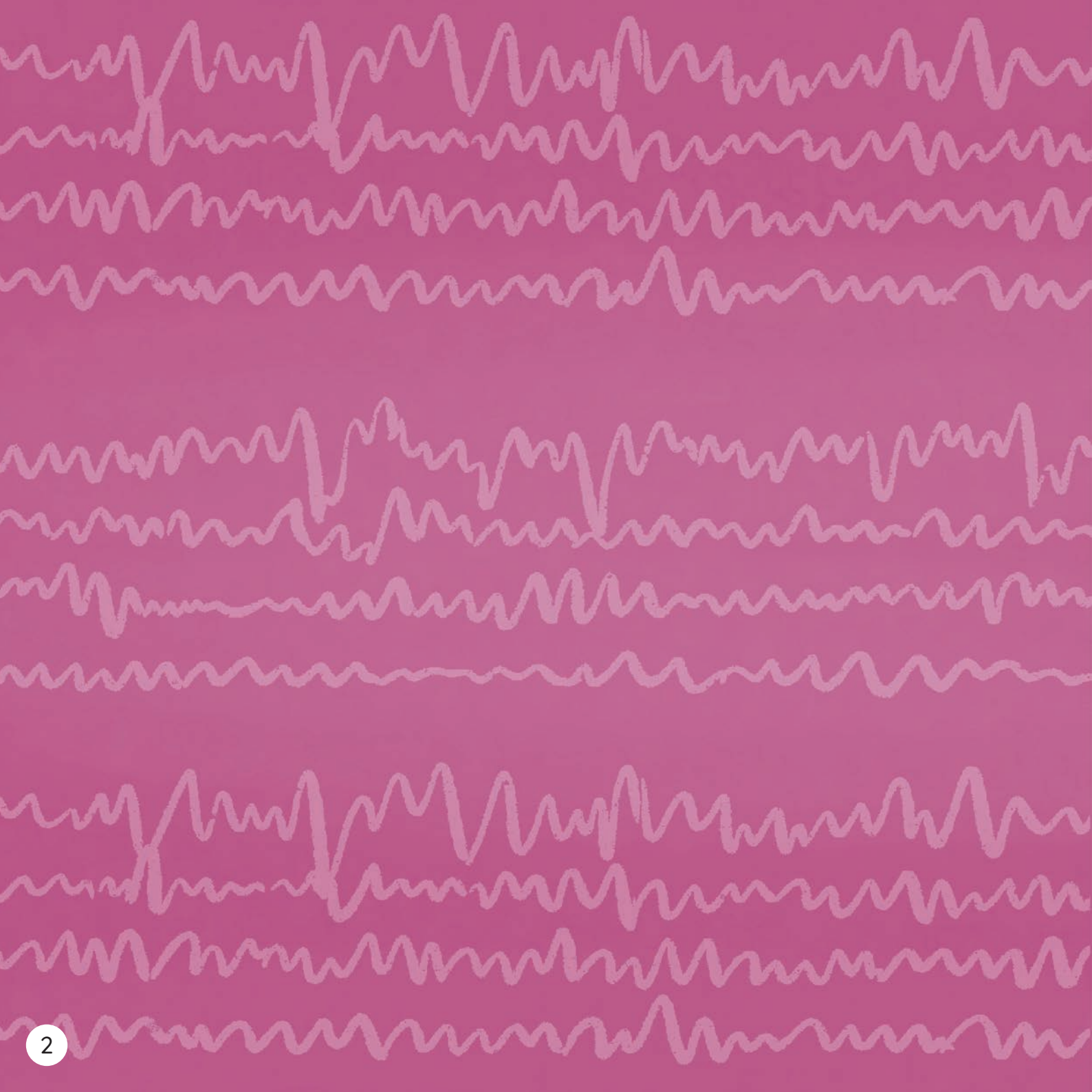


# ABBY

is a drawing champion



Carolijn Leisink



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Mum carries the bags, while Abby holds her box of felt pens.  
Today, they're going to SEIN, where they'll be staying for a while.  
A guy opens the door, saying, 'Welcome, both of you!  
I'm Sam. I work at SEIN, so come along with me.'



They walk to their room and put all the bags down.  
Abby grabs her pens. 'Can I start drawing now, Sam?'  
Sam says, 'No, not yet. Come with me for now.  
You're going to have an test here, it's called an EEG.'



The technician is already waiting. She says, 'Welcome, my name is Mia. Have a seat, and I'll tell you how everything works.'

Mia points to her mouth and nose. 'You know what they are called.'

Abby says, 'Yes, easy peasy! Ask me something I don't know!'

Mia asks, 'Is there something in your head that you can't see?'

Abby thinks of a joke. 'Maybe, like your boogers?'



Mia and Mum laugh. 'How do you come up with such funny stuff?' Abby shrugs. 'It's just my brain making it up.'  
'It's your brain that does that,' Mia says. 'Yes, that's exactly right. Whenever you think or do something, your brain sends out a signal.'



Abby spots a pencil. 'Can I draw with that?'

Mia says, 'I'm afraid not, because it's for the EEG.'

I use it to mark where everything needs to go.

Can you sit still?' Abby says, 'Yes, very well!'



Mia sticks all the electrodes on. Abby says, 'It doesn't hurt.  
But you know what I really don't get, how can you see my brain?'  
'I can't really see your brain. Your skull is in the way.  
But this clever device passes on the signals.'  
Mia points to a screen, where lots of waves appear.  
'This is what your brain does. It controls everything.'



When you think, 'I want to wave,' your hand goes up on its own.  
Because you wave with your hand, not with your elbow.  
Your brain is important for everything you do.  
It helps you move and also learn how to do things.'  
Mia tidies up. 'All done! You've been so patient.'  
Abby sighs. 'It took ages, but I thought of something fun!'



Abby grabs her box of pens. 'Mum, please stand up.  
Can you stay still for a long time, like I just did?'  
Abby draws Mum; it turns into a real portrait.  
She puts in extra effort and draws very neatly.



Mum asks, 'Am I looking pretty yet?' But Abby says nothing more.  
Her arm starts to shake, and the pen jerks back and forth.



Sam rushes over. Mum explains what happened.

‘Abby’s hand started scribbling, though she always colours neatly.’

Abby stares into space, thinking: Who did this?

Everything is ruined! A tear rolls down her cheek.



Sam says, 'That's really tough. This isn't nice at all.  
I saw something on the screen, that looked like a seizure.'  
Abby yawns and Mum says, 'I think you're very tired.'  
She wipes Abby's tears away. 'Let's go to your room.'



Once Abby's had a good sleep, she has to go with Mum.  
'The doctor will tell us more about the EEG.'  
Mum takes the drawing and puts it in her bag.  
'Then the doctor can see exactly what I mean by those scribbles.'  
Abby shouts, 'I don't want that! It's completely ruined!'  
Mum says, 'The rest is beautiful. The doctor will understand.'



The doctor says, 'I'm Martin. What have you brought with you?'

'A really, silly drawing,' Abby whispers very soft.

The doctor looks. 'It's lovely. It even looks like me!

Look at my hair, it's sticking up on the top of my head!'

Mum starts to laugh, and Abby smiles again.

'You can have that silly drawing, if you want.'



Martin sticks it on the cupboard door. 'You're a drawing champion!  
Sometimes brains make mistakes, but you can't help that.'  
Martin takes a paper and pen, scribbling on a sheet.  
'These are the brain waves, but I'm sure you remember.  
When you were drawing, and started scribbling on the page,  
I could see in those waves that you were having a seizure.'



That seizure is epilepsy, something goes wrong in your brain.  
But there's nothing you can do about it, it's just a glitch.'  
Abby looks sad. Mum says, 'It's not nice.'  
Martin says, 'Yes, I understand that. We're going to help you here at SEIN.'



Once, there was a footballer here whose leg kept going stiff.  
When he wasn't paying attention, the other team scored a goal.  
A little girl was watching a film, with a scary dragon in it.  
But suddenly, in her mind, she could see lots of glitter.  
A big boy was at the dining table, lifting his cup to his mouth.  
But his arm started to tremble, and the milk spilled on the ground.'



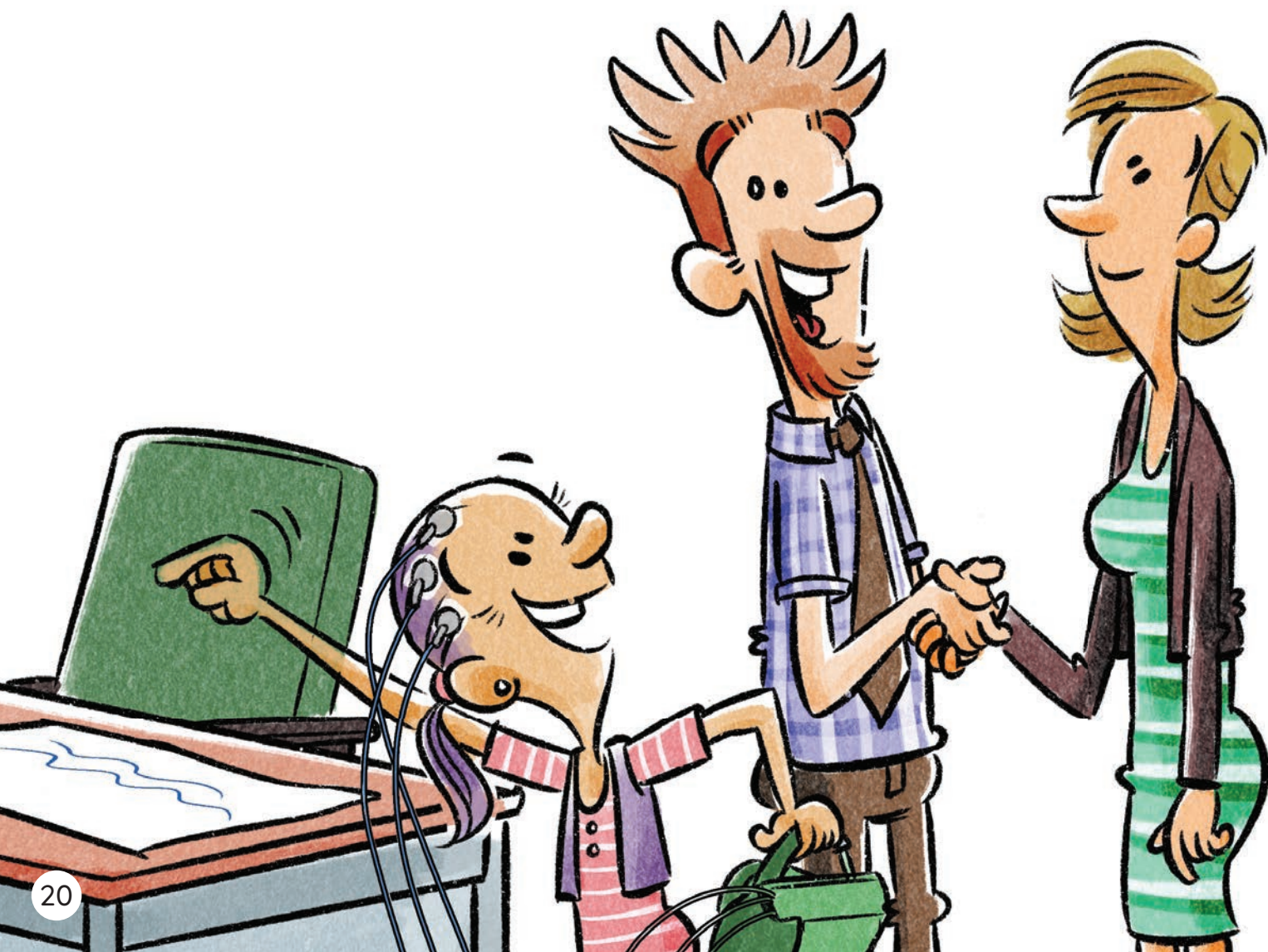
Martin says, 'Well, that's enough talking for now. Do you have any questions? You can always ask, and we're happy to help.'

Mum shakes her head and says, 'I think I understand. Thank you.'

Abby wants to draw, so we'll be off now.'

Martin begins to tidy up, but Abby calls out, 'Wait!'

Can I have that sheet? I've thought of something fun.'



'Of course,' says Martin. 'Take those scribbles with you.'  
Mum laughs loudly. 'I'll bet you've got a good idea!'  
On one of the brain waves, Abby draws a big face.  
She makes it extra funny, with some spiky hair on top.  
Mum grabs a pen too. 'This is so much fun.'  
She starts colouring, and suddenly, there's a monkey with false teeth.



And just when things are getting fun, Abby's arm starts to shake again.  
And her pen accidentally draws a crooked line.  
Mum strokes Abby's back, and Sam comes over.  
'In Abby's brain, just now, another seizure started.'



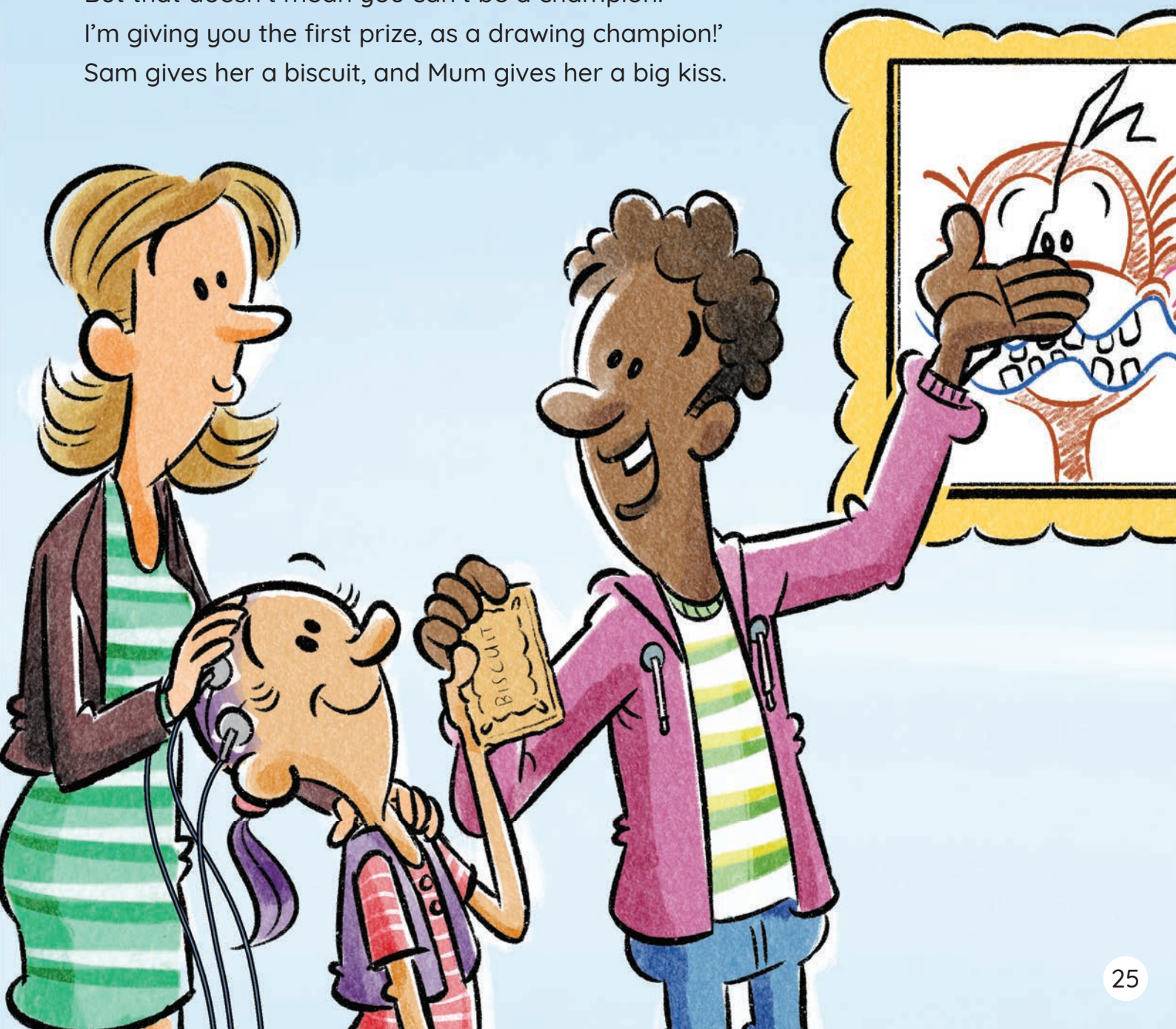
Abby stays quiet for a moment, but then sees a really strange creature.  
There's a monkey with false teeth and punk hair on the page.  
Abby cries and laughs at the same time, but Sam understands.  
Mum says, 'Abby, that line sure didn't spoil it in the least!'  
Everyone laughs at the very funny monkey.  
And when they've finished laughing, Abby suddenly falls asleep.



She rests her head on the table because she's incredibly tired.  
And when she wakes up calmly, Sam comes to her side.  
'Are you feeling rested? Would you like some juice?'  
Abby drinks, and Sam says, 'You draw so well!'



Sometimes, your brain has a seizure, and that's not nice at all.  
But that doesn't mean you can't be a champion.  
I'm giving you the first prize, as a drawing champion!  
Sam gives her a biscuit, and Mum gives her a big kiss.



Abby starts to laugh. 'That's what the doctor said too!'  
Mum gives a thumbs up. 'So, it must be true!'  
Abby grabs her pens. 'Sam, you're getting a drawing from me.'  
Sam gives her a high five. 'That makes me very glad!'



Abby starts drawing again, thinking nice thoughts with her brain.  
Her thoughts are incredibly proud to be a champion!



# Credits

## Text: Carolijn Leisink

My gratitude to SEIN for their guidance during my epilepsy (surgery) journey is beyond words. During one of my many hospital stays, I wrote this story. As a drama teacher, children's book author, and mother of two, I hope to support others dealing with epilepsy.

Would you like to see my other work?

Have a look at: [www.carolijn.leisink.nl](http://www.carolijn.leisink.nl)



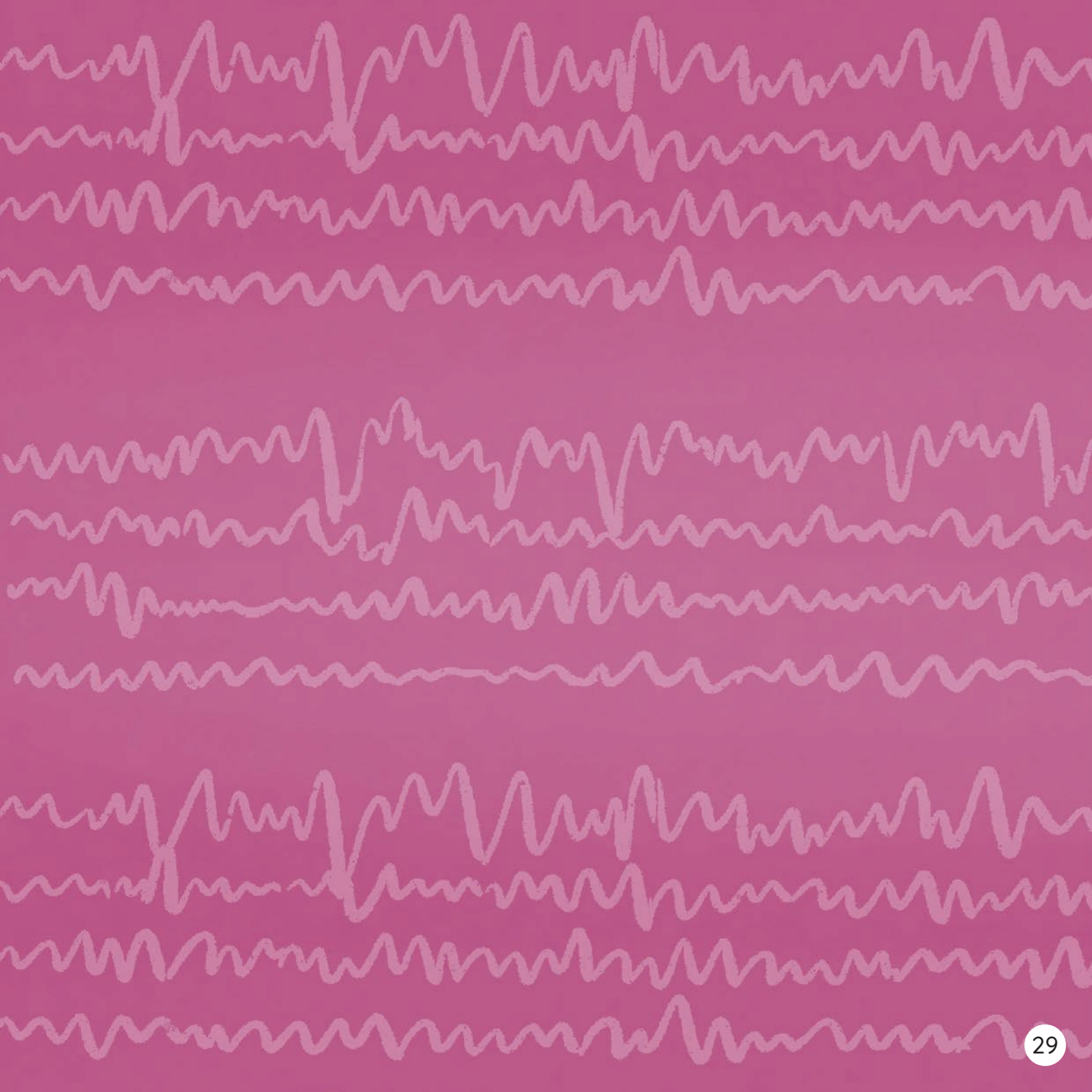
## Illustrations: René Leisink

Epilepsy has left a mark on my sister's life, but from that mark, many beautiful things can emerge. To support my sister, I created the illustrations for her story. I hope it also helps and inspires others to turn every setback into something beautiful.

Would you like to see more of my illustrations?

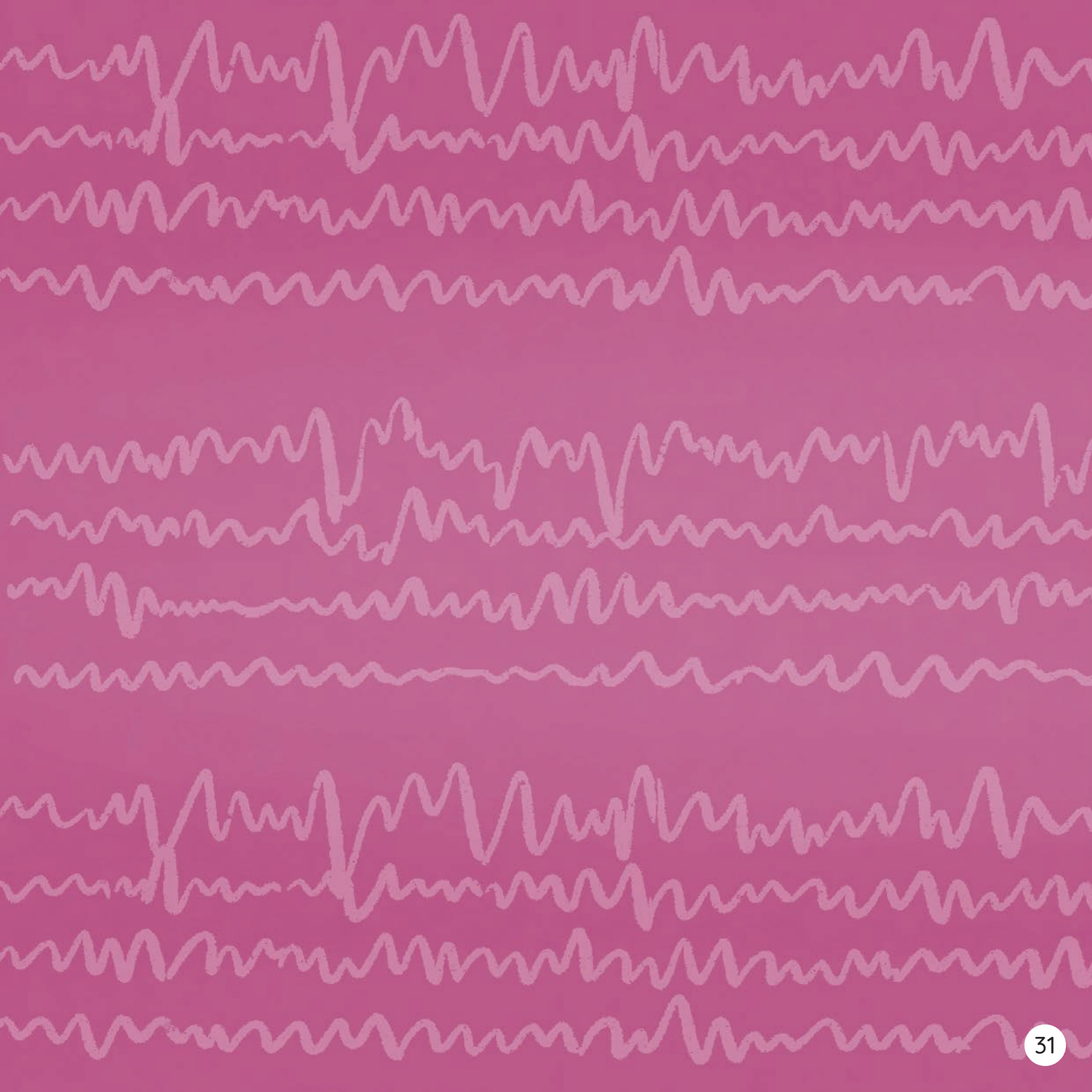
Have a look at: [www.noodweer.nl](http://www.noodweer.nl)







This book is available  
for free download at:  
[carolijn.leisink.nl](http://carolijn.leisink.nl)



# ABBY

is a drawing champion

Abby is admitted to SEIN for an EEG test. The technician sticks electrodes with wires on her head and explains all the things the brain can do. With the electrodes on her head, Abby creates a beautiful drawing.

Suddenly, her arm starts shaking. The pen jerks back and forth, leaving scribbles on the paper. The EEG allows the doctor to see what was happening in her brain. The doctor explains that there are different types of epilepsy and that this was also an epileptic seizure.

Abby is sad and tired. She feels her drawing is completely ruined!

‘Abby is a drawing champion’ is a colourful picture book about a girl who is diagnosed with epilepsy.



SEIN

Centre of expertise for epilepsy  
and sleep medicine