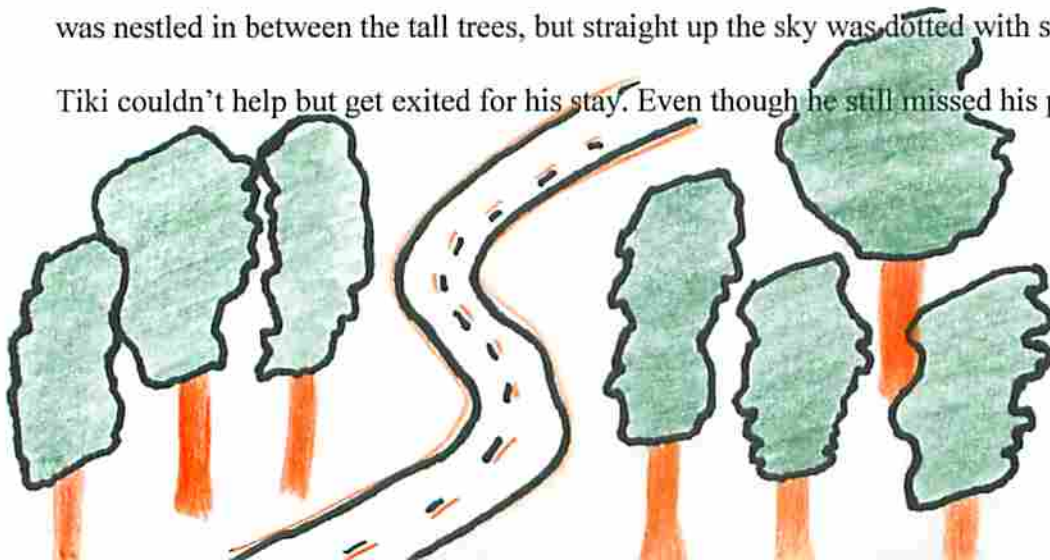


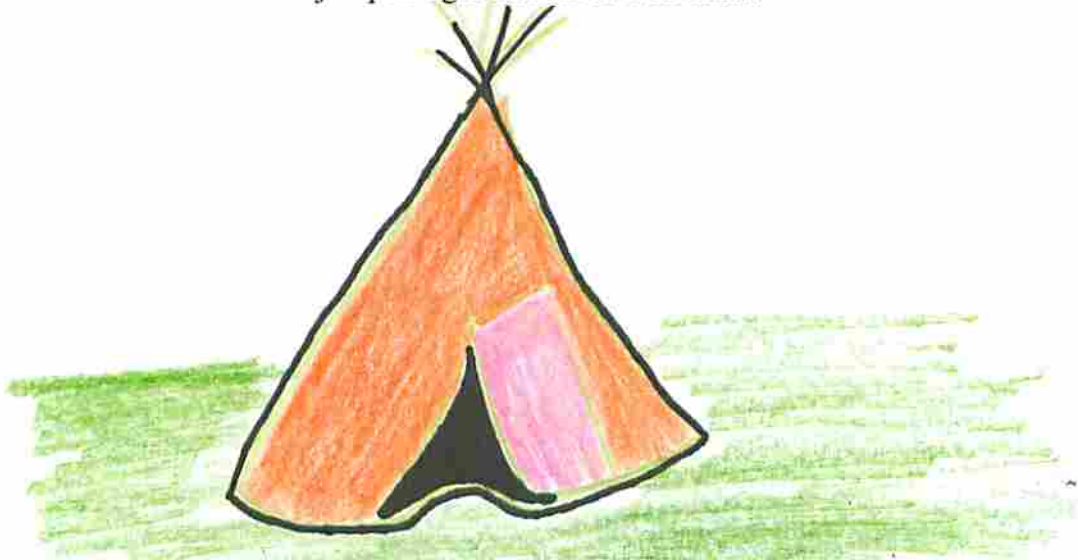
Tiki had been looking forward to his ninth birthday all summer, and now it had finally come. He was sad that all his friends couldn't play games in the park. Instead of celebrating at the park like always, Tiki was going to spend his birthday with his grandparents; Clarence and May. This news upset Tiki but his parents wouldn't budge. They told him that they had an important wedding to go to.



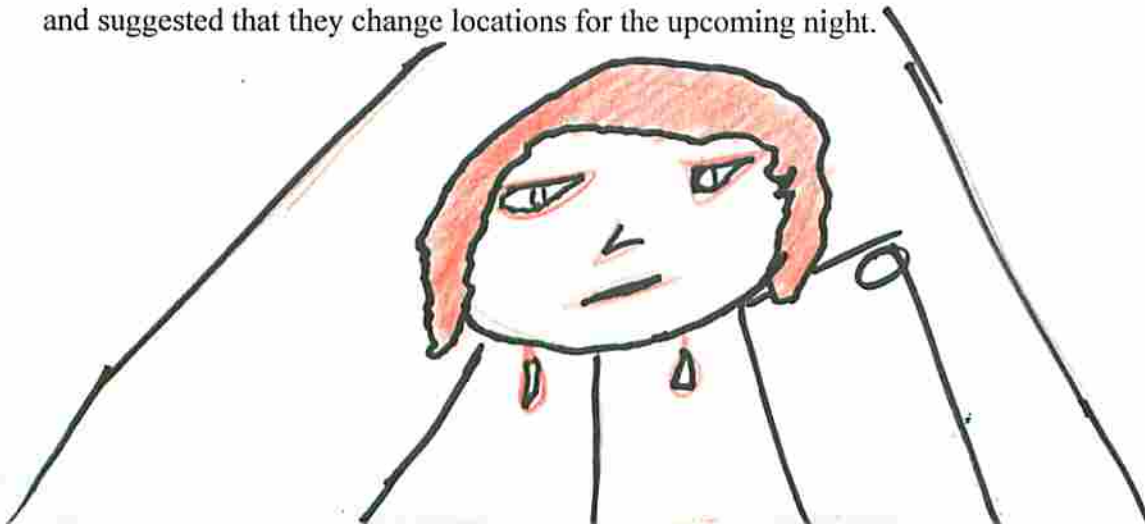
Tiki played games in the car ride to his grandparents house. All the way down the coast into the tall redwood trees they went. Up and down the windy road they went until, in the night, after a left and a right, they arrived at Clarence and May's house. The house was nestled in between the tall trees, but straight up the sky was dotted with stars and Tiki couldn't help but get excited for his stay. Even though he still missed his parents.



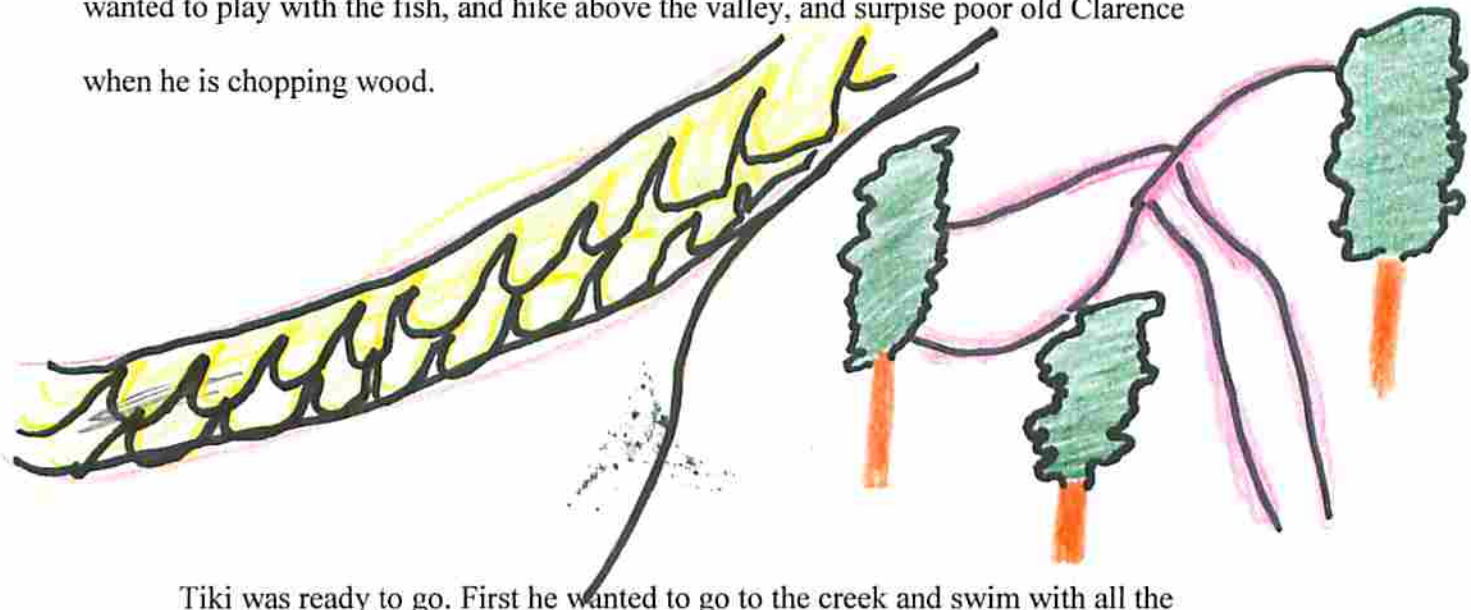
Tiki's parents left and Clarence May and Tiki had a little bit of forest to themselves. Even though it was pretty late by Tiki's parents standards, Tiki was allowed to stay up as late as he wanted. Just before Tiki ran off to play by the creek May shouted out of the house that she had a surprise for him. Tiki wheeled around and followed May into the backyard where Clarence stood next to a real live tipi. Tiki was so happy that he forgot all about the creek and jumped right into his new fortress.



The glorious cloudless morning brought light onto the tipi. Grandmother May came out of the house to check on Tiki and screamed. "Oh no!" The sprinkler system had went off in the night and the tipi was soaking wet! As May was hurrying to the tipi, Tiki stumbled out of the tent dripping wet. The water had seeped into the tipi and was flooded. Tiki was sad that his birthday present was ruined. However, Grandmother May smiled and suggested that they change locations for the upcoming night.



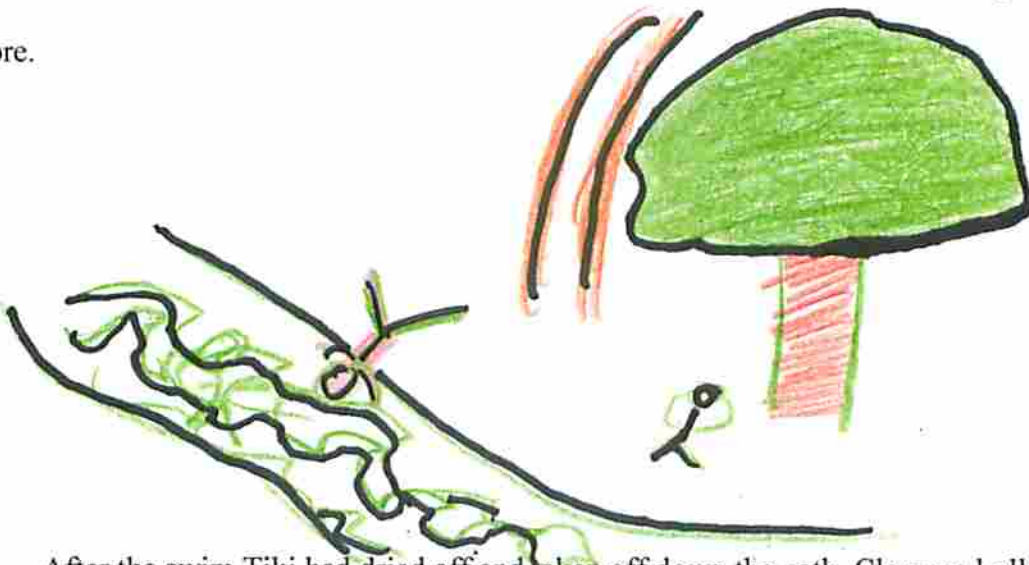
“We’ll forget about the tipi until tonight. For now, I have a couple of ideas of what we could do,” May said. “I could take you down to the creek to play with the fish. Or we could hike up the mountain trail to see what lies above the valley. Or we could surprise Clarence when he’s chopping wood. Tiki’s mood quickly changed from sad to very happy. This was the first birthday that he had so much choice of what to do. Tiki wanted to play with the fish, and hike above the valley, and surprise poor old Clarence when he is chopping wood.



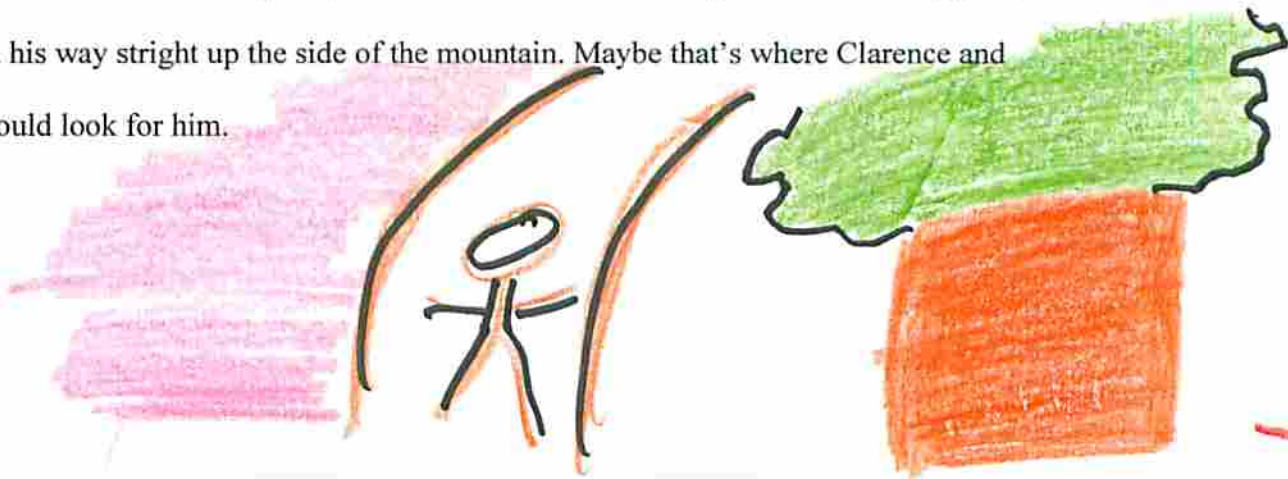
Tiki was ready to go. First he wanted to go to the creek and swim with all the different fish. Tiki took his first couple leaps in the direction of the creek when May called him back saying “Tiki wait, you won’t have enough strength to do everything you want down by the water without some food first. And with that May brought him a slice of the finest cake that the forest bakery could make; it was a spice cake topped off with the frothiest vanilla frosting. With that in his stomach, Tiki ran off to the creek with Grandmother May at his heels.



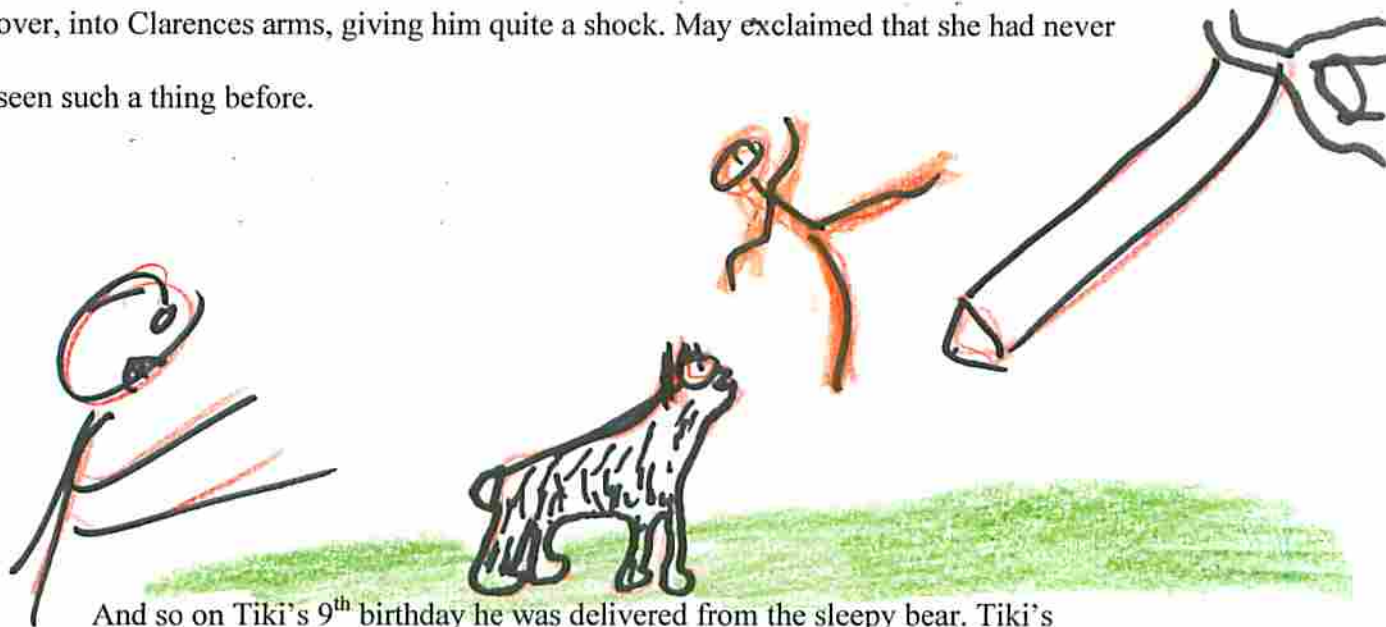
Clarence came down with a piece of cake and sat under a tree and watched Tiki with May. Clarence decided to go for a dip. But it turns out that Tiki forgot his swimming trunks. He didn't mind though, his birthday suit served just fine. The current was a little strong but because Tiki was so light in his suit he cut through the current like it was nothing. He even kept up with the salmon going up stream, sometimes he would even fly out of the water like them too. May exclaimed that she had never seen such a thing before.



After the swim Tiki had dried off and taken off down the path. Clarence hollered for him to slow down, but Tiki was out of ear shot. Tiki trekked on the side of the mountain next to the valley, he followed along side the valley but he soon became lost among all the trees and crisscrossing paths. Tiki looked around and Clarence and May where nowhere to be found, because of his inpatients he had forgotten about them. But Tiki remembered what his grandparents had said about what lay above the valley, so he worked his way stright up the side of the mountain. Maybe that's where Clarence and May would look for him.



After much walking, Tiki came upon a massive swing hanging from a tree branch. He thought he'd try it out so he swung as high as he could. With every swing Tiki made the tree would moan and when Tiki got so high that the tree let out a screech so loud that it awoke a sleeping bear. Tiki was deathly scared but he kept swinging in order to stay off the ground. The bear came out and stood right in front of the swing, there was no place for Tiki to go. Just then Clarence and May came huffing and puffing up the path, Clarence went full speed ahead. When Clarence was near Tiki hollered and leapt from the swing at its full height. Tiki flew over the sleepy bear who batted at the air under Tiki as he flew over, into Clarence's arms, giving him quite a shock. May exclaimed that she had never seen such a thing before.



And so on Tiki's 9th birthday he was delivered from the sleepy bear. Tiki's inpatients almost cost him. He had had enough adventure for the day. So Clarence had taken him home away from sleepy bear, Both May and Tiki agreed that Clarence had been surprised enough from the catch that surprising him again would do no good. Tiki promised to never ever again travel the forest alone, maybe he'll try again next time...