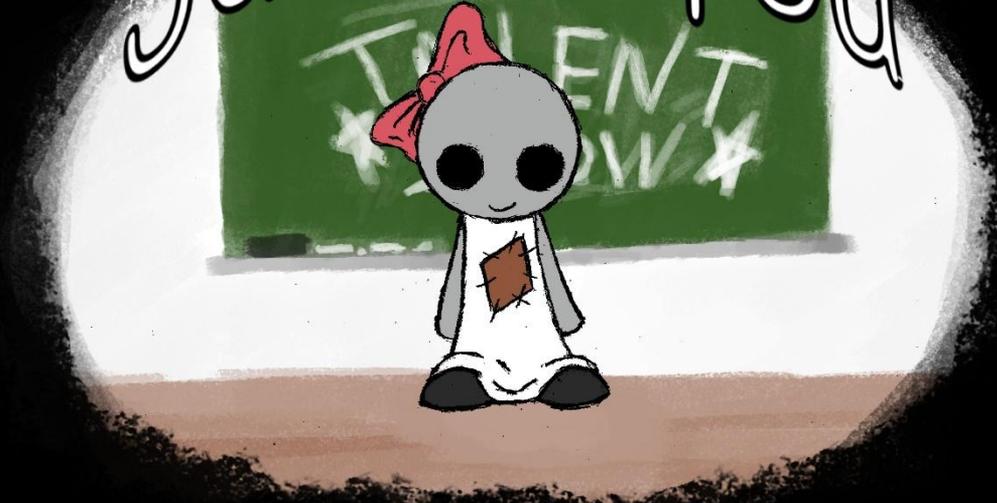


Molly The Ragdoll

Just Be You



**Written & Illustrated By
Jeff DeMarco**

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First edition May 2024

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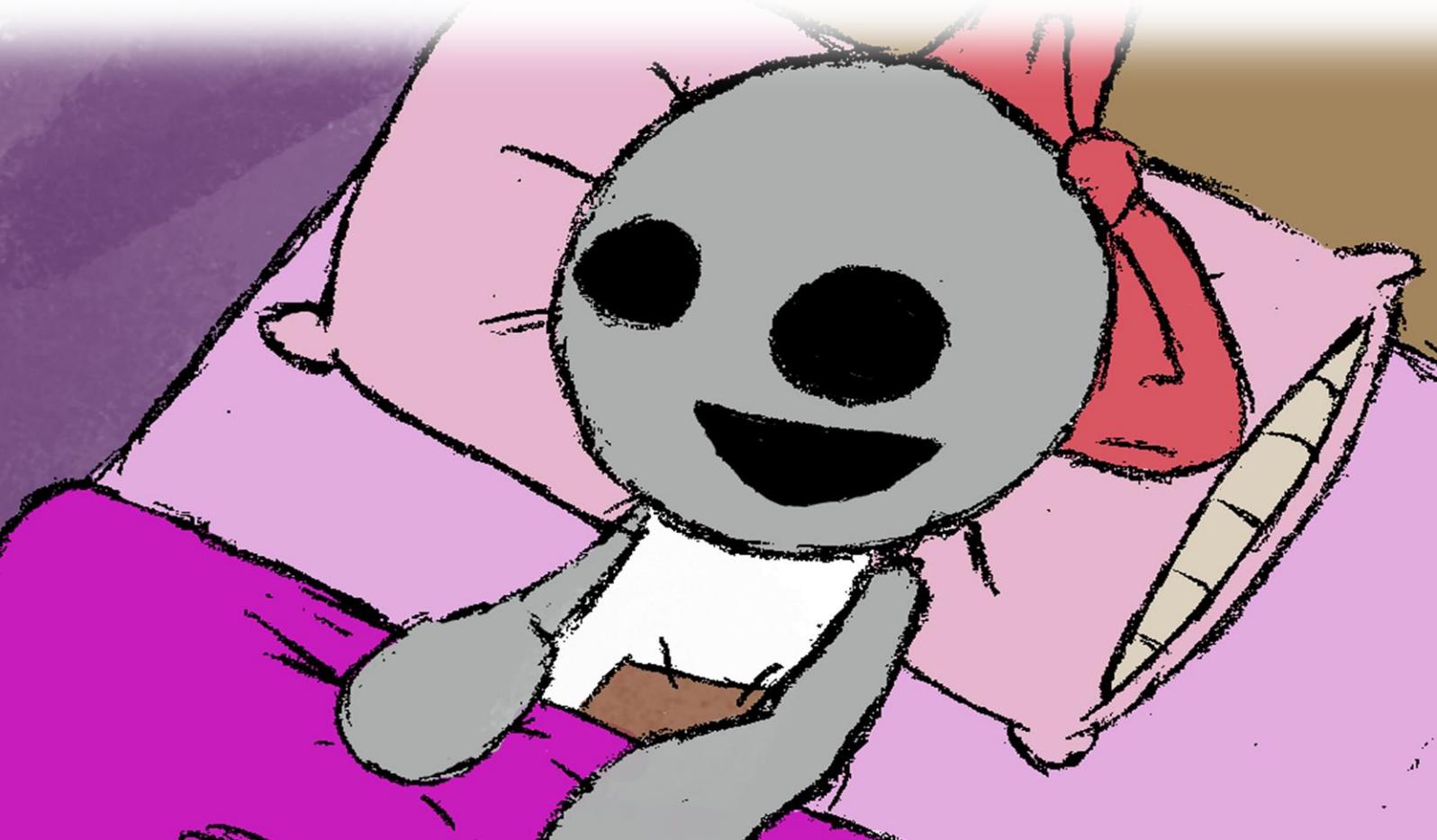
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“For Linkin and Oliver, who inspire me every single day.”

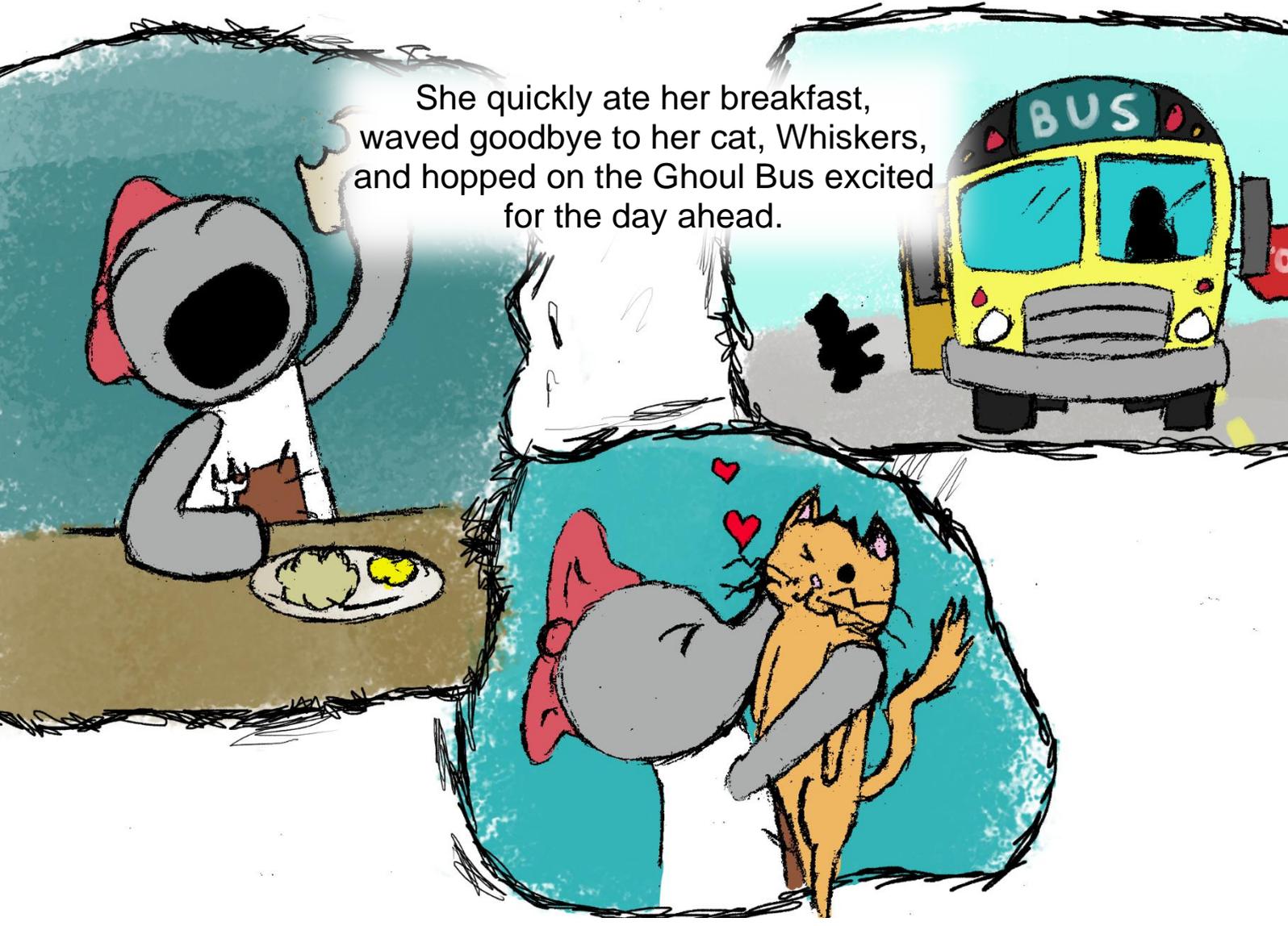
Today was the big day for the talent show at Ghoul Elementary and Molly was so excited she could hardly contain herself.





She had gone over the song she was going to sing to her class repeatedly in her head, so much so she could barely sleep the night before. She just couldn't help it! She had looked forward to this day for so long.

She quickly ate her breakfast,
waved goodbye to her cat, Whiskers,
and hopped on the Ghoul Bus excited
for the day ahead.





The kids all settled into their seats as their teacher, Ms. Bleck, stood smiling at her students.

“Good morning class!” she said. “I’m so excited to see all your performances today! Let me do roll call and we’ll get started...”
As Ms. Bleck began calling their names, Molly looked around at her classmates and what they had brought in for their part in the show.



'I didn't bring anything in for my talent. I don't have anything to show except for me...' she thought. For the first time that morning she started to feel... nervous.
And that was scary.



“Mummy-Kid! Let’s start with you this morning!” Ms. Bleck said. “Come to the front of the class, please, and let us begin.”

Molly watched as he made his way to the front of the room.

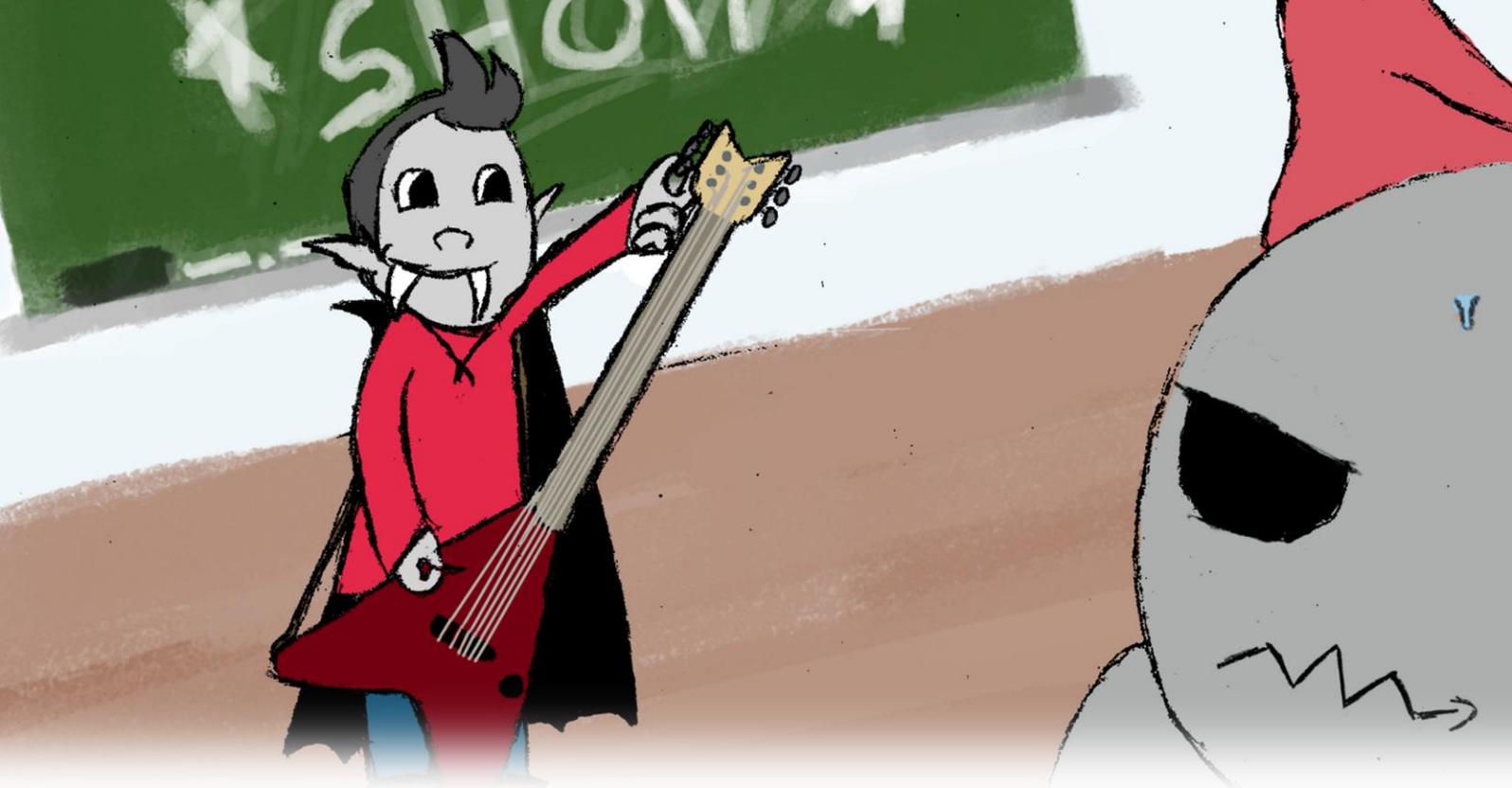
He seemed so... calm. ‘I’m not even up there yet and I’m so scared,’ she thought.



Mummy-Kid performed magic tricks for the class. Everyone gasped and was awed by his talent, including Molly. She was so entertained she forgot about her impending performance... if only for a moment.



Mummy-Kid finished and bowed to the class before taking his seat. “Wonderful! What a terrific and magical act,” said Ms. Bleck. “Next, let’s go with Bitey! Please come forward!” Bitey excitedly jumped from his seat and rushed to the front of the room.



Molly watched as he got ready for his part, smiling ear to ear. 'How does he make this look so easy?' she just couldn't get out of her own head about this.



They all cheered as Bitey shredded on his guitar, rocking the classroom, and cranking out tunes everyone could groove to.



As he wrapped up and the class gave their final cheers, Molly began to fear the worst.

“Please don’t let me be next, please don’t let me be next...” she repeated to herself.

“Alright, next up...”

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE

PLEASE





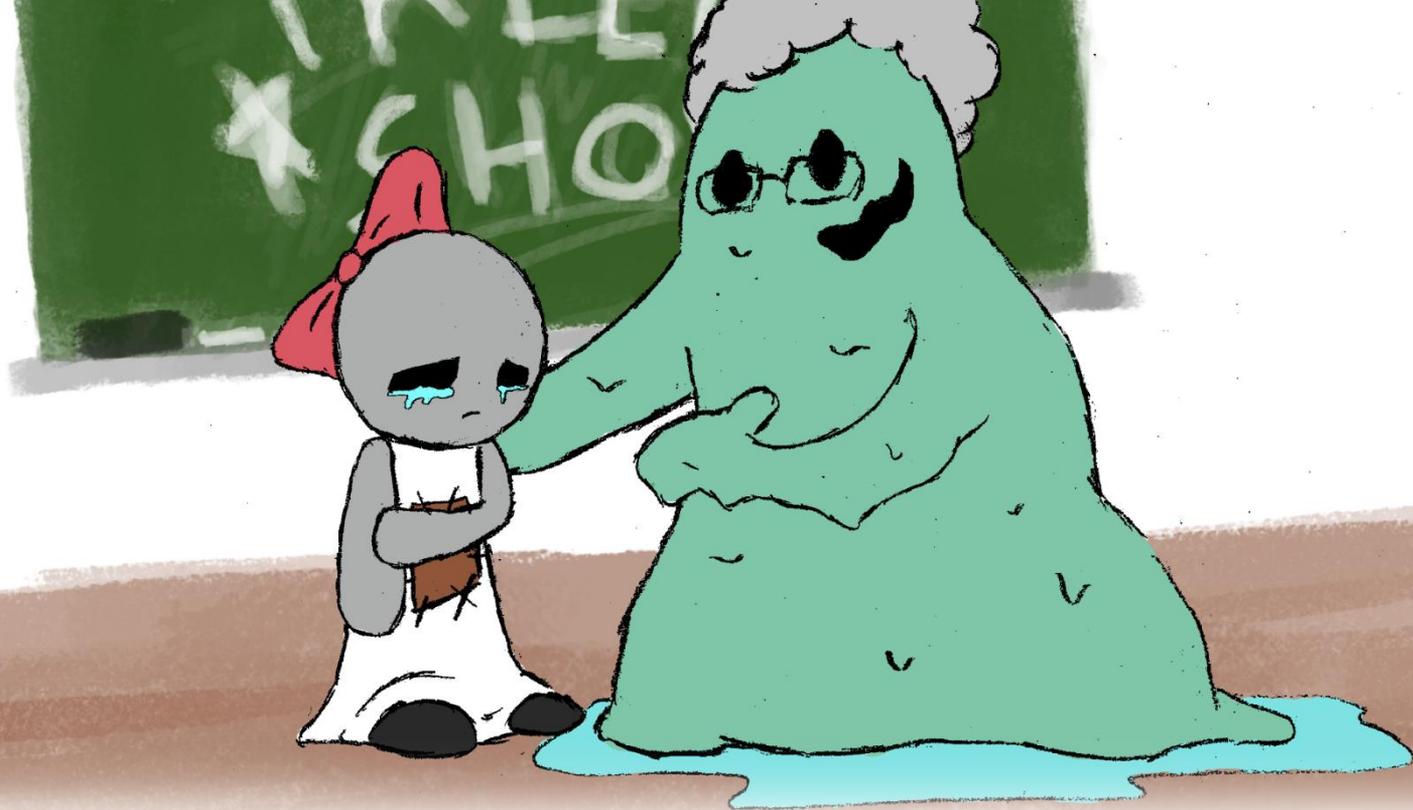
“Molly!” Ms. Bleck gestured towards her, beaming. “Are you ready dear? You’re up next!”
Molly gulped. This was it.



She slowly got up from her seat and made her way to the front of the room, looking down the entire way. As she turned to face everyone, she could feel tears filling her eyes.



“Um...” she said, quietly. “Today I wanted...” she was having a hard time finding the words. As she looked out at her classmates, they all smiled back at her awaiting the performance. The classroom looked so much bigger from up here...



Ms. Bleck, concerned, tried to step in and help-
“You wanted to sing for us, isn’t that right dear?” she asked.
“Um... yes...” Molly stuttered as the tears started to flow down her cheeks.

THIS
IS
TOO
MUCH





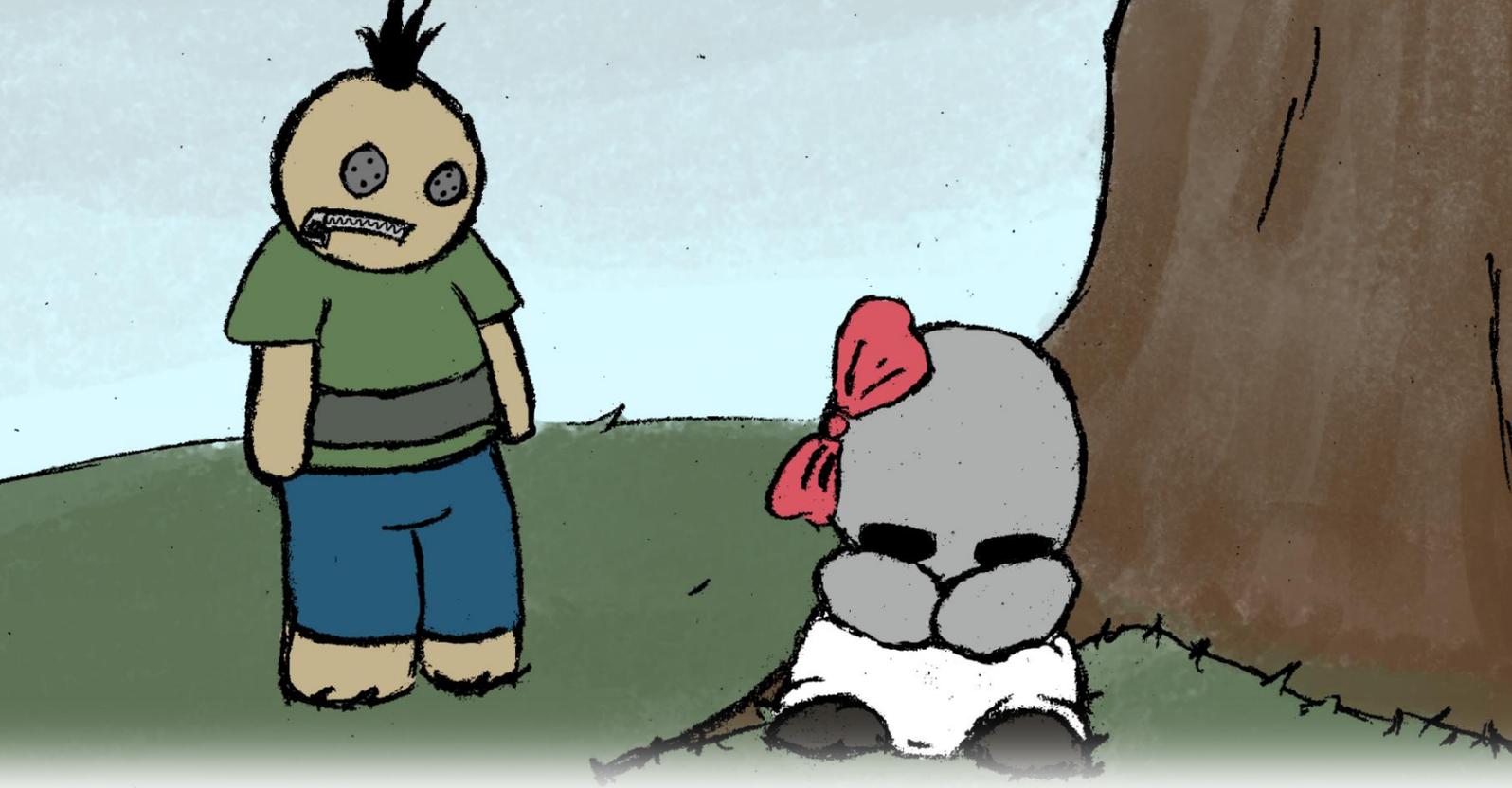
Molly burst into tears and ran from the classroom. She didn't know where she was headed, but she knew she had to find *somewhere* to hide.



She ran to the playground and hid under a big tree.
“Perfect,” she said to herself, burying her head in her knees. “I’m alone here...”



She was so excited... how did it get so... scary?
“...Molly?”
She heard a friendly voice say her name.

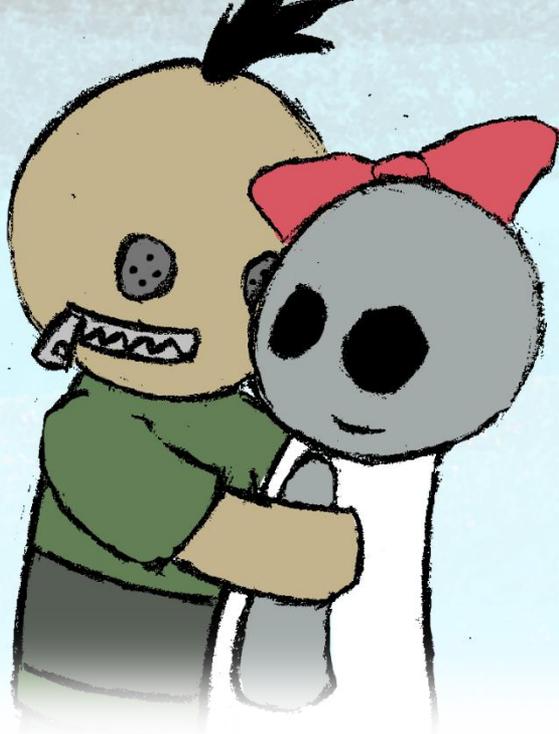


She opened her eyes and raised her head to see her friend Zippy standing there before her.

“Molly, are you okay?” Zippy asked. “Everyone was so worried!”



“I can’t do this Zip!” she cried. “I really wanted to sing but I’m so scared I won’t be any good, or no one will like it! Everyone else was doing something cool- or bringing in something special! All I’m doing is singing!” She wiped the tears from her face. “I’m sorry... it’s just so much scarier than I thought it would be. And everyone else is making it look so easy. I don’t... I don’t know if I can do it.”



“Molly, we all love you and just want to hear you sing,” Zippy said. “Your voice and YOU are what make you special, and we’re all so excited to watch your part of the show.”

Zippy reached out and hugged her. She felt some of the fear melt away. “Just be you, and you’ll be amazing. Everyone will love it.”



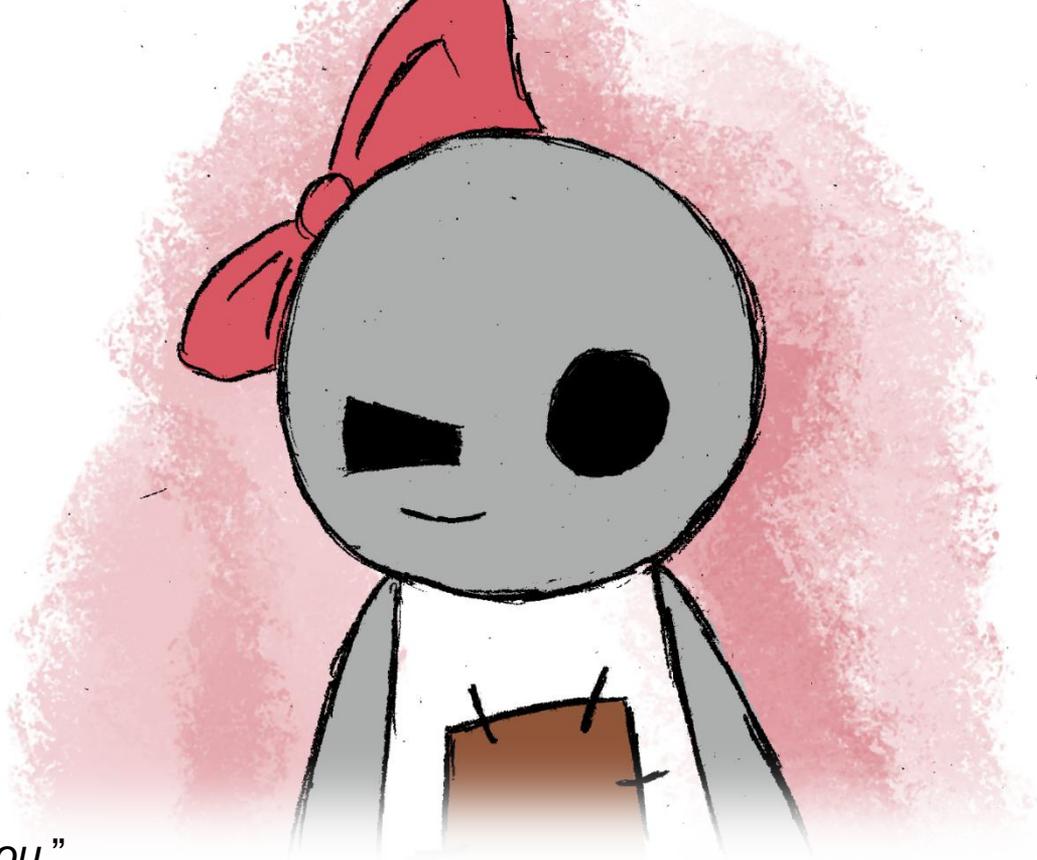
They made their way back to the classroom together. Molly was still scared but knew it would be okay- Zippy was right! She just had to be herself and try.

She took her place and cleared her throat.



“Molly, are you ready to begin?” Ms. Bleck asked.

“Yes mam!” Molly said with pride. She looked at Zippy in his seat and remembered what he had said.



“Just be you.”

And for the first time all morning, she thought to herself...

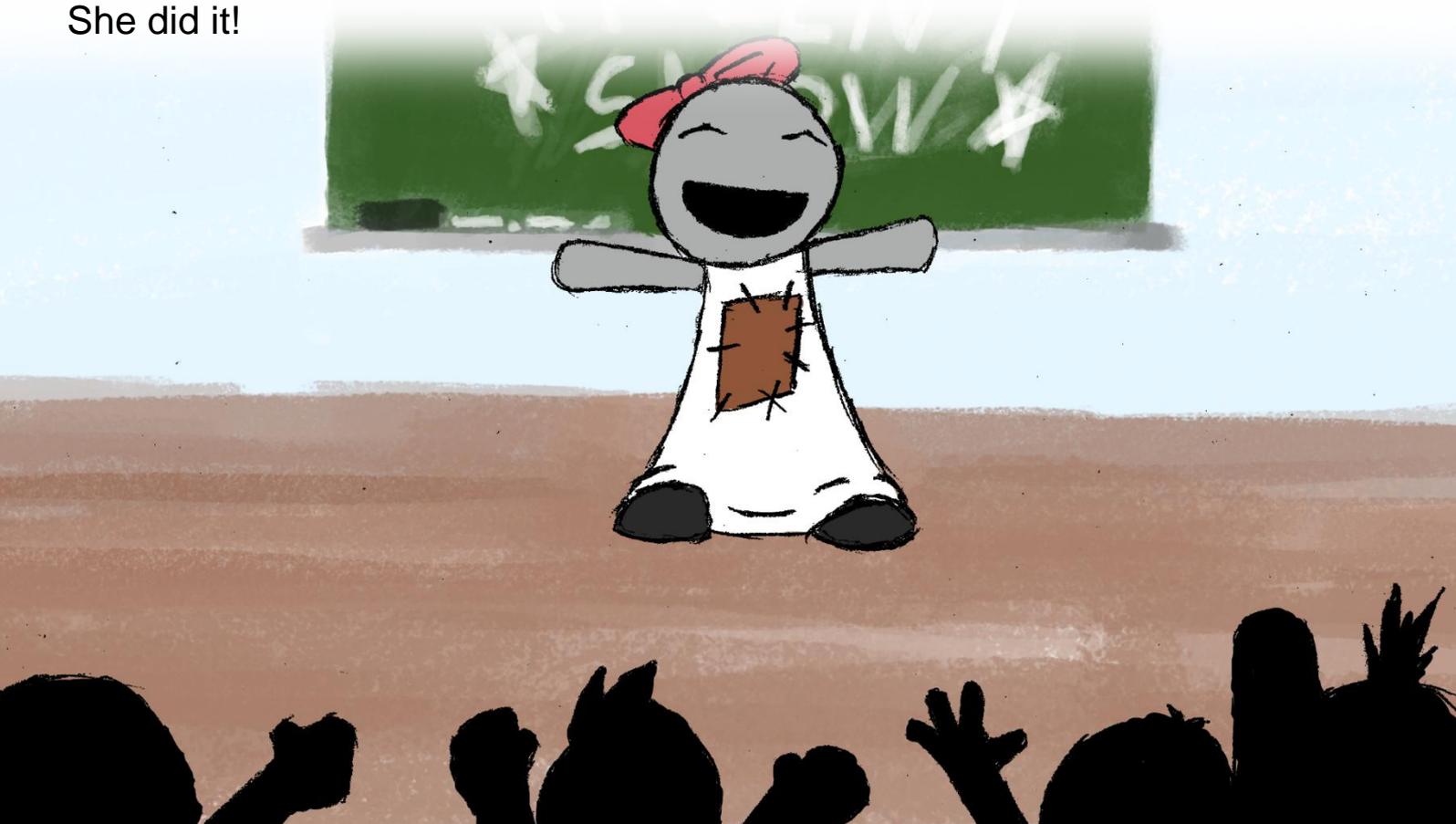
‘I’ve got this.’



And, despite all the fear and doubt, Molly began to sing with the most pride and joy she had felt in a long time. Before she knew it, she had completely lost herself in the song!

The students cheered loudly as she finished. She smiled proudly, looking back at Zippy as the applause continued. She couldn't believe it.

She did it!



The End



