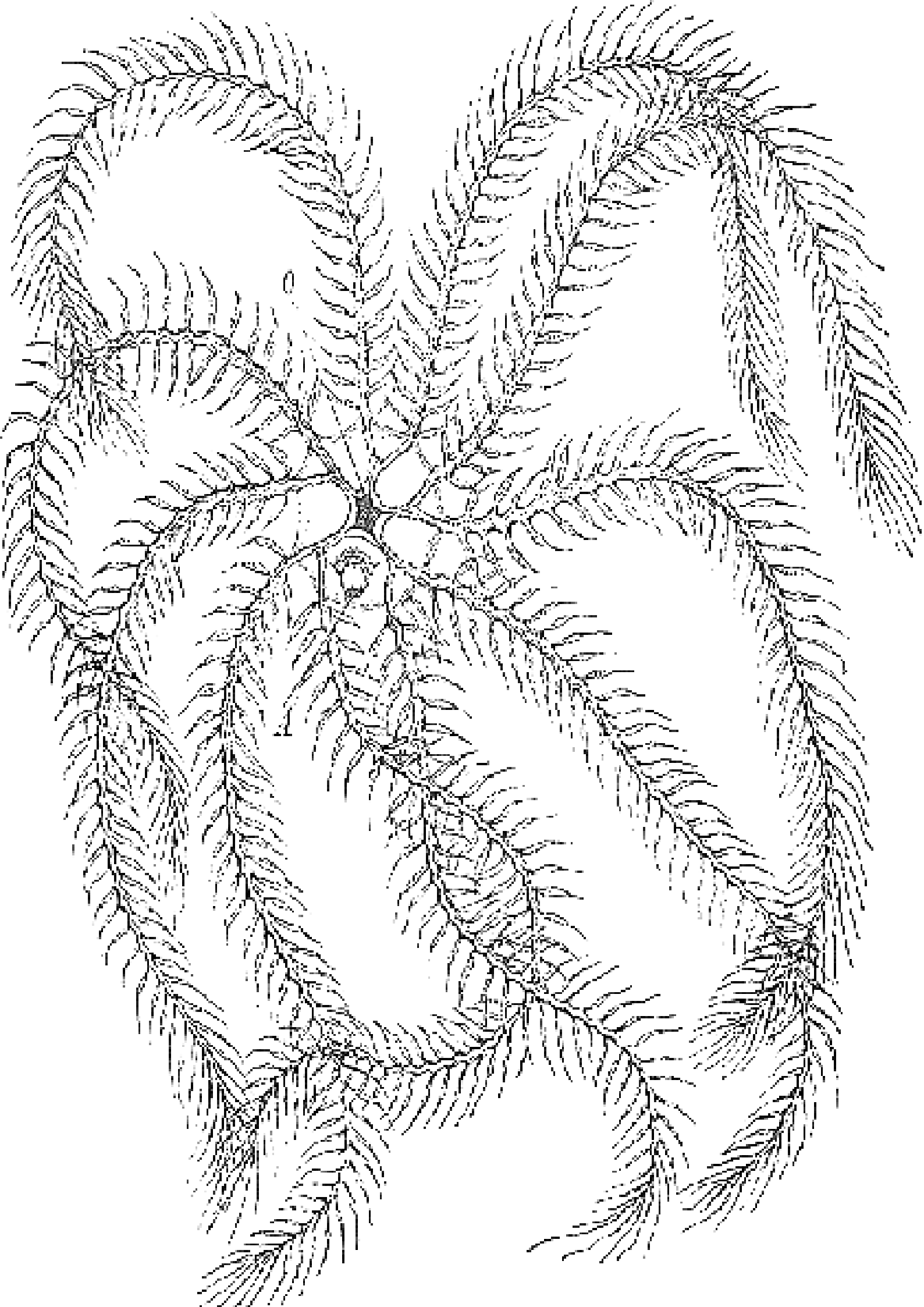


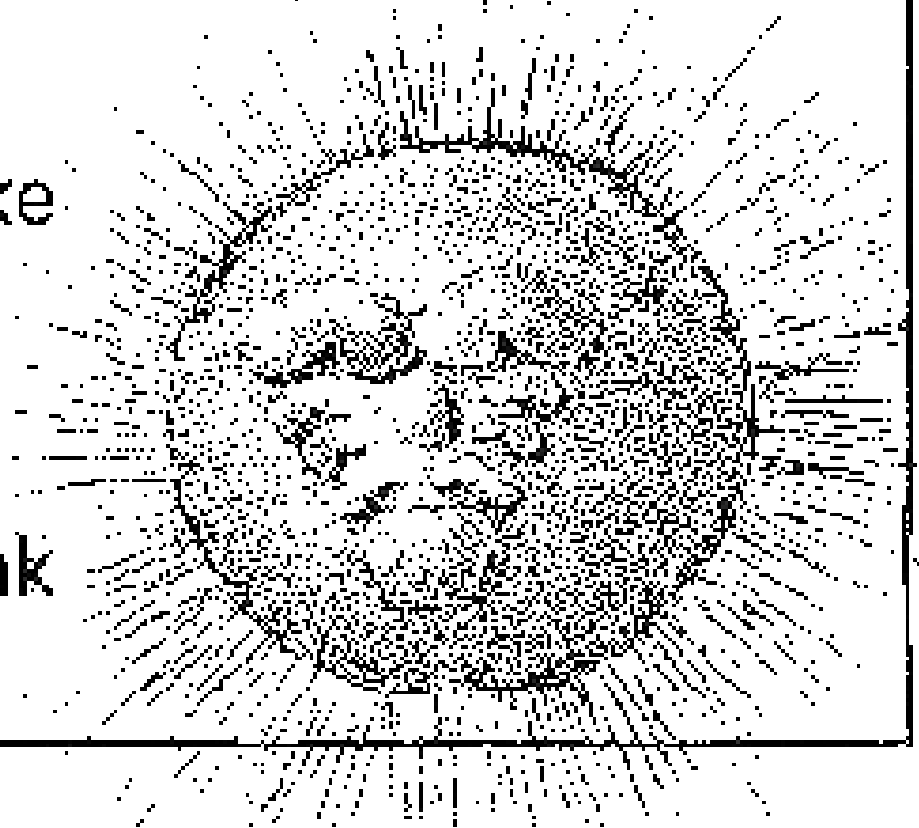
coil

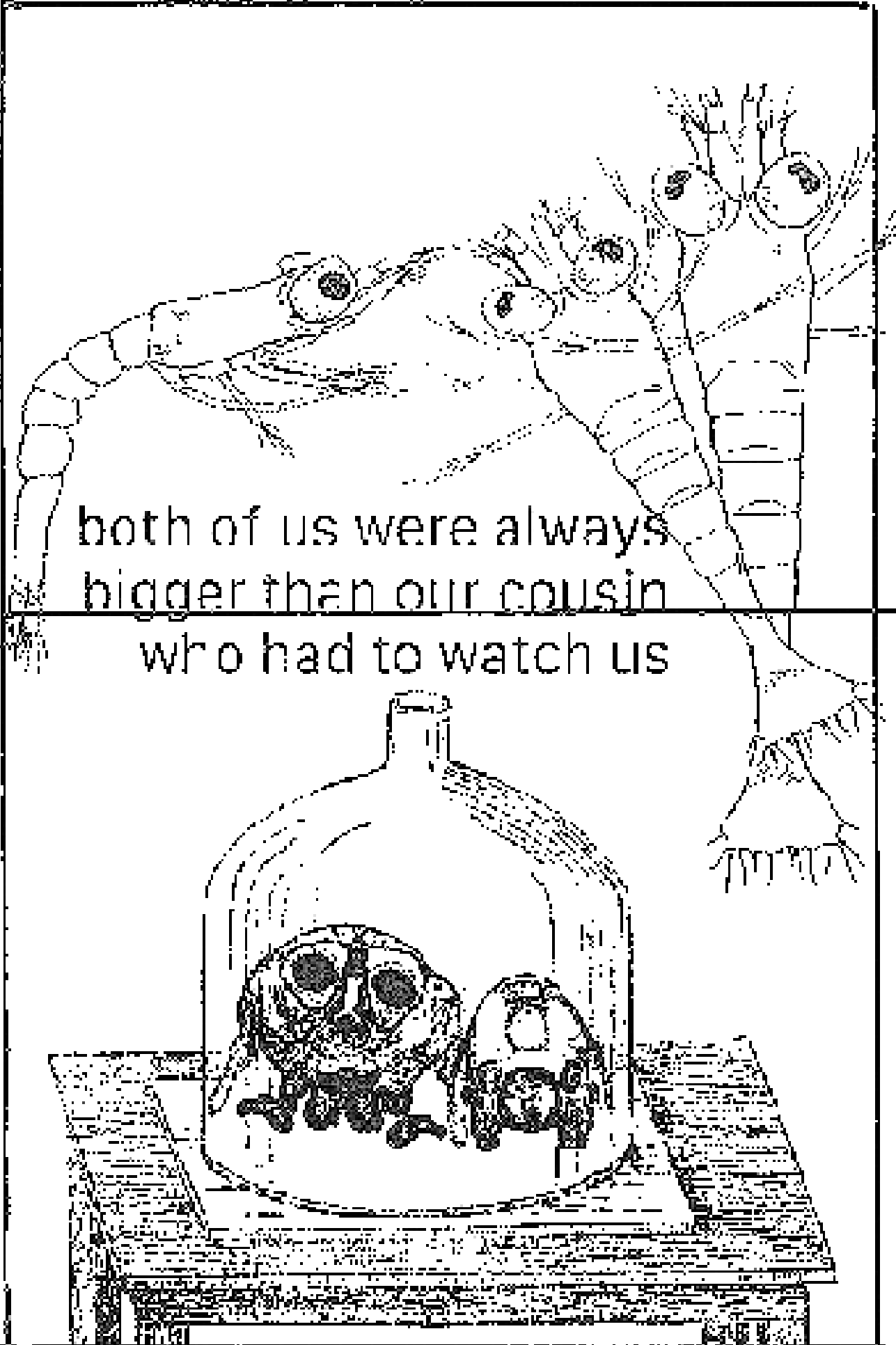


the way this goes, i was
always bigger than
my older sister



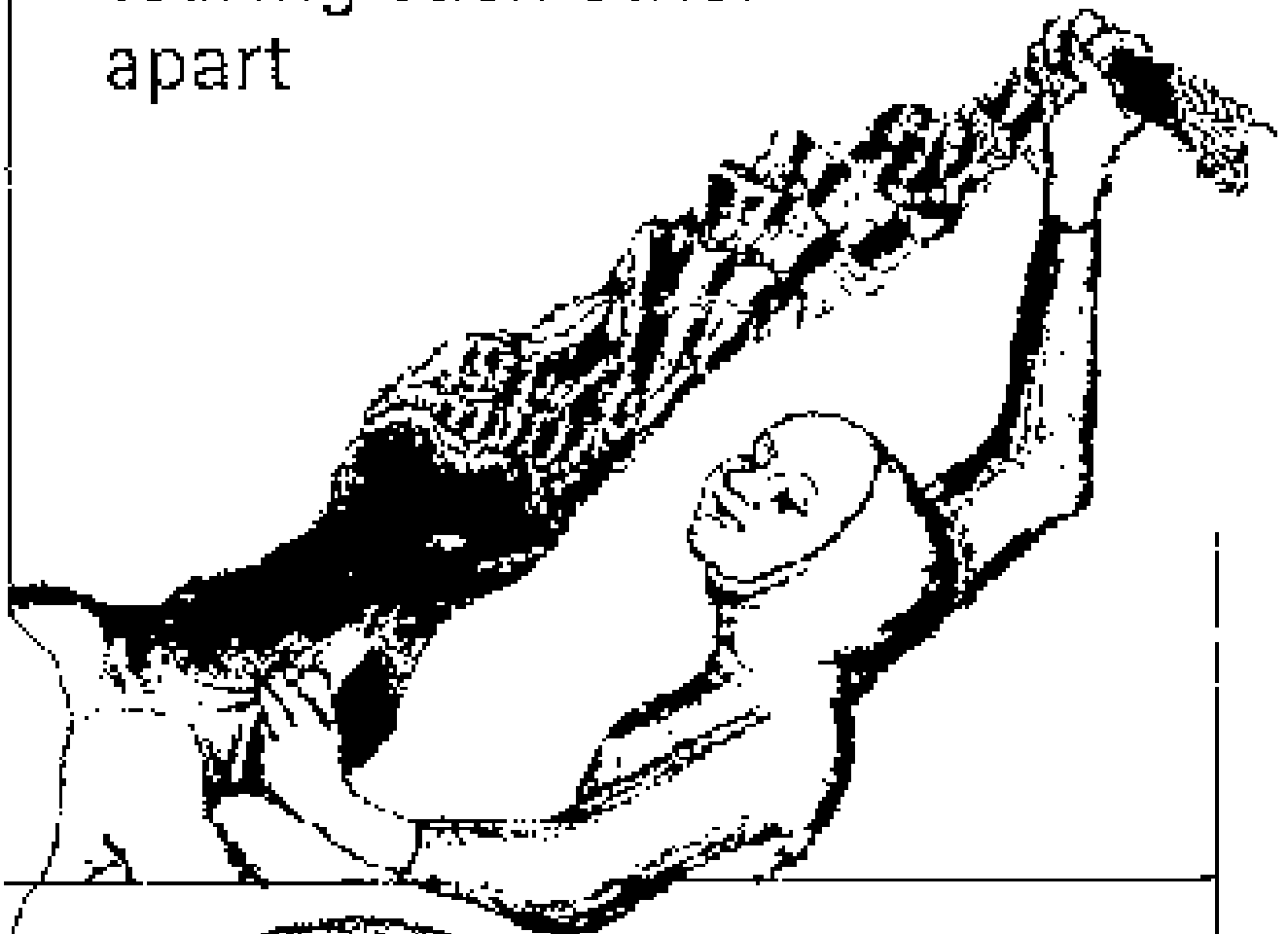
always, like
so much
earlier
than
you'd think





both of us were always
bigger than our cousin
who had to watch us

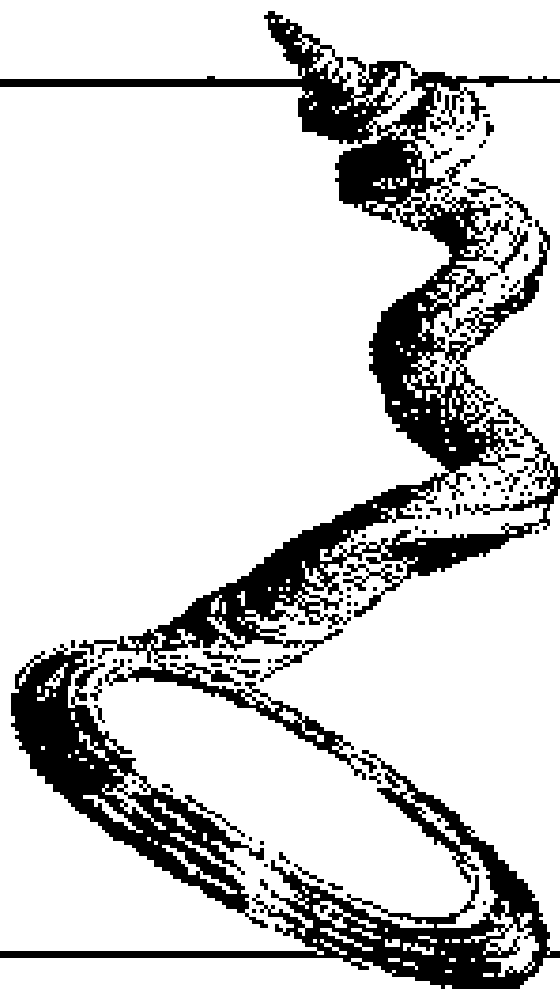
but couldn't stop us from
tearing each other
apart



in this
memory
I won



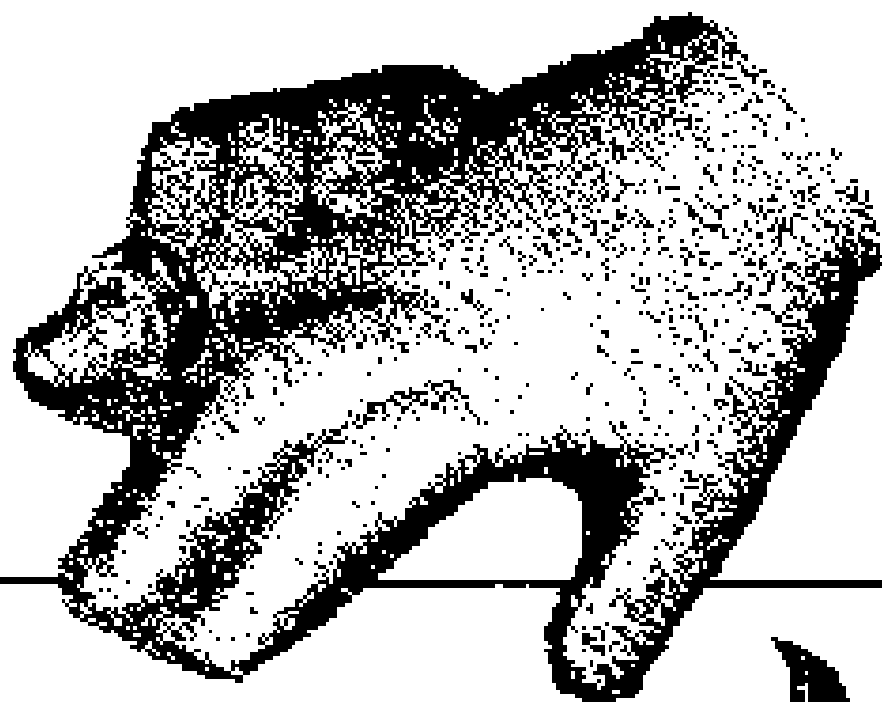
a prize



which my cousin
braided neatly

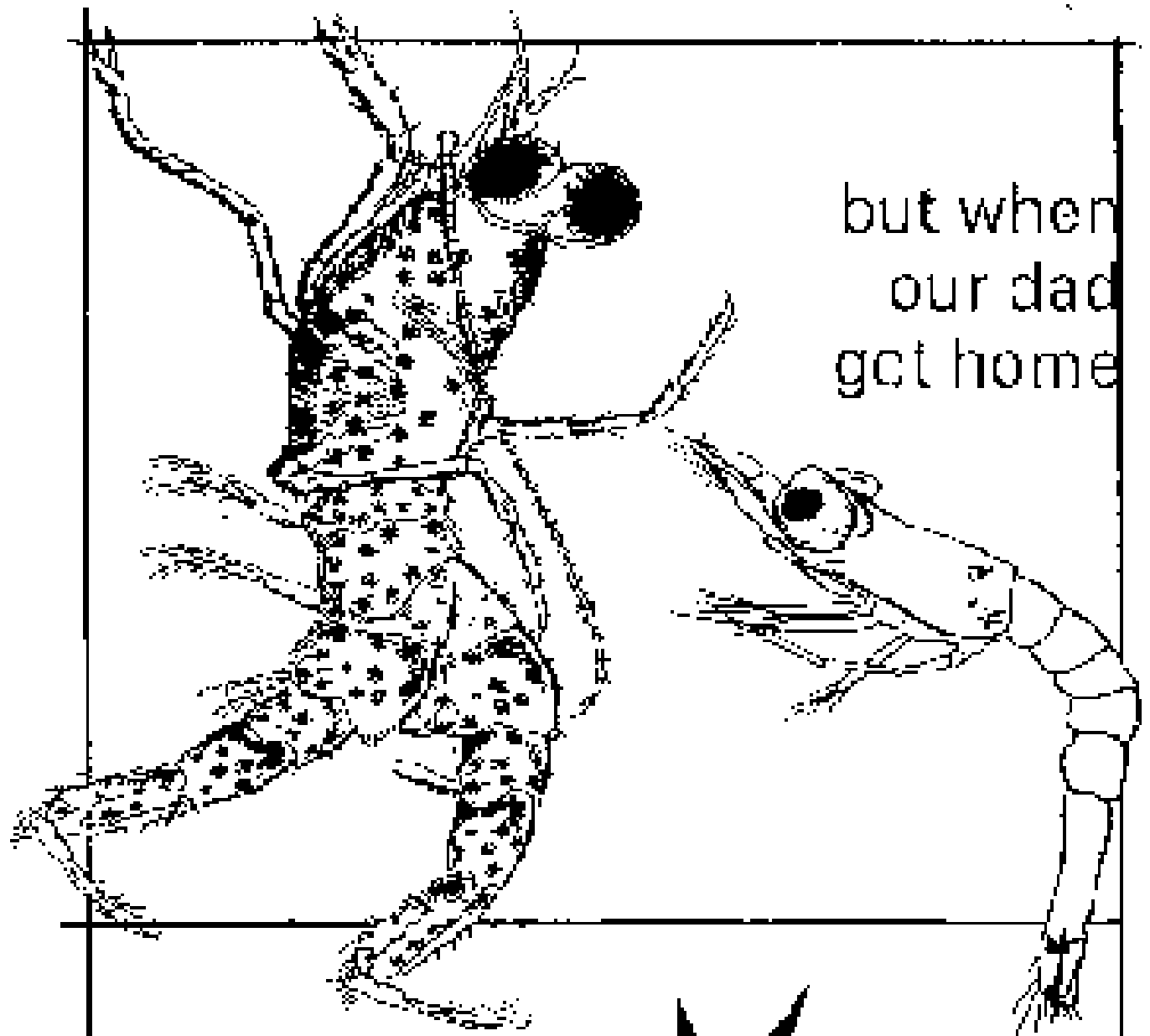
into a ring

and added to my
sister's hand



this was how my
sister became a girl



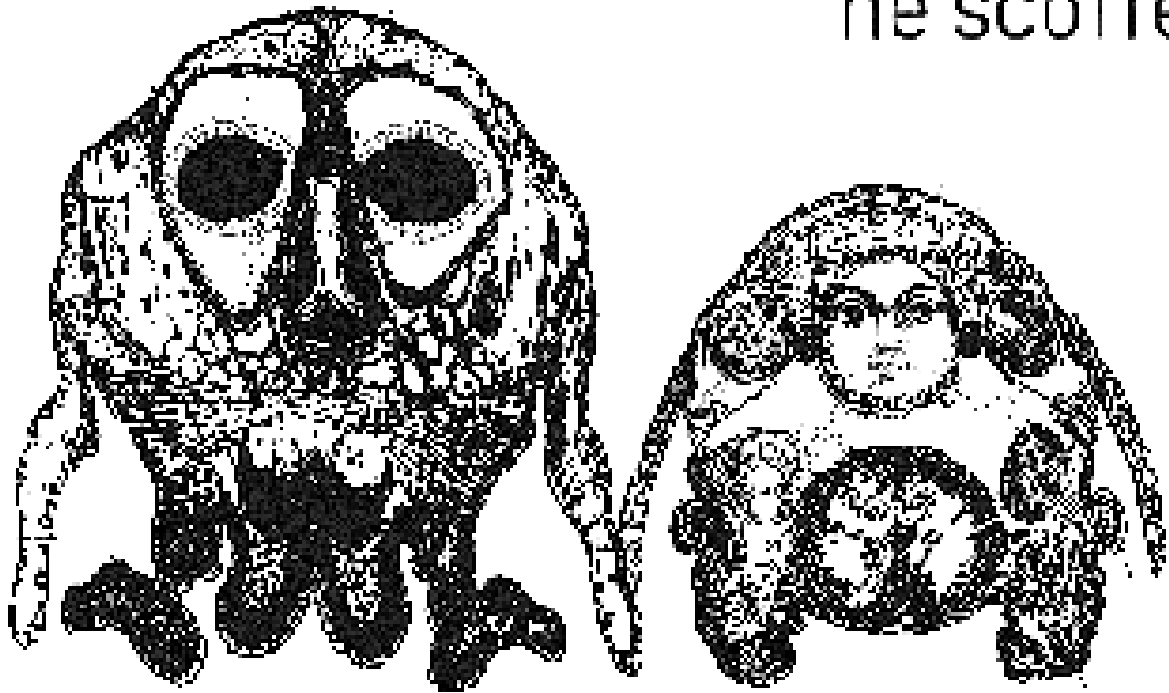


but when
our dad
got home



and was shown
the little ring of hair

he scoffed

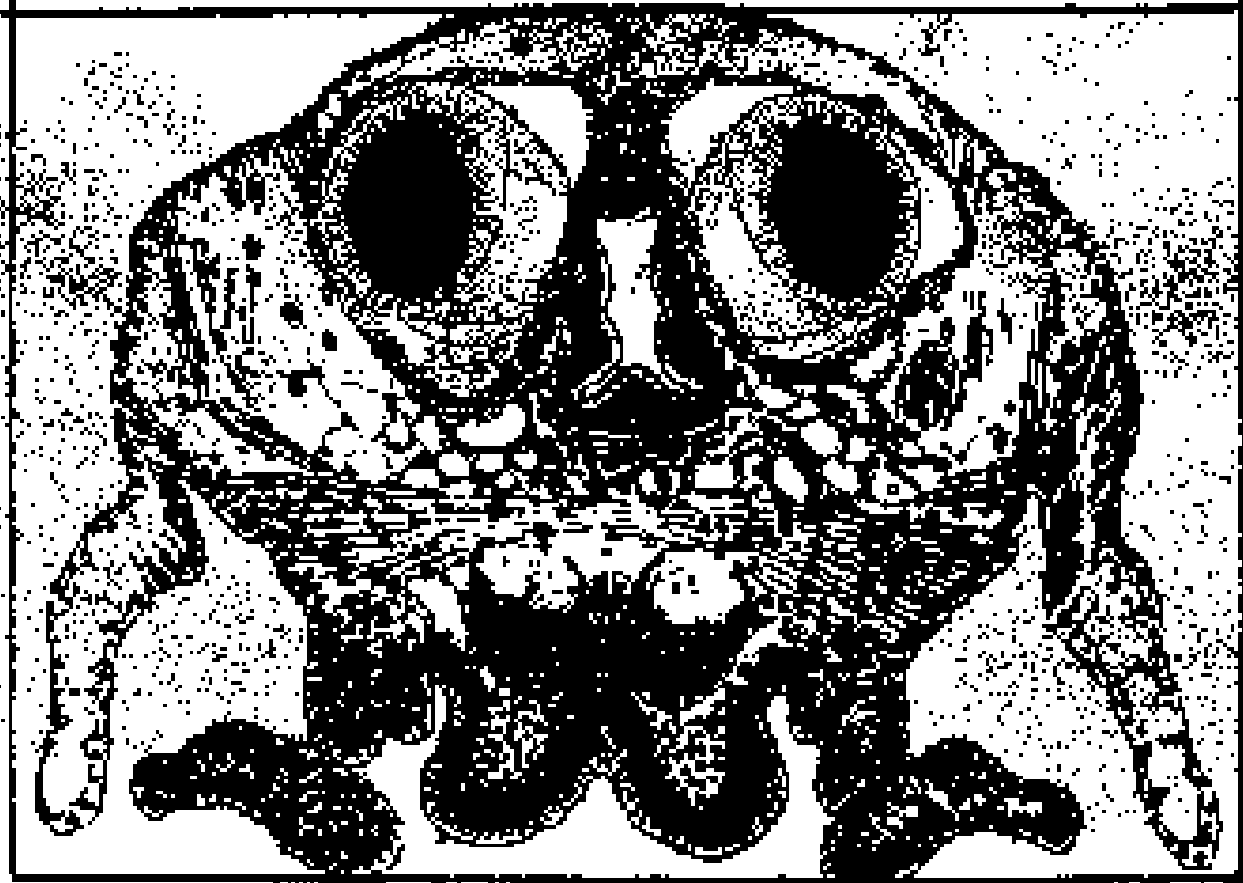


"yeah, that's
not human
hair"

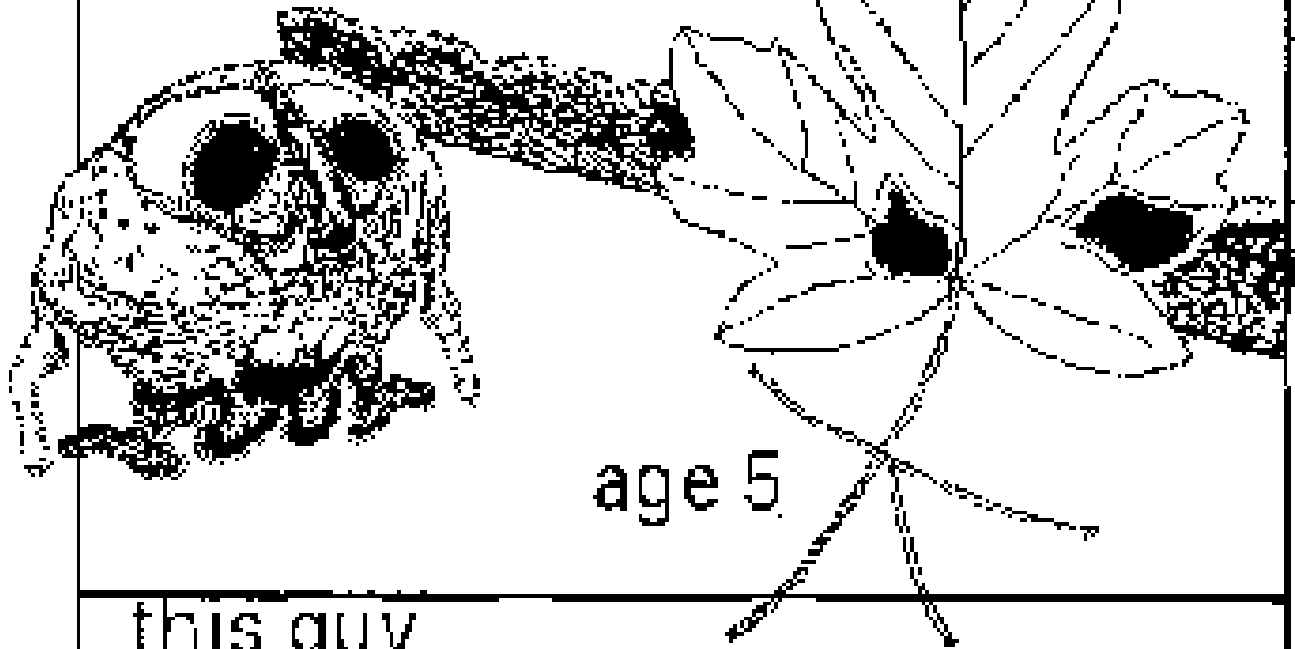




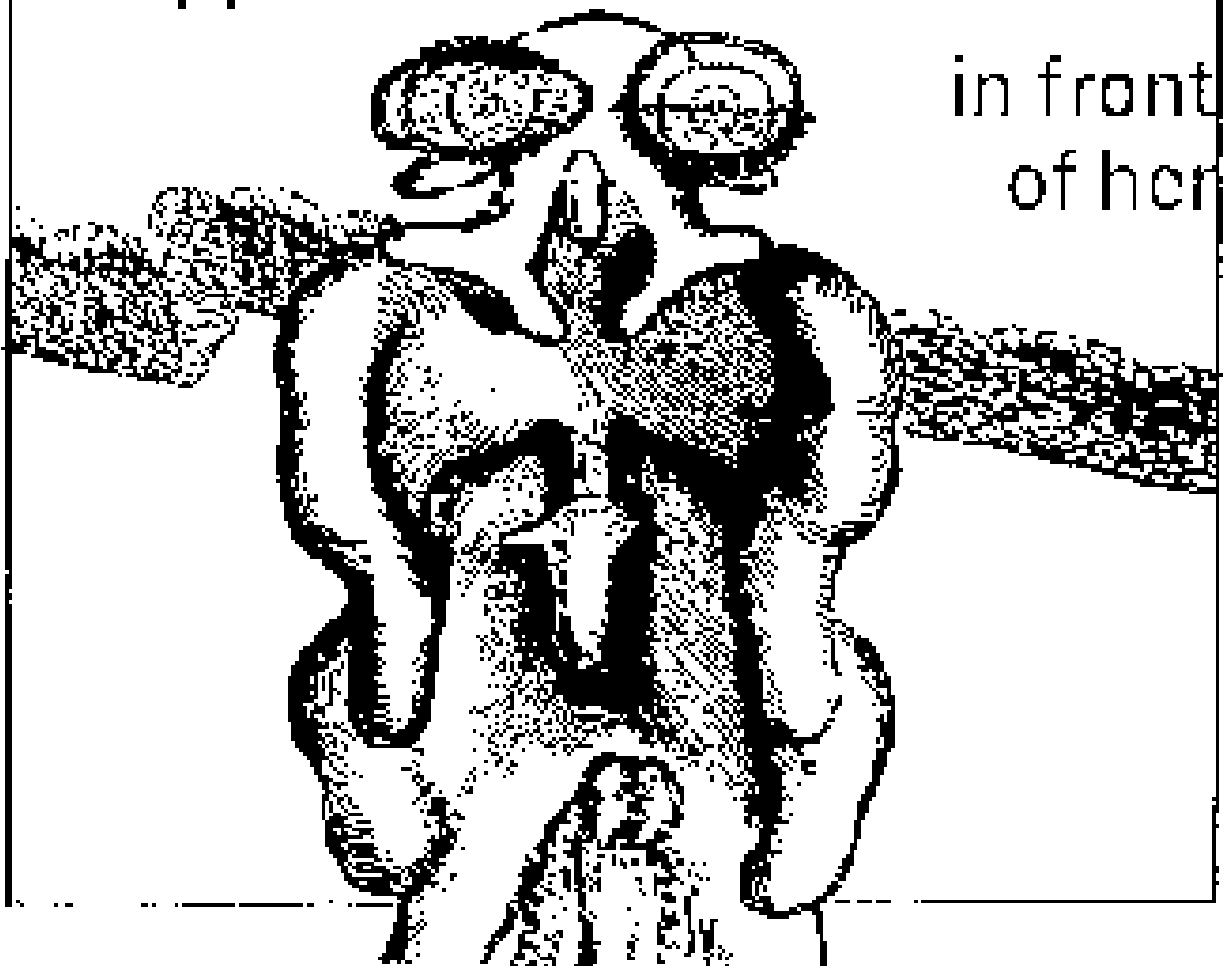
wasn't punished
but I felt more afraid than before

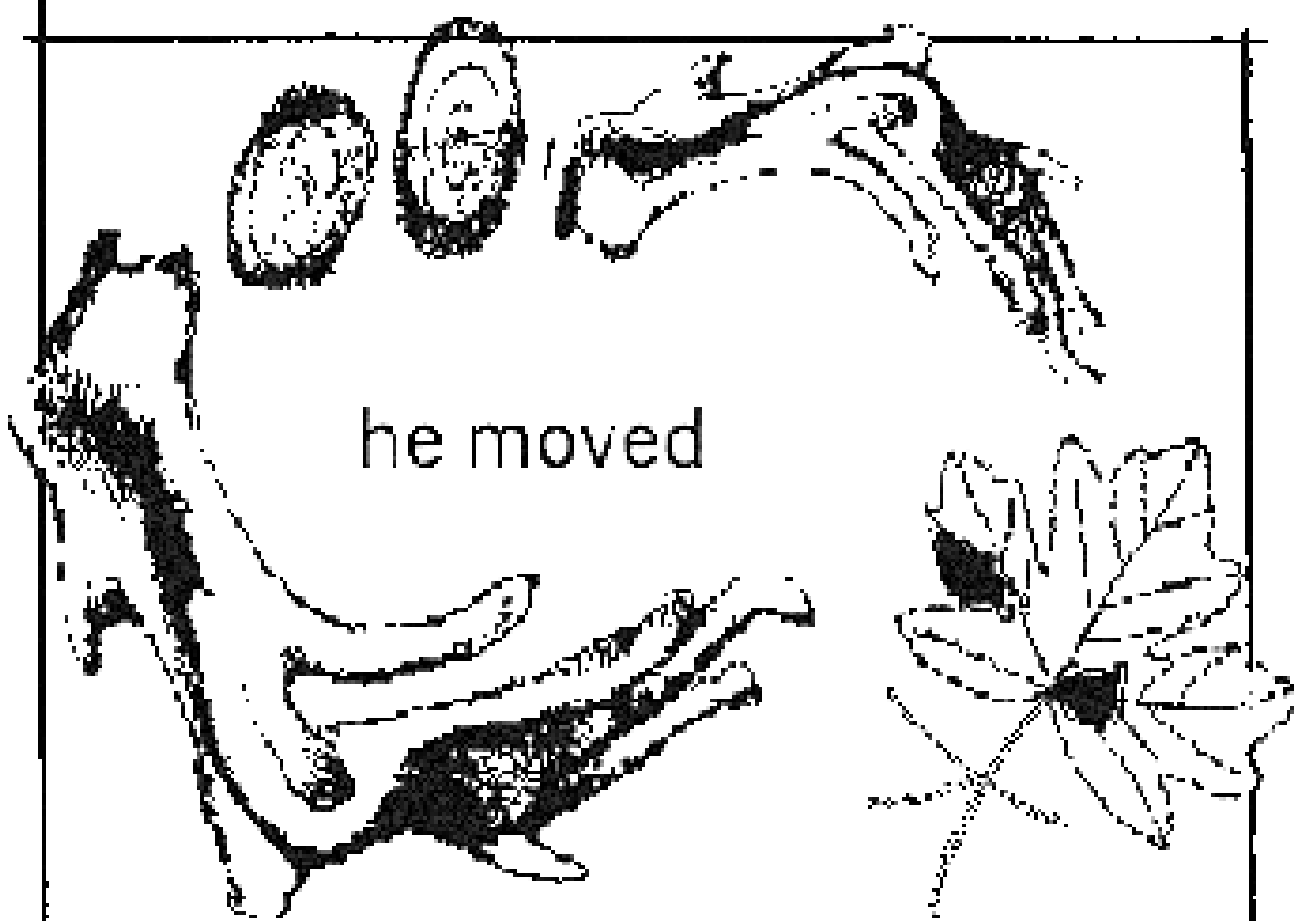


the twin to this
memory involves
my younger sister



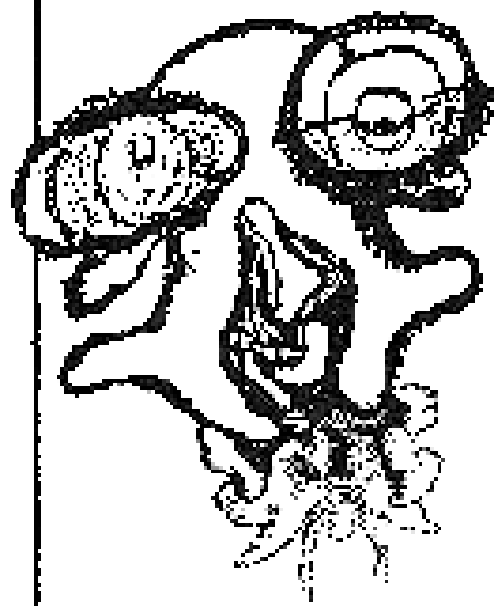
this guy
stopped





he moved

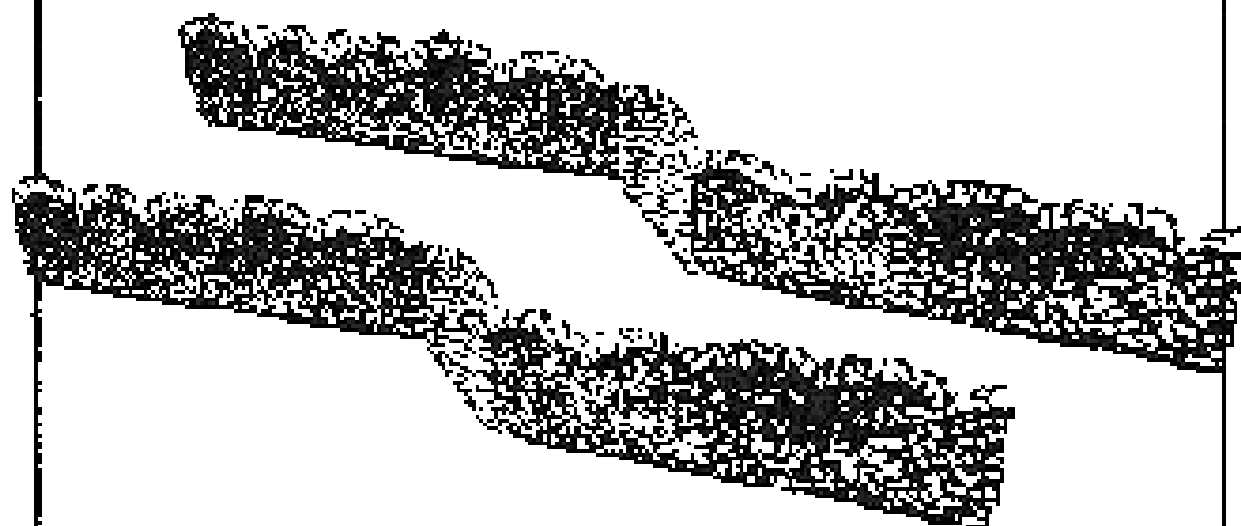
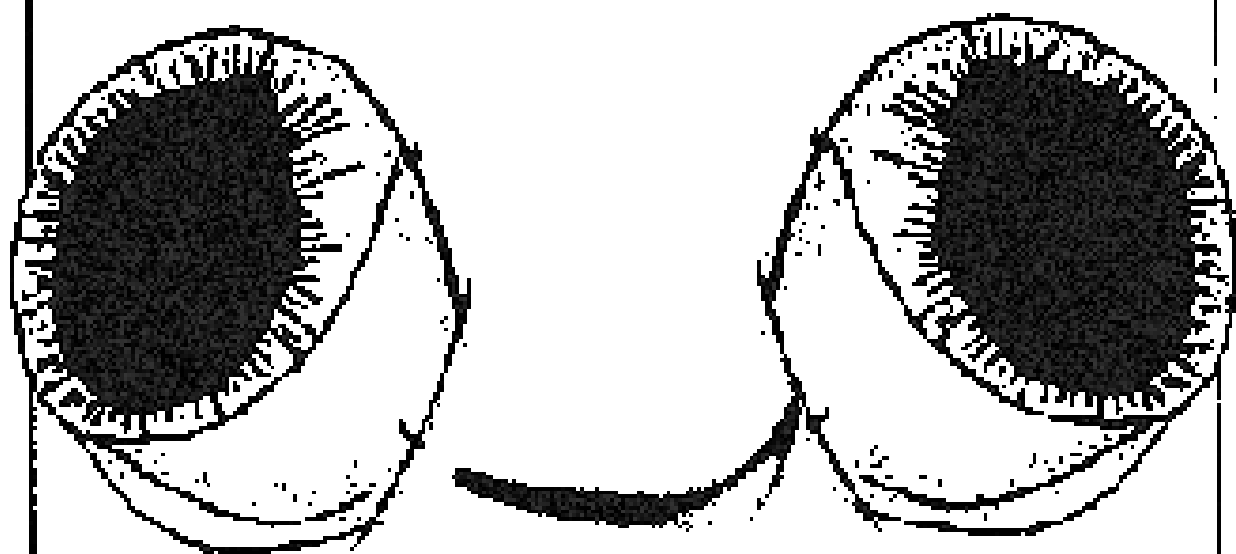
suddenly and briefly at her



then retreated
with a playful look

My dad caught up to us
but only spoke to me

"you were ready to
protect her, right?"



from behind, he'd seen
me jump and shrink away

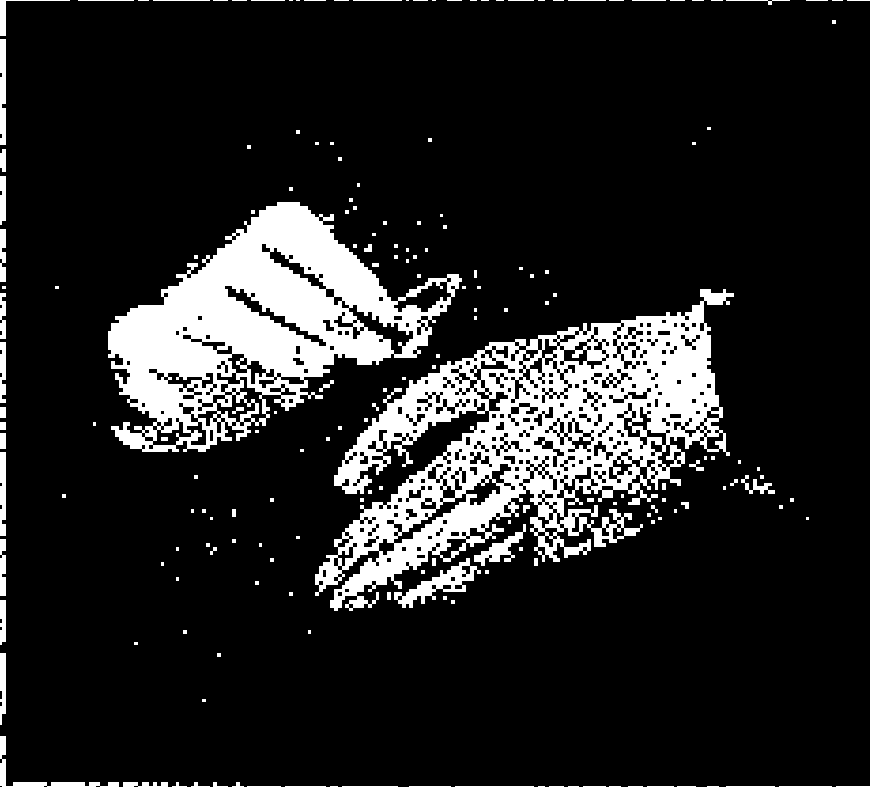
he seemed satisfied
somehow



by my failing
to protect her

i satisfied myself
that at least i knew it





2024

