

ACT I

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Lilly. It was a bright day. The wind smelled like cut grass, and the sun made shiny spots on the slide. Lilly skipped ahead, happy—until she reached the park gate.





That's when she saw them. Big, older boys standing near the path, talking in low voices and laughing like they knew a secret. Lilly's stomach did a small flip. Something felt... wrong.



Lilly looked back.
Her mom was walking to the bench with a book,
acting like it was a totally normal day.

Lilly wanted to say, ‘Mom, do you see them?’ but
the words got stuck in her throat.

She tried to avoid them. She stepped left; they stepped left. She stepped right; they stepped right. No matter what she did, they kept getting closer.





A toddler waddled up, looking calm, like nothing scary existed. When one of the boys leaned in to say something mean, Lilly blurted out, 'Hey! Don't bully her!' The boys turned to Lilly. They smiled, but it wasn't a friendly smile.

An illustration of three boys standing in a line, blocking a girl's path at night. The boy on the left is wearing a green shirt, the middle boy a red shirt, and the boy on the right a blue striped shirt. They are all reaching out with their arms to form a wall. In the foreground, a girl with blonde hair, wearing a pink shirt and blue overalls, is reaching up with her hands outstretched. In the background, a woman is sitting on a bench, reading a book. The scene is lit by a street lamp, and the ground is wet with puddles reflecting the light. The sky is dark with some light rays.

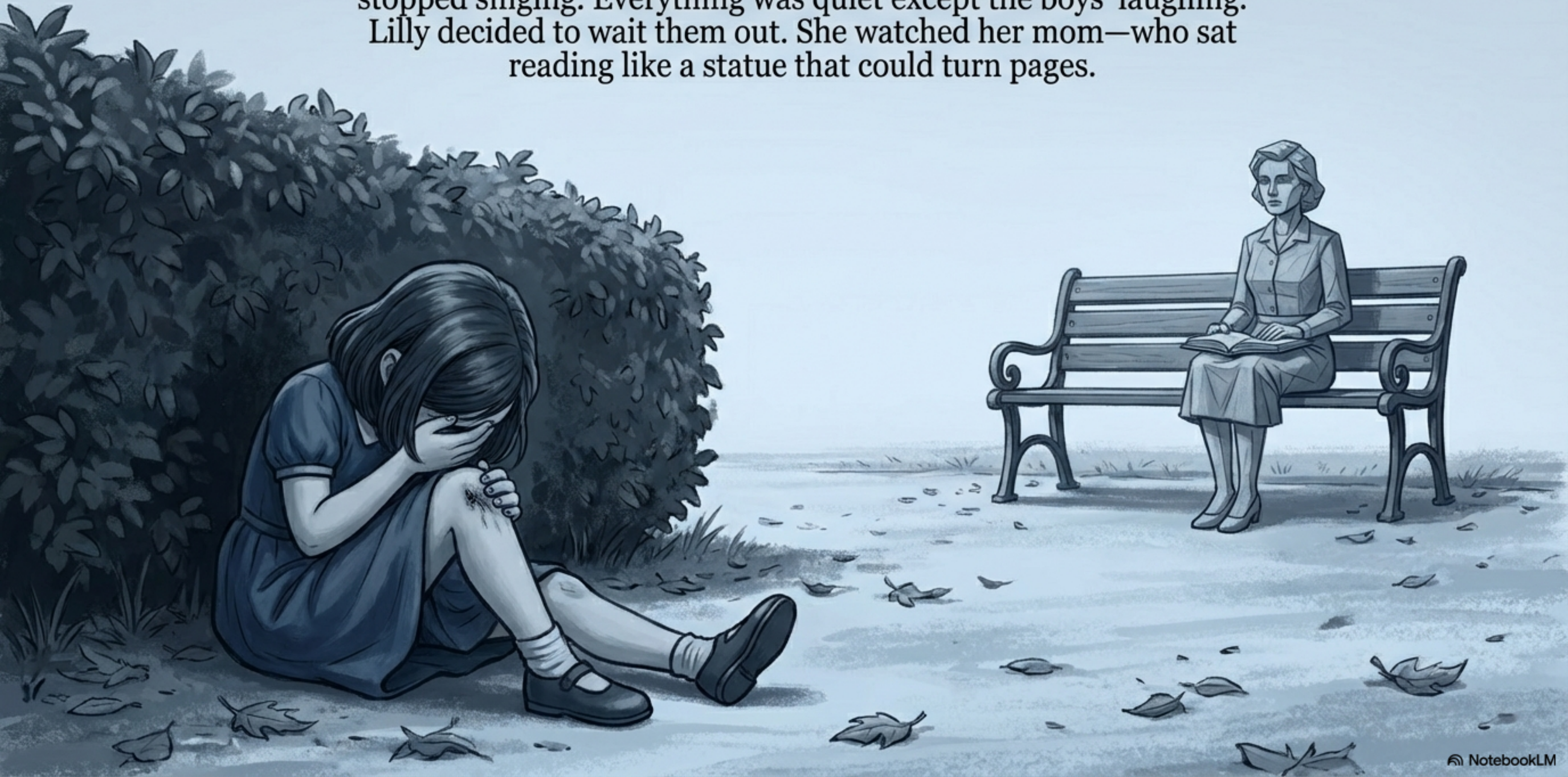
GET OUT OF MY WAY!!

Lilly tried to reach her mom.
“Mom! Can we go?”

Her mom didn’t look up.
The boys blocked Lilly’s
path, making a wall.

She yelled.
They just laughed—and then, one of them shoved her.

Lilly fell. The park didn't feel like a park anymore. The birds stopped singing. Everything was quiet except the boys' laughing. Lilly decided to wait them out. She watched her mom—who sat reading like a statue that could turn pages.



Hours seemed to pass.

Then, one boy stepped closer.

He didn't laugh.

"I'm your brother," he whispered.
"Please trust me."

Lilly's mind felt scrambled—her brother? Here? But he had snacks, and his voice sounded familiar.



He gave her carrots and cucumber slices.

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch.

The food made her feel real again.



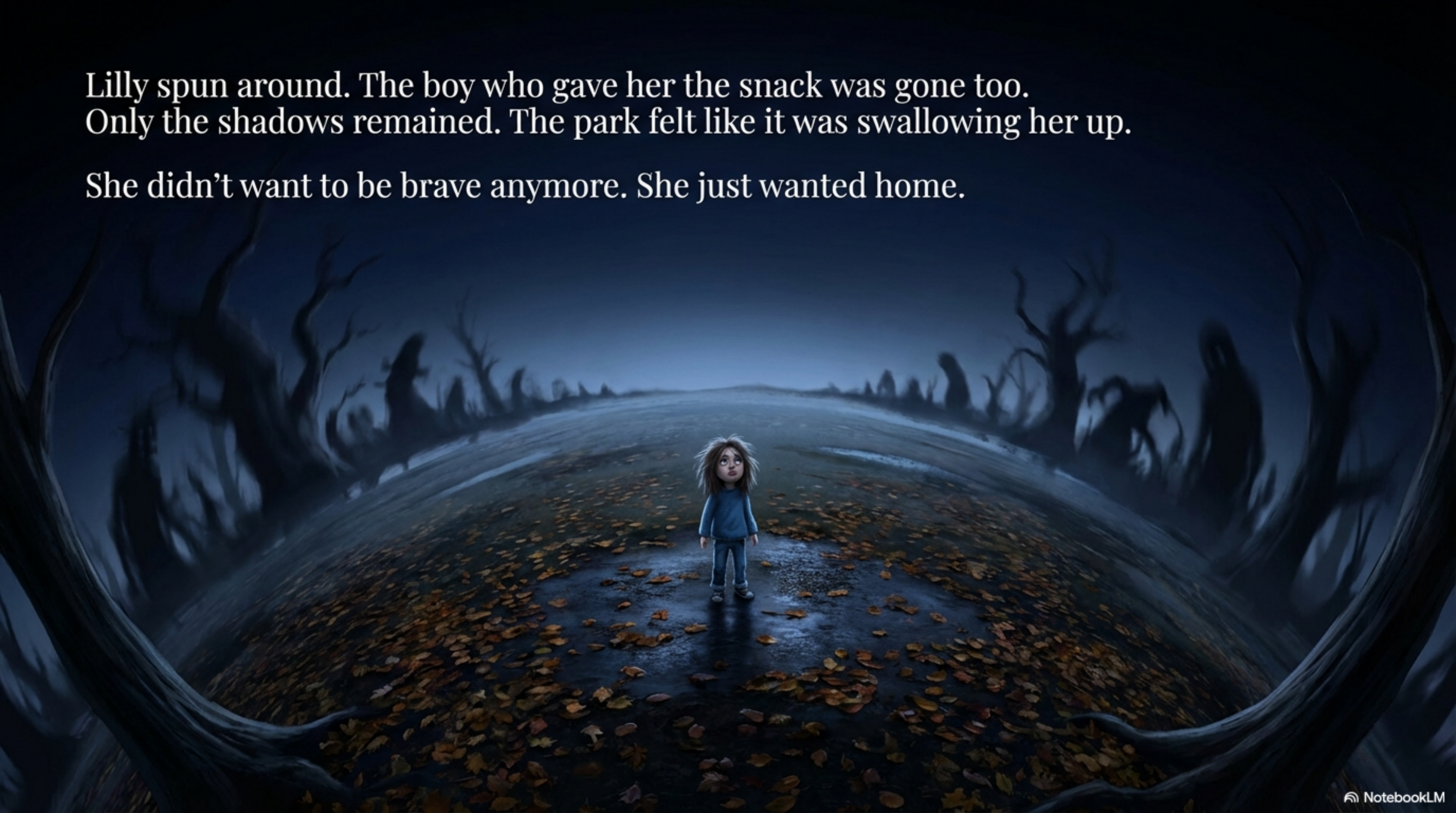
Until she looked up.

Her mom was gone.

The bench was empty, like she
had never been there at all.



Lilly spun around. The boy who gave her the snack was gone too.
Only the shadows remained. The park felt like it was swallowing her up.
She didn't want to be brave anymore. She just wanted home.



LILLY'S PLEA

Lilly walked toward the boys.

“You can have the park,” she said,
her voice wobbling.

“And please let my brother come...
he’s the engineer to look after me.”

One boy answered, cold as a closed door:
“No. You’ll stay here forever.”





CLICK

Lilly felt her fear rise up like a
wave—and then—A light turned on.

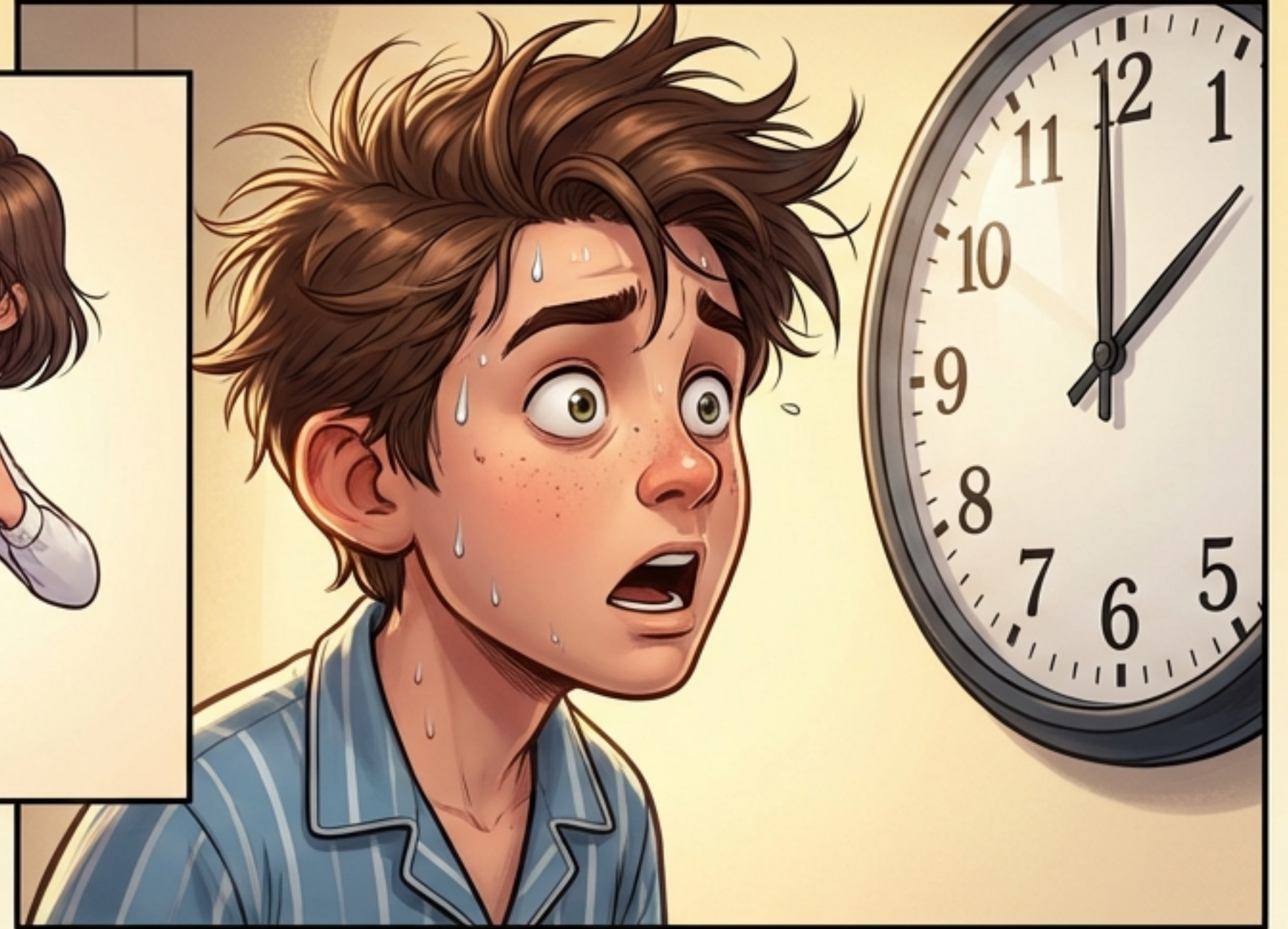


Lilly gasped, sitting straight up.

Lilly gasped, sitting straight up. She was in her room. Her blanket was twisted around her legs. Warm hallway light spilled in like sunshine.

“It was just a nightmare,” she whispered.

LILLY'S MORNING



She ate **breakfast** and grabbed her backpack. Meanwhile, her brother rolled out of bed, looked at the clock, and shouted: “WAIT—WHAT?! I’M LATE FOR SCHOOL!!”



Lilly smiled.

The dream brother had been scary, but the real one was just late. Real life was weird too... just not as scary.

The End.