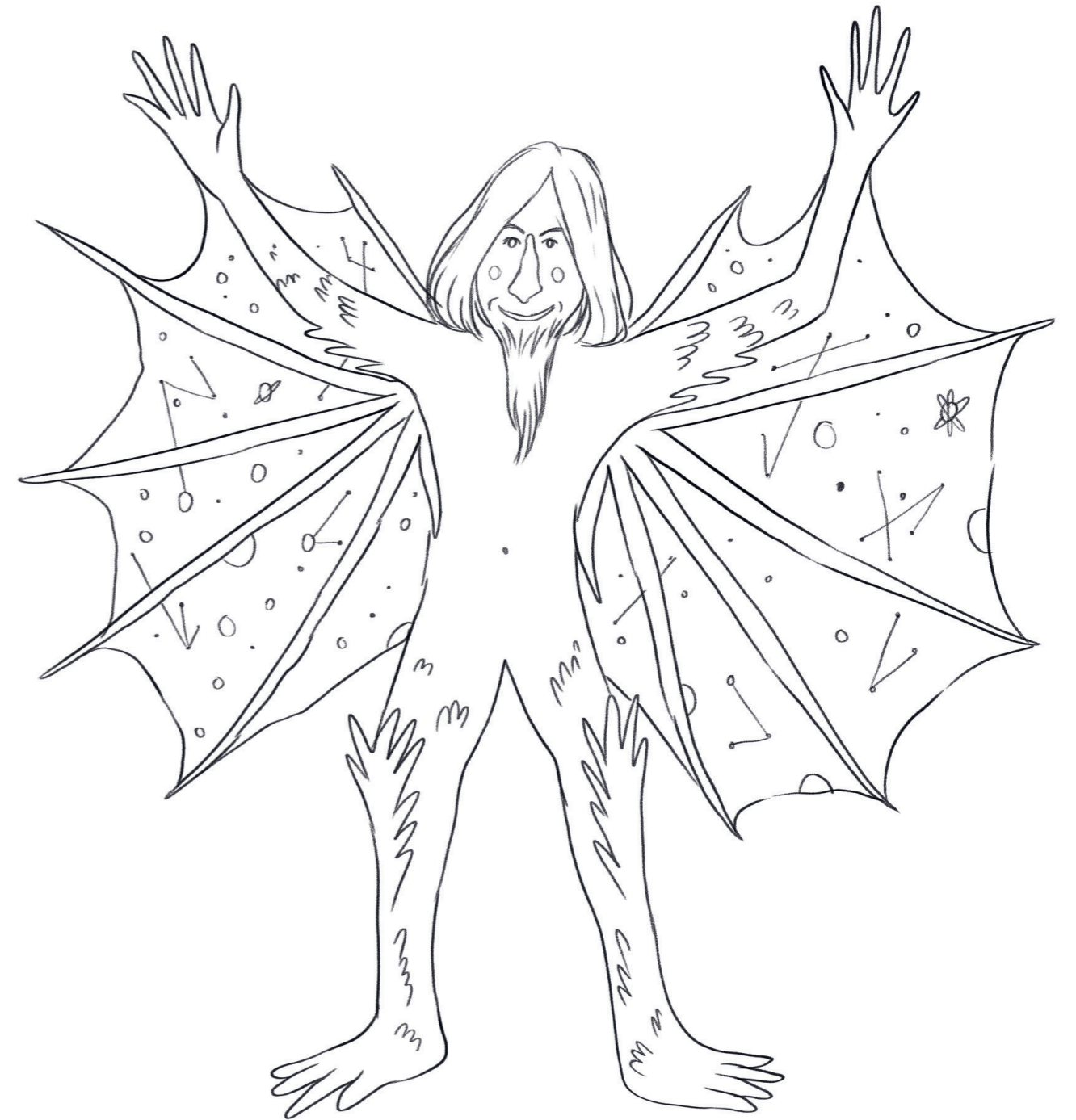


Earth is a wonderful planet. It's just far enough from the sun to get not *too* hot and just close enough to be not *too* cold. And do you know how many grains of sand there are on our earth? Well, the universe has almost as many stars as the tiny grains here on earth! Within that huge group of stars, astrobiologists look for planets that resemble ours, and where other life might be possible.





In the early 1800s, most people were convinced that the moon, Mars, and Venus were inhabited. Scientists wrote stories about how they had seen cities on the moon and canals on Mars with their telescopes. They believed creatures lived there, but we could not reach them. The Austrian astronomer Joseph Johann von Littrow suggested digging out large canals and ditches in the Sahara Desert that could be filled with oil and then set on fire, using earth as if it were a gigantic drawing board to send messages to Mars at night.