

Visual Research for Non-Fiction Comics

Biography and Memoir in the Graphic Novel Format

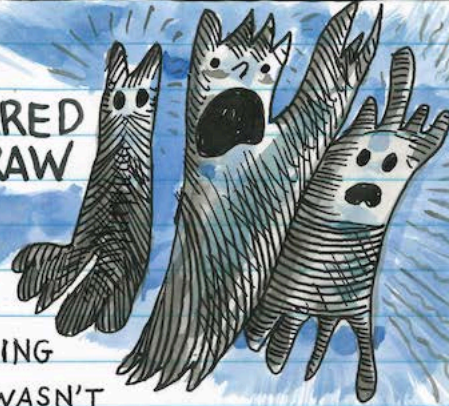
Associate Professor Sara Gómez Woolley | February 5th 2025

TOO SCARED TO DRAW

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WASN'T

DRAWING OR WRITING AS FAR AS OUR FOUR-YEAR-OLD HAND WAS CONCERNED, BUT AT SOME POINT SOON AFTER, DRAWING SPLITS OFF, AND FOR MOST PEOPLE IT MOVES FIRST TO THE MARGINS AND THEN VANISHES FROM THE PAGE ENTIRELY. IT'S A GHOST FOR MOST PEOPLE, A SCARY ONE WE AVOID ROUSING. WHEN WE MUST DRAW, WE USE A SYMBOL. →

NO GHOST CAN INHABIT A STICKMAN. NO GHOST WANTS TO.



- Lynda Barry, Making Comics

What's your why?

- What interests you most about Visual Memoir and Biography?
- What is your relationship to the medium?
- Is your desire to tell stories about real people connected to your life's purpose? If so how?

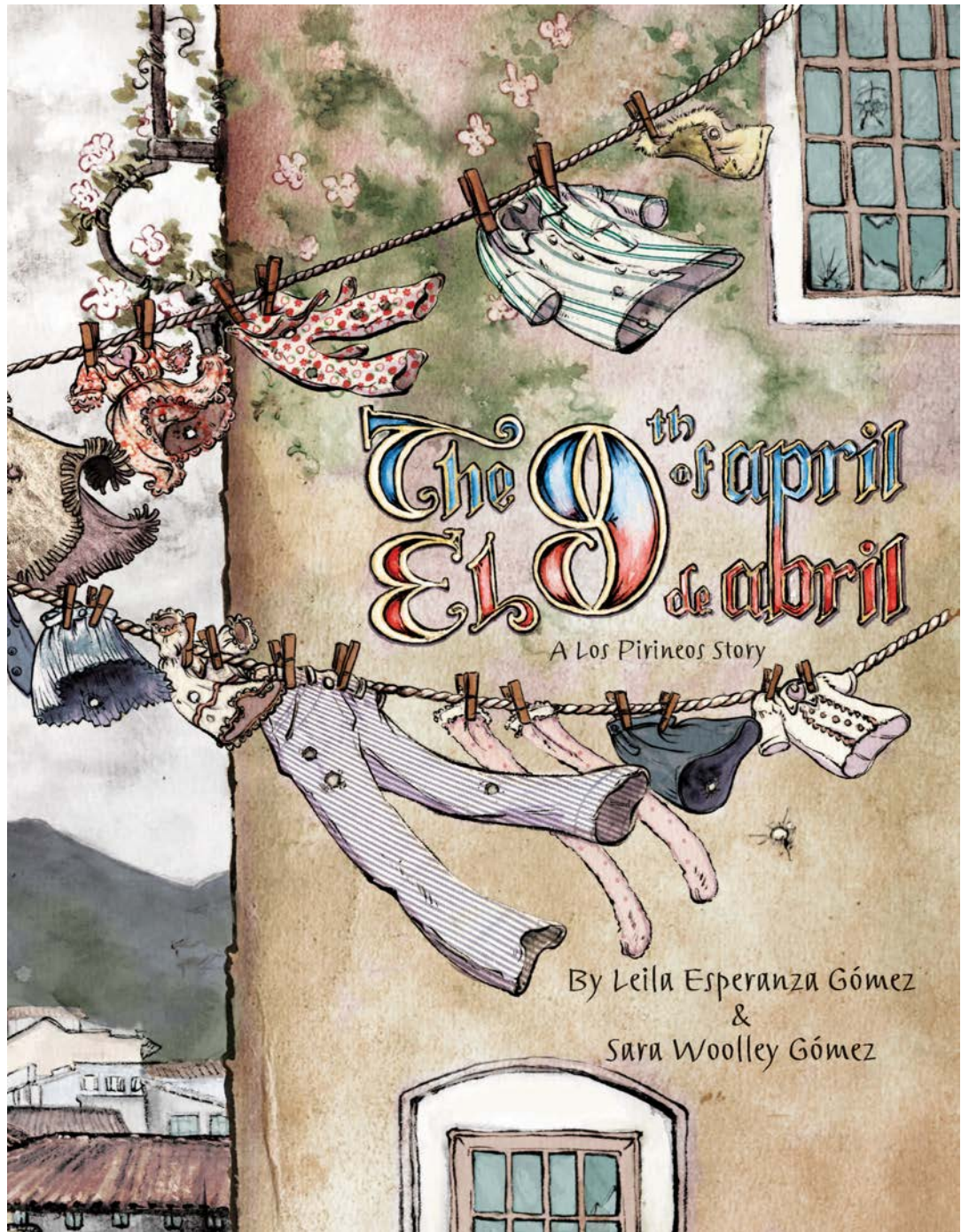


Sara Gómez Woolley

AUTORA

ILUSTRADORA





The 9th of April
El 9 de abril

A Los Pirineos Story

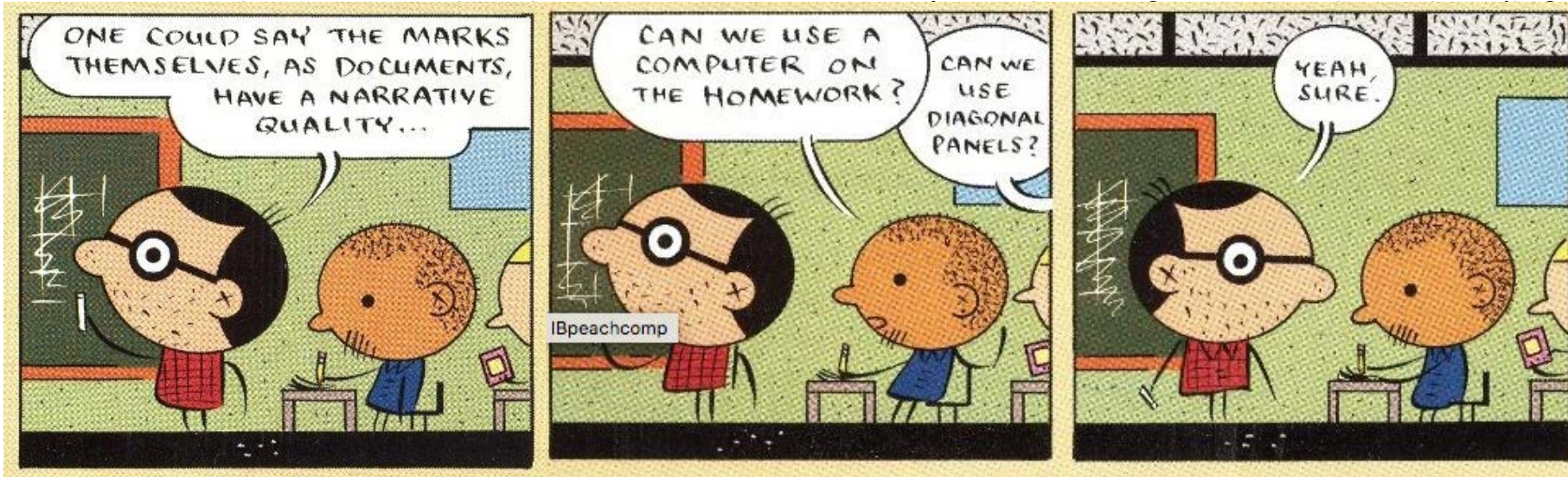
By Leila Esperanza Gómez
&
Sara Woolley Gómez



Philosophy:

Everyone has a meaningful story to tell. Whether you went to art school or haven't picked up a pencil since kindergarten, there's no difference. We all have access to a creative visual voice. This course aims to help each student find and develop their unique "visual voice" and to help them express their personal narratives in comic format.

Comics are language. Every language can be learned. Comics have a distinct grammar set made up of language parts composed of BOTH words and images. (*Realistic drawing is NOT one of the requirements of this language.*)



Ivan Brunetti – excerpt from Mr. Peach, a strip about teaching from The New Yorker

OVERALL COURSE STRUCTURE

- **Reading VS. Making**
- **Reading List**
- **Craft and Community!**
- **Critique and Discussion: Class Discord**
- **In-Class Activities (Like the one we just did!)**
- **Research and Creative Practice**

WE CRITIQUE: EFFORT, TIME, CARE, GROWTH, STORY, CRAFT, & CLARITY

Grading System

- **Final Project 30%**
- **Visual Project Archive 30%**

PROJECT

Over the semester students will work on a well-developed project pitch for a Memoir, Biography, or Auto Bio comics / other illustrated narrative project. They will create the archive of research necessary to fully realize the project, as well as create the following deliverables:

DELIVERABLES (Individual components of the final project)

1. PITCH

2. SYNOPSIS

3. OUTLINE

4. CHARACTERS

5. SETTINGS

6. BACK MATTER

7. MAP, INFOGRAPHIC, OR CROSSECTION

8. SAMPLE SCRIPT & SEQUENTIAL ART FOR FOR 2-4 PAGES

• **Community 20%**

This class is planned to function as a creative crucible! To do so we need to build an active community to share ideas, critique work, and support. There are multiple channels to participate in building our class culture factored into the overall grading system.

In this course, you are expected to help grow and care for our creative community. Here are some ideas of different ways to contribute:

- **Participate in our DISCORD (required)**
- **Moderate our DISCORD**
- **Facilitate Discussions**
- **Solicit feedback on your work in process (Discord and in class)**
- **Critique each other's work in process (Discord and in class)**
- **Knowledge Share! – We all come from a range of diverse experiences and spaces of expertise. PLEASE volunteer to share your knowledge!**

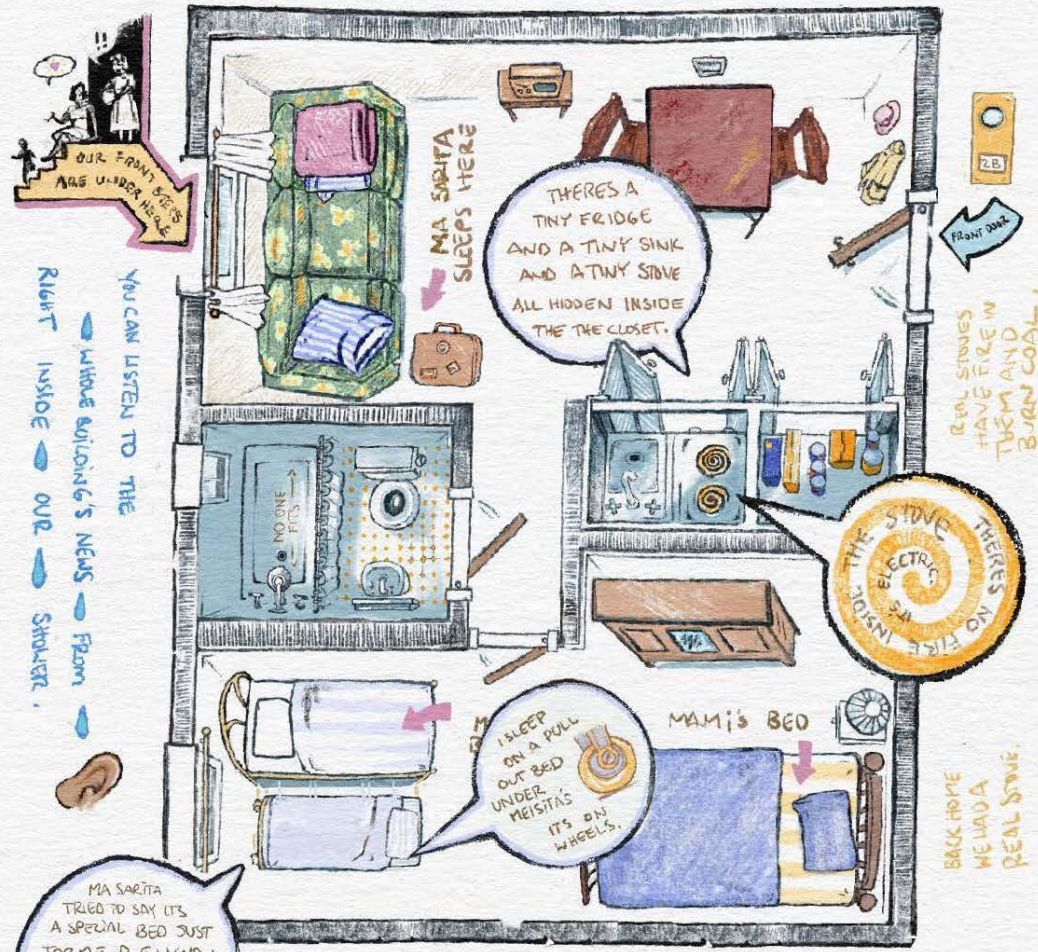
• **Sketchbook 20%**

Your sketchbook is the space where you observe, ideate, experiment, draft, and develop. The best research a graphic novelist can possibly do is from observation, and the sketchbook is the critical tool for that visual research.



THIS IS OUR NEW APARTMENT IN NUEVA YORK!

IT HAS EVERYTHING WE NEED, JUST SHRUNK DOWN TO MINIATURE SIZE, LIKE THIS ...

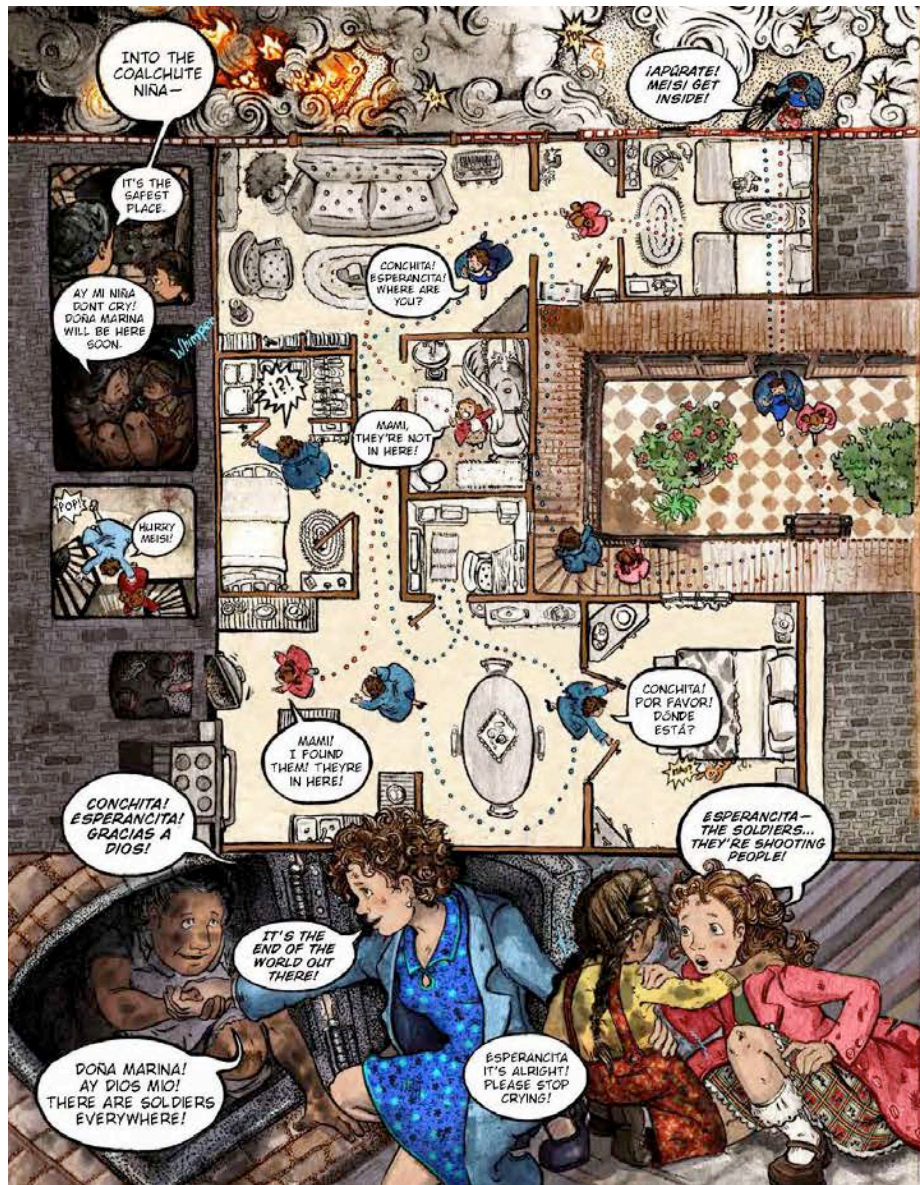


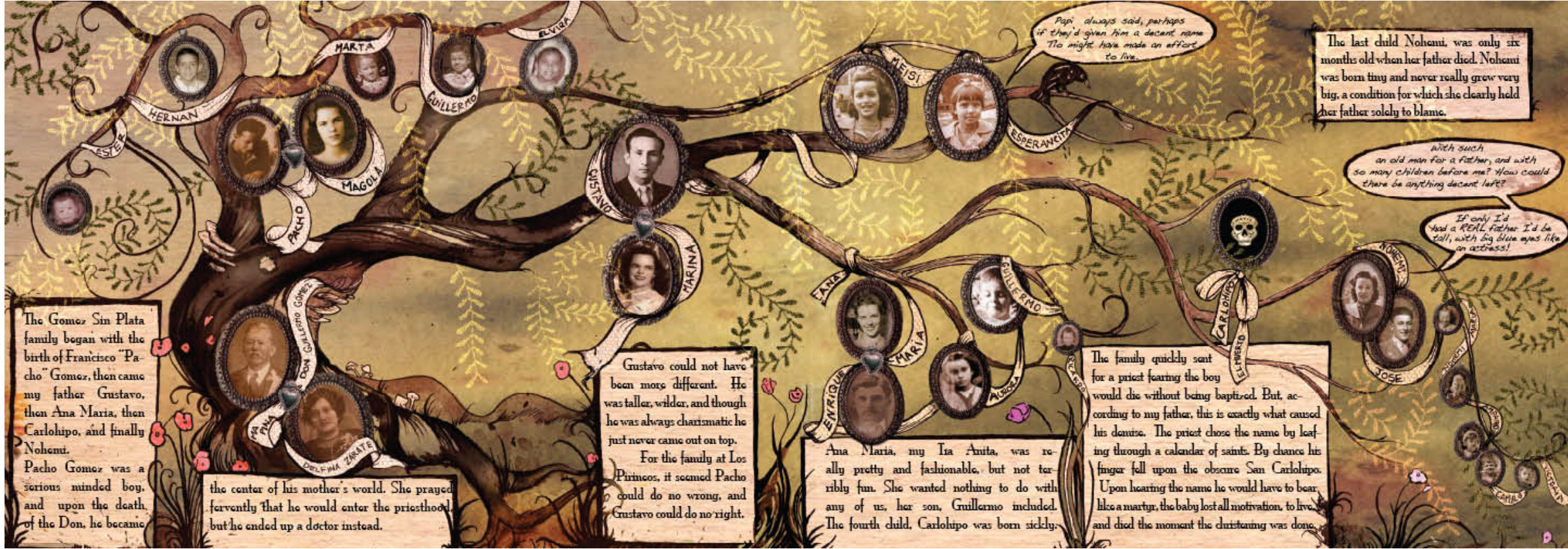
RIGHT INSIDE OUR SHOULDER. YOU CAN LISTEN TO THE WHOLE BUILDING'S NEWS FROM WITHIN OUR SHOULDER.

MA SARITA TRIED TO SAY IT'S A SPECIAL BED JUST FOR ME, BUT I KNOW IT'S BECAUSE I'M THE YOUNGEST, I ALWAYS GET THE WORST STUFF.

IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER THAT WE LIVE IN A TINY APARTMENT NOW ANYWAY.

IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE ANY MORE STUFF





The Gomez Sin Plata family began with the birth of Francisco "Pacho" Gomez, then Ana Maria, then Carlohipo, and finally Nohemi. Pacho Gomez was a serious minded boy, and upon the death of the Don, he became

the center of his mother's world. She prayed fervently that he would enter the priesthood, but he ended up a doctor instead.

Gustavo could not have been more different. He was taller, wilder, and though he was always charismatic he just never came out on top. For the family at Los Pirineos, it seemed Pacho could do no wrong, and Gustavo could do no right.

Ana Maria, my Iia Anita, was really pretty and fashionable, but not terribly fun. She wanted nothing to do with any of us, her son, Guillermo included. The fourth child, Carlohipo was born sickly,

The family quickly sent for a priest fearing the boy would die without being baptized. But, according to my father, this is exactly what caused his demise. The priest chose the name by leafing through a calendar of saints. By chance his finger fell upon the obscure San Carlohipo. Upon hearing the name he would have to bear, like a martyr, the baby lost all motivation to live, and died the moment the christening was done.

Papi always said, perhaps if they'd given him a decent name. He might have made an effort to live.

The last child Nohemi, was only six months old when her father died. Nohemi was born tiny and never really grew very big, a condition for which she clearly held her father solely to blame.

With such an old man for a father, and with so many children before me? How could there be anything decent left?

If only I'd had a REAL father. I'd be tall, with big blue eyes like an actress!





CANADA
(GRINGOLANDIA DEL NORTE?)

OUR PRIMOS
ARE
KANSAS
HERE.

GRINGOLANDIA

LA GRAN
NANZANITA

NUEVA YORK

OCEANO
ATLANTICO

TRÓPICO DE CÁNCER

FLORIDA

CUBA

REPUBLICA
DOMINICANA

HAITI

PUERTO
RICO

JAMAICA

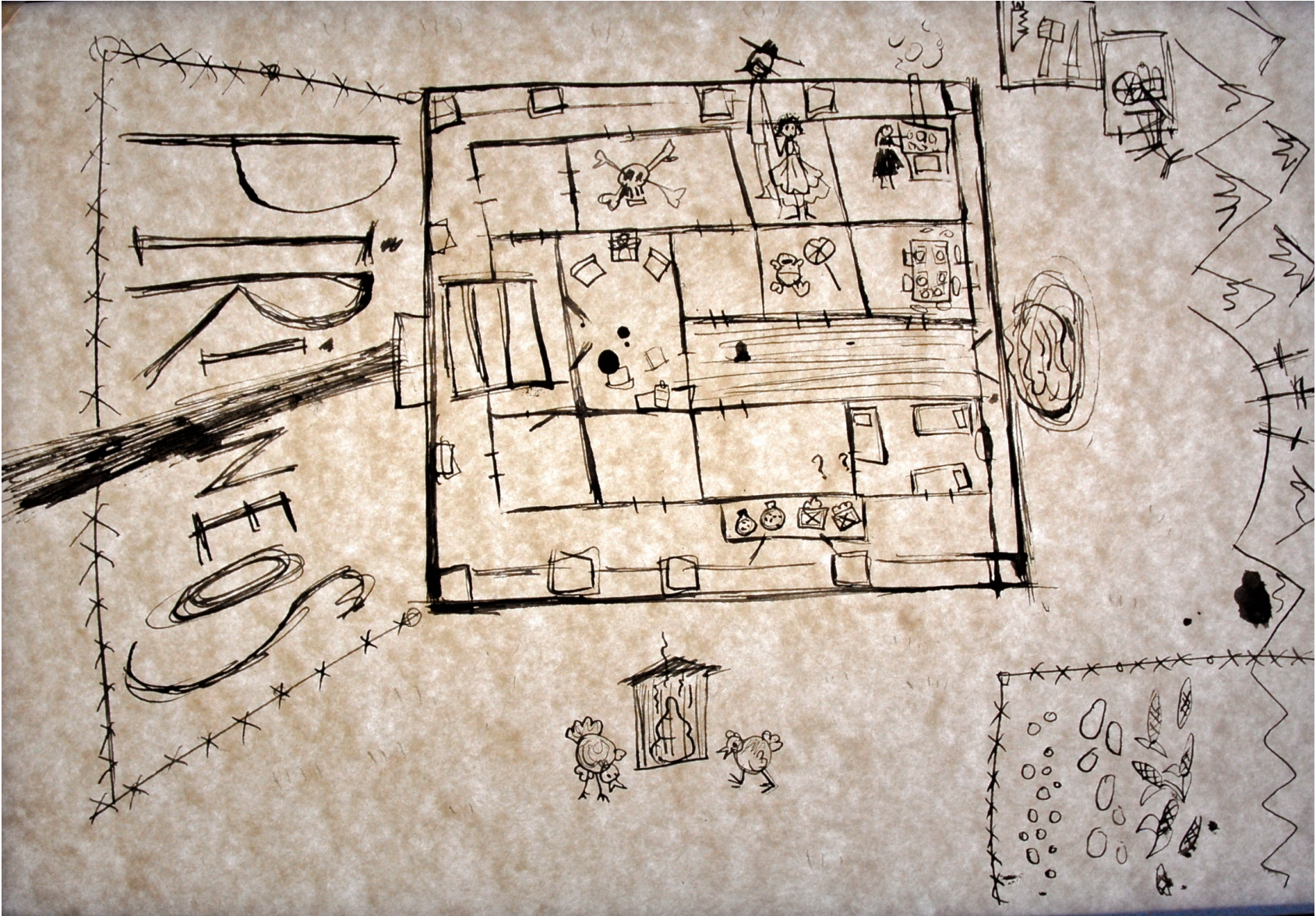
HONDURAS

NICARAGUA

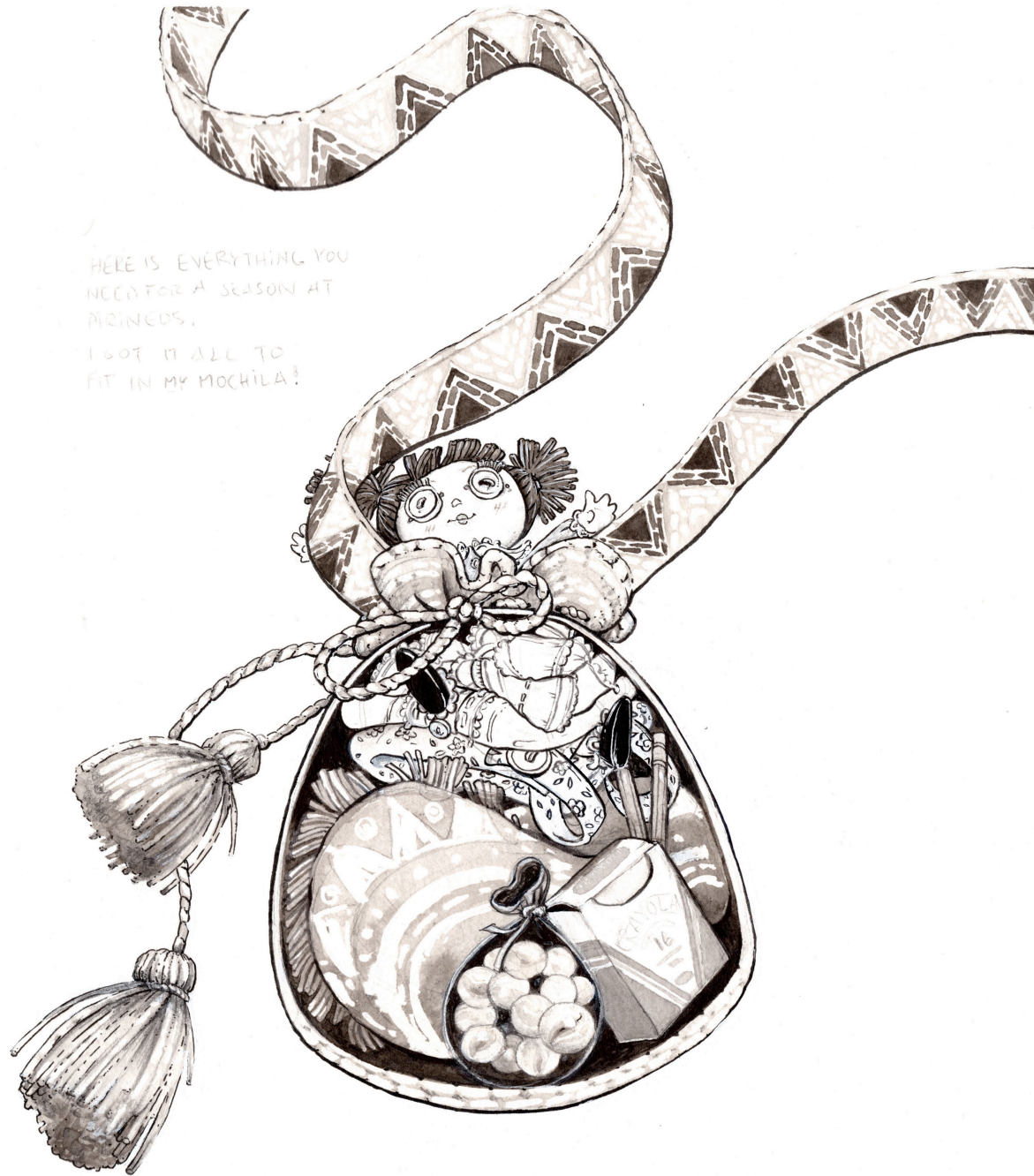
COSTA RICA

VENEZUELA

COLOMBIA



HERE IS EVERYTHING YOU
NEED FOR A SEASON AT
MINECRAFT.
I GOT IT ALL TO
FIT IN MY MOCHILA!



HEY! LET'S TAKE A FANCY TOUR OF THE
MARTIN FAMILY'S FANCY,
BARGAIN-PRICED...

WINNERBUD Chieftain FEATURING

1. Tiny loft for journaling
and whatnot.

2. A fancy
kitchennette.

3. Scenic views of
billboards and
horse trailers.

4. A fancy
ensuite
bathroomette.

5. A roomy and restful
shower. Not a place to
stow pillows and
blankets!

6. A petite
power room
with a view of
the exhaust.

7. A stylish
commode
that
stylish
people
poop in
stylishly.

8. A fancy
walk-by closet for all
your cotton tshirts.

9. A convertible bed
for luxurious and restful
sleep on the side of any
busy road or truck stop!

10. Stylish poop
empties out here.

11. An open plan
dining and family room
that feels some!

Expertly decorated in lush
brown wood tones
and harvest gold
shag carpeting!

13. Leatherette,
comfort-plus
Captain Kirk chairs!

12. Dining table converts
into a reclining couch
for when you get
the vapors!