

The Kingdom with No Rules, No Laws, and No King

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Once upon a time a young boy named Benjamin lived in a kingdom that had no rules and no laws of any kind.

It also had no king . . . but let's not get into that now.

It did have: majestic mountain ranges, roaring rivers, really cool castles, cutesy cottages, beautiful birds and adorable furry animals, great weather, miles of beaches, perfect waves, all kinds of excellent trees great for climbing, and a more than adequate number of benches for people to sit on.

One day, Benjamin was sitting on one of these benches with his father, mother, and big sister. He was wearing a cowboy hat, and they were all eating chocolate ice cream cones. All of a sudden, a guy walked up to Benjamin, did a sort of silly dance, took Benjamin's cone right out from under his tongue, and ran off licking it.

"Hey! That guy took my chocolate ice cream cone!" Ben yelled.

"I noticed," said his father, licking his own ice cream. "He made a nice move on you."

"Guess he was in the mood for some chocolate ice cream, dear," said his mother sweetly.

"You have to learn not to pay attention to silly dances when you're eating ice cream," his big sister said.



Remember, this was a kingdom without rules or laws of *any* kind. So, there were no rules or laws about taking ice cream cones that didn't belong to you.

Benjamin still wanted more ice cream. So he reached over and took his sister's cone.

She immediately and matter-of-factly snatched her mother's cone.

Benjamin's father quickly gulped *his* ice cream down in one bite just as Ben's mother was about to grab it.

"Ha, ha!" he said, with a big chocolate moustache dripping from his upper lip.

Benjamin's mother sat thinking for a moment as Ben and his sister licked their ice cream very fast, keeping one eye on their mother.

Then, Benjamin's mother started to whistle and appeared to be about to scratch an itch on her head. Instead, she reached around her daughter, knocked Benjamin's ice cream cone out of his hand up in the air, and caught it in her mouth.

Benjamin sighed a very deep sigh and said to himself, "There's got to be a better way."

His sister and his mother finished their ice cream cones. Then everyone put on their crash helmets, got in the car, and with Benjamin's mother at the wheel, the family headed home. Ben wore his cowboy hat on top of his helmet.

There were no traffic laws of any kind. So as their car approached the kingdom's main intersection, Benjamin's mother had a decision to make. If the light was red, she could stop if she felt like it or she didn't have to if she didn't feel like it. If it was green, she could stop or she could go if she felt like it.

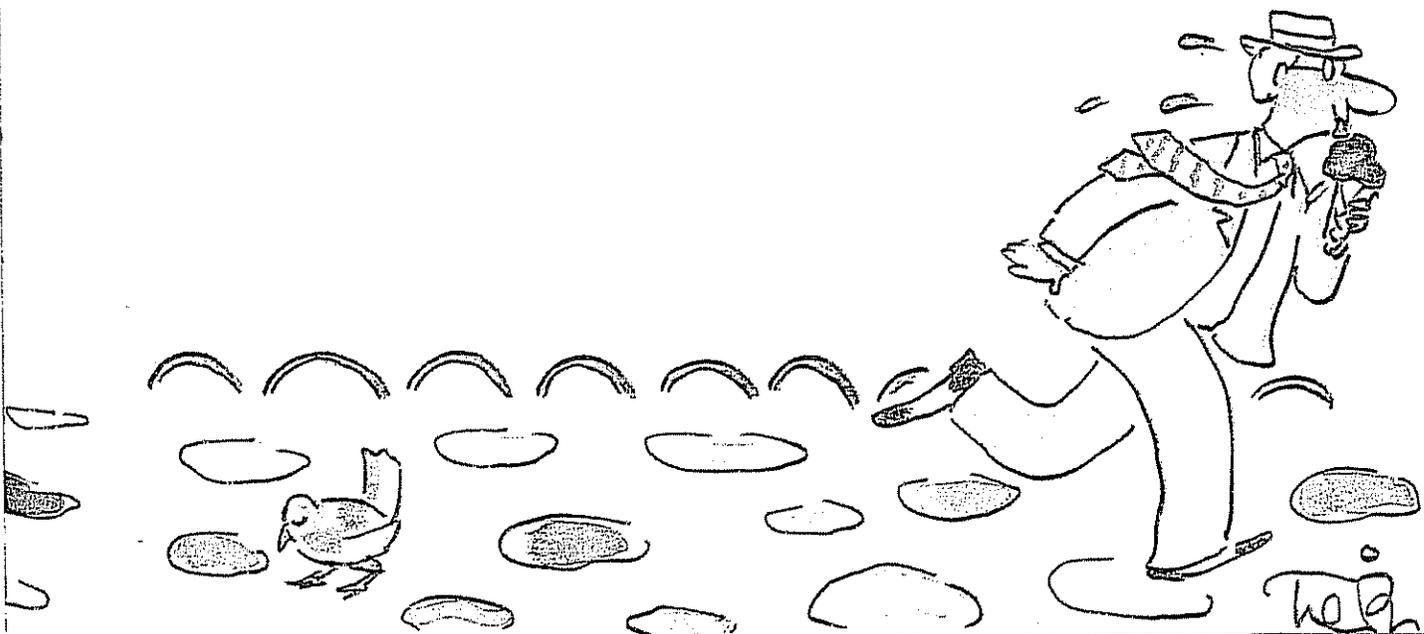
The light was green, and Benjamin's mother decided that she felt like going through it. Unfortunately, the person in the truck in front of her felt like *stopping* for the green light.

Just before the car smashed into the rear of the truck, Benjamin thought to himself, "There's *got* to be a better way!"

The next thing he knew, he was hanging by one leg, upside down, from a branch near the top of a very, very tall tree. And this was *not* one of the trees in the kingdom that was great for climbing.

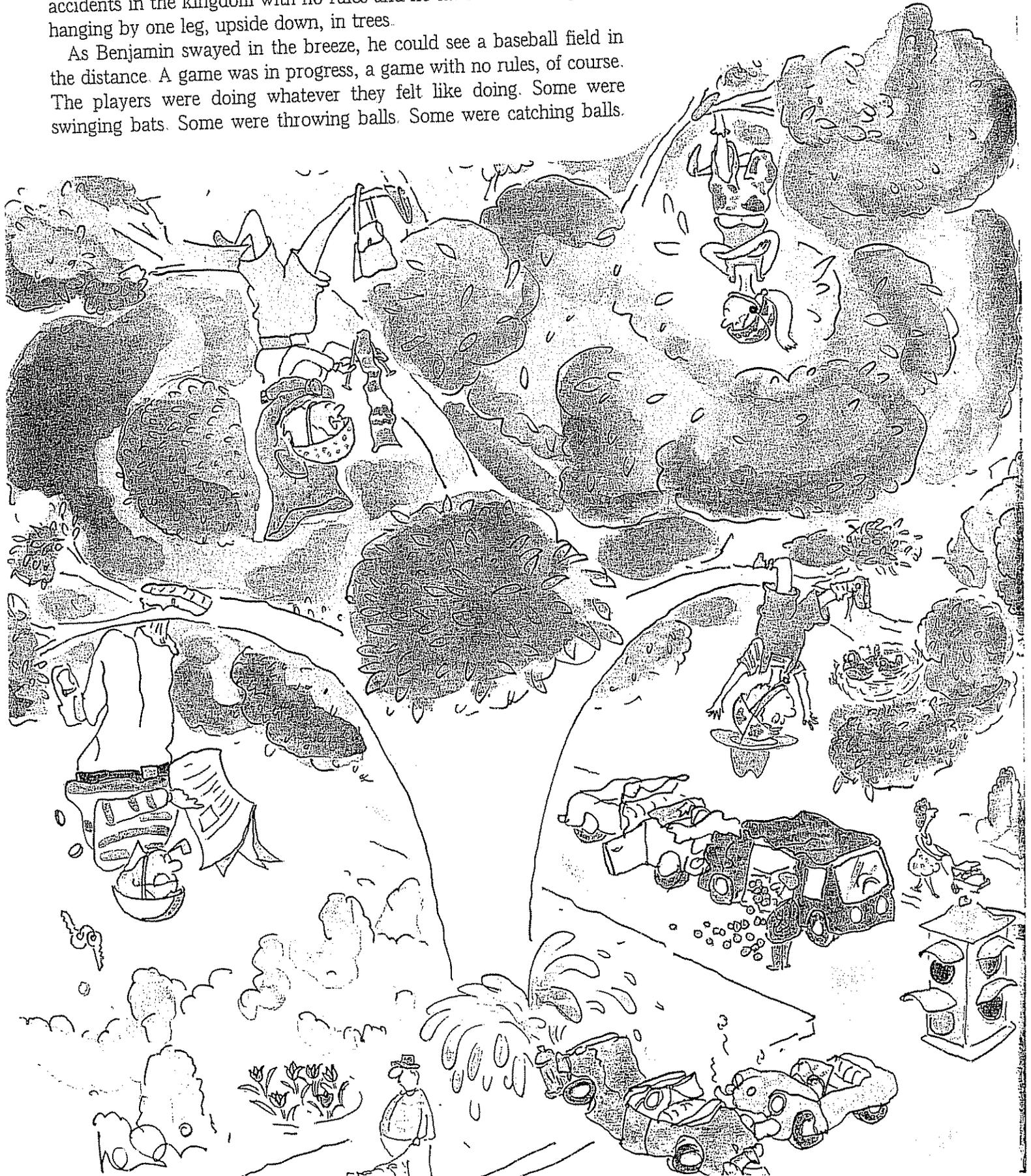
"They're gonna need ladders and stuff to get me down," he thought to himself. He was going to be up there for a while so he decided that the best thing to do was to relax.

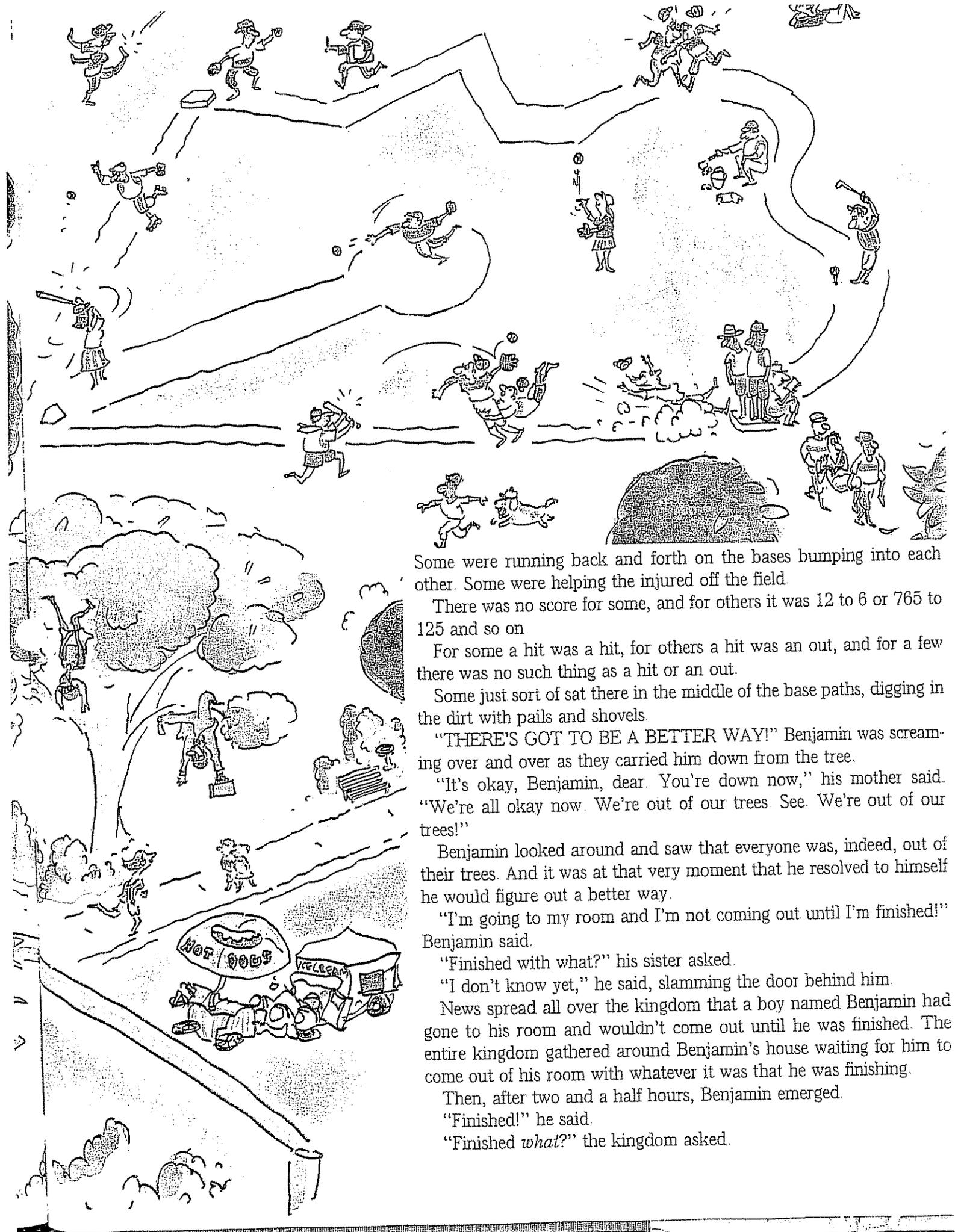
He looked around and saw that his parents and his big sister were each hanging by one leg, upside down, in trees, as were lots of other people all around the intersection.



Everyone looked relaxed and nobody was particularly peeved. That was because they were used to it. Most of the many automobile accidents in the kingdom with no rules and no laws resulted in people hanging by one leg, upside down, in trees.

As Benjamin swayed in the breeze, he could see a baseball field in the distance. A game was in progress, a game with no rules, of course. The players were doing whatever they felt like doing. Some were swinging bats. Some were throwing balls. Some were catching balls.





Some were running back and forth on the bases bumping into each other. Some were helping the injured off the field.

There was no score for some, and for others it was 12 to 6 or 765 to 125 and so on.

For some a hit was a hit, for others a hit was an out, and for a few there was no such thing as a hit or an out.

Some just sort of sat there in the middle of the base paths, digging in the dirt with pails and shovels.

"THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER WAY!" Benjamin was screaming over and over as they carried him down from the tree.

"It's okay, Benjamin, dear. You're down now," his mother said. "We're all okay now. We're out of our trees. See. We're out of our trees!"

Benjamin looked around and saw that everyone was, indeed, out of their trees. And it was at that very moment that he resolved to himself he would figure out a better way.

"I'm going to my room and I'm not coming out until I'm finished!" Benjamin said.

"Finished with what?" his sister asked.

"I don't know yet," he said, slamming the door behind him.

News spread all over the kingdom that a boy named Benjamin had gone to his room and wouldn't come out until he was finished. The entire kingdom gathered around Benjamin's house waiting for him to come out of his room with whatever it was that he was finishing.

Then, after two and a half hours, Benjamin emerged.

"Finished!" he said.

"Finished *what?*" the kingdom asked.

"Three laws and a bunch of rules," he said proudly.

"Huh?" said the kingdom, not having the faintest idea what he was talking about.

"This is the bunch of rules," Benjamin explained, holding up a booklet. "From now on, we'll play baseball by the rules in this book, like nine people on each side, nine innings, four balls, three strikes, no pails and shovels, stuff like that. If you don't play by these rules, you can't play."

"Interesting!" some of the people in the kingdom said.

"Sounds pretty good," others said.

"No pails and shovels? Phooey!" said Benjamin's mother and father and some others.

"Get to the three laws!" his sister demanded impatiently.

"Yeah!" said the kingdom.

"Okay," Benjamin said, and he took out a very impressive piece of notebook paper and began to read:

"Everyone will stop on red and go on green. That's the first law.

"Nobody can take another person's chocolate ice cream cone. That's the second law.

"Every day at noon, the entire kingdom has to come over to my house, play cowboy, dig in my sandbox with pails and shovels, and sing and dance to a great song I wrote called 'Hail Benjamin, He's a Heck of a Guy!' That's the third law. If you don't obey the laws, you get punished."

"Interesting," some of the people in the kingdom said.

"Sounds pretty good!" others said.

"The law with the pails and shovels is my favorite," said Benjamin's mother and father.

"Hail *who*?" said a guy in the back to no one in particular.

Then Benjamin said that he was going back to his room and he would not come out until the kingdom tried the three laws and the bunch of rules.

So they did. And they found that they no longer spent as much time hanging by one leg, upside down, in trees. They were able to finish their chocolate ice cream cones, and baseball was a lot more fun. But every day at noon, not everyone was coming over to Benjamin's house and playing cowboy, digging, and singing and dancing like they were supposed to.



"I can't. I have an earache," one guy said.
"I'm allergic," said another guy.
"My pail and shovel are at the cleaners," Ben's sister said.

"Oh yeah?" said Benjamin. "Prove it. Show me doctors' notes and a pail-and-shovel cleaning ticket."

The two guys had notes, but Benjamin's sister didn't have a pail-and-shovel cleaning ticket. She said she'd lost it. Then she said, "Okay, look. I don't like the third law. I don't see why, every day at noon, everyone has to come all the way over to our house and play cowboy, dig, and sing and dance to 'Hail Benjamin, He's a Heck of a Guy!'"

"We have to because it's the law," the kingdom tried to explain.

"But it's a *silly* law. It serves no useful purpose," Benjamin's sister replied.

"True," Benjamin said. "But I like it a lot. It's a *fun* law!"

His parents agreed.

"I don't think it's fun!" Benjamin's sister said. "I don't like it one bit."

"You don't?" Benjamin asked.

"No, I don't!" said his sister.

To Benjamin's genuine surprise, more than a few of the people in the kingdom appeared to agree with her.

"Okay, no problem," Benjamin said with a shrug. "From now on, the law is: Every day at noon, *no one's* allowed to come over to our house and do *anything*."

"Brilliant! Hooray for Benjamin!" cheered everyone in the kingdom. Everyone except Benjamin's sister, that is.

"Wait a minute! That's no good either!" she shouted, taking a deep breath. "We don't need a law to force people to come over to our house and play cowboy and dig and sing and stuff like that, but we also shouldn't have one to *stop* them from doing it if they feel like it."

"We shouldn't?" the kingdom asked.

"No," she said. "As long as no harm comes to anyone, why should there be a law against it?"

"You know, she has a point," said her mother and father.

"A very *good* point!" a lot of other people in the kingdom joined in.

So the kingdom kept the first and second laws and the bunch of rules, but got rid of the third law altogether. They also decided that from then on, *all* the people would be involved in making laws and rules because, after all, stuff like that was just too important to be left to some guy in a cowboy hat.

Benjamin eventually became a very successful singing cowboy. His sister became senior partner of the kingdom's first law firm. His parents became umpires. And the kingdom that now had *some* laws and *some* rules lived lawfully ever after. It still had no king . . . but it's too late to get into that now.



THE END