



AND D O W N WENT POSS

Written by Anne Little

Illustrated by Denise McMahon

NOTE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Epilepsy affects one to two people out of every hundred. People can develop epilepsy at any stage of their lives, however most people have their first seizure in childhood. It is estimated that 64% of people develop epilepsy before the end of their primary school years.

Children with epilepsy are often unwittingly subjected to isolation and rejection by play/classmates who fail to understand their condition. In order to eliminate the fear and misconception associated with epilepsy, it is important to foster positive, caring attitudes towards epilepsy as early as possible.

Young children are receptive to new ideas and accepting of people who are different. The purpose of this book is to positively influence children's attitudes towards epilepsy by educating them about the condition as early as possible.

NOTE: Epilepsy is a condition which affects animals as well as human beings. Dogs, cats and possums are just a few of the animals known to have epilepsy.

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Little Poss was so small when he was born that you could hardly see him. Everyday he grew and grew. Soon he would be able to come out of his mother's pouch. Finally, the big day arrived, Little Poss was coming out for his first glimpse of the world.



Little Poss slowly crawled out of the safety of the pouch. At first, he was very wobbly. He had to hold on tight as he crawled up onto his mother's back. Then he sat perfectly still and looked around. He couldn't believe his eyes. It was so different to being inside the dark pouch. Little Poss could see tall trees, fluffy clouds and brightly coloured birds. It was wonderful.

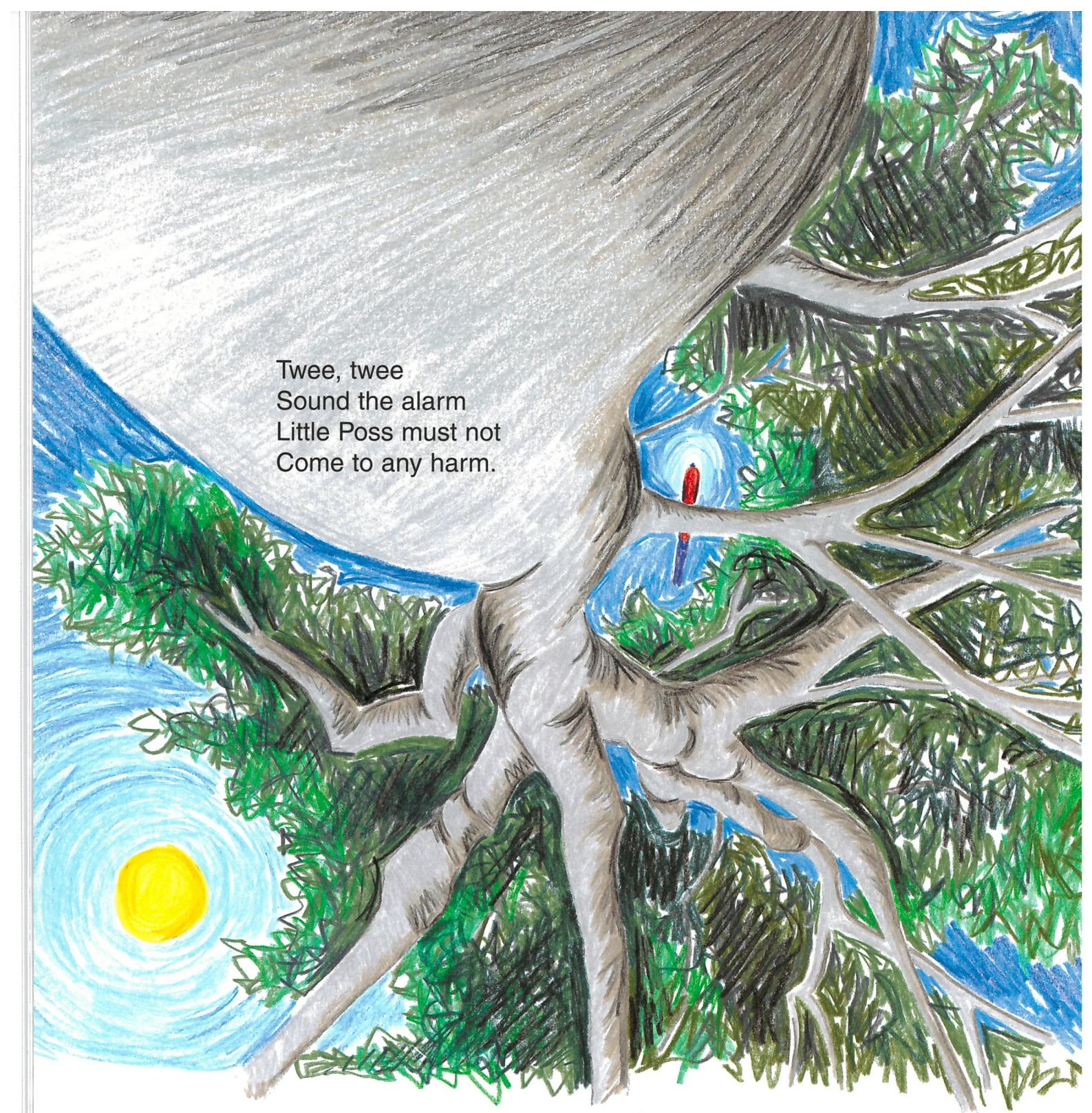


Little Poss was very sad when his mother said that he had to go back inside the pouch. It seemed a long time until the next day. But finally it came. Out he climbed, determined to show how clever he was, so that he would be able to stay out. He was not so wobbly this time. He scampered up his mother's back.



Glee, glee
Look at me
Bright and colourfu
As can be.

The view was even better than Little Poss remembered. Little Poss was so excited. He could see the bright blue sky, the round yellow sun and in the next tree was Ruby Rosella. She was beautiful.



Twee, twee
Sound the alarm
Little Poss must not
Come to any harm.

Little Poss climbed higher to get a better look at her. In his excitement he tumbled head over heels. DOWN,
DOWN,
DOWN he went. He landed with a big THUMP on the not very soft ground.

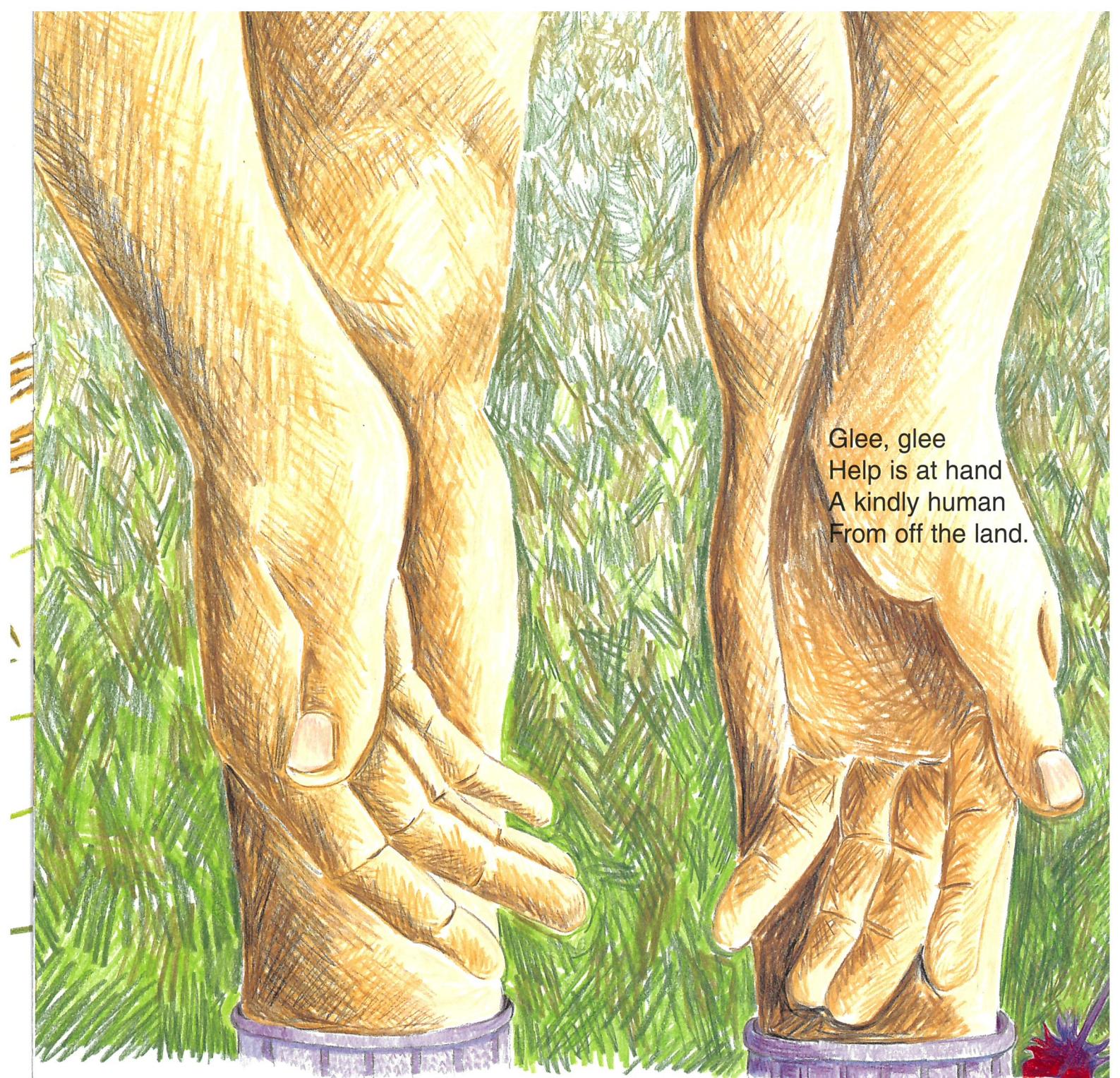


Little Poss sat up and shook his head. IT HURT. There was a big lump, where he had hit his head on the ground. As he looked around at his new surroundings, he heard a strange noise.

CRUNCH, CRUNCH, THUMP, THUMP.



All of sudden, in front of him he saw a big, hairy stump. Little Poss blinked and looked again. This time he saw not one hairy stump, but two hairy stumps and they reached up into a big hairless person.



Glee, glee
Help is at hand
A kindly human
From off the land.

"Well, who have we here?" BOOMED a human voice. "It looks like you've had a fall, Little Poss." The owner of the voice bent over and gently picked up Little Poss. "You're too small to be out on your own. Your mother will be worried about you. But first we'd better get the animal doctor to look at you."

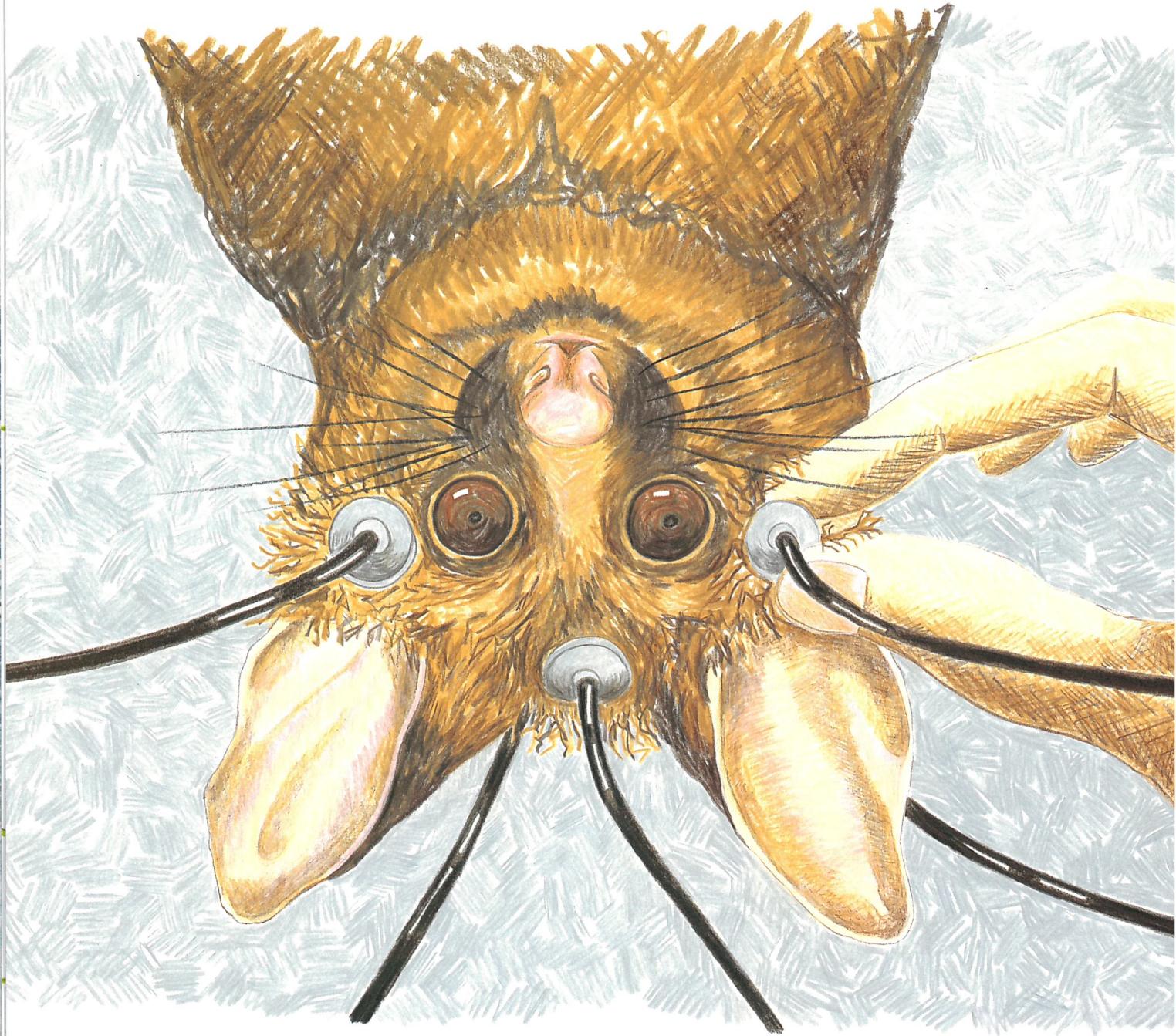


The animal doctor felt Little Poss's head and looked into his eyes. "I think you'll be alright, but I'll keep you here overnight just in case." In the morning, the animal doctor came to look at Little Poss again.

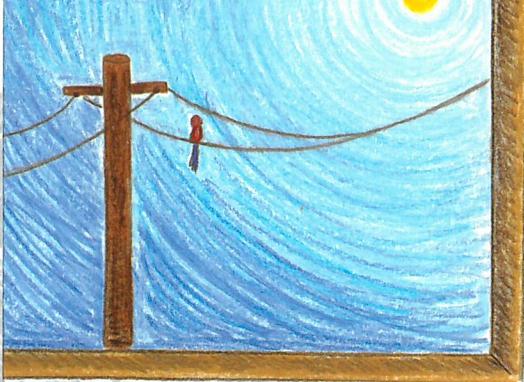


Twee, twee
What could be wrong?
Little Poss
Is not very strong.

The animal doctor asked Little Poss to walk over to the gum tree and climb it. Little Poss started off, but he fell over. He started again, and he fell over again. Little Poss was scared. The animal doctor said, "I'd better take another look at you."



So the animal doctor looked at Little Poss's eyes with a special torch and tapped his knees with a soft rubber hammer. The animal doctor wanted to see what was going on inside Little Poss's head. So she pasted some wires onto his head. The paste felt cold and sticky but the wires didn't hurt. Little Poss lay very still while the animal doctor did the test.



Glee, glee
Now we know
Soon we will
Be able to go.



"Doctor, what is wrong with me?" asked Little Poss. "You have epilepsy," said the animal doctor. "I've never heard of a possum with epilepsy. What is it?" asked Little Poss. The animal doctor looked at Little Poss and said, "Do you know what your brain does, Little Poss?" "Yes, it sends out messages to the rest of my body."



"That's right," said the animal doctor, "when you want to walk, your brain sends a message to your legs to make them move. When you have epilepsy the brain sends out mixed messages, so you can't do things quite right for a while. There are many kinds of epilepsy. Some kinds make you fall down and shake all over, others make you stop what you're doing and stare."



Twee, twee
Don't be glum
Life can still be
Full of fun.

"Oh dear," thought Little Poss "whoever heard of a possum who sometimes goes wobbly, shakes all over and falls out of trees." A tear slipped down his cheek. "You look worried Little Poss," said the animal doctor. "What's the matter?" "I don't want to be different. I want to be like all the other possums."



"I am going to give you some medicine to help stop your epilepsy. You must take your medicine everyday. If you do this you will be just like all the other possums. You will be able to climb trees, scamper along the tree branches and jump from tree to tree."



Glee, glee
A happy poss.
He will be able
To play with us.

YIPPEE!!!! Little Poss was so happy, he did a little dance ----- round and round and round he went.

Glee, glee
Come back to the trees
The bush is the place
For you and me.



Little Poss was much happier. He put his medicine in his gumnut purse. He was ready to go home. "If you follow Ruby Rosella, she will lead you home to your mother. Bye Little Poss and remember to take your medicine everyday." "I will." Little Poss gave a big wave goodbye and turned to follow Ruby Rosella back to the bush where he belonged.

THINGS TO DO

1. Discussion starters

- a) When you have epilepsy, your brain sends out mixed messages, so that you can't do things quite right for a while. What did Little Poss's epilepsy make him do?
- b) How did the animal doctor know that Little Poss had epilepsy?
- c) What did the animal doctor give Little Poss to stop him from falling over?
- d) Why was Little Poss upset when he first found out that he had epilepsy?
- e) How do you think it feels to be different from everyone else?
- f) What can we do to help people who feel sad?

2. Happy/Sad

Draw and cut out two circles. On one circle draw a happy face and on the other draw a sad face. Glue the faces back to back on either side of a paddle pop stick. Ask the following questions:

- how did Little Poss feel when he first came out of the pouch?
- how did Little Poss feel when he saw two big, hairy stumps?
- how did Little Poss feel when he couldn't walk properly?
- how did Little Poss feel when he was told he had epilepsy?
- how did Little Poss feel when the animal doctor told him if he took his medicine everyday he would be like all the other possums?

Indicate how Little Poss would feel by holding up the happy or sad face.

Discuss - Think of a time when you've been happy, how did you behave?
Think of a time when you've been sad, how did you behave?

3. Friends

Ruby Rosella was a special friend to Little Poss. Think of a special time when you felt cared about by a friend. Do a finger painting to show how this made you feel.

4. Differences

Little Poss was sad when he thought he was different to the other possums. Yet in lots of ways everyone is different. We come in different shapes and sizes, we like different food, toys and colours. Make a collage using magazine pictures to show how you are different from your friends.

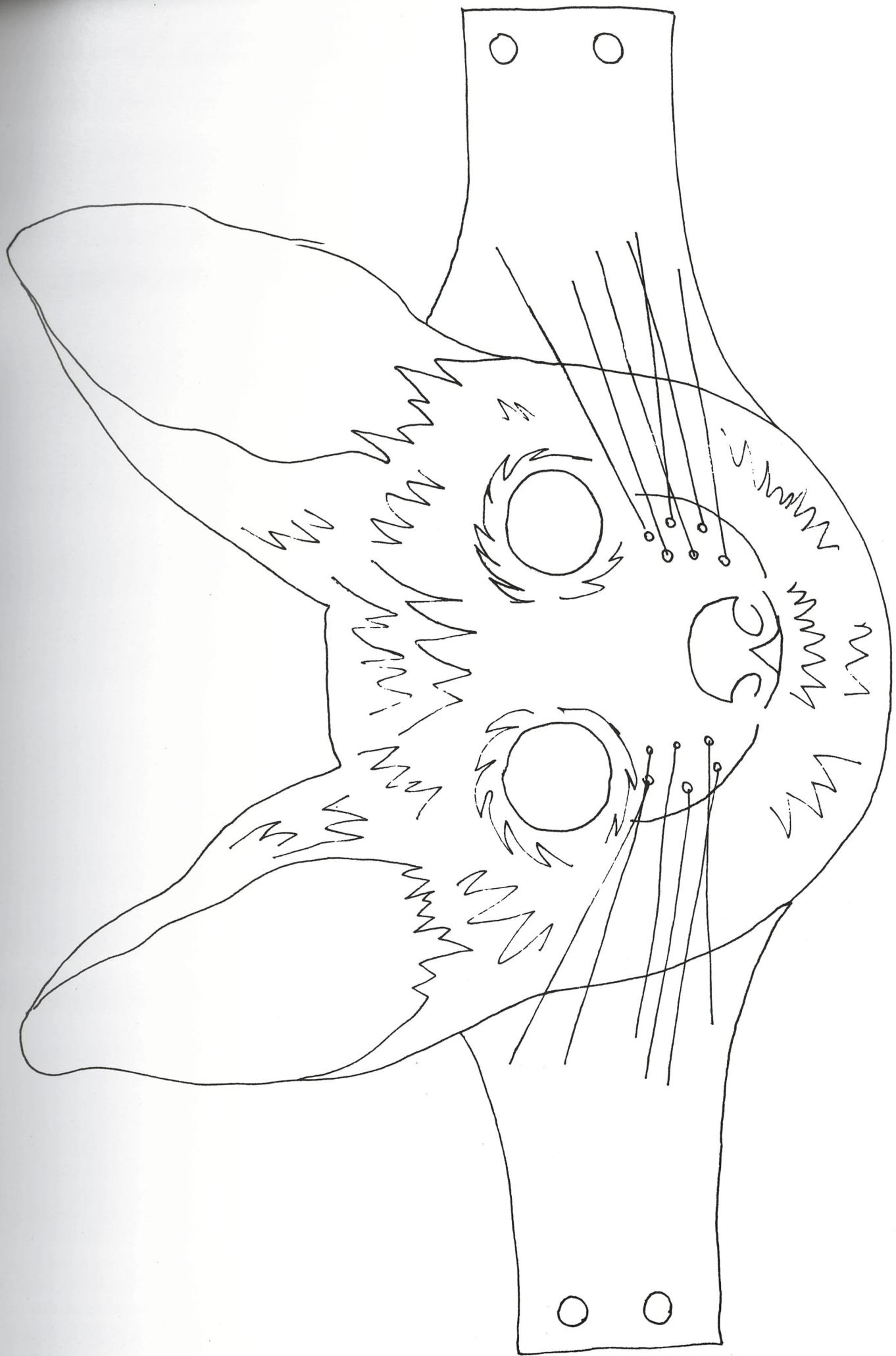
5. I spy

Ruby Rosella is Little Poss's special friend. In the story she keeps a watchful eye on Little Poss. Can you find her hiding in the pages of the story?

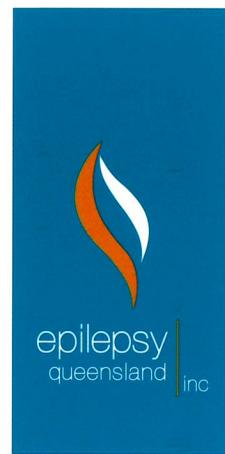
6. Something to make

Copy the possum face, onto another sheet of paper or stiff cardboard. Use scissors to cut around the outline of the face. Cut slits for the eyes. Punch two small holes on each band. Tie a piece of ribbon or elastic through these holes. Now you have your own possum mask.

The initial development of this picture story book was made possible through financial assistance from the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation.



This delightfully illustrated picture story book tells of the feelings experienced by Little Poss when he is first diagnosed as having epilepsy. The book not only explores the topic of epilepsy but also looks at the impact of being different. It is accompanied by ideas for activities which complement and enhance the reader's understanding of the story.



For further information or support visit www.epilepsyqueensland.com.au or phone 1300 852 853