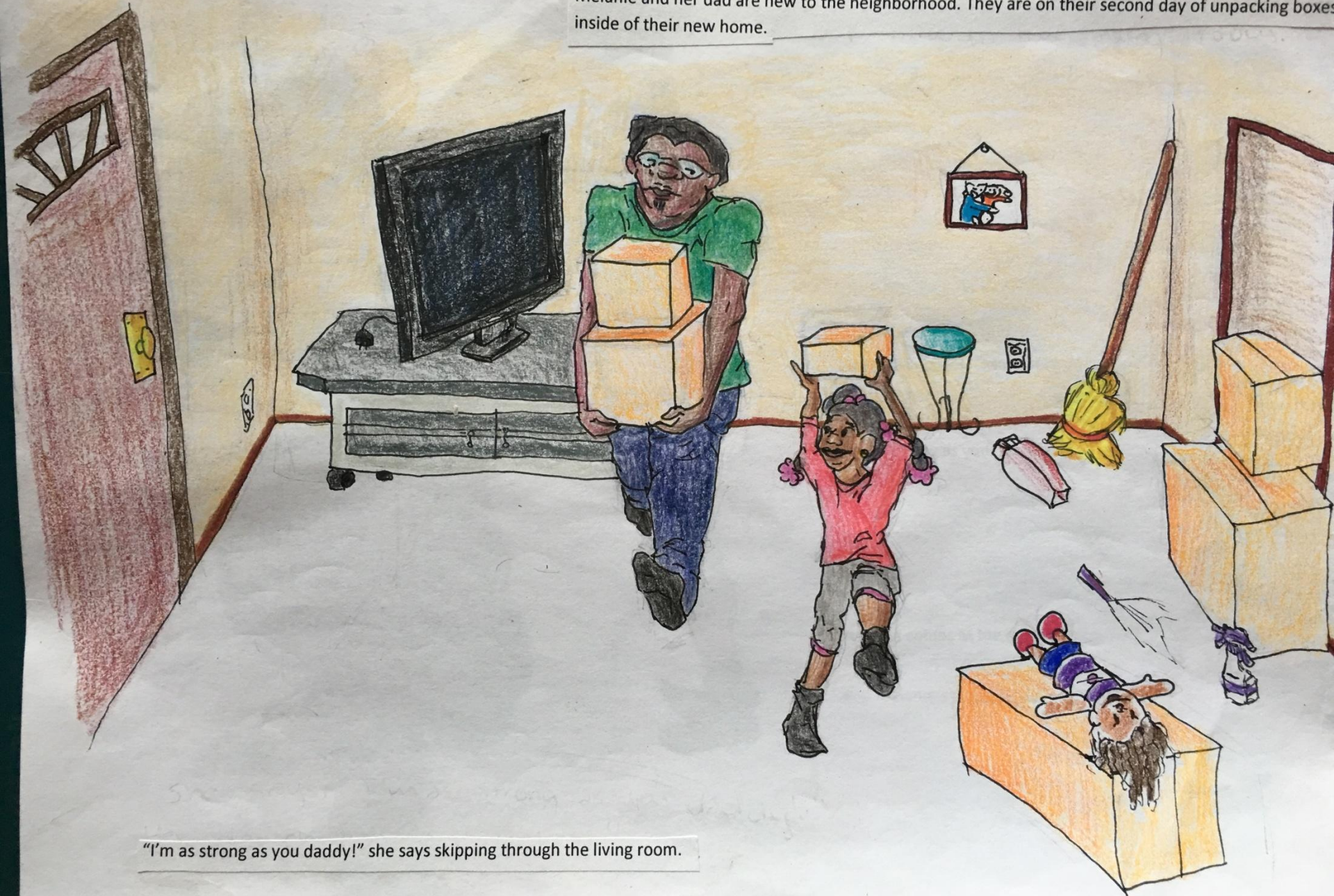


# Little Moments



Melanie and her dad are new to the neighborhood. They are on their second day of unpacking boxes inside of their new home.



"I'm as strong as you daddy!" she says skipping through the living room.



Her dad chuckles, "Make sure your mind

stays as strong as your muscles,"

he advises.

A knock comes at the door,

and Melanie's father answers it.



At the door are a woman and her son.

She holds a delicious looking chocolate fudge cake with strawberries on top. "It is nice to meet you," she says, "We are sorry we could not welcome you to town sooner."



Her father takes the cake with great thanks, "Melanie what do you say?"

"It's chocolate!" She screams.

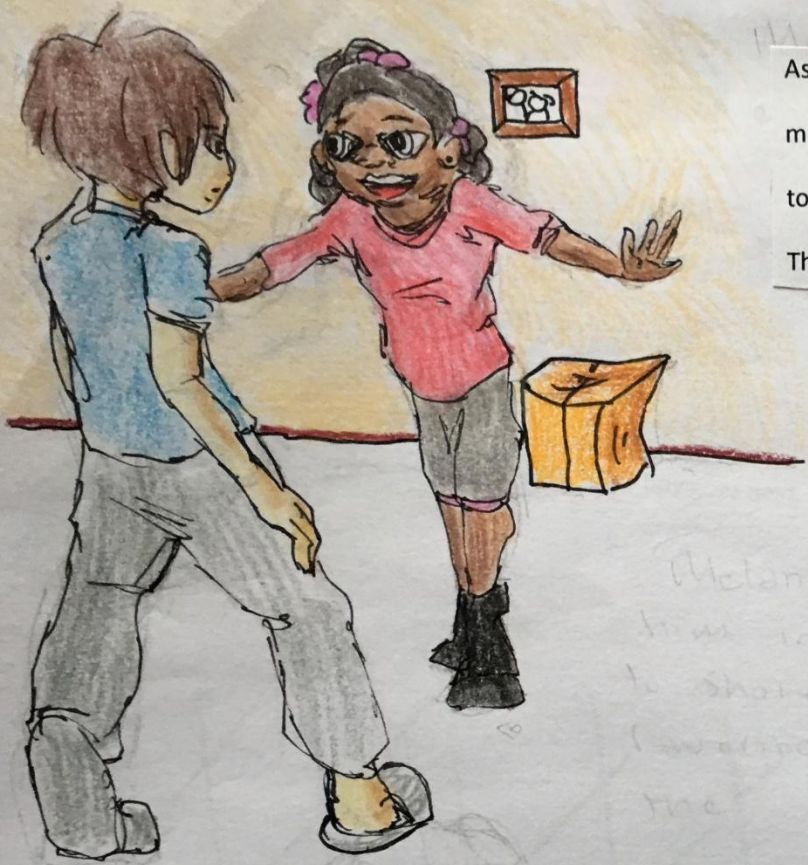
Her father invites them in for a piece of cake to say thank you.



"What else should you say? He presses.

"Thank you," she says, this time with her inside voice.



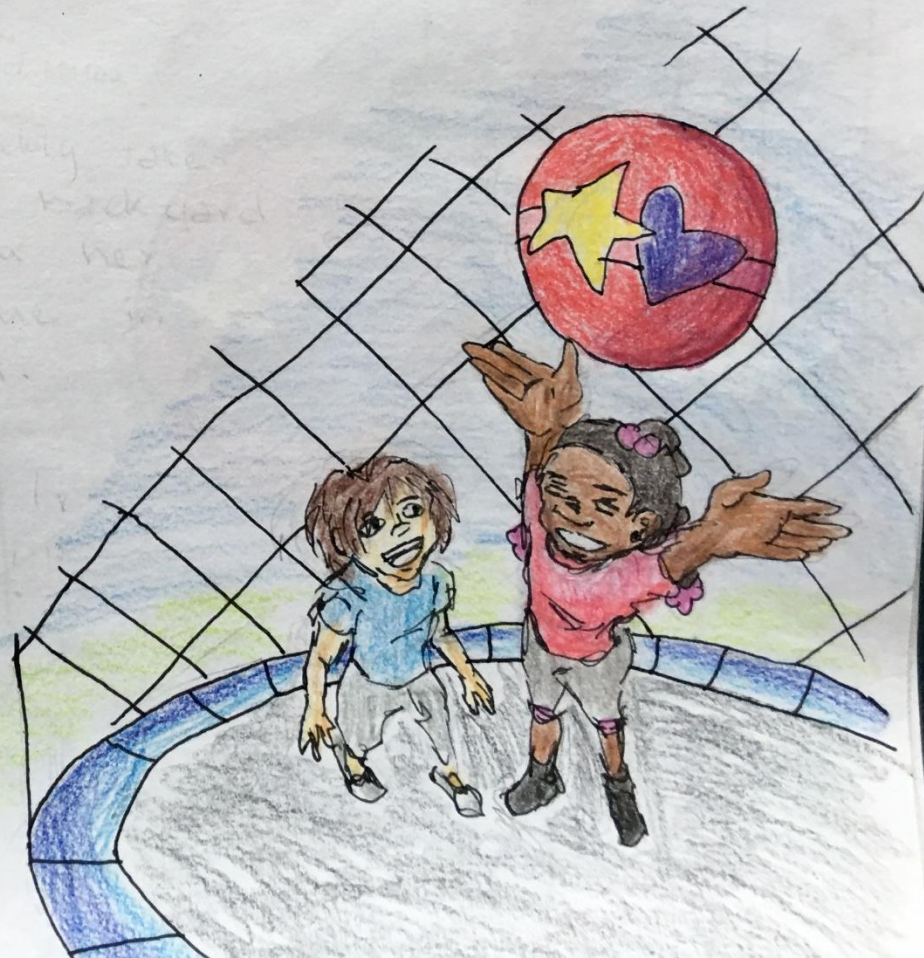


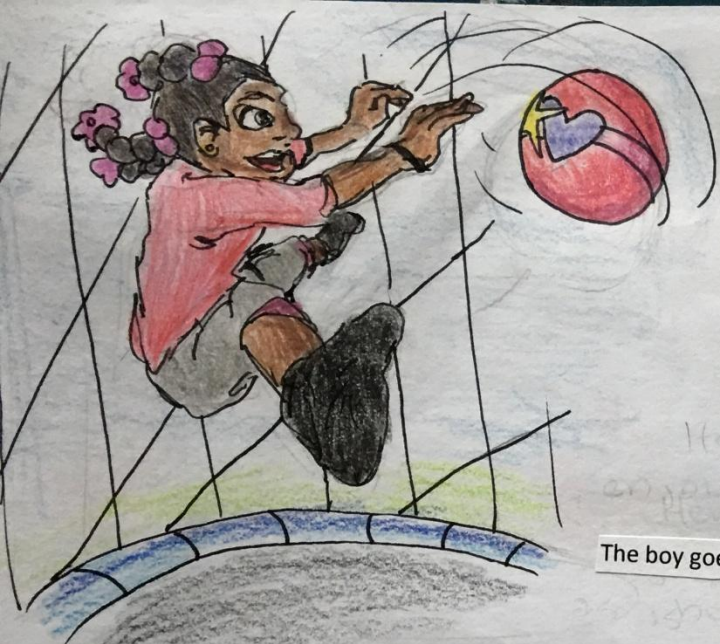
As the woman and her son walk in Melanie is excited to meet someone new. "What is your name? Do you want to play on our trampoline?"

The boy is caught off guard by Melanie's excitement. "Okay."

Melanie quickly takes him in the backyard to show him her favorite game in the world. It's called Trampoline ball.

They go to the backyard and climb in the trampoline. Melanie tosses the ball in the air and announces her favorite game, 'Trampoline Ball.'



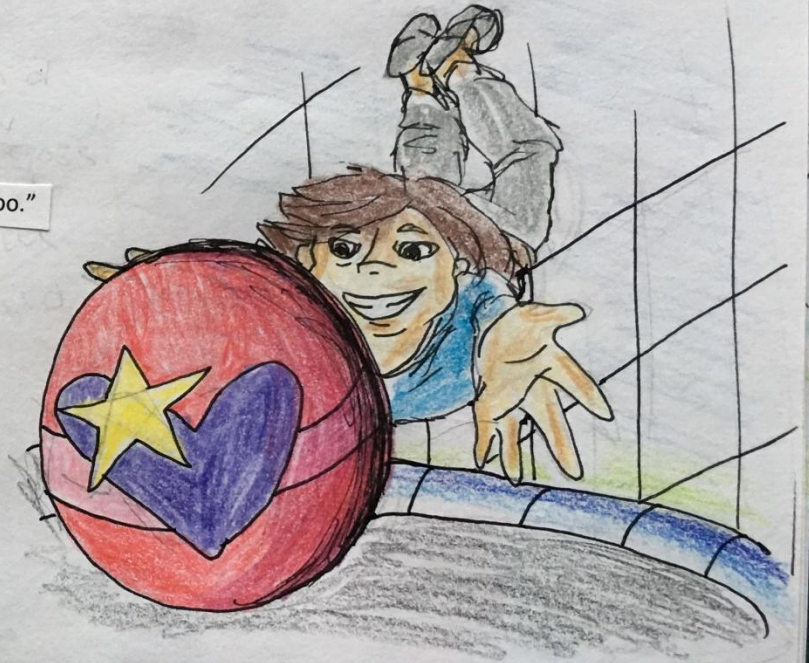


Both of them cannot wait to jump into the air each time they land.

Each time one of them gets the ball they are supposed to say something about themselves.

Melanie starts, "My name is Melanie. I like dogs."

The boy goes next, "My name is Sef. Me too."



They both take a few more jumps and land flat on their backs huffing and puffing





Sef continues to catch his breath, but points at something he didn't notice before. "Who is she?"

Melanie gives her favorite doll a big hug.

"My aunty got her for me before we moved for my birthday. Her name is Lizzy."





Sef nods, "Hey want to see my dog? His name is Razor."

Melanie jumps up and down shouting, "Doggy, let's go!"





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happy to show  
them to his friend.



Sef introduces them to one another. Melanie is nervous at first.

Razor licks her hands, making her feel better.

Razor jumps into Sef's arms.



Melanie sits her doll, Lizzy, beside her and begins to have fun with Sef and Razor. She twirls his favorite chew toy around.





Sef laughs with Melanie and asks with a big smile, "It's fun to play regular games, but do you like video games too?"

She looks over to him as she balances Razor's paws, "I love video games too. What kinds do you have?"

Sef and Melanie run upstairs leaving Razor out of his cage.

steps, leaving





"Yay, I win!" Melanie cheers, "I love race car games."

I did not think you would have so many. You're the luckiest."

"Really?" Sef says in shock, "I didn't think girls liked cool stuff, like video games. I thought they only liked wimpy dolls."



Melanie lowers her arms from the air to her hips,

"What is that supposed mean?"

"Dolls are nice, but they are also for girls not boys."

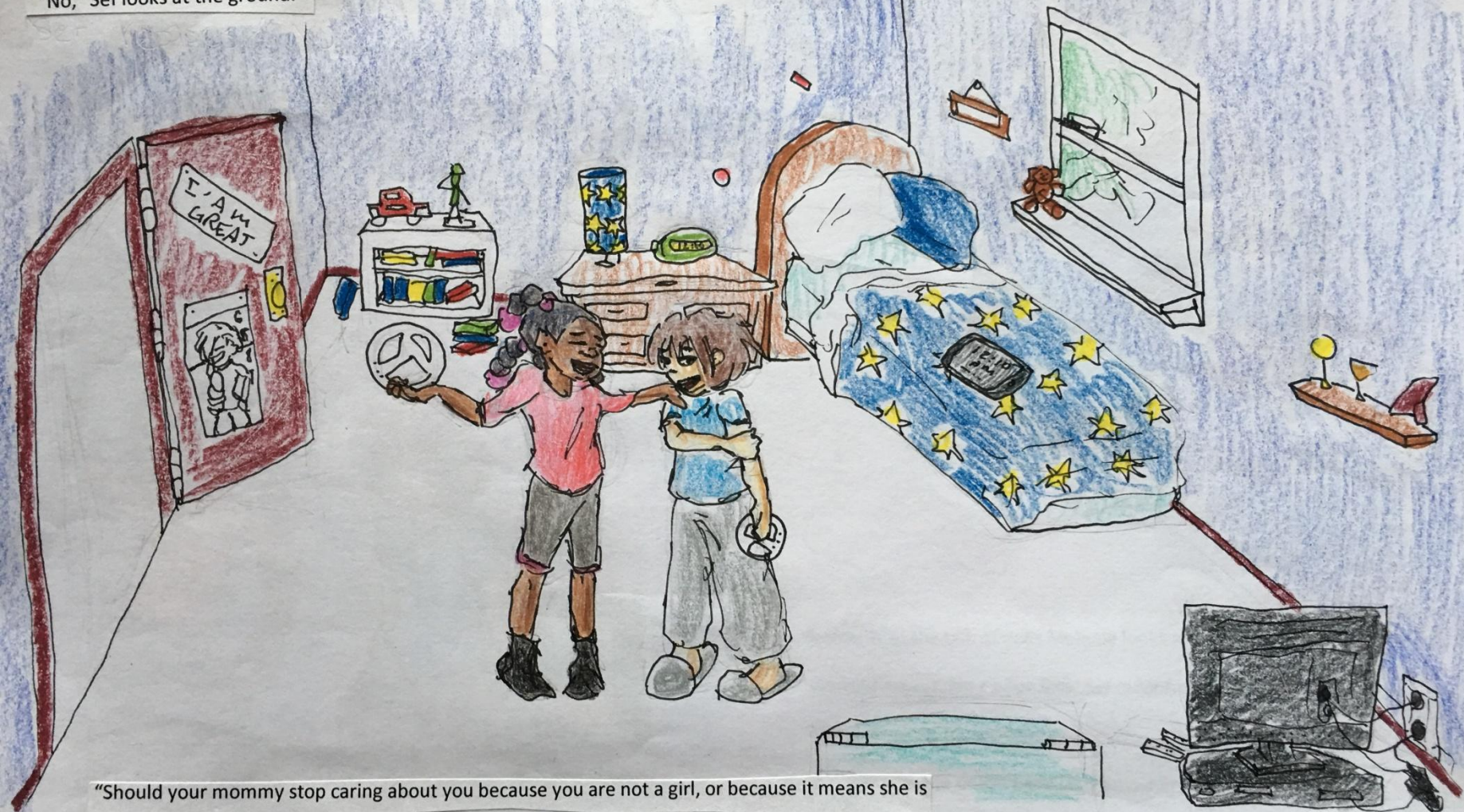
He responds, shrugging his shoulders.



Melanie decides to feel sorry for Sef, "Is it wimpy

for you to love your mommy?"

"No," Sef looks at the ground.



"Should your mommy stop caring about you because you are not a girl, or because it means she is wimpy?" she asks.

Sef frowns, saying nothing.

Melanie puts a hand on his shoulder, "I like playing with dollies because I think it is fun to care for people, just like you think it is fun to race cars in your game. Maybe that is what the girls in your class think too."

Sef scratches his head, "I never thought of it like that.

I like it when my mommy cares about me, and I shouldn't be

ashamed of that because I am a boy. Maybe dolls aren't only for girls," He agrees.



Suddenly at the talk of dolls Melanie looks around and has a worried expression on her face. Sef is confused,

"What is wrong Melanie?"

Melanie says she doesn't see Lizzy anywhere.

Sef suggests she is probably downstairs with Razor.





While hurrying down the stairs Sef runs over to pull Lizzy away from Razor's teeth.

"Razor no, stop!"

Melanie is right behind them with worry in her eyes.

Sef turns around and instantly Melanie begins to cry.

Lizzy's poor, ripped up condition is enough to make Her heartbreak. Tears stream down Melanie's face where her dimples once were.



Dad runs in hearing crying from the kitchen. After Sef shows him Melanie's doll he pick her up.

He says, "Thank you for your kindness. We had better get home."



Dad ties Melanie's scarf around her soft hair, "Why did you love the doll aunty gave you so much?"

"Aunty gave it to me because she loves me. It carried her love for me inside of it," she answers.



"You should know no matter how many gifts get ruined, or how much damage there is to something she gives to you it can never damage aunty's, or anyone's love towards you. Especially not mine."



He points to her heart, "It can never damage our love, because it will always be locked up tight in here."  
Melanie smiles, "Thanks Daddy."



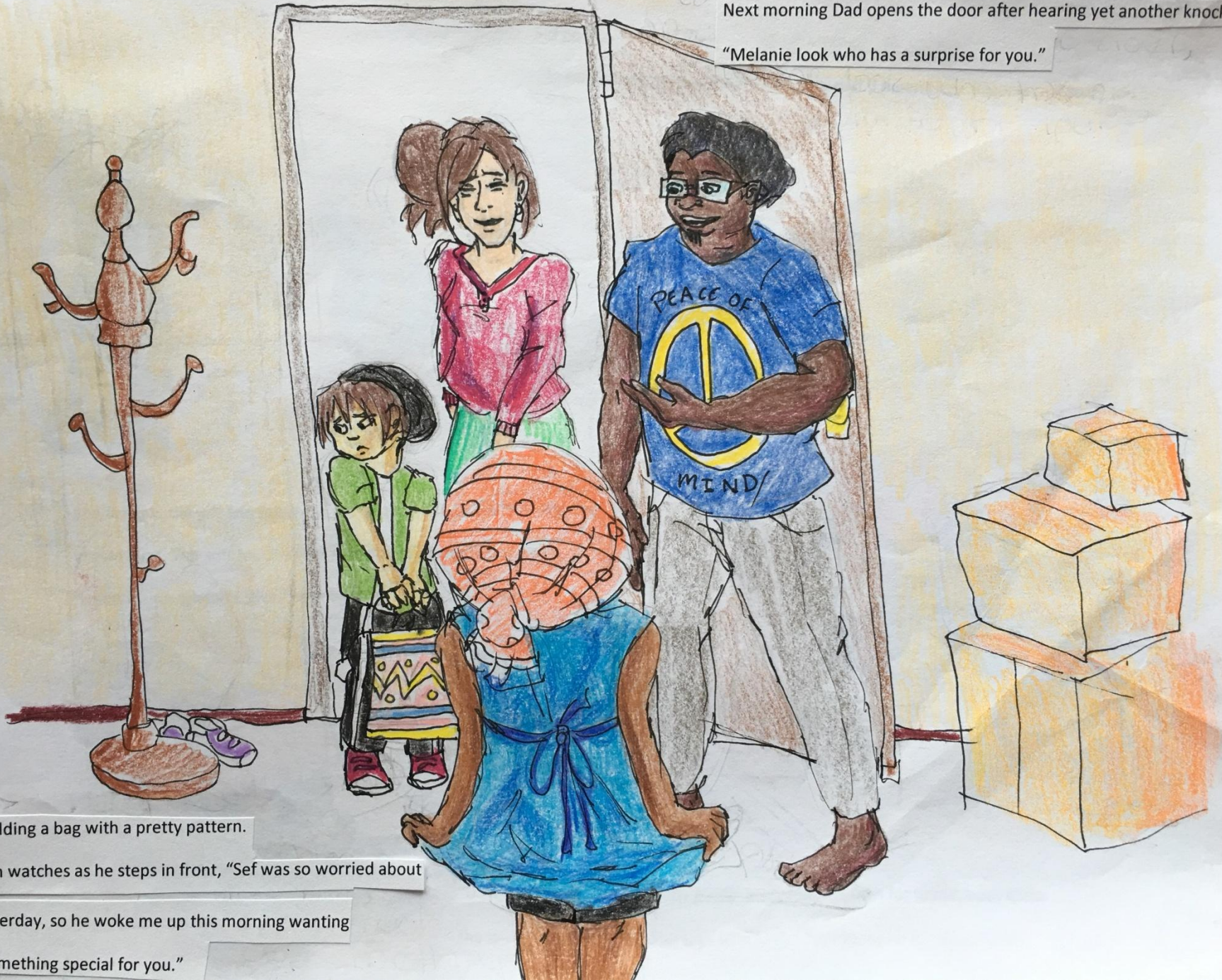
Dad smiles back, and then surprised Melanie by jumping out at her, "Now it is time for the tickle monster!"

In the midst of all of their laughing, dad falls asleep. Melanie is very careful not to wake him, so she snuggles hugging her father's arm, like a comforting blanket.



Next morning Dad opens the door after hearing yet another knock.

"Melanie look who has a surprise for you."



Sef is holding a bag with a pretty pattern.

His mom watches as he steps in front, "Sef was so worried about

you yesterday, so he woke me up this morning wanting

to do something special for you."

Sef nervously hand Melanie the bag, "I really liked playing with you.

I hope you are not too mad about your doll. I mean Lizzy. Razor is real sorry too."



She accepts the gift and takes out a beautiful doll with brown skin and brown eyes. The soft touch of her luxurious curls make her feel warm inside. Melanie gives Sef a big hug.



"How can I be mad? I know my aunty' s present meant a lot to me, but I know she will always love me," She says with smile, "tell Razor he is off the hook."

"I love your present a lot Sef, but I'm glad to have another person in my life who cares about me even more!"

