

Storm in a Milk Cup

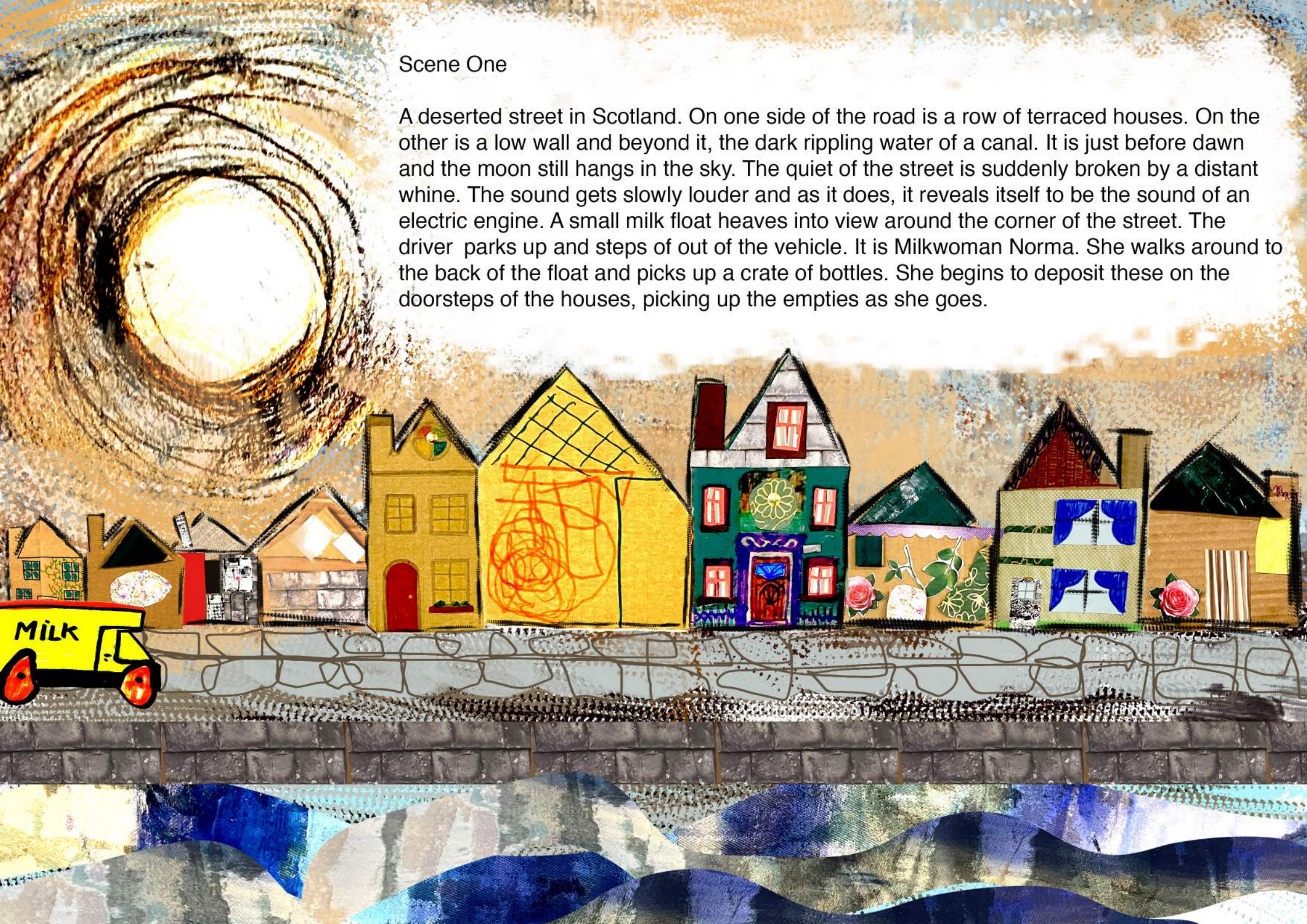
by the Eden Group

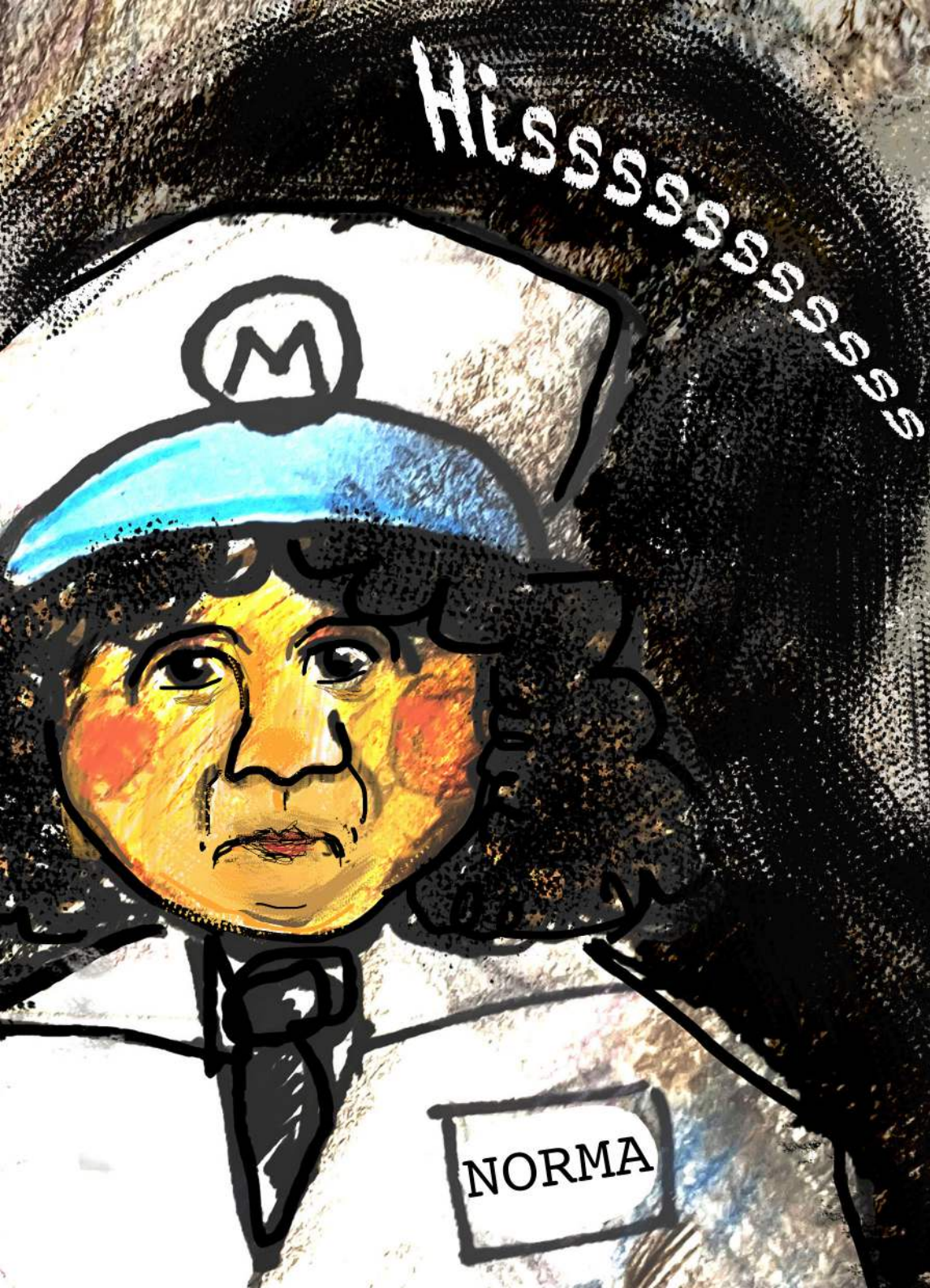


Supported by Matthew Bellwood & Alice Burford

Scene One

A deserted street in Scotland. On one side of the road is a row of terraced houses. On the other is a low wall and beyond it, the dark rippling water of a canal. It is just before dawn and the moon still hangs in the sky. The quiet of the street is suddenly broken by a distant whine. The sound gets slowly louder and as it does, it reveals itself to be the sound of an electric engine. A small milk float heaves into view around the corner of the street. The driver parks up and steps out of the vehicle. It is Milkwoman Norma. She walks around to the back of the float and picks up a crate of bottles. She begins to deposit these on the doorsteps of the houses, picking up the empties as she goes.





While the milkwoman works, a splashing sound emerges from the canal. She stops what she is doing and listens for a moment. The street is silent so she continues her deliveries. She places the last bottle down on a doorstep and then returns to the float.

She replaces the crate and picks up another. As she does, she hears a strange noise from the back of the van. It is a wet, sucking, splashing noise, the kind of sound you might expect to hear from a broken water pump in a garden fishpond.

She puts the crate down and goes to investigate. As she turns the corner of the van, a vast, dark shape looms over her. Her eyes grow wide in terror and the air is filled with a slimy, sniggering hiss.

Scene Two

A sandy beach on the Scottish coast. Two young children, a girl and a boy, are playing on the sand. They chase after each other along the tide line. Behind them, their mother calls for them to wait.

The girl grabs the boy and they collapse in a heap. As they do, the little boy spots something sticking out of the sand. It is a glass milk bottle. The end has been sealed with a carefully shaped piece of driftwood.

He reaches out for it. "What's that?" asks his sister. "It's a message in a bottle," says the boy. "A message from who?" The little boy removes the stopper and shakes out the piece of paper inside. He unrolls the paper and stares at it for a moment. "A message from who?!" says the girl again. "I don't know," says the boy. "I think it's from a milkman."





Scene three

Milkwoman Norma wakes up to find herself on the shore of a rocky island. She is sitting in the driver's seat of her milk float. As she looks around, she realises that the vehicle is not alone. There are many other milk floats all along the rocky shore. Some are upright, others lying on their sides.

All appear to be empty. There is no sign of their drivers or of the milk that they once carried, but the shingly beach is strewn with empty bottles. She steps out of the float and walks around to the back of the vehicle. It too has been emptied. There is not a drop of milk to be seen. Suddenly she hears a cry and looks up. Above her, at the top of a craggy cliff, is a figure. He is waving his arms in greeting and appears to be dressed as a milkman.

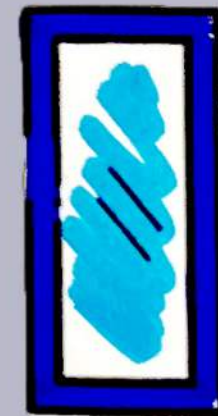
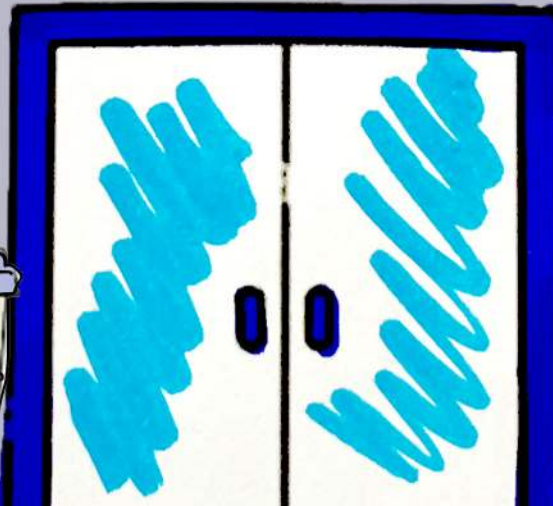
Scene Four

A police station on the Scottish coast. Police Inspector Biscuits stands outside the station door. He gulps down the remains of a coffee in a takeaway cup and grimaces. He scrunches up the cup and throws it in a nearby dustbin. He sighs deeply. "What I wouldn't give for a latte..." He pushes open the station door and steps inside.

A young WPC is sitting behind a desk. "Morning Callaghan. Any news on the missing Milk Deliverers?" Callaghan smiles grimly. "They've found another bottle sir. This one was on the beach at Pittenweem." "What was the message?" "Same as all the others, sir. Whoever wrote it claims they're one of the missing Milk Deliverers. They say they were taken by a giant fish and they're on an island somewhere in the North Sea. They say that all the other missing Milk Deliverers are with them." The Inspector sighs again, even more deeply. "Nothing's ever simple, is it? A giant fish! Why couldn't it just be a good old-fashioned bank job!"

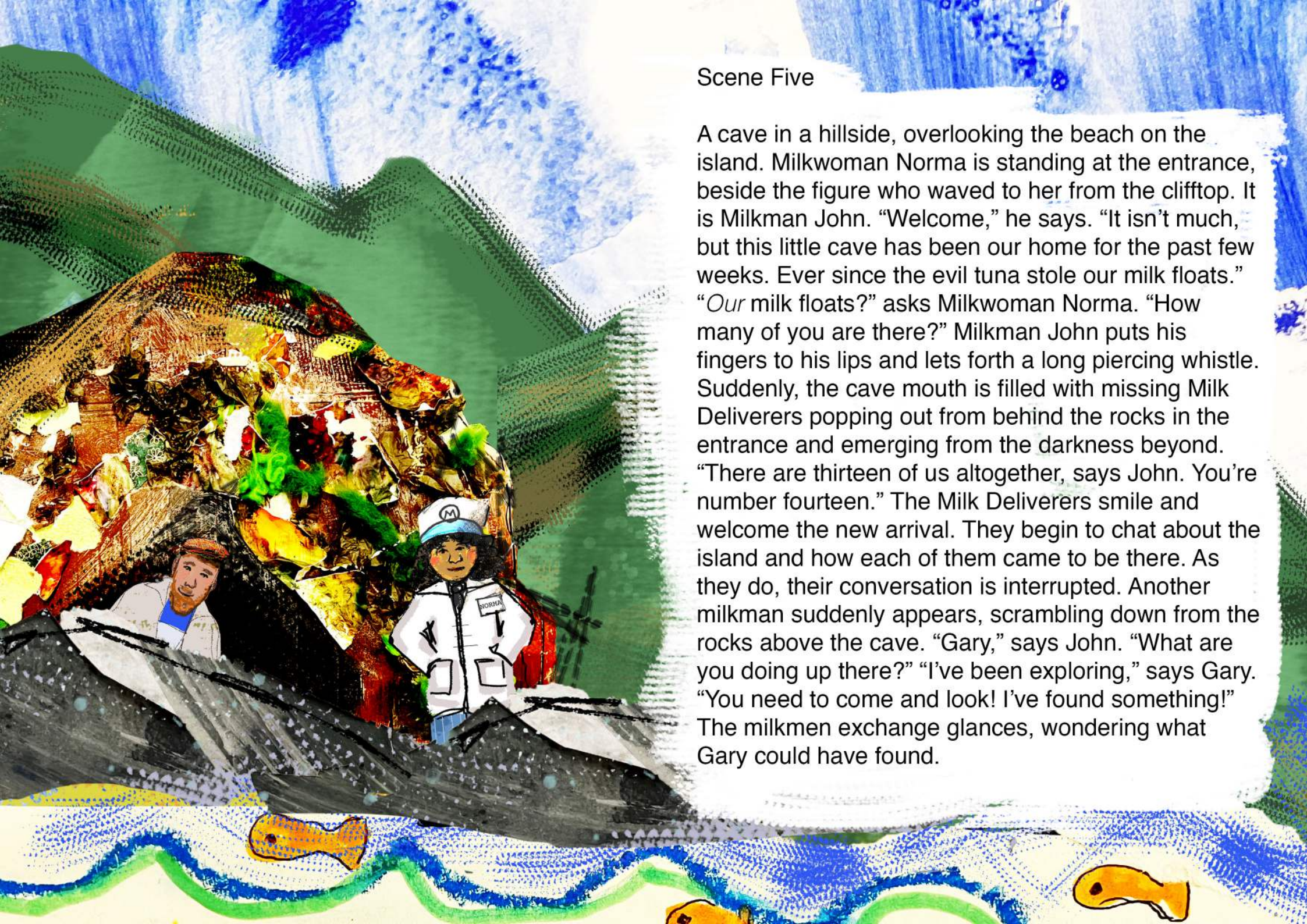


POLICE



Scene Five

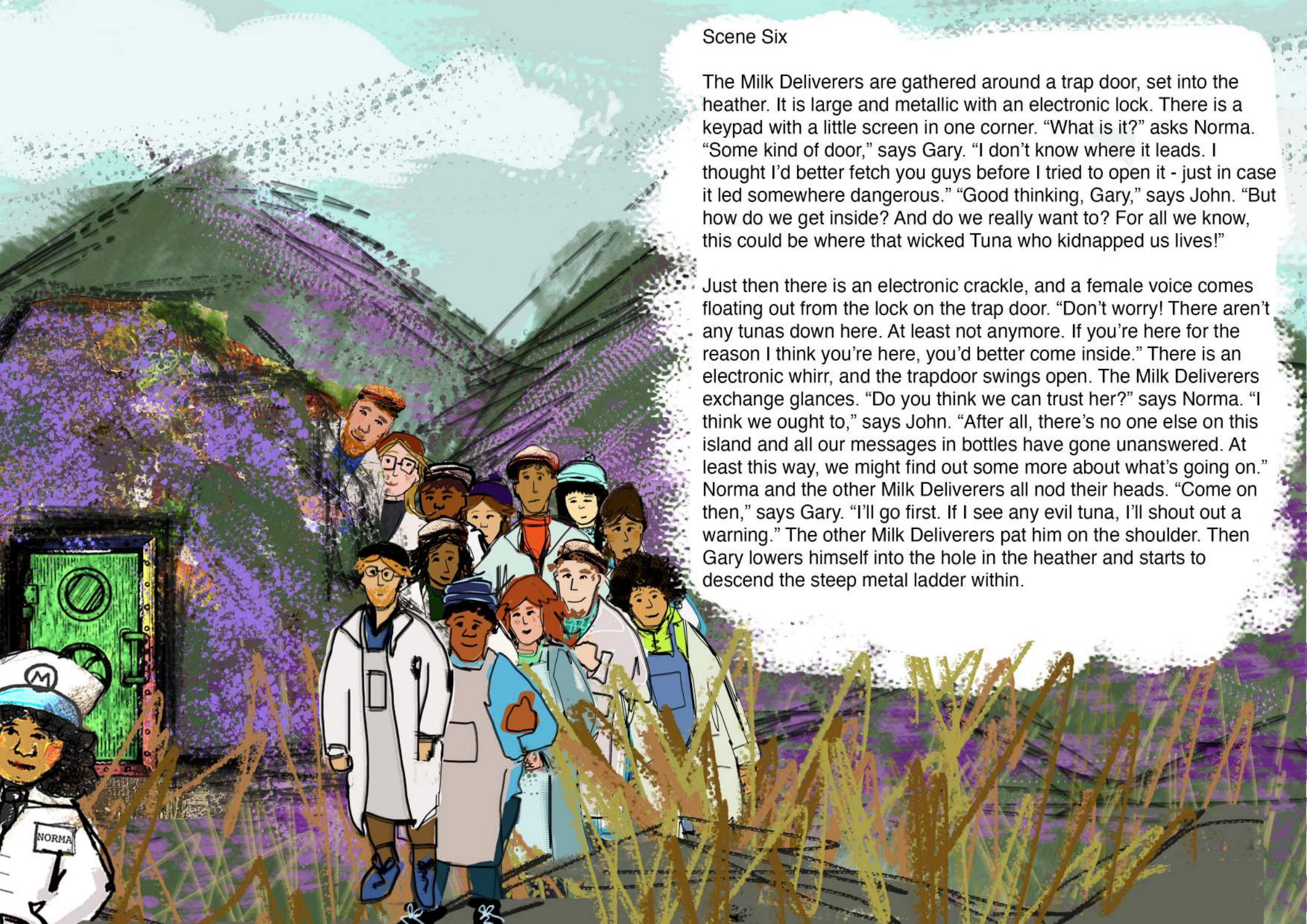
A cave in a hillside, overlooking the beach on the island. Milkwoman Norma is standing at the entrance, beside the figure who waved to her from the cliff top. It is Milkman John. "Welcome," he says. "It isn't much, but this little cave has been our home for the past few weeks. Ever since the evil tuna stole our milk floats." "Our milk floats?" asks Milkwoman Norma. "How many of you are there?" Milkman John puts his fingers to his lips and lets forth a long piercing whistle. Suddenly, the cave mouth is filled with missing Milk Deliverers popping out from behind the rocks in the entrance and emerging from the darkness beyond. "There are thirteen of us altogether, says John. You're number fourteen." The Milk Deliverers smile and welcome the new arrival. They begin to chat about the island and how each of them came to be there. As they do, their conversation is interrupted. Another milkman suddenly appears, scrambling down from the rocks above the cave. "Gary," says John. "What are you doing up there?" "I've been exploring," says Gary. "You need to come and look! I've found something!" The milkmen exchange glances, wondering what Gary could have found.




Scene Six

The Milk Deliverers are gathered around a trap door, set into the heather. It is large and metallic with an electronic lock. There is a keypad with a little screen in one corner. "What is it?" asks Norma. "Some kind of door," says Gary. "I don't know where it leads. I thought I'd better fetch you guys before I tried to open it - just in case it led somewhere dangerous." "Good thinking, Gary," says John. "But how do we get inside? And do we really want to? For all we know, this could be where that wicked Tuna who kidnapped us lives!"

Just then there is an electronic crackle, and a female voice comes floating out from the lock on the trap door. "Don't worry! There aren't any tunas down here. At least not anymore. If you're here for the reason I think you're here, you'd better come inside." There is an electronic whirr, and the trapdoor swings open. The Milk Deliverers exchange glances. "Do you think we can trust her?" says Norma. "I think we ought to," says John. "After all, there's no one else on this island and all our messages in bottles have gone unanswered. At least this way, we might find out some more about what's going on." Norma and the other Milk Deliverers all nod their heads. "Come on then," says Gary. "I'll go first. If I see any evil tuna, I'll shout out a warning." The other Milk Deliverers pat him on the shoulder. Then Gary lowers himself into the hole in the heather and starts to descend the steep metal ladder within.





Professor
Rebecca Tracy

Scene Seven

Gary reaches the bottom of the ladder. A long, dark corridor stretches ahead. "It looks safe down here!" he shouts. "No sign of any tuna!" The other Milk Deliverers begin to descend as Gary starts to head down the corridor. At the end of it is a door. As with the trapdoor, there is an electronic lock to one side of it. "What have you found there lad?" asks John. "Another keypad. I think whoever we spoke to is behind this door." There is an electronic crackle. "You're quite correct," says the voice. "I see that everybody is assembled. So ..." There is an electronic whirr, and the door slides open. The Milk Deliverers look inside. Behind the door is a brightly lit laboratory. The lab is clearly under the sea. On one side is a gigantic glass wall. Behind it is the swirling, bubbling North Sea, teeming with fish and other underwater life. The lab is filled with a variety of hi-tech equipment and, in the centre, is a table covered in a complicated array of glass lab equipment. Behind the desk is a woman wearing stripey neon trousers and a leopard-print lab coat. Her bright, red hair is tied into two long plaits. She steps out from behind the table and smiles at the Milk Deliverers. "Good day to you all and welcome to my lab. My name is Professor Rebecca Tracey."



“What are you doing down here, Professor?” asks Norma?

“Ah!” says the professor. “This is my secret hideaway. This island was once the property of my Uncle, Jasper Tracey, the famous industrialist. He made his fortune in the haggis industry back in the 1930’s.”

“I remember learning about him at school,” says Gary. “He was one of the wealthiest men in Scotland!”

“Yes,” says Professor Tracey. “And when he died, he left the island and all his remaining fortune to me. I was working at the University of Gretna back then. I was interested in food science - I hated the fact that so many people in world don’t have enough to eat. I began looking for a way to solve the world’s food poverty. The more research I did, the more certain I became that I had the answer. I came up with a method of growing animals to massive sizes. I wanted to start with farm animals - chickens, cows, and pigs - but the university wouldn’t fund it. They said it was impossible - pie in the sky! Then my uncle left me his fortune. It came at just the right time. I set up my laboratory here, in the middle of the North Sea. I’ve been working on my theories ever since. A little over a year ago, I had the most amazing breakthrough!”

“The Giant Tuna!” says Norma.

“That’s right,” says Professor Tracey. “One of my tuna specimens started growing exponentially. At first, I was delighted! I love tuna sandwiches and I thought that I had found a way to provide enough fish to feed the world. The only trouble was, the Tuna’s intelligence grew, along with it’s size. When he reached six feet he began to develop the ability to talk. We had some amazing times together. We talked about so many things. We were good friends he and I. But one day, I went down to the beach to pick up an Amazon delivery. When I came back, I found the lab had been trashed. He’d found my notes and read all about the experiment that created him. When he realised that he was destined to be dinner, he went crazy.”



“Couldn’t you try to reason with him?” asks Gary.

“He didn’t want to listen! He trashed my lab and left via the underwater drainage system. He’s grown too big to get back in but I think he plans to destroy this place for good.”

“But what about us?” says John. “Why has he kidnapped fourteen Milk Deliverers?”

“It’s not you!” says Professor Tracey. “It’s the white stuff he’s after! In order to grow, he needs a constant supply of fatty acids, protein and calcium. Milk is the perfect food for a growing tuna!”

“Gosh! Suddenly it all makes sense!” says Gary.

“But how much milk does he need?” asks Norma.

“It’s hard to say. Who knows how big he could get if he keeps on drinking.”

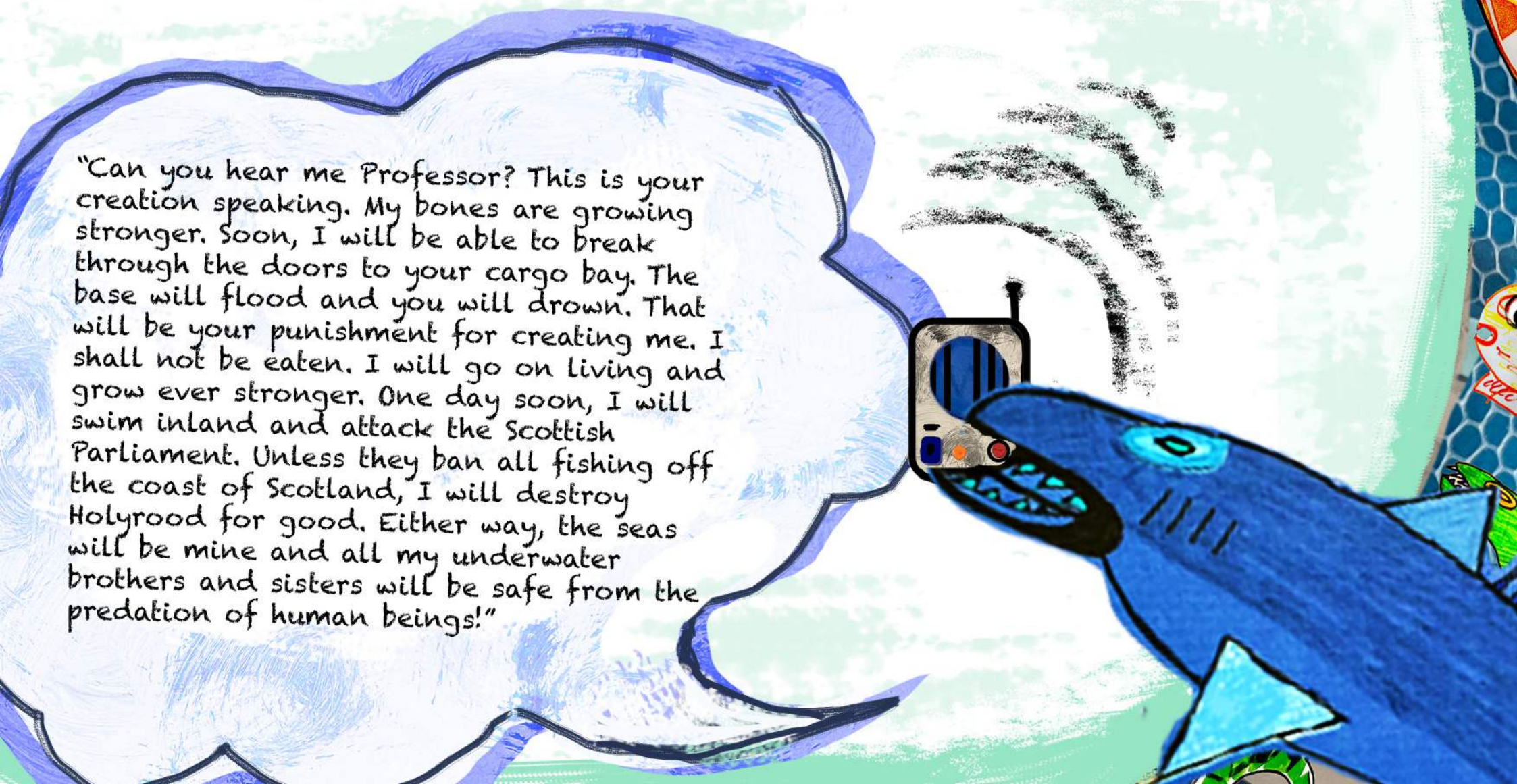
“You mean, there could be more kidnappings?” asks John.

“Worse than that! The Tuna has a vendetta against all human beings. He hates the way that we treat the world’s oceans and he hates the thought of other fish and undersea life being eaten. If he gets big enough, I believe he plans to swim inland and take down the government!”

"How do you know?" asks Norma.

"Because he visits the lab at night. He bobs up outside the underwater window over there and whispers threats through the intercom in the airlock. Listen!"

Professor Tracey flicks a switch on her desk and strange, deep voice comes bubbling out of a speaker nearby.



"Can you hear me Professor? This is your creation speaking. My bones are growing stronger. Soon, I will be able to break through the doors to your cargo bay. The base will flood and you will drown. That will be your punishment for creating me. I shall not be eaten. I will go on living and grow ever stronger. One day soon, I will swim inland and attack the Scottish Parliament. Unless they ban all fishing off the coast of Scotland, I will destroy Holyrood for good. Either way, the seas will be mine and all my underwater brothers and sisters will be safe from the predation of human beings!"

“So, you see,” says Professor Tracey, sadly, “I need to leave the island, and warn the Scottish Parliament. What’s more, I need to go quickly, for one day soon, the monster I created will break in and destroy my lab.”

“But you must have a boat!?” says Norma. “Otherwise, how could you have gotten here in the first place?”

“I did have a boat – but the tuna destroyed it! It was his first act when he escaped, his way of trapping me on the island. He charmed a flock of seagulls into destroying the antenna of my radio mast. I can’t get in contact with the mainland.”

“But won’t someone come looking for you?” asks John. “Surely they’ll send a search party if they don’t hear from you for a while?”

“That’s the trouble, no one knows I’m here! I wanted my research to be a secret. The only people who know my address are Amazon and Ocado but I can’t contact them as my WiFi Cable has been picked apart by crabs. So as you see, I’m stranded here just as much as you are!”

“There must be some other way to escape?” says Gary.

“I wish there was,” says the Professor.

The Milk Deliverers are silent for a moment.

“Hang on a minute! What about our milk floats?” asks Norma.

“Milk floats?” asks Professor Tracey.

“Yes! There’s fourteen milk floats washed up on the beach. Could we not turn one of them into a boat?”

“We can do better than that!” says Professor Tracey. “My first degree was in Mechanical Engineering. If we work together, I think we can make some amazing amphibious vehicles!”

Scene Eight

A balmy summer evening on the shore of the island. The Milk Deliverers and Professor Tracey are converting the milk floats into a fleet of amphibious vehicles. Music is playing from the CD player in one of the milk floats' dashboards. The soundtrack is "Take on Me" by AHA.

A range of special features are being added to the vehicles. These include fiery swords, concealed sails, underwater mesh, flashlights, missiles and radar dishes. The Milk Deliverers and the Professor laugh and high-five each other as they go about their work. Eventually, the fleet is ready. It is just after midnight and the moon is high in the sky. Professor Tracey inspects the vehicles and then turns to the Milk Deliverers, waiting on the shore. "This is amazing work everybody. I think we're ready to go. I suggest we go back to the lab and try to get some sleep. When the sun rises, we'll gather on the beach and prepare to make our getaway. The Milk Deliverers cheer and together with the Professor, they head off up the beach in the direction of the lab.

Little do they know, however, that they are being observed. A little further along the beach is a set of seaweed-covered rocks. On one of these sits a small, brown octopus, carefully concealed by a pile of bladderwrack. As the Milk Deliverers leave the beach, the octopus slips off the rock and wriggles its way to the edge of the water.





Scene Nine

The octopus slips beneath the waves and swims down to the lair of the Giant Tuna. It relates what it has seen. The Tuna listens and then smiles grimly.

"Don't worry, my friend. We won't let them get away with this! We will marshal our forces and attack the milk floats. Until Professor Tracey is gone, and her lab destroyed for good, the ocean will not be safe for any of our kind."

The octopus waves its legs deferentially. "Very good your magnificence! I will spread the word among your underwater minions."

The octopus swims away and the Tuna brings a bottle of milk to its lips and drinks it down in one enormous gulp.

Scene Ten

Early morning. The sun rises above the clifftops. A line of shadowy figures makes its way down the steep cliff path. The figures gather around the fleet of converted milk floats. Professor Tracey and Norma have the largest of the vessels. Slowly, the electric motors of the fleet begin to splutter into life. Slowly the milk floats begin to move, edging their way towards the sea. As they enter the lapping waves, the Milk Deliverers activate the newly fitted flotation devices and the vehicles head out onto the open water. The sun rises higher and before too long, they are out in the middle of the cold North Sea.

“The Scottish coast is that way!” cries Professor Tracey, pointing off towards the distant horizon.

Slowly, the fleet begins to turn and sets off in the direction that Professor Tracey pointed. Inspiring music soars in the background. The Milk Deliverers begin to smile and laugh, sure that they are free at last. But as they do, the waters around the fleet begin to break and boil.

“What’s happening?” cries Gary.

“The Tuna!” cries John, pointing as an enormous silver fish breaks the surface and arcs into the air. The Tuna dives beneath the waves again, but now the Milk Deliverers see that they have been surrounded. The waves about the milk floats are thick with fins, scales and tentacles.

“Time to use the weapons systems!” shouts Professor Tracey.

The Milk Deliverers begin to press a series of brightly coloured buttons on their control panels. As they do, the milk floats begin to transform from inoffensive milk delivery devices to terrifying waterborne chariots of destruction.



The transformation comes not a moment too soon. The Tuna leaps into the air again and gives a terrible, spluttering cry. "Attaaaaaaack!" As he slips back beneath the waves, the underwater creatures surrounding the floats begin to swarm ever closer, butting and slapping and ramming the vehicles. The Milk Deliverers try to defend themselves as best they can, and a pitched battle begins.



Scene Eleven

Suddenly, the wind drops, and the sea grows calm. The Milk Deliverers find that the controls of their amphibious vehicles are unresponsive. It looks as though the Tuna and his minions are going to overwhelm them. The Milk Deliverers start to weep and wail, their hearts filled with terror. Then, a mysterious sound breaks the silence. It is a musical sound – a strange, long, low, keening note – a clarion call from some enormous horn. As it echoes across the water, the sea beasts slowly stop their attack and come to rest on the surface of the ocean.

The sound falls away and as it does, something enormous breaks the surface. It is a gigantic crab, gleaming red and brown in the sunlight, beady eyes fixed on the scene of the frozen battle. Sitting on a throne on the top of the crab is regal looking woman. At least, she is a woman from the waist up. Instead of legs and feet, she has a long fishy tail. Her hair is braided with strands of seaweed and she wears a crown of coral. All around the mighty crab more faces break the surface. It is a host of sea-people with tridents in their hands. As they appear, they break into song and music fills the air. The song has no words but it fills the hearts of everyone who hears it with peace.



As the song comes to an end, the woman on the throne speaks. Her words seem to echo across the water.

“This is not the way. There is no need to fight. You have more in common than you think. The Tuna was wrong in what he did. Kidnapping milkmen is no way to solve a problem, but nor is engineering a massive fish in order to sate the world’s hunger. No creature wishes to be eaten, and a creature as intelligent as this deserves a long and happy life.”

“Who are you?” cries Professor Tracey.

“I am the Queen of the Merfolk. These people in the water are my subjects. We are farmers of the sea. Our food is made from kelp and other seaweed. It is easy to grow and very nutritious. If you like, I can show you how to grow it for yourselves. That way, the world can eat and the Tuna can live out a full and happy life.”

“A whole lifetime eating kelp! That doesn’t sound like a lot of fun to me.” says Gary.

“Maybe not. But it’s better than being eaten by angry sea-life!” says John.

“That’s true!” says Norma.

“So. What do you say?” Asks the Merqueen. “Are you willing to accept my proposal? Surely a woman as clever as Professor Rebecca Tracey can find a way to make kelp protein taste good to humans?”

The Milk Deliverers all turn to look at Professor Tracey.

“What do you say, professor?” asks Norma.



Scene Twelve

A police station on the Scottish mainland. Inspector Biscuits is typing up a police report. Beside him is a cup of black coffee. There is a knock on the door.

“Come in!”

The door opens and Callaghan pops her head round. “Inspector Biscuits. You need to come quickly. There’s an incident in progress.”

“What are you taking about Callaghan? What kind of incident?”

“It’s the Milk Deliverers sir. I think they’ve come back home!”

“What?!” Inspector Biscuits jumps to his feet.

“They’ve been sighted down at the docks.”

“All fourteen of them?”

“Yes sir! The only thing is, they haven’t come back alone!”

“What are you talking about Callaghan?”



Scene Thirteen

A harbour in a small Scottish town. A crowd has gathered on the harbour wall, everyone is staring out to sea. A siren is heard and a police car pulls up nearby. WPC Callaghan and Inspector Biscuits jump out and run up to take their places on the sea wall.

“Well, well! Would you look at that!?” says Biscuits.

The sea is full of milk floats, each one driven by one of the kidnapped Milk Deliverers. Around them in the water is a variety of sea life, the waves filled with fins and tentacles. Swimming alongside the lead milk float is a monstrous Tuna.

Inspector Biscuits lifts a megaphone to his lips. “Is everything alright out there? Do you need assistance?” There is a pause before the speakers on the front of the lead float burst into life. The voice it transmits is that of Professor Tracey.

“We’re fine! Everyone is safe! We’re just looking forward to getting back to dry land.”



“And what about your underwater companions?” asks Inspector Biscuits. “I hope that Tuna isn’t bothering you. He looks like a troublemaker to me!”

“Not at all!” says Professor Tracey. “This Tuna is a great personal friend of mine. What’s more, between the two of us, I think we might have solved the world’s food problems.”

As she speaks, the Tuna leaps out of the air. He turns a somersault and flips back into the water. The Milk Deliverers cheer and the crowd of watchers on the Harbour wall gasp in amazement and then break into spontaneous applause.

Over on the lead float, Norma gives Professor Tracey a hug. “Thanks for bringing us all home safely Professor. And well done for making peace with your creation.”

Horraaaaaayyyyyy

The End

