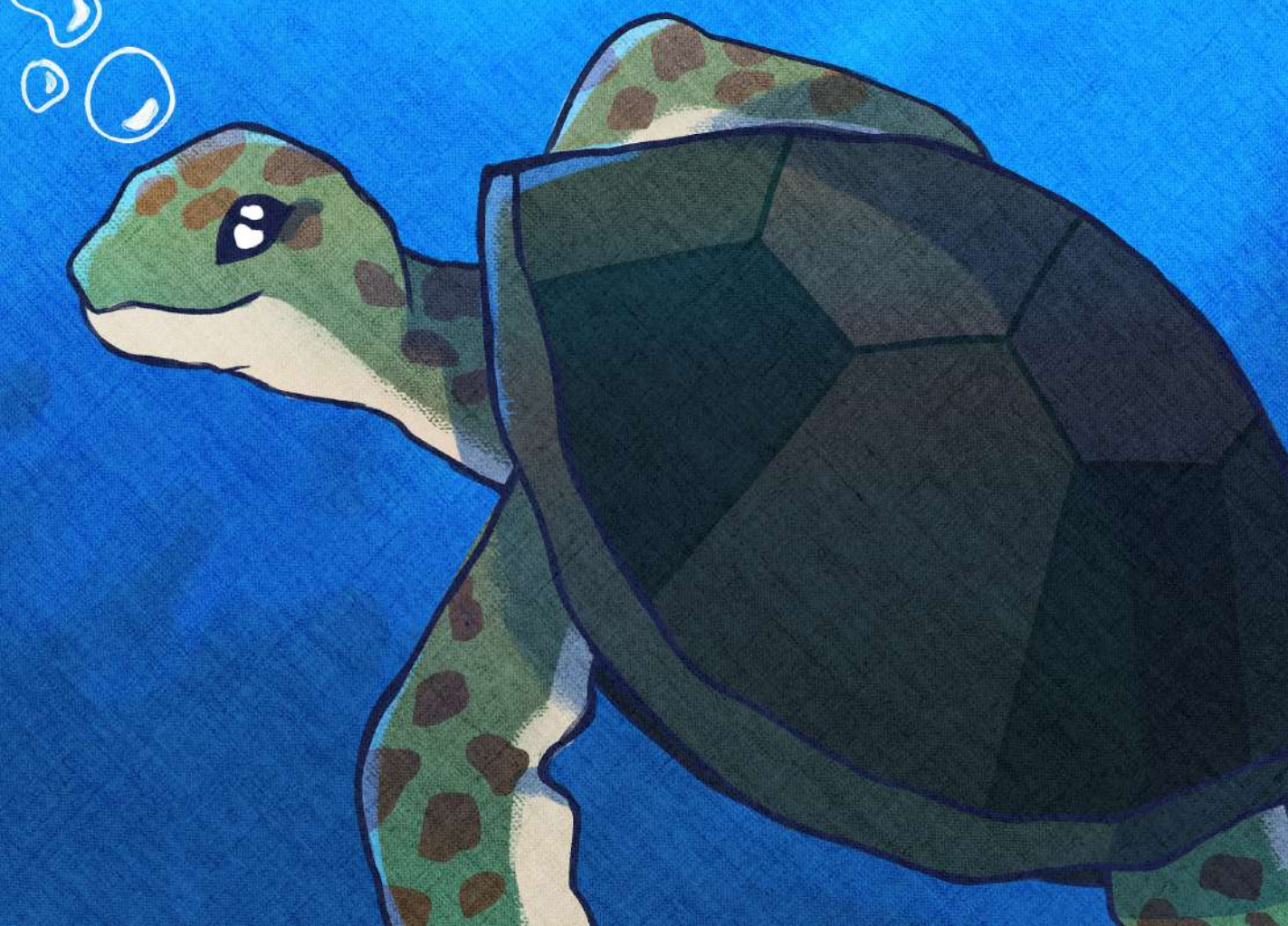
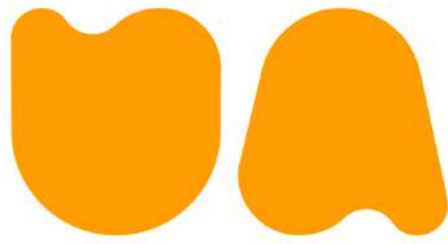


MANUELA

In the
Pond

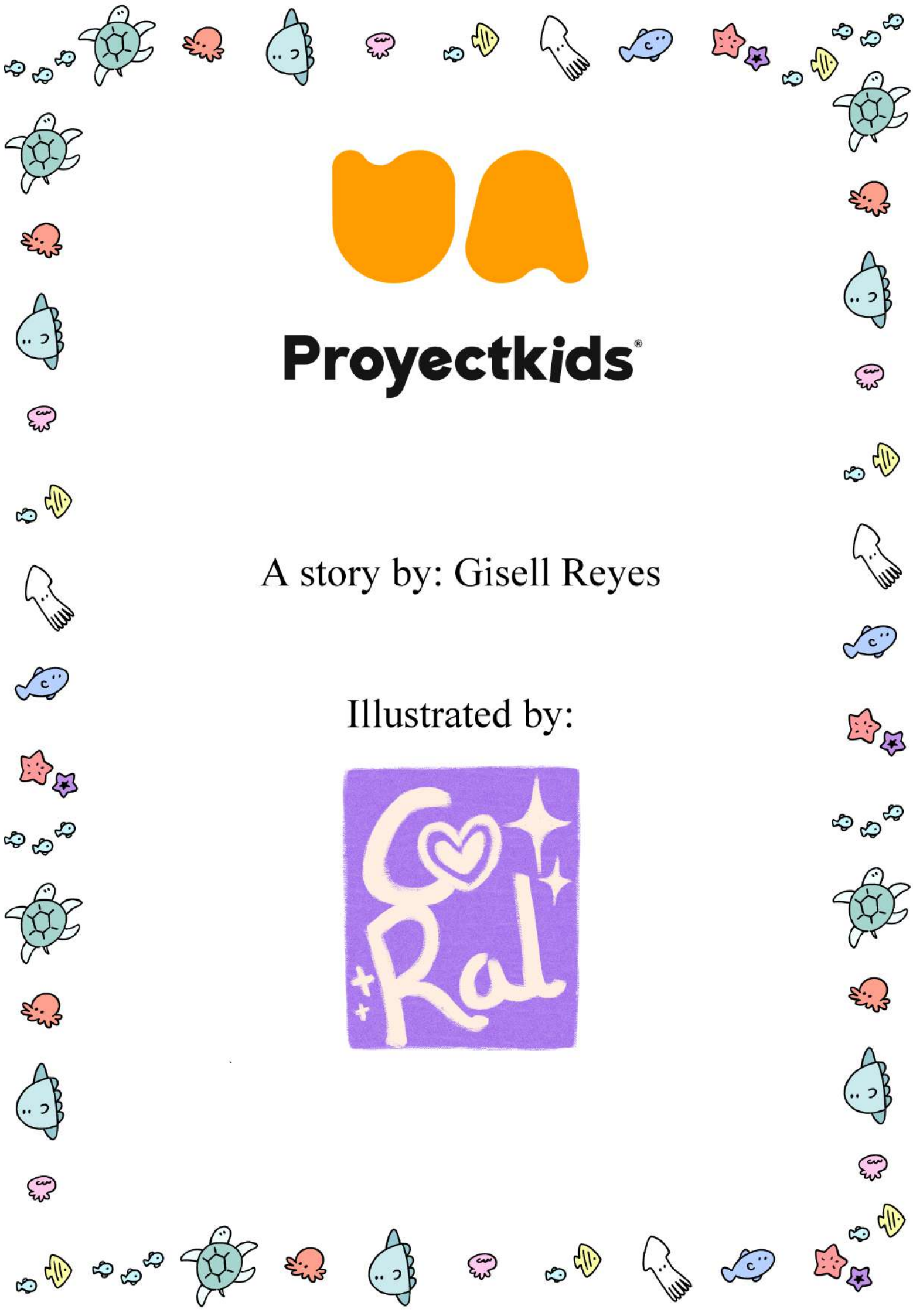




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A story by: Gisell Reyes

Illustrated by:





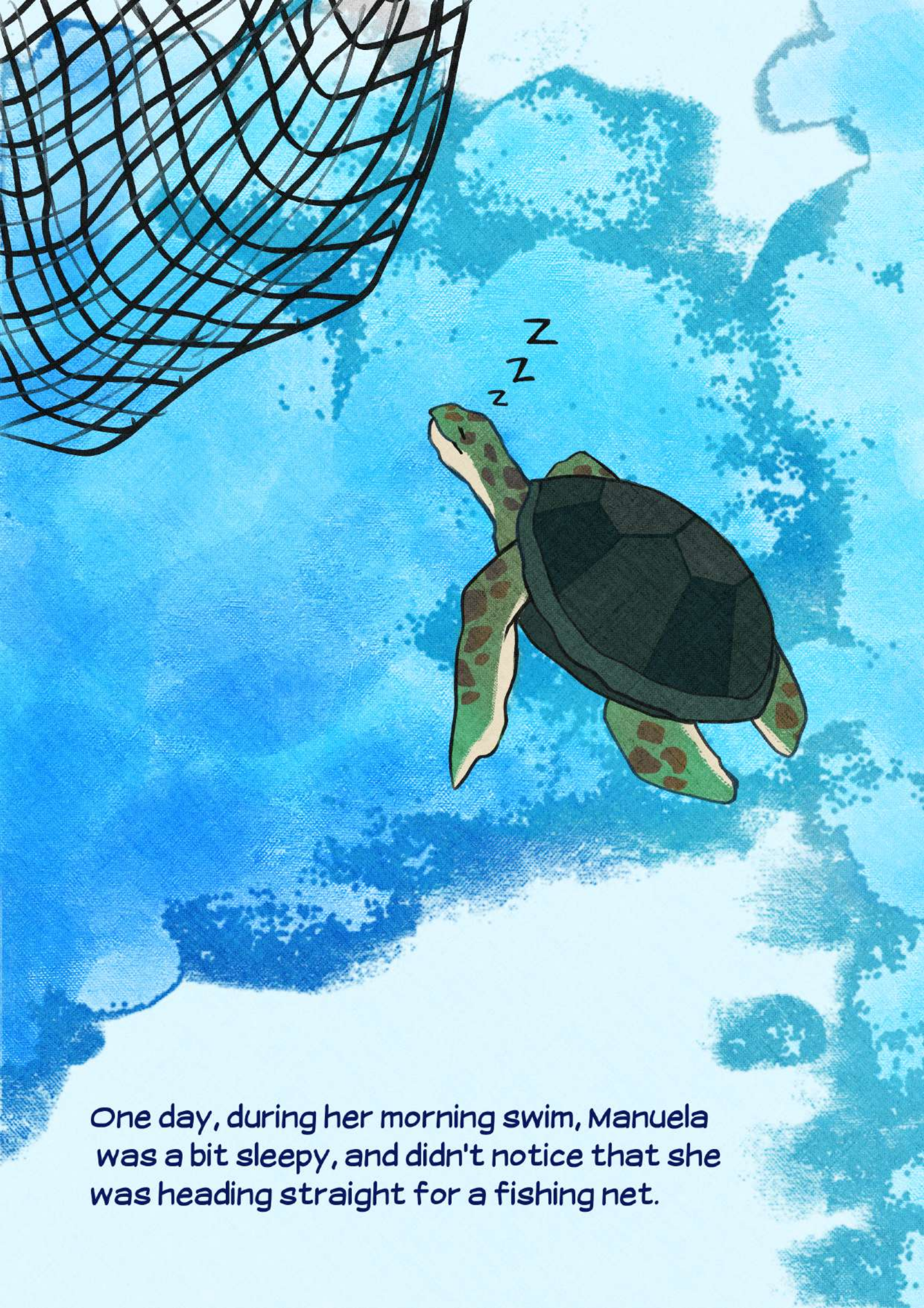
Life under the sea has always been fulfilling for Manuela, who spent her days among seaweed and reefs. Under the sea she is happy, flapping from place to place, leaving a trail of bubbles in her wake.

Swimming is one of the things the young turtle enjoys most.



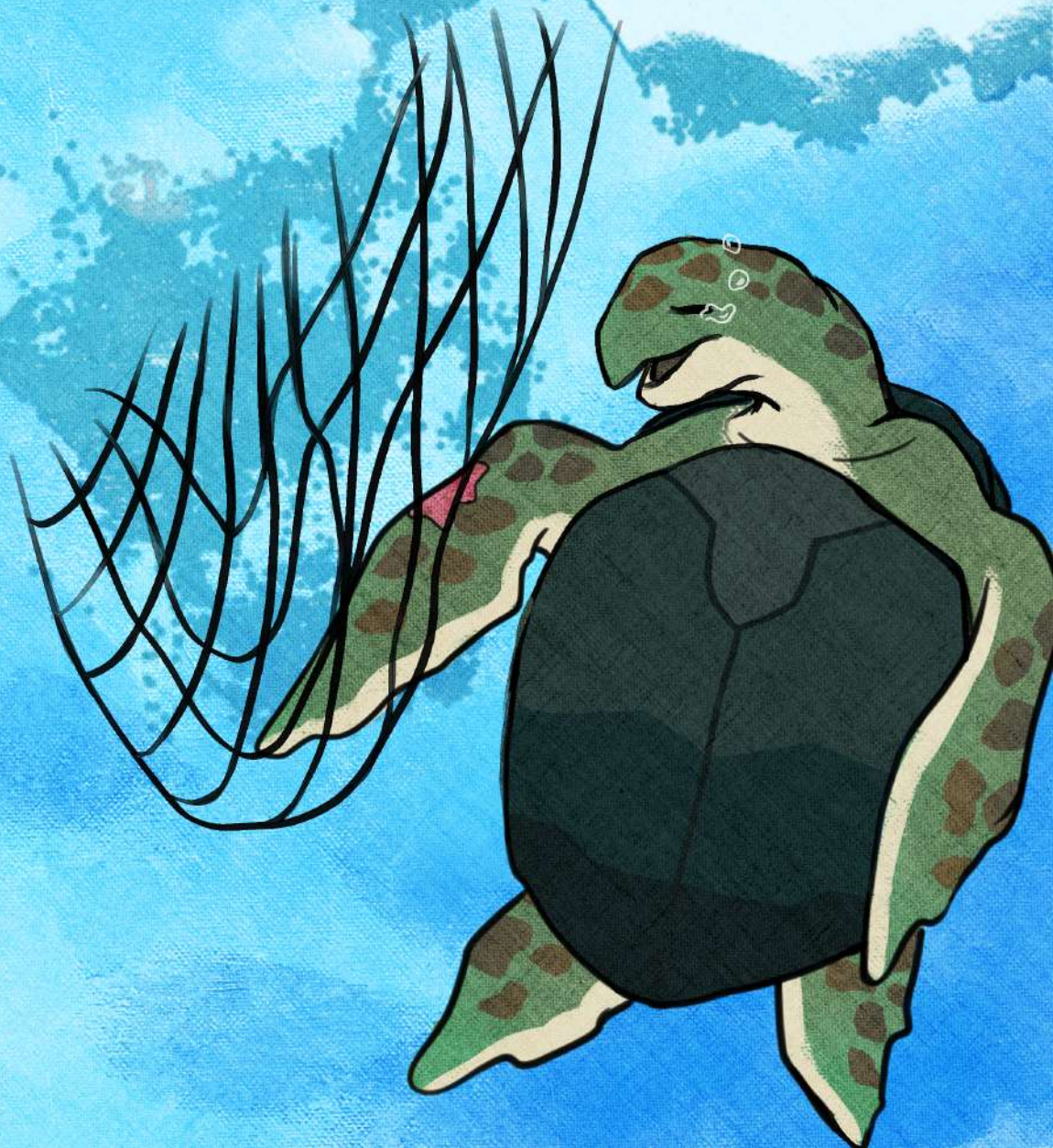
On the reef, Manuela has many friends, hanging out with the other turtles and working together. Their work, however small it may seem, is very important for the balance of the ecosystem, so Manuela was happy to be part of something so substantial to life.





One day, during her morning swim, Manuela was a bit sleepy, and didn't notice that she was heading straight for a fishing net.

Her right flipper got caught and, in her struggle to go free, she hurt herself.



A couple of hours later, when she woke up, Manuela was in a pond. She didn't know what this new place was. She felt disoriented and in a lot of pain. She tried to swim to look for her reef, but it was useless. She stared at the little leaves above the water as she became homesick.





That night, Manuela wept and wailed over her injured fin. Someone had healed it, but the discomfort was what saddened her most, because she didn't know when she would be able to swim as freely as before.

—Don't cry, my dear, it will be all right, —a voice comforted her.

Manuela wasn't sure where the voice came from, as it didn't sound like an aquatic voice, like that of her friends on the reef. She felt a gentle touch on her head, and her immediate reaction was to hide in her shell.



—Don't be afraid, it's all right,—the voice repeated.

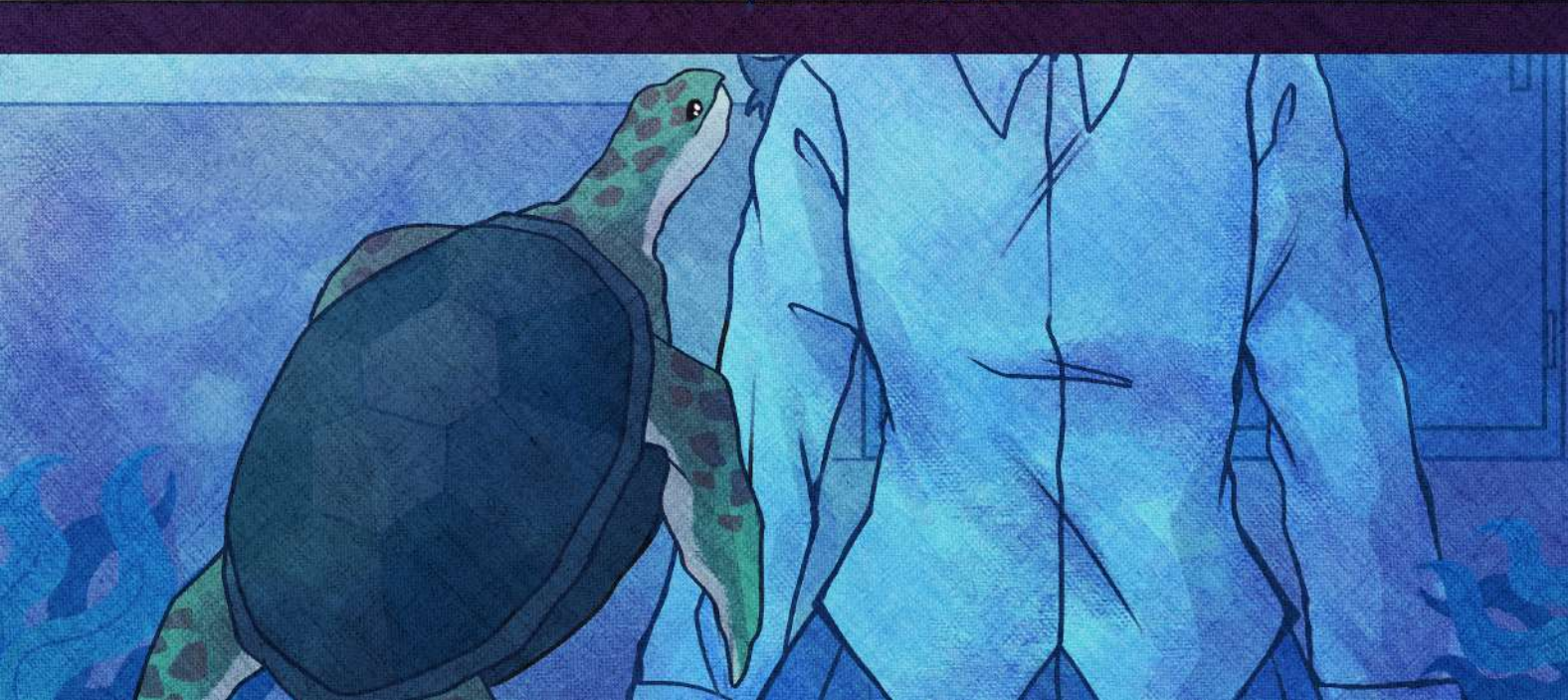
Manuela poked her head out, and replied suspiciously.

—Who are you?

— Oh, you do know how to talk! So, tell me, why are you crying?

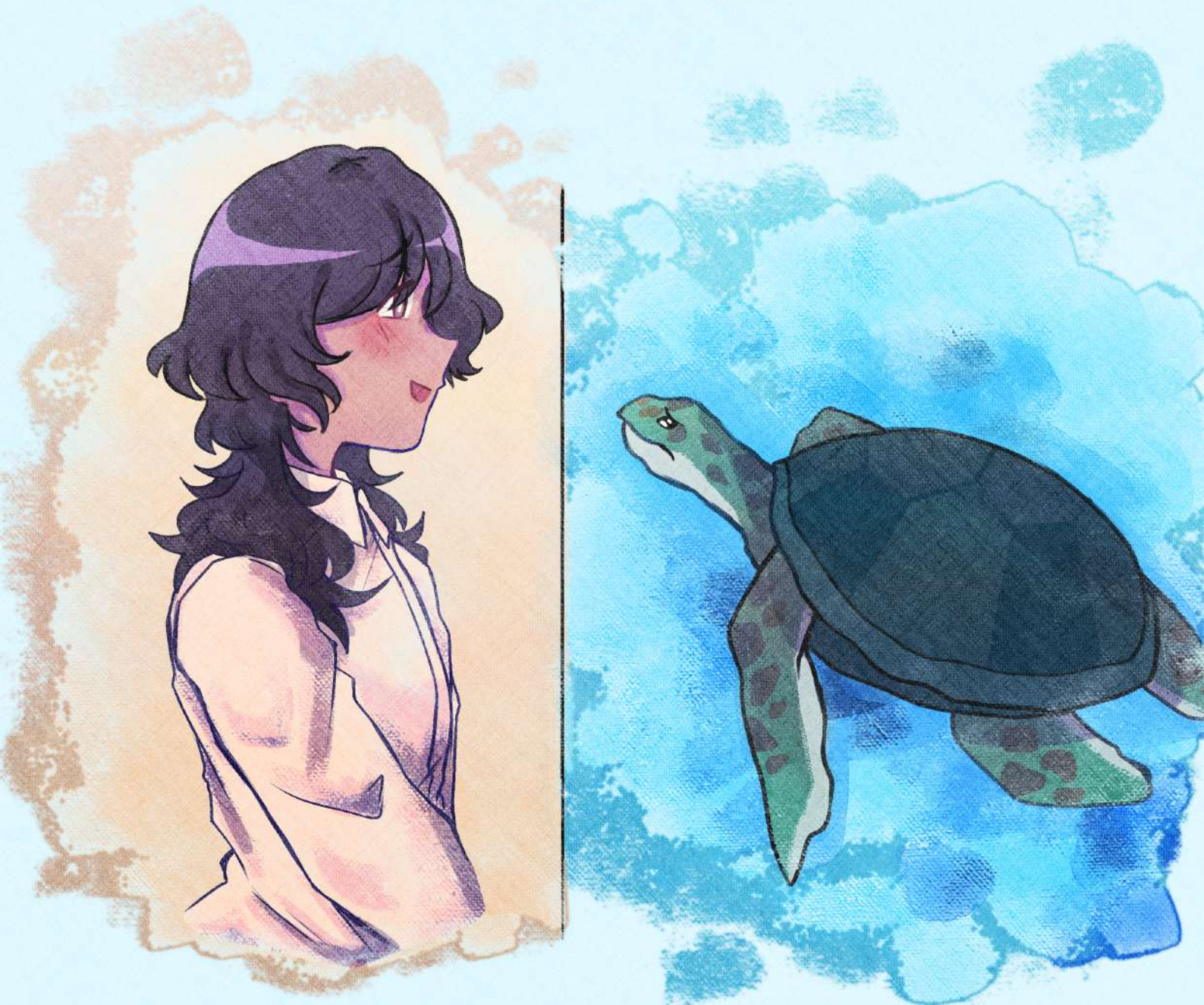
—First tell me who you are, —Manuela answered between sobs.


—My name is Evelyn, I found you in my father's net, you were the only turtle among so many fish, — the young girl, sitting on the edge of the pond, kept caressing her shell, —now will you tell me why you are crying?



—I'm Manuela, my flipper hurts, I can't swim well and I miss my home. I don't like it here.

Evelyn understood her new friend's sorrow. She promised to look after her until her fin was completely healed, and then she would take her back to the sea.

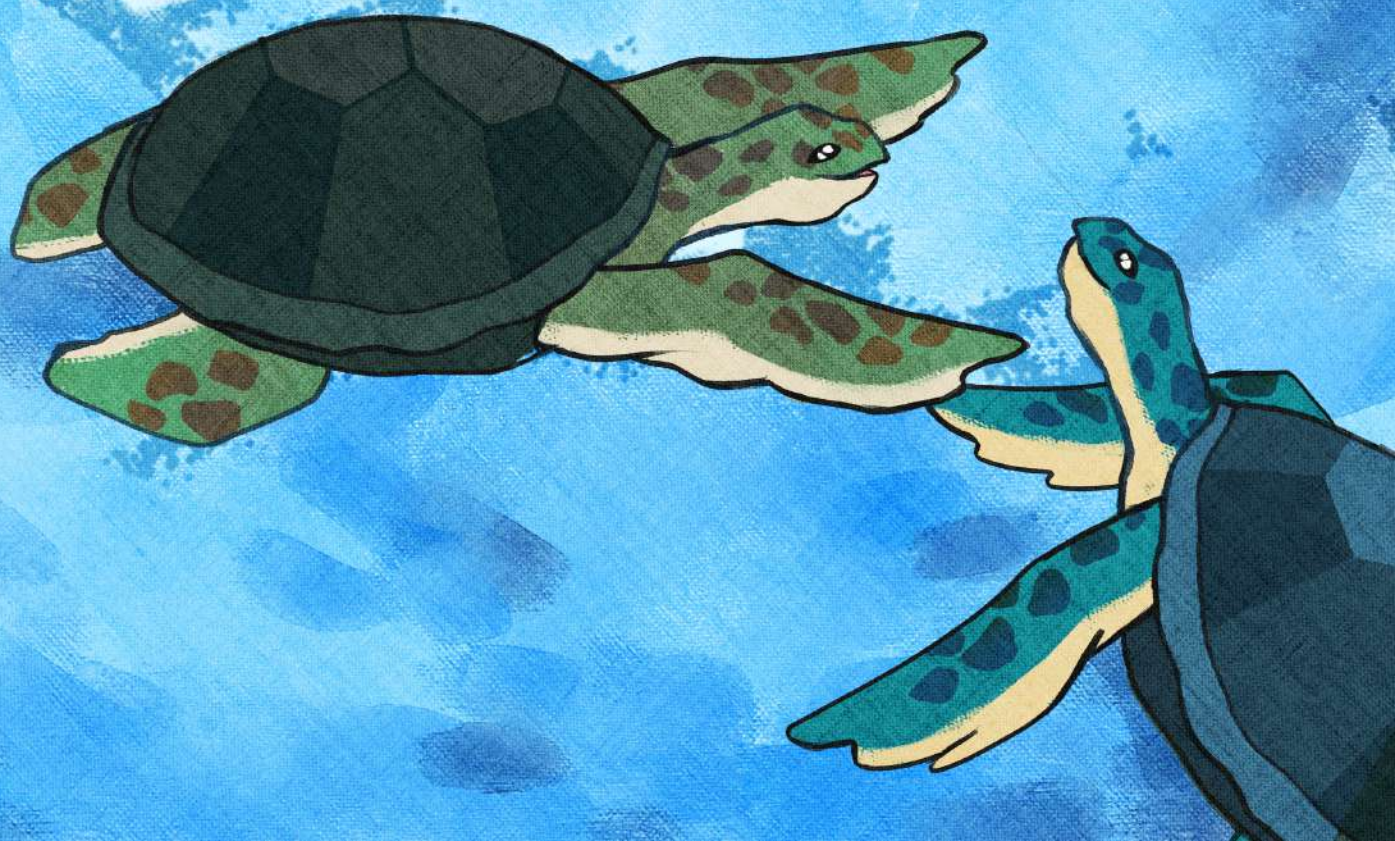


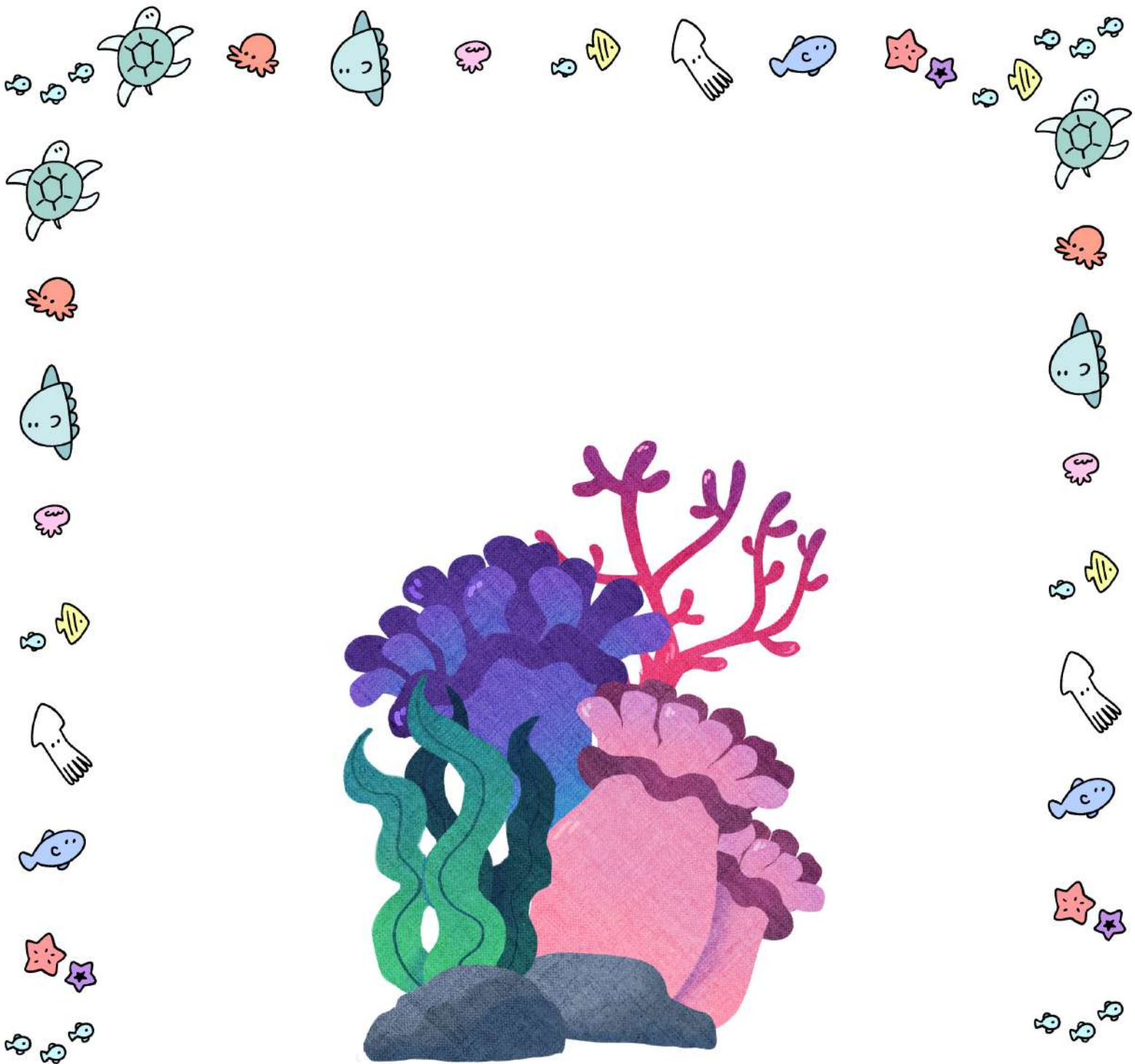


A pond is no place for a turtle.
Manuela's right is to be at home in
the sea. After a month, she was ready.
Evelyn kept her promise. She returned
Manuela to the sea, allowing her to continue
her work on the reef.

Manuela was once again a free and happy turtle.
Moreover, after that, the girl and the turtle continued
to see each other, because now they were friends.
And, as important as freedom is friendship.

The End





“Manuela in the Pond”

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