

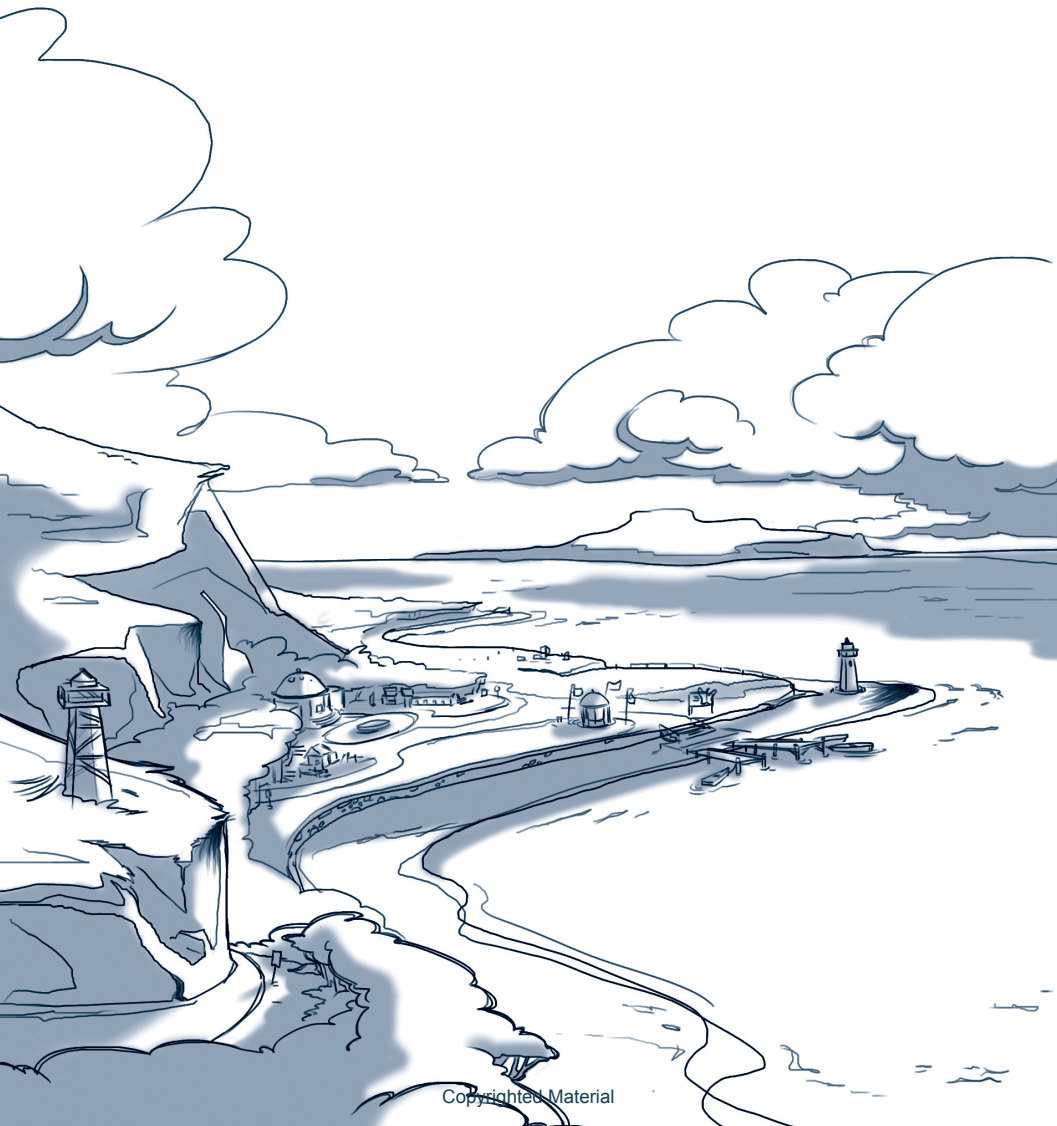
Sync or Swim is a small tale with enormous insight on ways you can empower, engage, and energize employees or volunteers facing discouragement or cynicism. Based on the principles successfully used by major corporations, health organizations, over 250 colleges and universities, government agencies, churches and non-profits.

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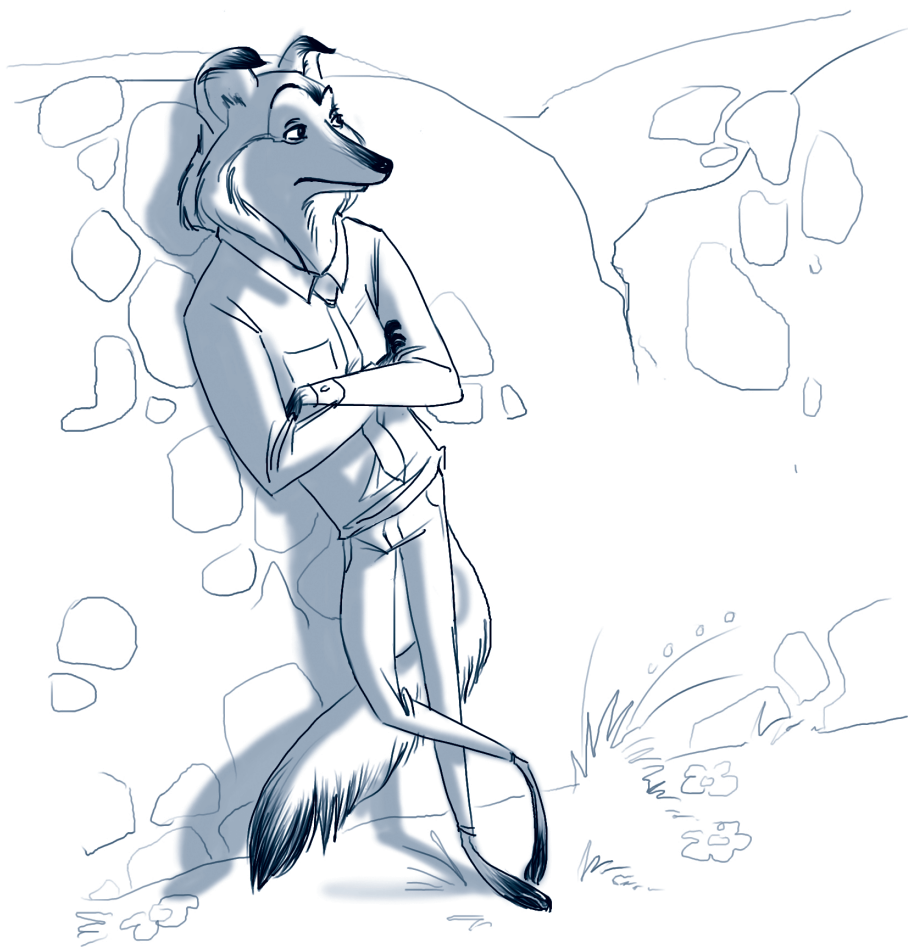


Sam Comes to Paradise

Sam the Shetland sheepdog loved big challenges, and landing his dream job as CEO of Monarch Enterprises, the family-run company that owned Spruce Isle, felt like the challenge of a lifetime. Standing atop the island's seawall, he studied the breach where storm waters had blasted through a while back, flooding several streets and shops and impacting Monarch's bottom line. His mandate was to ensure it never happened again and that Spruce Isle's all-important tourist trade would continue to grow and flourish.

Friends had warned him that it wouldn't be easy, and that as CEO he'd be caught between Monarch's head-in-the-sand board and its prickly staff. Sam sniffed the sea air. He had years of experience dealing with prickly personalities. *I'll get them on board and get it done!*

The sun was bright, the breezes warm, and it was hard to imagine the fury of a storm assaulting the levees. Tourists



Bring on the storms!

were filing off the ferry at the dock and heading for the quaint shops and restaurants renowned for their seafood. The ocean's blues, greens, and frothy whites lifted his spirits.

All his life Sam had dreamed of coming here. Spruce Isle was named for its majestic trees on the mountains and famed for its flowers and butterflies, including a species that swarmed in its forest each year. Everything—shops, mountains, butterfly migrations, beaches, and even the system of storm barriers—everything invigorated him.

Bring on the storms! His resolve rippled through him like a shot of adrenaline.

Looking out at smaller, distant islands, he noticed a seabird flying toward him. As it neared, he saw it was a puffin. It soared in, landed, settled itself, and stared out at the sea.

Sam had seen puffins in photos. He thought of them as odd but somehow natty seabirds, with their white faces and black caps and stout, multicolored beaks. But this one looked tattered, her chunky body a bit unsteady on her red-orange feet.

The old puffin said, "Bigger storms are coming." She hunched forward as in a stiff wind.

Sam glanced her way. She'd be amazed, he thought, to know he was in charge of leading the entire Monarch organization and protecting the island. He had come from the turbulent world of sports management with a reputation as a problem solver, someone who could work with big

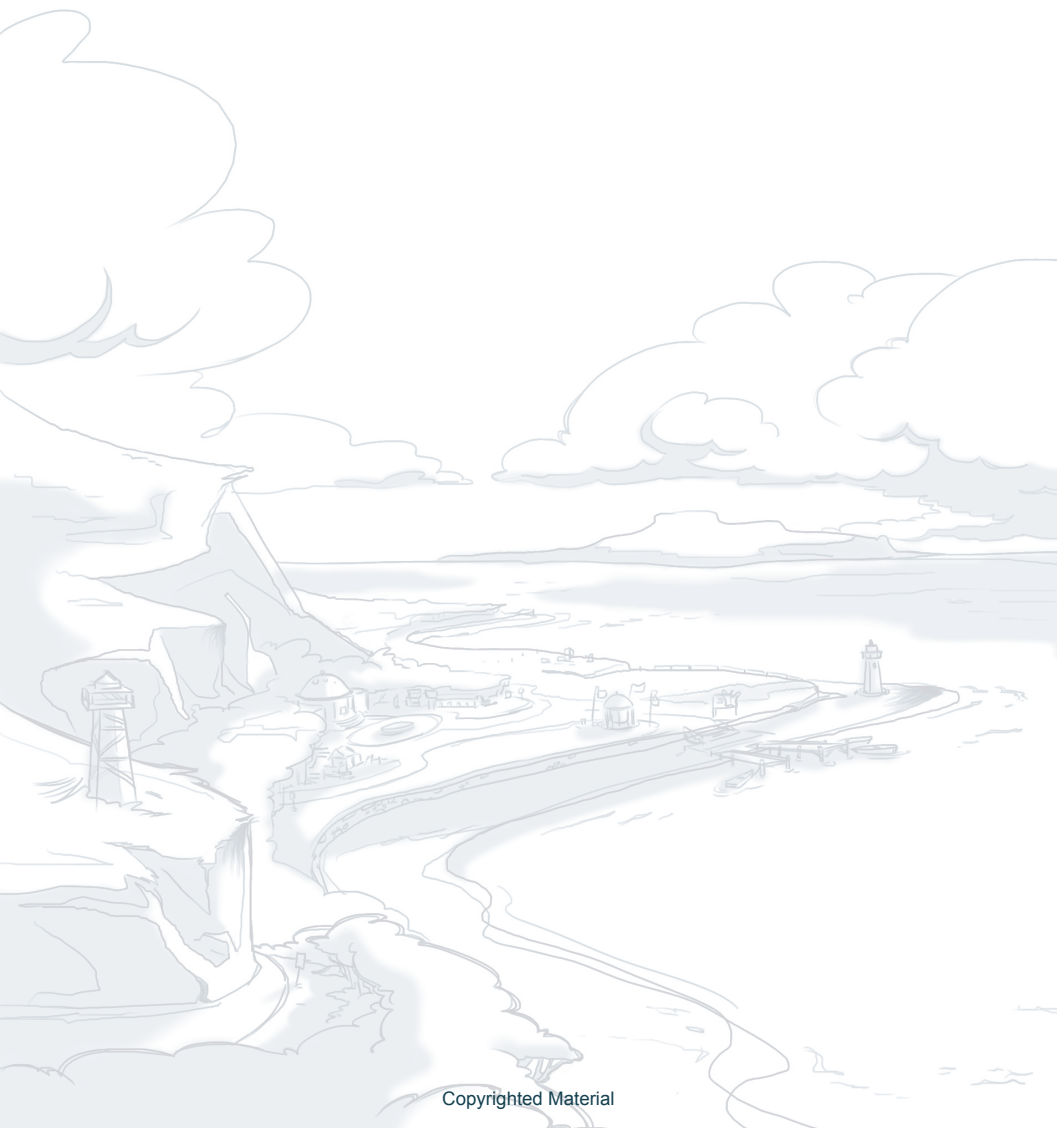
egos. Whatever it took, he'd rally the team and get it done.

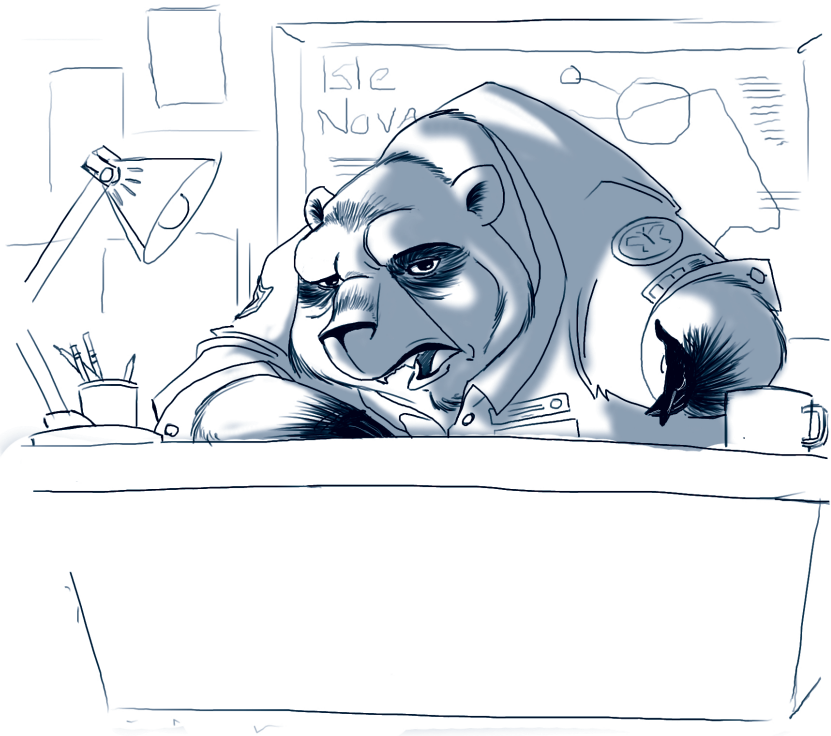
The puffin flapped her stubby wings and shifted her weight. "The next storm could bring disaster."

Sam looked over at her. *I know that. What's with this bird?*

The puffin wagged her head, eyes still on the sea. Then her short wings suddenly beat furiously, lifting her into the air.

Annoyed and slightly unsettled, Sam watched until she became a little speck in the distance.





"We're understaffed and underfunded."

The Bear on the Mountain

Sam started climbing the mountain that dominated the island's interior. Its wildlife, trails, and butterfly pavilion drew thousands of tourists, and they were drawing him. Eventually he was looking down on the shoreline below, a long, thin squiggle of brown separating the ocean blue and island green. That squiggle had to hold back the coming storms from the lowland shops, beach, and hotel.

He reached the highland forest with tall oaks and pines and meadows bright with wildflowers. Although early for the swarming butterflies the island was famous for, blue swallowtails circled a puddle and orange-tips zigzagged over a meadow. A bird chirped and a feathery flash of scarlet caught his eye.

Sam passed hikers studying a trail marker and went on to the butterfly pavilion, one of the island's most popular attractions. After standing in line with other visitors and then entering the vaulted enclosure, he feasted his eyes

on the hundreds of butterflies on the trees and plants and in the air. A poster on the wall helped him identify clearwings, swordtails, cabbage whites, and painted ladies. He watched light play on sparkling metallic colors of a metalmark. A hovering leafwing landed on his shoulder and stayed there a while.

The experience was all he'd hoped.

Yet the pavilion itself was in need of paint and a bit shabby, with cobwebs in corners. He'd take that up with Frisco, the head ranger.

Sam followed a trail to the preserve's headquarters, a complex of log buildings with flags flying, including Monarch's corporate flag—sky-blue, with a monarch butterfly poised on the leaf of a gnarly branch.

Monarch's proud history started with a pioneer who saw the island's potential for tourism despite the dangerous storms. Over time the company built seawalls, developed hotels and shops, and cut trails so visitors could see the butterflies swarm. Much of the forest was set aside for camping and hiking. Then came the butterfly pavilion, and tourism spiked.

Sam found Frisco in his headquarters cabin. The big spectacled bear stared at him. "Heard you were coming." His expression said he'd like to send Sam back out the door with a swipe of his paw.

Sam's hair bristled but he forced out friendly words of wonder at the butterfly pavilion. He said nothing about its

cobwebs but quizzed Frisco on his priorities.

The ranger's responses confirmed what Sam had heard: Monarch workers were very good at playing the blame game. "We're supposed to have emergency shelters up here all stocked and ready in case a storm breaches the levees," Frisco blustered. "But go look for yourself. They're not ready because we requisition supplies but the stuff never arrives!"

Sam perked up his ears. "I'll check on that."

"We're understaffed and underfunded. Hordes of tourists keep coming, and we can't worry about shelters we'll never need." The big bear reared up higher and stared down at his new boss. His meaning was clear: The seawall is your problem, and you don't look like you can handle it.

Sam had dealt with plenty of big pro athletes. He stared back.

Unblinking, Frisco complained, "My staff can't keep up with all these campers and gawkers. Headquarters *never* delivers on promises, and *nobody* cares." He thrust a list at Sam. "Here's what we need."

Sam took the list. He wondered what the rest of his direct reports would be like.

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