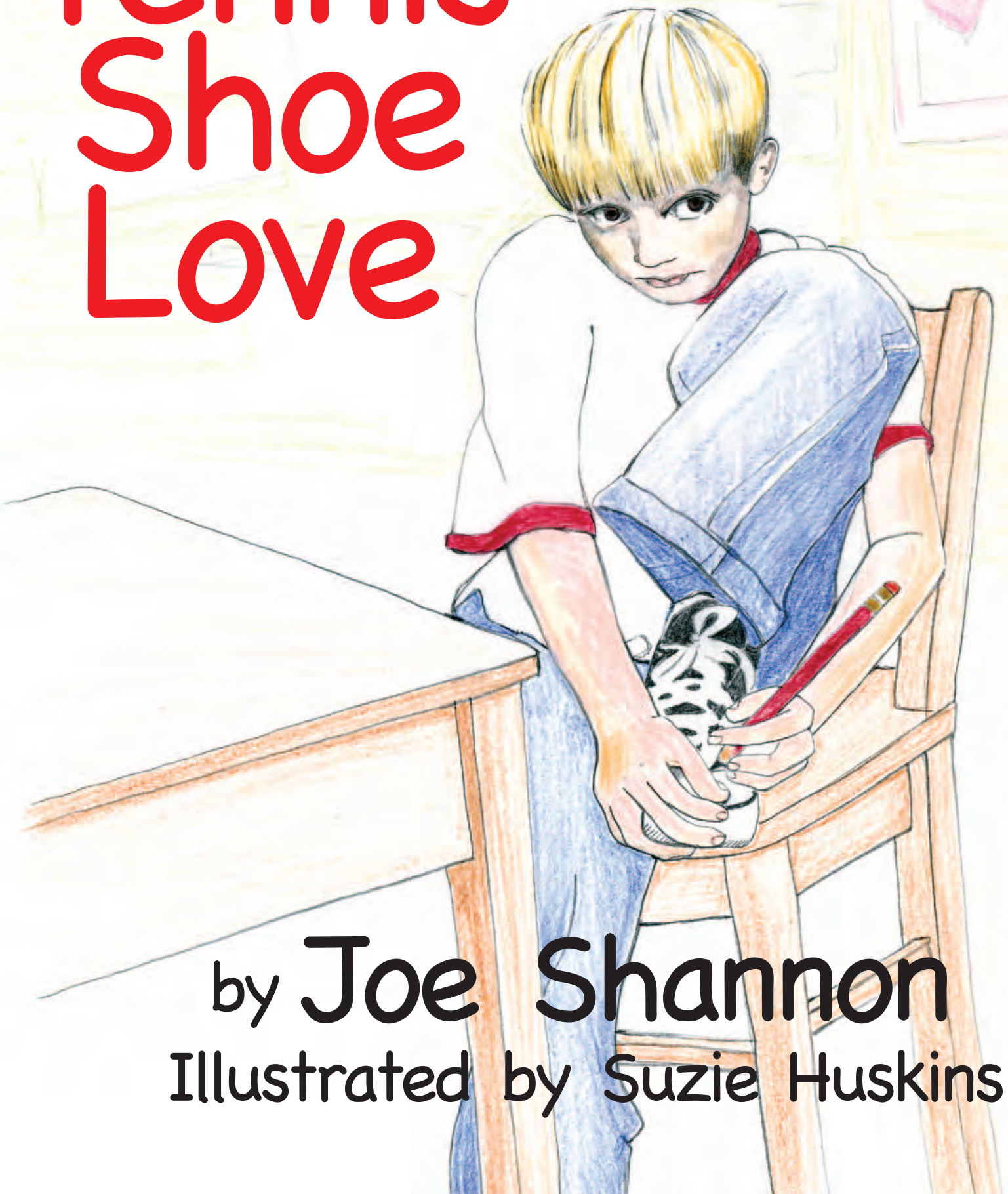
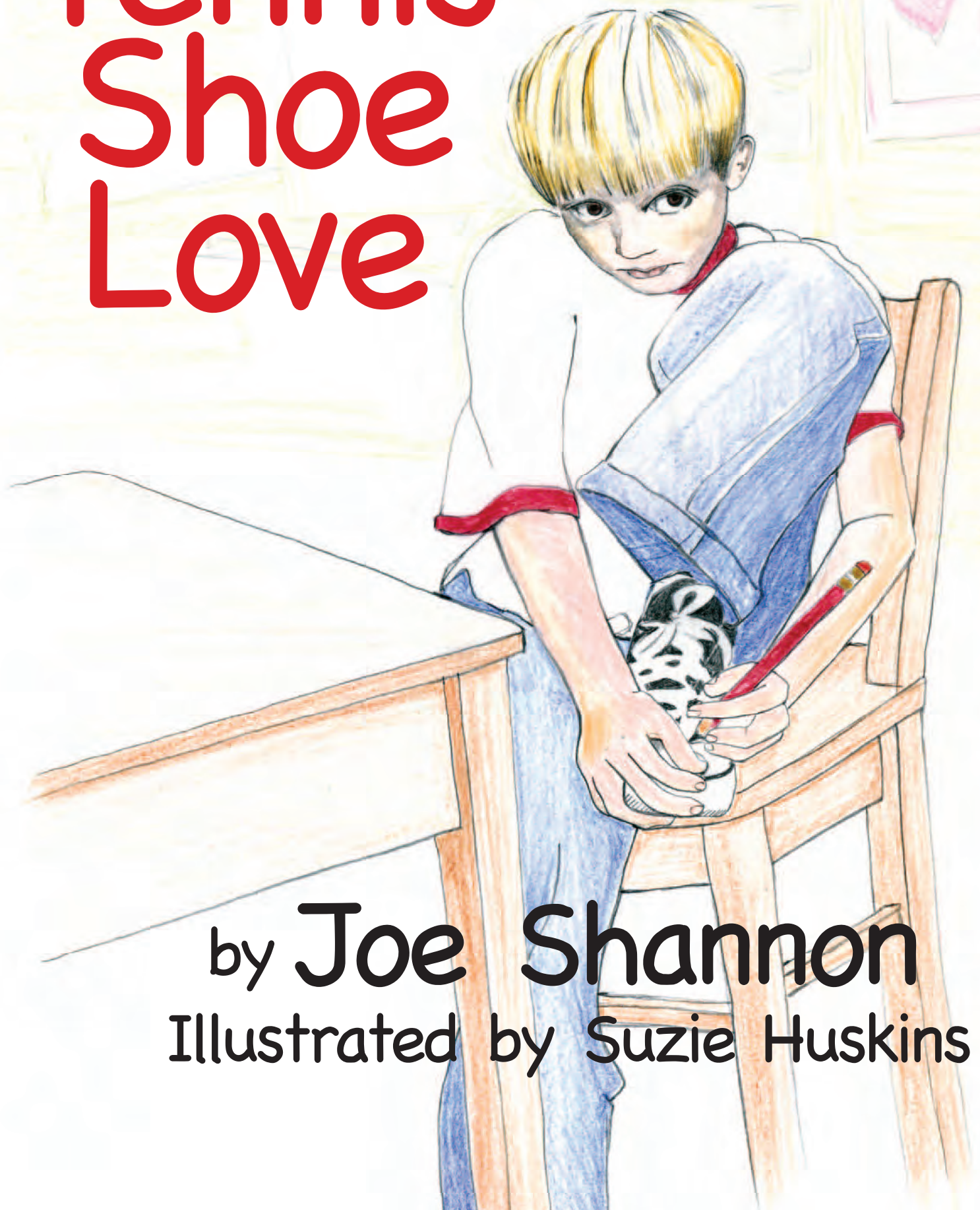


Tennis Shoe Love



by **Joe Shannon**
Illustrated by **Suzie Huskins**

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Summary: A young boy writes his first love letter on the toe of his tennis shoe.

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Joe Shannon is a teacher, concert producer, and storyteller.
He lives in Boone, North Carolina. For more information
about his work, go to www.mountainhomemusic.com.


Printed in China

Dedicated to
my teachers,
my students.



THIS IS AN ALMOST
TRUE BOOK. I HOPE YOU
LIKE TENNIS SHOE LOVE.
-- JOE

BE
MINE
✿



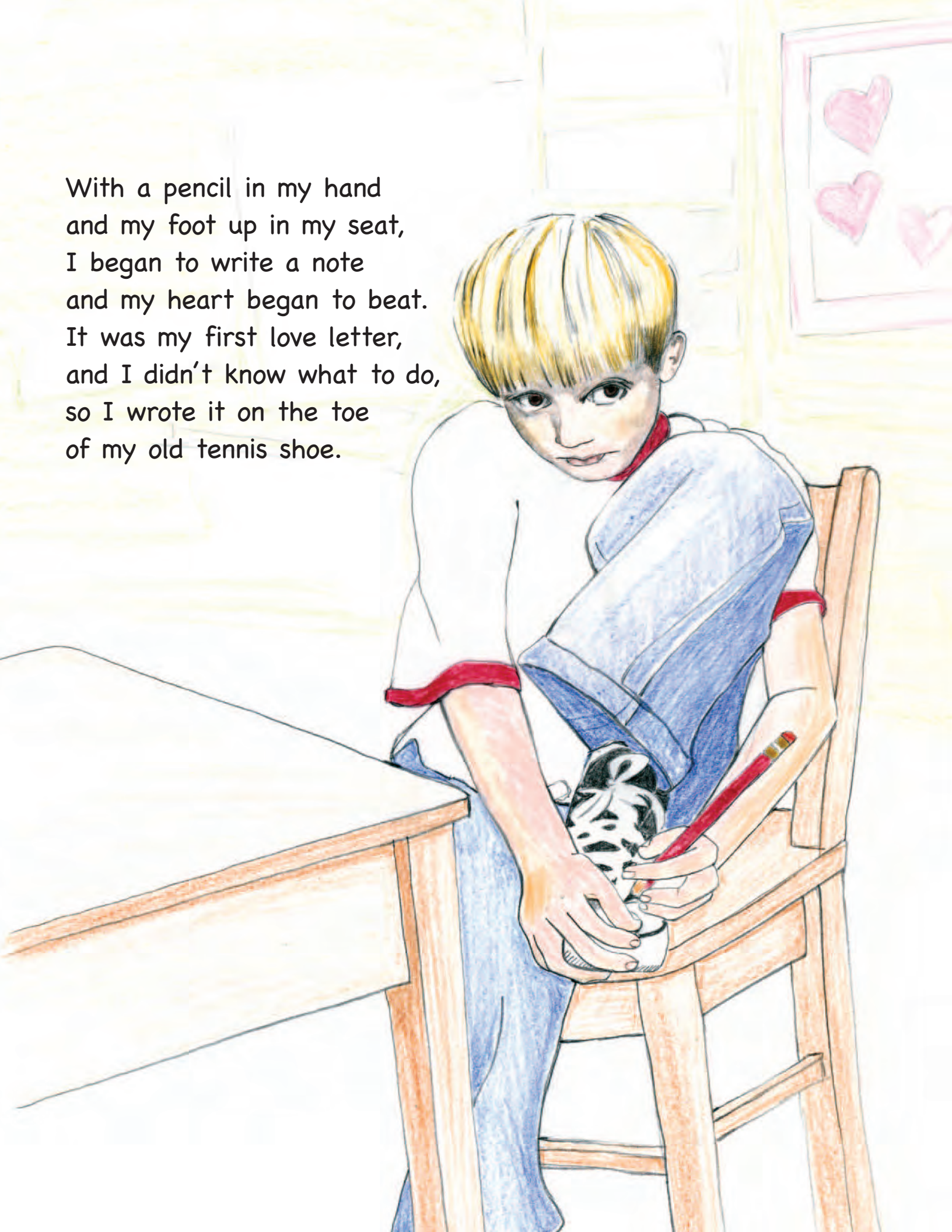
A hand-drawn card with a pink border, tilted slightly to the right. The card is set against a yellow background with several pink hearts of various sizes. One heart in the top right corner contains the text "I'm Yours!". The main text on the card is written in a purple, slightly slanted font. The signature "-- Joe" is at the bottom right of the card.

THANKS TO MARGARET,
CAROLYN, SARAH, SHARON
AND JEANNIE FOR YOUR
HELP + ENCOURAGEMENT.

-- JOE

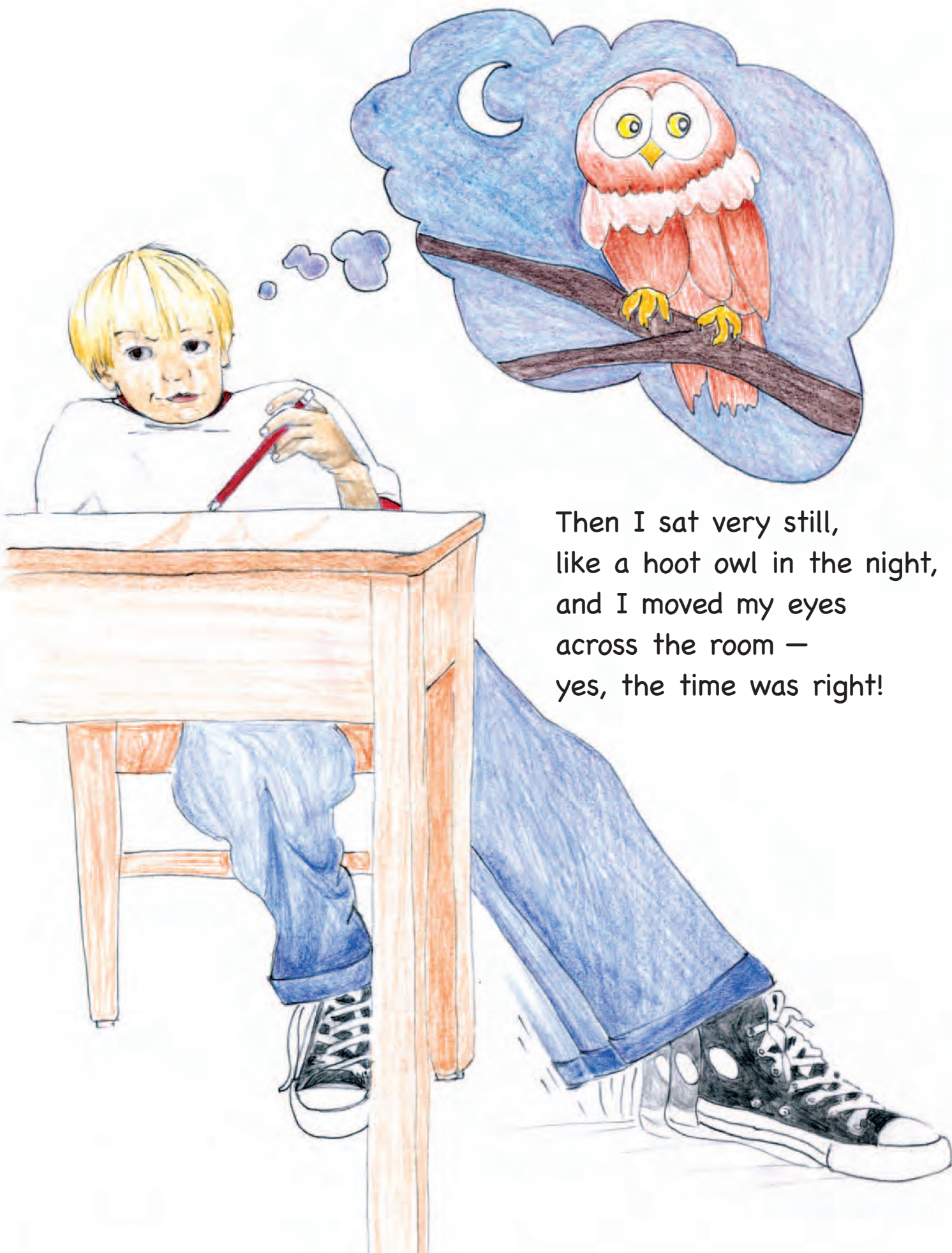
I'm
YOURS!

With a pencil in my hand
and my foot up in my seat,
I began to write a note
and my heart began to beat.
It was my first love letter,
and I didn't know what to do,
so I wrote it on the toe
of my old tennis shoe.





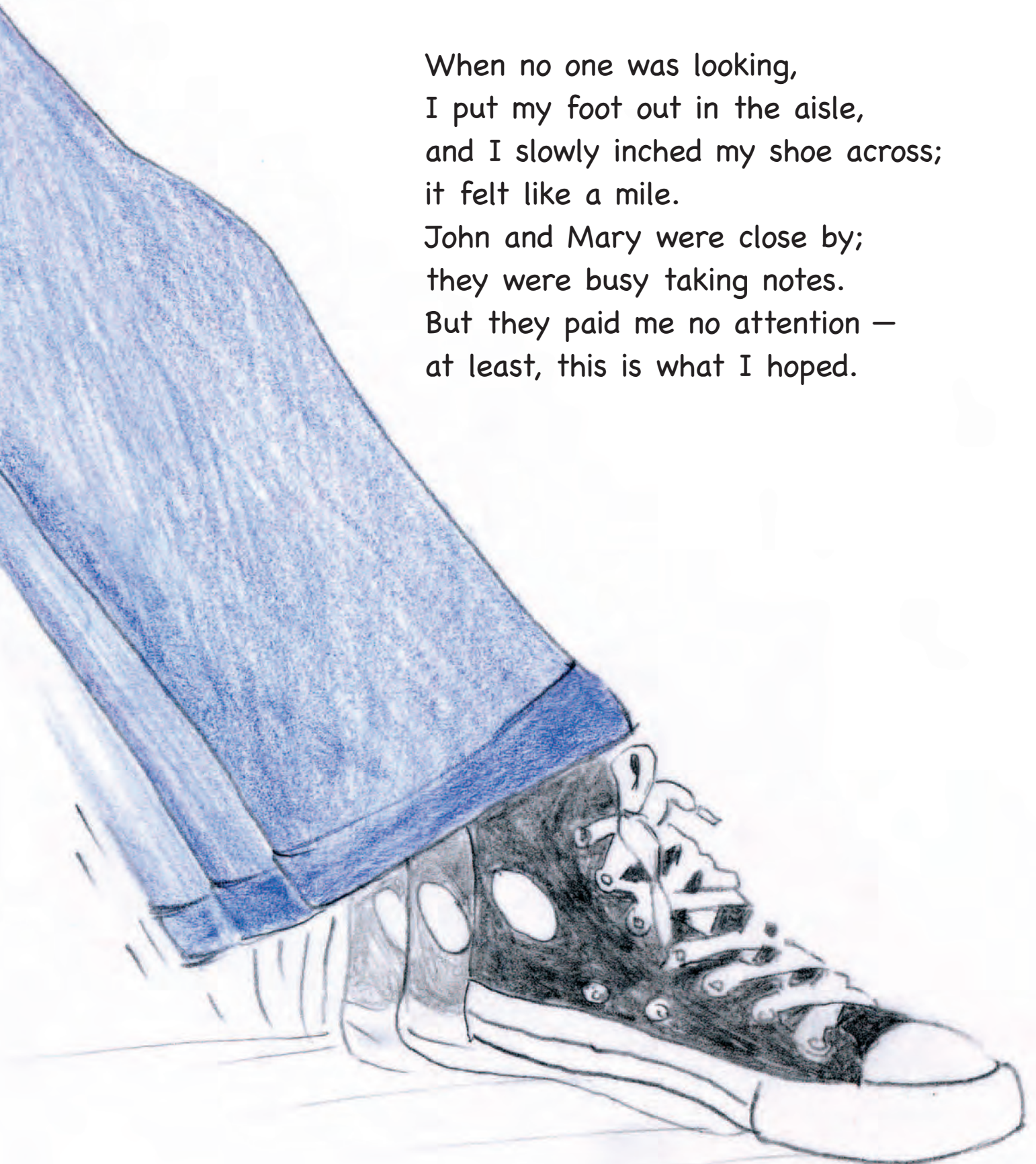
I used my big fat pencil, what I called my Big Moe,
and I quietly wrote a secret note right over my big toe.



Then I sat very still,
like a hoot owl in the night,
and I moved my eyes
across the room —
yes, the time was right!

When no one was looking,
I put my foot out in the aisle,
and I slowly inched my shoe across;
it felt like a mile.

John and Mary were close by;
they were busy taking notes.
But they paid me no attention —
at least, this is what I hoped.





When my special mail arrived, I tapped softly on Sue's chair, hoping that she would notice — and see how much I cared. But like all the other kids, she was busy taking notes, so I tapped a little harder and then my bubble broke!



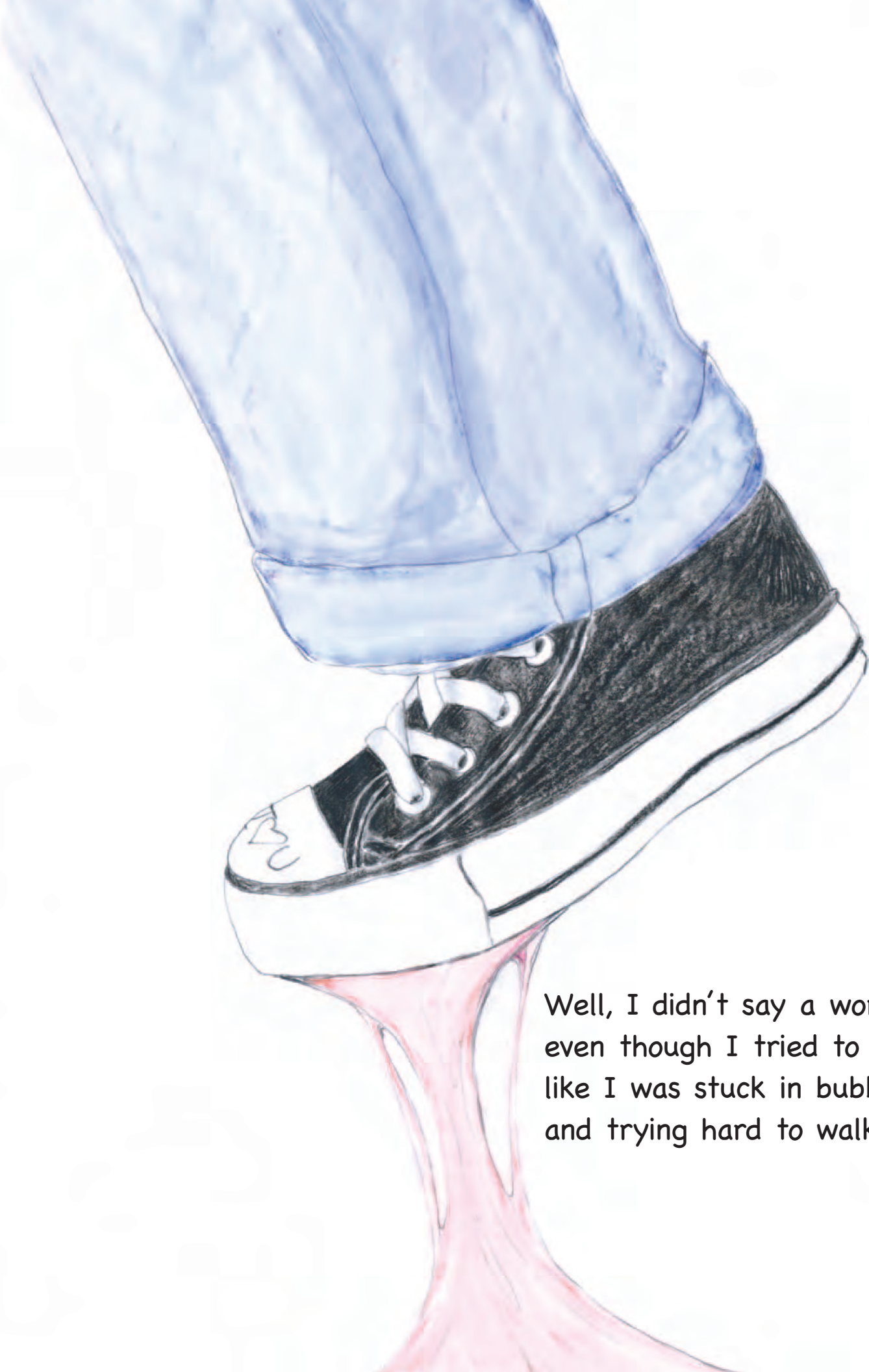
Sue looked
down to the
floor, and
then John
and Mary
did too.

Like looking through a
thick spy glass, their
eyes were on my shoe!



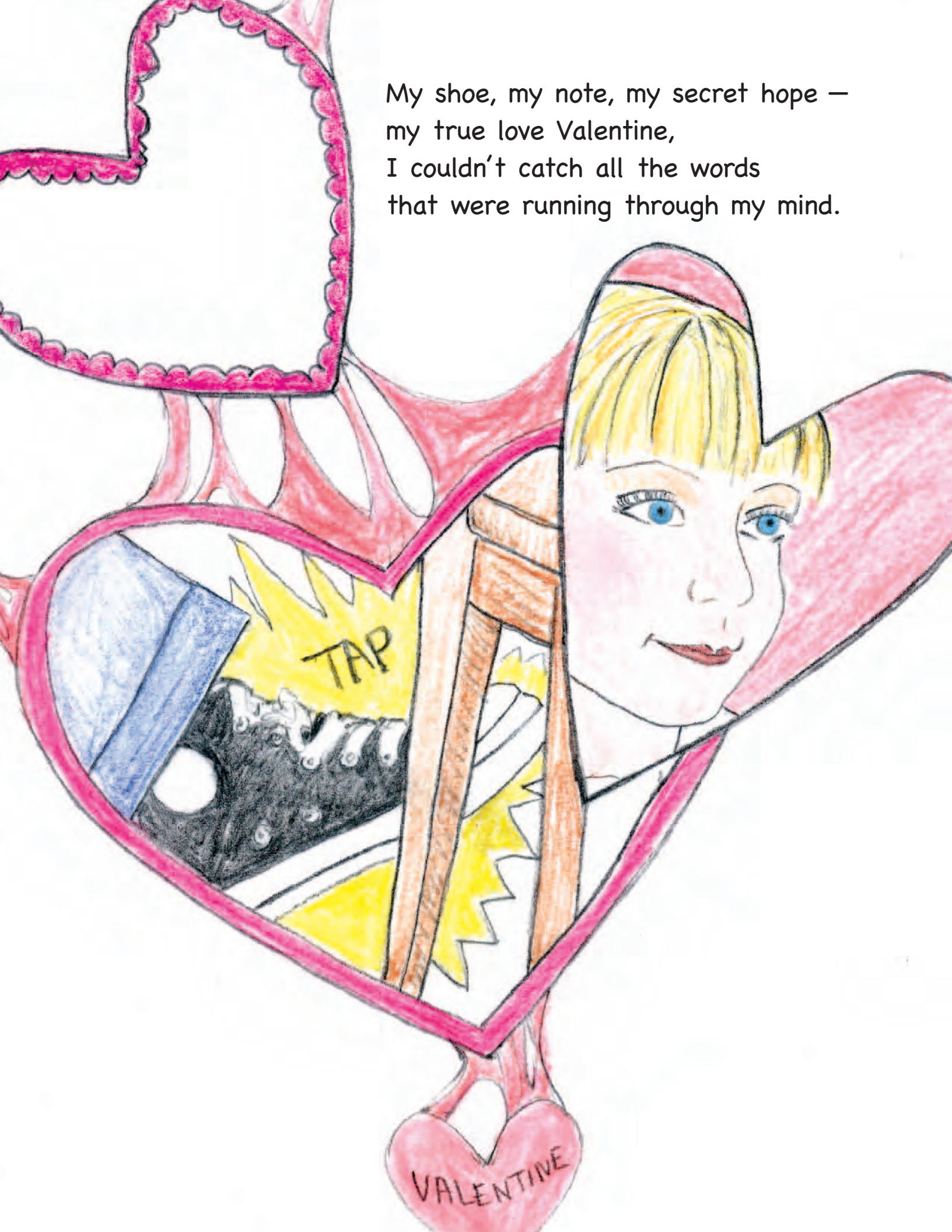
Then the teacher called my name,
and the whole class turned my way.
“What’s the trouble over there?
Is there something you’d like to say?”



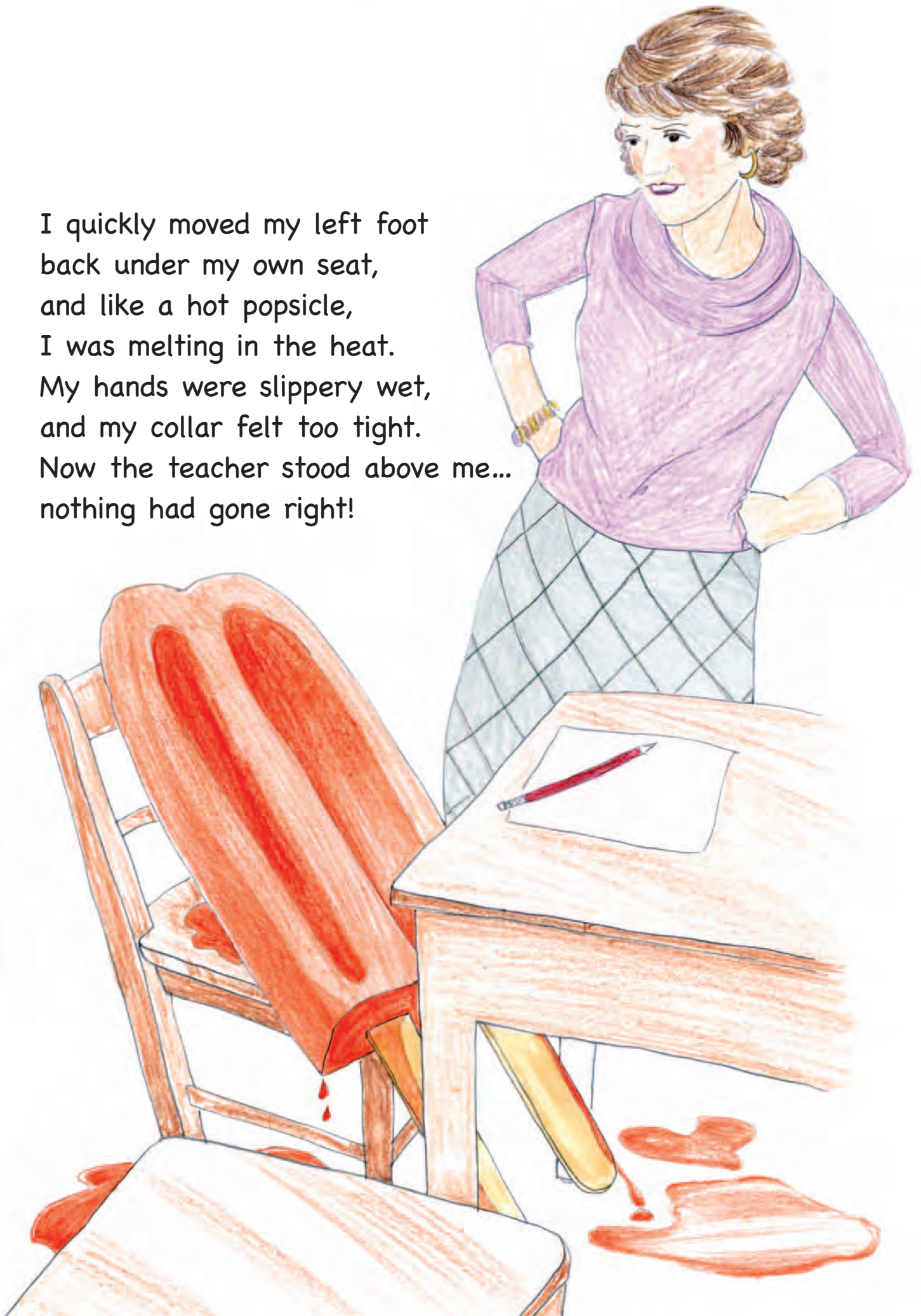


Well, I didn't say a word
even though I tried to talk,
like I was stuck in bubble gum
and trying hard to walk.

My shoe, my note, my secret hope —
my true love Valentine,
I couldn't catch all the words
that were running through my mind.



I quickly moved my left foot
back under my own seat,
and like a hot popsicle,
I was melting in the heat.
My hands were slippery wet,
and my collar felt too tight.
Now the teacher stood above me...
nothing had gone right!





I tried to hide my old shoe, my secret fairy tale.
But the teacher shook her head
when she saw my special mail.

Then John and Mary laughed at me, and Sue... just turned away.
I hid my face in my hands; there was nothing I could say.



Now I was tired at playtime, and I couldn't eat my snack.
And when we had to get in line, well, I got in the back.
In the room I sat real quiet, like I wasn't really there.
And I kept my feet flat on the floor, right under my own chair!



FEBRUARY

14

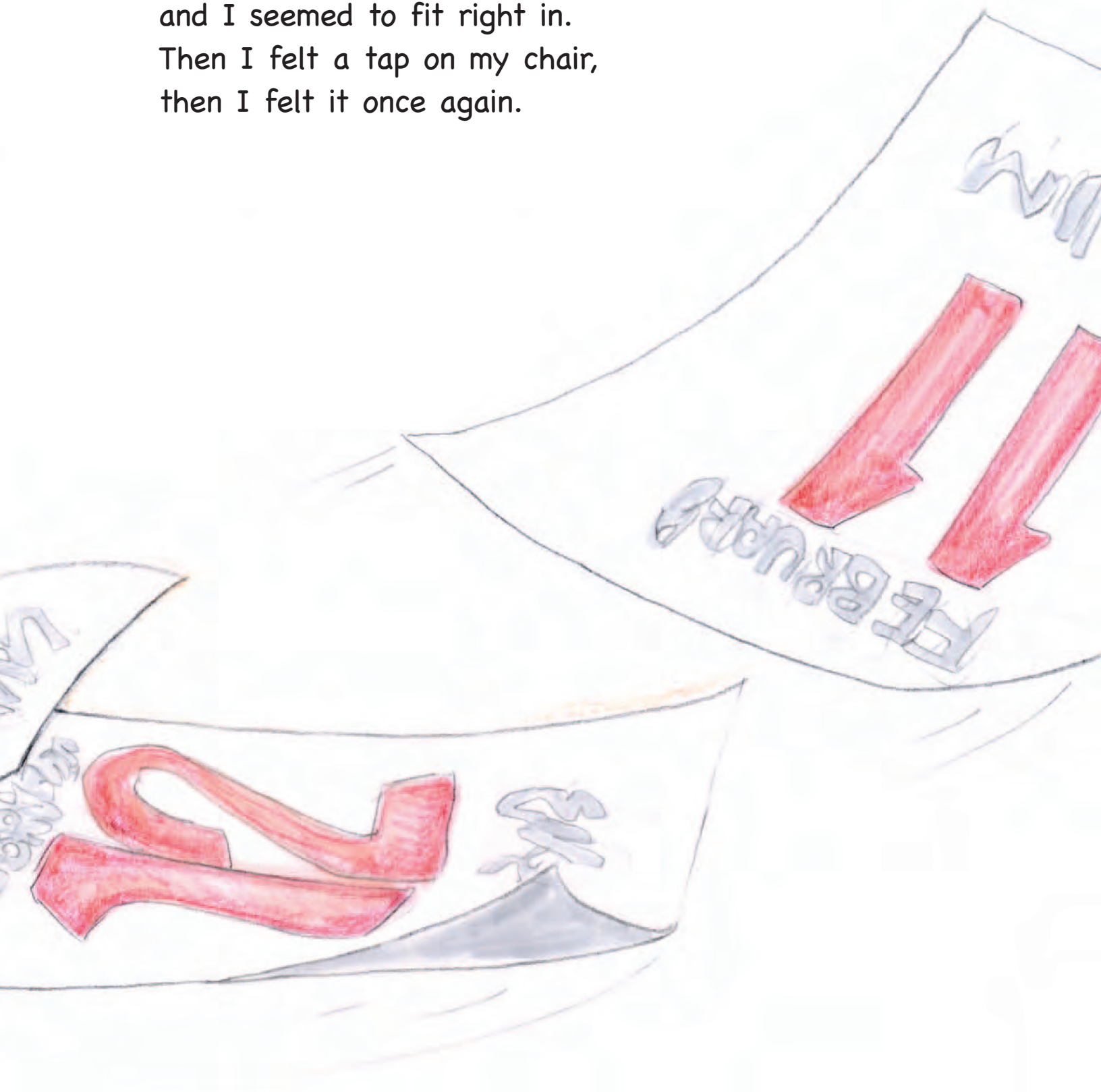
THURS

FEBRUARY

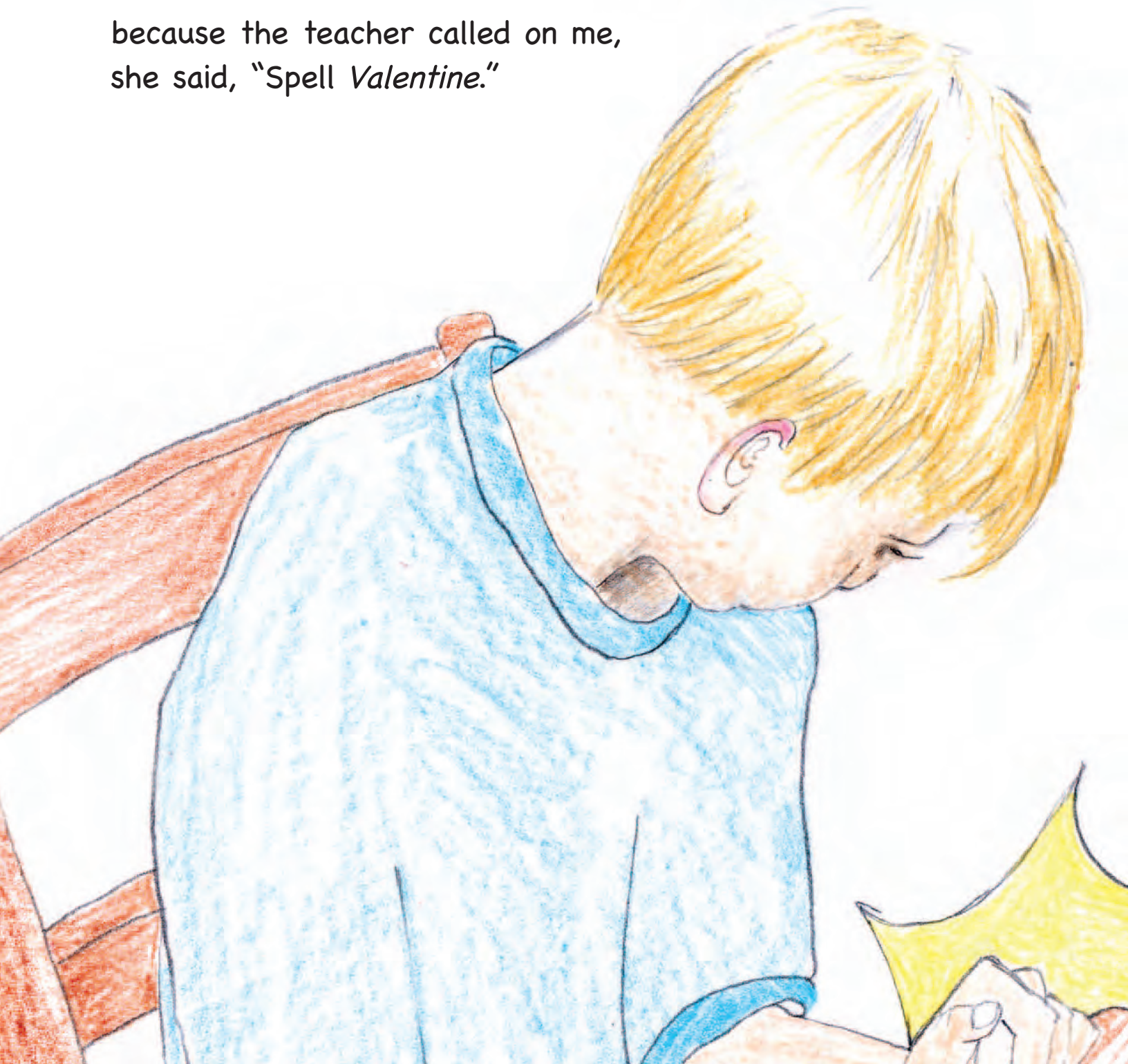
14

FEBRUARY

A day or two went by
and I seemed to fit right in.
Then I felt a tap on my chair,
then I felt it once again.



I bent down beneath my seat
and strained my eyes to see.
Ah! There on the toe of her sweet shoe
was a note for me!
But I couldn't read the note;
I didn't have the time
because the teacher called on me,
she said, "Spell *Valentine*."

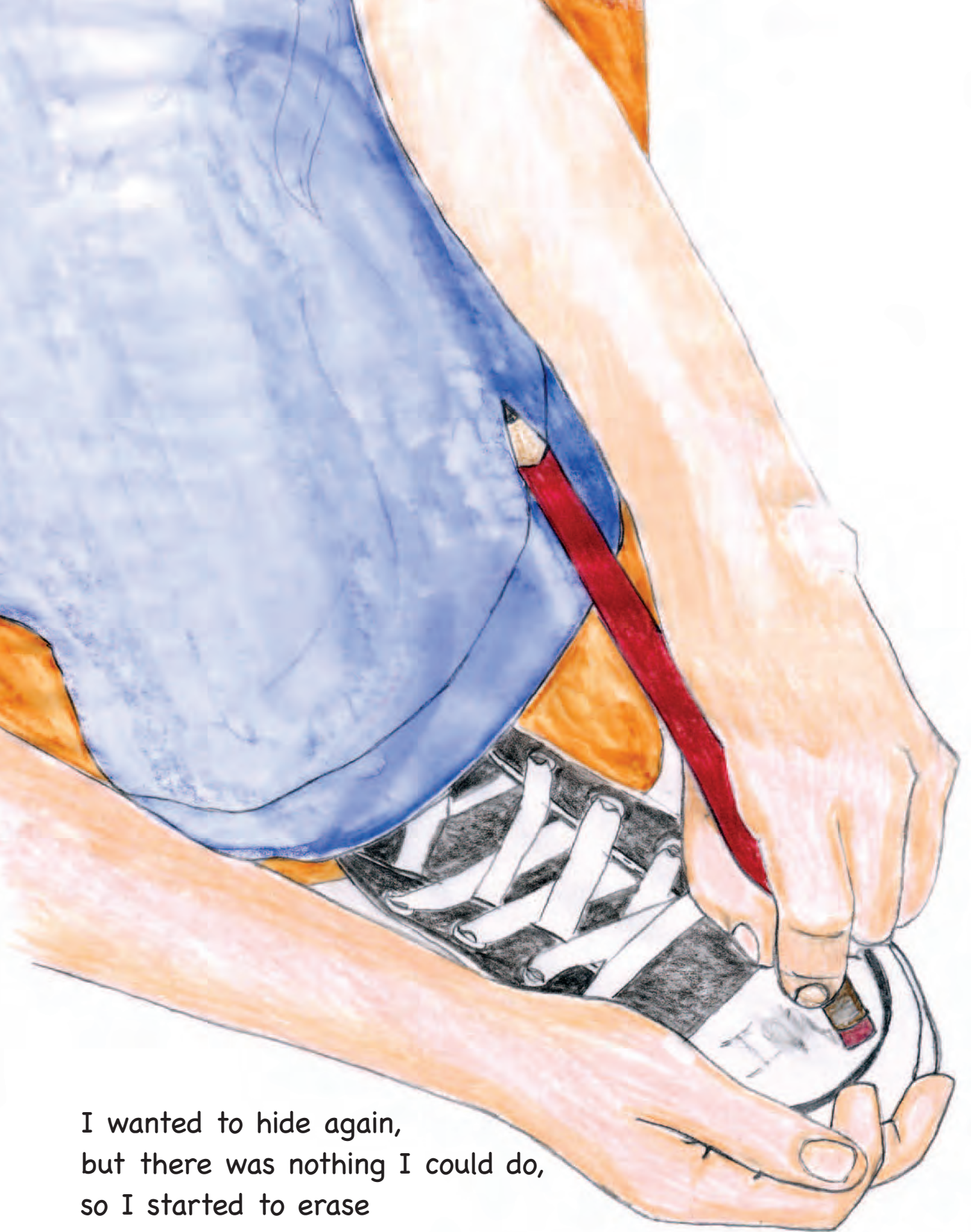








Ah... "V-A-L ..." I started,
and then "S-U-E" I said.
"Oh no! Oh no! What have I done?
I spelled Sue instead!"

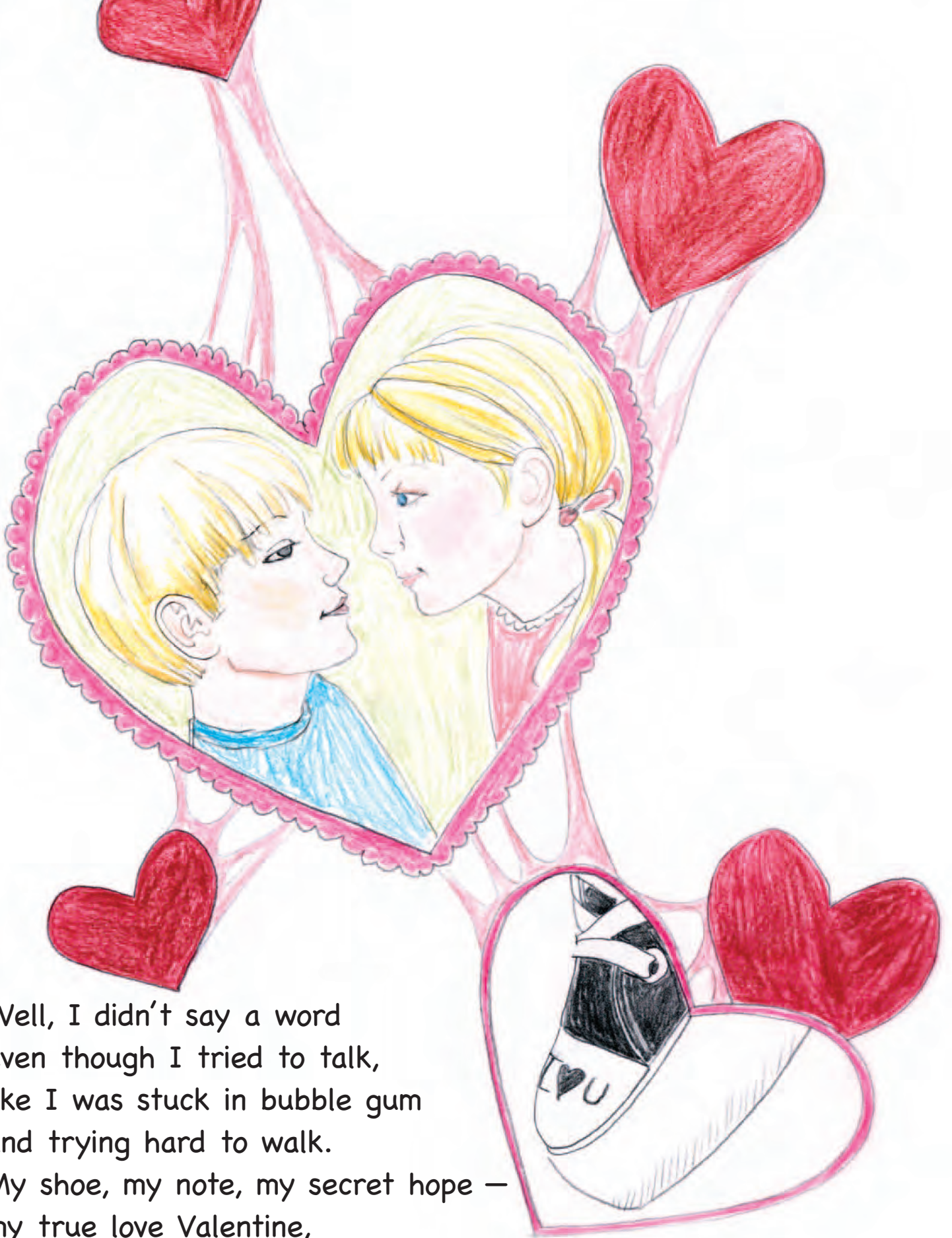


I wanted to hide again,
but there was nothing I could do,
so I started to erase
that silly note on my shoe.



But then Sue looked
at me, and smiled
the sweetest smile.
Then she pointed
to her shoe in the
center of the aisle.





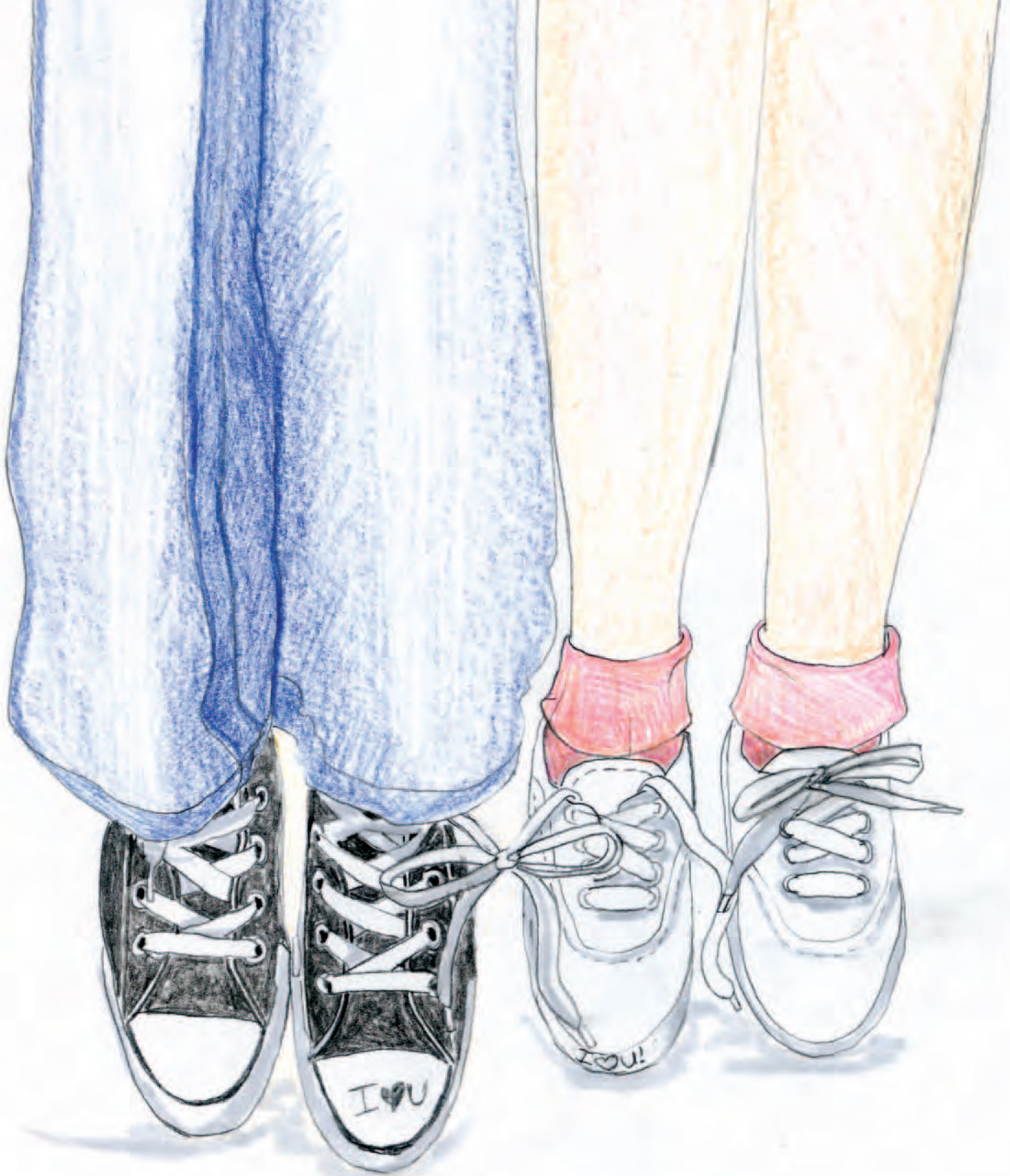
Well, I didn't say a word
even though I tried to talk,
like I was stuck in bubble gum
and trying hard to walk.
My shoe, my note, my secret hope —
my true love Valentine,
I couldn't catch all the words
that were running through my mind.

Now I had a girlfriend, but I didn't know what to do.
Is there something more to love than a note on a shoe?



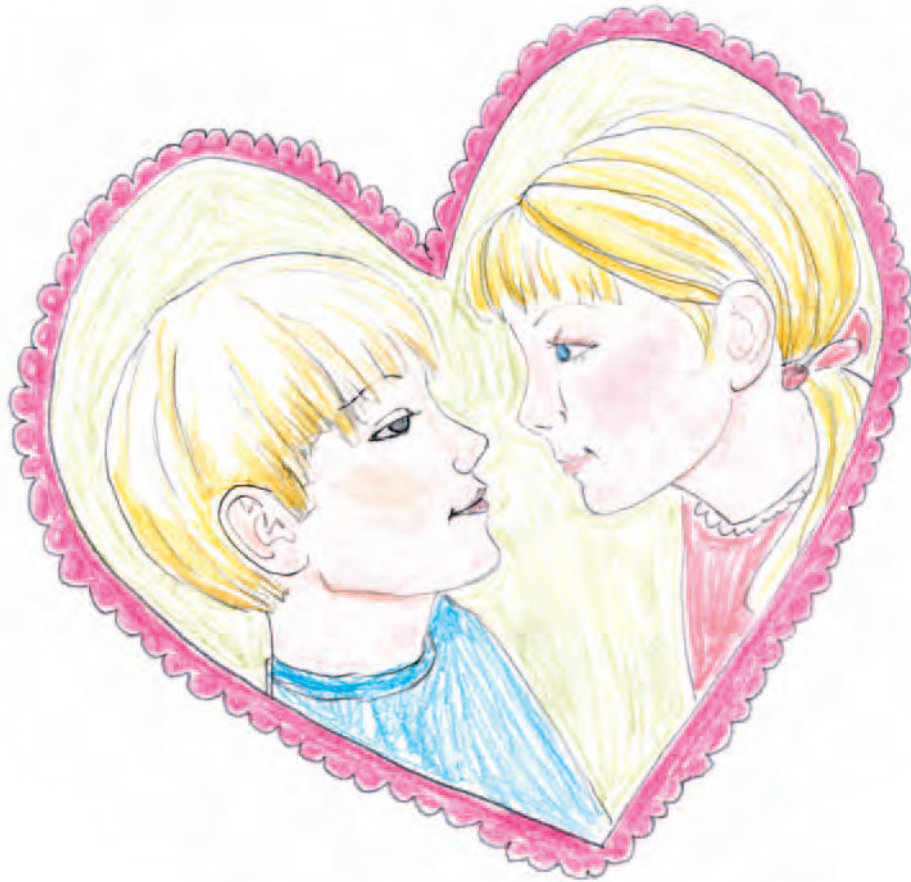


Well, I never did find out because Sue left Riverdale:
an empty desk, an empty chair, no one to send my mail.



Many years now have passed and we never met again,
but I remember very well how I made a special friend.

I remember seeing Sue and our feet not far apart,
and I remember those old tennis shoes
where we wore our hearts.



The End



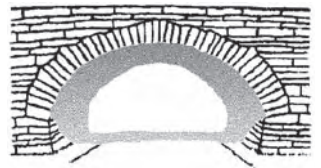
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