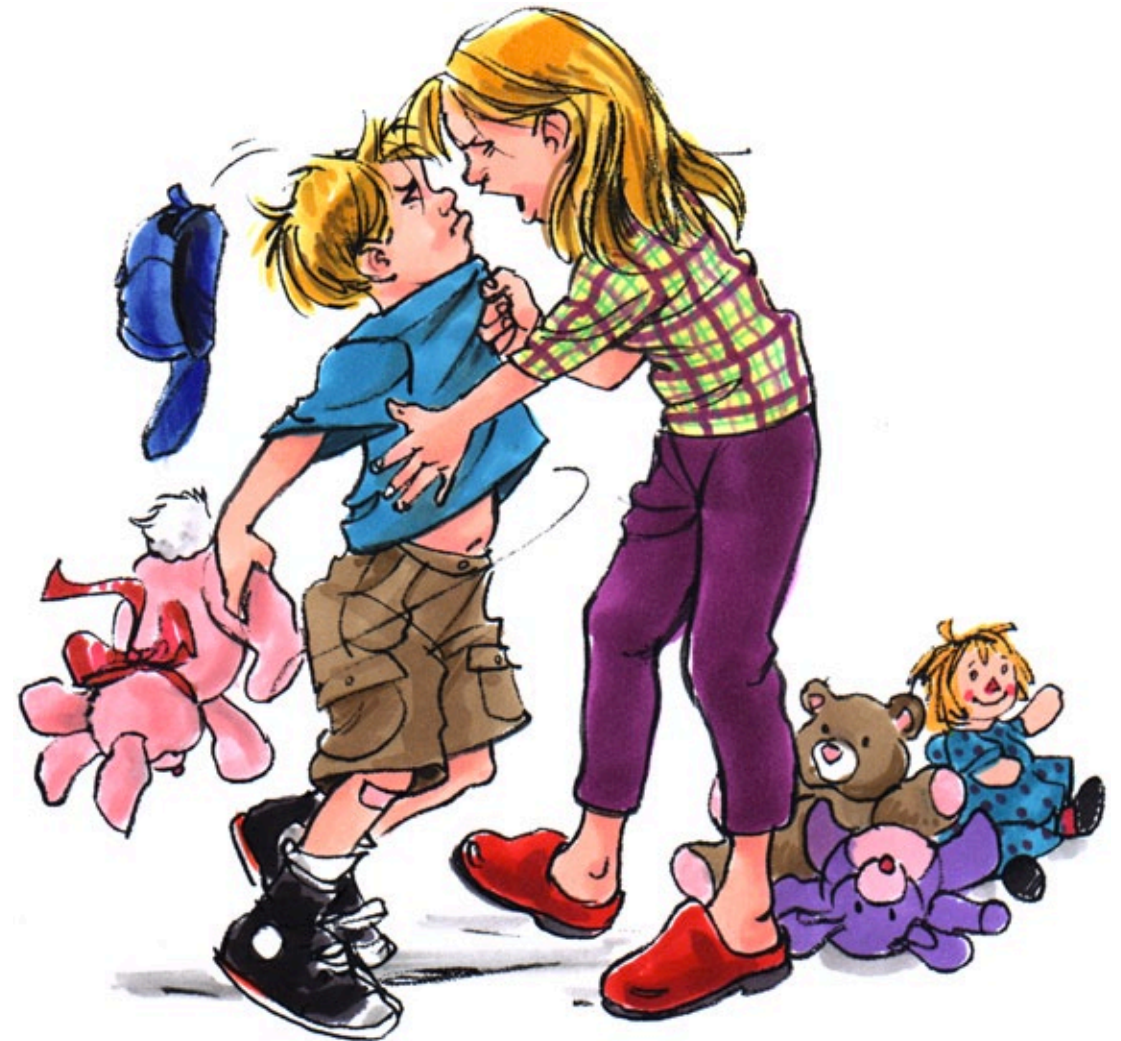


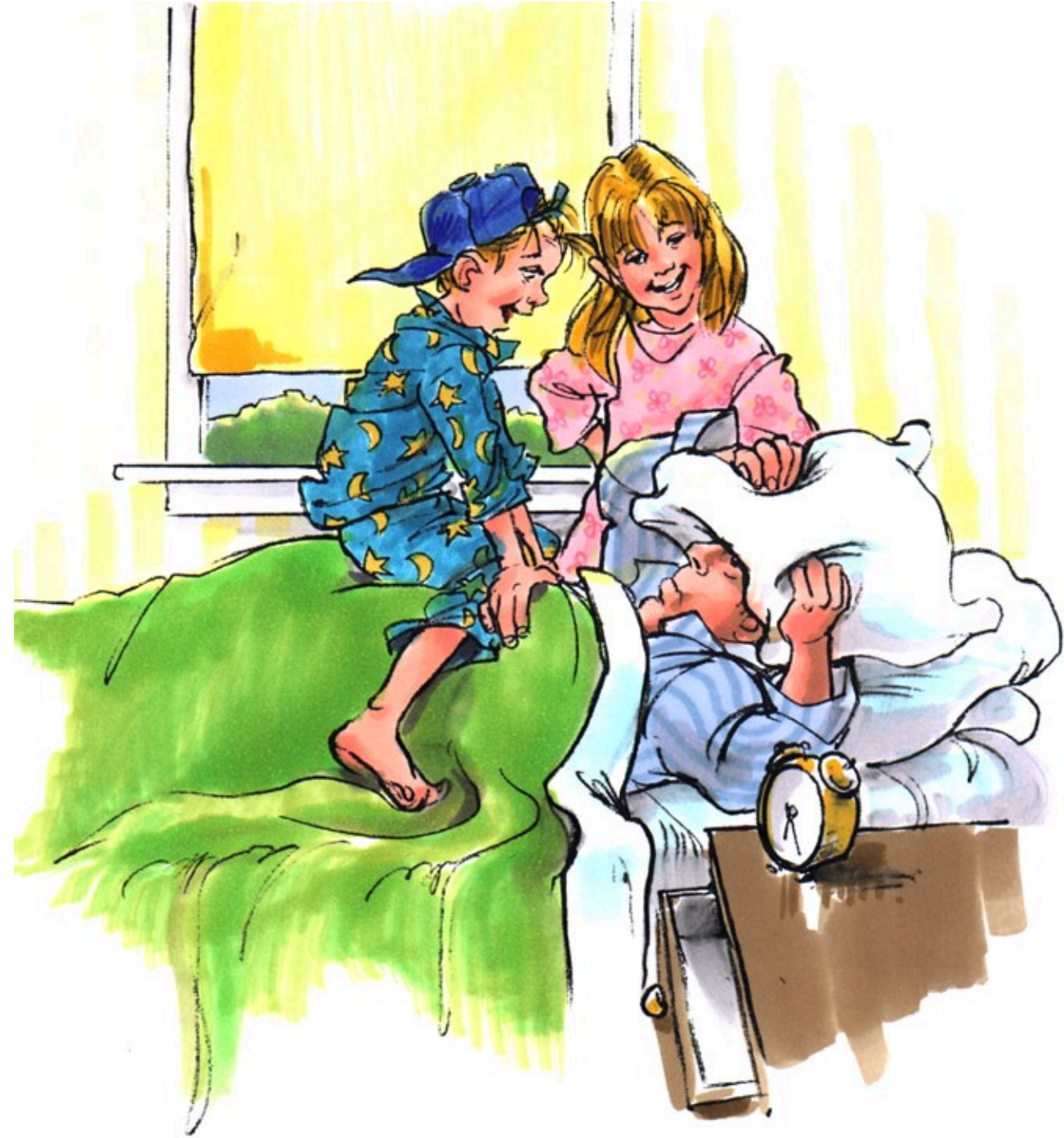


☺ This is a picture of my big sister and me. My sister's name is Rebecca Elizabeth. But everyone calls her Becky. My mom says Becky is a strong-willed and tenacious individual. I say, if there's something she wants, she usually gets it. My name is Benjamin. But you can call me Ben.

☺ Sometimes Becky and I get along. Most of the time we don't. But one time Becky and I wanted the same thing. And we worked together to get it. Becky and I wanted a pet.



☺ We asked our mom about it, but she said it was up to our dad. So Becky and I pestered him about a pet for almost a month. Mom said she'd never seen two kids who were more persistent. I think "persistent" is a good thing.



☺ I told Dad I wanted a snake named "Killer." Becky said she wanted a cat named "Cupcake." Dad said we would be lucky to get any pet at all.



☞ “A pet is a big responsibility,” he said. “Can you two be responsible?”
I crossed-my-heart-and-hoped-to-die that I could.
Becky promised “absolute reliability.” (Mom says Becky has a large vocabulary. That means she uses a lot of big words that I don’t always understand.)

☞ “Okay,” said Dad. “If you can be responsible, then you can get a pet.”
YES!!! Becky and I were so happy that we hugged!
But not for very long.





☺ Dad, Becky, and I headed for the mall and I said I was going to get the biggest, meanest-looking snake in the world!

Becky said I was “delusional.”

The mall security **guard** held the door open as we thundered in and made a beeline for the pet store.

☺ The mall was full of people. But that didn't stop Becky and me! We ran to the pet store as fast as we could go.

The **guard** ran after us and told us to slow down!