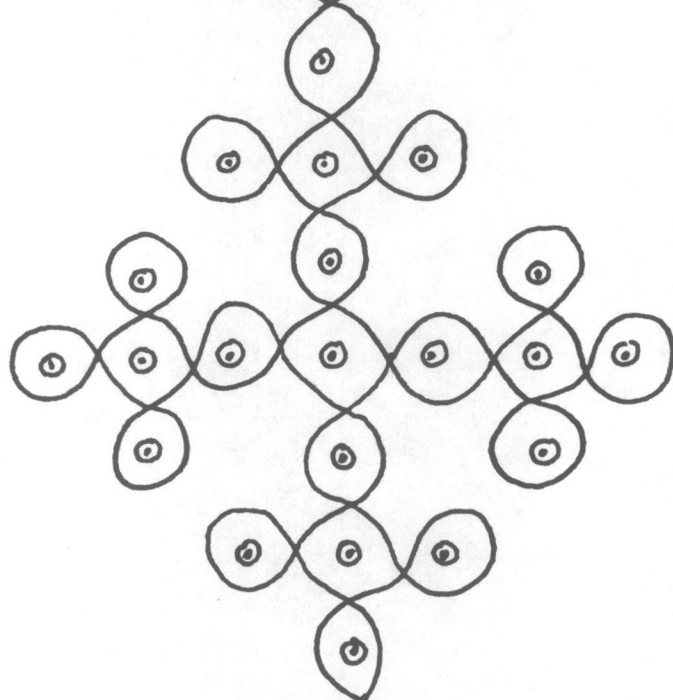


The Tense Present



Smile

Robert Zenz

T H E T E N S E P R E S E N T

R O B E R T Z E N D



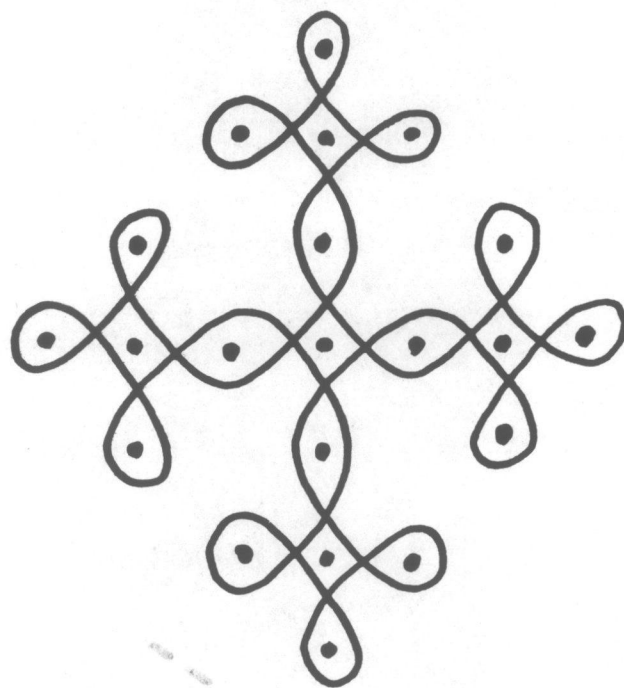
Copyright © Janine Zend, 1983,
all rights reserved, reproduced under license

Smile

THE TENSE PRESENT



Smile



Smile

ouch ouch ouch ouch



Smile



Where was I before?

ouch ouch ouch ouch



Where was I before?
Smile

There is an extremely jam-
med situation here.



Smile

○
I am alone. I am lonely.
I am bored. I am hungry.



Smile

It is getting worse: our
numbers are increasing. I
am squeezed from all sides.
Can you stop pushing me? It
was me? Sorry.



Smile

○
What can I do? I'm floating
ahead, but where to? I'm get-
ting tired. If I could only
eat something, I'd be O.K.
I think...



Smile

A ray of hope. Something
must have happened outside.
I feel it. Oh, what a re-
lease! Many of us are emig-
rating. I wonder where they
are going. Well, it doesn't
really matter. At last, I can
breathe! And stretch!



Smile

○
Hey, what's that noise? The
pressure is increasing. Oh.
It's gone. Good. Oh no. A-
gain? Something wants to
break into my place, but is-
n't succeeding. Strange. I
smell something good. Hope
it's food.



Smile



Smile

Oh my god! I am being taken
too! There must be a misun-
derstanding! I want to stay!
Hah! I am being carried away!
What's this? An elevator? A
river? A flood? I better learn
how to swim. At last, I can
use my long tail!

O
Oh, I love fish! And how
many! Too bad I cannot
catch them. I'm so heavy
and slow, I can hardly mo-
ve. Annoying. And on my o-
ther side, too. Why does-
n't at least one come near
me so that I could GULP!

I can't get out of this stream. And I see a huge, round reef! Excuse me, do you mind? what a rude bastard... Don't you see that you're in my way? Gee, I can't avoid it! My head... Ouch!

Finally! This one is coming towards me. Looks like a delicious piece. Strong and huge. And what a nice big fleshy head it has! Come on, come on! I am so hungry! Now! Ouch!



Smile



Where was I before?



Smile

I
see
me to re-
member that
that I was hungry
and afraid,
but now I am
quite satisfied.



Smile



Smile

There is a turbulence inside. The landscape around me seems to be shrinking. Isn't it interesting?



Smile



Smile

Well, that was o
nly an optical illus
ion. Actually, I am g
rowing. There is a liqui
d food pouring toward me.
I better open up in the fro
nt so that I can drink it up.
Yummy. It's good! But certain
parts of it stink. Yakk! I must
get rid of them. But how?

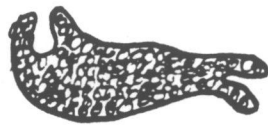


Smile

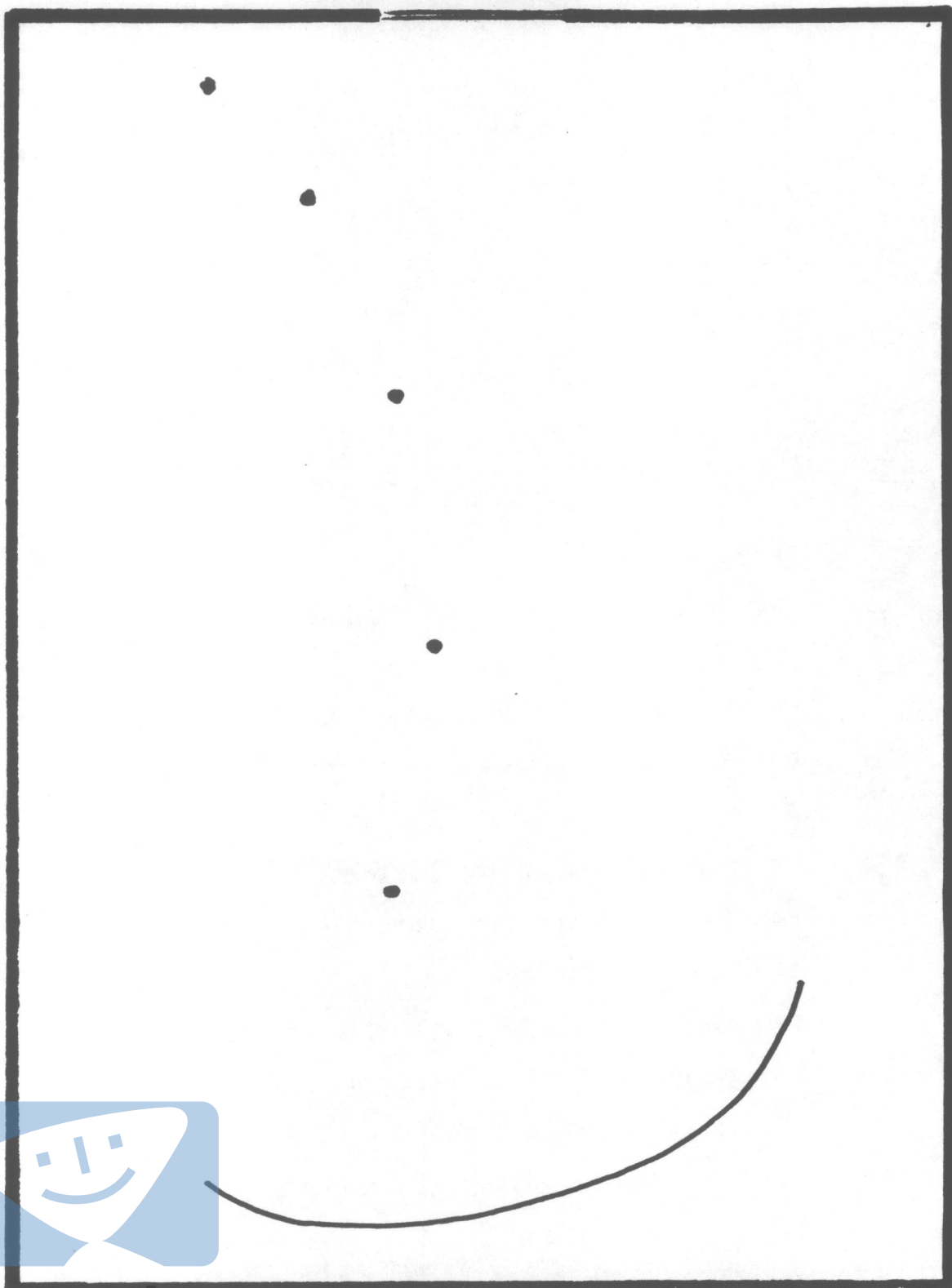


Smile

Th
is is disgusting. Oh! Why d
on't I just make another ho
le on the other end of me? T
his was a splendid idea! Yes,
I shouldn't mix up these two
contrary functions. One end s
hould be for getting, the oth
er for giving away. Yeah, tha
t's much better!



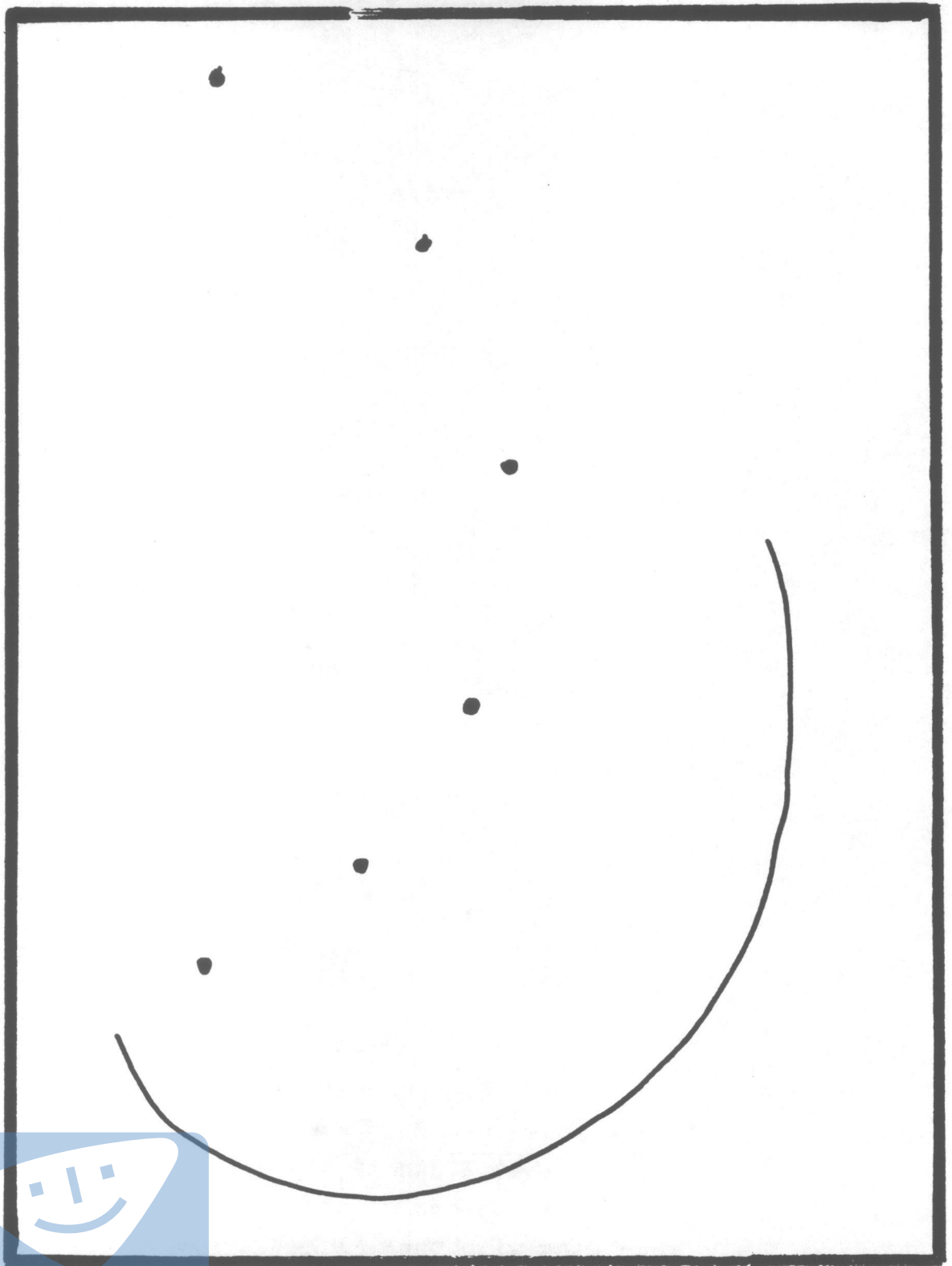
Smile



Smile

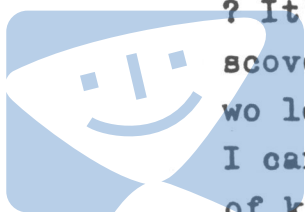
Recently, I took a strange shape. Long formations grew out of me. Two on the top, and two on the bottom. Each ends in five short formations. I don't quite see what use I can make of them... Above my rear-opening, a tail grew. I'm curling up and rotating as I float. It makes me a bit dizzy. But it's a good feeling. I really like swimming. Except... The room is getting smaller and smaller.

Smile



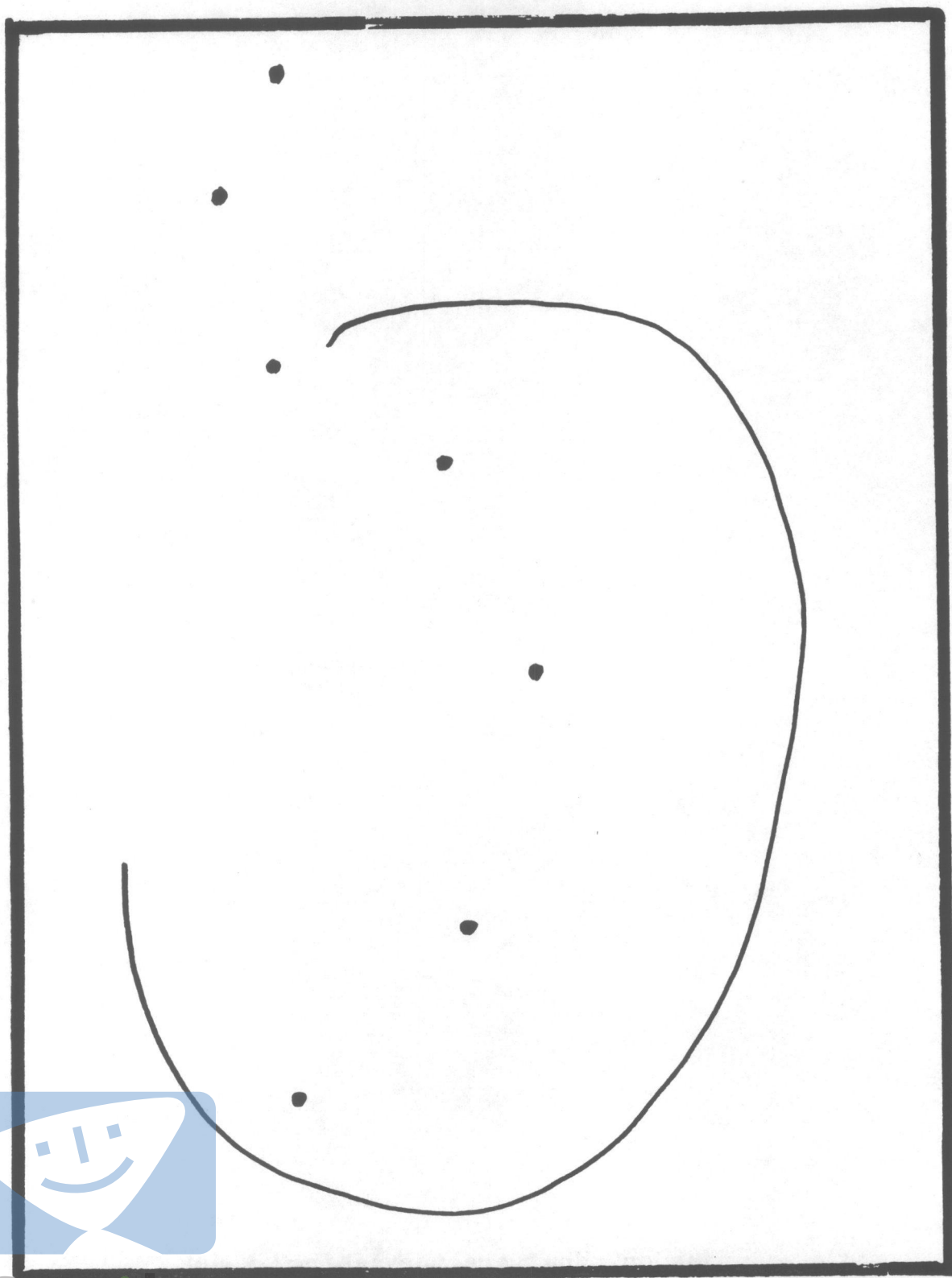
Smile

Hey! Where's my tail
? It's gone. Hm. By the way, I di
scovered what I can do with the t
wo long extensions on the bottom.
I can kick with them! I get a lot
of kicks out of my kicks.



Smile



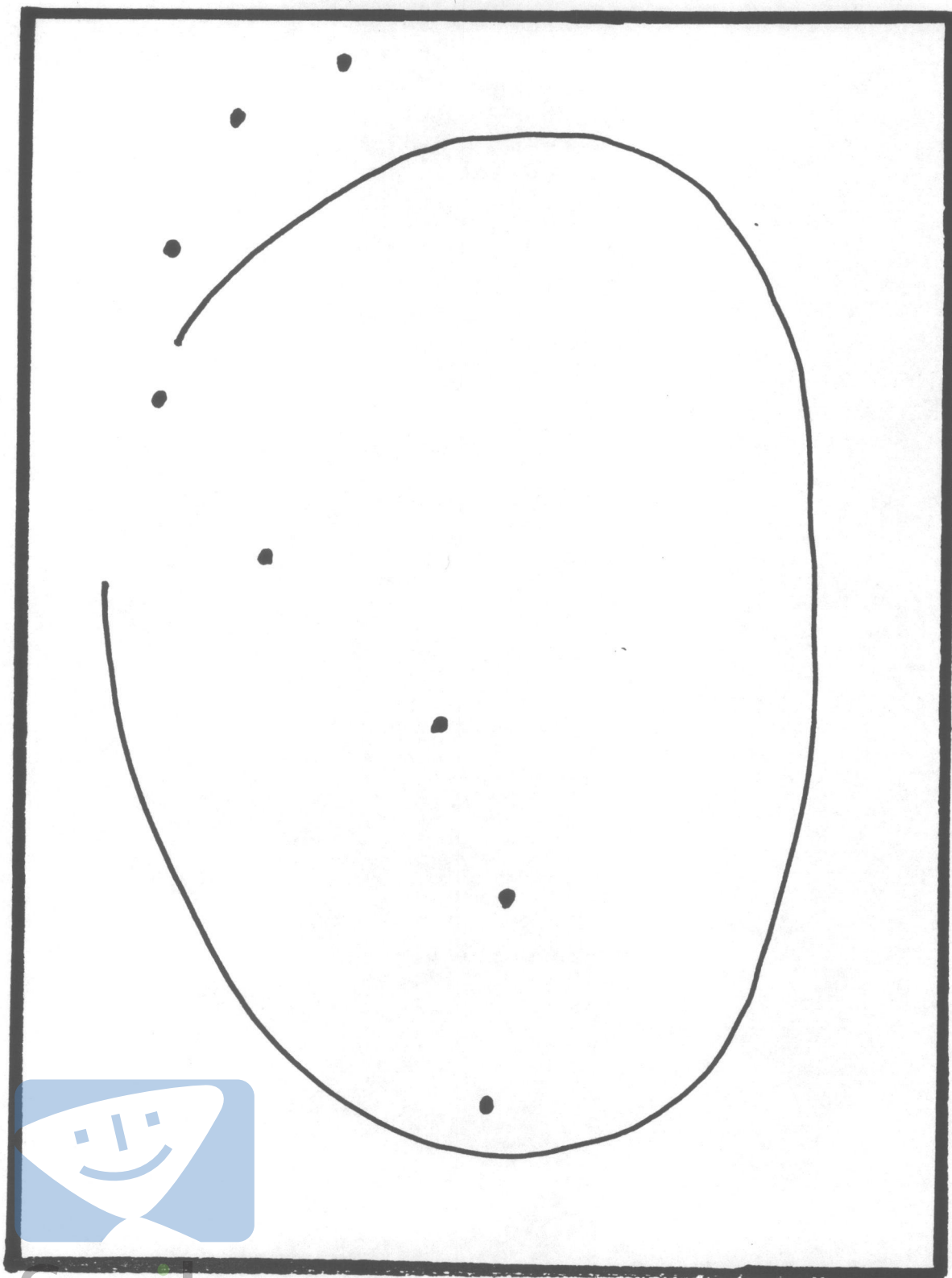


Smile



Smile

What's going on? What are they doing? I don't want to get out of here! What the hell is squeezing my head? Huh! That hurts! My belly button! This running water is freezing. Why? Why? It is too bright! Pull down the curtains!



Smile

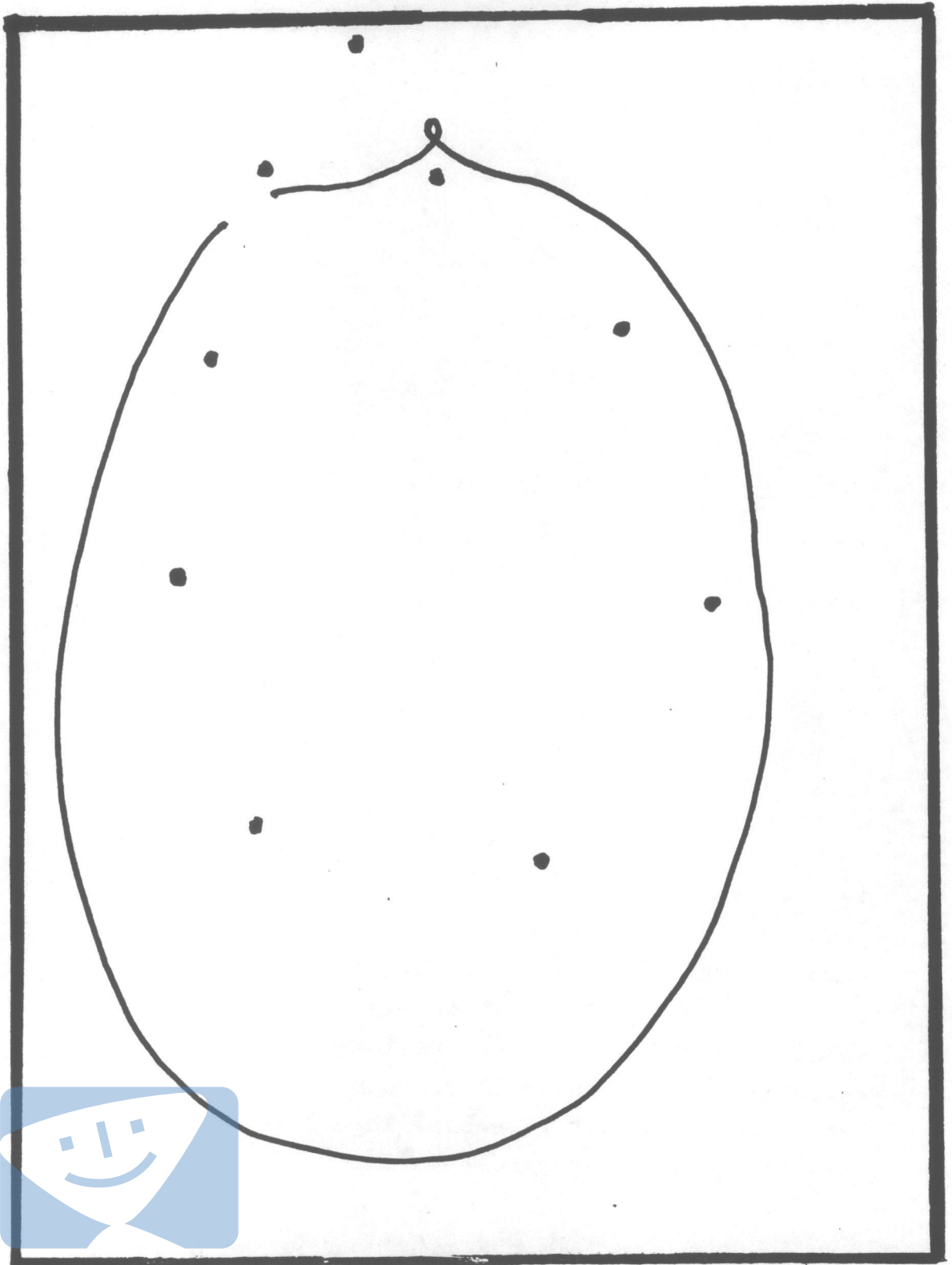
Ouch!



Where was I before?



Smile

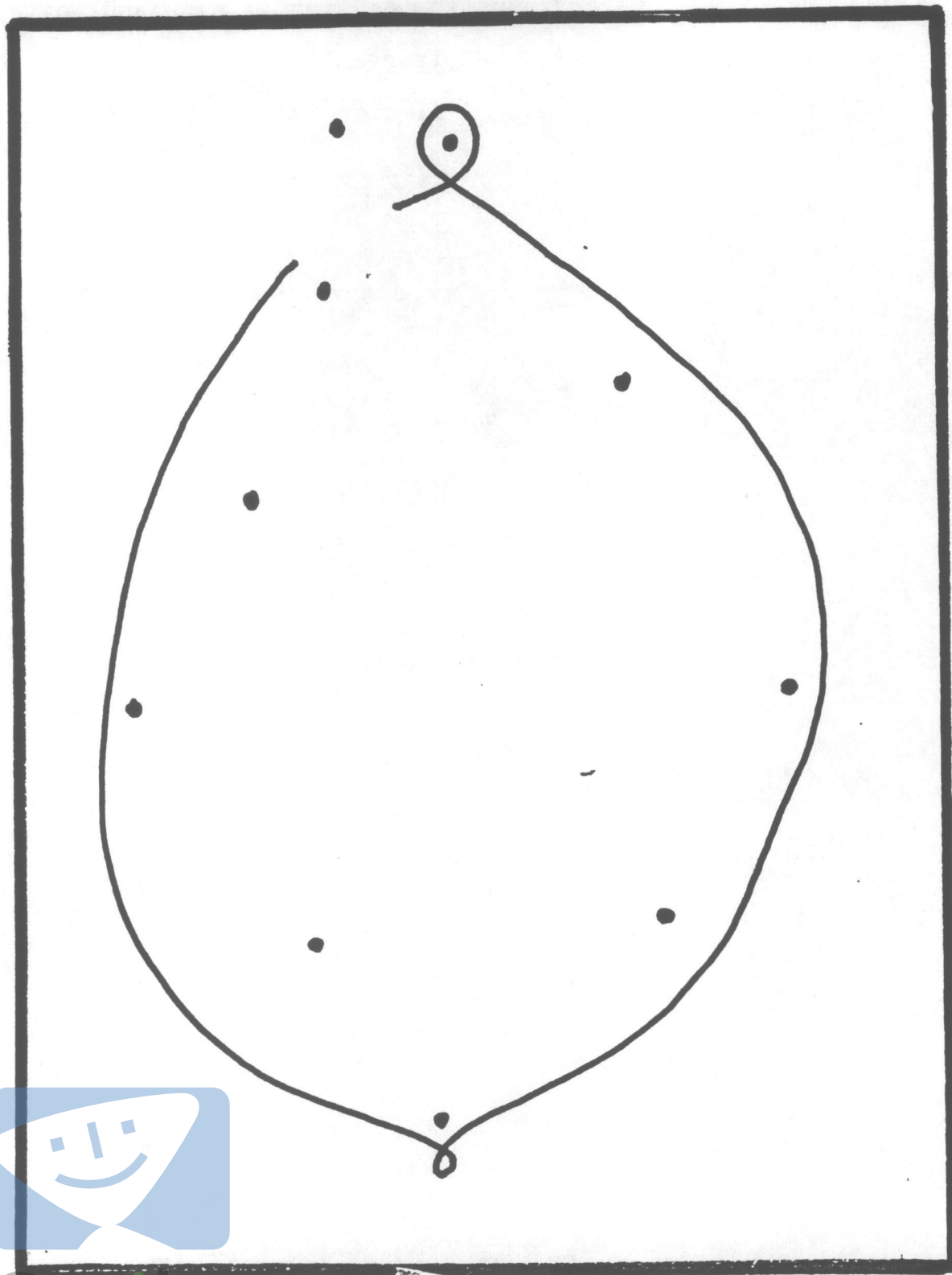


Smile

This soft big one is very pleasant and warm. The spring which I am sucking has a good smell. Now the other spring. It is the same. Why am I turned around all the time? Why do they wake me up all the time? Sleeping is like that chamber where I was before. Where was it? Recently I have become forgetful. No wonder. They always interrupt whatever I do. When I sleep, they wake me up. When I eat, I am put to sleep. When I am dry, they make me wet. And viceversa. Idiots!



Smile

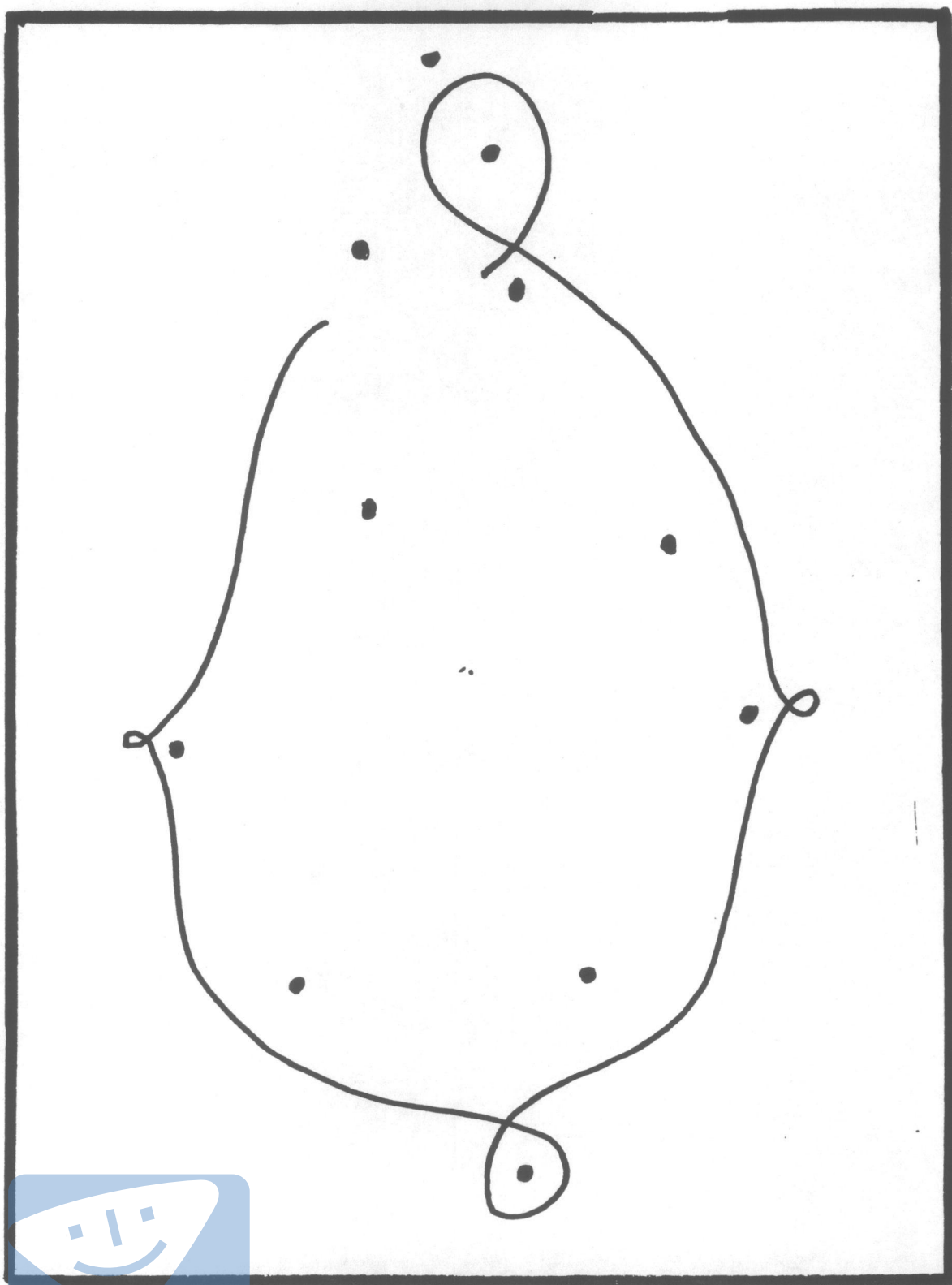


Smile

I can't stand this guy! He always put
s a spoon into my mouth. Aaaaa! My god, why doesn't he stop it? O
uch! What was that? Why did he sting me? These giants are cruel!!!
They always try to make me cry. But the ceiling is nice and white, a
nd I especially like the rocking. It is really relacsing. (Sorry, but
I can't spell yet.) I am yawning... I'll soon fa



Smile

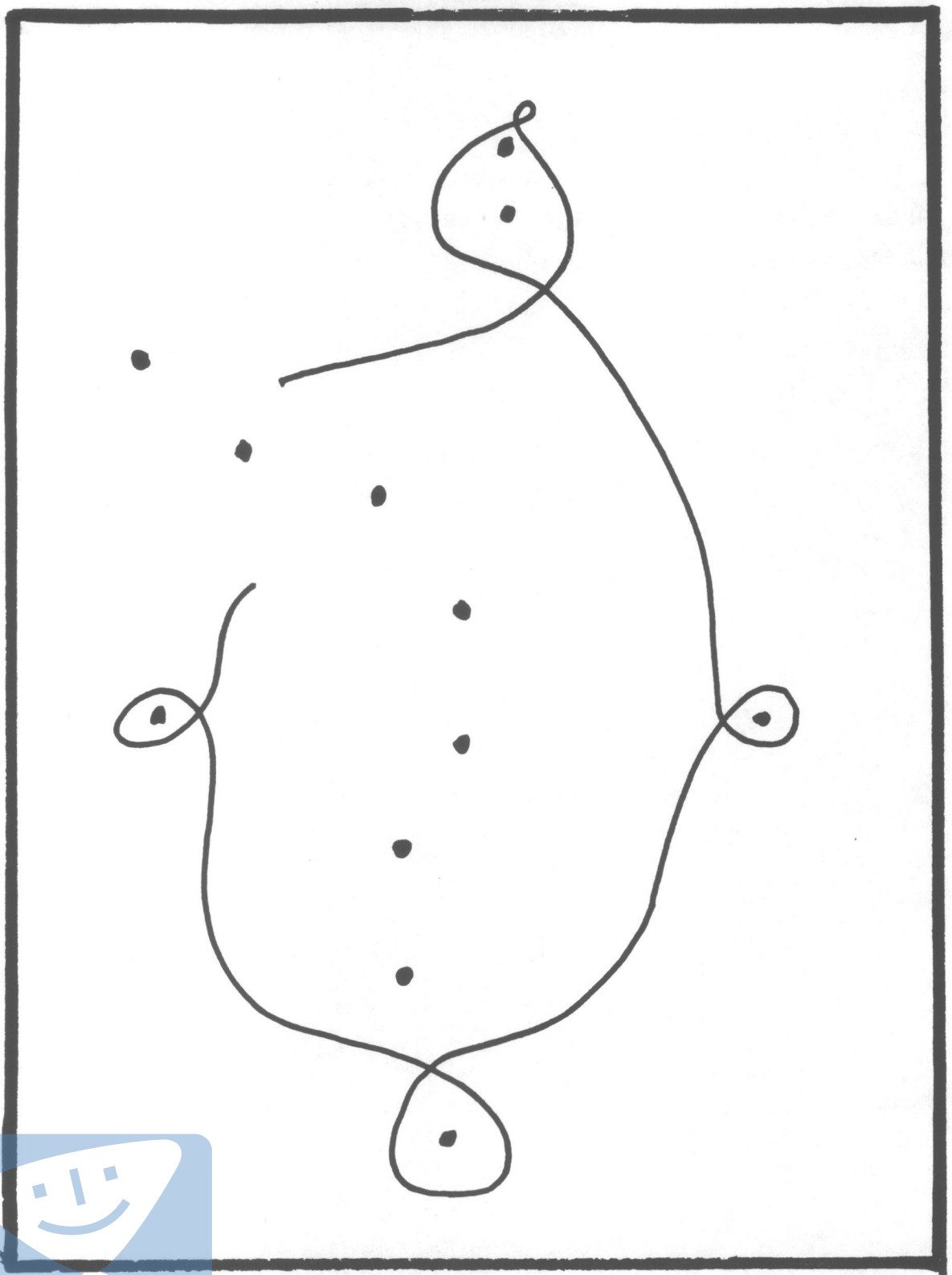


Smile



Smile

This is a great achievement!
I am turning over onto my stomach. And now onto my back. I am quit
• proud of me!



Smile

()

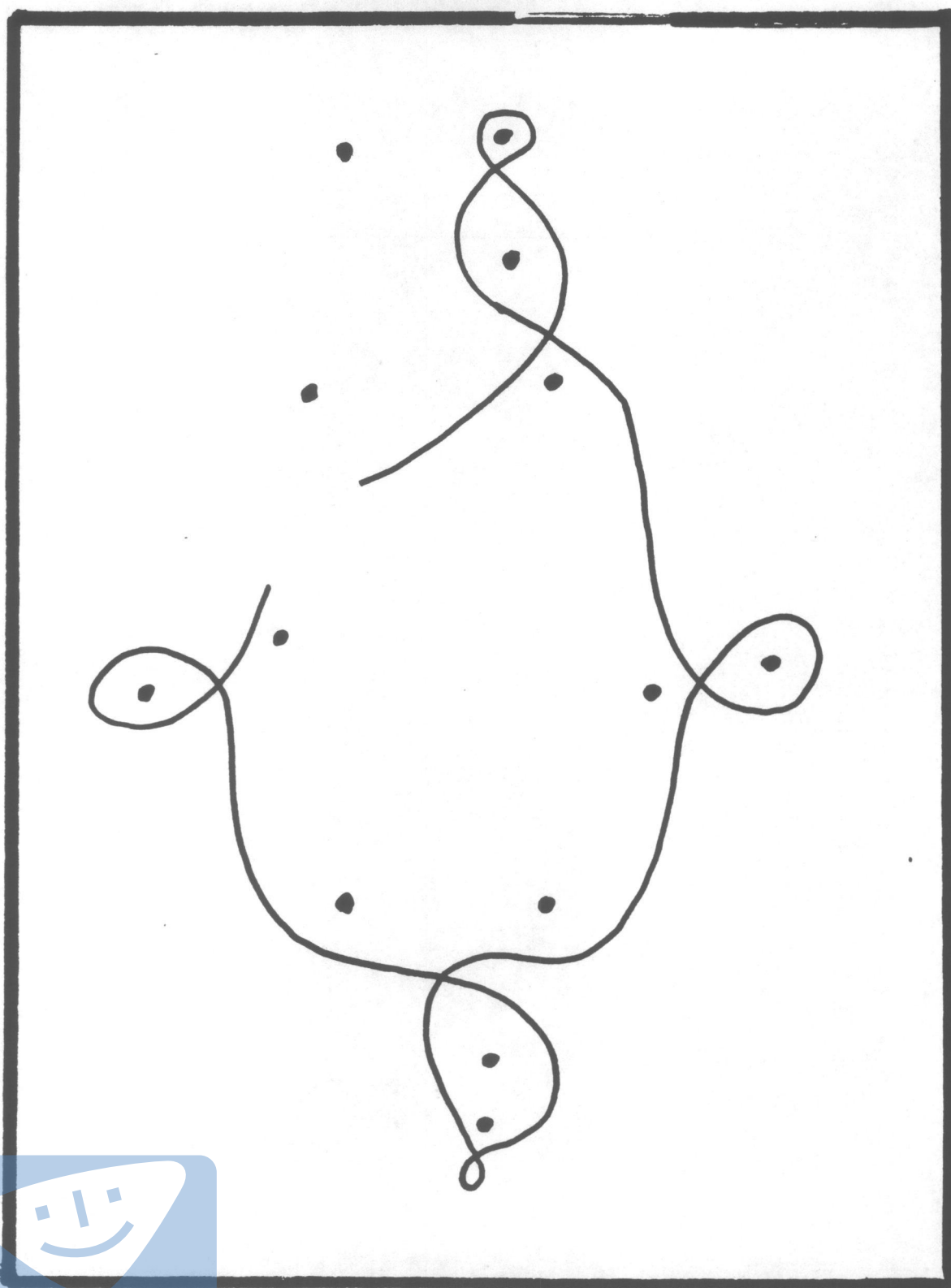
This is fantastic! I am crawling which means that the whole room is passing by, beside me, on both sides. I can move everything backward. I am really beyond my own expectations!

na... na...na... na...

na... na...



Smile



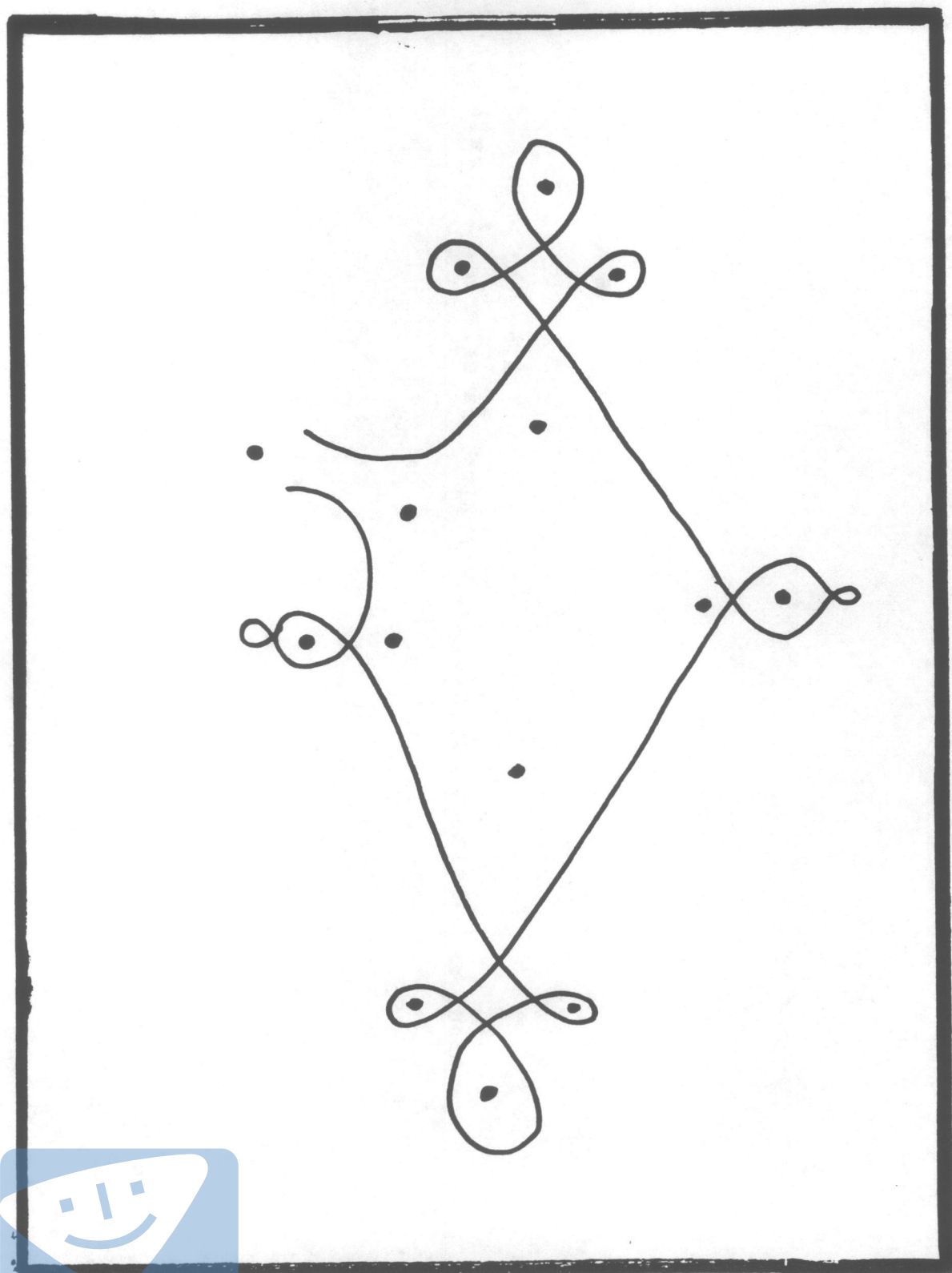
Smile

I am holding the wall with my hands. Fabulous!
The floor shouldn't be held any longer. It can lie there alone, without my help! I'm a good teacher.



Smile

Papapapapapapa



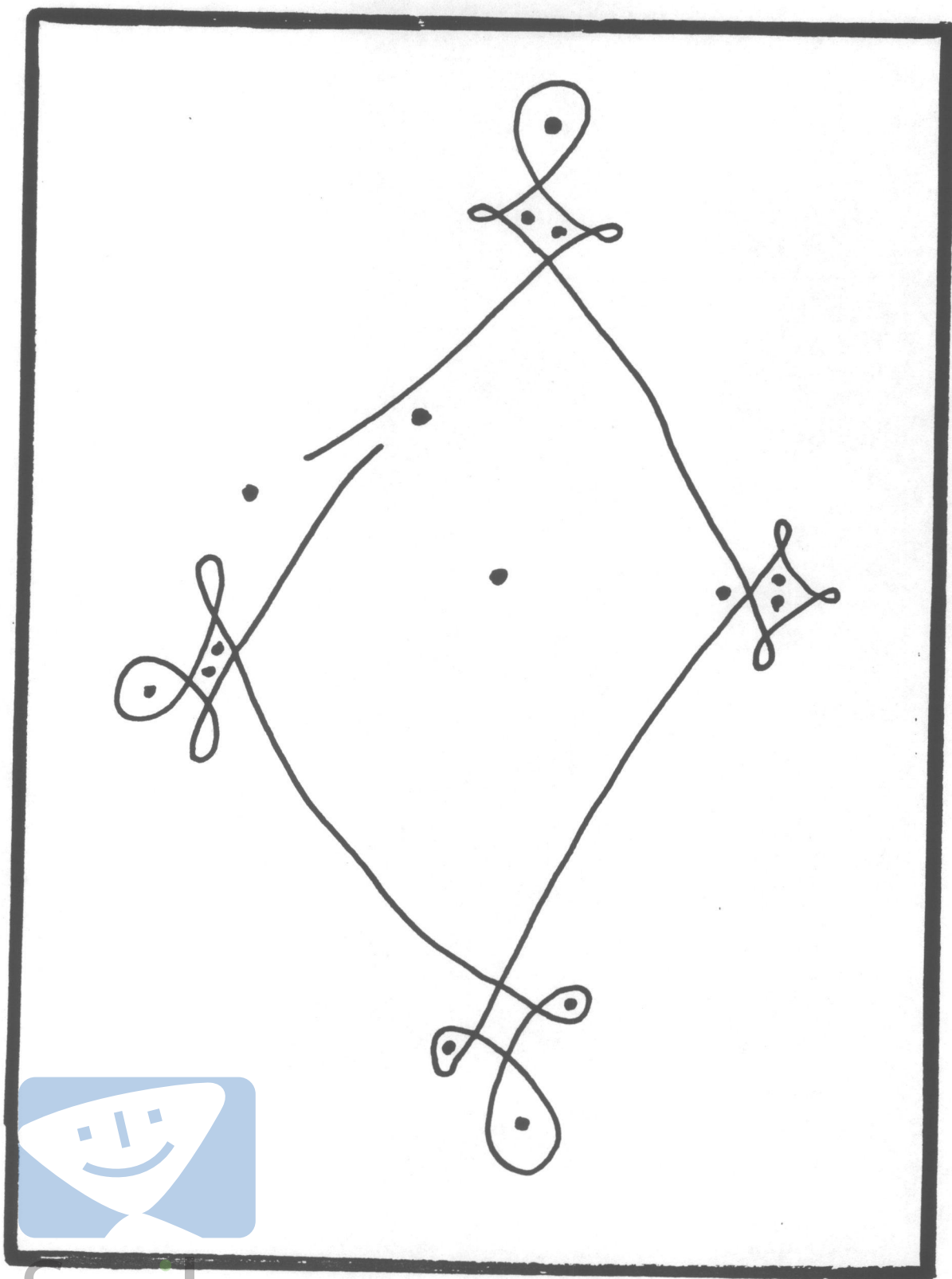
Smile

Even the wall can stand now without me, thanks to my patient and tireless efforts. At last!



Smile

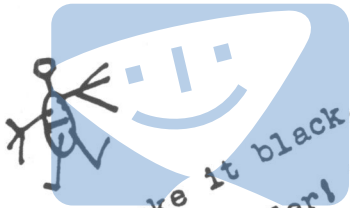
40 It's mine! I want it! Good. I am stronger. After all, who did he think I was
? Did he think I was just a... Hey! Give it back to me! Mama! Mama!
Give it to me!



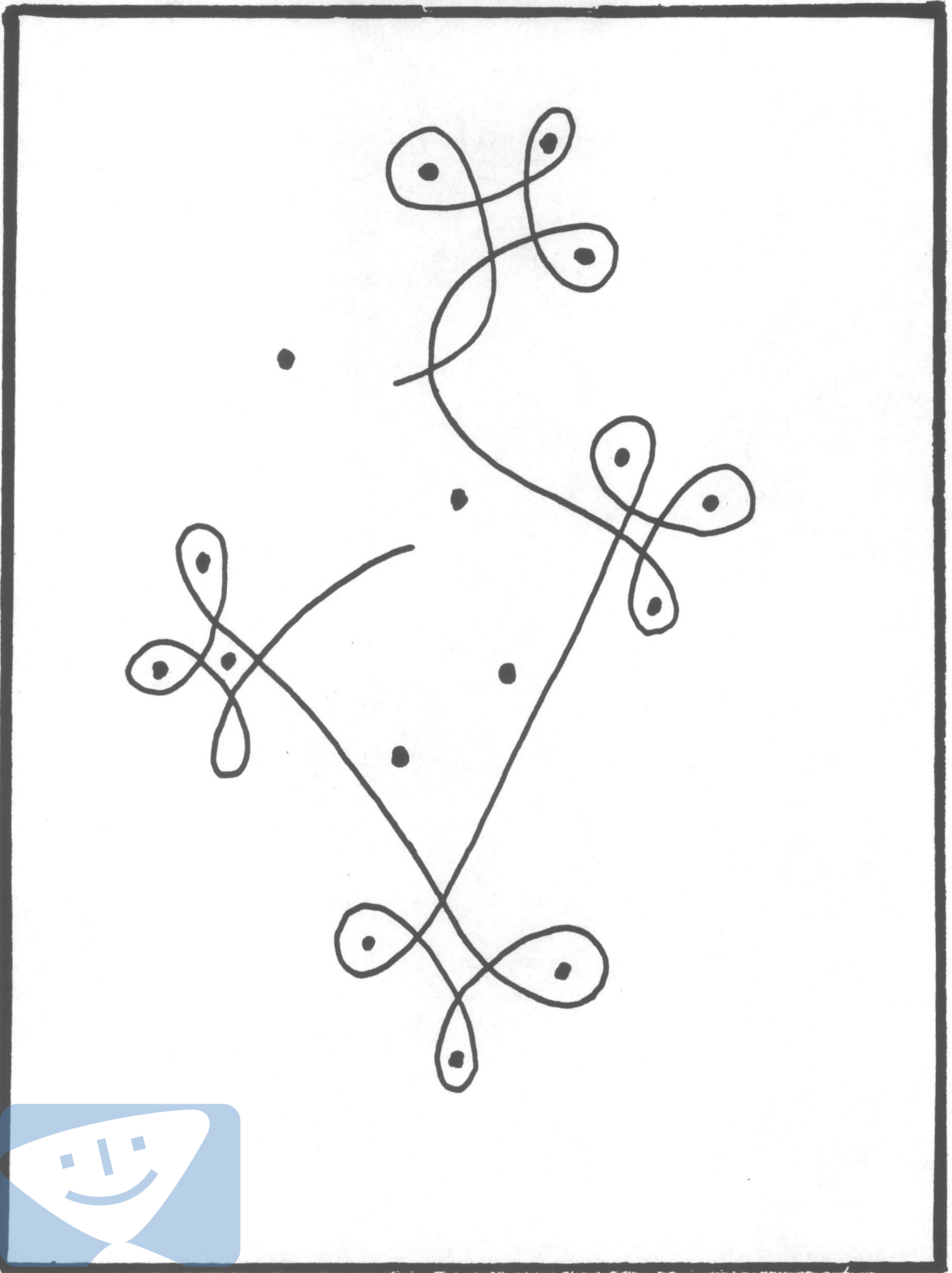
Smile

I can run

much faster than you!



tree. I'll make it black. This here is a sun. I'll make it blue. This is a
No, it's not a spider! A house. This will be yellow. And this here is me.
My dad knows better! It's me! Daddy! Jimmy says that I am a spider! You see?

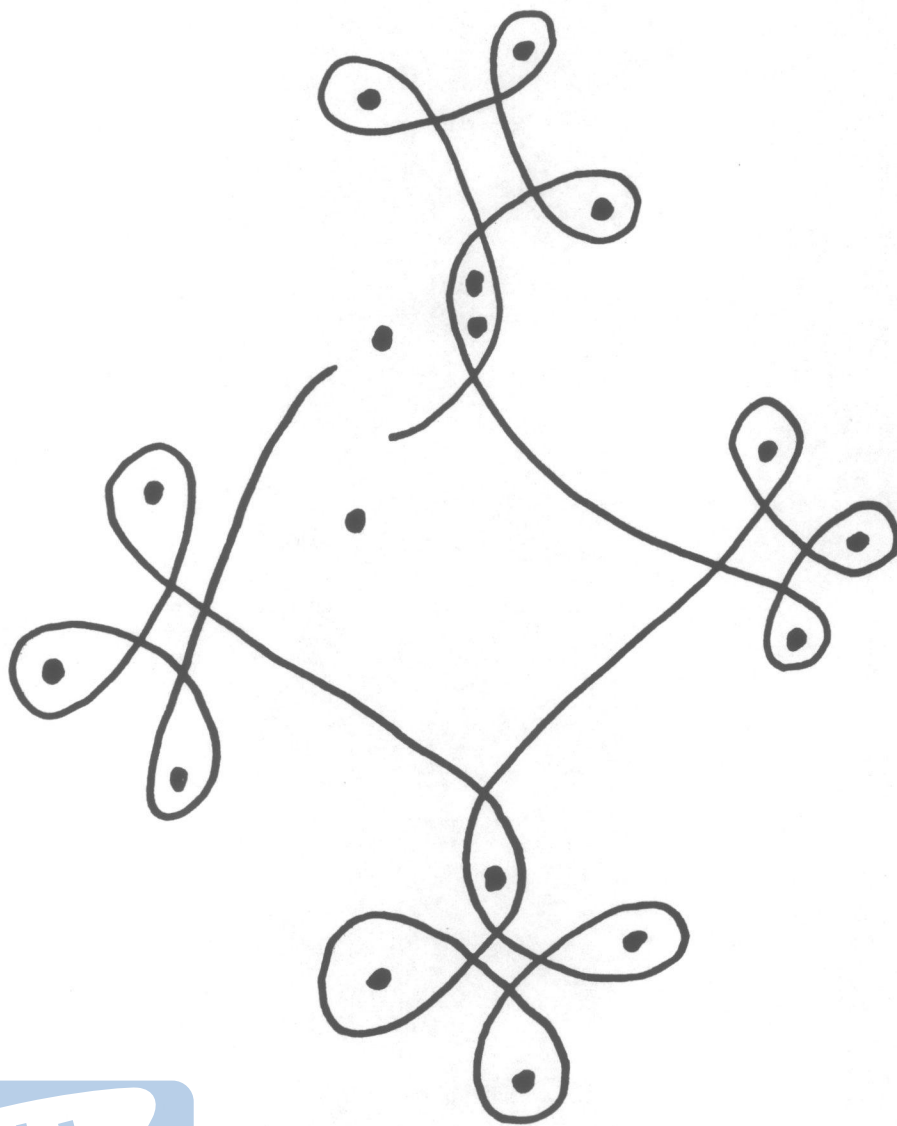


Smile

I am soared. I hope, Miss Schligovitz will ask somebody else. I hate geogr
aphy! The circus was much more interesting yesterday. That's why I had no time to
do my homework. It's all my parents' fault, they took me. When will the bell ring?
Moments can be long.



Smile



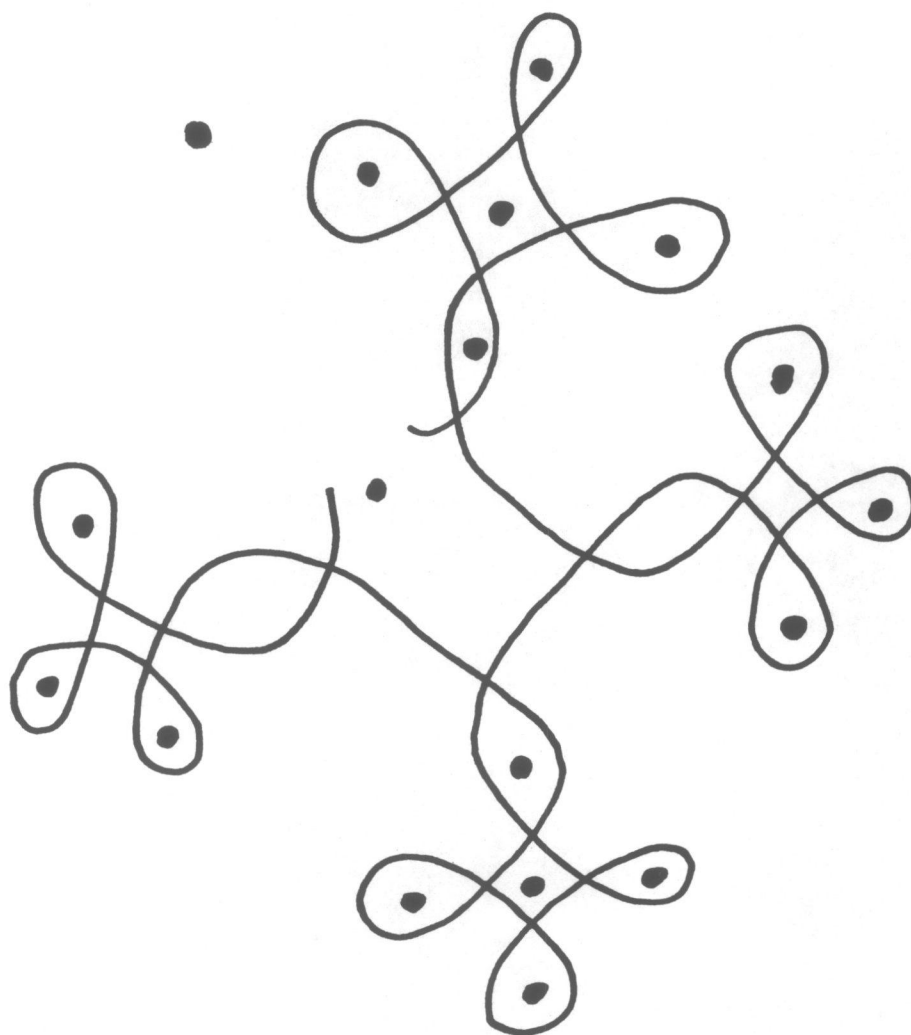
smile

will marry mommie, then Mary.
Hi, Mary! She is cute. I will marry her when I grow up. First I

There are five continents. Europe. Asia. Africa. America. And...



Smile



Smile

Do you really like my first poem, Arthur?

What I actually attempted to express in
it is the alienation of modern man in our
technological society.

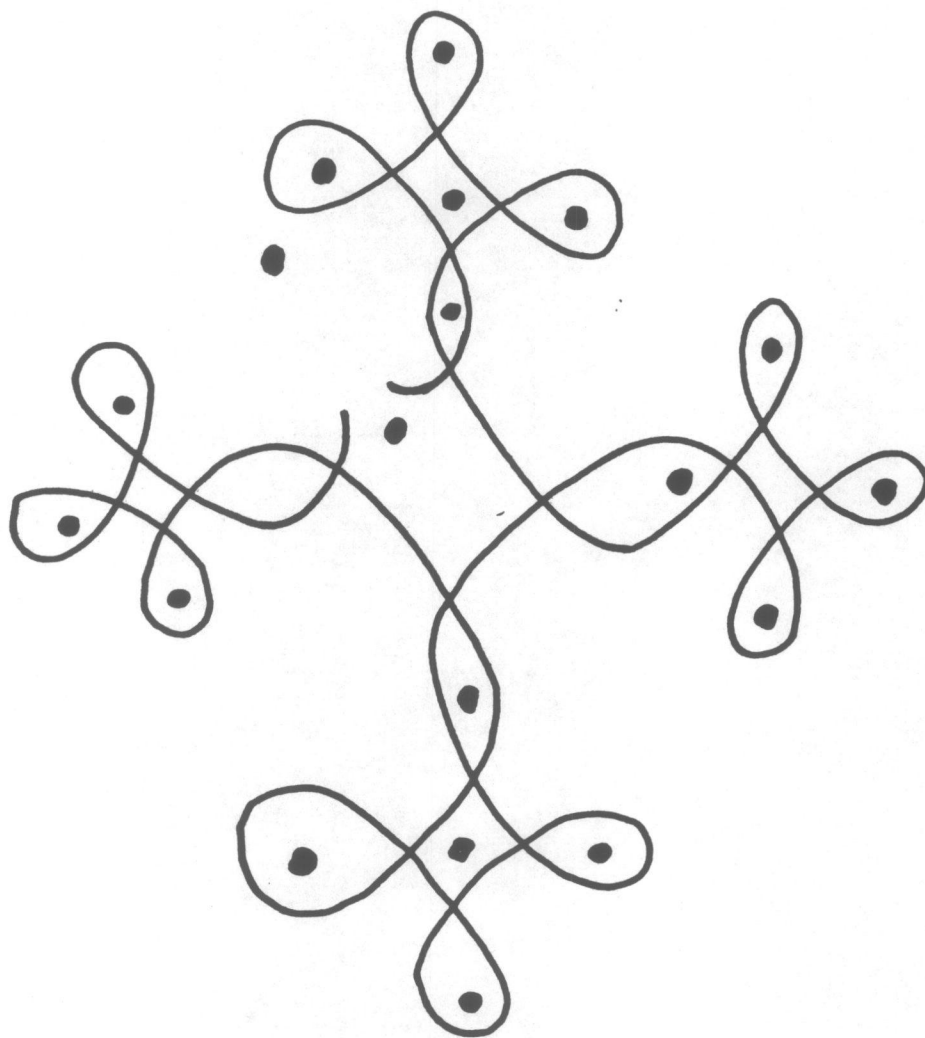


$$E = Mc^2$$



Smile

l o o o r e v e r
y



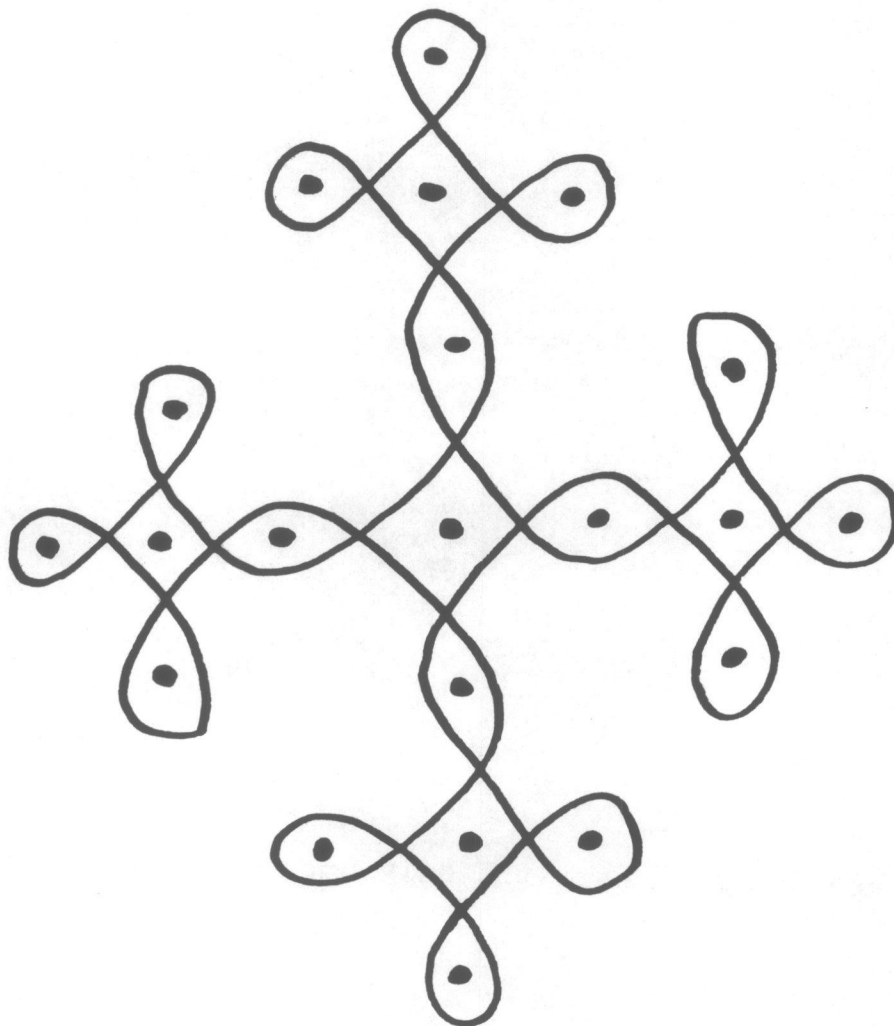
Smile

How could I skip that boring convocation-ceremony?

No way? Okay, okay, I'll go.



Smile



Smile

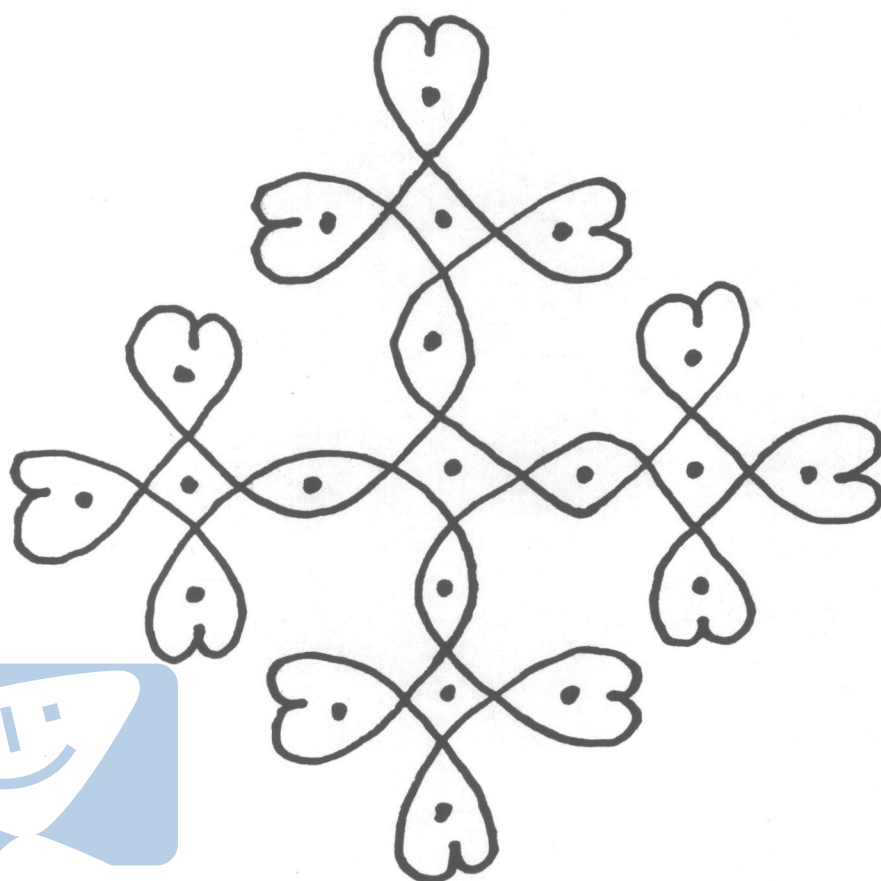
I love you! Forever!

But you are the real one, the only one. Oh, she was just a

childish fancy. You know...



Smile

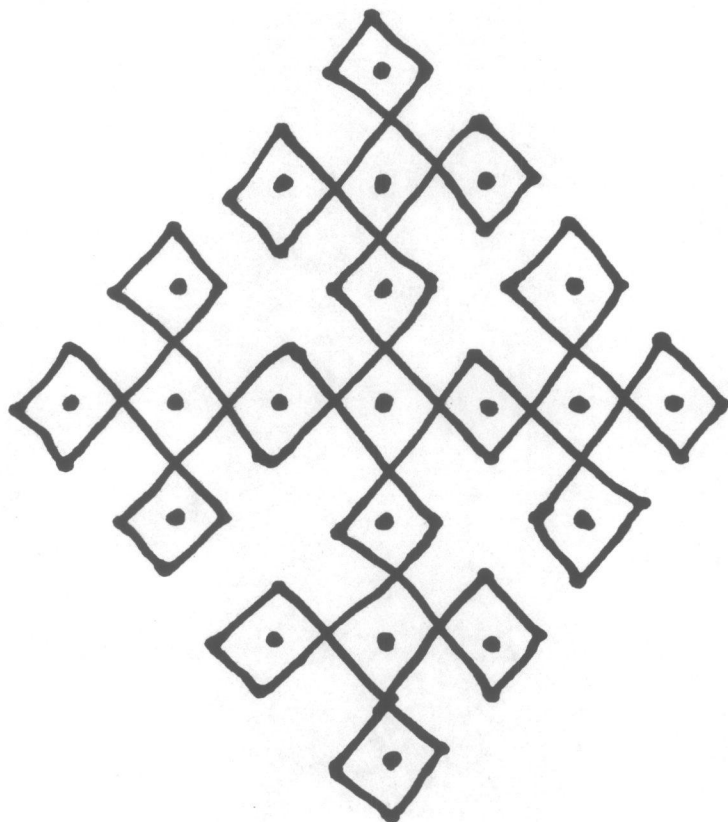


Smile

I'm sorry, Mr. Clark,
my alarm-clock didn't
work this morning.
Of course. Of course!
It will never happen
again. Yes. Yes. Yes.
You are absolutely right.
I promise.
(Fuck you!)



Smile



Smile

I do. I do.

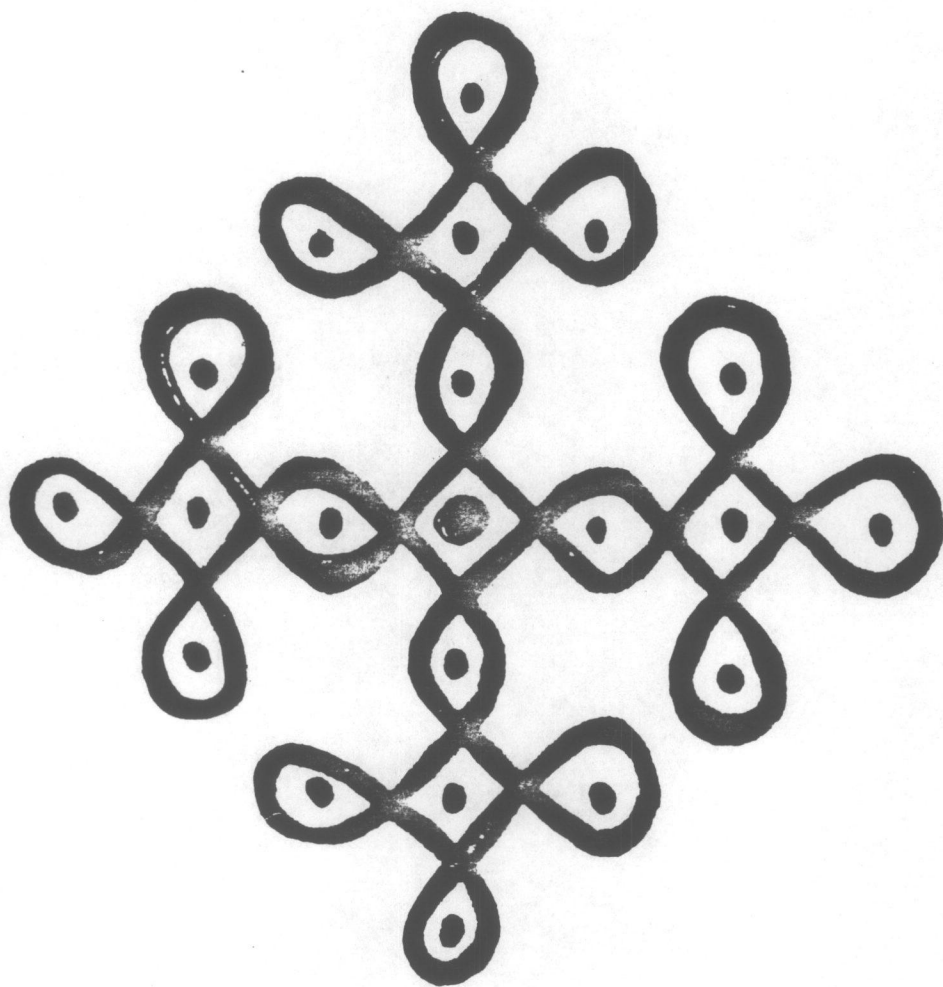
Oops!...I almost
dropped the ring.

And now... our first decent kiss. Stop.

Look. Look.
Isn't he the most beautiful
baby you ever saw in your life?
No, but really!
Not because he is my son,
I mean it objectively.



Smile



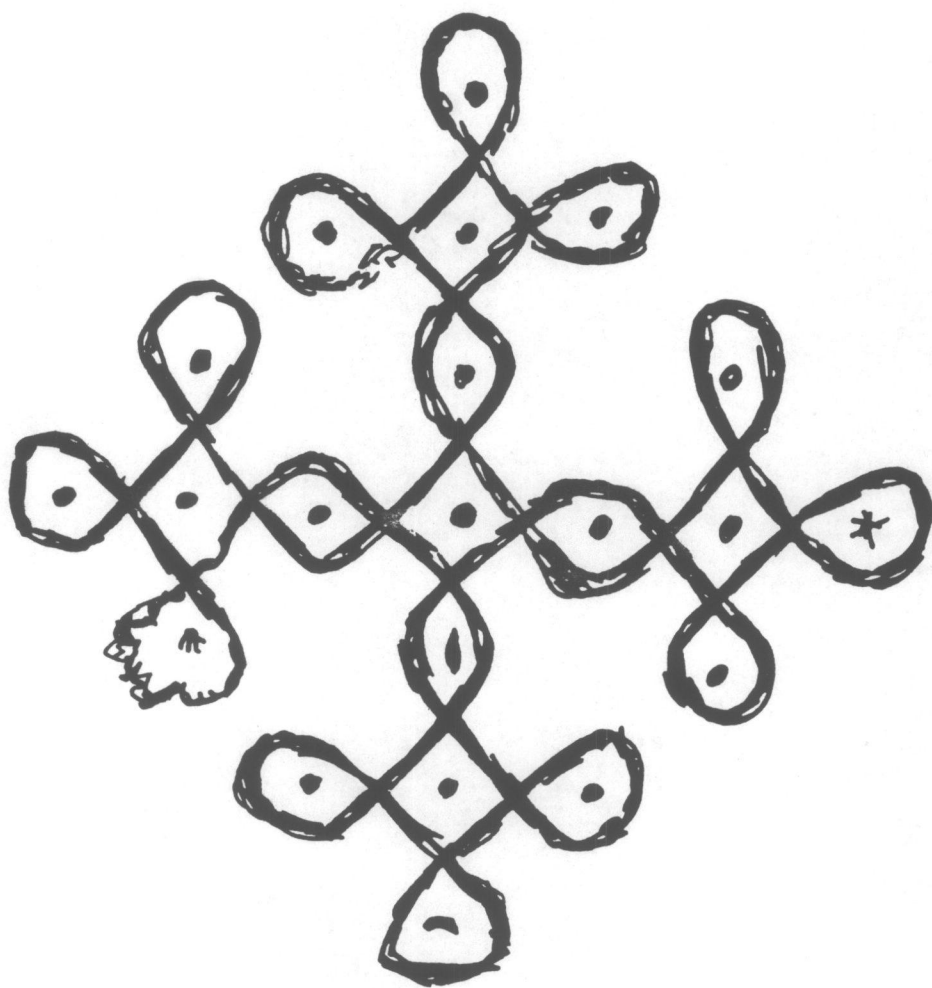
Smile

But of course, I love you. Why do you keep asking it?

I wish you understood my situation. Oh, she is very sick. Take it off

on. I am basically a very faithful man. But my wife is frigid. Oh, she is very sick. Take it off



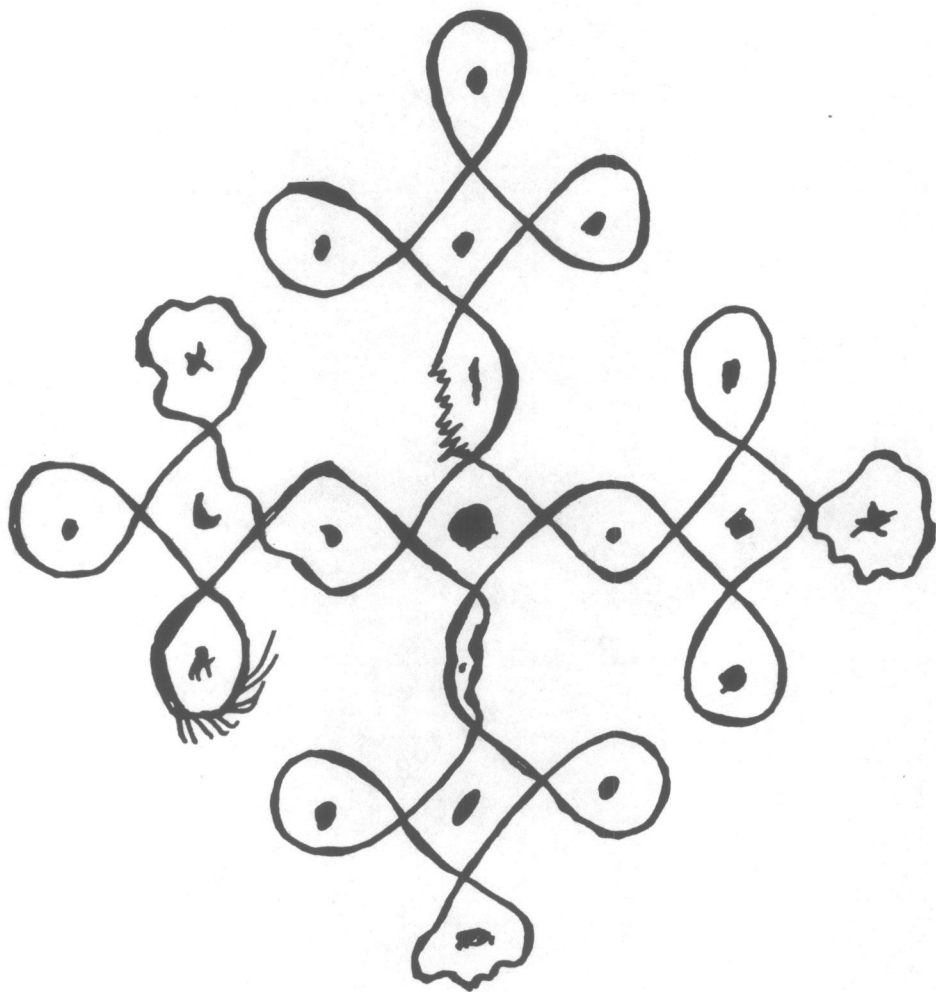


Smile

My dear colleagues. Don't think that my promotion will change anything in my relationship towards you. We shall always remain friends.



You are fired.

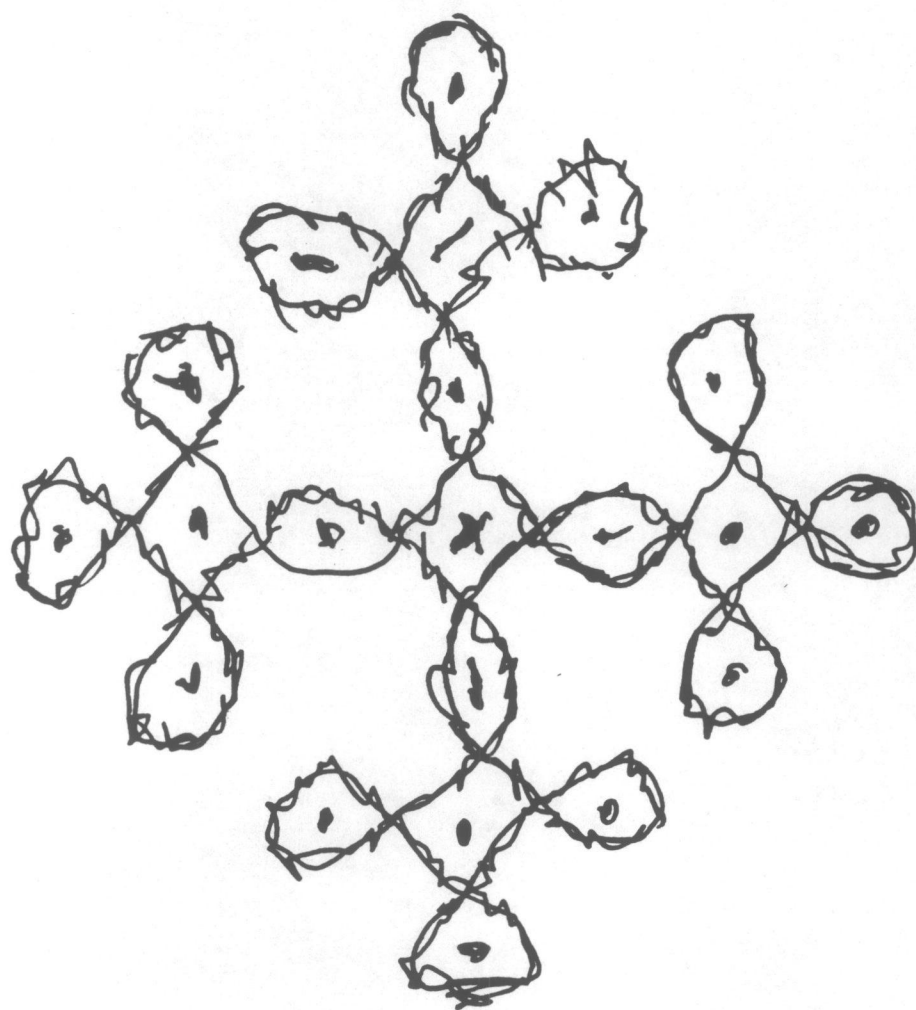


Smile

If you really must invite
them, do so. But I don't want to stay up too late. I am tired.



Smile

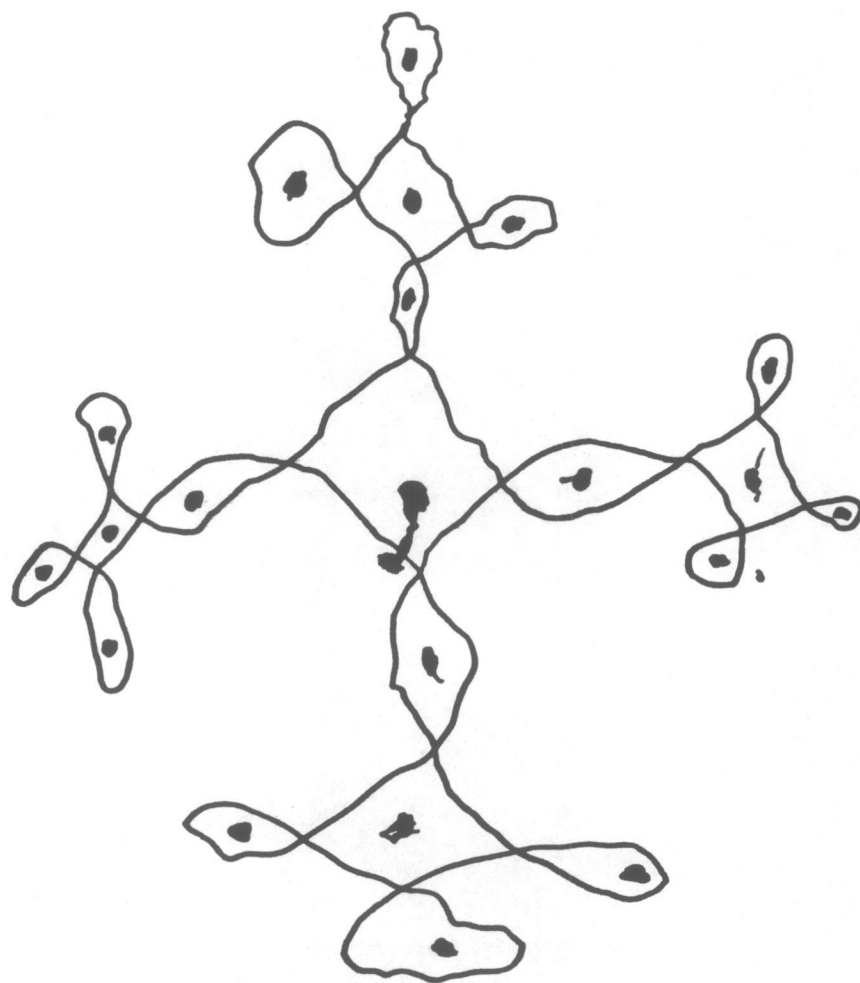


Smile



I don't understand, Doc... I have a quiet life, a sedentary job, I don't s
oke, I never overexert myself... Why me?

Smile

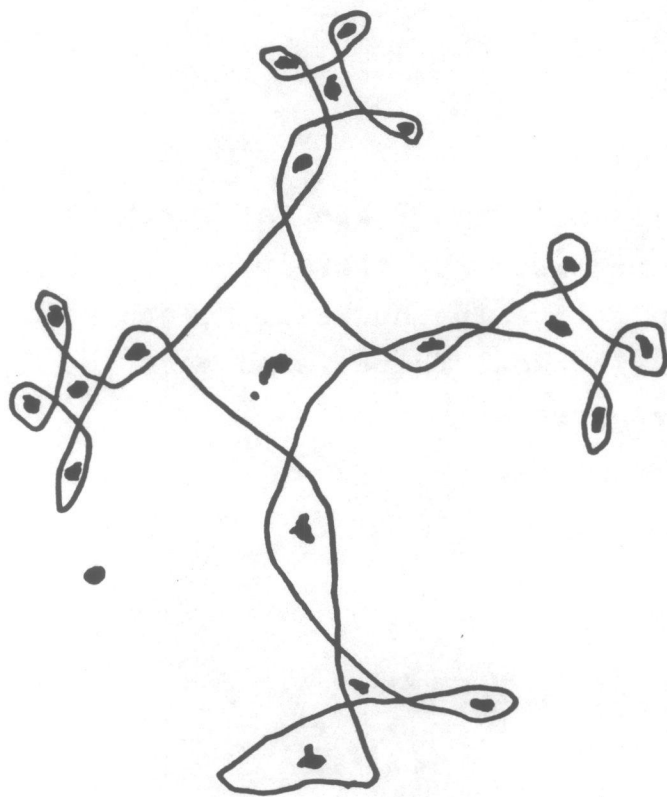


Smile

It is true.
I never believed it when others told me. Yes, I admit, it's strange
... No, really, I love my grandson more than I loved my son. Bu-bu-
bu-bu-bu. he is wet! Take him away!



Smile

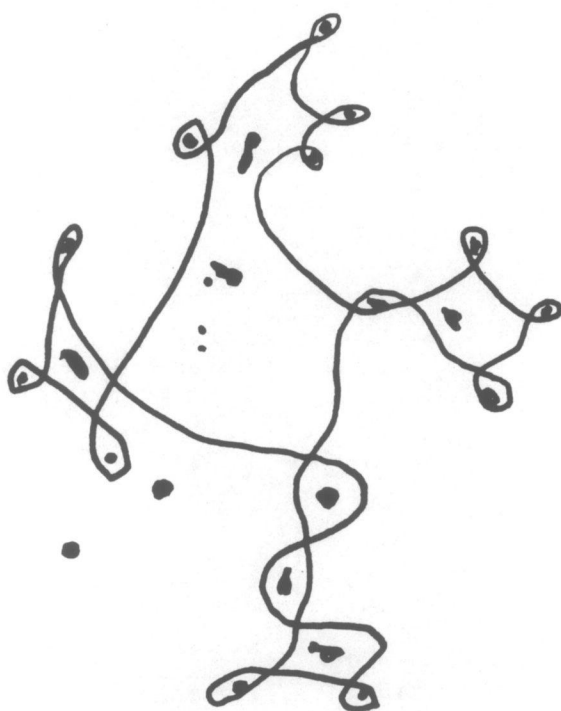


Smile

Interesting.
I can't recall what I ate for lunch today, but I sharply remember the flavours of my childhood. No, I don't live in the past. No one does. I just remember it. Now. There is no past. No future. It is always present.



Smile

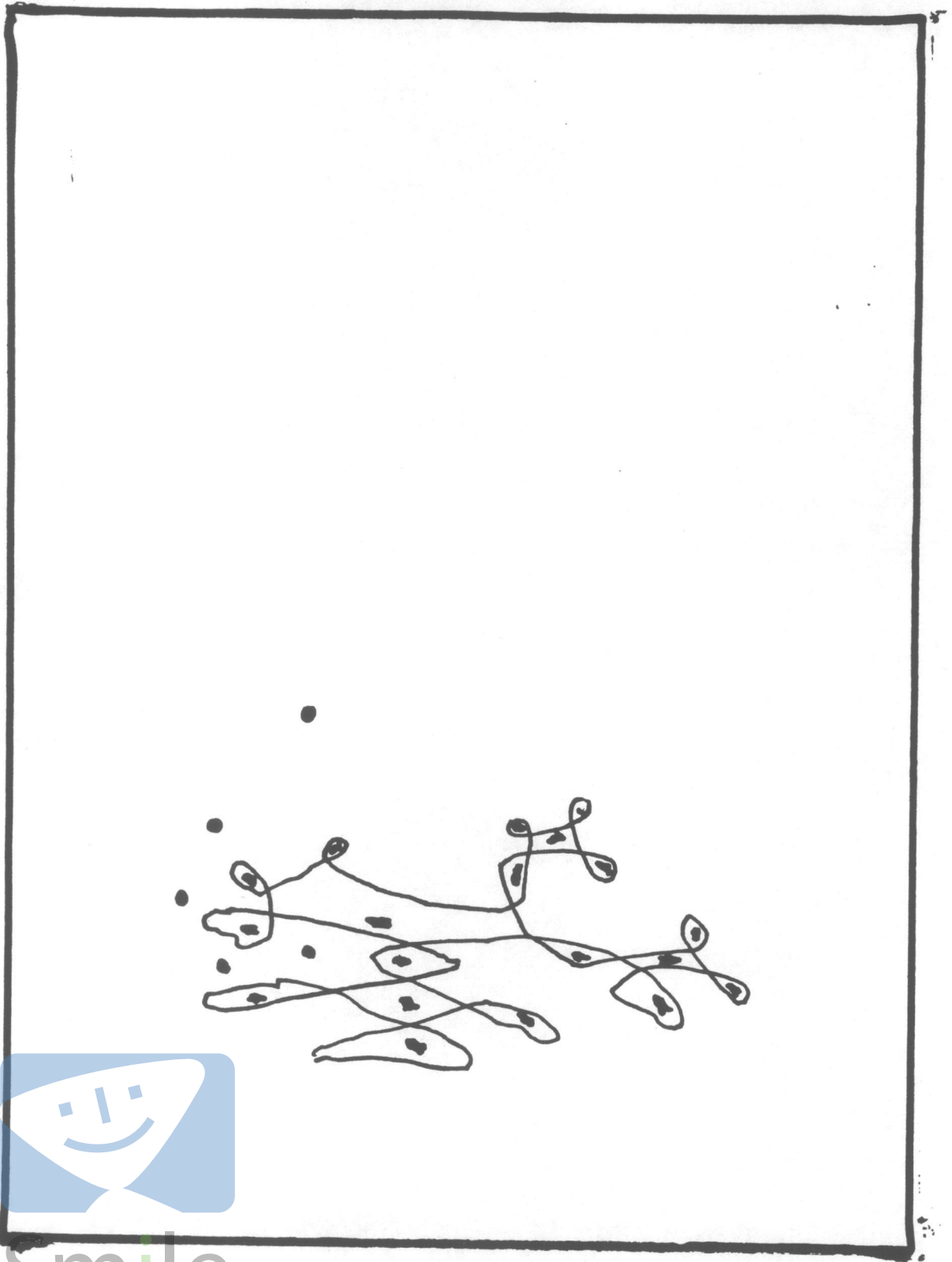


Smile

What was I going to say?
Recently I have become forgetful. Er...

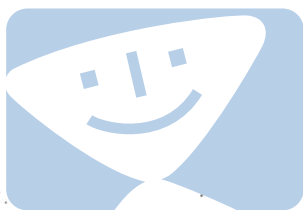


Smile

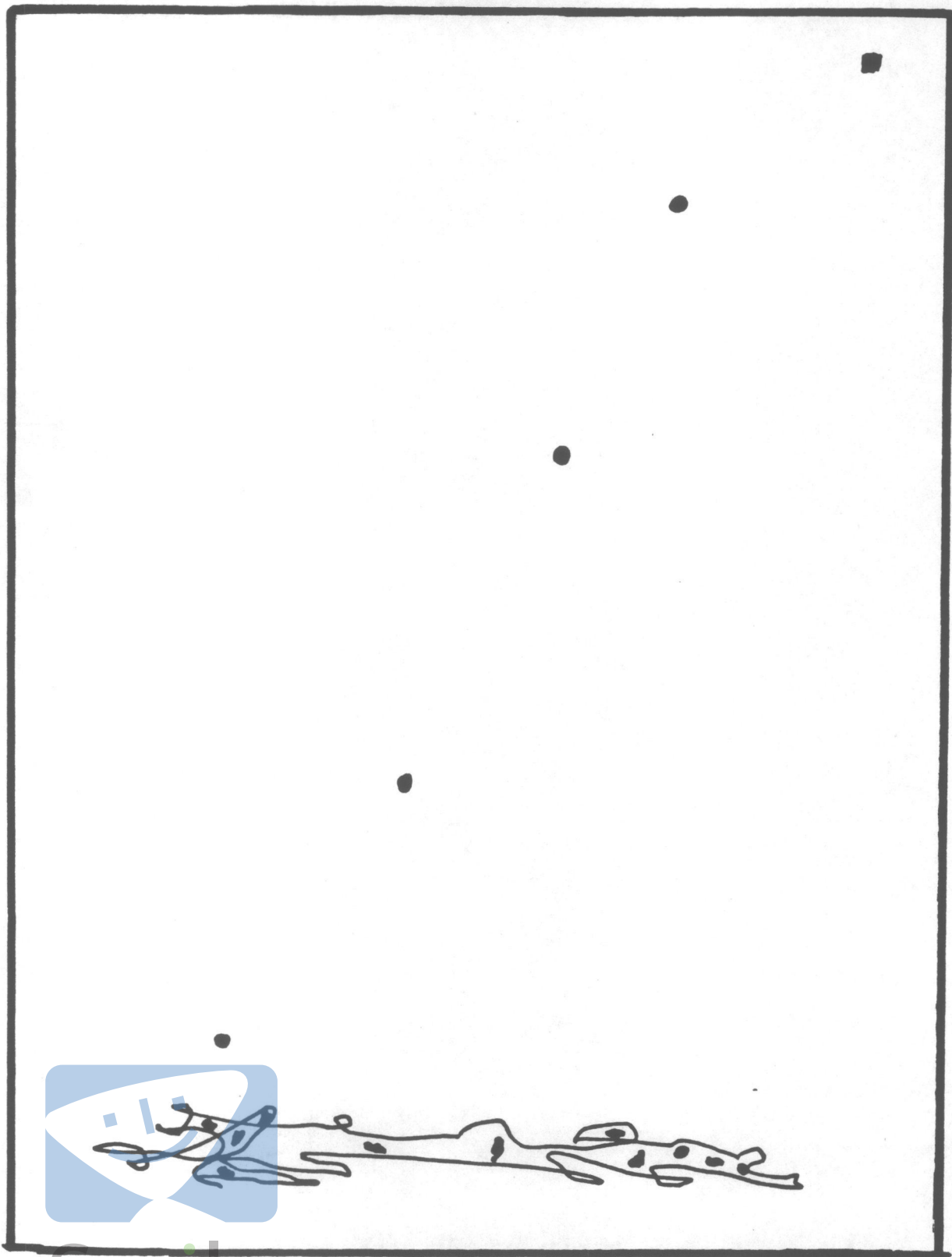


smile

Is it incurable? How about
going to Honolulu? I've he
ard there is an excellent
specialist there. Money
no problem.



Smile

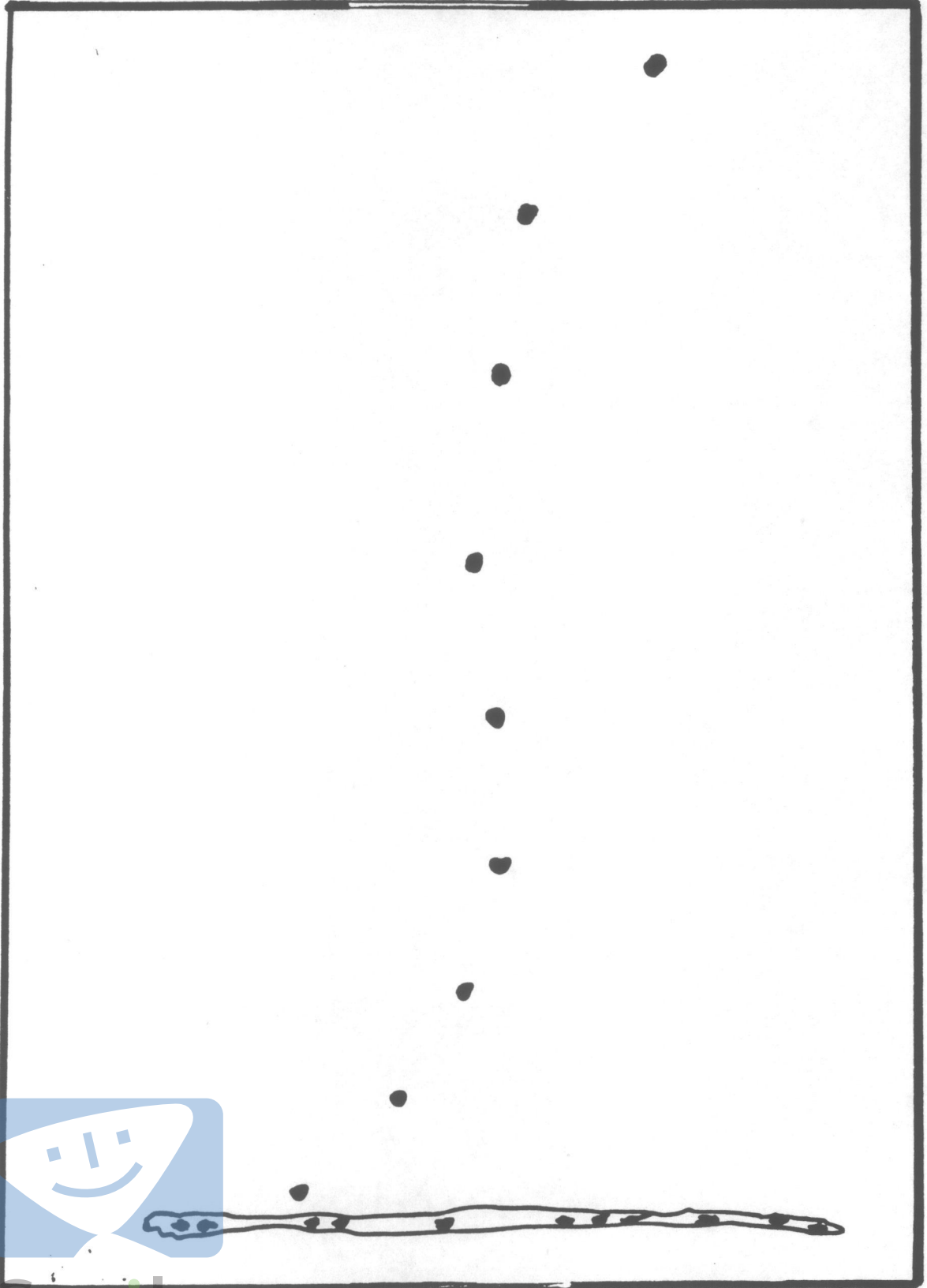


Smile



Smile

Let me...
smoke a last c
igarette. Oh
...I am...



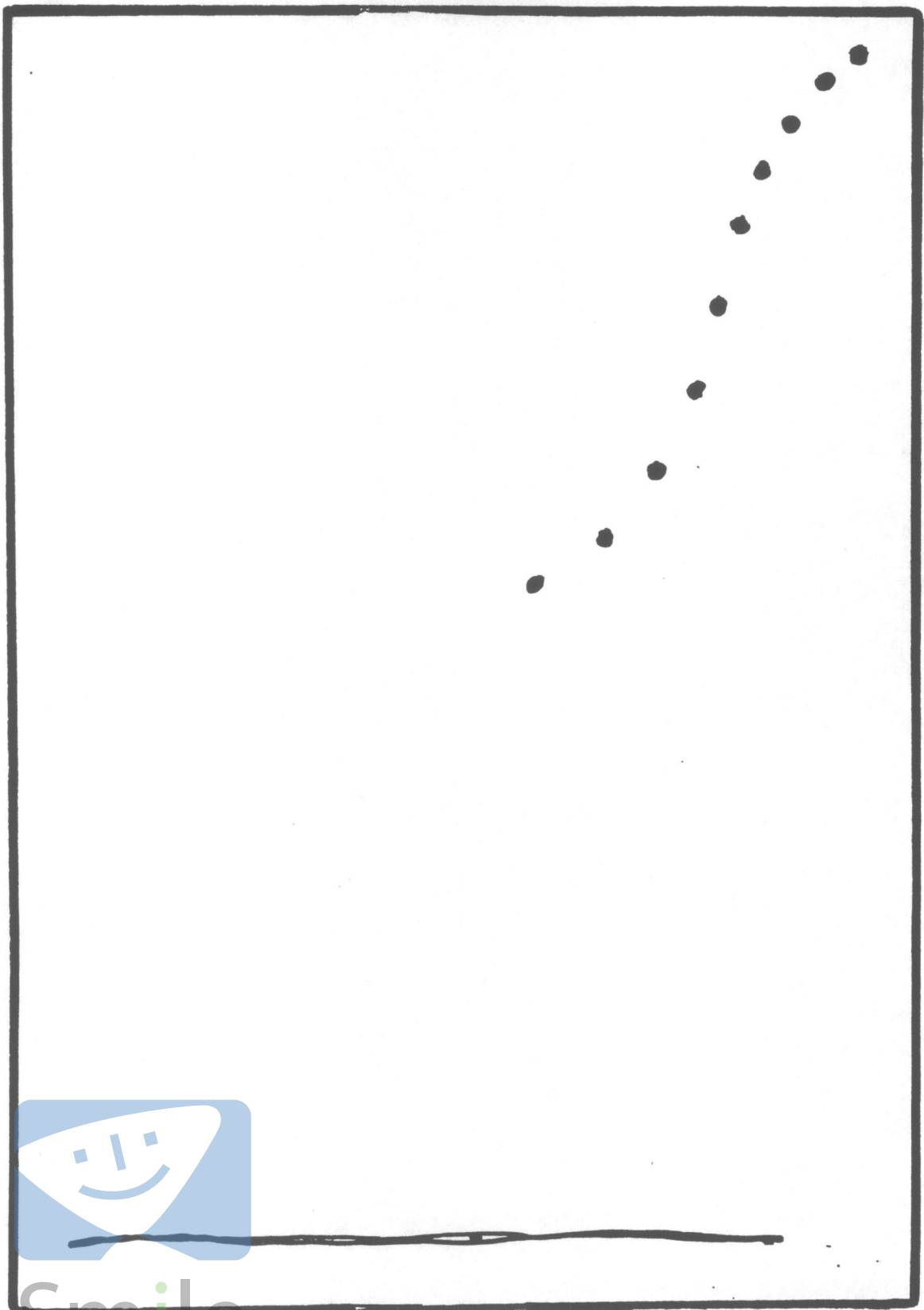
Smile



Smile



I...aaaa

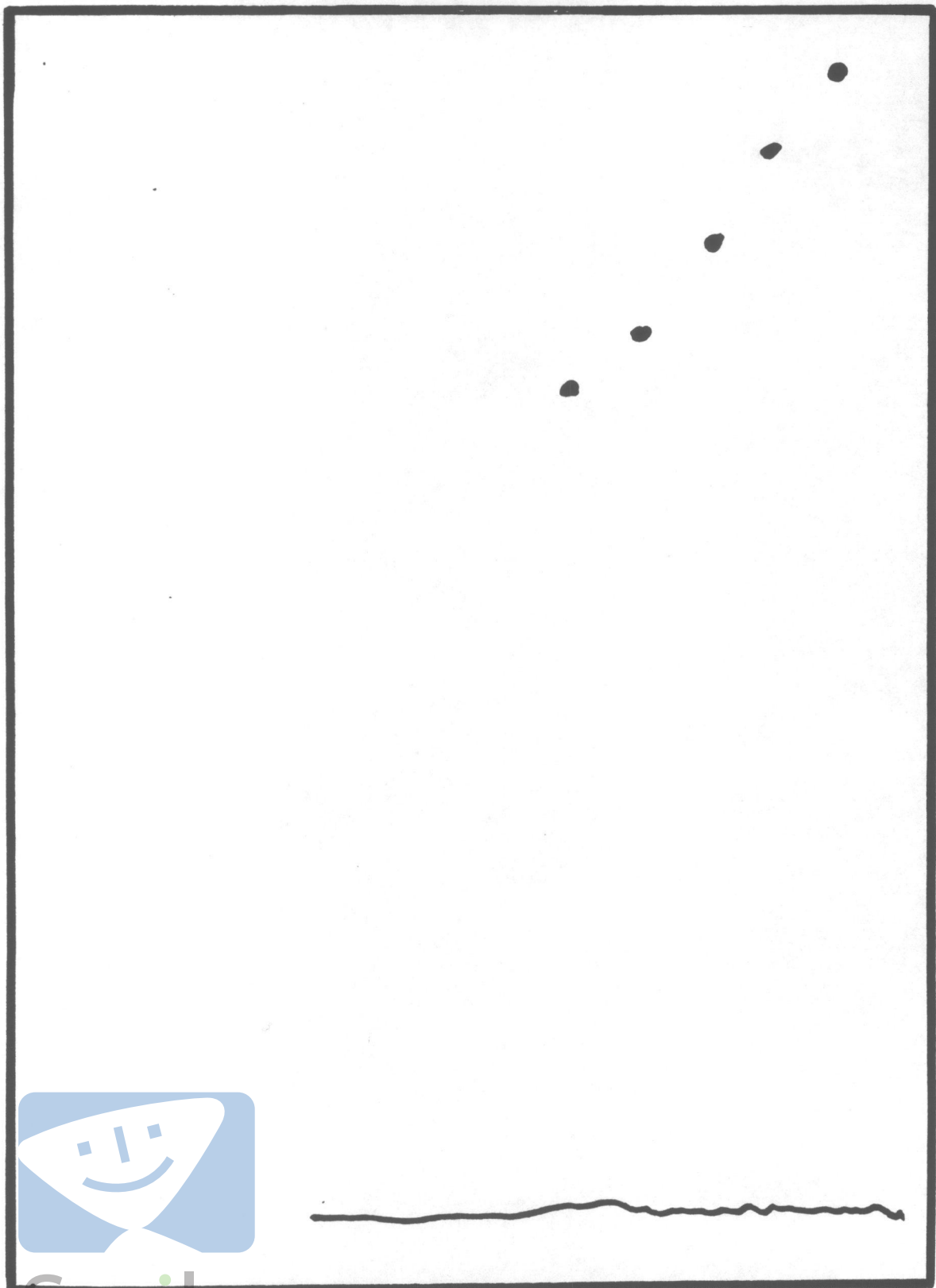


Smile

Ouch!

Where was I before?
Where was I before?
Where was I before?
Where was I before?
Where was I before?





Smile

SOMETIME
SOMEWHERE
SOMEONE
WAS

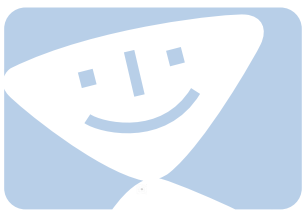


Smile



Smile

unmarked



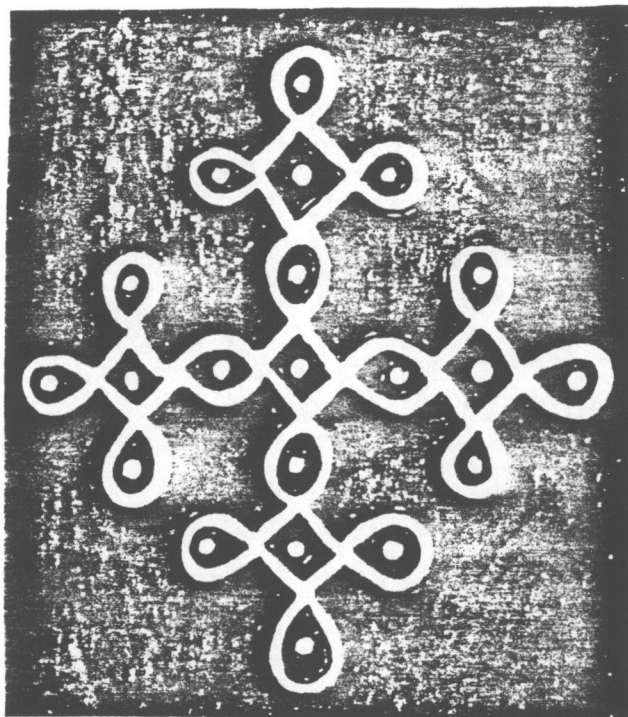
Smile

BUT WHEN I WOKE I FORGOT WHO



Smile

the end



Smile

LITTLE SONG

Now I have to
live a little

fight a little
love a little

ail a little
ape a little

die a little

Not End



Smile