

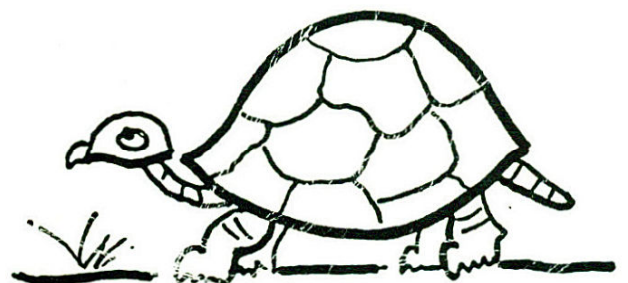
LITTLE BEN AND THE PAPAYA TREE



R. FRANCK
AND
J. ALBERTSON

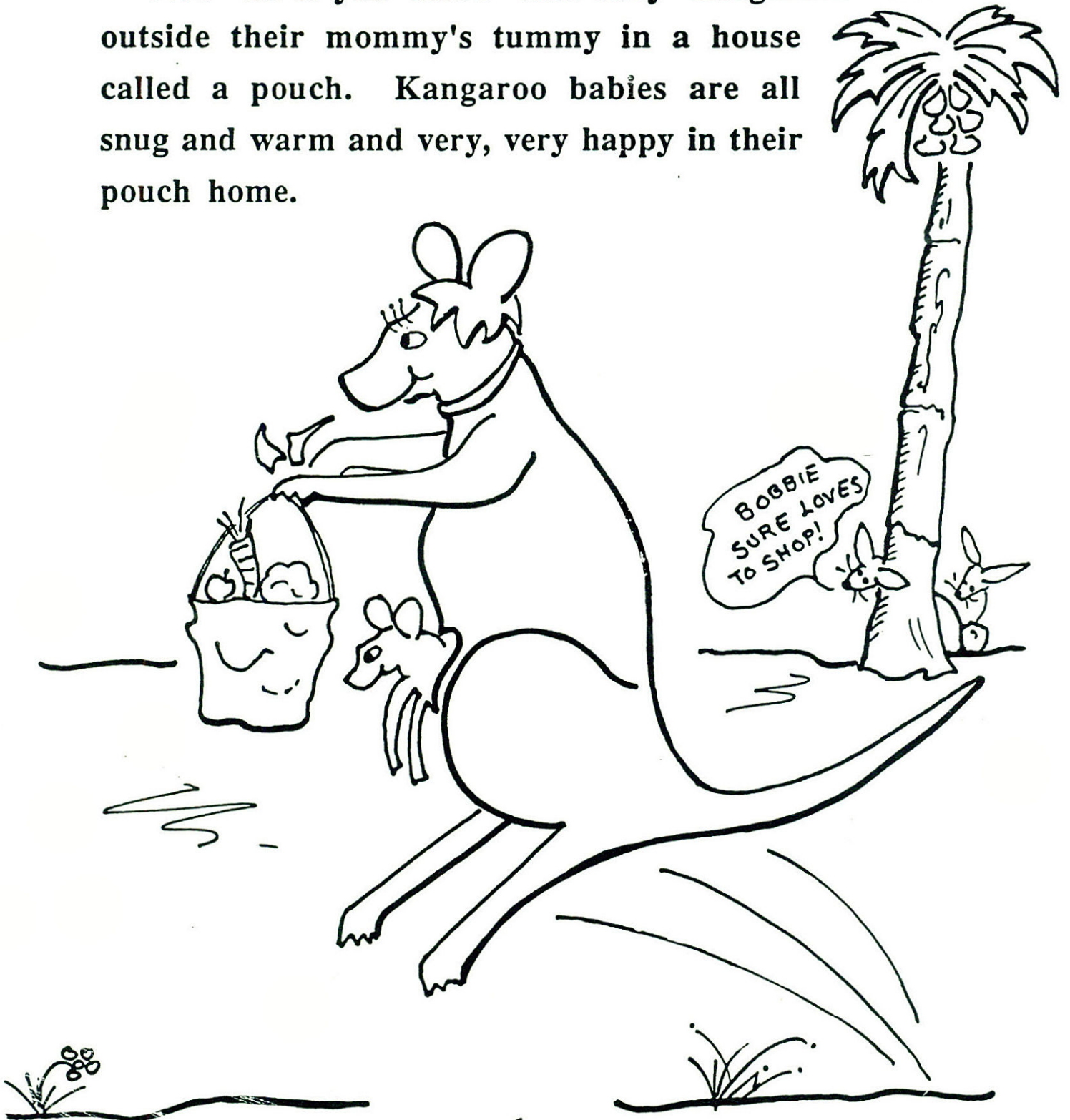


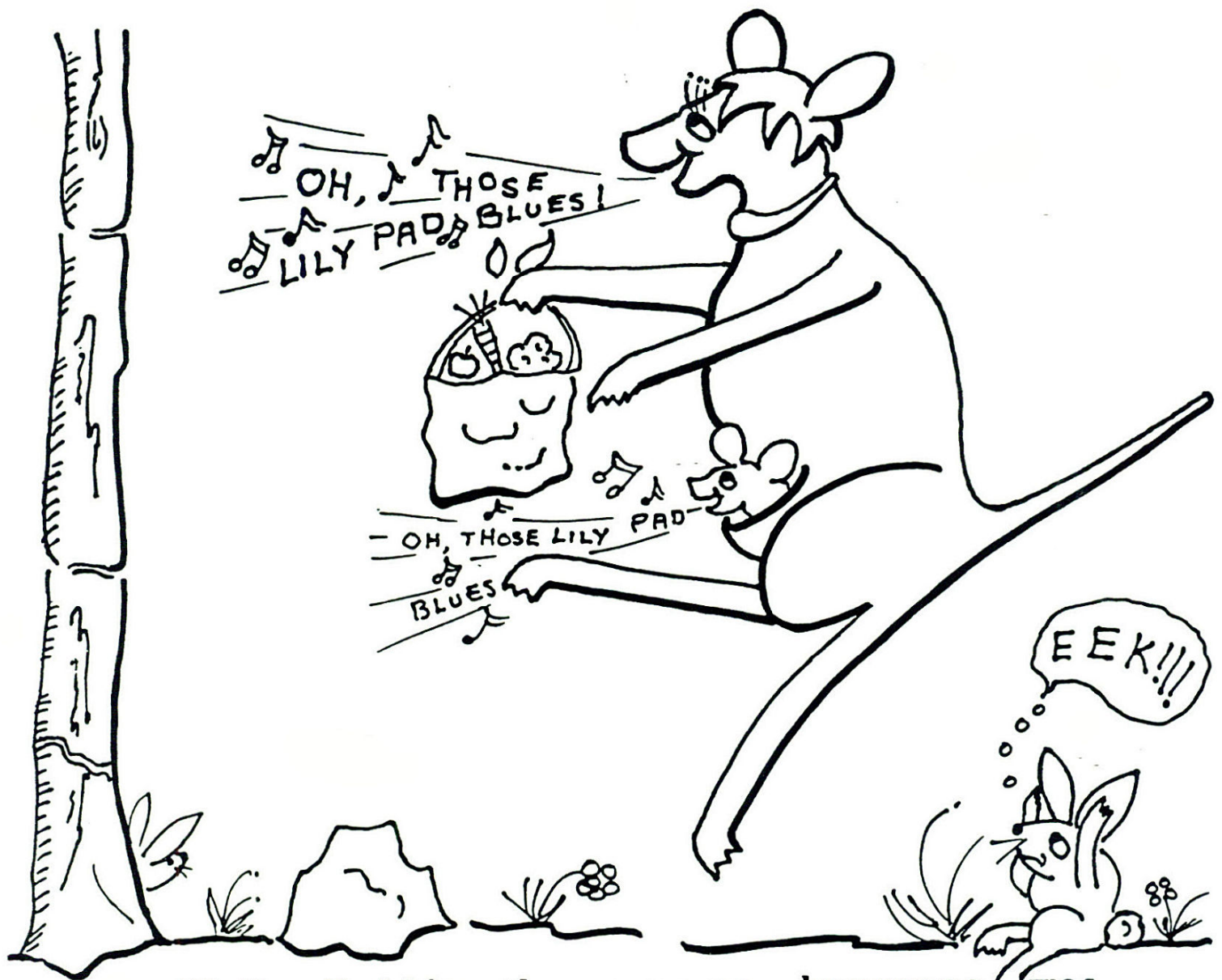
ILLUSTRATED BY
J. ALBERTSON



One Tuesday morning last year, Bobbie the momma kangaroo was out shopping for groceries with her baby Benjamin.

Now all of you know that baby kangaroos live outside their mommy's tummy in a house called a pouch. Kangaroo babies are all snug and warm and very, very happy in their pouch home.



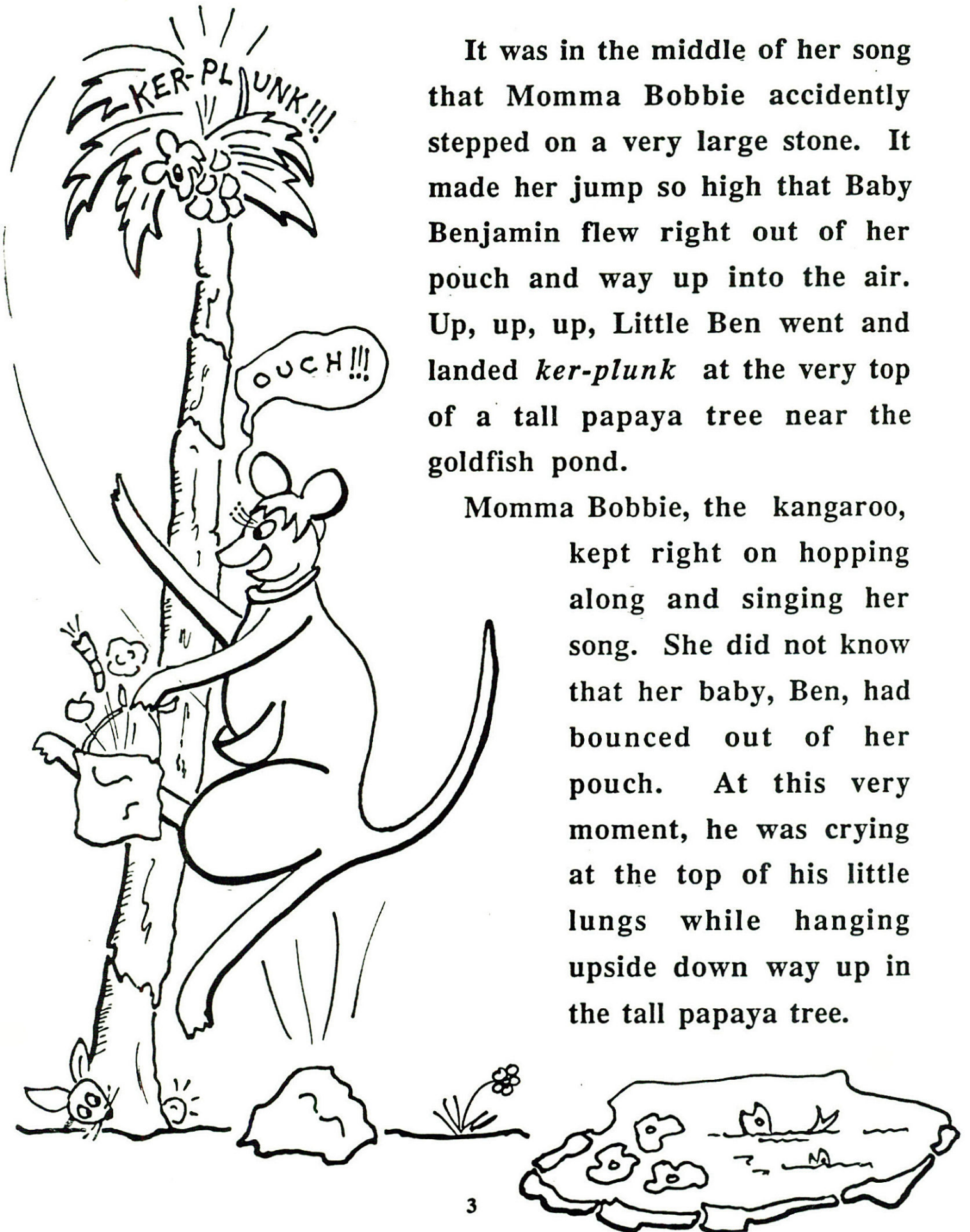


Well, Bobbie the momma kangaroo was hop-hop-hopping along singing a favorite song, "*The Lily Pad Blues*", to her son, Benjamin. Ben loved that song and tried to sing right along with his mother but his voice was very soft. It sounded a little like a squeaky mouse.

Bobbie did not mind a bit that there were squeaky noises coming from her pouch and she sang at the top of her kangaroo lungs.

It was in the middle of her song that Momma Bobbie accidentally stepped on a very large stone. It made her jump so high that Baby Benjamin flew right out of her pouch and way up into the air. Up, up, up, Little Ben went and landed *ker-plunk* at the very top of a tall papaya tree near the goldfish pond.

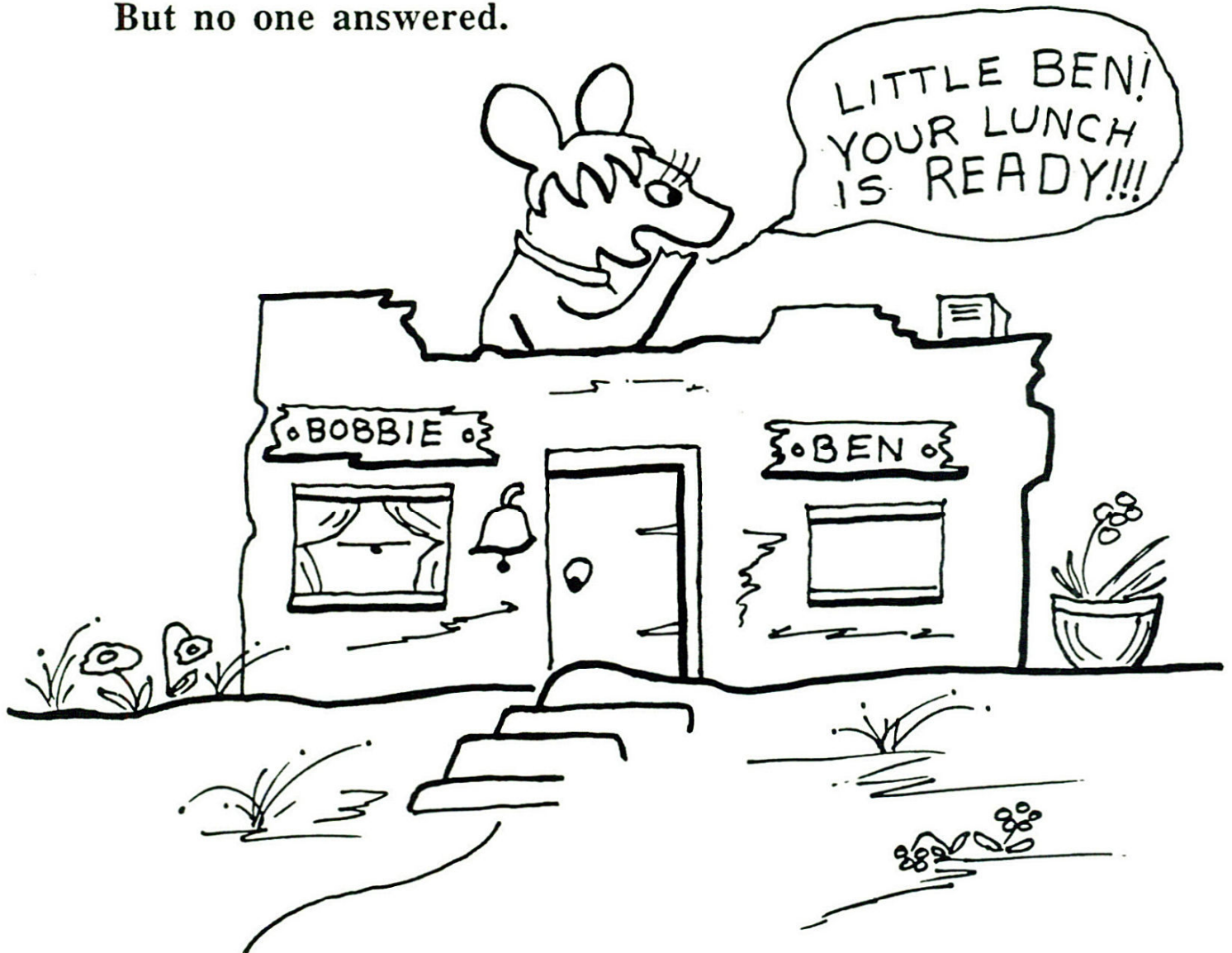
Momma Bobbie, the kangaroo, kept right on hopping along and singing her song. She did not know that her baby, Ben, had bounced out of her pouch. At this very moment, he was crying at the top of his little lungs while hanging upside down way up in the tall papaya tree.



When Bobbie got home to her kangaroo house she put all her groceries away and set the table for lunch. Since baby kangaroos often jump out of their mommy's pouch and go play tag with their friends, Bobbie was not surprised to find that Little Ben was gone.

She called, "Benjamin, Come eat lunch!" Well, Momma Bobbie called and called and called. "Little Ben!" "Little Ben!" "*Little Ben!*" "Your lunch is ready." "Come home an eat....right....this....*minute!*"

But no one answered.





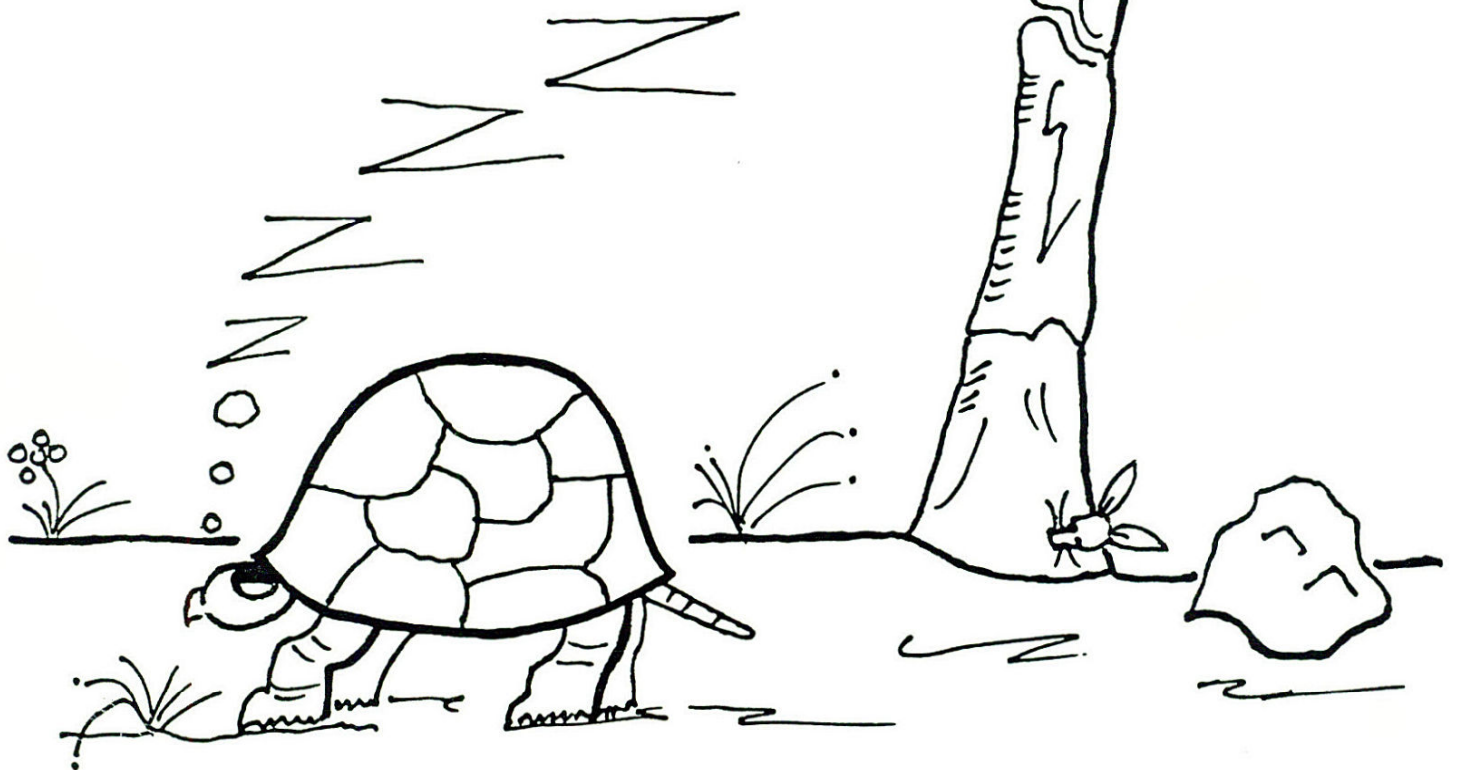
Now, next to playing tag with his friends, Ben just loved to eat. He had a wonderful appetite and could always eat a large plate full of grass & leaf salad.

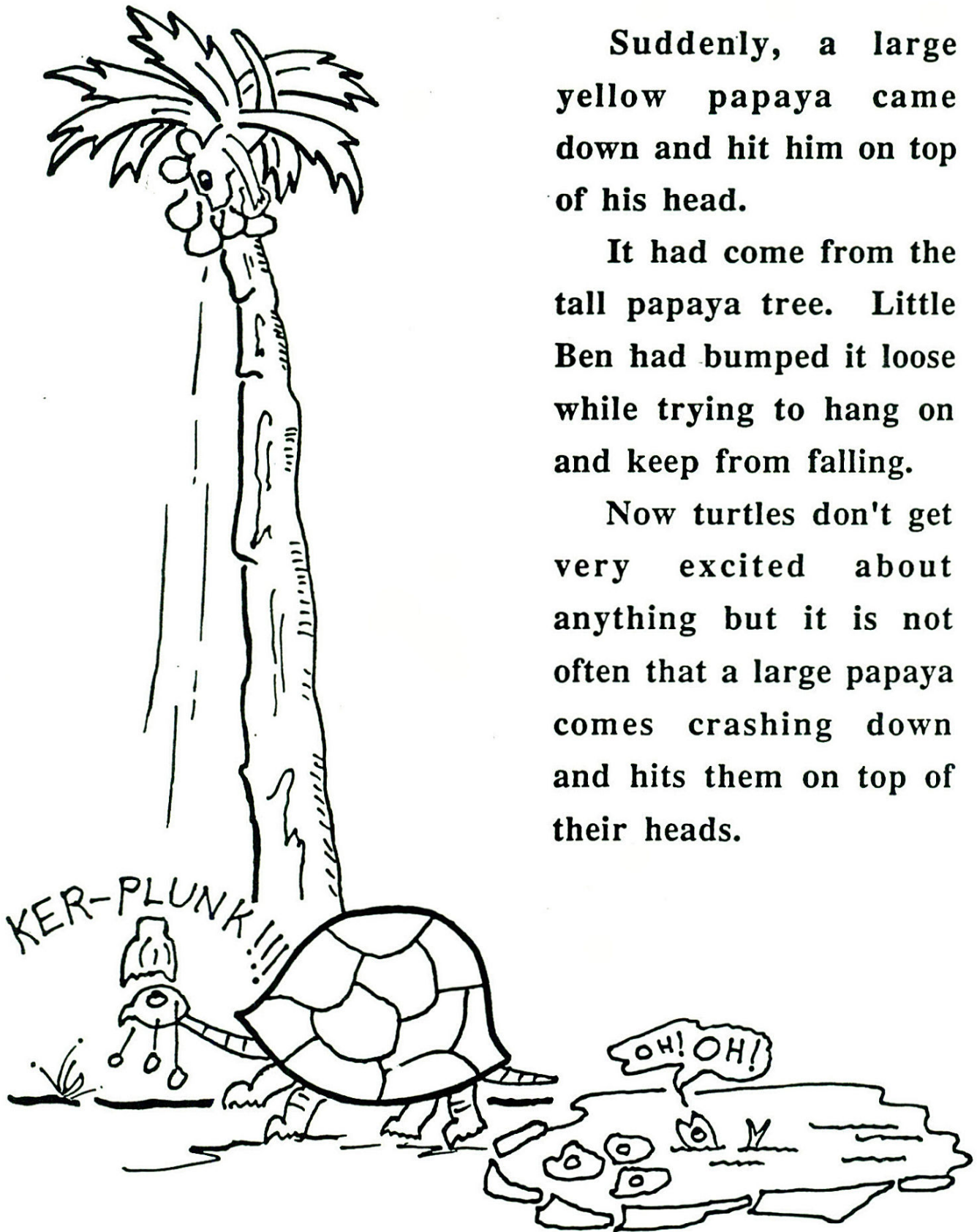


However, this time Little Ben didn't come home. His cold lunch got warm and Momma Bobbie became worried. She started to look everywhere for him. Where could that little *rascal* be?

Meanwhile, back at the goldfish pond, and hanging upside down from the tall papaya tree was Little Ben calling, "Help, help!" "Please, someone help me!" But no one answered.

Down below near the goldfish pond Grandpa Sam, the turtle, was peacefully sunning himself and about to take a noon-day nap.





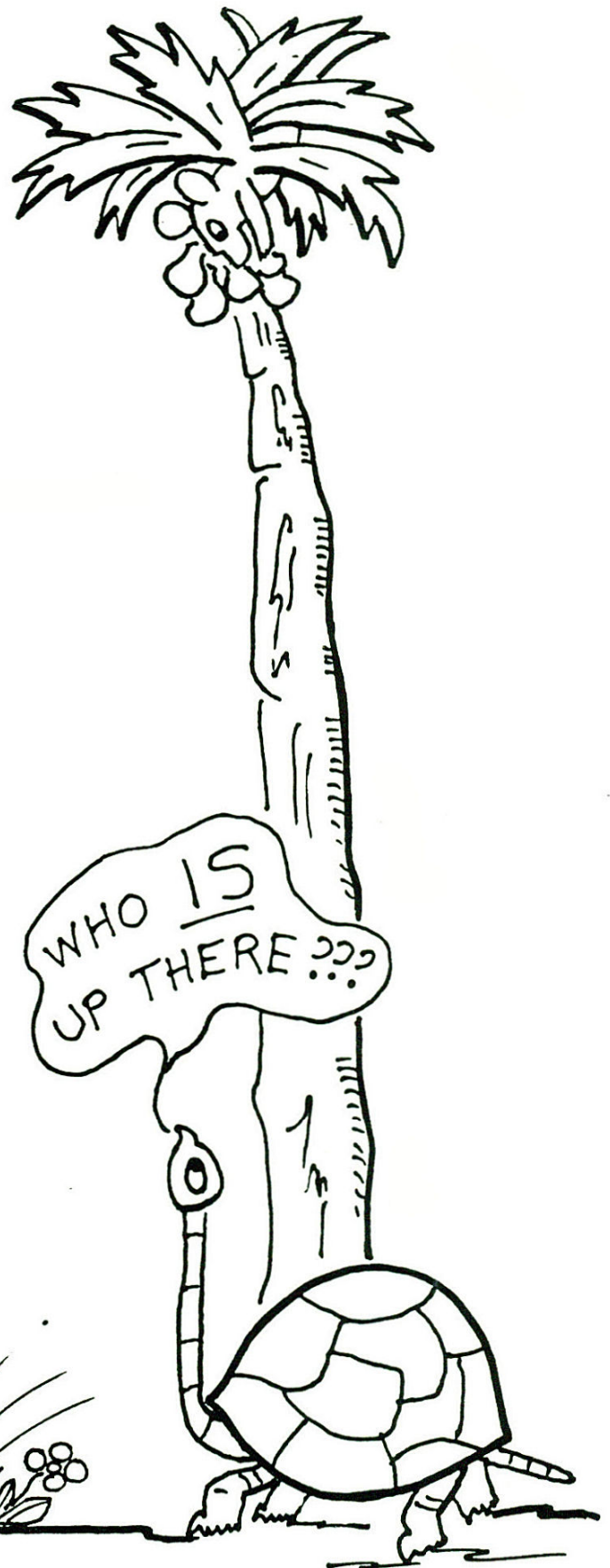
Suddenly, a large yellow papaya came down and hit him on top of his head.

It had come from the tall papaya tree. Little Ben had bumped it loose while trying to hang on and keep from falling.

Now turtles don't get very excited about anything but it is not often that a large papaya comes crashing down and hits them on top of their heads.

"Say, Who did that?" said Grandpa Sam, and he stretched his *long* neck as far out of his big shell as it would go. He looked up into the tall papaya tree.

"That's a mighty funny looking papaya hanging down from that papaya tree," he said. It was brown instead of yellow, and he had never heard of a *talking* papaya with a long tail. "That's mighty strange!" Grandpa Sam thought.

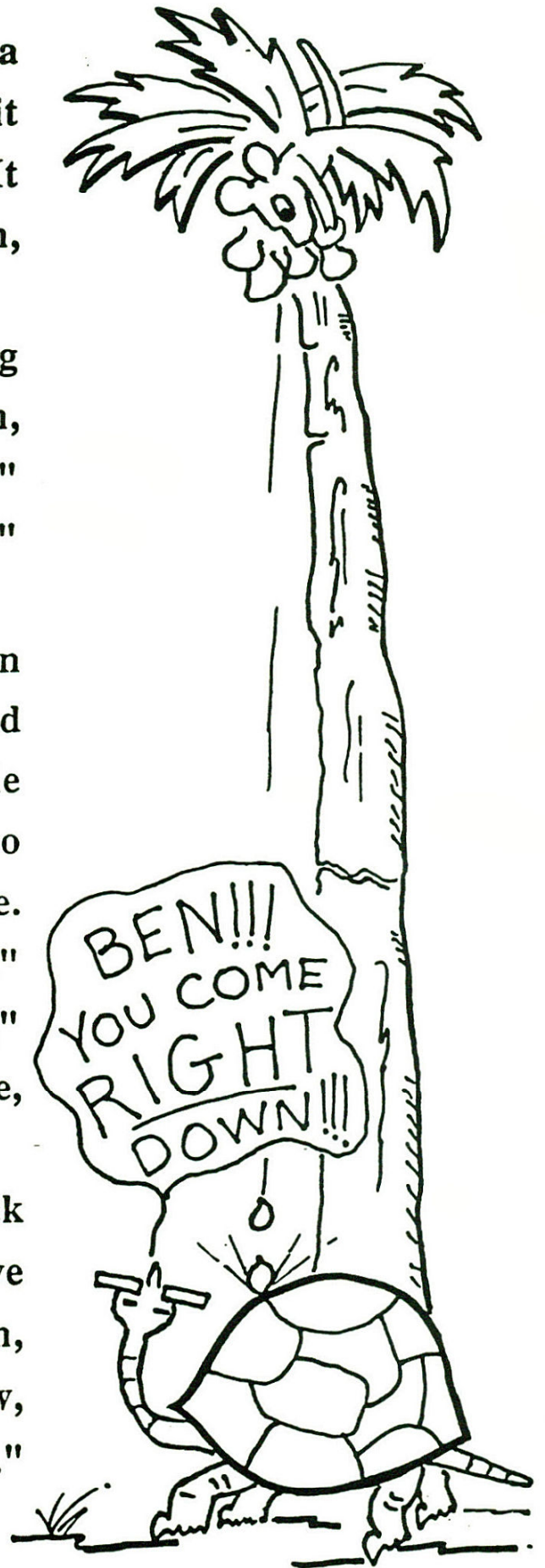


He put on his glasses to get a better look and, sure enough, it was *not* a papaya after all. It was his little friend, Benjamin, the kangaroo.

"What on earth are you doing up there, hanging upside down, and making so much noise?" "You come down *right now* !" Sam said.

Two large tears rolled down Baby Ben's cheeks and splashed on Grandpa Sam's big, high turtle shell. "My mamma jumped too high and that is why I'm up here. I don't know how to hop down." "I only know how to hop up," Ben said. "Oh *please* help me, Grandpa Sam!"

Sam stretched his long neck and looked up at Ben. "Well, we turtles can not hop up or down, but don't you worry little fellow, I will go and get your mamma." "You just hold tight."

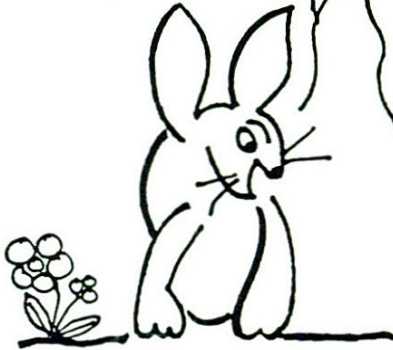


Now you all know how slow turtles walk, and Grandpa Sam was very old and very, very slow.

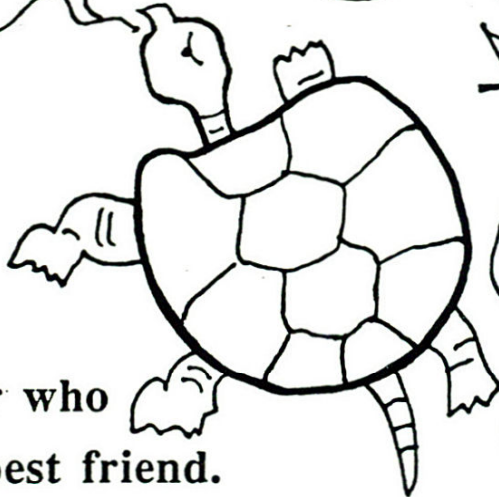
On his way to the kangaroo house he met several of his friends. First, there was Freddy, the little red fox. Then along came Jackie, the rabbit, and finally,



HE'S WHERE!!!



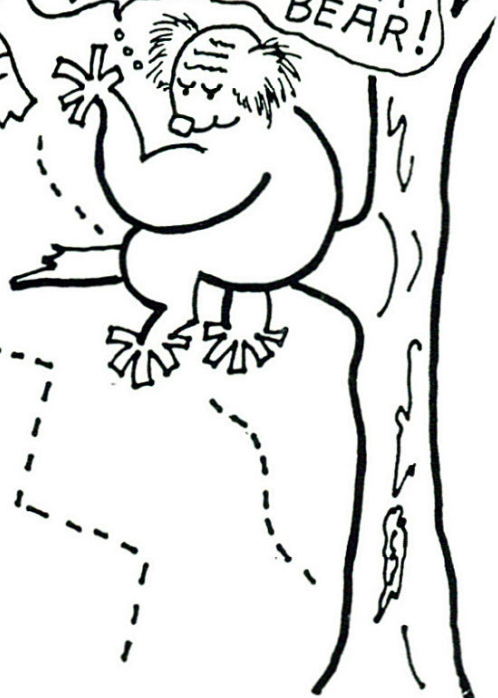
LITTLE BEN IS STUCK UP IN THE PAPAYA TREE, JACKIE!



HOW DID HE EVER GET UP THERE, GRANDPA SAM???



MAYBE HE THOUGHT HE WAS A KOALA BEAR!



Little Terry, the young koala bear who was Ben's very best friend.

Of course, Grandpa Sam had to stop and tell *each* one of them where he was going and what had happened to Ben.

All of the animals wanted to help, and all of them talked at once. They all walked slowly along toward Bobbie's kangaroo house. All that is, except Terry, who got a ride on Grandpa Sam's back for koala bears don't like to walk very far.



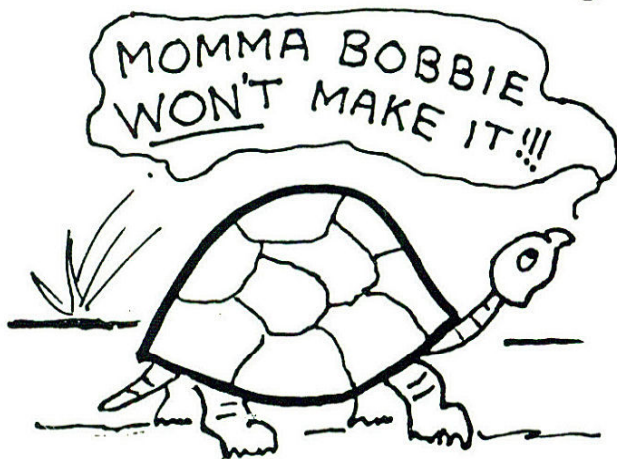
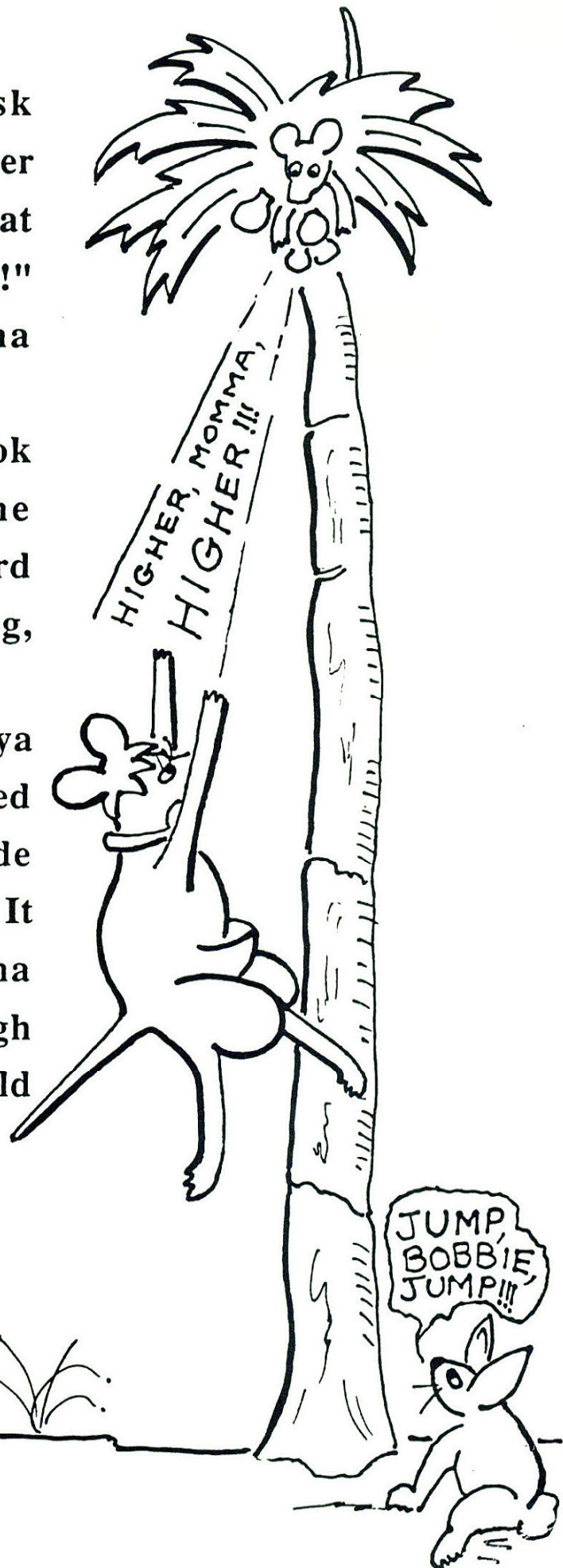
When they were half-way to the kangaroo house, who should come hopping along but Momma Bobbie. She saw the little group of friends busy talking.

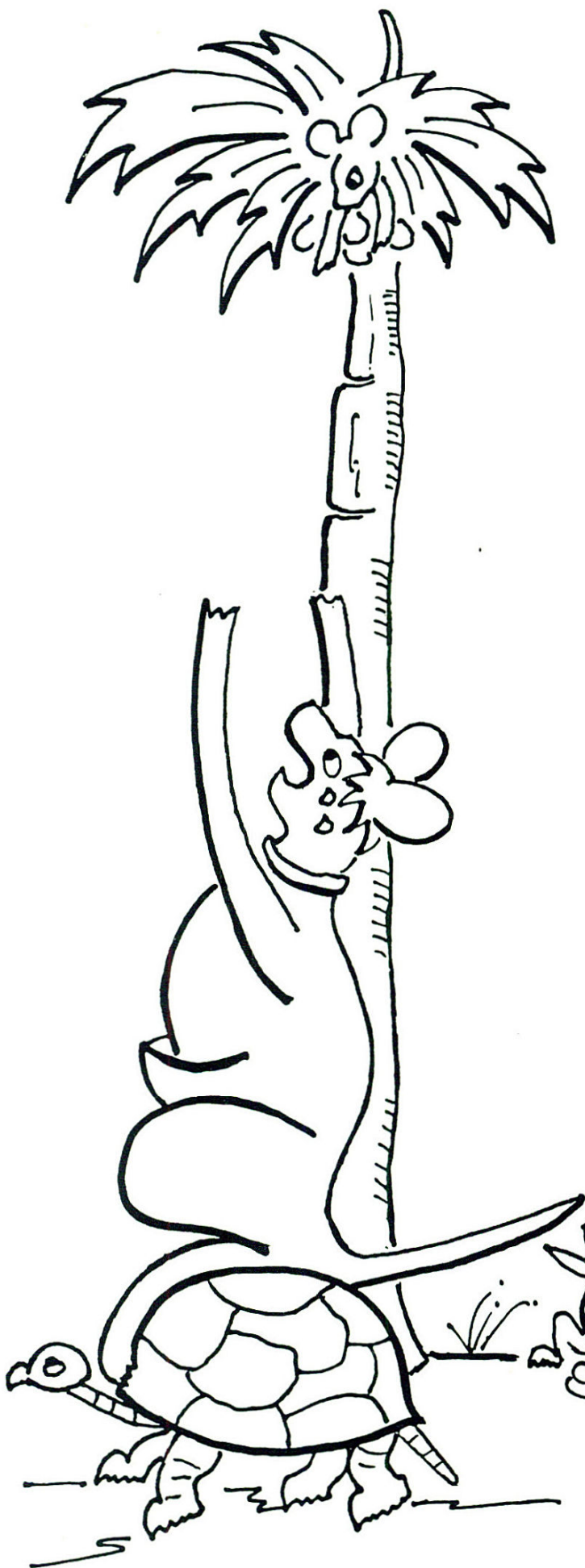


Before she could ask Grandpa Sam if he had seen her baby, all the animals shouted at once, "We know where Ben is!" "We'll show you, Momma Bobbie."

So all her friends took Momma Kangaroo to the goldfish pond. There she heard a little squeaky voice saying, "Help, Momma, I'm up here!"

Looking up into the papaya tree, she saw a very frightened baby kangaroo hanging upside down from the tallest branch. It was her Little Ben. Momma Bobbie tried hopping up as high as she could jump but she could not reach the little kangaroo.





Grandpa Sam even let Bobbie stand on his big, old, hard turtle shell to make her taller, but she still could not reach her Little Ben.

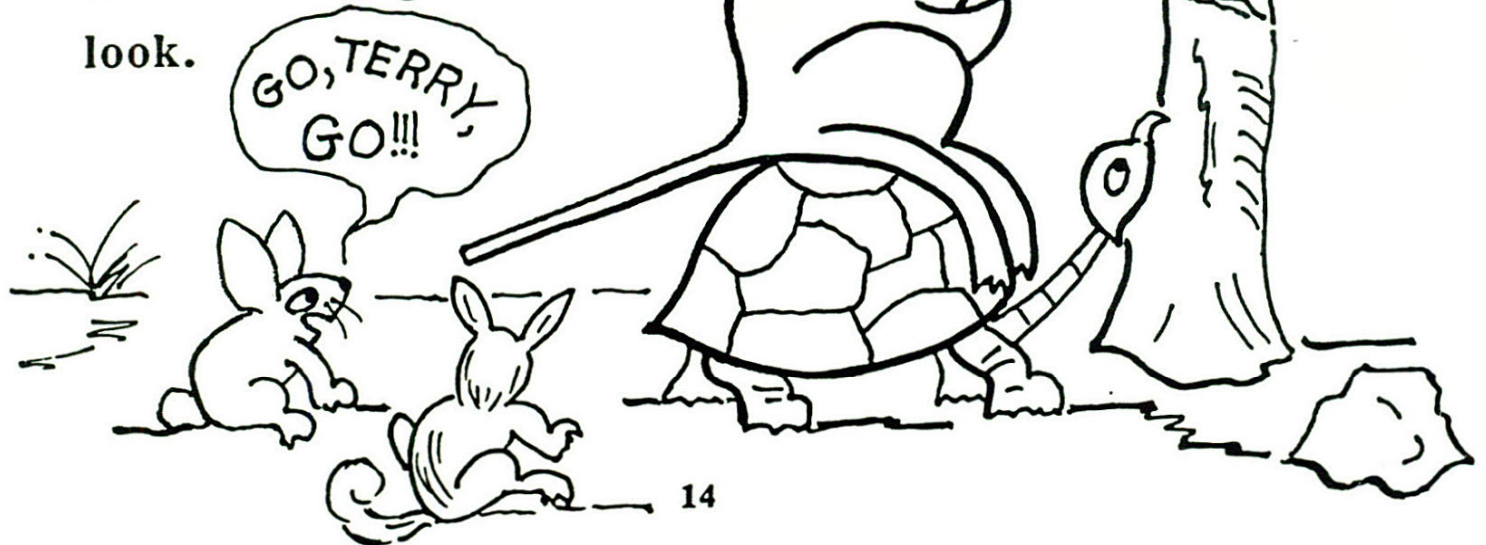
Tears came to Momma Bobbie's eyes. She did not know how to get her little baby kangaroo down from that tall papaya tree. "What shall I do?", she cried. But no one knew the answer.

Freddy, the little red fox, felt very blue. Jackie, the rabbit, was twitching and sniffing his nose and trying hard not to cry rabbit tears. Even Grandpa Sam sniffed once or twice, which is most unusual, for turtles almost never cry.

Only Terry, the young koala bear, did not cry. He was too busy thinking how he could get his best friend, Little Ben, down from that tree. Suddenly he yelled, "*I can save Ben!*" Then before any of the other animals realized what was happening, young Terry had started to climb the papaya tree.

Now all of you know that koala bears are good tree climbers, and soon Terry was near the top branch where Little Ben was holding on and hanging upside down.

"Be careful," Momma Bobbie cried to Terry. "Do be careful!" Then she hopped up onto Grandpa Sam's large turtle shell to get a better look.





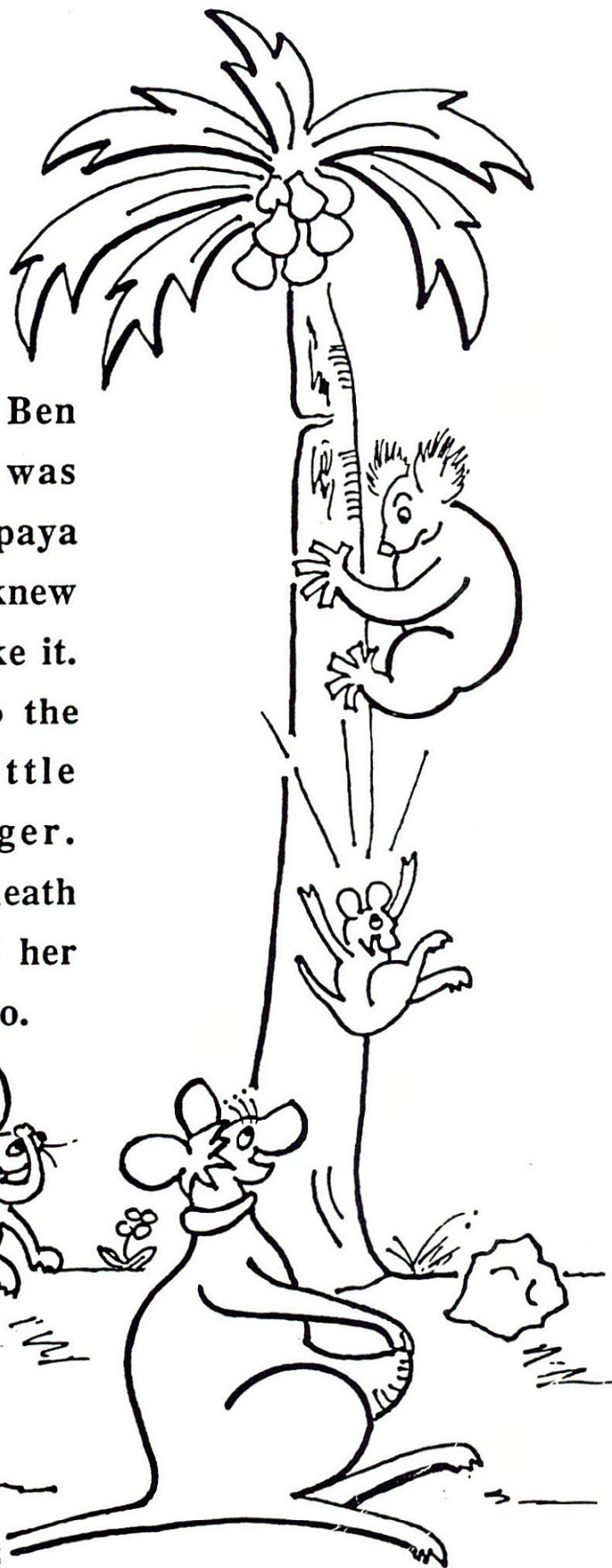
Terry reached the top of the papaya tree and put one of his long front legs around Little Ben, holding him tight against his body. Slowly, very slowly, he began to climb down the tree with the little kangaroo *squirming* in his arms. "Stop squirming or we'll both fall!" he scolded Ben. "I can't help it, you're tickling me," Ben giggled.

You see, baby kangaroos are very ticklish, particularly under their arms, and Little Ben was no exception. He giggled and squirmed, and laughed and squirmed, and the more that Terry tried to hold on to him, the more he moved about and laughed out loud.

Momma Bobbie, of course, knew how ticklish Little Ben was. It was almost *impossible* to give him a bath for he would squirm and giggle.

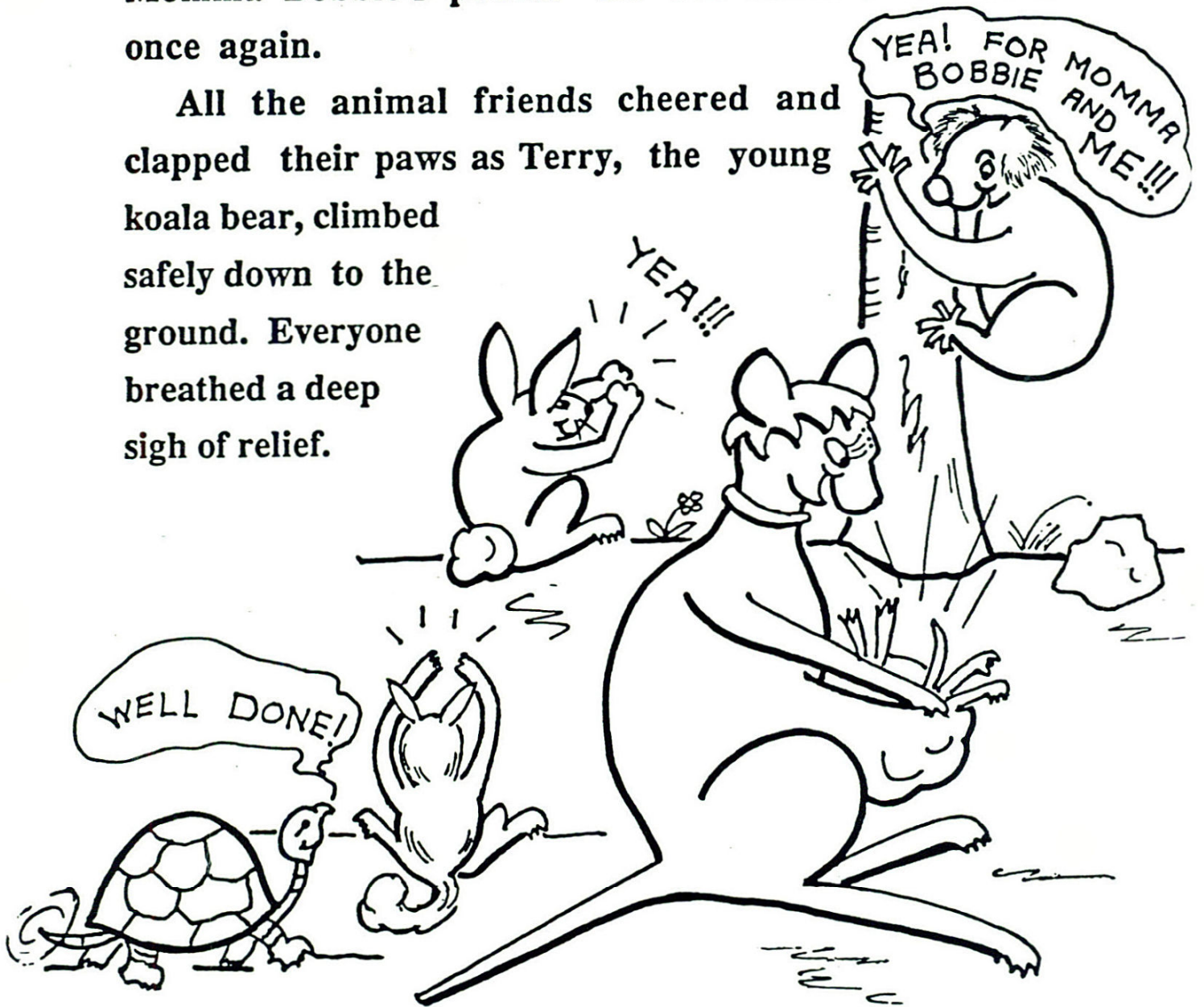
By now Terry, with Ben wiggling in his arm, was half-way down the tall papaya tree. But Momma Bobbie knew they were *not* going to make it. Terry could not hold on to the ticklish, wiggling little kangaroo much longer. Quickly, she hopped underneath the papaya tree and opened her pouch as wide as it would go.

Momma Bobbie got there *just in time!* Down came the little kangaroo yelling, "*Help...help*", and laughing at the same time.



Little Ben landed *ker-plunk* right in the middle of Momma Bobbie's pouch. He was home safe and sound once again.

All the animal friends cheered and clapped their paws as Terry, the young koala bear, climbed safely down to the ground. Everyone breathed a deep sigh of relief.



Of course, you all know that turtles can't clap their paws but old Grandpa Sam was wagging his short little turtle tail just as hard and fast as he could to show everyone how happy he was that Little Ben was safe.



After thanking all their animal friends, Momma Bobbie with Little Benjamin in her pouch went hop, hop, hopping home to their kangaroo house.

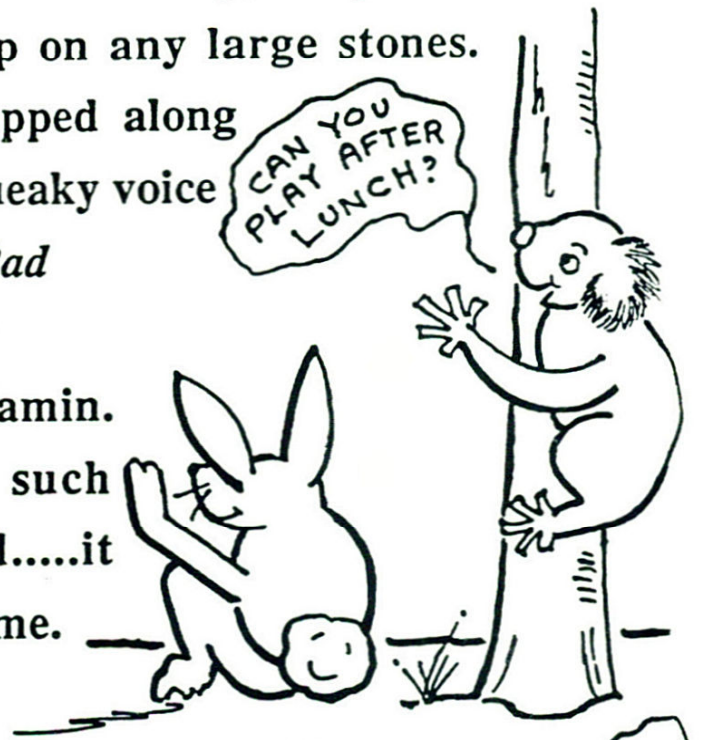
Little Ben was very hungry. It was well past his lunch time and he asked his mother to go as fast as she could hop. "I'm starved!" he said. But this time Momma Bobbie was very, very careful not to step on any large stones.

As she hopped along she heard a squeaky voice singing "*The Lily Pad Blues*".

She was very happy and so was Benjamin. It was nice to have such wonderful friends and....it was nice to be going home.



CAN YOU PLAY AFTER LUNCH?



BYE

