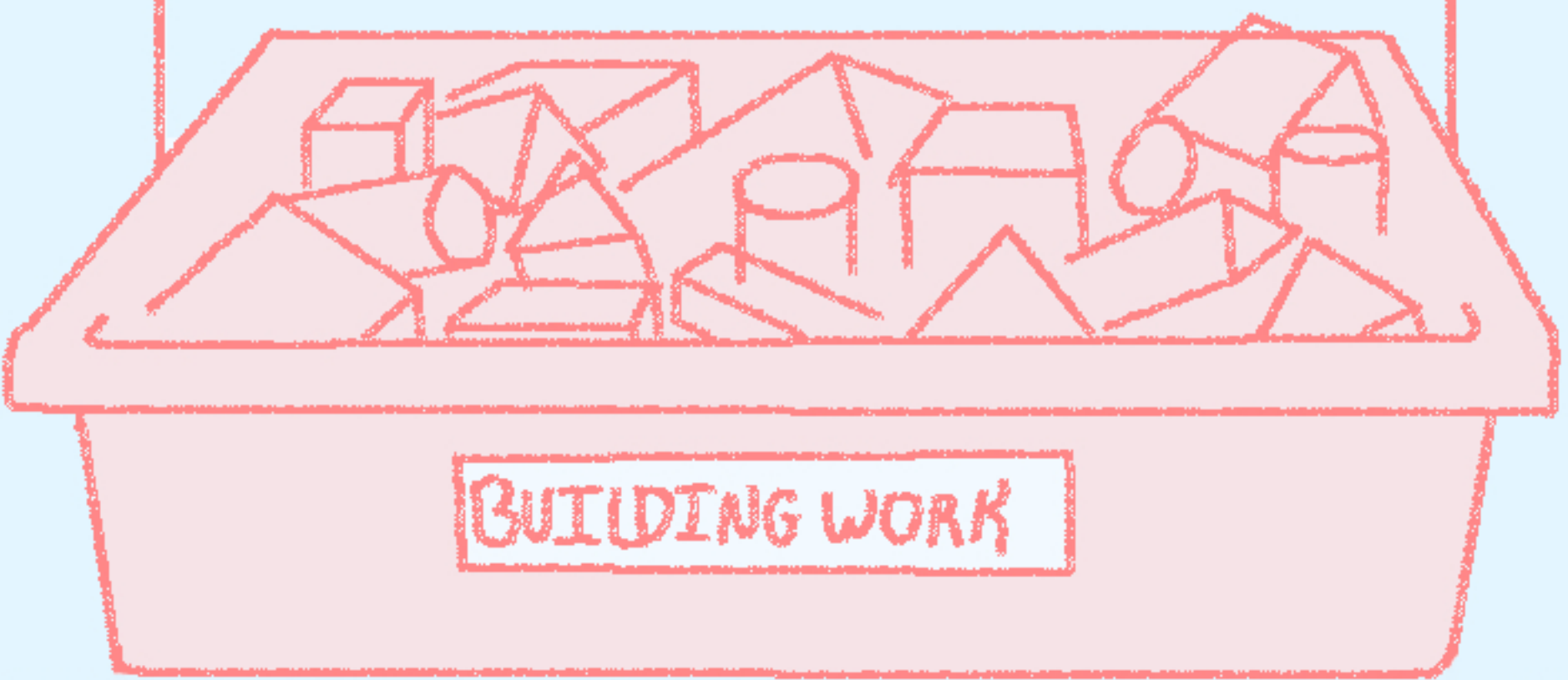


It Like

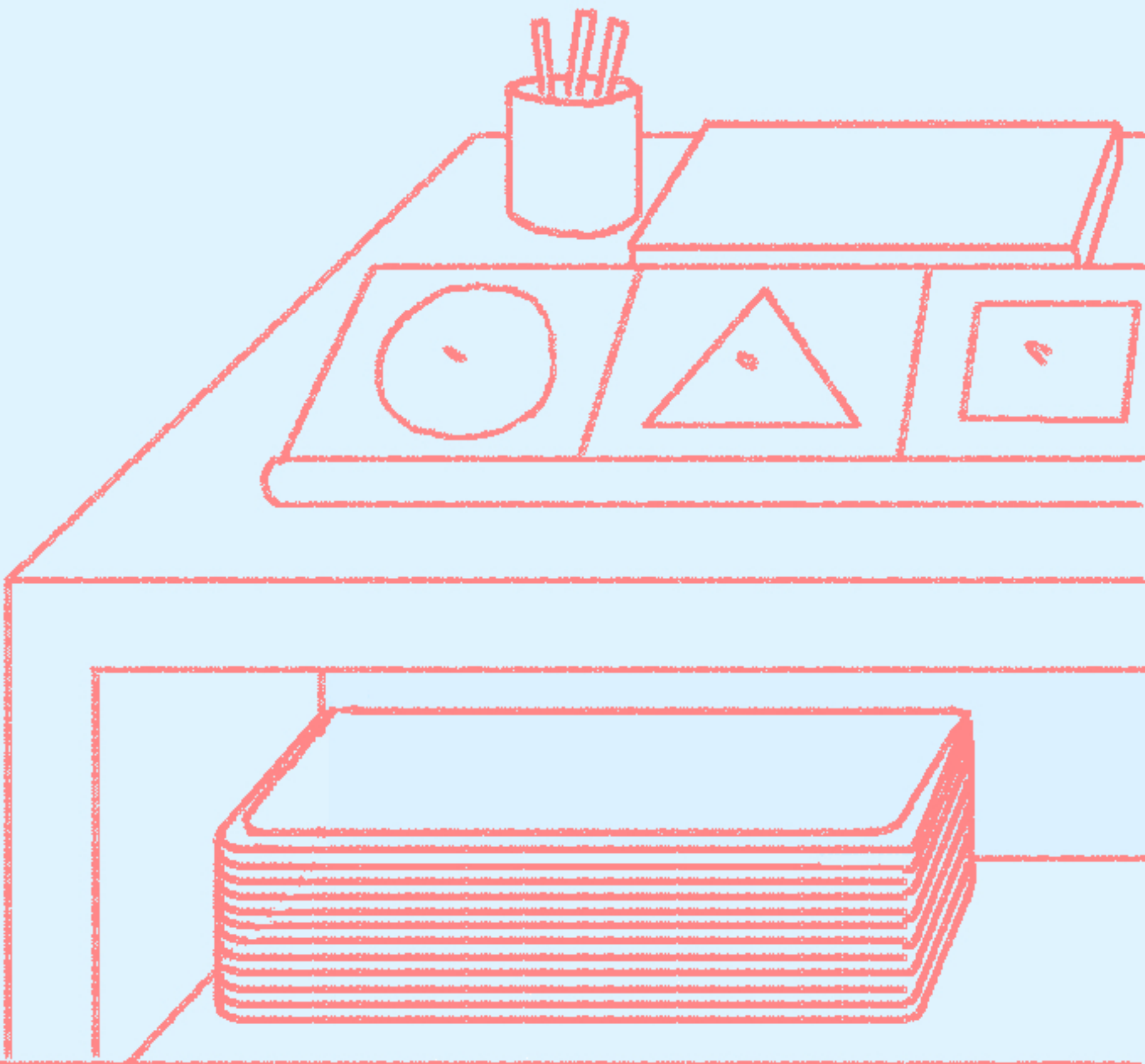
Kids



**I like children. I like to play with them and talk to them. I like to ask them what they do for fun at home or about their sisters or brothers.**



**I had never considered working with them, but when I found out about the opening, I couldn't think of a reason not to go for it. I would feel good if I could make their day a little better, or teach a kid one new thing each day.**



**Plus, \$10 an hour. Much better than what I was making working at the restaurant.**



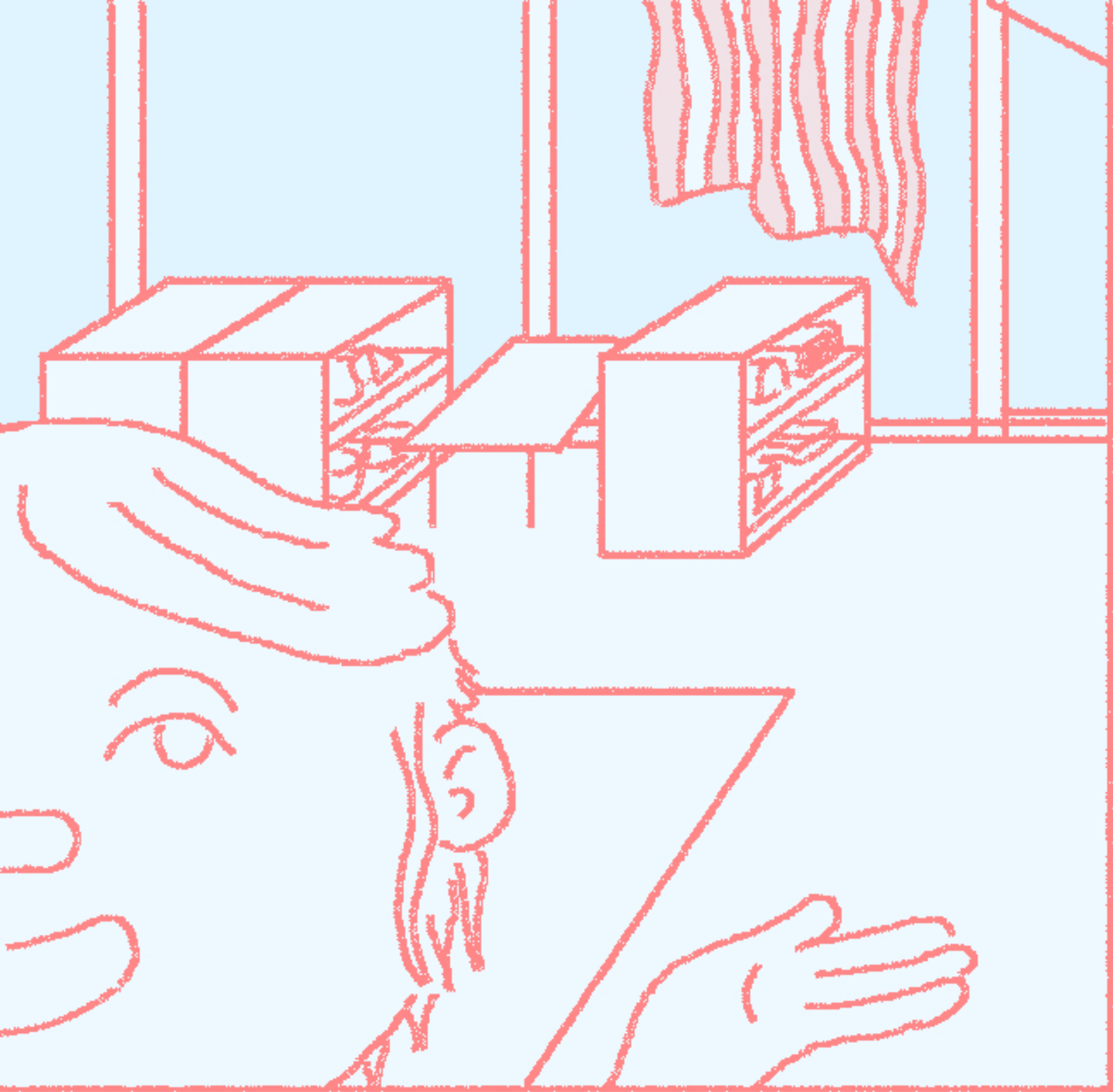
**I remember my first day. I clocked in and headed to the room to meet the lead teacher I would be working with. Her name was Ms. Sarah.**



**My boss seemed happy about Sarah's classroom, but the other teachers and aids in the building always said something negative or sarcastic when I told them my placement.**



**I liked Ms. Sarah a lot. She was frank with the kids and didn't let them talk back to her. I can be a pushover– I get it from my mom. I was hoping to develop the confidence Sarah showed in the classroom. She was very "teacher-like," if that makes sense. Like, she wore that blue denim. It's easy to talk to kids who are happy, but troublesome kids are another story. That takes skill, and she had it.**



**We were both shy at first, but she eased me into the position. I was the classroom assistant. She only asked that I help keep the kids under control and focused while they worked, get food ready for lunch and snack, clean, help with transitions. Each task felt natural as the days went by.**





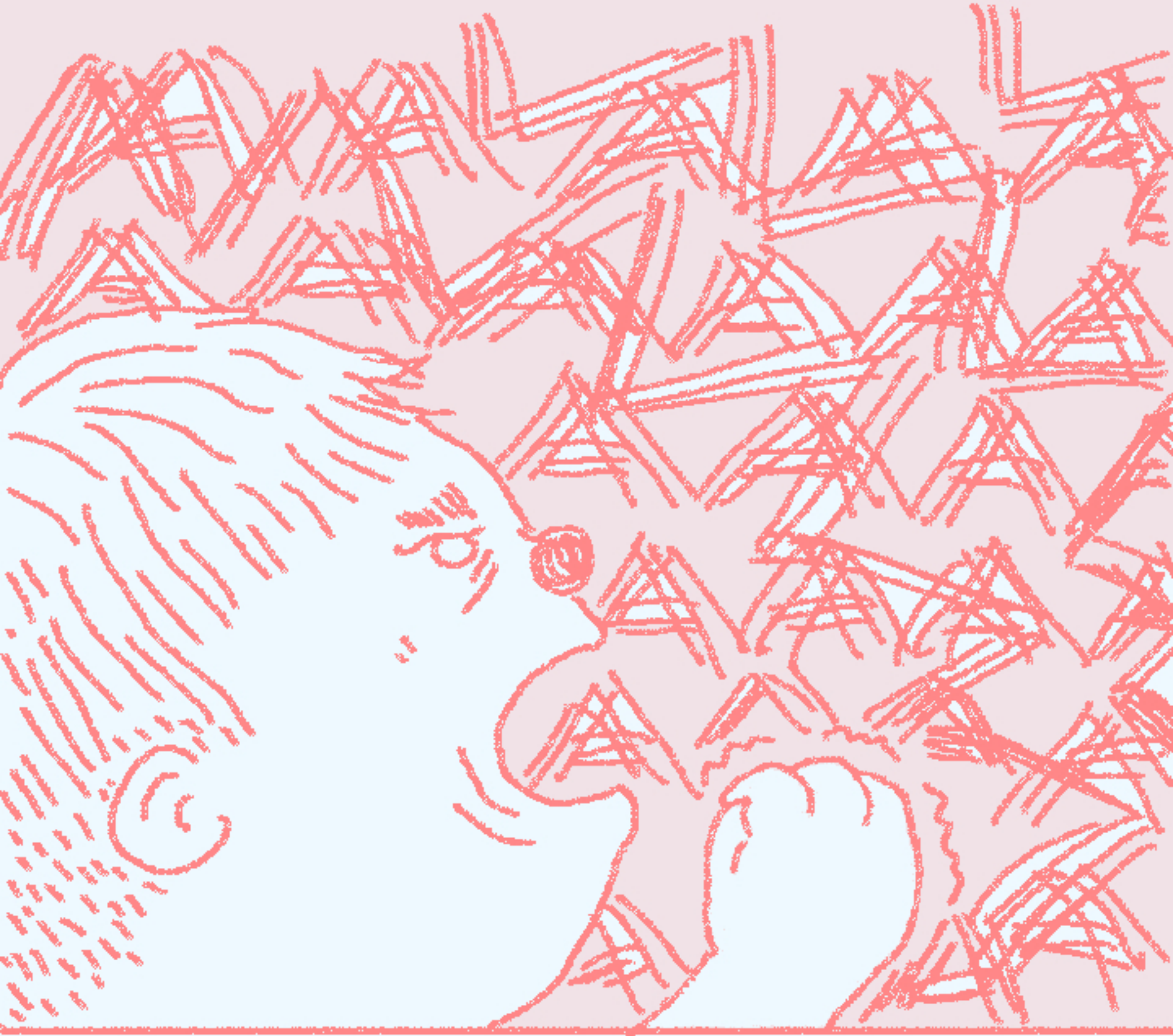
**The kids came in and we started the day. It happened quickly. It was a Montessori school— in short, the kids work at their own pace and we are to talk to them in non-negative ways. If a child is running in the room, instead of saying, "Stop running!" we would say, "We don't run in our classroom." Since I didn't teach, my work mostly had to do with this behavioral side of things.**



**It was one of the first days I enjoyed going to a job. Ms. Sarah was so positive, and correcting kids never felt mean. They were messy, but kids are always gonna be messy. They can't help it. They can't help much of anything. They do the best they can.**



**The weeks passed. It took several days for me to see, but Sarah's class was pretty wild. They had a handful of older students who fed off of each other. It was a lot to handle. I started getting angry at them some days, but it was bearable. We had a lot of sweets too.**



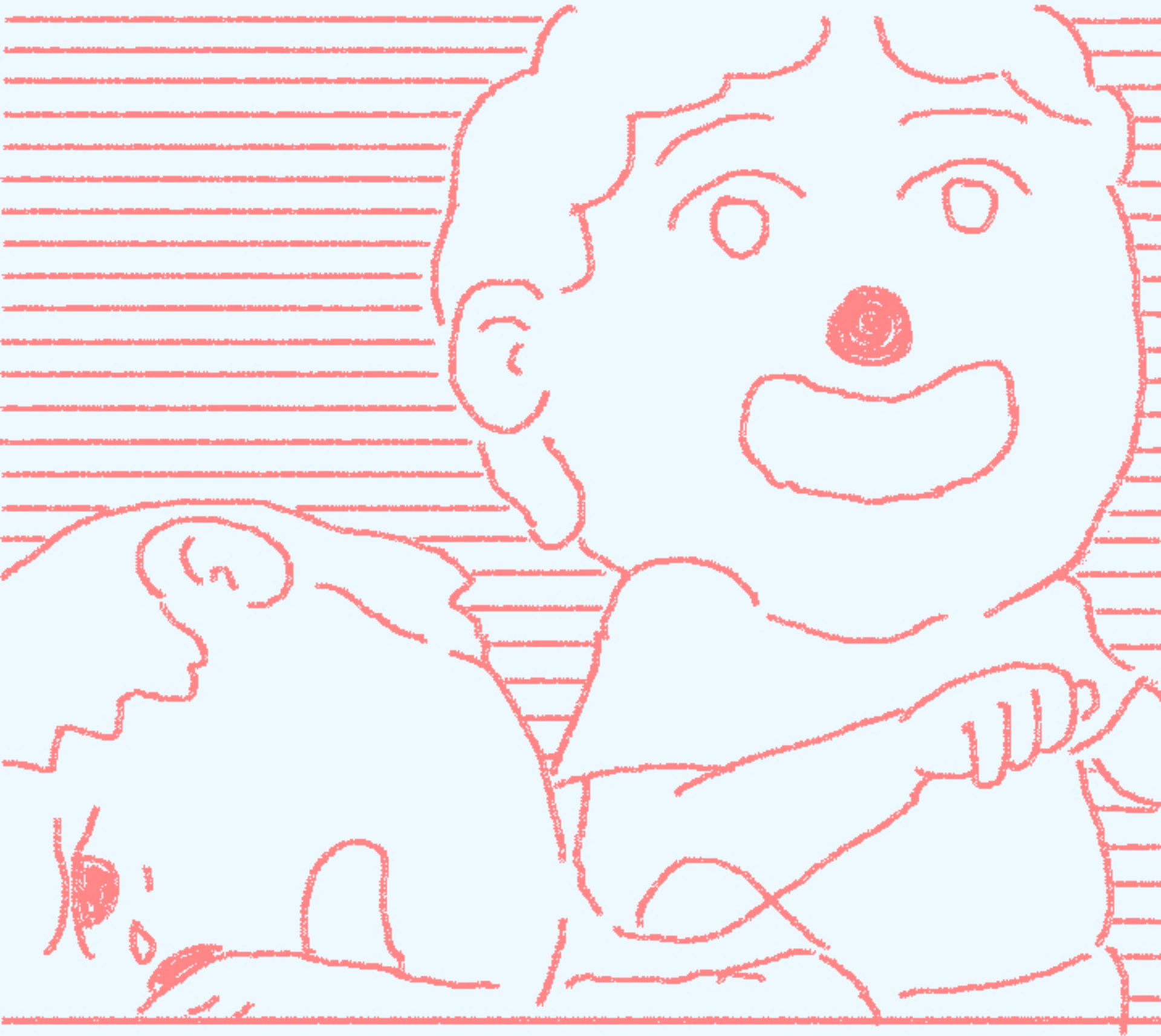
**We had at least one with an undiagnosed behavioral disorder. Hnery would act sweet until someone made him mad, then he would scream and run and hit, and throw the room into chaos. His mom expected so much of us, that rich bitch. I usually don't say that kind of thing about people, but I can't help it with her.**



**I don't think she worked. She would always come in wearing exercise clothes. In my head, she would drop her kid off, go to brunch, exercise, talk on the phone all day, and then gets her kid again. She had a daughter on the way. We all hoped she wouldn't be a mess like her brother.**



**Most of the parents were rich, but not all of them were like her. You had parents like her that would threaten your job like she was your real employer when her kid got a bruise. Others understood that kids get hurt here and there just by being kids.**



**We got more students, and our class only got wilder. The loud ones ran around the room during nap and kept the others from sleeping. Then the good kids were always cranky from lack of naps or got the wrong impression about behavior during naptime because of the misbehaving kids.**



**The first time I cried on the drive home surprised me. It had only been three months. I didn't cry driving home from the restaurant until I had been there a year and a half.**





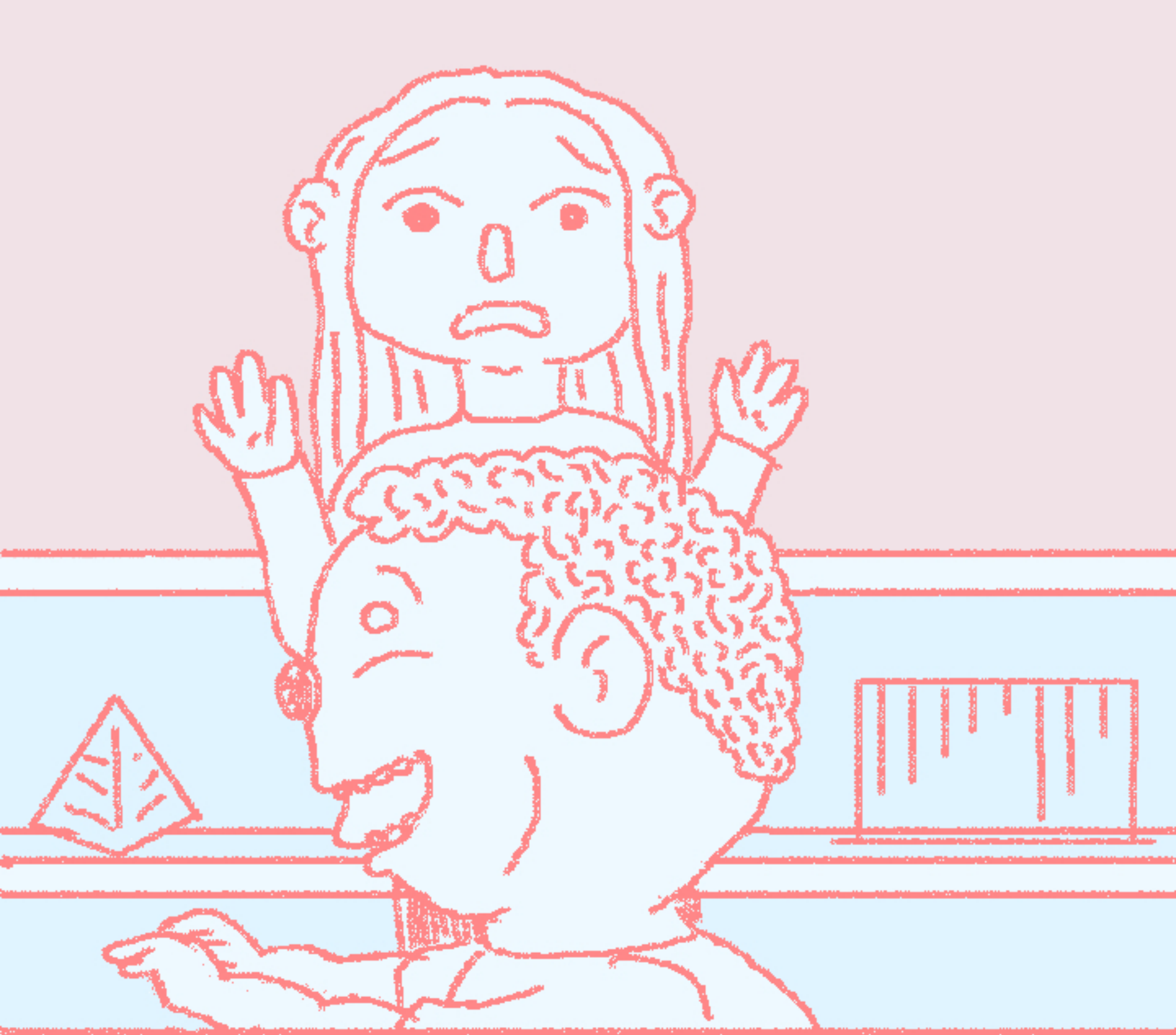
**I woke up the next day feeling refreshed. It was a blow for me, but crying usually gets things out of my system. The bad day was over, and with a new day, I could go back with new energy.**



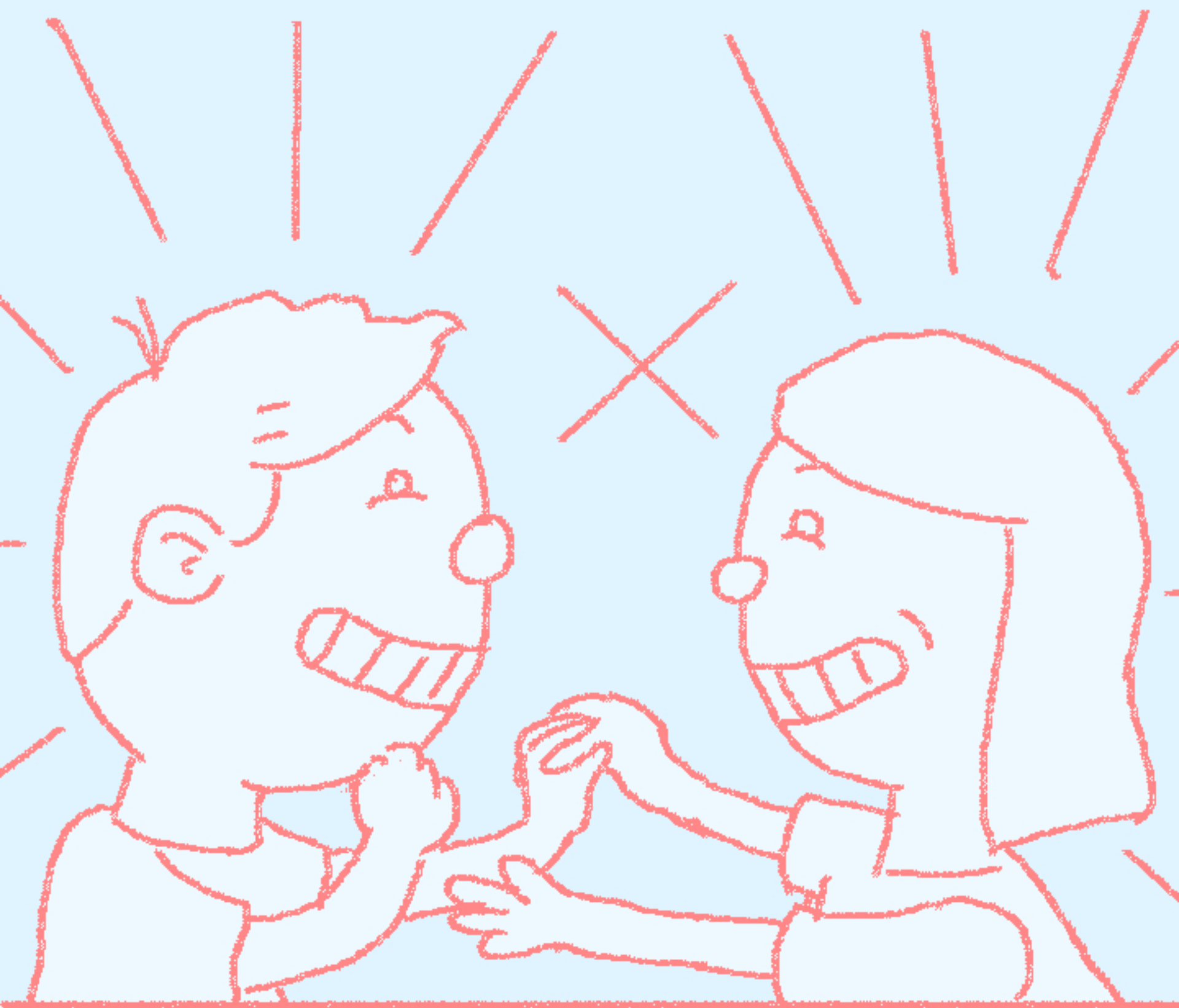
**That good mood lasted three days, up until Sarah told me that she would be leaving for a month for more training.**



**It was terrible.**



**I had to work with substitutes every day who never knew our schedule, never knew the kids names, never knew anything about our class. It was a recipe for disaster.**



**They'd leave me alone at lunch before I got to eat. We went from fifteen nappers and one kid who'd stay up when I first started to twenty-two kids who'd run around the room and play while four kids slept. It's hard for me to think of times when I was more frustrated.**



**One student was getting worse by the day. He was a mixed kid, but both of his parents were old and white. They must have adopted him. They named him Caiden. Have you ever met a black guy named Caiden? They babied him and fed him junk all the time. He was three and a half and on his way to being obese. His mother took him to get frozen custard every time he threw a fit about leaving. Awful.**

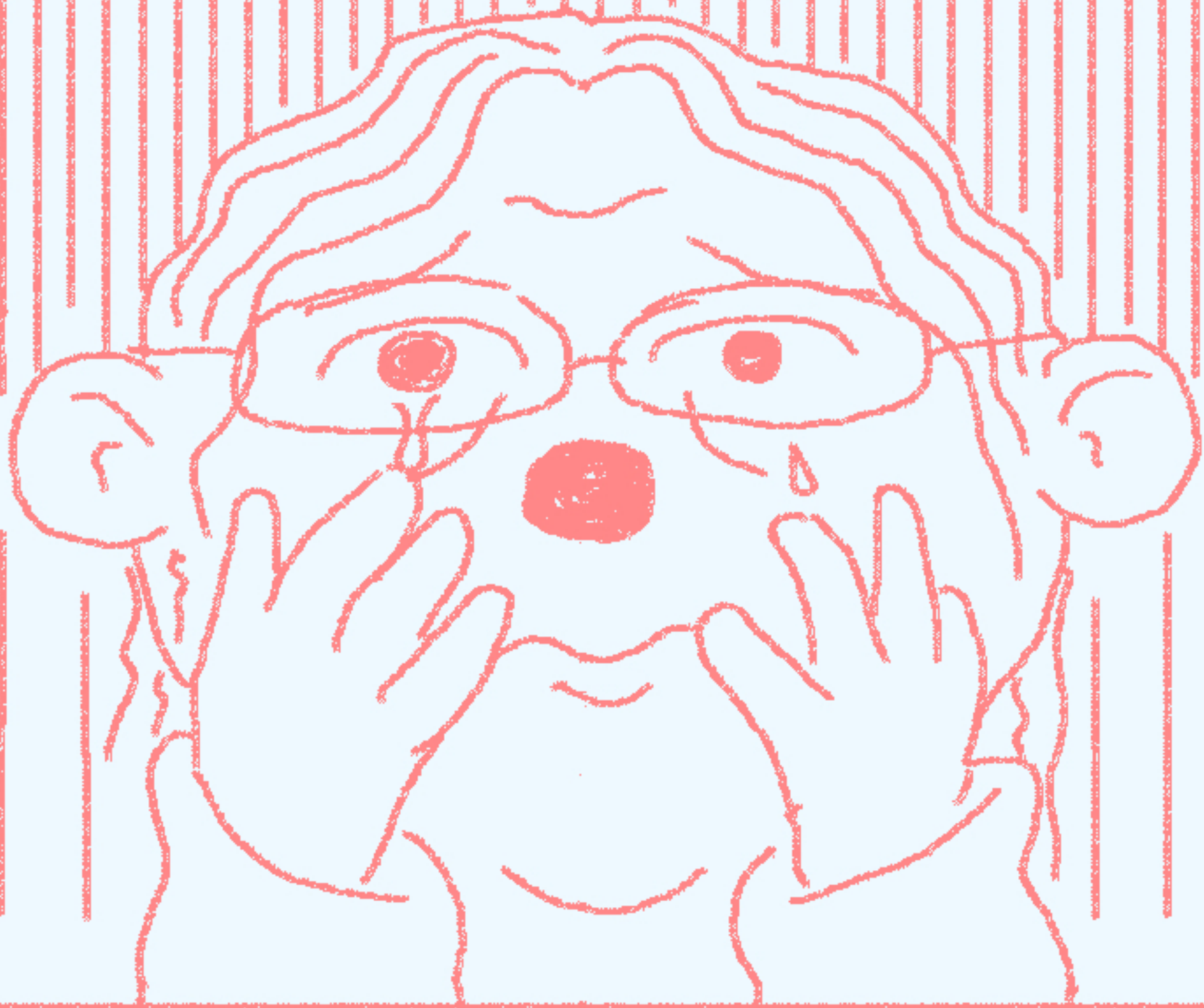


**One day when the substitute was gone, he was running around during naptime, which was now the usual routine. Everyone was acting bad, but when the room is in chaos, you have to choose one to start with, and I picked him. I cornered him in the bathroom and tried to talk to him. I couldn't get him to respond to me.**



**He just kept smiling and laughing in my face. It was infuriating.**





**I stood up and he ran out. I was done with him.**



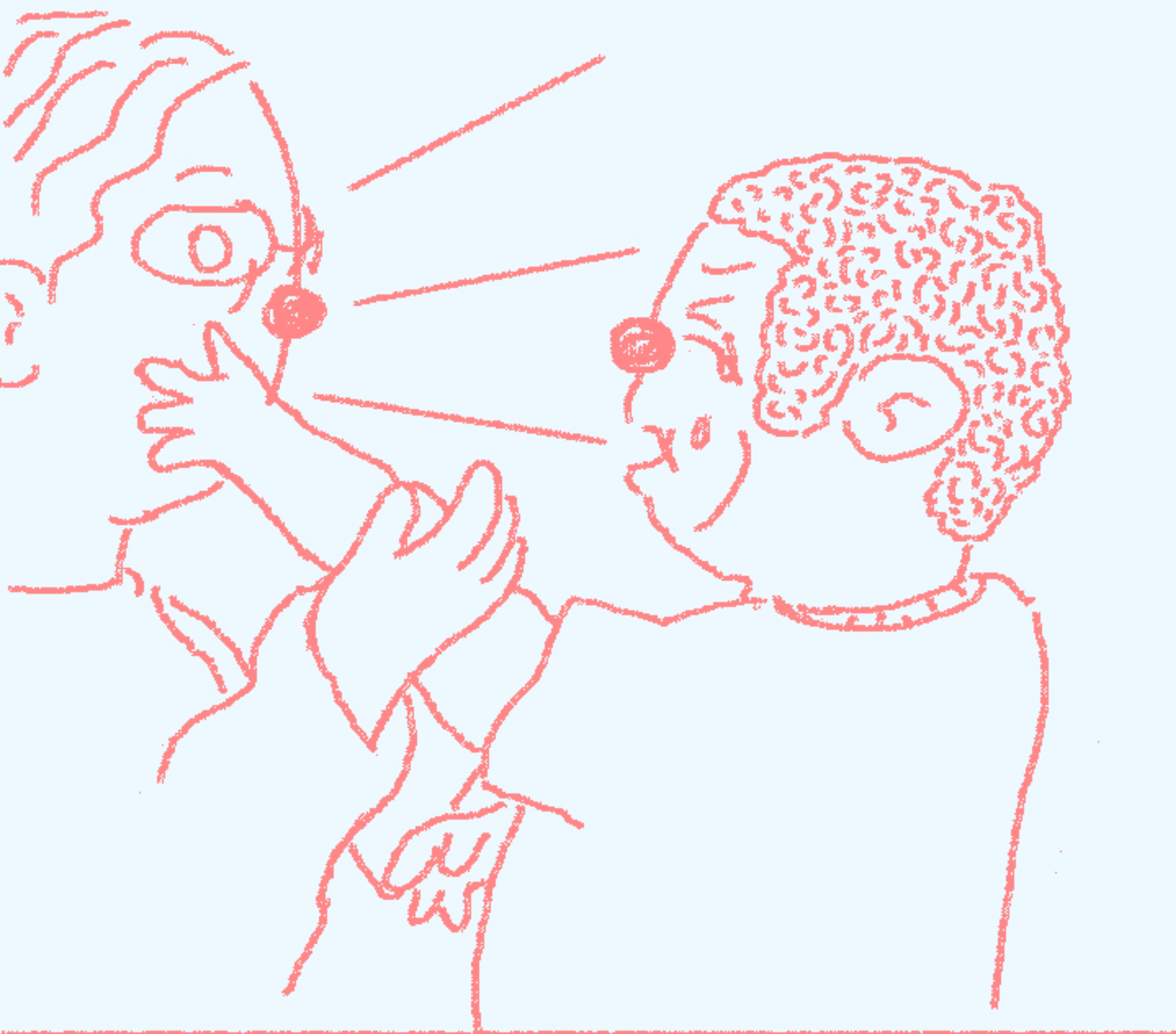
**I walked out of the bathroom and went to grab him.**



**He was so heavy.**

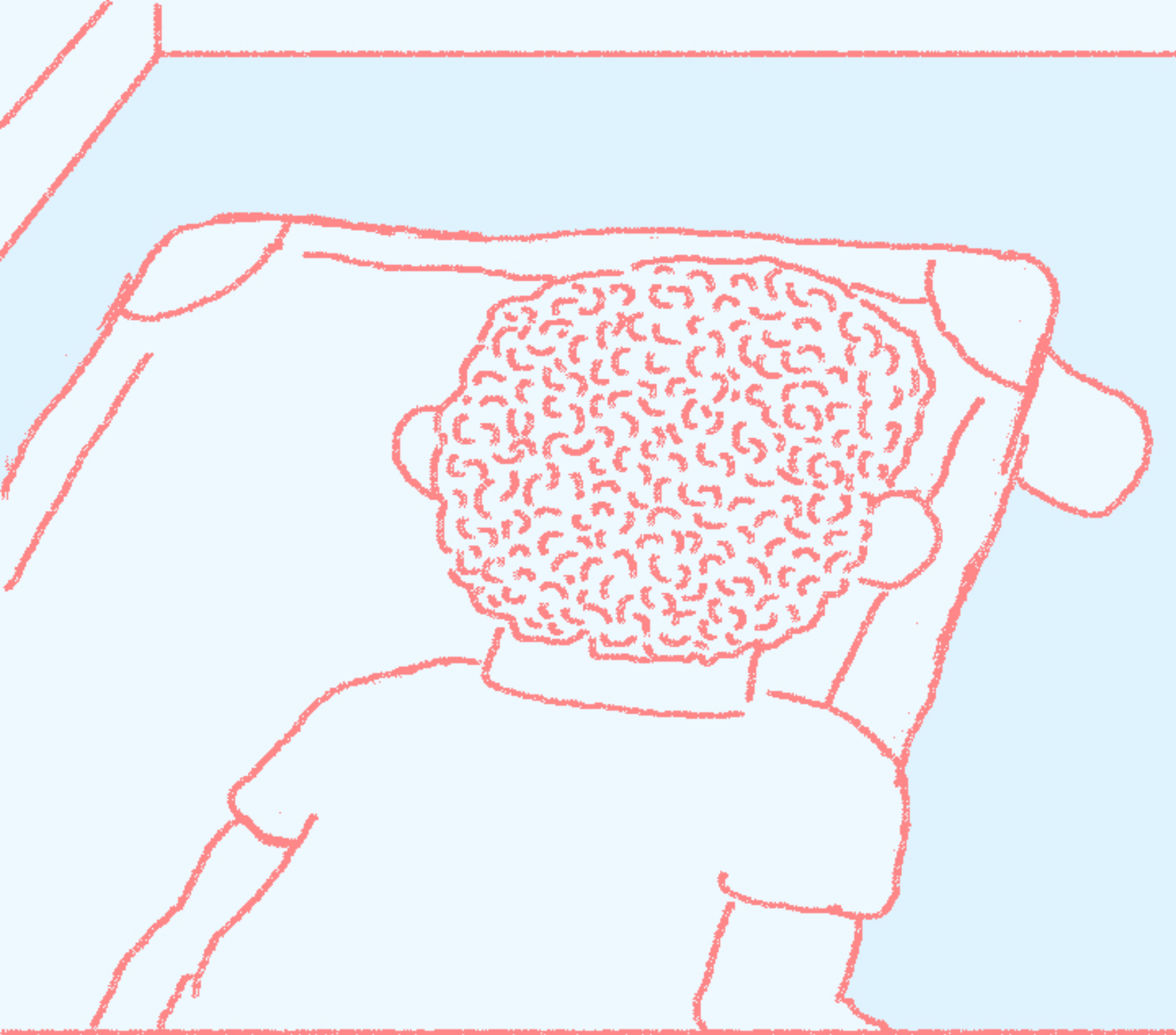


**He started fighting back, slipping out of my hands.**









**The room was silent when he breathed in.**







**Then he came right to me.**



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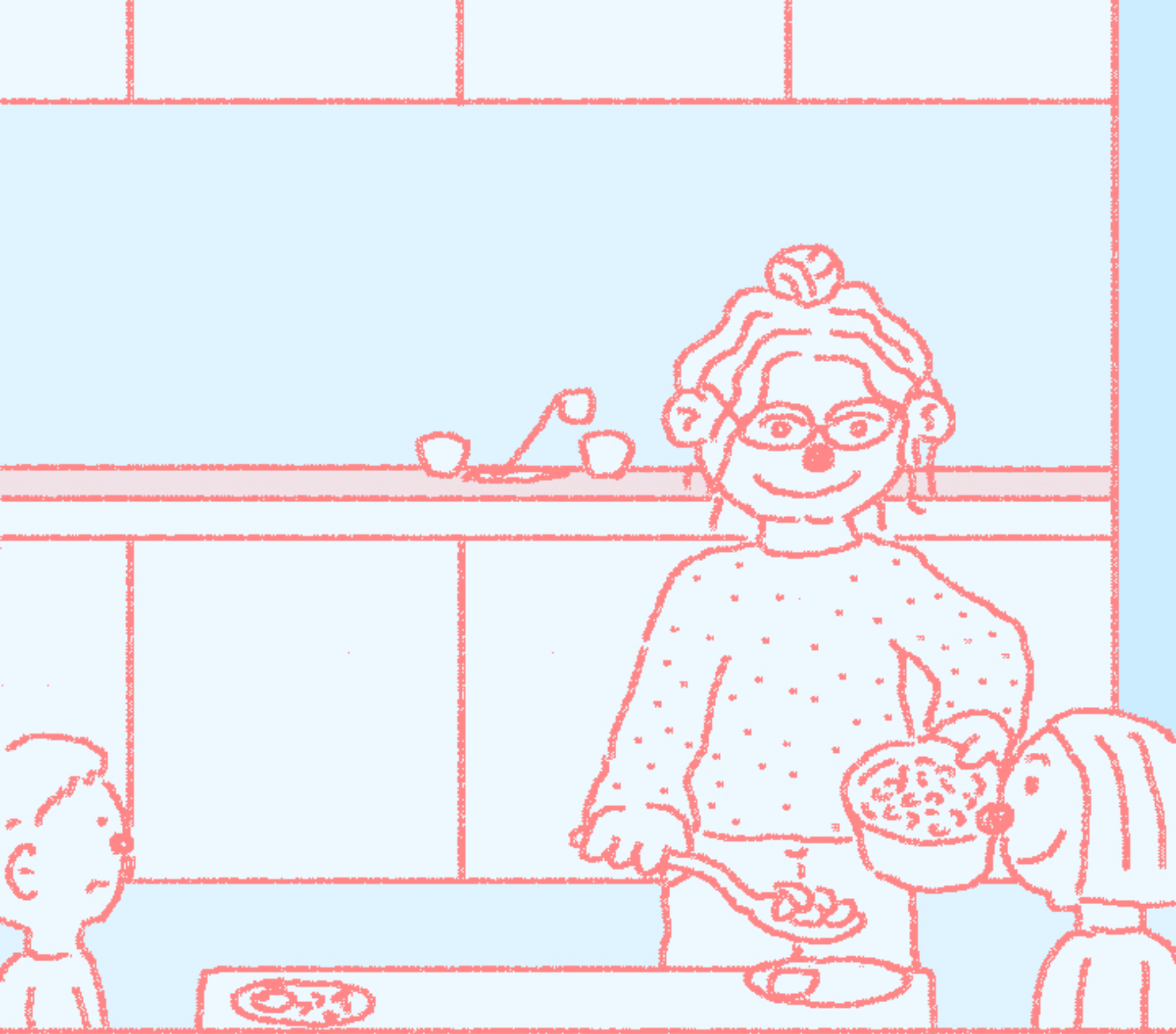
**I was fucked. His face was bleeding and bruised, and there were cameras in our room. He was screaming, and the rest of the kids only got louder. But now I wasn't noticing the noise.**



**The sub walked in. Without thinking, I told her that Caiden fell while running really fast and hit his face on a shelf. I called his mom to let her know what happened. She sounded very upset, but she said she understands. She told me she would talk to him about running in class. I told her that he was feeling better and was excited to get some Paw-Patrol band-aids.**



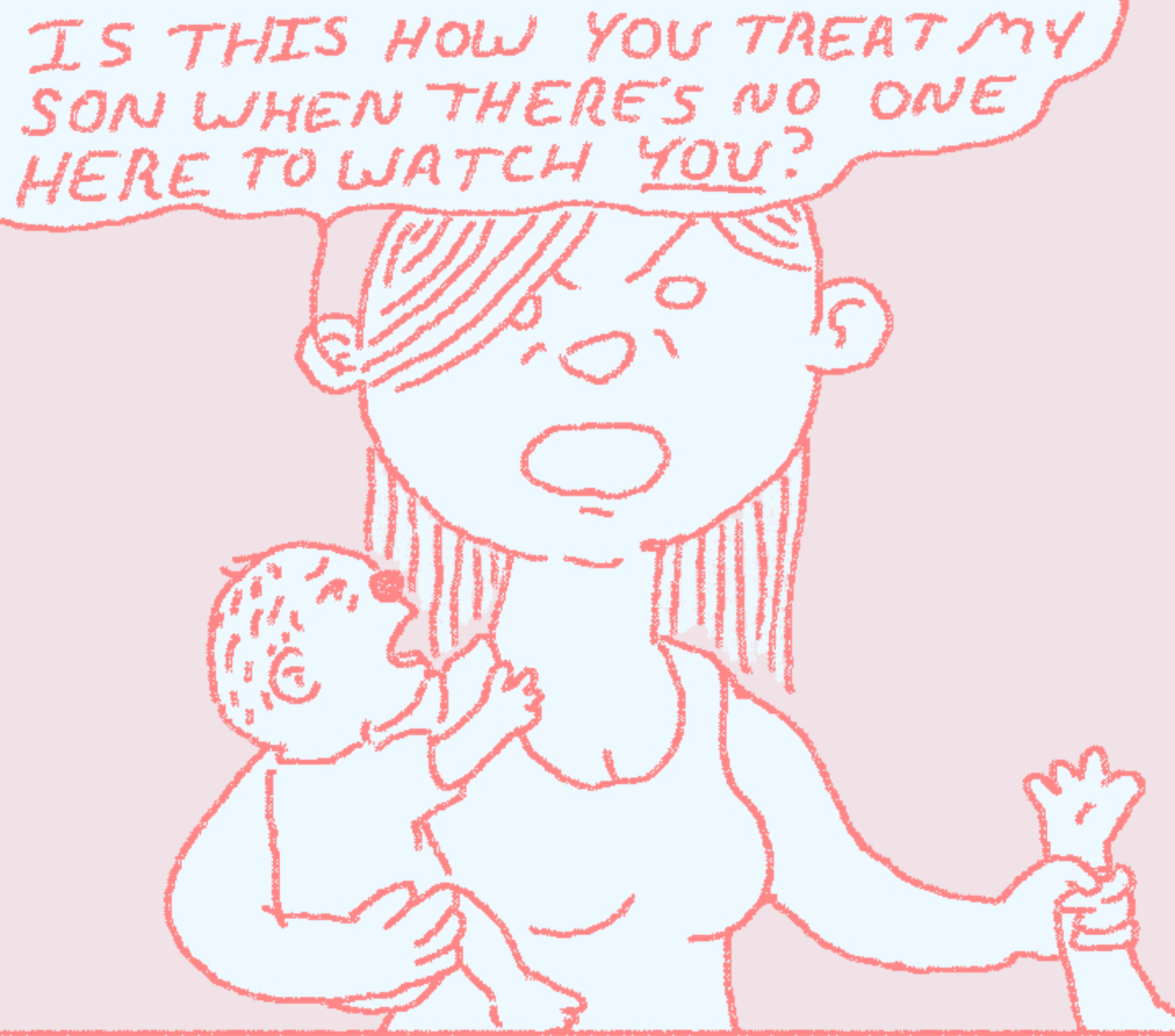
**I couldn't sleep at all that night. I just kept playing it over in my head and seeing it from a camera's perspective. I thought about turning myself in. I thought about Caiden telling his parents what really happened. If anyone asked to review the video, I'd be fired.**



**Days went by, and weeks went by, and nothing happened. Sarah came back to work and the incident never came up. The class was still wild, but with Sarah's help I could manage.**



**The last week before Christmas, I was trying to clean up while Henry screamed and ran around the room in circles. When he passed me on third lap, I reached out quickly and grabbed his arm.**



**His mom walked in right when it happened. She screamed at me, walked out, and that night I got a call from the school director telling me not to come in the next day.**





**I just nodded, as if she could see me through the phone.**

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