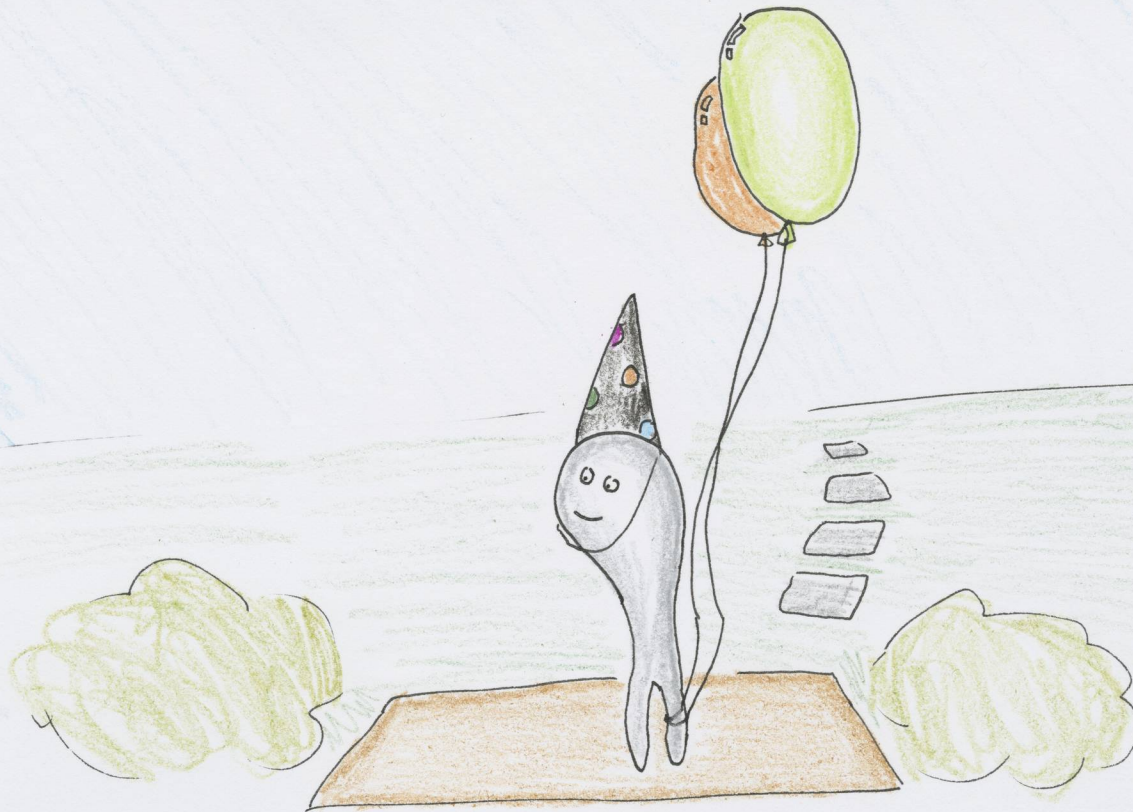


The Birthday Squirrel



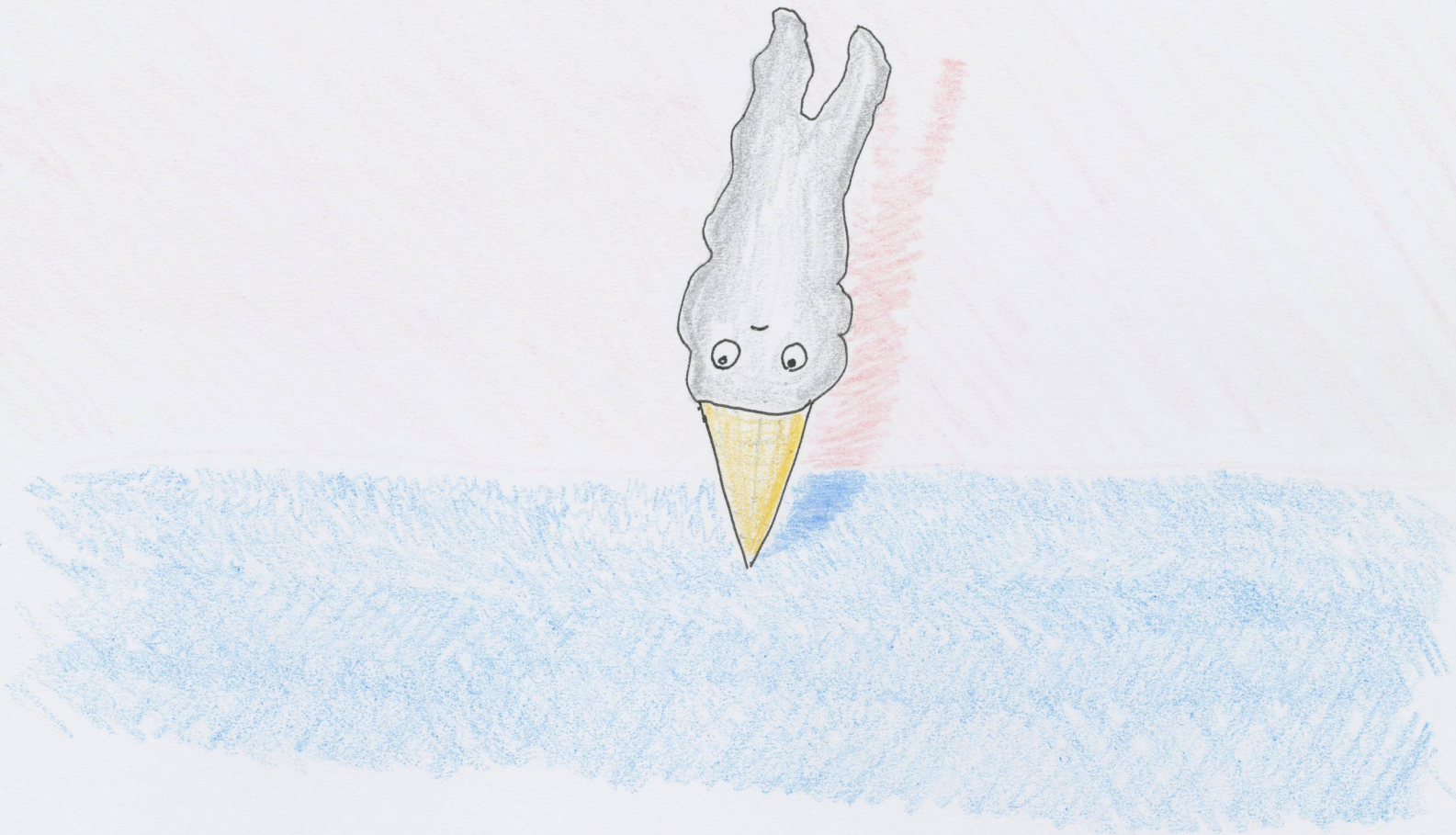
by Hyena Smith



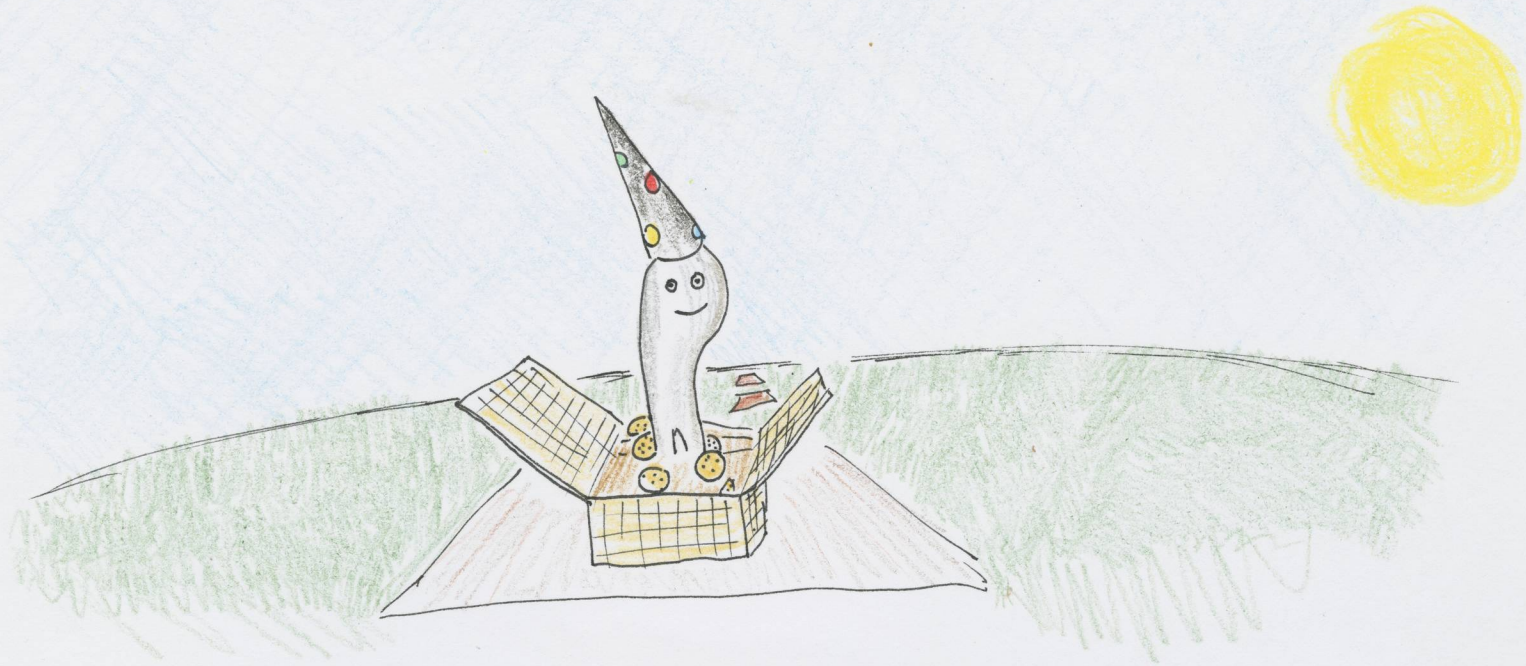
Have you ever had a visit by the Birthday Squirrel?



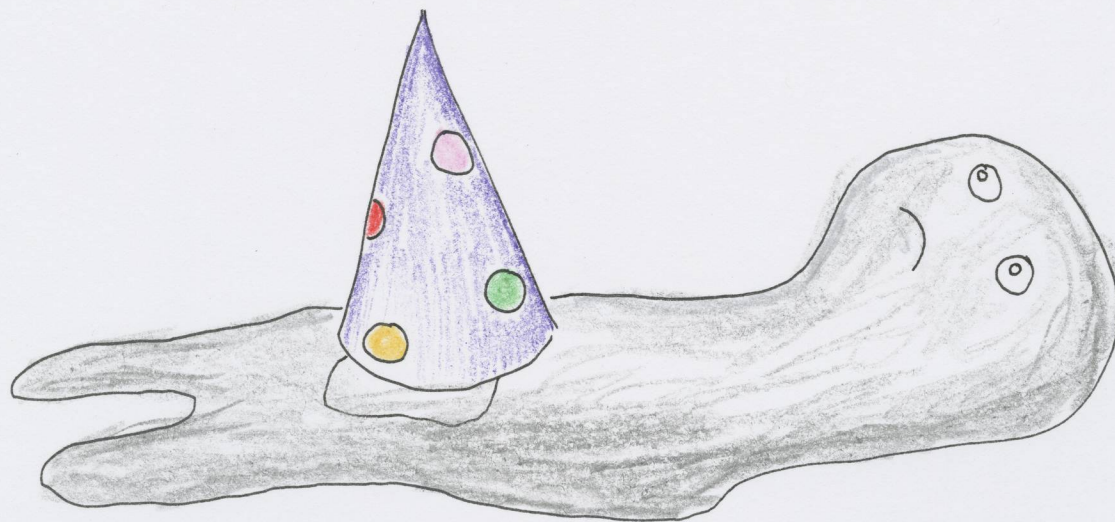
The Birthday Squirrel is about yay big, which is to say not very big at all. He has gray fur. He has no arms and two legs. He is very handy with his two legs. He also wears a party hat with polka dots.



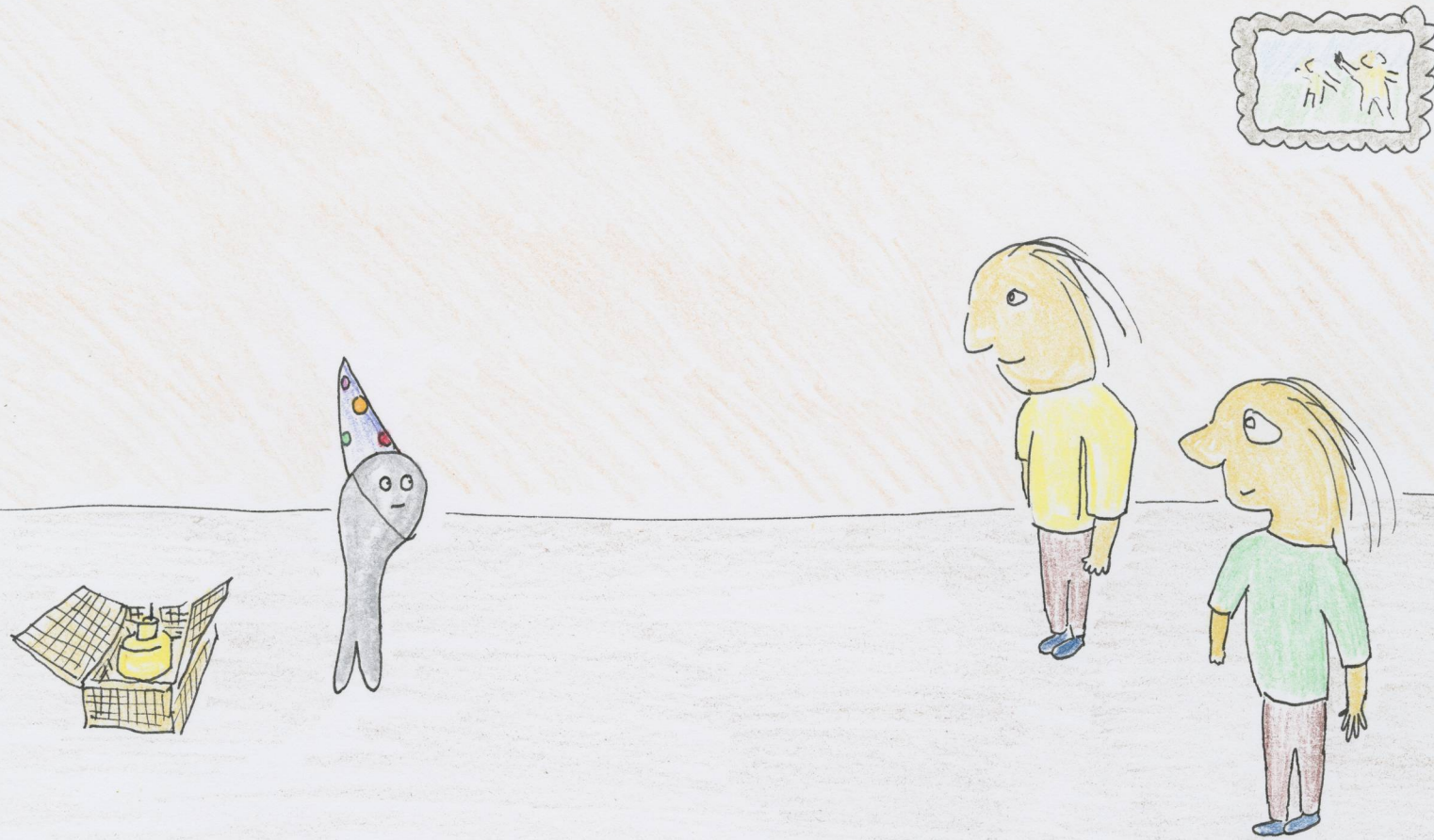
If you were hanging upside-down from your couch, you could be forgiven for thinking he was a furry ice cream cone.



He shows up on children's doorsteps to wish them a happy birthday. When you open the door, you see a basket and in the basket is your favorite treat. Also in the basket is the Birthday Squirrel. Each time a child sees a birthday basket, the Birthday Squirrel feels a swell of joy at helping somebody to feel important.



The sad part of all of this is that no one has ever wished the Birthday Squirrel a happy birthday.



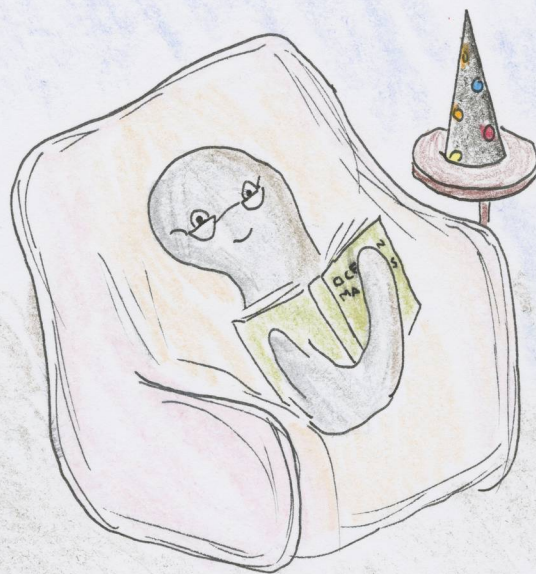
There were two twins whom he visited every year. They were named Hansel and Gretel. At one such visit, Gretel whispered to her sister, "Do you think maybe we can return the favor and wish him a happy birthday? In person, I mean." Hansel said, "Good idea. Let's ask him where he lives and when he is free." They did.



The Birthday Squirrel answered, "Well, I have no deliveries on February 30th," and wrote his address on a spare treat napkin. The twins knew that the Birthday Squirrel had a birthday, and that it must be that day; otherwise he would be out making his usual rounds.



When February 30th arrived, the Birthday Squirrel had a day off because no one else on Planet Earth had that birthday.



"What a relief to have a break from delivering," he thought to himself, and started reading a book about ocean mammals.



He heard a ring at the door. He opened the door with his handy feet. There was a basket. Inside the basket was a banana split. What's more, there were two children in the basket: Hansel and Gretel!



"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BIRTHDAY SQUIRREL!" shouted the children. The Birthday Squirrel felt so lucky that they cared about him.



Then all three of them celebrated by sharing the banana split. It had acorns for nuts, so Hansel and Gretel both left the acorns alone to let their new friend have them. A happy birthday indeed!

Dear Reader,

It may or may not surprise you to know that there is no February 30th. Good job! You are a DIT Detective In Training! There are 28 days in February, except every fourth year when there are 29. Years that have a February 29th are called leap years, and they have 366 days instead of 365.

Every day there are millions of children around the world who have a birthday. There is no day when nobody has a birthday. This means that, in order to tell the story of the Birthday Squirrel correctly, we had to give him a birthday that isn't on the calendar. He needs a day off, you understand!

The twins are DITs too, and they used their sleuthing skills to know when to visit the Birthday Squirrel. With that explanation out of the way, I will end by saying

1. I hope you had as much fun reading this book as I did making it, and
2. When your birthday comes (or are you celebrating it at this very moment?) I hope that it is your happiest birthday yet!

Sincerely,
Hyena Smith