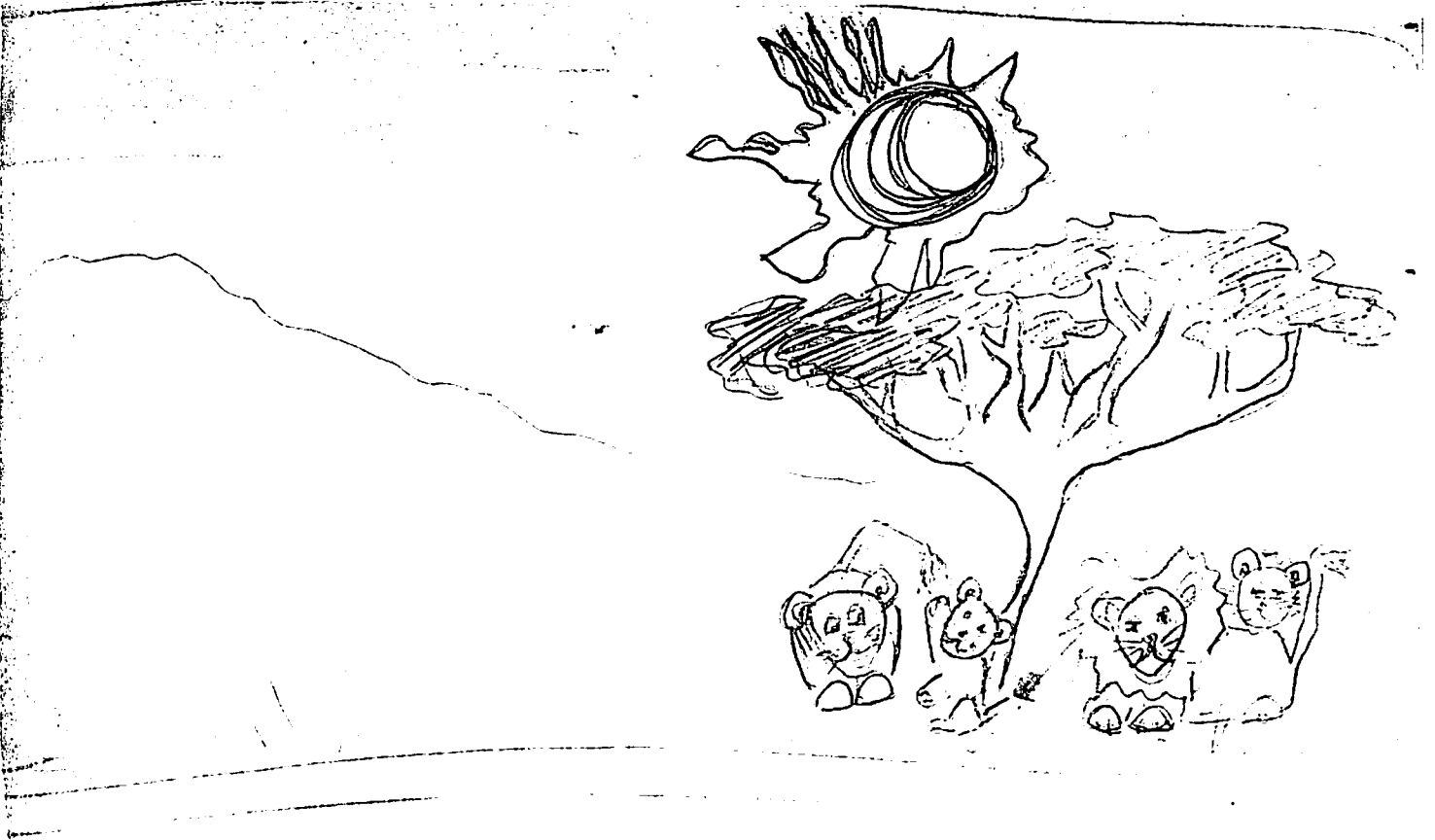


Sky in the Night



The African sun beat down on the land.

The lion family was lying under a tree.

Sky was the little one.

She was the smallest lion of her pride.

Sky was small, but tough.

She was the only lion who had a black spot on her tail.

Her father told her that the spot meant she was protected.

It was dark like the night.



Sky pretended to sleep.

She was mad that she couldn't keep playing like her brothers and sisters.

"I'm old enough to stay up. I'm small but I'm tough!"

Then, her ears popped up,

She heard something move in the grass.

She got ready to spring forward to see what the noise was.

She sprang, and the noise got farther away.

Again, she sprang forward.

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"Hey, where are you going? I just want to play!" she said.

Sky kept springing forward every time she heard the noise.

Soon she was on the other side of the grassy plain.

She looked around.

There was nothing there that she knew.

She couldn't see her brothers and sisters.

She couldn't see the tree.

She couldn't see her mother and father.

She was all alone.



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At first she was scared, but then she remembered who she was.

Her black spot would keep her safe.

Her fear went away and her curiosity came forth.

Suddenly, she felt very thirsty.

All she could see were trees, grass and big rocks.

Then one of the rocks started to move toward her.

"Who are you?" Sky asked.

"I'm Rocky the Rhinoceros. What are you doing out here? This is
Rhino Land. Beat it, kid!"

"I'm really thirsty. Can you help me find a watering hole, please?"

"I can, but that water is not for you. It's ours."

"Okay, I'll find it on my own."

So Sky walked on until she came to a pile of rocks.

She walked over to them.

"Ow!" said a voice.

"Who said that?" asked Sky.

"You're breaking my tail. Get off!"

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"Oh, I'm sorry. Can you help me find a watering hole?"

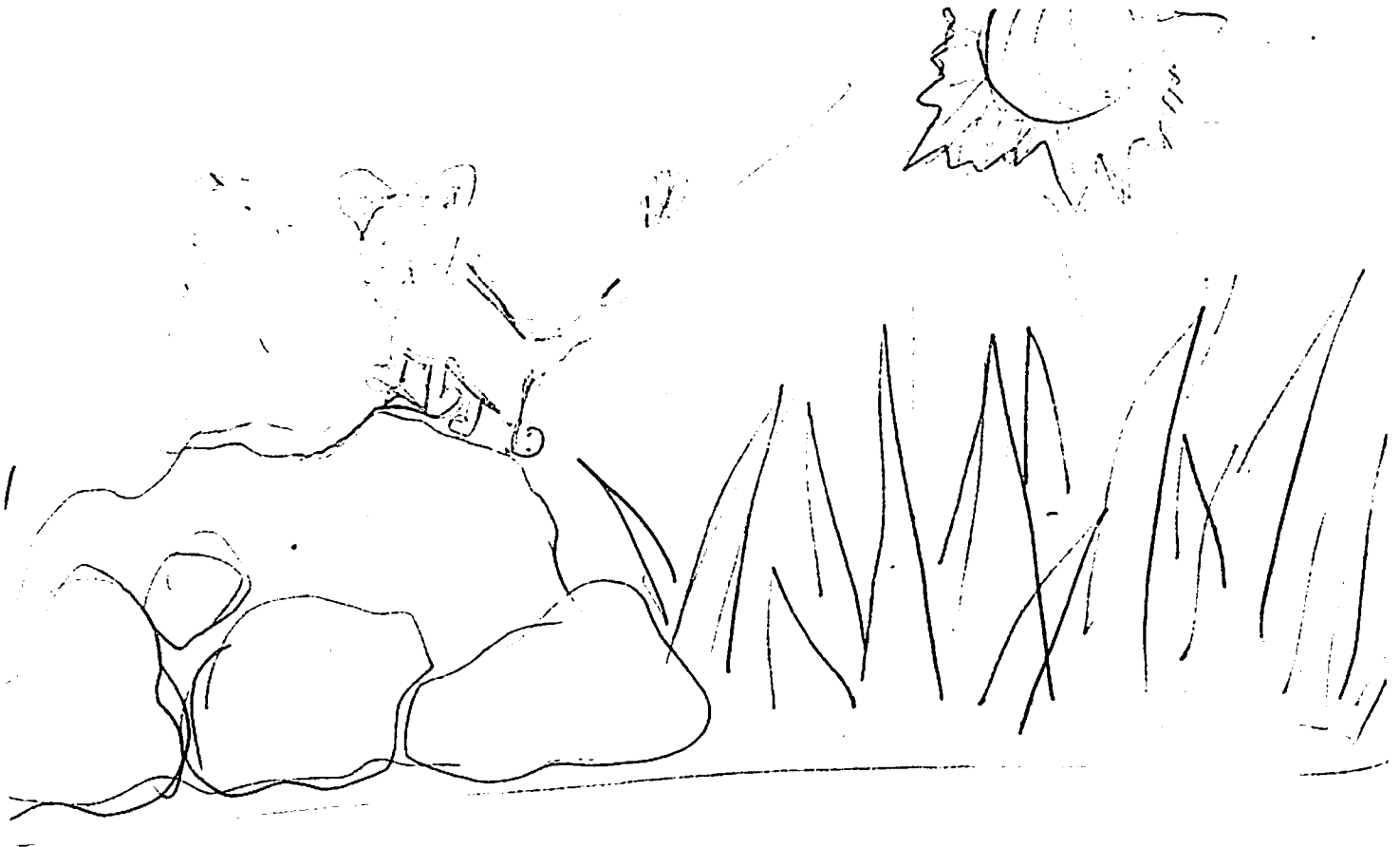
"No. You stepped on my tail. Why should I help you?"

"It's the nice thing to do. I would help you."

"You would help me by getting off my rock," said the snake.

So Sky walked off.

Her thirst was growing as the noonday sun beat down on her back.



Up ahead, she saw bunch of trees.

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"They have spots," she said to herself. "And they're moving!"

Then one of the trees moved right up to her.

"Hello down there."

Sky had never seen such a tall animal before.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Alfred the Giraffe. I almost stepped on you."

"Well, I'm glad you didn't. Do you know where there's a watering
hole? I'm really thirsty!"

"Let's see here. There's one to the east and one to the west."

"Which one should I go to?" asked Sky.

"I don't know east from west, so you go which way you think is
west."

"So west is where I want to go?"

"Or east. It's up to you. Whichever way you end up."

Sky was confused.

"Which way would you go if you were me?" she asked.

"Well I'm not you, so I don't think I can help."

Would nobody help her?

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The air was cooling down as the sun sunk slowly in the sky.

Sky's little legs were tiring out.

She felt all wobbly and shaky.

She curled up into a ball and used her tail as a pillow.

The last thing she saw before she closed her eyes was the black spot
on her tail.

She thought about her father and mother and brothers and sisters
and how they used to curl up together.

She was getting cold and wished for their warmth.

The noises of the other animals in the distance made her afraid.

She remembered her father's words about her black spot on her tail.

"The darkness is part of you," he said. "So you should never be
afraid of it."

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She focused on her father's words and soon she fell asleep.



The next morning she opened her eyes and smelled new smells.

"Where am I?" Sky said.

She looked around at the grass.

It smelled so fresh and it looked so green.

"Mmmm," she said.

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Her paws reached out and she felt soft, wet mud.

"WATER!" Sky yelled.

He got up and ran over to the watering hole.

She saw all the water and jumped in.

Sky was so happy.

She drank so much water that her tummy hurt.

She had been near the watering hole the whole night and didn't
even know it.

And she had found it herself!

Sky couldn't wait to tell her family.

She wanted them to share this beautiful water with her.

Then she looked off into the distance.

One big lion was walking in the grass.

"SKY!" the lion shouted.

He let out a roar to let everyone know he was coming for his cub.

"Papa?" Sky shouted. "I found water!"

Papa came up along side her and smiled.

"So you did, little one."

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"And I slept all night out here in the dark by myself," she said.

"Were you afraid of the night? Did your black spot protect you?"

"Yes, it did." Sky said.

Sky and her father spent the morning at the cool watering hole.

Then they left to go back to the tree on the plain of grass where

Sky's mother and sisters and brothers were waiting.

