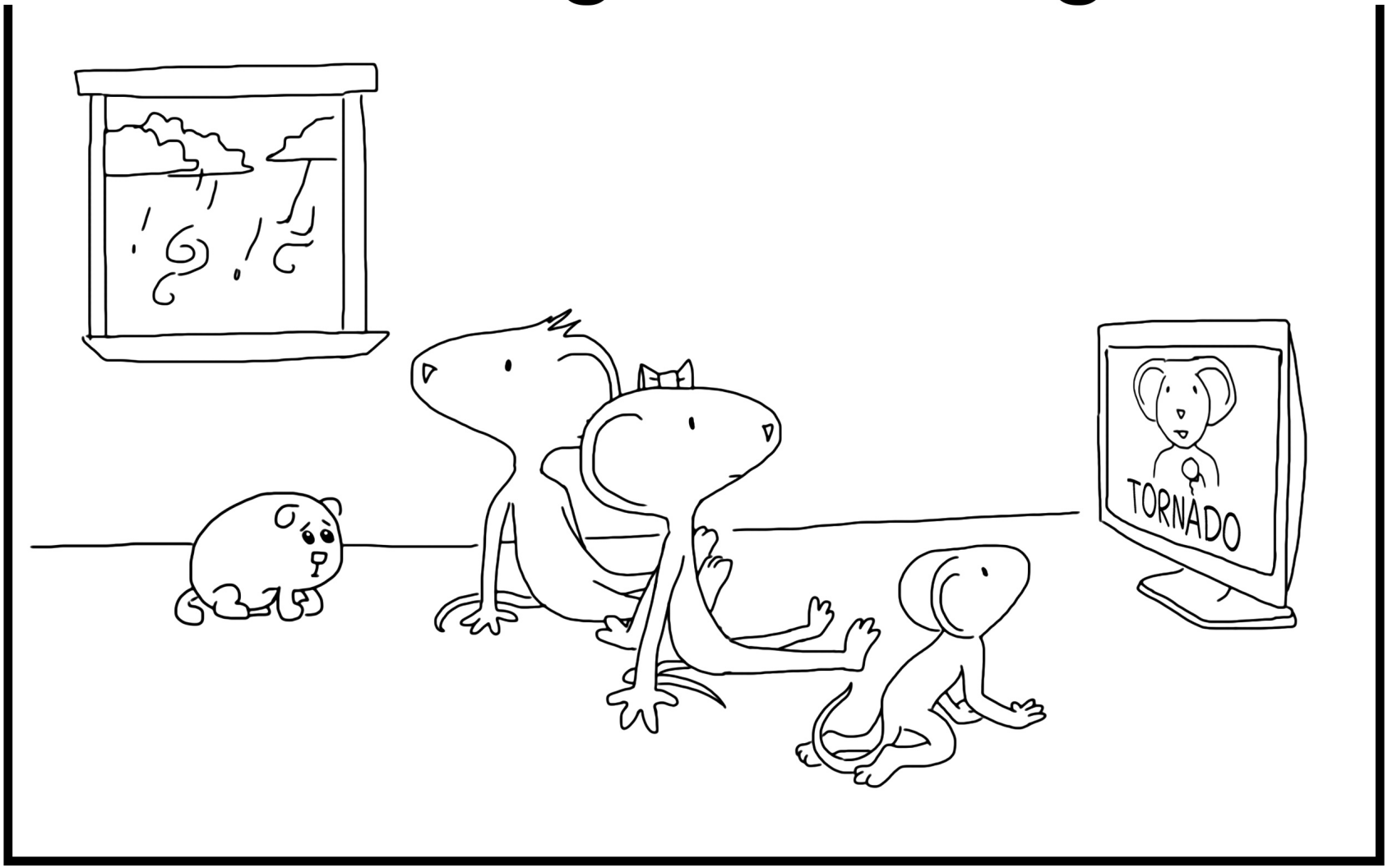
Trinka and Sam

The Swirling Twirling Wind



Trinka and Sam and the Swirling Twirling Wind

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A PARTNER IN NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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This story was developed in collaboration with the Early Trauma Treatment Network, the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, and Joplin School District. Special thanks to Mariana Holliday, Lisa Orem, and Renee White for providing input and feedback on the story.

The story was developed to help young children and their families begin to talk about feelings and worries they may have after they have experienced a tornado.

More information about how to help children who have experienced tornadoes or other traumatic events can be found at www.nctsn.org.

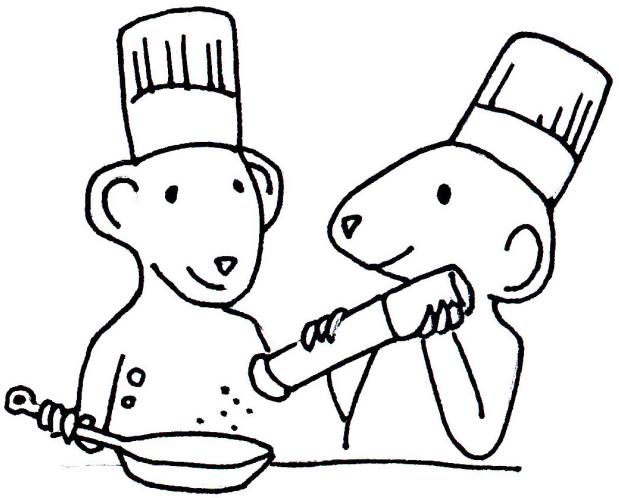
More information about the story, the use of the story, and the team who created the story can be found at: http://piploproductions.com/stories/trinka-and-sam/.

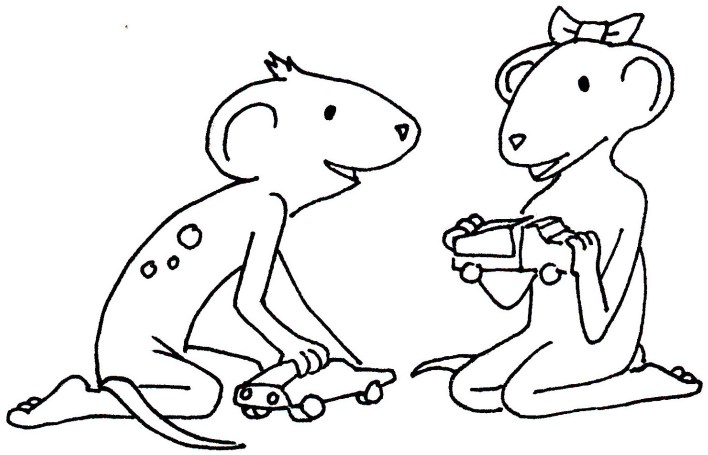
For the children and families of Joplin, Missouri and children and families who have experienced tornadoes around the world.

Adults: This story was designed for children who have experienced serious tornadoes. Please read it by yourself first and decide whether this is a good story to read with your child. If your child has been through a mild tornado, you may decide that this story presents details and images that may not be helpful for your child to hear and see. Even if you choose not to read the story to your child, the story and the parents' guide, at the end of the book, may help you better understand your child's reactions to the tornado. If you decide to read the story with your child, you may want to encourage your child to color in some of the pictures.

This is Trinka.

And this is Sam.





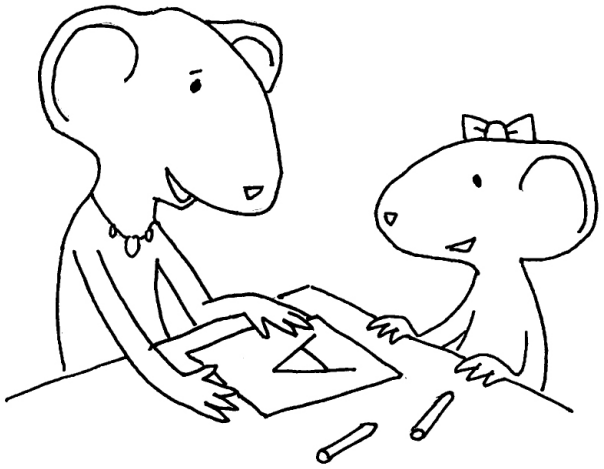
They are neighbors, and they like to play together.

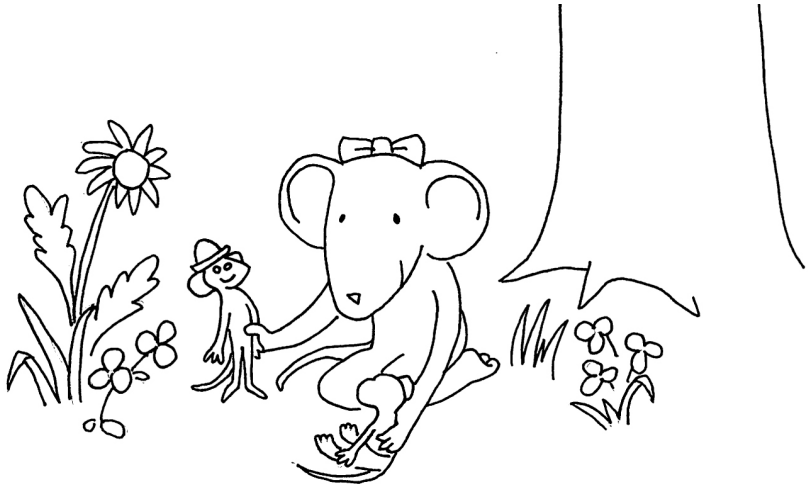
In the spring, they run outside and welcome the flowers.

And when it rains, they love to go puddle stomping.

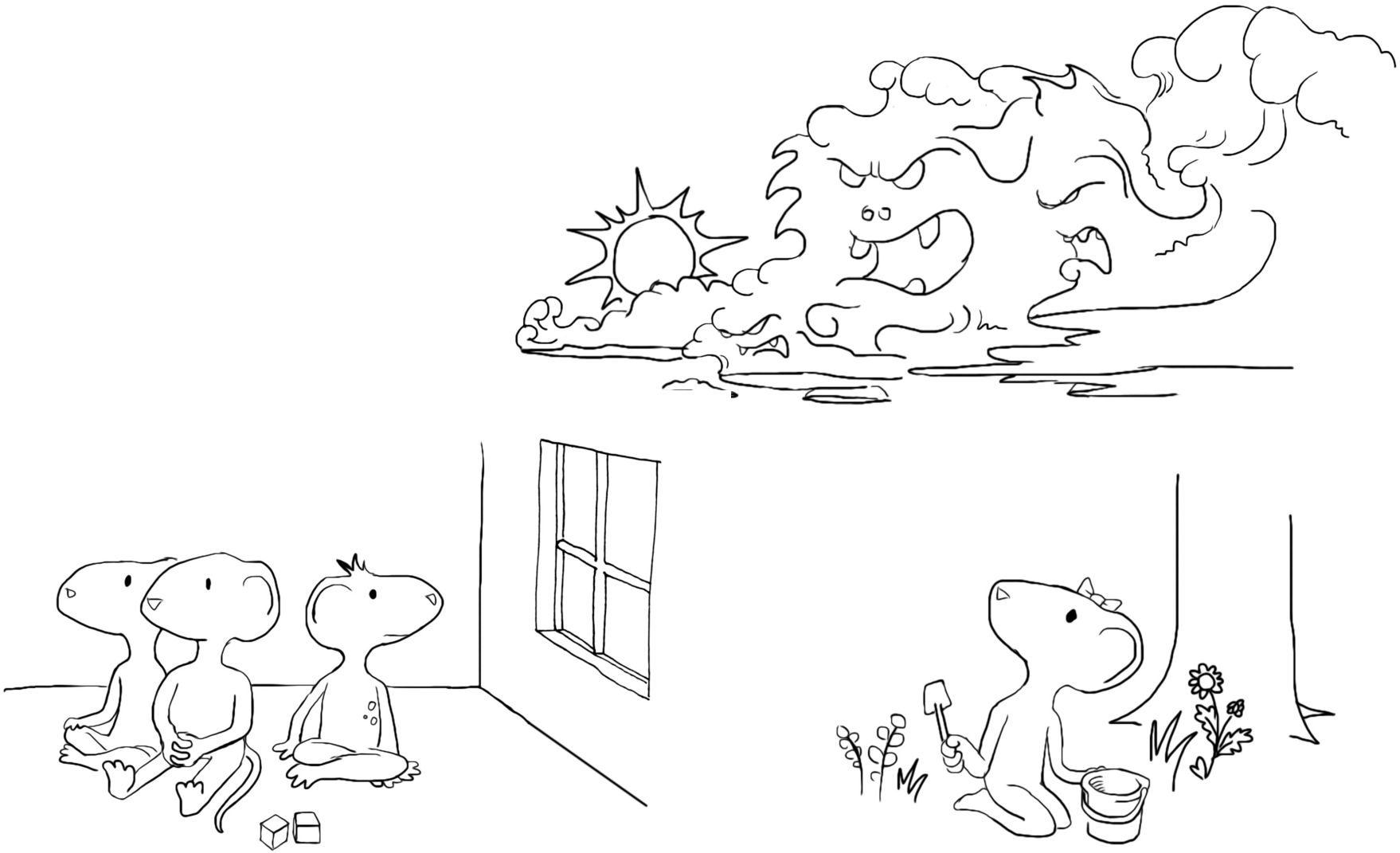
And they always listen when it's time to stop. Well, . . . almost always.

They were growing up and learning lots of things. Sam just started school.

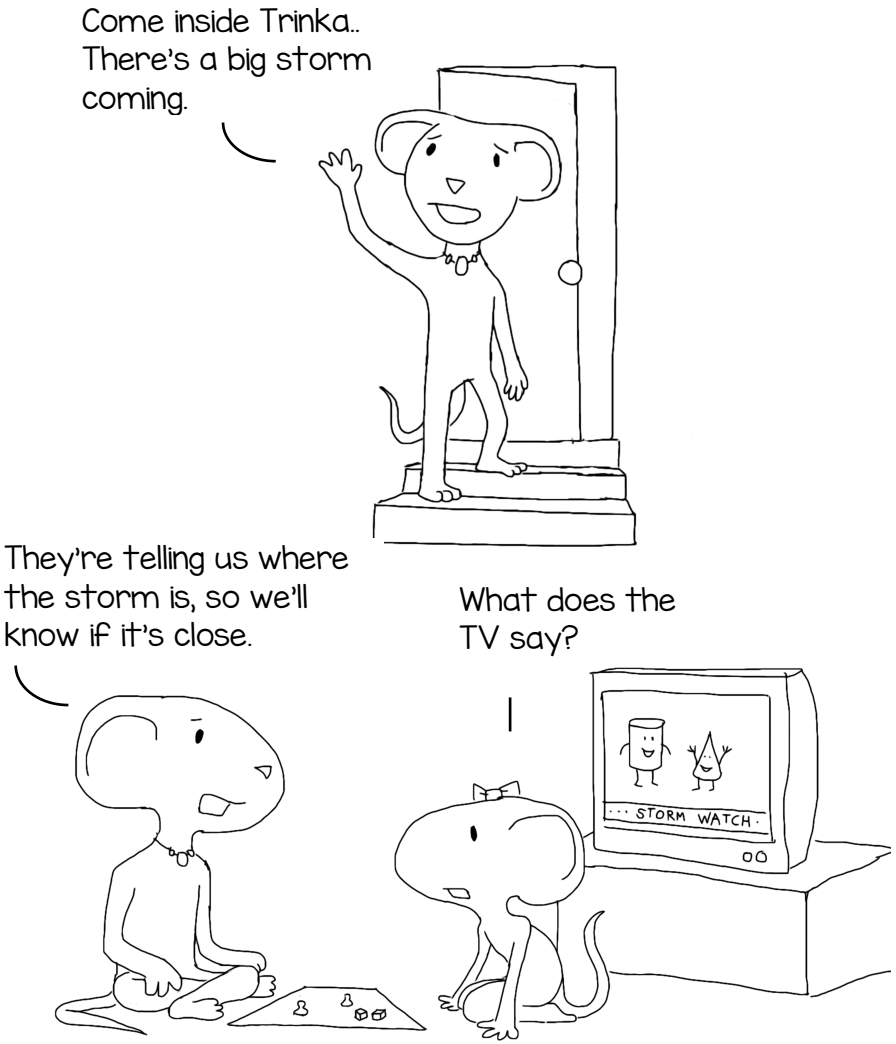




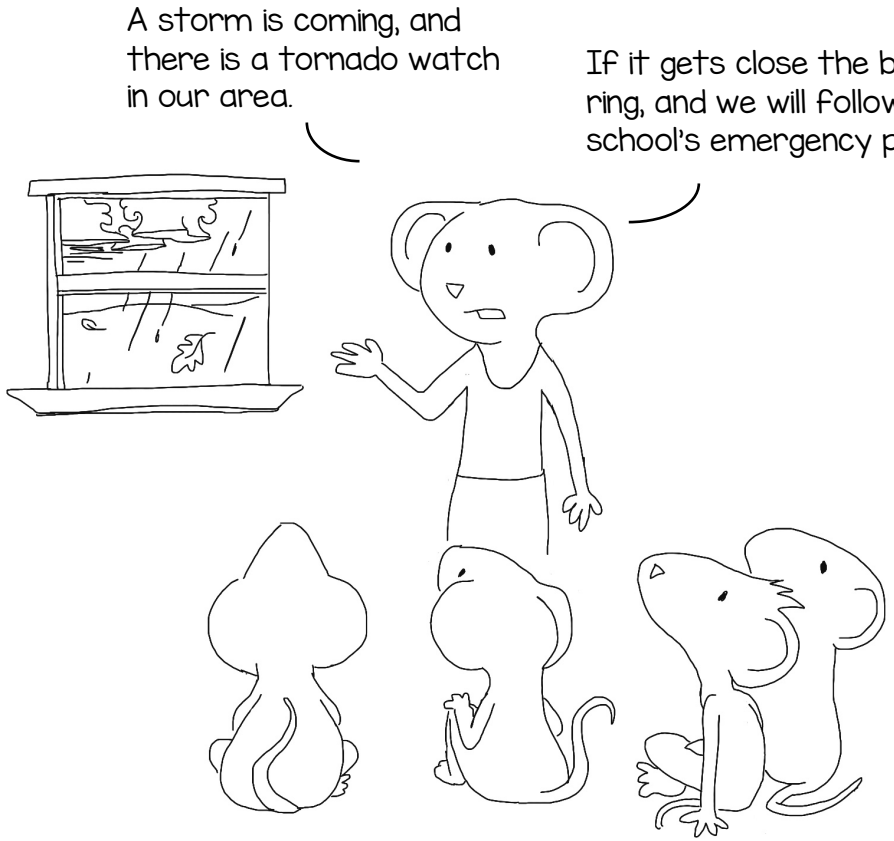
Trinka was too little for school, but her mom taught her the alphabet, and she played school with her dolls.



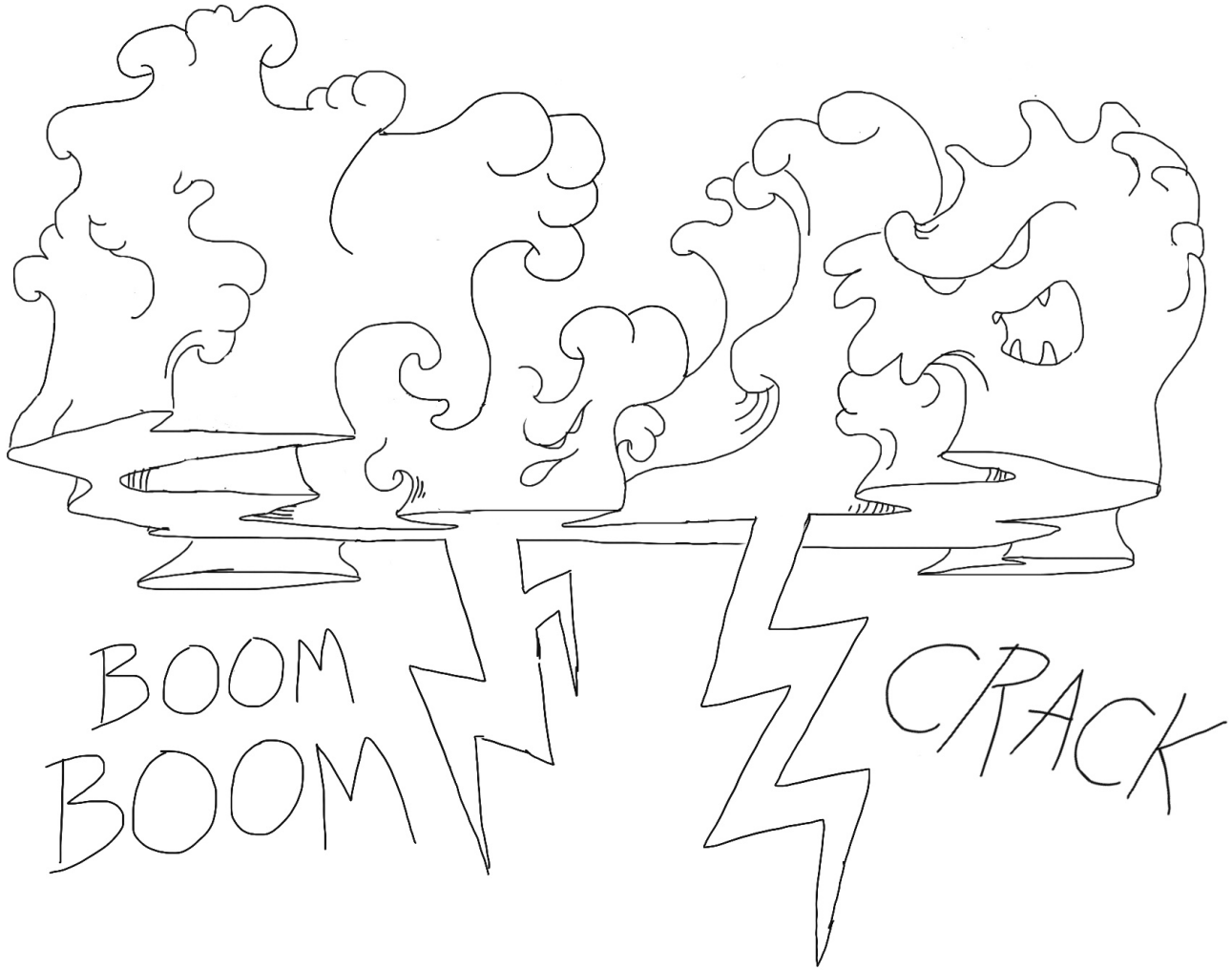
Now one sunny spring day while Sam was in school and Trinka was playing outside, an army of clouds came marching in, and the wind began to blow.



Trinka's mom told her to come inside. She said they would play games while they checked for news about the storm.

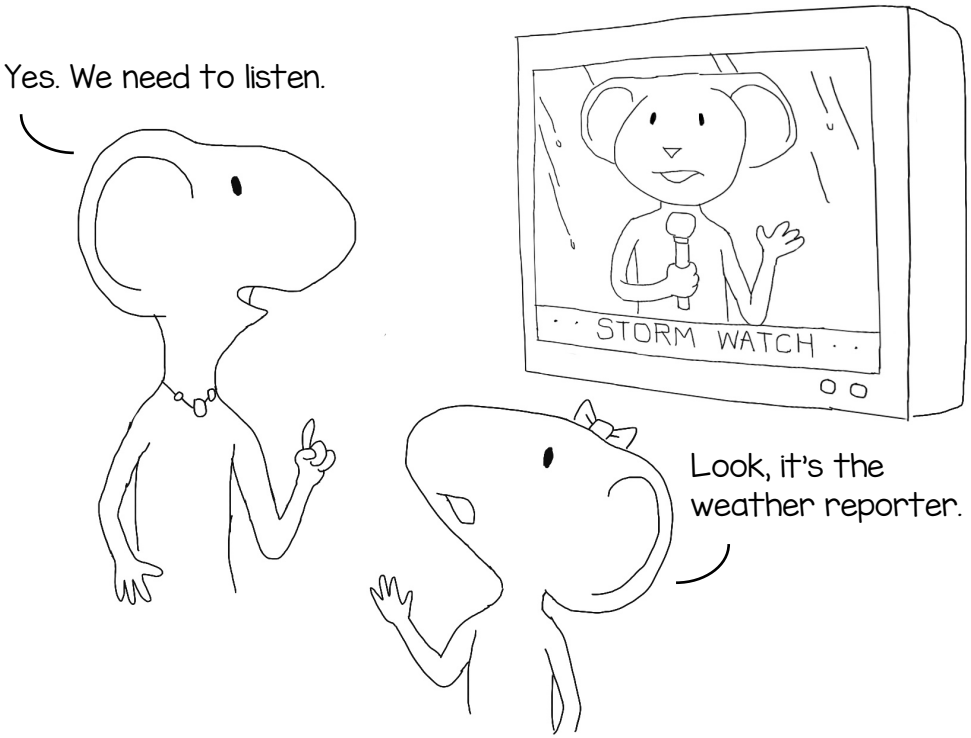


Sam's teacher said that right now they were fine, but if the storm got close, they would follow the school's tornado plan just like they had practiced before.

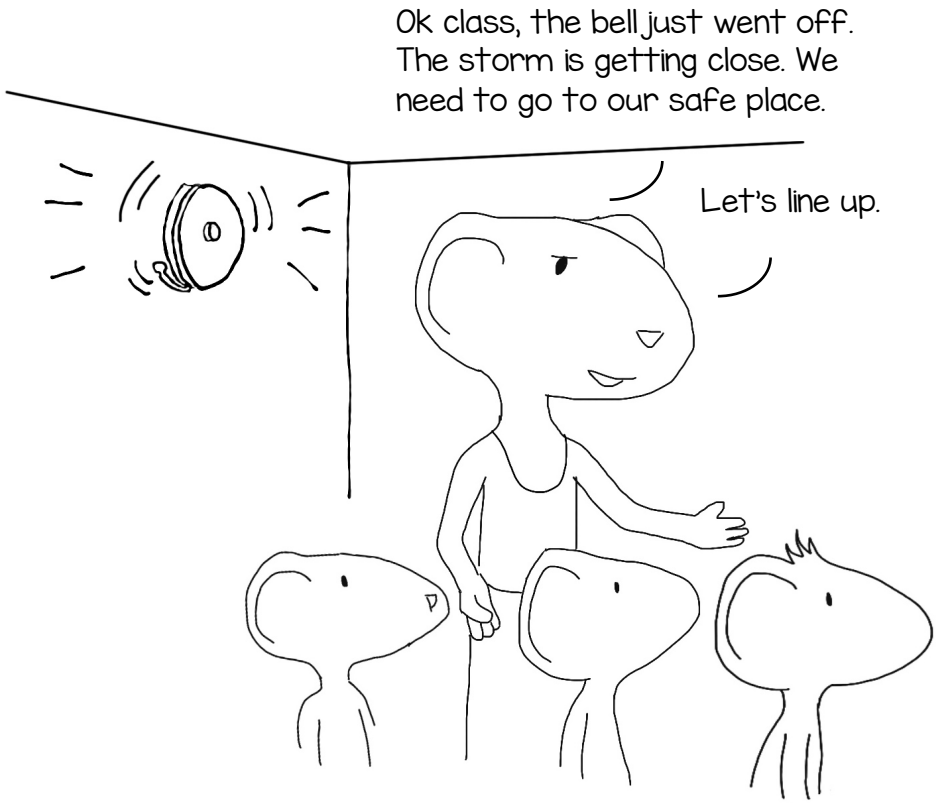


The storm got bigger. The wind blew harder.
Then came the boom boom of the thunder
and the crack crack of the lightning.

They had storms before, but this one seemed bigger and closer.

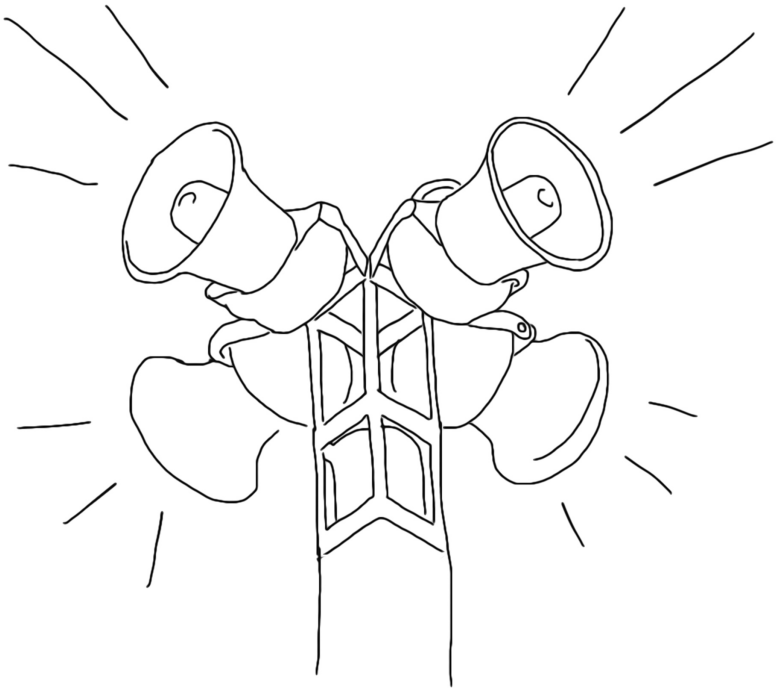


Trinka and her mom saw the weather reporter come on tv.



Sam's teacher stood up in front of the class and made an announcement.

WWWWWEEEEEEERRRRRNNNN



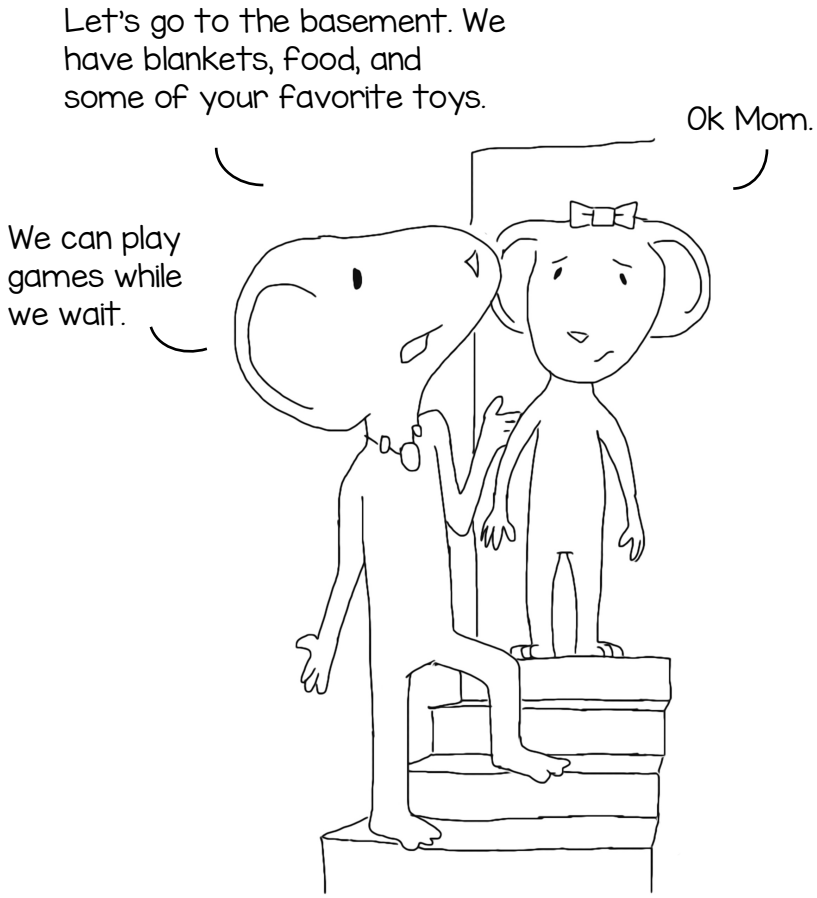
WWWWWEEEEEEERRRRRNNNN

WWWWWEEEEEEERRRRRNNNN

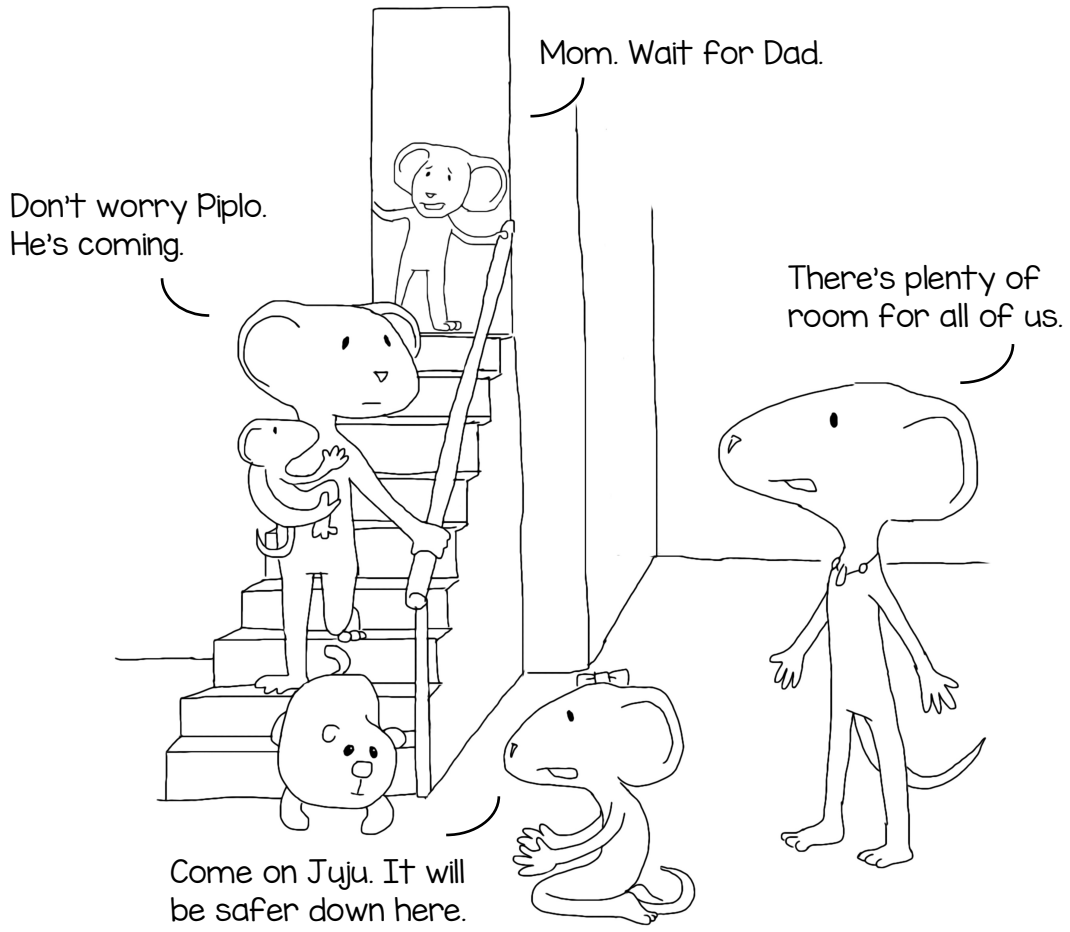
Outside the sirens went off.

It was loud, and it was scary, but they needed to send the warning to everyone. “Get to the safest place you can and wait while the storm passes.

Everyone take cover!”



Trinka's mom was ready. They would go to the basement where they had supplies to wait out the storm.

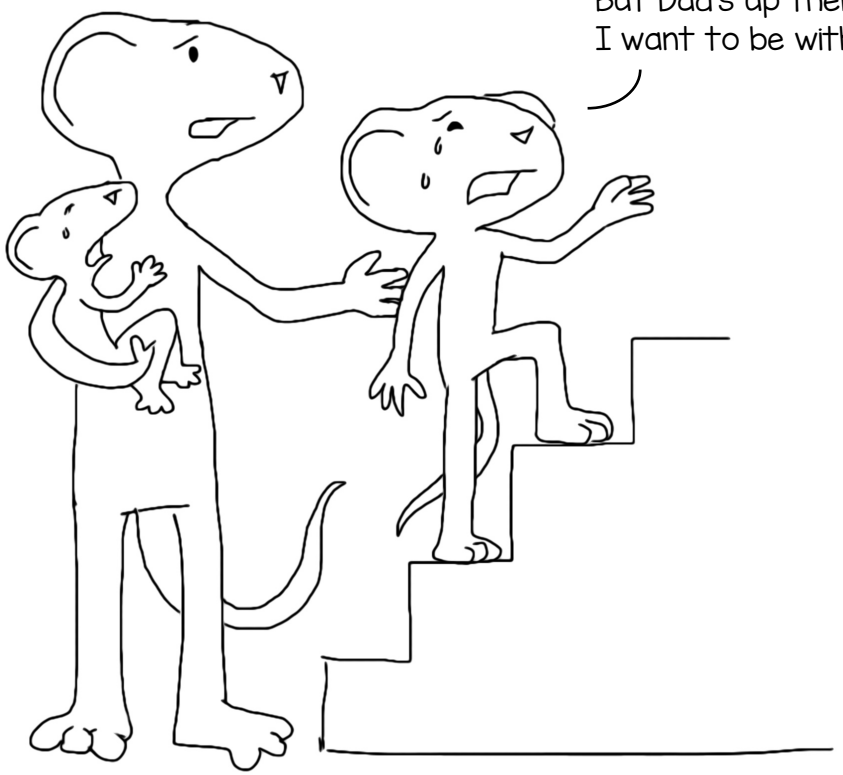


They brought their pet Juju. Their neighbors Piplo and Livi and their parents came too because they did not have a basement.

You need to stay down here.

It's not safe for children. He'll be here in a minute.

But Dad's up there.
I want to be with him.



Piplo was mad and crying. His dad was checking on their house and watching the storm. Piplo wanted to be with him.

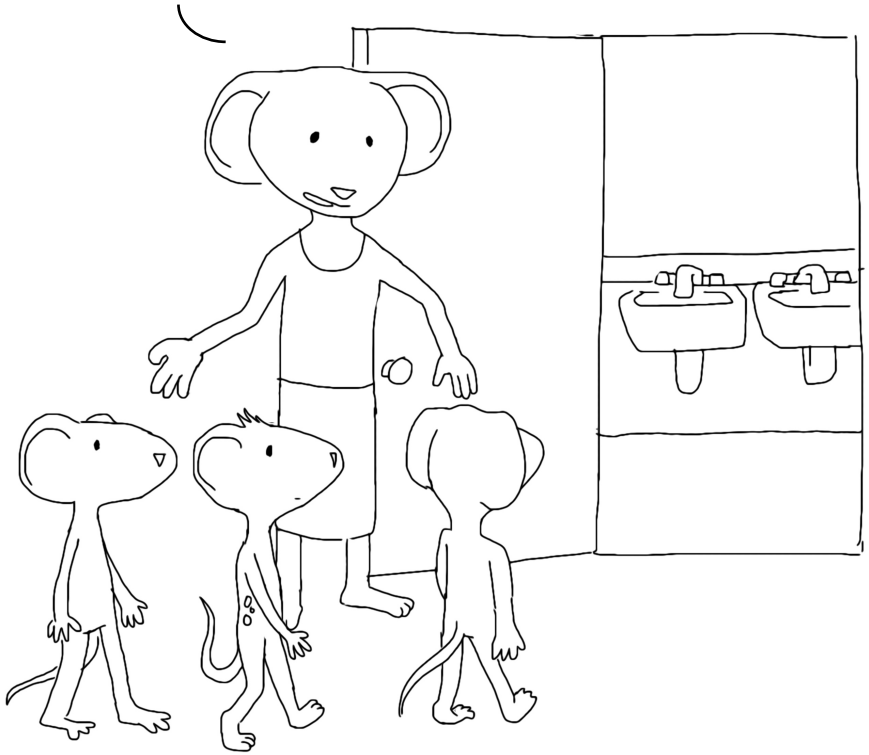
Sorry Piplo. I had to close up our house. I brought your helmets just in case things fall down, and I brought our radio, so we can listen to the news.

Great idea..

Come on. Let's play games.

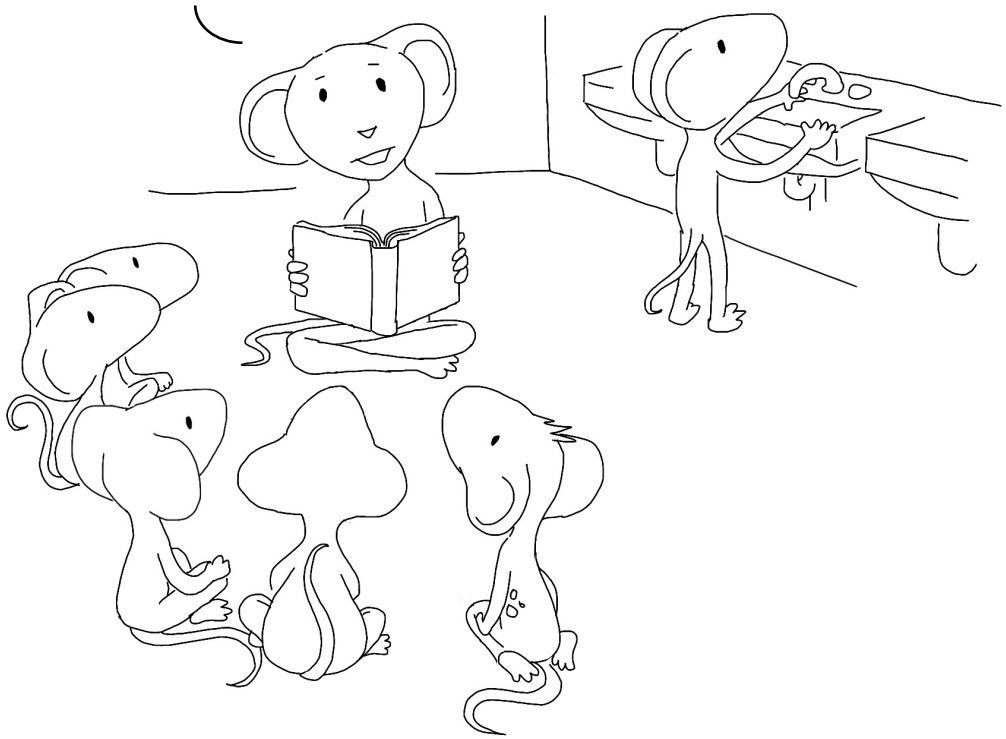
Eventually his dad came, and they shut the storm door.

Thank you for walking so calmly.
We'll wait out the storm in here.



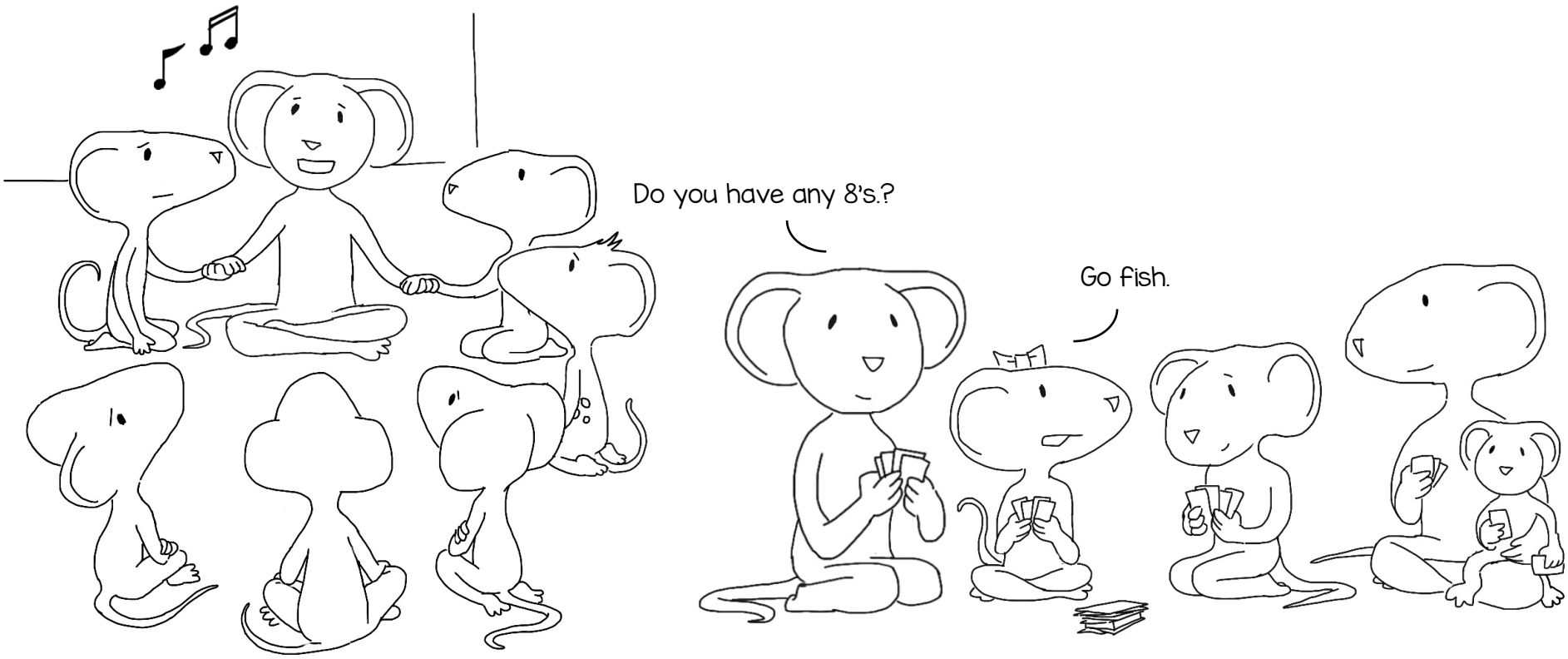
At school, Sam's teachers led the children to the bathroom. A room with no windows in the middle of the building was the best place in the school to wait out the storm.

Come sit down. Let's read a story.

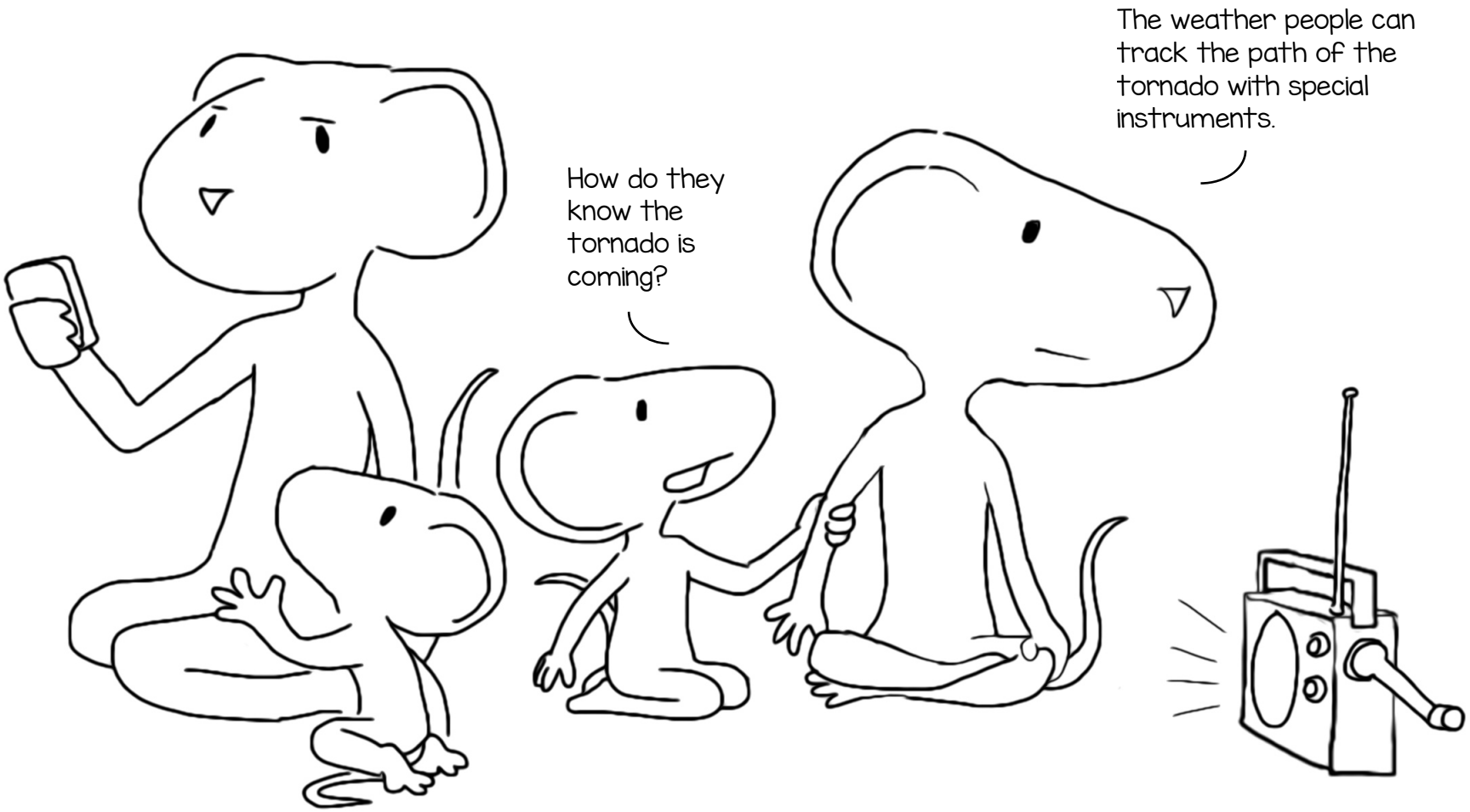


Some children wanted to play with the water, but they couldn't.

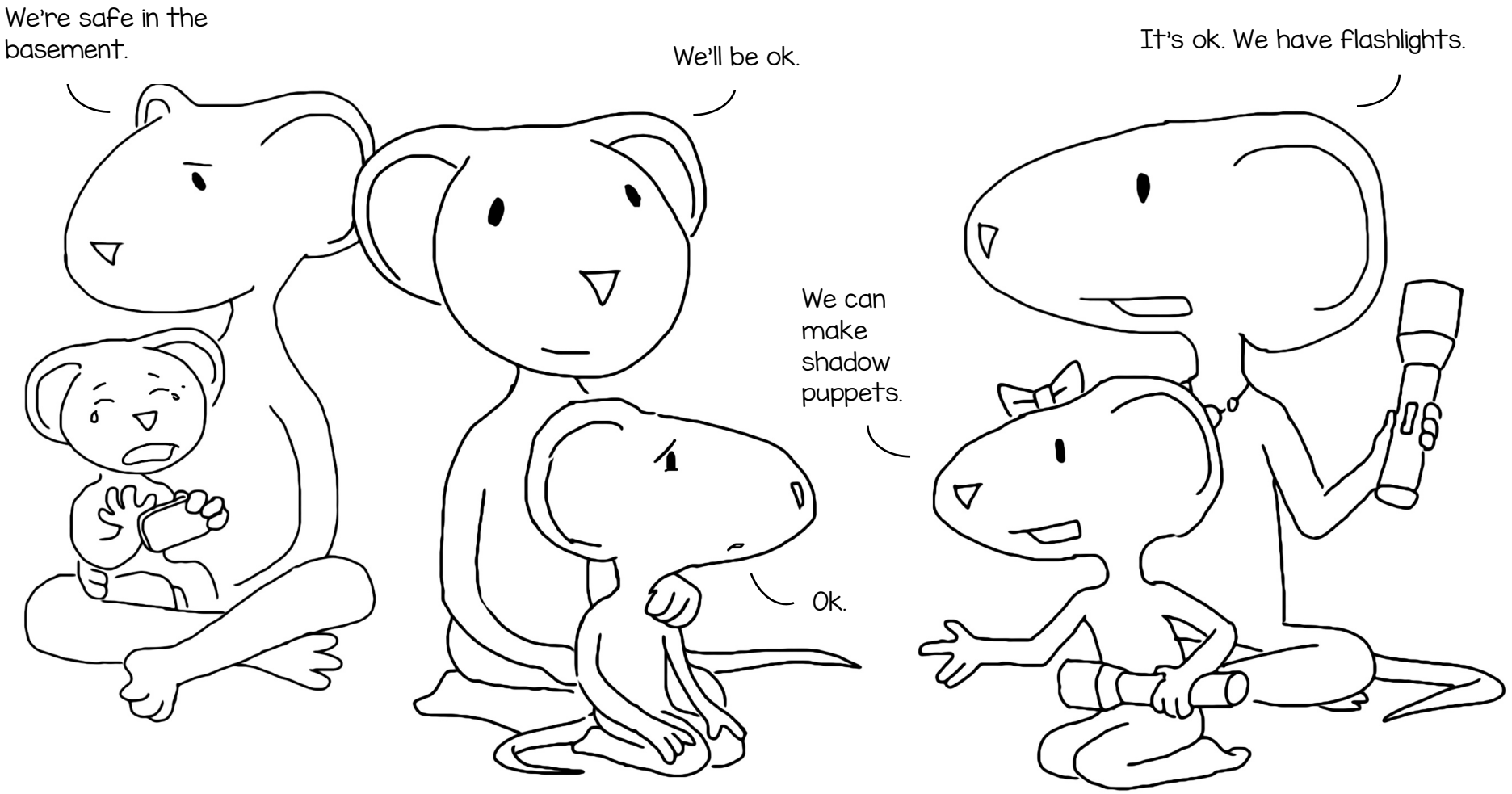
They sat in a circle and the teacher read a story.



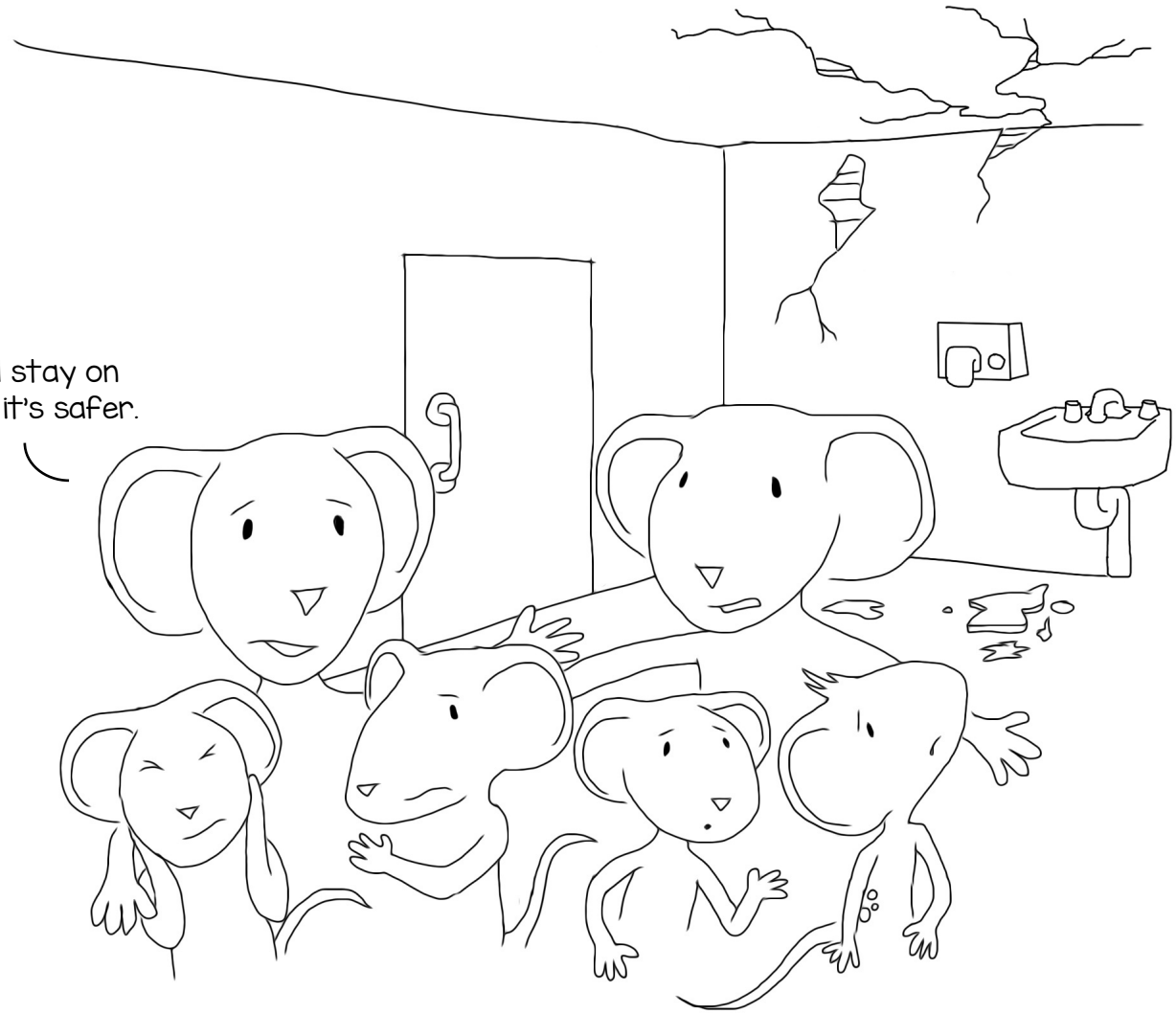
Trinka and Sam waited. All the kids waited. It was hard to wait, but the kids did a good job listening. The grownups were trying to keep the kids safe and make the waiting as fun as possible.



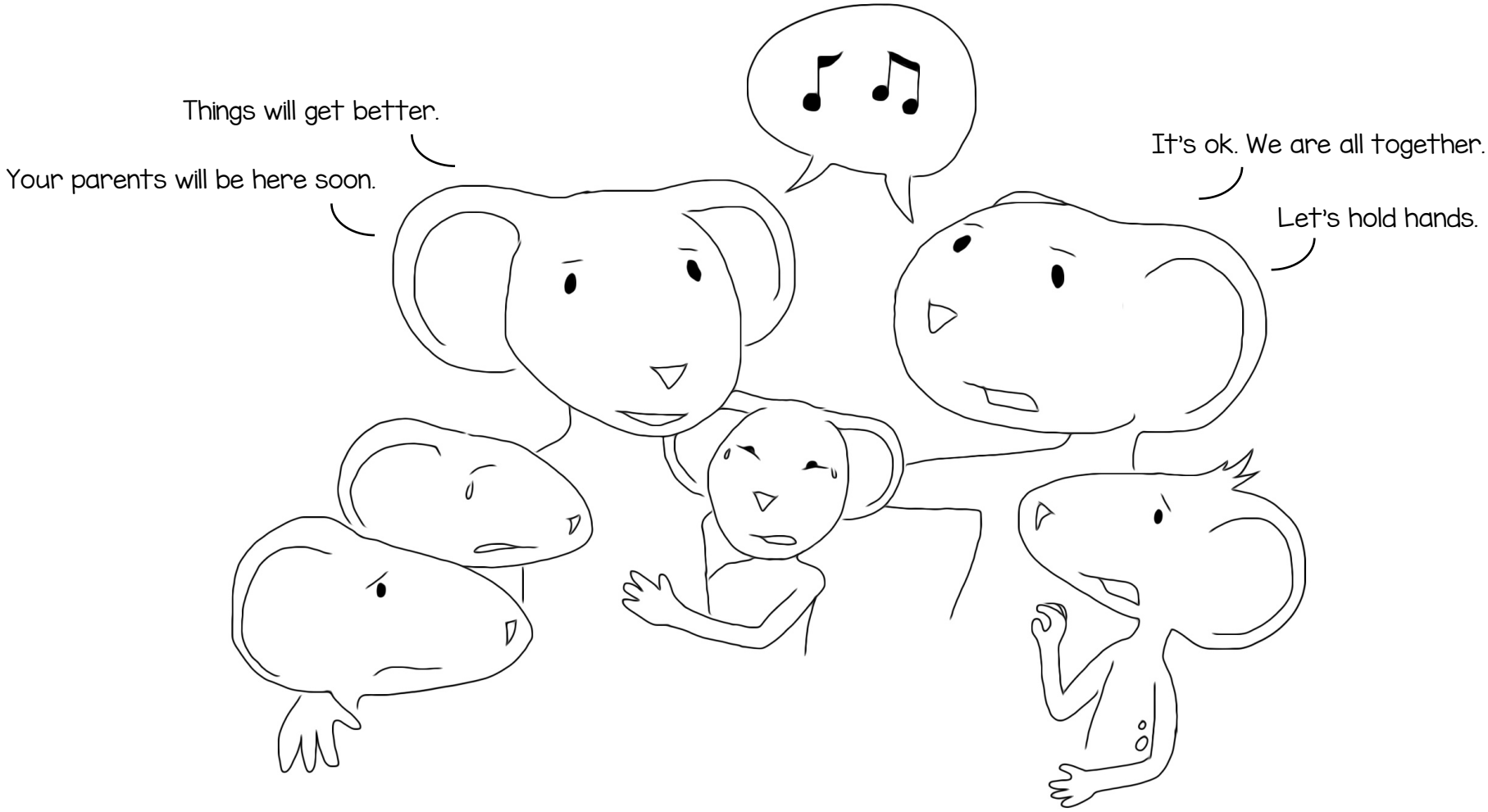
They had done this before. Usually the storm would pass and nothing bad would happen, but this time was different. This time the news reporters said a tornado had touched down and was going right through their town.



The news reporters were right. This time the tornado went right through Little Town. When it did, the lights went out in the basement. Trinka was scared, and she hugged her mom. Piplo's family hugged too.

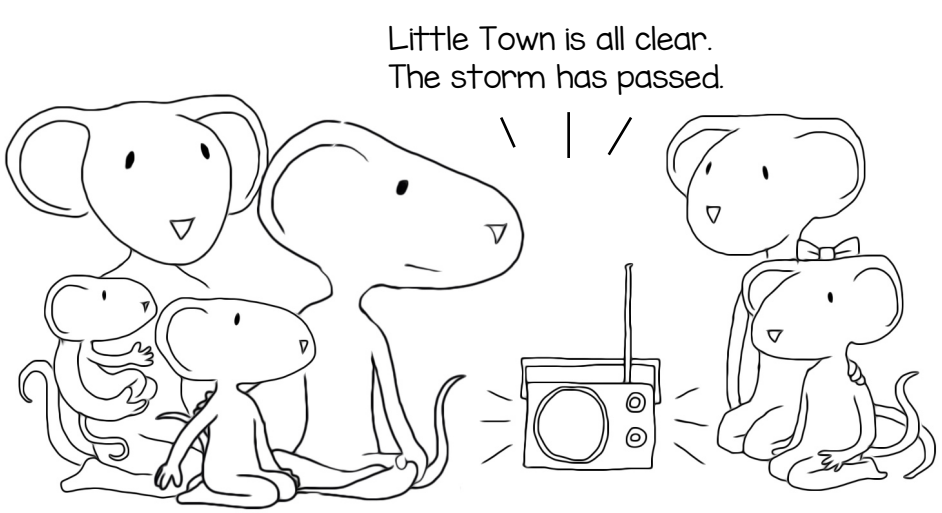


At school, the children heard the howl of the wind and a loud crash. Sam and his friends looked up and saw that the wind had ripped a part of the roof. They were so scared. They huddled on the floor with their teachers.

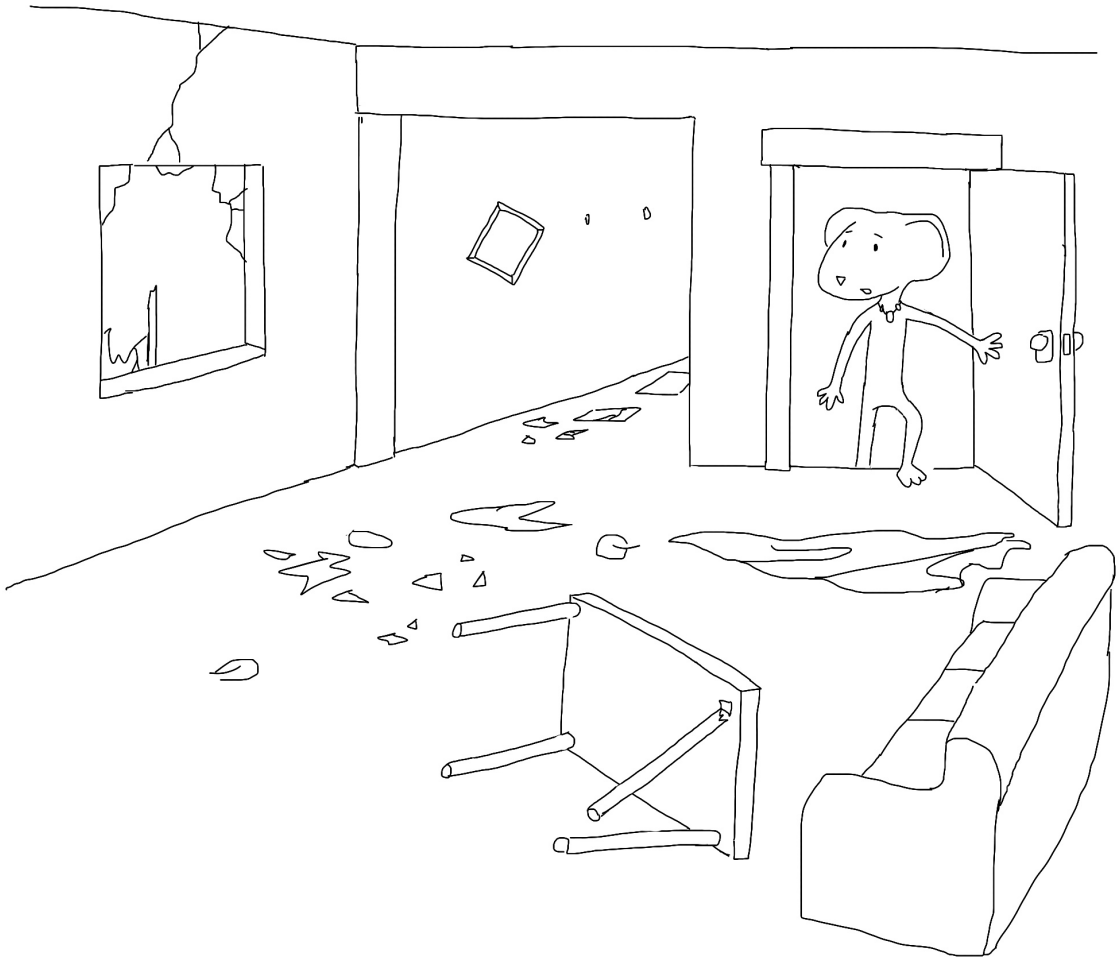


Sam wanted his mom and dad. Some kids were crying.

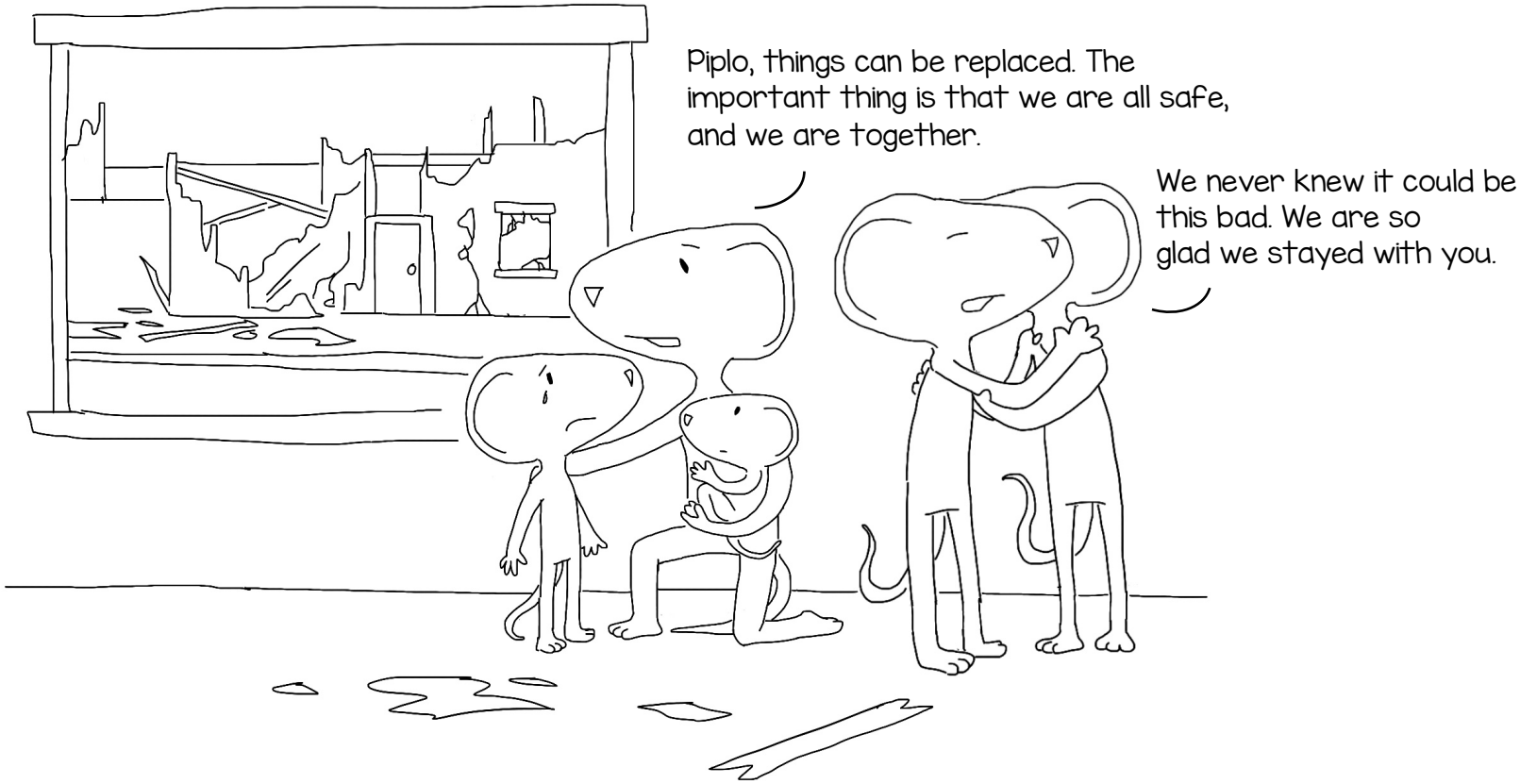
They held hands and their teachers said comforting words and sang a song. Their teachers were trying to keep them safe and calm.



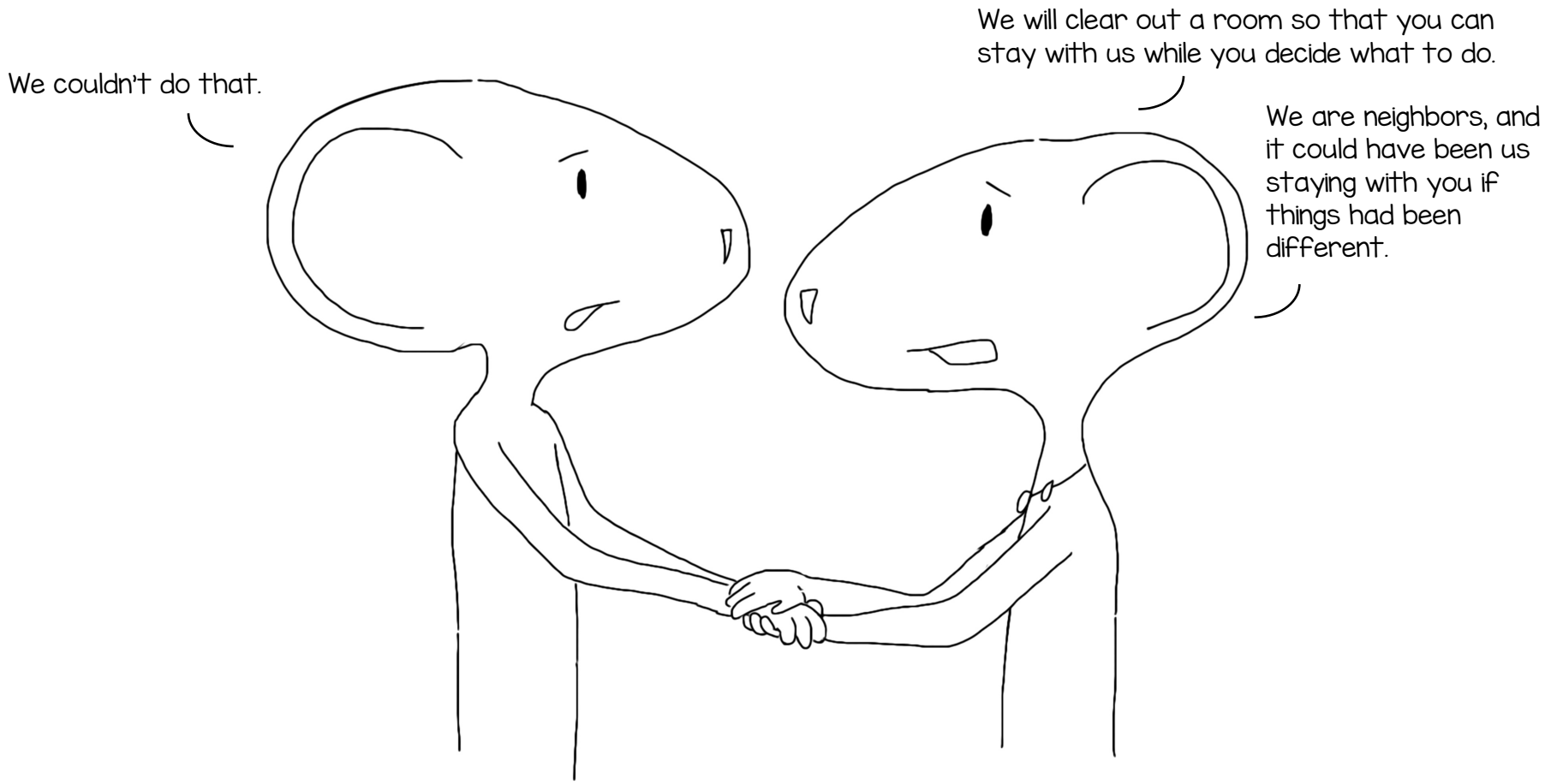
It seemed like a really long time, but after a while, it was quiet. They didn't hear the wind. The sirens stopped their loud wail. Piplo's parents checked the radio. A teacher came into the bathroom to make an announcement. The tornado had passed. It was all over. They were safe.



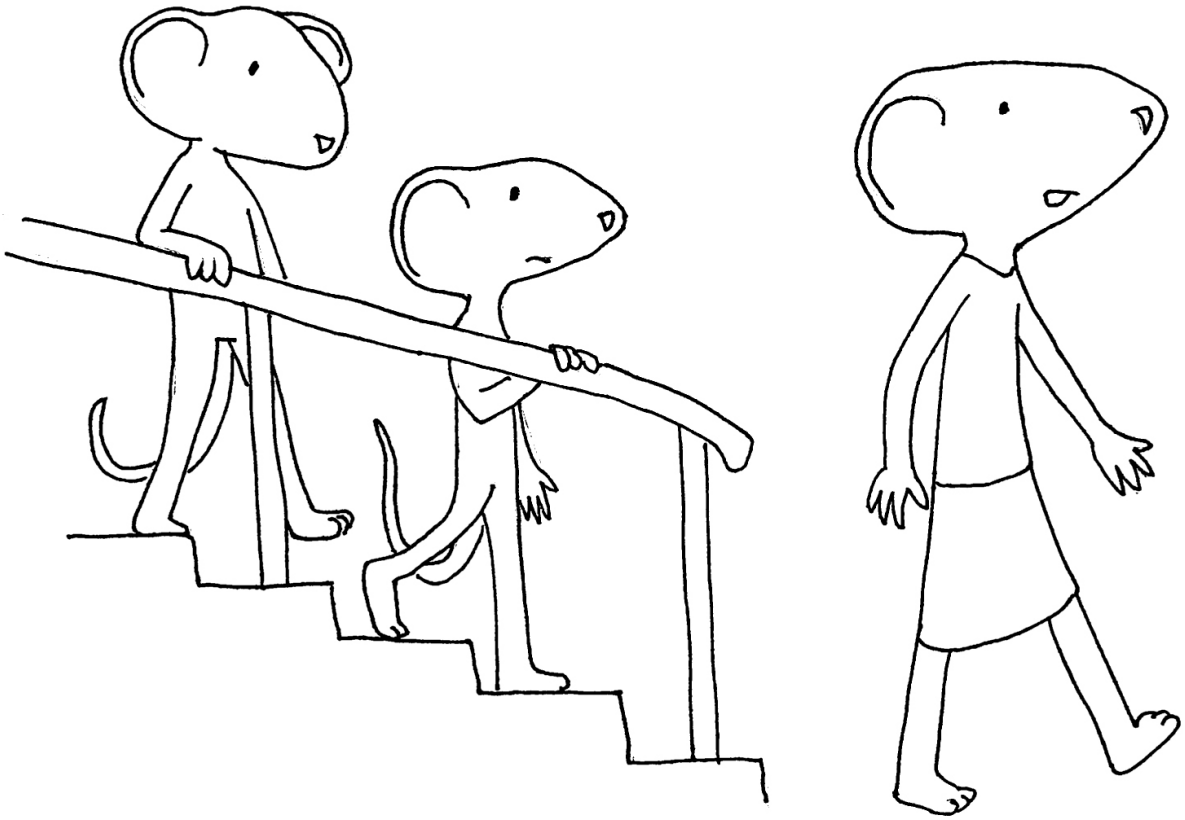
Trinka's mom went upstairs.The tornado was over, but it was sad to see the damage it had done. The windows were broken and the house was topsy-turvy.



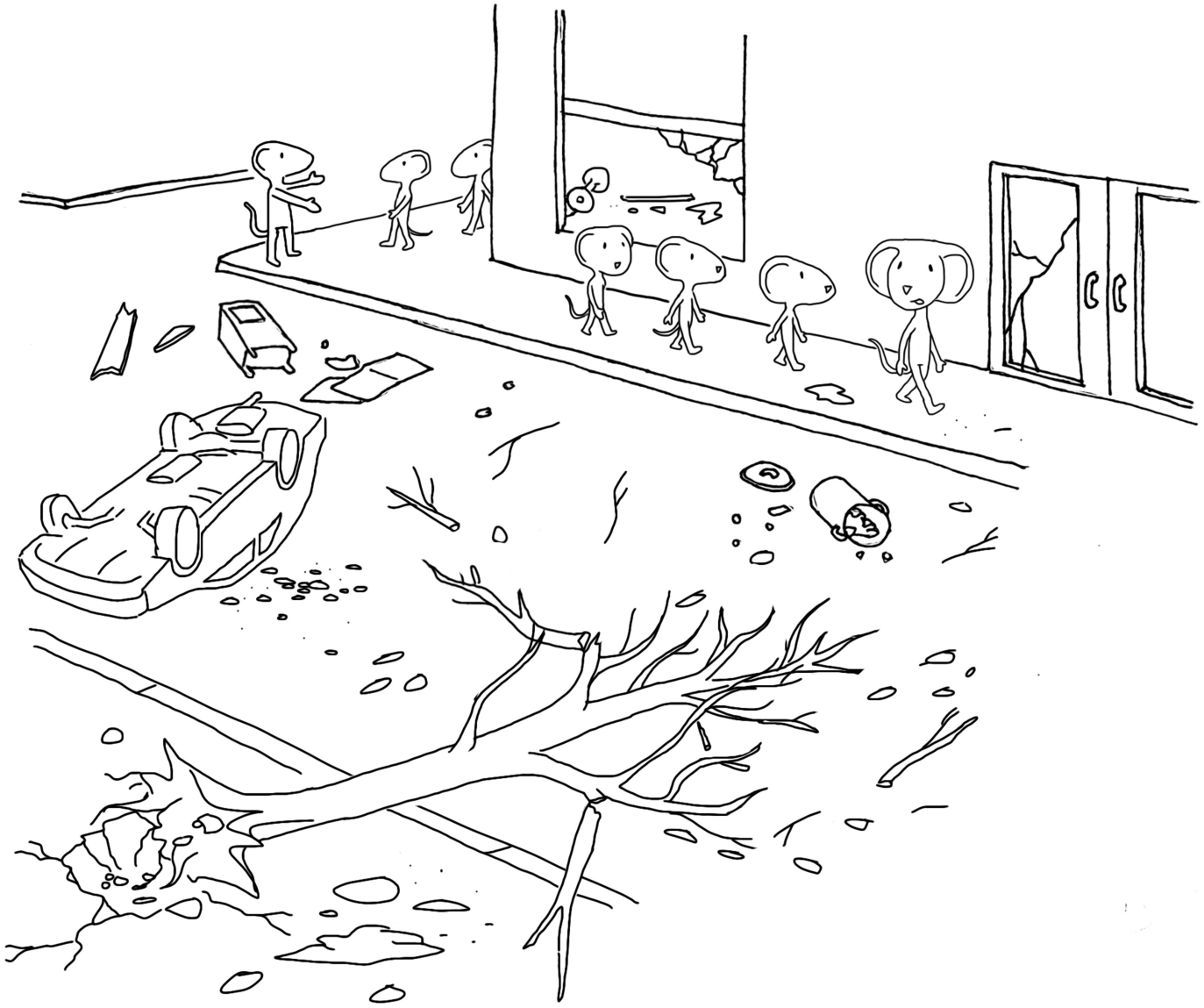
When they looked across the street, they saw that Piplo's house was wrecked. Piplo's family was crying. They were so sad to have lost their house, their toys, and all their belongings, but they were also so glad that everyone was safe.



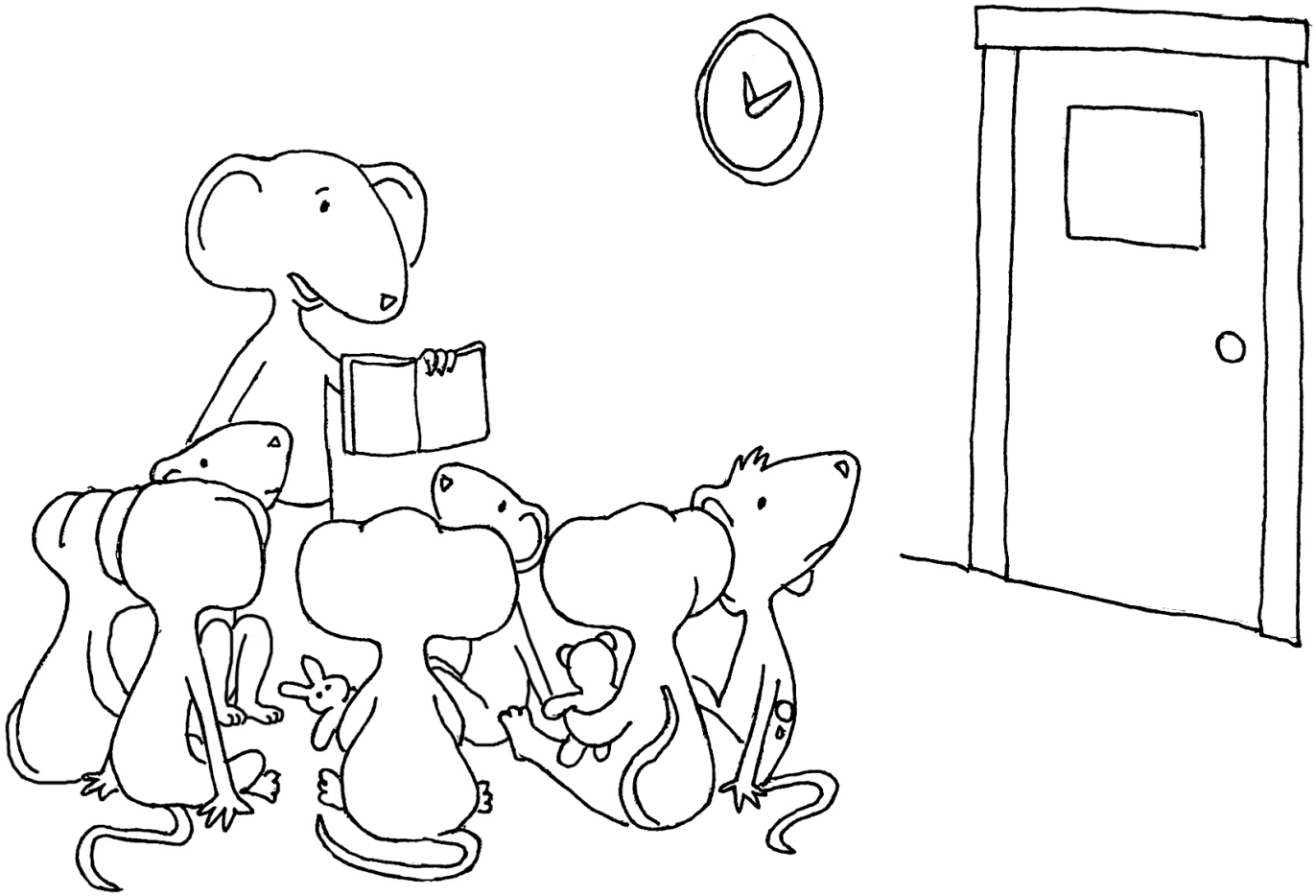
It was very strange that Trinka's house was ok but Piplo's was not, but this is what tornadoes sometimes do. Trinka's mom said that they had just been lucky. Piplo's family could stay with them while they decided what to do.



At school, the teachers said that even though the tornado was over, their building was not safe because it had been hurt by the tornado. They would go down the street to a safer building, and they would wait for their parents there. They lined up like they practiced in the drill and followed their teachers.

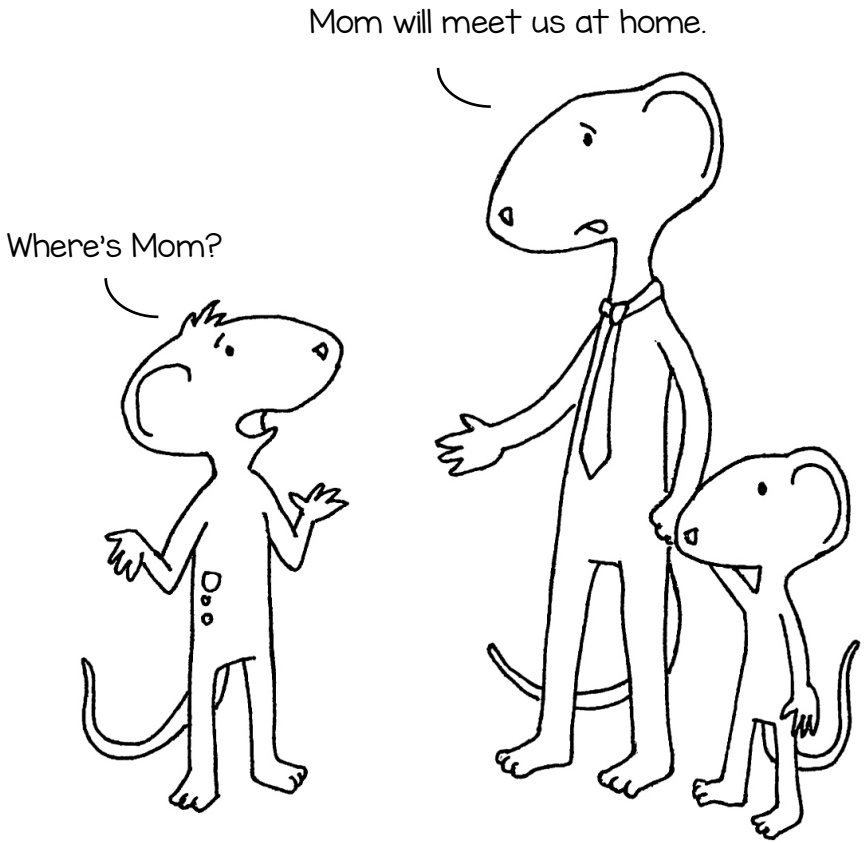


As they walked down the street, Sam saw what the tornado had done. He was mad at the tornado. It had hurt his school and messed up his town.

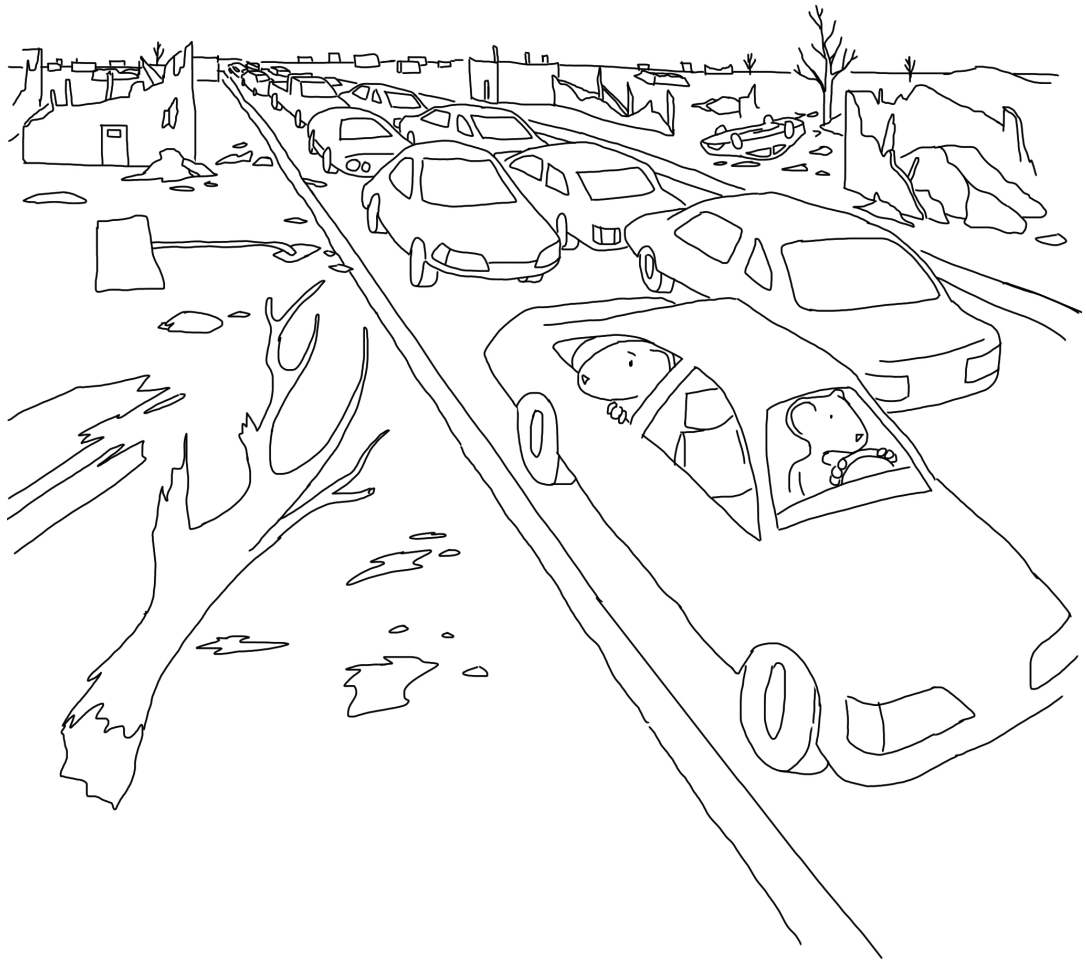


When they got to the other building, they waited for their parents to pick them up. Their teacher said that their parents knew where they were. They sat in a circle and read a story. Sam tried hard to listen. He wanted his mom and dad to come soon. It was hard to wait.

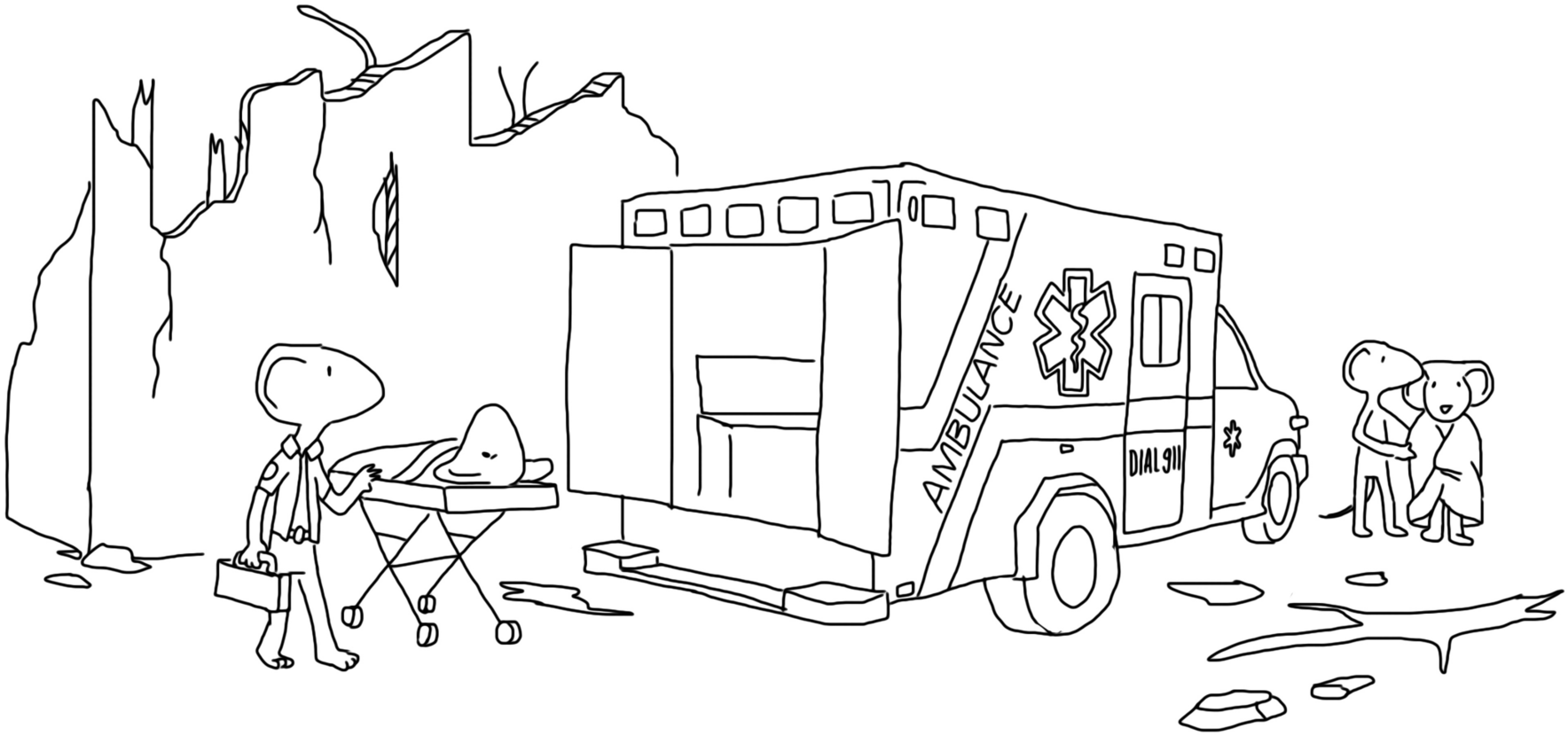
After a long time, Sam's dad came. Sam was mad.



Sam was also worried about his mom. Why wasn't she there?

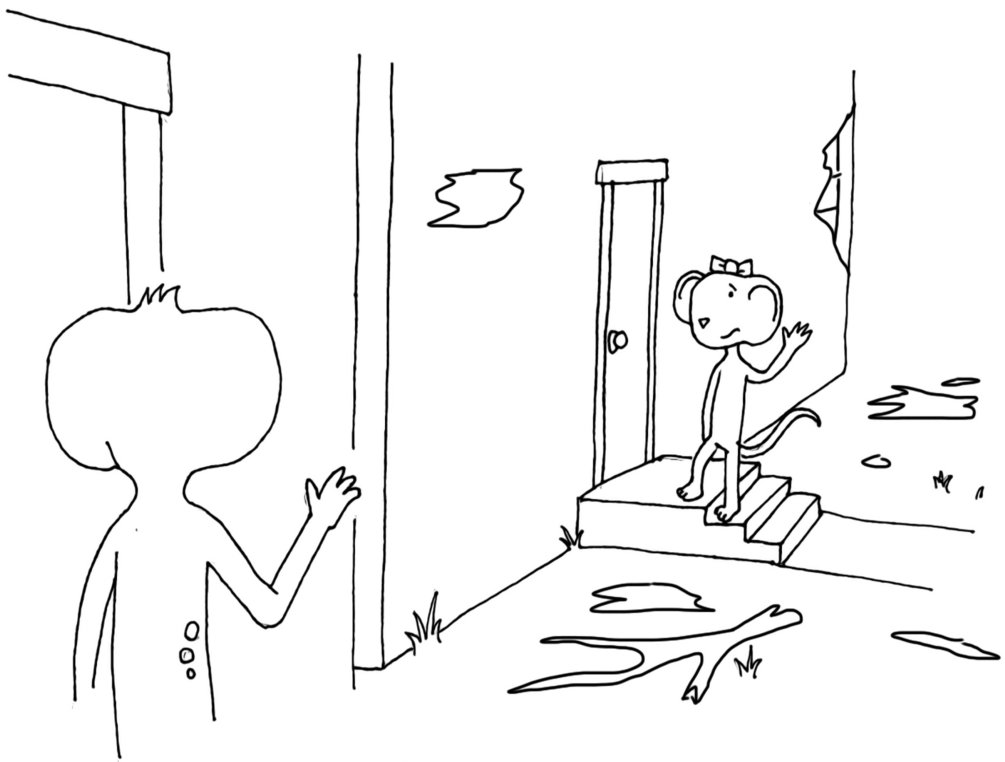


His dad took him home. There was a lot of traffic, and on the way, Sam saw many strange things that the tornado had done. He saw cars turned upside down, strange looking trees with clothing hanging where the leaves should be, and land full of junk where houses once stood.

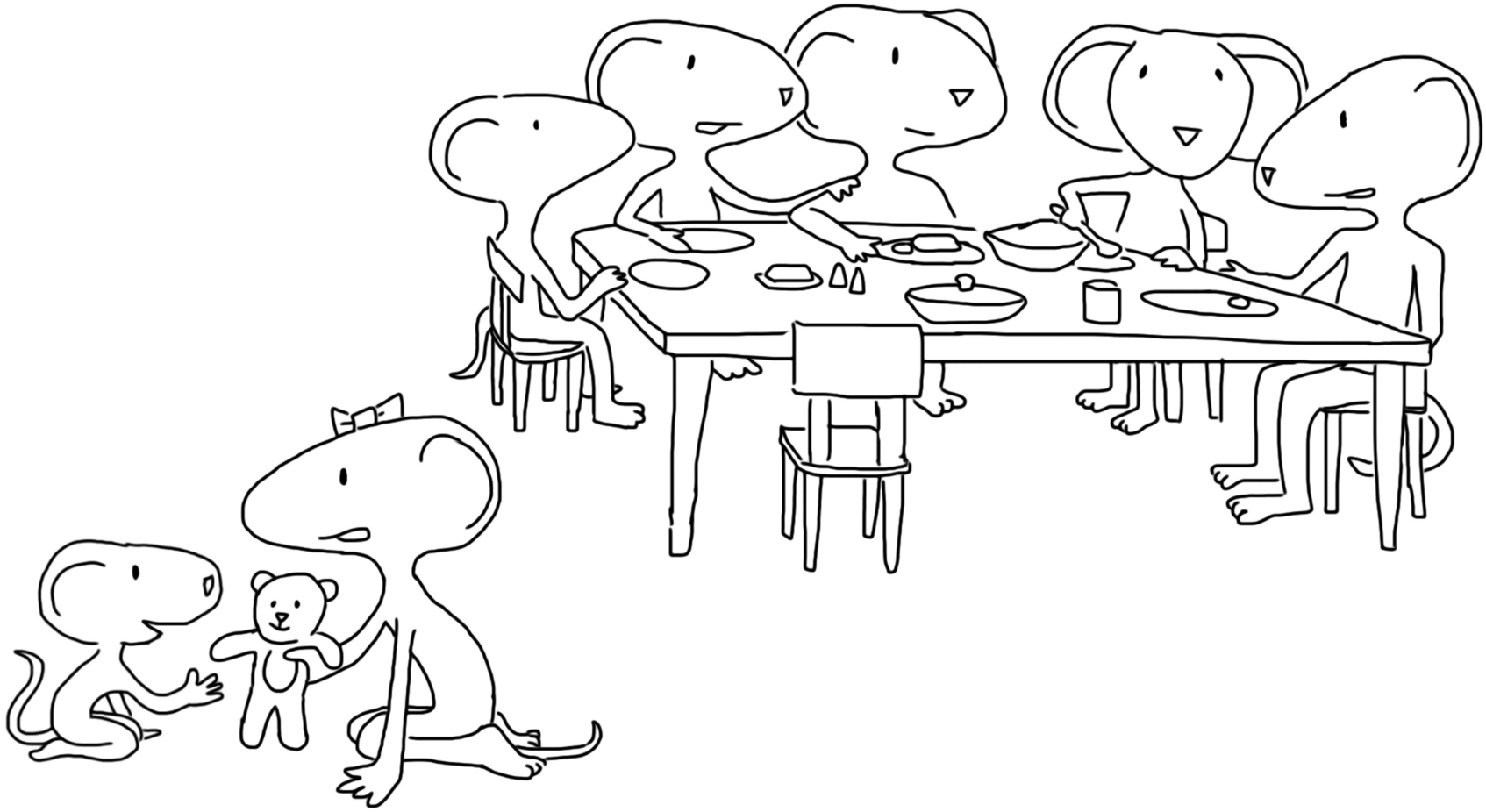


They also saw people who were hurt, and they saw people helping other people.

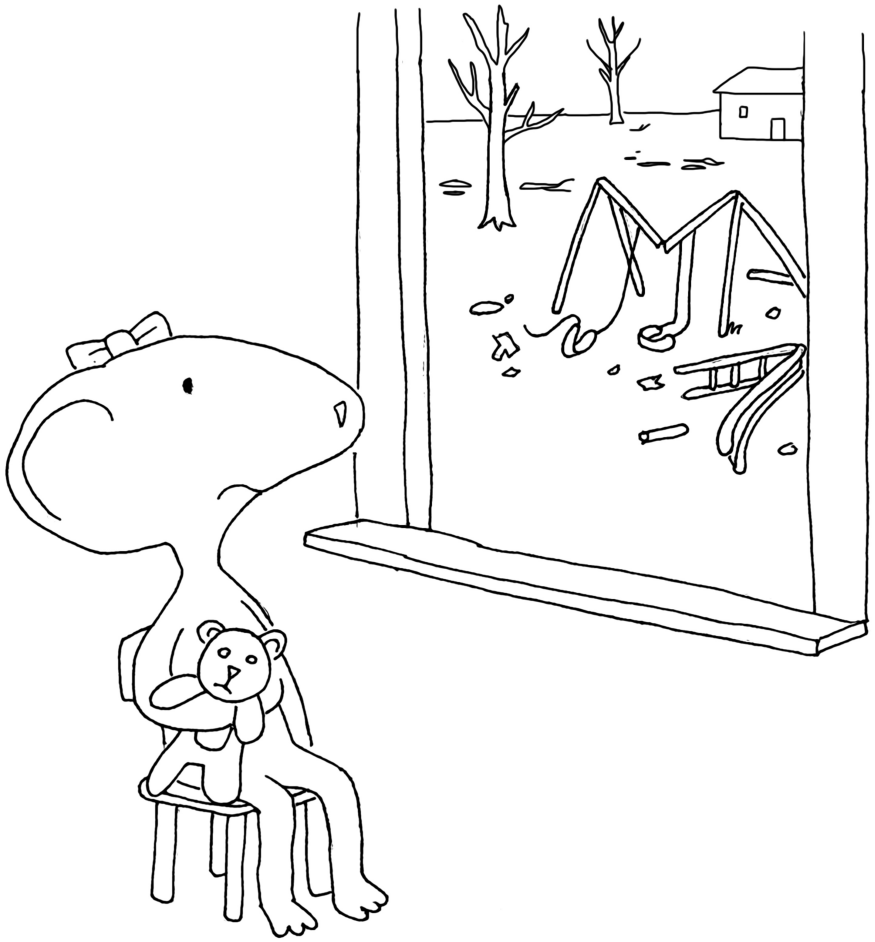
When they got to their house, Sam ran to hug his mom.



Trinka saw Sam and went outside. She was glad he was ok. He was happy to see her too.

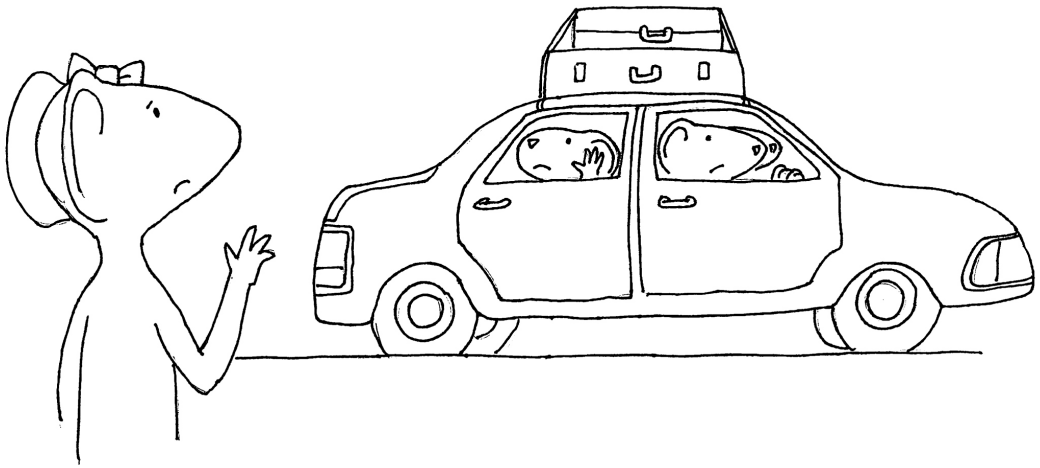


They were both lucky. Their houses were on the side of the street that the tornado barely touched. Their families helped their neighbors. They helped them find some of their things. They gave them hugs. They made sure they had clothes and a place to stay while they figured out what they would do.



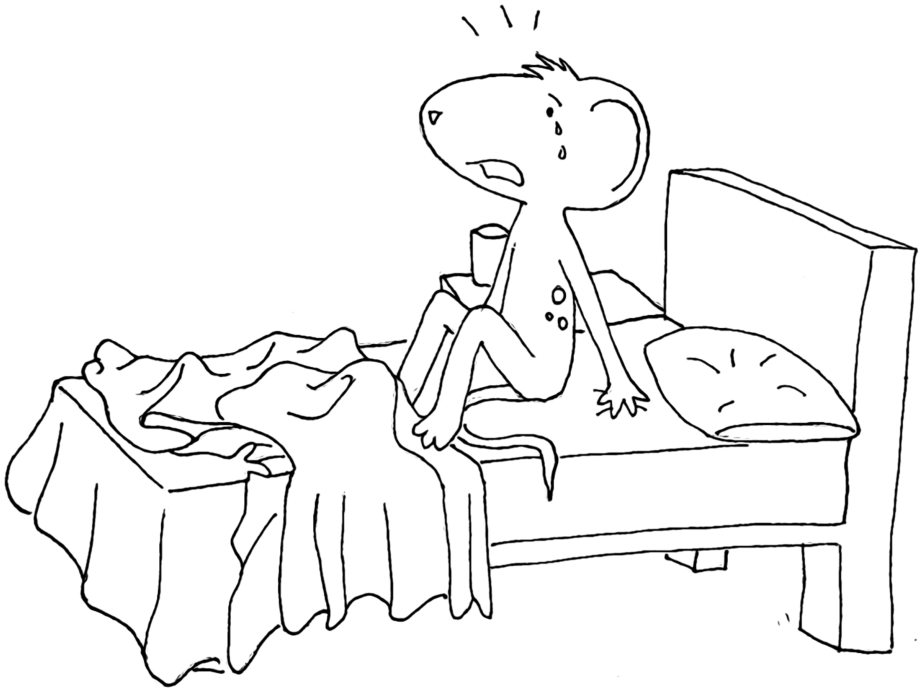
After the tornado, it was hard. The playground was gone.

Some stores they loved closed.

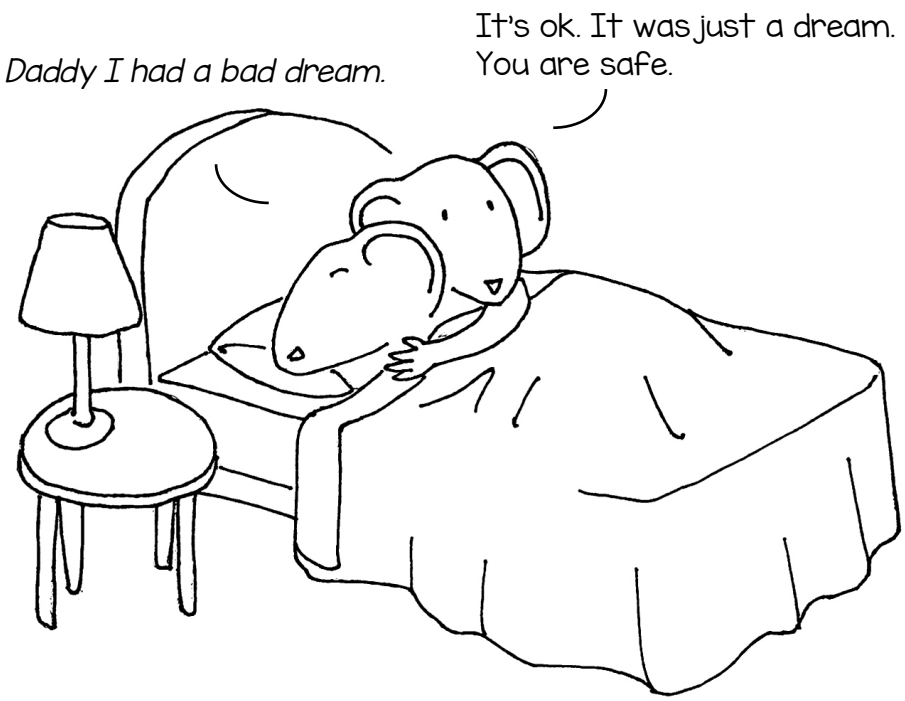


Because Sam's school was damaged, he had to go to another school. Some of his friends went with him, but others went to another school. He missed them.

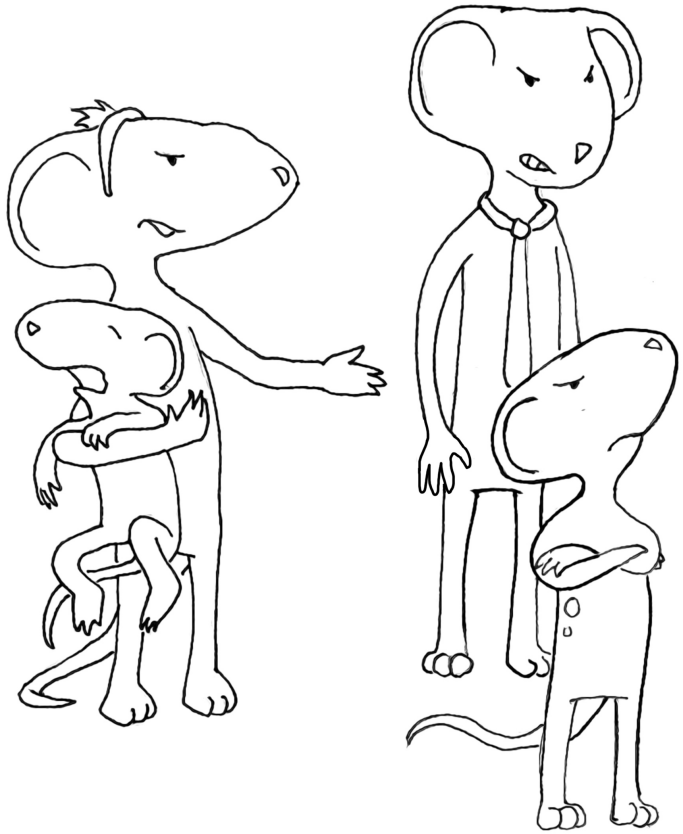
Piplo's family decided to go to the Big City to live with Piplo's grandparents at least for a while. Trinka and Sam missed him.



The tornado was over but life was not the same yet. Sometimes Sam would wake up scared.

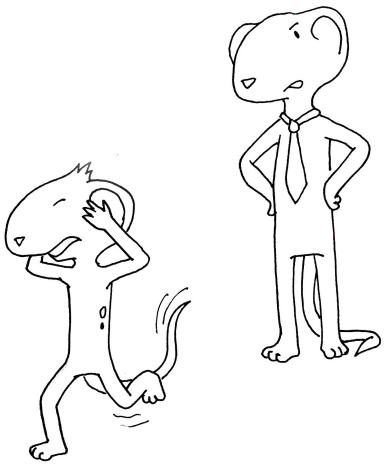


His dad would hug and cuddle him. He knew how scary the tornado had been, and he knew Sam needed a little extra loving right now.

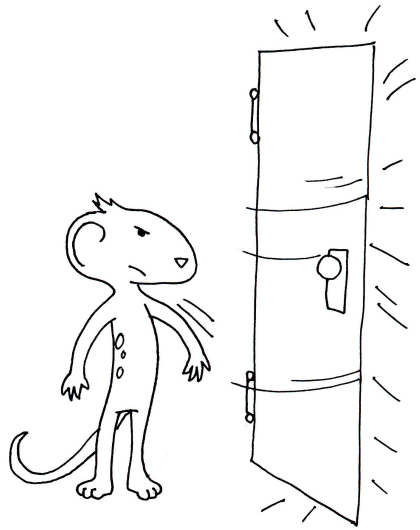


Even with the extra love, Sam did not feel the same. He felt mad. He felt cranky. Sometimes it seemed as though he had a tornado in his belly.

He took his brother's toy.

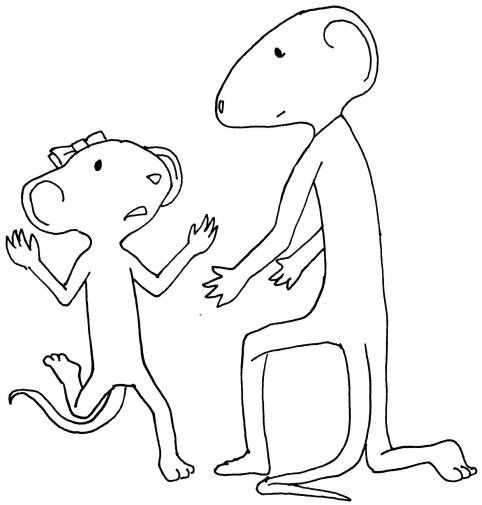


He didn't listen to his daddy.



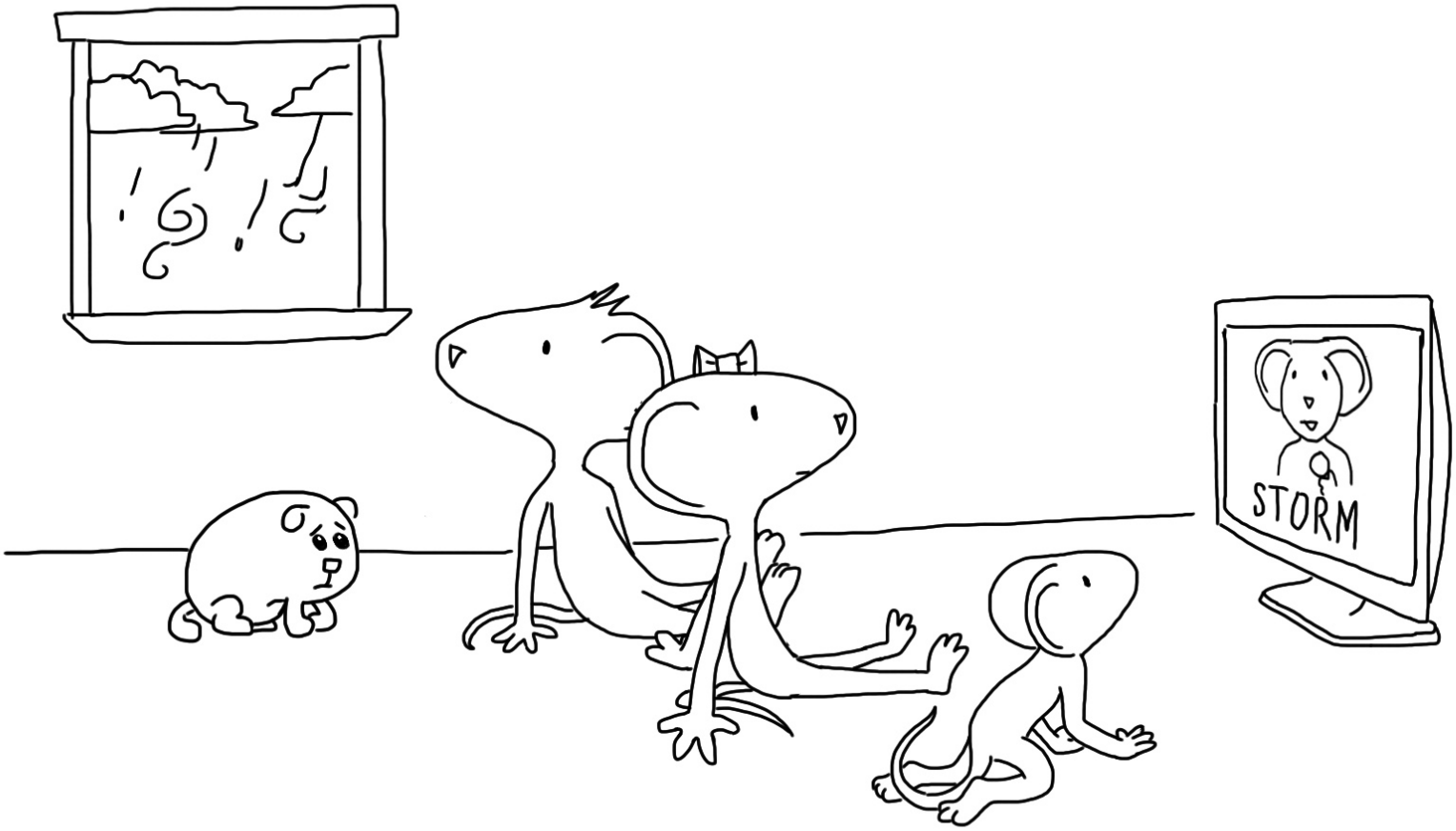
He slammed the door.

He didn't behave right, and he didn't know why.

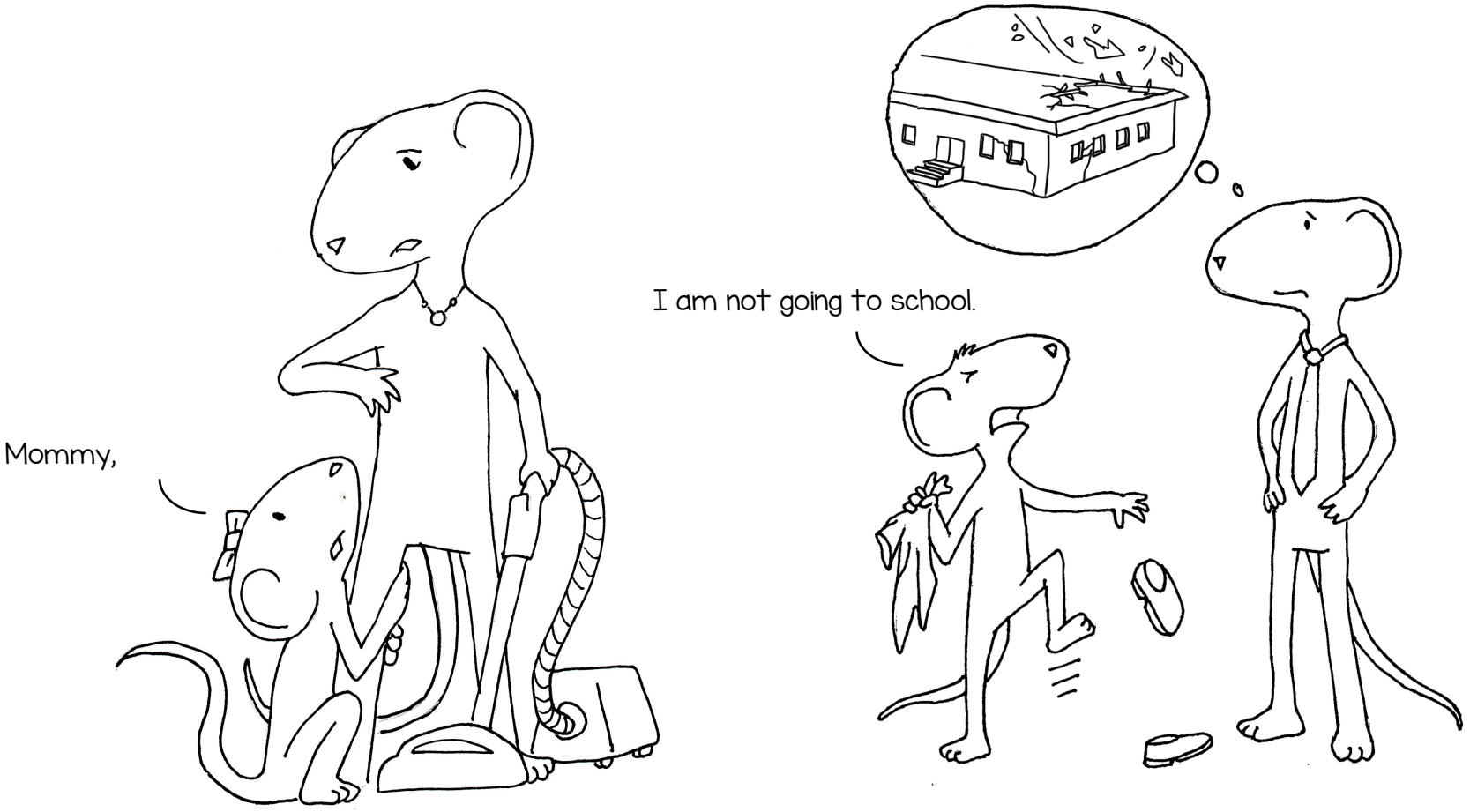


Trinka's mom saw that Trinka was also not the same. She cried more. She got scared a lot. She was afraid to be alone and would cling to her. mom. She didn't like the rain.

She also had problems listening, especially at night. She did not want to go to bed.

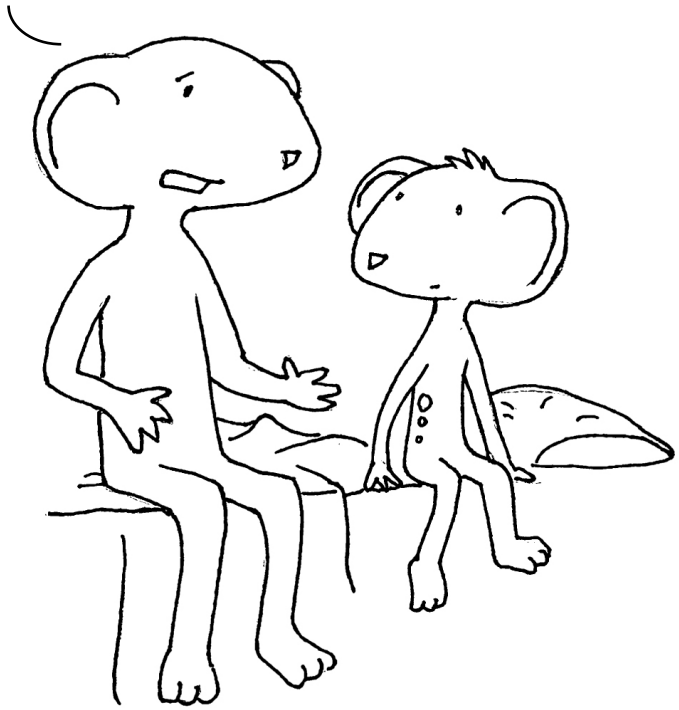


And everyone, even baby Livi and their pet Juju, seemed to notice and get worried when the weather changed and the storm clouds rolled in. They would run and check the news. The weather reporter would say it was just a normal storm, no tornado watch, but the clouds made their stomachs feel like the tornado was inside them.

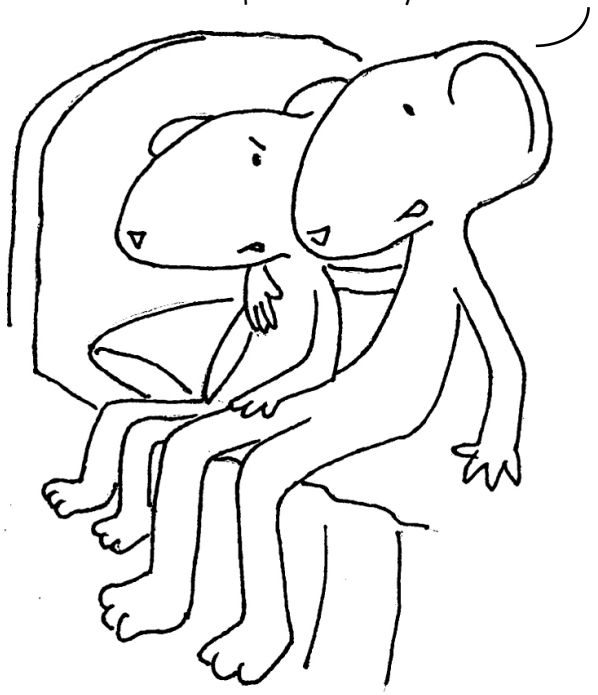


Trinka's mom understood. Sam's dad understood. Even though the tornado was over, it would take a while before Little Town was fixed. It would take time until they all felt calm and safe inside.

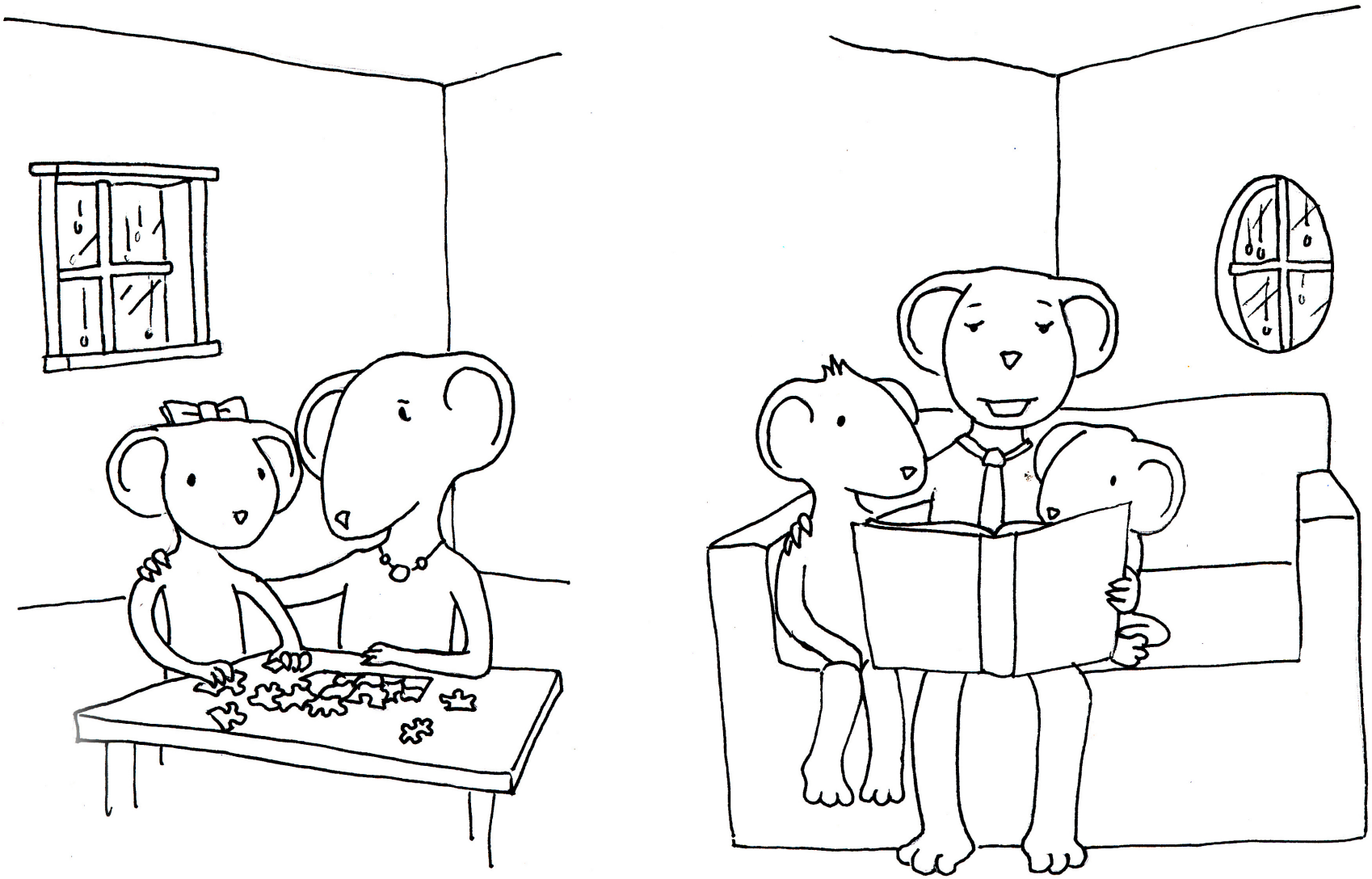
I know it was scary for you at school. I wish I could have been there to hold you and keep you safe.



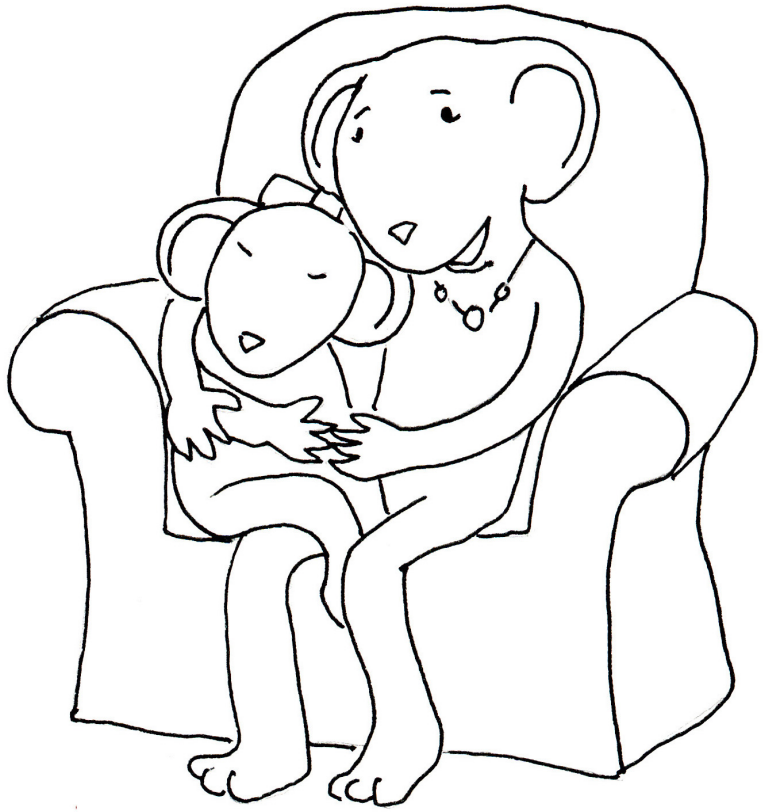
I know you worry about tornadoes. This was a really bad one. Our family had a really good plan, and we followed it. This helped us stay safe.



Sam's dad talked to him. Trinka's mom talked to her. "The tornado was scary. It scared all of us, and there have been so many changes in our lives because of the tornado. It is hard, but we are together."

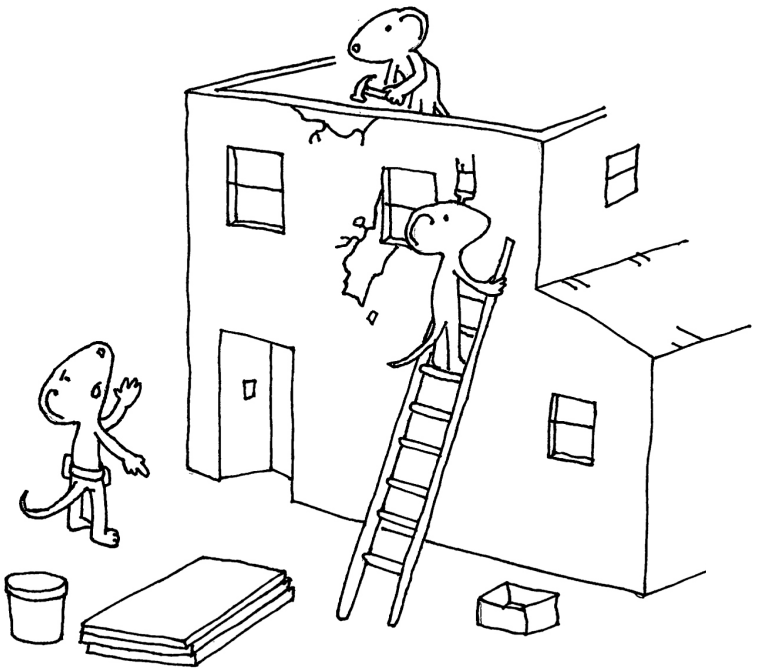


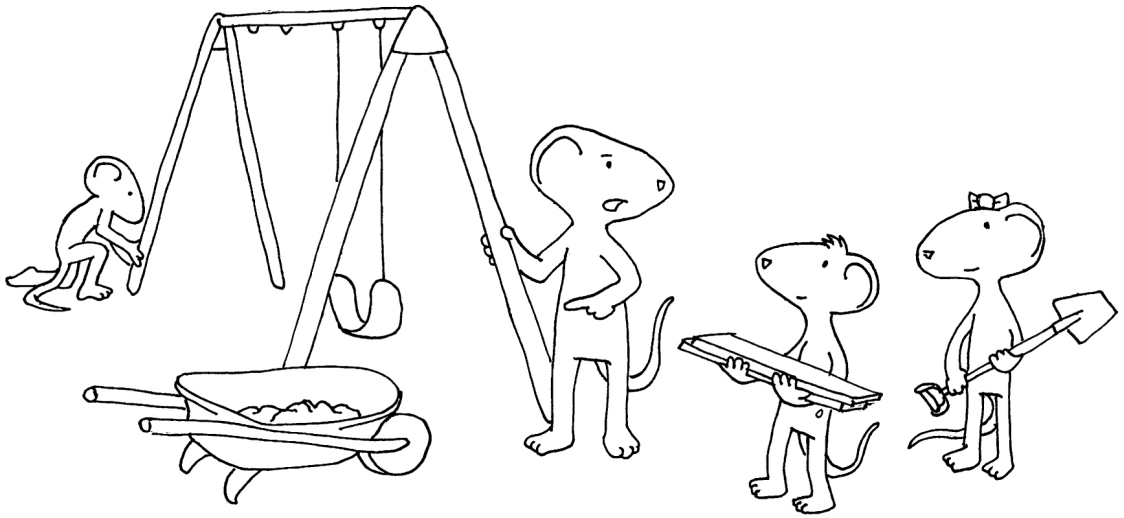
They spent time together as a family. They tried to get back to old routines and to start fun new ones.



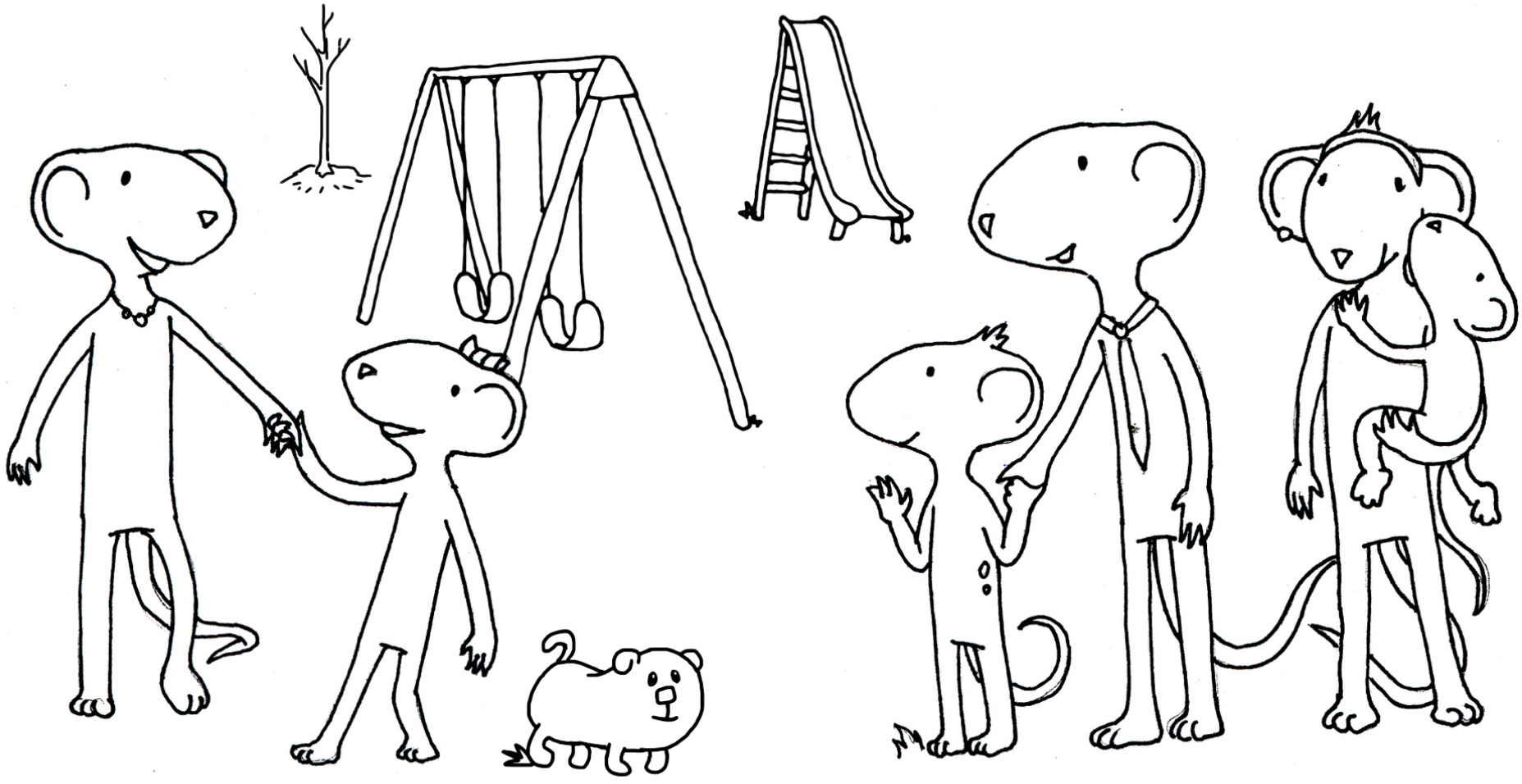
Trinka and Sam often needed hugs and lots of patience, and their parents were there for them.

It would take a while. They would plant new trees and paint the old ones. They would build bird houses.





The school and house would be put back together. They would work together to fix the playground. They would rebuild Little Town.



And eventually they would all go out to play.

My Story

My Story

Parents' Guide

The purpose of the story is to help children who have experienced a tornado learn to deal with their fears and worries. As the story shows, you can help your child by letting your child know s/he is safe and loved.

Ways to Use this Story

1. Read and talk about this book with your child.
    - Follow your child's lead.
    - Some children may want to stop and talk about what's on the page. Let them. This is how they will begin to express how they feel and what they remember.
    - Some children may get worried while reading the book and need to take a break. That's ok. You can say something like "It's hard for me to talk about the tornado too. It is good to take a break."
2. Use it as a coloring book.
    - Coloring is fun and relaxing.
    - Children can use different colors for different feelings. For example, when Sam gets angry, they might color that picture red. When Piplo is sad, they might color that picture blue. When Sam and Trinka are scared, they might choose a color for fear and color "scary" pages with that color. Doing this will help your child begin to think about different feelings.
    - As children are coloring, they often begin to talk about what they are thinking.
    - Some children may want to scribble on the tornado pictures to show how angry they are with the tornado or how much they didn't want this to happen. This is a good way to share feelings.
3. Use it to talk about what happened to your family during the tornado and its aftermath.
    - Stories are important to young children. They help them understand what is happening.
    - When you read the story to your child, s/he will know it is ok to talk about what happened and ask questions.
    - Each family will be impacted differently. Use this time to talk with your children about your family's experience. Give the facts in simple words.
    - If your child saw you get upset, talk about it. It is ok to admit that you were scared or upset. Help your child to see that you are doing better now, that you are strong, and that you will do all you can to keep your family safe.
    - By talking to you, your child may be able to share difficult feelings. When children can talk and don't have to act out their feelings through their behavior, often their behavior improves.
    - To help your child begin to talk, ask him/her what s/he remembers and whether s/he ever feels the way that Trinka and Sam felt. Offer that you felt scared too and be open to answering questions.
    - Sometimes when children are not comfortable or ready to talk about their own feelings, they express themselves by talking about how the characters in the story felt or behaved. If you have noticed similarities between Trinka and Sam's feelings and behaviors and those of your own children, you can direct the conversation to those parts of the story. For example:
        - After the tornado, Sam is mad at his dad because Sam thinks his dad took too long to come and get him. Young children often get upset with their parents and blame them for what happened even when it's not the parents' fault. This is because they believe that parents are so strong and powerful that if they don't do something, it is because they chose not to do it. For Sam, it is important that his dad not react to his anger but recognize that Sam was very scared and needed him. It may help if he talks to Sam about how much he wished he could have been there to hold Sam and keep him safe and how he came as fast as he could.
        - After the tornado, Trinka is more clingy. It is hard for young children to see the aftermath of the tornado and to have their home and toys damaged. Even though she was safe, she may worry about what could happen in the future, especially after she hears and sees what happened in her community. Her mother's reassurance, and knowing her family has a good safety plan helps her.

    - Even Livi, who is a baby, may be affected after the tornado, especially if the tornado results in changes in the family routine or how family members react to different situations.
4. If your children seem scared, angry, or sad, talking about Sam, Trinka, Piplo, Livi, or even Juju's feelings may help your children begin to talk about their own feelings.
5. If your family has a pet, when Juju is introduced into the story, talk about the experiences of your own pet(s).
6. Use the story to begin talking to your children about tornadoes.
    - Young children may have a lot of questions about tornadoes, but because they are little, they may not know how to ask them. Here are some questions they may have.
        - What is a tornado?
        - Why do they happen?
        - Will it happen again?
        - When will it happen?
        - How do I know when a storm will cause a tornado?
        - What will we do if it happens at home, school, or when we are outside?
    - When children have their questions answered, they feel less scared. Even when they are still scared, they know they are not alone. They know that they can talk to you.
    - Here is some information you might share with children to help them understand tornadoes. To start the topic you can say, “It is helpful to know about tornadoes. Here is what I know about them.”
        - Most tornadoes form from thunderstorms, when warm moist air and cool dry air meet.
        - Tornadoes can look like a funnel, a thin rope-like form, or a cone shaped cloud.
        - Tornadoes have winds that can reach up to 300 miles per hour.
        - They are sometimes called twisters.
        - Tornadoes cause damage when it touches down on the ground.
        - Weather radars are used to detect tornadoes and give advanced warning. Sometime tornadoes can touchdown quickly with little warning.
        - Tornadoes can happen at any time of the year. In northern states, peak tornado season is during the summer. In southern states, peak tornado season is from March through May. A few southern states have a second peak time for tornadoes in the fall.
        - Tornadoes most likely occur between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m., but they can happen at any time.
        - Tornadoes come in different strengths.
            - Most are weak and they have a lifetime of 1-10+ minutes and winds less than 110 mph.
            - 29% are strong and they last 20 minutes or longer and winds reach 110-205 mph.
            - Only 2% of all tornadoes are violent and can last over an hour.

Key Points to Remember

- Even after a natural disaster is over, it can continue to affect us.
- Many things may remind you or your child of the tornado.
    - A dark, greenish sky
    - Cloudy days or storm clouds
    - The feeling of “sticky” air on your skin
    - Heavy rainfall
    - The sound of strong wind
    - Loud roars similar to freight trains
    - Large hail
    - Trees with no leaves and broken branches
    - Damaged homes
    - Empty lots where buildings once stood
    - Tornado siren drills
    - Seeing people upset or crying
- Young children often cannot tell us that they are remembering. They show their fear through their behavior. Trinka wants to be picked up. Sam takes his brother’s toy and runs around the house. Some children get stomach aches.
- Children react in different ways. Trinka is scared, and she becomes clingy. Sam is scared, and he acts out.

- In the story, the parents are upset and frustrated by their children's behavior, but they try to understand why their children are behaving this way.
- Even when children are scared, angry, or sad, it is not ok for them to behave aggressively – setting limits for your children will help them feel safe.
- Young children ask the same questions over and over. This is not because they forget what you told them but because this is their way of learning about what happened and how to make sense of it. They need you to answer the same questions over and over, as patiently and lovingly as possible.
- Let your children know that even though scary things may have happened in the past, they are safe now. Remind them of the family plan to keep safe.

Thinking About Your Child

- Has your child acted differently since the tornado?
- What makes your child scared?
- How do you know when your child is scared?
- How does your child tend to behave when stressed or scared?
- What can you and your child do together that will help your child feel better?
- Have you talked to your child's teacher about any changes in his/her behavior at school?

Ways You Can Help Your Children

- Help your children talk with you about what happened.
- Help your children identify feelings they may be having, and let them know it's ok to feel that way.
- Help your children feel safe. Focus on psychological safety (how your children feel) and actual physical safety (what to do if there is another tornado, where they can go that will be safe).
- Young children feel safe when you hold them.
- Children feel safe when they have predictable routines (regular meals, schedules, and consistent rules) and know what is going to happen next.
- Develop or update a family safety plan, so that your children know what will happen if there is another tornado. Include in your plan:
  - Safe places where you can take cover during a tornado.
    - Go to a safe room such as a storm cellar, basement, or the lowest building level.
    - If there is no basement, go to an inside room without windows, like a closet or bathroom.
    - If outside, go into a building. If there is no shelter, find a ditch or low area and lie down.
    - Stay away from windows, corners, or outside walls.
    - Crouch down on your knees and protect your head with your arms. Go underneath sturdy furniture or cover yourself with a blanket/cushion if you can.
  - An emergency supplies kit.
  - A battery operated or wind up radio to monitor storm updates.
  - Flashlights, helmets, and sturdy shoes in the designated safe place areas.

Ways You Can Help Yourself

- Adults can also be affected by natural disasters. You may be scared, and you may feel sad, angry, or guilty about all that has happened.
- In order to best help your children, you need to take care of yourself. Children, even very little children, notice when the grown-ups around them are not doing well.
- The first step to taking care of yourself is taking time for yourself. Ask yourself. . .
  - Does thinking about the tornado and its aftermath keep me from being able to do what I want or need to do?
  - Am I trying to completely avoid thinking about the disaster?
  - Do I feel anxious, distracted, or irritable?
  - Do I feel very sad or depressed?
  - Could my attempts to cope cause me problems later? Am I ignoring things I need to do or doing things that are not good for me?
  - What good things am I doing?
- If you notice that you are having strong reactions to the disaster:

    - Talk to friends or family members.
    - Take time for yourself and do things that you enjoy.
    - Stay healthy. Eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep.
    - Allow yourself to feel sadness and grief.
    - Try to return to a normal routine.
    - If you feel very overwhelmed, try to take small steps to deal with large problems.
- Many adults feel guilty about focusing on or taking care of themselves, but remember your children feel happiest when they know that you are ok.

Additional Resources

- NCTSN.org – information about children, tornadoes, and trauma:
- FEMA – Tornado information for children
- Mocomi Kids: What is a tornado? Facts and information
- Science Kids: Tornado facts for kids
- Sesame Street – *Let's Get Ready! Planning Together for Emergencies* with tips, activities, and other tools to help the whole family prepare for emergencies (both in English and Spanish)
- Redcross.org - Tornado safety tips – information about how to prepare, respond during, and recover after a tornado
- WeatherWizKids.com – information about tornadoes for school-age child
- Zerotothree.org – information about young children and early childhood development