Clio and the Greek sculpture



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Illustrated by **Jorge Consuegra**

Teaching about heritage crime
Activity No.21

Clio and the Greek sculpture

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Council of Europe



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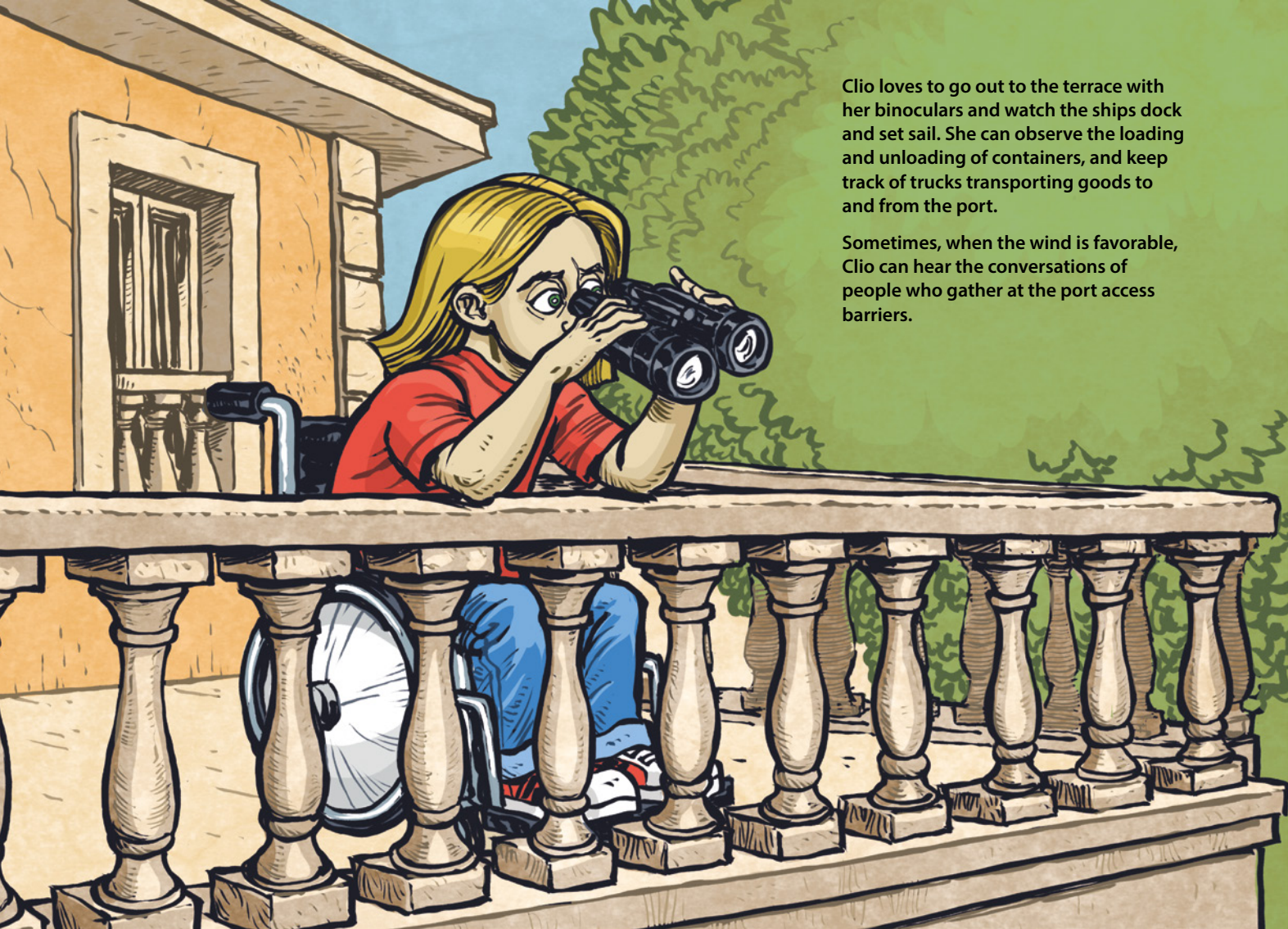
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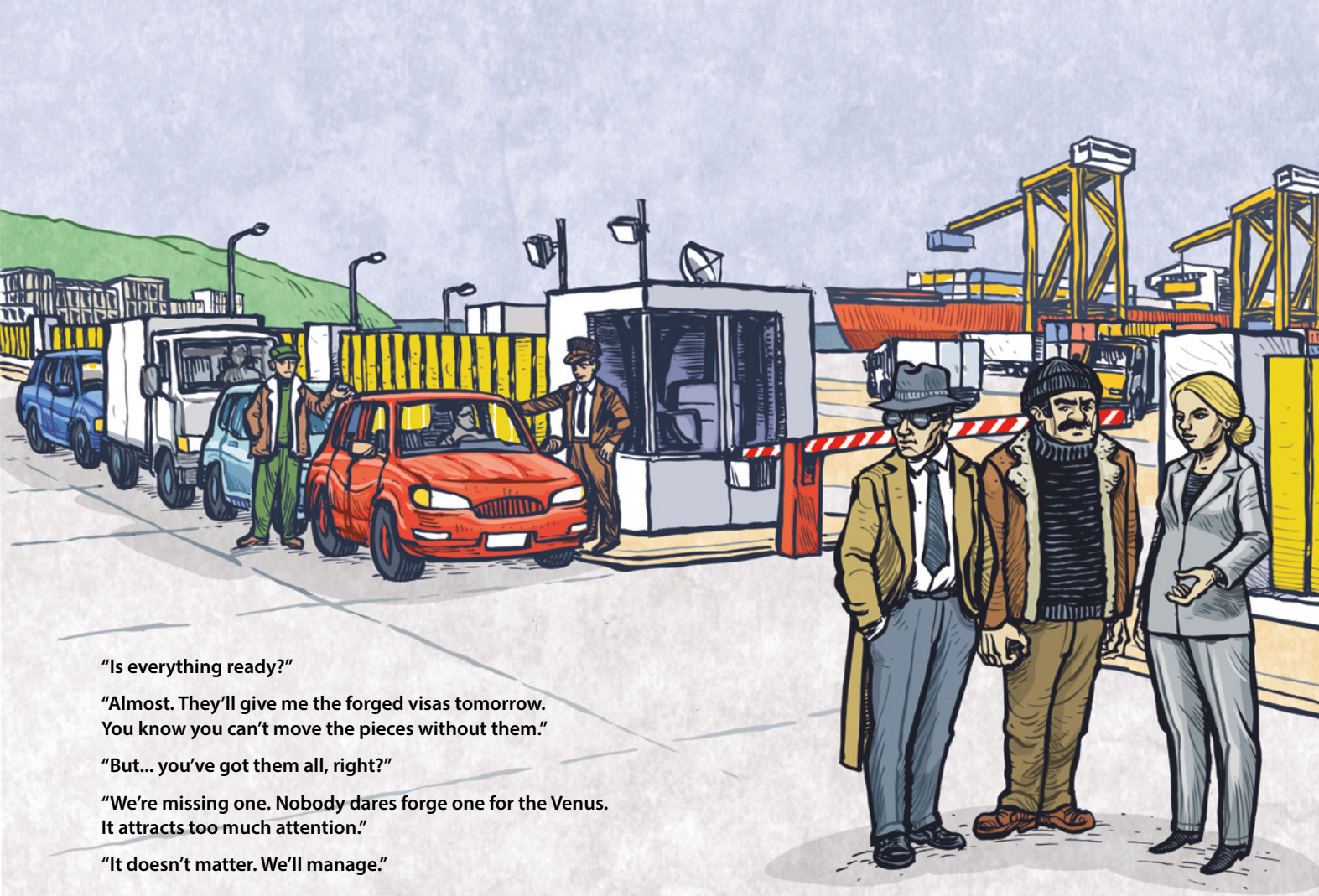
Clio is a very bright and observant girl who lives in a house with a beautiful garden near the port.

Since she cannot walk, Clio spends much of her time at home reading books about lost civilisations that she has borrowed from her grandfather Apollo, a historian and archaeologist.



Clio loves to go out to the terrace with her binoculars and watch the ships dock and set sail. She can observe the loading and unloading of containers, and keep track of trucks transporting goods to and from the port.

Sometimes, when the wind is favorable, Clio can hear the conversations of people who gather at the port access barriers.



"Is everything ready?"

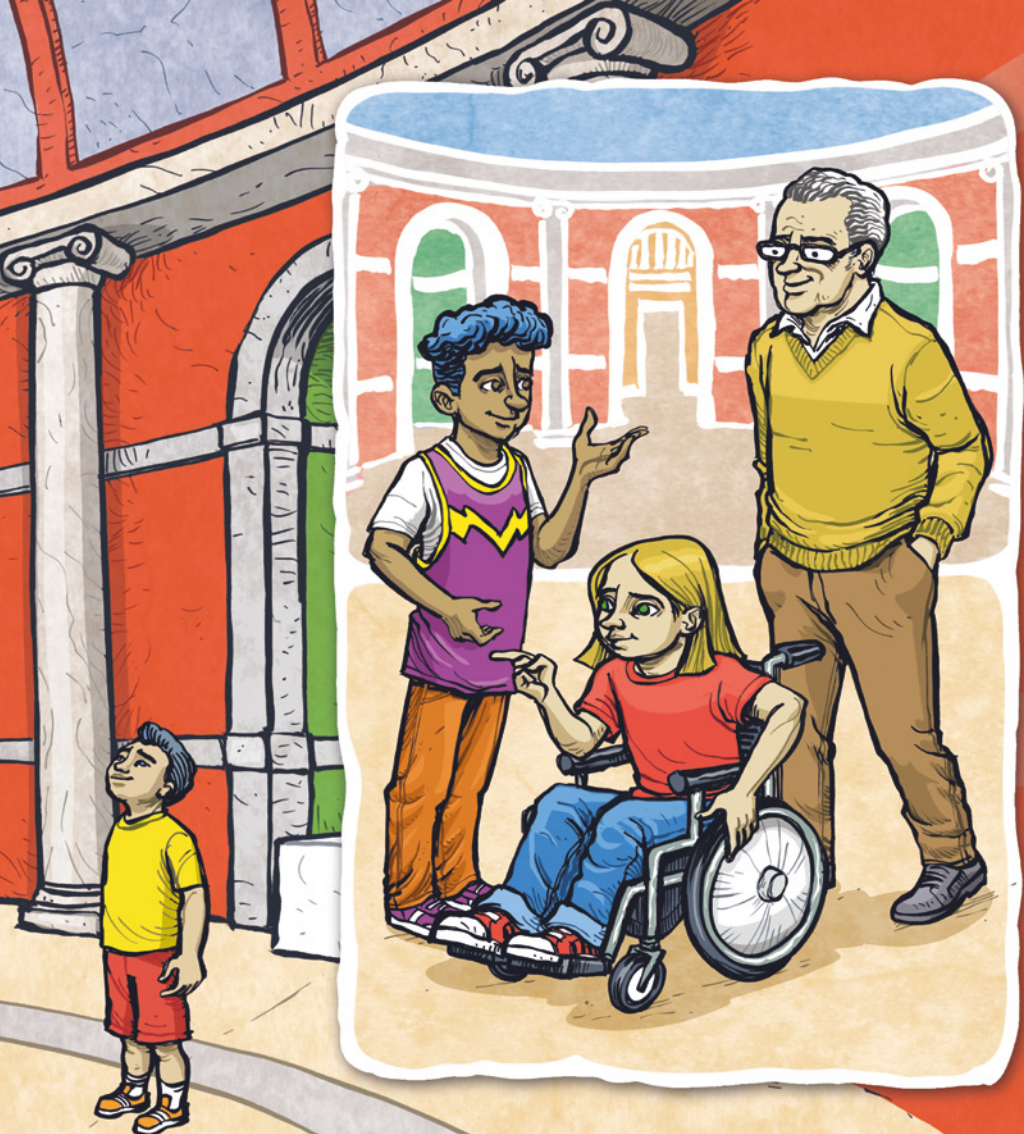
"Almost. They'll give me the forged visas tomorrow. You know you can't move the pieces without them."

"But... you've got them all, right?"

"We're missing one. Nobody dares forge one for the Venus. It attracts too much attention."

"It doesn't matter. We'll manage."





Today is Saturday, and since there's no school, Clio is visiting the art museum with her grandfather. As usual, they are joined by Hermes, Clio's neighbor. Hermes is an athlete and loves climbing on everything.

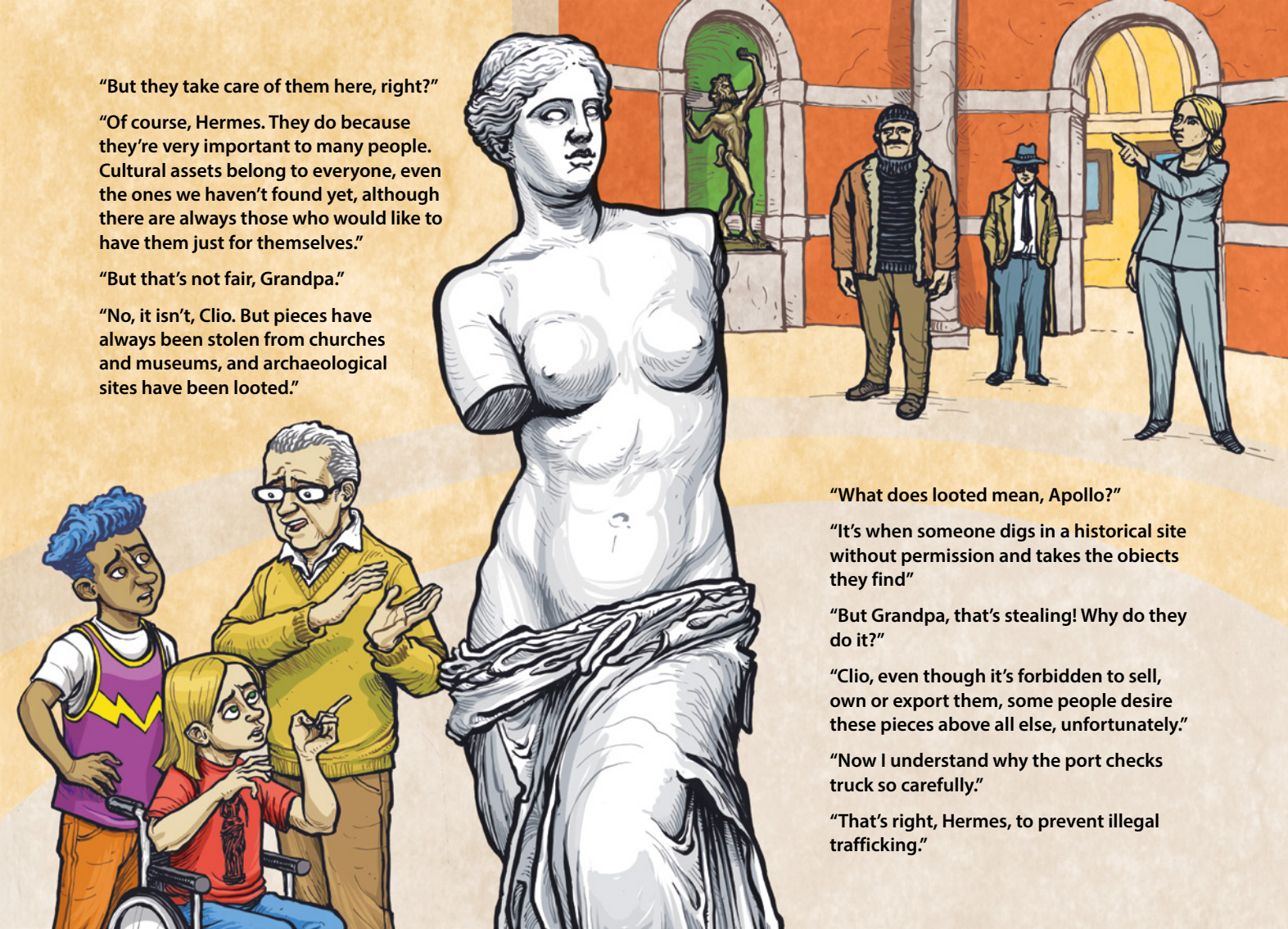
Hermes and Clio's favourite gallery is the one that houses the Greek sculptures.

"They're beautiful, Apollo. Thank you for bringing us here."

"Yes, kids. We're fortunate to still have them today and see them up close. Even though they're a bit damaged, they still let us learn a lot about the past."

"But, Grandpa, why are they broken?"

"Well, sometimes it's simply due to the passage of time. These are fragile pieces, and some of the materials they're made of deteriorate if they're not cared for. Other times, different societies did not appreciate what belonged to other cultures, even ones from the past."



"But they take care of them here, right?"

"Of course, Hermes. They do because they're very important to many people. Cultural assets belong to everyone, even the ones we haven't found yet, although there are always those who would like to have them just for themselves."

"But that's not fair, Grandpa."

"No, it isn't, Clio. But pieces have always been stolen from churches and museums, and archaeological sites have been looted."

"What does looted mean, Apollo?"

"It's when someone digs in a historical site without permission and takes the obiects they find"

"But Grandpa, that's stealing! Why do they do it?"

"Clio, even though it's forbidden to sell, own or export them, some people desire these pieces above all else, unfortunately."

"Now I understand why the port checks truck so carefully."

"That's right, Hermes, to prevent illegal trafficking."



The next day, the sirens of the police cars fill the morning air and their swirling lights sweep across the front of the house.

Clio, startled awake, pushes herself upright in her wheelchair to get out onto the terrace.

As she scans the scene with her binoculars, Hermes climbs up the gutter and then leans against the railing beside her.

"Run to the museum to see what's going on while I keep an eye on it."


NIOSA

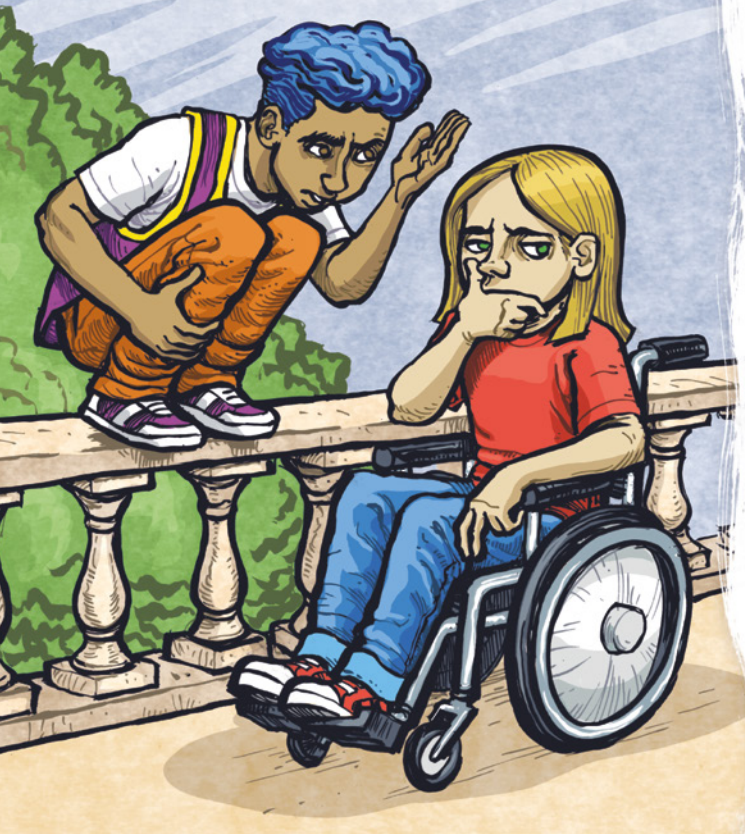


Hermes climbs up a tree, whose branches reach the terrace, and deftly descends to the street. Once at the door of the museum, taking advantage of the commotion, he slips into the gallery.

The *Venus* is gone, as is the sculpture of the *Faun*, and the relief depicting *The Birth of Aphrodite* is on the floor, smashed to pieces.

"A disaster, Clio. The museum has been robbed. Have you seen anything strange?"

"Not really, no. Well, the police arrested a man who was spray-painting graffiti on the church wall. They chased him up the street until they caught him. He drew a faun."



"It can't be a coincidence, that's one of the sculptures that was stolen from the museum. I'll tell your grandfather."



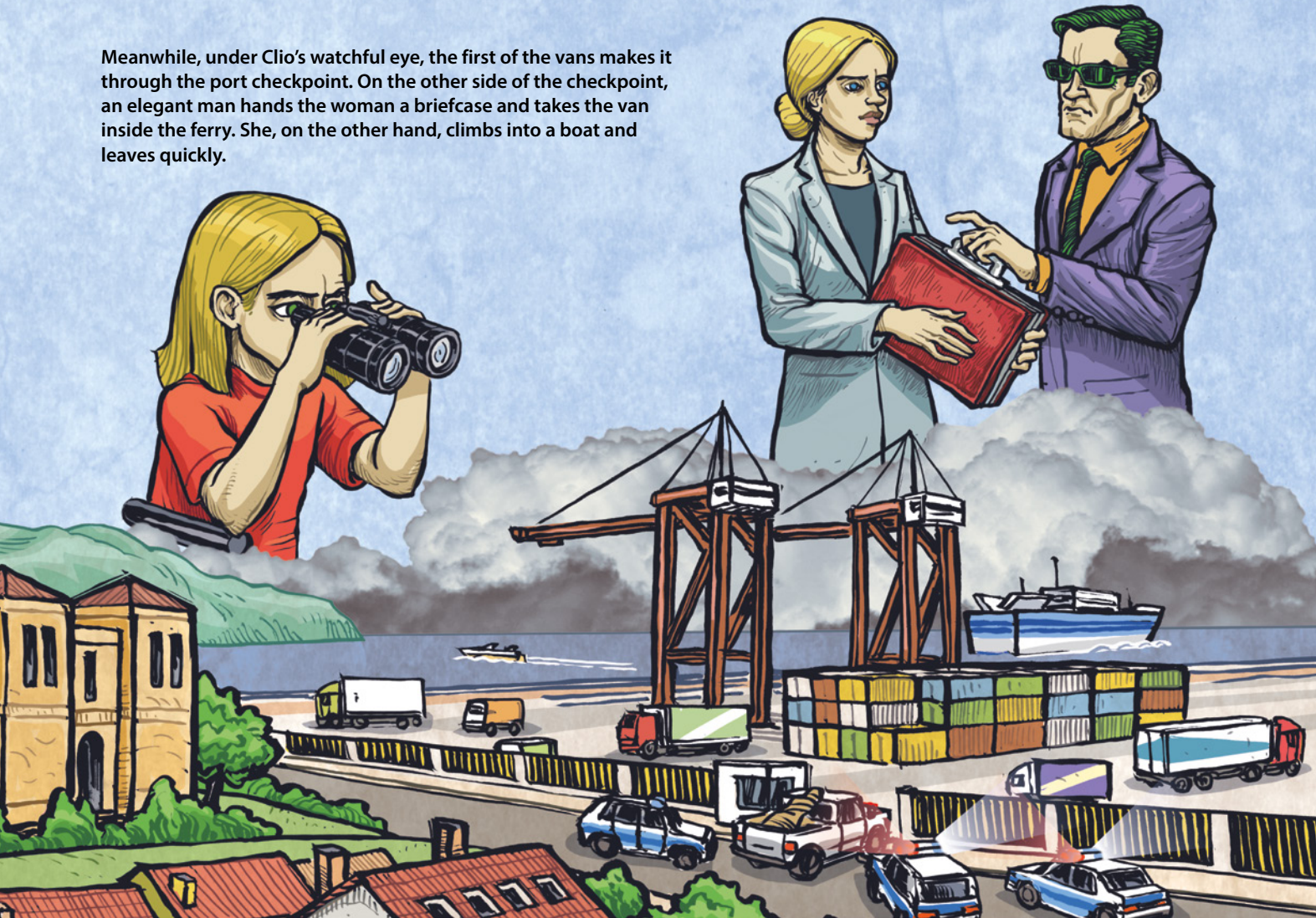
Clio watches the gatehouse and the port access barrier from the terrace. There are fewer controls at the entrance queue than usual. Suddenly, her gaze stops on a man and a woman whom she thinks she has seen at the museum. They are driving two vans, each loaded with wooden containers, but the second one is also carrying a strange bundle.

When Hermes and Apollo arrive on the terrace, everything is clear to Clio: the graffiti was a distraction; several policemen were trying to catch the vandal but, in their pursuit, they left the barrier unattended. Taking advantage of this, the strange couple is trying to bring the stolen items into the free zone and from there take them out who knows where.




Learning this,
Apollo runs to the museum
as fast as he can and
explains what is going on
to the Chief Inspector.
MUSEO

Meanwhile, under Clio's watchful eye, the first of the vans makes it through the port checkpoint. On the other side of the checkpoint, an elegant man hands the woman a briefcase and takes the van inside the ferry. She, on the other hand, climbs into a boat and leaves quickly.



In the meantime, Hermes, perched on the cab of the second van, shouts at the top of his lungs to attract the attention of the driver and the port security officers, who are soon on the scene.

From her vantage point, Clio smiles with satisfaction when the police arrive at the barrier. They have done it!



Immediately, through her binoculars, she can see the driver being arrested and, right afterwards, her grandfather and the chief inspector remove the tarpaulin covering the large bundle in the van.

Then, the *Venus* appears under the watchful eyes of all those present, who celebrate the police feat with applause.

At that moment, Clio looks for Hermes and Hermes, sure that his friend is watching everything, returns a victory gesture from a distance.



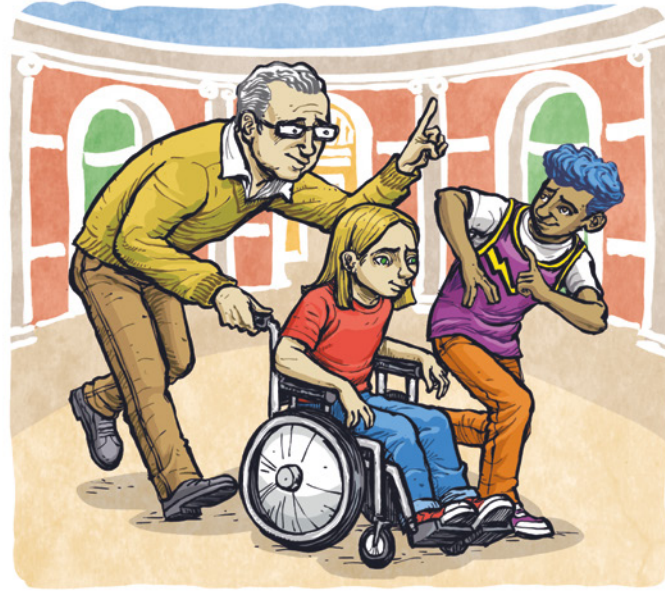

NICOSIA



The following Saturday, Clio, Hermes and Apollo return to the art museum. In the centre of the room, the curators work on the reconstruction of the relief sculpture with *The Birth of Aphrodite*, in full view of the visitors, and the *Venus* presides over the room, with a security cordon around her.

However, inside the niche where the *Faun* once stood, and instead of the sculpture, the word NICOSIA can be read, crossed out and written in black spray paint.





"Grandad, we have to find the *Faun*."

"Of course, Clio. Let's start with…"



Discover the adventures of Clio and Hermes in *Clio and the Greek Sculpture*, where they play a major role in preventing valuable archaeological treasures from being illegally taken out of the country.

Through this engaging, illustrated story, you can explore key issues surrounding cultural heritage - including the consequences of stealing and trafficking artworks – and learn some of the ways these crimes can be prevented.

After reading, discuss the story with your classmates and teacher. Together, you will discover the different forms heritage crime can take and why protecting our cultural heritage matters.

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