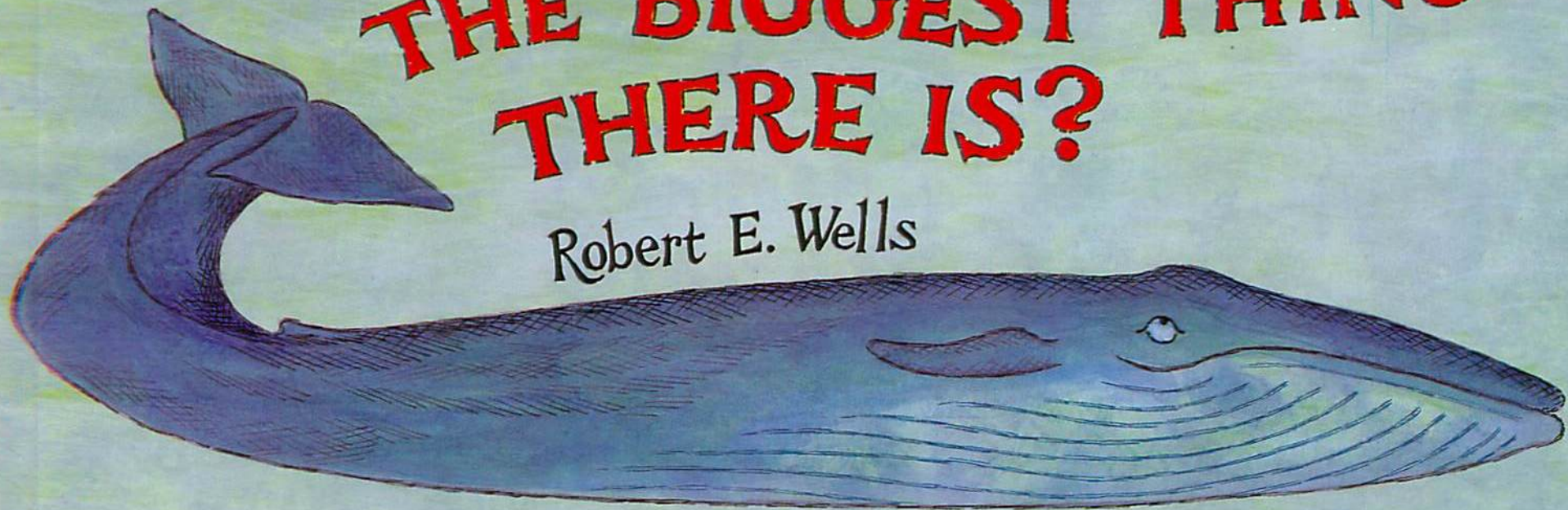


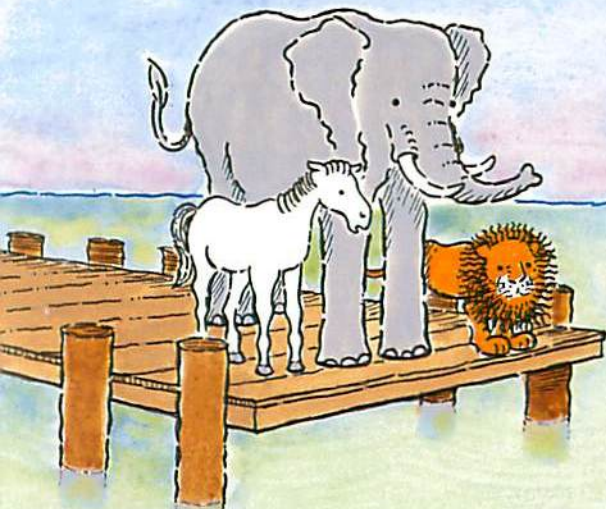
IS A BLUE WHALE
THE BIGGEST THING
THERE IS?

Robert E. Wells



This is the tail of a blue whale.
The "flipper" parts are called flukes.

Just the flukes, all by
themselves, are bigger than
most of Earth's creatures.



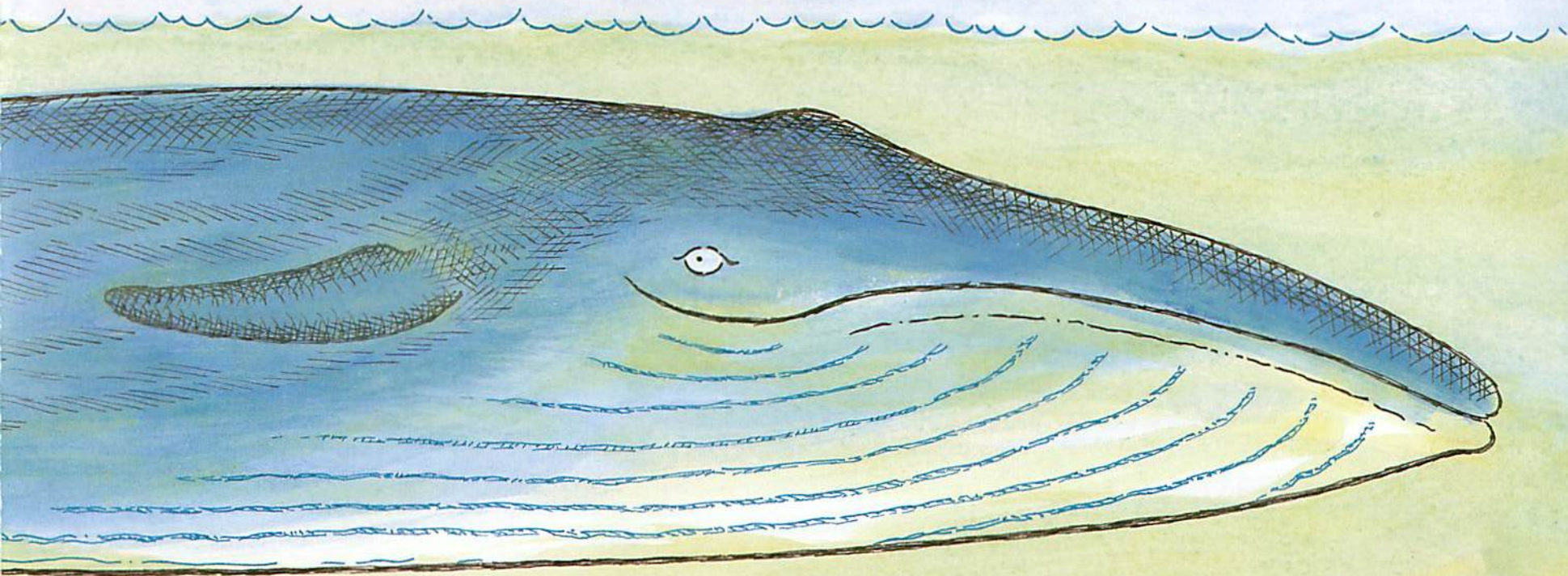
Here's the **WHOLE**
blue whale. It's not just
bigger than **MOST** of
Earth's creatures,
it's bigger than
ALL of them.



A blue whale can grow to be 100 feet long
and weigh 150 tons!

It's the biggest animal that ever lived.

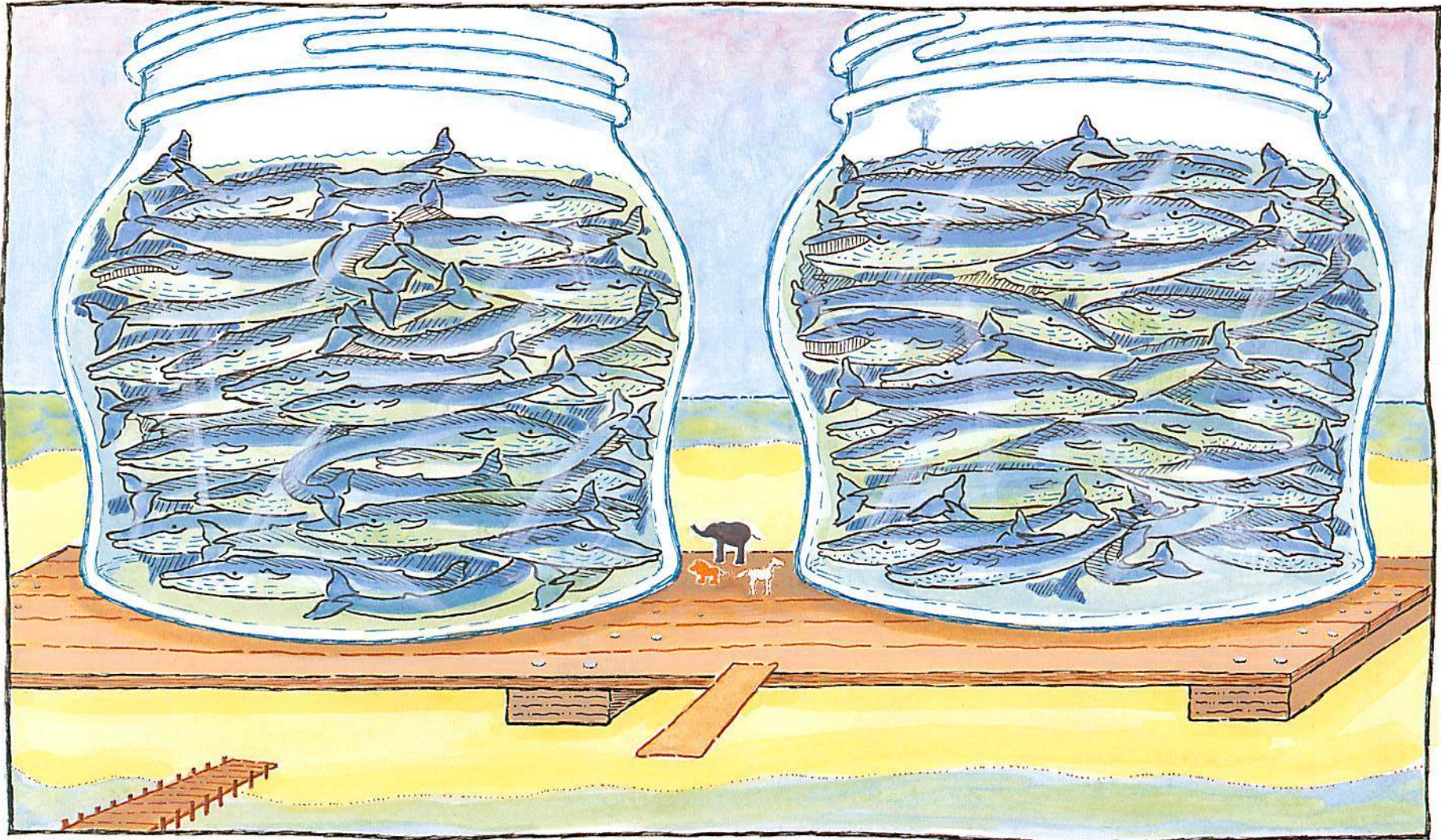
But of course, a blue whale is NOT
The Biggest Thing There Is.

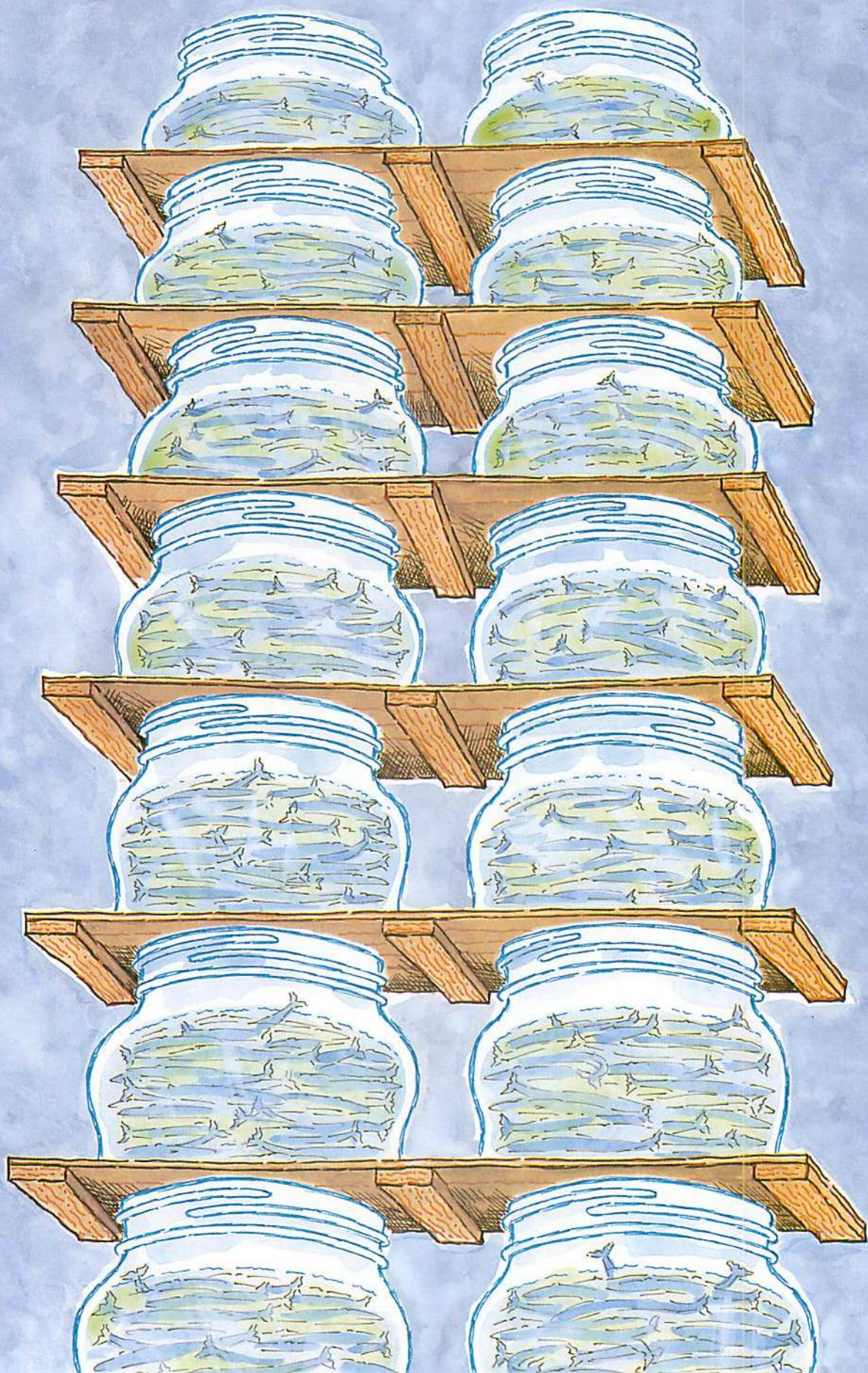


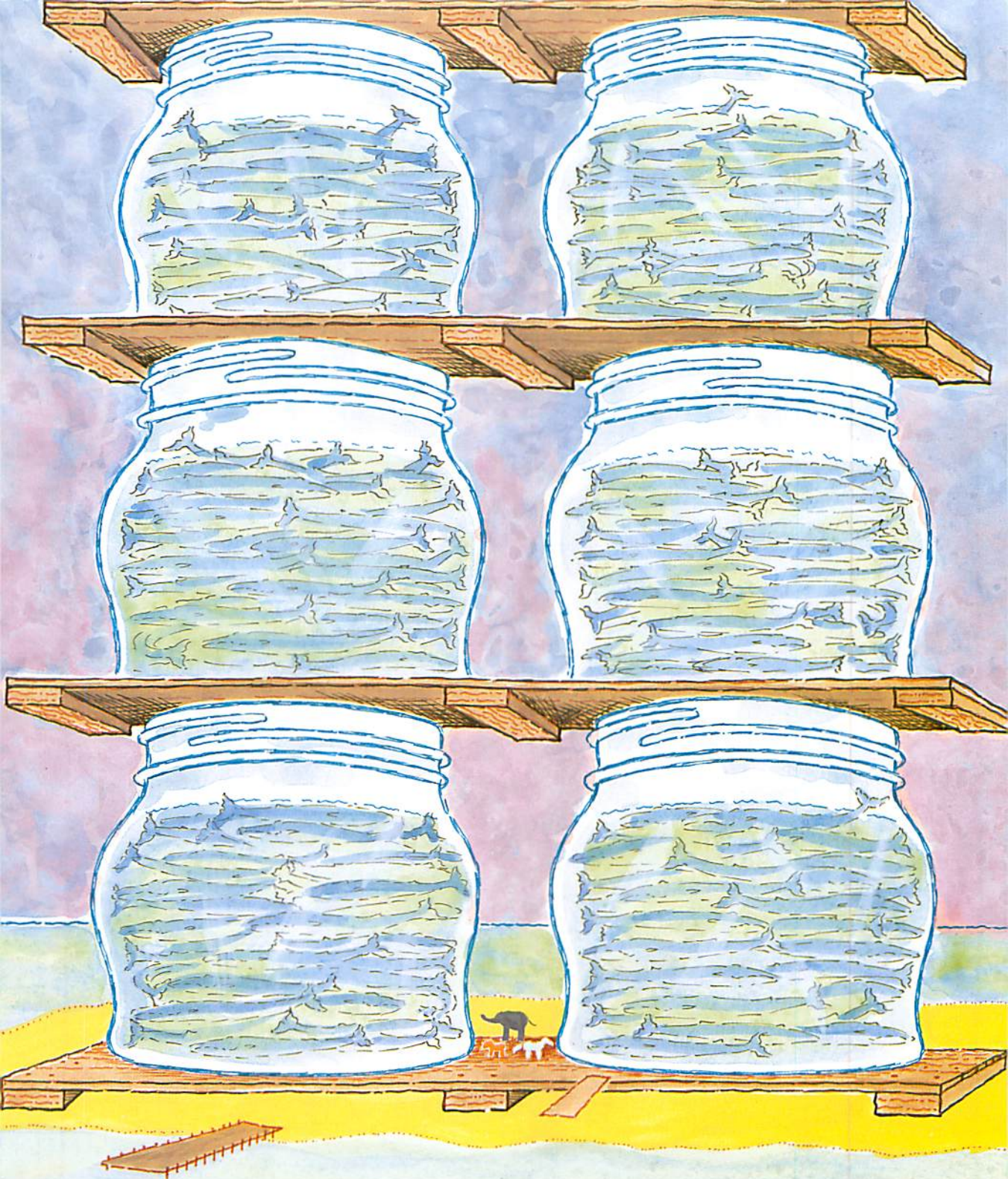
If you
put 100
blue whales
in a
really
big
jar,



and then put two of those whale jars
on an enormously large platform,

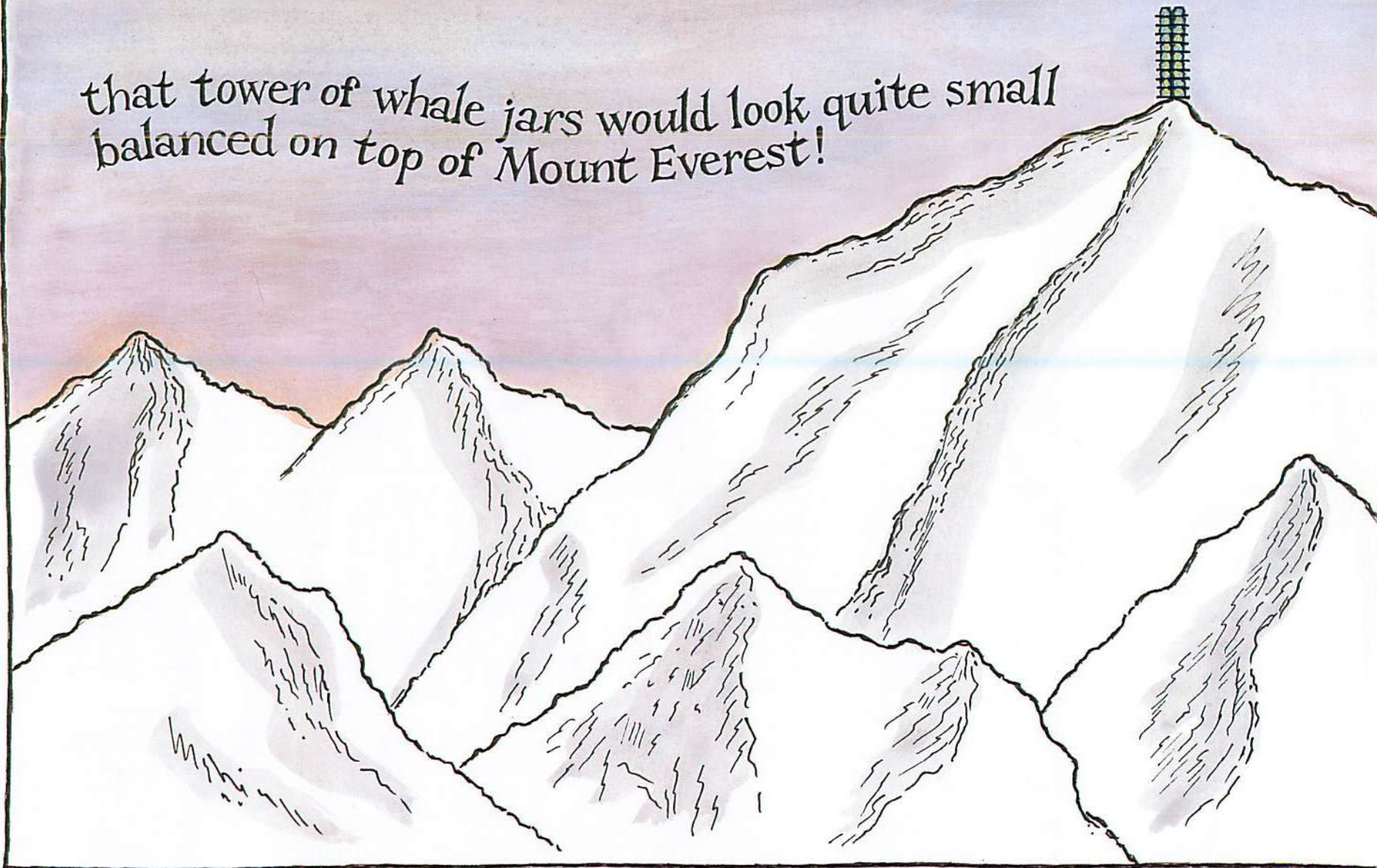






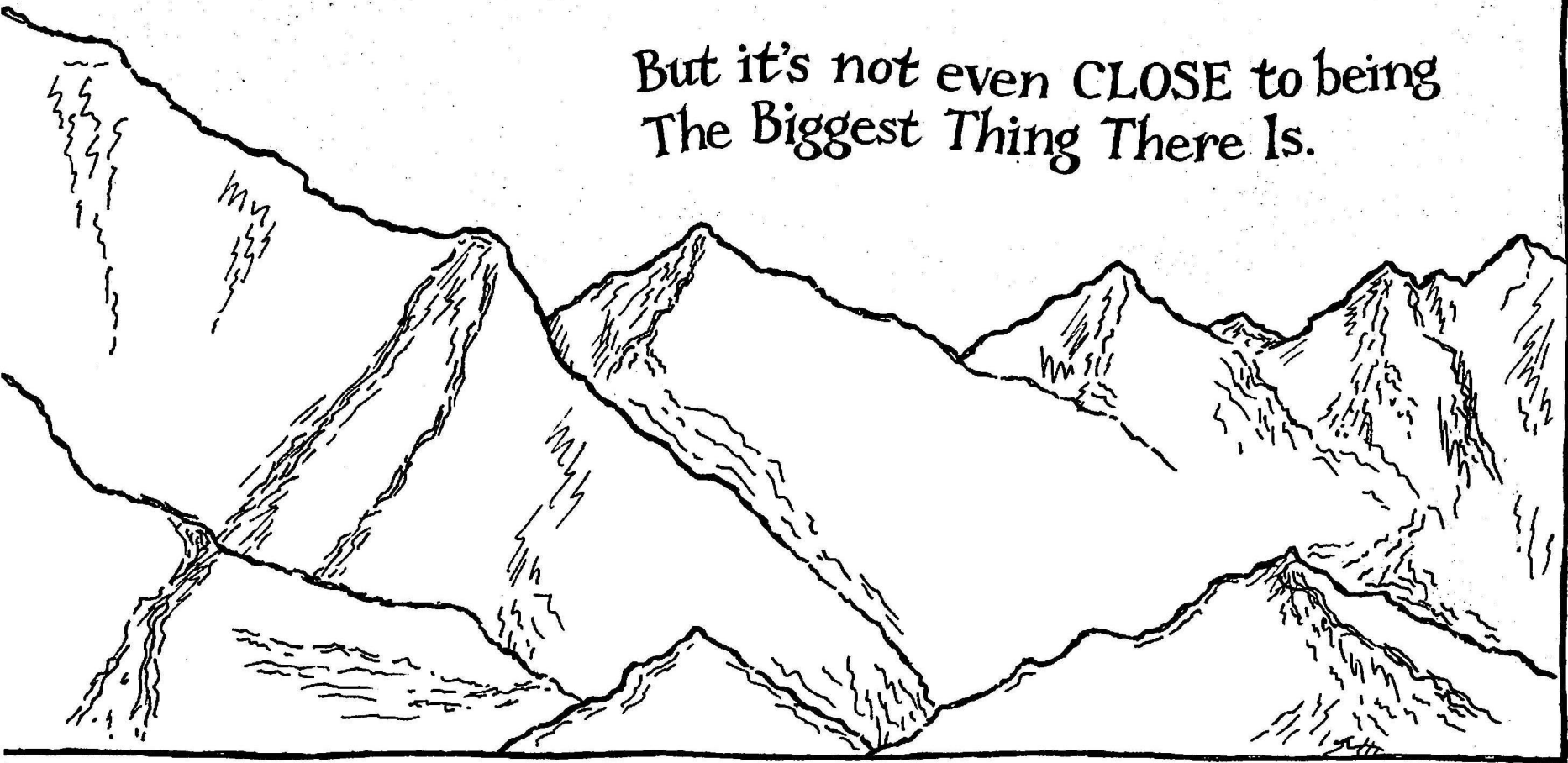
and then made a tremendously
tall tower out of 10 platforms
of whale jars,

that tower of whale jars would look quite small
balanced on top of Mount Everest!



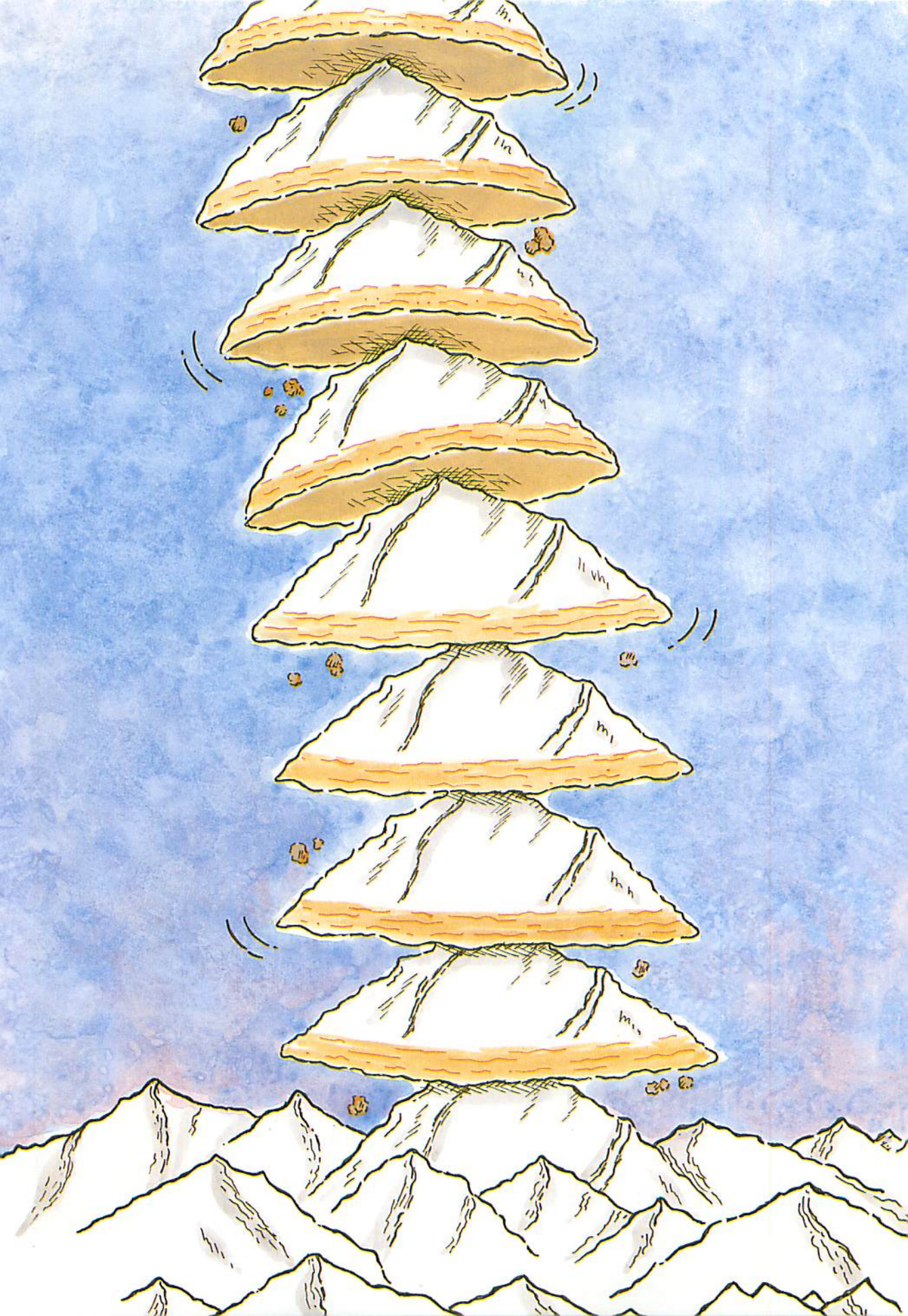
Yes, Mount Everest is mighty big. If it were hollow, it could hold millions of whale jars.

But it's not even CLOSE to being
The Biggest Thing There Is.



Even
100
Mount
Everests,
stacked
one
on
top
of
the
other,

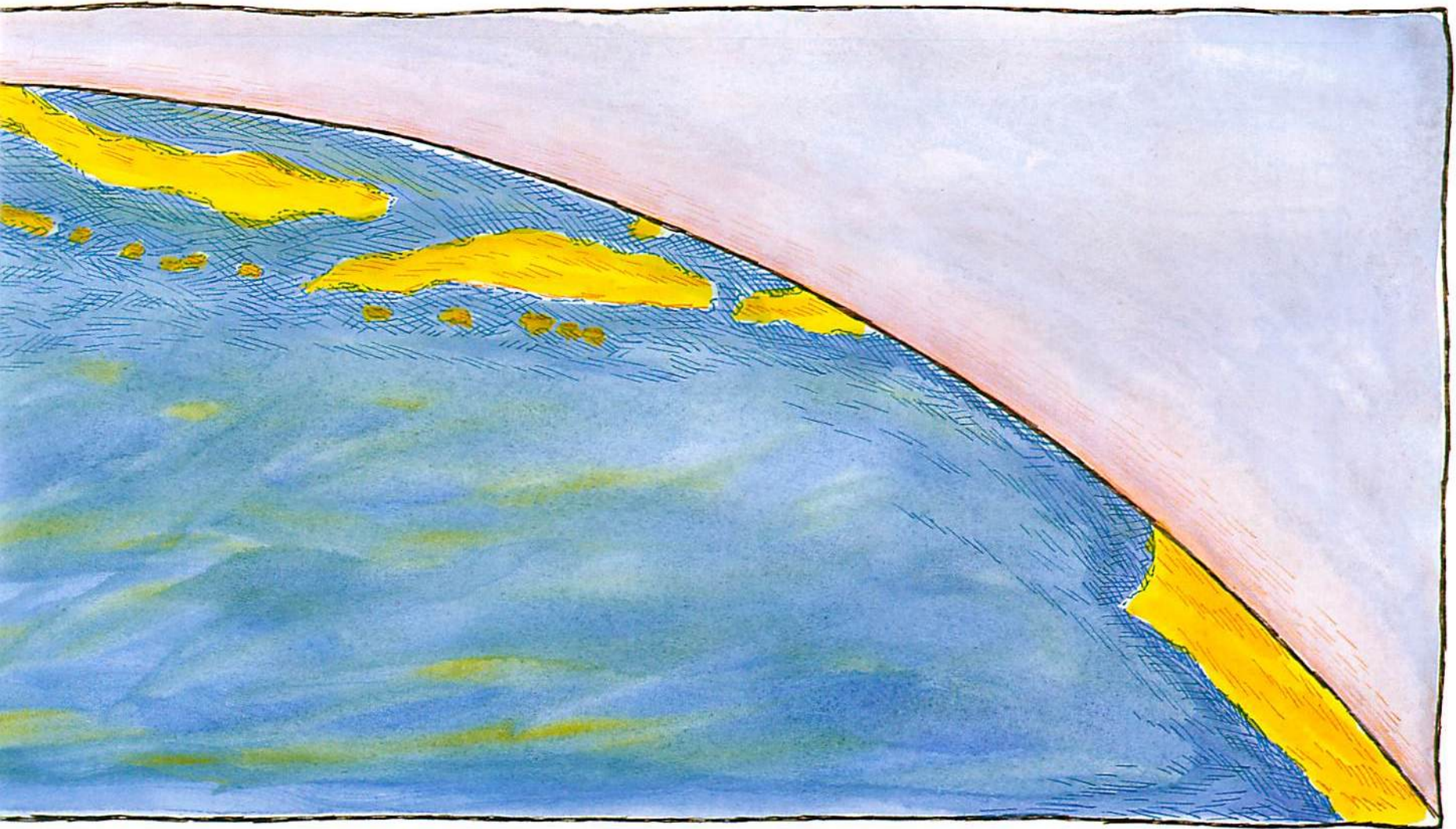




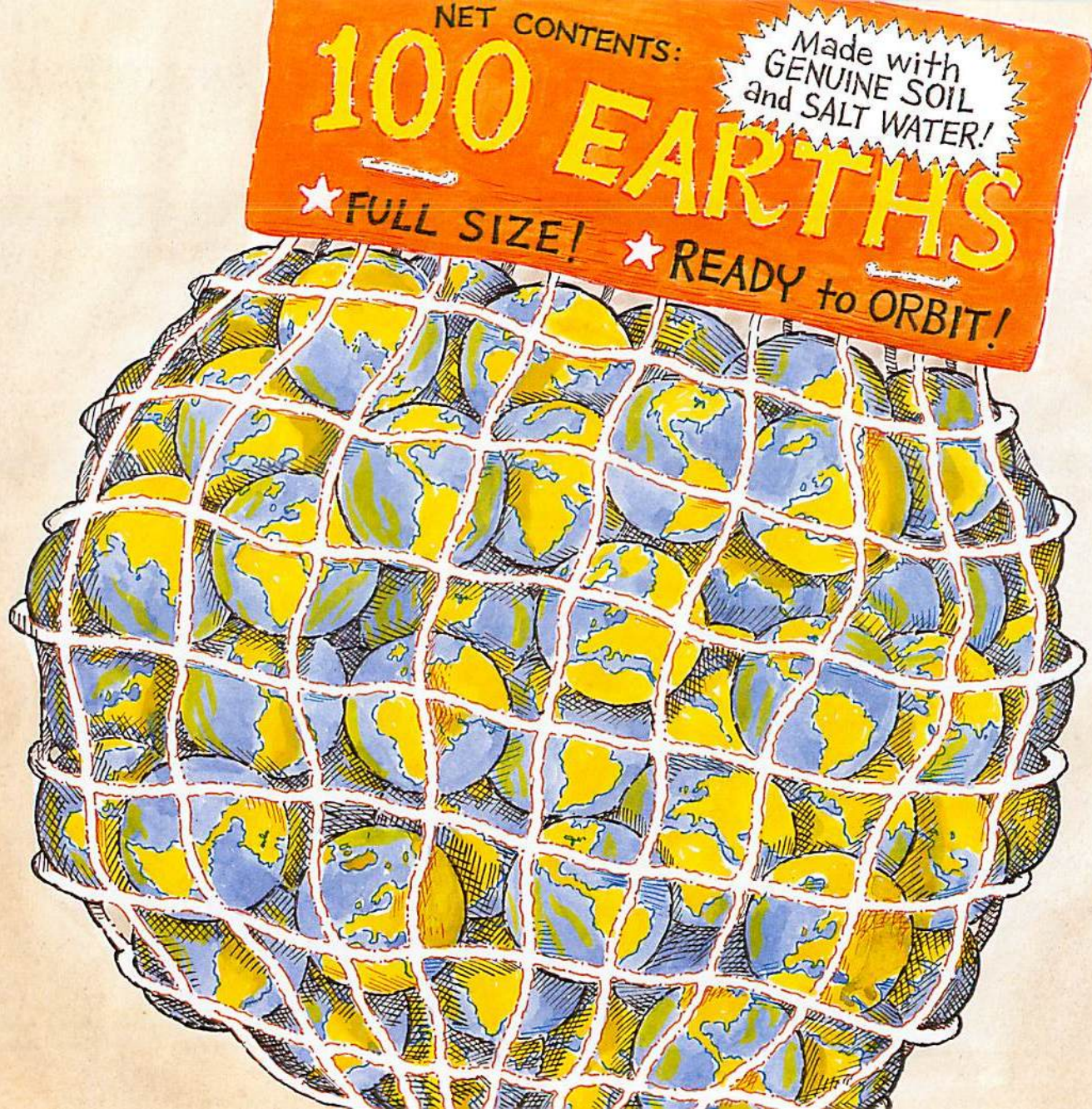
would be a mere WHISKER on the face of the Earth!



And just in case you thought our EARTH
was The Biggest Thing There Is,



here are
100
full-sized
Earths,
in a
rather
big bag,



next
to
our
sun!



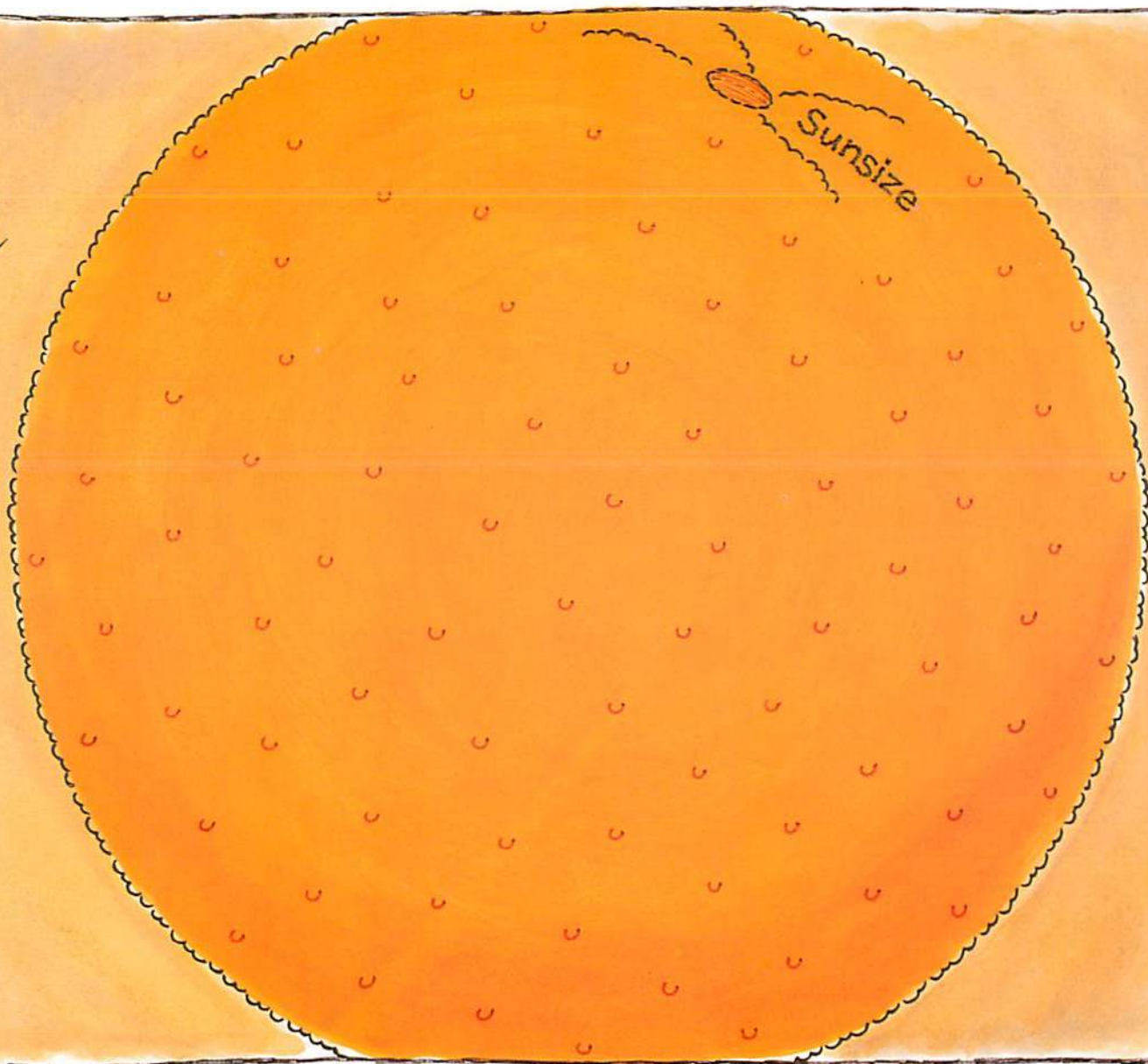
There's no doubt about it -
our sun is **HUGE!**

More than
ONE MILLION
of our Earths
would fit inside!

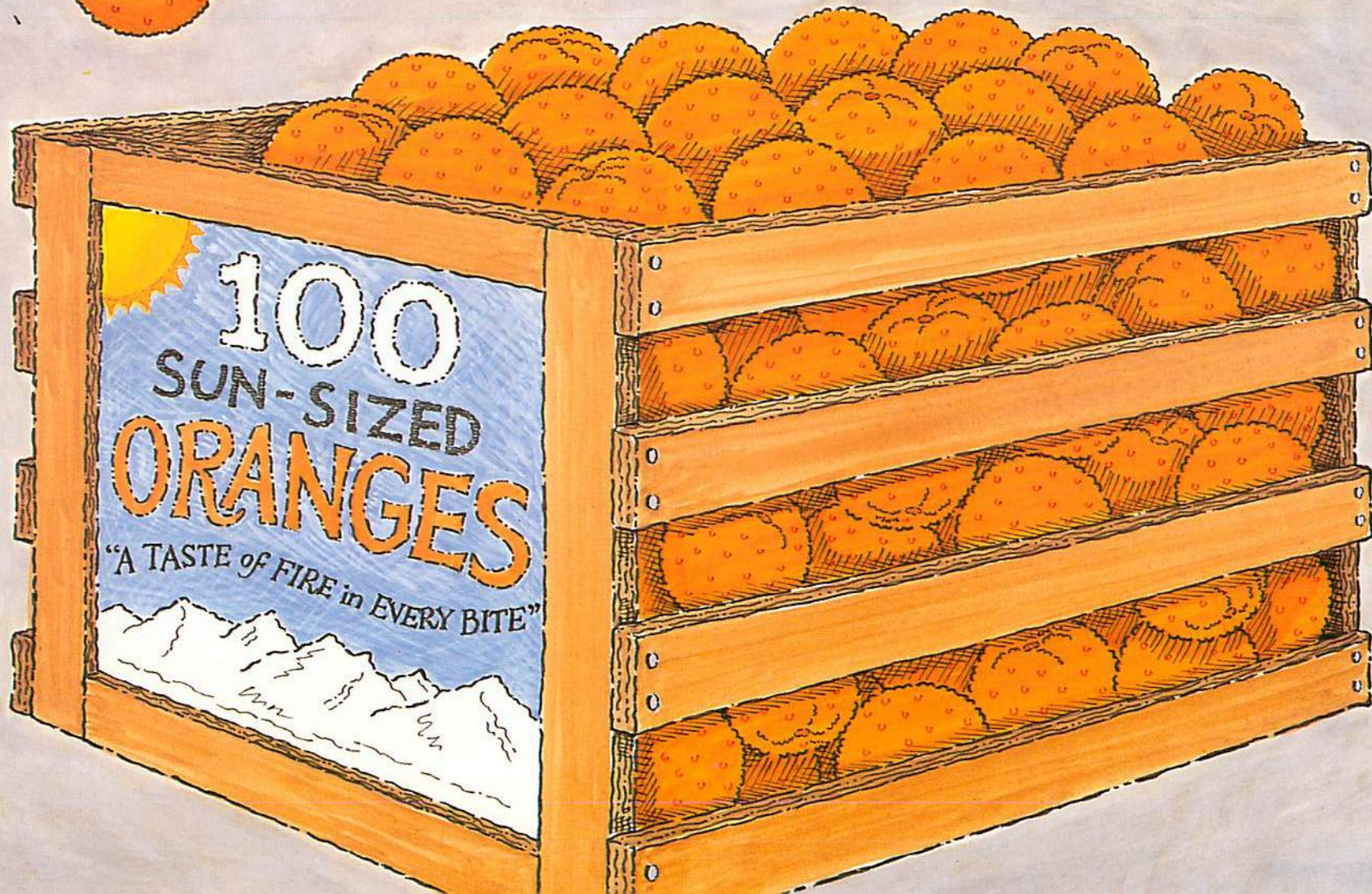
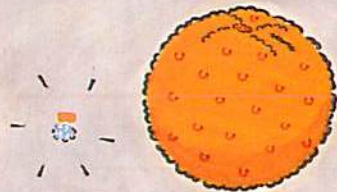
It's so big that it can control the orbits
of nine planets and give us a sunburn
from 93 million miles away!

But even our **SUN** is **FAR** from being
The Biggest Thing There Is

because
if our sun
were turned
into a
SUN-SIZED
ORANGE



and packed in an IMMENSE orange crate
along with 99 other sun-sized oranges,

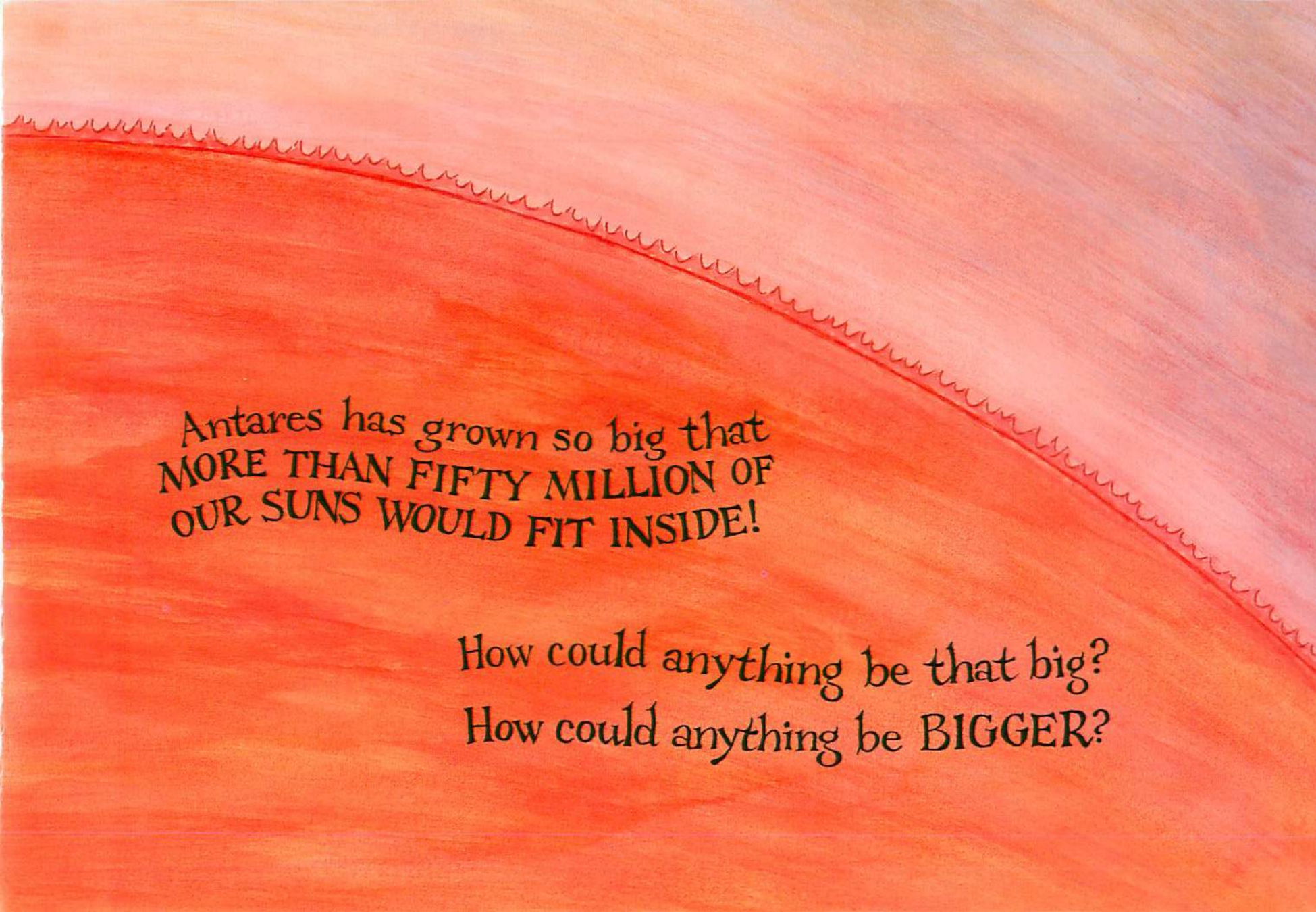


it could be set on top of something much bigger—a red supergiant star called ANTARES!



Stars come in many different sizes. Our sun and Antares are both stars, but our sun is medium-sized, and Antares is...well, it's a SUPERGIANT!

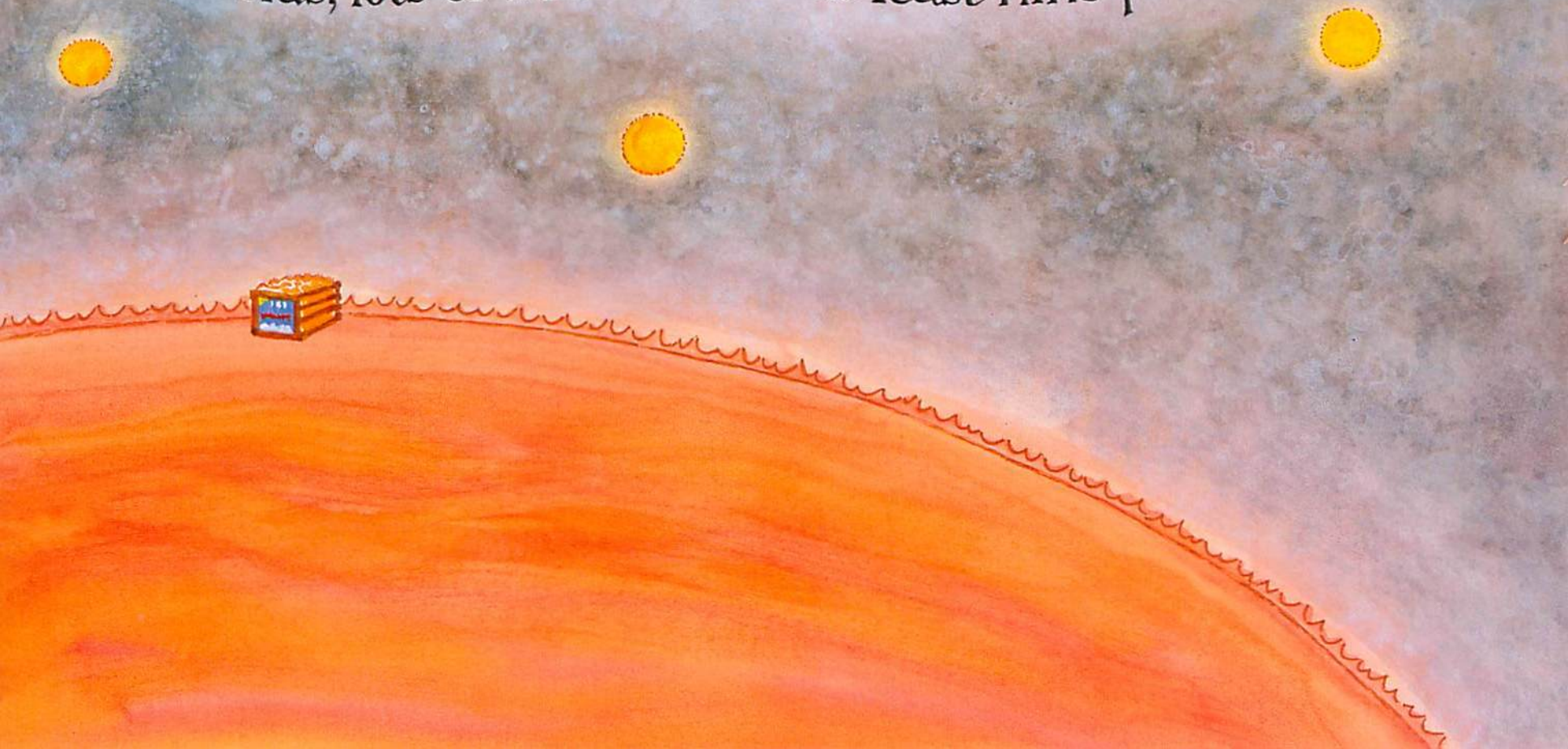
Antares was not always this big. All stars have lifetimes; and some, like Antares, expand to enormous sizes and turn red as they get close to the end of their lives.



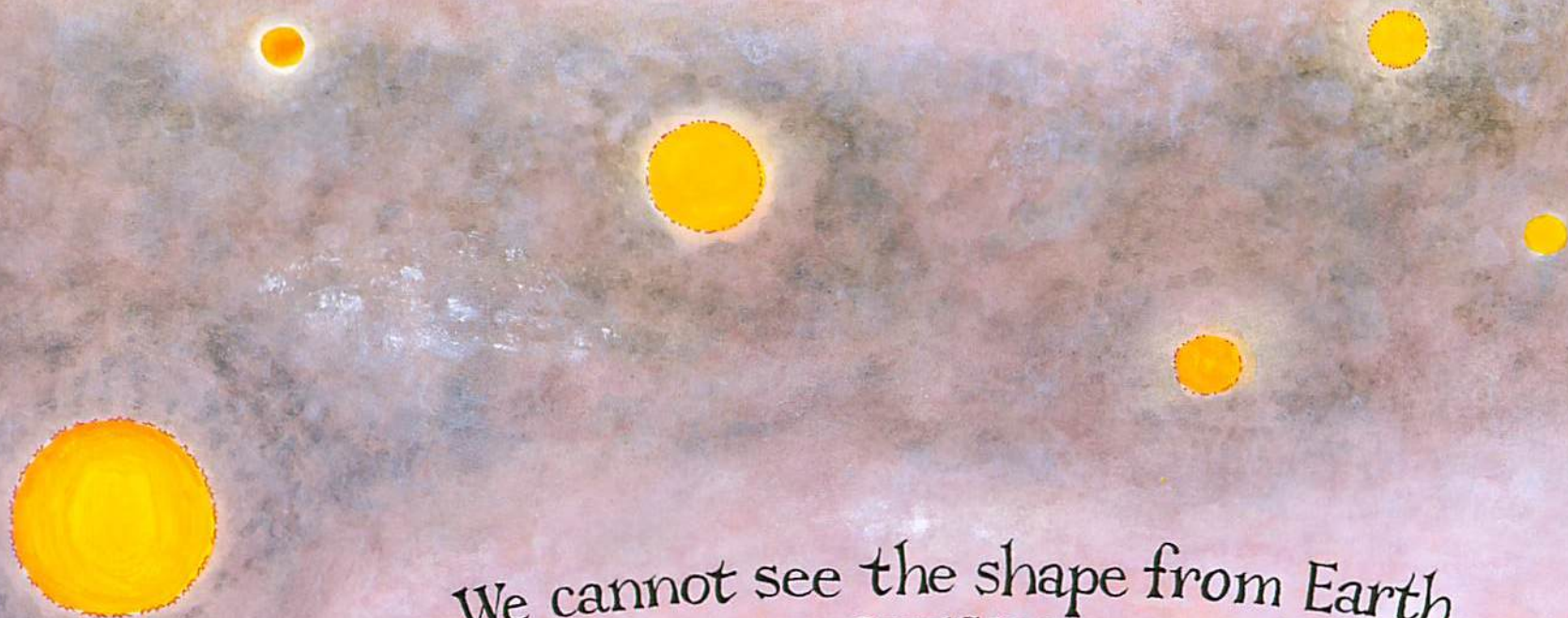
Antares has grown so big that
MORE THAN FIFTY MILLION OF
OUR SUNS WOULD FIT INSIDE!

How could anything be that big?
How could anything be BIGGER?

Our galaxy, the MILKY WAY, is much, MUCH bigger. A galaxy is a gathering of a great number of stars. The MILKY WAY is made up of BILLIONS of stars, including Antares. Along with those stars, there are countless comets and asteroids, lots of meteors, and at least nine planets!



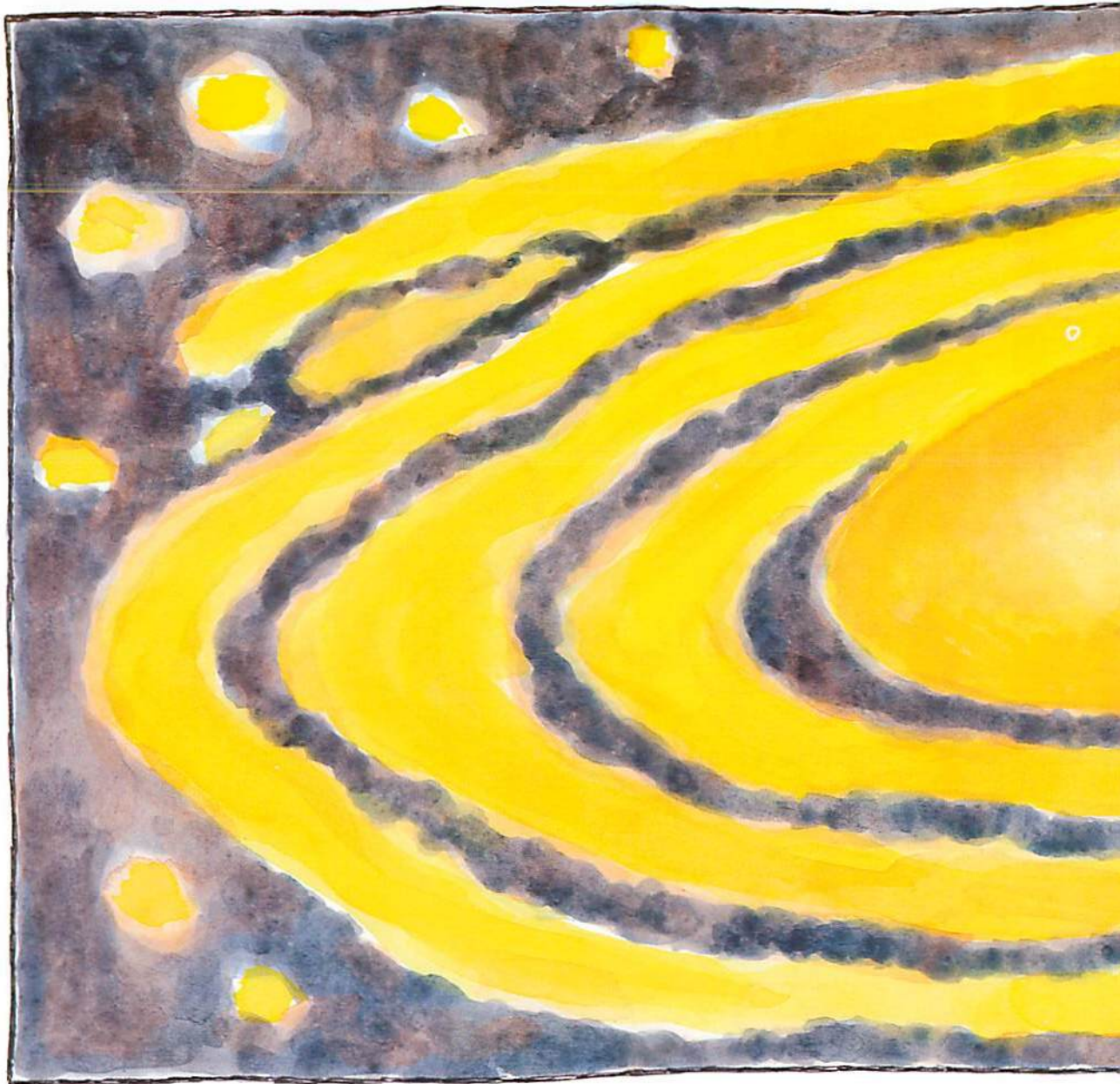
Just as a sand castle has a shape, formed by all the grains of sand it is made of, our galaxy has a shape, formed by all of its stars.



We cannot see the shape from Earth.
But if we were OUTSIDE our galaxy,
looking at it from a great distance,

it might look something like this, with a bulging galactic center and great cloudlike swirls glowing with the light of billions of stars! From this distance you could not see the galaxy's stars separately.

The Milky Way
MUST be
The Biggest
Thing There Is!





But wait.
Our galaxy
is not alone.
Astronomers,
the scientists
who study
stars, report
that there
are BILLIONS
of OTHER
galaxies out
in the
darkness we
call space.
And ALL
of them are
part of
Something
Even Bigger—

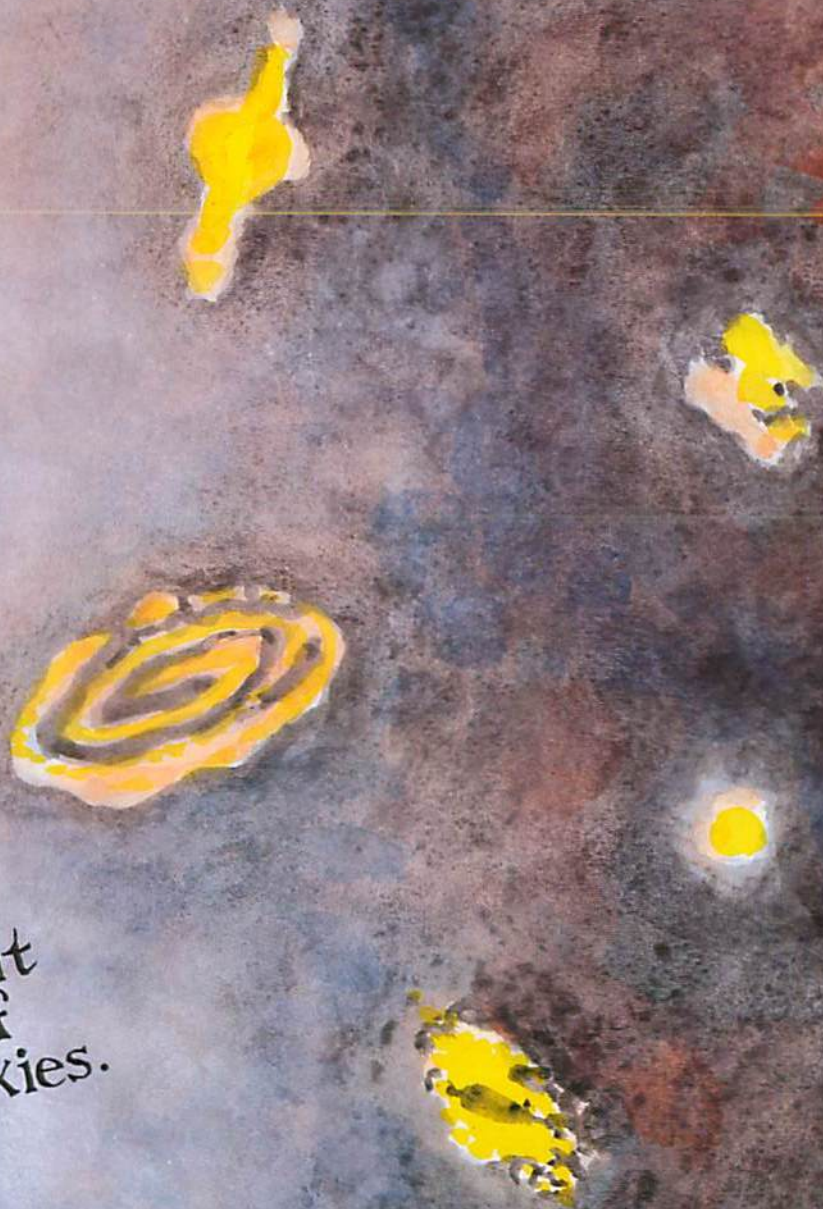
THE UNIVERSE!


The UNIVERSE is
ALL THE GALAXIES
and ALL THE DARK SPACE
between them.

It is EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS
anywhere in space and time!

Because it is so
AMAZINGLY BIG,
no one knows what
the WHOLE universe
really looks like.

But here's what a tiny part of it
might look like, showing some of
the many different kinds of galaxies.





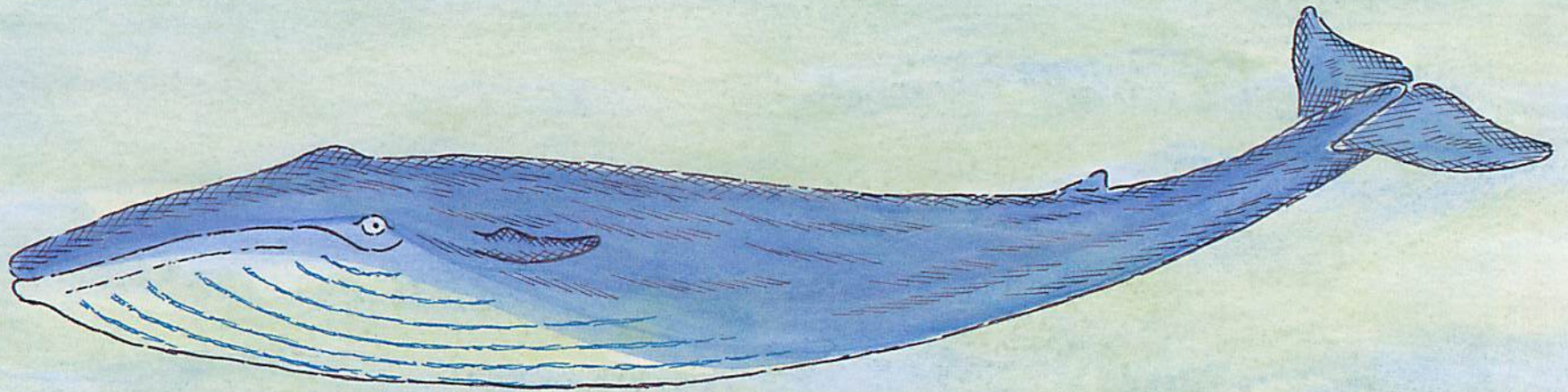
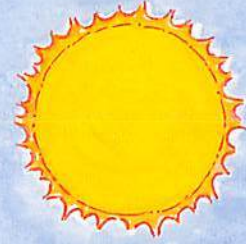
The universe is the biggest thing we know. More than likely, we can call it

THE BIGGEST THING THERE IS.

Even with our most powerful telescopes, we cannot see to the end of the universe. So we don't know how big it really is.

But this much we do know:

it's a lot bigger
than a blue whale.



Some additional thoughts on Very Big Things

It's fairly easy to imagine the size of a jar of blue whales, or a stack of Mount Everests, or even a crateful of sun-sized oranges. But imagining the immense size of the universe—that's another matter.

The truth is, the universe is so unbelievably big that even with its countless billions of stars and galaxies, it is almost totally empty. Vast distances separate stars, even within those gatherings of stars we call galaxies.

If our galaxy were pictured to scale, and our sun were the size of this dot ·, the nearest star to it would be another "dot" some ten miles away, with other "star dots" hundreds, and even thousands, of miles distant.

The distances between galaxies are also vast. Like the stars, the galaxies in this book are shown much closer together and more alike in size than they would actually be. Shrinking vast distances proved to be more practical than making a picture book one million miles wide!



AN ALBERT WHITMAN
PRAIRIE BOOK

A blue whale is big; it's the BIGGEST animal alive. But it isn't the biggest thing there is. After all, a blue whale would look small sitting on top of a mountain. And though a mountain is large, it's no more than a pebble in relation to the whole earth.

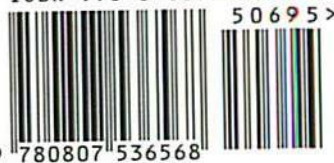
So is the earth the biggest thing there is? It's not even close. There is SOMETHING SO BIG we cannot even see all of it at once. In fact, it's so big we don't even know where it begins and ends!

In this book you'll discover some big things, some bigger things, and the thing beyond measure—what it is that we can truly call THE BIGGEST THING THERE IS.

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