

Eva Müller  
My Class Always  
Hovered Over Me  
Graphic Novel  
(Original German title: Scheiblettenkind.  
Graphic Novel)  
279 pages, Paperback  
Publication date: 21 November 2022  
© Suhrkamp Verlag Berlin 2022

Scheiblettenkind is an autobiographical story on 279 pages. It is drawn with black pen on paper. The author has received several grants and awards for the book. Among others, the Artist in Residency stipend from Koone Foundation in Finland, the Artist in Residency grant by the Camargo Foundation in France or the Japan Media Arts Residency from the Agency of Cultural Affairs in Japan.

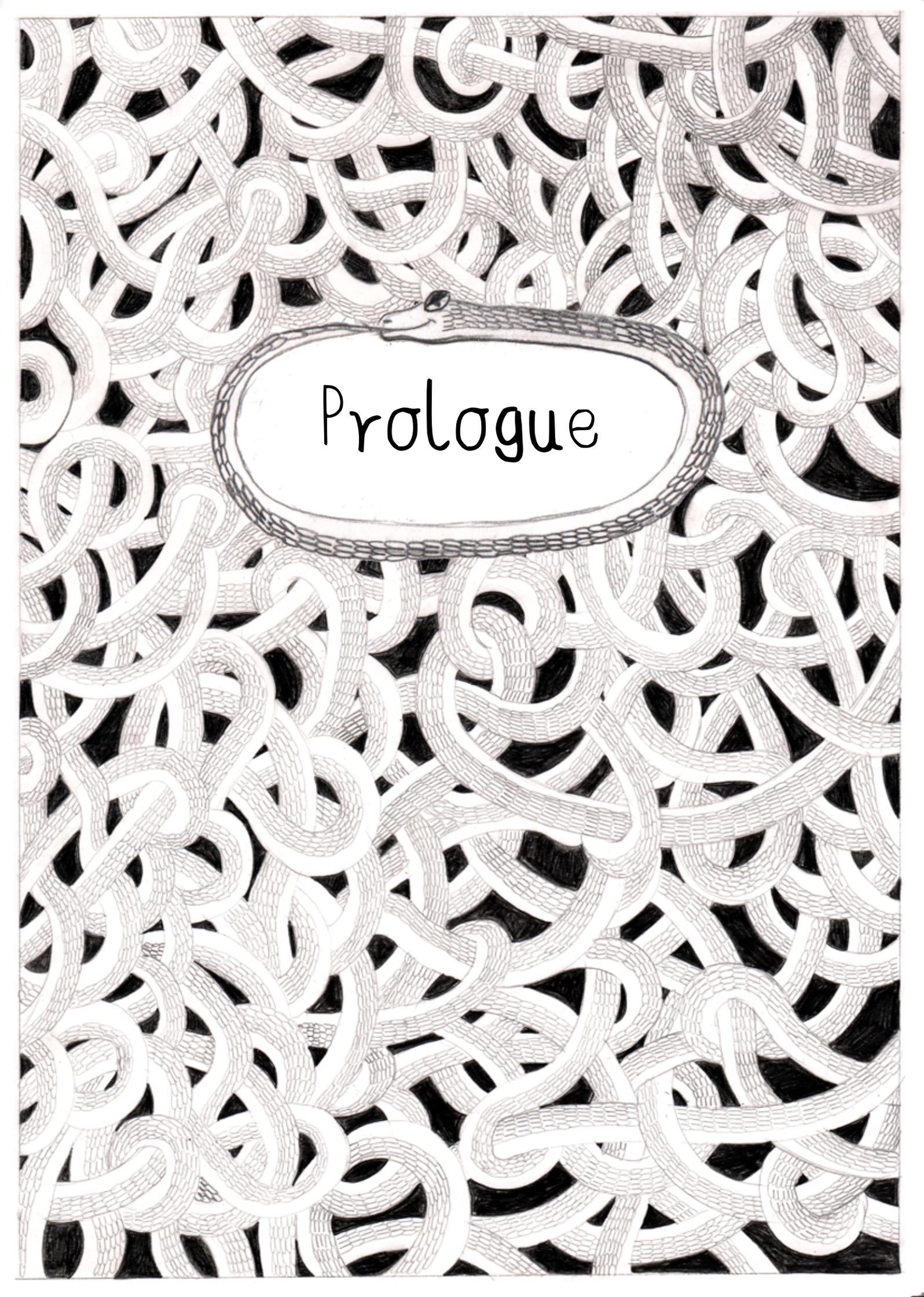
The main topic of the autofictional comic is labour and the labour history of a working-class family over the past 3 generations.

Such an upbringing has an effect on future generations, even when they climb up the social ladder and shift milieus, like the protagonist did when she became an artist. The book deals with the contradictions that arise when a milieu shift like that happens and a person stands between two worlds or more precisely between two classes. The book is a reminder that class matters.

As a studied artist with parents that never visited a museum and a grandmother that hasn't even seen the ocean, the protagonist's past hovers over her in the form of a snake. The snake is always present, to remind her of her position, to shame her and put self-doubt in her head.

The jobs that the protagonist and the women of her family held over the years preset the structure of the book, from there the story jumps into punk rock, pop culture, European realism, history and into personal stories of a typical lower middleclass family in Germany.

Every chapter is accompanied by pages on which Karl Marx, the famous German philosopher, can be observed in modern situations, as he comments on the world around him with his most famous quotes.

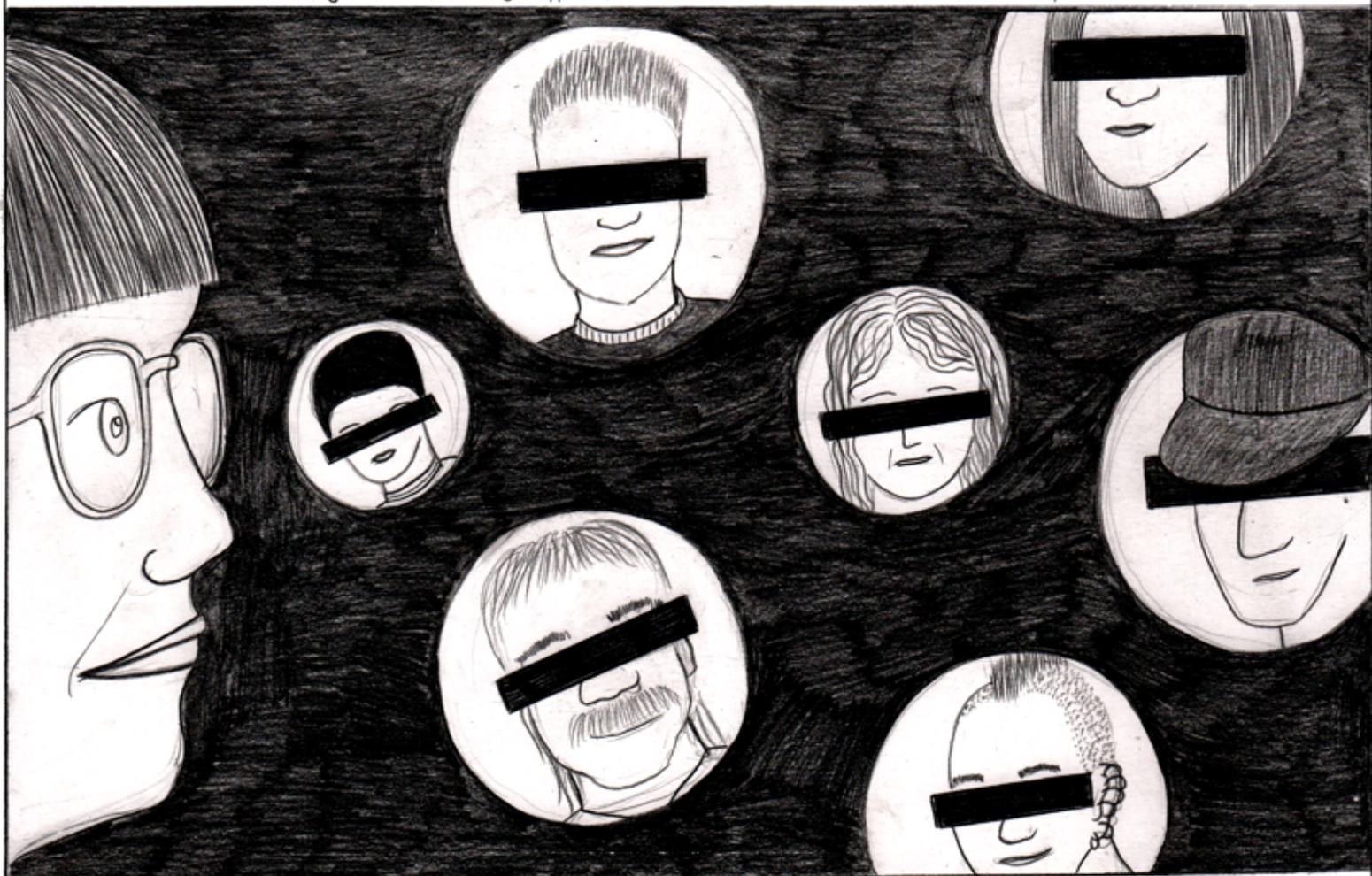
The image features a central illustration of a snake coiled into a large, horizontal oval shape. The snake's head is positioned at the top left of the oval, facing right. The background is filled with a dense, repeating pattern of smaller snakes, each coiled into a similar oval shape, creating a complex, interlocking texture. The entire scene is rendered in black and white with fine line work.

Prologue

I have been working with autobiographical storytelling for a long time.  
Talking about myself isn't a problem for me. I have barely any inhibitions when it comes to that.



But things are entirely different as soon as others come into the picture.



Because I don't think it's fair to talk about other people, especially without asking them first.

Moreover, memories are subjective ...



... and our memory isn't a hard drive.

False memories often take hold, particularly in an emotional context.



That's why I chose the form of autofiction for this graphic novel.



I am a storyteller and artist, not a chronicler or scientist.



That's why the characters who appear here don't or didn't exist like this in "real life".

Many situations happened in different places, with different people,  
at different times or even played out entirely differently.

Enjoy  
this story.







The morality  
of capital is buried  
in the logic of its  
circulation.



My grandmother comforted me and bought me a turtle.



Now, listen closely. You have to work very hard to get anywhere in life. Very hard!

All I have ever done is work. Always!

Afterwards, we had a serious conversation



There is only one exception, and that is on Sundays.



Sundays are the only day on which you are allowed to rest. In fact, you **MUST** rest.



Otherwise,  
you'll be sent  
to the moon  
and never come back.  
You'll be trapped  
there forever.



Cool,  
like E.T.!

What  
is Ee  
Tea?

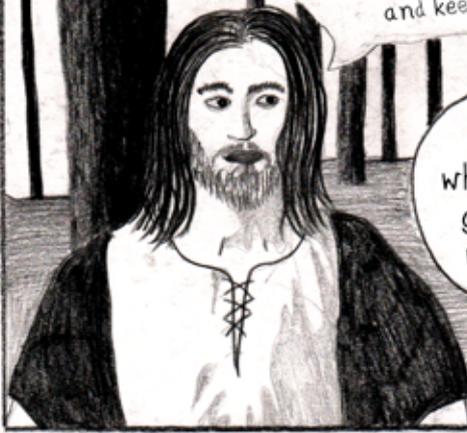


Unfortunately,  
the story had nothing to do with E.T.  
It goes like this:  
A man went to the forest on a Sunday,  
cut down some wood and carried it home.

In the forest  
he met a young man  
in his Sunday best  
who was on his way to church.



The young man  
stopped and  
approached  
the man  
carrying  
the wood.



Don't you know  
that today is Sunday?  
Today, the Good Lord rested after  
he created the world and all the  
animals and people. Don't you know  
the third commandment?  
Remember the Sabbath day  
and keep it holy?

Sunday,  
what's that  
got to do  
with me?



But in reality,  
the young man was God.  
He got angry.



May you carry  
your wood forever!  
If you don't care about Sunday,  
you shall forever live  
on the day of the moon and  
stay in the moon as a warning  
for everyone who desecrates  
the Sunday  
with work.



For years,  
I used the story  
as an excuse.



Could you come  
down please  
and take out  
the rubbish?!



No,  
today is Sunday.  
if I take out  
the rubbish  
I'll be sent  
to the moon.



My grandma told me  
many strange things.  
for example ...



... that my hand would turn  
black and fall off if I wrapped  
a rubber band around it  
and forgot to take it off.

She told me that unbaptized  
children are damned and  
stay in limbo forever ...

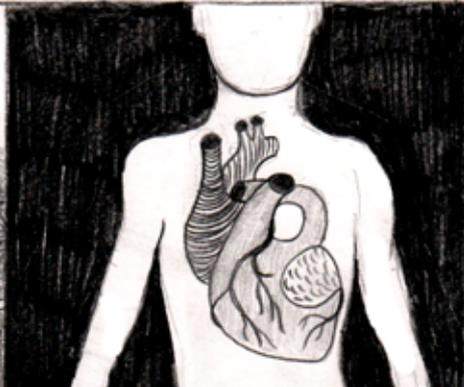




... or that I would stay cross-eyed if I squinted too much.



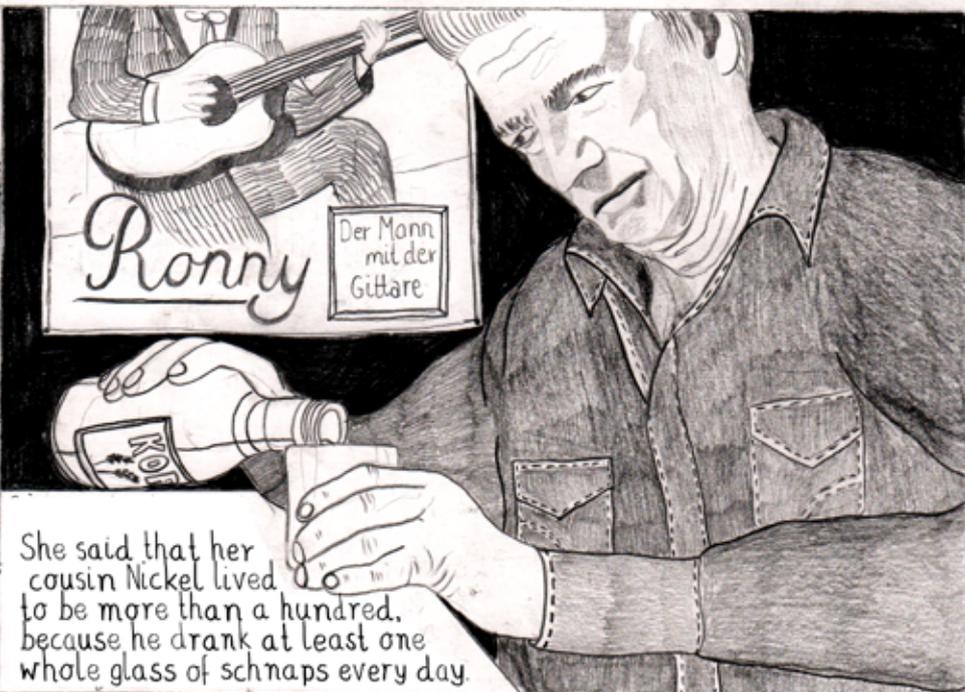
She told me that her neighbour, who, in retrospect, was obviously suffering from a psychosis, was a witch.



My grandmother told me that her husband, my grandpa, died because his heart was too big. So big that it could simply no longer fit in his body.



She also told me that it was no surprise that Jews were hated so much in Germany, because supposedly they owned all the money.



She said that her cousin Nickel lived to be more than a hundred, because he drank at least one whole glass of schnaps every day.

But one story, which she only told me once, was true.



My grandma worked as a servant, next to her work on the family farm, as a maid in a bourgeois household.



She worked for twelve hours every day ...



...did the laundry...



...made the beds,...



...cooked food,...

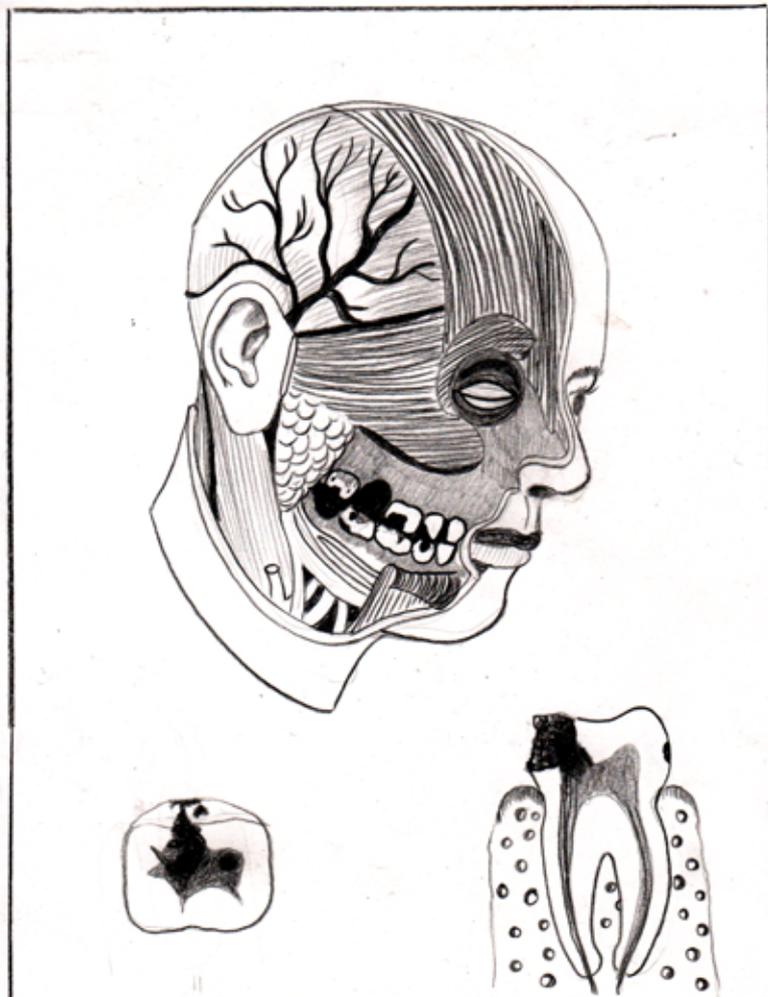
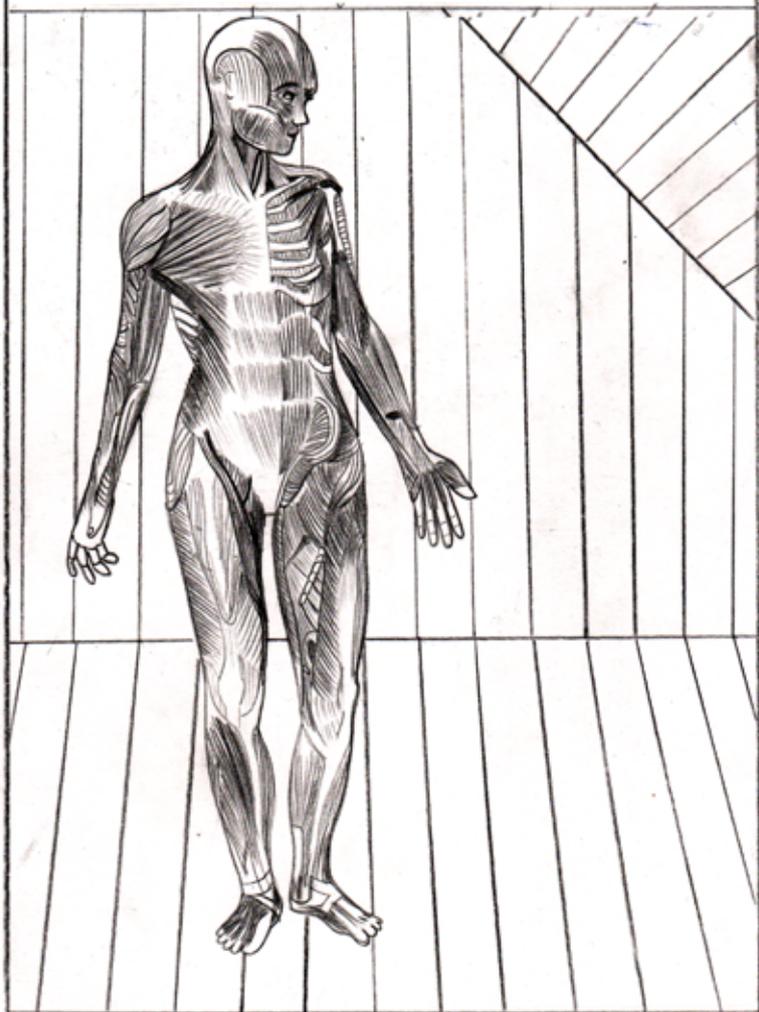


...scrubbed the floors.

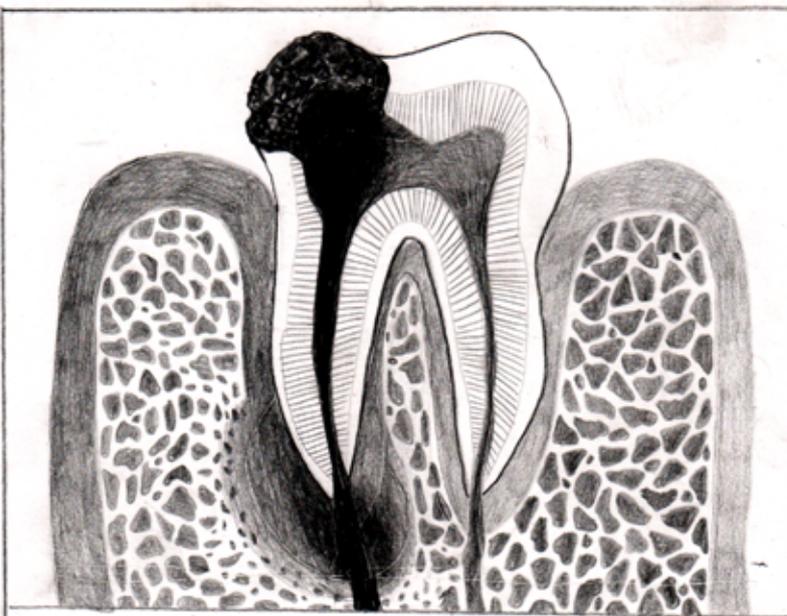
The weakest point...



...of my grandma's otherwise very healthy body...



... were her teeth.



She suffered from chronic inflammations.



Her cheek would swell, and she would get a fever.  
She had to miss a few days of work as a maid.



She constantly had to go to the dentist.

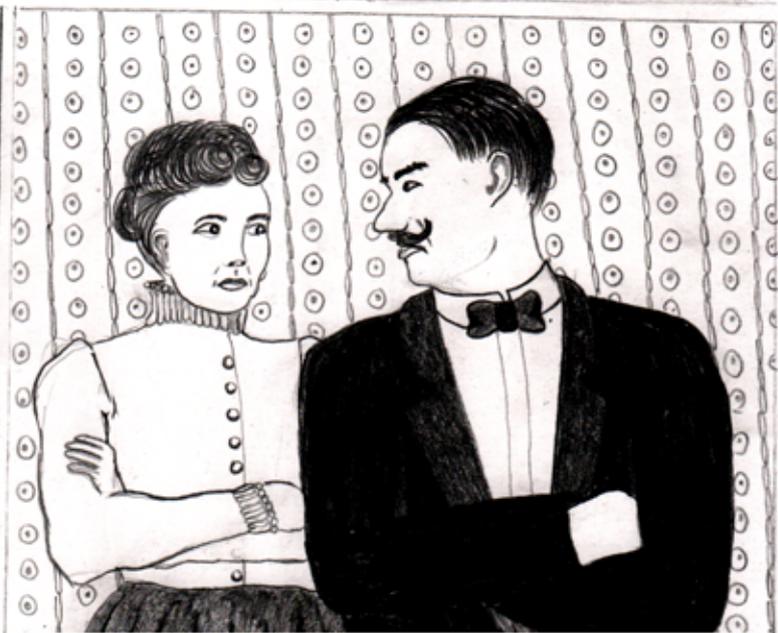
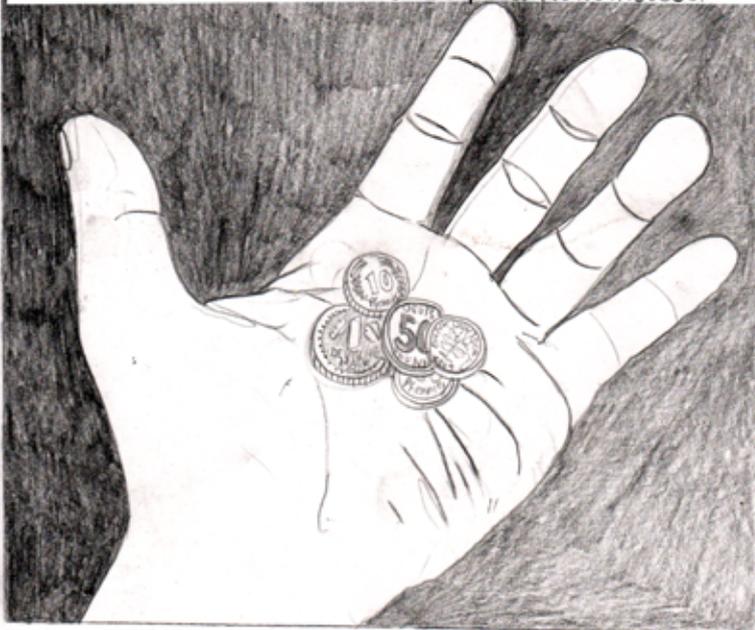


The dentist was not a real dentist,  
but a dental therapist  
without any academic training.

My grandma even claimed that the dentist also tended to the animals' teeth.



The dental therapist was much cheaper than a real dentist, but he wanted to be paid nonetheless.



According to the contract, her employers had to cover the costs.



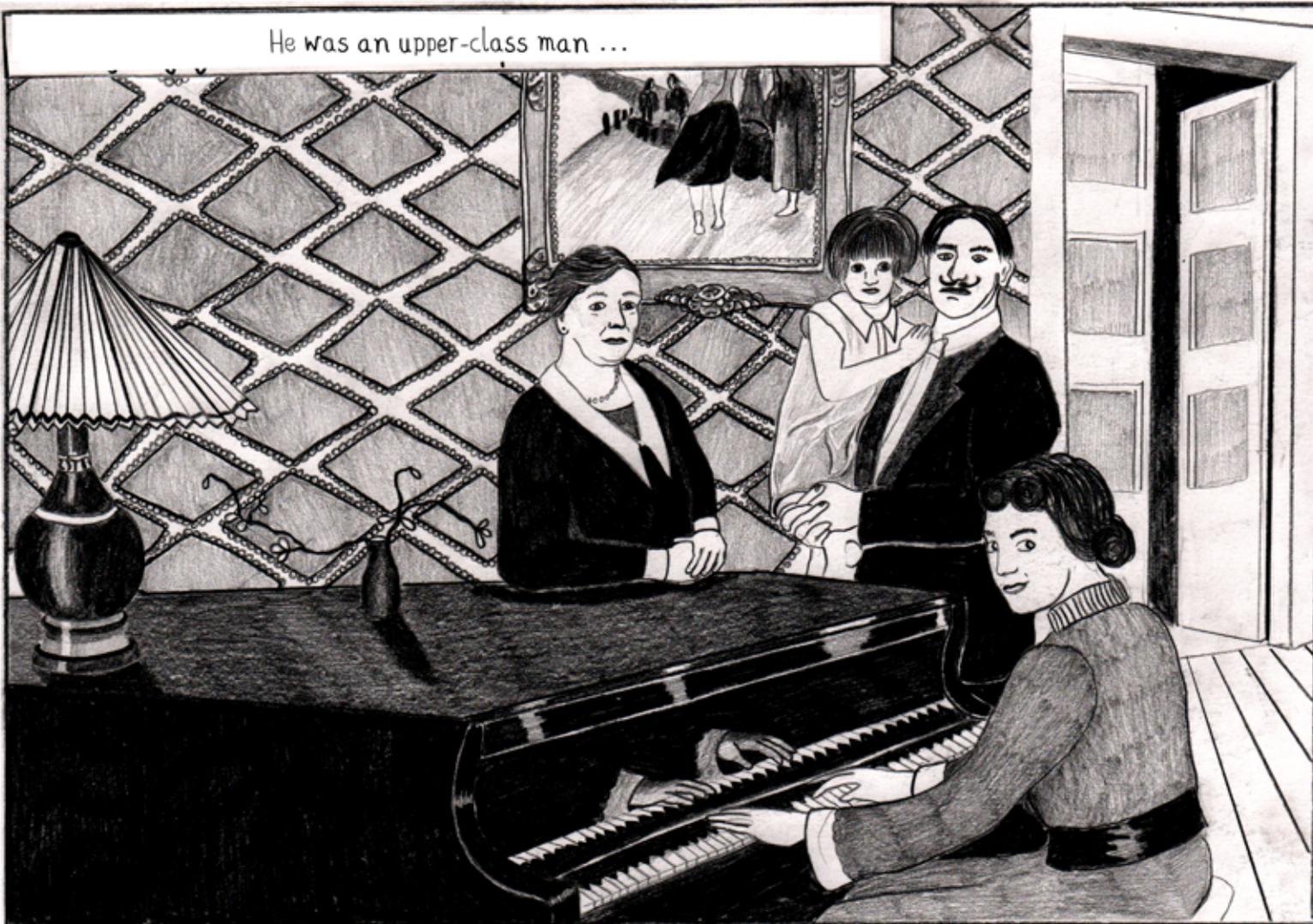
After the fourth tooth had become inflamed, her employer was worried that my grandma was getting too expensive.



He suggested that she should have all her teeth pulled.

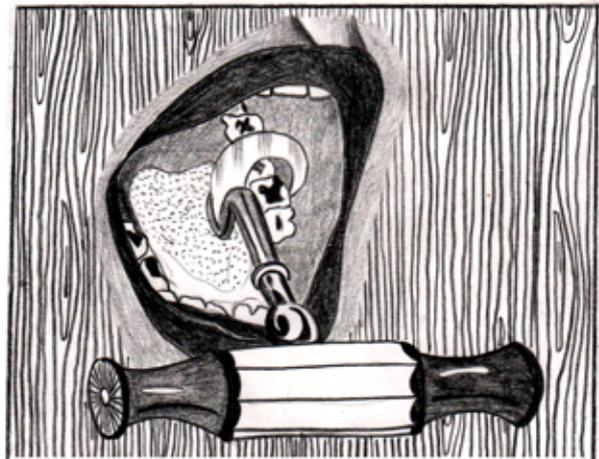
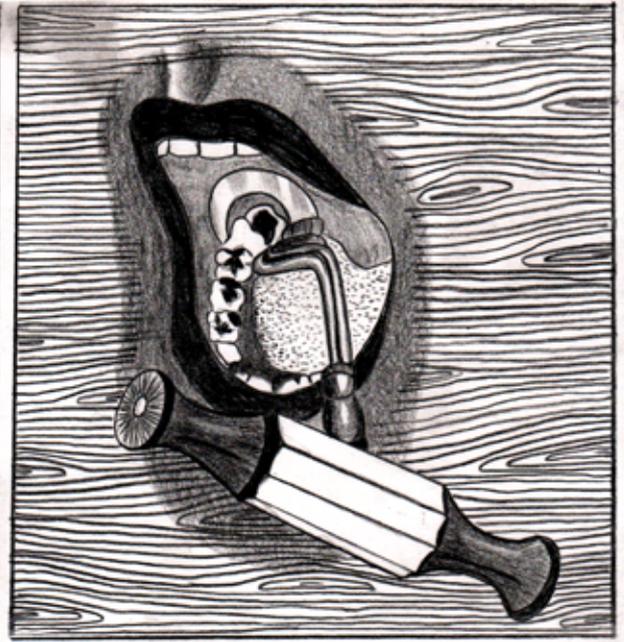
And I'll pay for it.

He was an upper-class man ...



... and she a simple peasant girl. My grandmother was only 16 years old.  
The entire family depended on her wages.

She didn't even consider saying no, even though she was really scared.



An appointment was made with the dental therapist ...

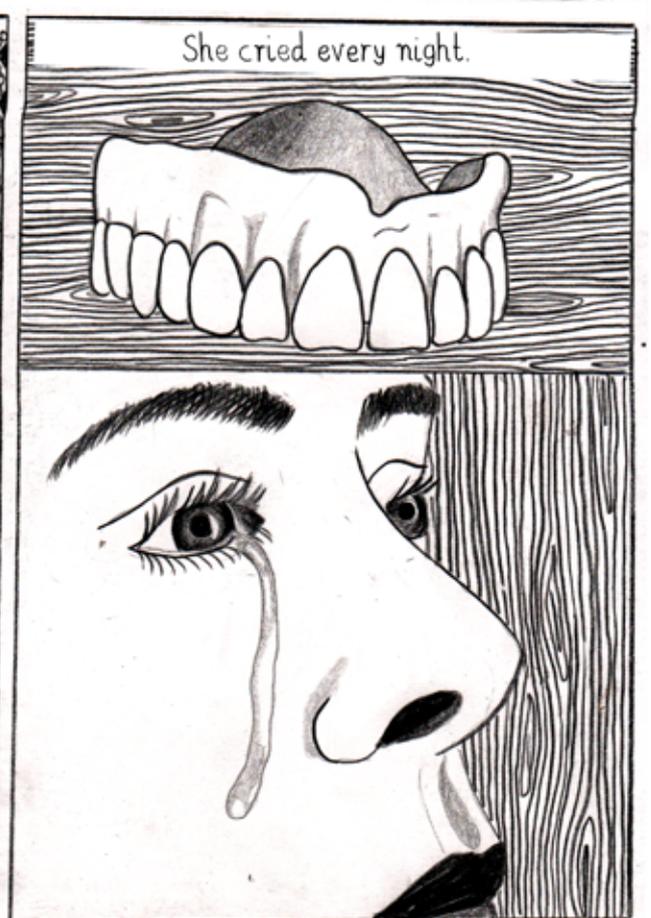


... and one week later my grandma had no more teeth at just 16. The next day, she was already back to scrubbing the floors ...



... and stayed toothless for 2 months, until her dentures were ready.

She cried every night.



My grandma wore the dentures all her life. I still remember watching them  
in the water glass next to her bed, as though they were an exhibit in the museum  
of natural history.



The dentures were very dear to my grandma, and I was not allowed to touch them.



When I was in my twenties, she finally got new ones.



She wore them for a few days but then went back to using the old ones. To the day she died. She said that they just fit the best.

