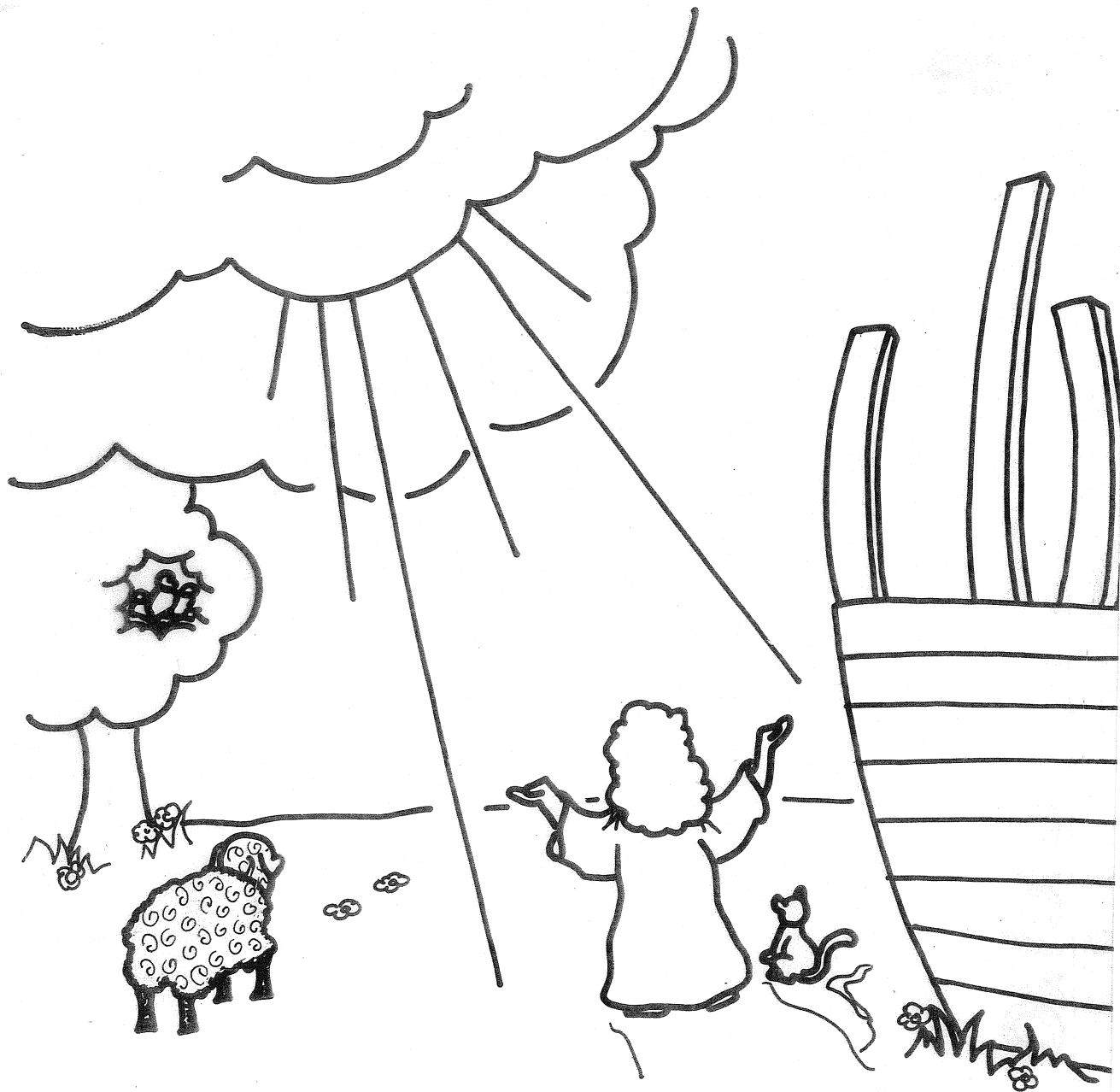


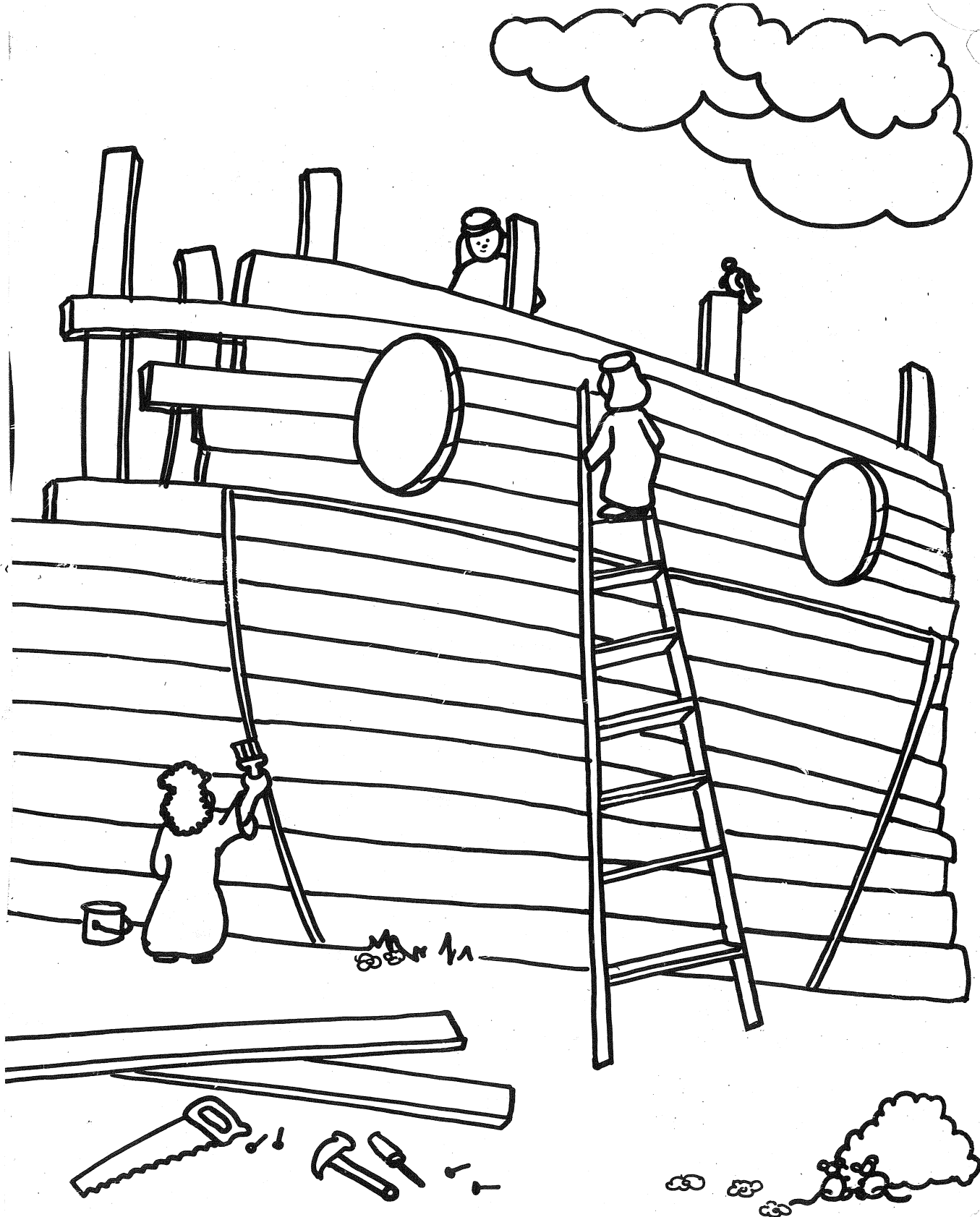
# Noah's Hero



**By Leonard and Lindsey Winneroski**  
**Illustrated by Christine Marino**



A long time ago there was a man named Noah. Noah was God's friend and did everything that God told him to do. One day God told Noah to build a boat that was big enough to hold his family and a mommy and daddy of every kind of land animal because God was going to flood the earth. God was sad because man had become evil and had forgotten how to love Him.

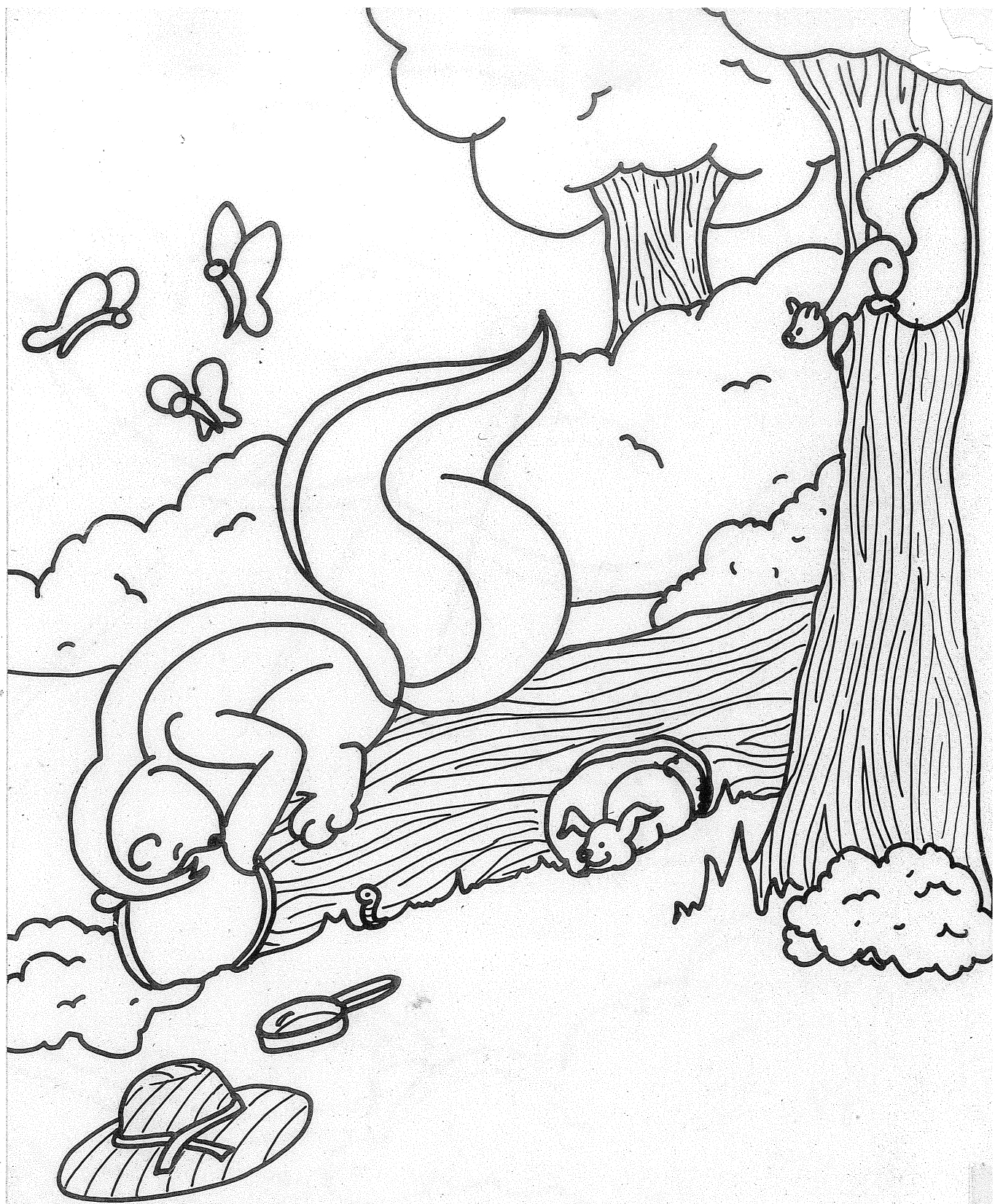




As Noah and his family built the ark, God called the animals. One of the animals God called was a kindhearted skunk named Marcus Stripe. Marcus enjoyed exploring God's beautiful creation more than he liked spraying people with stinky skunk oil.









Because of his good heart, God spoke to him (in skunk language, of course) saying, "Marcus, I have noticed your good deeds and honest heart, and I have chosen you to be the father for a whole new family of skunks." Marcus felt very honored to be chosen by God and he rushed home to tell his wife, Petunia.

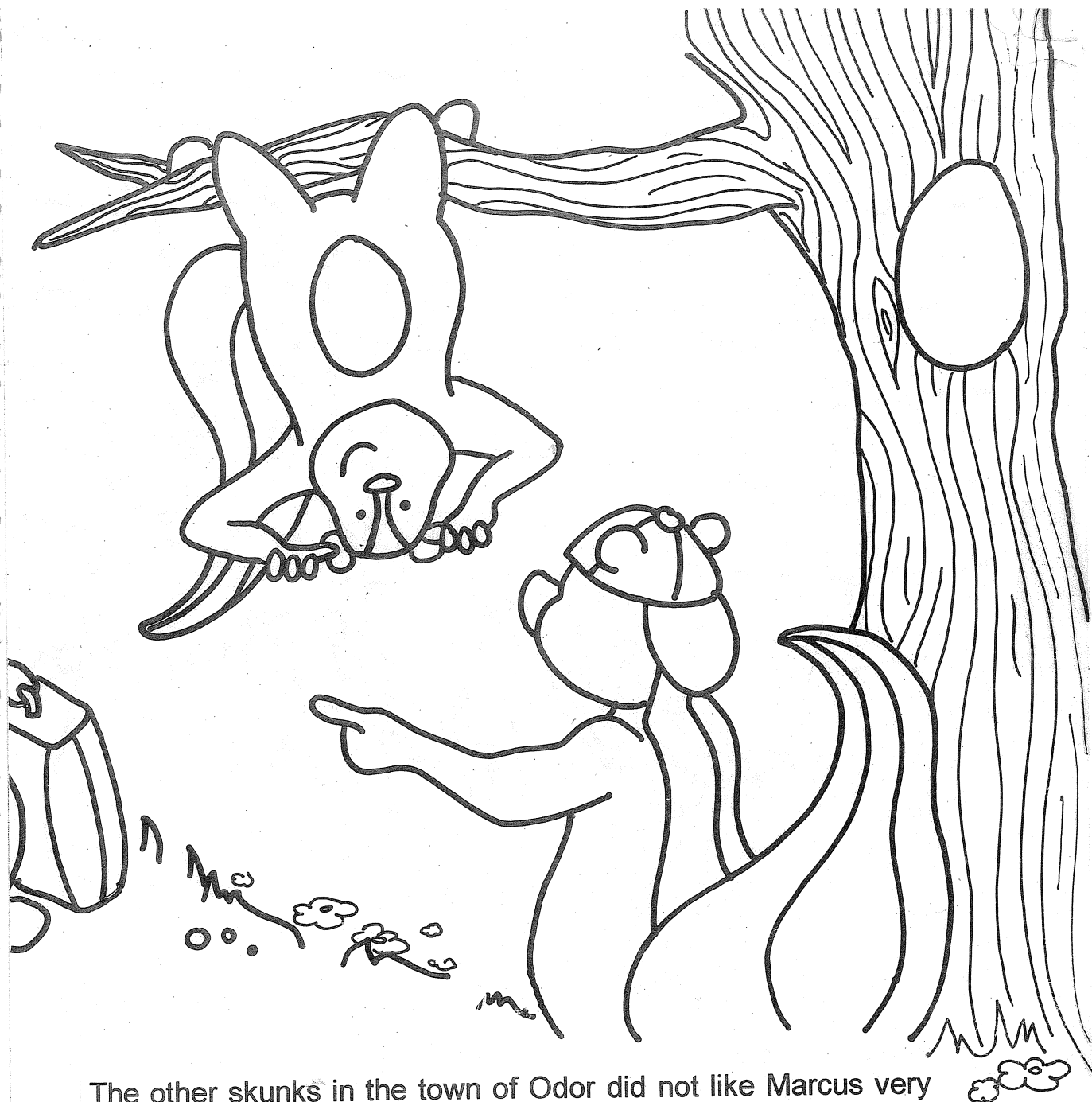


Marcus and Petunia were very happy that God invited them to go with Noah on his ark. The little skunks packed their belongings and began the long journey to meet Noah.









The other skunks in the town of Odor did not like Marcus very much because he did not join them when they sprayed other animals just for the fun of it. When the mean skunks saw that the Stripes were leaving on a trip, they stopped them and asked them where they were going. Marcus told them about Noah's ark and the terrible flood that was coming, but they just laughed at Marcus and told him that he was crazy.

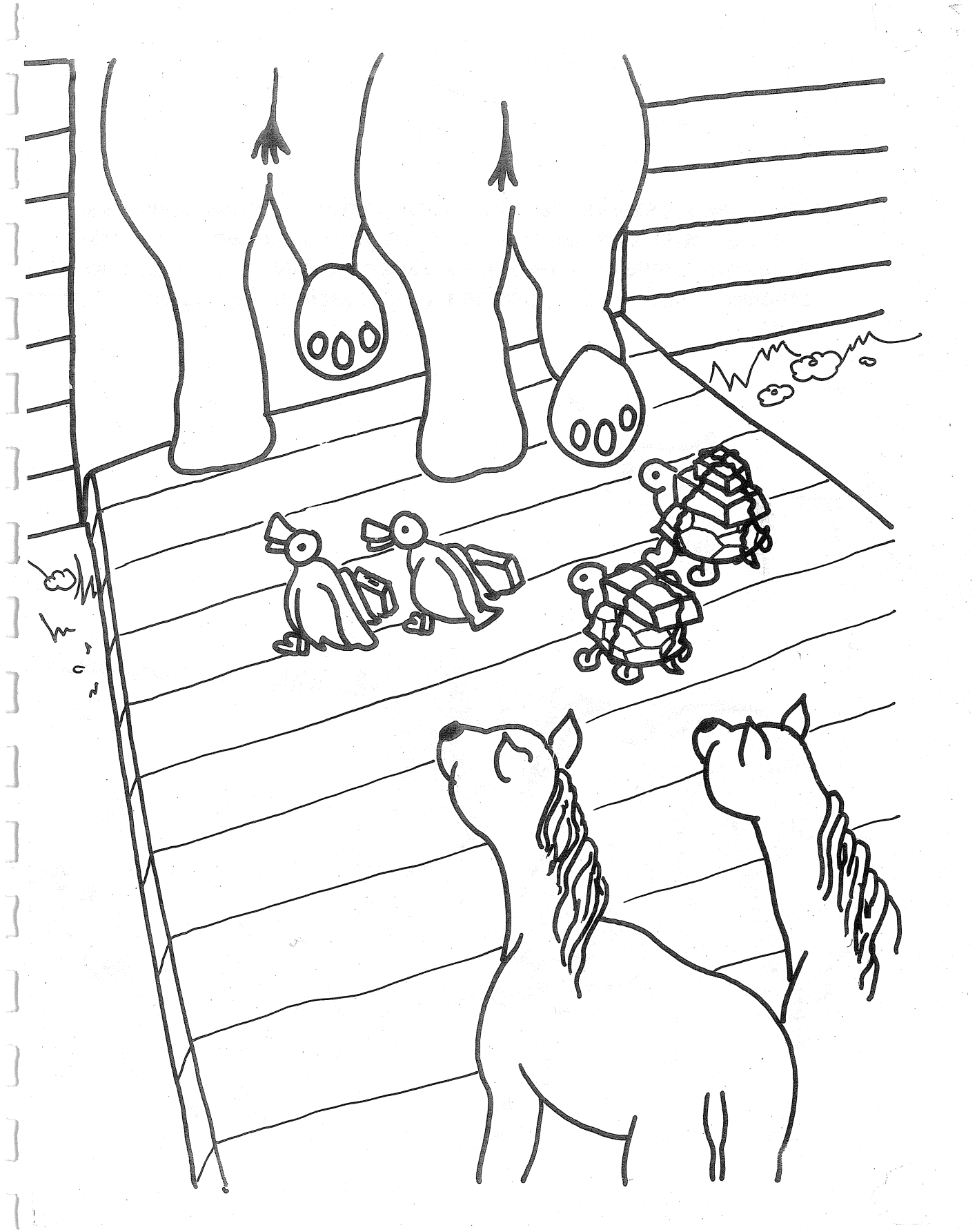




When Marcus and Petunia arrived at the ark, they were surprised by how large it was. Noah and his family were loading the animals into the ark two by two. Marcus and Petunia rushed toward the ark to meet Noah. "Hello, Noah! My name is Marcus and I would like to introduce you to my lovely wife Petunia."

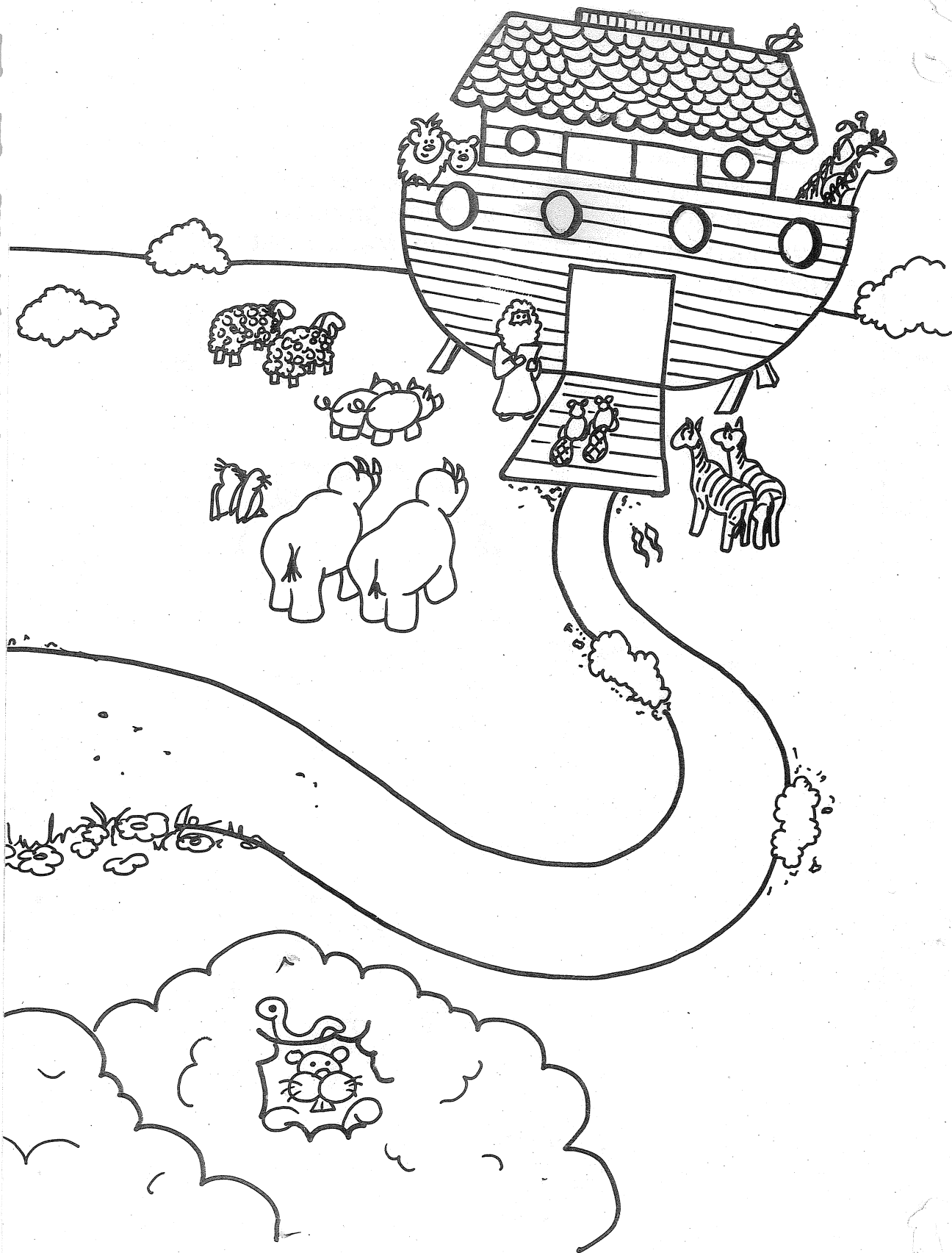
"I am very pleased to meet you" said Noah as he pinched his nose and backed away from the Stripes. Noah asked the skunks to wait in a nearby field until he called them.



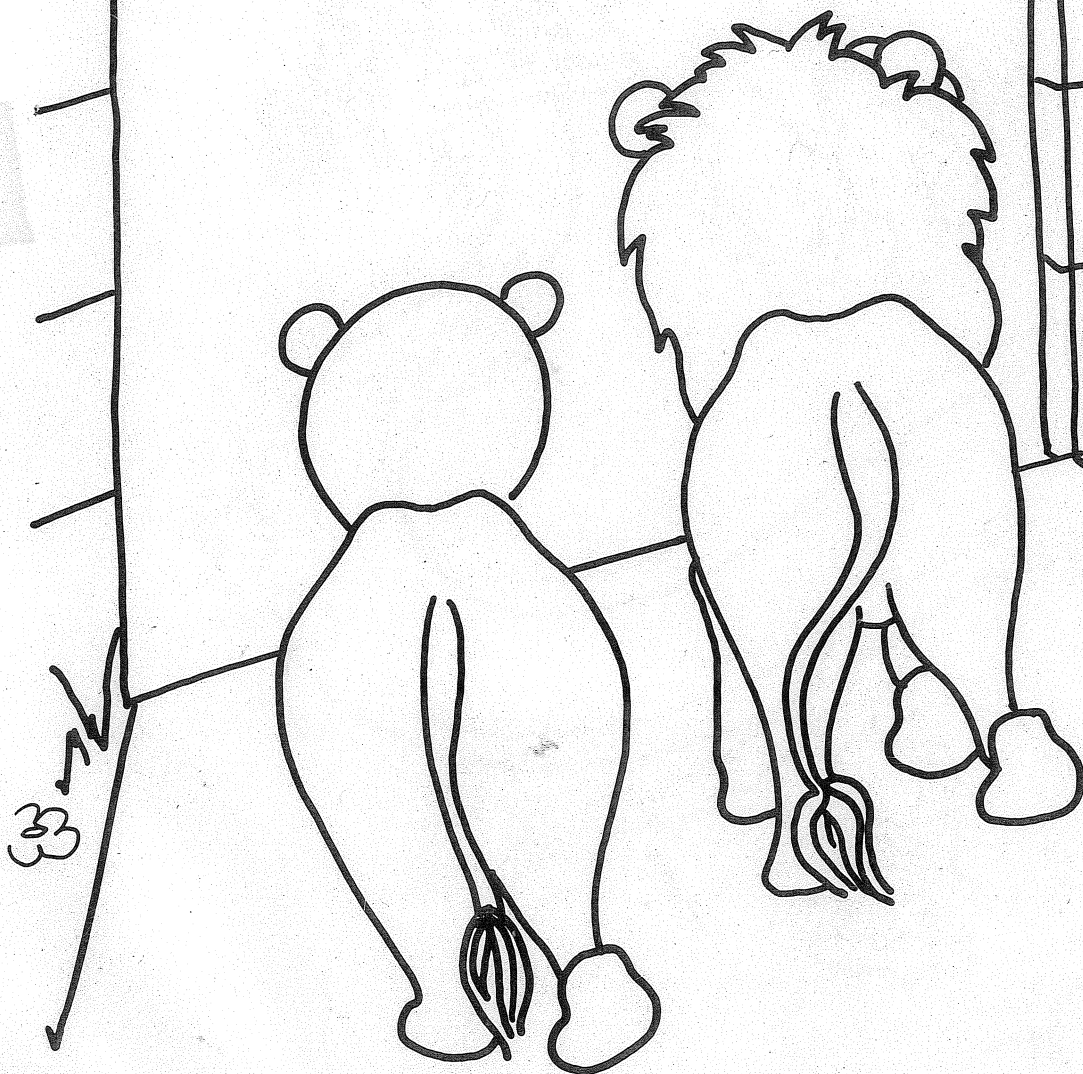


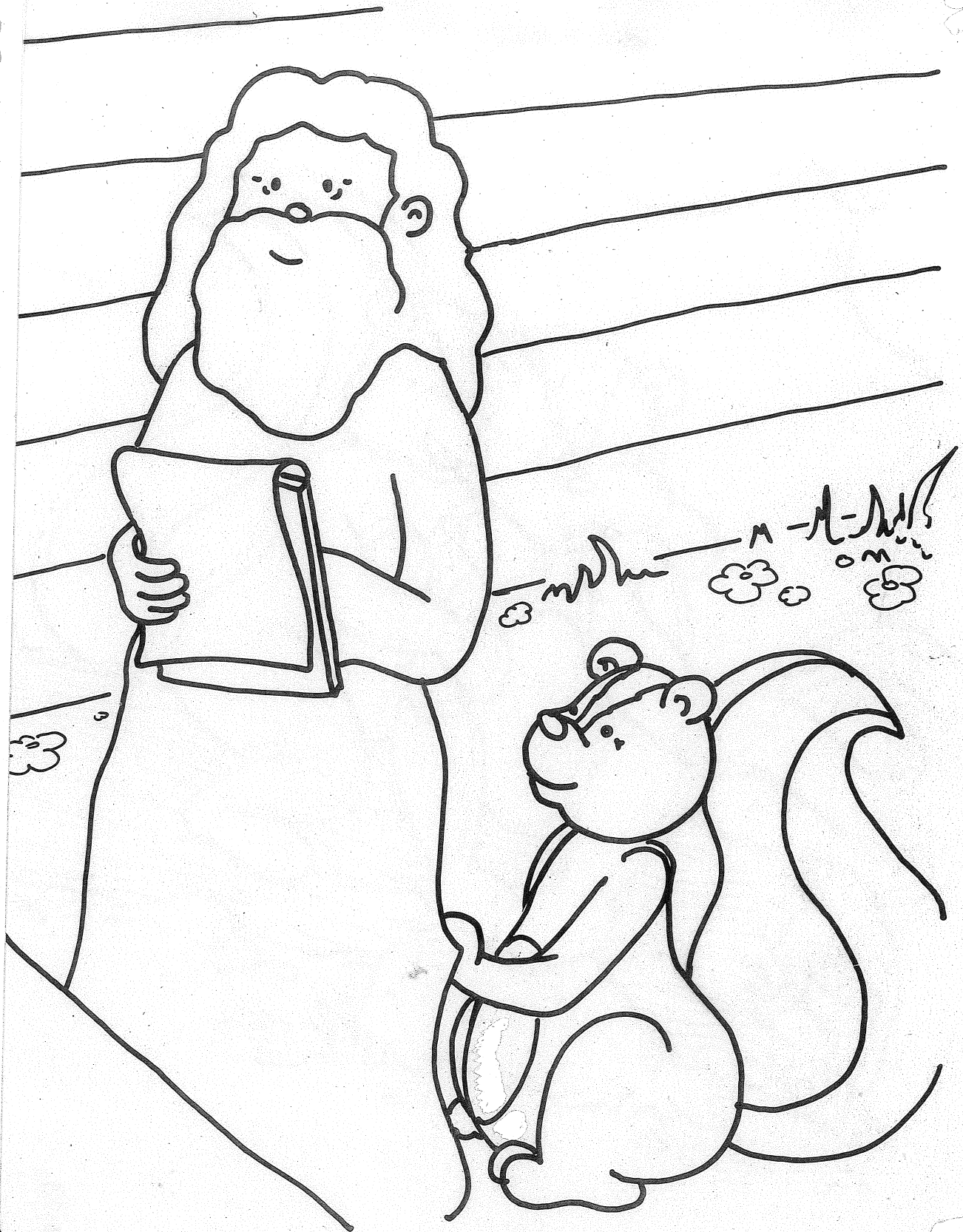
The Stripes rested in the field the whole day. Marcus wondered why the other animals did not have to wait to enter the ark when they arrived. The Stripes began to think that Noah had forgotten them. Marcus decided to approach the ark again.





"Excuse me, Noah," said Marcus. "I hate to be a pest, but we were wondering if you had found a place for us yet?" Noah was very tired from his work and was a little grouchy. "I have not found a place for you yet, Marcus, but I will work on it tomorrow."

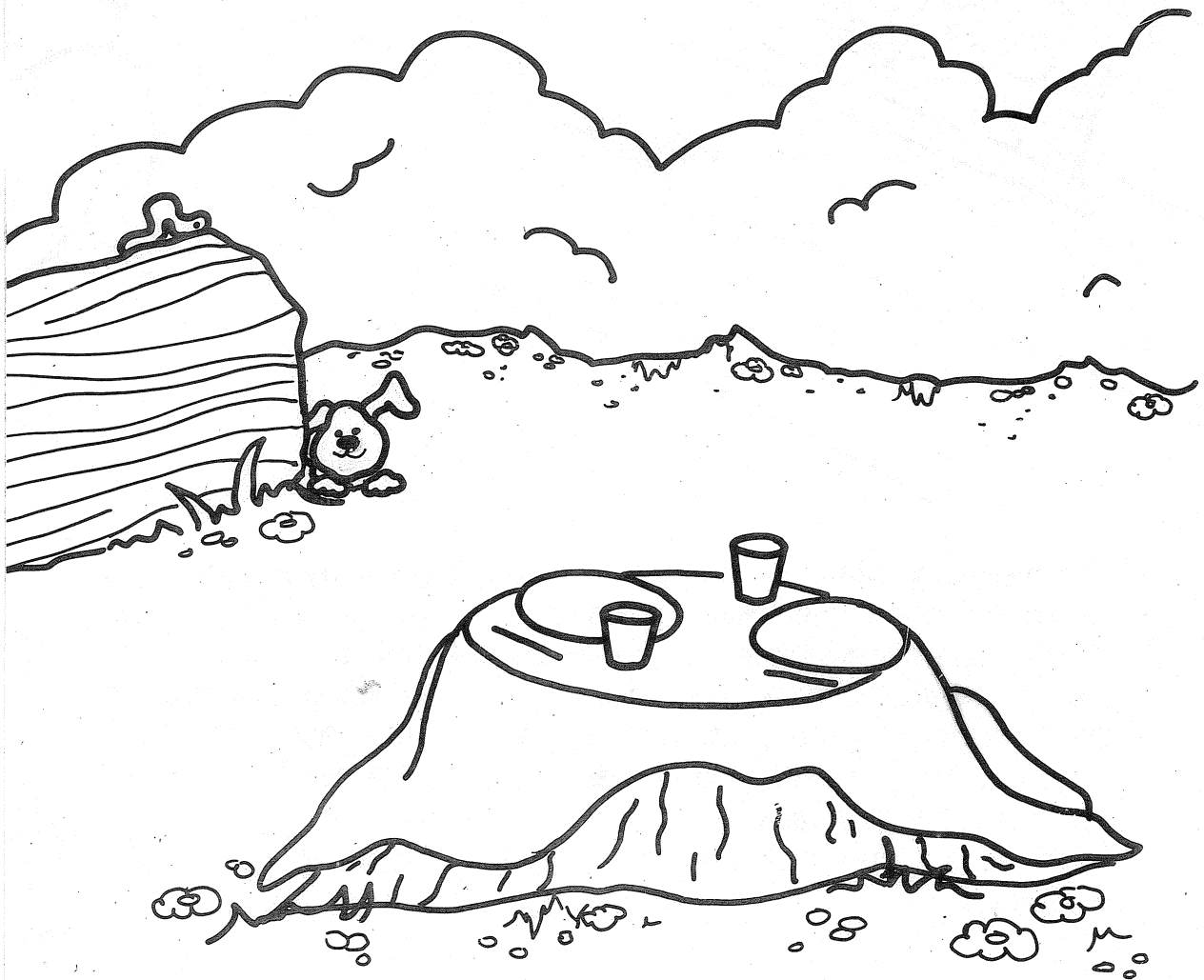


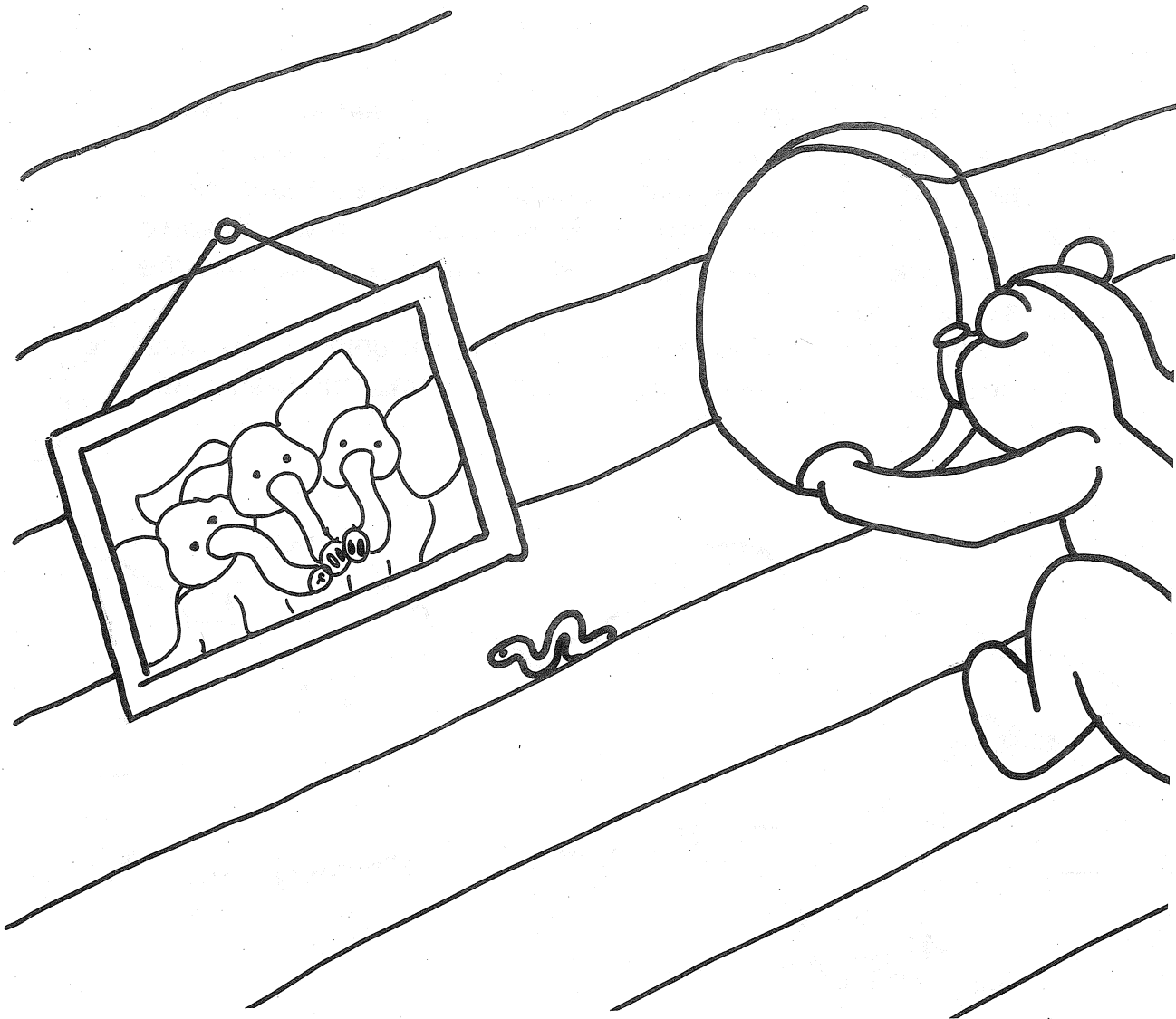




Marcus was very sad that they were being treated differently from the other animals. He tried to fight back tears as he returned to the field to be with Petunia. "Our lives would be so much easier if we didn't stink," said Marcus. "The world would smell a whole lot better if God just washed us away with the others," he groaned.

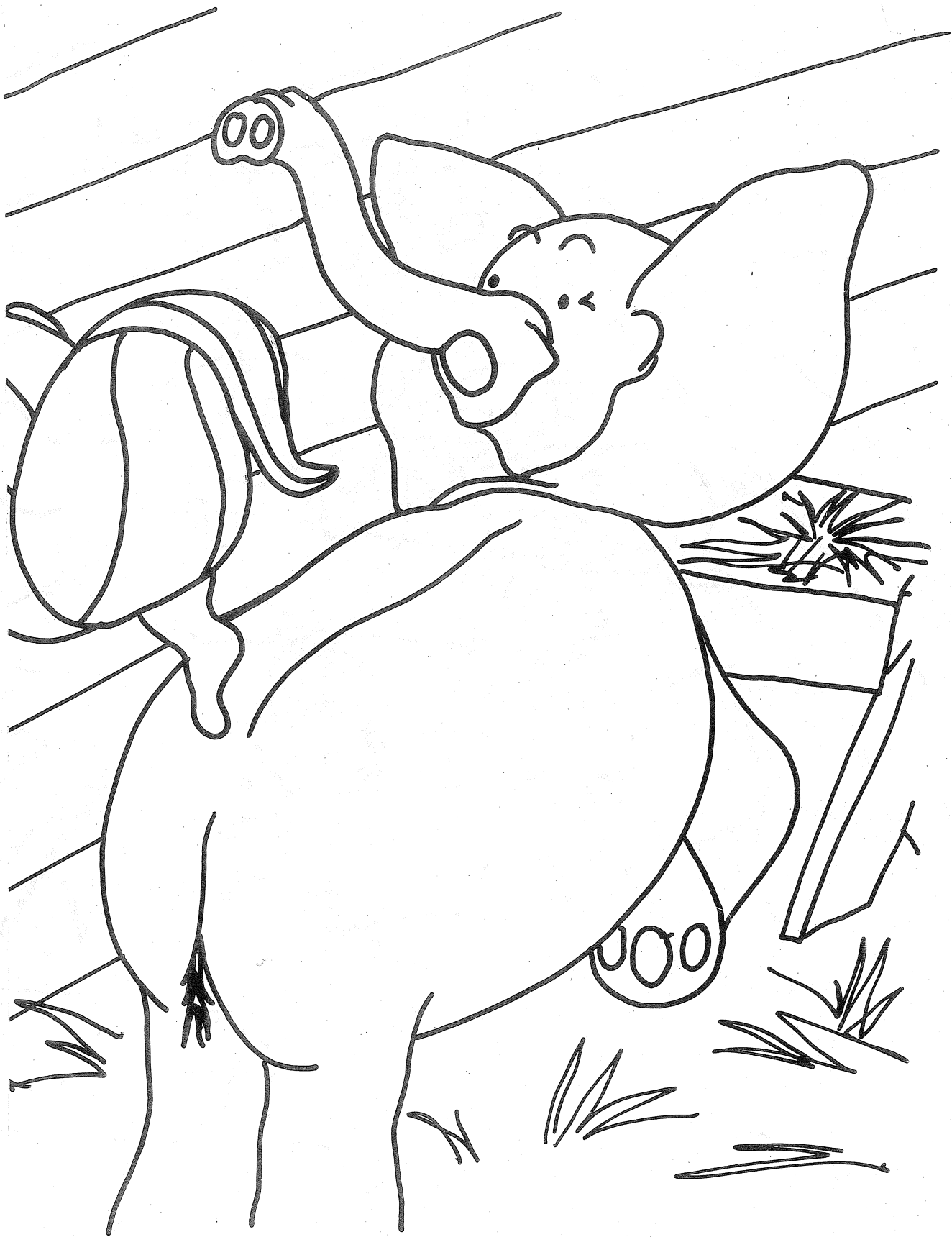
"I think that you smell lovely, dear," said Petunia. "You must not doubt God. He has a purpose for us - and on Noah's Ark, too!"



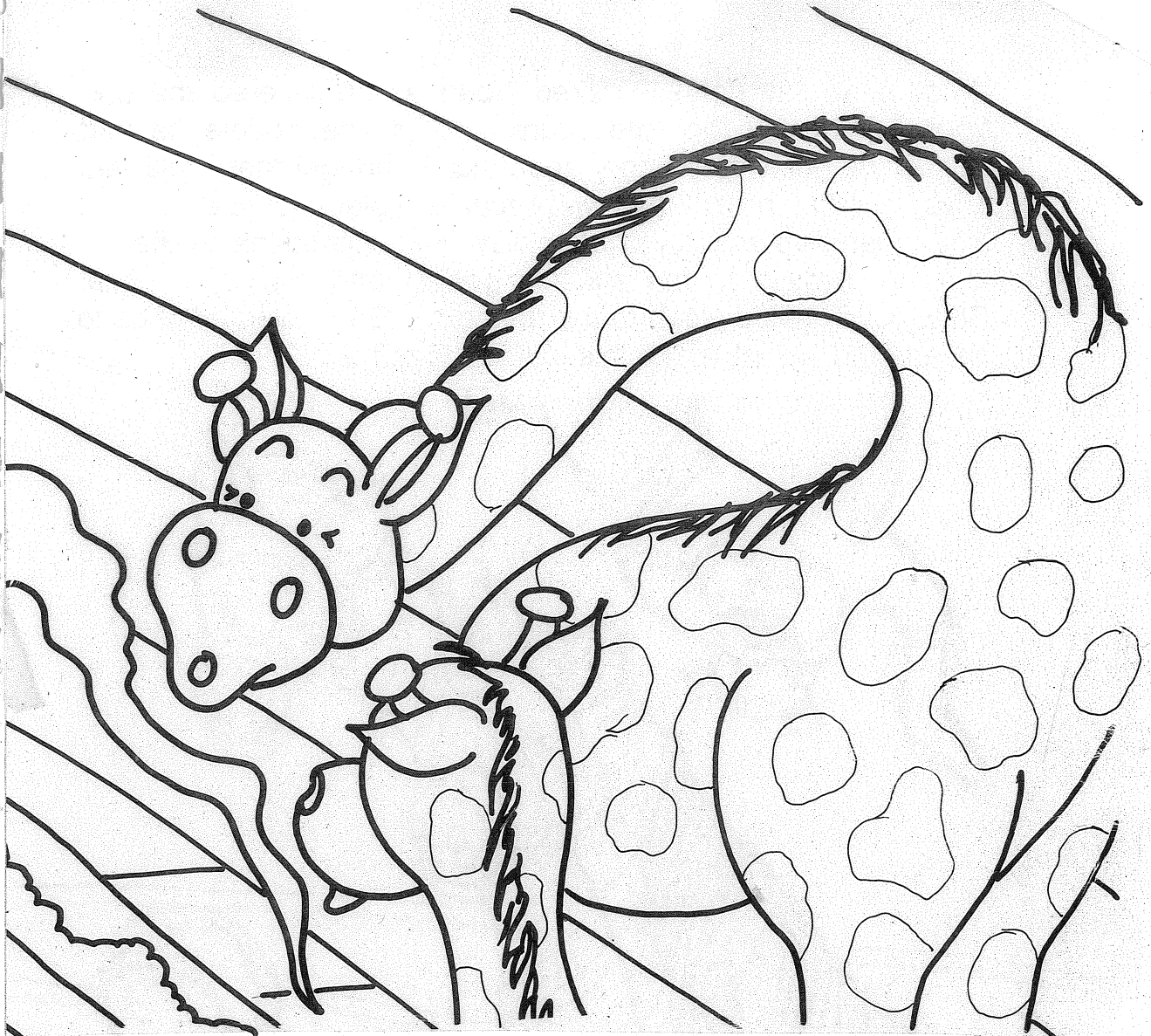


The next day, Marcus decided he couldn't wait any longer to be called by Noah. He told Petunia that he was going for a walk, but instead he sneaked (as much as a skunk can sneak) into the ark through an open window. As Marcus squeezed through the window, he stepped right on top of an elephant's back! "What is that smell?" said the elephant as he buried his trunk into a nearby haystack. "Don't look at me" said his wife. "Noah just cleaned our stall an hour ago!"









All the animals on the ark were looking to see what the commotion was about. Marcus was very frightened and jumped off the elephant's back into the aisle between the stalls. "Hold on friends!" yelled Marcus as the animals surrounded the little skunk. "My name is Marcus and I was invited by God to be on this ark with my wife Petunia."

"God didn't tell me that I would have to travel with a smelly old skunk when I agreed to go on this ark!" shouted a male zebra from a nearby stall.

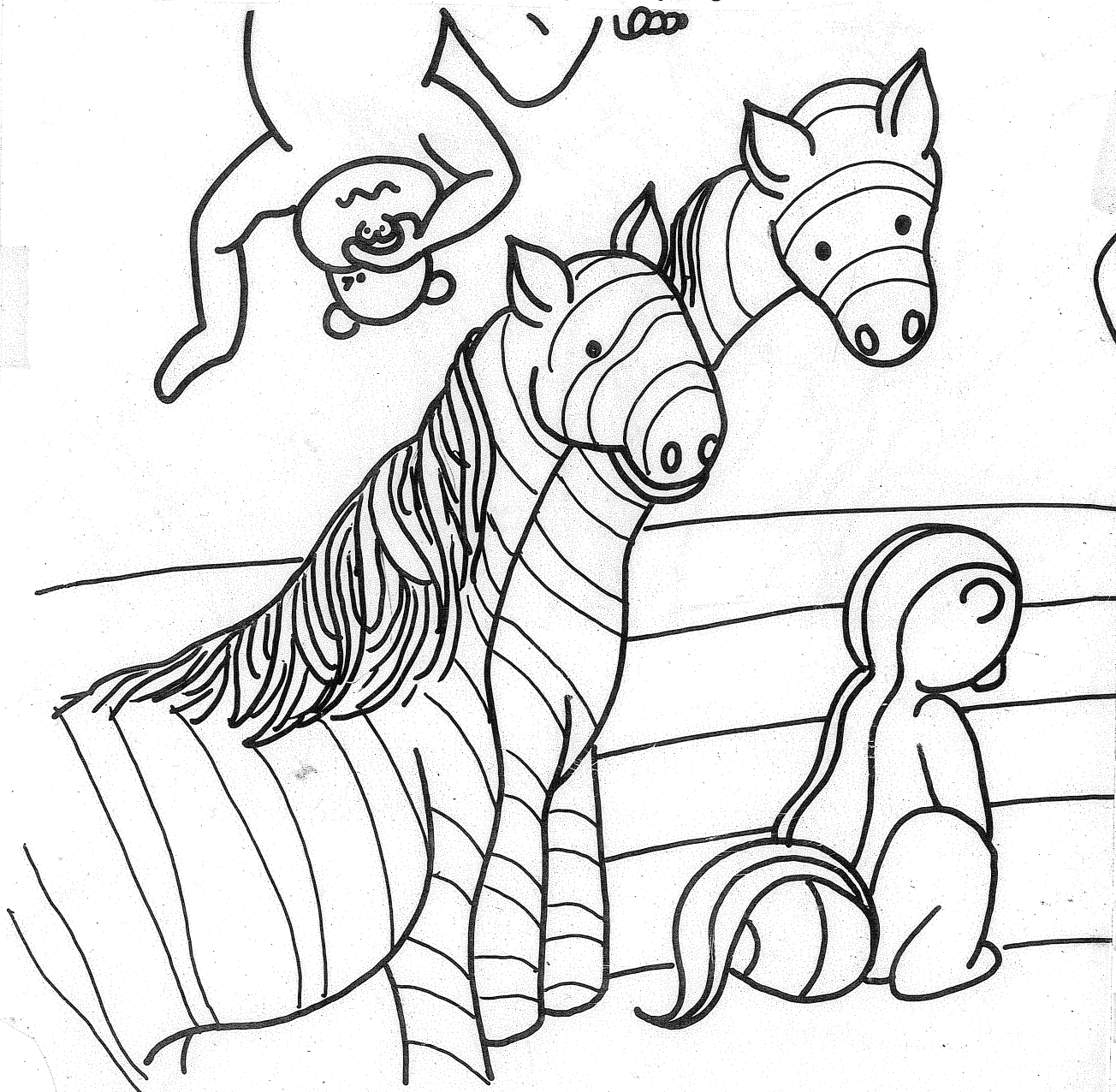
"Yeah!" chimed in the other animals as they all started yelling for Noah.

"What is all this noise?" asked Noah as he entered the ark. When Noah saw the little skunk and all the trouble he had caused, he grew very angry and said, "I thought that I told you to wait *outside* the ark until we prepared a place for you!"

"You mean he's actually *coming with us*?" whined the giraffe.

"If he is coming on the ark, I'm getting off!" cried the zebra.

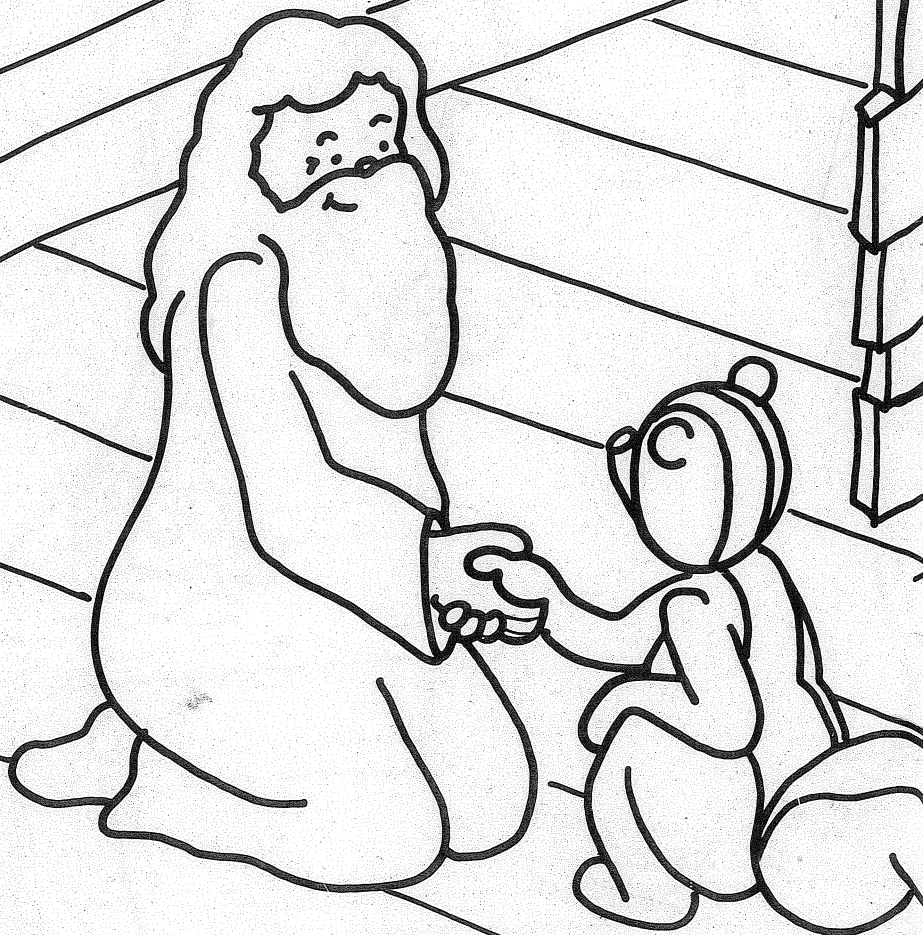
"SILENCE!" yelled Noah to the animals. "God called *all* of us to this ark and we will make this journey together!"

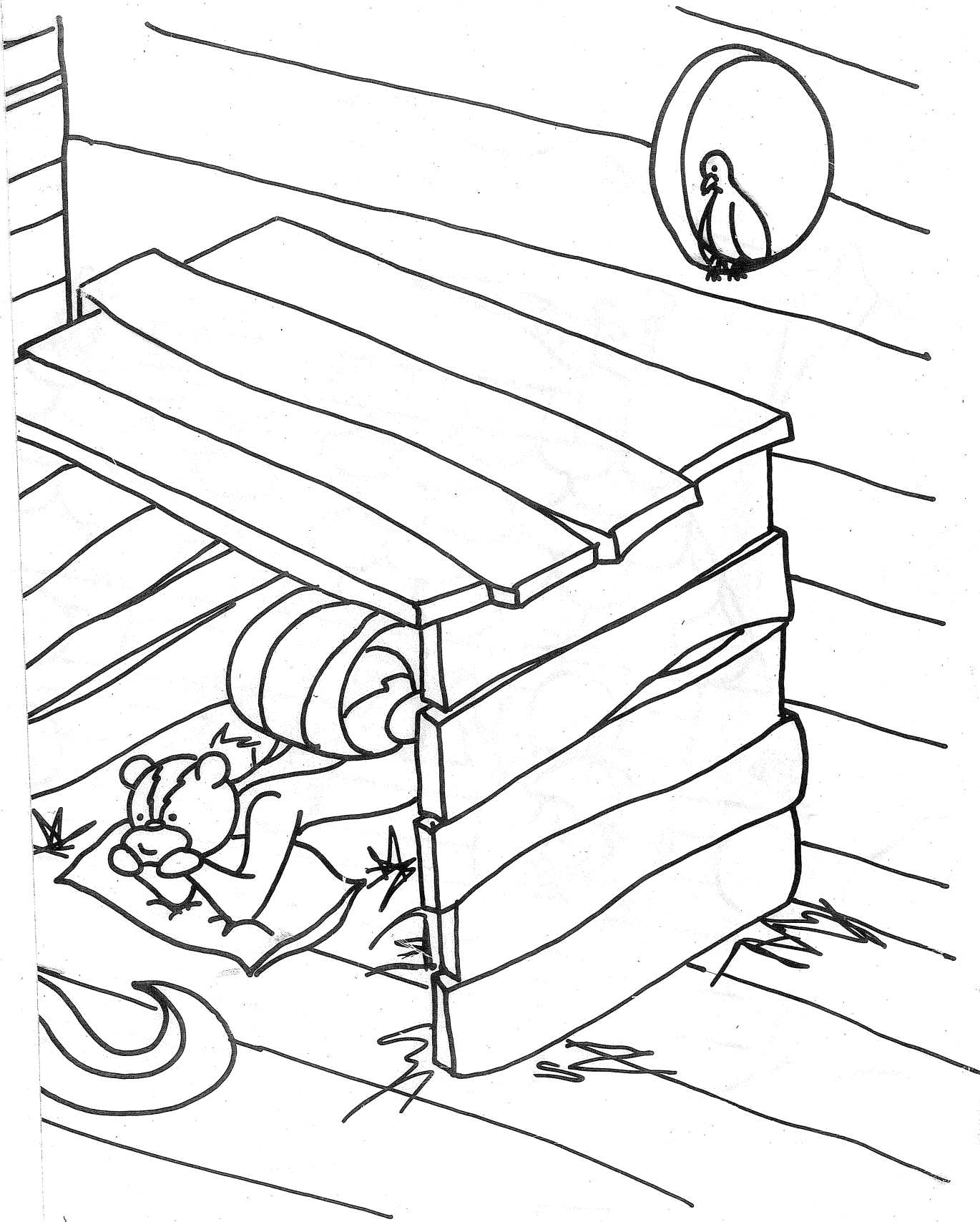


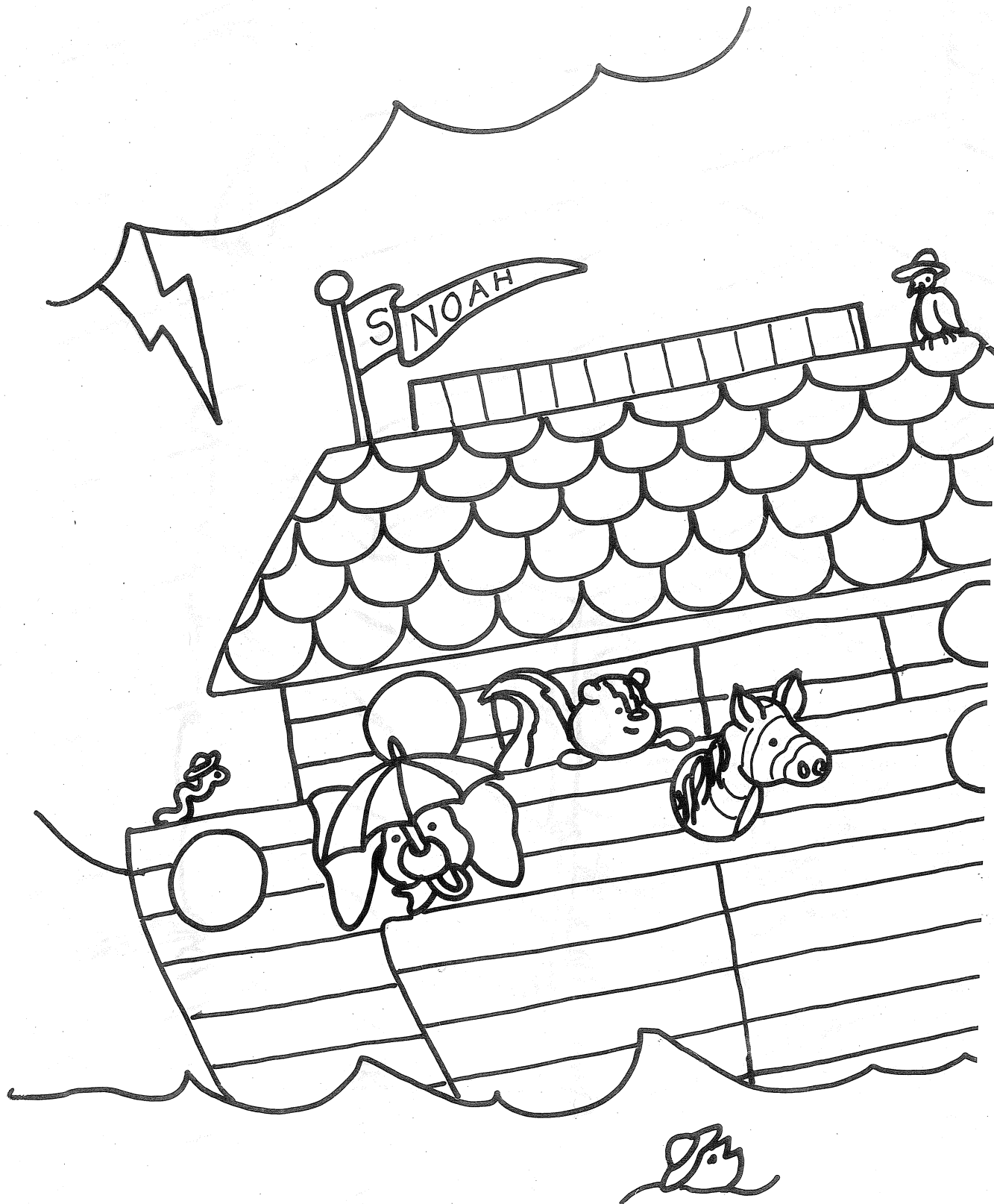




Noah told Marcus to find Petunia and meet him back at the ark at once. Noah led them to the top deck of the ark to a special stall that had been built just for them. "I hope that you will both be comfortable here," said Noah. "It will be much more pleasant for you and for the rest of the animals if you stay here."



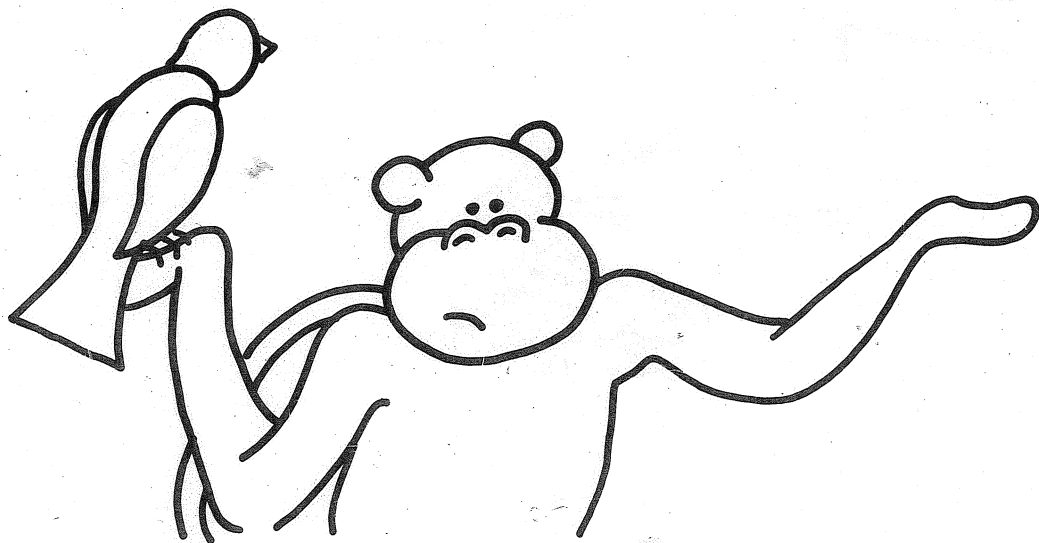
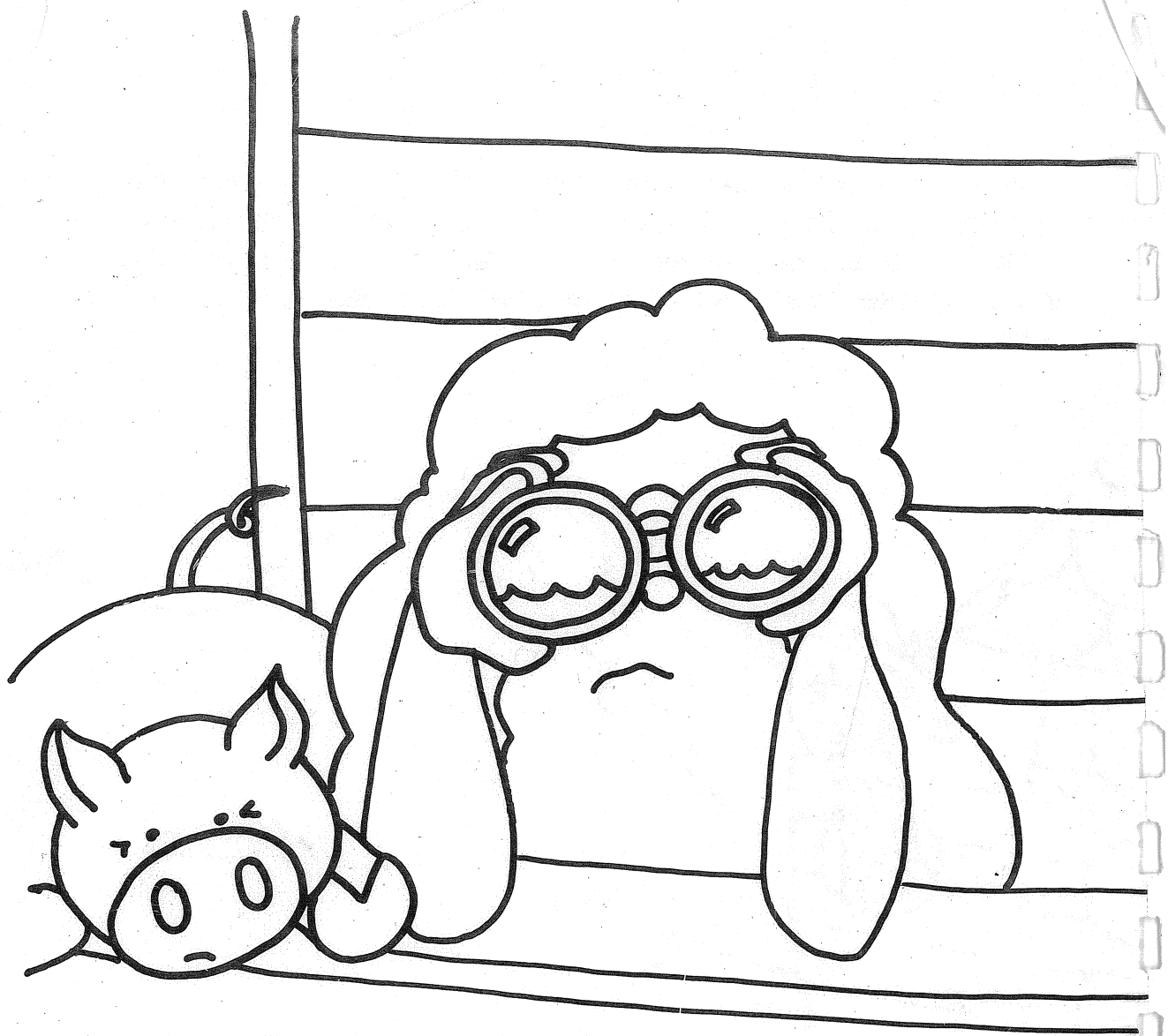


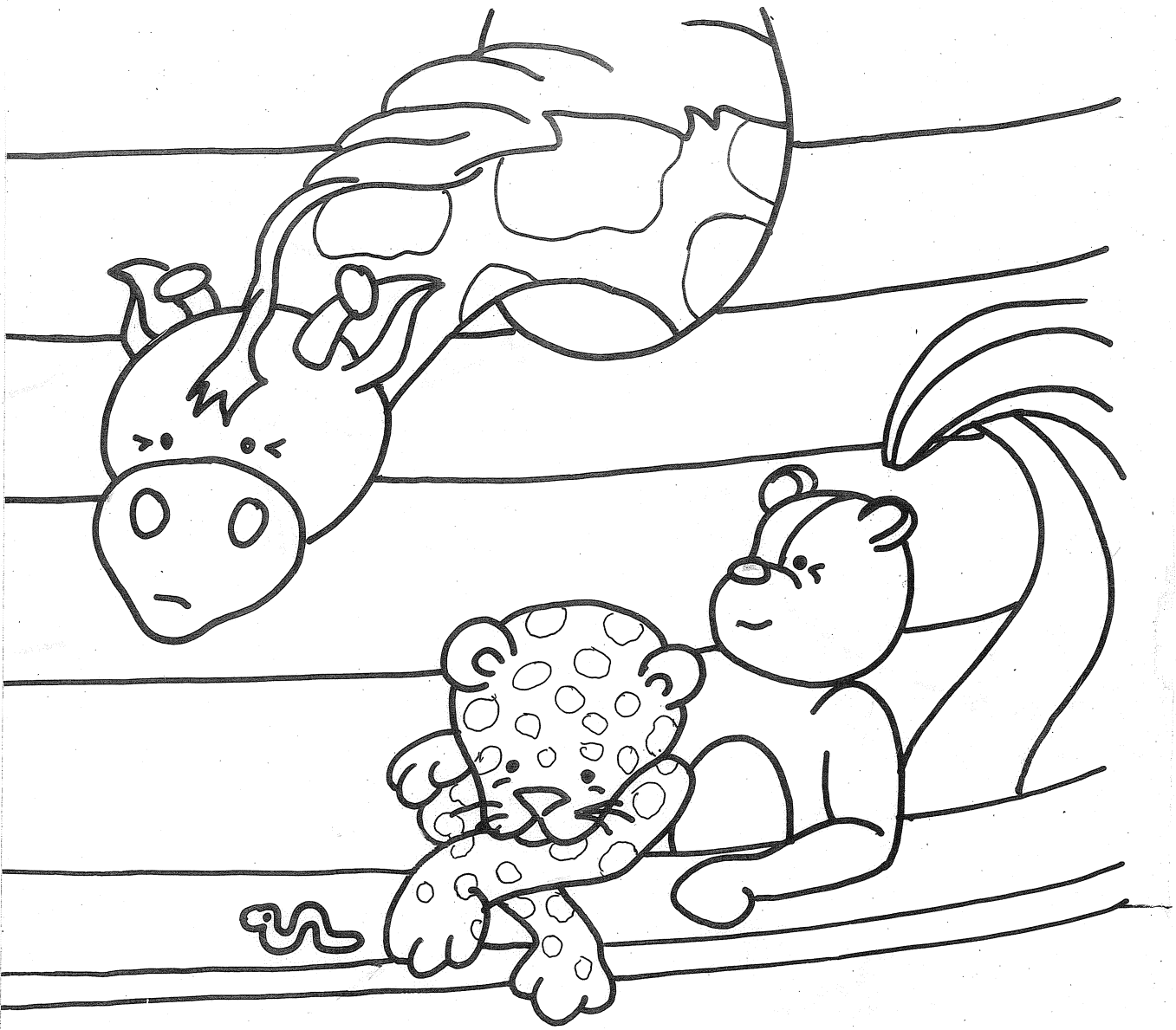




Later that evening, black storm clouds began to fill the sky and thunder roared from the heavens. The animals all raced to their stalls. It rained and rained for forty days and forty nights and the ark rocked back and forth as the earth was covered with water.



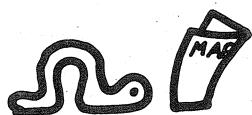
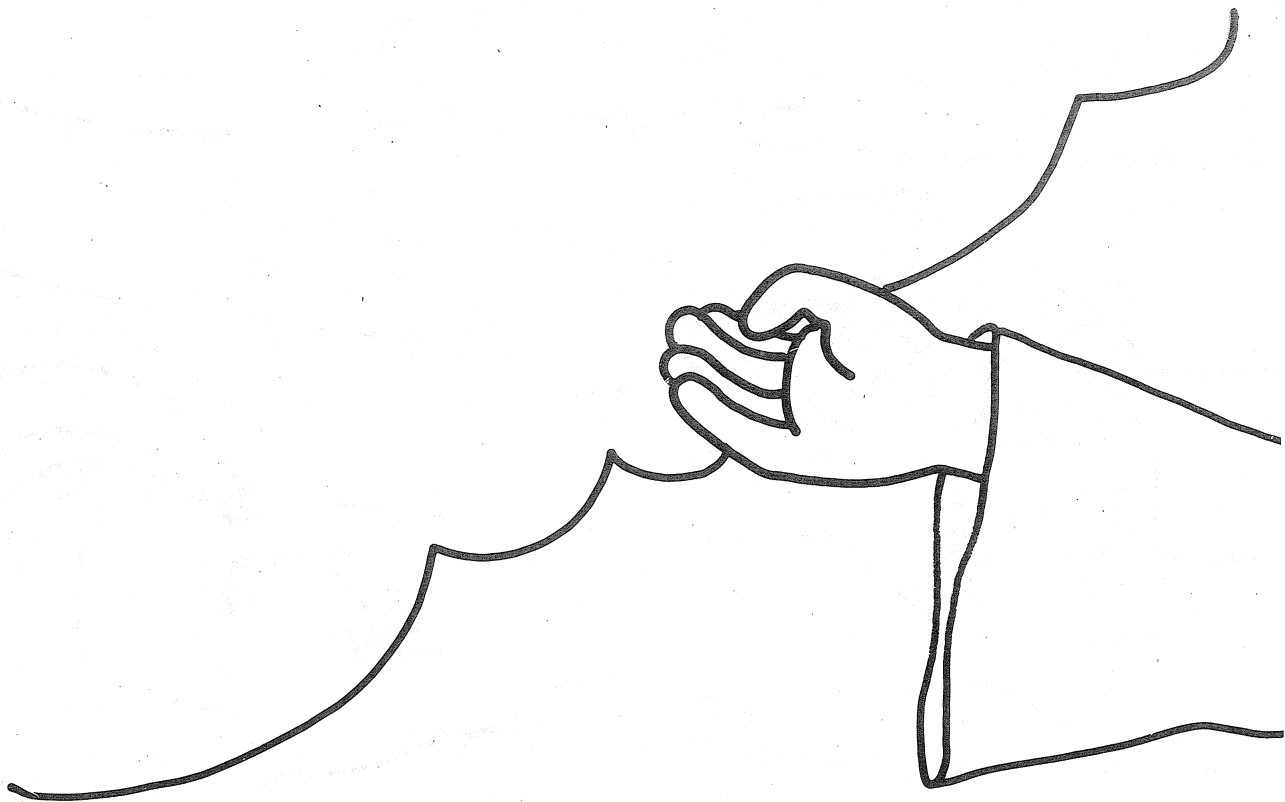




When the forty days were over, the rain stopped just as suddenly as it had started. The ark floated on the new ocean for many weeks. Noah's family began to worry that God had forgotten them since all they could see for miles and miles was water. The animals had also started to worry.

"If God does not rescue us soon our food will run out!" complained the pigs.

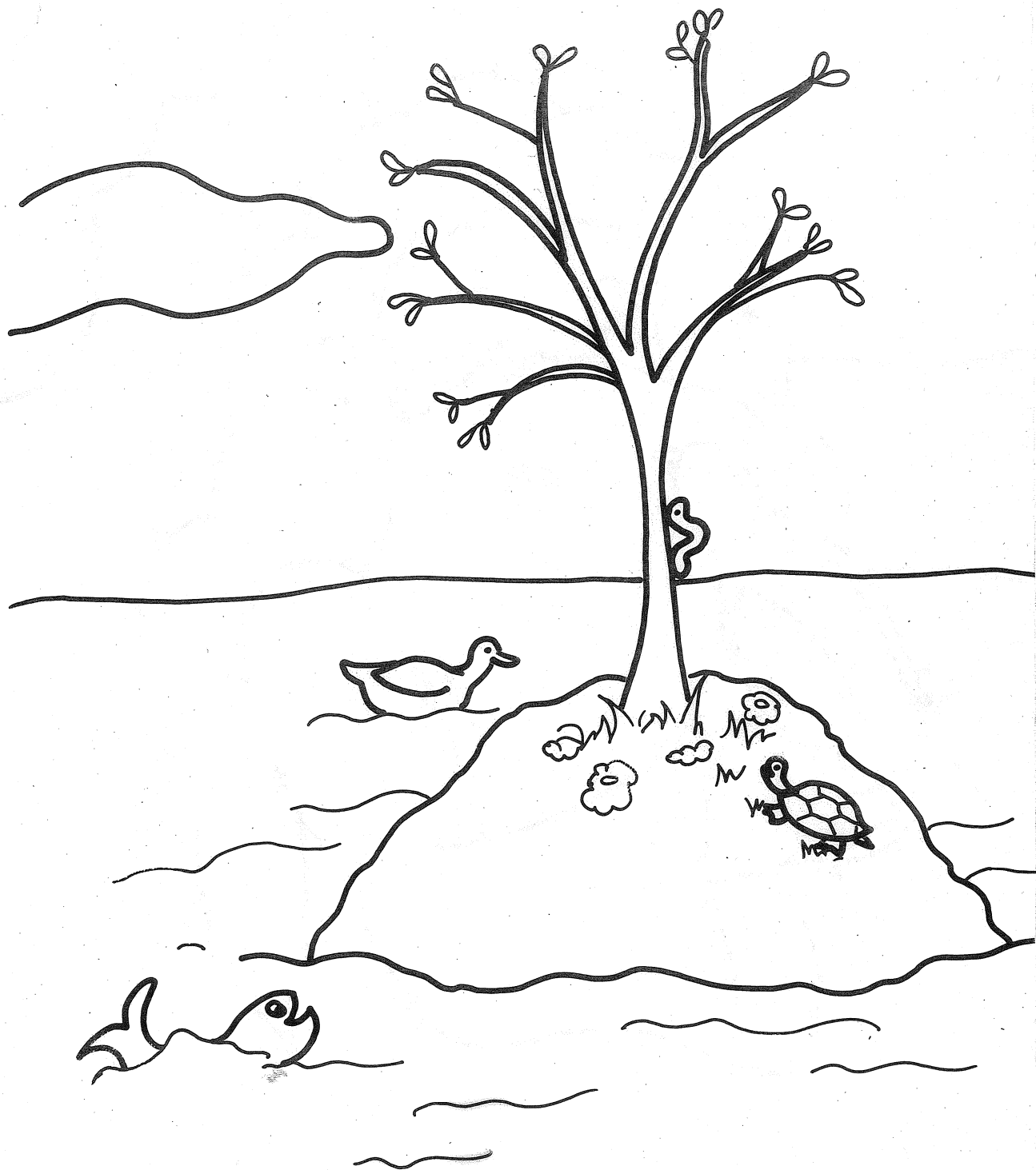
"If we don't get off this boat we will forget how to run," sobbed the cheetahs.

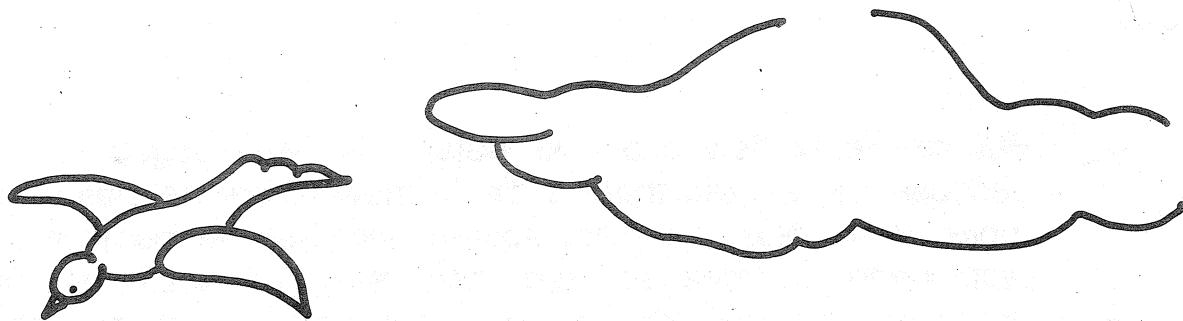


Noah knew that the animals were getting restless, so he called for Henry the dove and told him to fly around and look for land. Henry returned after several hours, exhausted from flying. "It's no use, Noah," said the dove. "I flew all around and all I saw was water. Noah was sad, but he knew in his heart that God had not forgotten them.

"You must not lose hope, little dove," said Noah. "The animals and I are counting on you." After resting for a little while, Henry flew out over the ocean once more to look for dry land.

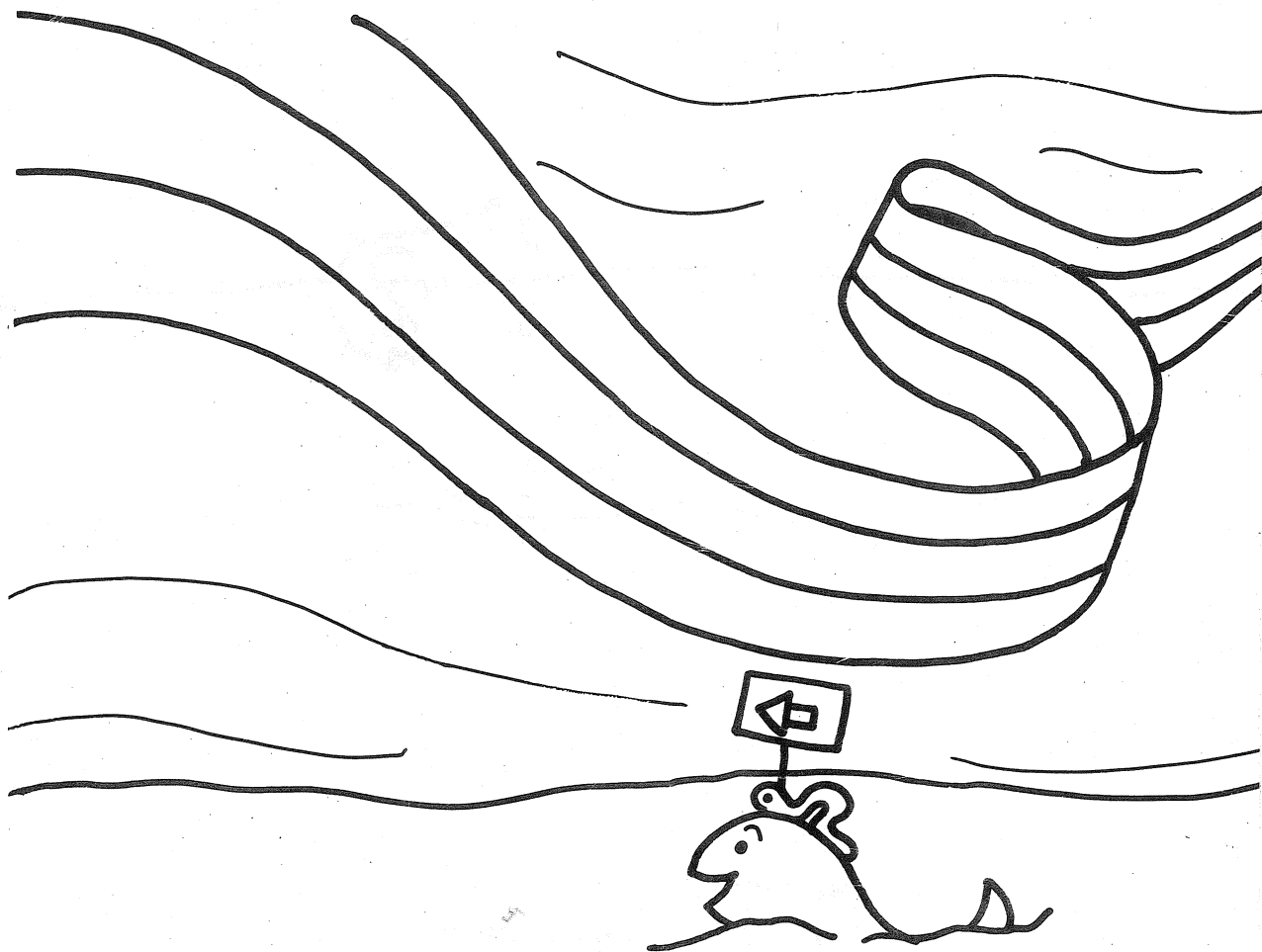




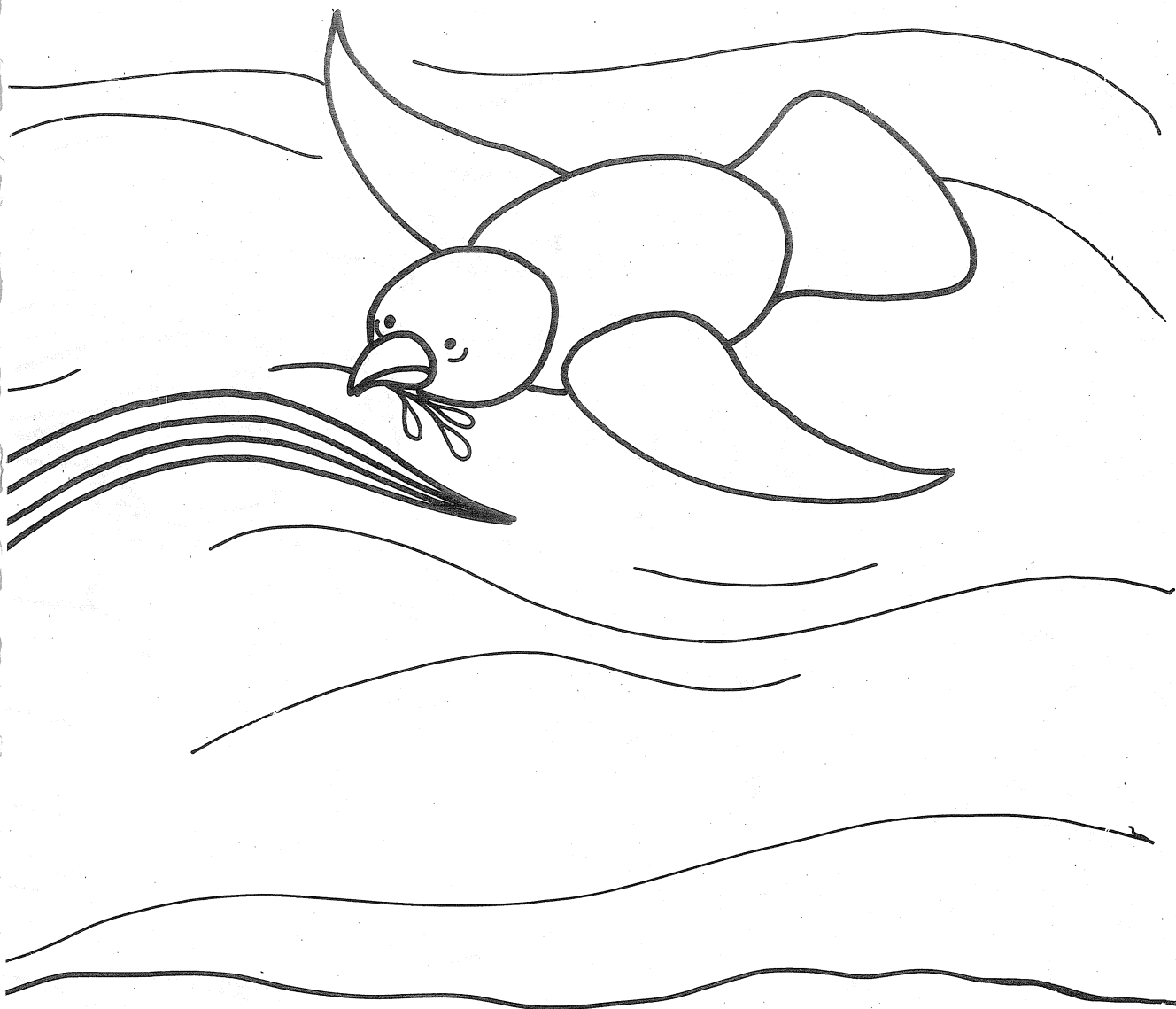


Just when Henry was ready to give up, his heart jumped as he spotted a small island with a tree in the middle of it. "We're saved!" cried Henry as he raced toward the tree. He rested in the tree for a while and then broke off a branch with his beak and soared into the air again.

But as Henry flew over the water, his heart began to sink because he realized that he didn't know where he was. The more Henry flew, the more scared and tired he became. In fact, Henry became so tired that his wings would not flap anymore and he started to fall from the sky toward the ocean below. Just before Henry was ready to splash into the water, he took a deep breath and then shook his head.



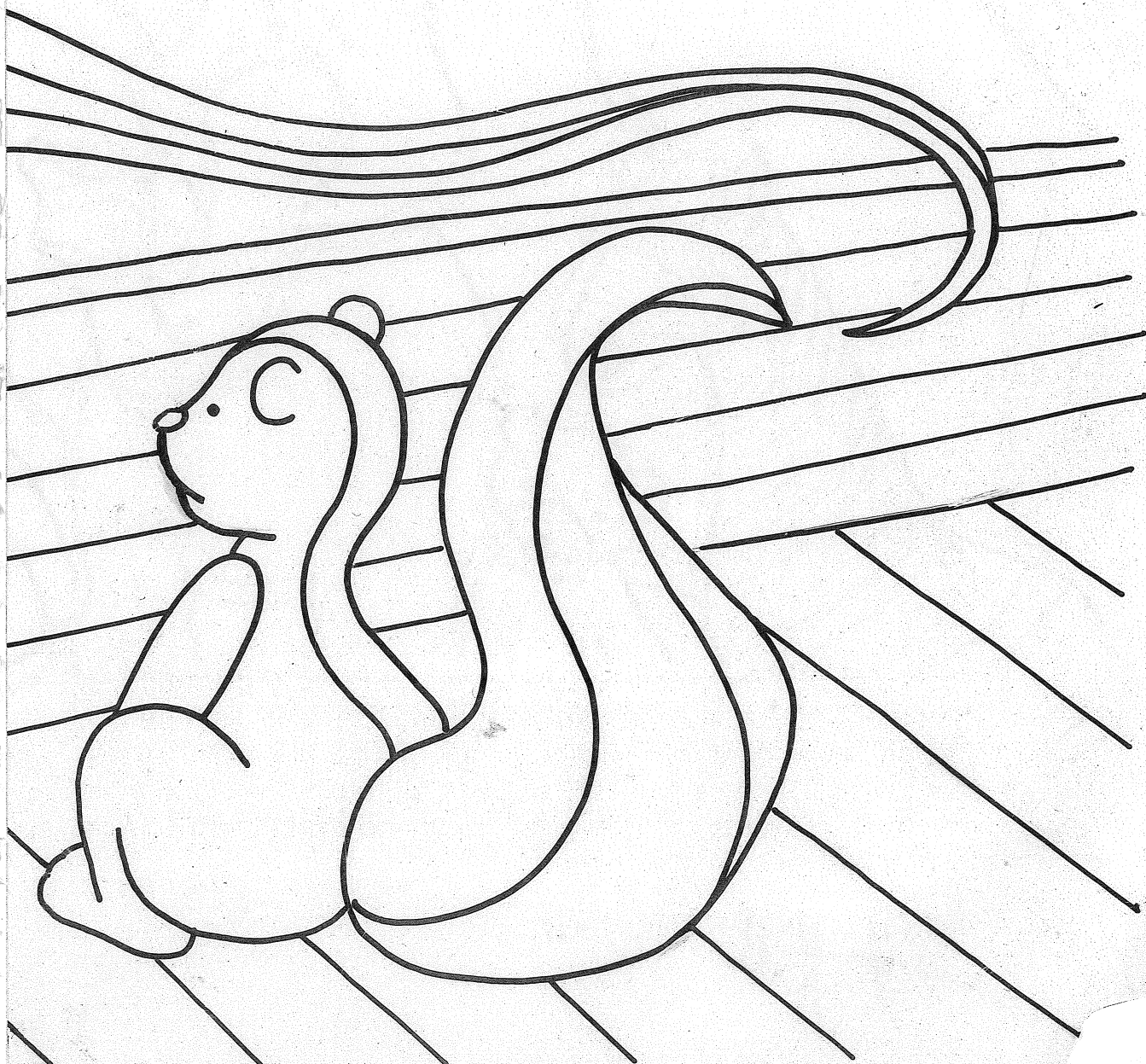




"What is that terrible smell?" thought Henry. "Wait!" cried Henry as he began to flap his wings once again. "I know what that smell is!" "That wonderful smell belongs to some friends of mine that just happen to be on Noah's Ark!" Henry laughed as he followed the horrible smell all the way back to the ark.



Noah was waiting on the deck of the ark when Henry reached it. The little dove gave Noah the tree branch and told him all about his journey and how he would have died if he hadn't smelled Marcus and Petunia back on the ark. The news of the tree branch spread quickly amongst the animals, as did the story of how the Stripes' heavenly odor had saved the dove by guiding him back safely to the ark.





Noah and all the animals rejoiced over the news of dry land and thanked God for making skunks. From that day forward the Stripes were honored guests at all of the animal's homes. Marcus and Petunia had helped them all realize that God does not make mistakes, and he gives *everyone* wonderfully special (and sometimes smelly) gifts.

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