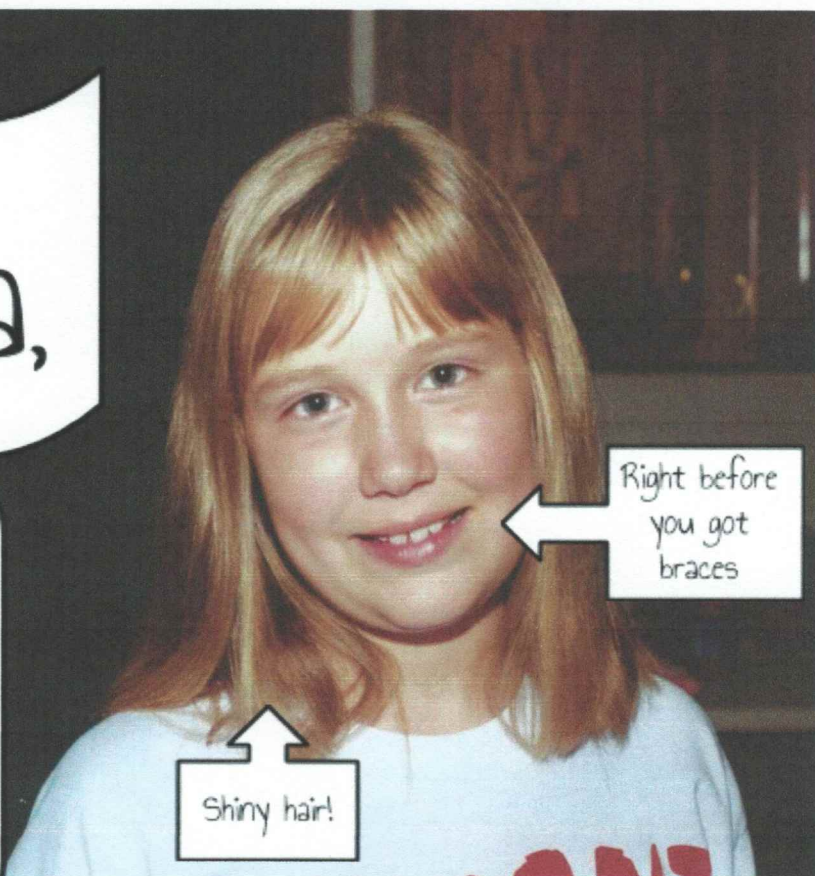
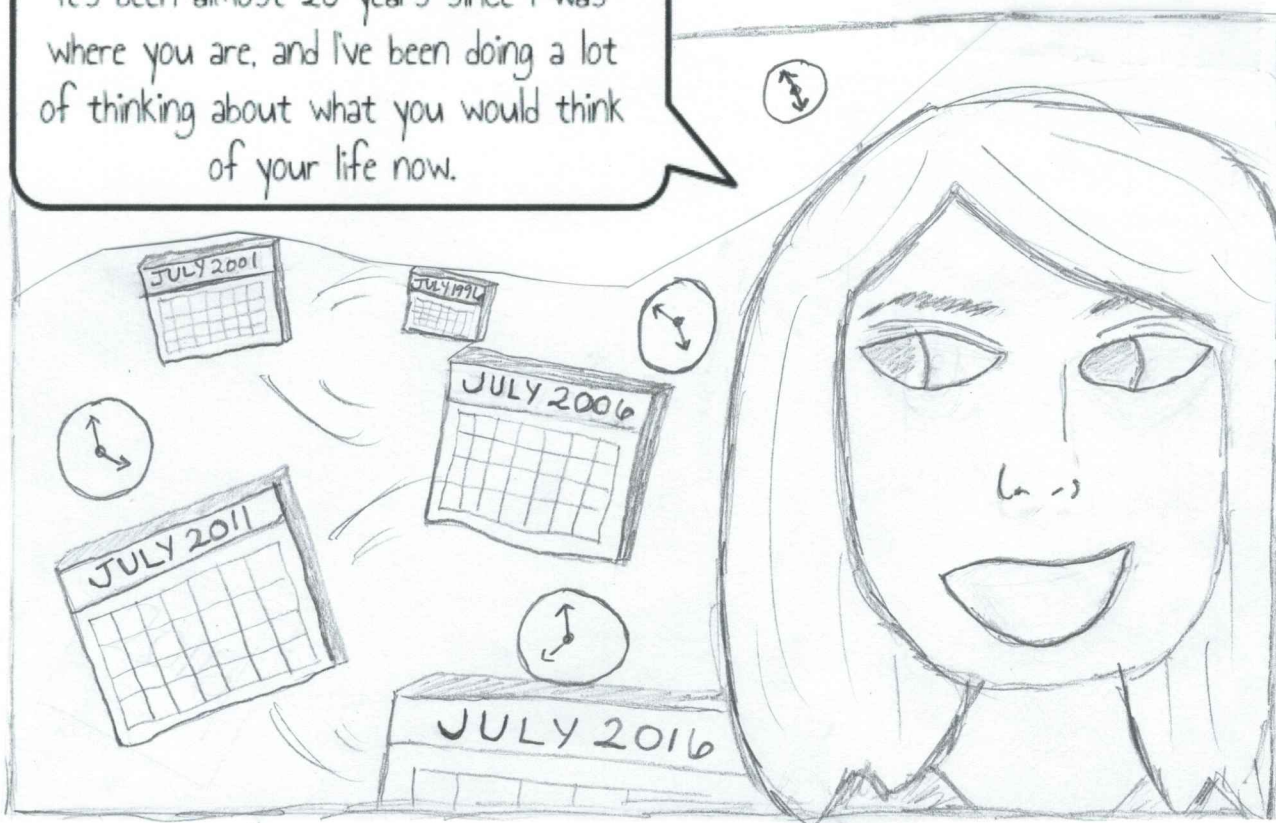


Dear
Lisa,

You are ten
years old, and
the year is
1997.



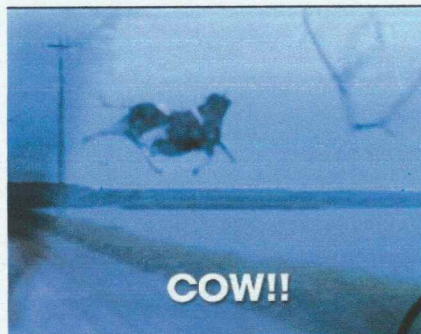
It's been almost 20 years since I was
where you are, and I've been doing a lot
of thinking about what you would think
of your life now.





It's hard to say. Because while I'm you and you are me, we're really not the same person anymore.

Although I do still remember pretty well what it was like to be ten...



COW!!

Watching Twister even though it gave me nightmares



Memorizing the Spice Girls' "Wannabe" and "Spice Up Your Life"



Being both fascinated and freaked out by the JonBenet Ramsey case



Dancing to my cassette tape of the "Macarena" alone in my room to get all the steps down



And playing Donkey Kong Country on my Super Nintendo, hopping on crocodiles until my thumbs were cramped.



Nice Lion King pajamas!

Awesome "Super Nintendo on Christmas Morning" face

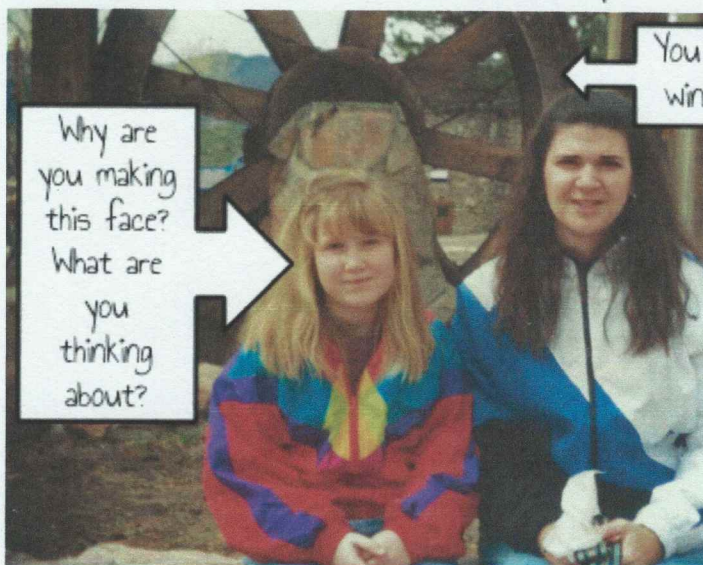
It's difficult, but if
I try hard, I can
also remember how
it *felt* being ten...



That feeling of being stuck inside my head, equal parts

confident
that I
knew all
there was
to know

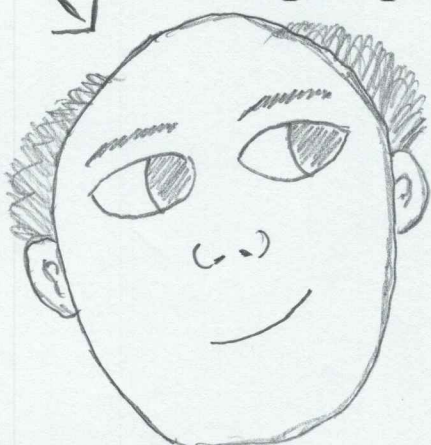
Why are
you making
this face?
What are
you
thinking
about?



You and Mom in very 90s
windbreakers in Colorado

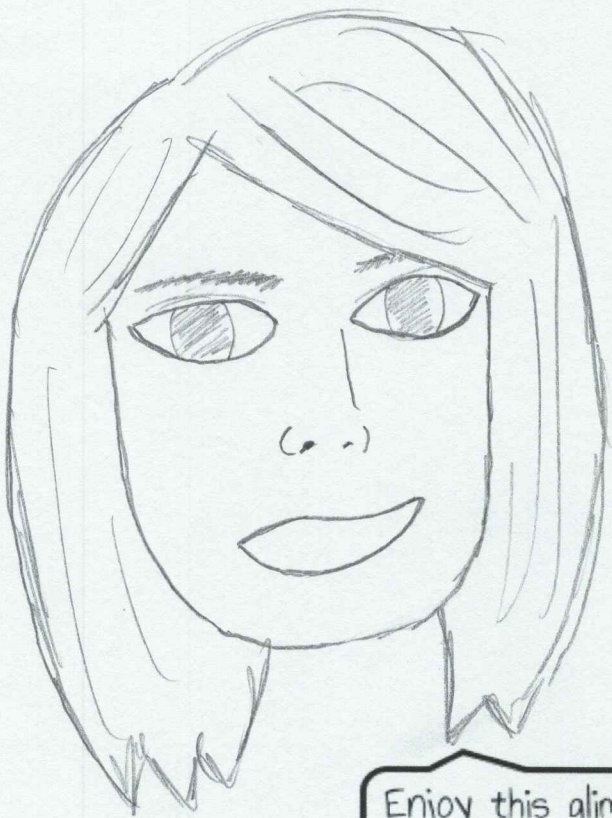
and terribly
afraid that I
actually
knew
nothing.

The poet Billy Collins wrote in "On Turning Ten" (one of
my favorite poems) that ten "is the
beginning of sadness."



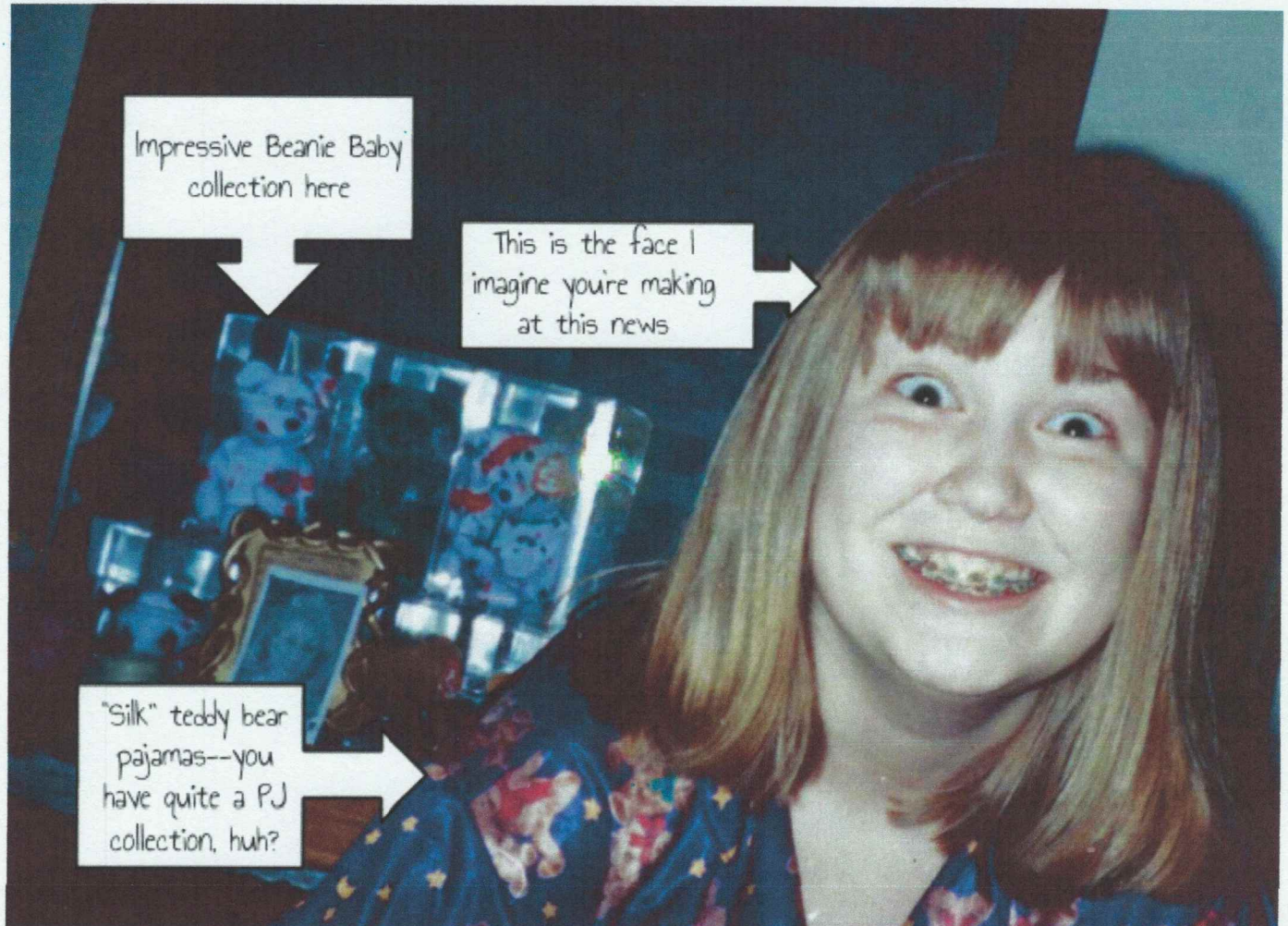
It's really hard to
grow up.

I don't envy you.



I'm writing to tell you a few things about your life in 2016. There's a lot going on, but I decided to narrow it down to 10 facts since you're 10 years old. The rest will have to remain a mystery. I also tried to pick things you would actually care about.

Enjoy this glimpse of your future.



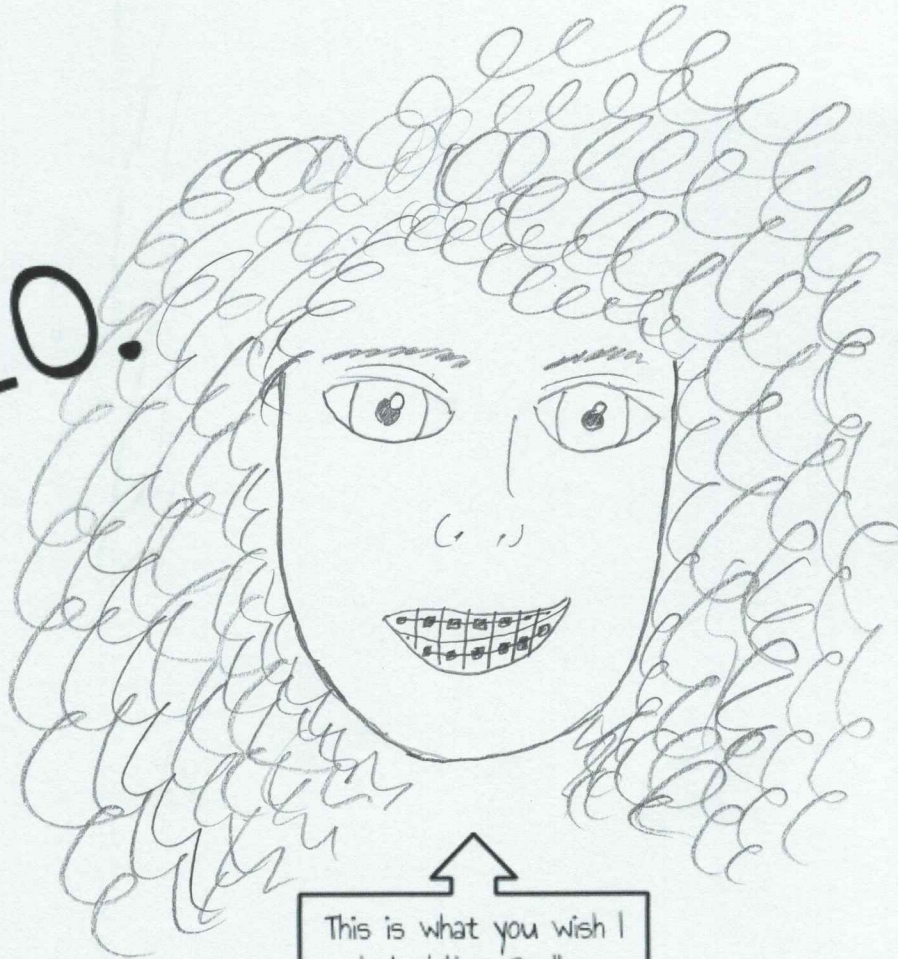
Impressive Beanie Baby collection here

This is the face I imagine you're making at this news

"Silk" teddy bear pajamas--you have quite a PJ collection, huh?

You will not have a huge perm when you are in your 20s. I know this is what you envisioned for yourself, but in 2006, perms were no longer in fashion. I couldn't do that to us. You will also not have blue colored contacts, and you will not have braces voluntarily because you think they look cute on you (which they do). None of these things were very good ideas.

10.



This is what you wish I looked like? Really?

I LOVE this shirt. I wish I knew where it was. Hang on to it for me, okay?

9.

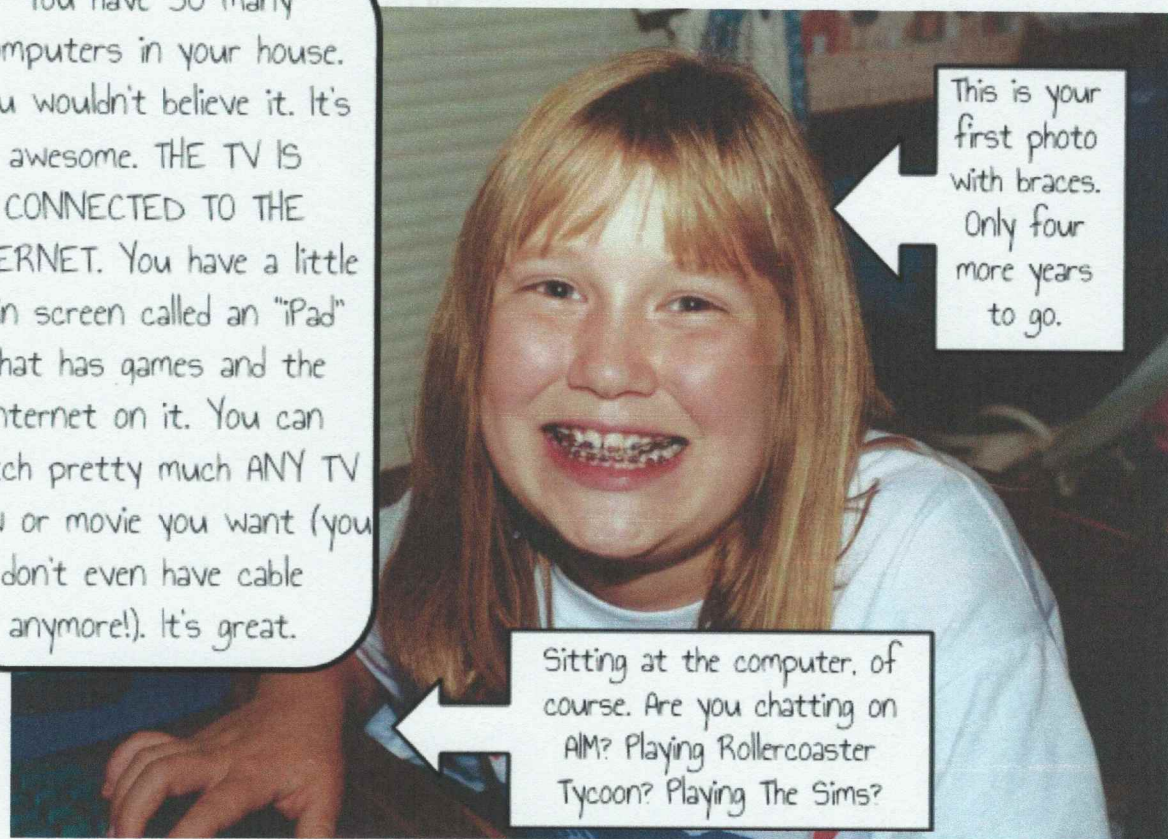
Your sister is really cool. You still talk and hang out, but probably not as much as you should, because you're both busy. I know that you fight sometimes, and you can annoy each other, but when you're older, you remember the fun stuff more, like playing silly games on car rides and having secret club meetings under the bridge. Have fun and be friends. No more tossing each other's stuffed animals off the bed in fits of rage.



Amber's matching scrunchie game is on POINT

8.

You have SO many computers in your house. You wouldn't believe it. It's awesome. THE TV IS CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET. You have a little thin screen called an "iPad" that has games and the internet on it. You can watch pretty much ANY TV show or movie you want (you don't even have cable anymore!). It's great.

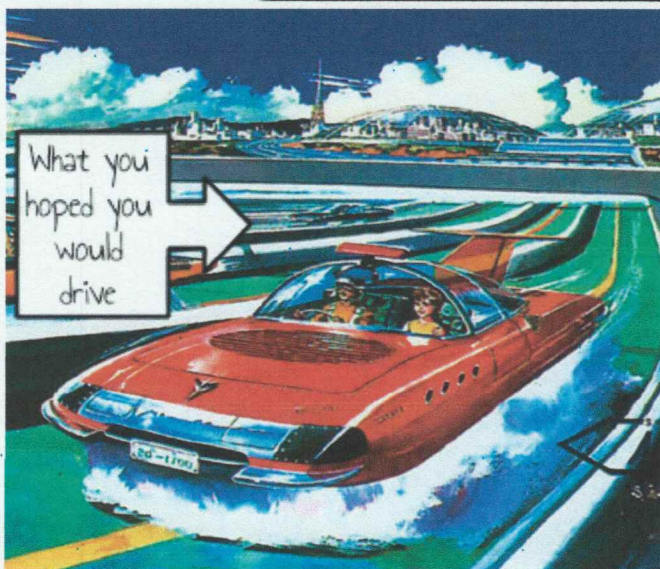


This is your first photo with braces. Only four more years to go.

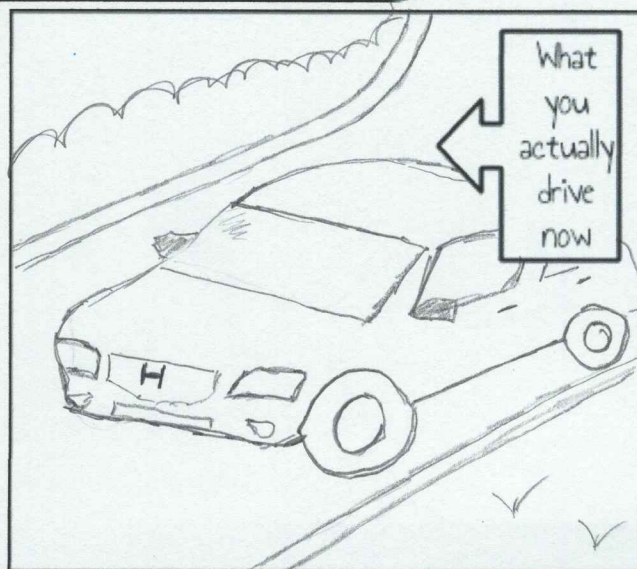
Sitting at the computer, of course. Are you chatting on AIM? Playing Rollercoaster Tycoon? Playing The Sims?

7.

I know you expected this, but we do not have flying cars in 2016, although some people are starting to invent cars that drive themselves. I know this disappoints you greatly. You drive a black Honda Civic right now. Your next car could be an electric car, which you will just plug in to charge at your house, so that's pretty cool. It's no flying car, though.



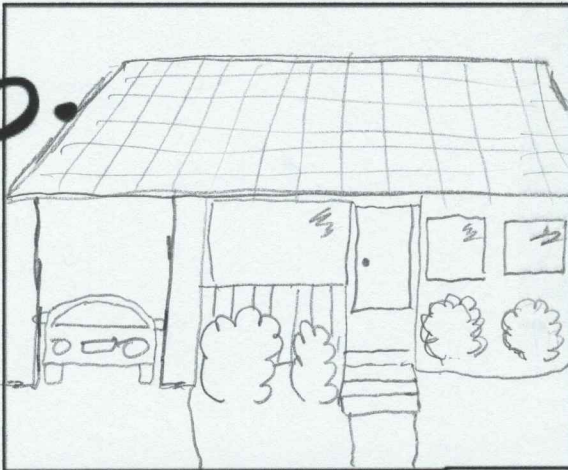
What you hoped you would drive



What you actually drive now

You live in a cute house that YOU own. It has a porch and a yard and a little shelf over the kitchen sink where you can put knick knacks you find at the antique store.

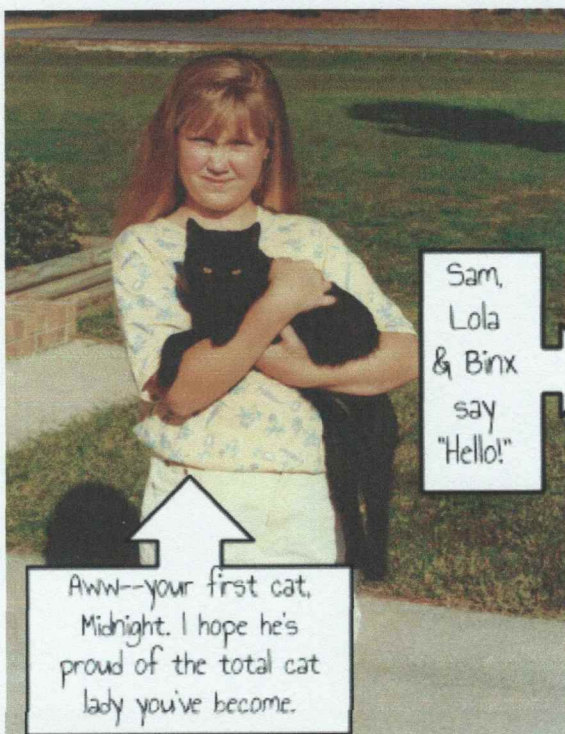
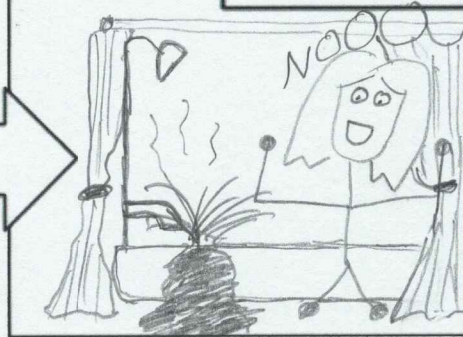
6.



Owning a house is pretty cool but sometimes it's stressful...

Like when a chunk of raw cabbage gets stuck in your garbage disposal and you can't use your sink for three days until you finally dissolve it with baking soda and vinegar. Yeah. Imagine THAT smell.

Or like when a water pipe gets blocked and sewage starts spewing out of your bathtub and onto the bathroom floor.



Sam, Lola & Binx say "Hello!"

Aww--your first cat, Midnight. I hope he's proud of the total cat lady you've become.



5.

Mom is totally right that you will take home almost any animal you find when you get older because you can't stand to leave a stray all alone. You have THREE cats. Their names are Sam, Lola, and Binx (yes, from *Hocus Pocus*!). They are sweet and spoiled. You adopted Sam and Lola in college, and you found Binx by a dumpster at a pizza place last fall. You WILL have dogs once you have a bigger yard.

4

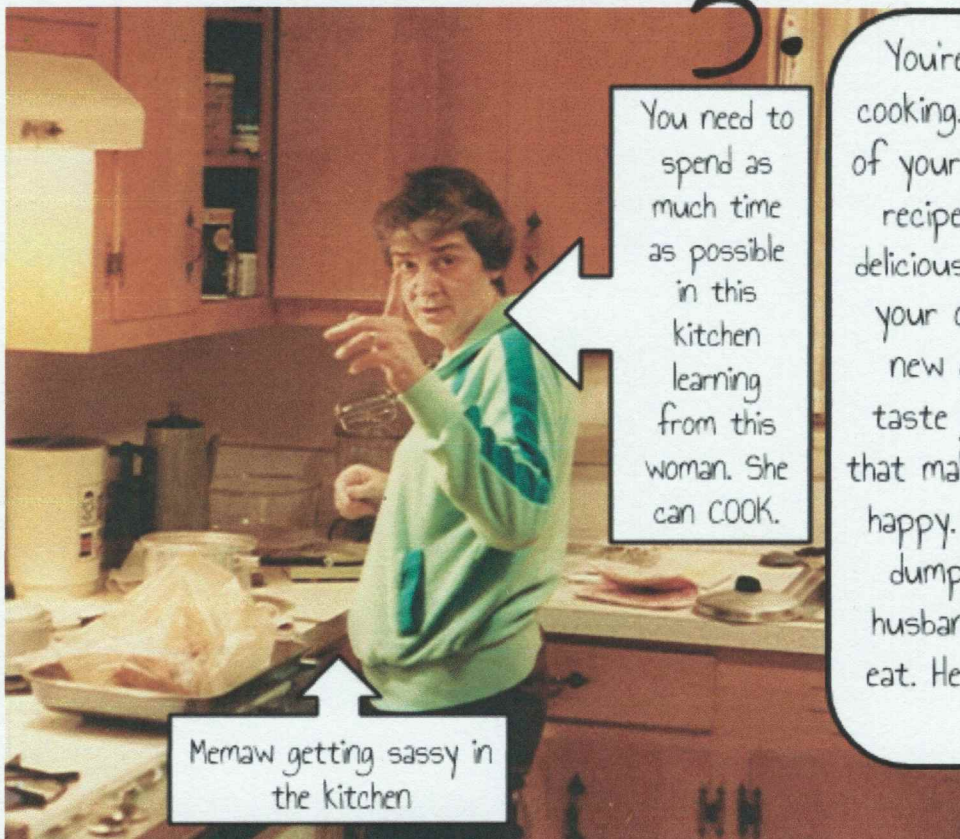
Most days, you are confident and happy with the way you look. I wish I could come back 20 years and hug you and tell you how strong and beautiful you are so that you wouldn't spend your teenage years feeling frumpy and awkward. You poor thing. It gets better. I really admire you because you work out WAY more than I do. Keep it up!



Before the Cotillion Holly Ball dance. You look so pretty!

You are ROCKING those braces, girlfriend!

3.



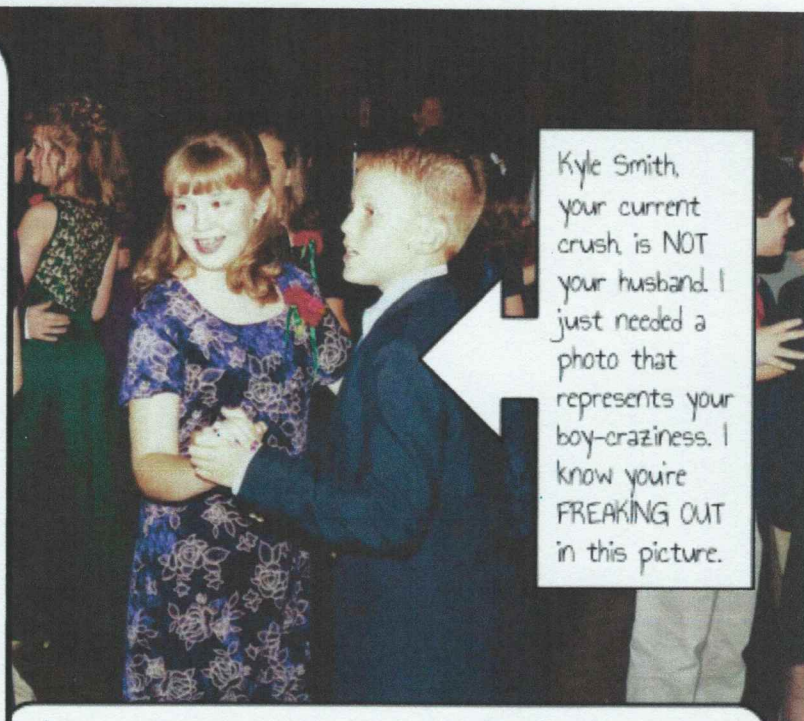
You need to spend as much time as possible in this kitchen learning from this woman. She can COOK.

You're REALLY GOOD at cooking. You should be proud of yourself. You can follow a recipe to make something delicious, and you can also do your own thing and invent new dishes that actually taste good. You make food that makes people really, really happy. Memaw's chicken and dumplings recipe is your husband's favorite thing to eat. He even requests it on his birthday.

Memaw getting sassy in the kitchen

2.

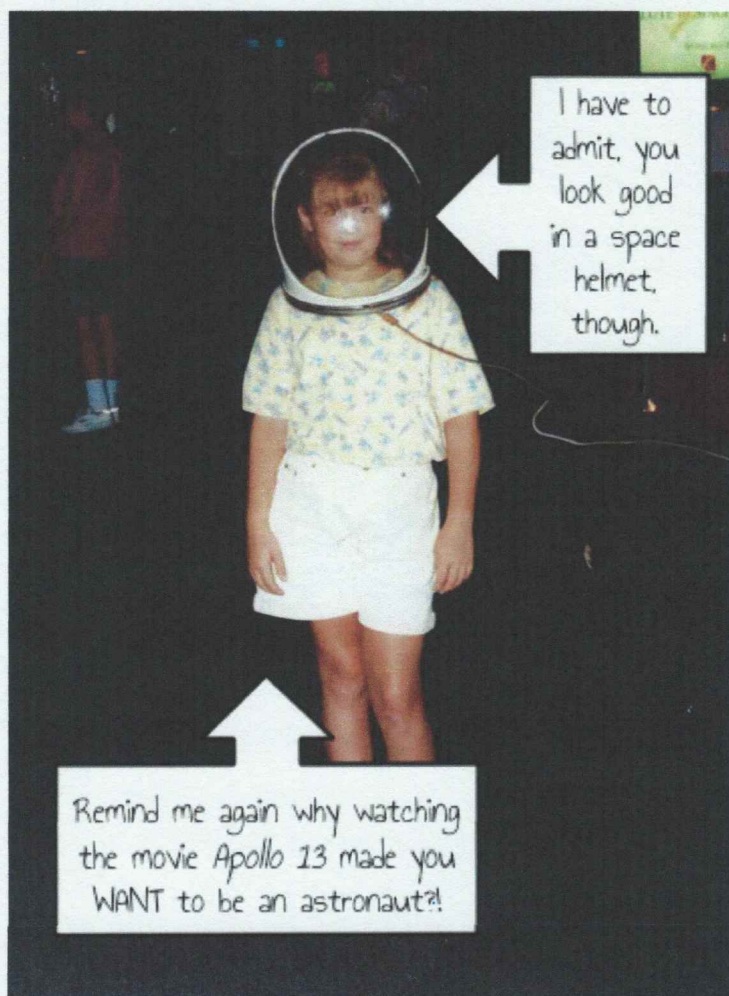
YOUR HUSBAND! Surprise! I know you were waiting for this one, you boy-crazy romantic, you. You're married. He's really attractive, and smart, and funny, and he treats you with kindness and compassion. He's exactly what you deserve and you should not settle for anything less (although I know sometimes you will, which pains me to think about, but at least you end up in a good place).



Kyle Smith, your current crush, is NOT your husband. I just needed a photo that represents your boy-craziness. I know you're FREAKING OUT in this picture.

Also, your husband is a MUSICIAN. He plays guitar, drums, piano AND saxophone. He also sings. It's hot. RrrrrRRRRRoooooWWW.

1.



I have to admit, you look good in a space helmet, though.

Remind me again why watching the movie Apollo 13 made you WANT to be an astronaut?!

And I know you're wondering about your job. You're a TEACHER! You decided not to become an astronaut after all (that was going to be a LOT of math, which we both know is not our strong suit, dear). You taught English for five years, and now you teach photography, journalism, yearbook and newspaper. It's a lot of work, but you really love it. Getting summers off is pretty amazing too.



Well, there you go!
Ten facts about
your life in 2016.
I'm sure you have a
ton of questions
now, but you'll just
have to wait and
see how everything
turns out.

I would say that overall, life in
2016 is pretty good.



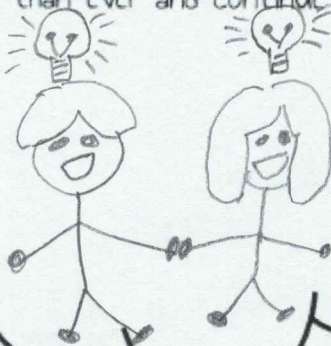
Of course, some people on TV and
the internet like to say that things
are getting worse, and that the
world is scarier than ever.

but I think most of those people
just say that because the
world looks different than
they're used to.

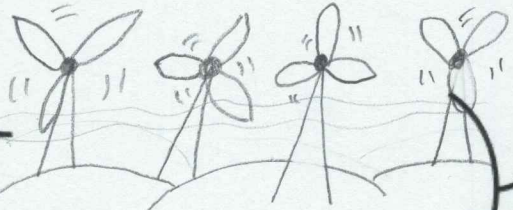


Really, in a lot of ways, things are better than they've ever been...

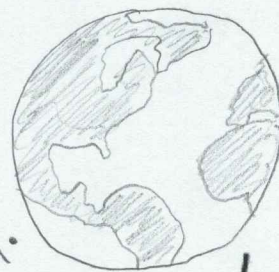
Average IQ scores are higher than ever and continue to rise



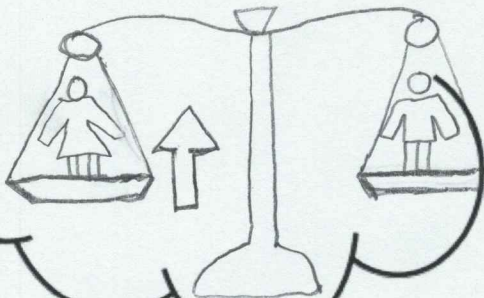
As of 2014, 22% of the world is powered by renewable energy



40% of the world's population has an internet connection



Worldwide gender inequality has gone down by 20% since 1995



Teen pregnancy is at an ALL TIME low





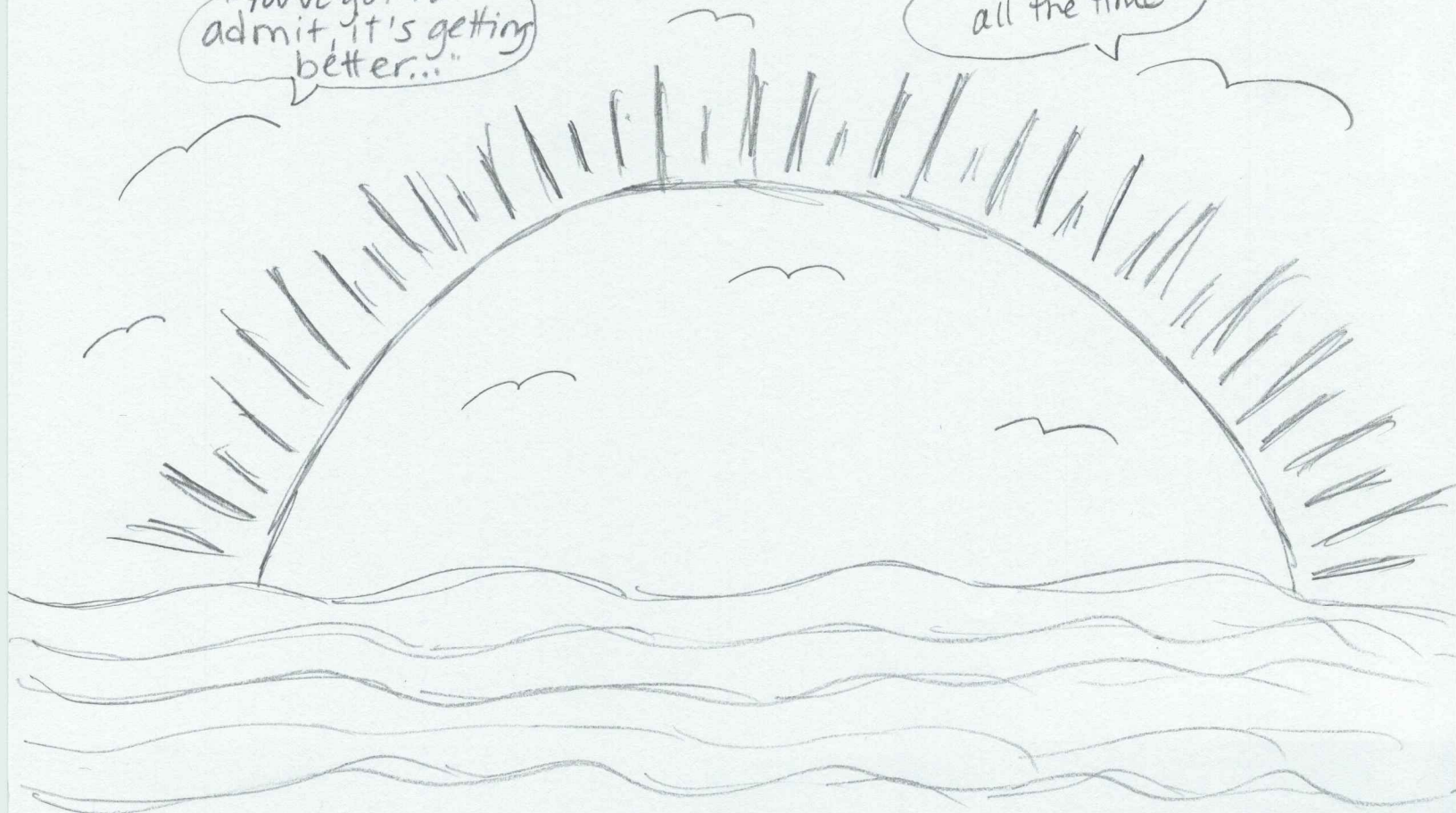
Don't get me wrong--bad things do happen.

But your little corner of the world is pretty great.

and slowly but surely, things really do seem to be looking up for the rest of the world, too, even if it doesn't feel that way sometimes.

"You've got to admit, it's getting better..."

"A little better all the time"



You've got a lot of growing up to do, and growing pains hurt, both physically and emotionally.

As I look at you in this photo, with your tousled bangs and baby cheeks, near the end of your childhood, I want to come back and tell you not to try to grow up too fast--that it will happen whether you will it to or not, and you should enjoy being a kid. And I want to tell you that everything is going to be okay.



It's going to go by faster than you can possibly imagine.

And while I can't come back
all that way and tell you
that everything is going to
be fine, that's okay,
because here we are.
And it is.



And I would like to
think you'd be
proud of how we
turned out.