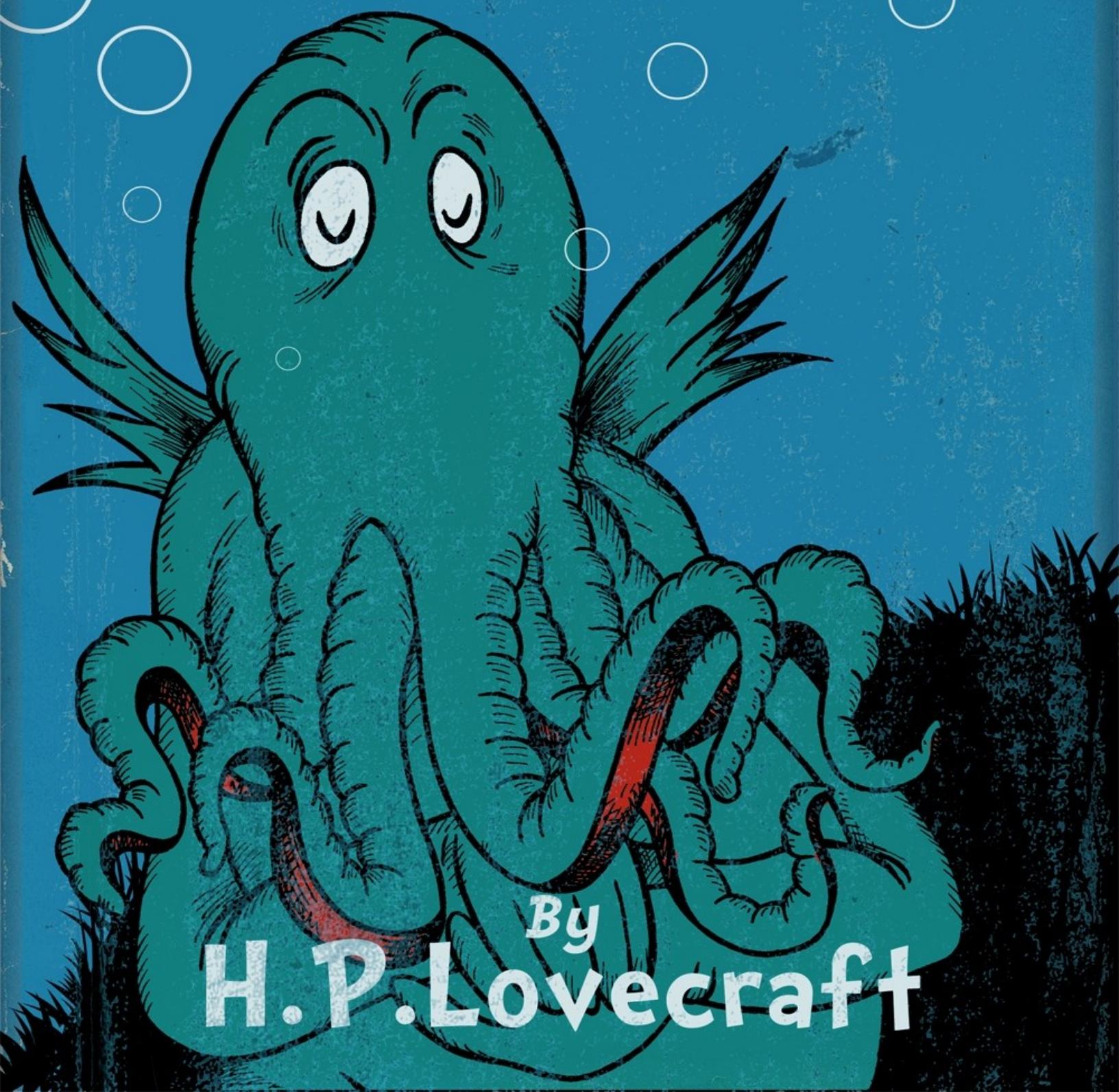


FOR
BEGINNING
READERS

THE CALL OF CTHULHU

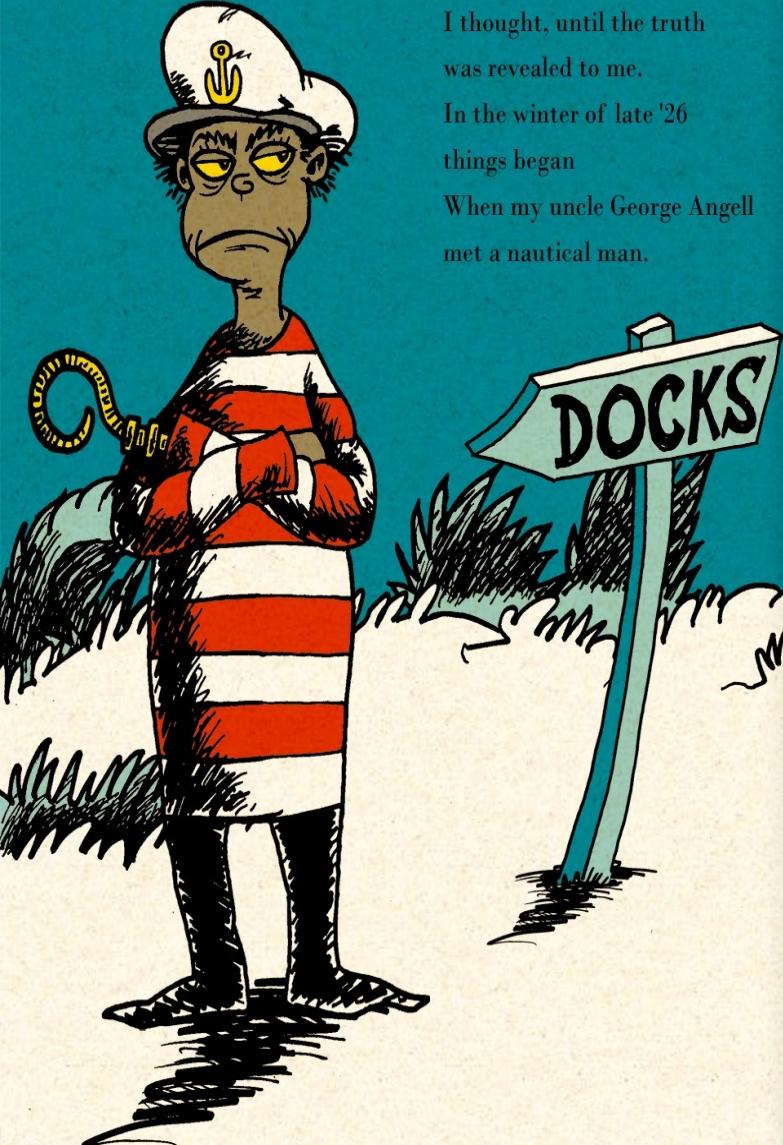


By

H.P. Lovecraft

The most merciful thing
in the world is, I think
that the mind is unable
to know and to link
our irrelevance
to the wide universe
and the cosmic truth
which is, by far, worse.





Theosophists recount
strange philosophy,
I thought, until the truth
was revealed to me.
In the winter of late '26
things began
When my uncle George Angell
met a nautical man.

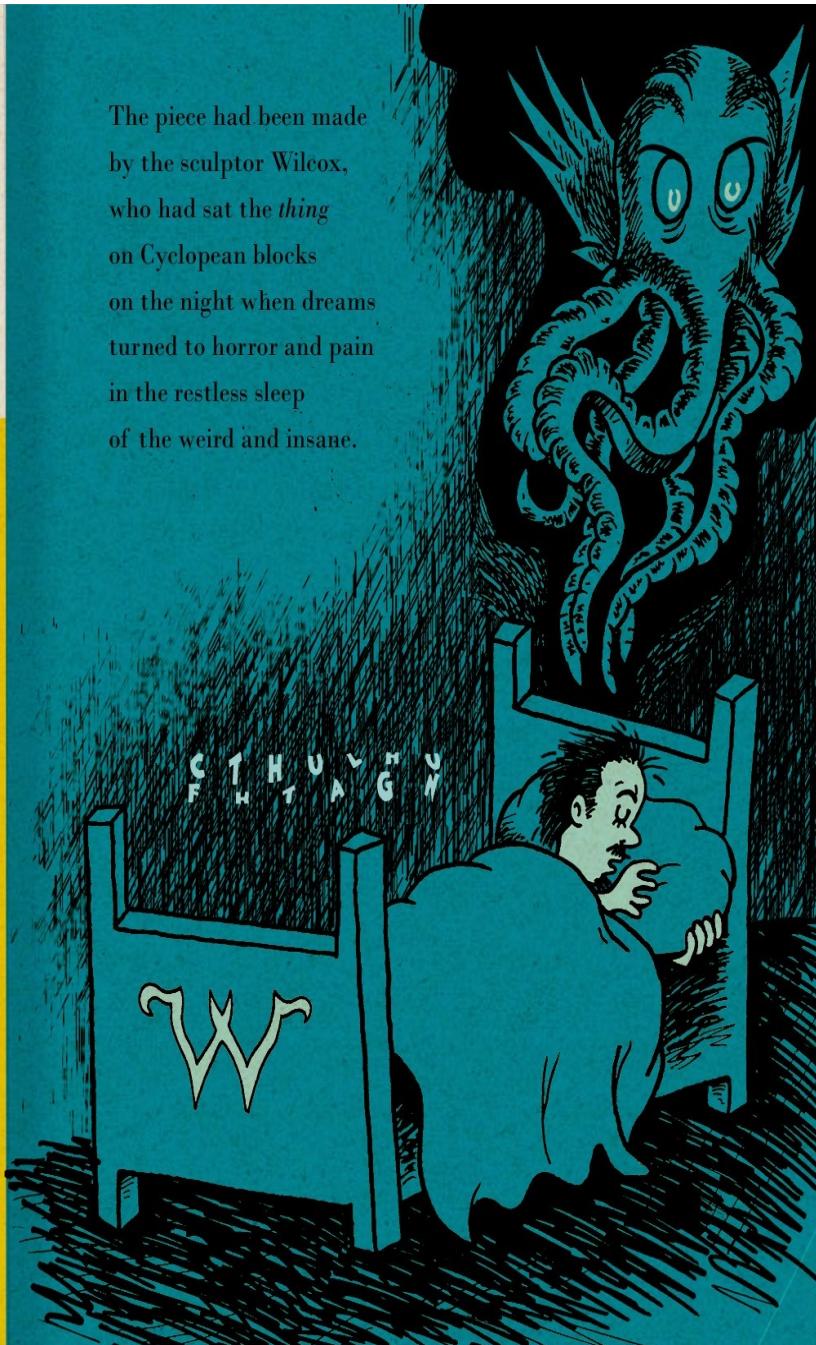


Later that day
he farewelled his life
And the doctors' prognosis
was tempered with strife
When they could not explain
where death had its start.
Eventually
they blamed it on his heart.

Going through my late uncle's papers one day
I found a strange bas-relief made out of clay
with a strange looking figure carved out above
strange hieroglyphics I could not conceive of.



The piece had been made
by the sculptor Wilcox,
who had sat the *thing*
on Cyclopean blocks
on the night when dreams
turned to horror and pain
in the restless sleep
of the weird and insane.



In the month of March '25 it occurred
(amongst other ills of which you might have heard).

Wilcox asked Professor Angell to explain
the visions of R'lyeh assaulting his brain.



Recalling the past, his research did begin
when he heard the phrase *Cthulhu fhtagn*.
He kept the records of unsettling tumult
inside of a file marked with "CTHULHU CULT".



So Angell asked Wilcox to record his dreams
and all throughout March he then did that it seems,
but he fell unconscious from March 23rd
till April 2nd - then no more was offered.



I reasoned that Wilcox's hoax was exposed
and thus it appeared the strange case could be closed.
I believed Angell's research met an impasse.
I had not yet read of Inspector Legrasse.



Why Angell believed the dreams of Cthulhu
became obvious when I read through file two.
He had an account of an earlier date
he'd investigated since 1908.

The Archaeological Society
was having a meeting down in Missouri.
When in walked Legrasse with a stone statuette,
with questions from experts Legrasse was beset.





None of the members who were there assembled
could think of a thing that the thing there resembled,
except for Webb, who, when exploring Greenland,
had there seen a similar idol first-hand.

It was 1860 and out in the snow

Professor Webb met with some fell Esquimaux.
Phonetically, he copied down their mad chanting.
It turned out Legrasse had heard similar ranting.

The inspector, Legrasse, had uncovered the meaning:

In his house at R'lyeh, dead Cthulhu lies dreaming.

With these few words he unhid what was hidden,

and opened the door to a thing long forbidden.

Way down in the swamps of the deep and dark South

a rumour was murmuring by word of mouth
that women and children a cult had been stealing.

Police then decided truth needed revealing.



When twenty men into the dark ventured bravely,
not one man laughed, no, they all ventured gravely.
As tom-toms beat distant in dark haunted wood,
lagoon country legend chilled them where they stood.



The paths that explorers had refused to take
lead into the swamp and then out to a lake
in which lives a formless and polypus sight,
that devils worship at the stroke of midnight.

The officers spotted an ominous glare.

Still, none had imagined what would be found there.

On pushing through branches and into a glade,
they encountered twisted madness on parade.



They found it was too late to save the kidnapped.

On seeing this sight, some policemen had snapped.

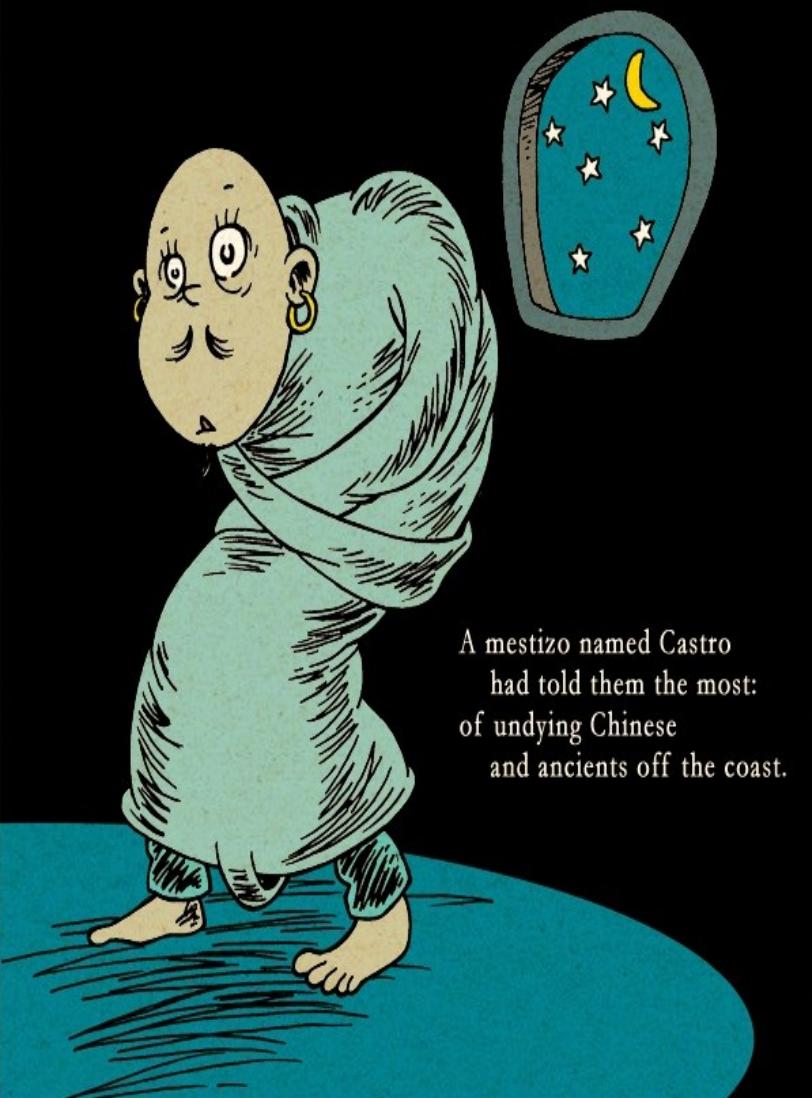
Regaining their senses, they then charged ahead.

Some men were arrested and some were shot dead.

When Legrasse got his captives back into the town
some had mentioned Great Old Ones that live underground.
They'd arrived here on Earth when the stars were just right.
Falling out of the sky. Coming in from the night.



Most convicts kept silent, kept their secrets their own,
for some parts of their faith were for their ears alone.



A mestizo named Castro
had told them the most:
of undying Chinese
and ancients off the coast.



Great Cthulhu had led Them
from some other place
when the Great Old Ones travelled
across outer space.
For a time at some humans
They'd psychically screamed
up until R'lyeh sank.
Now They wait there and dream.

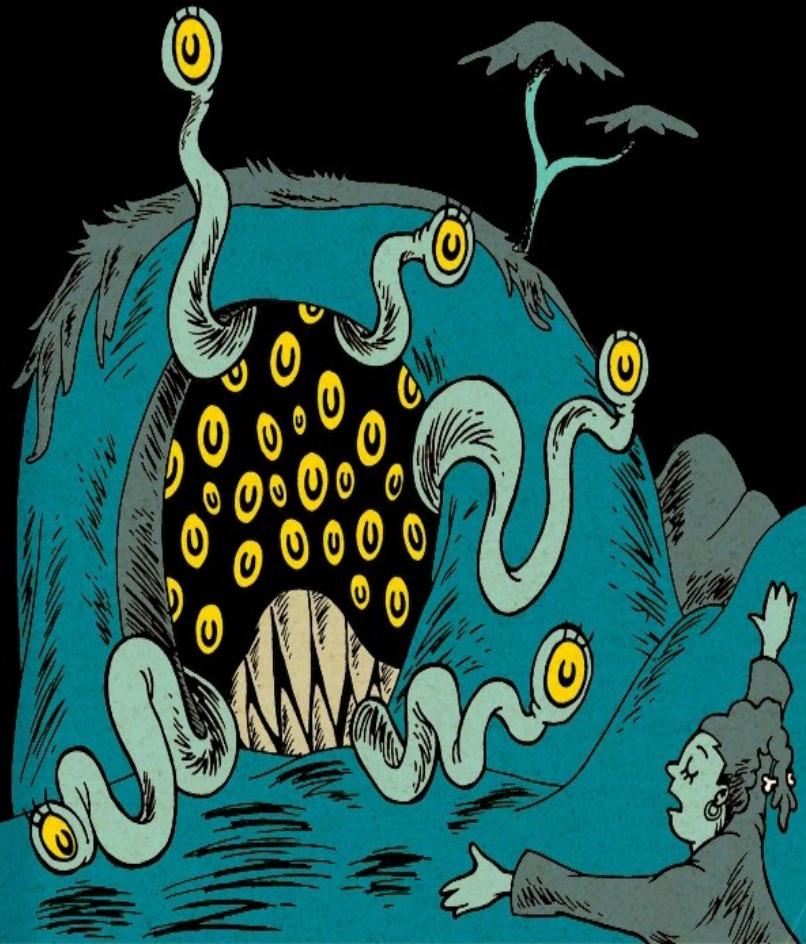
In the Necronomicon (though easy to miss)
the mad Arab, Alhazred had referenced this,
writing: *That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may yet die.*





Of the statements from Castro, one should be most feared:
when the stars in the night sky have rightly appeared
then the Old Ones are able to rise once again,
but the cultists alone are the ones who know when.

All their insights are secret so none understand.
They will murder for chaos across distant lands.
They'll awaken Great Old Ones with foul, arcane prayers,
who'll then spill from below while our sanity tears.



Legrasse's tale closed not with answers but questions.
To keep up the silence was someone's suggestion,
and in secret the men there could then correspond.
I convinced myself Angell still might have been conned.



I held on, at that time, to some feelings of doubt.
I still wondered if Wilcox had found out about
the Professor's strange research and contacts worldwide.
After visiting him, I was sure he'd not lied.



Although Castro had died shortly after his trial,
I had managed to stop with Legrasse for a while.
With the cultists and idol he was still obsessed.
When I saw it I likewise had become possessed.



I imagined that I'd receive grandeur and fame
for revealing religions that had gone un-named.

But with little to go on I put it aside
till a foreign newspaper, by chance, I espied.



The old paper recounted the *Emma*'s travails:
she'd run into some storms when from Auckland she'd sailed.

They had then met a ship,
which had ordered them back.
When the crew had refused,
the *Alert* had attacked.

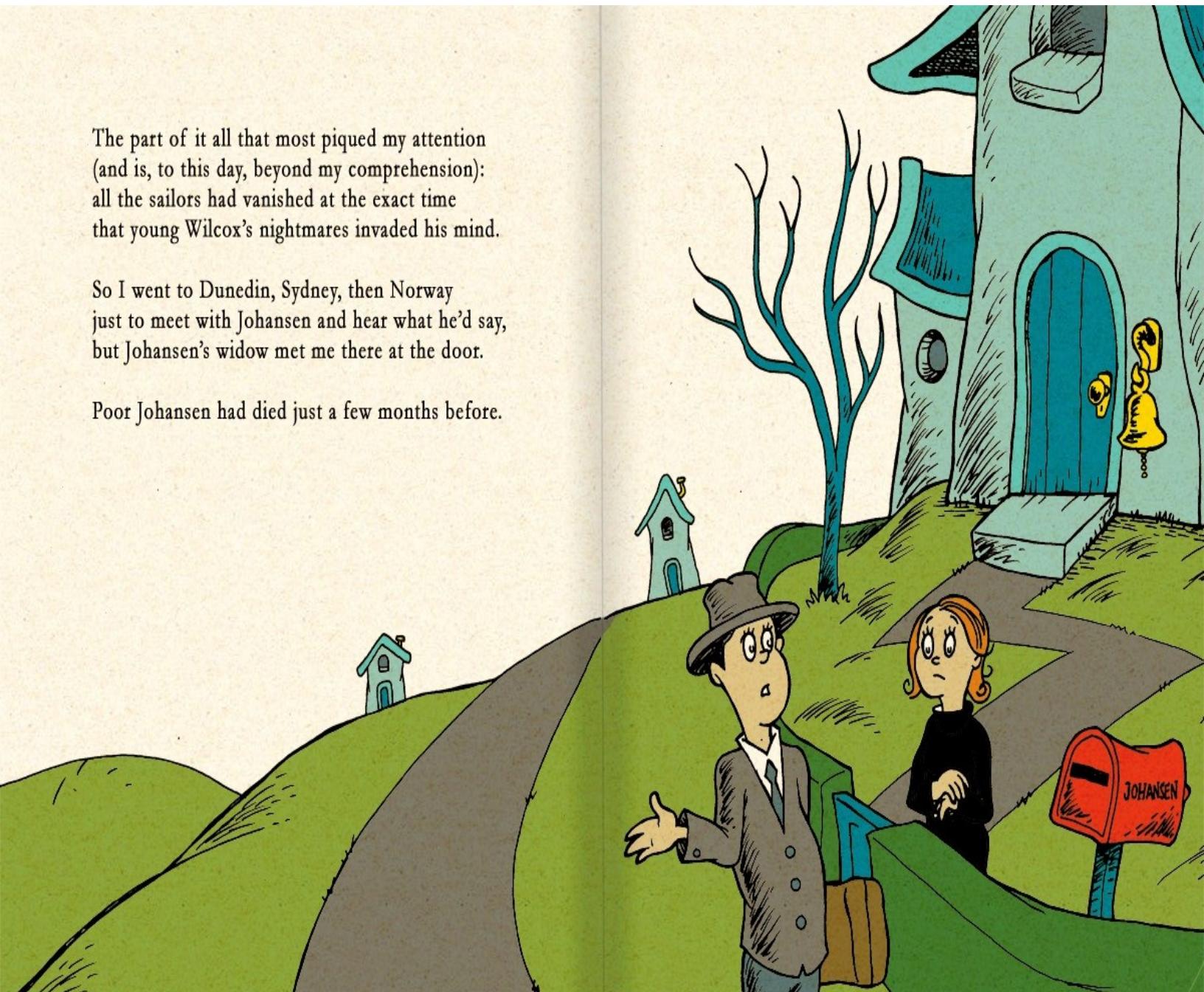
Though the *Emma* was sunk,
still her crew won the battle,
then they sailed into something
that left the men rattled.
Just Johansen returned
from the turbulent sea
with the idol in hand,
quite mysteriously.

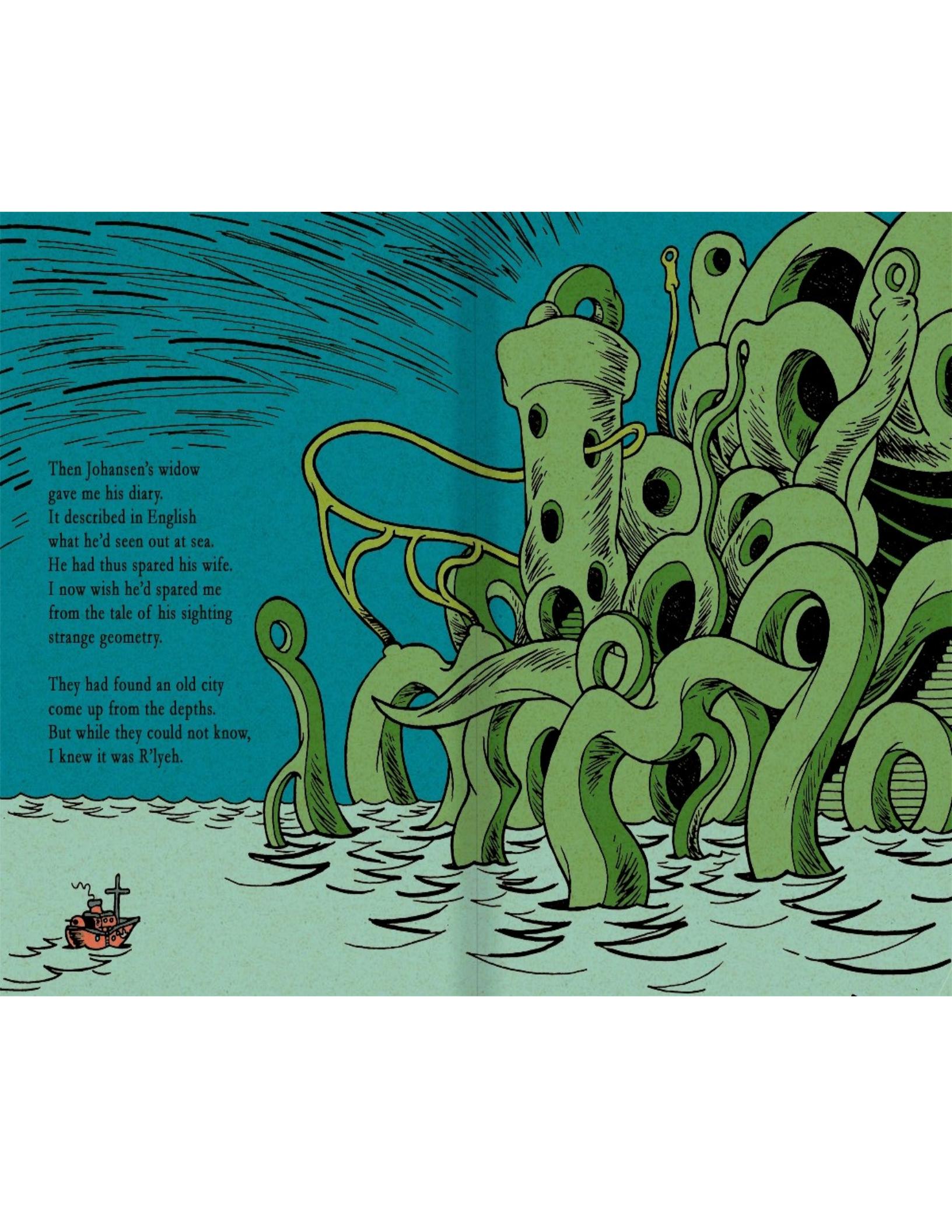


The part of it all that most piqued my attention
(and is, to this day, beyond my comprehension):
all the sailors had vanished at the exact time
that young Wilcox's nightmares invaded his mind.

So I went to Dunedin, Sydney, then Norway
just to meet with Johansen and hear what he'd say,
but Johansen's widow met me there at the door.

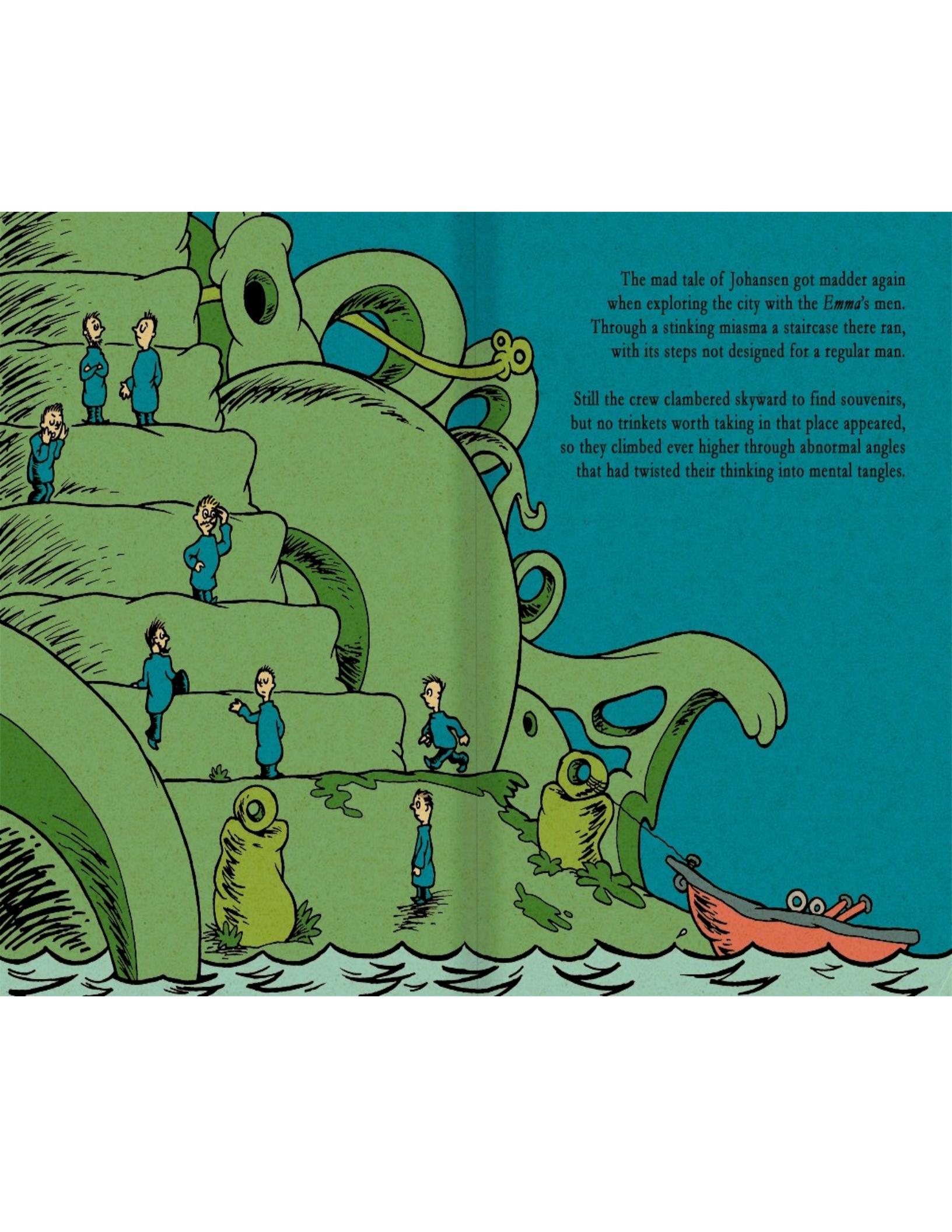
Poor Johansen had died just a few months before.





Then Johansen's widow
gave me his diary.
It described in English
what he'd seen out at sea.
He had thus spared his wife.
I now wish he'd spared me
from the tale of his sighting
strange geometry.

They had found an old city
come up from the depths.
But while they could not know,
I knew it was R'lyeh.



The mad tale of Johansen got madder again
when exploring the city with the *Emma*'s men.
Through a stinking miasma a staircase there ran,
with its steps not designed for a regular man.

Still the crew clambered skyward to find souvenirs,
but no trinkets worth taking in that place appeared,
so they climbed ever higher through abnormal angles
that had twisted their thinking into mental tangles.



At the top of their climb
they had found a great door
that was not for certain
in the wall or the floor.

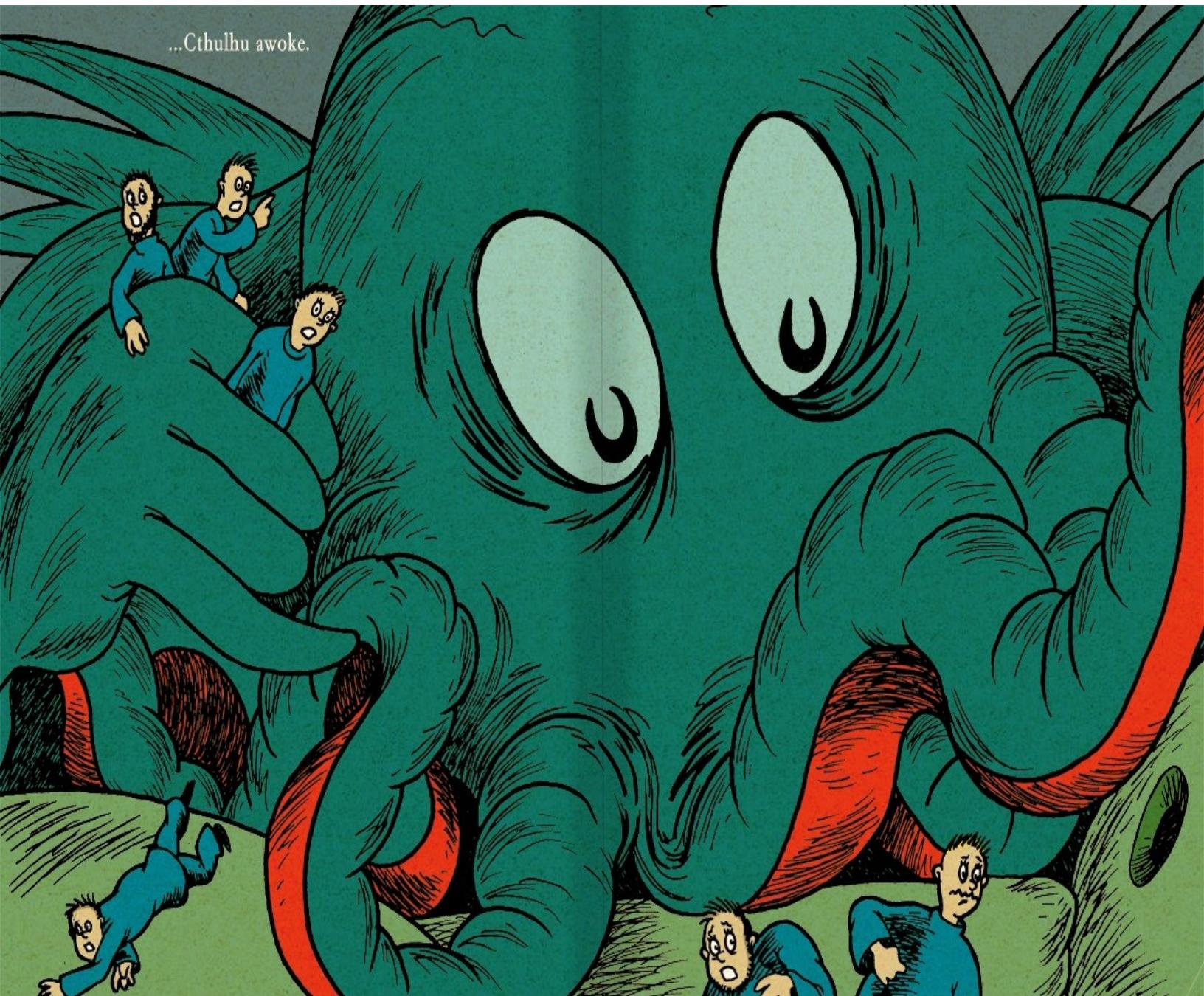
At a sailor's light touch
the great portal swung wide,
and a tenebrous shadow
leaked out from inside.

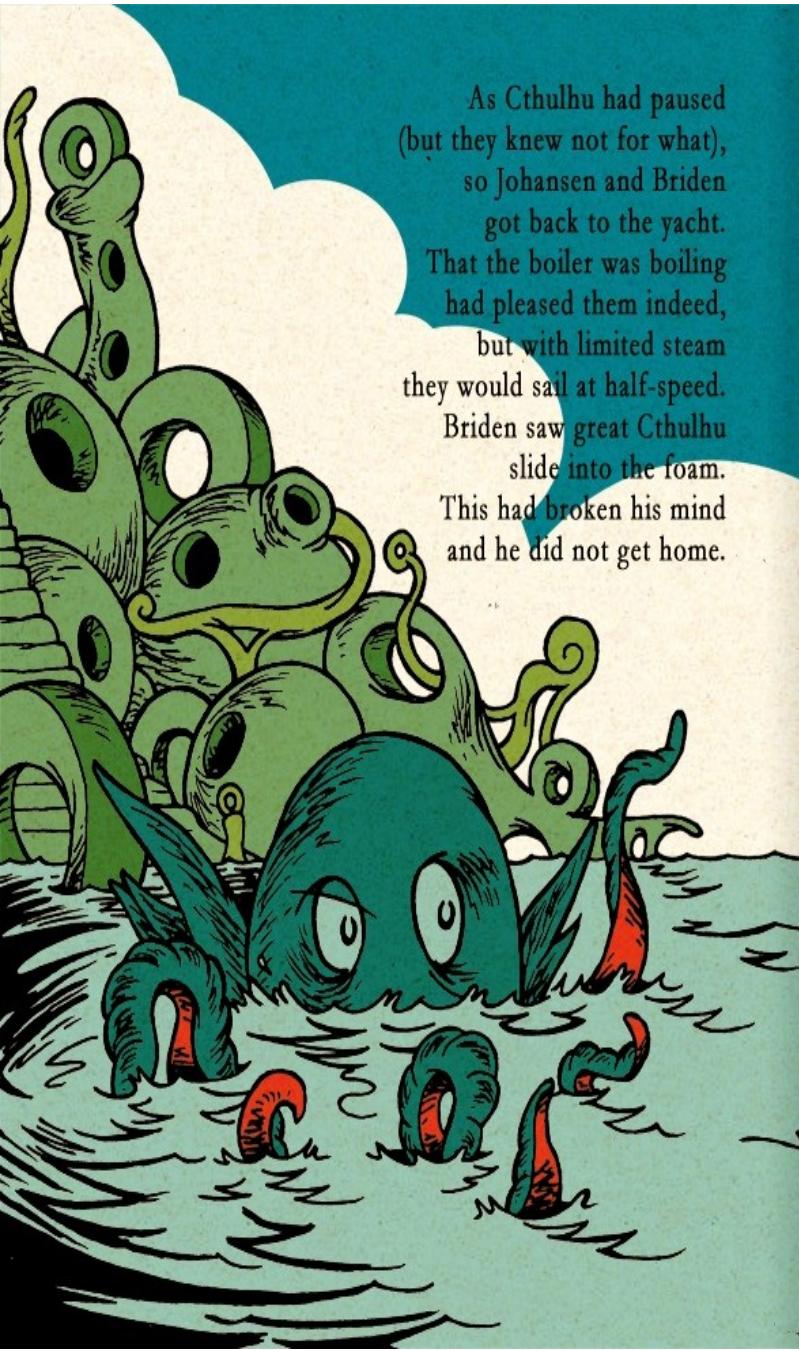
When a nasty, wet, slopping
oozed up from below
they experienced something
man's not meant to know.

Two men died where they stood,
as their minds simply broke.

"Twas a merciful fate when...

...Cthulhu awoke.



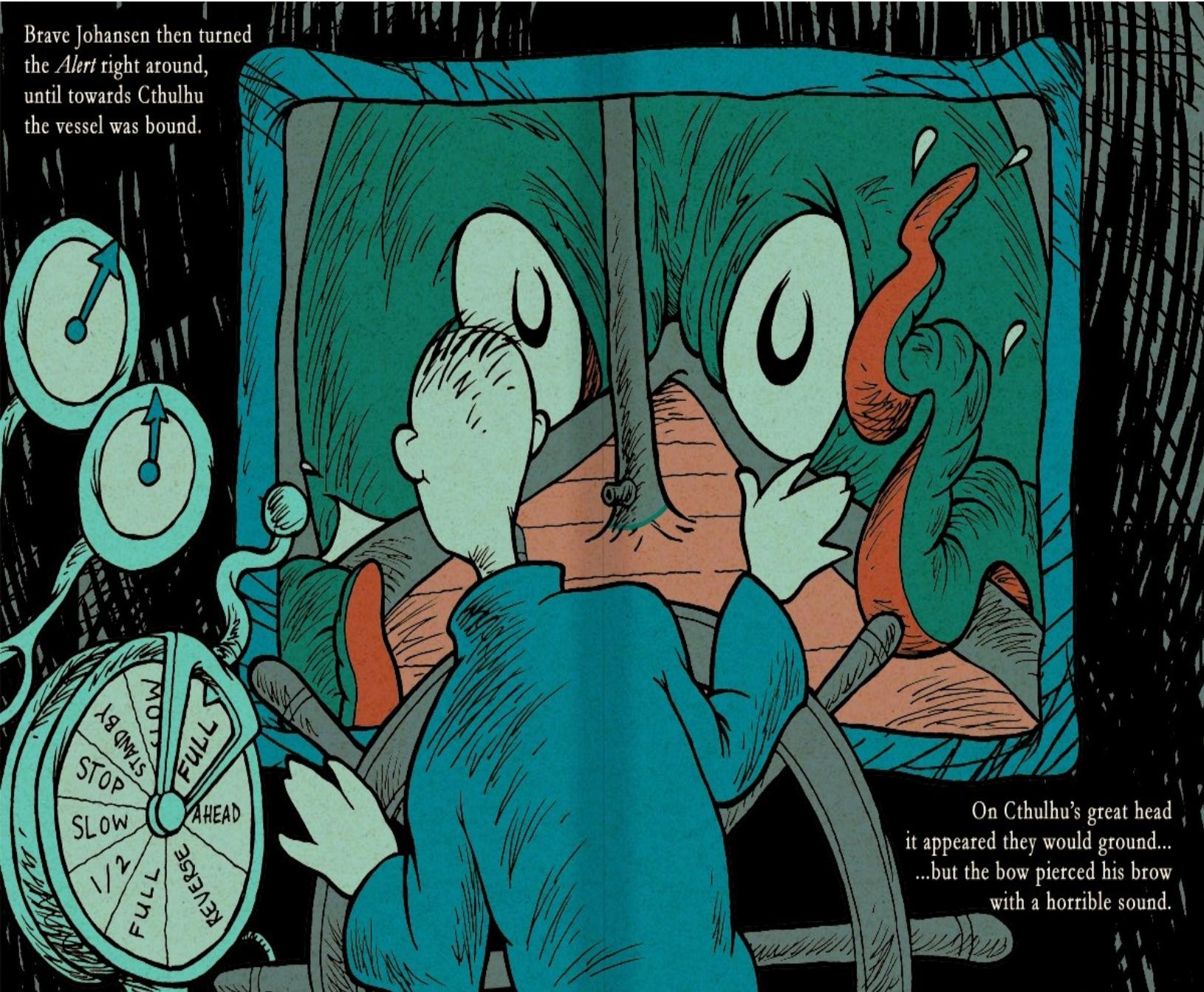


As Cthulhu had paused
(but they knew not for what),
so Johansen and Briden
got back to the yacht.
That the boiler was boiling
had pleased them indeed,
but with limited steam
they would sail at half-speed.
Briden saw great Cthulhu
slide into the foam.
This had broken his mind
and he did not get home.

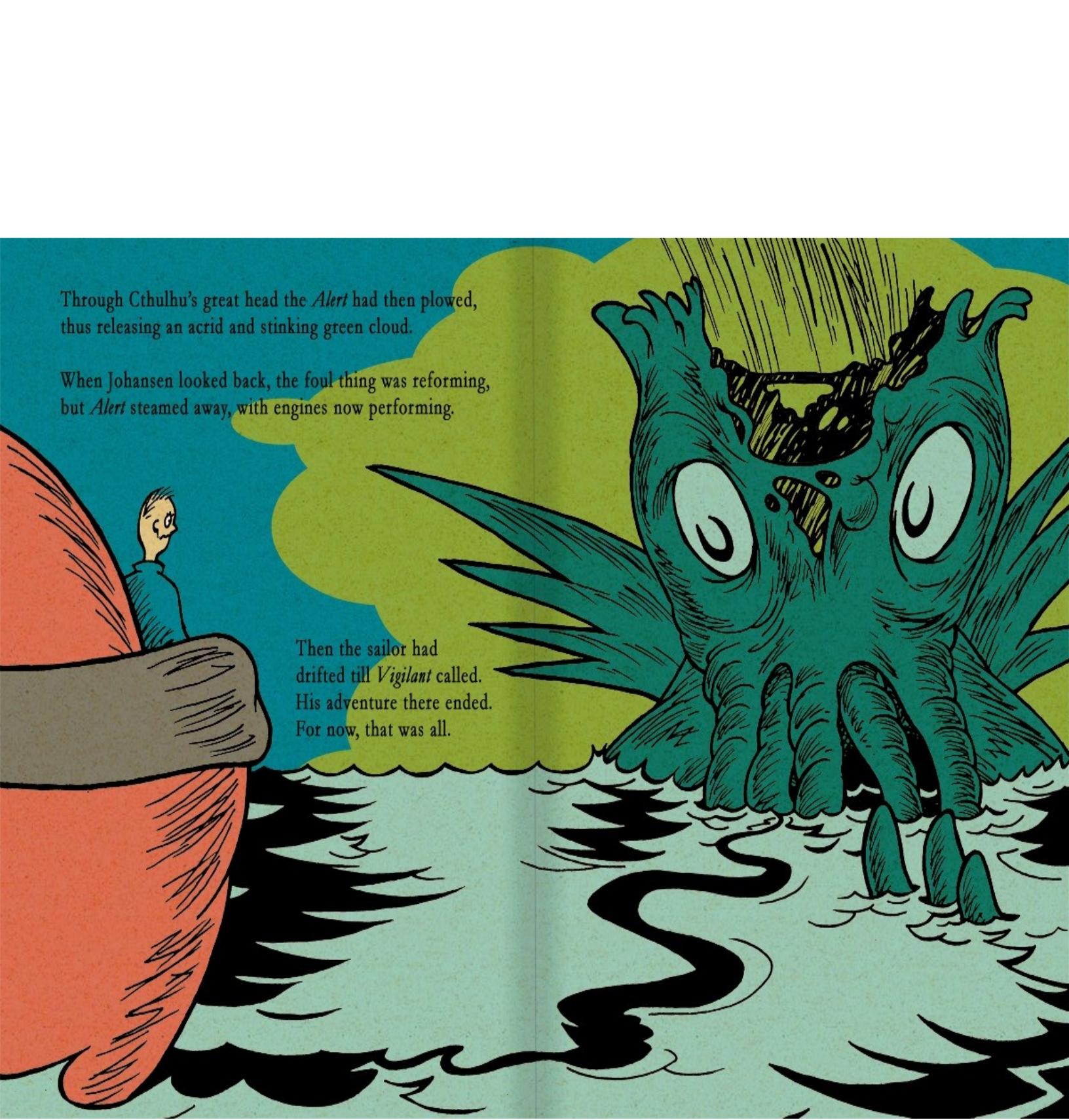


Though Johansen planned to
make more steam and then flee,
it was clear that Cthulhu
would catch them at sea.

Brave Johansen then turned
the *Alert* right around,
until towards Cthulhu
the vessel was bound.



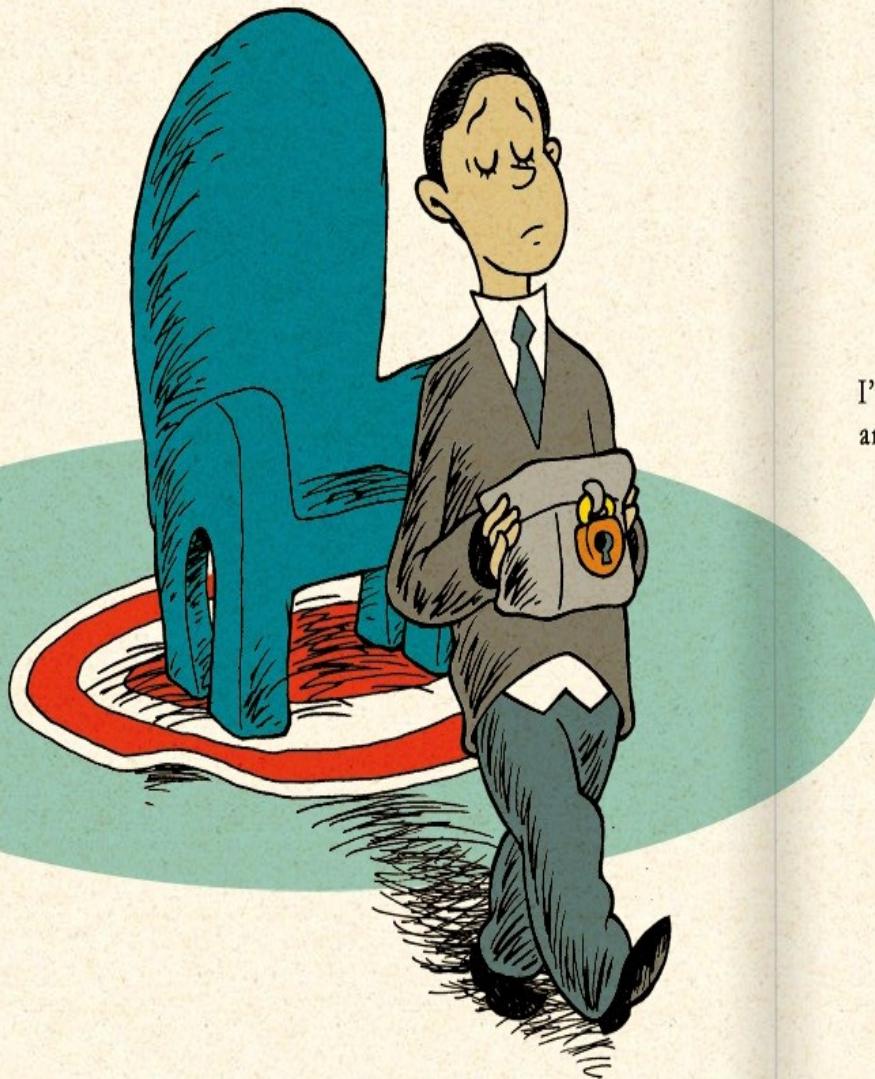
On Cthulhu's great head
it appeared they would ground...
...but the bow pierced his brow
with a horrible sound.



Through Cthulhu's great head the *Alert* had then plowed,
thus releasing an acrid and stinking green cloud.

When Johansen looked back, the foul thing was reforming,
but *Alert* steamed away, with engines now performing.

Then the sailor had
drifted till *Vigilant* called.
His adventure there ended.
For now, that was all.



The ship, *Vigilant*, sailed past where R'lyeh should be
but the city had sunk back beneath the deep sea,
and I guess that Cthulhu lies waiting there still,
his existence maintained by the strength of his will.

For Johansen, death ended his mad misery,
and I know, just like Angell, it'll soon come for me.
I've discovered too much of what man should not know
and the cultists are out there somewhere spreading woe.

I've uncovered the truth of the strange bas-relief,
and Johansen's account of things beyond belief.
Now I'm packing up all of these things in a box.
The small box that was Angell's that closes and locks.

If you value your life, you will leave it all there,
and with all of my papers, please exercise care.
All these terrible truths, I now beg you: don't share,
for with these cosmic horrors, our psyches can't bear.

