

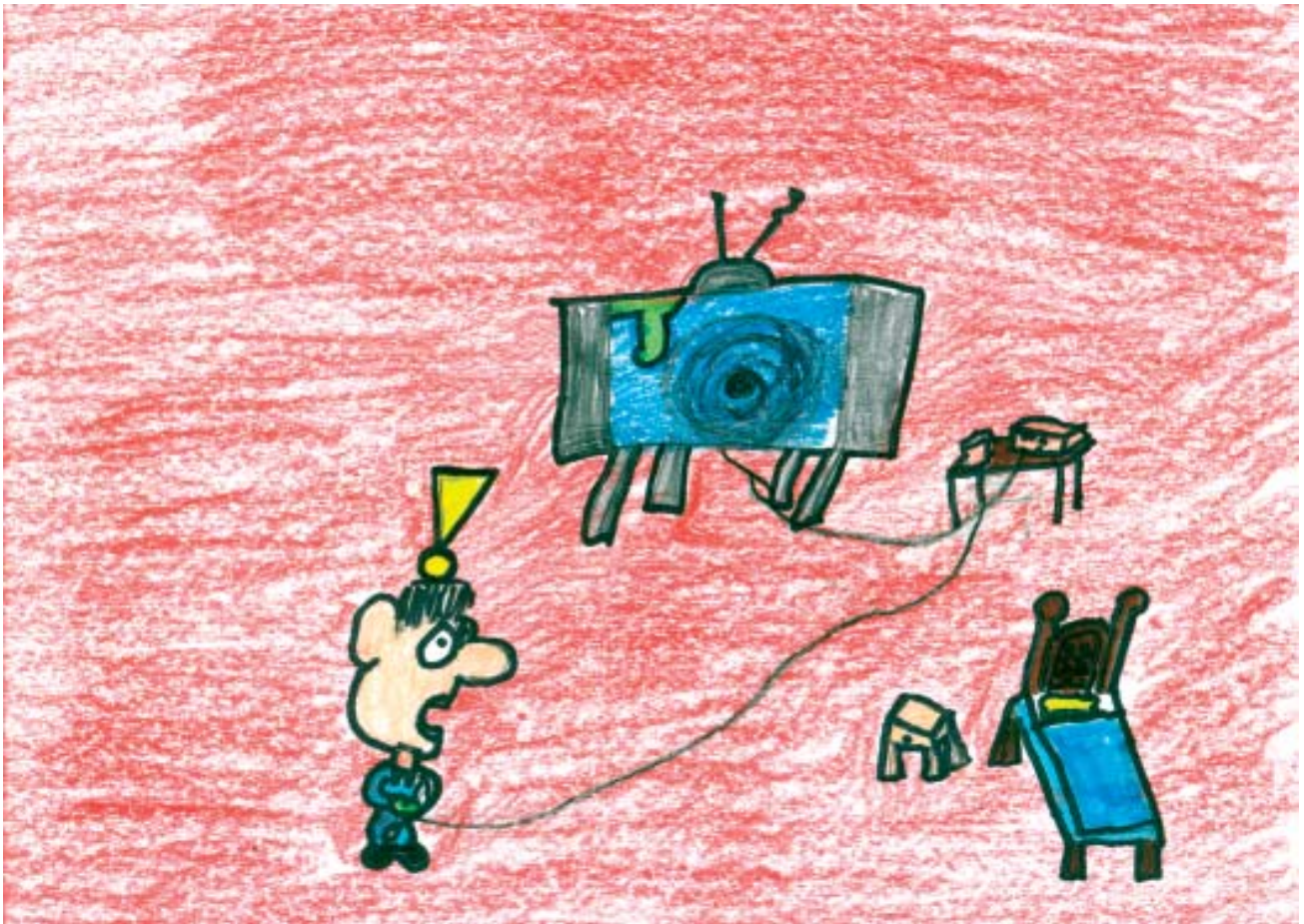


Well... it all started one beautiful fall day when I was a fourth grader in Mrs. Mann's class.

Over the speaker came the glorious voice of my principal, Mrs. Murray, "Boys and girls, due to the hurricane brewing in the Gulf of Mexico, school is cancelled for the rest of the week."

The principal could barely switch off the intercom before the class erupted in cheers of joy,

"Vacation! Ice, ice baby!"



I came running off the bus,

- ◆ through the hallway,
- ◆ jumped on my bed,
- ◆ switched on the TV,

and was ready for an afternoon of mindless Nickelodeon reruns.

I heard the “beep... beep... beep...” of the Emergency Broadcast System. Then my TV screen was filled by an image of Hurricane Ivan beamed from the International Space Station. My mouth gaped open and in a flash I knew,

*This is not going to be the vacation I had planned!*