

The Ocean Is Big, My Father Said

by Linda Ward Stephens



Art by Stephen Fieser

“**W**hat’s the ocean like?” I asked my father as he packed the car.

“The ocean is big,” my father said. “A ship takes two weeks to cross it.”

“What’s the ocean like?” I asked my mother as she made sandwiches for our trip.

“The ocean is always moving,” my mother said. “The tides go in and out. The waves roll in forever.”

“What is the ocean like?” I asked my brother and sister as we buckled our seat belts.

“The ocean is deep,” my brother said, “and full of monsters. There are whales as big as our house and sharks as big as the car.”

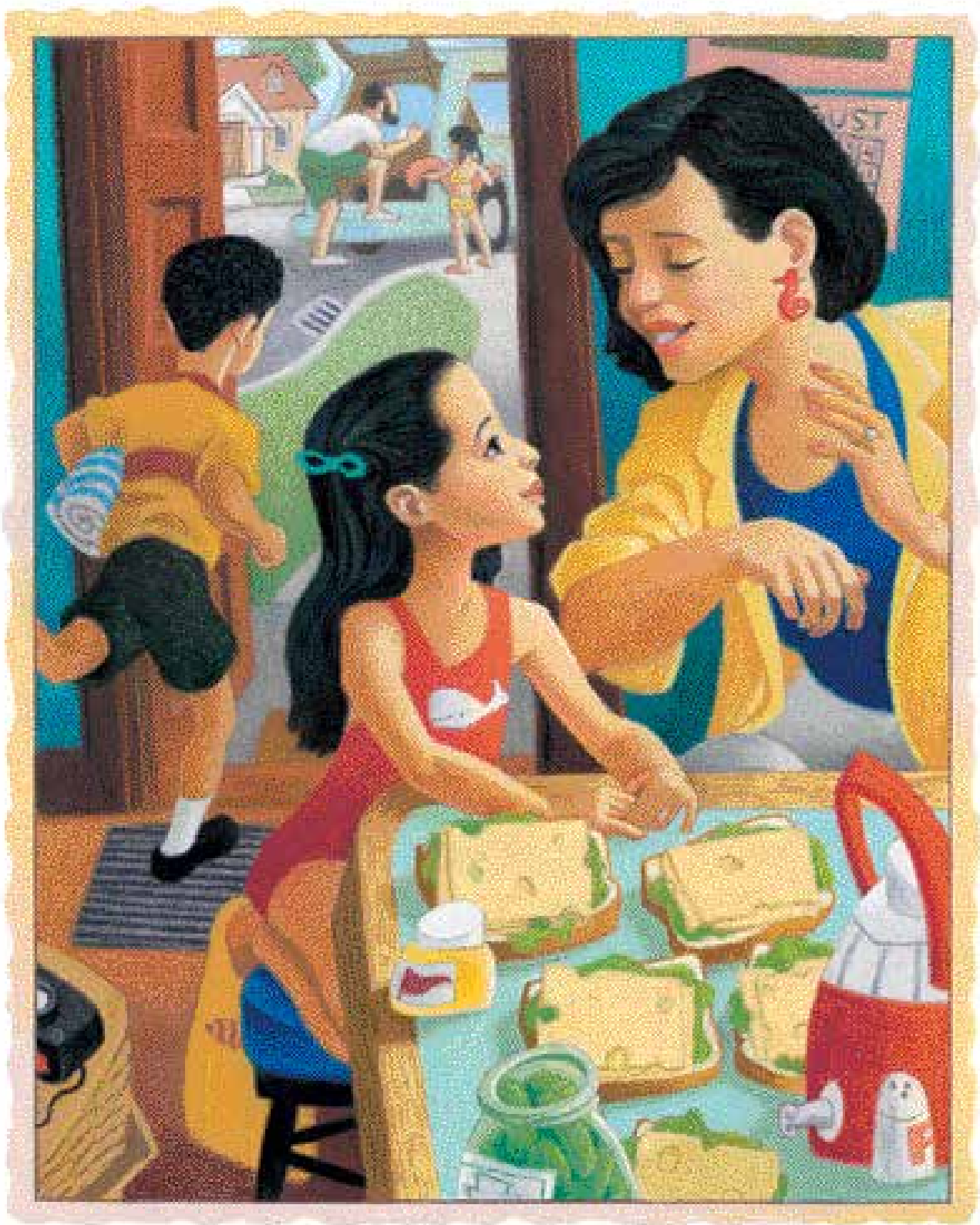
“The ocean is cold,” my sister said, “and the water tastes like salt.”

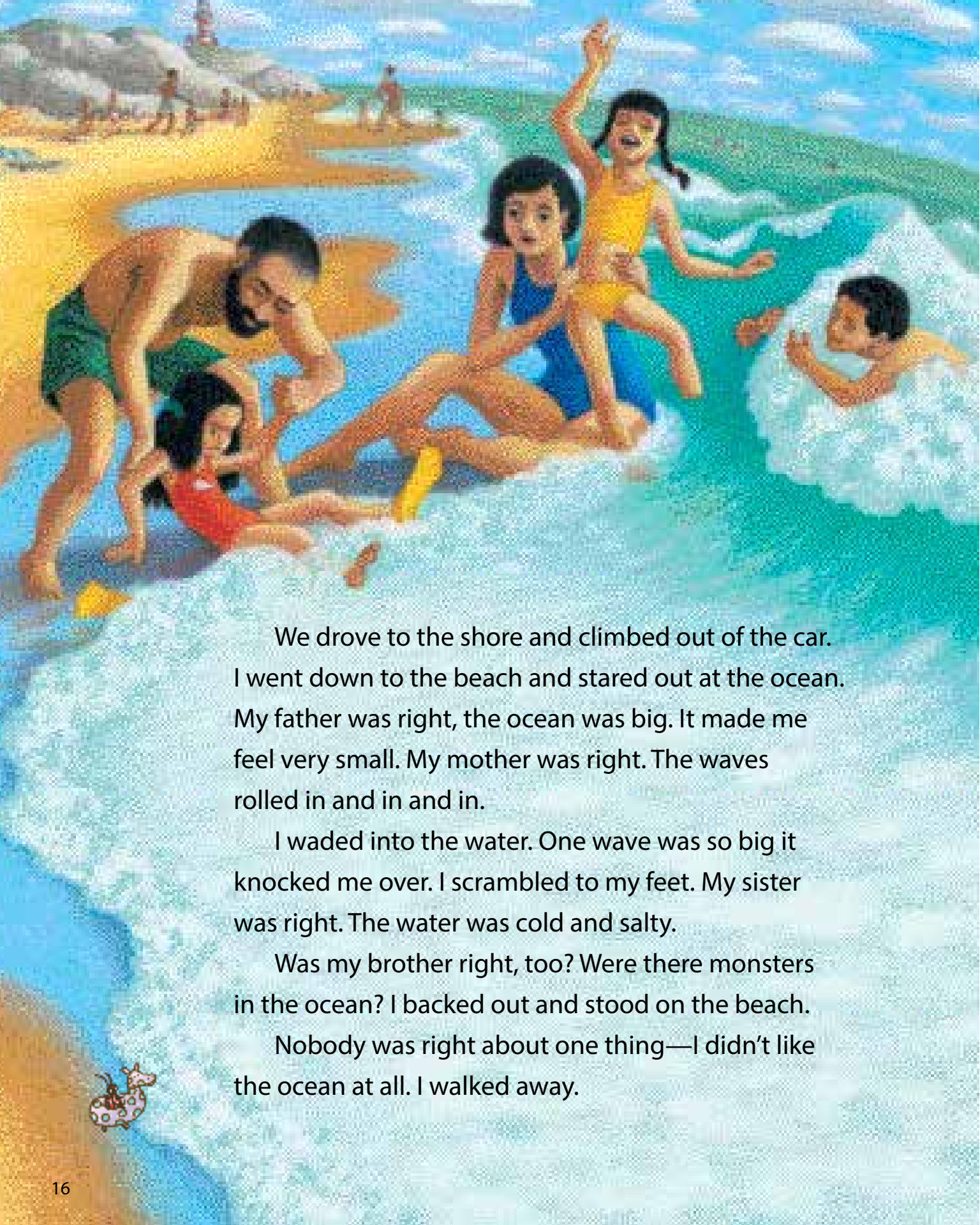
“Will I like it?” I asked. I really wanted to know.

“Oh yes!” said my father and mother.

“Of course,” said my brother and sister.







We drove to the shore and climbed out of the car. I went down to the beach and stared out at the ocean. My father was right, the ocean was big. It made me feel very small. My mother was right. The waves rolled in and in and in.

I waded into the water. One wave was so big it knocked me over. I scrambled to my feet. My sister was right. The water was cold and salty.

Was my brother right, too? Were there monsters in the ocean? I backed out and stood on the beach.

Nobody was right about one thing—I didn't like the ocean at all. I walked away.



I found a pool filled with seawater. It was left behind when the tide went out. The pool was not too big. It was not too deep. It was not too cold. I waded in. Tiny fishes swam around my toes. There was a starfish hiding in the rocks, and two little crabs were on the bottom.

It was a piece of the ocean just my size, and I liked it. 🐚

