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We live on Joyaska Ranch near a little town called Firefly. It's about a hundred miles from Kalamak. We get to go home in the summer, at Christmas and sometimes at Easter.

When we're at home we can ride horses, go swimming at the river, run in the hills, climb trees and laugh out loud and holler yahoo anytime we like and

Then one day Dad bought me a suitcase, some new shoes and a wool snowsuit, green like fir trees. Then he drove me to Kalamak. Dorothy went ahead on the cattle truck the school sent to pick up students.

We drove for a long time. Then we came to this big building and Dad parked the truck. Mum walked in with me. The red doors slammed shut behind us and we walked down a long hallway. Our footsteps sounded hollow. When we came to the junior girls rec room we saw a whole bunch of little girls in a big noisy room. Some of them were playing. Some of them were sitting down on red benches with their suitcases, looking sad. A nun called Sister Maura came over and talked to Mum. Then Mum turned and left. I looked at her walking away from me. I heard her footsteps echoing, and I was so scared I felt like I had a giant bee sting over my whole body. Then I stopped feeling anything.

When Mum was gone, Sister grabbed my shoulder and shoved me over to a red bench. She told me not to move. I sat there listening to the girls playing and running back and forth in the rec room. That's when this big girl called Edna came over with her fist raised. "What are you staring at?" she asked.

Just then Sister Maura came back with Cookie. Cookie's eyes looked big and red, like she had been crying. I never saw her look like that before. Sister

clean slice and let it fall to the floor. The girl hid her face in her hands as the second braid was cut.

The nun did the same to four other girls, sparing only one older girl and one of the outsiders' children, who was likely a trapper's daughter. The sound of the shears severing thick black hair drowned out the howls of the disgraced girls.

At last, only I remained. I held my breath. I was large for my age. Surely she would pass over me.

She did not. She stopped directly in front of me. I stepped back from her heavy cross, which nearly struck me in the face, but she reached out and yanked me back by one braid.

"I can fix my own hair," I protested in Inuvialuktun, but she held tight and, with the same motion a bird makes to pull a piece of flesh from a fish, clamped the jaws of the shears down on my braid and severed it. I was horrified. I wasn't a baby. My other braid fell to the floor to meet the first, and I joined the others in their weeping.

There we stood, sobbing in the humiliation of our discarded hair.

I HARDLY SLEPT THAT night. The bed had a rickety frame that creaked every time I took a breath. Each girl's bed was as loud as mine, and the noise filled the vast space of the large room with a disjointed foreign sound, unlike the sleepy rhythmic breathing of my mother, father, and siblings, with whom I had shared a tent since birth. Sobs also carried through the room. My eiderdown blanket was soft, but I missed the musky smell of furry hides, the comforting aroma of smoke drifting through the air, and the darkness of the tent, even in summer. The thin serge curtain above my bed did little to keep the midnight sun from penetrating the huge room. Gathering the blanket off my assigned bed, I crawled underneath it, squinted my eyes, and imagined that my father's pipe was glowing in the distance.

They woke us very early the next morning, but my sleep had been almost as brief as the short-lived darkness. By the time the nuns entered the room, clapping their hands fiercely, I was dressed and seated on the edge of my bed. I was not about to let another minute stand between me and my chance to learn.

sounded like a sewing machine. We could hear a man's voice snarling. One of the kids whispered that he slapped a grade five girl because she turned her head away and broke the needle in her mouth. One of the grade twos came out holding her mouth with blood seeping through a white bandage and rolling down her chin. She was crying, and she wouldn't look at us.

Then it was my turn, and I felt like I had a bellyache. The dentist looked at me and told me to sit in this big chair that moved up and down. He was holding a needle. He put it down and made me open my mouth. He looked around my mouth with a little mirror on a little silver handle. He poked at my teeth with a silver tool. His hand smelled like soap. He had on thick glasses, and he was really big. He growled, "Get your TONGUE out of the way." Everything he said was like a growl. Move your HEAD back. Don't close your MOUTH. Keep STILL. OPEN YOUR MOUTH!

When he said I had to get seven fillings I thought I was going to get them done right away, and I felt like my blood was draining from my body.

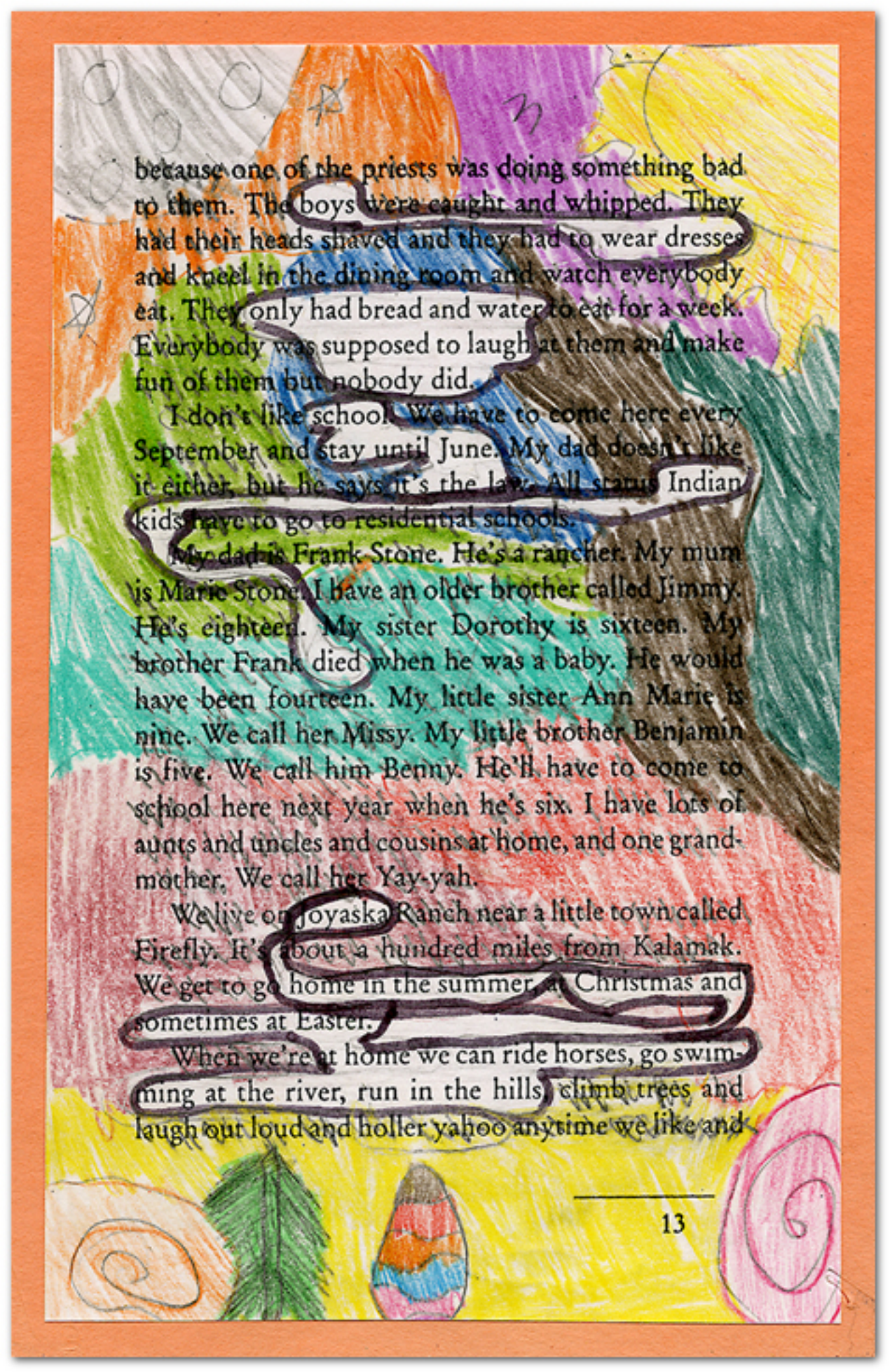
Then he told me to leave and come back the next day. I had a bellyache all night. I couldn't sleep. I didn't want to eat. It reminded me of a book I read called *A Tale of Two Cities*. This guy Charles Darnay knew he was going to the guillotine the next day to get his head chopped off. That's how I felt.

# KIRS

The boy was also my friend but I knew what he had finally  
learned to do on the boat. Mr. Capinter had hit Woki,  
who owned the boat. The school's smells were  
harsh against the tender skin of my  
inner nostrils. I craned my head in every possible  
direction without making myself look like  
someone had been taking the tulip's hair company  
by hand and stripped it clean. My eyes darted  
from wall to wall, trying to take it all in.

An outsider with a look like a boat and  
a strap on his back, looking through the  
log, that was when I first saw that you have come  
to your senses. She told my father that  
"You certainly can't teach her the things she needs to  
know. She will be a task. I took a book and  
shoulder and went home away without giving me  
a chance to say goodbye. I looked back and saw my  
father wiping tears from my mother's face. I wanted to  
run to her and tell her that it would be all right, but  
a priest approached them and they walked  
away without me."





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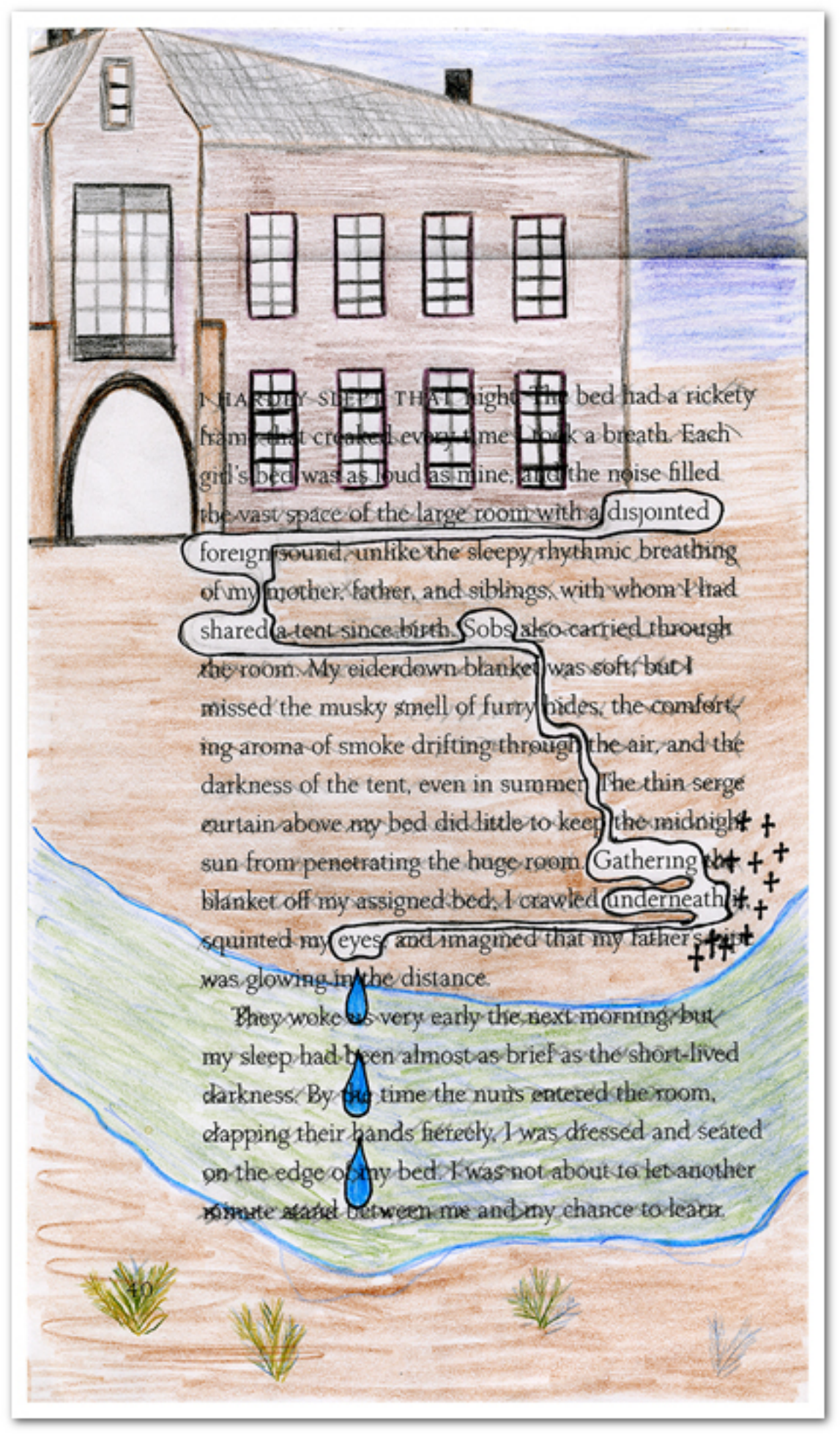
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All these other kids have to go to residential schools.

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cousins and uncles and aunts at home, and the grand-  
parents. We call them Day-yaah.

We live on the edge of a bush near a lake called  
Kadonk. It's about a hundred miles from Kadonk.  
We go to go home in the summer, and we go to  
school in the winter.

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Mama chased them away. Then she patted him around  
him.

"Are you all right?" she asked gently, wiping his cheek  
with both hands. He smiled a little but it was not real.

"Mama," he asked, "am I going to school soon?" He really  
wanted to know why Mama and Grandpa looked so sad and  
worried, but he didn't know how to ask.

Now Mama frowned. "Don't worry about the school. Just  
keep picking berries. And remember, slow down next time.  
Don't pick any more berries for the mice."

DAWN touched the sky. Wisps of mist floated on the  
damp ground.

"Papa, can I go hunting with you this year?" Lawrence  
stood as tall as possible when he asked.

Papa shook his head. "Not yet, my son. When we're in the  
bush, we spread out and walk for miles looking for game. If  
we're too far from camp, we stay overnight. We take only one  
blanket each. Your mama wouldn't like you getting cold or  
sick."

Lawrence looked at the ground to hide his disappoint-  
ment.

"While we're away, why don't you test your skills?" Papa  
said. "There's a family of beavers living in the river. They  
come up for food early every morning and late in the  
evening. If they smell you, they will dive down and go some-  
where else. See if you can fool them."

"I can fool them, Papa."

"Don't be so sure until you try it."

Papa, Uncle Louis and Uncle James picked up their pack-  
sacks, waved goodbye and disappeared down the trail.

Grandpa told Lawrence, "To see a beaver, you must find a



They were tossed into white nighties,  
pushed into line and prodded to march  
single file down to the kitchen. White  
bowls of stew and white bread lined the  
table. White ~~more~~ black robes brushed  
past. Suddenly, they all stood still, bowed  
their heads and prayed. Then as if they  
were like little windup dolls they were  
told to pick up their spoons and eat.