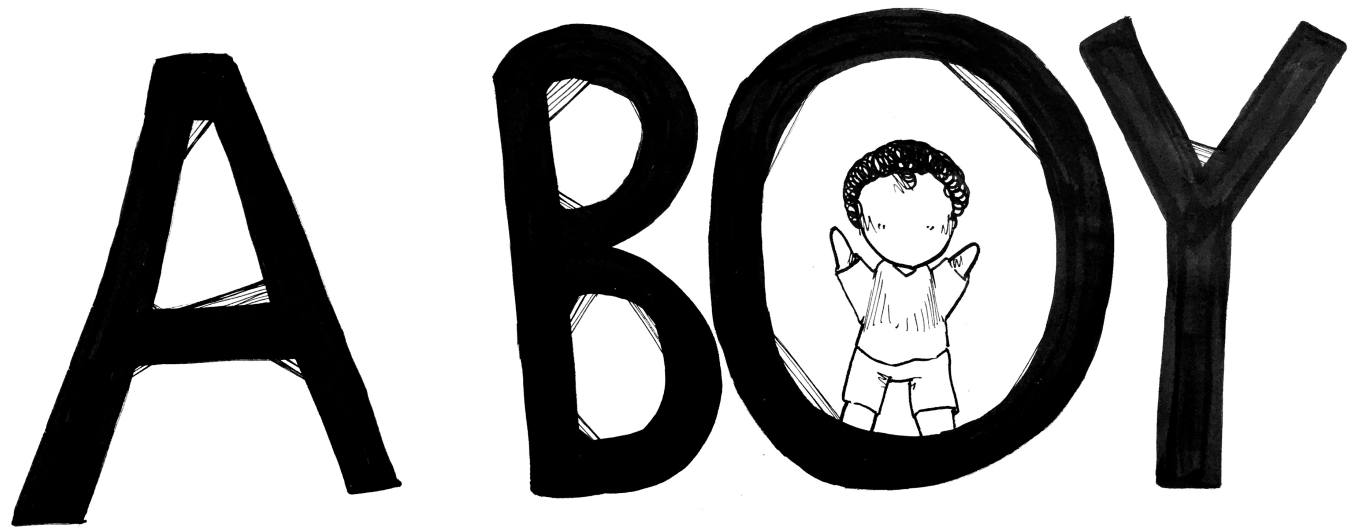


A BOY



a short story

by varak kaloustian

illustrated by maya sarkissian

This story, while simple, captures the essence of my hardships throughout my teen years. The best way to portray emotions that I can think of is to write them down. I am sharing my emotions in the hopes that they might give others in the same boat something to think about. So here is a tale about me... a boy.

Varak Kaloustian

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The story begins

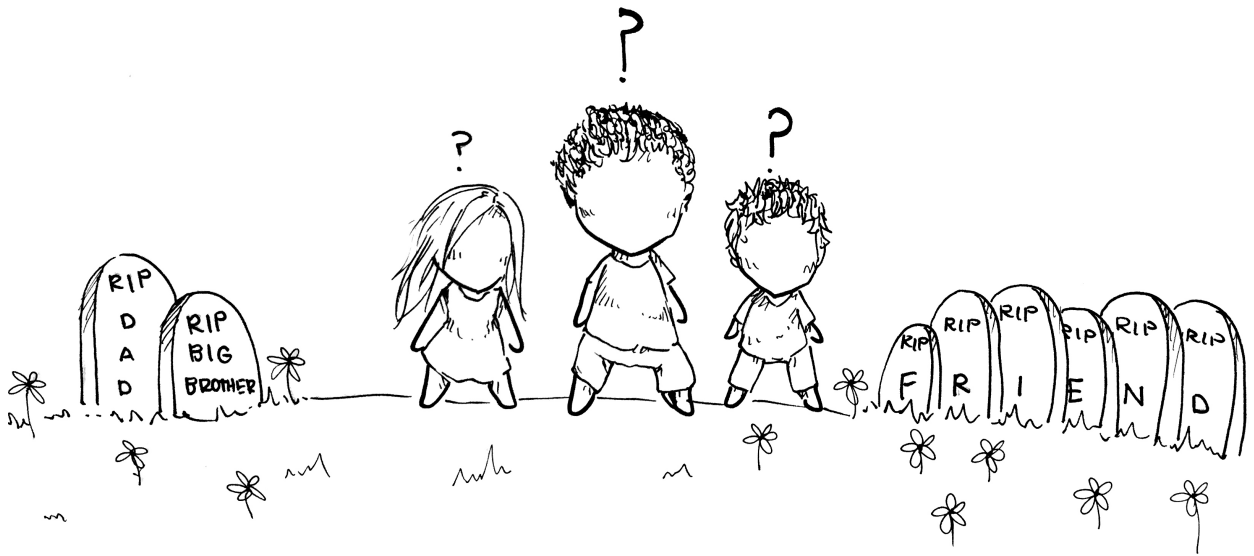
Once upon a time, there lived a boy without a name. He lived without a care in the world.



He had many friends. His family loved him. He was happy. He seemed very sure of himself. It seemed life couldn't get any better for the boy.



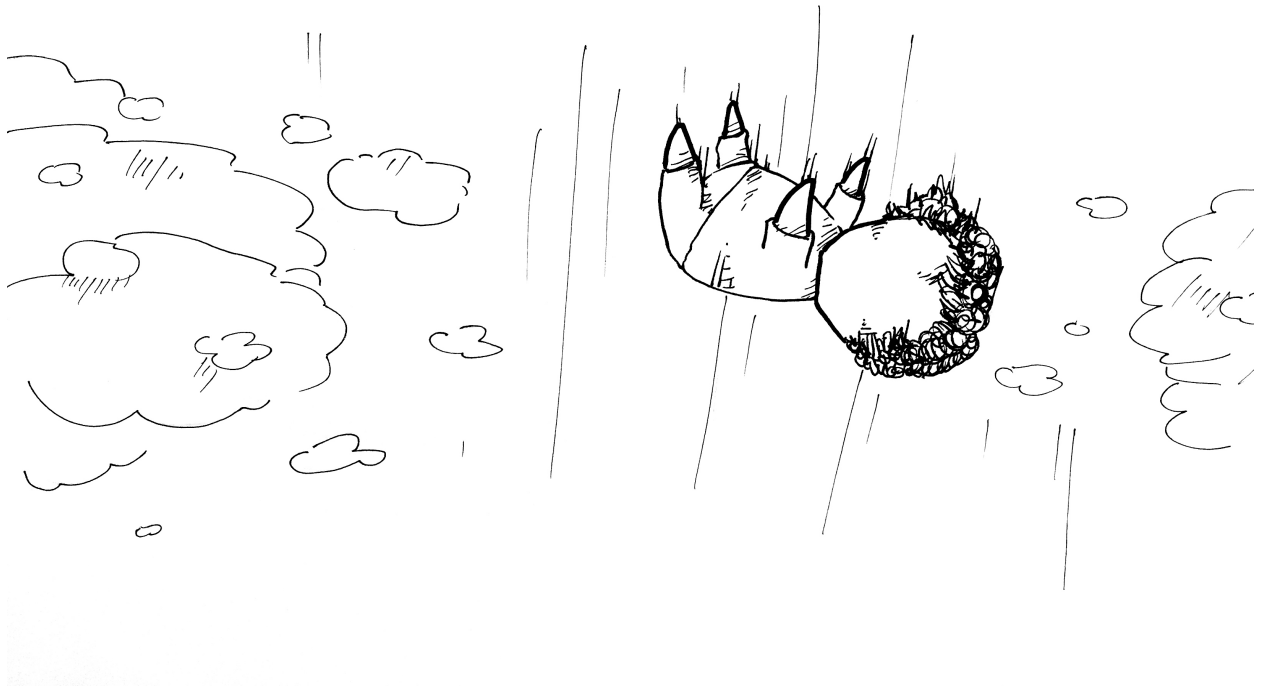
Sadly, however, life disintegrated real fast. Not just for the boy, but everyone around him. All that was left were his little brother and mother.



The three were unsure of how this happened, but they were determined to find out. Thus they set out to the skies, with wings on their backs.



While on their quest, something puzzling happened: when the boy flew over an area without clouds, he plummeted downward, uncontrollably. His wings disappeared.

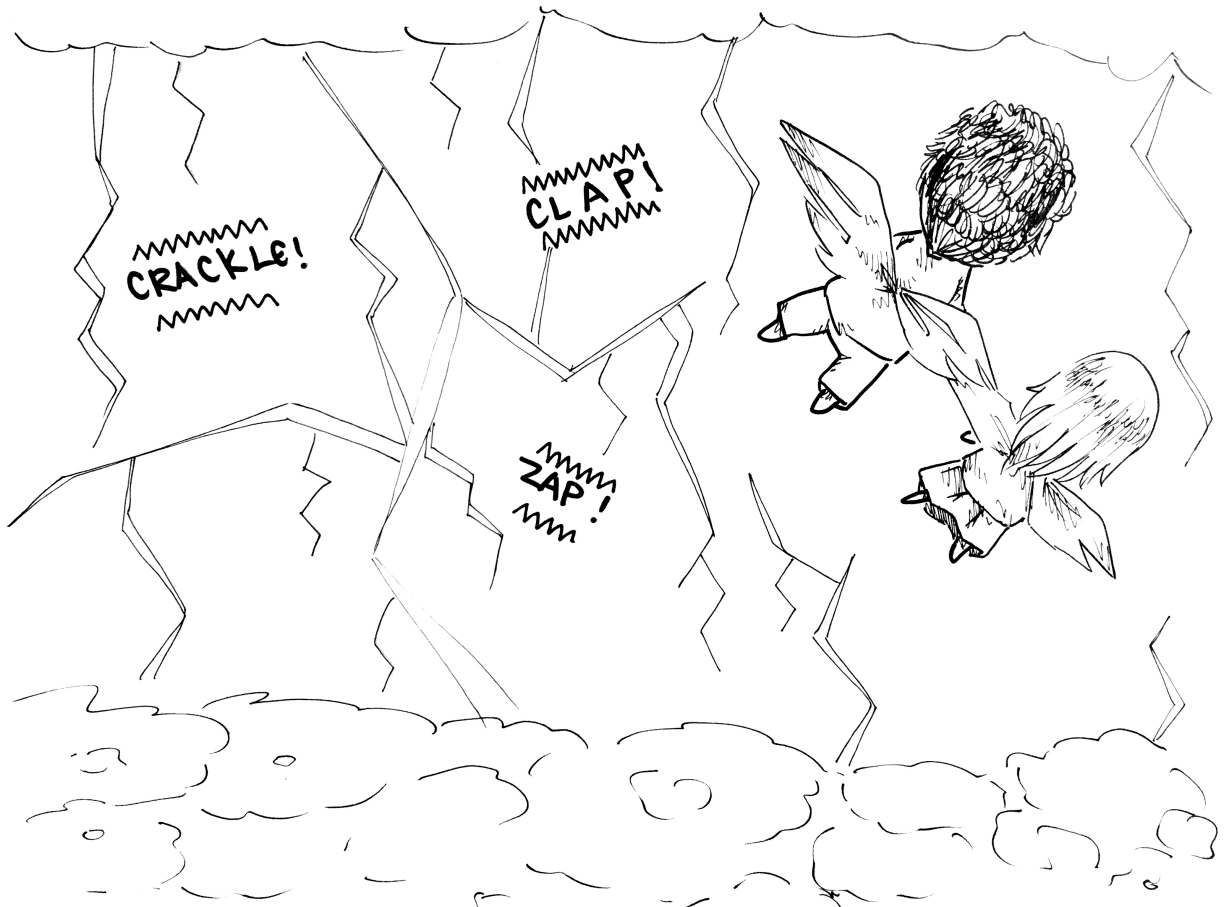


As he landed, he passed out.

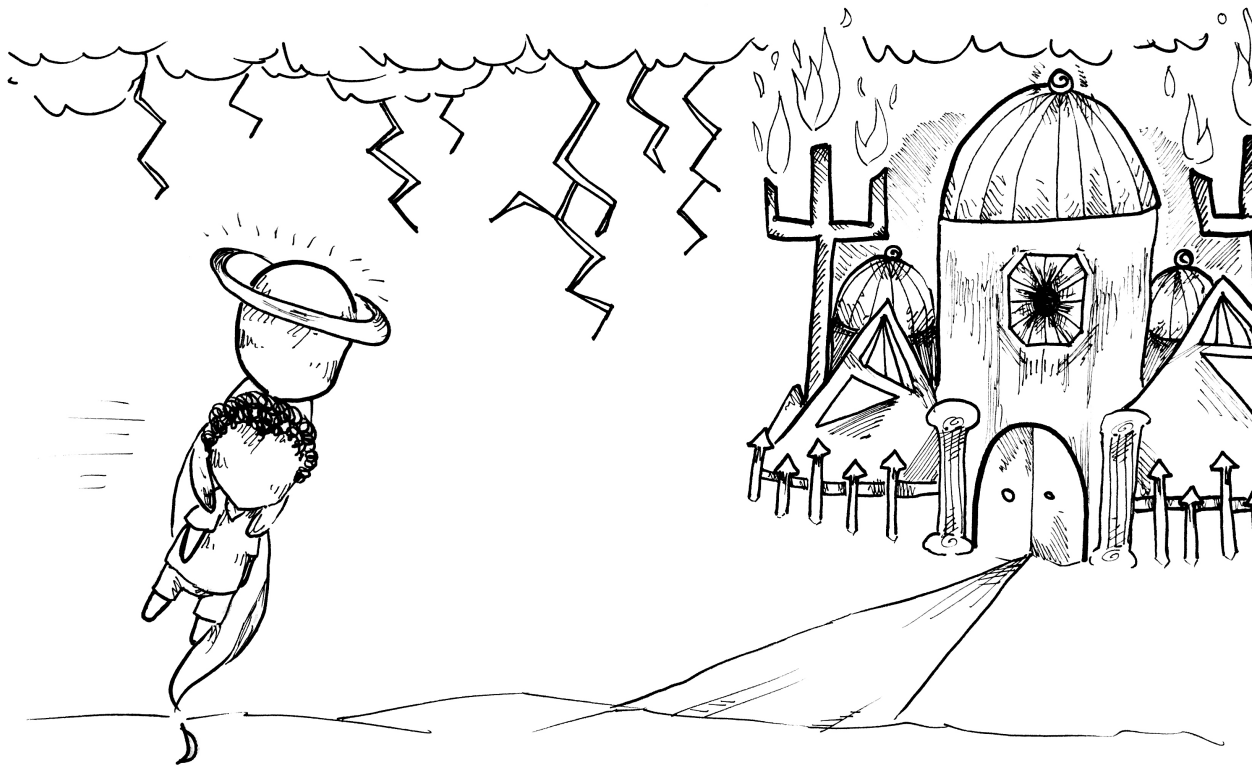
A strange-looking fellow stumbled upon him.



Meanwhile, when his little brother and mother tried to rush to him, the gateway of the clouds closed up and became dangerously stormy. The little brother and mother were forced to leave.



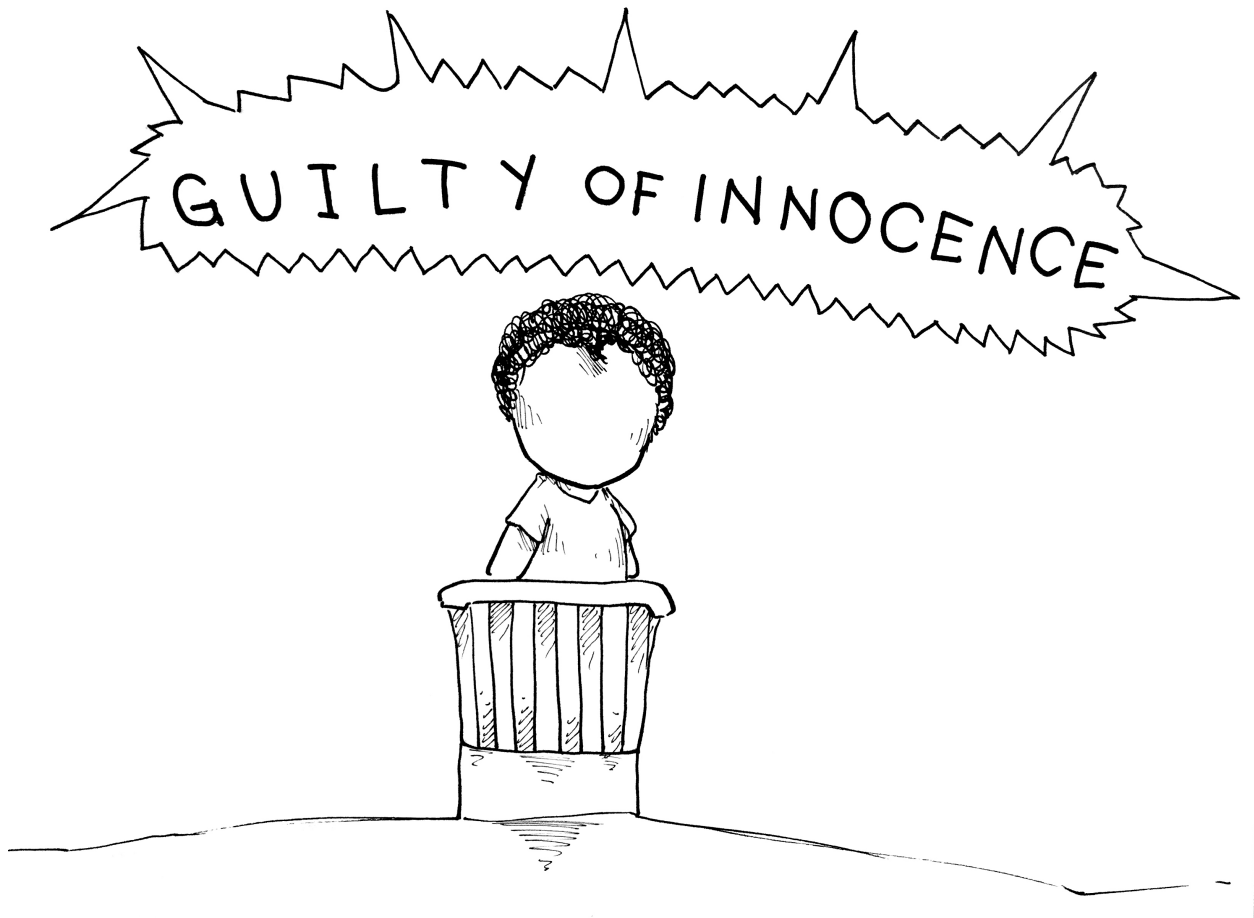
**Back under the sudden storm front,
the peculiar figure carried the boy to a
mighty palace. It looked promising.**



When the boy came to, he was standing in what looked like some sort of courtroom. As he was unsure of his situation, he asked, and asked, and asked why he was there.



Without any explanation, the verdict was delivered. At this point, the boy never quite understood and it didn't really matter what the trial was for, but everyone yelled the exact same verdict:



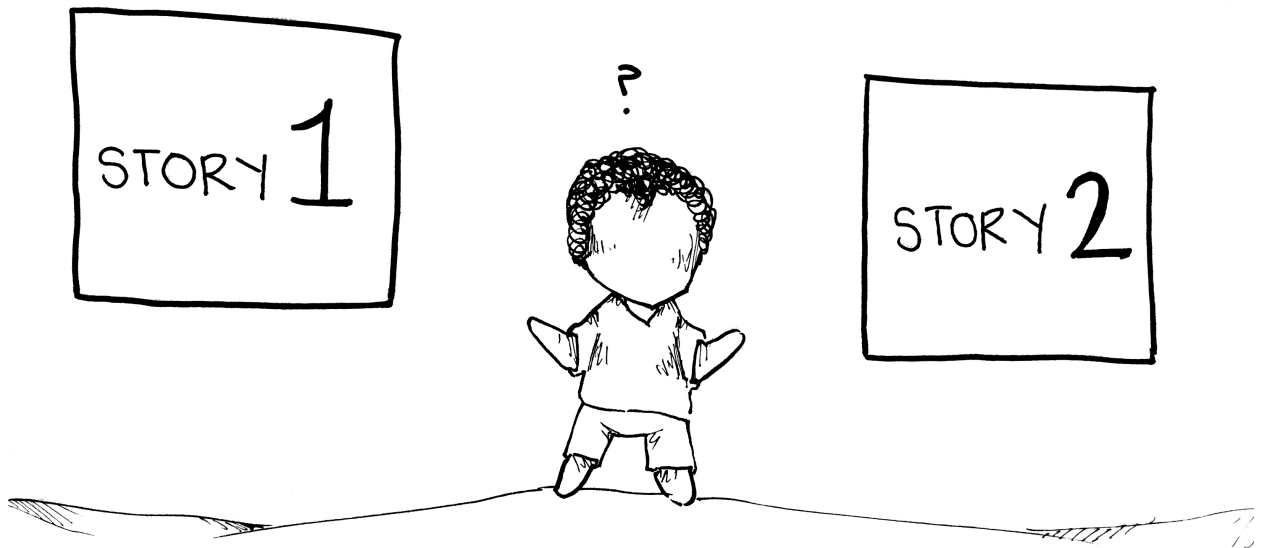
At that moment, the boy felt different. In a bad way. Something had infiltrated his fragile heart as those three words echoed.



Inside the boy's head, a faceless spirit confronted him. The boy had to do something fast.

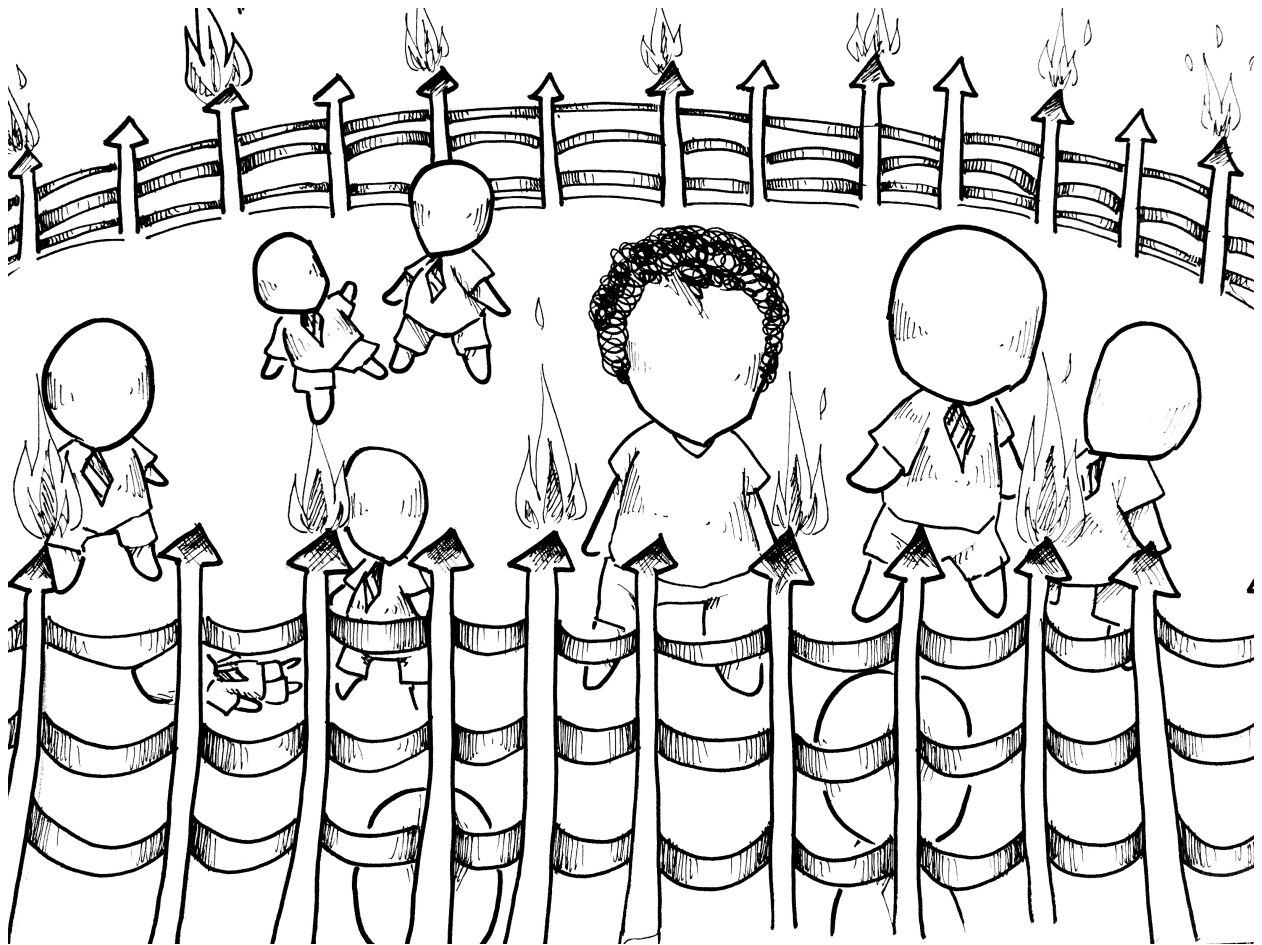


**The story branches into two here.
Which story do you want to hear?**



Story # 1

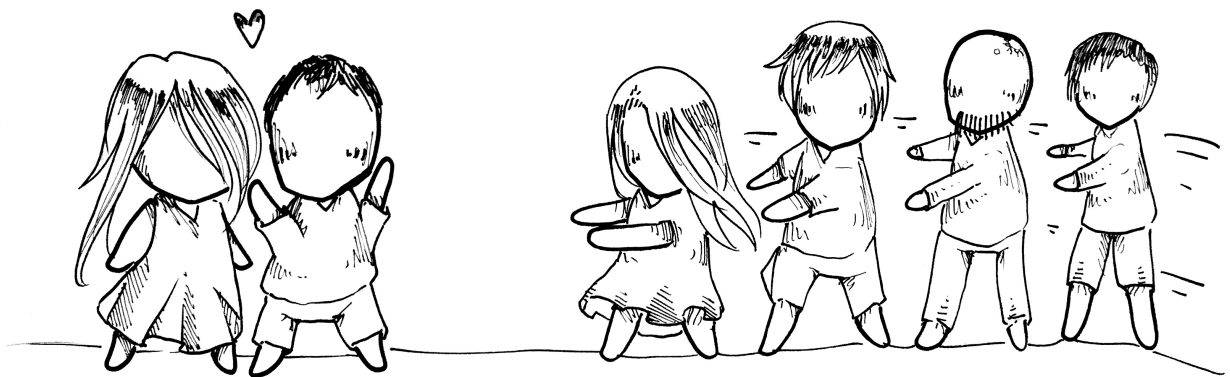
After the guilty verdict, the boy was thrown into a school. He wasn't told to do anything. He was just there. He also noticed he was the only one who looked different.



Inside his head, the boy took a treasure chest from his back pocket and flung it open. The resulting storm swallowed everything, including the boy. In the physical world, the boy seemed fine.

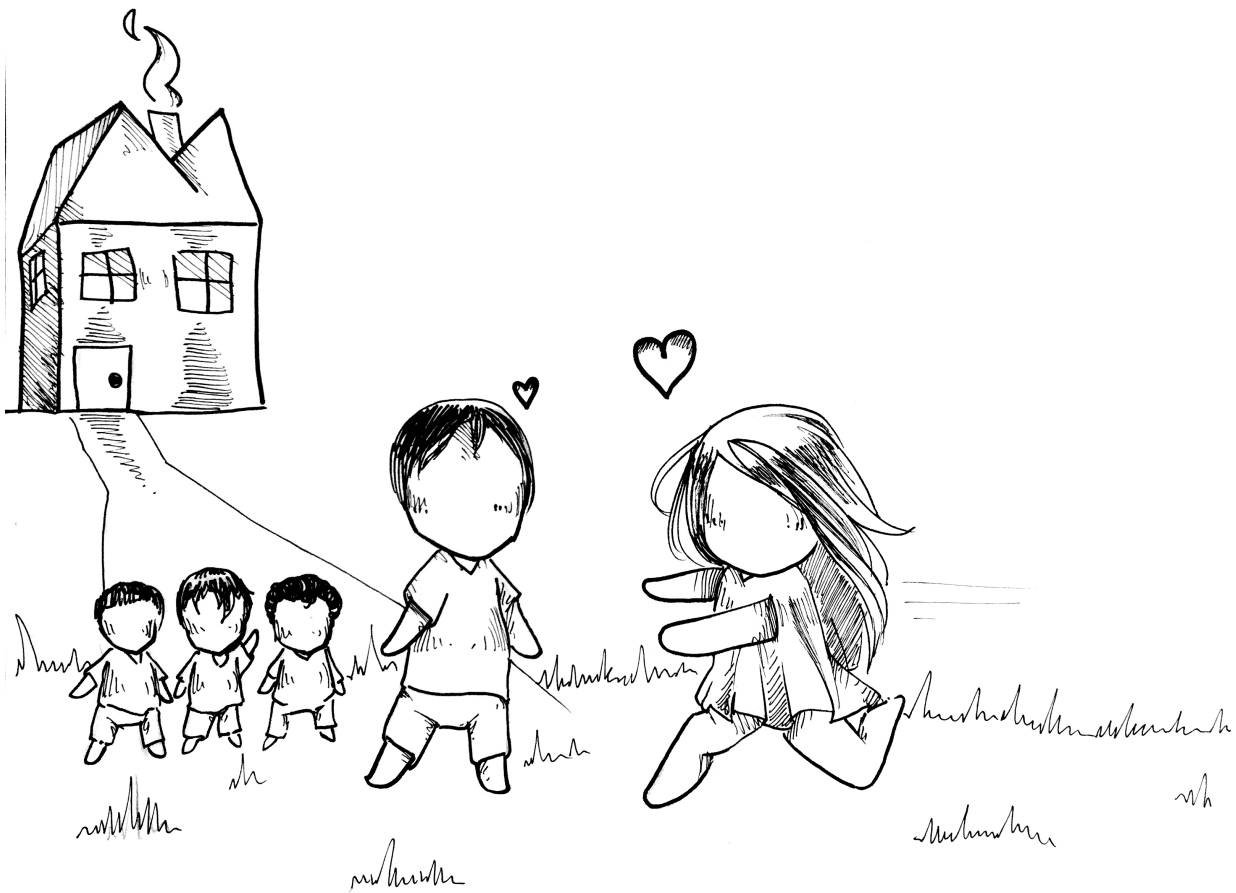


As the boy went on with his life, he eventually found his little brother and mother, along with the rest of his family. He even found a wife.



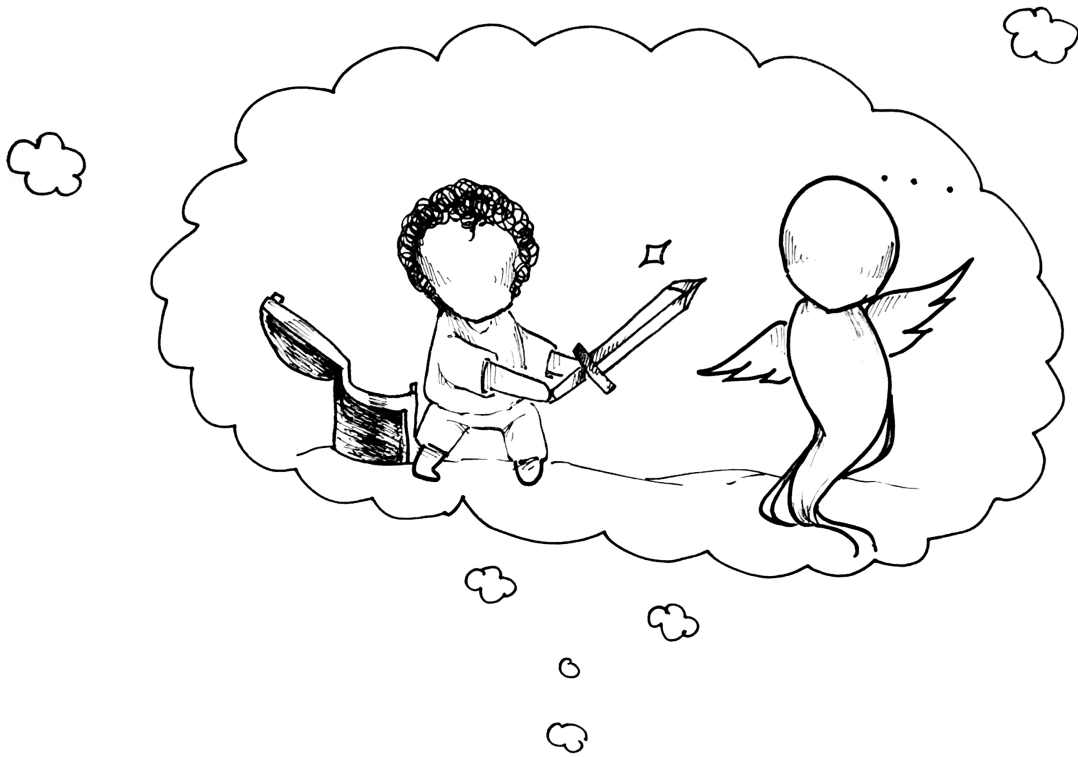
The boy even founded a successful business. He was wealthy, had a nice house, lived in a great area, and had kids of his own. Yup, everything seemed perfect again... Just perfect.

THE END



Story #2
(Continued from page 19)

When the faceless spirit confronted the boy, he took out a treasure chest. From it, he drew his most prized weapon. He prepared to fight.



To make sure he remained different from all the others, the boy found and wore a black jacket. This would also mask his inner war.



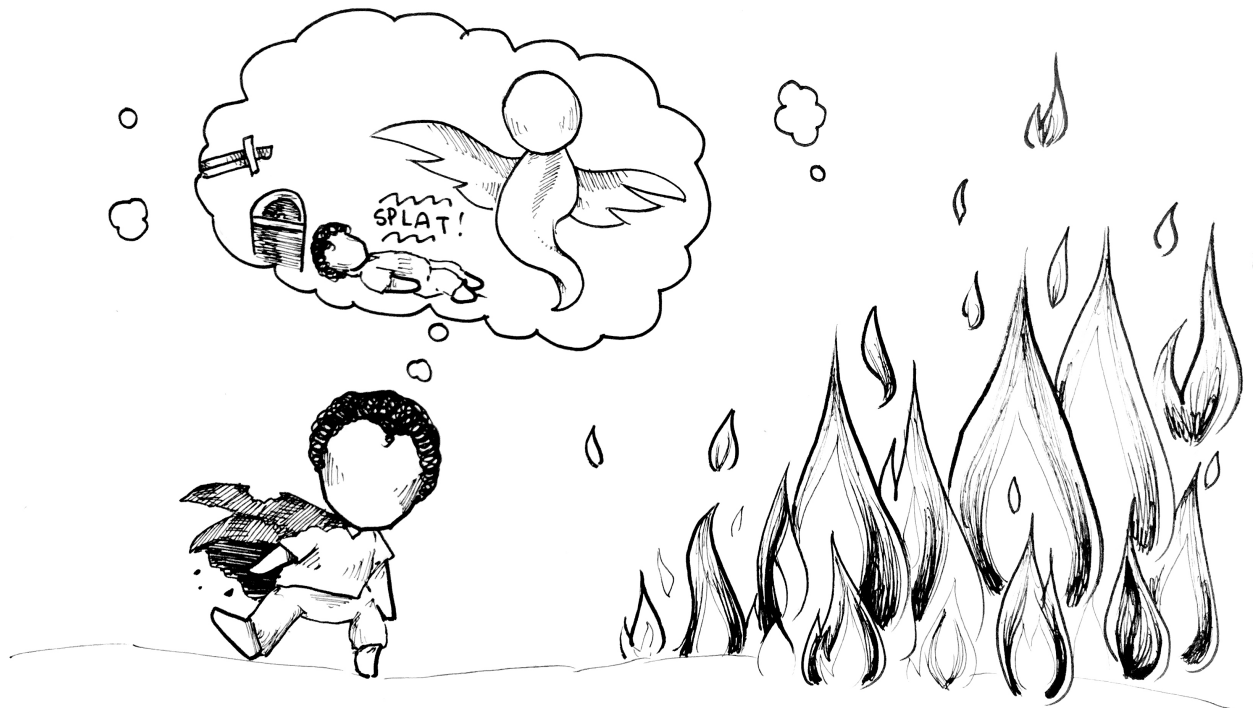
So the boy kept going...



and going...



and going...



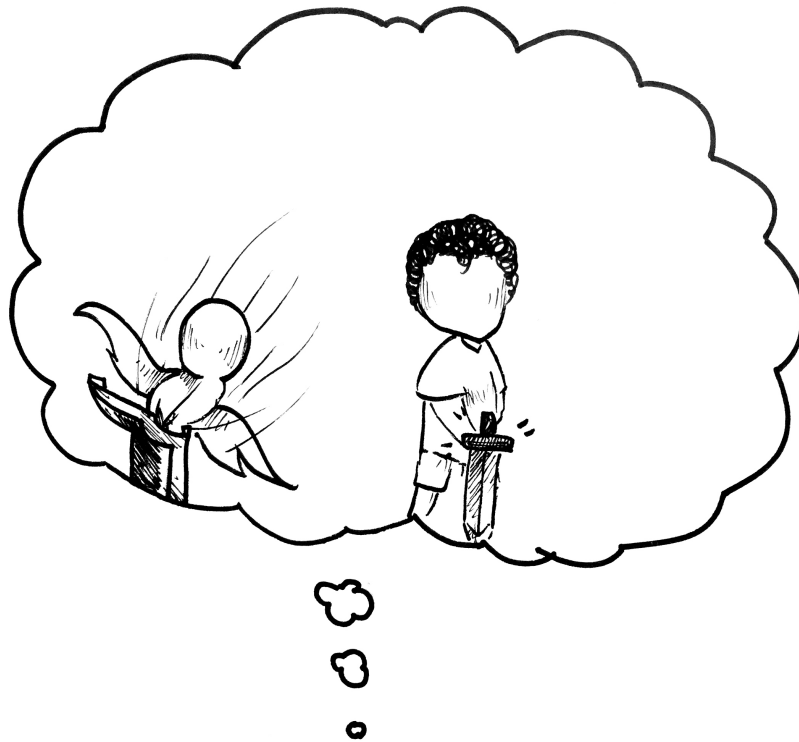
and going...



AND GOING!



At this point, right after the boy got out of school, the chest opened once more. But it wasn't taking back the sword; it was taking in the invaded spirit.



As the boy regained consciousness, his family, including his lost little brother and mother, and friends all returned to him.

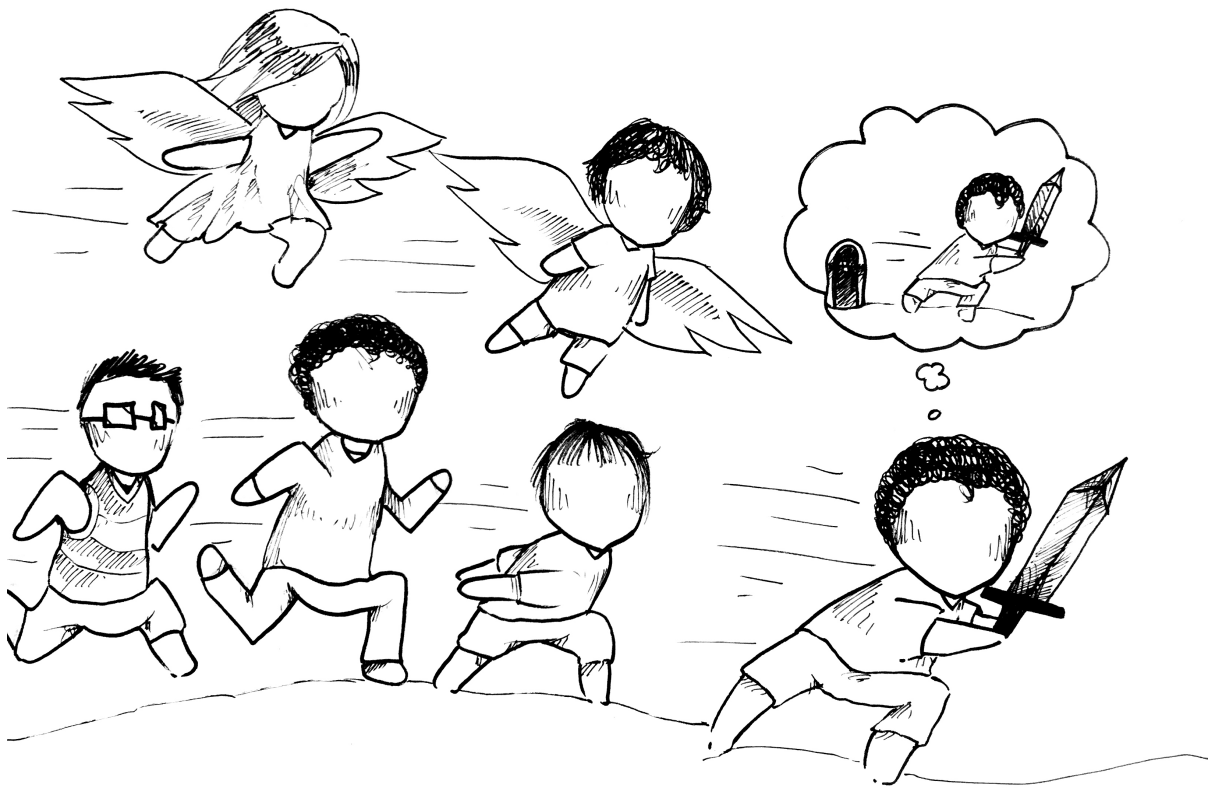


**Though there are more evil spirits
out there to fight...**



**The boy and his loyal companions
are ready for anything.**

THE END



There is one good ending and one bad ending. Can you figure out which is which?

