



*The Shapes*  
*on the* **Shore**

We spent last weekend at home. The sky wouldn't stop pouring and the winds wouldn't stop howling. But this week, Appa promised to take us out to Thatha's house at the seaside.

We arrived well after sunset and were forbidden from stepping off the front porch. But the dark sea teased us from afar as it crashed onto the deserted beach and slowly receded back into itself.



On the sand sat dark masses, these shapes that  
wriggled and drift with every crashing wave.

What were they? Were they alive? We wondered.



“You know what those are?”, I said,  
“They’re those trees that grow out  
of salt water and mush, their roots  
grow upward instead of down.

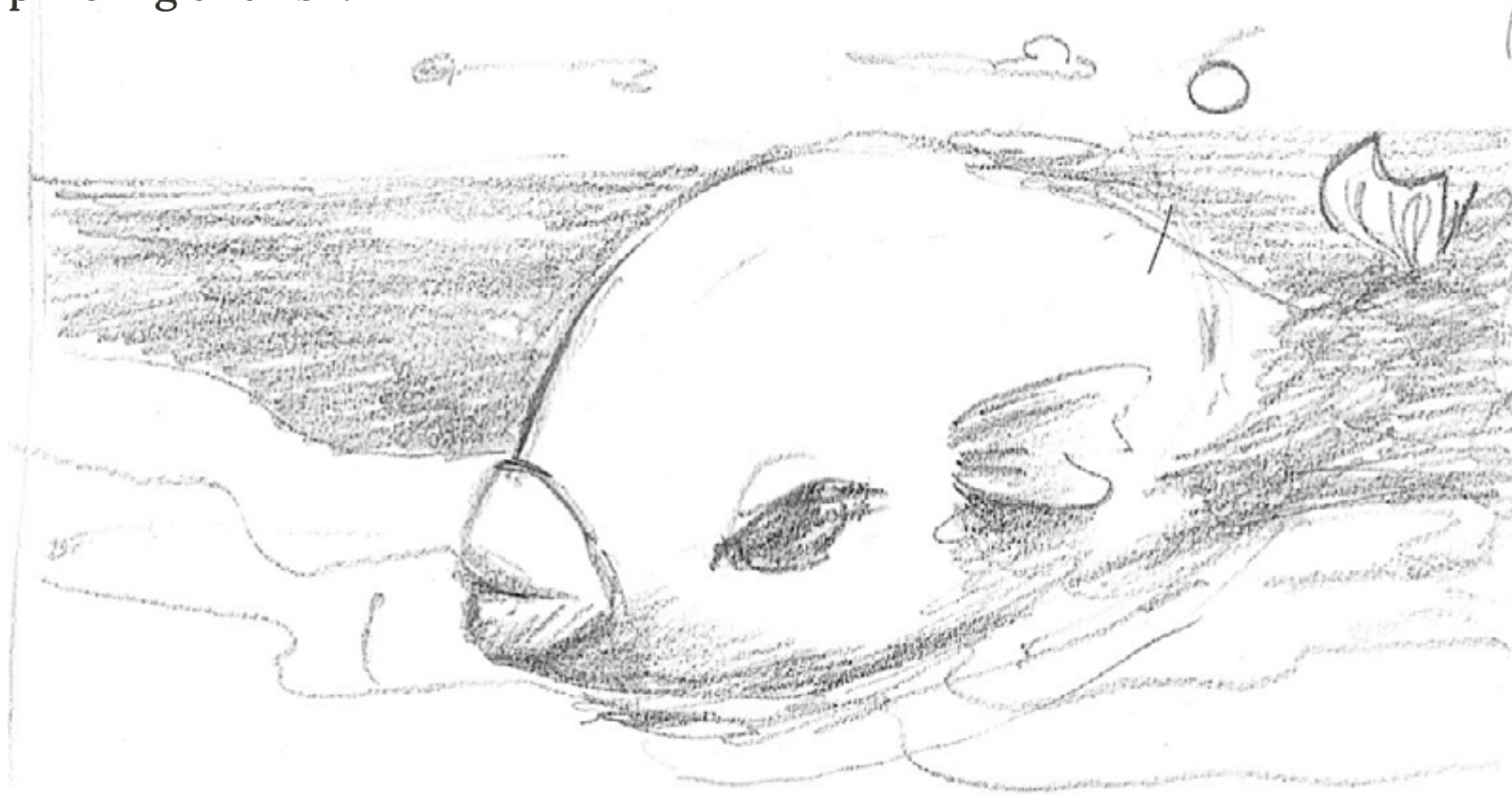
And in these forests, you can find fish that  
walk on legs! A strange forest indeed, maybe  
we will meet some tomorrow.”



“Actually...”, Varun anna interrupted, “I think they’re sandcastles. Sandcastles built by thousands of little crabs.

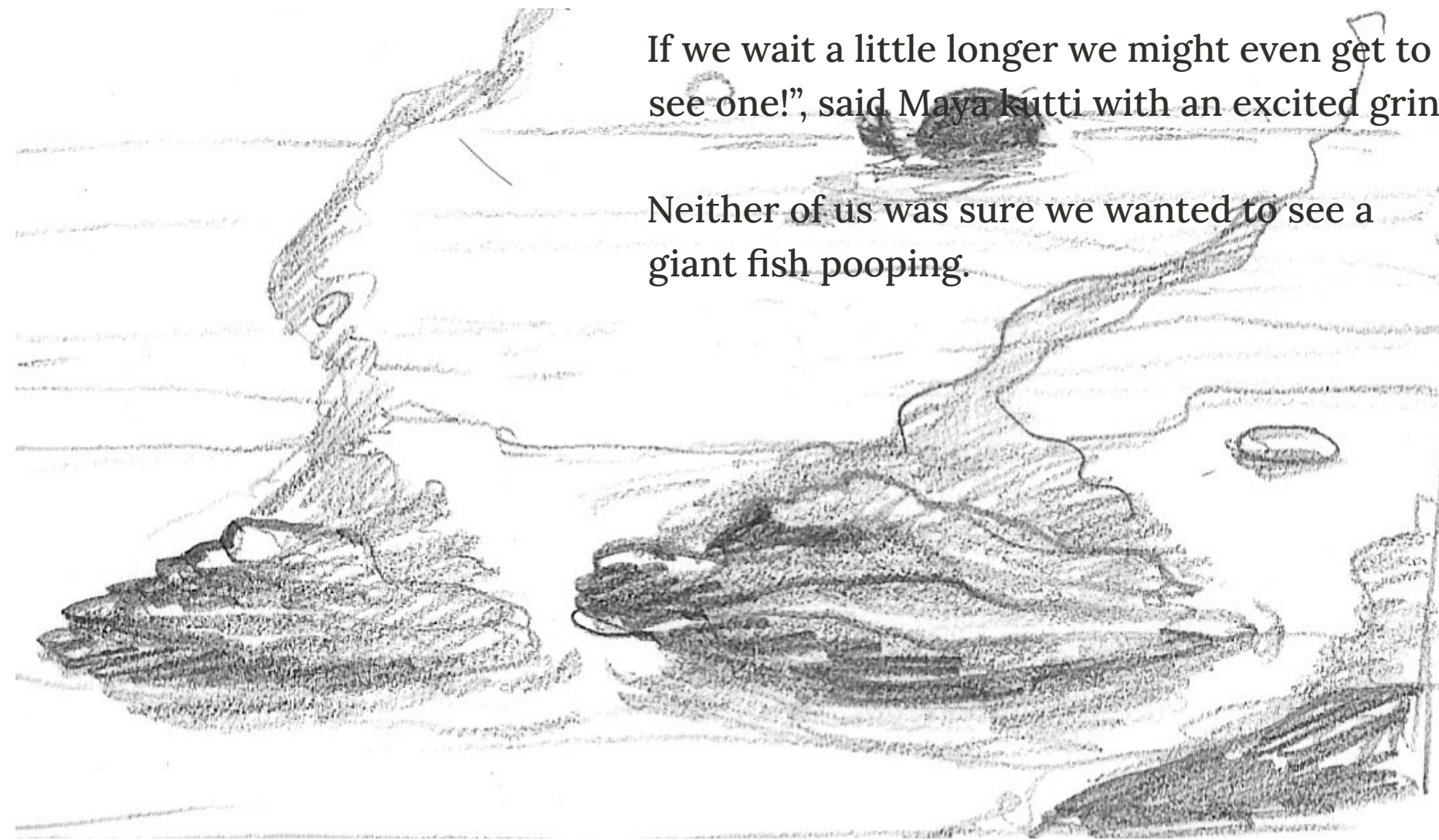
And these sandcastles are more amazing than anything any of us have ever made.”

“Neelu chithi told me that beaches are made of fish poo. Perhaps this beach is filled with giant poop from giant fish.



If we wait a little longer we might even get to see one!”, said Maya kutti with an excited grin.

Neither of us was sure we wanted to see a giant fish pooping.



“You aren’t making any sense”, said little Hari.

“I’m sure they’re Sea Monsters. They obviously don’t come out in the day because there are too many humans around.

They don’t like us.

So they come out at night to bask in the moonlight and play in the sand.”

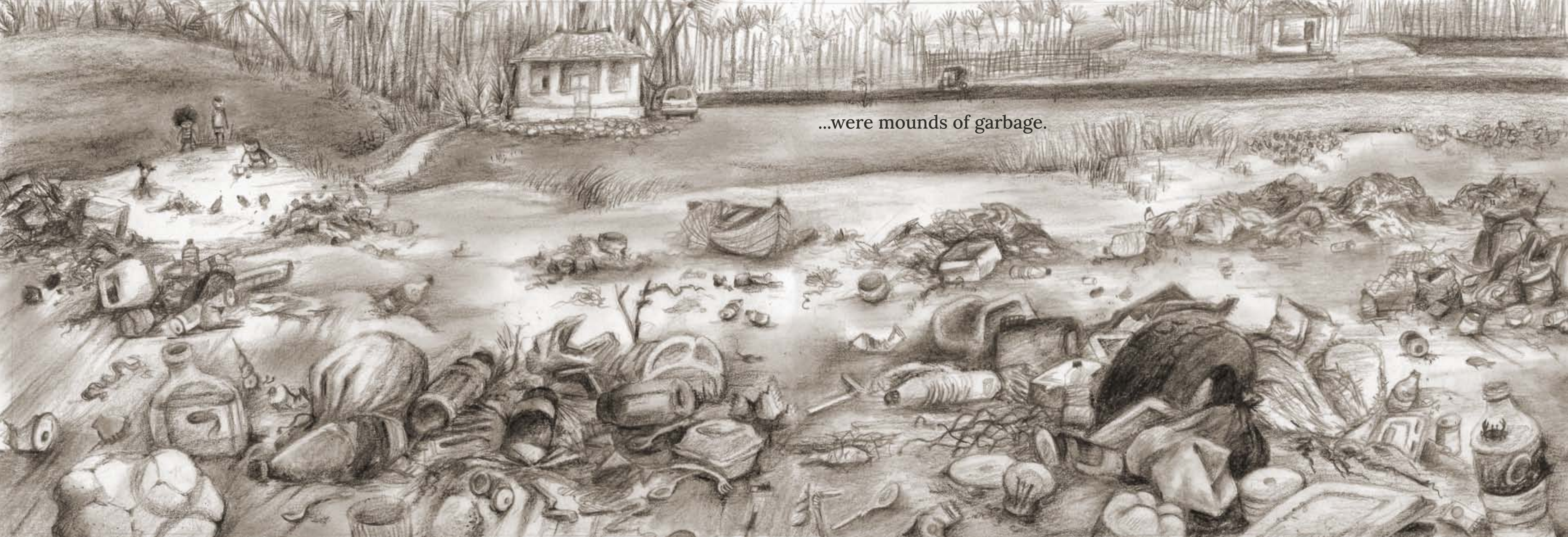




We ran to the beach the next morning with our buckets and our hats... Kicking up the sand behind us.

To find the mysterious mounds that moved in the night...





...were mounds of garbage.

“That’s a lot of garbage. Where did all this come from Thatha?”, we asked him.

Thatha explained, “Every minute, a truckload of plastic garbage is thrown into the sea. Most of this plastic is shaped like things we use every day... cola bottles, bags, chocolate wrappers.

Huge companies that sell millions of these tiny things won't stop packaging them in plastic. As they sell more and more, there's more and more plastic in the world. Now there's just plastic everywhere. Miles and miles of it."

And Thatha was collecting it all by himself. That was a whole lot of garbage for one collector.

"What if we were all garbage collectors, wouldn't it be easier?", said Varun anna.



One, two, three, four, five times faster. If we called Appa, then six, Amma, then seven.

And then Amma would tell Neelu Chithi, who would tell her twins, who would tell their maid, who would tell the janitor at the school next door, who would tell the principal of the school next door, who would tell the kids from the school next door.”

Eight, ten, eleven, twelve, thriteen...  
hundreds of times faster! The miles of trash won't stand a chance!

“Of course, until the next tide will bring miles more”