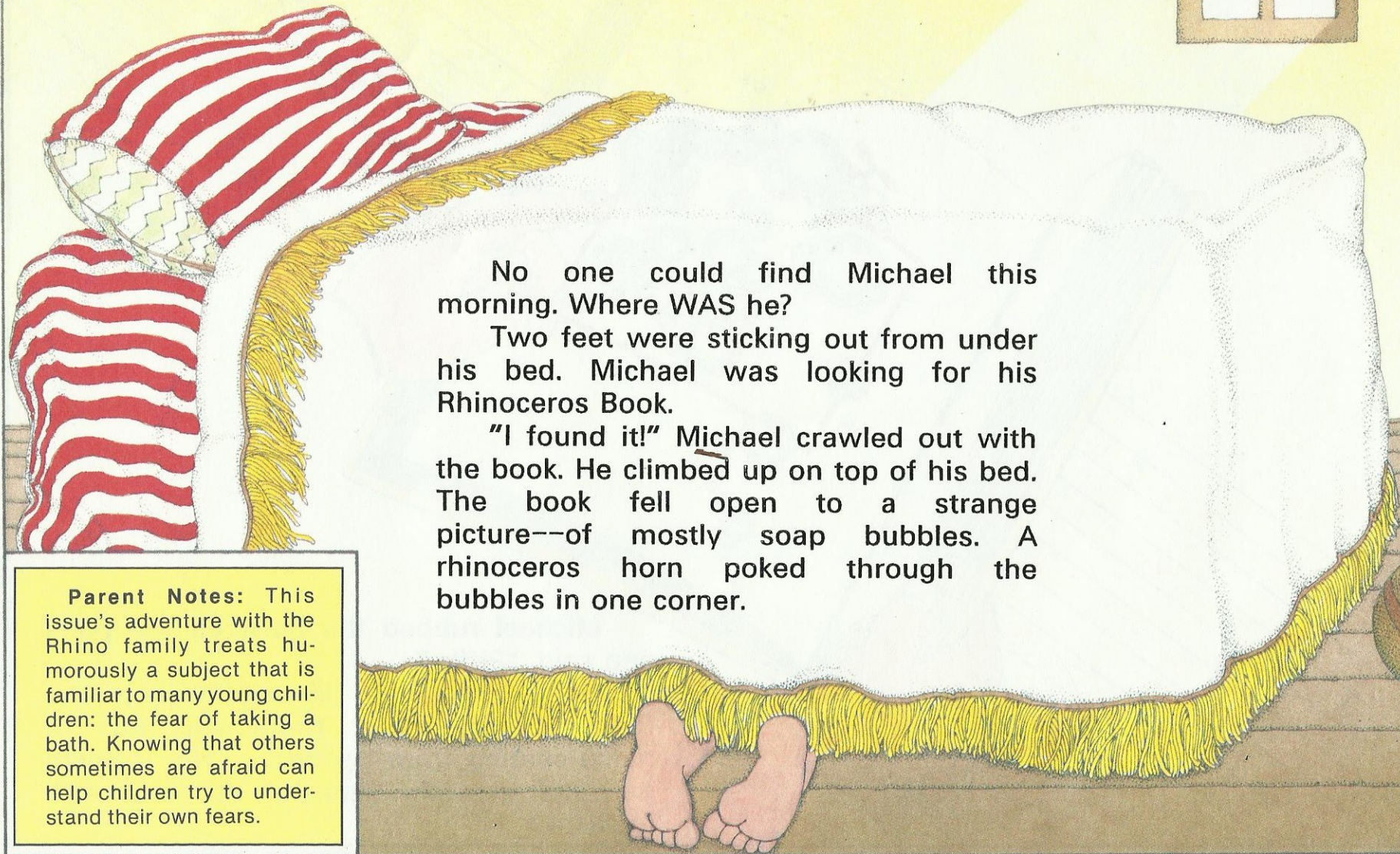
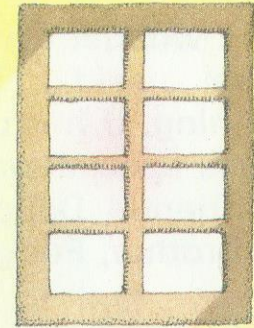


Ruggles Takes a Bath ... Almost



No one could find Michael this morning. Where WAS he?

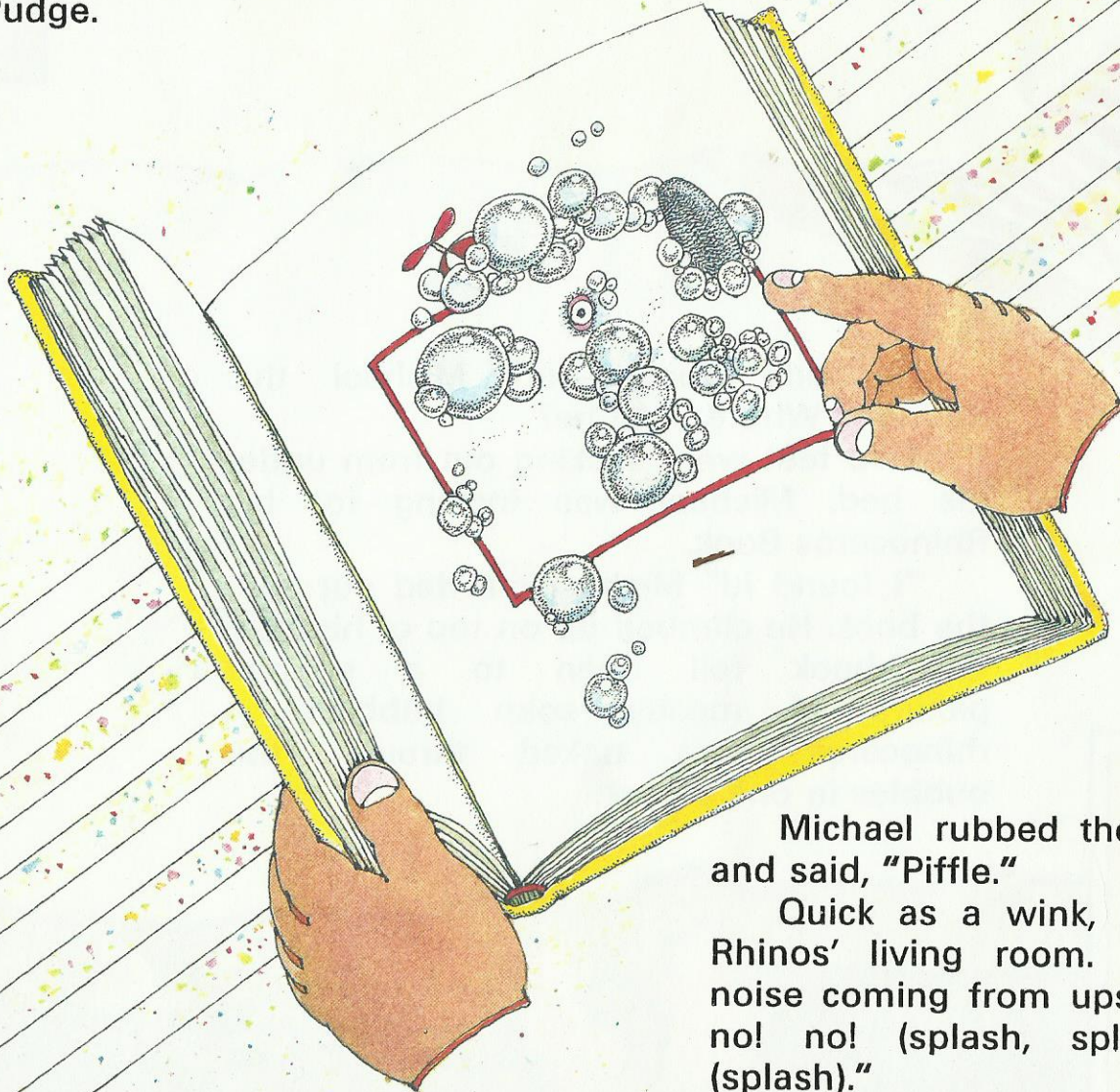
Two feet were sticking out from under his bed. Michael was looking for his Rhinoceros Book.

"I found it!" Michael crawled out with the book. He climbed up on top of his bed. The book fell open to a strange picture--of mostly soap bubbles. A rhinoceros horn poked through the bubbles in one corner.

Parent Notes: This issue's adventure with the Rhino family treats humorously a subject that is familiar to many young children: the fear of taking a bath. Knowing that others sometimes are afraid can help children try to understand their own fears.

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"I wonder what's going on here," Michael said. Then he remembered something. If he rubbed a rhino's horn and said his special word, he could go visit his rhino friends, Dollop and Ruggles, and their baby brother, Pudge.



Michael rubbed the horn on the page and said, "Piffle."

Quick as a wink, Michael was in the Rhinos' living room. There was lots of noise coming from upstairs--"No! (splash) no! no! (splash, splash) no, no, NO! (splash)."

Soap bubbles floated slowly down the stairway. Michael followed the bubbles.

The whole Rhino family was upstairs. Mama and Papa Rhino were trying to catch Ruggles, who was leaving a trail of mud as he ran around shouting, "No way!"

When Ruggles spotted Michael, he stopped and said, "Hi, Michael!"

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Just then Papa Rhino grabbed Ruggles. "Now," said Papa, "it's bathtime!" But as they got near the bathtub, Ruggles slipped away. Papa grabbed for him again and missed--and fell into the tub. KA-SPLASH!

"Oh my goodness," cried Mama Rhino. "You got splashed, Michael. Are you OK?"

"What about ME?" said Papa. His suit was soaked. His bow tie looked like a wet, squishy sock.

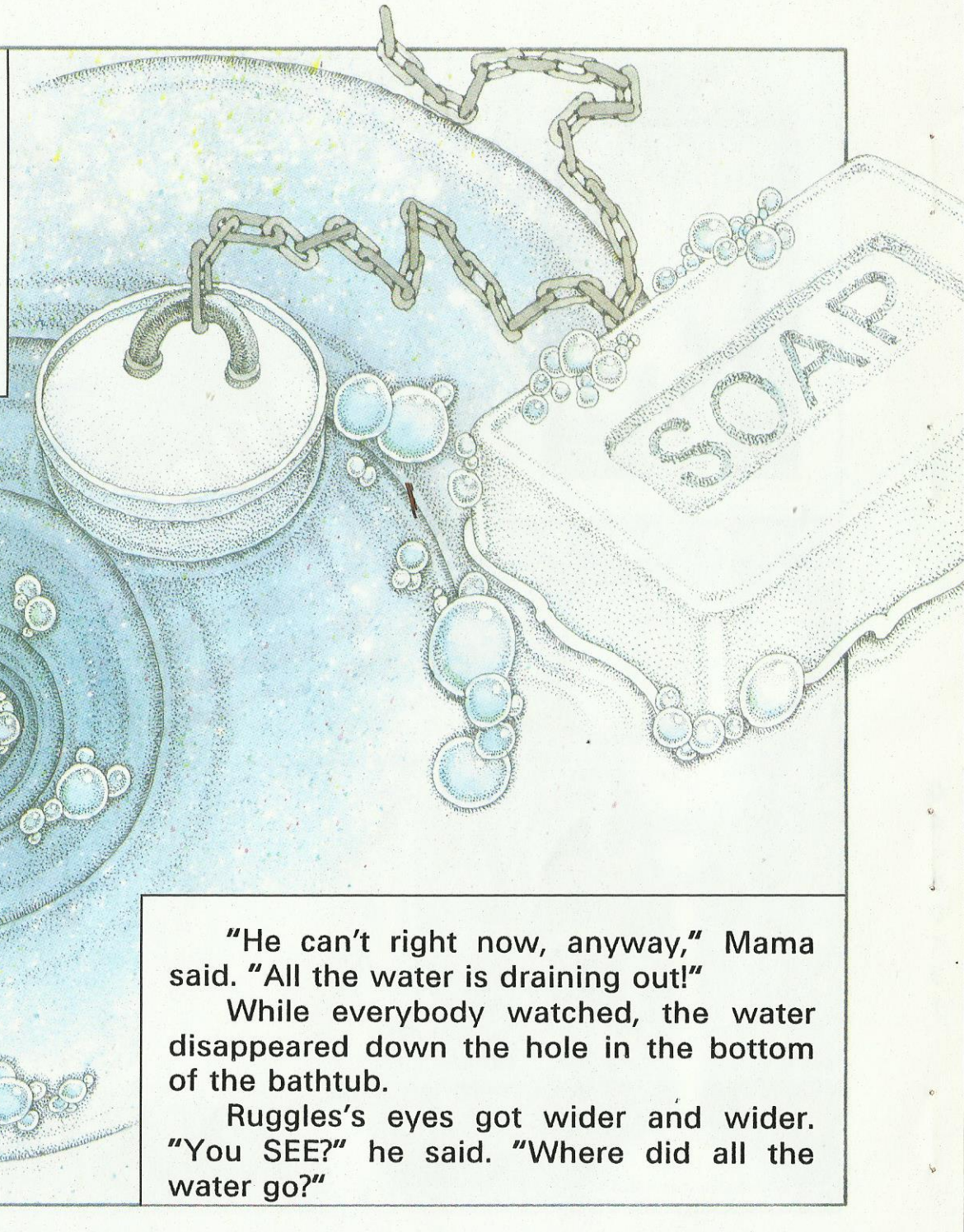




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"Ruggles was playing under the front porch," Dollop whispered to Michael. "He came out looking like a blob of mud with a horn. And now he won't get into the tub to wash."

Ruggles helped his father out of the bathtub. "I'm sorry," he said, "but I can't take a bath! Not ever!"



Anticipating what might happen next in a story helps prepare children for later success in reading. At this point, you could ask, "Why do you think Ruggles doesn't want to take a bath?"

"He can't right now, anyway," Mama said. "All the water is draining out!"

While everybody watched, the water disappeared down the hole in the bottom of the bathtub.

Ruggles's eyes got wider and wider. "You SEE?" he said. "Where did all the water go?"

"Down the drain," Papa replied.

"Well, what if that happens to ME?" cried Ruggles. "I don't want to fall down there!"

Out in the hall, Dollop began to laugh. But Mama said, "Now, Dollop, if Ruggles is scared of something, we should help him--NOT laugh at him."

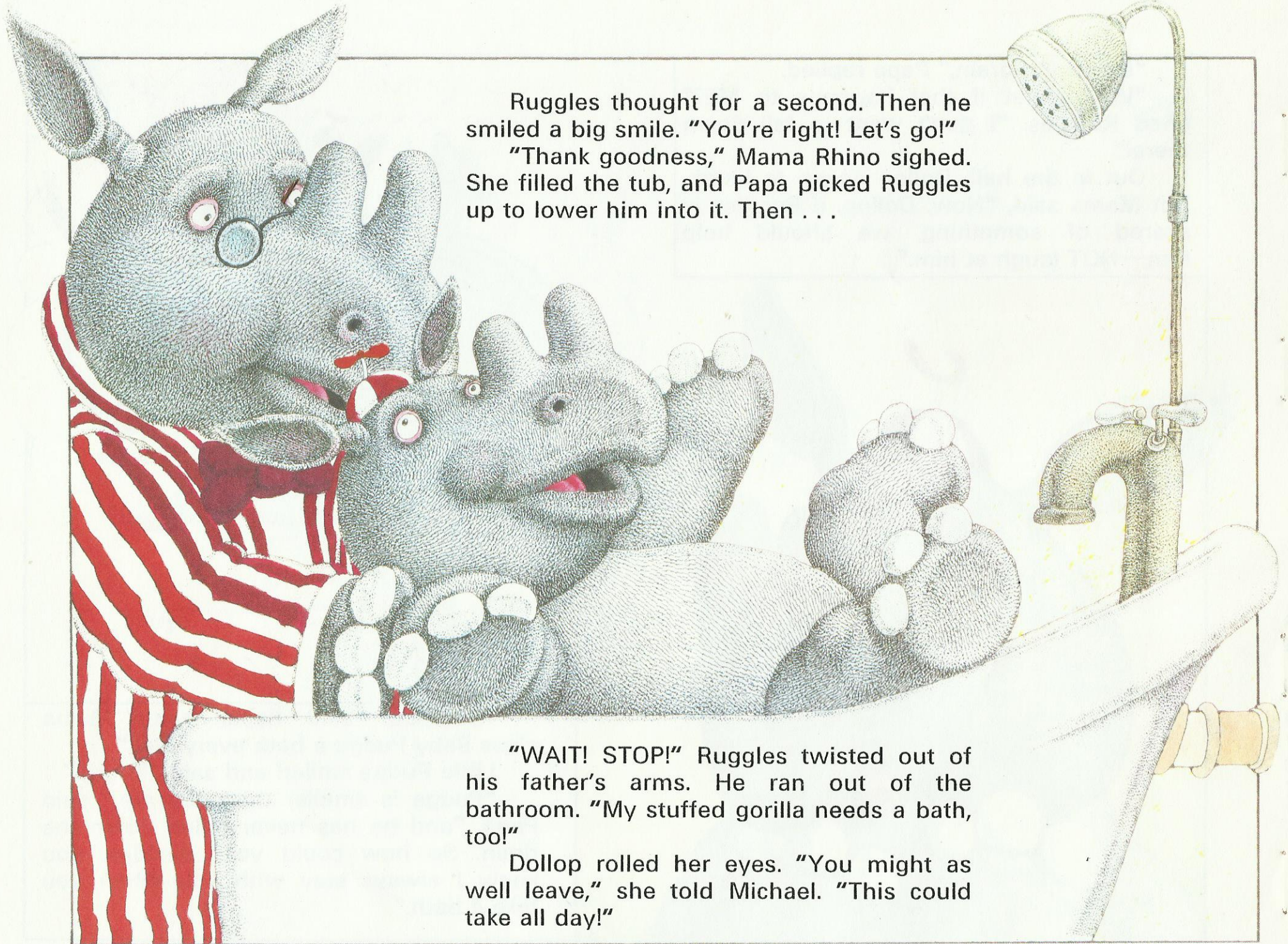


"Ruggles," said Papa, "your Mama gives Baby Pudge a bath every day."

Little Pudge smiled and said, "Glurg!"

"Pudge is smaller than you are," said Papa. "and he has never fallen down the drain. So how could you? Besides, you know I always stay with you when you take a bath."

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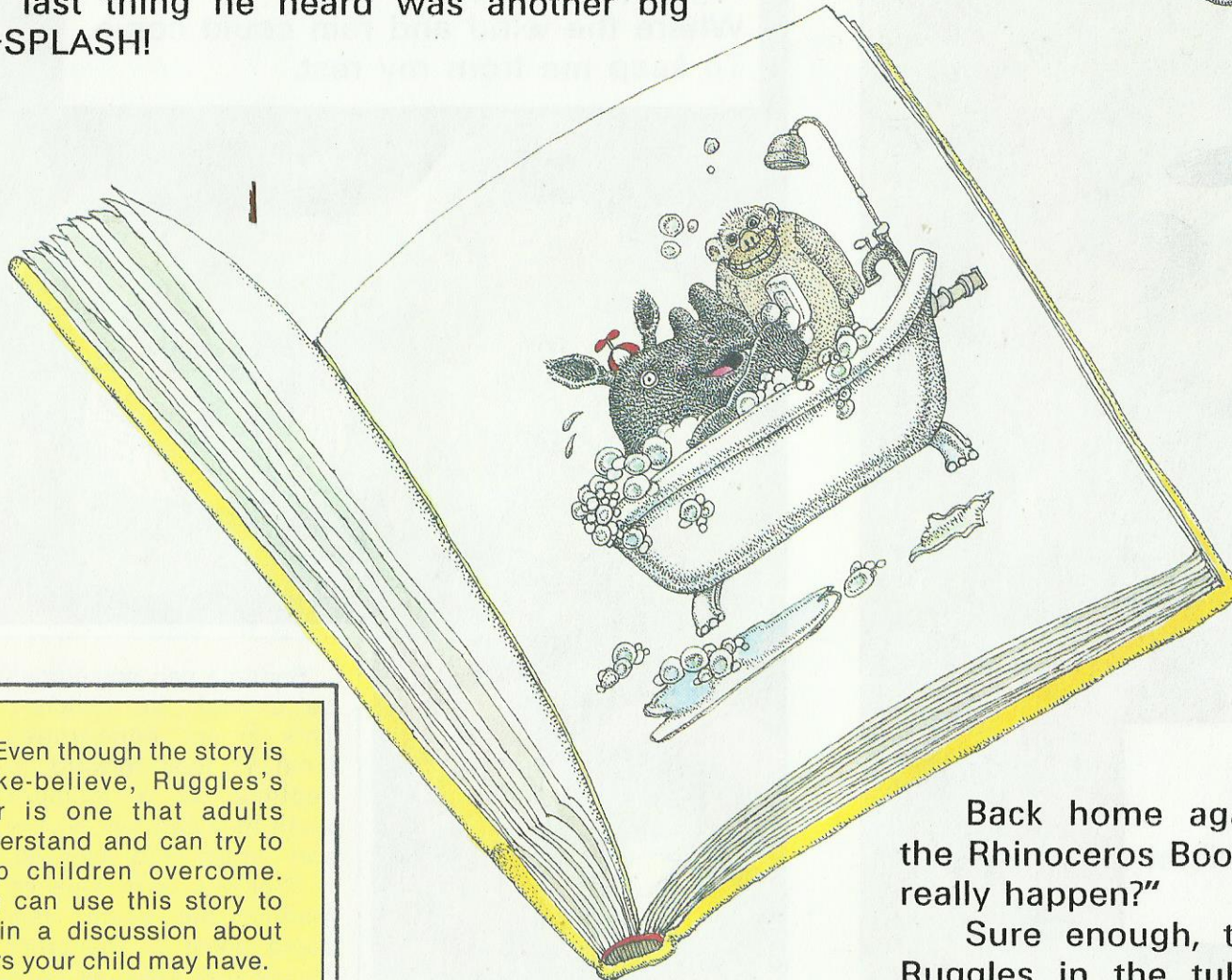
A detailed illustration of a rhinoceros family in a bathtub. On the left, a large rhinoceros (Papa) with glasses and a red and white striped shirt is holding a smaller rhinoceros (Ruggles) in his arms. Another rhinoceros (Mama) is visible behind them. The bathtub is white with a brass faucet and a showerhead. The scene is set in a bathroom.

Ruggles thought for a second. Then he smiled a big smile. "You're right! Let's go!"
"Thank goodness," Mama Rhino sighed. She filled the tub, and Papa picked Ruggles up to lower him into it. Then . . .

"WAIT! STOP!" Ruggles twisted out of his father's arms. He ran out of the bathroom. "My stuffed gorilla needs a bath, too!"

Dollop rolled her eyes. "You might as well leave," she told Michael. "This could take all day!"

Michael felt hungry. He thought that it must be almost time to go home for lunch. He rubbed Pudge's horn and said, "Piffle." The last thing he heard was another big KA-SPLASH!



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Even though the story is make-believe, Ruggles's fear is one that adults understand and can try to help children overcome. You can use this story to begin a discussion about fears your child may have.

On the lighter side, your child might have fun thinking of a name for Ruggles's stuffed gorilla.

Back home again, Michael looked at the Rhinoceros Book, wondering, "Did it all really happen?"

Sure enough, there was a picture of Ruggles in the tub, holding tight to his gorilla doll.

And--was that a big soap bubble floating by?