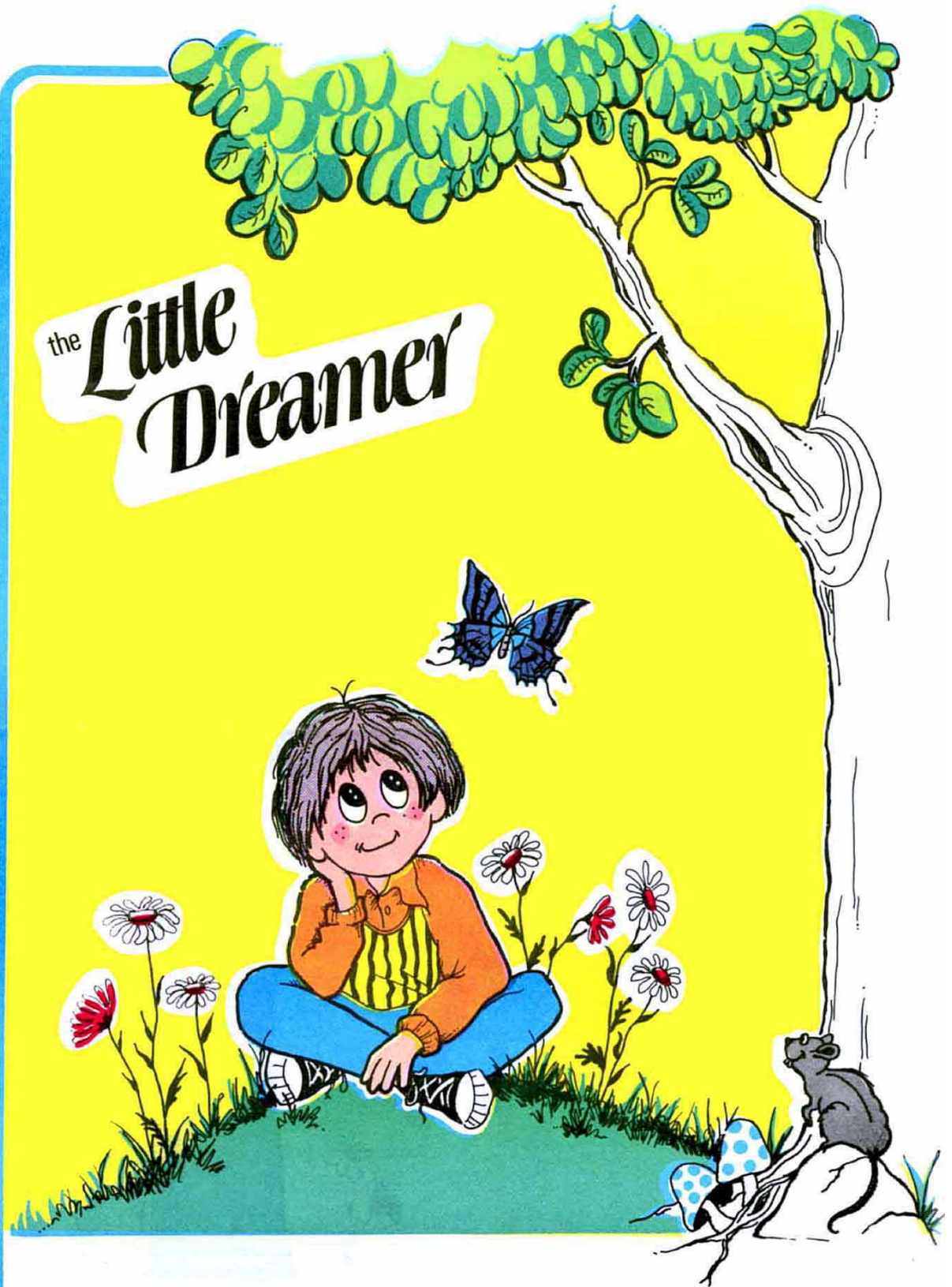


the Little Dreamer



by Frederique

Pictures - Design
Rebecca Baker
Lisa Frank

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He is a nice little boy.

At school, all the other students are fond of him. He has marvelous dark, shining eyes.

His father is a banker. He seldom smiles.

His mother is a beautiful woman who is always very confident of herself. The little boy admires her deeply.

The clouds are his friends, but he does not understand the numbers.

He likes to paint. He enjoys spreading strange streaks of color across large pieces of paper to look like clouds in the sky at sundown.





"How many sticks did I draw on the blackboard?" asks the teacher.

The little boy awakes from his daydream with a start and sees the little marks dancing in front of him.

"20," he guesses because he is not interested in counting them.

With a discouraged smile, the teacher tries an easier question: "5 + 3?"

"10," the little boy answers immediately without thinking, because he dislikes calculations.

His grades in school are very low and that makes his parents very sad.

The little boy wants so much to please his parents.

He knows that his father works hard to earn a living by writing numbers in large notebooks and by using mysterious calculating machines.

But the more he sees that his parents are unhappy with him, the less he understands the numbers.



Each evening, the little boy's mother helps him to do his homework. It is the worst time of the day. The more his mother tries to explain the calculations to him, the less he understands.

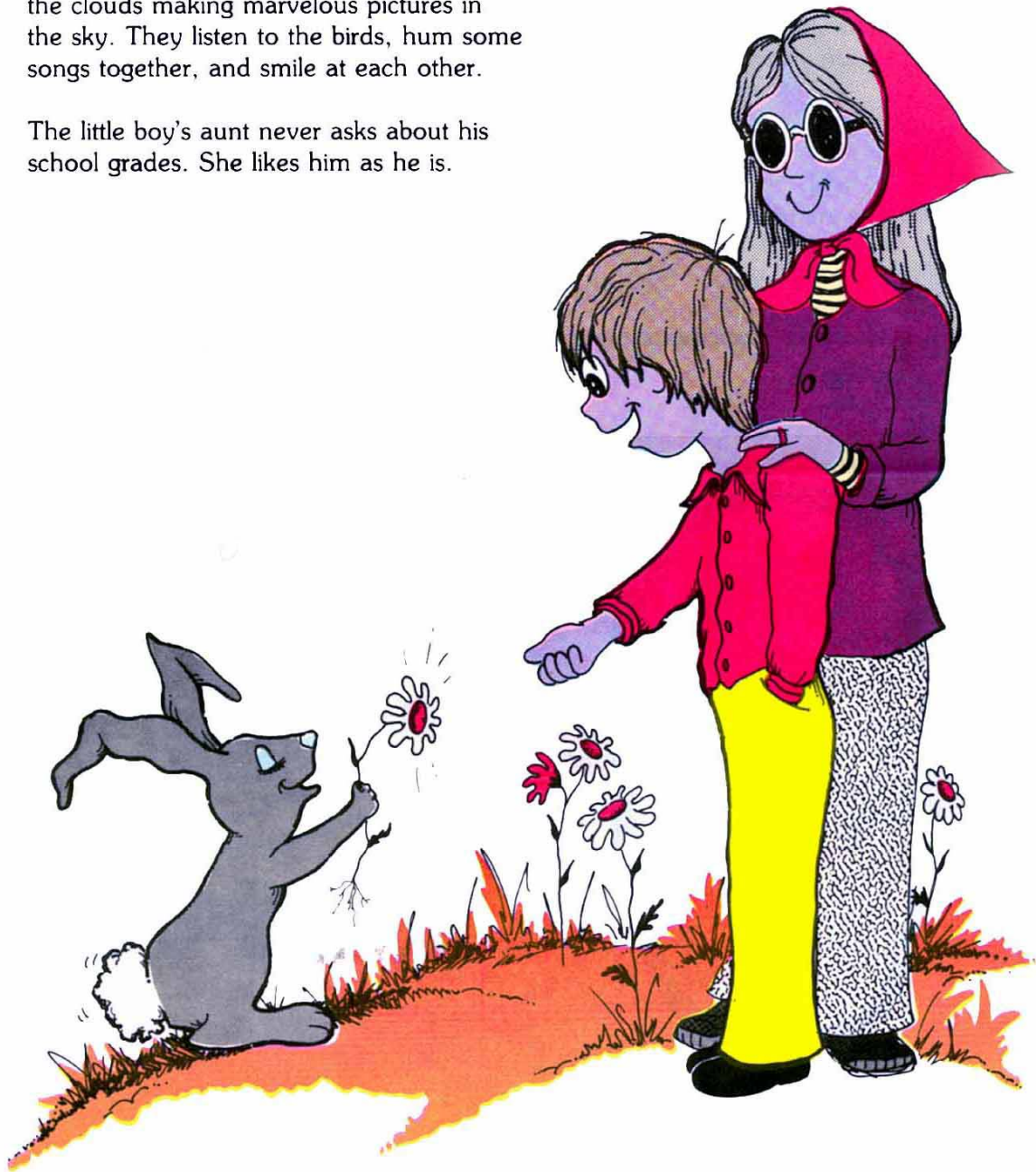
His mother talks a lot and seems to find everything so easy. He looks at her lovingly, but still does not understand.



Twice a week, the little boy visits his aunt who has no children of her own. She is a quiet person who always seems to have time to listen to him.

He enjoys her company very much. They walk together in the country and look at the clouds making marvelous pictures in the sky. They listen to the birds, hum some songs together, and smile at each other.

The little boy's aunt never asks about his school grades. She likes him as he is.



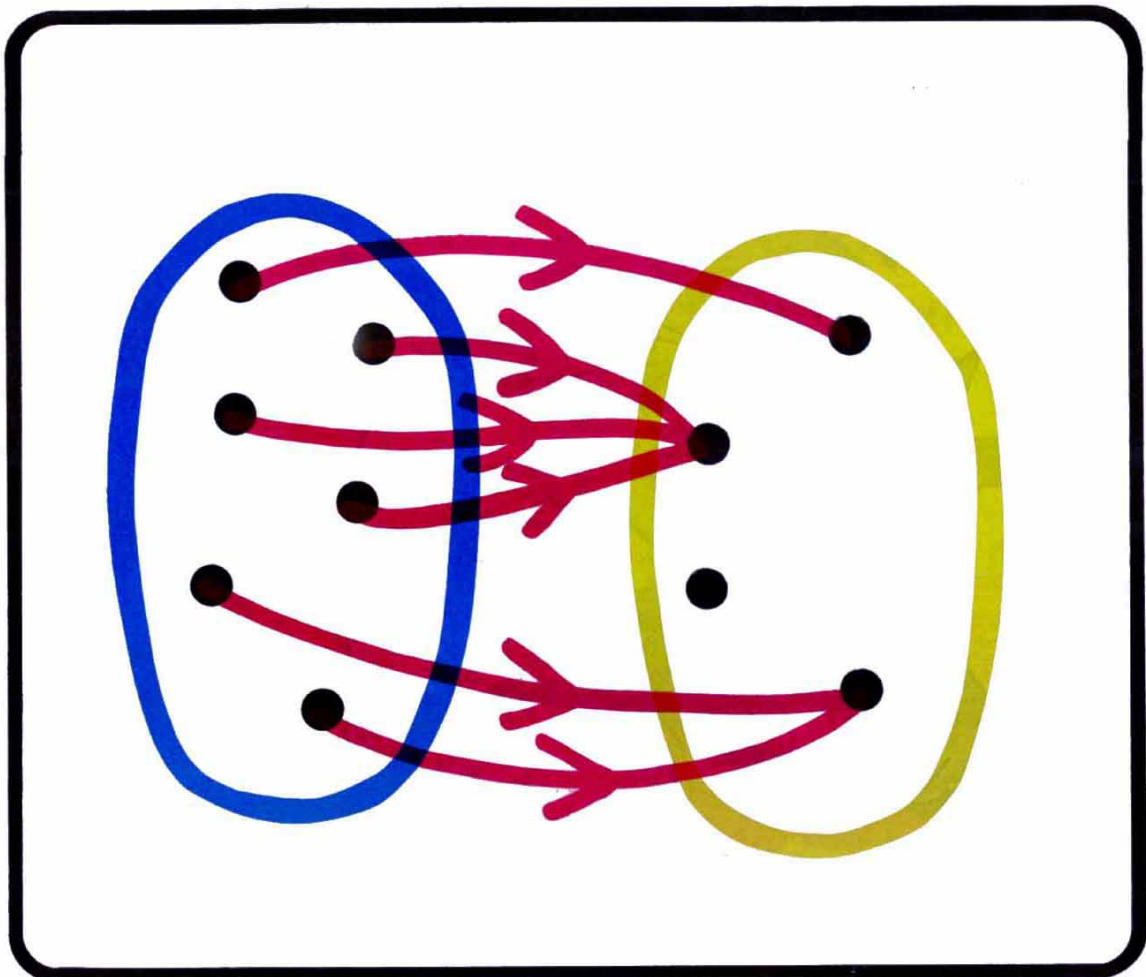
One afternoon, the little boy and his aunt are painting and drawing together. He is so happy to be near her. Her home is so peaceful.

She draws a very strange picture.

"These red arrows are very beautiful," the little boy thinks to himself. "They are like doves flying through the air."

"What are you doing?" he asks.

She looks at him and smiles.



“In the blue string, I have drawn some birds,” she says, “and in the yellow one some nests. Each bird flies to its nest.”

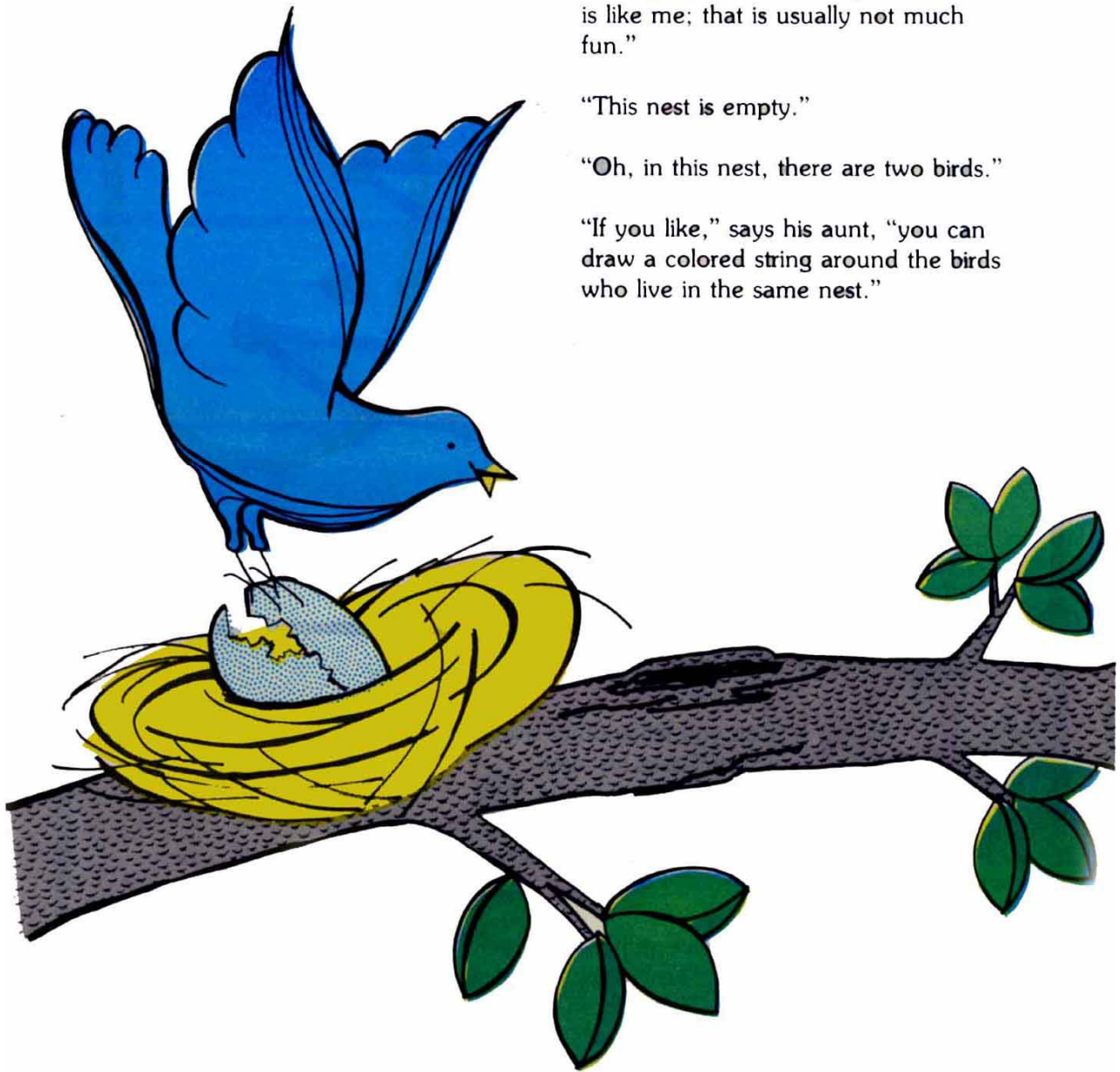
“There are three birds in this nest,” the little boy observes, pointing to the dot with three arrows ending at it.

“Look, this bird is an only child. It is like me; that is usually not much fun.”

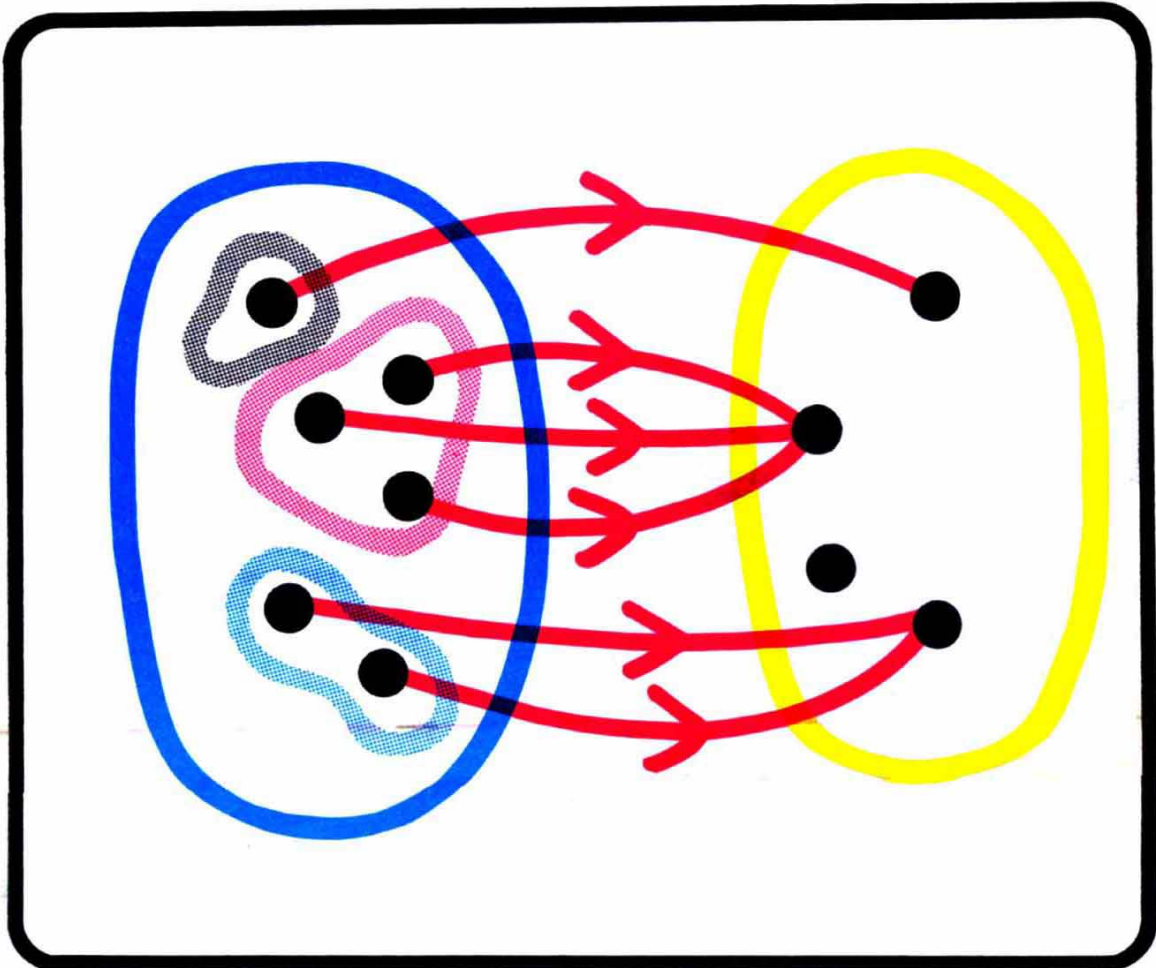
“This nest is empty.”

“Oh, in this nest, there are two birds.”

“If you like,” says his aunt, “you can draw a colored string around the birds who live in the same nest.”



“How beautiful our picture is now,” shouts the little boy. “It is like a song in colors.”



“Can you tell another story for our picture?” asks his aunt.

He thinks for a little while.

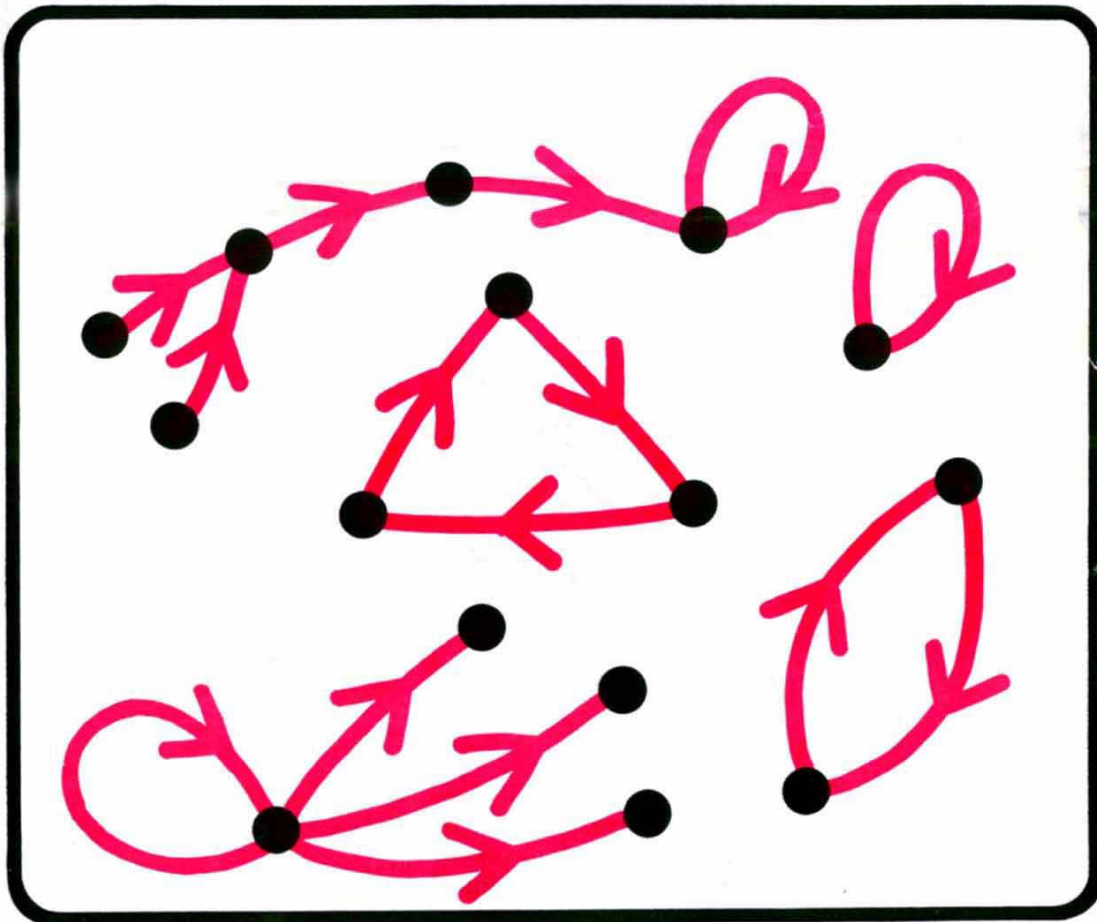
“In the blue string, there are children,” he says, “and in the yellow string, some houses. The children go to their own houses. The dot all by itself is a dog house. No children live there.”

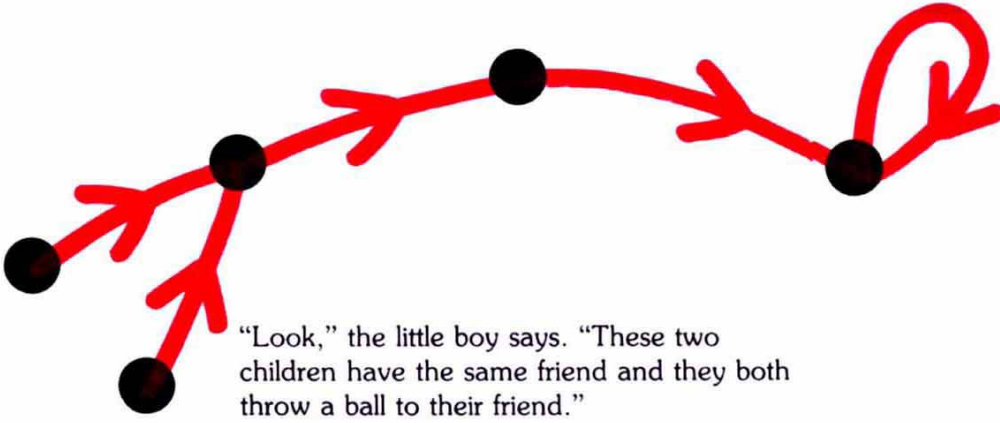
“If you like, you can draw your own picture,” suggests his aunt, “and we shall try to tell some nice stories for it.”

The little boy draws a complicated picture.

“There are many children,” he says.
“They are throwing balls to their friends.”

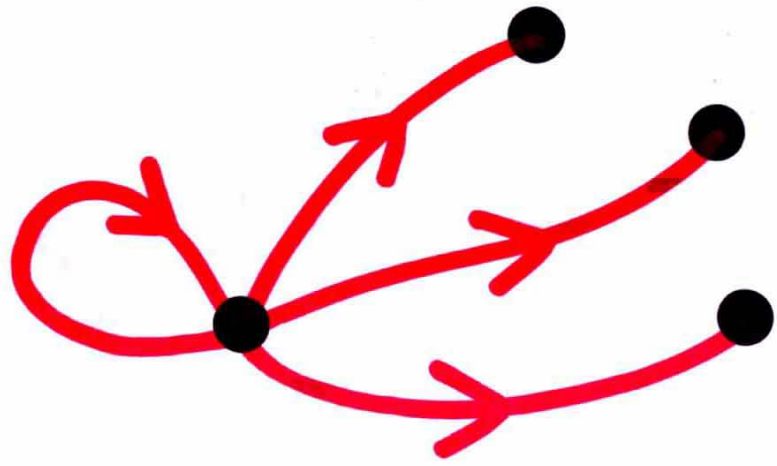
“That is a nice picture,” observes his aunt.





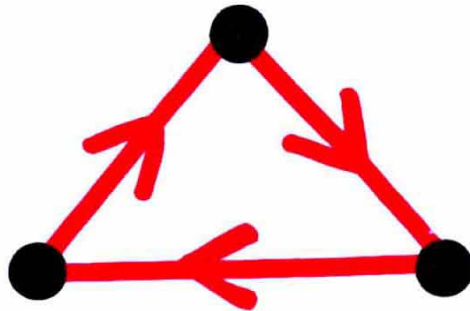
“Look,” the little boy says. “These two children have the same friend and they both throw a ball to their friend.”

“This child, here, receives a ball and throws it to another child who throws it up in the air and catches it.”



“This child has many balls—four balls, I think. She throws three of them to her friends and the last one to herself.”

“Three friends are playing. The ball passes from one to another and they throw it over and over again.”



“This child likes to play by himself.”

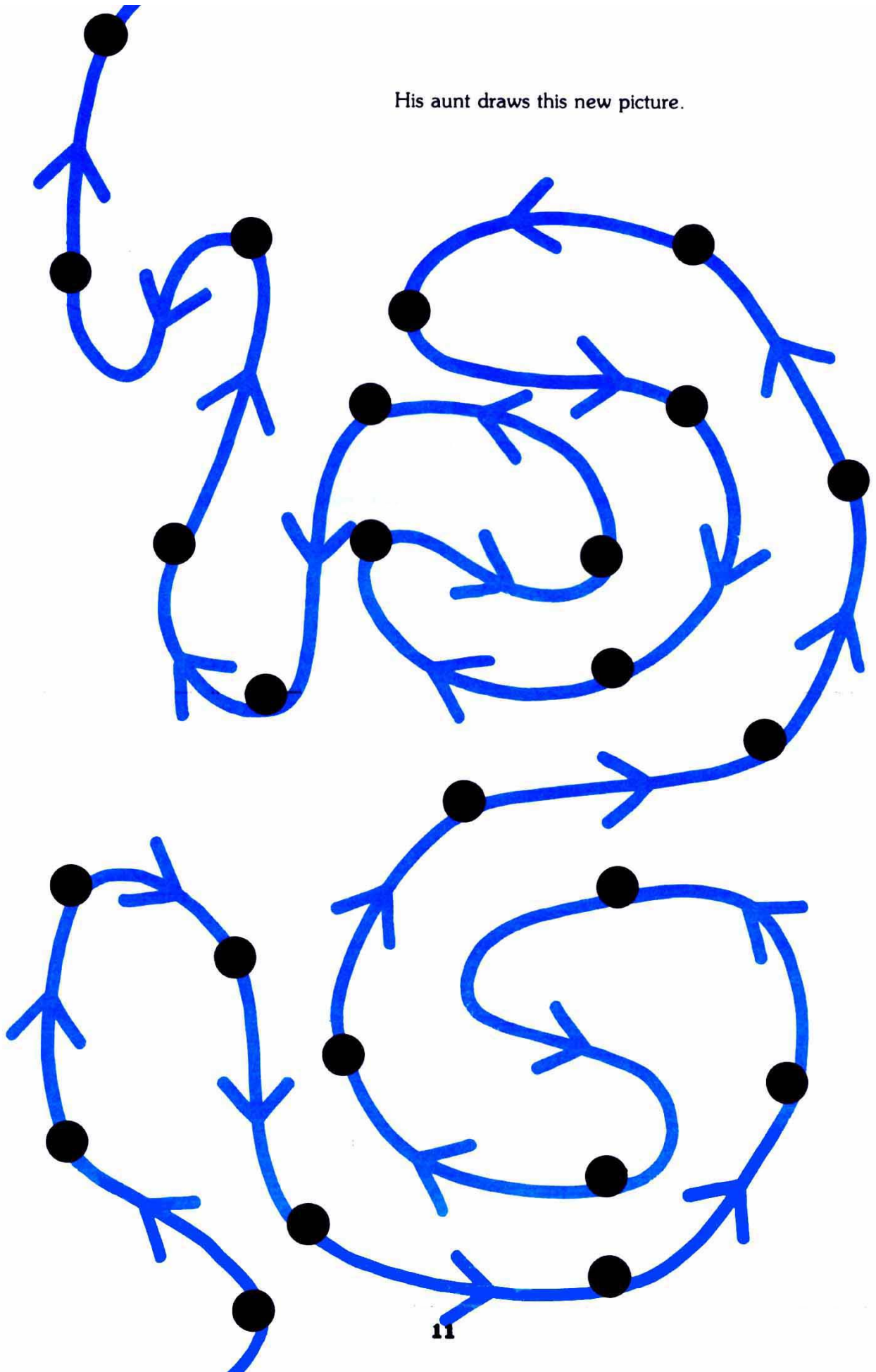


“Here we have two friends who throw a ball to each other over and over again.”

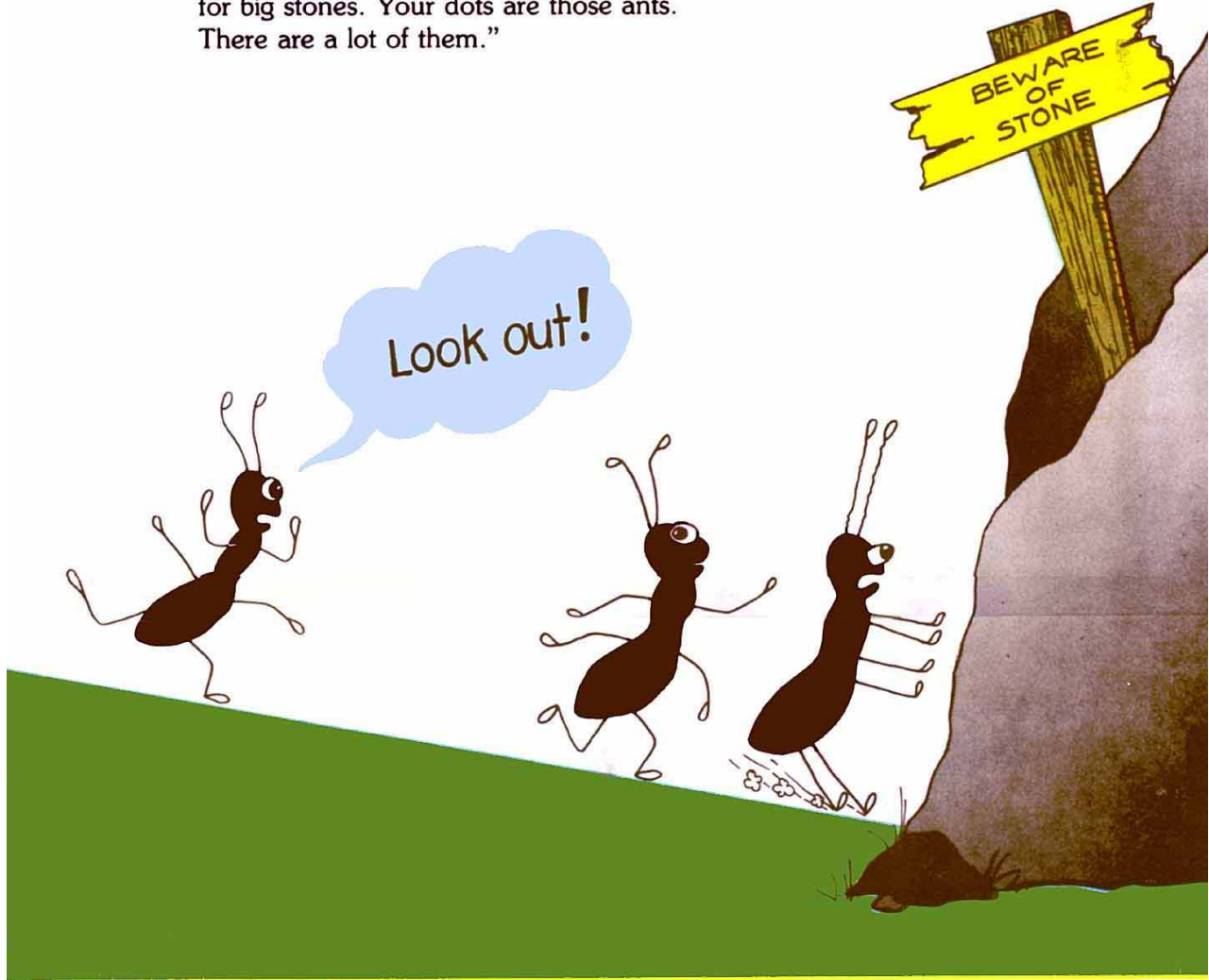
“It is a happy game,” comments his aunt.



His aunt draws this new picture.



“Do you remember the ants we saw last Sunday?” the little boy recalls. “They were running and had to watch out for big stones. Your dots are those ants. There are a lot of them.”



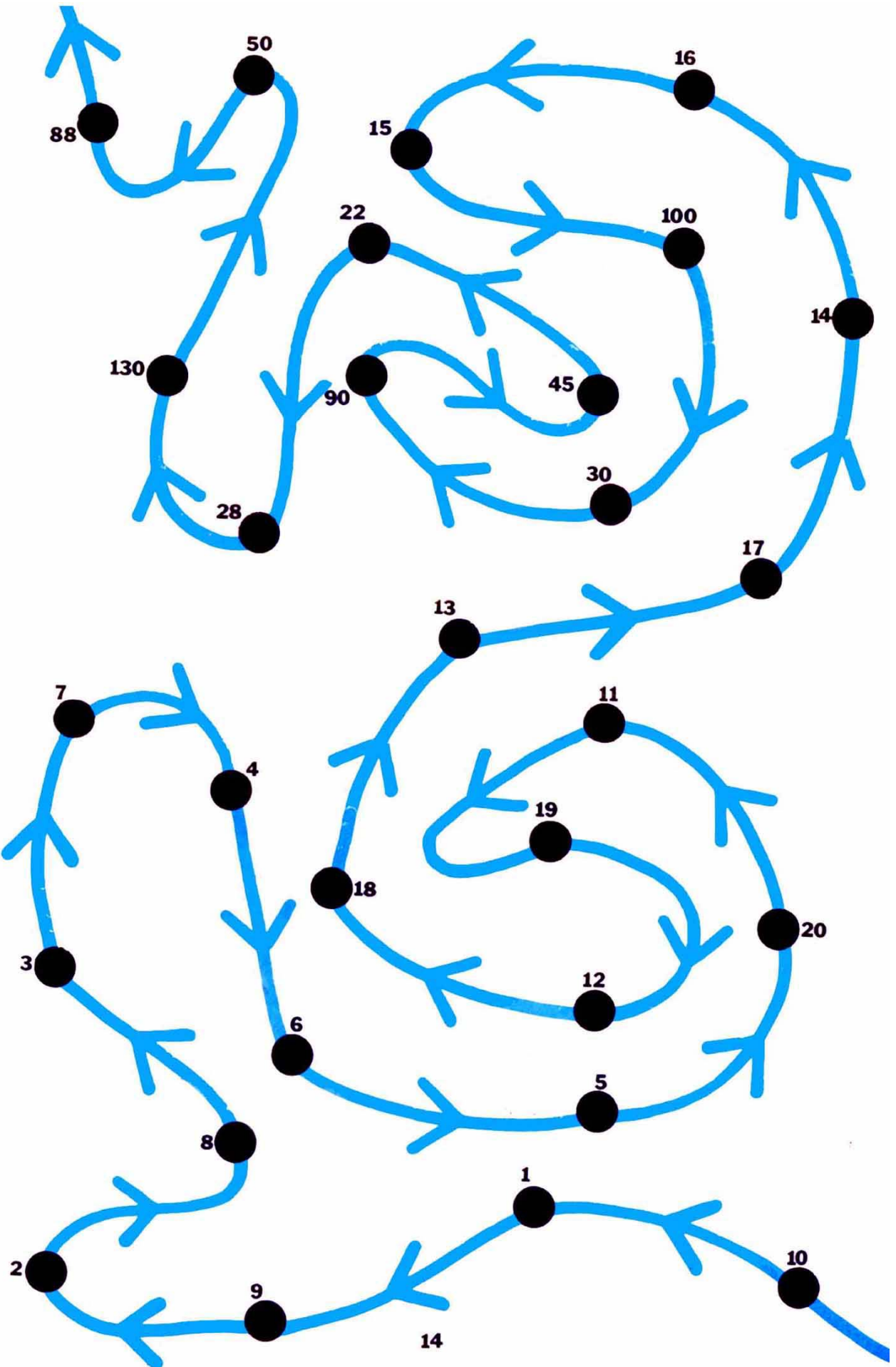
“Do you know what I think?” he says laughing. “Your picture also reminds me of my teacher. This morning, she tapped on her desk with a little stick and we had to count all together . . . , 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, . . .”

"You are not at school here," notes his aunt, "if you like, you can play with the numbers in a much more imaginative way."

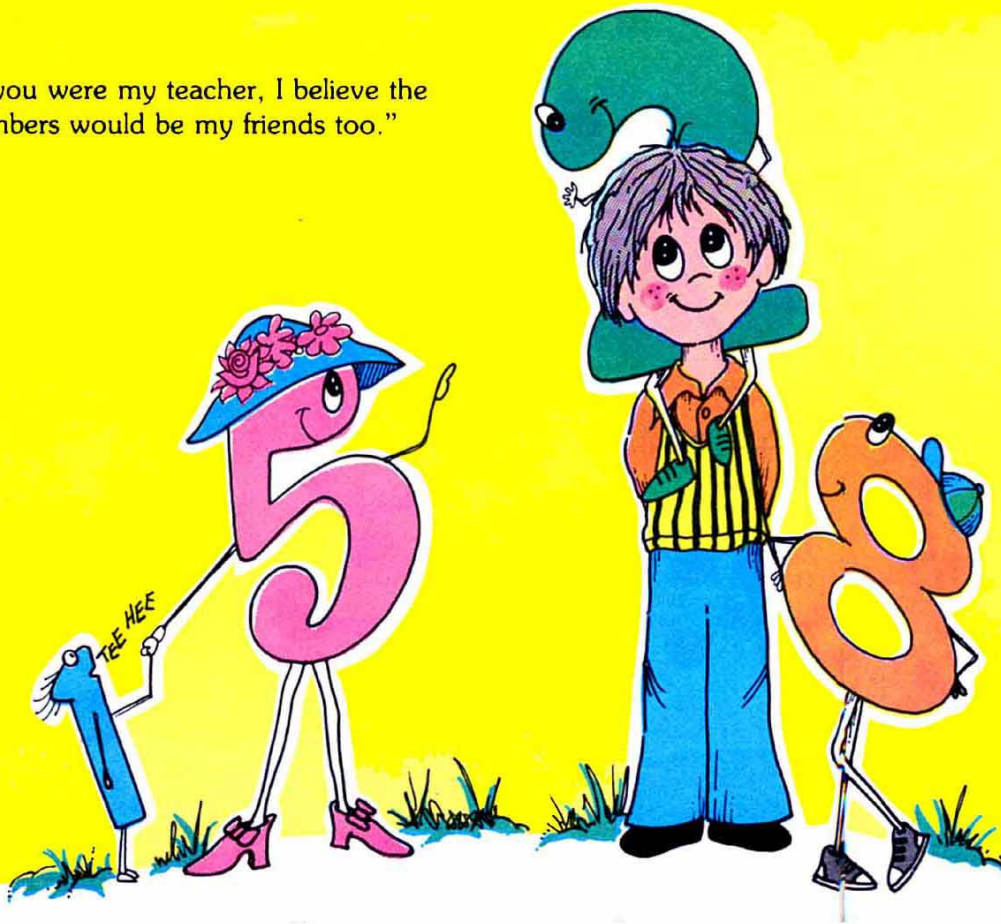
"It would be fun to mix them up," he answers. "Look, I'll write 10, 1, 9, 2, 8, 3, 7, 4, 6, 5, 20, 11, 19, 12, 18, 13, 17, 14, 16, 15, 100, 30, 90, . . ."

"Happy numbers," observes his aunt. "They must enjoy dancing in this way."





"If you were my teacher, I believe the numbers would be my friends too."



STORIES BY FREDERIQUE

Ages 5 to 8

The Playful Numbers
 The Baby Is Born
 81 Roses
 One Out of Seven
 The Old Shoemaker
 I Am A Very Happy Boy
 The Little Dreamer
 Two by Two
 The Weird Story of 24
 Where's My Nose?
 The Happy Puppet
 The Magic Box
 Summer School in the Old Days

Ages 8 to 12

The Little Donkey
 Singing Friends
 Dancing Friends
 I Am Not My Name
 The Living Lines
 The Square Trap
 Nabu Wins an Award

Ages 10 to 14

The Hidden Treasure
 A Valentine Mystery
 Election in the Number World
 A Very Strange Neighborhood

Schoolwork disagrees with "The Little Dreamer." Everything is so rigid and cut-and-dried. There is little room for fantasy and artistic expression. His parents, whom he wants to please so much, are disappointed with his school grades. The only solace he can find is in the company of his aunt, who shares his interest in clouds, birds and trees. Together they discover just how rich are the mathematical languages of strings and arrows. These languages inject into a mathematical situation the possibility of giving full rein to the imagination, and they render even the cold, lifeless whole numbers familiar and much less daunting.

"The Little Dreamer" is an encouraging story that shows that mathematics is more than mere arithmetic. Mathematics has something for everyone!

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