The Mommy License

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Illustrated by: Cora McAnulty

To Lily and Henry. Thank you for making me a Mommy.
And to Cora for giving me my first Mommy License!
-S.M.

To Mommy. Thank you for making great books.
To Daddy. You are really good at computers.
-C.M.

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The day I was born the doctor handed me to my mommy. Then he gave her the Big Book of Rules and her Mommy License. She was asked to raise her right hand and take the Mommy Oath.

"I solemnly promise to be the best Mommy I can be, to love my child forever, and to follow all the Mommy Rules."

My mommy read all the rules in the book. All seven hundred and twenty-one rules.

And I was always trying to break the rules. All seven hundred and twenty-one rules.

When I was a baby, I tried to take our dog, Max, for a ride.

"No, no, no," said Mommy. "Rule 57: Do not allow your child to use the dog as a pony. You don't want me to lose my Mommy License, do you?"

When I was one, I tried to wash my teddy bear in the potty.

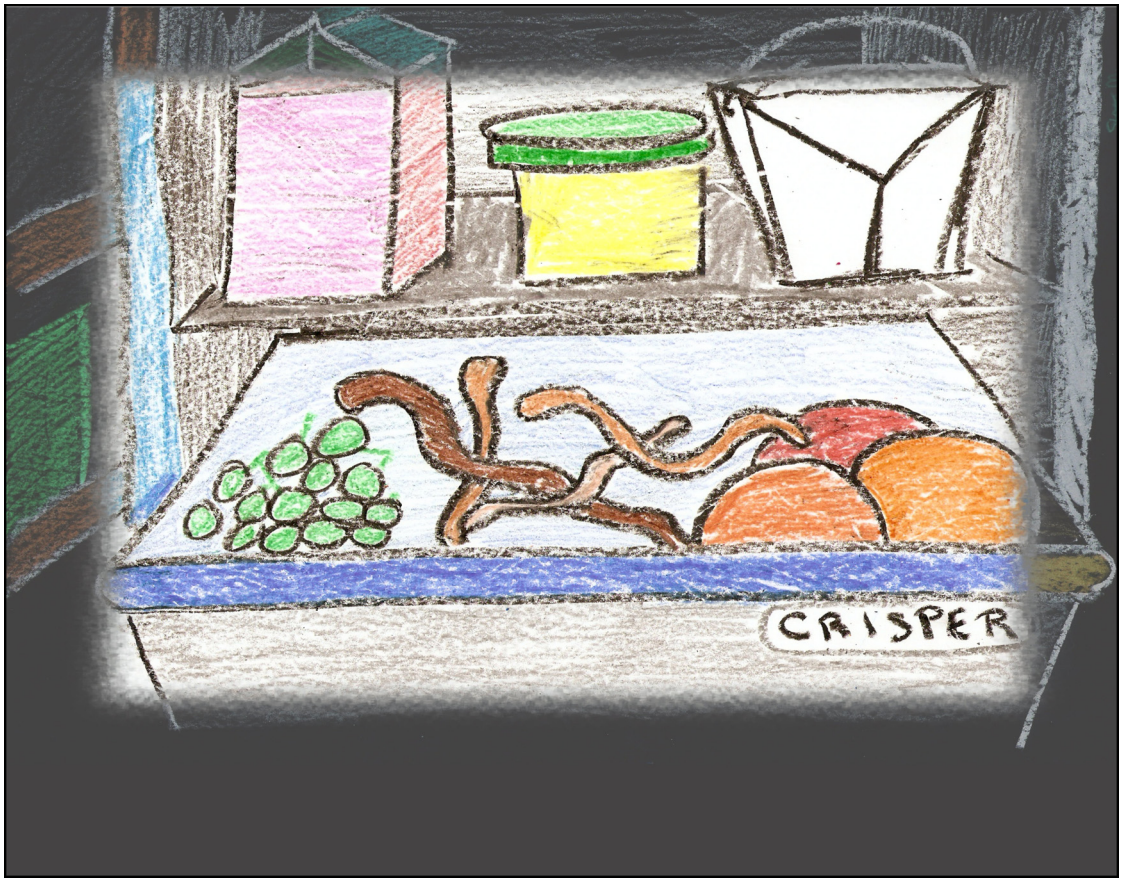
"No, no, no," said Mommy. "Rule 106: Do not allow your child to play in the toilet. You don't want me to lose my Mommy License, do you?"

When I was two, I tried to decorate the walls with an orange crayon.

"No, no, no," said Mommy. "Rule 197: Do not allow your child to color on anything but paper. You don't want me to lose my Mommy License, do you?"

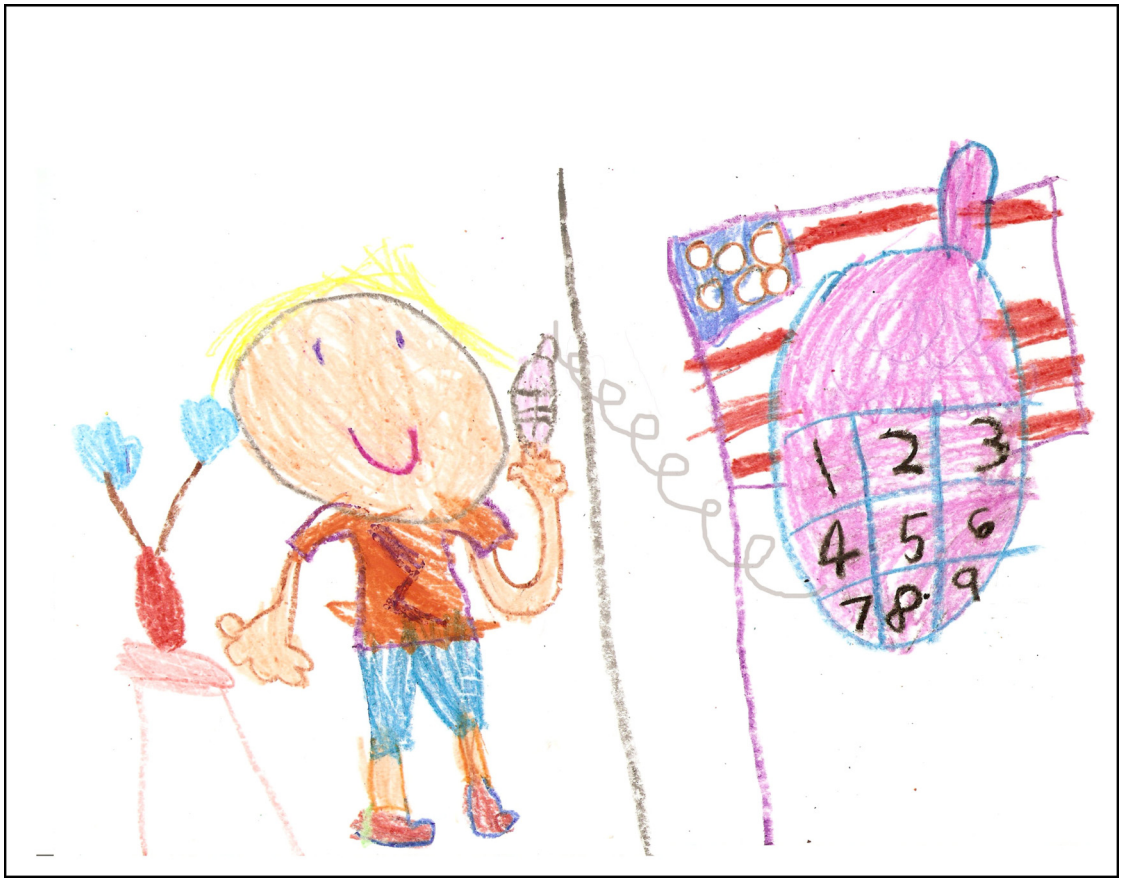
When I was three, I tried to wear my bathing suit to preschool.

"No, no, no," said Mommy. "Rule 241: Do not allow your child to wear summer clothes in the snow. You don't want me to lose my Mommy License, do you?"



When I was four, I tried to keep a family of worms in the fridge.

"No, no, no," said Mommy. "Rule 509: Do not allow your child to keep pets in the refrigerator. You don't want me to lose my Mommy License, do you?"



When I was five, I tried to call the President of the United States.

"No, no, no," said Mommy. "Rule 642: Do not allow your child to telephone any national leaders just to say 'Hi!'. You don't want me to lose my Mommy License, do you?"

When I was six, I tried to sneak a piece of chocolate cake for breakfast. And you know what? Mommy never saw me.

As I finished licking the last bit of frosting off the plate there was a knock at the front door.

"May I help you?" Mommy asked when she opened it.

"Yes, Ma'am," said the little fairy floating at our door. "I'm from the DFL - Department of Family Licenses. I regret to inform you that we must take back your Mommy License."

"Oh dear." Mommy said. "Why?"

The fairy pointed her wand at me. "He knows."

"I had chocolate cake for breakfast. I'm sorry, Mommy."

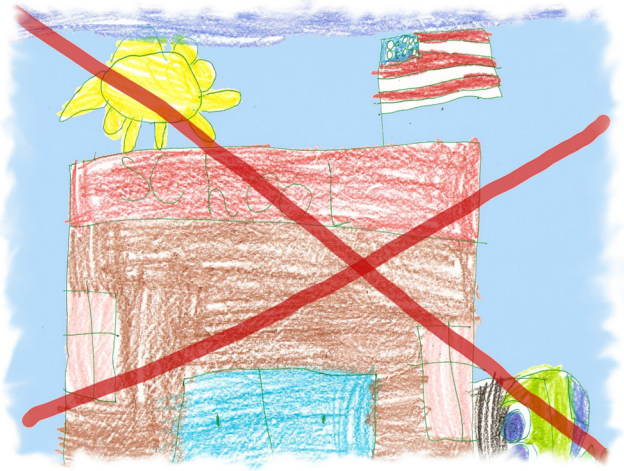
"Stop, my child. You can no longer call her Mommy. You must now call her 'Mrs. Walker'," the fairy ordered me.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Walker." I said.

Then Mrs. Walker handed over her Big Book of Rules and her Mommy license. When the fairy flew away, Mrs. Walker patted me on the back.

"I think I'll make another cake," she said. "Perhaps vanilla."

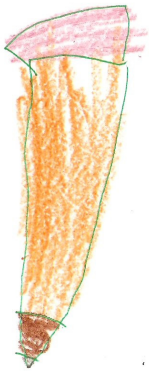
For the rest of the day, Mommy…er…I mean Mrs. Walker, let me do whatever I wanted. There were no rules at all.



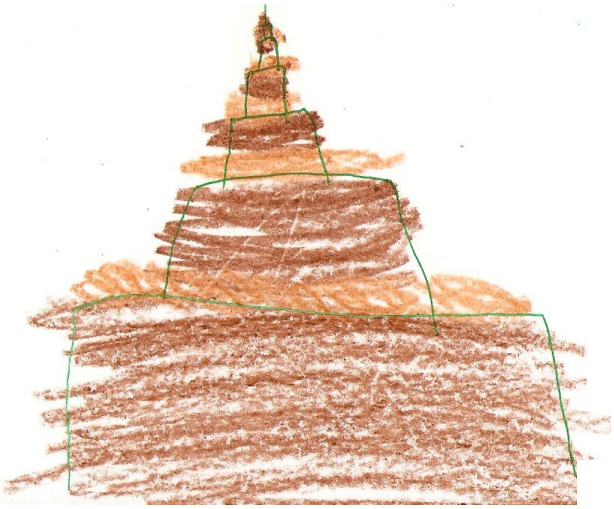
I didn't go to school.

I ate potato chips and ice-pops for lunch.

I watched a movie with a giant, fire-breathing lizard.



I didn't do any homework.



I ate the rest of the chocolate cake for dinner and half the vanilla cake for dessert.

I didn't feed the dog.

I didn't take a bath.

I stayed up really late.

When I was finally tired, I crawled into bed. But I couldn't sleep. My stomach bubbled and flipped in pain. If I closed my eyes I imagined a giant, fire-breathing lizard trying to eat my house. And there was a really bad smell coming from my bed. I think it was me.

"Mrs. Walker!" I yelled.

She came running into my room. Even though she didn't have her Mommy License and even though I smelled like a dirty sock, she hugged me tight. Then she gave me a glass of water which made my belly feel better. And she wiped my face with a warm wash cloth.

"Mommy," I whispered so the fairy from the Department of Family Licenses could not hear me. "Tomorrow, I'm going to help you get your Mommy License back!"

As soon as the sun was up, I did some research. Mrs. Walker could only get her Mommy License back if she passed the fifty question Mommy test.

"Let's get to work," I said as I ran into her room.

So we began our studying.

"What is a healthy snack: apples, doughnuts, or ladybugs?" I asked her.

"Apples." Mrs. Walker answered.

Correct!

"What must a kid wear in the car: a hat, a seatbelt or a parrot on his shoulder?" I asked.

"A seatbelt," she said.

Correct!

During a bath, what part of a child does not get washed: the belly, the feet, or the tongue?" I asked.

"The tongue," she said.

Correct!

"Let's try one more question. When is a child too old for a bedtime hug: 4, 14, or 44?" I asked.

Mrs. Walker thought about it for like an hour. "Never," she finally said.

That's correct!

"It was a trick question." I said and gave her a high five.

Mrs. Walker drove us to the Department of Family Licenses. We held hands as we waited in a long line that snaked through rope.

"You'll do great," I told her. "And I promise not to break any more rules."

She smiled.

When we finally got to the front of the line a fairy told Mrs. Walker to go into the testing room. I waited in the hall with the other children.

"How did your mom lose her license?" asked the red-haired girl seated next to me.

"I ate chocolate cake for breakfast," I answered.

"Oh. That doesn't seem so bad. I put lipstick on our cat and gave her a haircut," she said.

It was a long time before Mrs. Walker finished her test and I was getting nervous. When she came through the door I jumped out of my chair.

"Did you pass?" I asked.

"I did, thanks to you." Mommy showed me her new, golden Mommy License.

On the way home from the Department of Family Licenses we stopped for ice-cream and everything was wonderful…

…until I turned seven and broke Rule 543: Do not allow your child to ride a sled down the stairs.