

The Greedy Tortoise

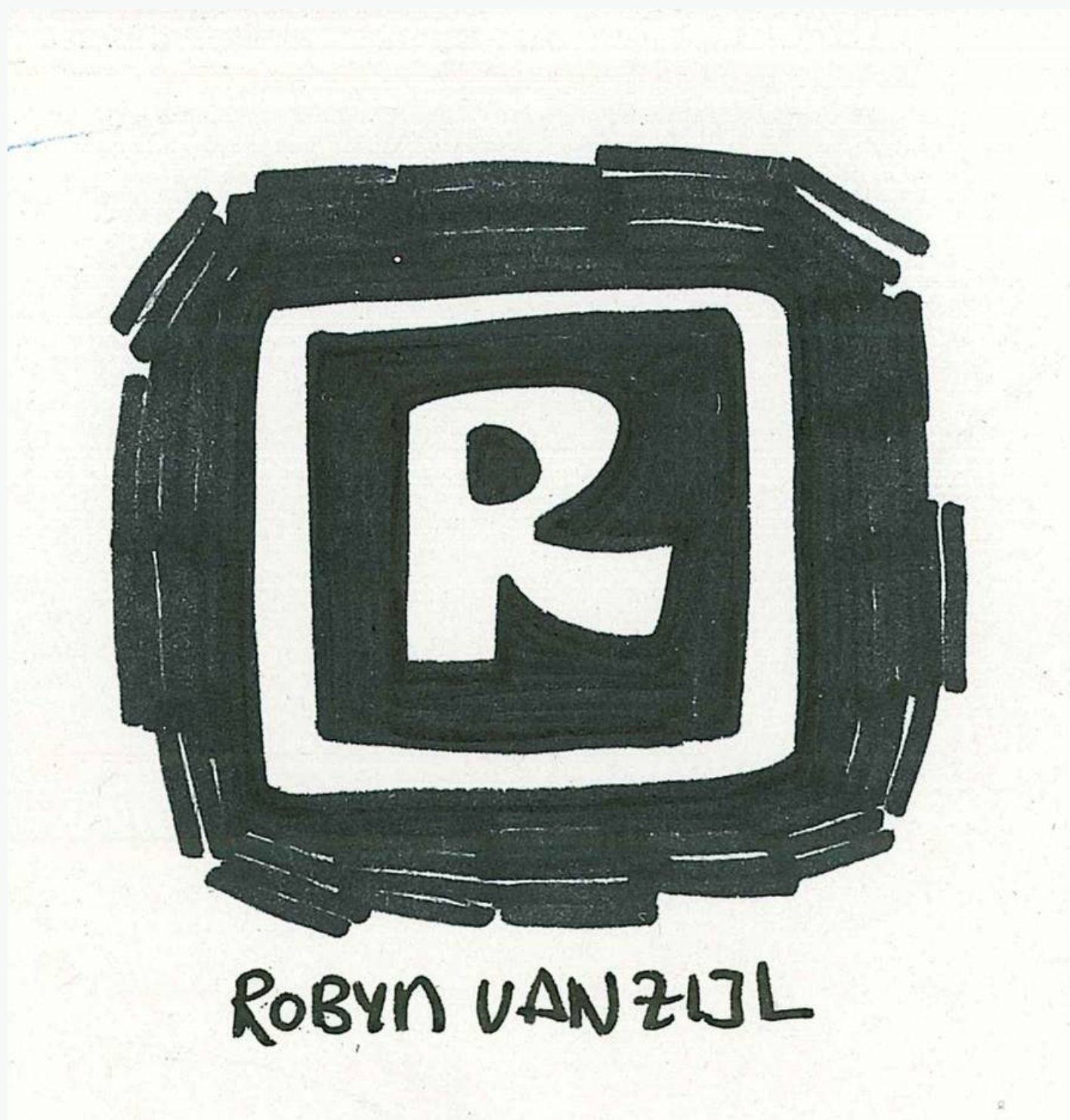


An African Folktale



Illustrated
by

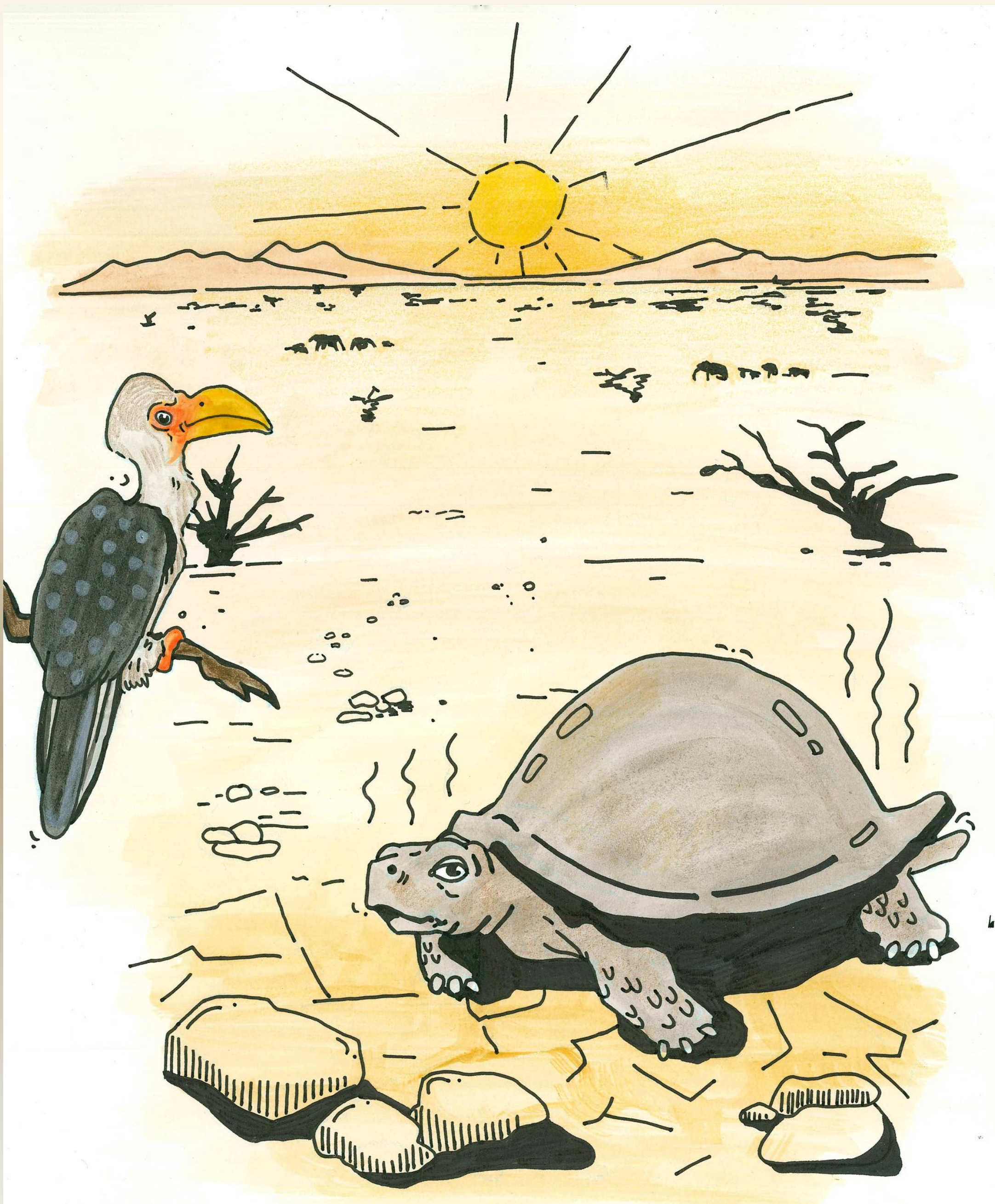
Robyn van Zijl



In the most beautiful part of Africa the animals were starving. Their skin hung loose from their bones. Their faces were sad.

There was no food to eat because the rains had stopped. A drought had begun. The plants were dead, and the water holes were dry.

The only animals that still had a sparkle in their eye and beautiful coats were the birds.



The clever, dishonest tortoise noticed this. He decided that he would find out how the birds were flourishing.

But the birds did not trust the tortoise.

Everyday he pestered them, “Please take me to where you get food.”



Eventually, the birds agreed.
“Tortoise,” they said “you will have to
make wings so that you can fly with
us to heaven.” Each kind bird gave
him one feather, until he had enough
feathers so that he could make



In heaven, the most beautiful table,
filled with the most delicious foods
stood ready and waiting for them.

The birds suggested that tortoise change his name for the ceremony before the feast.

Tortoise thought long and hard.

At last he said, “My name will be Every-one-of-you”.

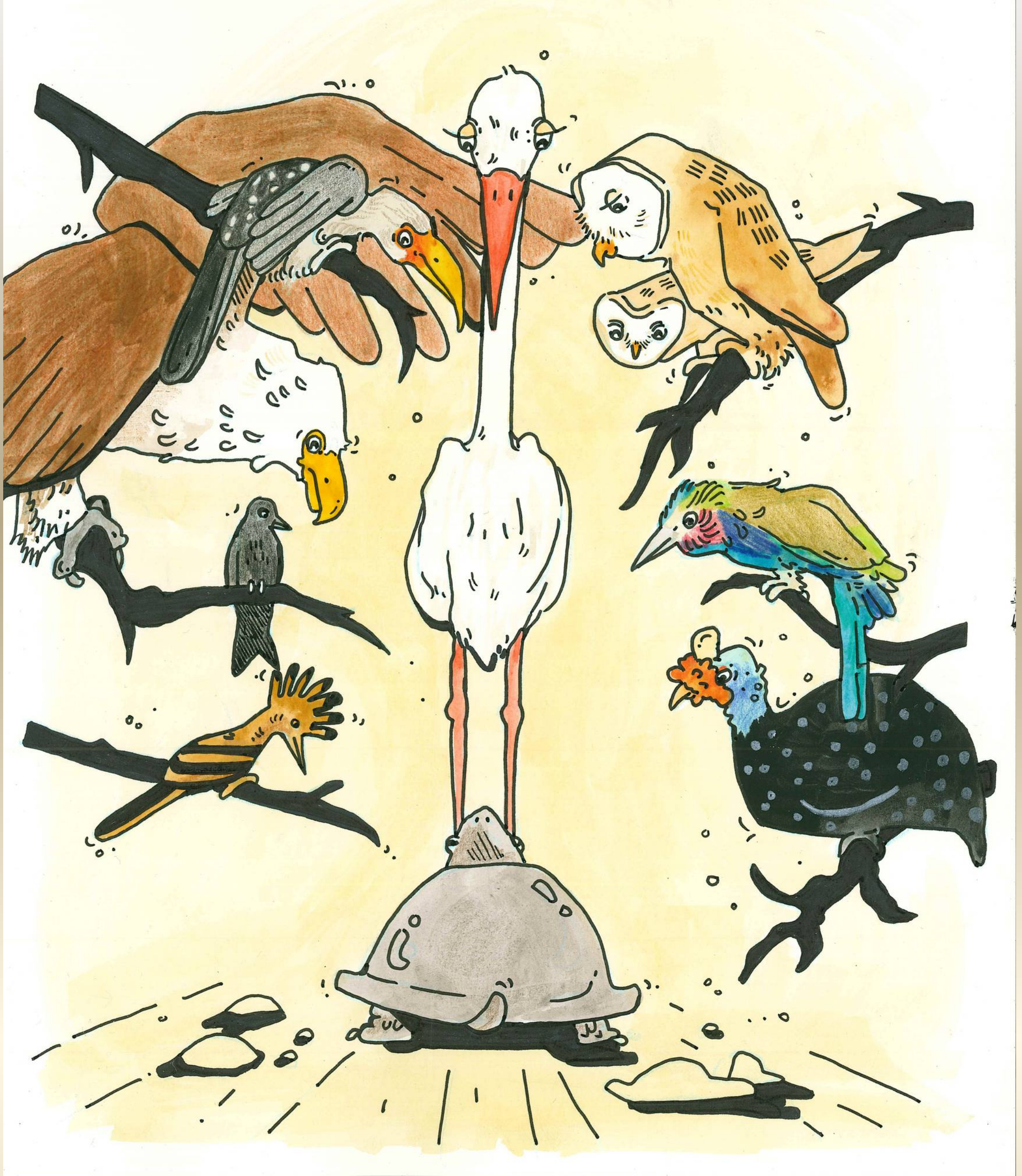
The hosts welcomed the large group with open arms. Before they left they said, “We hope that every one of you enjoy this food.”





Just as the birds were about to eat, Tortoise reminded them, “My name is Every-one--of-you. All this food belongs to me and I am not going to share it with anyone else.”

Tortoise was greedy. He ate every crumb of food and did not share a thing.



The birds were angry. They took back all their feathers.

How would Tortoise fly back down to Earth?

The Tortoise asked the birds to take a letter to his wife. It said, “please find as many soft things as possible and put them outside the house.”

The birds changed the letter and told his wife to find as many hard and sharp things that she could find.

Tortoise jumped...

he fell...

and he

f e l l...



and

he

F E L L!

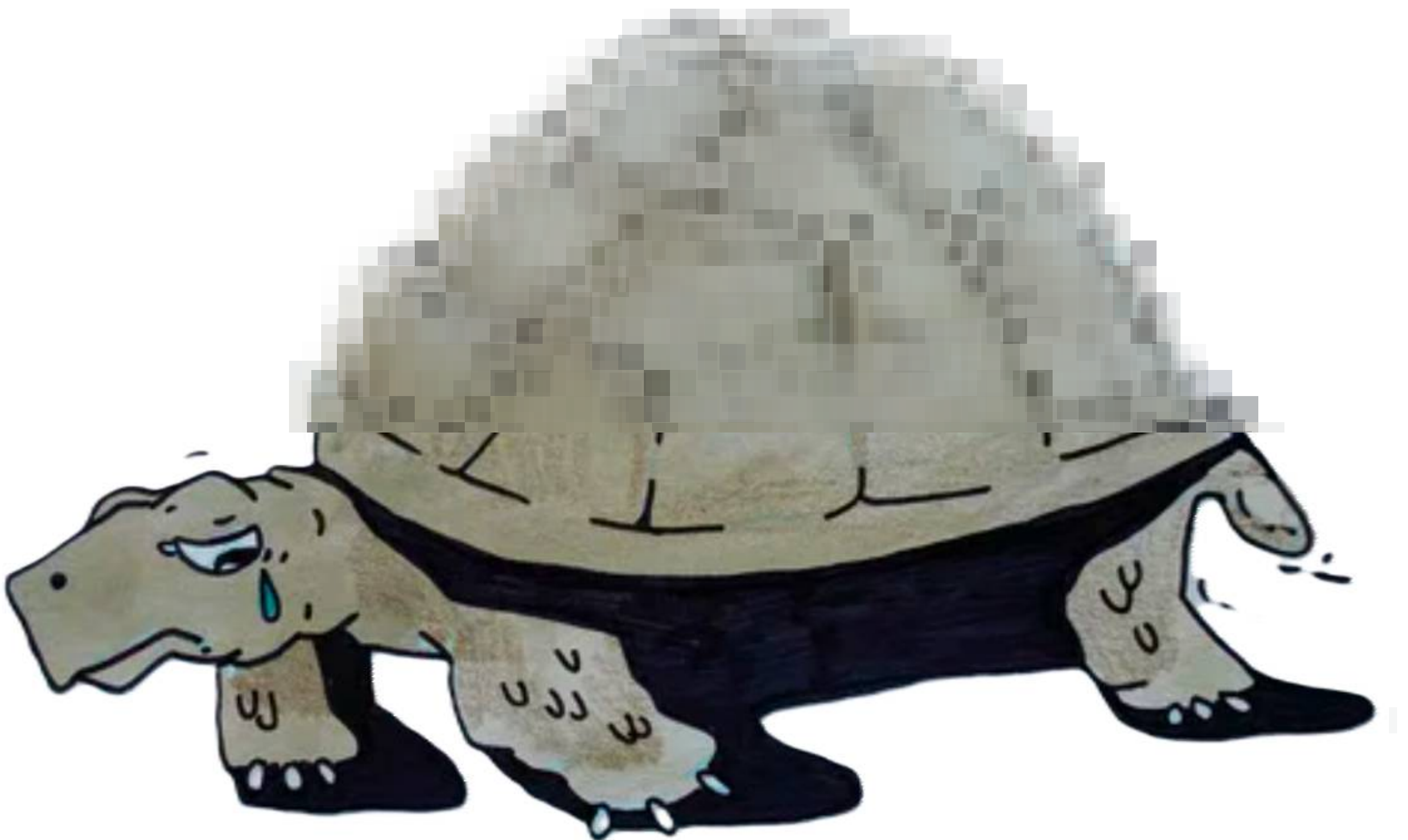
Until...

CRASH!

CRUNCH!

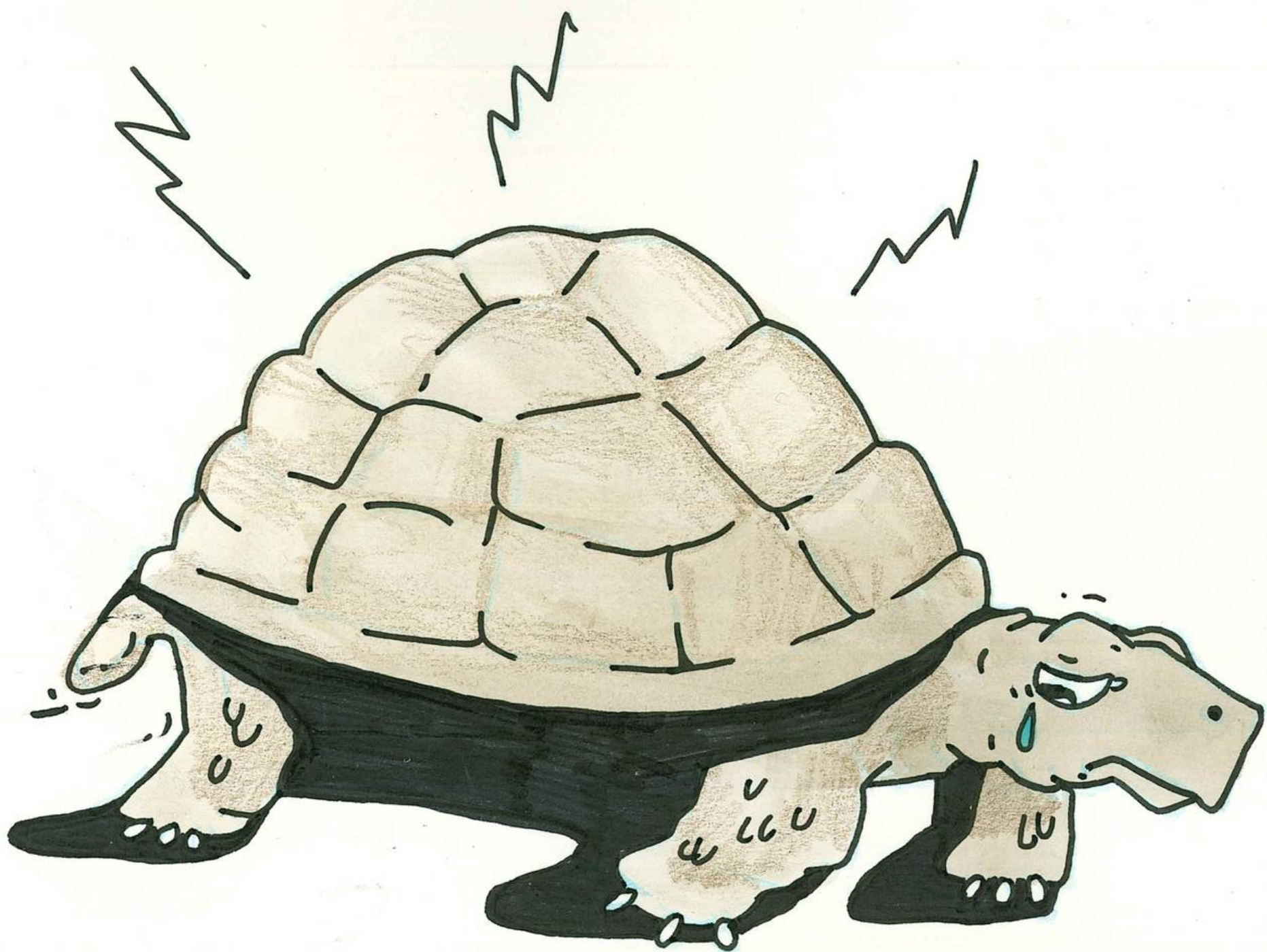
He pounded onto the hard, sharp landing and his shell shattered into tiny pieces.

Oh dear!



His wife, the most skilled and talented healer in the land, sat down and lovingly repaired each piece of his shell.

There was no way that it could be smooth and shiny, as before.



That is how the Tortoise got
his shell.

Discussion

Do you feel sad for tortoise?

Was tortoise greedy? What does greedy mean?

Do you think he deserved to have his shell broken?

Were the birds kind?

Or were the birds mean?

What could tortoise have done differently?

Could the birds have done things differently?

