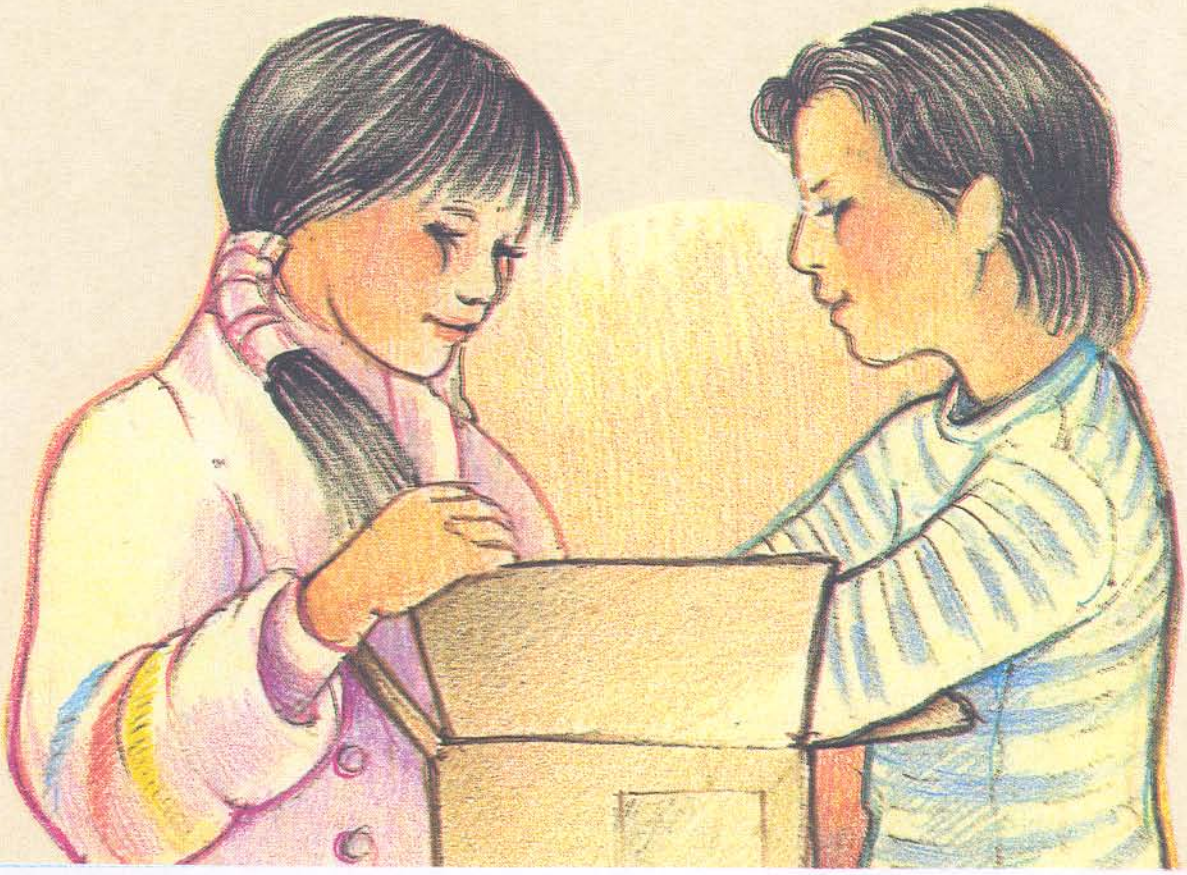
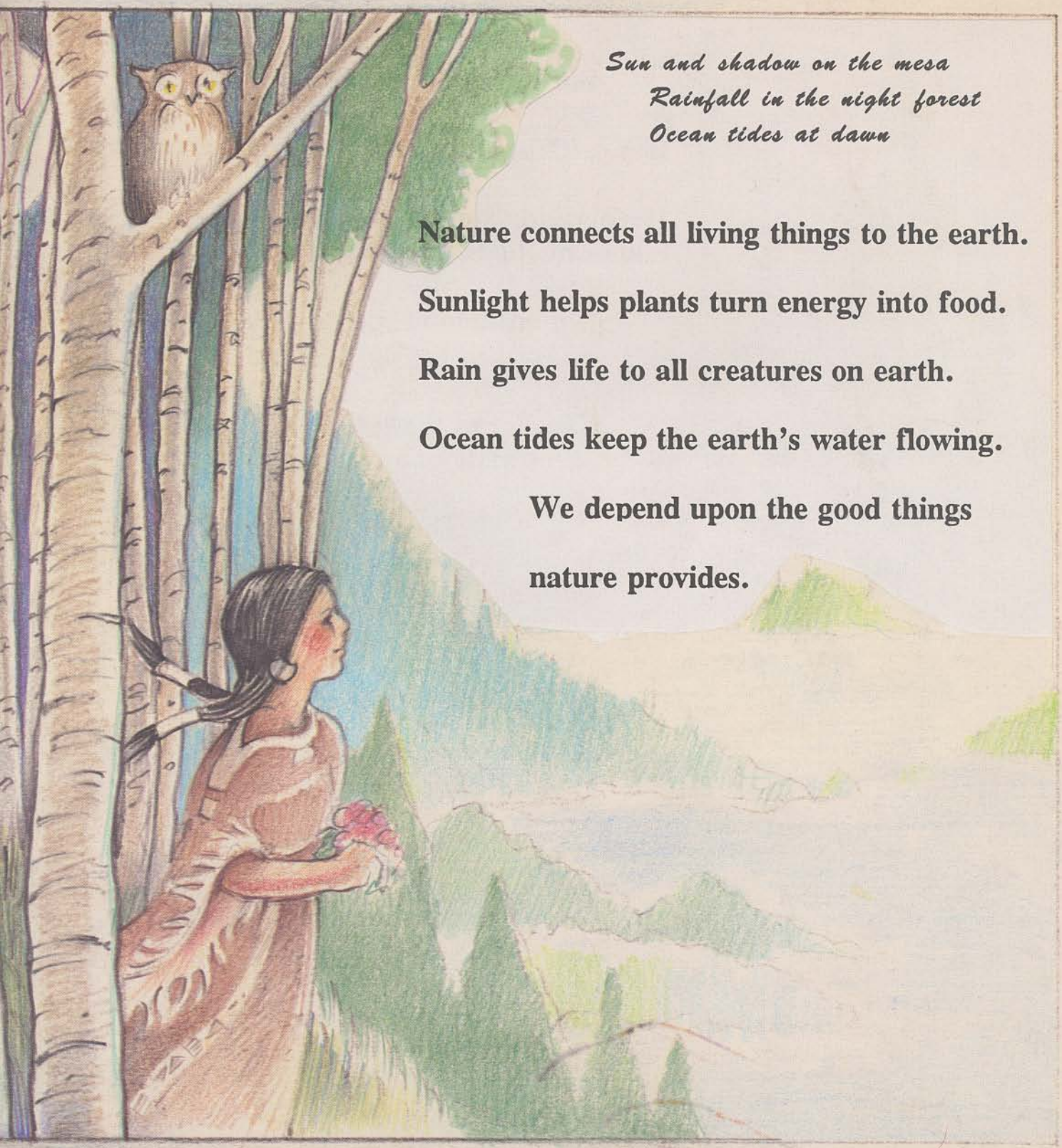


Learning about RADON

a part of nature



Sun and shadow on the mesa
Rainfall in the night forest
Ocean tides at dawn

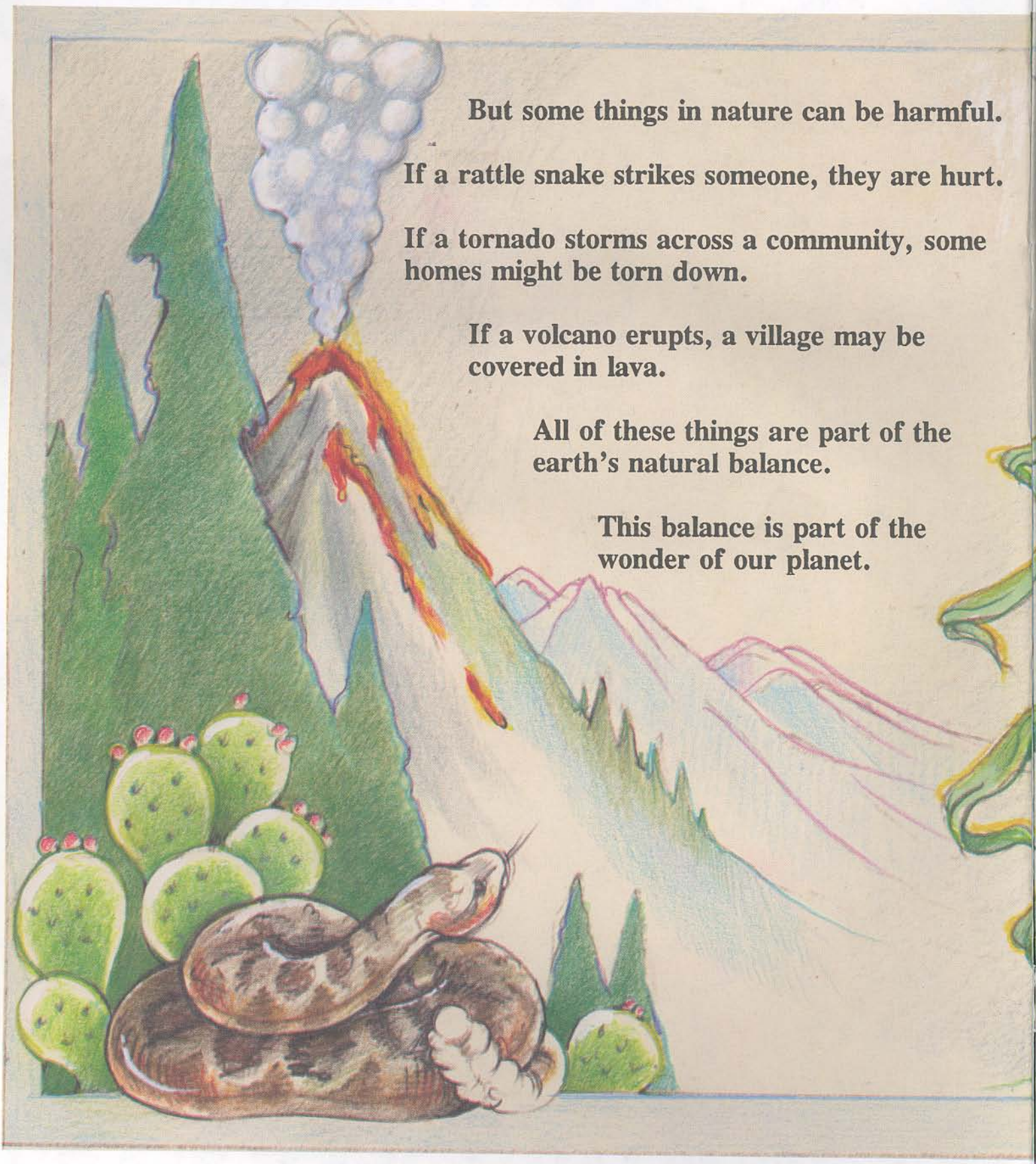
Nature connects all living things to the earth.

Sunlight helps plants turn energy into food.

Rain gives life to all creatures on earth.

Ocean tides keep the earth's water flowing.

We depend upon the good things nature provides.



But some things in nature can be harmful.

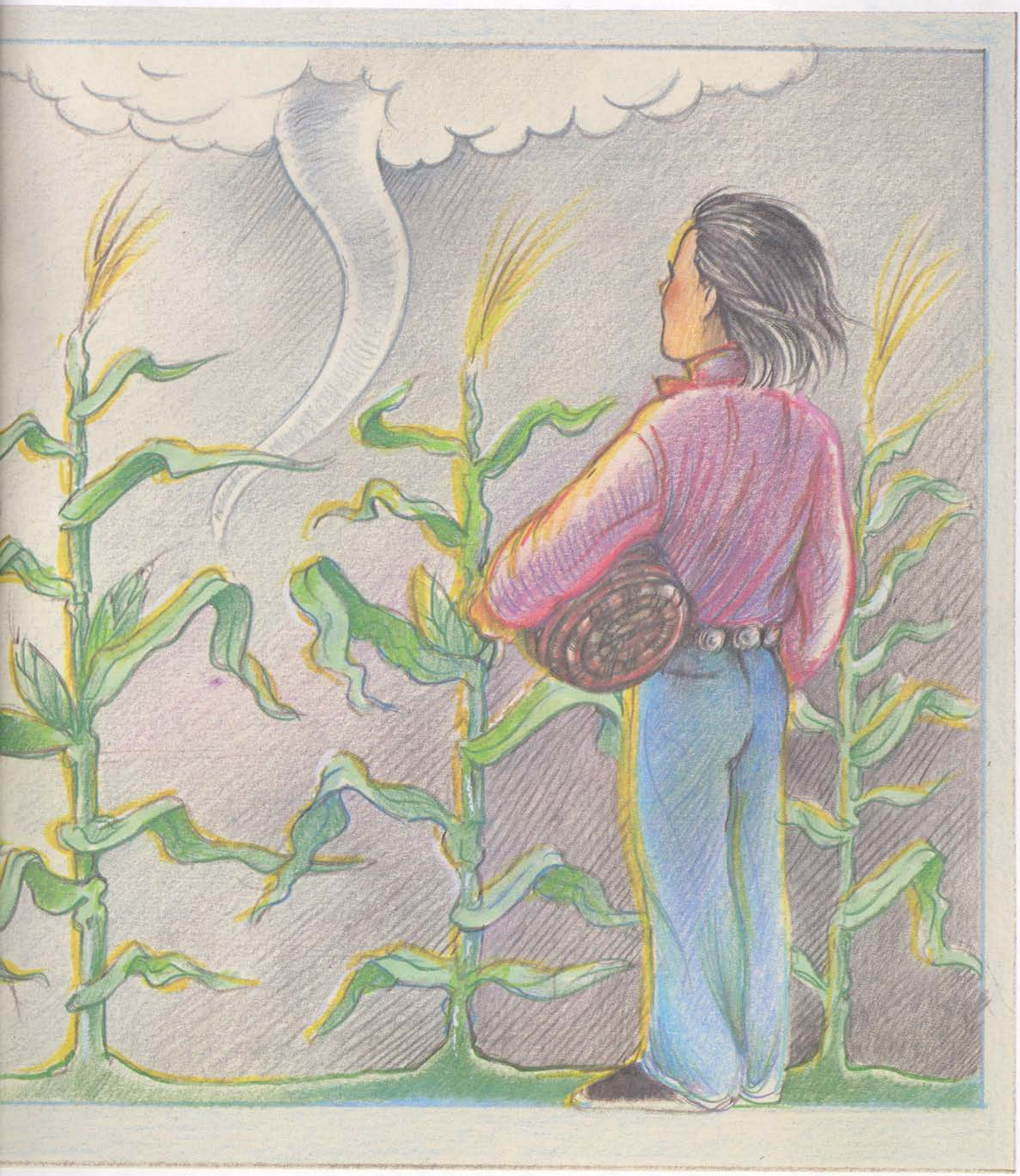
If a rattle snake strikes someone, they are hurt.

If a tornado storms across a community, some homes might be torn down.

If a volcano erupts, a village may be covered in lava.

All of these things are part of the earth's natural balance.

This balance is part of the wonder of our planet.



A gas called radon is also part of nature.

Radon is not something we can see, touch, or smell.

It is found in the earth's soil.

When homes, schools, and stores are built on top of the soil, we do not always know that radon is there.

But once we build these places, radon can come inside -- just like the wind comes inside when our windows are open.

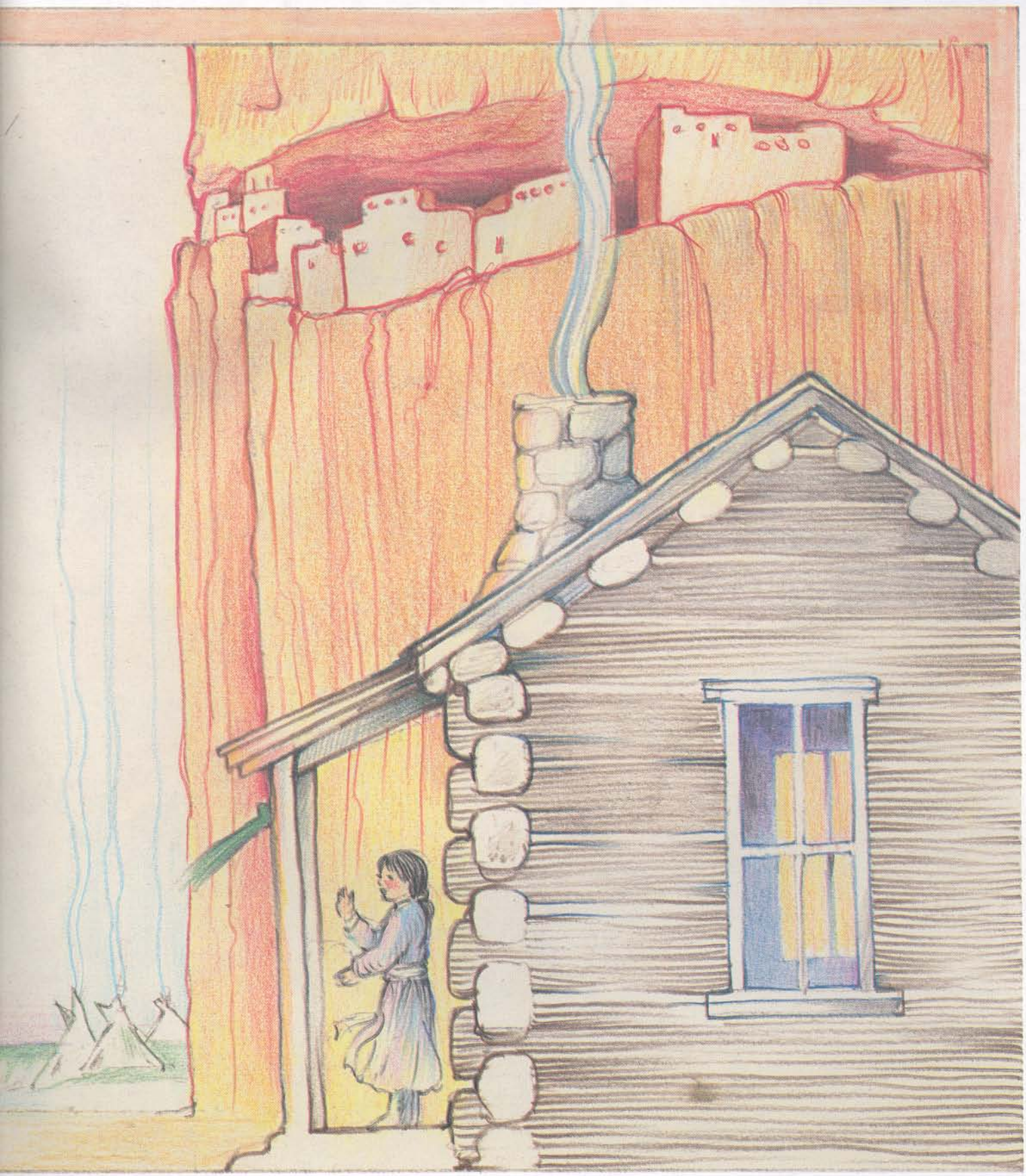
With help from scientists, we are able to measure how much radon is in the soil, in our homes, or in our schools.

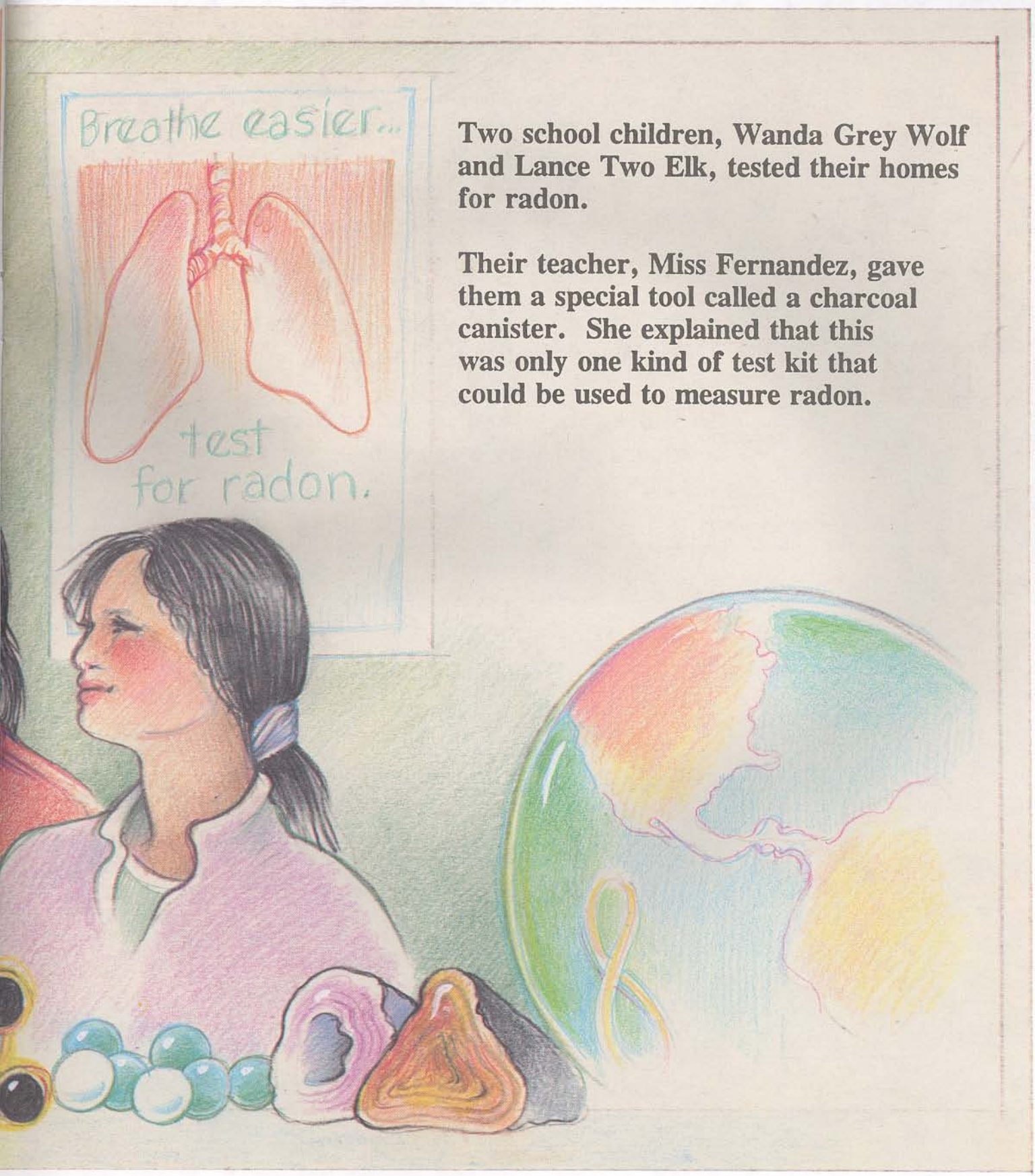
It's important to do a test to find out how much radon comes into each of our homes.

Too much radon in a home can harm our health.

Breathing radon is bad for us because it hurts our lungs.

A simple test will show how much radon is in a home.





Two school children, Wanda Grey Wolf and Lance Two Elk, tested their homes for radon.

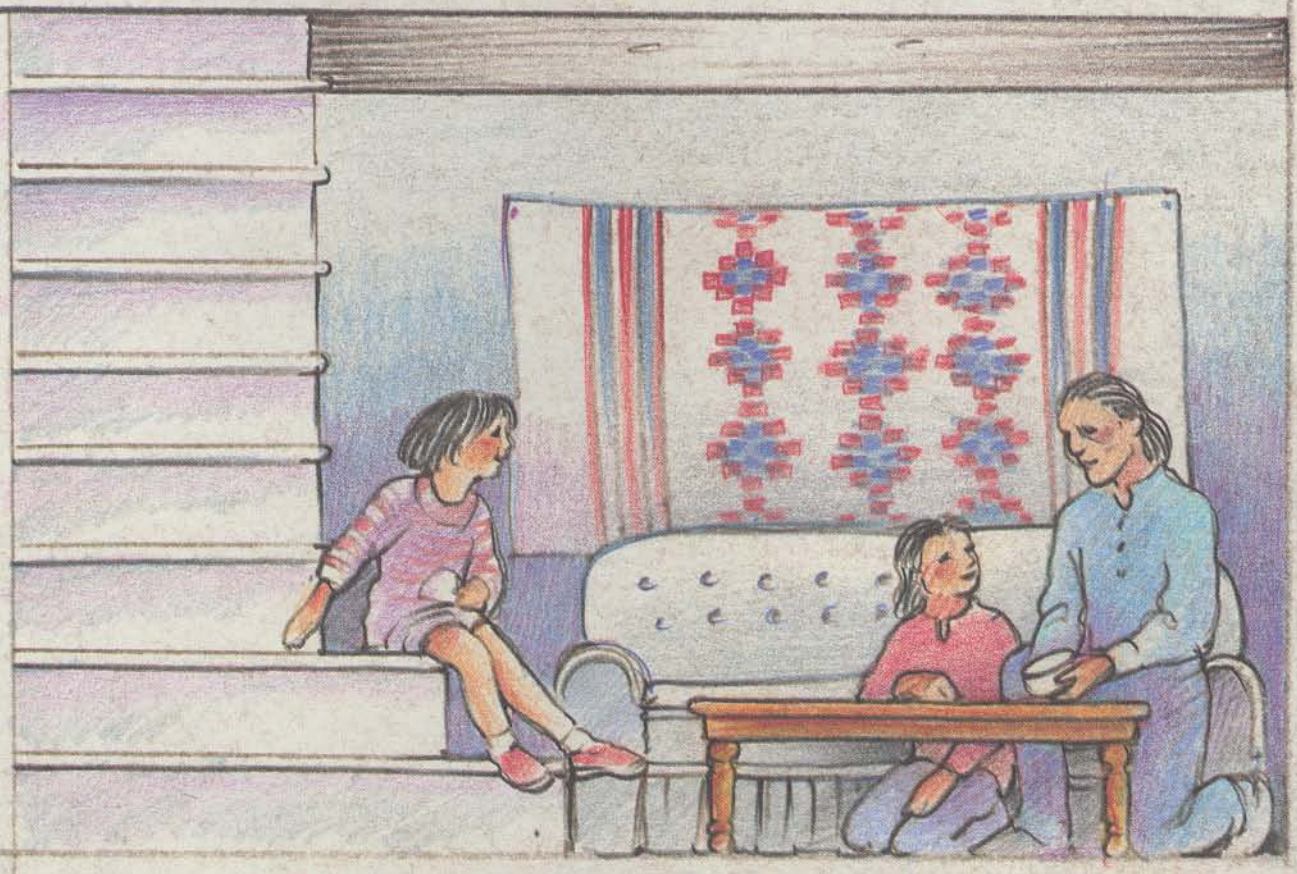
Their teacher, Miss Fernandez, gave them a special tool called a charcoal canister. She explained that this was only one kind of test kit that could be used to measure radon.

That night Wanda and Lance explained the test to their families.

They had to put the canisters in the lowest part of their homes where people lived.

In Lance's house, this place was the basement. In Wanda's house, it was her bedroom.

Before they went to bed they closed all the doors and windows in their houses.

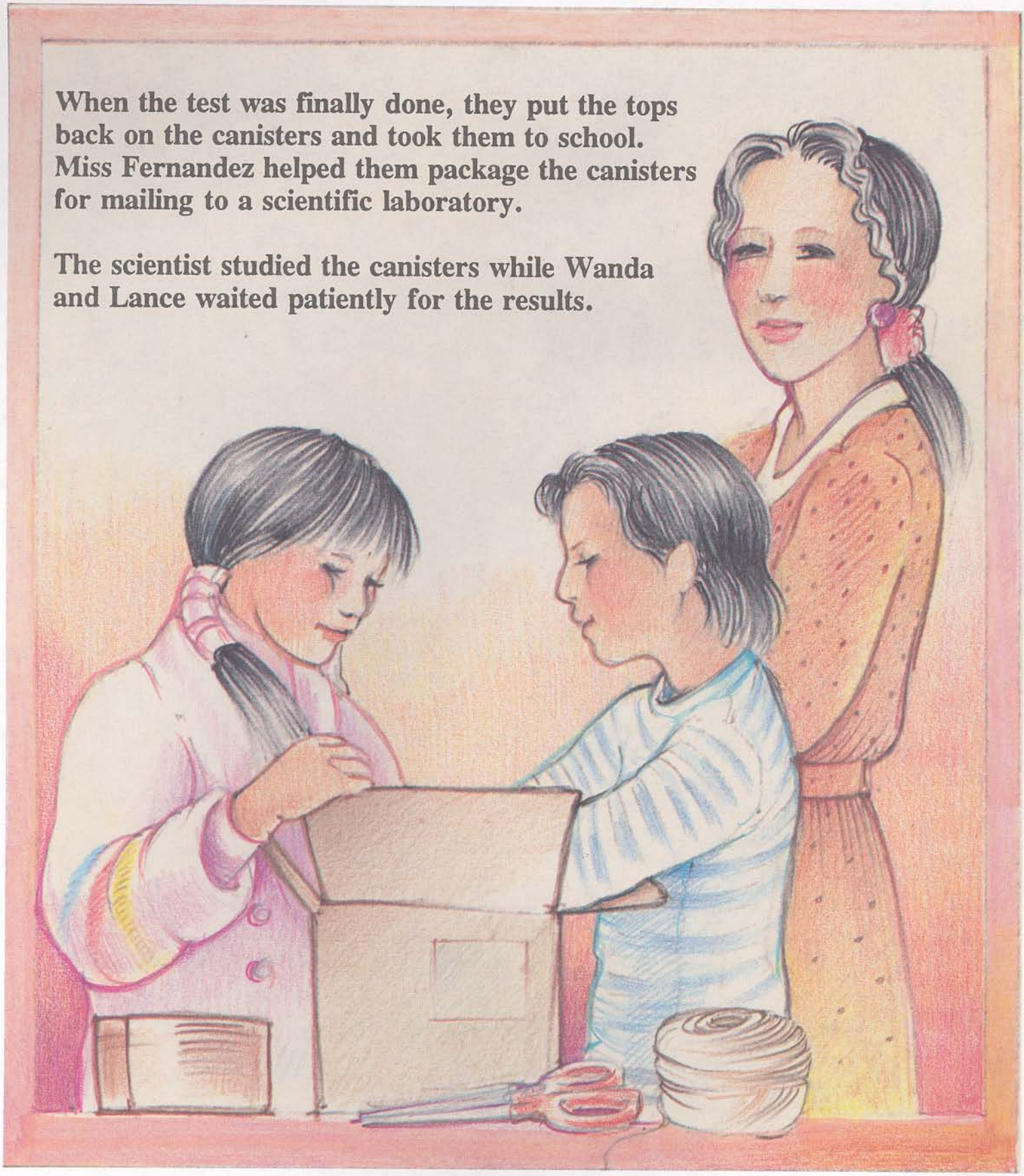


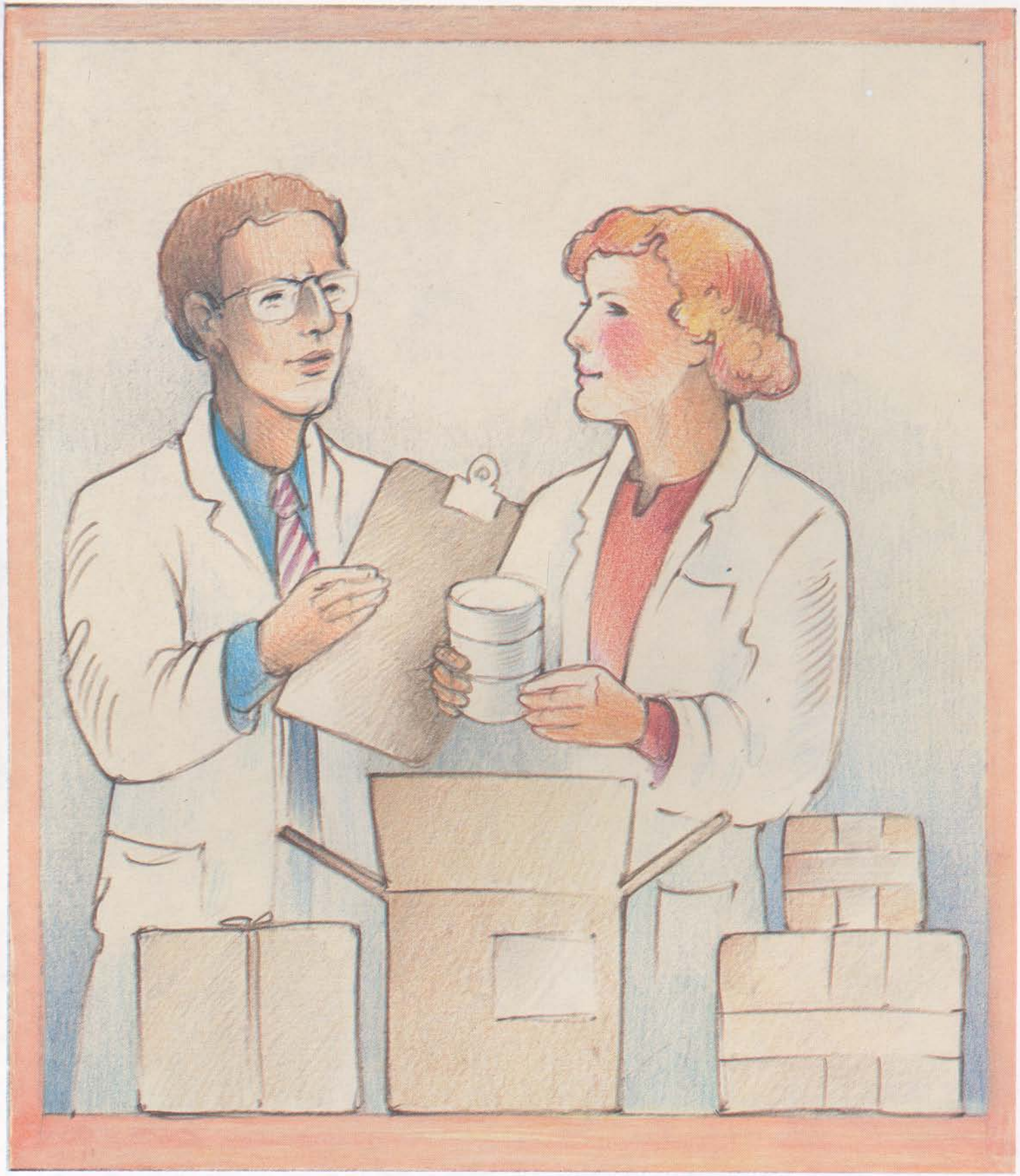
This way, the radon would not escape while it was being measured in the canisters.

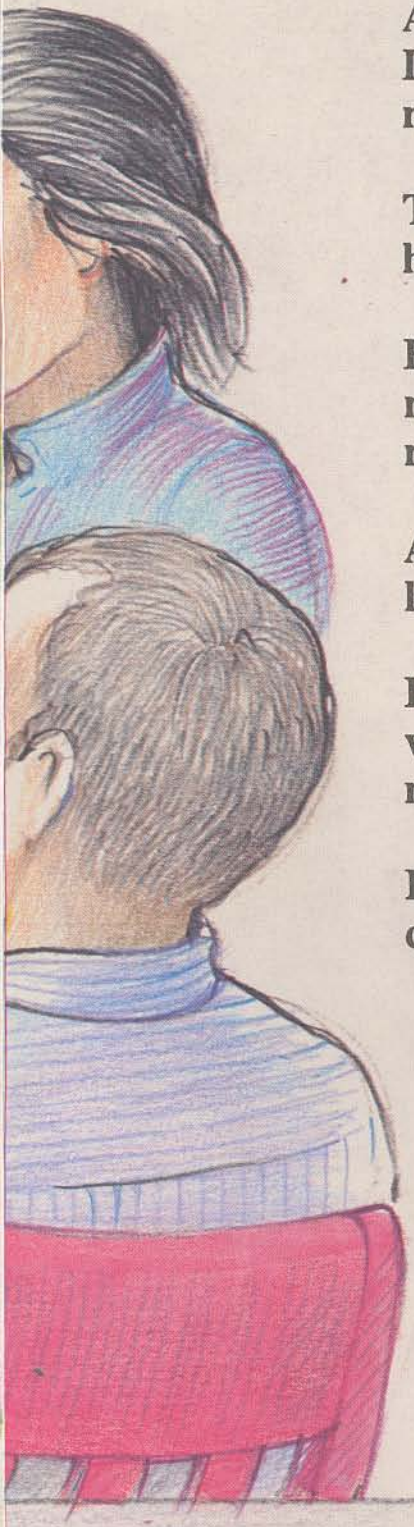
In the morning they took the tops off the canisters to begin the tests. For 7 days and 7 nights they left the canisters alone. Wanda and Lance wanted to touch them but they didn't. They knew that if they bothered the canisters the test would be ruined and they would have to start all over again.

When the test was finally done, they put the tops back on the canisters and took them to school. Miss Fernandez helped them package the canisters for mailing to a scientific laboratory.

The scientist studied the canisters while Wanda and Lance waited patiently for the results.







After a few weeks, Miss Fernandez told Wanda and Lance that scientist had determined the amount of radon in the air of both their homes.

The laboratory results showed that Wanda's home had some radon in it, but only a small amount.

Even though he lived next door to Wanda, Lance's results were not the same. His home had too much radon in it.

At first Lance felt scared because his home had a lot of radon in it.

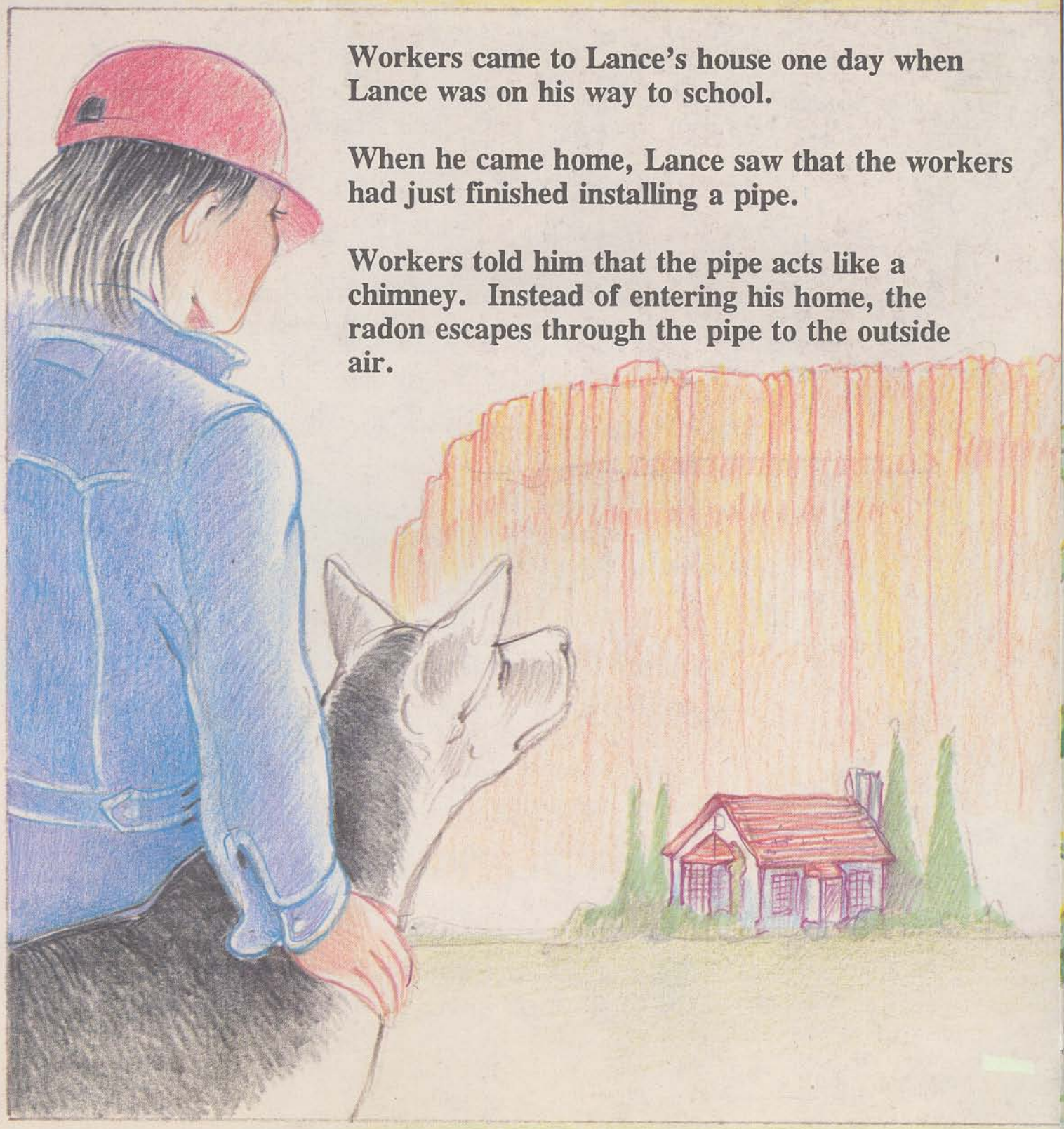
He did not want to go home. He was afraid and he was mad at the earth for making radon a part of nature.

But then Miss Fernandez told him that his house could be fixed.

Radon experts could work on Lance's house to reduce the amount of radon that could get in.

Lance was happy that scientists could help find a solution to this problem.

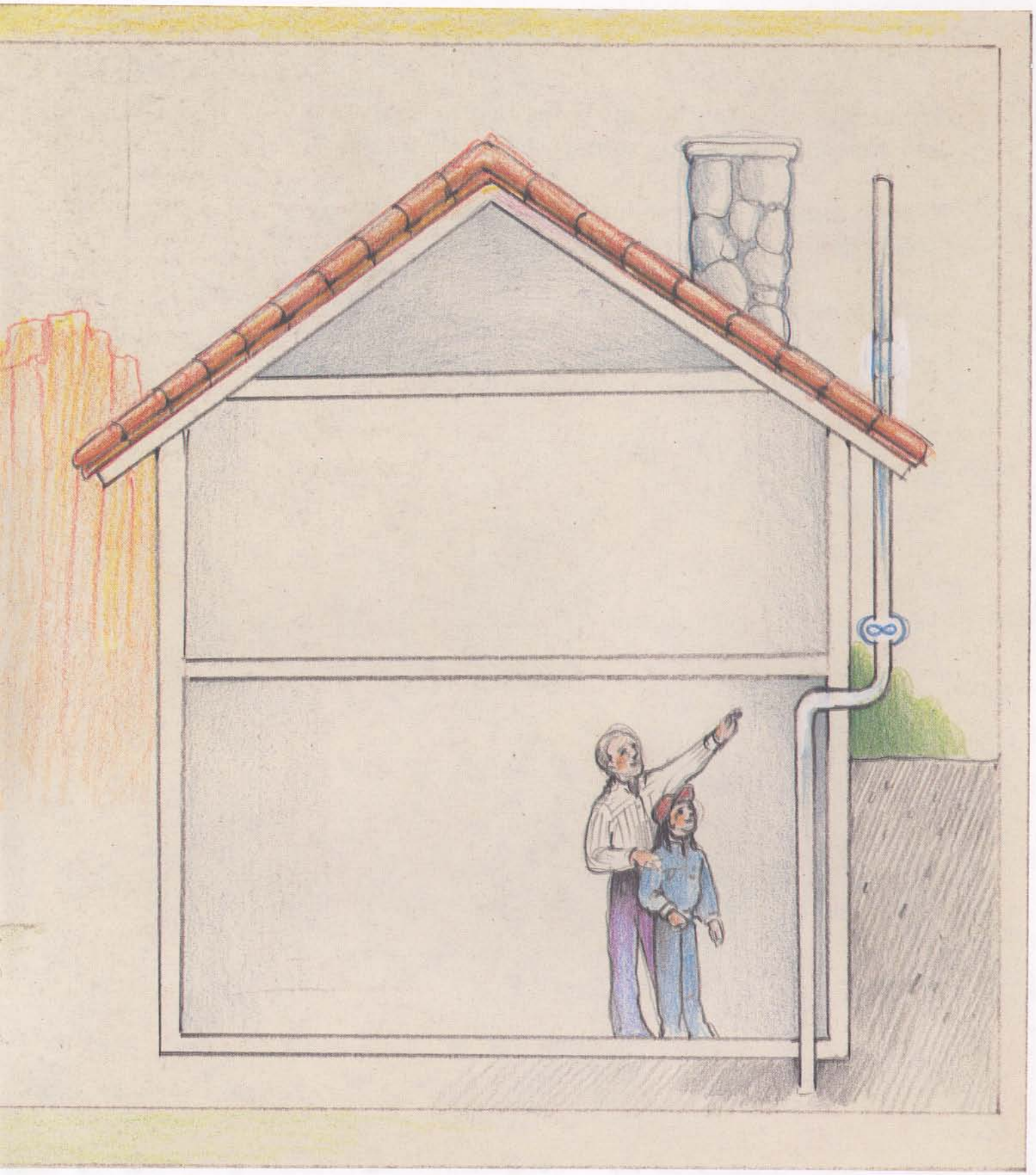
That night Lance and his family talked about how to fix their home.



Workers came to Lance's house one day when Lance was on his way to school.

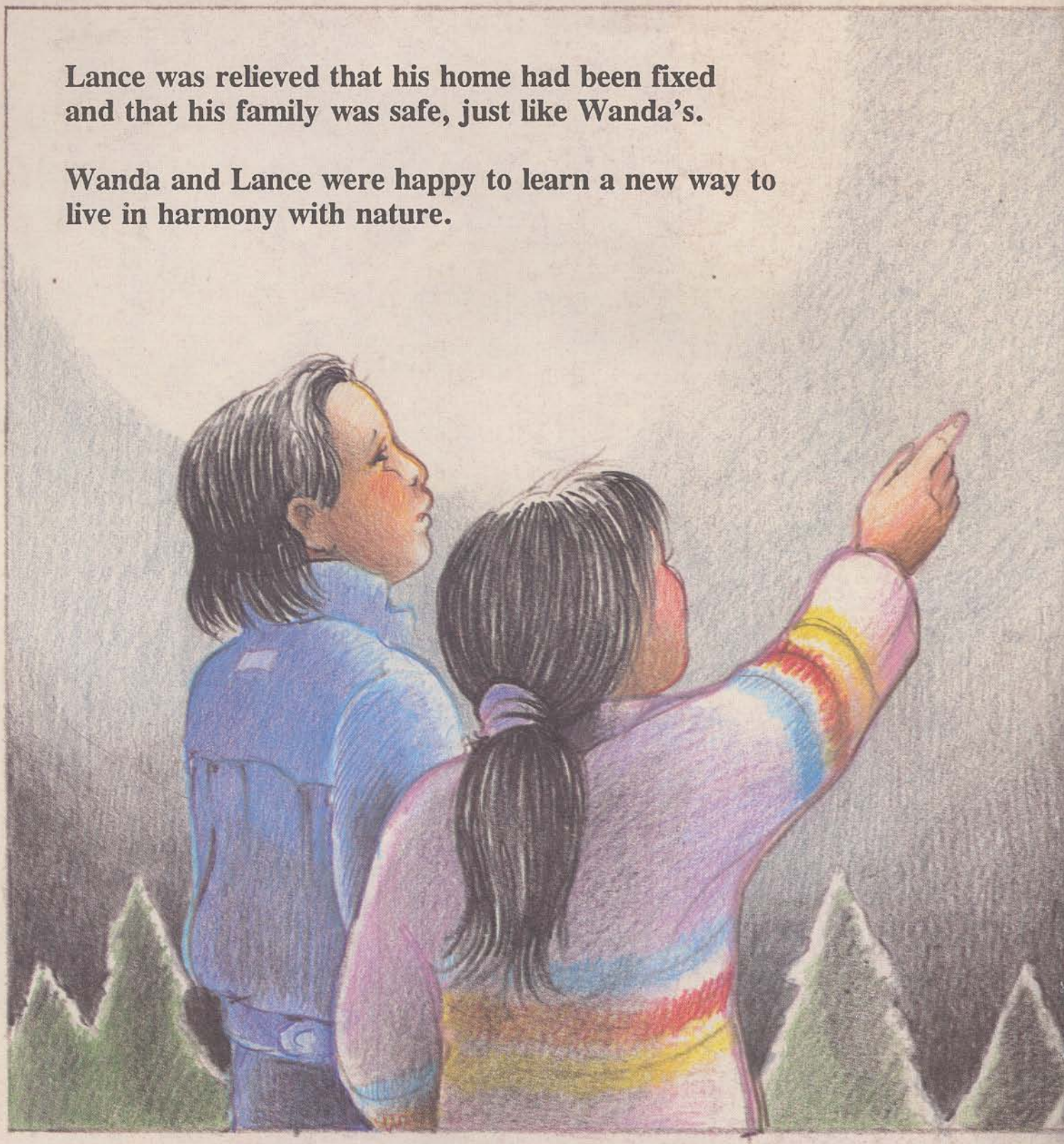
When he came home, Lance saw that the workers had just finished installing a pipe.

Workers told him that the pipe acts like a chimney. Instead of entering his home, the radon escapes through the pipe to the outside air.



Lance was relieved that his home had been fixed and that his family was safe, just like Wanda's.

Wanda and Lance were happy to learn a new way to live in harmony with nature.



Learning about RADON a part of nature
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United States Environmental Protection Agency
Indoor Environments Division (6609-J)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

To learn more about radon, contact your local tribal health department, a state radon program office, or EPA's Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse at 1-800-438-4318. For a current list of state contacts and more on radon, visit www.epa.gov/radon. This document was prepared by the Western Regional Radon Training Center in cooperation with the U.S. EPA. Acknowledgments to Milt Lammering, Denise Scheberle, Dick Beardmore, Laura Smith, Ann Blackstone, Jim Reidhead, Patricia Joyce, and Greg East.