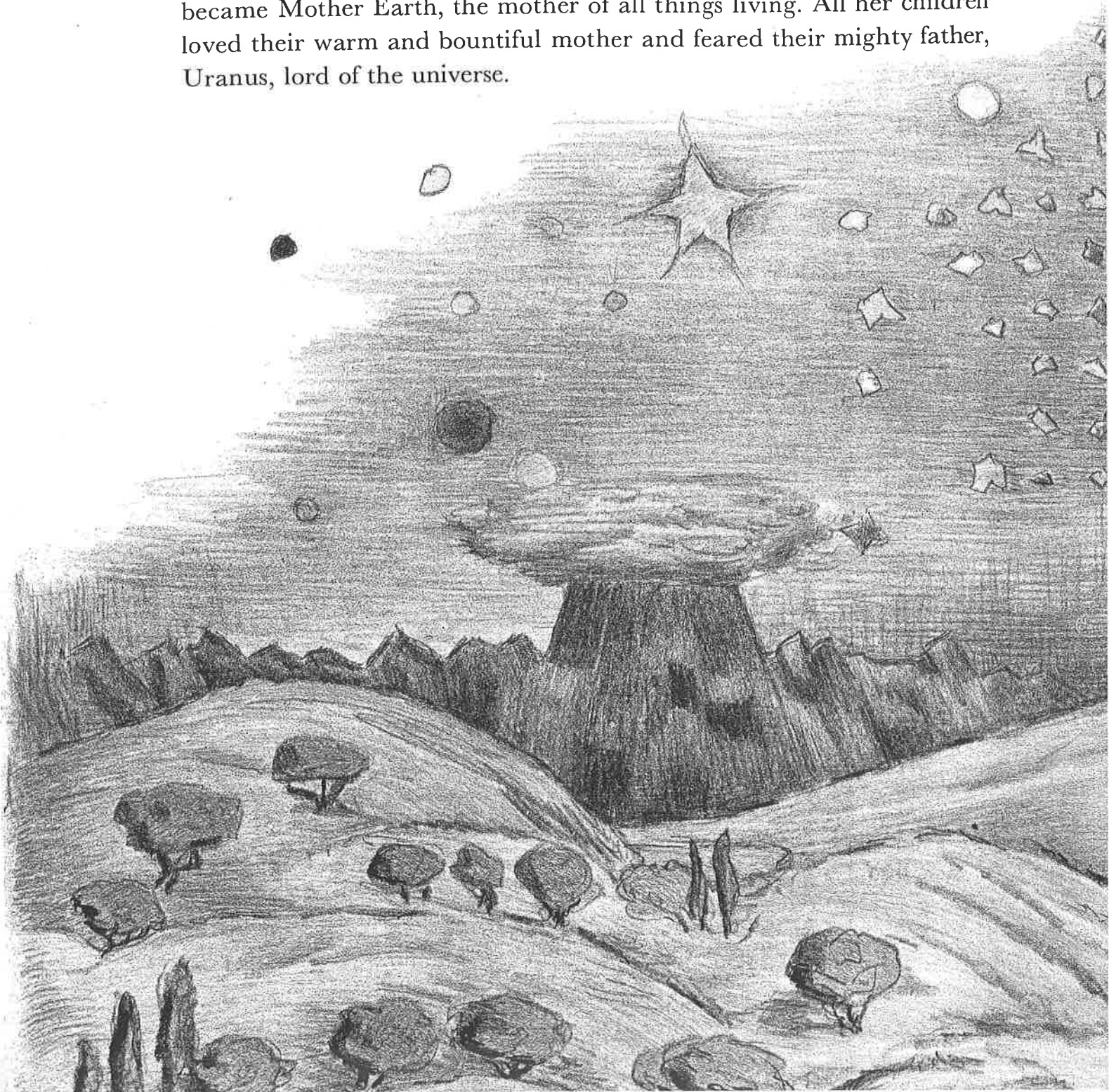


GAEA, the Earth, came out of darkness so long ago that nobody knows when or how. Earth was young and lonesome, for nothing lived on her yet. Above her rose Uranus, the Sky, dark and blue, set all over with sparkling stars. He was magnificent to behold, and young Earth looked up at him and fell in love with him. Sky smiled down at Earth, twinkling with his countless stars, and they were joined in love. Soon young Earth became Mother Earth, the mother of all things living. All her children loved their warm and bountiful mother and feared their mighty father, Uranus, lord of the universe.





THE TITANS

THE TITANS were the first children of Mother Earth. They were the first gods, taller than the mountains she created to serve them as thrones, and both Earth and Sky were proud of them. There were six Titans, six glorious gods, and they had six sisters, the Titanesses, whom they took for their wives.

When Gaea again gave birth, Uranus was not proud. Their new children were also huge, but each had only one glowing eye set in the middle of his forehead. They were the three Cyclopes and they were named Lightning, Thunder, and Thunderbolt. They were not handsome gods, but tremendously strong smiths. Sparks from their heavy hammers flashed across the sky and lit up the heavens so brightly that even their father's stars faded.

After a while Mother Earth bore three more sons. Uranus looked at them with disgust. Each of them had fifty heads and a hundred strong arms. He hated to see such ugly creatures walk about on lovely Earth, so he seized them and their brothers the Cyclopes and flung them into Tartarus, the deepest, darkest pit under the earth.

Mother Earth loved her children and could not forgive her husband for his cruelty to them. Out of hardest flint she fashioned a sickle and spoke to her sons the Titans:

“Take this weapon, make an end to your father's cruelty and set your brothers free.”

Fear took hold of five of the Titans and they trembled and refused. Only Cronus, the youngest but the strongest, dared to take the sickle. He fell upon his father. Uranus could not withstand the weapon wielded by his strong son and he fled, giving up his powers.

Mother Earth made Pontus, the boundless seas, her second husband, and from this union sprang the gods of the watery depths. And from her rich ground grew an abundance of trees and flowers and, out of her crevices, sprites, beasts, and early man crept forth.



CRONUS was now the lord of the universe. He sat on the highest mountain and ruled over heaven and earth with a firm hand. The other gods obeyed his will and early man worshiped him. This was man's Golden Age. Men lived happily and in peace with the gods and each other. They did not kill and they had no locks on their doors, for theft had not yet been invented.

But Cronus did not set his monstrous brothers free, and Mother Earth was angry with him and plotted his downfall. She had to wait, for no god yet born was strong enough to oppose him. But she knew that one of his sons would be stronger than he, just as Cronus had been stronger than his father. Cronus knew it too, so every time his Titaness-wife Rhea gave birth, he took the newborn god and swallowed it. With all of his offspring securely inside him, he had nothing to fear.



But Rhea mourned. Her five sisters, who had married the five other Titans, were surrounded by their Titan children, while she was all alone. When Rhea expected her sixth child, she asked Mother Earth to help her save the child from his father. That was just what Mother Earth had been waiting for. She gave her daughter whispered advice, and Rhea went away smiling.

As soon as Rhea had borne her child, the god Zeus, she hid him. Then she wrapped a stone in baby clothes and gave it to her husband to swallow instead of her son. Cronus was fooled and swallowed the stone, and the little god Zeus was spirited away to a secret cave on the island of Crete. Old Cronus never heard the cries of his young son, for Mother Earth set noisy earth sprites outside the cave. They made such a clatter, beating their shields with their swords, that other sounds were drowned out.