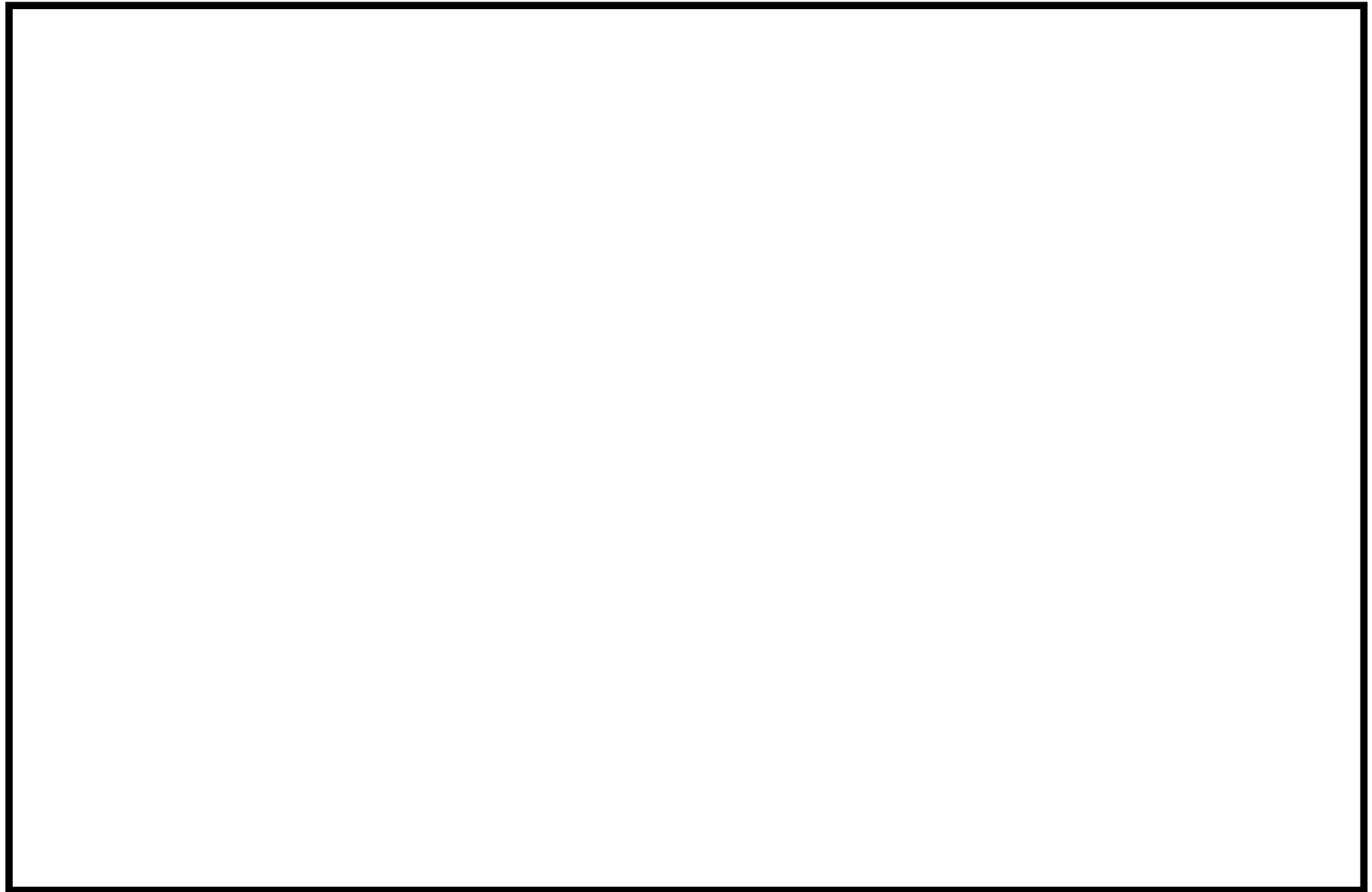


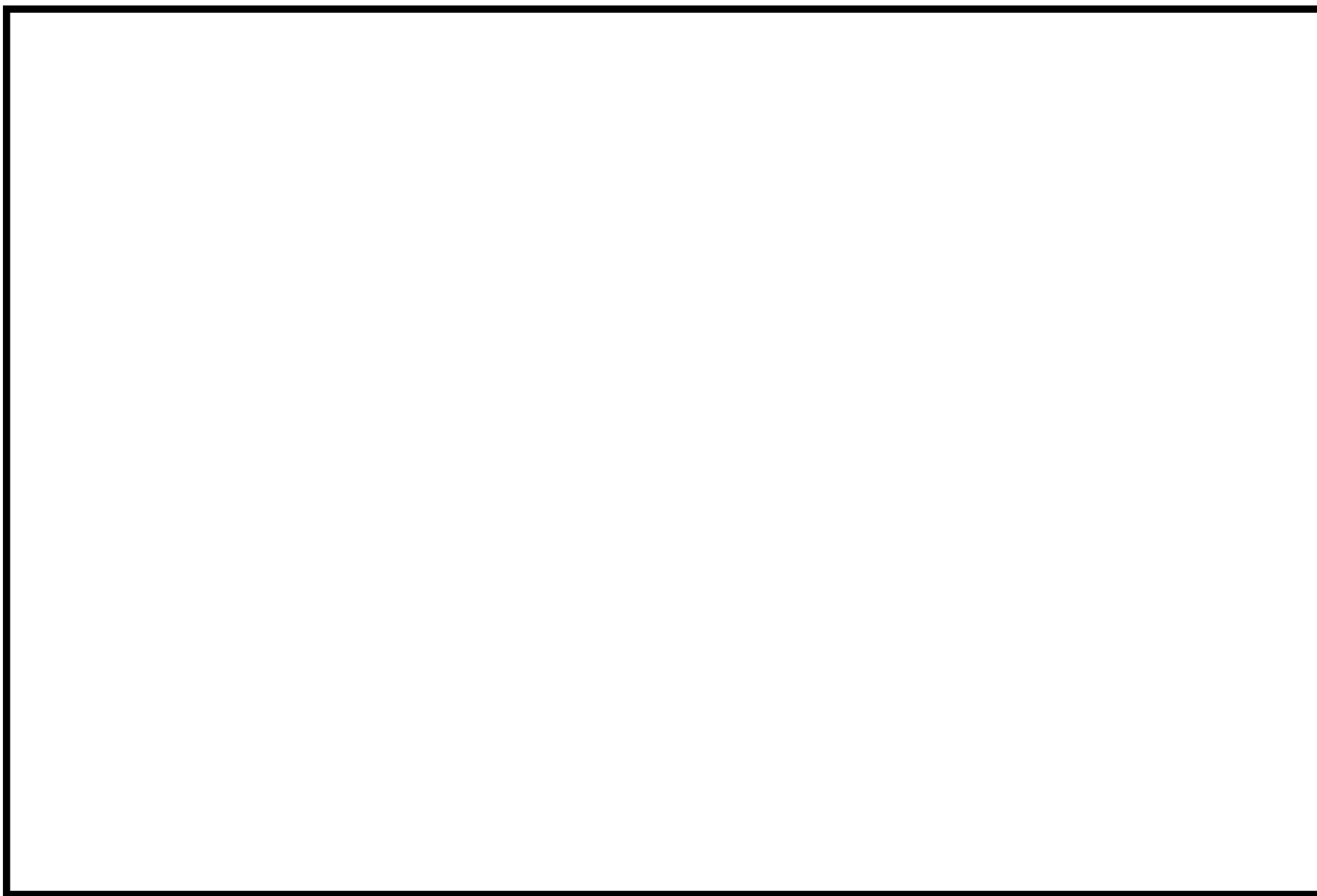
Remember Me?

by Corinne Demas

illustrated by _____

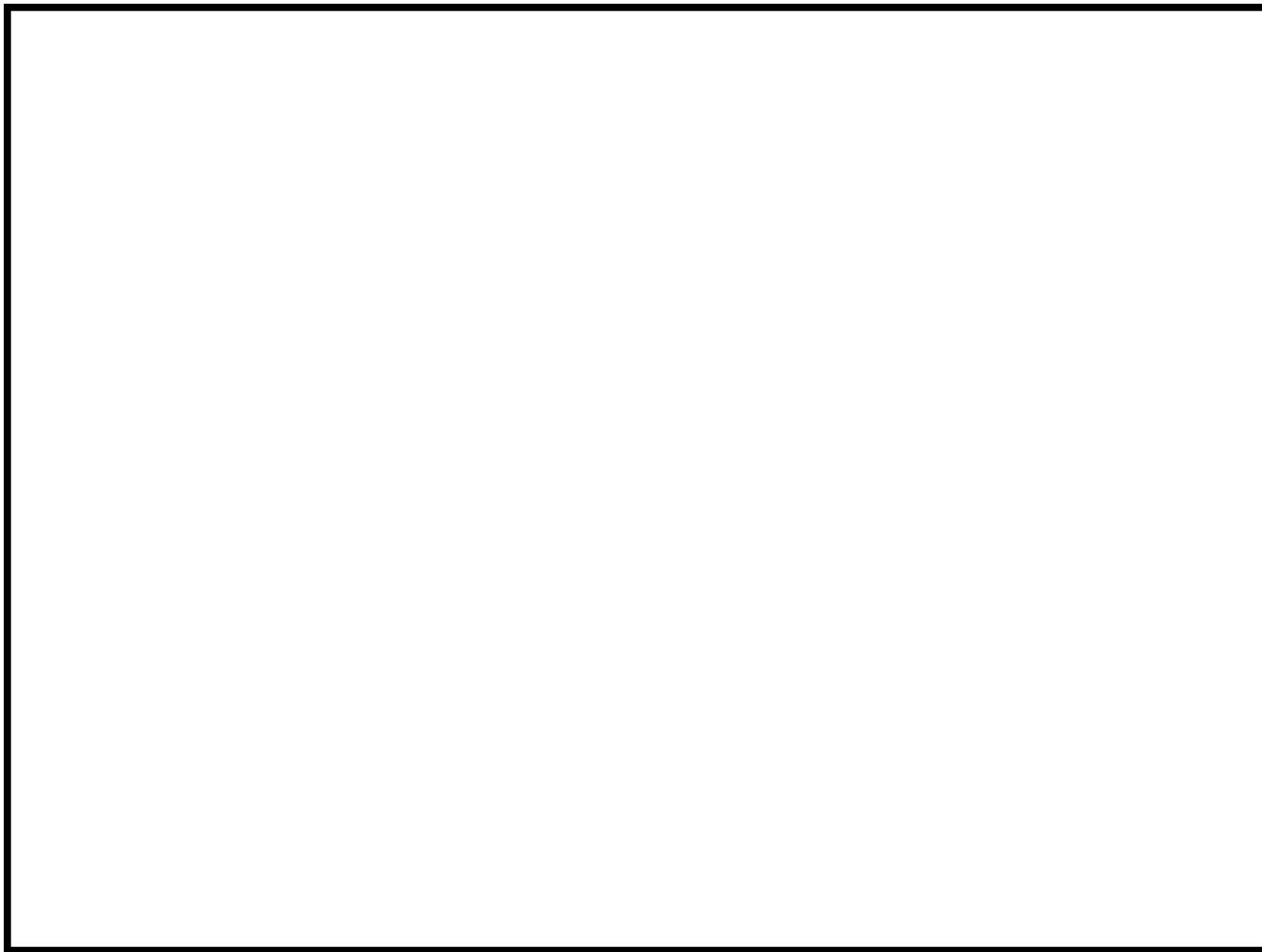


When my alarm rings I run to the window and look across the street to my best friend's bedroom window. Nora's not there. Did she forget?



Suddenly, she is there!

We hold our hands up over our heads and wiggle our fingers. That's our secret signal. Then we both wake our moms, get dressed, and gobble some breakfast.

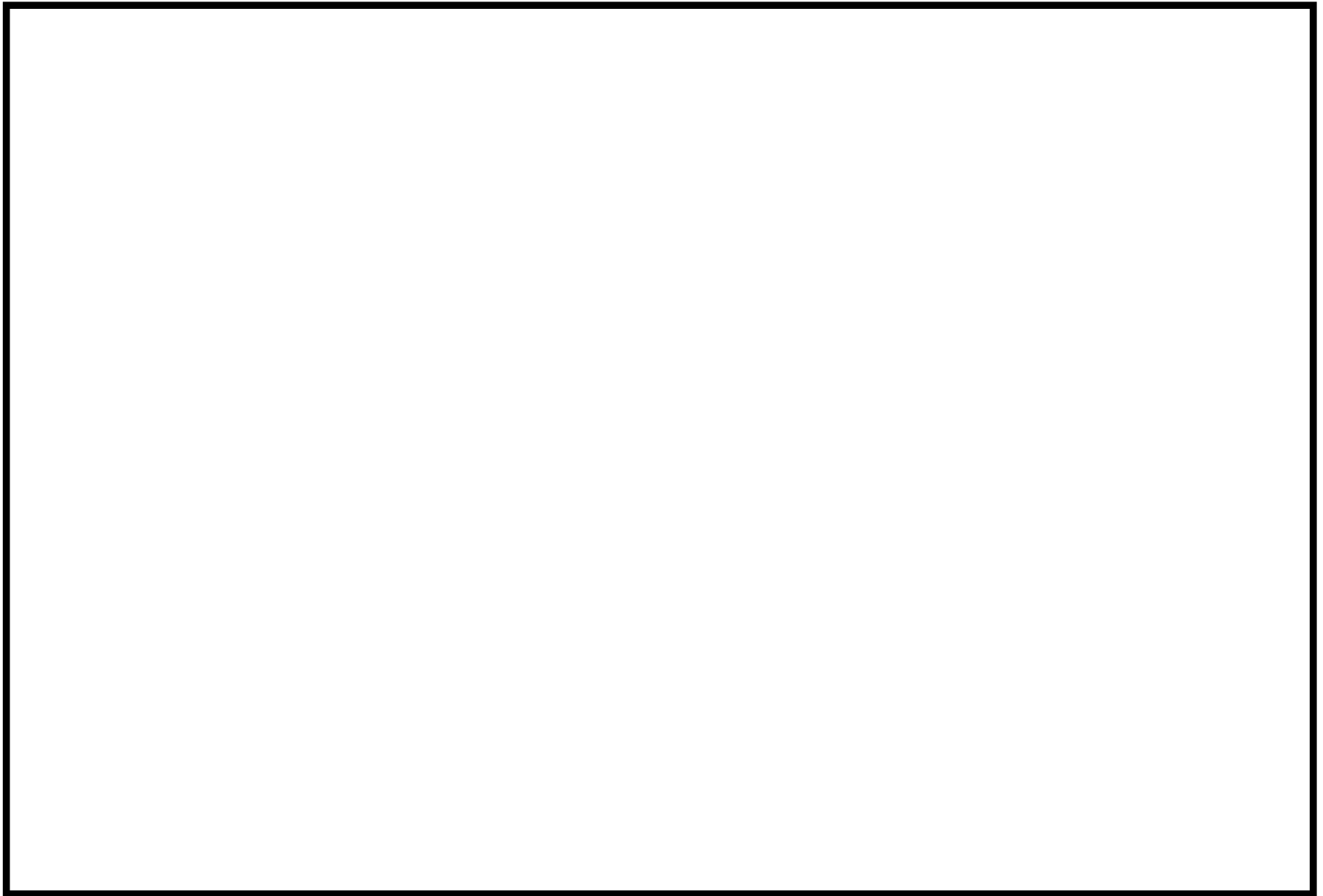


In the hallway I call out “Good morning” outside 8B, Mrs. Sanchez’s door. She always gets up early, too, though she’s old, and never leaves her apartment now.

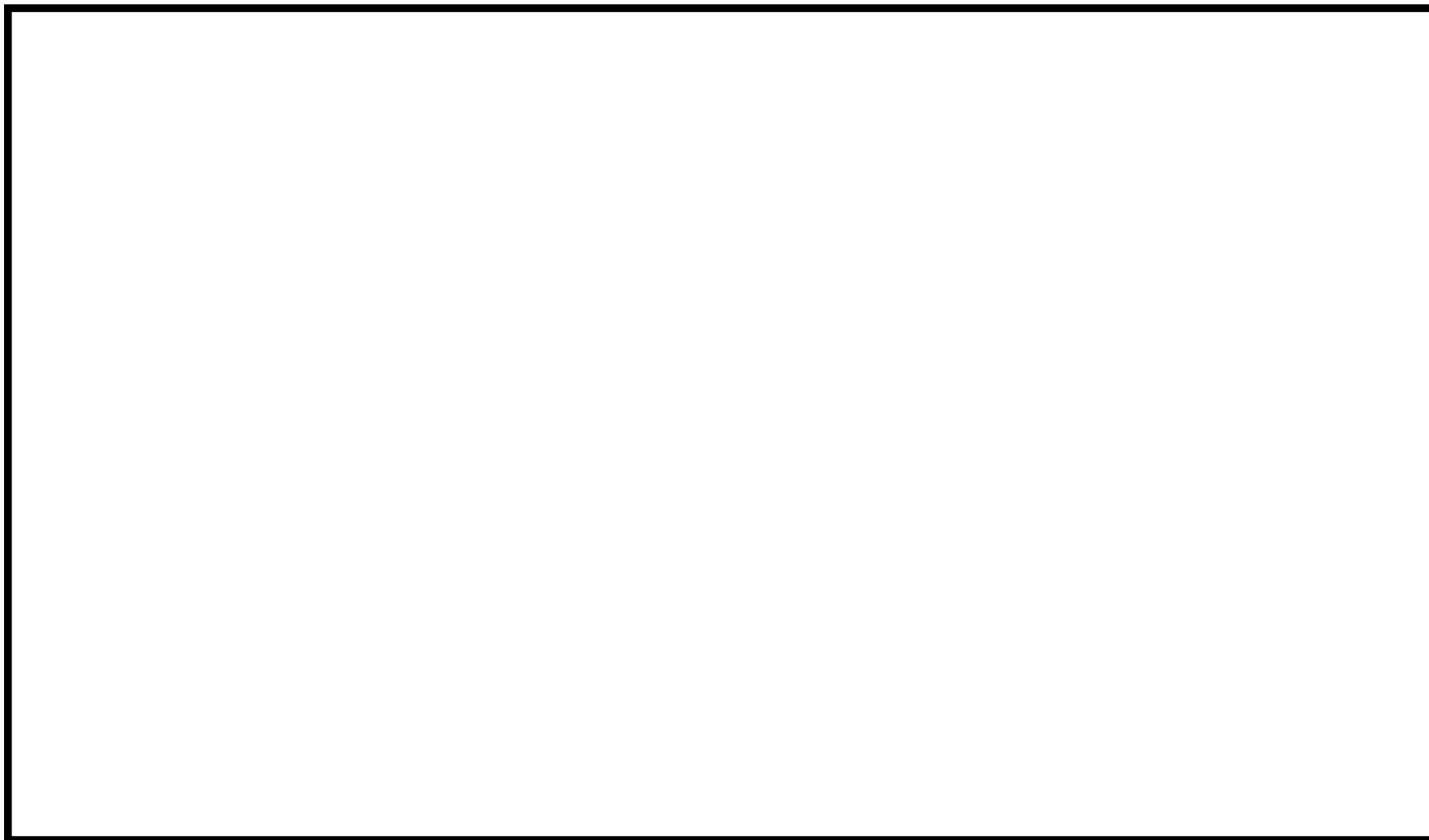


We live on the eighth floor, but Mama says the stairs are safer than the elevator. We are the only ones in the stairway. It's seven steps down, then turn on the landing, then five steps more to the seventh floor. Then down and turn and down and turn, a hundred and four stairs to get outside.

Going down is fun. But I hate climbing back up.



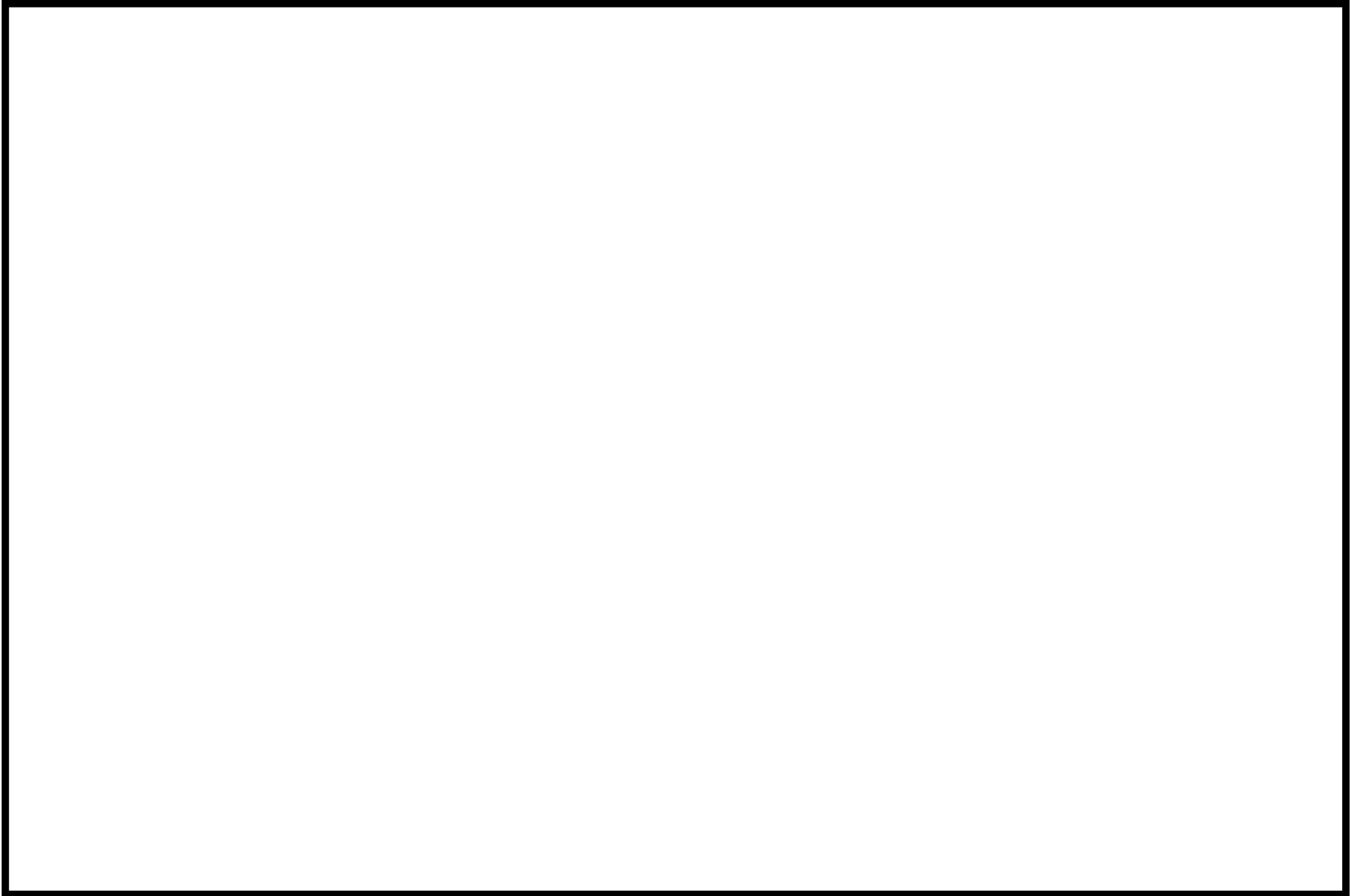
It is barely morning when we get outside. The city is still asleep. There are no other people. No cars coming down the street. What if Nora and her mom don't come?



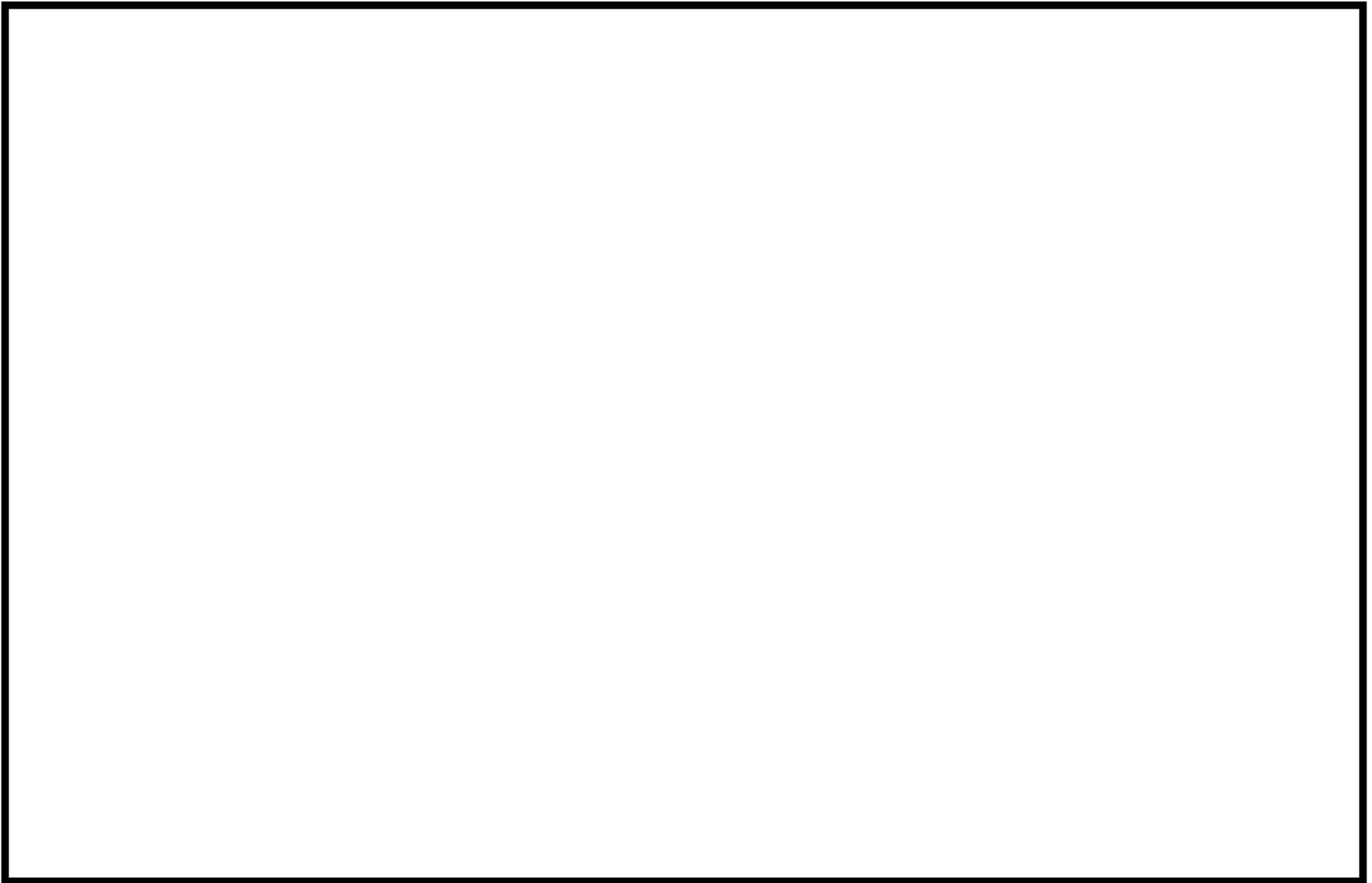
I look up at the sky. “Hello, Sky,” I say. Remember me?”

There is one tree in front of our apartment building. It has a little square of dirt around it. It is my tree. “Hello, Tree,” I say. “Remember me?”

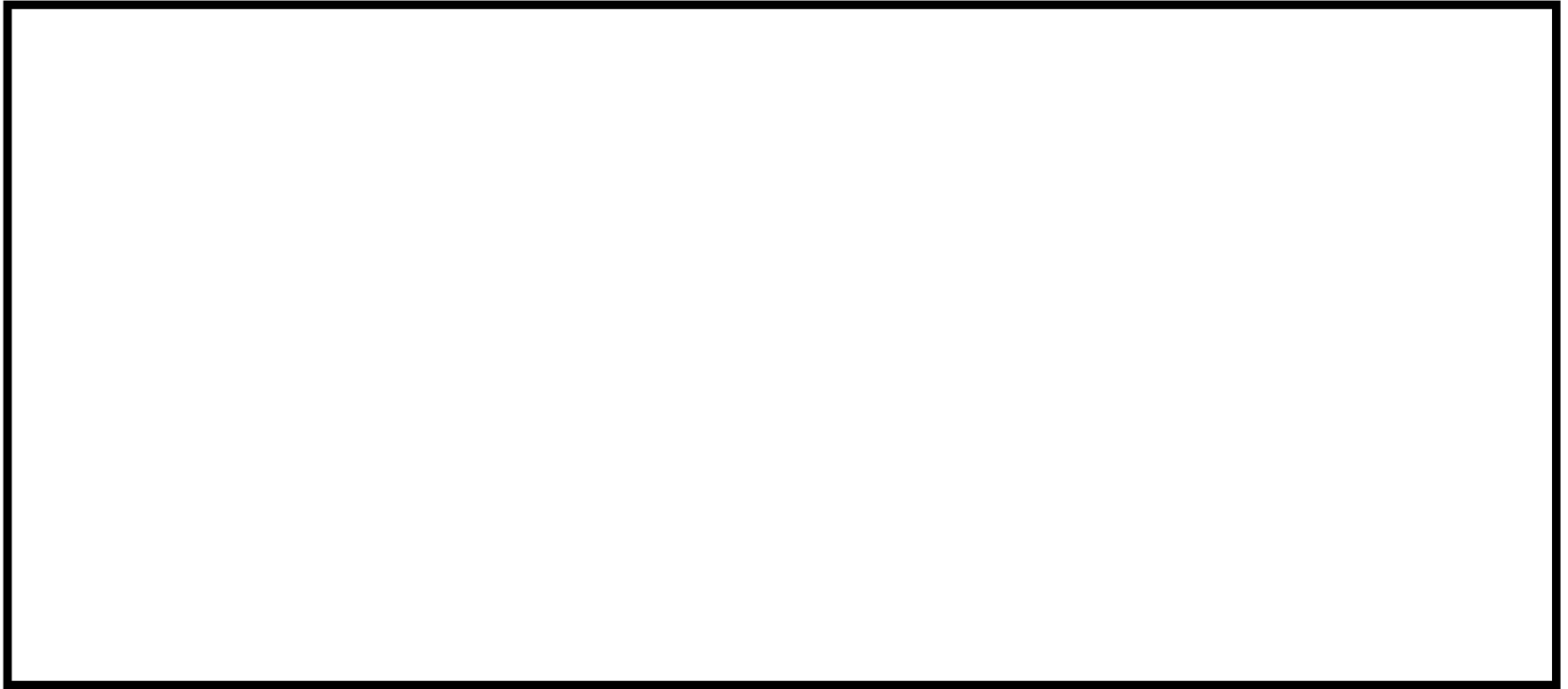
There is one pigeon pecking at something on the sidewalk. I call it my pigeon, but it could be another that looks just like it. It’s hard to tell with pigeons. “Hello, Pigeon,” I say. “Remember me?”



Finally Nora and her mom come out. They cross to our side of the street today. Tomorrow we'll go to theirs. Nora and I have to stay far apart, as long as a car. Our Moms, too.



The playground is closed. Nora and I run to the corner and back again. We jump over the cracks in the sidewalk. We see how long we can stand on one foot, and we count out loud. It's hard to do when you giggle.



We draw with chalk on the sidewalk.

“Trees!” I call out. And we both draw trees.

“Flowers!” calls out Nora. And we both draw flowers.

“Birds!”

“Unicorns!”

“Too hard!” I say.

“Just make a horse, then put a horn on it, says Nora.

“You make horses best,” I say. “So you draw them, and I’ll add the horns.” We draw a parade of unicorns along the sidewalk.

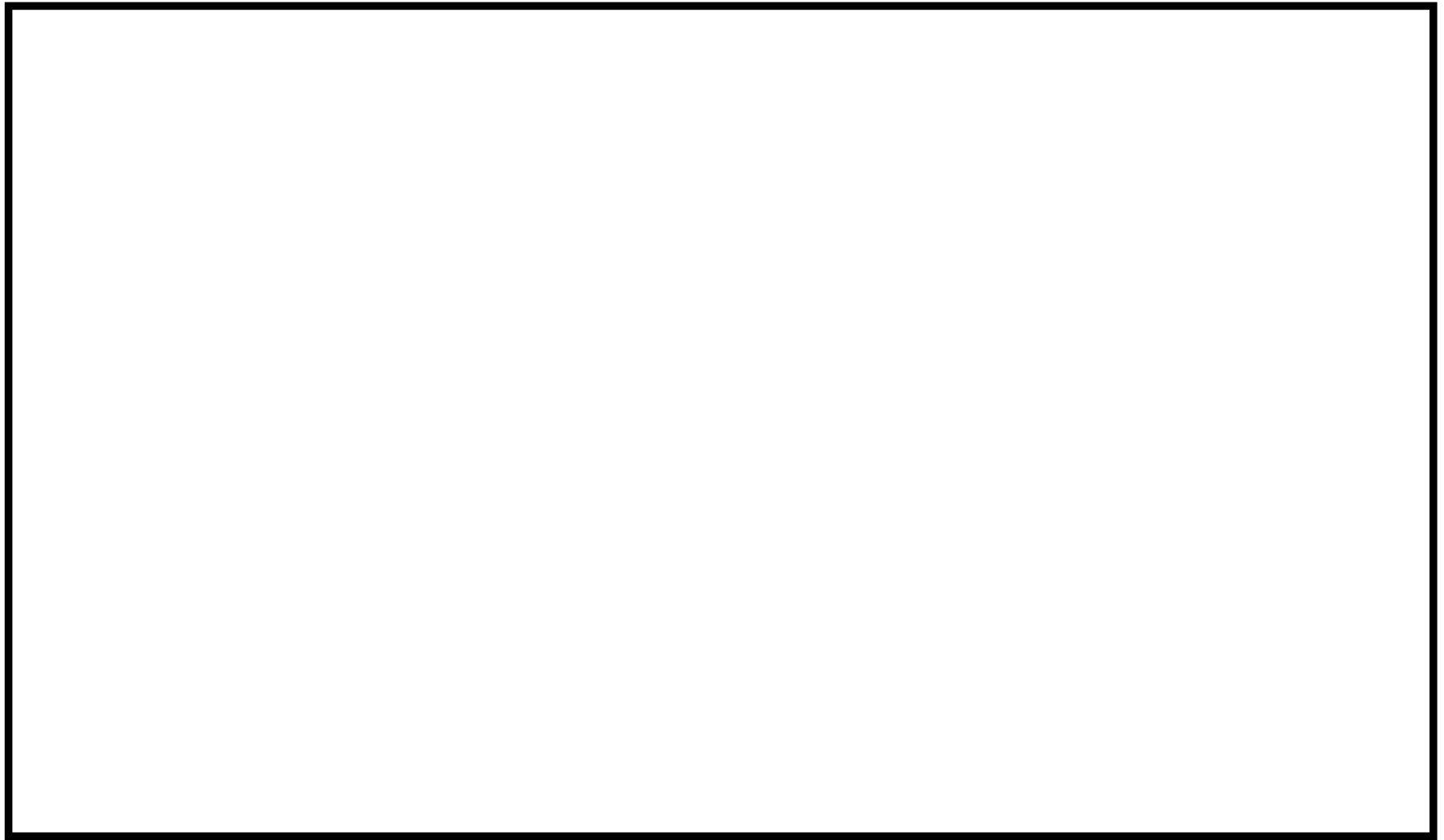


We write messages for people who will walk by later.

Hello!

Have a happy day!

Stay Safe!



Too soon it is time to go back upstairs. Our teacher sends us schoolwork every day. At school we sat side by side. Now we have to work on opposite sides of the street. That's MUCH farther than a car apart.

We can't hug goodbye. We put our arms around our own chests and hug ourselves and pretend we are hugging each other. Then we wave one last time before going inside our buildings.



“I wish I didn’t have to walk up all those stairs,” I tell Mama. “I wish I could stay outside for ever.”

Mama takes my hand. “It won’t be this way forever,” she says. “I promise you.” She kisses the top of my head. “Here we go!”



The staircase is still empty, but on the second floor landing someone has stuck a note.

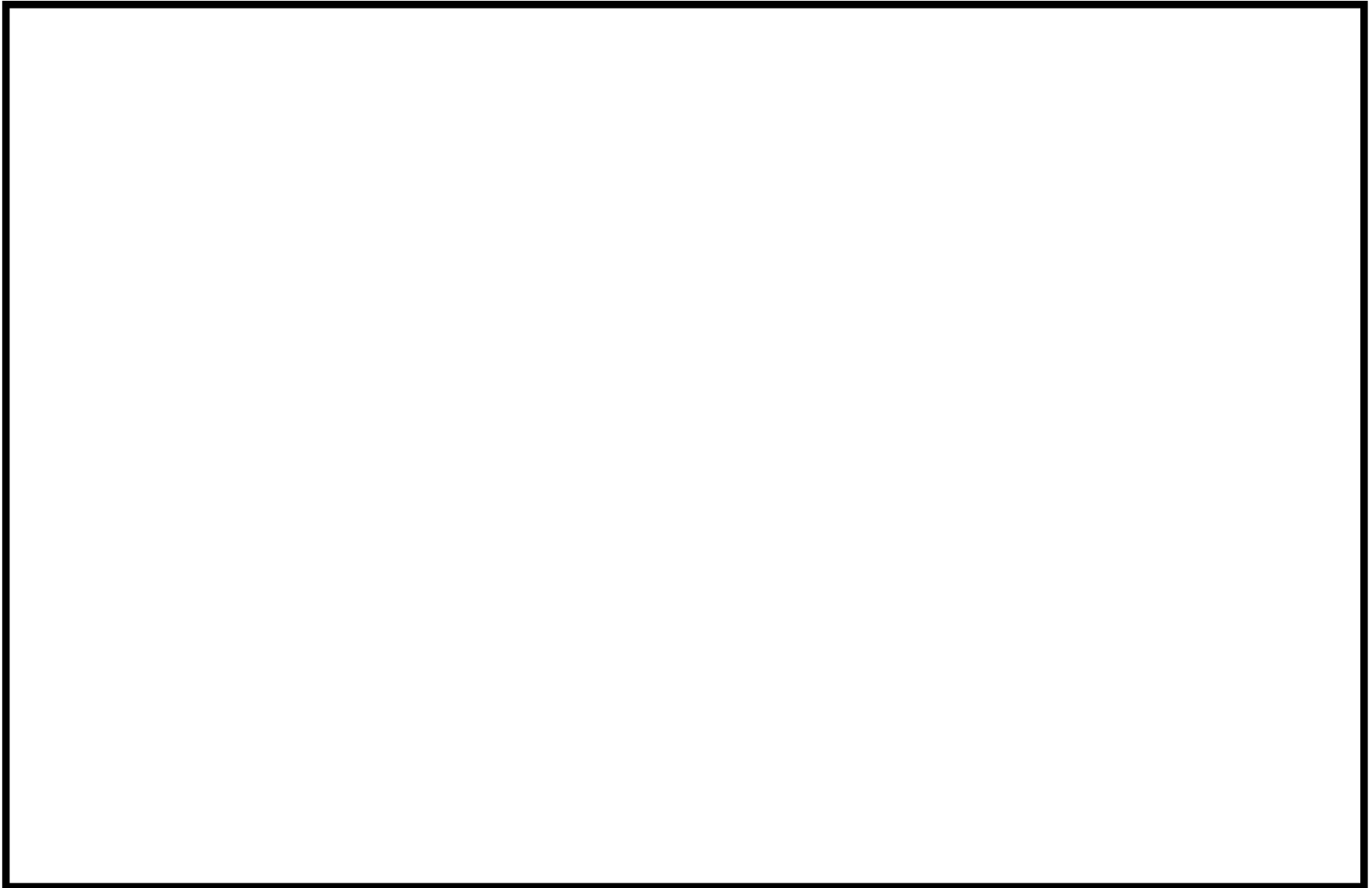
“Good morning, Evie!”

On the third floor landing someone else has stuck a note. “Have a happy day!”

“I’m tired,” I tell Mama.

On the fourth floor landing the note says, “You are half way there!”

There’s a note on the fifth floor and the sixth floor.



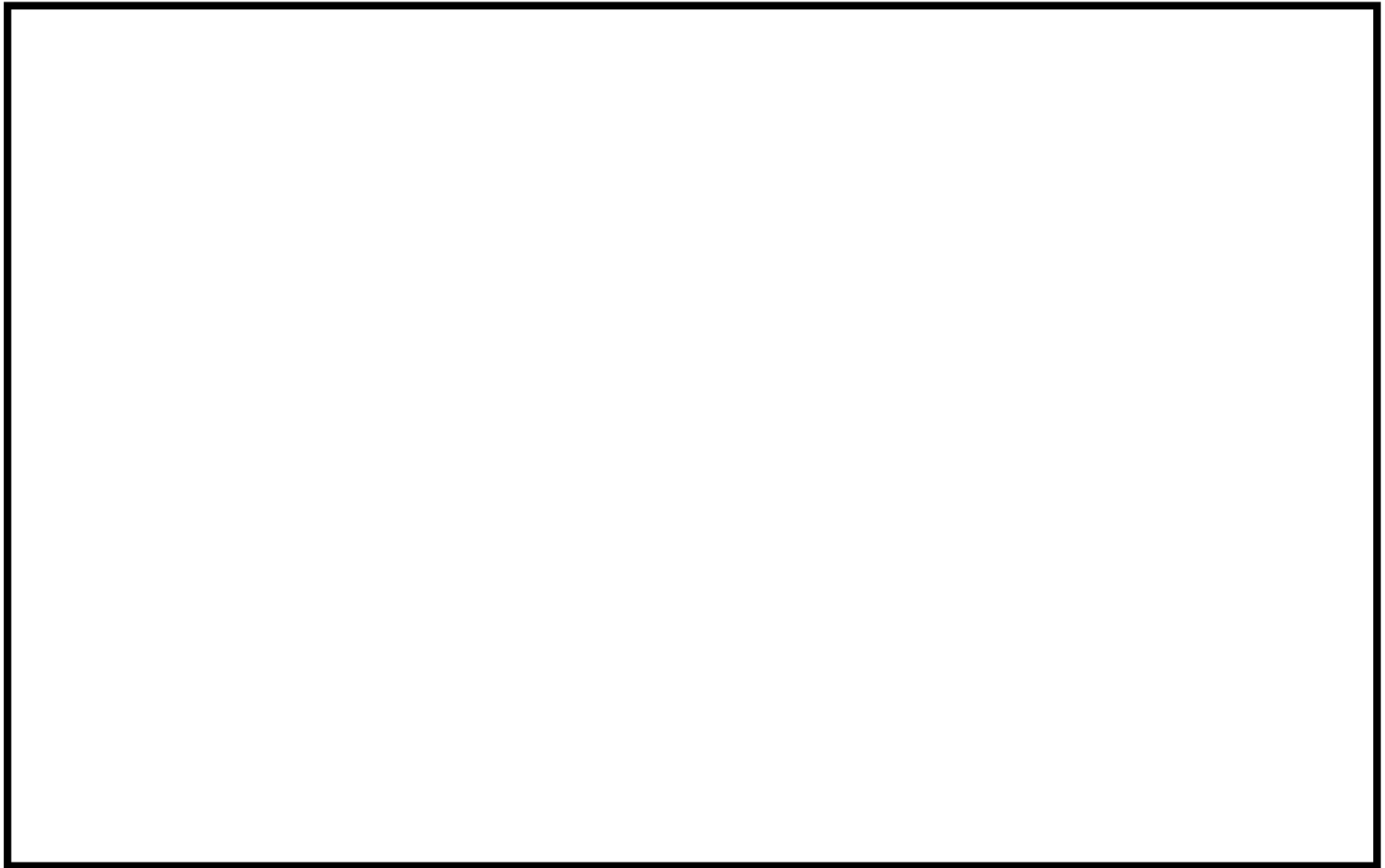
When we get to the seventh floor I sit down, “I can’t climb one more step!” I say. But then I spot a piece of pink paper stuck to the banister. The note says, “Hello, you are almost home!”

So I get up and keep climbing.



I don't see a note on the banister on the eighth floor, but there's something outside our door. A tray of muffins, all ready to bake!

There's no note, but I know it's from Mrs. Sanchez.



I draw her a picture of the morning outside, so she can see it, too: the sky, my tree, my pigeon, and my friend Nora standing on one foot. I even draw a unicorn—all by myself. I draw a picture of me and Mrs. Sanchez. I write “I remember you,” and sign it with a heart. Then I stick the note on the door of 8B before school starts.