



Diary of a lively Labrador

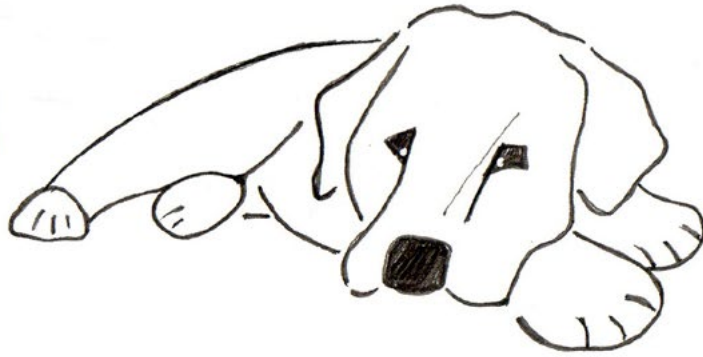
Story by Ruth Merttens
Illustrated by Jackie Abey

MONDAY

Today was a boring day.

Well, to be truthful, my owner is really boring! I call her the Princess. She calls me 'Boof-Head'. But there is nothing royal about her and nothing of the 'Boof-Head' about me.

SO
bored



Well, it is no wonder I get bored...

All the Princess does all day is type – tap, tap, tap, at the old word-processor. She's a writer, you see.



Today I was SO bored that I almost ate my own tail. In the end, I chewed up one of the Princess's slippers and that definitely got her attention!

delicious
slipper!

In the afternoon we went for a walk.



I was SO excited to be doing something at last, that I ran off with the ball she was throwing and didn't come back. Then, when she was really mad at me,

I came back.



We walked together for a while.

But just as she was beginning to like me again, I bounced all over the friends we met and put muddy footprints all over their clothes.

That was not a popular move...!



We returned home in silence.



TUESDAY

Another boring day.

There sat the Princess, tap, tap, tap, and there was me,
bored out of my skull.

To be fair, the Princess does always walk me first thing in the morning.
But this particular morning, I was in disgrace for bouncing.
First I jumped up at the postwoman – I like her!



Then I...

And last of all, I jumped all over the next-door neighbour as she was
taking her little son to school. Unfortunately, he fell over – not my fault!

That was when the Princess got mad at me
and shut me in the toilet.

Whoops

Me and



My friend
Rover



The walk this afternoon was BORING because the Princess
kept me on the lead so I couldn't run or jump.

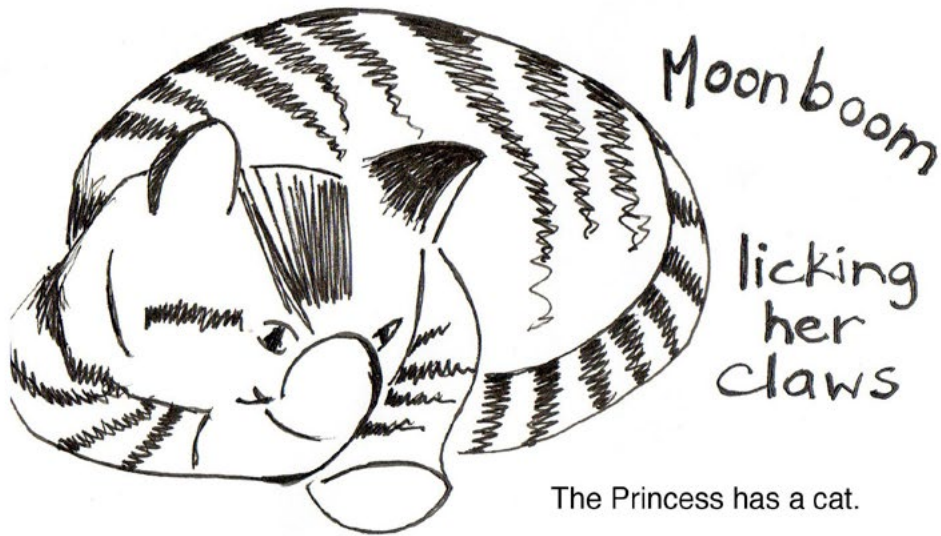
She let me off just as we came towards the house and I ran
over to say hello to my friend, Rover, and we ran round and
round the street – which of course, annoyed the Princess a lot!

So I was firmly put back on my lead.

Sigh

WEDNESDAY

This morning I bounced all over the post-woman but NOT the milkman, so quite good really! But the Princess still put me on the lead this afternoon. Which annoyed me!



Her name is Moonboom, and mostly we live side-by-side and ignore each other. To tell you the truth, Moonboom is rather fierce and I am quite scared of her. I have often tried to get her to play and she always responds by hitting me on the nose with her paw – and believe me, she has sharp claws, that cat!

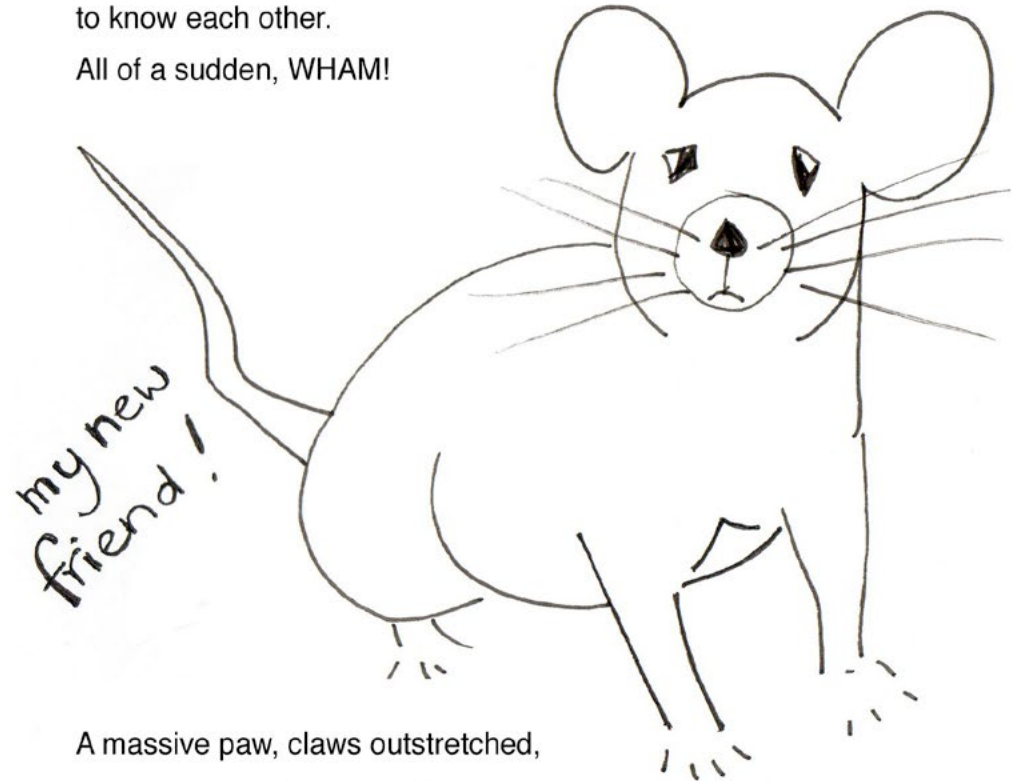
But today we had a real argument.

I was lying on my mat, my nose on my paws, when a little mouse came running along and stopped in front of me.

He was grey-brown, with long whiskers and a cheeky grin.

We were enjoying each other's company, chatting away and getting to know each other.

All of a sudden, WHAM!



He threw me a terrified glance, and scuttled back along the wall disappearing into a small hole under the skirting board.

I was NOT impressed with how Moonboom had treated my friend and I growled at her angrily. "Grrrrr!"

She hissed fiercely, arching her back and showing her claws so I decided to lie back down. I didn't want a scratched nose – it hurts!

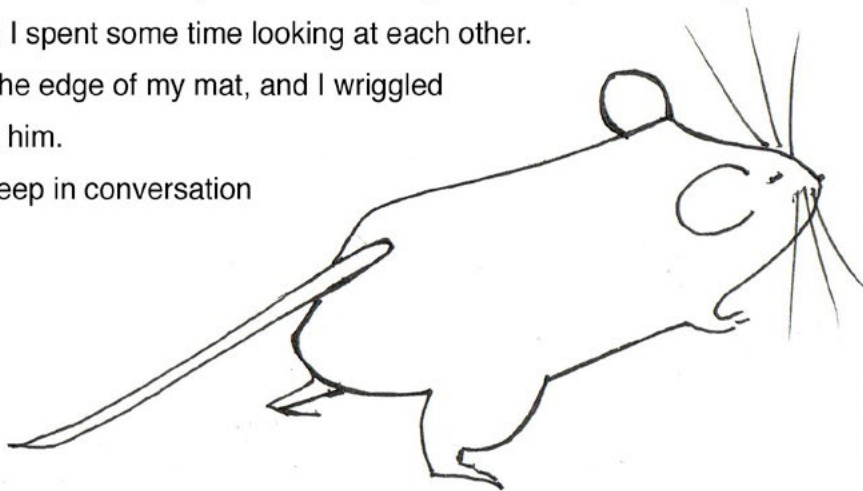
THURSDAY

Bounced all over the milkman but not the postwoman.

The Princess was not too cross,
so I have not been put
on the lead.



My friend the mouse came back. Happily, this time,
Moonboom was fast asleep in her favourite place on top of the fridge.
Mouse and I spent some time looking at each other.
He sat on the edge of my mat, and I wriggled
my nose at him.
We were deep in conversation
when....



"Aaargh!"

A terrible scream
rang out.

The Princess
stood there horrified.

"A mouse!
Yuk!
Get rid of it!
Kill it!"



I was most offended.

How would she feel if I treated her friends like that? She moans
enough if I jump up at them – which is, after all, just being friendly.

How could she scream at my new friend?



I have to say, Mouse
did not seem bothered.

He just sloped off
along the edge of
my mat and vanished
along the side of the

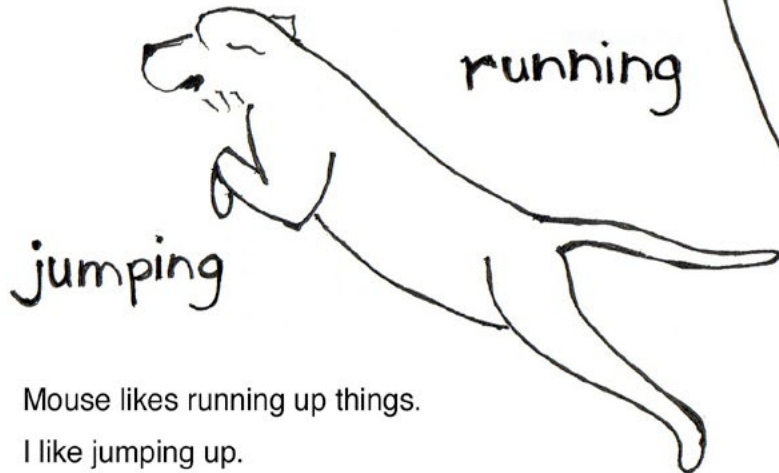
room and into his little hole in the corner.



FRIDAY

Bounced all over the paper boy but not the postwoman OR the milkman.
The Princess said I am improving.
So today it became clear that Mouse and I have two problems. The first is the Princess, and the second, much more serious, is Moonboom.

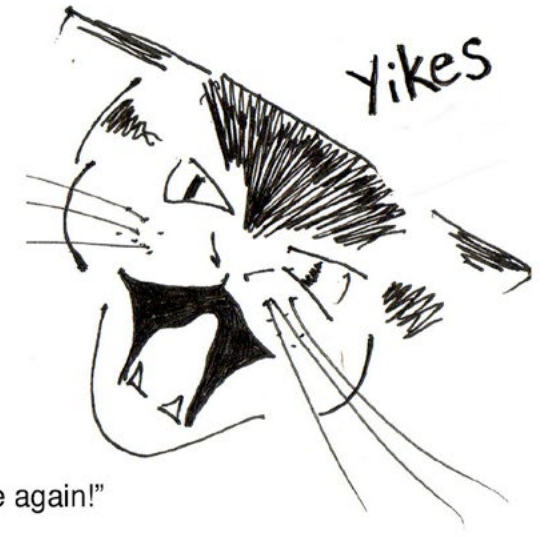
Mouse likes to sit on my mat, just in front of my nose. We chat about this and that – and we have many things we agree about.



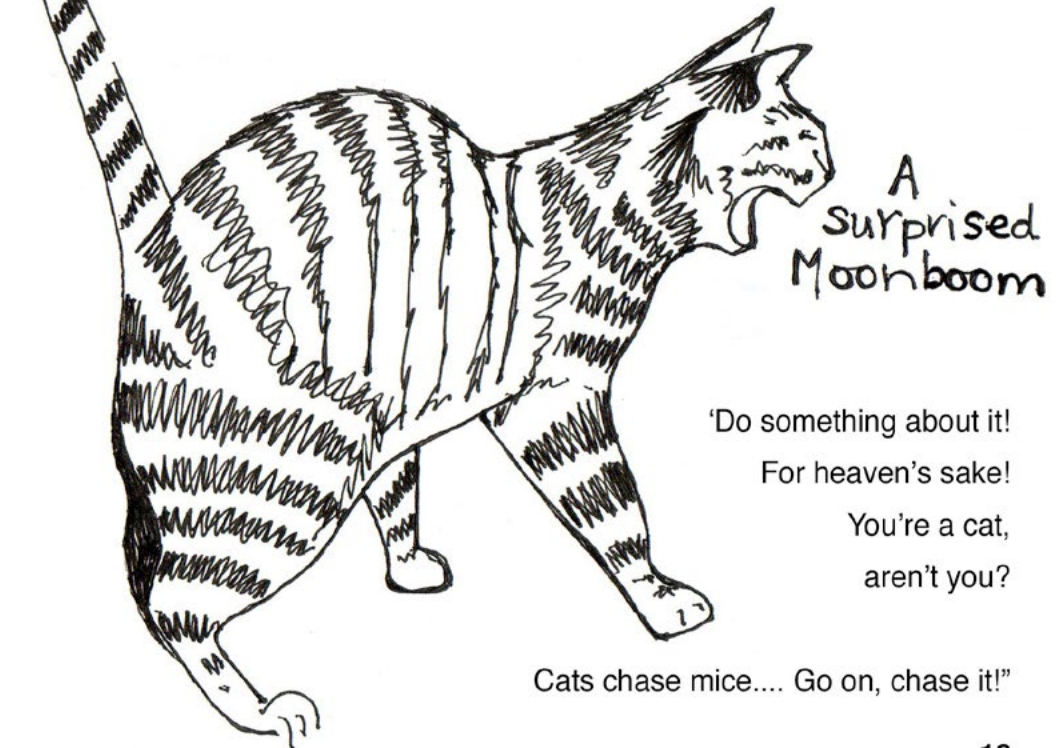
Mouse likes running up things.
I like jumping up.
Mouse likes skipping. I like bouncing.
Mouse is terrified of cats.

I think Moonboom is quite scary.

So today, we were chatting on my mat, when the Princess came through and saw us. She let out a yell, a mixture of fury and fear.
“Aaargh! There’s that pesky mouse again!”



Then she turned to look for Moonboom who was, as usual, curled up asleep on top of the fridge. She swept her up in her arms, and plonked her on the floor a centimetre from Mouse.



‘Do something about it!
For heaven’s sake!
You’re a cat,
aren’t you?’

Cats chase mice.... Go on, chase it!”

FRIDAY

...CONTINUED

Moonboom, startled out of her sleep, lost a precious second in waking up. Before she had time to pounce, Mouse had sprinted away. This time, he could not run toward his hole since Moonboom blocked his path.

So he ran the only way possible – namely under my paws and round between me and the wall.

Moonboom stalked slowly round to my tail end.



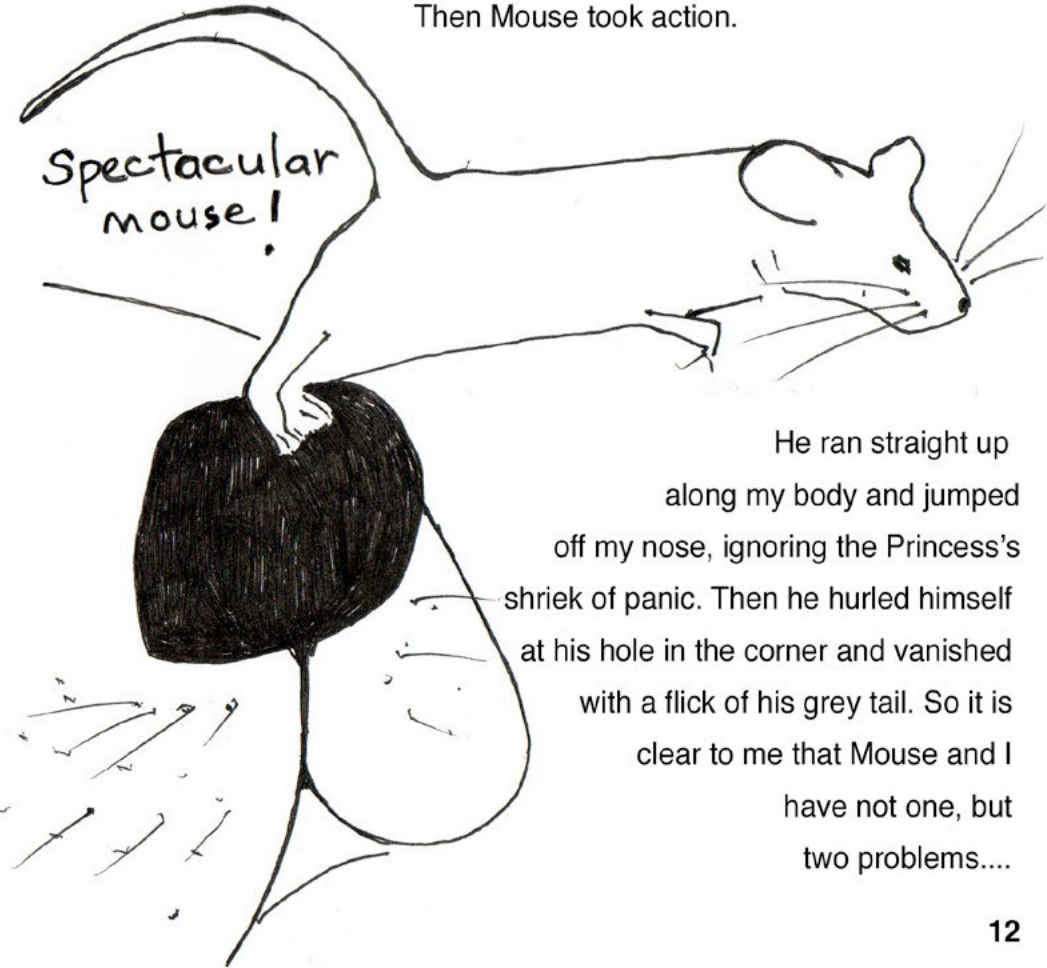
“Grrrrr...,” she let out a long, low growl, “move yourself, you stupid dog. Unless you want to feel my claws in your backside!”

I sat there, rigid with fear. I knew just how sharp Moonboom’s claws could be. And she was not afraid to use them! But I didn’t move. I could feel Mouse trembling behind me. But I stayed put.

Just as Moonboom was about to launch herself at me, claws open, the Princess took a hand.

“Move you stupid hound,” she said, crossly, clearly thinking that I didn’t realise that the mouse had run behind me. She put her hand on my collar to pull me out.

Then Mouse took action.



He ran straight up along my body and jumped off my nose, ignoring the Princess’s shriek of panic. Then he hurled himself at his hole in the corner and vanished with a flick of his grey tail. So it is clear to me that Mouse and I have not one, but two problems....

SATURDAY

Bounced over the paper boy again, but this time he fell off his bike! I was in disgrace and the Princess shut me in the toilet as soon as we got home.

She even fed me in there.

“You have to learn not to BOUNCE on people,” she yelled at me!

“You can jolly well stay in here and think about your behaviour!”

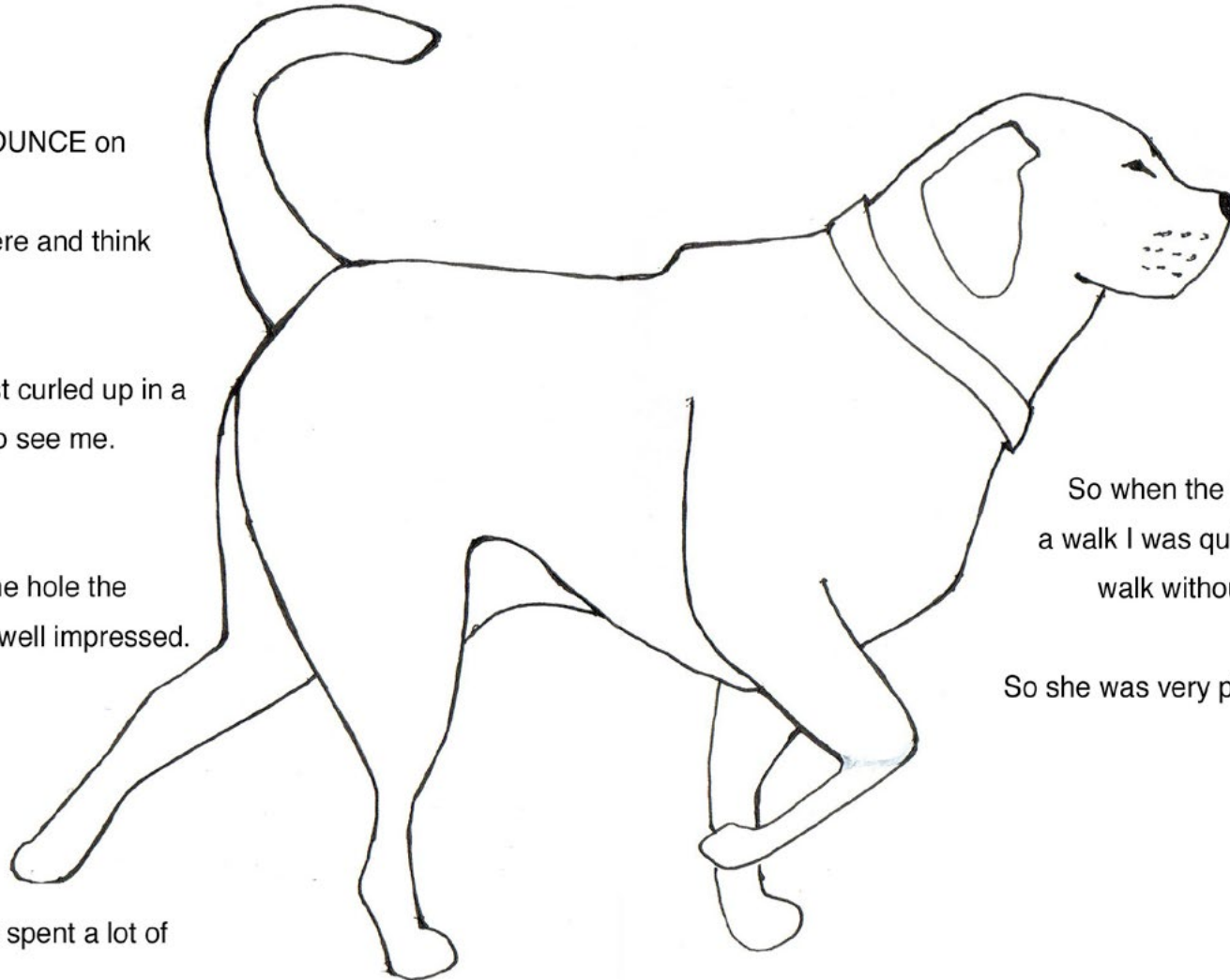
I was quite sad, and had just curled up in a corner when Mouse came to see me.

He found his way through the hole the pipes come through. I was well impressed.

The good thing was that he was safe from both Moonboom and the Princess and so we spent a lot of the morning talking.

We decided to meet round the back corner of the garden whenever we can.

My time in the ‘toilet-prison’ today was not nearly as gloomy as usual.



head held
high
me being
very good

So when the Princess came to take me for a walk I was quite chilled. I even managed to walk without any jumping up on anyone!

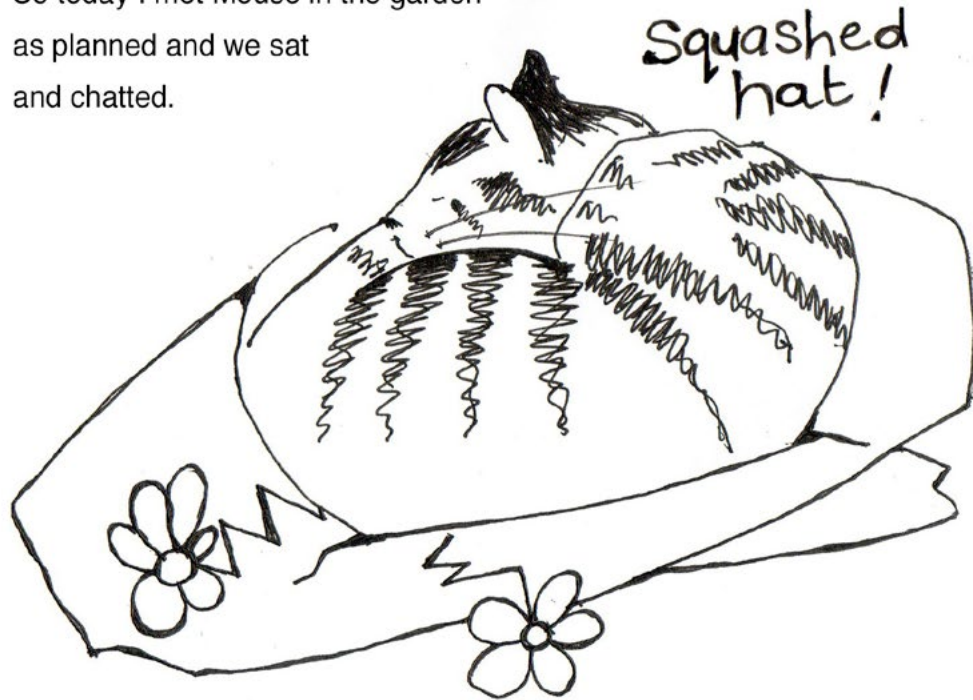
So she was very pleased with me and Saturday ended well.

SUNDAY

Managed, through GREAT effort, not to bounce or jump up on anyone this morning.

Did lose the ball in the stream by running away with it when the Princess had told me to bring it back, but that's the sort of thing that could happen to anyone.

So today I met Mouse in the garden as planned and we sat and chatted.



Moonboom was also in the garden, lying fast asleep on top of a hat belonging to the Princess.

Perhaps because the Princess was herself out, Moonboom was obviously far too content and sleepy to be bothered chasing mice.

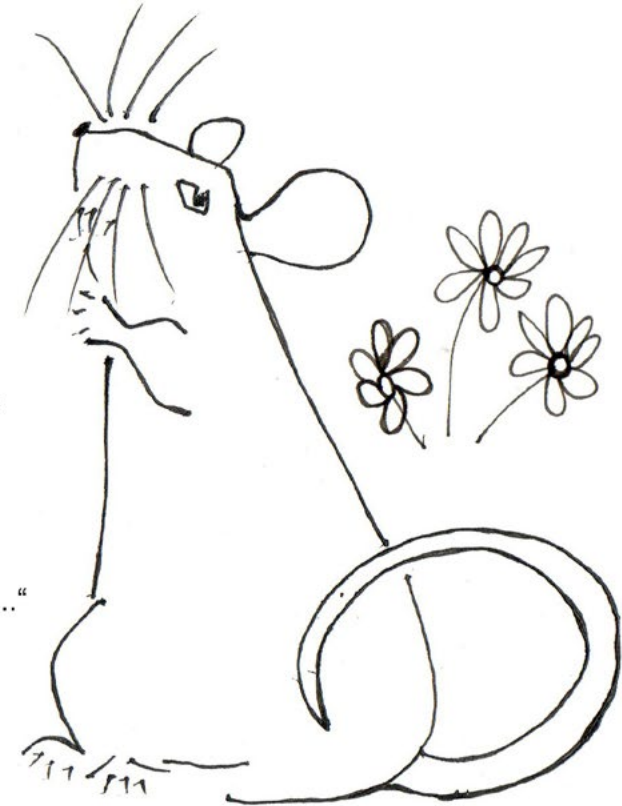
I told Mouse all about my problems with jumping up on people and how I was always getting into terrible trouble.

a
thoughtful
mouse

"I just can't help it!
I get so excited!" I explained,

"I really LOVE to see people
and then I bounce.

Then the Princess gets mad..."



MONDAY

Not a good morning. Bounced on the postwoman and the milkman and then, when the paper boy skidded on his bike to avoid me, he ran into the hedge and I got the blame! How unfair is that?

So there I was back in the 'toilet-prison'.
Mouse came to see me, running along the pipes as usual.



"I have had an idea,"
he told me excitedly,
"about your bouncing problem."

"Really?" I replied.

I was quite depressed about the whole thing and almost resigned to spending the rest of my life in the toilet!



"Yep," he said, "but it has to be OUR secret!"
And then he started to whisper.

As I listened, I first started to smile and
then to laugh, big, woofy dog laughs.

The Princess came and let me out of the toilet.

Perhaps she thought I was barking!

TUESDAY

It was a terrible morning walk. Perhaps because I was so pleased about the PLAN that Mouse and I had concocted, I was too excited to behave.

I went running to say hello to my friend the postwoman and she dropped all the letters she was holding. She assured the Princess that she didn't mind, but I could see that the Princess was furious.

Then I forgot myself and bounded all over the milkman, who dropped a milk bottle.



The Princess put me on the lead.

So then, when I was trying to say hello to the paper-boy, I pulled her over.

I licked her face and did tell her that it was a mistake, but she was still very upset.

very
upset

She didn't put me in the toilet-prison but I think that was because she was too depressed.

I was depressed too.

I like the Princess and I don't want her to be mad at me.

I could only hope that Mouse's plan was going well.

WEDNESDAY

Much better walk this morning.

The Princess kept me on the lead, and I managed not to pull her over even when I forgot myself and jumped up at a gentleman walking his horribly well-behaved spaniel.

I hate 'goodie-goodie' dogs.



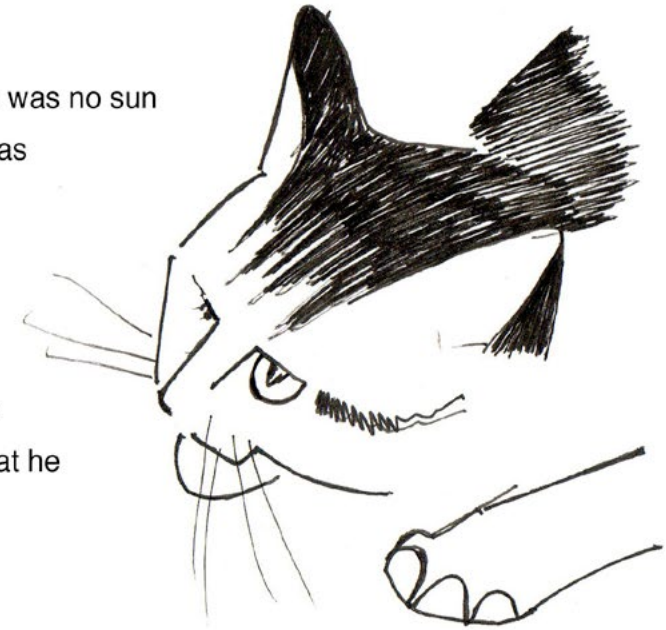
They are so smug!

Anyhow, I went down the garden in the afternoon and met Mouse.

We had to be very careful because Moonboom was on the prowl.

It was a grey day and there was no sun for her to sleep in so she was out hunting.

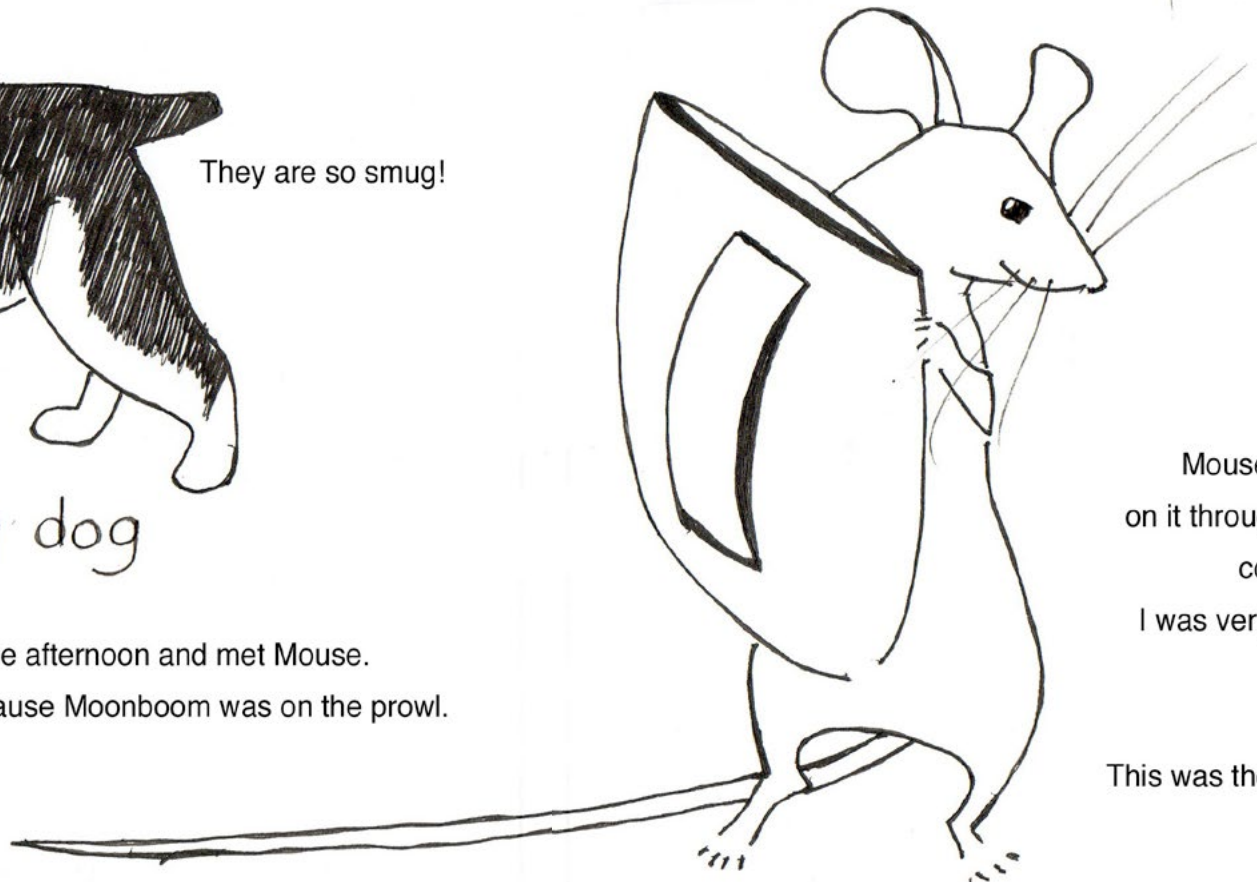
Talking together in a corner near the pond – the safest place we could think of – Mouse showed me what he had found.



It was a tiny, brown leather pouch, which looked as if it had once held a set of keys.

Mouse showed me a small loop on it through which a belt – or a dog collar! – could be threaded. I was very impressed with Mouse's cleverness in finding it.

This was the **1st** stage of the plan!



WEDNESDAY

CONTINUED...

Now all I had to do was get my collar off.

It took me over an hour of scratching and rubbing against the garden fence to make sure my collar was turned completely inside out.

This was the **2nd** stage of the plan.

Mouse carefully put the pouch on the floor with the loop upwards. We waited together for the Princess.

hours
of
scratching

When she came over to hang up the washing, she saw my collar all twisted and inside out!

"What have you done to your collar, you stupid dog?" she laughed, and, not realising that she was doing exactly what Mouse and I had so carefully planned, she undid my collar and took it off.

This was the **3rd** stage of the plan.

Success!

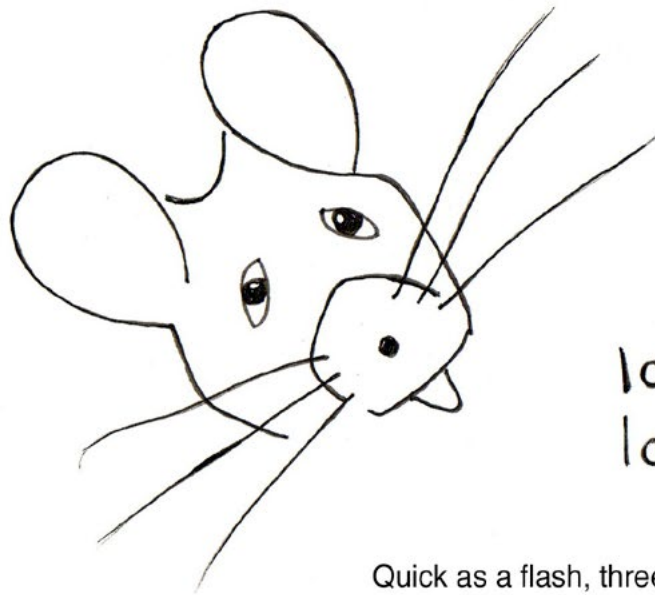
WEDNESDAY

CONTINUED...

Just as she bent over me to fasten my collar back on, she saw Mouse.

He was standing there, bold as brass, sticking his tongue out at her!

I doubt that the Princess noticed his tongue,
but she was certainly scared enough to drop the collar
and scream.



This was the **4th**
stage of the plan.

lovely
look!

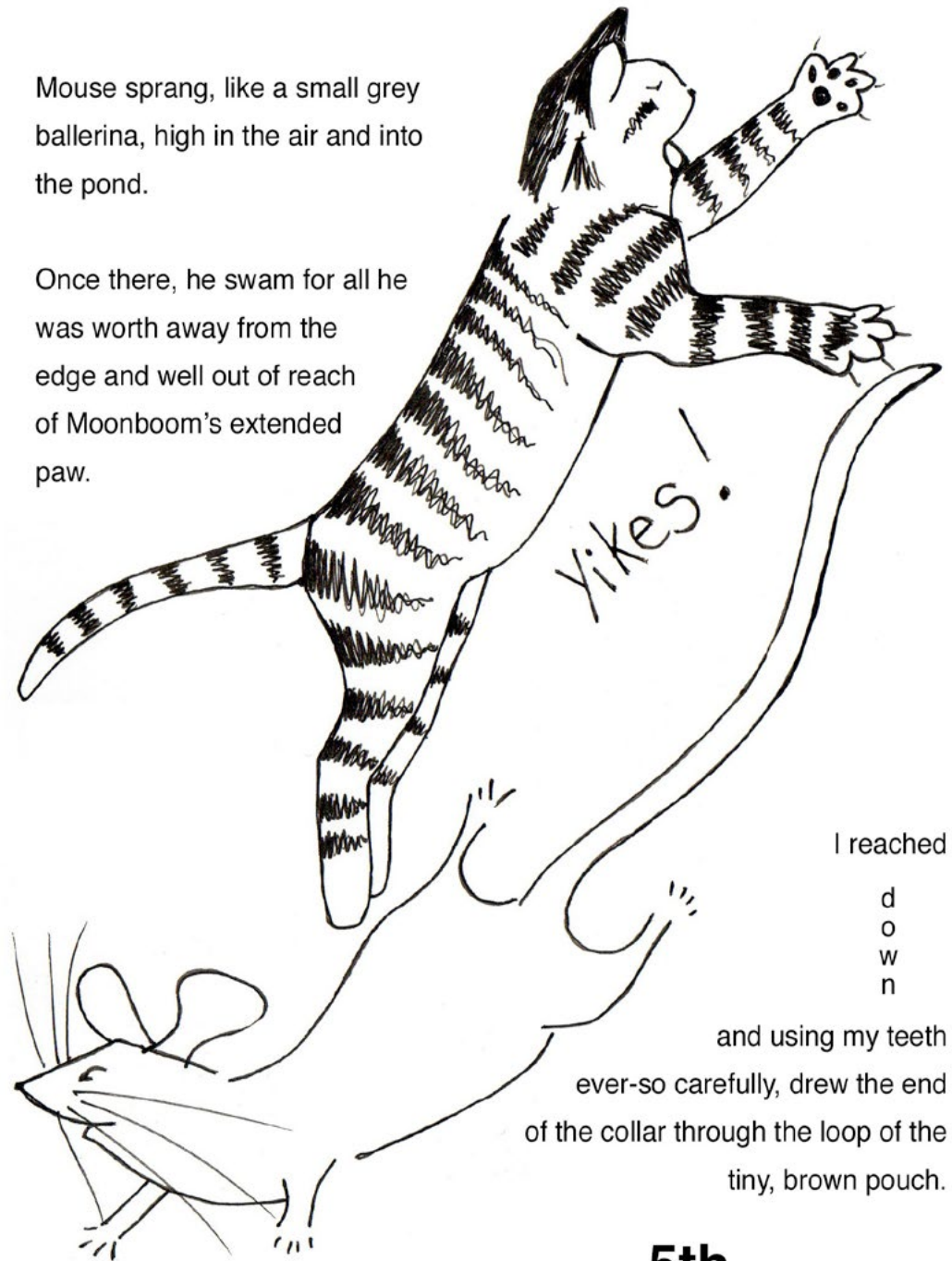
Quick as a flash, three things happened at once.

Moonboom, who had been sitting watching a squirrel digging
a hole under a large bush, came charging toward us.

Seeing Mouse, she leapt, claws outstretched.

Mouse sprang, like a small grey
ballerina, high in the air and into
the pond.

Once there, he swam for all he
was worth away from the
edge and well out of reach
of Moonboom's extended
paw.



I reached

d
o
w
n

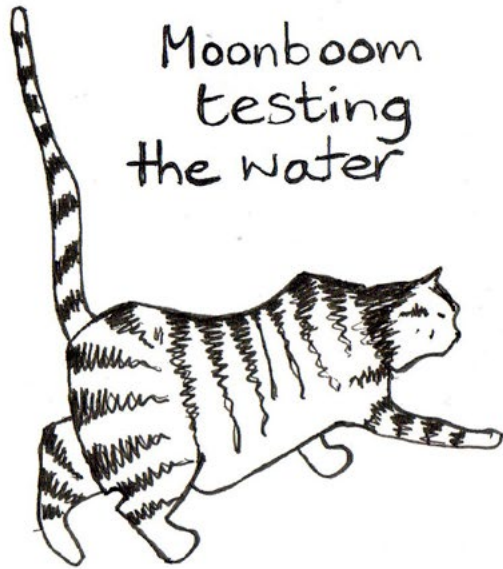
and using my teeth
ever-so carefully, drew the end
of the collar through the loop of the
tiny, brown pouch.

This was the **5th** stage of the plan.

WEDNESDAY

CONTINUED...

The Princess was much too busy watching the mouse vanishing under a large lily-pad to pay attention to what she was doing.



Moonboom
testing
the water

Moonboom was now circling the pond
and growling menacingly.

But there was no way Moonboom
was going swimming!

Oh no, not even for
the Princess!

Not looking at all at my collar as she picked it up,
the Princess fastened it back on me, muttering about the dratted mouse.

The little brown pouch was now firmly attached to the
collar round my neck!

This was the **6th** stage of the plan.



me with my
collar
in place

looking
good

THURSDAY

I was more than usually ready for my morning walk when the Princess came down, tousled and sleepy-headed as normal.



sleepy
head

Fortunately, she did not
bother to put me on the lead.

Or perhaps some unrecognised
instinct warned her that there was a mouse
on my collar!

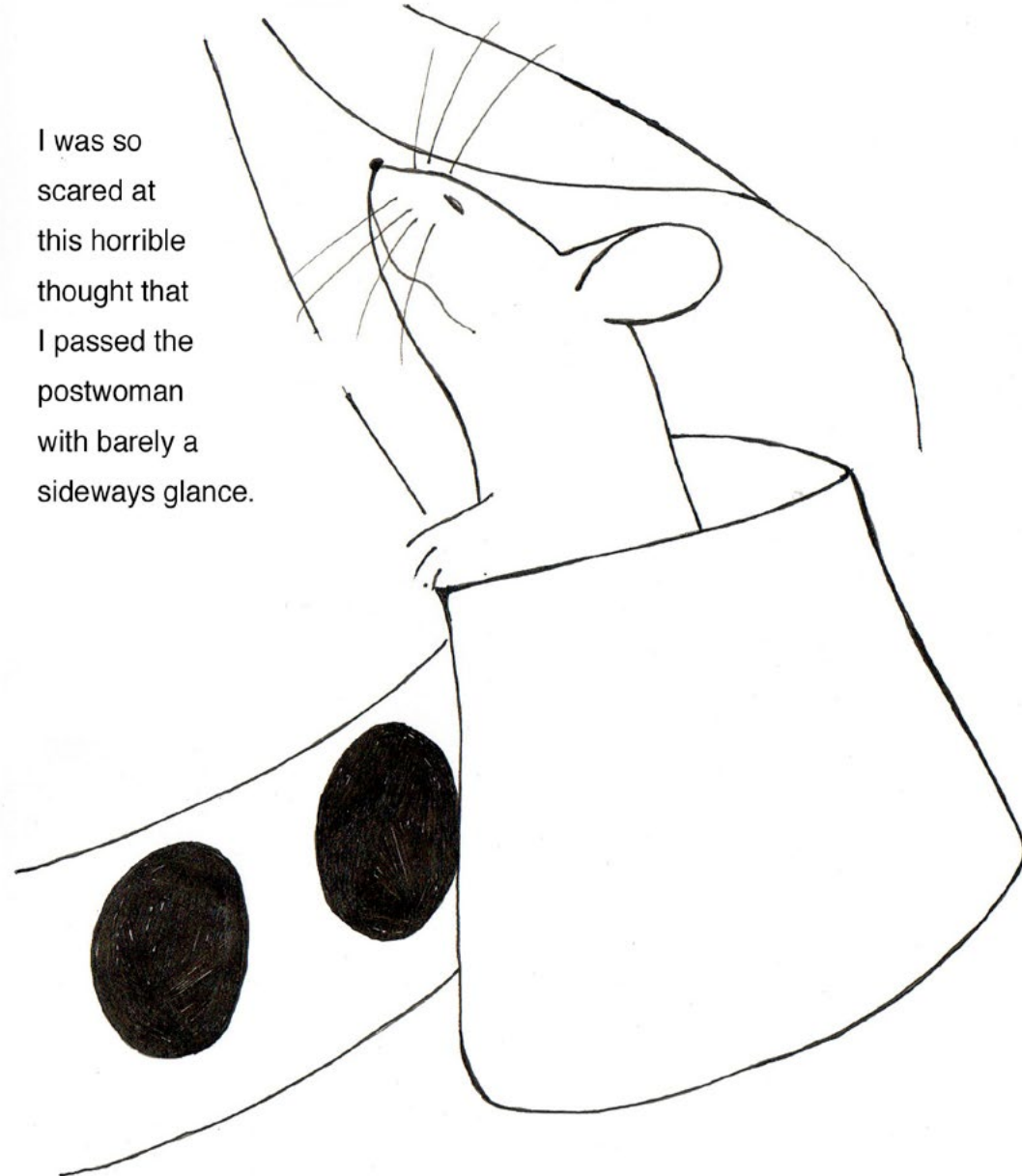
From his safe hiding place in the little brown pouch hanging hidden in the fur below my neck, Mouse could see everything.

The postwoman came towards us, swinging her bag and carrying a great bundle of letters.

"Don't you dare jump up at her," hissed Mouse fiercely,

"or I will be thrown out of the pouch and killed!"

I was so
scared at
this horrible
thought that
I passed the
postwoman
with barely a
sideways glance.

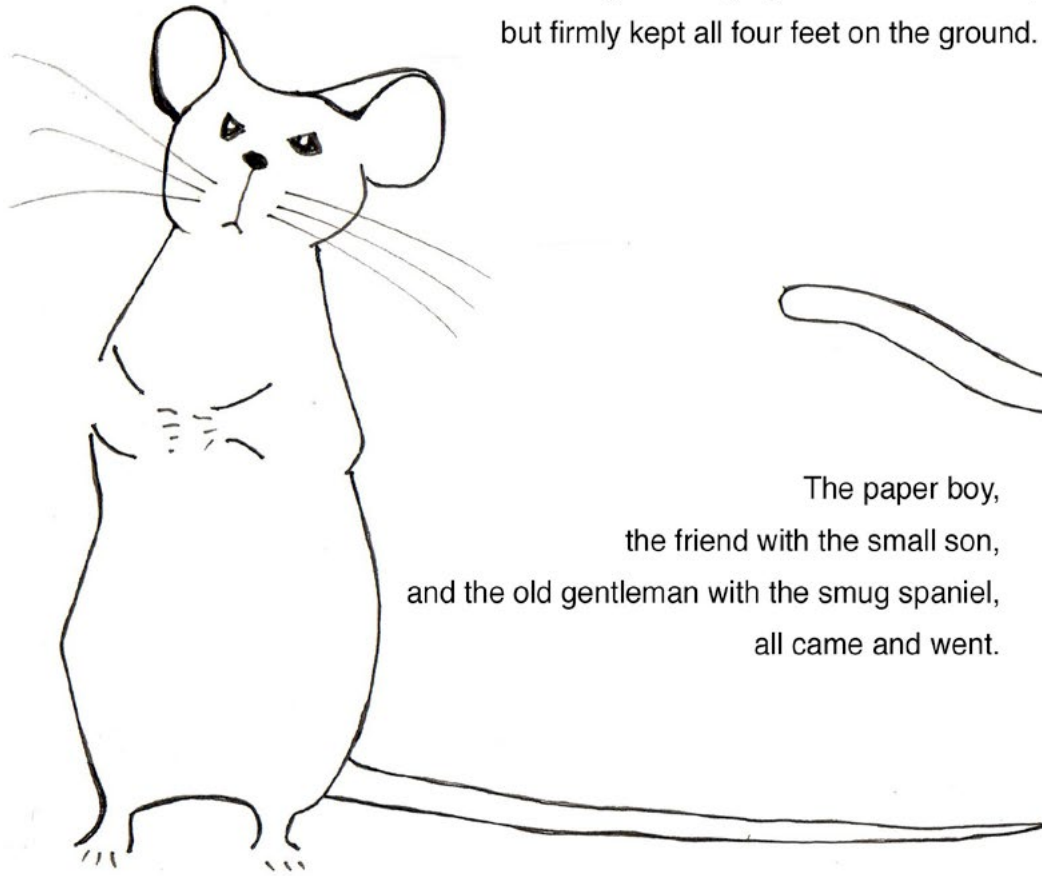


THURSDAY

...CONTINUED

The next person we met was the milkman. Once again, Mouse whispered a warning. "Don't even think about bouncing! Remember I am on your collar!"

I did manage to wag my tail at the milkman, but firmly kept all four feet on the ground.



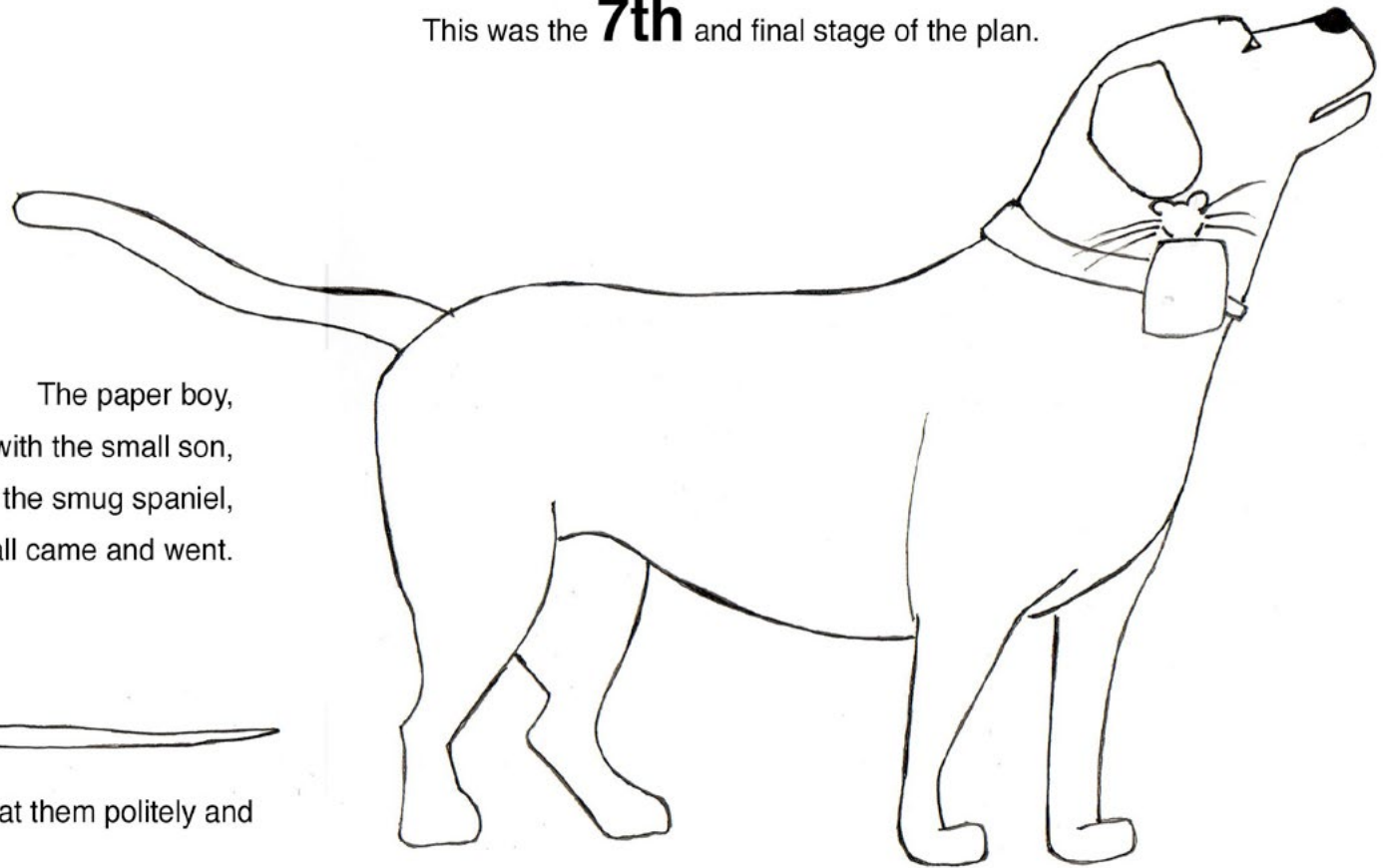
Not only did I not jump up or bounce, I even nodded at them politely and wagged my tail.

I have to say that the Princess was astounded!

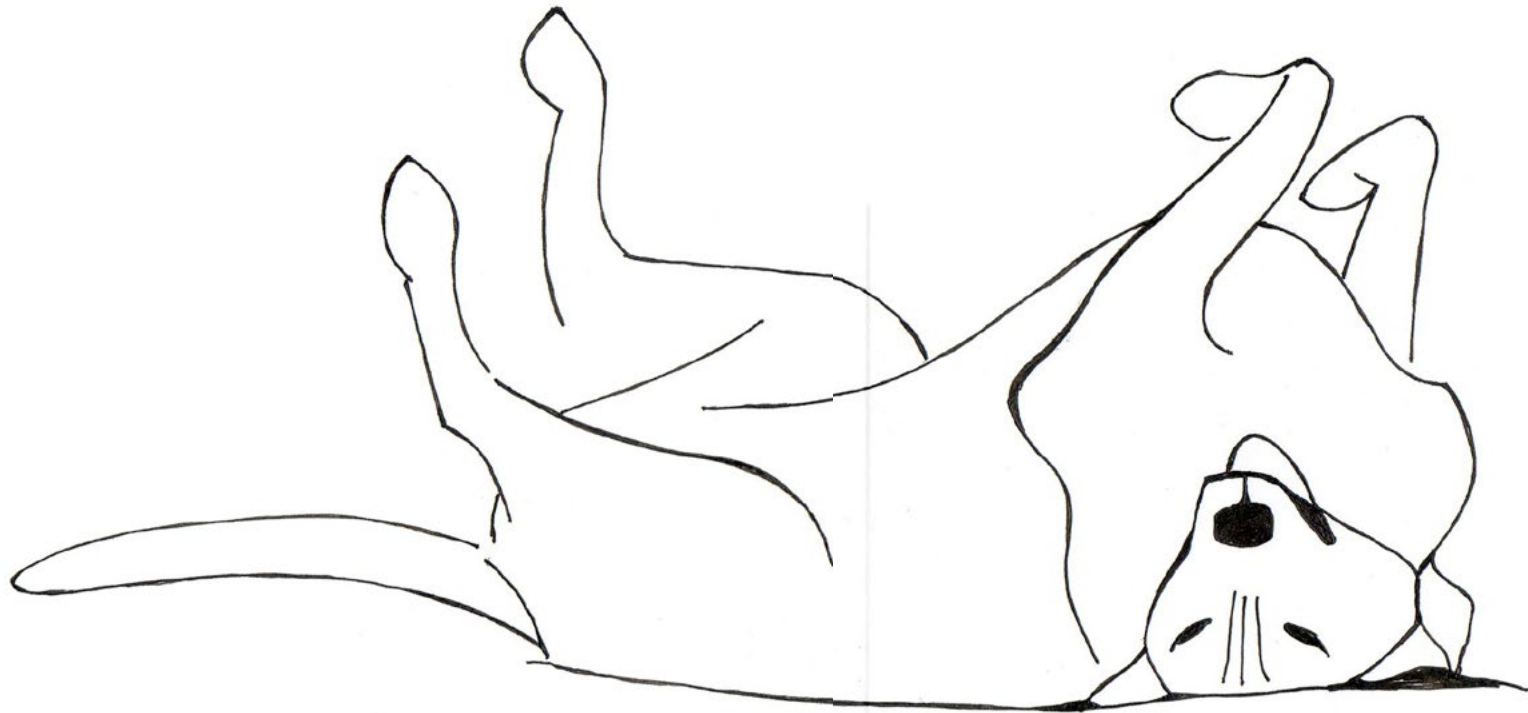
"Well, extra breakfast for you this morning, Boof-Head," she smiled as she ladled out my food back in the kitchen.

"You are just the best dog ever!"

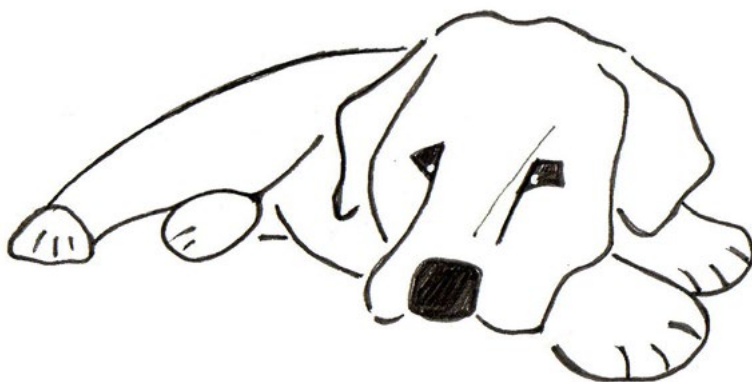
This was the **7th** and final stage of the plan.



THE BEST



DOG EVER!



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