




Zeke's Adventures in Alphabetland



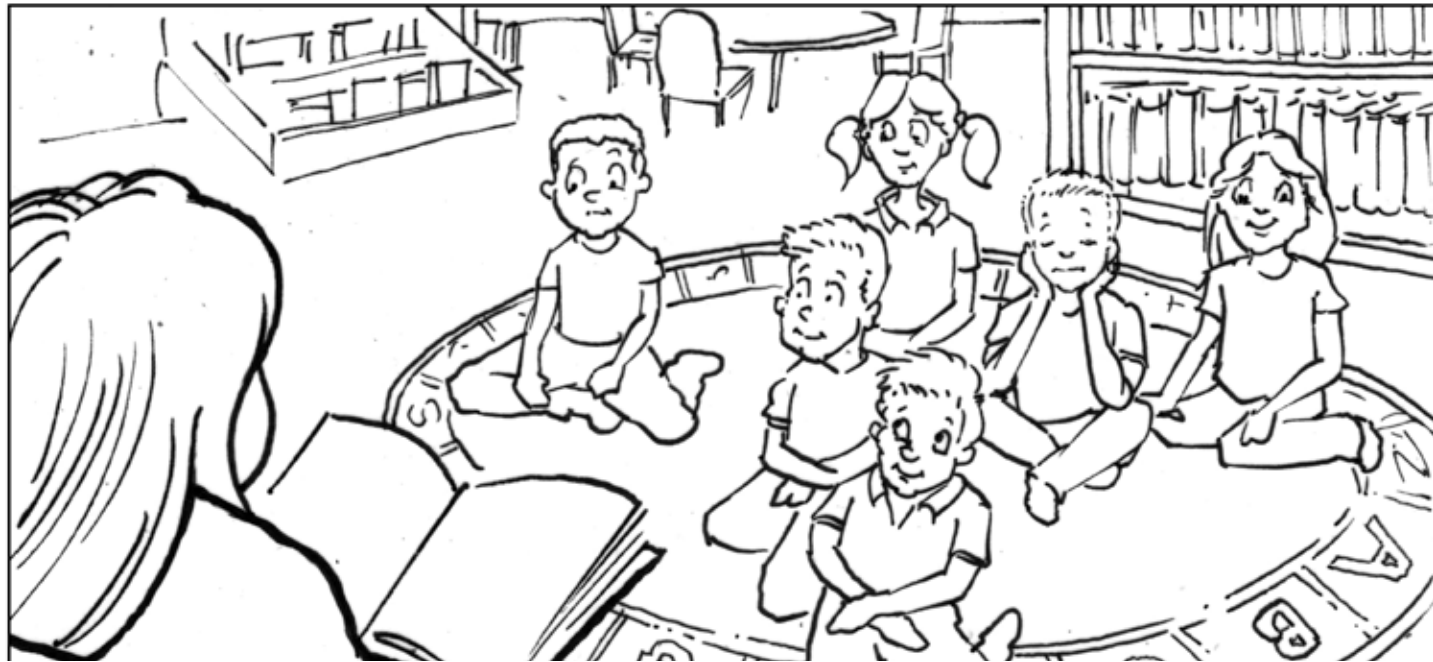
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Beginning

I was beginning to get very tired sitting on the storytime carpet listening to my teacher read. It was a chapter book with very few pictures. I liked books with lots of pictures the most. The words, I thought, never quite matched what I saw in the pictures. And although there was a great deal of adventure and colorful characters, I was sleepy and wanted to lie down. I missed naptime like we had in preschool. That was always so nice. But now I was a Kindergartener and everything was different. We were there to learn the alphabet and learn to read. I wasn't interested and didn't see the point to it all. I just liked pictures.

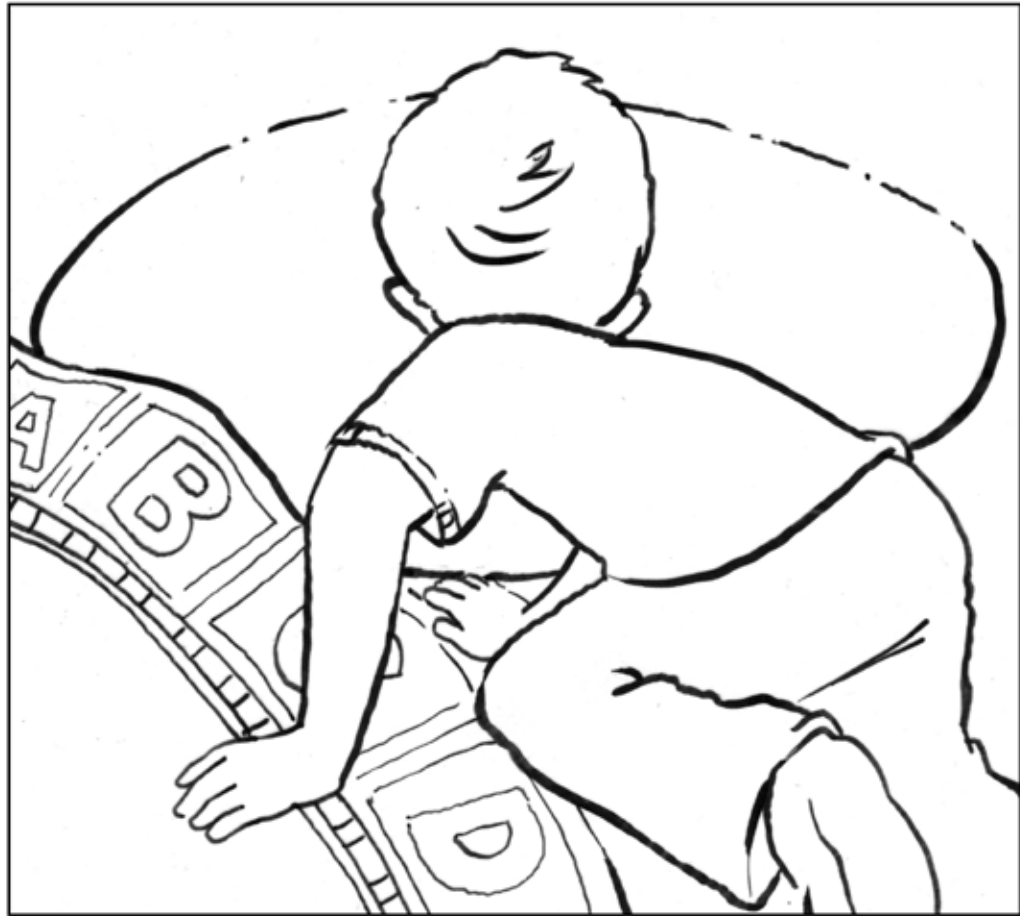


I must have fallen asleep, because I woke up and found myself to be lying down. I opened my eyes and it was dark. I was alone. I don't like being alone and I especially don't like being alone in the dark! But there was some light. I could see it coming from the edges of the storytime carpet. And when I pulled the carpet up, I saw that the light was quite bright. When I pulled the carpet completely back, I saw that it was covering a large hole in the floor underneath. How had I not fallen in before?



I couldn't see anything in it. It was so very bright. I didn't feel scared. There was something pleasing about the light. I was curious. I wanted to go in.





Aa - Sound is the Solid

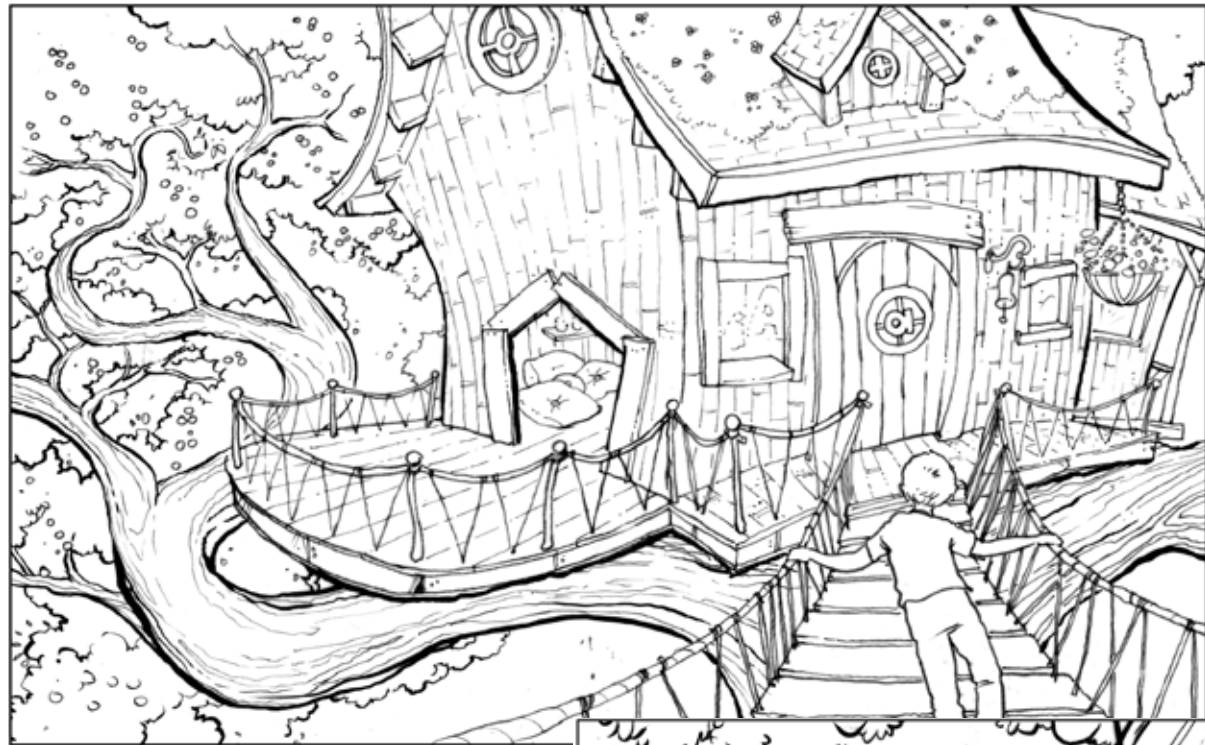
I followed a path that took me to a tremendous apple tree. There were stairs going up and around it. I heard the sound of someone saying, “aaaaaaaaah” from way up high where I could see an amazing treehouse.



So I did.

And that was the beginning of my adventure in Alphabetland where I met all of the letters of the alphabet, learned how together they make words, and the importance of knowing and telling my story. Here is my story. May you be inspired to learn to read and write your own.





I approached the treehouse across a rickety bridge. Peeking in the window, I could not believe what I saw. There was the letter **A**. Only this letter **A** was alive like an animal! It had eyes, a nose and a mouth, and was covered in hair and had hands like feet. It was staring very intently at an apple, saying, "Aaaaaah...". It would stop, look frustrated, take a deep breath and start again saying, "Aaaaaaah....".

It was like it was trying to say the word apple. I just blurted out, "Apple".

This alarmed it and it let out a scream, "Aieeee!"

I ducked down fast and hid. Then, I heard laughing. It started to say again, "Aaaaaah" and then "ple". Then faster, "Aaa-ple". Then, "Apple!! It is an apple." That last time I heard it's voice right above my head. I looked up and there it was smiling at me. "It is an apple." it said and offered me a bite and motioned that I come inside.

"Ask." It said.

I felt confused. "Ask you what?" I asked.

"Okay, not ask me." it said, "I ask you. Who are you? What are you doing? What do you need?" I didn't say anything back. I was still pretty amazed that I was talking to a letter A in a treehouse.

It tossed me the apple. I caught it, and then it lept over me like an acrobat, landing at the door suggesting I follow back outside. "You must know. Come. An adventure will help you know."



Bb - Begin the Begin



The letter A took me to the bottom of the tree and around the back. There was a tiny bungalow built right into the base roots. Beside it was a beautiful flower filled patio and pool. There I met letter **B**. She bounced right up to me and gave me a great big hug!

She insisted that I sit down and have a good breakfast before I began my journey. I agreed, but I wasn't so sure about any journey or adventure. I wondered if I shouldn't go back. The others might have gone outside and be back by now.

"So where are you going, little boy?", she asked buttering the bread for a baby bear sitting with us.

"I don't know." I said. I told them about falling asleep and finding the light under the storytime carpet and how I'd never met letters of the alphabet before. She didn't understand this. I tried to explain what letters were but couldn't really. They were just letters. Usually they didn't talk.

"Well, where would you like to go?", she asked. I told her I didn't know this either. "Then it is time to begin to know so you can get there." she said ringing a bell.

Leaving the table, we went to a platform halfway up the tree where there was a big band of animals all with instruments. I was given a bugle to play. The letter **B** conducted and began to sing, "Happy Birthday". When they got to the part where you say the person's name, she asked me my name. "I'm Zeke." I said. And they finished the song singing happy birthday to me. "But it's not my birthday." I told her when the song finished.

"I believe," she said, "every beginning is a birthday. Only some come with presents."

We then stood for awhile looking out across the landscape. She asked again where I would like to go. I could see the way back. There were pathways heading in all directions from the tree and many beautiful far away places could be seen from there. I thought it would be neat to meet more letters.

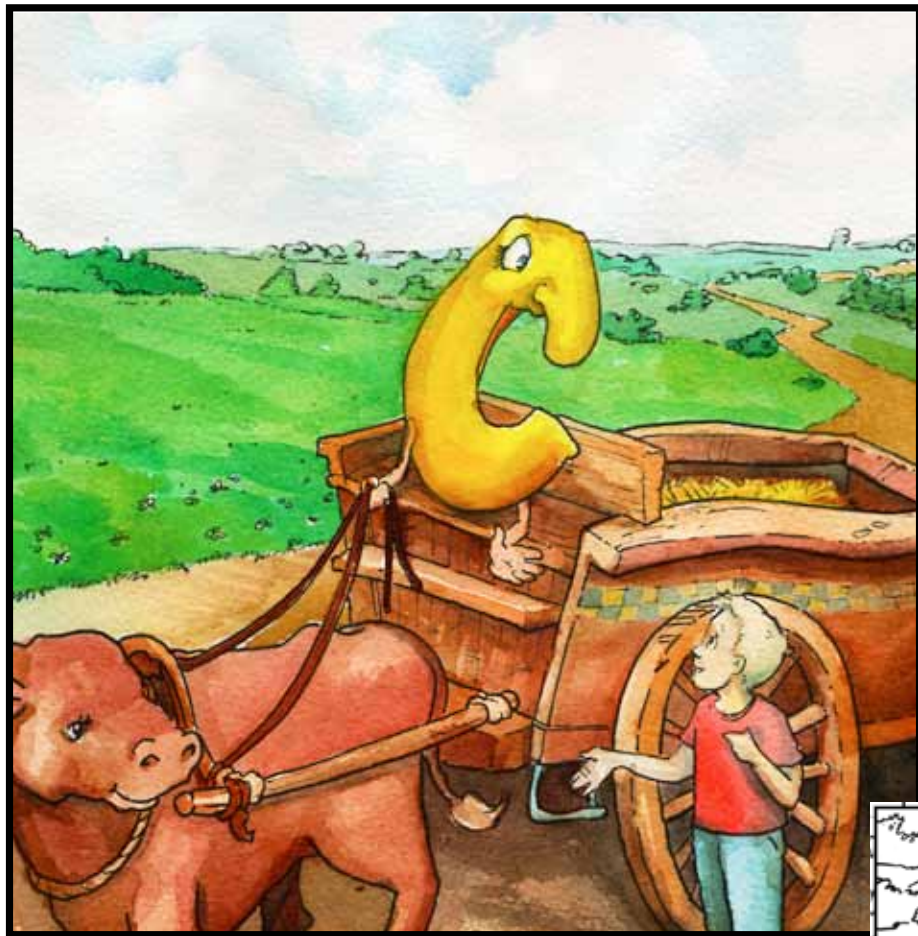
"I want to go there!" I said pointing. I'd spied coming up the closest road a cart driven by what looked to be a letter **C**.

We hugged goodbye and I went on my way.



Cc - Community Choices

I caught up with the cart and indeed it was the letter **C**. She offered me a ride and even let me sit up front. She called her cart the 'Country Cab Service'. She too asked me where I was going. I told her I was content to ride if that was okay. Most pleased to have a companion, we set off having a wonderful conversation as we went bumping along the road.



Soon, though, there was a choice to be made. We could go left or we could go right. The road to the right look more traveled and there were more passengers there to carry. The decision was mine. I chose right.

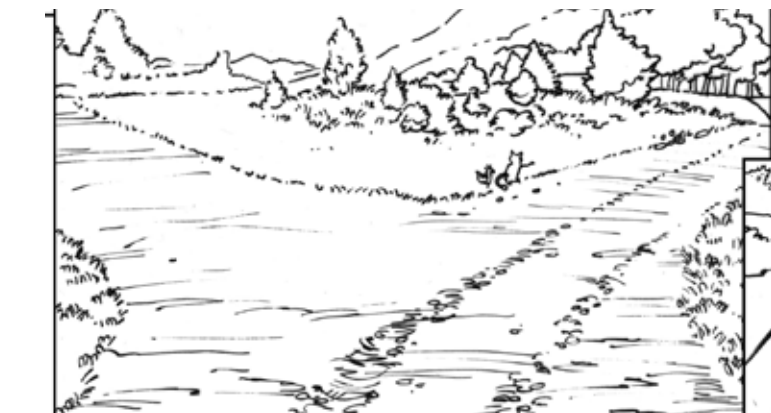
A cat and a cockatoo joined us and we moved on down the road.



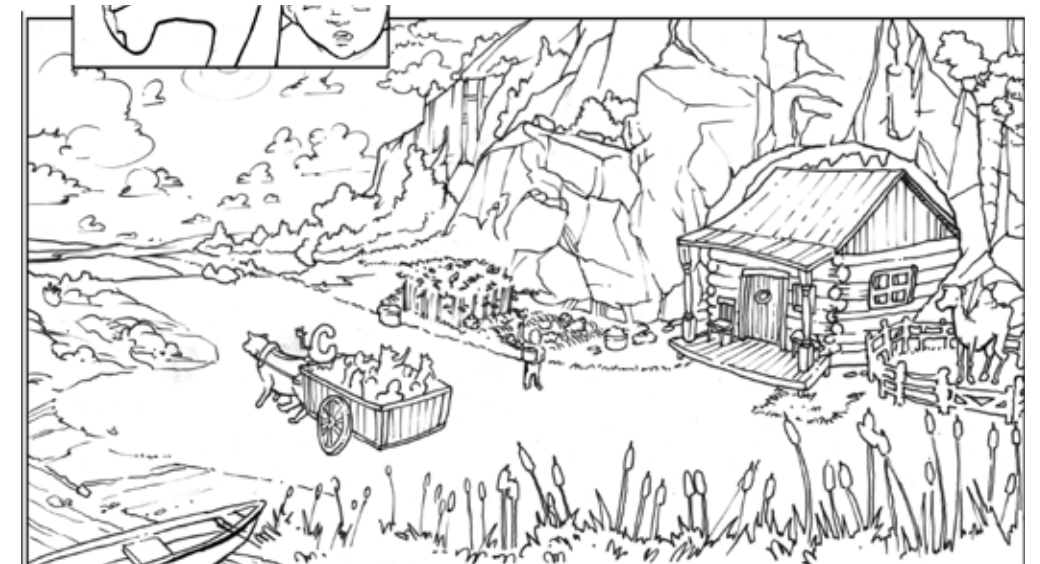
Another crossroads and more passengers. I wondered how many the cart could carry.

The way to the left looked as if it went to the desert. Beyond that and across a creek looked very organized and controlled with clipped trees lining the road. Ahead was a mountain. To the right, the path went straight up to another closer mountain and into a tunnel.

All aboard, I asked everyone which way we should go. They all had a different idea.



In the end, we followed the way of the crocodile and chimpanzee dressed as a clown. They were delivering a cake to someone named **D**. I knew a little bit of my alphabet and I knew **D** came next so I was excited for the choice.

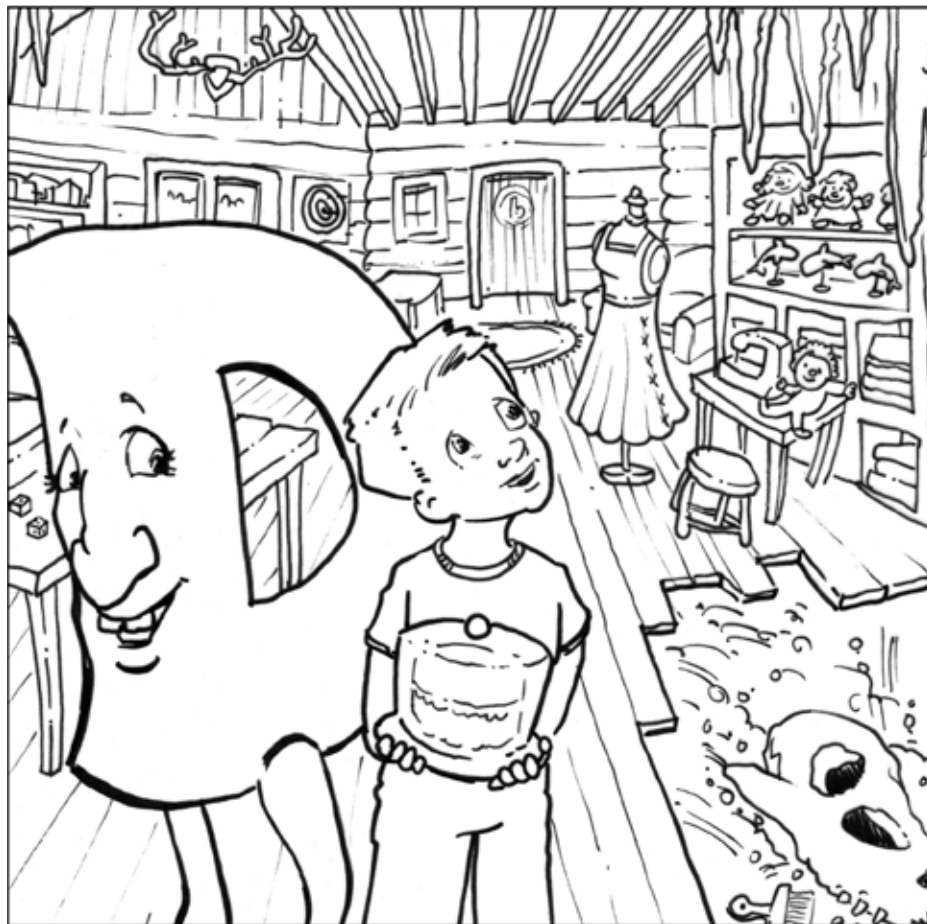


Dd - Pictures of Time



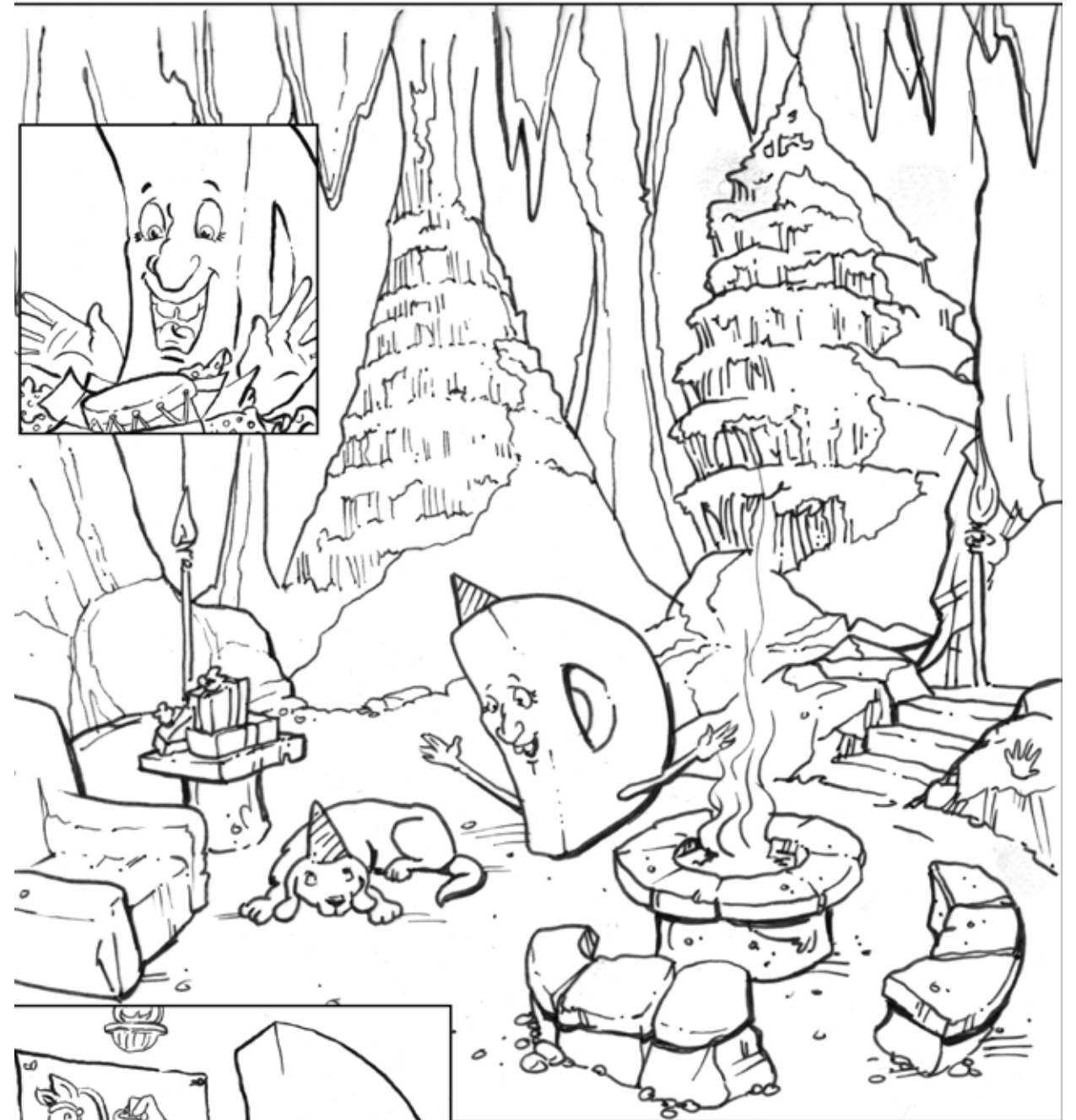
I was delighted to get to deliver the cake myself. I was having such a good time! I walked to the door and knocked. As expected, **D** was shaped just like the letter **D**.

She had me come inside. Her cabin was just the front of a large cave. She showed me her doll collection, the dress she was making and a whole shelf of dolphins she'd carved out of wood.



She took me further in and showed me where she had been digging and found a real dinosaur skull. And then to a dimly lit cavern filled with stalagmites and stalactites, a stone table and chairs, a fire pit and her dog.

"*Ta da!*" she said. I was the only guest at her party. I'm glad I was there to share it with her.



Oh we had a wonderful time! She unwrapped presents she'd wrapped for herself, played pin the tail on the donkey and had a competition to see who could eat the most doughnuts hanging from strings without our hands.

Ee - Symbols for Objects



And then the best part... we got to draw... ON THE WALL! The walls further into the cave were covered with drawings **D** had made.

"I sometimes draw things that happened." she explained. *"It helps me remember and if I ever want to go to that time again, I just look at the pictures I made. And sometimes I draw things I'd like to happen. I think it helps them come true or at least it helps me get to feel like they are coming true while I'm drawing them."*

I decided to draw things that happened. She did too.

We had not done very much of our drawings before a rumbling began. It started softly and grew louder. Soon dust started to fall from the ceiling.

"This is a DISASTER!" she yelled. Dropping our painting sticks, we ran to get out of the cave. We ran through the cabin and outside. We saw what was causing the rumbling.



It was the letter **E** riding atop an enormous elephant on an elaborate platform, surrounded and followed by a parade of animals and more elephants. The letter **E** called out, *"Pause!!"* as he set eyes on **D** and I escaping the cabin.



The herd stopped and the letter **E** jumped down to meet me. He wasn't like the other letters I'd met earlier. Just his head was shaped like the letter **E**. His body was just like mine. He was dressed like an Egyptian I remembered seeing in a museum exhibit. He eagerly looked me up and down not saying a word. He seemed quite enamored by me.

"My scrolls!" he commanded.

An small elephant brought a number of scrolls which **E**, who he introduced himself as, unfurled to show me.

"Each of these symbols represent things that exist upon the earth." **E** explained. *"There is one symbol I have yet ever to see. Do you see it?"* **E** pointed to a symbol of a kneeling man. *"It is you! YOU are unique. YOU are different. It is prophecy that I meet you and that I serve you."* And with this he bowed and offered his eternal service.

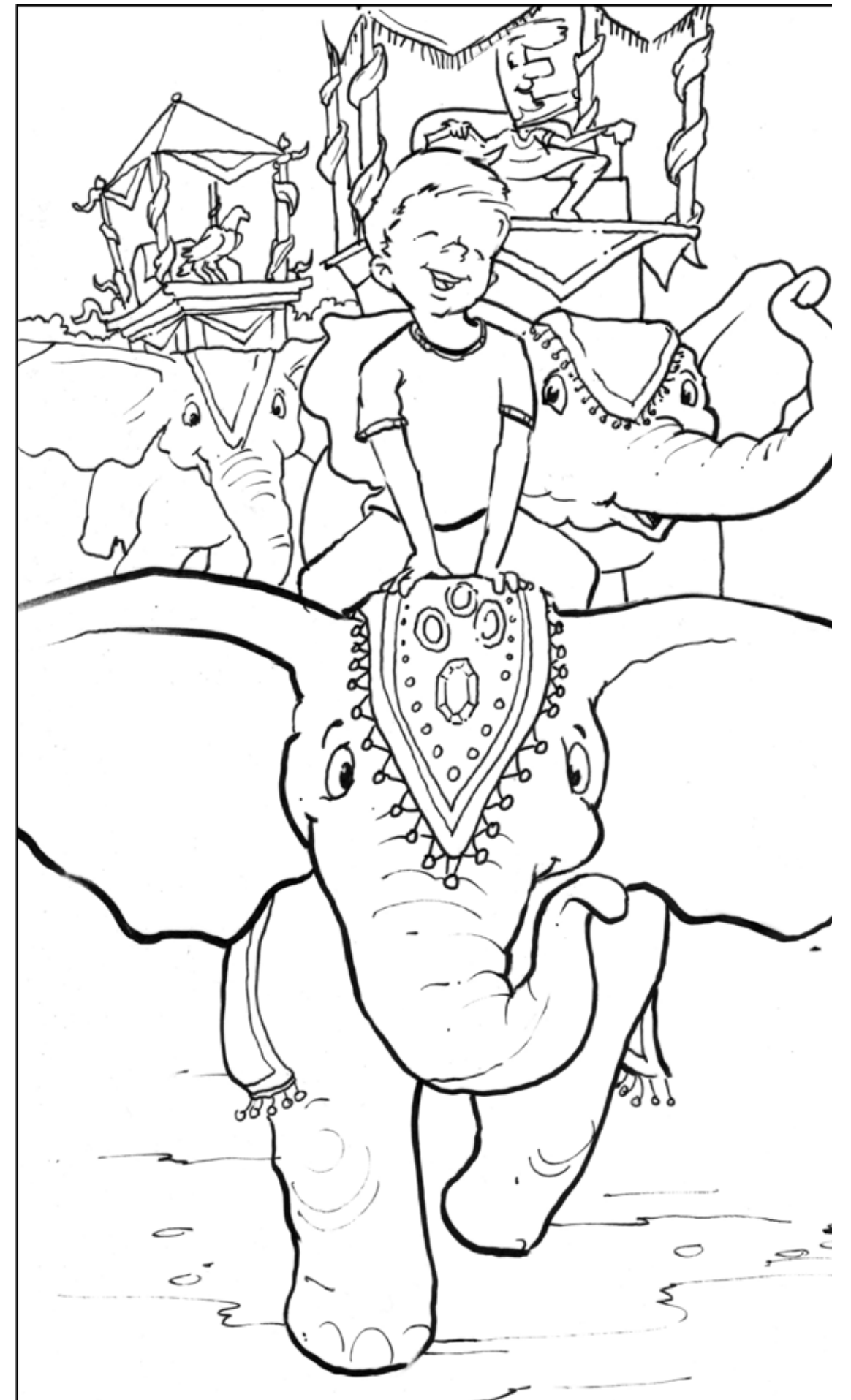
"What is your wish?" **E** asked.



First, I didn't have an answer. Then, I looked at the elephant. I had always wanted to ride an elephant. *"That's easy!"* I said. *"I wish to ride an elephant!"*

"And so it shall be." said **E**.

I said goodbye to **D** with a hug and continued my journey with **E** - now riding an elephant!



Ff - Counting Symbols



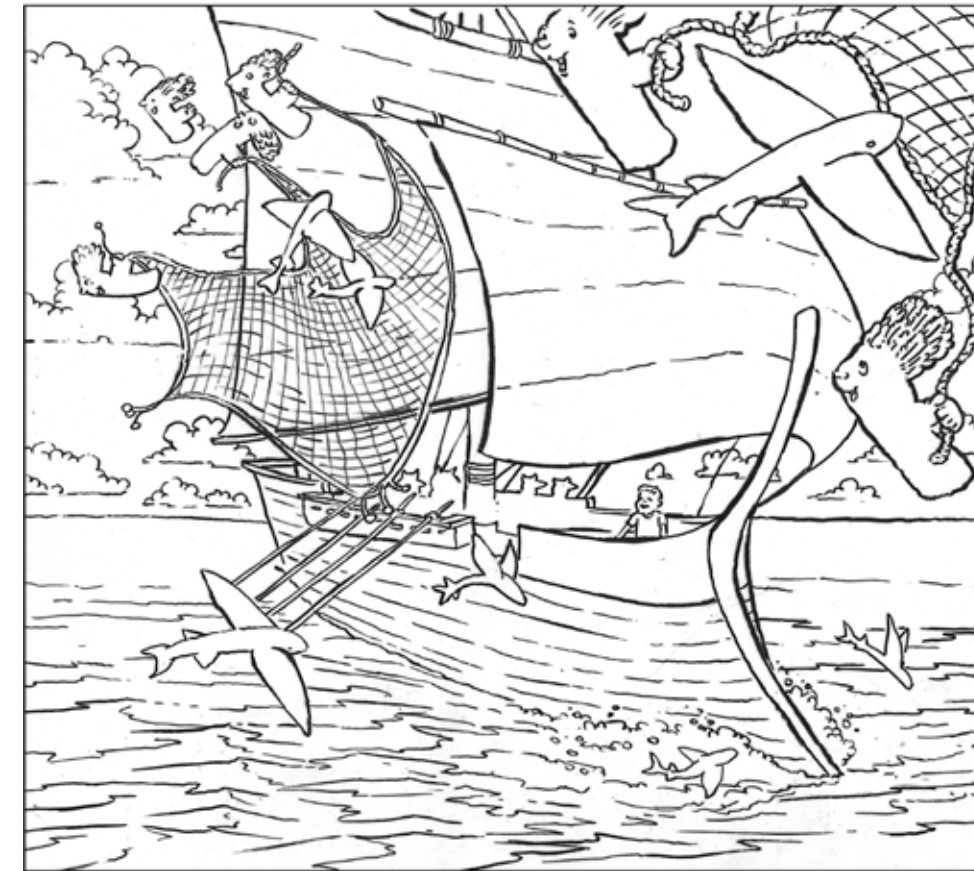
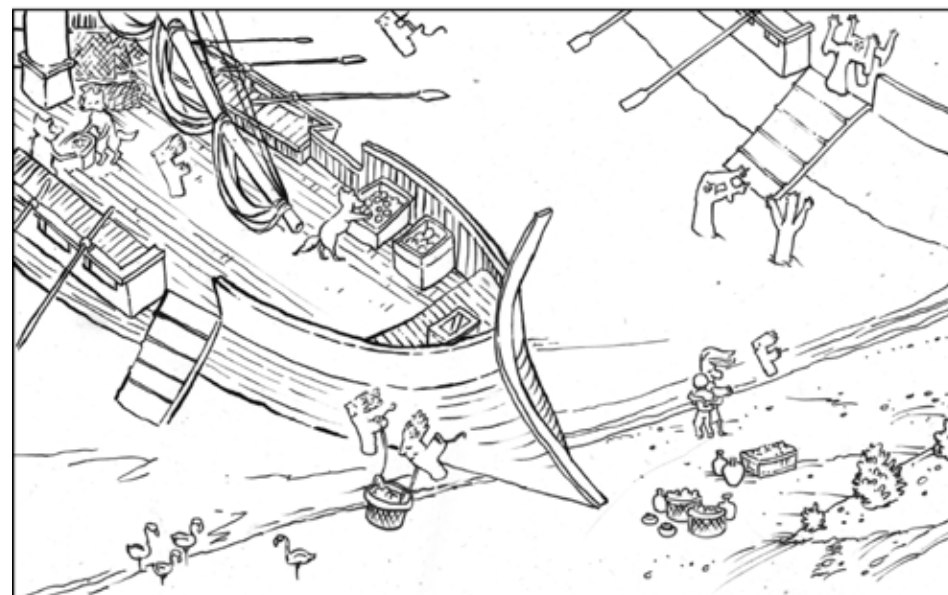
Our road together ended at a wide river and small fishing village. I had moved from riding the elephant to sitting with **E**. We shared stories and laughed. He was funny and reminded me of my father. He praised me for my fearlessness in going on my journey and was deeply fascinated by the alphabet I spoke of. He felt that I should return to my school to learn this alphabet and learn to do this thing I called reading. I agreed.

We met **F** who was the figurehead of this family of fishermen. I felt shy, but **E** helped me tell my story to her. He let me tell her what I wanted to do.



She knew of a king who had in his command a group of wise ones. Perhaps, help could be found there. One of their boats was leaving soon to trade at that very castle. I could join them. In exchange for my passage, I would have to work which I was fine with. I liked helping. It made me feel good.

I said goodbye to **E** and I went on with the **F**s.



The boat was fantastic! The river opened to the sea. **F** finally called out, "FISH!". A flurry of flying fish left from the water in front of us. **F**s flew into the air with their nets.

My job was to count the number of fish caught as they would need to know how many were to be sold at the market outside of the castle we were headed to. What fun I had!! I could barely keep up. They caught over fifty fish!

For each fish, I added one clay cone to a pile. When I had five cones I replaced those cones with a bigger cone. When I had four of these I replaced them with a clay ball.

Once they finished, **F** showed me how to make marks on a clay tablet of all of the cones and balls I had gathered.



I rested the rest of the way, sitting with members of the crew talking as friends. Soon the castle was in sight and the boat was prepared for landing. I think this was my favorite part of my adventure.



Gg - Letters Playing Together

The docks were alive with activity. The boat and all of its goods were unloaded. I joined a group of **F**s to explore the market on shore.

What a place! Colorful tents, all kinds of things being sold and traded and interesting characters everywhere. They seemed so familiar.



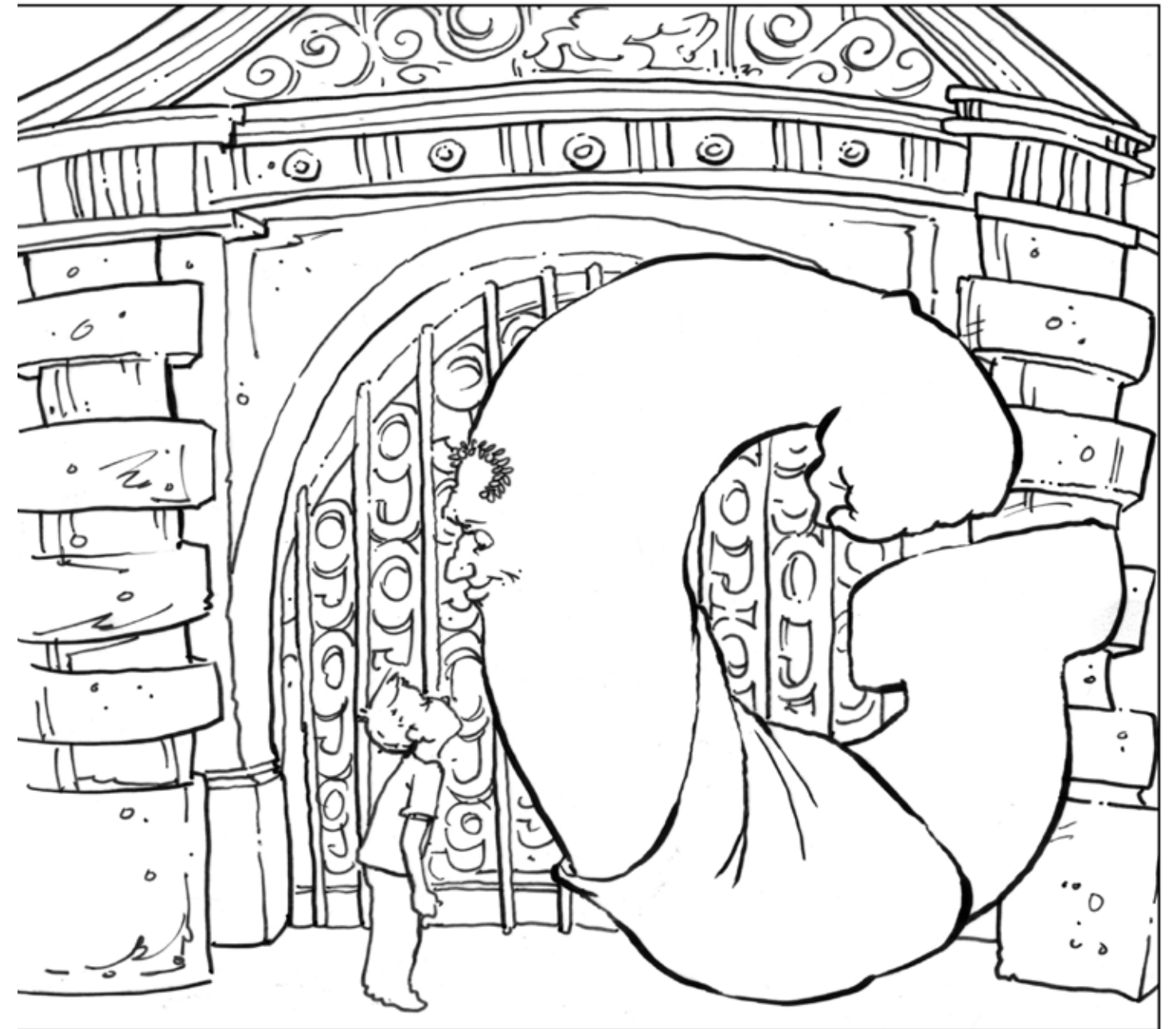
I said goodbye to the **F**s and was told the answers I sought were beyond the gate ahead.

The gate was guarded by a giant letter **G** dressed like a Greek - another I'd seen at the museum.

"Who are you and what do you want?" the **G** asked.

This time, I had an answer. "I'm Zeke and I'm here to ask for help from the king." I responded.

"Do you know the rules of the games?" the **G** asked.



"Rules? Games? What games? What rules? No one told me that to get what I wanted I had to play games. "Let me in!" I demanded. He would not.

We stood staring at each other for some time. Everyone I'd met had been so helpful. Everything had been so fun and exciting. I felt so angry. Finally I knew what I wanted and where I wanted to go and I couldn't get there. He would not give way. Finally, I relaxed and took a deep breath and asked, "What kind of games? How would I know the rules if no one has told me what they were?" And I asked if he would tell me.

"Great!" he responded opening the gate to me. "I'm glad you are open to finding out. There are many games to play. Each have their own rules but there are some that apply to them all. I will be your guide. Come inside."



Inside were glorious gardens filled with flowers and greenery and everywhere were animals and more of the familiar letters playing and laughing.

“These are the rules.” the **G** explained.

1. Have fun.
2. Play fair.
3. Be honest.
4. Try hard.
5. Help others.
6. Be a good winner.
7. Be a good loser.
8. Don't cheat.
9. Be nice.
10. Never quit.



I followed those rules and had a great time. I nearly forgot where I was going and what I'd come to do. Then, **G** reminded me and told me a final rule.

“11. Always keep in your mind,” he said, “who you are, what you are doing and where you would like to go.”

Hh - Slowing Down

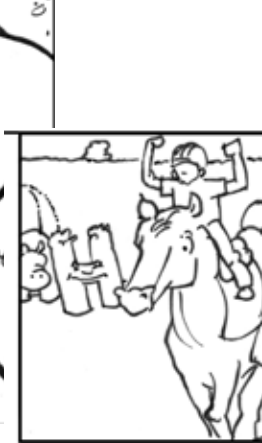
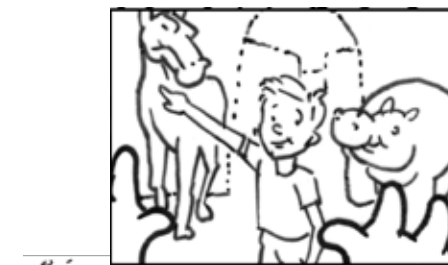
Time to keep moving forward. I felt happy and ready to take on the next challenge.

Another step in getting to the castle was the hedge maze and a game of ‘Ride and Go Seek’.

I was introduced to **H** who would be my helper and given the choice of riding a horse or a hippo, I chose the horse. Heroes rode horses. I was fitted with a helmet and set to finding my way.

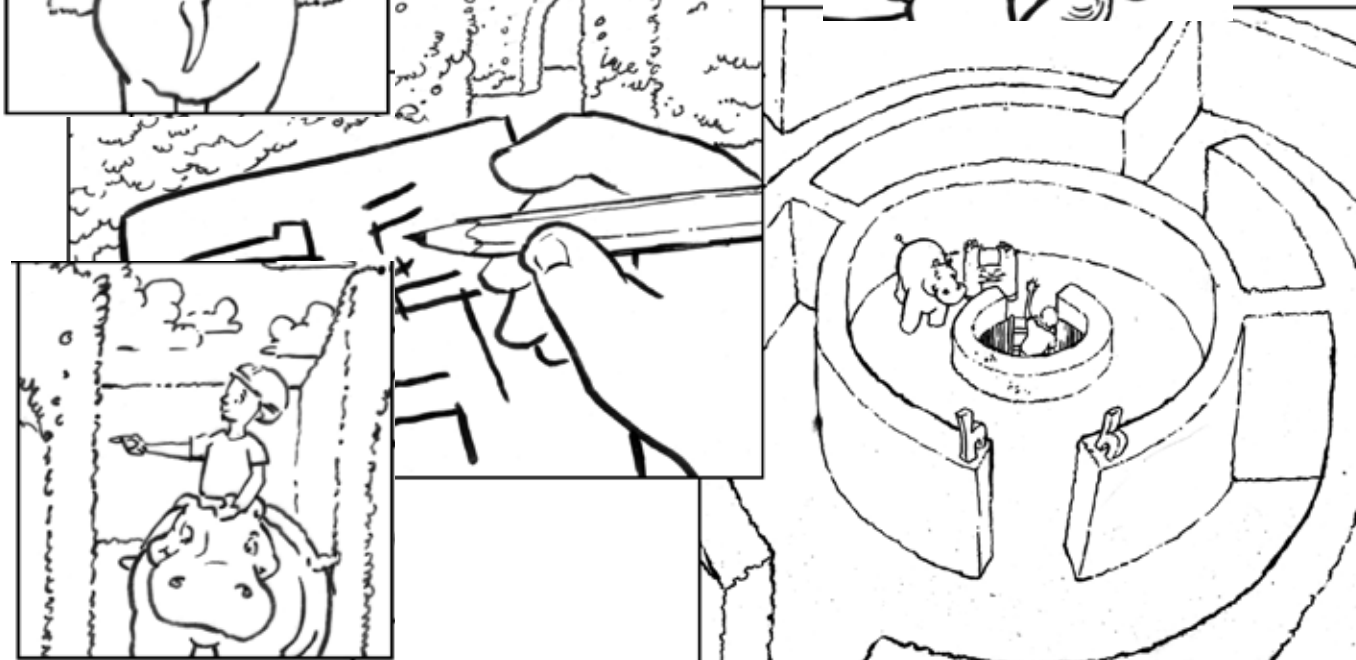
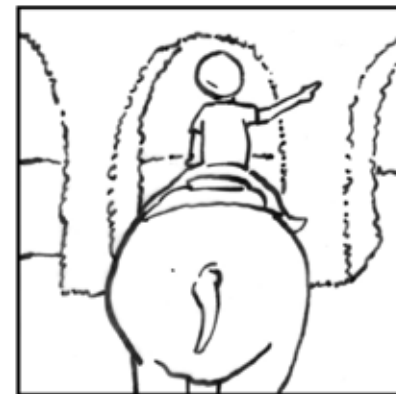


It was HORRIBLE! The horse went too fast! I couldn't control it! I felt myself getting more and more lost as we raced down one pathway to the next. Finally, I blew the horn I was given to call for help.

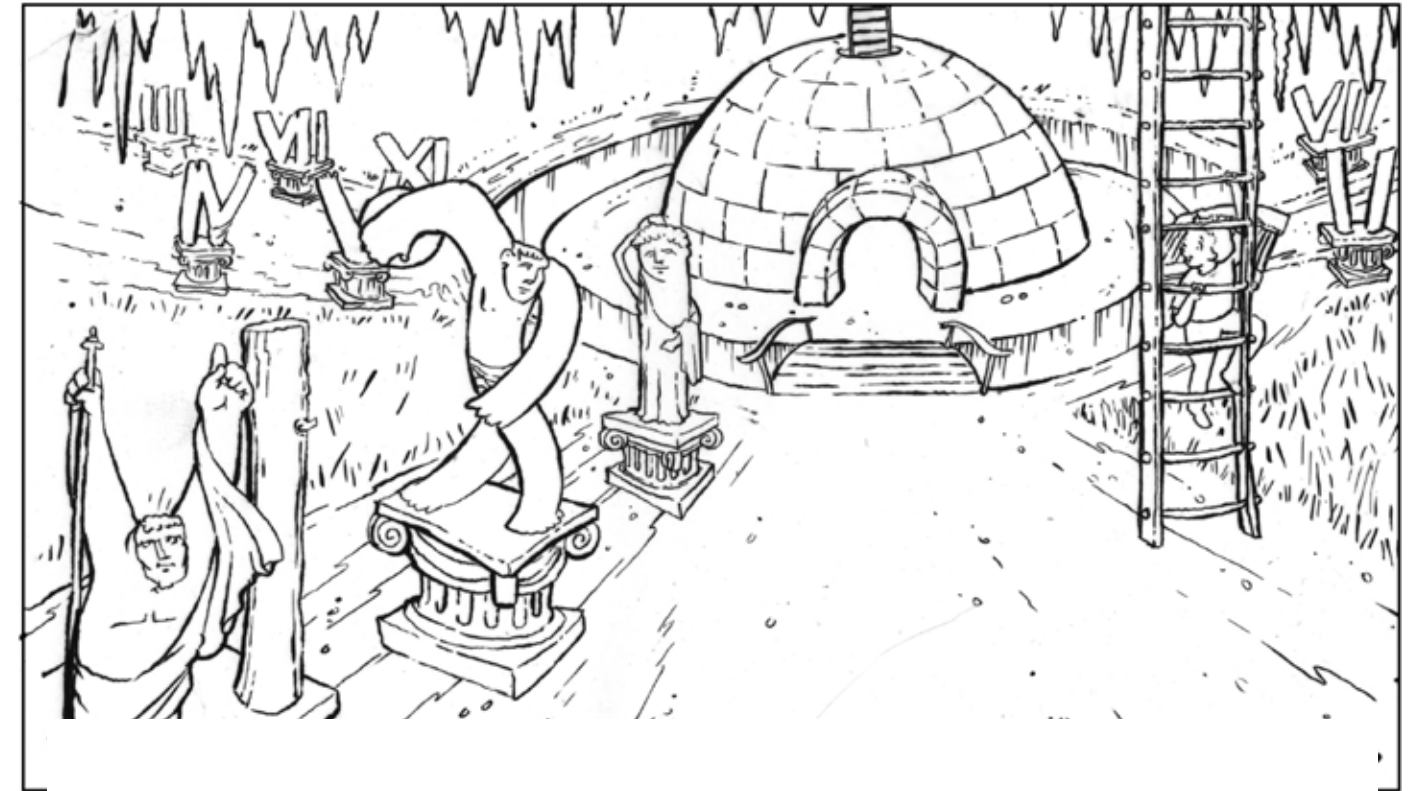




H came to meet me with the hippo. I found a hedge house way up high where I could see the maze differently. Then, going slower with the hippo following my commands, I was able to find my way to the center. There I found a hole leading underground. **H** met me there, gave me a hug and told me, "This is where you need to go. Go inside."



Ii - Greatest Strength



I had not noticed the heat of the gardens and games above until I went down into the incredible icy cavern below. Ice sculptures lined pathways leading to the center where there was a large igloo. I could see sparks and flashes of light coming from inside. I came closer and peeked through the doorway.

In front of a block of ice, was the letter **I**. She had no hands or feet like the other letters. Just a great big smile and the sweetest of eyes. From her, a stream of light and sparkles flowed. She changed the ice without even touching it.

"Are you going to introduce yourself?" she asked. "You are welcome to join me."



I came inside, told her who I was and what I had come here to do. Then I asked her, "How are you doing that?"

"This?!" she laughed. "I am making something of nothing, imagining the possibilities, intending something different. Would you like to try?" Her block had been changing bit by bit into the shape of an iguana. With a wink, it BECAME an iguana and slithered off the platform.

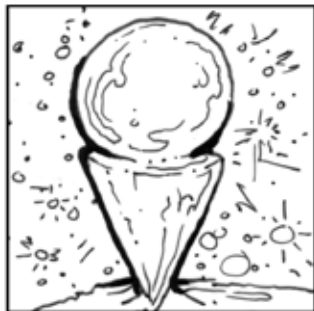
This was magic! "I can't." I said.

"You can." she said.



"Your imagination is your greatest strength. Close your eyes and imagine what it is you desire. Picture it in your mind. See the block. Imagine taking away the pieces and parts that are different than what you want your creation to be." she said.

All of the ice there had me thinking of an ice cream cone. I tried. I closed my eyes and imagined an ice cream cone. "Find the basic shapes of what you desire first", Letter I said. "The details will come."



I did. Once I had a clear picture in my mind, I opened my eyes and to my surprise the block was already changed. I stared intently at the block. Before my eyes, the parts that weren't an ice cream cone melted away in a sparkling display of light and color. "Final step." whispered Letter I behind me. "Believe it to be real."

I did. And so it was. That was the best ice cream cone I'd ever had.

Letter I said I was ready to return to the surface and showed me the ladder up. "Remember." she said, "Your power is infinite."



"I will." I said and climbed up feeling quite invincible.

Jj - Playing My Own Song

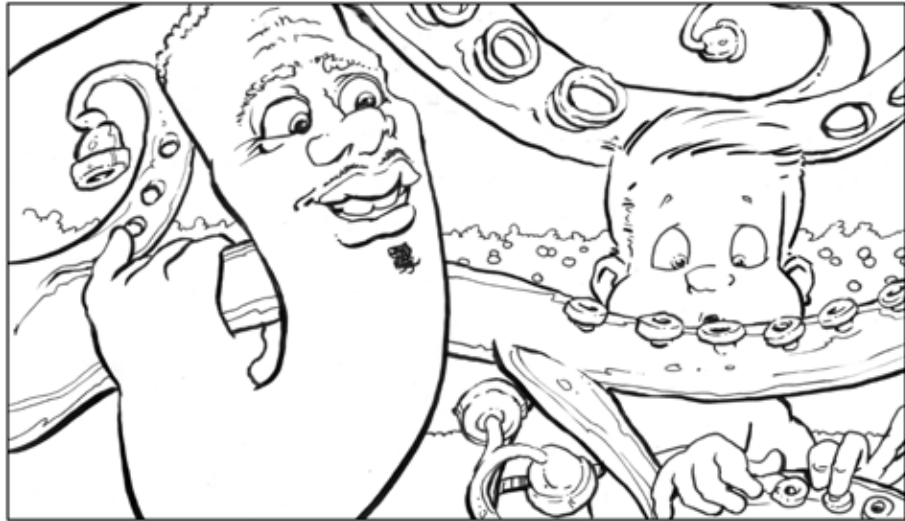


Back in the light of day, there was music. I was greeted by a letter introducing himself as **J**. **J** swung from branch to branch of a large golden tree blowing on mouthpieces and singing as he went. The whole tree was filled with those just like him, each blowing notes or strumming strings. The sounds were both chaotic and beautiful.

J asked me, "What's your song my young friend?"

I told him who I was and where I was going. The more I said this, the easier I was finding it to say. But he wasn't interested in that. "That's fine." he said, "But what is your song? Your tune? What makes you dance and come alive?"

I didn't know. Noone had ever asked me this. He offered a branch. "Take a deep breath and blow." he said. "See what comes out."



I blew and I covered different holes making the sound I made different with each. The tree squaked and blurted. It sounded awful. But the others picked up and began to play music along with the sounds I made making it actually not sound so bad. It was music but different than I'd heard anywhere else. I kept playing.

"That's right!" J encouraged. "Just takes a little practice. You

got this." And I did start to figure it out. The sounds I made in combination with that of the others really was nice music.

"Now let's see how you dance!" said J. The others carried on with the tune. I took off my shoes and danced barefoot in the grass.

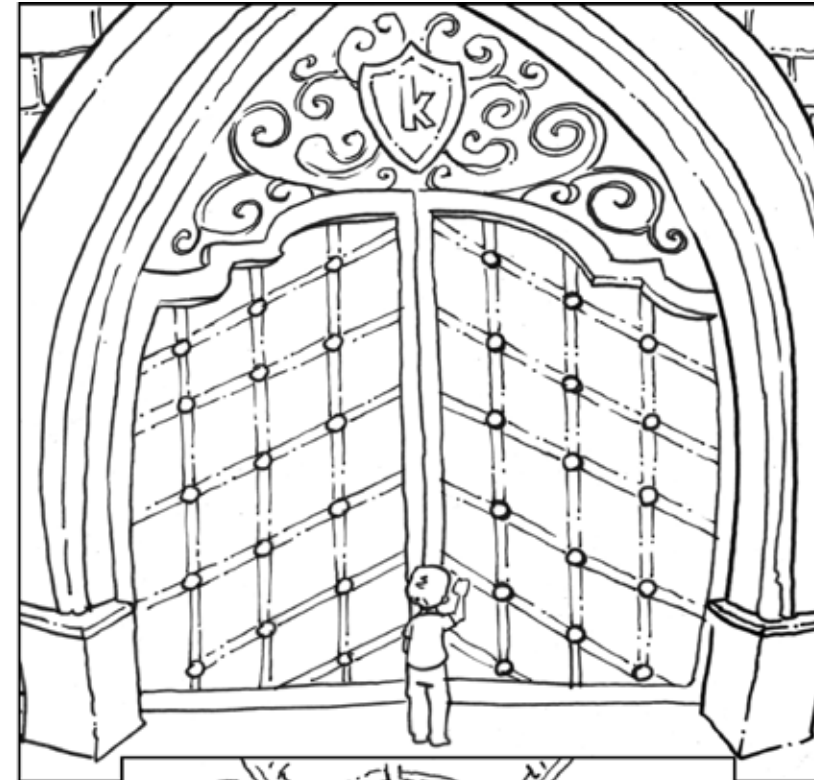
"Are you having fun?" J asked me.

I had stopped paying attention. I had closed my eyes and was just enjoying myself. "Yes. I am." I answered. "Thank you." And then, I thought, it was time to go.

I said goodbye to J and waved to the others. J pointed me in the direction of the entrance to the castle. It was a short path. I danced instead of walking.



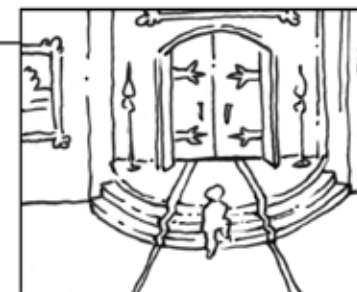
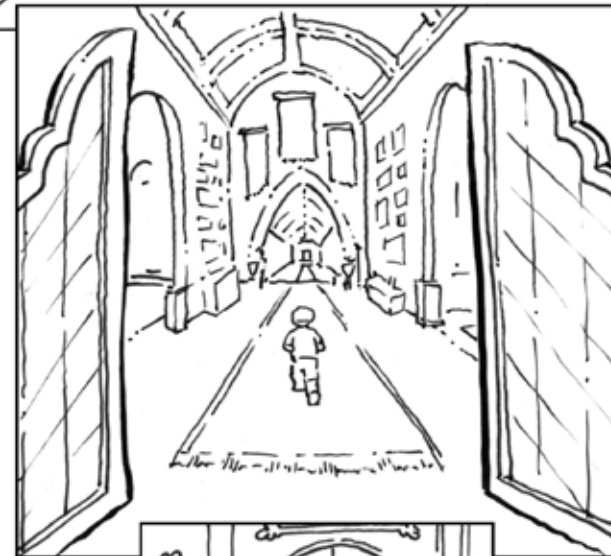
Kk - Price of Power



At last, I stood before the door to the castle. Noone was there to meet me. I knocked. Noone answered but the doors swung open to me. Noone was there. How could a castle this big be so empty?

I followed the red carpet leading from one room to the next. Each room was richly decorated with murals on the ceilings and paintings on the walls.

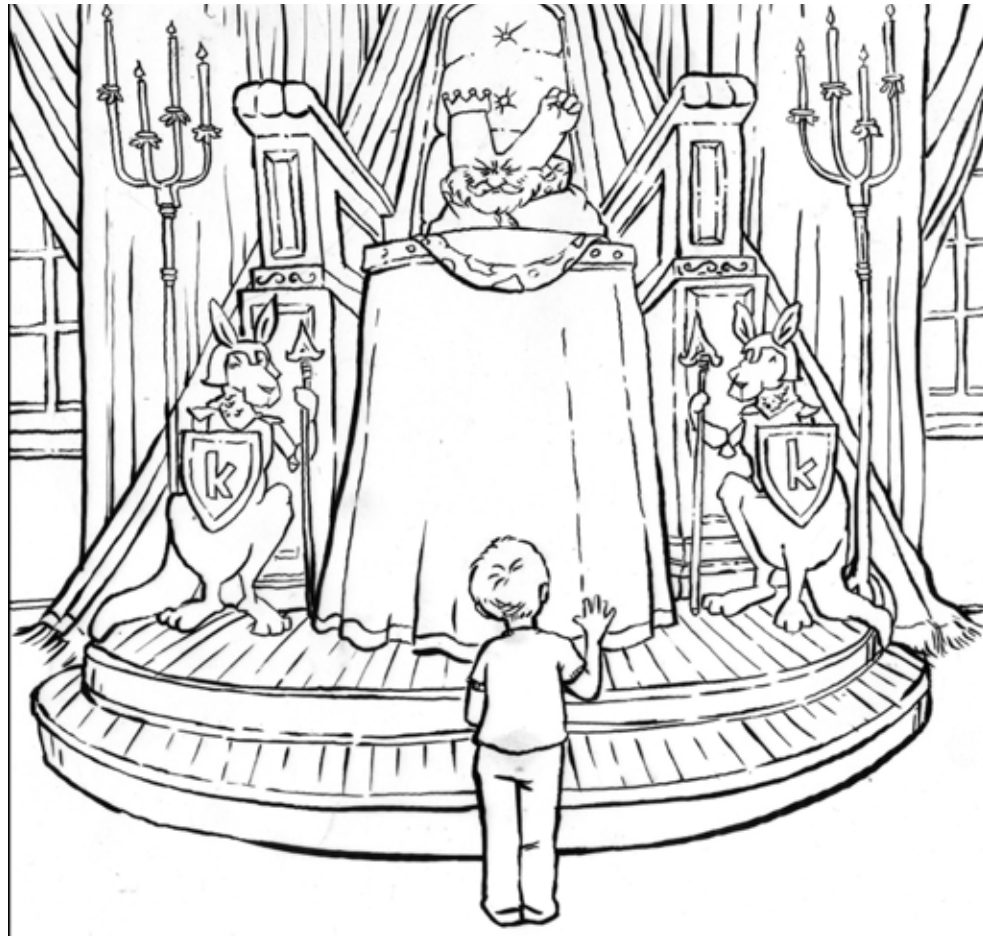
I came to another door. I knocked on this one and again, noone answered. I pushed on it gently and discovered I could open it. I looked inside. It was very dark. I thought about being back in the classroom. All of my fears of being alone and in the dark came back. This time, I was in a strange place and the rooms were much bigger. In the room beyond the door, there was a mean and angry looking character sitting on top of a tall throne. He was all alone himself except for his kangaroo guards. This had to be the king - the letter **K**.



I had nowhere else to go. I had to face him and ask for his help. I slowly opened the door further and went inside despite being so scared.

“Who are you? What do you want?” asked the king.

The question had become familiar. As I began to tell my story once again, I began to feel calm and more at ease. I’d had such fun each step of the way getting there. It was hard not to feel excitement in the telling.



At one point, **K** stopped me and came down from his throne, removing his heavy cloak to sit with me on the steps and listen to me closer. By the time I was telling him about the games, the magic and the music of his gardens, he was laughing and enjoying himself. We both were laughing and enjoying ourselves. He even sang me his song and began to share stories of his own when he was just small and coming to be king.

The king stopped and said, “You are bold and courageous and your purpose is clear. How can I not help someone such as you?”



He called for his wise ones - **L, M, N** and **O**. To his wise ones he said, “Help Zeke find his way back to this school so that he can learn. I see greatness in this boy today. With education and knowledge I see the possibilities of an even greater man who could be a king. Let it be so.”



LLMmNnOo - The Wise Ones



And so began my time in the castle. I spent time with each of the wise ones. The castle was not as lonely a place as I’d first found it. There were many that lived there.

L was a lion in charge of the library - a library where none of the books had words - just pictures! **L**, other helpers and I looked through stacks of books. My world was strange to all of them. They did not understand how letters like themselves combined to make words. Or how words were combined to make sentences and how when you had a lot of sentences there was often a story. For them, everything was pictures.

While I was enjoying myself, I did not think this was helping until I found a picture of a schoolhouse. “Like this!” I called out. “A school looks like this!”



M was the master of measurements and maps. I loved being in his space. There were so many things to look at. He and his helpers had built all manner of machines. There were flying machines. There were machines to measure the movements of the moon and planets in the sky. There were machines to measure the weights of things, the amount of things and the size of things.

What **M** was most proud of was his collection of maps. He had been on many adventures of his own making maps and had many made by others. "If the place from where you come has been explored," he said, "we will find it on a map."

M showed me how to use the key of the map to understand it. These were symbols he said that represented different things. Dots meant there was a path, a black line a road, a blue line a river. There were all kinds of symbols and all kinds of maps.

I didn't think this was being very helpful either although as with **L** in the library I was really enjoying myself and learning a great deal about maps. Then I found a map that was familiar to me. "Here!" I called out. "I think I live here!"

Working with **N** was more difficult. He did not speak or hear. The king helped. The two of them communicated using their hands. The king would wave and hold up fingers bending and shaping them into different forms that **N** understood. **N** would do the same and the king would tell me what he had said.

N was most interested in the part of my story where I played my own song. He asked that I do that again with him. He took me to a circular marble balcony overlooking a gorgeous rose garden. Colorful hanging baskets at the opening of each window were filled with singing birds. Flowery vines climbed each of the supporting pillars leading up to a glass dome that covered the entire area. "Perfect vibration and reverberation." The king translated.

I was set down at a piano to play. **N** held onto the side. That's how he could hear it - through his hand and the vibrations. And there he could smell. He had an incredibly large and odd shaped nose that made him look like a letter **N**. He said, "Beautiful vibrations release beautiful smells."

I played with the accompaniment of a narwol. I wasn't so sure how it would be helpful, but **N** seemed truly pleased. I did my best to play beautifully for him."





With **O**, I explored my story as an opera. It was a play with lots of singing. She thought she could be the most helpful if she not only knew what happened but the feelings I had as they were happening. I told her I didn't really know what those were. "Then all the better that we act them out and find them out." she'd said.

It was great fun! We talked as we built things for the stage like the big apple tree, **C**'s cart and the big gate at the entrance to the castle. I told her about my adventure. She was also interested in what came before and we talked about that too. It was nice to share. She had a way of making everything I did sound like quite an adventure and I felt good talking with her.

As we acted out my story, I played me and she got me to really act out my emotions. "More!" she'd command. "Let the audience *FEEL* your sadness, *FEEL* your happiness." And so I did. I laughed loud and I really did cry.

We did a performance for everyone. **N** conducted an orchestra playing music he'd created from our time together. I wasn't so sure how it helped in finding my way back but I would certainly start paying more attention to my emotions as I went.

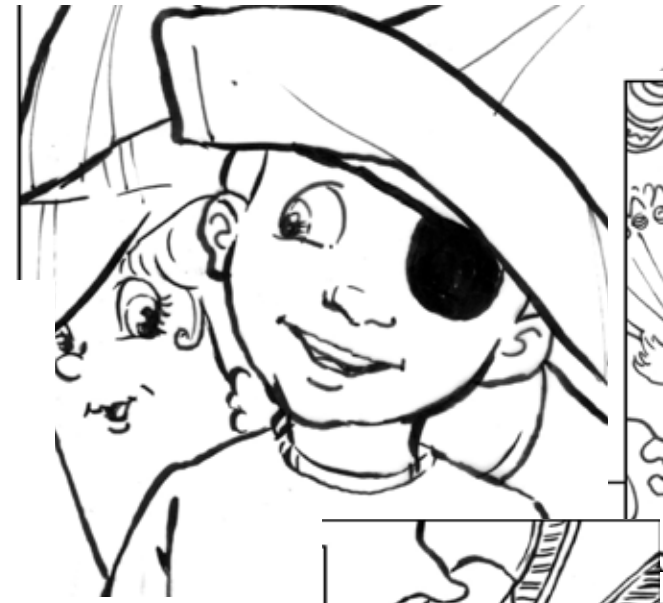
Pp - Pausing to Play



The most fun I had at the castle was playing with the princess, **P**. She was very pretty and very polite. It was nice to get away from the books and the maps, working on music and plays and just play. What a time we had together! So much laughter.

We played outside games and inside games. We played with her stuffed animals. We worked puzzles together. We had tea parties, drew pictures, played dress up and pretend. She and I became great friends.

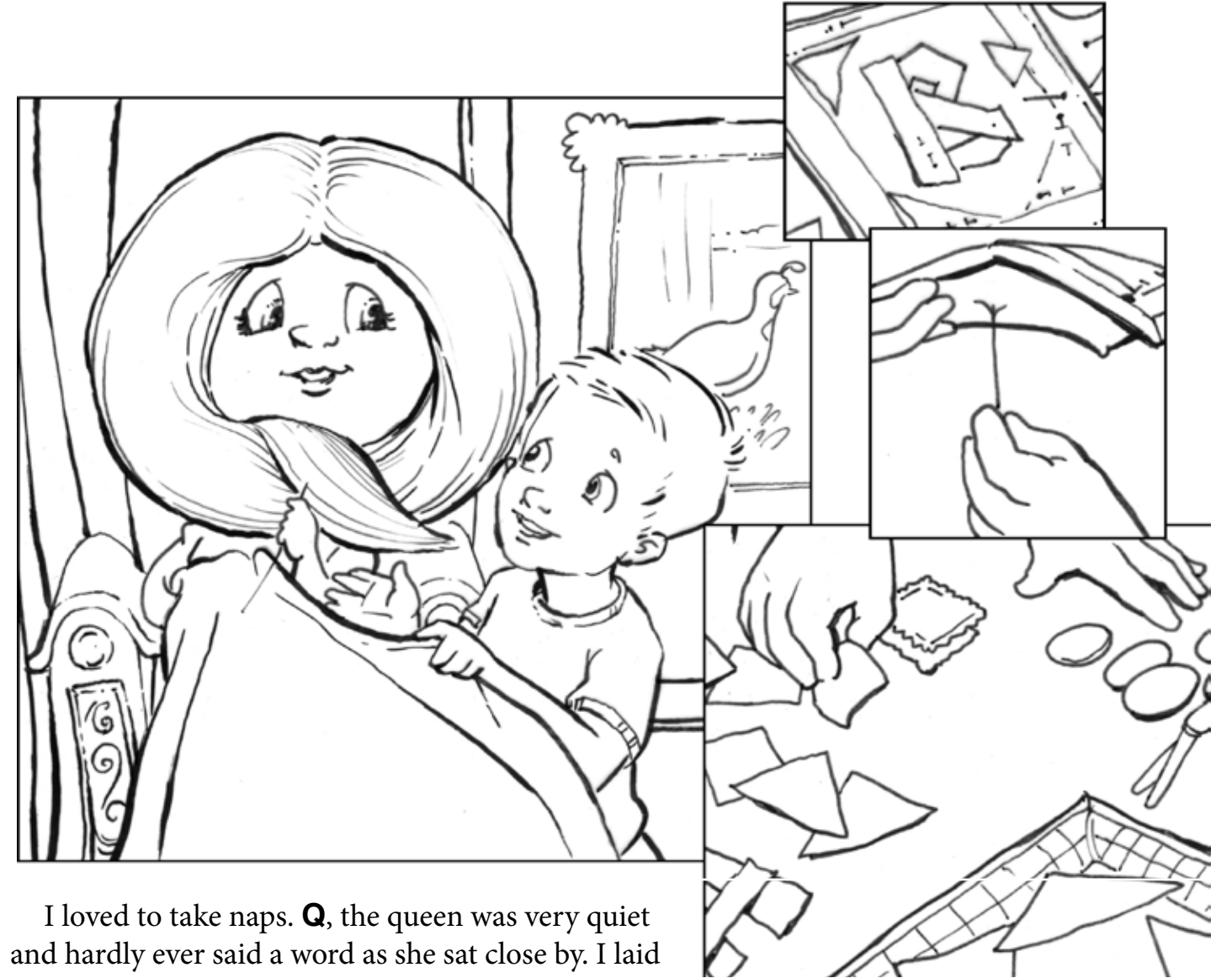




But always there was an ending to our time together. I would tire and it would be time to go to sleep again. We put away our playthings and I would go with the queen to take my nap.

I think about **P** often. I hope she found the prince that she always dreamed of.

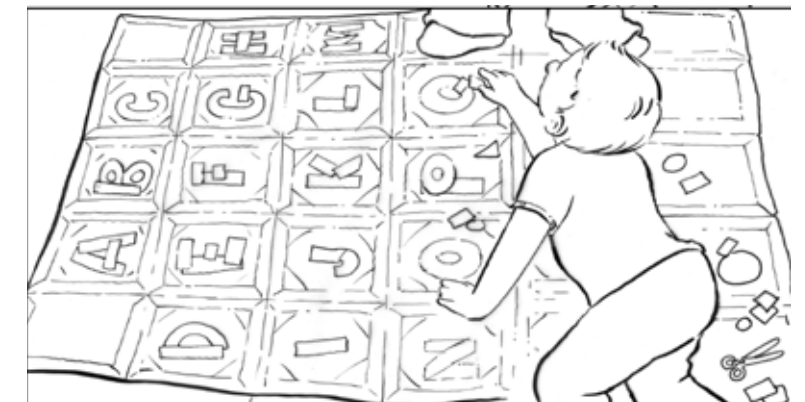
Qq - Quiet Time



I loved to take naps. **Q**, the queen was very quiet and hardly ever said a word as she sat close by. I laid my head down and would quickly fall asleep. I don't remember what I dreamed about. I wonder what the difference would have been.

I was very interested in the quilt she was making so she began to show me how to make one of my own. Using different colored shapes, I formed each of the letters I'd met and put them all together. It was a lot of work but I didn't want to quit. It was turning out really quite cool.

However, after study, after play, after relaxing and after creativity time I had to work. Everyone had to do some work in the castle to contribute. That is how I got to know **R**.



Rr - Reading a Recipe



I was to help **R** in the kitchen preparing the evening meal. **R** had just one arm so there were a number of helpers that were needed to cut, measure, mix and prepare the food we all were to eat. **R** ran the show directing as needed, running back and forth between tables making sure everything was done just so. Once introductions were made, he asked me, “*How are you at reading a recipe?*”



“*I can’t read.*” I told him. I thought he might not have heard my story and what I was there trying to do. Then he showed me the recipe book. It was all pictures! I just had to match what was in the book. “*I can read this!*” I said. And I was set to work.

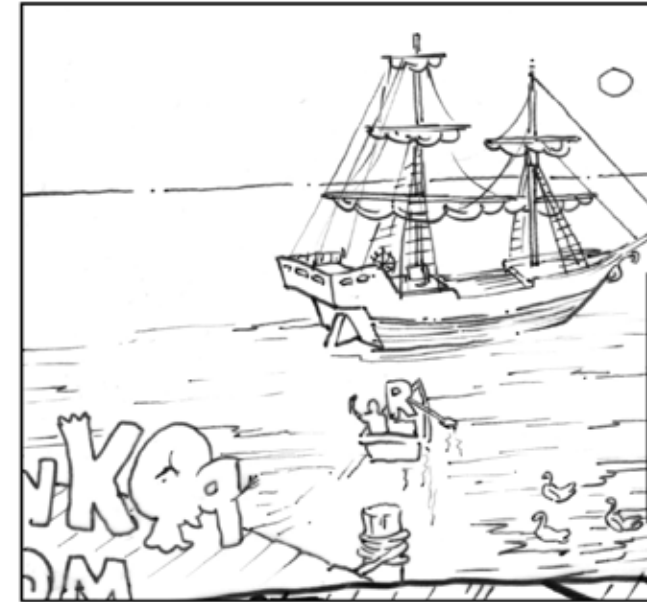
I felt useful. I liked being in **R**’s kitchen. It reminded me of the times I helped my mom in our kitchen at home. Those were good times. I missed my home and my family. I had been gone for a long time and I wanted to return. One idea had been to go back the way I came. This just didn’t seem right and I really had not been paying attention as I was going along. I would surely get even more lost. And I knew there was more to the alphabet. The only way I was going to get home was to move forward and to leave the comfort of the castle, but to where and how?

And then it was announced. A feast was to be prepared. A celebration was to be had. A solution to my problem would be revealed!

Tales of a school like the one I described and the one in the book had reached the king and his wise ones. It would take a voyage across the sea to get to it. A great sailing ship was in the harbour waiting. Our honored guest was none other than the letter **S**, its captain. We would set sail in the morning.



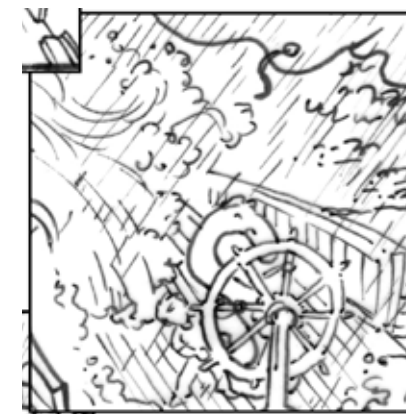
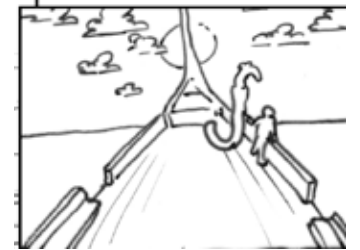
Ss - Surrender



It was hard to say goodbye. Everyone at the castle had been so good to me and I felt close to them. **R** rowed me out to the sailing ship in a small boat. The sails were unfurled and we were off!

S was a storyteller. Once sight of shore was lost and our journey underway, we stood together at the bow with the salty spray and wind in our faces and he told me stories. His words created pictures so clear it was if I were in the stories themselves seeing all that he described.

But that ease did not last. A storm came upon us. The winds became strong. The sea surged and waves crashed over the sides of the ship. More and more water came aboard. “We’re **SINKING!**” I shouted.



S was calm. “Don’t panic.” He said. “There is always a solution, sometimes quite different than what you would expect.” I was panicking.

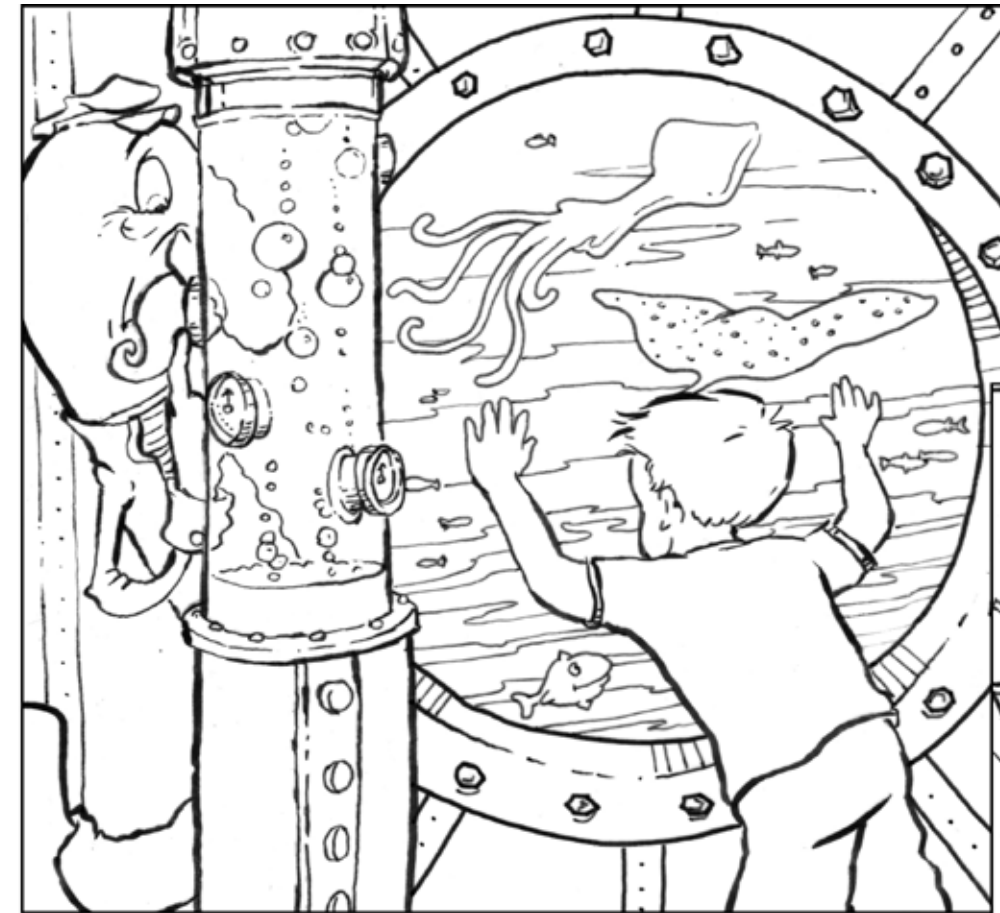
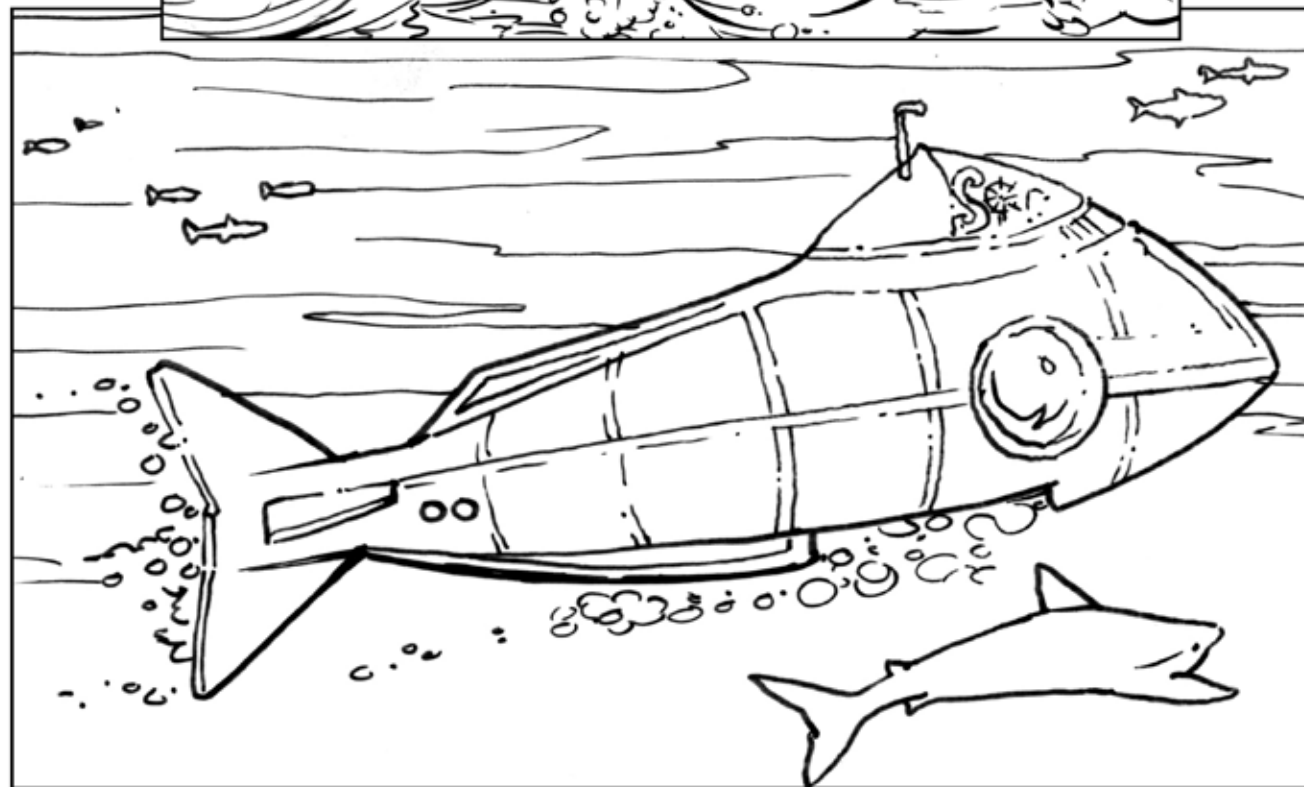
“If we accept that this ship is sinking and we will be under the water, what would you imagine us to be safe inside?” he asked.

“I don’t know!” I screamed over the wind. “A submarine?!?”

“Yes!” **S** smiled. “That would be superb!” And he pushed a big red button.



The steering wheel of the ship spun from its place rising up into the air. Sparks and electric silver light sprung from it and surged across the ship. Before my eyes, the ship began to transform and change. Metal replaced wood. Masts began to shrink and soon we were enclosed underwater in a submarine.



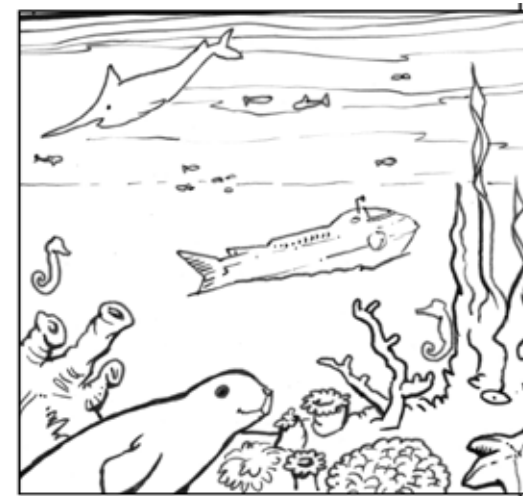
This was spectacular! There was so much alive beneath the surface! So much to see!!

Except there was a problem. The submarine had no fuel. We were still sinking.

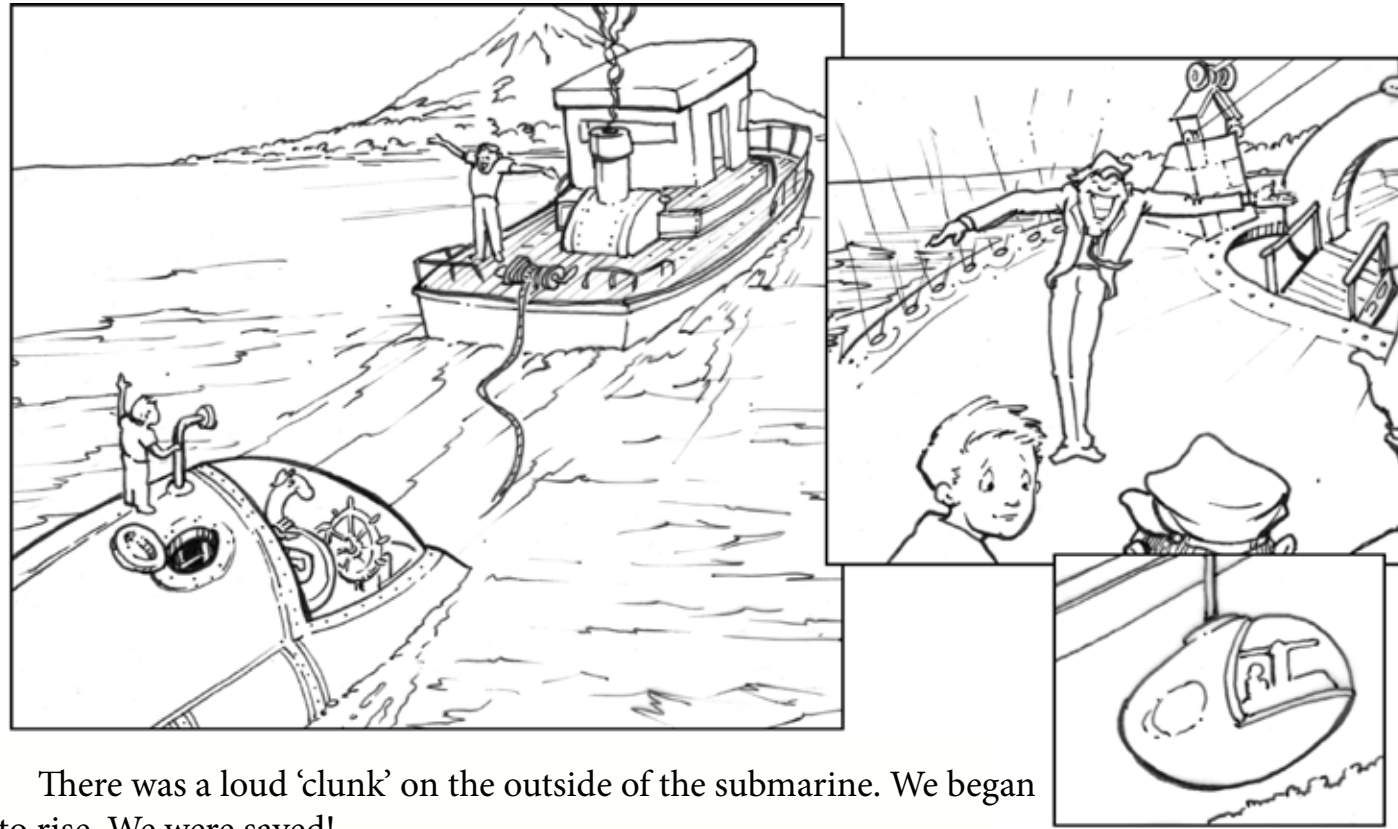


So there we sat at the bottom of the sea. I thought of **O** and would have liked to cry and be very sad at that point. But **S** was calm and was asking me about other solutions. "Can we call someone to save us?" I asked.

"Yes!" **S** smiled. "Super idea!" He took me to a station and showed me how to send signals for help using something called 'morse code'. Three short touches of a lever, three long ones and then three short ones meant, "Send Help". I did this and then we waited. **S** told more stories and I was able to calm down and feel relaxed that all would work out somehow.



Tt - Technology



There was a loud 'clunk' on the outside of the submarine. We began to rise. We were saved!

On the surface, we were greeted by the tugboat driver hailing as **T**. He had received our distress signal and come to see how he could help. He towed the submarine to the closest port, a place called 'Alphabet City'. This, **T** said, was a technologically advanced city home to letters from around the world.

The port was in a small town outside of the city. It would take some transfers of transportation to get there, but **T** promised that he and his team would take care of me in my travels and I would be safe.

First stop was a tram that would take me up and over the first peak of the island. We were greeted at the tram station and I was passed into the care of **T** again. The two looked nearly identical, like twins. As we rode higher and higher up the mountain **T** told me tales of how the city came to be. He was very proud and an excellent tour guide pointing out interesting things along the way, each with its own story **T** was eager to tell.



I then boarded a train. The conductor and driver was **T**, of course. I wondered how they could tell each other apart if they looked the same and all had the same name.

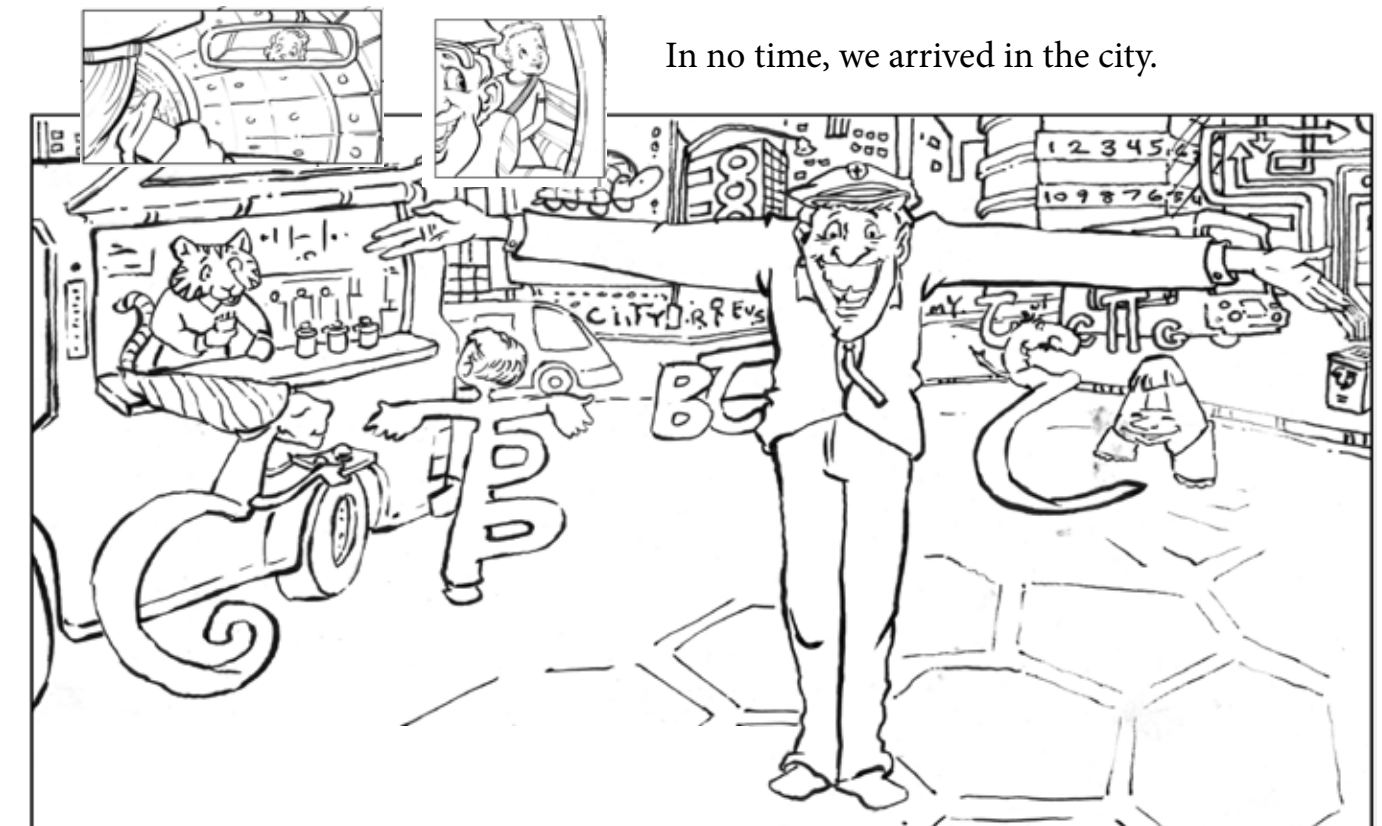
The train made the trek across the first island at terrific speed. We went through three tunnels which I really enjoyed.

Waiting for us on the other side was **T** again, this time the driver of a taxi that would take us over the bridge and into the city. The others had been talkative. This

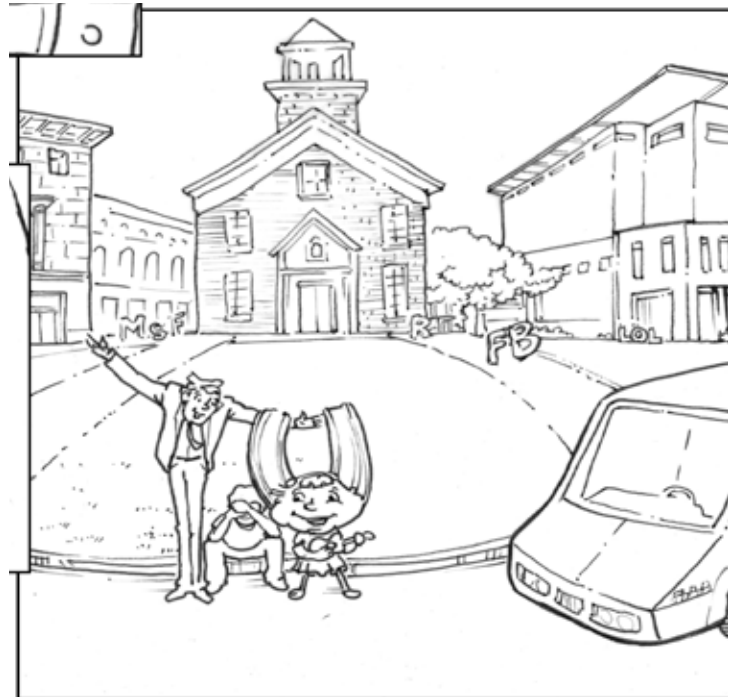
T was even more so! He told jokes, he told stories and made it a point to ask me questions. He said his favorite part of his job was meeting people. "Can't get to know someone if you don't ask questions," he said.



In no time, we arrived in the city.



Uu - Higher Learning



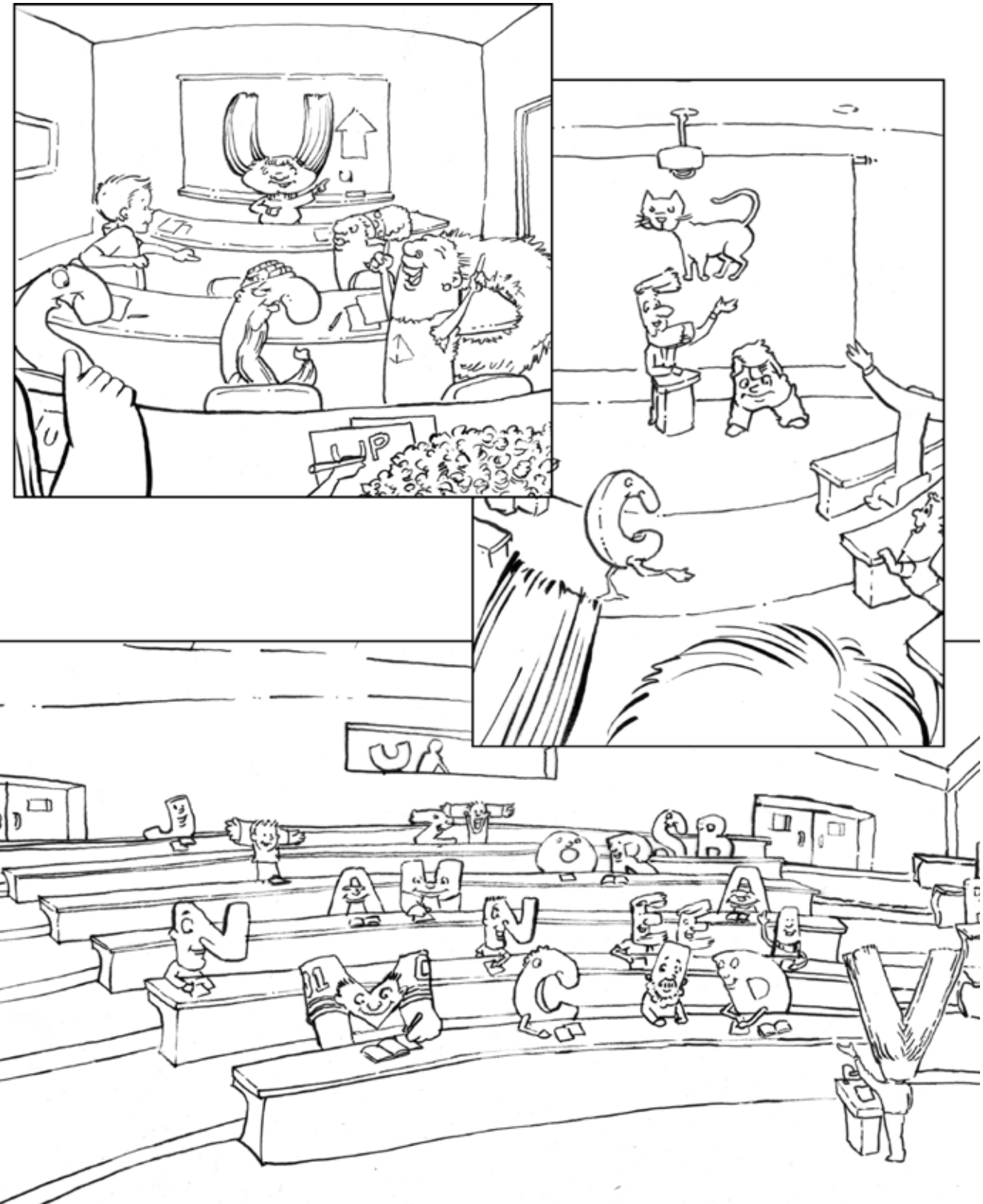
T listened to me and when I showed him the book from the castle with the picture of the school, he brightened. “*That’s here!*” he cried. I was overjoyed! After all that had happened, I felt possibly I was very close.

He took me there immediately. We were greeted by the undergraduate welcoming committee, letter **U**. Only, there was not the there I was expecting. It was not my schoolhouse. It was a whole university with a building that just looked similar. I felt very unhappy. I sat down and began to cry.

U tried to cheer me up with singing a song and playing her ukele. I did not like that. It did not help. She stopped and put her hand on my shoulder and said, “*I want to understand. Please tell me what’s wrong.*”

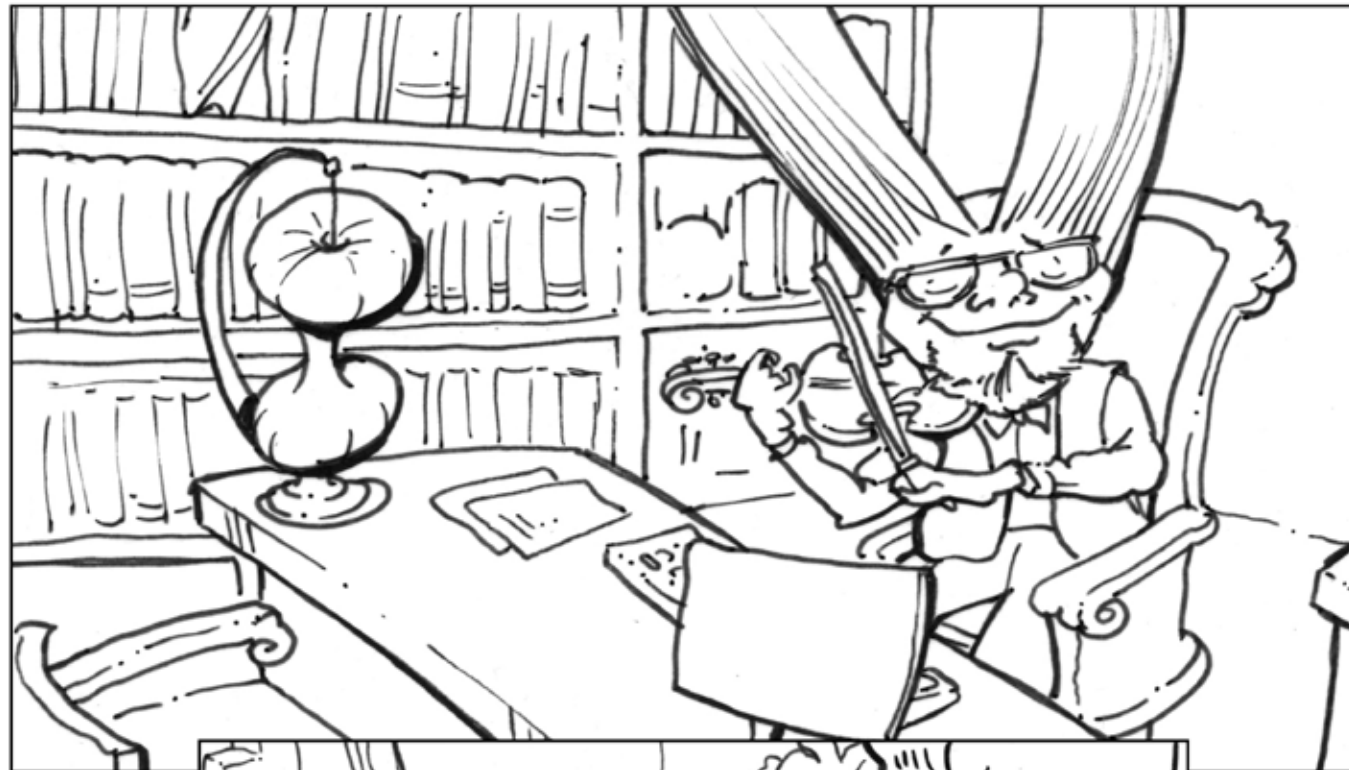
First I told her how angry I was that I’d come all of this way and it was the wrong place. She listened. I told her about how sad I was being away from home for so long. She just listened. I told her how worried I was that I would not get home again. She listened and finally when I’d shared all of my feelings I found I actually felt better.

“*I know someone who can help.*” she said. I was very happy to hear this.



She took me through some of the classrooms there at the university. This was where letters came to learn what they might become and how they could work together to create new things in the world. I didn’t understand then what world she was talking about. That would be answered by Professor **V**. We visited his classroom last and when he was finished with his lecture, we visited his office.

Vv -



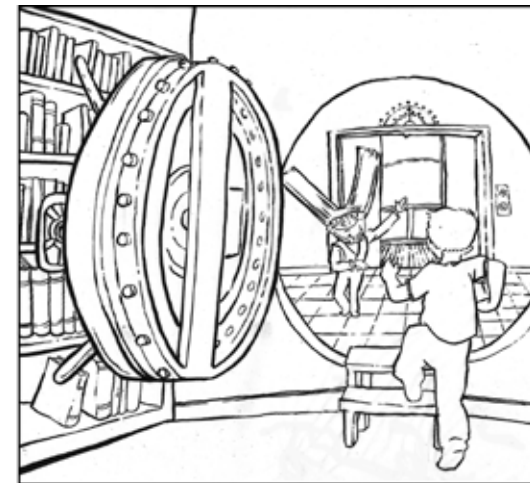
V didn't even notice us come in. He was lost in music. His eyes were closed, his violin tucked under his chin. He looked so happy. Finished, he warmly asked me to sit down so we could talk.

I told him who I was. I told him I wanted to go back to my Kindergarten classroom where I was learning the alphabet and how I was going to learn how to spell and then to read and to write. I told him about the adventure I had had up until meeting him. I told him that I wanted to make a book about it but I couldn't do that if I couldn't get back home again.

"Would you like me to help you?" he asked.

"YES! Please!" I said.

He offered his hand. "Come with me."

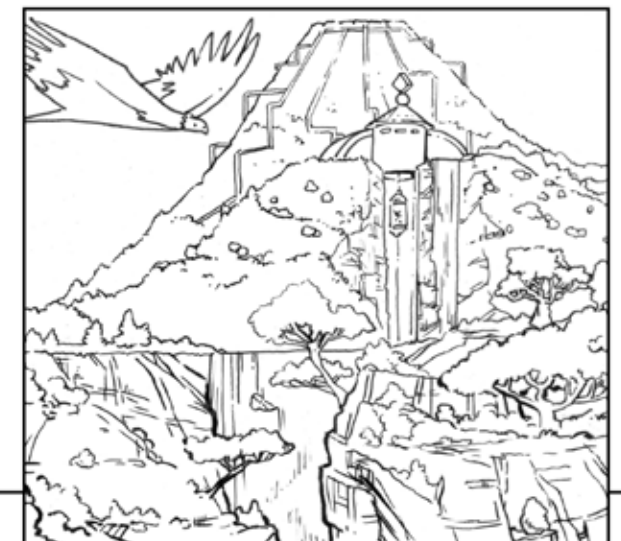
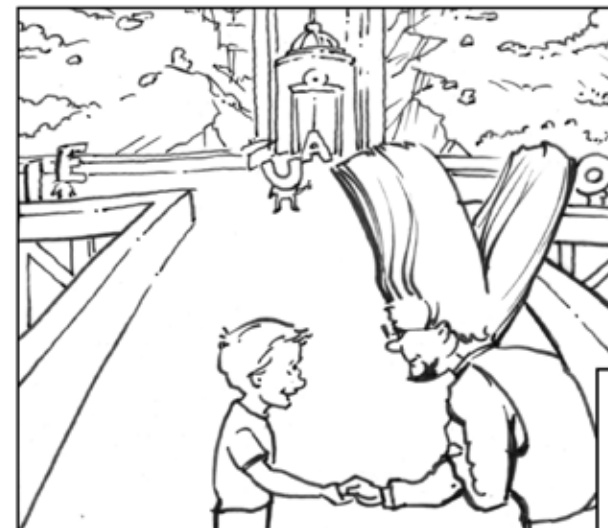


Moving the bookcase revealed a massive vault door. He opened it. Inside was a small room leading to an elevator. He gestured that I go into it.

The elevator didn't take us to another floor of the building. It took us outside and up the side of the volcano. The view was spectacular!



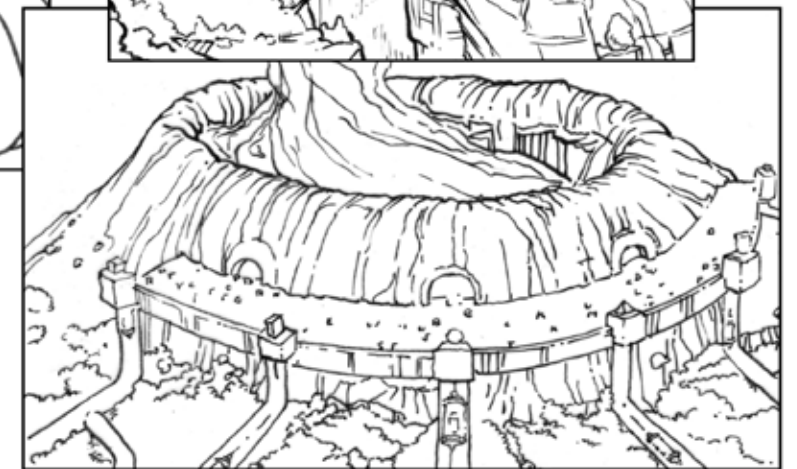
V explained as we rode upwards. "I know of your world. It is where we as alphabet letters go. The students I teach seek to become words. Words can become things or they can become thoughts. As thoughts they have the possibility of becoming eternal when they are written or have power and multiply as they are spoken."



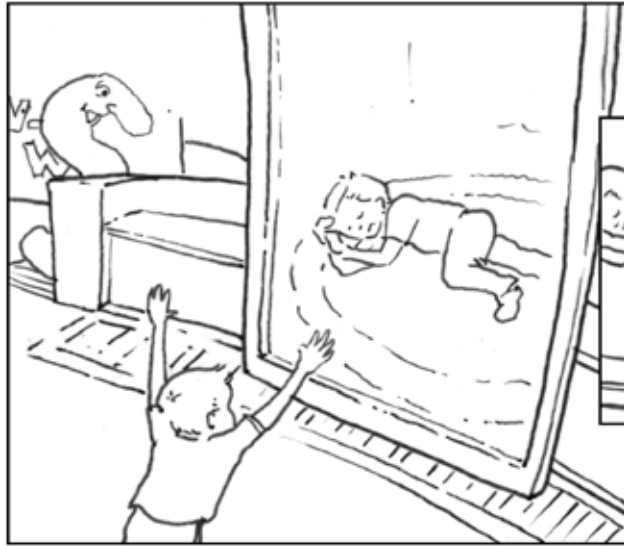
We arrived at a platform leading to another elevator. Other letters coming from other places were also arriving here and making their way to the final elevator.

V wished me luck. He seemed confident that I would find my way in coming here. "Be open to possibilities." he said, "And use your imagination." With this he gave me a wink.

This elevator took me all the way up. I rode with an **A**, an **E**, an **I**, an **O** and a **U**. There I was at the top of a volcano on a wide platform. More elevators ended here and there were 100s of letters moving towards entrances inside.



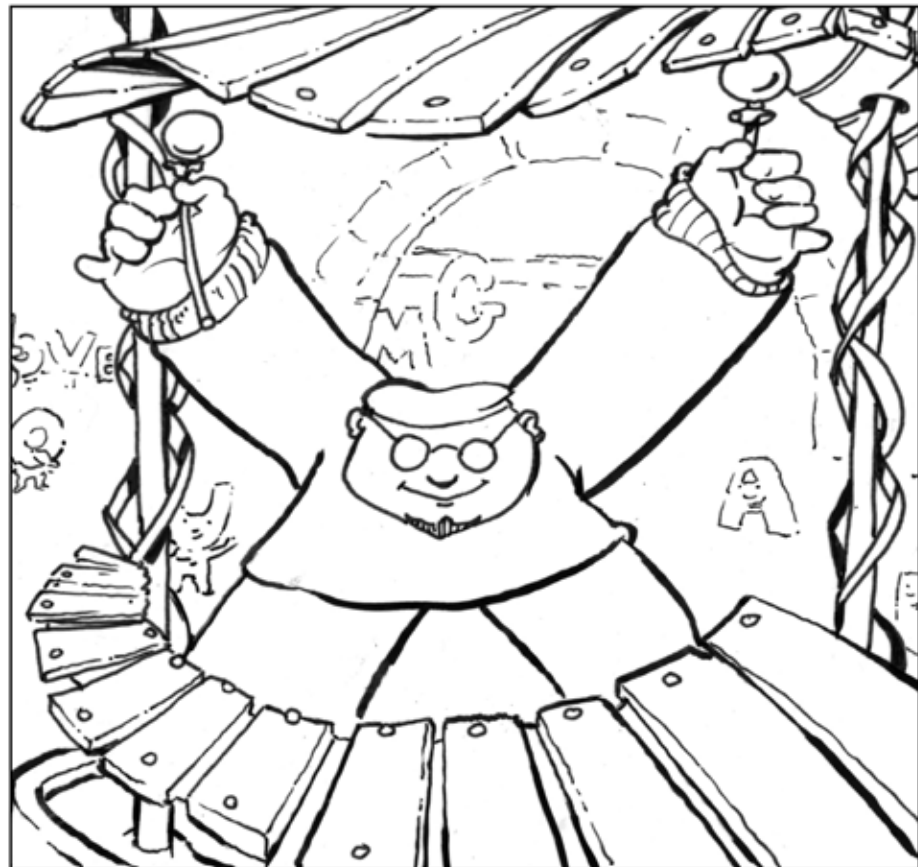
Xx



“There I am!” I shouted. “Why am I still here? I don’t want to be here, I want to be there! What else am I supposed to do?”



Another floating platform came closer, this one with the letter **X** dressed all in black at its center surrounded by colorful xylophones.



“There is more to you than what you’re made of and what you look like.” The **X** said. “What do you think about looking inside?” He asked.

“I’ll try anything.” I begged.

So **X** began to play his instrument. As he did so, two machines came down from above and stopped to focus on each side of my head. I could FEEL the vibrations of **X**’s music through my entire body. It was so very soothing.



On one screen, a picture of a brain showed the front lighting up. “Wow! that’s my brain!” I thought out loud. On the other screen I started to see pictures and moving clips of scenes of ME! There was me as a baby with my mom. There was the first house I remember growing up in. I got to see me walking for the first time!! The images began to flash by so quickly I began to feel dizzy and thought maybe I was returning.

But I wasn’t. Everything slowed and the music stopped. There I was lying on the storytime carpet asleep. Here I was with annoying letters still fluttering around my head.

“Perhaps,” said the **X** and the **W** agreed, “It is time you ask **Y**.”



Zz



There was nothing there except a purple crayon and nothing to do so I began to draw. I drew a picture of each letter I had met and what happened when I met them.

When I got to **Z**, I smiled. That was the first letter I ever knew because that was the first letter of my name. I made the letter **Z** and thought about what I would draw with it as I'd not met him or her yet. "I would love to fly home the way I came and say goodbye to everyone one last time" I thought out loud.

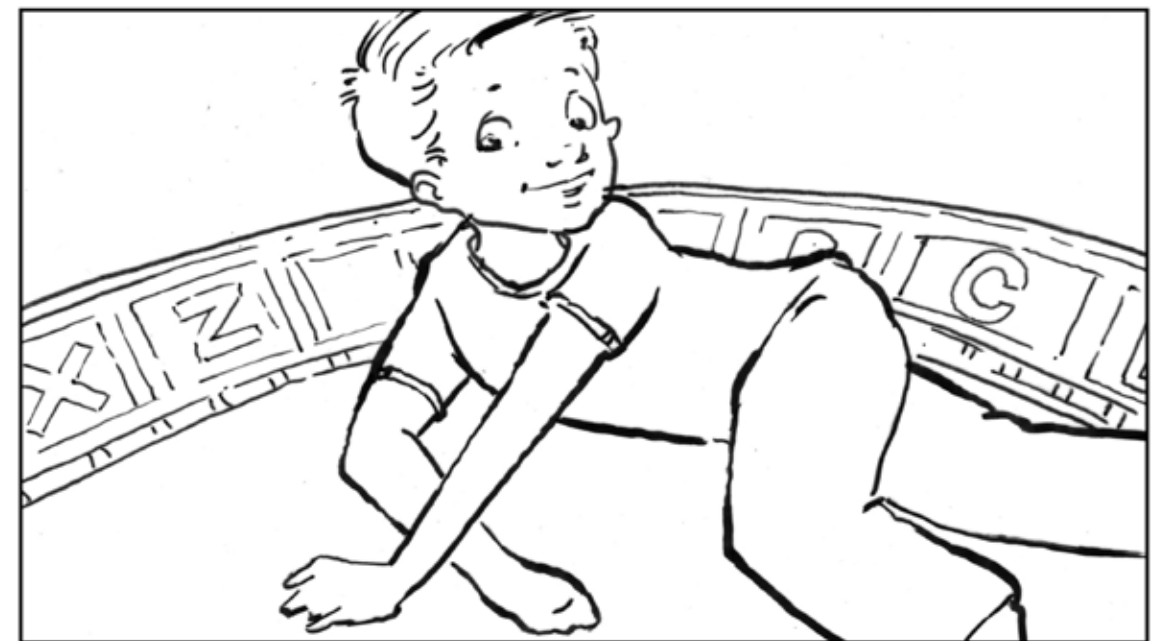
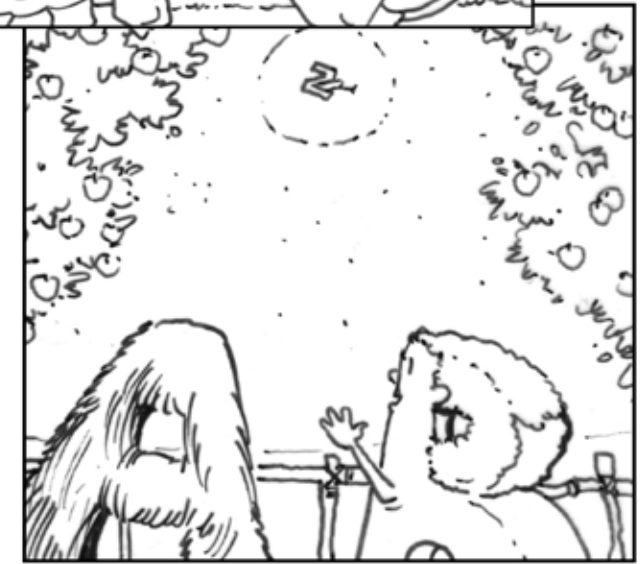
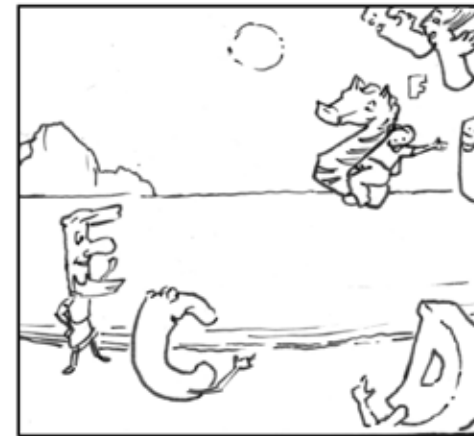
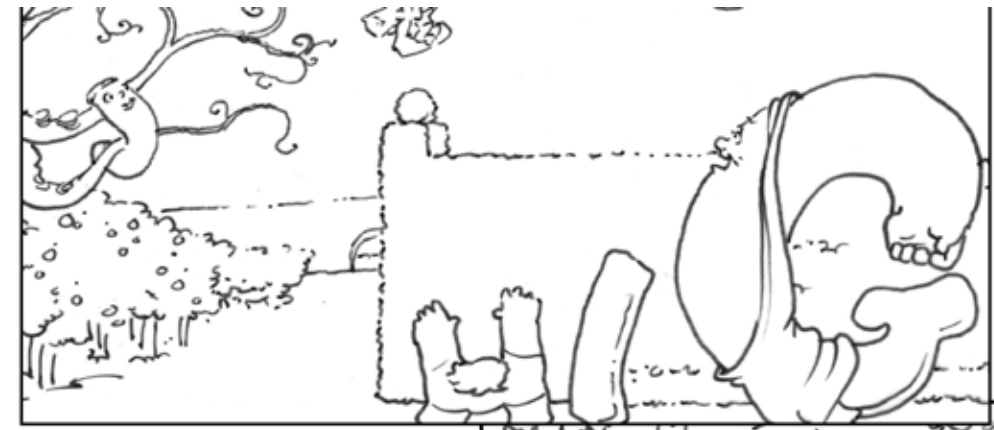
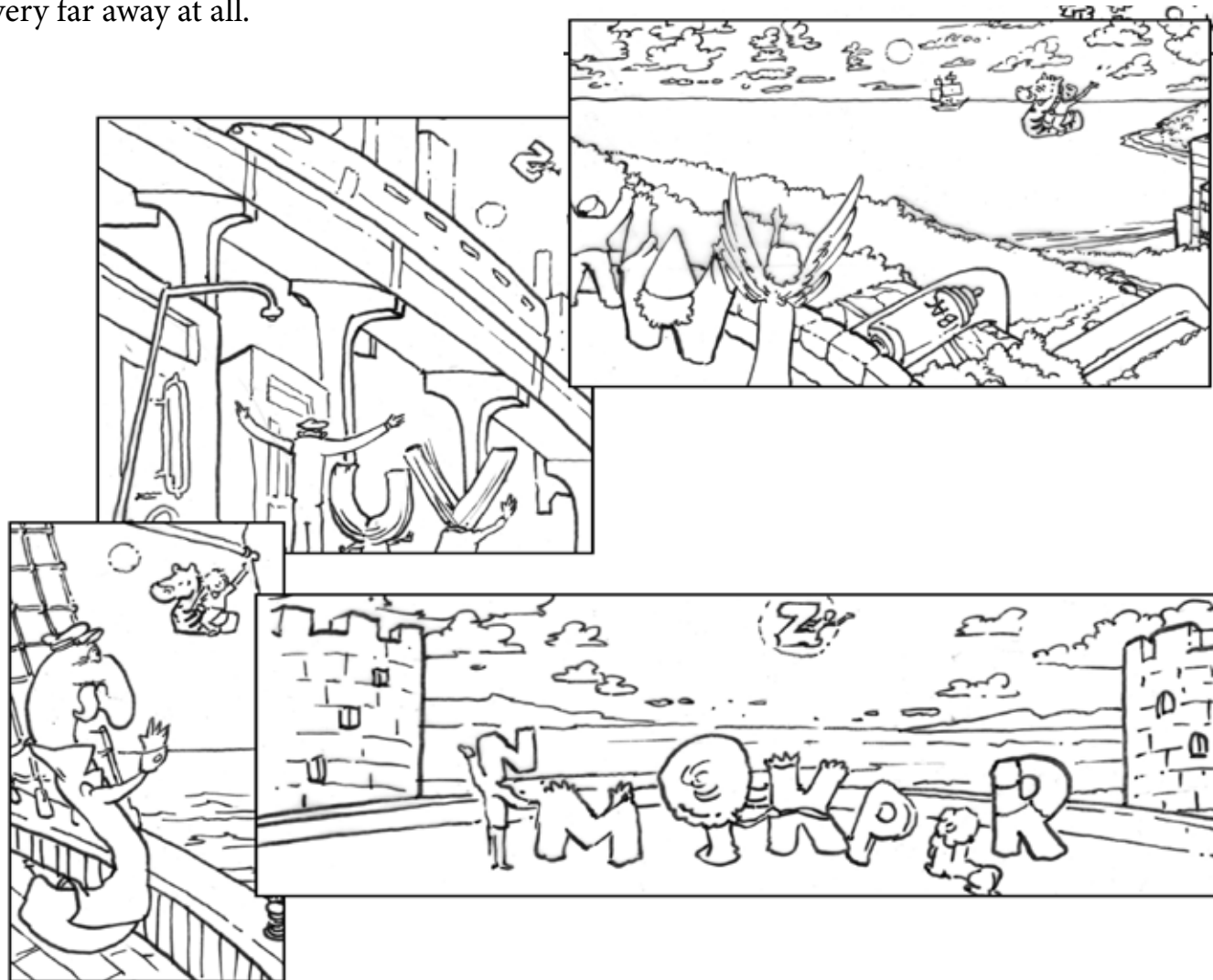


Just like Letter **I** had showed me and **V** encouraged me to do, I closed my eyes and imagined a letter **Z** I could do that with. When I opened them, there **Z** was.

The End

I got on the saddle and held on tight. **Z** flew into the air and into the white. We came out in a cloud high above the volcano. **Z** zipped through the air coming closer to see and wave to **W**, **X** and **Y** gathered outside on the wall. We then went to the city and waved to **T**, **U** and **V** together downtown. We went across the sea passing **S** - his ship a ship again. And then we passed the castle. All of my friends, **L**, **M**, **N**, **O**, **P**, **Q** and **R** were there watching the sunset and waved to me. **G**, **H**, **I** and **J** were close by together in the garden. We travelled up the river and saw **C**, **D**, **E** and the family of **F**s relaxing together on the shore as the moon rose. Then over the forests to the great apple tree where **A** and **B** waved from their viewing balcony.

The moon was bright and full. **Z** zagged and started to fly towards it as if it was not so very far away at all.



And then I woke up. I knew my alphabet - each one personally! I would learn to spell and learn to read and write. I would always remember this adventure and would have many more. I felt so happy. Thank you for allowing me to share this one with you.

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