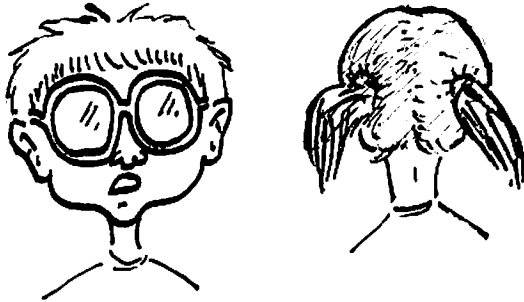


The Thing Under Your Bed

By Leila Pakawongse

Calvin had just turned seven years old.

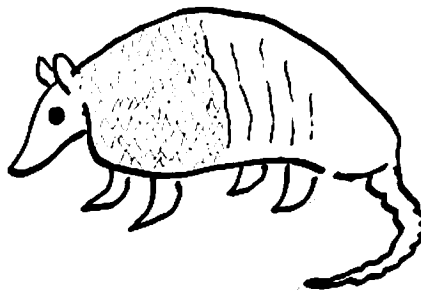


At his birthday party he invited everyone in his class. Even the girls who made fun of him, like Erica who always wore her hair in pig tails. But the cool kids were also there, like his best friend, Malcolm, who wore big glasses that made him look like a bug, so everyone called him Bug.

Calvin's mom made Tanner come to the party too. Tanner was ten years old and looked a lot like Calvin, except he was older. He was the coolest older brother. He rode his scooter to school, went skating with his friends every Friday and went to school dances. Tanner was the bomb. He knew everything about everything.

"Hey Bro, you're seven now. What's the first thing you're gonna do?" he asked after they ate cake.

"Open my presents, DUH!"



And so Calvin opened his presents. He got a stuffed animal from his grandmother, it was purple with green scales which he promptly gave to his little four year old sister.

"Don't you like stuffed animals, Calvin? You've got that nasty old stuffed dog you sleep with every night," Tanner always knew how to embarrass Calvin.

"I'm too old for stuffed animals, sorry Grandma," even though Calvin really loved Mr. Fluff, he

told himself he's throw it away when he got to his room.

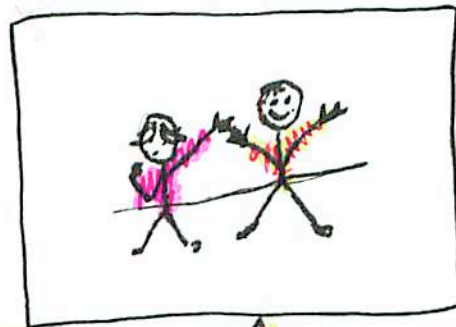
He got a lunch box from Erica, with pink stickers all over it. He thanked her and quietly said "not."

Bug gave him an ant farm. Bug liked bugs.

Among his list of things he also got a t-shirt from his father that said,



His little sister gave him a drawing of the two of them,



But his best gift was...



He hopped right onto it and ran to the street. He put on his helmet that had flames on the side and zoomed down the street. He was as fast as a dart. Now he could ride his scooter to school like Tanner.

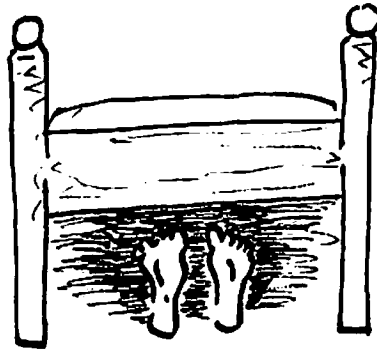
Best birthday ever!

He said Thanks to everyone and let his mother do the cleaning.

“Hey Tanner, you wanna go ride with me?” Calvin wanted more than anything for Tanner to say yes.

“Sure lil bro, but I gotta tell you something first.”

“What is it?” Calvin was a little ‘fraid at what Tanner was going to say.



“There’s a monster... *under your bed.*” Tanner said with the most serious face Calvin had ever seen.

“How do you know?”

“Oh, I know.”

“But how?” Calvin was started to shake a little.



“Because - There’s one under everyone’s bed. He’s big and scary. He’s got huge teeth. Nails the length of your arm. Feet as big as your head. Breath as bad as onions. Two heads. Seven eyes. Hair

longer than floss. He sleeps under your bed and he'll eat you."

"Why does he want to eat me?" Calvin asked earnestly.

"Because you're seven. You're in your prime age. You're juicy from eating all that cake."

Tanner put simply.

"But won't mom and dad miss me?"

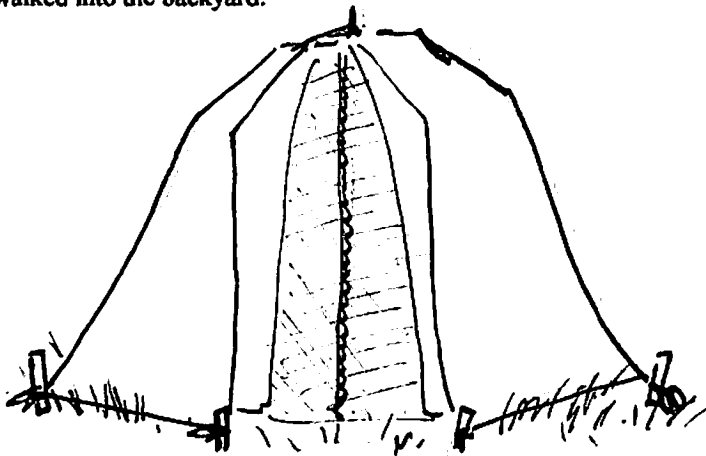
"Maybe, I just wanted to say my good-bye now," and Tanner rode off down the street.



So Calvin had to think. How was he going to keep away from the monster under his bed?

So he thought, and thought, and thought. And then he came up with an idea!

He was going to sleep outside, in a tent, next to the dog house. If anyone would protect him, Scout, the family dog, would. So Calvin went into the attic and got the tent, a sleeping bag, and a flashlight and walked into the backyard.



He looked around. It was still light out but he knew that it was going to be dark soon. He put up the tent as fast as he could right next to Scout's dog house. He fell asleep once he snuggled into his sleeping bag.

Late that night, he felt the tent shake. It started shaking more and more and it would stopped.

Then he yelled, "Scout! Get the monster!"

And then he heard Scout bark and a scream.

And then it was quiet.

Calvin peaked his head out and saw nothing.

It was dark and Scout was back in his dog house.

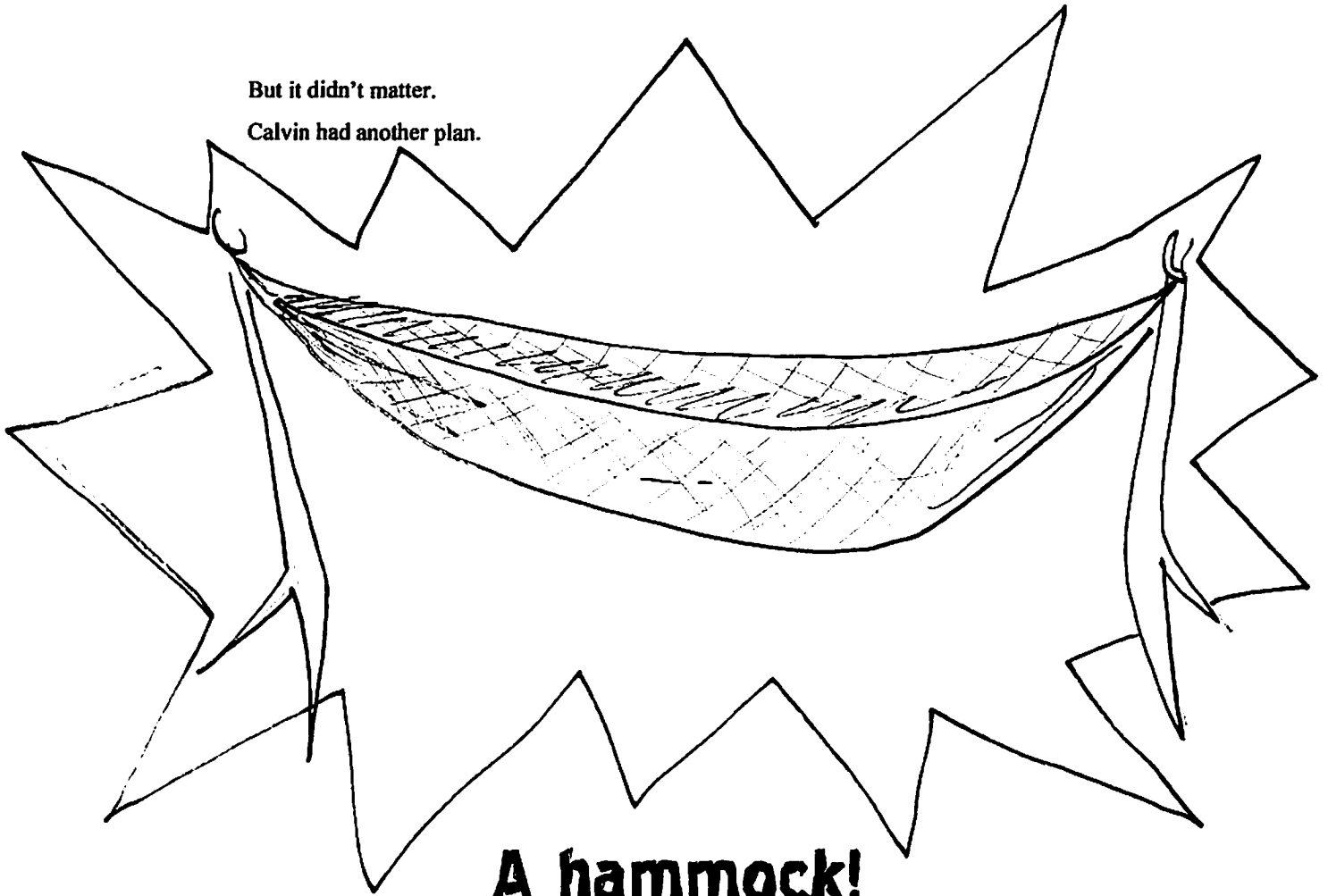
"Good boy, Scout!" as Calvin petted Scout, then he crawled back into his sleeping bag.

When Calvin woke up, his mother was standing at the opening of the tent, "What are you doing?" She told him he needed to put the tent back in the attic and sleep in his own bed.

"You are going to get sick mister! It's freezing out there. Sleep in your own bed tonight."



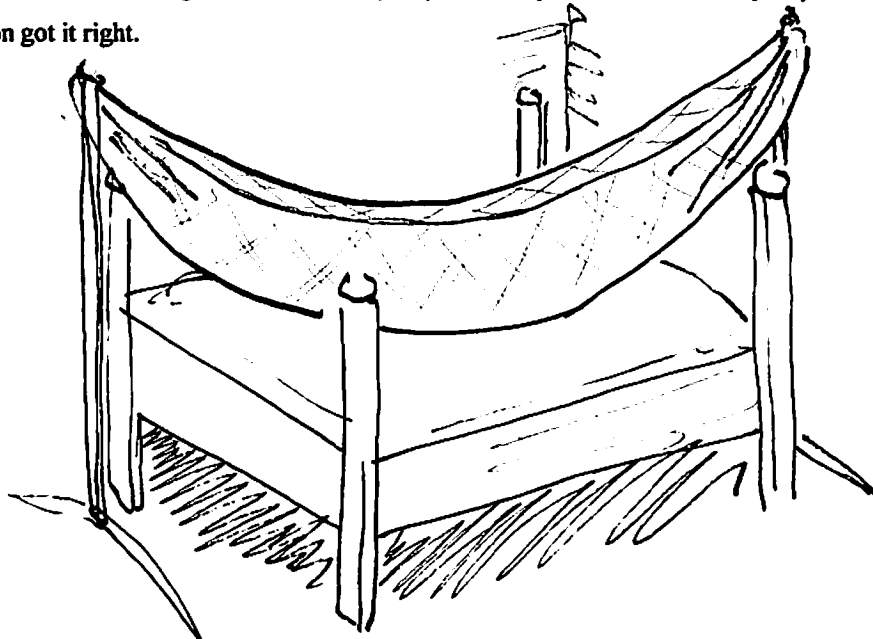
But it didn't matter.
Calvin had another plan.



A hammock!

After he put away the tent, he quietly tip toed past his mother when she was washing dishes and grabbed the hammock his father would use while he sun bathed. He took it apart in a hurry and tip toed past his mother up to his room.

It took him awhile to figure out which way to put which pole and how exactly to put it on top of his bed, but he soon got it right.



In the middle of the night, he woke up because something flipped the hammock over.

AH!!!!

The monster was going to get him.

But then his door slammed shut. He heard footsteps and his mother was in the room.

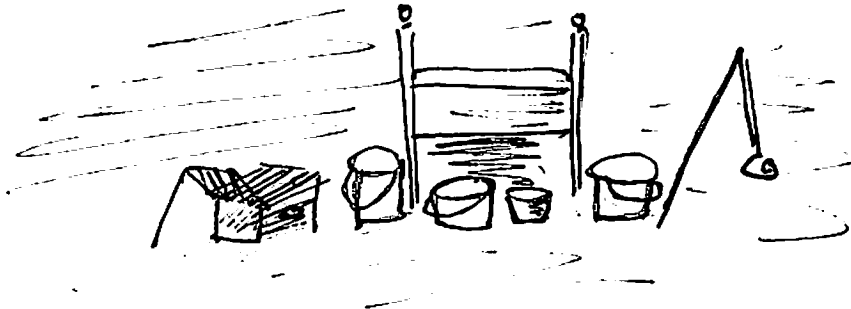


“What are you doing? What happened? Are you ok? Nightmare? What is this hammock doing in here?”

“Uh... nothing Mom. I was just... doing... stuff”

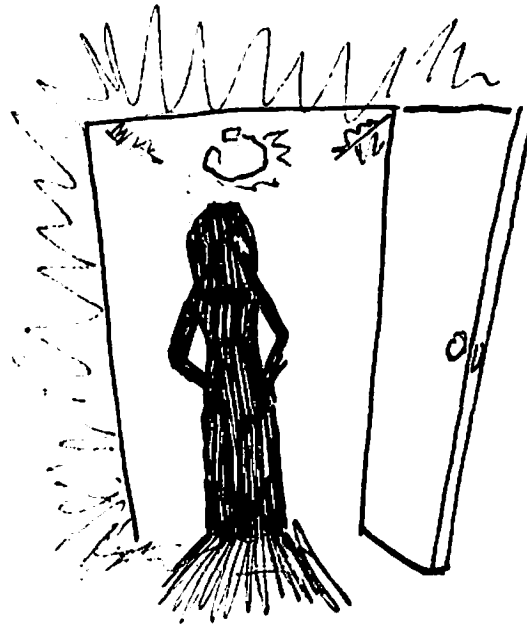
And Calvin fell back asleep.

That morning, he had a better idea! Calvin ran into the garage and found all the wire and buckets and steel rods his father had. He brought them all to his room, careful to keep quiet so his father didn't hear him.



All around his bed he set up traps. A cage here, a rod to bonk the monster on the head, and buckets all around so the monster would walk right into one. He made sure that all the contraptions were hidden so that the thing under his bed wouldn't see them, it was like a sneak attack, but not really. It was the perfect plan, because if the monster came from under the bed, Calvin would hear him walking around. Calvin was sure that he's catch the monster this time.

But in the middle of the night, Calvin got thirsty, and walked right into the bucket, stubbing his toe. He yelled and hollered, all until his mom ran into the room,



“Calvin dear, are you ok? What happened? Nightmare? What are you doing? Why are all these buckets in here?” His mom asked with amazement.

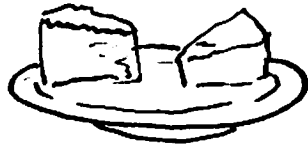
“Uh... nothing Mom. I was just, working... on... stuff.”

“Go to bed.” And with that, she left.

And Calvin fell asleep.



The next morning, he had an even better idea! He snuck into the kitchen while his brother was doing homework at the kitchen table. He went straight to the refrigerator and grabbed all the left over cake. He poured a glass of milk, and in stealth mode, he ran back to his room, careful not to spill any milk.



He lay belly down on top of his bed, and at every corner put a piece of cake. At the foot of the bed he put the glass of milk, surely a monster would also need a glass of milk with his cake, Calvin thought. He snuggled right into his blanket and drifted off into sleep.



It must have been late, because Calvin's eyes could barely open when he saw the hallway light shine through. Something was opening his door. Calvin made sure to keep quiet. He kept one eye open and the other closed, and watched as the shape moved across the room... stoop down low... shuffle on the group... and slide under his bed.

Huh? Calvin thought. Was the monster just returning to under the bed?

And then Calvin's bed began to shake. It rumbled and made loud stomping noises on the ground. Calvin didn't scream. He knew who it was.

He got out of his bed, ran to his parents room, grabbed his mom and pulled her back to his room. They both watched as the bed rocked back and forth, and noises came from under the bed.

"Calvin! I've lived under here for tooo long. I am going to eat you tonight!"



"Oh really, Tanner? You're going to eat your little brother?" Calvin's mom said with sass.

"You're funny, Tanner, but not that smart, I just turned seven."