

CHARLIE'S STORY



A child's journey home

"Homelessness is about more than rooflessness. A home is not just a physical space: it provides roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing."

Crisis, 'About Homelessness', 2008.

*Produced by the Statewide Children's Resource Program,
2019.*

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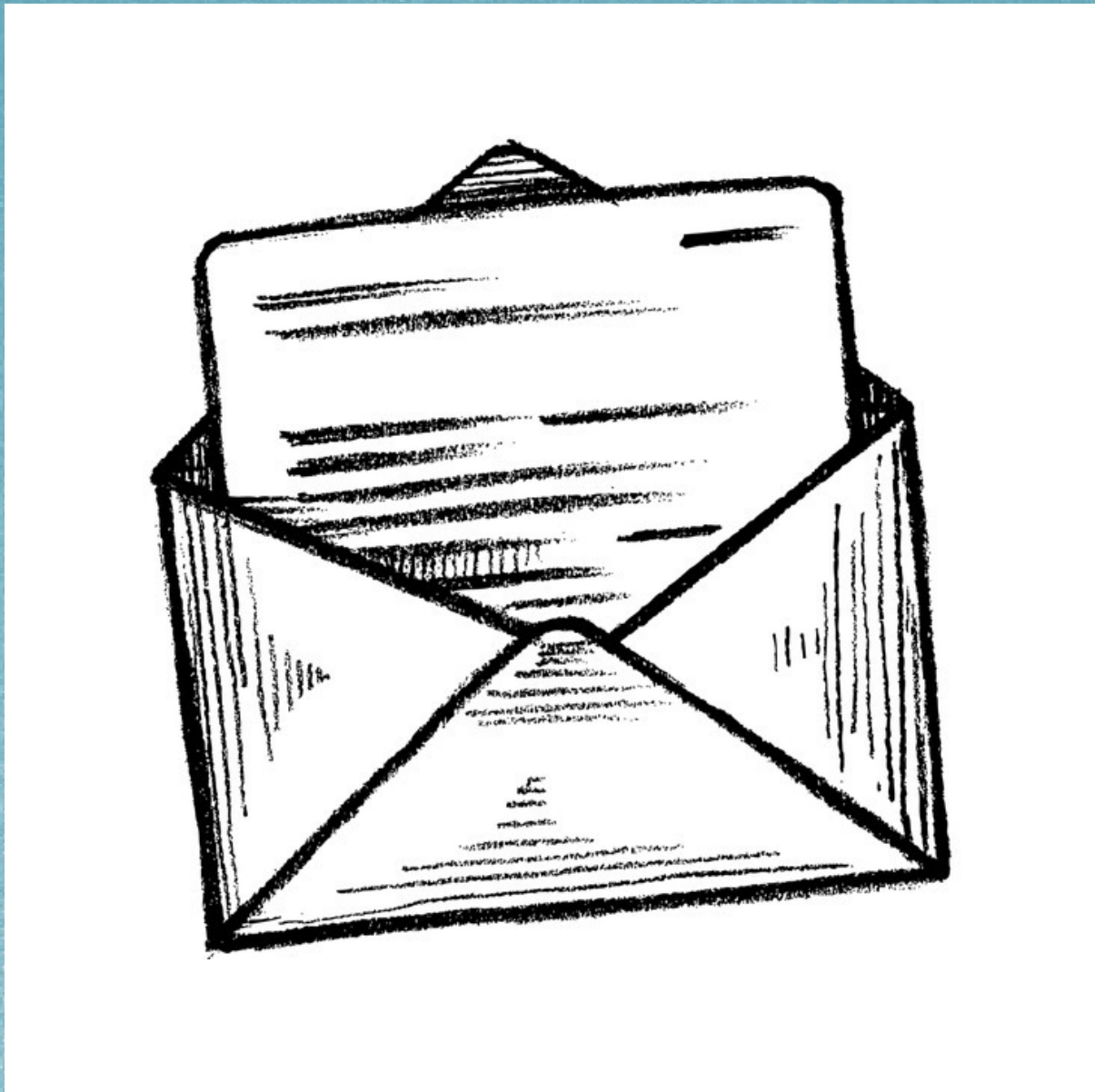
Hi, my name is Charlie and
this is my dog, Ralph



I love playing basketball and
I have lots of friends at
school.

Two years ago my life was different. It was a bit sad. I didn't have Ralph yet, for one thing.

But also, Mum and I had nowhere to live.



It started when mum got a letter, saying we had to leave our house. Mum cried when she read it.

We had to put everything in boxes.

Mum's friend Mandy said we could stay at her house. Mandy was nice, but I didn't like staying at her house.

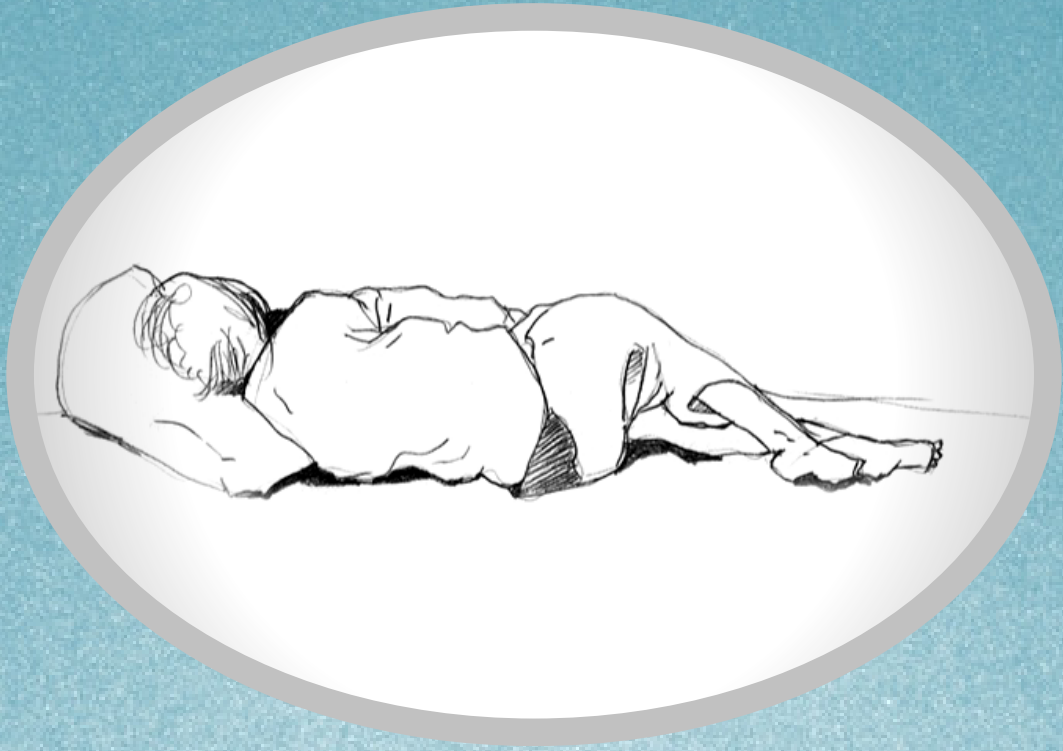


She had a daughter called Sam. Sam called breakfast "brekkie", and kept asking, "Why are you staying at my house?"

Sam was allowed to watch TV at night. Mum never let me do that. Some of the shows scared me.

So I drew pictures in the hallway.





Mum used to read me stories, but all our books were in boxes, so she just read my readers from school.

I had to sleep on the couch. I couldn't sleep until everyone went to bed. The couch was uncomfortable and squeaky.



A few days later, Mum said I had to change schools. She took me to the school Sam went to.

It was hard at the new school.

Sam told everybody I slept on her couch. Kids teased me after that.

I didn't want go to school any more.



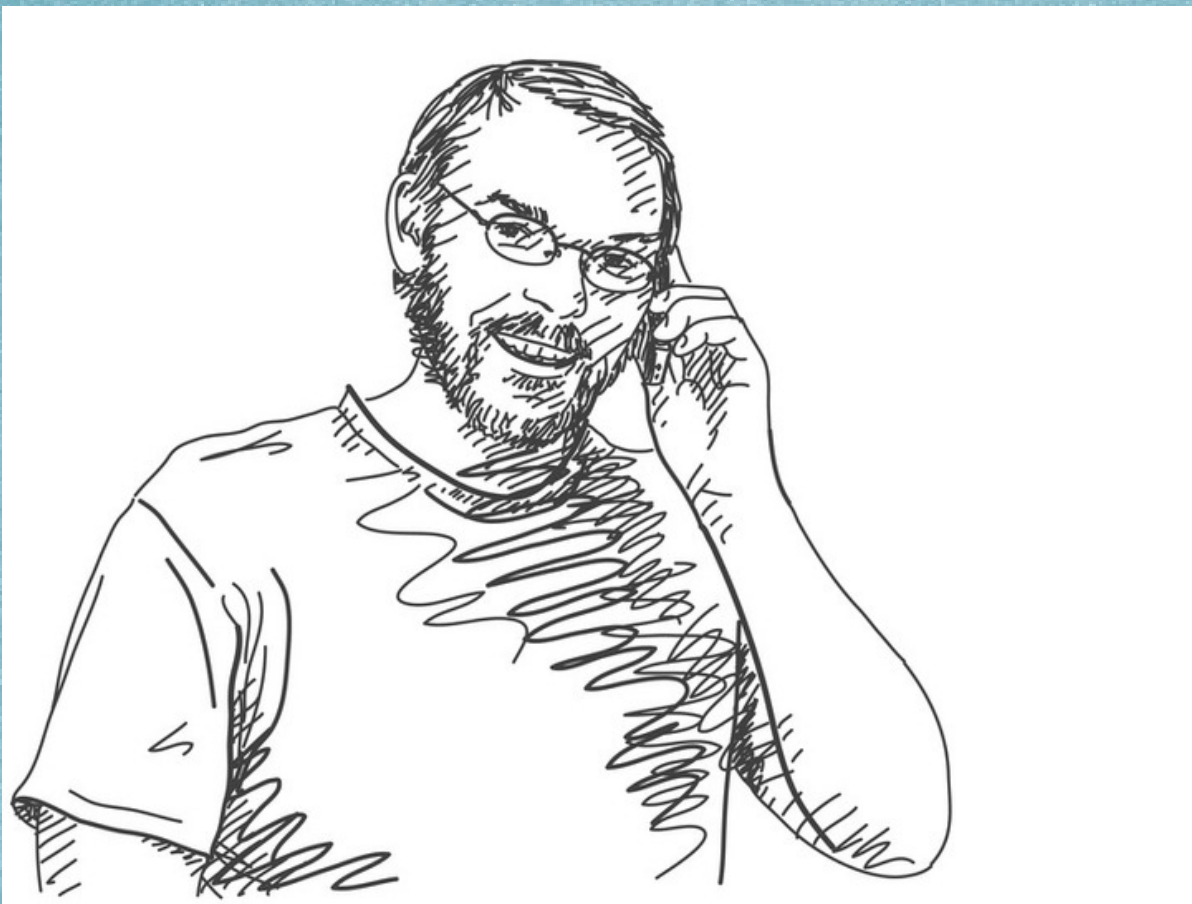
I just wanted everything to go back to normal.

One day we went to a place that helps people without homes. I was a bit scared, but Mum held my hand.



Inside there was a big couch waiting room and a TV. Some other people needed help too. They looked worried, but the staff were really nice.

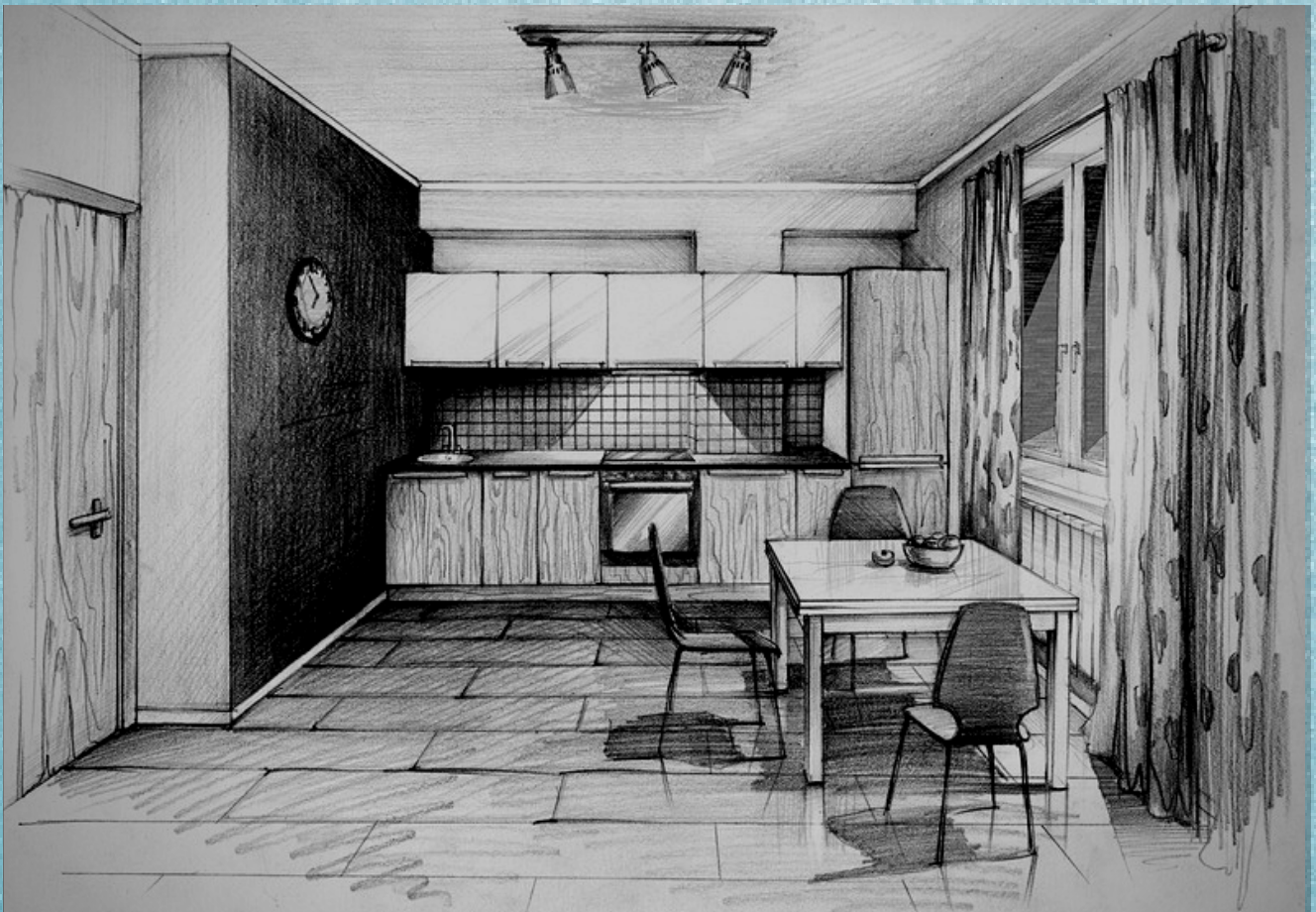
We met a man called John.
John was cool. He
gave me some pencils and
paper to draw with while he
talked to Mum.



He said that he would help us
find somewhere to live.

Mum tried to find a house for us. She looked at lots of places, but the real estate agents kept saying 'no'.

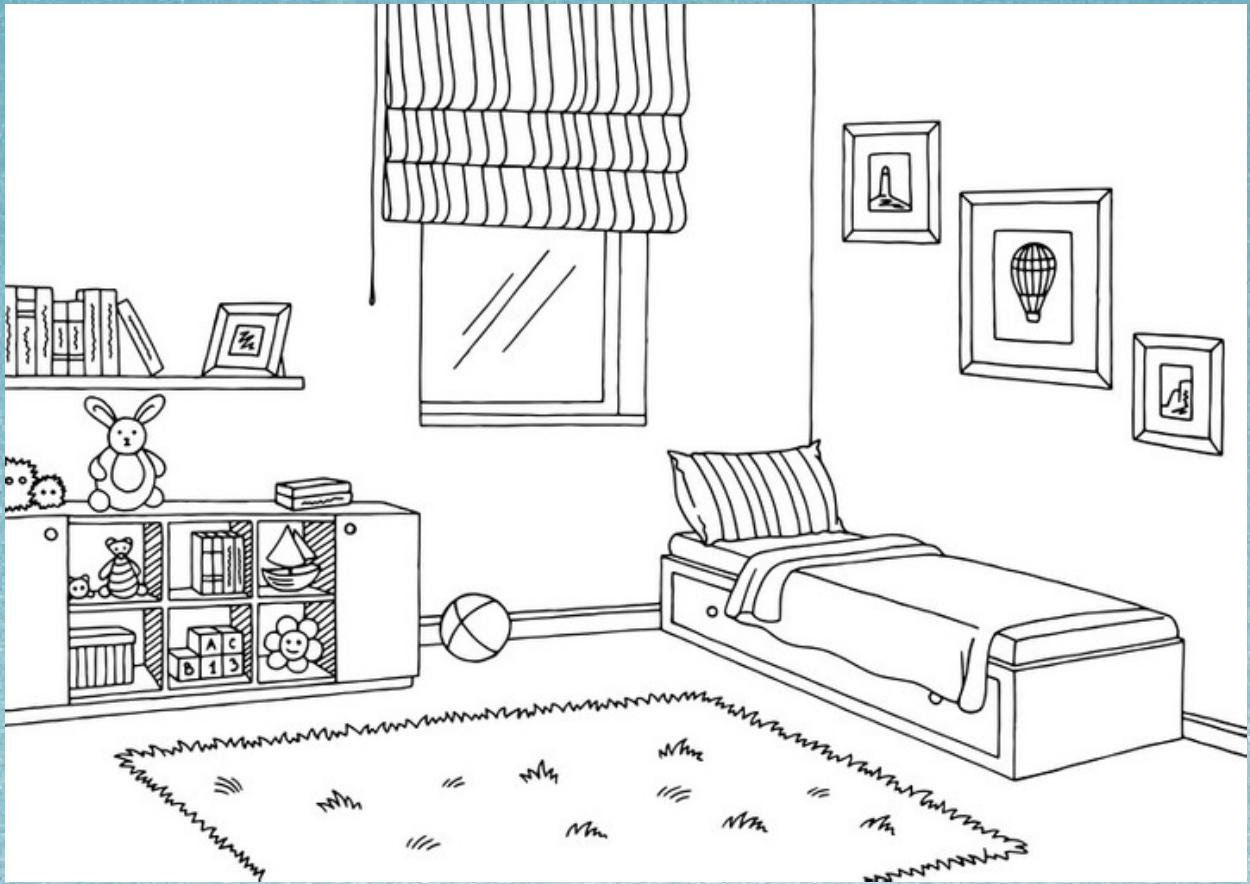
One time we looked at a house at night, it was a bit scary.



We stayed at Mandy and Sam's for a few weeks, then we moved into a different house.

Mum said John had helped us get the house and we would stay there for a little while.

I had a room to myself.



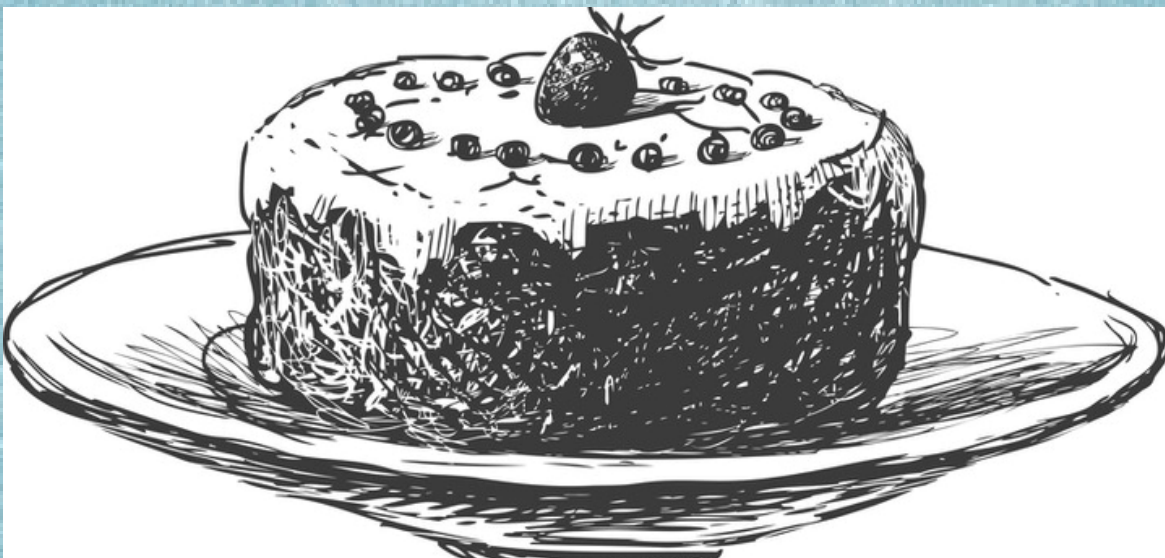
It was a bit small, but
there was a bed in it.

I was finally able to fall
asleep quickly.

We stayed in that house for more than a school term.

I had my birthday party there.

Mum made a chocolate cake with a strawberry on it.



My friends from my old school came over. We had heaps of fun.

Then one day John and Mum took me to the furniture shop after school.



I got to choose a bed.

I didn't understand what was happening until the next day...

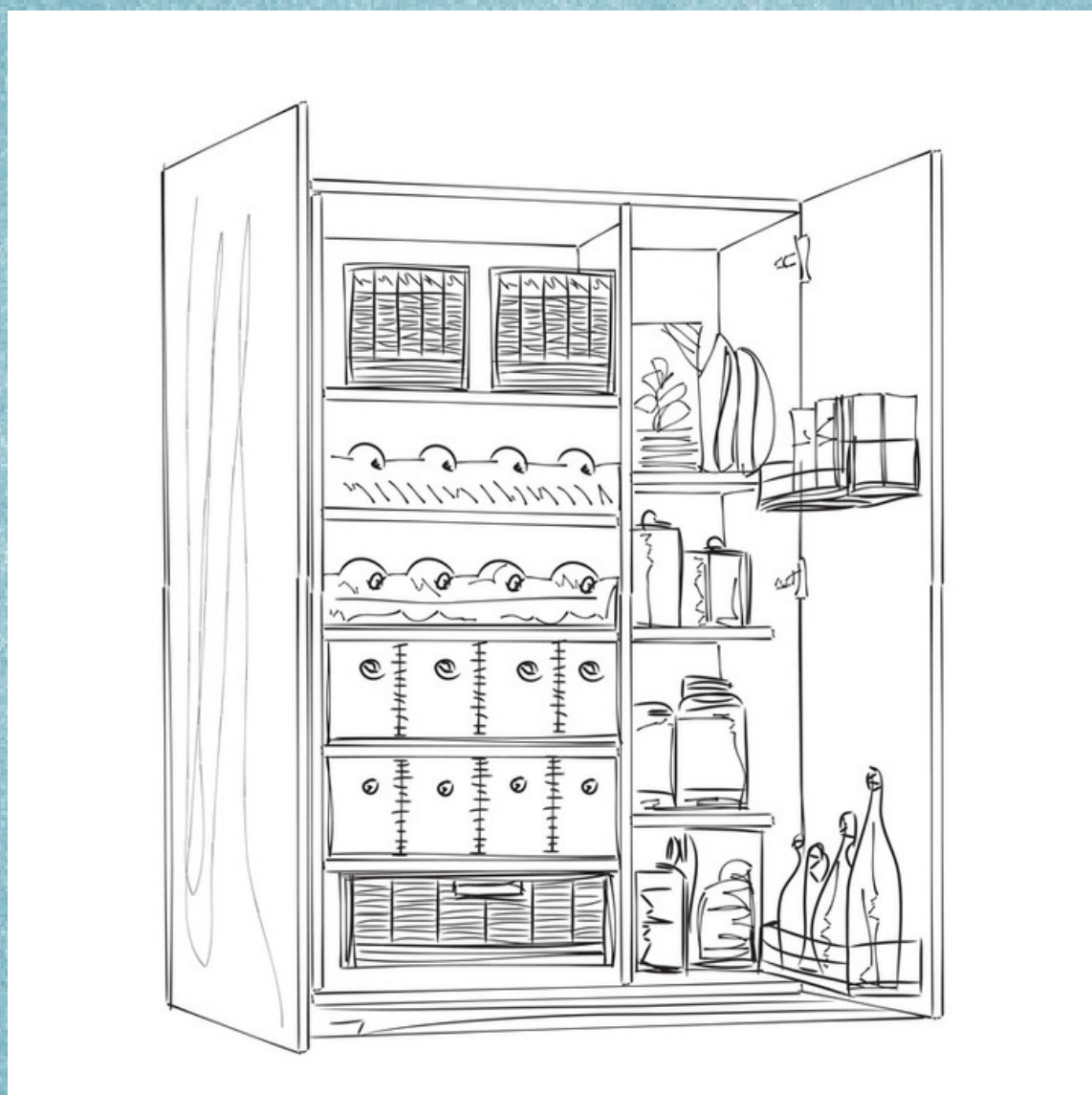


"This is where we'll stay for a long time, Charlie", said Mum.

Mandy and Sam helped us move in.

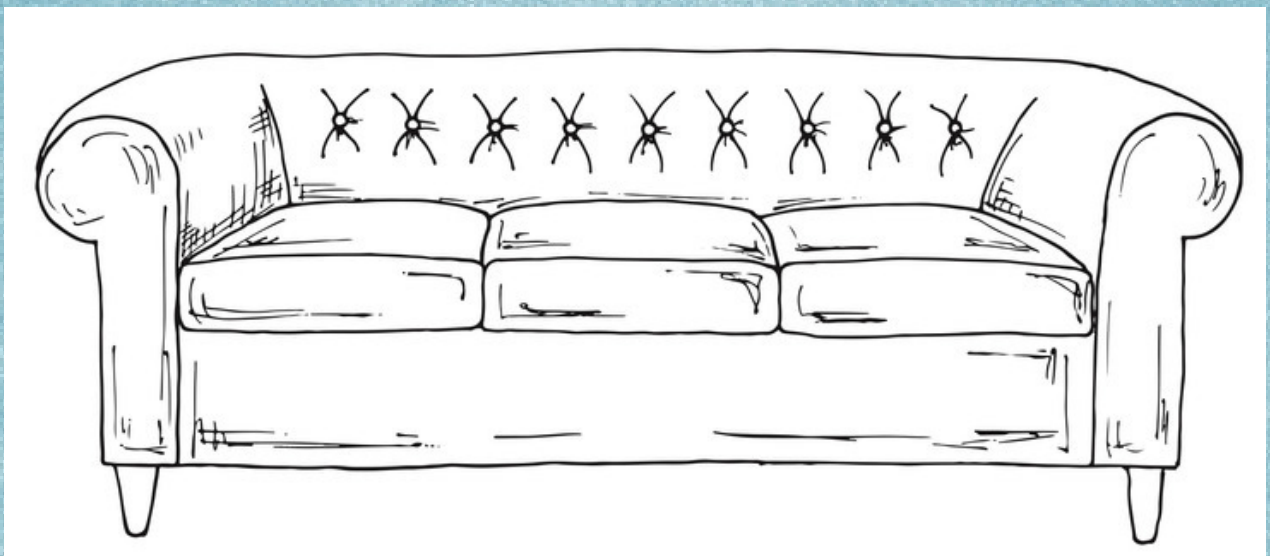
I helped cook dinner.

Sam was nice. She said we were lucky. She said she was jealous that our house had a pantry.



Mum said Mandy and Sam could stay over.

Sam said she was sorry for telling the kids at school that I slept on the couch.



I told Sam she had to sleep on my couch.

Sam and I laughed so much my cheeks hurt.

That night Mum read all my favourite books to me.

"What would make this house feel like home to you, Charlie?" Mum asked when she turned out the light.

"Could I get a puppy?"

"What would you call it?"

"I like the name Ralph"

"I do too!" Mum said, laughing.

A couple of weeks later, John came to say goodbye. He played basketball with me.



"I'm sorry to say goodbye, Charlie", he said, "but I've lots of other families to help, you and Mum are doing fine."

I told John that I wanted to be like him when I grew up.

"I thought you wanted to play basketball?" he asked.

"Hmmm, maybe I can do both?"

John laughed. "That's a good idea, Charlie!"

Since then things have been great. I'm still at my new school, I have made lots of friends, including Sam.



I have new friends in the neighbourhood and there's a park around the corner. We can play basketball there too.

Everything is great, but....

I'm still not sure what I want to do when I grow up, but I've got lots of time to work it out.

I'm just happy that Mum, Ralph and I have a place to live.

The end

Children and homelessness

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2017-18

3 in every 10 people who were homeless in 2018 were under 18



1 in 6 people who were homeless in 2018 were under ten years old



3 in 9 children under 15 who were homeless were not enrolled in school





This is Charlie's Story. Charlie and his mother are thrust into the bewildering world of homelessness when he is six years old.

After struggling to adjust to the changes in his life, Charlie finds support, friendship, and eventually, home.



<http://statewidechildrenresourceprogram.weebly.com/>