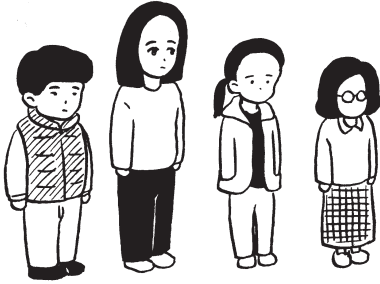


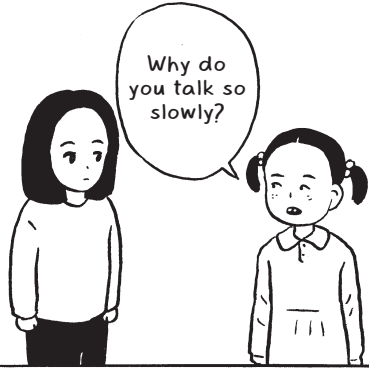


The world
I live in.

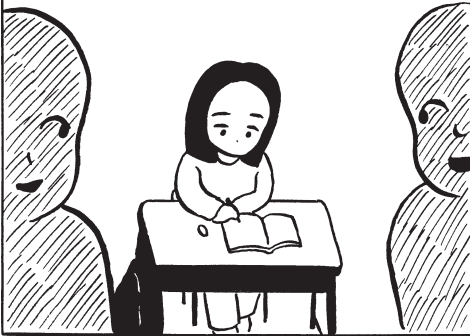
I was bigger than the other kids,



but in everything else, I was slow.



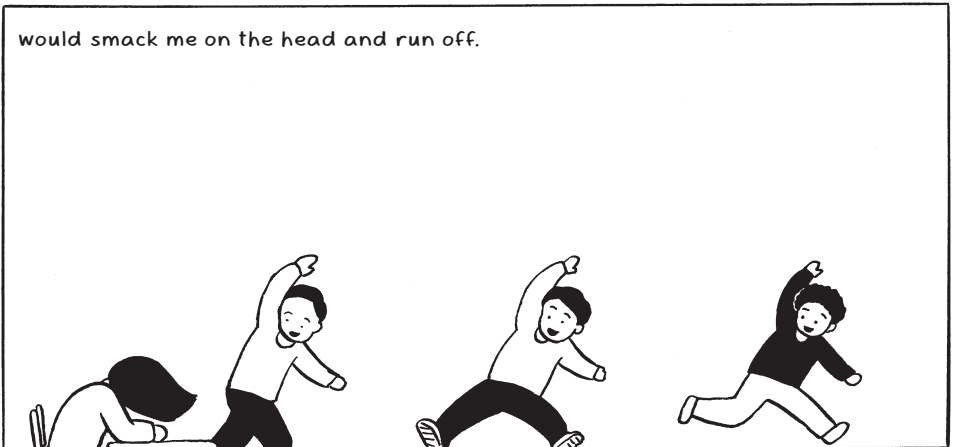
I mumbled too, so I became the class target.



Even boys from other classes



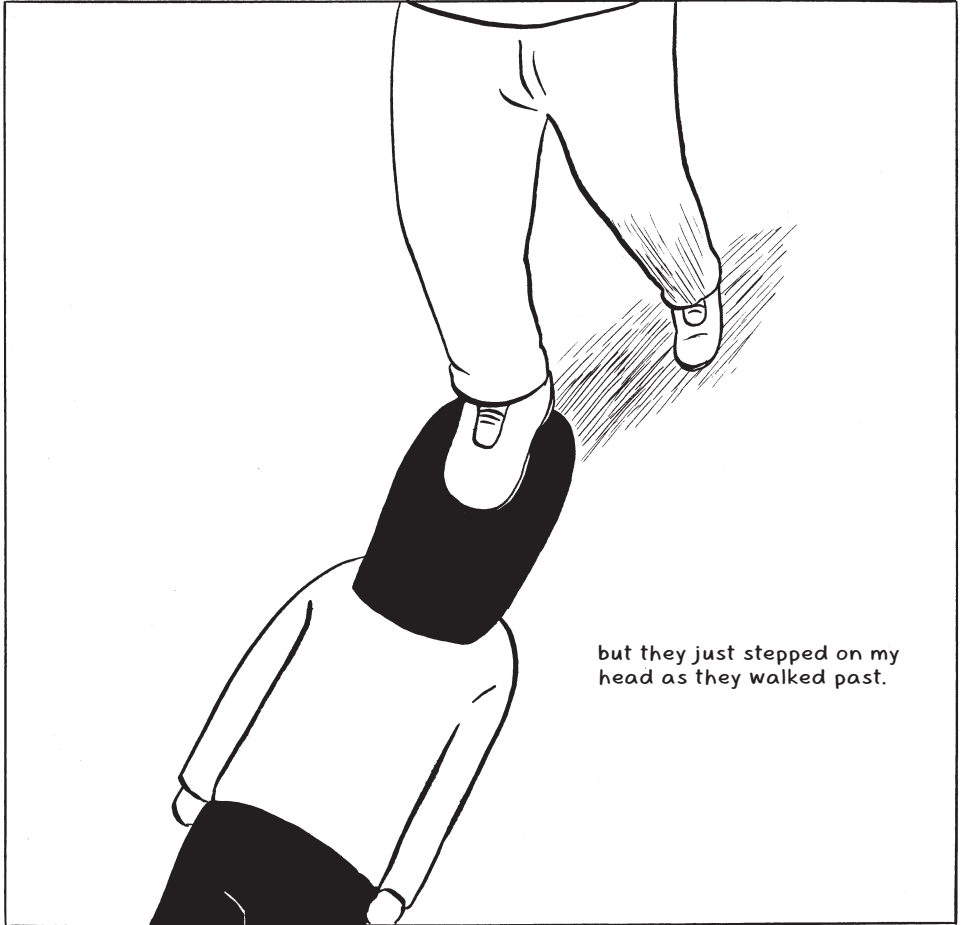
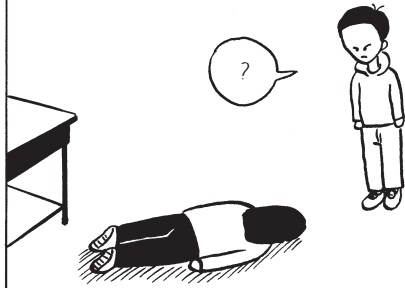
would smack me on the head and run off.



One day, my head hurt so much

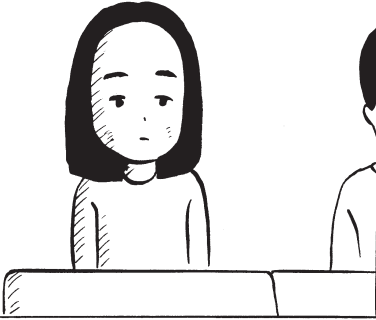


that I pretended to faint—

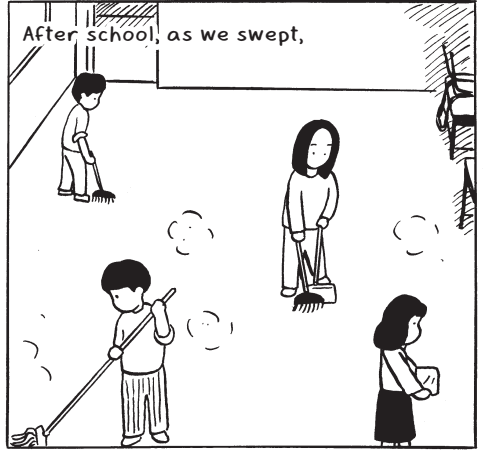


but they just stepped on my head as they walked past.

Cleanup duty was miserable.



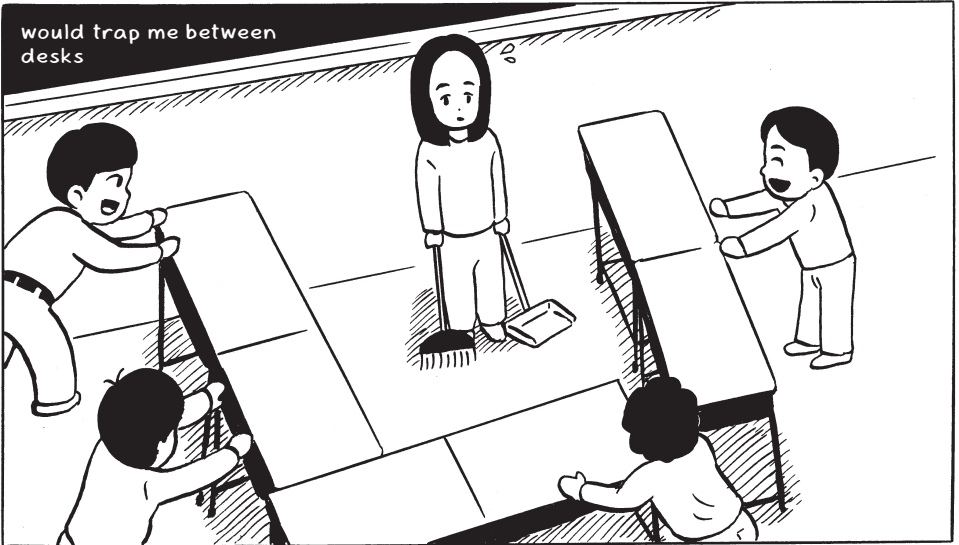
After school, as we swept,



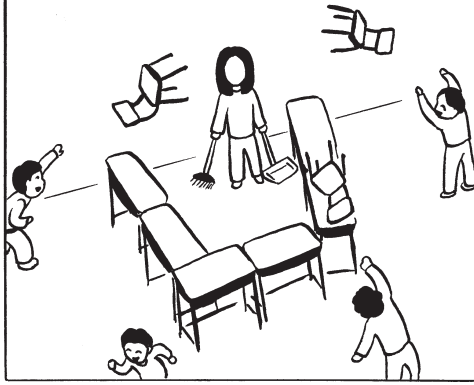
the boys



would trap me between desks



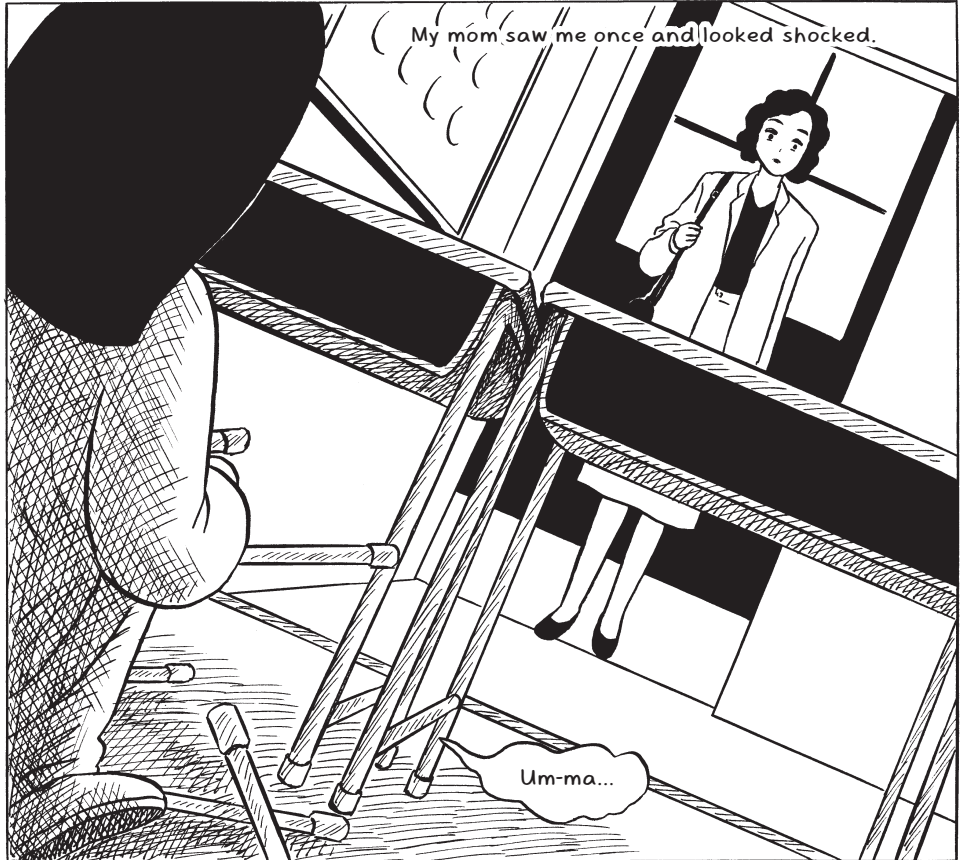
and throw chairs at me.



I was too young to understand why they treated me that way.



My mom saw me once and looked shocked.



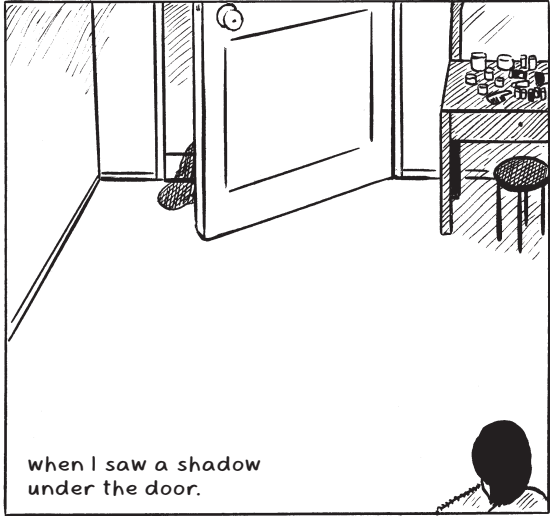


Ghosts

I was in sixth grade when I started seeing ghosts.

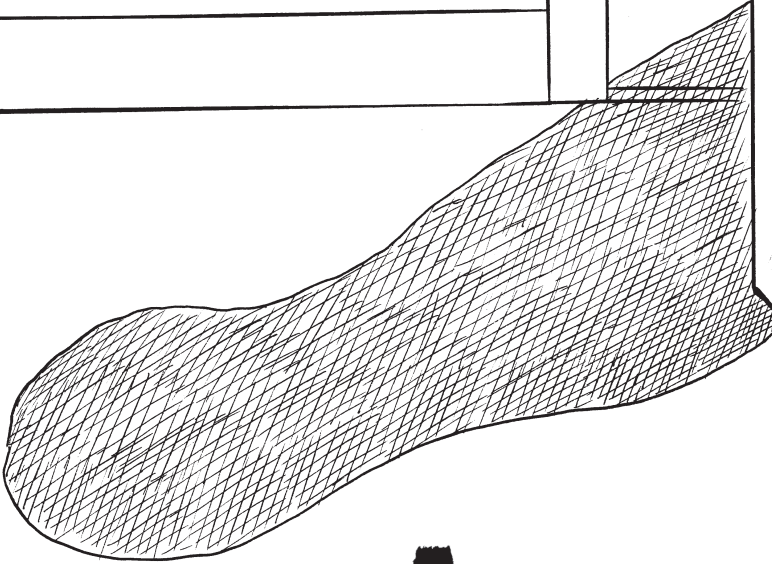


I was home alone



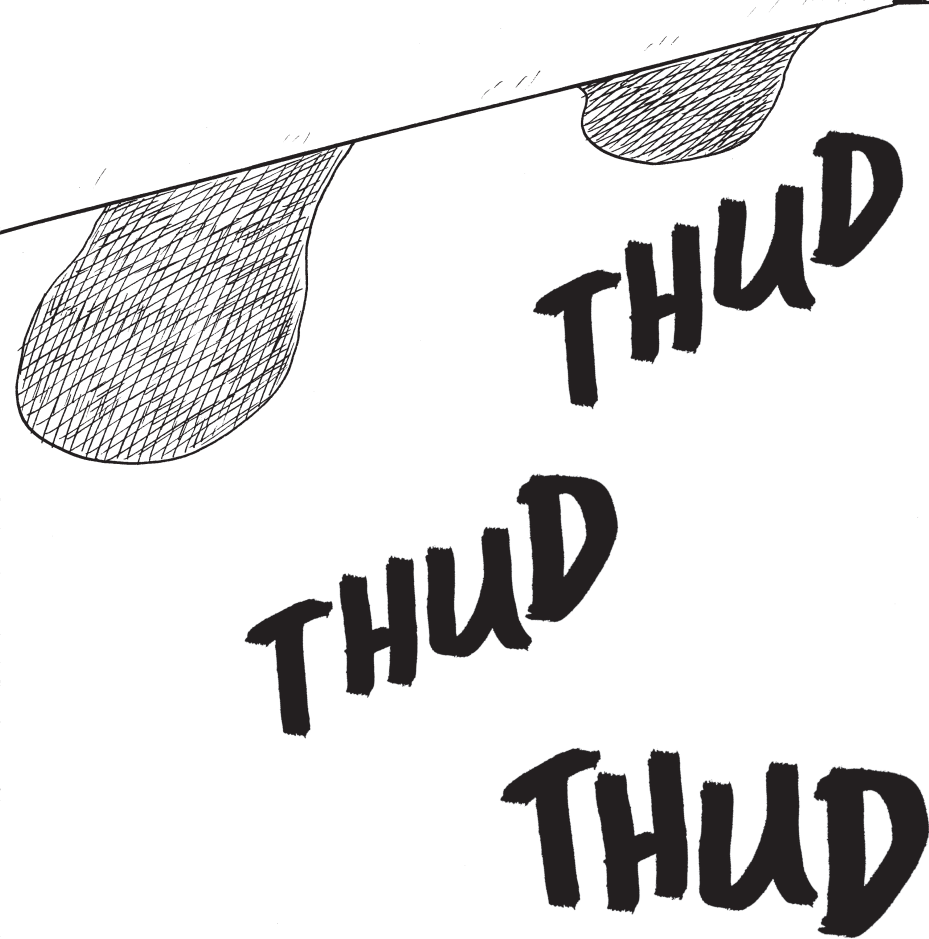
when I saw a shadow under the door.

THUD



THUD
THUD

THUD



I heard the sound of
many footsteps.

They came closer—

THUD THUD THUD THUD



then faded away—

THUD THUD THUD



and came closer again.

THUD THUD THUD

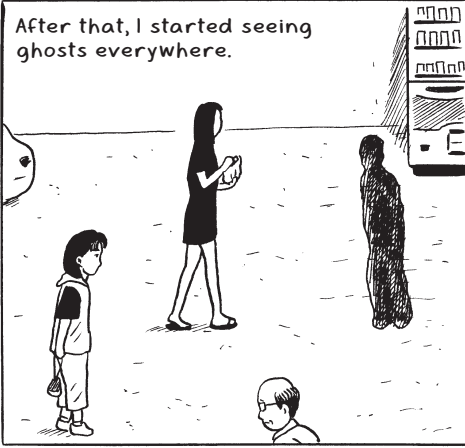


Until the footsteps finally moved away,
I was too scared to breathe.



THUD THUD THUD THUD

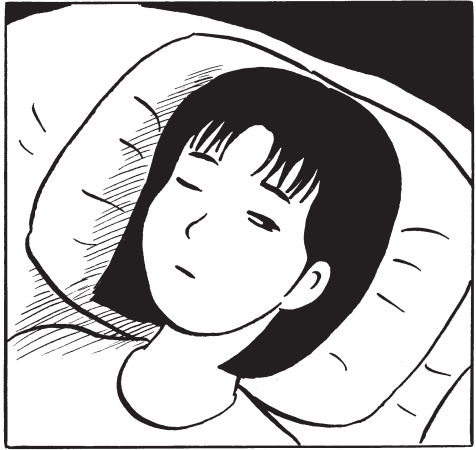
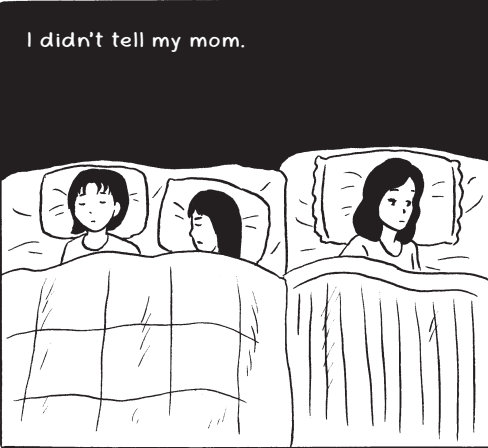
After that, I started seeing ghosts everywhere.



They became as common a sight as stray cats.

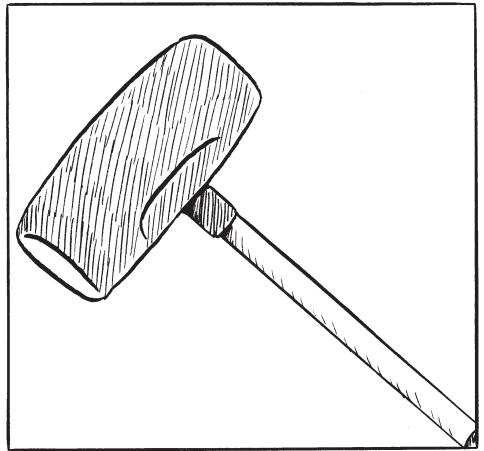
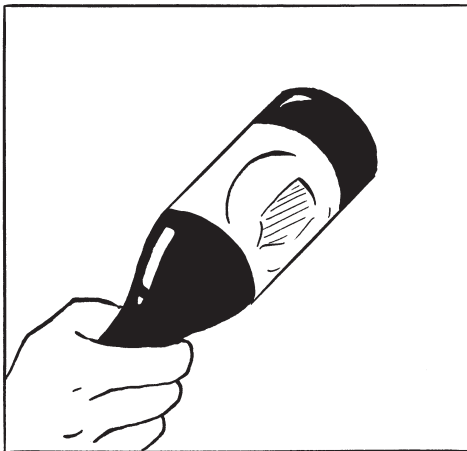
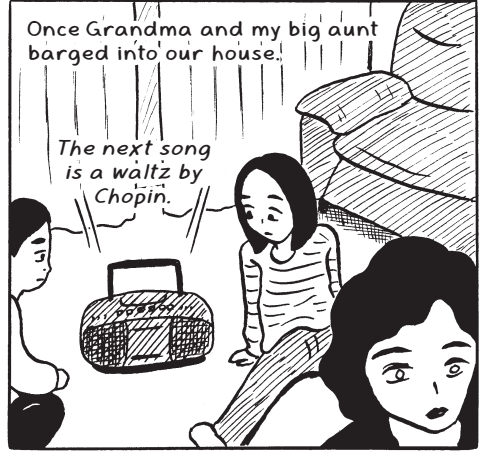
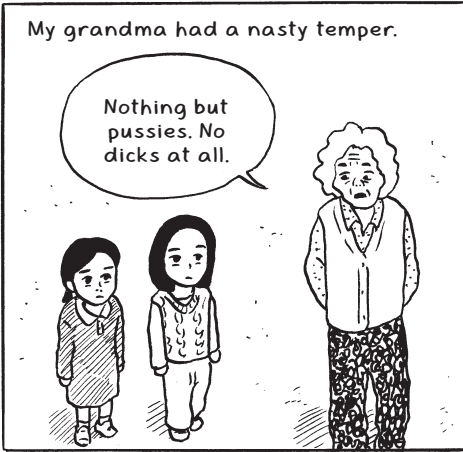


I didn't tell my mom.





Grandma







My sister and I ignored them and danced to the music.