A Boring Story

Dec. 1979

(Or: The Most Interesting Story Tom-John Has Ever Heard)

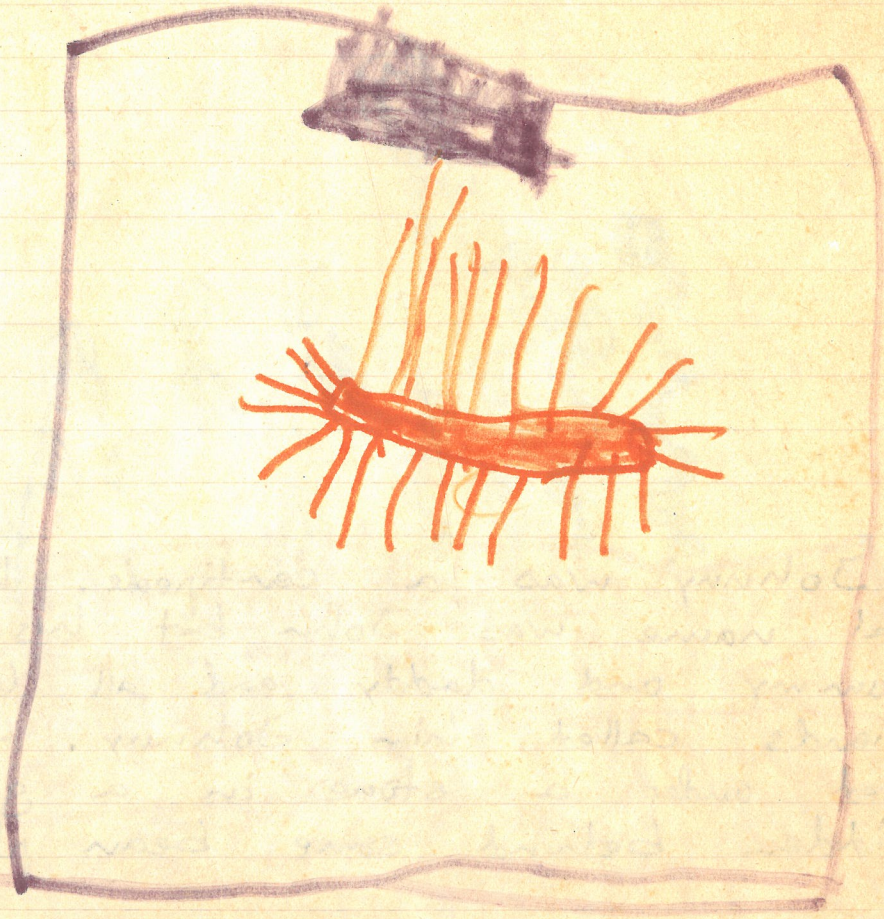
One day, there was a man peeling potatoes. He peeled one potato, then he peeled another potato.

THE END

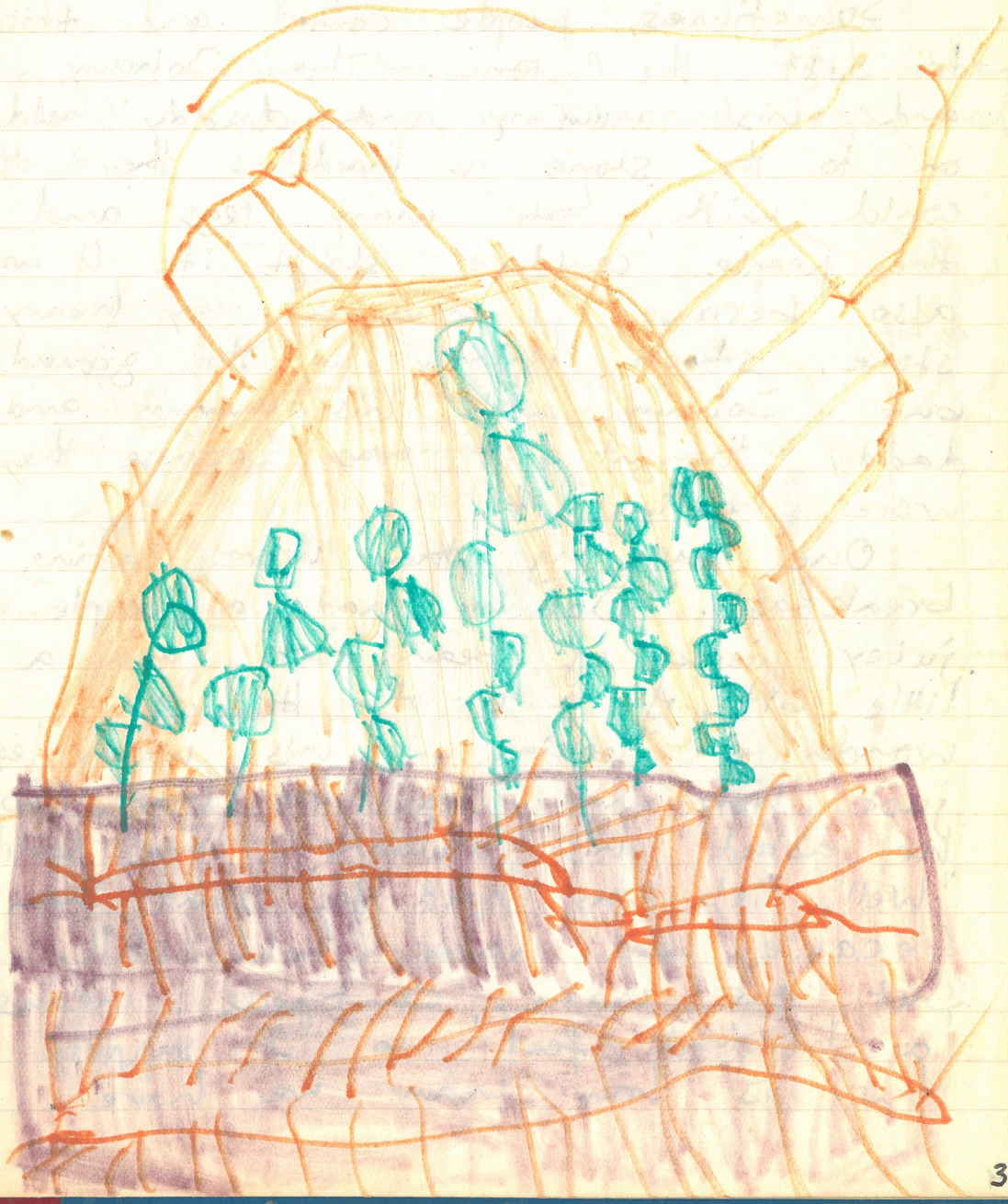
JOHNNY THE CENTIPEDE.

by

TOM-EGHAN and Dieter Britz



Johnny was a centipede. His real name was John but his mummy and daddy and all his friends called him Johnny. He lived under a stone in a garden, hidden behind some bean plants.



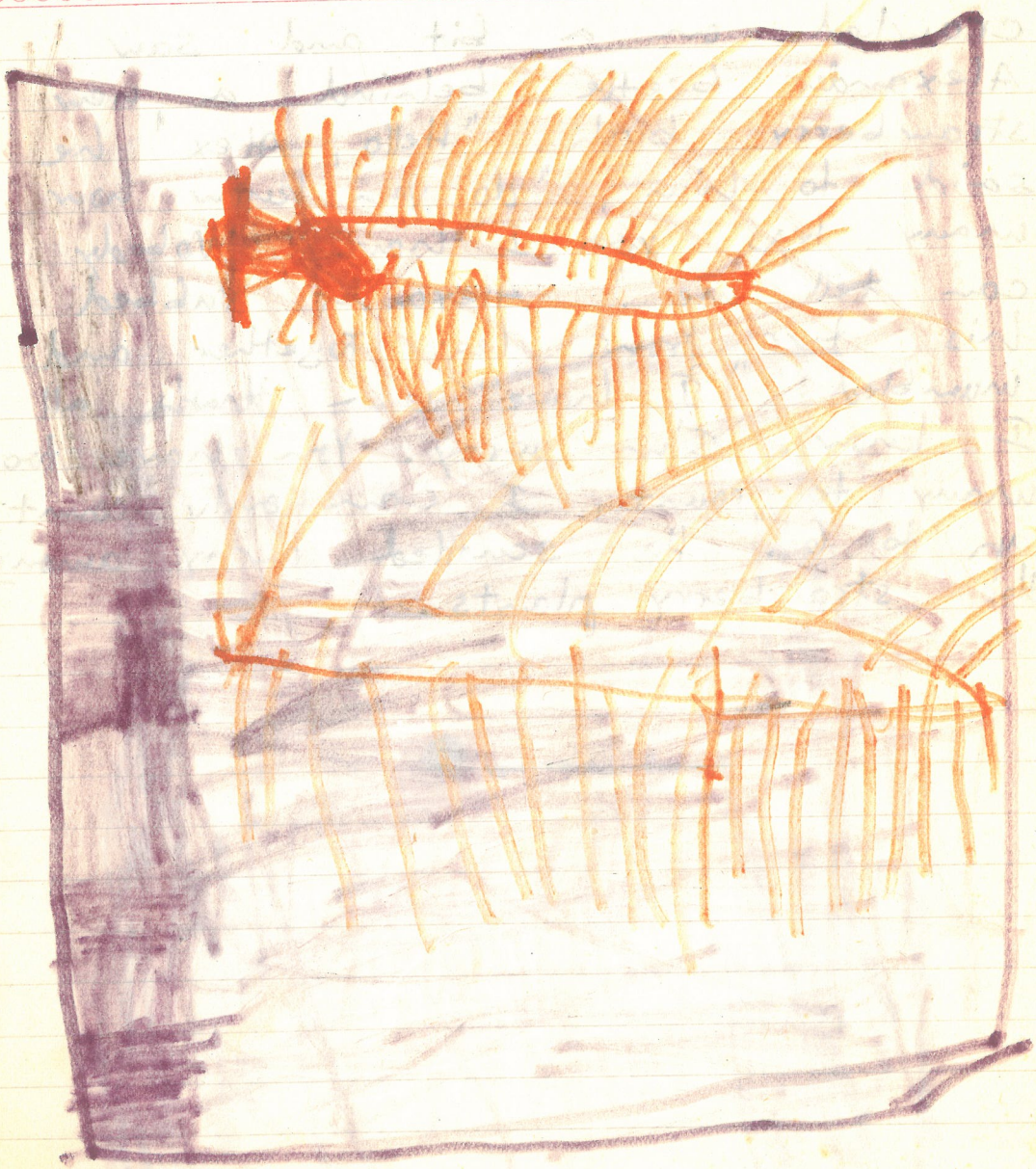
Sometimes, people came and tried to lift the stone. Then Johnny and his mummy and daddy held on to the stone as hard as they could with their many legs and the people couldn't shift it. It was also because it was a very heavy stone, stuck tightly in the ground, but Johnny and his mummy and daddy thought it was because they were holding it.

One morning, they were eating breakfast. Johnny had a couple of juicy pieces of bean roots and a little bit of a carrot. He was wondering, looking at his many legs, just how many legs he had. So he asked his mummy. She said "Well, it's very hard to count them, because we never hold still. But our name, centipede, means a hundred feet so I suppose that is how many we have."

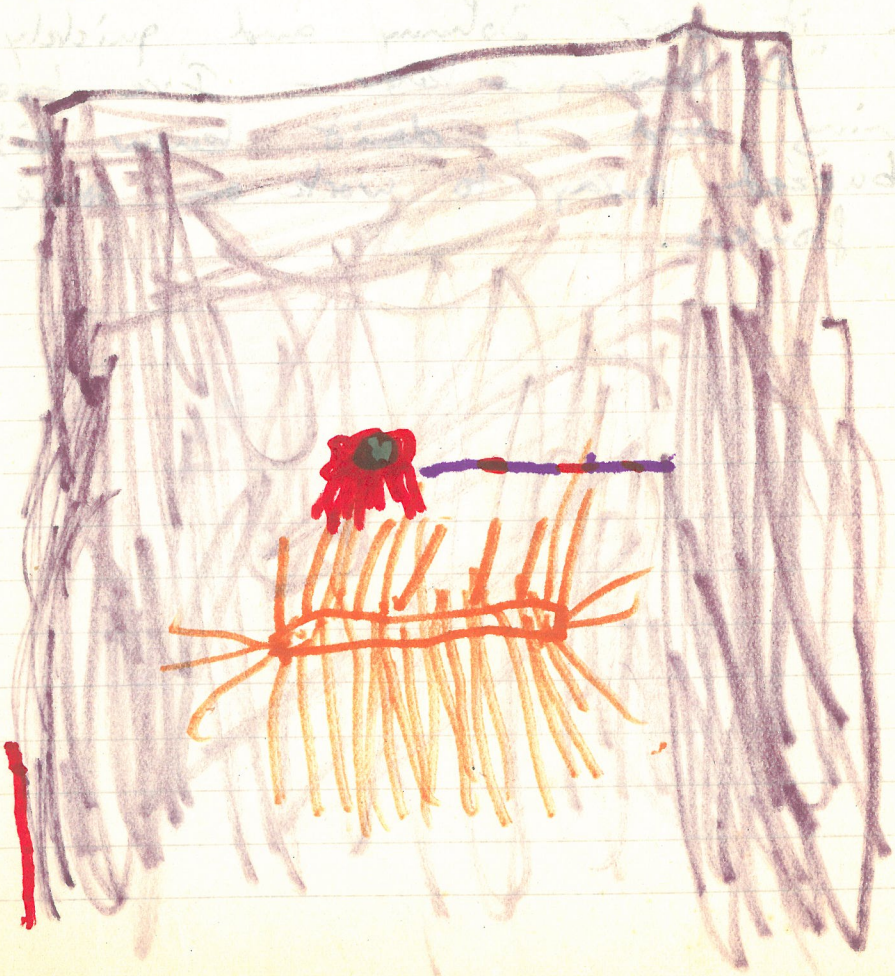
Johnny's father then said, "But in Danish, they call us 'Tusindben' which means 'a thousand legs,' and that's different."

Then Johnny went out for a crawl. He met Willy the earthworm. He asked him "Willy, do you know how many legs a centipede has?" Willy thought for a bit and then said "Too many. Look at me - I have no legs at all, and I can get about alright. But I can tell you that in Russian you are called сорокножка or "sorokonoshka" and that means forty little feet." "Well," said Johnny, "I have now heard that we have 40, 100 or 1000 legs. They can't all be right!".

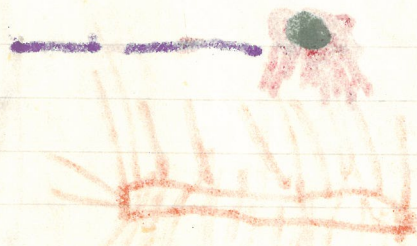
Willy the worm munched on a juicy piece of soil and said, "Well, I can't help you then, so let me get on with my soil chewing. I have to chew on all this, so that it's nice and soft. The people are planting strawberry plants and they need soft soil. Good bye!". Johnny



crawled on a bit and saw Alexander beetle behind a new strawberry bush. "Hello, Alex" he said to him, "do you know how many legs ~~you~~ I have? Nobody can tell me." Alexander rubbed his two front legs together and mumbled "I have 6 – that's all I know. I'm sorry. You have too many to count, I can only count up to 6." He scuttled away among the strawberry plants.



A big fat bumble bee came buzzing over from the row of yellow flowers. It took a quick look into a couple of bean plant flowers and grumbled to itself "Nothing much here, not worth stopping for. Bean plants are never much good for nectar." Then it saw Johnny and quickly said "I know, I know — I've been listening and I don't know either!" It buzzed away to work on some more flowers.



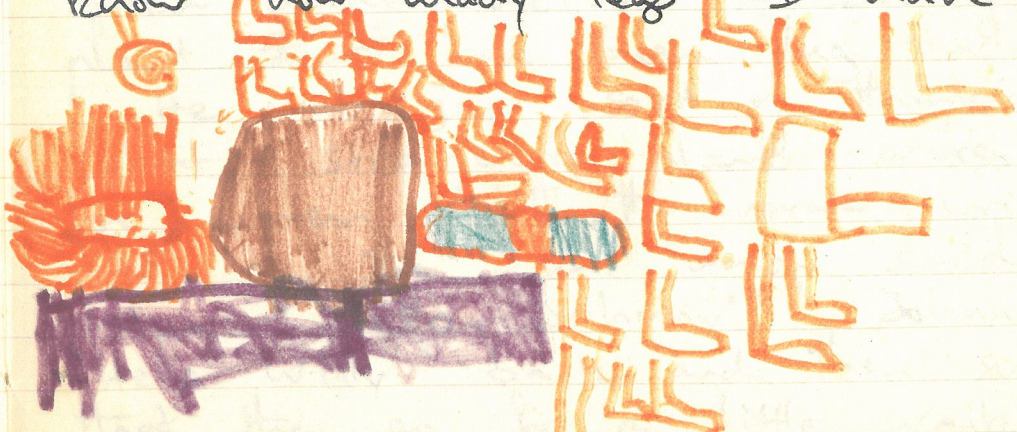
Johnny sighed "Will I ever find out, how many legs I have?". A cheeky little ground spider popped its head out of a hole in the soil and said "Why, don't you count them yourself?" and quickly scurried back into its hole.

Johnny thought for a while.

Then he had an idea. But he had to find somebody to help him, because Johnny couldn't count past 20. He crawled around the strawberry plants that had just been put in and suddenly met Tom the snail. Tom could not speak as he had no mouth. But he could wave his feelers about. Johnny said to him: "Tom, I need your help. Will you help me count how many legs I have – I'd like to find out." Tom waved his feelers "NO!" but Johnny said "I know what you want to say – that I move my legs too much to count them. But here is my idea. We go over to that nice clean flat rock, and I take off all my shoes. Then you count them and write down the number on this piece of paper."

So he took all his shoes off, and Tom did the counting. It took a

very long time. When he finished, he wrote it down on the piece of paper. Johnny crawled over to it and said to Tom "Thank you very much." Tom then slithered away and Johnny never saw him again. He was just going to look at the piece of paper, when, suddenly, Willy the earthworm wriggled past him, swallowed the paper together with a lump of soil, saying over his shoulder "It's not often there's a bit of paper mixed with the soil I have to chew". Johnny said to him "Now I'll never know how many legs I have!"



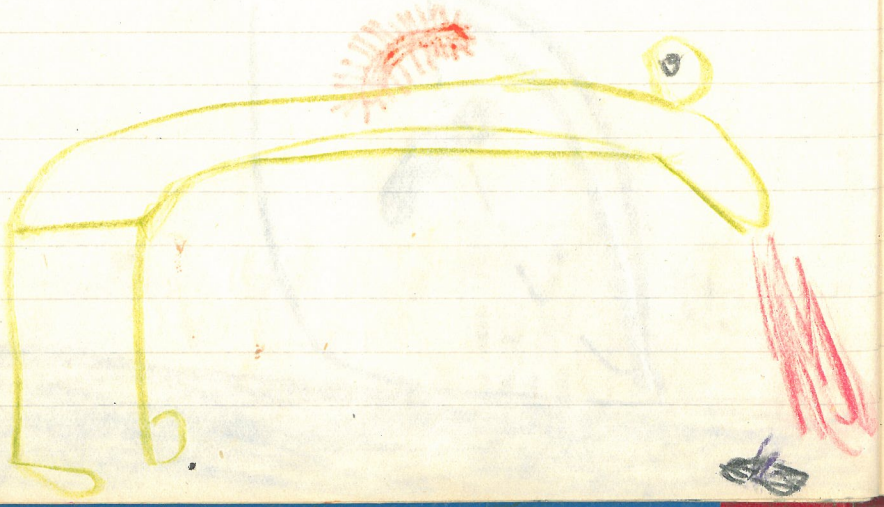
— THE END —

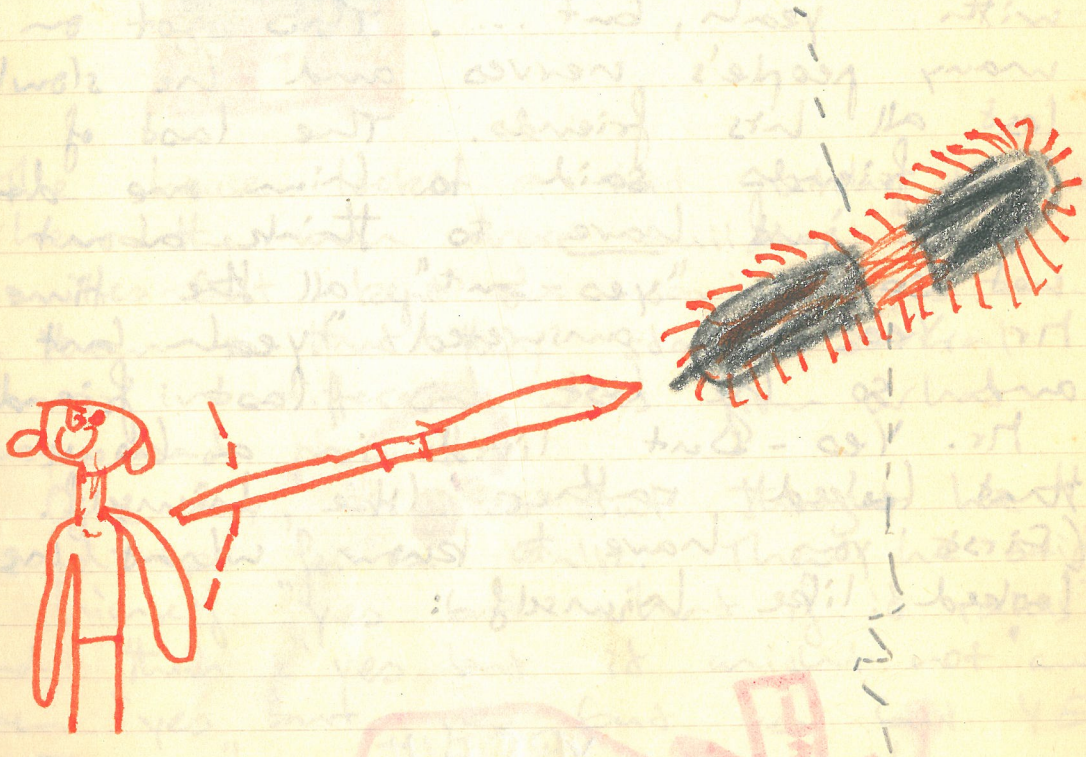
Willy the Worm Finds a Shoe

28.9.'80

One fine afternoon, Willy was 5 km away from his home in the people's garden, just at the end (it was really 5 m, but to a worm, this seems like 5 km). Johnny the centipede, his friend, was with him, and a ladybird beetle was watching them. Suddenly the found a shoe. Willy said to Johnny "help me take this shoe home" but Johnny said "What for?". Willy explained that he wanted Johnny to sleep with him, and there would be room enough in the shoe but not in his hole.

They took 2 days to get it home, because they thought it was too heavy, but they got there just in time for sleep. They had good dreams while sleeping in the shoe. Willy dreamed about a dragon, which was blowing fire on Willy. Willy had his secret magic and then he could escape — so that dream finished as a good dream. Johnny dreamed about a friend of his but the friend had a spear which was his father's and he tried to spear Johnny but he missed and Johnny took the spear and hid it.





And so they had a good
night in their shoe.

THE END.

JOHNNY AND WILLY THE WORM FIND A CARROT.

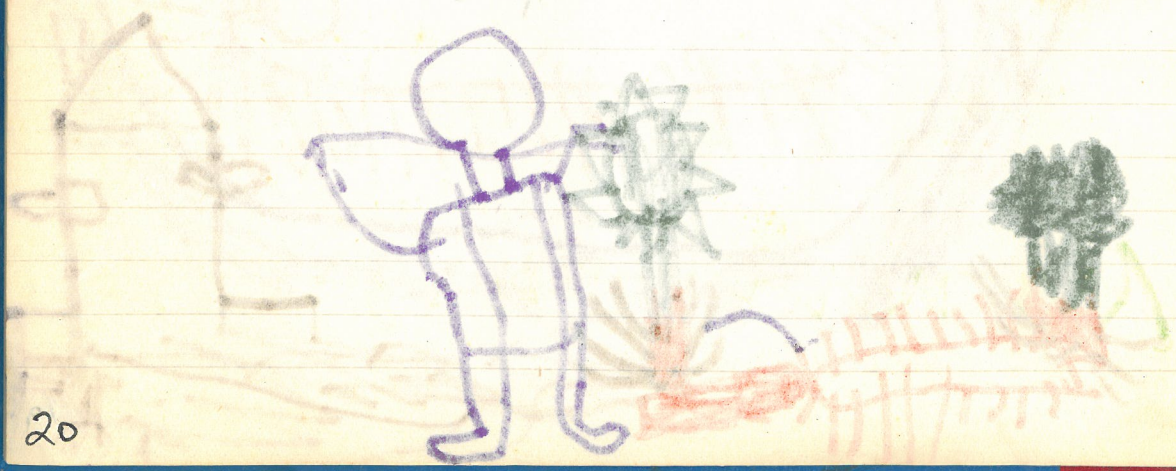
One day, Johnny the centipede was crawling lazily through some clumps of earth, wondering what he was going to do today. It was a sunny morning in autumn. The bean plants were all gone; the people had dug them under with a spade one day because they wanted the place where the beans had been, to put new strawberry plants in, which they did. When Johnny crawled through the ground these days, he often came across a bit of bean plant that had been dug under.

He was just sort of thinking what strawberry plants were good for when Willy the worm wriggled out of the soil and said to him "Hello, Johnny!". Johnny said "Hello Willy" back and then suggested that they go for a little walk.

"Or for a little wriggle, as the case may be" answered Willy, who was, as you know, a worm, and therefore had no legs and had to move around by wriggling. He wasn't unhappy about this because he didn't mind getting dirty and also he never had to clean any shoes.

So they left, Johnny using his many legs, still wondering how many and also wondering why he had so many when his friend Willy was alright with none — and Willy moving along wriggling. After some time there were no more strawberry plants and no more left-over bean plant bits in the soil and they were on an empty bit. When they got across this they were in a little forest of carrot plants, looking very nice and fresh green. Johnny wondered how he and Willy could get one out to take home. They pulled and pulled at a little plant, but the carrot refused to come out.

As they were wondering what to try next, they felt the ground shaking a bit and a big shadow fell across them and the carrot. Suddenly, a giant hand reached down and grabbed the leaves of their carrot, and pulled hard at it. A human was trying to pull the carrot out! But all that happened was that the leaves and stalks gave a loud "SNAP" and broke off, leaving the carrot still sitting in the ground.



The next thing they saw was a spade coming down, and the earth being turned over. A lot of carrots fell down, out of the soil at last! The person with the spade picked them all up, but after looking at them, threw one down again, saying

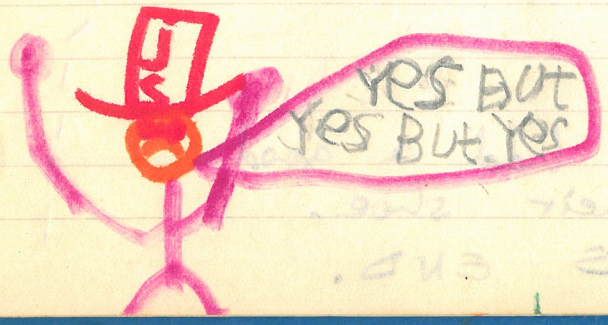
"This one is not worth eating. It is far too small!" It landed quite close to where Johnny and Willy were hiding behind the rock, and they saw that it was just the one they had been trying to get! For them, it was exactly the right size. When the people had left, Willy and Johnny pulled the carrot, which was about as long as Johnny himself, home. Willy and Johnny's family lived off this carrot for a whole week.

Mr. Yes-But

23.9.81

Mr. Yes-But (some people call him Mr. Yeah-But) was the most yes-butty person in the world. If anybody said anything whatsoever to him, he would start his answer with "yeah, but ...". This got on many people's nerves and he slowly lost all his friends. The last of his friends said to him one day, "you'll just <u>have</u> to think about not saying "yes-but" all the time. Mr Yes-But answered "yeah but I" - and so he lost his last friend.

Mr. Yes-But lived in a house that looked rather like himself. (First you have to know what he looked like himself:

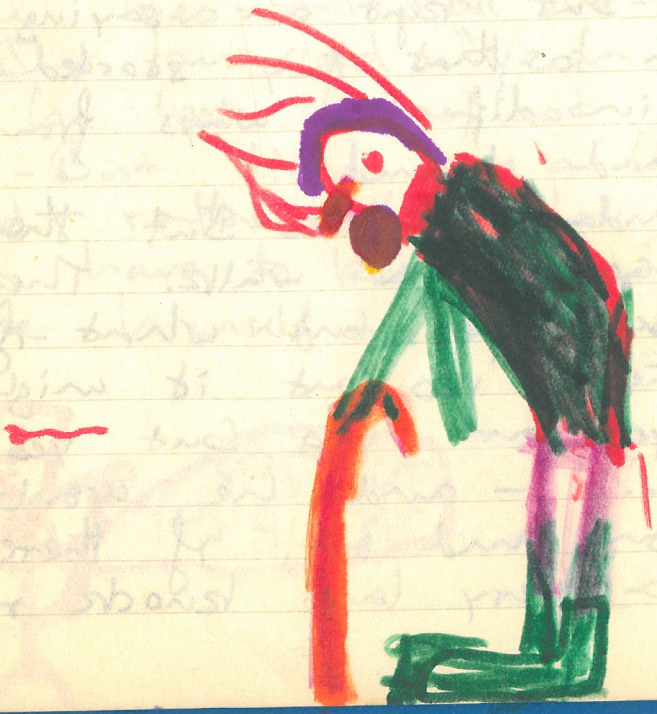


)

The house looks a bit patchy because when the men were building it, Mr. Yes-But kept on saying "yes but.." to them so that they started several times in different ways from what they had planned.

One day, Mr Yes-But thought he would go for a walk. Then he said to himself "yes but what if it rains?" and then "yes but it might not" and then "yes but yes but yes but YES BUT ..." – and he would have gone on and on, if there had not been a very loud knock on his

front door. He went to see who it might be and found a tall old man with a bushy beard, thick bushy eyebrows and a stick. The old man said "hello!" and Mr. Yes-But answered "yes, but-" and the old man said to him in a very stern voice "But me no yeah-buts!". He sounded angry.



He pushed his way into the house past Mr. Yes-But, waving his stick. Mr. Yes-But was so surprised he forgot, for once, to say "yes but".

The old man sat down at the table, thumped his stick on the floor between his knees and commanded "you sit down; you and I are going to have a talk!". Mr. Yes-But went over and sat down in another chair and said softly, "yes but who are you?". The old man shouted (thumping his stick as he did) "BUT ME NO BUTS! And never mind who I am". Mr. Yes-But meekly said "would you like a cup of Nikoline?" and the old man shouted "But me no — oops, you didn't! No, never mind the Nikoline, I have come to talk, not to drink. Now listen: you have lost all your friends and you will never make new ones, as long as you keep on

saying "yes but" all the time."
Mr. Yes-But sighed and said very quietly "yes but I don't know how to stop". "BUT ME NO YES-BUTS!" shouted the old man and went on for a long time explaining how Mr. Yes-But could stop saying "yes-but". When at last he finished, he lifted himself to his feet on his stick and thumped out of the door again.

And do you know, to this day, Mr. Yes-But has not said "yes but" to anybody again, but he has never told anyone (not even me) what the old man told him.

THE END - BUT -.