

Gemma's Visit to the Aquarium



Written and illustrated
by Lee Lamarche

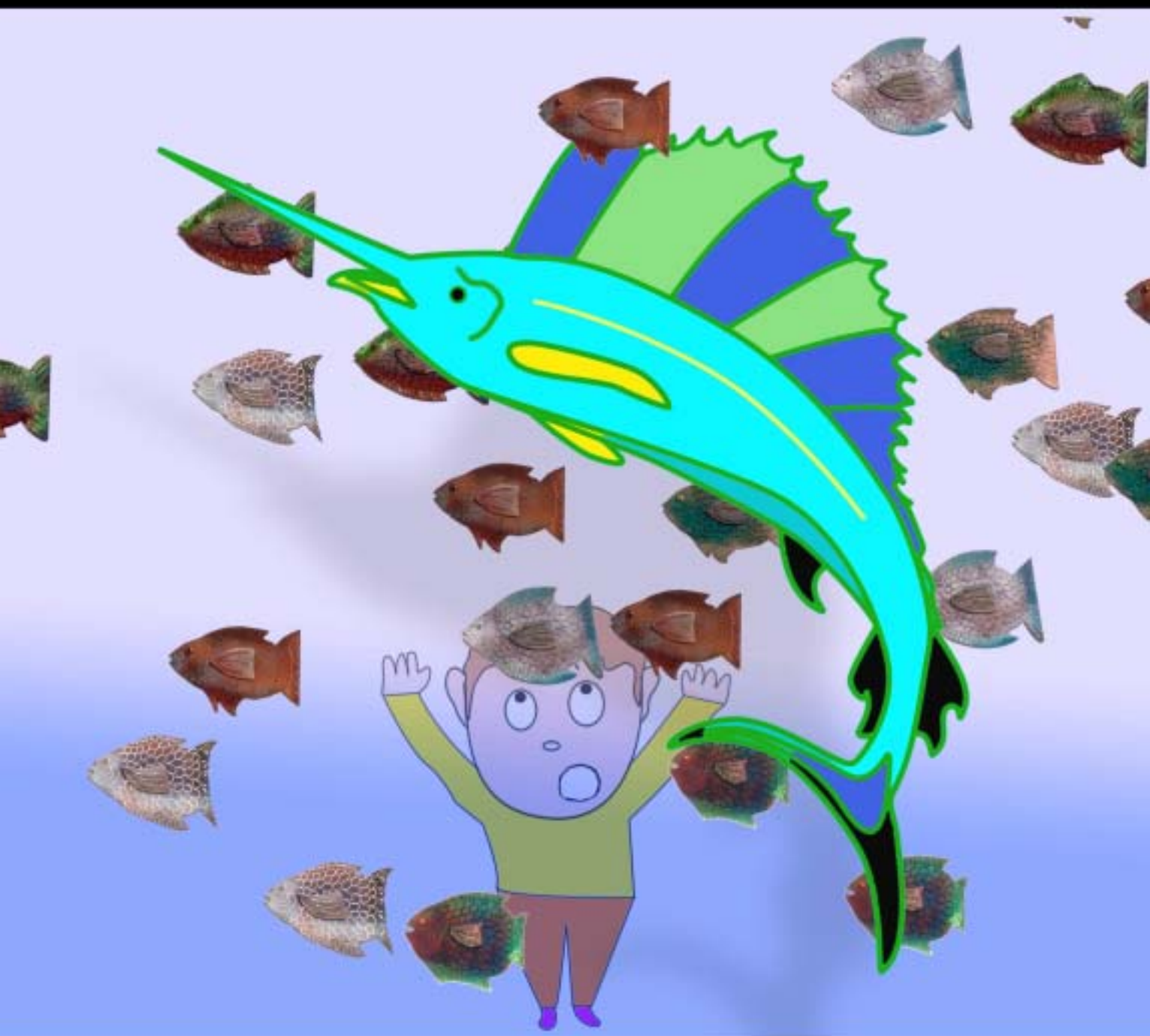


This is Gemma. She is two years old. On this bright and beautiful day she is planning to go to the Brooklyn aquarium.



Mama and Mama Cat had told her that morning. They would see all Gemma's favorite animals. She was so excited that she was waiting in the car before anyone else.

FACT: Sailfishes are fish living in all the oceans of the world. They often have a characteristic sail on top, which often stretches the entire length of the back. Another notable characteristic is the elongated bill, which looks like that of a swordfish.



Their first stop was the "Think Tank". It had all sorts of fish from all different places around the world. Gemma was especially excited by the Sailfish, which cut a sharp path past all the other fish.

FACT: A bathysphere is a spherical deep-sea submersible which is lowered into the ocean on a cable. The first bathysphere was made by Otis Barton and William Beebe in 1930. The sphere was fitted with three-inch thick windows and had a 400-pound entrance hatch which had to be bolted down.

THE BATHYSPHERE



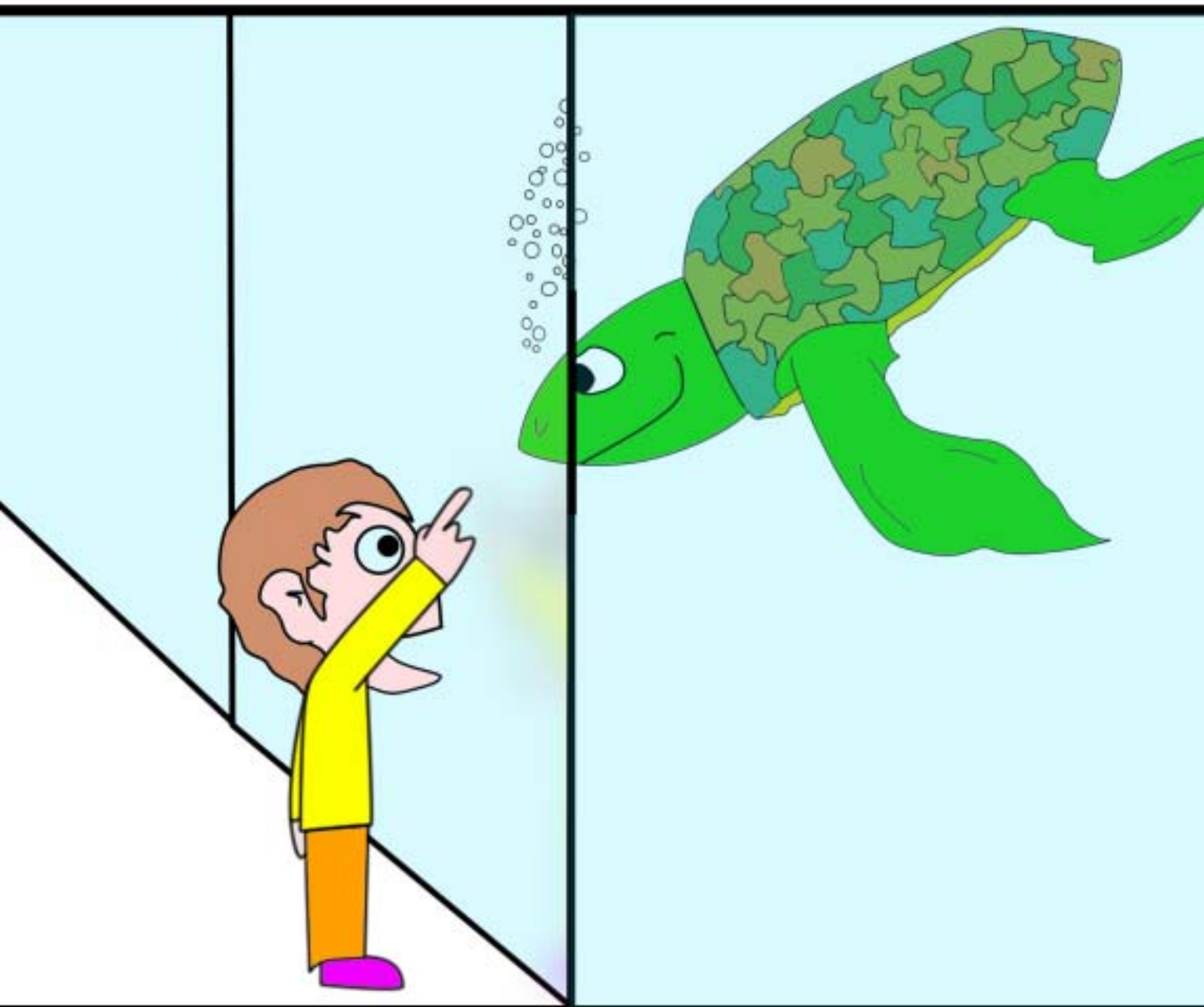
Their second stop [because everyone thought it would be educational] was to see the Bathysphere. Gemma even got inside and posed for a picture for Mama.

FACT: Starfish (more correctly known as sea stars) typically have five or more "arms" which spread out from their central disk. Starfish move with the help of hundreds of small tube feet on the bottom of their arms. Their tube feet also help them to eat.



Gemma told Mama Cat that she wanted to see more animals. All three of them looked at their map and decided to go to "Explore the Shore". Inside, Gemma got to hold a live starfish. She even felt it's little suckers get sticky on her hands. Mama made her roll up her sleeves.

FACT: Sea turtles are turtles found in all the world's oceans except the Arctic Ocean, and some species travel between oceans. The Leatherback Sea Turtle is the largest, measuring up to seven feet long and five feet wide. They can weigh up to 1300 pounds.

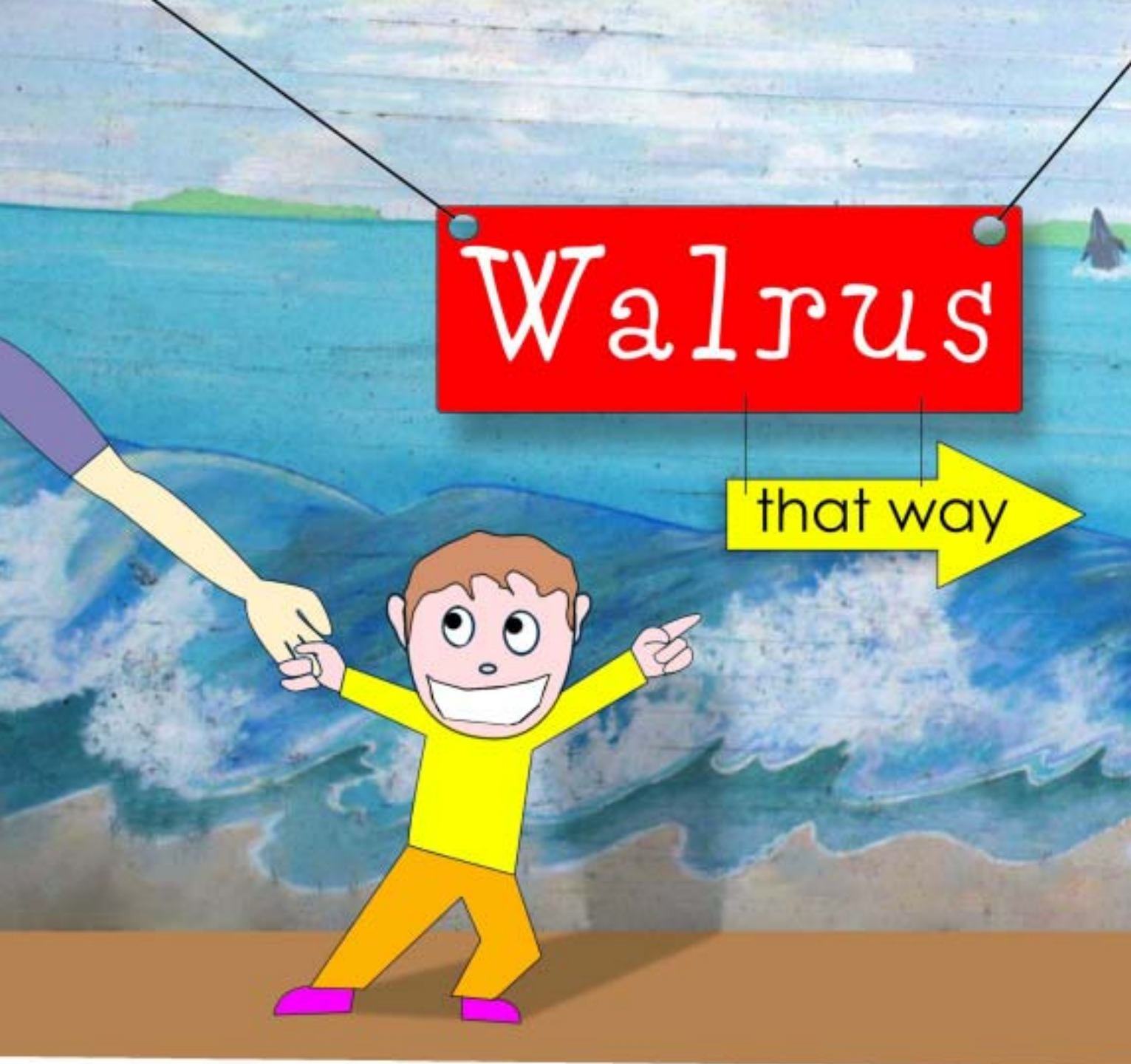


In "Explore the Shore" Gemma even got to see a giant sea turtle. It swam lazily up to the glass and breathed out bubbles. Gemma made a face at it and the turtle didn't seem to mind. It was only after looking at the turtle that Gemma said she wanted to see something with big teeth. Something like....sharks.

FACT: Sharks are fish with a streamlined body. They breathe with the use of gills. Shark skin has a special layer to protect them skin and they have replaceable teeth. They are misunderstood predators, and hardly ever attack humans.

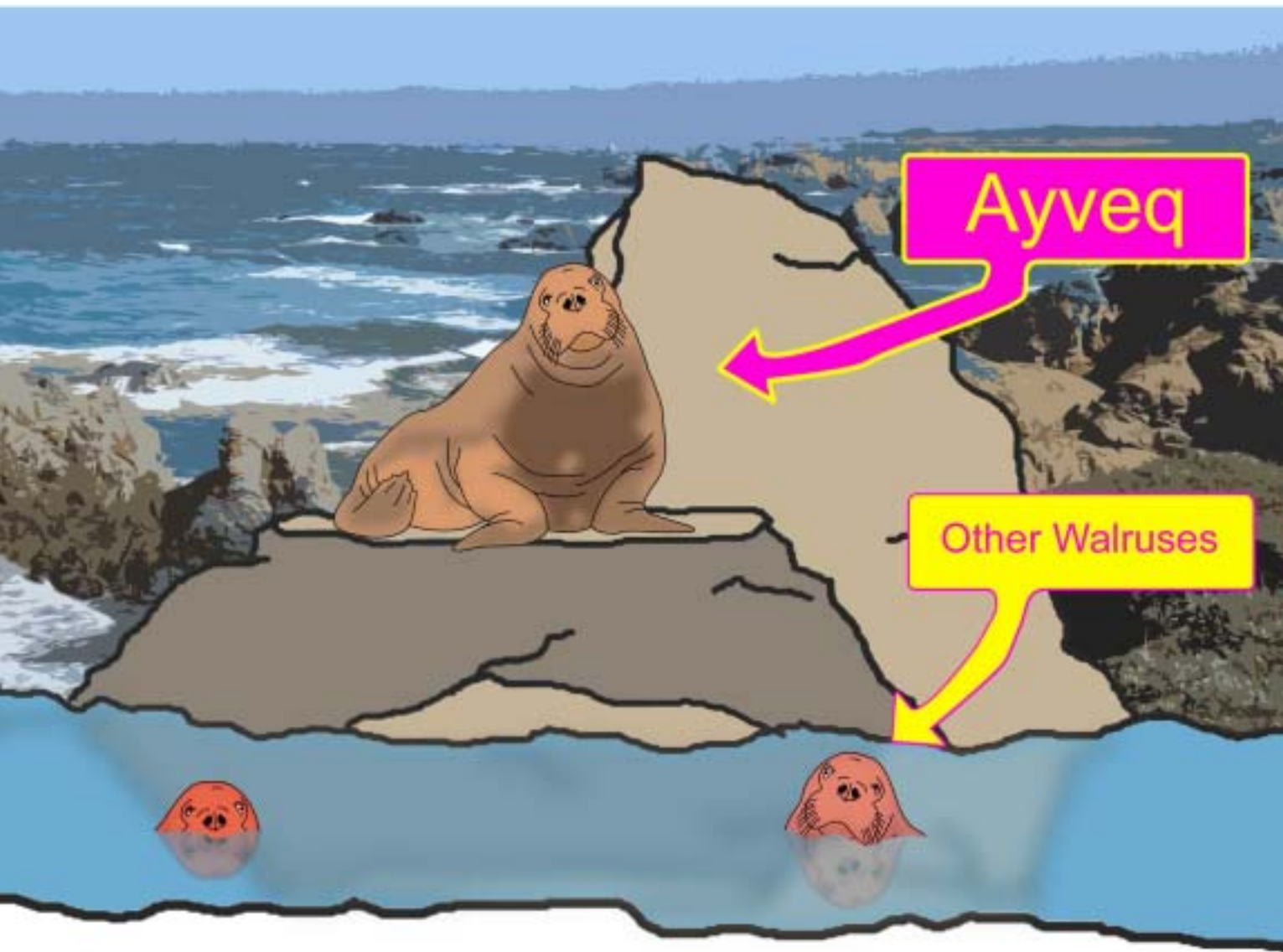


The sharks were big. They swam around their tank with mean, dark eyes. Gemma watched them in awe as they patrolled their territory. She was surprised to see a scuba diver inside the tank! She wondered if he was scared. He waved to her and she waved back.

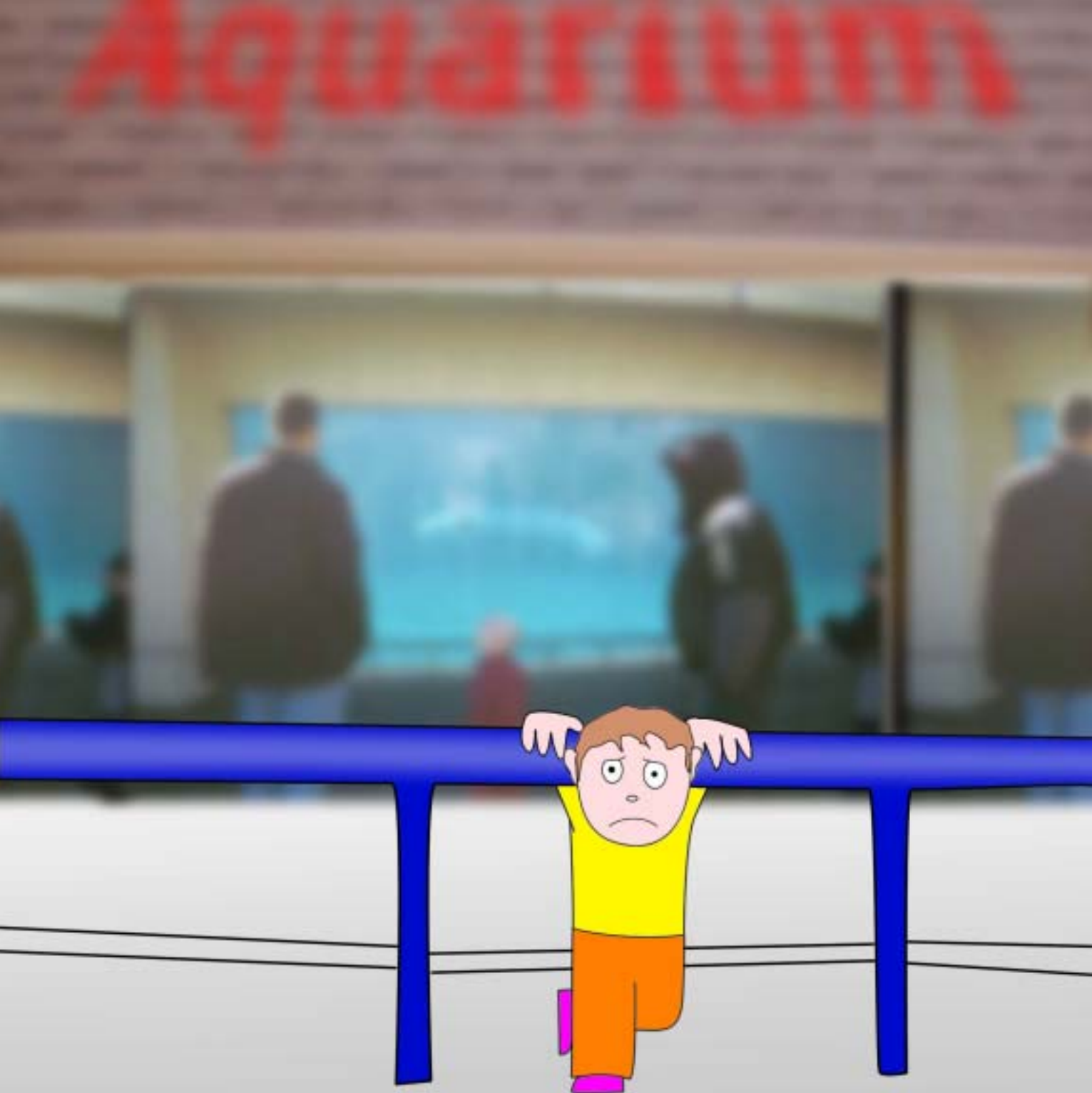


Back outside, Gemma pointed at a sign which read “Walrus, that way!” With an arrow. She pulled both Mama Cat and Mama to hurry up. Mama explained that the Walrus wasn’t going anywhere but Gemma wouldn’t listen.

FACT: Walruss are large semi-aquatic mammals that live in the cold Arctic seas of the Northern Hemisphere and can weigh up to 3,500 pounds.



The walrus, whose name was Ayveq, sat proudly on a big rock on the other side of his enclosure. Gemma tried to make him puff out his cheeks or make a funny noise but Ayveq simply sat like the walrus king while the other walruses swam and slept.



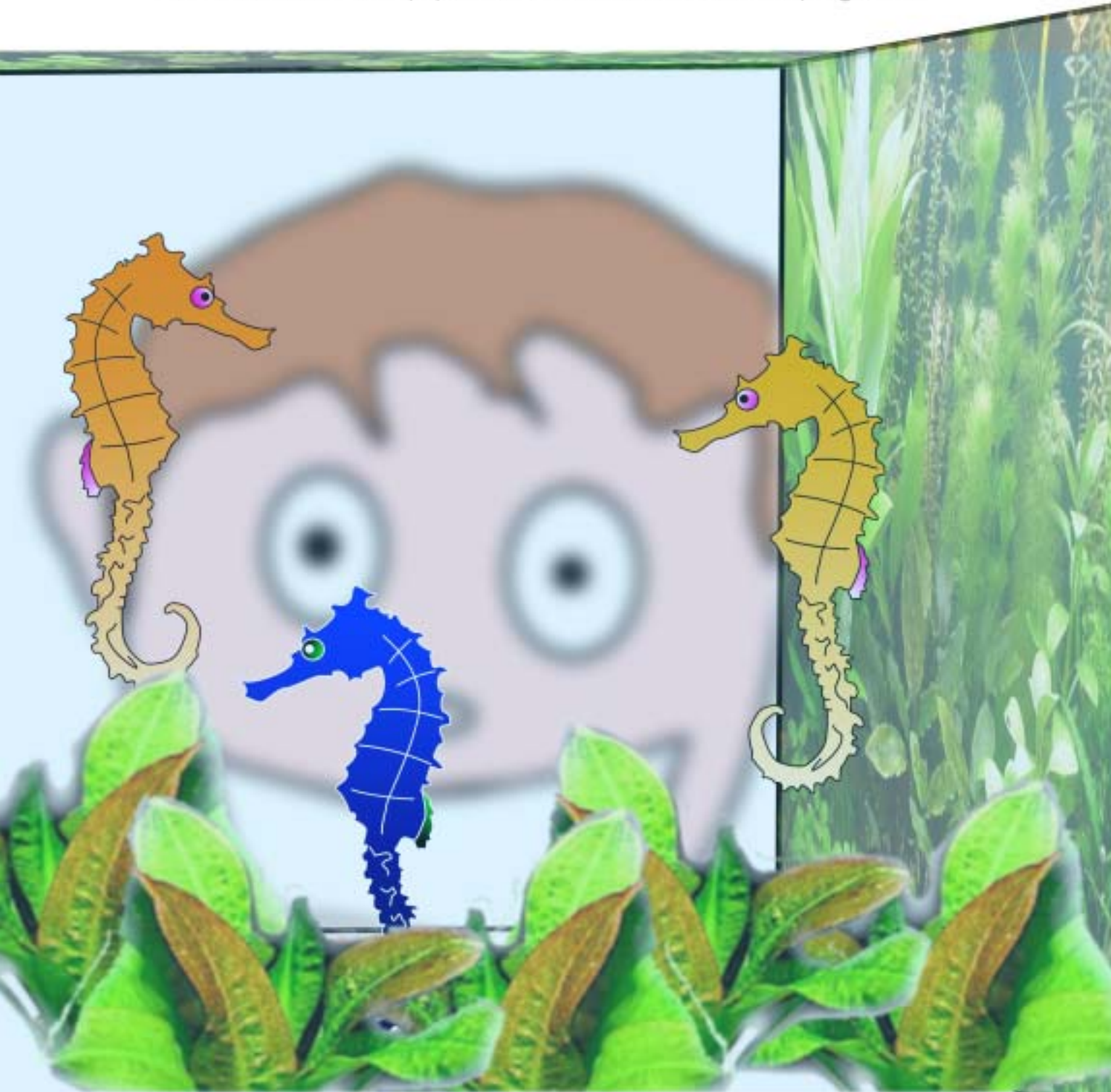
In the next exhibit there were supposed to be Sea lions. Gemma looked all over but didn't see any. She was disappointed. There were always sea lions! After a few minutes, both moms suggested they keep walking and that the sea lions would be there next time.

FACT: Penguins are a group of aquatic, flightless birds living almost exclusively in the Southern Hemisphere.



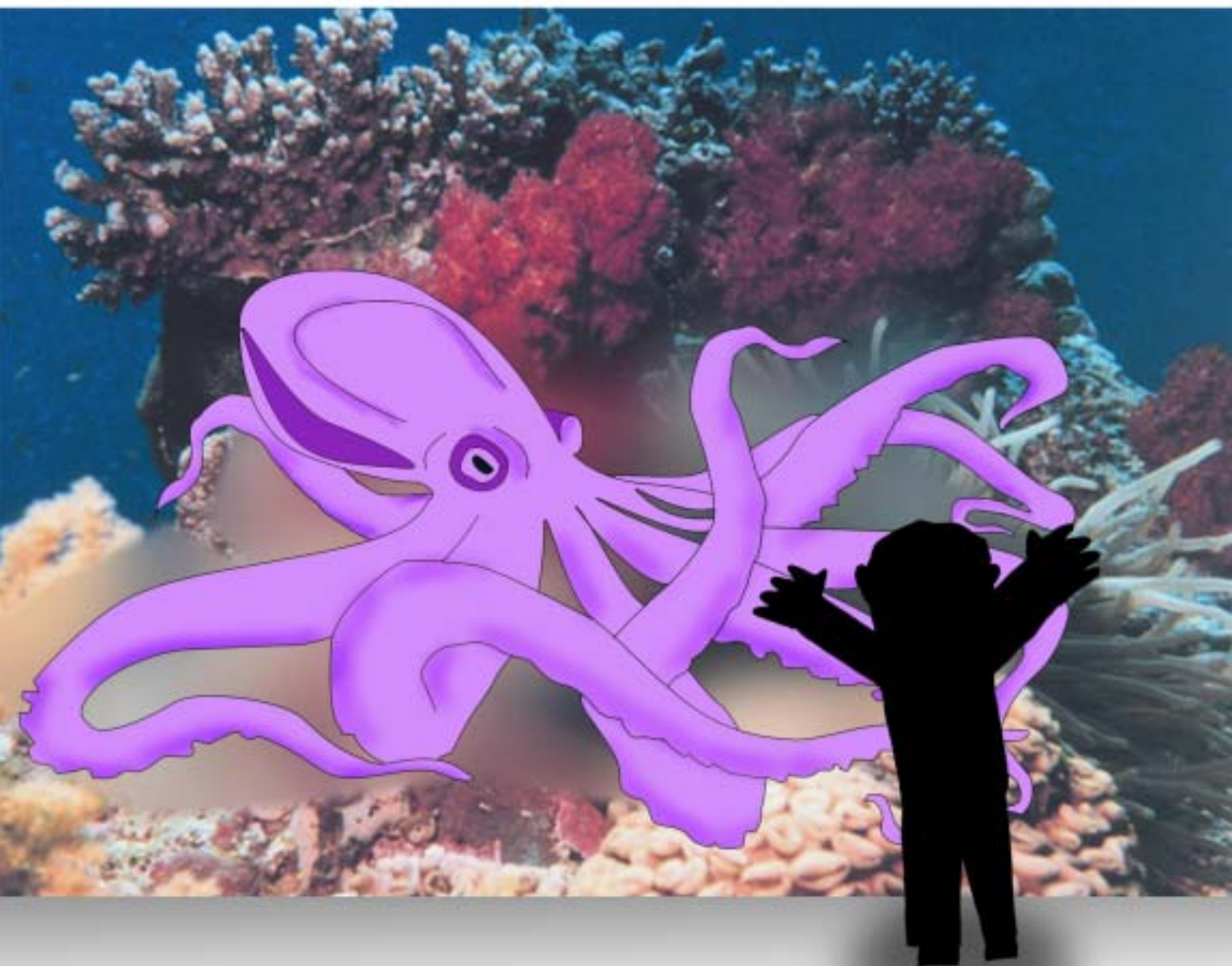
Gemma's mood got better as she heard the sound of animals in the next enclosure. They were chattering to each other. A few were waddling around or falling off a rock. One of them was swallowing a whole fish! Gemma tried to copy their noises, and one of them even answered back!

FACT: Seahorses are fish found in tropical waters all over the world.
Seahorses are the only species in which males become "pregnant".



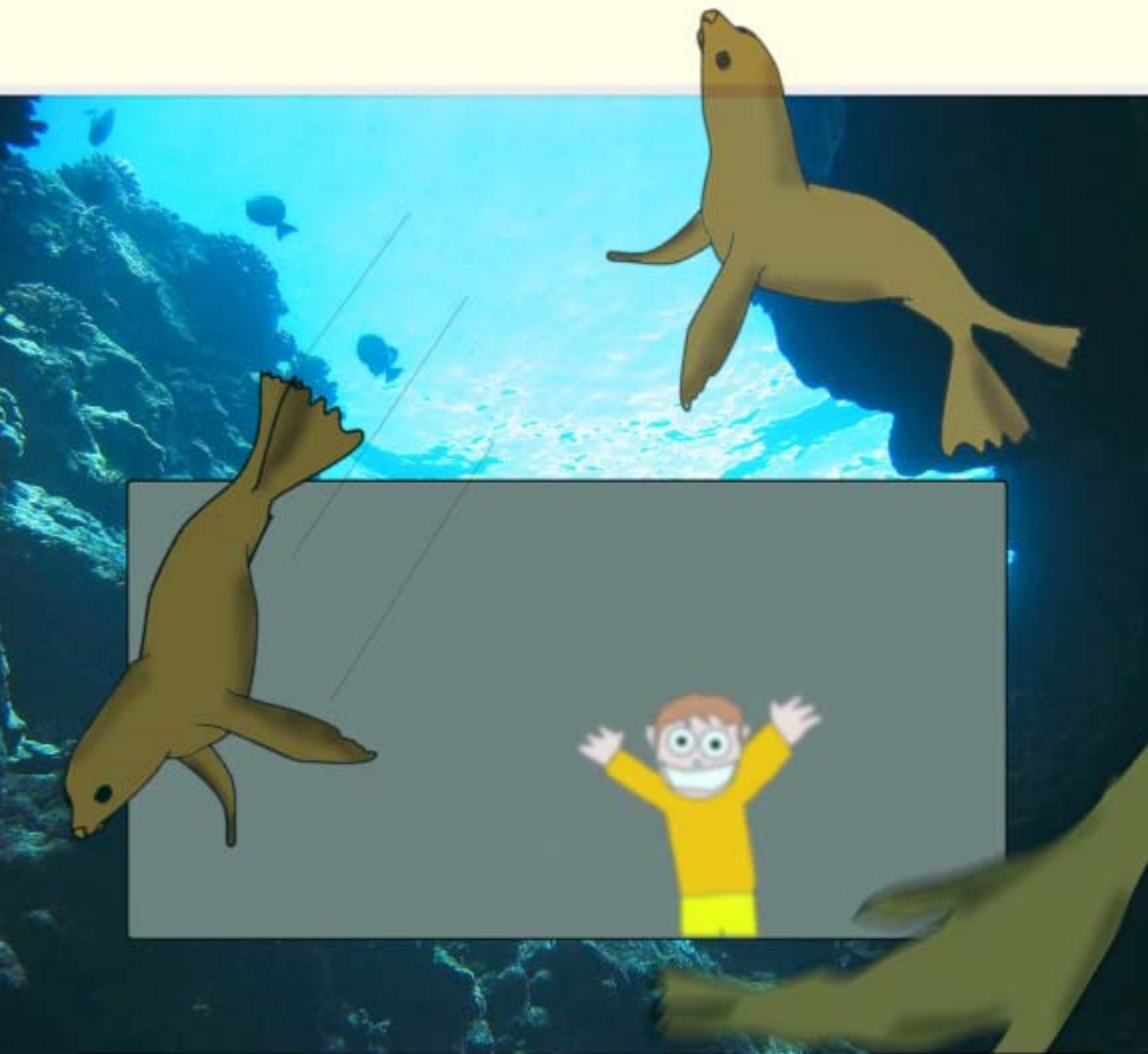
What are these? Strange looking fish, don't you think? They have that curly tail that twists forward and that long face. Look how they have all different colors. What are they called? Gemma thought and thought some more. Seahorses! That was it. Pretty.

FACT: The octopus inhabits many diverse regions of the ocean, especially coral reefs. There are 289 different octopus species.

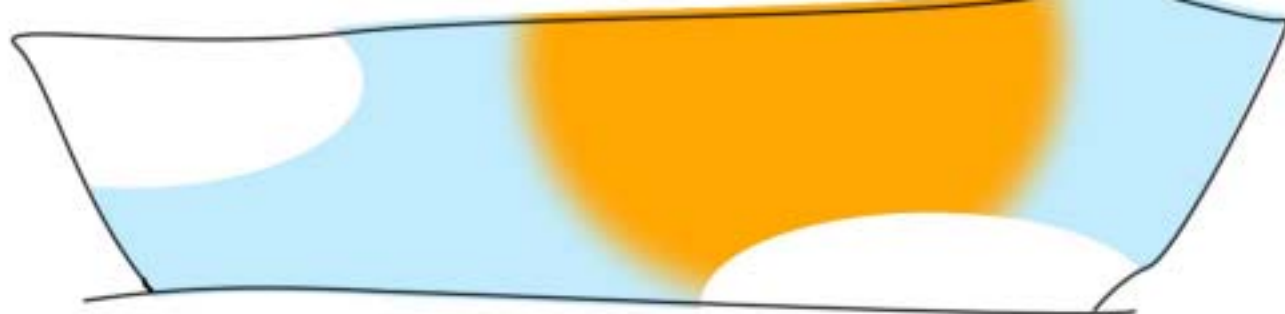


Now here is an animal to look at. It has so many legs! [eight. Gemma counted.] It was lucky it could swim without getting all tangled up. Silly octopus. It blinked. Gemma pointed at it and said "OC-TOE-PUSS" out loud. It echoed in the small dark space.

FACT: A sea lion is a marine mammal. Sea lions have ears, long front flippers, and the ability to walk on four flippers on land.



Look! In the next tank! It's the sea lions! They must just have been swimming before. Gemma wondered why she hadn't thought to look in the water. The three sea lions swam all over, corkscrewing and messing around. They looked like they were having fun. Gemma's smile grew very big.



Gemma was happy. She was also very sleepy. It had been a long day and they had seen all of her favorite animals. Mama picked her up and brought her to the car. Mama Cat clicked her into her safety seat. Gemma sat with her eyes closed and happily dreamed of all her aquarium friends.

THE END