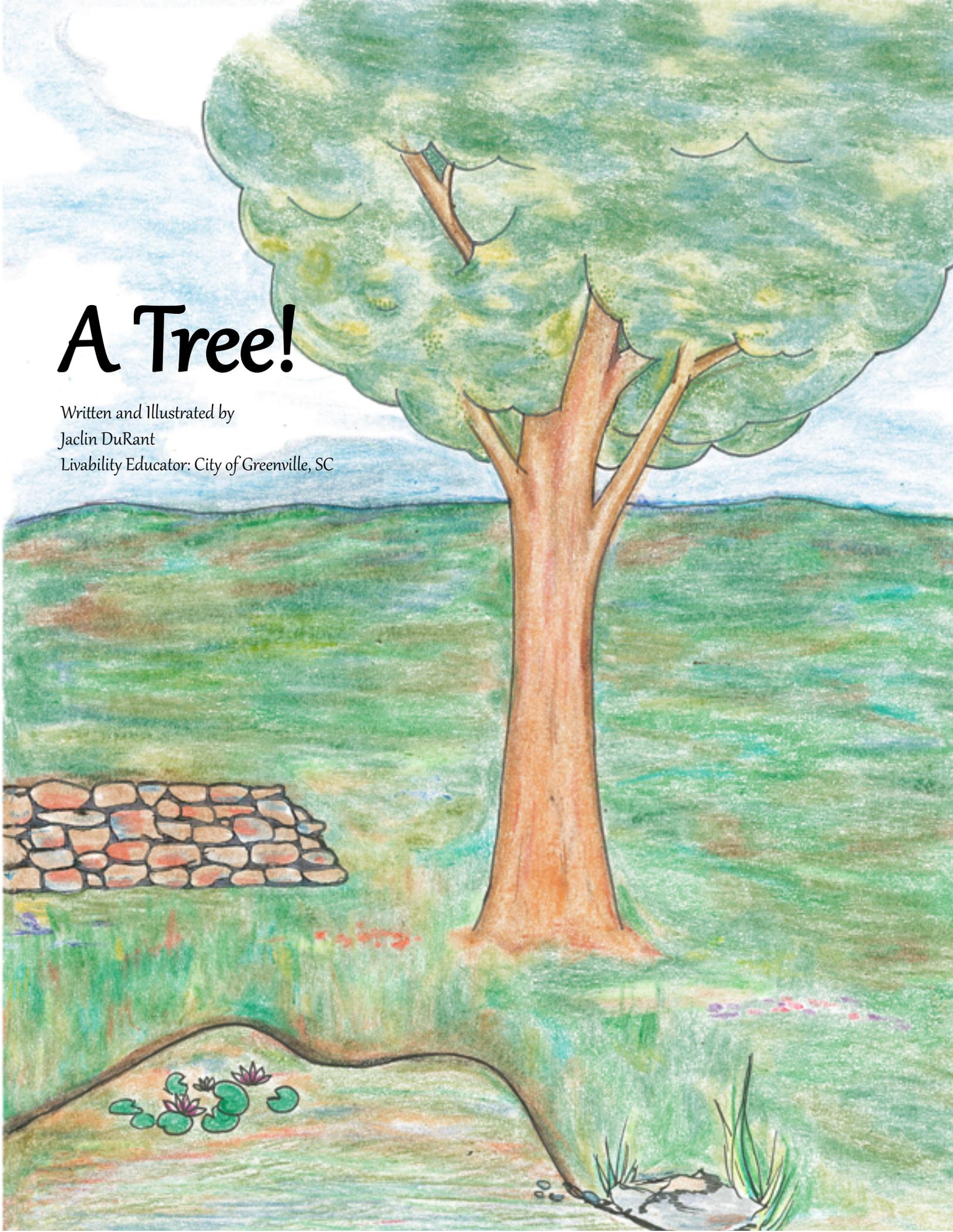


# A Tree!

Written and Illustrated by

Jaclin DuRant

Livability Educator: City of Greenville, SC



## Connections for Sustainability

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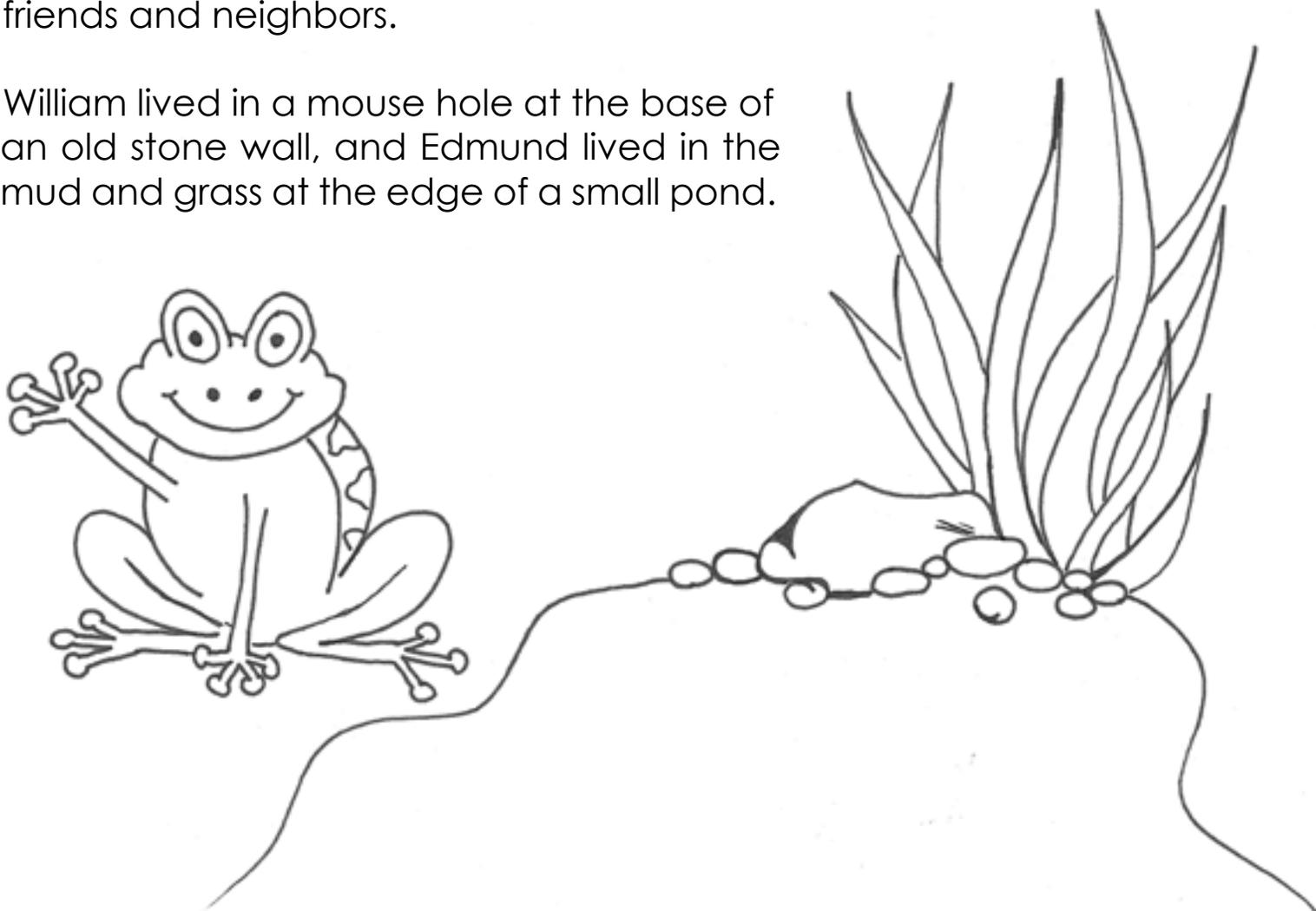
## A Tree!

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William Mouse and Edmund Frog were friends and neighbors.

William lived in a mouse hole at the base of an old stone wall, and Edmund lived in the mud and grass at the edge of a small pond.

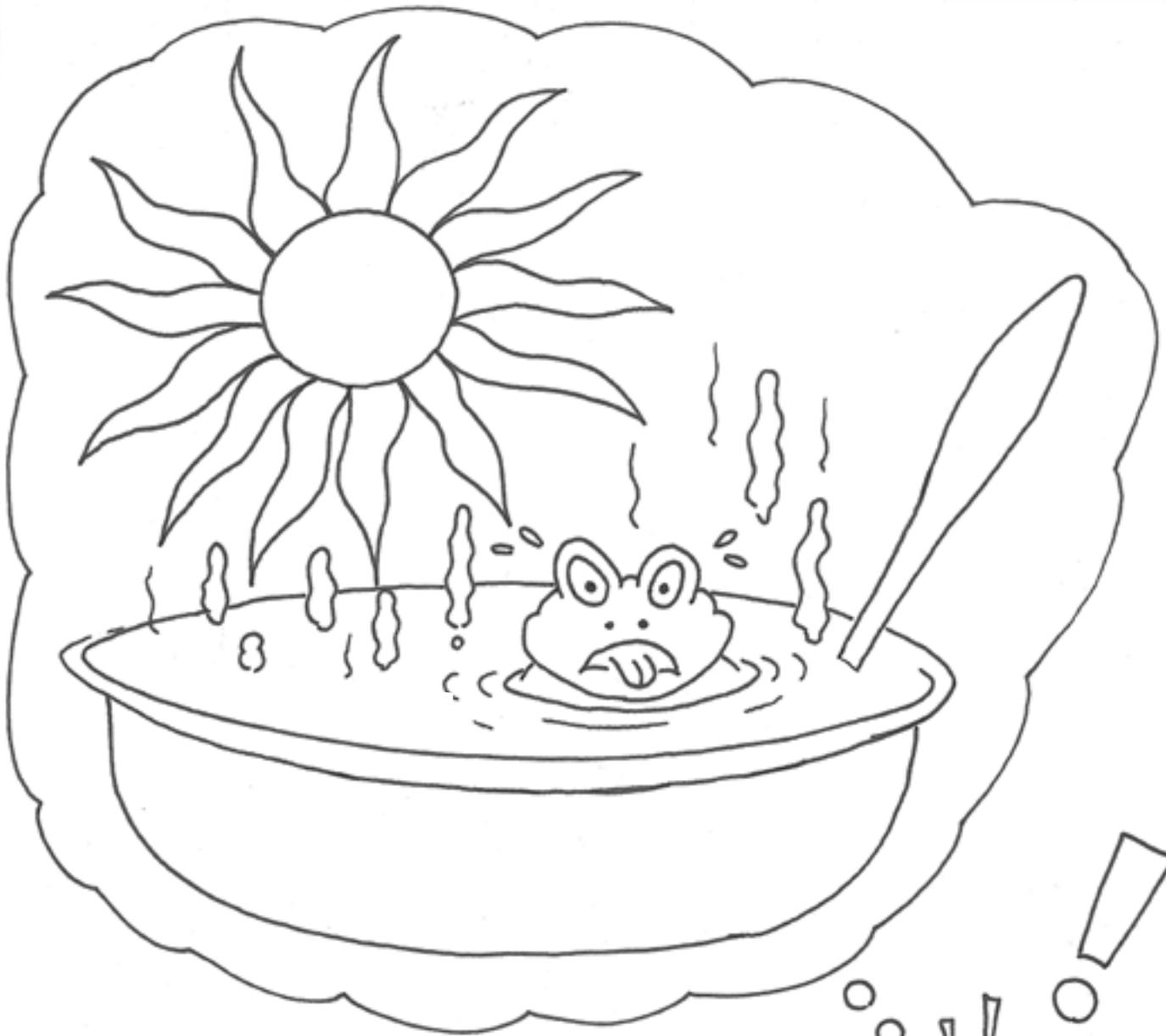




One day, William and Edmund were chatting.

"I don't want to move away!" William said. "My great, great grandfather Mouse built this mouse hole.

But, it's getting *harder and harder* for me to find any food for winter!"



“Tell me about it,” replied Edmund.

“My great, great, great grandmother hopped to this pond from far away, and I want to stay here.

But, it’s so hot in the summer, that I feel like I might turn into Frog soup!”



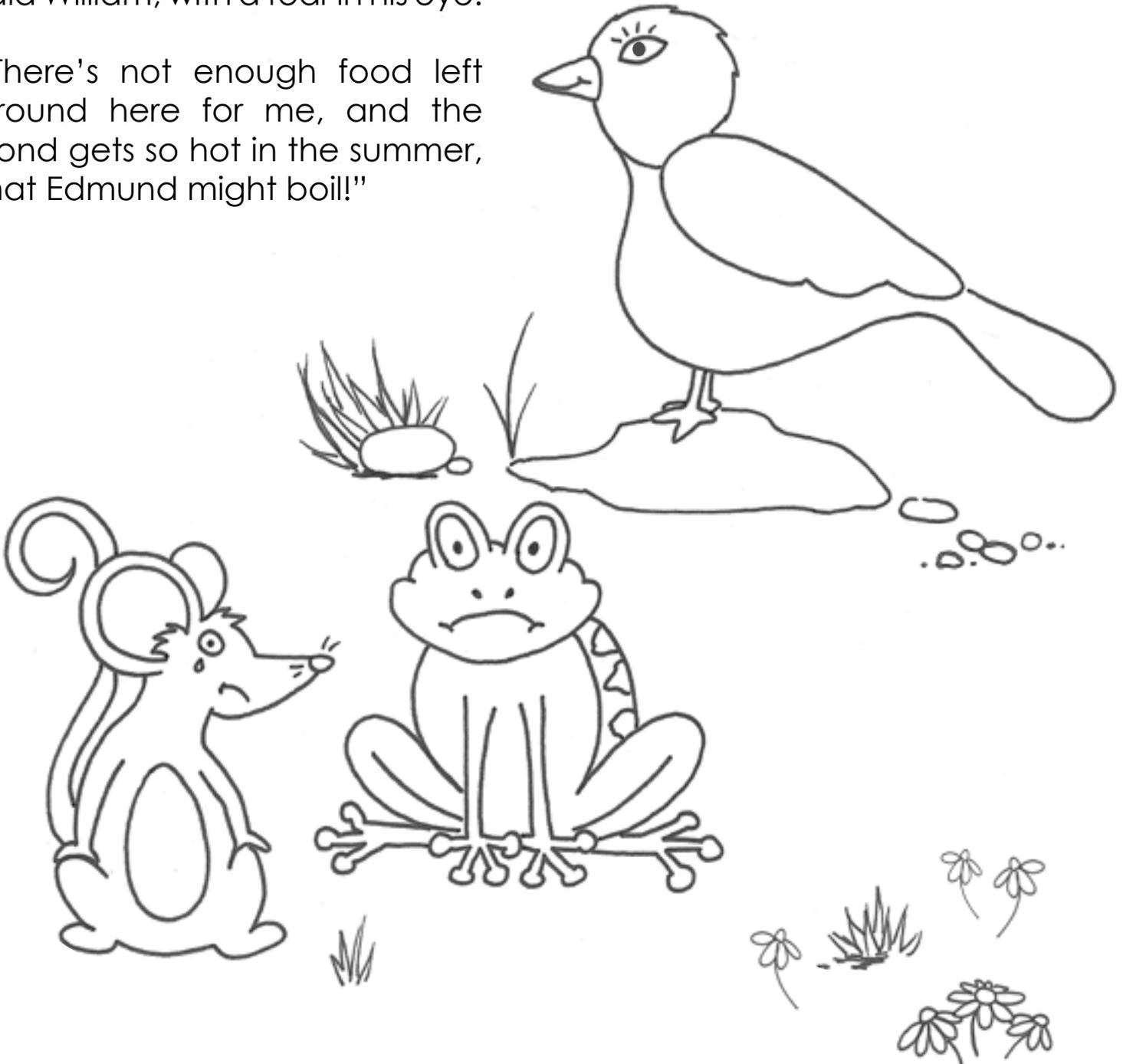
Just then, Robin, the Robin, landed near the base of the old stone wall.

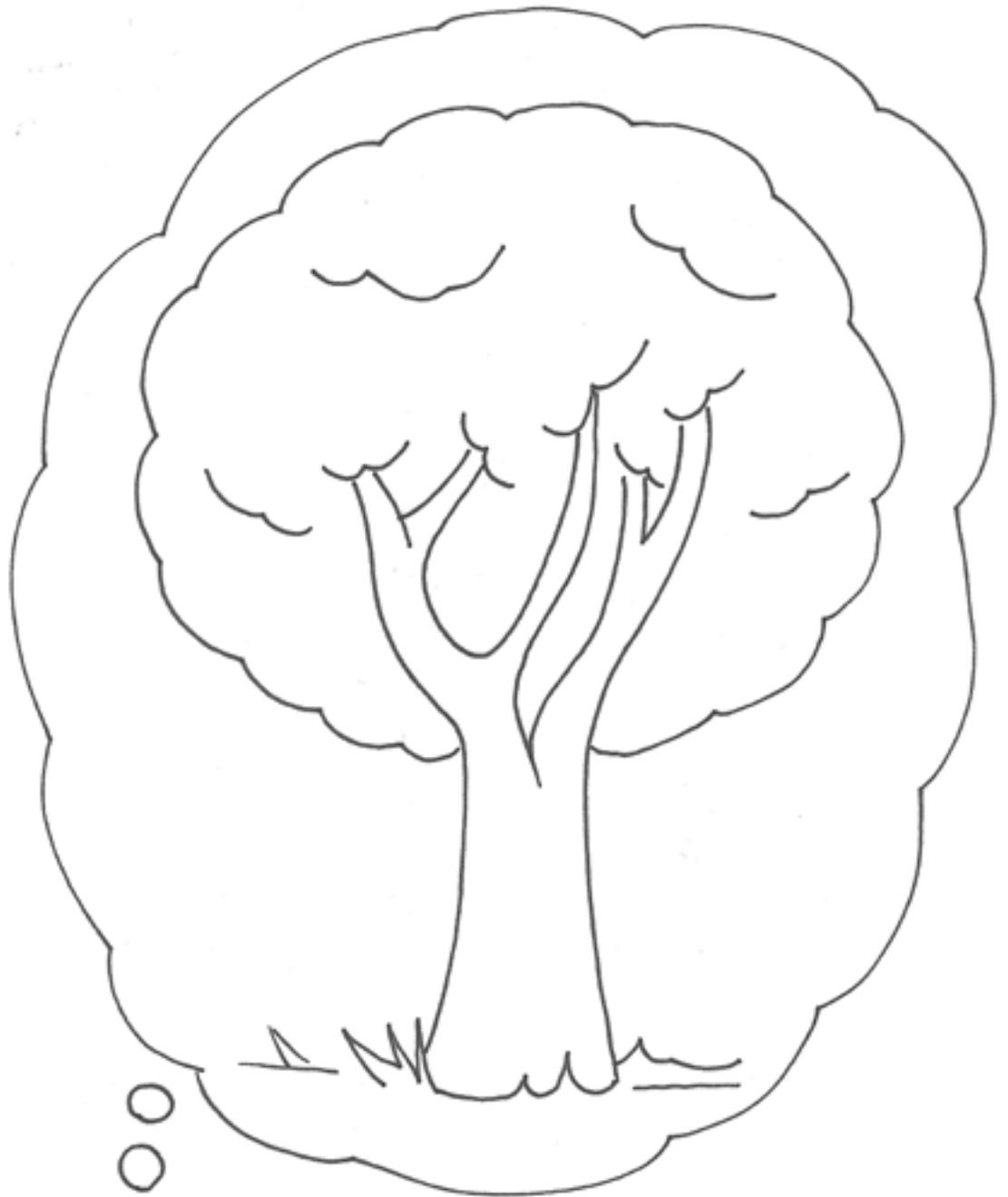
“What’s up?” She asked. “You two look mighty glum!”

“We are,” croaked Edmund.

“We might have to move away,” said William, with a tear in his eye.

“There’s not enough food left around here for me, and the pond gets so hot in the summer, that Edmund might boil!”



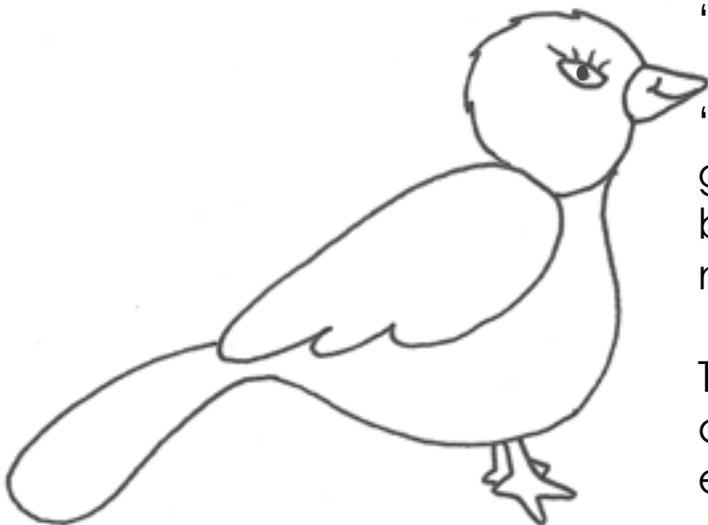


"Huh, that is too bad," Robin sang.

"This does look like it used to be a great place to live. I wouldn't mind building a nest here myself, but there's no place to put one."

The three friends sat, sadly thinking about their problems, until Robin exclaimed, "I know..."

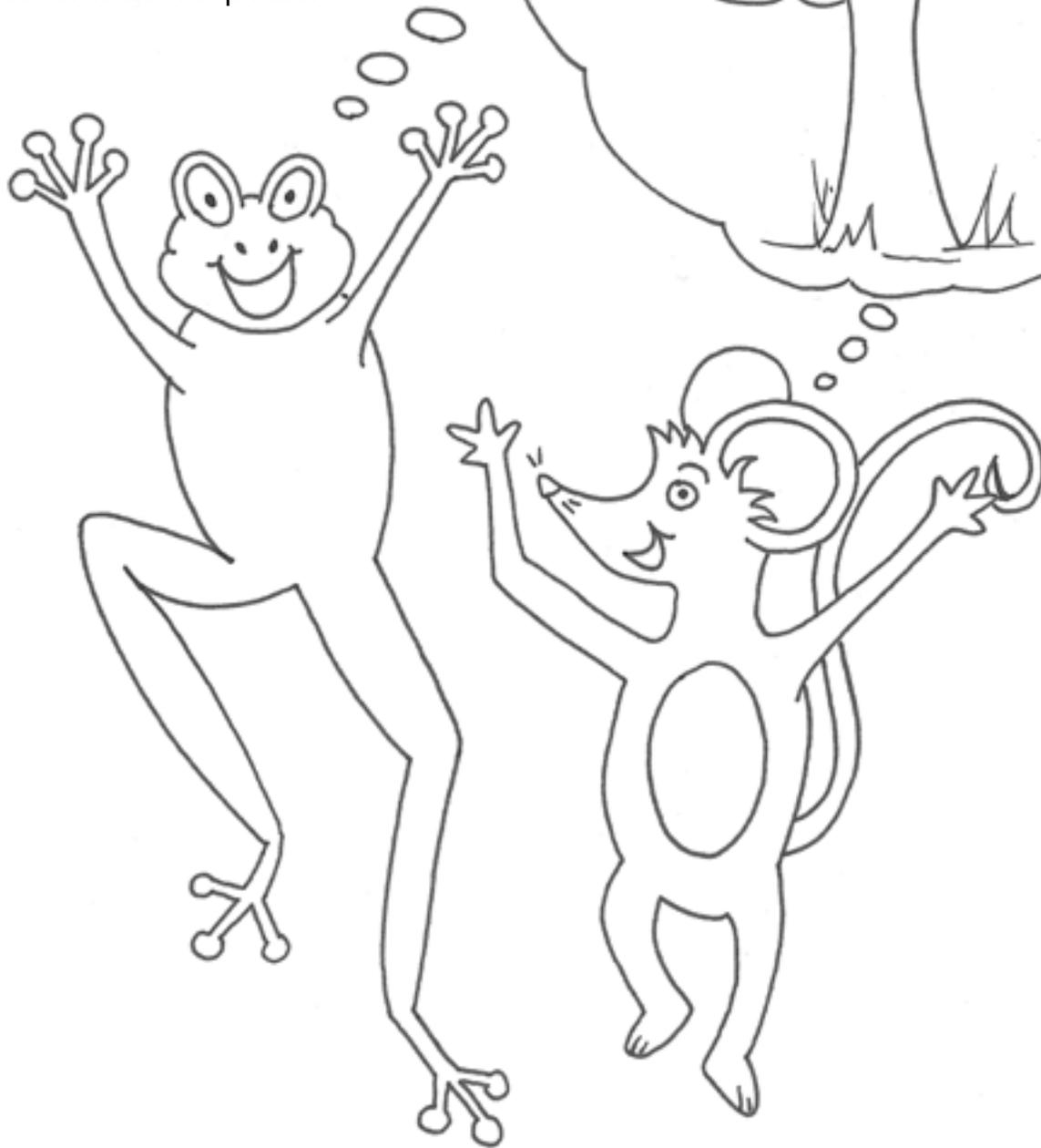
You need a tree!"



“A tree.” Edmund hopped in joy. “That’s perfect! A tree would shade my pond in the summer, and its seeds would be food for William in the fall and winter.”

“That’s right,” said Robin, “And I could build my nest in its branches.”

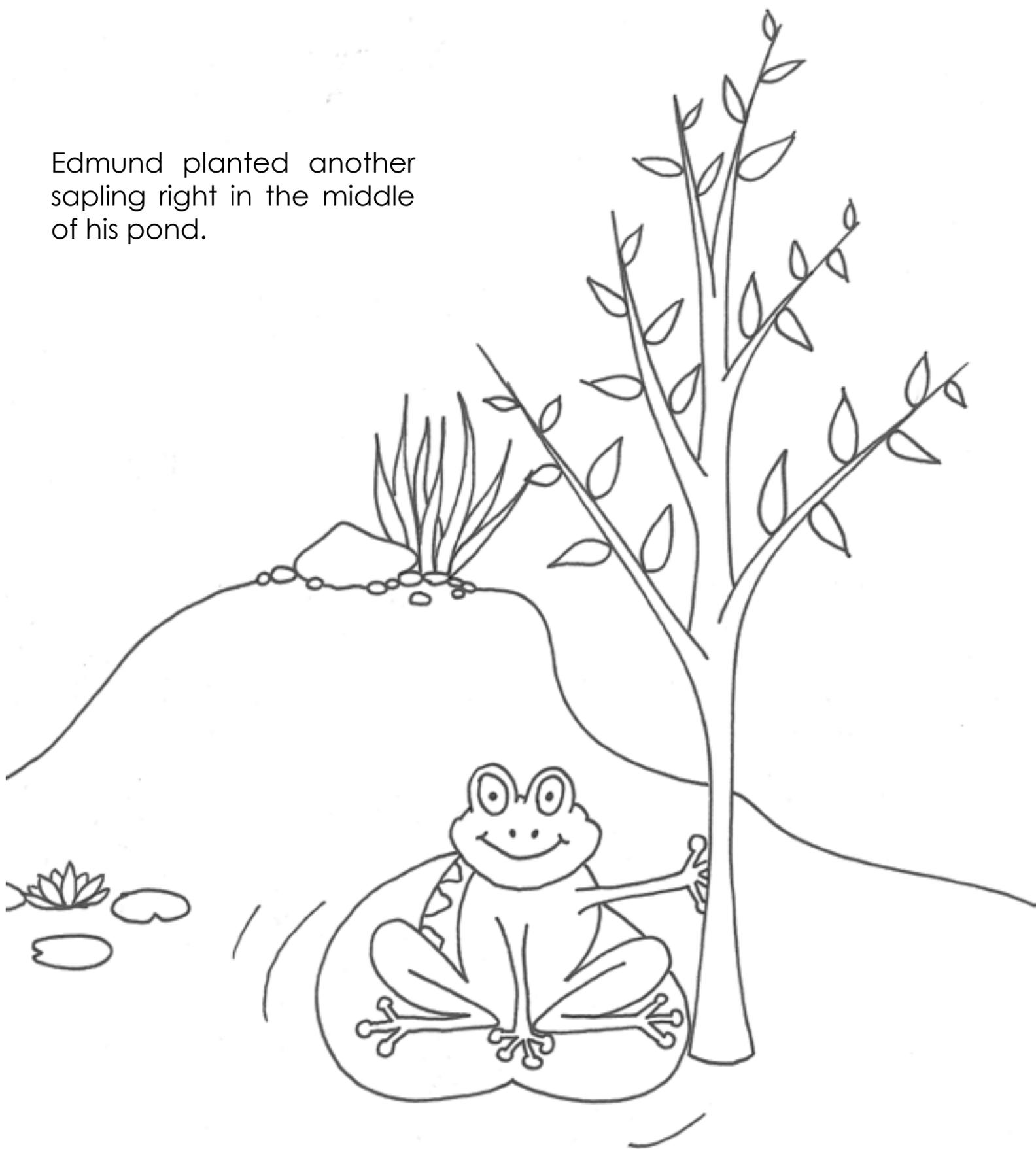
The three friends were all excited that they had come up with a solution to their problems, and each went out to find a tree to plant.



William planted a sapling  
right on the top of the old  
stone wall.



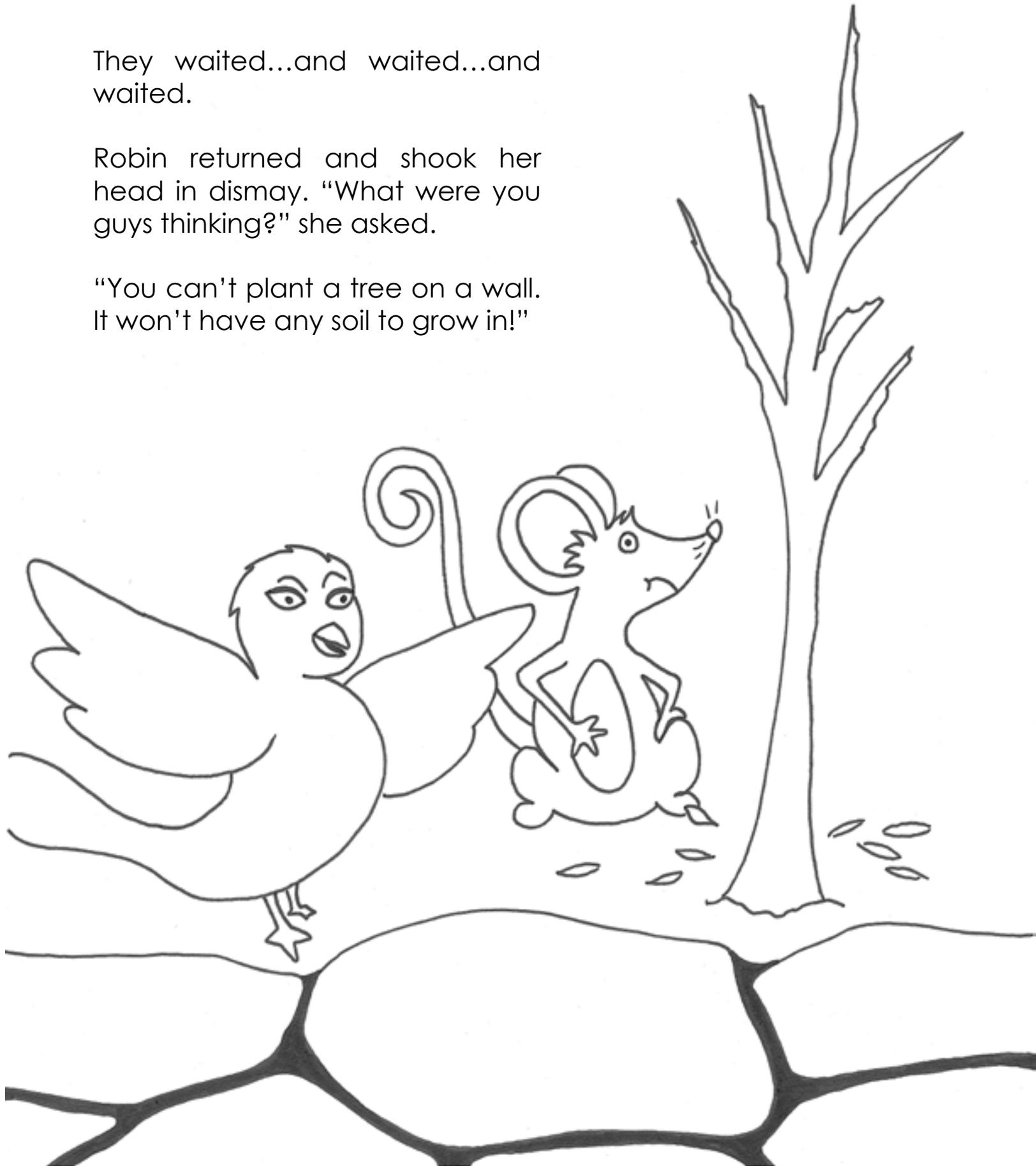
Edmund planted another sapling right in the middle of his pond.



They waited...and waited...and waited.

Robin returned and shook her head in dismay. "What were you guys thinking?" she asked.

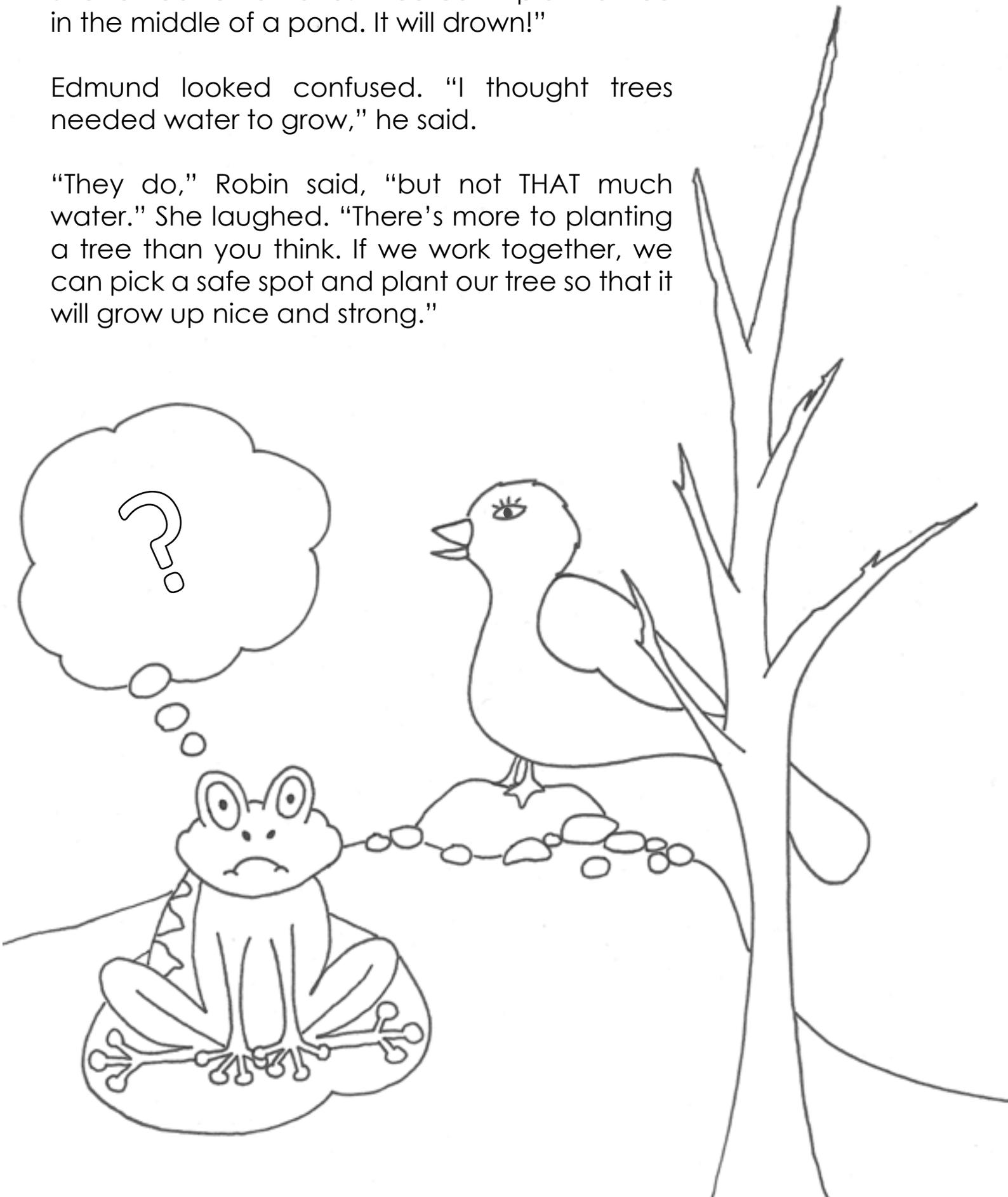
"You can't plant a tree on a wall. It won't have any soil to grow in!"



She turned to Edmund. "You can't plant a tree in the middle of a pond. It will drown!"

Edmund looked confused. "I thought trees needed water to grow," he said.

"They do," Robin said, "but not THAT much water." She laughed. "There's more to planting a tree than you think. If we work together, we can pick a safe spot and plant our tree so that it will grow up nice and strong."



Robin flew in circles over the pond while Edmund and William watched. Finally, she pointed to a spot near the end of the old stone wall.

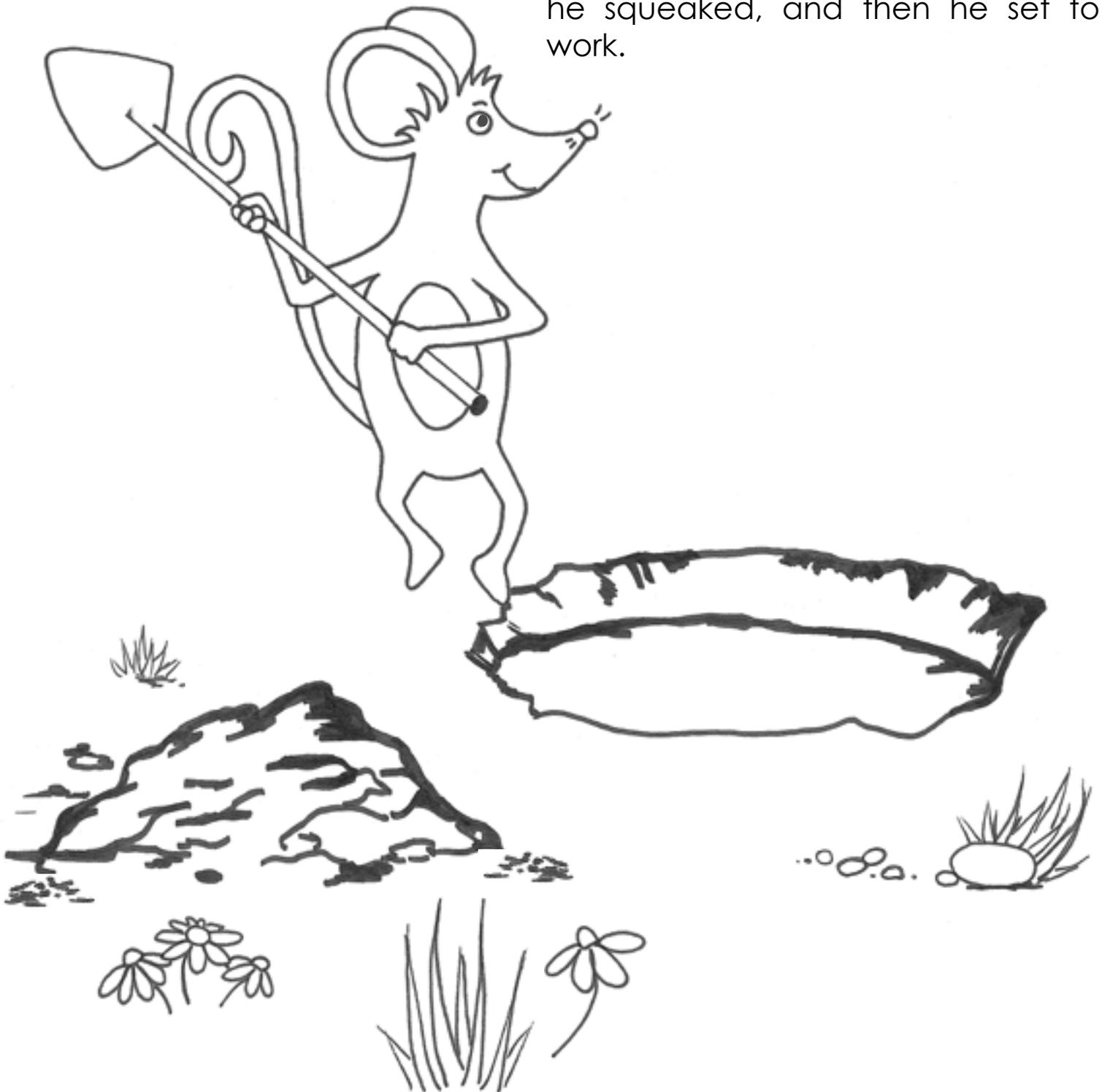
Here, the tree would be close enough to the pond that its branches would shade the water in summer, but far enough away that its roots wouldn't drown.

"This is the perfect spot," said Robin. "Now, we need to dig a hole."



William ran into his mouse hole and came back waving a shovel in the air.

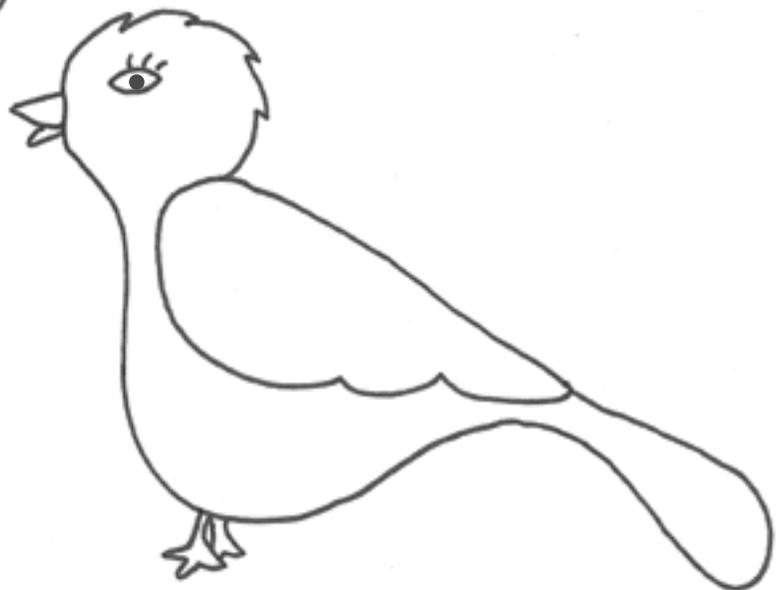
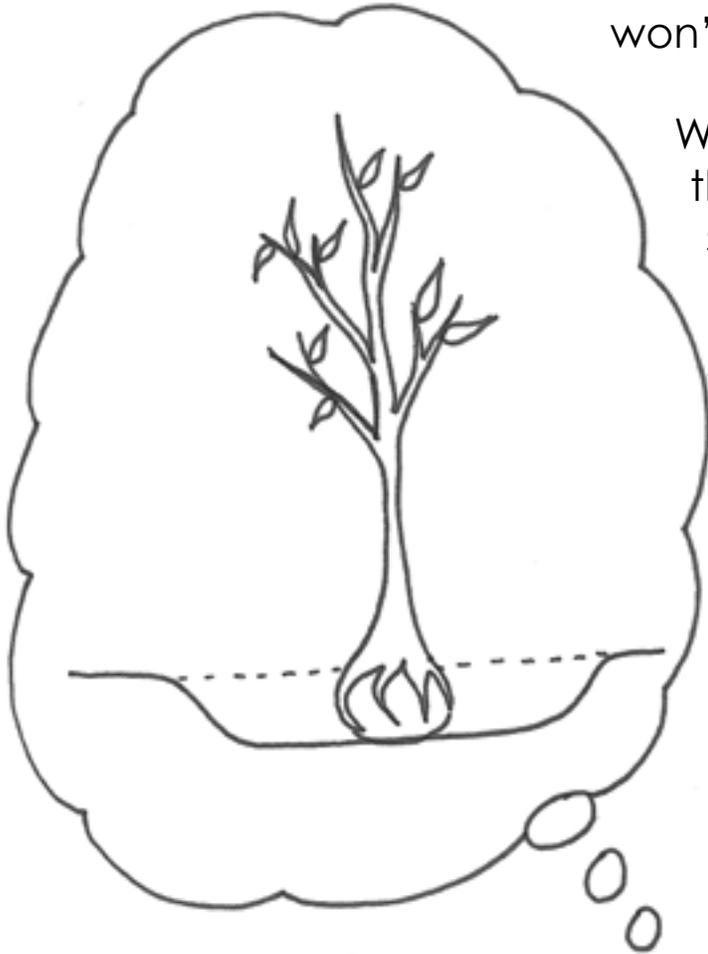
“I can dig a great BIG hole with this!” he squeaked, and then he set to work.



“We need to dig a very large hole,” said Robin.

“The hole should be much wider than the root ball of our tree, but not too deep. If we bury the trunk flare below the ground, then the tree won’t be able to survive.”

William finished digging and the three friends carefully lifted the small tree into the hole, making sure that the hole wasn’t too deep for their tree to survive.

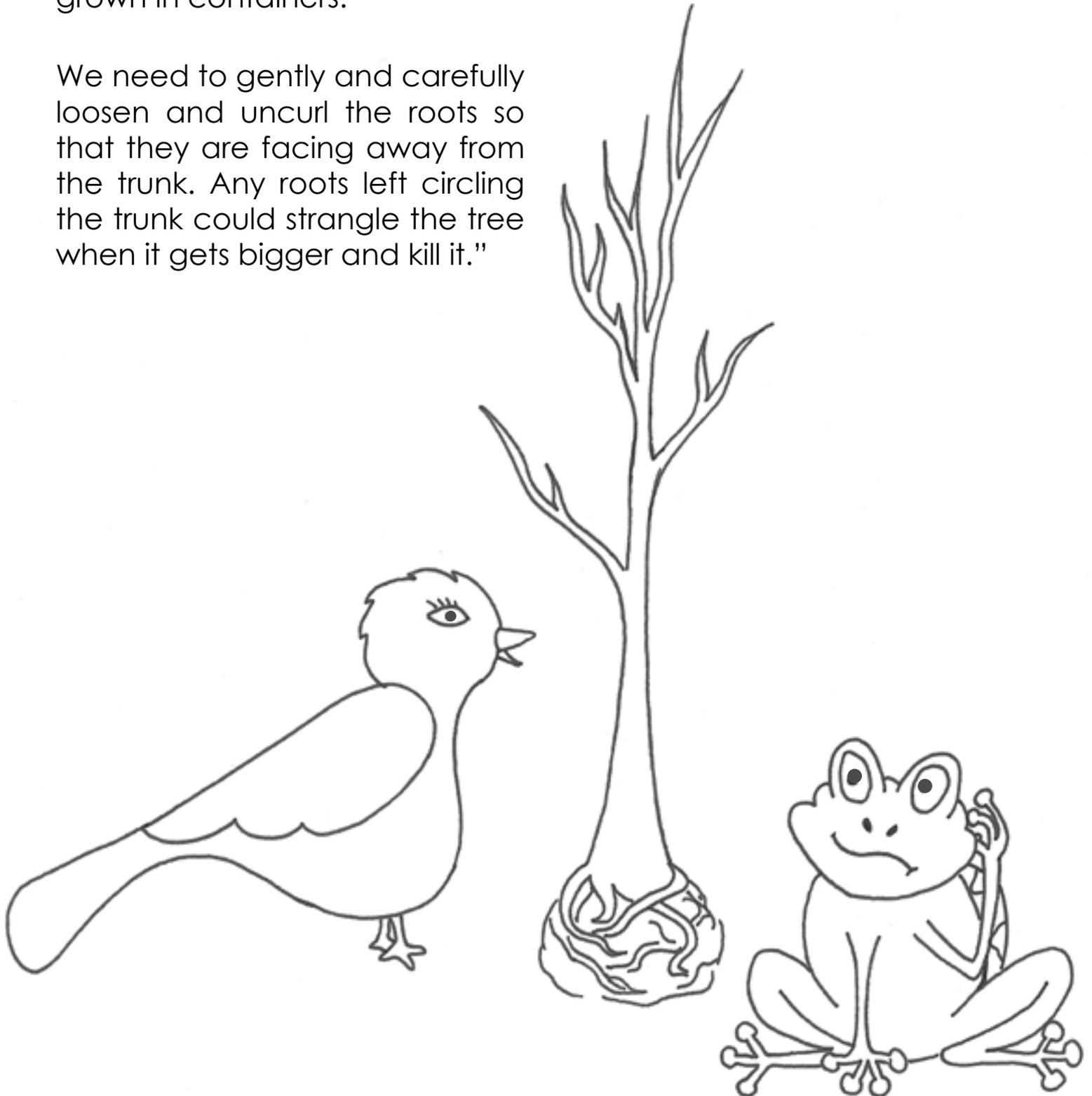


Once the tree was safely in its hole, Robin and Edmund took the sapling out of its container.

“The roots are all balled up!” Edmund exclaimed. “Is the tree OK?”

“It will be fine,” said Robin. “That is how tree roots grow when they are grown in containers.

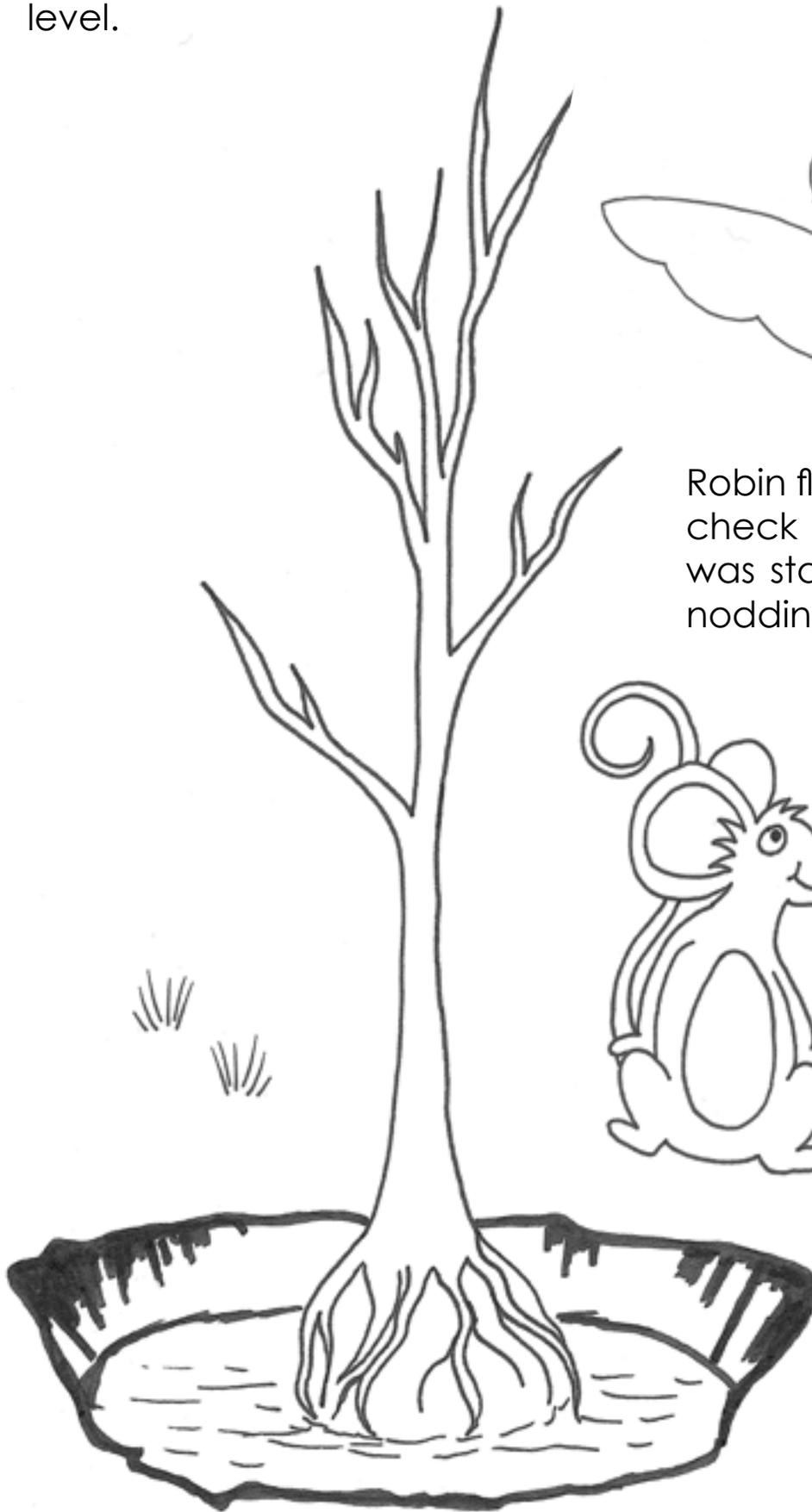
We need to gently and carefully loosen and uncurl the roots so that they are facing away from the trunk. Any roots left circling the trunk could strangle the tree when it gets bigger and kill it.”



Finally, the little tree rested safely in its hole. The roots faced away from the trunk and down, and the flare at the base of the tree was above ground level.

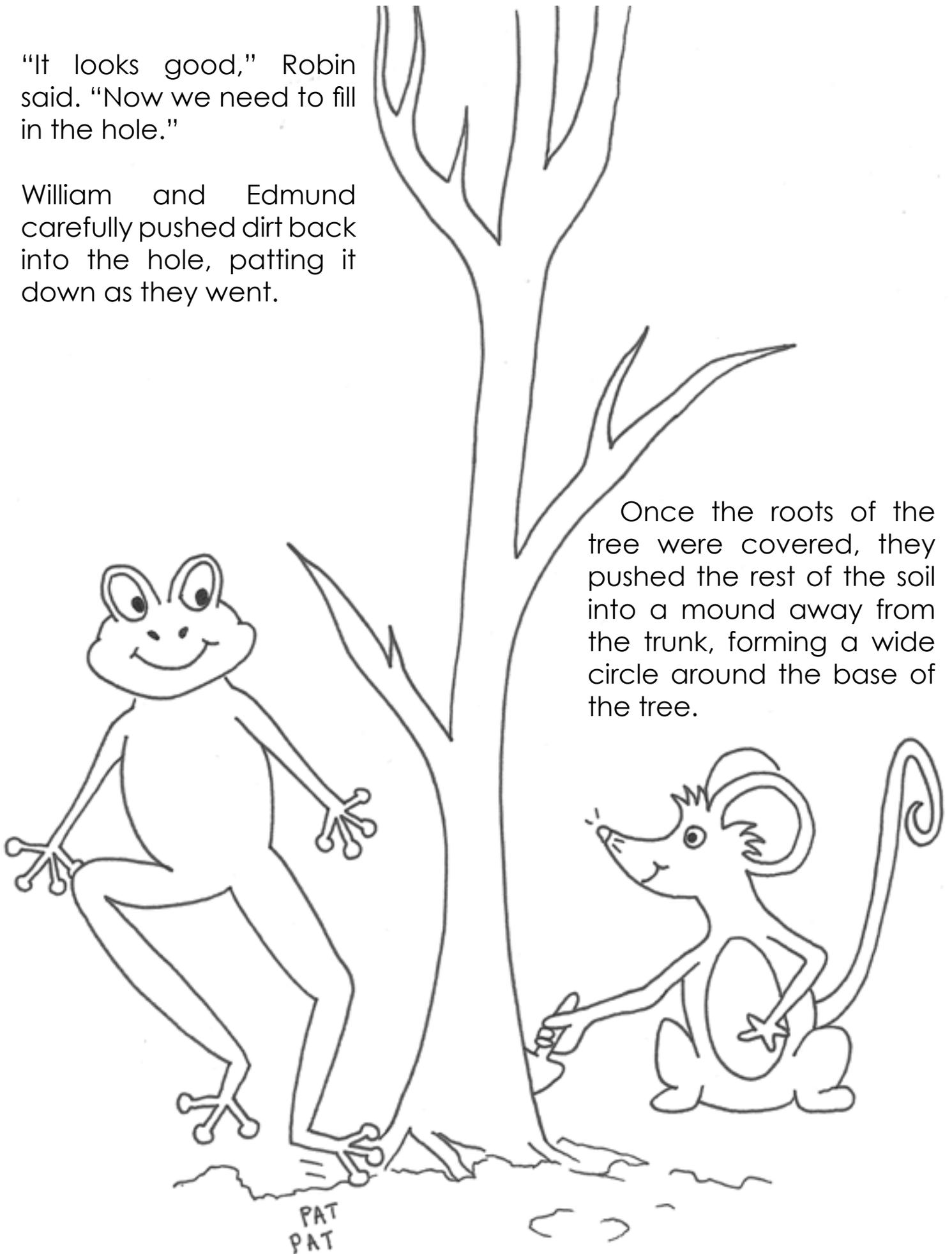


Robin flew around a few times to check and make sure the tree was standing straight up before nodding in satisfaction.



"It looks good," Robin said. "Now we need to fill in the hole."

William and Edmund carefully pushed dirt back into the hole, patting it down as they went.



Once the roots of the tree were covered, they pushed the rest of the soil into a mound away from the trunk, forming a wide circle around the base of the tree.

“Now, it needs water,” said Edmund.

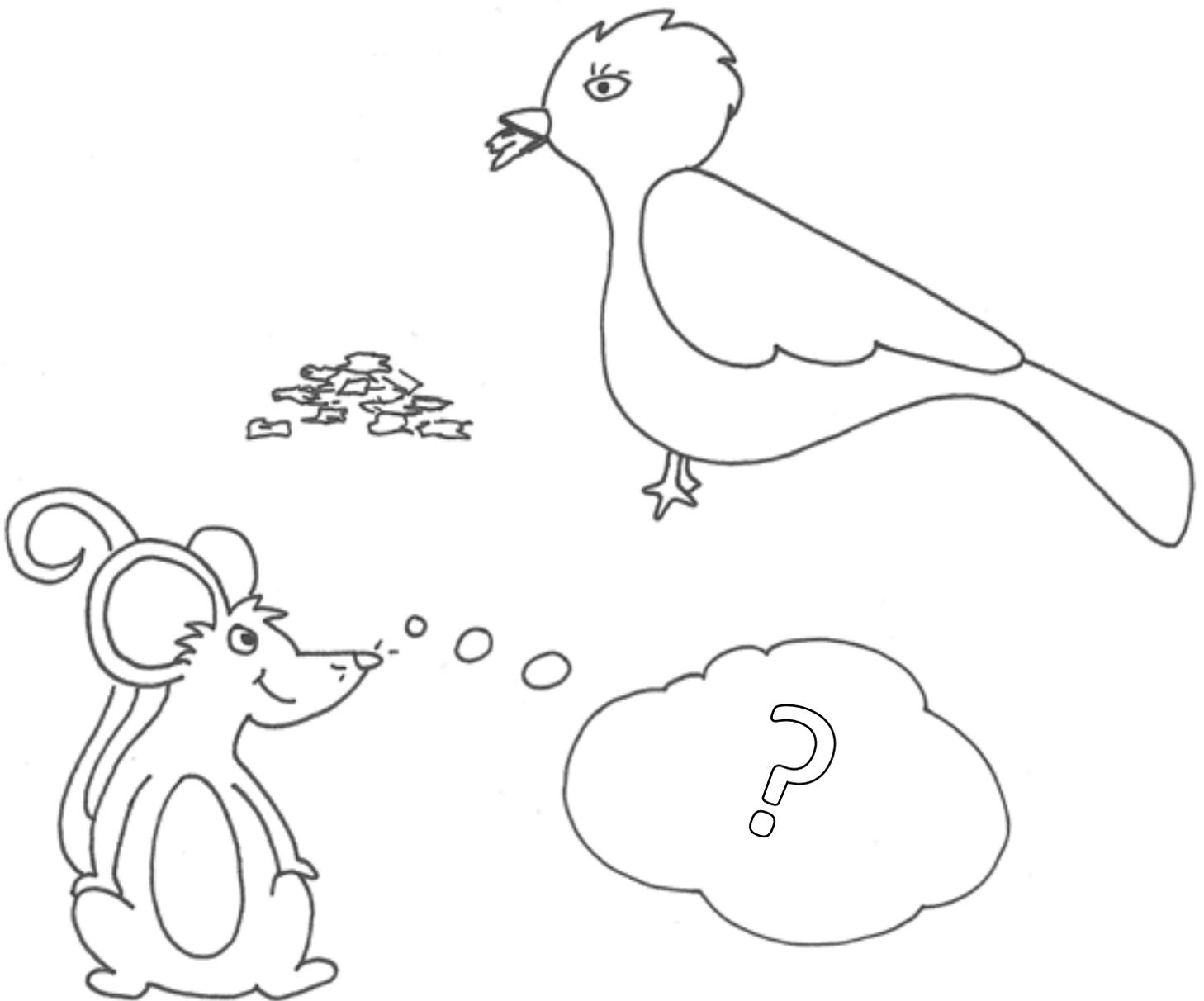
“That’s right!” Robin sang. “We need to make sure we give it plenty of water today. In fact, we should water it a good bit for the first year of its life, especially during dry times. The soil at the base of the tree should be slightly damp, but not soggy.”



William and Edmund hopped and scampered back and forth from the pond to the tree, bringing water while Robin flew back and forth, dropping wood chips and dry leaves in a pile.

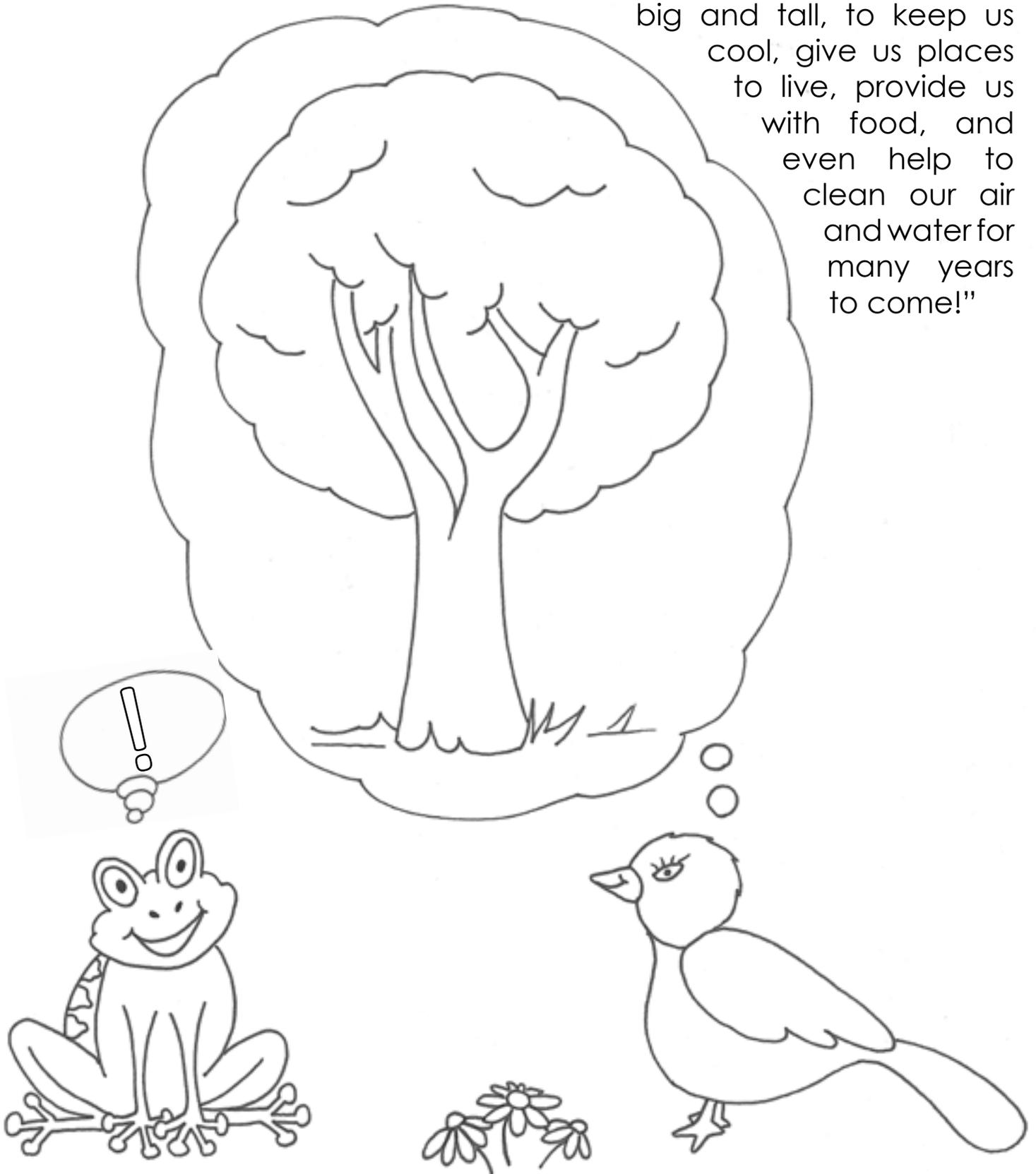
Finally, William asked, "Robin, what are you doing?"

"I'm making a pile of mulch," Robin said. "Once you're finished watering the tree, we can put mulch all around the base of our tree to help keep the roots cool and keep the soil from drying out."



“Wow!” said Edmund, “There’s a lot more to planting a tree than I thought!”

“That’s true,” said Robin. “But, all of these simple steps will help to make sure that our tree survives to grow big and tall, to keep us cool, give us places to live, provide us with food, and even help to clean our air and water for many years to come!”



“That’s amazing!” William said, as he pushed mulch into place around the base of the tree, making sure to keep the layer a few inches away from the trunk and about two inches deep, like Robin had taught him.

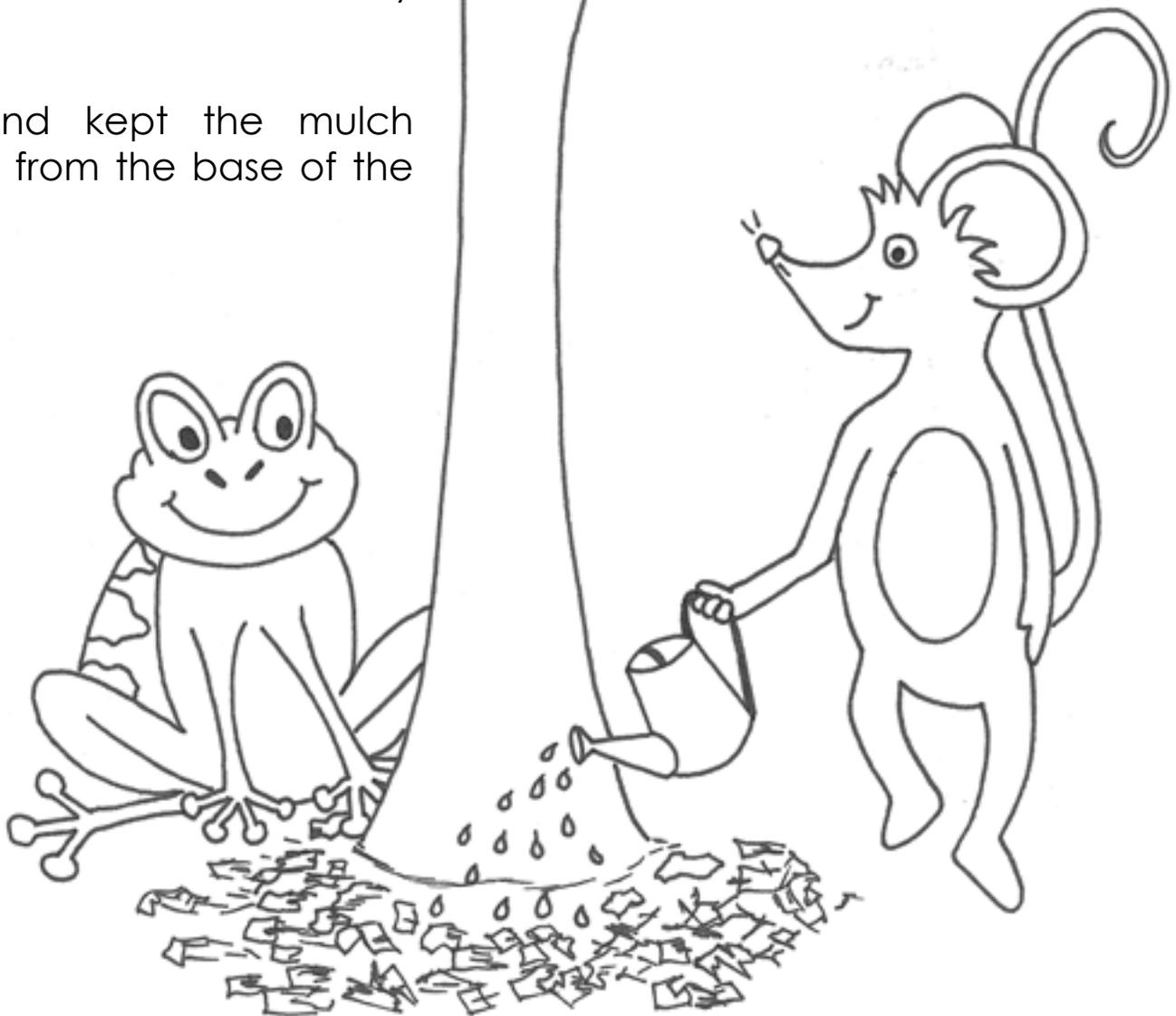
“I never thought about all of the things that trees can do for us before.”



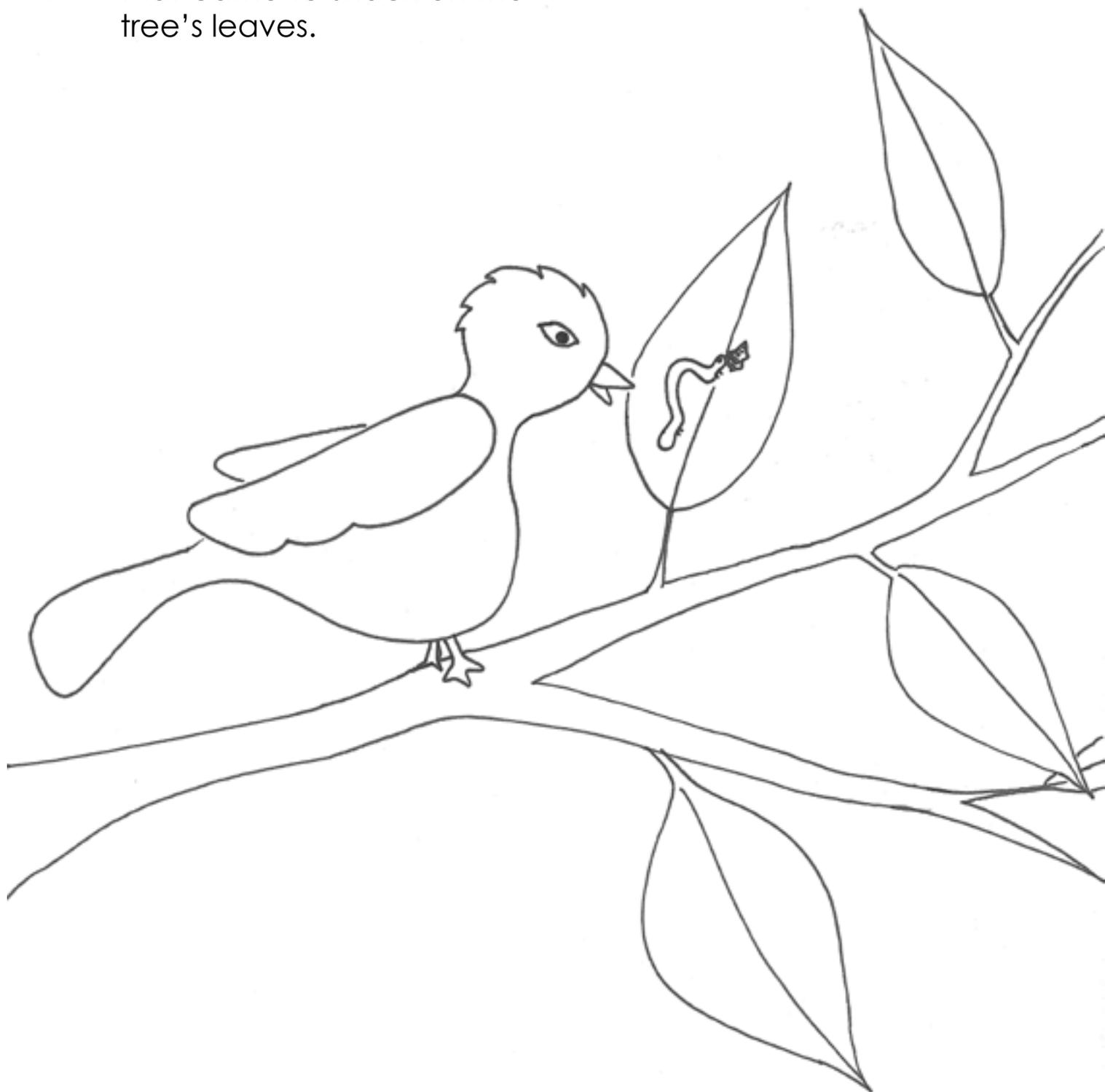
As time passed, the friends took turns taking care of their tree.

William watered it on dry days.

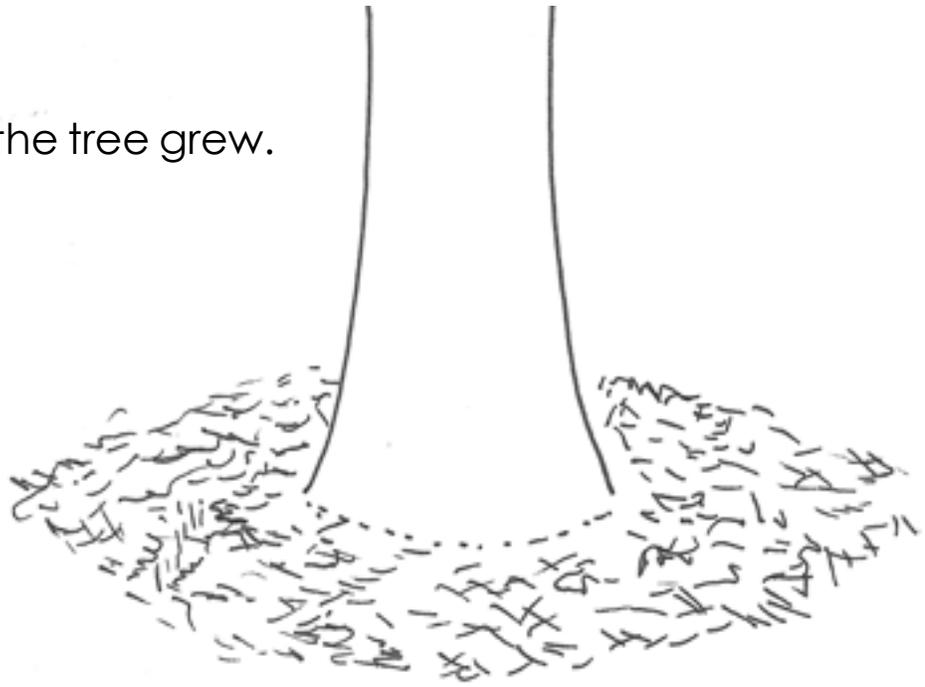
Edmund kept the mulch away from the base of the tree.



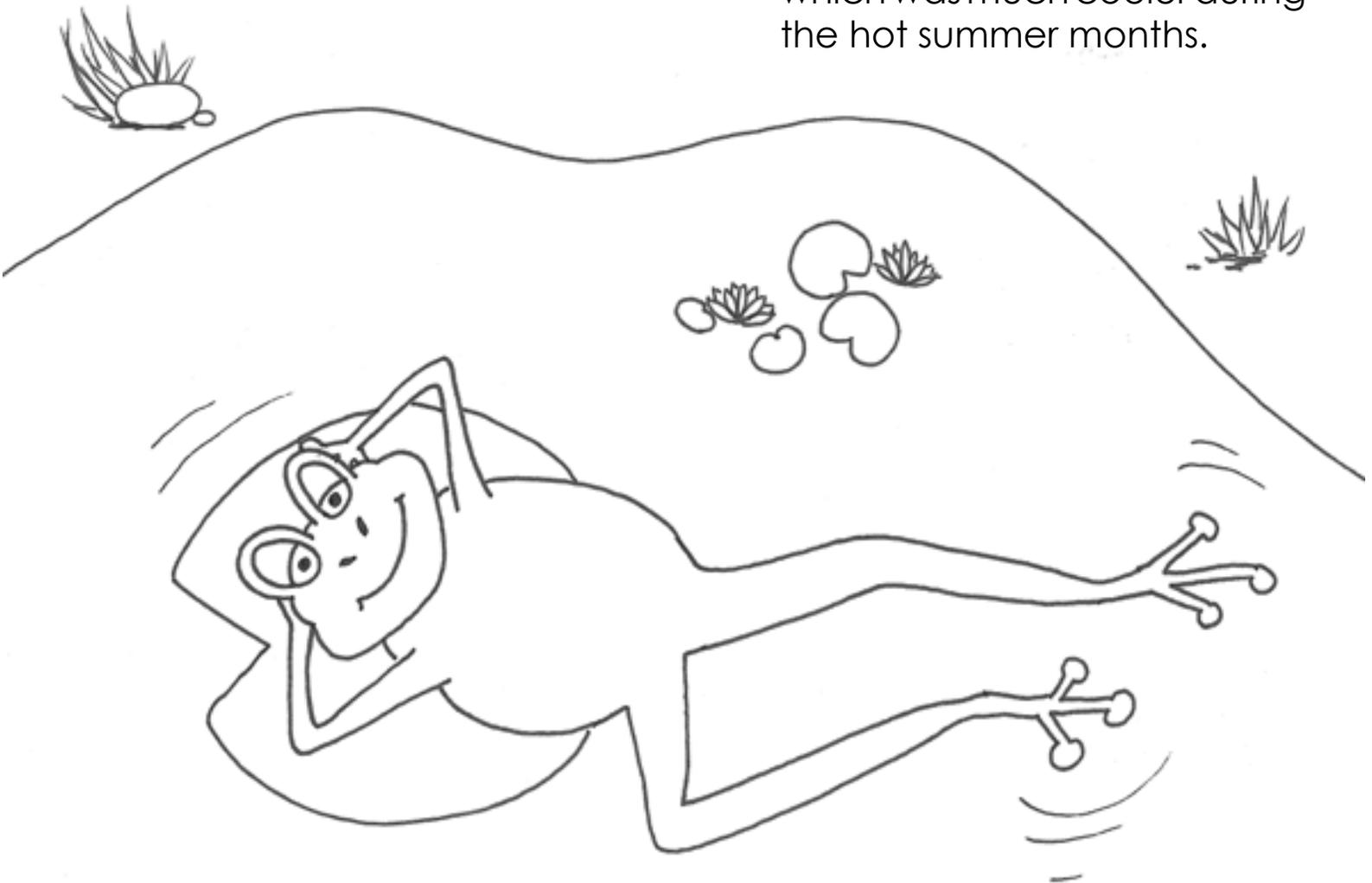
Robin even ate the insects  
that came to snack on the  
tree's leaves.



Time passed, and the tree grew.



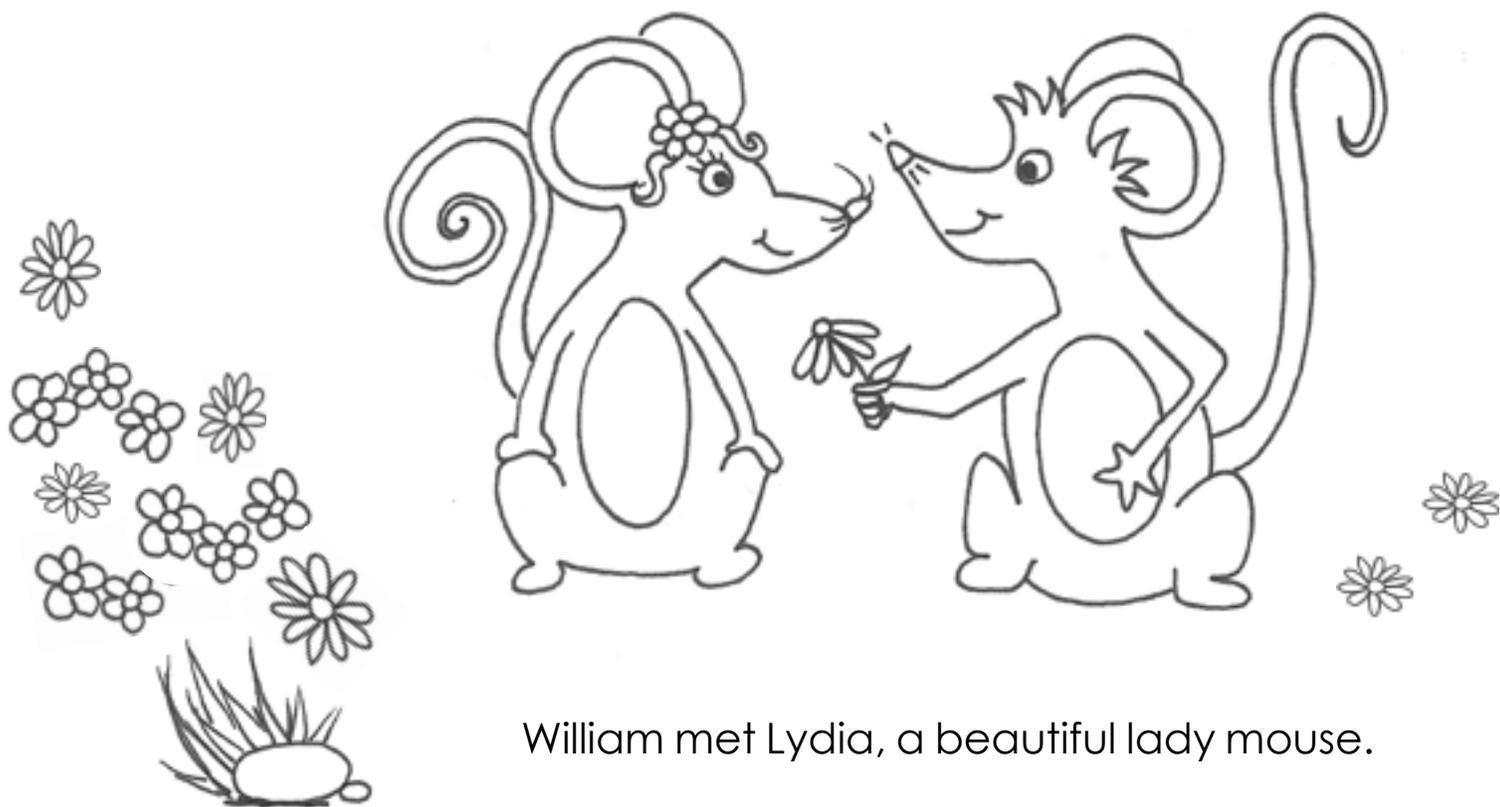
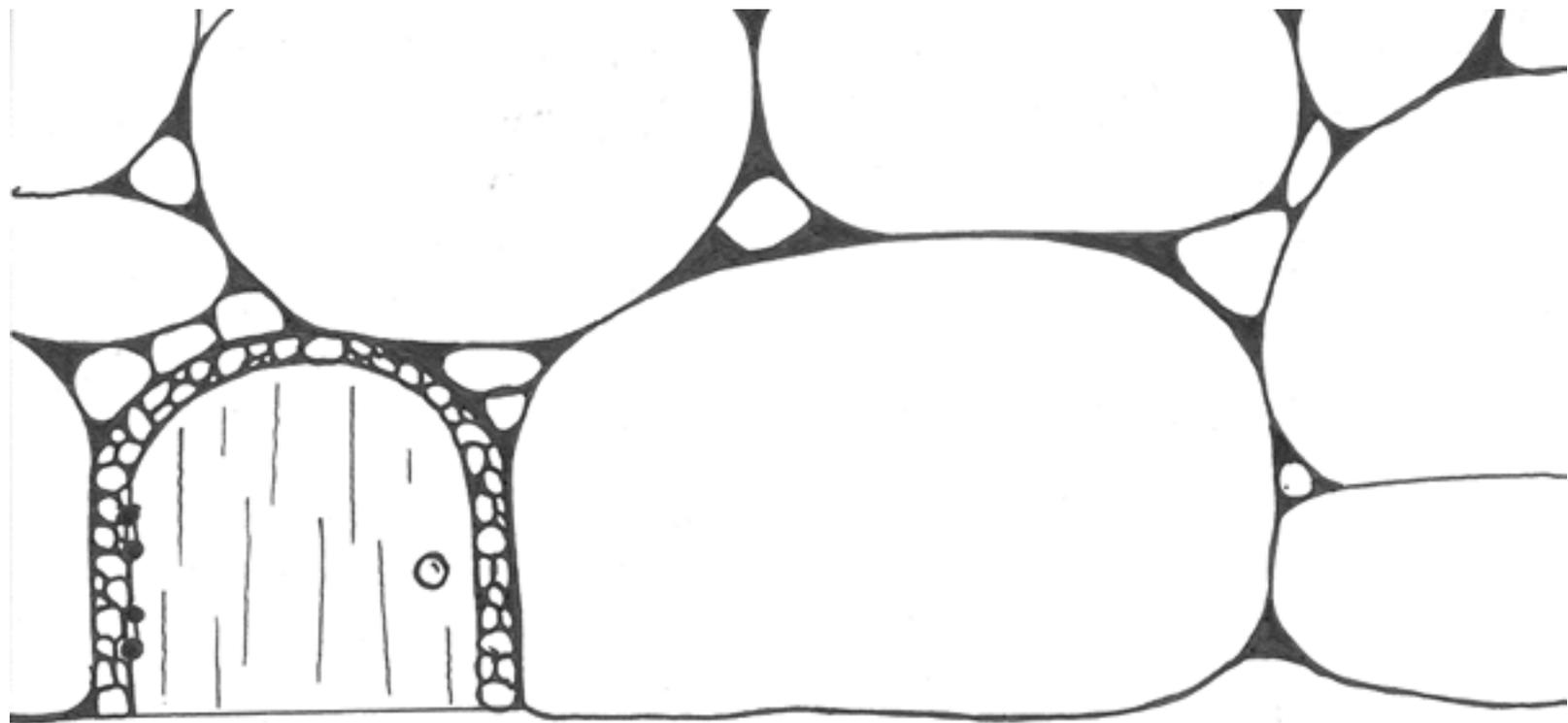
Edmund relaxed in his pond, which was much cooler during the hot summer months.



Time passed, and the tree grew some more.

Robin built a nest in the tree's branches and eventually laid some eggs.

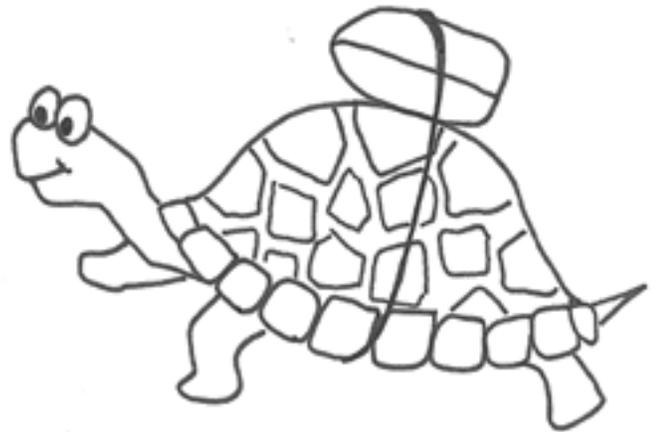
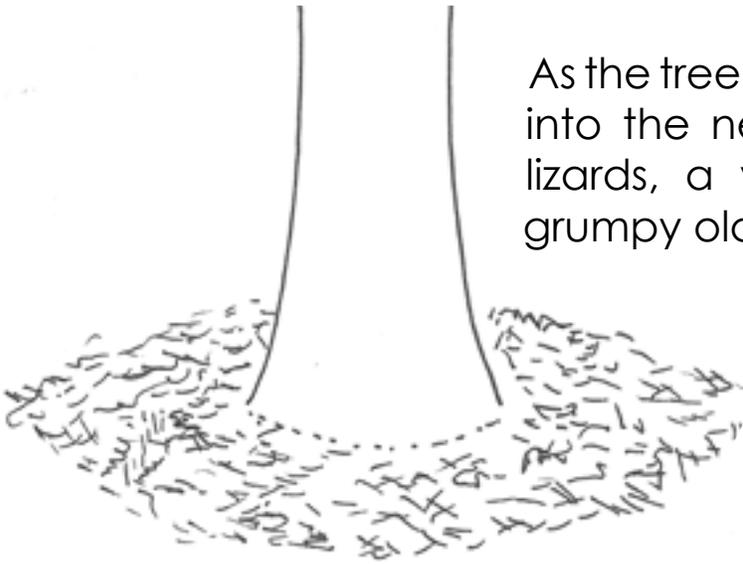




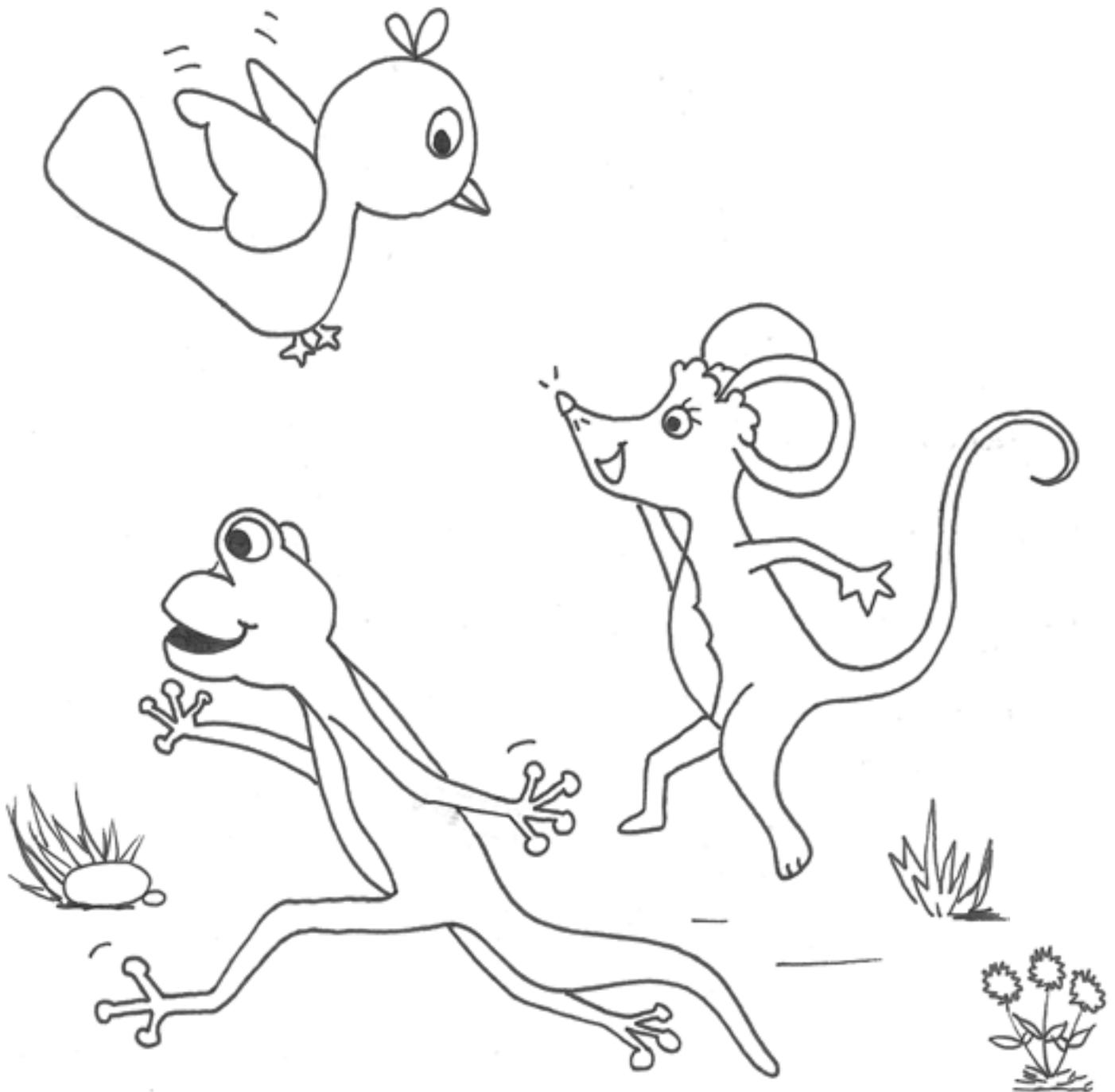
William met Lydia, a beautiful lady mouse.

She moved into the mouse hole in the old stone wall, and soon, William was collecting seeds from the tree to store for winter when his children would arrive.

As the tree continued to grow, new folks moved into the neighborhood; including a family of lizards, a young turtle, and even a grumpy old grandpa squirrel.



One spring day, William and Edmund were sitting together in the shade, watching the children play. "It's hard to believe that we ever thought about moving away from this place," said William.





Edmund nodded. "Things sure were tough back then," he said. "It's amazing what a difference we can make with a little hard work and a tree!"

# The End

