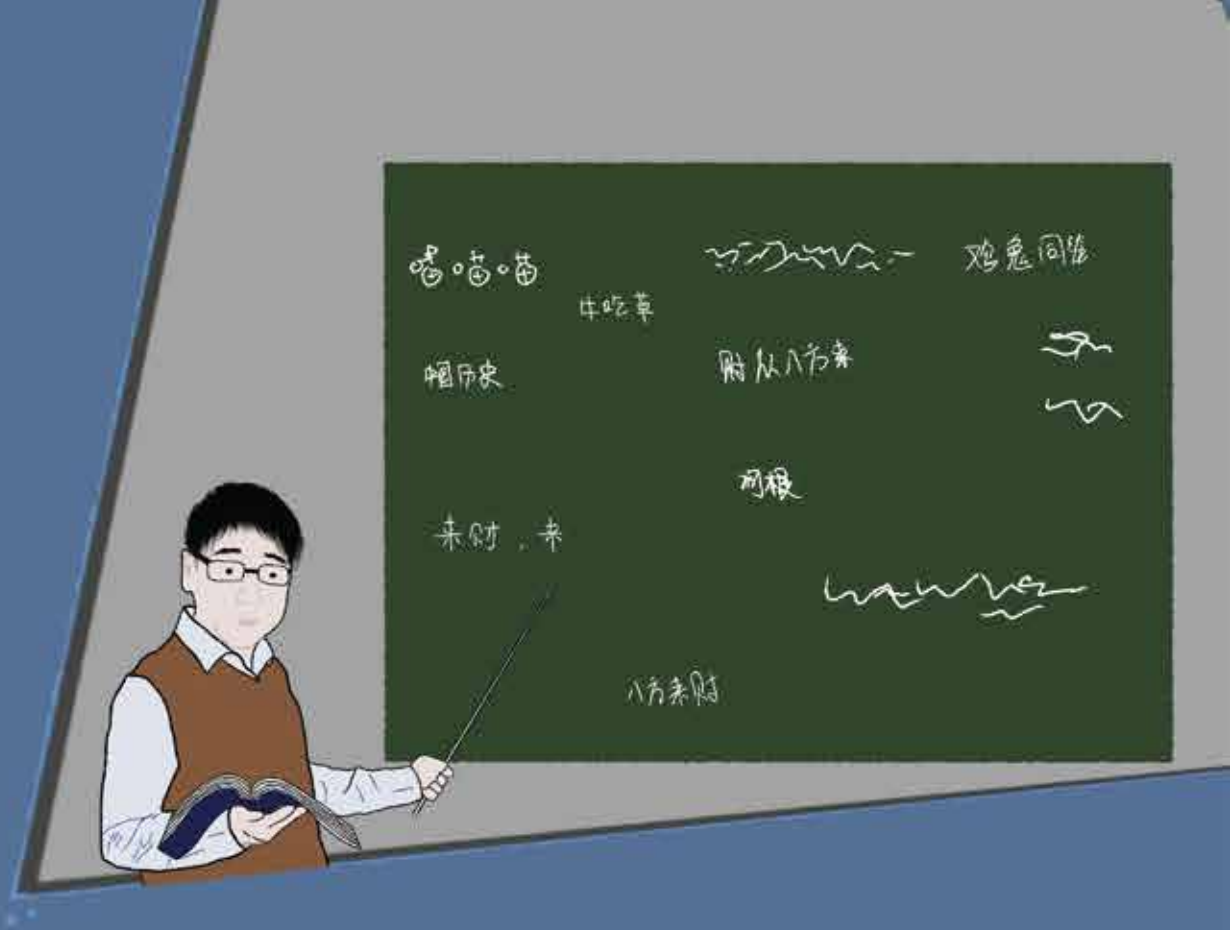


# Learning to Breathe



He's obsessed  
with teaching...



My father is a respected doctor.

A university professor.

He believes that,  
my sister and I  
than other kids



with his methods,  
would be far smarter  
our age.

A man who never gets questioned...

Starting in kindergarten, his belief



turned into a strict routine – two hours of

teaching every day, usually during lunch and

dinner. He even installed a blackboard in front

of our dining table. It became the most unbearable

part of every single day.



After every lesson, he'd ask if it was useful.

If it was fun. We always said yes.

I said yes for years.



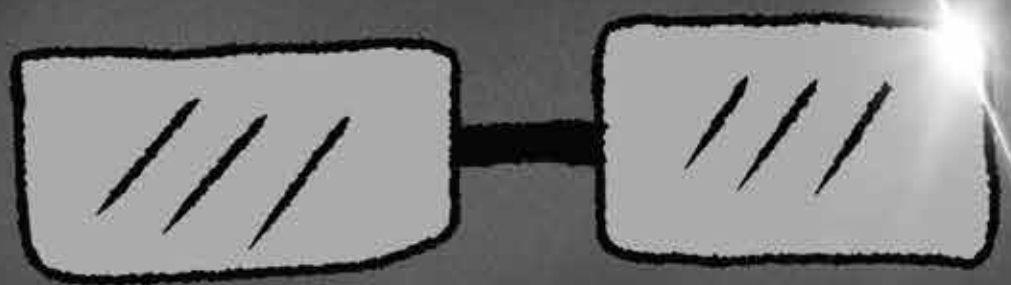


I learned to yawn without  
opening my mouth.

Yawning meant boredom.

Boredom meant I wasn't  
paying attention.

And if I wasn't paying  
attention, I didn't deserve to sit.



He made me  
do squats.

'Squats clear

the mind,'

he'd say.

'Exercise will  
wake you up.'



My father believed it was time

we learned independence.

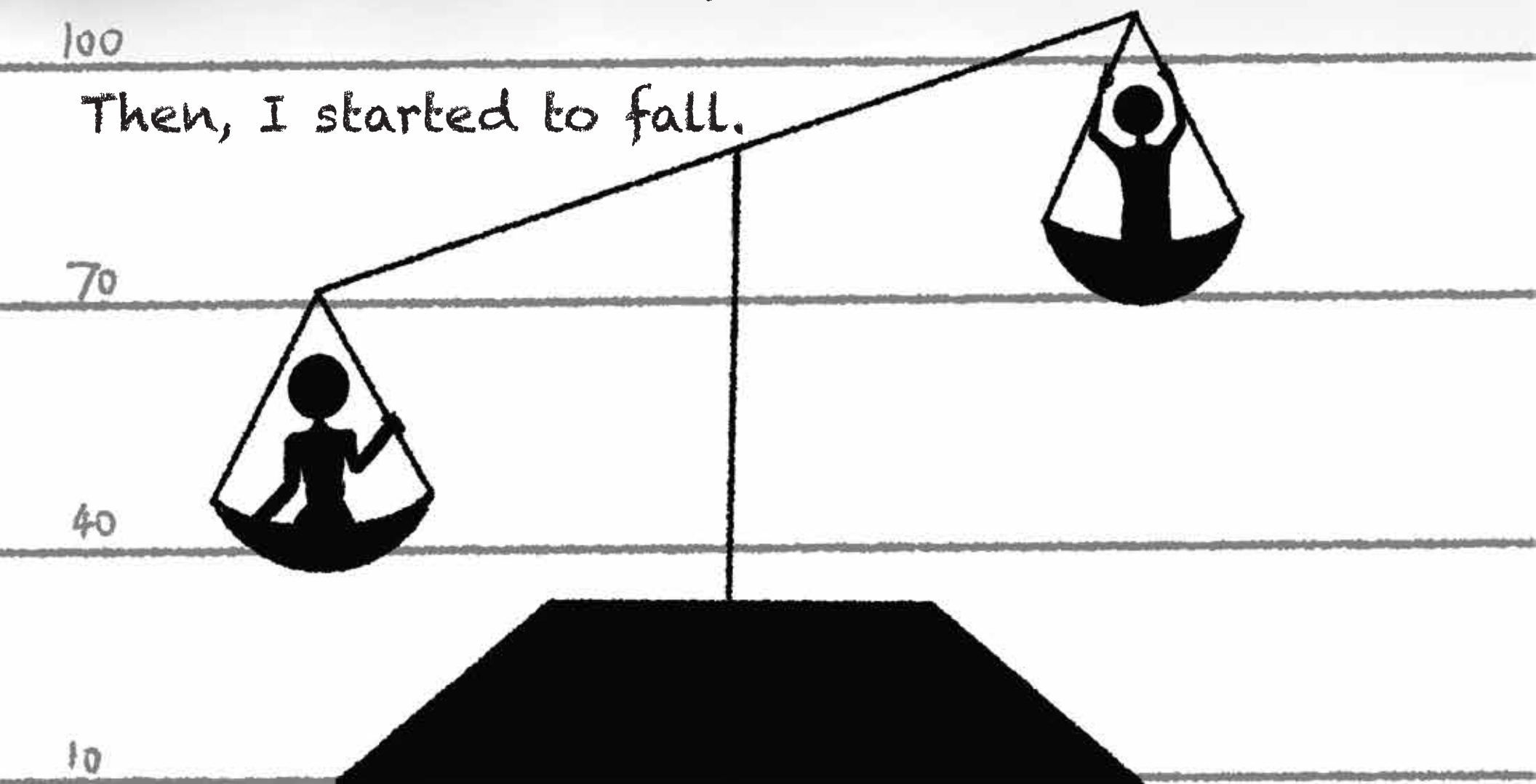


So he sent us to a residential middle school.

When I got there,

I ranked 14th in the entire school.

Then, I started to fall.





I moved when spoken to.  
stood still when I was alone.  
Just a puppet waiting for someone  
to pull the strings.

My teacher didn't like that I had male friends.

She said good girls don't waste time.

Good girls don't get distracted.

I don't remember much from that time.

I buried it.

But later, my mom told me—

my teacher once ordered  
my roommates to lock me in dorm.

To keep me from seeing  
my best friend.

He had the highest  
grades in school.

She said I'd ruin him...

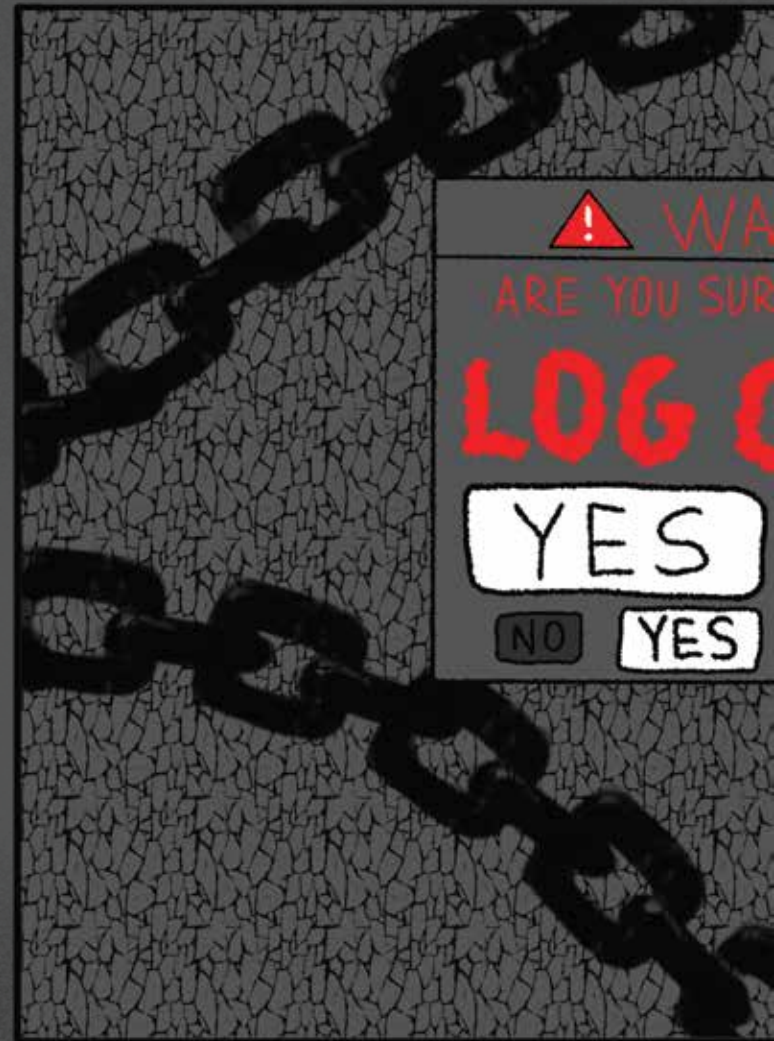




# There was no

"You and your sister share  
the same genes.

So why aren't your grades  
the same?"



Not at school.

Not at home.

Nowhere.





room for me.



My mom, my dad, my teachers

Everyone said it—

'Learn from your sister.'

'Work harder.'

'Pressure makes progress.'



I didn't feel safe.

I didn't feel  
anything at all.

I didn't feel  
like I belonged.



That's when my mom noticed.  
We talked – really talked –  
for the first time in a long time.



My dad knew everything.

He knew I wanted to leave this world.

And still, he said I needed more pressure.

That pressure would make me stronger.



I told her everything.

What I thought. What I felt.

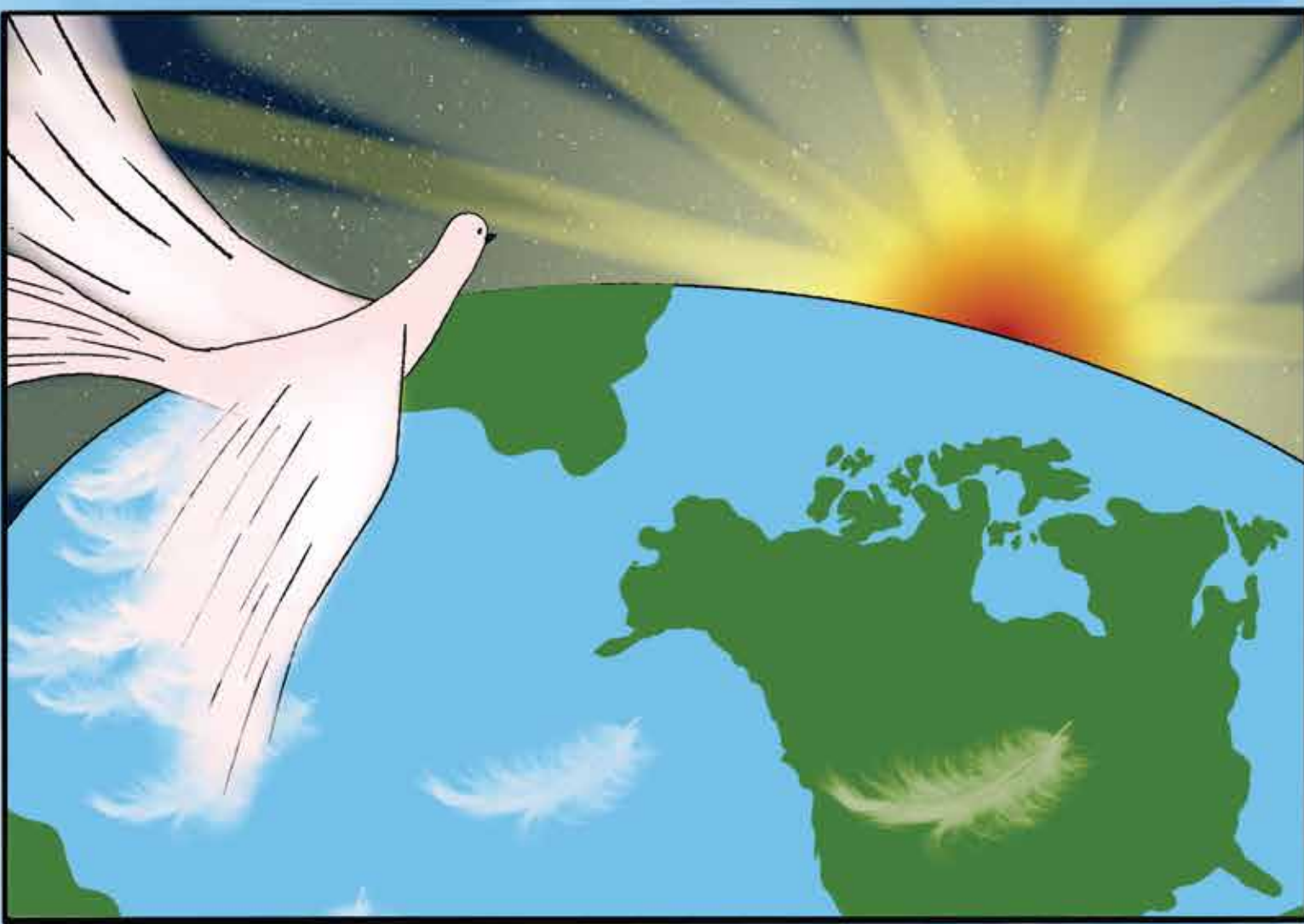
Why I want to "quit" this world.



Every time he argued with my mom—  
every time she tried to protect me—

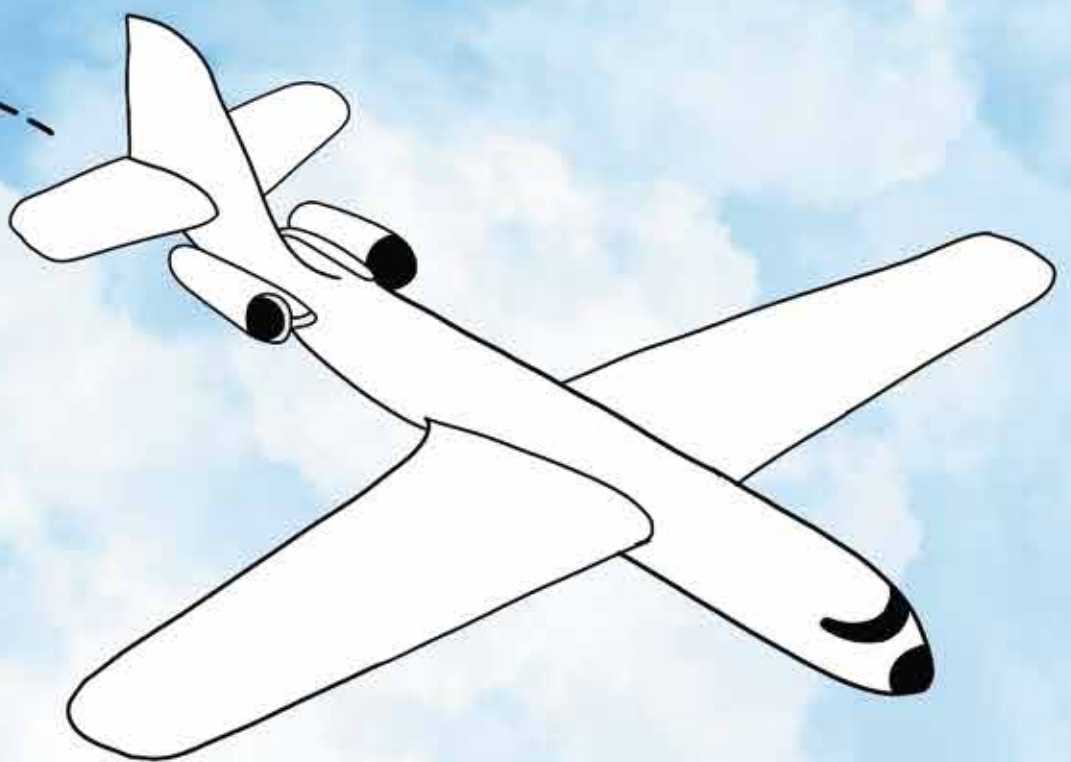
I sat there, silent. I already knew what he would say.  
But still — the tears came on their own.





When I arrived in Canada,  
things began to change.

I was finally far from my father.  
School felt lighter. People felt kinder.



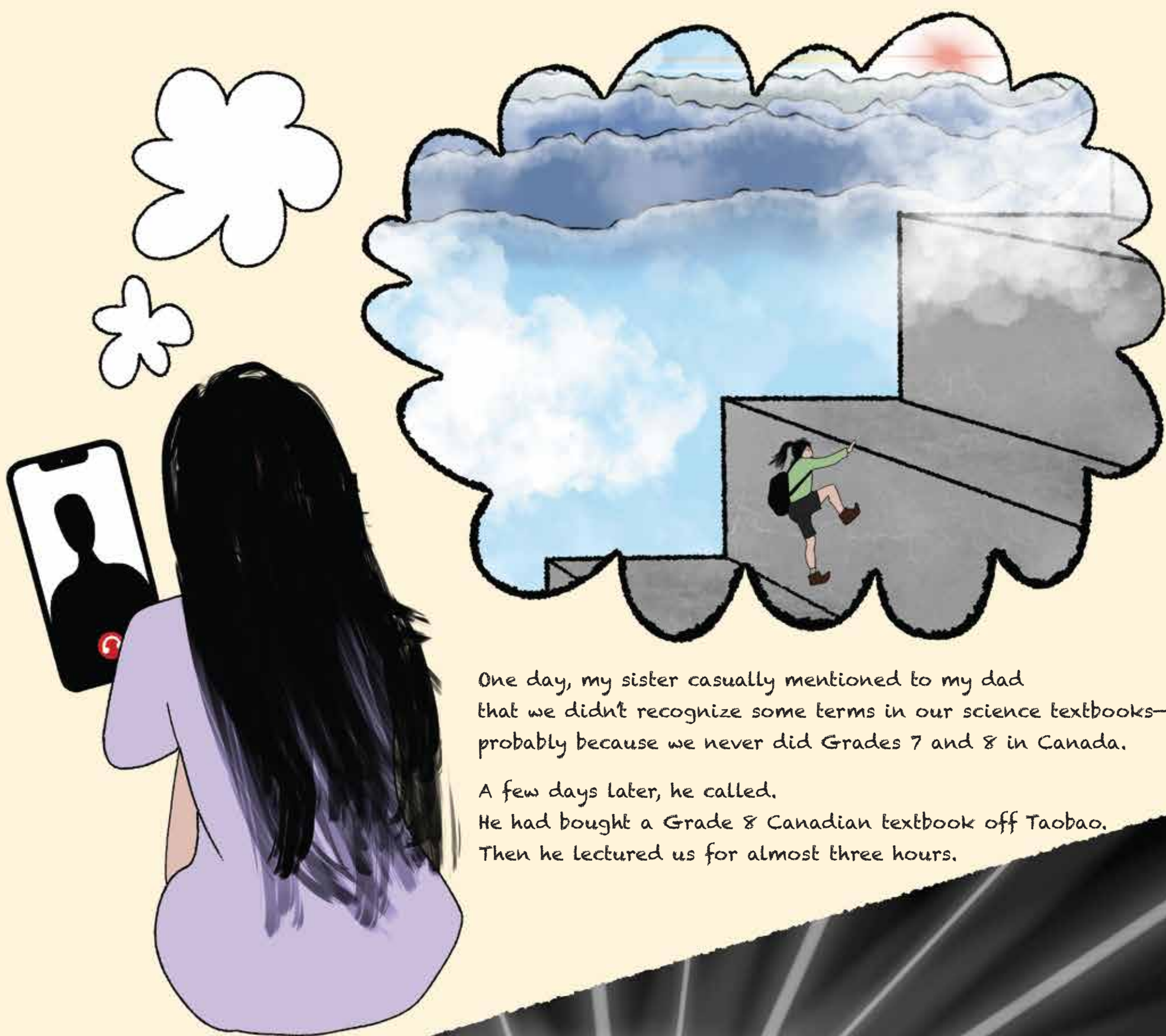


For the first time in years,  
I could feel again.



I had space to breathe.  
To care about things.  
To like things.  
To be me.





One day, my sister casually mentioned to my dad that we didn't recognize some terms in our science textbooks—probably because we never did Grades 7 and 8 in Canada.

A few days later, he called. He had bought a Grade 8 Canadian textbook off Taobao. Then he lectured us for almost three hours.

"Kids,  
give me two hours a day  
for three months.  
I'll teach you everything  
from Grades 7 and 8."



Once you've  
tasted freedom,

you can't bare  
the darkness anymore.



For the first time in my life,  
I said what I really felt.

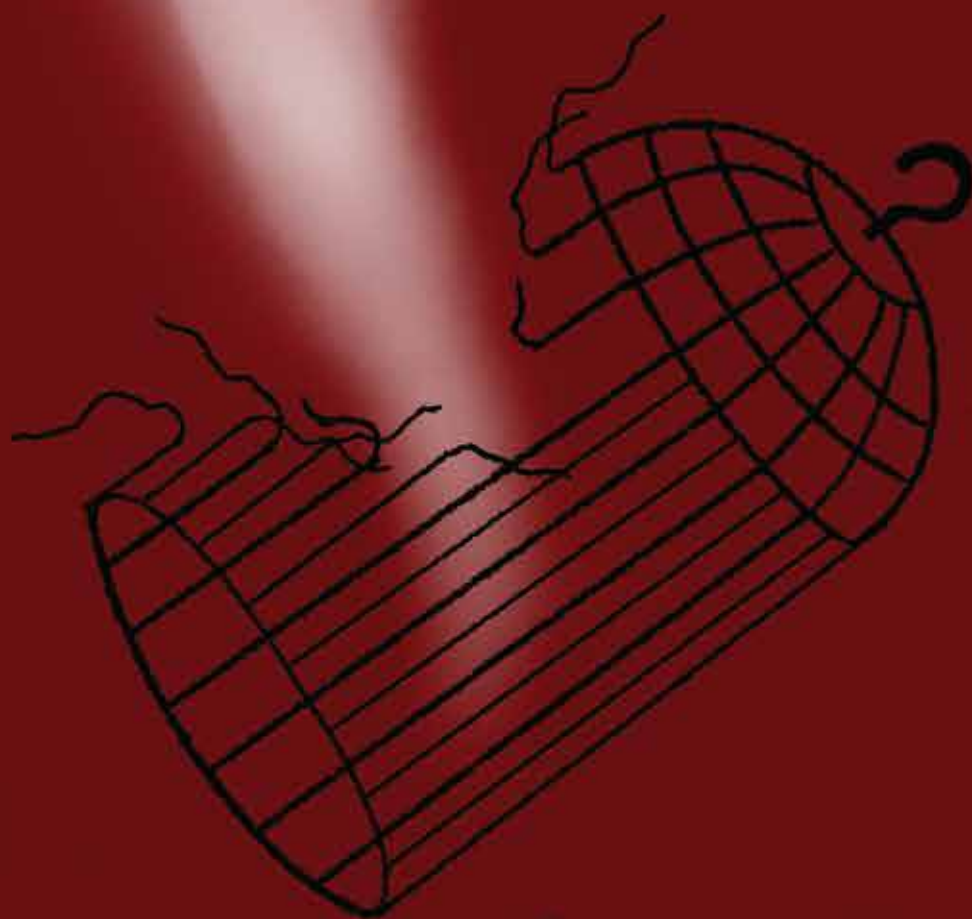
I screamed at him –

Why did you give  
birth to me?

Why didn't you  
strangle me when  
I was born?

Why did you let me live?

He didn't call for  
two days. When he  
finally did, he said  
nothing about it.







came to Canada—  
he never tried to force me again.

After that, even when he





