

Little Turtle Messenger



Written by **Chan Eng Heng** Illustrated by **Tan Yi Sin**

Dear George,

I hope you will like the book.

Warm regards,

Chan.

27/6/2010

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Illustrated by Tan Yi Sin



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There is a hidden turtle in each picture. Try to find it. The "Did you know?" facts below each picture will help you learn more about turtles and how you can help save them.

Have fun reading this book!



Little Maya and her friends are very excited.

They have arrived at the Turtle Sanctuary for a turtle camp where they will learn about sea turtles. It will be fun as they will play turtle games and pretend to be turtles. They will take part in a drawing competition and also help to clean up the beach.

If they are lucky, they may see a mother turtle crawl up the beach at night to lay her eggs.





Did You Know?

A turtle sanctuary is a place where people protect turtles and save all their eggs for incubation. Monitor lizards, crabs and ants love eating turtle eggs.

Later in the day, the kids help to dig up a hatched nest. Baby turtles called "hatchlings" had crawled up to the surface two nights ago and made their way to the sea.

Some hatchlings can still be found in the nest. They are very cute and full of energy. Some of them will be released later tonight.

It is the first time Maya and her little friends have ever seen hatchlings.





Did You know?



A green turtle nest contains about 100 eggs. The nest is deep and the eggs are buried below 70-80cm of sand.

When night comes, it is time to release the hatchlings.

Everyone is given a hatchling to release.

The hatchlings scramble quickly to the sea. They know where to go on the dark beach. The kids have learnt that the hatchlings are guided by the light from the sea.

But if there are bright lights on the beach, they will be attracted to the lights instead and not find their way to the sea. It is important to keep the nesting beaches dark.





Did You Know?

Hatchlings face many dangers in the ocean. Only one out of a thousand hatchlings will survive to become an adult.



Maya and her friends are tired, but still excited after releasing the hatchlings. Now they are waiting in the dark for a mother turtle to come up.

Soon, one by one, they fall asleep. But Maya wants to stay awake to see a turtle make a nest.

Everything is so still. Only the sound of waves crashing against the shore can be heard.





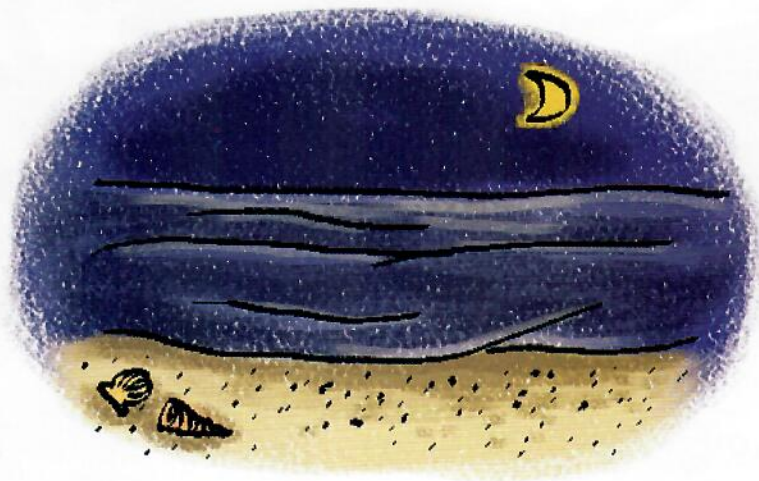
Did You Know?

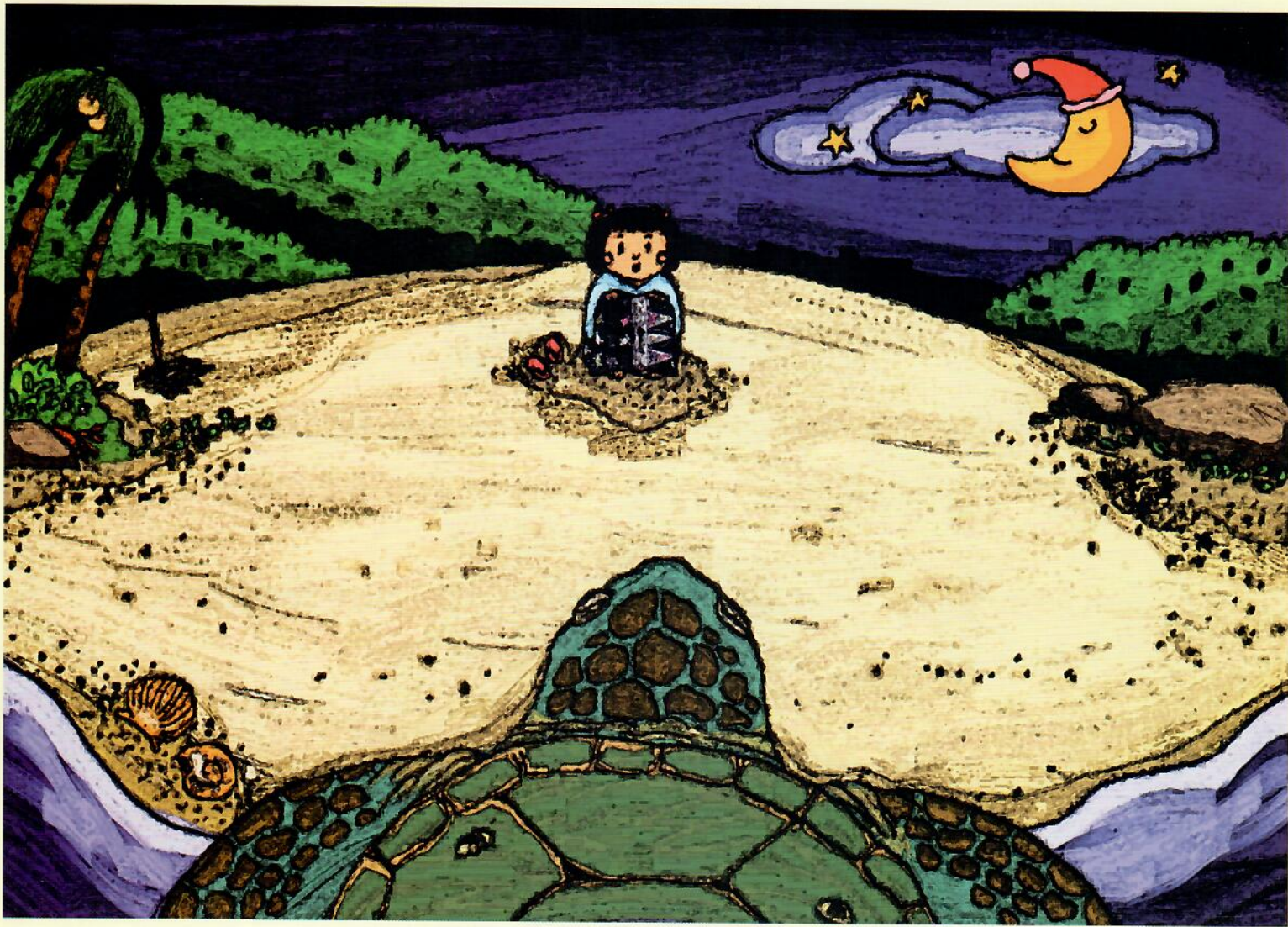
Turtles crawl up the beach to lay eggs at night when most of their enemies are asleep.



Then Maya sees something dark move in the water and come towards her. Is that a turtle?

She watches it emerge from the water and crawl to where she is. It is a turtle, a very old turtle, moving very slowly.





Did You Know?



When female turtles become adults, they return to the same beach they were born to lay eggs.



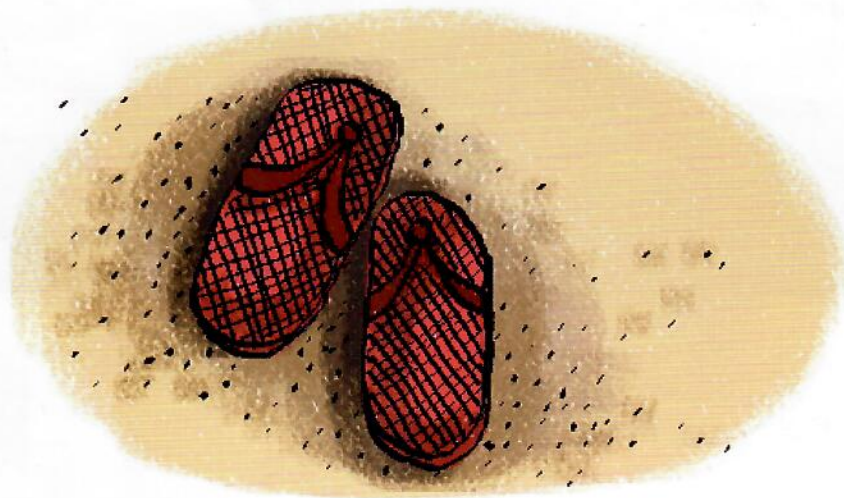
Maya thinks the turtle looks sad as their eyes meet. They seem to understand one another.

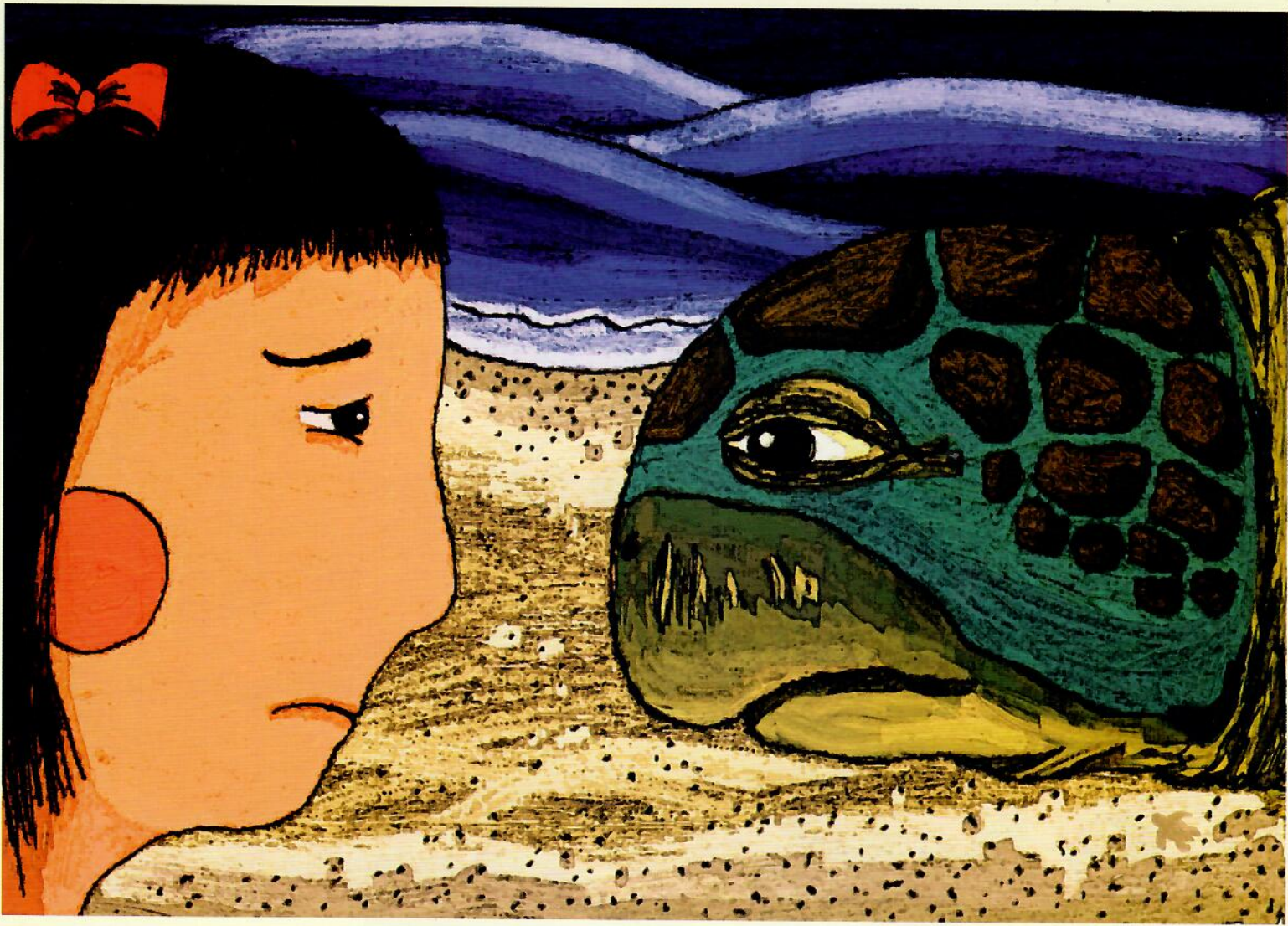
"Why are you so sad?" Maya asks the turtle.

"Do you really want to know?" the turtle replies.

"Yes," Maya answers.

"Then climb onto my back and I will show you," says the turtle.





Did You Know?

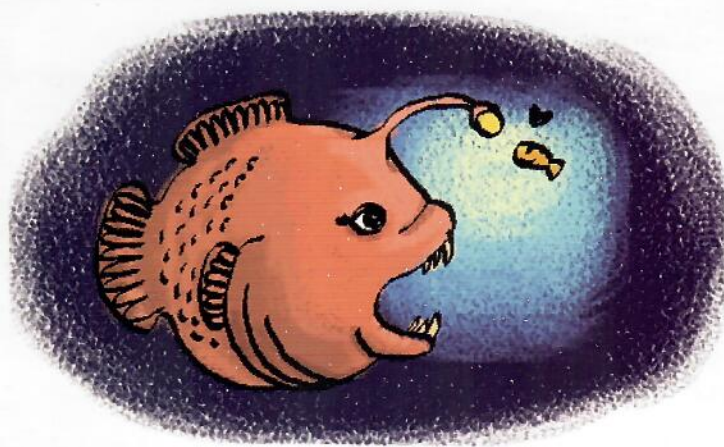
Adult green turtles are huge. They can weigh up to 180kg and their shell length is a metre long.



And so begins an amazing journey for little Maya.

In the darkness of the sea, she sees many beautiful and strange creatures that are lit up by lights from their own bodies. It is like a wonderland of lights.

The turtle explains that in the deep dark waters of the sea, it is important that the creatures produce their own light so they can see and look for food.





Did you know?

The angler fish carries its own bait over its head to attract small fish for food.

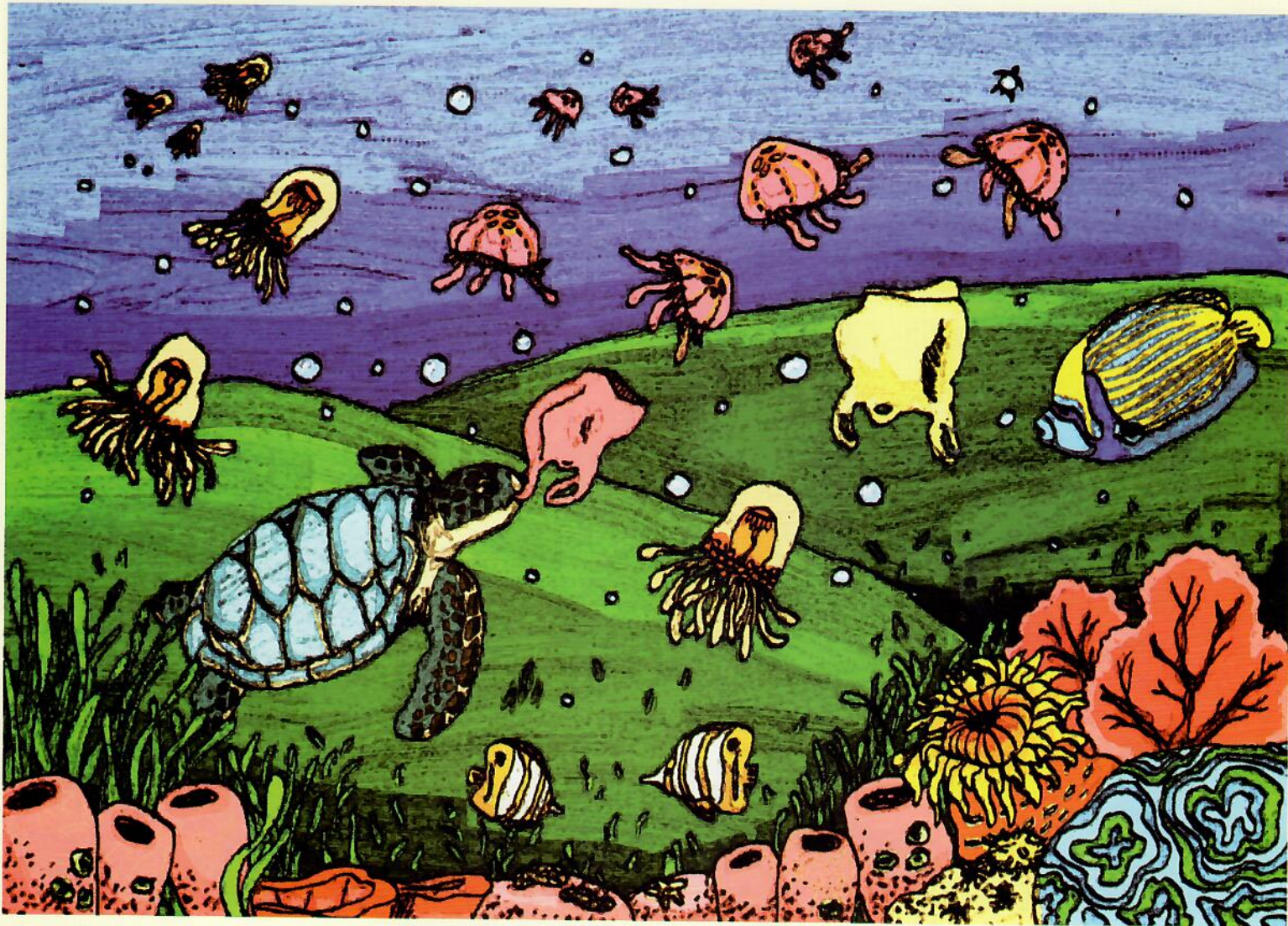
Maya holds onto the turtle tightly. They come to the surface of the water again where jellyfish is floating around. Among them are plastic bags.

"Look, a turtle is eating a plastic bag!" exclaims Maya.

"Yes," replies the turtle. "To us, plastic bags look like jellyfish. When we eat them, we get very sick and sometimes die."

This is so sad. In my village plastic bags are thrown everywhere and they get washed to the sea, Maya thinks to herself.





Did You Know?



We can help save turtles by reducing the use of plastic bags and not throwing rubbish on beaches.

Later, Maya sees old fishing nets tangled on some rocks.

"Oh no, there is a turtle caught in the net!" she exclaims.

The turtle quickly brings Maya closer to the nets and together they free the trapped turtle.

"Fishermen throw their old fishing nets into the sea, and often we get caught in them and drown," the turtle tells Maya.





Did you know?

Old fishing nets left in the ocean continue to kill turtles, dolphins and other endangered marine animals.

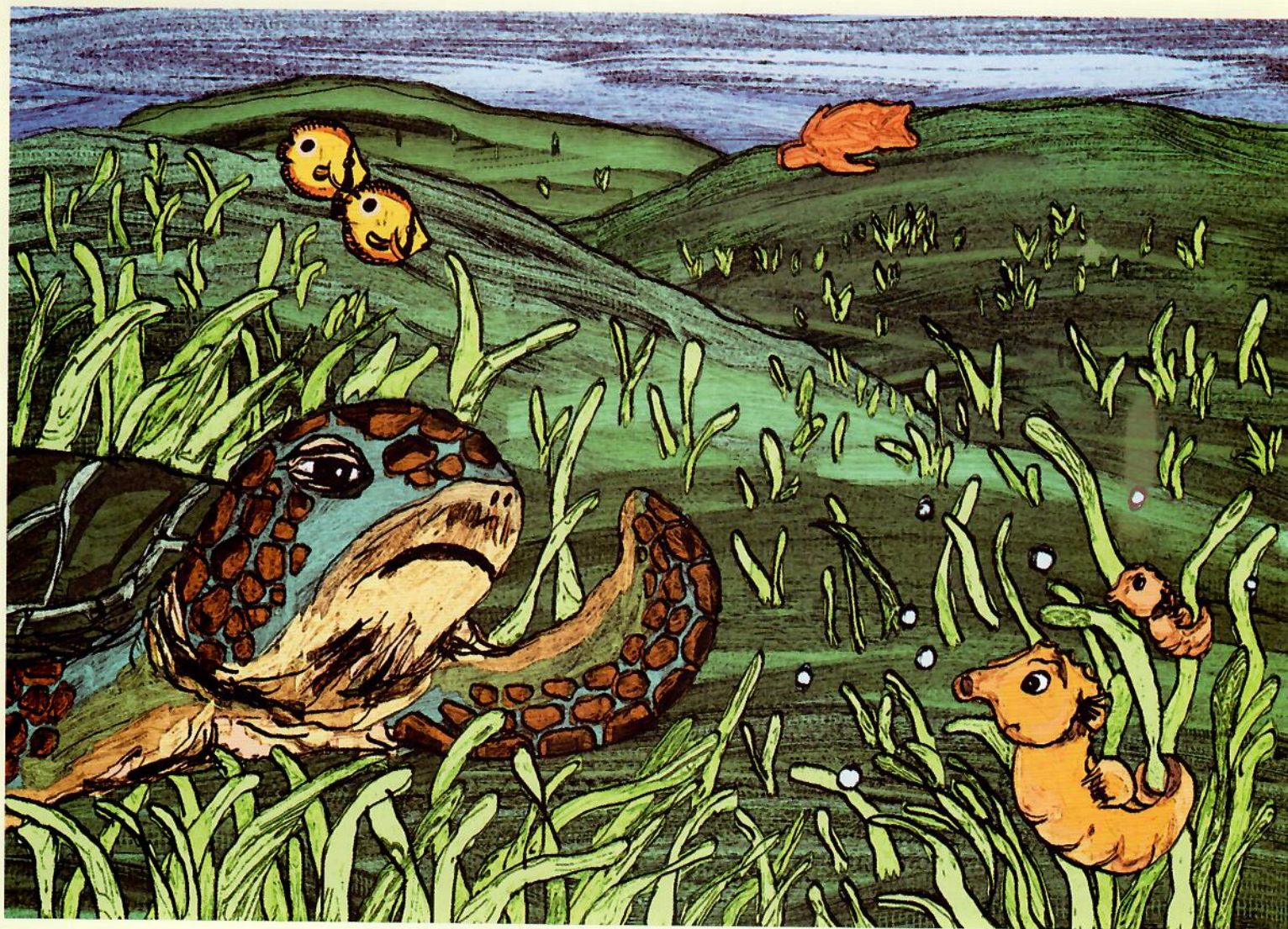


Finally, Maya arrives in the village of the turtles. There are very few turtles and all of them are old and sad.

"Your village is so different from mine. You do not have children playing around like in my village. Where have all of them gone?" asks Maya.

As the turtle looks at Maya knowingly, she suddenly realizes why. She is filled with shame and anger at the same time. Her people in the village have been eating turtle eggs, stopping them from hatching into baby turtles.





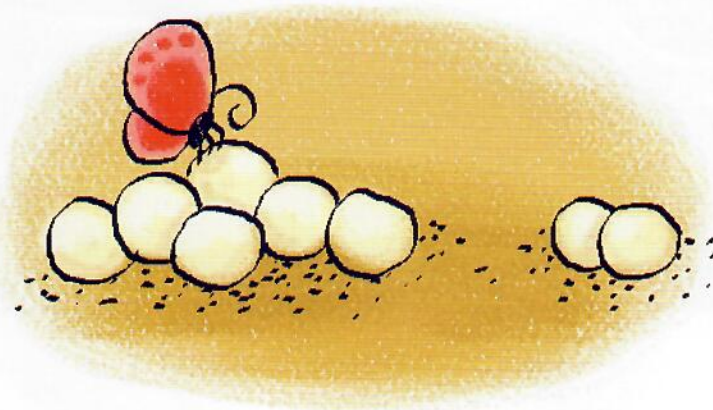
Did You Know?



A hatchling takes care of itself amidst the many dangers of the ocean. It takes about 20 years before it becomes an adult.

Maya thinks of people digging up turtle eggs. Her people have been doing this for as long as she can remember.

The turtle children have been stolen and eaten by humans. It is no wonder that only old and sad turtles remain in the village of the turtles.





Did you know?

For turtles to survive, all their eggs must be protected and incubated.

People do not just eat the turtle eggs. They make money out of them by selling them in the market. Maya remembers seeing turtle eggs in the market and even her mother has bought some.

How can the poor turtles continue to live when humans are eating all their babies?





Did you know?



Many people still eat turtle eggs.
This habit must stop if turtles are to survive.

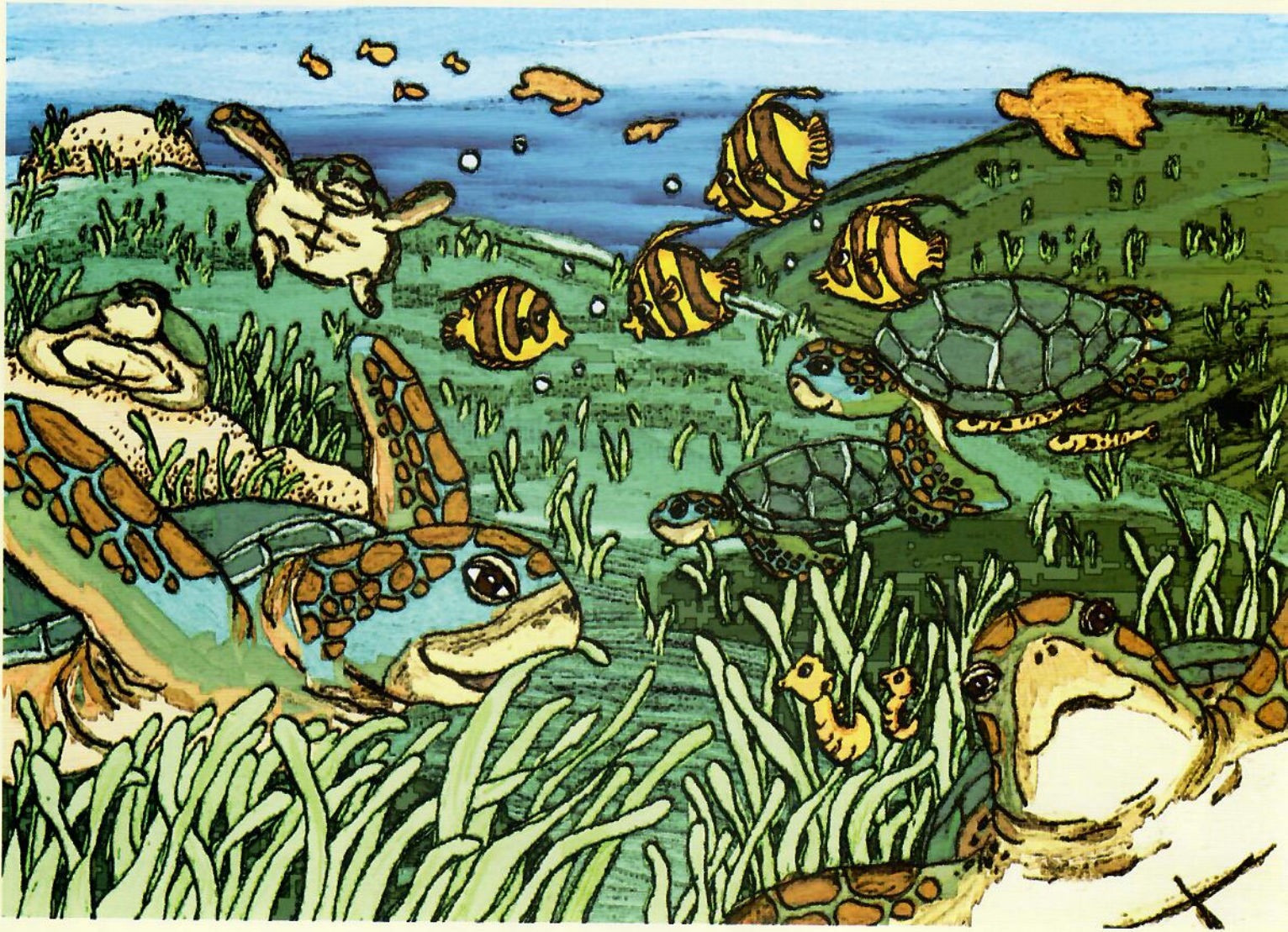
The turtle turns to Maya and says, "Please tell your people to stop stealing our eggs so they can hatch. We have lost so many children.

"We do not have much time left as all of us are so old now. Please help us get our happy turtle village back."

"Yes, I will tell my people what I now know. They have good hearts and they will listen to me," Maya promises.

The turtle smiles, then brings Maya back to the Turtle Sanctuary.





Did You Know?

Green turtles feed mostly on seagrass and seaweed.
They also eat jellyfish if they can find them.



The next morning, Maya tells her friends about her journey. They listen carefully and some of them start to cry for the poor turtles.

After Maya's story, all the children in the camp promise not to eat turtle eggs anymore.





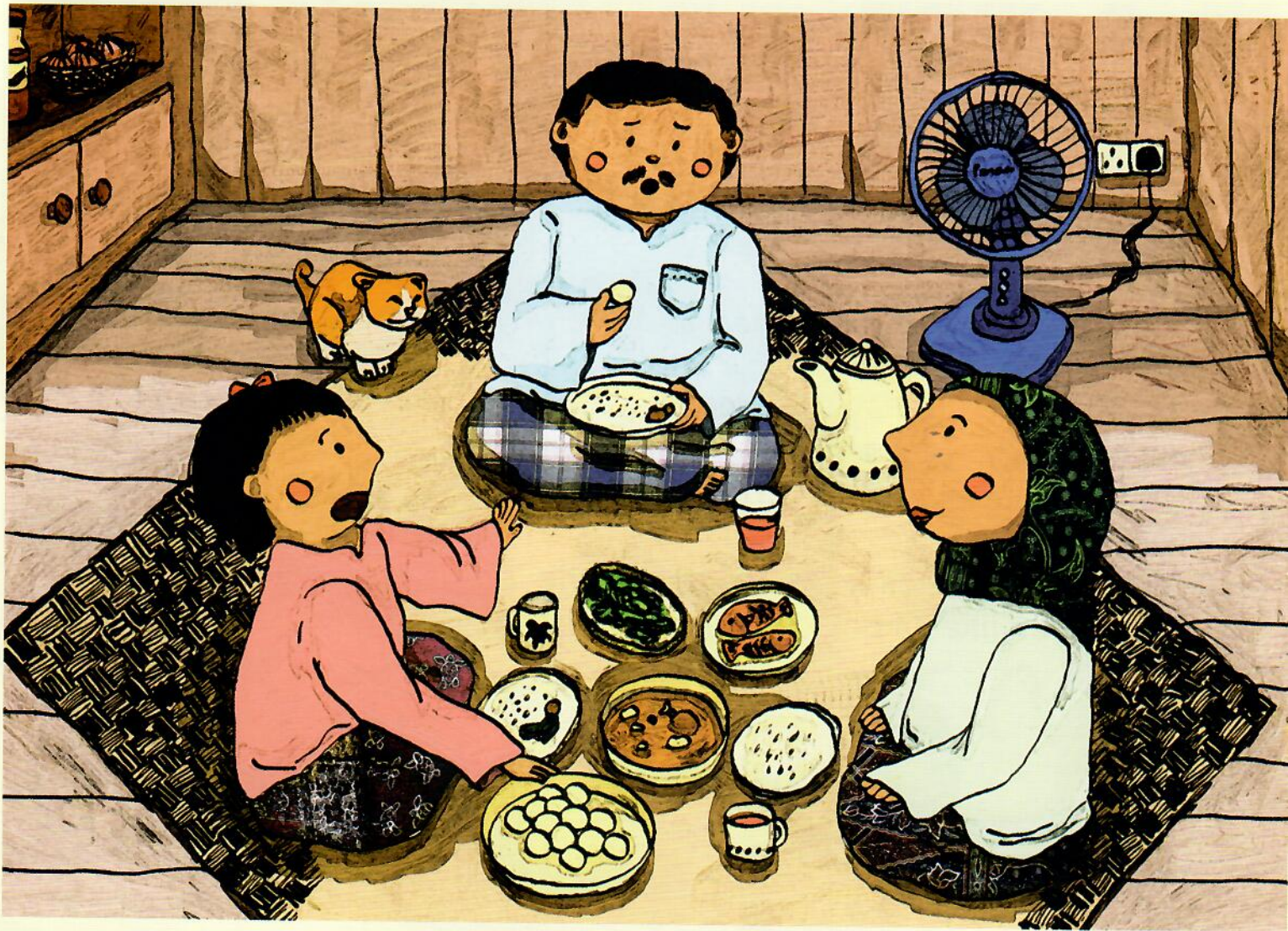
Did You Know?

You can help save turtles by telling your mother, father, brothers, sisters and friends not to eat turtle eggs.



Back home, Maya tells her family why they should stop eating turtle eggs. Her mom and dad are happy that their little daughter has learnt so much at the turtle camp. They promise that they too will stop eating turtle eggs.





Did You Know?



The government should make a law forbidding people from eating and selling turtle eggs.

Maya cannot stop talking about the village of the poor turtles. In school, she is asked to go to every class to tell her story.

All the children in the school and even the teachers decide to stop eating turtle eggs.

As Maya tells her story in other schools, she gets more and more people to stop eating turtle eggs.

Soon she becomes known as the "Little Turtle Messenger."
Would you like to be a turtle messenger too?





Did You Know?

If you become a turtle messenger, the turtles will have a better chance of surviving.



The Author



Chan Eng Heng is a retired university professor who has been saving turtles for more than 20 years. Her turtle camps have brought joy to hundreds of children in Redang Island. Her efforts at the Turtle Sanctuary have helped save half a million turtle eggs for incubation, and over 400,000 hatchlings have made it to the sea. As founder of the "Save our Turtles Outreach Programme" (STOP), she has brought turtle conservation to the hearts and minds of the public. STOP has produced more than 1,500 turtle lovers through its volunteer programme. Today, she continues her life's work through the Turtle Conservation Centre (www.turtleconservationcentre.org).



The Illustrator



Tan Yi Sin has a passion for drawing. She thinks about drawing all the time. She is a firm believer in the importance of drawing from the heart and is always more than willing to share her drawings with others, hoping to touch their hearts or bring a smile to their faces, making the world a much happier and better place to live in.

This is a story about how a little girl meets a turtle in her dream and is brought to the world of turtles to see some of the hazards faced by them. She finally arrives in the village of the turtles and finds only old and sad turtles. She immediately realizes why the young ones are missing. Humans have been eating turtle eggs, not giving them a chance to hatch. She promises the turtle she will help. By relating the turtle's story to her friends, family, school, then other schools, she is able to get people to stop eating turtle eggs.



"This amazing story of Maya and the turtles has important lessons not only for children but all adults indeed! Once read, it will imprint a lasting message on anyone ... we have to relieve our precious turtles of the pressures humans place on them. Children living around turtle nesting beaches should all be given a copy of this book. They will become our turtle conservation ambassadors!"

Dato' Dr Dionysius Sharma, Executive Director/CEO WWF-Malaysia

"This charming and beautifully illustrated little book captures the sense of wonder and mystery one feels in the presence of a nesting sea turtle in the dark of night. Young readers are taken on a fantastic underwater adventure while clinging on to the back of a turtle. They are shown the beauty of the turtles' world and see the damage humans are causing them, and also learn what people can do to solve some serious environmental problems. It is both instructive and uplifting."

Dr Jeanne A. Mortimer, American turtle conservationist based in the Seychelles

This book, aimed at raising turtle conservation awareness, was produced with support from:



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