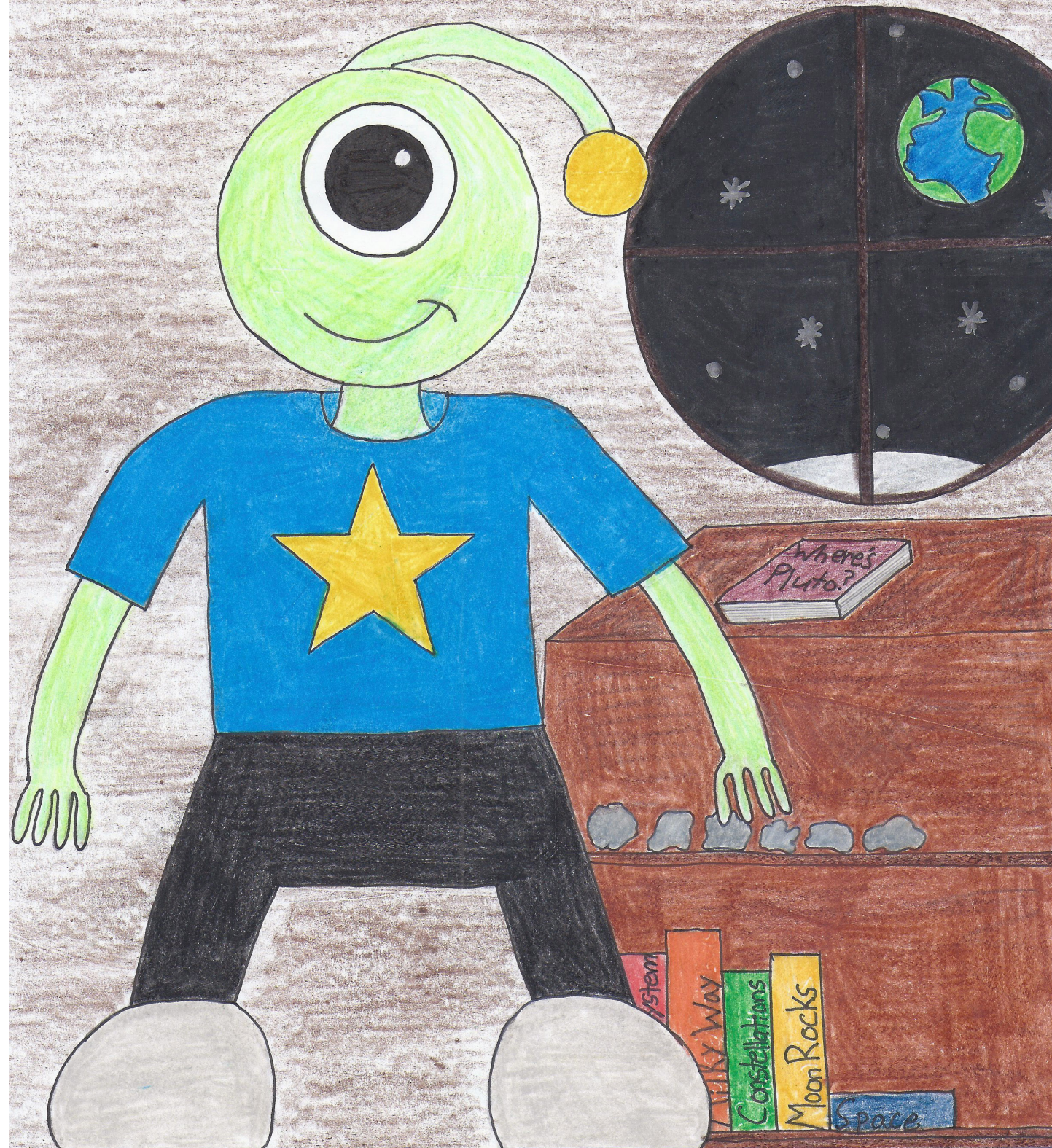


Mysteries of the Moon

Written by Sera Hunter
Illustrated by Carly Burton

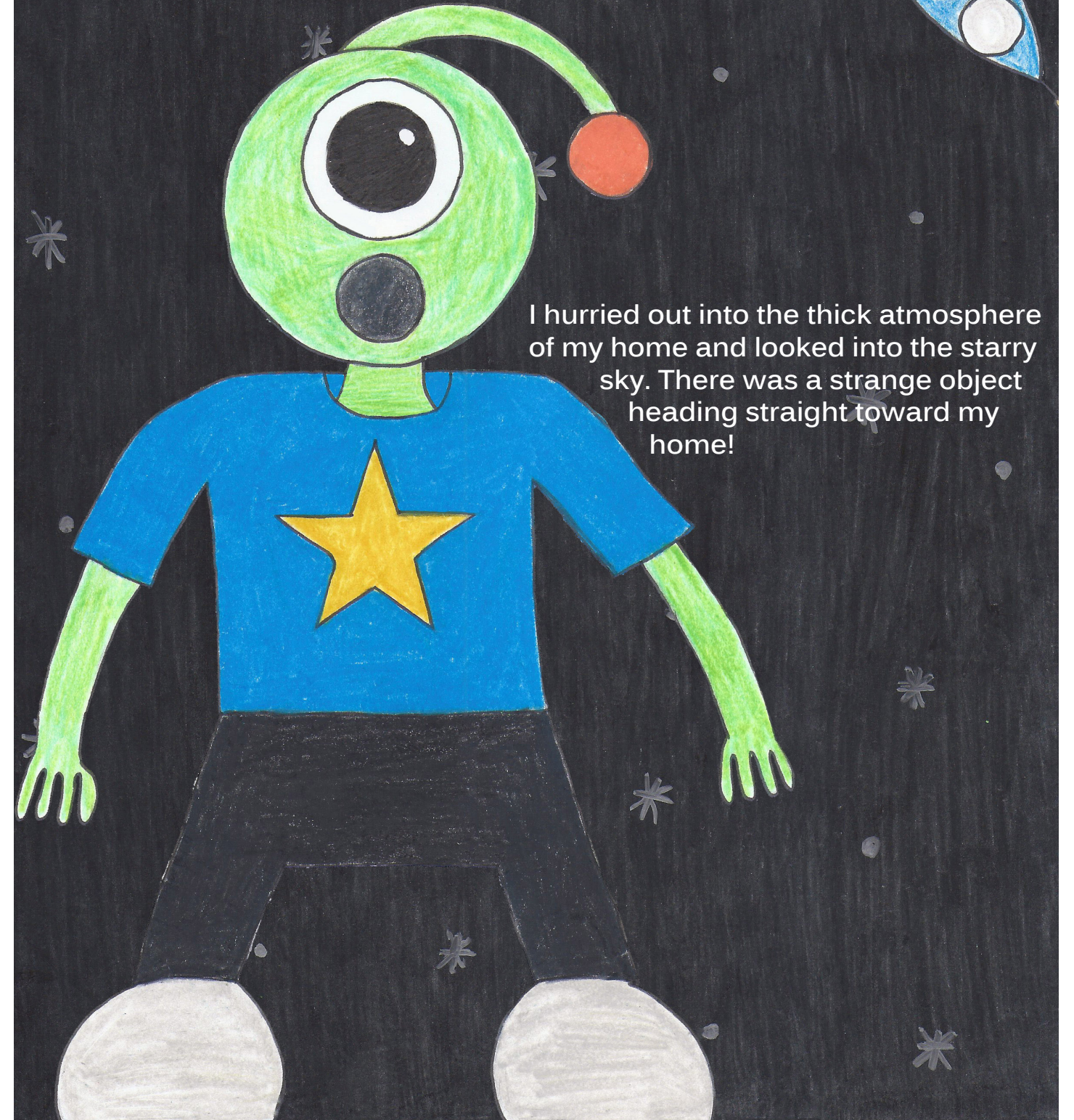
I love the way the rocks feel under my shoes and how the cosmos look from the view of my house. Sure, it gets kind of lonely up here on the moon by myself, but I've got the stars to keep me company.

I've explored every inch of my rocky home, and I know every crater like the back of my four-fingered hand. If a visitor ever lands here to see me, I'd like to show him the moon.



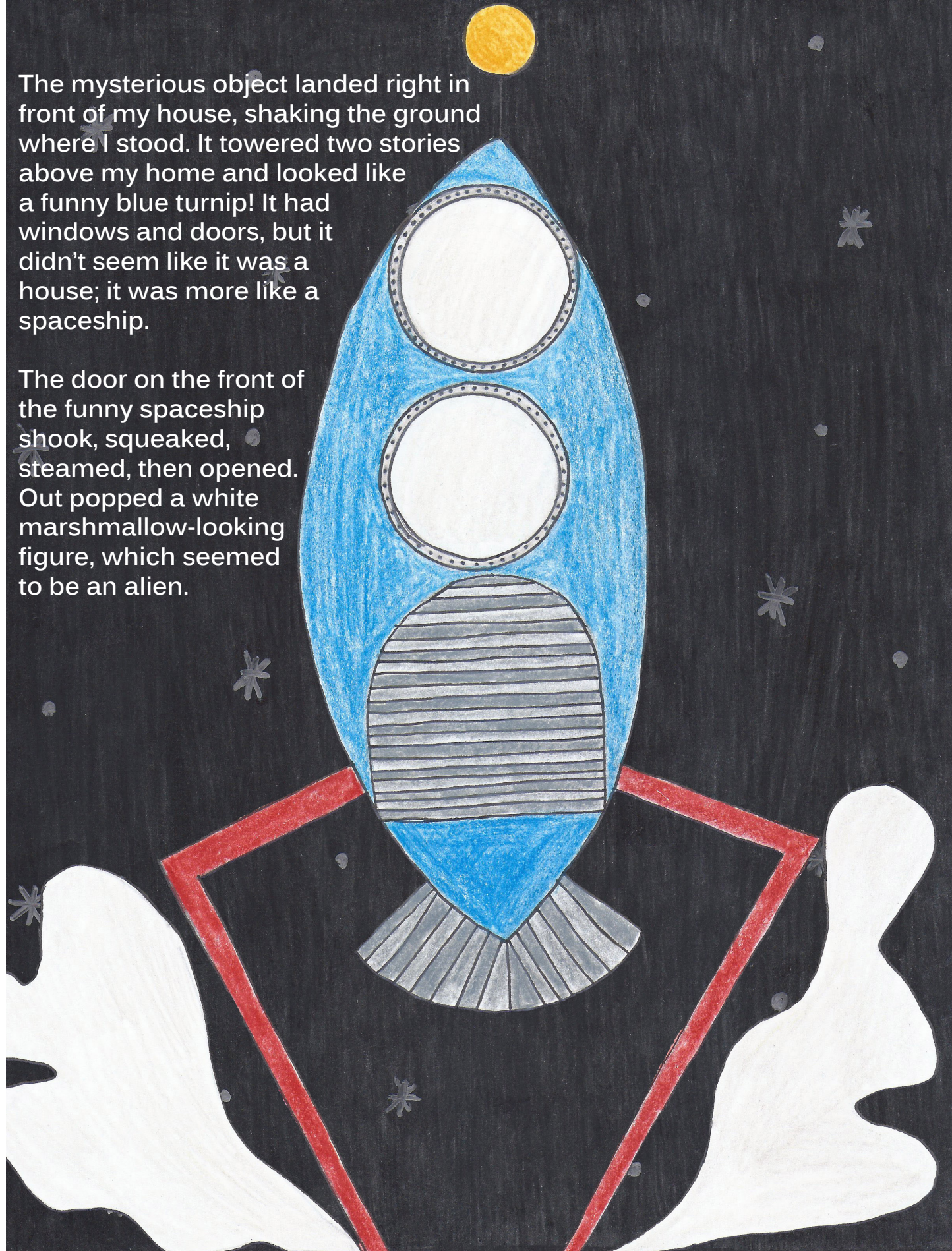
This morning I felt strangely elated as I hurried to put on my favorite star shirt. Today felt different from the dull and void filled afternoons playing with moon dust, organizing my rock collection, or rereading every book I have.

I hurried out into the thick atmosphere of my home and looked into the starry sky. There was a strange object heading straight toward my home!



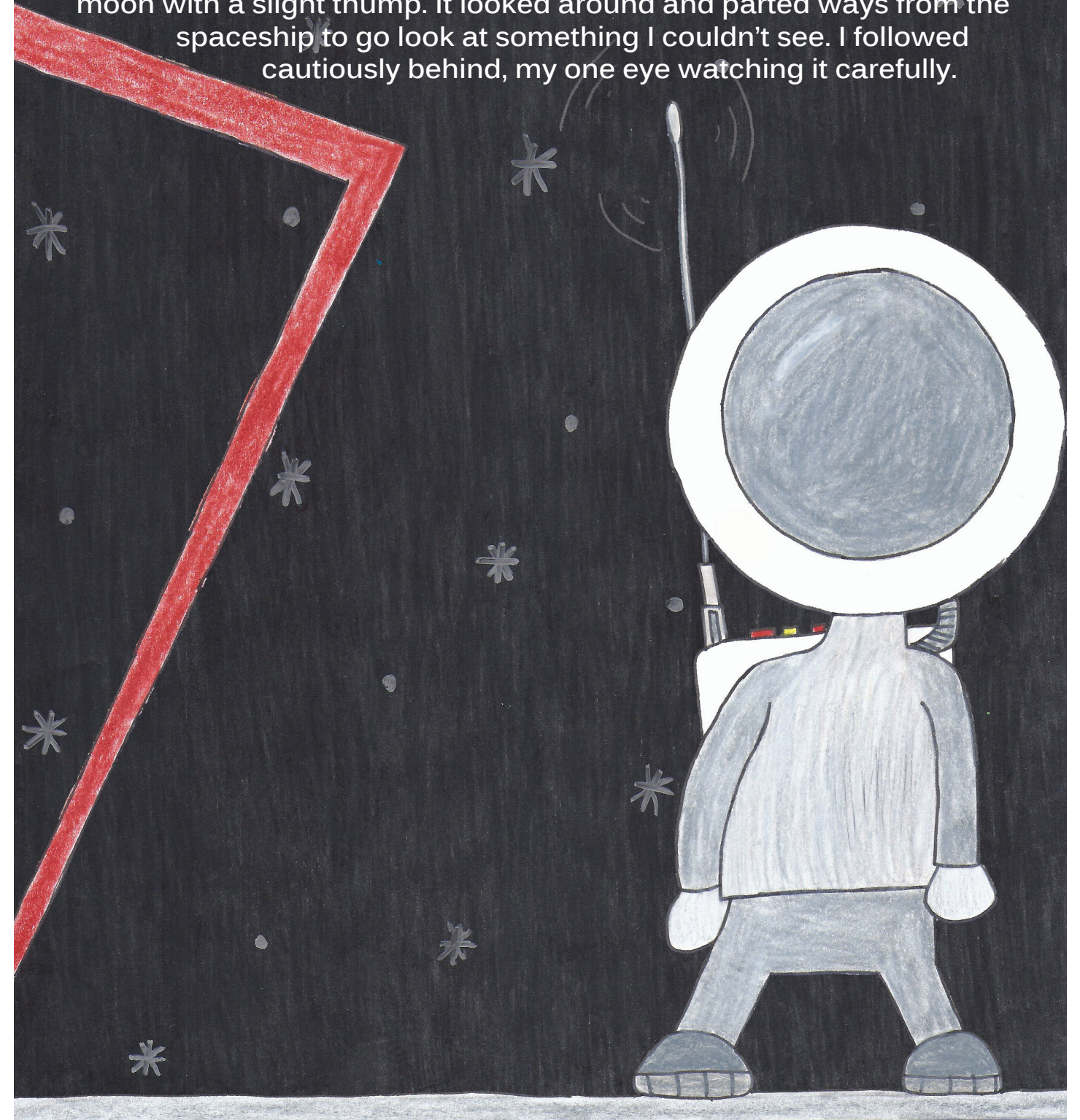
The mysterious object landed right in front of my house, shaking the ground where I stood. It towered two stories above my home and looked like a funny blue turnip! It had windows and doors, but it didn't seem like it was a house; it was more like a spaceship.

The door on the front of the funny spaceship shook, squeaked, steamed, then opened. Out popped a white marshmallow-looking figure, which seemed to be an alien.

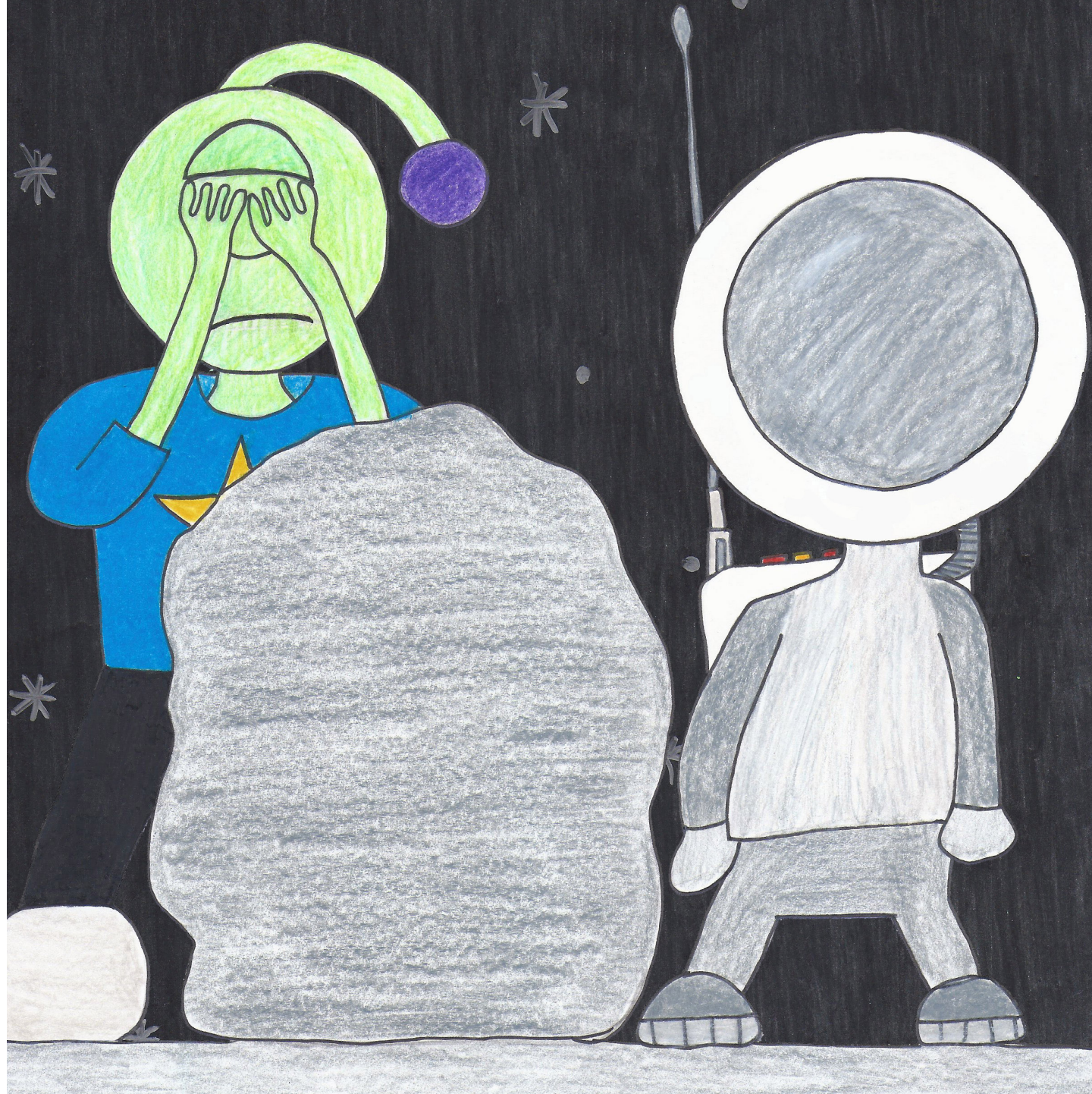


The funny looking alien was pudgy and white with gray arms and black feet. Its face was covered by a black and white helmet which, oddly enough, shone brightly against the white background of the moon. The alien didn't seem to have eyes, ears, a nose, or even a mouth! Though, it did carry a little bag around with it.

The alien walked down the stairs and landed on the dusty ground of the moon with a slight thump. It looked around and parted ways from the spaceship to go look at something I couldn't see. I followed cautiously behind, my one eye watching it carefully.

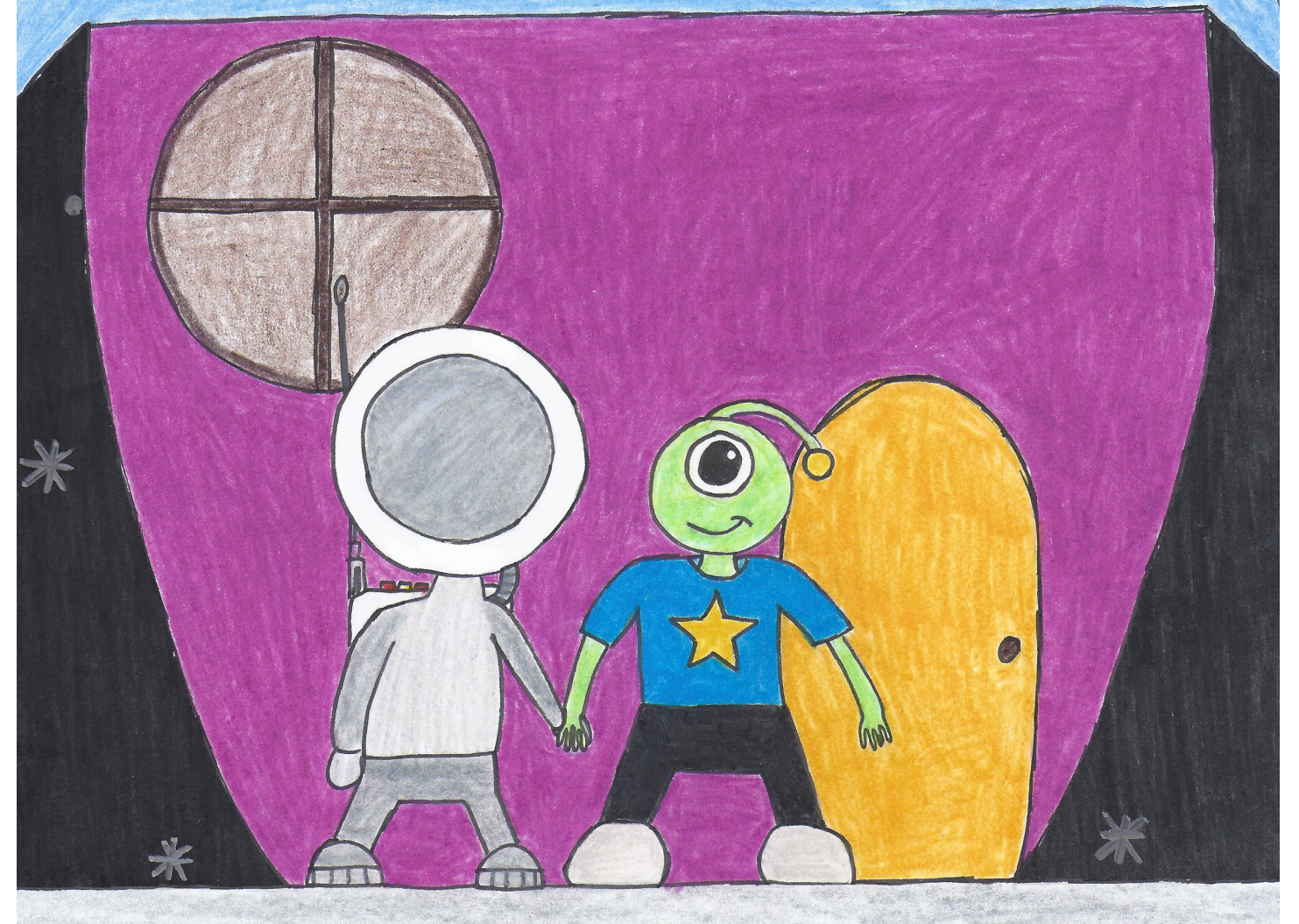


The pudgy alien stopped suddenly and turned around. It had sensed me trailing it! I ducked behind a rather large moon rock, but I was too late, it had seen me! The foreign visitor walked over to me, and I stared up at it in surprise. As it moved toward me, I covered my pale green face with my arms. The thought of what a weird alien could do to someone like me made my knees knock together anxiously.

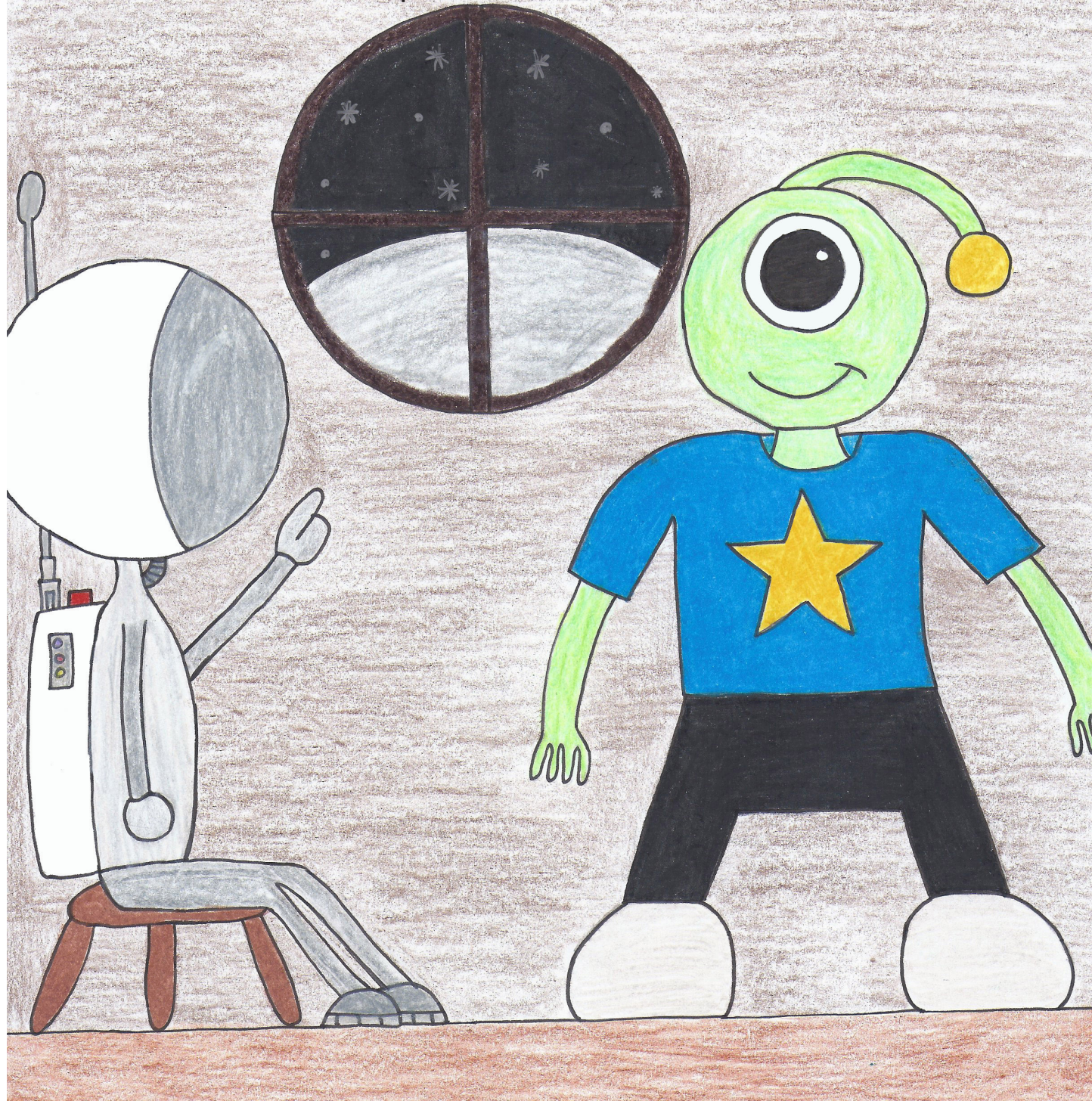


"Hello there!" The alien suddenly chirped, bending down to get a closer look at my face. It stuck out its paw, and I hesitantly shook it. What a weird texture! It felt kind of like a tent, soft and smooth, yet thick. I smiled, making it laugh. "Hello back to you, too!" I replied, standing up with the alien. "What are you?" I suddenly asked, looking at my shoes sheepishly. "I'm a human. An astronaut, actually. I was sent here to learn more about the moon!" Astronaut, huh? What an interesting name. It explained to me about its mission, so I skipped over to my house, with Astronaut following behind me.

"I'm Polaris. I live here on the moon so I can answer any questions you might have." Astronaut stared at me in awe through its helmet. "Really? Oh boy, that's amazing! I've never met someone like you before, Polaris!" I smiled and looked away from my new friend. "Thank you."

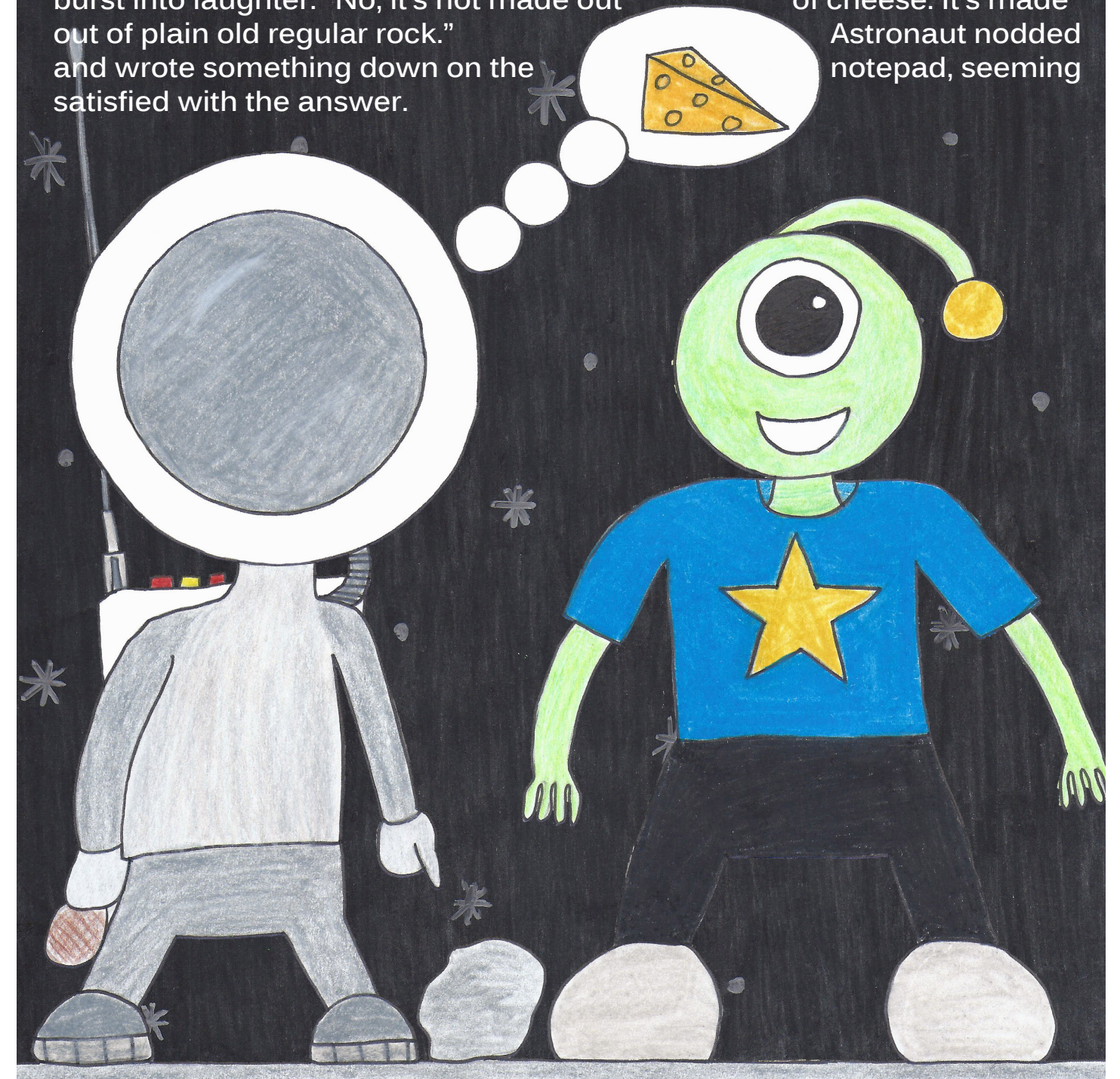


So Astronaut and I entered my little house. "You can have a seat here," I said, "it's my most comfortable chair." Astronaut nodded gratefully and took a seat. "So... what is your mission here on the moon?" I asked the alien, causing Astronaut point toward the window. "The moon is a great mystery to humans. I'm here to learn more about it! If you don't mind... uh...can you do a favor for me tomorrow? I have some questions I'd like to ask you. I'd do it today, but I am very weary from my travels and would like to rest." I looked out toward the window, thinking about this for a moment. "Of course I'll help."



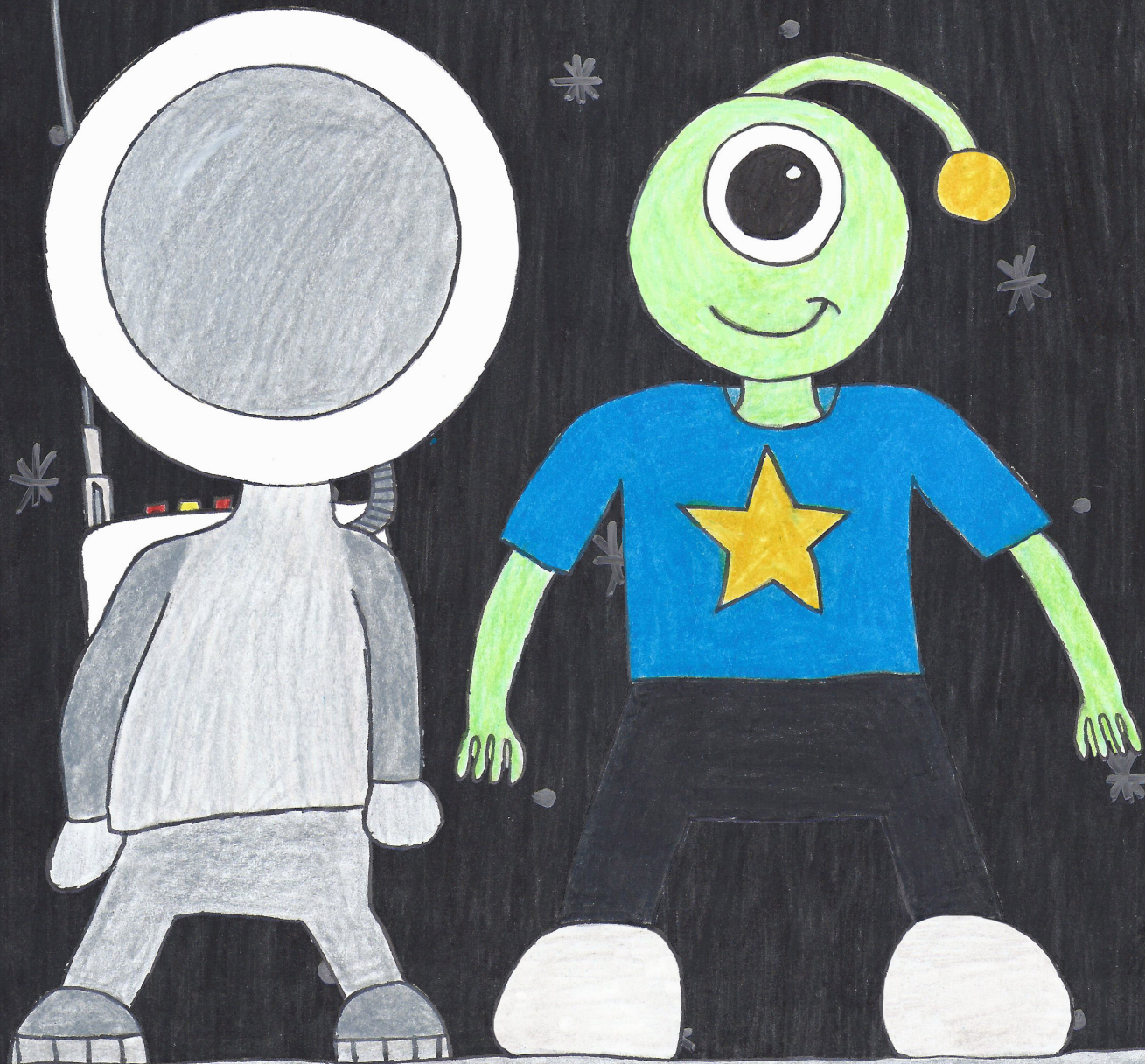
The next morning Astronaut came out of the spaceship carrying a brown bag. I was already waiting next to my house. "Come on Polaris, there are so many things to discover today!" Astronaut called, moon jumping away from the ship, venturing away from me. I followed closely behind, until Astronaut came to a stop in front of a large moon rock.

"Alright!" Exclaimed Astronaut, as it pulled out a notepad with a list of questions on it. "My first question is... hmm... is the moon made out of cheese?" Then Astronaut looked at me like I had grown two heads when I burst into laughter. "No, it's not made out of cheese. It's made out of plain old regular rock." Astronaut nodded and wrote something down on the notepad, seeming satisfied with the answer.



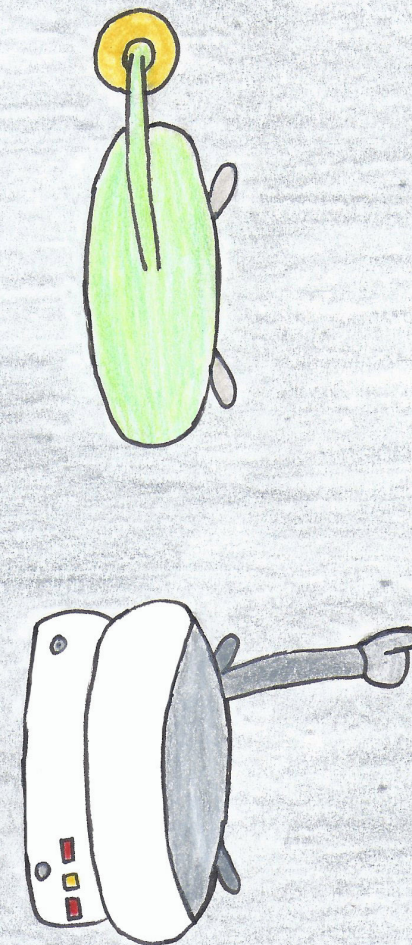
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“Next question!” Astronaut blurted out, pointing at the ground beneath us. “This is a very serious question, actually. Is... there a man in the moon?” A smile crept its way up my face. “Well, no, there is not. I’ve lived here my entire life and have not seen any man! It’s most likely the craters that formed here, giving the moon the illusion of a man!”

Astronaut scribbled viciously on the notepad, mumbling softly. “What an interesting answer! I never knew that.” * * *



Astronaut then walked around a bit before coming to the pitch darkness of the other side of the moon. “Huh, this is actually one of my questions, Polaris. What causes,” it swiped a hand towards the darkness, “this?” Considering that I’ve usually stayed in my house the majority of the time that I’ve lived here, answering that question took a lot of thought.

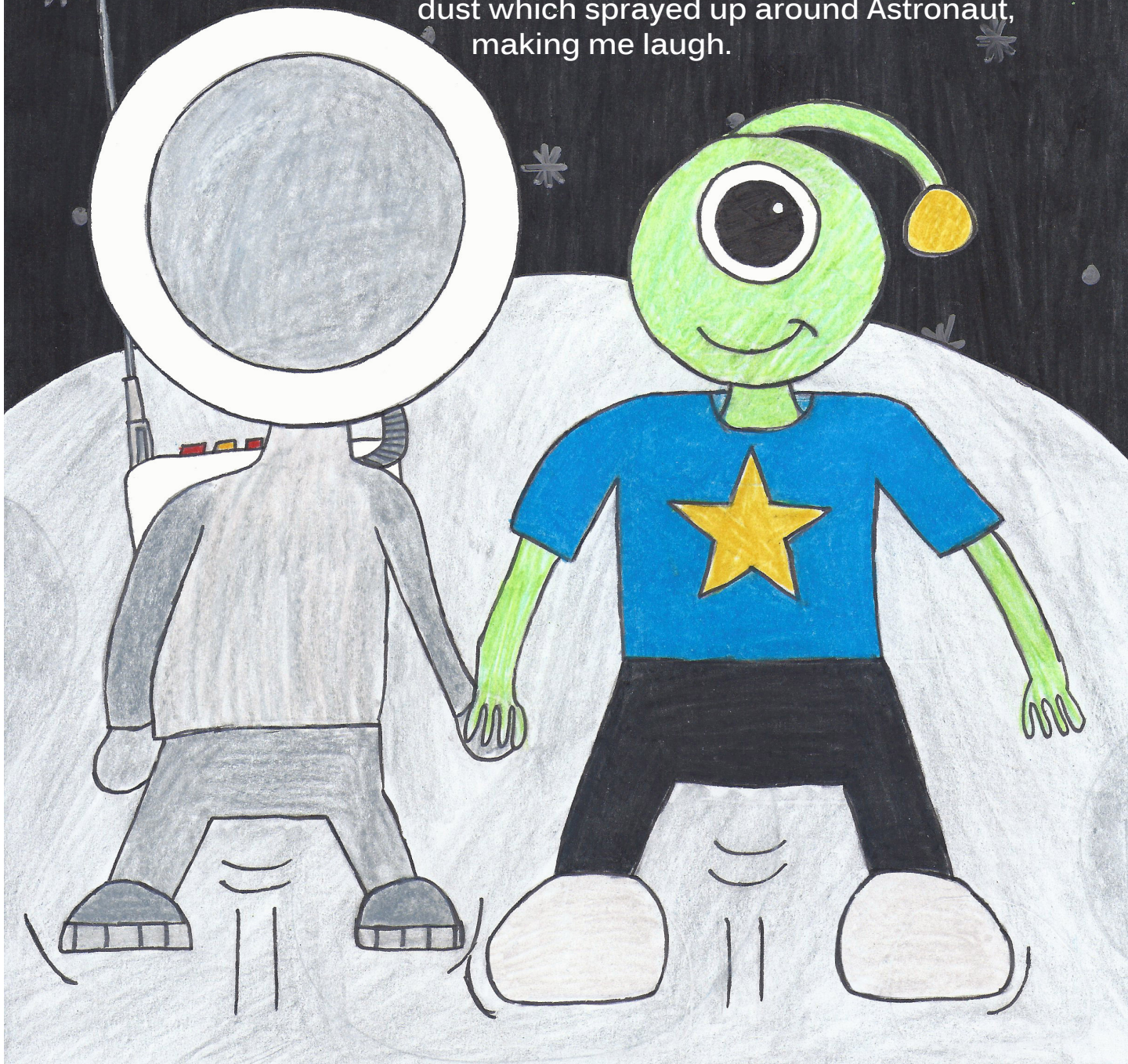
“Well, the thing is, Astronaut, you see that bright star over there?” The alien nodded. “That’s the sun. The light from the sun reflects off the part of the moon that is revealed to the sun. That’s how you can see it from where you live! This darkness is just the part that isn’t illuminated.” Understanding dawned on Astronaut’s face, and again, it scribbled on the notepad. * * *



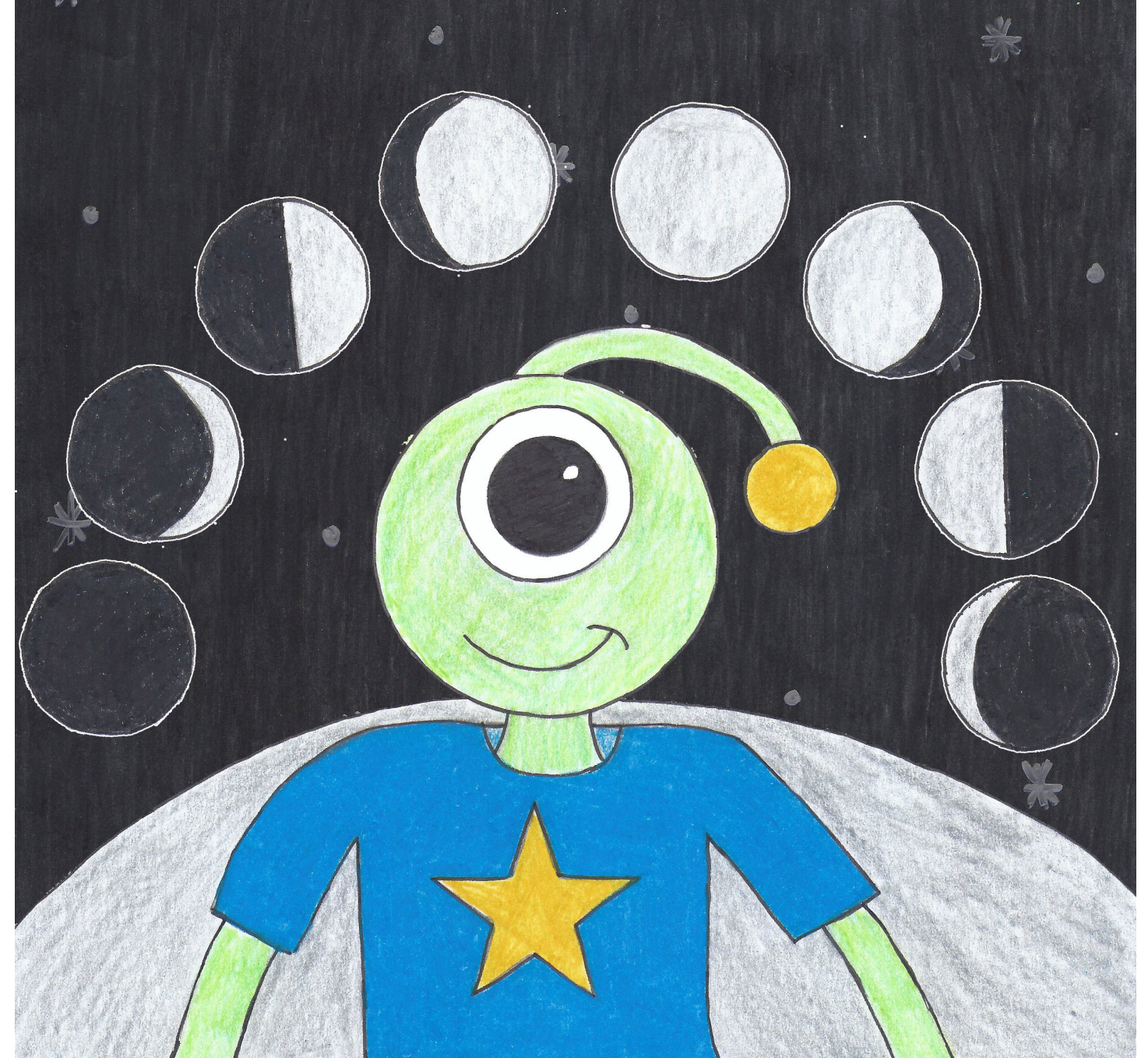


"Why do I float on the moon but not when I'm home on earth?" I grabbed Astronaut's hand and started bouncing up and down where we stood. "Gravity is affected by how big something is, Astronaut. Since your earth is bigger than my moon, its gravity is stronger making it so that you're pulled down more!"

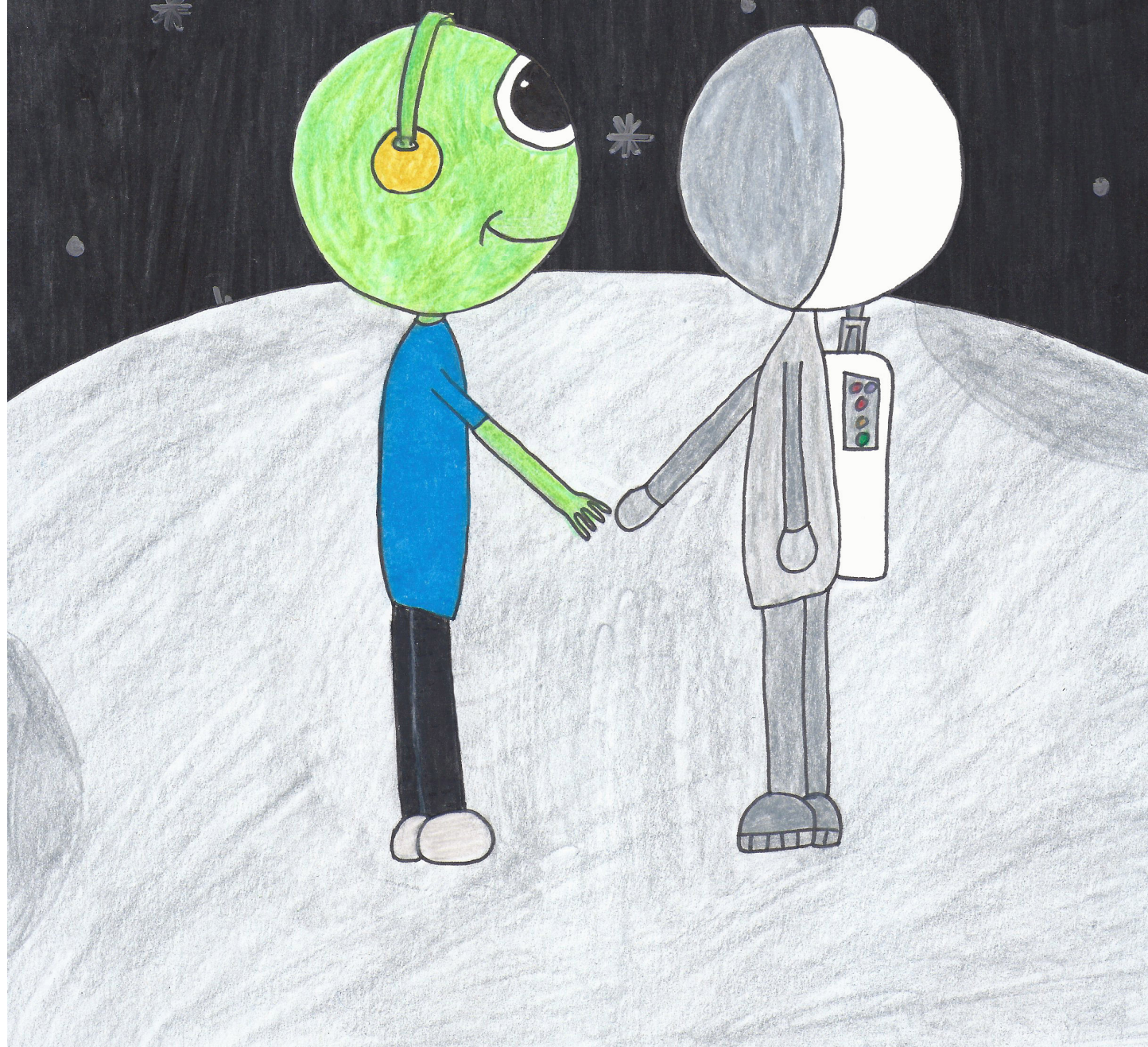
We stopped jumping and Astronaut pointed toward earth. "So I can't do this on earth?" Then, suddenly, Astronaut jumped into the space above us and floated towards a large crater. The puffy alien surfed down the side of the crater and landed in some moon dust which sprayed up around Astronaut, making me laugh.



After a fun time of surfing down craters, we got back to the questions. "Why does the moon seem to change shape?" "The moon has phases," I replied, "because it revolves around the earth, and the earth revolves around the sun. The light reflects off of the moon differently each day. The phases go from new moon, to waxing crescent, then first quarter, followed by waxing gibbous, and finally to a full moon. After the moon has become full, it starts to disappear, going from waning gibbous, to the last quarter, and then to waning crescent. The cycle begins again by going back to a new moon; it restarts every 27 to 28 days." Astronaut listened to me in awe, amazed that I knew so much about the moon.

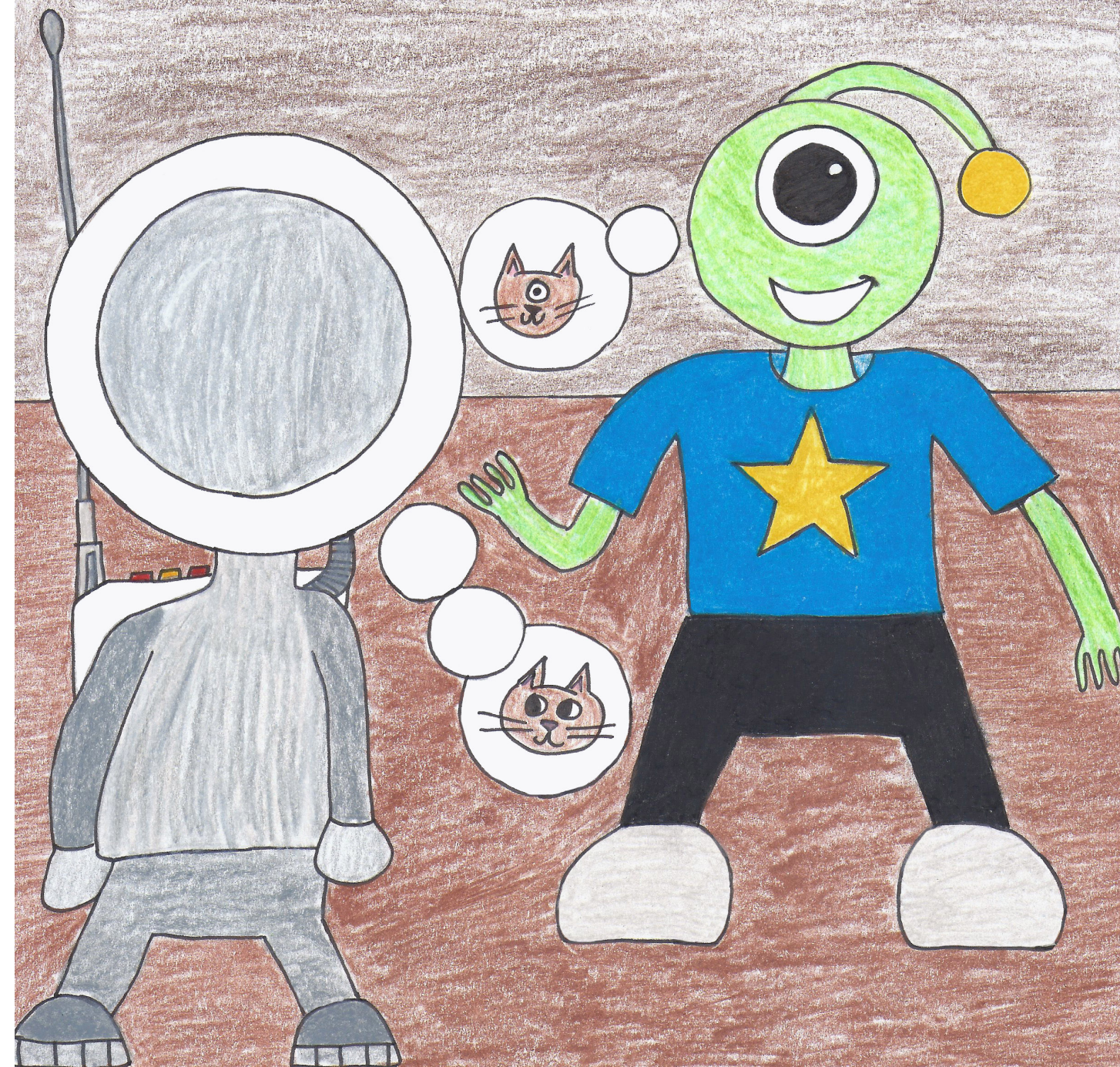


Astronaut thanked me for helping, and we headed back toward the ship. "Thanks so much for helping me, Polaris. I never expected to make such a good friend on the moon!" Grinning, I shuffled the moon dust with my shoes. "Well, I always hoped I'd get a visitor someday, someone that I could show the moon. You answered my wish!" We both smiled and continued our walk to my house.



Unfortunately, Astronaut had to go home the following morning. At first I felt sad, because my friend was leaving me, but then I realized that I'd be sad if I didn't get to go home to my real planet if I were in Astronaut's place. Astronaut and I stayed in my house and told stories about each other's adventures until it was time to sleep.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Polaris. Oh... and thank you for being such a nice friend to me. I'll come visit you again someday, okay?"



As I watched Astronaut's ship fly away from the moon, I didn't feel sad, I felt extremely happy. Our adventures together were fun, and I couldn't have asked for a better friend among the stars. Besides, Astronaut promised to come visit me again. I can't wait until that time comes! So, I guess it is time to go back to playing with moon dust, organizing my rock collection, and rereading all my books until the time comes for Astronaut to visit again

