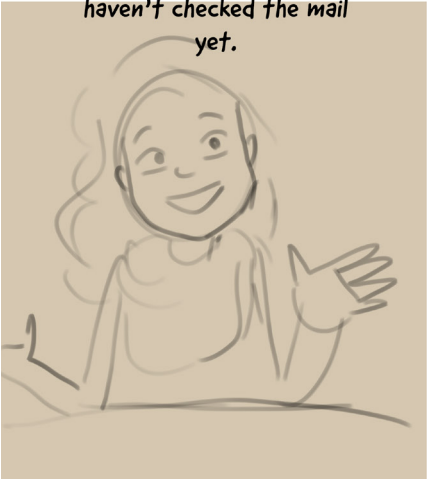
Guess what!



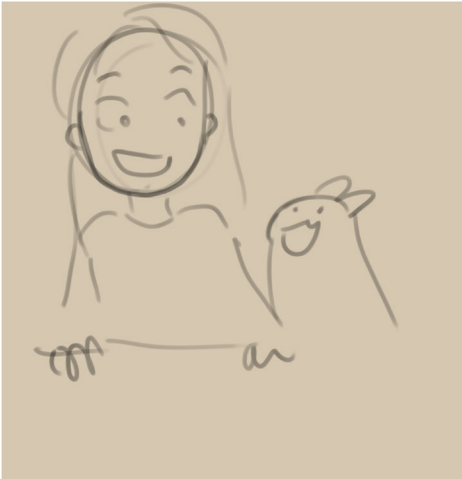
I'm passing all my classes and I got an art award!



That's amazing Raea!



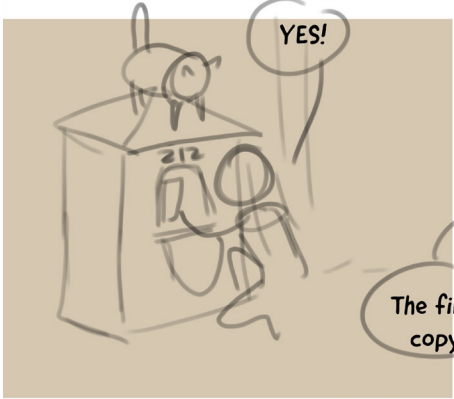
Oh! You know what? I haven't checked the mail yet.





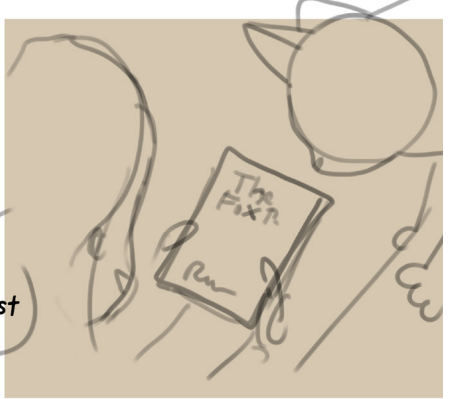


Let's go bud!



YES!

The first copy!



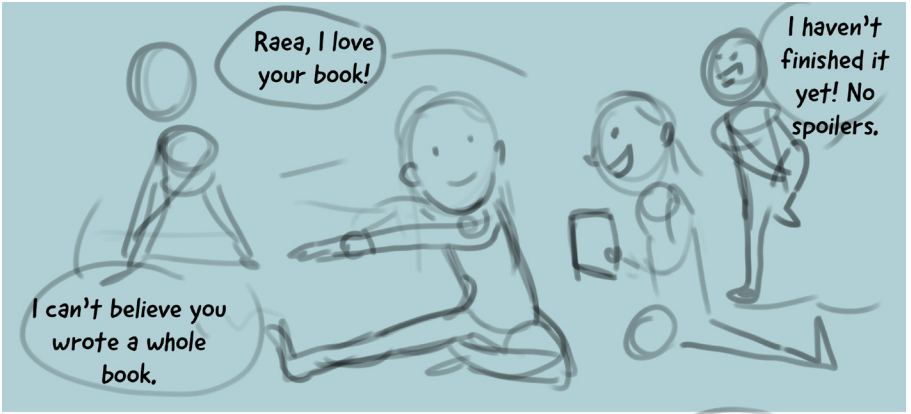
Doesn't surprise me!  
You are the most  
creative person I  
know!

I did it! I wrote A BOOK!

Good job Raea!

Nooiiiccee.





All I did was try... try to do something I previously thought impossible.



Raea!



What is it?



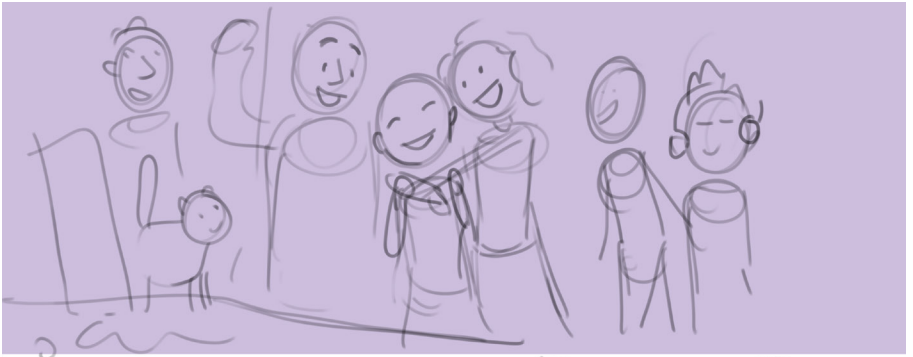
Look! You've been taken off the waitlist!

CONGRATULATIONS  
welcome to our  
University!

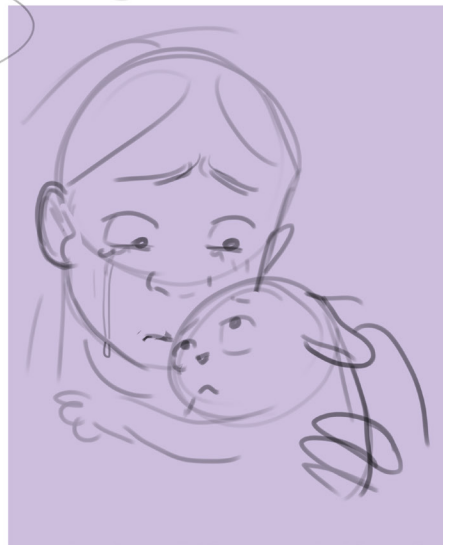
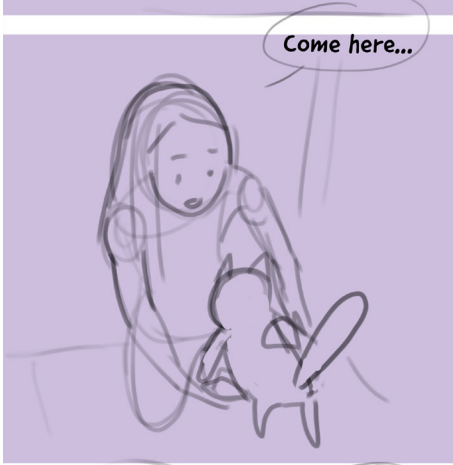
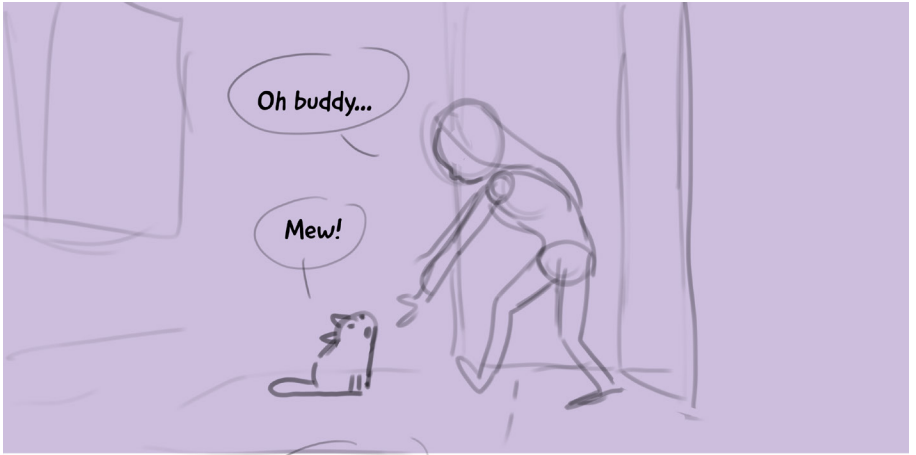
You got into college!

Meow?










A person is sitting on the floor in a room, hugging a small animal. A speech bubble above them says "I'm going away Pumpkin."

I'm going away Pumpkin.

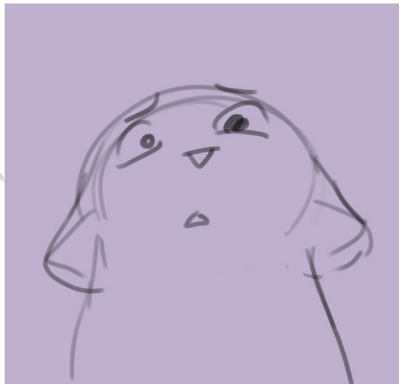
A person with a sad expression is hugging a dog. A speech bubble above them says "Goodbye."

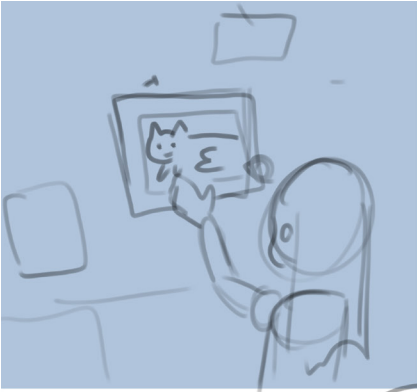
Goodbye.

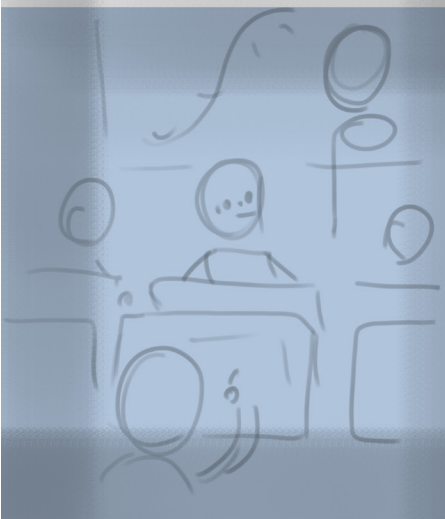
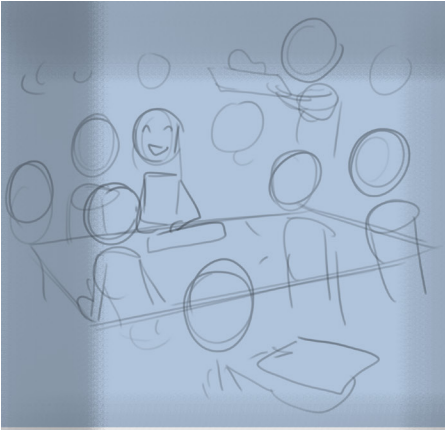
A person is hugging a dog. A speech bubble above them says "I love you."

I love you.





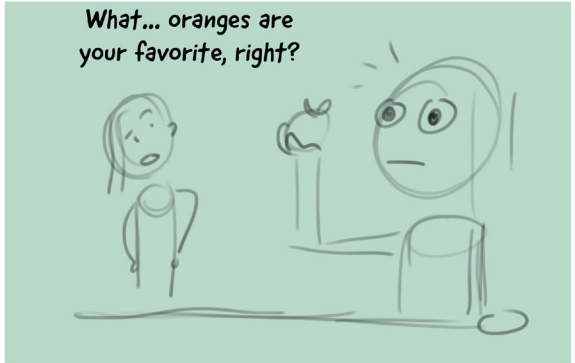




Hey! Raea CATCH!



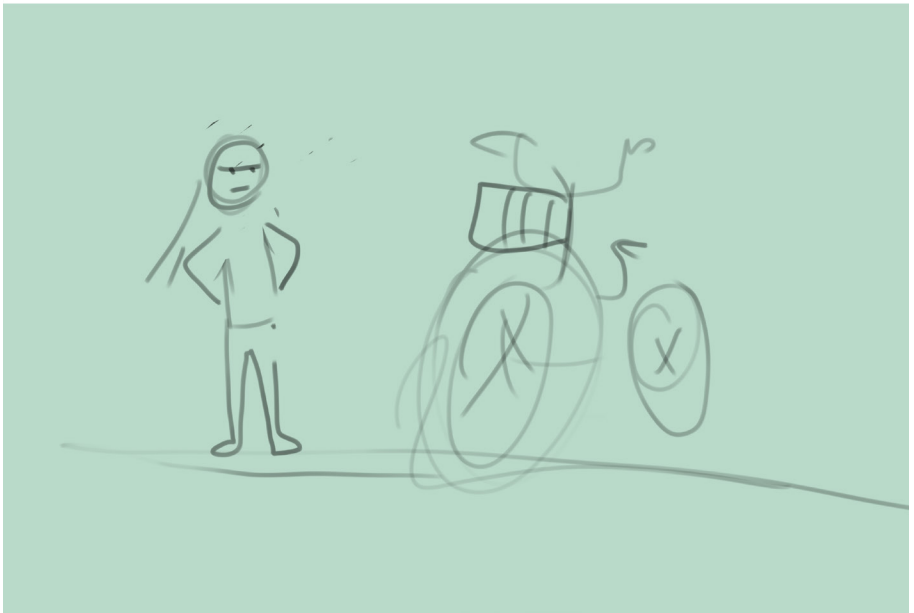
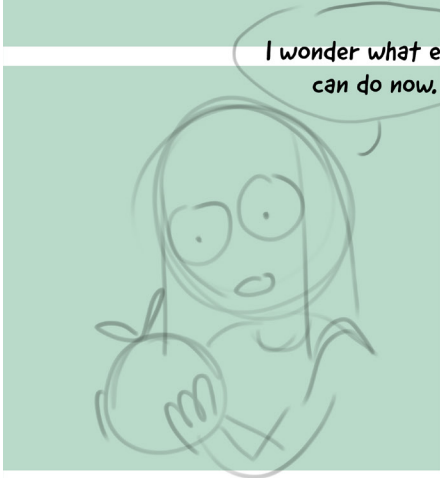
What... oranges are  
your favorite, right?

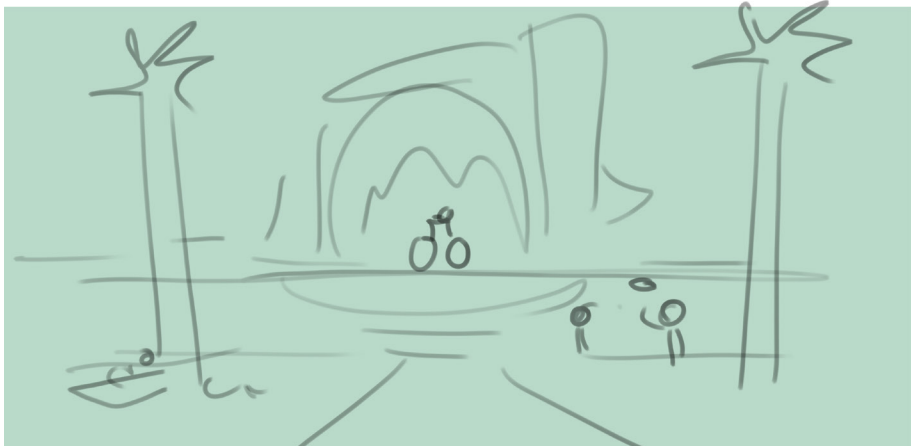


I CAUGHT IT!

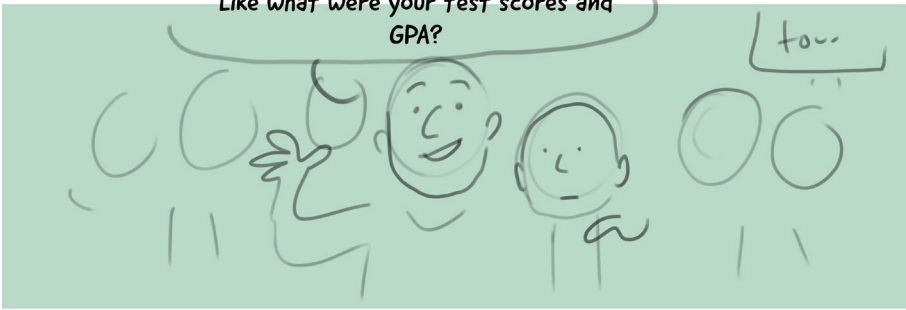


I've never caught something  
before!

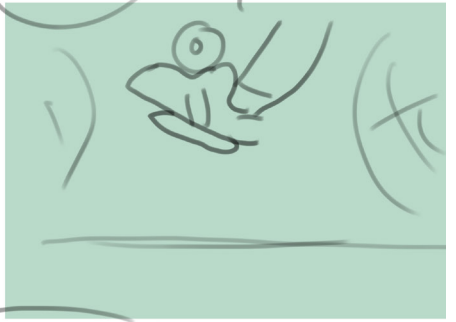
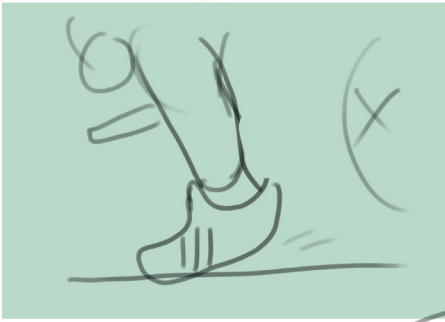
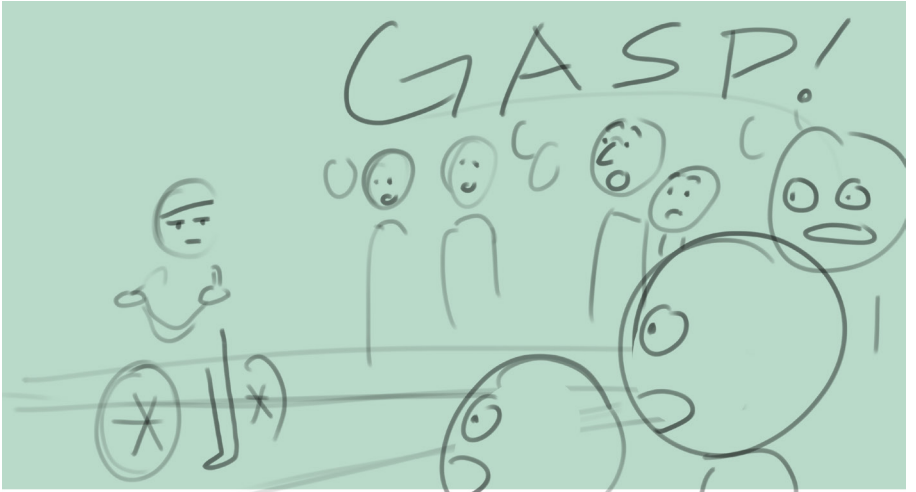










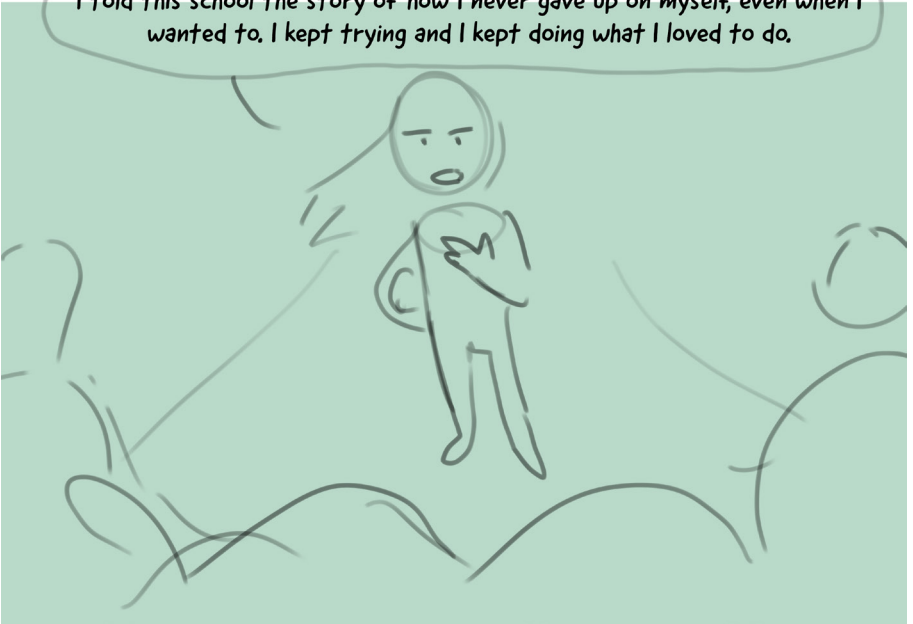




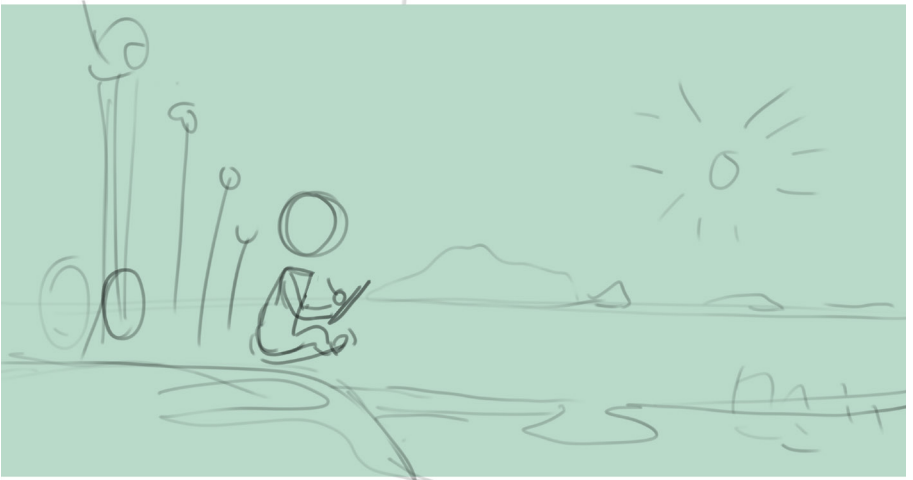
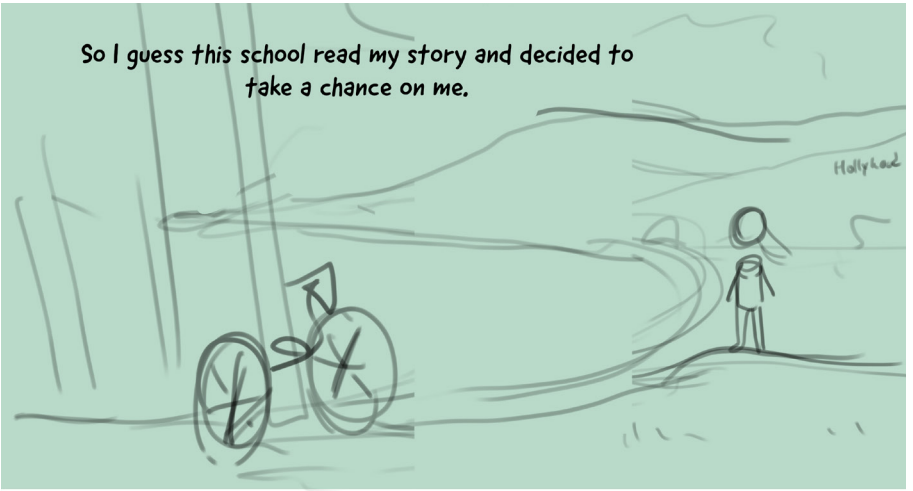
So, you want to know how I did it?



I told this school the story of how I never gave up on myself, even when I wanted to. I kept trying and I kept doing what I loved to do.

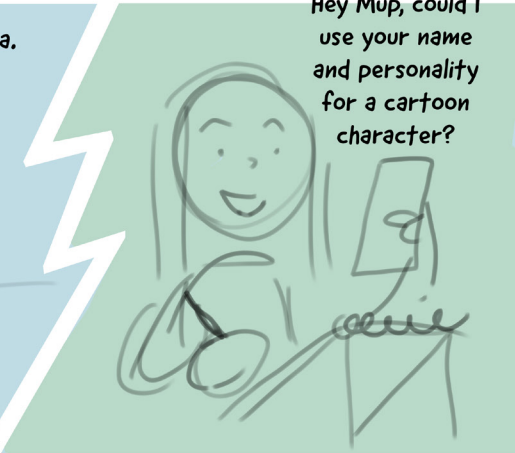


So I guess this school read my story and decided to  
take a chance on me.





Hey Raea.



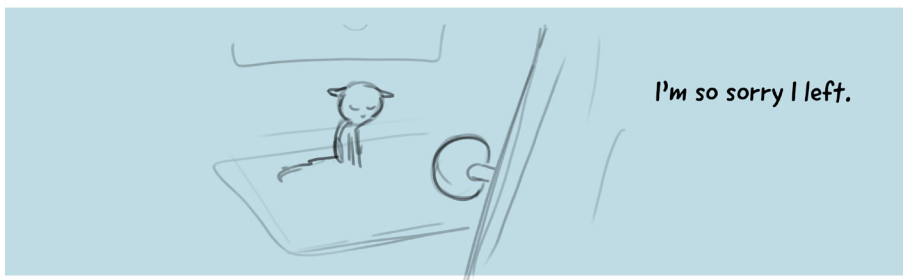
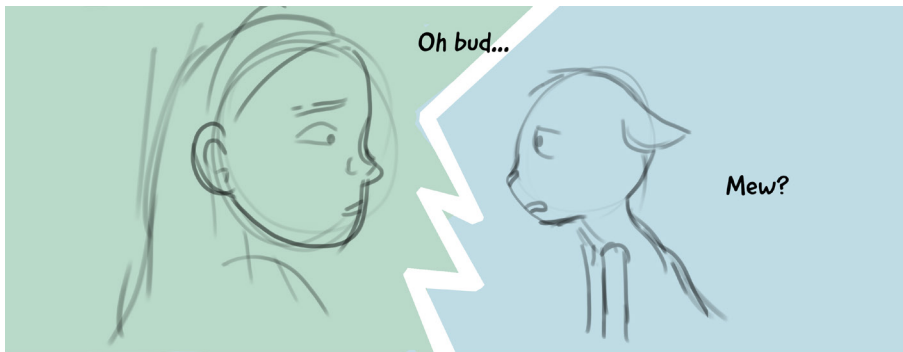
Hey Mup, could I use your name and personality for a cartoon character?



MEOW?

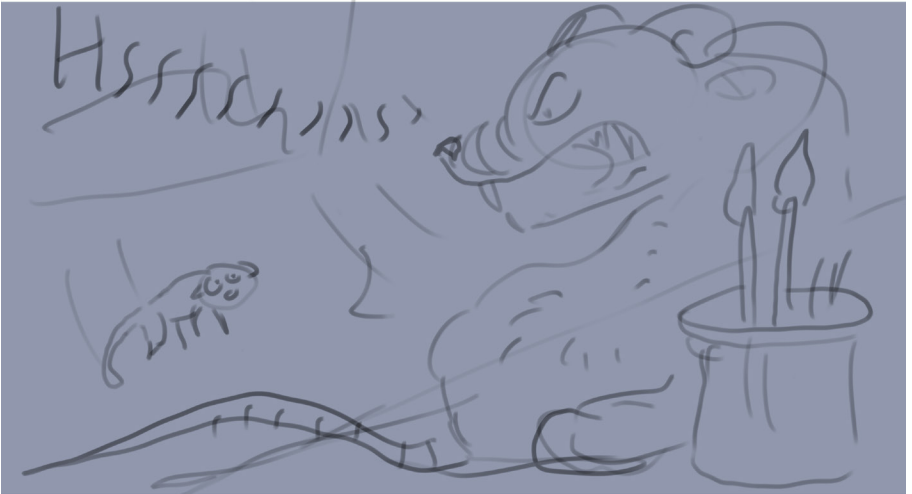
Uhh... sure.



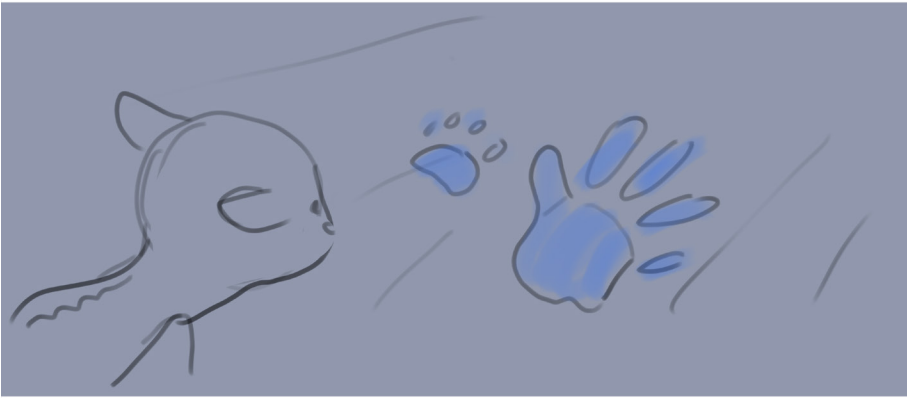
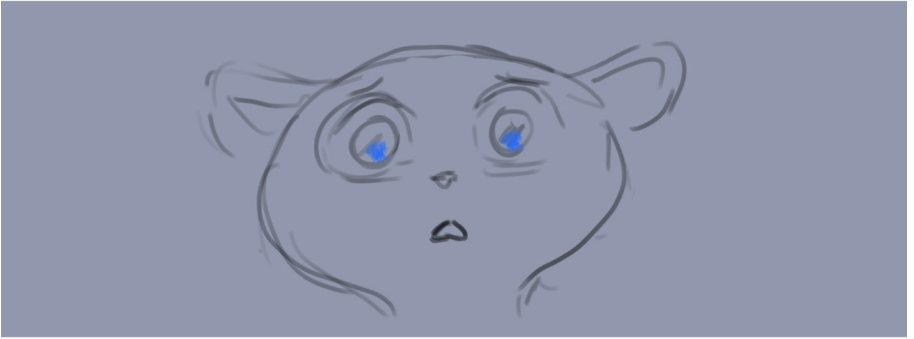
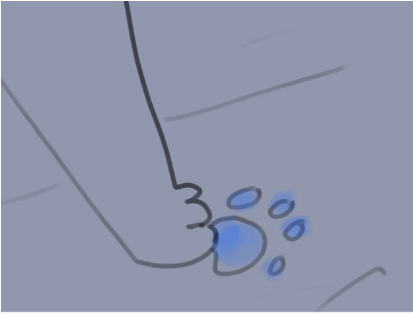


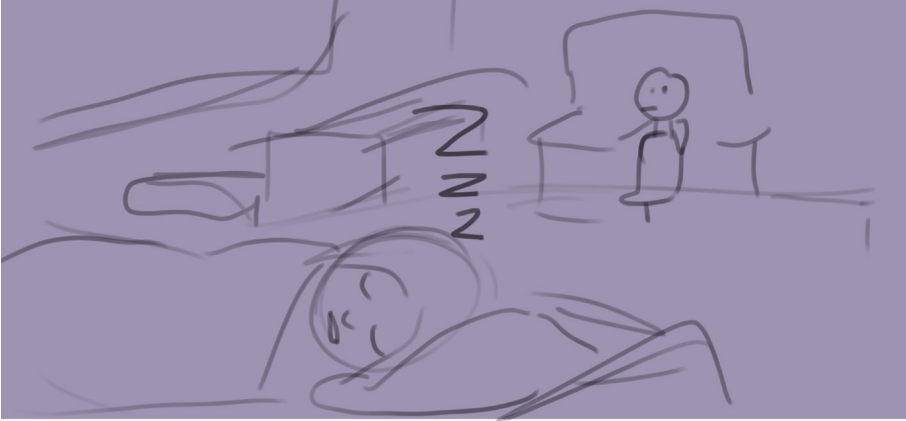
Please don't be sad.



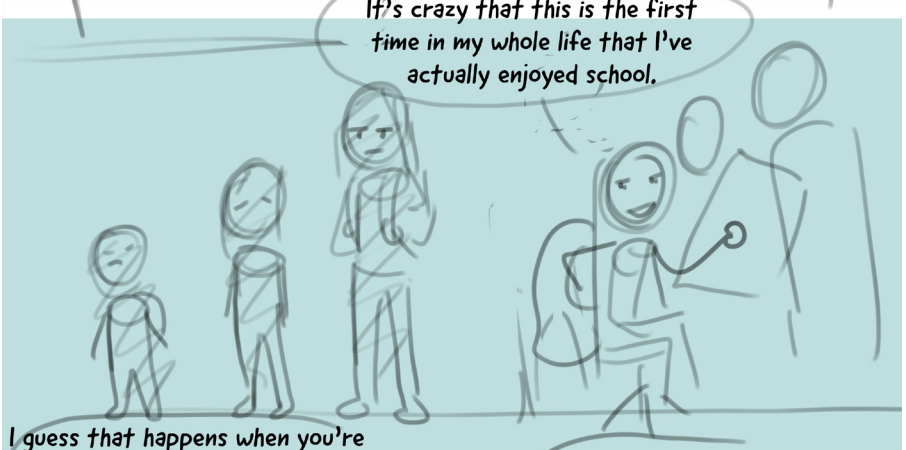




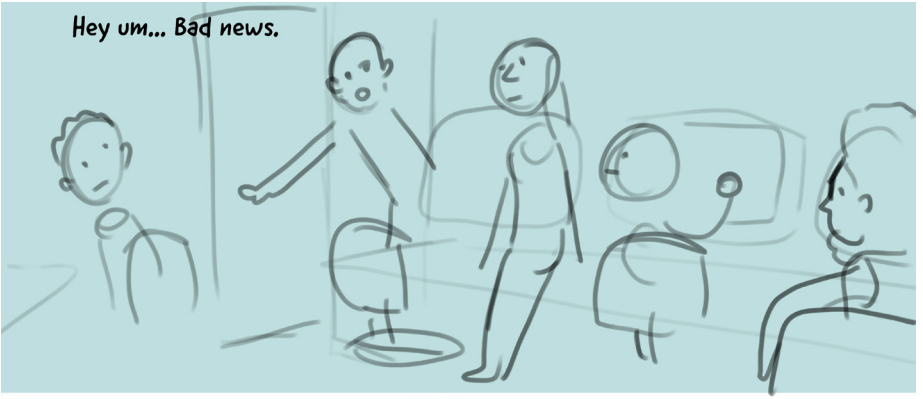






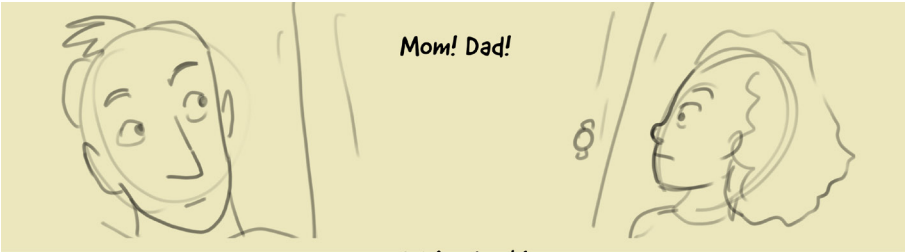


Hey um... Bad news.



They're cancelling school  
and everyone has to go  
home.





Mom! Dad!

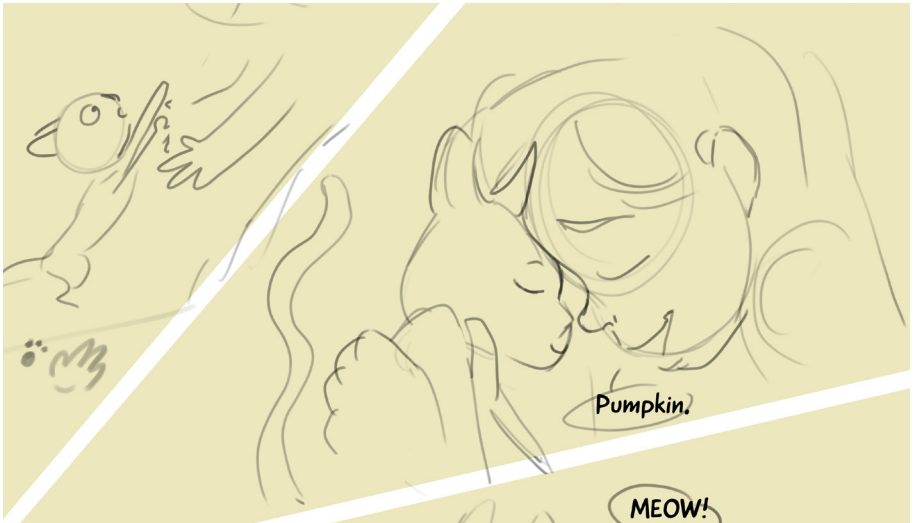
We're back!



WAIT! Where is Pumpkin?







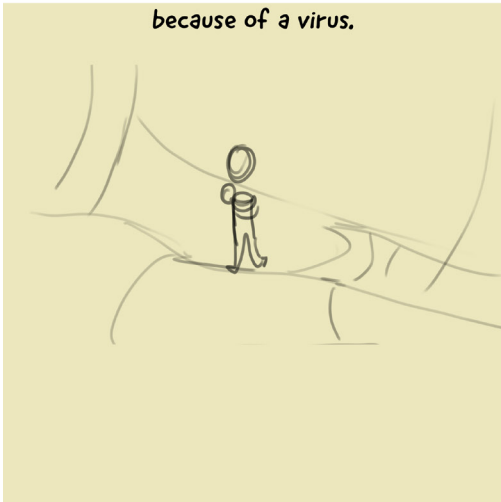
Pumpkin.



MEOW!

You will not believe it, bud. The whole world has shut down because of a virus.

They cancelled school. So it's just you and me, Pumpkin.





But... I don't want to give up on my school project.



It's a graphic novel.



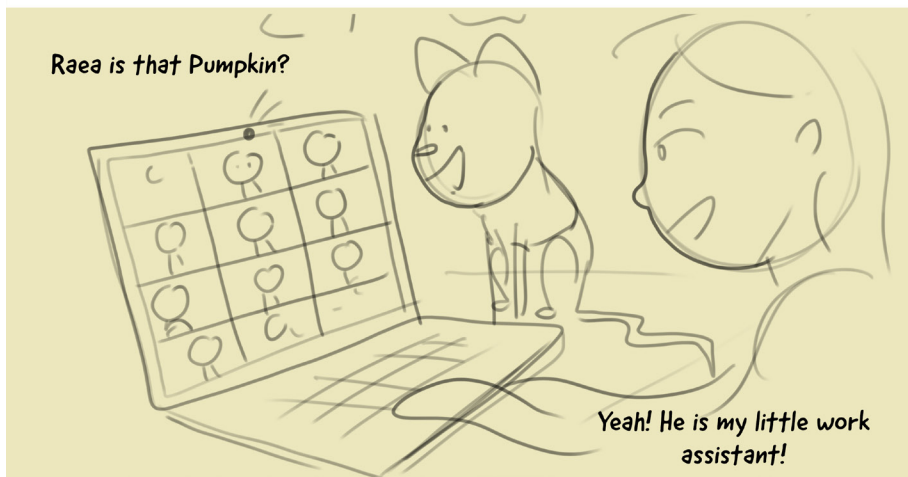
So what do you say bud, do you want to help me finish it?

Whether or not schools, been cancelled?



MEOW!







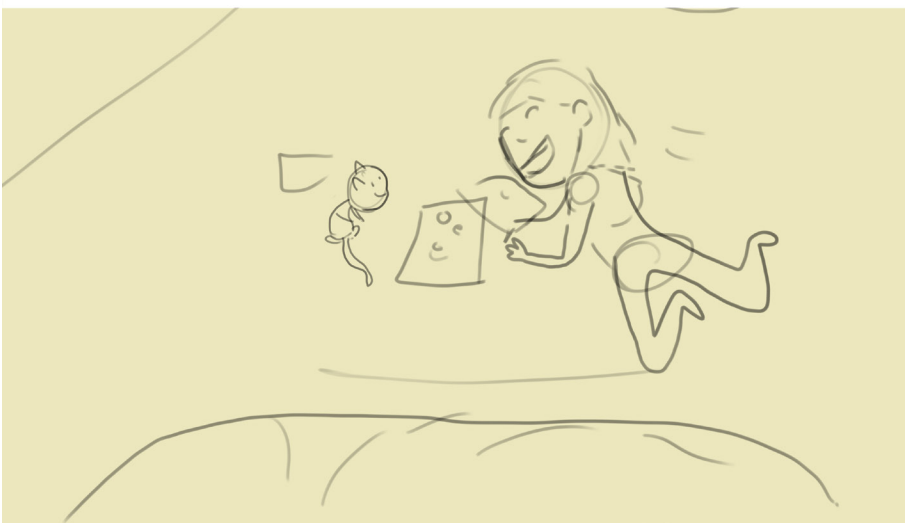
LOOK!

We did it!



Just you and me buddy.

Just like old times.



Today, we have something to celebrate! I'm here with author Raea Gragg.



This is the first time these students can gather together since the start of the pandemic.



Raea, what do you hope these kiddos learn from you?



