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extracts from

An Illustrated Treasury of Scottish Mythical Creatures

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Published by

Floris Books

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This book is for

Seán Harris Houston – T.B.
Lesley & Malcolm – K.L.

First published in 2015 by Floris Books
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Floris Books, 15 Harrison Gardens, Edinburgh
www.florisbooks.co.uk

The publisher acknowledges subsidy from Creative Scotland
towards the publication of this volume

British Library CIP data available
ISBN 978–178250–195–4
Printed in China

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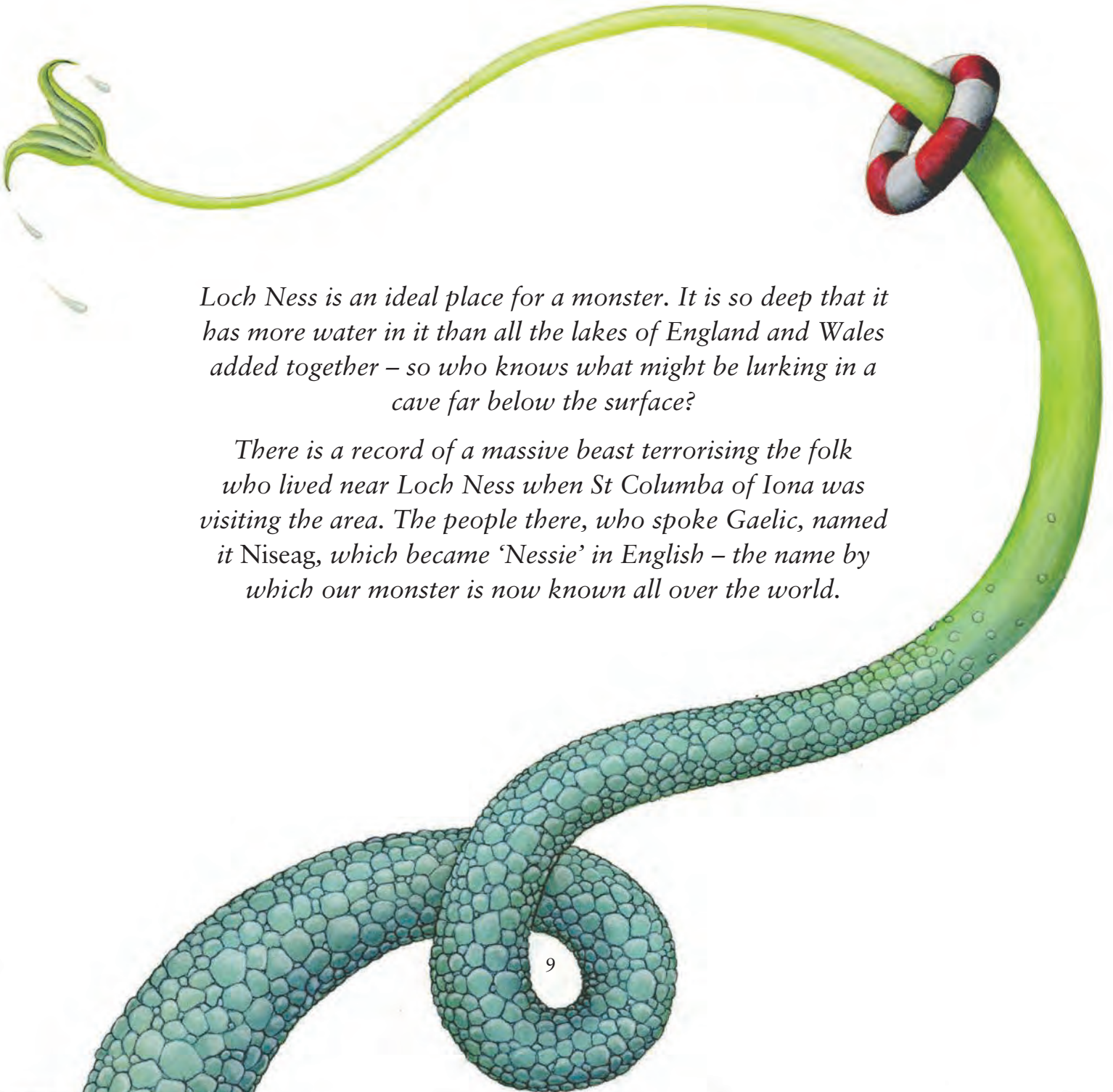
deep dark waters of Loch Ness

something he had never seen before

The wind strengthened

hail beat in his face

The Monster of Loch Ness



Loch Ness is an ideal place for a monster. It is so deep that it has more water in it than all the lakes of England and Wales added together – so who knows what might be lurking in a cave far below the surface?

There is a record of a massive beast terrorising the folk who lived near Loch Ness when St Columba of Iona was visiting the area. The people there, who spoke Gaelic, named it Niseag, *which became 'Nessie' in English – the name by which our monster is now known all over the world.*

McKenzie resolved not to mention the monster to anyone. Folk did gossip about seeing monsters but few believed these stories. If he told of what he had seen, people might laugh at him. Or, if they thought his tale was true, they might hunt the monster – out of fear or for food. They definitely wouldn't be happy with what he was doing, which was dropping some fish into the water whenever he passed that spot in the loch.

Later that same winter, McKenzie was on his route to Inverness one evening when a storm blew up. The wind strengthened, and hail beat in his face. He had no passengers on board, and he was glad of that, for the boat was heaving as the heavy current dragged it along. Using all his strength McKenzie grasped the tiller to guide his boat. If he didn't deliver his cargo of barrels and boxes to Inverness he would not be paid. The waves grew stronger and pounded against the hull as he tried to hold his boat on a steady course. Then a freakish gust struck. The boat spun out of control, and with a horrible grinding tearing noise, the rudder broke off!



Now there was no means of steering. McKenzie was at the mercy of the wind and the waves. His boat was pulled this way and that by the force of the storm. The boxes and barrels began to roll and slide around. McKenzie grabbed a box and hauled it back into the centre of the deck. But it was no good. As soon as he put one box in place, another slipped loose. Water was swilling into the boat. Within minutes it would be swamped. The boat would tip over and McKenzie would end up in the freezing cold waters of the loch.

Suddenly there was a hard dunt at the stern and the whole boat shuddered.

"Ah, no!" McKenzie cried. "I have hit a rock!"

He peered over the side. A round grey lump was sticking out of the water. McKenzie groaned. If the rock had torn a hole below the waterline his boat would sink in seconds. In the gloom he saw the grey lump rise up from the waves, and two eyes looked into his. It was not a rock. It was the monster!



smoke curled from the hut

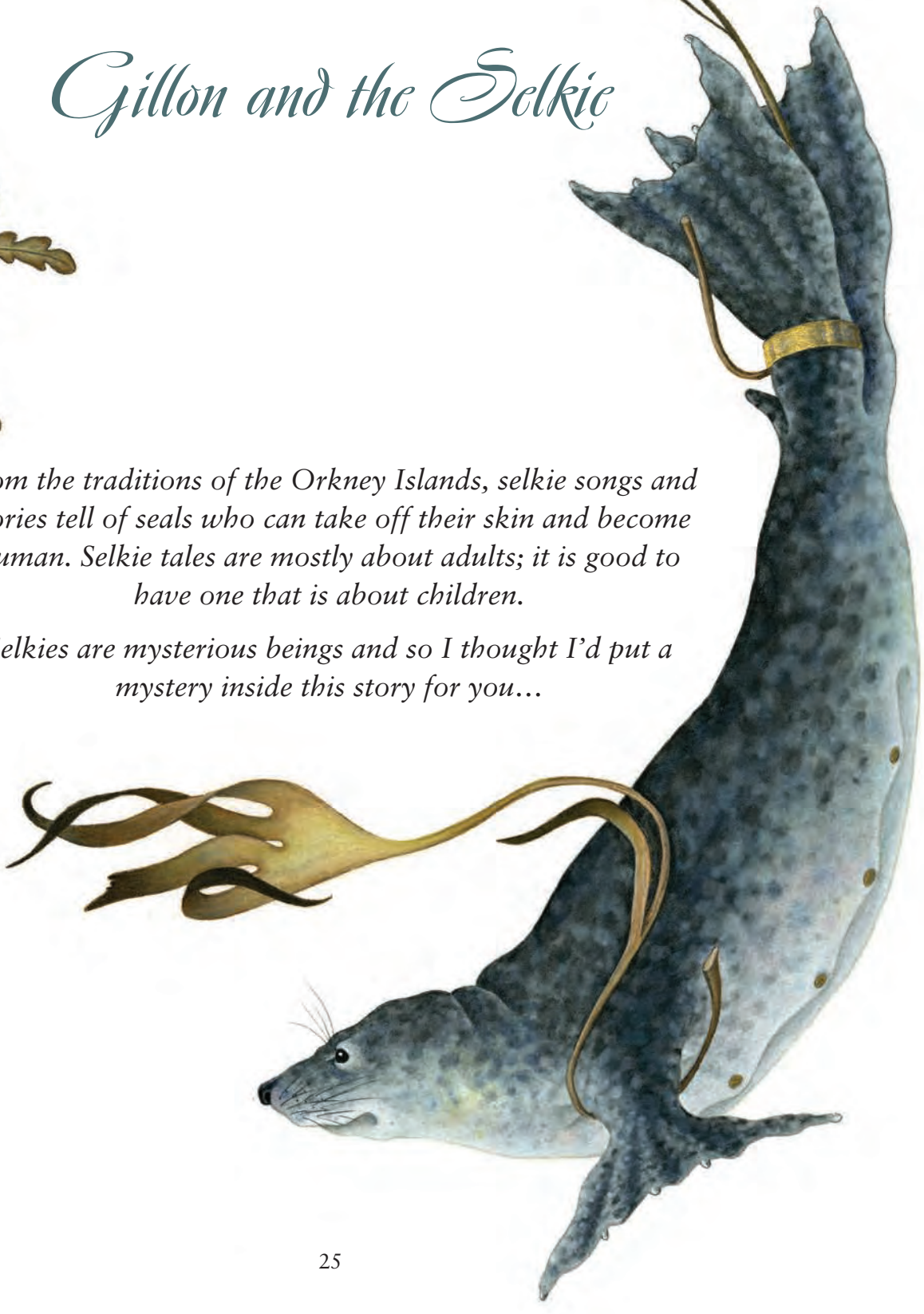
singing and splashing among the waves

when the moon rises but the sun hardly sets

came ashore and danced

soft breezes caused the waves to come lap, lap, lapping on the shore

Gillon and the Selkie



From the traditions of the Orkney Islands, selkie songs and stories tell of seals who can take off their skin and become human. Selkie tales are mostly about adults; it is good to have one that is about children.

Selkies are mysterious beings and so I thought I'd put a mystery inside this story for you…



Gillon lived with his mummy and daddy

on the sandy shores of the Orkney Islands.

His daddy was a fisherman, and Gillon was happy to help him bait the fishing lines and mend the nets. His mummy cooked the meals, cleaned the cottage and did the washing, and Gillon was happy to help her do this too.

He never went to bed hungry as there was always plenty of fish to eat: herring rolled in oatmeal or cod in parsley sauce; hake and haddock, mullet and mackerel, and teeny-tiny toasted sprats. They ate boiled fish and baked fish, frittered fish and cakes of fish, steamed fish and smoked fish, pan-fried and poached fish. And when they grew tired of eating fish, they would trade some of their catch for flour and eggs, and butter and sugar; then Gillon's mummy would make clootie dumplings and scones, and all manner of good things to eat.

Gillon loved living by the sea. In winter, fierce gales came roaring down from the cold north to send breakers crashing over the rocks. In summer, soft breezes caused the waves to come lap, lap, lapping on the shore. No matter what the weather did, Gillon liked to watch the water and listen to the sounds it made. He was a contented boy.



revenge is going to taste delicious

she honked loudly and flapped her wings

chunk of homemade cheese shone in the sun

Some hae meat and canna eat

a flurry of feathers

The Saving Grace

Here is Mr Fox up to his old tricks in a story based on the traditional tale 'The Fox and the Goose', but with a twist at the end…





There was once a girl called Kirsty MacLeod.

She was just an ordinary girl, who lived in an ordinary house with ordinary parents. Kirsty had long red hair and every morning Kirsty's father would brush out Kirsty's long red hair and Kirsty's mother would pleat it into one single plait that hung down her back.

One of Kirsty's tasks on the farm where they lived was to feed and water Griselda, the family goose. It was very important that Kirsty looked after the goose, because Griselda was better than a watchdog on the farm. If she sensed danger she honked loudly and flapped her wings. And anytime she saw the wily fox prowling about the henhouse or creeping up on the baby ducklings, Griselda ran at him, hissing, with her neck outstretched, to chase him away.

Kirsty loved Griselda and fed her regularly, making sure she had clean water every day. Now and then Kirsty would take the goose for a stroll along the riverbank because she knew that Griselda especially loved to drink fresh river water.