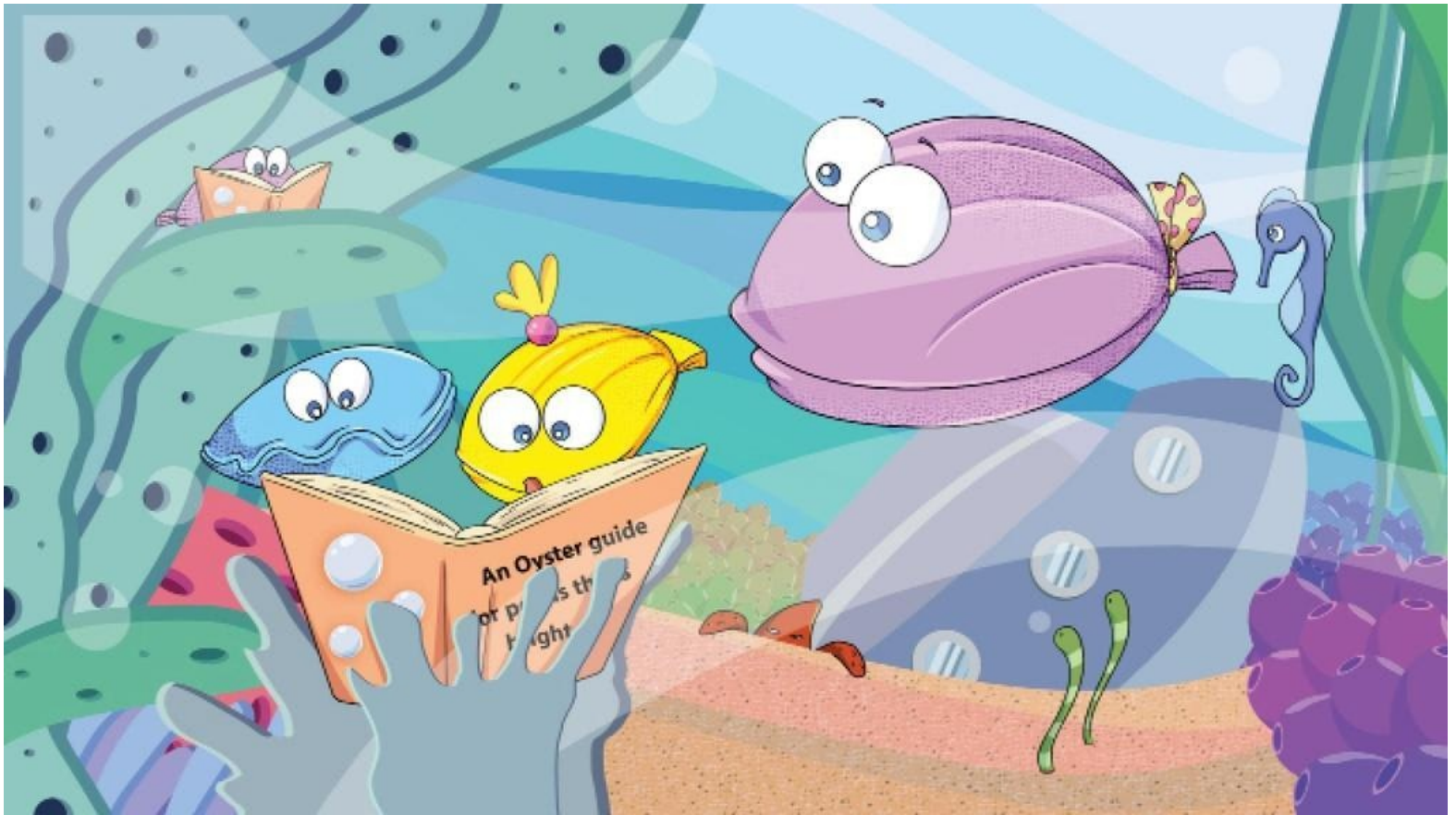




The Oyster

Author : Laila Audi

Illustrator : Maya Abboud



Akoya is a big oyster. She lives in Happy Oyster Bay. All of the other oysters spend their time reading the encyclopaedia “An Oyster’s Guide for Pearls that are Bright.”



Akoya didn't really care about making pearls. Actually, she spent most of her time awake. Making pearls needed lots of sleep. Akoya hated to sleep.



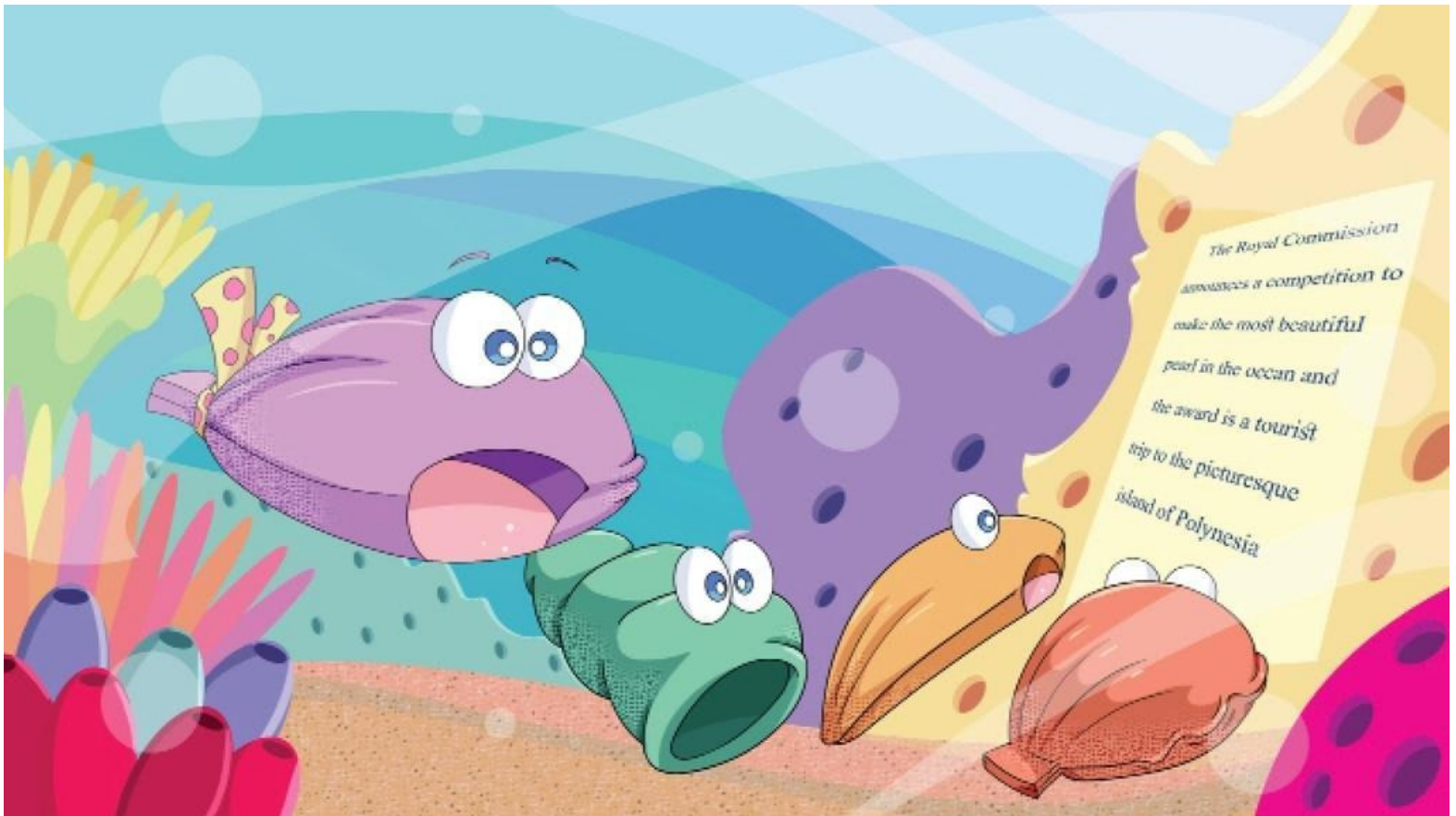
One day Aunt Pearl invited Akoya for plankton salad. It was Akoya's favorite dish. She couldn't resist it.



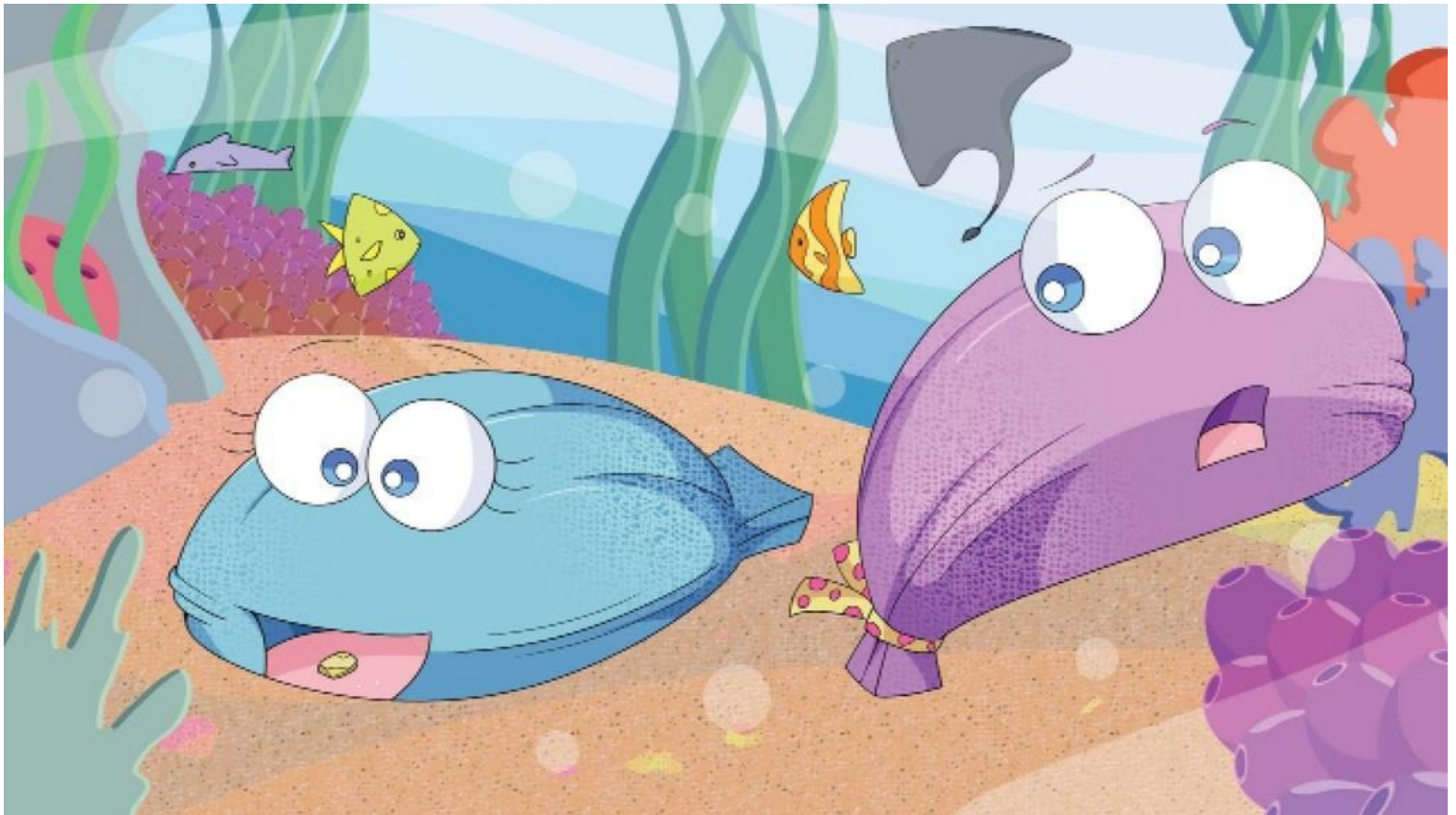
After lunch, Aunt Pearl opened a box and showed Akoya a beautiful pearl. It was her Aunt's greatest accomplishment. It was the biggest pearl in Coral district. She asked Akoya, "I wonder what you will do Akoya. What will your greatest accomplishment be?" Akoya laughed as she replied, "I'll do anything that doesn't need sleep."



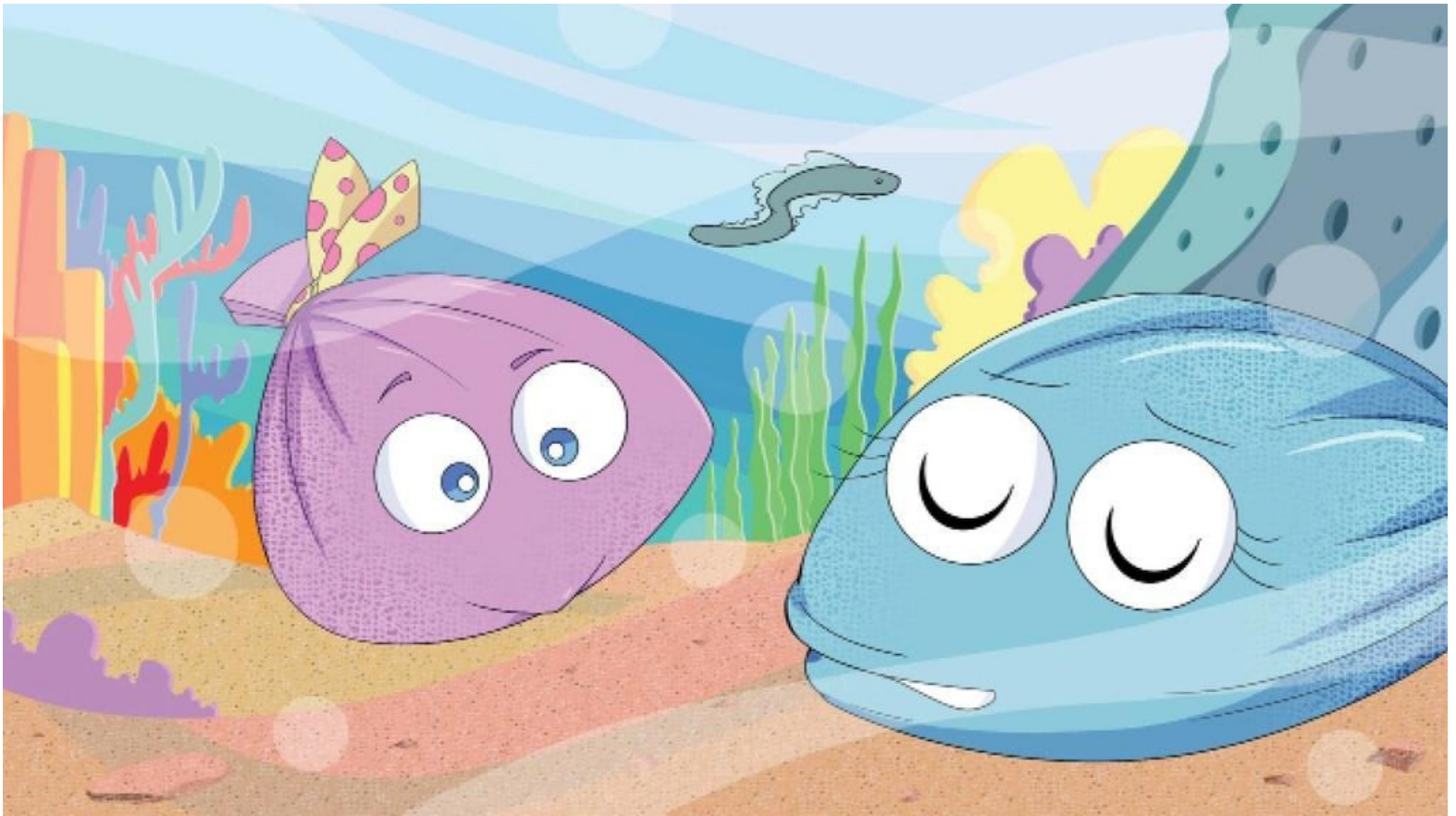
As Akoya turned around she noticed a show room, that contained a wonderful pearl. It was the most beautiful pearl she had ever seen in her entire life. It was black and bright. Aunt Pearl said, “My grandmother made this pearl and since then no other oyster managed to make something similar. Suddenly...



...the two oysters heard lots of noise outside. The oysters gathered around a competition announcement that read: "The most beautiful pearl in the ocean competition." Akoya yelled, "What a wonderful opportunity; I love travelling on such journeys."



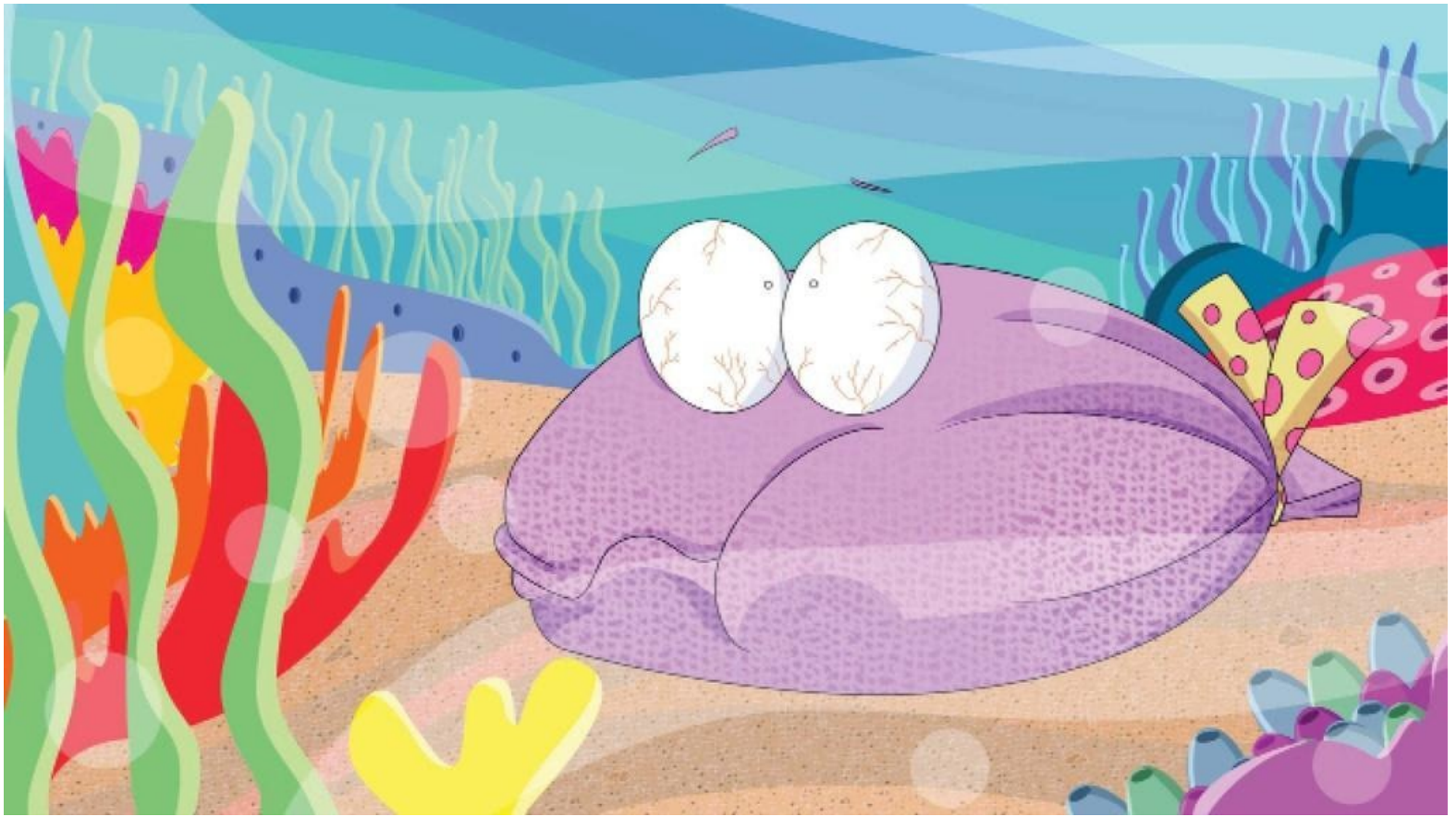
Oh no! Akoya doesn't know how to make pearls. Plus, this means she'll need lots of sleep and she hates to sleep. Then she had an idea.



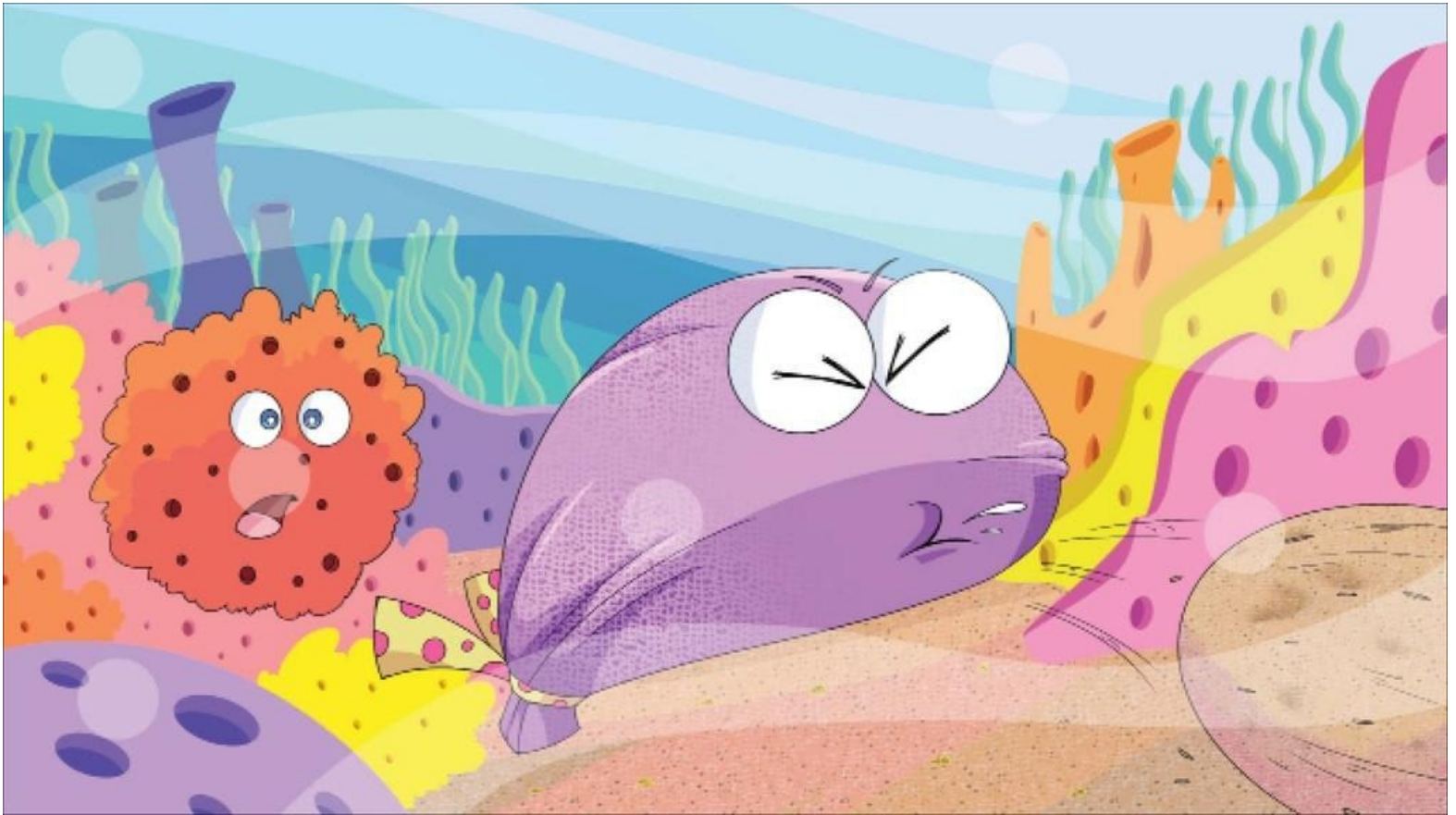
She watched Aunt Pearl who said, “I’ll make the biggest and whitest pearl ever.” Then she chose a cozy spot in the sand and took a small particle of sand into her mouth. Then she said, “now I’ll go to sleep for a few months.” See you later.



Akoya told herself, "It seems that the secret is in the small sand particle she swallowed." She laughed and said, "Then pearls are made of sand. That's easy." So, Akoya swallowed a big ball of sand.



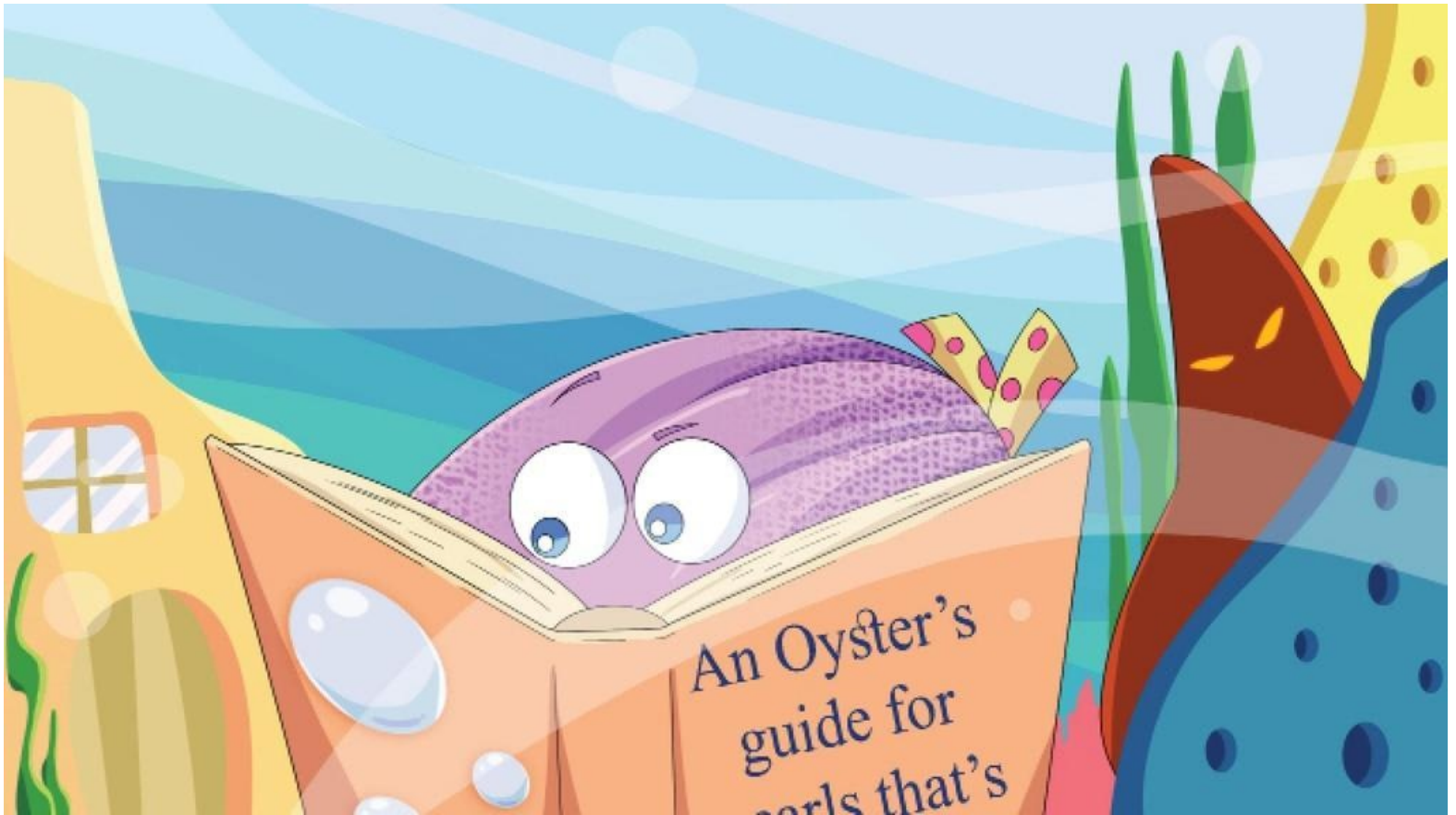
She waited and waited, until she started to suffocate.



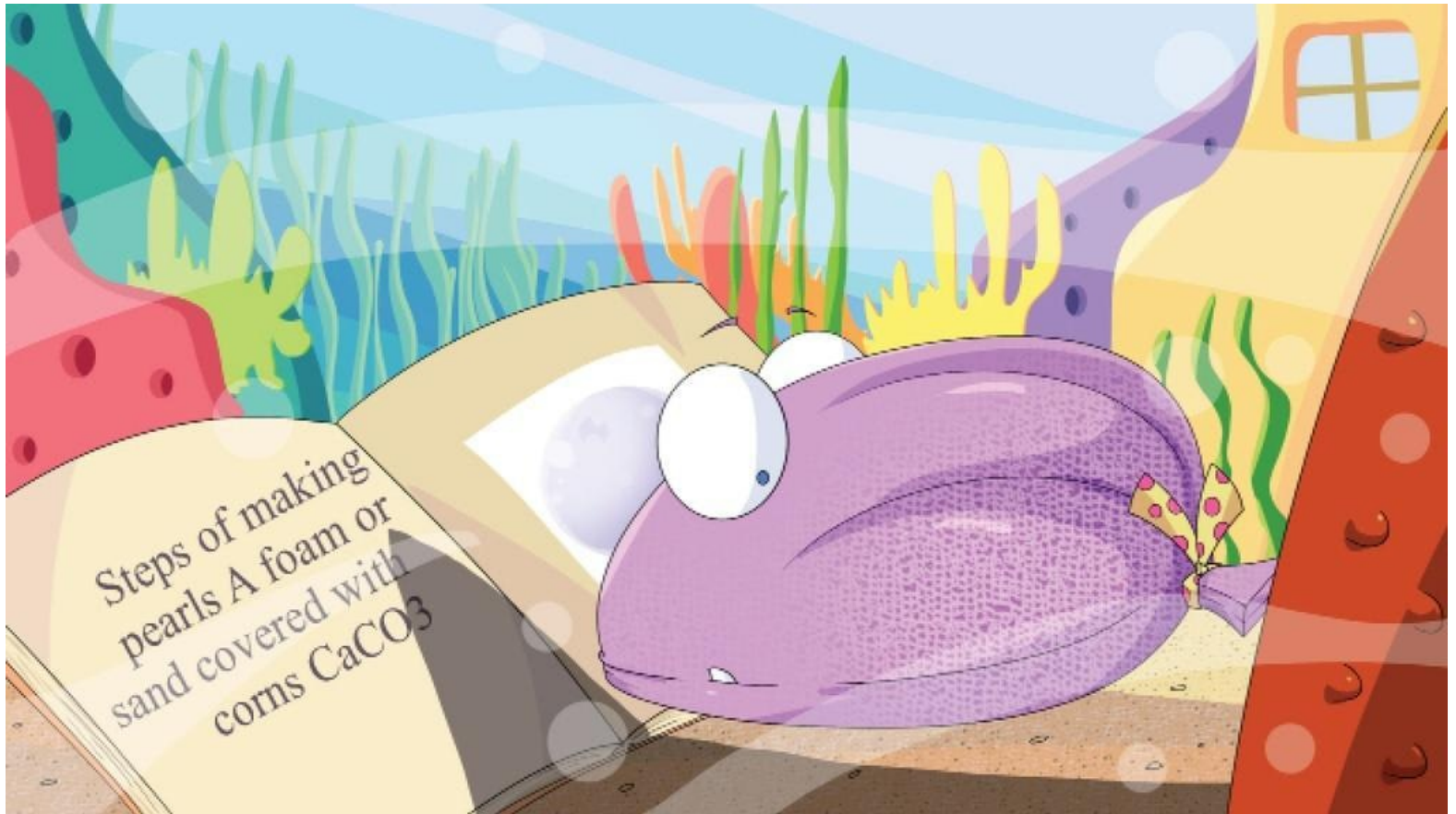
So, she threw up the sand ball and sadly said, “The sand didn’t turn into a pearl. A sponge nearby said, “I’ve always known that pearls are made of CaCO_3 , how did Akoya make a sand pearl. How strange!”



When Akoya heard sponge, she got an idea. She smiled and quickly got a whole bucket of CaCO_3 and started swallowing it, but again she started to suffocate. It didn't turn into limestone. "What do these oysters do then to make pearls. I tried everything."



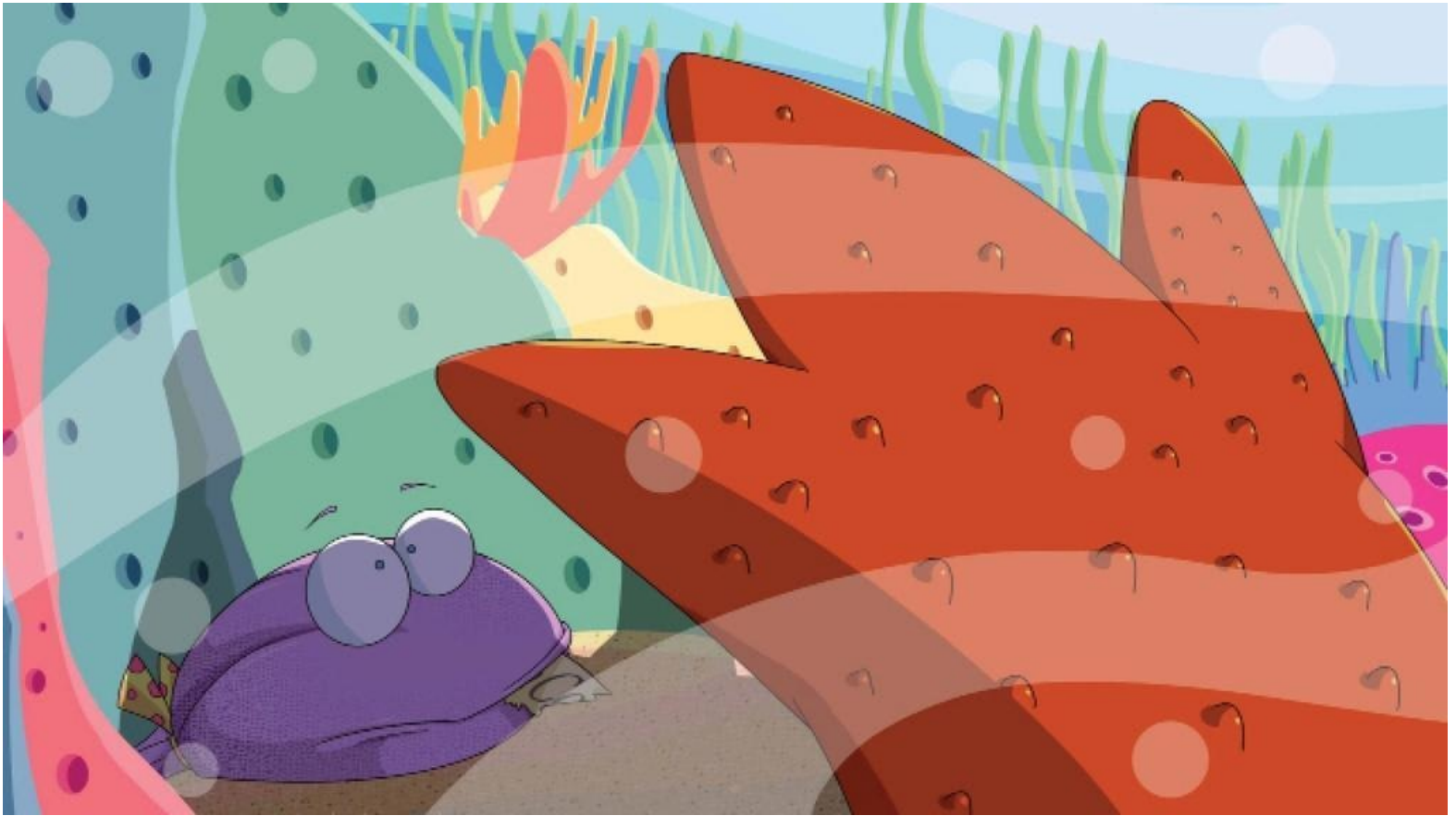
Akoya didn't have the patience to read the encyclopaedia, but it seemed like she had no other option. She hurried to her Aunt's library and started reading "An Oyster's Guide for Pearls that are Bright."



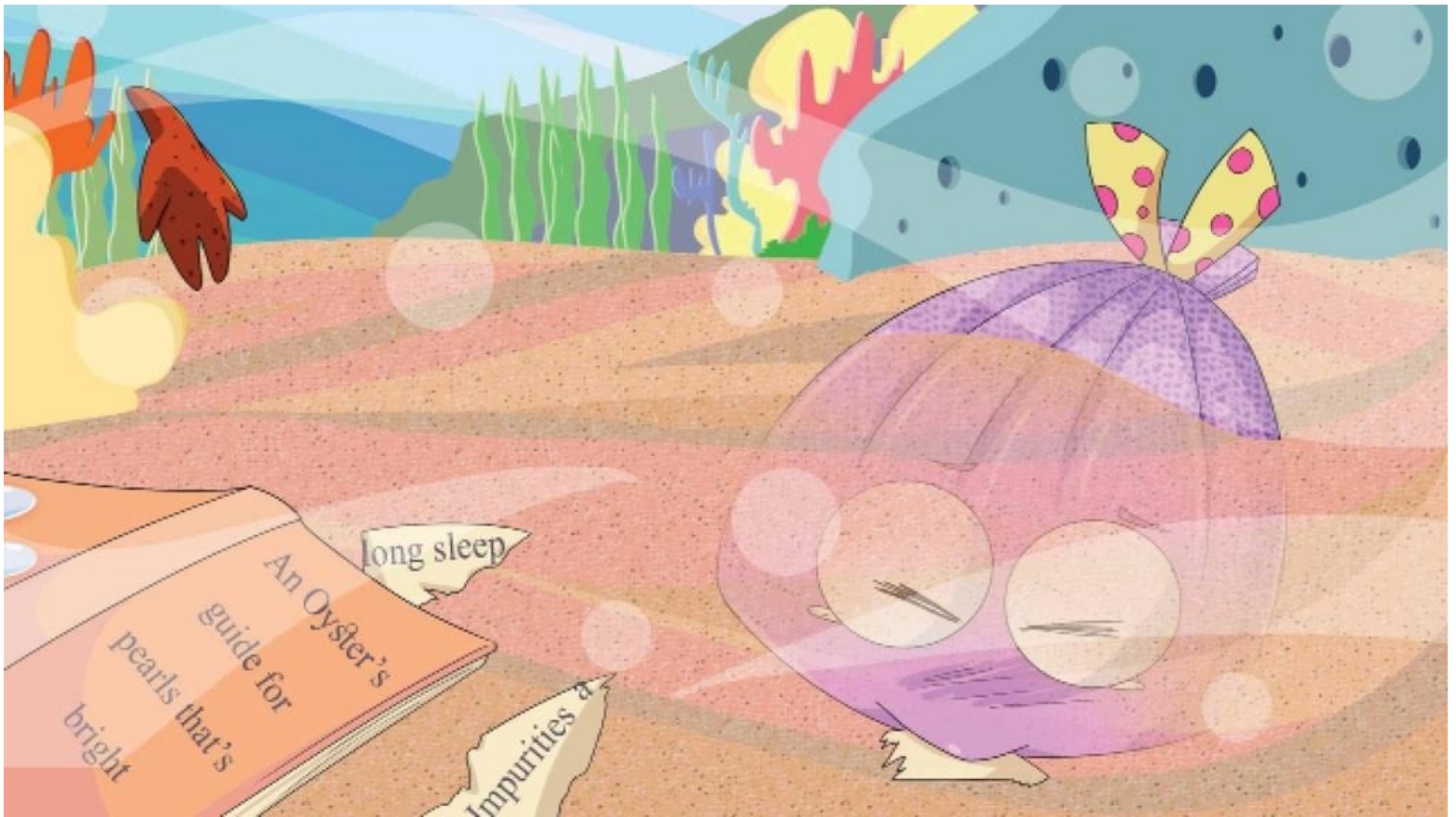
She read and she read and suddenly...



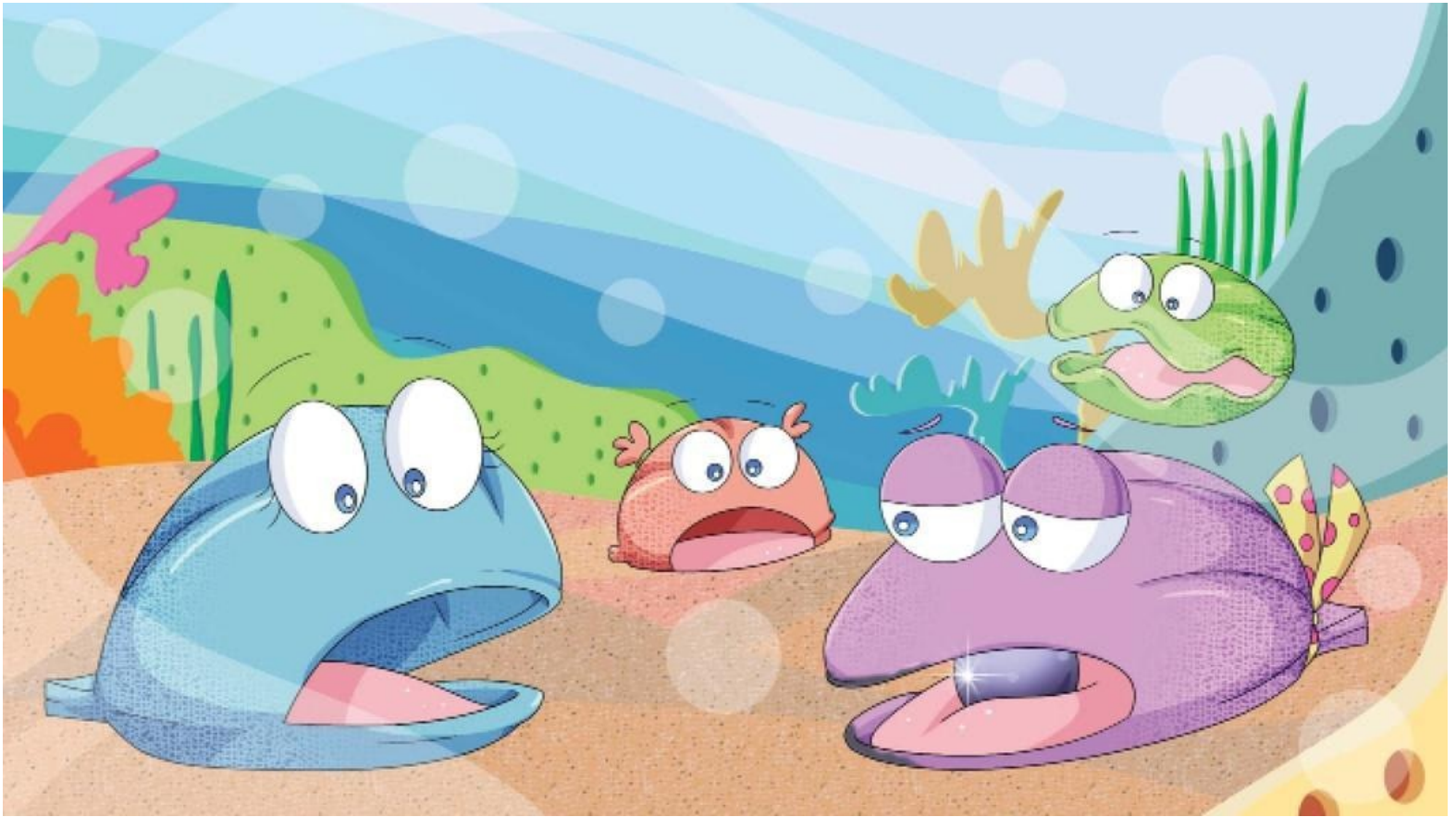
She felt that something was moving around her, and before she finished reading, a wild starfish took the book from her. She tried to take it back, but the star fish attacked again.



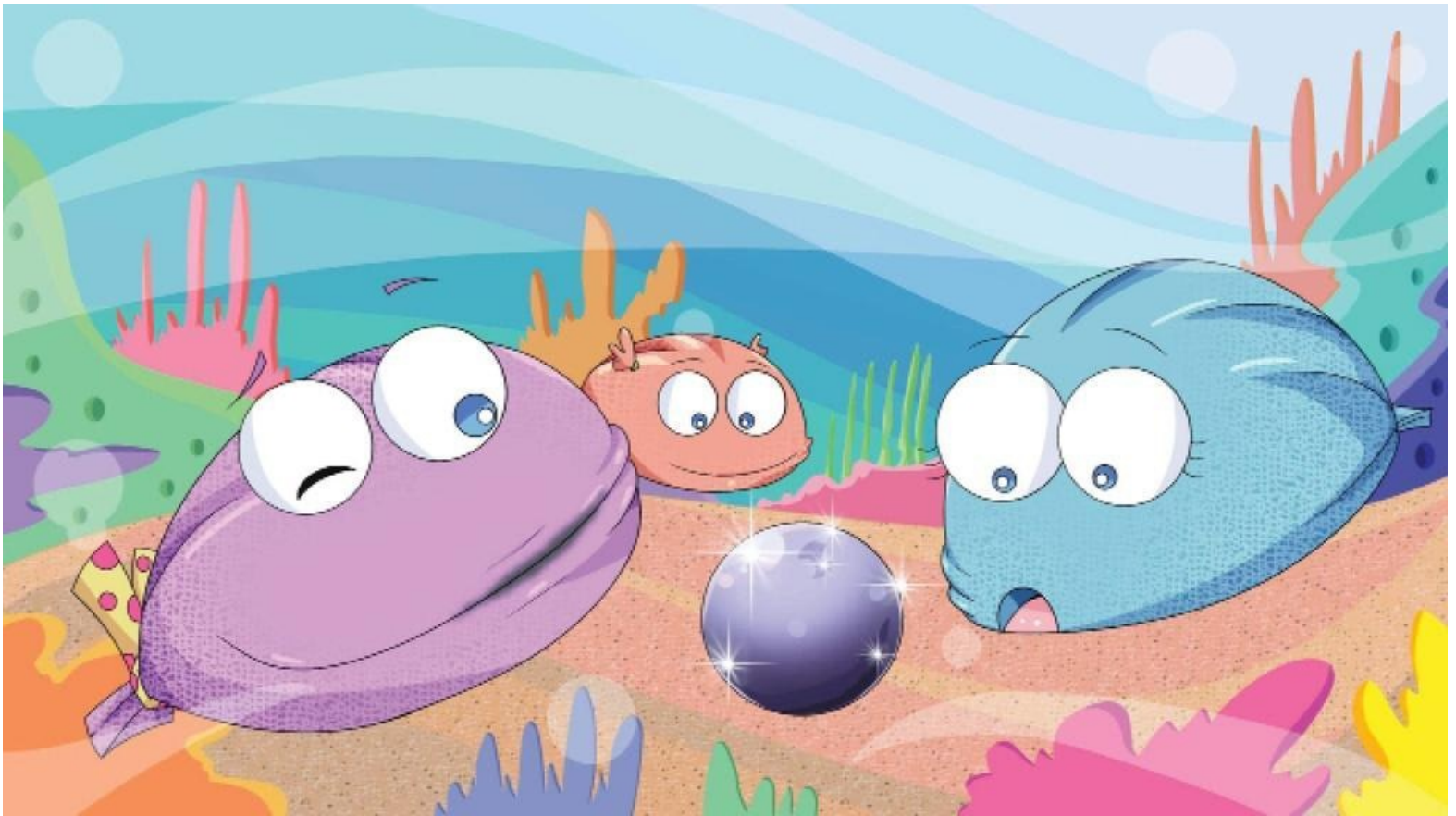
Akoya tried to escape but she couldn't. She was surrounded by rocks in all directions and the wild starfish was in front of her. To escape she only had one option.



She dove and hid deep down the sand. Every now and then she wondered, "Shall I get out now?" "Did the wild starfish go away?" "I want to know how pearls are made. I have no time to waste." She cried out of fear. Then she closed her lips firmly on the remaining part of the page of the book. She didn't like to sleep, but now she has no other choice. She has to do something with her life. She closed her eyes and she slept soundly.



After some time, Akoya woke up to find herself surrounded by other oysters. Aunt Pearl was there as well. Akoya was sad. She was sure everyone managed to make pearls, while she didn't. When she opened her mouth she asked, "For how long have I been sleeping?" Aunt Pearl replied, "We all fell asleep for six months. But what is this? You did it Akoya!"



Aunt Pearl said, “Your lips are covered by ink. That’s why your pearl is black. Akoya kept the torn paper secret to herself. Then, she proudly smiled, “This is the most important achievement in my life.”





The End