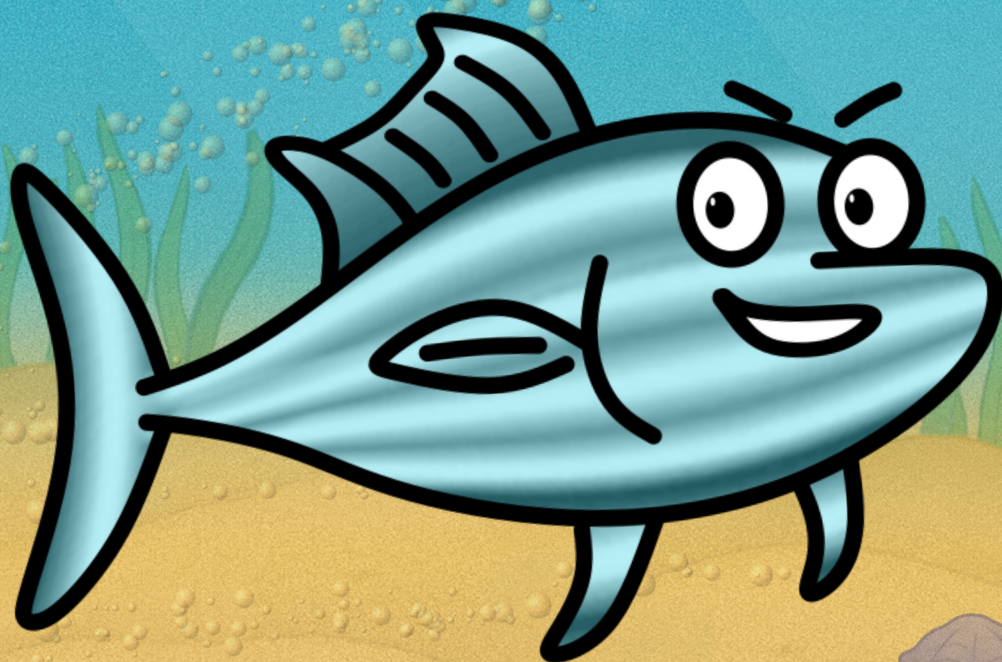


Max Speed

Max



Melanie Atkinson

Written by Melanie Atkinson.  
Illustrated by Simon Robinson.  
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This is a work of fiction. Any names, characters, or places are made up or used in a fun and imaginative way.

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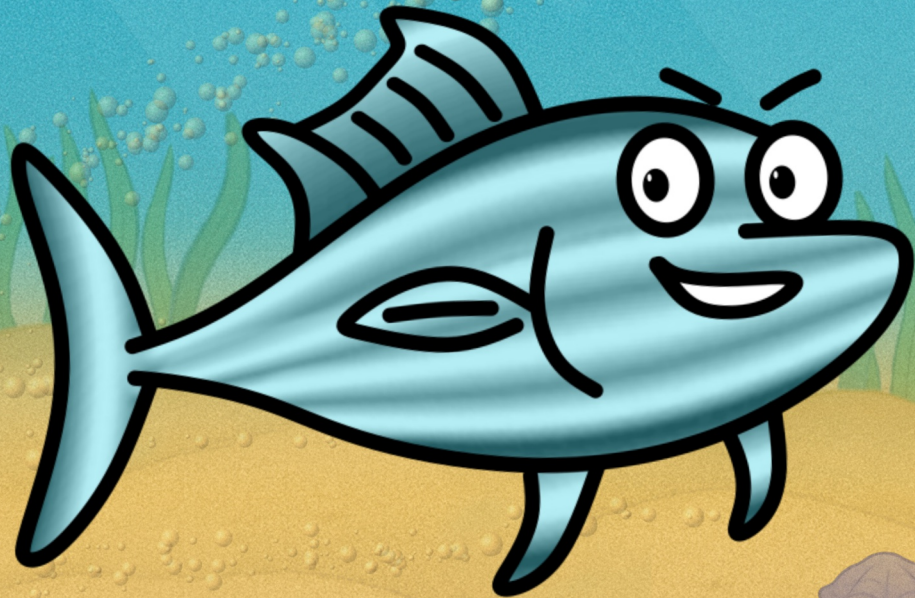
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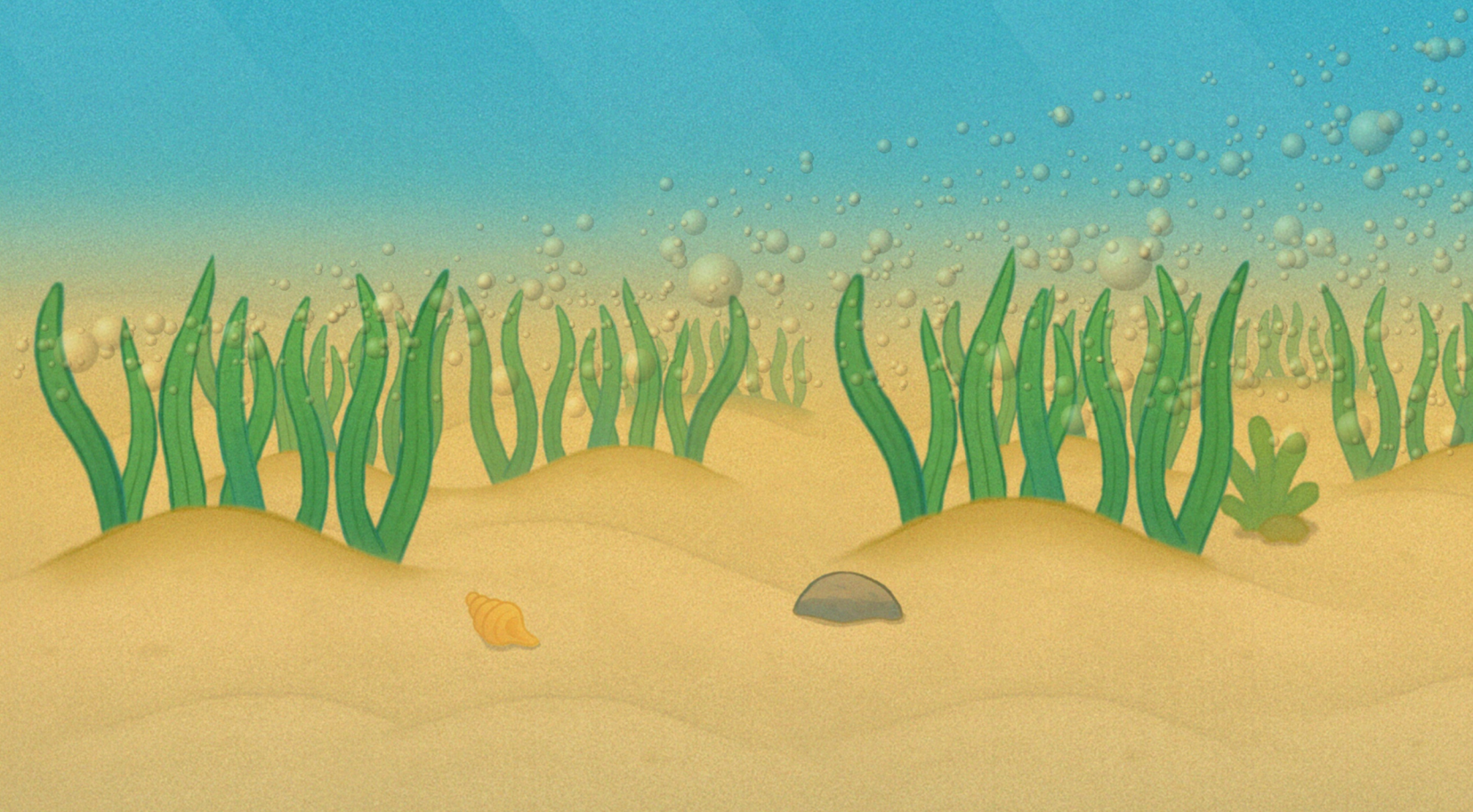
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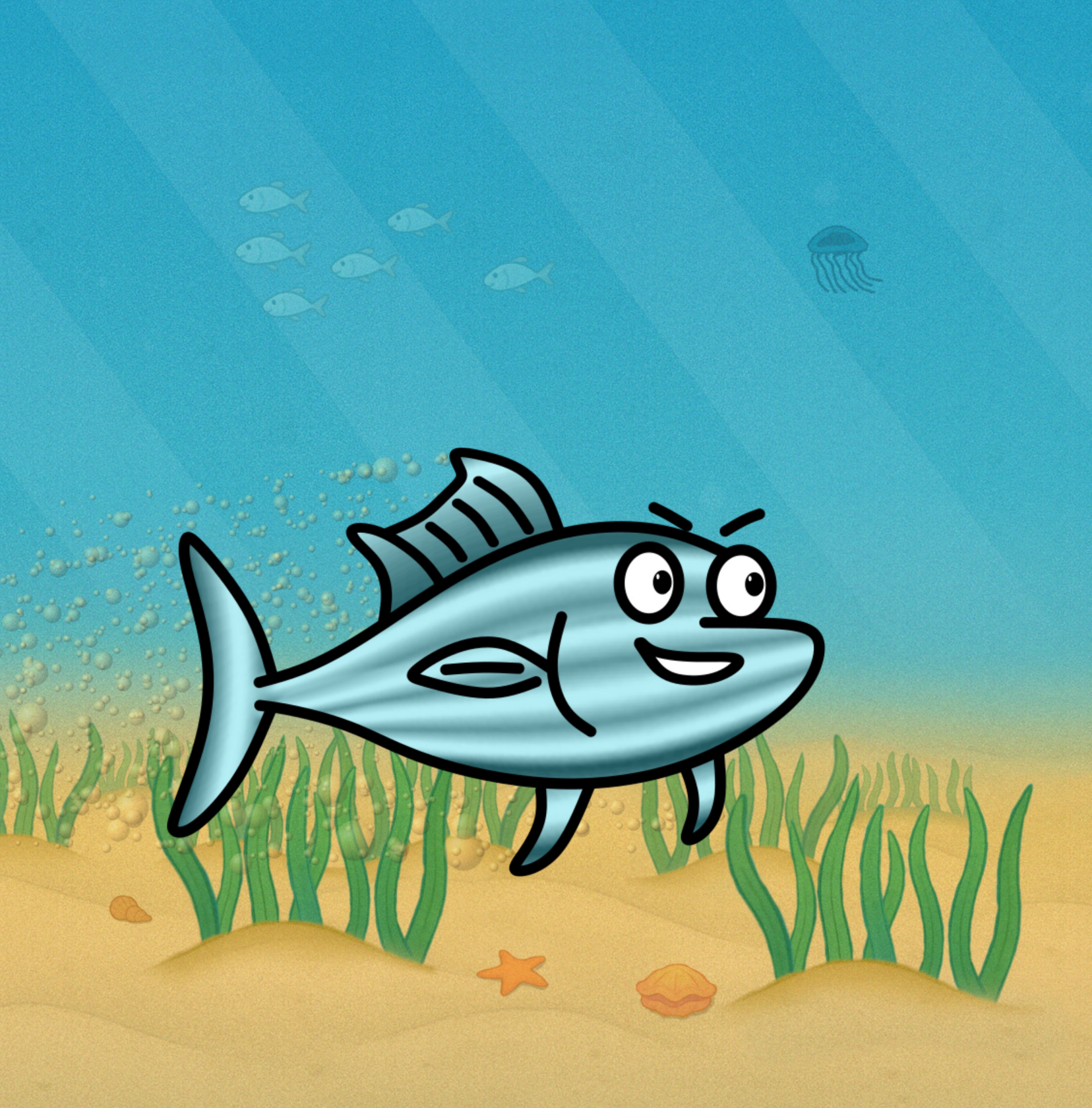
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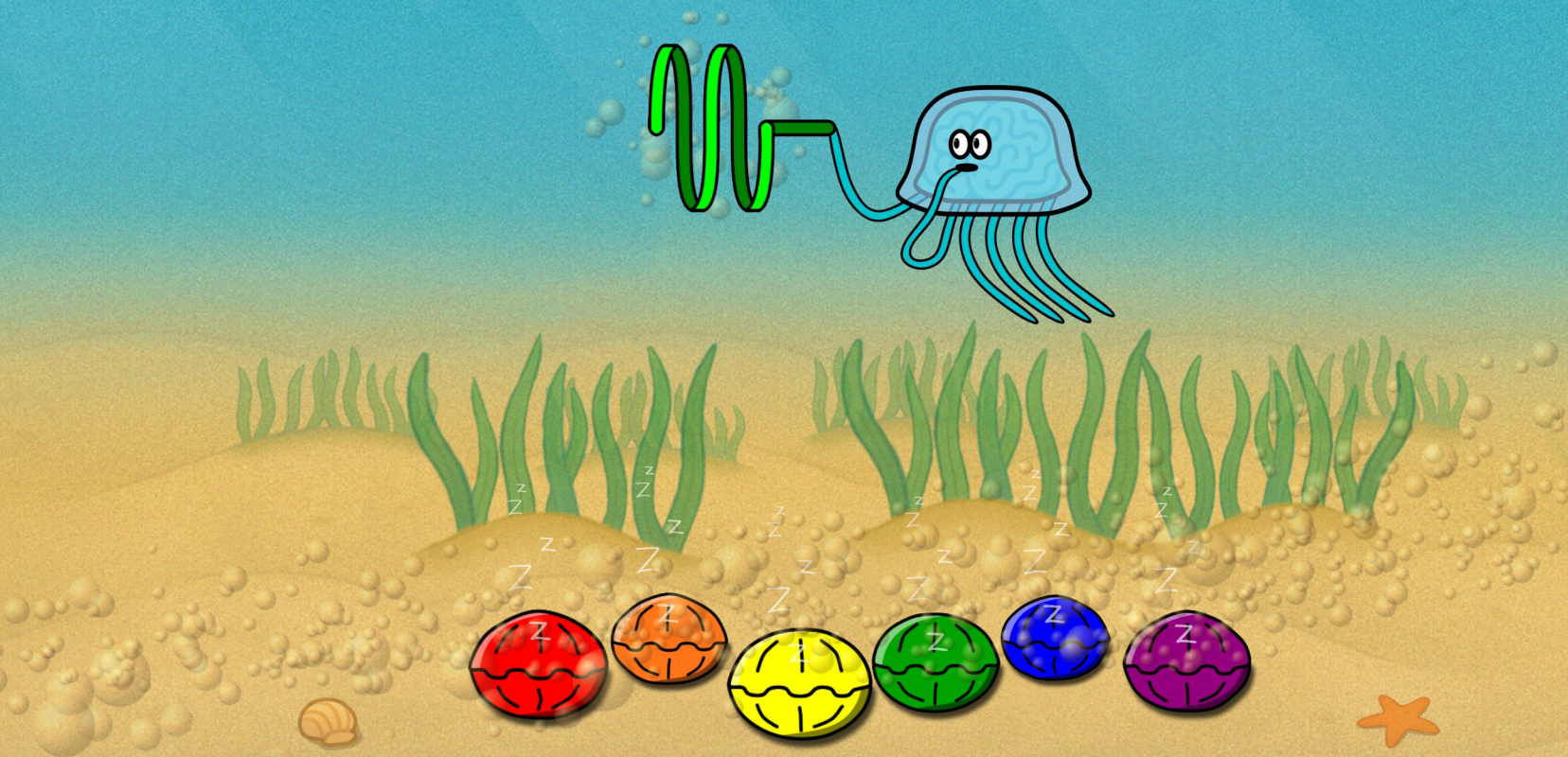


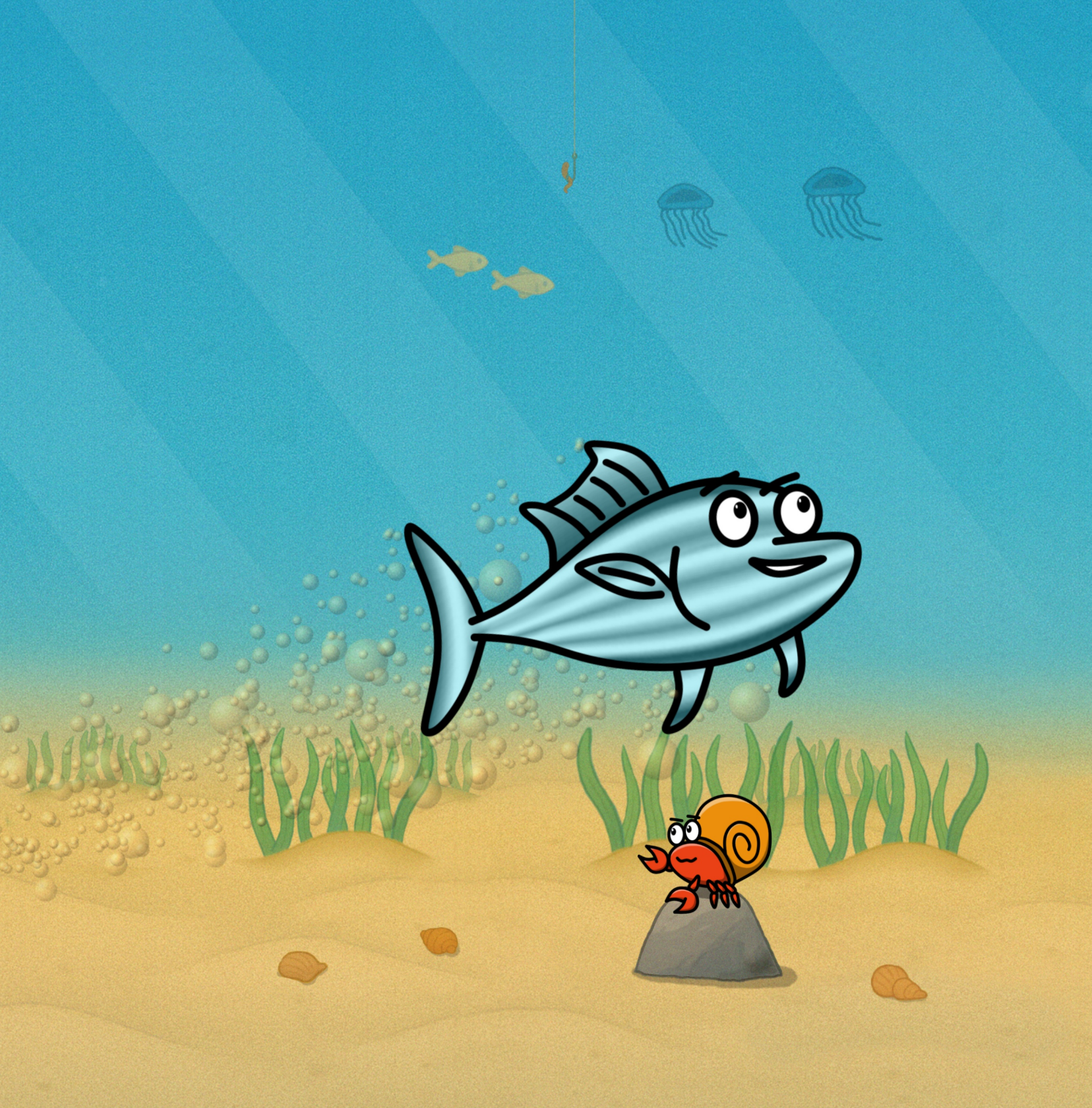
“I am the fastest... fish... on the reef!”  
said Max Tuna, zooming through the seagrass.






“ZOOOOM!” shouted Max as he swam past the quietly sleeping clams.





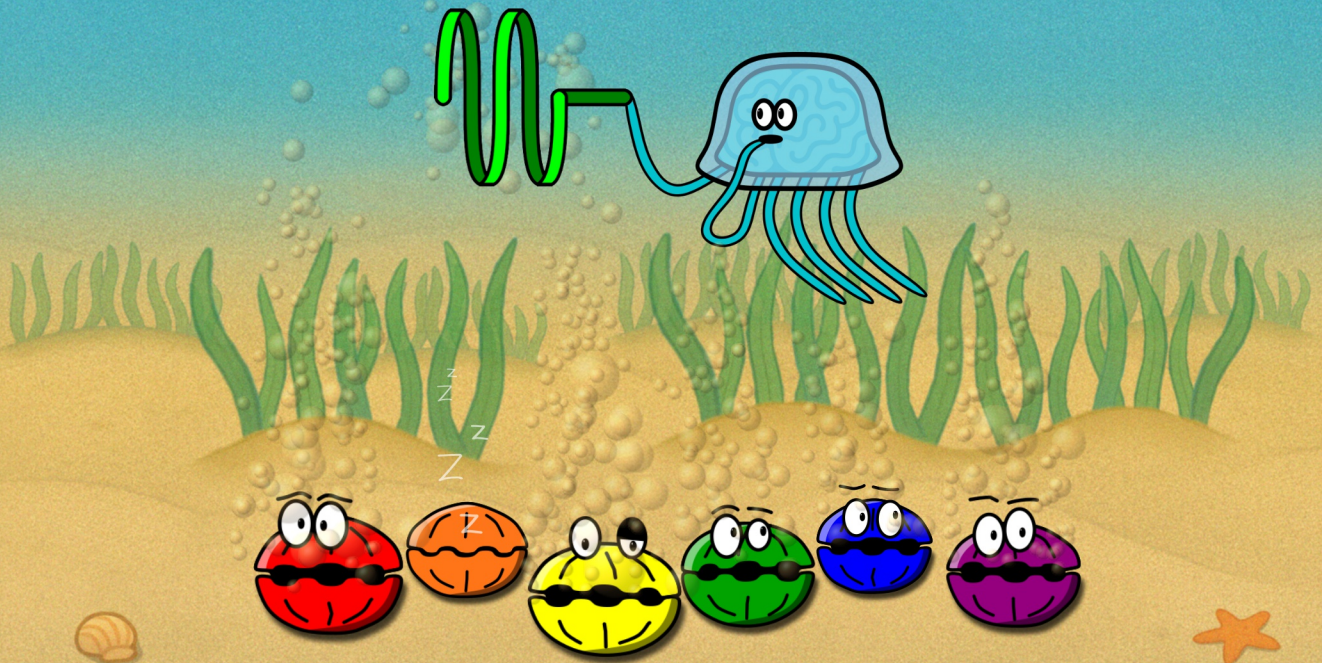


“What’s happening?” ... “Why did you wake us up?” ... “Who’s that?” said the unhappy clams.



“Oh, it’s you, Meemee Jellyfish,” said Mr Clam.  
“I am going to speak to your teacher, Miss Coral.”

Meemee looked confused.



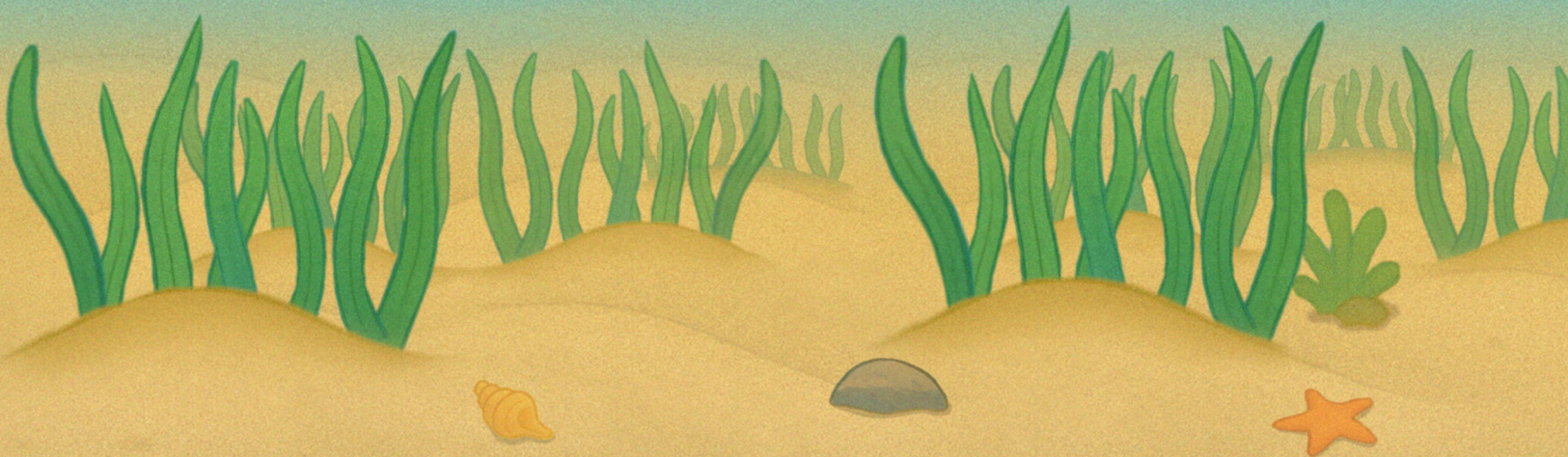


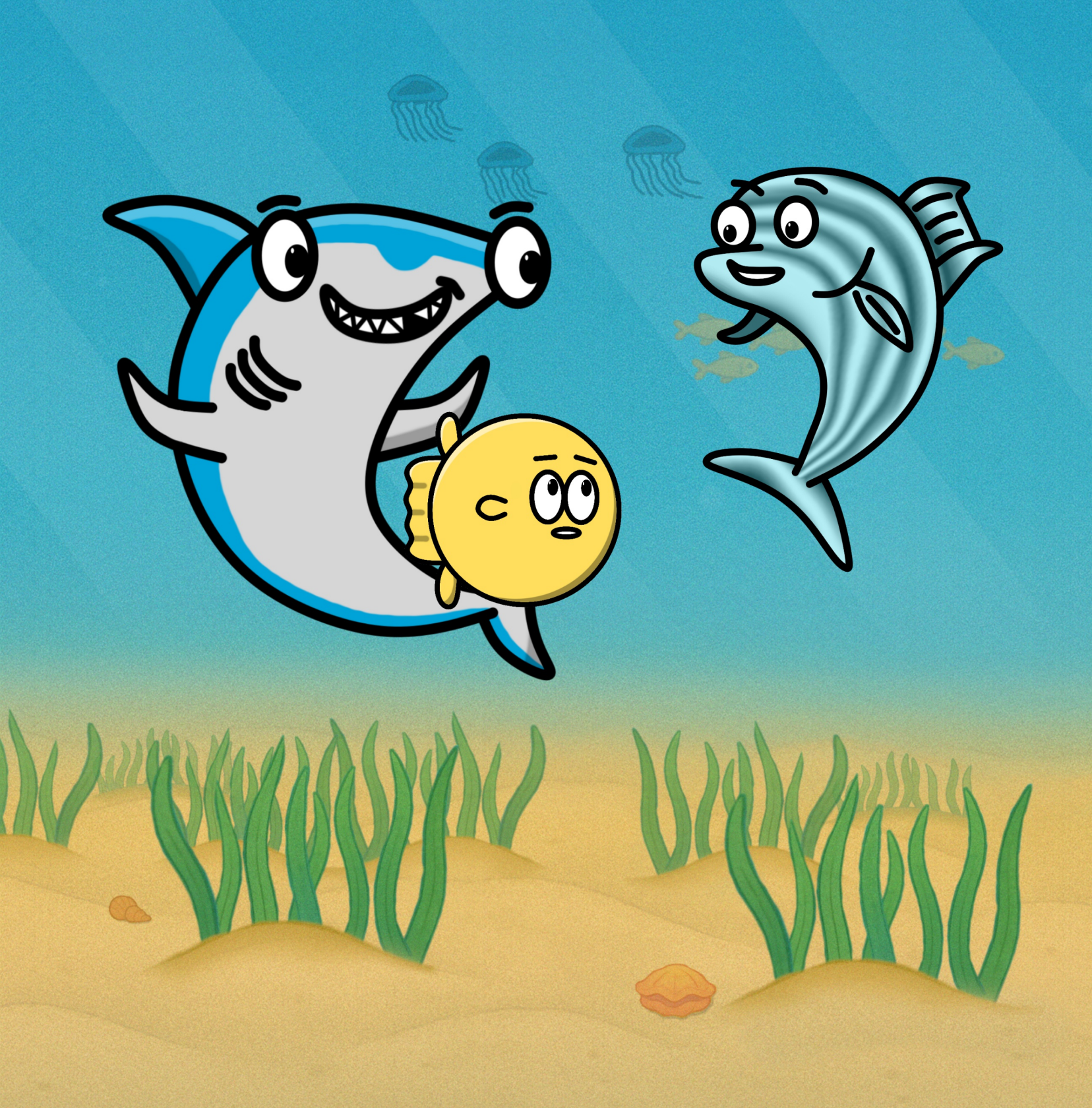



“Hey, Sandie. Hey, Larry,” said Max. “Race to the corals and back!”

“Oh, oh!” said Sandie Shark. “I’m gonna beat ya this time.”

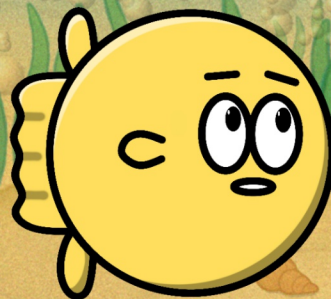
“Yer but nar,” said Max.

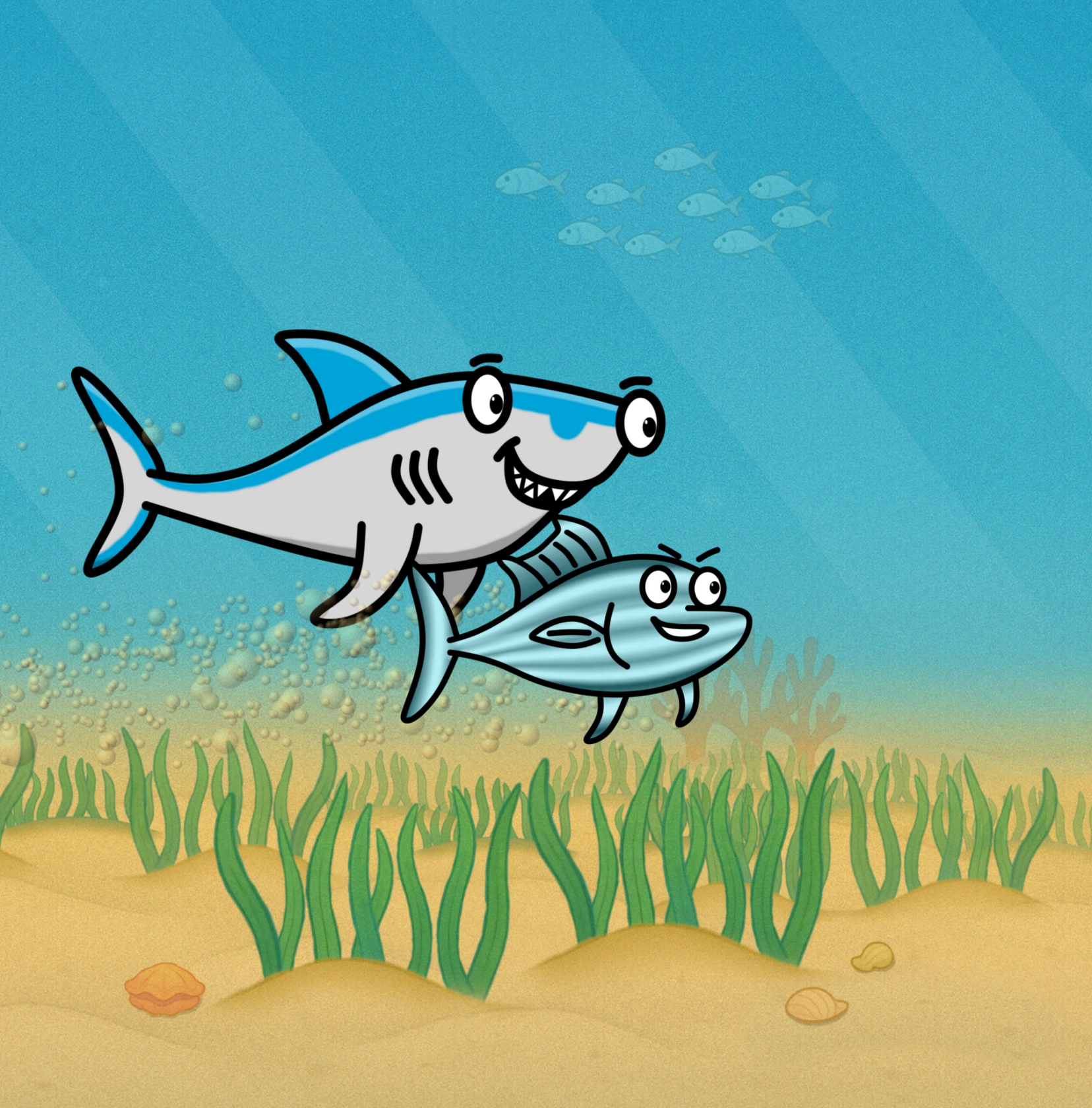




An underwater scene with a blue background. Three jellyfish are swimming in the upper part. A group of four yellow fish is swimming in the middle. The bottom is sandy with green seaweed, a grey shell, and an orange starfish. Numerous small bubbles are scattered throughout the water.

“ZOOOOM!” shouted Max as he swam towards the coral, with Sandie right behind. “Aw, hurry up Larry. Last one there is a lazy daisy.”

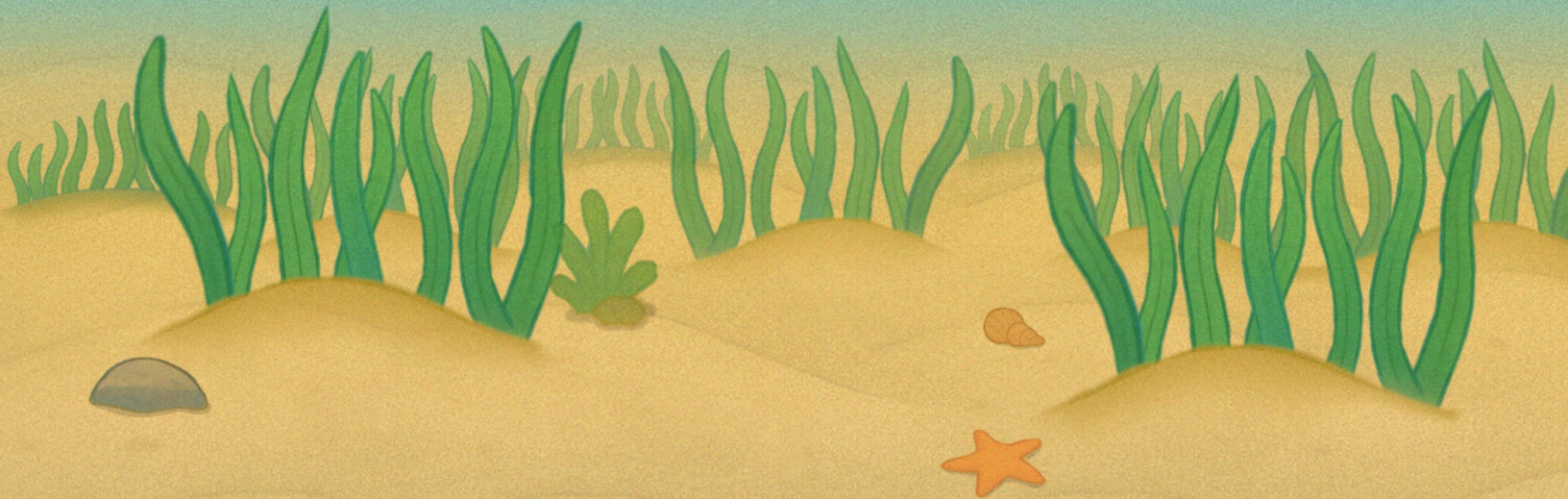


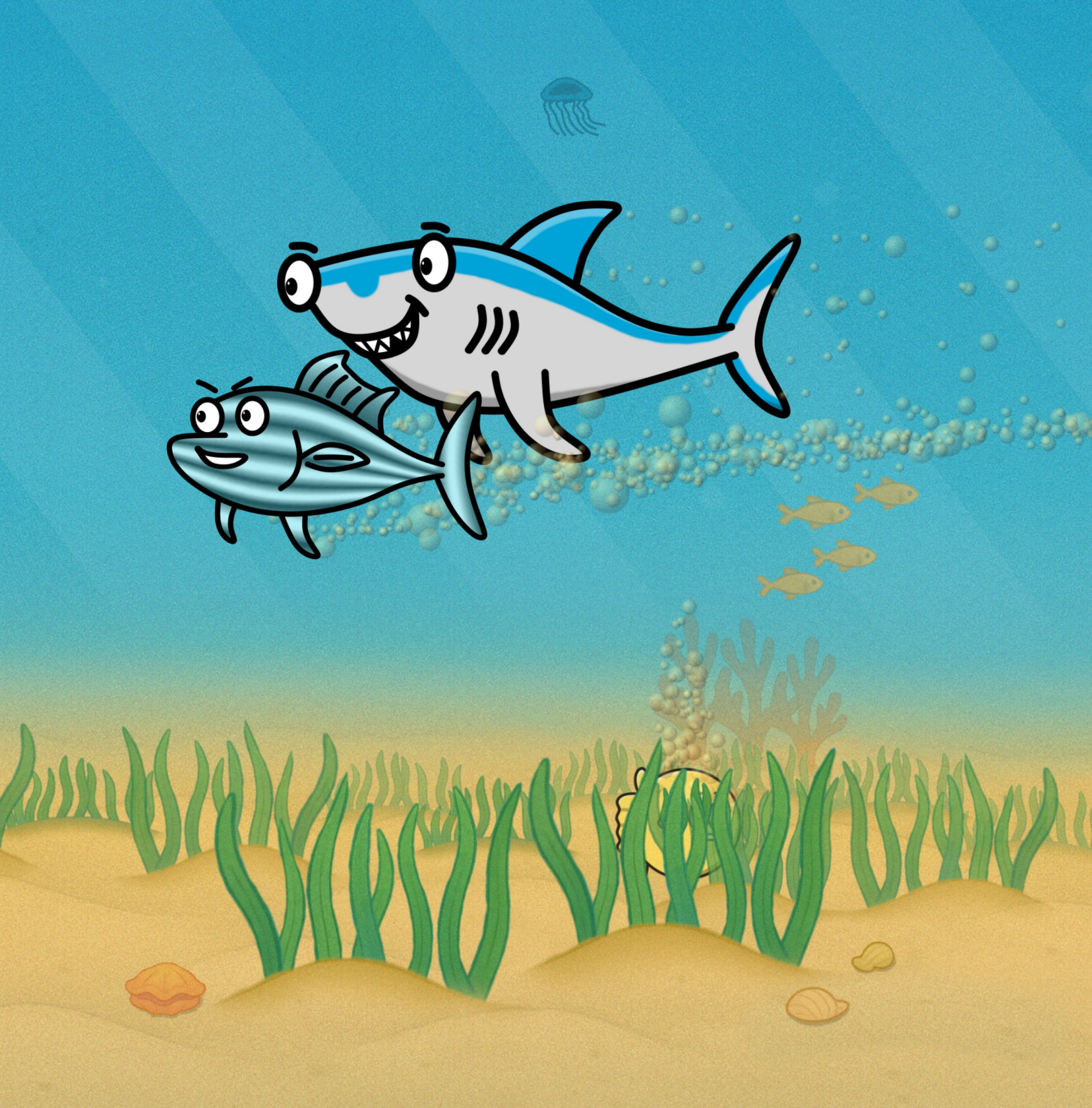




Larry Sunfish tried to keep up but found himself deep in the seagrass.

“Oh no,” said Larry. “I can’t see them anymore. Deep breath. Remember to breathe and be calm please, Larry. Breathe and be calm.”





“Maximillian!” said teacher Miss Coral. “Why did you leave Larry in the seagrass? And why is Mr Clam unhappy with Meemee?”

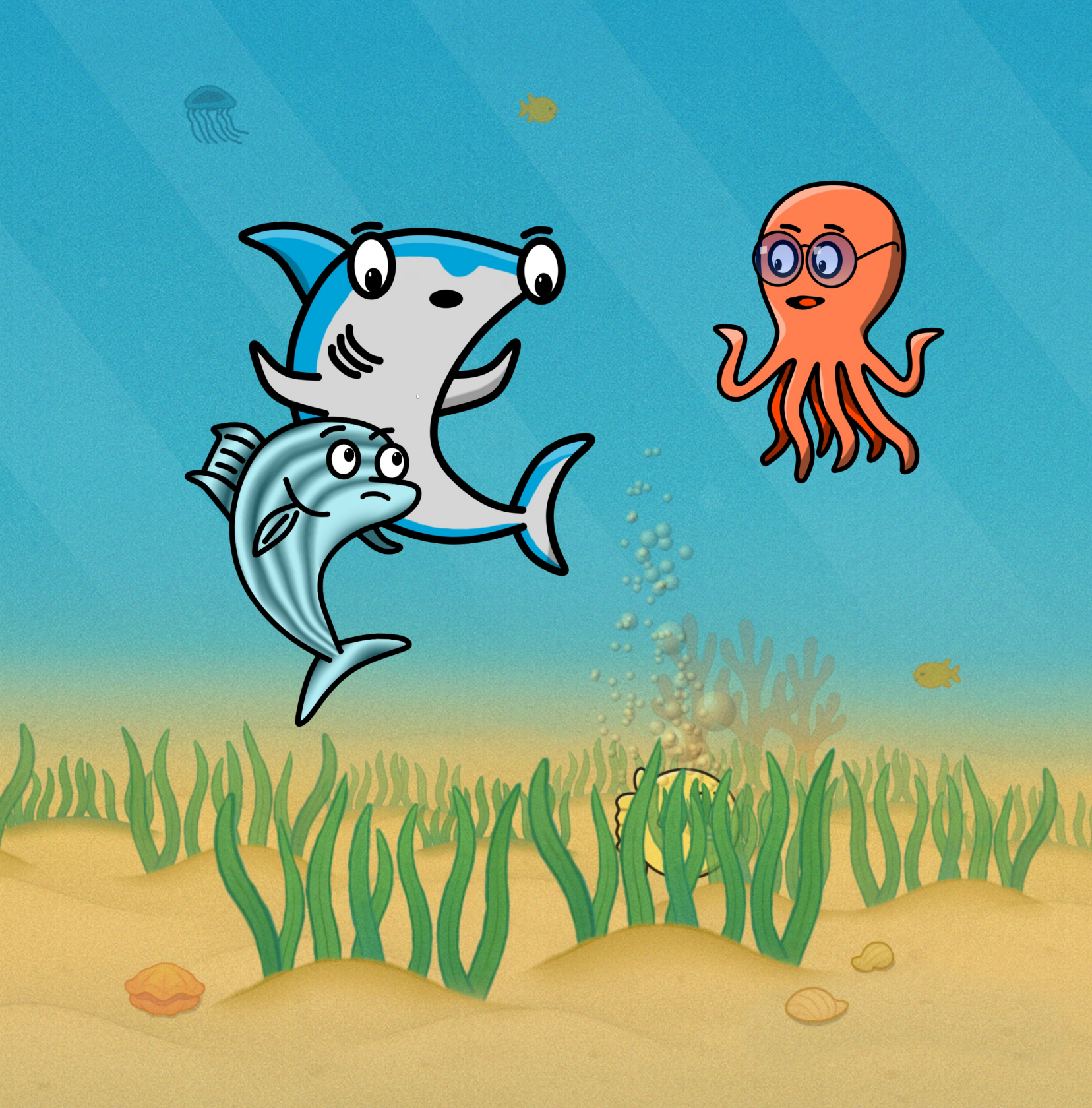
“Oh, sorry,” said Sandie. “I’ll go help Larry.”

“Larry is too slow,” said Max. “Why is Meemee in trouble? She was just twirling her ribbon.”

“Maximillian?” said teacher Miss Coral.

“Aw,” said Max. “It’s not Larry’s fault he’s slow. And I might have woken up Mr Clam, I think.”







Max zoomed over to Quinn Cuttlefish.

“Hey, Quinn, first one to stack four shells... is the winner!”





Quinn carefully stacked his shells, steadying each before adding the next.

Max zoomed and collected shells in record-setting time.

“I am the fastest shell stacker... on the reef!  
One, two, three...”





“F... F... Awww.”

Max’s stack  toppled over before he could place his last shell.

Quinn carefully placed his fourth shell and stood back to admire his work.

“Aw, you won again,” said Max. “I don’t understand. I am the fastest.”







"I... I like to make it look neat," said Quinn.

"Aw, that takes too long."

"And I want mine to stay up, so I go slow," said Quinn.

"But I like fast. And zooming. Aw. But I got Meemee in trouble, and I left Larry behind and made him sad when I zoomed... Aw... Gotta go."







“Break time over, everyone,” said Miss Coral.



“Hey, Larry, I’m sorry you got lost in the seagrass. I’ll try to slow down next time. Do you want to swim back to class together?”

“Yes please, that would be good. Thank you,” said Larry.

“Hey, Meemee, I’m sorry you got in trouble with Mr Clam.”

Meemee looked confused.





Miss Coral's message.

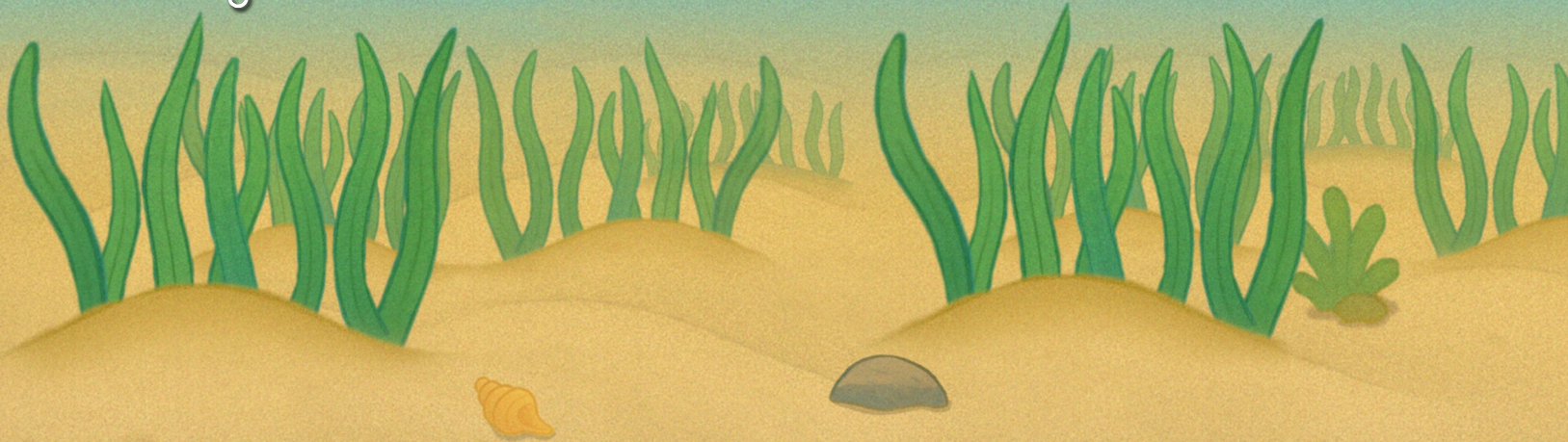


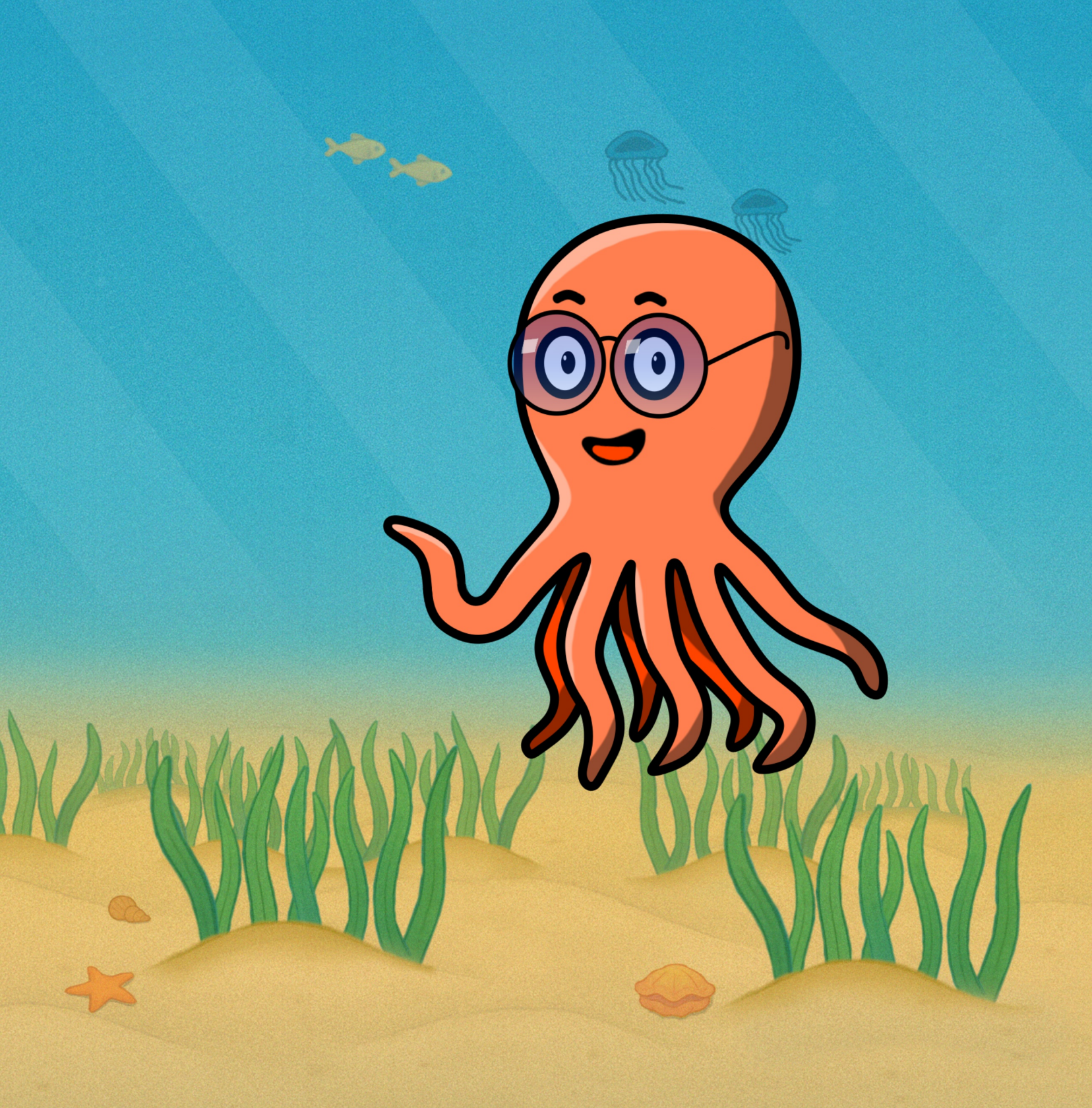
“Sometimes we move too quickly.

“If we act before we think, things can go wrong and our friends can feel upset.

“It helps if we stop for a moment, take a slow breath, and think about what to do next.

“Taking our time is not about being slow, it is about giving ourselves a moment to make kind, thoughtful choices.”





## Parent and Carer Notes

This story explores impulsivity, self-regulation, and learning to think before acting. Children aged 2-5 often move quickly through their world with big bursts of energy, driven by excitement and curiosity. They may not yet recognise how actions affect others, and they are still developing the ability to pause, self-regulate, and choose a thoughtful response.

### Support strategies

Use simple everyday moments to help your child practise pausing and checking in. You might say, "Let's take a breath first," or "Shall we stop and see what is happening?" Support children to notice what their bodies are doing by naming what you observe. For example, "Your body is moving quickly," or "Your body looks calm now."

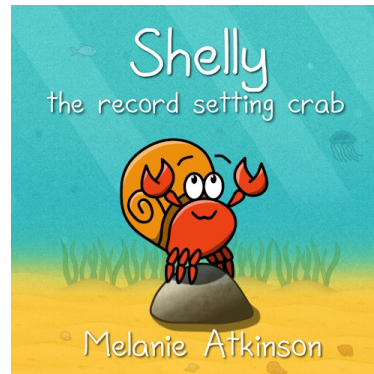
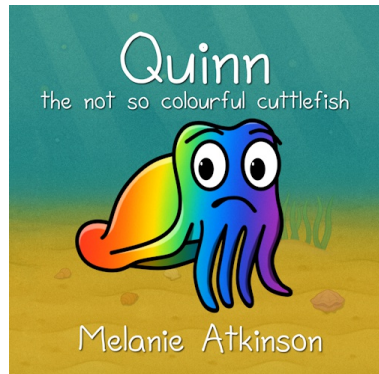
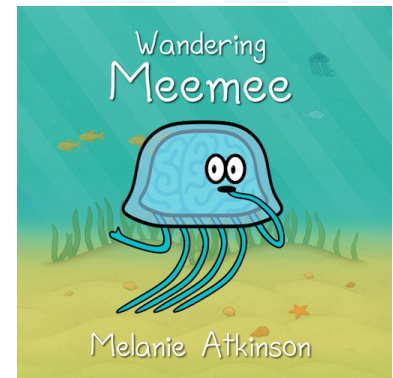
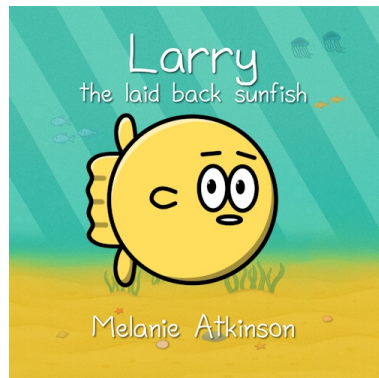
Model how to pause and look around before acting. Encourage your child to notice other people and what they might need. You might say, "Does your friend look ready?" or "Shall we see how everyone is feeling first?" Reinforce moments of thoughtful behaviour with feedback such as, "You waited and that helped your friend," or "You noticed they needed space."

When mistakes happen, guide children through simple repair. Offer language they can use, like "I am sorry," "Are you ok?" or "Can we try again?" Supporting children to make amends helps them understand empathy, responsibility, and the value of taking a moment to think before acting.

Helping children develop these early skills supports emotional safety and strengthens peer relationships, building the foundation for confident and thoughtful decision-making.

An expanded version of these notes and strategies can be downloaded free from the publisher website [www.PerthLight.com.au](http://www.PerthLight.com.au).

There are six books in the “On The Reef” series. Each book deals with pre-school children’s different “Big Feelings” and includes specific support strategies for parents and carers. Educator Resource Sheet PDFs and other parent and educator resources can be downloaded free from the publisher website at [www.PerthLight.com.au](http://www.PerthLight.com.au).



## About the Author

Melanie Atkinson is a teacher and early years educator based in Perth, Western Australia. With qualifications in Child Psychology and a degree in Early Childhood Education, she has worked in early learning centres with preschool and kindergarten children and their families for over 25 years.

Melanie's work is deeply rooted in the principles of the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Version 2.0, which guides her daily teaching practice.

Her passion lies in helping children develop a strong sense of identity, emotional wellbeing, and resilience through play, connection, and storytelling. Her stories are designed to reflect real-life emotions and experiences that young children face, offering support and guidance in self-regulation, empathy, and self-worth.

Melanie created the On the Reef series to support children, parents, and educators in navigating "big feelings". Together the On The Reef series of books offer language strategies and safe, playful moments for emotional learning. Each story is informed by the EYLF's vision of belonging, being and becoming, and reflects Melanie's belief that every child deserves to feel seen, heard and valued.

