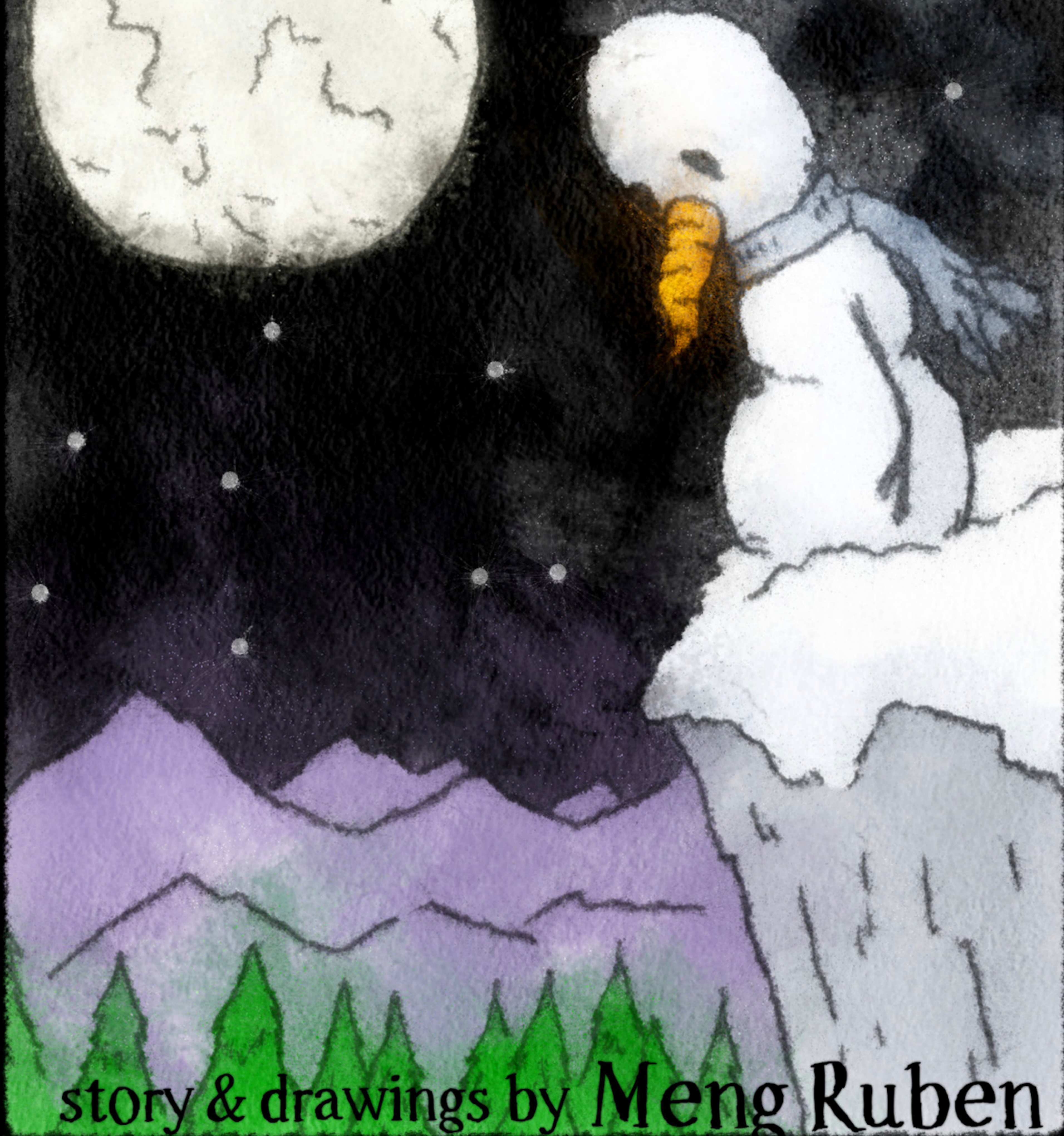
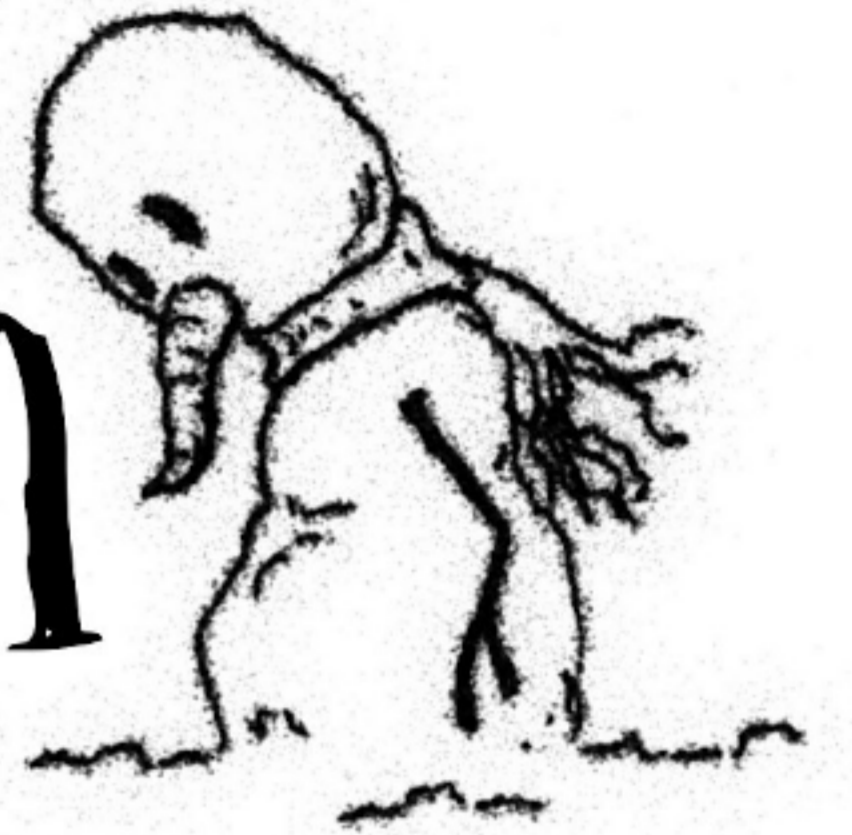


My Melancholy Snowman



story & drawings by Meng Ruben

My
Melancholy
Snowman



by
Meng Ruben



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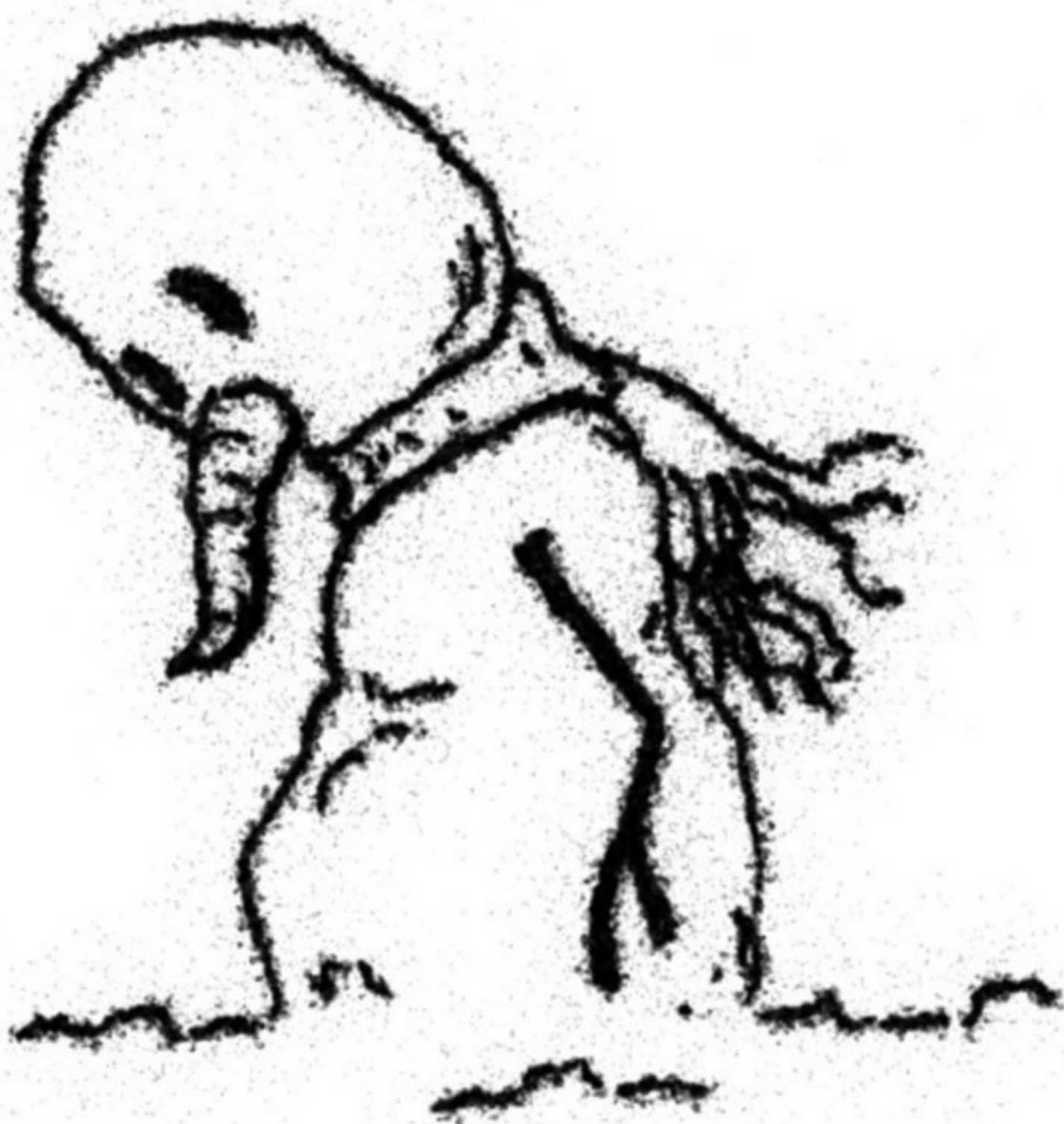
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My Melancholy Snowman



My snowman was
different from
the other snowmen.

They were all happy.



My snowman wasn't.

My Melancholy Snowman



They played with their
little boys and girls.

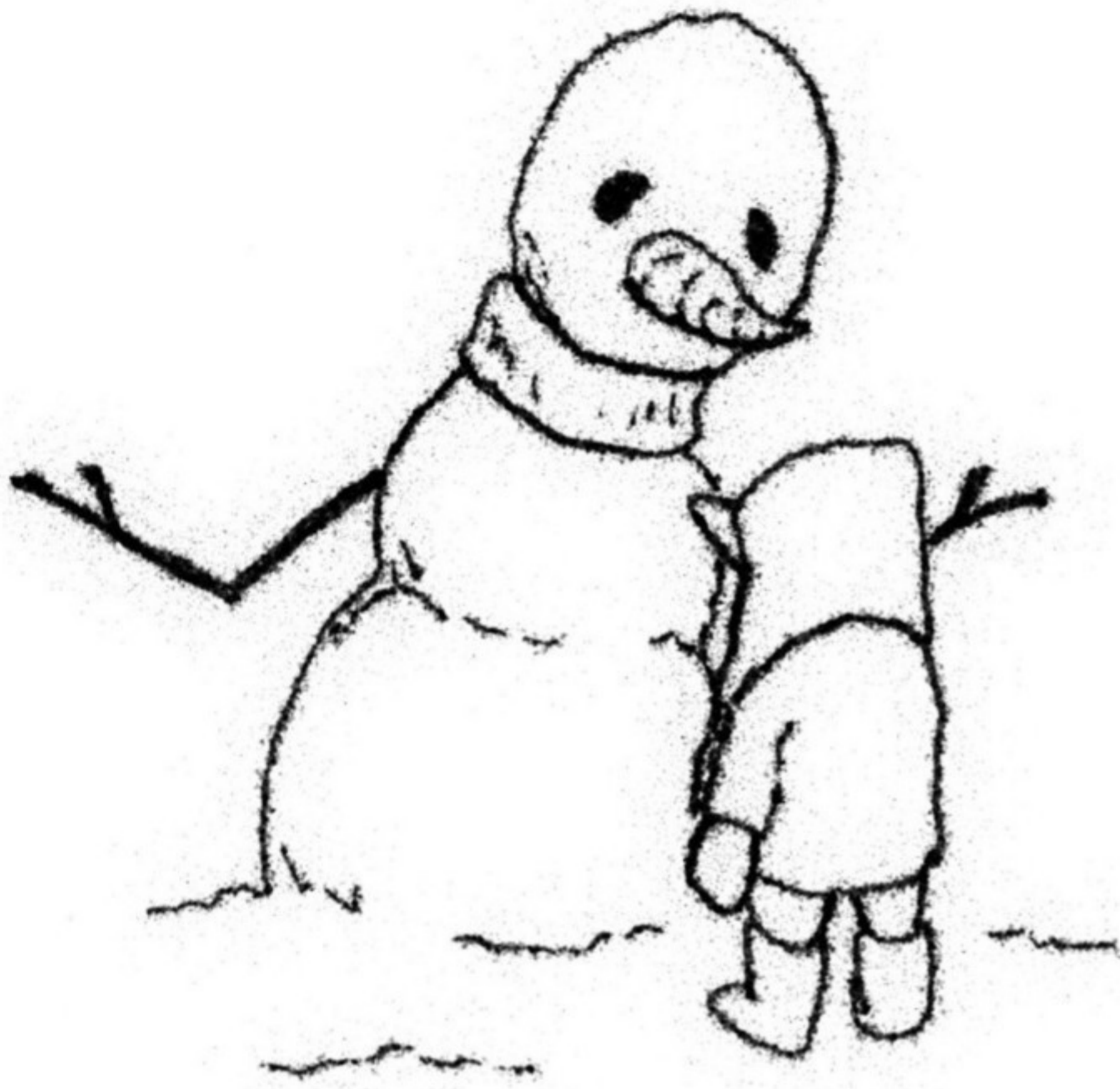
My snowman didn't.

They hung out in groups
and chatted together.

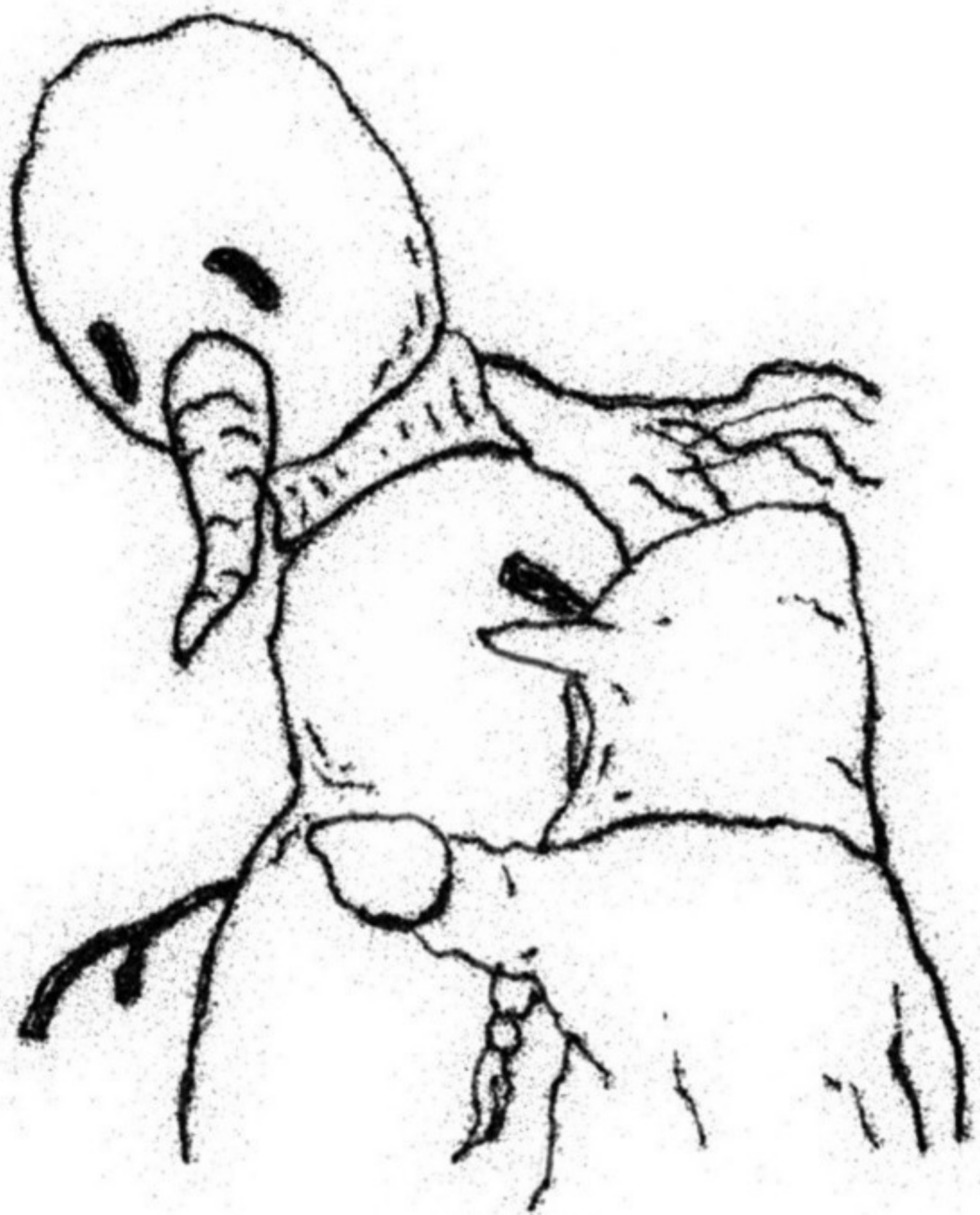
My snowman sat quietly
on his own, gazing into
my cocoa mug as
though contemplating
his own liquidy future.



My Melancholy Snowman



“Why don’t you smile?”
I asked him one day.

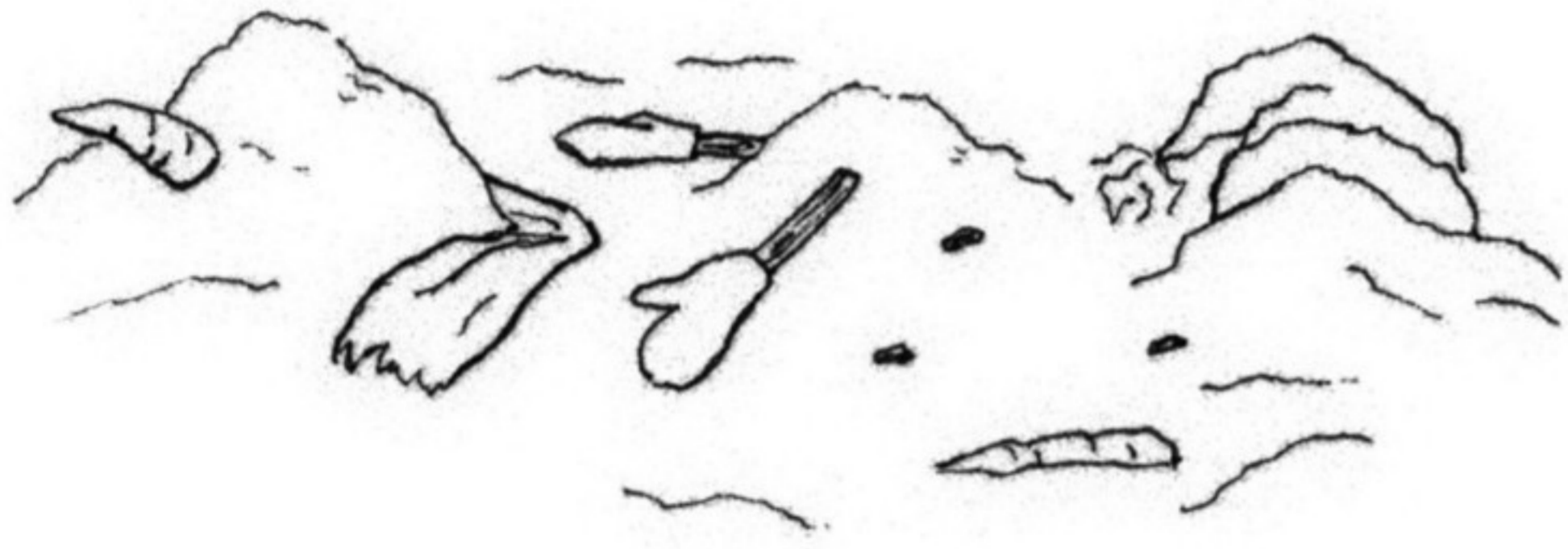


“If you can’t find
anything here to smile
about, then go and look
around until you can.”

“Go on now,” I ordered
him. “Shoo.”

My Melancholy Snowman

Without a word and
with his head bowed
low my snowman
went off on his own.



The next day a warm
front came through
and all of the
snowmen in town
melted.

My snowman didn't melt,
for he had headed
north.

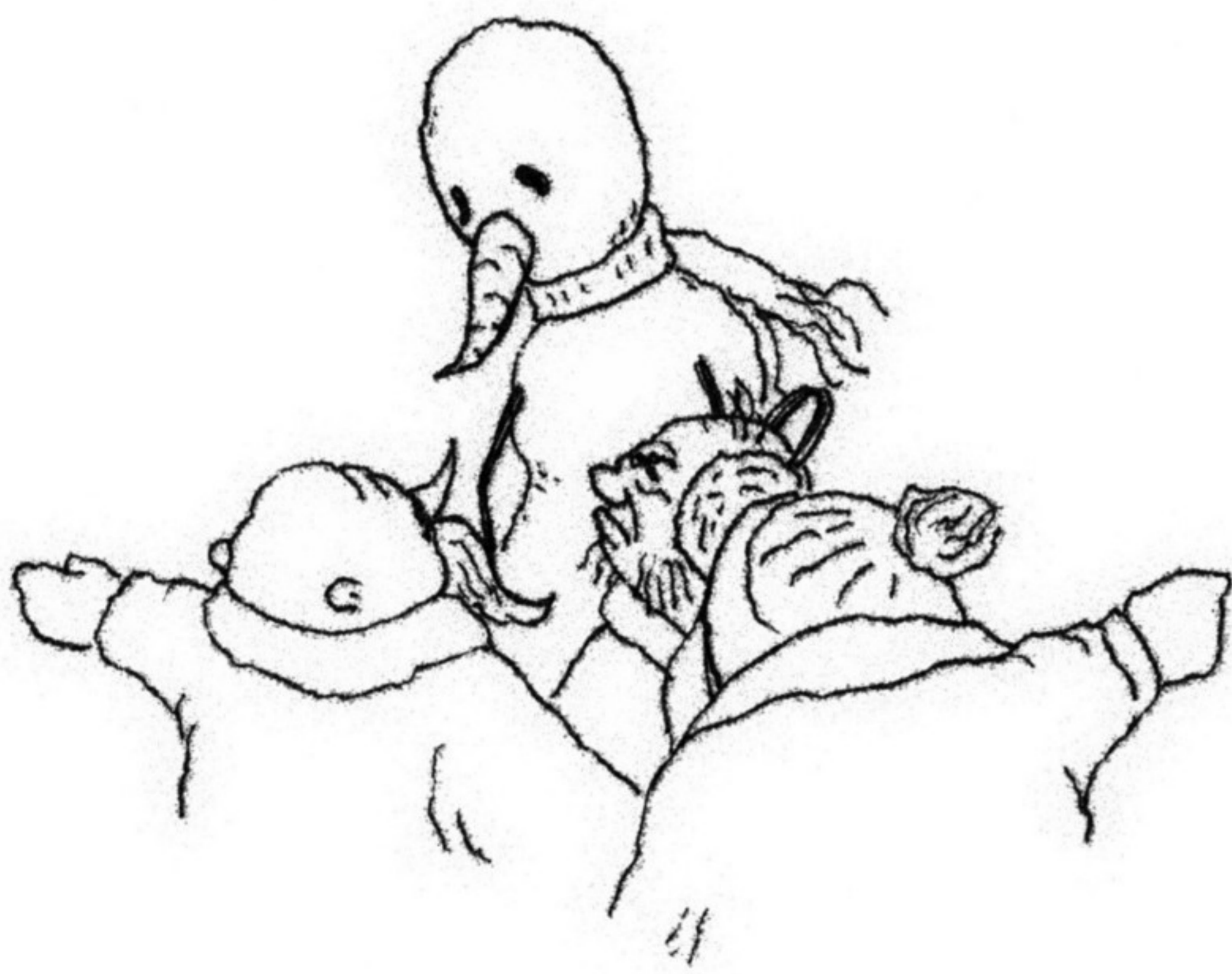
He came to a lake
and he started across it.



My Melancholy Snowman



In the middle of the lake
he found three burglars
sitting around a small fire.
They had just robbed a
donut shop of all its
food and money and
they were roasting the
donuts over the fire with
some pointy sticks.



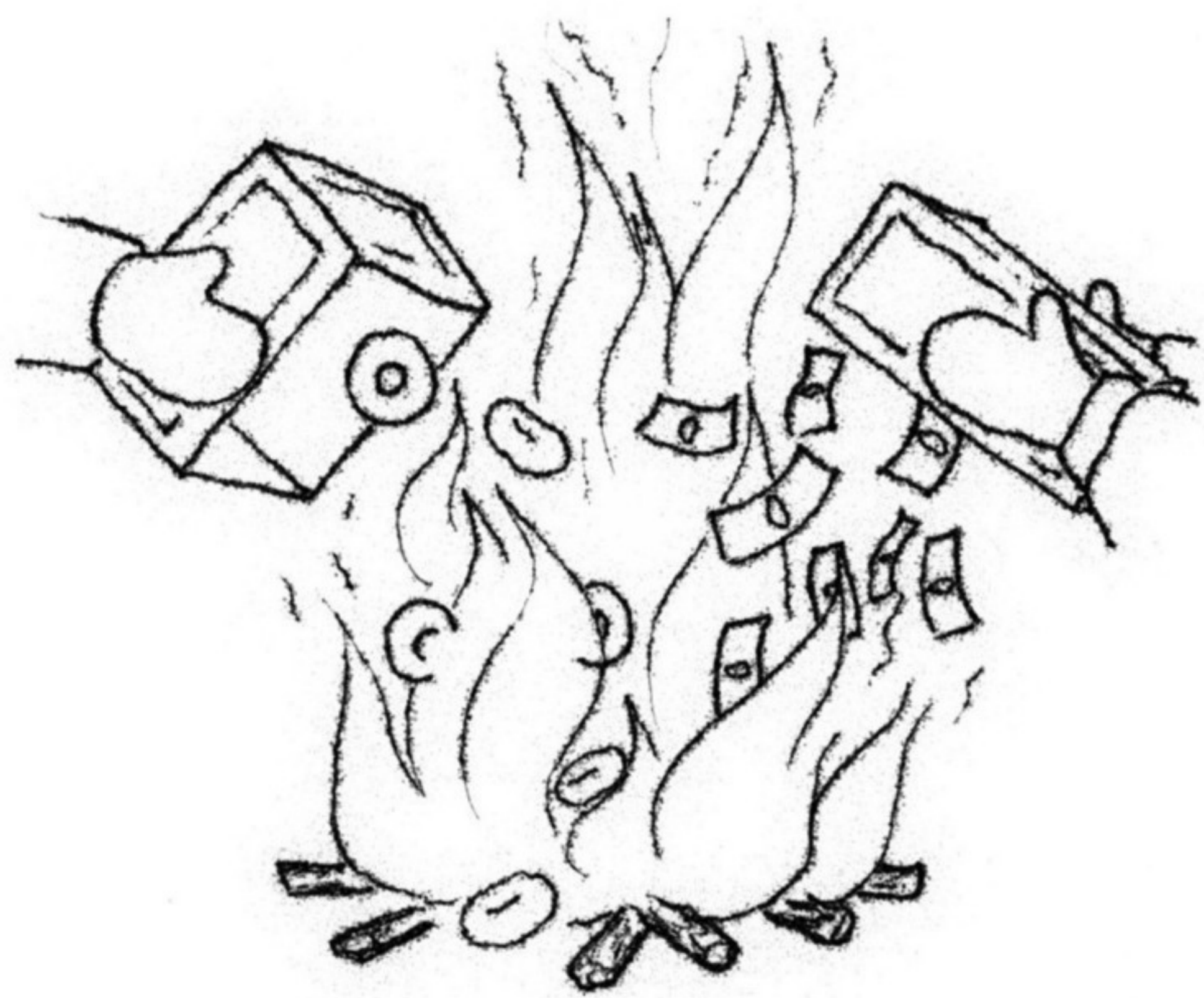
My snowman came and
stood over them, not
saying anything, just
staring down at them
in his
melancholy way.

They told him to get lost.
He didn't listen to them.

My Melancholy Snowman



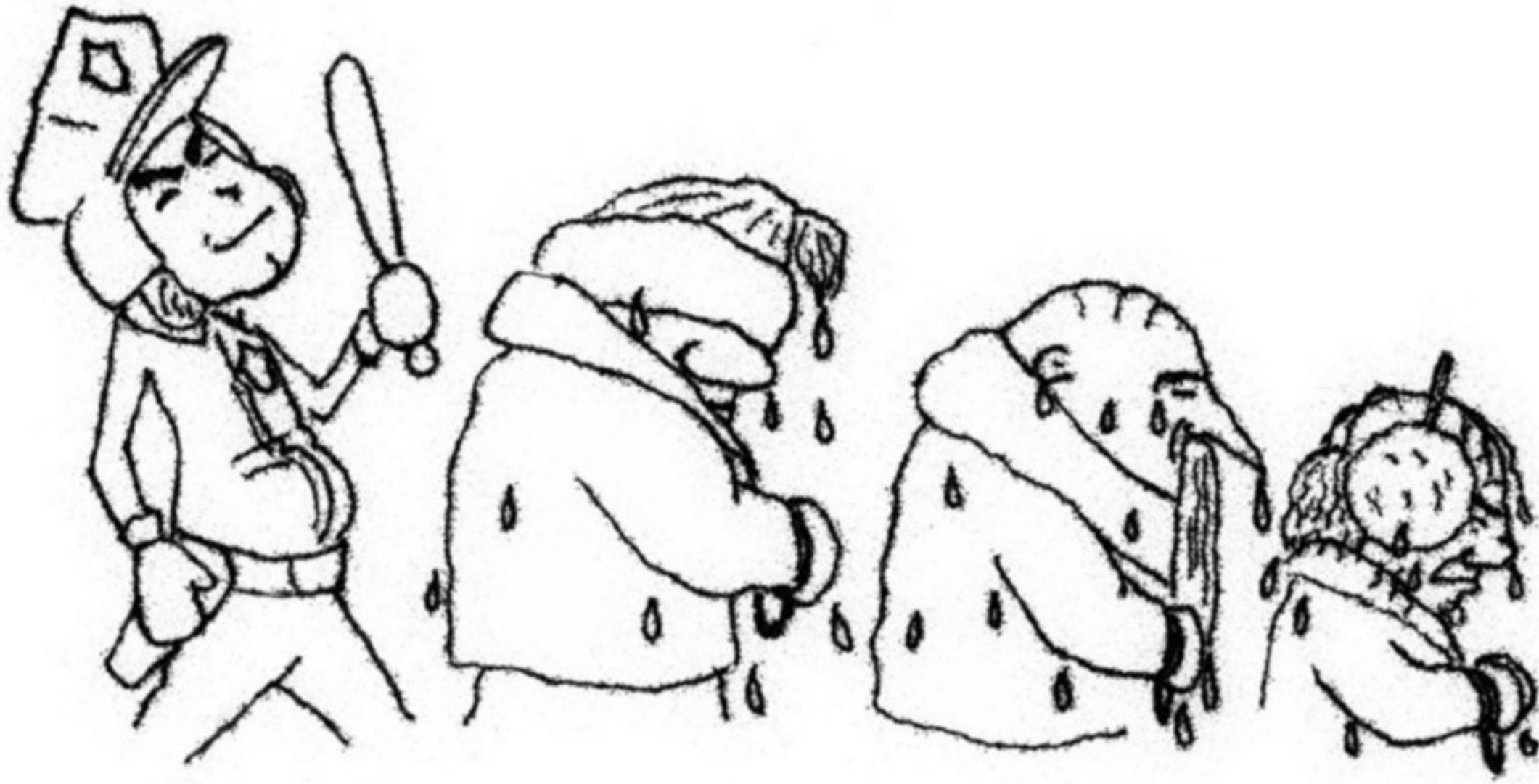
The burglars shivered and told him again to go away. But he wouldn't. He just kept staring down at them. His dreary expression made them feel both very cold and very guilty and they stacked more and more branches on to their fire.



Soon, having run out of fuel, they had to throw their roasting sticks, their donuts and then finally all of the money they had stolen on to the fire.

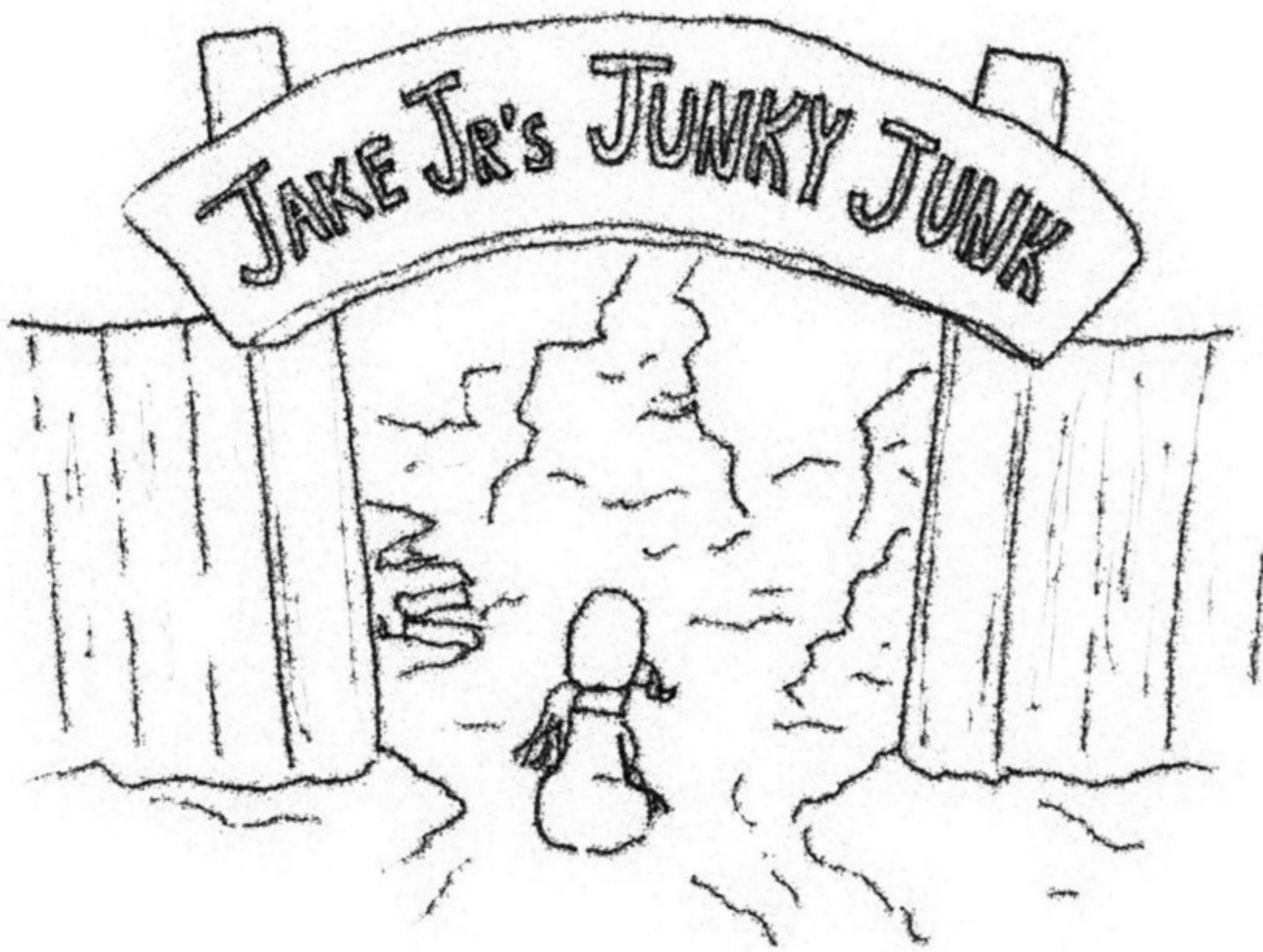
My Melancholy Snowman

The fire got blazing so strongly that it melted the ice all around them.



The three burglars plunged into the lake and cried for help until an obliging policeman came to their rescue.

My snowman had already walked on and left the lake behind.



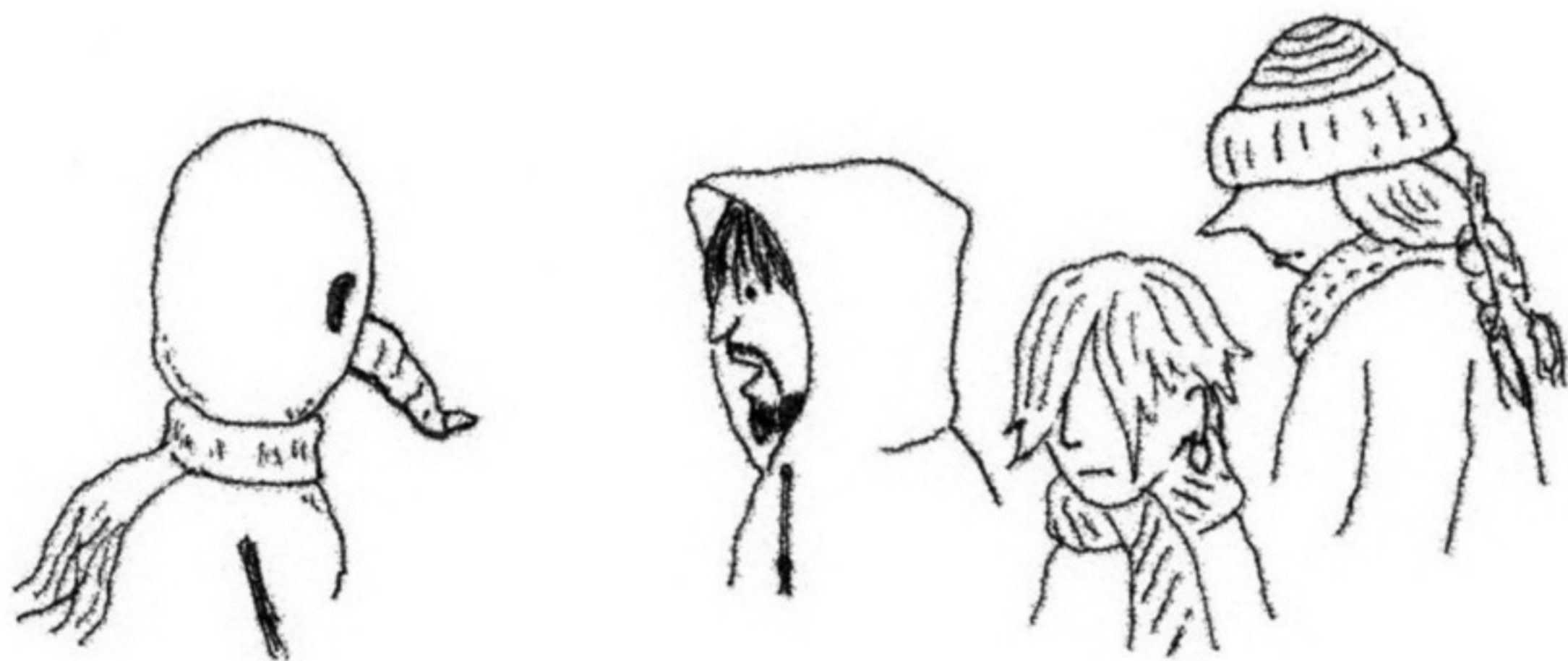
After passing through field after barren winter field, he entered a junkyard at the edge of a small town.

My Melancholy Snowman



There in the junkyard
he found a teenage
violin rock band
jamming together.

They had all run away
from home because their
mothers wouldn't let
them play their music
noisily enough.



They were playing good,
energetic, headbanging
violin music.

That is, until they saw
my snowman.

My Melancholy Snowman



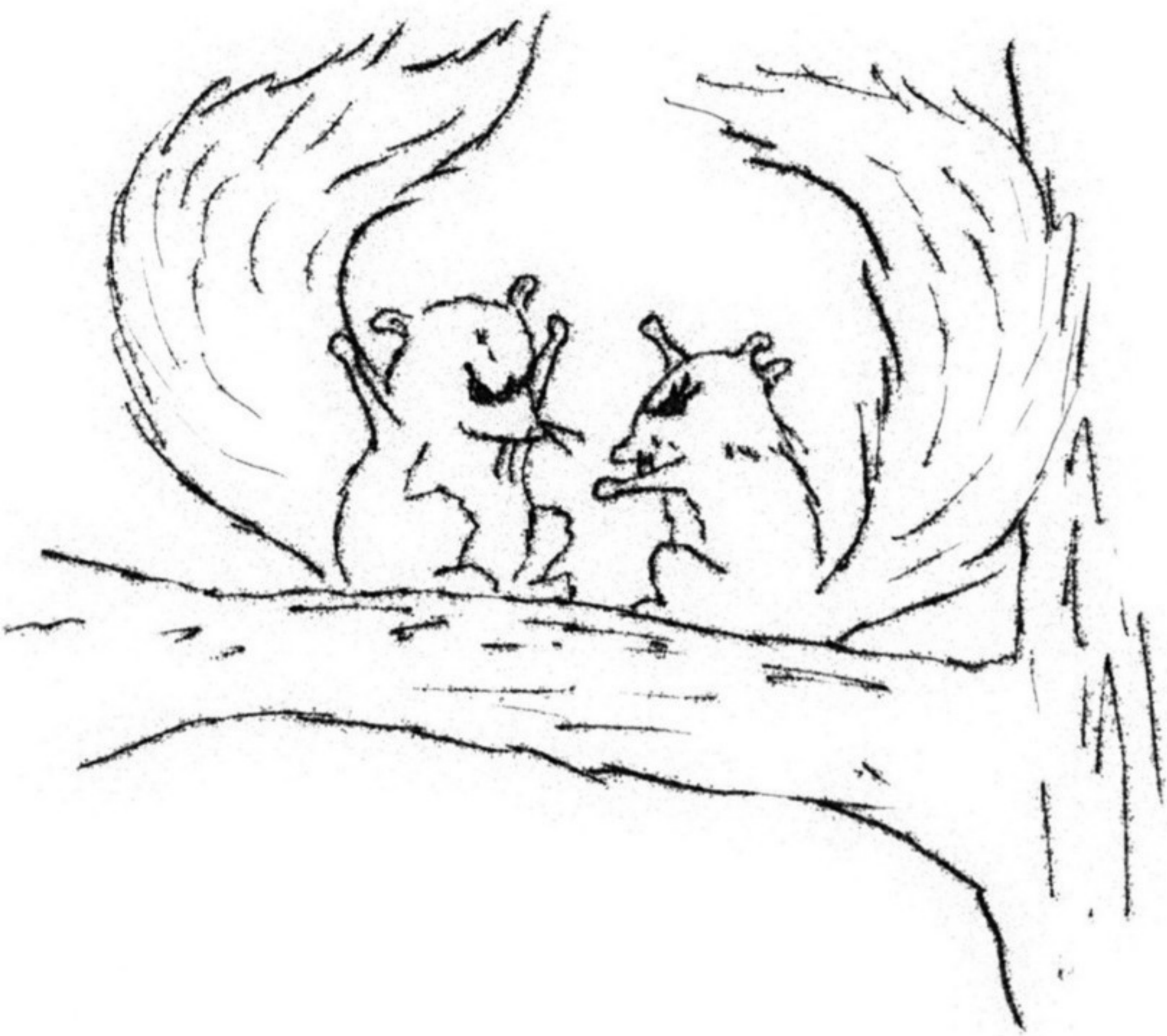
Soon their bows were squeaking out the sadist, slowest, sourest songs any fiddle had ever sung.

They left the junkyard crying, their feet firmly facing the direction of each of their mothers.

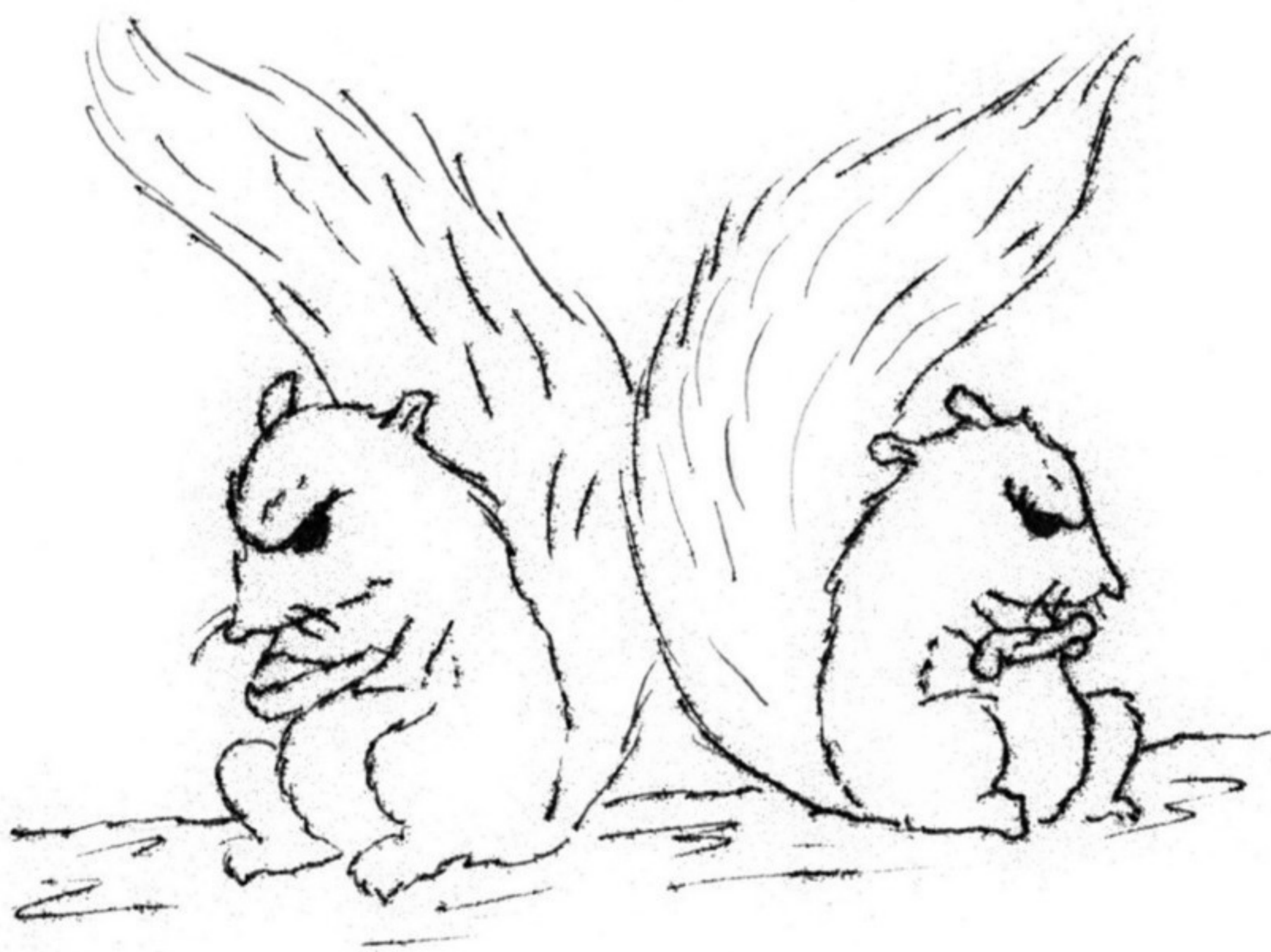


My snowman wandered through and out of the junkyard and after some time came to a forest of tall fir trees.

My Melancholy Snowman

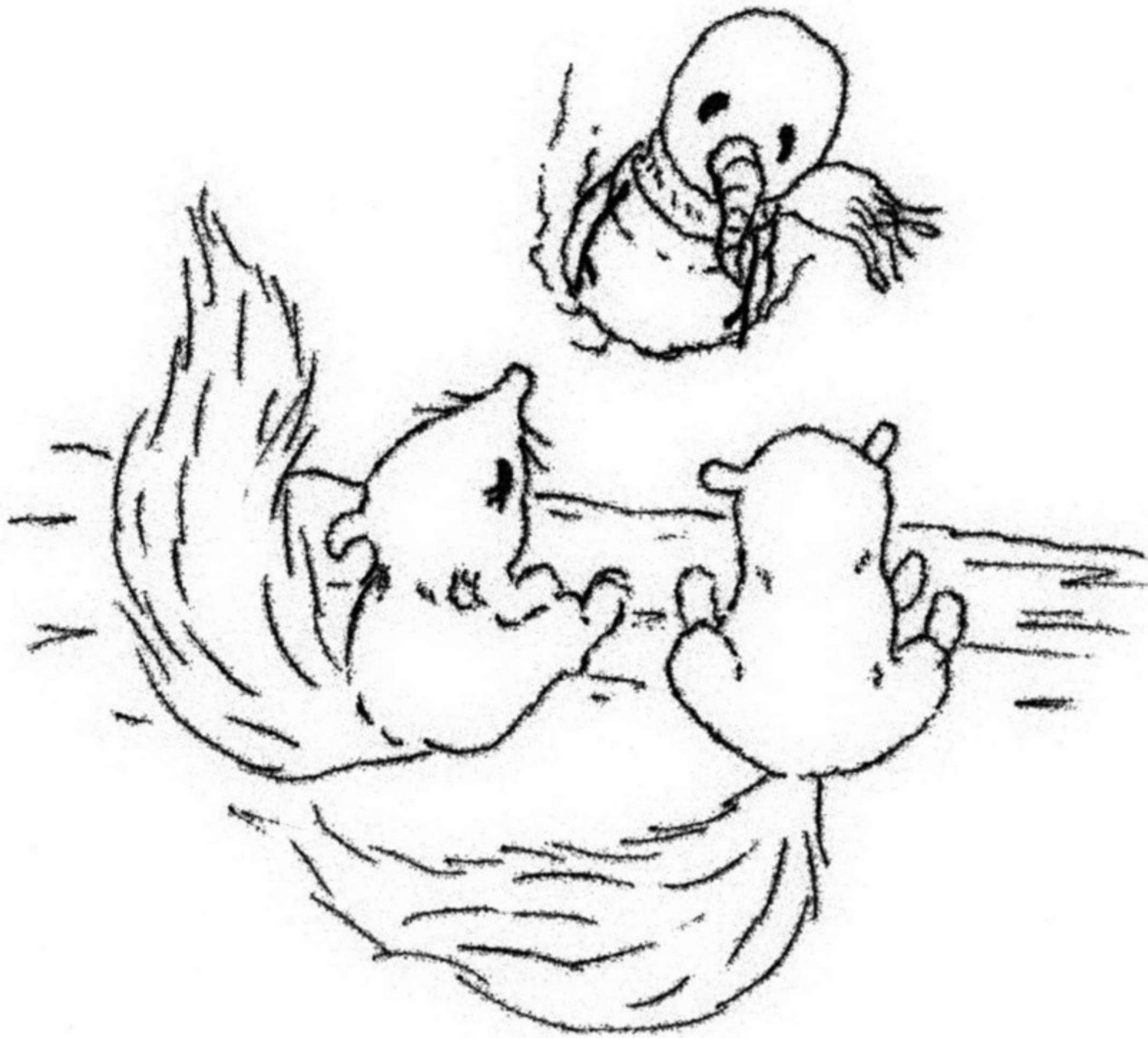


Not long after entering the forest he spotted two angry squirrels. He knew they were angry for they were yelling most ferociously at each other about a lost cache of nuts.

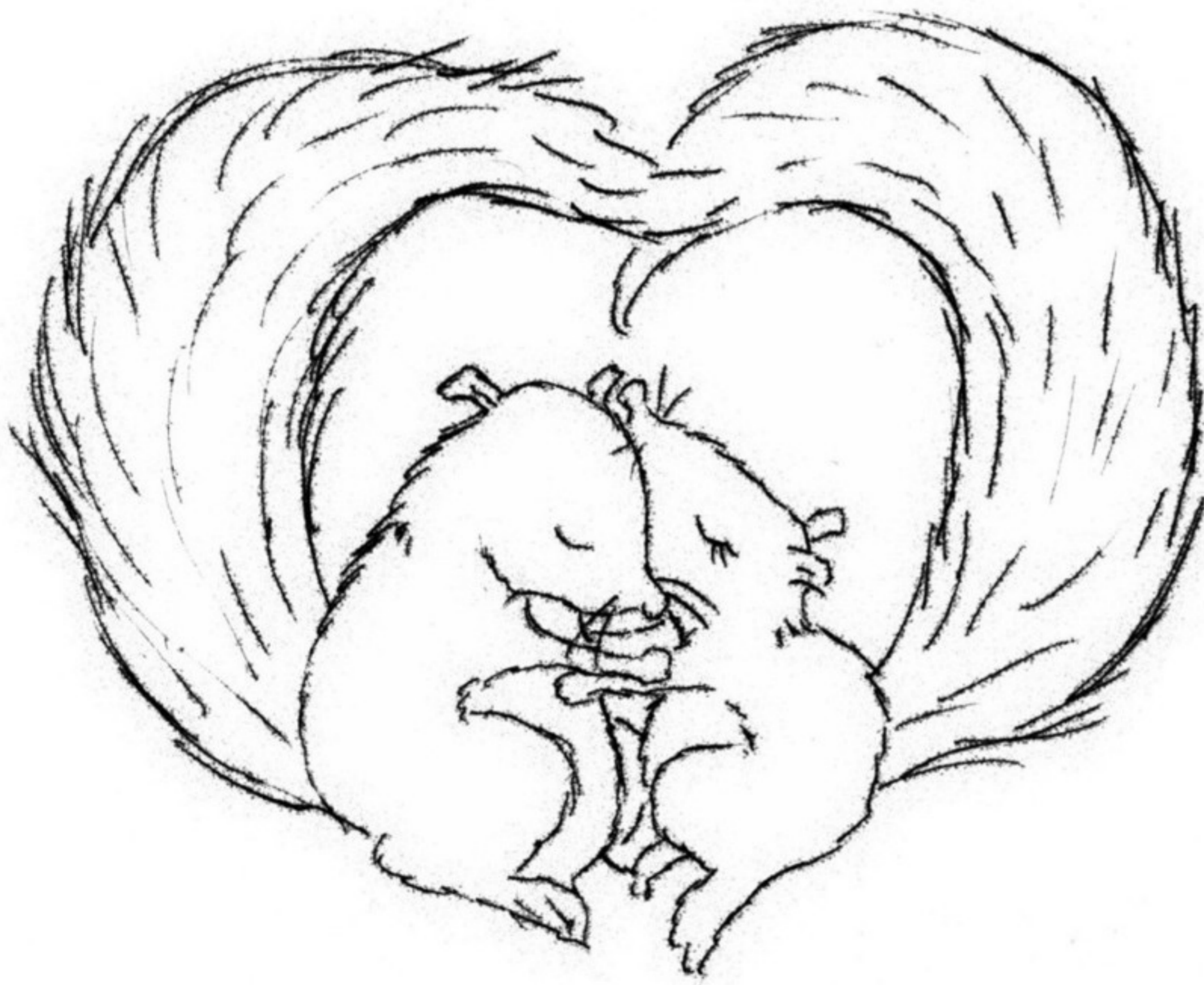


They were a new couple and they had been planning to have children soon, but now in the heat of their fight they couldn't stand to look at each other.

My Melancholy Snowman



They both looked down at the same moment and saw my sad-faced snowman looking up at them.



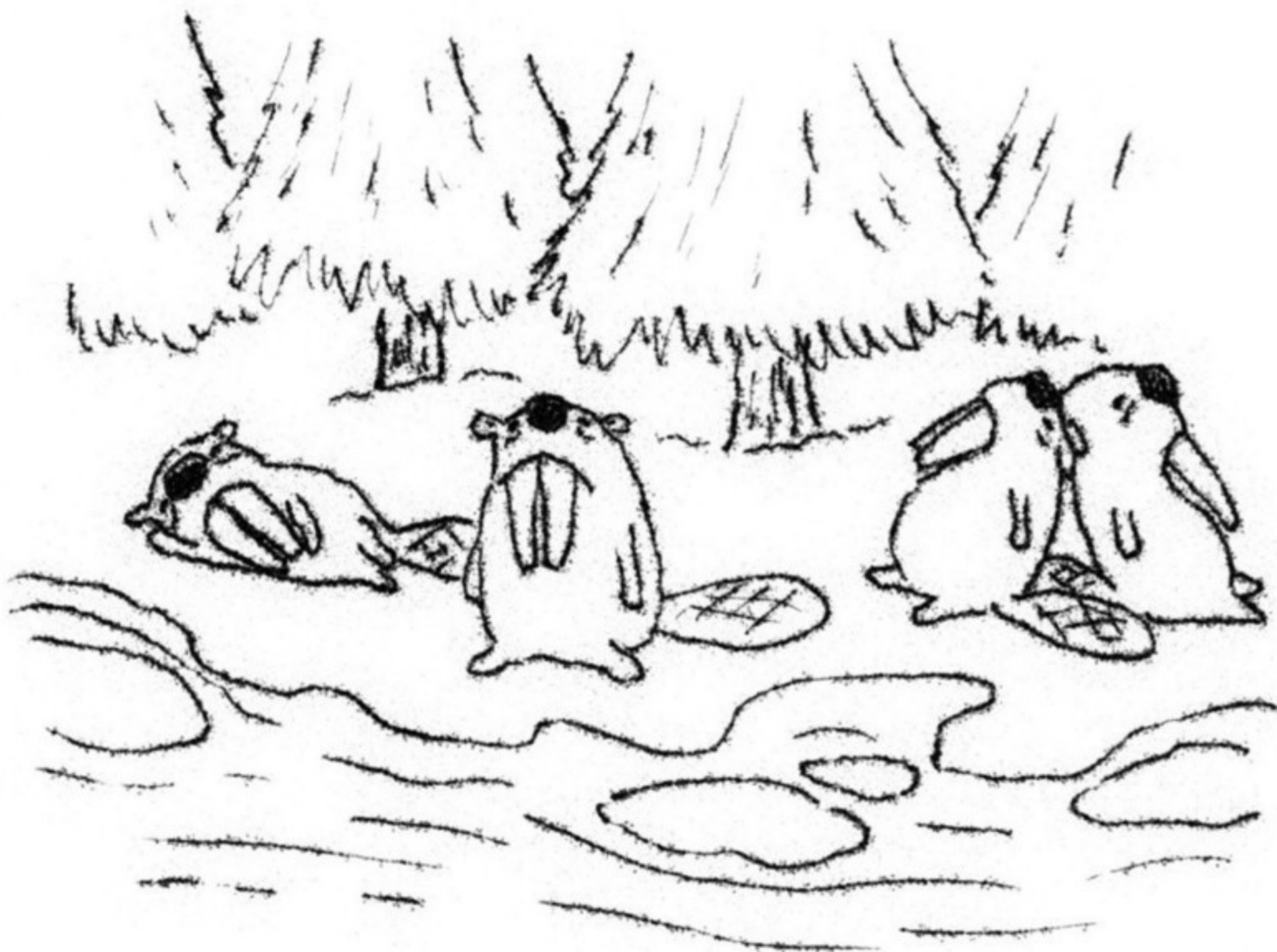
Their fight did not last much longer than that. They were so filled with a sense of loss that they embraced and whispered reassuring words of love into the other's fuzzy ears.

My Melancholy Snowman



The snow was deep in the forest and the going was slow.

It was some days before my snowman came to a place where the forest was divided by a wide river.



As he pondered how and if he should cross the river he noticed a group of bored beavers on the other side.

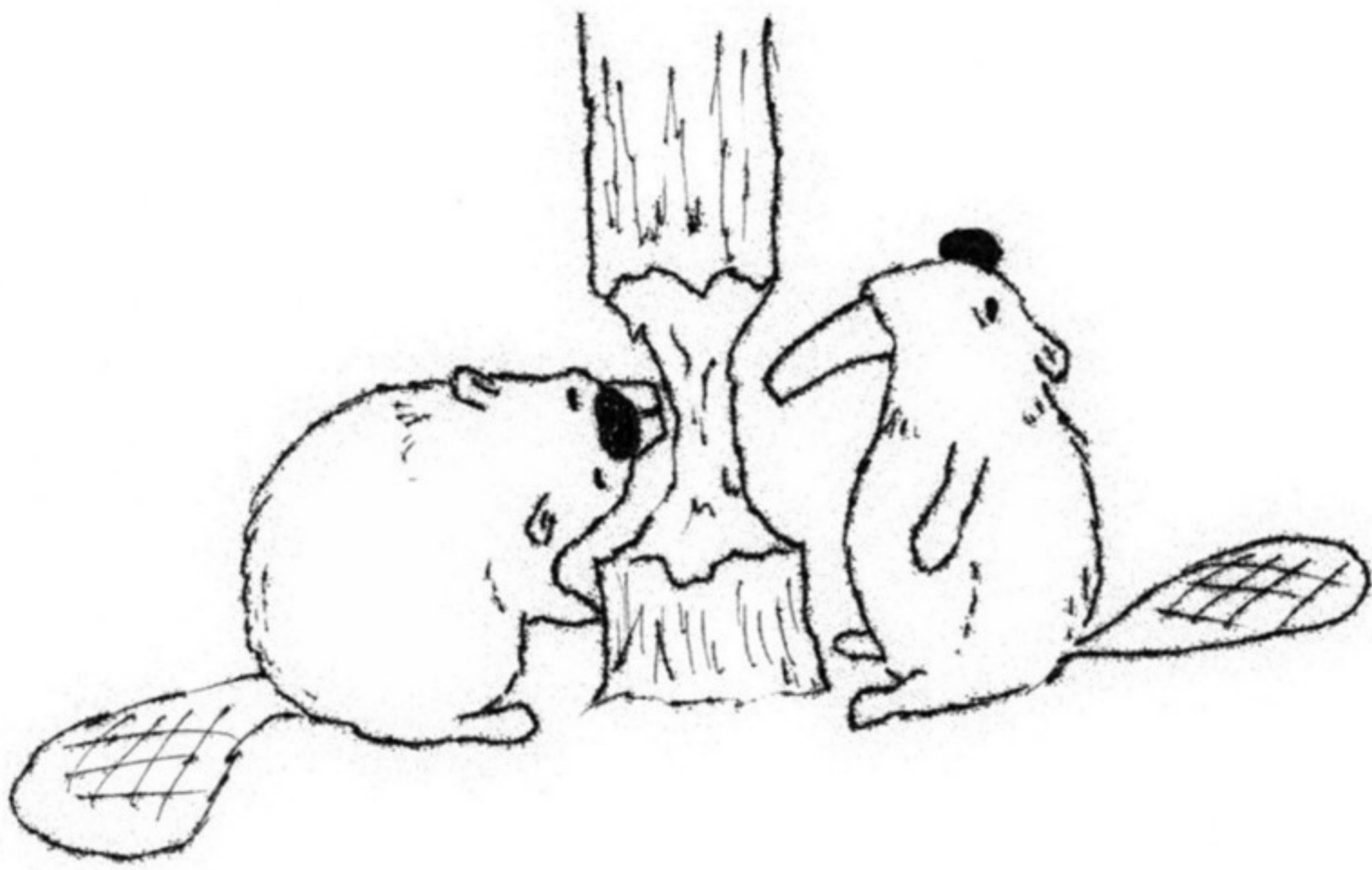
My Melancholy Snowman



They were as bored as
a band of beavers
could be.

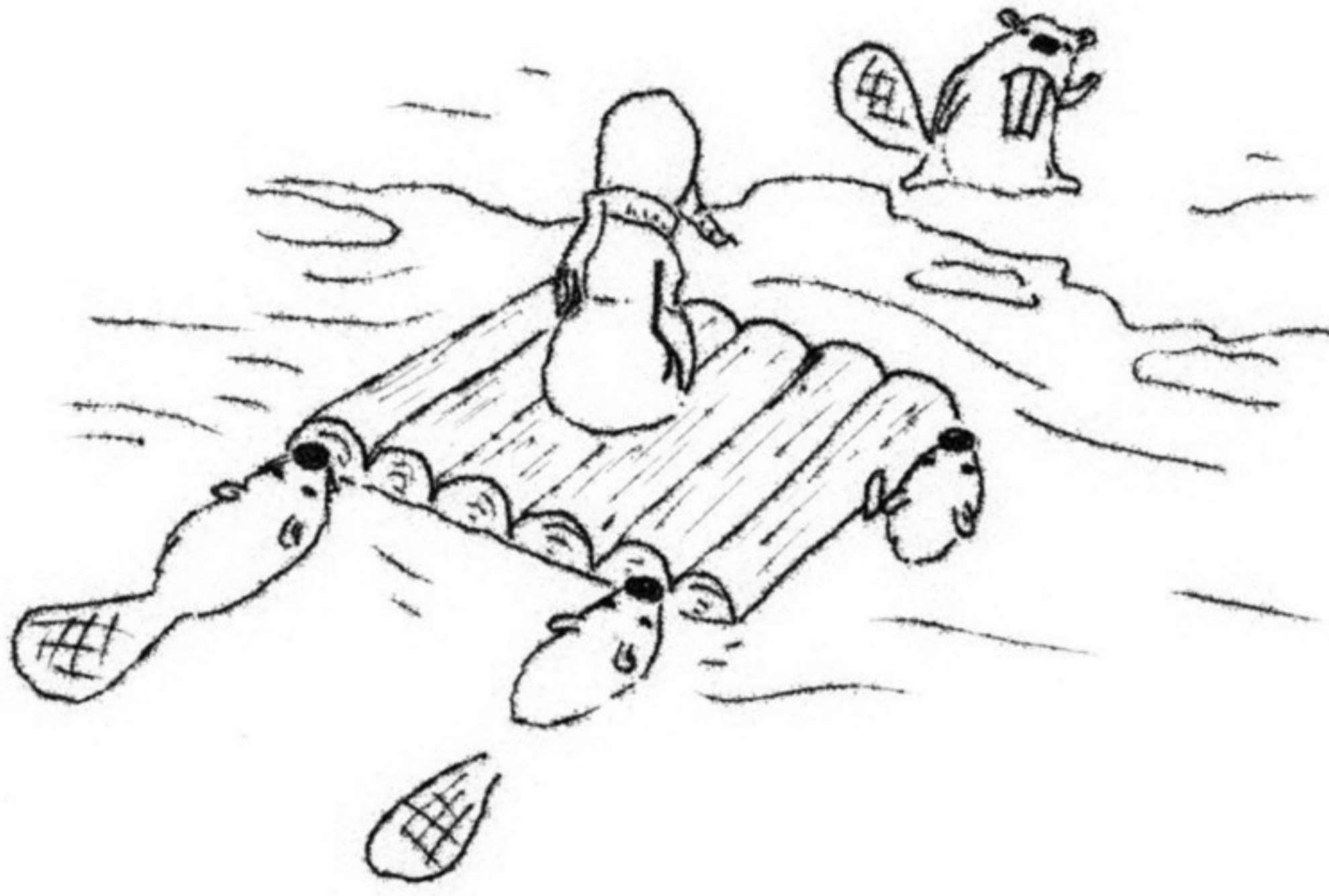
It had been a long
winter and the
work-loving creatures
had spent most of it idle.

When they saw the
snowman looking so glum
they thought he must be
troubled and in need of
help. They immediately
cut some wood and built
a raft that they carried
across the river to where
my snowman stood.

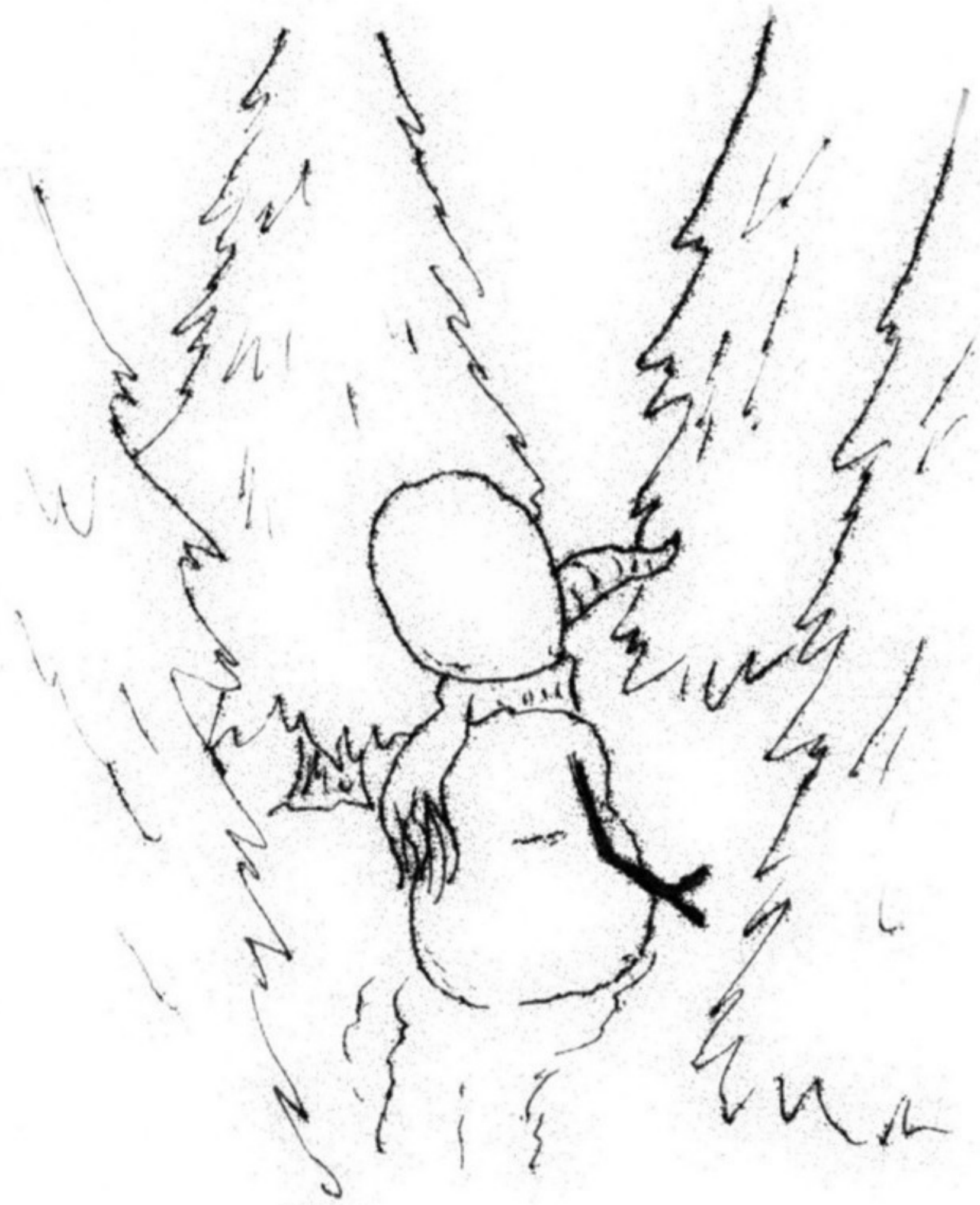


My Melancholy Snowman

Placing him upon the raft they carried him to the other side, careful that he should not get wet.

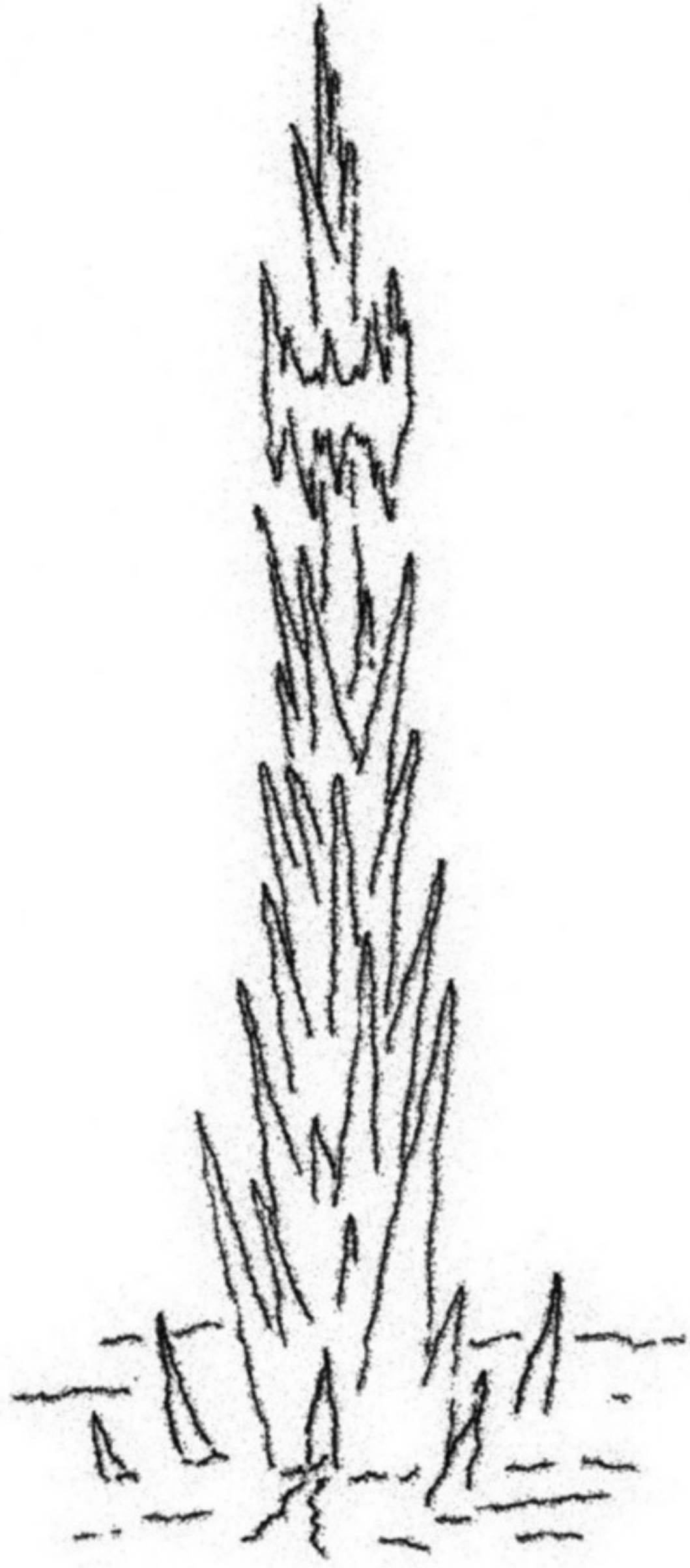


After setting him safely ashore they swam happily off in search of some other helpful task.



Leaving the river, my snowman entered the forest on that side.

My Melancholy Snowman



He came upon a tall
tower of ice that only
he could see.

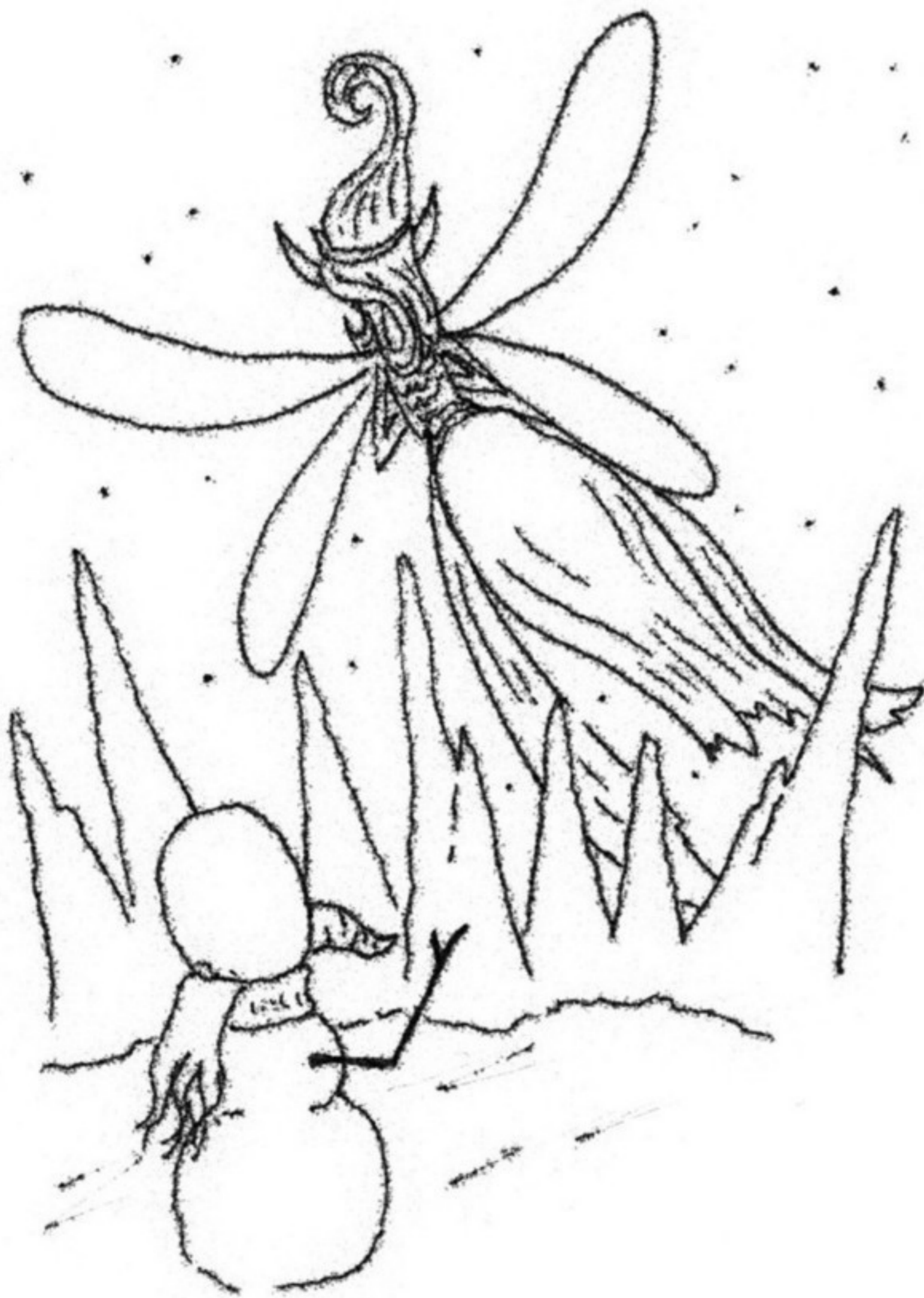


At the top of the tower
was an evil fairy queen
who was busy designing
an enchantment that
would make everybody
miserable during the
holidays.

My Melancholy Snowman

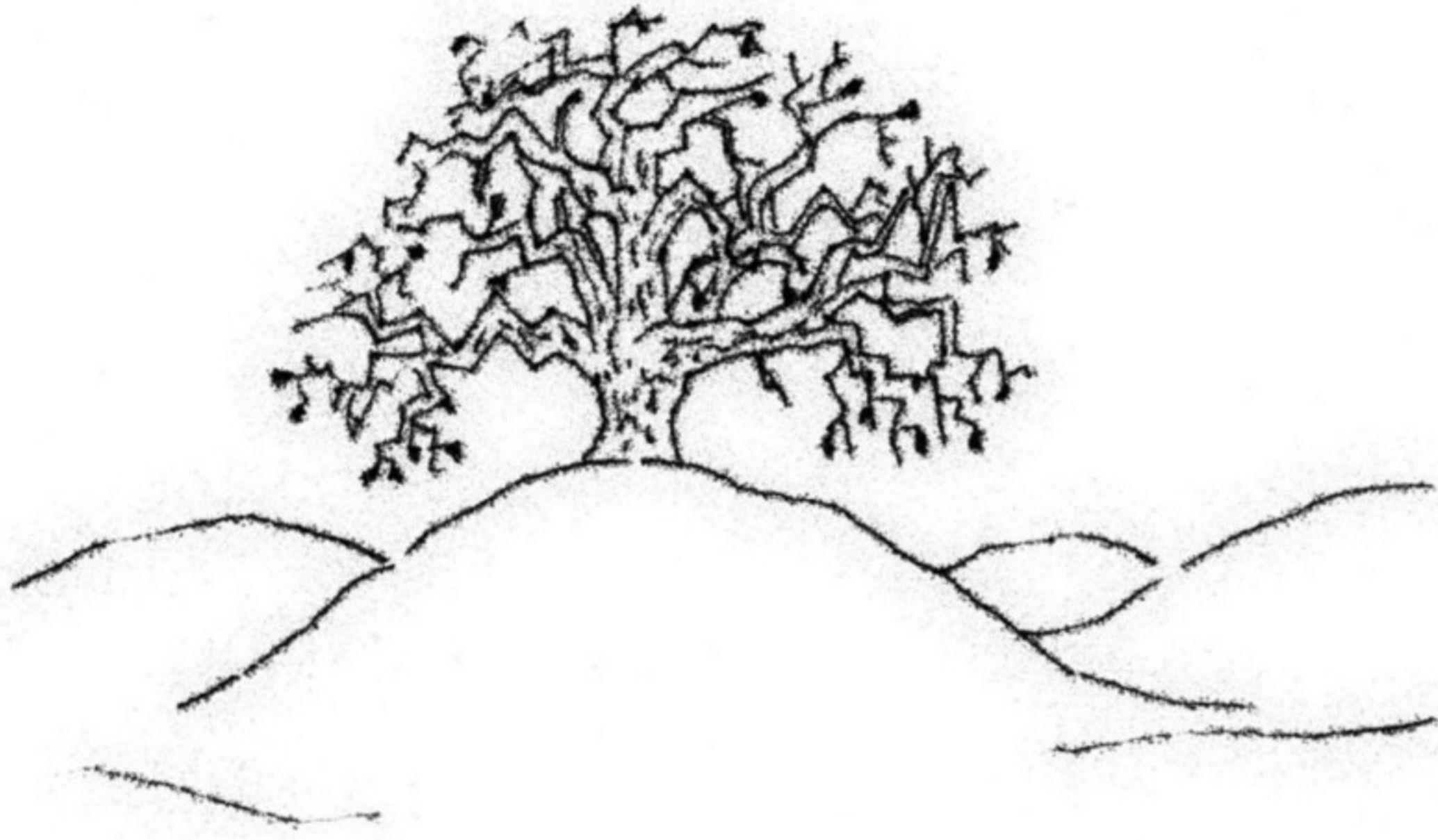


One look at the snowman convinced the queen that the world was already miserable enough and, satisfied, she packed away her magical paraphernalia...

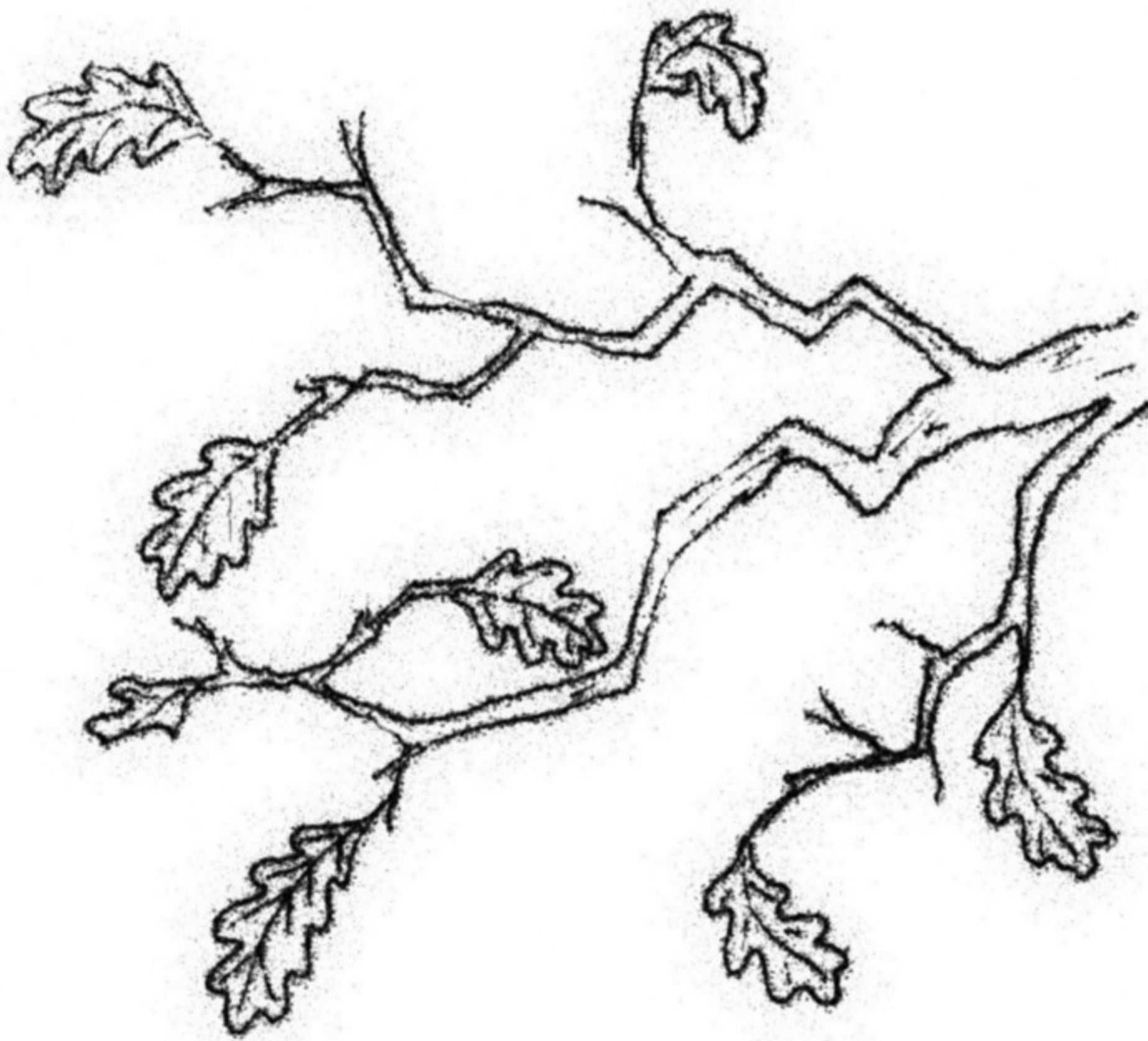


and flew away into the night.

My Melancholy Snowman

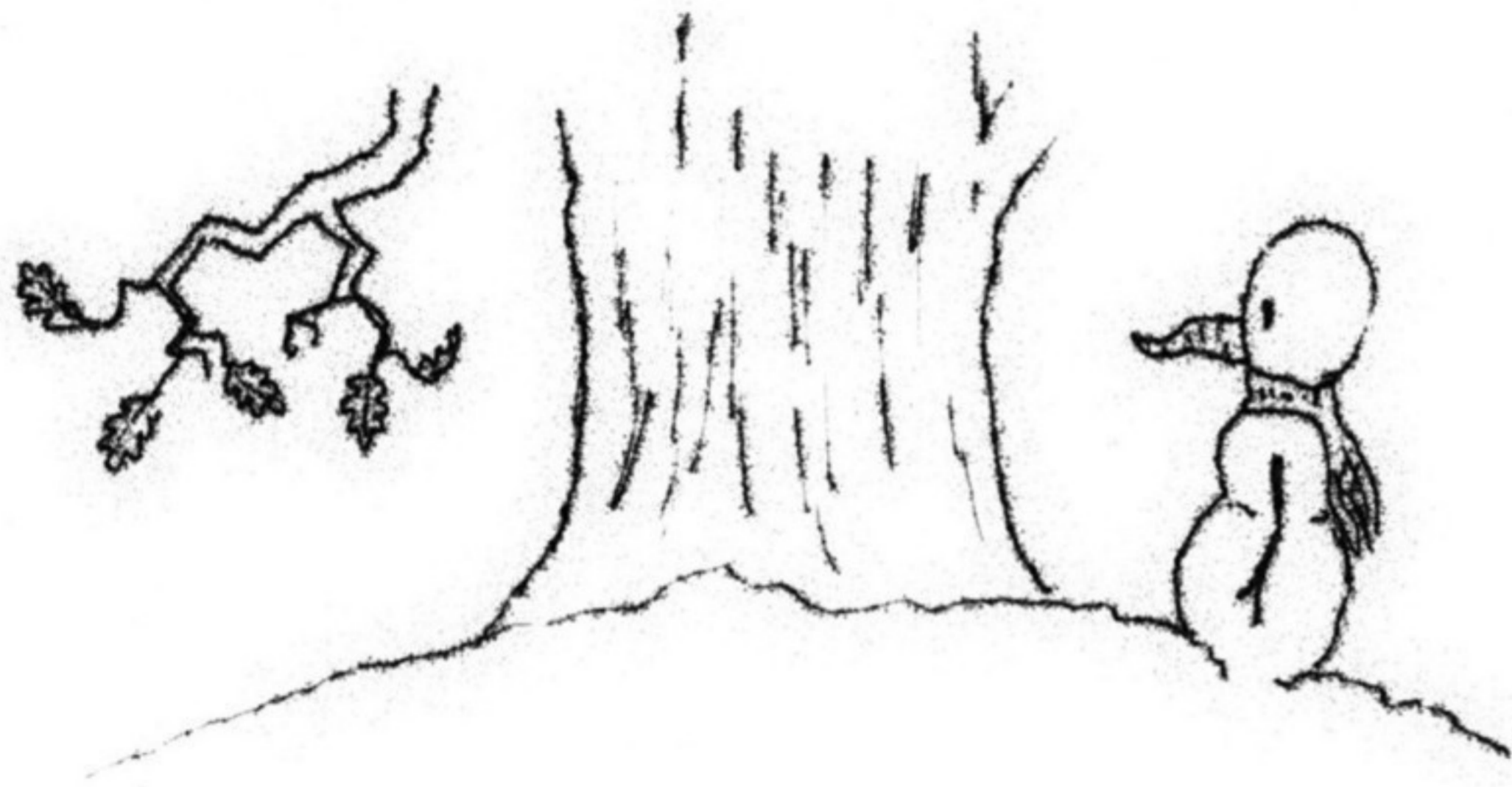


A few mornings later my snowman came to the foothills of some very tall mountains. On top of one of these hills was an ancient oak tree whose branches sprawled out and drooped in a worn-out way.

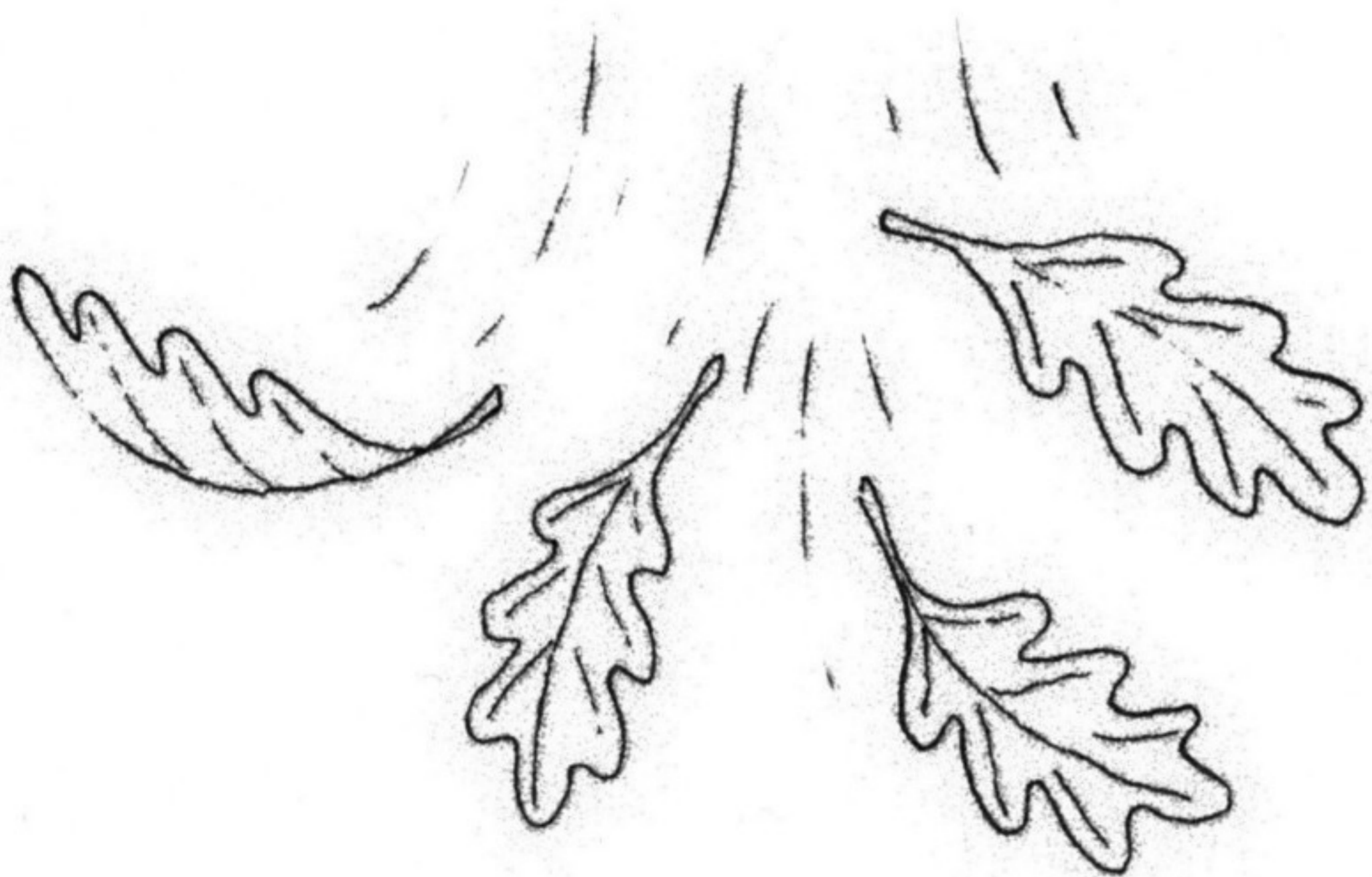


Many leaves still clung to the branches even though they were brown, dried up and torn from a month of harsh winds.

My Melancholy Snowman

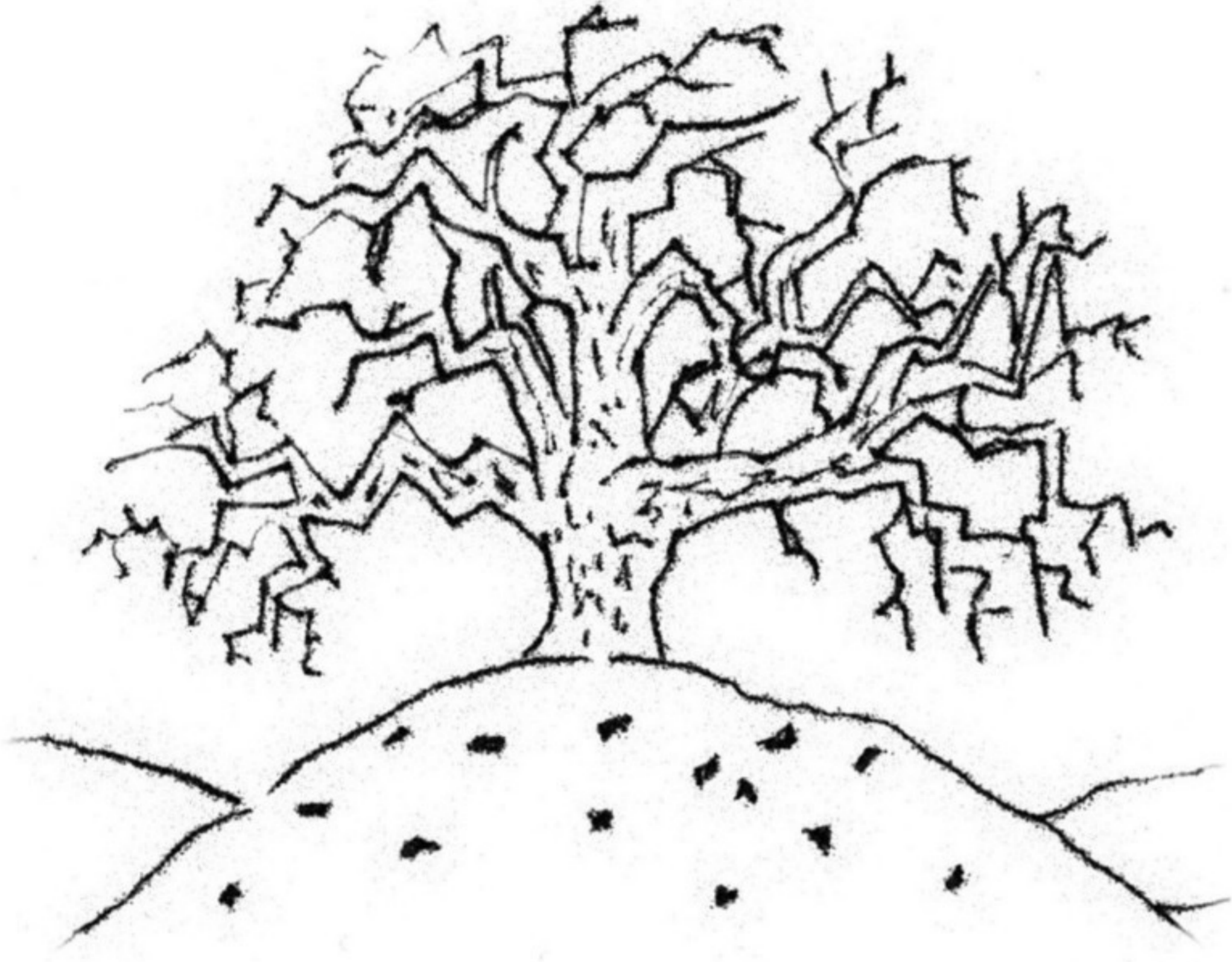


The snowman stood there and listened and soon could hear the tired tree begging and coaxing the leaves to finally let go and make space for their new siblings.

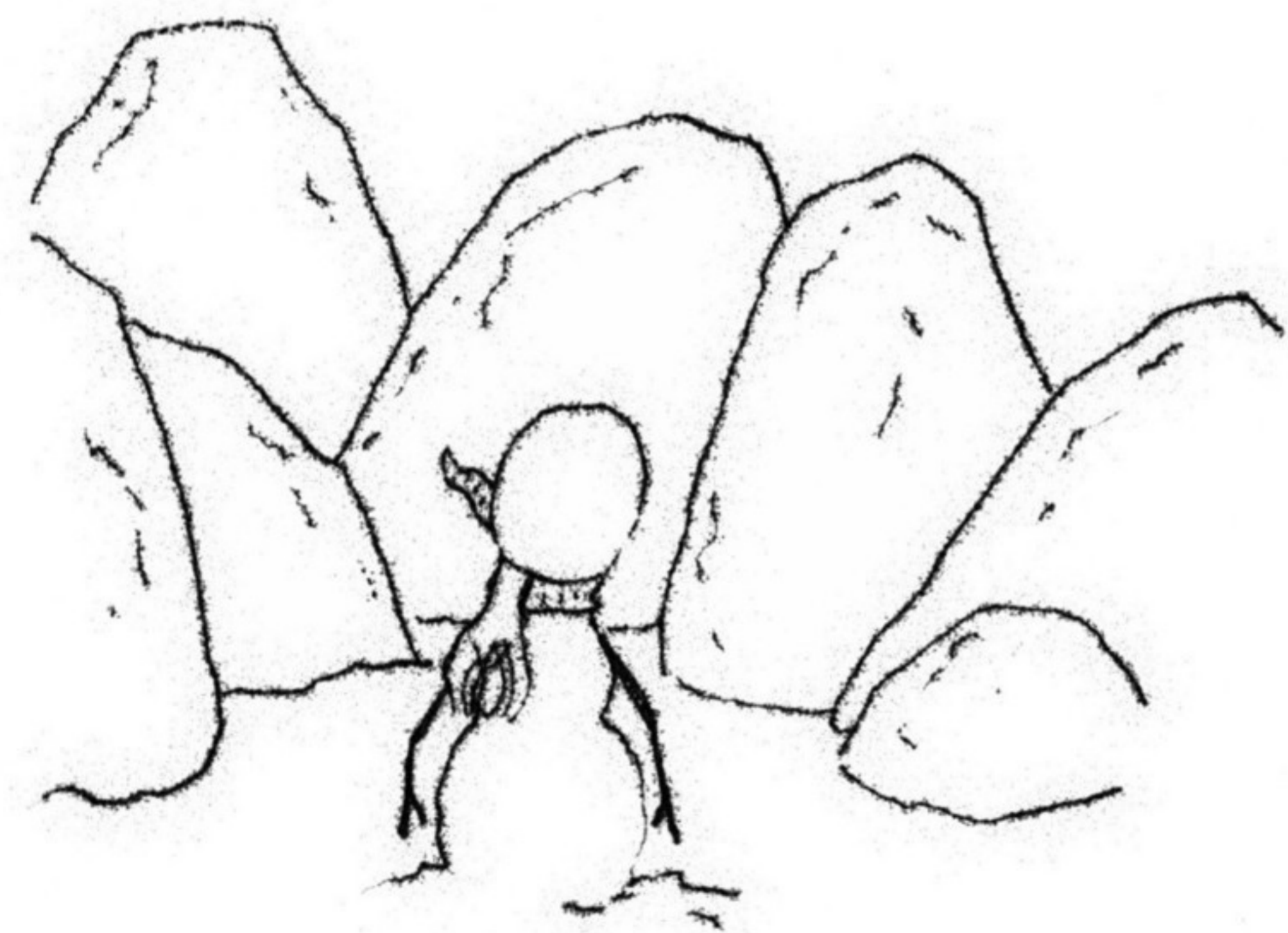


As the leaves became aware of the sombre snowman, their stubborn tenacity melted away. One by one, their grip on their mothers' limbs relaxed and they drifted in a graceful dance onto the sparkling snow.

My Melancholy Snowman

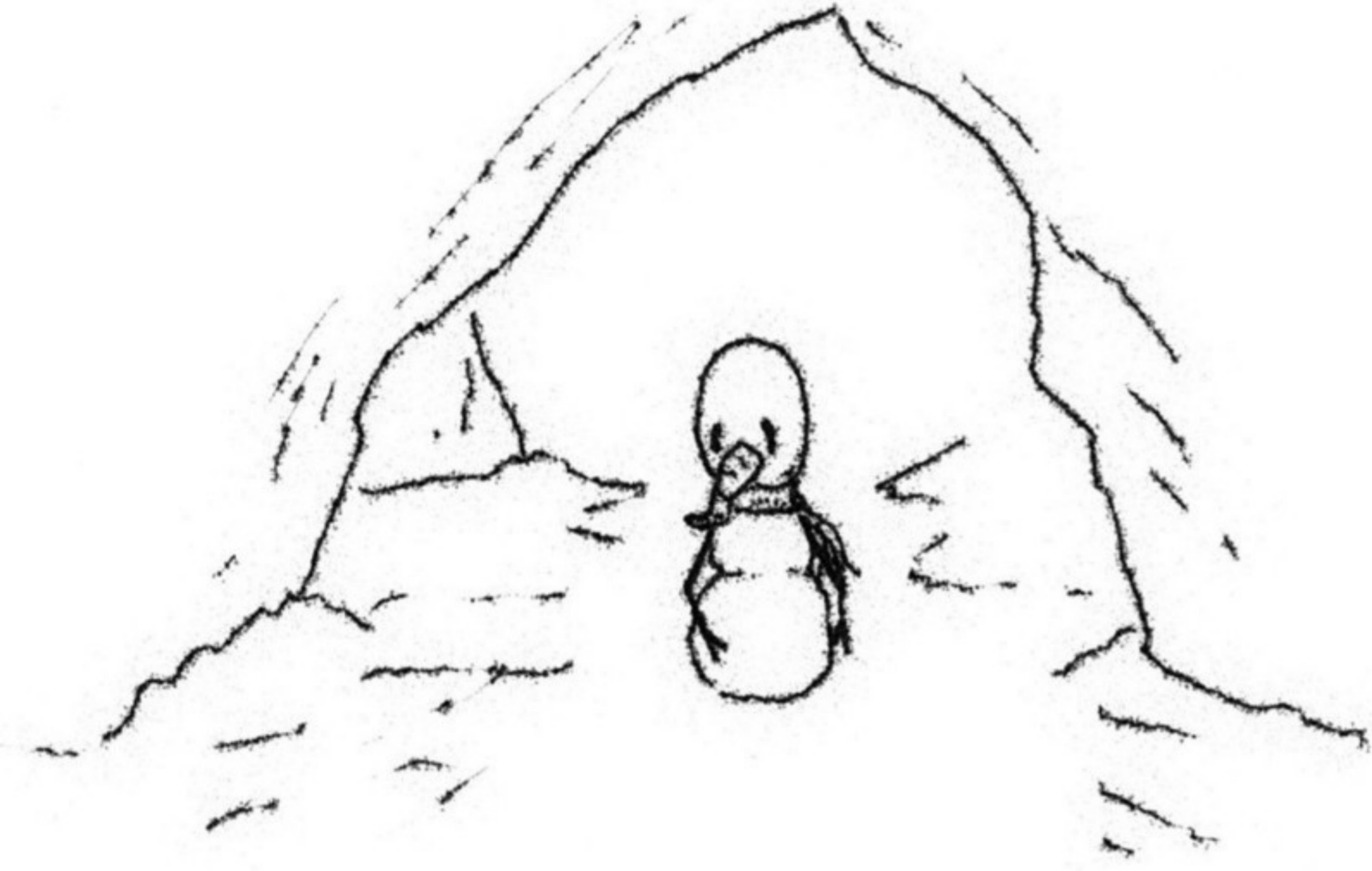


The oak tree sighed,
wished her children
good night and
began to make plans
for her new buds.



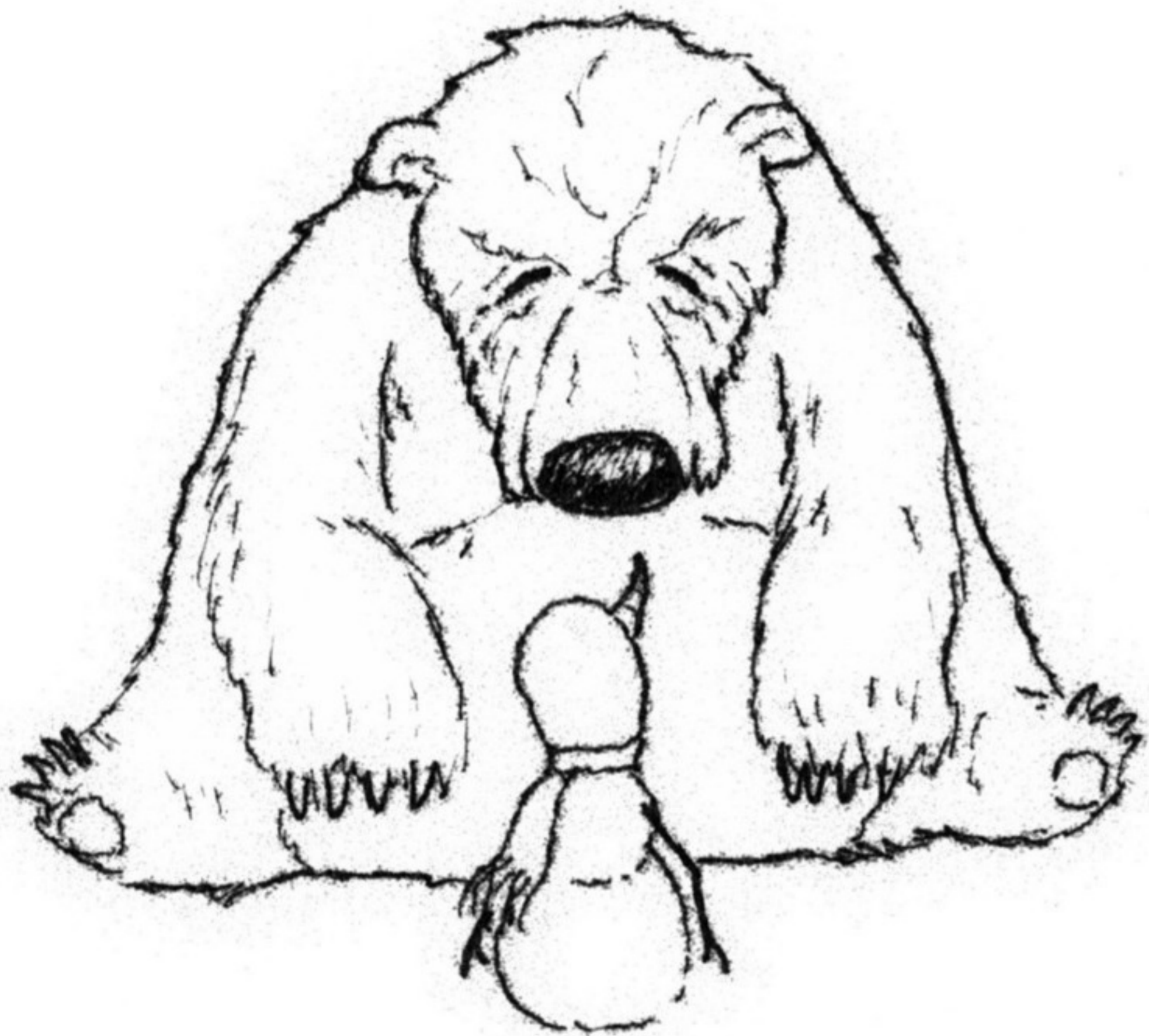
My snowman moved
deeper into the hills,
and eventually came
to a place of
scattered boulders.

My Melancholy Snowman



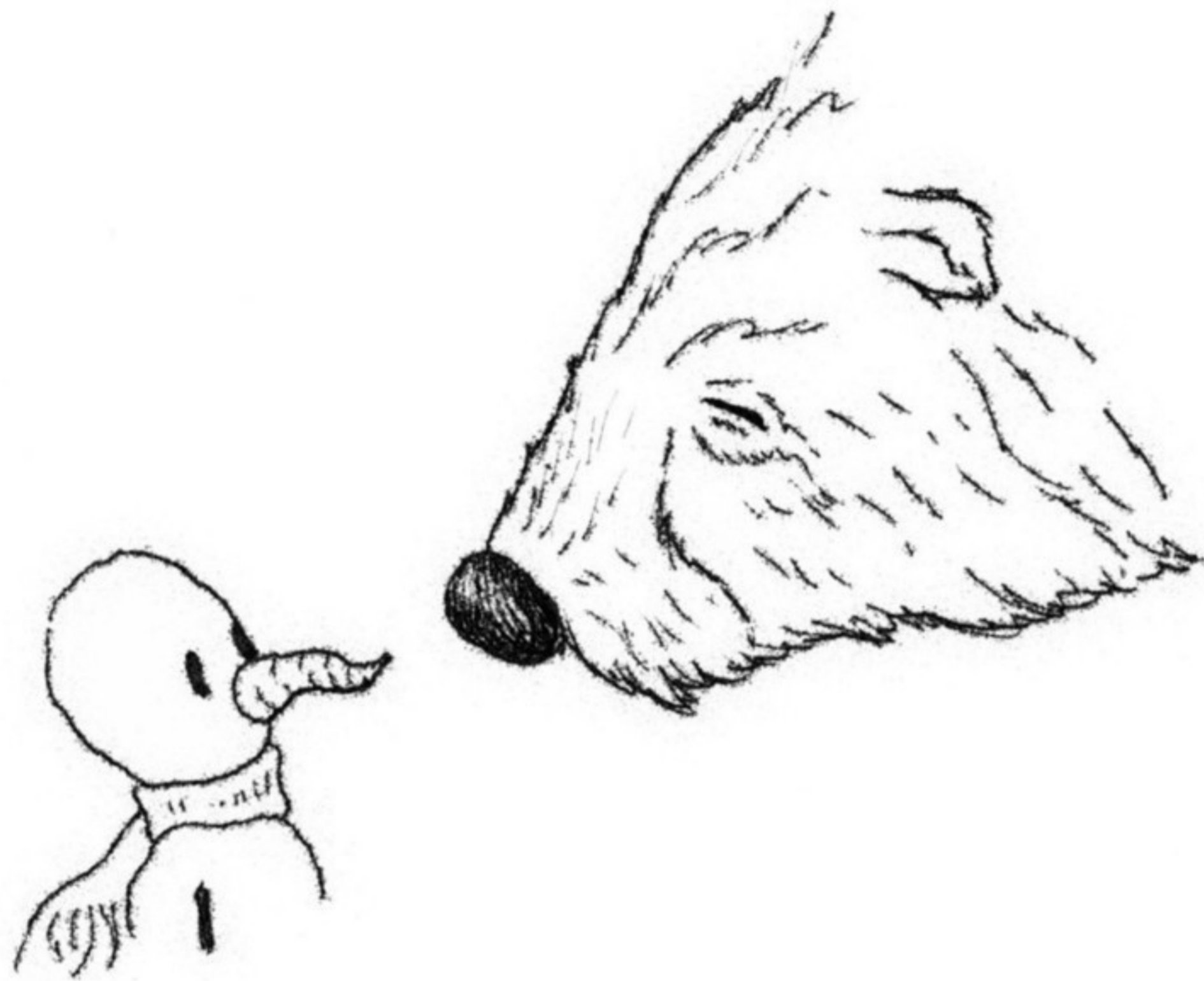
Poking around, he found the entrance of a deep, well-sheltered cave

He walked into the dimly lit cave, curious as to what he might find.



There in the cave was a huge brown bear, staring off into the distance as though he were made of ice. The poor bear hadn't slept a wink all winter. His mate had been caught by a hunter that fall and he had been left all alone.

My Melancholy Snowman

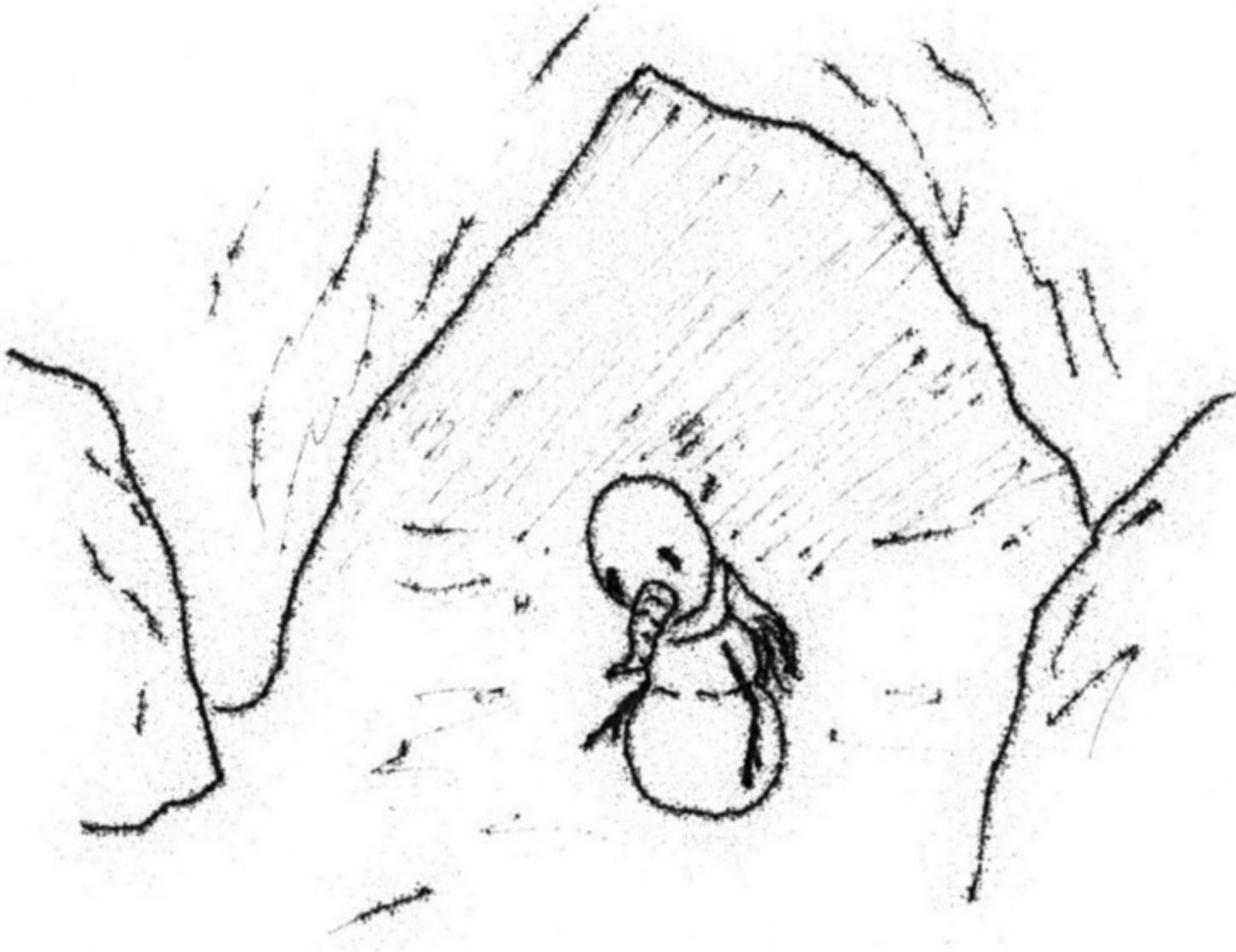


He felt so lonely that he wished his great ursine heart would hurry up and break apart so that he might finally get some rest. When he looked down at the meek, little snowman in front of him, all of the dams inside of his furry breast burst open.



He gave a long, drawn-out moan like the north wind's last song. Then he leaned over, pulled the snowman to him with his great paws, lay down and went right to sleep.

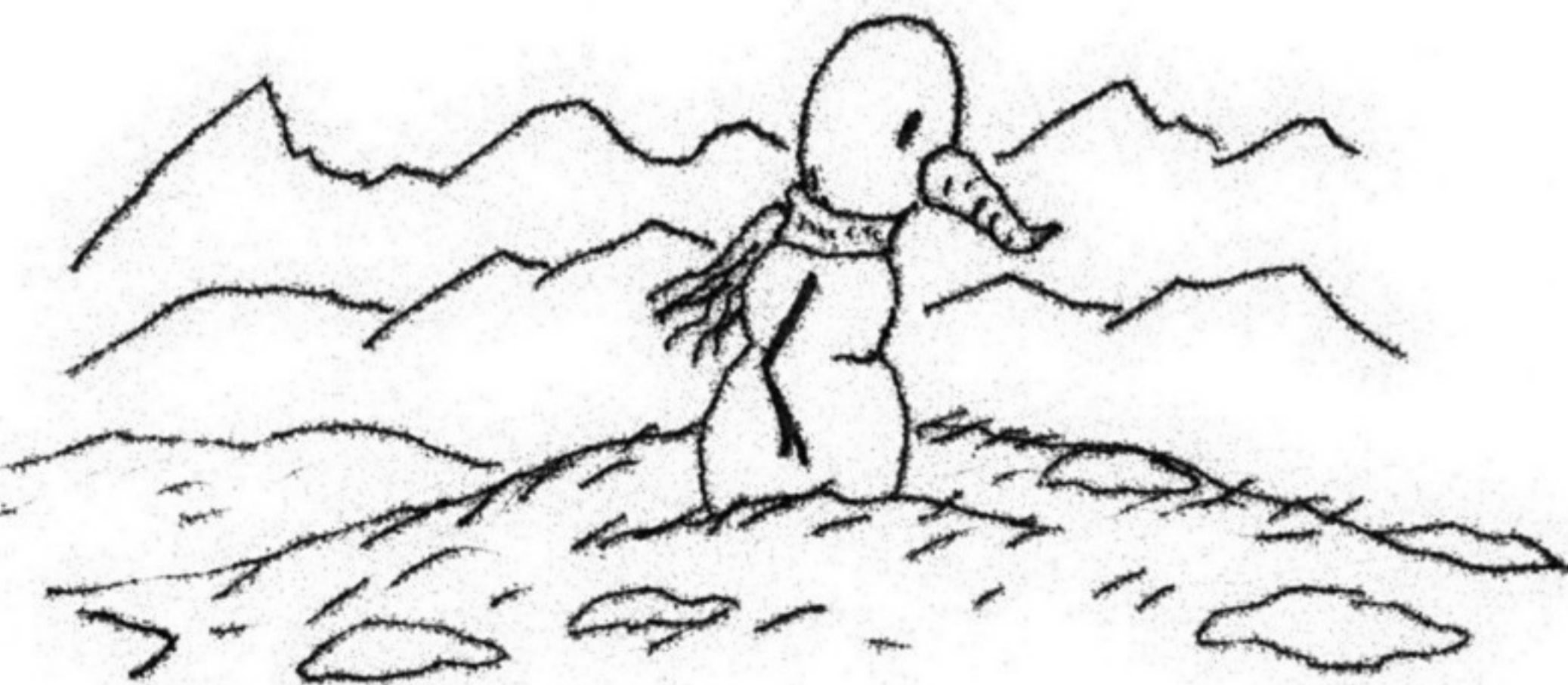
My Melancholy Snowman



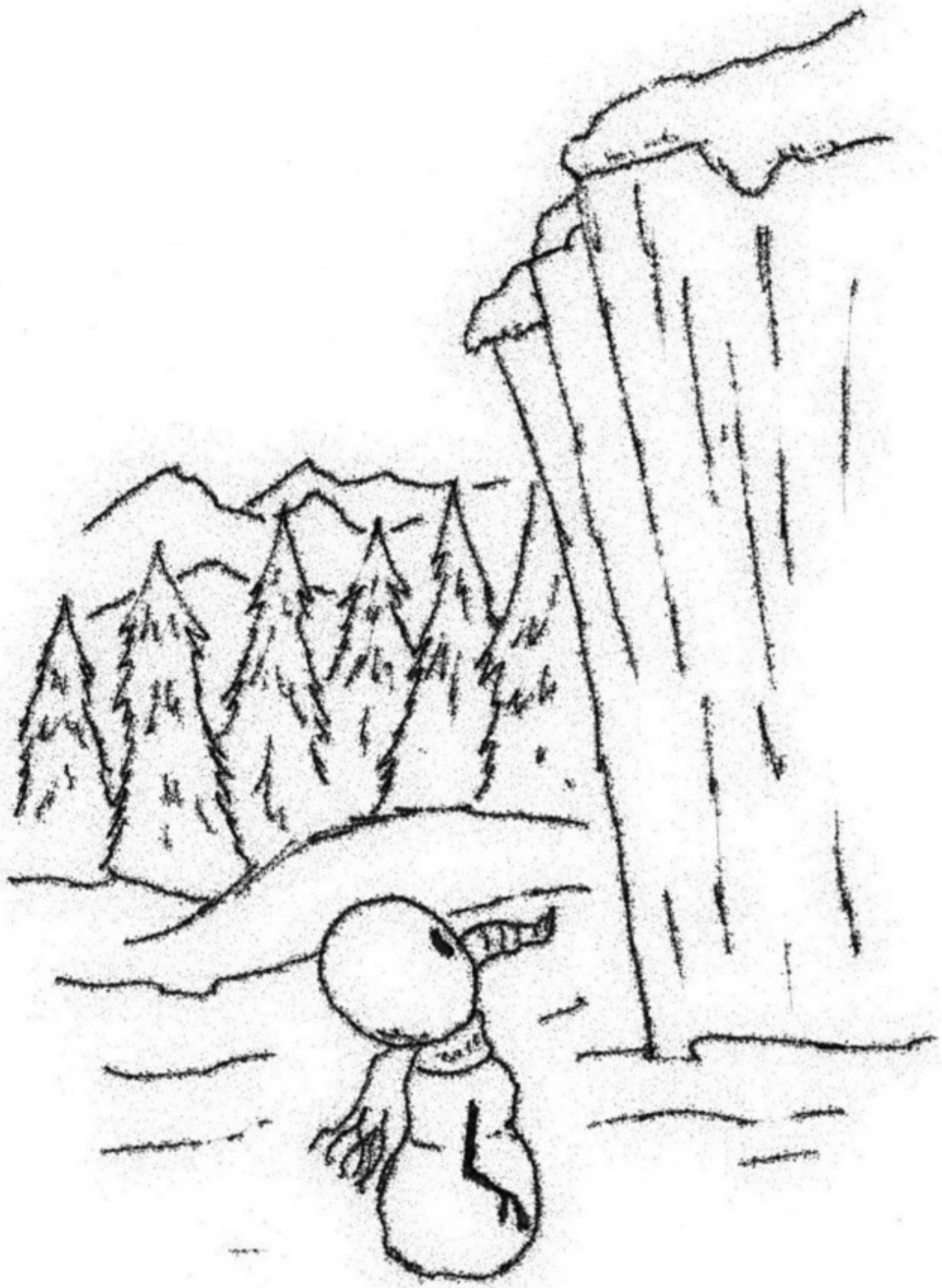
When daylight crept into the cave, the snowman slipped away from the bear's claws and crept outside.

The snow on the ground around him was quickly melting so he climbed higher and higher towards the great northern peaks.

All that day while my snowman wandered through the mountains, his melancholy mind pondered over the meaning of his existence. He wondered why such a melancholy snowman had been made. What use in the world could he possibly be?

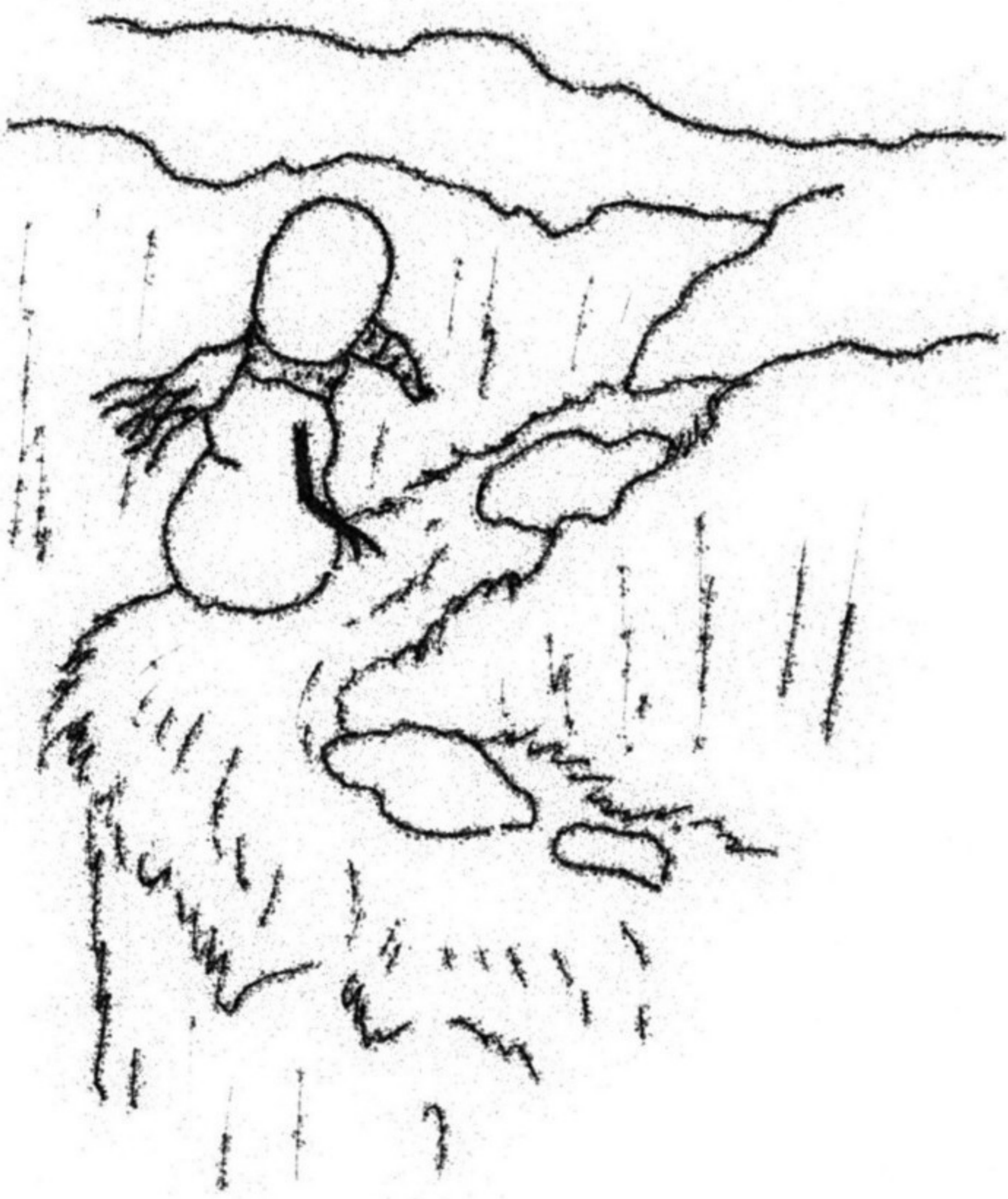


My Melancholy Snowman



He looked up and saw a tall cliff towering overhead.

A deep patch of snow on the top of the cliff shown out in the fading sunlight.



Climbing to the top of the cliff, he found the patch of snow and sat down upon it.

It felt oddly comforting to be sitting upon snow again. It was kind of like being home.

My Melancholy Snowman

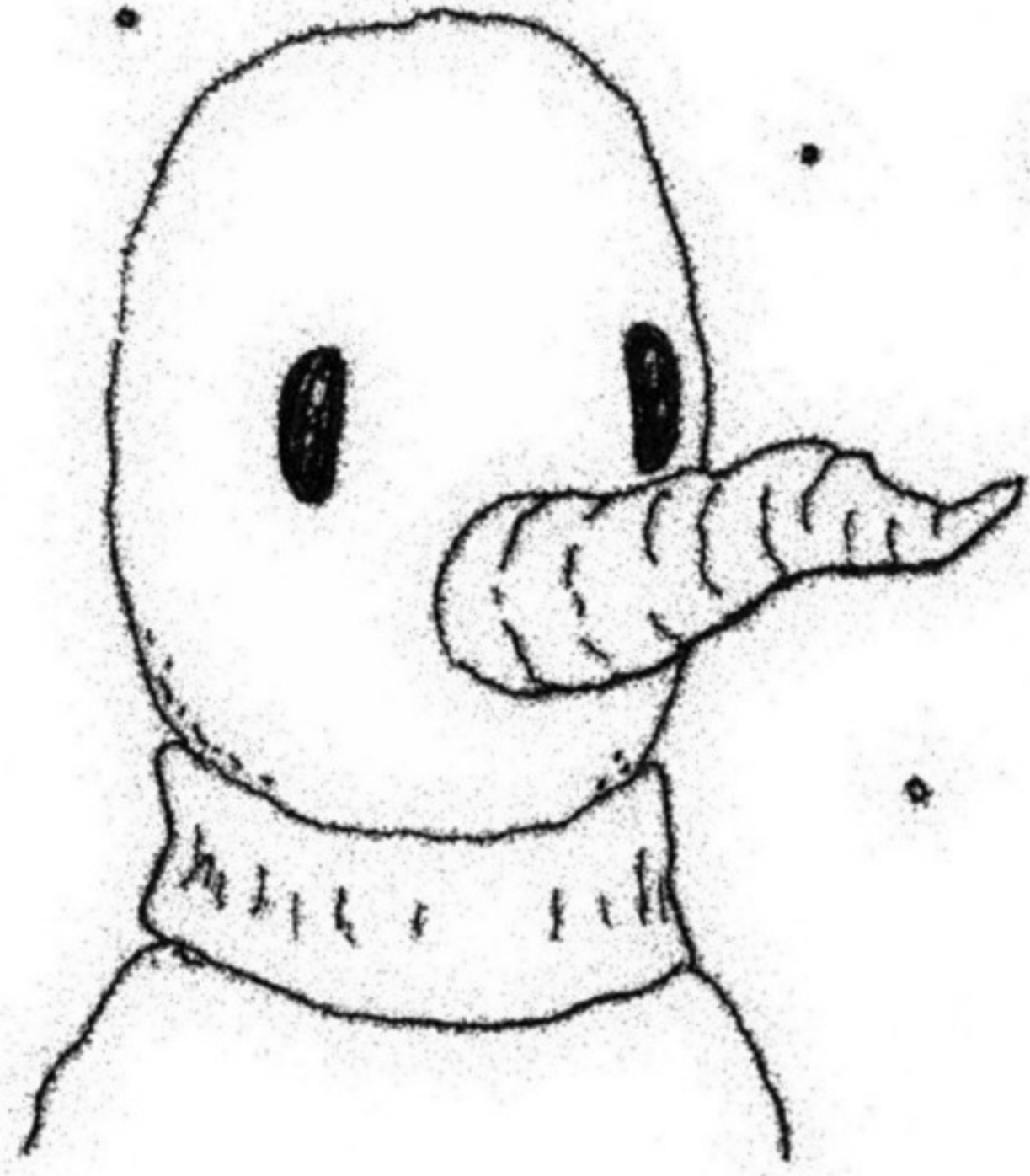


He looked out at the world below him and was amazed to see glowing golden in the last rays of the sun all the places he had passed through since I had sent him away.



There was the robbers' lake, the rock band's junkyard, the squirrels' forest, the beavers' river, the fairy queen's tower, the oak tree's hill, and the bear's cave.

My Melancholy Snowman



As he looked upon each one, he remembered the adventures he had experienced and the individuals he had met.

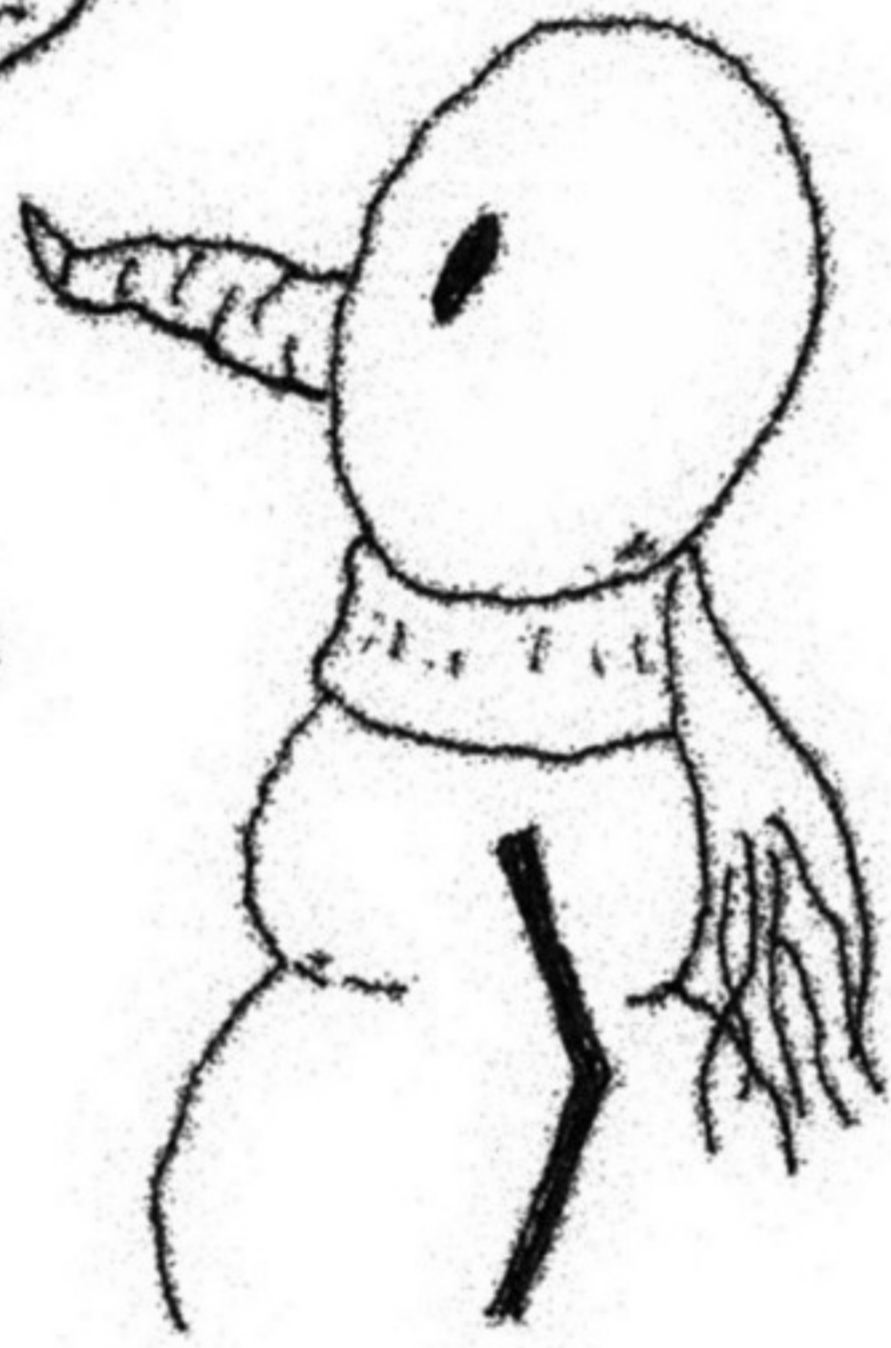
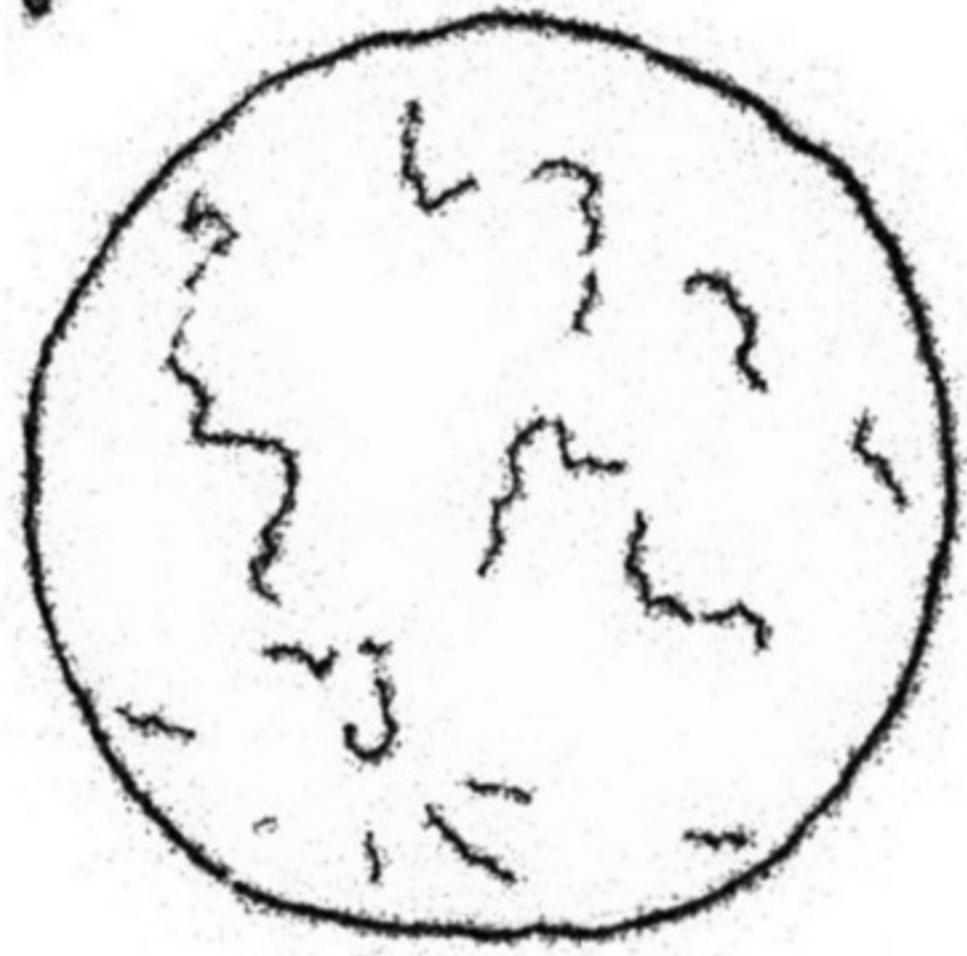
He sighed.

An owl flying by heard his sigh.



The owl thought that instead of sounding sad, the sigh sounded rather contented.

My Melancholy Snowman



After a while my snowman looked up and gazed at the moon.

It was the first full moon of spring.

The next morning when I awoke, I looked outdoors and saw a small, still puddle just below my bedroom window.

The puddle had two black pebbles in it and for some very strange reason, the puddle was smiling up at me.



And, at the edge of
my yard, a family of
wild rabbits,
freshly awoken from
their hibernation,
was chewing gratefully
at a rather old carrot.

