Art Spiegelman visits Maurice Sendak at his idyllic Connecticut estate, where the celebrated illustrator recently finished “We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy,” a children’s book about homeless kids living in garbage...

...and I didn’t redo a single picture for “Dumps...” just — gagoomba! — from start to finish. I did a picture a night, just like when I was 12 years old...

I envy that! I do maybe 20 sketches for every finish, all with the insecure dread that people will find out my dirty secret: I can’t draw!

Yes, that was my life too, all Sturm und Drang! My friends fled: “He’s not making a book, he’s building a coffin!”

But that’s all over! I’m 65 — facing the Big Croak — and I’ve finally come to the Pleasure Principle!

It has to do with young friends dying of AIDS... it has to do with studying Melville...

I’m illustrating his most meshuggah book now, “Pierre”...

You’re doing a book for grownups?

Kid books... grownup books... that’s just marketing. Books are books!

I suppose. But when parents give “Maus,” my book about Auschwitz, to their little kids, I think it’s child abuse...

I wanna protect my kids!

When Nadja, my 6-year-old daughter, was asked what I do for a living, she said, “Daddy draws mice!”

Art— you can’t protect kids... they know everything!
I'll give you an example... My friend lost his wife recently, and right at the funeral his little girl said, "Why don't you marry Miss So-and-So?" He looked at her as if she were a witch!

...but she was just being a real kid, with desperate day-to-day needs that had to be met no matter what.

People say, "Oh, Mr. Sendak. I wish I were in touch with my childhood self, like you!"

As if it were all quaint and succulent, like Peter Pan.

Childhood is cannibals and psychotics vomiting in your mouth!

I say, "You are in touch, lady— you're mean to your kids, you treat your husband like shit, you lie, you're selfish...

That is your childhood self!

In reality, childhood is deep and rich. It's vital, mysterious, and profound. I remember my own childhood vividly...

I knew terrible things... but I knew I mustn't let adults know I knew...

It would scare them.