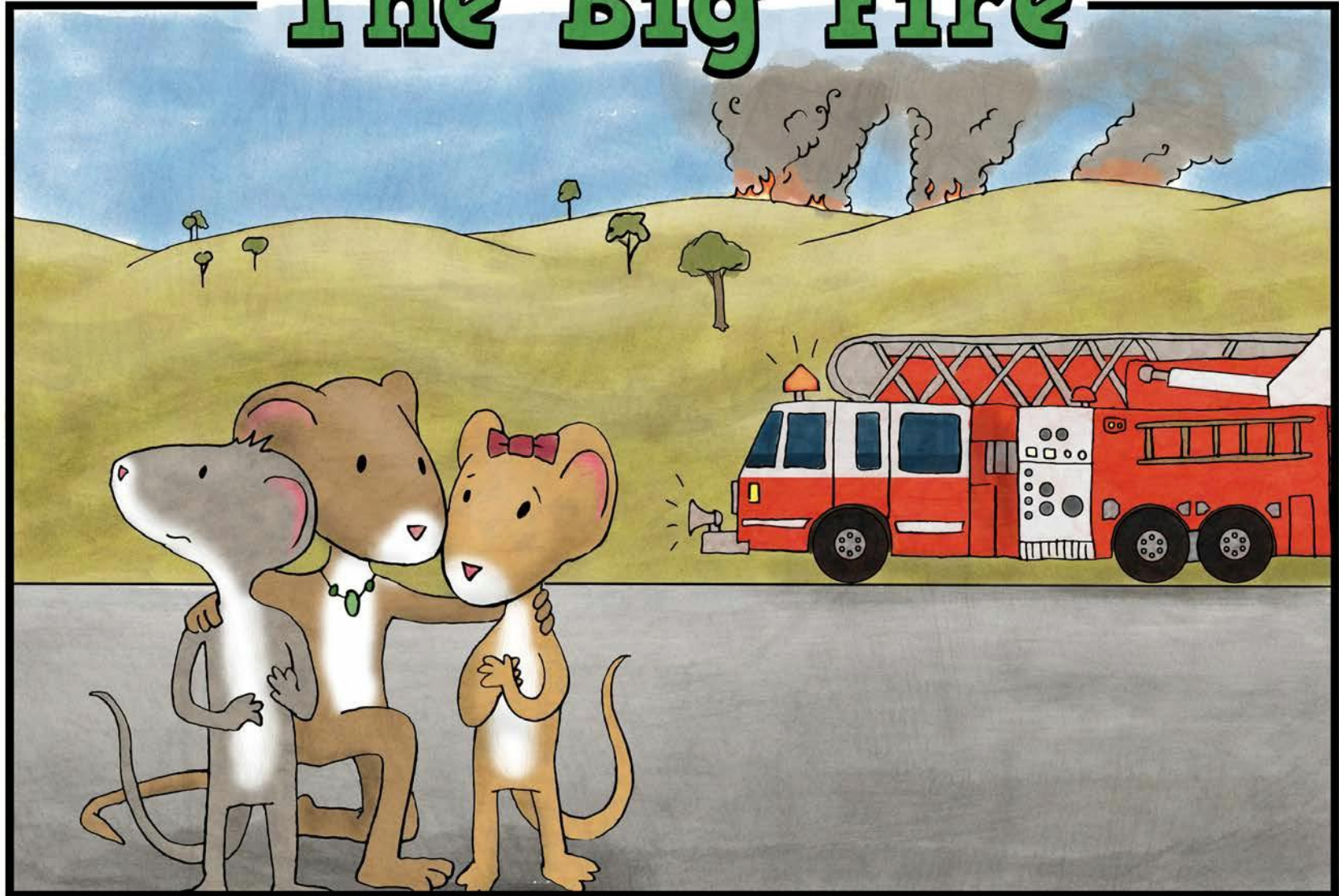


# Trinka and Sam

## The Big Fire



# Trinka and Sam

## The Big Fire



# Trinka and Sam and the Big Fire

Story by Chandra Michiko Ghosh Ippen  
And Melissa Brymer

Illustrated by Erich Ippen, Jr.

Parents' Guide by  
Chandra Ghosh Ippen  
Melissa Brymer

This project was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.



Piploproductions.com

© 2017 Chandra Ghosh Ippen. All rights reserved. This story may be copied and distributed free of charge, but it may not be sold. It may not be altered or excerpted without the express written permission of the primary author (chandra.ghosh@ucsf.edu).

This story was developed in collaboration with the Early Trauma Treatment Network and the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

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 fire.

More information about how to help children who have experienced fires or other traumatic events can be found at [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org).

More information about the story, the use of the story, and the team who created the story can be found at: \*\*\*\*\*[piploproductions.com/stories/trinka-and-sam/](http://piploproductions.com/stories/trinka-and-sam/). The website also has other stories to help children and families heal.

For the children and families of California, Montana, and Oregon and children and families who have experienced fires around the world. And, for all the firefighters out there, thank you for all you do!

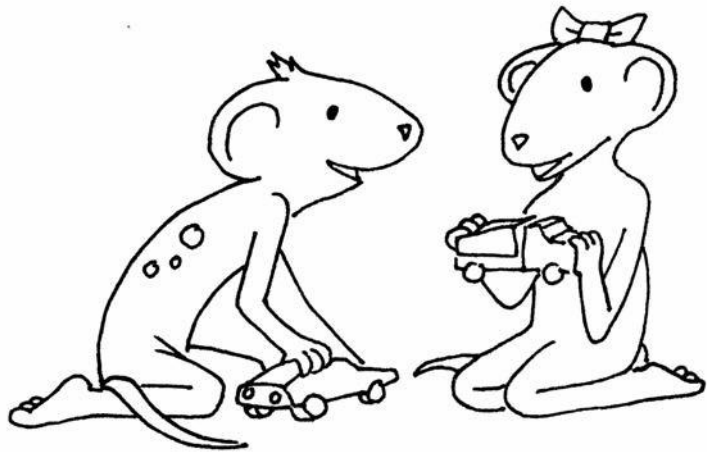
Adults: This story was designed for children who have experienced serious large-scale fires. Please read it by yourself first and decide whether this is a good story to read with your child. If your child has been through a fire with minimal damage to homes and communities, you may decide that this story 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 fire. 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.

---- Come on Sam.

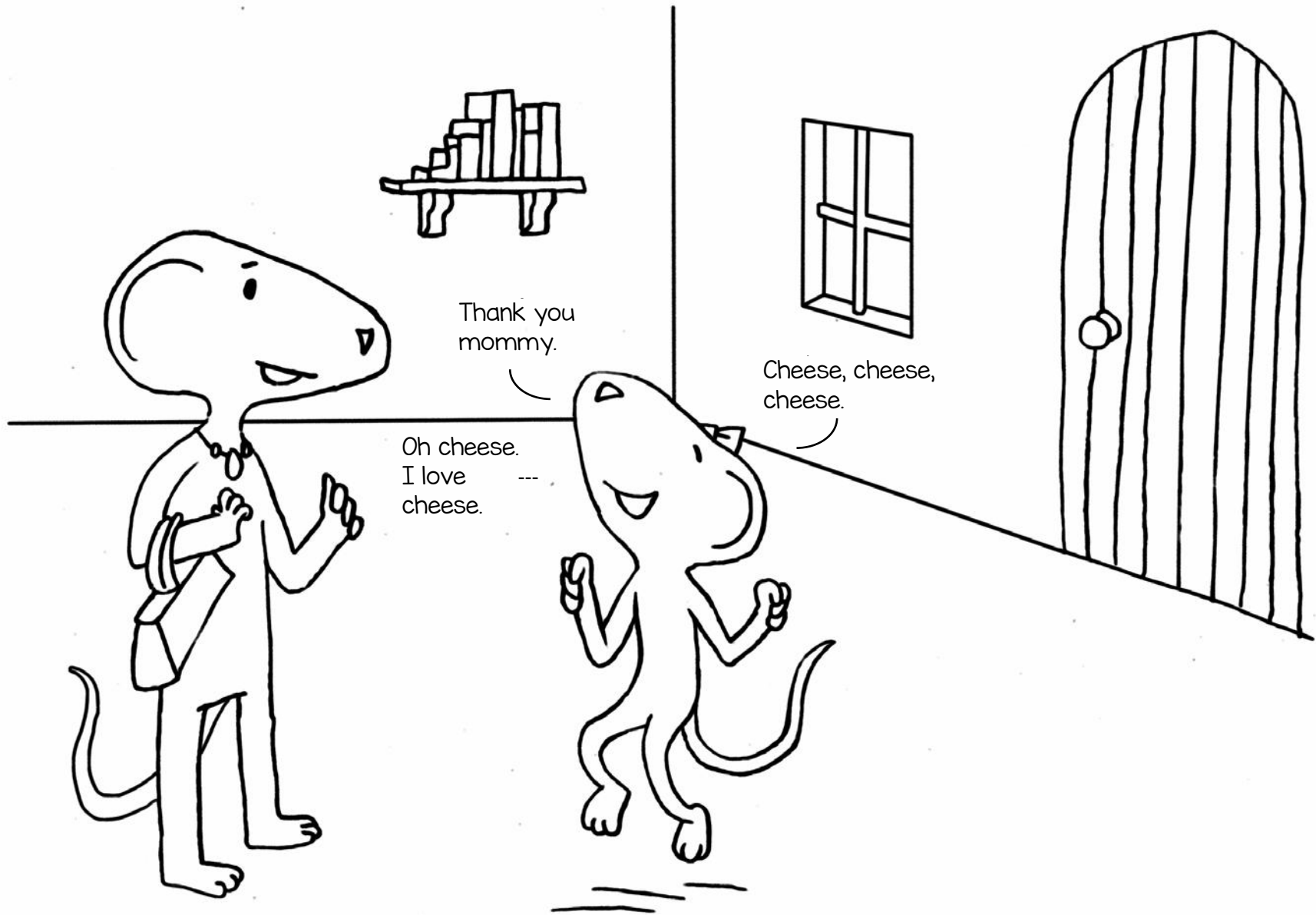
Trinka let's go. - - -

Coming.



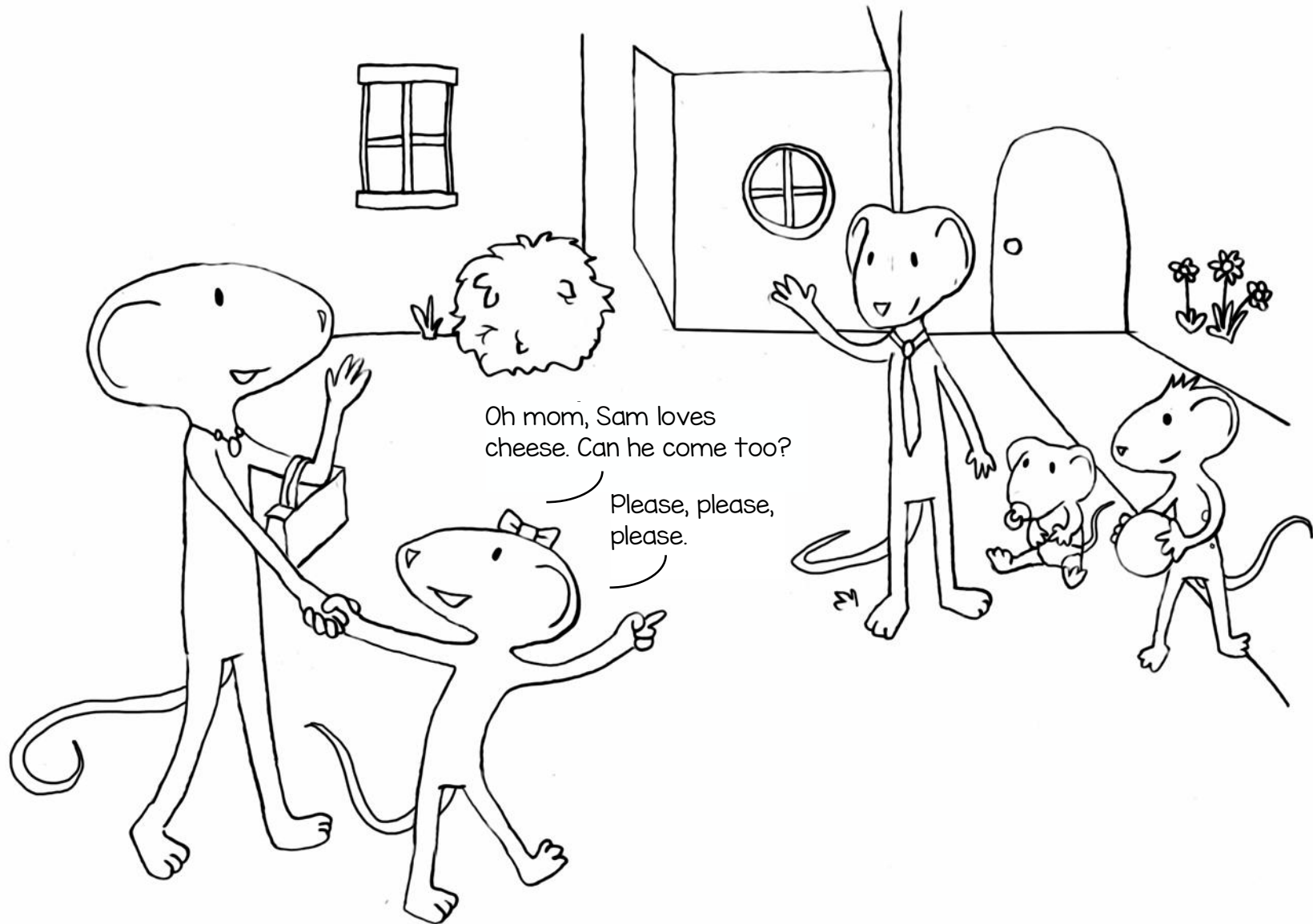
But it's so much fun.

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



One day Trinka's mom decided to head to Littletown to buy some cheese. Trinka was very happy.

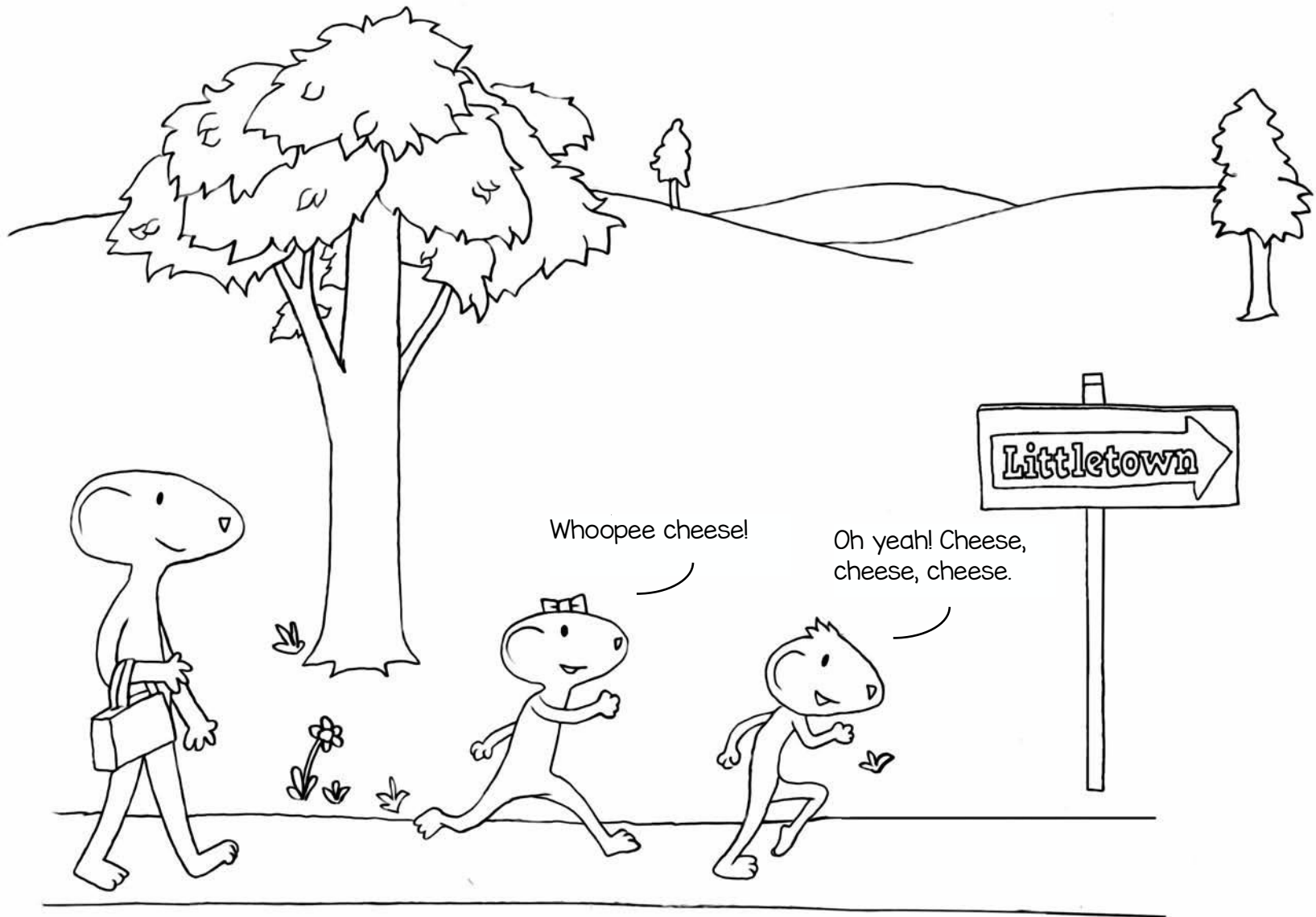




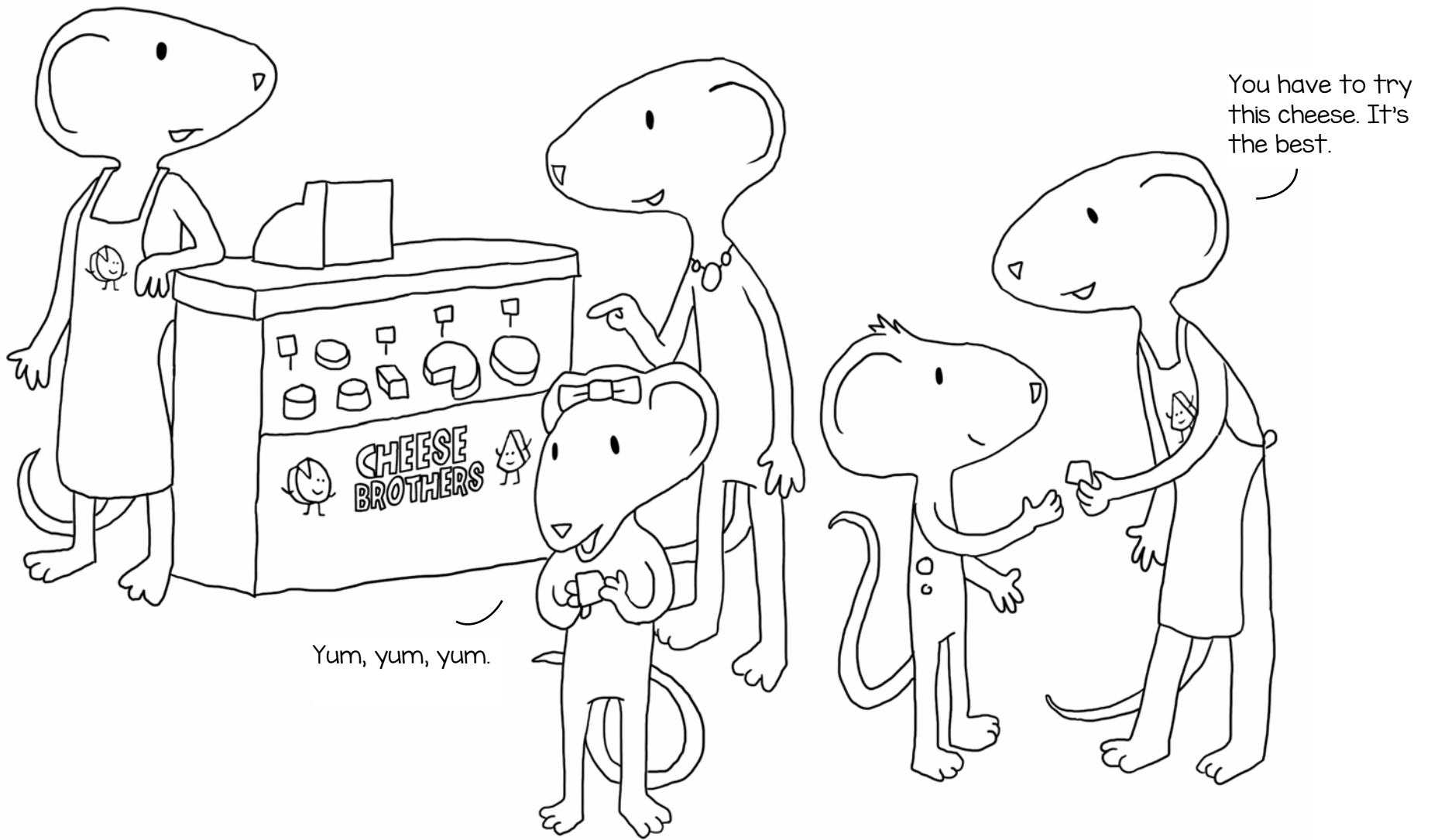
Oh mom, Sam loves cheese. Can he come too?

Please, please, please.

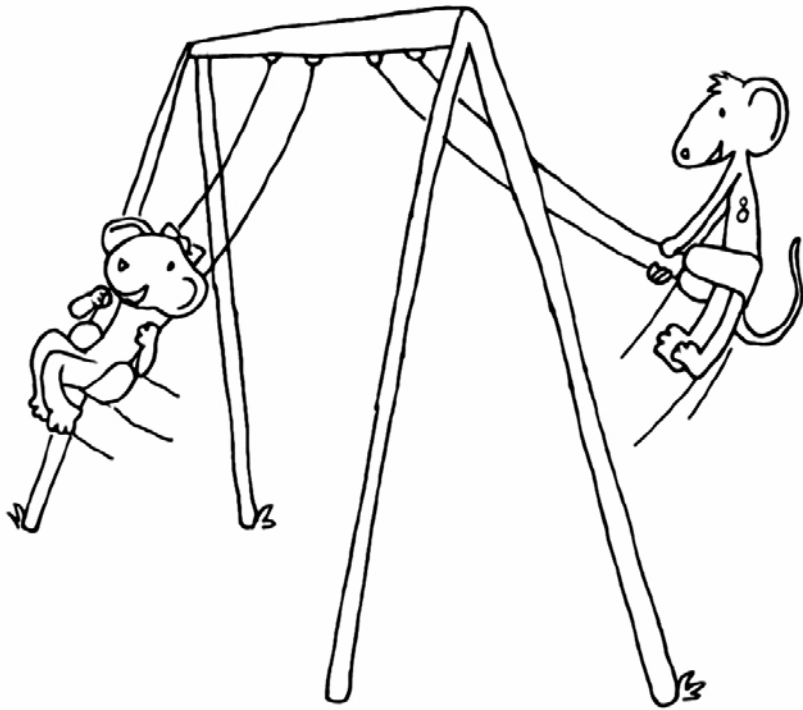
Trinka saw Sam playing outside. She knew Sam liked cheese, and she begged her mom to let him come. Her mom said that would be ok, but they would have to ask his dad.



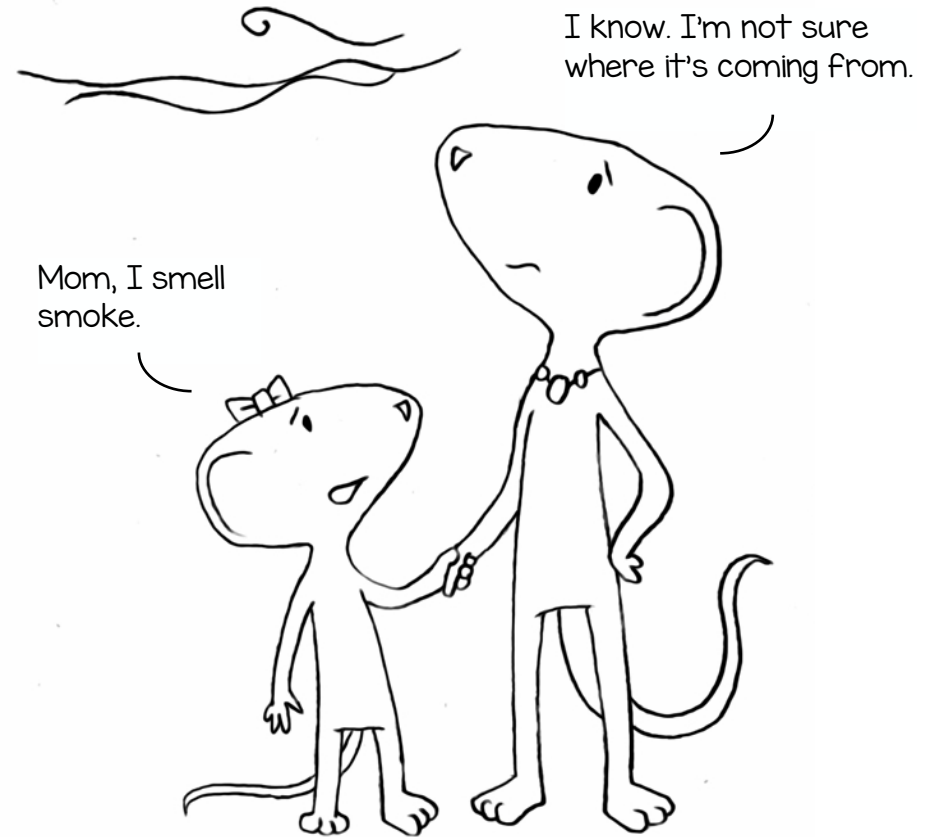
Sam's dad said yes, and they headed off to Littletown.



They had a great day. The Cheese Brothers shared their most special cheese.



They played at the playground and saw who could swing the highest.

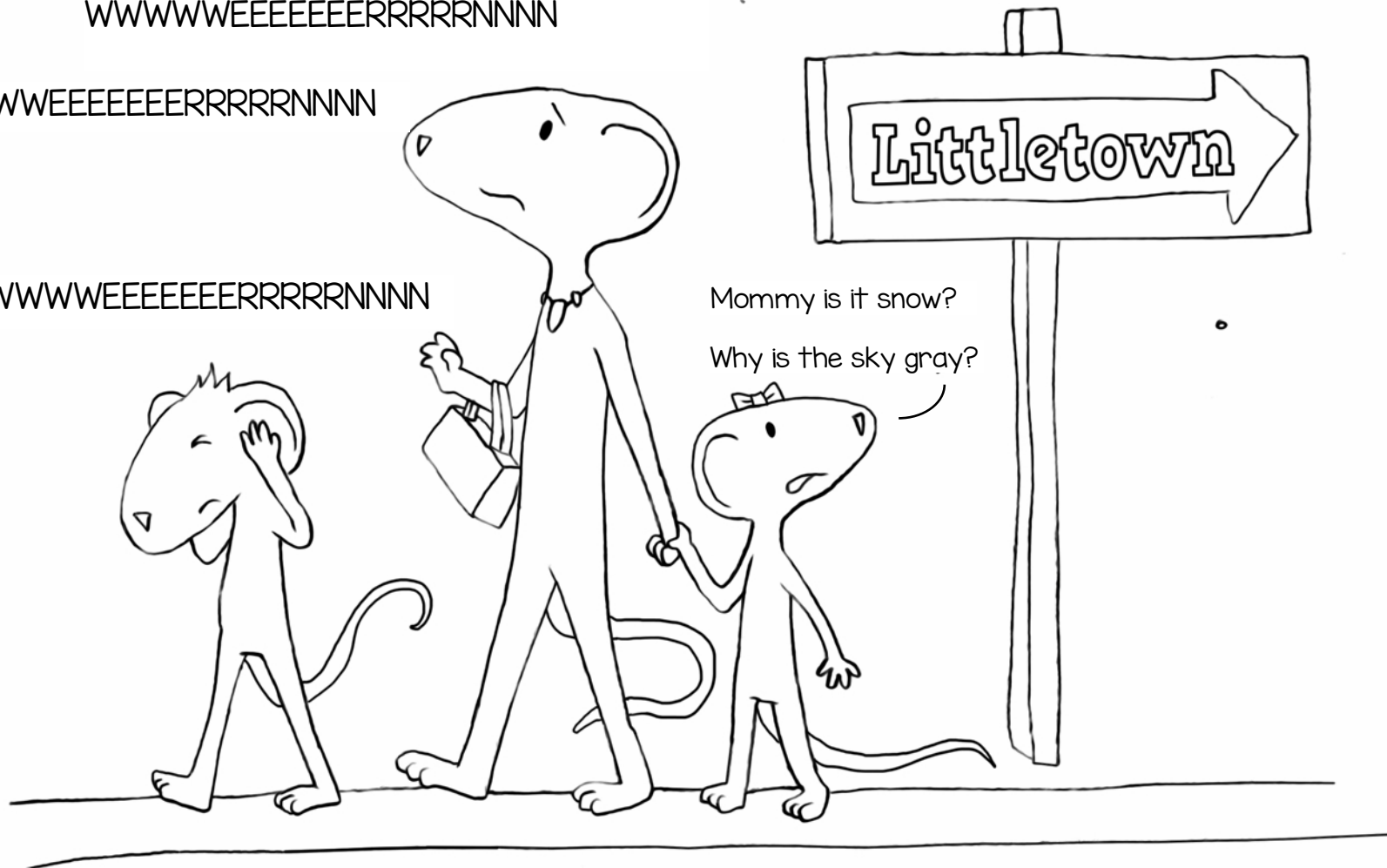


While they were playing, they smelled smoke. They didn't know where it was coming from, but they decided to go.

WWWWWEEEEEEERRRRRNNNN

WWWWWEEEEEEERRRRRNNNN

WWWWWEEEEEEERRRRRNNNN



Mommy is it snow?

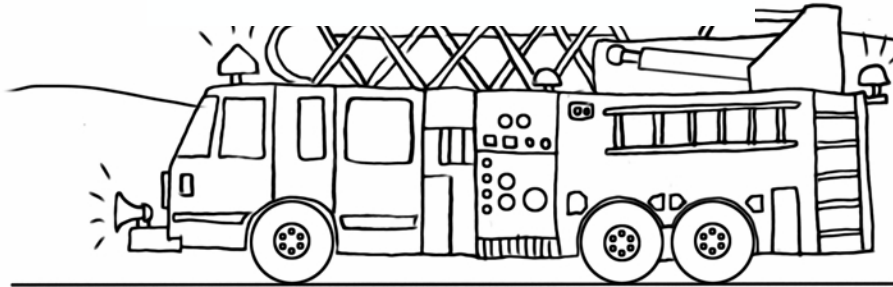
Why is the sky gray?

As they walked towards home, the sky looked strange. The air was thick. It was hard to breathe. They heard noises . . . sirens, loud sirens. Sam didn't like them. He put his hands on his ears. Trinkka grabbed her mom. She felt scared.



WWWWWEEEEEEEEERRRRRRNNNN

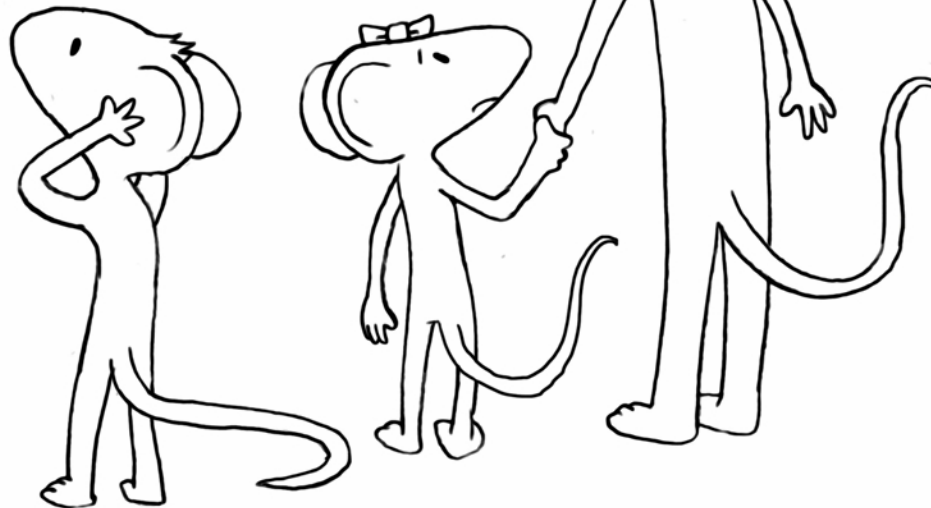
WWWWWEEEEEEEEERRRRRRNNNN



They're going to help people.

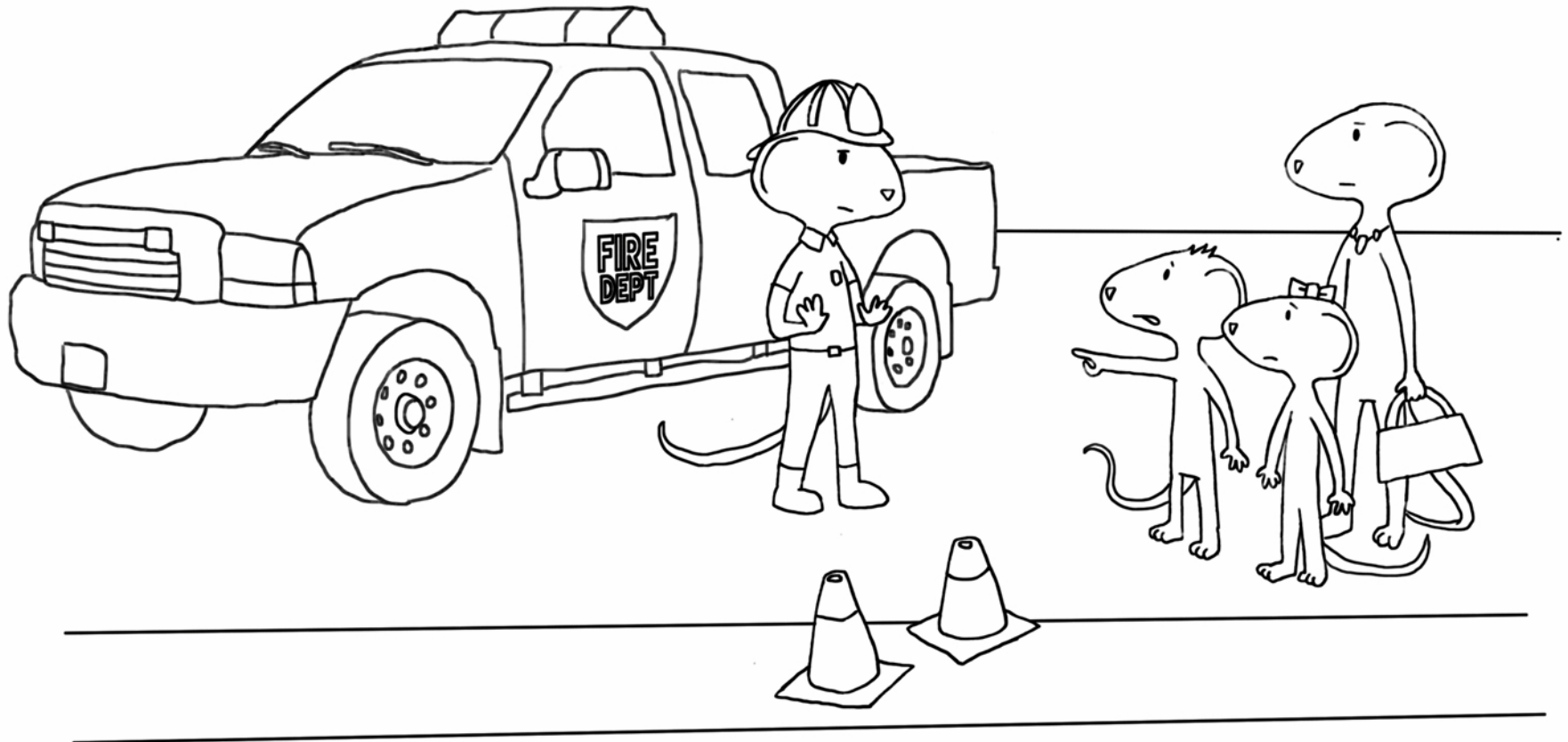
They've got to go fast.

WWWWWEEEEEEEEERRRRRRNNNN



A fire truck went by.

"I know they are loud," said Trinkka's mom. "They need to go fast, so they can get to people who need help and put out the fires. Their siren is saying beep, beep. Please make way. We need to put out the fires."



“Where are they going?” said Trinka. “I’m not sure,” said her mom. “But we live over there” said Sam. He was very worried. Trinka and her mom were worried too.

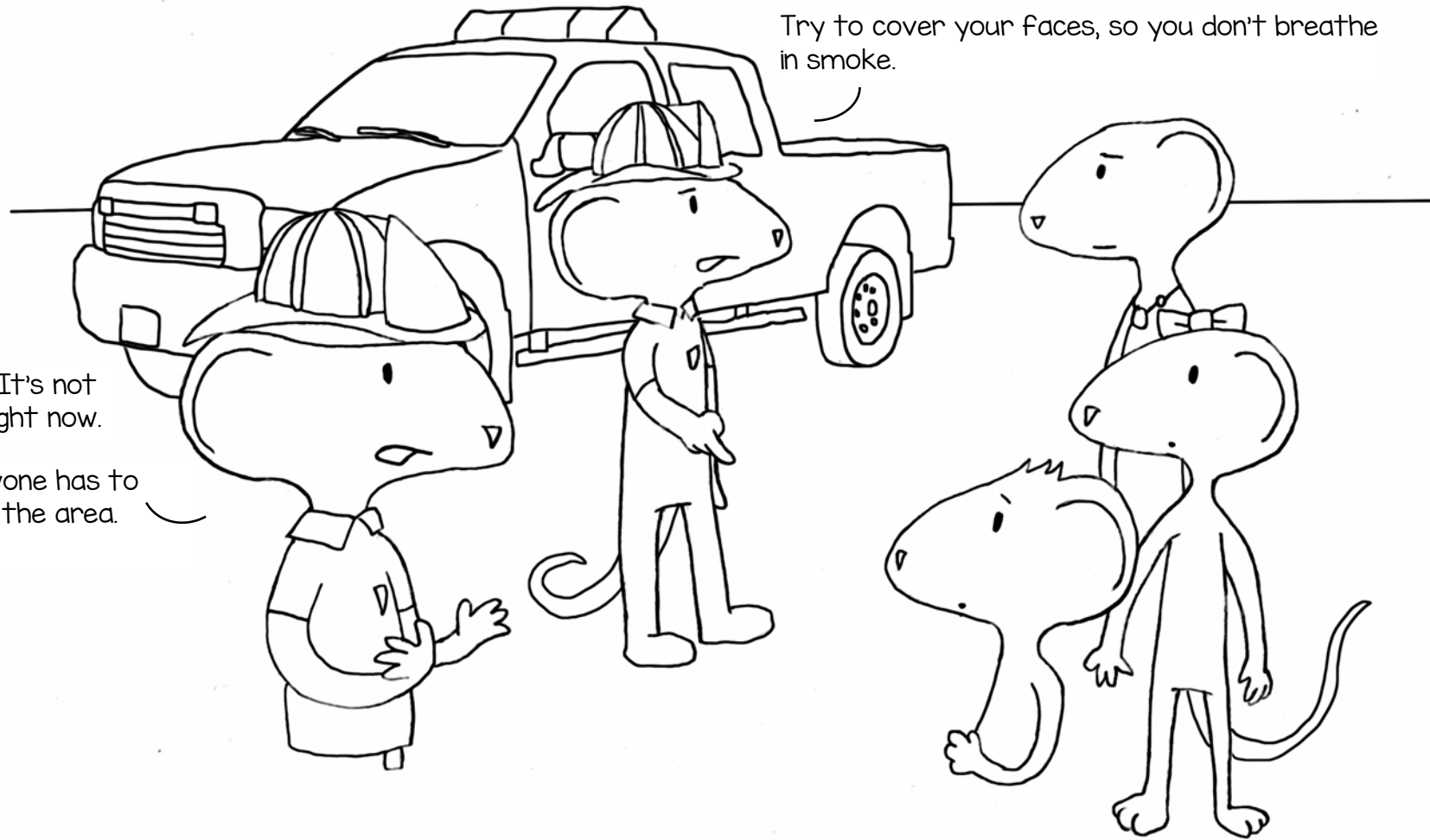
A fire truck was stopped by the side of the road. Trinka’s mom went to talk to the firefighters to find out what was happening.

You can go to Harbortown. It's safe there,  
and they've set up a shelter.

Try to cover your faces, so you don't breathe  
in smoke.

Sorry. It's not  
safe right now.

Everyone has to  
leave the area.



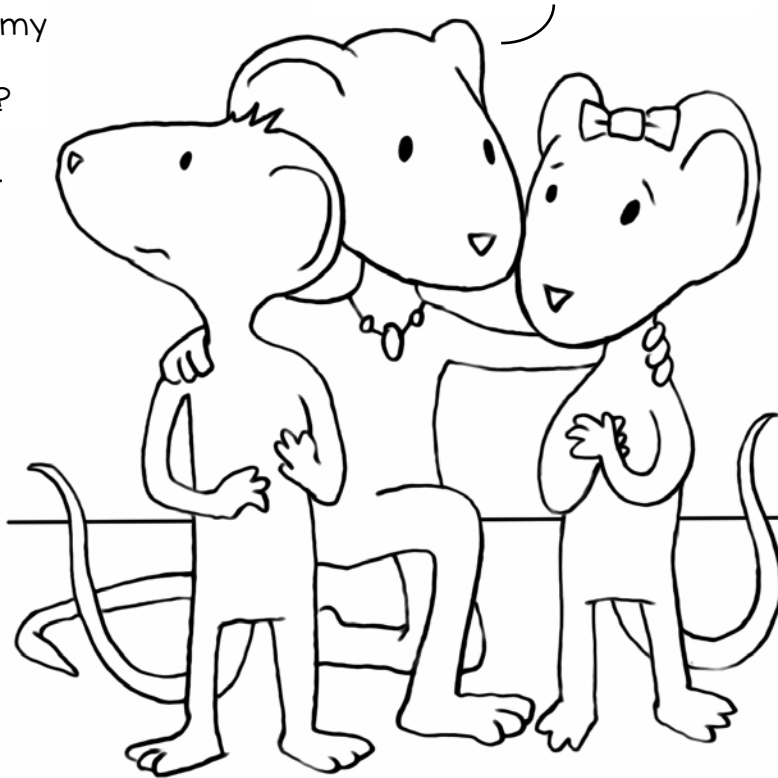
The firefighters said they should not go home. "The area is not safe right now and is being evacuated." The firefighters told them where they could go.



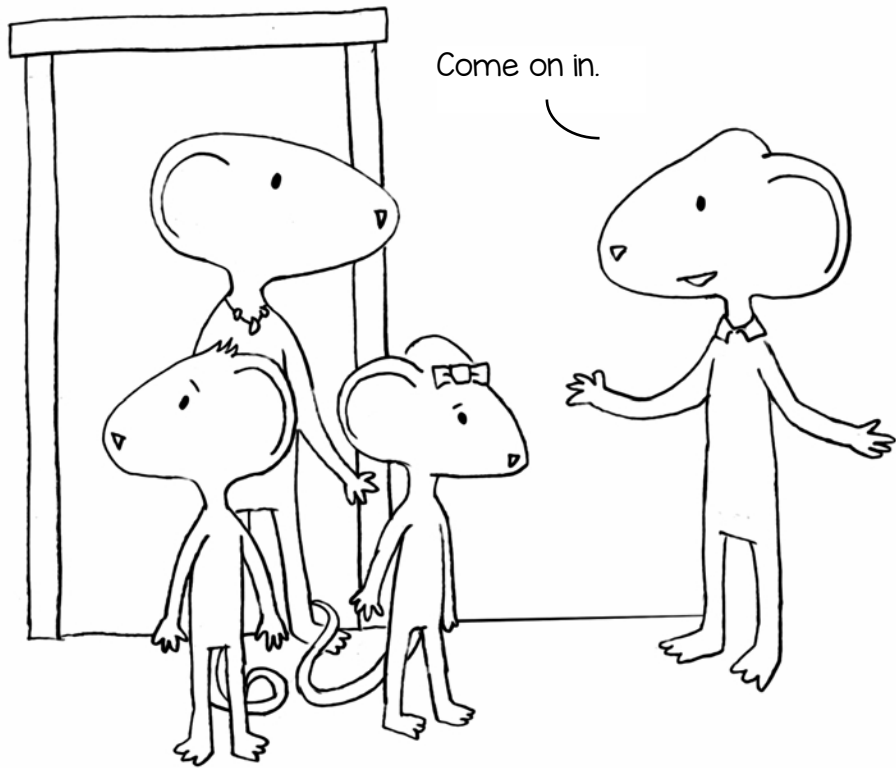


The firefighters said that everyone had to leave. Maybe they are at the shelter. We can look for them there.

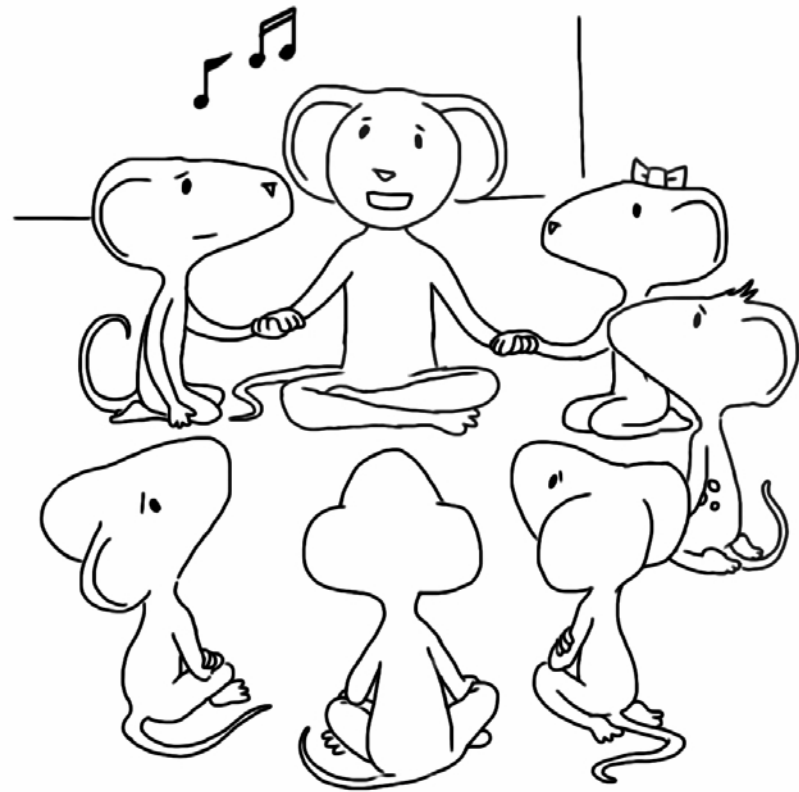
Where's my dad and brother?



Trinka and Sam could see flames in the distance. The hills were glowing. They were scared. Sam was worried about his family.



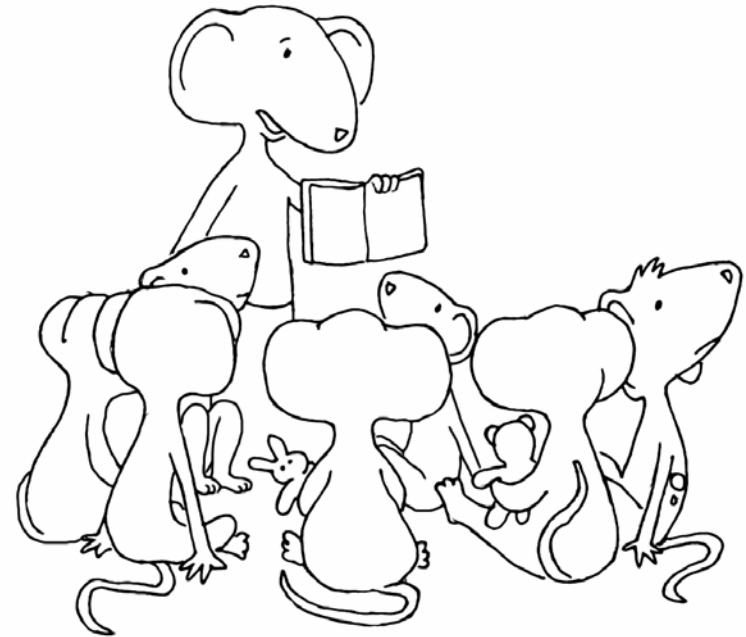
When they got to the shelter,  
there were nice people there.  
They gave them water and  
told them where to go.



Some kids were singing. Trink  
and Sam sat down with them.



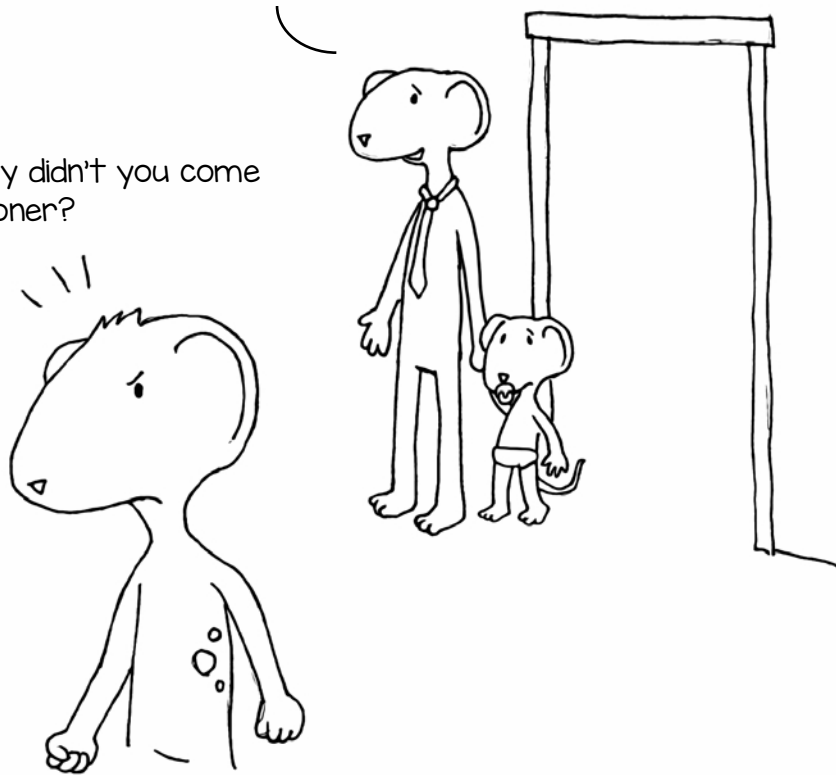
Sam colored for a while.



He tried to listen to stories,  
but he just didn't feel right.  
He wanted his family.

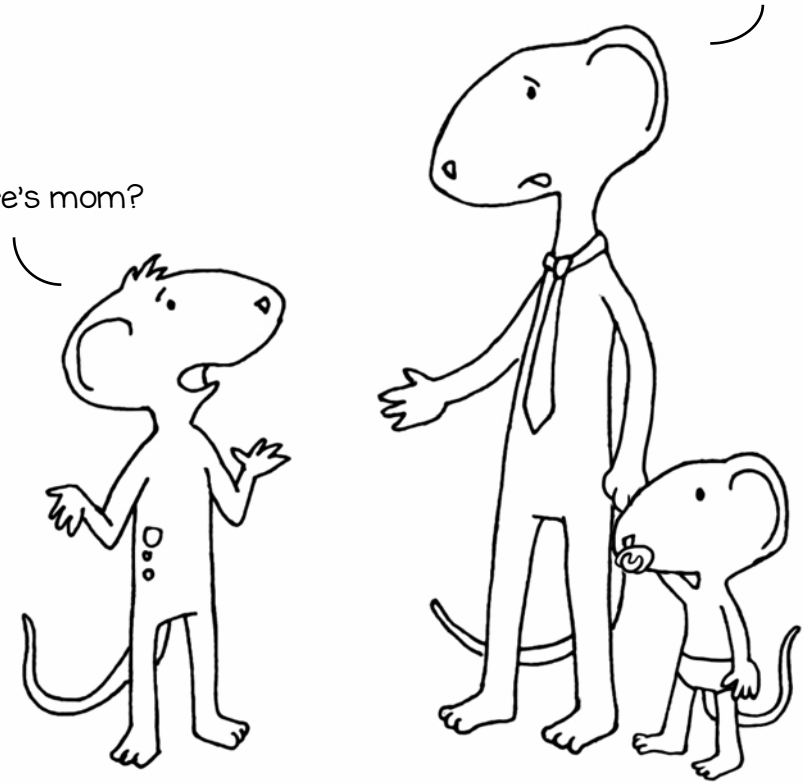
Sorry Sam. We had to take the long way to get to the shelter.

Why didn't you come sooner?

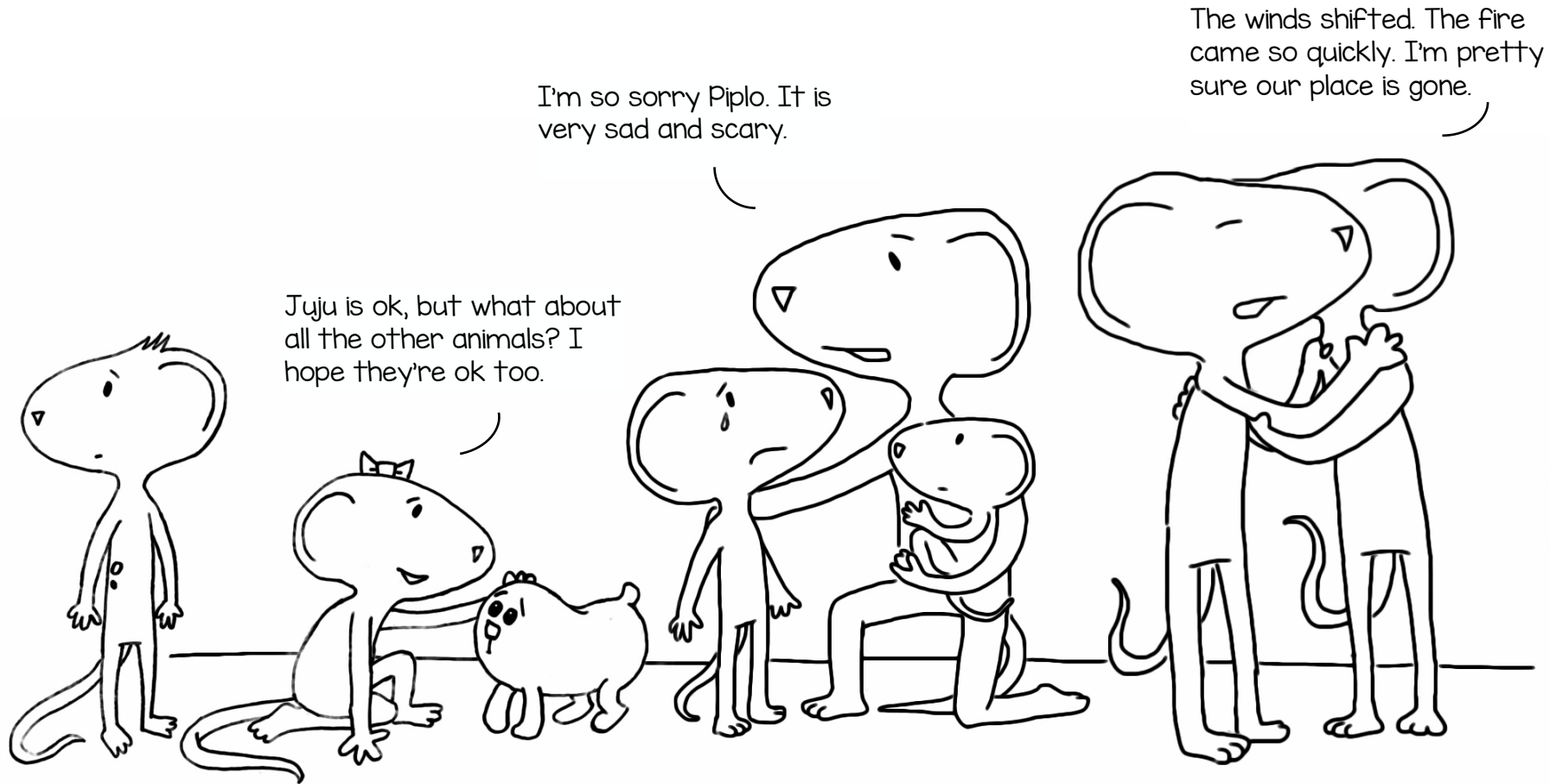


After a long time, Sam's dad came. Sam was happy, but he was also mad.

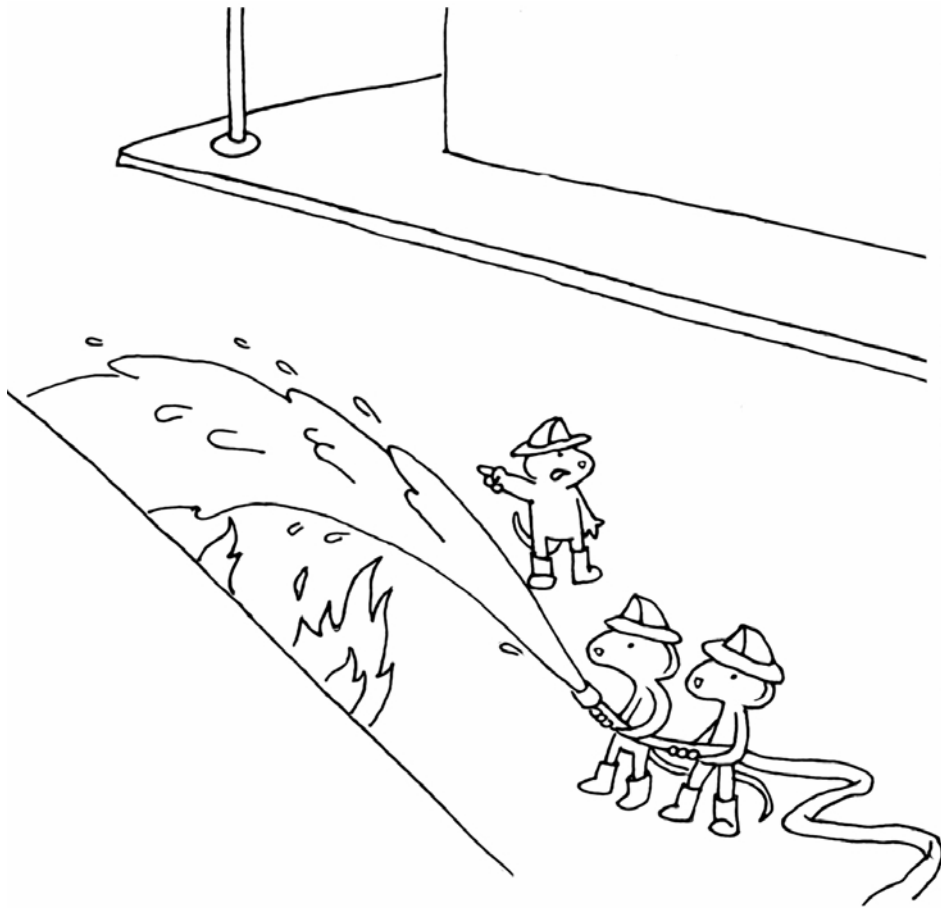
Where's mom?



He didn't understand why his mom wasn't with them.



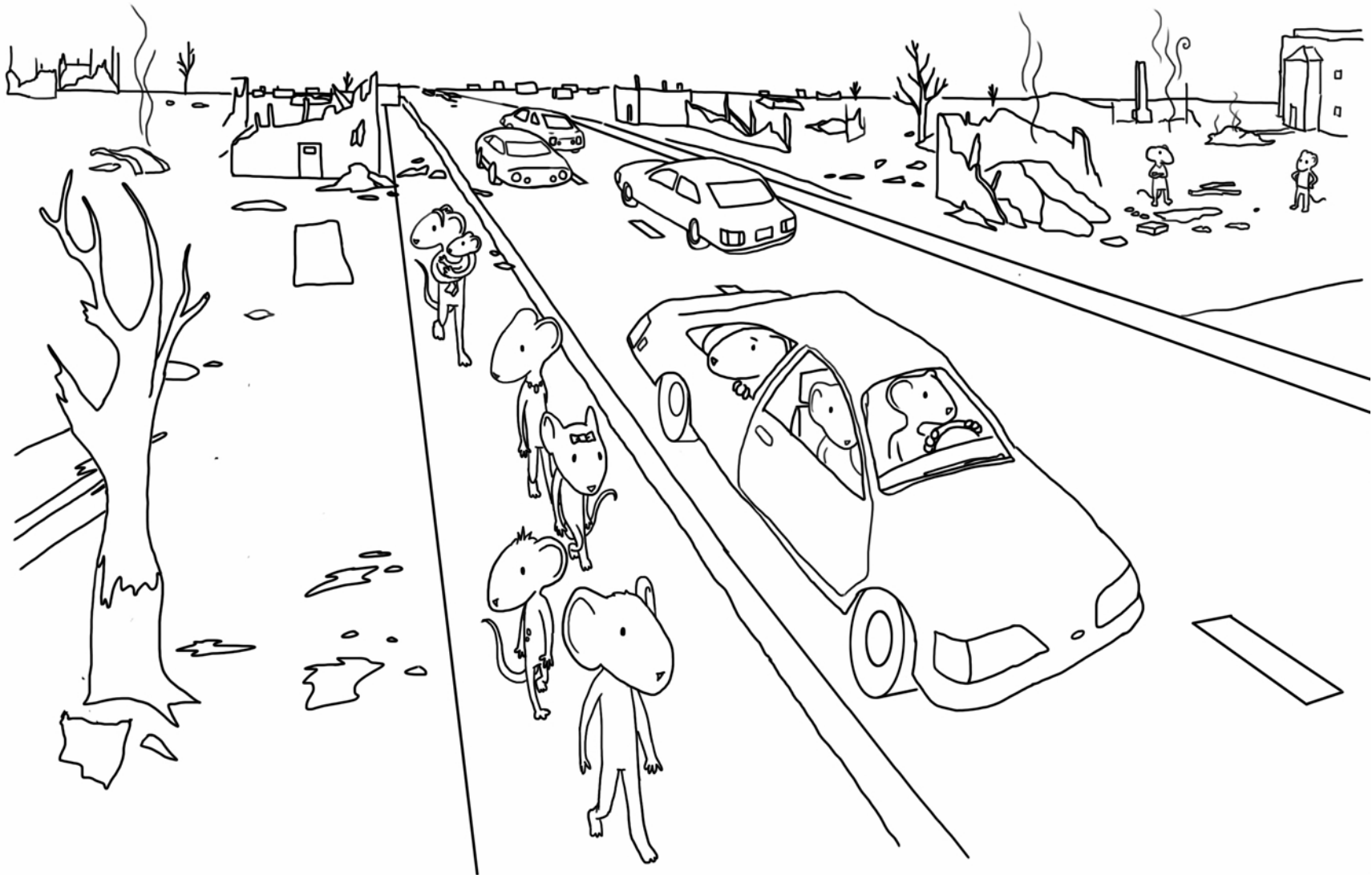
They waited for a long time. More neighbors came. They saw Piplo and his sister Livi. They brought their pet Juju. Piplo was crying. The wind changed directions, and the fire came so fast. They had to run out of their house. They left everything behind. They were pretty sure that the fire had burned down their place.



It took a long long time.  
Little town was in danger, but  
the firefighters worked hard  
and finally put out the fire.



They could go back to their  
homes, but the fire had  
caused a lot of damage, and  
they didn't know if their  
homes were ok.



As they went back to their neighborhood, they smelled the smoke everywhere. They saw what the fire had done. Trees were black and their leaves were gone. In some places there was nothing left but ashes. Sam was mad at the fire. It had hurt his school and messed up his town.

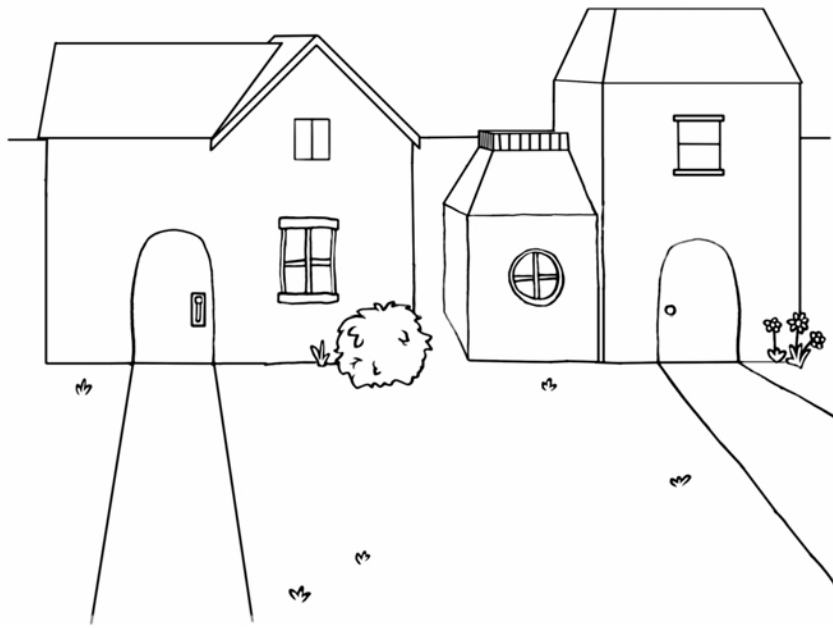


The ambulances and fire trucks were there. They were helping people who did not feel well and were taking care of them. They were also rescuing people's pets.





When they got to their neighborhood, they saw that Piplo's house had burnt down. Piplo's family was crying. They were so sad to have lost their house, their toys, and all their belongings, but they were also glad that everyone was safe.



They went a little farther to where Trinka and Sam lived. The trees around their place were burned, but they were lucky. The fire had stopped right before it reached their homes.

Oh mom. I missed you so much!



I know honey. I wanted to be with you, but all the roads were closed, and the phone lines were down.



I was really worried. I am so glad you are all safe.

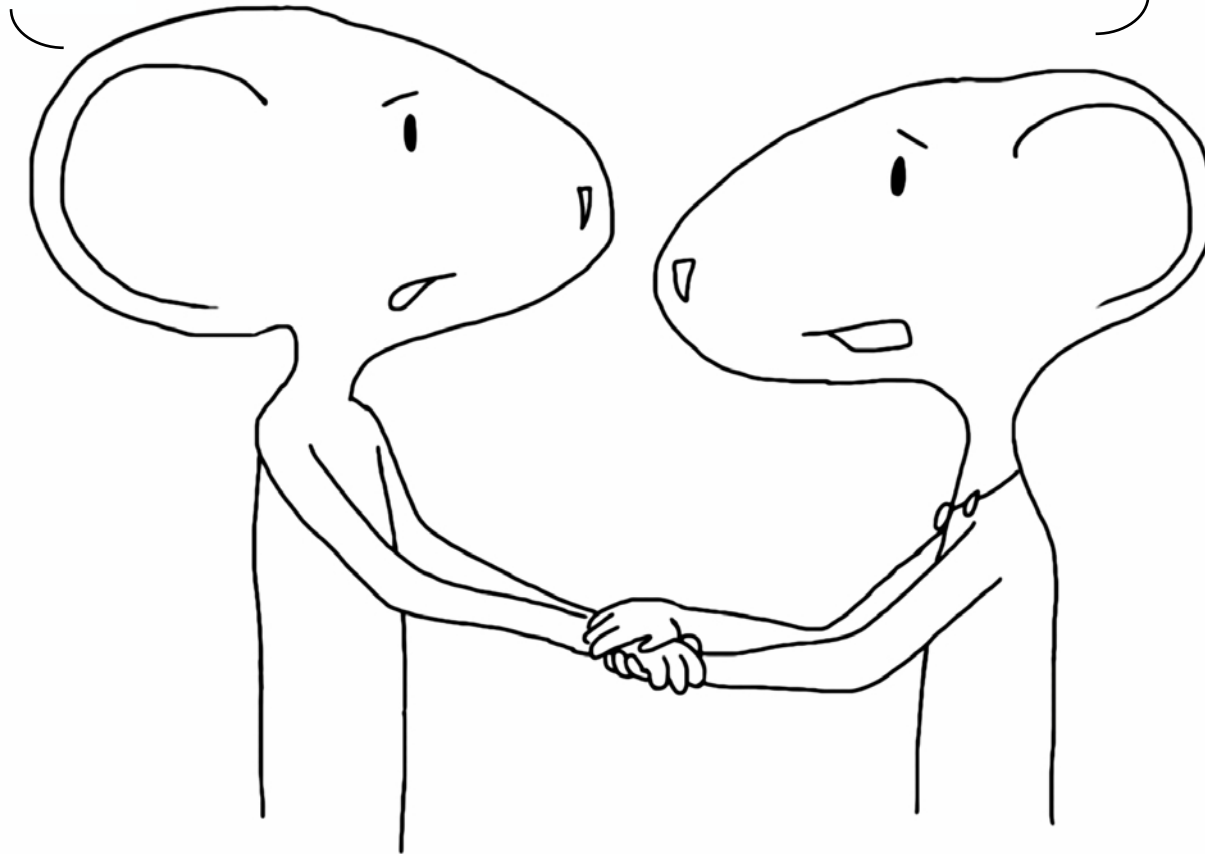
Sam's mom came running out of the house. She had rushed home as soon as the roads were open, and now they were all together.

Thank you for  
saving our home.



They were grateful to all the firefighters who had worked so hard to put out the fire. The firefighters said there were still fires in another area. They would be watching, but the children could not play outside because of the smoke. School might be closed for a while, and when it opened, they might not be able to play outside during recess until the smoke was gone, and it was easy to breathe.

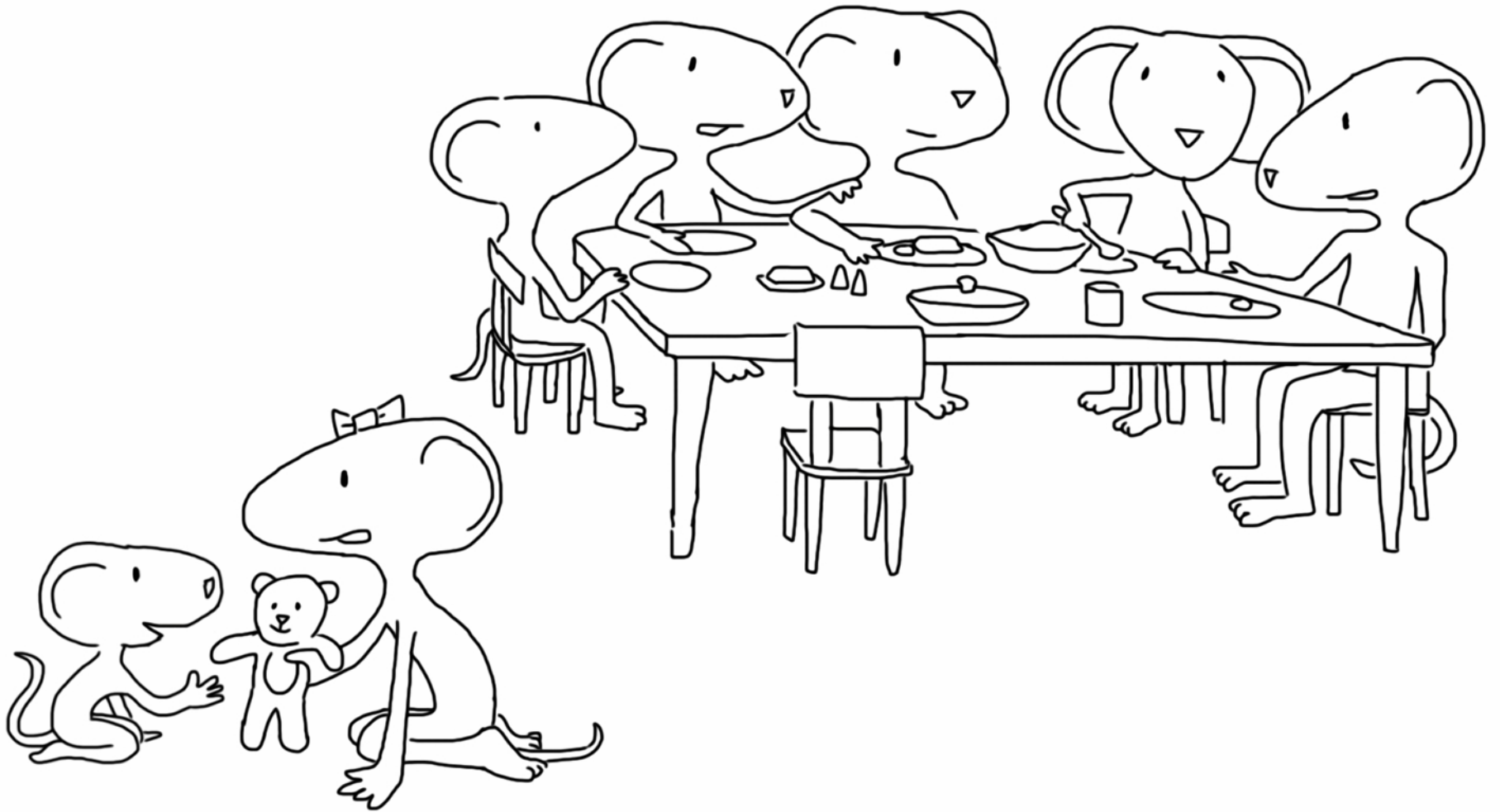
We couldn't do that.



We will clear out a room so that you can stay with us while you decide what to do.

We are neighbors, and it could have been us staying with you if things had been different.

It was very strange that Trinka and Sam's houses were ok but Piplo's was not, but this is what fires 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.



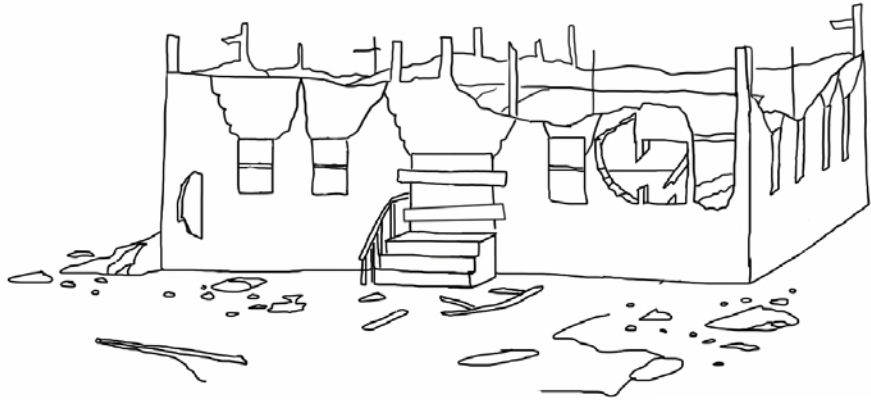
After the fire, families helped their neighbors. They gave them hugs. They made sure they had clothes and a place to stay while they figured out what they would do.



After the fire it was hard.  
Some stores they loved were  
gone and could not rebuild.



There were things that  
reminded them of the fire.

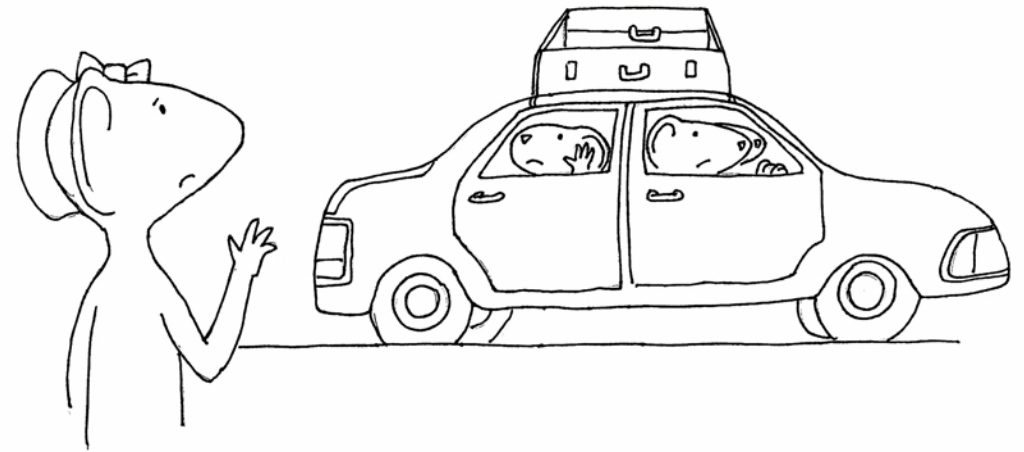


Why can't I go there any more?

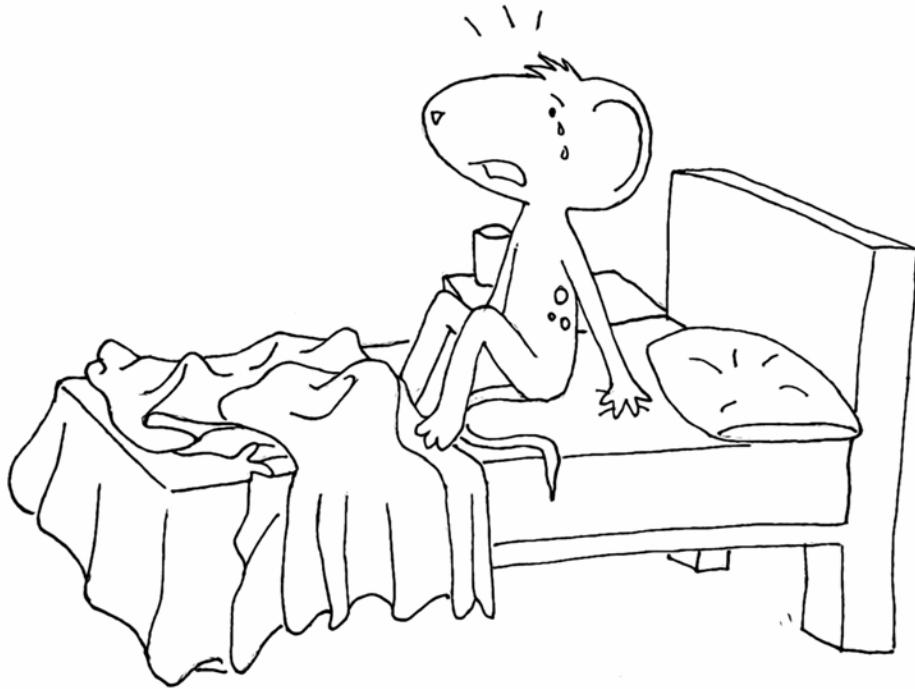


They're going to fix it, but for a while, you'll go to another school.

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. Trinkka and Sam missed him.



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

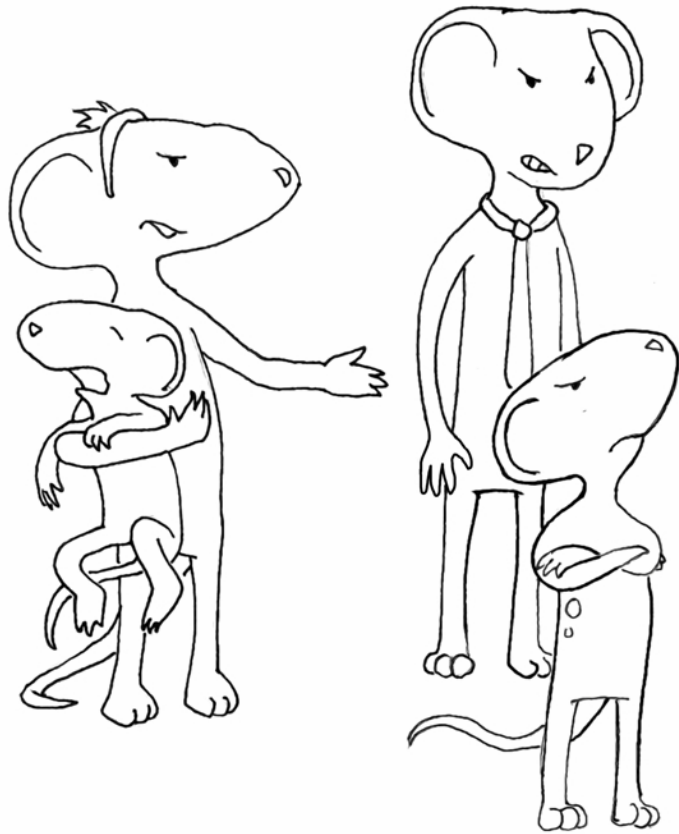
Daddy I had a bad dream.

It's ok. It was just a dream.  
You are safe.



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

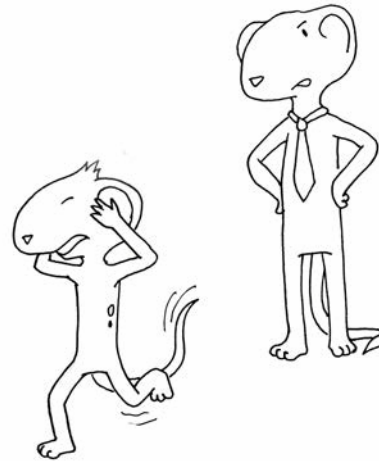




Even with the extra love, Sam did not feel the same. He felt mad. He felt cranky.



He took his brother's toy.

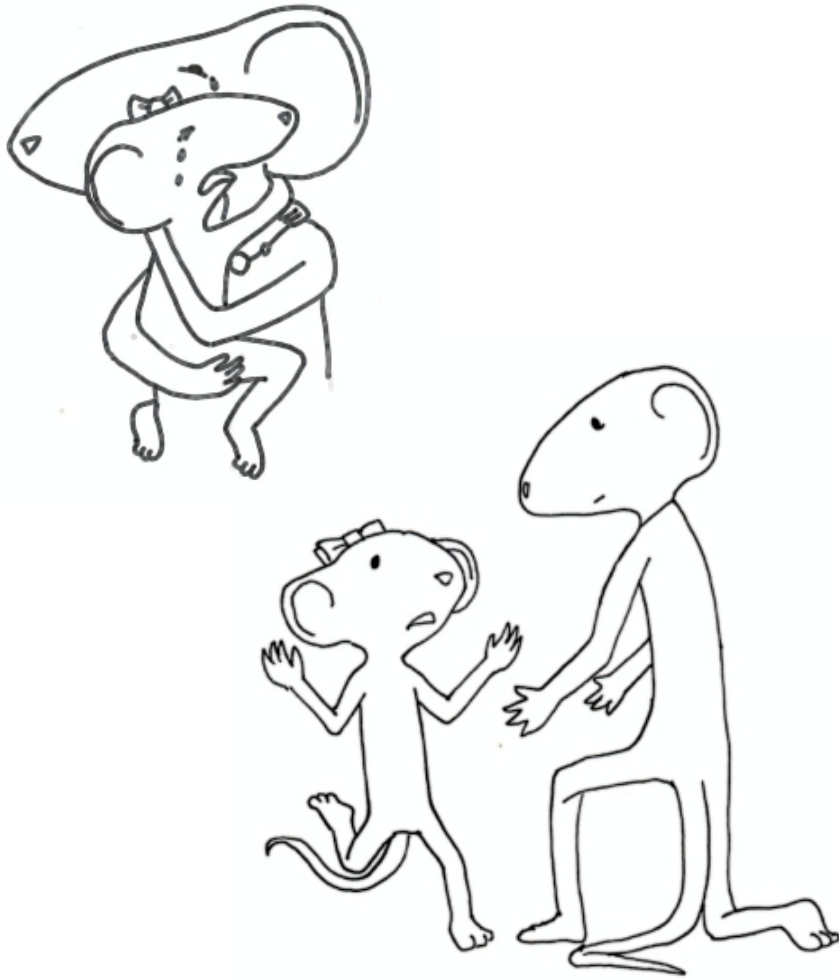


He didn't listen to his daddy.

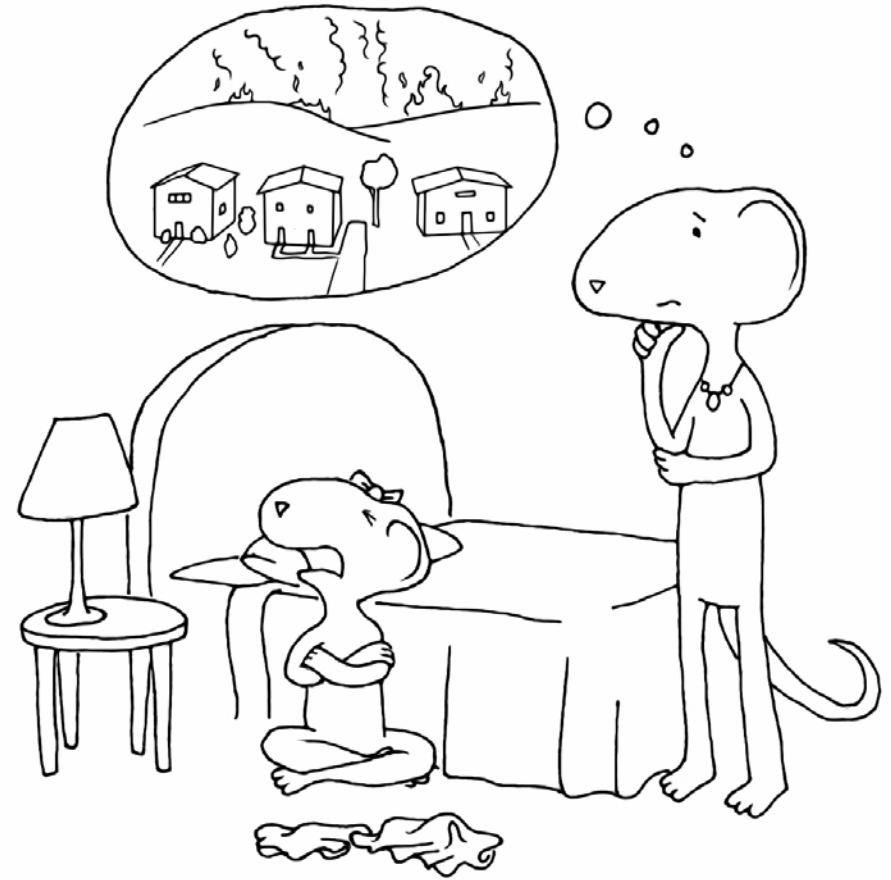


He slammed the door.

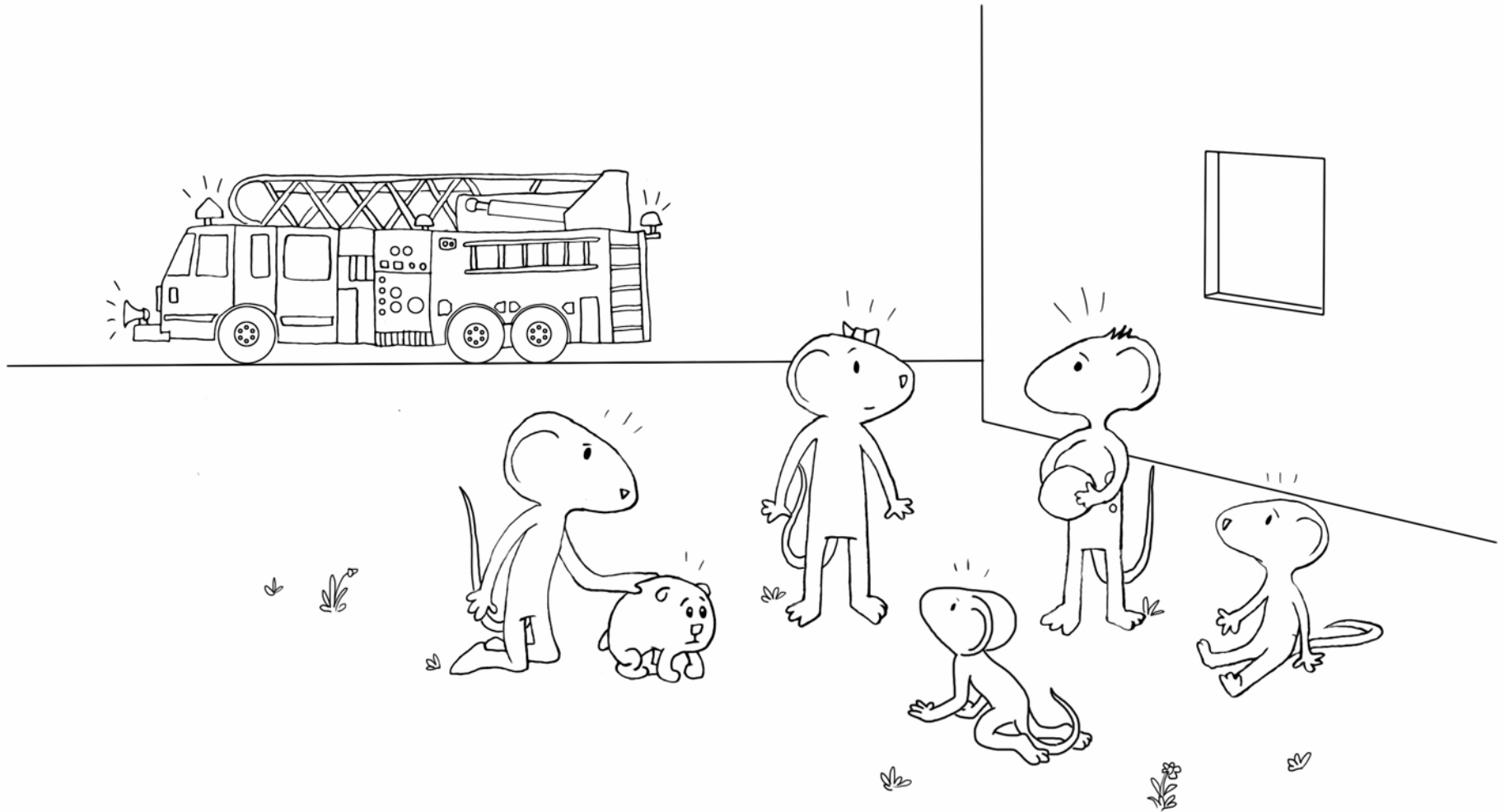
He didn't behave right, and he didn't know why.



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

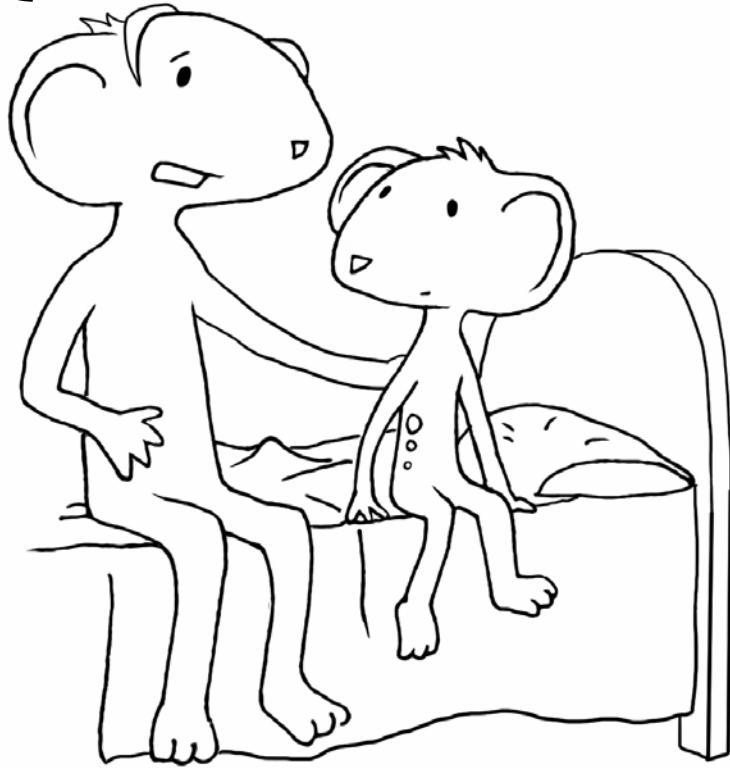


And everyone, even baby Livi and Juju, seemed to notice and get worried when they smelled smoke or heard sirens from fire trucks, ambulances, and police. They would look around to see if there was a fire, and even though there was no fire, the memories of the dark smoky clouds followed them.

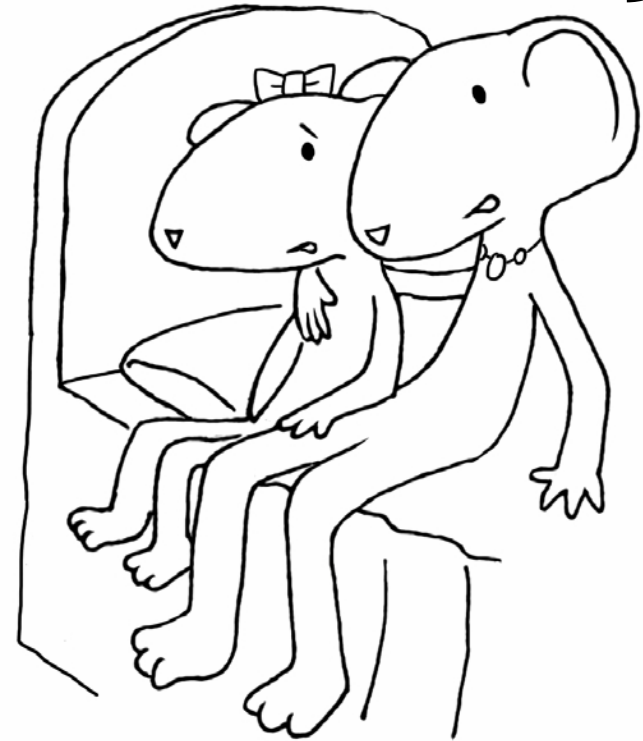


Trinka's mom understood. Sam's dad understood. Even though the fire was over, it would take a while before Littletown was fixed. It would take time until they all felt calm and safe inside.

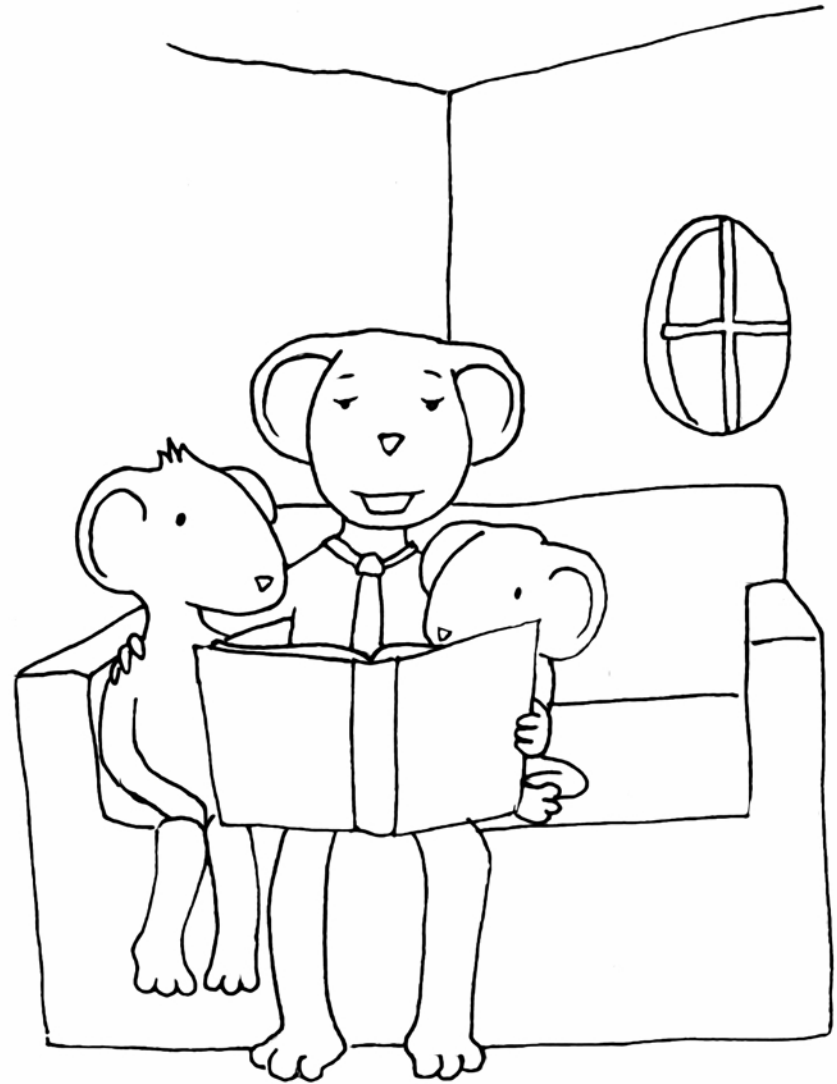
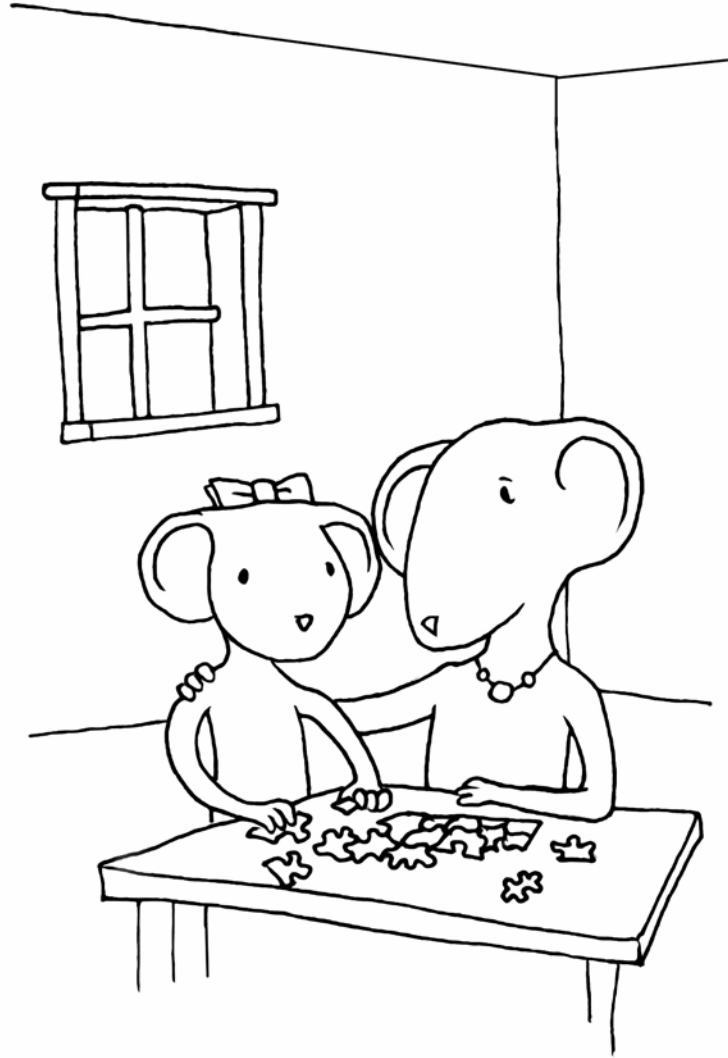
I know it was scary. I wish I could have been there to hold you and keep you safe.



I know you worry about fires. This was a really bad one. Our family and Littletown are making a really good plan to keep us all safe in the future.



Sam's mom talked to him. Trinkka's mom talked to her. "The fire was scary. It scared all of us, and there have been so many changes in our lives because of the fire. 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.

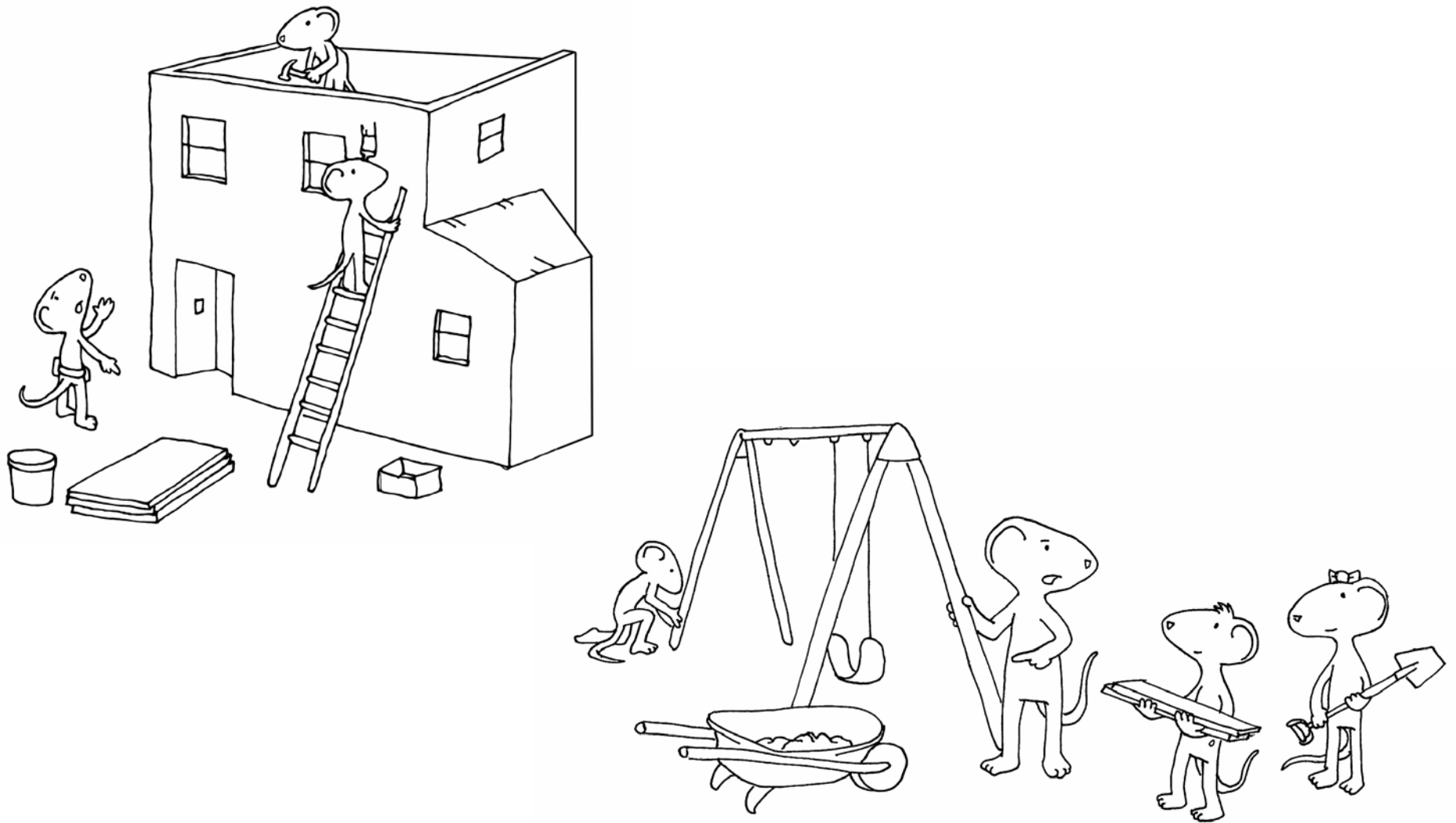


Trinka and Sam often needed hugs and lots of patience, and their parents were there for them.

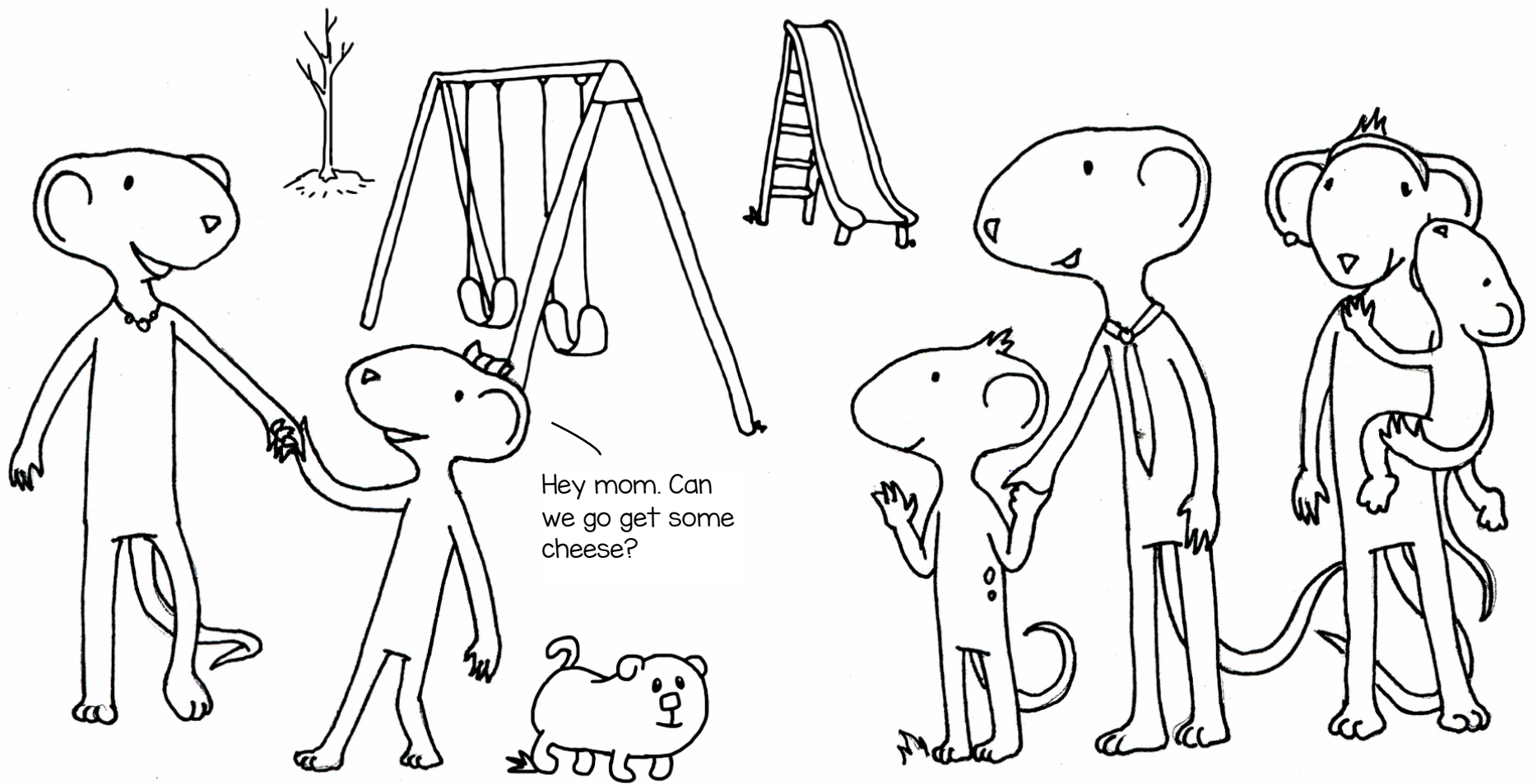


It would take a while. They would plant new trees and bushes.

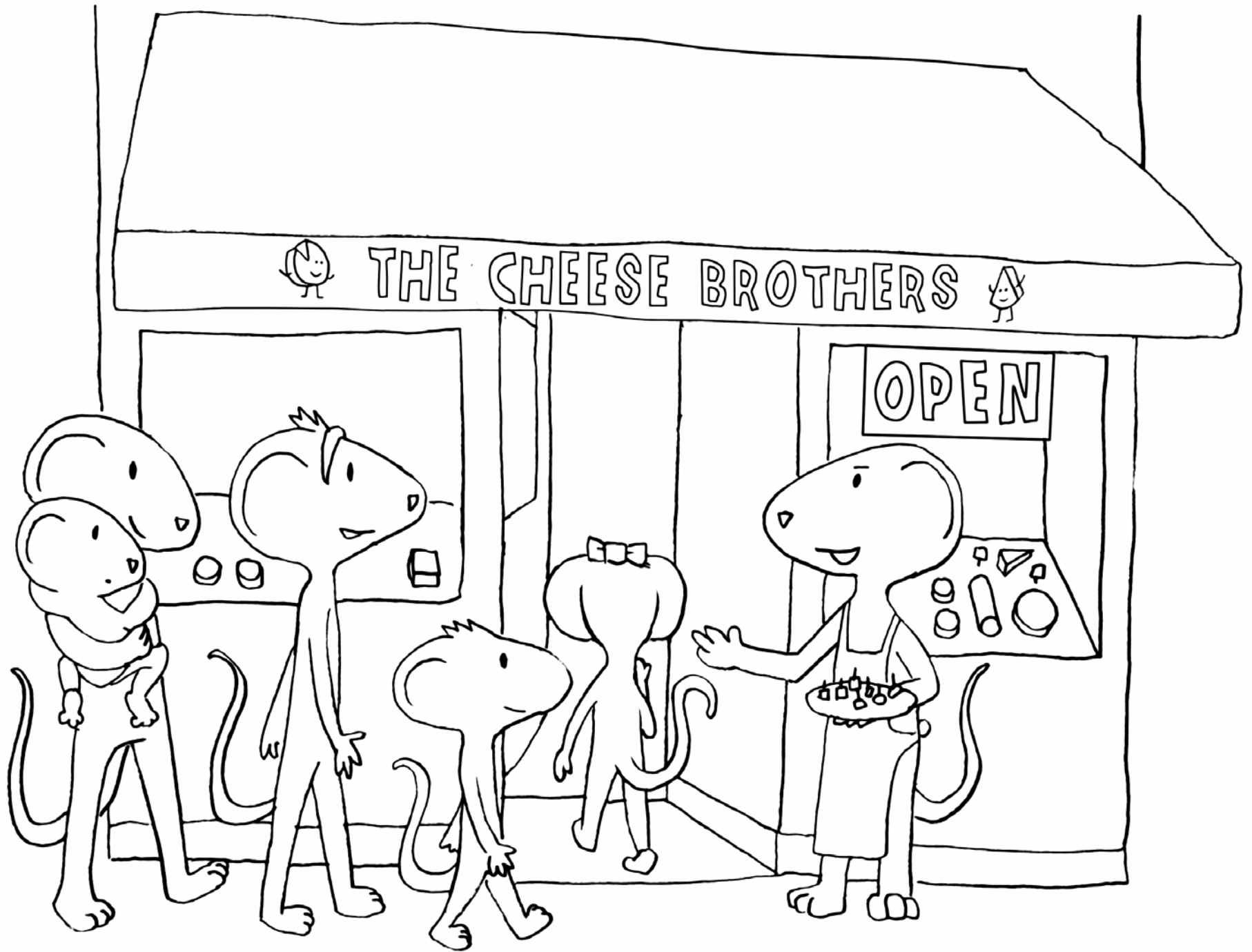




They would build new schools and homes. They would work together to fix the playground. It would take time, but they would rebuild Littletown.



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 fire learn to talk about and 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 fire 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 fire pictures to show how angry they are with the fires 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 fire 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 fire, Sam is mad at his dad because Sam thinks his dad took too long to come. He is also upset because he doesn't understand why his mom is not there. 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 fire, Trinka is more clingy. It is hard for young children to see the aftermath of the fire. 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 fire, especially if the fire 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, Trinkka, 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 fires.
    - Young children may have a lot of questions about fires, but because they are little, they may not know how to ask them. Here are some questions they may have.
      - Why did it start?
      - What made it spread so fast?
      - Will it happen again?
      - What are people doing to keep us safe in the future?
      - What will we do if it happens again?
      - Will the grass and trees grow back?
    - 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 what to expect during and after a fire.
      - Fires happen when something gets really hot and burns. There are good fires and bad fires, but all fire is dangerous, so we must be very careful with fire. Good fires are birthday candles, a fireplace, or campfire. We control these fires. Bad fires are ones that aren't under control and that are unplanned. These fires burn things we don't want to burn-like trees and houses.
      - Not all wildfires are bad. Some forests and grassy areas need fire to help them stay healthy. The fire burns away dead plants and overgrowth of live plants that could make the ground sick. Fire fighters watch these fires to make sure they burn where they should.
      - A fire may change direction due to the way the winds are blowing. The stronger the winds, the faster fires can spread.
- If the fire fighters feel it is becoming unsafe, they will ask us to leave our house. We will evacuate to a shelter or to a loved ones' home.
  - Fires create big clouds of smoke and ash that smell and may turn the sky dark. We may even see ash on our car or on the grass. When there is a lot of smoke, we need to stay inside because breathing too much of this can make us feel bad.
  - When the fire fighters tell us it is safe for us to go home, fires may still be burning in other areas, so we may still smell smoke and see ash. Fire fighters are monitoring the fire and will let us know if we have to leave again.
  - After a fire, it may be important to plant lots of bushes and plants to try to prevent flooding.

### Key Points to Remember

- Even after a fire is over, it can continue to affect us.
- Many things may remind you or your child of the fire.
  - Seeing fire: campfires, barbecues, a fire in your fireplace
  - Smelling smoke or seeing ash
  - Windy days if the fire spread on a windy day
  - Helicopters if helicopters were involved in fighting the fires
  - Warm dry weather
  - Seeing blackened landscape or trunks of trees
  - Damaged homes
  - Empty lots where buildings once stood
  - Sirens
  - Seeing people upset or crying
- Young children often cannot tell us that they are remembering. They show their fear through their behavior. Trinkka 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. Trinkka 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 fire?
- 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 fire, where they can go that will be safe). After a fire, there may be an increased chance of floods and mudslides during heavy rains, which can create additional stress. If you live in one of these areas, discuss with your children what they should do.
- 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 disaster. Include in your plan:
  - Safe places where you can go
  - A family evacuation plan

- Sign up for any text or email alert system for emergency notifications
- Who you will call if you are not together
- An emergency kit with copies of essential documents
- Supplies to keep pets and livestock cool, hydrated, and fed. Make a plan if they need to be evacuated.
- Groom your house and property annually (e.g., clean gutters, rake debris)

### **Ways You Can Help Yourself**

- Adults can also be affected by fires. 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. For example, if you had to evacuate, you may want to return back to your property the first time without your children so you can experience your own reactions without them present.
- The first step to taking care of yourself is taking time for yourself. Ask yourself . . .
  - Does thinking about the fire 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 fire?
  - 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](https://www.nctsn.org/): Information about children, disasters, and trauma, including information about the emotional impact of fires.
- [NCTSN: Help Kids Cope](#): An app for Android and Apple mobile devices to help children cope before, during, and after a disaster such as fire or floods.
- [NCTSN](#): After a Crisis Helping Young Children Heal – A one page tip sheet for caregivers
- [NCTSN Simple Activities for Families](#) during evacuations and when indoors
- [Piploproductions.com](https://www.piploproductions.com/): Other stories and information to help families heal including “Once I Was Very Very Scared”.
- [Smokeybear](#): Prevention activities for children and educators
- [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)
- [Sesame Street](#): Traumatic Experiences A toolkit to help families after traumatic experiences.
- [Weather WizKids Wildfires](#): Information about wildfires
- [Zerothree.org](https://www.zerotothree.org/). Information about young children and early childhood development