

① THE TATIOO

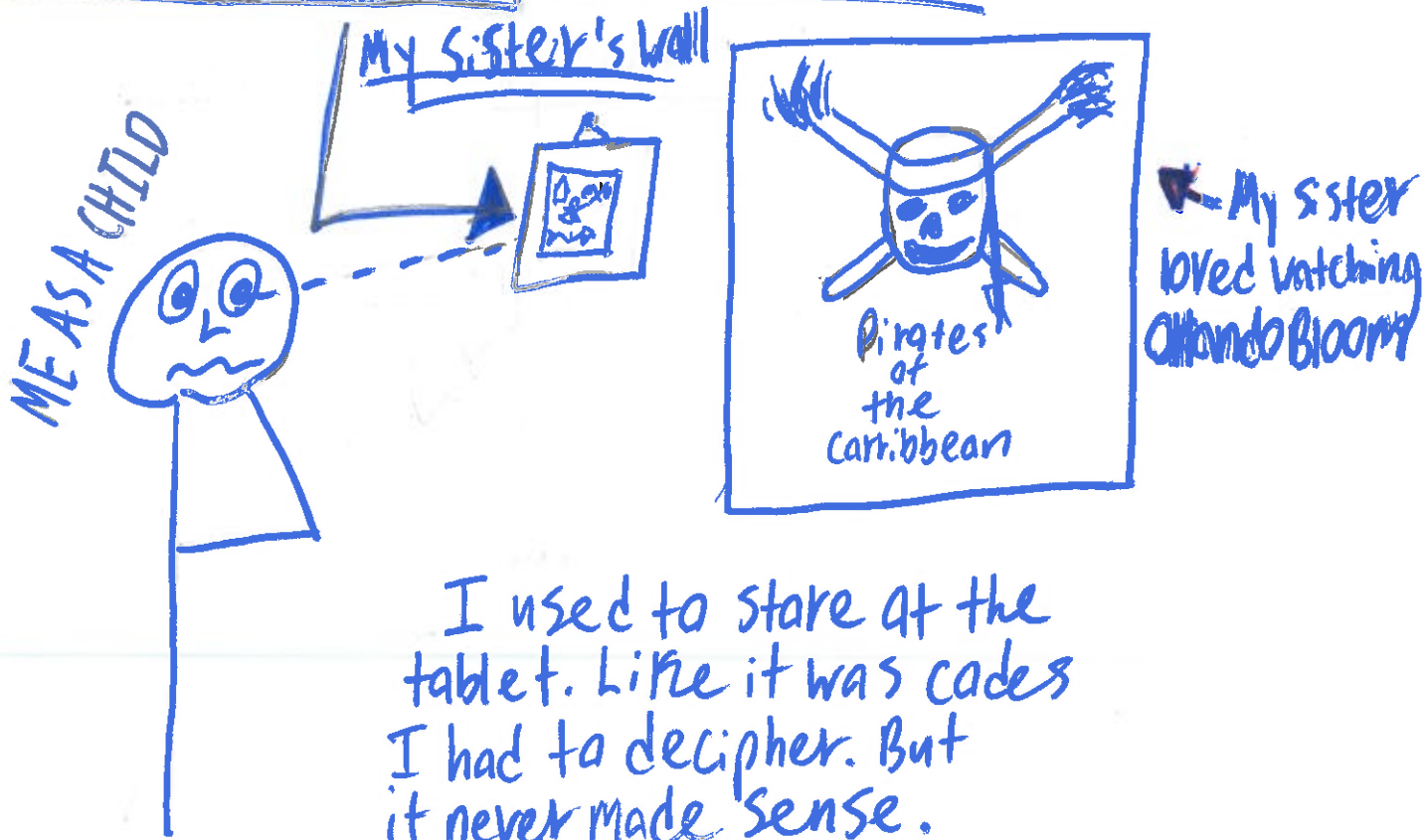
By Leaned Martinez



② But why that tattoo?



When I was younger, my sister had this tablet of "Arte Taino" hanging in her room. I don't remember where she brought it, but it was suddenly in her room after a trip to the DR. Maybe she got it from a Botánica. But I do remember feeling confused when I looked at it. Who were the tainos?



I used to stare at the tablet. Like it was codes I had to decipher. But it never made sense.

When I begged my sister to tell me more about the Tainos, she told me that they were the Native people before Christopher Columbus (that devil) came to America. But I wanted to know more, so she told me to Google it. Boy, I wasn't ready for what I found.



That was the first day when I learned about the tragedy in the Antilles. And from that day on, that image was burned on my mind. A man with a spear and a skeleton of a fish. But I felt hollowed knowing.

3) The Resurgence

Years and years later, after my sister moved away to N.J., I was in the DR doing research for my next book. And then I saw it... on a door!!



So I went inside and found this older woman behind the counter. And I asked her about the art on the door.



So she told me the origins of the symbols on the door (After I gave her 100 pesos).

She said that those specific symbols, the person with the spear and the skeleton of the fish, was found in a cave nearby.



And then she proceeded to tell me about the myth: One night near the cave where man came from, Agüeybaná was walking and saw a dead fish. The fish asked for help but Agüeybana went on. The next morning, Agüeybaná saw the fish had already turned into a skeleton. And it hurt Agüeybaná that he didn't help. So he took out his heart with his spear. He decided that if the fish that was so helpless was hollow, so would he. And he walked the island without a heart to love and feel beautiful emotions.



(How I imagined Agüeybaná)

And it became the inspiration of the tattoo I have on my arm. Because it reminded me how the Spaniards took away the hearts of the Natives. My tattoo is a reminder to never forget and always find our heart that was taken away from us.