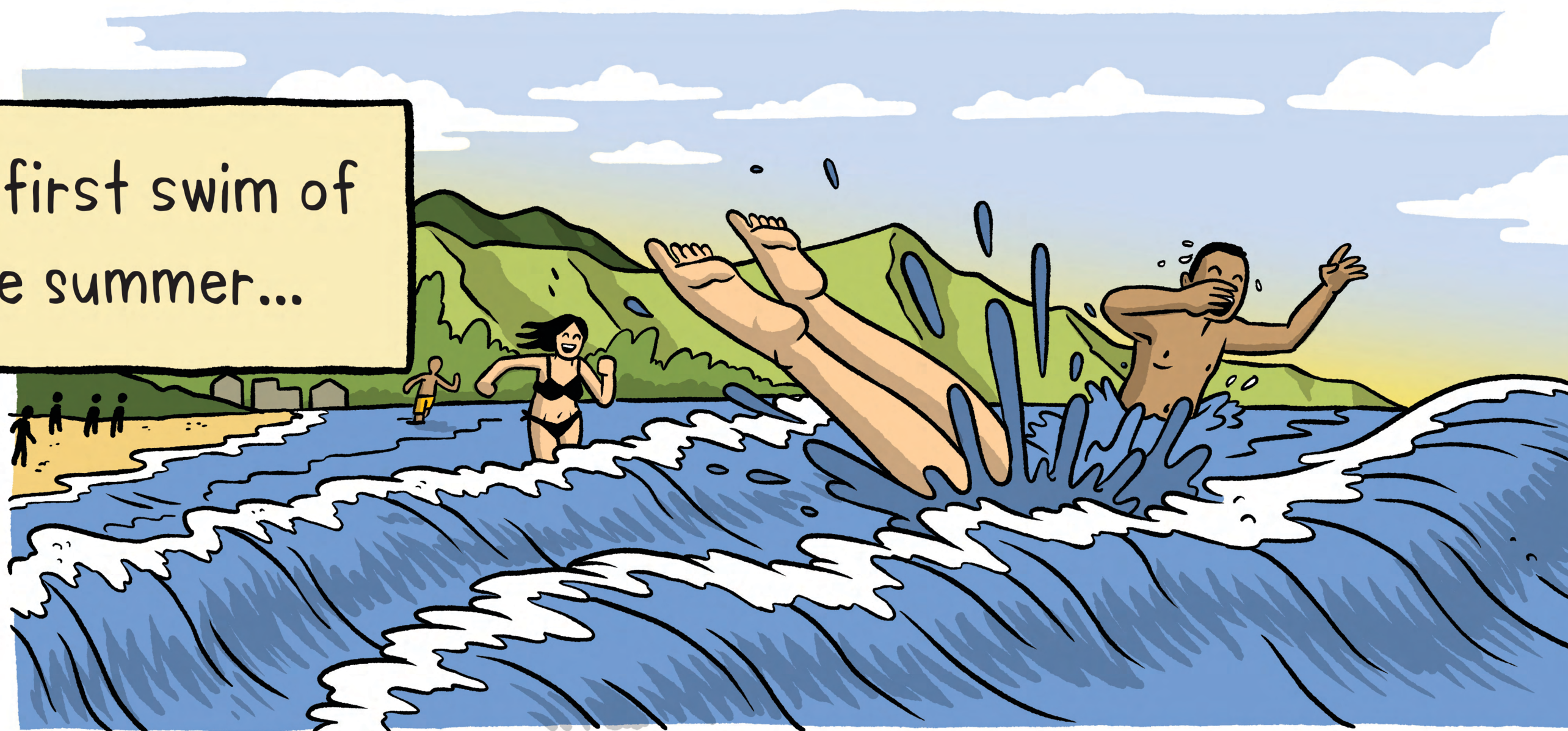
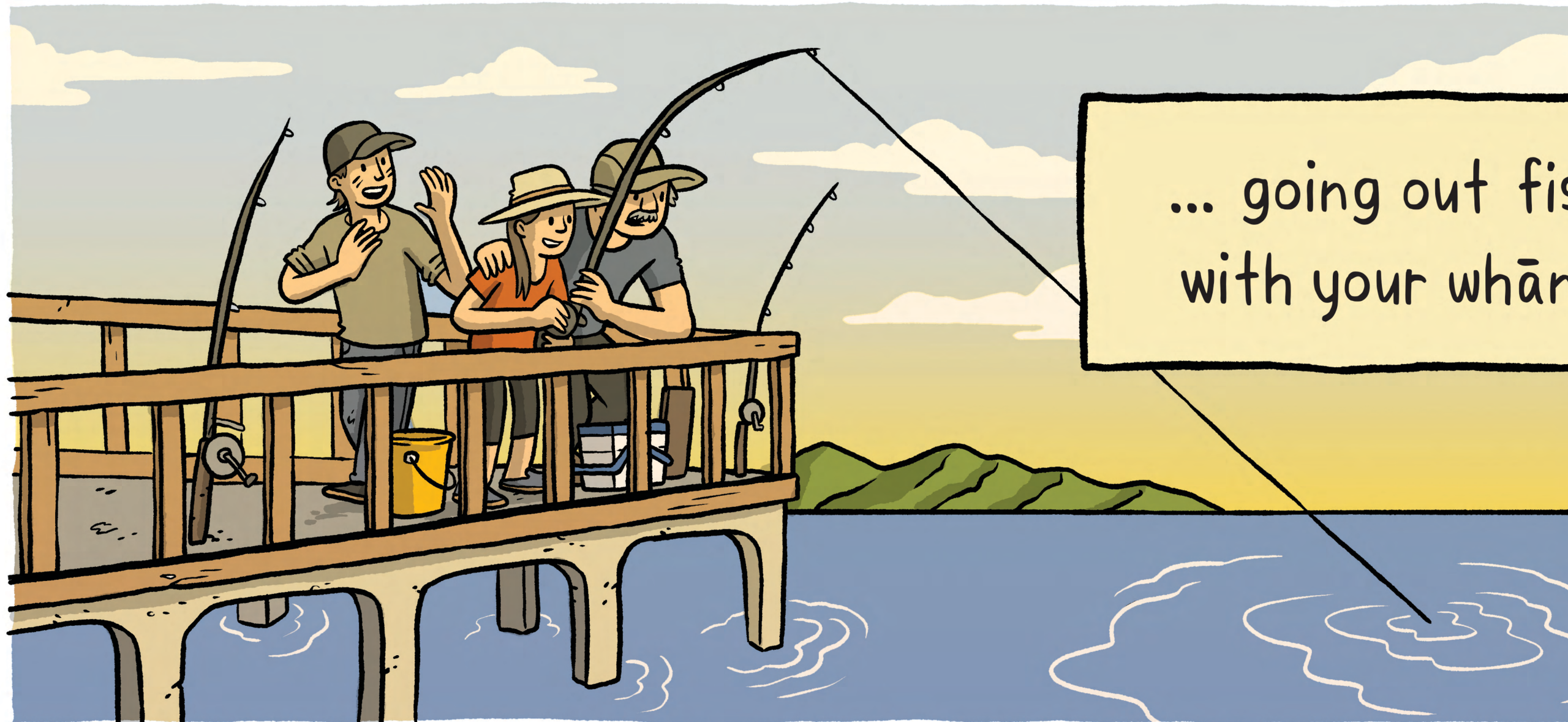


BIG BLUE AOTEAROA

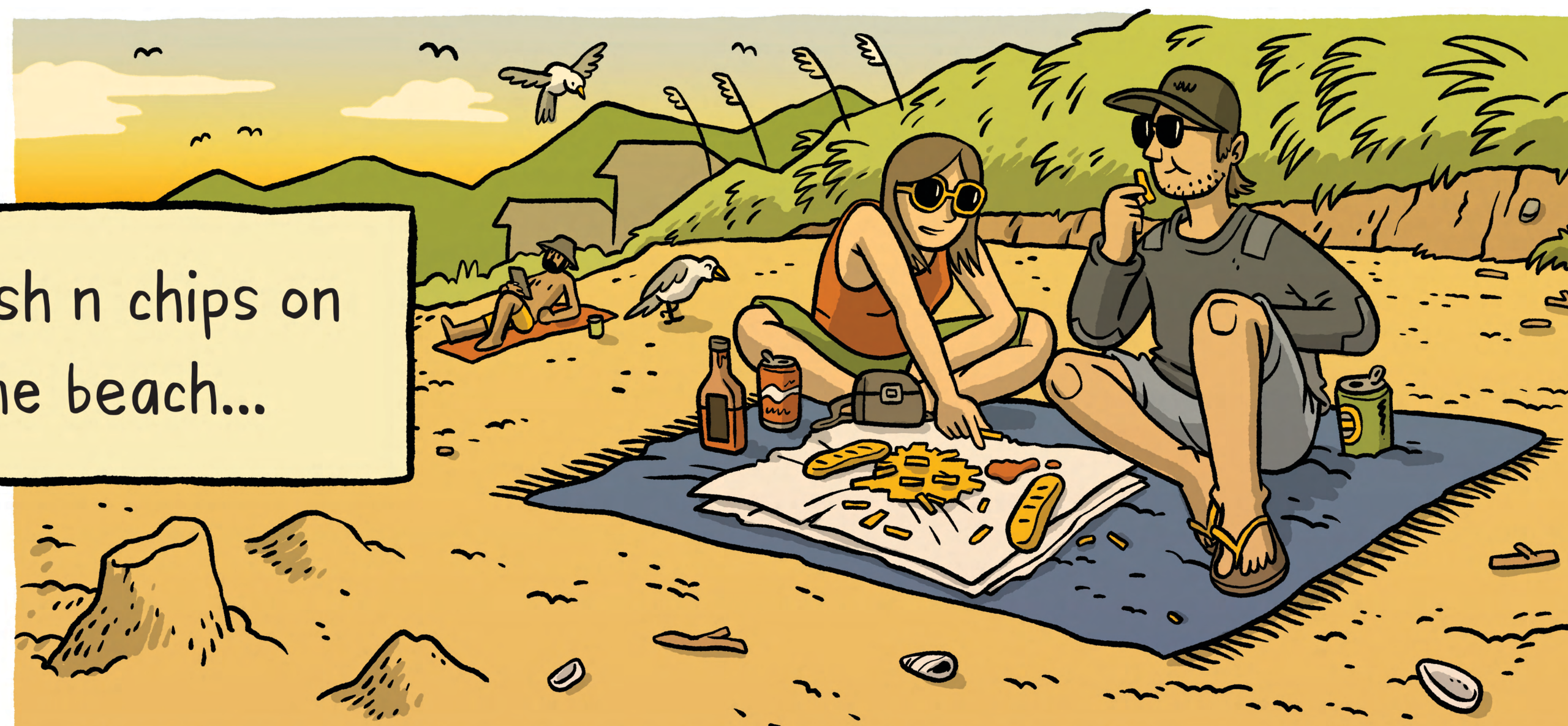
The first swim of the summer...



... going out fishing with your whānau...



... fish n chips on the beach...



the great chats as you walk along the shore at dusk.



Our ocean has always been here. It has been part of our arrival, our histories and our lives. It's fed us, soothed us, cleaned us, brought us together.



Ko te wai te ora o ngā mea katoa -
water is the life giver of all things.

But somewhere along the path,
our relationship with the sea has
gradually become disconnected.



It's become something we use,
or take from. Something we
take for granted.

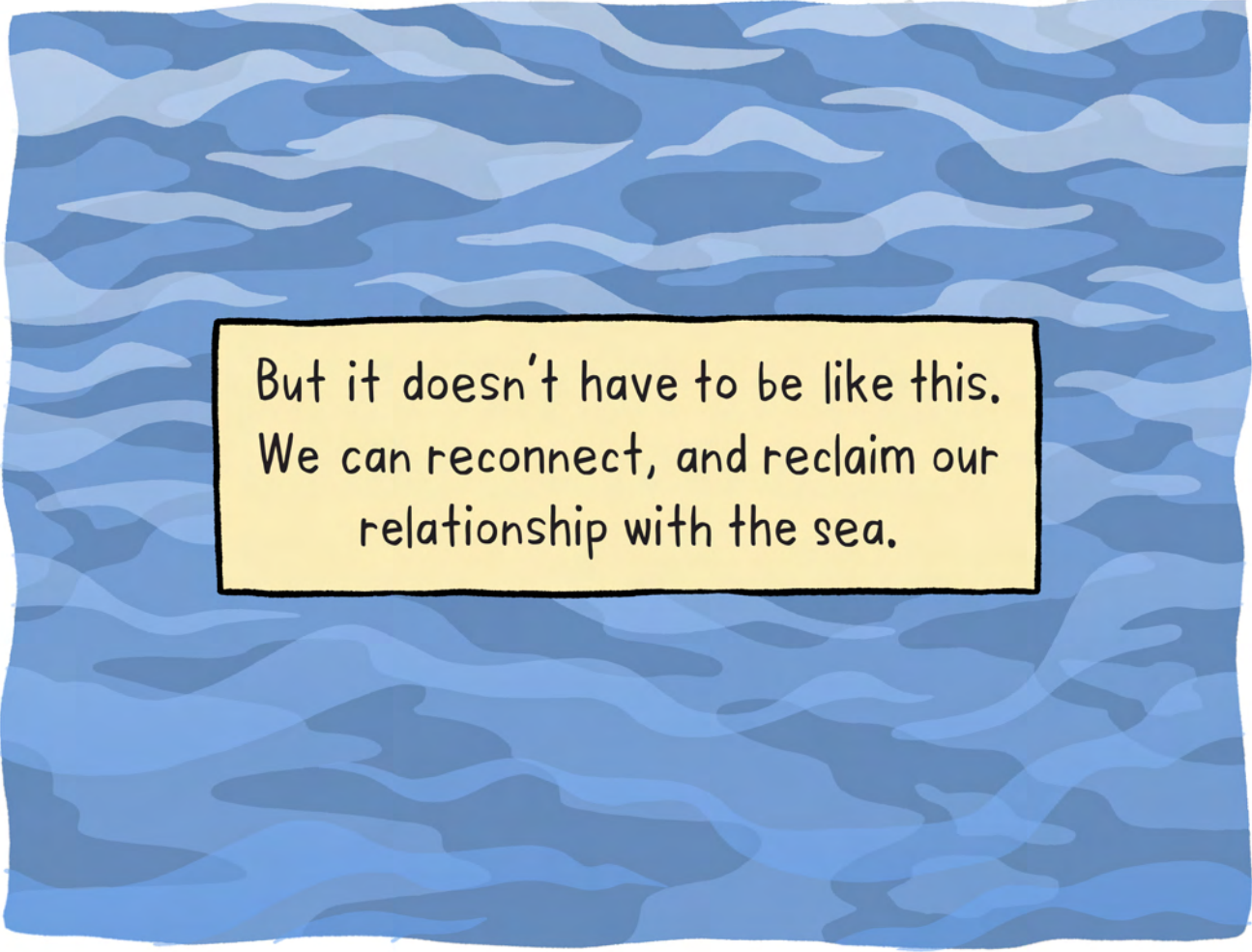
And at worst, that disconnection has led to serious damage.

We've dredged channels and altered shorelines.

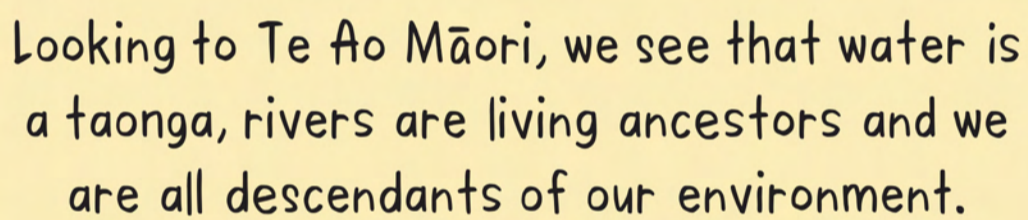
We've overfished in places and introduced invasive species in others.

What happens on the land affects the moana too - sediment and pollution runoff from industrial and residential areas contaminates our waters, while plastics float throughout it.

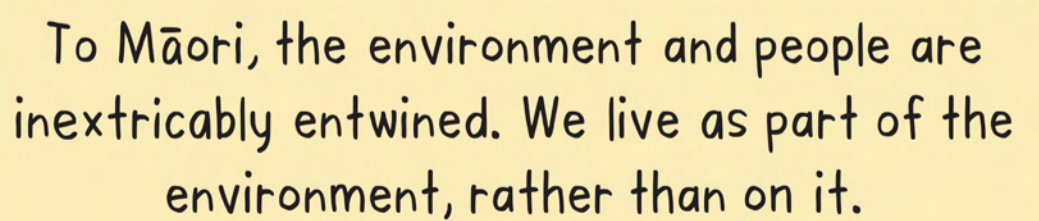




But it doesn't have to be like this.
We can reconnect, and reclaim our
relationship with the sea.

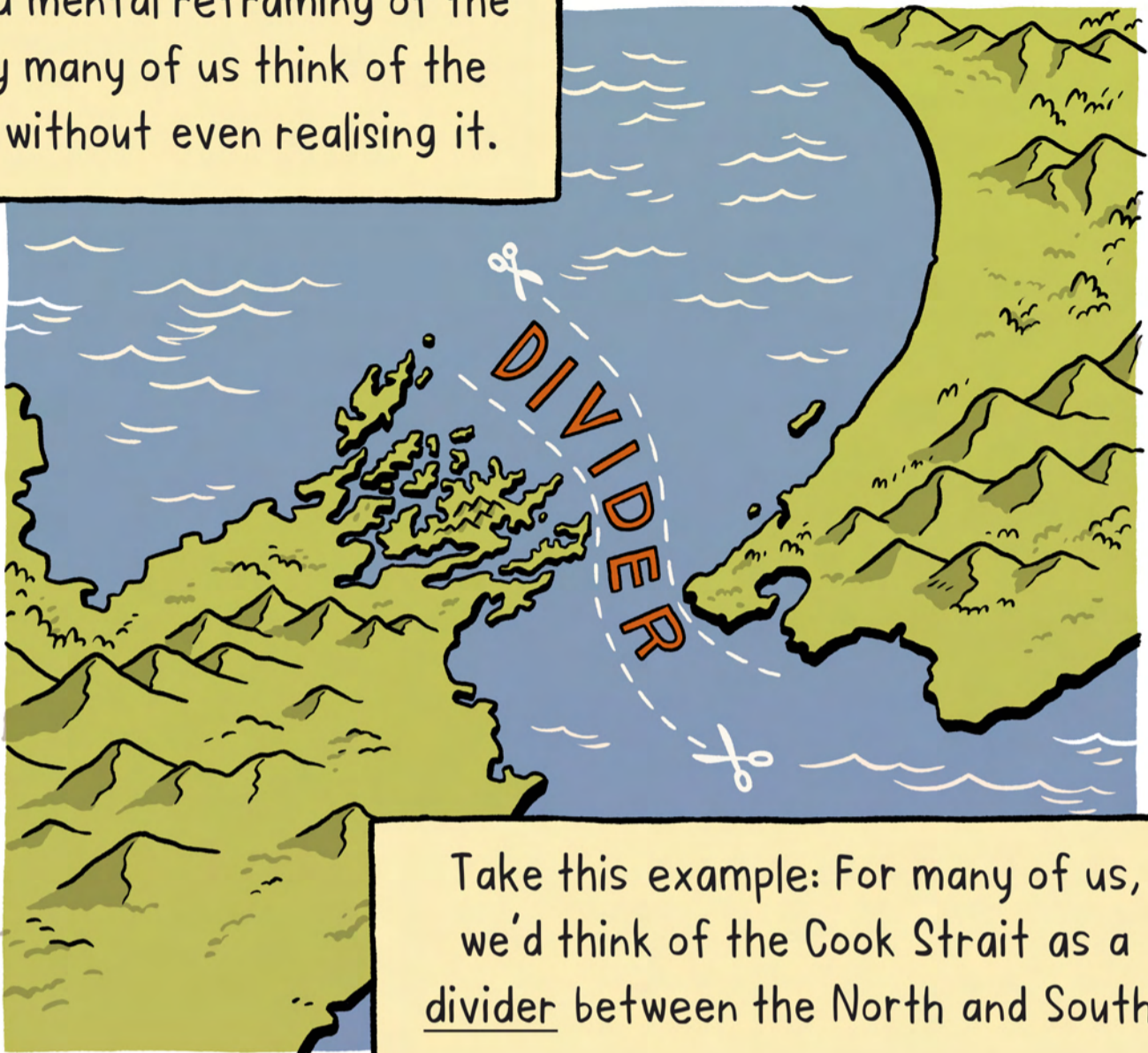


Looking to Te Ao Māori, we see that water is
a taonga, rivers are living ancestors and we
are all descendants of our environment.



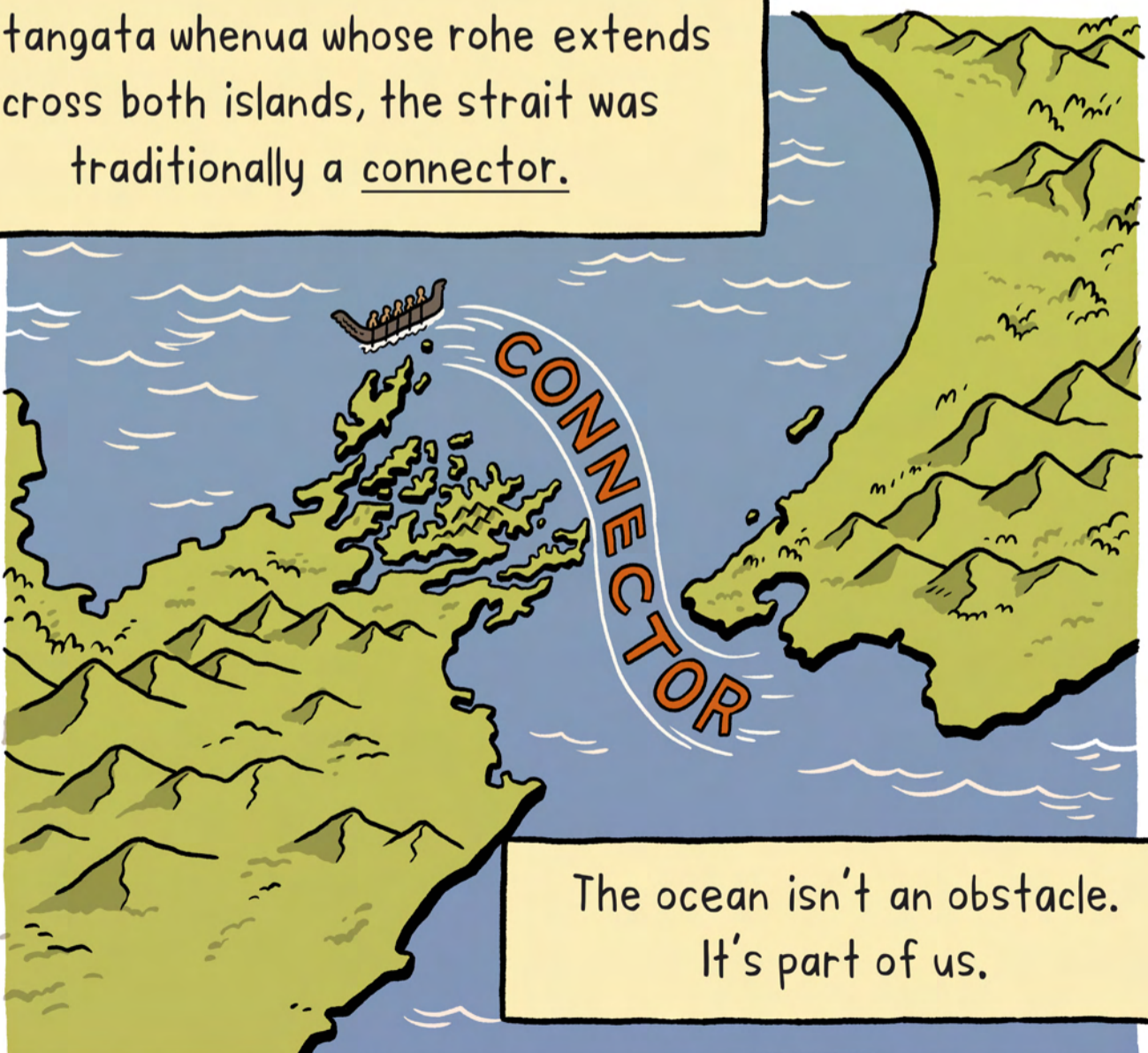
To Māori, the environment and people are
inextricably entwined. We live as part of the
environment, rather than on it.

It's a mental reframing of the way many of us think of the sea without even realising it.



Take this example: For many of us, we'd think of the Cook Strait as a divider between the North and South.

For tangata whenua whose rohe extends across both islands, the strait was traditionally a connector.



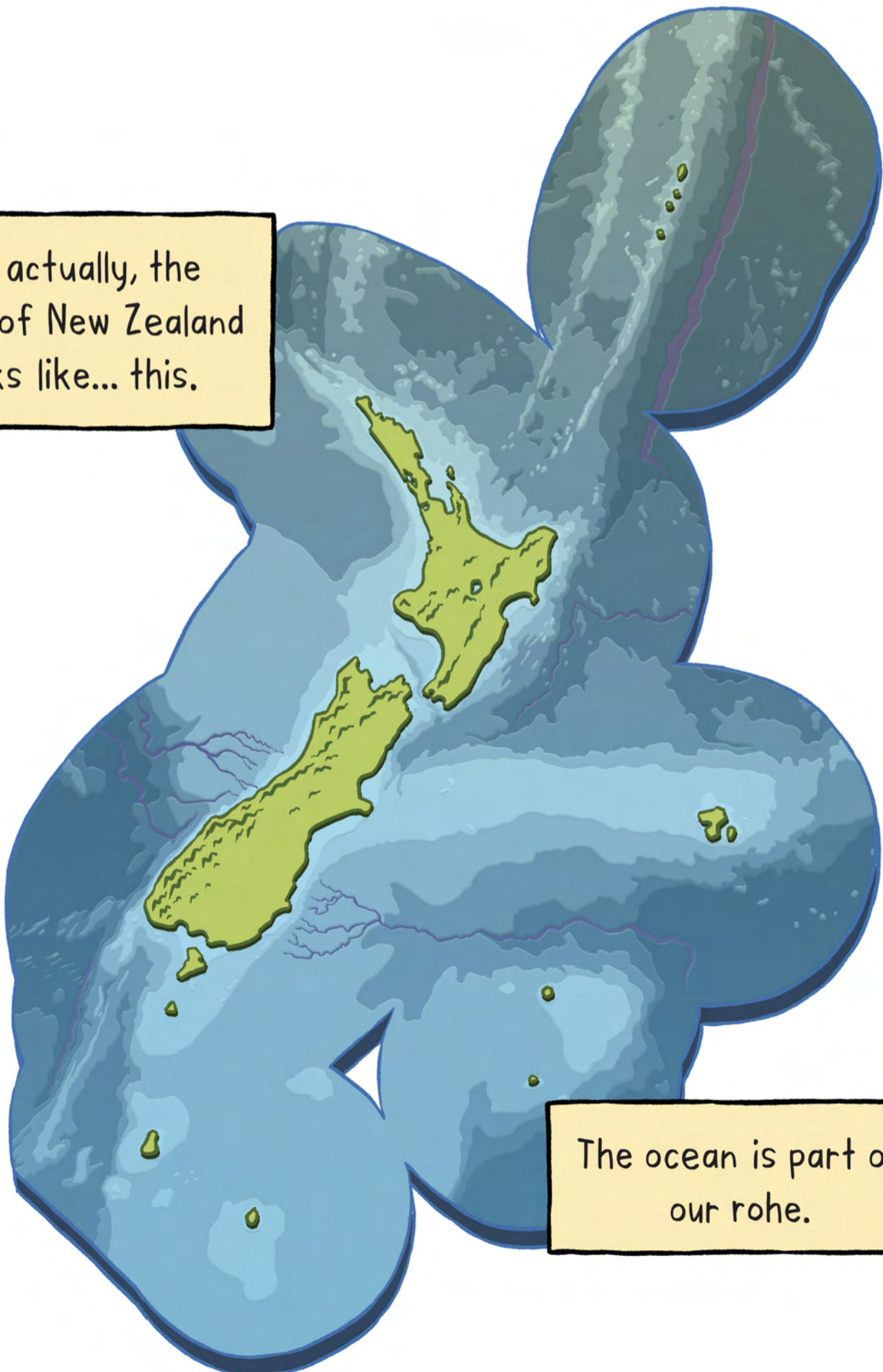
The ocean isn't an obstacle.
It's part of us.

And that's an exciting shift in thinking to make, because all of a sudden, our country gets a lot bigger and more interesting.

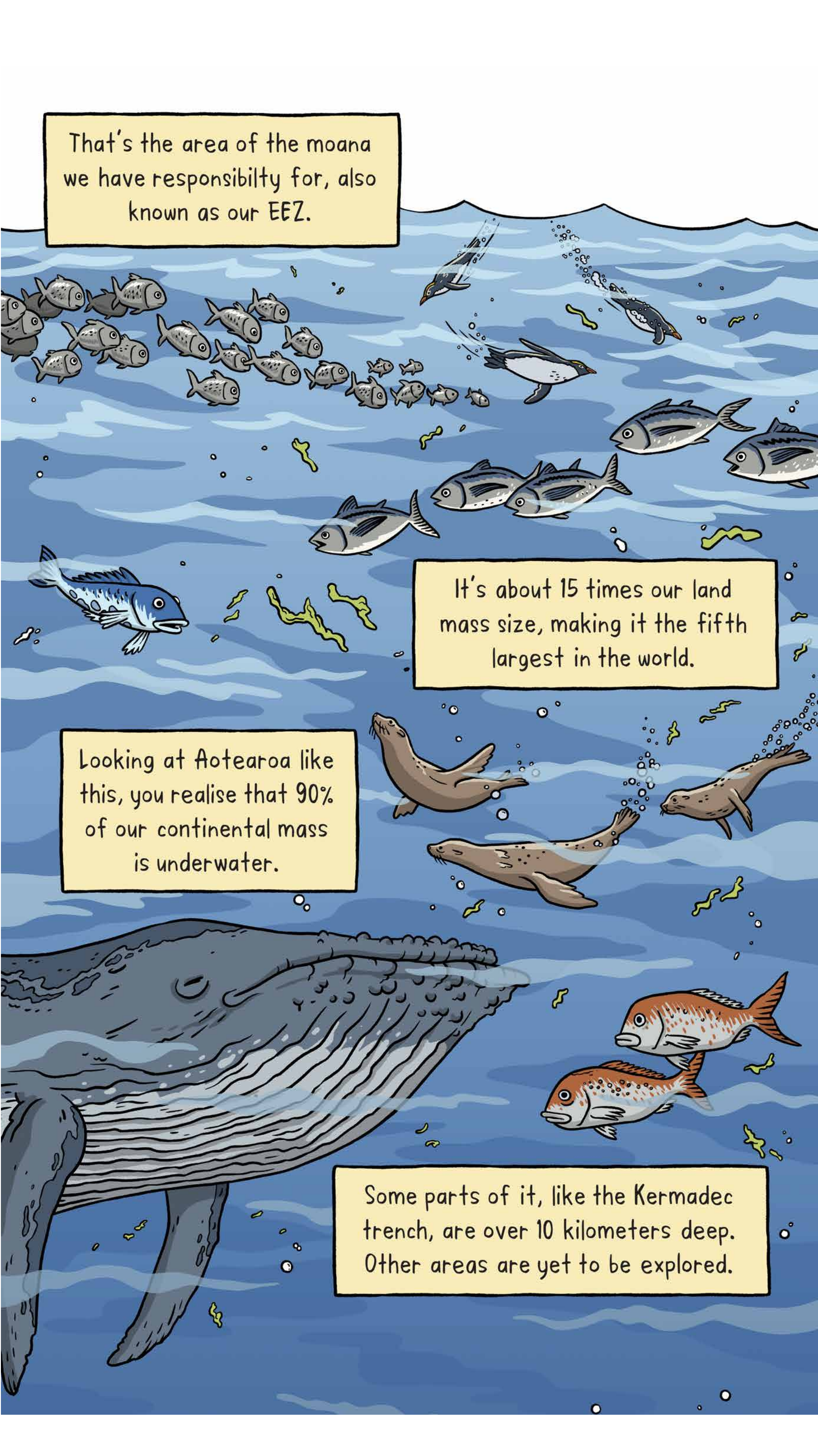


When we think of what New Zealand looks like, this is what we usually see...

But actually, the shape of New Zealand looks like... this.



The ocean is part of our rohe.

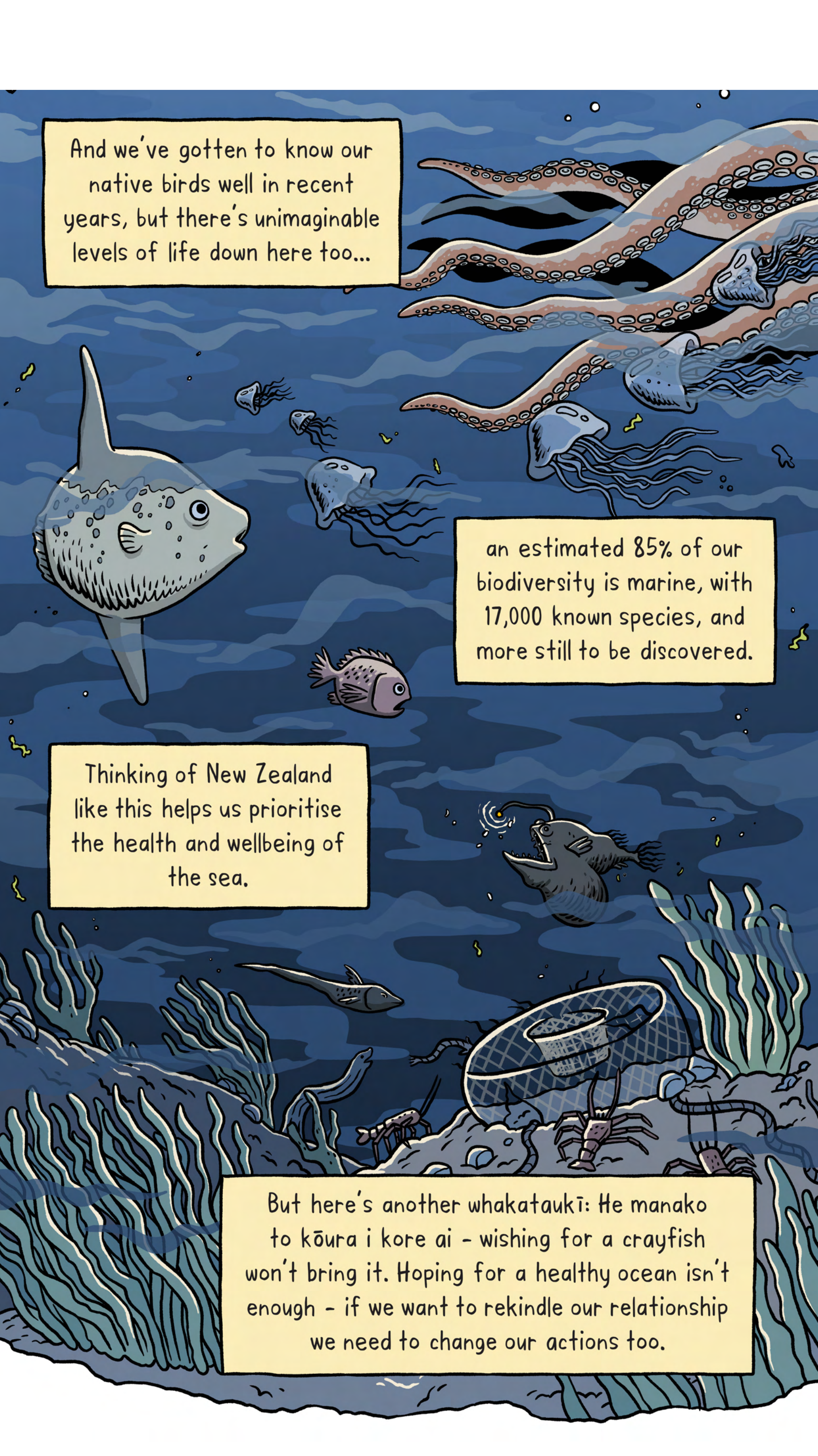


That's the area of the moana we have responsibility for, also known as our EEZ.

It's about 15 times our land mass size, making it the fifth largest in the world.

Looking at Aotearoa like this, you realise that 90% of our continental mass is underwater.

Some parts of it, like the Kermadec trench, are over 10 kilometers deep. Other areas are yet to be explored.



And we've gotten to know our native birds well in recent years, but there's unimaginable levels of life down here too...

an estimated 85% of our biodiversity is marine, with 17,000 known species, and more still to be discovered.

Thinking of New Zealand like this helps us prioritise the health and wellbeing of the sea.

But here's another whakataukī: He manako to kōura i kore ai - wishing for a crayfish won't bring it. Hoping for a healthy ocean isn't enough - if we want to rekindle our relationship we need to change our actions too.

That could be as hands on as supporting local organisations to help restore the marine environment...

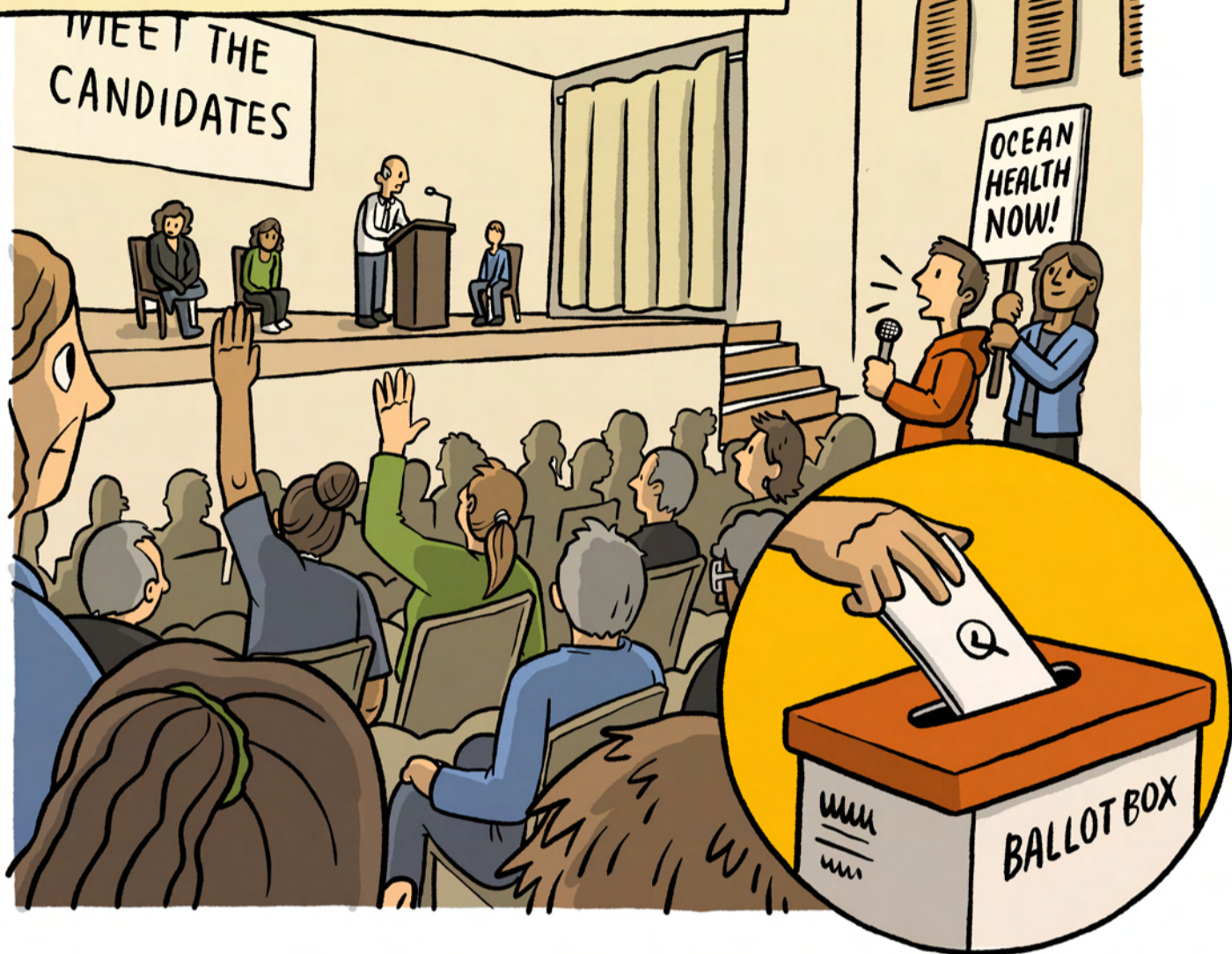


or as simple as making good choices with the companies we buy from, or by choosing sustainable tourism activities.

On a personal level we can be aware of any substances we're putting into the water.



At both a local and national level, we can make it clear that ocean health policies will influence our voting decisions.



And on a business and government level we can shift to a 'blue economy' approach, which focuses on doing business while doing good for the moana, communities and Aotearoa.



Toitū te marae a Tāne, Toitū te marae a
Tangaroa, Toitū te iwi. If the land is well
and the sea is well, the people will thrive.



Because it's all connected. It's the same
ocean that feeds us and soothes us and
brings us together. It's us.

Created in partnership with The Spinoff and the
Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge

To find out more, visit sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz

Big Blue Aotearoa

Developed in partnership with Toby Morris and The Spinoff, this comic is designed to help change the way New Zealanders view our moana, in a bid to encourage us to protect and advocate for it.



Scan the QR code with your phone to view and share Big Blue Aotearoa online.