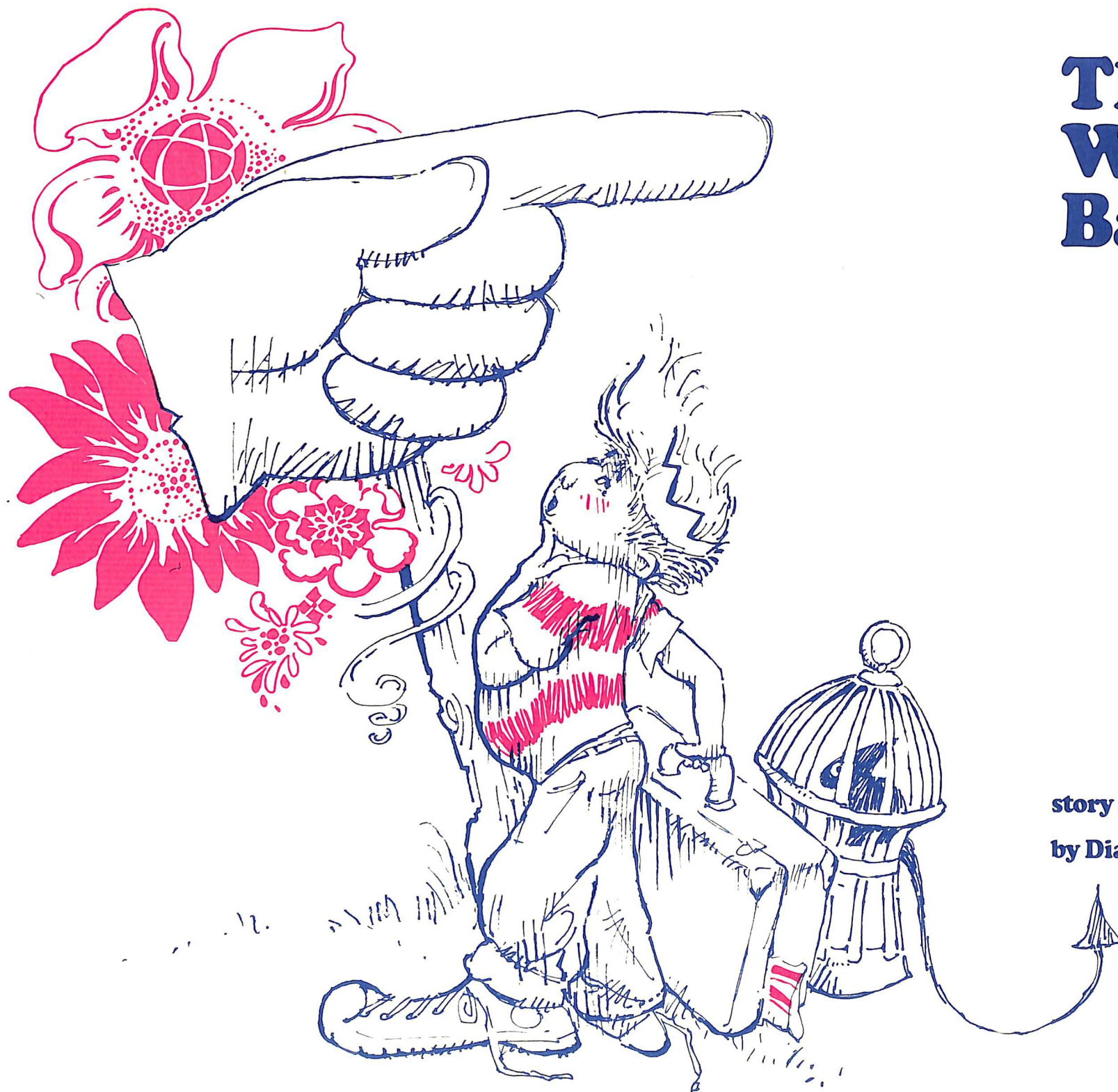
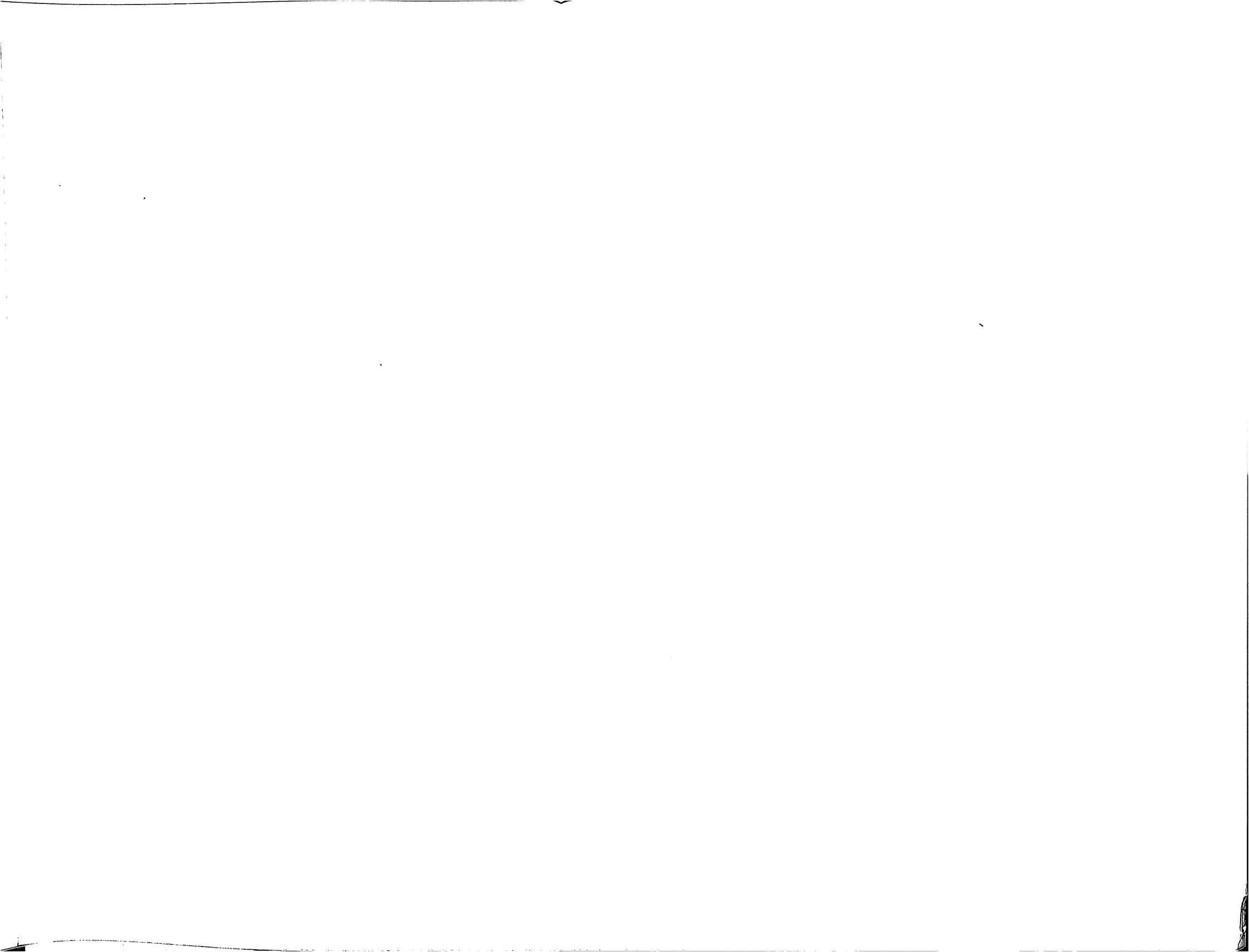


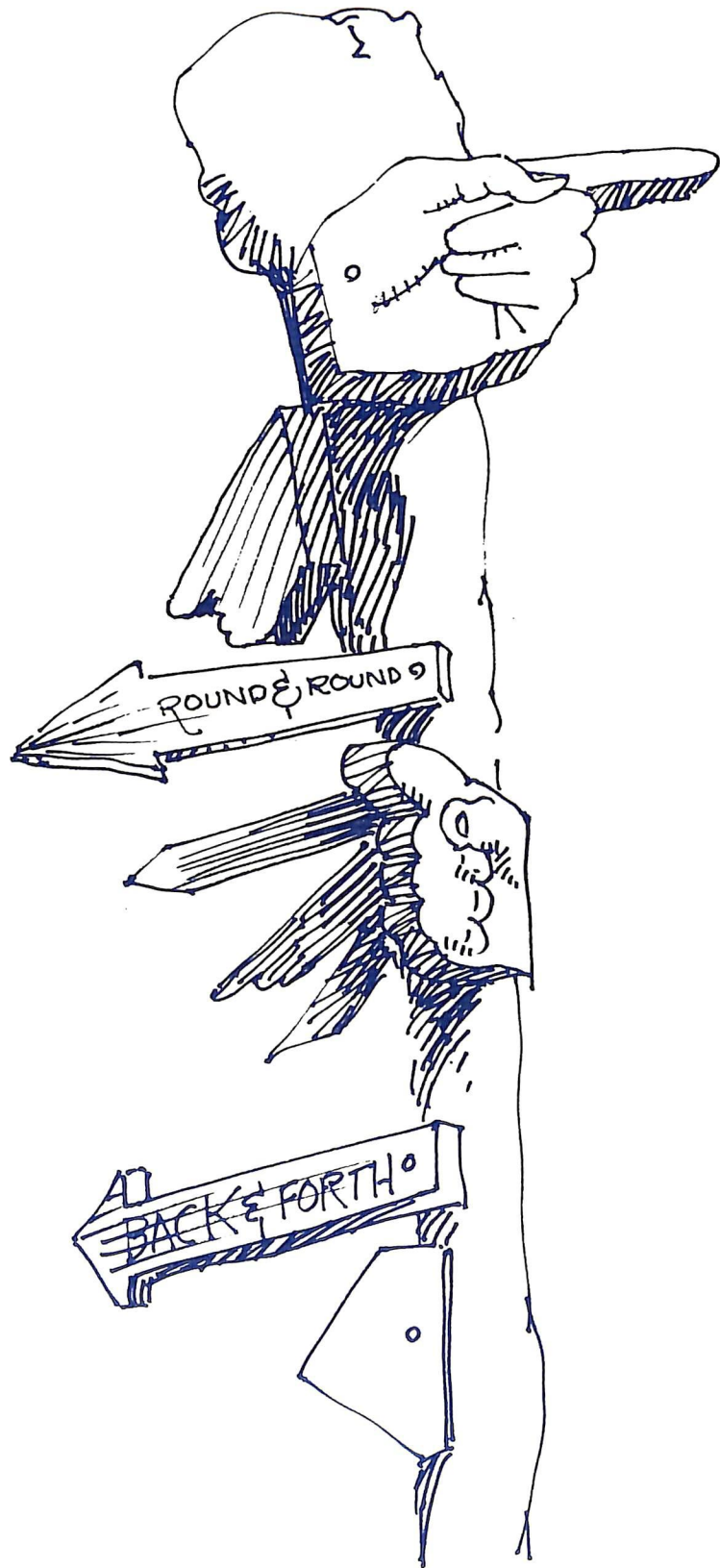
# The Way Back



story and pictures  
by Diane Cobb



# The Way Back



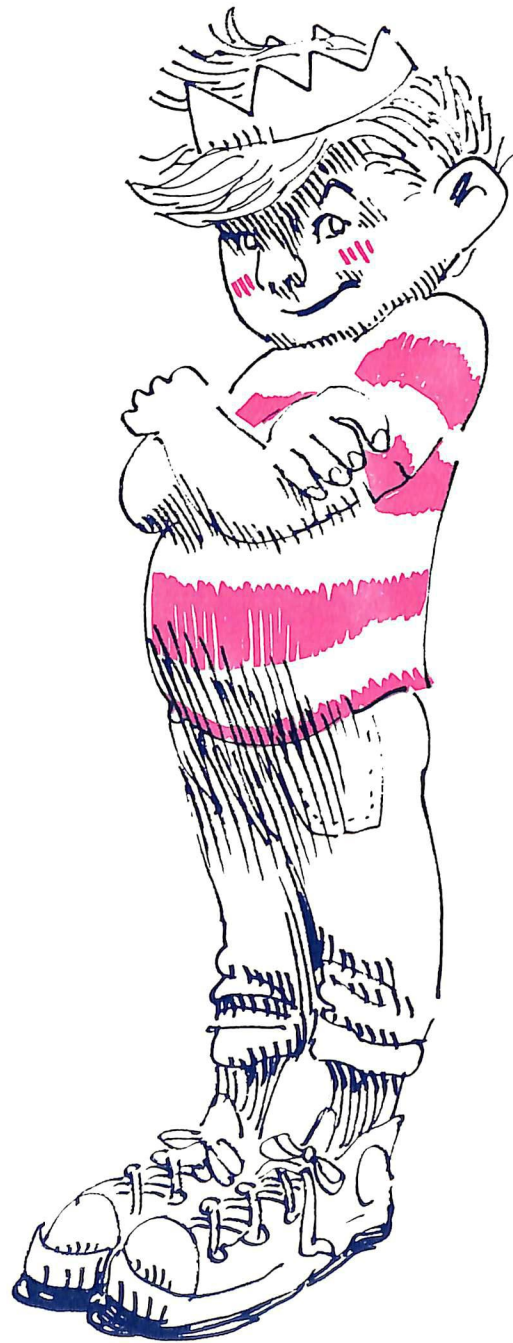
No part of this book may be reproduced in  
any form without permission in writing  
from:  
Sufism Reoriented, Inc.  
1290 Sutter Street  
San Francisco, Calif. 94109 U.S.A.

Library of Congress Catalog Card  
Number: 72-87878

©1972 by Sufism Reoriented, Inc.  
All rights reserved.

**T**here was once a prince named Dan.

1-701450



**T**his prince was the son of a King who loved him  
with a special love...



... **A**nd he gave all his people this same special love,  
because to him, each one was special, like his  
own child.



**T**his King was like the golden sun that shines on the good and the bad, on the flowers and the weeds.

Some people try to lock themselves away from the sun, like Grumpy here. He won't get very warm that way! But the sun may find him anyway.



**T**his is a wish-bush. Take a good look. There aren't too many around. Its fruit is tasty and gives you your wish, too.

Where can you find one? Only in this King's wonderful garden where flowers never die.

In that wonderful garden Dan lived. There were also many other wonders. The angels walked, the animals talked, and there was no school.

You would have liked it there.



**B**ut Dan didn't always like it. It was a little too perfect. Besides, he had never been anywhere else. One day he wanted a change.

Here you see him looking at the World-Well. The World-Well was on Black Hill. There was something unpleasant about Black Hill. Nothing grew there. The animals avoided it. The King had warned Dan to stay away from it.

But today Dan was tired of the wonderful garden. Things were too easy there. He could do whatever he pleased (except...)

Well, why not have a look in the World-Well?

A tiny voice seemed to say:

"What's in the Well?

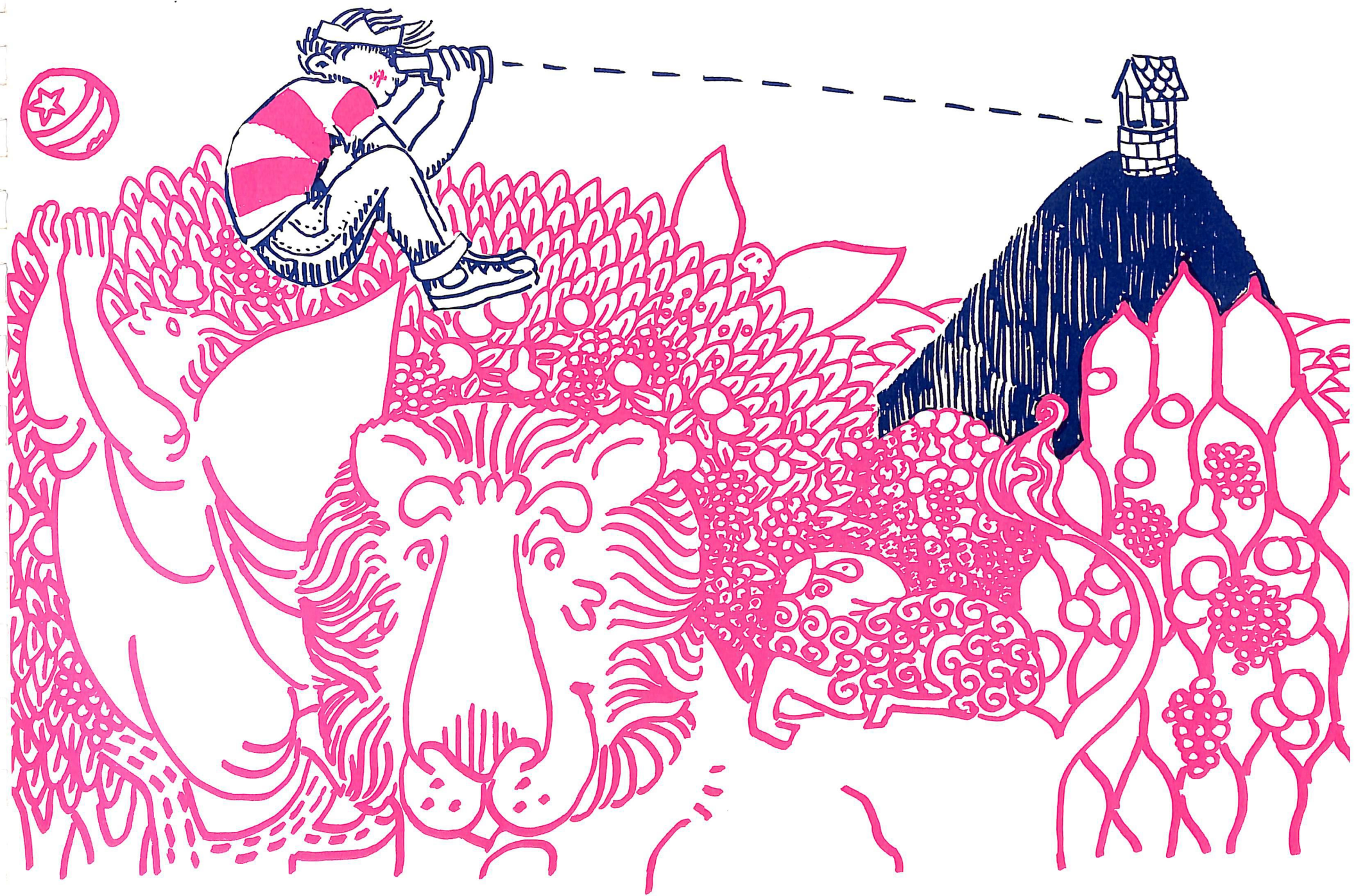
Who can tell?

Don't you wish you knew?

Better find out

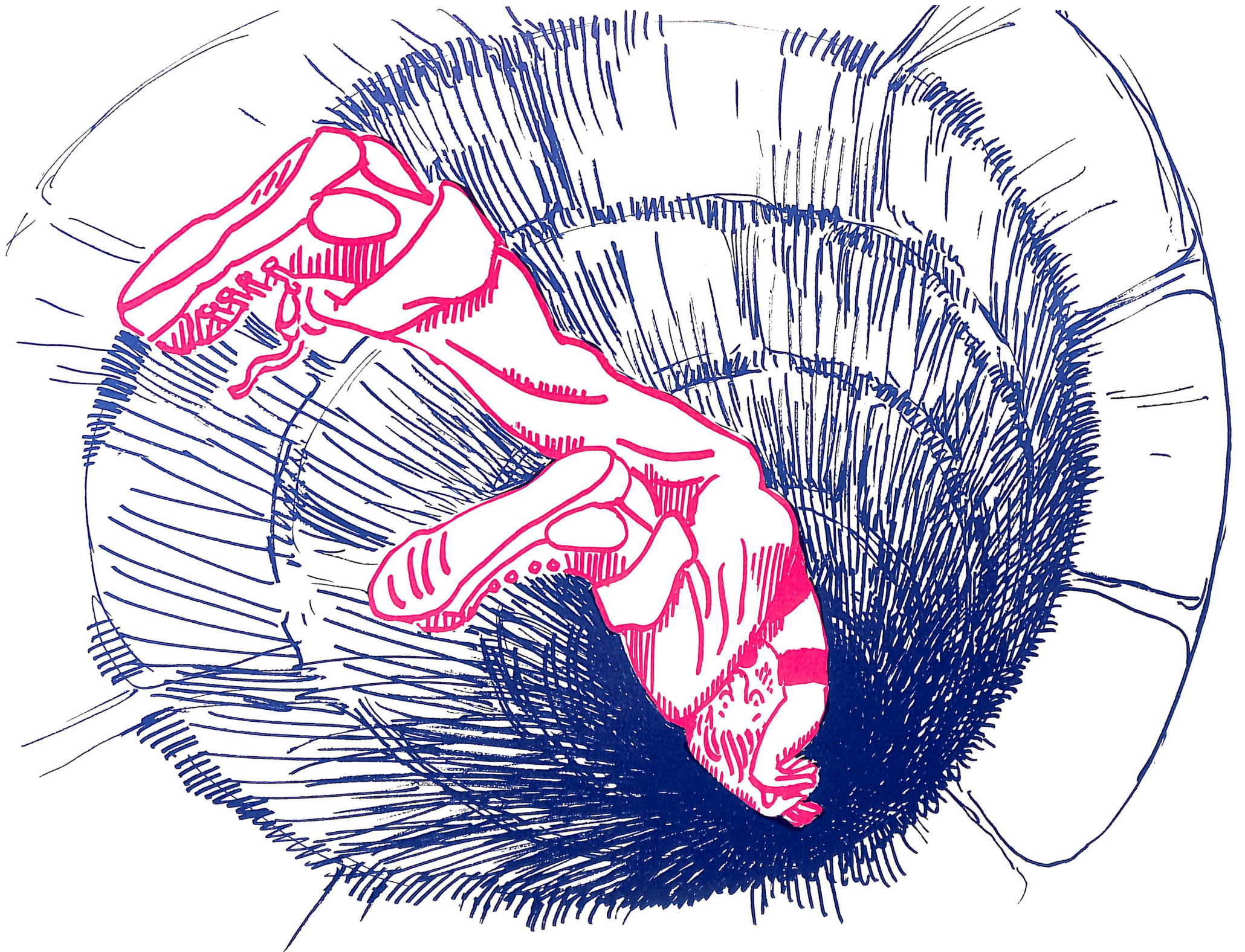
What it's all about;

You won't sleep till you do!"



**S**o Dan decided to climb Black Hill and look into  
World-Well. Suddenly...

Dow w w w n n n n



**T**he well was very deep.  
All the way down he was forgetting.  
When he landed, he had forgotten who he was.  
“A rock, maybe?” thought Dan.  
He tried being a rock awhile.

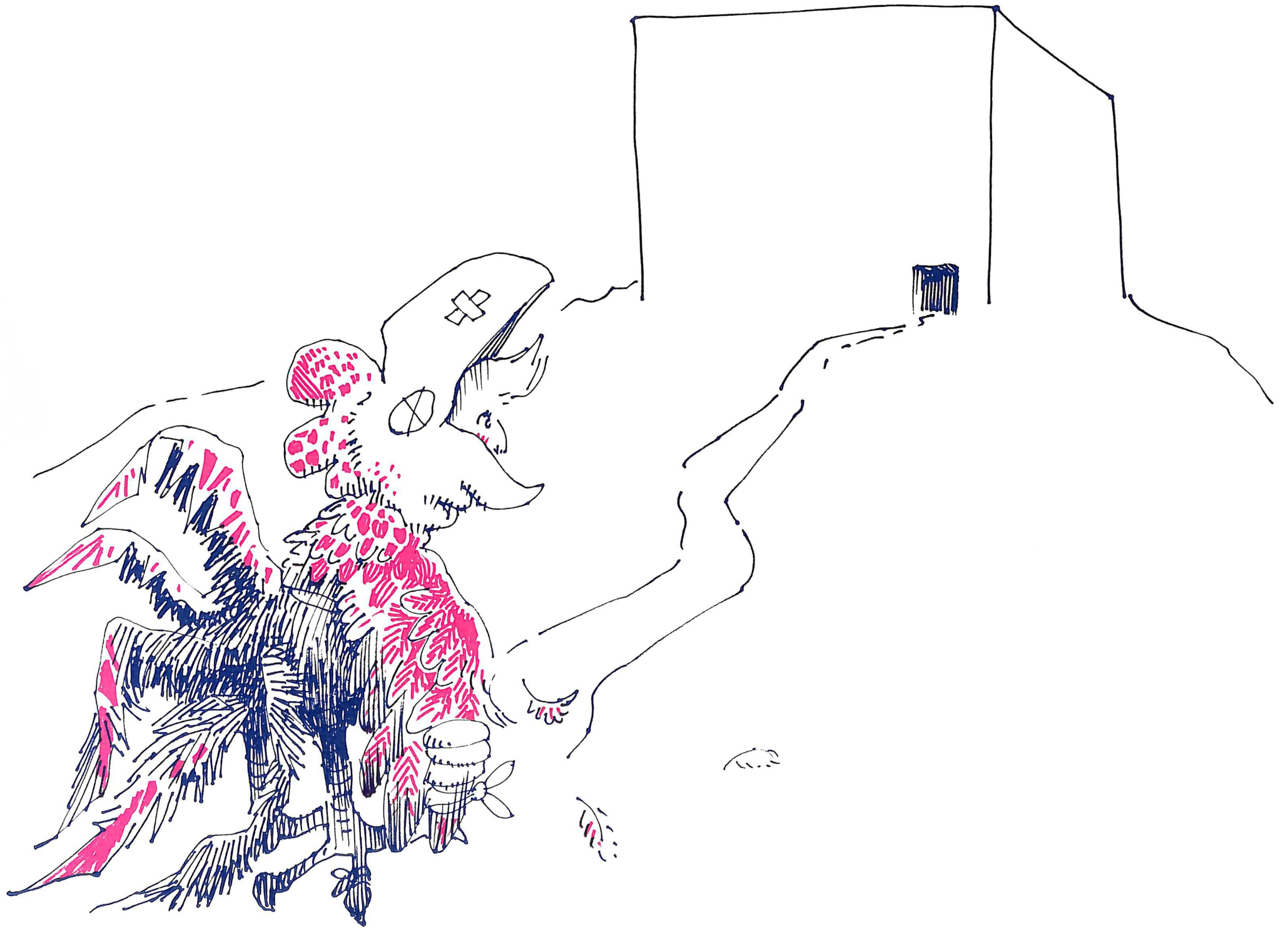


**T**hen a tree,  
Then a bird,  
Then a tiger. Lots of other things, too.  
Each time he would say,  
“Aha! That’s me all over.”  
Then he would change his mind.  
“No, that’s not it,” he would say.  
And he would try being something else.



**O**f course, he wasn't really any of these things. They were all just costumes, like you wear on Hallowe'en. Costumes and more costumes! When he got tired of one, or it wore out, he'd go to the Costume Room to trade it in for another.

Now, the Costume Room was a funny place. Maybe it looked a little scary from the outside. Who could tell what was in there? But once inside, it wasn't a bad place. It was chock full of costumes. There were so many to pick from!



**S**o many things to be!



**A**t last he tried being a boy. This time he was sure he had it right. He tried being a

Bad boy, a

Good boy, a

Beautiful girl.

He tried many other costumes, too.



**A**s time went on, trying on costumes seemed more and more important. He didn't care who he really was anymore. When a costume wore out or got torn, back he'd go to the Costume Room. Then he'd have fun deciding whether to be a

Clown, or a

Man-about-town, or a

Sailor, or a

Tailor, or a

Preacher, or a

Kindergarten teacher,

or whatever.



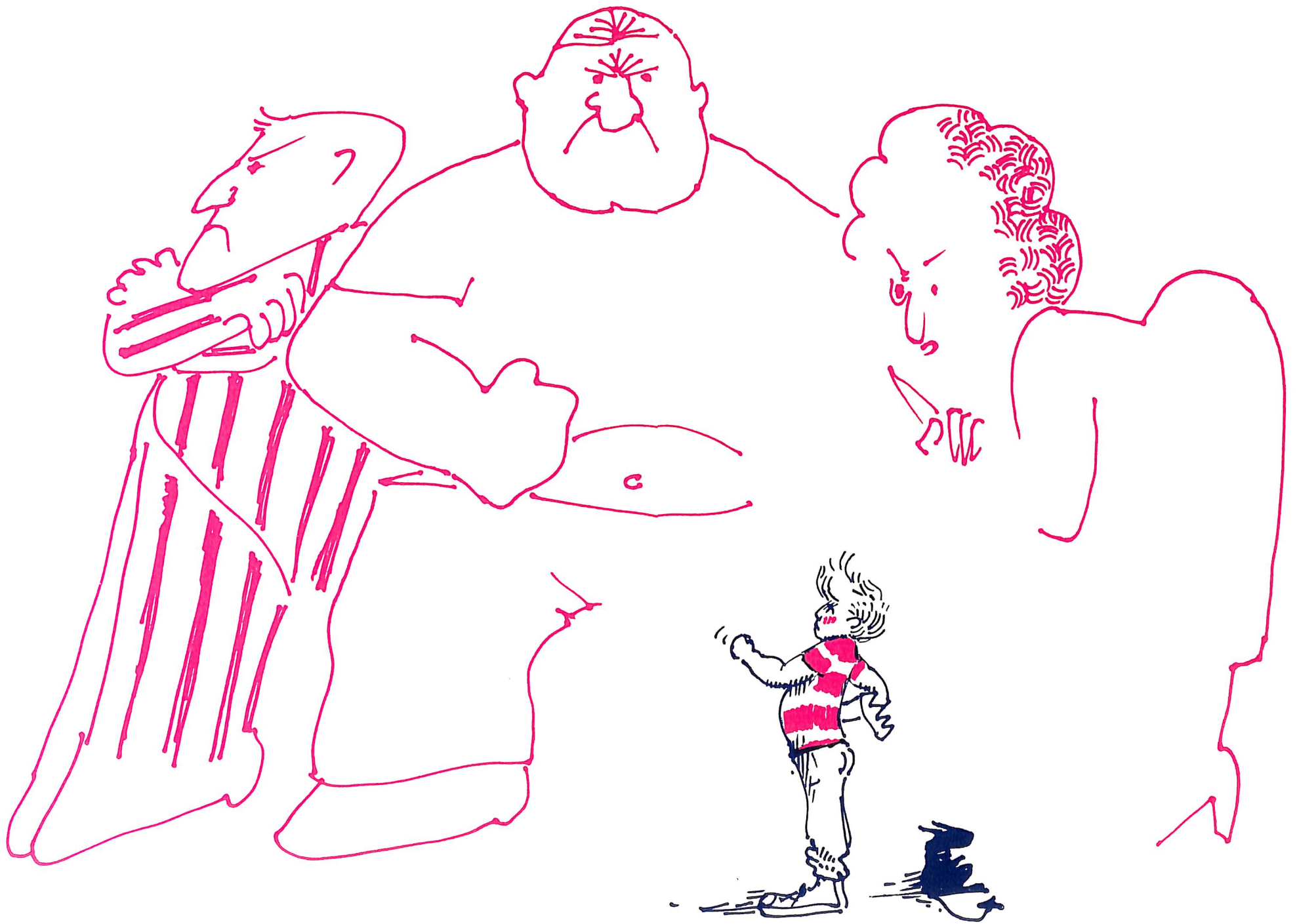
USED

USED

**S**ometimes Dan met people who were hard to like, and I'm sorry to say he didn't try too hard. He felt he was much better than they were, though he had forgotten he was a prince.

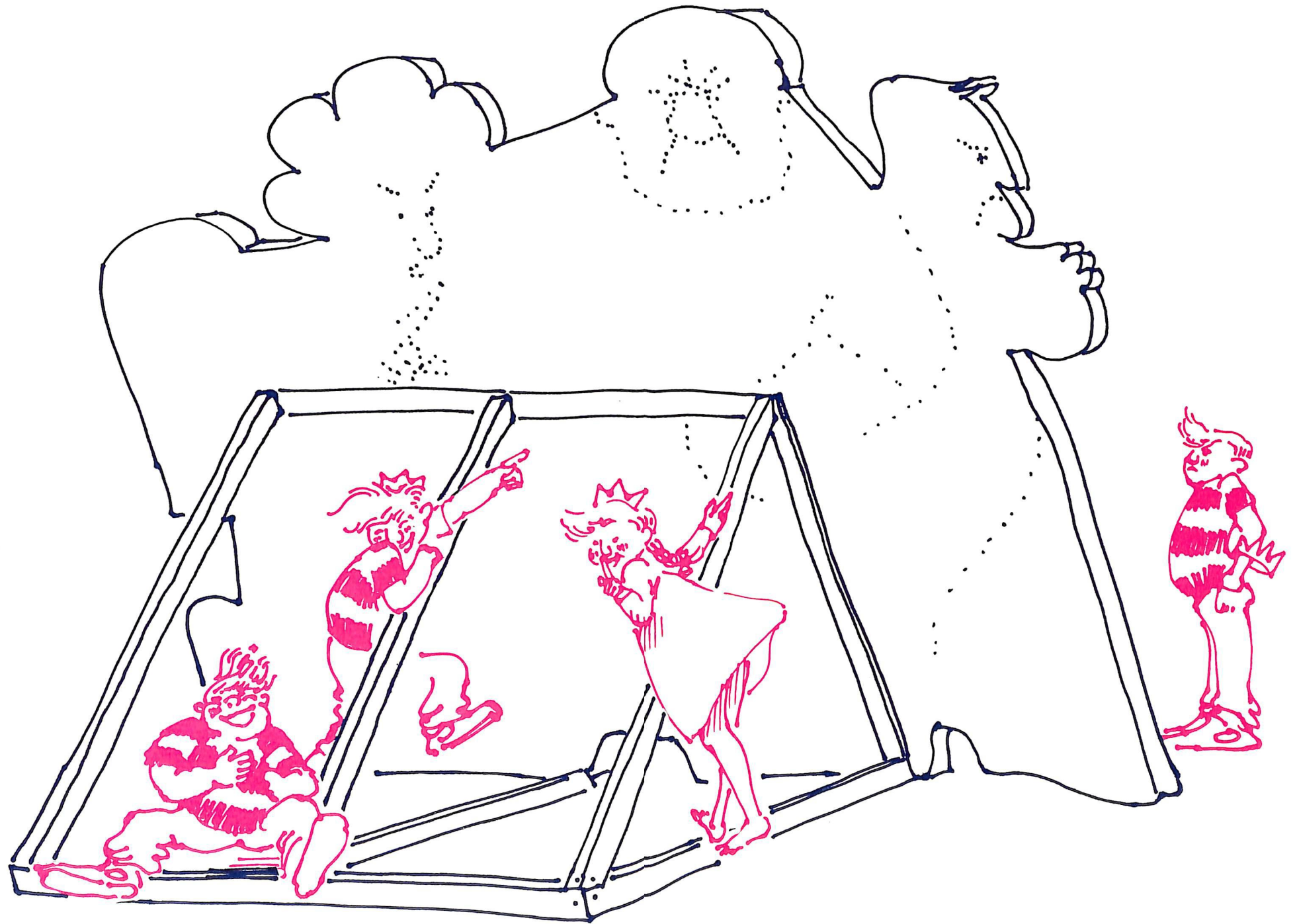
See that sooty little animal beside Dan?

That was his pet, I-Love-Me, egging him on. "You show 'em Dan," he'd hiss softly. He loved to see Dan get mad. Dan didn't know it yet, but his "pet" was planning big trouble for him.

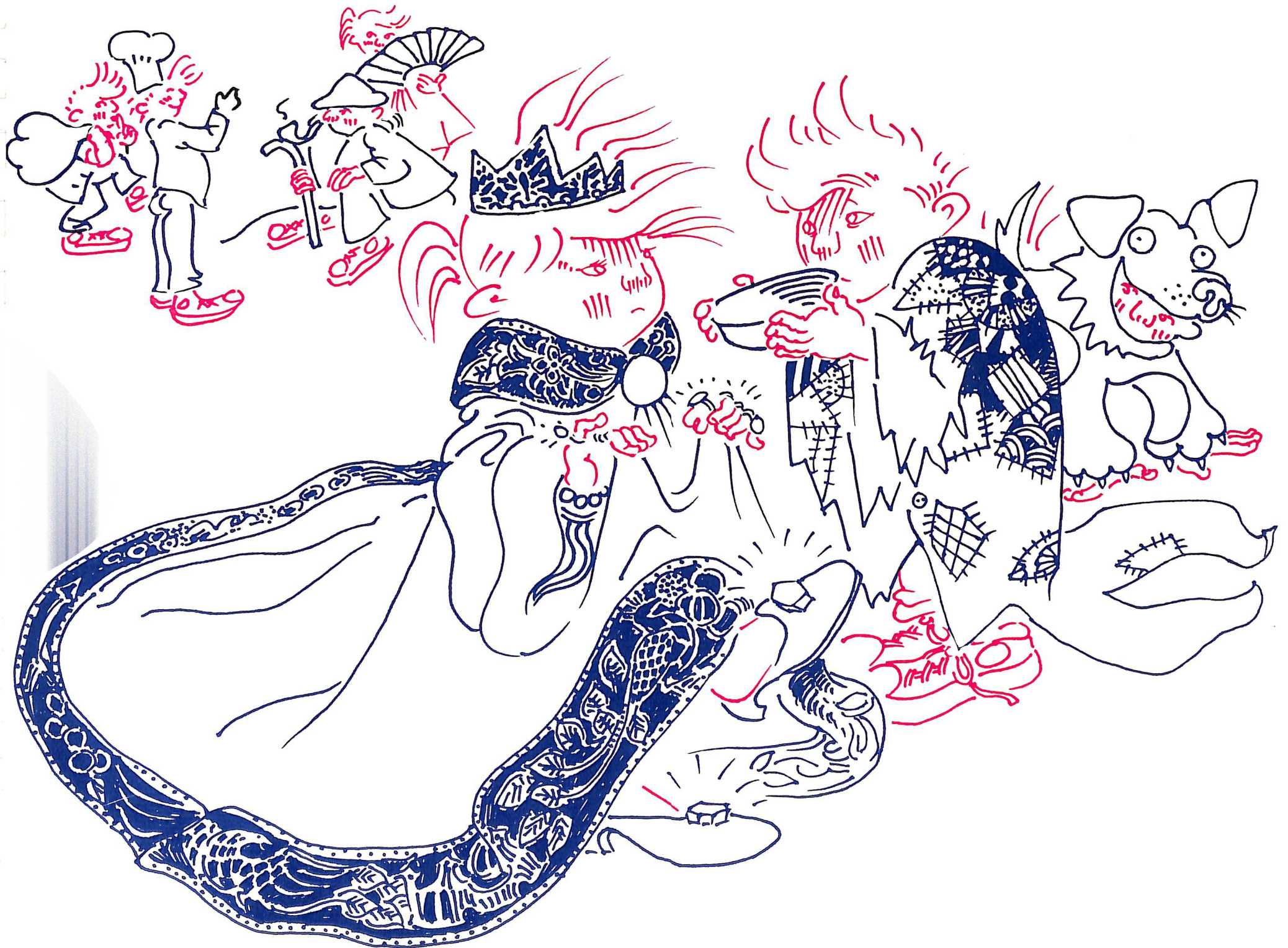


**I**-Love-Me had made Dan angry at nothing but a big billboard. Hidden behind it were his own brothers and sisters, princes and princesses all of them. They couldn't help laughing at Dan's mistake.

But they didn't know who they really were, either. Dan was not alone. They had fallen down the World-Well too.



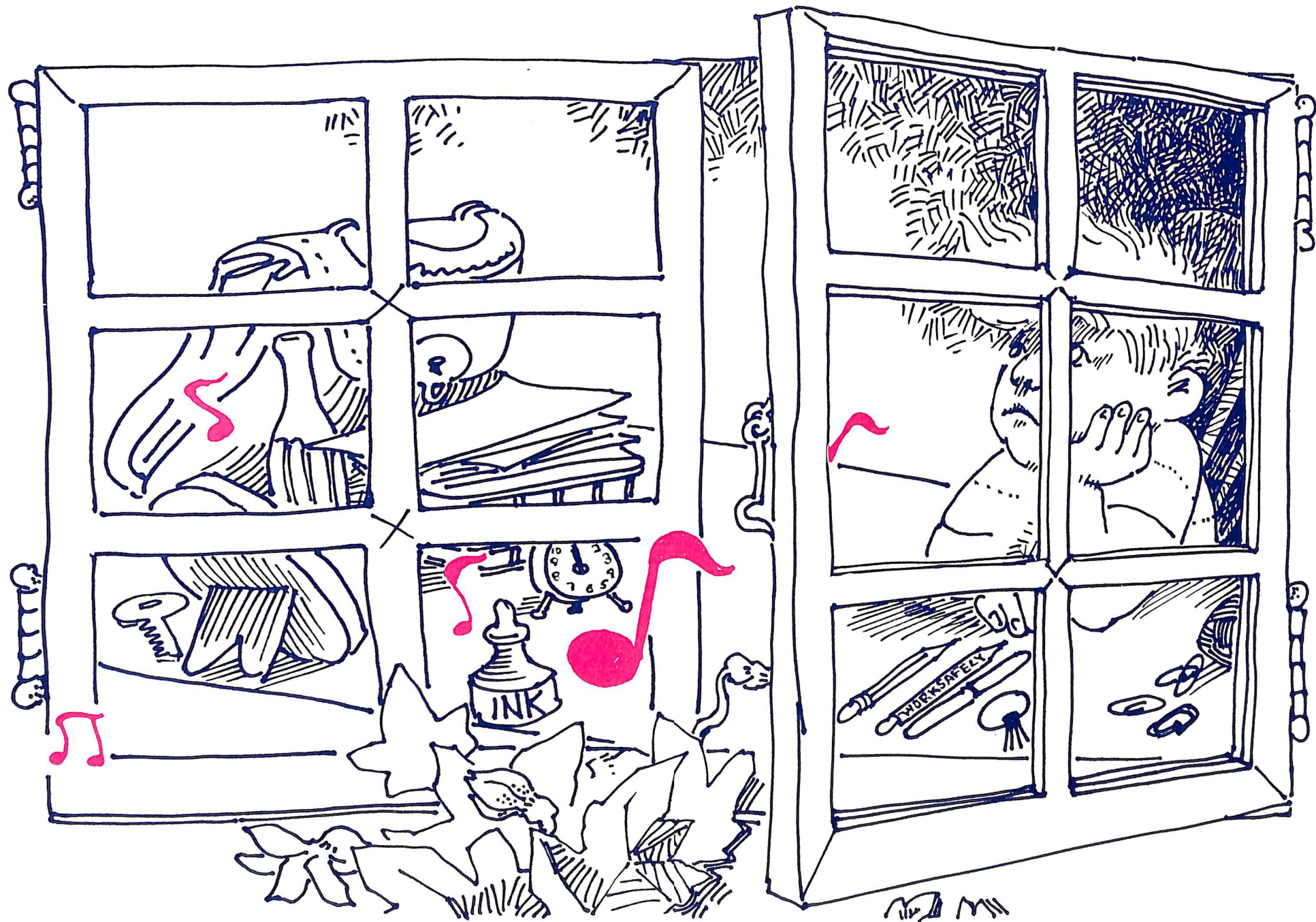
**T**hey had forgotten who they were and the wonderful garden. They spent their time trying on one costume after another, hoping the next one would be the right one. They were just as lost as Dan.



**H**ere you see Dan in his house, not very happy. He had tried on so many costumes—the one with the fancy ermine cape, the one with the pretty face, the one with all those tattoos. And all the rest!

“Costumes, phooey!” he thought. “Is this all? What’s the use? Why am I here, anyway?”

“What was that?” Outside the window someone was whistling, low and sweet. The sound came stealing into the room where Dan sat. Dan left the room. He left his old life behind.

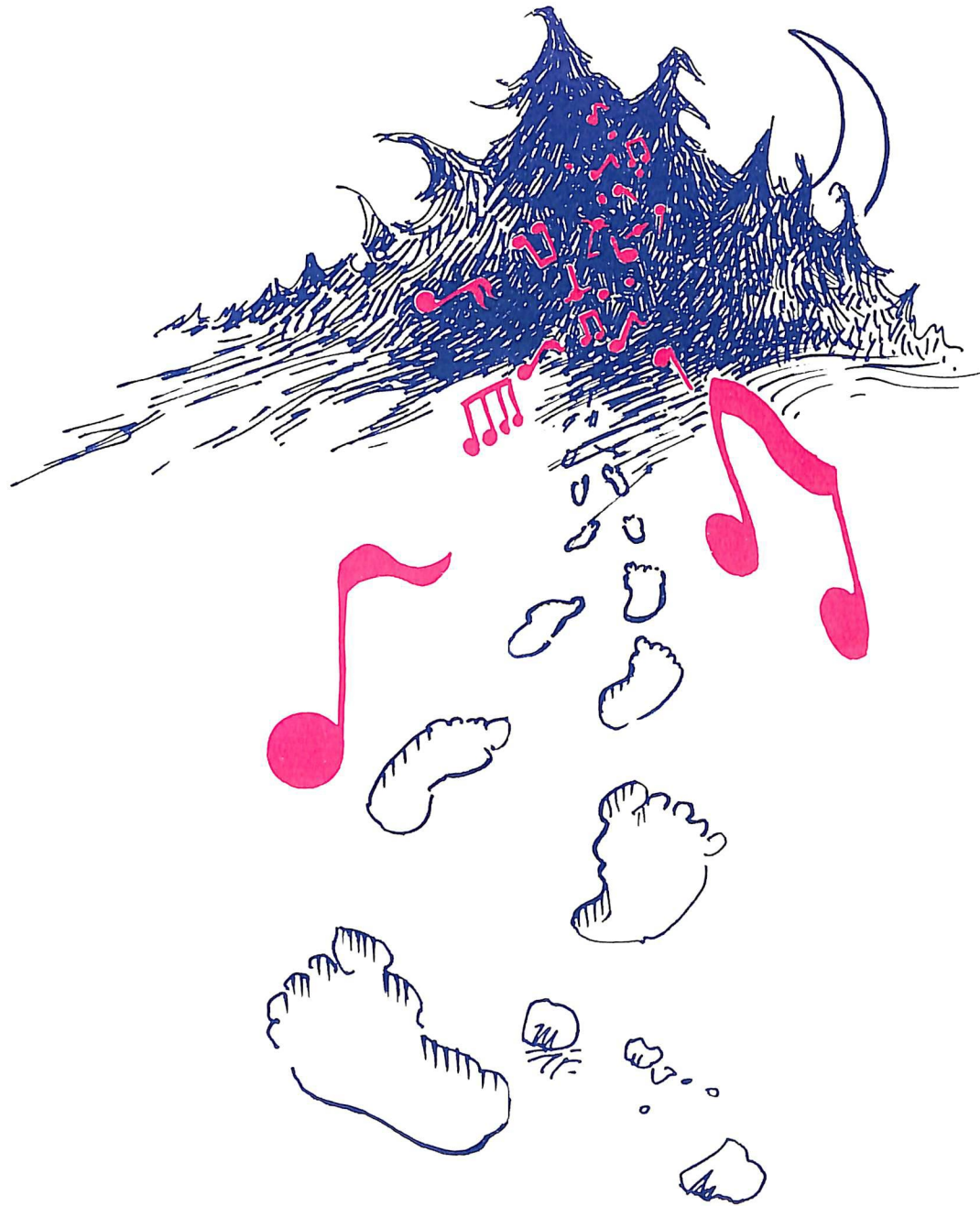


**O**n he went, though night was coming on, and the trail was hard to see. The footprints led straight into the dark Forbidden Forest. Dan knew that a few had gone into this forest before, but none had ever come back—but this didn't seem to matter now. He just had to find the one who was whistling.

As he went, he was surprised to find himself singing:

“All my songs were for this one Song;

All my loves, for this one Love.”



**T**he pines moved strangely in the night air. They seemed to be whispering about him, but Dan went on.



**D**eep in the woods, curled up on a flower bed, he found someone sleeping—an Old Man, the One-Who-Can-Take-You-Home. He wasn't big but he made Dan feel small. Dan waited for him to wake up. He felt sure this was the one who had been whistling. He also felt sure the Old Man would be happy to see him. After all, hadn't he left everything behind just to find him?

Dan *thought* he left everything behind, but his pet I-Love-Me had followed him through the night.



**T**he Old Man awoke with a roar.

“What do you want with me?”

Dan thought a minute, then said, “I want to go home, Sir, wherever that is.”

“Then kill that dangerous animal!”

The Old Man pointed right at his pet I-Love-Me, and handed him a sword. The forest was suddenly bright though the sun was not yet up.

“Kill I-Love-Me? Oh, I couldn’t! Why, he praises me all day long. He tells me I’m right and others wrong. He...”

But then he saw the Old Man looking at him, and he knew the Old Man was right.



**I**-Love-Me began to sputter and hiss and show his claws.  
Dan picked up the sword and cut off his head.

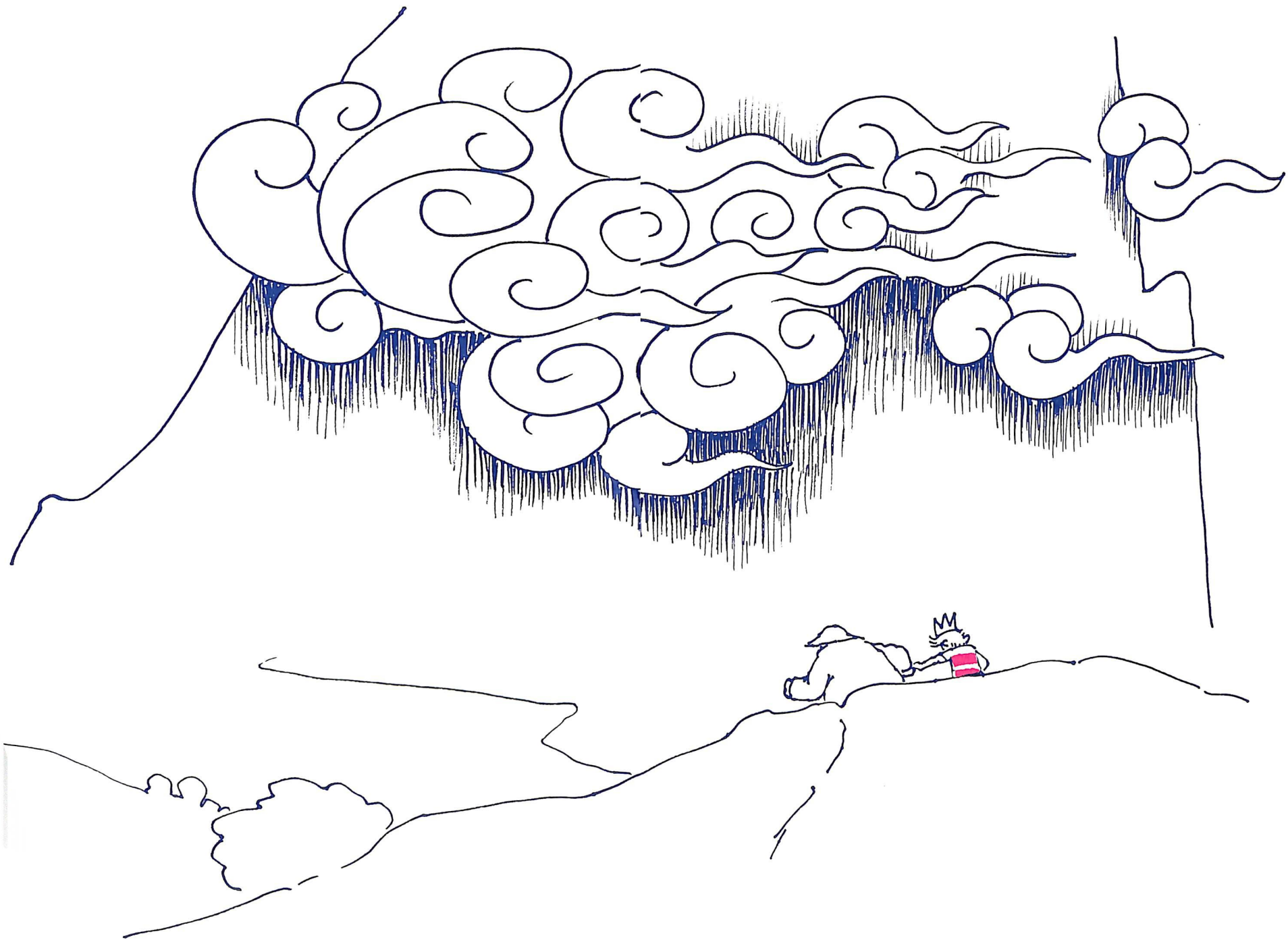


**I**-Love-Me turned out to be bigger than Dan had thought. “He would have made a mouthful of me one of these days,” thought Dan.



“**G**ood boy!” said the Old Man.

Together they went off to the mountain that  
leads home.

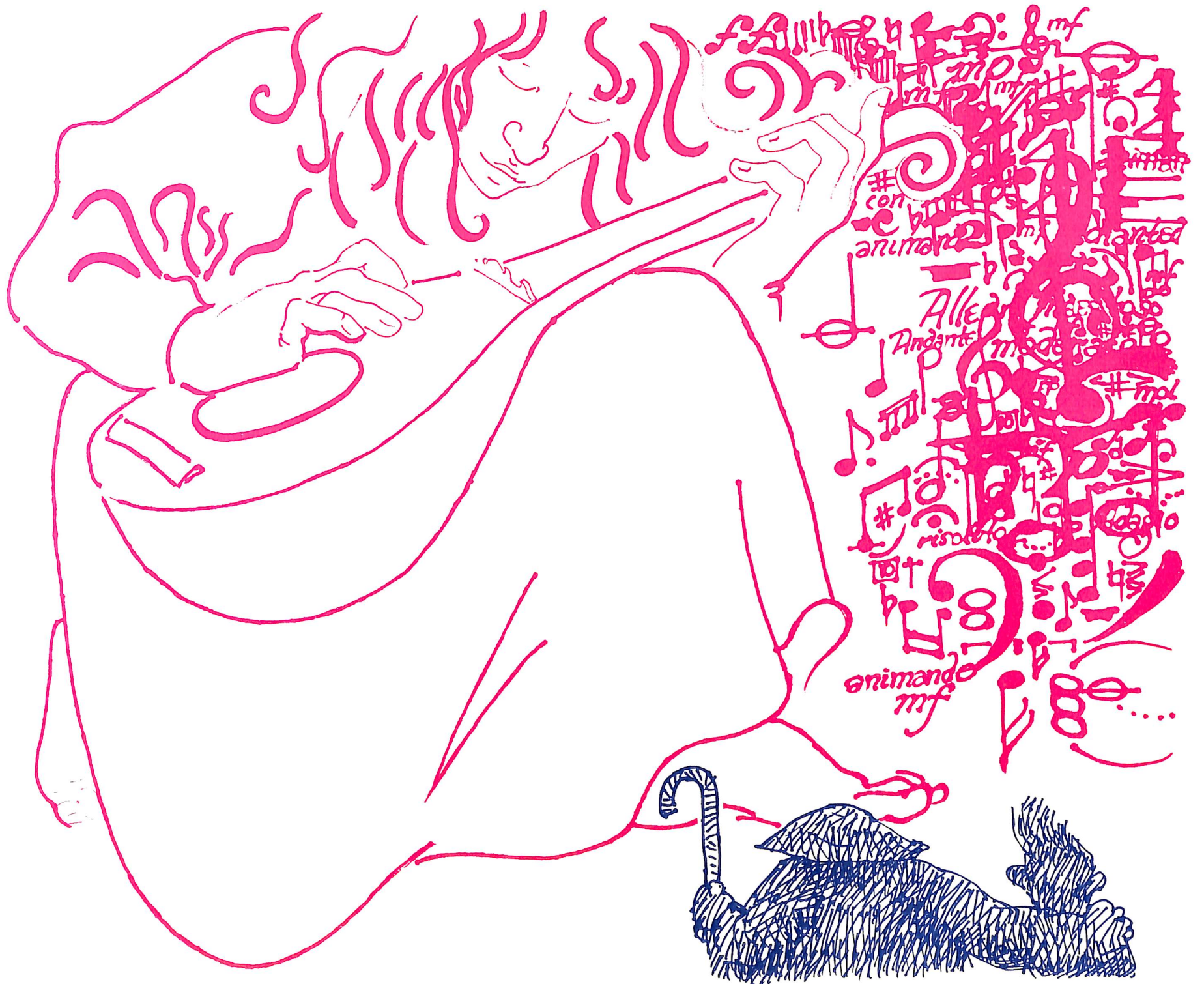


**M**ore and more, as he went toward home, everything—the clouds, the rocks, the streams—reminded him of a face, but what face? Somehow he knew that he was going home to see this face again.



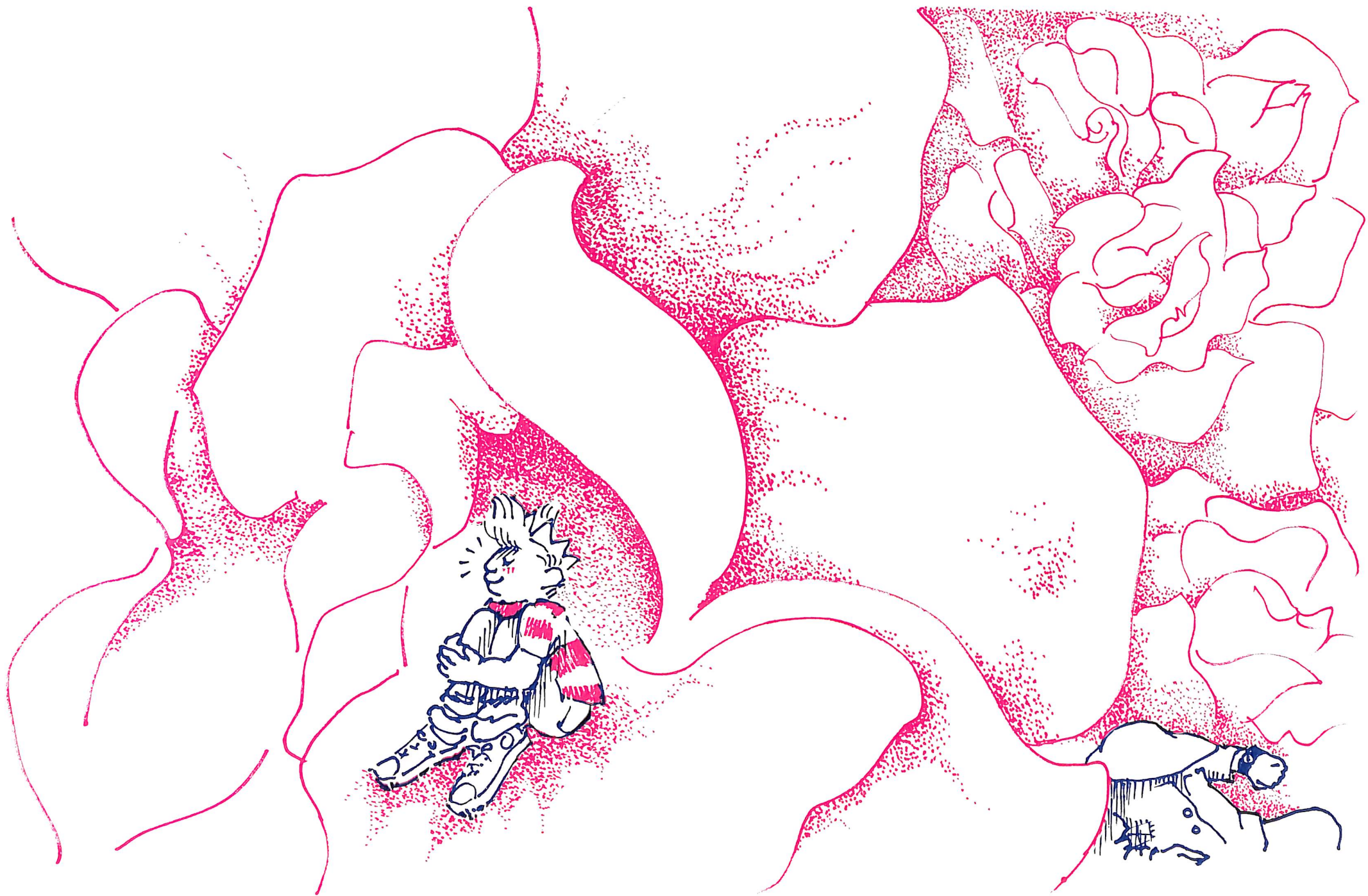
**T**hey passed the enchanted places.

THE PLACE OF MUSIC



“**C**ome on, we haven't got all day,” said the Old Man.

THE PLACE OF FRAGRANCE

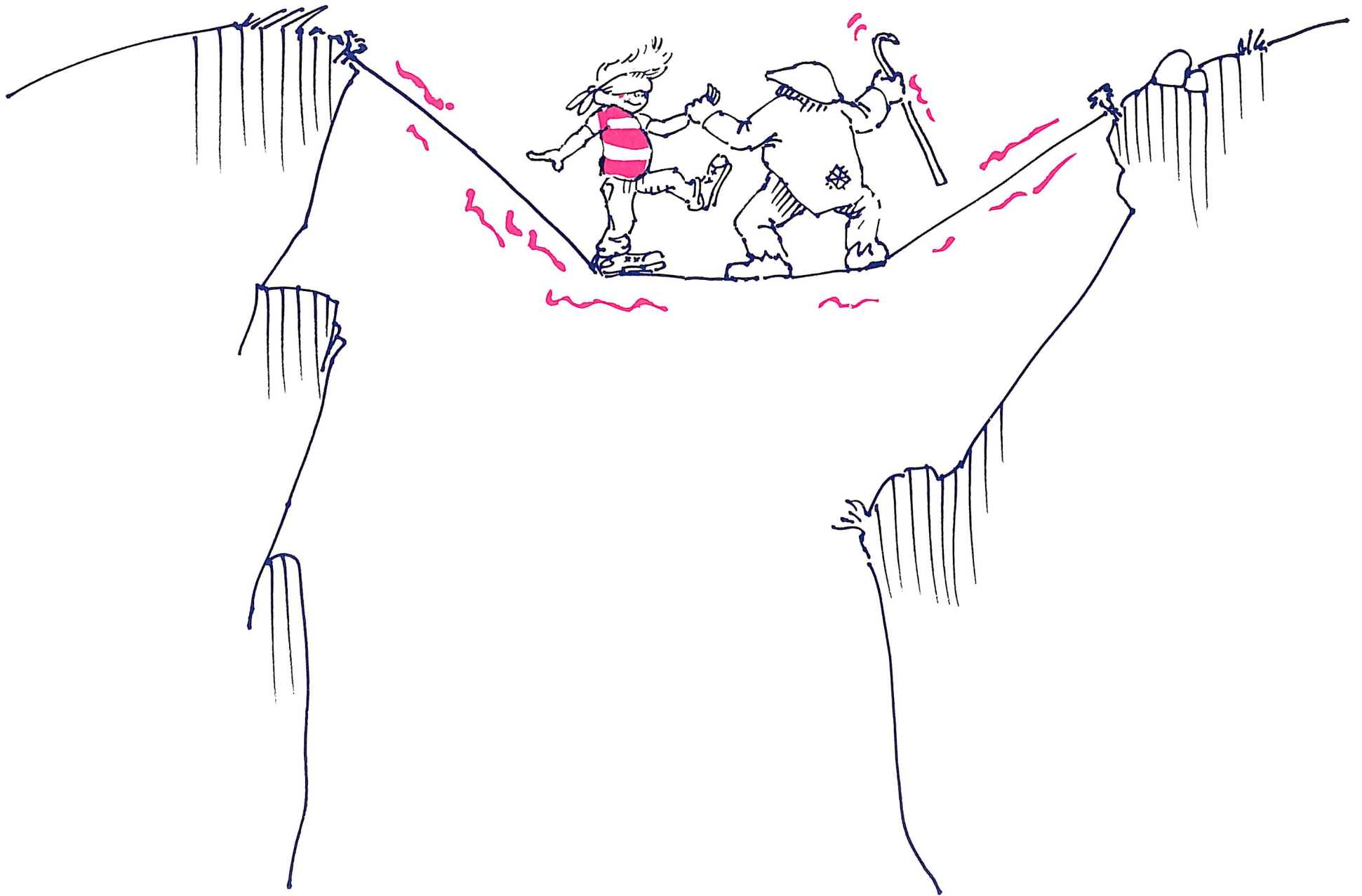


**T**hey hurry along a comet's tail through

THE PLACE OF LIGHT



**W**hen the way got too scary, the Old Man blindfolded Dan. Dan felt safe, because the Old Man had him by the hand.



**E**ach time, just when it seemed that earth and sky were offering him their finest secrets, the Old Man said,

“Quit stalling! Let’s get going!”

At last, Dan couldn’t stand it.

“Give me a little time to enjoy myself. I’ll never see these wonders again.”

The Old Man looked at him almost gently and then said:

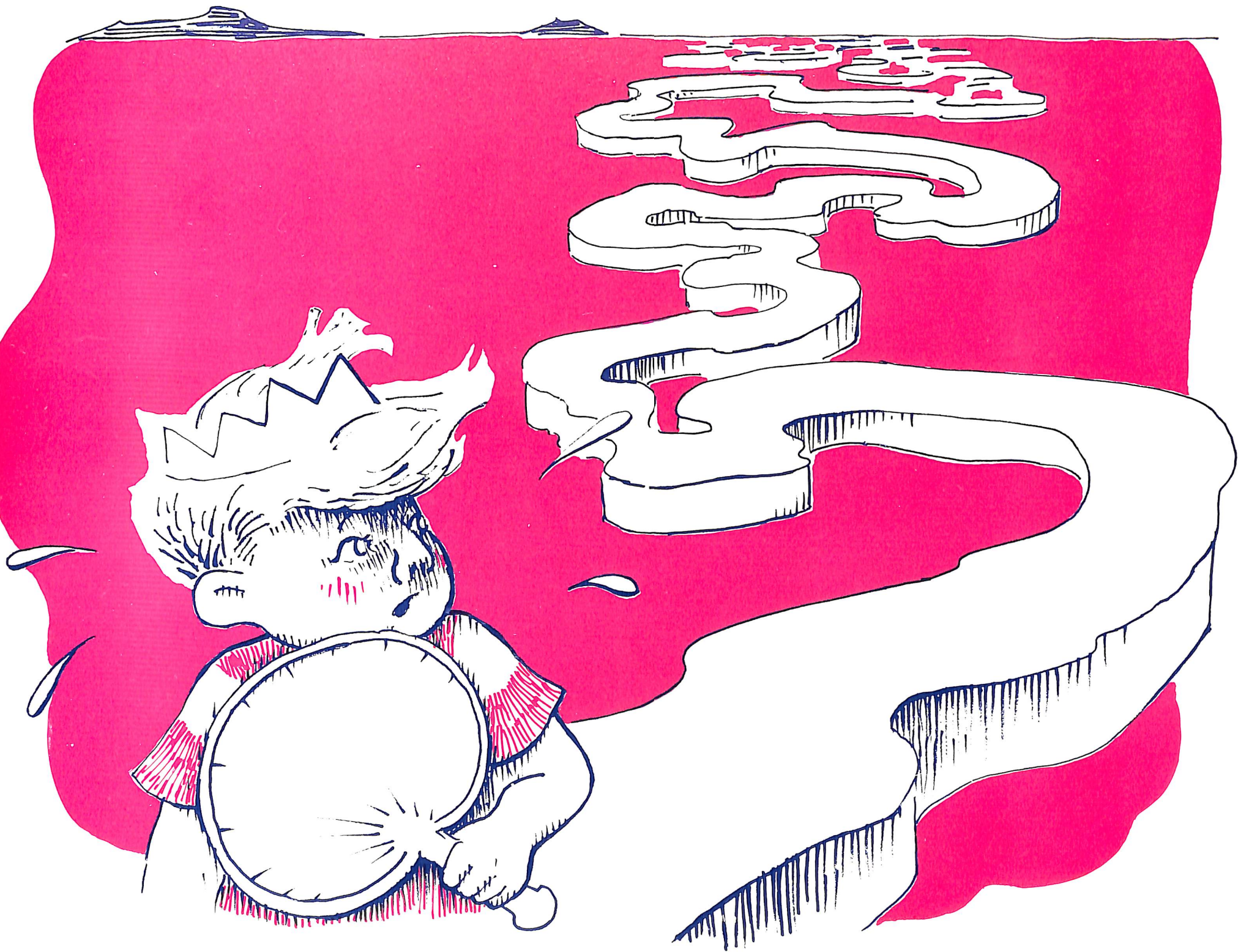
“If you knew where I’m taking you, nothing could tempt you to stop even for a moment.”



**D**an had to cross the terrible Lake of Power. Drink one drop of this water, and power to do anything is yours.

The day was very hot, and Dan was very thirsty, but the Old Man had forbidden even a sip. The water was deep and murky.

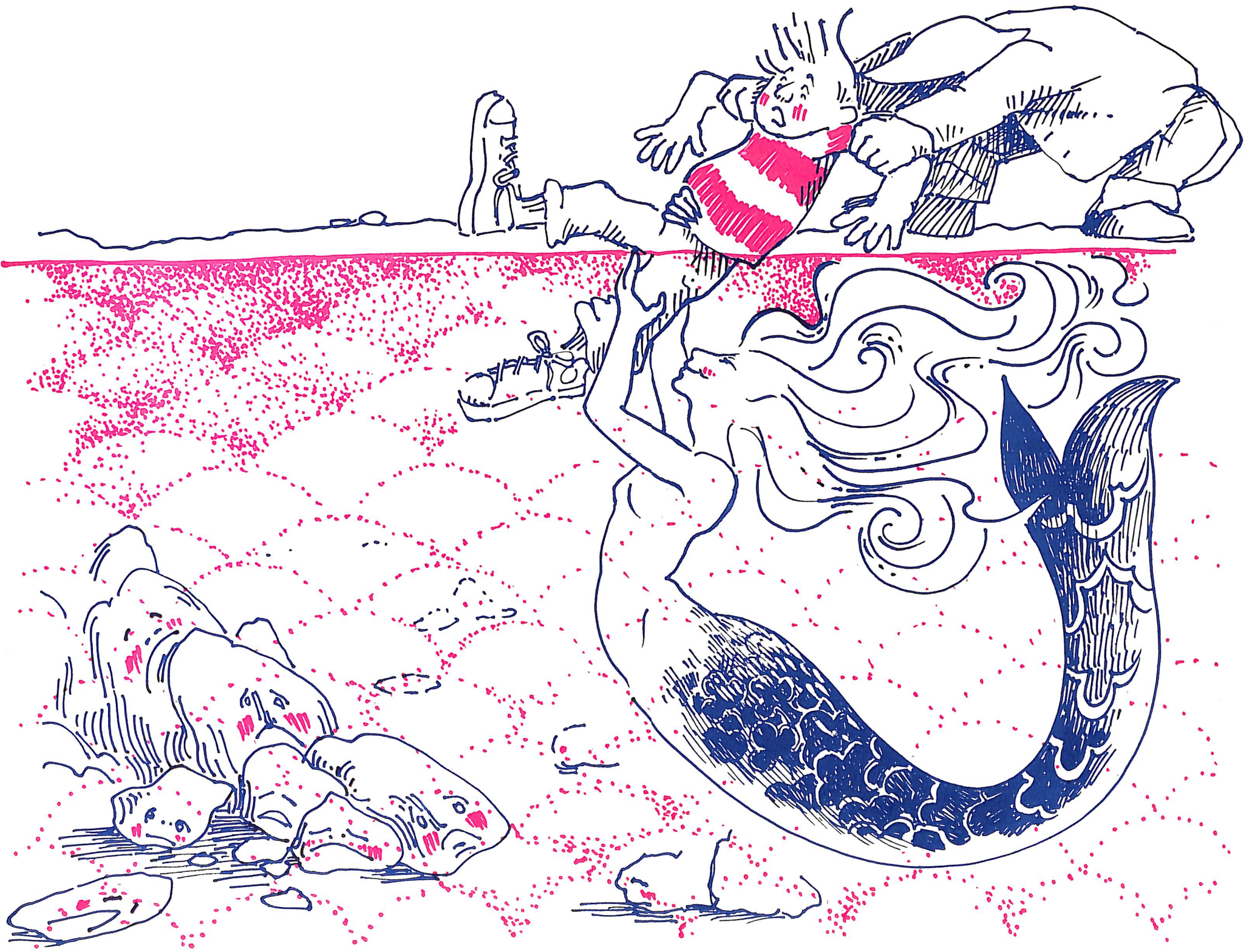
A wicked Nixie owned this lake. She was a pretty thing (besides being wicked), with long hair and a long fishy tail. She wanted to see Dan drown.



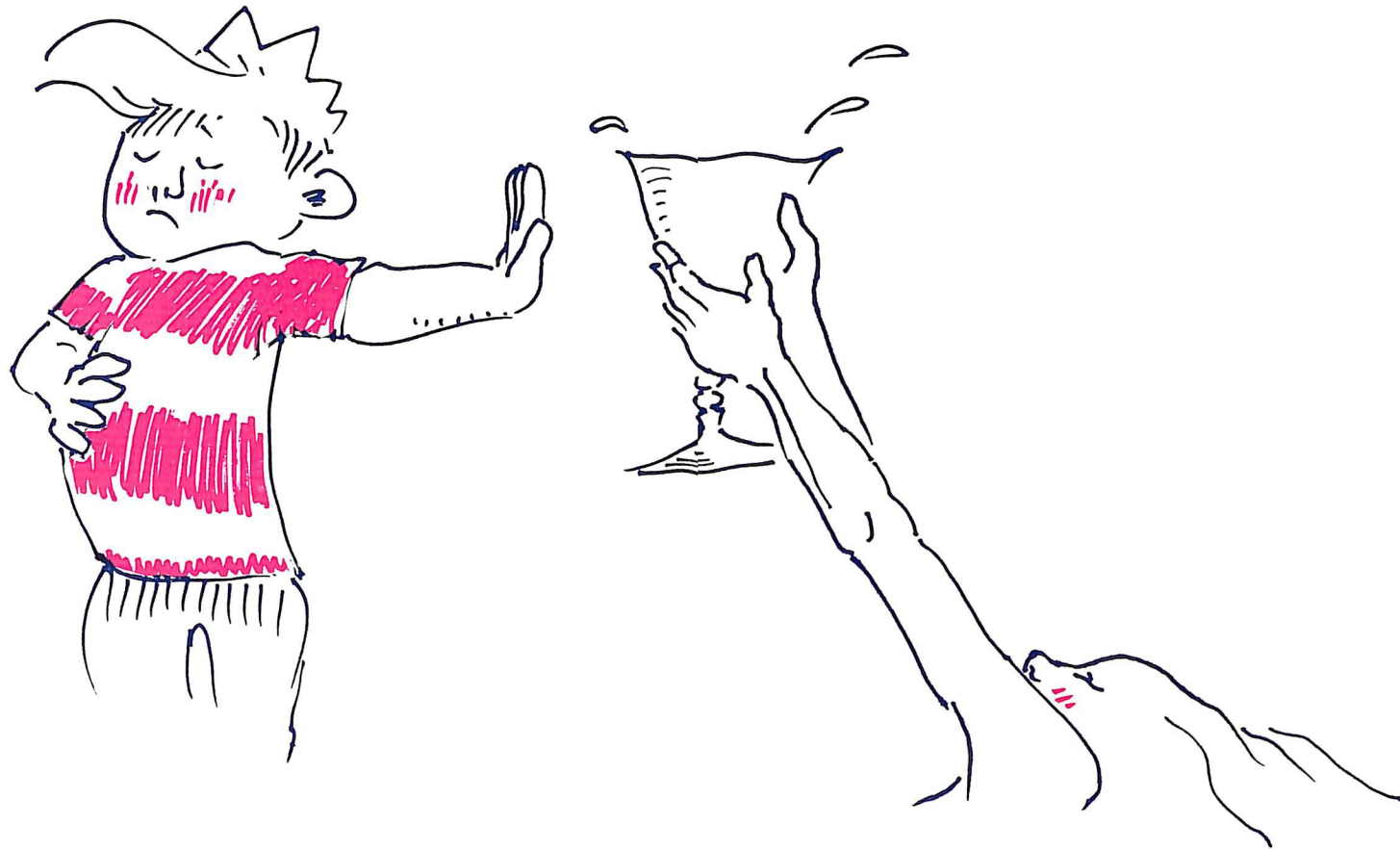
**D**an felt something tugging at his leg, two slim green hands were pulling him under. Then the water cleared. Dan saw that the floor of the lake was covered with stones—stones that were once boys who wanted a drink too badly.

There was a great tug-of-war. Who would get Dan? Back and forth they tugged him, till he felt he was stretching. Suddenly, the Nixie's slippery grasp was broken. Quickly, the Old Man pulled him out.

“Have it your own way,” said the Nixie, who then disappeared with an angry splash.



**N**ow Dan was across the lake. He could drink as much as he liked without becoming stone. The Nixie came back to offer him some water in a shining cup. But Dan wasn't thirsty any more. He had won.

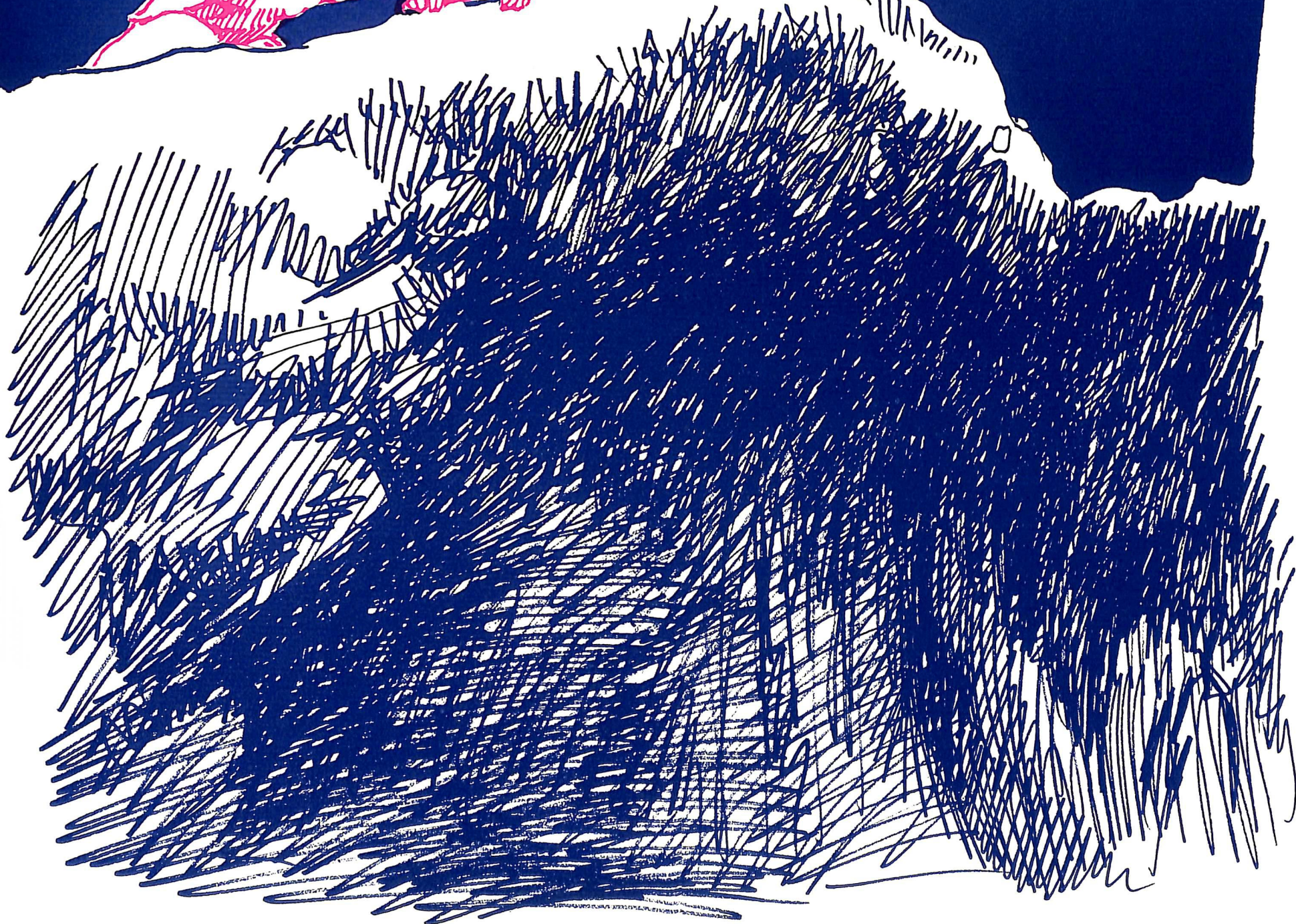
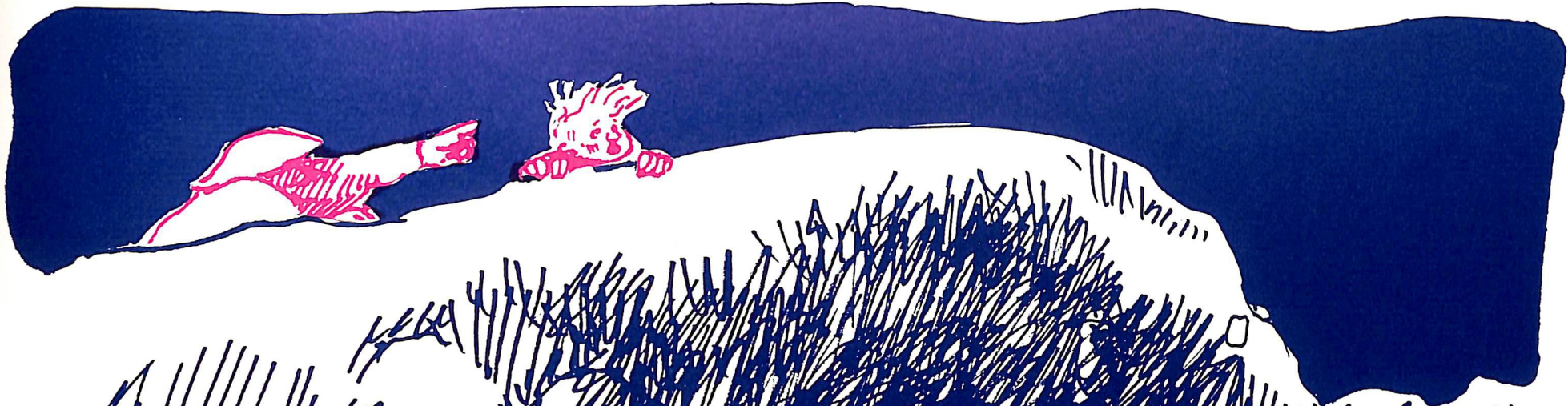


**C**loser and closer to home he came. More and more he longed for that face he couldn't quite remember and would never forget. Sometimes at night on the long grassy prairies he went to sleep, dreaming that somewhere that face loved and cared for him.



**O**n they went, through many secret winding ways,  
through terrible dangers, through beauty so bright it  
hurt the eyes. They came at last to the Great Gulf.  
The Great Gulf! How could they ever leap over that  
awful blackness?

On the other side, far—almost too far to see—  
gleamed the walls of home.



**A** breeze sprang up across the Gulf and it was sweet with laughter, music, and the smell of a thousand flowers.

It blew from that wonderful garden where the King walked among flowers that never die.

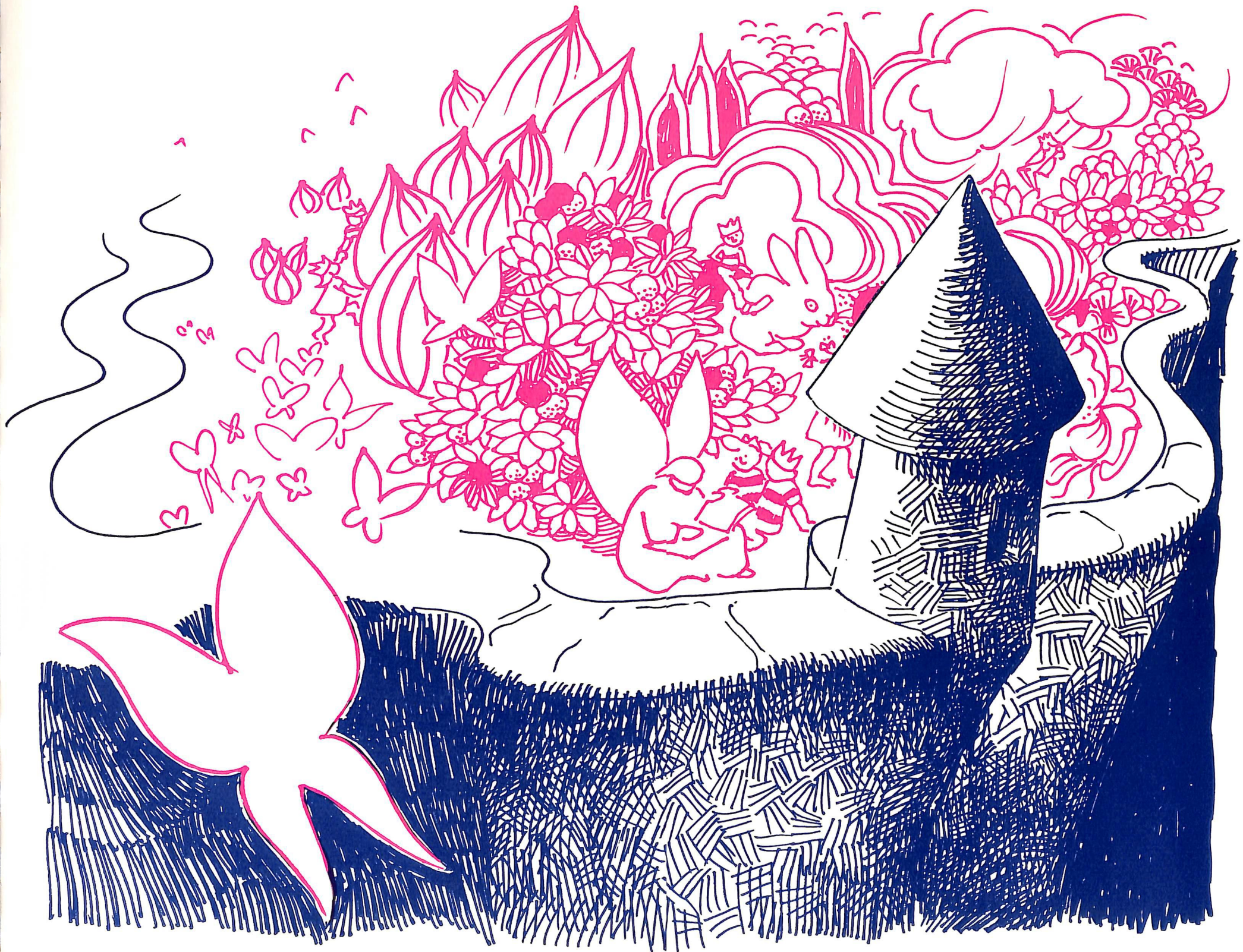
And Dan remembered...

The garden was his home!

He was a prince!

The face he missed was his own father's!

He had thrown all this away forever. He could never get back. Dan began to cry.



**T**he Old Man grabbed him and began shaking him.  
“Did you really think,” he said, “did you really think I  
would take you all this way to leave you stranded?”



“**D**on’t you know who I am? Wake Up!”  
He kept shaking Dan harder and harder.  
His face reminded Dan of someone.



“**F**ATHER!”



