

It is the year 1810, and Mary Anning and her brother Joe are scrambling over the cliffs of Lyme Regis looking for "curiosities" to sell. Suddenly Joe sees a strange giant head sticking out of the cliff-face, and calls to Mary – who can't believe her eyes. The creature must be twenty feet long! Is it a giraffe? A gorilla? A crocodile? No one knows, but Mary is determined to get it out, even if it means risking life and limb.

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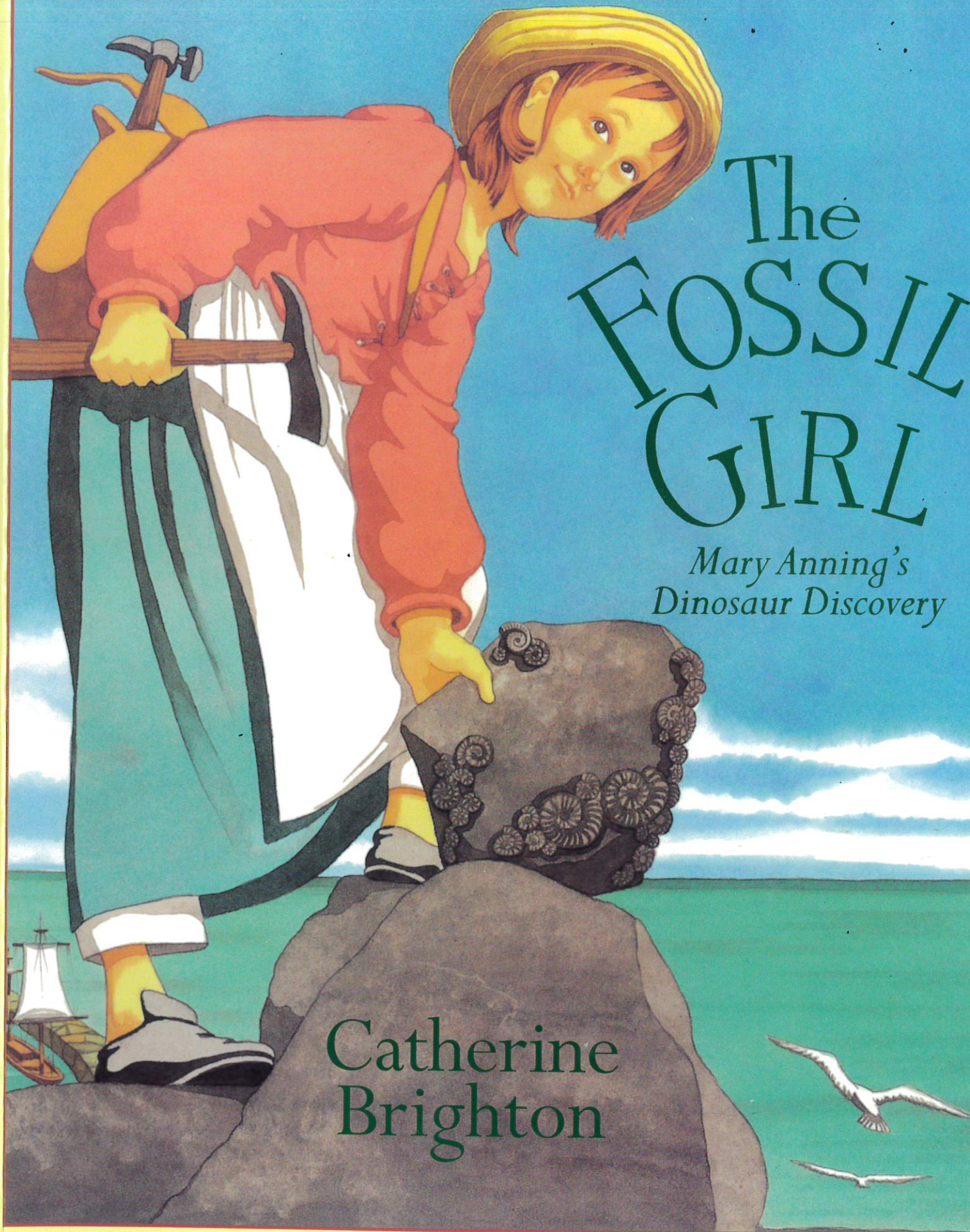
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THE FOSSIL GIRL

CATHERINE BRIGHTON

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The FOSSIL GIRL

*Mary Anning's
Dinosaur Discovery*

Catherine
Brighton

Lyme Regis, Dorset, 1810.

Mary and Joe Anning went out in all weathers to collect "curiosities" to sell in their shop. After their father died, they helped their mother keep the shop going.

Joe,
come and
look at this!

I'm
coming.

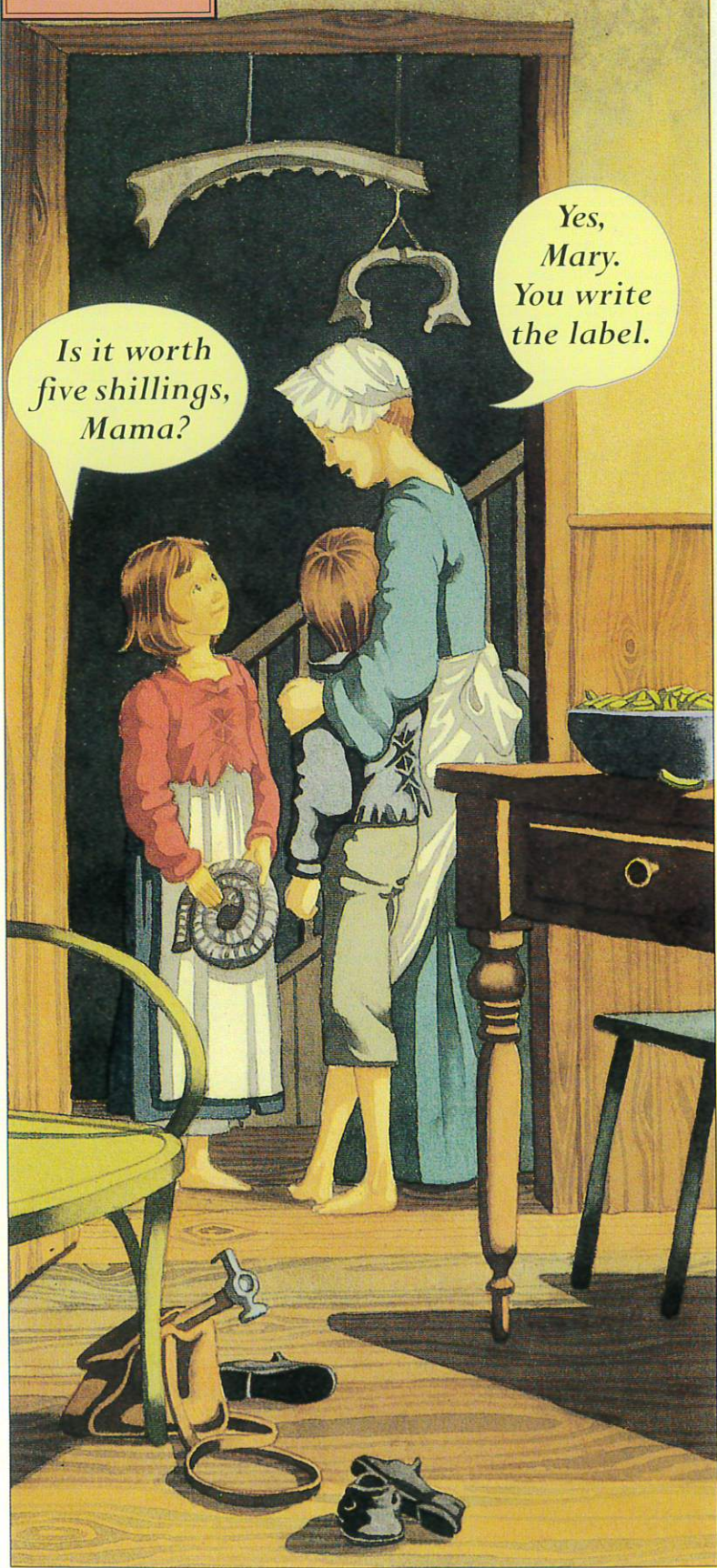
That's
big.

It's worth at least
five shillings –
Mama will be pleased.

Mama, look what
we've got!

Hurry!
There's
a storm
coming.

At home . . .



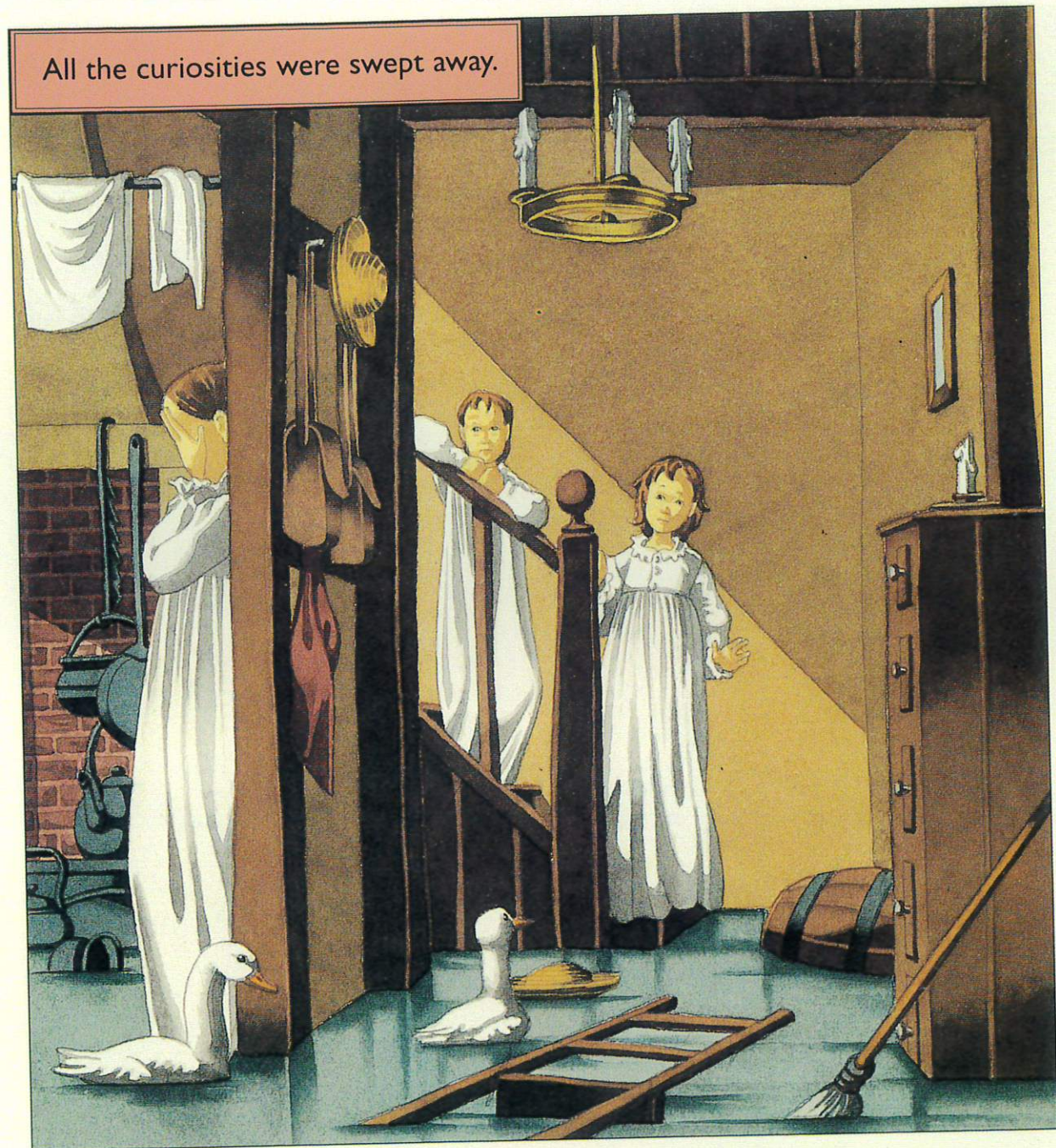
Before Mary went to bed, she watched the storm from the safety of the shop window.



And then suddenly, in the middle of the night, a huge wave burst through the windows, flooding the Annings' house.



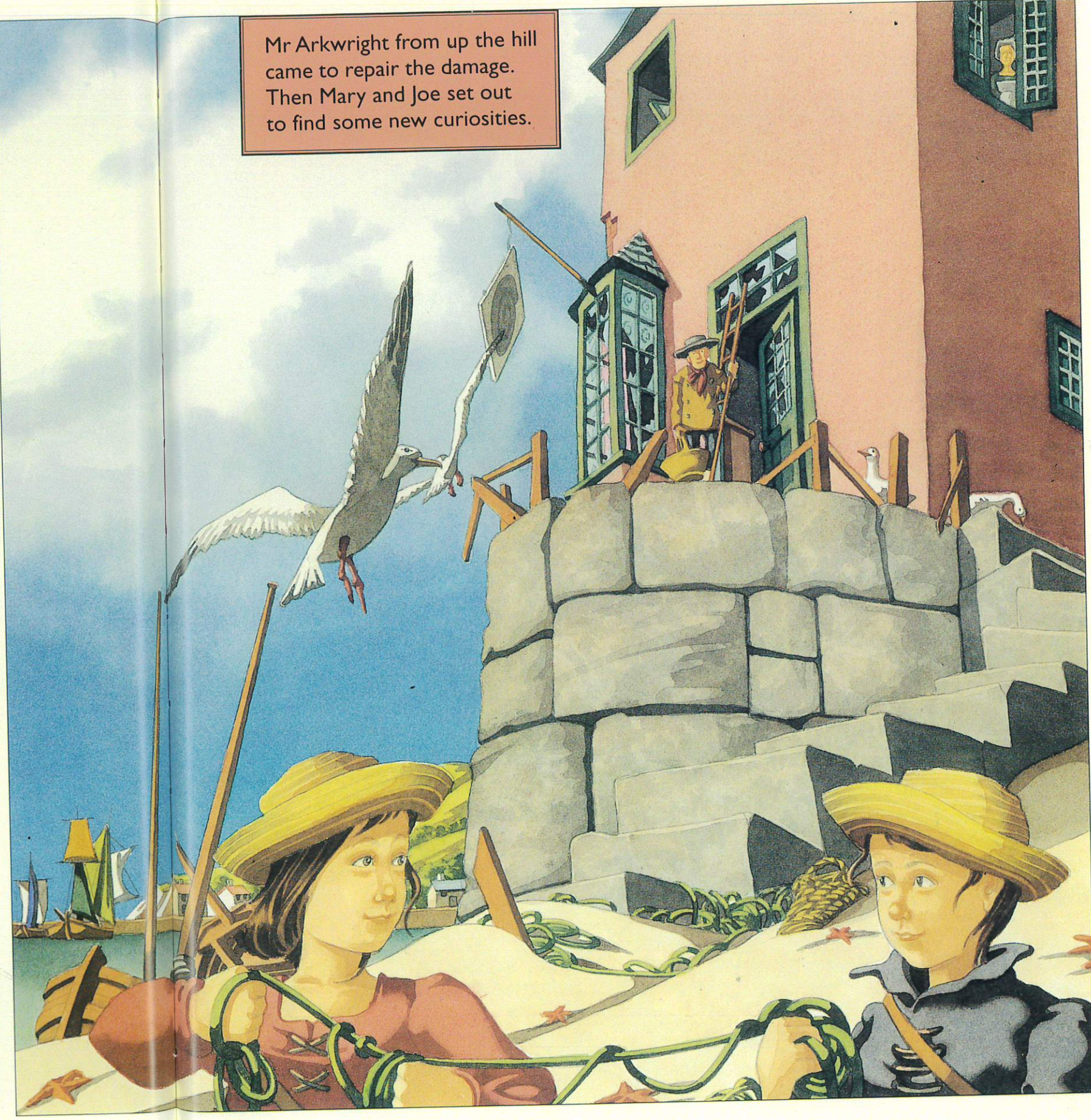
All the curiosities were swept away.



Don't worry, Mama. Joe and I will soon find more curiosities. We'll start tomorrow.



Mr Arkwright from up the hill came to repair the damage. Then Mary and Joe set out to find some new curiosities.







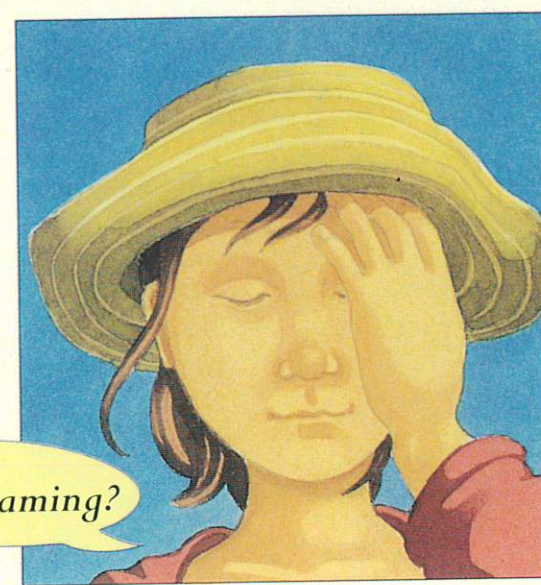
It must be the biggest curiosity we've ever seen.



If the face is this big, the body must be ...



... twenty feet long!



Am I dreaming?

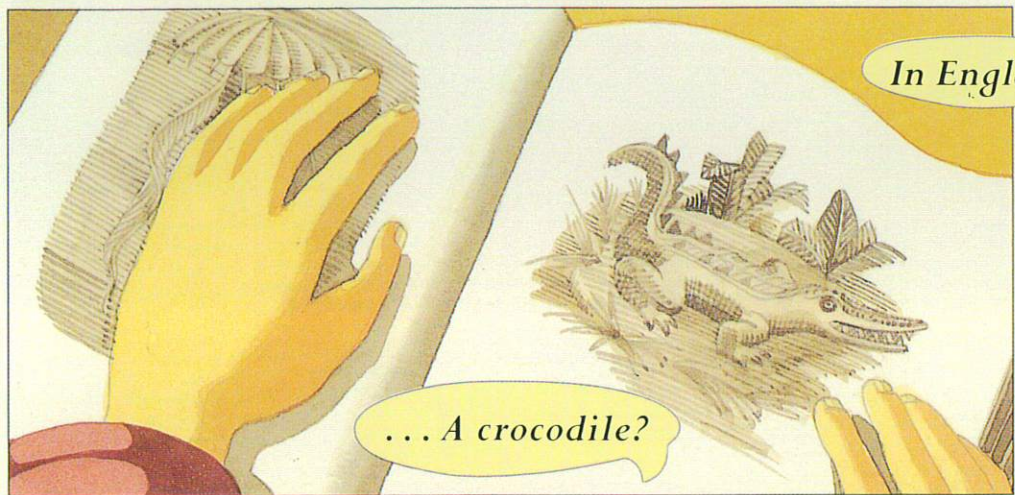
Later, Mary got down her book, *Strange Creatures of the World*.



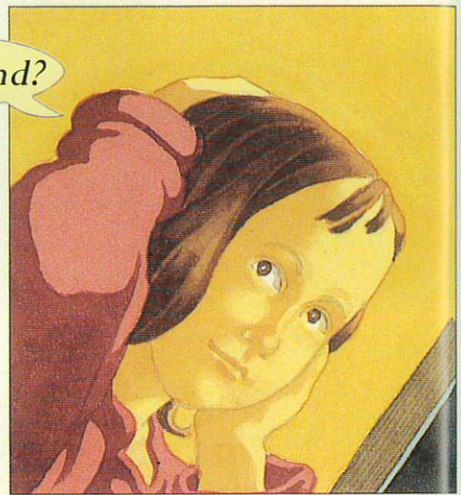
Is it a giraffe?



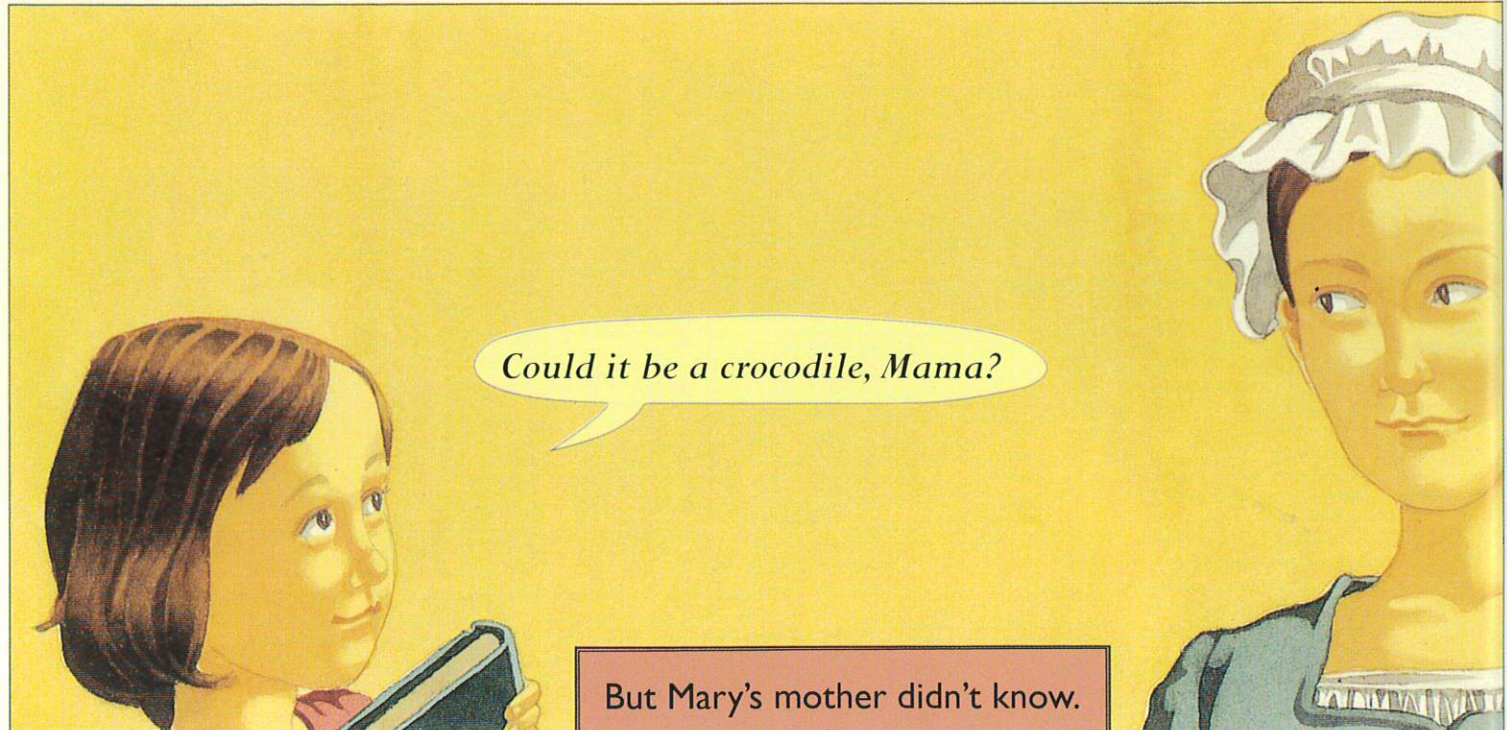
... A gorilla?



... A crocodile?



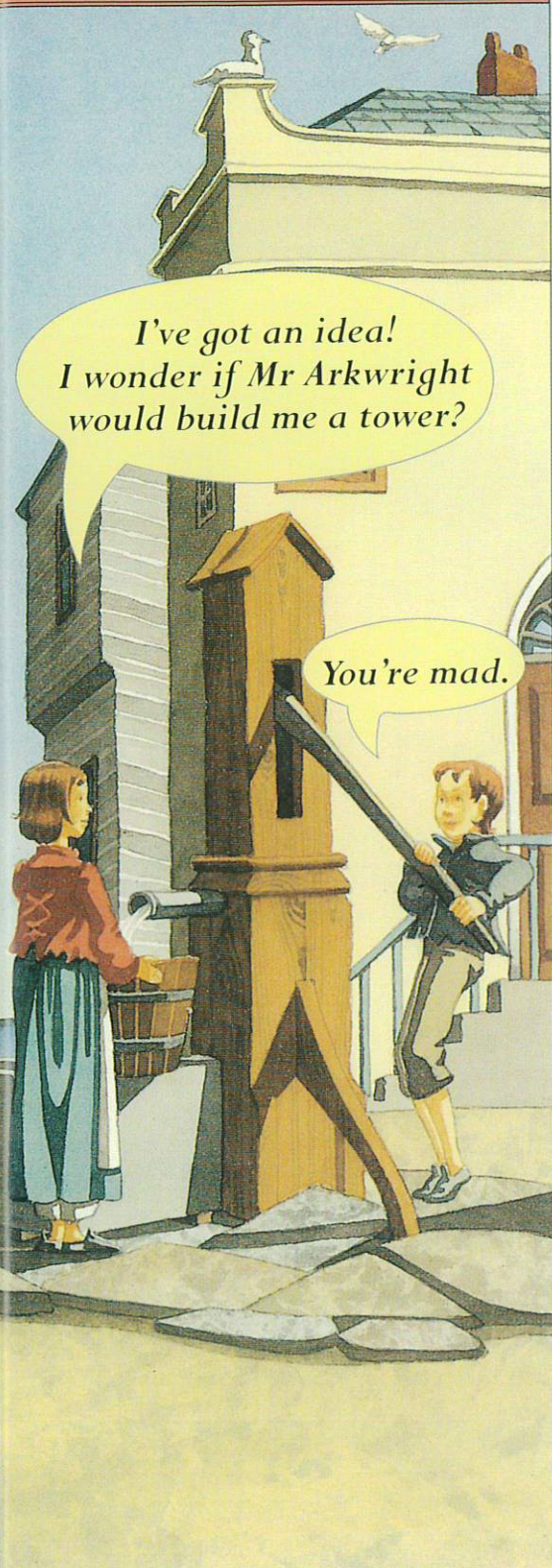
In England?



Could it be a crocodile, Mama?

But Mary's mother didn't know.

That night, Mary lay awake thinking of a way to get her crocodile down the cliff and into the shop. Next morning ...



I've got an idea! I wonder if Mr Arkwright would build me a tower?

You're mad.

Mary picked some flowers for Mr Arkwright, and asked him if he would build her a tower up the cliff. He was so intrigued, he said yes.



Thank you, thank you, thank you, Mr Arkwright!



If God wanted you to find curiosities, Mary Anning, why did he bury them?

It's a crocodile.

In England?

Is Mary really going up there?

She's brave!

Or stupid.

Rrrfff!

When the tower was ready, Mary climbed up the rickety ladder. The platform swayed under her. It was a long, long way down.



Oo-er.

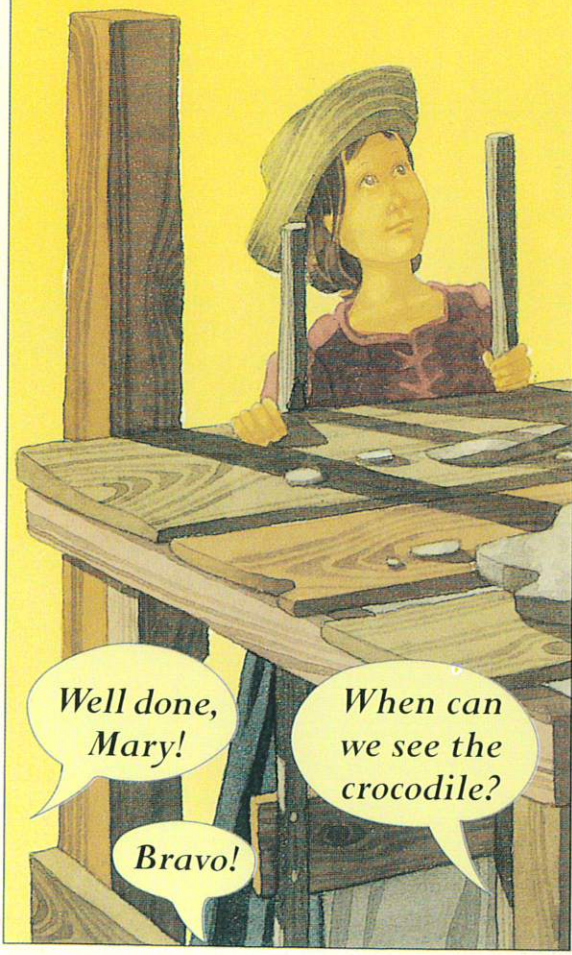
Then she turned to face the creature.





Mary lowered all the pieces down into Mr Arkwright's cart, and took one last look at the hole where the curiosity had been buried all those years.

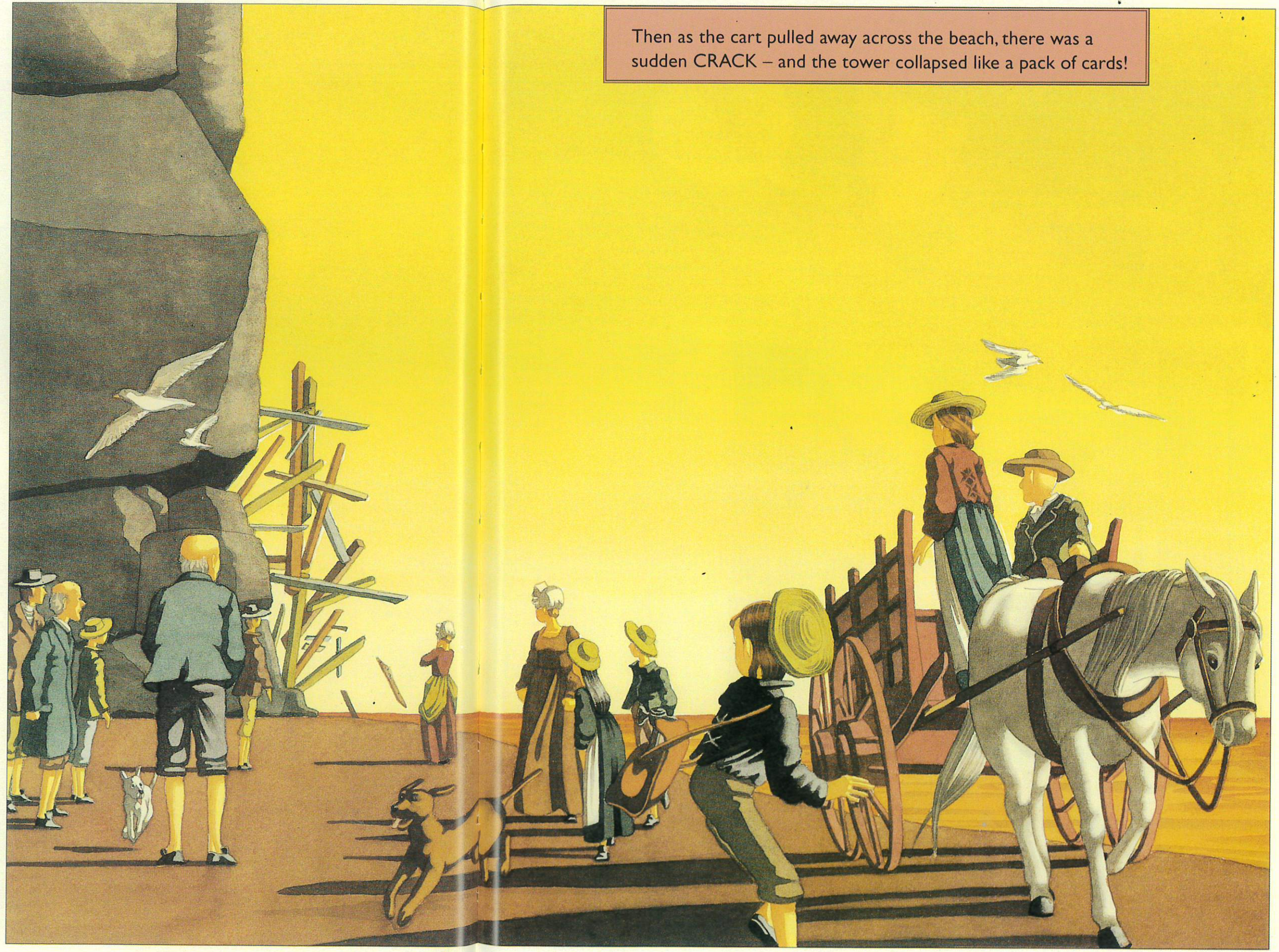
Then as the cart pulled away across the beach, there was a sudden CRACK – and the tower collapsed like a pack of cards!



Well done, Mary!

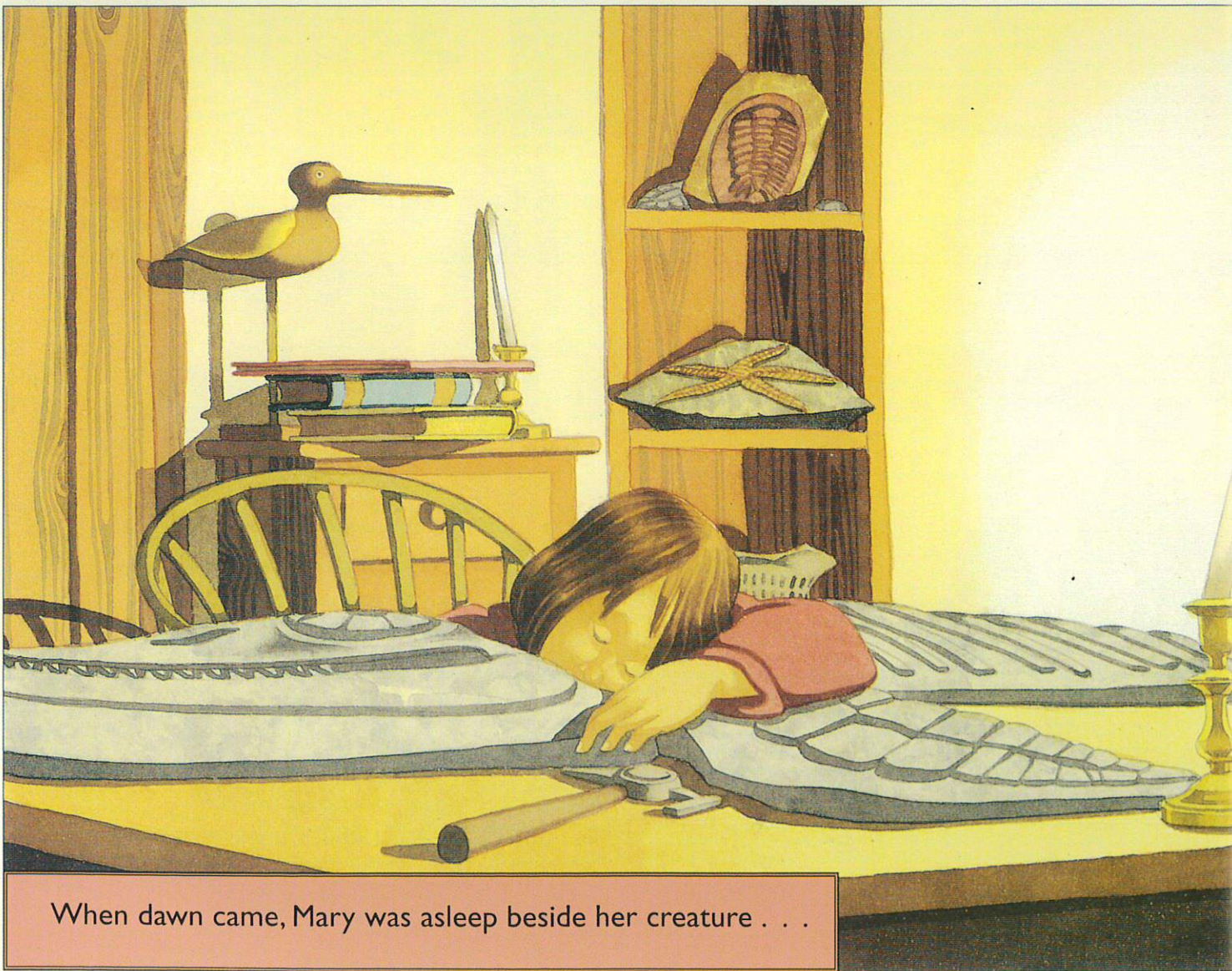
When can we see the crocodile?

Bravo!



Back in the shop, Mary examined the curiosity.

*A nostril!
So did you
breathe . . .
and spout?*



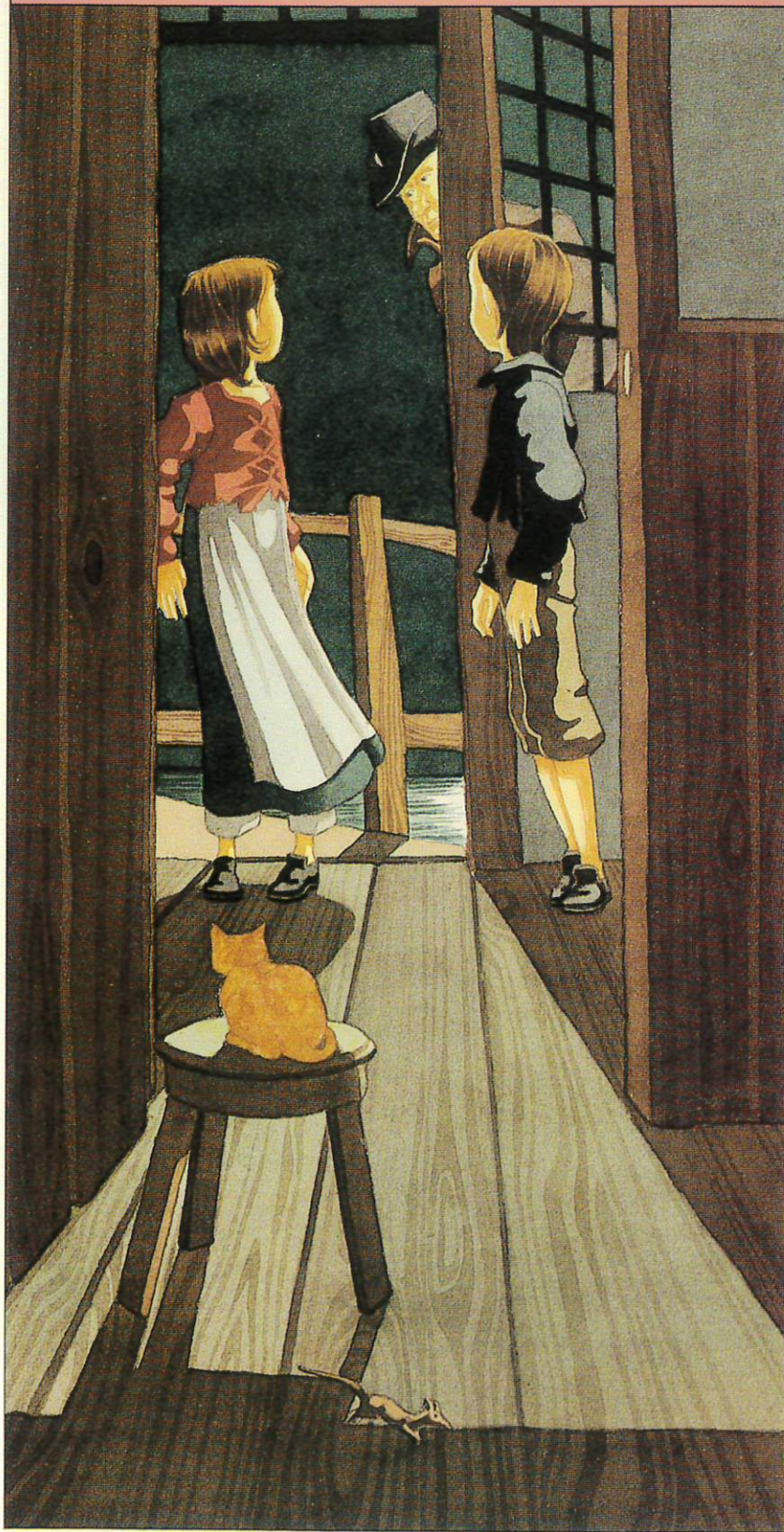
When dawn came, Mary was asleep beside her creature . . .

... while outside, a very long queue was forming.



Mary and Joe charged each person a penny to see the curiosity. Now they could afford their first hot meal for months.

Just when Mary and Joe thought the last sightseer had gone, a figure appeared at the door. It was Henry Henley, Lord of the Manor.



He was very interested to see the curiosity, and told them that the creature was not a crocodile . . .



Mary and Joe could hardly believe what he had told them.



The next day ...

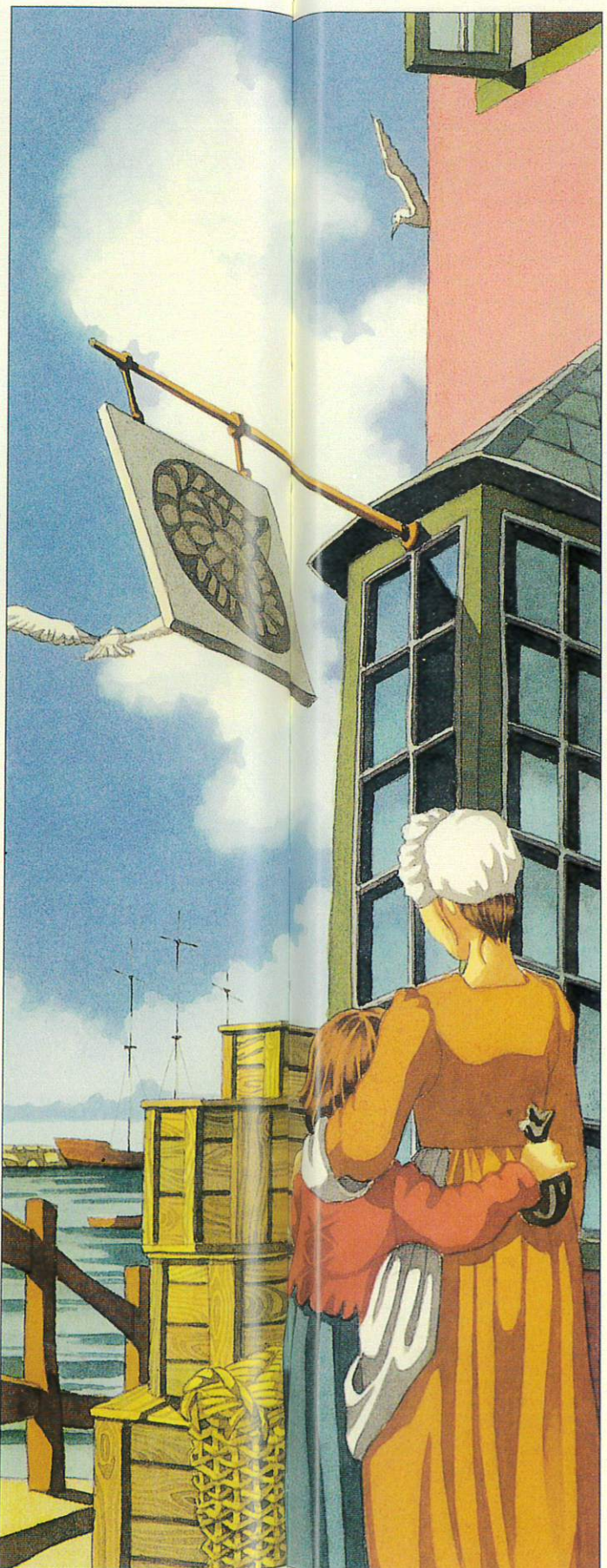


I'd like to buy your fossil. Would you accept £20?

If you please, sir, we'd like £23.

Yes, £23. It's the best one we've ever found.

So Henry Henley bought the fossil for £23 and made arrangements to transport it up to London.



Fossils – so that's what they're called! One day I'm going to be a famous fossil hunter.

Come on then, let's get started!