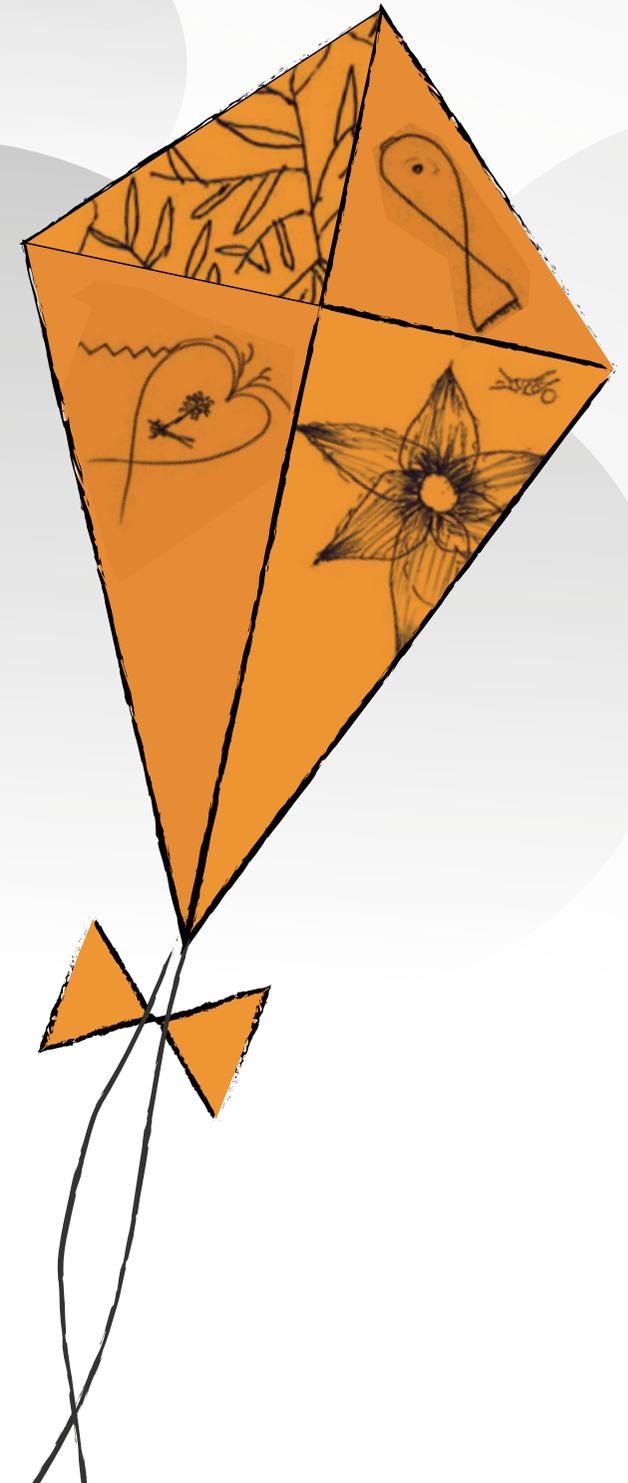


# Sketches of hope, stairways, trees and more

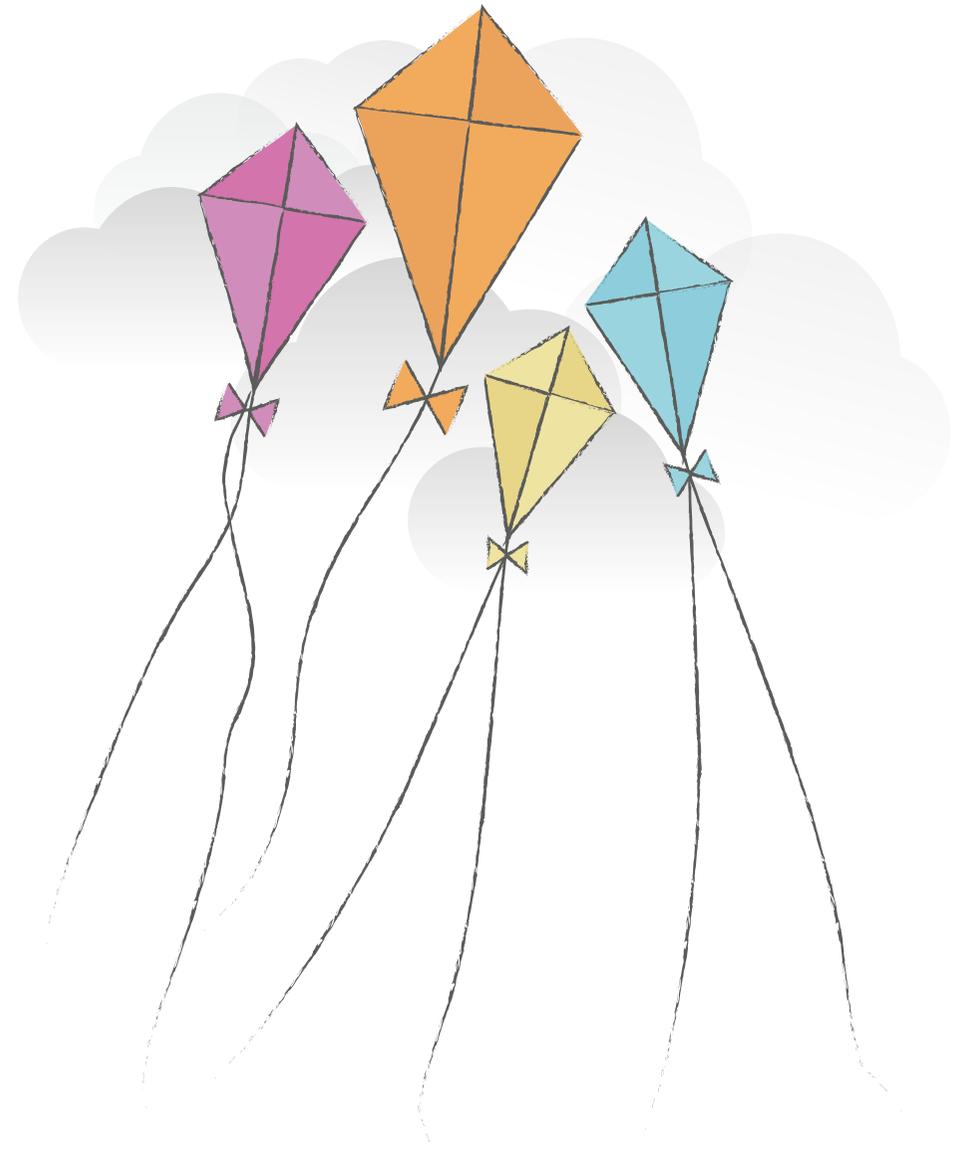
Building new lives in  
Yorkshire and Humber

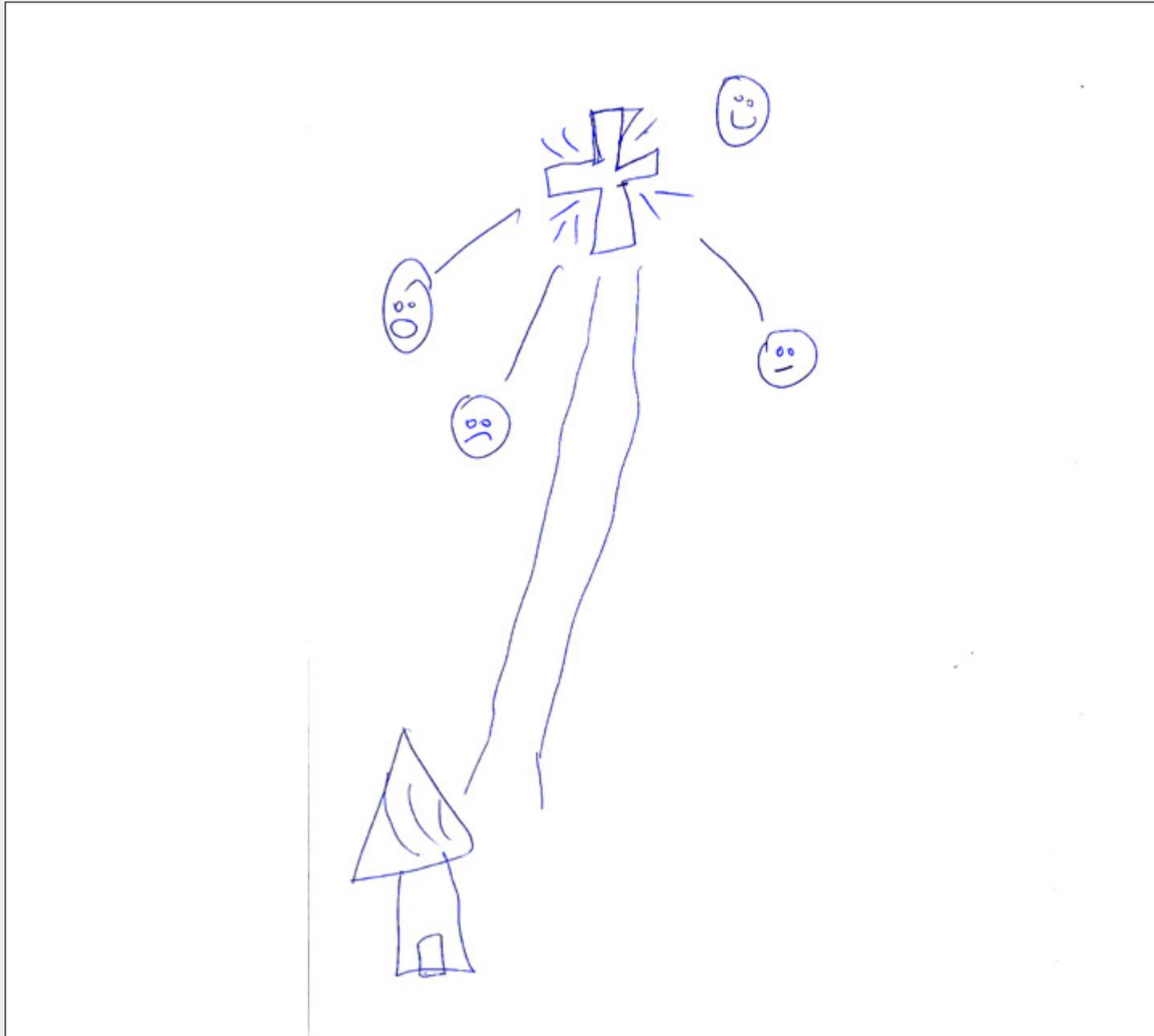


*Sketches of hope, stairways, trees and more: building new lives in Yorkshire and Humber* is a collection of drawings that tell something about the relationship between people who were granted refugee protection at a certain point in their life and the new cities, towns and villages they came to inhabit in Yorkshire and Humber. As part of the interview process the research participants were invited to sketch how they felt about places where they lived.

These sketches suggest the complexity embedded in relationships between people and their environment. They take various forms: that of a memory, hope and aspiration, a sense of growth and limitation, challenges and struggles, excitement and joy, meaningful connections or their absence, self-esteem and expectations, spirituality and security, ambition and stability, living at a crossroads, and so on. They also show that there is no single way in which people feel belonging in a place, and that attachments (or the lack of) to people, places and things of all kinds always relate to experiences, practices and connections people have in other places and in other times, that go beyond 'here' and 'now' (see the [main research report](#)).

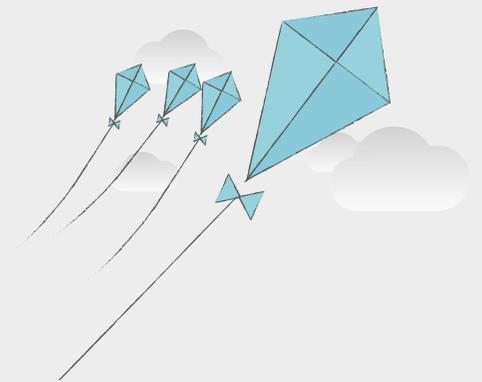
This booklet is an accompanying piece to our main research report '[Living the weathers and other stories](#)' for the Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber (RIYH) project. What follows are 36 sketches accompanied by short descriptions by our research participants of what they represent. We thank our participants for their time, their trust, and for sharing their stories and experiences with us in yet another way. All the names are pseudonyms.





I think the cross is like where I get my real peace and meaning because when I am confused, you know there was time, when I felt lonely, because you hardly get a visitor, there was a time when I [thought] 'will I be able to talk to adult again, you know? Will I able to speak and talk?'. So I know God is with me always and always can speak through me and inside me. God's spirit is in me, happy time and sad time, and when I spent a lot of time at home, he was my way and he is my peace. That [the belief] is my hope.

**By Mazaa**





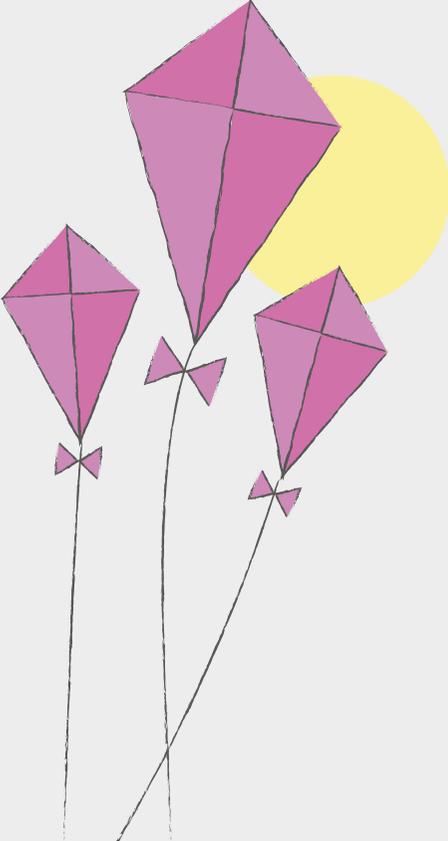
This is my house and my garden [here in the UK], lots of flowers...I like sitting in my garden in summer and my daughter playing around me, and I am very relaxed...and if I go out I like to see water, flowers, blue sky. This is very important for everybody in the world to have peace...If everybody laughs together, no problem ... I love this little town in summer, sometimes I come with friends to look at flowers and stuff like that...this [house] means a lot to me...you feel safe like in your space, where we lived previously [outside the UK], if you don't pay one day they will kick you out...and we used to share house with people.

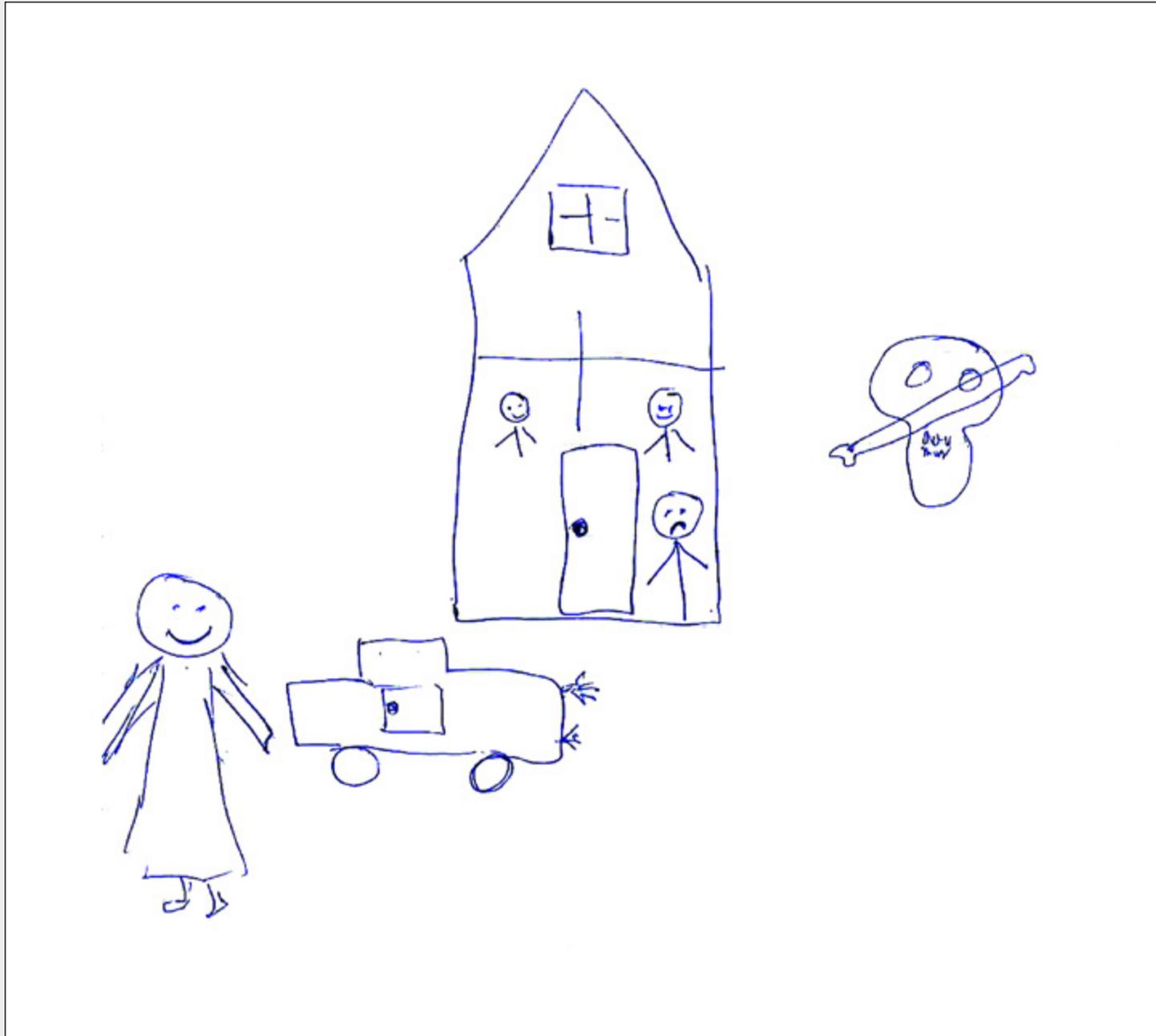
**By Amira**



I see Leeds as a mother. What mother gives you? What mother can give to her child? She gives them love, support, freedom, hope, friendship, kindness and home, while keeping them grounded.

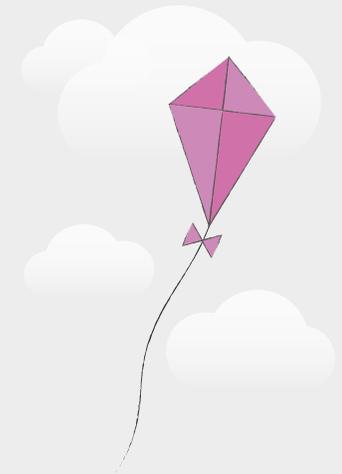
By Abia

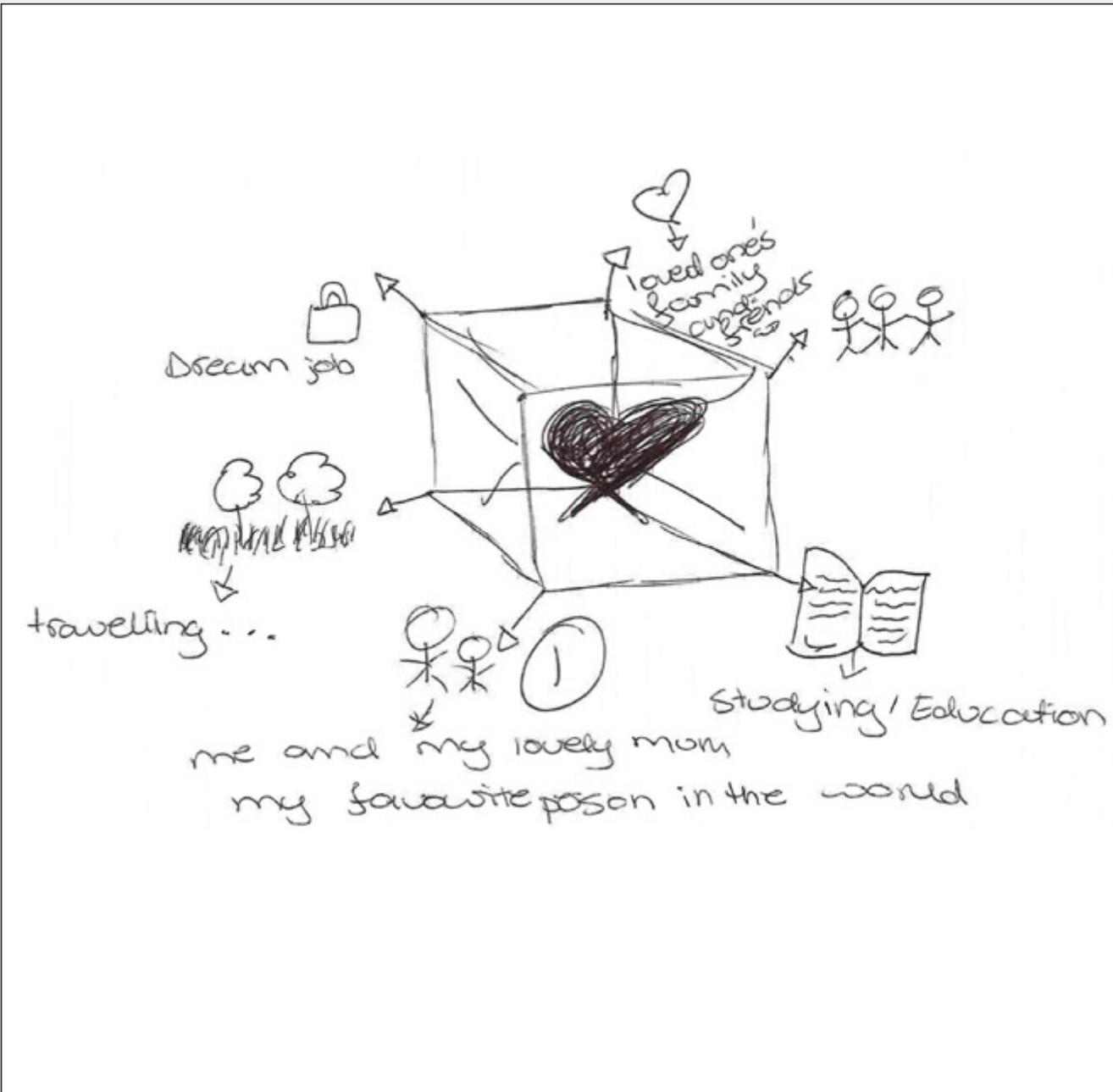




[this is] my house and my kids are happy. But me, I am not happy in this house because I told you the area is dangerous and the house is small. It's a very old house and there is damp and humidity...not a healthy house. And also I drew my friend and her car behind me.

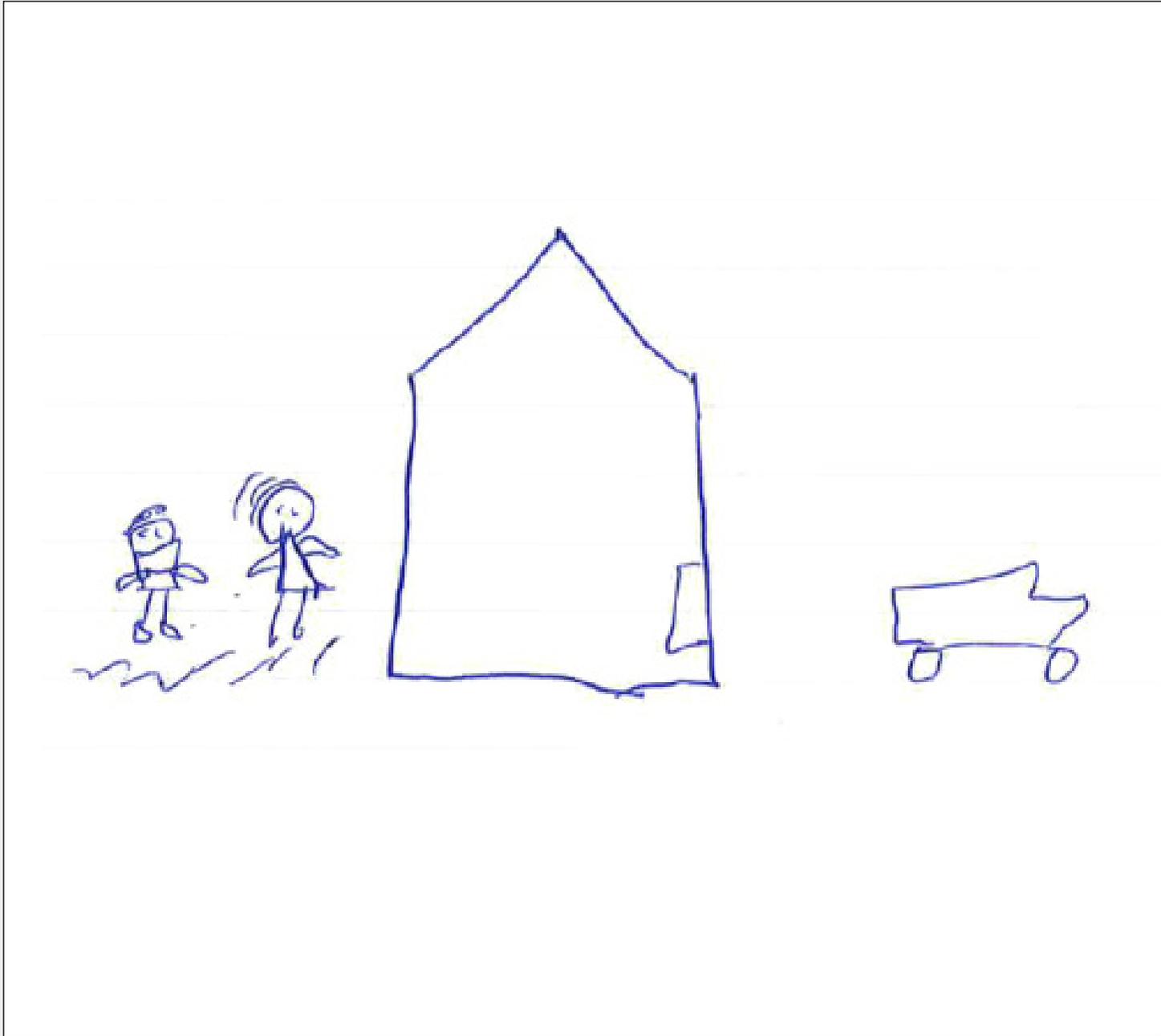
**By Aleea**





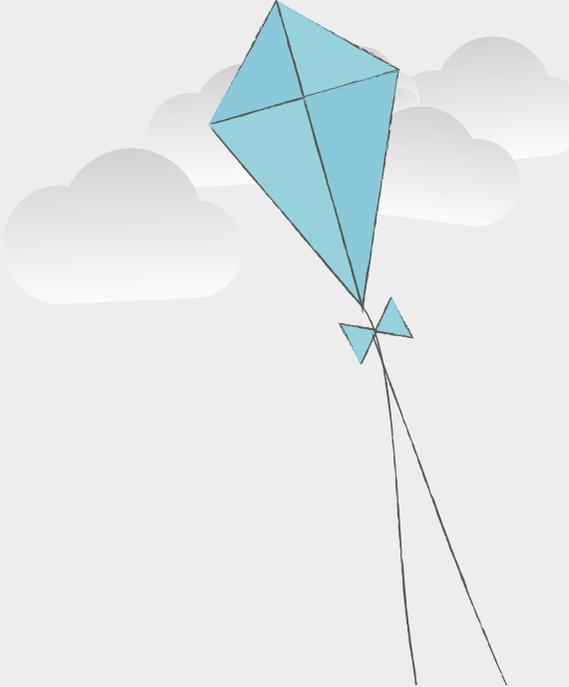
This is a box and here is my house in it, and then basically it leads to all of these things. So this is what I am thinking about at the moment. So the first thing I am thinking about is of course me and my mum, and the second thing I am thinking about is friends, this is friends and this is family. And then studying, education and then my dream job because I am going on to do my GCSE courses next year. So I am studying, putting pressure on myself. Also I would like to have time to travel, and go and know places and live my life, because I am a teenager...a lot of people get really surprised how I like school a lot because I write a lot and studying and questioning matters all the time and sometimes I shouldn't but I do. It just makes me feel good about myself and it make me feel like I am actually achieving something even if I will never use that in my life or not. But I try my best in every subject and especially in the subject that I know will help me in the future and the things I want to take for GCSE so that's all I want to say.

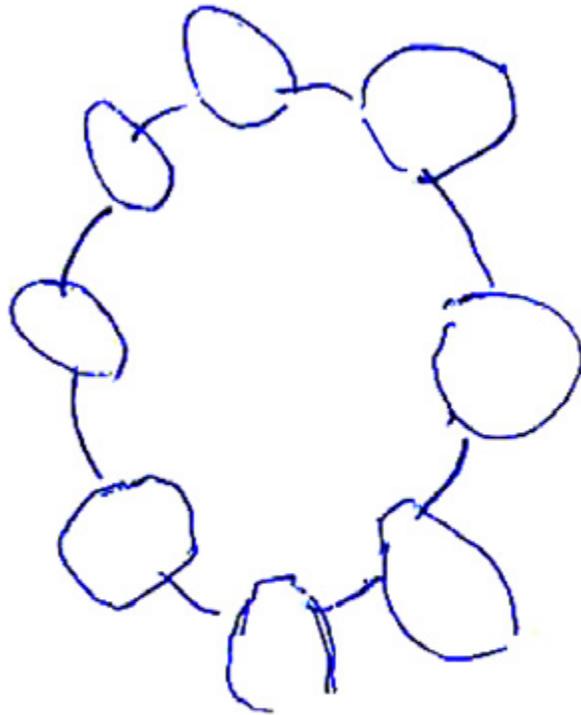
**By Amina**



My husband has an illness and he cannot walk ... This is drawing of my hopes. I hope to have a house, healthy children and a car. Because my husband cannot walk, so the car would help me drive him around.

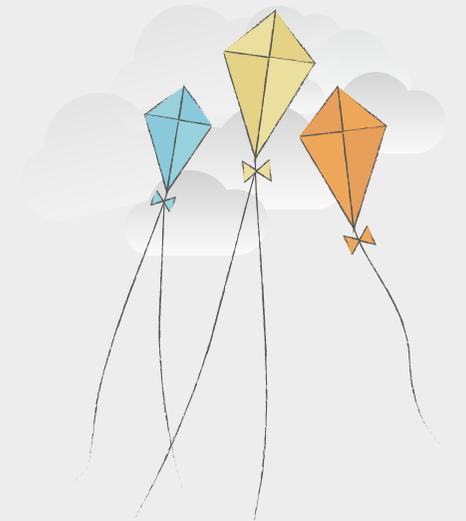
**By Amira**

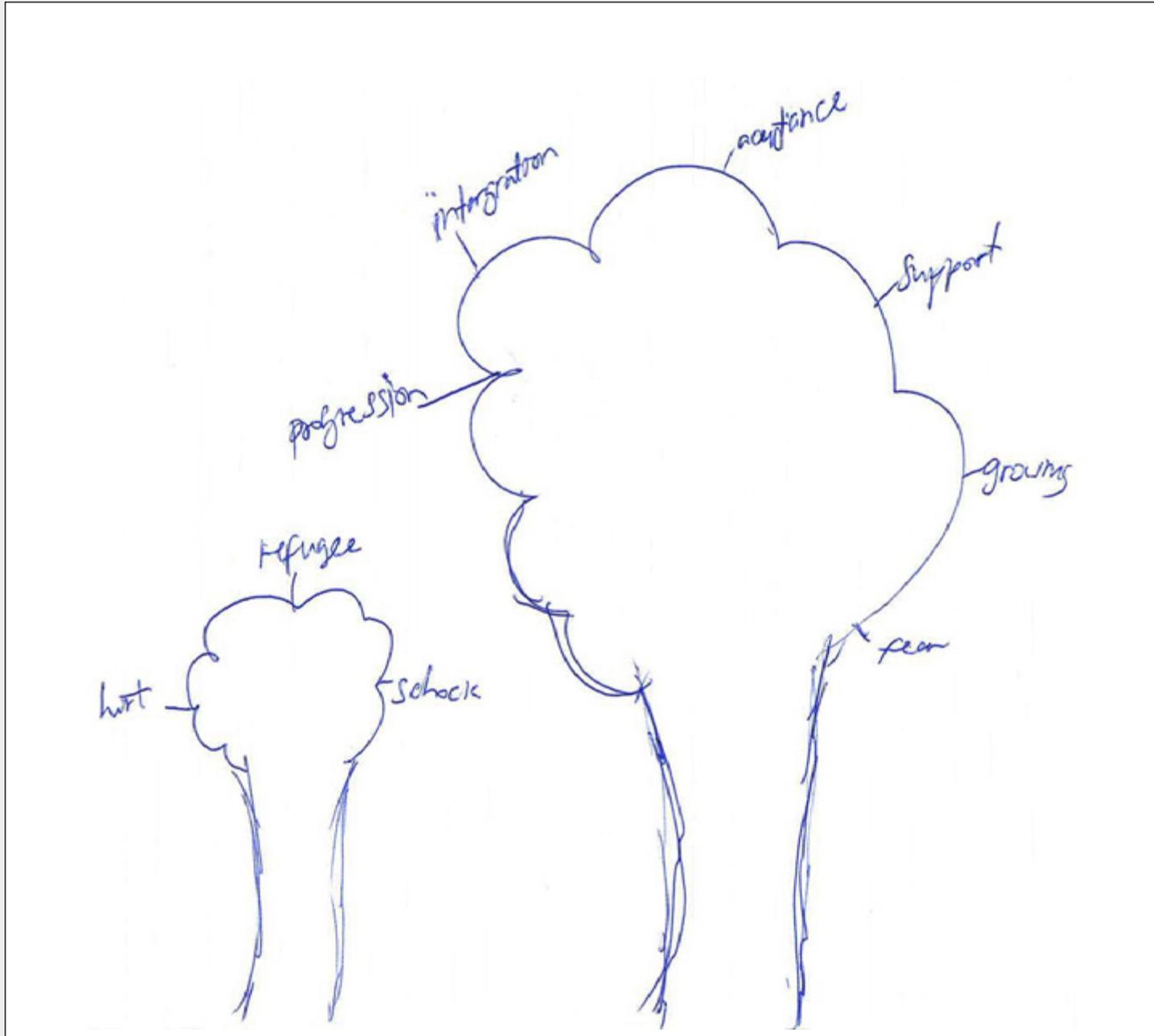




There are different groups of people, they are together like a flower ... like flower petals. There is yellow flower, there is white, and there is red but in general there is no difference between them...I feel like a person from this community, not a stranger...I don't like to be a stranger or somebody say this person is from different place or is not from us. I would like people to respect me as a human being not as Iraqi or Iranian or Turkish.

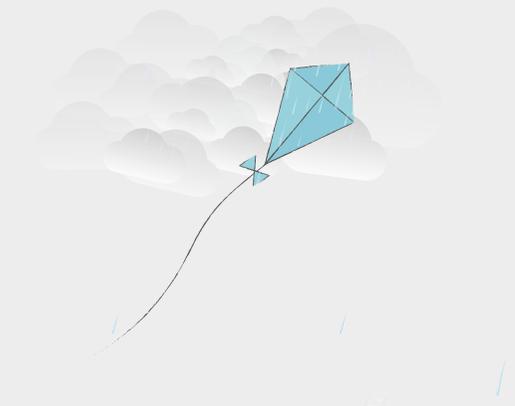
**By Ammar**



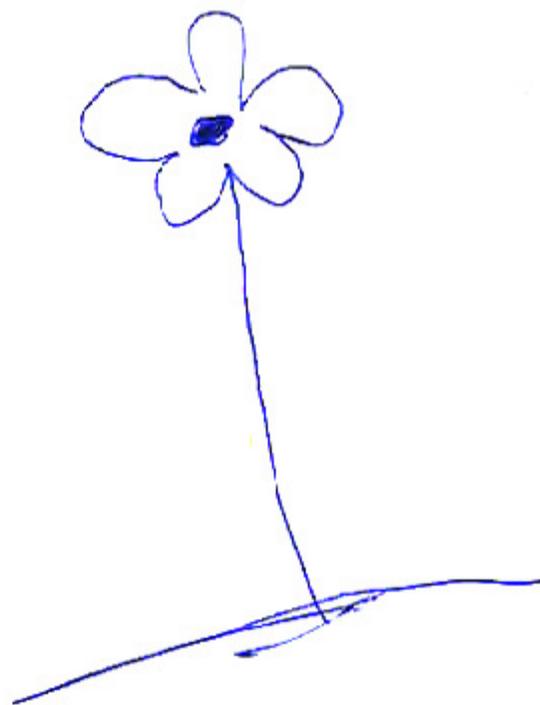
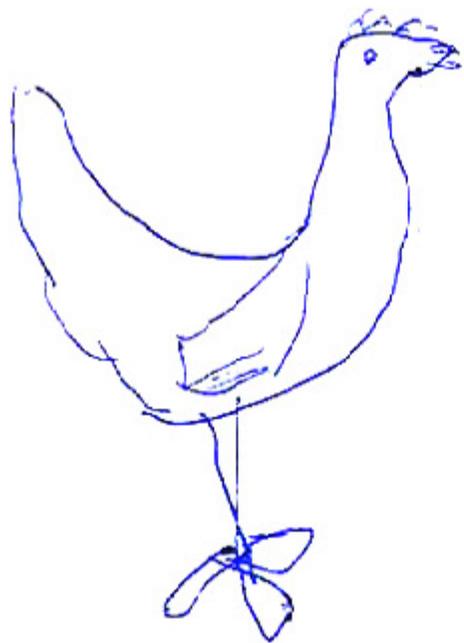


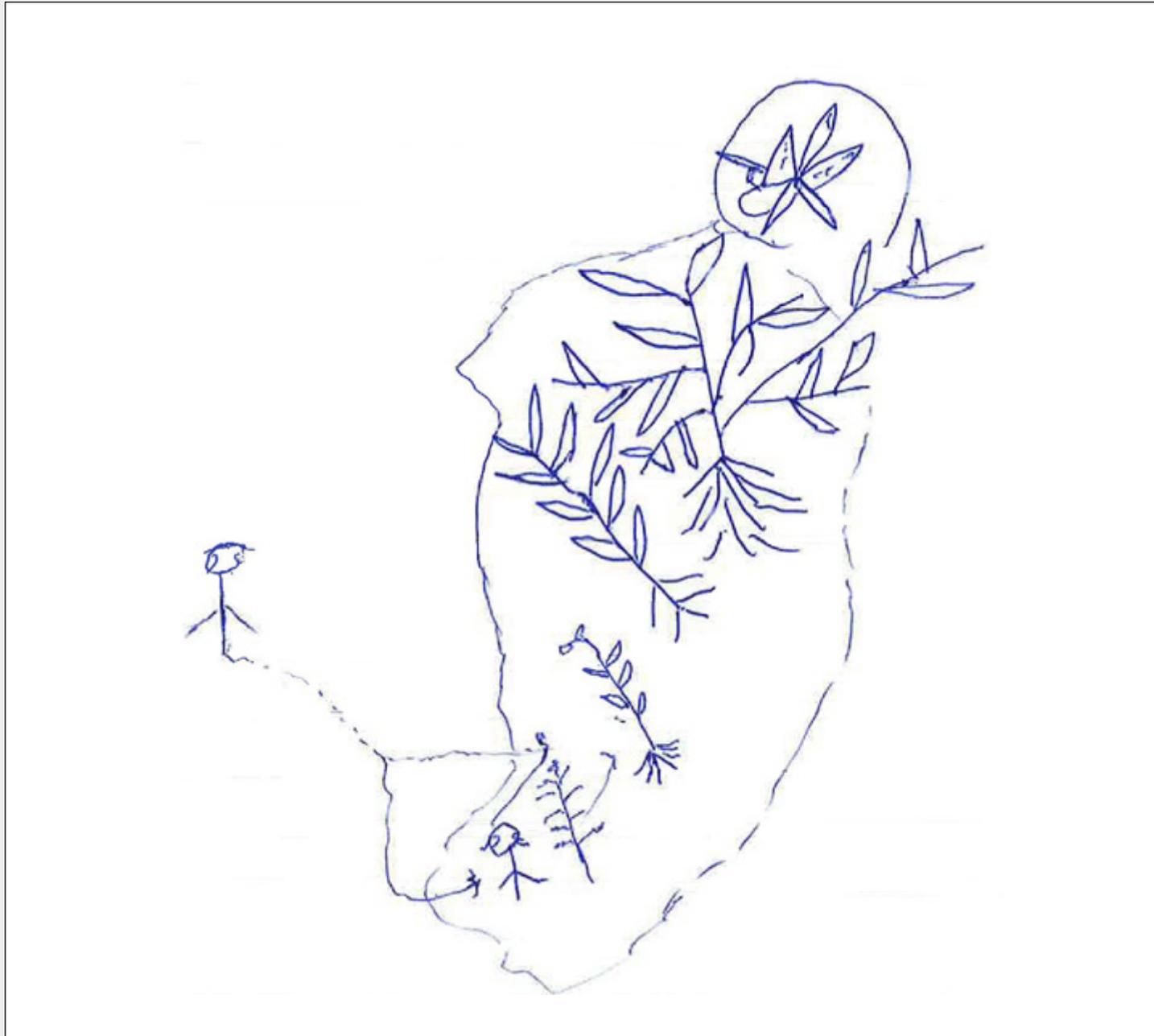
Hurt - shock - refugee...  
You are a small tree when you arrive and you are not quite grown yet and the tree is growing into, you know, you start off by like you are still relatively fearful then you're growing and you've got support and then you accept your life and then you integrate and then you progress ... So you got a baby tree of when you just started as a refugee, you are in shock, you don't know how to cope and then the tree is growing into these more beautiful things.

**By Anita**



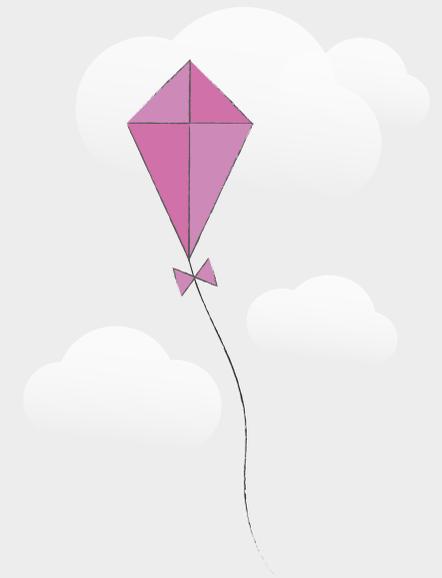
By Asim

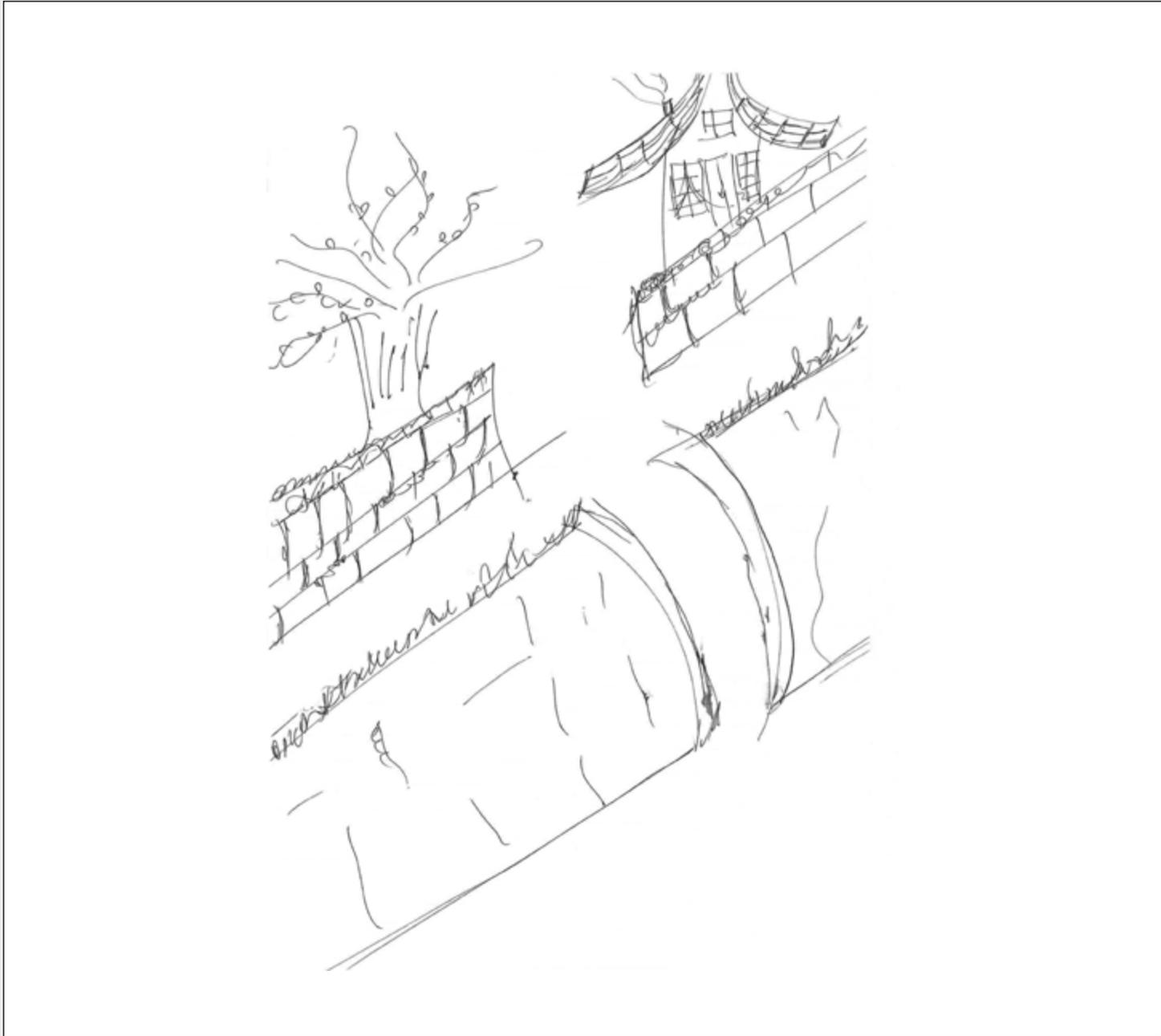




I would represent Sheffield by drawing a sketch in a way that shows my journey of settling in the city. First, there is a sketch of me when I first arrived in the city, and it represents the progress I made over the years. Blossoming tree branches that incrementally grow in number indicate my successful settlement process.

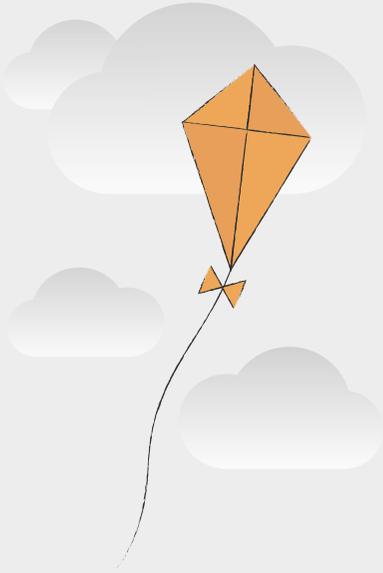
**By Biniam**

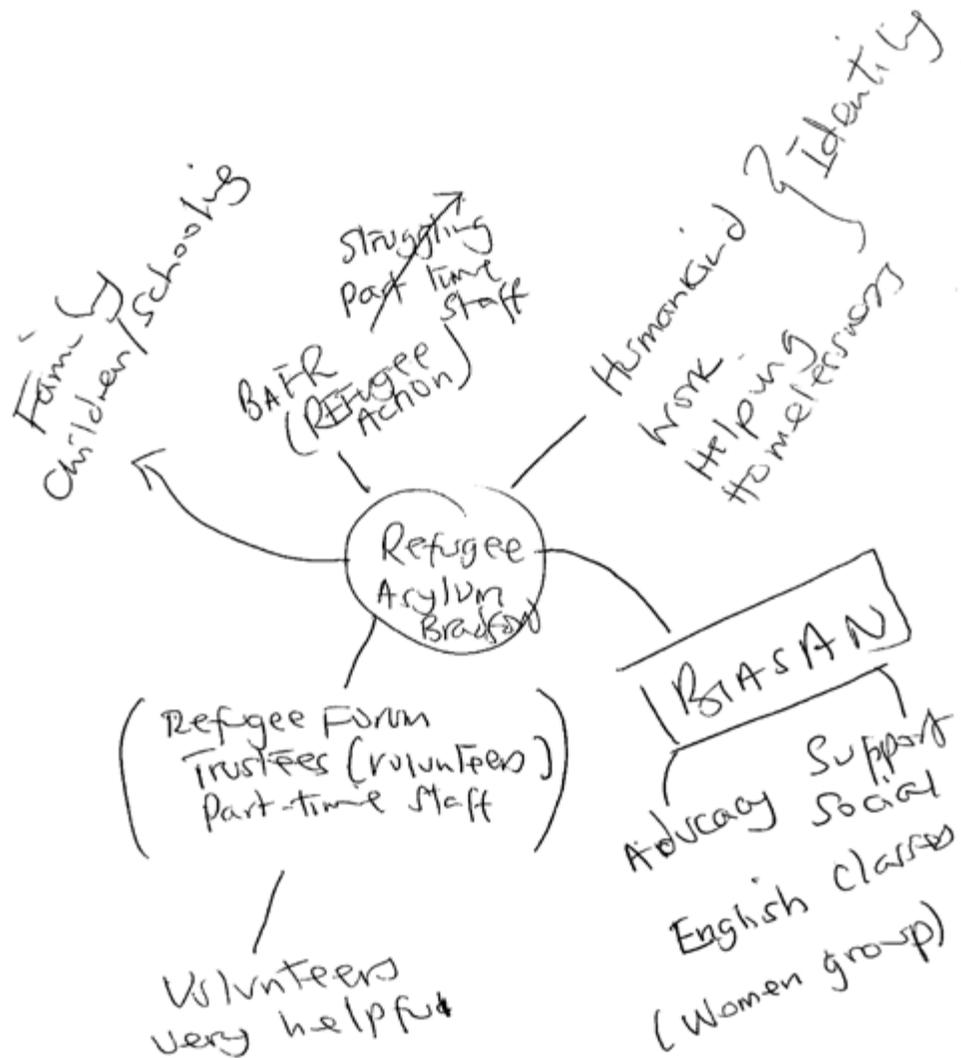




This is a river, a bridge with wood and stones; it's a strong pathway, and a wall like a very old wall with the stone, big stones. It's a farm, a very big farm which has trees, very old trees and it's a cottage, the place is far...It's a very quiet place, a person that lives here doesn't have signs of pressure...Freedom! No pressure!

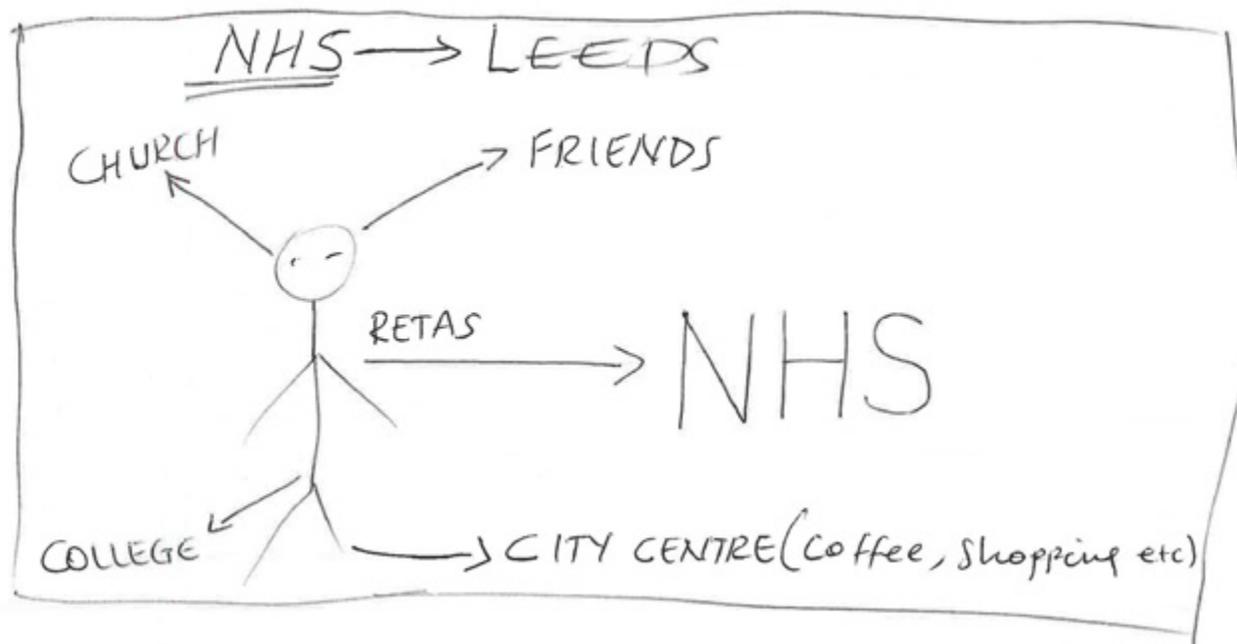
**By Darius**





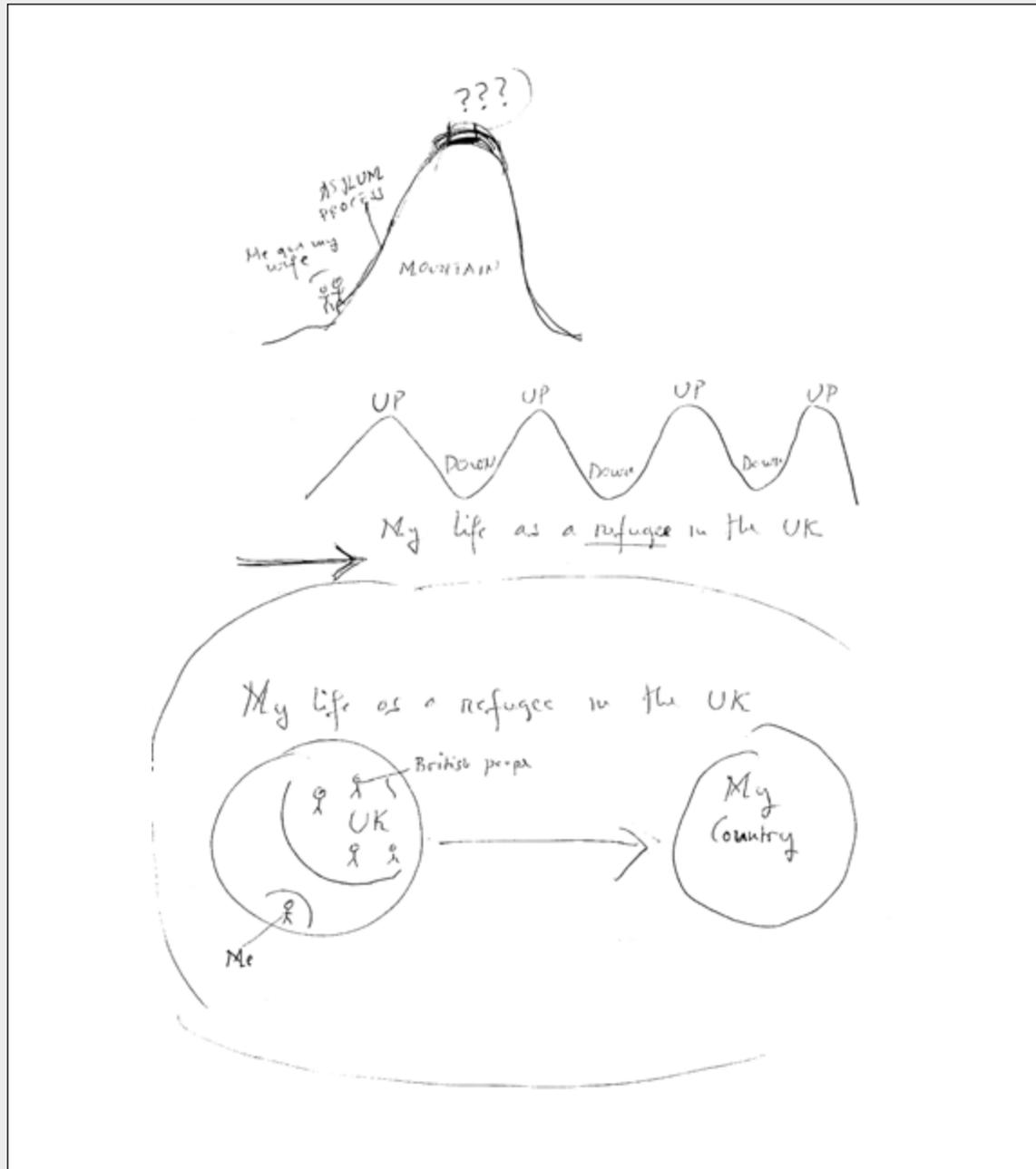
...organisations like Bradford Action for Refugees which has now become Refugee Action I think, sort of like it was taken over. You find all the different organisations struggling for funding and part time staff ... So I am putting it into brackets because the work the refugee forum does might not continue because there might not be any funding for it. However we have volunteers who are very helpful and we also have BIASAN. It's a group that has been known I think for advocacy and support on social, English classes, women group. I feel I am part of all this, Human Kind so this is work. And I sort of do feel a bit like I identify with homeless people. I sometime feel homeless because I still don't feel like, even though it is 50-50 whether in the UK or Kenya is my home, I think Kenya is more my home.

**By Declan**



This is me in Leeds, with all the social connections - with friends, the church, refugee organisations, the NHS, college and the city centre. An arrow is RETAS, as they gave me direction to join Leeds NHS Hospital. Leeds is a city that gave direction to my life. When I think of Leeds, the NHS is what comes to my mind, because it [NHS] changed my life. I am doing my 15-month paid apprenticeship programme with Leeds NHS Trust and I will qualify as Medical Deployment Assistant. The city centre means going out for coffee and socializing with friends and doing my shopping activities.

**By Ephrem**

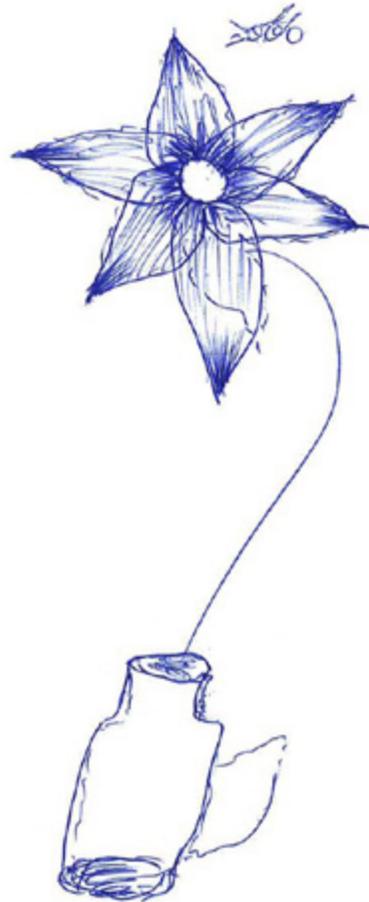


I've tried to think about how it was, my asylum process, me and my wife it was like we were climbing a mountain. The reality, well, it was difficult that's why I think it was like climbing a mountain and we don't really know what was waiting for us at the top. My life as a refugee in the UK has a lot of ups and downs. Sometime I see good things and bad things, good things bad things ... This, you know to be honest when I was drawing it, uhhh it made me feel like I want to cry. It's like I am in the UK but in reality sometimes you feel like well, to be honest you feel like you are not British. You feel like somebody who has been put in a society to which you don't really belong. Sometimes you try to consider yourself as part of the society but sometimes you feel like it's not the case. You really understand that you are a refugee, you are not British, that's how I feel, and far away is your country ... I know that even in my country I could face challenges ... But the thing with being a refugee is very difficult because it's part of my identity. If I am in my country and I am a victim of some injustice from my manager I would say the person is not good. But if I face it here, because I am maybe a black person, because maybe she felt that I am not from here, or whatever reason, I put it down to me, then I think 'oooo it's because I am a refugee', and it's more painful... and sometimes you say 'oh if I didn't have this status maybe it would be different'.

**By Jean**

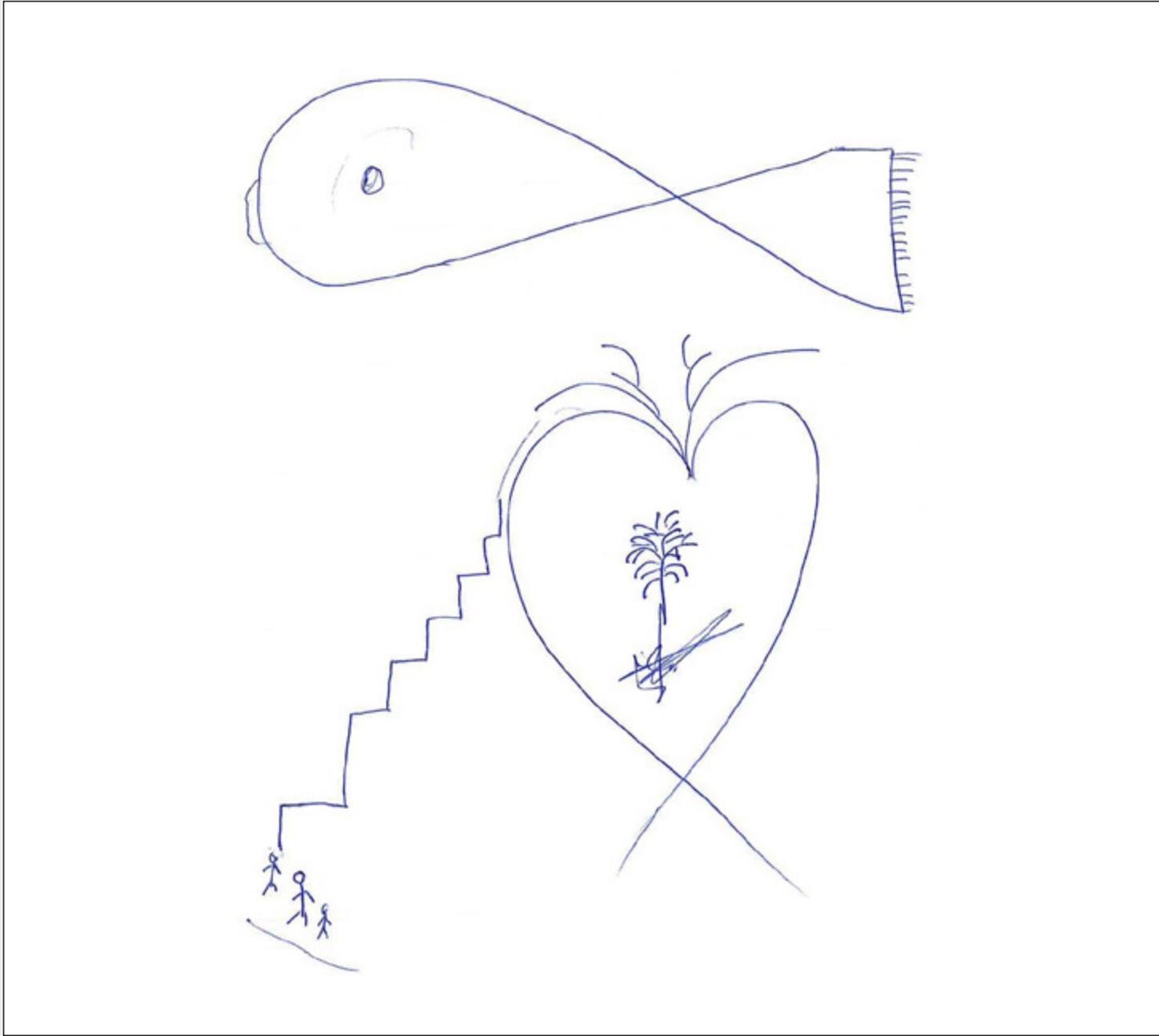
Sheffield

BEE



I am settled here [in Sheffield]. If I am away from Sheffield, I feel I am missing a lot of things. I have made friends here, I have a job here. I even miss the streets if I am away. I want to symbolise Sheffield with a flower. Firstly, flower is a symbol of beauty and abundance, especially in the month of September in our country. It is pleasant to wake up to the colours of September flowers. And I can liken Sheffield with a beautiful flower in September for it is beautiful. Against the backdrop of my experience in Eritrea, my life in Sheffield is a rebirth. I feel I am born again, and I am living the stolen years of my life again. And what a better way to represent my life than by the beauty of a flower! Secondly, the bee hovering over the flower shows that bees make honey from flowers. And honey is a precious thing. Our mothers call us 'honey'. We also use the word 'honey' to call people we love. I can also see Sheffield as the flower where I (represented by the bee) come and make honey (my life). Overall, this is a budding flower, and it resonates with the progress of my life in Sheffield.

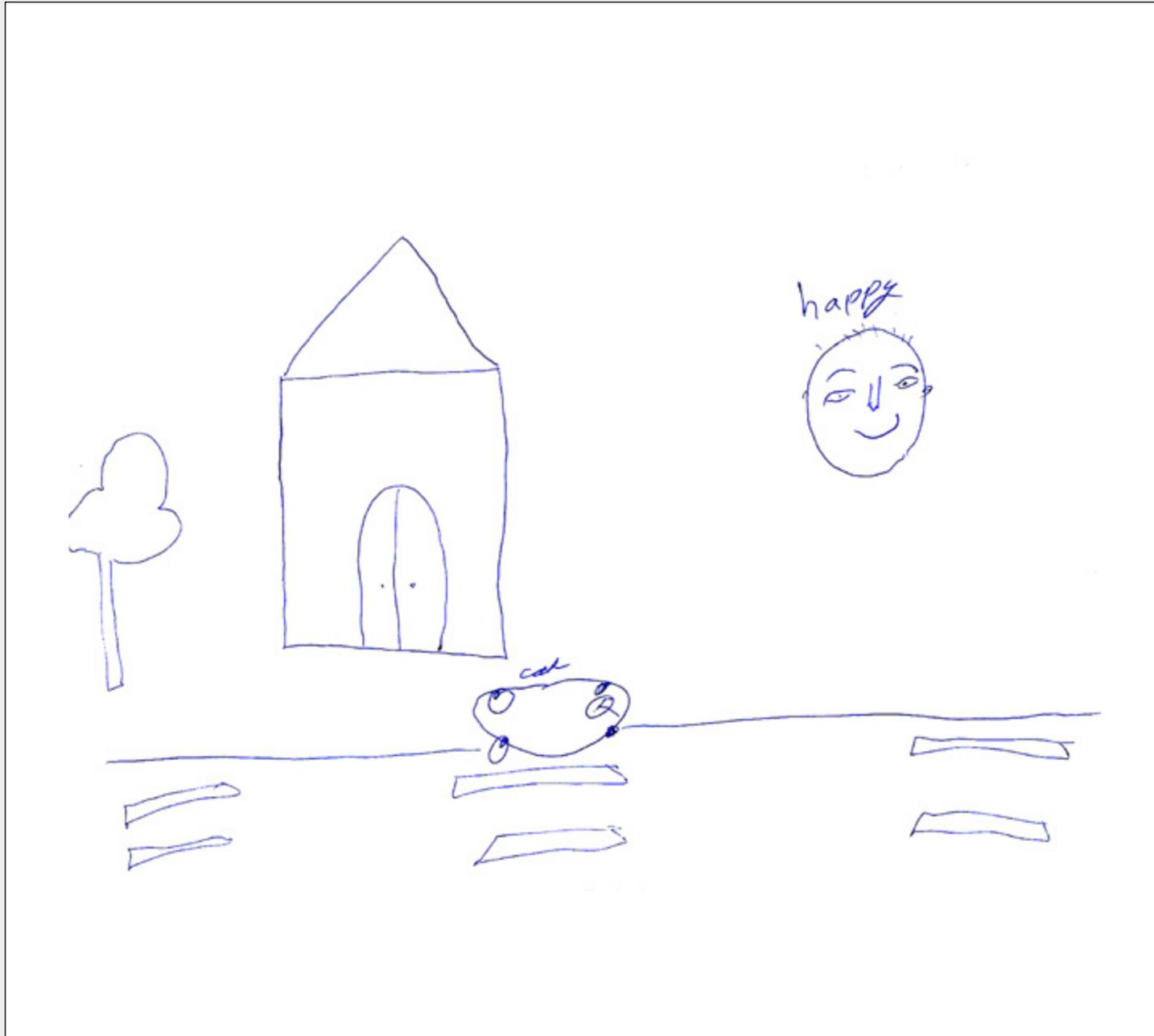
**By Eyob**



The fish represents a game which I used to play in my village with my friends. We used to love playing it. Then the heart and a tree within it, and steps...it is like a person takes step by step, and the steps stand for life that is too hard, like Libya, France, Italy, Belgium and the tree is England.... when I reach the tree I find myself protected, it is a shelter, and you can sit there. Sitting under the tree within the heart stands for good life, whereas steps and climbing up stands for difficult life.

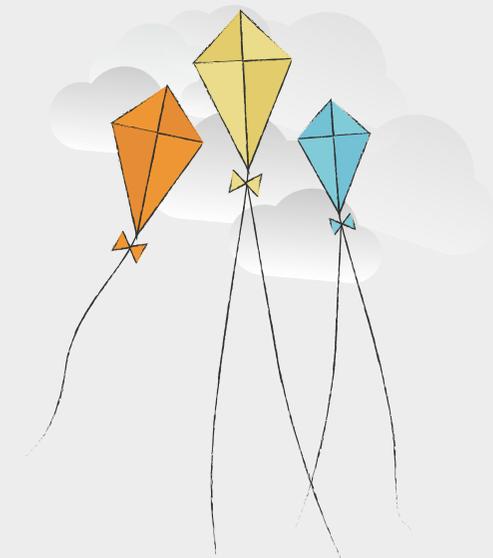
**By Faheem**

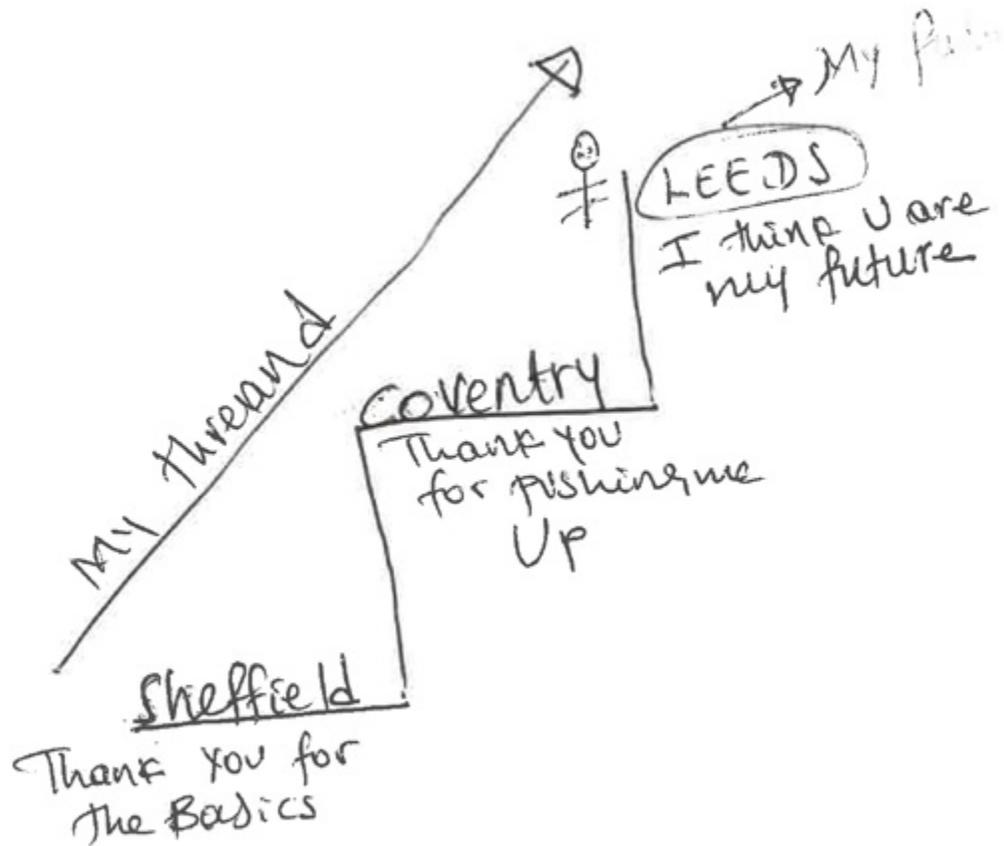




It is a house and a car. In the future, I would like to own a house... [the house would be] in a big city, in London... [having car is] important. Especially where I live now [the countryside].

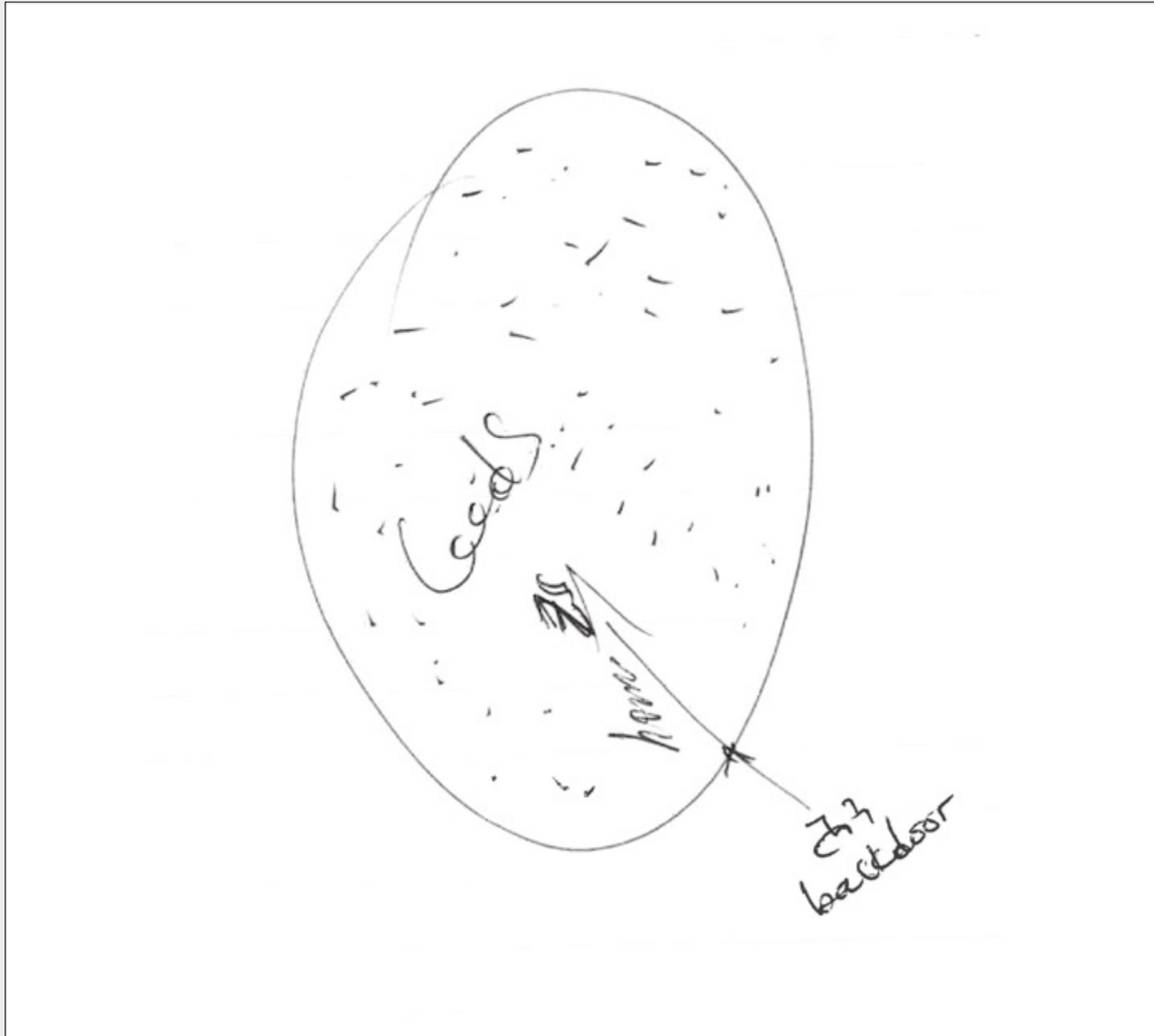
**By Farid**





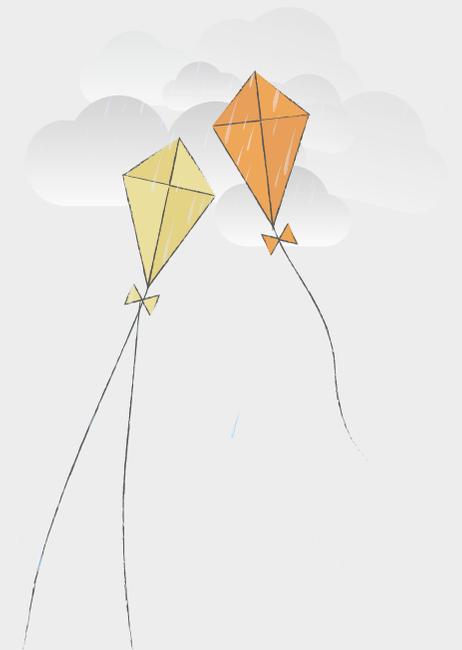
Leeds is a place where I see my future. The stairway represents the stepwise process of my journey in the UK, Sheffield being the first step in my planned upward mobility. I am thankful to Sheffield for being the springboard. Then there is Coventry as the second step in my mobility. I am grateful to it for 'pushing' me up. Leeds is the final step in realising my 10-year plan. Everything I wanted, I think I will find it here in Leeds. It will not be easy but I will find it. So Sheffield and Coventry are the means and Leeds is my final destination.

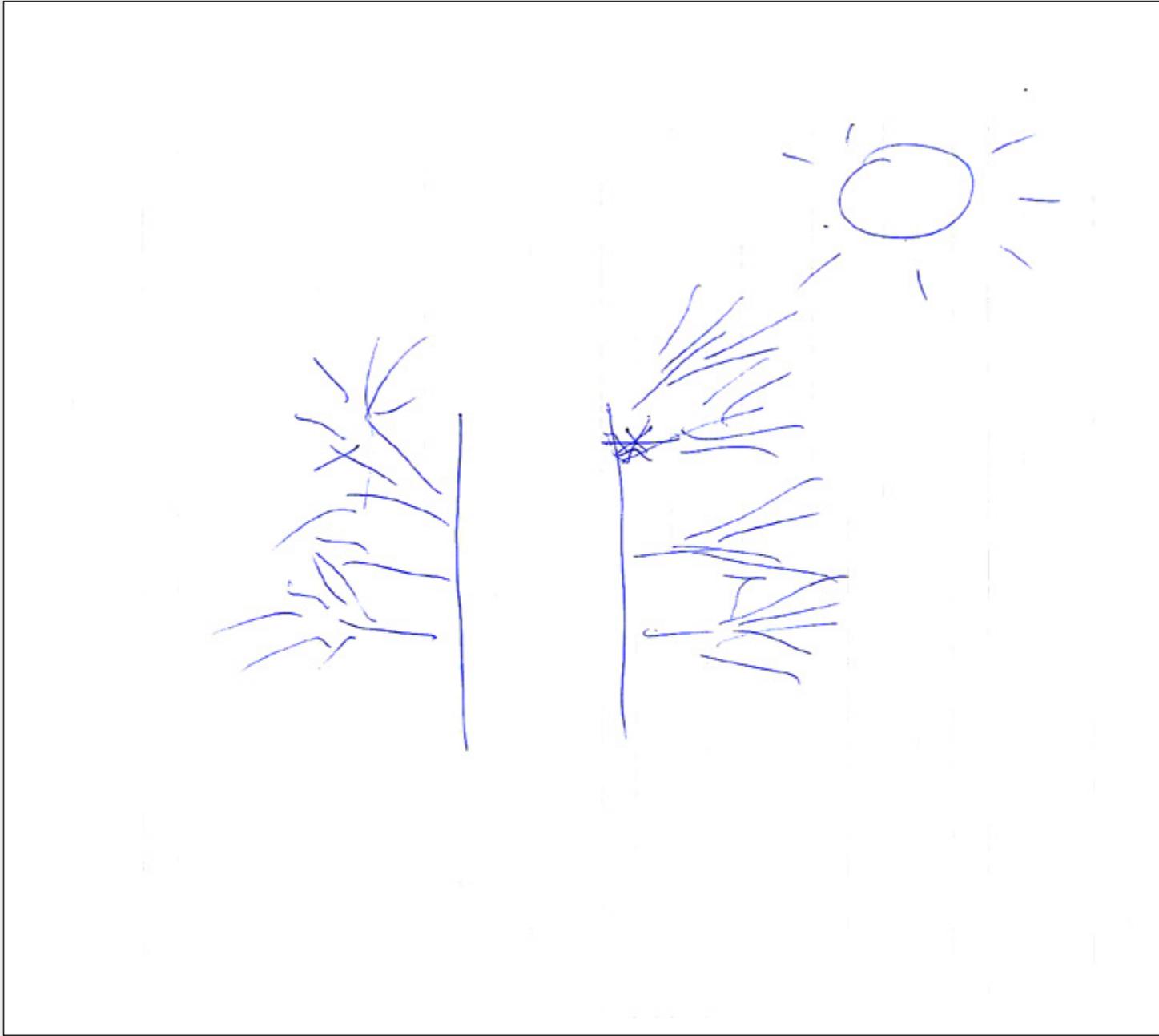
**By Freselam**



This represents the journey and totality of my life in Leeds. The dots represent life and people in Leeds. I came to Leeds through the backdoor and made it my home. Leeds is my home. And that is the reason why I did not want to live in Liverpool or Manchester. I would not go to other cities even if there is a good job opportunity.

**By Gebre**

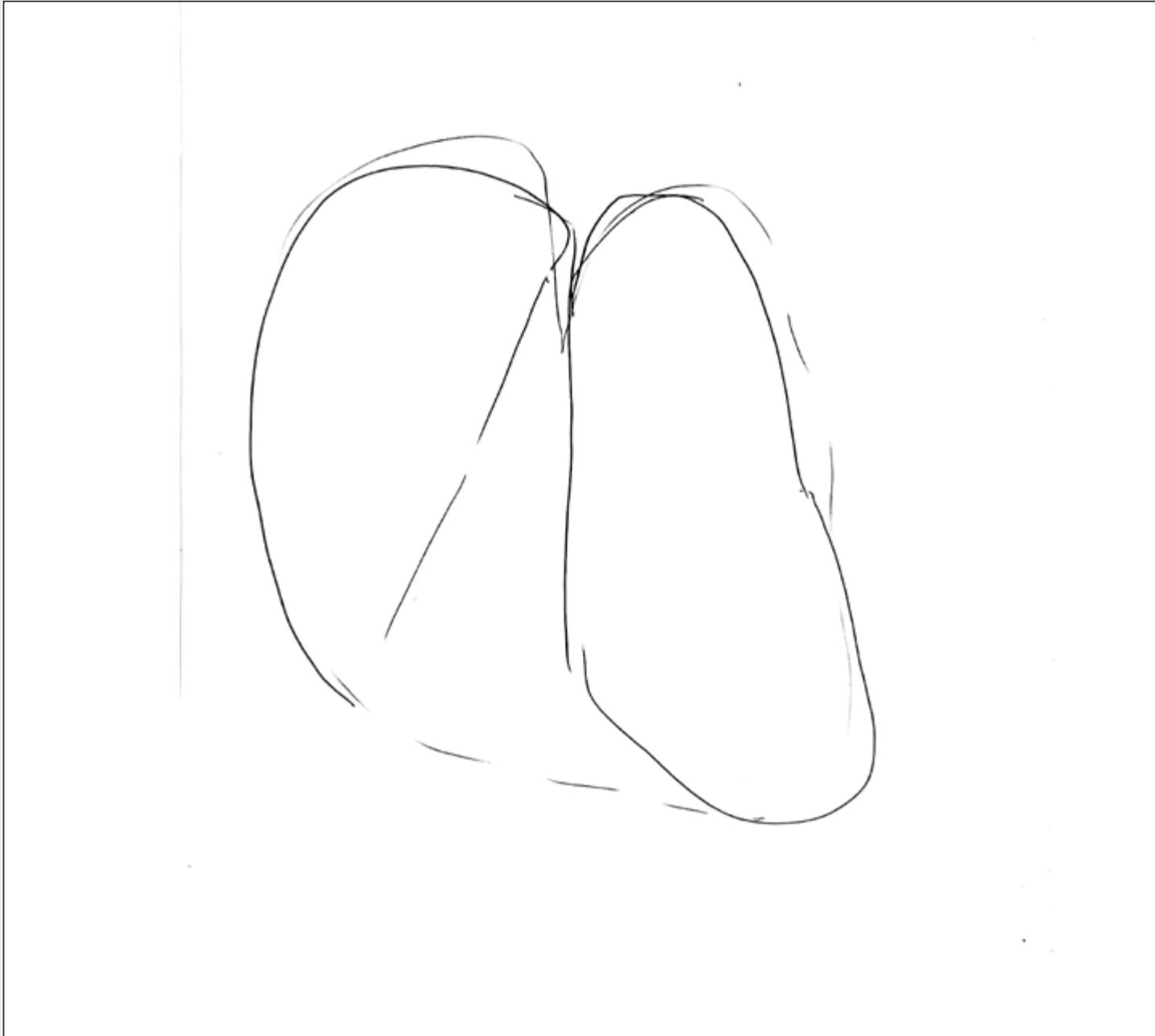




This is the avenue where we live, there are trees and the sun shines... and now the leaves are going to start coming out again. Nice flowers and all of that and hopefully nice sunny days, and it is just optimism.

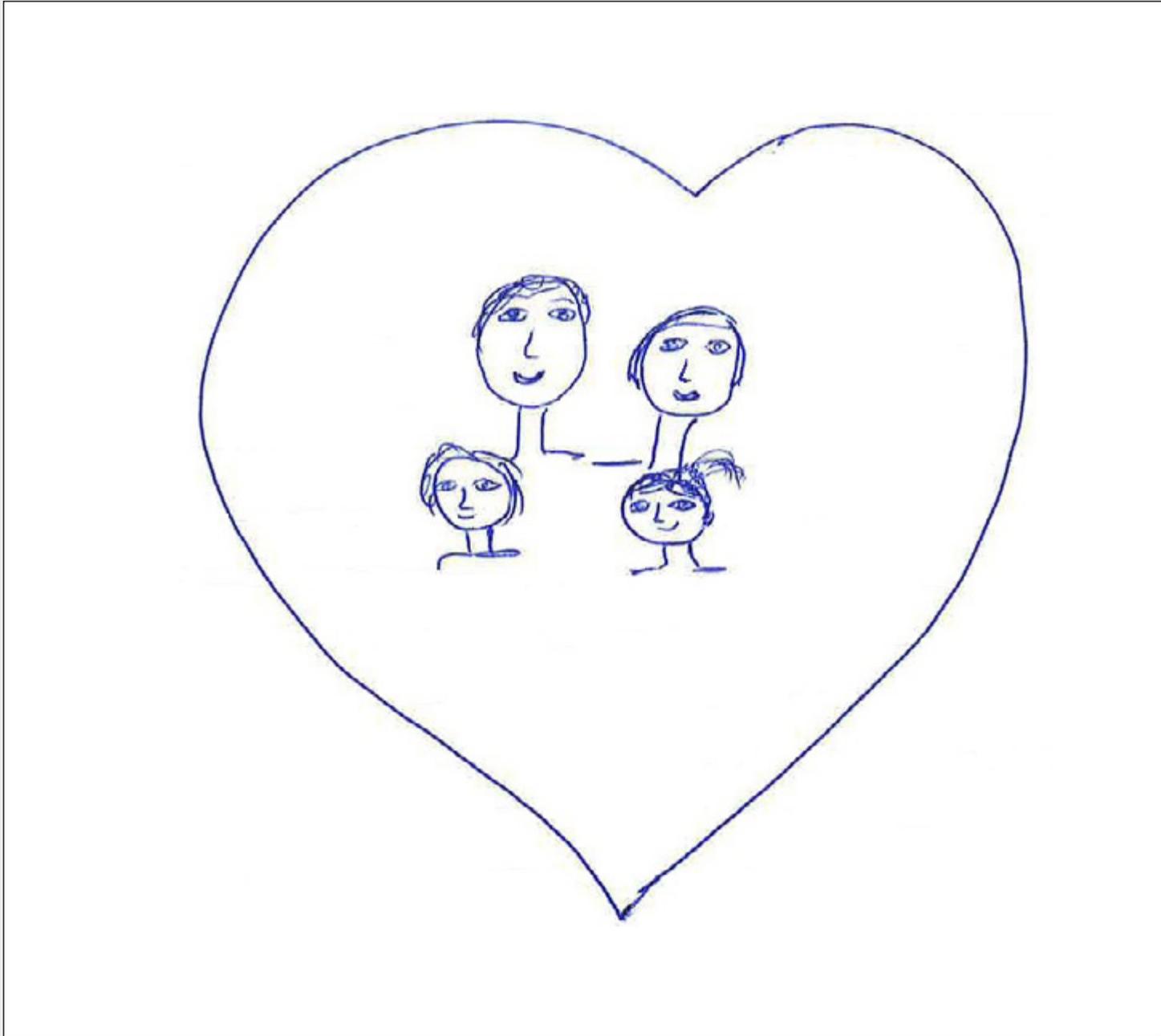
**By Haris**





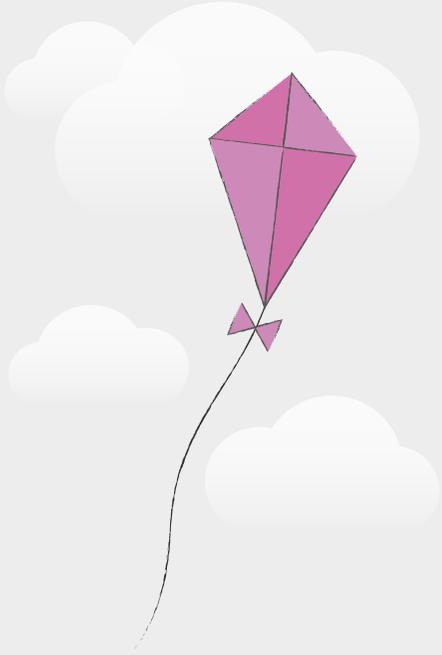
I can represent my life with a broken heart, because, you know, thanks to the government that they're keeping me safe [here], but how about the 30-years I have spent studying? My asylum was successful but I am still struggling to find an academic job to go back to my proper career. To go back to the job that I was designed to do. Maybe this is not routine in this country because there are few people with higher academic degrees who claim asylum. But again, for those small number of people like me, it is life changing. The sooner that you can go to academia and start working in your area, the more successful you can be, the more relaxed you may feel. Again, I am so thankful to this country. I am not complaining.

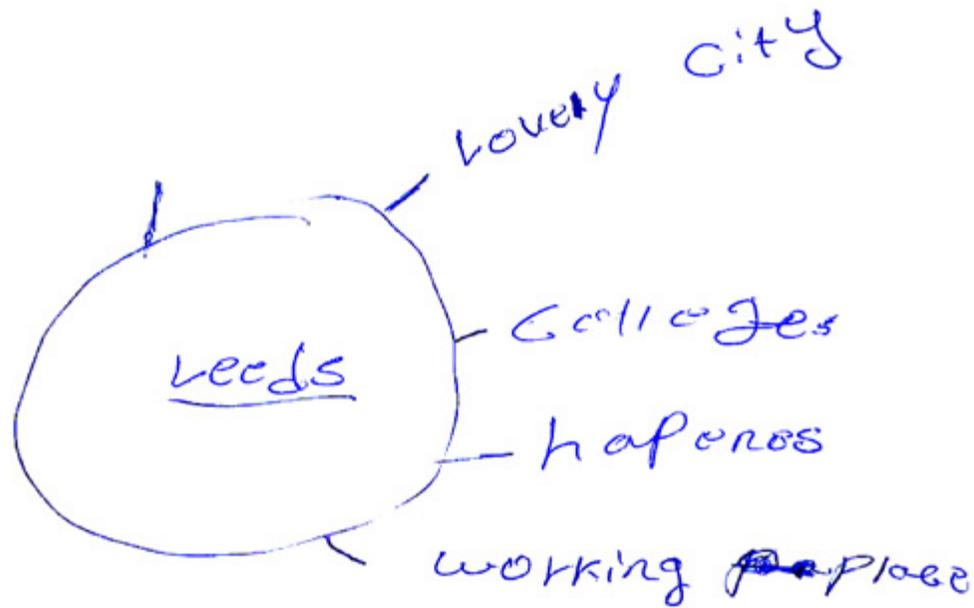
**By Hooman**



This is me and my family. I am happy with my life here. I feel safe and no one intervenes in our life. So we are feeling happy and live the way we want.

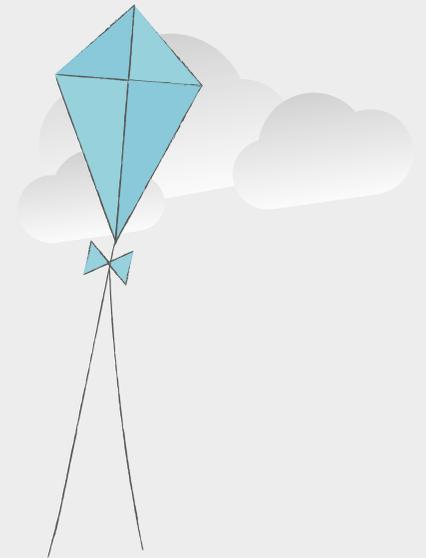
**By Jamila**





Leeds is a full circle which symbolises happiness, workplace, college and social life. Leeds gives me the opportunity to work and earn money, I go to college and it is a nice city. The social life here is good. My future plan is to go back to college on a full-time basis and study plumbing.

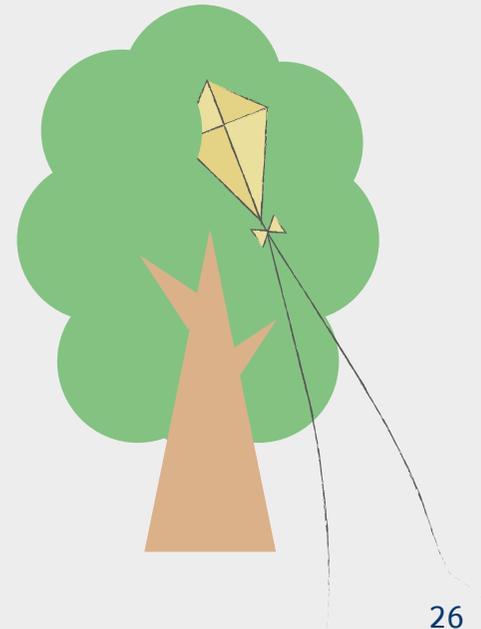
**By Kidane**





It is the Castle Hill in Huddersfield, the sign of Huddersfield...it is the uphill, the building on the hill. If you stand here you can see all of Huddersfield. It's a nice place a little bit old, but it's nice. That's me and my daughter. That's a duck, this is because in Huddersfield we have a lot of ducks. Yeah, we are happy, me and my daughter and the whole family.

**By Mabel**





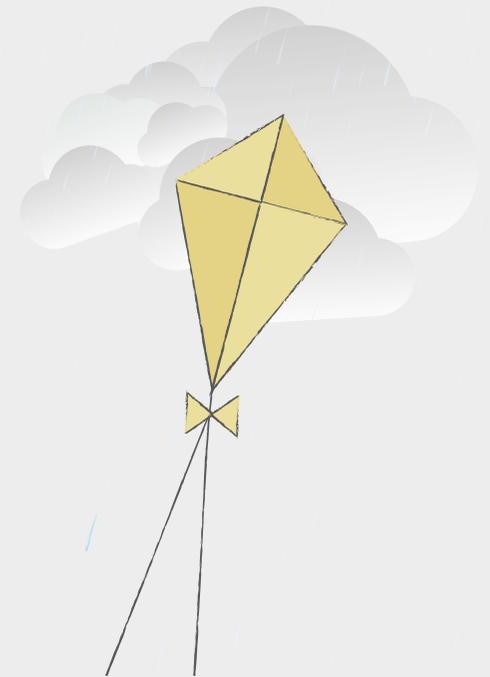
family

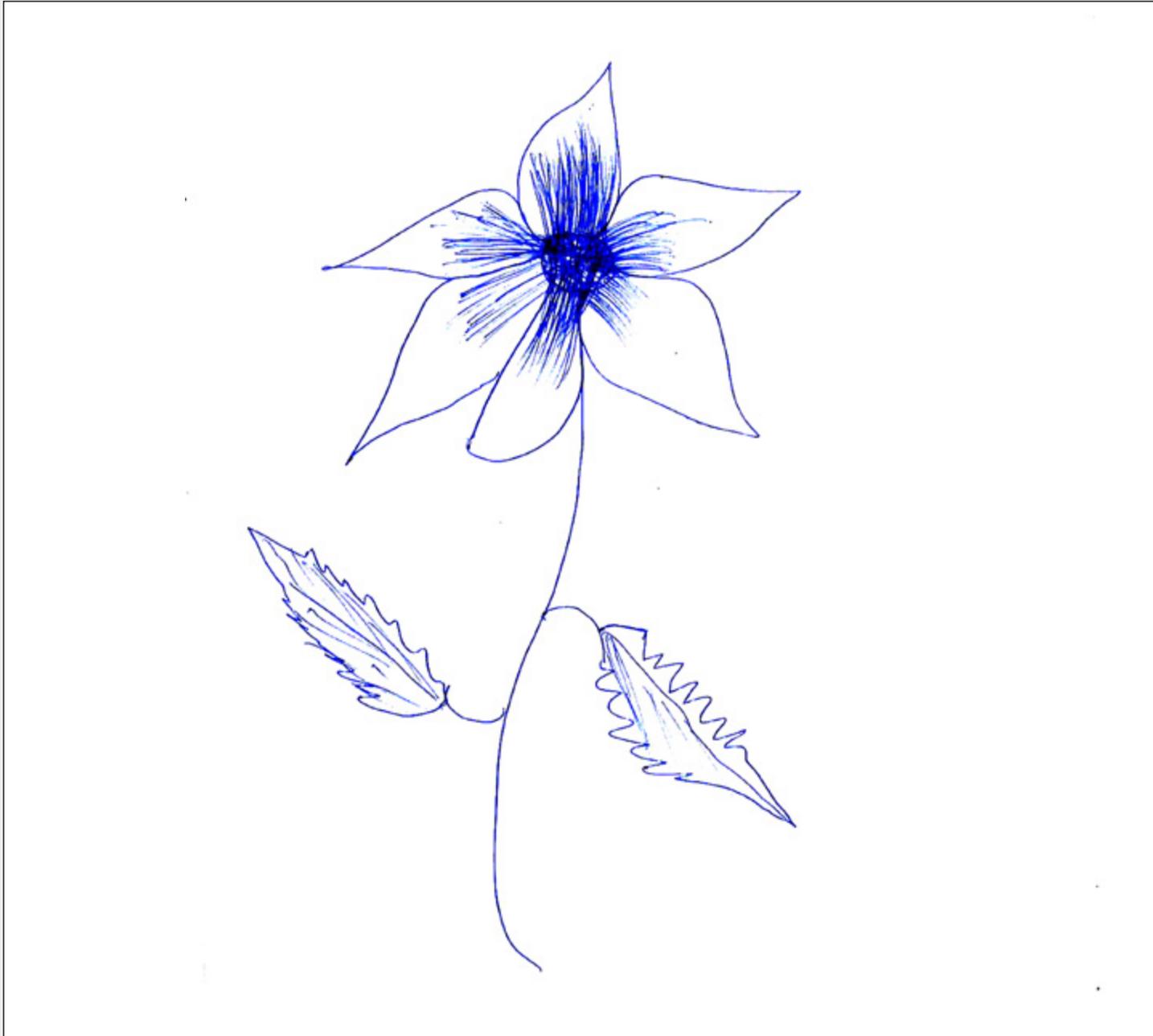


Leed means for ~~my~~ me home and family.

[this is] house, home, that one is family... Leeds means family for me... because you know, I had a lot of bad experiences and also some good experience [here]. I found a lot of good friends after these issues [my children being taken away by social services].

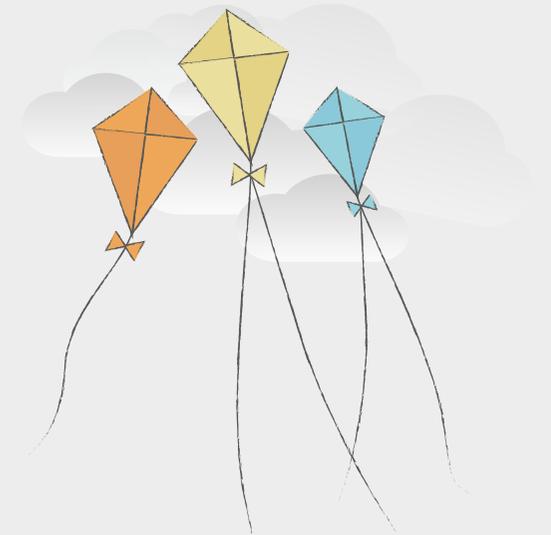
**By Maya**

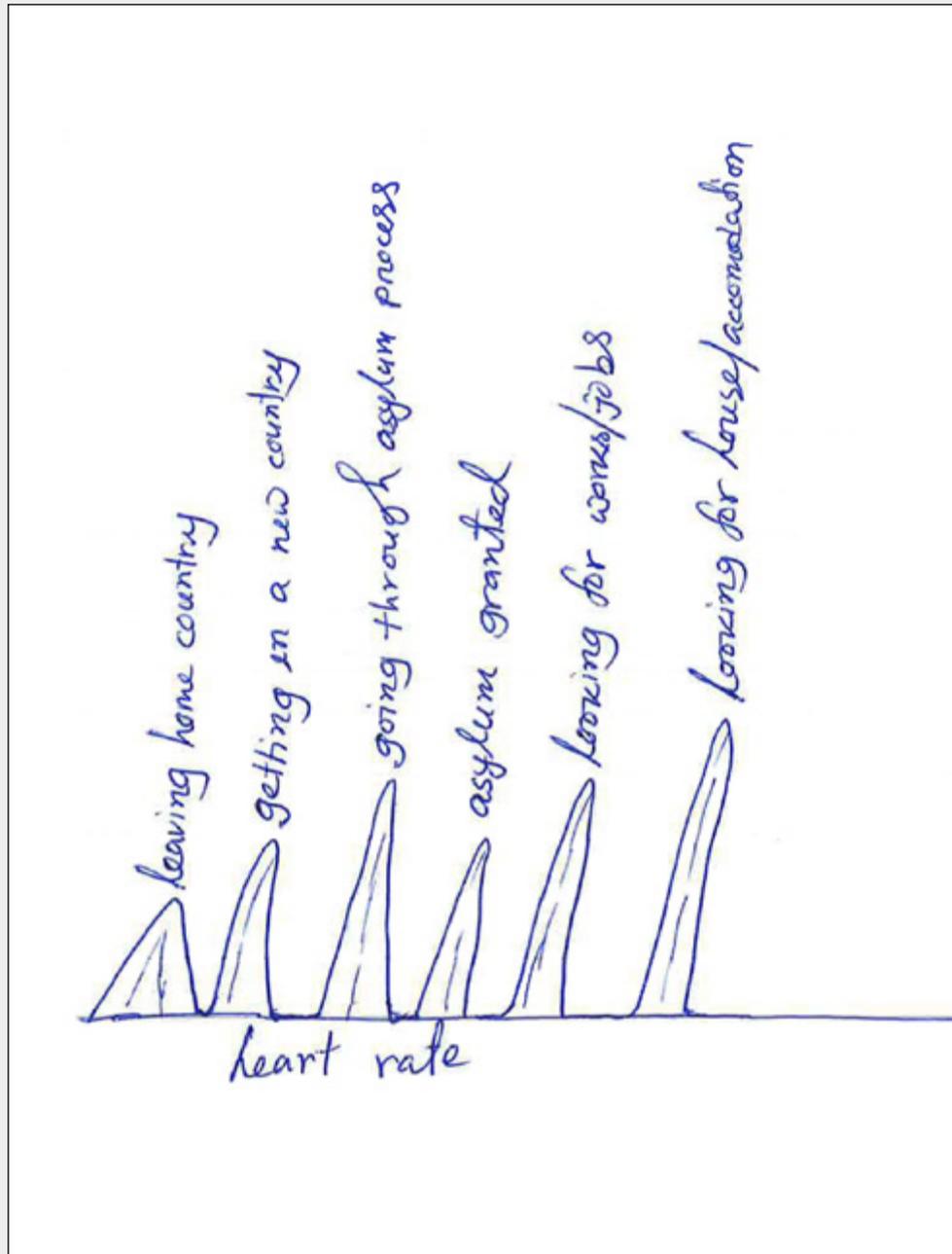




You see I did not colour all the petals, I feel like I am like this now, but there is future that I will colour and make it beautiful. That is how I feel right now, there are things I need to do but this is just a start. I have a lot of opportunities. So this is a start for a lot of opportunities.

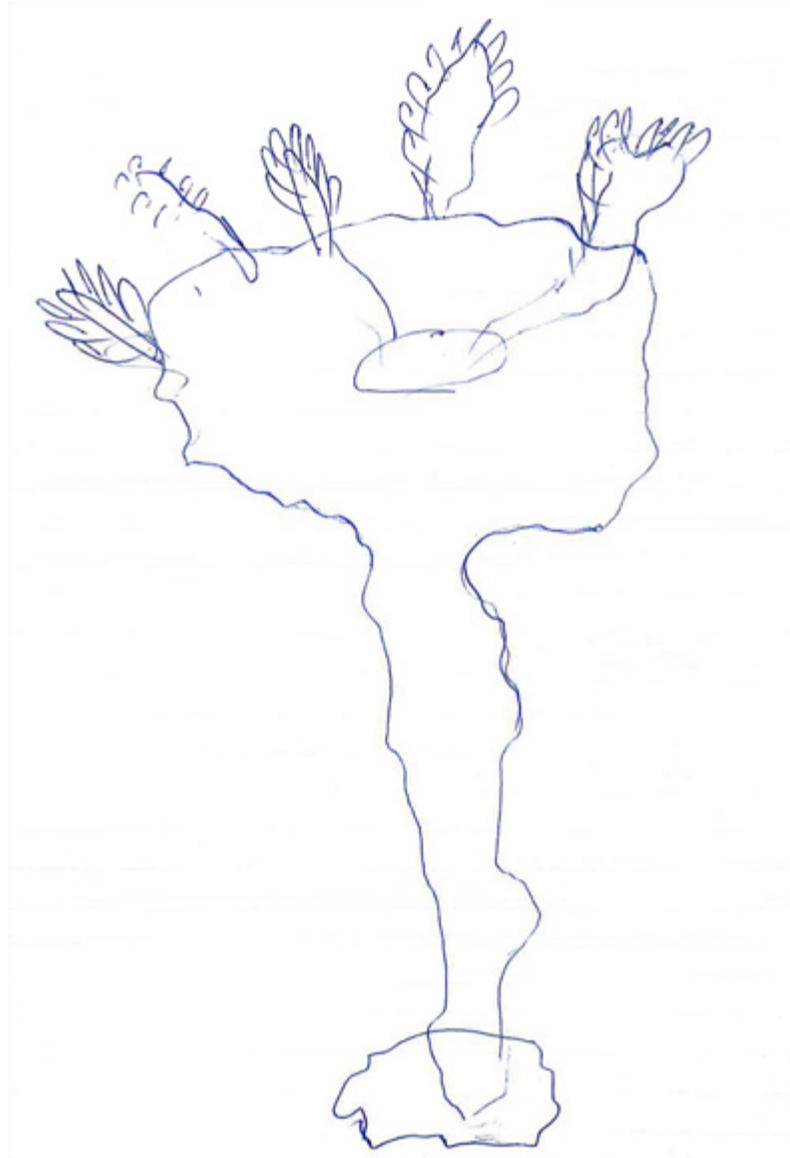
**By Miriam**





So when you actually leave your country, definitely you are not in a stable condition but the palpitation of your heart is up there ... Because you may feel after getting in there everything [would be] resolved, everything is solved. But once you get in the country, so it keeps you kind of when you see everything new and everything different, it actually gives you a pressure and your heartbeat goes a bit more, even though you thought that as soon as you get in there everything will get resolved, but actually it's not. It's even getting higher. After that when you are going through the asylum process, everything in the UK is very complicated, very time consuming, it's not time framed at all. You will keep asking people a lot of question, how long does it take to get the letter for my interview or for my hearing date, lots of things. It's very time consuming and it's getting even higher. And once you see asylum is granted, so you feel your heartbeat actually drops to this level because at that time you then start thinking well this struggle, I won this struggle now and I have to face another struggle, which is how to integrate myself... it stabilises once you get the asylum granted, but soon after you see you have got lots of things to do, because Home Office used to provide you with accommodation, Home Office used to provide you with weekly support. Now everything will stop and then you have to support yourself... I think this is even more stressful looking for your house and accommodation. I struggled, technically I was homeless for one month so I think there is a bigger struggle. And some people, like I know some people who after they are getting asylum they actually moved to London, to Manchester, they actually have got some friends, some connection so since it was just me, so I hadn't got that... I didn't draw any further ...it's going to be stabilised at some point.

**By Nadif**



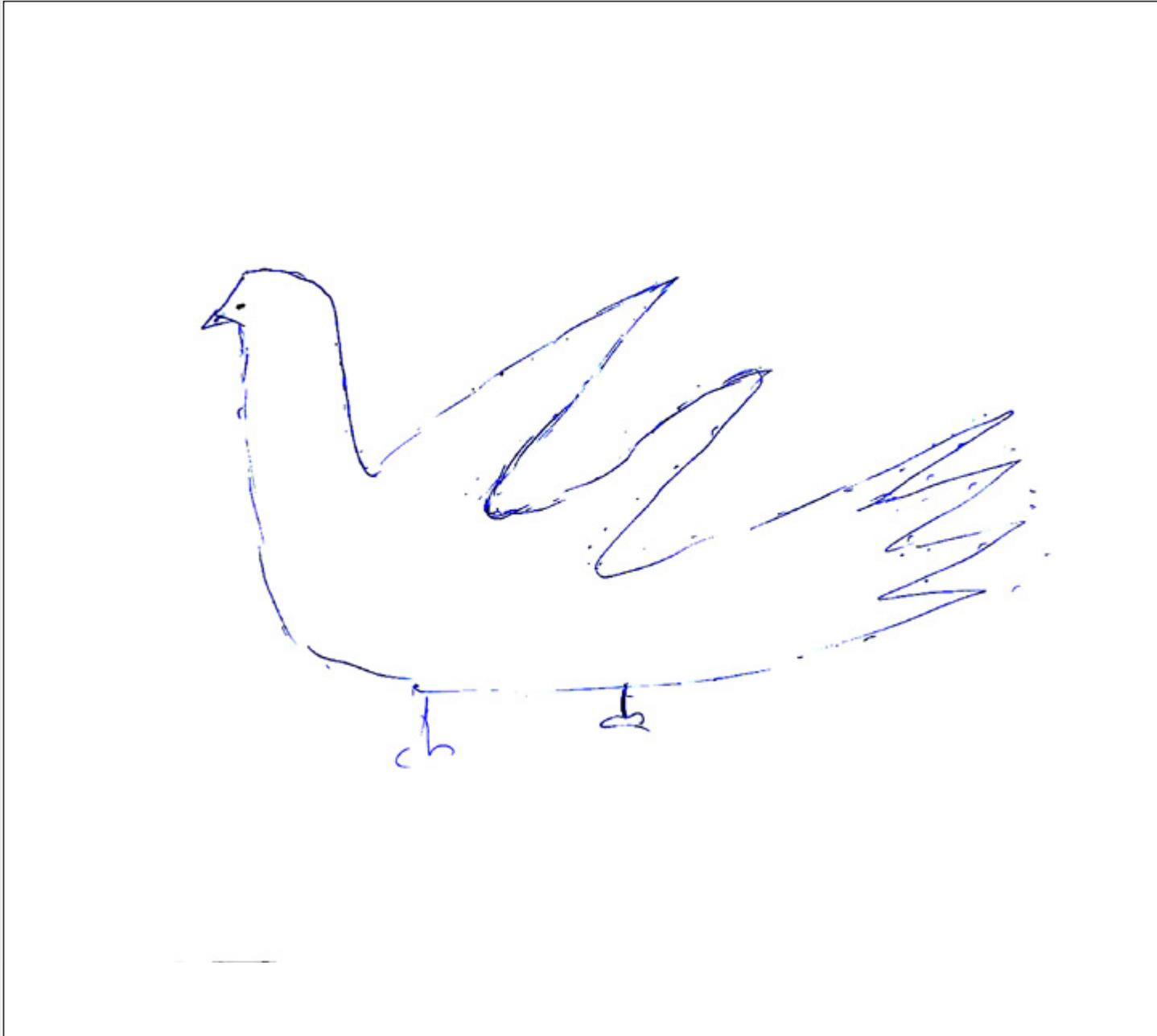
It is a tree...You see, there are trees everywhere here. In a park, all the area is covered with trees.... it's different to Africa....We don't [have many trees] in cities. In villages yes, but in the city, just a little bit ... in Africa, trees are not only about their roots and leaves, it's not only to make a place look beautiful. Some trees have specific meaning. It's then important to take care of trees. Some trees are used to treat people; people gather under trees to solve family issues; or discuss about the community. It's not always in conference rooms that crucial decisions are made. In Africa, that is sometimes done under a tree.

**By Oumar**



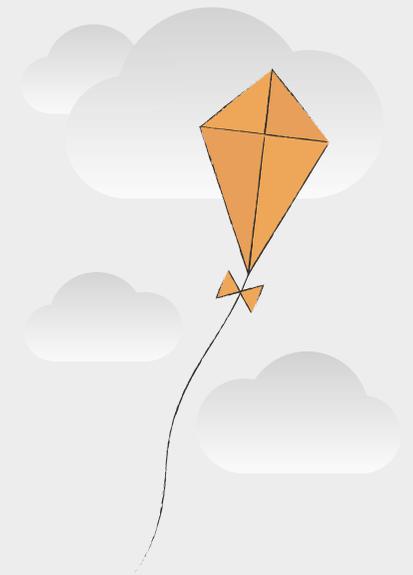
This is a tree, and this tree is just wonderful, aspiring, motivating, where my opportunities come from, like a spring and all this is just a lot of good things that could happen to me, you know. The church is a place of belonging. This is what Wakefield is for me.

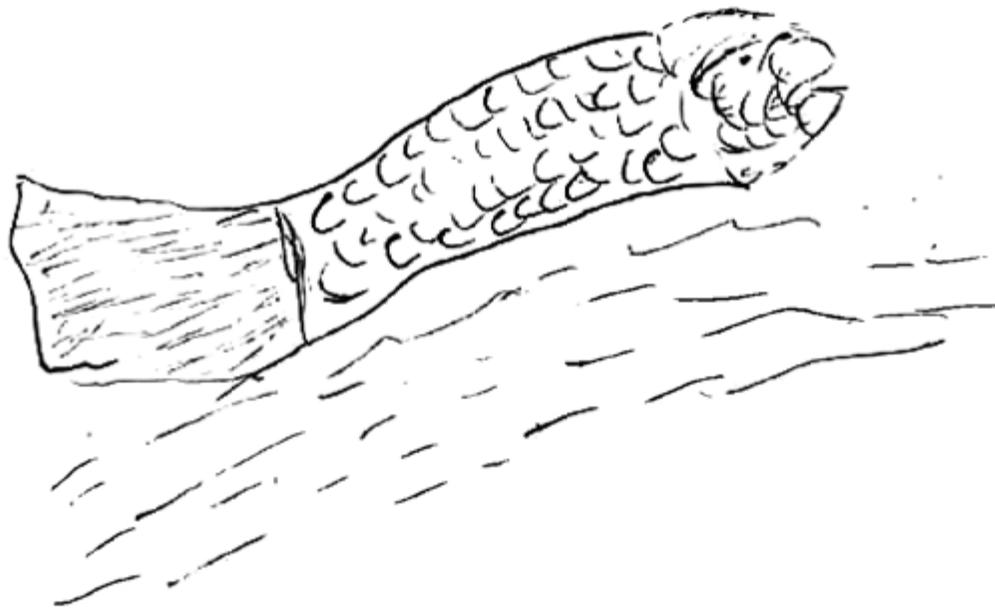
**By Priti**



Leeds is like a dove which symbolises peace and freedom. The reason I draw this is because I like Leeds. I had a bad time in Leeds, then I had a good time. I am presenting Leeds in a good way. Yeah, I like Leeds.

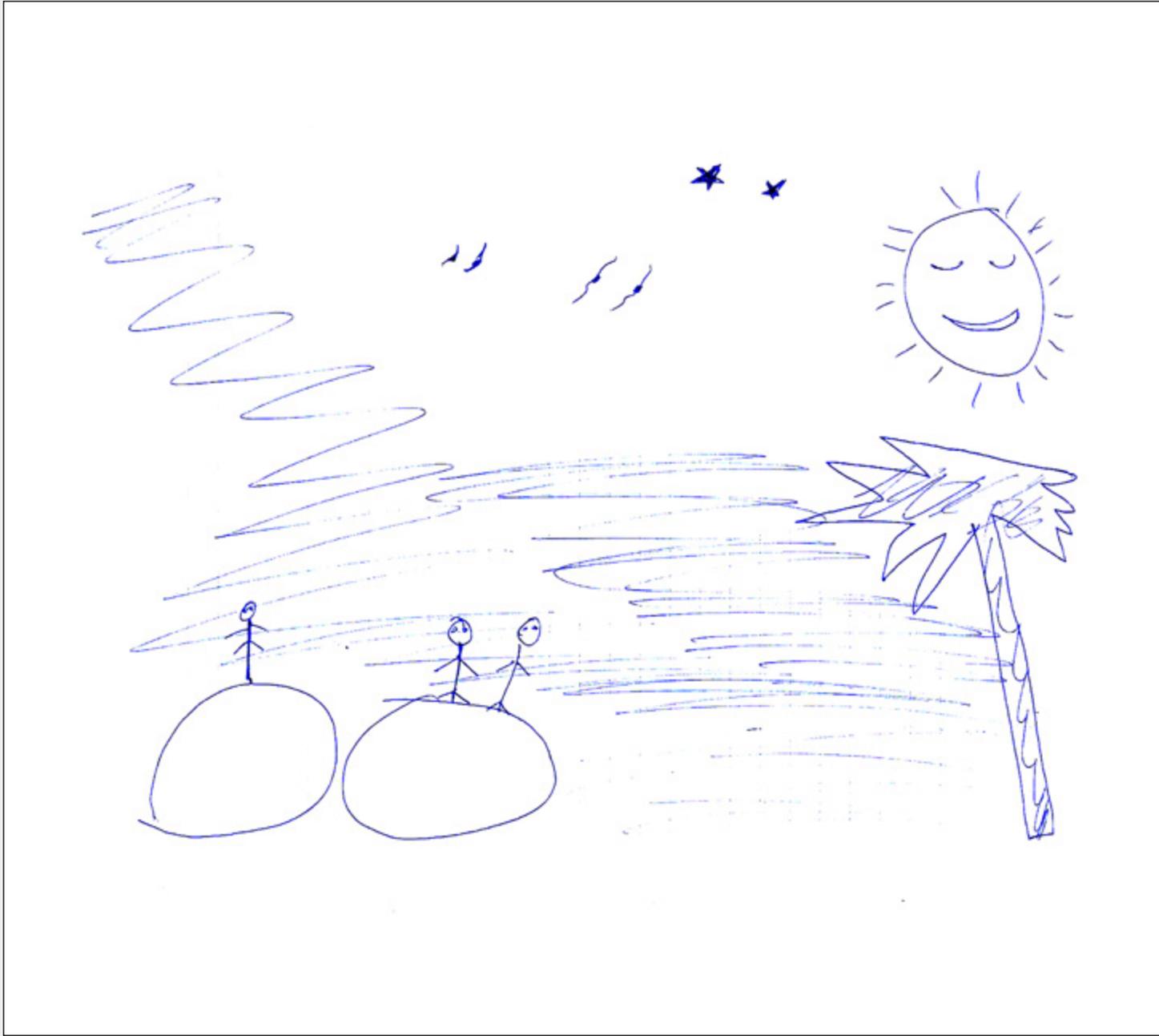
**By Se'are**





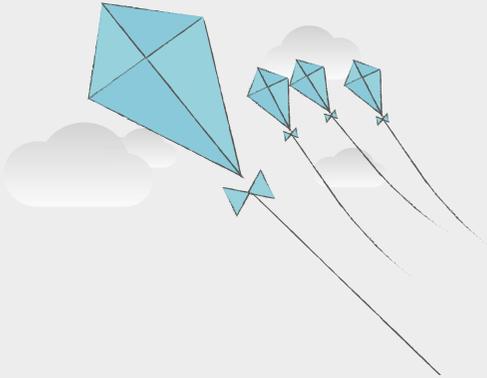
This is something that I actually kept in my mind. When we were sent to Rotherham I was really stressed out and for that reason, I started bleeding uncontrollably for three months. Later our social worker took me to the hospital and when I got there, there was a very little aquarium in my room. I was so stressed out, however I felt calm and relaxed whenever I looked at the aquarium and the fish inside. I kept that image in my mind and anytime I feel tension or stress, all I need to do is to think about it and it's actually soothing.

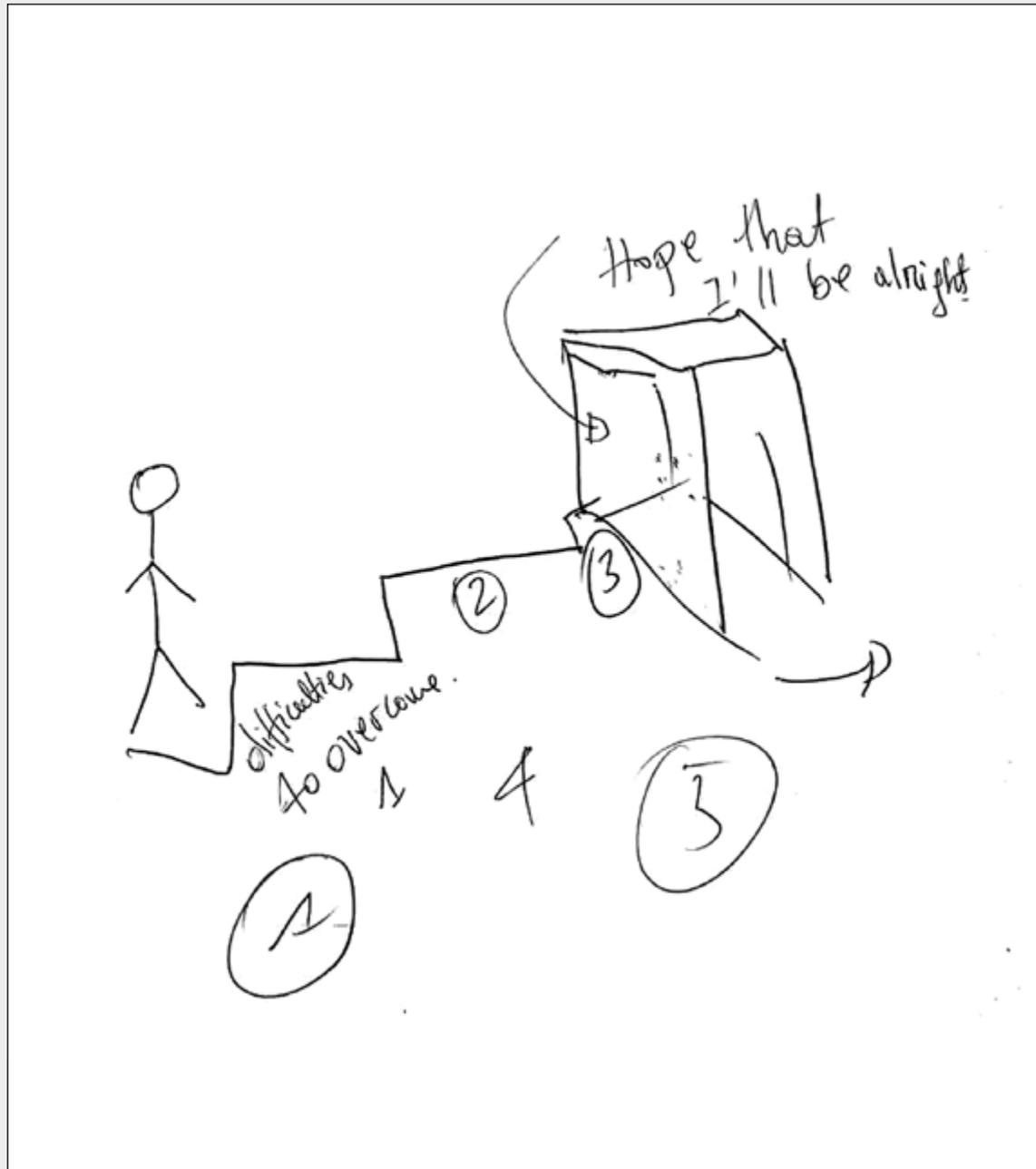
**By Serene**



People sitting by the sea, this is the sea, the Nile. The sun is setting. These are birds. These are two stars, and two big rocks.

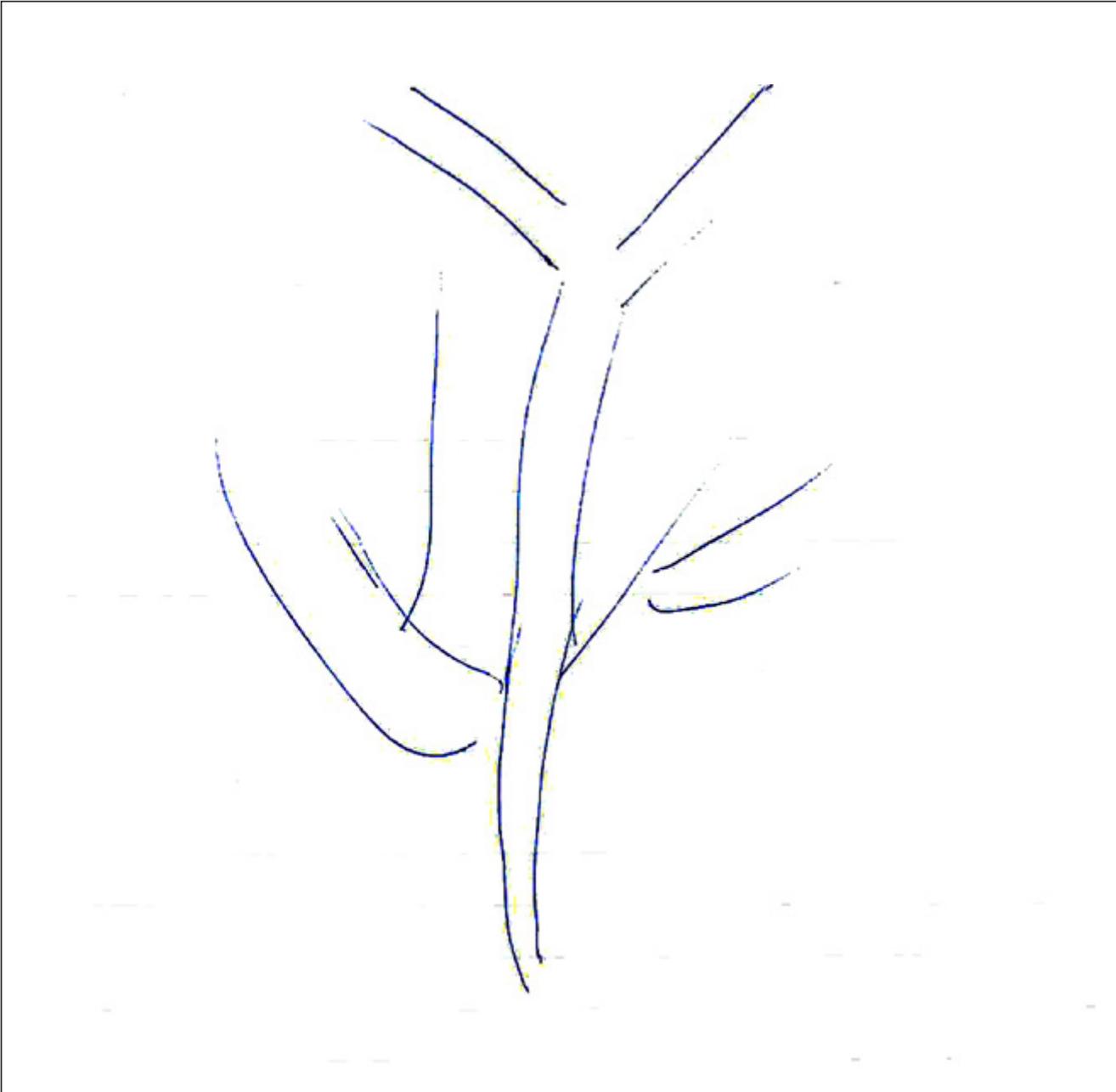
**By Suleyman**





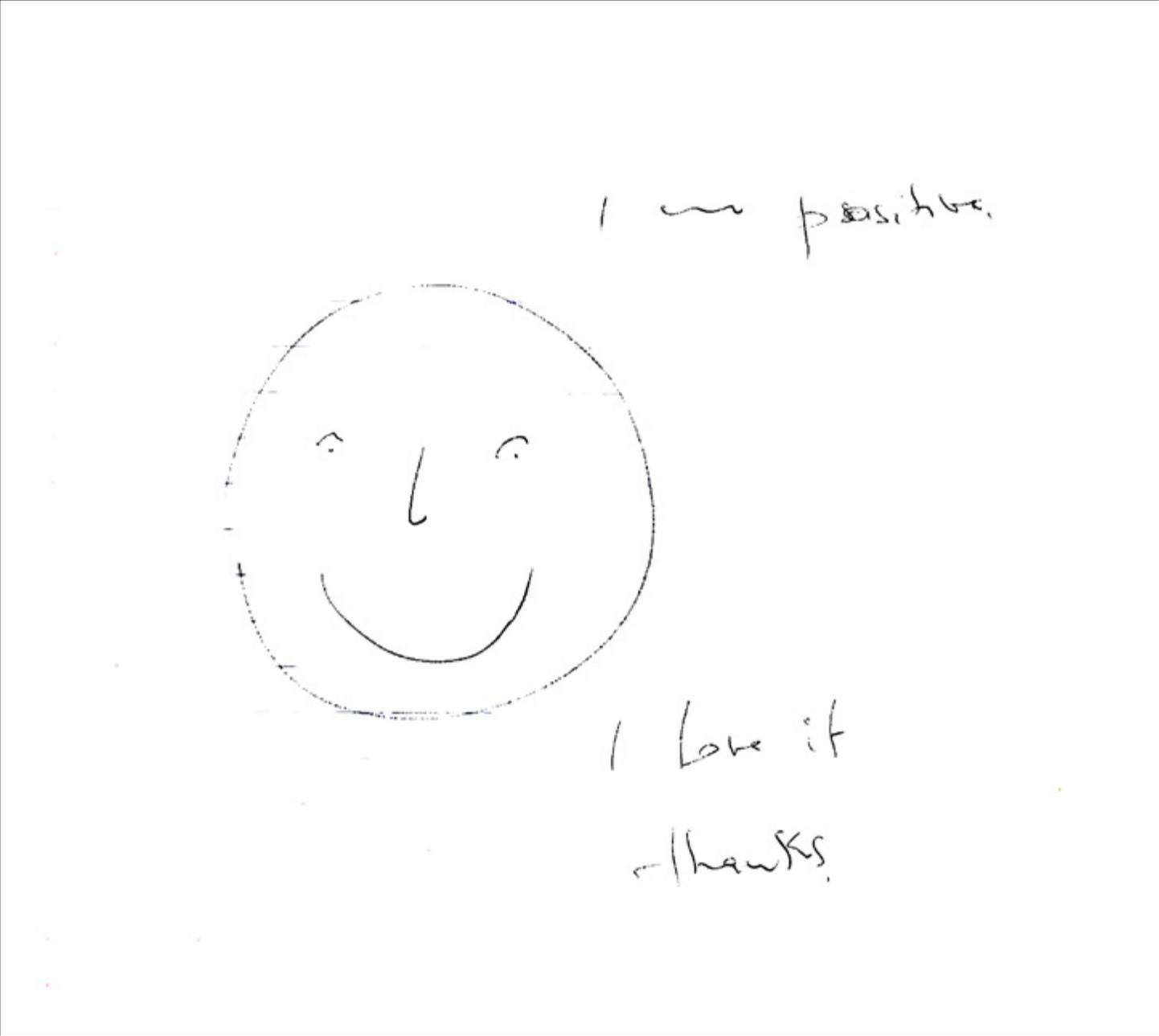
So you are living with the hope that once I overcome this difficulty I will be happy and everything is going to be ok, but you find another difficulty here and then when you overcome it again, you think this time I will be alright. But there is another one and then this “being alright” keeps on going far and far away from you and you realise that maybe this one took you one year, this one took you four years and this one, five. You never reach that hope of “alright”...[this building here] is like your home, where you think that if I reach this home, if I reach this door, then I will have my life, saying everything is going to be alright ... But for you to reach ... it will take you maybe two, four maybe five years, but if you don't have that mentality not to give up, maybe you will never reach that ... In Congo my country, to go to university is a struggle because families they don't have means for university. But when you go to university, you definitely know that that's a changing point in your life ... there are opportunities for you everywhere to become rich if you are smart enough ... And some patterns are there because we live in society where everyone help each other ... after a certain moment of life, you know exactly what you've been on and where you are now and where you are going and what is the next level, it is something that is granted ... But here you will be facing every time situation where it doesn't depends on you. It's not you who have the power to change it...I think 60% of it is because I am a refugee, so it doesn't depend on me. It depends on the law and the rules of the country.

**By Yann**



[it is] a street. When you walk, you can find another street and then go forward, and then you meet a street. Because when I work as volunteer, for example, I meet you, and you open another street... [here] We need to work more to get new chance....There are lots of opportunities here but you need to improve your language and yourself, hard work and work on things, what is most important for you....Because you need to start here from the beginning...not from zero, but from below zero. Yourself, your life, your children. You need to worry about everything, your children and worry about your culture. There are many things to think about. It is not just eat and sleep...Even if you think ahead and have plans, but still you're under the control of circumstances....[And with children it is] difficult because you need to speak with them all the time and tell them about what is wrong and what is the right way...the differences in culture and traditions....But we are here already, you can't put them in a room and close the room.

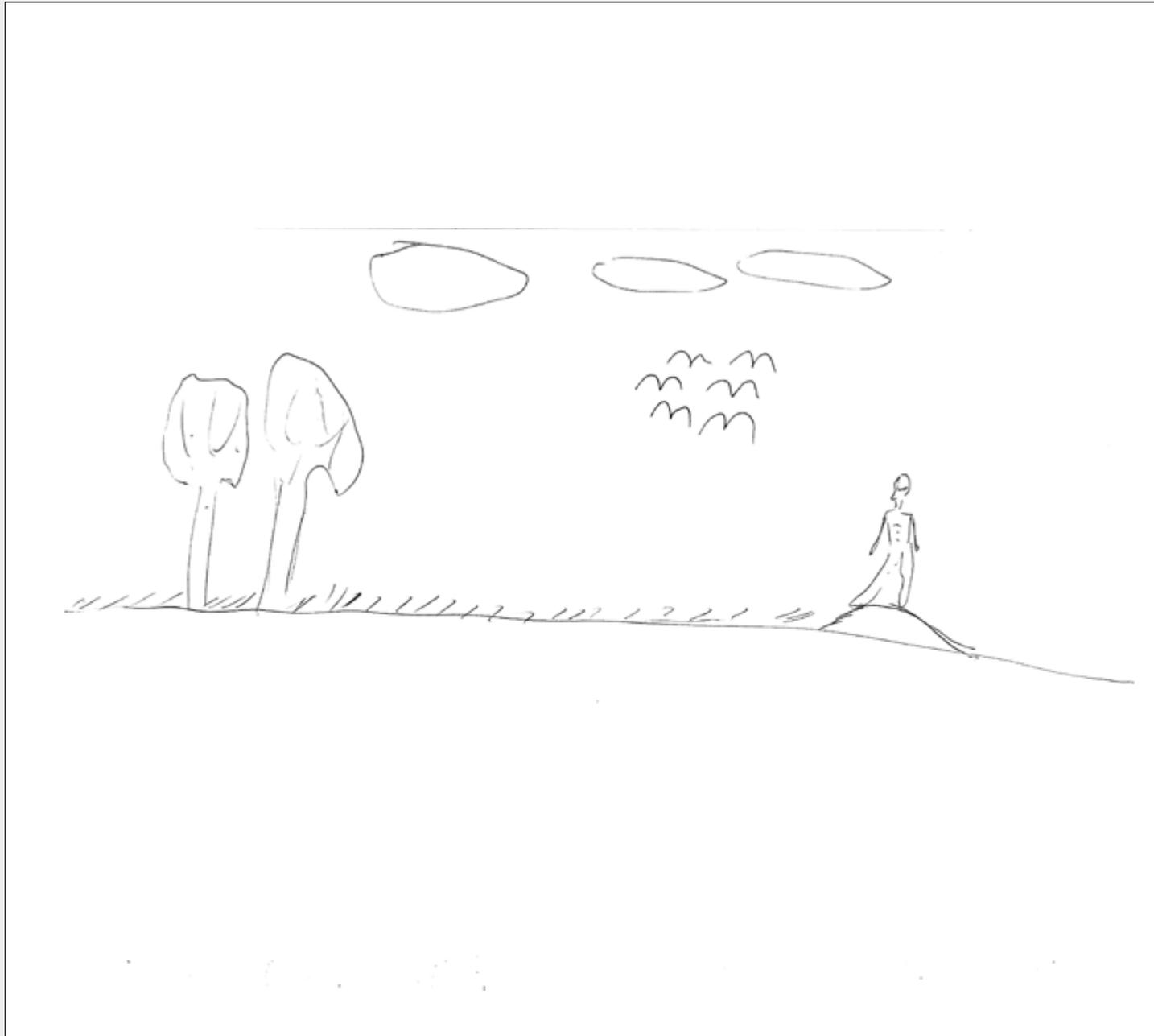
**By Yara**



I am positive about life. I love it. I am smiling...I love the true way, I love the nice people, lovely, friendly

**By Yohan**





This man, like me, stands on a rock, I see ahead, my future. There are some trees, birds, clouds, and the sky...[standing on a rock means] I want more vision, better visibility...[now] life is good...[but future] I hope will be better.

**By Zamir**



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[www.migrantinfohub.org.uk](http://www.migrantinfohub.org.uk) Covid-19 information for migrants and services in Yorkshire and Humber. Resources to share.

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Migration Yorkshire provides strategic leadership and local support across the Yorkshire and Humber region, and is hosted by Leeds City Council. Migration Yorkshire works with national, regional and local partners to ensure that the region can deal with, and benefit from, migration.

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