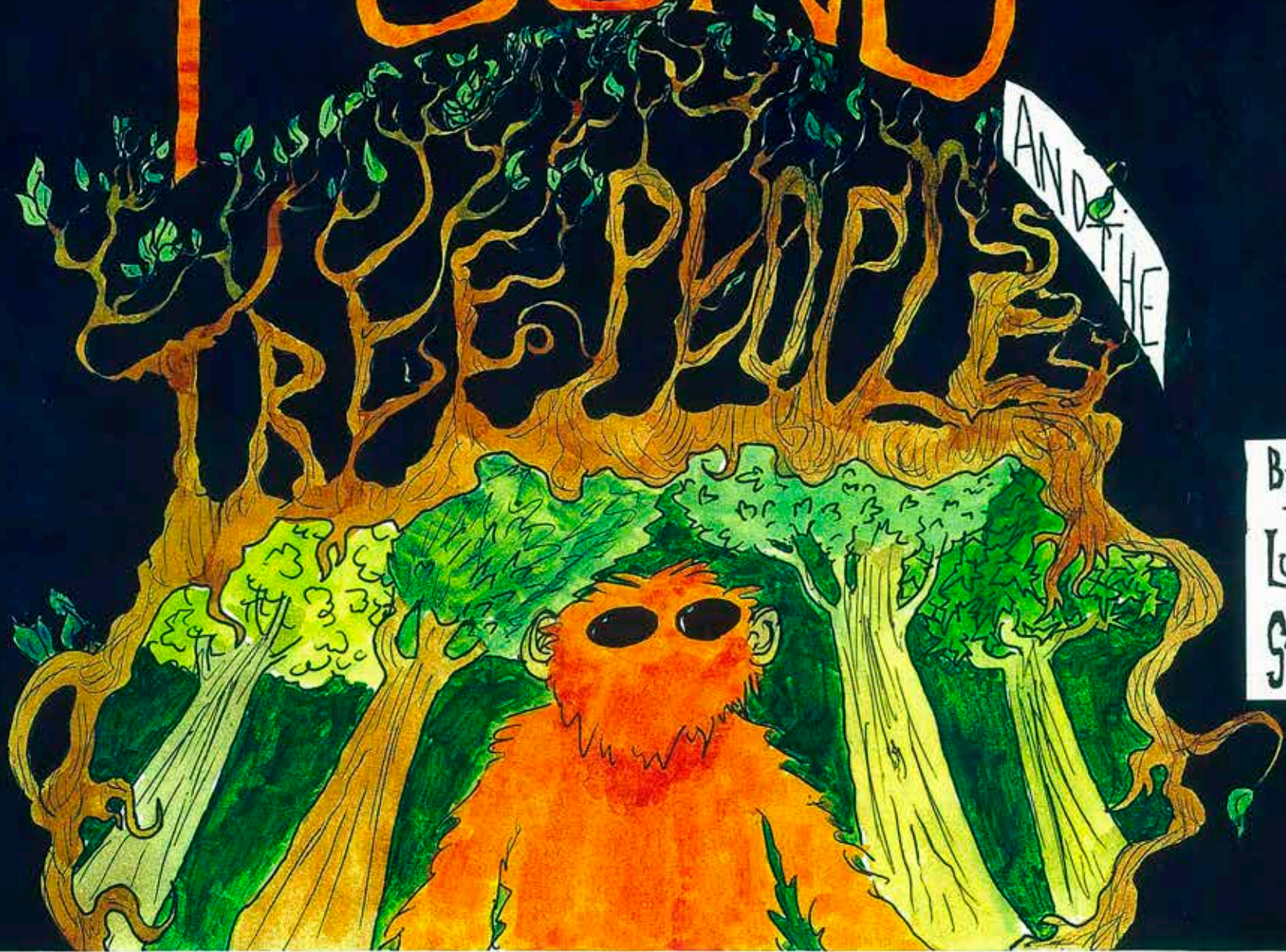


# FOOND



AND THE

By  
Lu Gan  
Stern



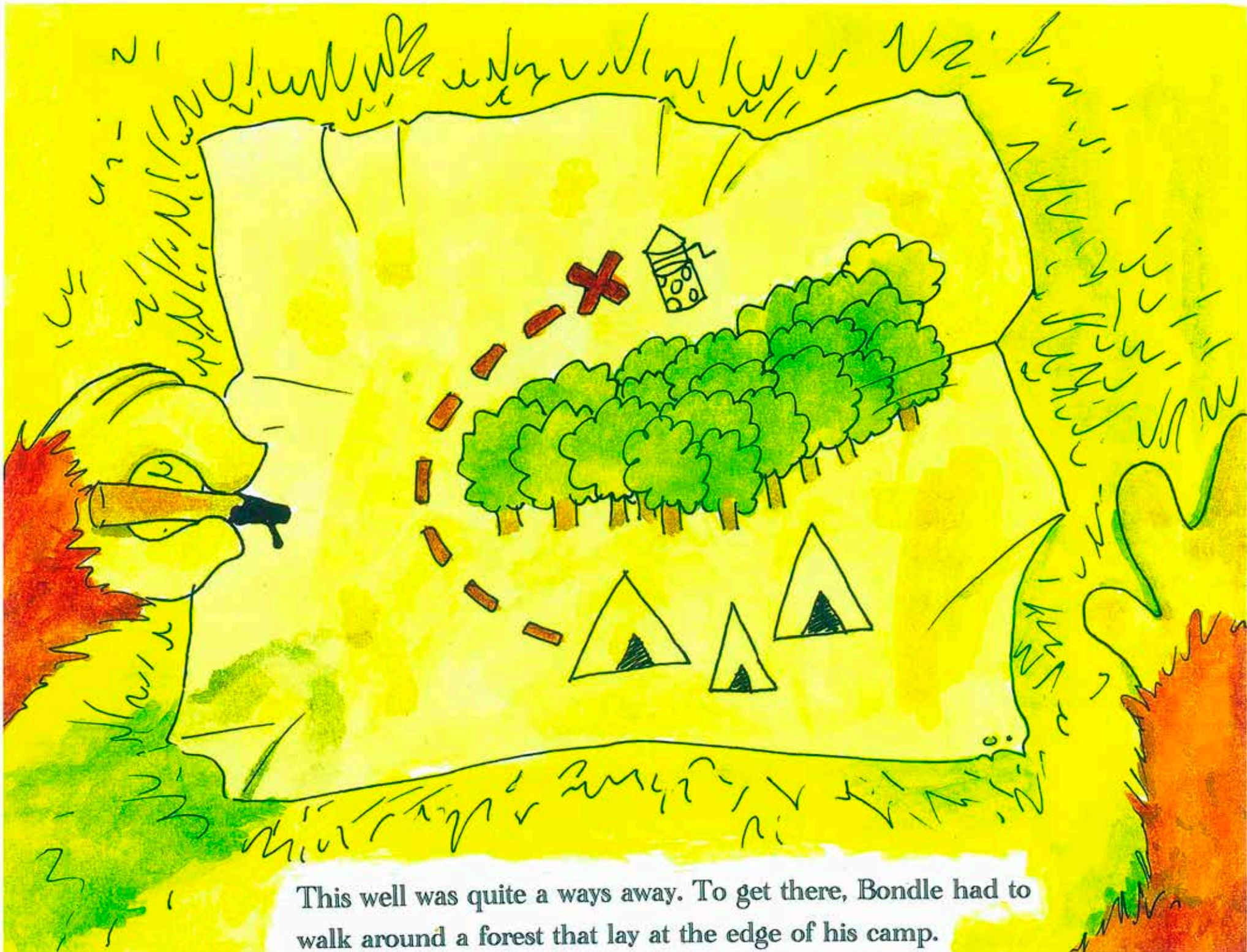
Long ago, a great plain stretched over the land. It was here that the Foond, a peaceful species of furry beings, found their home.

This story is about a certain young Foondling named Bondle.



Every day, Bondle would take two buckets to the well and fill them with drinking water.





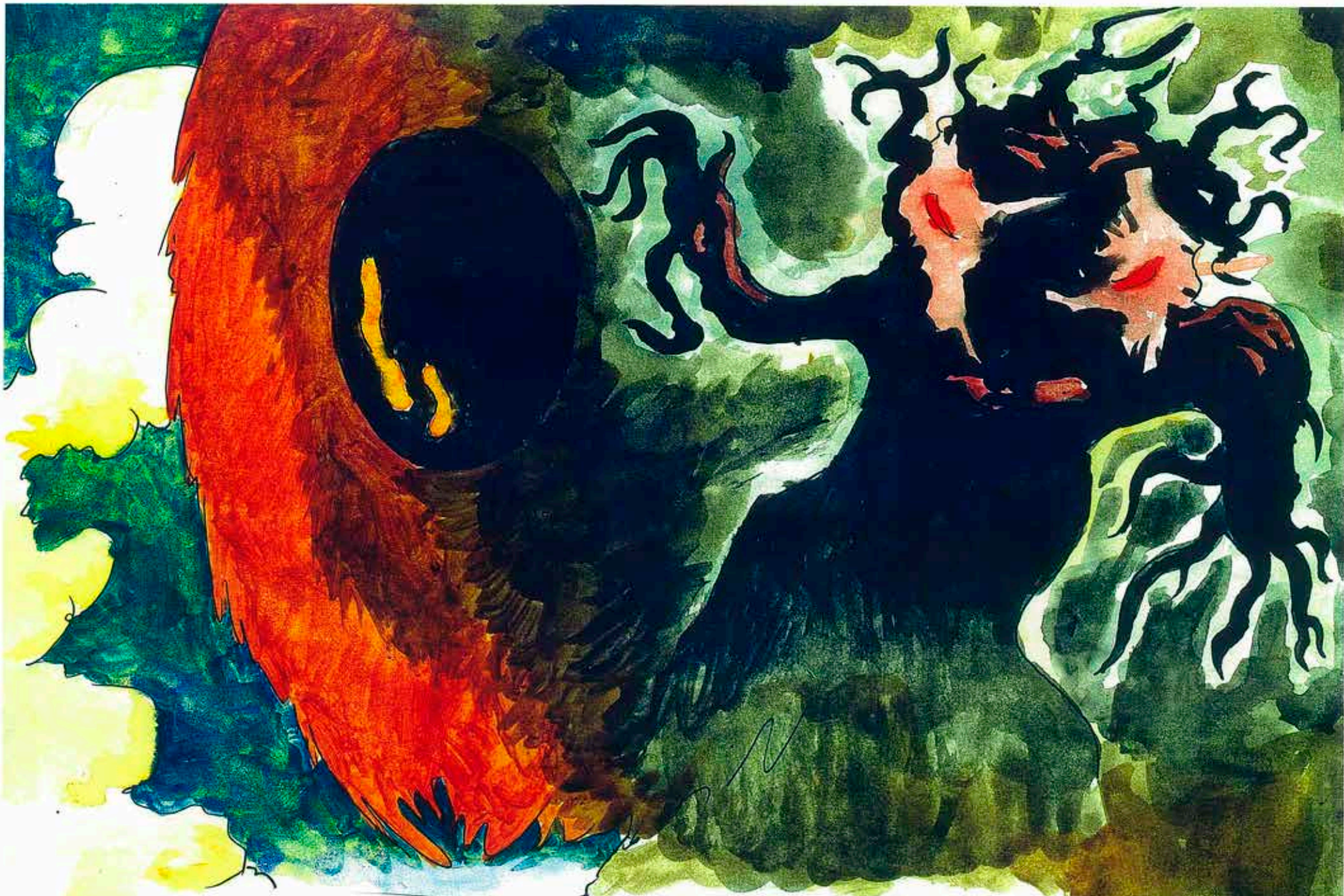
This well was quite a ways away. To get there, Bondle had to walk around a forest that lay at the edge of his camp.



“Why can’t I simply walk through the forest?” He asked his parents one night.

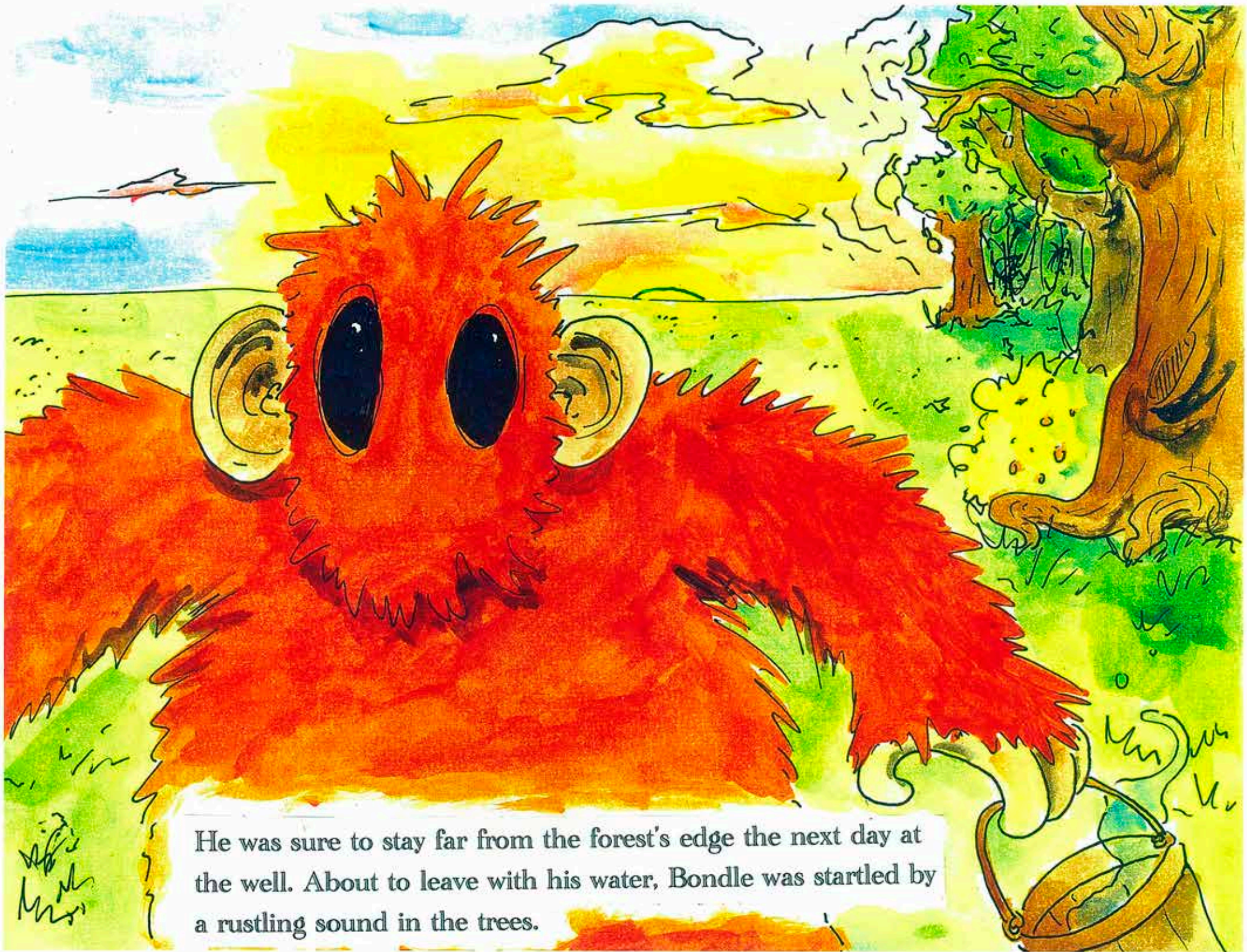


"There are dangerous things in that forest," his mother replied with a far-off look in her eyes, "It isn't safe for you."



Bondle knew of these dangerous things- beasts that were half plant, half animal, that lived in the trees and stole children in the dead of night.





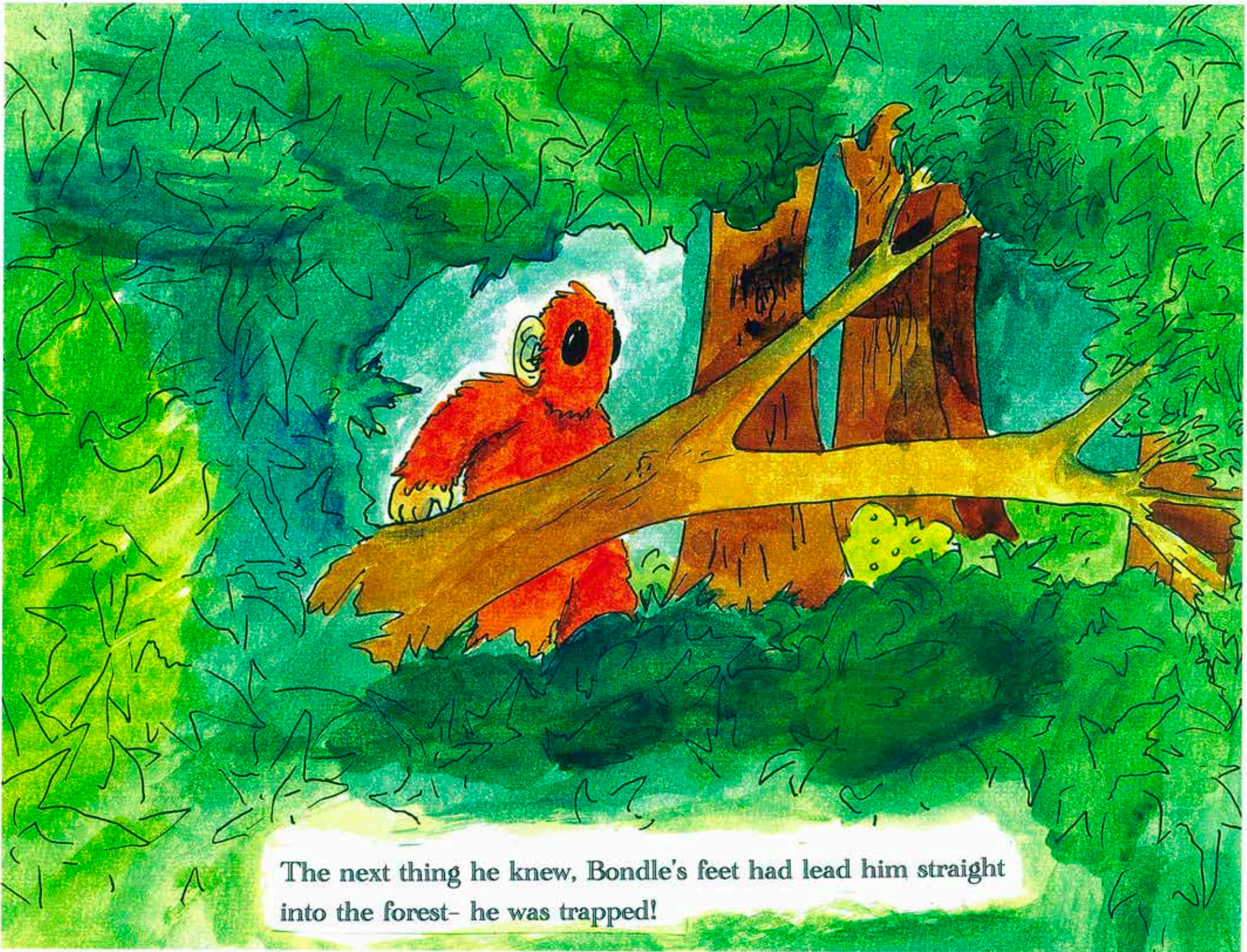
He was sure to stay far from the forest's edge the next day at the well. About to leave with his water, Bundle was startled by a rustling sound in the trees.



A monstrous creature burst from the forest. It was larger and more fearsome than Bondle had imagined.



Bondle ran as fast as his feet would carry him.



The next thing he knew, Bondle's feet had lead him straight into the forest- he was trapped!



But just when all hope seemed lost, he spied something out of the corner of his eye...



It was the tree people- Bondle was sure of it: the creatures he had seen in the night! Had they come to watch him get swallowed up?



No- in the blink of an eye, the tree people ensnared the monster, tying it up in their root-like fingers.



"Let's go," one of them said as they grabbed his hand, "He's trapped but he'll escape before long!"





They stopped after reaching a safe distance. "What- who- are you?" Bondle asked the shorter tree person, a girl, he guessed.



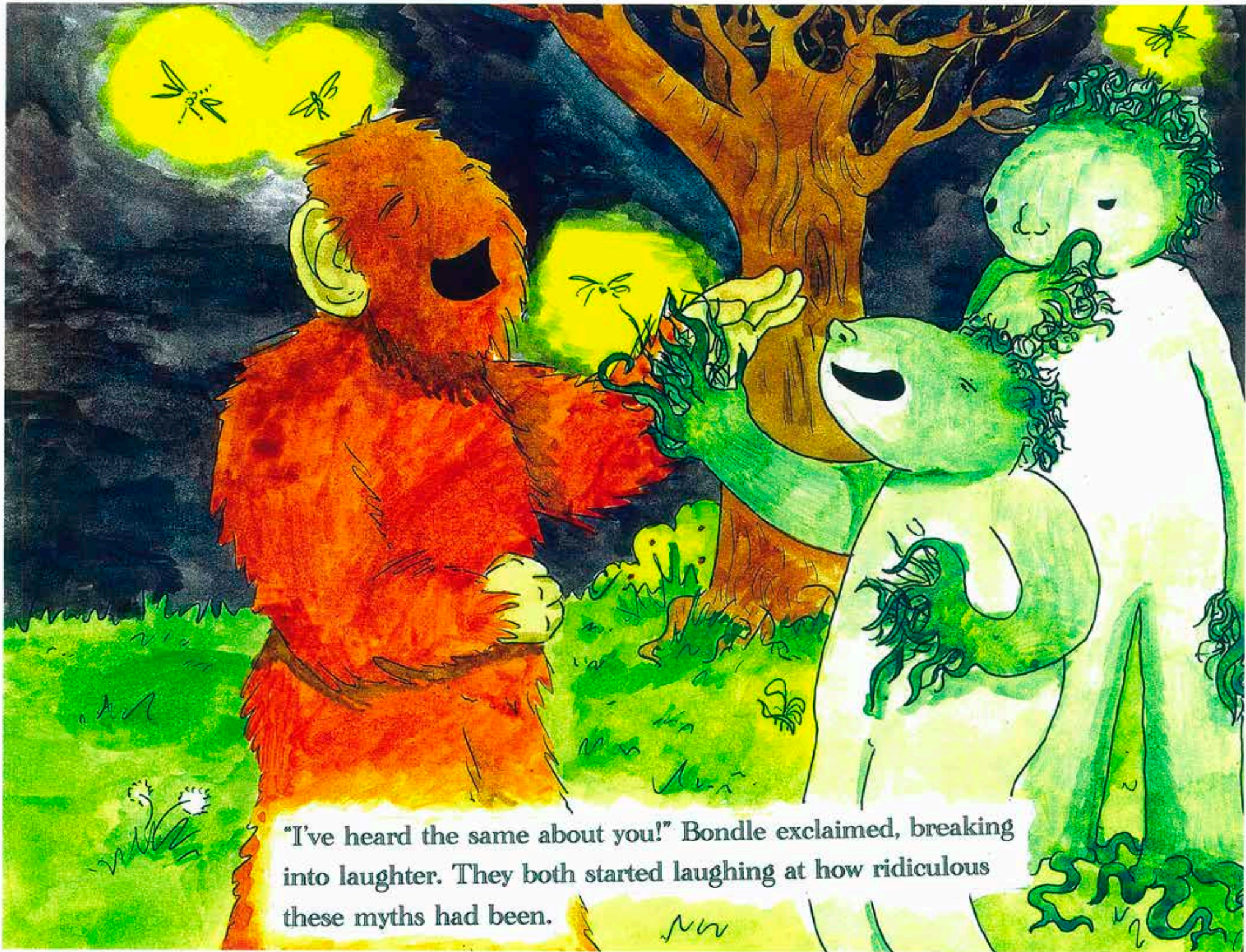
"You see?" said the older one, "He is like all the oth-" but his words were cut short as the younger one turned back to Bondle. "My name is Meeka," she answered, "And I am a who, not a what."



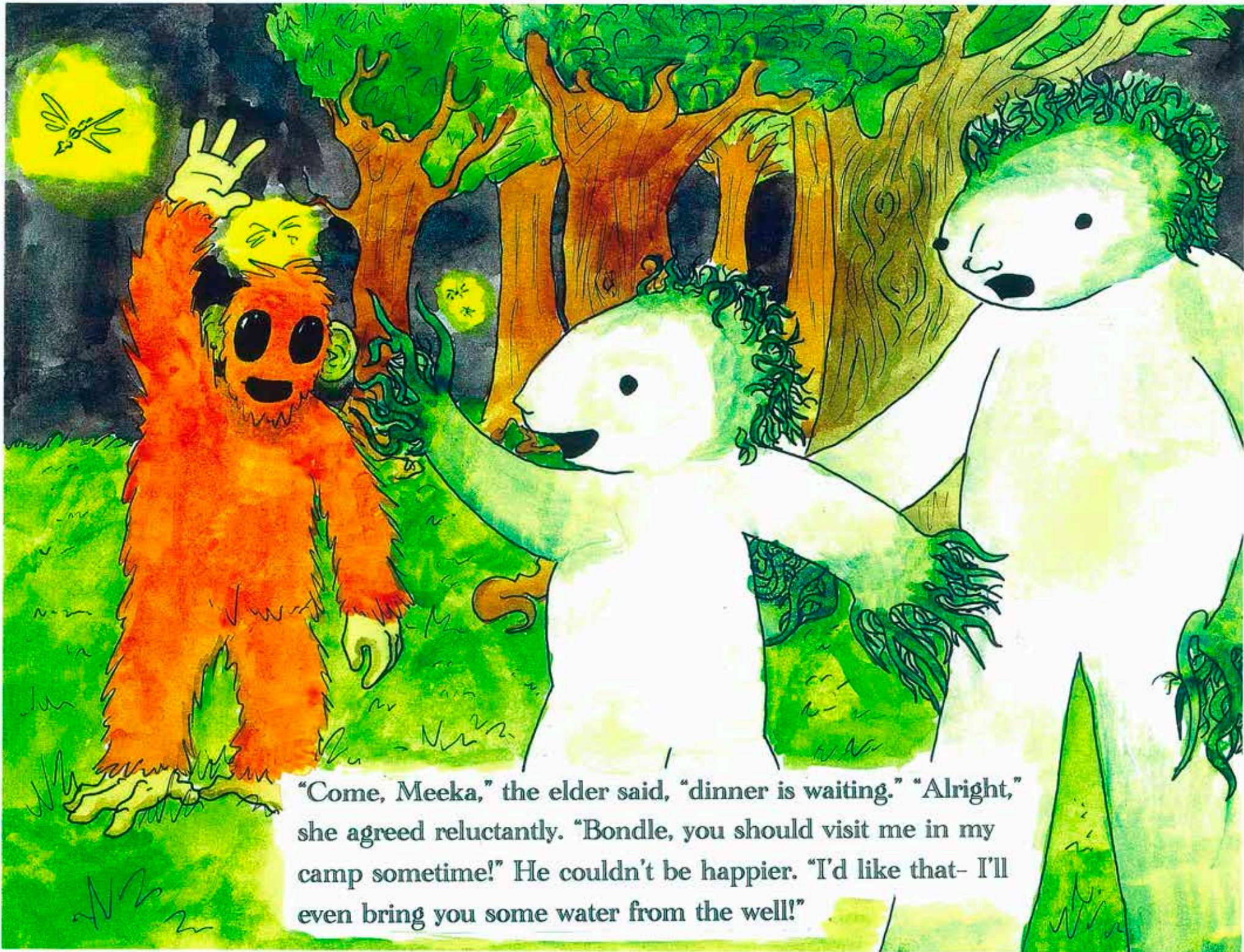
“My name’s Bondle,” said Bondle, feeling guilty for fearing Meeka and her kin. “Yes,” Meeka replied, “I’ve seen you at the well.”



"I would have said hello earlier, but my folk tell the scariest stories about you," she confessed.



"I've heard the same about you!" Bondle exclaimed, breaking into laughter. They both started laughing at how ridiculous these myths had been.



“Come, Meeka,” the elder said, “dinner is waiting.” “Alright,” she agreed reluctantly. “Bondle, you should visit me in my camp sometime!” He couldn’t be happier. “I’d like that- I’ll even bring you some water from the well!”

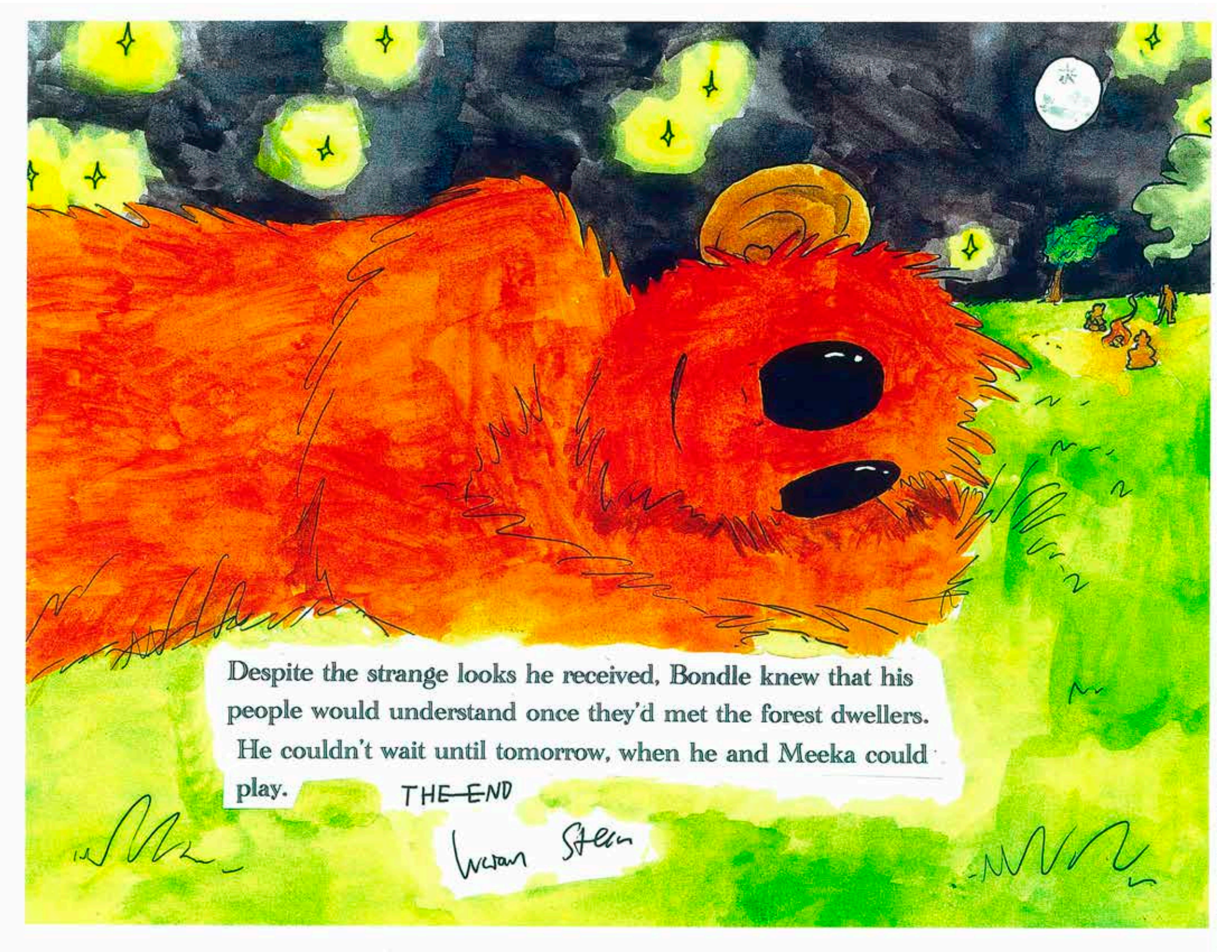


When he returned, Bondle's parents were worried sick over him. "Bondle, what have you been doing in the forest all day? I thought I told you to stay clear of that place!" his father cried.



"I'm fine," Bondle assured them, "I made new friends today. The forest people saved me, and they aren't anyone to be afraid of."





Despite the strange looks he received, Bundle knew that his people would understand once they'd met the forest dwellers. He couldn't wait until tomorrow, when he and Meeka could play.

THE END

Wesley Stein