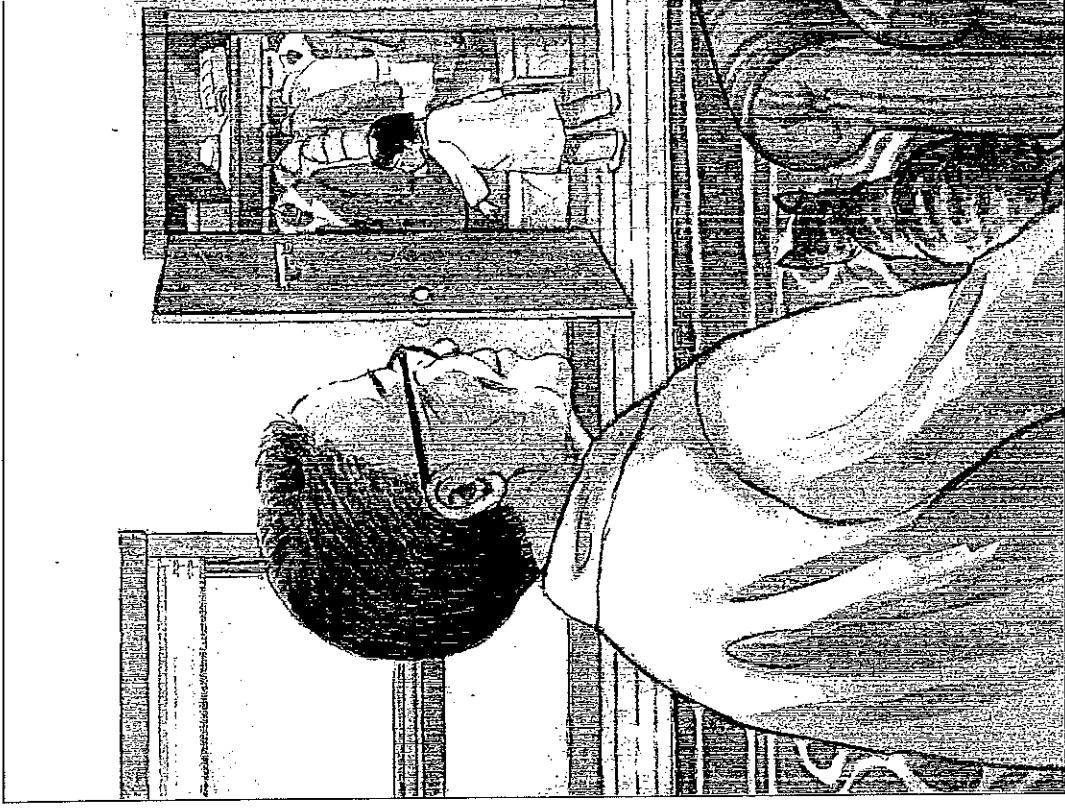


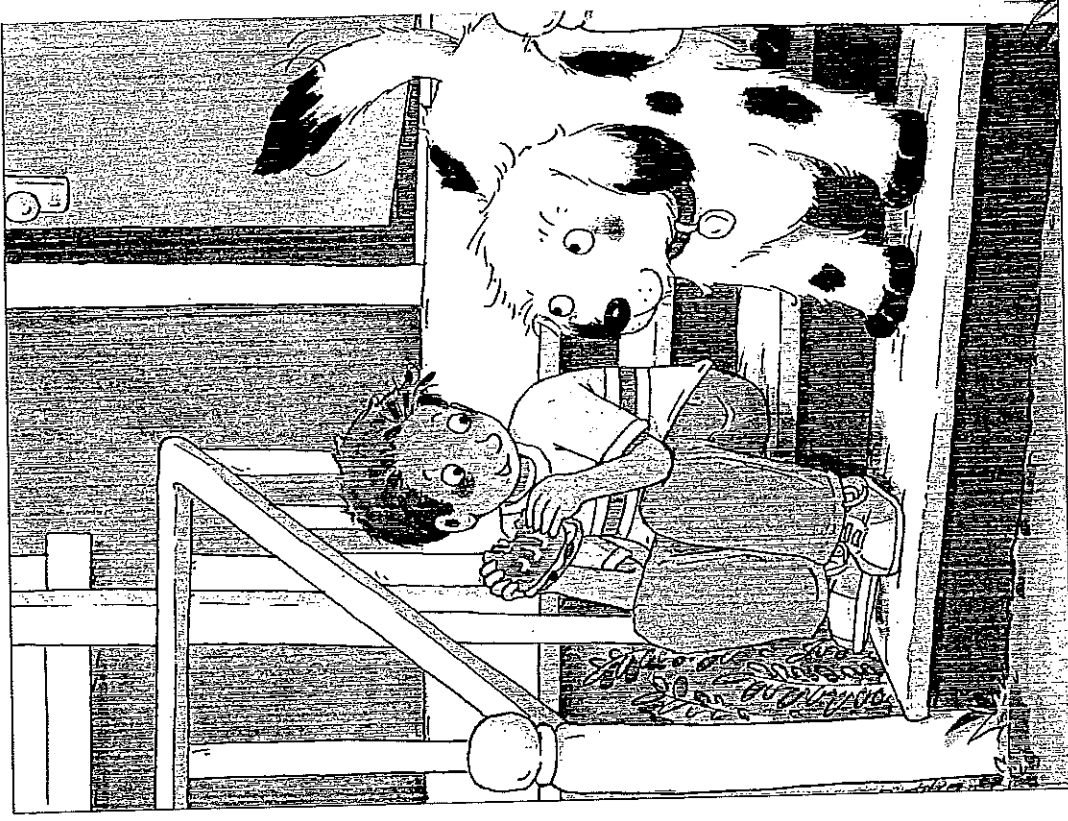
“Look at the rain,” said Dad.
“Get your umbrella.”



Kim looked in the closet.
“No umbrella,” she said.



Jim had a dog. The dog was
black and white. The dog's name
was Duke.



Duke was a big dog. He had
big feet. Jim liked his dog.

“I will have a snowball fight with you,” said Violet.

“I will be your friend.”

“Little sisters can’t be your friend,”

said Arthur.

“They cry if a snowball hits them.”

“I promise not to cry if you promise not to pack your snowballs too hard,” said Violet.

“Okay,” said Arthur. “I promise.”



Violet ran to get her coat and hat and mittens and boots.

Arthur practiced hitting himself with snowballs.

Arthur? Buster? Anyone? We just got a big delivery from the supermarket. You can have make-your-own sundaes. And if you're not interested in games, we can watch movies on my big-screen TV."

Prunella turned to the right, and all the kids followed her. Muffy stopped pedaling and watched them disappear around the corner.

She sighed. "They don't know what they're missing," she said, and pedaled away in the opposite direction.

Chapter 6

"It was my pitch. I could have hit it," said the Brain.

"I know," said Arthur. "I know."

Buster sighed. "But what could you do? The cootie-catcher had spoken. It told you not to swing at any pitches."

The three of them were standing on the playground. Arthur and Buster were trying to cheer up the Brain, who had struck out three times during that day's baseball game.

"It was bad enough to strike out," said the Brain. "But not being allowed to swing...!"

STONE FOX

the mirror so Grandfather could see.

"I'm warning you," Clifford Snyder continued. "If you don't pay . . . we have our ways. And it's all legal. All fair and legal. You're no better than other folks."

"Do we owe you some money, Mr. Snyder?" little Willy asked.

"Taxes, son. Taxes on this farm. Your grandfather there hasn't been paying them."

Little Willy was confused.

Taxes? Grandfather had always paid every bill. And always on time. And little Willy did the same. So what was this about taxes? Grandfather had never mentioned them before. There must be some mistake.

"Is it true?" little Willy asked Grandfather.

But Grandfather didn't answer. Apparently he had gotten worse during the day. He didn't move his hand, or even his fingers.

"Ask him about the letters," piped up Clifford Snyder.

The Reason

"What letters?"

"Every year we send a letter—a tax bill—showing how much you owe."

"I've never seen one," insisted little Willy.

"Probably threw 'em out."

"Are you sure . . ." began little Willy. And then he remembered the strongbox.

He removed the boards, then lifted the heavy box up onto the floor. He opened it and removed the papers. The papers he remembered seeing when he had looked for the money to rent the horse.

"Are these the letters?" he asked.

Clifford Snyder snatched the letters from little Willy's hand and examined them. "Yep, sure are," he said. "These go back over ten years." He held up one of the letters. "This here is the last one we sent."

Little Willy looked at the paper. There were so many figures and columns and numbers that he couldn't make any sense out of what he was look-