

## **THE DUCK**

I first heard this story at the Storylines Festival in Auckland in June 2002. We were lucky enough to have Margaret Mahy telling it, but I'm afraid you'll have to put up with me.

The story doesn't have a title, but I had to call it something. Margaret didn't know who wrote it so I guess I'm free to tell it in my own way. And so are you.

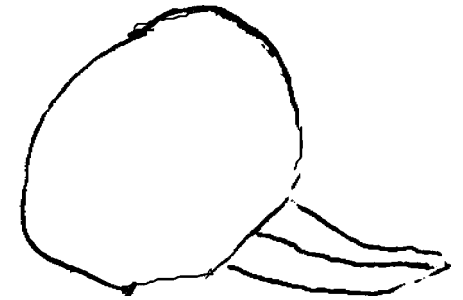


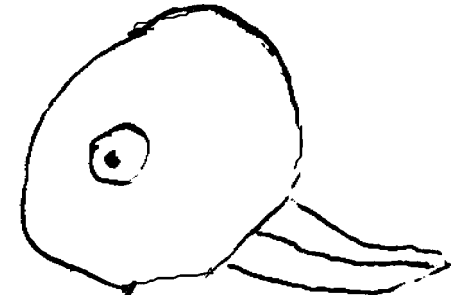
There was once a man who lived in a lovely round house. He and his wife were very happy there.

The only thing wrong with the house  
was that the garden was very small.  
It was also an extremely odd shape.

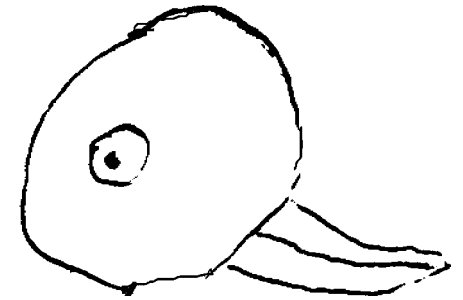


The path curved ever so slightly from  
the gate to the front door.

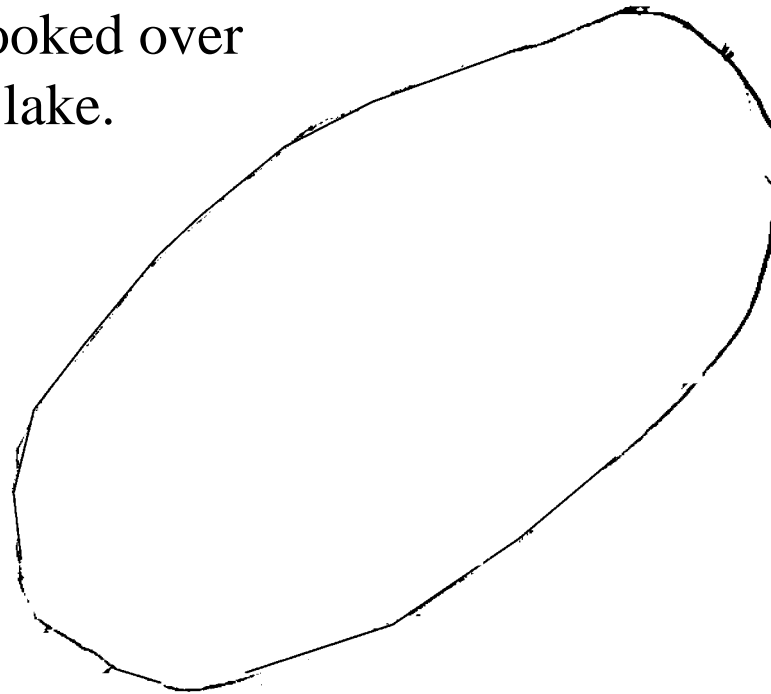


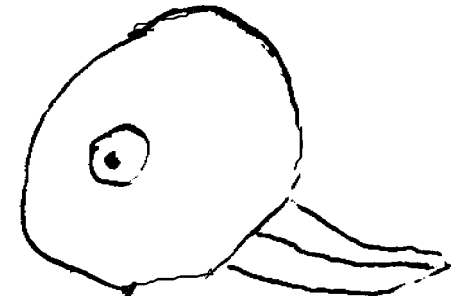


The house had one particular window  
that the man specially liked to sit at,  
partly because it was round ...

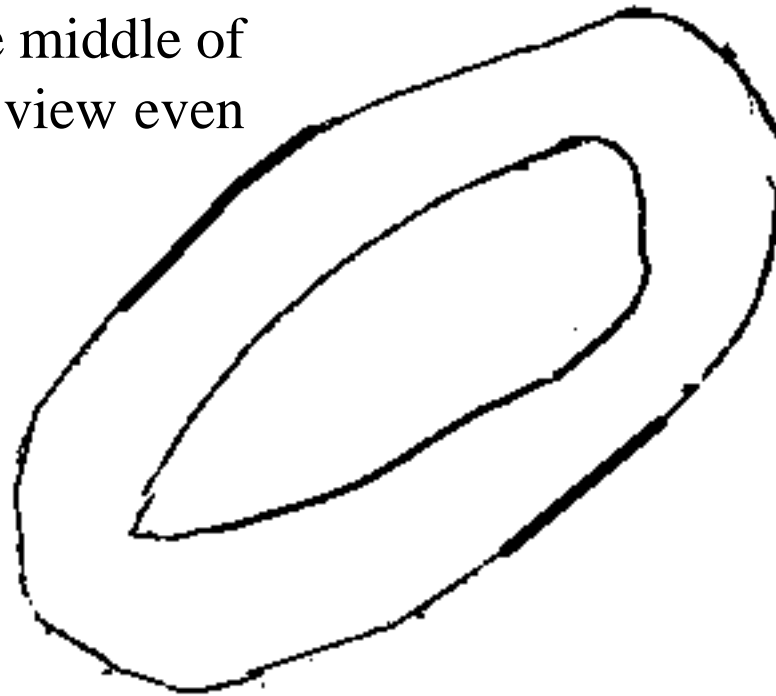


... and partly because it looked over  
a huge and very beautiful lake.

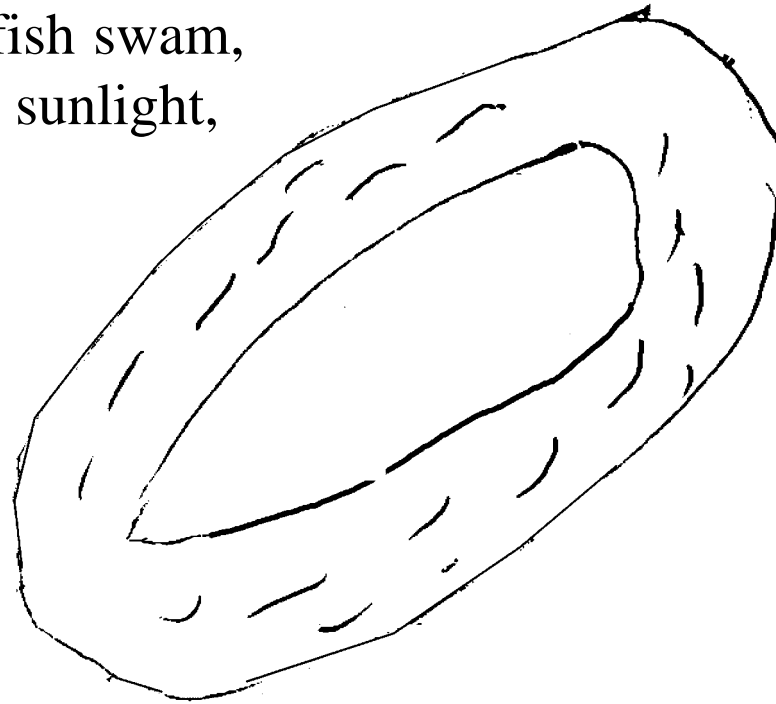
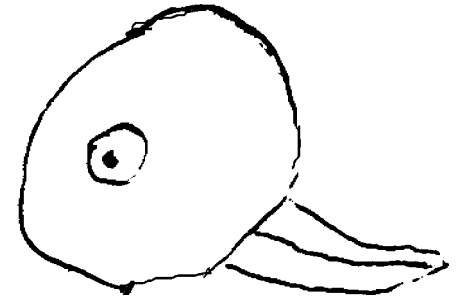




There was an island in the middle of the lake, which made the view even more attractive.

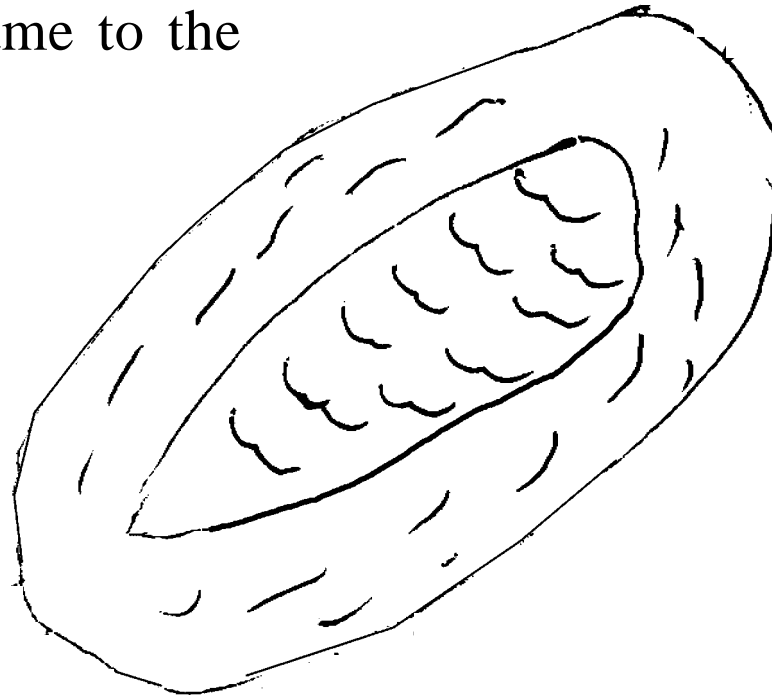


Around the island many fish swam,  
their scales glinting in the sunlight,

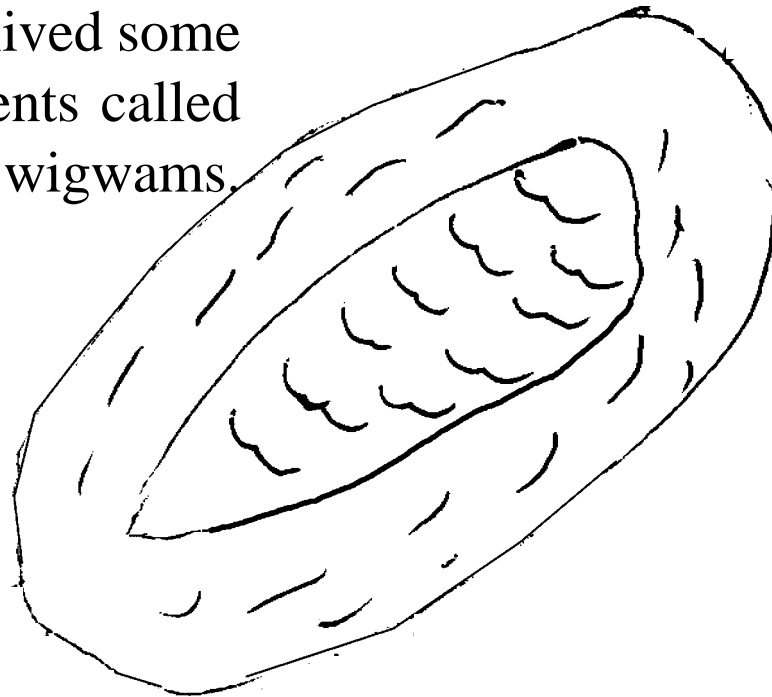
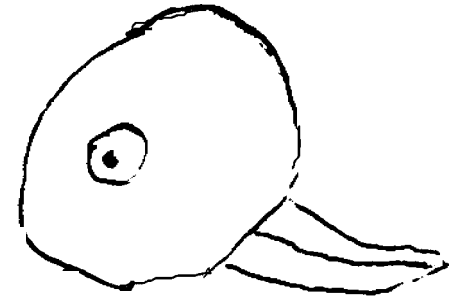




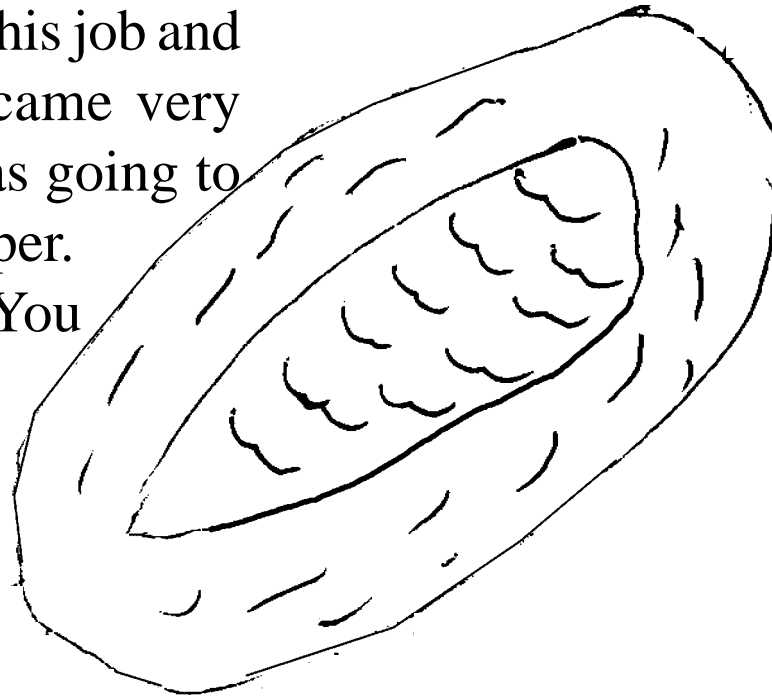
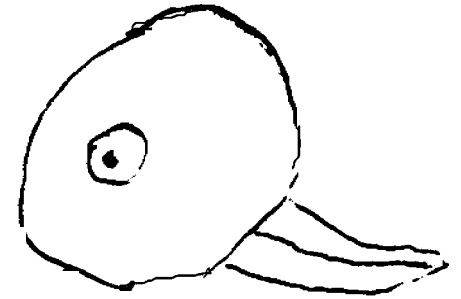
and every year ducks came to the  
island to breed.



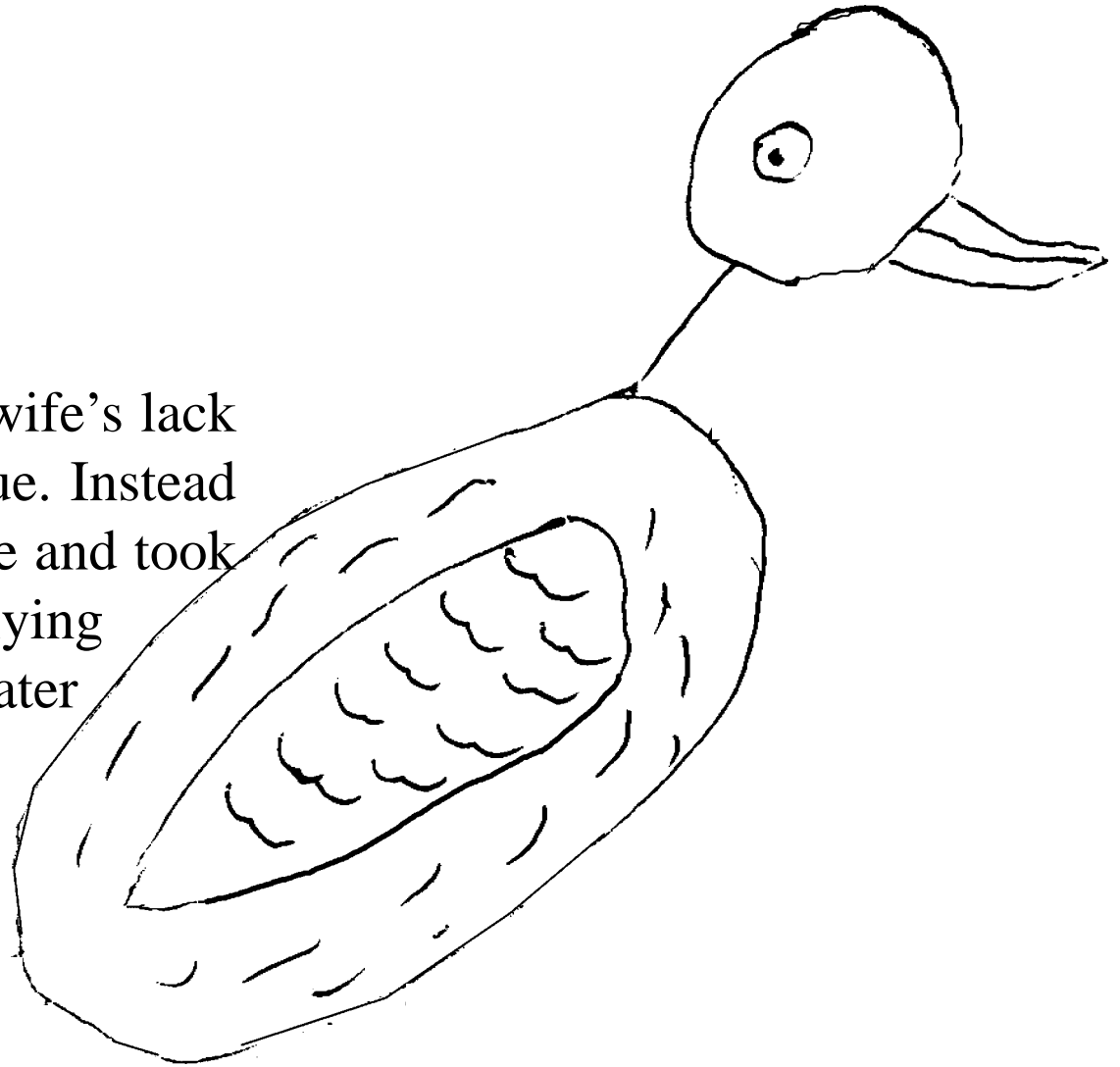
At the far end of the lake lived some Indians in their strange tents called wigwams. There were two wigwams.



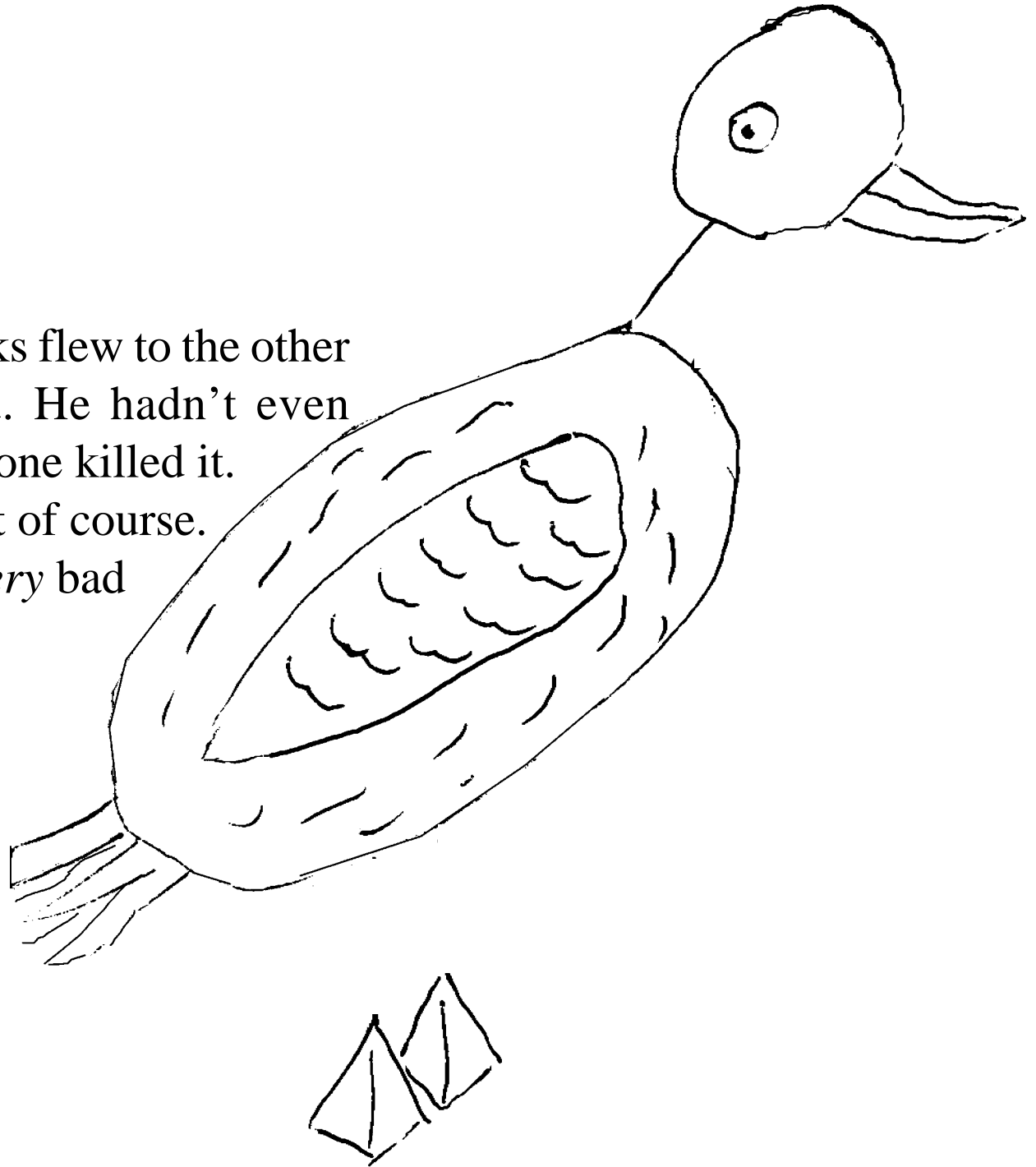
Then one day the man lost his job and he and his wife soon became very hungry. He told her he was going to shoot a duck for their supper. But she laughed at him. “You are such a bad shot. You don’t stand a chance.”



The man was hurt at his wife's lack of faith but he didn't argue. Instead he strode down to the lake and took careful aim at the ducks flying over the island. Seconds later there was a tremendous "bang!" ...

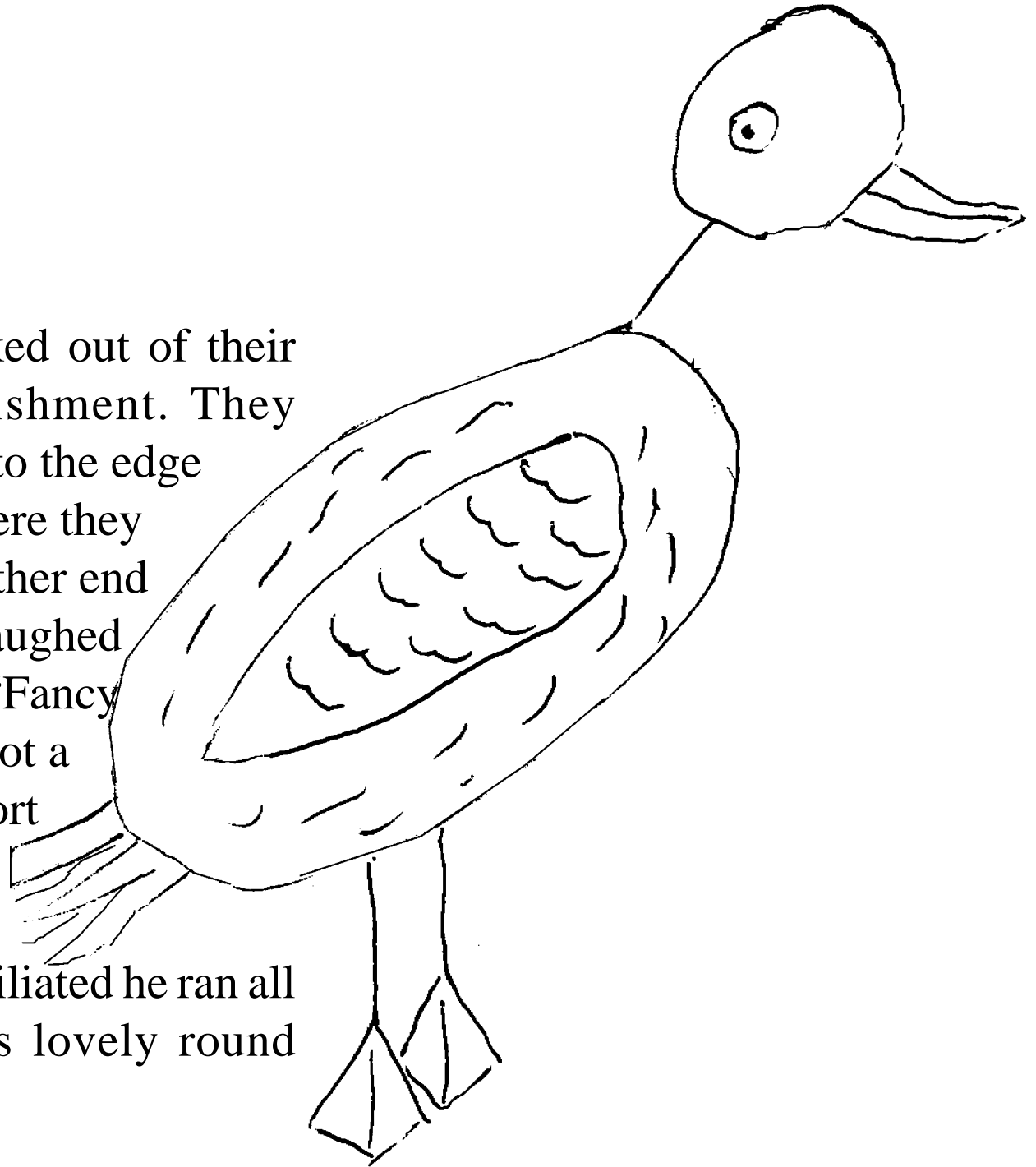


... and all the ducks flew to the other end of the island. He hadn't even winged one, let alone killed it. His wife was right of course. He really was a *very* bad shot.



The Indians all looked out of their wigwams in astonishment. They rushed out and over to the edge of the lake, from where they saw the man at the other end with his gun. They laughed and pointed at him. “Fancy not being able to shoot a duck from such a short distance!” they all mocked.

The man was so humiliated he ran all the way back to his lovely round house.



Now, he might not have got himself  
a duck, but you certainly have!

You've also learned:

1. that I'm a very poor artist;  
and
2. you can do *much* better  
yourself.

I do hope you will have  
a try.

For some stories to  
read, visit

[Laraine Anne Barker's web site](#)

