

Tomás and the Case of the Mysterious Missing Dog

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Written by Scott Baltisberger and Chrissy
Cowan

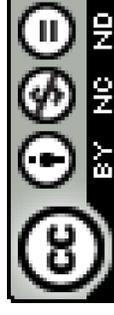
Illustrated by Scott Baltisberger

*This book is dedicated to Dr. Anne Corn,
who inspired many teachers and children
with her book, Monocular Mac.*



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and Visually Impaired
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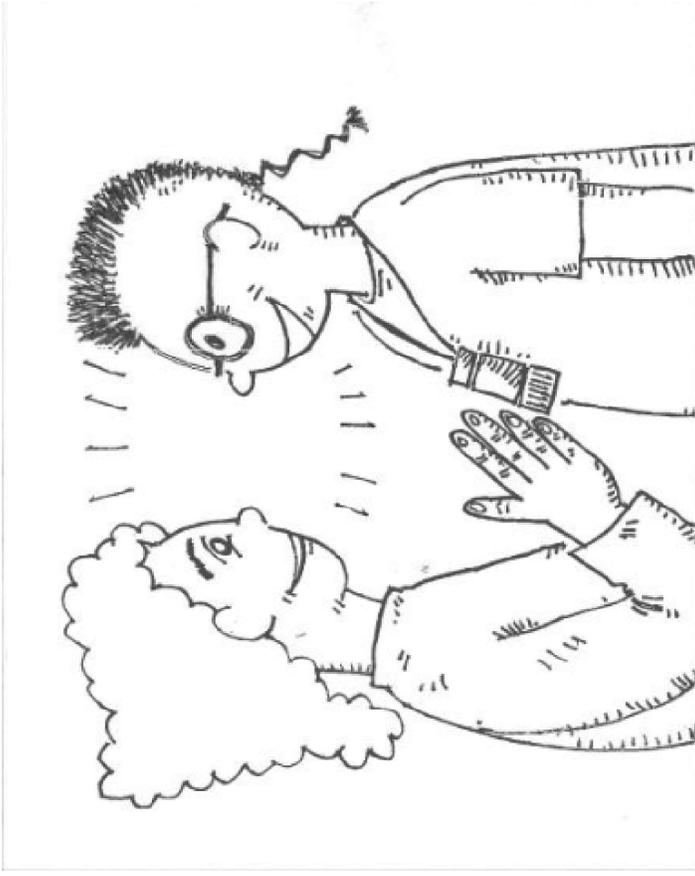


Scott Baltisberger is a teacher of students with visual impairments and a specialist in VI education with Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Programs.

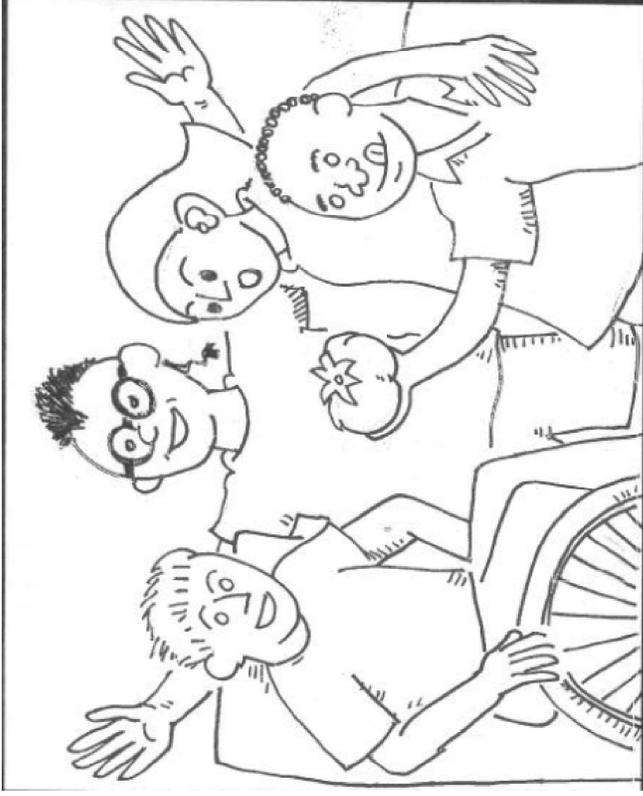
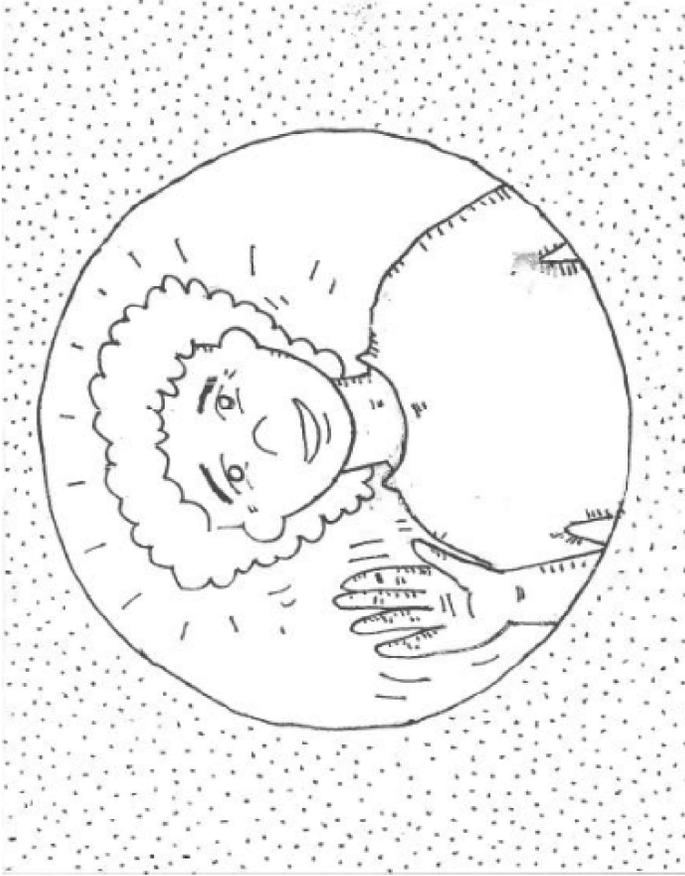
Chrissy Cowan is a teacher of students with visual impairments and statewide mentor coordinator with Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Programs.



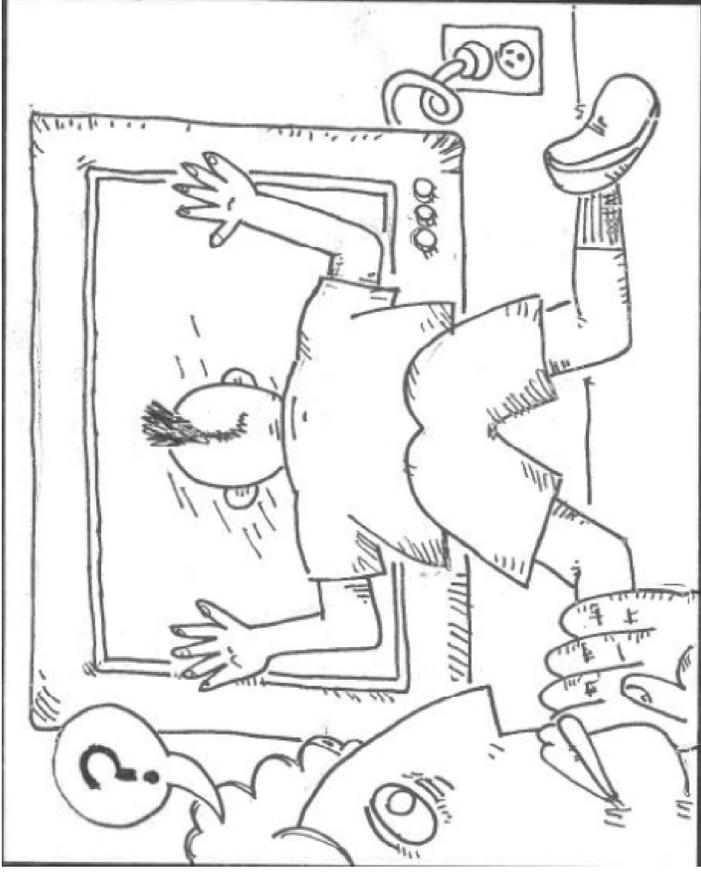
Hi! I'm Tomás! I guess I'm pretty typical for most third graders: I've got cool friends, a teacher, Ms. Acorn, who's pretty nice (but I think she gives WAY too much homework), I love computer games, pizza and riding my skateboard.



THE END



But, we've all got something that makes us a little different from each other. My friend Jim can speak Chinese, my friend Natalie wears a hearing aid. And then there's Randy. Randy likes to eat TOMATOES! No kid likes to eat tomatoes! But that's okay 'cause differences ROCK! If we were all the same, that would be BORING!

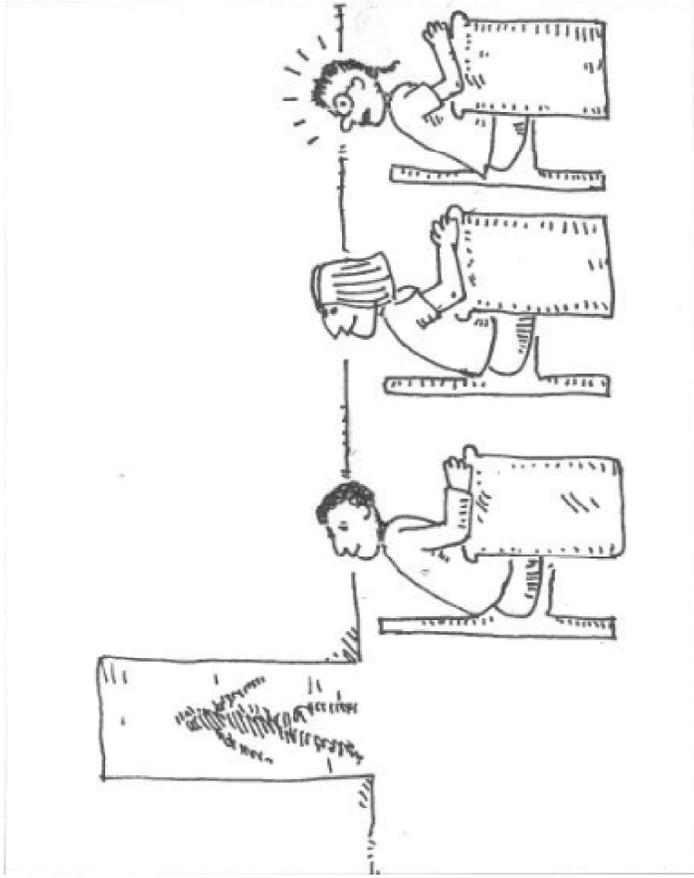


I guess something different about me is I have this thing with my eyes called optic atrophy. What happened was when I was about three years old my mom noticed I sat REALLY close when watching TV.



Randy leaned over and whispered, "Wow, the new girl is really cute!"

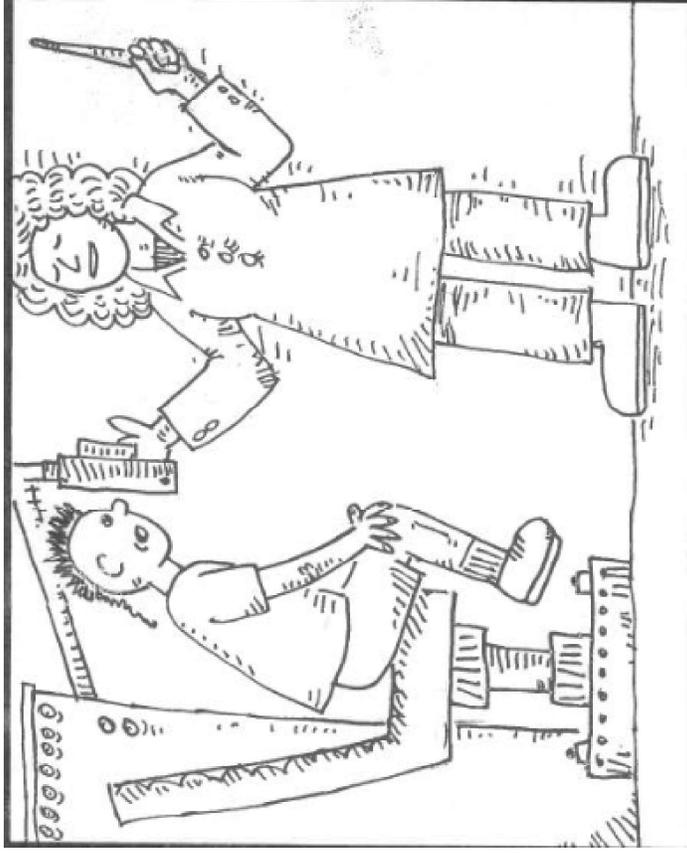
I raised my telescope...



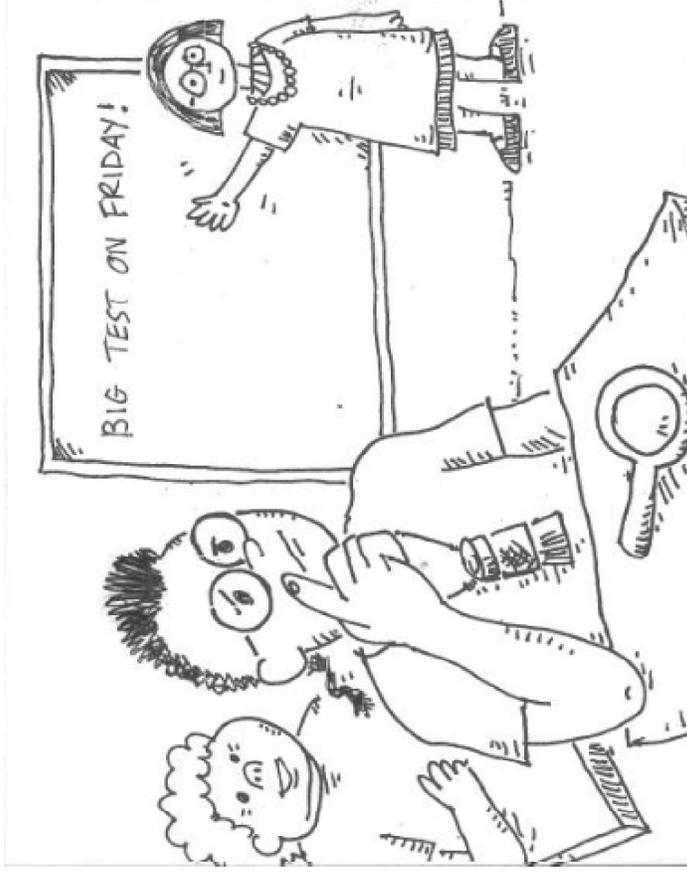
Just then, everyone turned to look at the back of the room.
“Class, we have a new student today,” announced Ms. Acorn. “Her name is Millie.”



She also wondered how come, when we were reading a book together, I'd push my nose right up against the pages to look at the pictures.



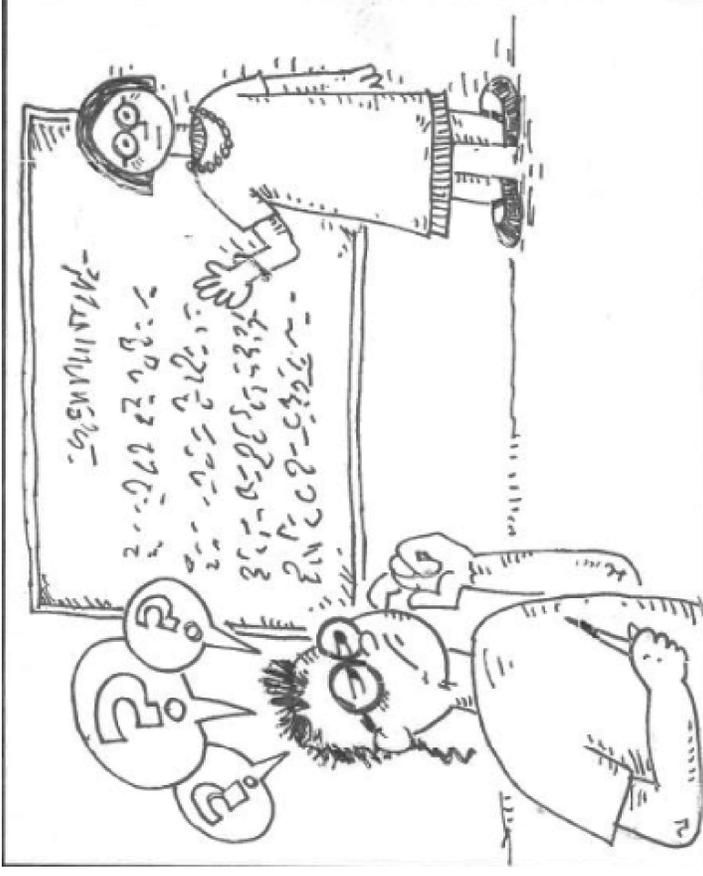
We went to the eye doctor and that's when she said I had optic atrophy. I got glasses but even when I'm wearing them, it's sometimes hard for me to see certain things.



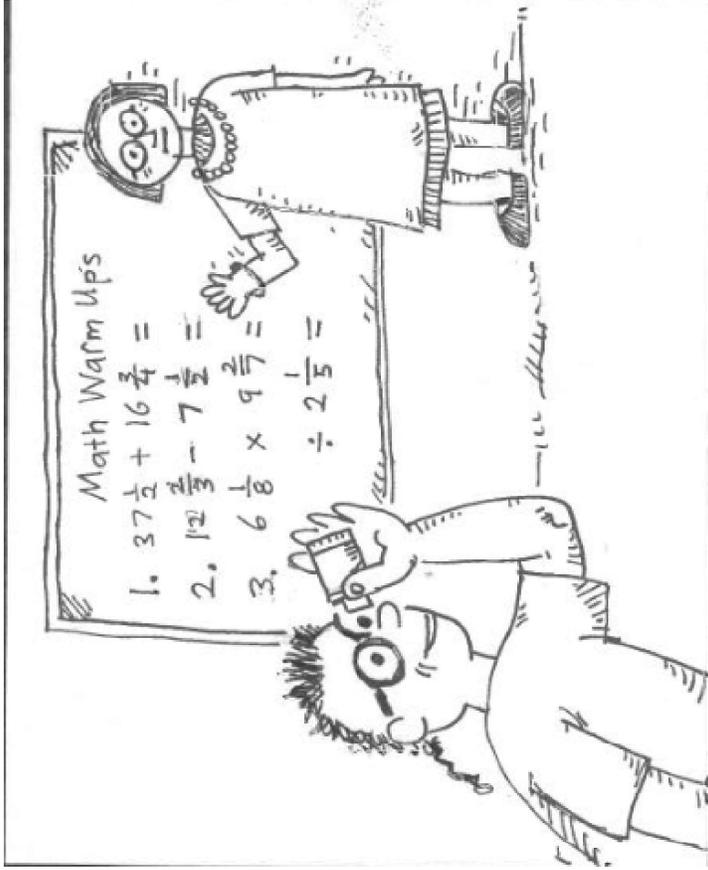
As I sat at my desk, I began to think again about how much my optical devices had helped. I wondered if Ms. Left was right... Maybe I was missing things in class when I didn't use my magnifier and telescope.



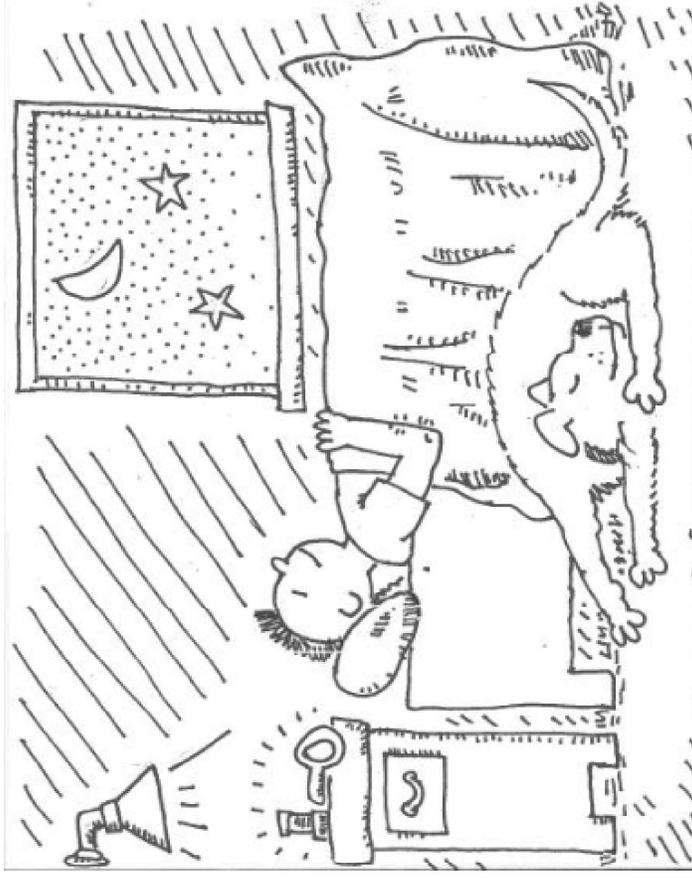
The next day, I couldn't wait to tell my friends that I'd found Luna. They congratulated me and we went to class.



For example, when Ms. Acorn puts something on the board or the overhead screen, my friends can read it just fine, but for me, well, it looks kind of fuzzy and blurry.



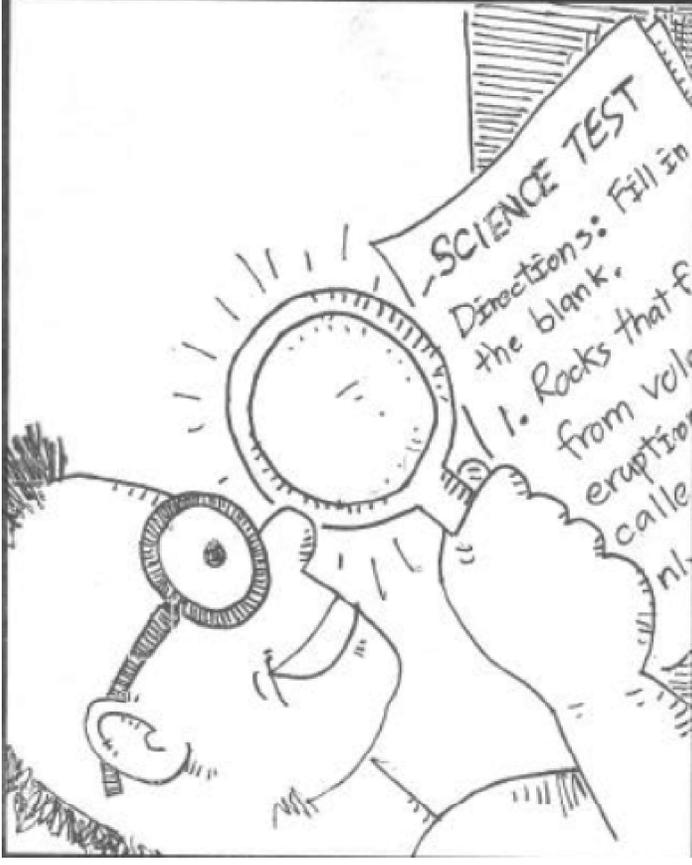
Fuzzy and blurry unless I use my telescope. I take it out, put it to my eye, point it at the board and twist it a little to get it focused. Then, I can read just like everybody else.



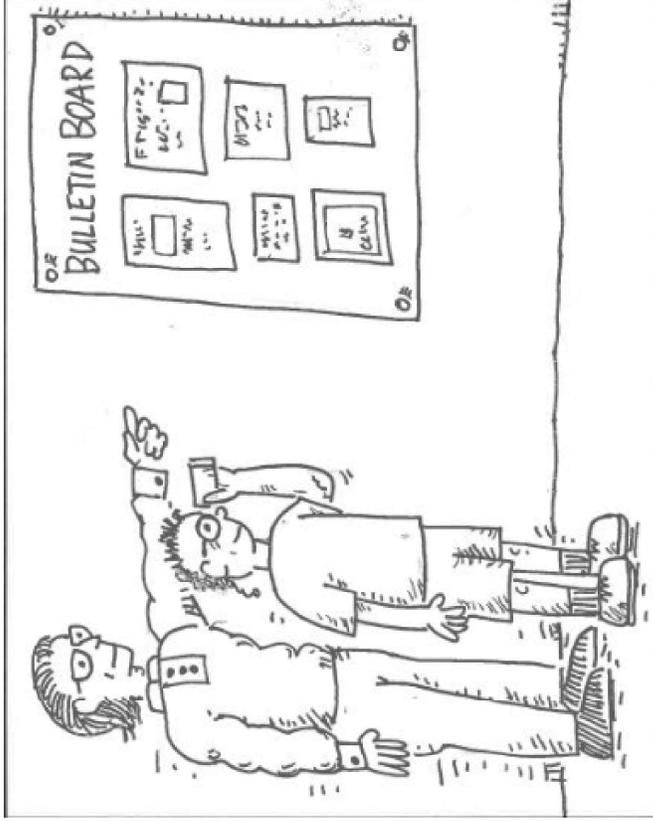
That night, as I lay in bed, I thought about the day's adventures. I don't think I could have done as much as I did without my telescope and magnifier!



And there was LUNA!
She was asleep in the laundry!
She must have come back from her little
squirrel chasing adventure earlier, where
she lost her collar.



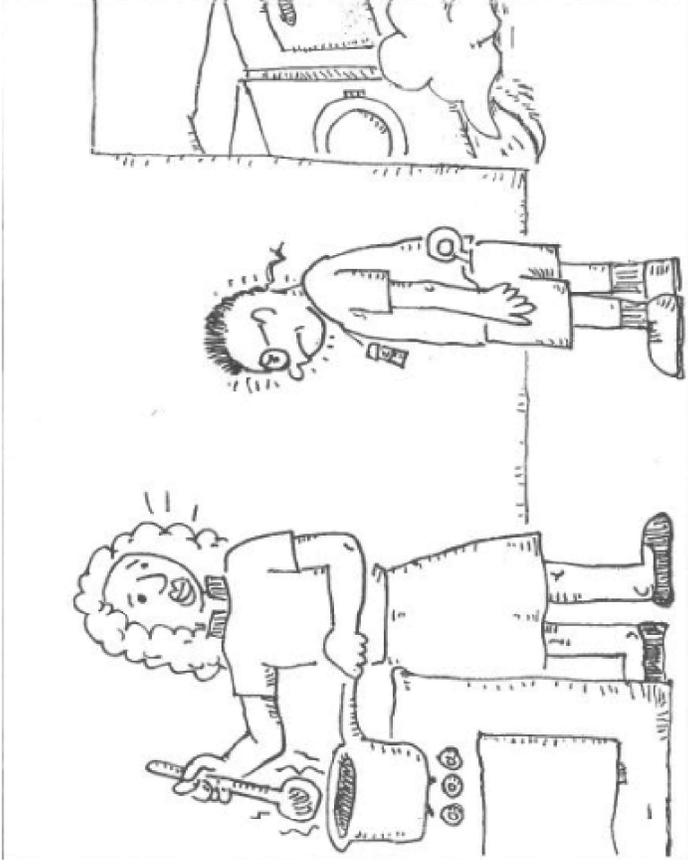
Another thing is books and worksheets. I've
got to put them really close to read and that
makes my eyes tired and gives me a
headache. So, I pull out a magnifier and
then I can read just fine.



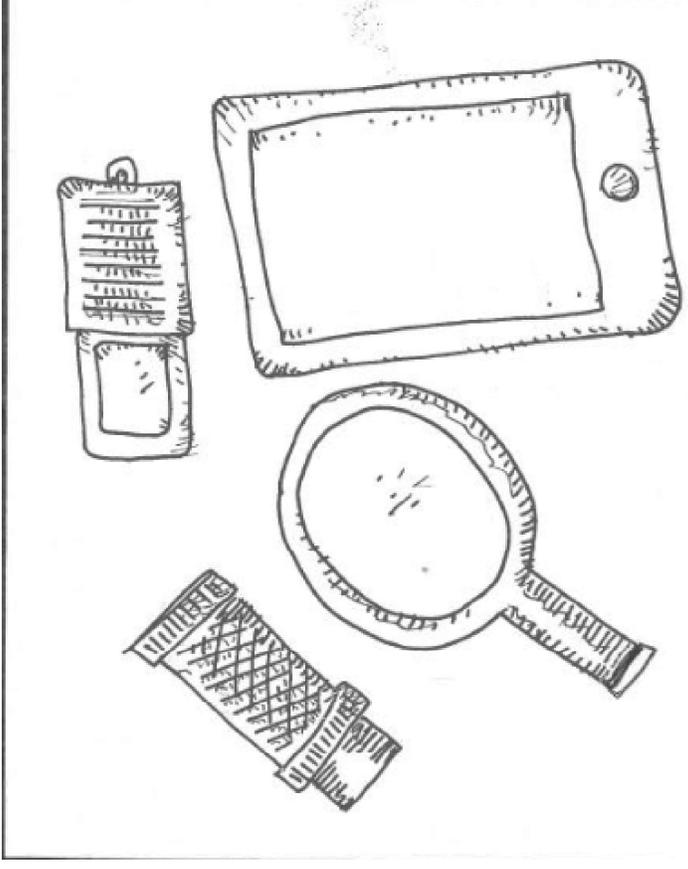
That's when Ms. Left, entered my life. She's a "teacher of students with visual impairments". I just call her my "vision teacher". She's the one who showed me how to use the telescopes and magnifiers and some other cool stuff, too. She and I get together once a week and we work on ways of making it easier to see things.



I slowly walked to the laundry room, thinking about how much I was going to miss Luna sleeping in my room that night. Then I bent down to pick up a blanket...



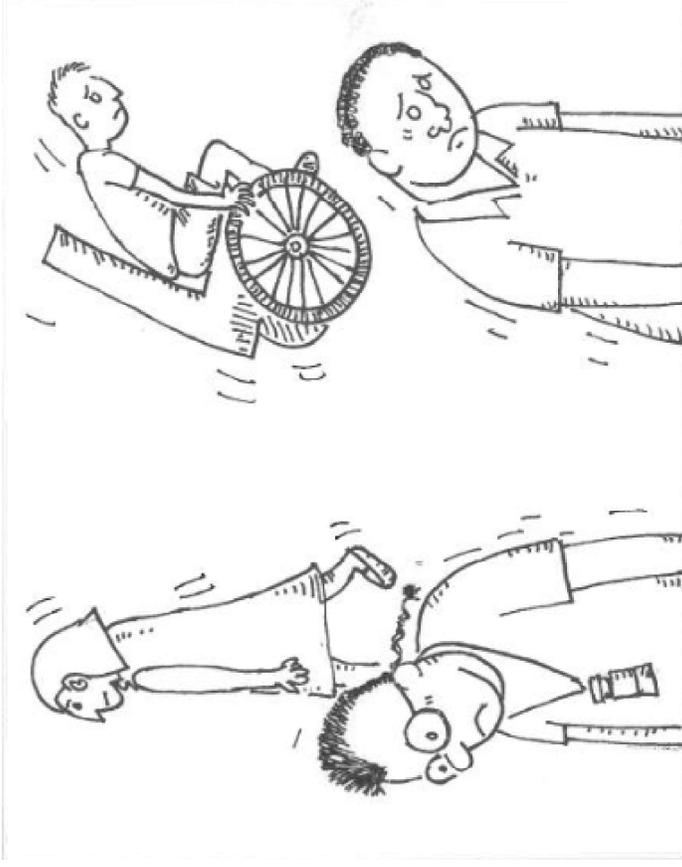
When I got home, I told Mom about Luna. She said, "Oh, that's too bad! Now why don't you go put the dirty laundry in the washing machine."



I've got a few different kinds of optical devices, too, for looking at different things.



My friends think the magnifiers are awesome. They want to check them out sometimes but I tell them no 'cause these aren't toys... I gotta have 'em with me at all times so I can get things done.

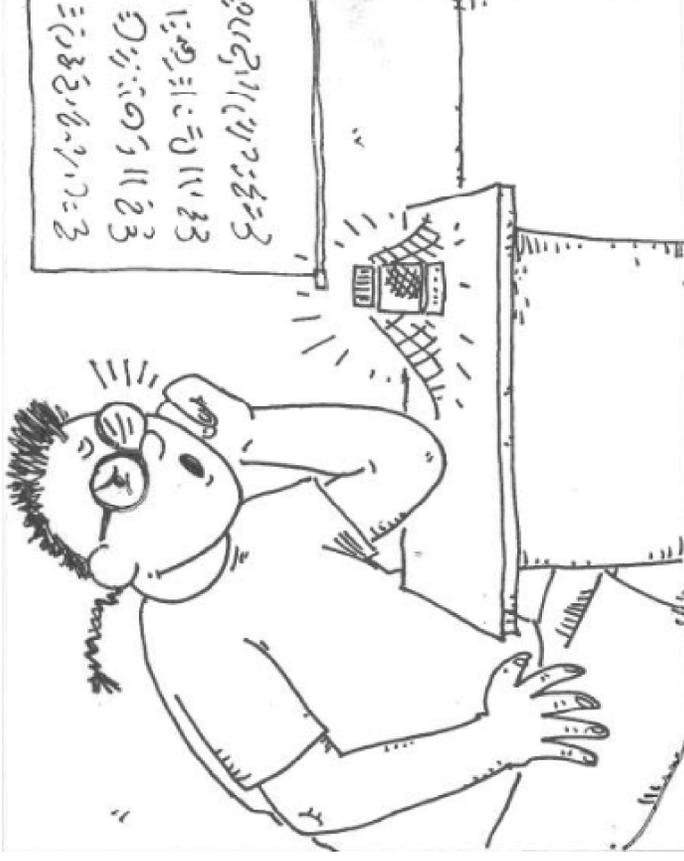


We ran right into Jim and Natalie. They hadn't had any luck either. It was getting late, so we decided to head home. I was really bummed!



Yikes! It was a big, ugly, mean CAT! And it smelled! It hissed and swiped at us with its claws!
We took off running!

34

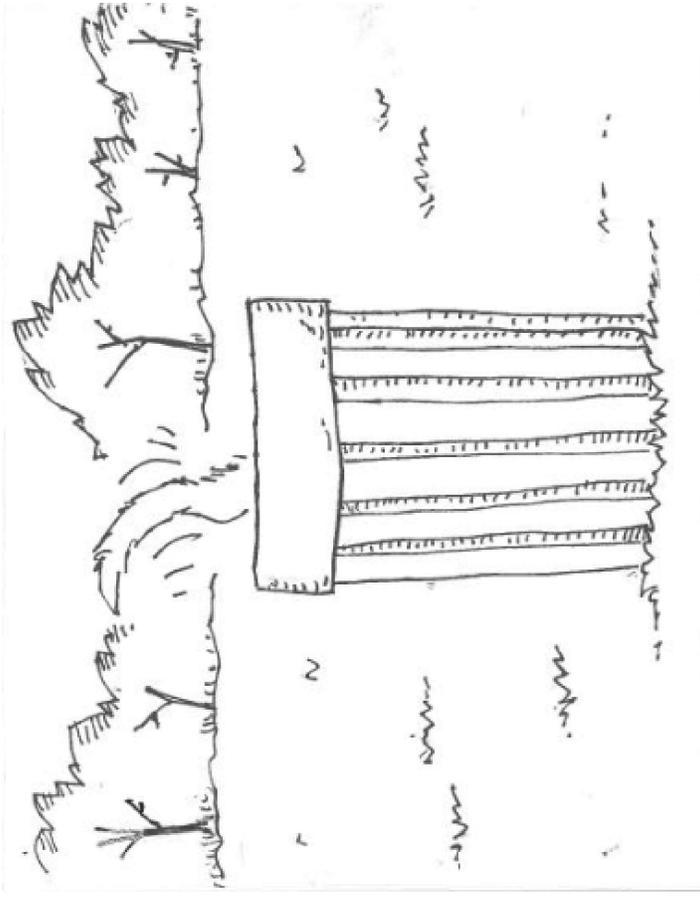


I didn't really like using all this stuff as often as my teachers thought I should because I felt it made me look different. Sometimes I just preferred to squint.
Until one day....

15



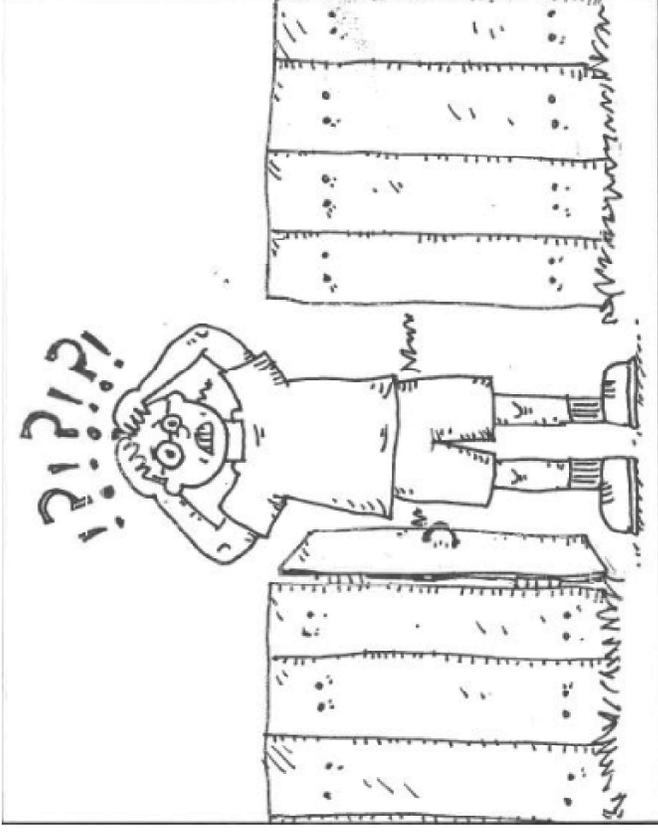
Like a lot of kids, I've got a dog. She's a great dog. Her name is Luna. I got her when I was just a baby, so we kind of grew up together. She's super-cool. She can run really fast and catch a Frisbee in the air. She likes to wrestle too! And she sleeps with me in my room at night. All my friends like her, too.



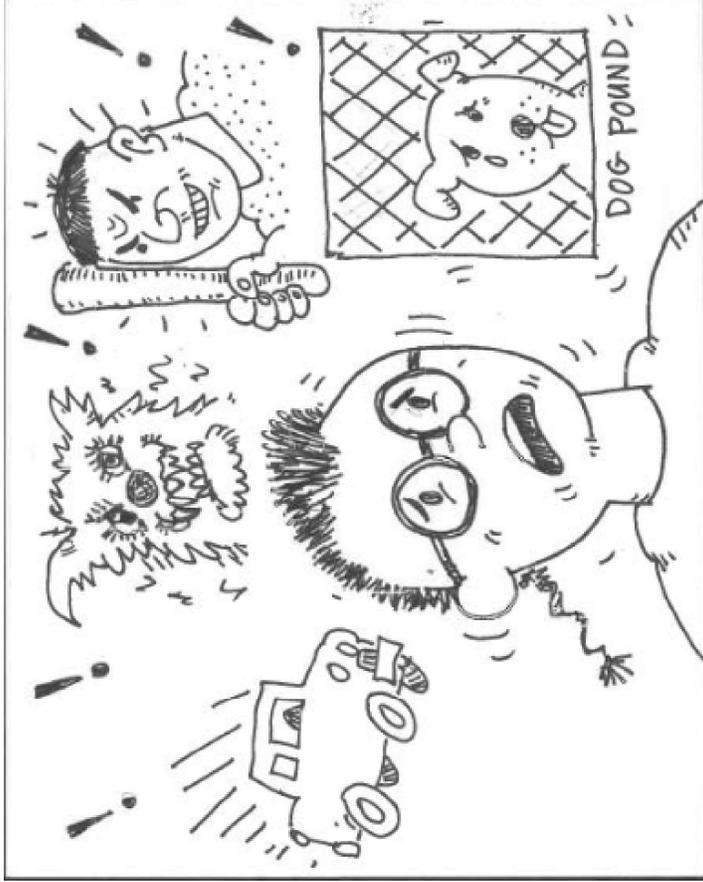
“Look Randy! Over there! In that trash can... Is that Luna?”
We ran over.



We got to the park and GOSH! There was a LOT going on! I had to stand back and scope it all out.



So you can imagine how I felt one day when I came home from school and she was GONE!! I couldn't figure out what had happened until I saw the gate to the backyard open and I remembered I hadn't closed it that morning after taking her for her walk. She must have seen it was open and gotten out. I was so mad at myself!



Our street is not too busy but still, there are cars and tough dogs and mean kids and.... DOGCATCHERS!!! Man! I felt awful! I had to make a plan and quick!

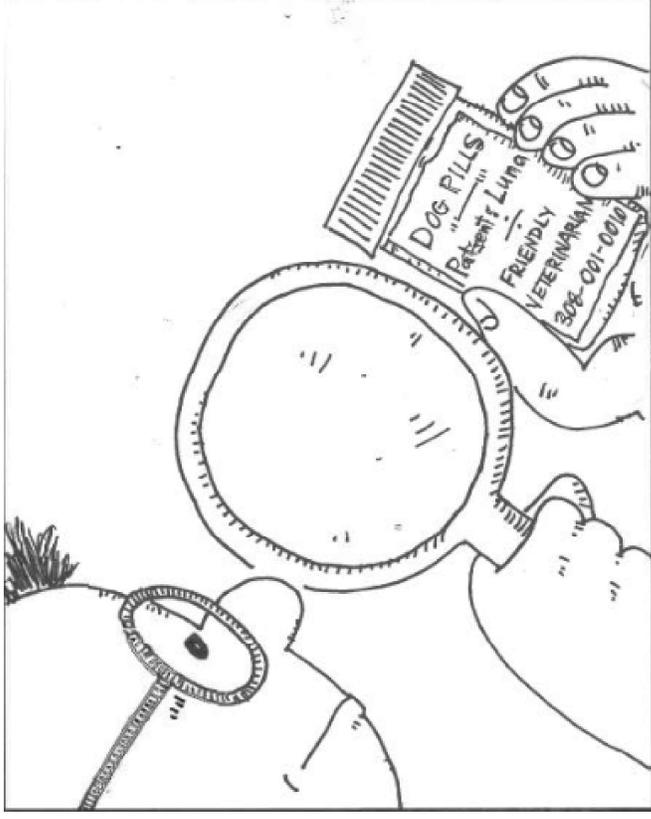


We looked on our map and saw there was a park a couple of streets over. Luna loves to chase squirrels. Maybe she went there...



I got to it first, snatched it up and whipped out my magnifier.... It was Luna's collar! This meant that Luna had come this way. We were on the right track but it also meant she didn't have any I.D. We had to get to her before the dogcatcher! Things just got REAL!

30



I wondered if someone might call Luna's vet if they found her. Gosh! Where would I find that number! OH! On Luna's pill bottle! I don't know if you've looked at any labels lately, but the size of the print on those things is amazingly tiny! I pulled out my pocket magnifier. Good thing I had it with me 'cause I found that number right away.

19



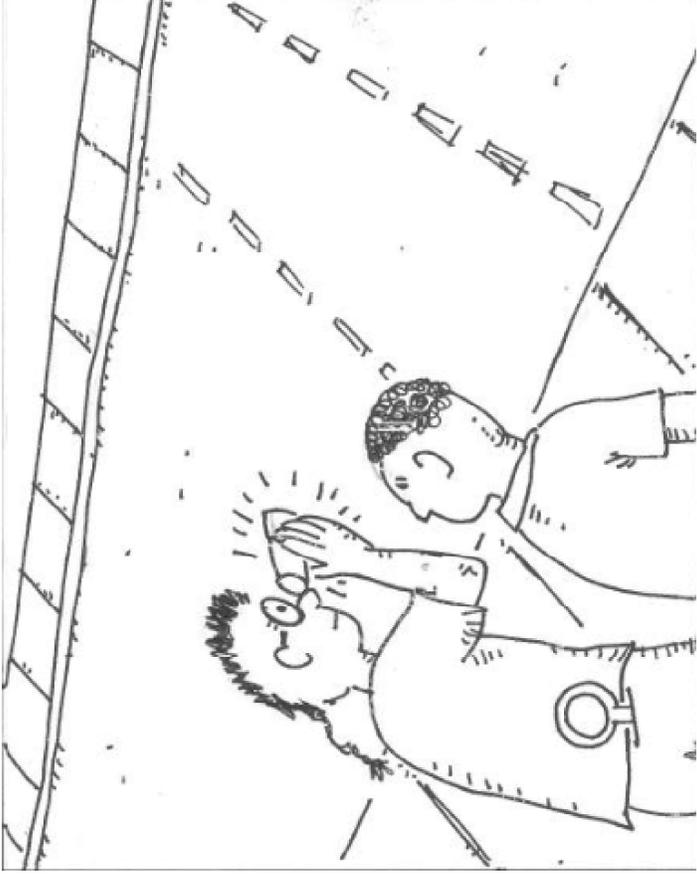
The vet said she hadn't heard anything but they'd call if Luna turned up. It looked like I was going to have to take matters into my own hands!

I got on the phone and called Randy, Natalie and Jim. They immediately agreed to help and said they'd be right over.

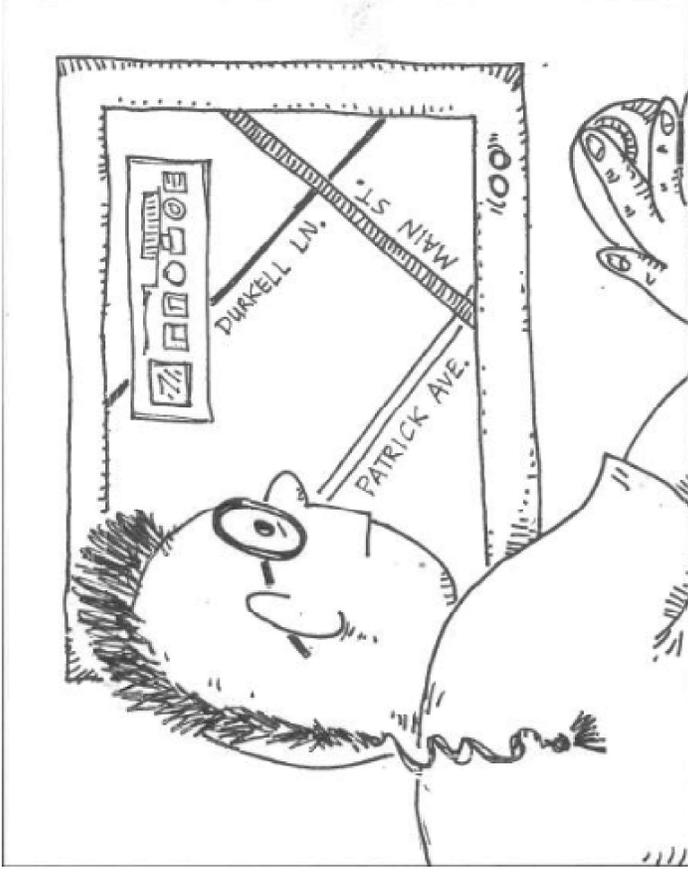


But when I got near the dog, I saw it was a German Shepherd.

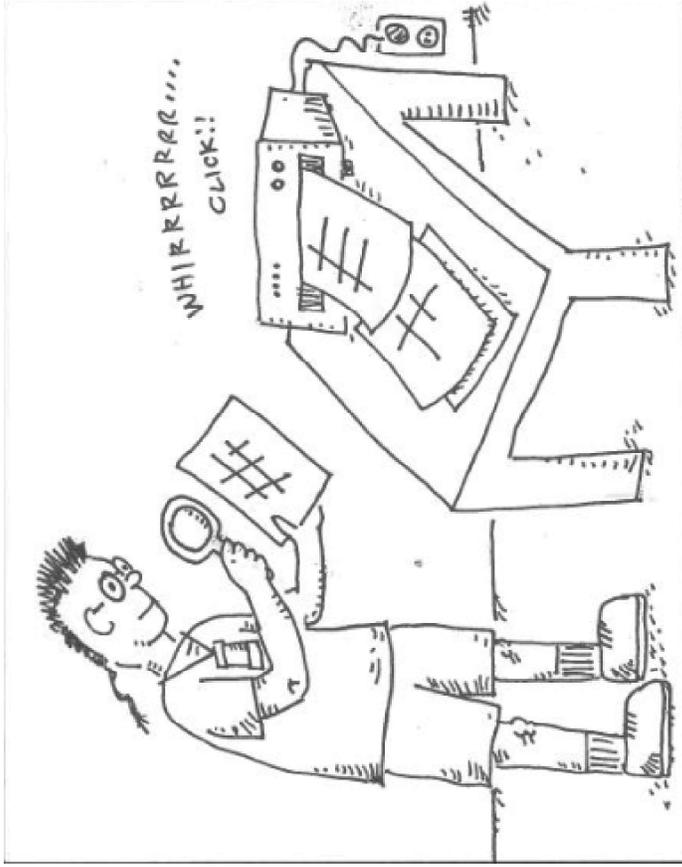
But... Just ahead we saw a collar laying on the ground!



So I pulled out my telescope real quick and saw that now it was safe.



While waiting for them, I did a web search for a city map on my mom's computer. Whoa! Another trip to Tiny Print Town! I'd never be able to read letters that small but luckily I have a program loaded on there that can zoom in, making things large enough to read.



I used it to find the names of the streets where I thought each person should search. I printed out some maps to give to each of my friends.



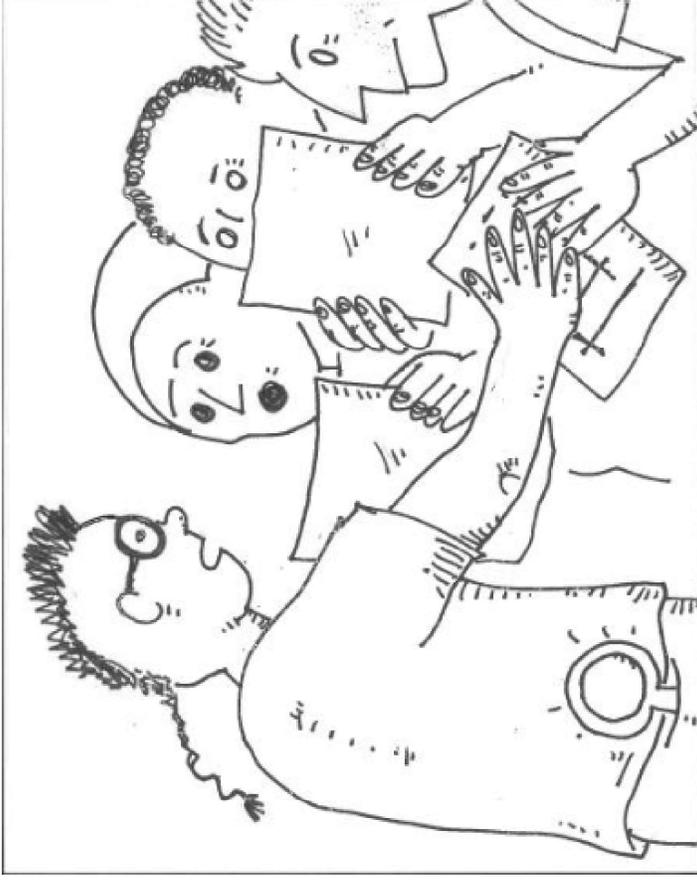
SCREECH!

I almost got taken out by a big truck! I had forgotten to check the traffic signal like my orientation and mobility specialist, Mr. Bill, always tells me.



Suddenly Randy hollered, "Wait a minute! I think I see Luna across the street!"
I took off running!

26

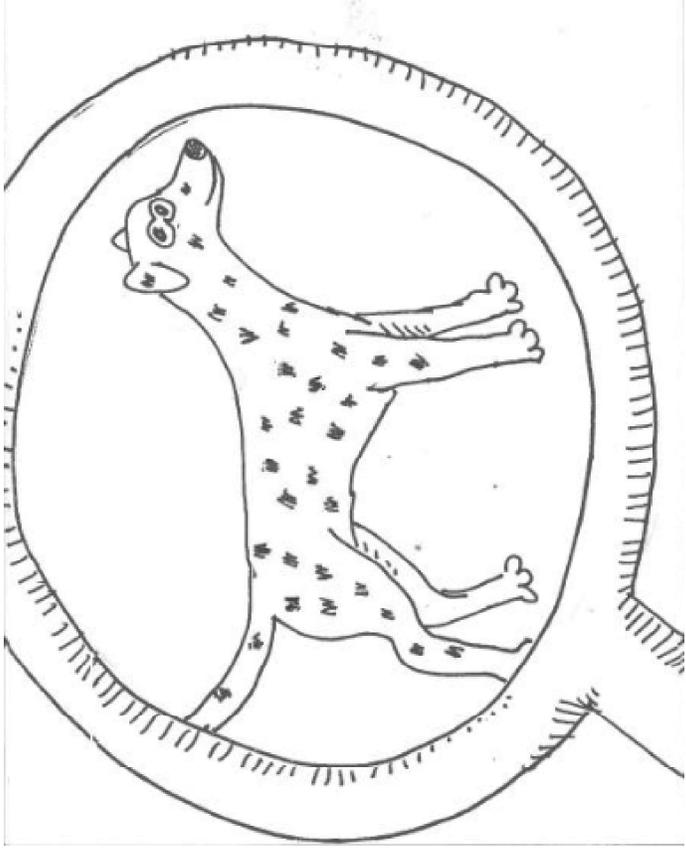


Finally, everybody arrived and we got to work. I handed out the maps and we paired up and picked the streets we would search.

23



Randy and I headed over to the City Market when Randy found a clue... It was a found dog notice taped to the window. Randy is great at math but some words are hard for him to read. I pulled out my magnifier again.



NUTS! The notice said this dog was a Dalmatian, NOT a yellow lab like Luna. Onward with the search!