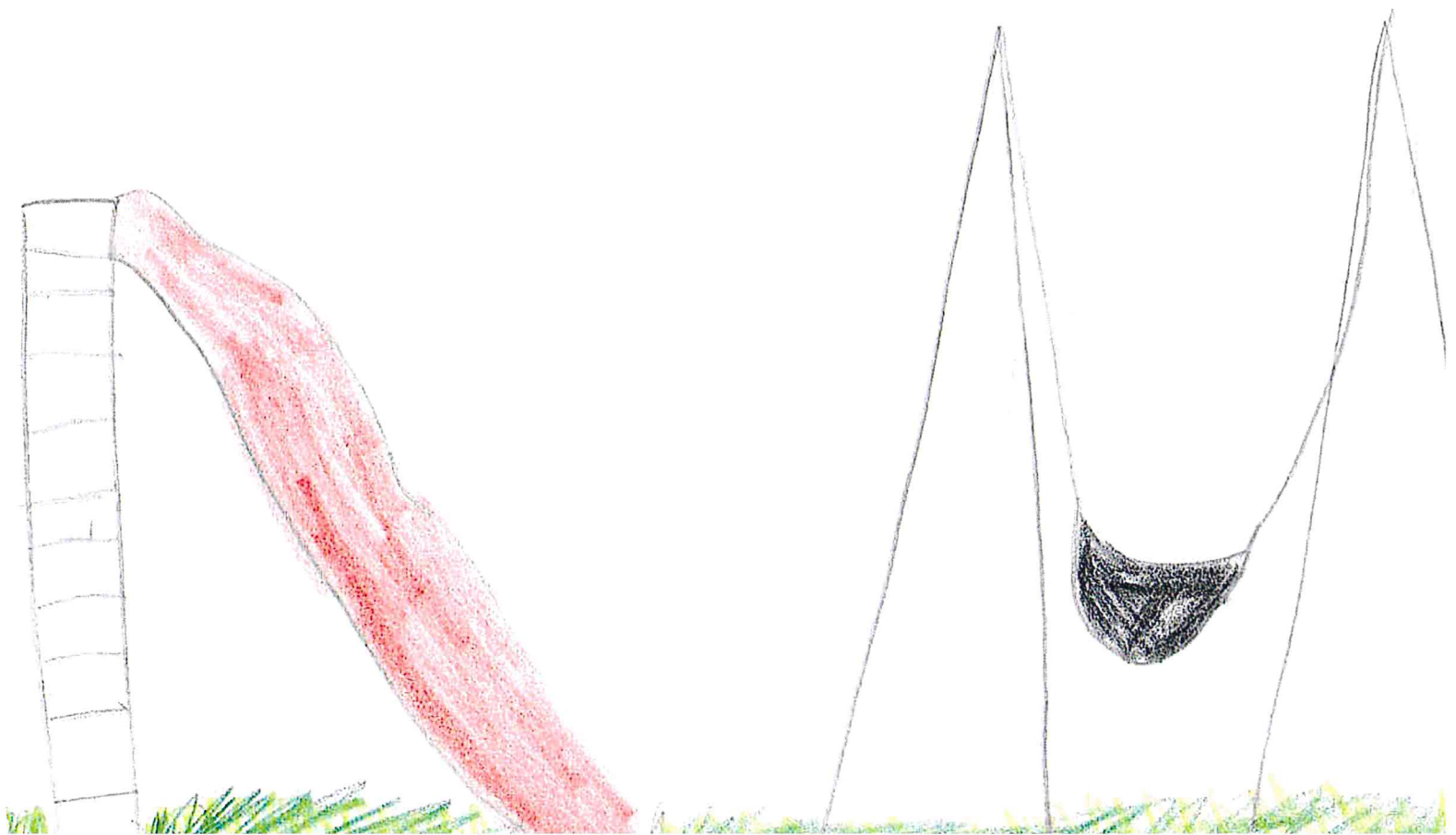
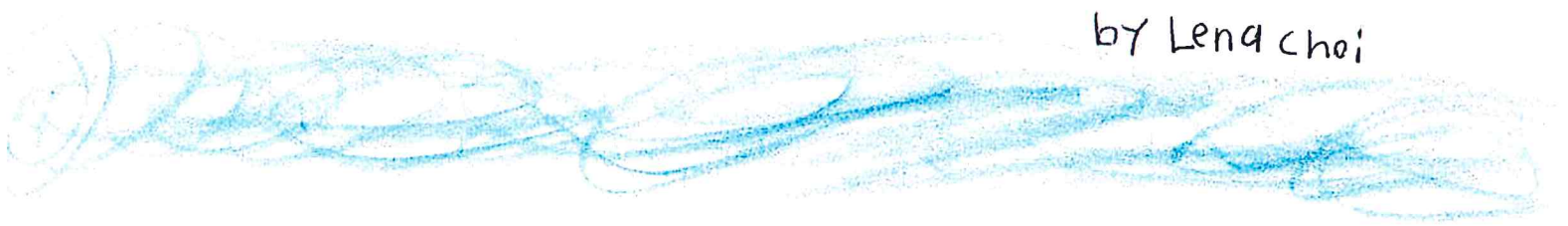


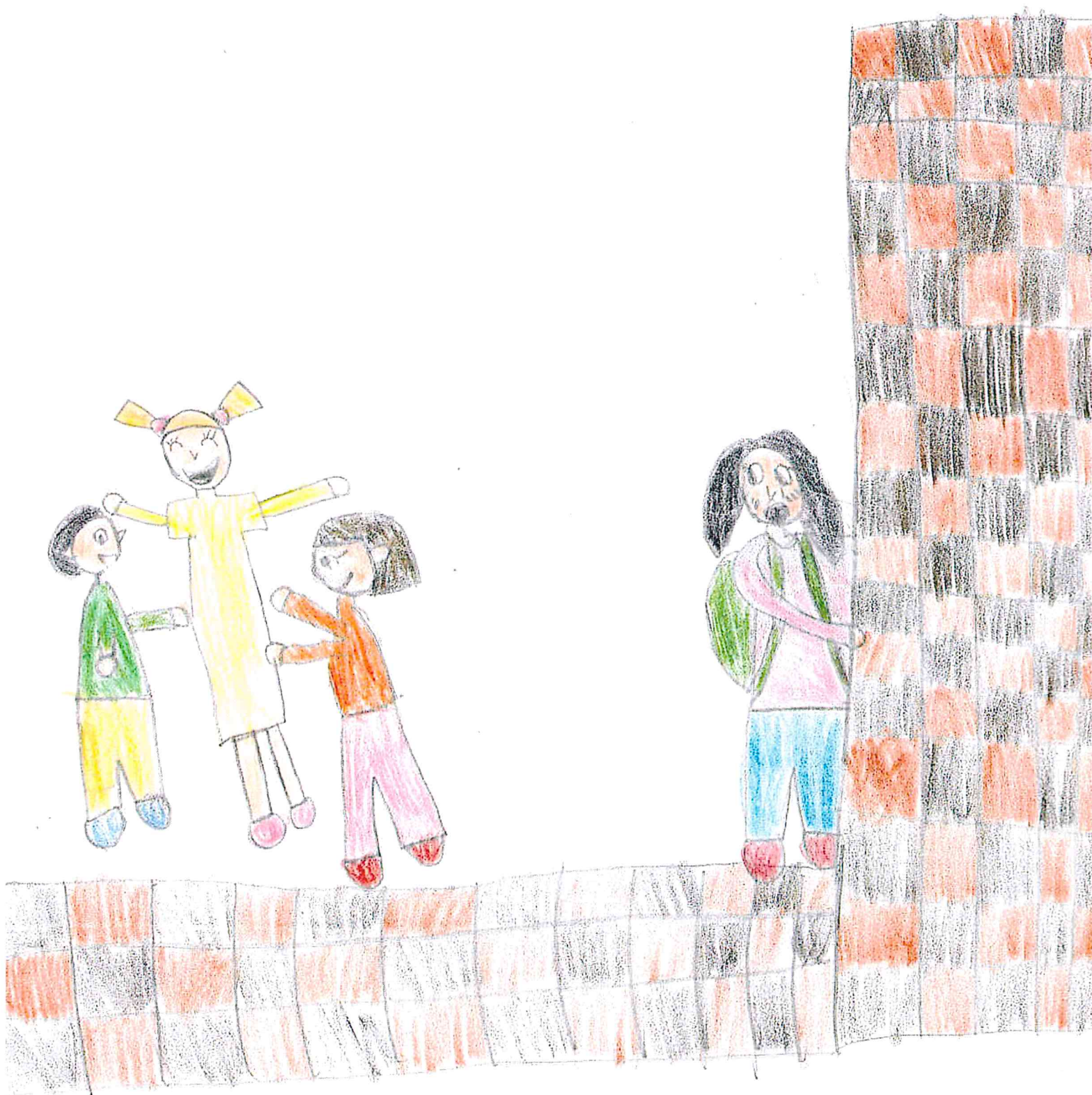
# Valerie's

# Brave Voice

by Lena Choi



It was the first day of school, and Valerie was excited but also nervous. She wanted to make friends but didn't know how.





At recess, she sat quietly on a bench alone. A girl walked over and said, "Hello, I'm Lucy. Do you have any friends? I have tons. Come with me. I'll show you how to make some." Valerie was thrilled that she could make new friends, so she followed Lucy.





They went to meet other students. Lucy spotted a boy reading. "Hi, Oliver! This is Valerie. Do you want to join my group?" Oliver smiled, "Hi, I would love to, but I want to finish this book first." Lucy said, "If you want to be in my group, you need to stop reading that boring book and come now." Oliver looked down sadly but closed the book and followed them. Valerie felt uncomfortable. She knew that Lucy's words were unkind and had hurt Oliver's feelings, but she didn't say anything because she was afraid of losing her new friend.



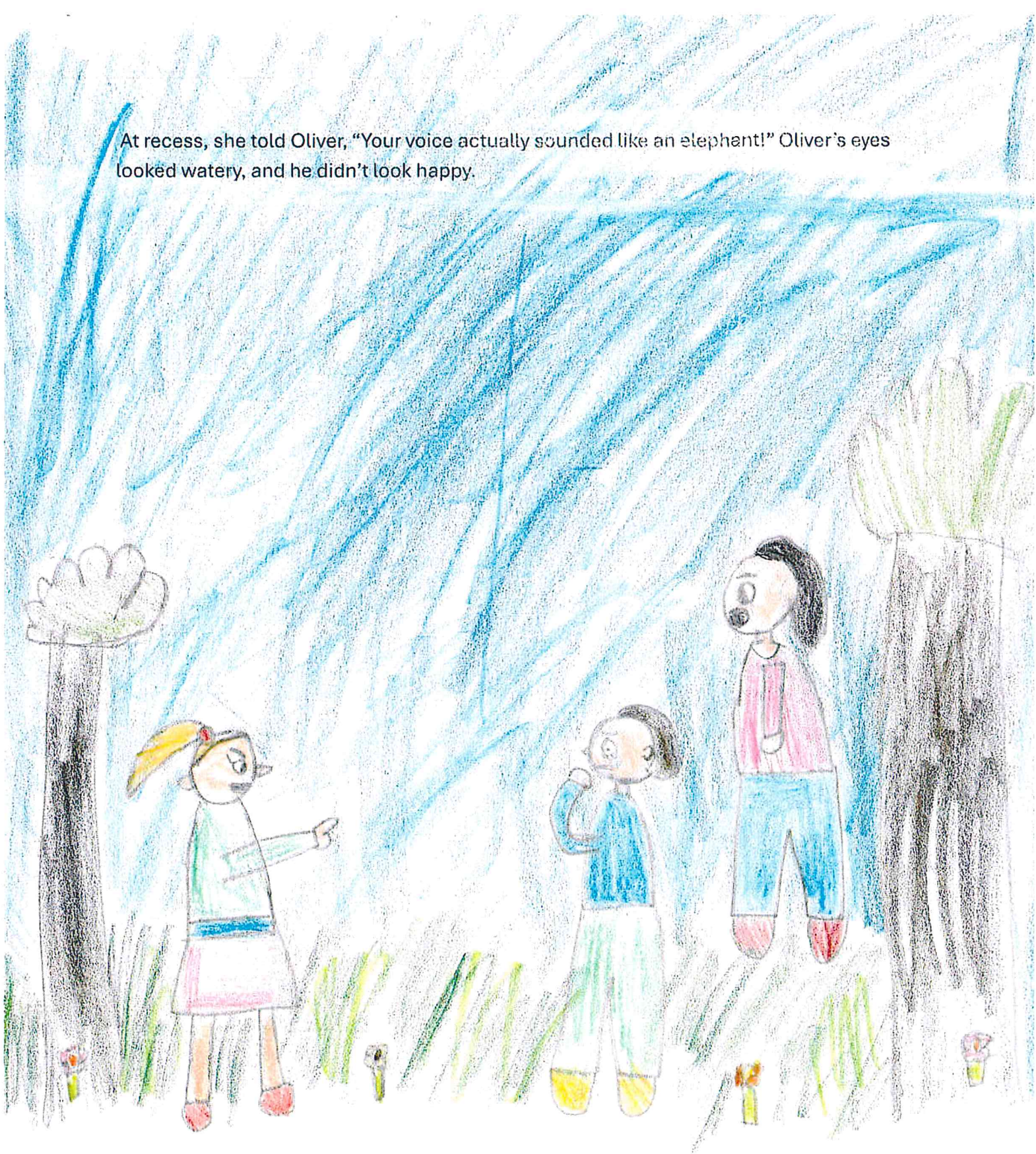


The next day in music class, Valerie's class sang together. Afterward, the teacher said to Oliver. "You have a wonderful voice! You could be a pop star someday!" Lucy became jealous.





At recess, she told Oliver, "Your voice actually sounded like an elephant!" Oliver's eyes looked watery, and he didn't look happy.





At that moment, Valerie knew it was time to speak up. She said firmly to Lucy, "Hey, that was very mean. You shouldn't treat your friend like that. Oliver, you are a great singer!"





Lucy was surprised that Valerie stood up to her and realized that she had been mean to both Oliver and Valerie. She said, "I guess I was being mean. I'm sorry, Oliver. And Valerie too." Valerie replied, "It's okay. We all make mistakes. We can still be friends if we're kind to each other."

From that day on, the three of them became real best friends. They played together, sang together and treated each other with kindness.

Valerie learned that sometimes, all it takes is just one brave voice to make things better.

