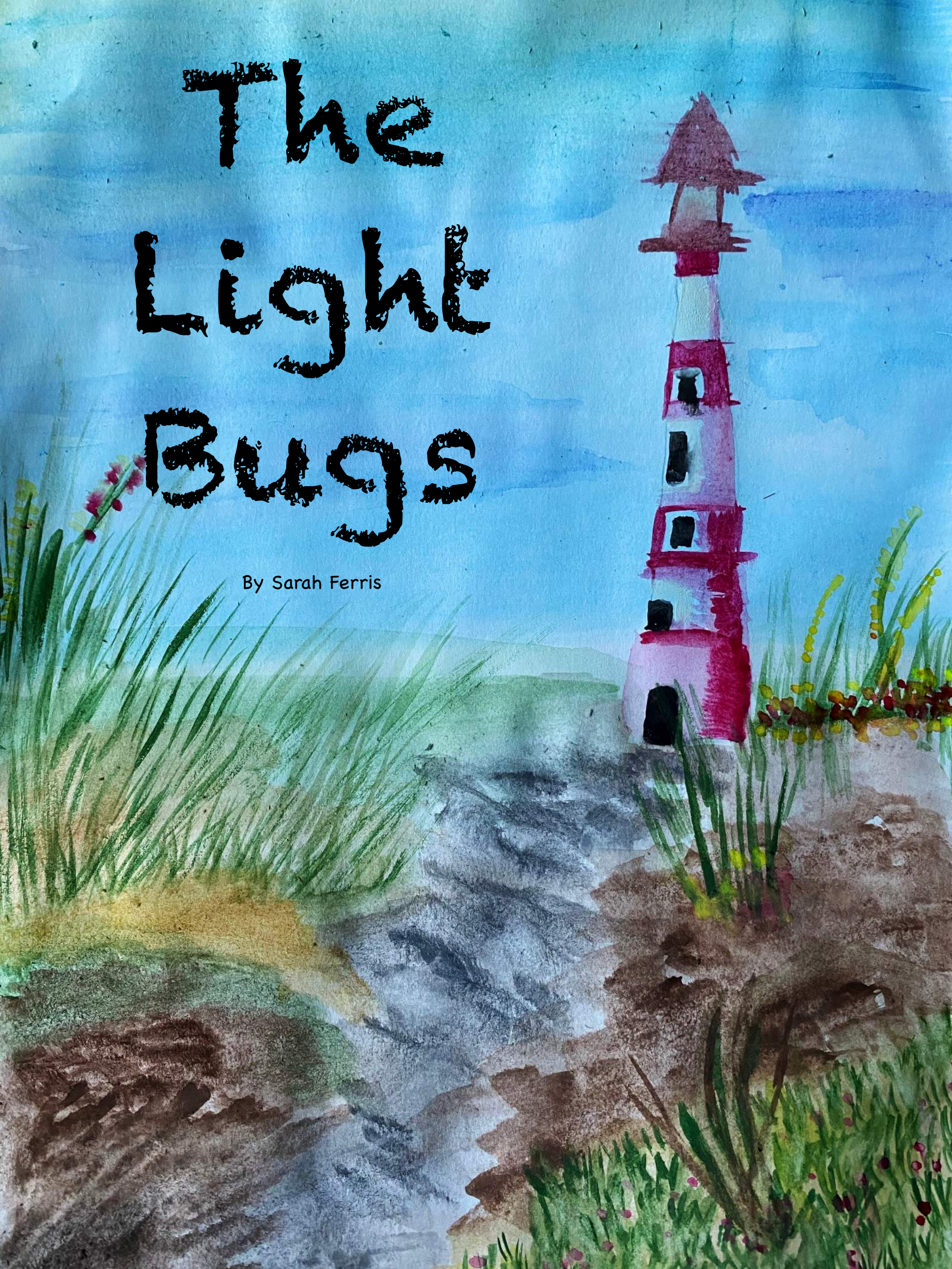


# The Light Bugs

By Sarah Ferris





// Look Bertie!" Nellie exclaimed, "is that a light coming from the old light house?".

Bertie swallowed the last bite of his cheese sandwich with a gulp. "No Nellie you must be seeing things." He turned his attention back to his packed lunch Nana had made for him that morning, eyes searching for the bright red wrapping of his favourite biscuit.

"I can't remember the last time the silly old thing worked" Bertie said as he looked up from his lunch box, "Hey! Nana forgot to pack me a KitKat".

"Oh Bertie, don't you remember the stories Mum used to tell us about the light house? She said she remembered the night it stopped working when she was a little girl." Said Nellie.

"I wonder if someone has been up to fix the old thing?" Nelly wondered aloud.

"You fool, why would anyone fix it when boats dock at the other side of the island?" Bertie grumbled as his words bustled past the custard cream filling his mouth. Nellie stared hard at her brother wishing he was like the biscuit he was eating, so she could crush him and blow away his crumbs. Maybe then he wouldn't be so annoying always trying to talk her out of adventures.





Almost like lightening, a great beam of light shot across the late afternoon sky.

"Oh my" Bertie stuttered "the light really is working!". They stared up at the lighthouse watching as the light disappeared once more.

"We have to go look Bertie we just have to! Nana never mentioned it was getting fixed and Nana knows everything. So something must be up!" Nellie reached forward and tugged Berties arm excitedly.

"We can't go! Nana told us to be home before dark or else Nellie, and you know what that means." Bertie snapped, yanking his arm from her grasp and bent down to pack up his backpack.

Nellie did know what he meant, she shuttered at the thought. "We are so close to the lighthouse Bertie I just want a closer look that's all! I promise we will be home before dark."



Before Bertie could protest Nellie darted off toward the lighthouse.

“Hey! Wait for me!” Bertie scrambled after his sister, feet slipping and sliding in the wet grass as he raced to catch up. Bertie opened his mouth to scold her, but he knew better. He had never managed to talk her out of her adventures before.

Nellie and Bertie raced across the field and up the stone path leading to the lighthouse, the sun was slipping further down the blue sky.

The lighthouse became bigger as they got closer, Nellie craned her neck upwards to the flickering beacon “Wow Bertie It’s so tall! I can’t believe we have never been so close before.” She cried.

“You’ve had your closer look Nellie, it will be dark within the hour and we still have to walk home so hurry up!” Bertie moaned.

Nellie walked toward the black door of the lighthouse, it was old and faded and looked like it could crumble if it were to be opened. Nellie noticed an old rusted lock hanging on the brass door knob.



“There is no way someone could be in fixing it, the lock is still on the door!”. She shouted. Nellie looked around for something heavy. Spotting a rock she picked it up, held it high above her head and smashed it against the rusted lock.

“Nellie! You-“ Bertie cried, It was too late, the old lock clanked to the ground.

Nellie wrapped her hands round the door knob and pushed hard. It slowly opened with a loud creek.

“Oops.” Nellie turned to her brother with a cheeky smile, “It would be a shame not to look now.” She grabbed her brothers hand and pushed him into the dark entrance of the lighthouse.

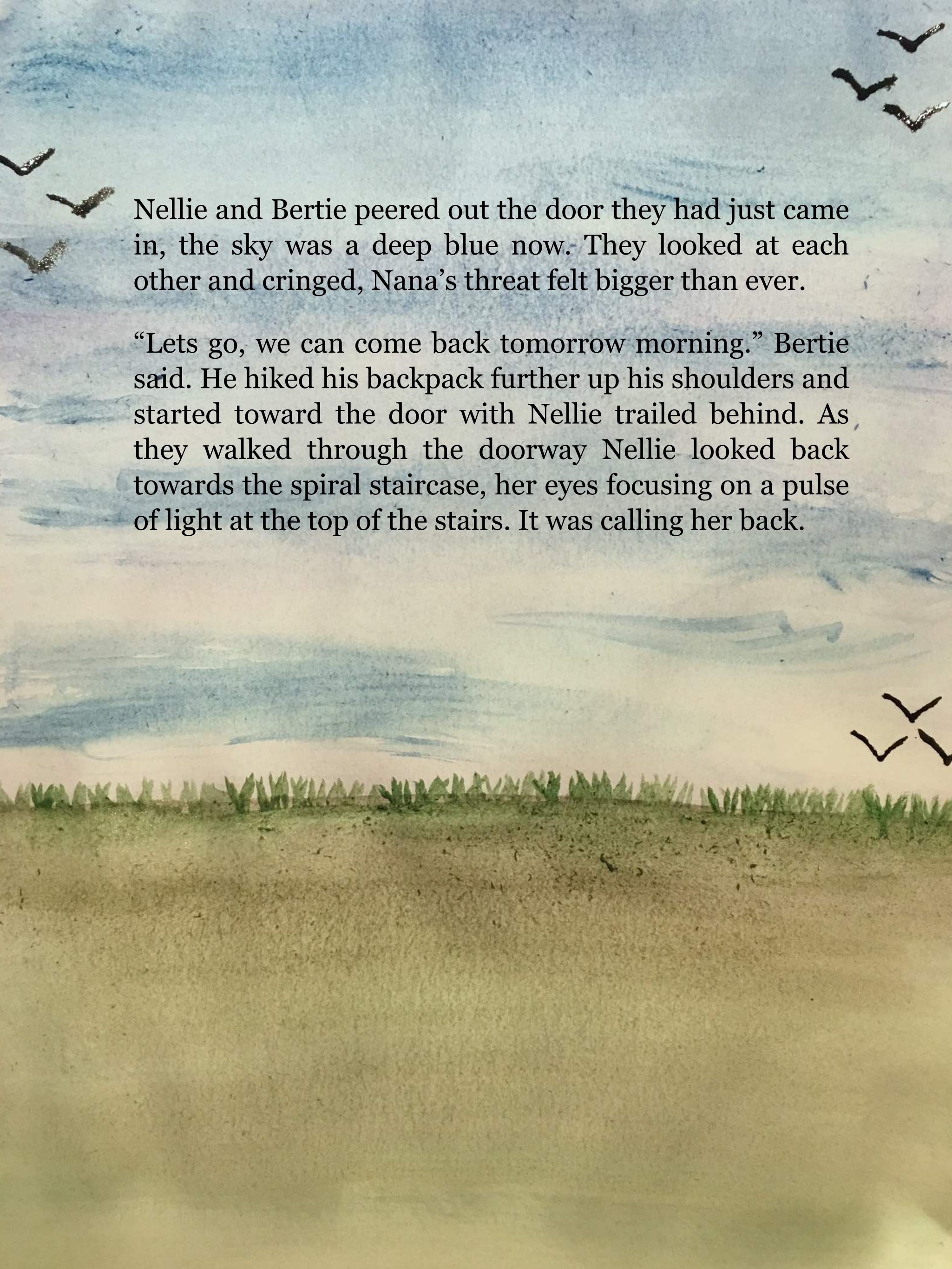
Bertie stumbled in with a yell, it bounced off every nook and cranny of the lighthouse before dying off into a pathetic little whimper.

“Just thought you needed a push” Nellie laughed. She grabbed the loop of his backpack and pulled him to his feet.

“You are a dreadful sister, never ever do that to me again” Bertie sobbed. “You know I don’t like the dark.”

Nellies face softened, “I’m sorry I- I forgot! I didn’t mean to frighten you. Look we can go home now if you like? It's almost dark now.”



The background of the page is a watercolor illustration. The top half shows a sky with soft blue and white washes. Several black birds are depicted in flight, with their wings spread. The bottom half of the illustration shows a horizon line with a row of green, spiky plants, possibly reeds or grass, against a pale, hazy background. The foreground is a textured, light brownish-green field.

Nellie and Bertie peered out the door they had just came in, the sky was a deep blue now. They looked at each other and cringed, Nana's threat felt bigger than ever.

"Let's go, we can come back tomorrow morning." Bertie said. He hiked his backpack further up his shoulders and started toward the door with Nellie trailed behind. As they walked through the doorway Nellie looked back towards the spiral staircase, her eyes focusing on a pulse of light at the top of the stairs. It was calling her back.



"Hello!" She called, turning back and rushing to the foot of the staircase. She cupped her hands round her mouth and bellowed "Is anyone up there?"

"Oh for goodness sake" Bertie muttered, shaking his head. He walked to his sister and joined her by the staircase giving up on his protests about getting home on time, he knew they were both goners now.

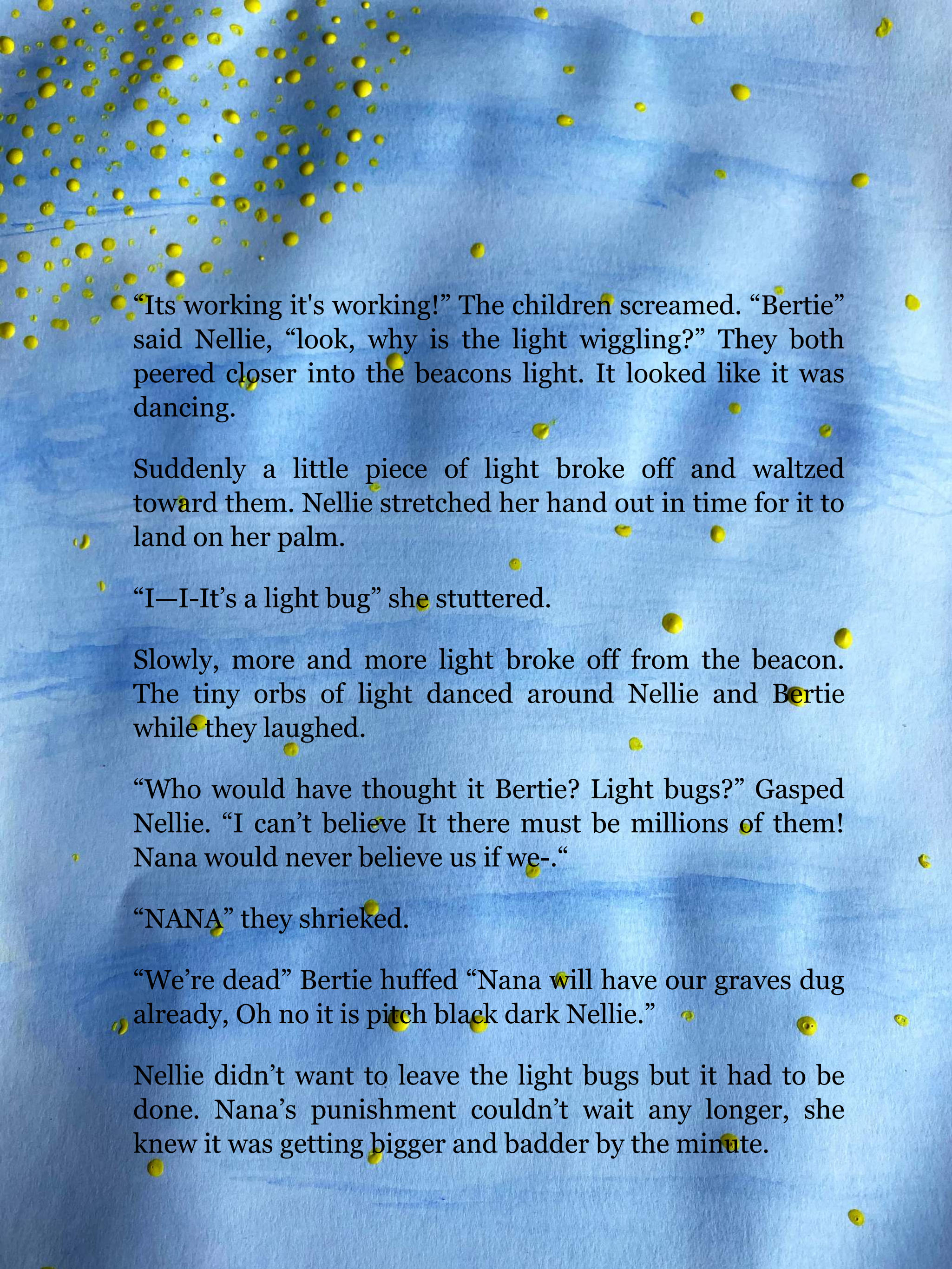
The light at the top of the stairs grew bigger and brighter. The siblings looked at each other, Nana's threat meant nothing to them now.

Taking two steps at a time Nellie and Bertie scrambled up the staircase. They came to a stop at the top of the stairs. The light disappeared, but the sea and sky were all around them. The wrap around windows were dusty but the children could still see the stormy sea and quiet town surrounding them.

"I bet we could see the house from here Nellie!" Nellie didn't reply, her eyes searching for the light.

"There is no one here?" Nellie said aloud. Suddenly, as if someone was listening the beacon began to glow a brilliant yellow.





“Its working it's working!” The children screamed. “Bertie” said Nellie, “look, why is the light wiggling?” They both peered closer into the beacons light. It looked like it was dancing.

Suddenly a little piece of light broke off and waltzed toward them. Nellie stretched her hand out in time for it to land on her palm.

“I—I-It’s a light bug” she stuttered.

Slowly, more and more light broke off from the beacon. The tiny orbs of light danced around Nellie and Bertie while they laughed.

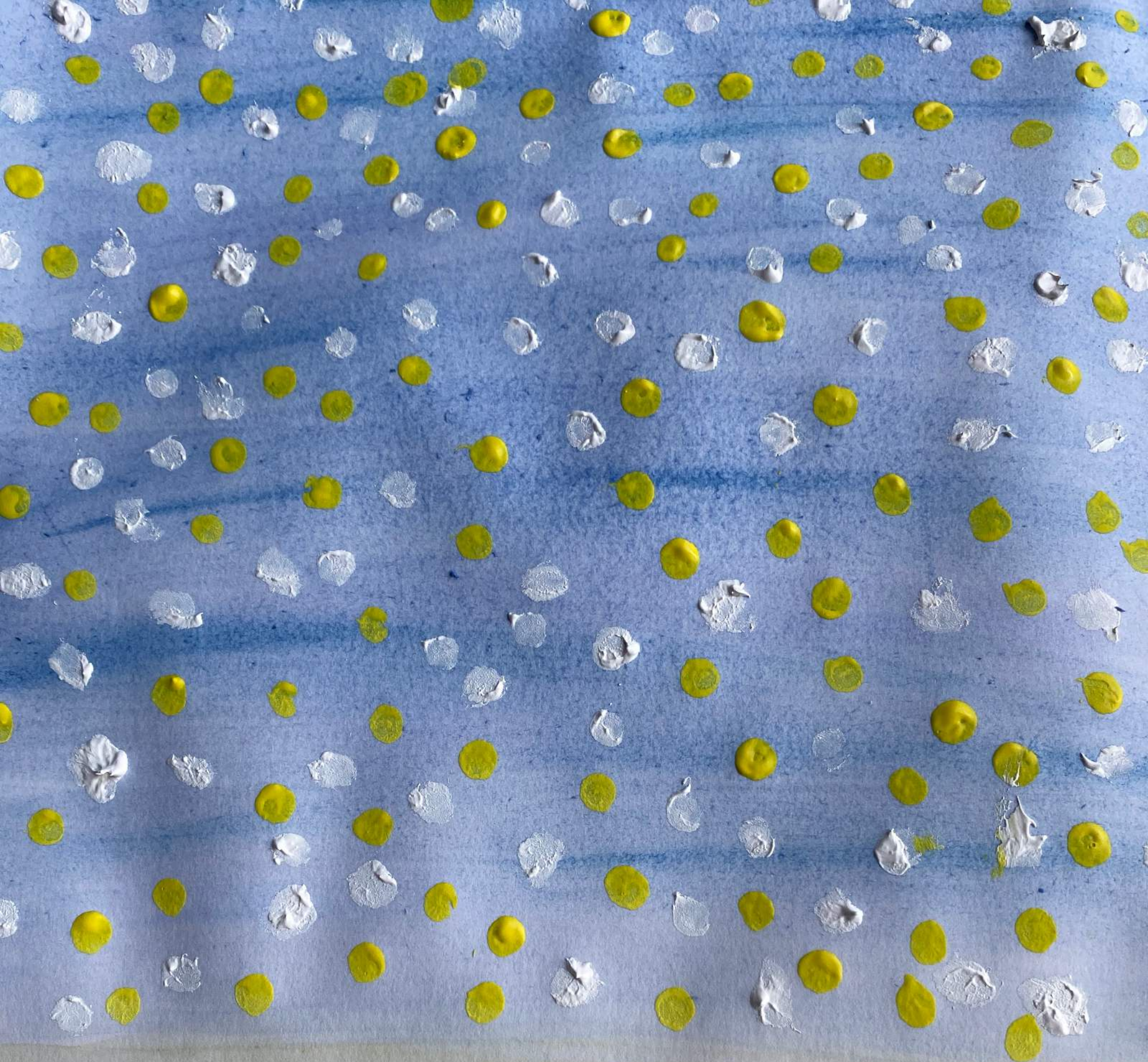
“Who would have thought it Bertie? Light bugs?” Gaspd Nellie. “I can’t believe It there must be millions of them! Nana would never believe us if we-.”

“NANA” they shrieked.

“We’re dead” Bertie huffed “Nana will have our graves dug already, Oh no it is pitch black dark Nellie.”

Nellie didn’t want to leave the light bugs but it had to be done. Nana’s punishment couldn’t wait any longer, she knew it was getting bigger and badder by the minute.





The children bolted down the winding staircase and flew out the lighthouse door. They raced down the stone path and across the field where their adventure had begun that day.

They ran beneath the star filled sky, or so they thought. As they ran the stars shined brighter, they grew fatter and began to clutter together.

The children smashed open their garden gate so hard it nearly came off the hinges. They lumbered up the steps to arrive at the front door just as Nana swung it open.



"Where have you two been!" She shouted, "You know the rules, look at the time!" Her face screwed into a sneer.

"Well Nana, we know we are running a little late but I would hardly say it's dark, would you?" Nellie smirked.

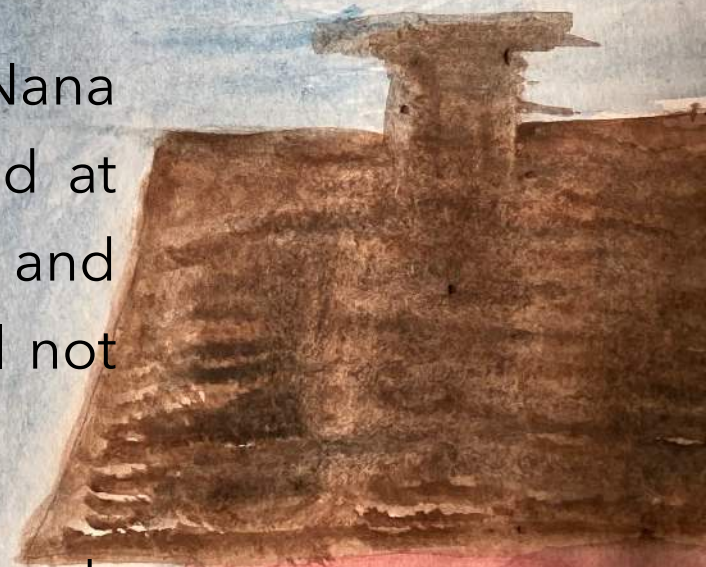
Nellie, Bertie and Nana looked up at the sky, no longer dark blue but a brilliant glowing yellow.

"How...what...how in the world" Nana whispered.

Nellie and Bertie brushed past Nana leaving her opened mouthed and confused at the sight. They quickly climbed the stairs and into their room to look out the window. Still not quite believing their lucky escape.

They watched as Nana finally closed her mouth before shaking her head. She slammed the door shut with a loud bang. The children grinned as the lightbugs broke apart to reveal the night sky.

"Well, that was a close one." Nellie beamed as Bertie threw his head back and laughed.





The end







