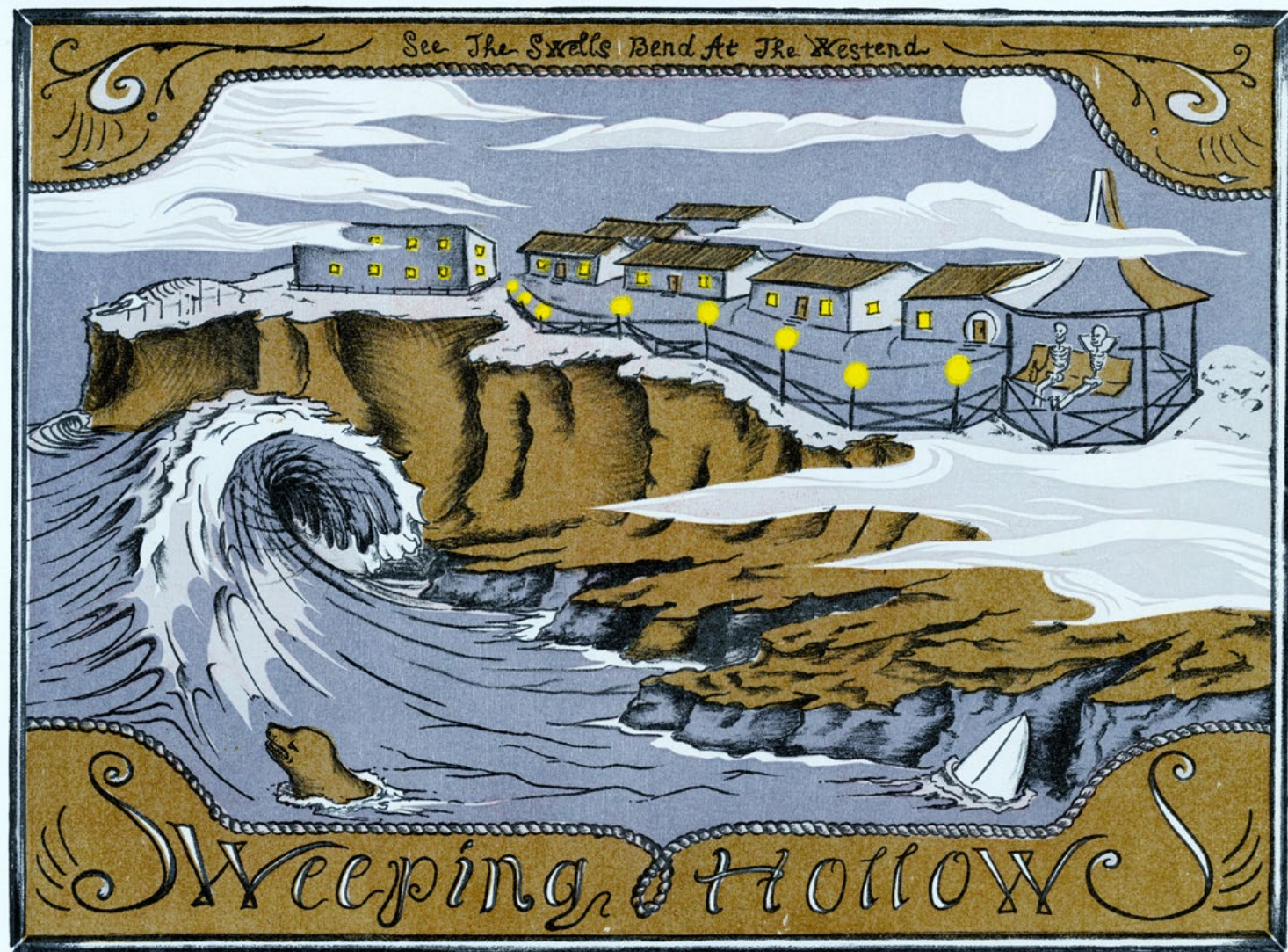


## LUCAS ELMER

*Sweeping Hollows, 2012*  
Woodcut/Lithograph, 14 x 11 in



Sweeping Hollows

LUCAS ELMER '12

COURTESY THE ARTIST

## RICHARD HUFFMAN

# The Inner Dark

Annie saw the baby roll up the tidal sandbank with each new wave. At first she thought it was a small seal. She approached it carefully and watched it roll back and forth a few times before she waded in after a wave receded. It wore a wet suit, which was a surprise to Annie. She never imagined wet suits were made that small.

She waited for Adeena to say something, or even Fierce, though it was still early in the morning and he seldom showed up until later in the day. But one never knew. He could be unpredictable, and if he did start yammering this early it was always about something prickly. He seldom had anything to say that wasn't a complaint. Though Annie had to hand it to him. The advice about her meds was spot on. "Do you want to just go on and on and on feeling like this slug, like somebody just bashed your head in with a hammer and you act like one of those zombies on TV? Really? Is that what you want?"

Of course Adeena would not agree to this, but then where was she whenever Annie did take the meds? At least Fierce was always there, meds or not. But Annie loved Adeena so much. She *never* complained . . . about anything. Her heart was pure. She had delicate wings that sparkled in the sunlight, glinting gold and lavender, vibrating faster than a hummingbird's. Sometimes there was confusion about Adeena and hummingbirds. They were alike in so many ways.

Annie carried the baby back into the fern grotto that opened to a cave where she had stayed the last two nights. The rainy season had not yet started and the winter waves that would inundate the grotto were still a month or so off. It was a cozy place. Once, years and years and years before, she had brought classes of children here and told them tales of bootleggers using the grotto to store barrels of whiskey. Then she would tell them to look at the cliffs around the beach that led to the grotto where swallows built their nests and on the other cliff where cormorants stood on tiny ledges hour after hour, staring at the cliffside.

Sometimes she would tell one of the boys—it was always the boys—to stay back from the waves. There was a riptide there and it would only take one slip. Most listened. Only two did not. They were best friends.

"You don't have to bring that up," Annie said. She should have known. Fierce was such a downer when he