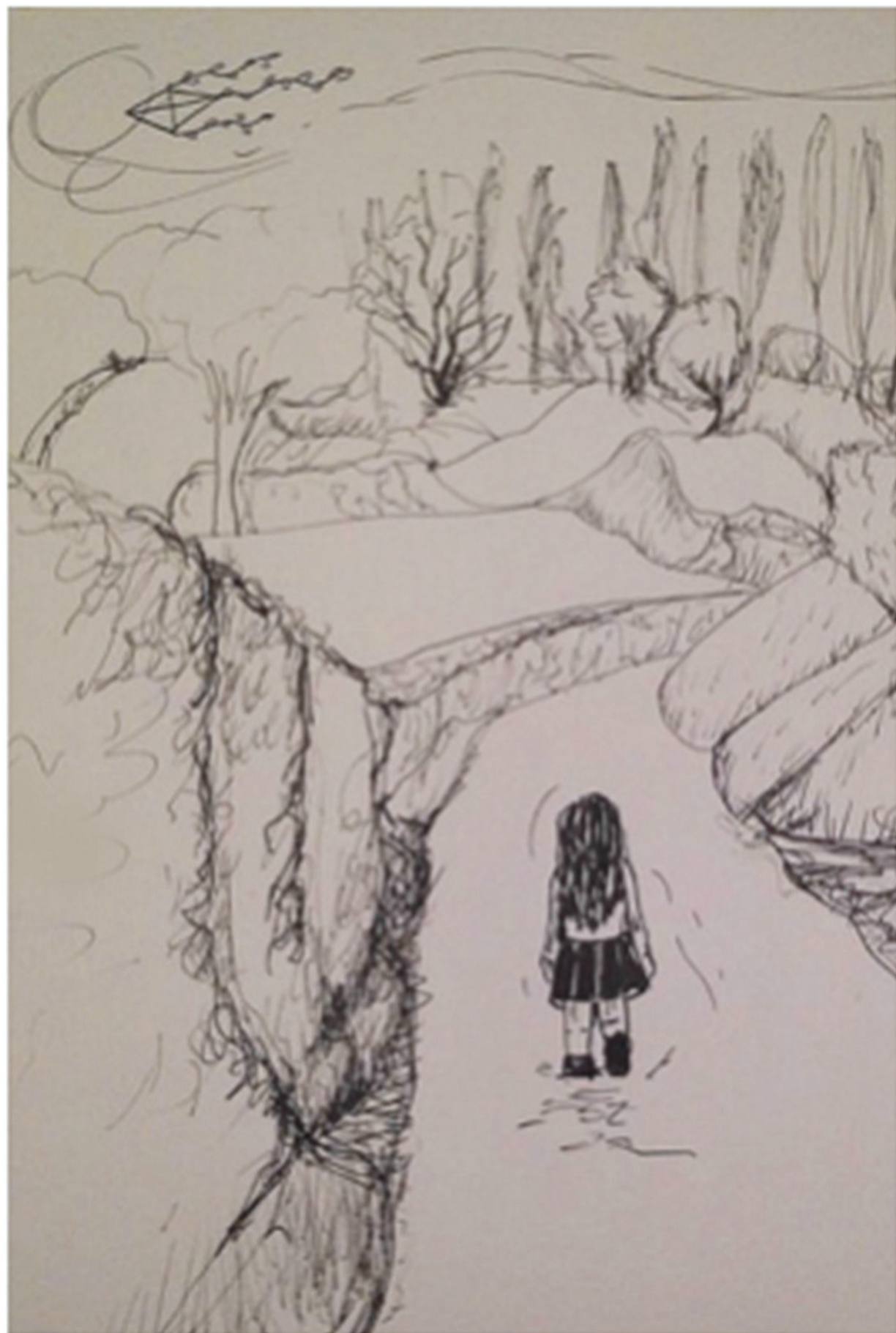


# Francesca e l'Aquilone

Francesca's Kite



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# Dartford Marshes



Francesca is a young girl who recently moved from Italy to Dartford. She is ten years old. She speaks only Italian and not a word of English.

Her only friend is her kite. She brought it from Italy, l'Aquilone. It is a true companion. Every day after school Francesca walks to Dartford Marshes to fly her kite.

There is a good energy there. Something difficult to define or describe. Under the unknown grey sky Francesca feels the cold wind in her skin. She lets her kite free to fly as far as the rope can reach.

She holds it tight. She would never want it to go.

When Aquilone is far high in the sky, Francesca wonders if perhaps it could see her home, the one she left, her playground, her friends.

But the wind is blowing colder and stronger, probably envious of her only friend, it starts pulling the kite harder and harder until the rope snaps.

Francesca looks at the piece of rope left in her hand and sees Aquilone flying faraway above the village and behind the hills. She is desperate. She needs to find it. So she starts walking across the marshes following the ancient river Darent.

The Darent is a quick-changing artist. It disguises himself, changing

shape and appearance, becoming marshes, lakes, ponds, hiding underground and coming back again in the form of a countryside peaceful stream of water.







Behind the trees near a farm Francesca sees something moving. It could be Aquilone! She runs towards the fences of the horses' enclosure, but without realising it she falls into a rabbit hole. She rolls down and tumbles few times until she reaches the bottom. She can hardly see anything, there is a dim light forming strange shadows in the room. There is a family of rabbits sharing a carrot. They are wearing clothes whilst sitting at a little table. They are friendly. Mother rabbit welcomes Francesca in. After having dinner with them she welcomes her in the guest room for a nap.

Francesca closes her eyes and falls asleep. After a while she starts shivering. A cold breeze is caressing her skin. She wakes up back in the field. She feels lost. Without knowing where she is she walks for a long time along a green path, looking for someone to help her to find her way back and her Aquilone. She wishes she can find someone who can speak Italian so that she could explain herself.

Francesca has now reached the town centre. The high street is as busy as ever. She sits on one of the benches at One Bell Corner. She likes that



bench. If she looks straight ahead she can see the little church at a distance. The road is straight with tall



old buildings by the two sides. She knows that this is not home, but it looks like it a little.

In her village in Italy they also had a square with a straight high street leading to a little church. If she closes her eyes she can smell the scent of lemons and *ginestra*. She can hear from the nearby windows the noise of the dishes put on the table ready for dinner. The laughter of the boys playing football across the street. She can see the linens hung out to dry outside the windows dancing with the wind like white sails against a deep blue sky.

A young boy comes to sit next to Francesca waking the girl up from her daydream.

- Ciao, ho perso il mio aquilone. Mi aiuteresti a trovarlo per favore?

Francesca asks. He smiles and nods his head. Francesca is happy, he understands! With a big smile she explains everything that happened.



# The High Street

They start walking toward Central Park. It is crowded with people. Mums with a lot of young children. Grandads with dogs. Old ladies with flowery dresses. And music. There is music coming from the bandstand.

There must be a fair going on, but Francesca doesn't really care about those strangers. The villagers. What can they understand? They seem not to even see her new friend. To them indeed Francesca is alone talking to someone that doesn't even exist.

They look at her shaking their heads with a pitiful expression in their eyes.

- Poor girl. - They say. - She must have gone mad. Talking to herself.

But she doesn't care of what they say. She keeps walking towards the lakes whilst chatting with her new friend.

Her friend advises her to ask a

group of geese who are snoozing nearby, if they could fly her above the village so that she can see her Aquilone.

- Come faccio a volare?

She asks.

But this is no ordinary land explains her friend to her. When she looks again the geese are now giants and can talk to her. They suggest first of all she needs to make reins.







She collects all the daises she can find in the field and she puts together a very long daisy-chain, that she ties around the geese's necks.

With few flaps of their giant wings they are up in the sky in a blink of an eye and Francesca is pulled up above the clouds. Her friend is next to her holding her hand.

She can see the village becoming smaller and smaller and the stream of the river Darenth flowing across the green hills like a mark sketched with a brown-blue pen. Something colourful and shiny like a rainbow is hiding behind few clouds ahead. Francesca can see it. It is Aquilone.

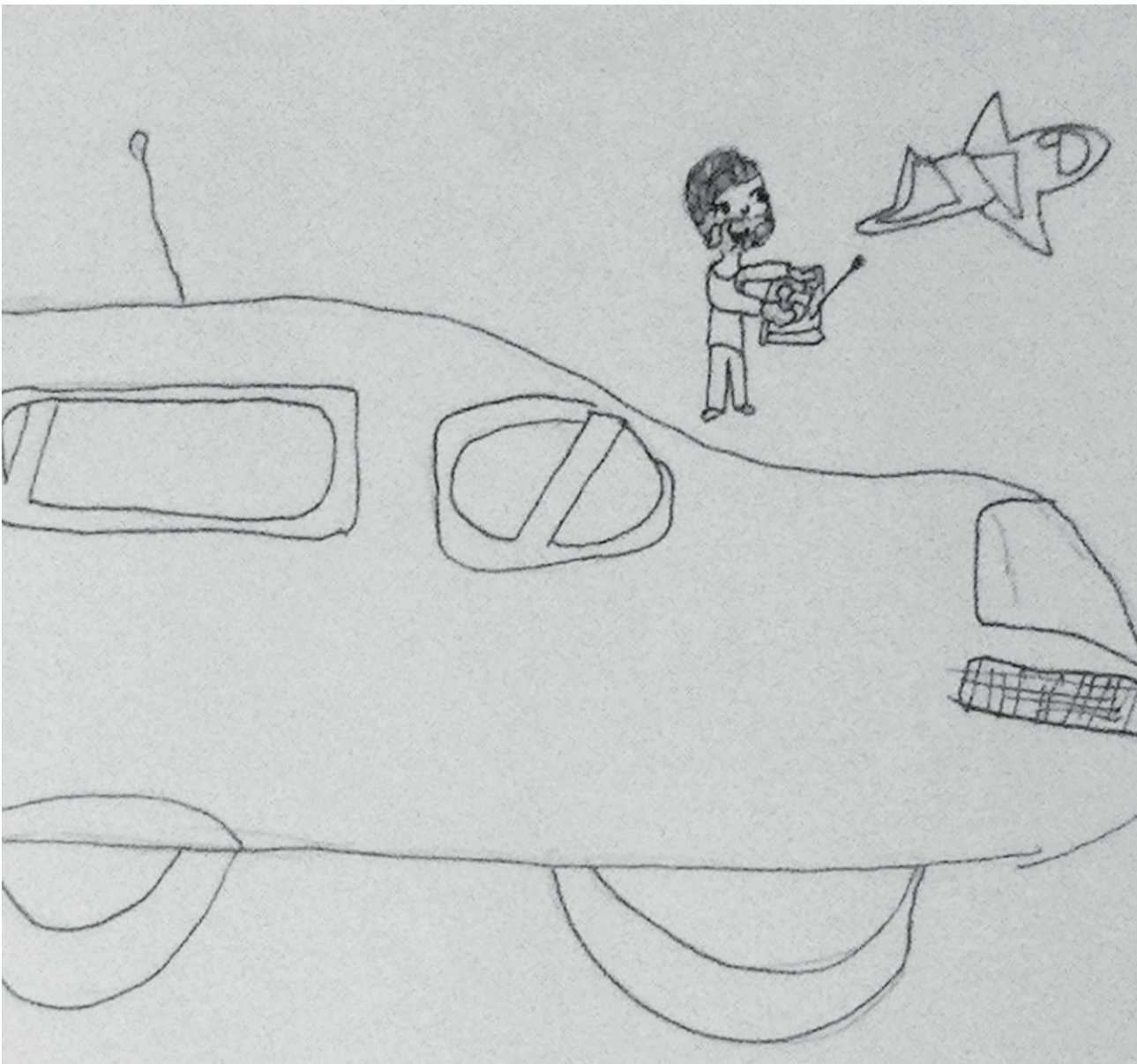
She stretches her arms and almost touches its rainbow tail with her fin-



gers. But there is a strong noise. A metallic noise of an engine. And a strong wind that pulls Francesca and her friend away braking the daisy-chain. Francesca falls down from the sky. She slowly closes her eyes looking at her Aquilone becoming smaller and smaller in the distance.

Francesca opens her eyes. They are now in a wide field. She can't recognise the place but at the same time it feels very familiar. The engine noise is still there. There are some people flying small aircrafts. She walks up to them and asks for help. She hopes that the dream she was dreaming might become true. She wonders if

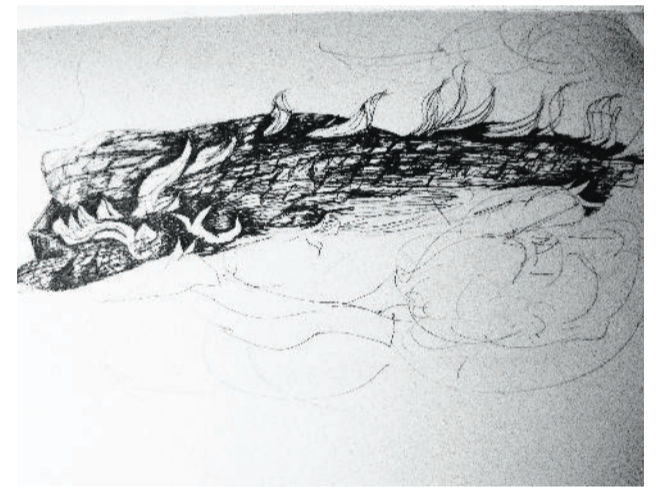




A man smiles at her but doesn't understand what she is saying and keeps flying his model.

The rest of the people take no notice of her. Francesca is disheartened. She walks with her inseparable friend, away from the group following a small path leading to a few houses and a church.

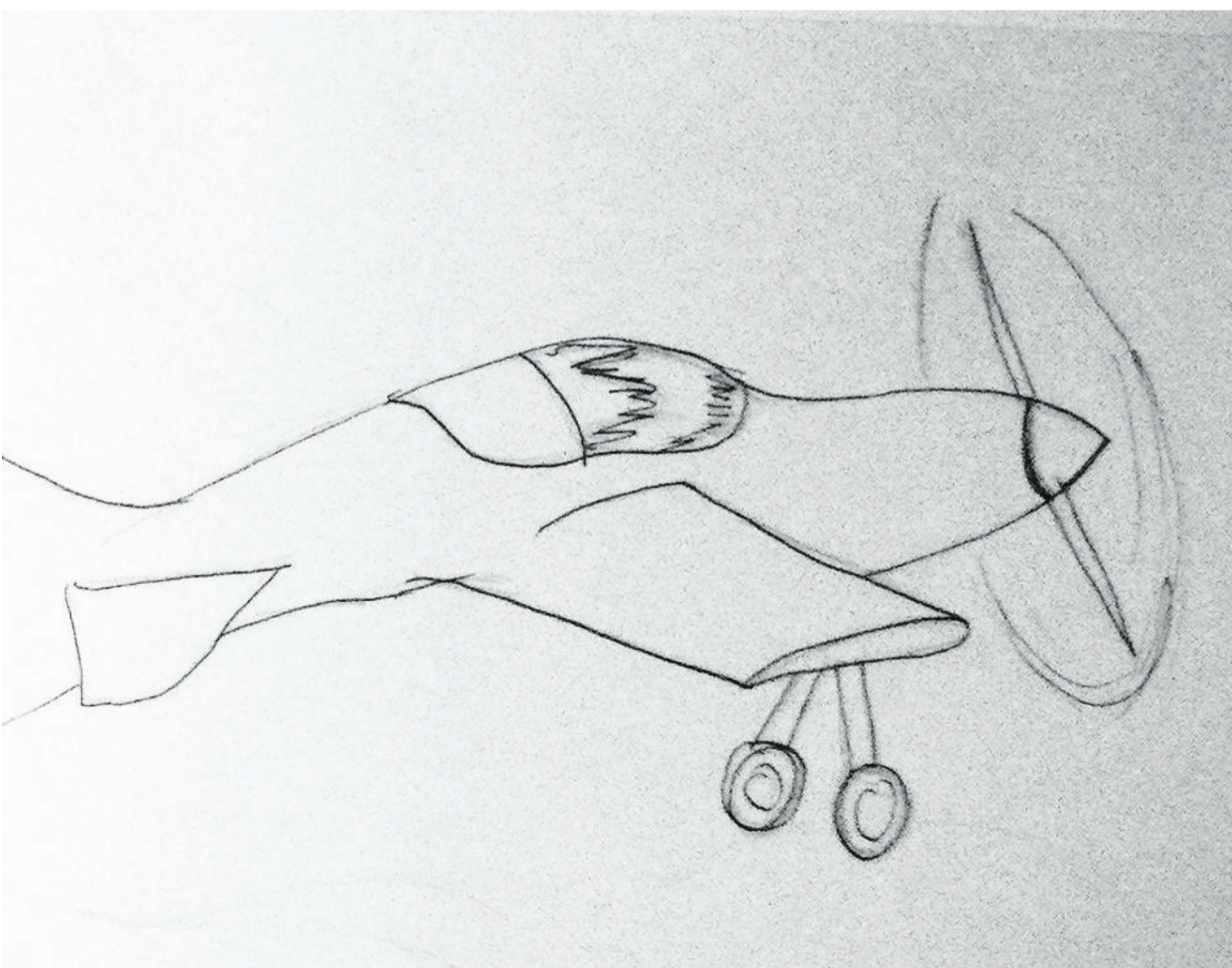
Whilst they walk, she smells something like burning wood.



she could use the small planes to fly over the sky to look for her kite.

- Mi aiutate per favore a trovare il mio Aquilone?

The more she walks closer to the houses the more the smell increases. A few logs are burning in a near car park. The day is becoming night and the air is getting colder. Francesca stretches her arms towards the fire. It is a nice warm feeling.



It is not long before it starts raining so they run looking for shelter. There is a light in the distance, she can see from the porch of the church. They walk to the church but the door is shut. There is a pile of leaves in a corner. Francesca sits on them and falls asleep.

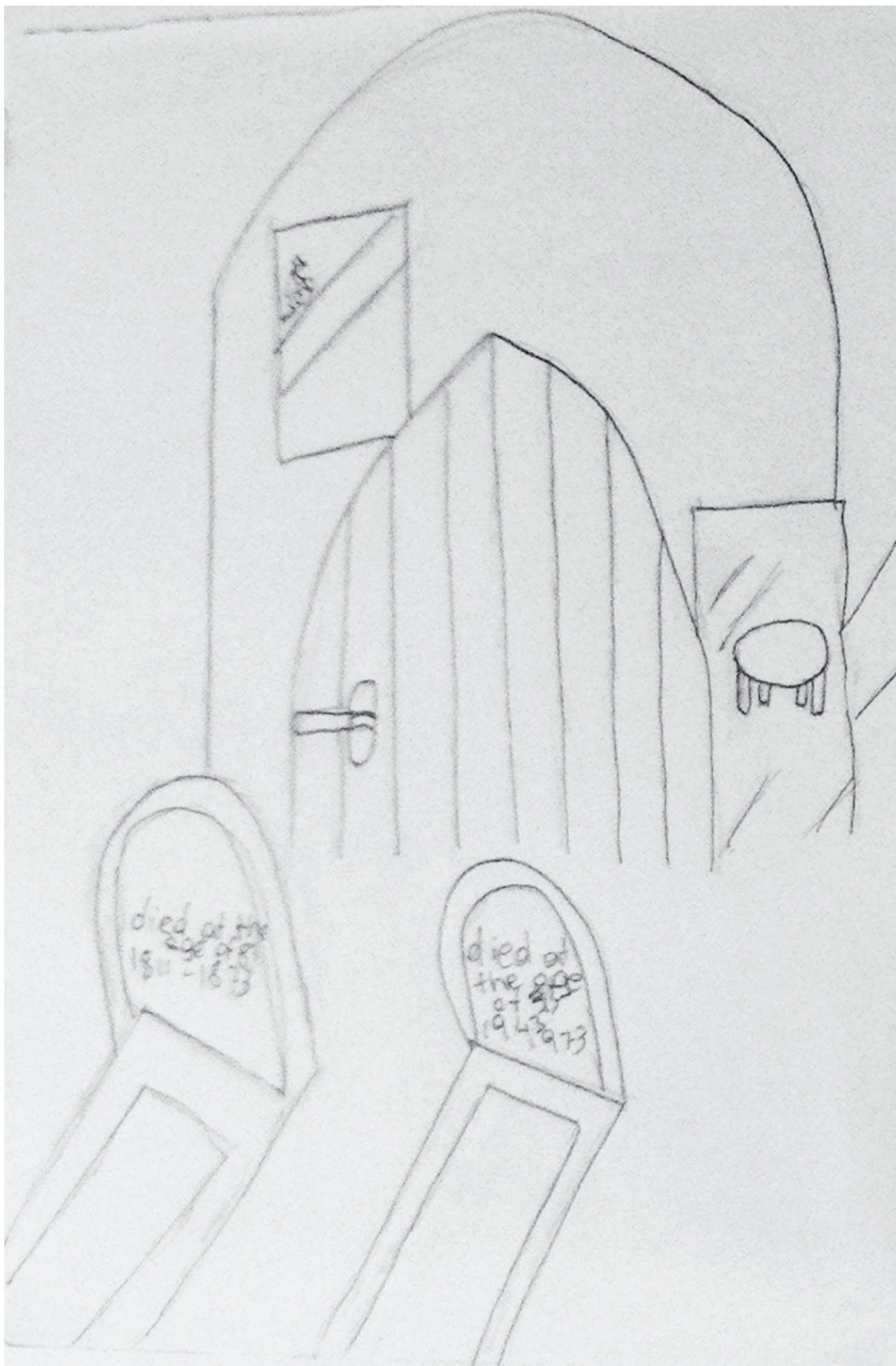
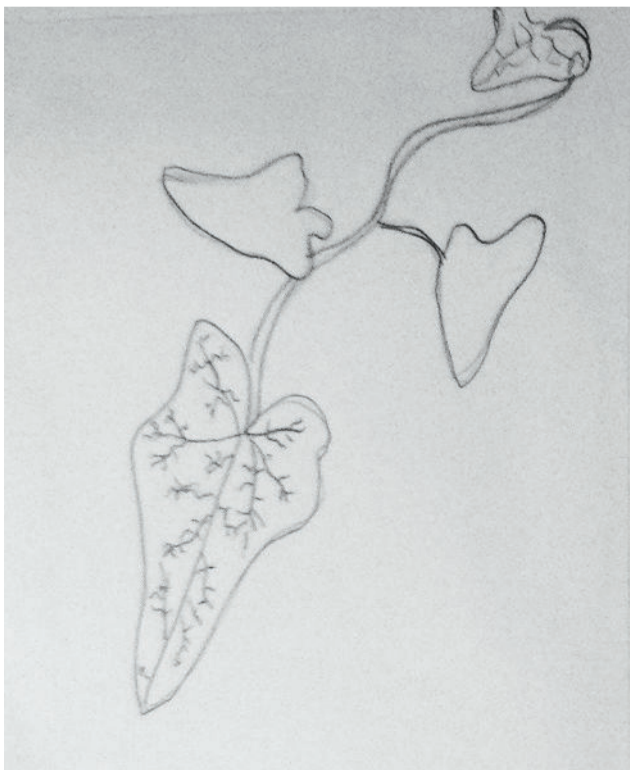
She is now in a white room chasing a colourful string. She keeps chasing it. The more she runs the more it goes. She can't catch it. She keeps



running across a long corridor with tall arches by the two sides. From white to black the place gets darker and darker. Francesca is now falling. There is no ground under her feet. She falls in the dark.

Francesca wakes up gulping. She goes back to the church's door. Tries to open it again. After few attempts she walks around the building under heavy rain. It is difficult to distinguish shapes and lines. She can see her friend walking slowly across the church graveyard. It looks like a peaceful garden, where the time is standing still. When Francesca reaches the church's backyard she sees a hall with tables and a small kitchen through a window. The window is open. Francesca shouts a few times hoping to be heard by someone, but nobody answers. There is a crash. A noise coming from the inside. Then steps. A shadow of someone inside the church walks toward Francesca and looks through the window. It is dark.

- Is anyone out there? - The shadow asks
- Aprite la porta per favore! Mi sono persa ho bisogno di aiuto!



The shadow doesn't understand.

- What are you doing here?
- Sto cercando il mio Aquilone.
- Do you speak French?
- Italiano
- Ah Italian! Romans!

The shadow is now a man; he smiles as if he knows something about

something...perhaps about the church...or about the place...perhaps about the Romans...or about Francesca. She looks at her friend. He could help. He could speak English for her. Her friend looks back at her, saying that she is wasting her time talking to strangers.

The shadow goes back from where he came.

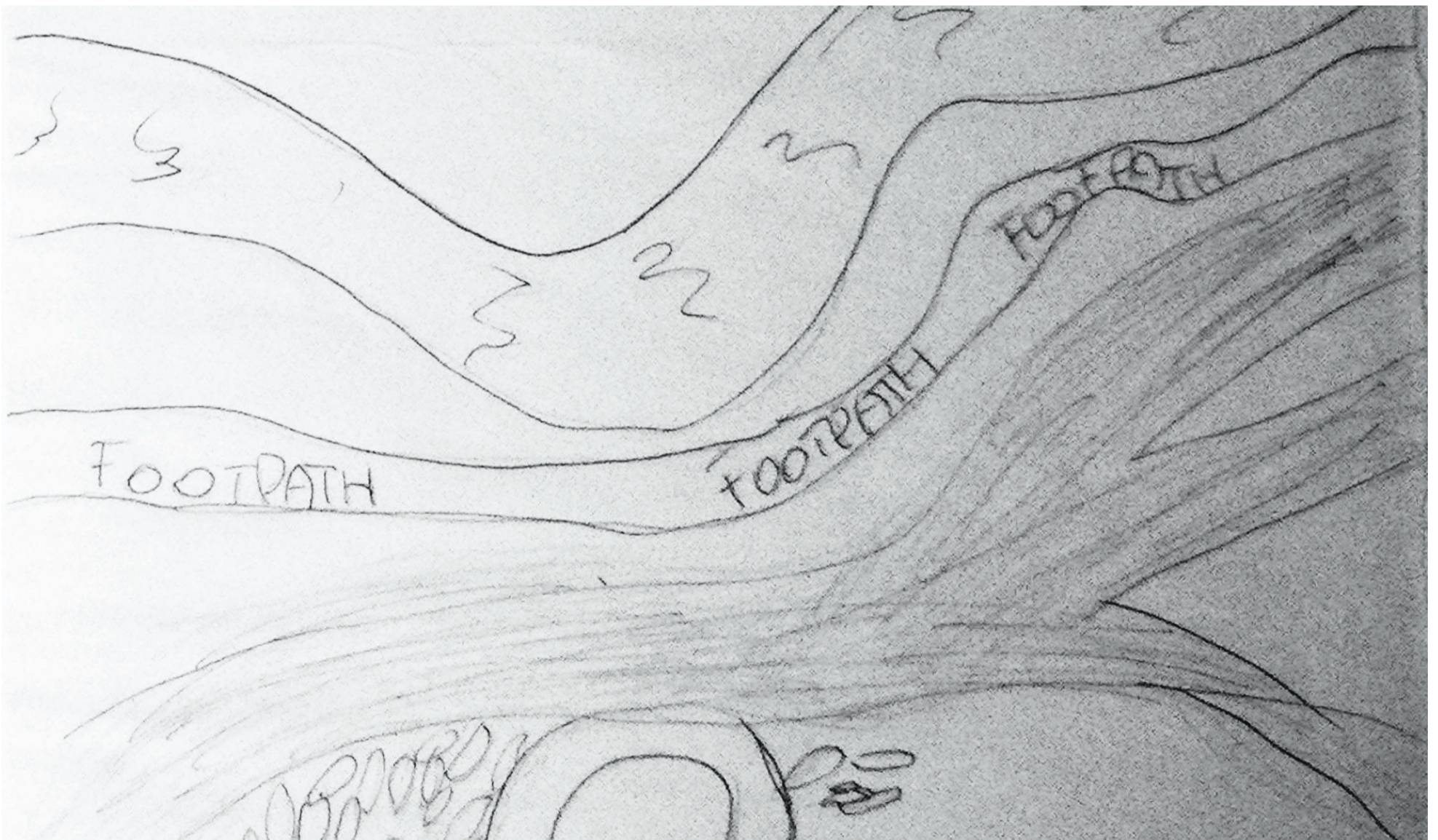




Francesca feels a heavy weight upon her chest. She can't breathe. She has no strength in her arms and legs.

- Sono sola. - She says. She realises that she is not going to find her kite anymore. She feels lost and alone.
- Alone? - Her friend asks and slowly disappears in front of her eyes like smoke.

Everything is pitch black. The whole world is spinning around. Francesca faints.





# Roman Villa Road



Noises of carts and horses. There are noises never heard before, but still familiar. How could that be? Francesca's eyes are still closed. It has stopped raining. She is lying on

the floor but she can't feel the grass anymore. Francesca feels limestone under her and a noise of water fountains.

She can see the daylight through her closed eyes.

So many things have happened in one day. Maybe too many for a



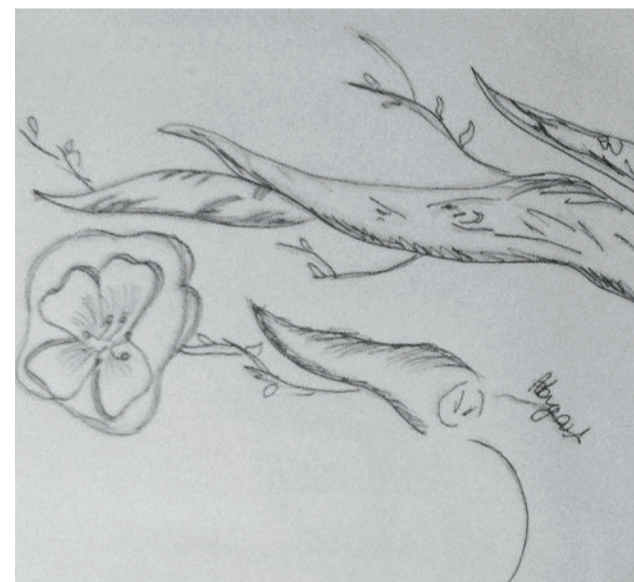
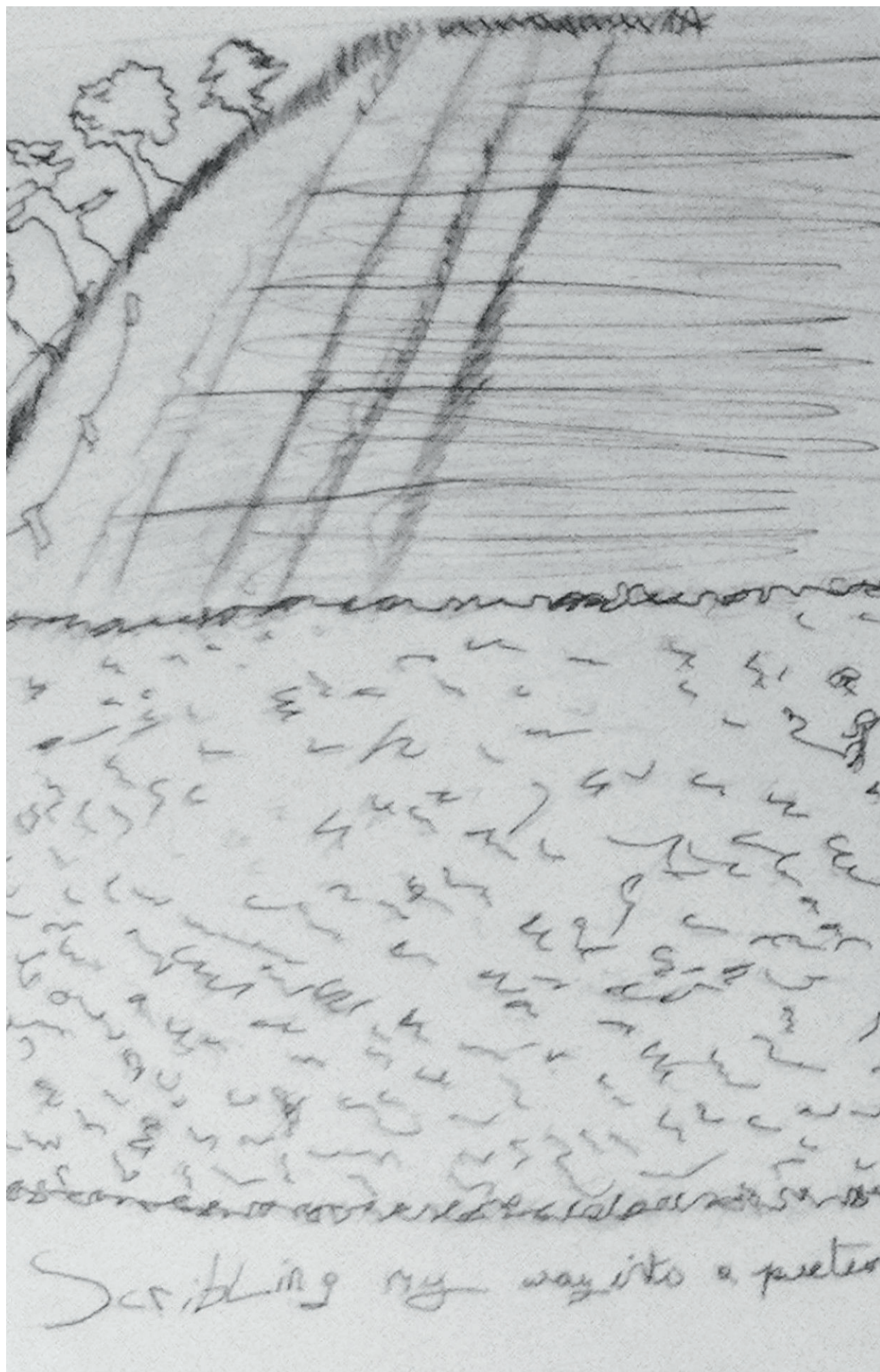
young mind. But there is this feeling now, a feeling hard to explain. The feeling of being home. How could that be?

Francesca doesn't really want to open her eyes. She is not scared. She feels no fear. She really hopes that

this nice warm feeling of being home will not vanish the moment she opens her eyes. So she keeps them closed for a little bit longer.

There are voices. She can hear them speaking but it is not English. Not Italian, but still ... familiar. Perhaps if she covers her face with her hands she could spy a little through her fingers. No one will notice her. And the warm feeling will remain.

The rainbow tale of Aquilone is flying behind a huge building. It is 200 feet long, made of white large bricks and a red roof held by strong columns. A straight paved path leads to a large door. The door opens into a symmetrical corridor with many rooms with big open windows. At the end of the corridor there is a wide squared court with a fountain made of marble in the middle.



Francesca is divided. She would like to stay and know more about that place, but Aquilone is flying to the opposite direction, towards the river Darenth. She follows the rainbow tale and she is back into the fields. Lost again.

Francesca curls down and starts crying. Tears fall whilst drops of rain bounce into the Darenth, making small circular drawings.





The tweeting of a humming bird wakes Francesca up.

She opens her eyes and walks to the river to wash her face. She is confused and has a very vague memory of what happened.

She looks at the field and where she saw the villa now she can see only trees.

She walks to the river and sees a young man, looking exactly like her imaginary friend. She walks over to him confused. He is holding her kite ...

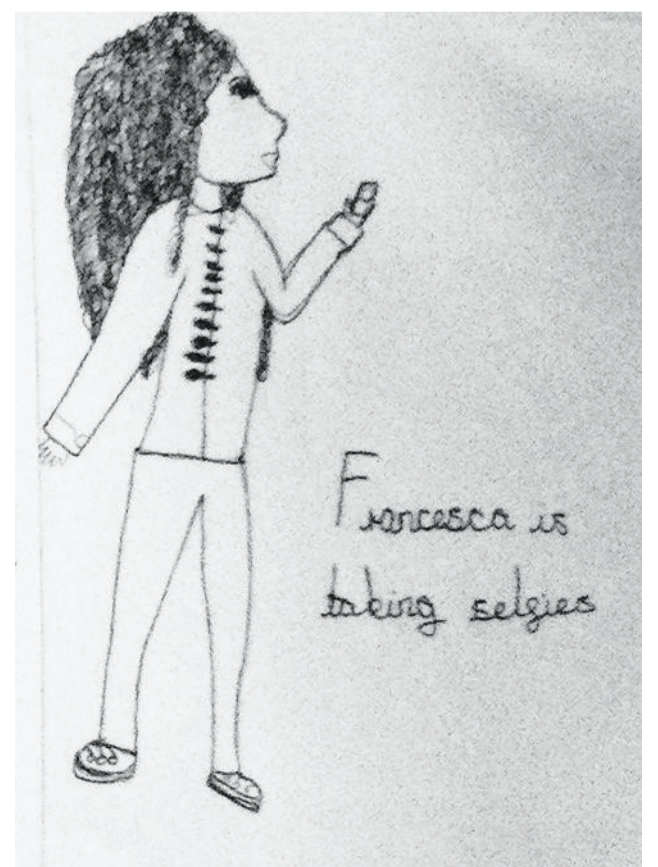
He looks at her and says:

- Is this yours? I found it stuck on a tree branch and I'm fixing it.

She looks at the rainbow tale. That is her kite.

She says:

- Yes it is mine. Thank you.







Follow Francesca's paths and learn more about Dartford at  
[www.francescaelaquilone.jimdo.com](http://www.francescaelaquilone.jimdo.com)

Dartford Creative is an arts programme that is funded by Dartford Borough Council and Arts Council England, exploring ways in which artists and local people can get involved in arts and cultural activity in Dartford.

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