

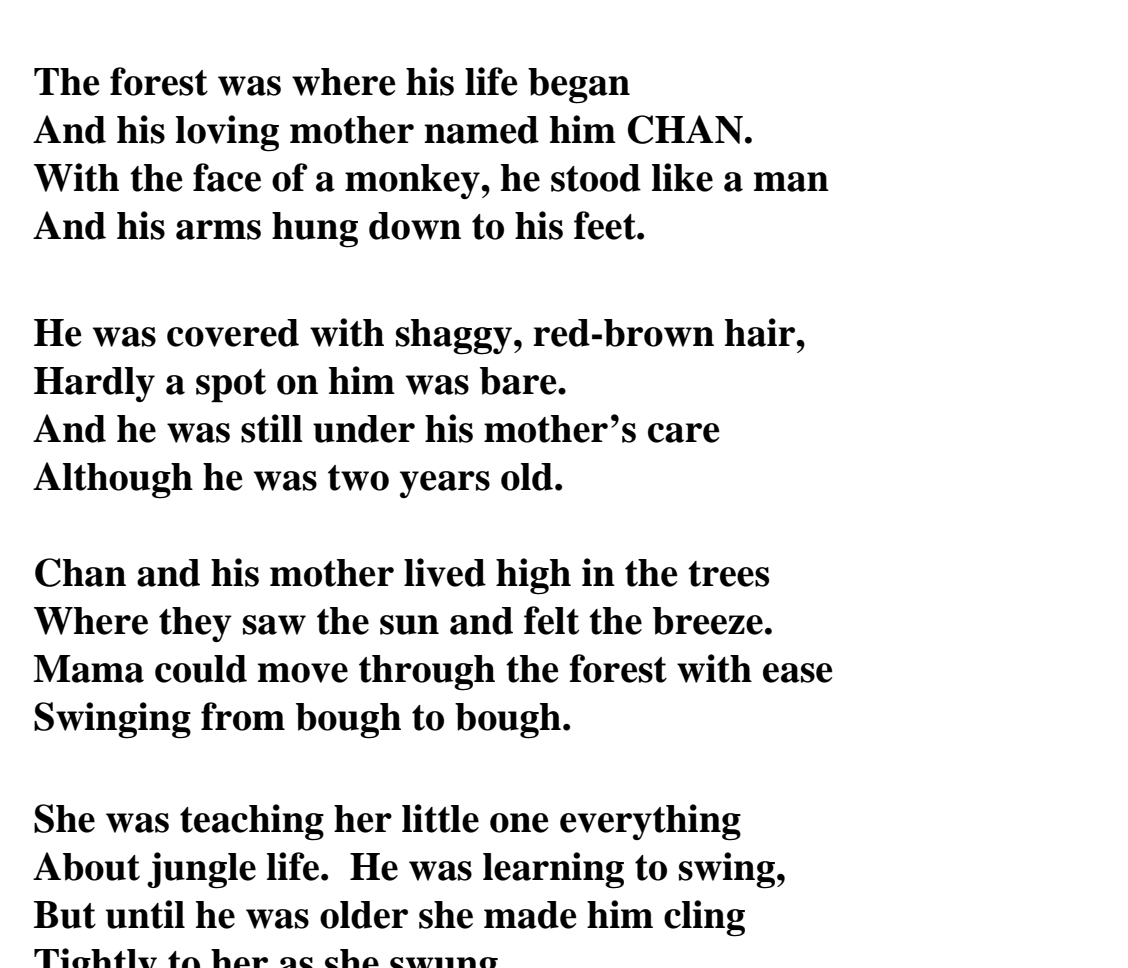
The Little Orangutan

by Catherine C. Shafer
illustrated by Barbara S. Johnson

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Deep in a rain forest, far away
Where trees shut out the light of day
And very few humans dare to stray,
There lived a little ORANGUTAN.

The forest was where his life began
And his loving mother named him CHAN.
With the face of a monkey, he stood like a man
And his arms hung down to his feet.

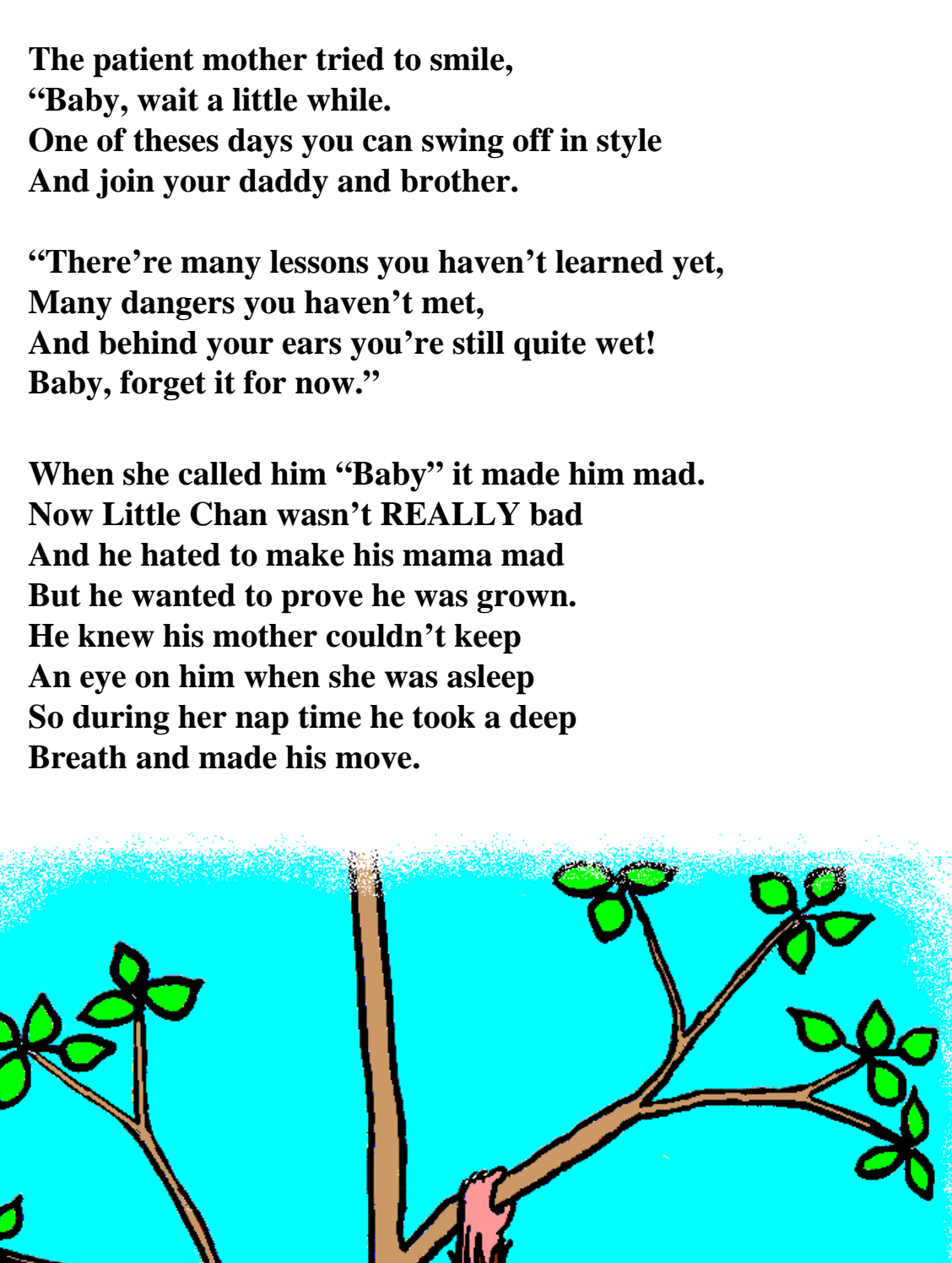
He was covered with shaggy, red-brown hair,
Hardly a spot on him was bare.
And he was still under his mother's care
Although he was two years old.

Chan and his mother lived high in the trees
Where they saw the sun and felt the breeze.
Mama could move through the forest with ease
Swinging from bough to bough.

She was teaching her little one everything
About jungle life. He was learning to swing,
But until he was older she made him cling
Tightly to her as she swung.

In the treetops there was plenty of food.
Tender bark and leaves they thought very good.
As they'd stripped a tree, the Orangutans would
Quietly move to another.

Every night they made a new nest
To keep out the rain so they could rest.
Mama would hold Chan close to her breast
And sing a monkey tune.



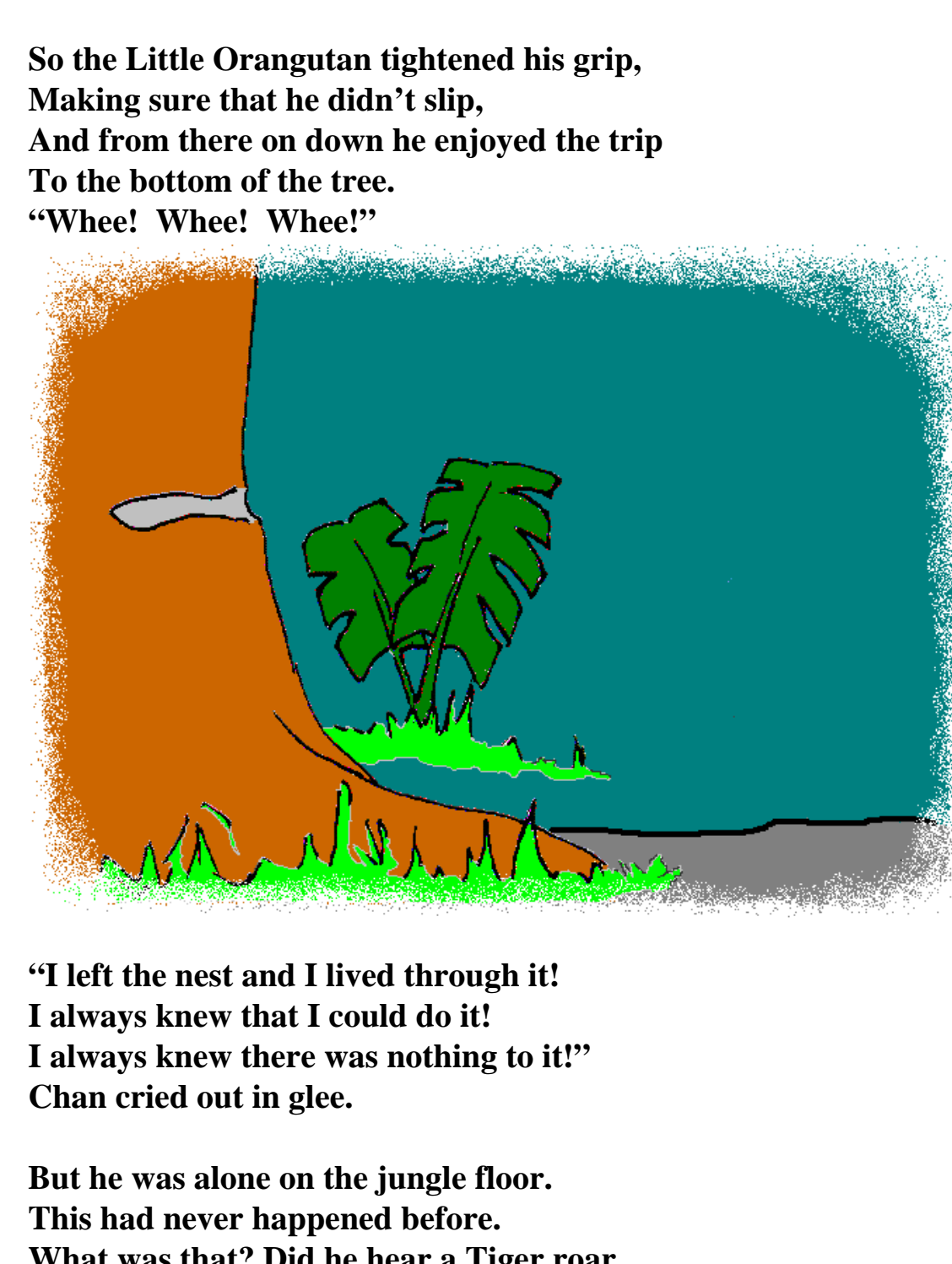
Sometimes they were fifty feet or more
Above the steaming jungle floor.
Sometimes they heard a Tiger roar
Far down below.

One day Chan said, "Mama, I'm grown.
I want to swing off on my own.
I know I can make it all alone.
Mama, let me go!"

The patient mother tried to smile,
"Baby, wait a little while.
One of these days you can swing off in style
And join your daddy and brother.

"There're many lessons you haven't learned yet,
Many dangers you haven't met,
And behind your ears you're still quite wet!
Baby, forget it for now."

When she called him "Baby" it made him mad.
Now Little Chan wasn't REALLY bad
And he hated to make his mama mad
But he wanted to prove he was grown.
He knew his mother couldn't keep
An eye on him when she was asleep
So during her nap time he took a deep
Breath and made his move.



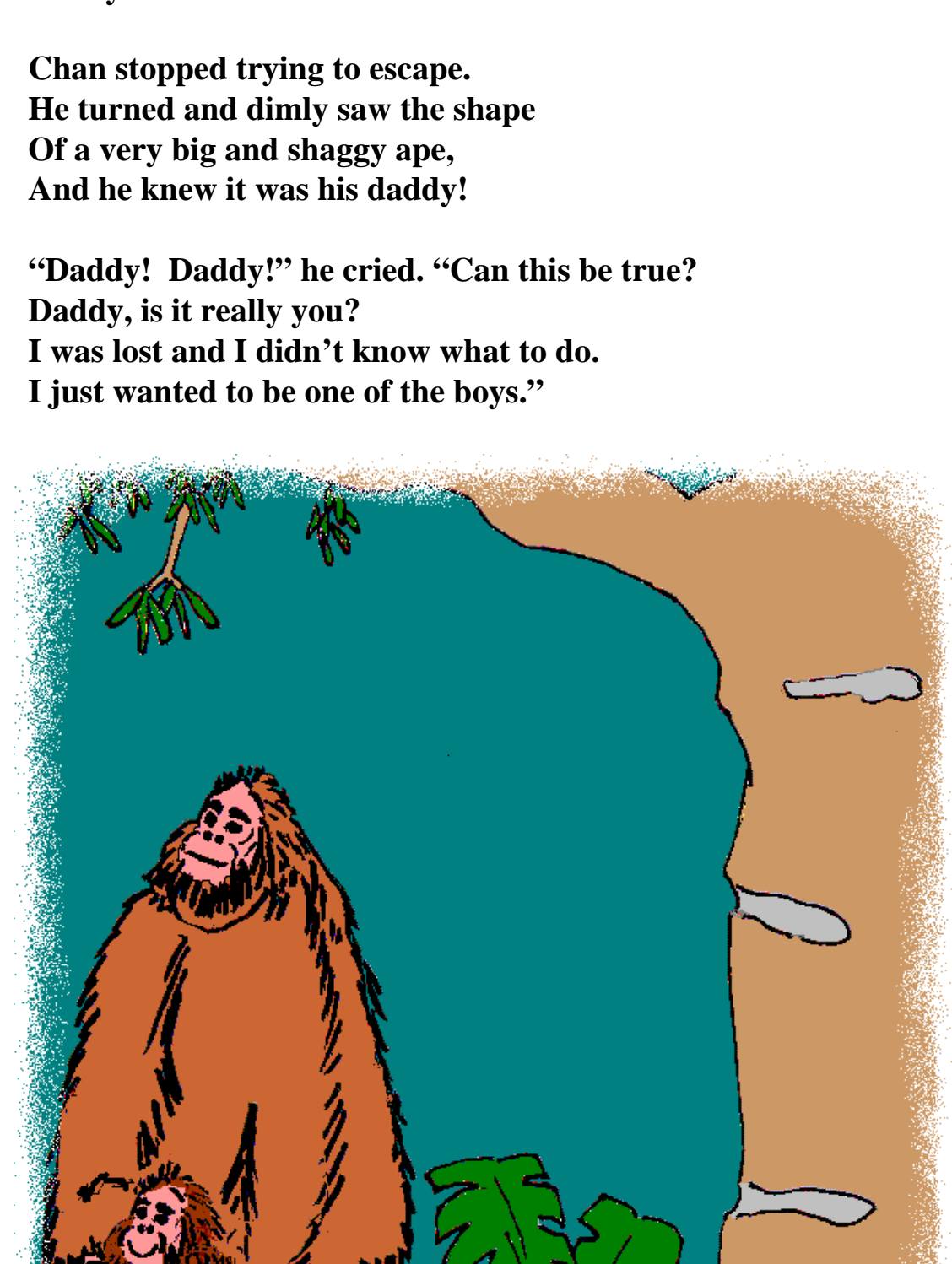
The first swings went well. Ah, this is GREAT!
He swung again, and realized too late
That this branch would not bear his weight
And he knew he was going to fall!

"O Mama!" he cried. "What do I do now?
I cannot reach the nearest bough.
I'd try to jump, but I don't know how.
He wondered and wondered, "What shall I do?
He is thinking as if Mama was speaking to him,
"Boy your chances are very slim
Unless you quickly get off that limb.
Now try to reach the trunk of the tree."

"So you made it? Good you didn't freeze!
Now grab the trunk with hands and knees.
And Oh Oh Oh do be careful - please!
Now slowly let yourself down."

Still wrapping his arms and legs around
The tree's smooth trunk very soon he found
He was sliding much too fast toward the ground,
And he might land with an awful bump.

So the Little Orangutan tightened his grip,
Making sure that he didn't slip,
And from there on down he enjoyed the trip
To the bottom of the tree.
"Whee! Whee! Whee!"



"I left the nest and I lived through it!
I always knew that I could do it!
I always knew there was nothing to it!"
Chan cried out in glee.

But he was alone on the jungle floor.
This had never happened before.
What was that? Did he hear a Tiger roar
Not too far away?

Where was Mama? He didn't know.
He didn't know which way to go.
He fought back tears, but they started to flow
And he knew that he was lost.

He was trembling from his head to his feet.
Perhaps if he looked for something to eat ...
Those red berries looked ripe and sweet.
He thought he'd give them a try.

Oh, the jungle was dark and pick a berry!
He was reaching out to pick a berry
When something grabbed him ...
A hand strong and hairy
And he could not get away.

THEN A VOICE SAID STERNLY

"Those berries would make you deathly sick.
And see that thing that looks like a stick?
It's a snake who's waiting to eat you up quick!
You naughty little boy!

"STOP THAT CRYING! A Tiger might hear
And I have no doubt there's a Tiger quite near.
There are many things in the jungle to fear
That you don't seem to know about."

Chan stopped trying to escape.
He turned and dimly saw the shape
Of a very big and shaggy ape,
And he knew it was his daddy!

"Daddy! Daddy!" he cried. "Can this be true?
Daddy, is it really you?
I was lost and I didn't know what to do.
I just wanted to be one of the boys."

Daddy said, "Chan, you cannot come with me.
You just aren't ready, as you can see.
But a fine Orangutan you will be
When you are fully grown!

"If you live in the jungle, you must not bungle!
You must always act wisely and fast.
If you make one mistake, just one little mistake,
It may very well be YOUR LAST!

"Now I'll take you back to your mother.
In about two years she'll have another
Baby to cuddle...your sister or a brother.
And then you'll be one of the boys."
And so it did not take to arrive back at the nest
That the little orangutan and Mama knew best.

The End