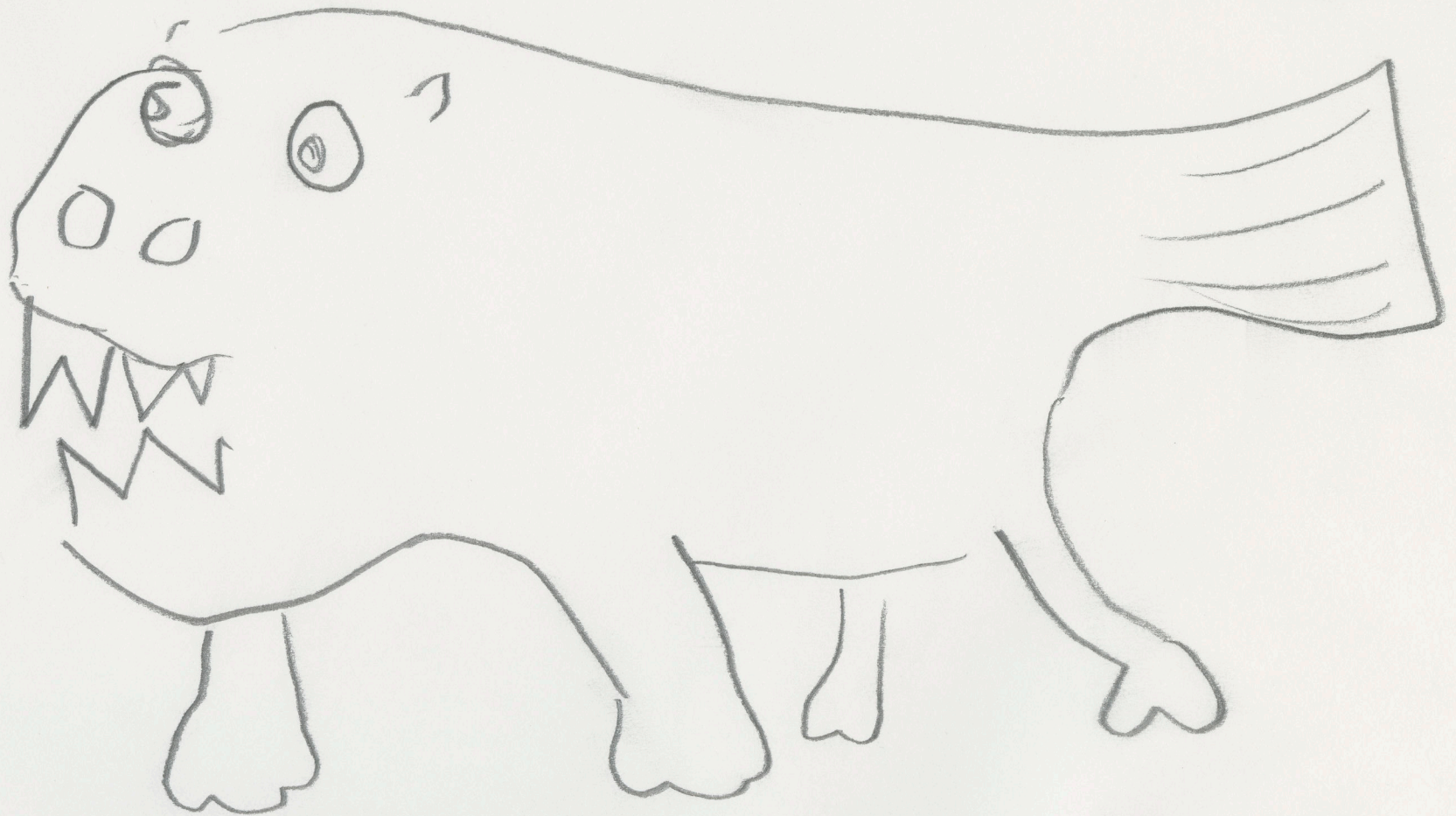
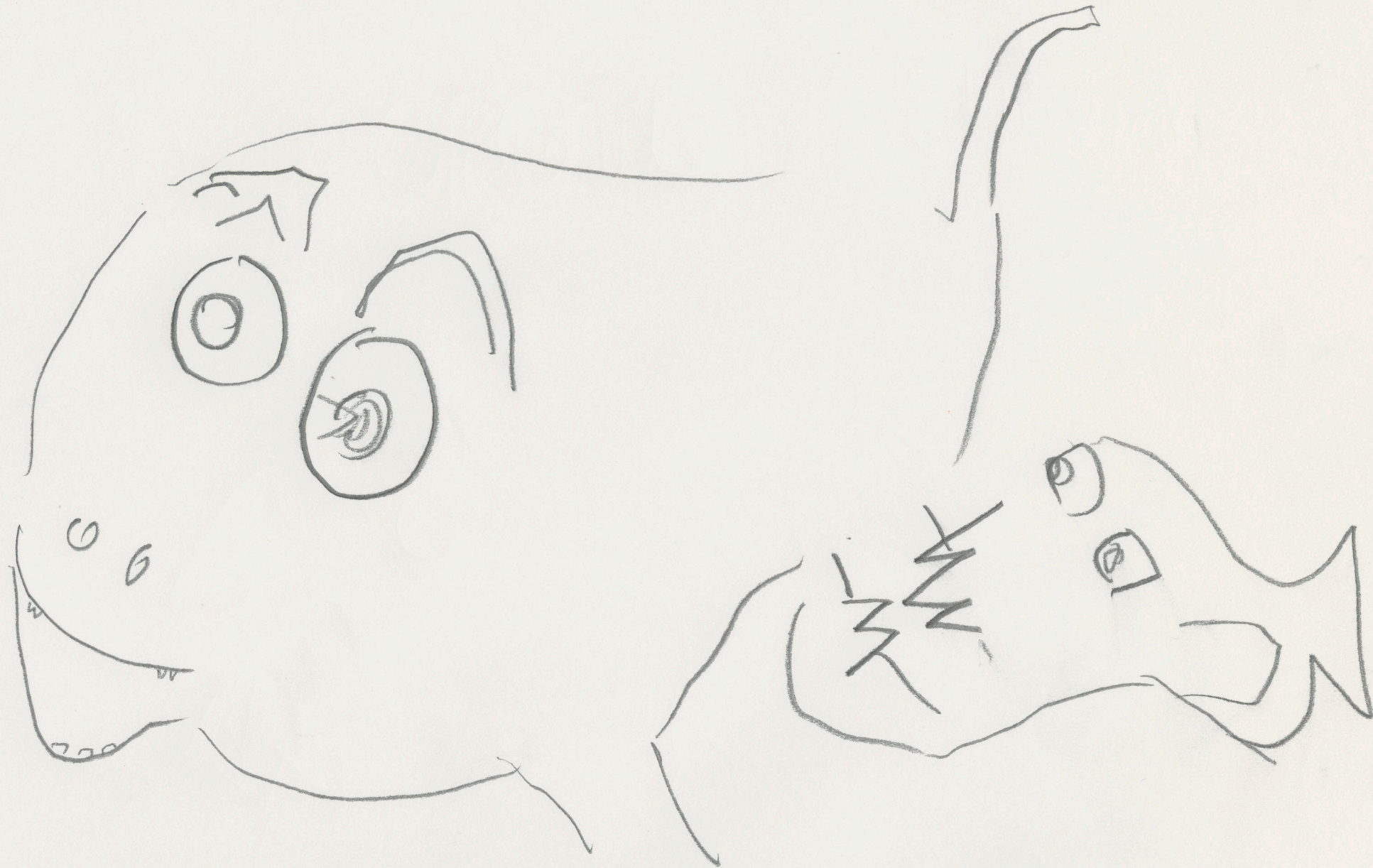


HIPPOTAMACUDA





At the beach last week a hippopotamus was bitten by a barracuda,
and so became the Hippopotamacuda.



The Hippopotamacuda scooped a translucent jellyfish from the ocean and used it as a magnifying glass.



With the sun properly positioned, he shone the jellyfish magnifying glass on a nearby flamingo until the flamingo became roasted like poultry.



The Hippopotamacuda ate the flamingo, which was very tender, and soon all that was left was the bones.



Next, using the sharp teeth which barracudas are known for, the Hippopot-
amaeuda gutted a lamb and made a drum out of the lamb's skin. Now the
flamingo's bones could be used as drumsticks.



The Hippopotamacuda beat so hard (having practiced the rudiments thoroughly) on the lambskin drums that a woolly mammoth fell over from the noise.



The woolly mammoth's tusks were very strong, and the Hippopotamacuda borrowed them to make an ivory ladder.



It would be easy to climb a tree and then steal an egg from the red-footed booby whose nest was in the tree.



As the Hippopotamacuda began to climb, a proboscis monkey was blocking the way; by all appearances this monkey was after the same quarry as the Hippopotamacuda.



Quick thinking was crucial; the Hippopotamacuda sneezed and filled the whole area with sneeze juice. Proboscis monkeys are clever and good climbers, but they are not spectacular swimmers.



The Hippopotamacuda used its barracuda fin to swim in the sneeze juice to the red-footed booby's nest.



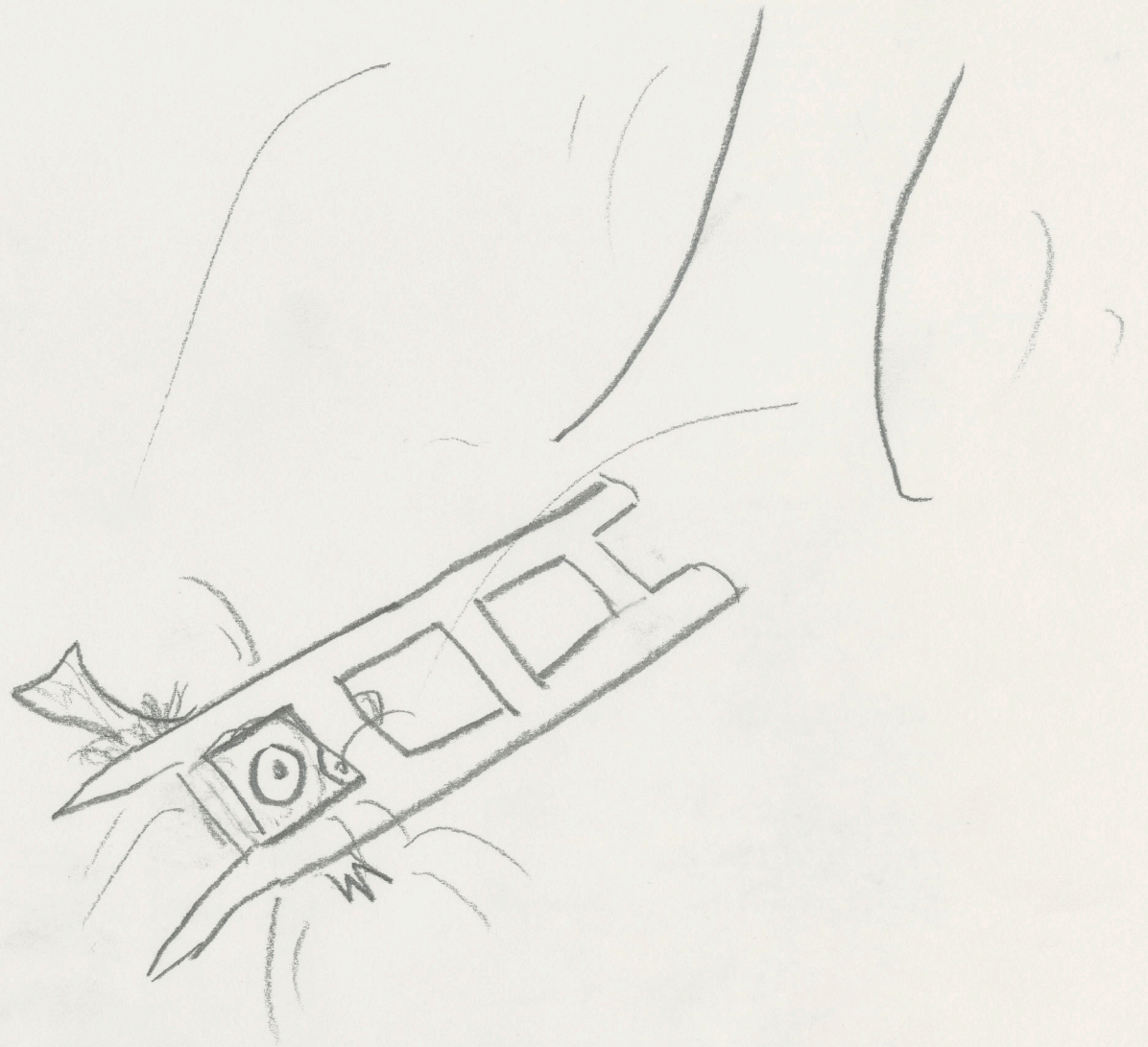
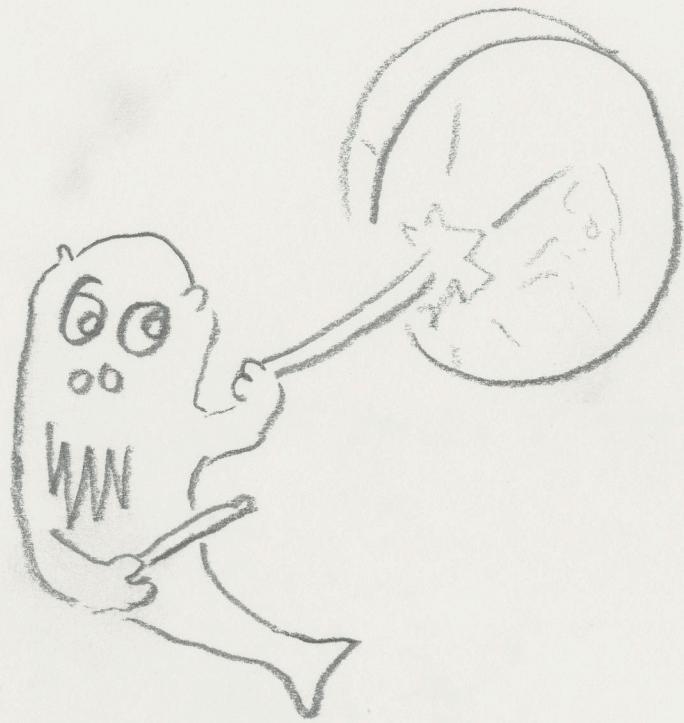
The first red-footed booby egg was delicious; the second less so; equal parts compassion and the law of diminishing marginal utility obliged the Hippopotamacuda to leave one egg for posterity, and because he was a generous hippopotamacuda, for the health of the booby population.



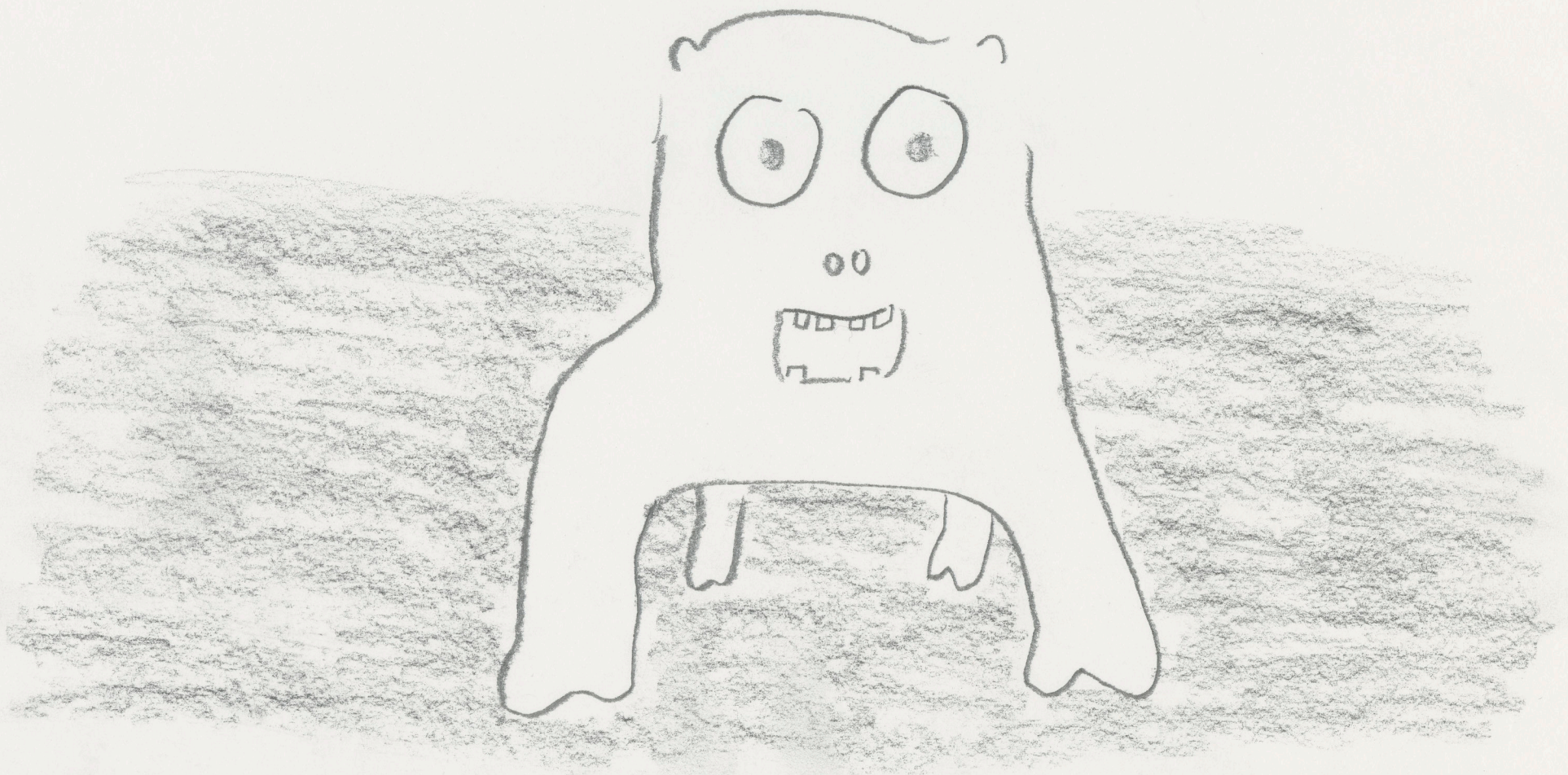
What was to be done with all this sneeze juice? Hippopotami are known for their big bellies. The Hippopotamacuda swallowed all of the sneeze juice. Inside the Hippopotamacuda's belly the flamingo meat was marinating. Outside of the Hippopotamacuda's belly the ivory ladder was still propped against the tree.



Meanwhile, thoughts were marinating in the barracuda's head. The barracuda dreamt of being a marsupial but would have settled for being a regular old land mammal. The barracuda hopped out of the ocean and onto the beach. It hopped over to the woolly mammoth tusk ladder and saw the proboscis monkey crying, or whatever it is that monkeys do when they're sad.



By this time the Hippopotamacuda was banging on the lambskin drums again. Whether it was ennui, digestion or joie de vivre that inspired this rhythmic excursion, the whole beach and tree began shaking. The woolly mammoth tusk ladder fell on the barracuda and squished it.



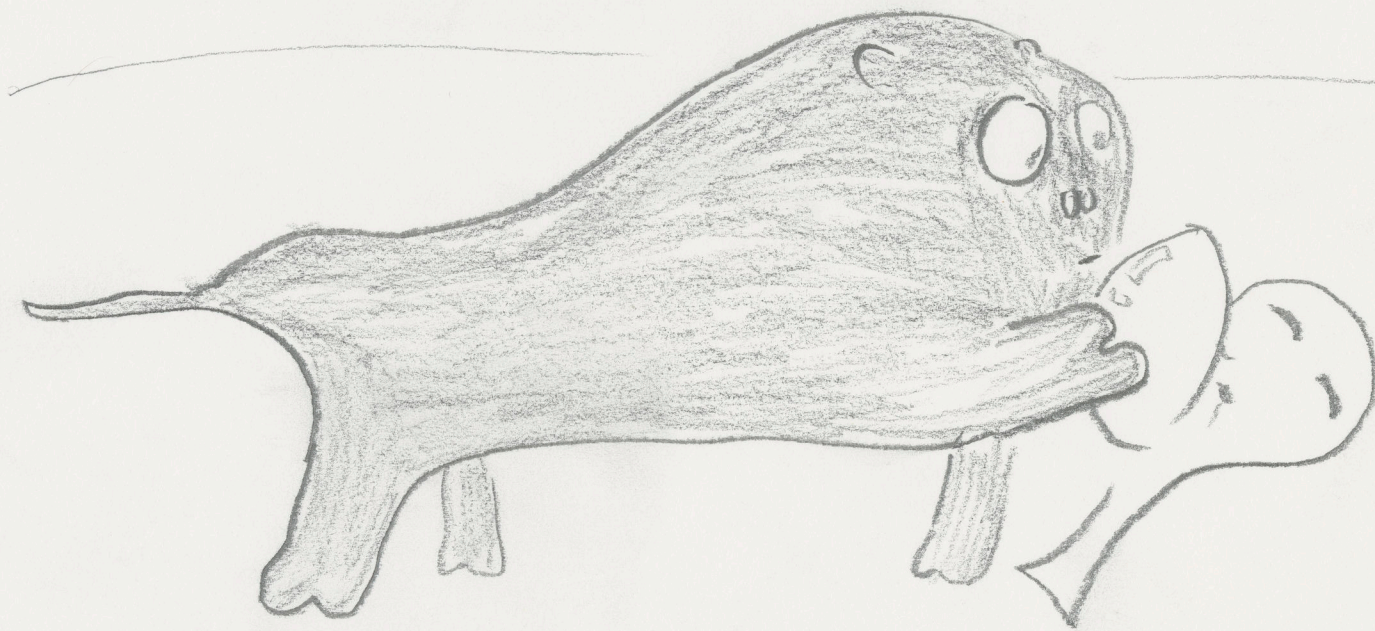
As if in an exercise in a child's mind, the Hippopotamacuda went back to being a hippopotamus.



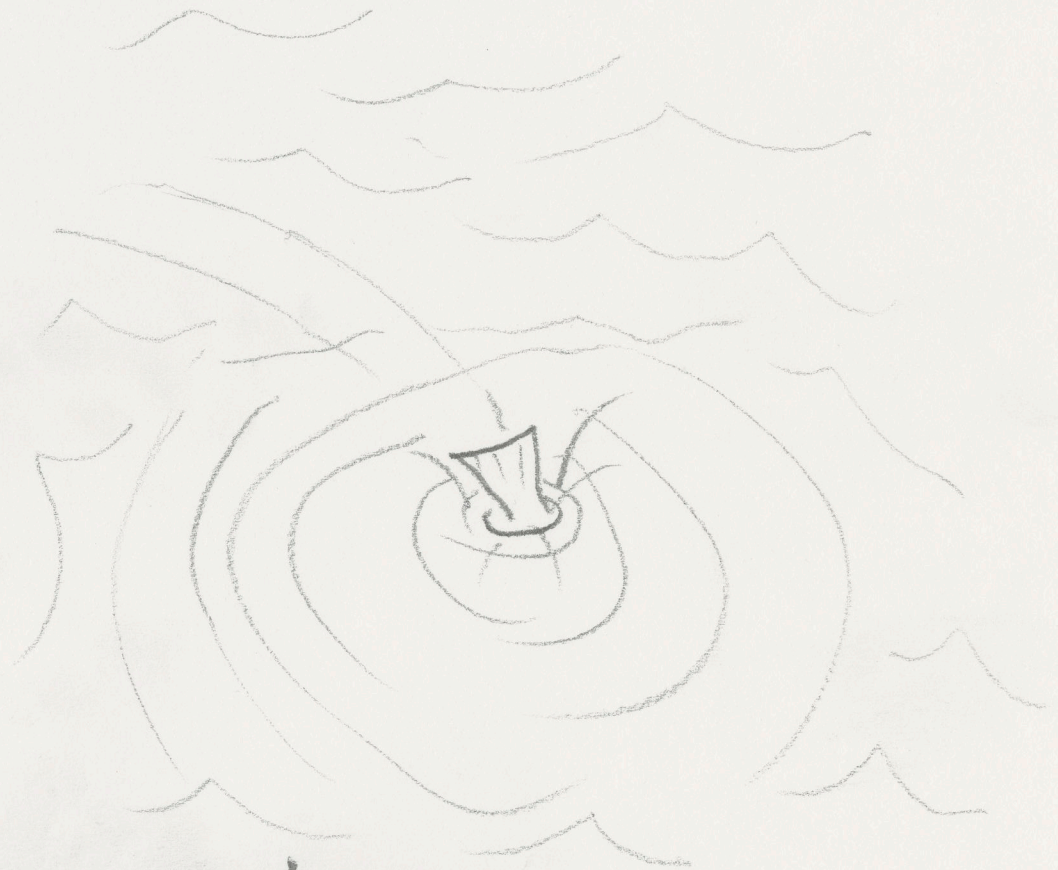
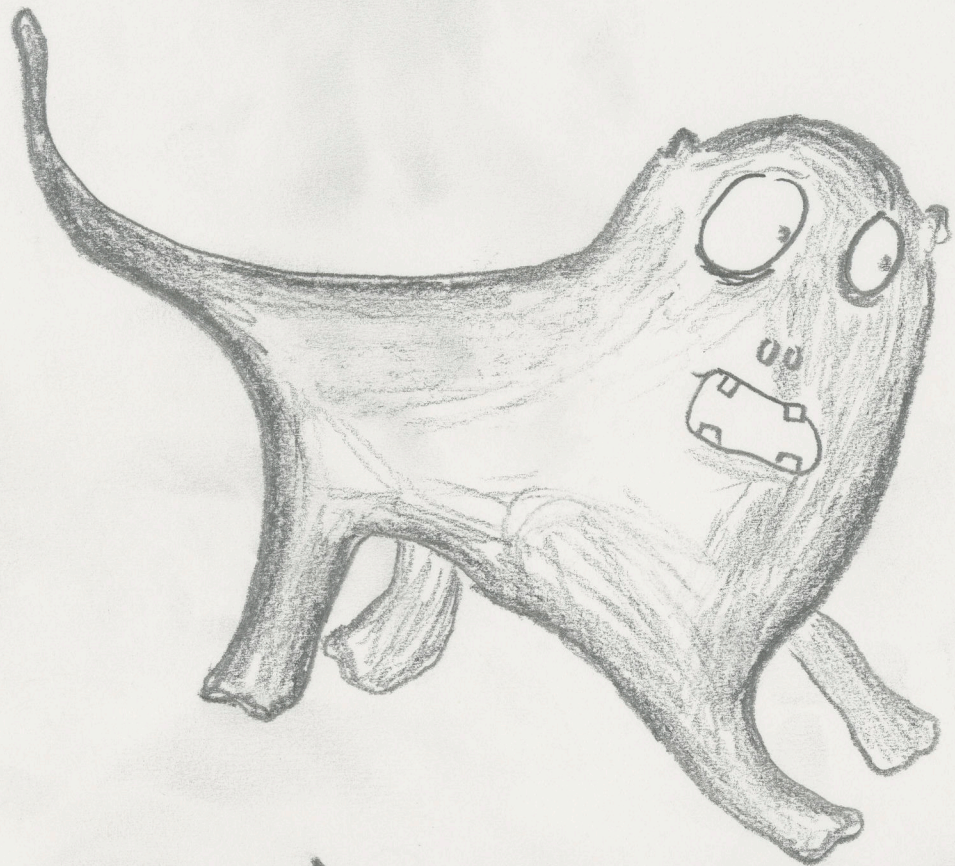
Flamingo meat spewed out of the hippopotamus's mouth. The lamb skin drums turned back into a lamb and the flamingo drumsticks went inside the flamingo meat where they belonged.



The woolly mammoth politely asked for its ivory tusks back. Two red-footed booby eggs spewed out of the hippopotamus's mouth. The proboscis monkey, who must have served some purpose in this beachy slice of the animal kingdom, climbed the tree and borrowed the third egg, then began juggling them, its floppy nose providing a kind of kinetic counterpoint. It was a marvel to behold, though the eggs' mother was not amused. Such were the sensibilities of even the most jovial of mothers of eggs.



With the barracuda now squished, the hippopotamus felt bad for the dead barracuda. He grabbed the translucent jellyfish, puffed it up with his stinky hippopotamus breath and created an artificial lung. He used this lung to bring the barracuda back to life.



Rehabilitated, the barracuda twitched and flopped beachwise, then waterward (to the hippopotamus's delight and later horror because this entire sequence of events repeated itself). The story you have just finished reading is little more than a long way of explaining why hippopotami tend to be afraid of predatory tropical fish. Consider yourself educated.