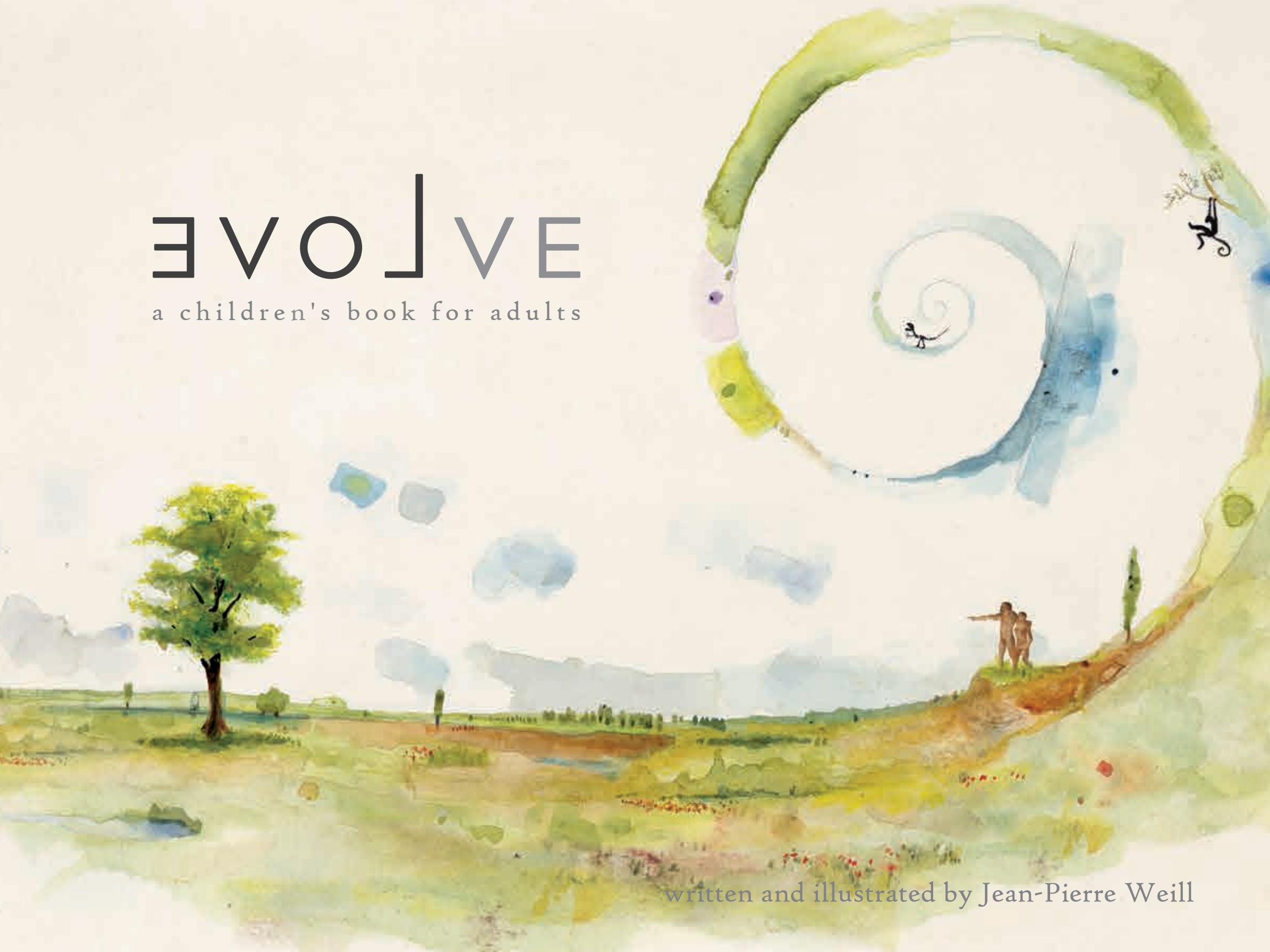


EVOLVE

a children's book for adults



written and illustrated by Jean-Pierre Weill



Evolve[ē'valv] (v.) from the old French, *é'vol'vere*. To unfurl, like a scroll.



The fundamental principle is that man must create himself.

- Joseph Soloveitchik

To Rachel

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Three biblical passages pertinent to the contents of this book have been included in its back pages. They have been adapted from the *New Living Translation*.

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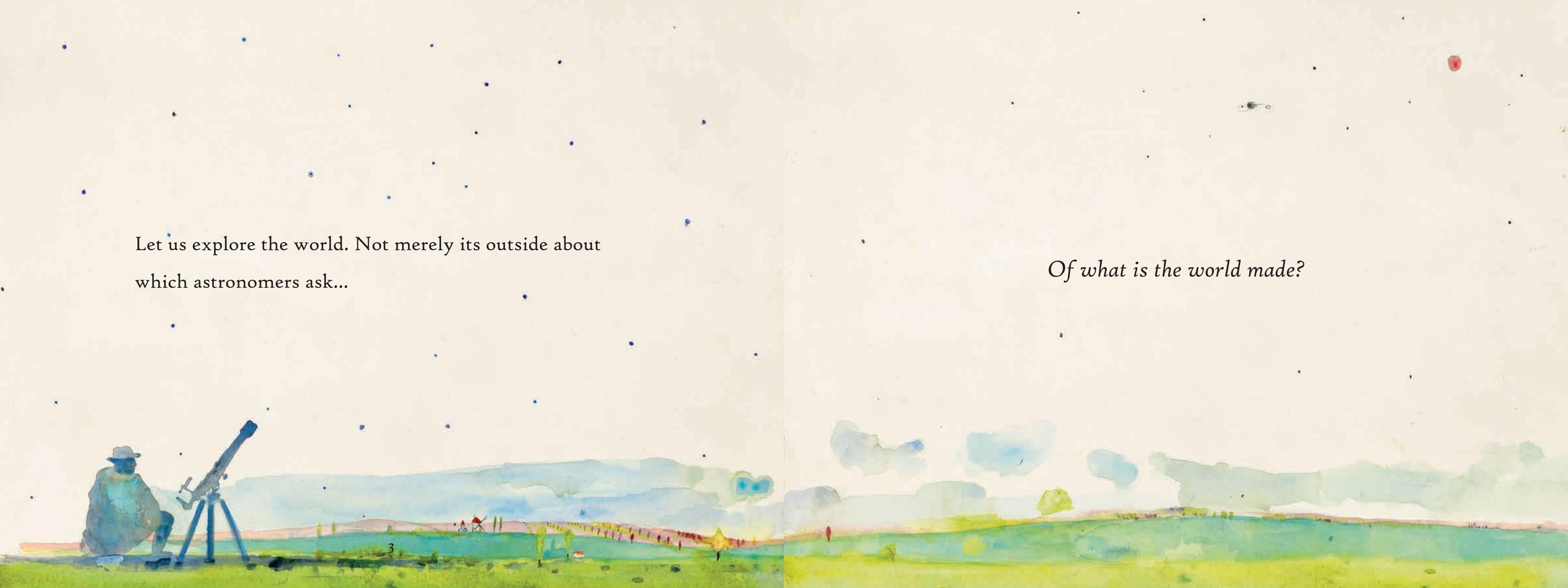
Jean Pierre Weill



I see you are reading and looking.

Let us go on a journey together.





Let us explore the world. Not merely its outside about
which astronomers ask...

Of what is the world made?

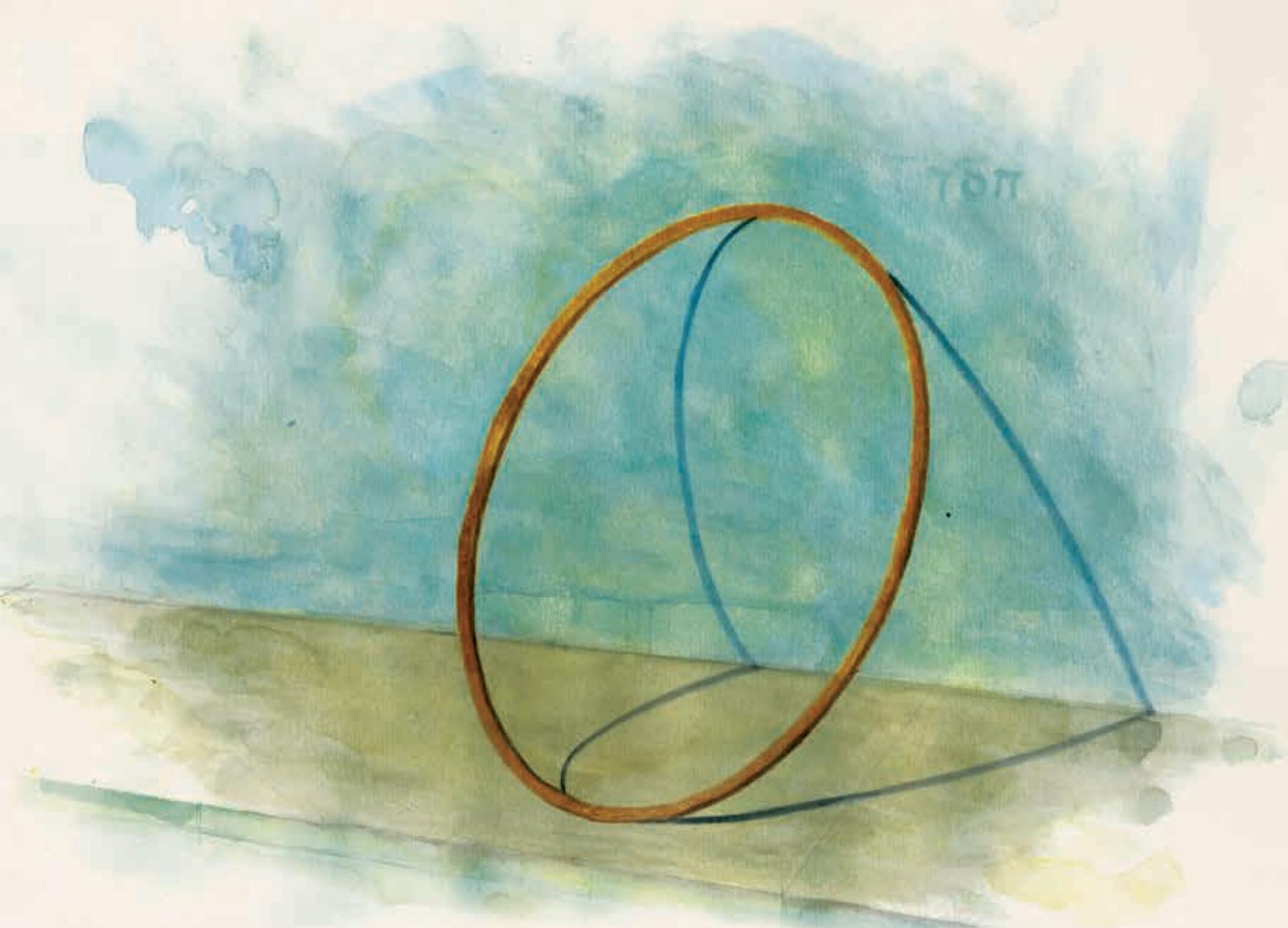
but its inside where the question is...



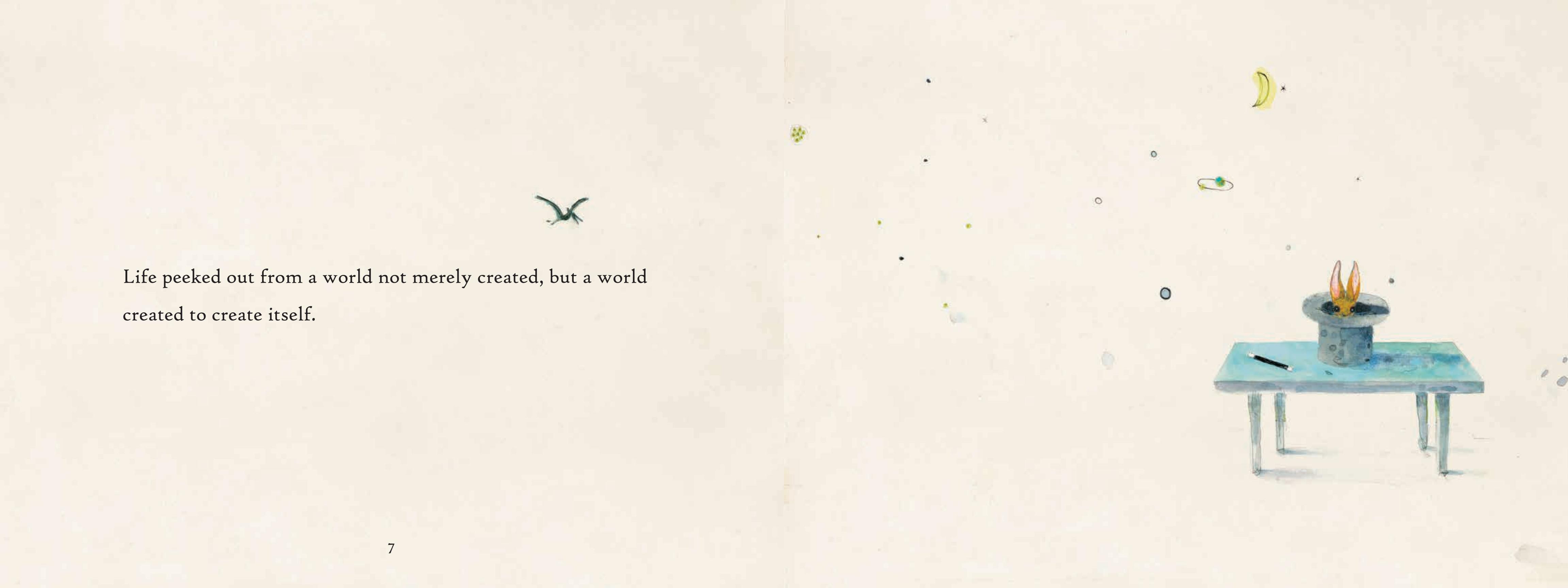
Who am I?

Let's begin with a simple assumption.

In the beginning, everything arose from One,



from an incomprehensible desire that summoned the
world to emerge as separate and distinct entities.



Life peeked out from a world not merely created, but a world
created to create itself.

Nothing — simply nothing — came from nothing.



Ever more complex forms emerged.

Forms of seeing,



and forms of relating.



It was a garden of now, of nothing but now.



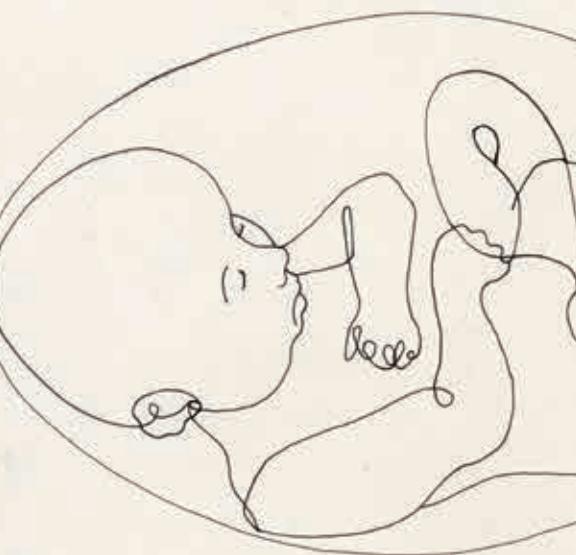


Yet there was no one to bear witness.



infancy

Adam



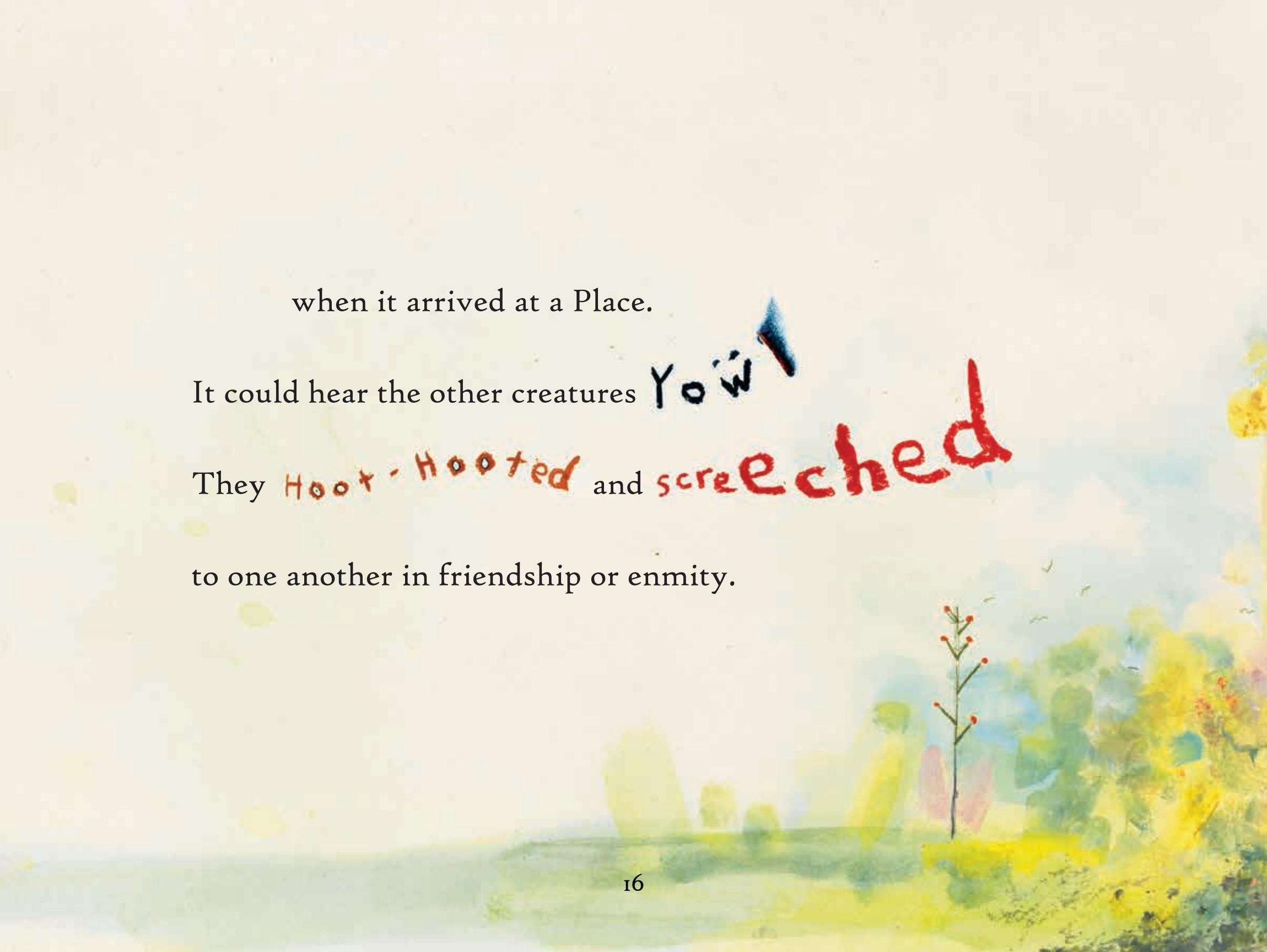


When it arrived at a Place.

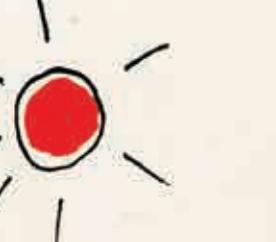
It could hear the other creatures 

They hoot-hooted and screeched.

to one another in friendship or enmity.



This creature assigned names to the birds of the sky and to the beasts of the field —

to the  ,  and  ,

to all that captured its attention. Upon naming the creation, the creature formed an interior world.



What is it to name a thing?



To name a thing is to acknowledge its unique existence.



The creature looked.
I am. I am Adam.

Man danced with joy. For having named himself
he knew himself as separate and distinct.





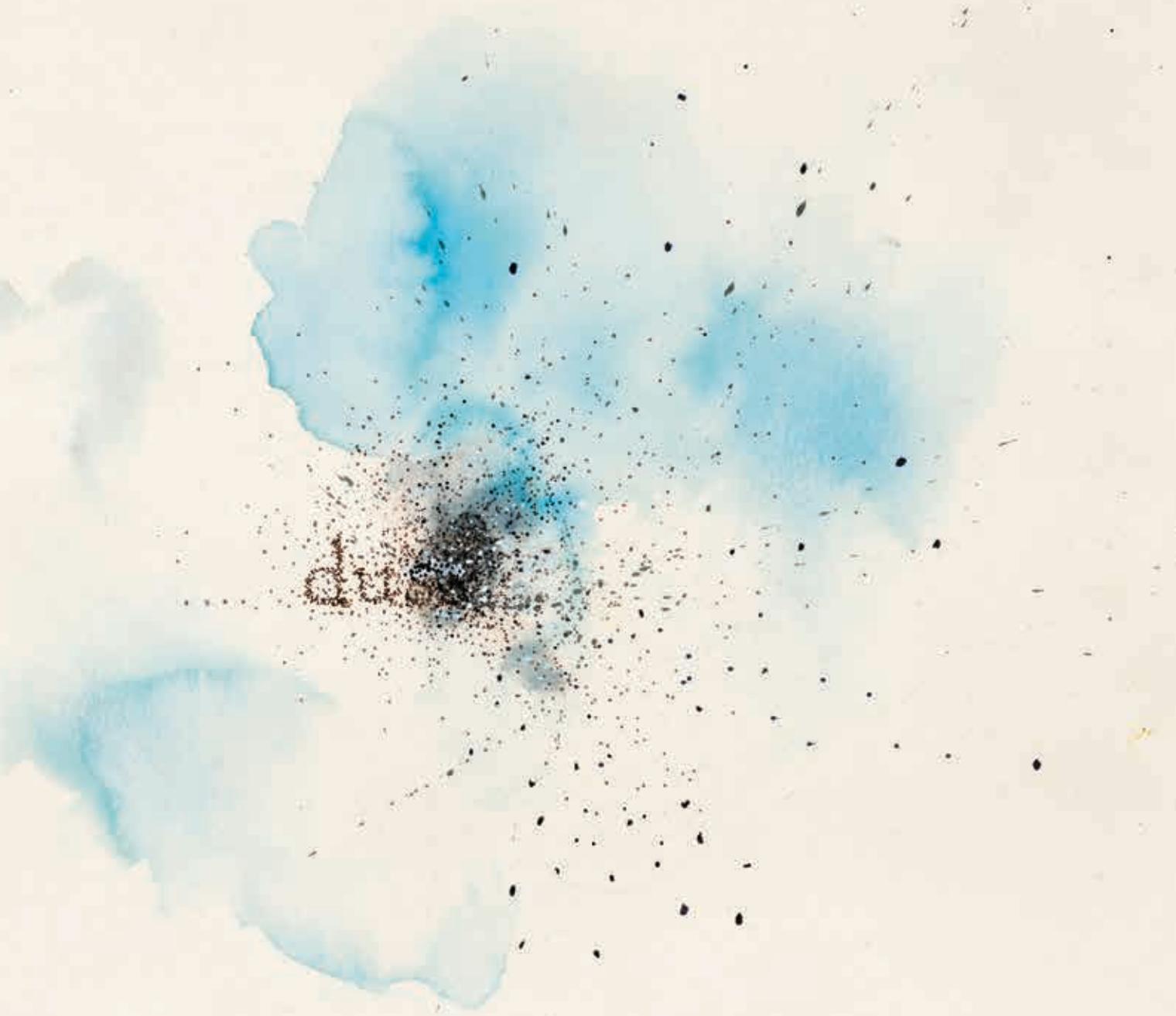
He came to a with fruit which grants the ability to invent narratives, to judge things and to rank them as better or worse. He ate from the tree of

GOOD and **EVIL**.



He felt vulnerable and hid his face.





He said: *i am dust*

in space





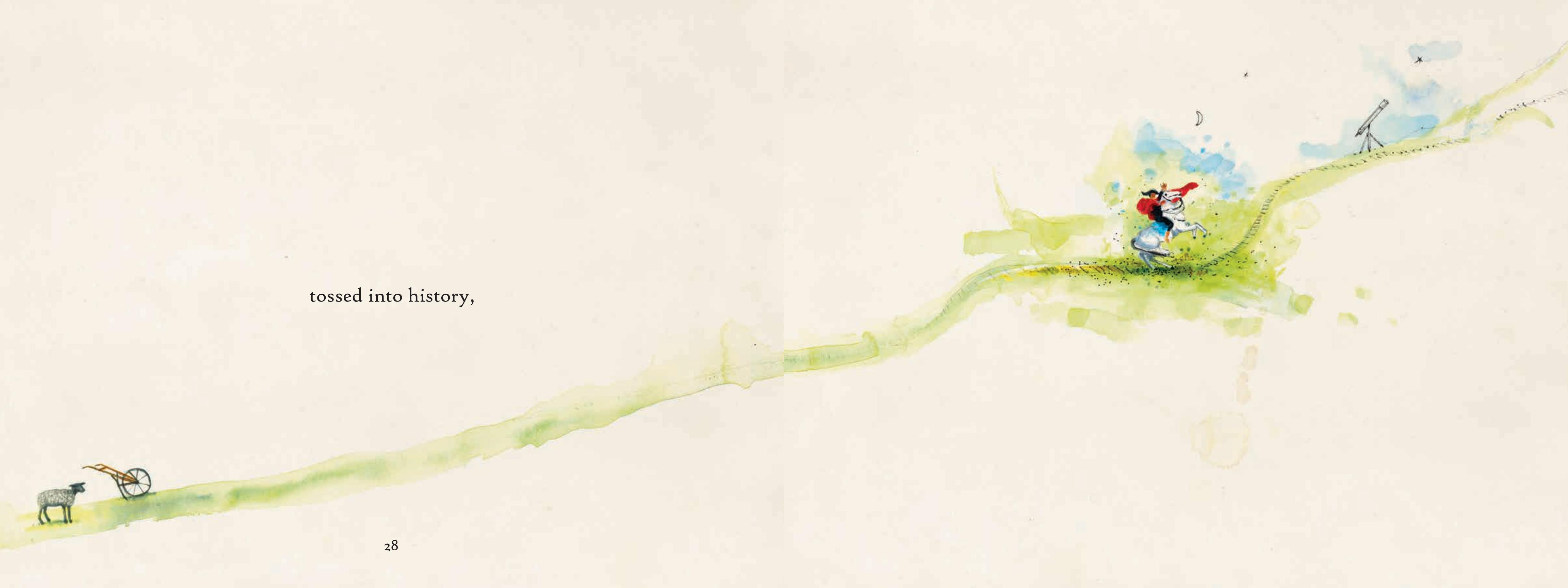
in time.

Thus, Adam was expelled from the garden of now,



tossed into the world of yesterdays and tomorrows,
of elsewhere and otherwise,





tossed into history,

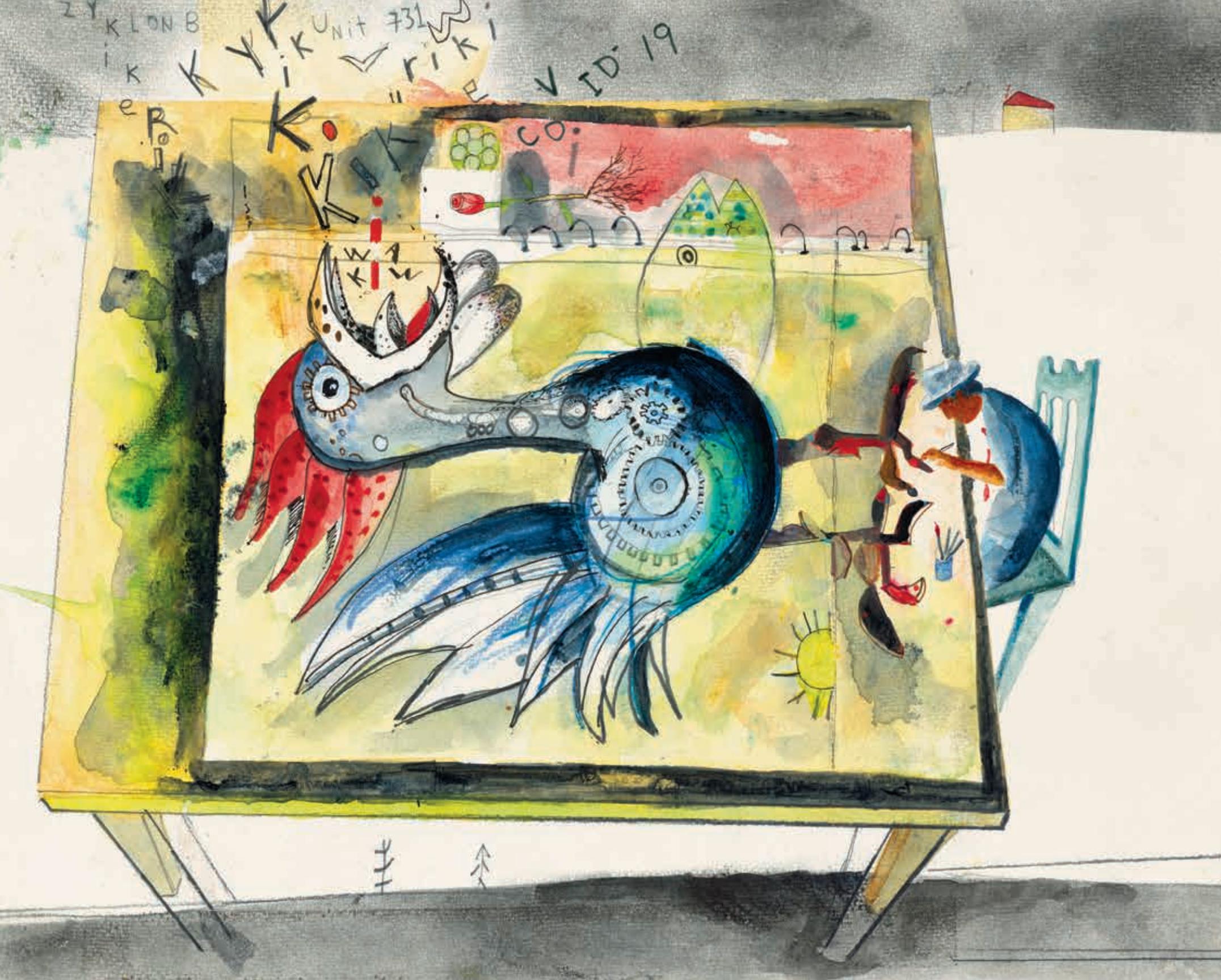


into suffering.



Adam cried.

*Is the world enough as it is?
Am i enough as i am?*



He began to imagine and question.



Whereas, before, Adam had experienced a single path,



choices



now appeared.

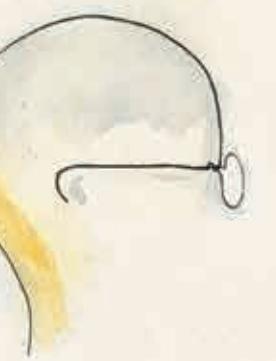


Some were simple.



Some were momentous.

Stakes can be high in a world of meaningful choices.



Gandhi

Hitler

adolescence

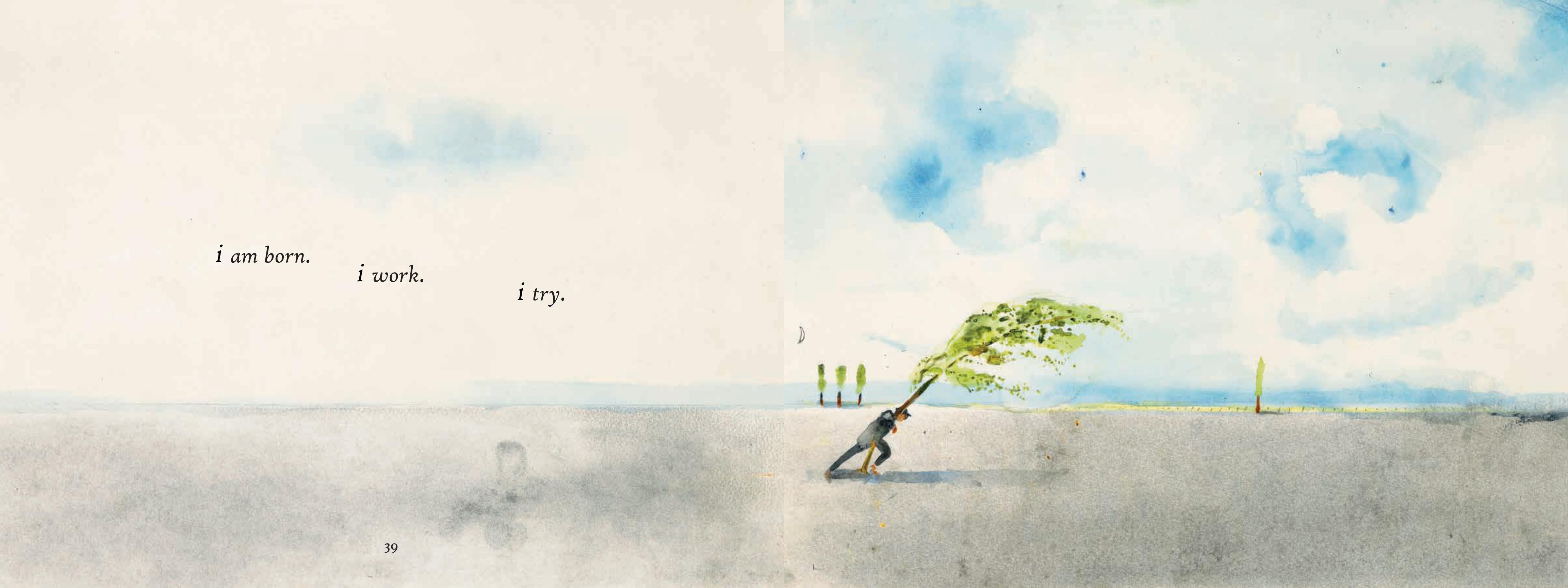
Cain



Adam had a son, Cain.

Cain was born with a burden: the burden of i.





i am born.

i work.

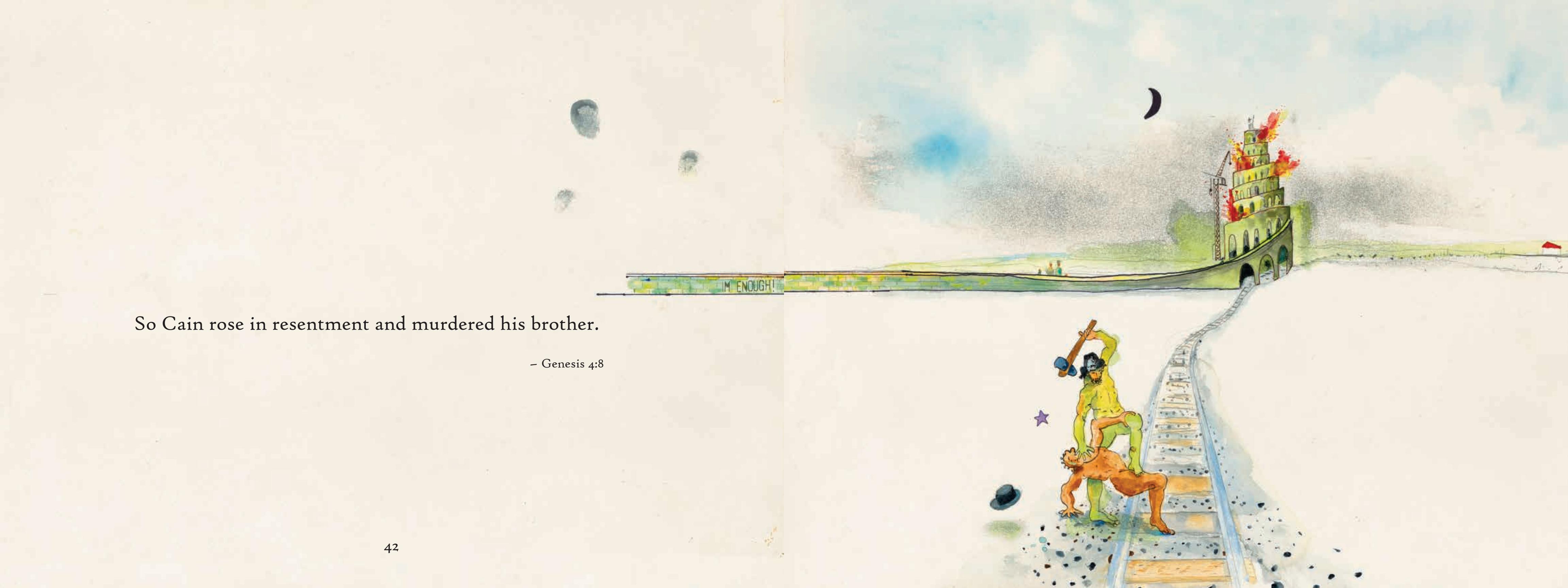
i try.



A colorful illustration of a landscape. In the upper left, a white building with a red roof sits on a green hillside. A blue ladder leans against the side of the hill. A man in dark clothing stands on the ladder, reaching up towards a vibrant rainbow arching across the sky. The hillside is dotted with small green trees and shrubs. In the lower left foreground, a person wearing a hard hat and safety vest stands near some construction equipment, including a yellow toolbox and a red chair. The background features a road with dashed yellow lines curving away into the distance under a cloudy sky.

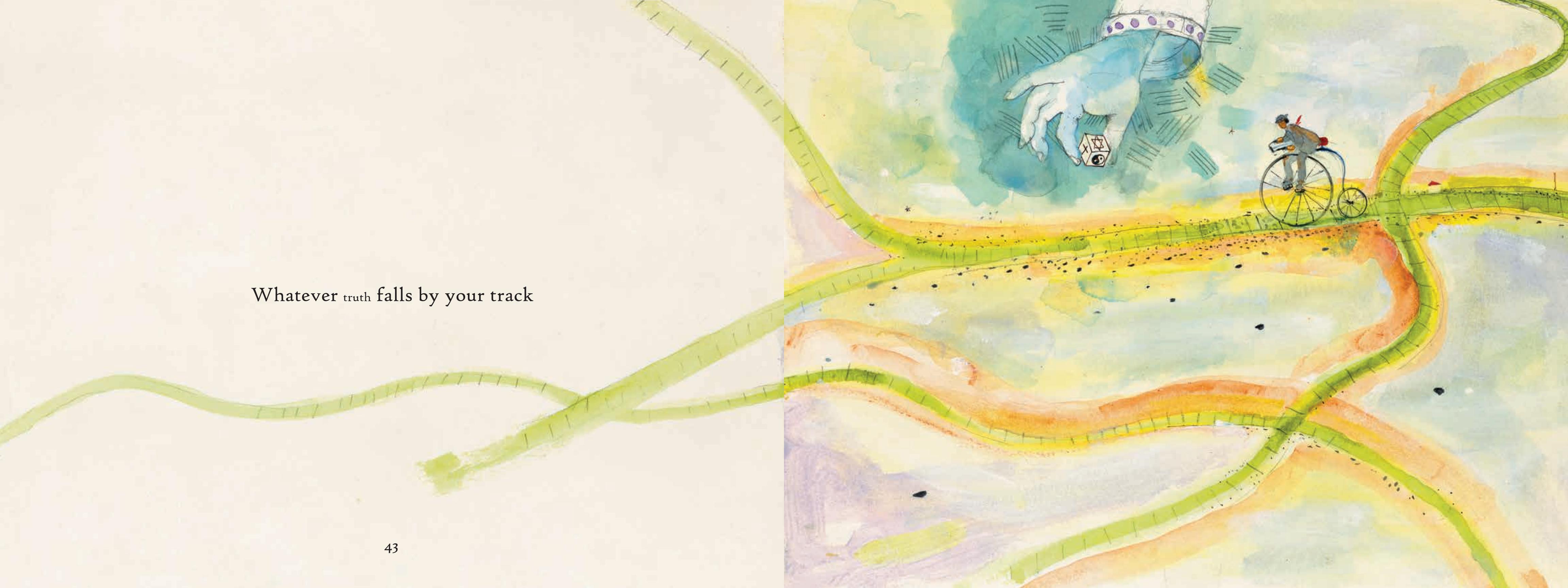
i toil for one approval, then another.





So Cain rose in resentment and murdered his brother.

– Genesis 4:8



Whatever truth falls by your track

the world feels imbalanced, and something seems wrong.



If i pray to my god do i hear something back



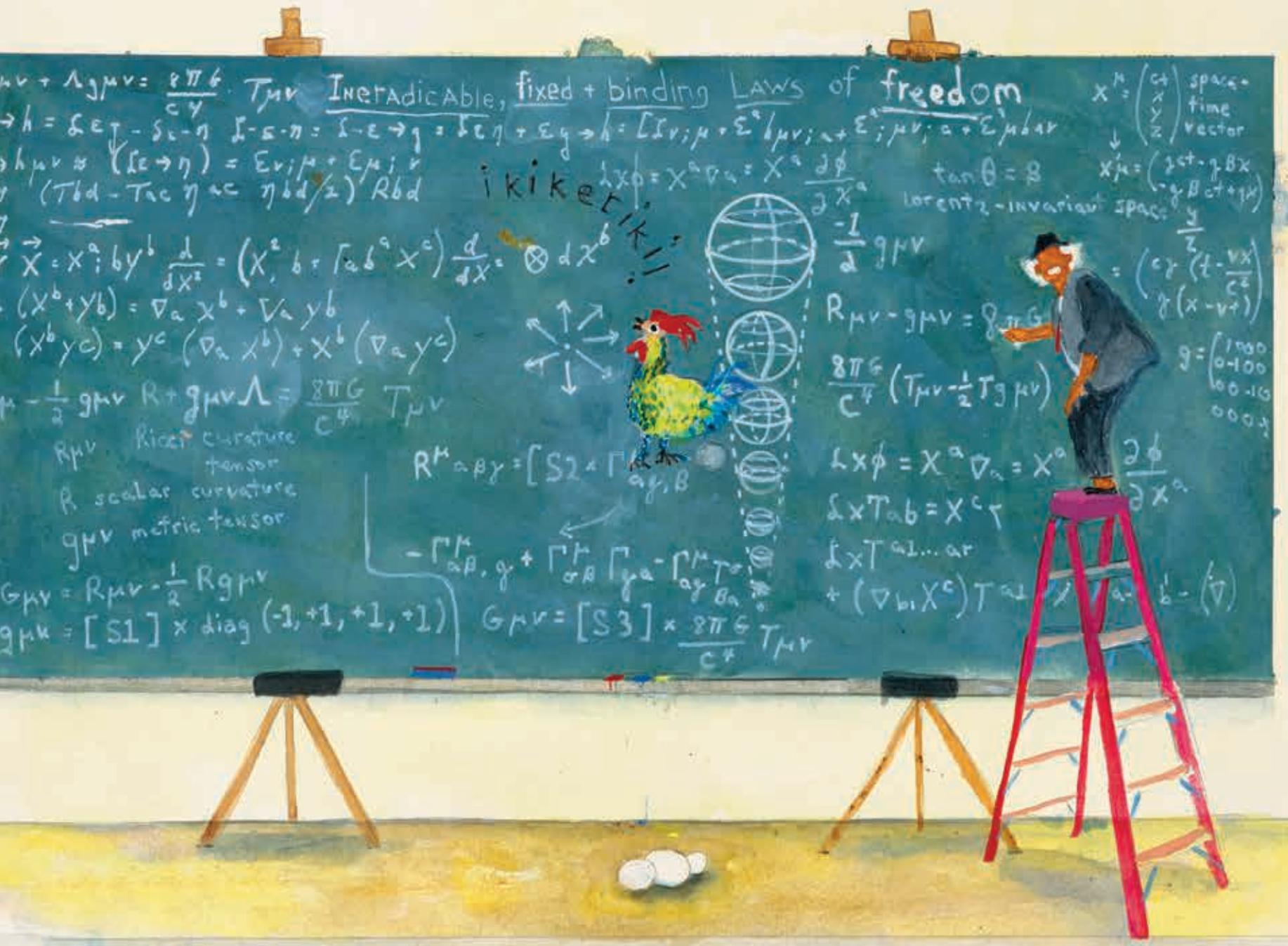
or just tumbling notes of my song?



Consider the tools from our hands that evolve



and the tools from our minds that inspire.



They are solutions to problems.
Yet it's you you must solve!



For tools are just tools. They can't put out our fires.



50



When Cain stands at the mirror to examine his face
and he peers into eyes of concern,



he fears his existence is a mechanical race



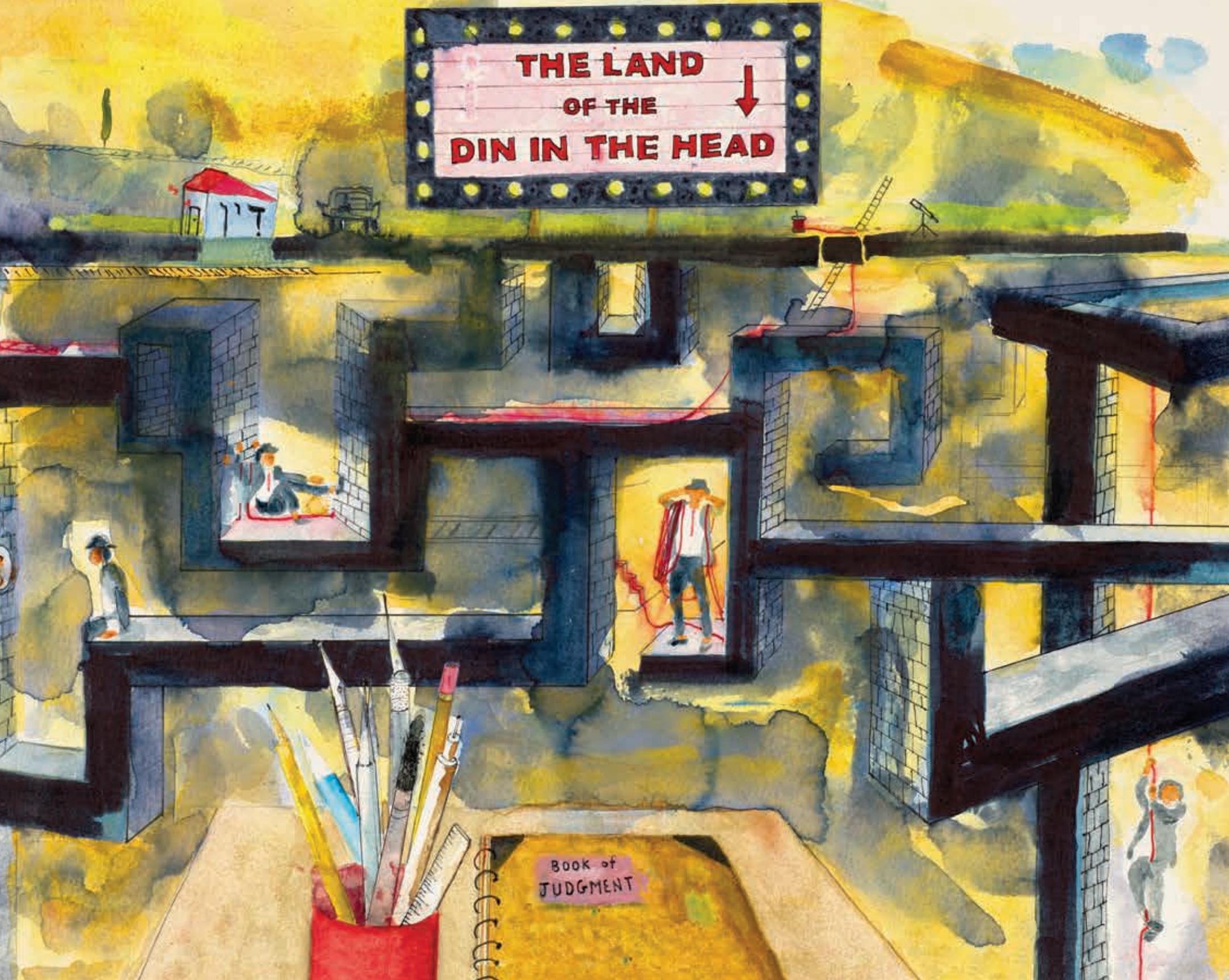


that there is nothing to win and nothing to earn.

He lowers his ladder to the heart of the matter
and unspools his life's coil of thread.



He gets lost in a maze of stairways and pathways in
the land of the din in the head.



O the thunder and thwacks!

the finger-pointing attacks!



Cain cries: *Am i the punchline in a satirical joke?*

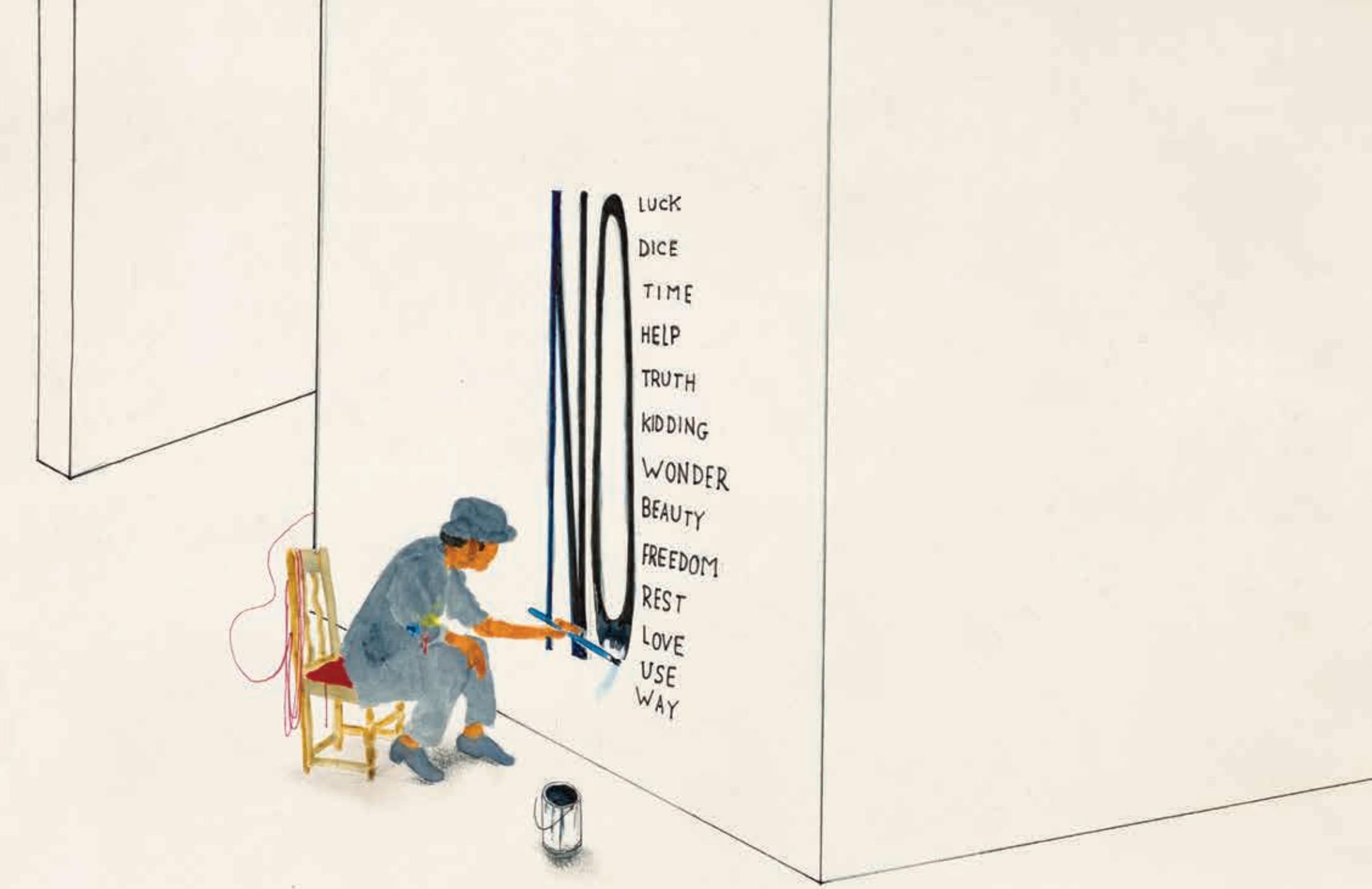


Do i bow down to form?



Do i paint my life

BLACK



as i trek through my me with my rope?



How Cain's nightmares repeat as i drift through his sleep





as i bob on waves of unrest.

As creation's debris i crawled out from the sea.



...m but DNA matter possessed.



Freedom, i say, is to make things go
My Way!



To be free is to shed inhibition!





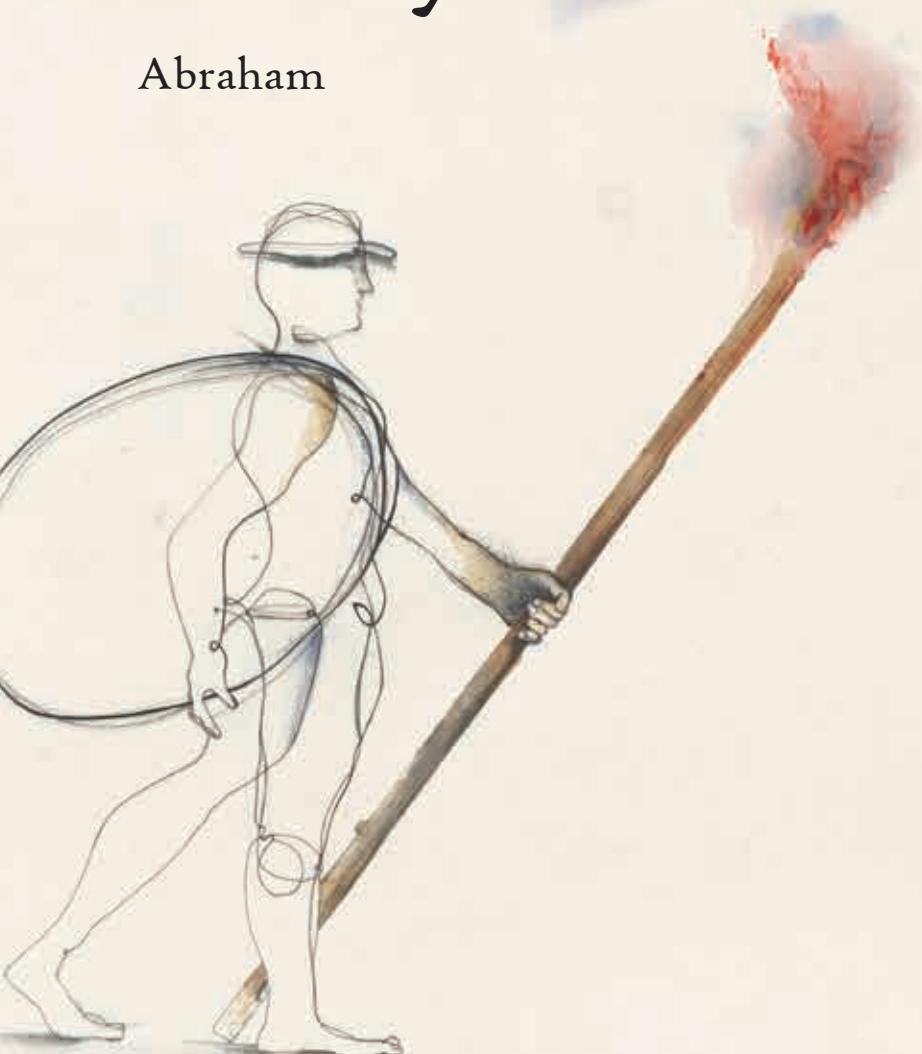
Are these really the ways to co-author life's play?
To be free is to compose my life's mission.





maturity

Abraham



We've arrived at the point in our biblical tale—
a knock-knock from beyond or within—
that called to Abe's I to abolish his i
as he strode on his fragment of string.



Abraham walked with his i up the slope
for a dance—for a meeting with time.

It's that dance we'll perform at the end of our rope
at the tippy-tip of our line.



He bound in a bag all he'd gathered through life—
all his love, all his values and cares



and he raised his voice as he lifted his knife—

my i is inflated with air!



An angel appeared. She grabbed hold of Abe's wrist
as the ego prepared to surrender.
She told him the reason the i must exist:



It's the path to become your inventor.



*Consider your values, all your beautiful goals,
all the dreams that your i chases after.
They clatter beyond and behind your control,
which is why your son's name suggests laughter.*





She asked Abe to count all the stars up above.
But the best he could do was get started.

Within, something flickered. He felt infinite love.
And with that, the archangel departed.



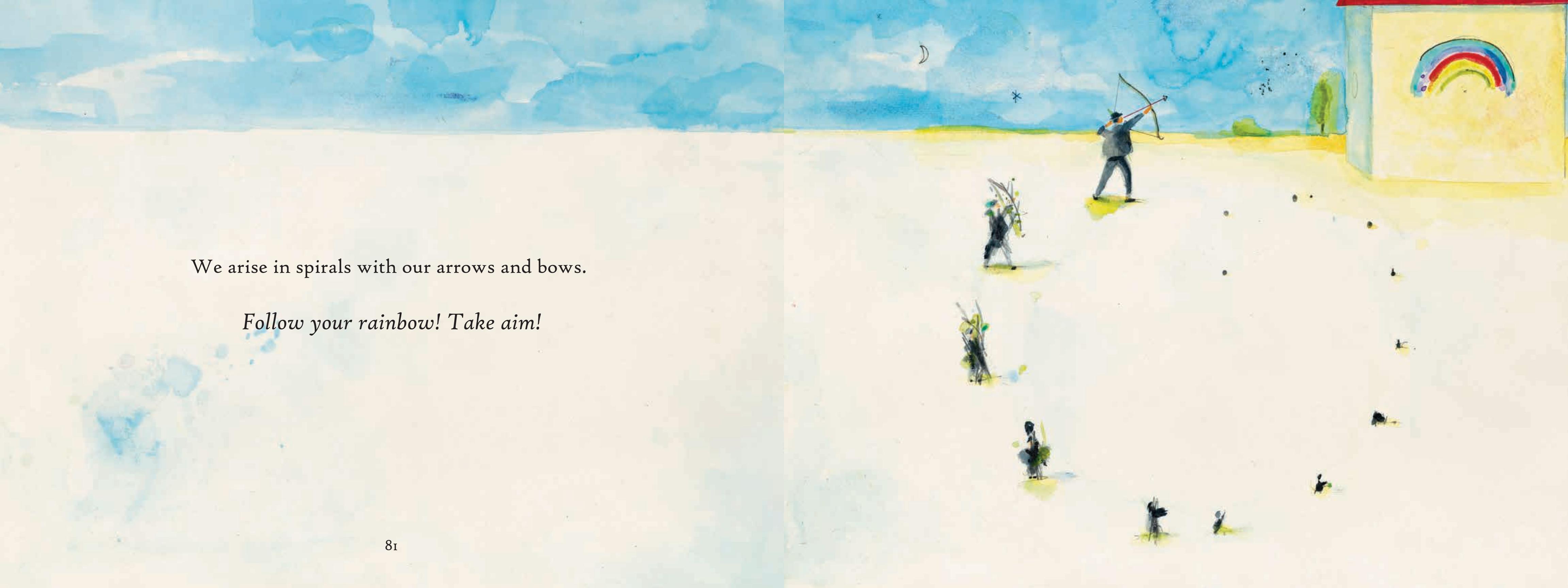
Might we say as we play as we twirl in our hoop
in the light of wherever we stand:

Through the choices we make it's the i we create.



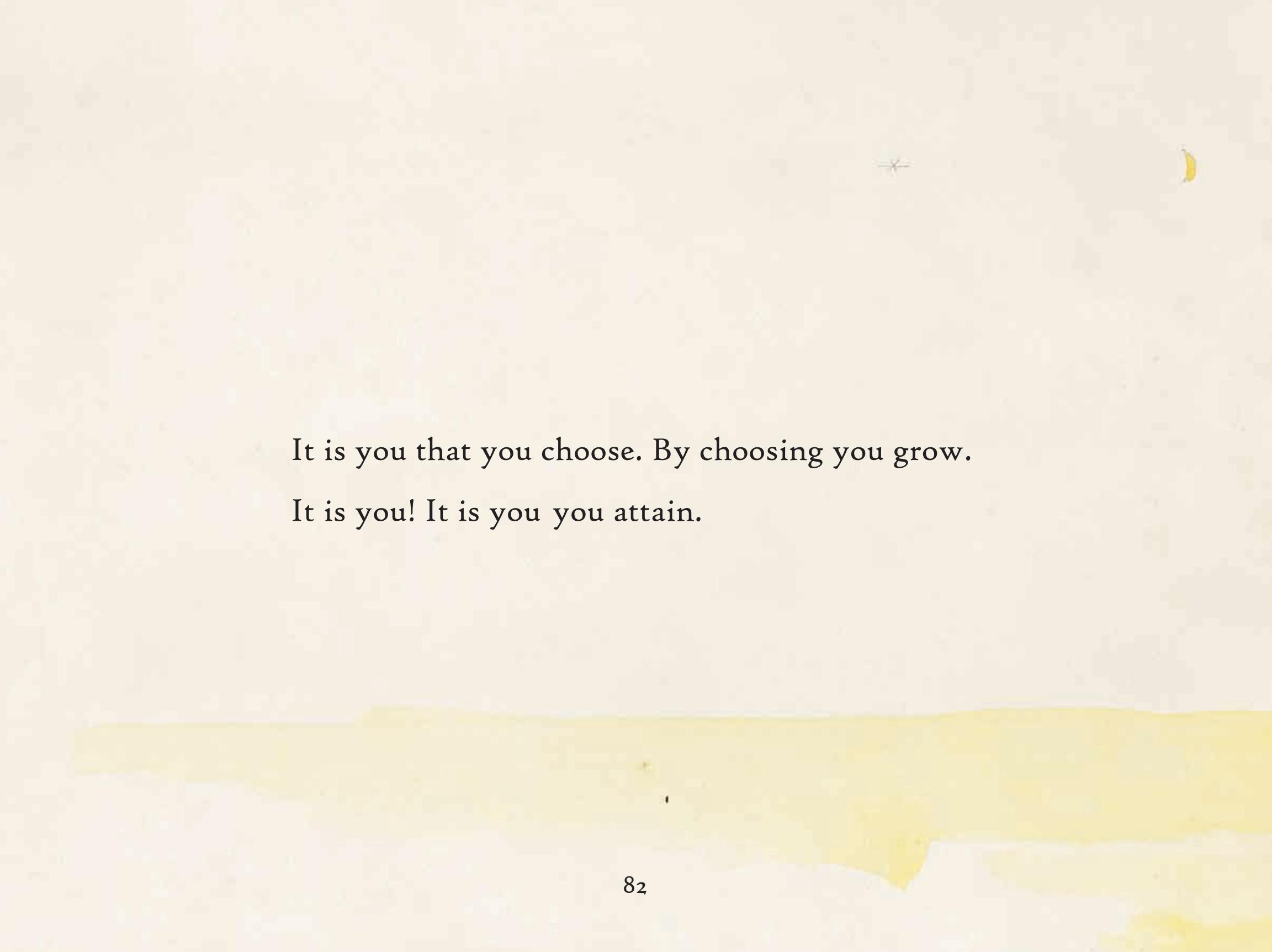
This is how we become. We're set free by our own hand.





We arise in spirals with our arrows and bows.

Follow your rainbow! Take aim!

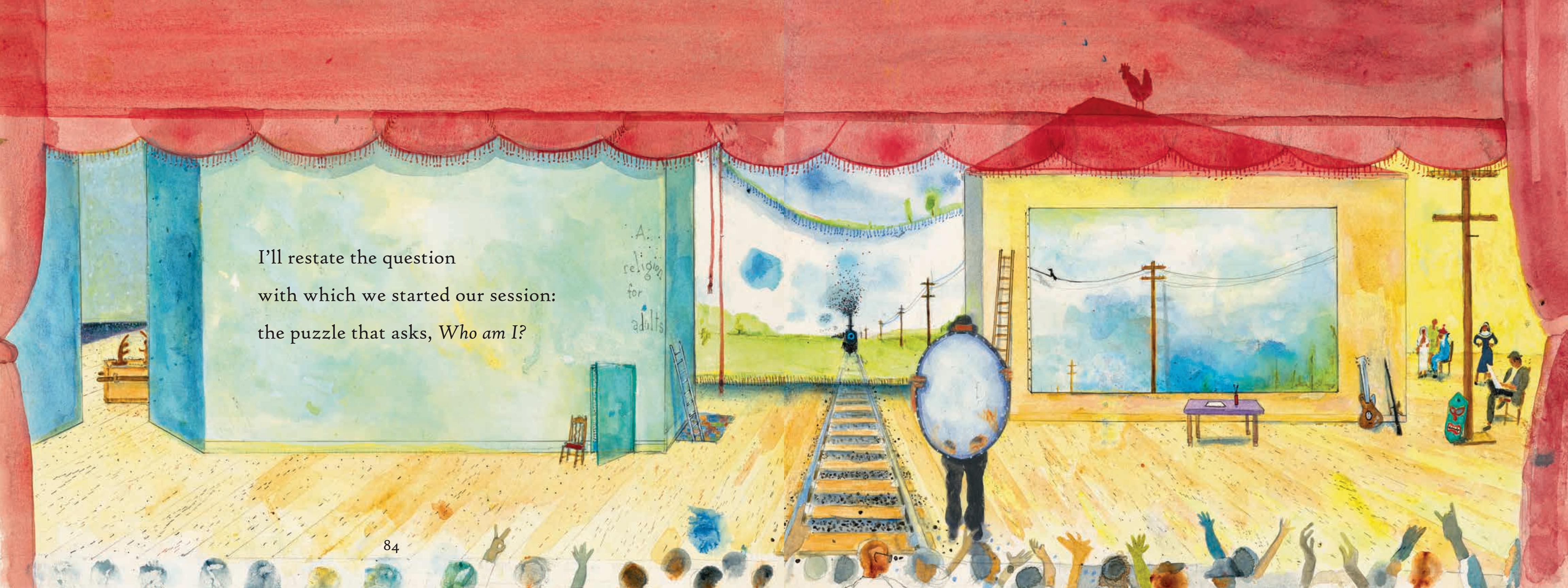


It is you that you choose. By choosing you grow.
It is you! It is you you attain.



Are we fixed to a script? Are our stars all aligned
in this magical puzzle in time?





I'll restate the question
with which we started our session:
the puzzle that asks, Who am I?

A religion
for adults

Who am I

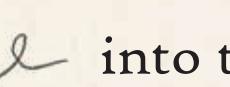


There will arrive a moment when I will let go of everything. Everything.

My  will cease and my  will return to the

minerals. Sometime later, my name will be spoken for the last time. There is

nothing to fear. Nothing.

Love brought  into the world and love will take me from it. During

this interval we discover ourselves through the world and the world discovers

itself through us. We name the world and confer our values upon it. What an

adventure! What a laugh! By choosing, we become a bit more free to invent

ourselves and bear witness,

an evolution of ne.



Adam said, I ate from the tree! And I would eat it again!

-B'reishit Rabba 19:12



Endnotes

This picture-book narrates three biblical stories about Adam, Cain, and Abraham. It interprets them as stages of the self. It relates these stories as the journey of a single individual. To this end, some figures central to the original biblical narrative have been omitted.

1 Adam lives in paradise, a timeless womb where all needs are gratified. No meaningful choice need be made. Adam is innocent, as yet unaware of himself as separate from the world. As such, he and the world are one.

i Cain confronts a world now strewn with thistles and death. He views the world as a battleground where he must assert his superiority over the other. Like the dot above the lowercase i, he feels alone.

I Abraham engages the world through the values he chooses. He embodies the mature and grounded self. He answers the question, *who am I?* with a single word: *hineni*, I-am-present.

•

page 5 **chesed** (chesed) is a Hebrew word closely associated with the idea of loving-kindness. Chesed gives existence to each and everything. It is regarded as a primary building block of creation.

page 7 *He [God] rested from all his work which God created to make itself.* - Genesis 2:3

page 8 I cannot speak about the first instant of the universe, because in that moment the physical laws of the universe are unrecognizable. After that first instant, everything is causal.

page 10 There is a difference between seeing and witnessing.

page 14

Adam comes into existence in a timeless garden. Like him, we develop in a timeless world and emerge from the womb and from our infancy to awaken to our separate, fragile selves.

page 16

According to Jewish sources, the word place מוקם (makom) in the Bible is the locus of divine presence.

page 18

To name a thing is to acknowledge its existence as separate from everything else that has a name; to confer upon it the dignity of autonomy while at the same time affirming its belonging with the rest of the namable world. - Maria Popova

page 19

God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. - Genesis 1:3
When humans name the world, the world is also illuminated.

page 21

For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. - Shakespeare

page 27

We avoid the present moment, escaping to a past that no longer exists or to a future that is never quite here.

page 28

Adam had two sons. Cain became a farmer. Abel became a shepherd. Their time-sensitive occupations required them to analyze the past and plan for the future.

page 36

Mahatma Gandhi and Adolf Hitler.

Adam

Cain

- page 37 Cain labors in a world of incessant competition with the other. Like him, we can spend much of our lives in a state of extended adolescence, obsessed with our thoughts, feelings, and judgments about ourselves and others.
- page 39-84 The second half of the book is composed in rhyme.
- page 43 We are creatures of our time and place. Our cultures shape our truths.
- page 45 *I talk to God but the sky is empty.* - Sylvia Plath
- page 50 Two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe. - Albert Einstein
- page 51 There are things we fail to notice about ourselves, including that we fail to notice things about ourselves. (paraphrased from R. D. Laing)
- page 55 A human being experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest; it's a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. It is a kind of prison for us.
- Albert Einstein
- Here is a pun between English and Hebrew. The English word *din* is a loud unpleasant prolonged noise that may describe the stream of thoughts that operates just beneath the surface of awareness. The stream often provides our concrete experience of ourselves. The Hebrew word *din* (דין) is associated with the concept of judgment. *Din* (דין) provides each existent with definition. *Din* (דין) separates the existent from the rest of the world so that it can be itself.

page 62 *What a long strange trip it's been.* - Jerry Garcia

page 64 Modernity has discarded religious myths. It has replaced them with secular, modernist myths. Here's one. There is no inherent meaning in the universe.

- page 66-67 Is freedom a movement from something or toward something?
- page 68 What is your mission? What is your highest value? That is your mission.

Abraham

page 69 In the story of the akeda, God invites Abraham to sacrifice his son. No mention is made about the immorality of child sacrifice. I, therefore, approach the story not as an encounter with the immorality of human sacrifice but as an existential encounter with the ego.

Abraham transcends and preserves the self. When we follow the path of maturity, transcending and preserving our lowercase i, we have become powerful, conscious participants in our own lives.

page 75 *The fundamental principle is that man must create himself.* - Joseph Soloveitchik

page 76 Isaac (צַדְקָה) Abraham's son, means he will laugh. Laughter is the natural response to the surprise of existence. Contrast this with Cain, who feels entitled and concerns himself with status.

page 77 The spiritual traditions that follow in the path of Abraham tell us that our job as finite creatures is to make the world a dwelling place for the Infinite. To earn its name, the Infinite must experience everything, including finitude.

Adam

God called to Adam: Where are you?

Adam replied: I was afraid and hid, because I was naked.

[2:7] Then God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person [2:8] Then God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there He placed the man He had made. [2:9] God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden He placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... [2:16] And God warned Adam: "You may eat the fruit of every tree in the garden — [2:17] except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." ... [2:19] God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. [He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and the man chose a name for each one.](#) [2:20] [He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals...](#) page 17 [2:25] Now the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

[3:1] The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals God had made. One day the serpent asked the woman, "Did God actually say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" ... [3:3] "No," the woman replied, "it's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God told us, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'" [3:4] "You won't die!" replied the serpent... [3:5] ["God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."](#) page 21 [3:6] ... The woman saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. [3:7] At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. [3:8] ... They hid from God among the trees. [3:9] Then God called to the man, "Where are you?" [3:10] Adam replied, "[I was afraid and hid because I was naked.](#)" page 22 [3:11] "Who told you that you were naked?" God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat? ... [3:17] ... [Now the ground is cursed because of you.](#) page 29 All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. [3:18] It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. [3:19] By the sweat of your brow you will have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. [For you were made from dust and to dust you will return.](#)" page 23

Genesis, chapter 4

Cain

God called to Cain: Where is your brother?
Cain responded: Am I my brother's keeper?

[4:1] Now Adam knew Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With God's help, I have produced a man!" [4:2] Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. [4:3] When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to God. [4:4] Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. God accepted Abel and his gift, [4:5] but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. [4:6] "Why are you so angry?" God asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? [4:7] You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." [4:8] One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the field. "And while they were in the field, Cain rose up and murdered his brother, Abel.^{page 42} [4:9] Afterward, God called to Cain, "Where is your brother?" Cain responded. "Am I my brother's keeper?" [4:10] But God said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! [4:11] Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. [4:12] No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth." [4:13] Cain replied to the Lord, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! [4:14] You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer..."

Abraham

God called to Abraham: Abraham!
Abraham replied: Here I am.

[12:1] God told [Abraham], "Go, leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you..." [12:4] So he departed as God had instructed ...

[22:1] Sometime later, God tested Abraham. God called. "Abraham!" Abraham replied. "*Hineni*. Here I am." [22:2] "*Take, please, your son, your only son—Isaac, whom you love—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.*" page 70 [22:3] The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. [22:4] On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. [22:5] "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back." [22:6] So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, [22:7] Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" [22:8] "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together. [22:9] When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. [22:10] *And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.* page 73 [22:11] *At that moment the angel of God called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"* "Yes," Abraham replied. "*Hineni*. Here I am!" [22:12] The angel said "Don't lay a hand on the boy! Do not hurt him in any way," page 74 for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son." [22:13] ... The angel called again to Abraham from heaven. [22:16] "This is what God says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my name that [22:17] I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore." page 77

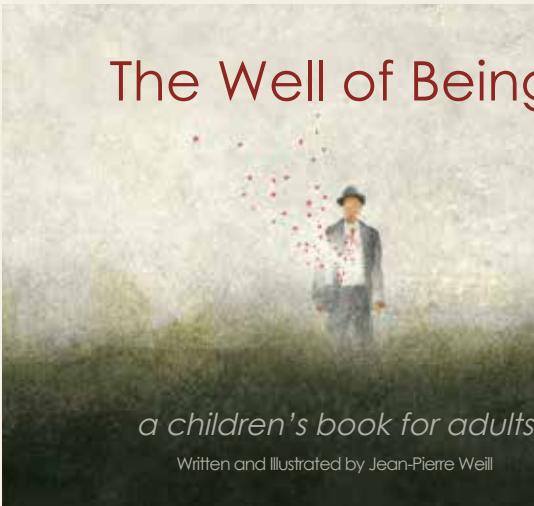
Attributions

- page 17 Cave at Lascaux paintings dated to 15,000 BCE
- page 18 Babar, adapted from Jean de Brunhoff
- page 28 Napoleon Crossing the Alps, by Jean-Louis David
- page 29 Adapted from Saul Steinberg
- page 31 Adapted from Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*
- page 48 Einstein's General Theory of Relativity
- page 50 Two flags inspired by Dr. Seuss's Sneetches
- page 60 Adapted from a cartoon by Anonymous
- page 64 Inspired by Paralytic Child, as adapted by Francis Bacon from Muybridge
- page 65 Inspired by Roy Lichtenstein's Magnifying Glass series

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You may be interested in another book by Jean-Pierre Weill. *The Well of Being: a children's book for adults* was published to critical acclaim. It has been translated into Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, and German.

* * *

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jean-Pierre Weill was born in Paris and grew up in New York. He and his wife, sculptor Rachel Rotenberg, reside in Jerusalem.

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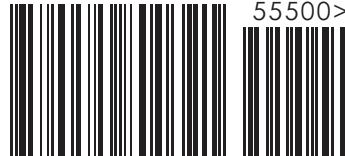
Ram Dass

Evolve

This picture-book retells the biblical stories of Adam, Cain and Abraham as a journey to the Self. These stories reside at the heart of the Western literary tradition. In this retelling they invite us to invent and celebrate our lives.



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