

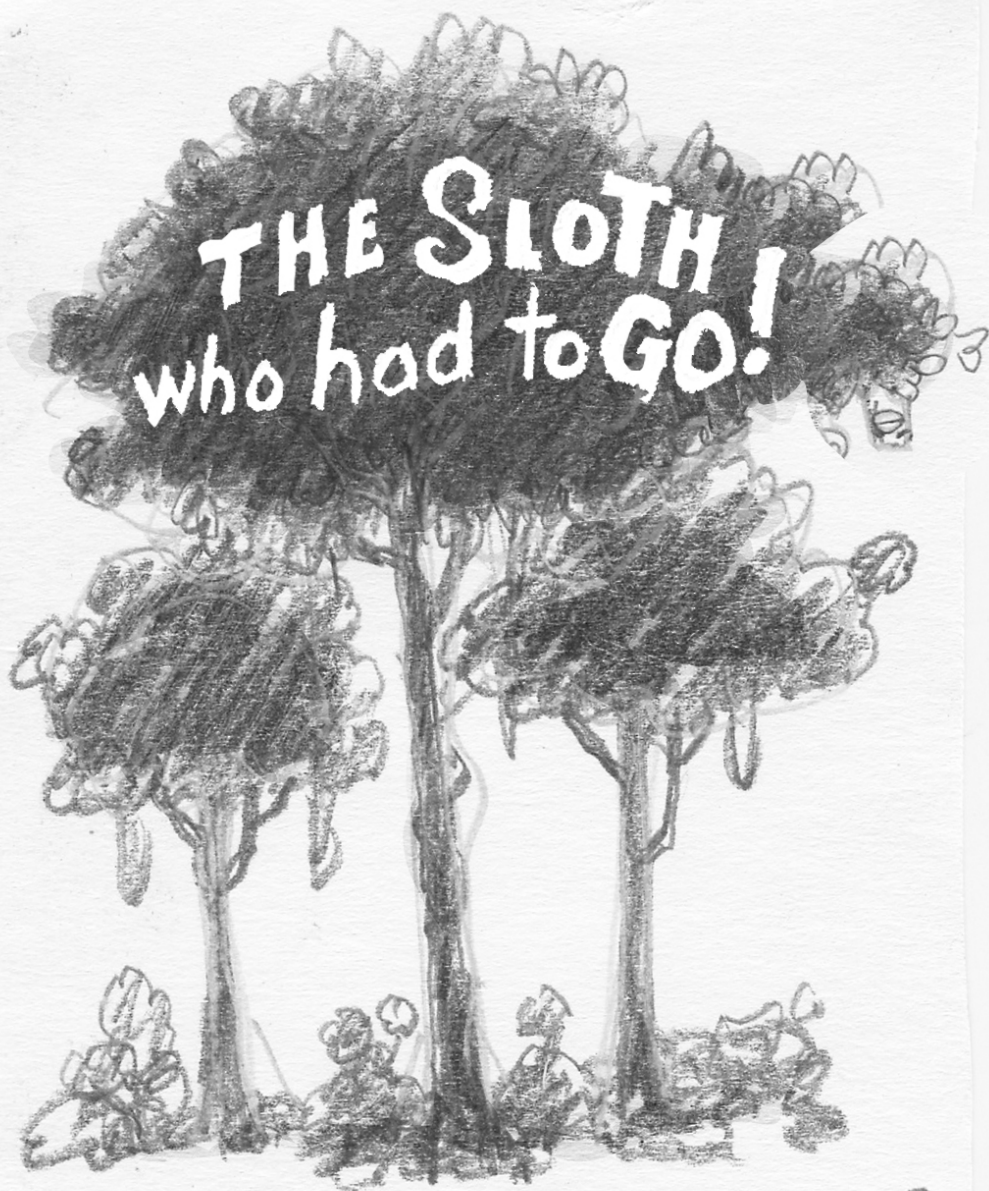


The Sloth
Who Had to Go

Lee Harper

DEDICATED
TO

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“Hello, my name is Tom.
I’m a tree sloth.
I’ve been hanging out here
in this tree all week, and I never want to go.
I LIKE it here. I feel SAFE here.
And best of all, my favorite
leaves grow here.”



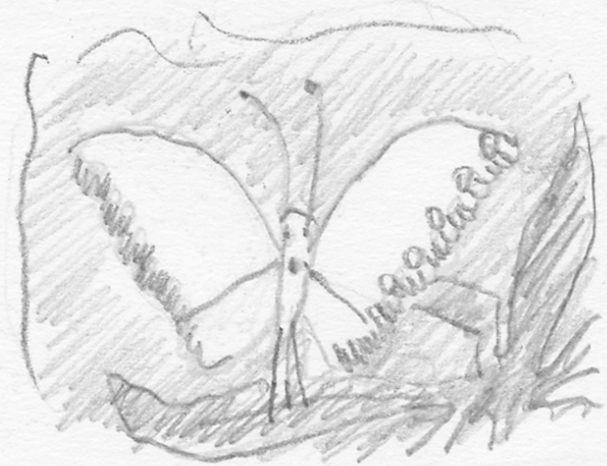
TOOT



“Tom,” said Mrs. Caterpillar, “I think you have to go.”



*Why did she say that?
Maybe she's just having a bad day.*



“Tom,” Mrs. Butterfly said, “I think you have to go.”



“Tom,” said Little Bird. “Go!”



“Okay, I’m going! I’m going!”



I’d better hurry. I don’t want any
ocelots to see me.

“Oh, hi Mrs. Toucan! How are you?”

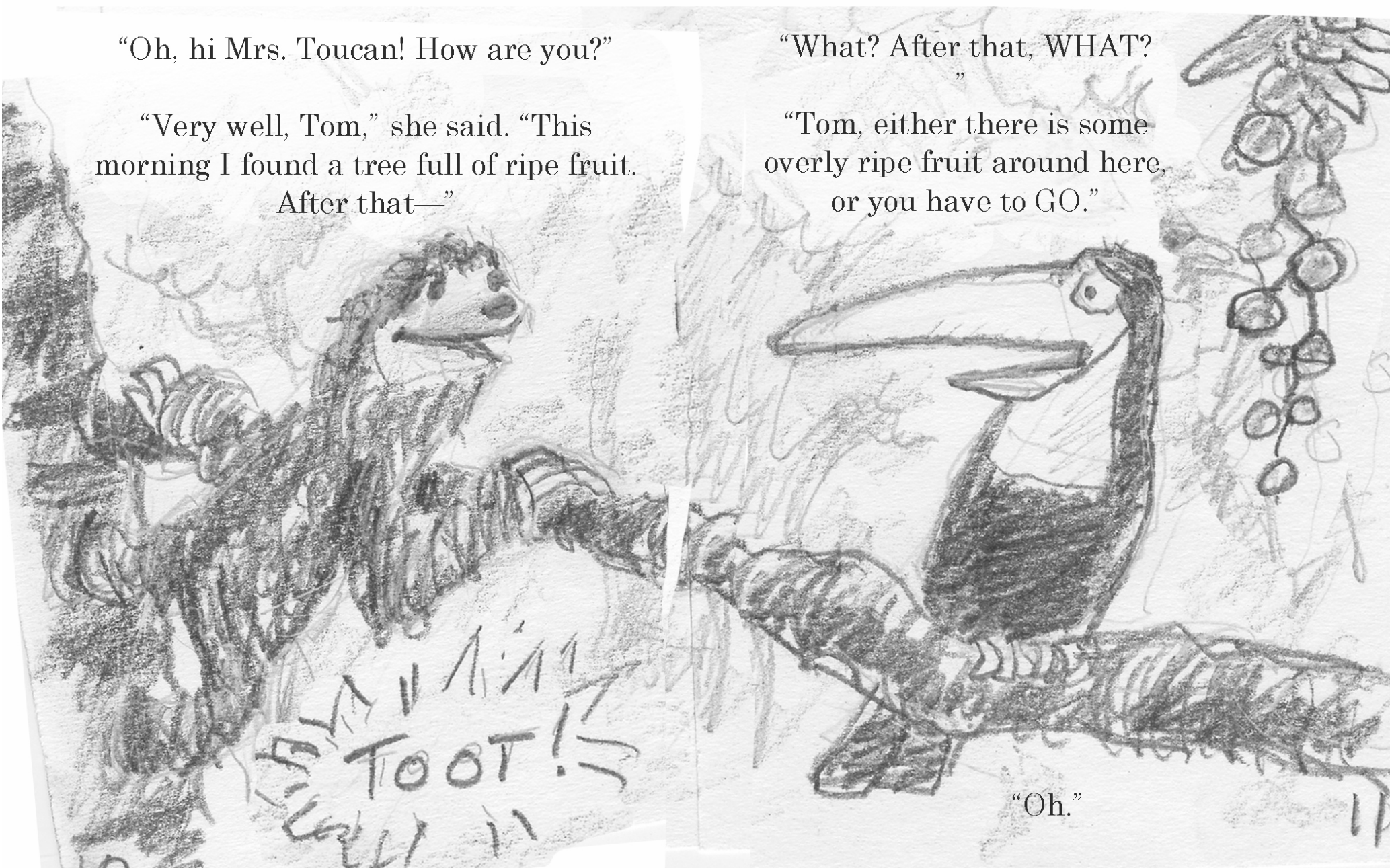
“Very well, Tom,” she said. “This morning I found a tree full of ripe fruit. After that—”

“What? After that, WHAT?”

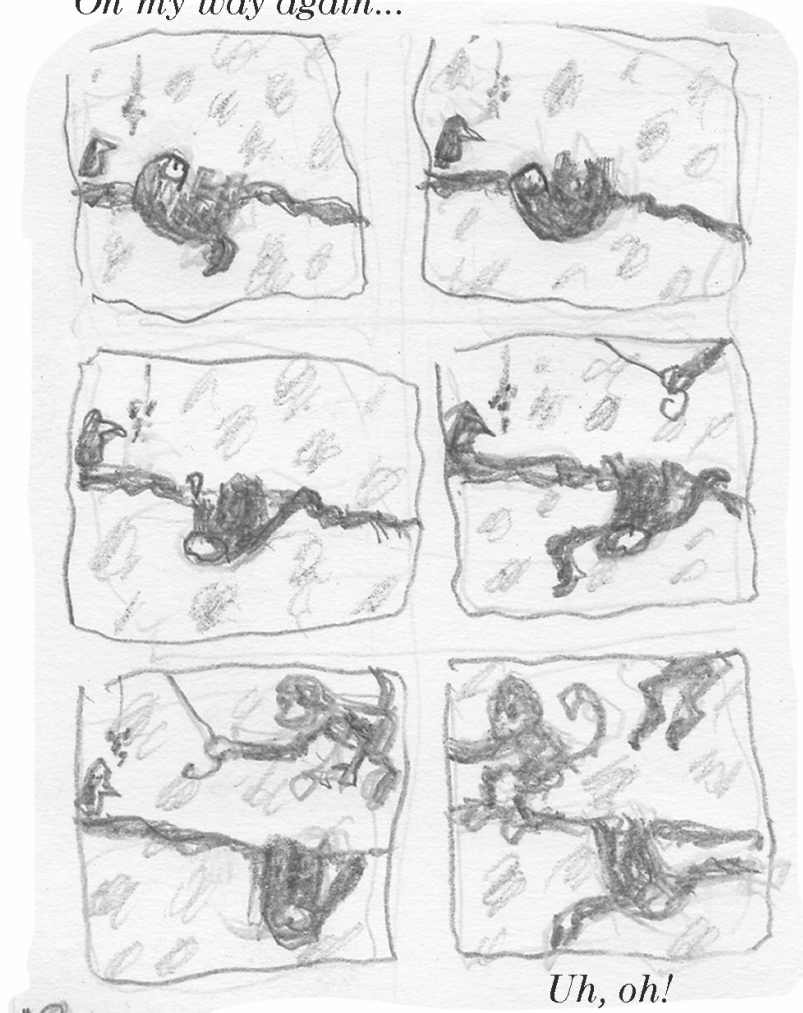
“Tom, either there is some overly ripe fruit around here, or you have to GO.”

TOOT!
TOOT!
TOOT!

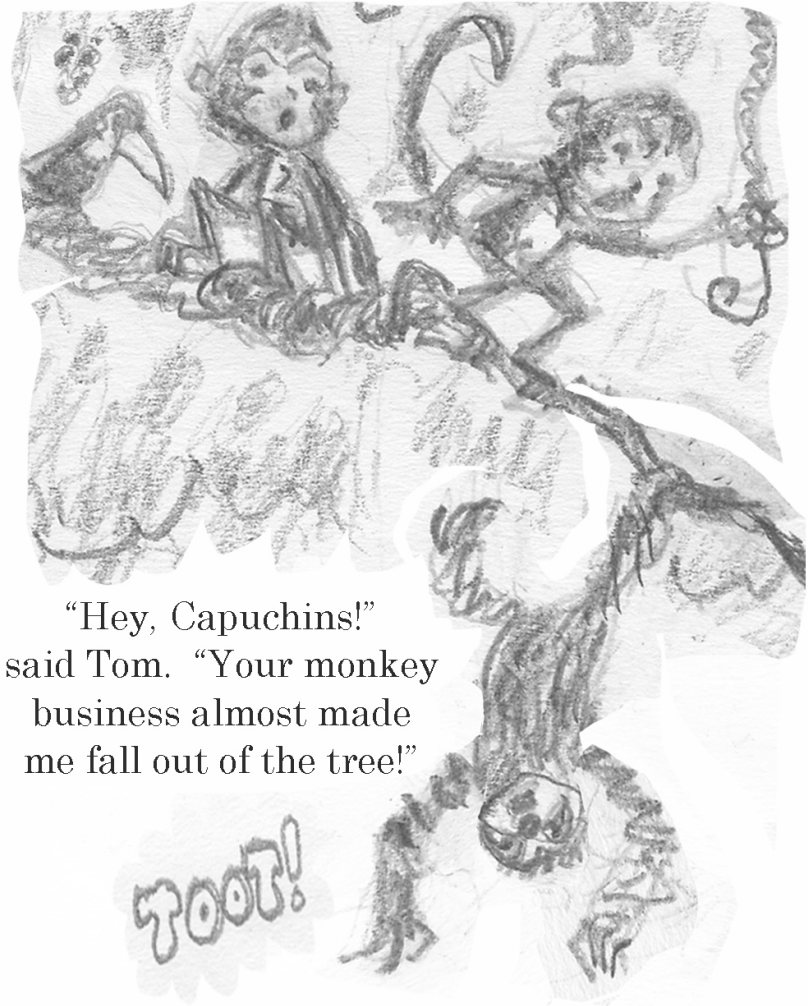
“Oh.”



On my way again...



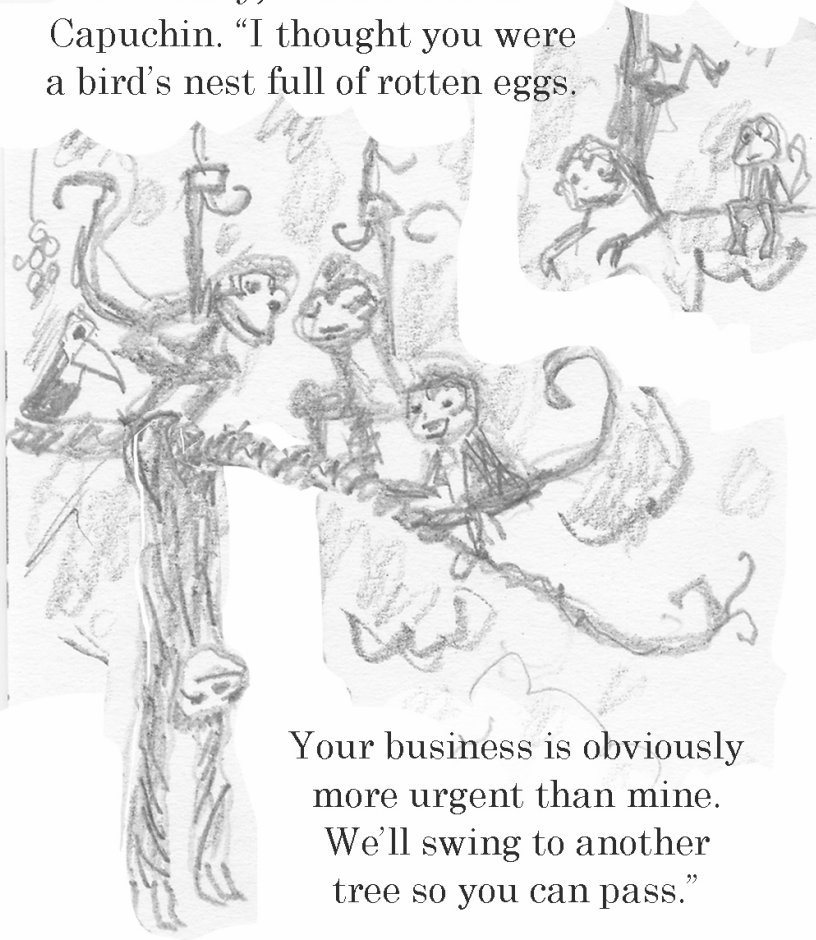
Uh, oh!



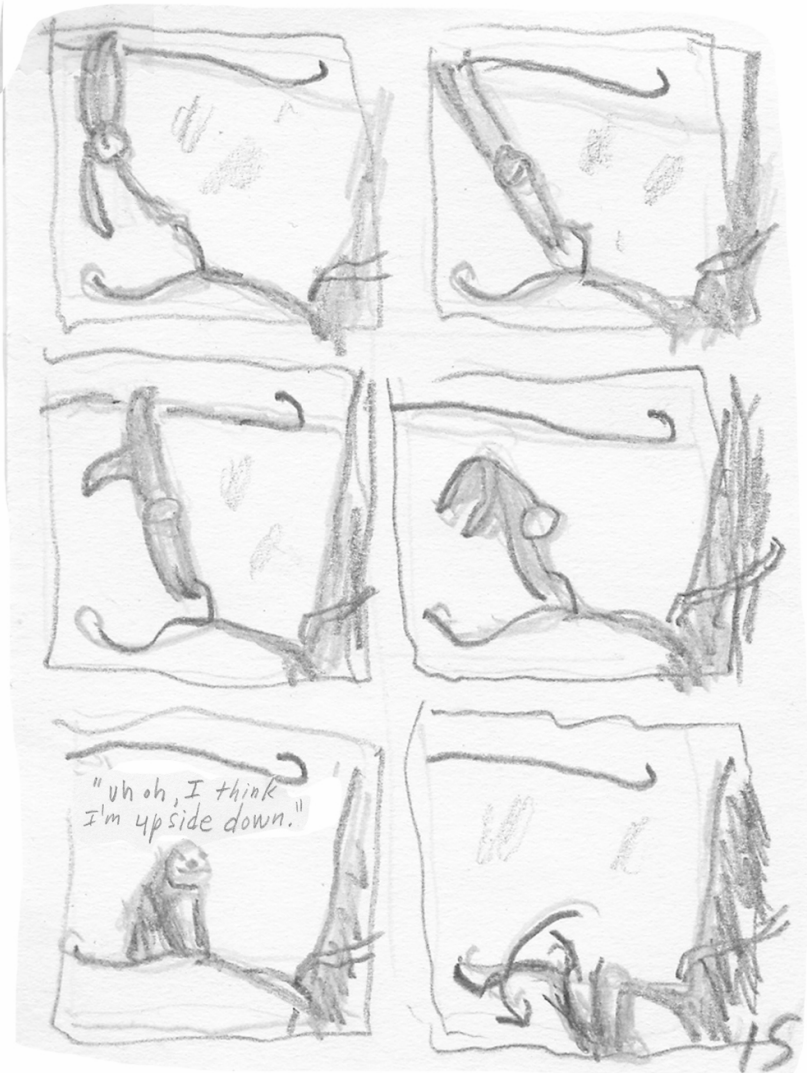
“Hey, Capuchins!”
said Tom. “Your monkey
business almost made
me fall out of the tree!”

TOOT!

"I'm sorry," said the Chief Capuchin. "I thought you were a bird's nest full of rotten eggs."



Your business is obviously more urgent than mine. We'll swing to another tree so you can pass."



“Hi Ants! Where are you going?”

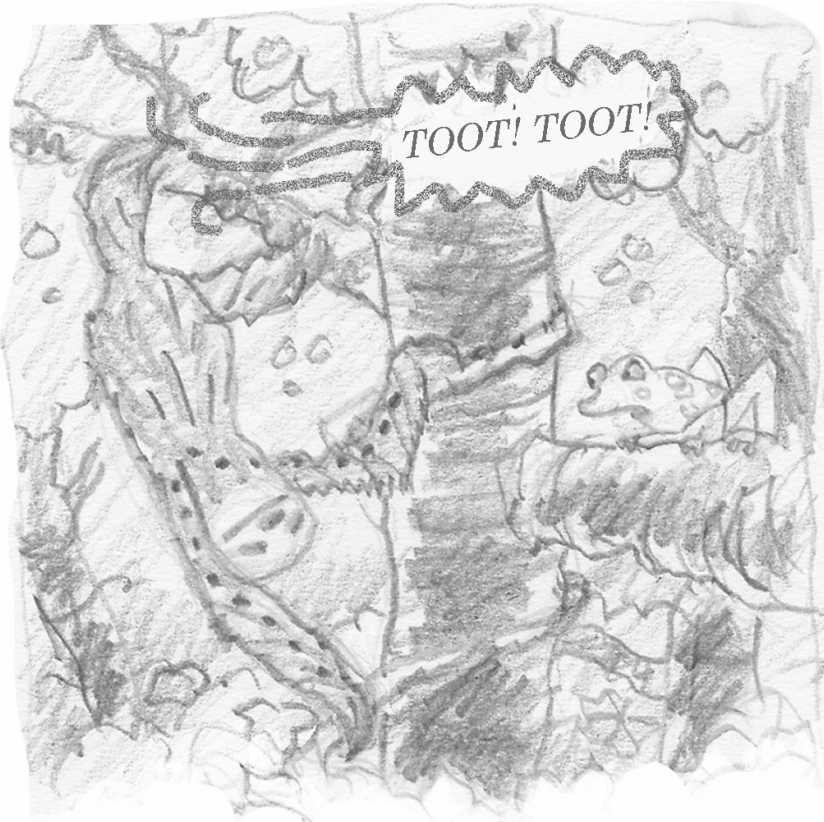


¹⁶ “We’ve been called to duty,” said one of the ants,
“and are marching to the bottom of the tree.”

Mind if we use your arm as a bridge?”

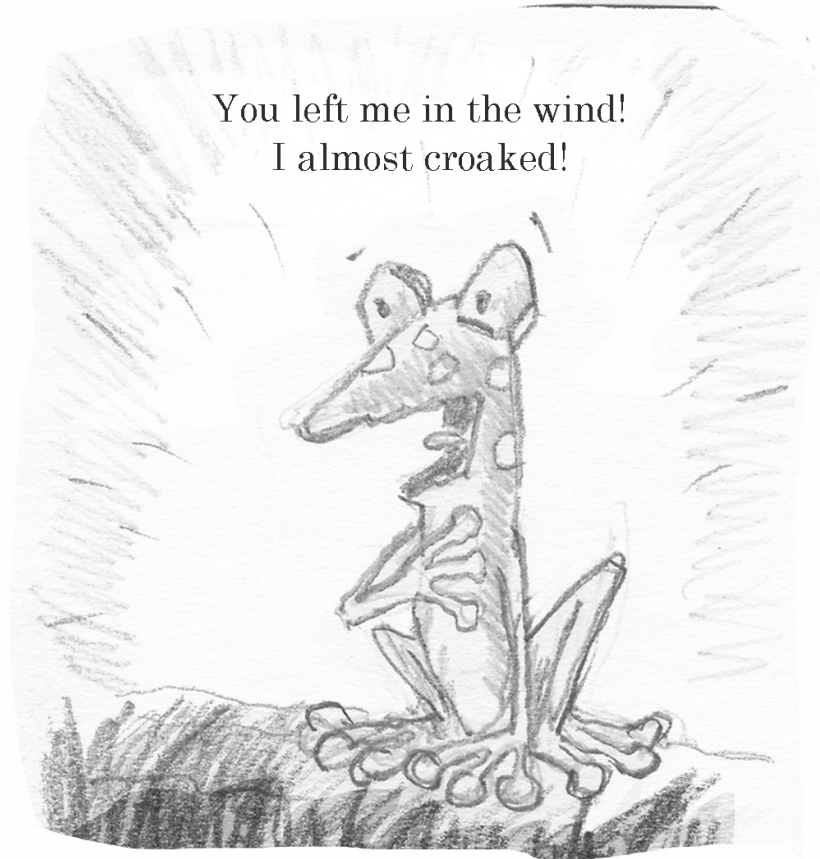


“Um,” said the ant, “speaking of
duty, you might want to follow us down.” ¹⁷



Now I'm really moving! "Did you know
I could go so fast, Mrs. Tree Frog?"

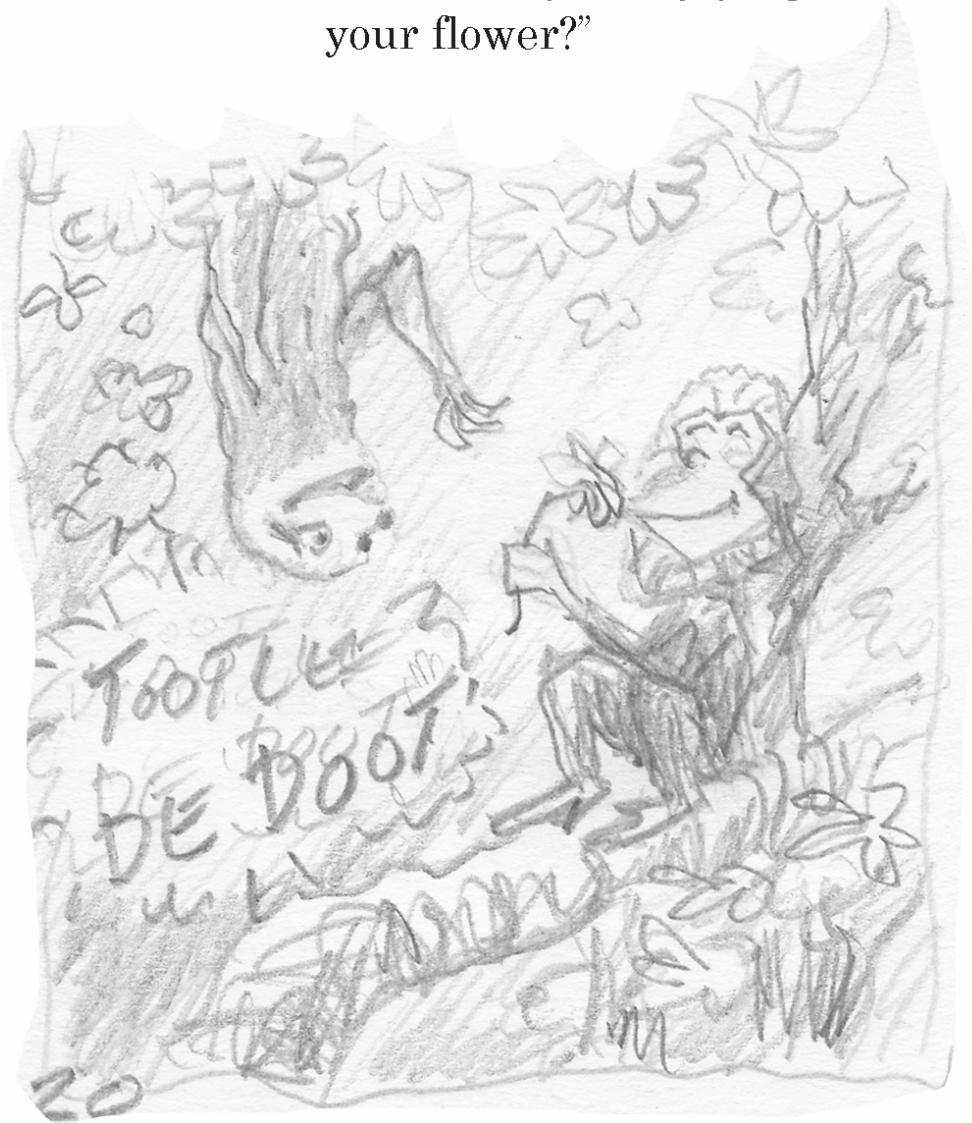
"No I didn't," she said.



It IS time for you to go!"

"Oh"

“Hi Mr. Howler. Are you enjoying
your flower?”

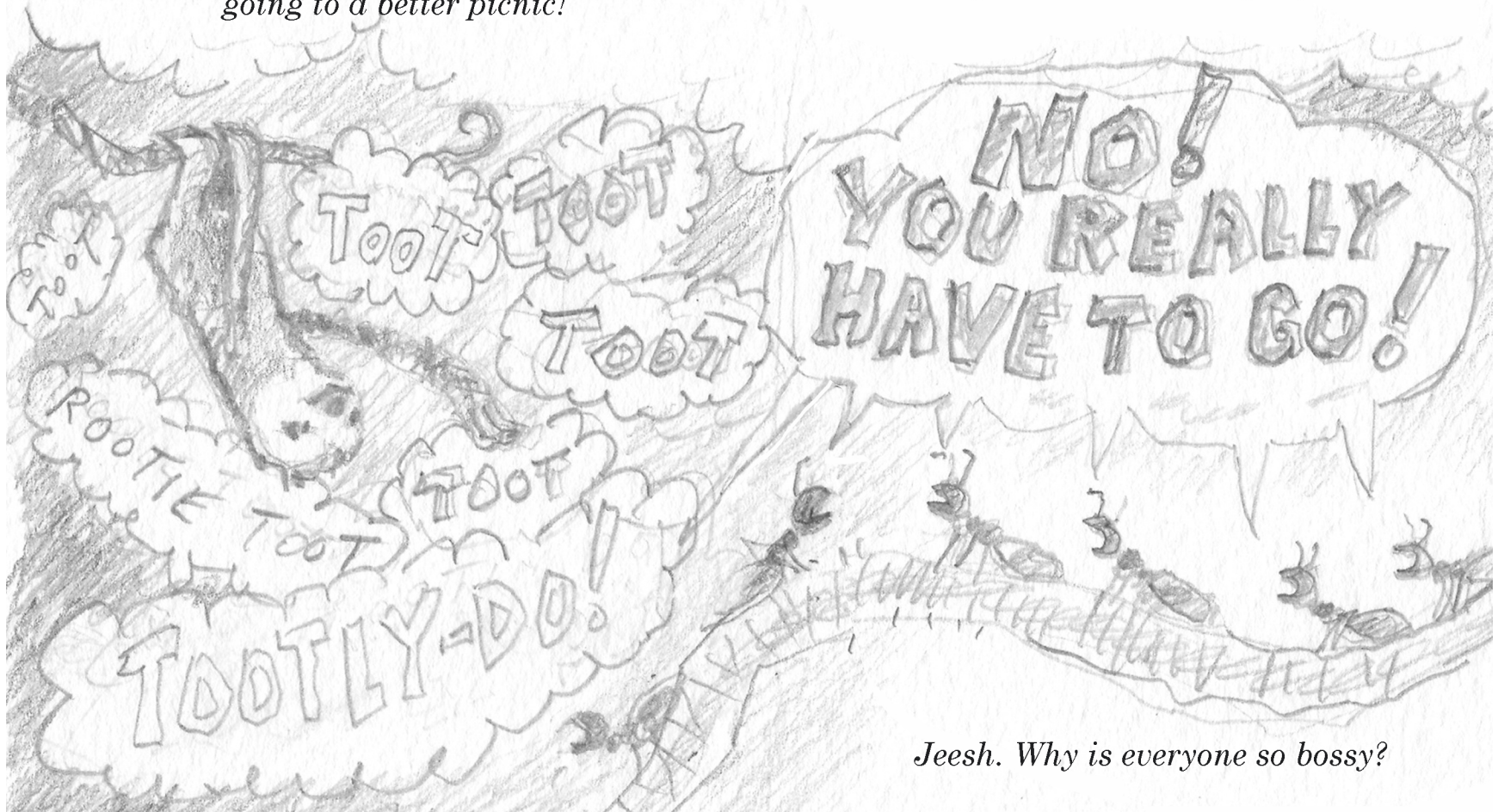


“I WAS a minute ago,” he howled
“but now my flower’s gone sour and lost
its bouquet! It’s time, Tom.”



Which way should I go? Oh, wait. There are my ant friends again. They're probably going to a better picnic!

*"Hi, Ants! It's me!
Would you like some company??"*



Jeesh. Why is everyone so bossy?



*When I get to the bottom of the tree I'll
sit down and think about all this
for a while."*

Think.



Think!



Think!!!



THUNK!

*Wow!
My friends were right. I really
DID have to go!!*



The End

Author Note:

Several years ago while on vacation in Costa Rica I spotted a tree sloth high up in a tree. I sat in the jungle and watched him for hours. Slowly he climbed through the branches. It was interesting to see how carefully he climbed. It seemed like he was moving in slow motion.

As I watched him I wondered: *Where is he going? What is he doing? Does he daydream while he's climbing? What if he had friends and could talk?*

Finally after several hours he made it to the bottom of the tree. What happened next was a surprise. He pooped!

Afterwards the tree sloth seemed to smile at me. Then he very slowly began his climb back to his place in the trees.

Later I learned that tree sloths come down from the trees once a week to poop, then return to the trees until the next time they have to go. The mystery of this unusual pooping behavior has never been explained. Could tree sloths have friends that are helping them? Probably not, but it's fun to imagine.

-Lee Harper