

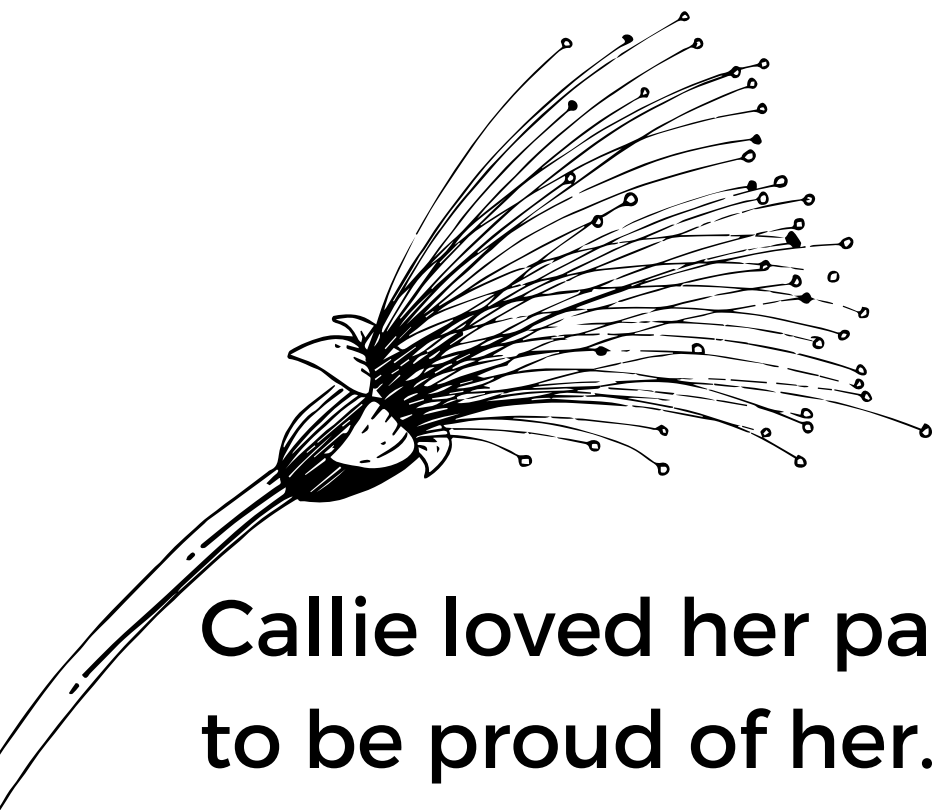


A TALE OF TWO

AUTISTIC

LITTLE GIRLS

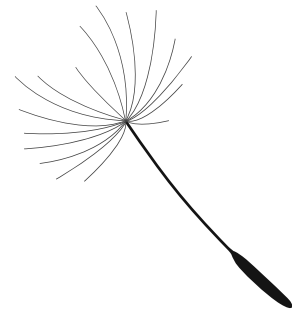




Callie loved her parents and wanted them to be proud of her. Her daddy loved sports, so Callie wanted to play catch with him.

Her daddy was thrilled and bought her a glove and some tennis balls. He didn't want her to get hurt by a baseball.





Callie listened to her daddy's tips about how to catch the ball. He lobbed it gently, and she didn't catch it. He threw it again, and it bounced off her belly before she could move her glove into position.



Time after time, she missed the ball. Her little brother caught it every time. Callie could see the frustration her daddy felt, even if his words were encouraging. Then, her daddy wanted her to try to throw the ball...





Callie had seen the pitchers on TV when her daddy watched baseball. They lifted their leg, drew back their arm, and let it fly. She imagined herself like a spring, coiled tightly, winding her arm back and then releasing the ball with all her might. It rocketed straight to the ground in front of her feet.

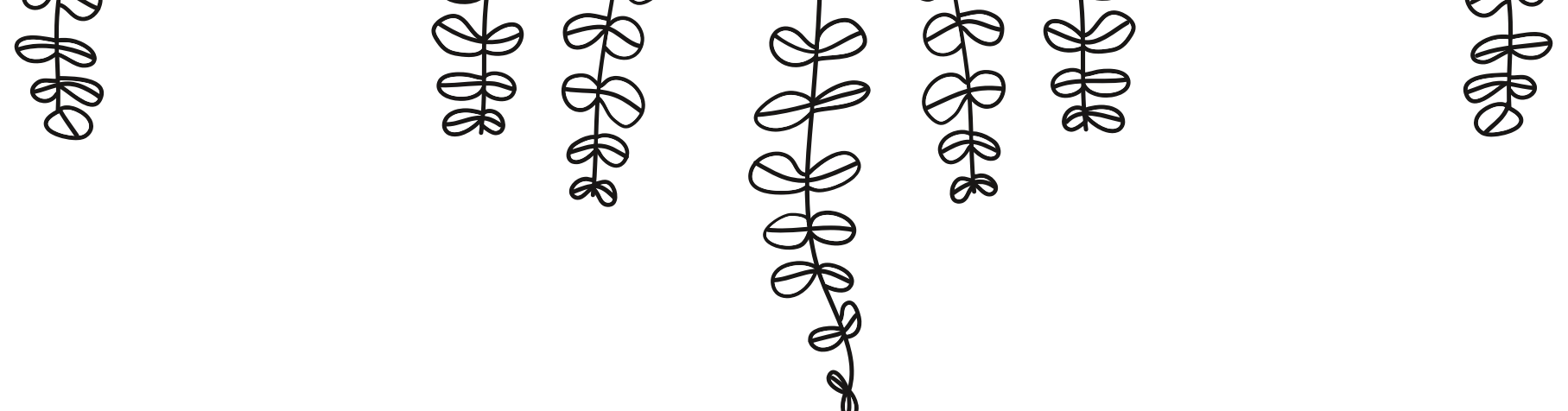
She looked at her Daddy, who was smiling the kind of smile that is a lie. He tried to position her body, show her how to stand. Everywhere he touched her felt like electricity, and after a few minutes, she couldn't handle it anymore. She jerked away. Her daddy sighed, threw down his glove, and stomped back to the house.

Day after day, Callie tried to play catch. She threw the ball, but it went straight to the ground. Or way over her Daddy's head. Sometimes it went behind her.

Trying to catch the ball was harder than throwing it. Sometimes it hit her in the head, or the chest. She ran to pick it up, feeling the soggy sweat and her scratchy socks rubbing her feet raw with every step. Her daddy tried to hide his frustration, but Callie was sensitive. She felt it like iron in her stomach.

Callie stopped asking her daddy to play catch, and he didn't ask her to keep trying. Instead, she went to her room and watched through the slats in her blinds as daddy threw the ball to her little brother, and her brother caught it and threw it right back every time.





Keisha loved her parents so much and wanted to make them proud. Her daddy loved sports, so Keisha asked him to play catch with her.

Her daddy was thrilled and bought her a glove and some tennis balls. He didn't want her to get hurt by a baseball.



Keisha listened to her daddy's tips about how to catch the ball. He lobbed it gently, and she didn't catch it. He threw it again, and it bounced off her belly before she could move her glove into position.

Time after time, she missed. Her daddy said, let's try to throw the ball. Keisha wound up her body and released the ball with all her might, just like the pitchers she'd seen on television. Like a rocket, it flew straight to the ground in front of her feet.

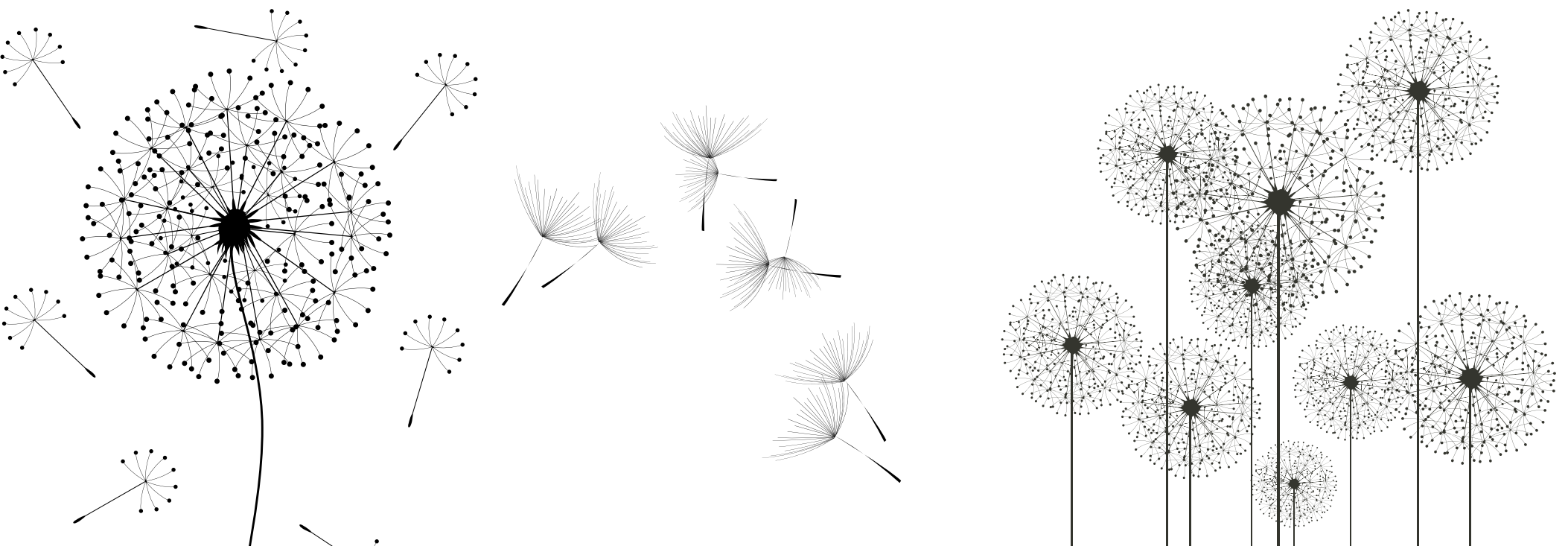
She looked at her daddy, and he burst out laughing. "Yes!" he exclaimed!

"Do that again!"



Keisha picked up the ball and threw it again. This time it went behind her. Her daddy roared with laughter. Keisha started giggling.

Her daddy ran to get the ball, then wound up and threw it as hard as he could at the ground. It hit so hard that it sent the dandelion seeds through the air along with some chunks of grass. Keisha shrieked with laughter and flapped her hands. Her daddy was laughing so hard he wiped away a tear. They took turns throwing the ball in all different directions, laughing until they could barely breathe.





The next day, Keisha's daddy asked her if she wanted to play catch again. He had stopped at the store on his way home and bought several kinds of balls-- a football, a kickball, and even a ball designed to have an unpredictable flight and bounce path.



Keisha had been so excited for her daddy to come home, hoping he would want to play again the way they had the day before. She ran to grab her shoes!



Day after day, Keisha and her daddy threw the balls, or the frisbee, or the boomerang. Keisha's daddy even got foam rockets to launch and catch. He used a slingshot to fire little toy soldiers into the air. The paratroopers parachutes made a slow descent back to the ground. Keisha caught those.



Callie watched from a distance or reluctantly joined in while her daddy tried and failed to teach her to be able to throw and catch.

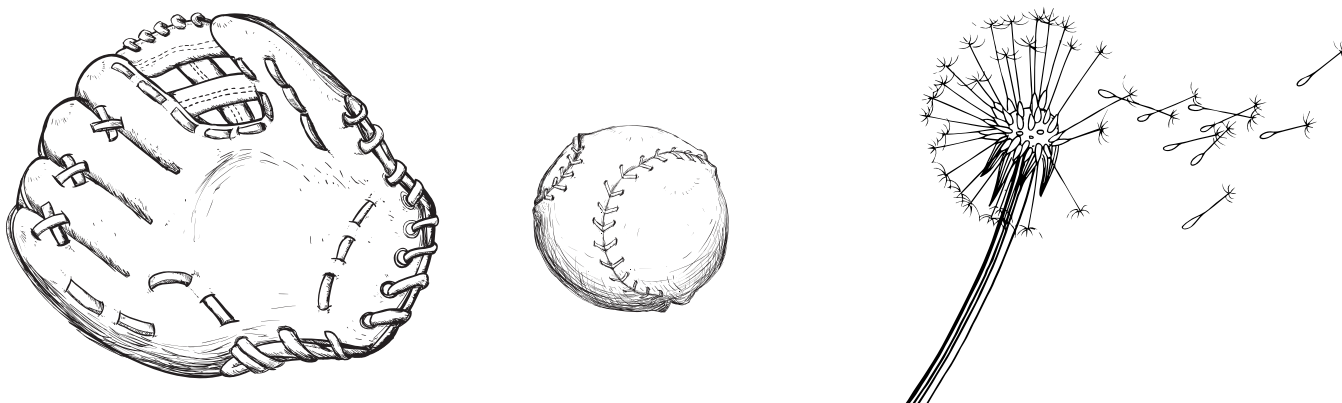
Callie's parents put her in occupational therapy for motor skills. They put her in behavior therapy for the fits she would throw while trying to play ball or trying to get out of playing ball.

Callie never learned to play baseball.

Keisha and her daddy continued their experiments. Her daddy realized how much their play had scientific value.

They started to learn about aerodynamics, momentum, thrust, gravity, inertia, and lift. They were accidentally mastering rocket science.

Keisha never learned to play baseball.



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