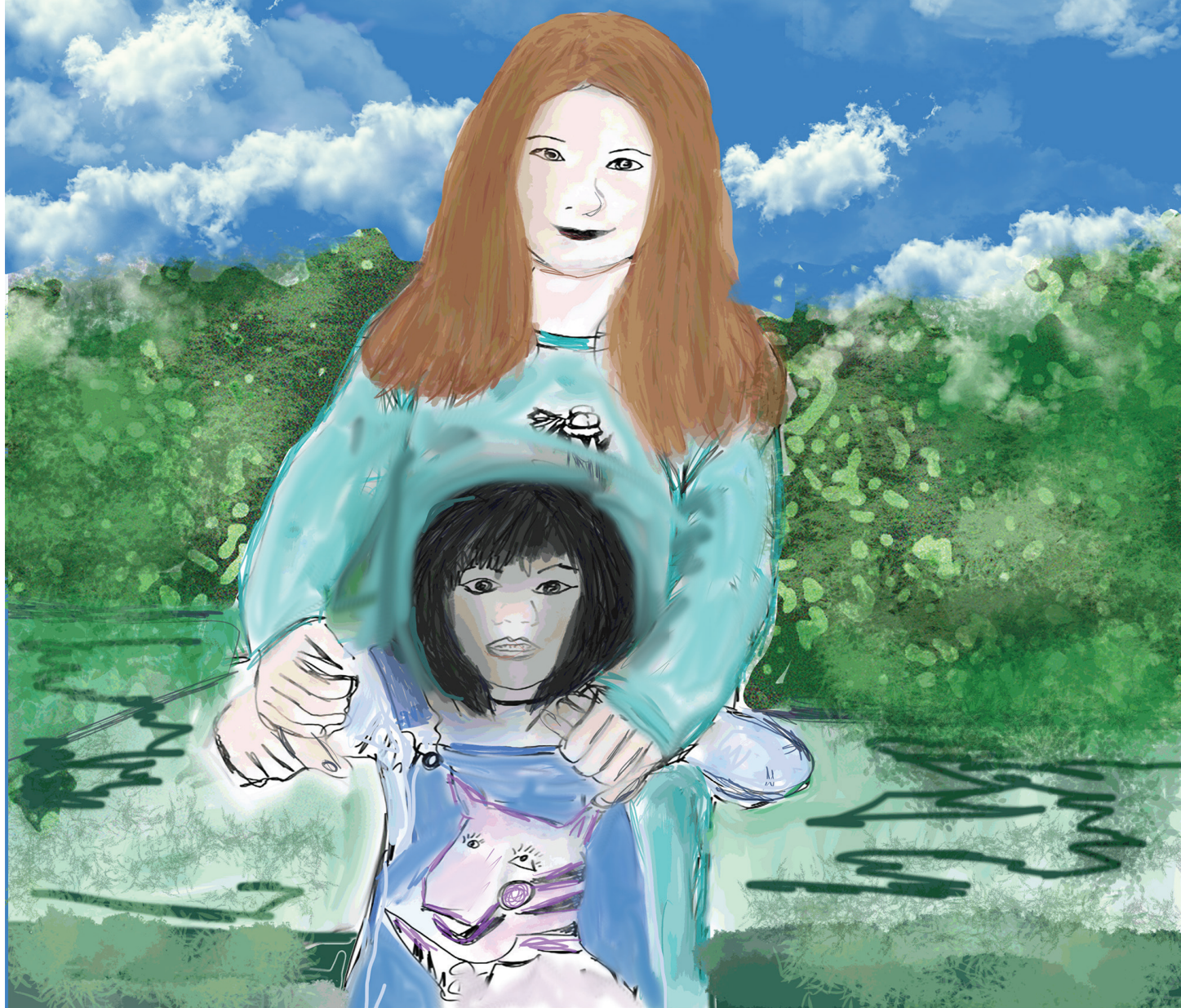


Before There Was You



Before There Was You

*Story and Illustrations by
Nancy P. Hemenway*

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For Zoë and Bekah

Special Thanks to Mary Owen, LCSW

and

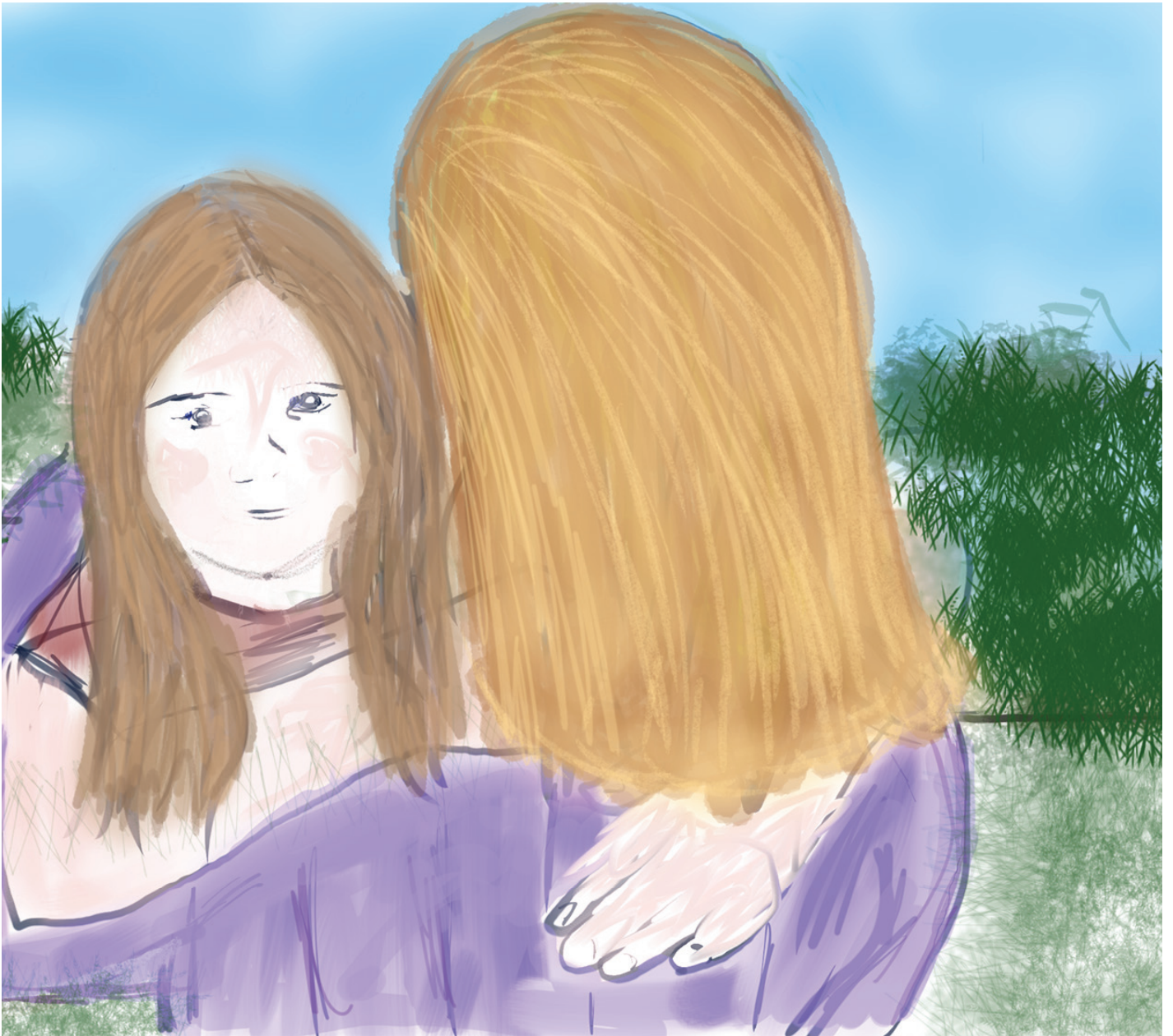
Patricia Irwin Johnston

Dedication

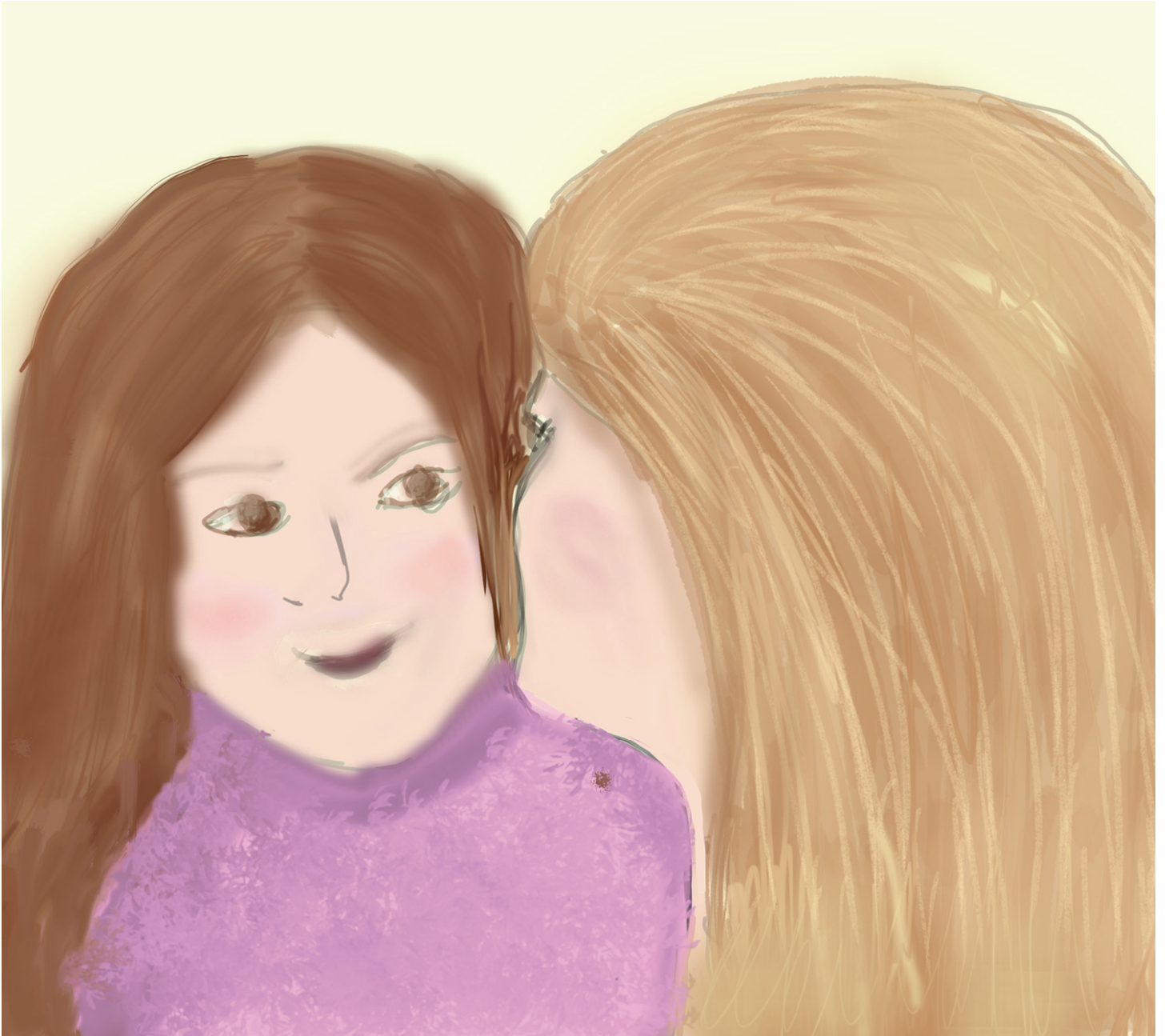
There is no joy that compares to the joy of creating a family with the addition of much-wanted and loved children. "Before there was you" is dedicated to my two beautiful and amazing daughters. To my love, Zoe Amanda, who grew under my heart and changed me forever and to my sweet Rebekah Ruth Xiaorong, who grew inside my heart making it bigger and making me a better person through the miracle of her adoption.



Before there was you, it was just mommy, daddy and me.
We spent a lot of time going places, like parks and zoos but
I spent a lot of time thinking about how much I wanted a
little sister to hug.



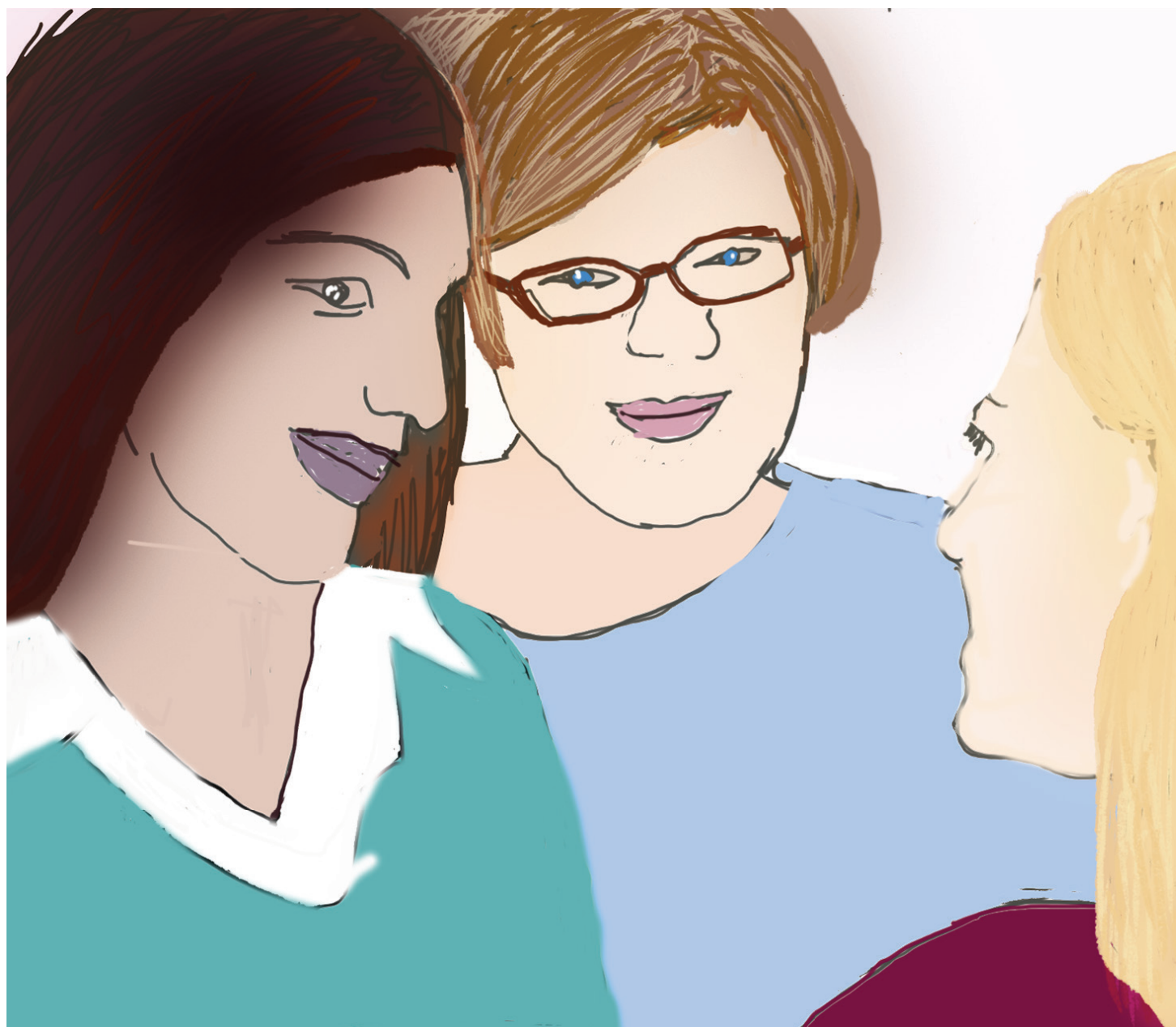
Before there was you, mom told me all about how I came to be. My mom and dad were really sad before they had me. They wanted a baby so, so, so much. My mommy was especially sad before me. She told me about my baby brother in heaven and she hugged me tight.



One day I asked my mom if we could try to get another baby for our family. She said that maybe we could adopt a baby. She asked me, "If you could choose any baby, would you want a sister or a brother?" I told her "A baby sister . . . of course !" That way I could share all my clothes and toys.



After we talked about adding a baby to our family, my mom spent lots of time on her computer looking for information about how to adopt a baby.



...And she talked to her all her friends too. Mommy found out there are different ways to adopt a baby.



We could find another mommy who was looking for a very special family to adopt her baby. Finding that special mommy who would chose us might take a very long time or . . . we could go to a different country where there are babies waiting to be adopted by families like ours.



Just a few days after Christmas my mom told me the best decision to add a new baby to our family would be for all of us to travel to another country and adopt a baby. Starting in January of the new year, we would find an agency and make an adoption plan for adding a baby to our forever family.



I asked my mom which place would give us a baby sister. She laughed, and said most likely China! In China, there are many baby girls in orphanages that need a mommy, a daddy and definitely a big sister.

I said, "Let's go to China!"



My mommy hugged me and told me it might take a whole year or even longer to bring my baby sister home. And there would be many papers we would have to gather. First, we needed something called a homestudy from an adoption agency and then the Chinese government would give us permission to adopt you. I told my mom I would help her.



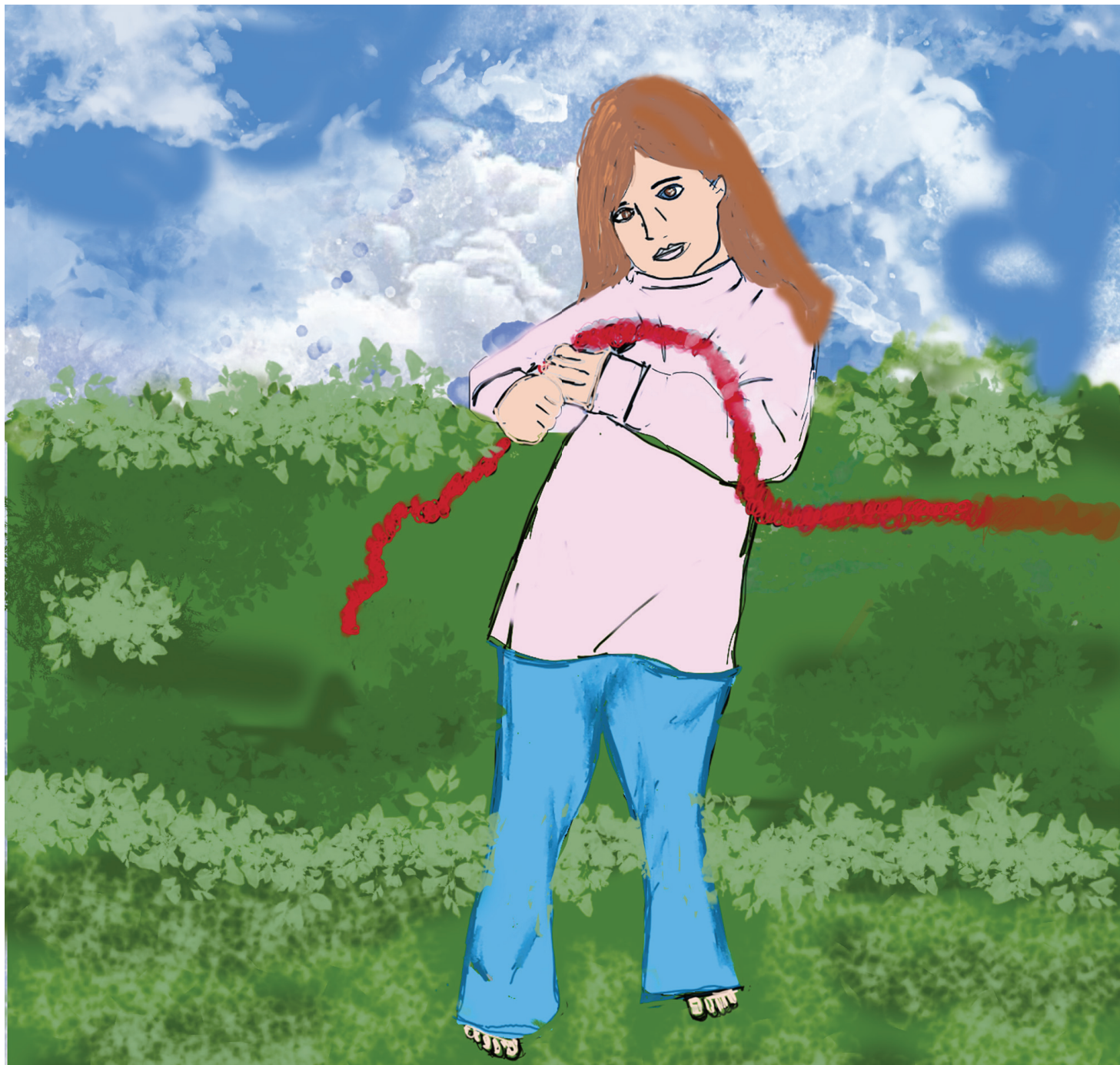
Every day I sat with my mom. I helped her collect lots of papers. We gathered passports and something called a VISA – not the credit card but something that gave us permission to go to China. We waited.... and waited... and WAITED. It took SOOOOO long.



Waiting for for you was very hard. To help me pass the time mommy told me a story about a “Red Thread”. She said, “When children are born into the world, no matter how far apart they are, there is an invisible red thread that pulls at their heartstrings toward all the people who they will love and who will love them forever.



You have one end of a red thread and your baby sister has the other end. Her end winds around and around bringing our hearts closer and closer. No matter how long it takes, or how far away the place, eventually, she will be together with you. Her thread may **STRETCH** and **TANGLE** but it will **NEVER** break."



Mommy told me the time will pass and my baby sister will be with us when the time is right. I thought really hard and made a picture in my mind of my baby sister holding on to the end of MY red thread.





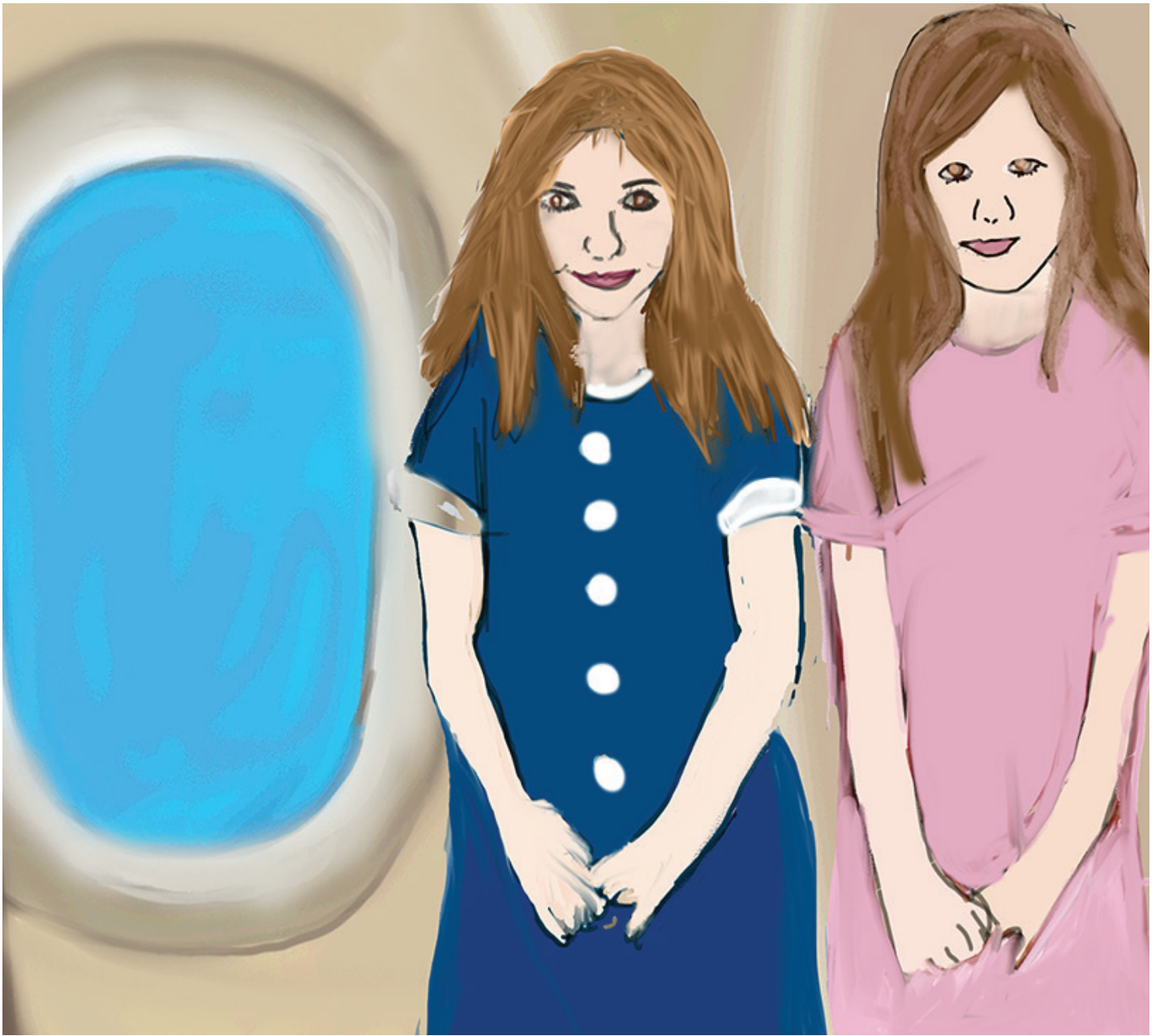
Then one day the phone rang!



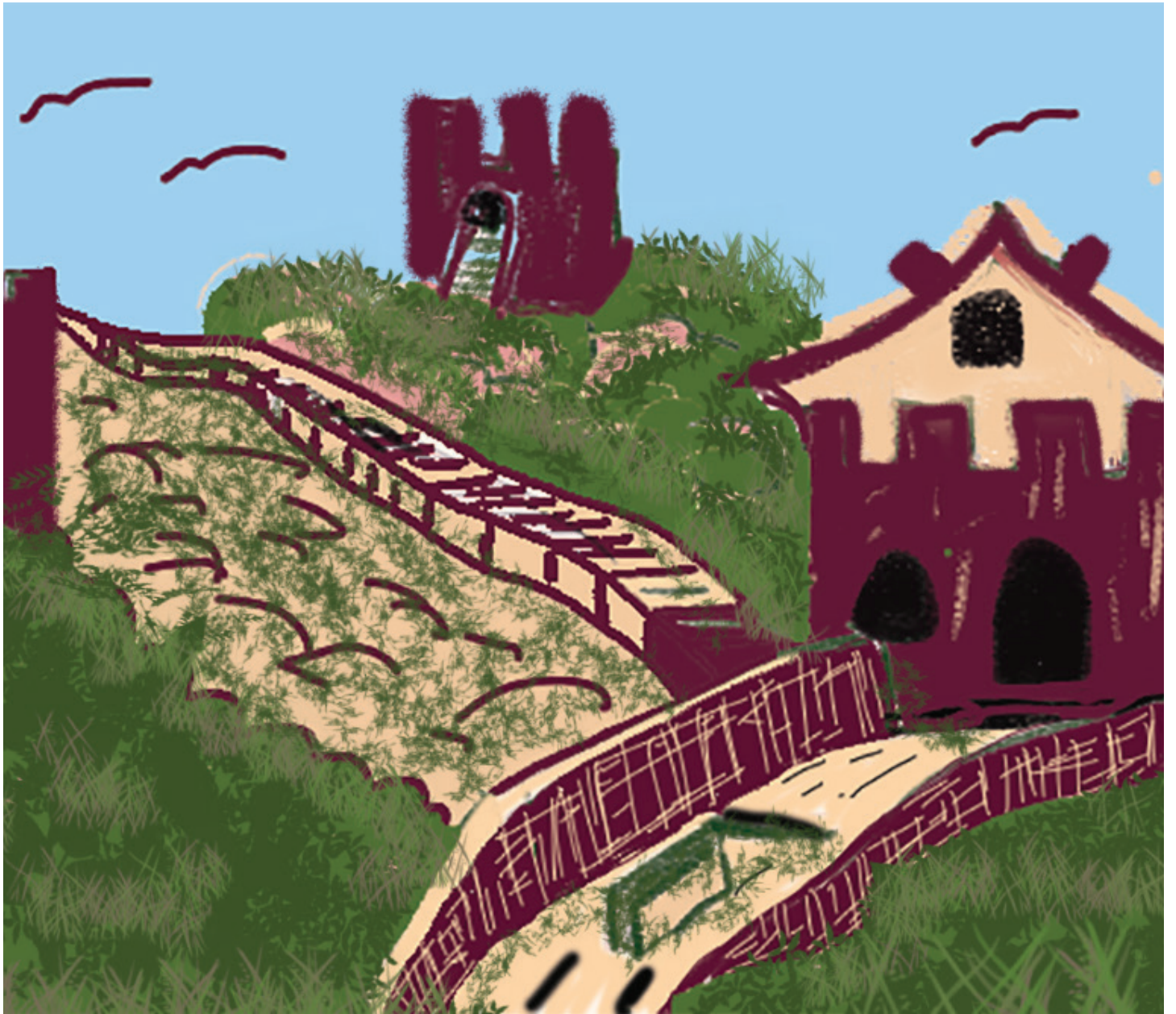
It was the adoption agency! I was so excited. The agency gave us a picture of YOU in China. I asked our Mom if we could go straight to the airport and bring you home. She laughed and said, it would be a little longer.



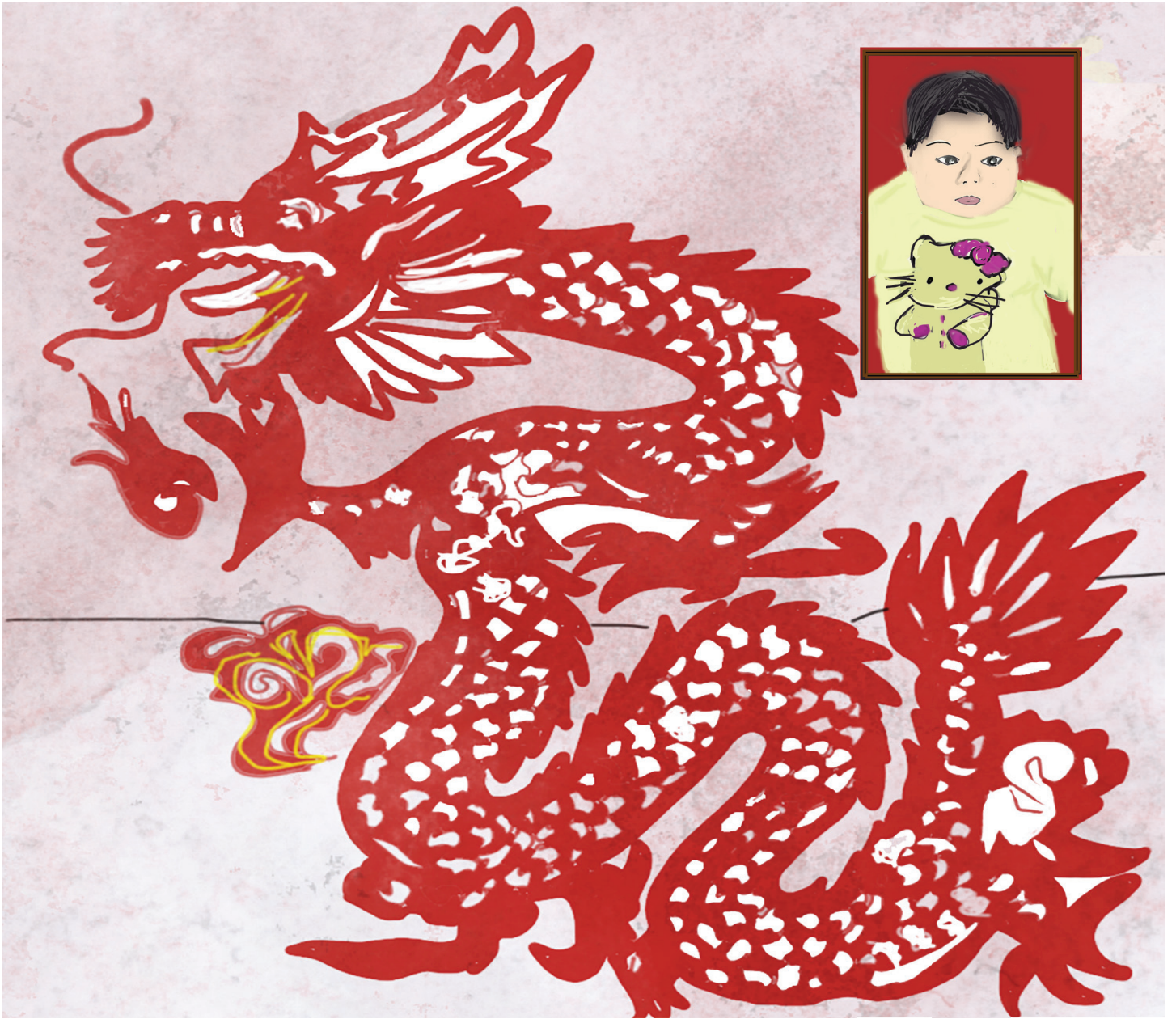
The day finally came for us to go to China and bring you home . We boarded a HUGE jet plane and traveled with other parents who also wanted to adopt a baby from China. The trip seemed almost as long as the waiting for your picture.



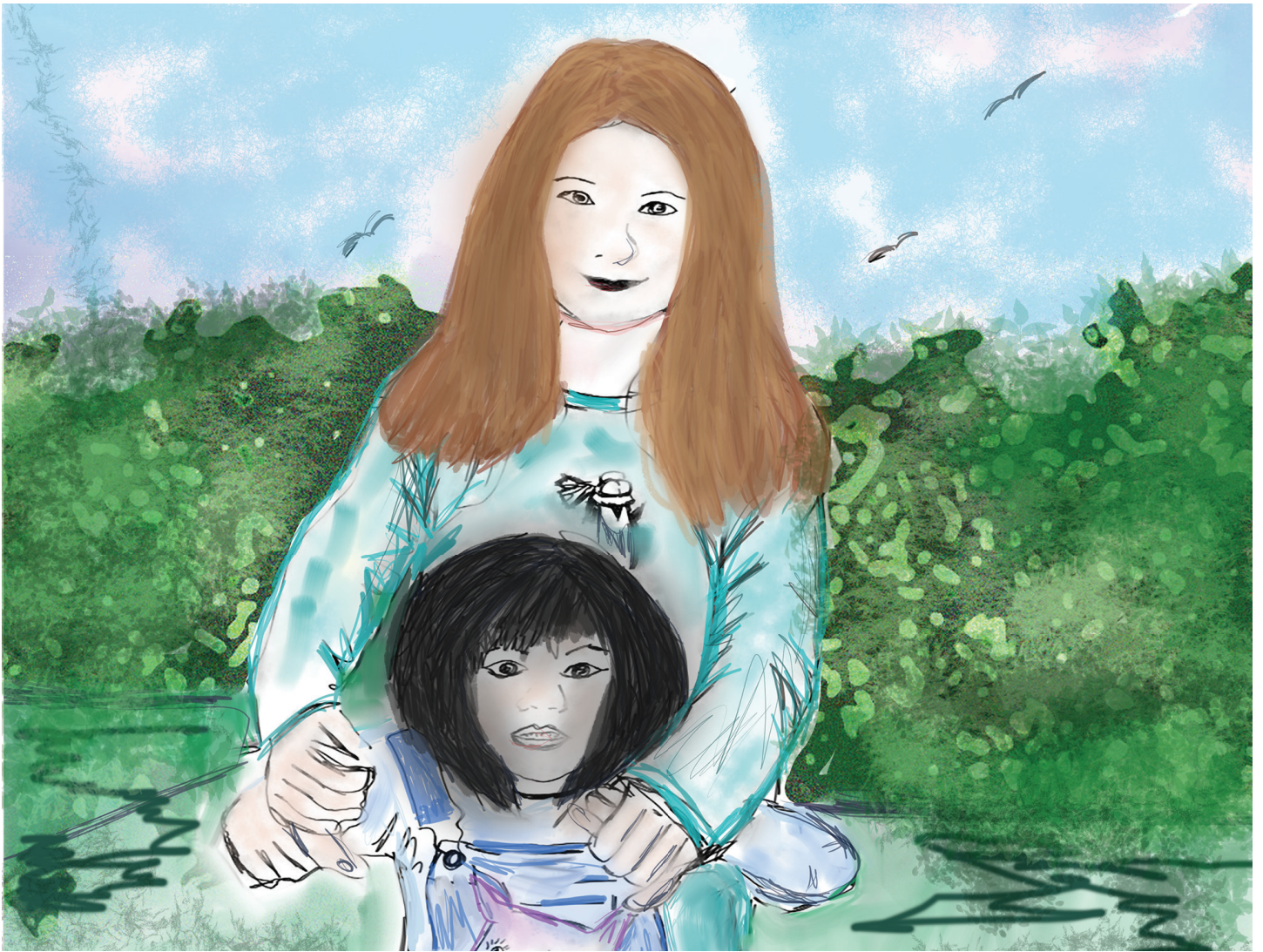
But one of the families in our group had a little girl the very same age as me. We made friends. Having a new friend who also wanted a baby sister helped pass the time until your “Red Thread” pulled my heartstrings to you.



Before we could meet you, our guide took us to visit the Great Wall of China. I was glad to have a friend with me but I REALLY wanted to pull that red thread closer. The next day we traveled to the China Hotel to meet you.



The nannies from the orphanage brought you to our hotel. They told us your Chinese name was Xiaorong and they called you a “Dragon Baby” because of the month and year you were born. Dragon babies are the most beautiful and smartest babies in all the world! Finally, the red thread brought our hearts together.



My mom and dad were so happy and so was I. Before there was you, our family was not complete. Before there was you a red thread tugged at our heartstrings on the other side of the world. Before there was you I didn't have a baby sister to hug every day. I am the luckiest little girl to finally have my forever sister as part of our family. Mommy says I grew under her heart but that you grew in it. I think you grew in my heart too.

