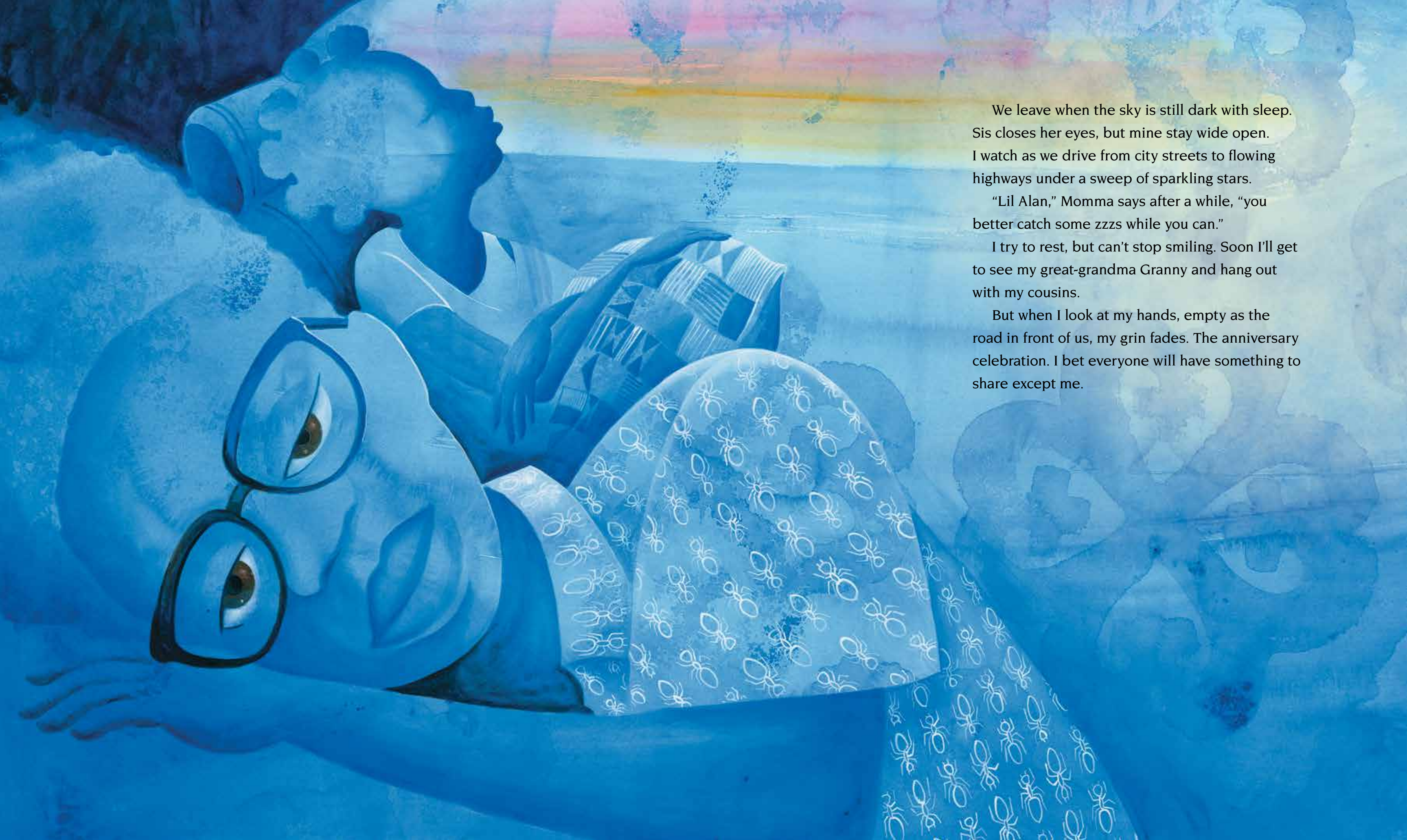




On reunion morning, we rise before the sun. Daddy hums as he packs our car with suitcases and a cooler full of snacks. He says there's nothing like going down home.



We leave when the sky is still dark with sleep.  
Sis closes her eyes, but mine stay wide open.  
I watch as we drive from city streets to flowing  
highways under a sweep of sparkling stars.

“Lil Alan,” Momma says after a while, “you  
better catch some zzzs while you can.”

I try to rest, but can’t stop smiling. Soon I’ll get  
to see my great-grandma Granny and hang out  
with my cousins.

But when I look at my hands, empty as the  
road in front of us, my grin fades. The anniversary  
celebration. I bet everyone will have something to  
share except me.



I doze off in a cloud of worry and wake to sunbeams tickling my face. I squint and see a familiar John Deere tractor store and grey silo standing at attention. We're almost there.

Sis and I sit up straight as pines when we see Granny's wood-frame house. She's right where we left her after last year's reunion, scattering corn for her chickens like tiny bits of gold.

"There she is!" Sis shouts.