

Remvale Tales

Snowball Saviour

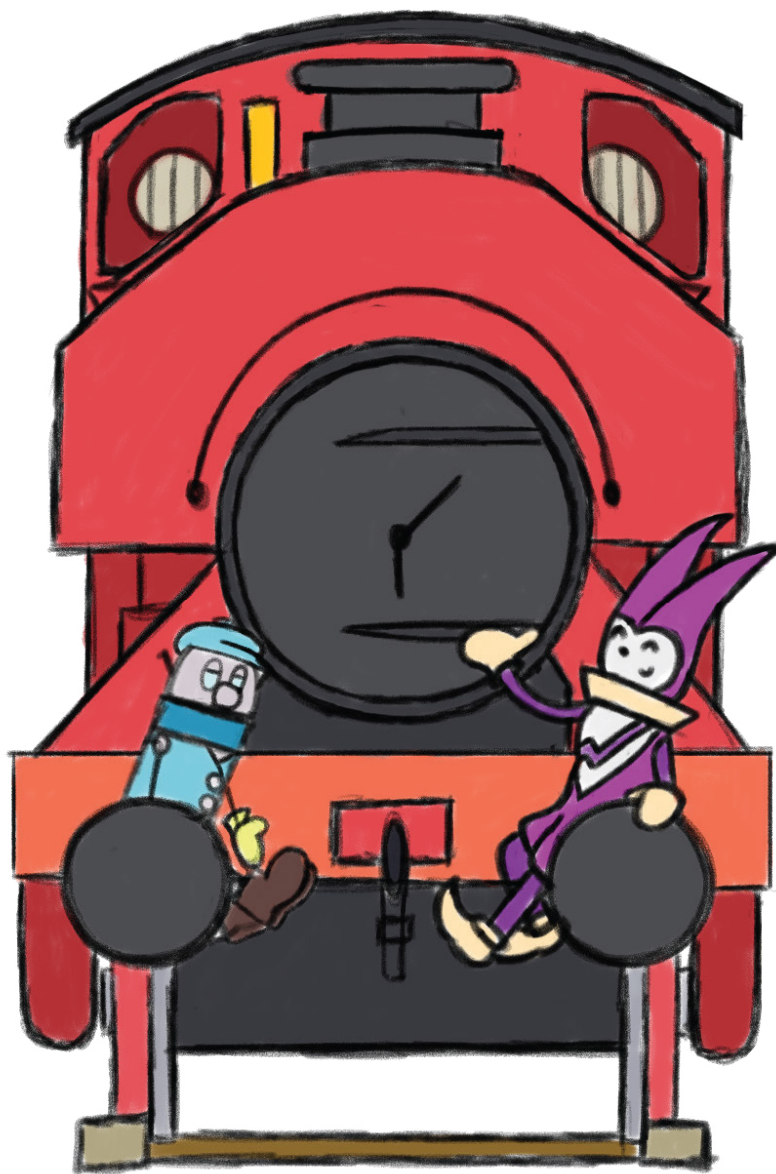


Lewis Knight

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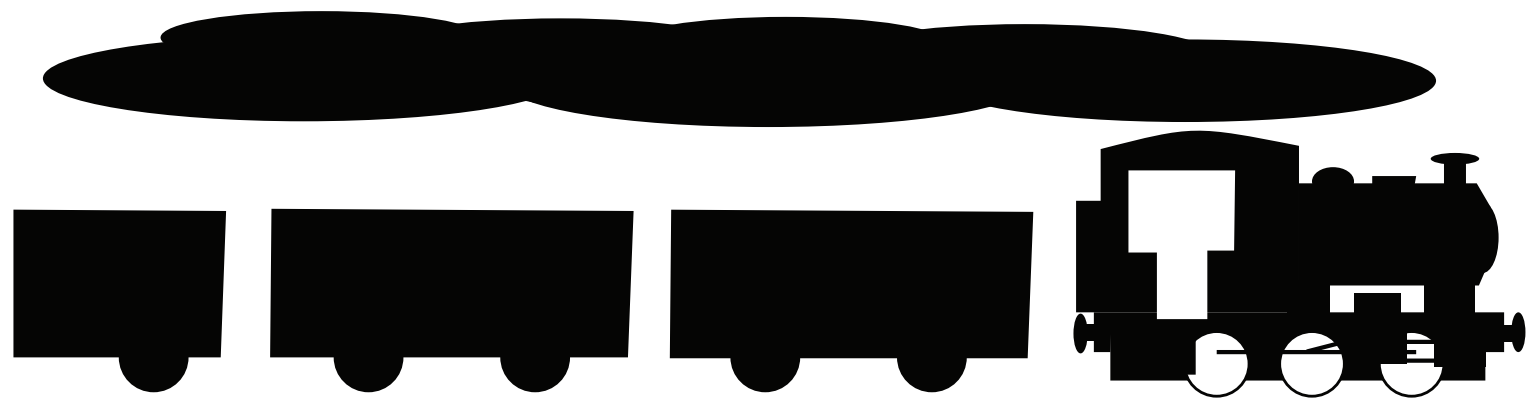
Written and Illustrated
by Lewis Knight



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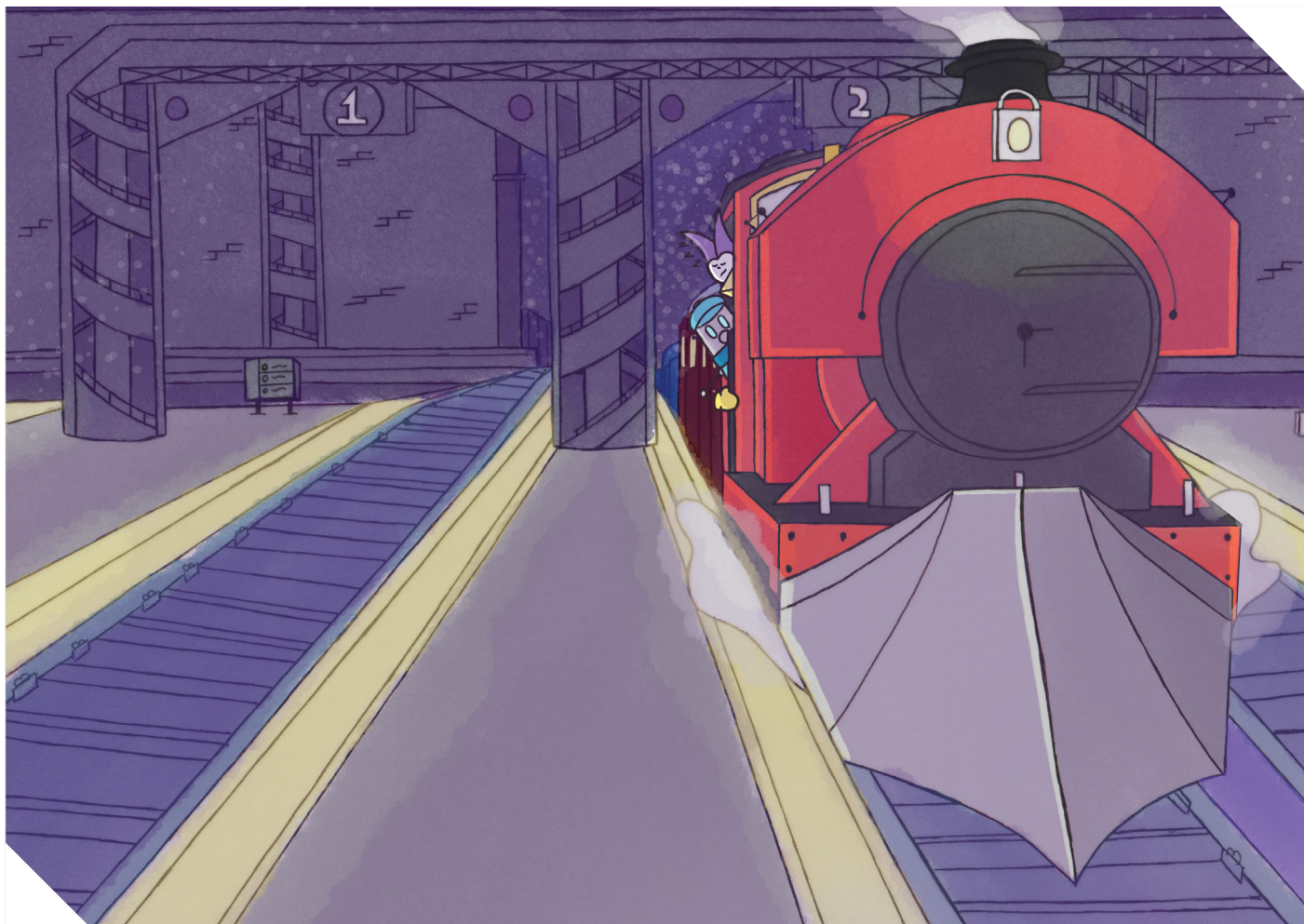
Log 1



Working for the Remvale Engineering Corporation means you have to deal with all sorts of weather conditions whilst on the job, from bucketing rain to blistering sun. But my favourite has to be just after the winter holidays, when Remvale gets coated from hilltop to valley in a thick layer of snow.

Whilst it looks nice, running a railway does have its troubles in the cold, let alone with a steam engine. In fact I've just remembered a funny story from the other day.

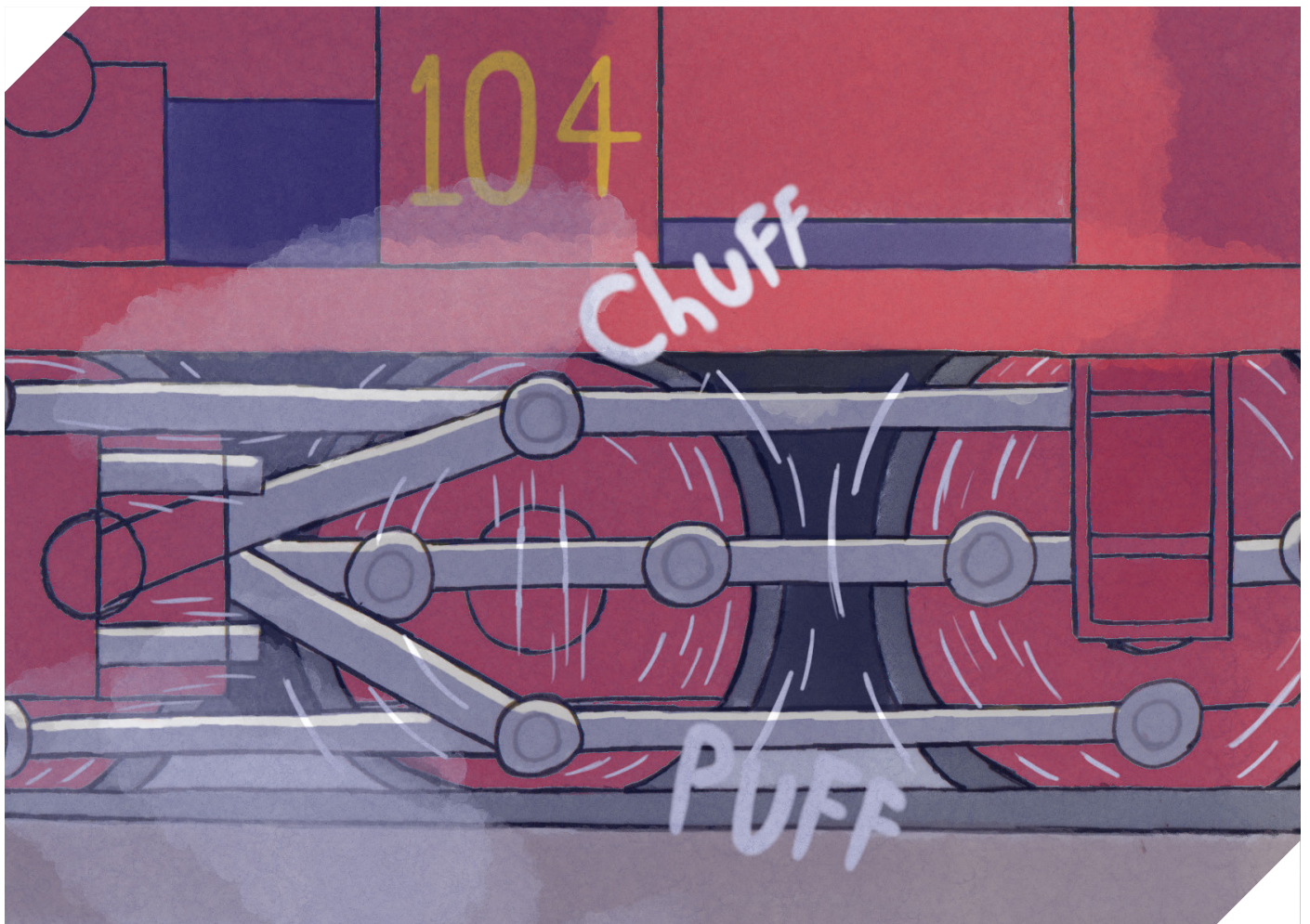
-Junior Engineering Buddy № 2508



Me and Jevan were in charge of the morning train delivering goods and passengers to the big town at Remtown.

It was quiet that morning, icy and cold. “Tell that guard to hurry up, I’m falling asleep in here”, yawned Jevan as she stoked Scarlet’s warm fire.

When everything was ready, the clock struck the hour, the guard blew his whistle and waved his green light.



As I opened Scarlet's regulator and peeped her whistle, Scarlet began to slowly huff and chuff out of the station.

The icy rails made her wheels slip and skid and slide and whine. With a great effort (and some sand on the rails) we hauled the train out onto the main line.



As we were the first train out that early morning, the line hadn't been cleared. But with Scarlet's heavy snowplough, we tackled the snow with great ease.

The snow made all sorts of scrunching and crackling sounds as Scarlet pushed it aside like icing on a bun. Her fire burned bright and she had plenty of steam, charging at every drift like a bull.



We started at the busy Remvale Junction, where all the main lines connected, passing by the Mickey Sutton Industrial Yard with the factories that smelled like soap.

Then we rattled past the edge of Bottletop Hill where all the tourists went to take pictures of the view. At the bottom of the Swinford Valley, the sun was just peeking over the horizon, shining on the snow like diamonds.

After the musty tunnel came the Bric a Brac Viaduct and then the thick and bushy pine trees of Welamere Forest. With a roll down the Bronwyn hills, we passed by the R.E.C Headquarters, before we arrived at our destination. Or so we thought.



We were just steaming over the frozen viaduct when Jevan chimed in again.

“Brrrrr” she shivered beside me, the cold air sweeping past us had clearly woken her up.

“Sometimes I wish I was back in the circus, we’d usually travel south in winter”, she said in-between stokes of coal and rubbing her frozen hands.

Jevan was new to Remvale, she’d been Scarlet’s fireman for a little while now and this was her first winter being away from the circus.

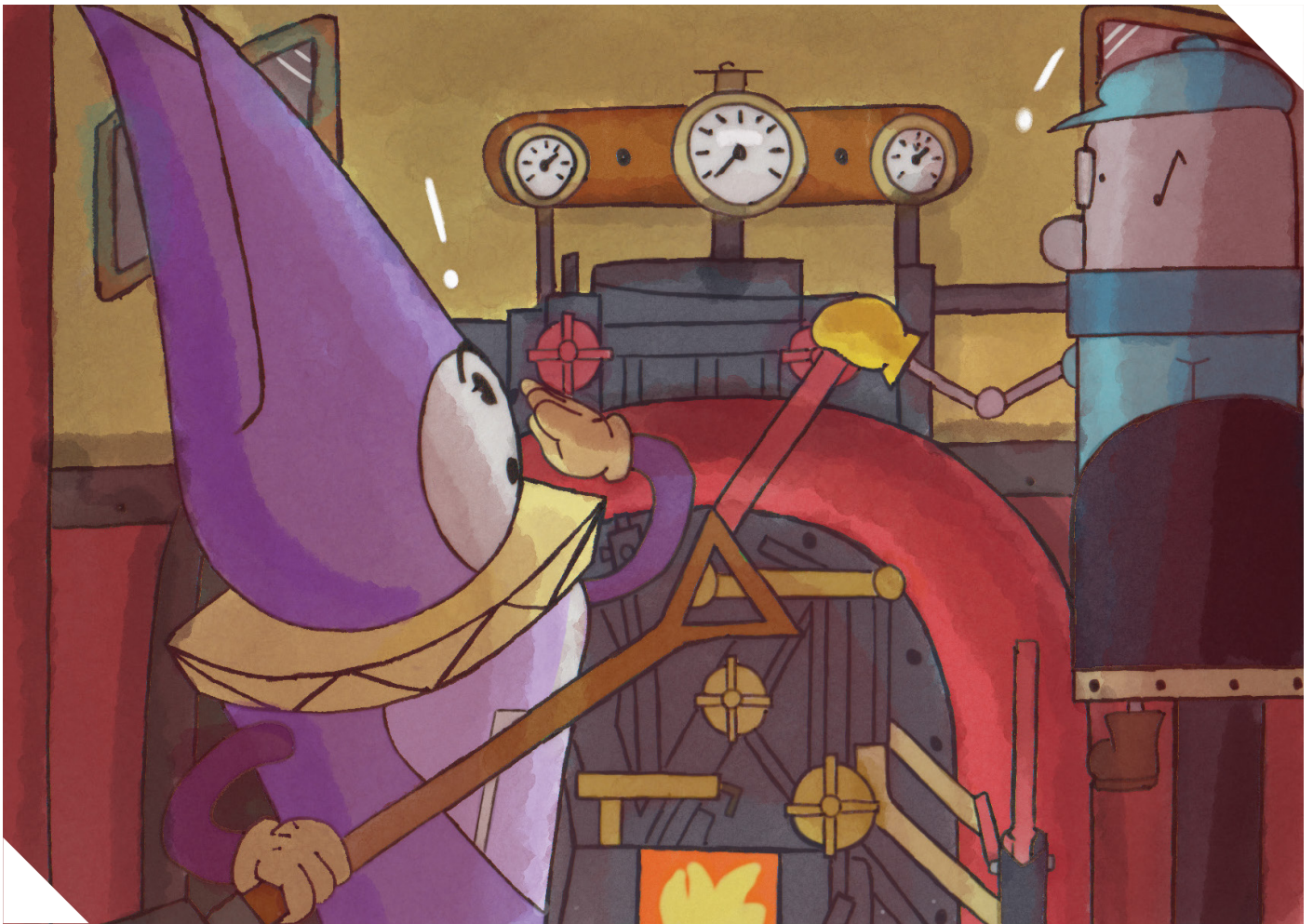


We puffed into Welamere station on time, I went to fill up Scarlet's water tank and...

Nothing. The tower didn't move. The water had frozen. We tried all sorts of ways to fill Scarlet's water tank, but nothing worked.

"Come on Jeb, we can't keep the passengers waiting any longer", said Jevan, anxious of the time. She was right, we were nearly 10 minutes late.

I conceded, and climbed back into Scarlet. We had enough water to keep going, but for how long I had no clue.



It didn't take long for us to find out. We were barely out of Welamere and coasting down Bronwyn Hill when it happened.

One minute there was steam pressure, then the next, there was none.

“We’ve run out of water!”, cried Jevan as she began to pat down Scarlet’s fire. I was two steps ahead and had already shut off steam. I knew with the weight of the train behind us we had just enough momentum to get us a few miles further.



Unfortunately, Remtown was still five miles away and even with the speed we had, Scarlet slowed, and slowed, and slowed, until she came to a complete stop.

“What do we do now?”, asked Jevan, concerned. “We’re nowhere near a water tower and I can’t leave Scarlet’s fire lit without water, her boiler will explode”.

I sat on the running board and thought for a minute. I thought and thought. Then, I saw the snow on the side of the line. Then I looked at the snowflakes melting on the warm tanks.

Snow. Snow. That’s it, we’ll use snow.



I jumped down into the deep snow and started shovelling. Jevan followed looking very confused, so I beeped her my idea.

“Snow!?! really?” she looked puzzled. “But it’ll take ages to fill up her tank, and even longer to produce steam, and think of all the gunk we’ll have to clean out afterwards, it’s...”

She trailed off and looked at the coaches, and at all the very confused and cross passengers looking back at her.

“I guess it’s worth a try”.



Jevan had always been good at juggling since the day I met her, but what I wasn't expecting was for the snowballs to go from my hands to Scarlet's tank in less than a second. They flung in the air so fast it was like a one-person snowball fight.

At this point the passengers were either very confused, shocked, or angry at the sight they saw out of their windows. But there was no time to explain to them what was going on. Before we knew it Scarlet's water tank was full.



Jevan rekindled Scarlet's fire. Soon her warm boiler melted the snow into water and turned the water into steam. Finally, with enough steam pressure we climbed back into Scarlet and....

We were off!



It was a clanky ride, but we forged on. Scarlet didn't take well to the new water but our idea had worked. the passengers all muttered to themselves as Remtown came into view.

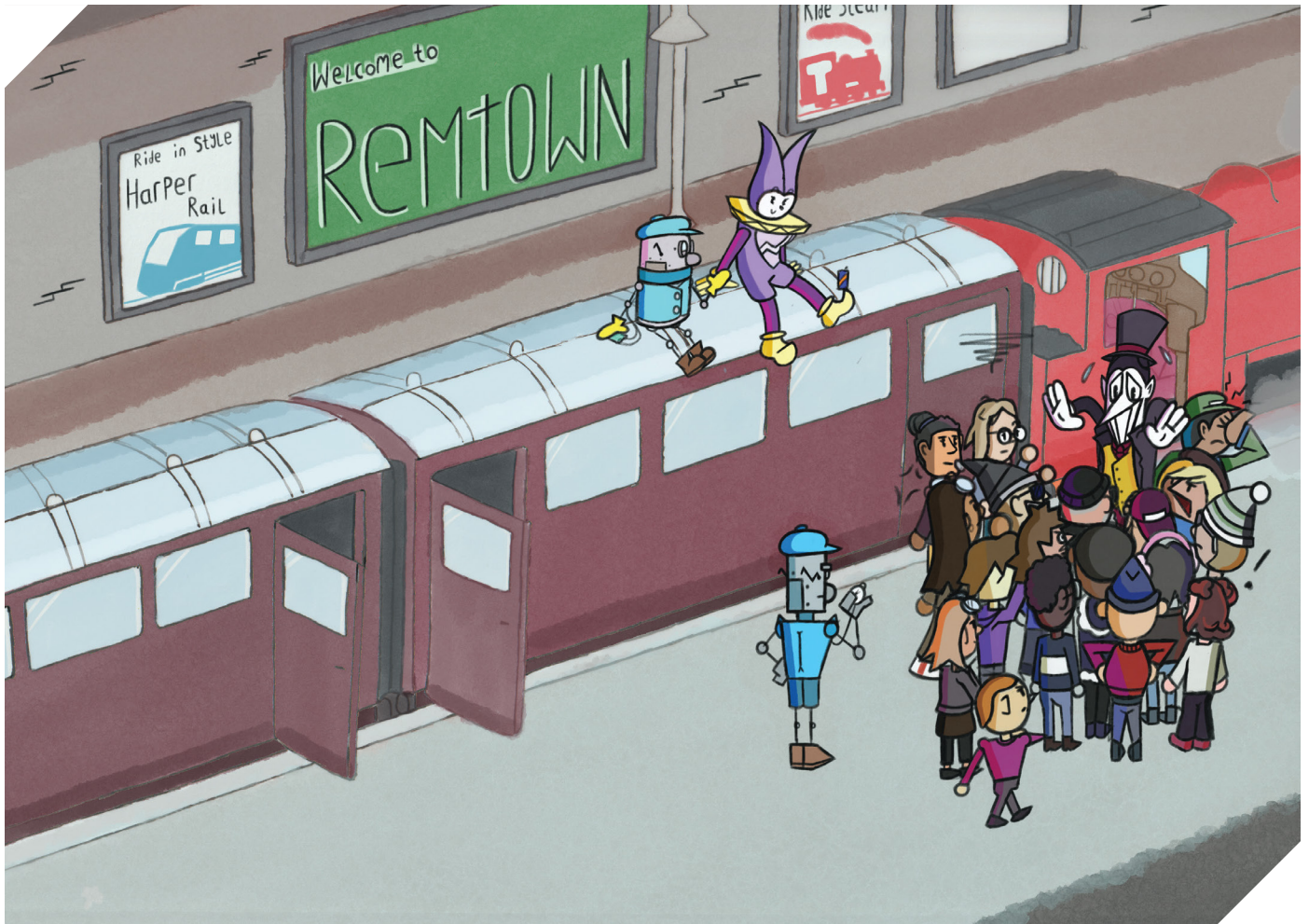
It was quiet when we got there. Despite being late, the town was only just starting to wake up. There are two stations in Remtown, Mollingford and Remtown Main. With just enough steam left we made it to Mollingford, the smaller station of the two.



There stood on the platform was the manager and Sedrick Spencer himself, Controller and CEO of the Remvale Engineering Corporation. At first, he was cross with our lateness, but when we explained the situation, the manager gave Sedrick a stern look.

“You told me you had installed the heaters into the water towers months ago!”, she said demanding an explanation.

“Well, um...”, Sedrick stuttered as he tried to think of an excuse. “You know how things go, budget cuts and promises don’t always match up. It was on the list of...”



But before he could get another word out, the angry passengers climbed out of the coaches and began circling Sedrick, demanding their money back for such a bad railway journey.

Me and Jevan bought some refreshments and sat to watch Sedrick deal with the refunds and complaints right there on the platform.

What a story we told the other drivers in the shed when we got back. What a laugh it was! I guess you could say that Sedrick deserved it.

-The End

