

The One-Who-Saw

by Gambhiro Bikkhu



E-mail: bdea@buddhanet.net
Web site: www.buddhanet.net

Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.

The nature of people is basically pure.

It's because of false thinking
and attachments that the truth is obscured.
Have no false thoughts, let go of attachments,
and that nature will be pure of itself once more.

6th Patriarch Hui Neng

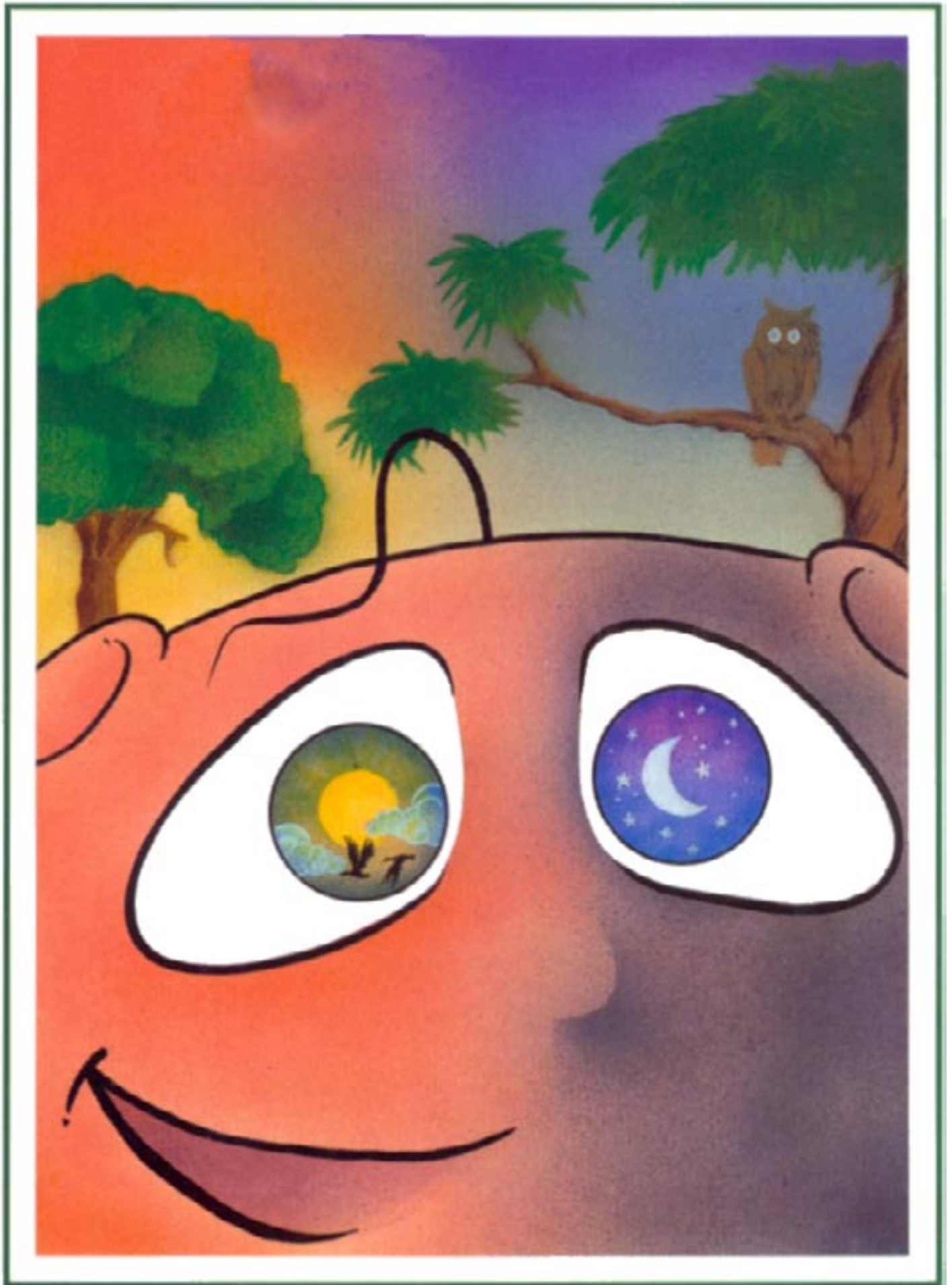


The One - Who - Saw

"Isn't happiness a gem?"

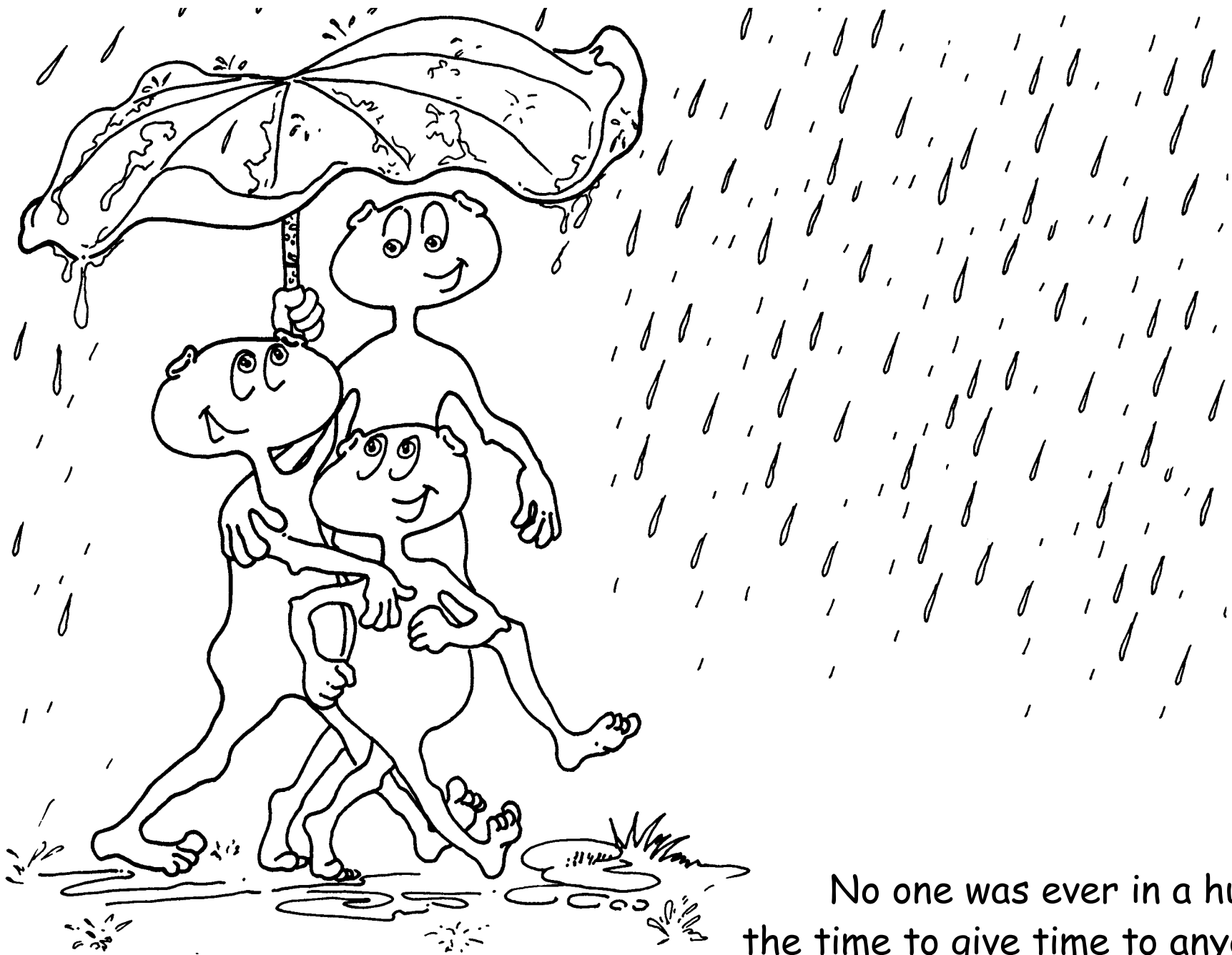
"Why don't you let that gem shine out?"

You all can be happy, too!"





Once there was a land where the inhabitants lived a happy and harmonious life. They were kind to one another. Their ways were simple. Their wants were few.



No one was ever in a hurry. They had the time to give time to anyone who asked.



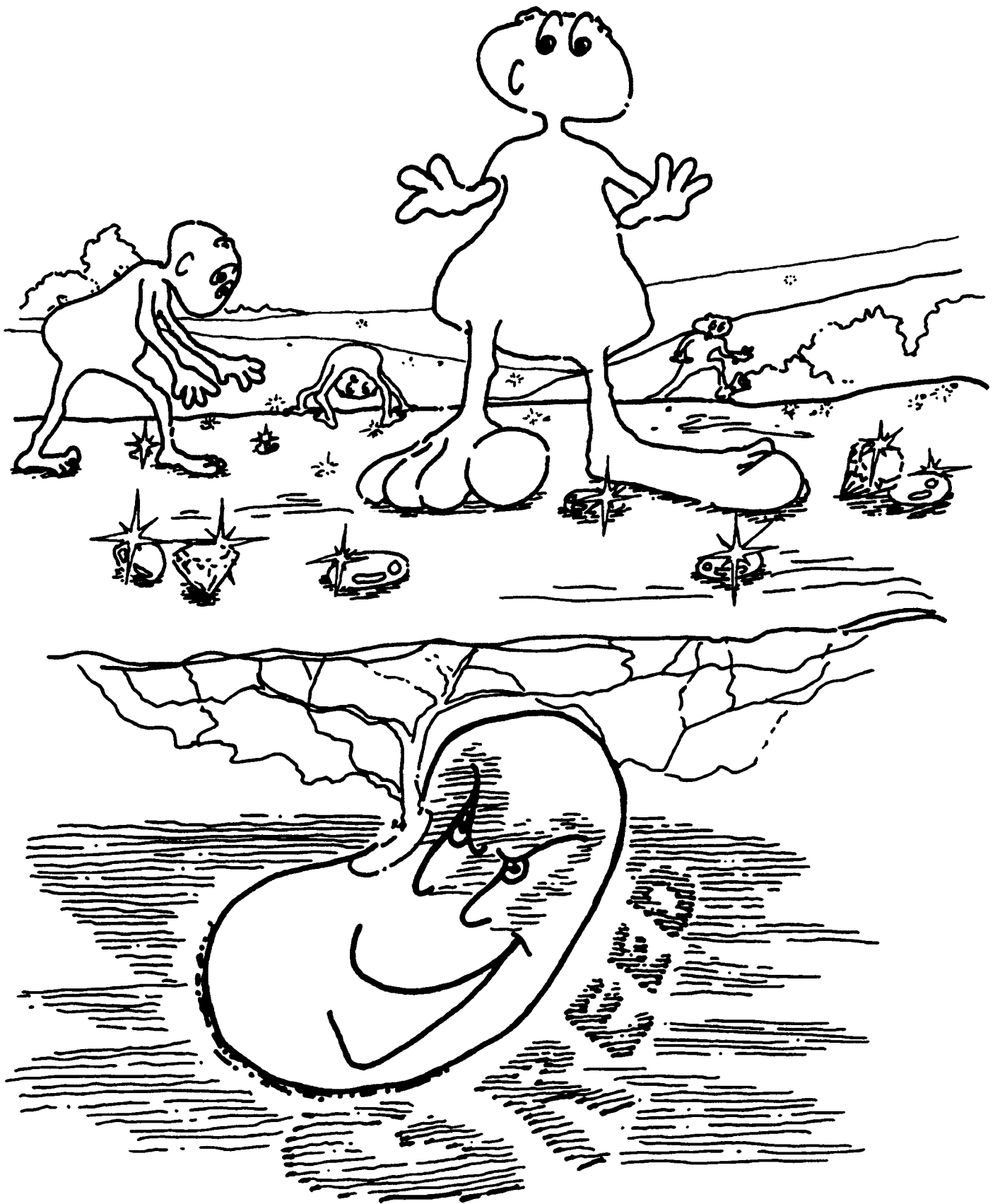
They had the time to sit by brooks and listen to them babble, or listen to the lonely owls at night hoo-hooing to their mates.



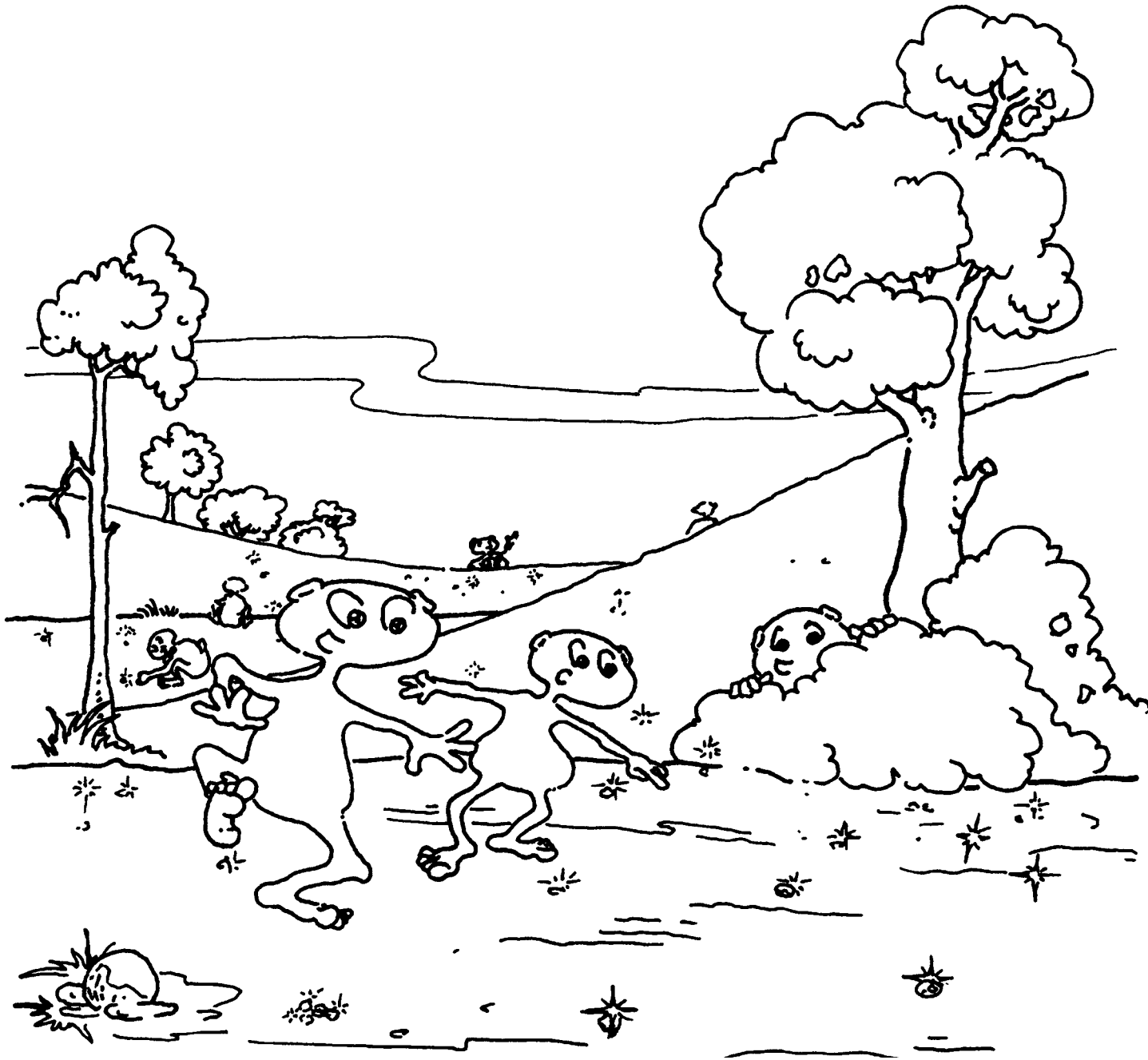
They had the time to watch the stars that twinkled through the trees and wonder just how many stars could hide behind a leaf. Or if there was only half a moon up hanging in the sky, they'd wonder if the half they saw was nailed down tight while the other half could fly. Or was the moon half empty or half full? They'd wonder.



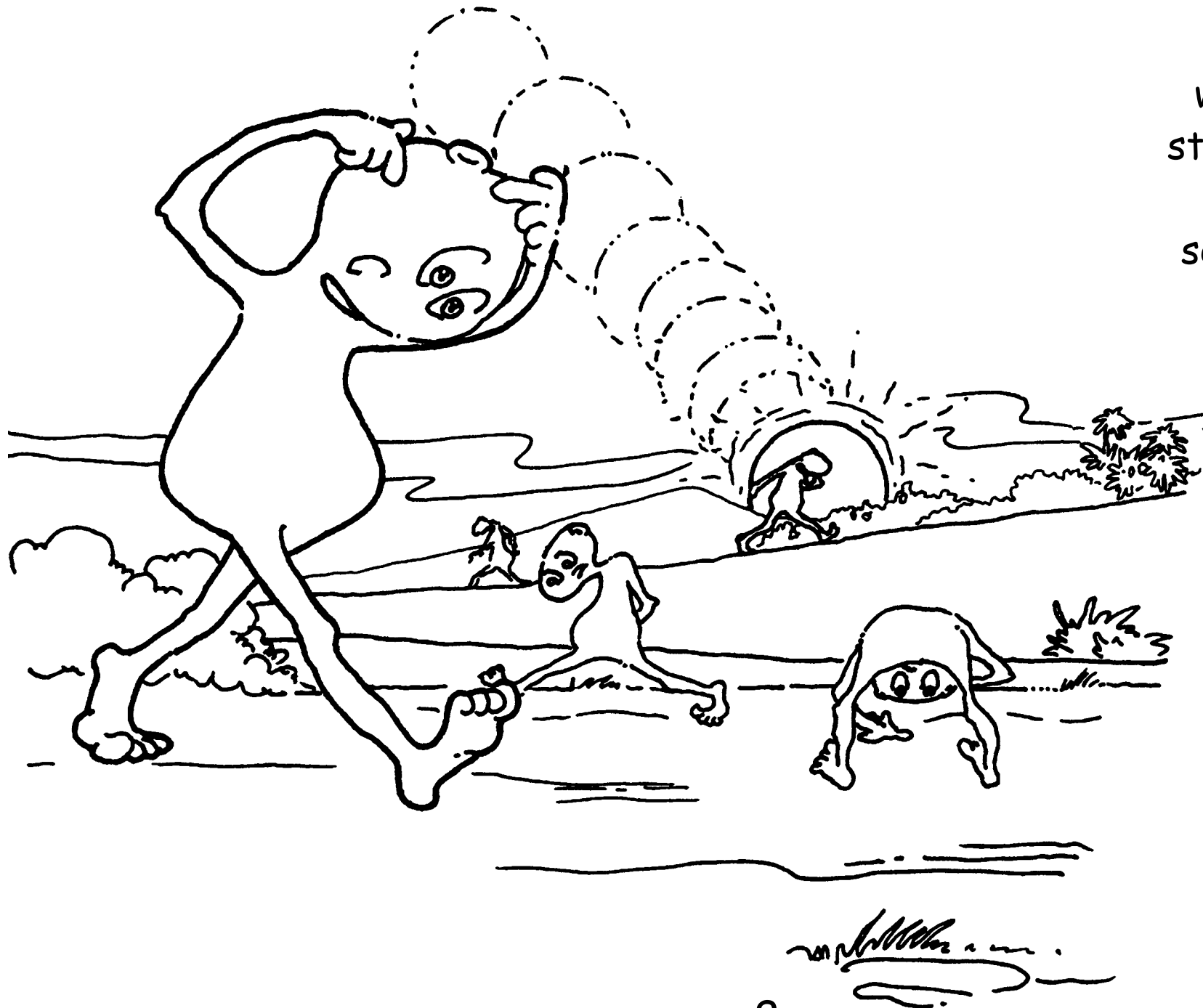
The inhabitants of this land were so in touch with the world around them, and their world was so in touch with their harmony and bliss.



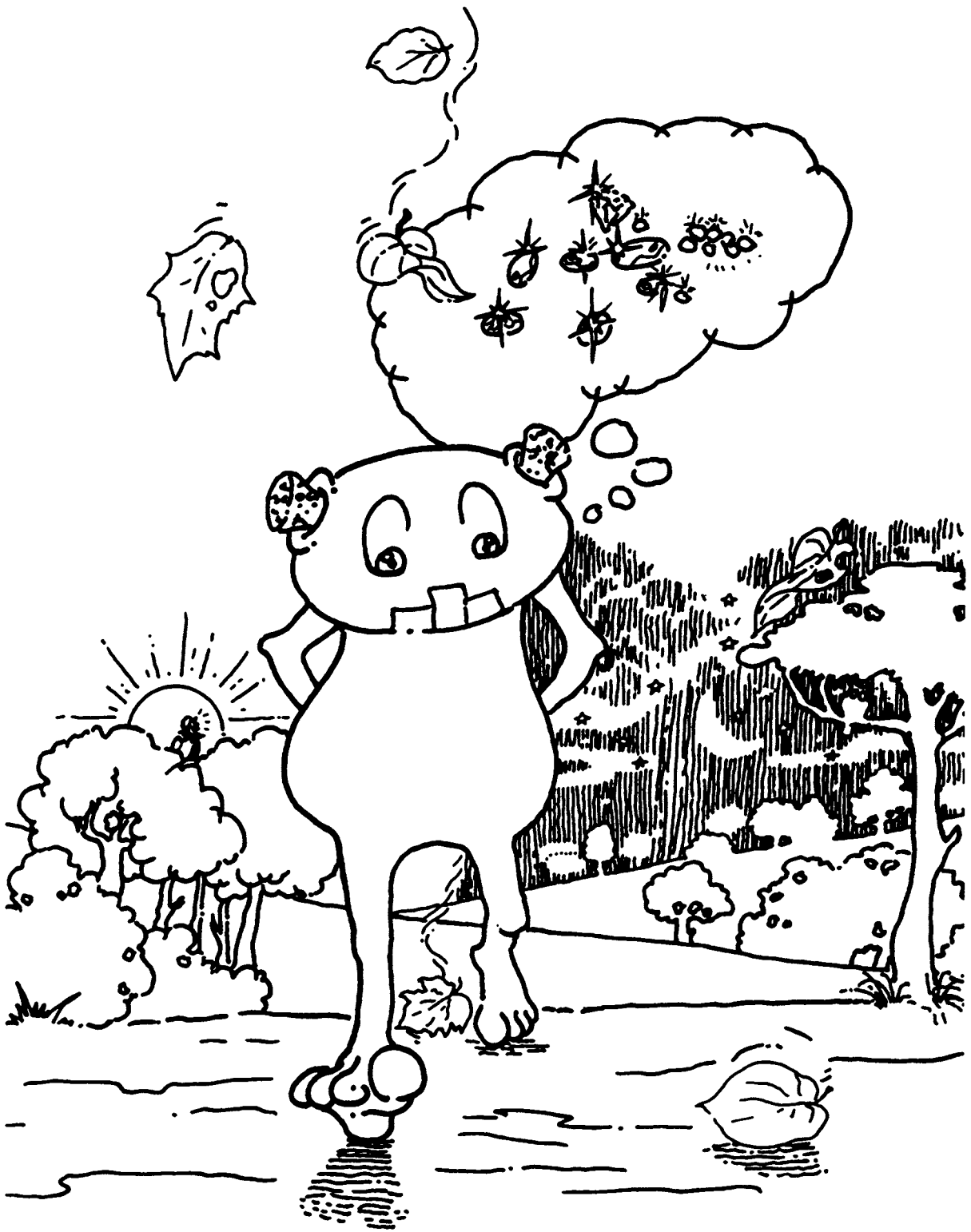
And then, one day, **Greed** sowed itself into the earth and sprouted in the form of tiny precious stones.



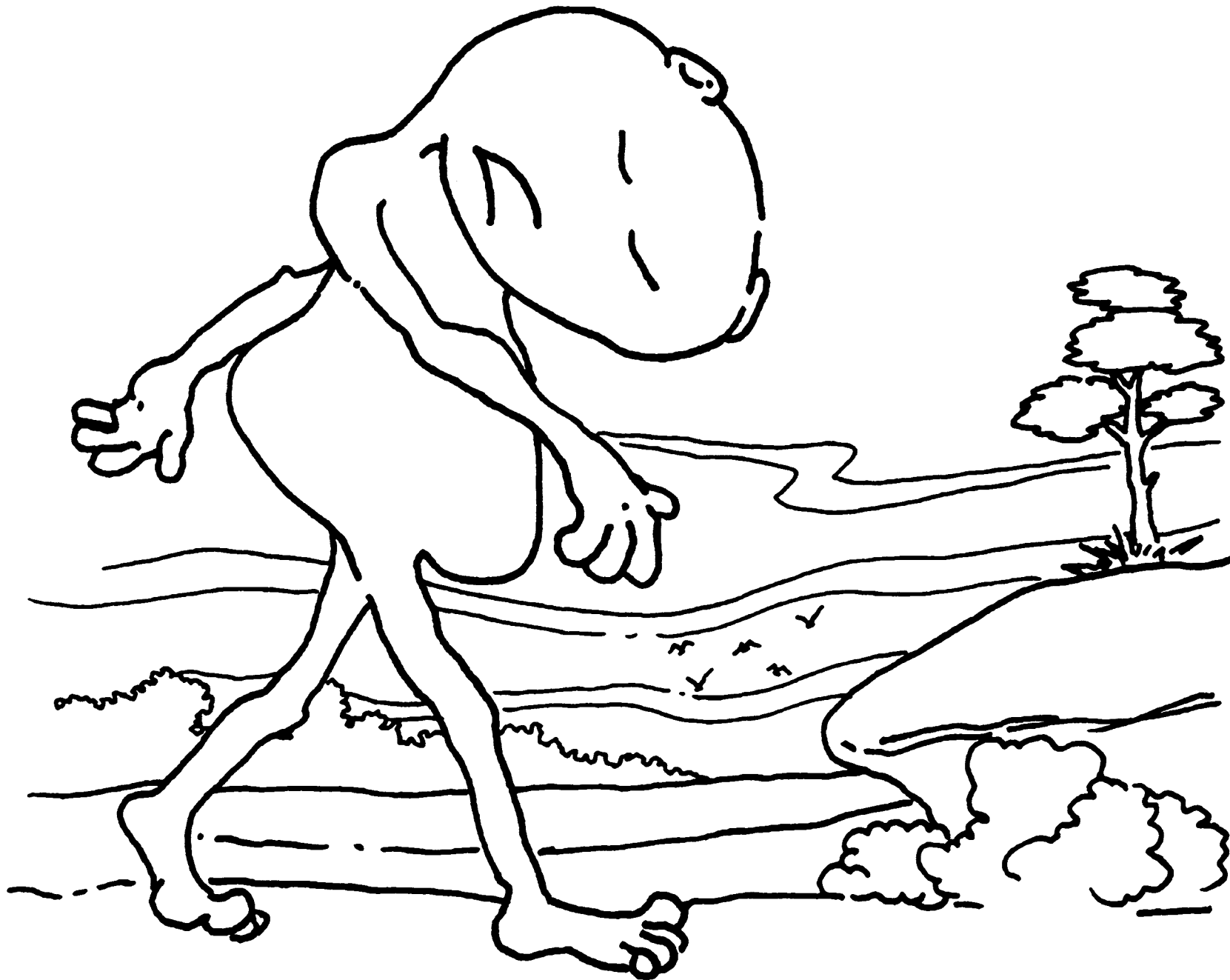
At first, no one paid much attention but, soon, word got around that the stones were worth a fortune. Then soon everyone went looking for precious stones.



But no one knew where or when the stones would appear for there was no set pattern. So the inhabitants of the land began to walk around with their eyes glued to the ground in front of them. In that way, they thought, they would be the first to find a stone the moment it appeared.



Chins tucked tightly into their chests, the inhabitants went around like that for days on end, for months, for years, and finally for generations. The brook's babble, in the meantime, went unheard and the riddle of the moon's other half was never posed again. The inhabitants now rarely talked to each other and spent most of their time alone.

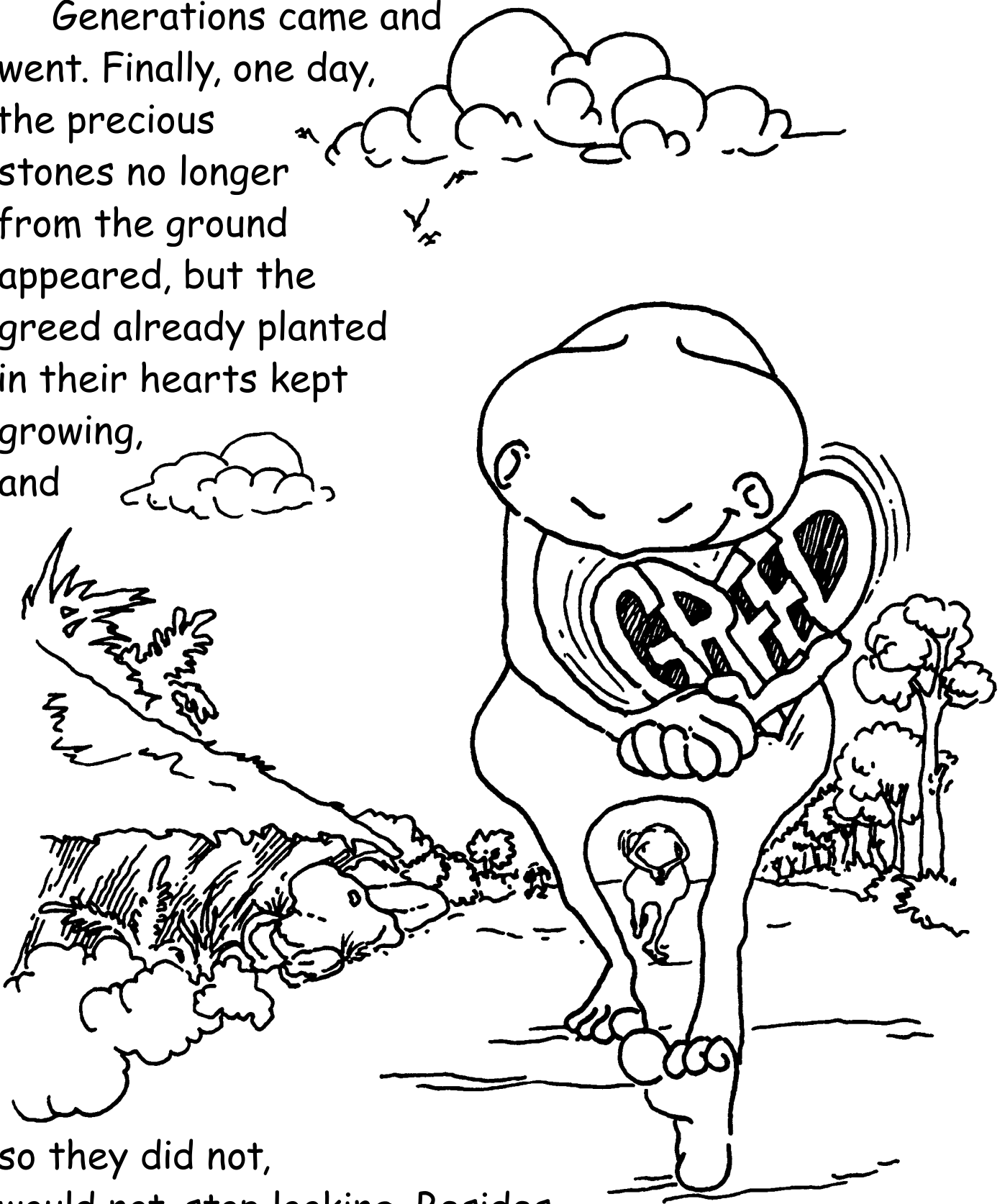


As time went by, their eyes that were once as big and round as crystal plates, and just as bright, slowly lost their luster and turned into slits from all the squinting that they did in search of the tiny precious stones.

And their neck muscles got stiff and rigid so that they could no longer look up into the sky again, no longer see the summits of the mountains on which they used to build their dreams. And, certainly, no longer did they see the sun and moon... or stars.

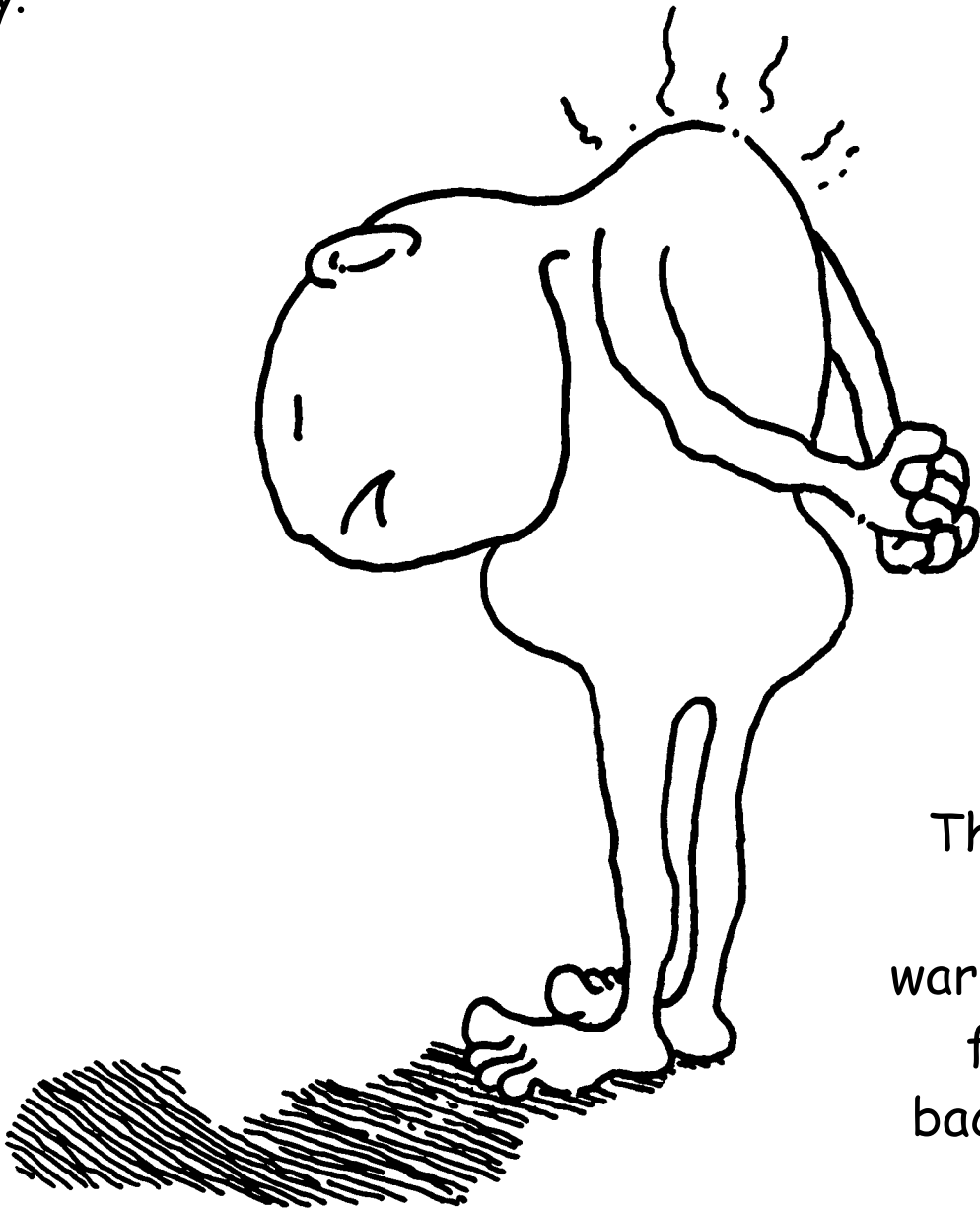
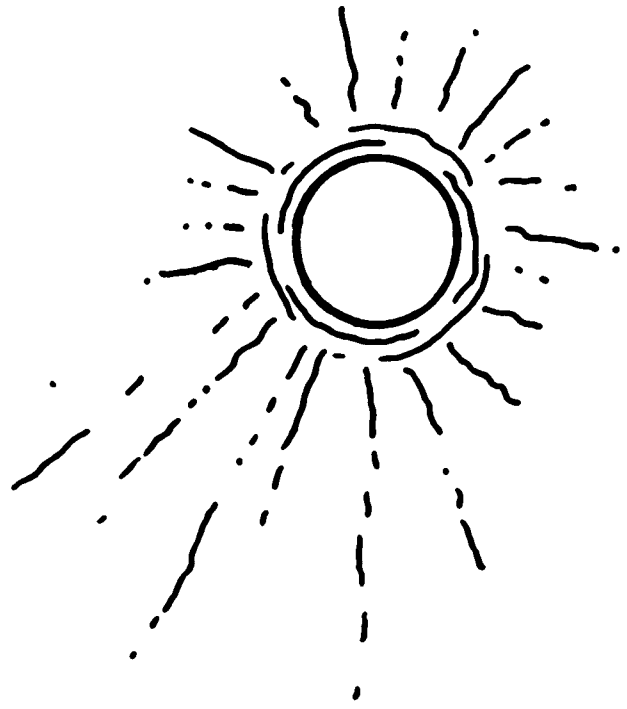


Generations came and went. Finally, one day, the precious stones no longer from the ground appeared, but the greed already planted in their hearts kept growing, and



so they did not, would not, stop looking. Besides, that was what their ancestors had always done, and the only task they were used to doing. Habits, indeed, are difficult to break when attachment already has a strong momentum.

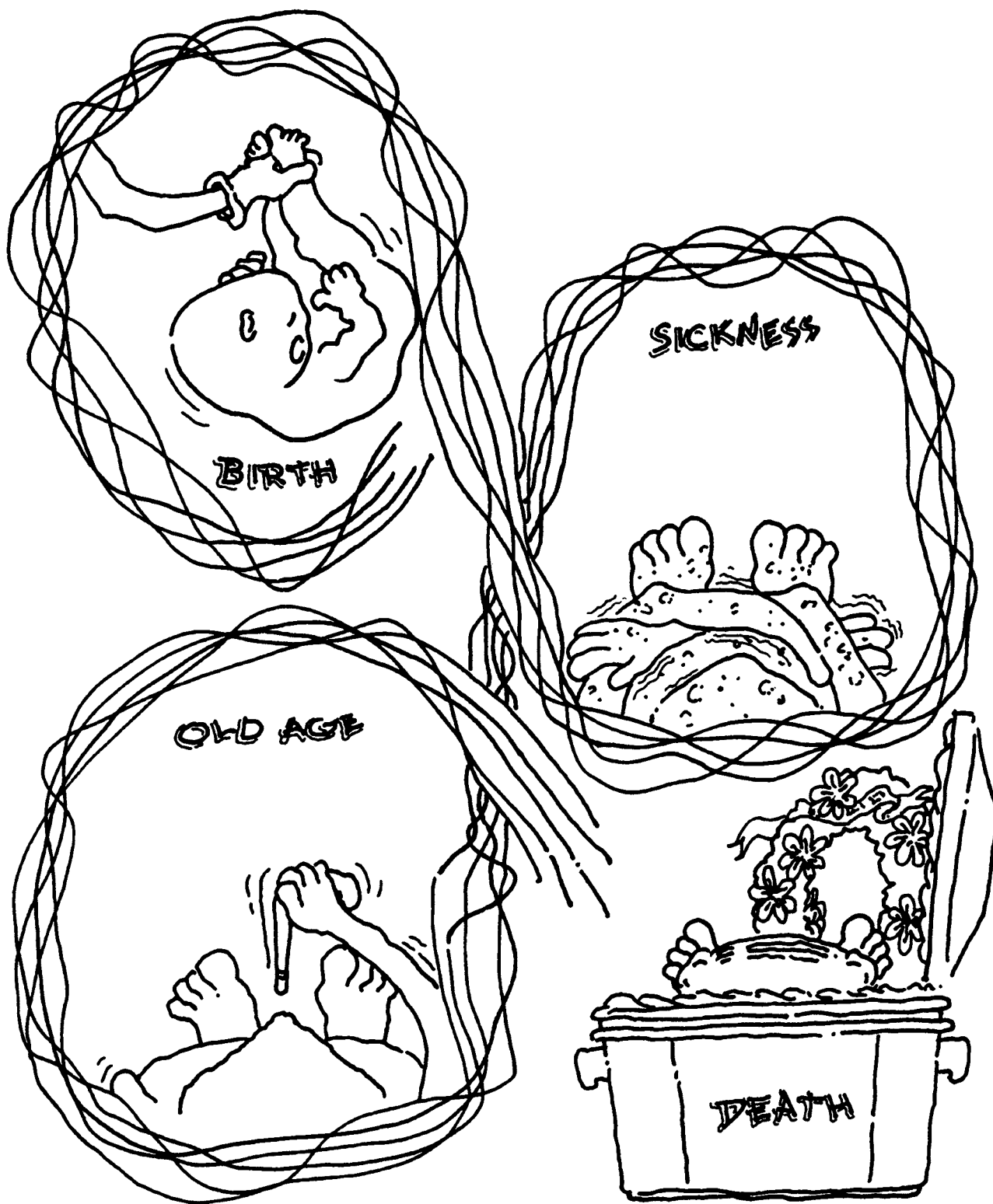
Their world was now only what they saw between their feet, the only world they ever knew. They heard there was a sun and moon, but had not actually seen them in the sky.



Their only proof was the sun's warmth that they felt upon their backs during the day...



...or the shadow of the trees
they saw upon the ground that
the full moon made at night.



Thus they were born, grew old, grew sick, and died, and never saw more than what was below their belly buttons and between their toes. It would certainly seem like a strange place to us, but to its inhabitants, it was a perfectly normal place, for they had never known it to be different since their birth and died knowing no differently.



And then, one day, one of the inhabitants strayed from his usual path and lost his way. He wandered about in circles all day long. When night fell, he fell too, right into a hole head first and there got stuck upside down.

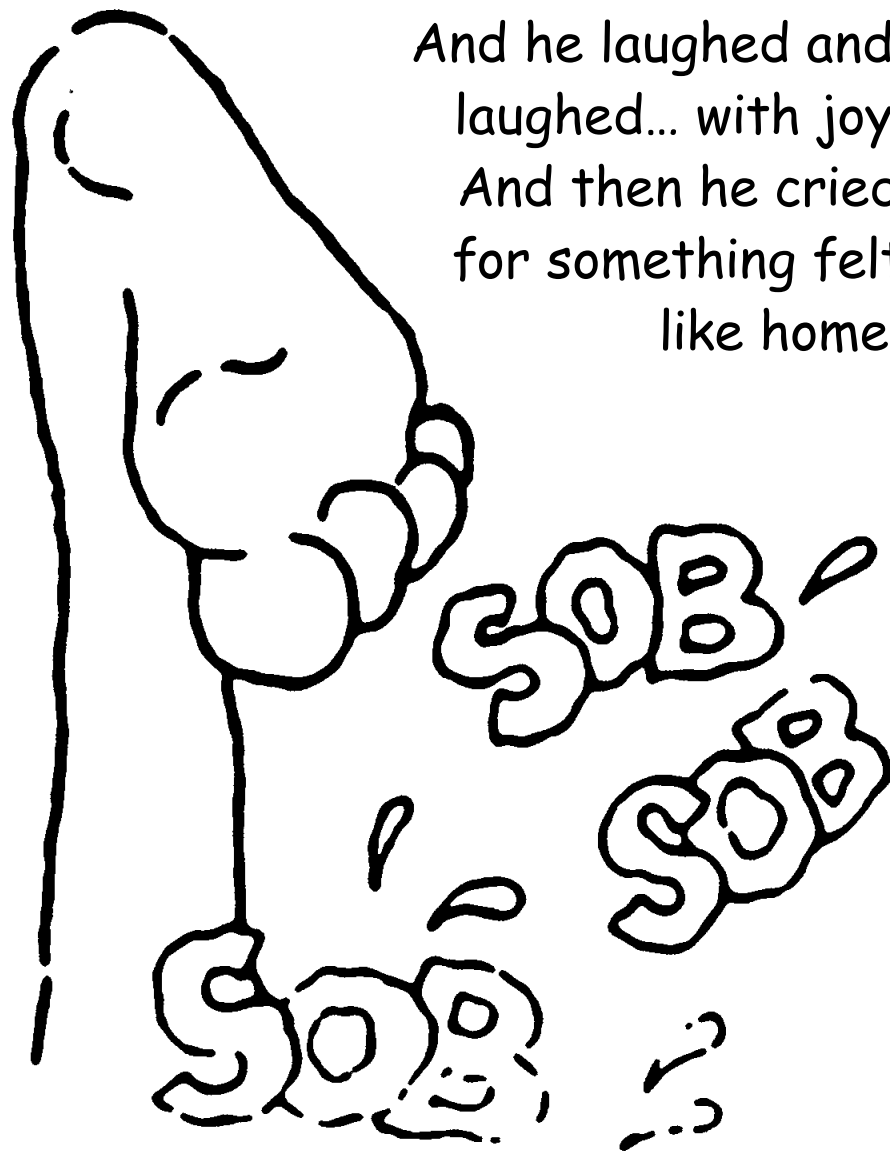


Then from the hole he saw a pale silvery ball above him and lights that twinkled. "Must be the moon!" he thought. "And are those the stars?" he wondered. "At last I see the moon and stars!" he exclaimed.

When morning came, he saw a bright golden light that made his eyes squint even more. And he saw, too, what looked like puffs of cotton that took the shape of things he never saw before: a clown with horns for feet, a little lamb with clowns for horns.



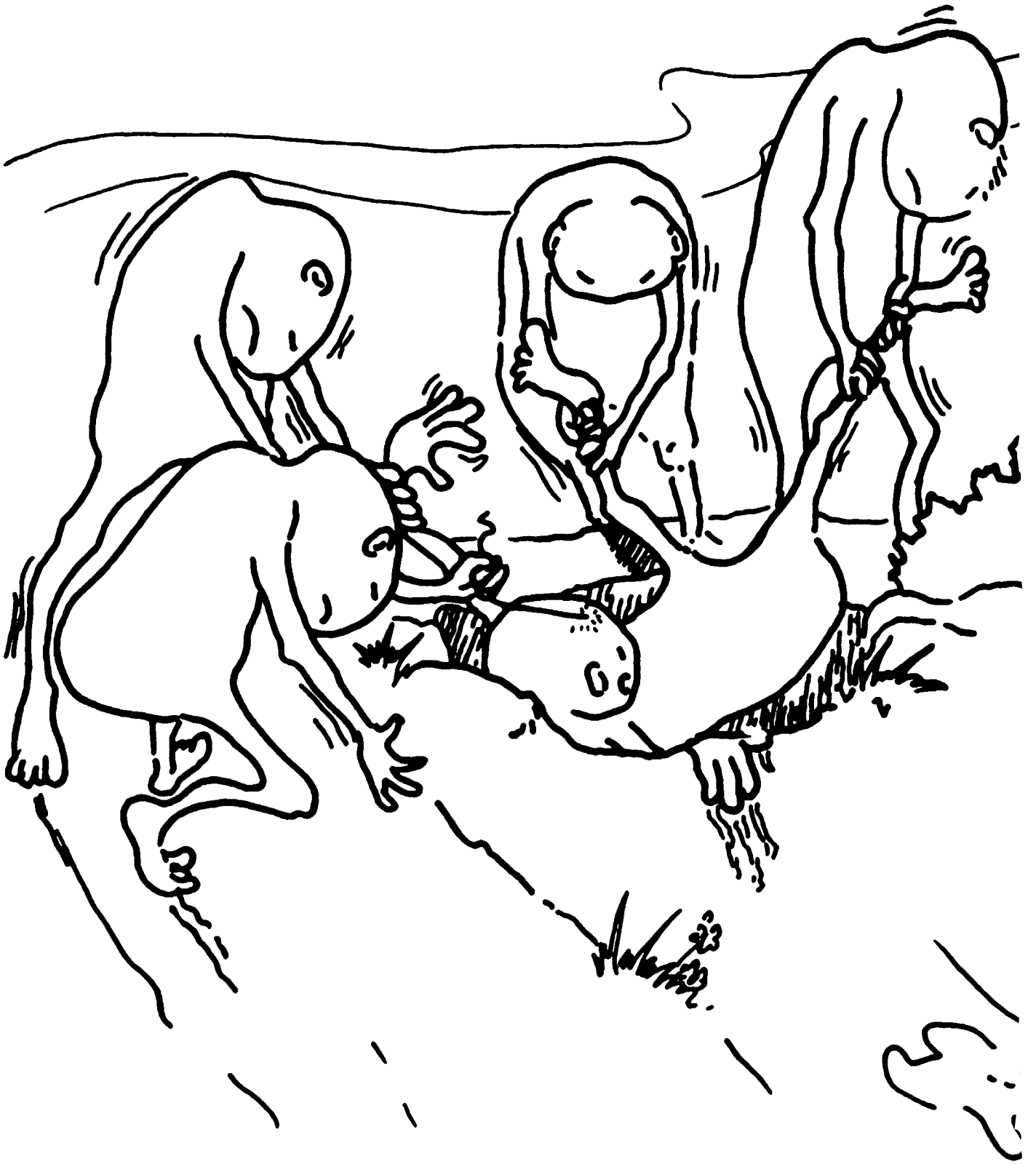
And he laughed and laughed... with joy. And then he cried, for something felt like home.







Struck by what he saw above him — a bird, a falling star (alas, he did not know to make a wish), a lightning flash, and all the sounds around him that seemed to echo in his hole, he lost track of all time.



Days had already passed when the inhabitants finally found him... by accident.

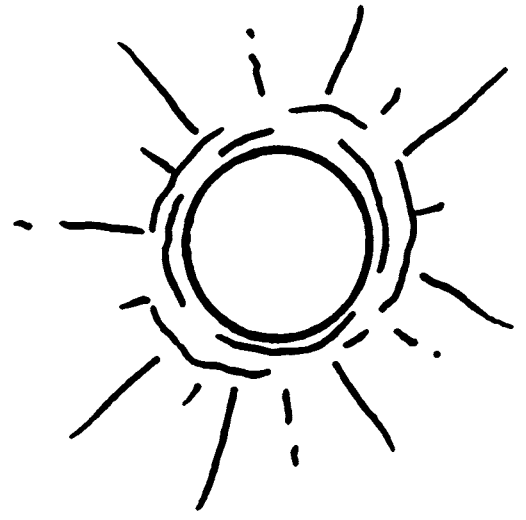
By accident, because no one had even noticed that he was gone. And when they pulled him out, he did not show much eagerness to be saved.



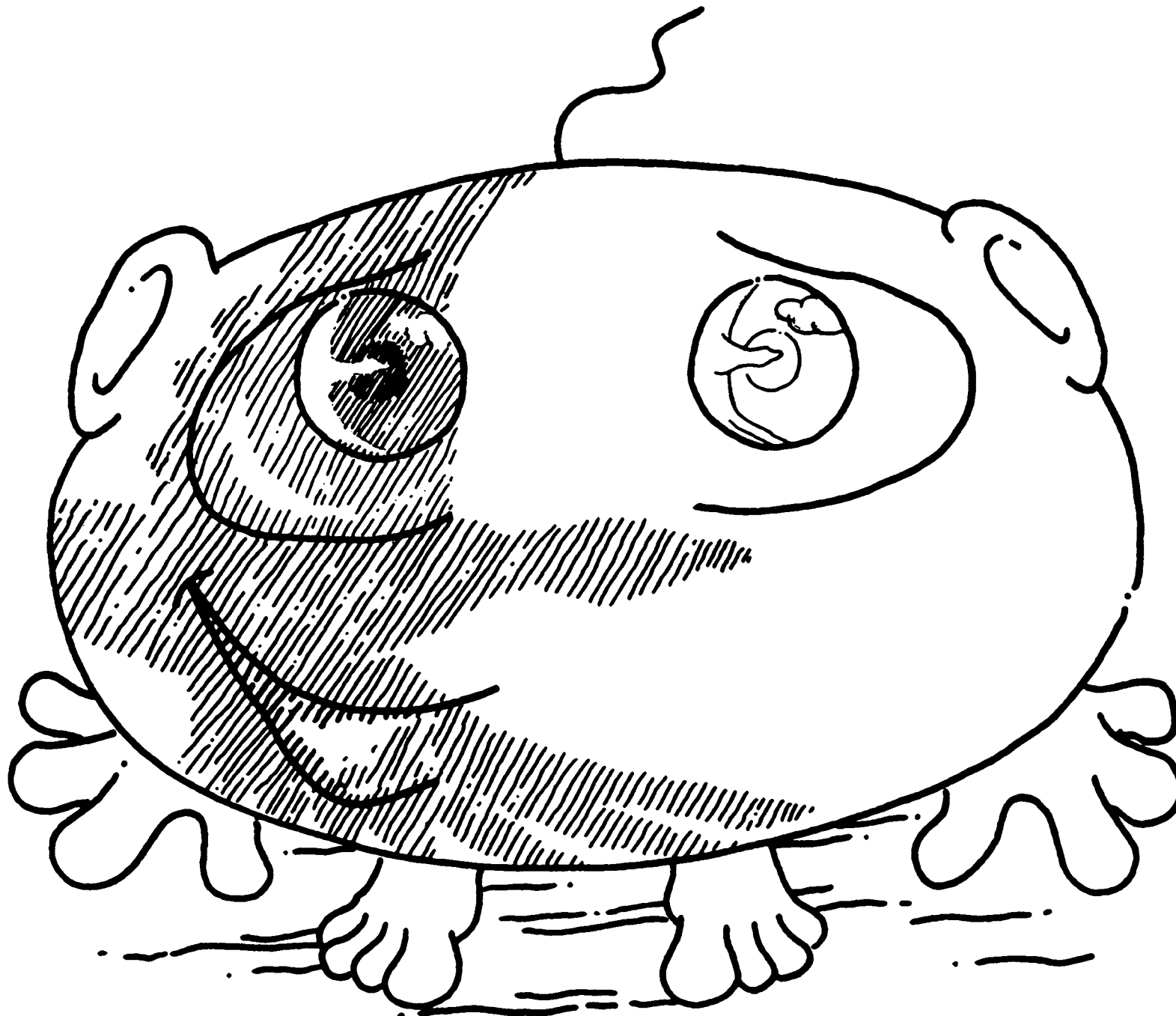
Rescued, the **One-Who-Saw** returned to where the others roamed and recounted to them with excitement what he had seen (and heard), but no one believed him nor did they care, nor had the time to listen. Instead, they thought that too much blood had pooled within his brain while he was upside down and caused him damage there. So they left him all alone with only his excitement to keep him company and went on their way spreading the word that he was nuts.



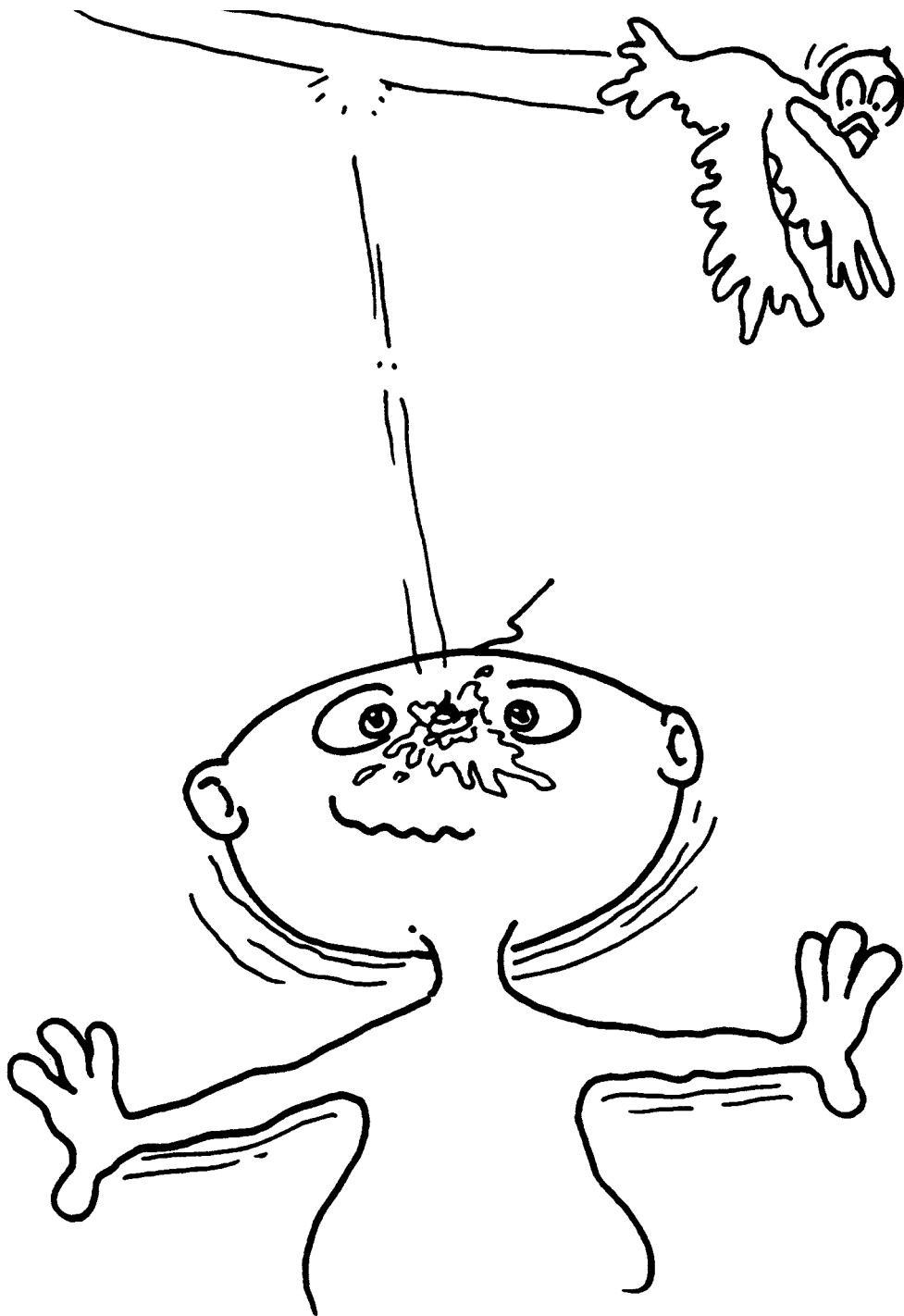
But the **One-Who-Saw** didn't mind nor did he get even a bit angry. Instead he returned to the hole he had fallen in as often as he could and learned how to get in and out of it upside down all by himself. But then one day, he asked himself, "Why shouldn't I see while standing on my feet what I can see while standing on my head?"



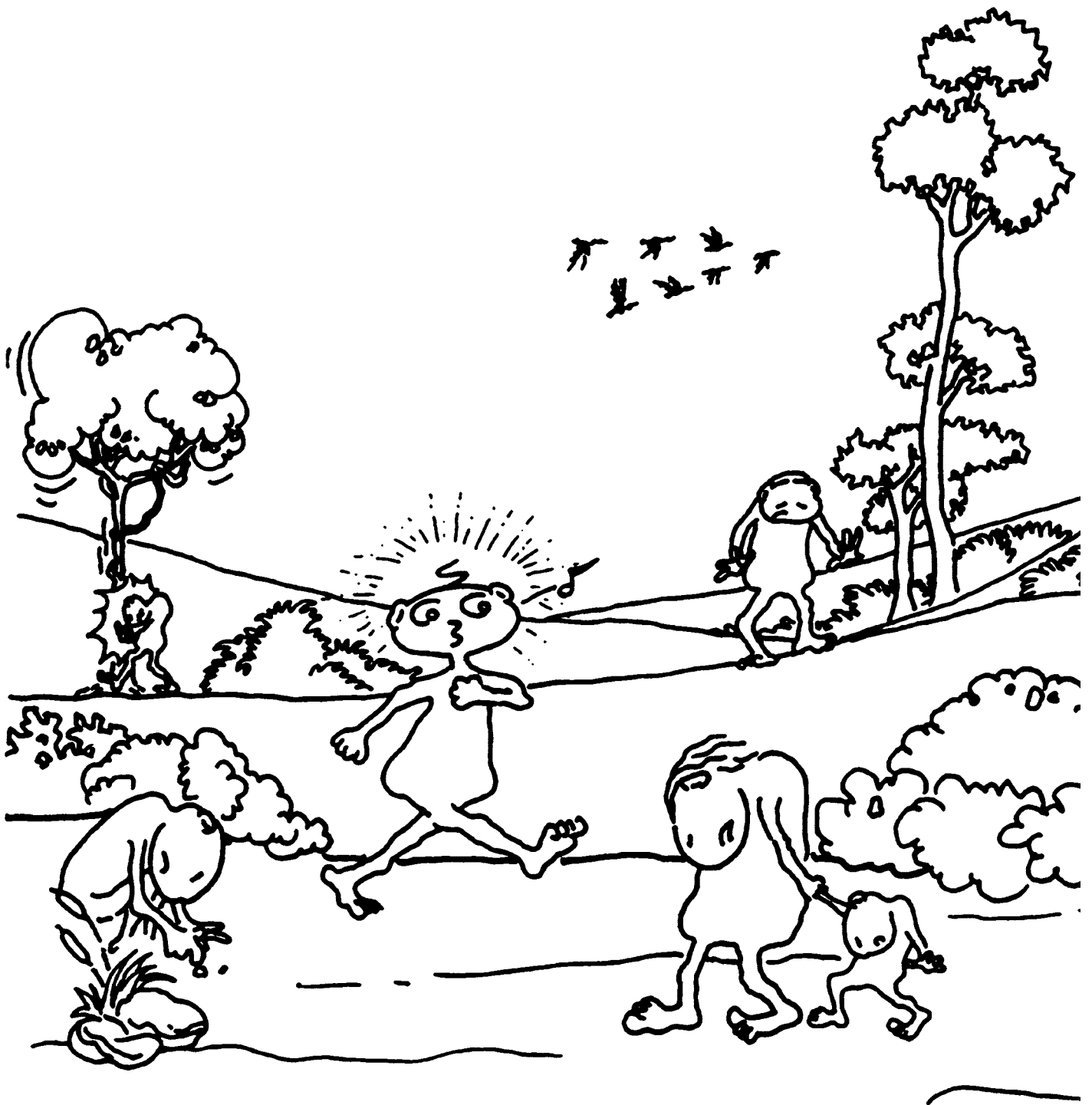
So he trained his eyes to look upward toward the warmth of the sun by day, and stretched his head as far back as he could, though it hurt so much, to see the moon and stars at night.



After a while, his eyes started to widen and slowly began to regain their shine, and his neck muscles softened and got more supple, until one day he managed to tilt his head all the way back and was able to look up. Yes, straight up!



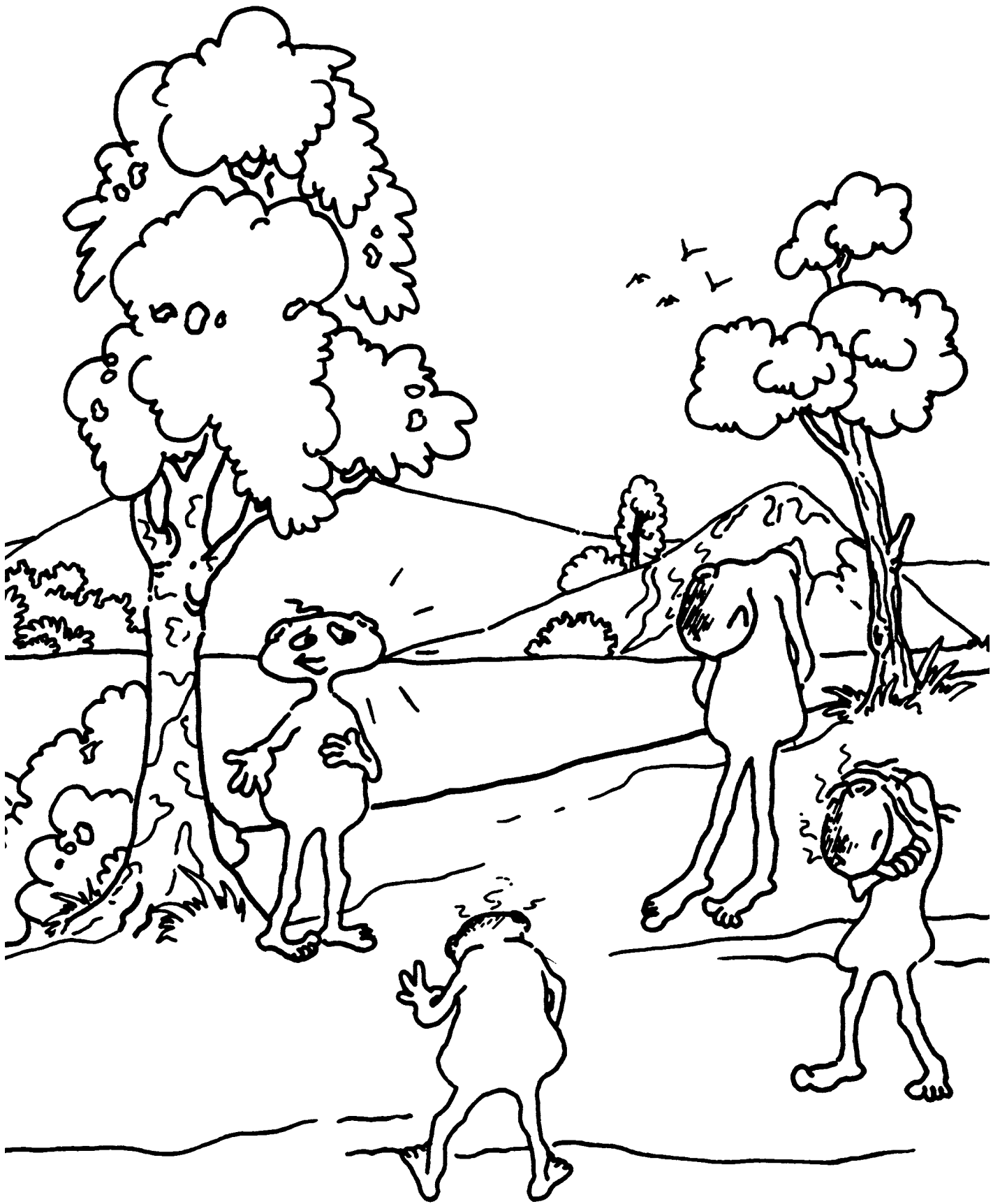
Then — splat! — a bird flew by above him. The world above was not so perfect after all! But the **One-Who-Saw** cared not and, instead, took all of it in stride, for what other things he saw were just too marvelous next to what he was used to seeing between his feet. The pebbles on the ground or on the bottom of a nice, clear stream could not compare to the pebbles twinkling in the sky at night.



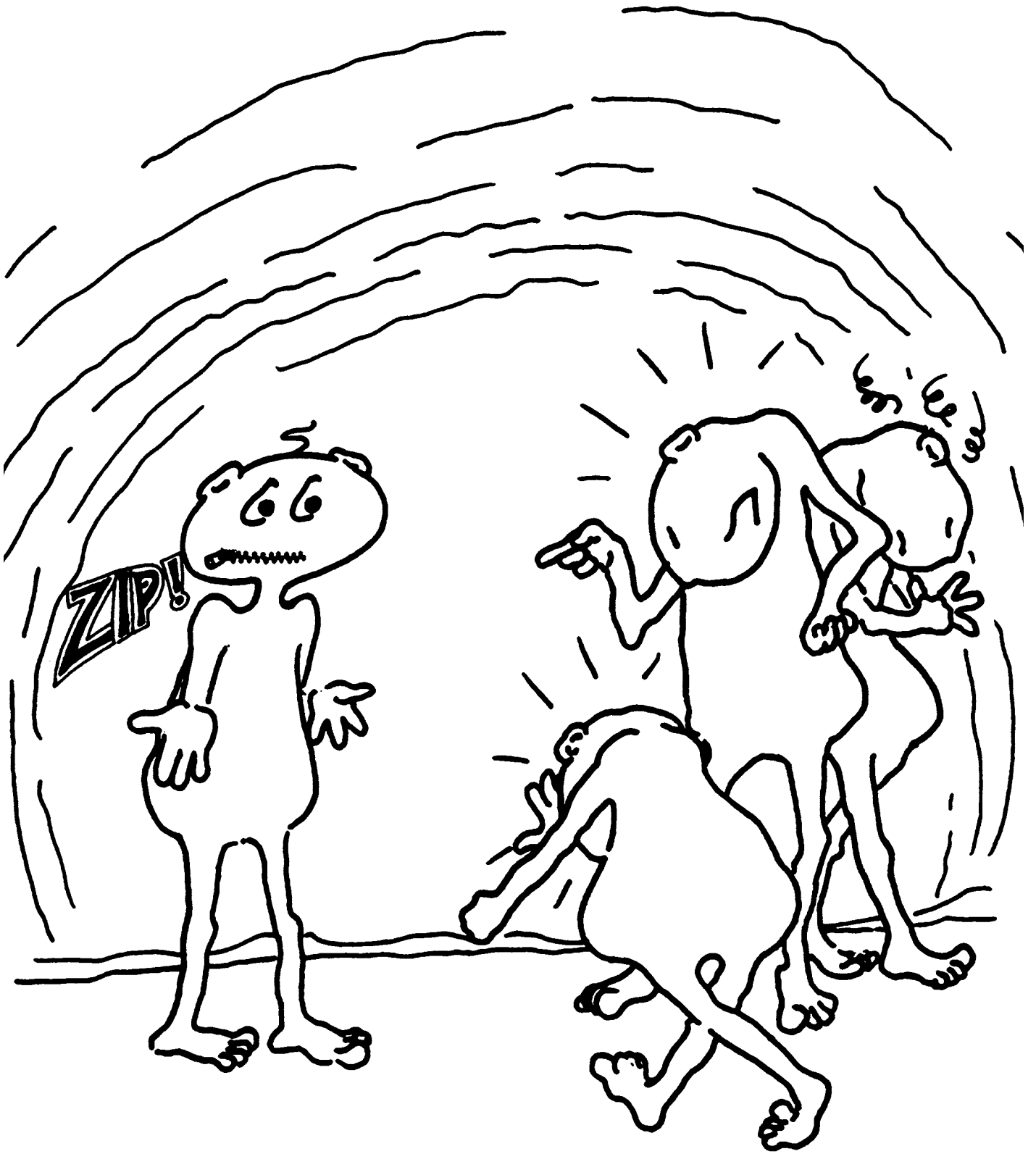
His face was now all lit up with such a glow that he stood out in any crowd. And what a tan he had! The gentle rain fell on his face and he felt cleansed. He felt the soft breeze, too, where it had rarely blown before, and felt new life enter into his every pore. Now he was always happy, and singing or whistling as he strolled about. He felt reborn.

Then, on top of Greed, Anger grew in the hearts of the other inhabitants. "Why should anyone be happy when we are not?" they asked. "And how can you be happy when the little gems are no longer found?" they grumbled and accused.

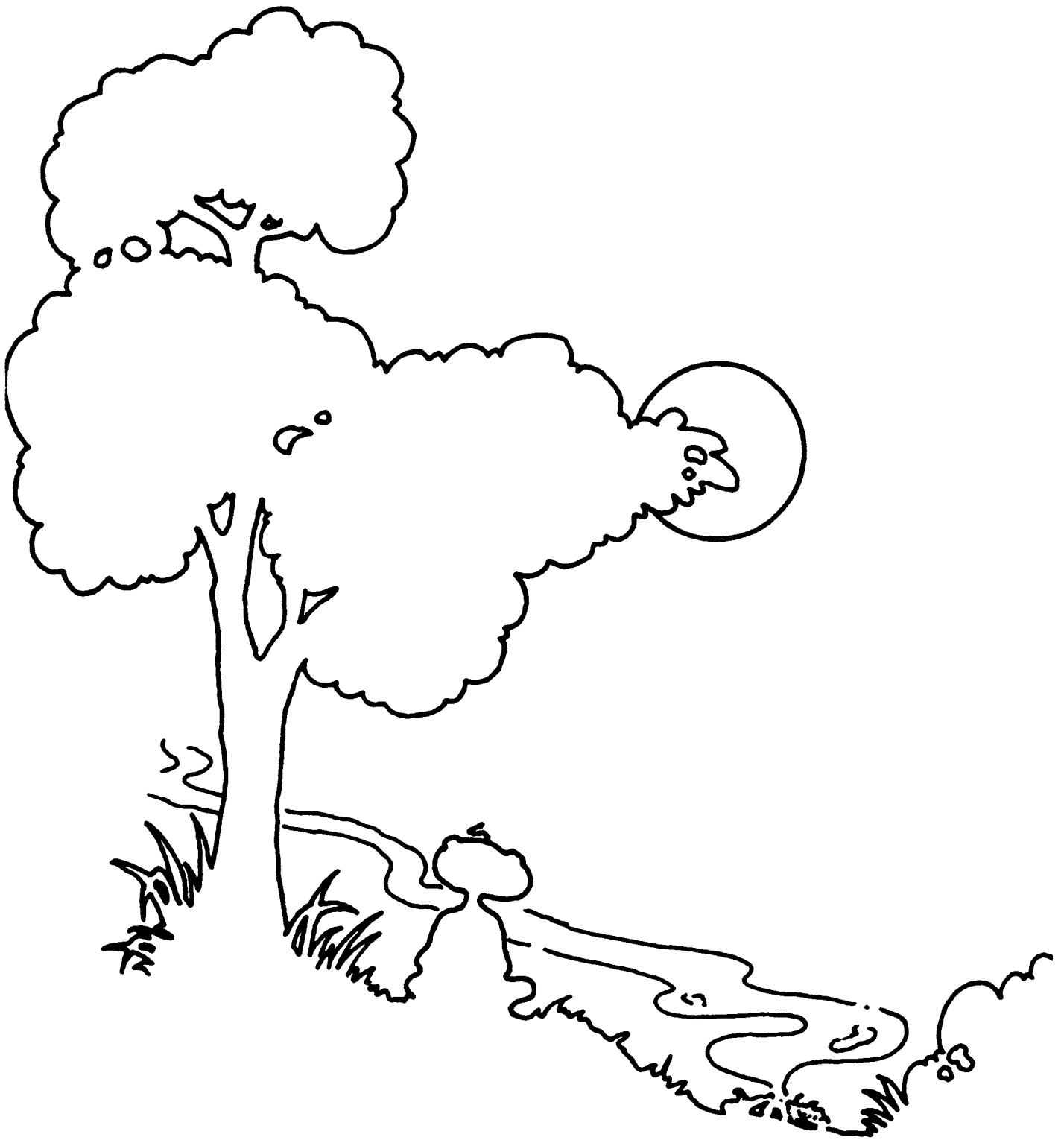




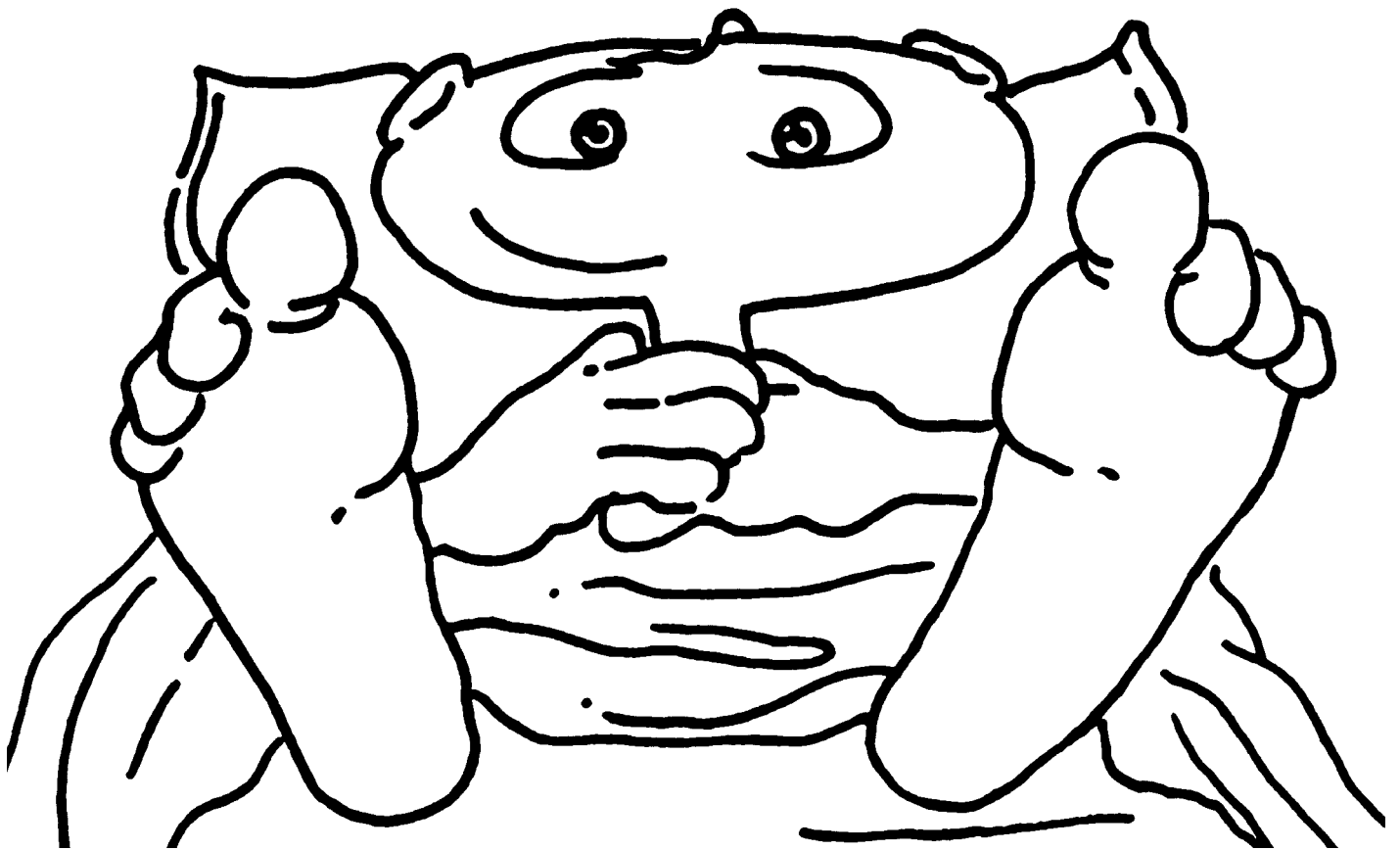
"Isn't happiness a gem?" the tanned one asked. "And it sprouts not from the ground but from the heart. Why don't you let that gem shine out? You all can be happy, too!"



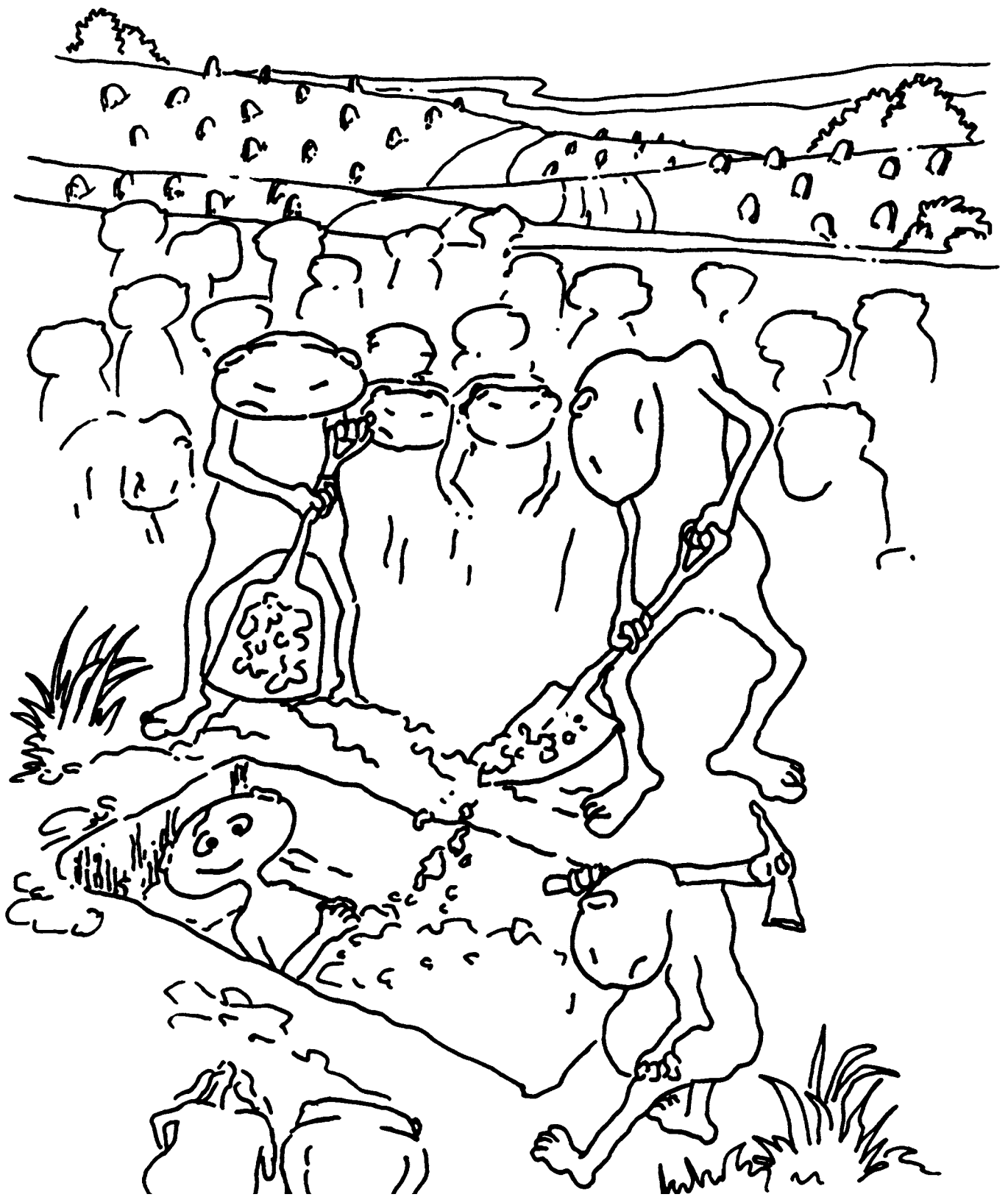
This did not appease the inhabitants and they tried to argue. But the one who had seen above only remained silent, for there was nothing to argue about with those who only saw below. Either one had seen above or one had not.



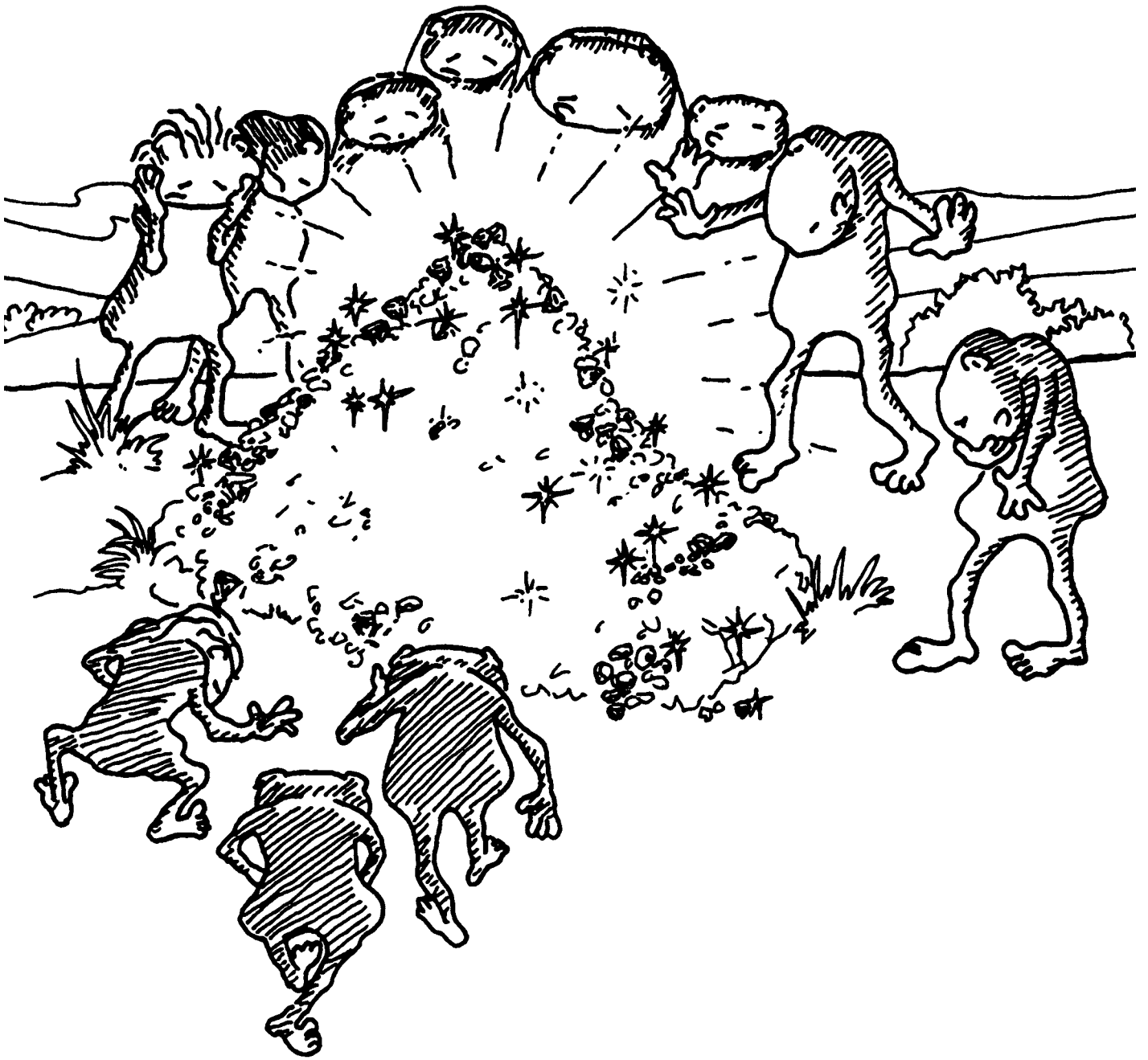
And so it was that the **One-Who-Saw** lived his life alone for he was mostly shunned. Rarely did anyone talk to him and when they did, they could not understand what he was saying. They spoke the same language, yes, but the words they had in common no longer meant the same, for they came from different spheres.



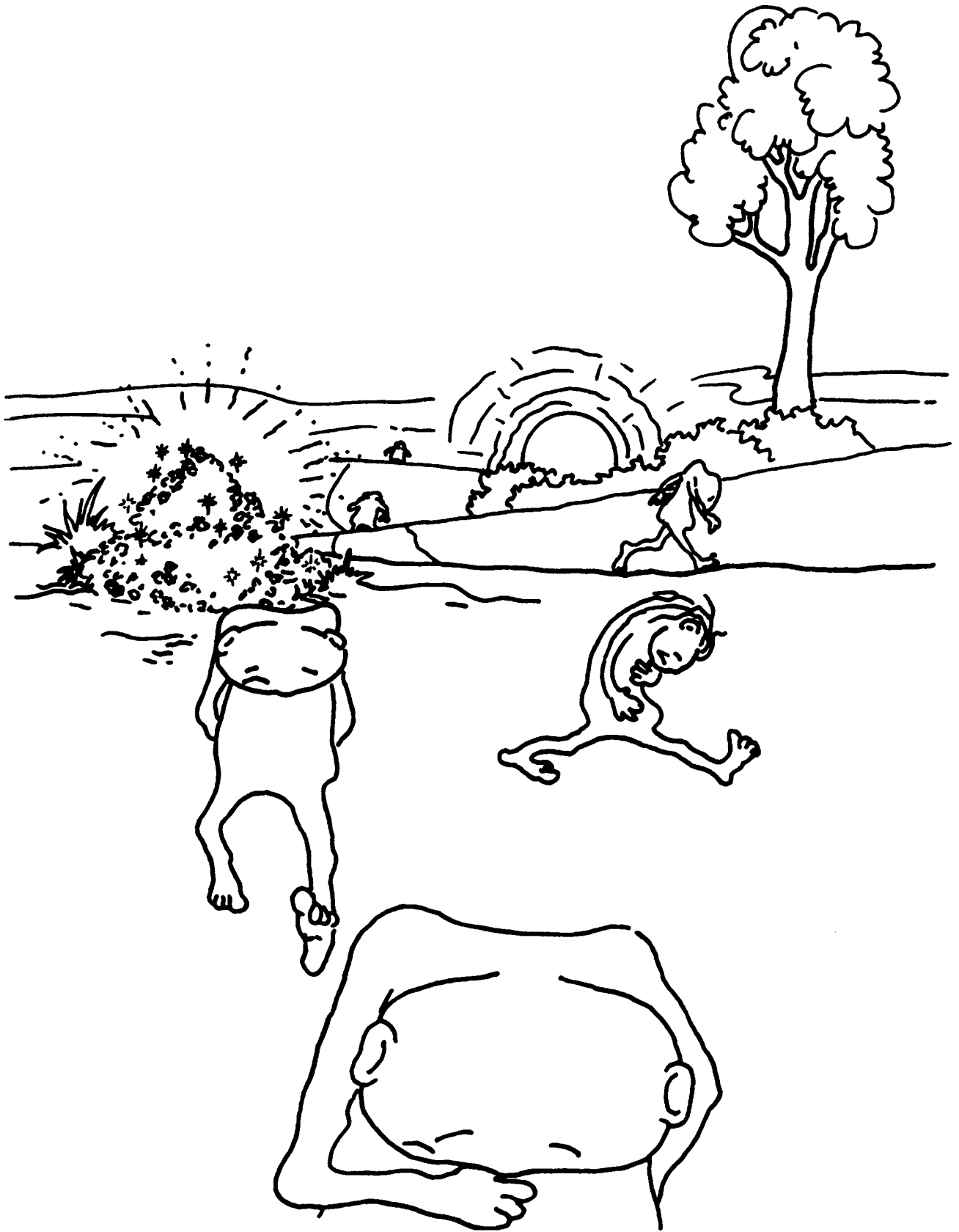
And when he fell ill, no one was there to take care of him, until one day he died with his head straight back, and with a smile on that tanned and golden face of his, as if to say, "Look, be happy! You can do it, too!"



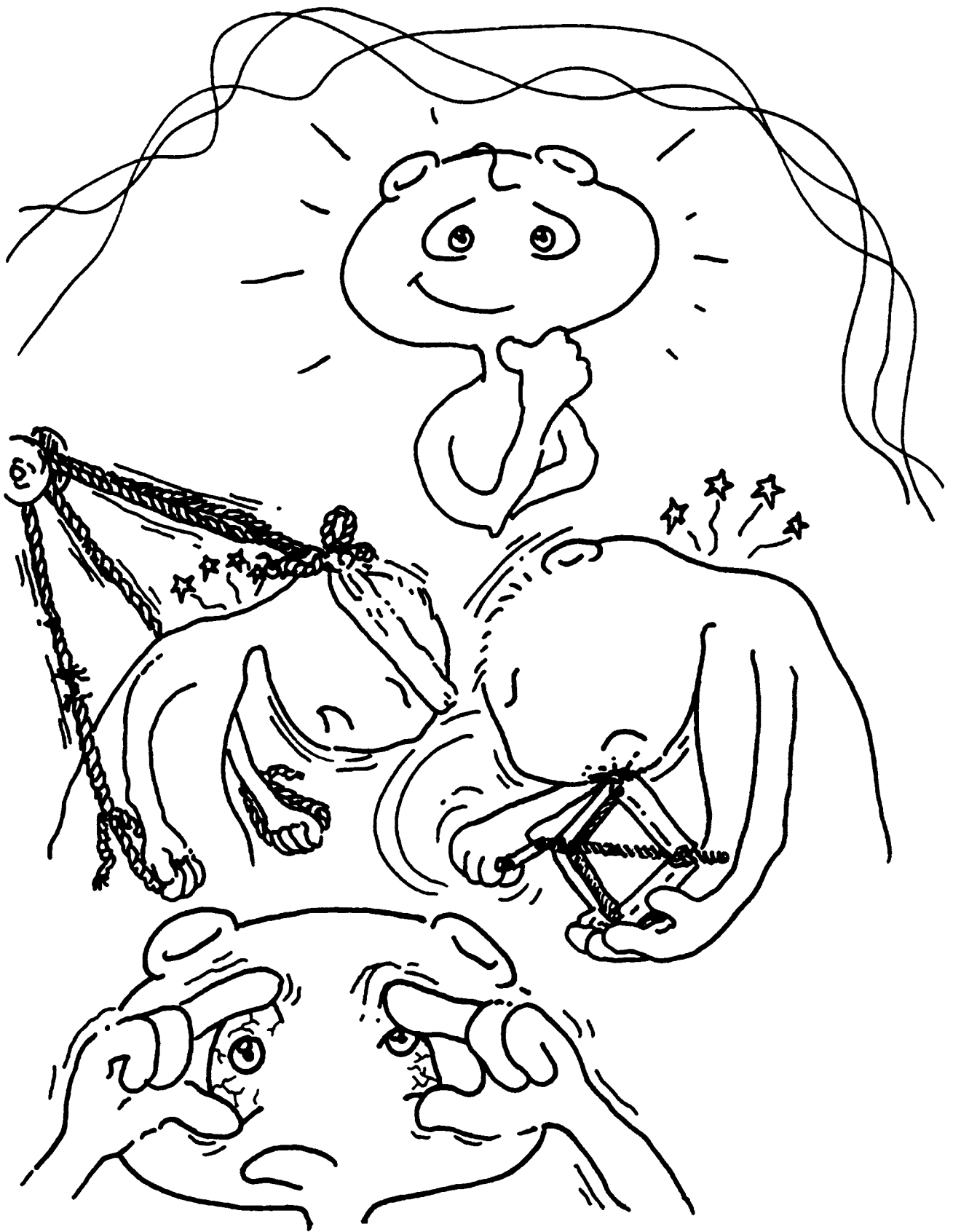
The inhabitants did go and bury him, not out of duty, not out of kindness, but with the hope that they would come across some precious stones while digging out or filling up his grave. But there was none. They then left his grave and said among themselves, "Good riddance!"



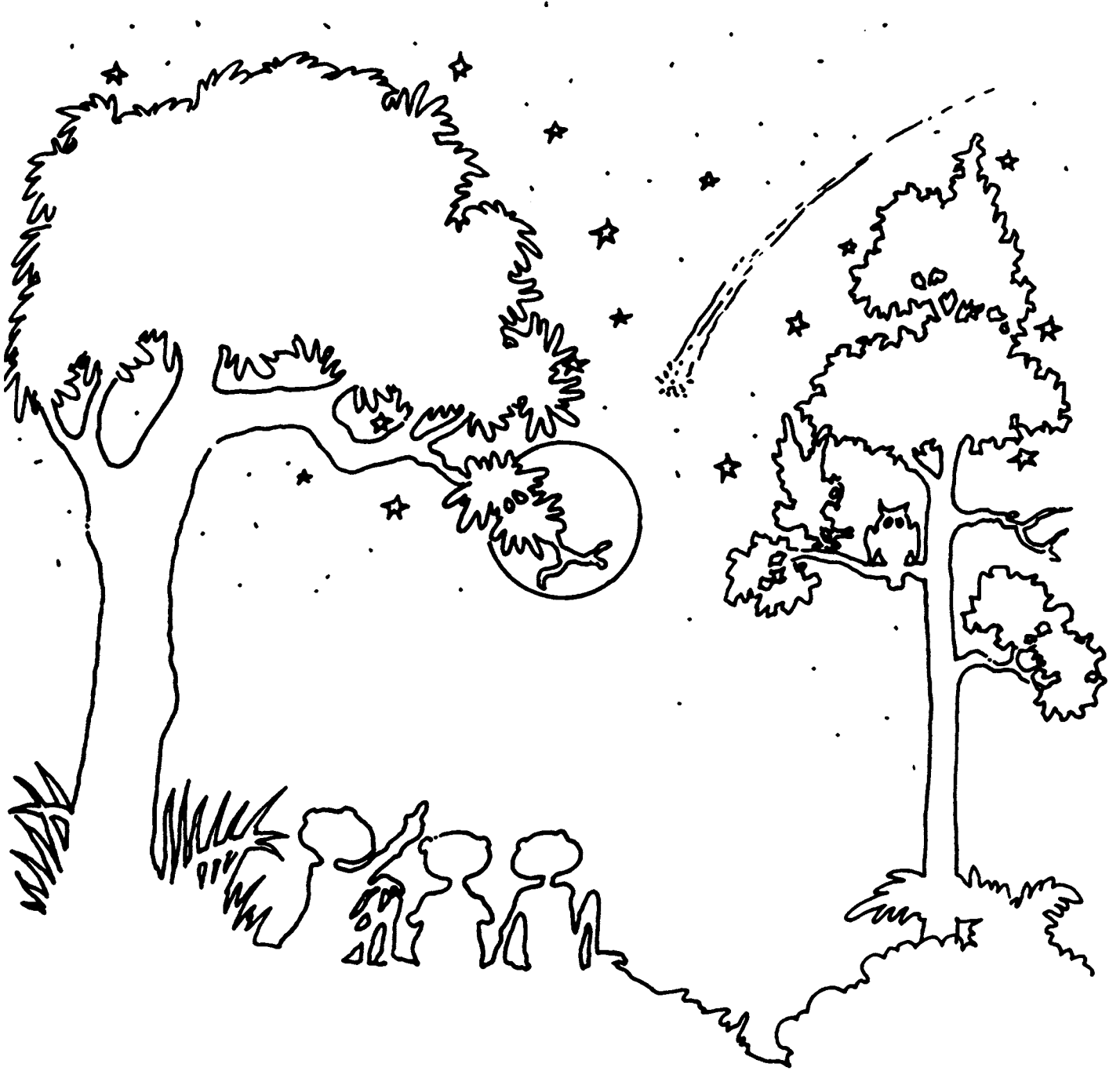
The next day there was quite a stir among them all, for upon the grave of the **One-Who-Saw** a pile of gems had appeared overnight, gems more beautiful and larger than they had ever seen before. The inhabitants only then did realize what they had lost when the **One-Who-Saw** had died, and even worse, while he had still been living among them, and were filled with genuine remorse and shame. Truth had been within their grasp, but they had somehow refused to reach for it, refused to see!



They then left the grave, leaving the precious gems untouched as a memorial to the **One-Who-Saw**, the one who tried to make them see, and as a testimony to what Greed and Anger had made them lose.

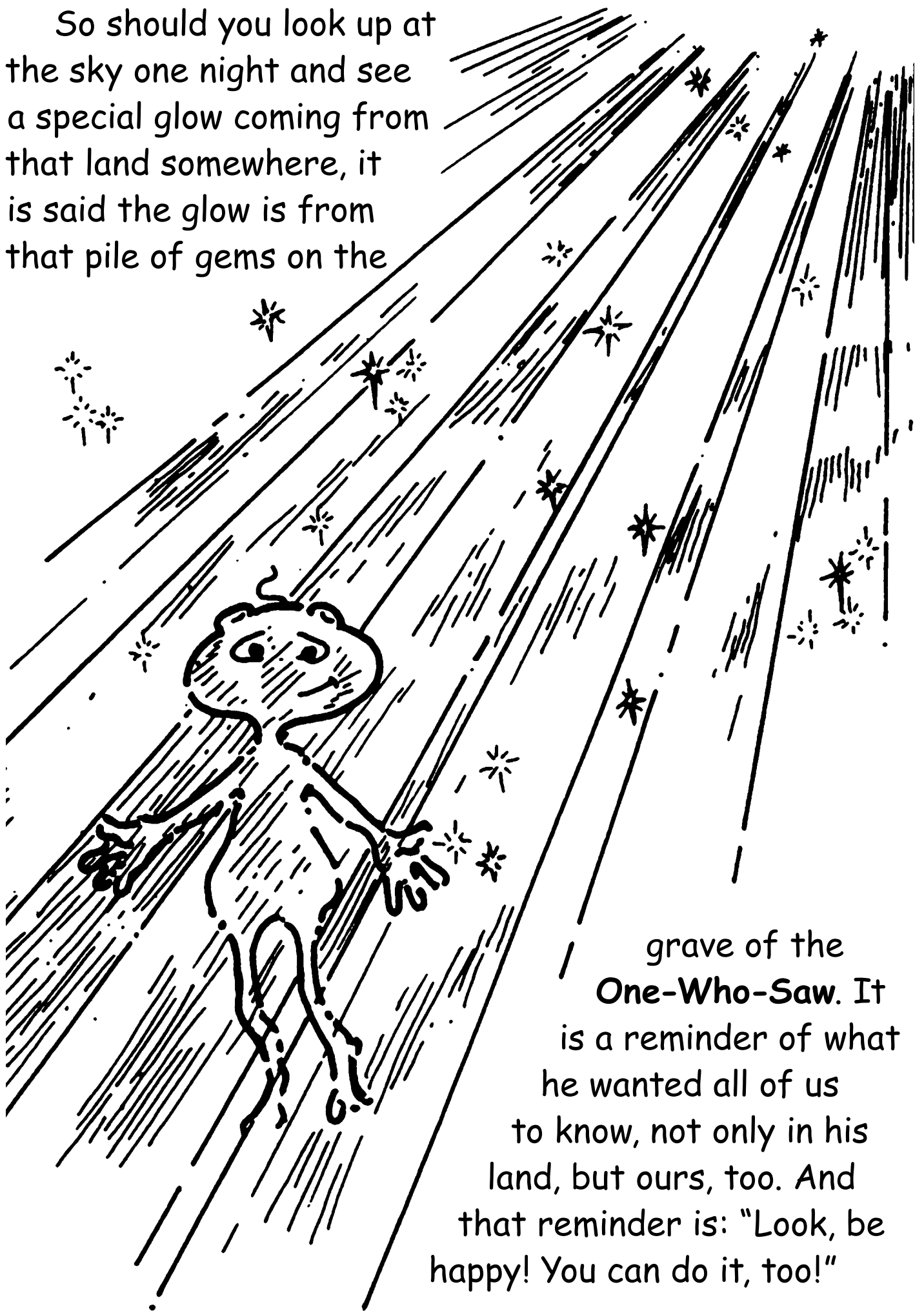


After a time, the inhabitants, inspired by the memory of the **One-Who-Saw**, did all they could to lift their heads and eyes so that they, too, could see and hear again what had been lost to them for generations.



As a result, they once again were happy and once more lived in harmony. They became generous and kind to each other too. And, again, they had the time to look up through the branches of the trees at night and playfully argue about how many stars could hide behind a leaf, or where the other half of the half-full moon had flown to.

So should you look up at the sky one night and see a special glow coming from that land somewhere, it is said the glow is from that pile of gems on the



grave of the **One-Who-Saw**. It is a reminder of what he wanted all of us to know, not only in his land, but ours, too. And that reminder is: "Look, be happy! You can do it, too!"

