

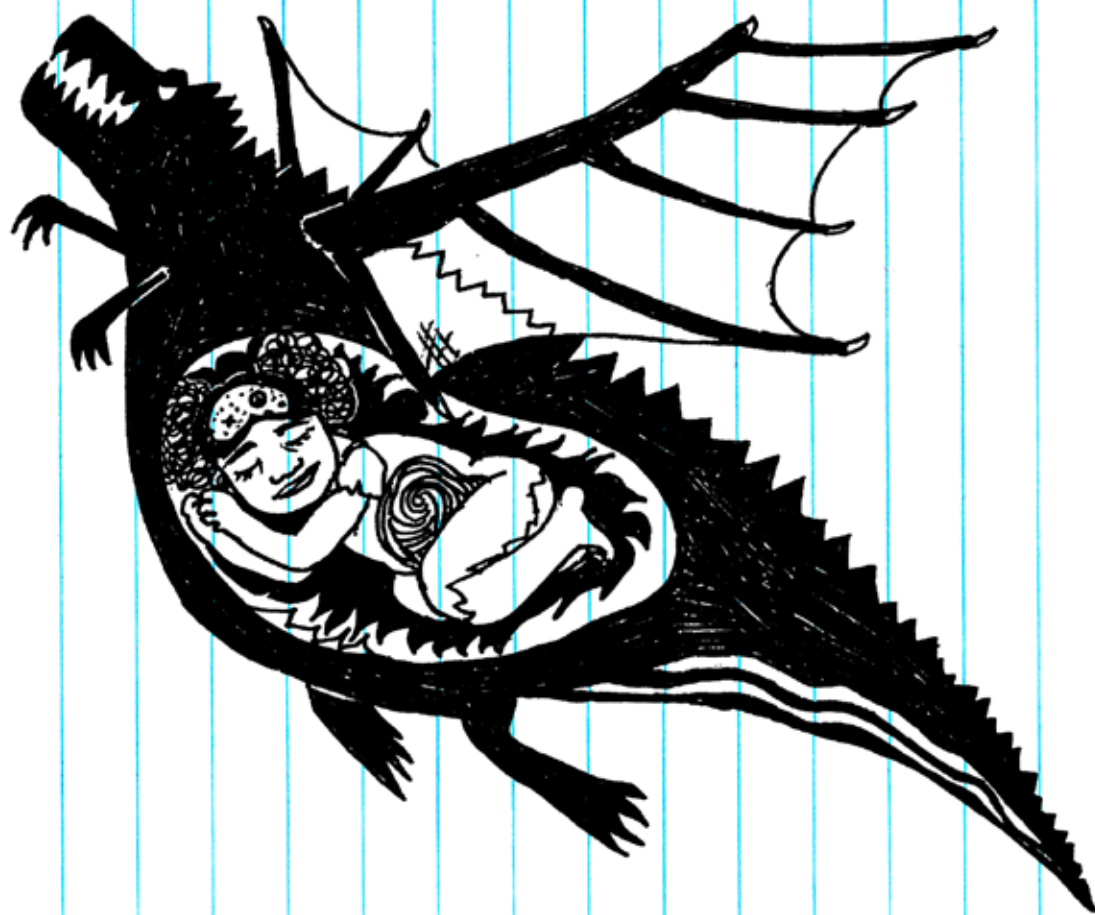
The Princess Who Went Quiet

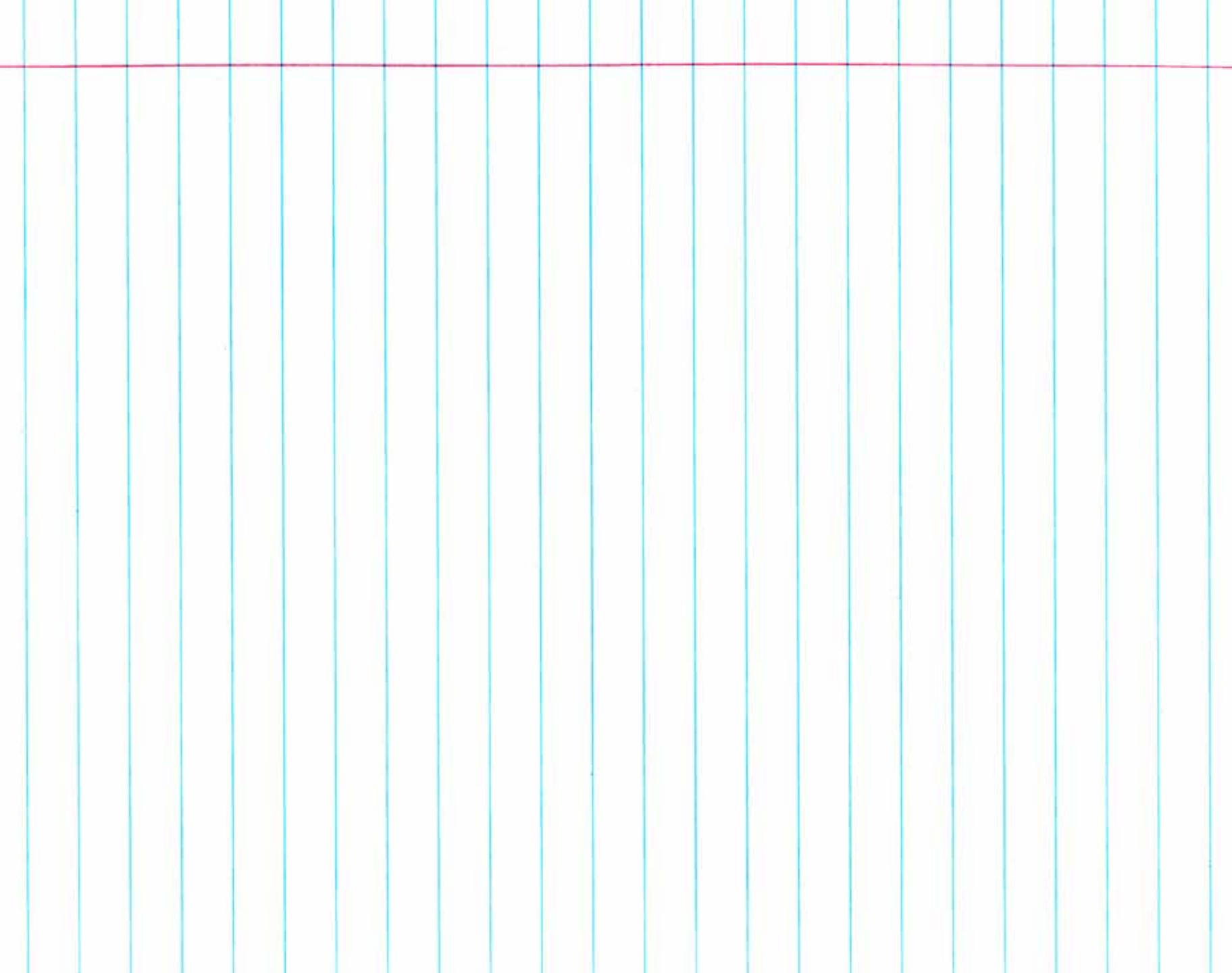
by Bianca Diaz



The Princess Who Went Quiet

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I am so grateful to everyone that made this project possible.

My brother Blas, Mami and Papi, I love you.

Mariame Kaba, Maria Gaspar, and the women of Visible Voices and the Lutheran Social Services of Illinois Connections program, thank you for your guidance and for sharing your stories with me. Máiréad Delaney, for going on the adventure and helping me find my words.

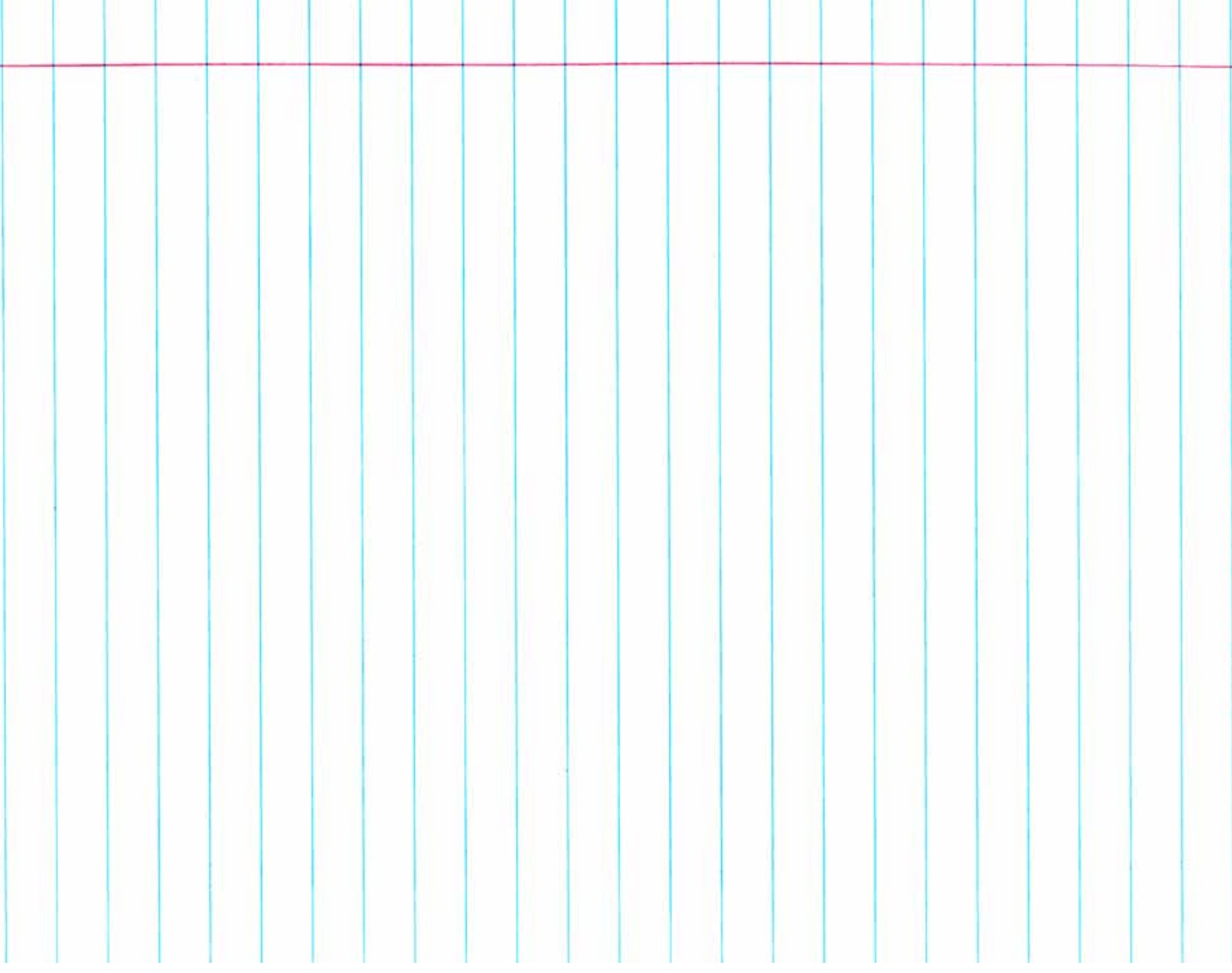
Supported by the 96 Acres project

96 Acres is a series of community-engaged, site-responsive art projects that address the impact of the Cook County Jail on Chicago's West Side. We aim to generate alternative narratives reflecting on power, and to present creative projects that reflect the community's vision of transformation.

For more information: www.96acres.org

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Once there was a princess who was loved by the whole kingdom.
She told great stories to anyone that wanted to listen.



She was kind and happy.



But one day...



She got caught in the
belly of the dragon!



She tried to make a home in the dragon's
belly, but everything burned.
Yes, even the toilet burned.

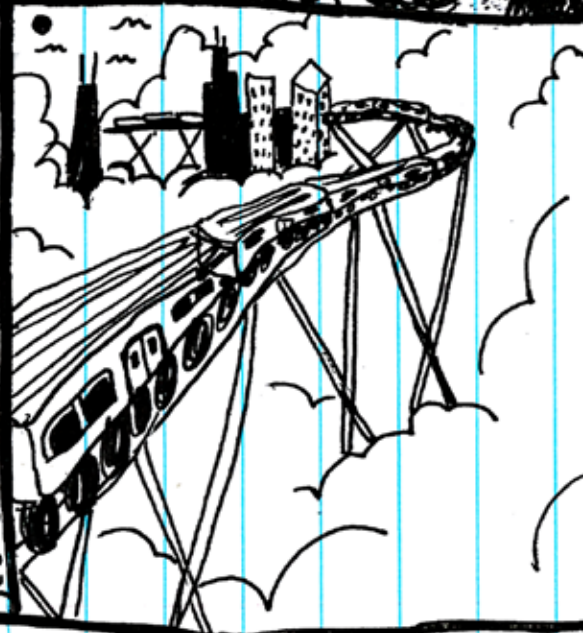
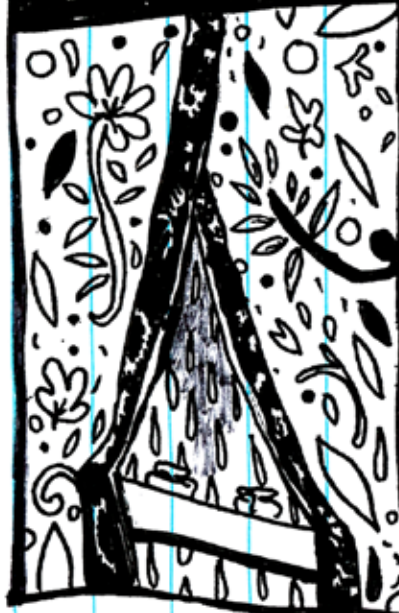
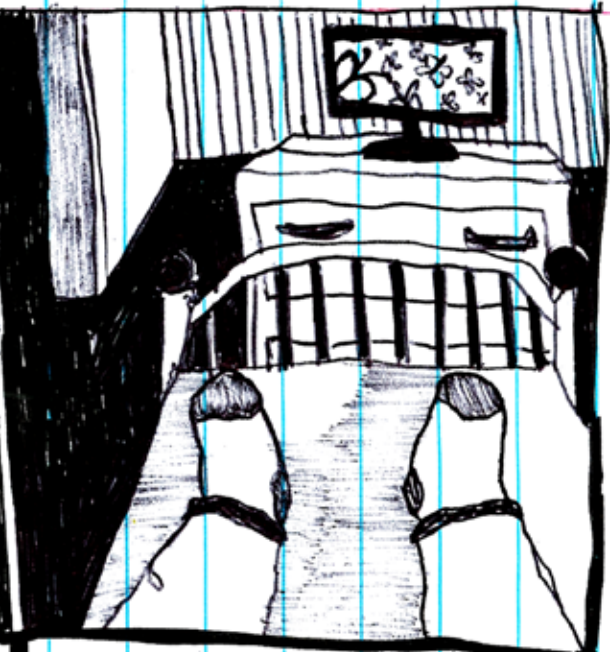


The princess grew lonely. The less
she told stories, the more tired she
felt. She was slipping away.



She
fell into
a
deep
sleep

The princess slept for many years. She had many dreams...



Meanwhile...

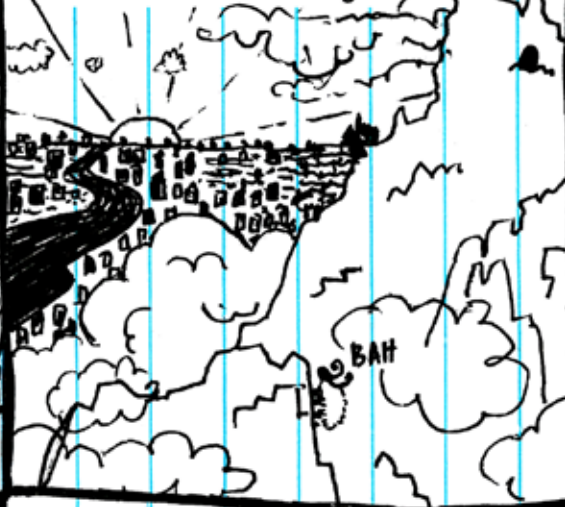
PRINCESSSSSSSSSSSS!

The whole kingdom was heartbroken.



It rained for days. The sky was crying.

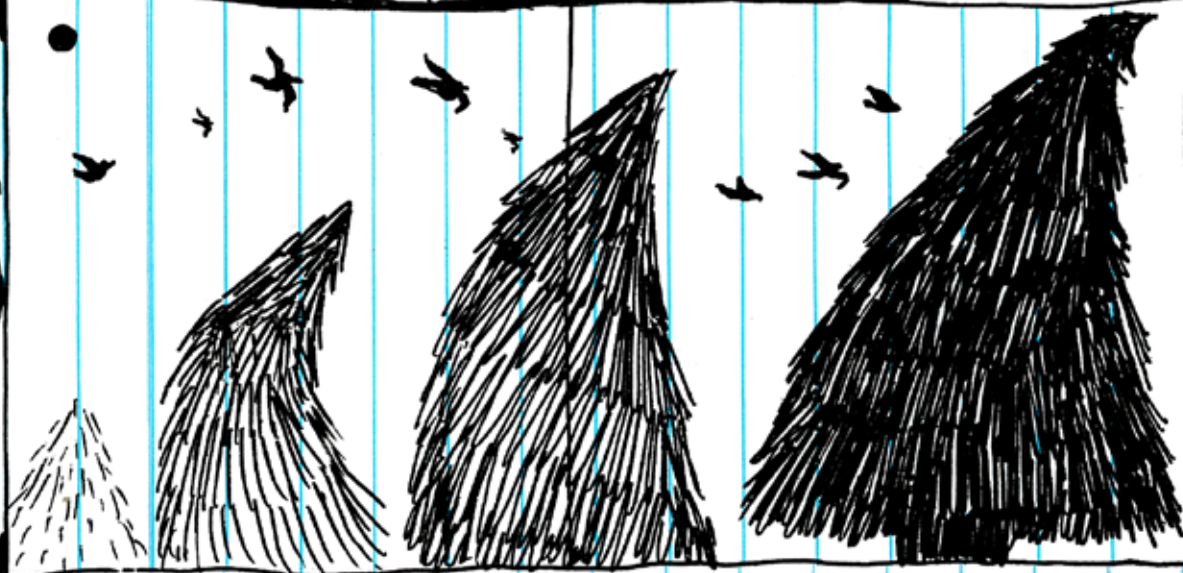
They searched high...



But they never found her.

GENERATIONS

PASSED...



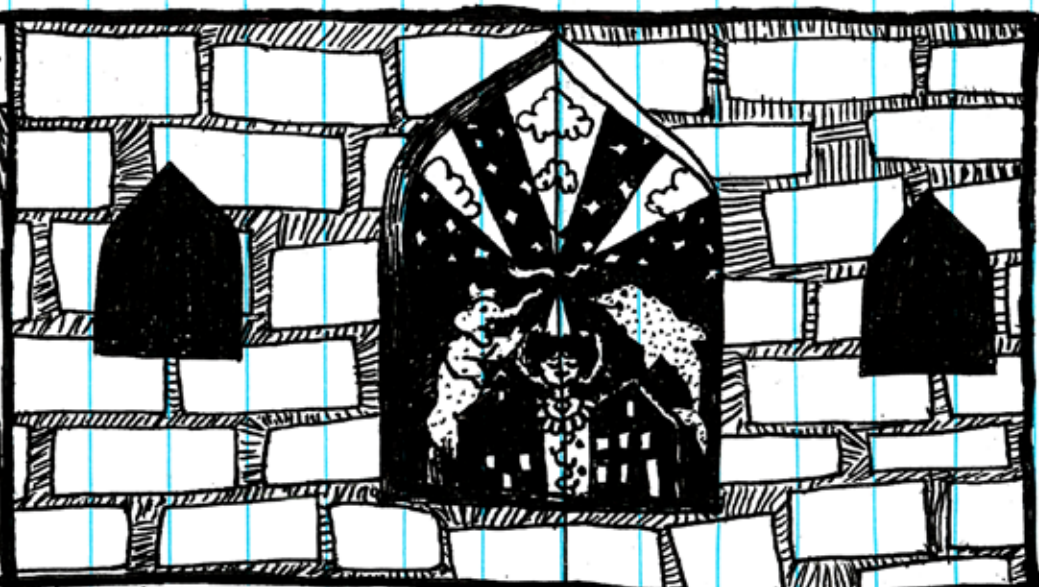
In her dreams, the princess still ruled. ★



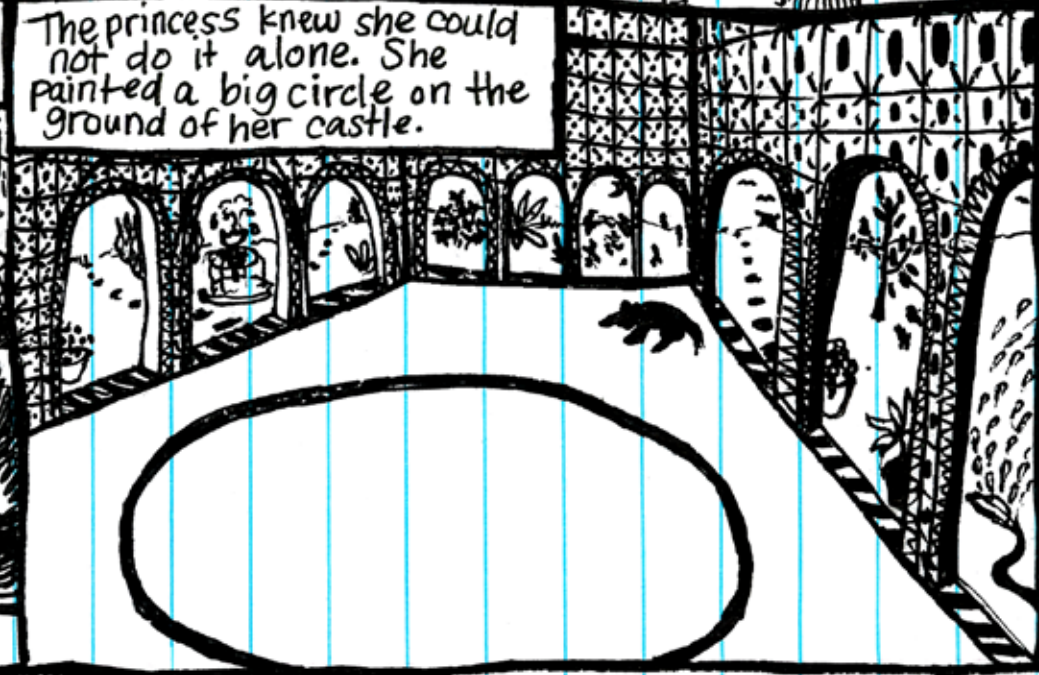
She was very fair. She listened to all the people of her kingdom.



It was not an easy task.



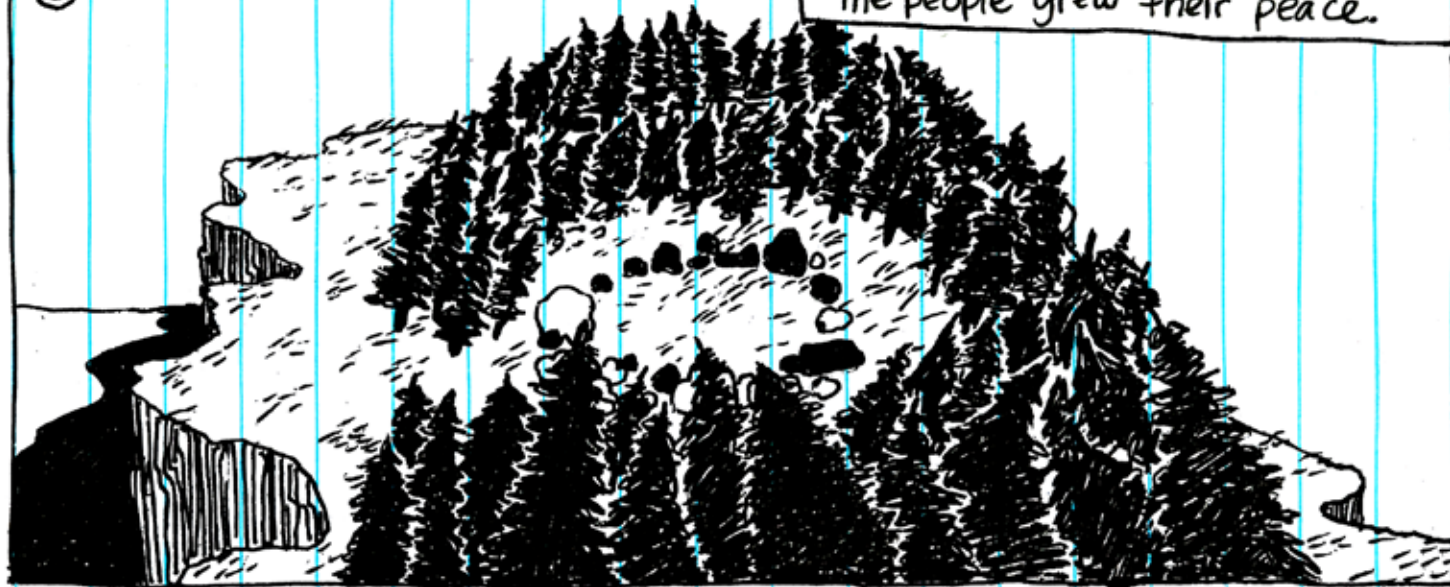
The princess knew she could not do it alone. She painted a big circle on the ground of her castle.



Soon, there were circles all over the kingdom.
At these circles, all animals were welcome.



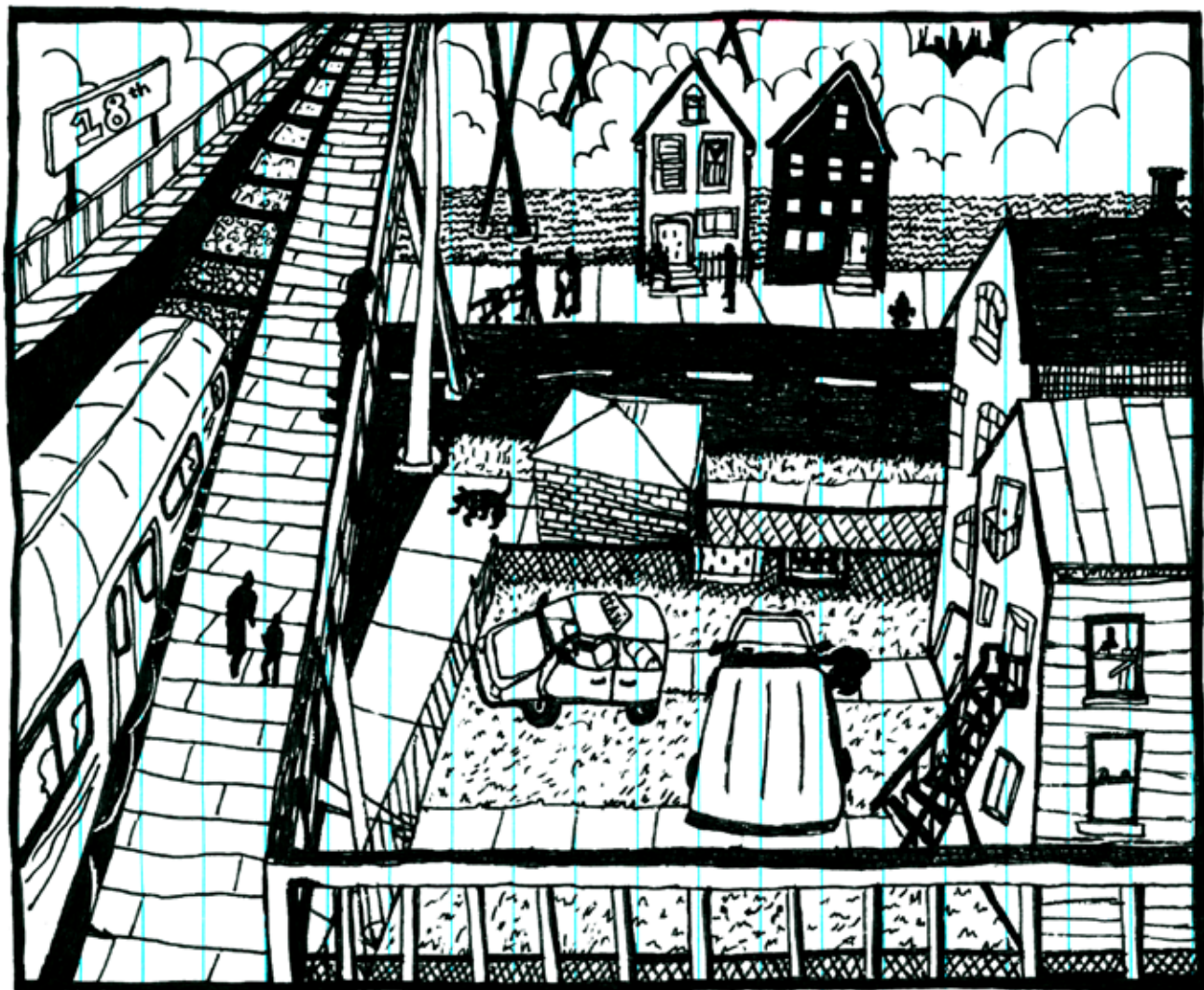
The people grew their peace.

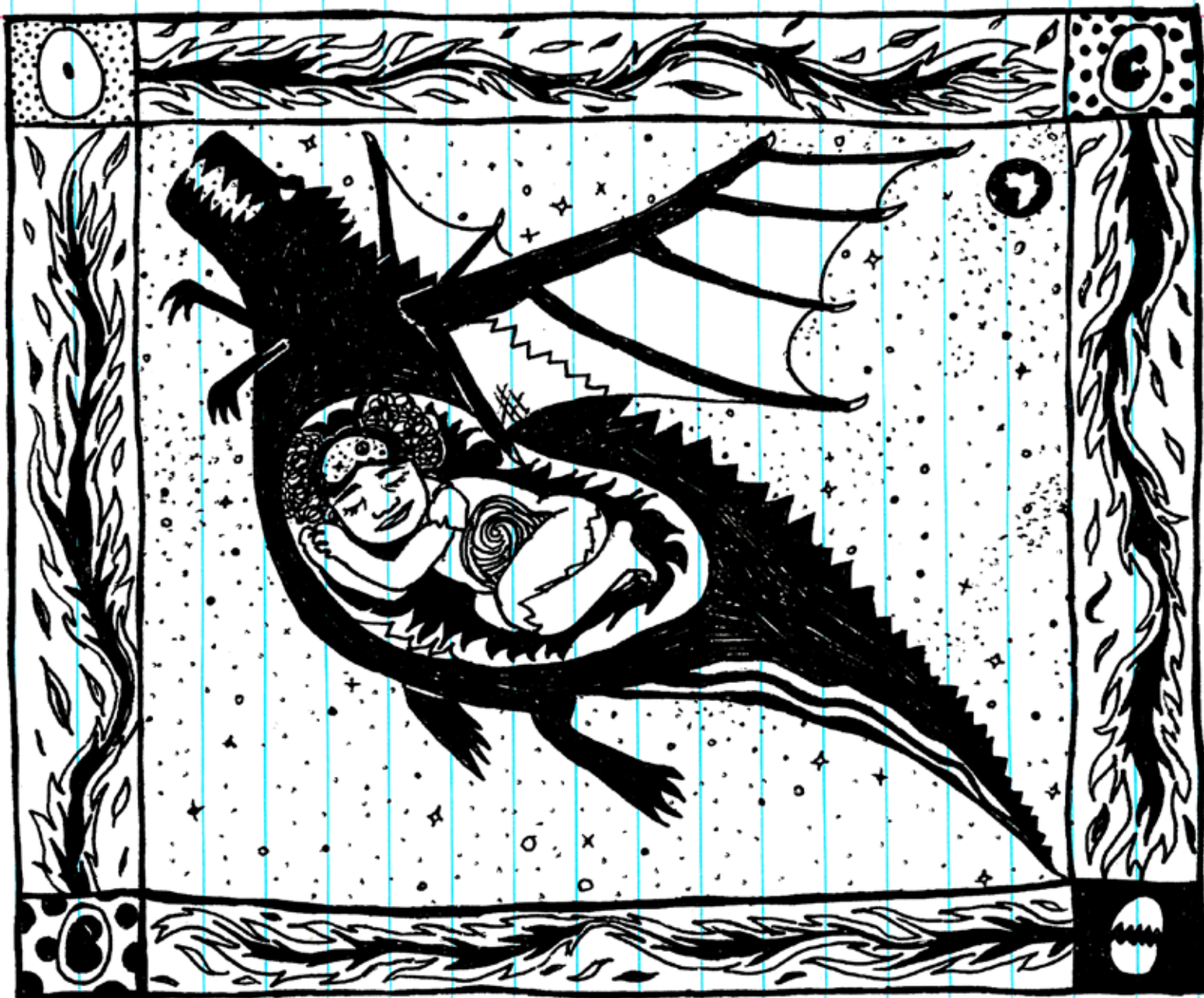


In reality, the princess faded from memory.

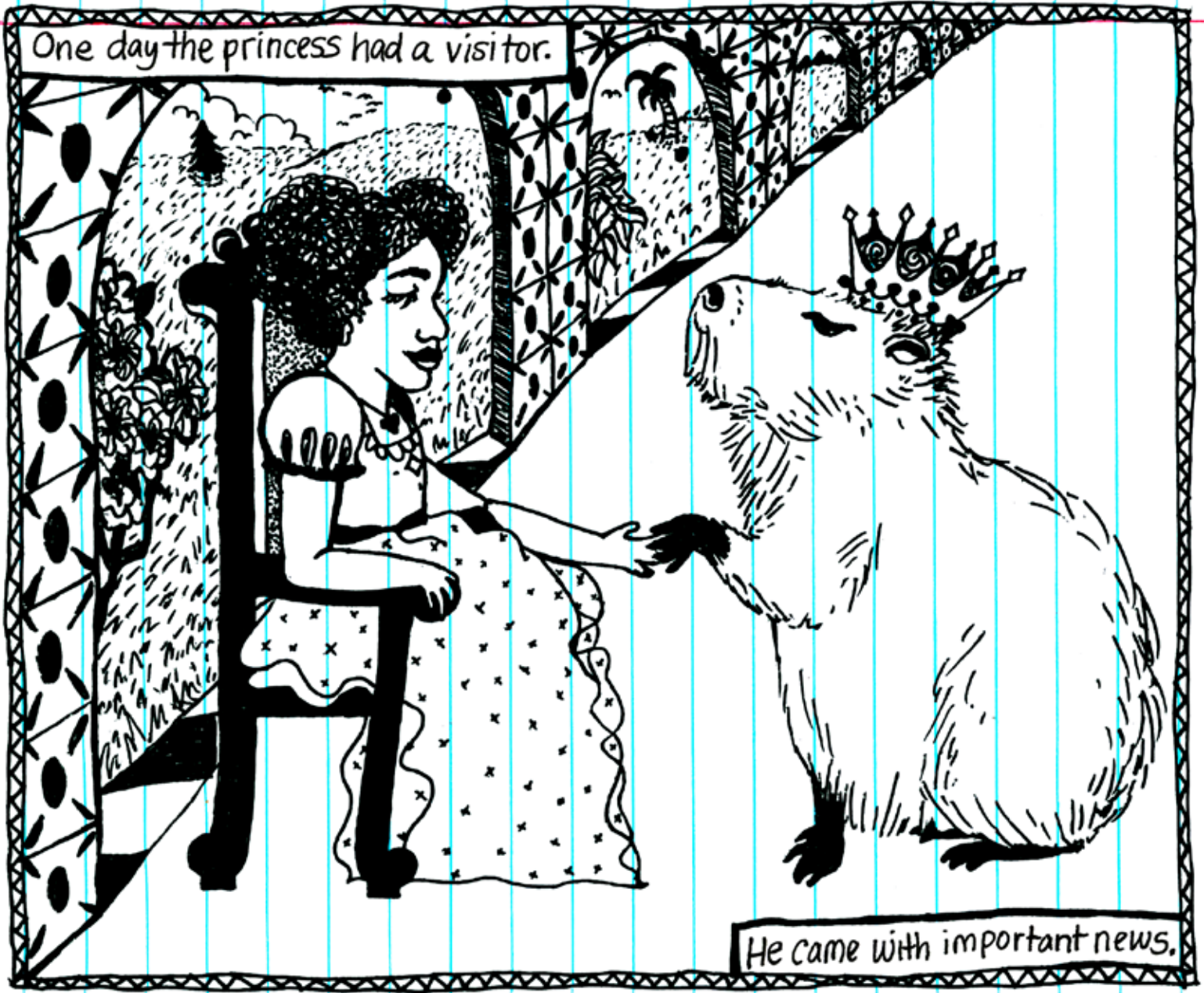


it was a very different world...



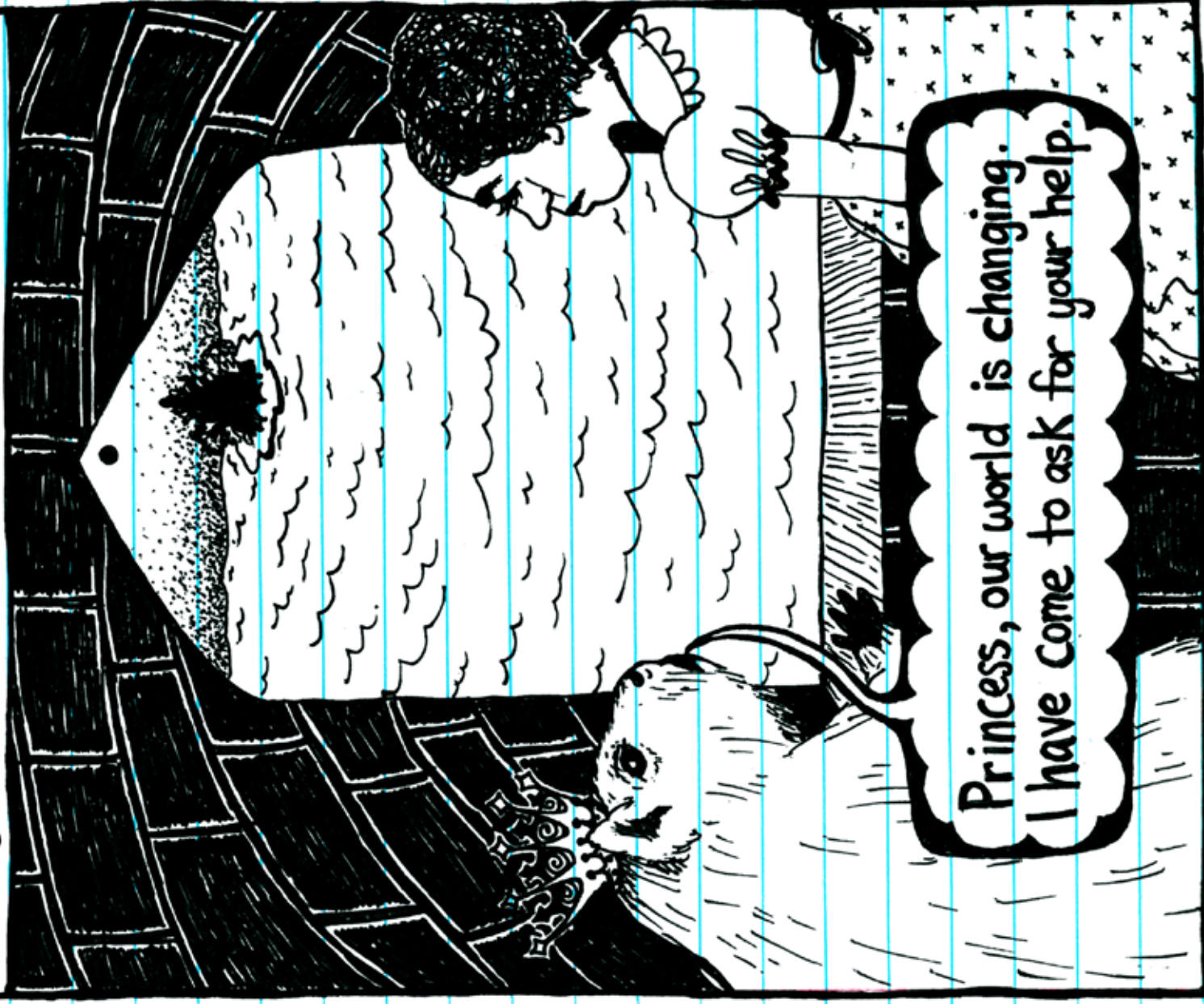


One day the princess had a visitor.

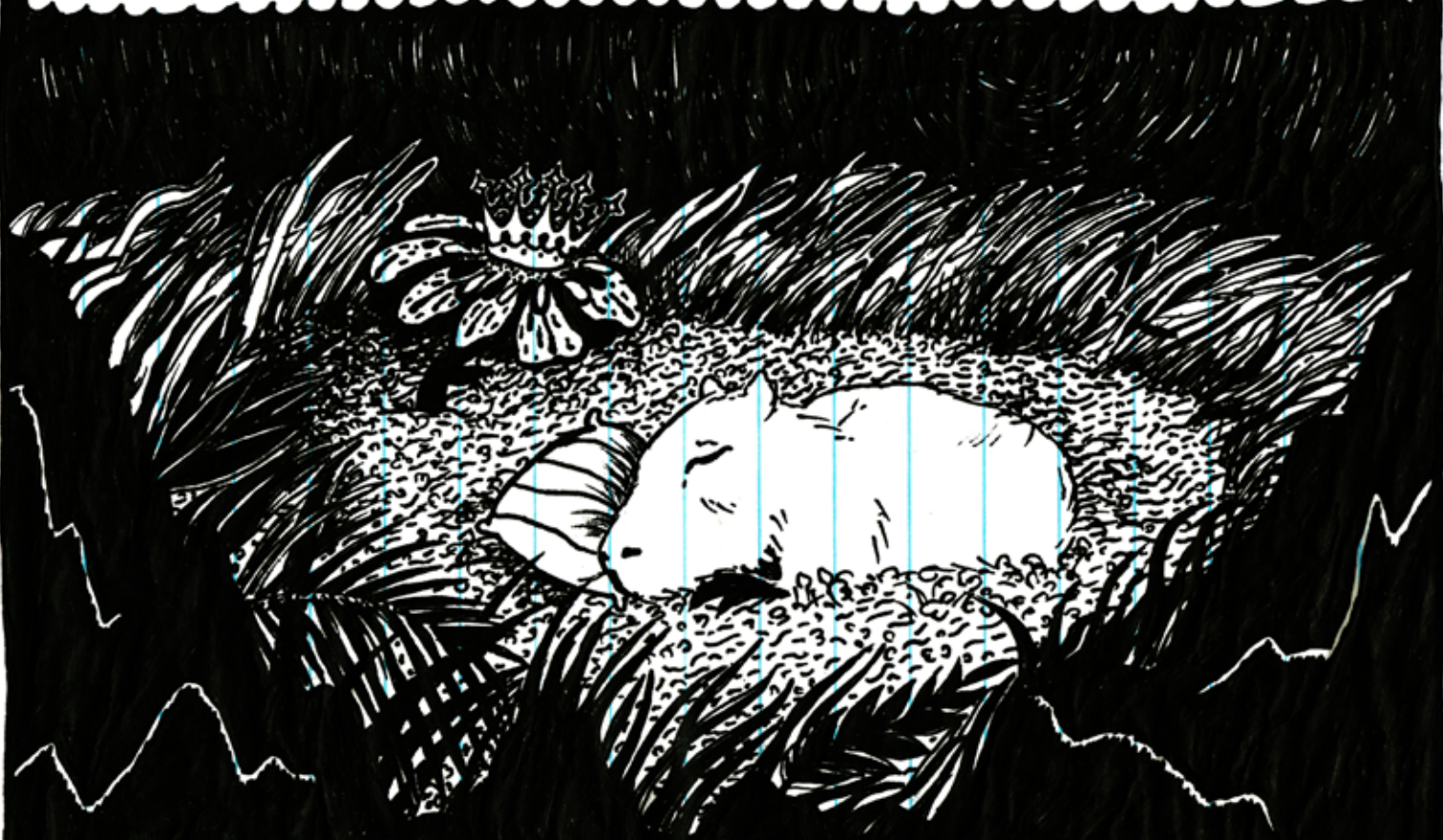


He came with important news.

The Princess and King Capybara walked together and spoke of many things.
They paused at the window of the highest tower.



Every day a citizen of my home, Story Island, disappears. We've searched everywhere but they are nowhere to be found. Now Queen Capybara is missing...



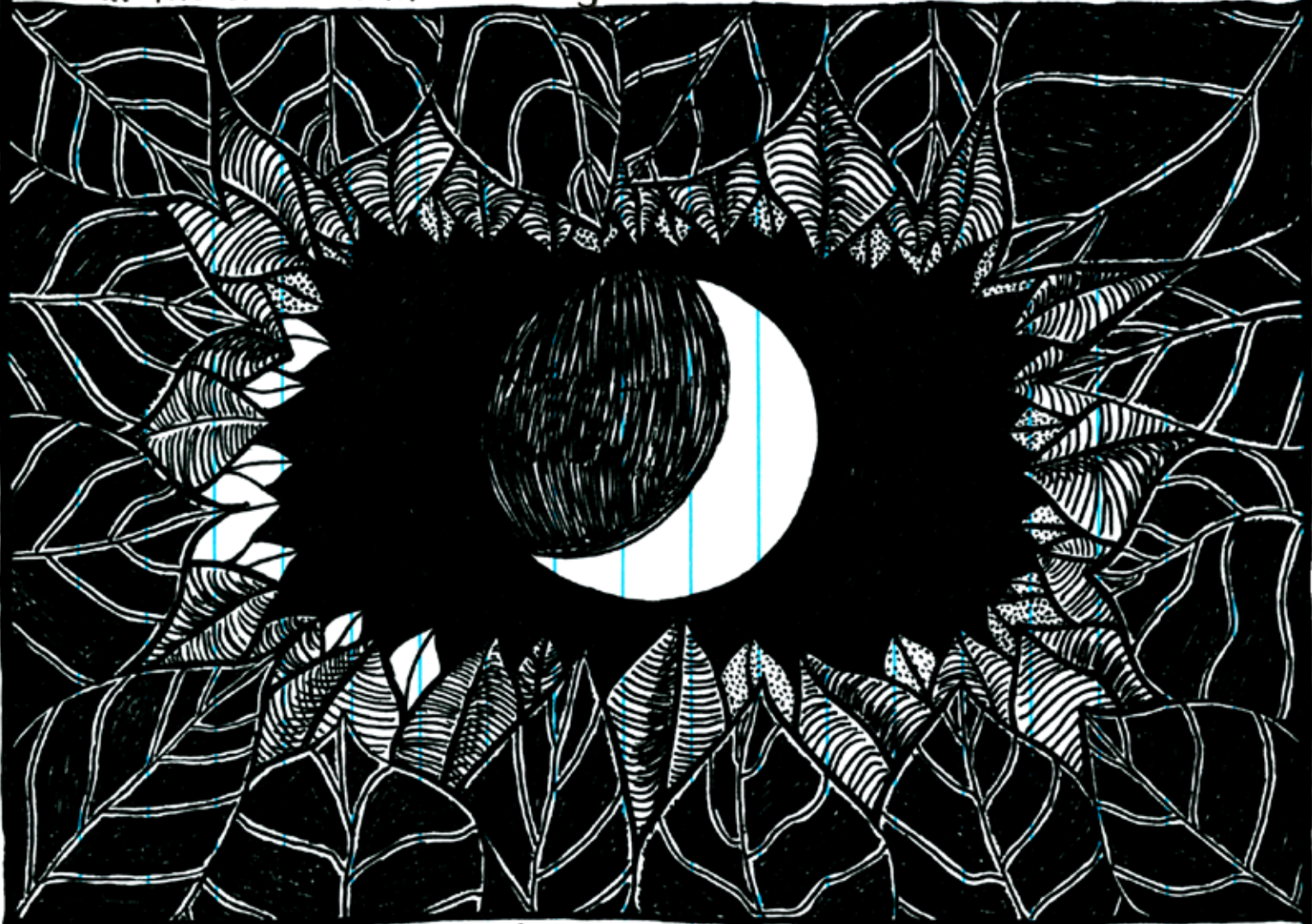
Every night I go to bed and I can smell her sweet scent on my pillow. I can hear her voice in my head. But she's not there. I don't know what to do. Will you help us, Princess?

The brave princess was moved to action. That night, she set out for Stony Island.

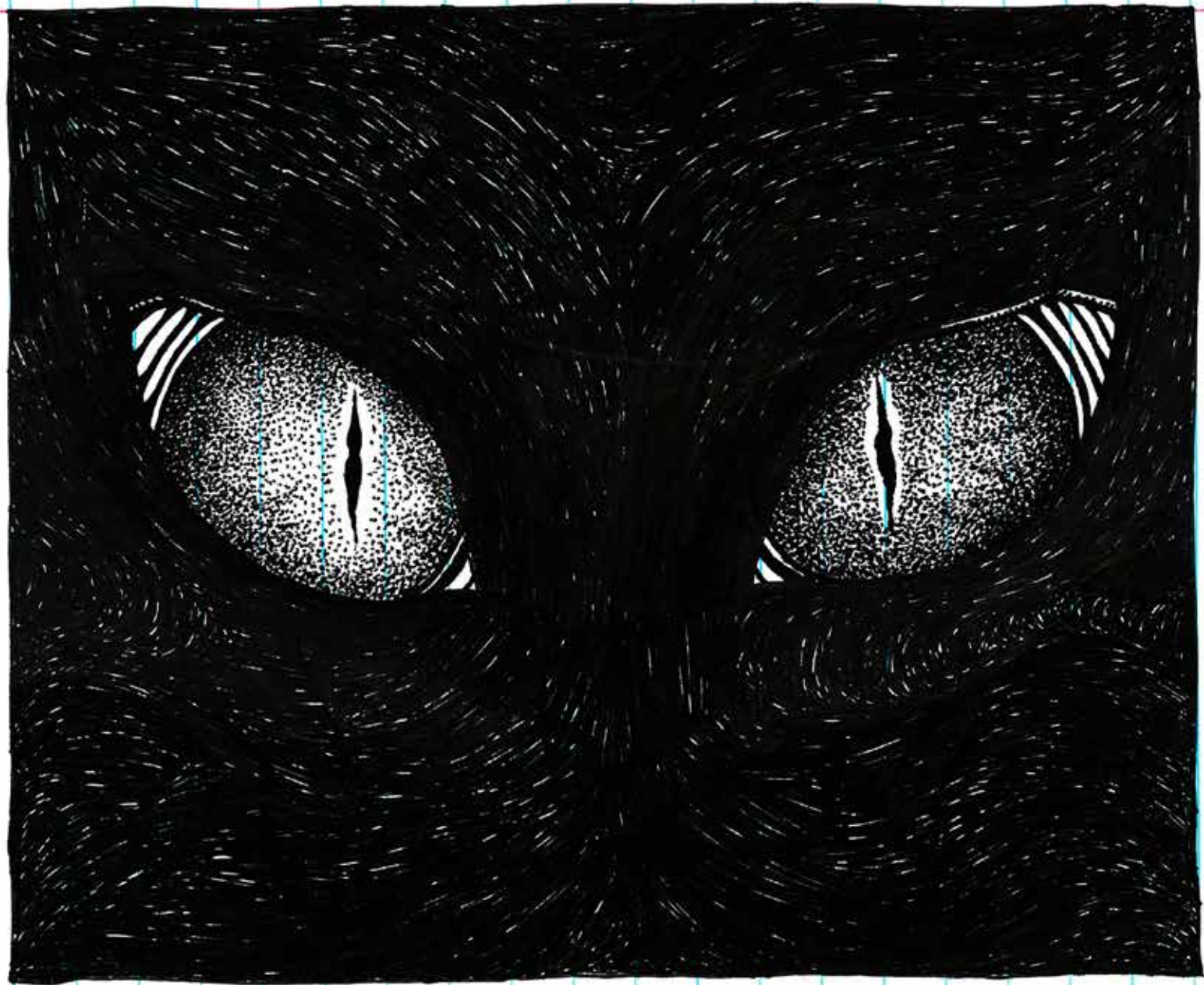


The people would care for the kingdom until their Princess returned.

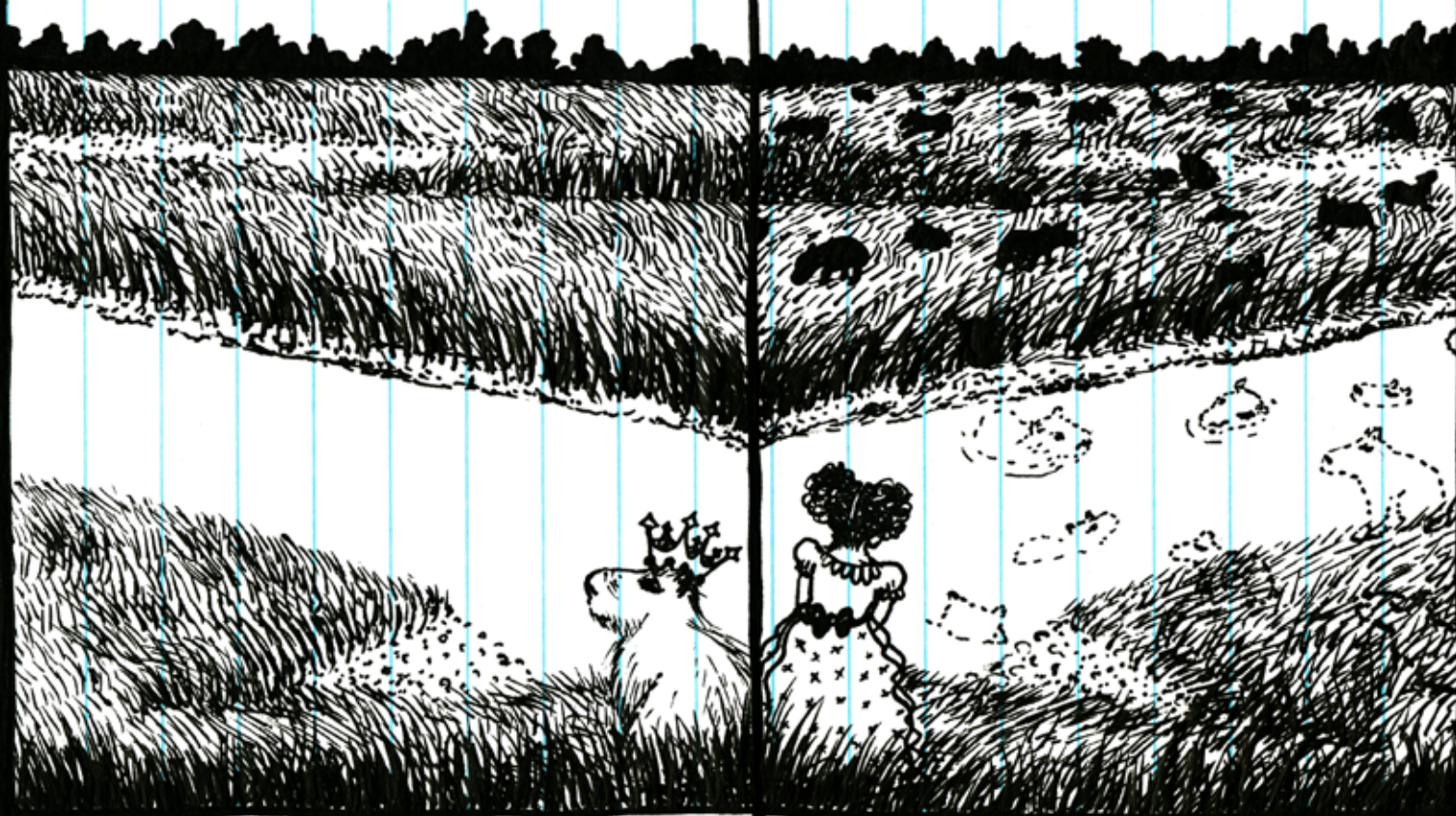
After several days and nights at sea, at last they reached the shore. They would tour the island in the morning.



Tonight would be a night of peaceful rest...



The next morning the princess felt very calm. She had a warm feeling inside. Together, the team traveled to the village where Capybaras first disappeared.



To King Capybara's eyes it was a ghost town.

But the princess saw something different.

The capybaras hadn't disappeared at all! They were simply invisible, and only the princess could see them. Without thinking, she stepped forward.



Words spread through her lungs like vines, and blossomed from her mouth like flowers.



Mama Capybara reappeared
before their eyes.

The princess felt weak.



I was going to visit my
sister in the east.
Halfway there, I hit a
wall and I couldn't
move any further.
I felt strange inside.
When I went home, no
one could
see me, or
hear me,
or touch me.

They shared words
and
grew powerful together.

They spoke,
and made the
invisible visible.

Together, they
went to the wall.

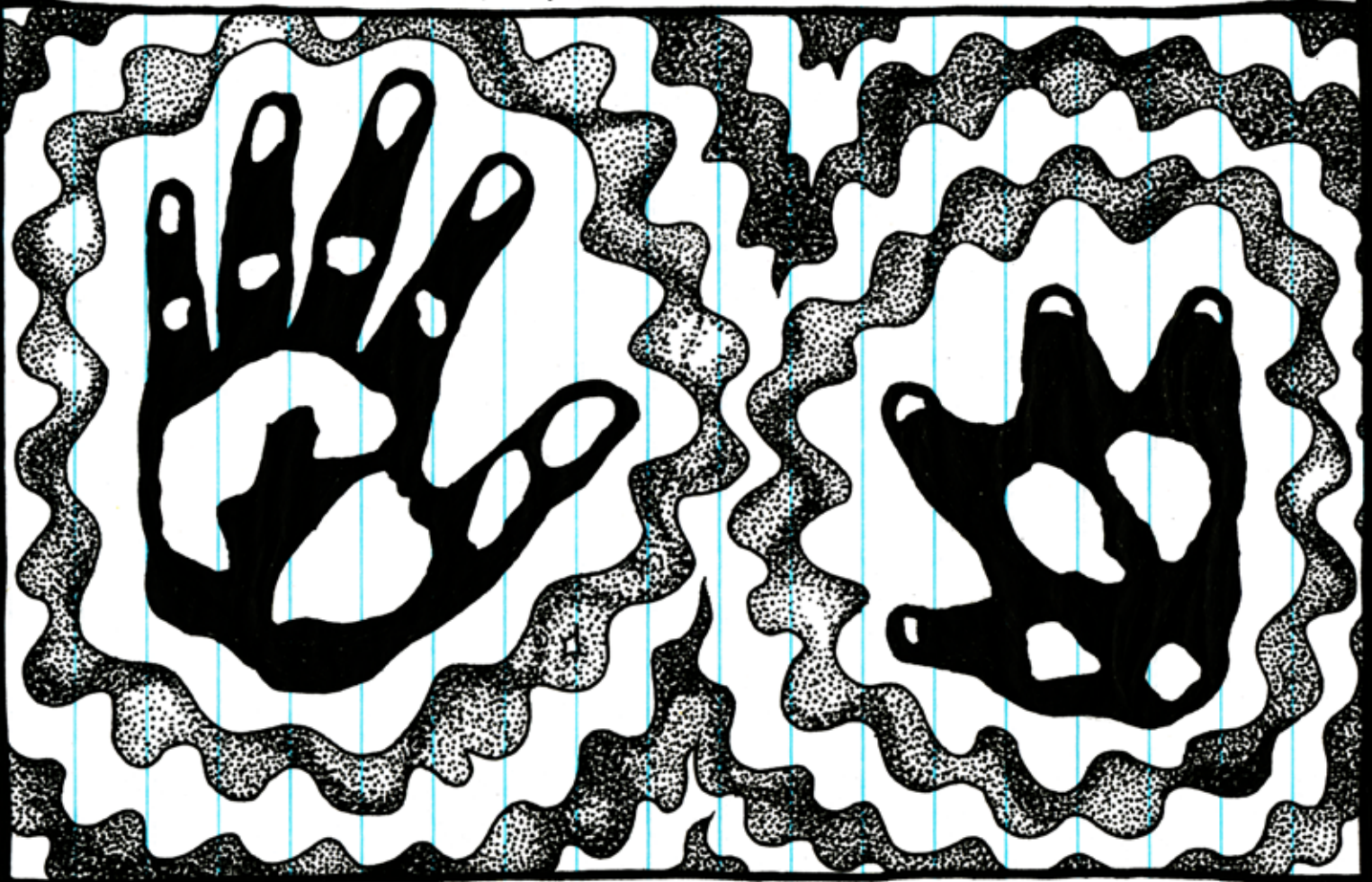


I was invisible. I felt so
alone in the universe.

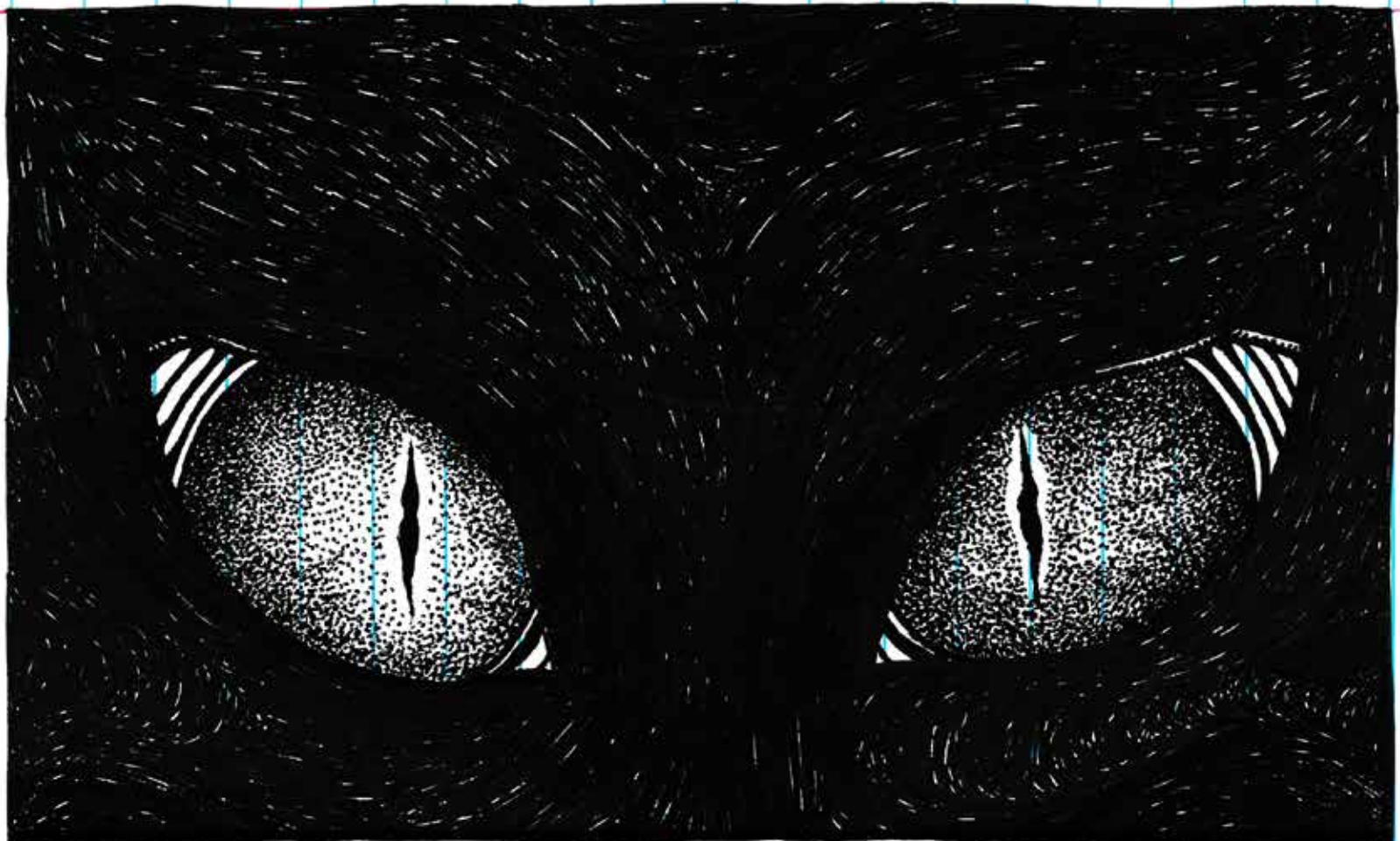


Mama Capybara's words gave
the princess strength.

They pressed their hands and paws to the invisible wall. It glittered, and brilliant pink waves rippled across it. Then the waves stopped and the wall hardened. The animals felt hopeless and cried out.



But the princess said, "We have 3 days before the wall hardens forever. We need to get to the other side. But how?"



Suddenly the crowd parted, and the princess was face to face with a pair of golden eyes. She remembered them, and the calm feeling they gave her. The black panther with the golden eyes spoke in a deep, rumbling voice.

"I can take you there princess. I travel between worlds."

The princess climbed onto his back, and they were off in a blur.

They cleared the wall in one powerful leap. It was deserted on the other side, except for one small and invisible capybara. The princess spoke to him, and the power of her words helped him reappear.



The princess felt weak when she used her words, like she lost a part of herself. But her energy was restored when the young capybara spoke back.

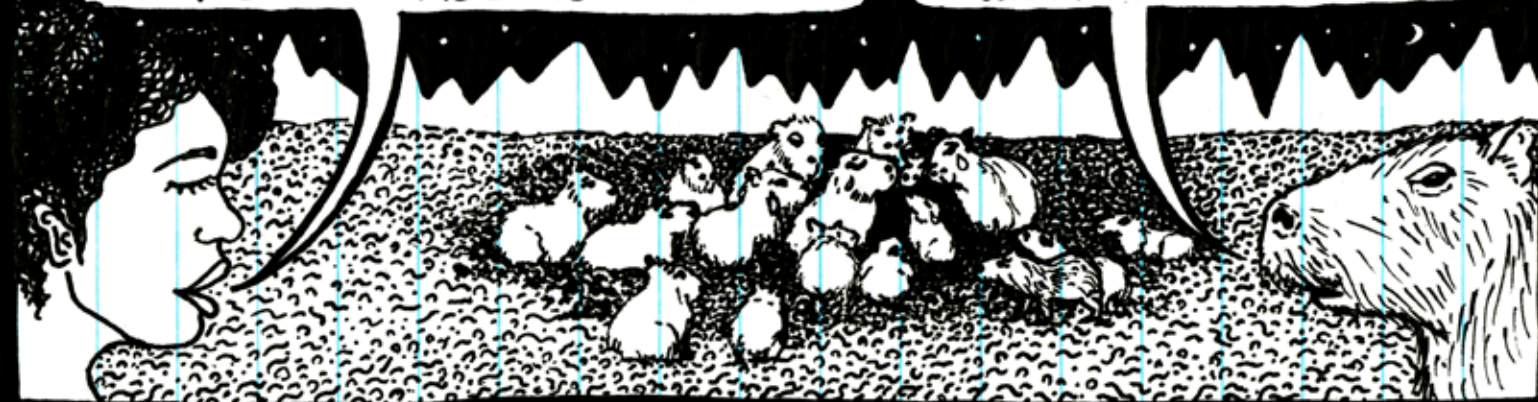
I thought I'd be alone forever! Everyone looked for me, but I was invisible.

You're not alone anymore. I see you. The wall made you disappear, and I've come to help. Can you take me to your elders?



There is a wall that separates East from West and makes us disappear. We have 2 days before it hardens forever. The only way we can bring it down is if all the capybaras on Story Island touch the wall at the same time.

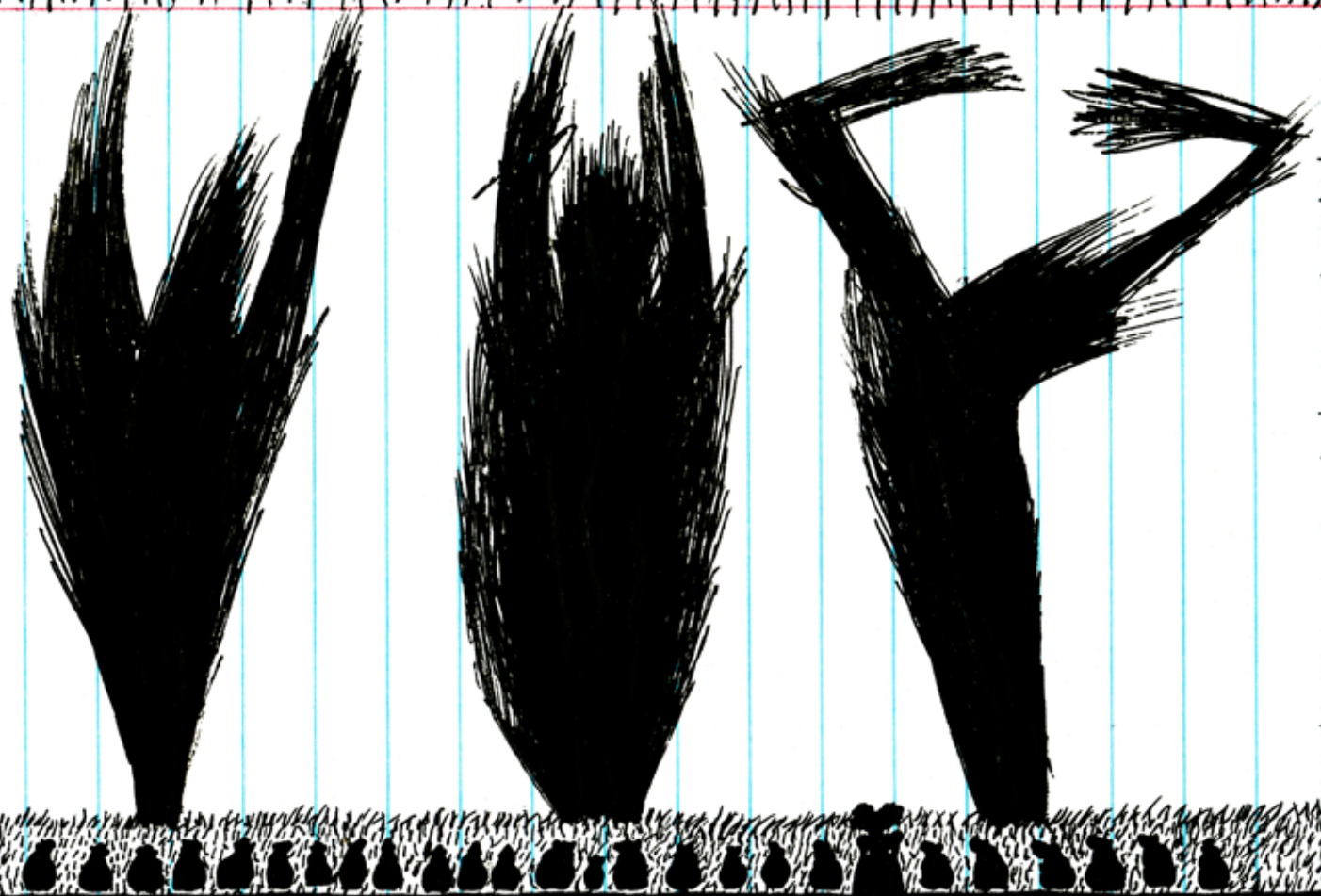
We of the East have a deep fear of the wall. This will not be easy. We will prepare tonight for a peace circle. Tomorrow, we will make a decision together.



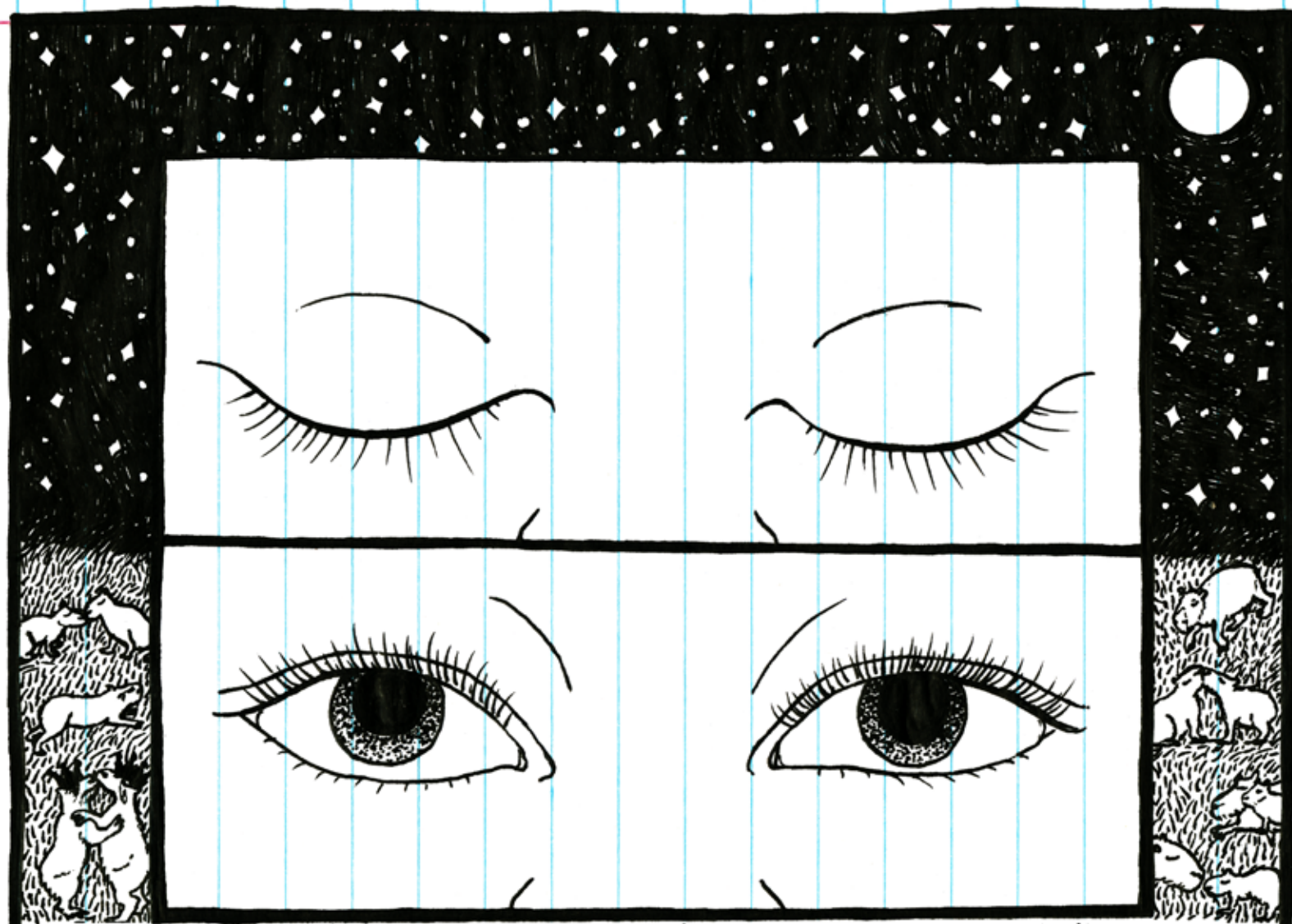
Our family needs us.
We can't let them disappear.
If we lose them, we'll all be lost.
Nobody deserves to be made invisible.



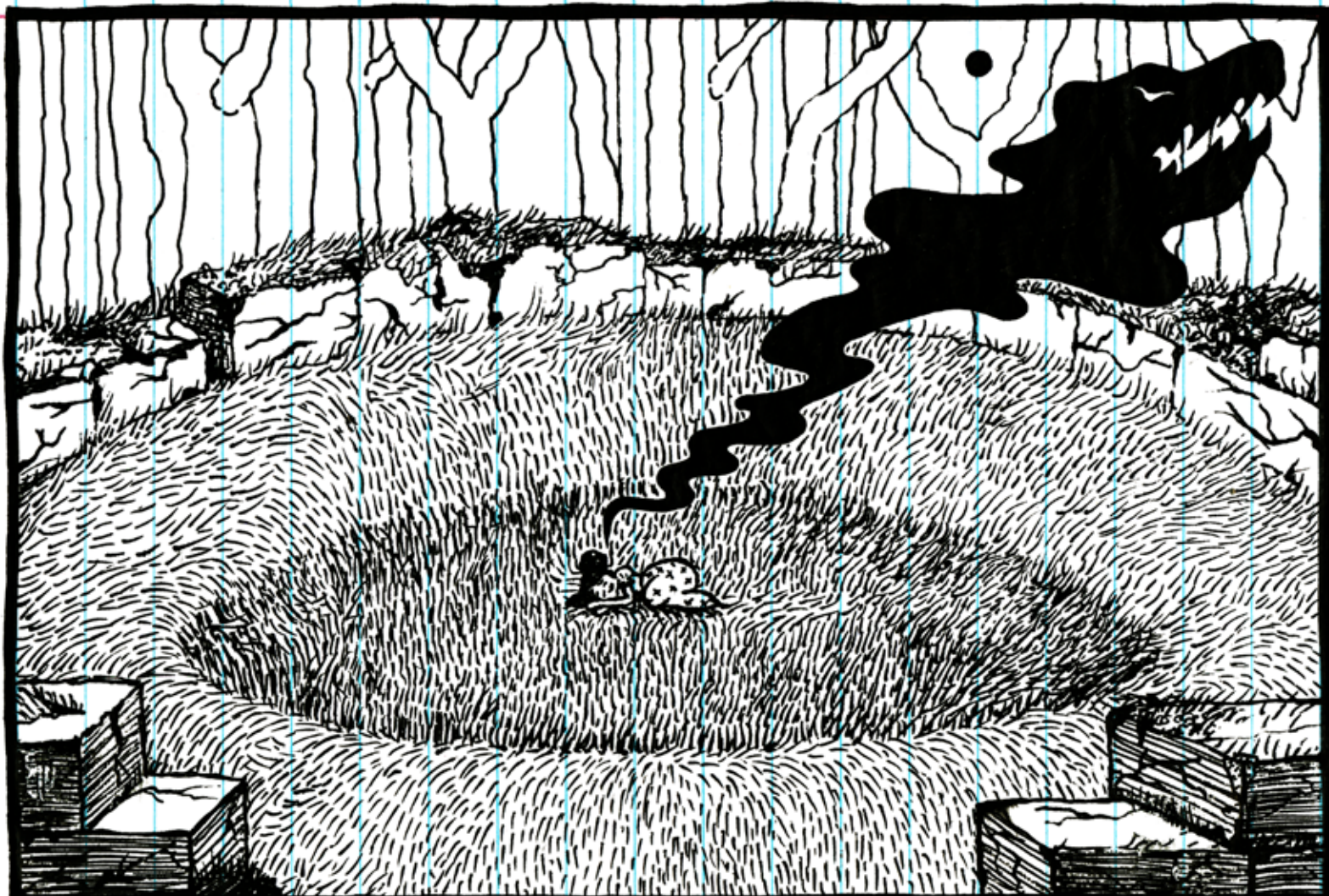
The next morning the capybaras and the princess gathered in circle to share stories. They passed around a mossy black rock. Whoever held the rock could speak while everyone else listened. They talked and laughed and cried all day. As dusk fell on the final day to bring down the wall, they felt love grow in their hearts. Young and old joined hands and paws and walked to the wall.



As the capybaras approached the wall, huge and monstrous shadows sprang up. They wanted to run, but the princess yelled, "It's only an illusion meant to keep us from the ones we love!" The instant they touched the wall they were bathed in brilliant pink light, brighter than the sun. Slowly, the light faded, and the capybaras of the East were paw to paw with the capybaras of the West.

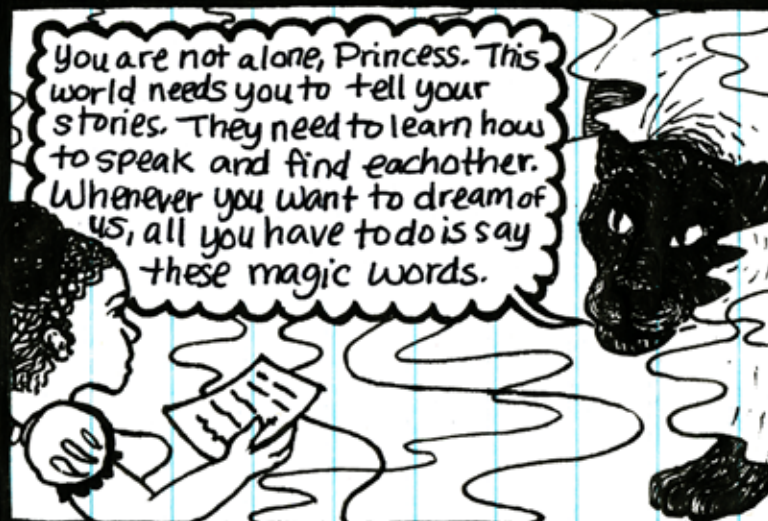


The wall in Stony Island was gone forever. The wind blew from the stars above to the grass below, and the princess knew she was changing. She saw the two worlds of Stony Island reunited, and she remembered the dragon that trapped her long ago, separating her from reality. She whispered, "Goodbye," opened her eyes, and woke up.

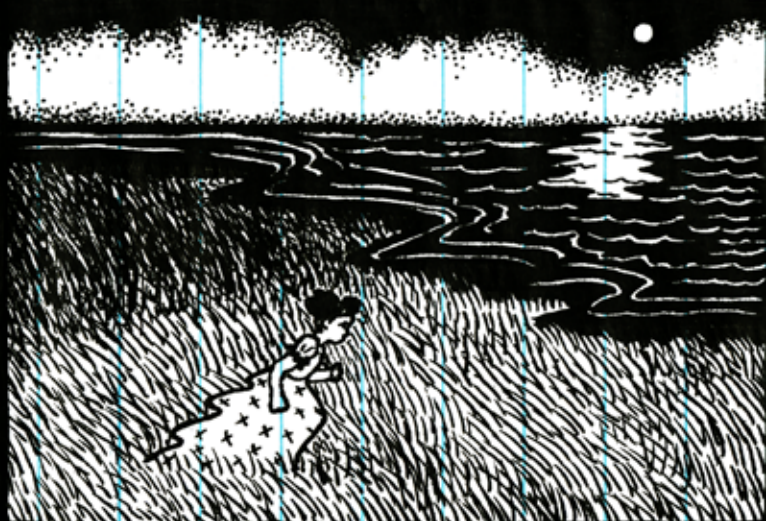


The dragon evaporated like a nightmare in a cloud of black smoke. After centuries of dreaming, the princess awoke in the ruins of her family's castle. She was totally alone. In a panic, she shut her eyes tight and tried to get back to the kingdom of her dreams, but she couldn't. She cried, mourning for the worlds she lost.

She lay paralyzed with fear, until one morning two orbs of golden light bounded out of the mist.



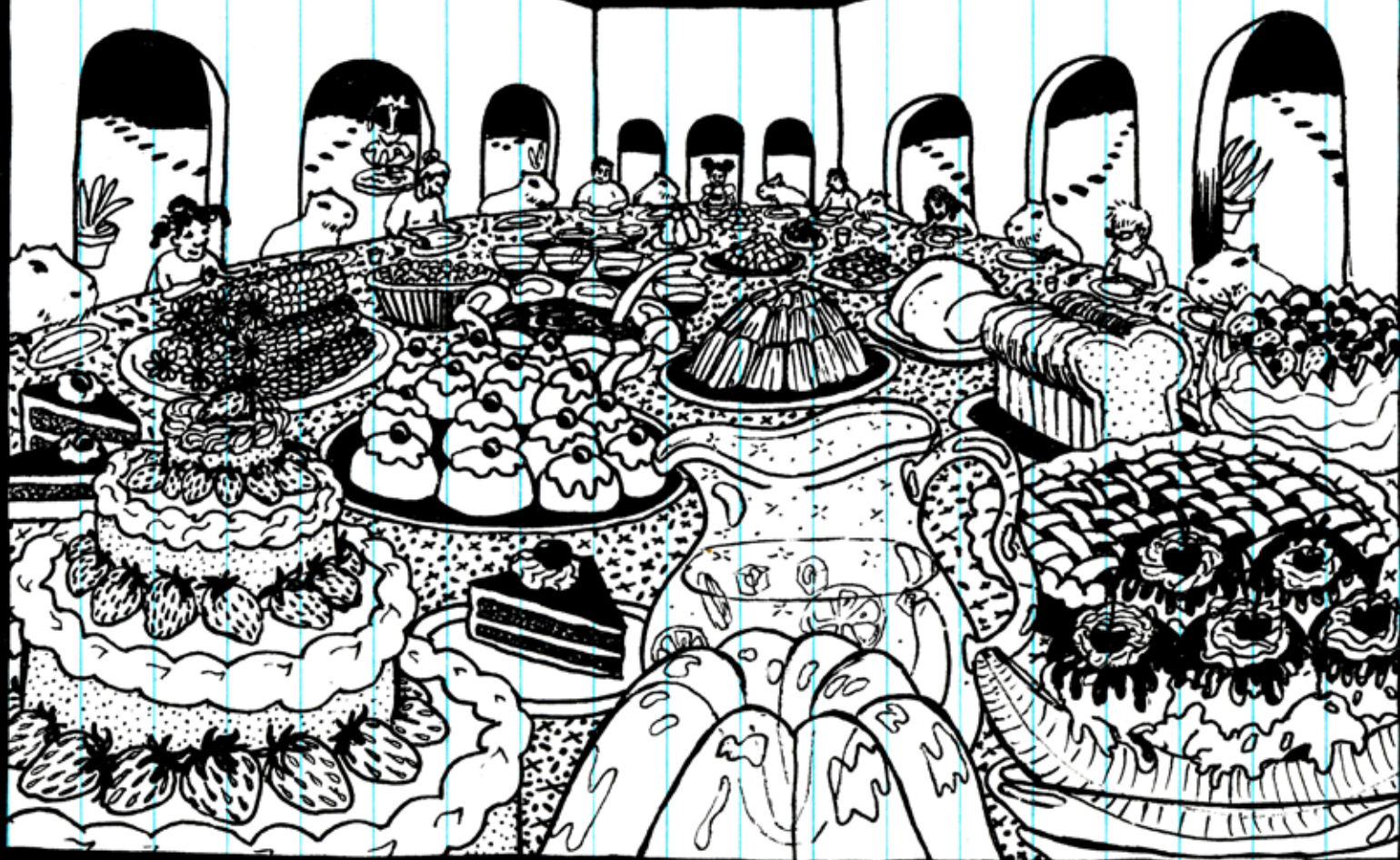
With that, the black panther disappeared into the white mist. The princess stood, and started walking.



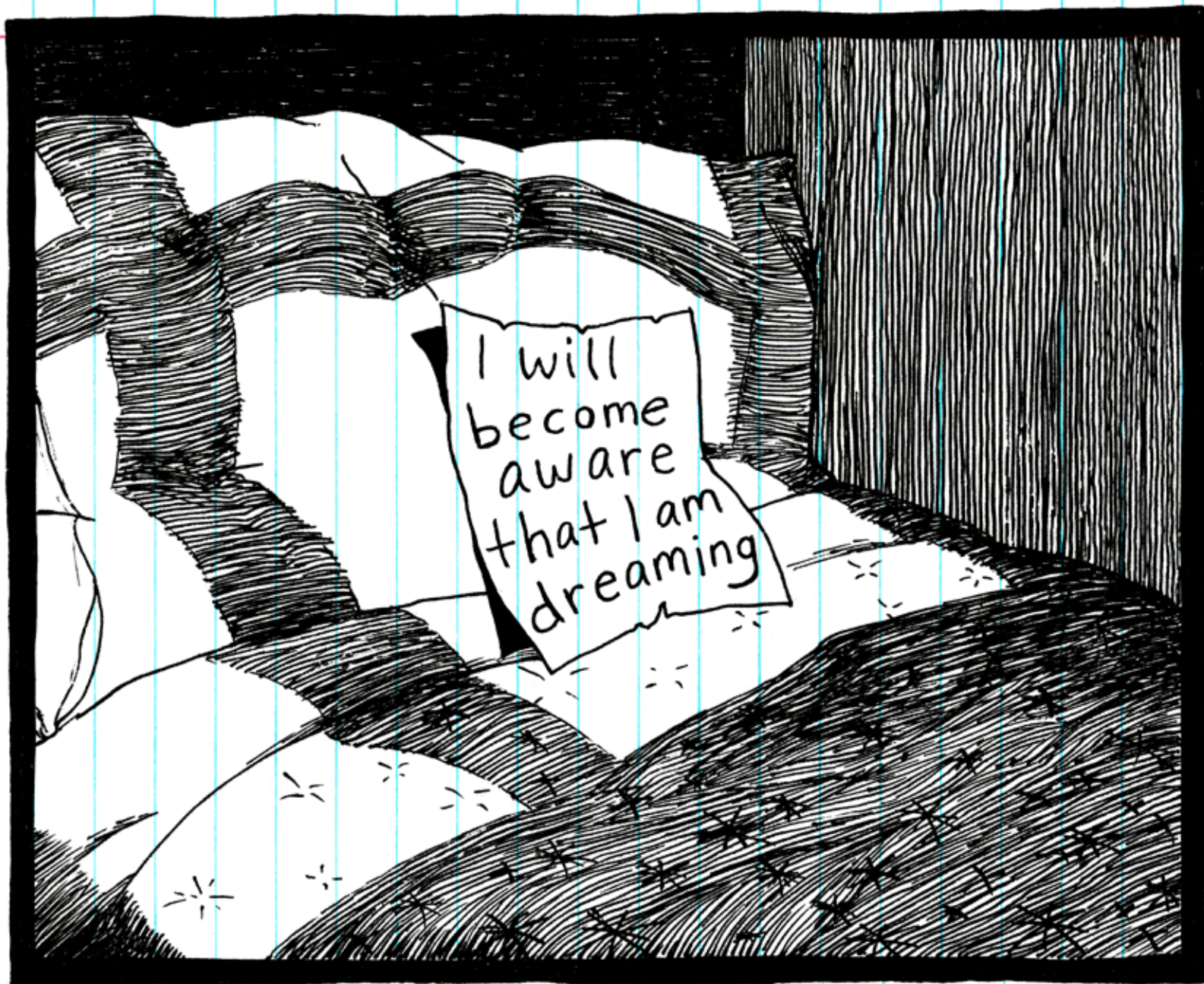
The princess walked for many moons until at last she reached the city. She stood on the block, wide awake, and shared her stories.

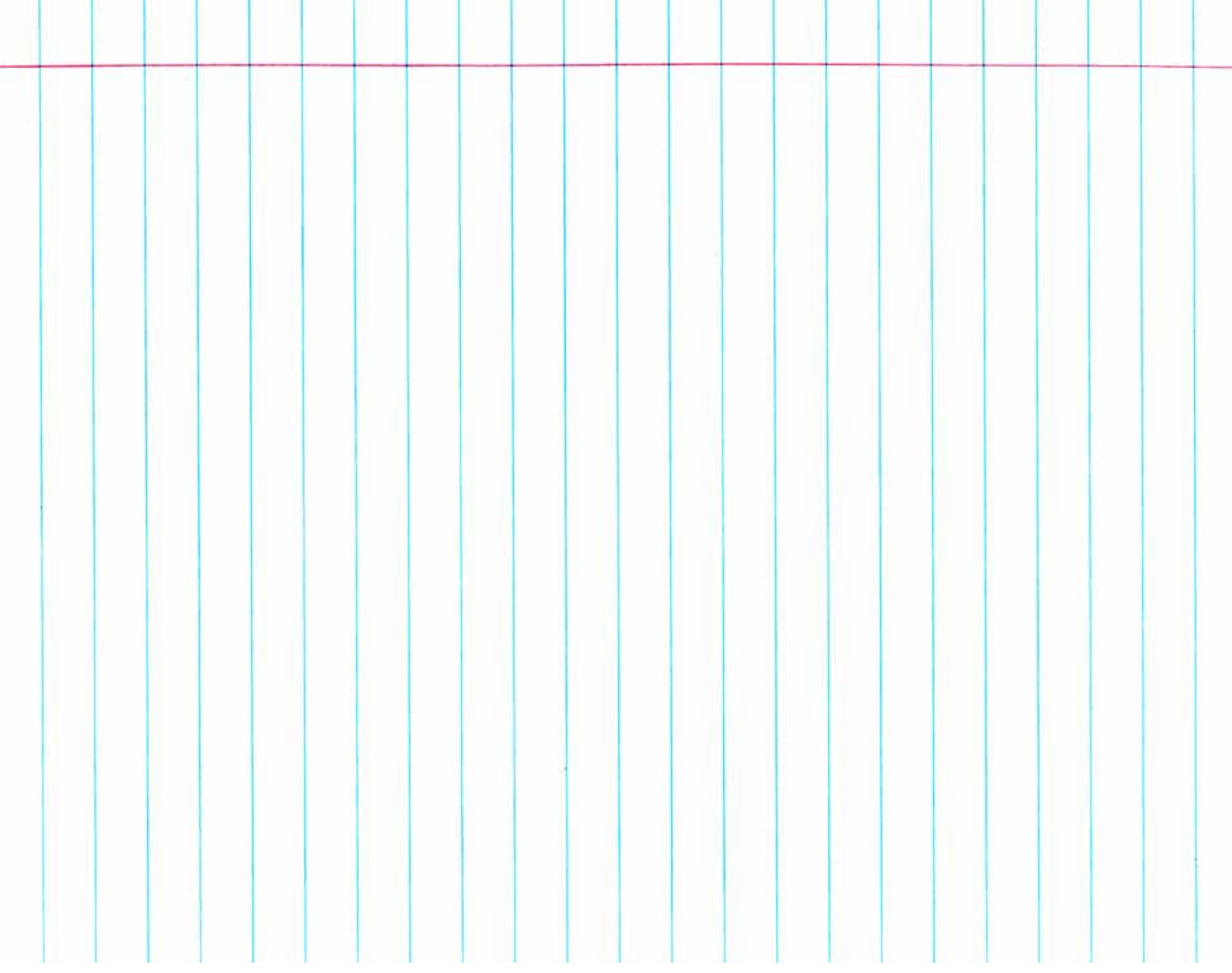


That night she lay warm in bed in the home of a grandma who had listened. She closed her eyes tight, and said the magic words.



The princess sat down to a delectable feast in the land of her dreams. She had so many stories to share, and even more to bring back with her. Her worlds were at peace.





Bianca Diaz is an artist and educator from the Lower West Side of Chicago. She is trying to understand how her neighborhood and the rest of the world shapes who she is. As she finds answers to these questions and comes up with more, she aspires to collaborate with other people in her communities to share these questions and answers through stories, and to shape a more just world together.

