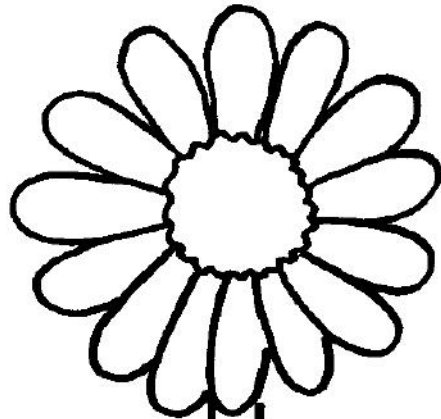
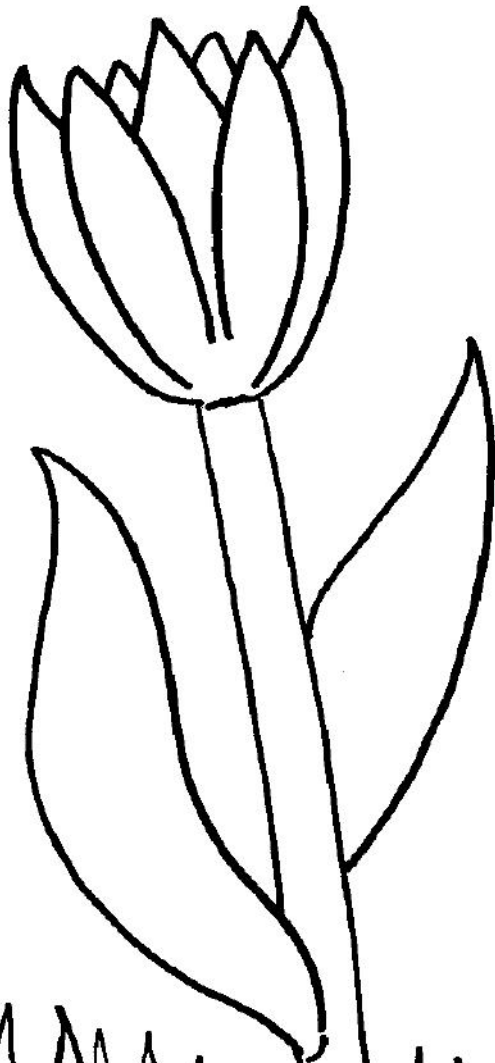
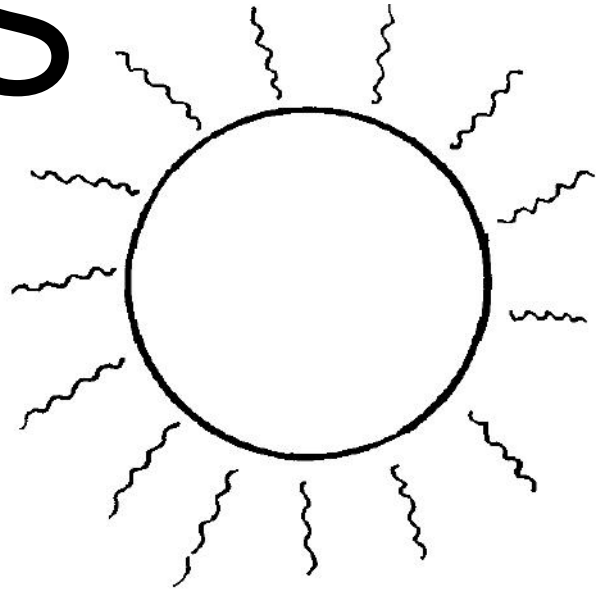
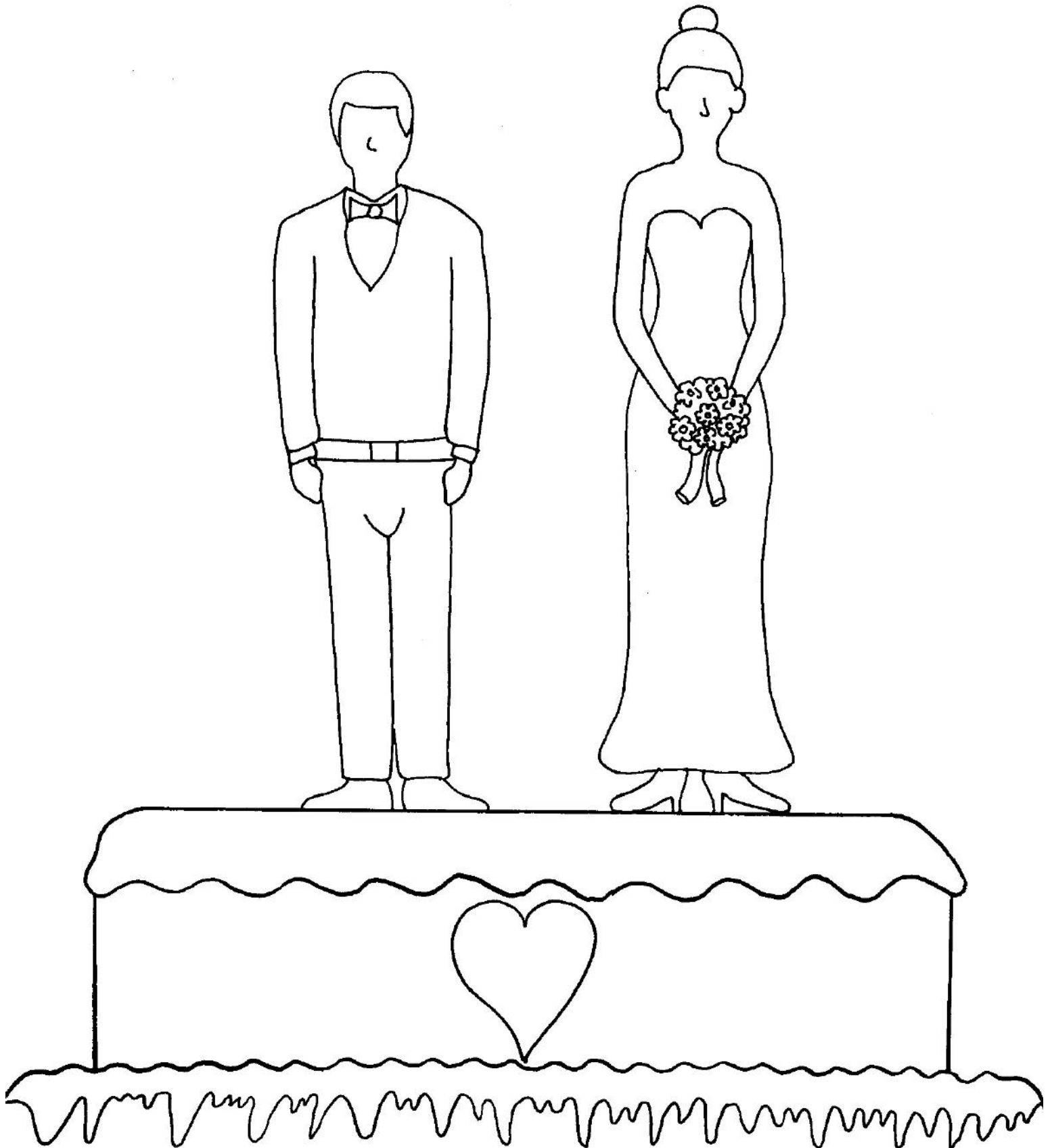


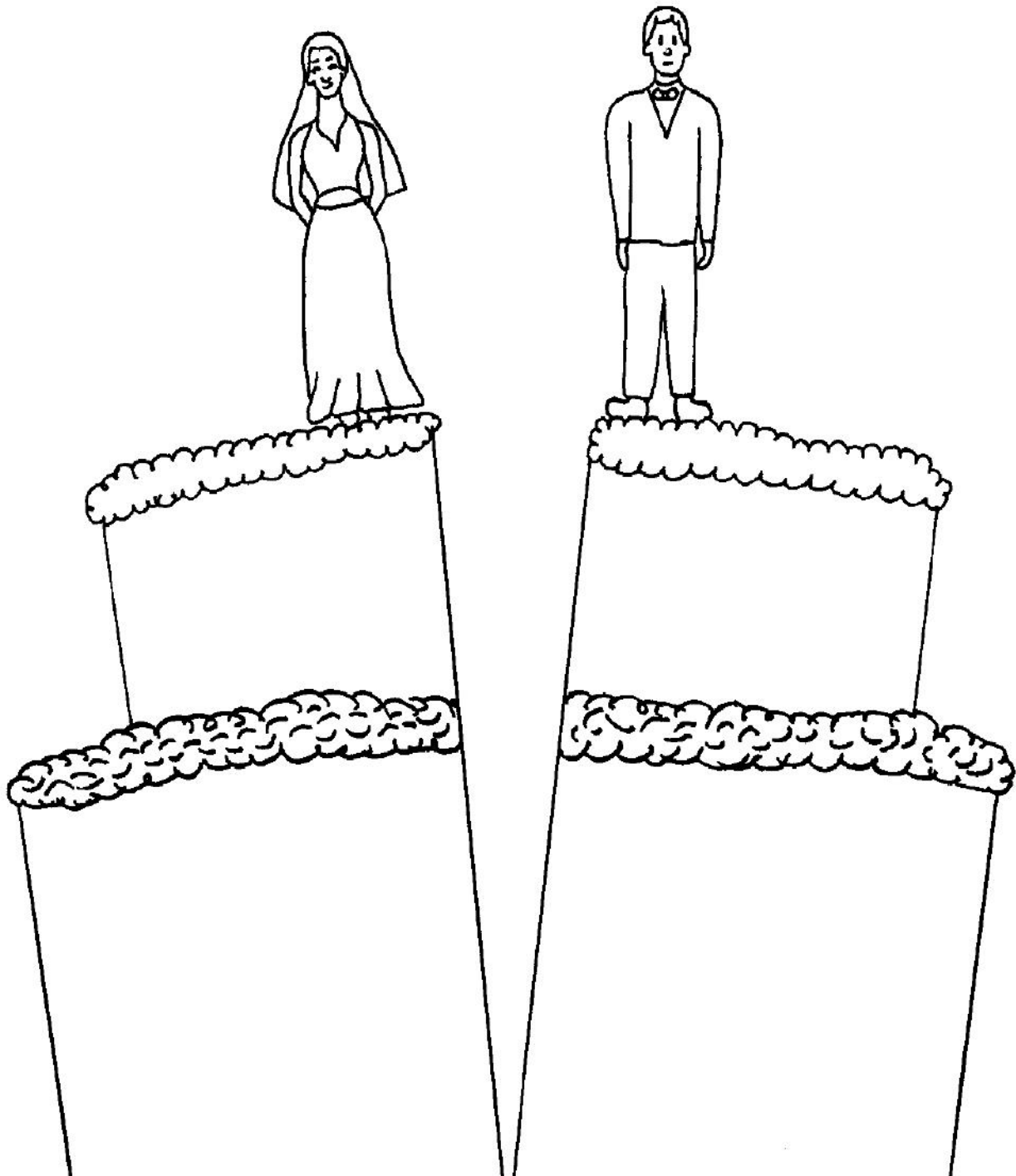
IMPERFECT DREAMS



Every marriage starts with a dream. It's a dream about two people who love each other very much. Two people who want to stay together through thick and thin. Two lovebirds who want to start a family together and spend the rest of their lives together, living happily ever after.

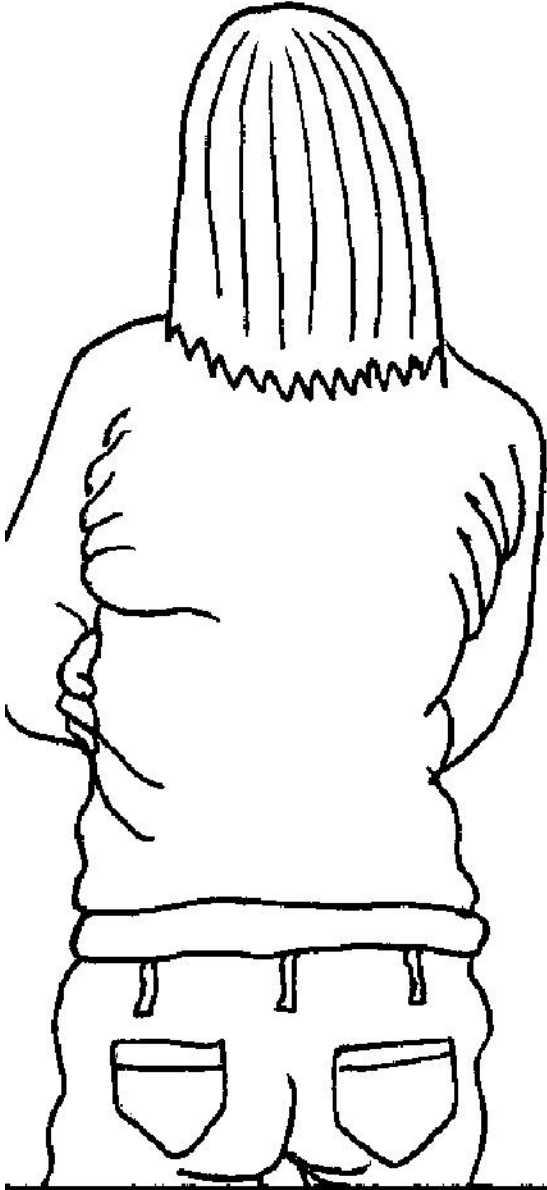


But sometimes in life, not everything goes exactly how we plan it to. Despite our best efforts, sometimes we just fall short of our goals. This happens in marriages, too. In the same way that a baseball player who swings at a pitch is trying really hard to hit the ball, every couple who marries tries very hard to make their marriage work. Yet in the end, just as baseball players sometimes miss, couples sometimes just can't seem to make it work, and they fall short of their goals. When this happens, it leads to divorce.



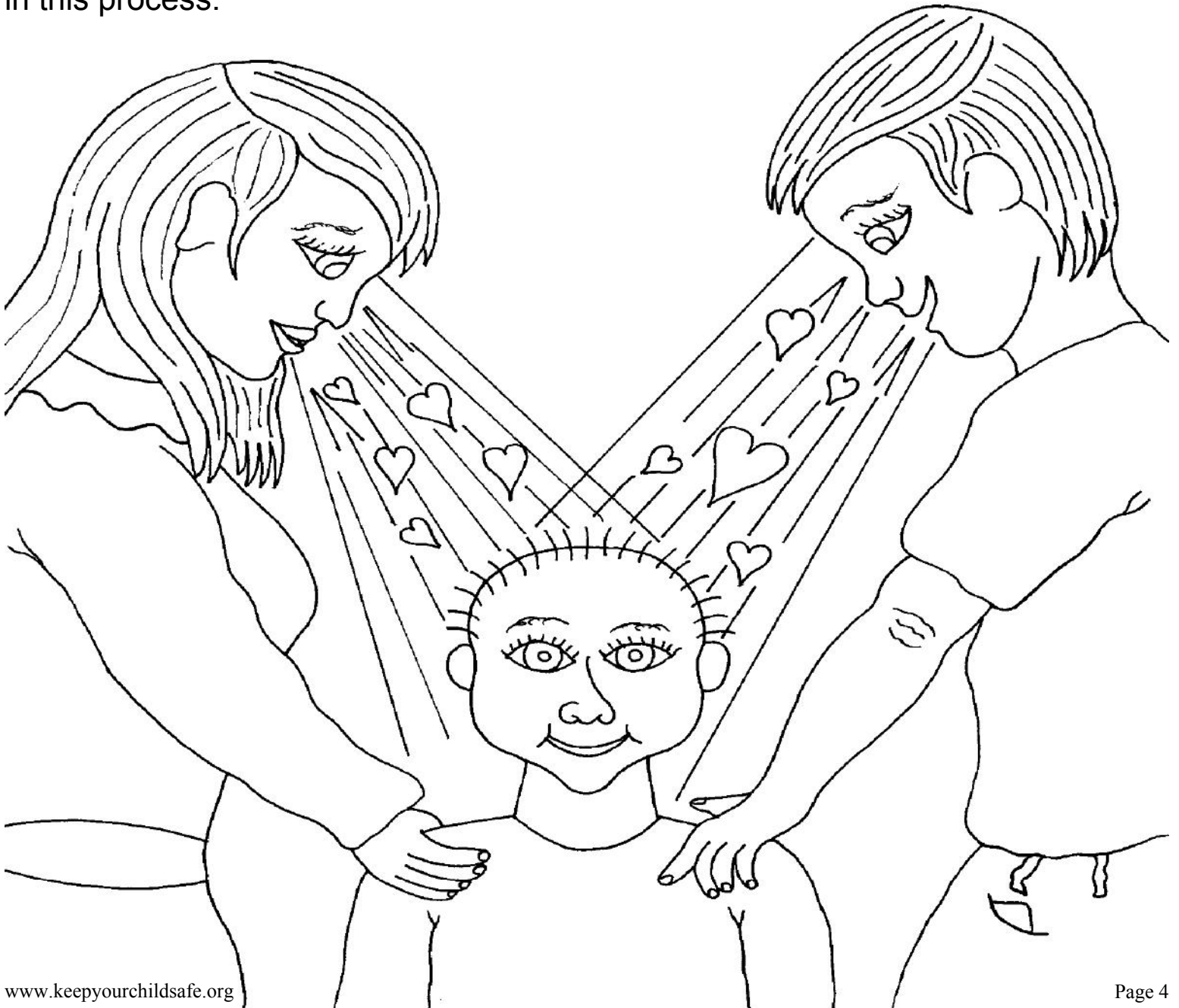
Deciding to divorce is not an easy decision for parents to make. They've probably tried and tried and tried to make it work, but have come to the conclusion that things just won't work out. It seems as though they're trying to fit a square peg into a round hole where it shouldn't go.

Parents try really hard to resolve their differences, but eventually it just comes to the point where there is too much hurt, too much distance between each other, and too much conflict to make their marriage work.



It's rarely any single thing that causes a divorce, but many things that build over time. Your mom and dad might share with you some of the problems, but there also may be grown-up things going on that are just between them. No matter what the reasons may be that led to this point, one thing is for certain: You didn't cause your parents divorce. Marriages are about the love and commitment between two adults, and when things go wrong and there's a divorce, that divorce is about what happens between adults, and has nothing to do with children.

This can be scary for kids to think about. When something is happening in our lives that we don't like, knowing that we have nothing to do with it and are powerless to stop it can be even scarier than thinking we're the ones to blame. But just because you can't stop your parent's divorce, that doesn't mean you're powerless over other things. Your mom and Dad will do all they can to help you feel like you have a voice in this process.



We won't lie to you: Life may get very hectic and difficult for a while. Divorce hurts everyone, and this is especially true for children. It means change, it means adjustment, and it means accepting things that are painful to accept.

The last thing in the world your parents want to do is hurt you. They hate having to put you through this. But your mom and dad don't like feeling upset and miserable all the time any more than anyone else. Besides, staying miserable together usually isn't a very good option for anyone, including you. It isn't much good to have both your parents together if they're always stressed out, upset, or arguing with each other.

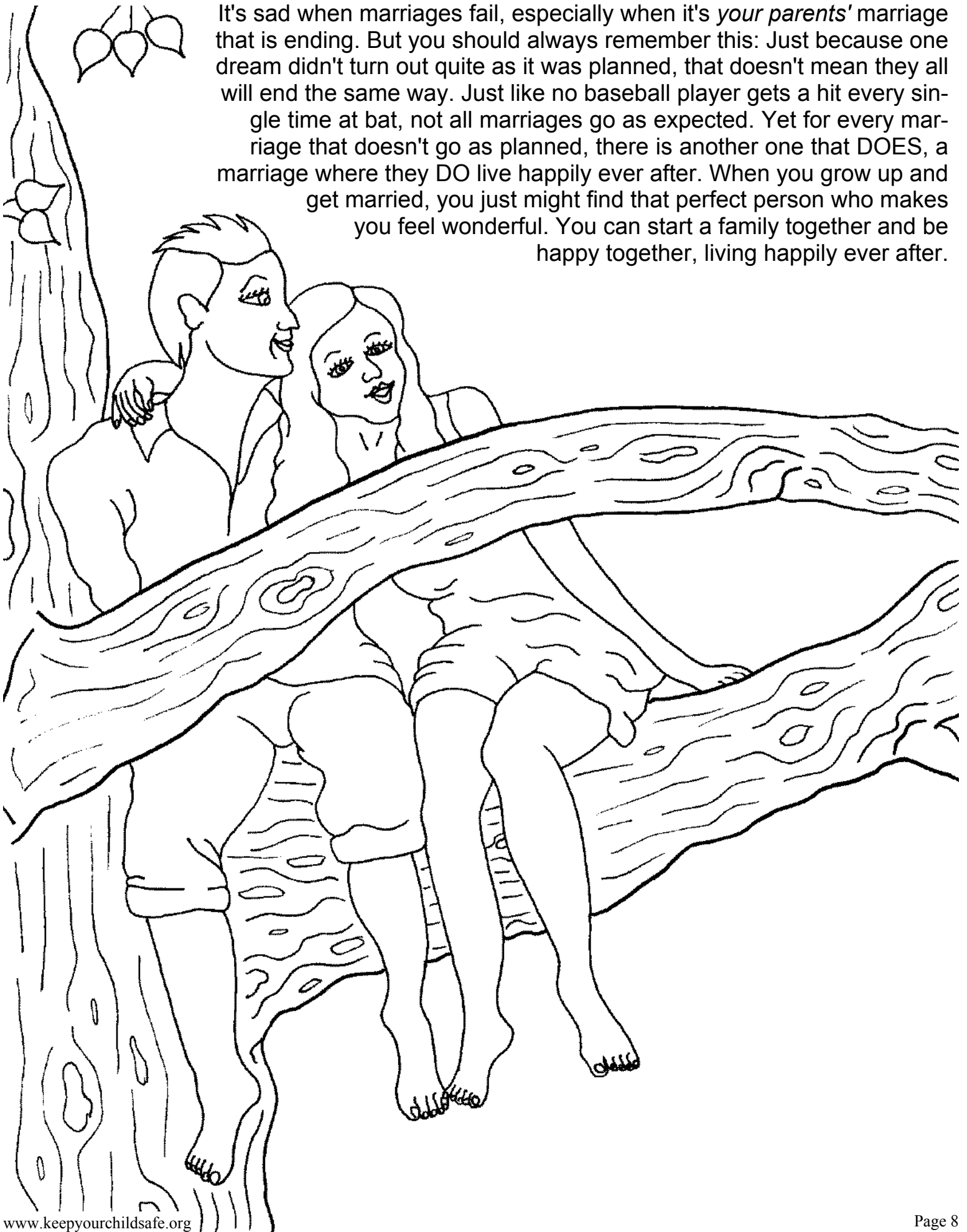


They also don't want to give you the wrong impression about marriage. They don't want you growing up thinking that marriage involves two people staying miserable together, or giving up on happiness and living a lie. They don't want you to think that a hectic, miserable marriage is the best that life provides, because it isn't. Marriage should always be about love. It isn't always easy, and loving someone isn't always pretty. In fact, sometimes it can be quite difficult.

Marriages work when there's enough love, compatibility and compassion to weather the rough patches. When things don't work, it's because two people are just a little bit too incompatible. There ends up being a little too much friction and far too many flaws in the relationship to see it through.



It's sad when marriages fail, especially when it's *your parents'* marriage that is ending. But you should always remember this: Just because one dream didn't turn out quite as it was planned, that doesn't mean they all will end the same way. Just like no baseball player gets a hit every single time at bat, not all marriages go as expected. Yet for every marriage that doesn't go as planned, there is another one that DOES, a marriage where they DO live happily ever after. When you grow up and get married, you just might find that perfect person who makes you feel wonderful. You can start a family together and be happy together, living happily ever after.



Most of all, you should know that you were born into a marriage of love. You are the product of love . . . a wanted and cherished part of our lives, and nothing that happens now or in the future will change that. You will always be a legacy of love, and the most wonderful thing about your parents' relationship together. Just because things didn't work out in the end, that doesn't go back in time and erase all the love that existed in the past. It doesn't change all the love they felt together when you were created and born. You are now, and always will be, a legacy of love.

