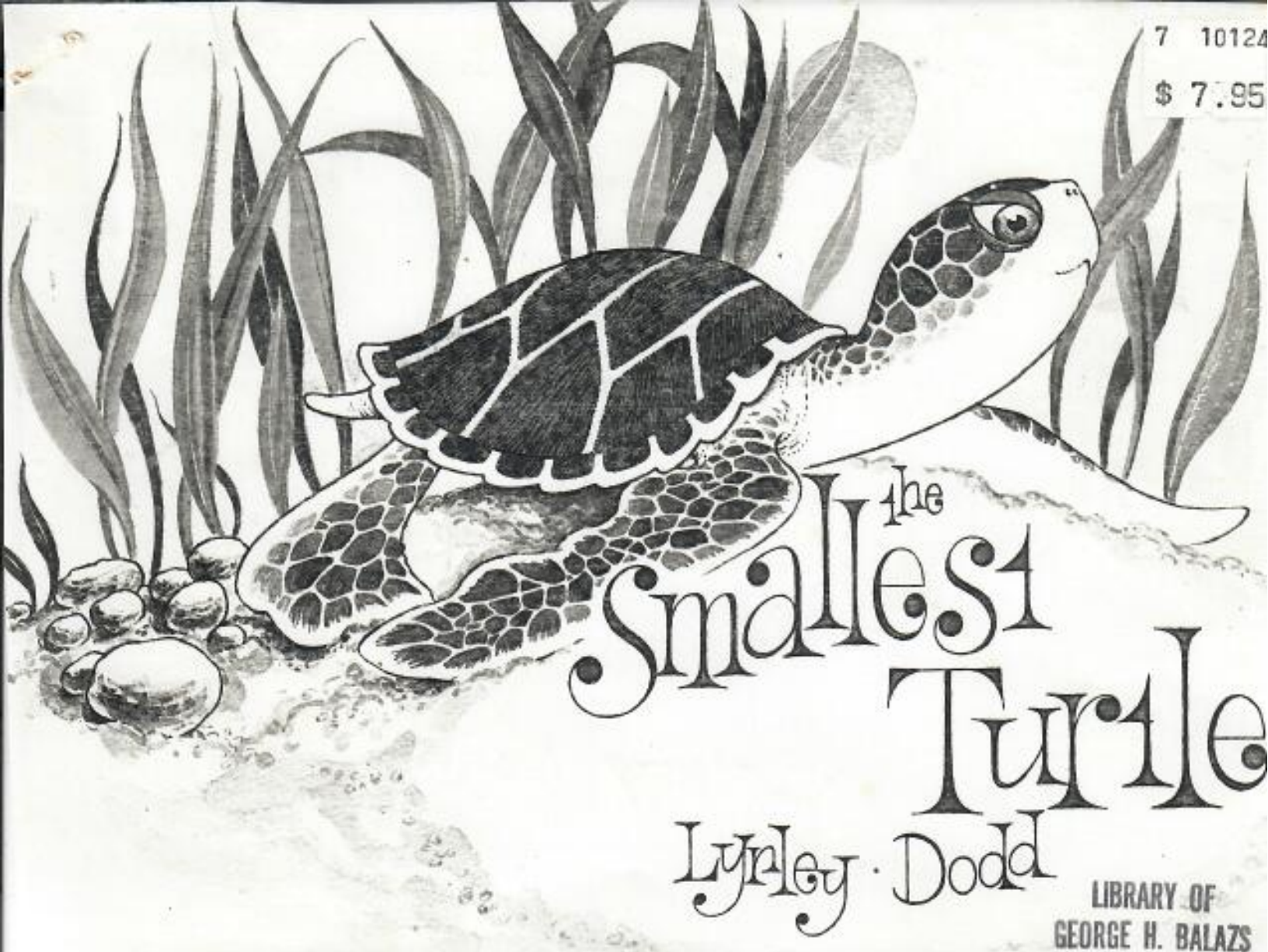


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the  
Smallest  
Turtle

Lyrley Dodd

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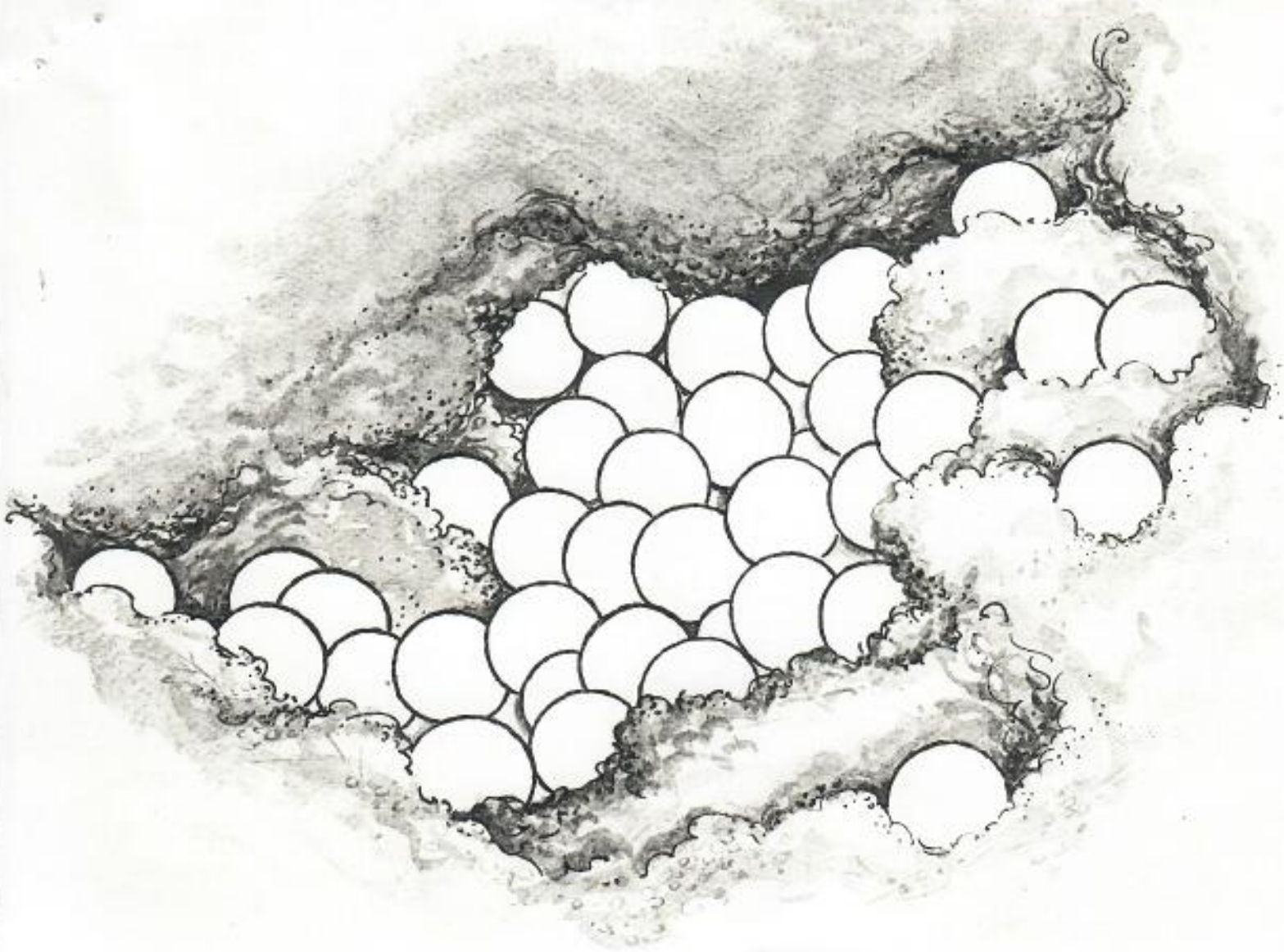
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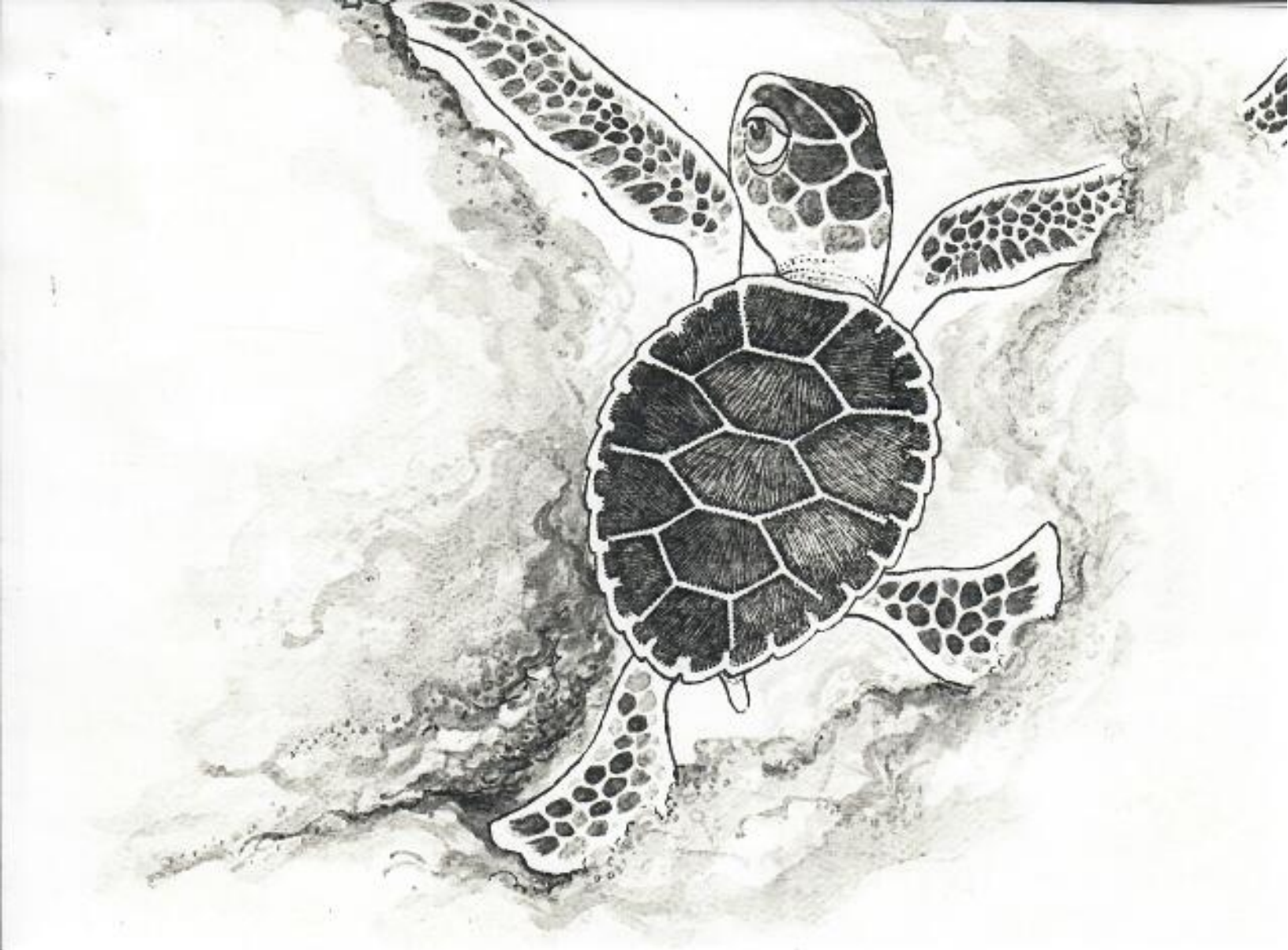


Deep in a safe dark hole  
under the sand  
lay a nest of turtle eggs.





One day,  
they began to hatch.  
Soon there were  
dozens of baby turtles  
all wriggling together  
up through the sand  
and away.





Except the smallest turtle.

He was late.

All by himself

he scrambled and scabbled

up, up, up . . .



and out into the shimmery sun.  
He blinked at the brightness  
and inside his head he heard strange words  
'To the sea — to the sea.'

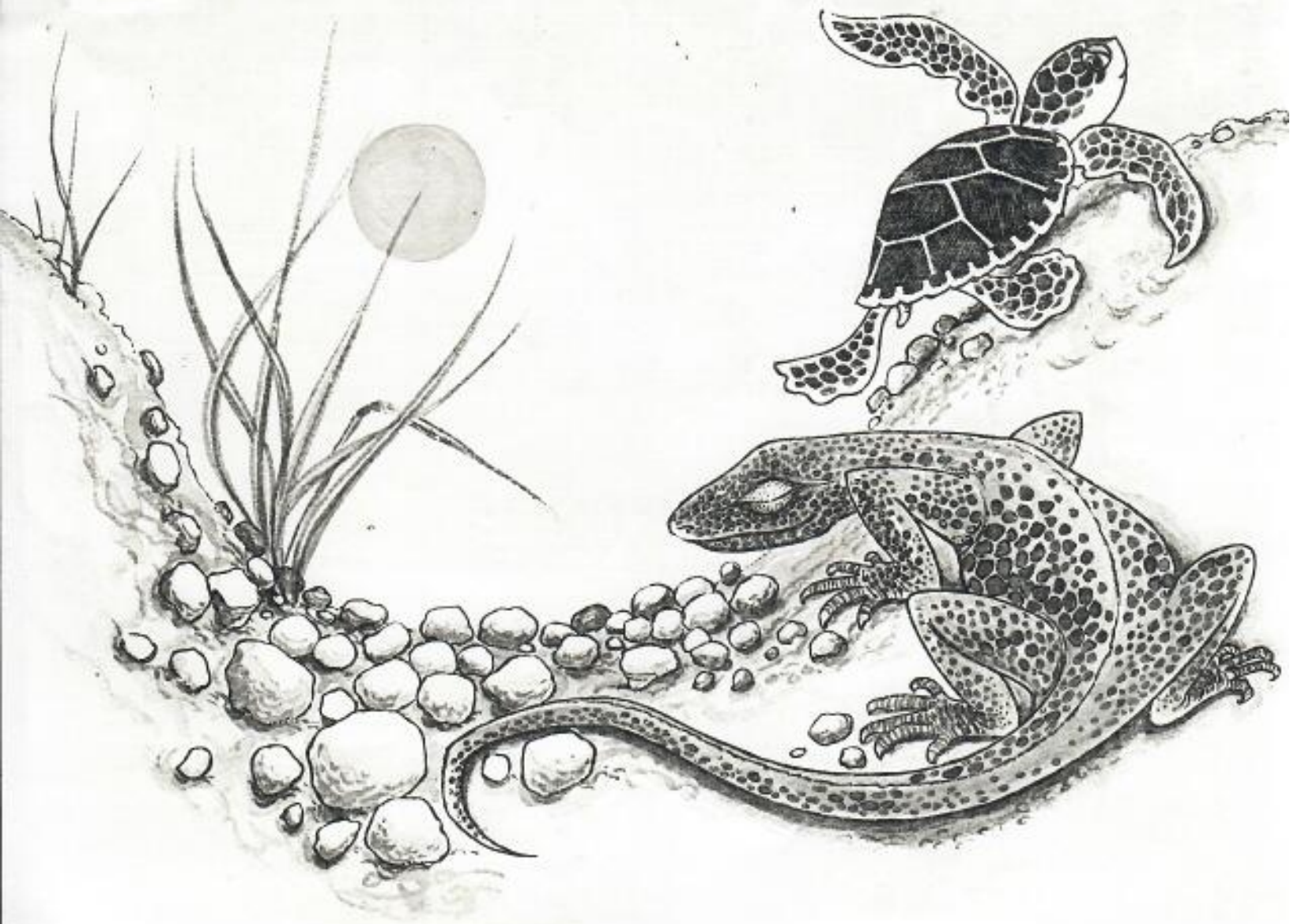




So away he went,  
skitterscatter,  
over a shiny grey rock  
and past a big black beetle,

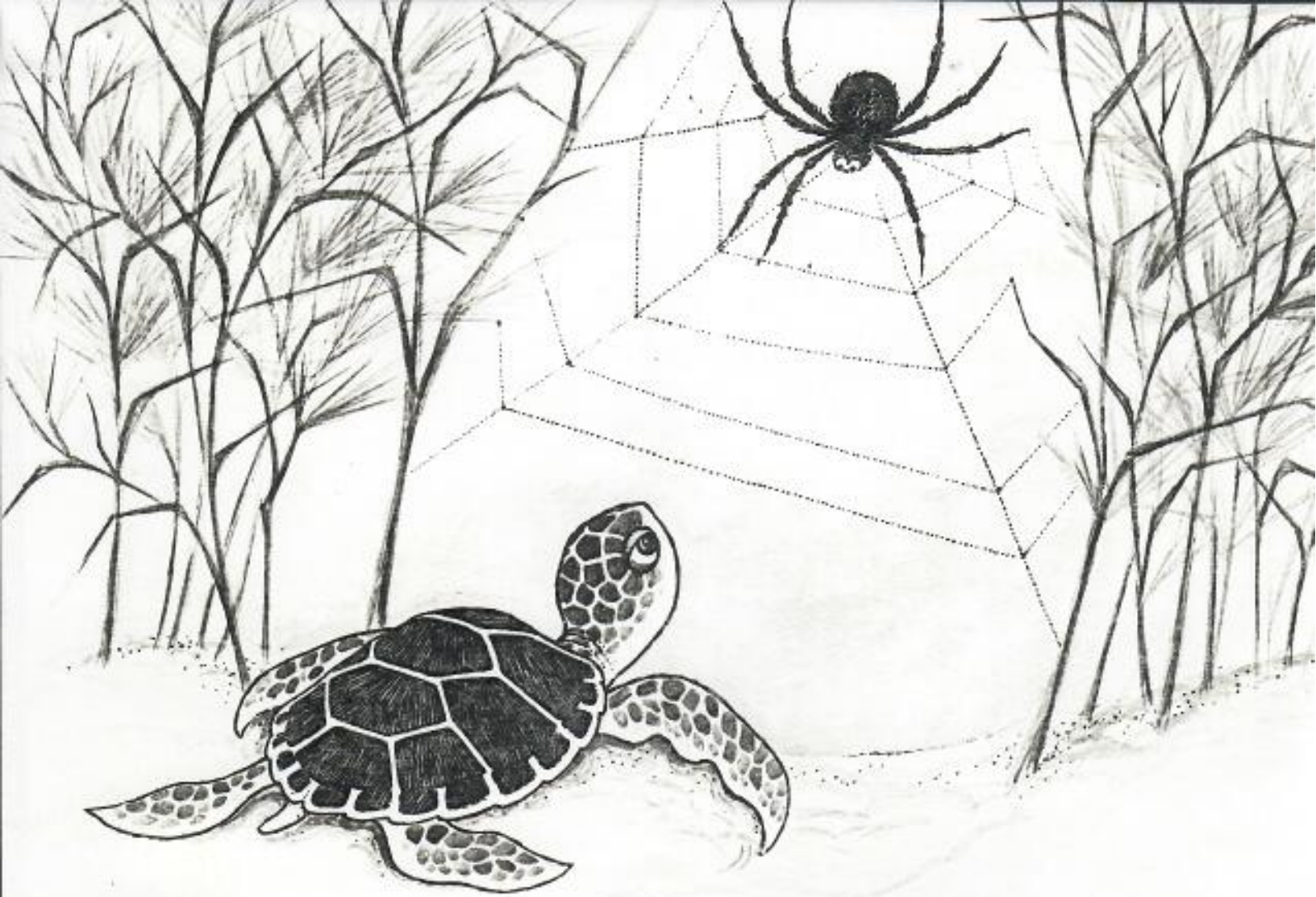


around a tree with twisty roots,



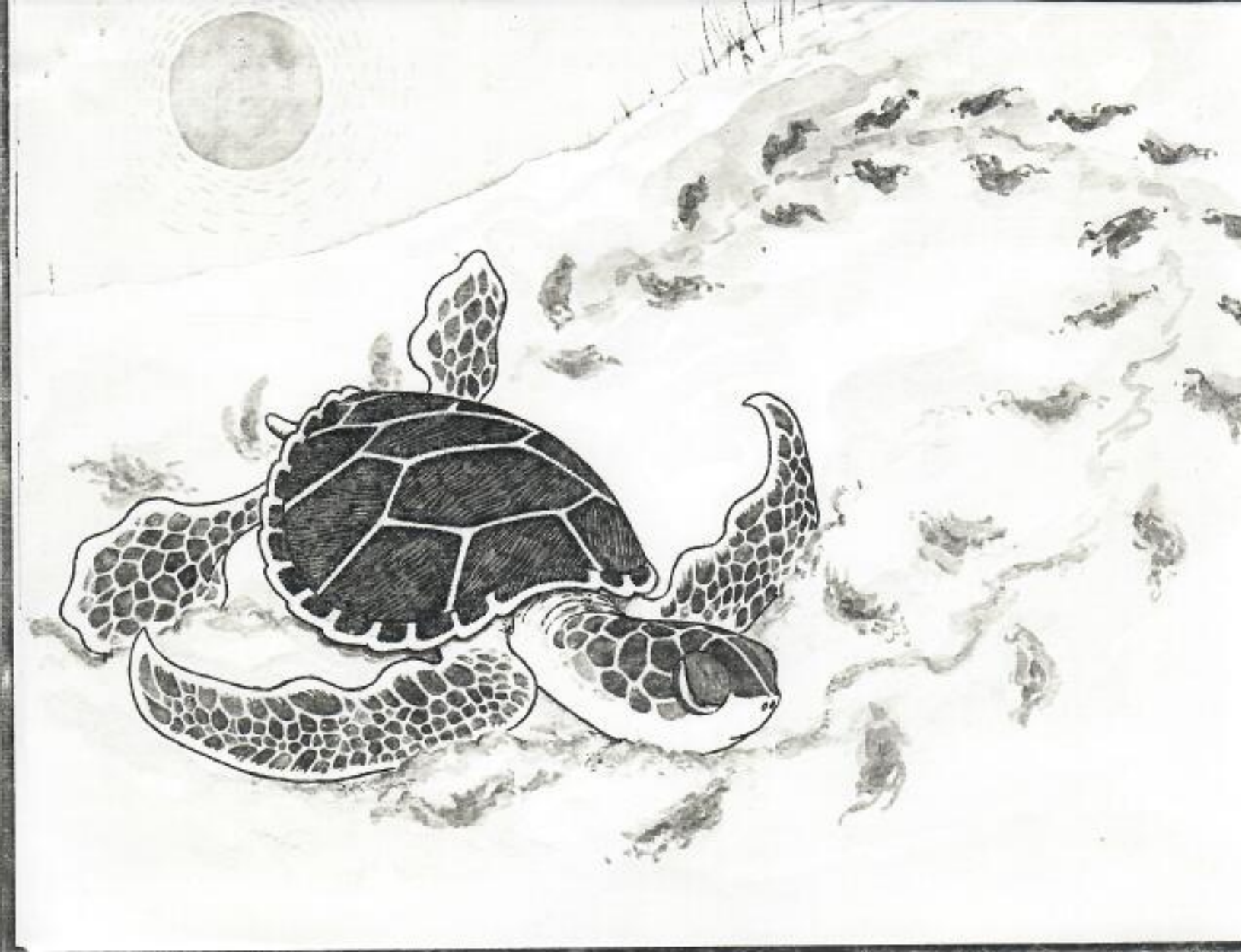


down a gravelly hole  
and up the other side,  
where a sleepy lizard  
was dozing in the sun,





through some prickly grass  
where a spider was weaving a web  
and all the time, his head said,  
'To the sea — to the sea.'

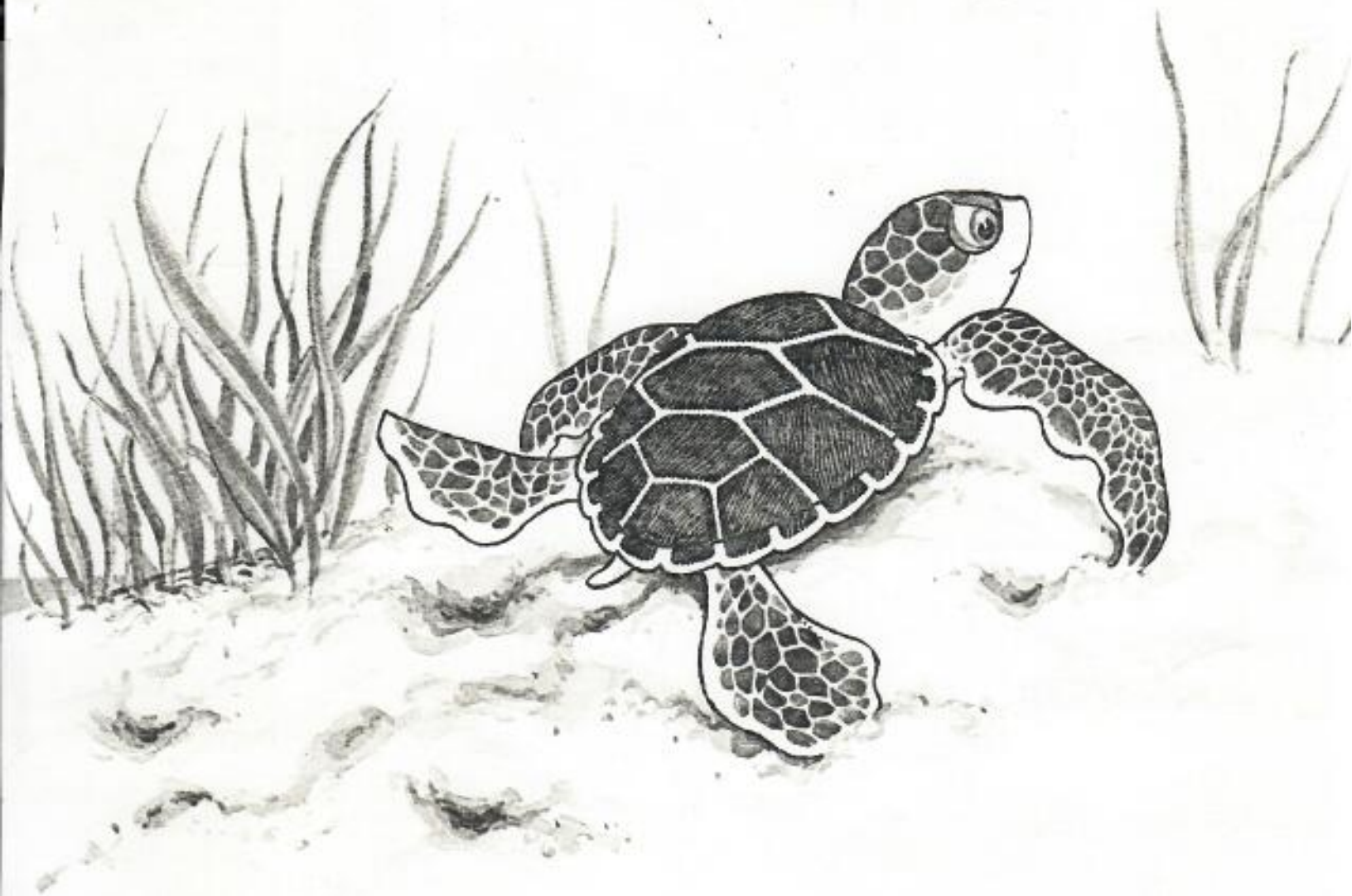




The sun was burning down  
on the smallest turtle.  
It made him too hot  
and it muddled the words in his head.  
He began to go round and round  
in circles.

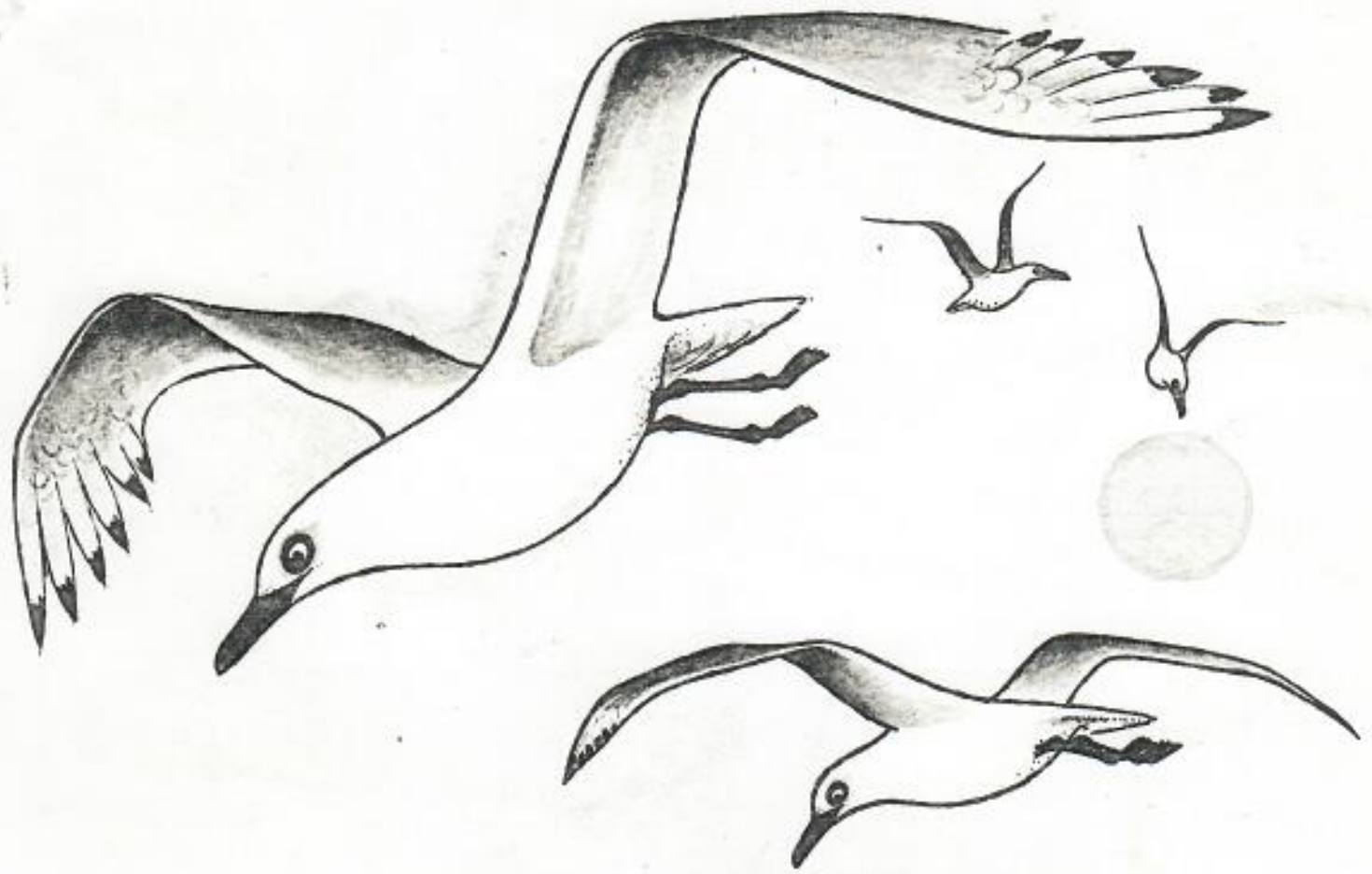


He crept into the shade  
of a big green leaf  
to cool down  
and as he cooled,  
the words in his head  
slowly came back again,  
'To the sea — to the sea.'





So on and on went the smallest turtle  
until at last he stopped to rest.  
He was getting very tired.  
Suddenly he heard something.  
It was the sound of waves  
crashing and hissing on the sand.  
The words in his head became stronger than ever,  
'To the SEA — to the SEA!'

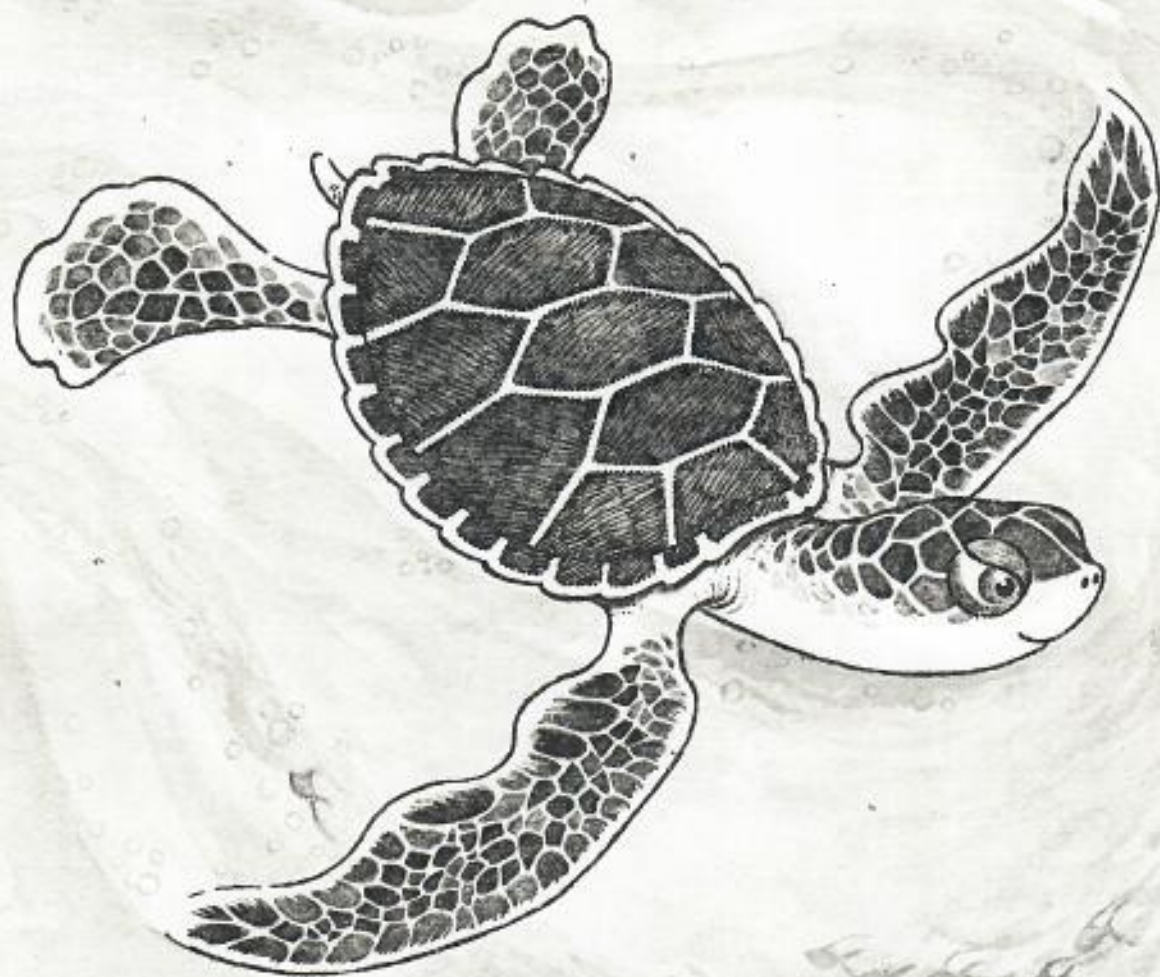


But there was danger.  
Gulls were wheeling and whirling  
up in the sky,  
looking with beady greedy eyes  
for a baby turtle lunch.





The smallest turtle didn't wait.  
Down the scorching sand he scabbled and skittered,  
faster, faster,  
away from the gulls,  
past the crabs,  
over the seaweed,  
over the shells,  
over the stones and . . .



at last he felt cool cool water  
on his hot tired sandy body.  
And as he swam down,  
down,  
down,  
he knew.  
'It's the SEA,' he sang,  
'It's the SEA!'