



BHIKKHU SUJAT • & LISA ANN E
BEGINNINGS

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BEGINNINGS

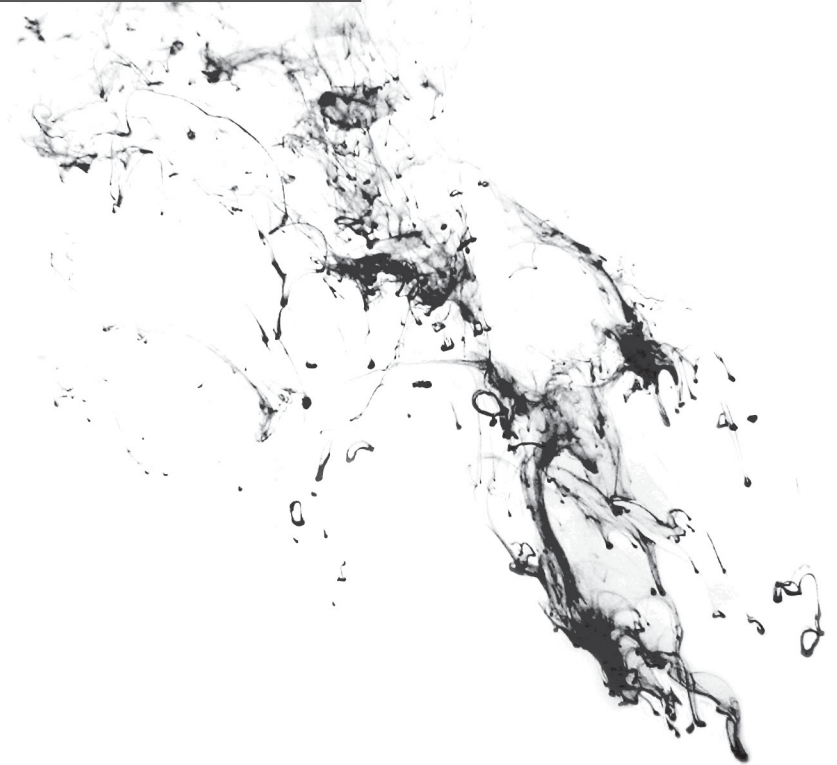
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IN TRODUC TION

THIS BOOK COMES IN TWO PARTS, JUST LIKE YOUR BRAIN.

The first part, *beginnings*, is an imaginative, illustrated retelling of some ancient Buddhist stories of the origin and evolution of the world. This part is printed in booklet form. The second part, *endings*, explores some of the questions raised by the stories, with discussions and comparisons, and is only available digitally on the attached CD.

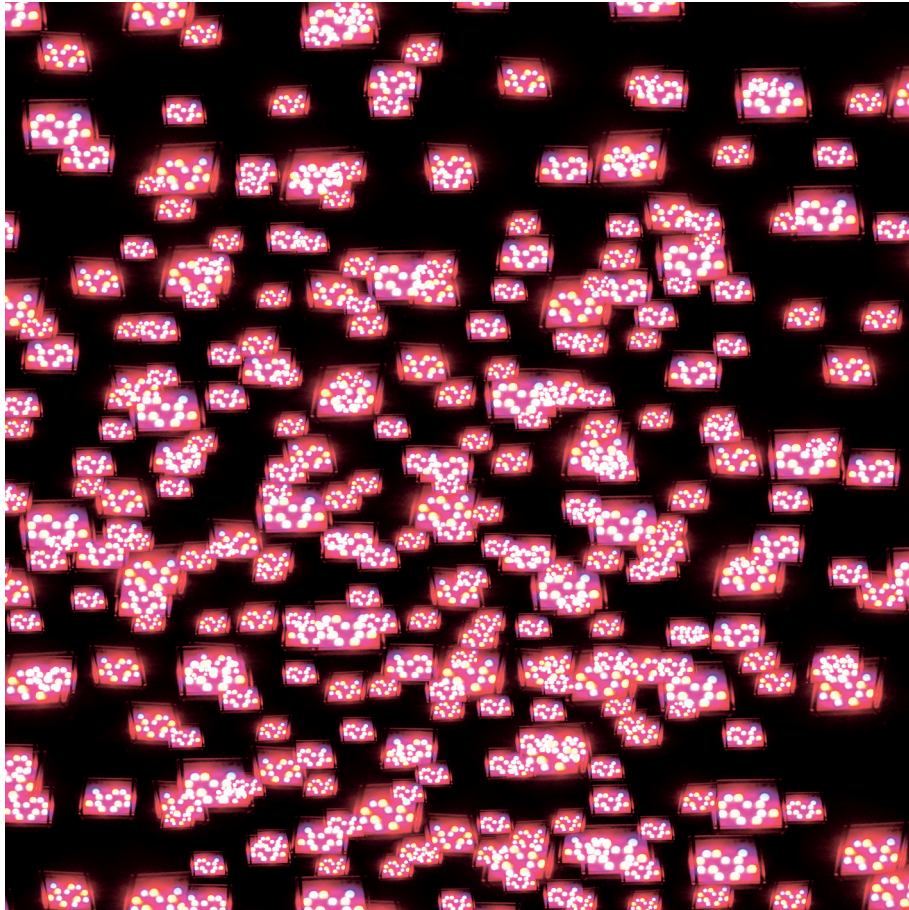
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In the CD, you'll find extra material. As well as the text of 'Beginnings' and 'Endings' in **PDF** format, we offer English translations of the main suttas on which 'Beginnings' is based. Finally, there is a Dhamma talk by Bhikkhu Sujato exploring the theme of these suttas.

Buddhism is rightly famous for pointing us back to the source, inside our minds. But here the Buddha takes us on a journey out into the world, showing how Dhamma moves in time, in nature, and in society. Yet it is a strange and wonderful thing that the further we travel, the closer we come to our own hearts, to our own real home...



would you believe ...?



There comes a time when the world ends

2 3

■
■
Sucked inside a speck of dust
And it stays like that for untellable time
Until a ripple of impossibility dreams of tickling the shore of the real

■ 1
And a trillion suns explode.



Was it first?... Or was it last?

How many times had it been like this? Who to tell? Dark was there, and the wind. Always the wind. If you'd been there you'd have been warm enough, but kind of slimy, and alone. Totally alone. But don't be scared. It was so long ago, you couldn't possibly have been there.

4 5

...Could you?

2

Beings came from **somewhere**.

Not from another planet or another galaxy. From another dimension. From inside.

They shone like the stars and the moon.

But they weren't the stars, and they weren't the moon.

They were **beings**:

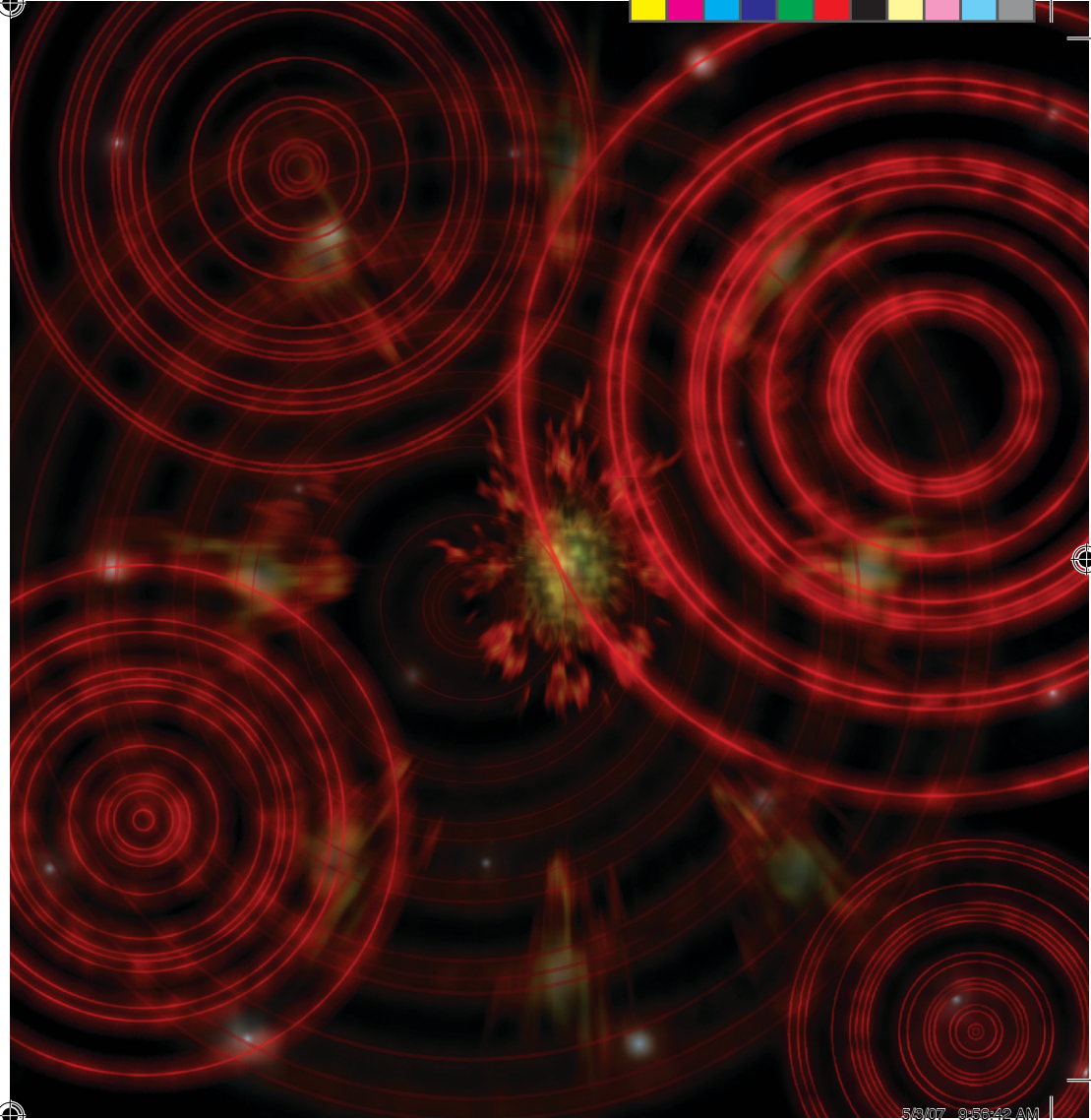
Shining, they moved through the sky, eating joy.

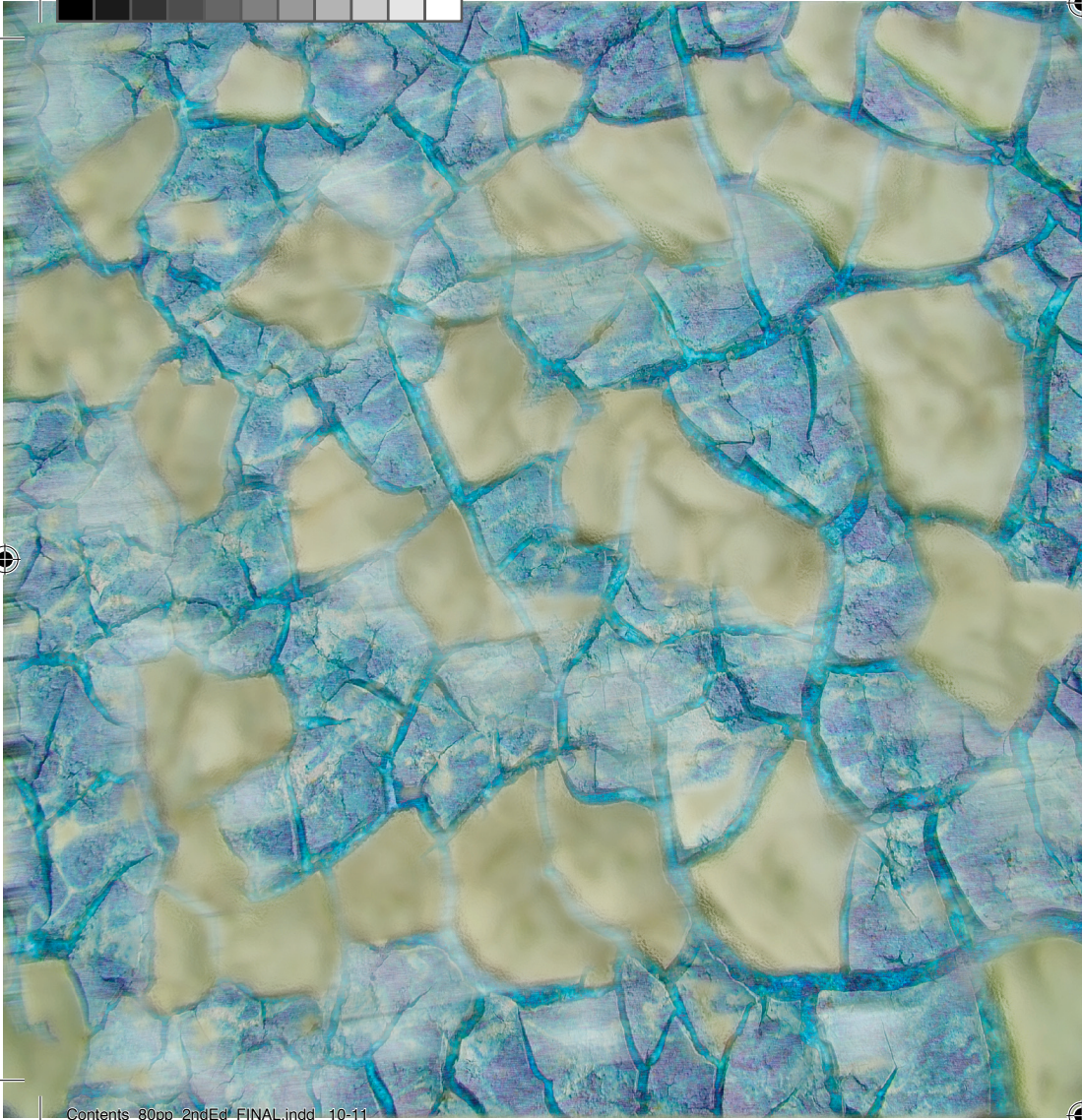
(What does joy taste like, anyway?)



**There wasn't much
there to speak of.
No sun, no moon, no day,
no night, no high, no low,
no today, no tomorrow.
There were no women
and no men – beings
were just beings.
Time moved
very very slowly.
And the beings moved
very very slowly.
And for a long long time
nothing much happened.
But the beings weren't
bored, they were happy.
They liked it like that.**

Weird, huh?





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05

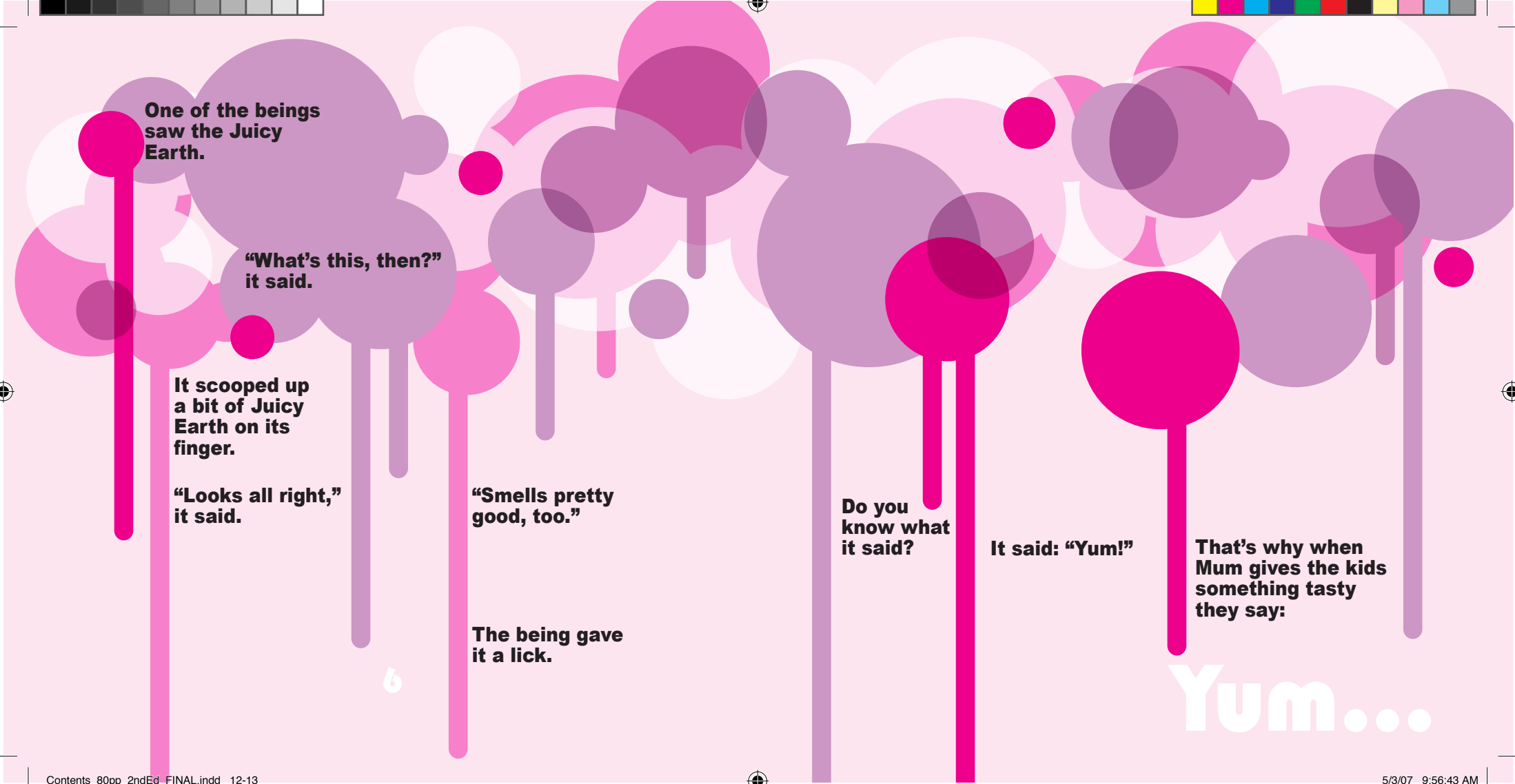
Then a layer of food formed itself on the skin of the waters.

Have you ever seen the skin that forms on *hot milk* when it cools? Juicy Earth was just like that.

It looked like butter and tasted very sweet, like pure *wild honey*.

vum!

Juicy Earth, it was called.



**One of the beings
saw the Juicy
Earth.**

**“What’s this, then?”
it said.**

**It scooped up
a bit of Juicy
Earth on its
finger.**

**“Looks all right,”
it said.**

**“Smells pretty
good, too.”**

**The being gave
it a lick.**

**Do you
know what
it said?**

It said: “Yum!”

**That’s why when
Mum gives the kids
something tasty
they say:**

Yum...



14 15

When the other beings heard that being say "Yum!" they wanted some too. So they all had a go at the Juicy Earth. They stopped it up in big bits and gobbled it down. They got all sticky and sloppy and scuzzy on their faces. It tasted so good they just wanted to keep eating and eating until they got sick. You know what it's like, don't you?
I sure do.

007

**They ate so much
they got fat and heavy.
The light shining from their
bodies got dimmer and dimmer.
They couldn't see at all.
So the stars came out, and the sun & moon.
They turned in the sky, around & around & around.
They made the days and nights, the months, the years,
and the seasons.
So the world was starting to evolve again.**

Then some of the beings ate more, and

So the others made fun of them:

So that's why whenever someone's fat or ugly or just different, people laugh at them.

And you know what happened to those nasty beings?

The Juicy Earth dried up and vanished, so they all went hungry & had to go on a diet.

And they cried and whinged about losing

**“Oh, gotta get that
Oh, gotta get that**

09

some ate less.

The ones who ate more got fat.

“Yah fatso!”

18 19

the Juicy Earth.

**taste!
taste!**

So that's why when advertisements try to make you buy some food they say:





10

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And when the Juicy Earth had gone there came a kind of mushroom. It was nearly as sweet and delicious as the Juicy Earth, but not quite. And the beings ate that even more.

PRETTY GREEDY.

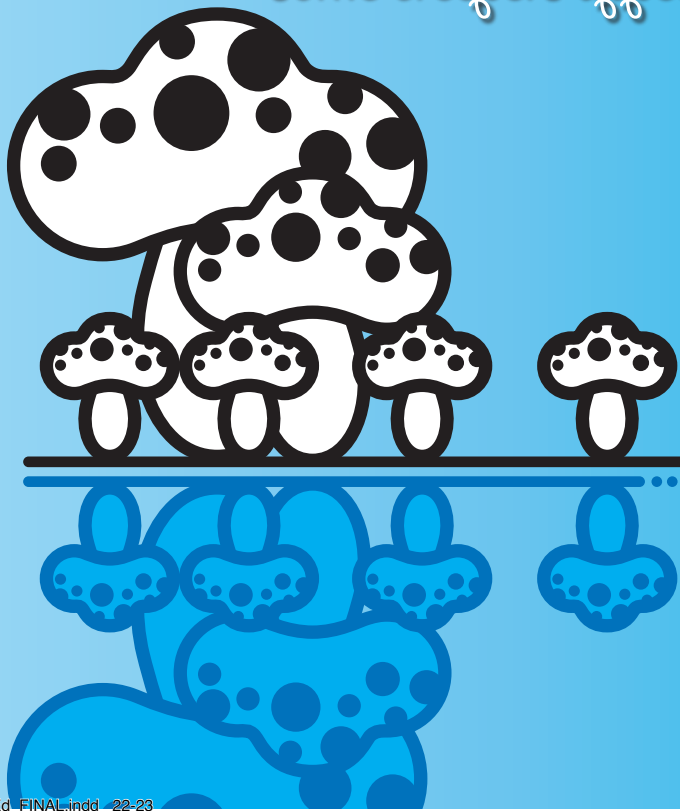
And they became more and more different from each other. Some were tall, some short. Some were dark, some light. Some were pretty, some ugly.

They separated into groups and called each other names. "Zithead!" "Camelface!" "Bumburp!" How would you like to be called "Camelface"?



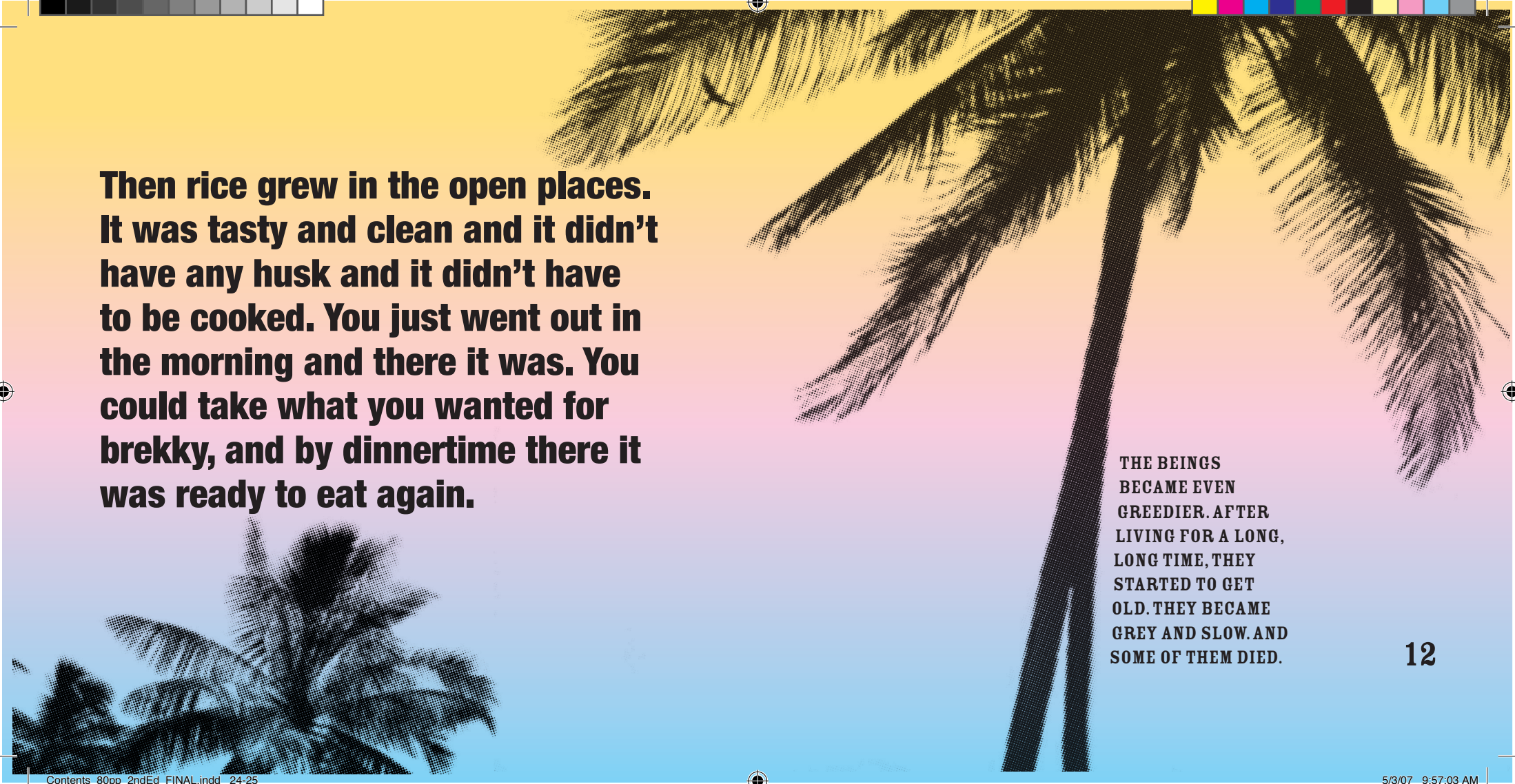
(I suppose it'd be all right if you were a camel!)

*Then the mushrooms disappeared and
some creepers appeared.*



*They were pretty tasty, too,
but not as good as the mushrooms.
So they ate them. All of them.
When the creepers were all gone
they sat around and said:
"Ah, remember the good ol' days?"
So that's why when people
think about all the bad things
in the world they say:
"Ah, remember the good ol' days?"*

But it doesn't help much, does it?



Then rice grew in the open places. It was tasty and clean and it didn't have any husk and it didn't have to be cooked. You just went out in the morning and there it was. You could take what you wanted for brekky, and by dinnertime there it was ready to eat again.

THE BEINGS
BECAME EVEN
GREEDIER. AFTER
LIVING FOR A LONG,
LONG TIME, THEY
STARTED TO GET
OLD. THEY BECAME
GREY AND SLOW. AND
SOME OF THEM DIED.



26 27

Their bodies changed: some became women and some became men. Before they had been whole, but now they felt like they'd been torn in half.

And the women spent all day thinking about the men. And the men spent all day thinking about the women. So they got together and had sex and then they felt whole again.

But only for a little while.
And then the other beings said:

Well, if you're going to get up to that kind of business you'd better go and do it in private!

So the beings found partners and separated from each other in couples. And they built houses so they could hide things from each other.

ଶିଳ୍ପ

Then someone thought:

“Why do I bother to go out twice a day to get food?

Why don't I just go out in the morning
and collect food for the evening as well?”

Then in the evening his friend said:

“C'mon, let's go get some food!”

And he replied:

“No need! I collected enough
for two meals this morning.”

And his friend said:

“Boy, that's a clever idea –
why didn't I think of that?”

So he collected enough food for two days.

But when they started storing it up,
the rice grew a tough husk,
and it didn't grow back, and so
they had to plough the soil and thresh the grain.

What a hassle!

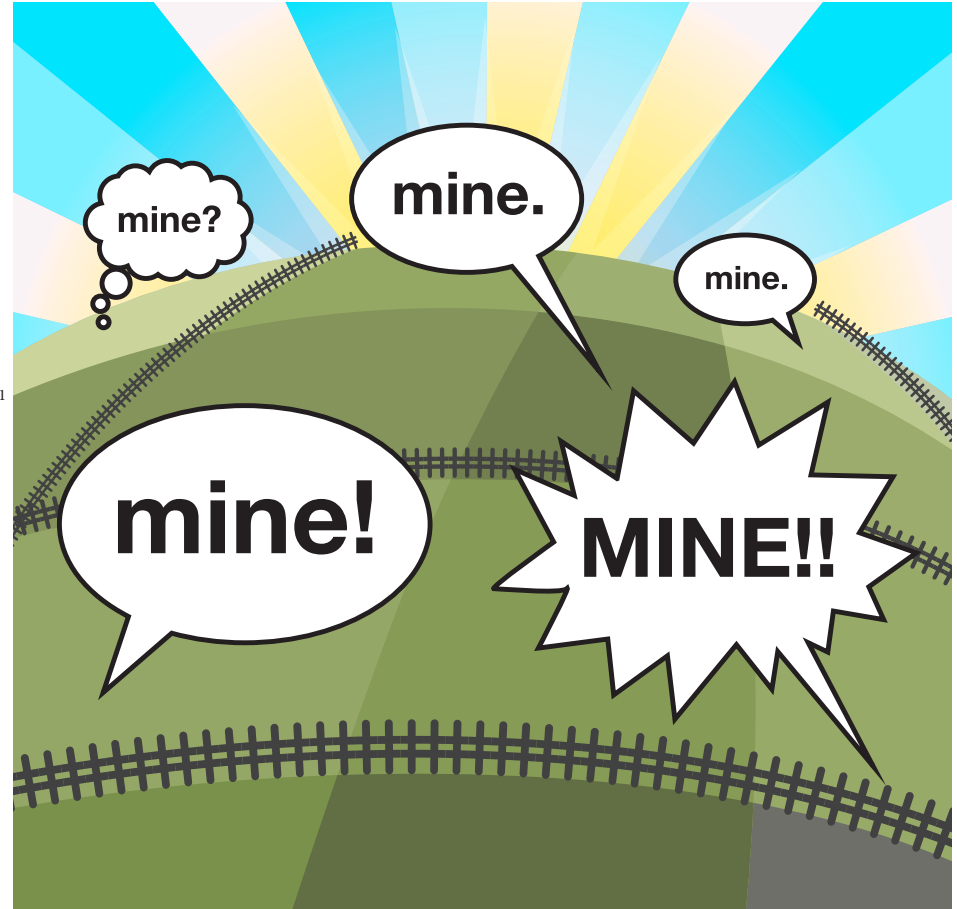
米

So then they had to divide the land for farming. They made boundaries & put up fences. Some people got good land and some people got bad land. And they argued with each other.

"It's mine!"

"No, I was here first - it's mine!"

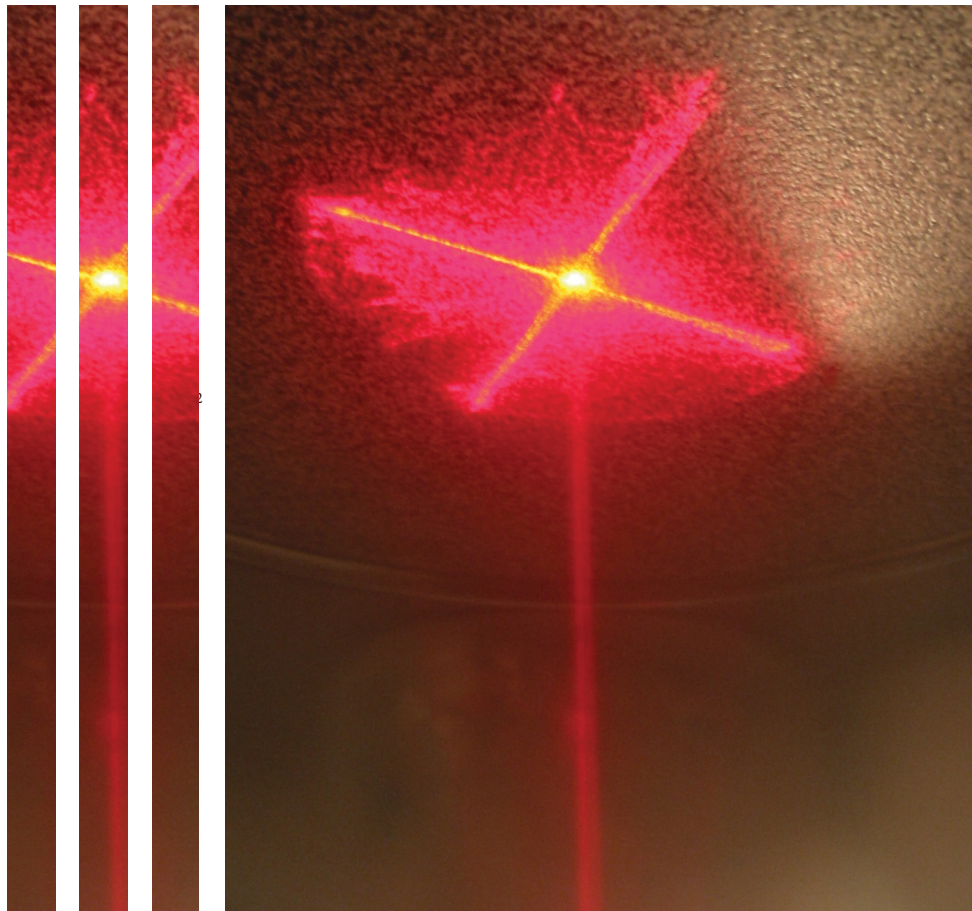
And they started fighting and hitting each other.



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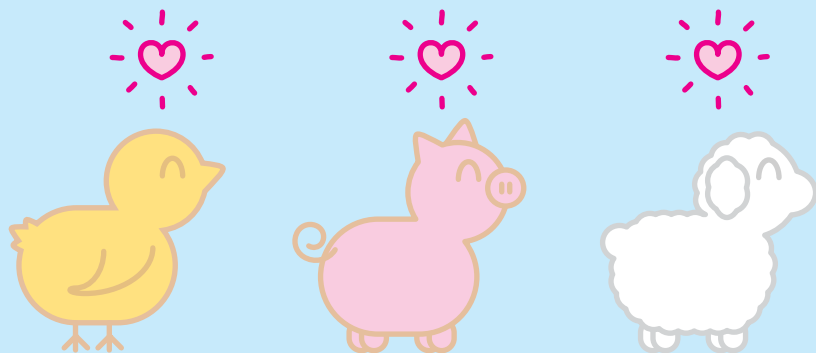
Then the people all came together and said: “Oh! Oh! How sad we are! Before we were all joyful together, radiant and happy. And now it’s come to this – Fighting and jealousy and arguing and selfishness. **Let us choose a leader.** One who is wise and just and fair and good. Then when we have problems they can help us.” So they chose the best and wisest Lady of them all. And because she wasn’t crooked but straightforward and honest they called her ‘Ruler’.

That’s why if you want to draw a straight line you use a ruler.



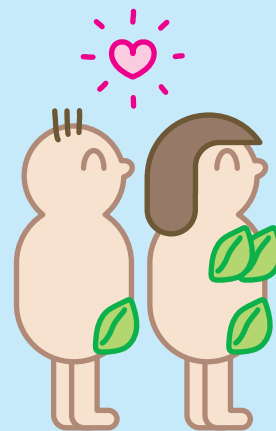
And then the Ruler did her Duties, which were these:

- ...To protect all the men and women in her realm**
- ...To deal with everyone fairly and kindly**
- ...To care for the animals and the birds and the fish**
- ...To help anyone who had no house or no food**
- ...To heal the sick in body and comfort the sick in mind**
- ...To listen with compassion when people come with conflicts and disputes**
- ...And to always encourage people to do good and to love each other.**



So all the people were happy and loved their Ruler.

Wouldn't you?



Then the Ruler got old and died.

They were very sad.

They chose a new Ruler, but she
wasn't as good as the first one.

And because they missed their
Ruler so much, they
made a statue of her.

A very big statue in a Temple.

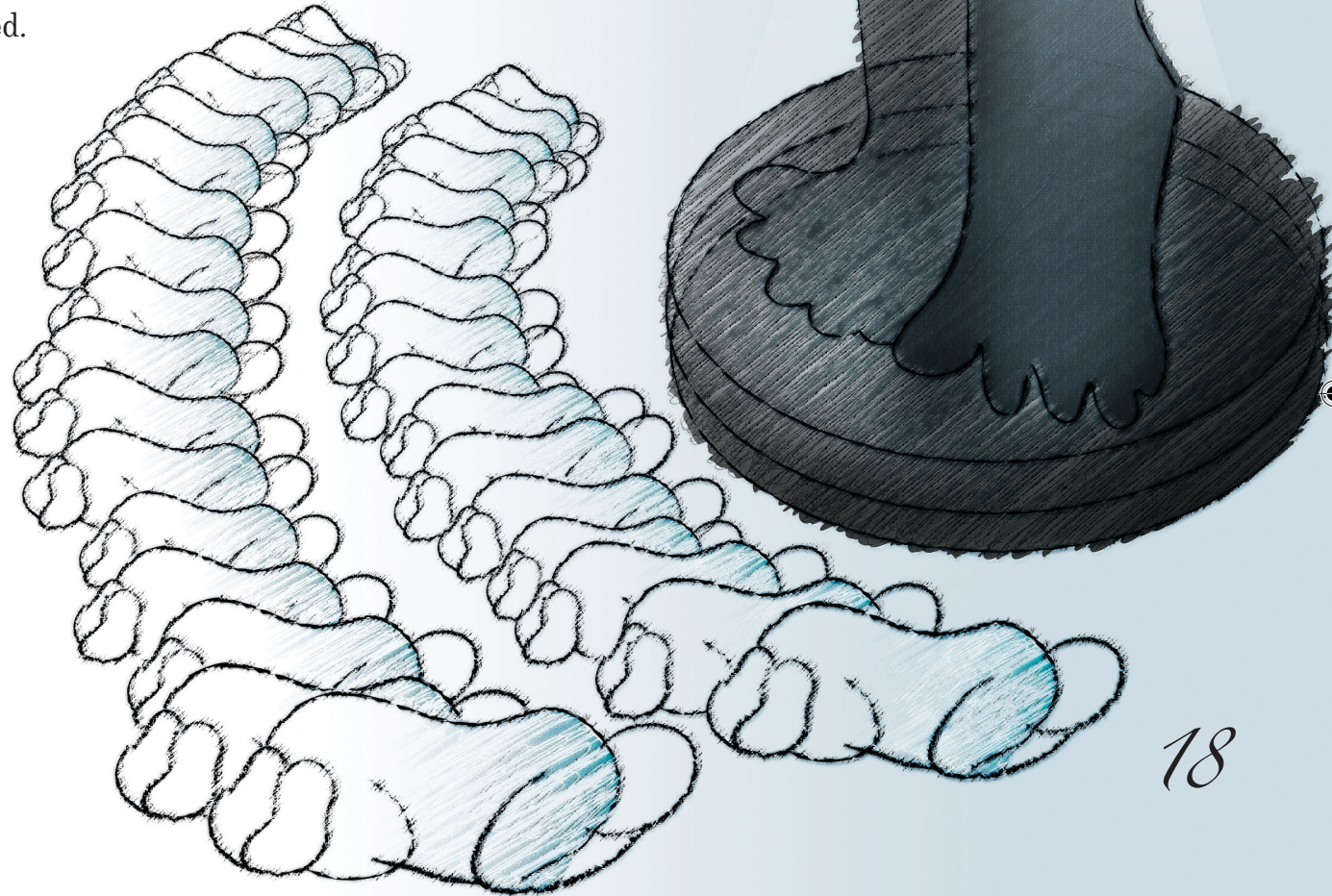
Then they went and
prayed to the statue and
made offerings to it.

And even though the Ruler
had hated killing, still they
took poor innocent creatures
and killed them in sacrifice.

They made her into a Goddess.

Before, they themselves were
real gods, but now they're
worshipping a fake god.

Unbelievable!



HEAVEN WAS IN AN UPROAR

“It’s outrageous!”
cried the King of Gods.

“Those fools, how can they think I
like their revolting sacrifices?

What do they think I am?

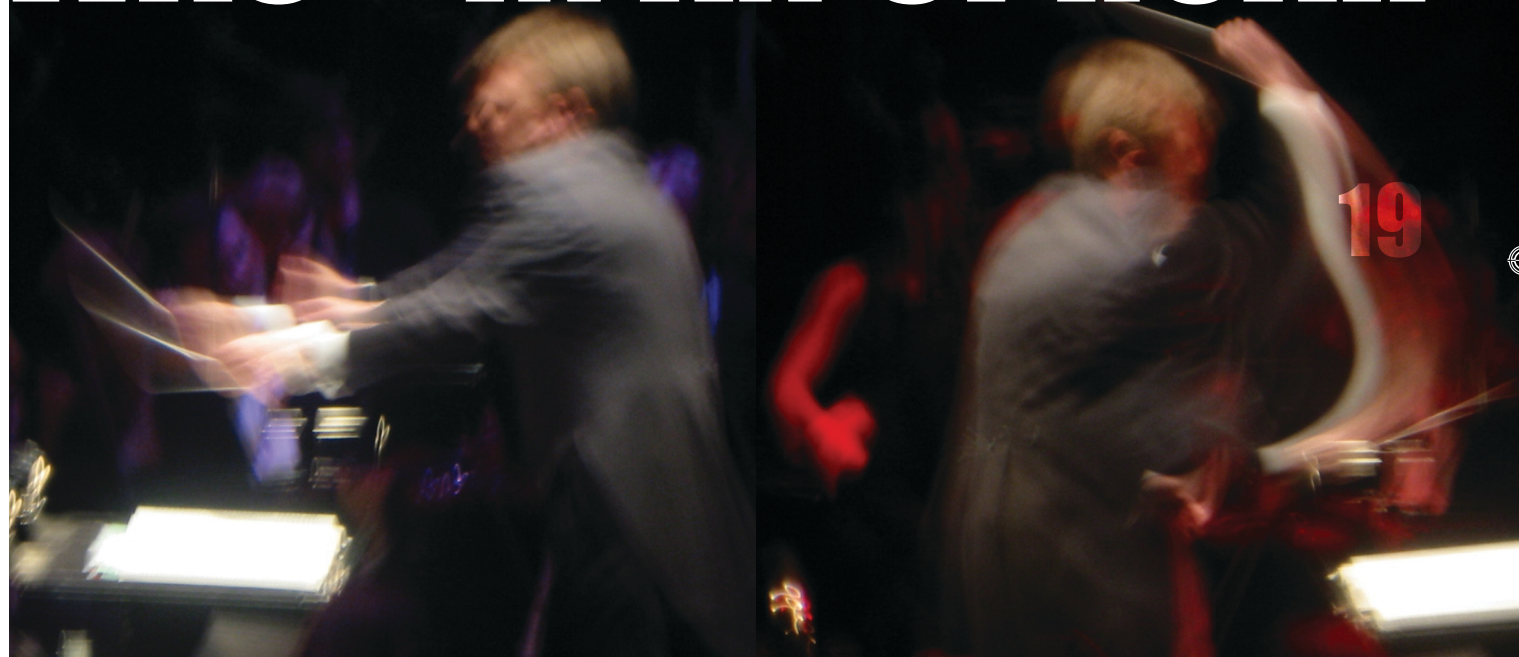
All their pompous rituals
and ceremonies,

Always trying to butter me up and
beg some kind of favor – pathetic!

And anyway, what do they
imagine I can do for them?

How can I save them from
themselves?”

“When,” he sighed,
“When, O when will they
ever grow up & understand
that they are responsible
for their own actions?”



The Rulers got very rich and powerful. They got people to worship them as gods even before they died. And they forgot all about their Duties. They took so much money the people became poor. There was one man who had nothing to eat. His wife and their children were hungry. They said: "Hey Dad! We're hungry! Can't you get us something to eat?" So he went to a rich man's land and took some food...

"Hey you!" yelled the rich man,
 "Give me back my food!"
 "I won't," said the hungry man.
 "My family is hungry."

But the rich man attacked the hungry man with sticks & stones until he was bleeding. Then he took him to the Ruler. "Sir!" he said.

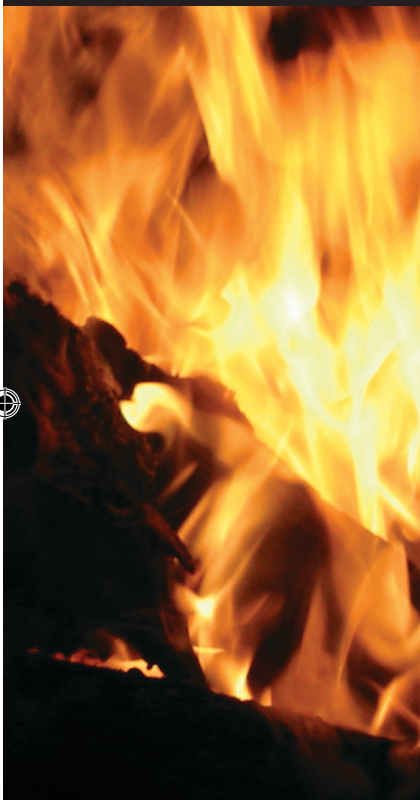
"This man is a no good thief! He stole my food!" So the Ruler said: "Did you take that food?" "Yes, sir." "Why?"

"Please, sir, I was hungry."
 "Hungry? What's that?"

"Please, sir, hungry is when a man hasn't eaten for so long that his belly is aching and empty."

"Is that all? Well then, take this money and this rice and go! And don't do it again."





So the man went home and he told his poor and hungry friends:

“If you go and steal something the Ruler will give you some money and rice!”

So one of them stole something and was taken to the Ruler.

“Did you take that food?”

“Yes, sir, can I please have some money?”

Then the Ruler thought:

“If I give money to everyone who steals, there’ll be no end to it.”

So he said to his soldiers:

“Take this man out and chop off his head!”

So they dressed that man in rough cloth and shaved off his hair.

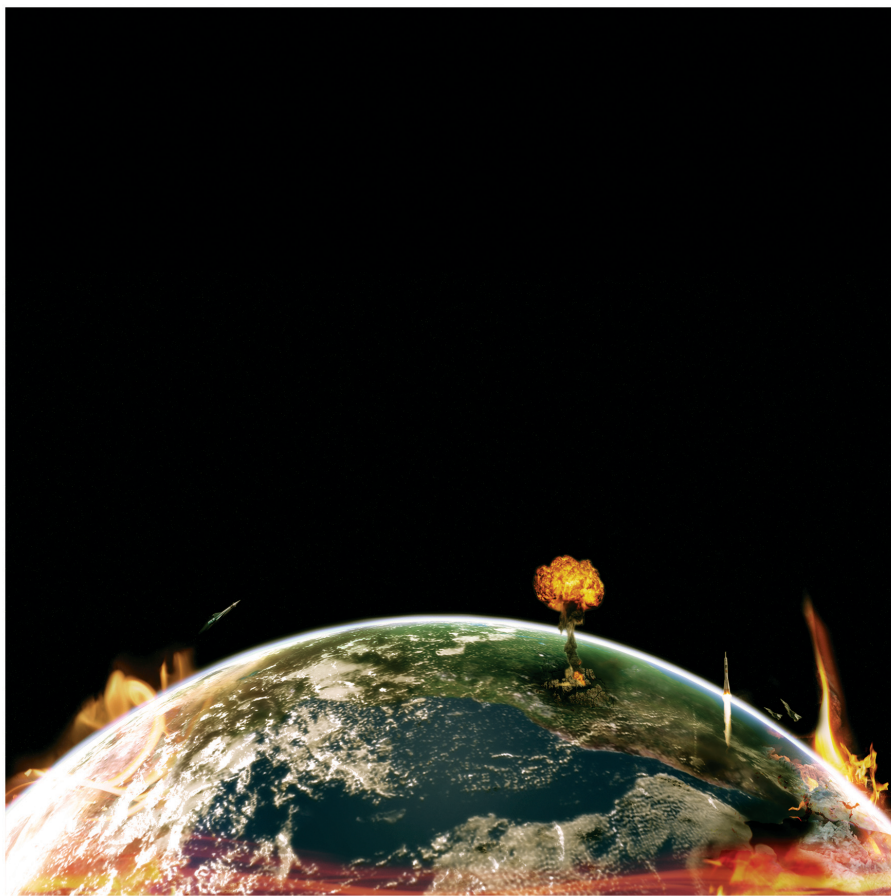
They tramped him through the streets while a goatskin drum cried “Doom! Doom!”

They shoved him through the southern gate and threw him to the ground

Then they chopped off his head.

And the people just stood there and stared. And they turned all their faces away.





So because there was greed
there was **POVERTY**;

Because there was poverty
there was **HUNGER**;

Because there was hunger
there was **STEALING**;

Because there was stealing
there was **KILLING**.

And people's lives were becoming
shorter & shorter and meaner & meaner.

Then another man stole some food
and was taken to the Ruler.

“Did you steal that food?”

“No, sir! How could I do a
terrible thing like that?”

And so then there was **LYING**, too.

And then some of those *people* said:

“enough!”

Why should we live among such evil?

So some men went to live in the forest.

They **MEDITATED** in little huts made of **LEAVES** and **STICKS**.

They walked through the village with their alms-bowls and *people gave them food*.

They tried to *do good*, and to help others to *do good*, too.

They lived in the
jungle with all the
WILD ANIMALS
but they never
HURT any of them.

People would see them sitting silent and still in the silver shine of the

STARS.

And because their bald heads *shone like the Moon* the people called them *monks*.

MONKS

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some of the *women* went to live in the forest & meditate, too.

They said to the people:

“Why search for **HAPPINESS** where there is *none*?”

So people called them

nuns

COULDN'T MEDITATE

But then some of the monks ~~couldn't meditate~~ so they came out of the forest and wrote books telling others how to meditate.

“**They said:**
Meditation is right, but reading is righter!”

So people called them **WRITERS.**

Life got more and more complicated.

The world became more
and more full of bad things.

The trees were chopped down.

No one had time to smell
the flowers or watch a sunset.

People didn't trust
and love each other.

They smiled with their
mouths, not their eyes.

They wanted lots
and lots of money.



They were never satisfied
with simple things.

They took drugs.

They didn't respect

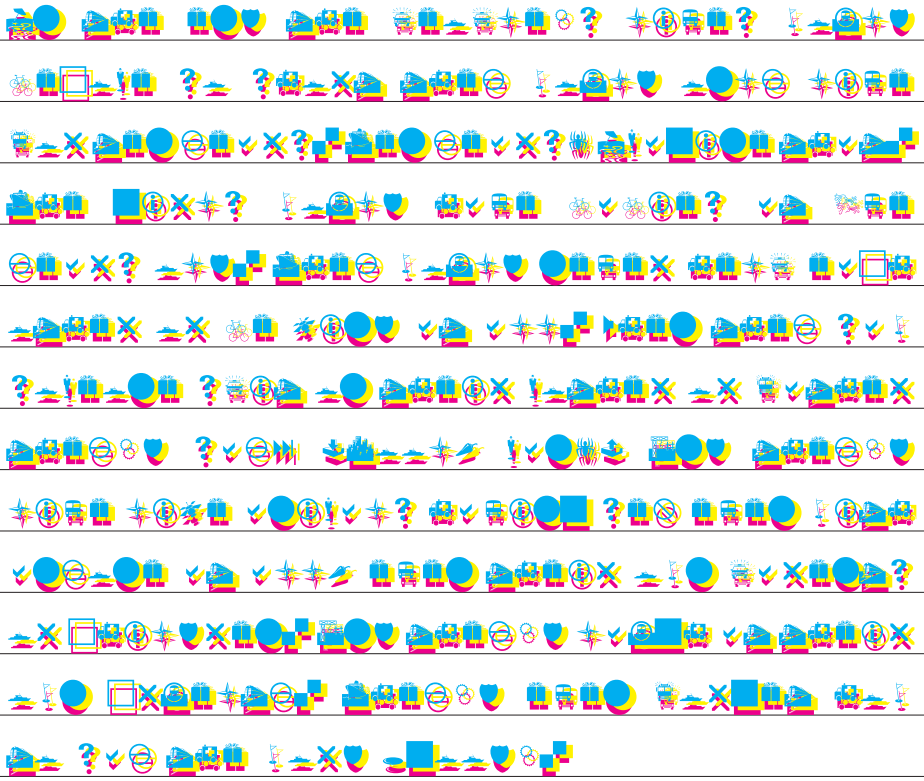
their parents and elders.

The worse they were, the more
they thought they were clever.

The monks & nuns
told them not to be bad,
but they didn't like that.

They wanted to be bad.
They thought bad was good.





IN THE END THE PEOPLE'S LIVES WOULD
 BECOME SO SHORT THEY WOULD ONLY LIVE
 FOR TEN YEARS. TEN YEARS! IMAGINE
 THAT. THE GIRLS WOULD HAVE BABIES AT
 FIVE YEARS OLD. THEY WOULD NEVER HELP
 EACH OTHER OR BE KIND AT ALL. WHEN
 THEY SAW SOMEONE SPIT ON THEIR MOTHER
 OR FATHER THEY'D SAY: "COOL, MAN!" AND
 THEY'D LIVE LIKE ANIMALS HAVING SEX
 WITH ANYONE AT ALL, EVEN THEIR OWN
 PARENTS OR CHILDREN. AND THEY'D LAUGH
 AT THEIR OWN CRUELTY. THEY'D EVEN
 FORGET HOW TO SAY THE WORD 'GOOD'.
 TWENTY-FIVE



And there would be a dreadful **WAR.**
They'd take guns & bombs &
knives and attack each other,
yelling: *"You beast, you freak, you shit –*

DIE!"

And they'd **FIGHT** and they'd
KILL with minds **FULL OF HATE.**

There'd be no good guys and no heroes.

For **7** days they would kill.
And the towns and cities
would all be destroyed.
That's how bad it can get.

BUT THERE WOULD BE SOME PEOPLE WHO

would run away from the killing.

(THEY'D
THINK)

I don't want to
kill or be killed!

And so they'd run screaming into
the hills to hide. And after the
killing's over they'd come out.

They'd see each
other and be so
happy.

*How wonderful,
my friend, to see you still alive!*



AND THEY'D
HUG EACH OTHER AND THEY'D
LAUGH AND CRY.

Then they'd say:

HOW HORRIBLE WAR IS!

IT'S NO GOOD FOR ANYONE EVER.

It's because we were so bad that

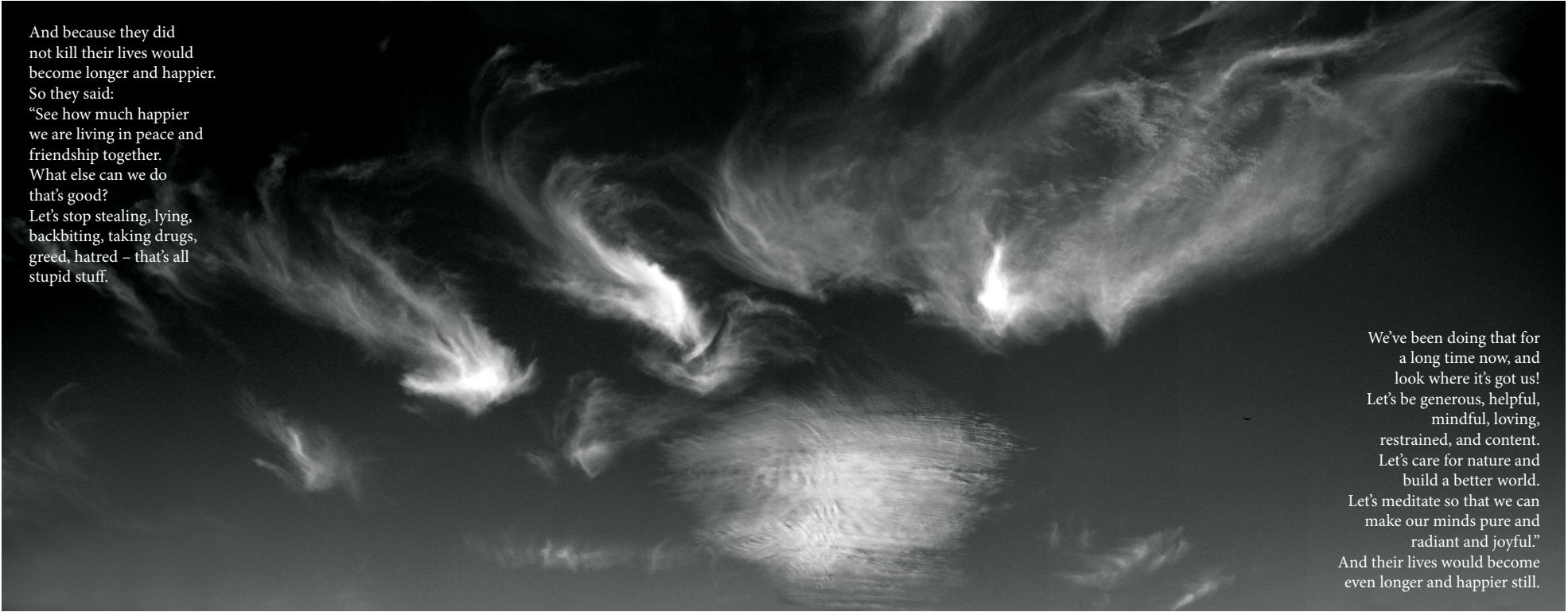
I KNOW—

we ended up DESTROYING everything.

let's do something *good!*

Let's all agree NOT TO KILL or harm each other.

SO THAT'S WHAT THEY'D DO.



And because they did
not kill their lives would
become longer and happier.
So they said:
“See how much happier
we are living in peace and
friendship together.
What else can we do
that’s good?
Let’s stop stealing, lying,
backbiting, taking drugs,
greed, hatred – that’s all
stupid stuff.

We’ve been doing that for
a long time now, and
look where it’s got us!
Let’s be generous, helpful,
mindful, loving,
restrained, and content.
Let’s care for nature and
build a better world.
Let’s meditate so that we can
make our minds pure and
radiant and joyful.”
And their lives would become
even longer and happier still.



And so it would go for a long, long time of joy and peace.

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And after a long, long time there would be born a young man called *Maitreya*. He would be very handsome and very intelligent and everybody would love him dearly. He would see how good and kind and happy the people were.

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But he would also see how they got old and died. And sometimes they'd be sad and not know why. They couldn't do anything about it.

“I wonder,” he would say. “Is there anything beyond birth and death? Is there any true happiness and peace?”

So he would shave off his hair and go into the forest to meditate. He'd become a *Buddha*.

Do you know what that is? I hope so. 🍀

NOW THEN.
HOW DO YOU FEEL?

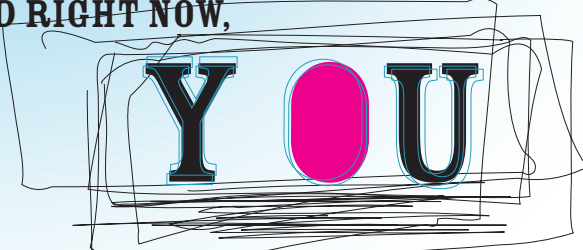
SPUN OUT?
GOOD.

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER IN THESE FEW PAGES.
YOU'VE BEEN LIKE A GOD,
SURVEYING ALL OF CREATION FROM ON HIGH.

IF YOU WERE REALLY A GOD,
WHAT KIND OF WORLD WOULD YOU MAKE?

LET ME TELL YOU A SECRET: **YOU ARE GOD.**

AND RIGHT NOW,



YOU

ARE

MAKING **THIS** KIND OF WORLD.

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SO WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO ABOUT IT?

SO WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO ABOUT IT?

SO WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO

the end...?

[Disclaimer]

All people, places, events, deities, fonts, and grammatical conventions in this work are entirely fictitious and bear no relationship with reality. This is pretty much how the authors feel most of the time, too. But we have never wavered in our faith that you, dear reader, are real.



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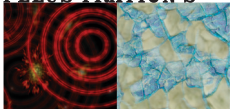
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COVER**

FEATURING THE
ARTWORK OF
LACHLAN WARNER

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Christians for giving me someone to argue with; Scientists for demonstrating the limits of reason.

ALL WISDOM BELONGS TO THE BUDDHA, ALL FOOLISHNESS IS MINE ALONE.

- BHIKKHU SUJATO

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- LISA ANNE



