

Dory felt Bram lying down next to him. Then on the wind came a new whistle, hearty and high-pitched.

The squelching footsteps stopped.

When all was quiet, Bram and Dory rose from the mud. Just in time, moonlight pierced through the loosened weave of clouds and shone the way back home. Holding hands, the brothers scrambled through the reeds together.

Dory looked back only once. On one side of the water, he could see the glowing coal of the lantern man. While on the other side, he could have sworn he saw straw-coloured hair of the hermit. It danced in the wind and lit up like fire.