



# The Fight

Story by Conn Mac Gabhann

Illustrations by Niamh Merc



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This book is part of a series developed and produced by The Irish Chaplaincy in Britain. The series aims to produce interesting reading material for adult early readers from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds.

# **The Fight**



John lived on a site in London.

He had lived there all of his life.

John was the last in his family.

He had four brothers and four sisters. They had all moved from the site in Hackney.

Some had gone to different sites in Britain and Ireland.

Some had moved into houses.

John wasn't lonely because Frank was always there.

Frank lived on the site too.

They were like brothers.

John and Frank did everything together.

They rode horses. They drove cars. They talked about girls.

They were always together when they were boys.

And when they were older John and Frank worked together.

John and Frank did tarmacking.

They worked for Danny.

Danny is John's dad.

John and Frank always did a good job.

Danny said, "Because we're Travellers, it must be twice as good."

It was always, "twice as good."

They worked very hard.

They worked from early morning to late every night.

They worked every day but not Sunday.



**John and Frank were always busy.**

**John and Frank never had time off work.**

**But there was one week when they didn't work.**

**Appleby Fair. It happened every June.**

**Every Traveller went to Appleby Horse Fair.**



John and Frank always talked about Appleby.

"Will we find you a wife there this year, John?" said Frank.

"Look after yourself first, Frank. With that face you need to pray for a woman," said John.

**Appleby Fair was a week of fun.**

**It was a week of horses and telling stories.**

**It was a week of meeting old friends and making new friends.**

**It was a week that you could find a wife.**



In May, John and Frank started on the road to Appleby.

"It's great to be on the road again. Free as a bird," said John.

"There is no feeling like it!" said Frank.

Frank was sitting next to John in the 4x4. The trailer was behind them.

It was a long trip. So they stopped at sites on the way.

They stopped off at Jimmy's site by the motorway.

Jimmy and Margaret were family.

Margaret gave them a big hug.

Jimmy met them. He said, "Come in. The tea is made."

The next day they travelled on.

In the evening, Danny pulled his trailer off the road.

John and Frank pulled in behind Danny.

"I'm going to that house. The farmer is a friend," Danny said.

The farmer let them stay in his field.



That night they sat around a big fire.

John sang a song. Frank told a story. They all laughed.

It was like the old days.

The next day, they got up early to go.

When they were cleaning up, the police came.

"What are you doing here?" the police woman asked.

"Why?" asked John.

"It's okay, John. We are going now." said Danny.

"We must be twice as good!" Danny said to John and Frank.

They were all sad. They pulled out on to the road.

Appleby was not far away.





They pulled into Appleby when it was late.

Everyone was laughing.

People called out to old friends.

The fire was lit.

Frank told a story and John sang.

It was like the old days.

**In the morning, John and Frank walked everywhere.**

**They met old friends.**

**There were Romanies.**

**There were Gypsies.**

**There were Irish Travellers.**

**There were Scottish Travellers.**

**There were Welsh Travellers.**

**There were barrel top wagons.**

**There were vardos.**

It was very sunny.

John and Frank sat on the grass. They looked out across the river.

"This is how life should be," Frank said. John nodded.

The horses were being washed in the river.

The girls walked along the river.

John and Frank looked at the girls as they walked past them.

John and Frank forgot about the horses. They watched the girls.

Life was good.



**John and Frank went back to the camp.**

**John's mum made dinner. It was very good.**

**They sat beside the fire.**

**They were all very happy.**



**Suddenly, there was shouting.**

**Two men were fighting. Then it stopped.**

**Later on, John was told that one of the men was from his family.**

**And Frank was told that the other man was from his family.**

John and Frank were told that they would have to fight each other.

They would have to fight for family pride.

John and Frank were very sad.

They said nothing.

The next day, everyone went down to the river bank.

An old man said "It will be done the old way."

John and Frank walked down to the river together.

They said nothing.

They wanted it over. They wanted it over quickly.

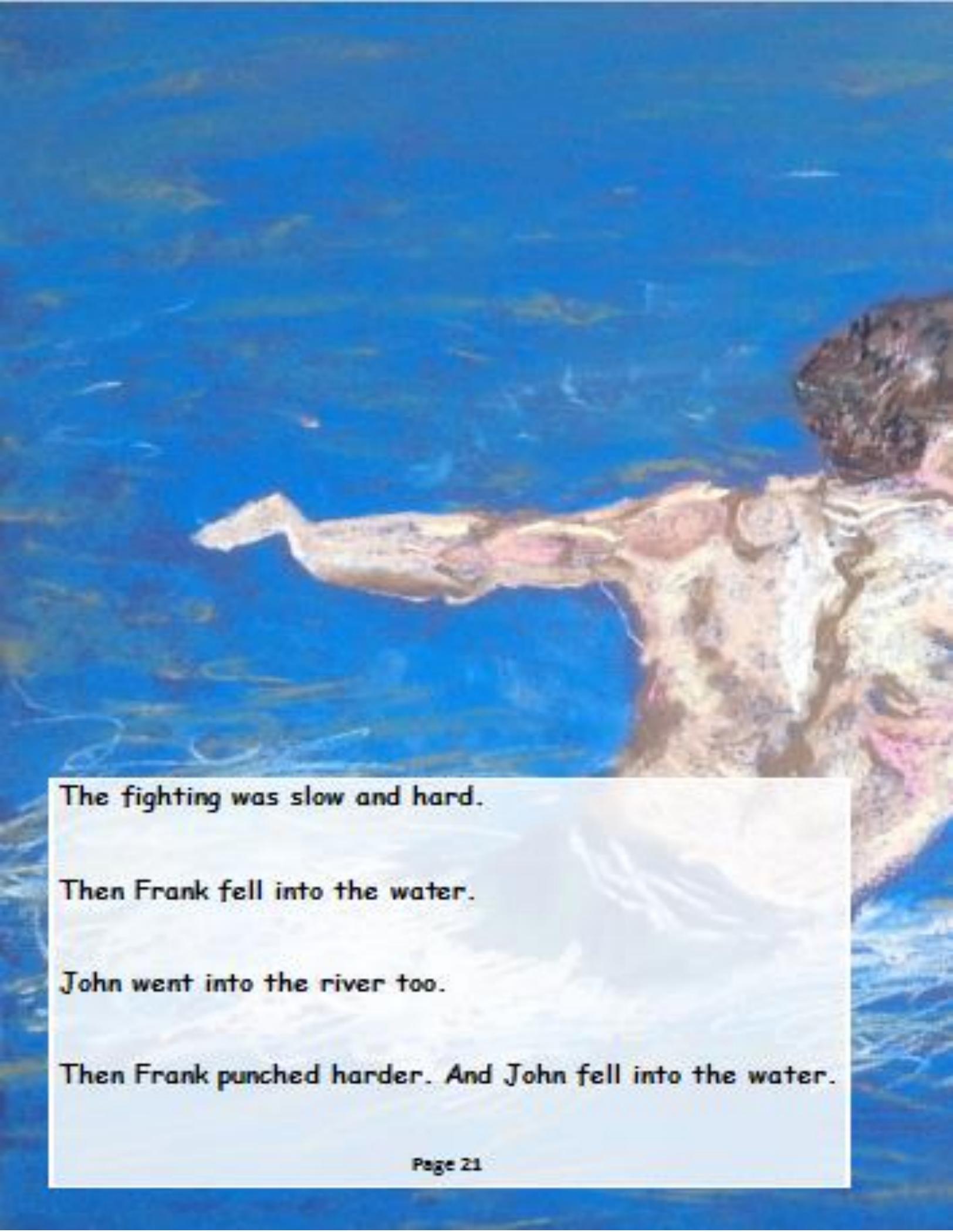


**Frank punched John first.**

**Then John hit Frank.**

**Frank punched.**

**Then John punched. And on the fight went.**

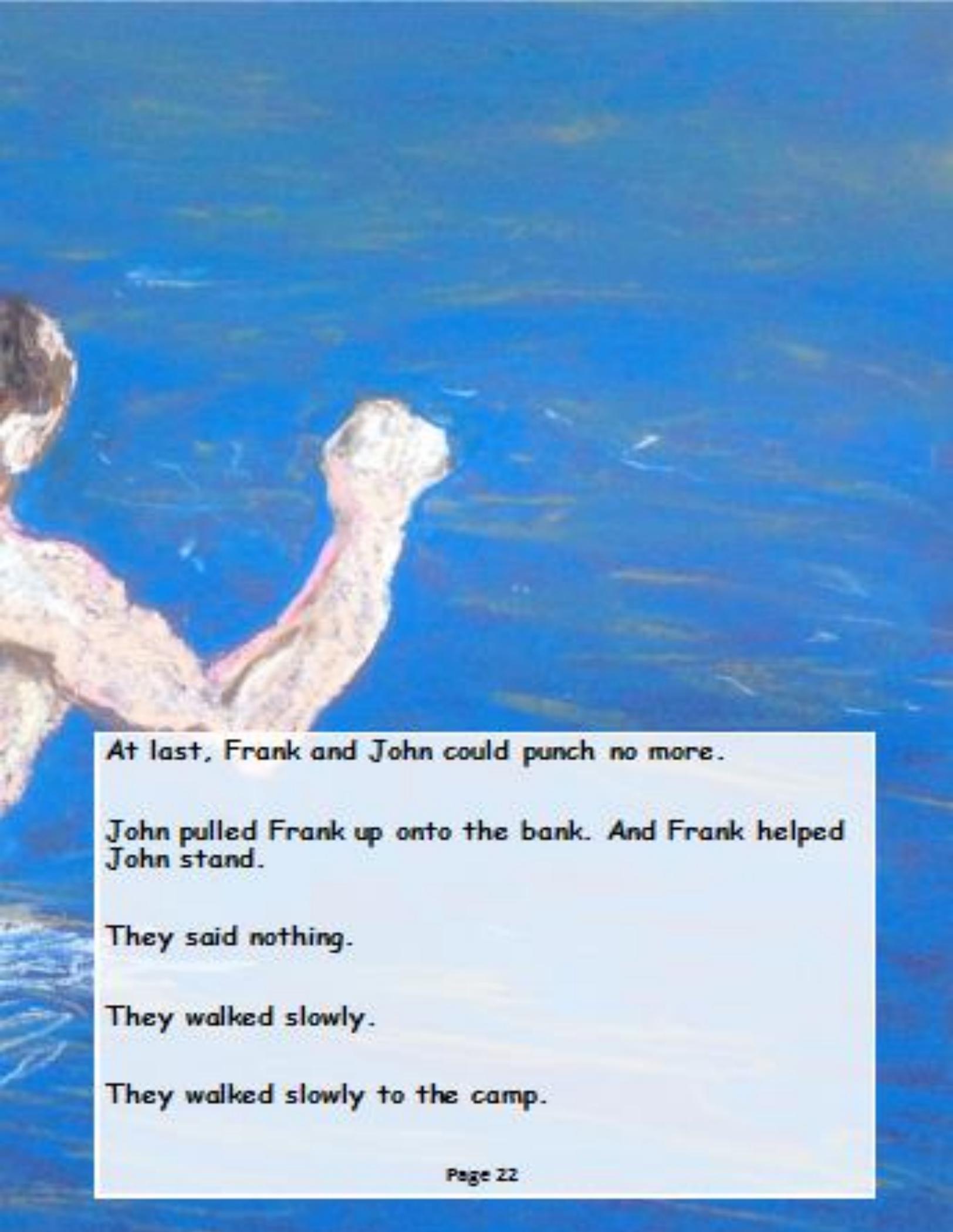
A painting of a muscular man in a river. The man is shown from the chest up, with his right arm extended forward. He has a very muscular physique, with visible muscles on his chest, shoulders, and arm. He is wearing a dark, textured cap. The background is a vibrant blue river with ripples and reflections. A white text box is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing four lines of text.

The fighting was slow and hard.

Then Frank fell into the water.

John went into the river too.

Then Frank punched harder. And John fell into the water.

A close-up photograph of a person's muscular arm and hand reaching out of clear blue water. The hand is clenched into a fist, and the skin is wet and glistening. The background is a deep blue, rippling surface of water.

At last, Frank and John could punch no more.

John pulled Frank up onto the bank. And Frank helped John stand.

They said nothing.

They walked slowly.

They walked slowly to the camp.



John and Frank sat by the fire.

The old man said "They were like the old Irish heroes."

"They were like the brothers Coo hullin and Ferdia."

John and Frank said nothing.

The men talked about the fight.

They asked "Who won?"

Danny sat and listened. He was sad.

At last, Danny said "Frank and John are like brothers."

"There is no pride in brothers fighting."

"It is very sad."



The next day, John and Frank drove home together.

They did not speak. Too much had happened.

They were brothers still but it was different.

Frank and John were soon back home.

Frank met a woman and got married. They had six children.

John met a woman called Helen. They had one girl and three boys.

Every day Frank and John worked together.

They worked from early morning to late every night.

They worked every day but not Sunday.



John and Frank became old men.

They worked hard.

They spoke less.

Sometimes brothers don't need to speak. They know what the other is thinking.

When people spoke about family pride, John and Frank walked away.



**Published by The Irish Chaplaincy in Britain**

