

Hawksbill's Secret

by Victoria Miles ★ Art by Anne Reas

A Hawksbill sea turtle circles in the warm ocean waters near shore. She waits for darkness.

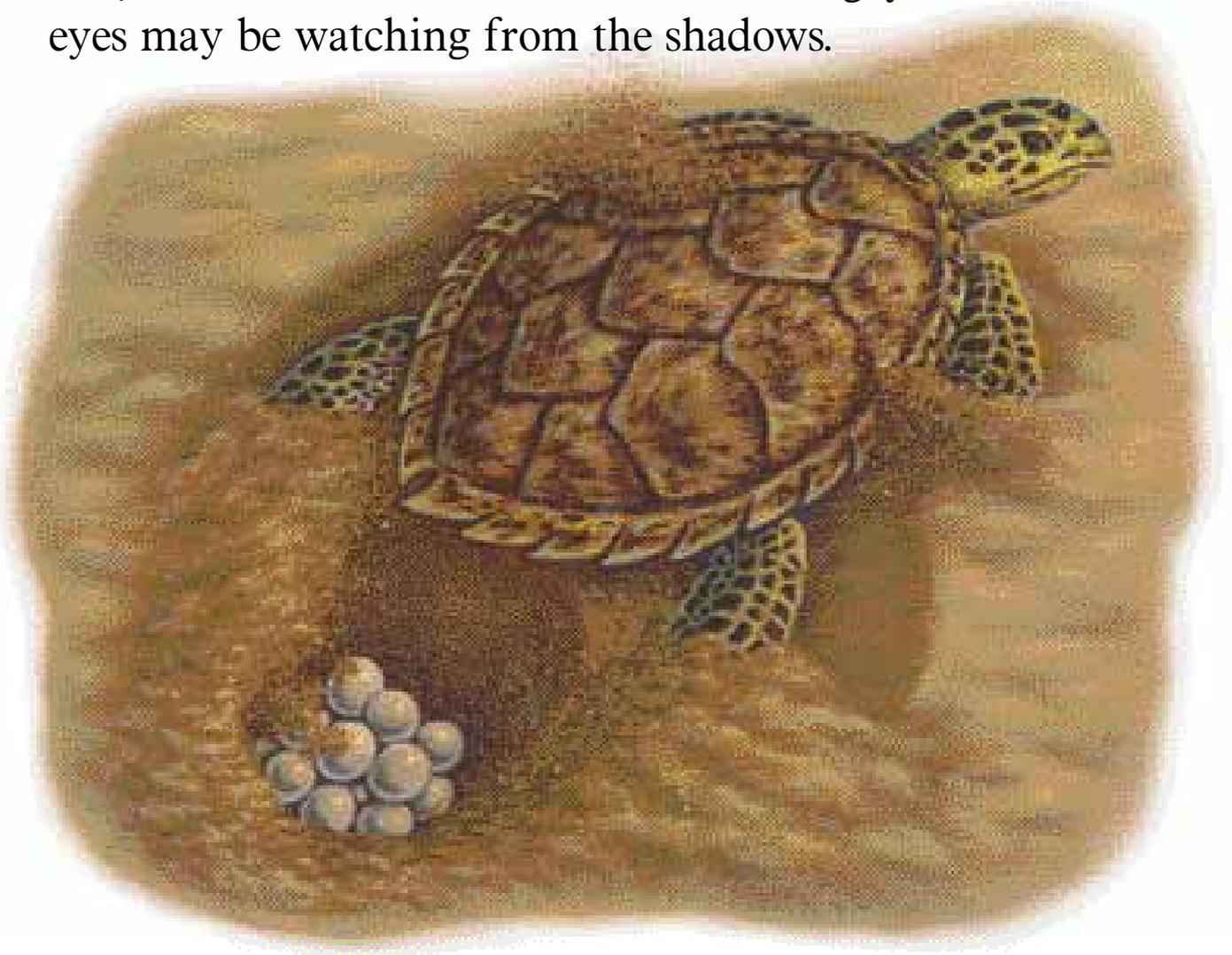
When night comes, Hawksbill swims to the beach. She was born on this beach a long time ago. And here she will lay her eggs.

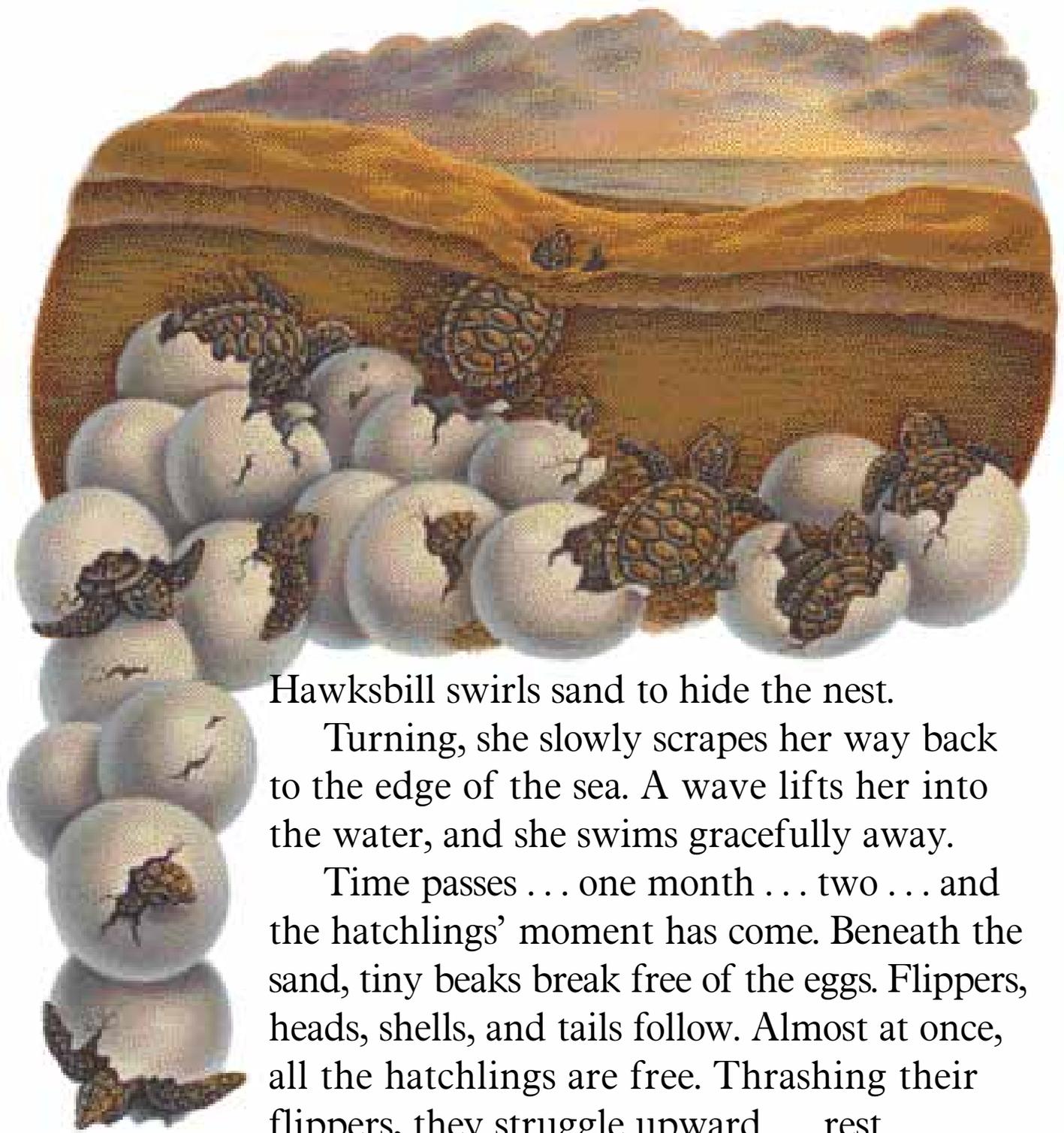
On the sand her movements become slow and clumsy. She crawls forward, away from

the water and up to where the sand is dry.

At the edge of the forest, Hawksbill stops. With her front flippers, she sweeps away sand. Then, using her back flippers, she begins to scoop a hole deep in the sand. When she can reach no farther, her nest is complete.

One at a time, Hawksbill's many soft, round eggs slip from her body and pile up on each other in the nest. When her last egg is laid, she covers her secret with sand. Hungry eyes may be watching from the shadows.



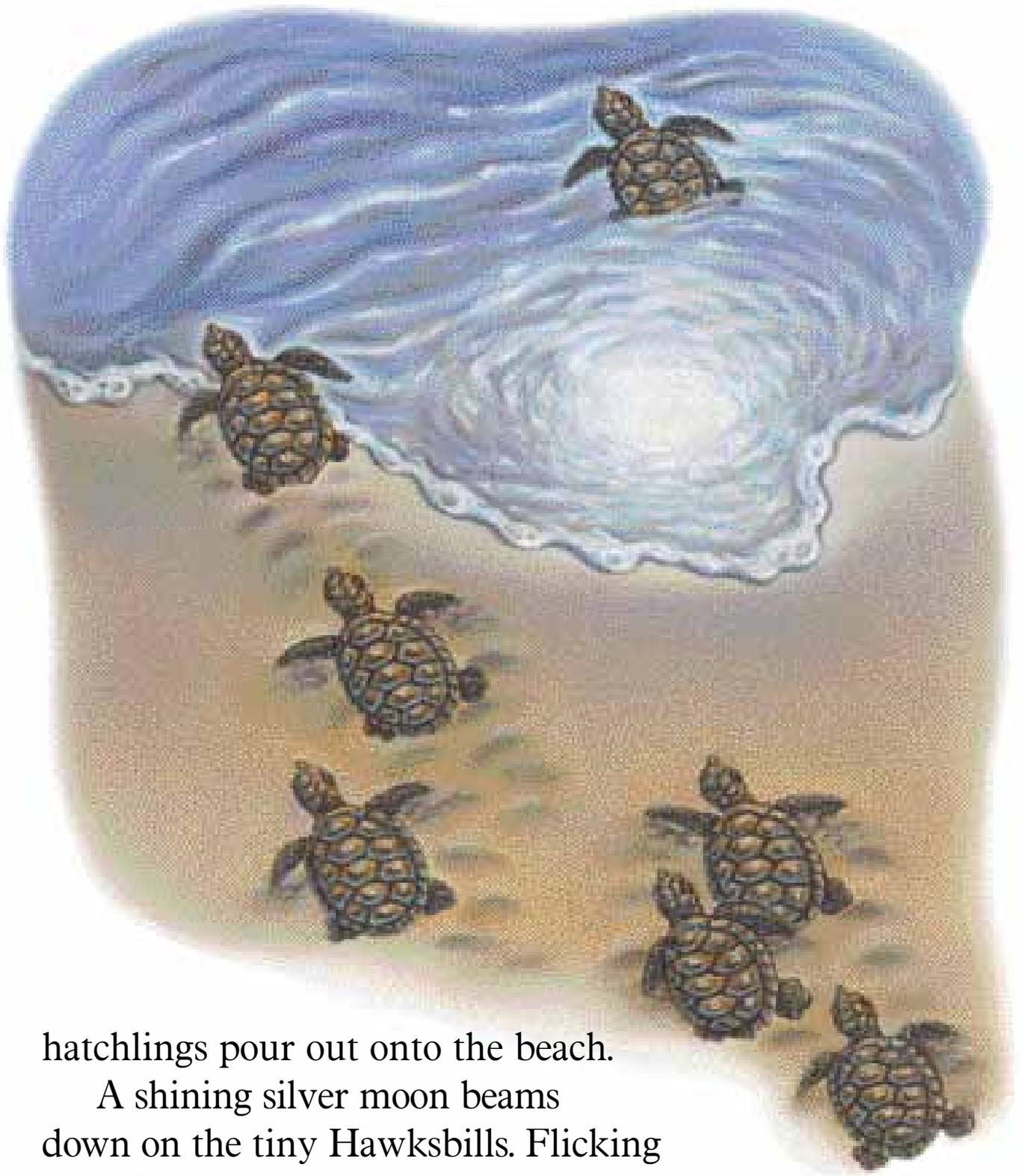


Hawksbill swirls sand to hide the nest.

Turning, she slowly scrapes her way back to the edge of the sea. A wave lifts her into the water, and she swims gracefully away.

Time passes . . . one month . . . two . . . and the hatchlings' moment has come. Beneath the sand, tiny beaks break free of the eggs. Flippers, heads, shells, and tails follow. Almost at once, all the hatchlings are free. Thrashing their flippers, they struggle upward . . . rest . . . climb . . . and rest again.

Just under the surface, they wait for the cool of evening. When the sun goes down, the



hatchlings pour out onto the beach.

A shining silver moon beams down on the tiny Hawksbills. Flicking their flippers, they chase the silver reflection, scuttling forward over the beach and