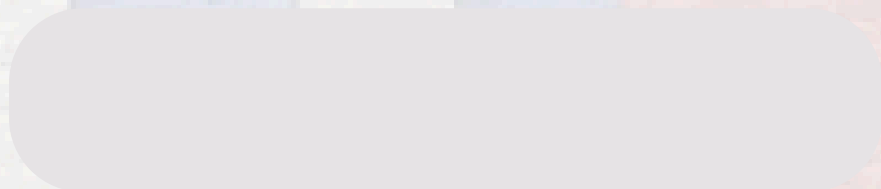
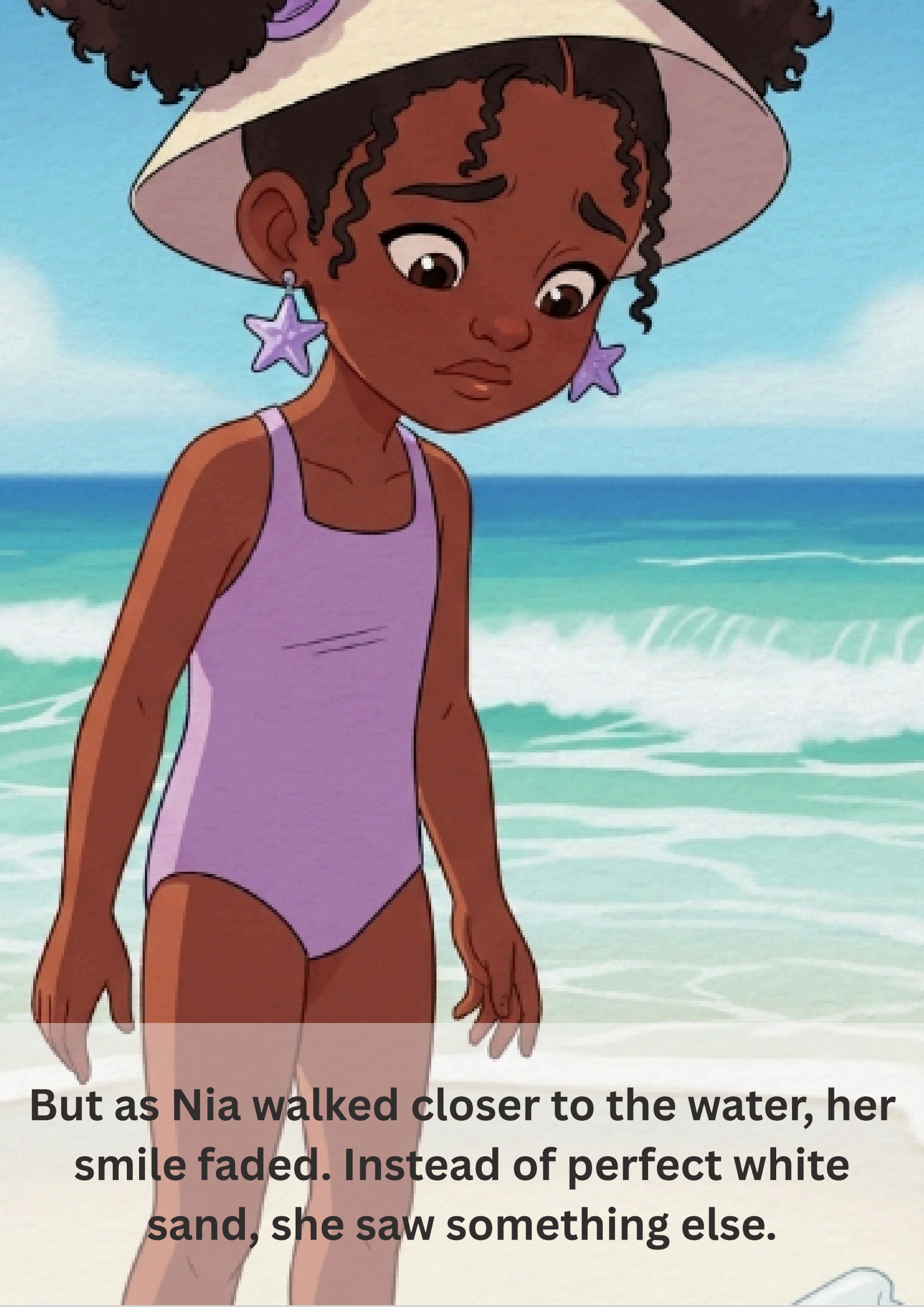


Nia Saves the Ocean

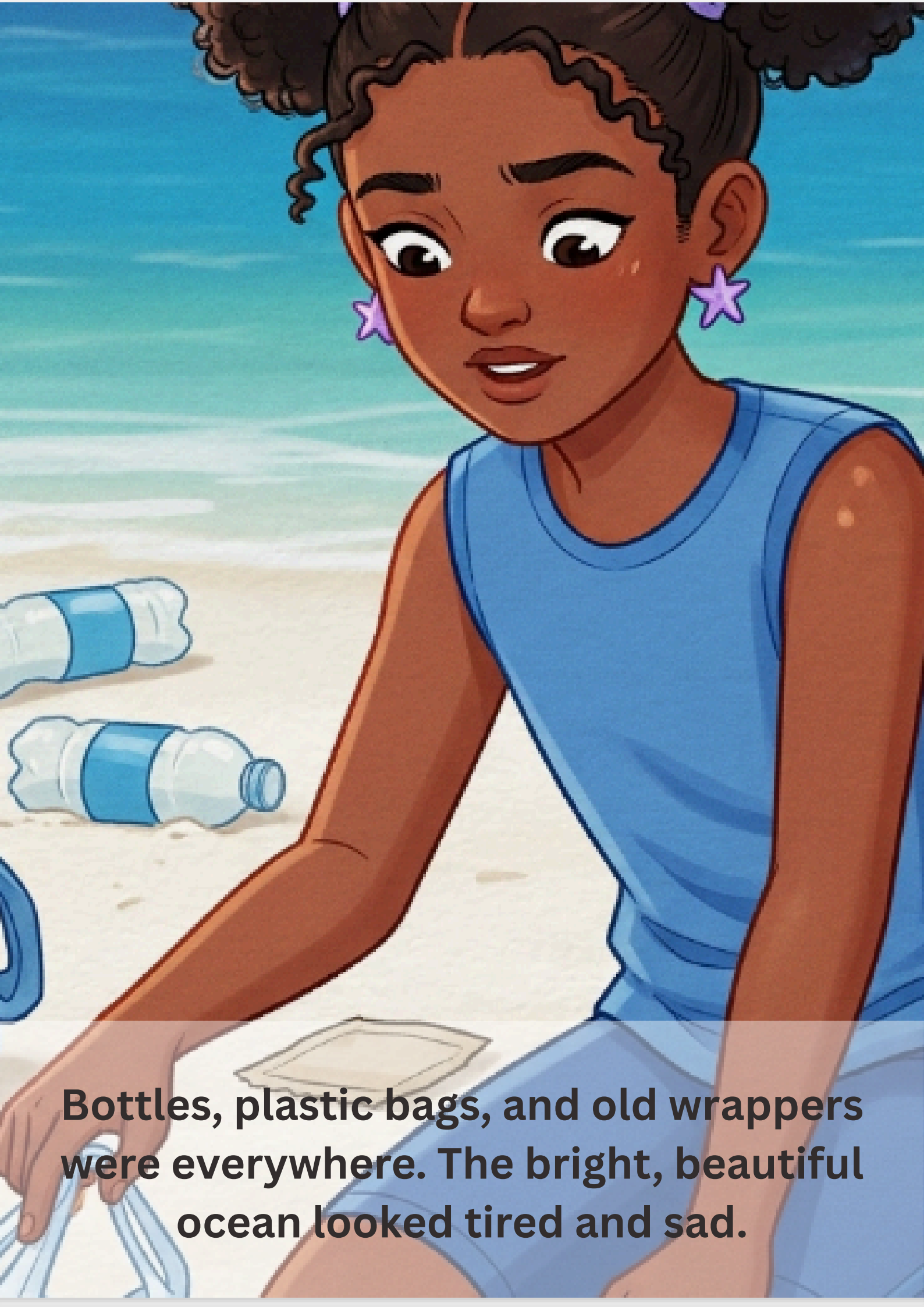




Nia loved the ocean. Every summer, she and her family drove to the shore to splash and play. Today, the sun was shining, and the waves were calling her name



But as Nia walked closer to the water, her smile faded. Instead of perfect white sand, she saw something else.



Bottles, plastic bags, and old wrappers were everywhere. The bright, beautiful ocean looked tired and sad.



“The ocean looks sad,” Nia whispered. “All this trash doesn’t belong here. It’s making the fish and the turtles sick.”



Just then, her friends, Rowan and Aaliyah, ran up. Rowan was holding a shovel, and Aaliyah had a bright red bucket.



“What’s wrong, Nia?” asked Aaliyah. Nia pointed to the mess. “We have to help. We have to clean this up.”



Rowan quickly joined in. They started with the easy things—a soda can here, a chip bag there. Plink! Plink! went the trash into the buckets.



Soon, their buckets were full, but the beach was still covered. “It’s too much for just us,” sighed Rowan, wiping his brow.



A kind older woman with a purple sunhat noticed their hard work. She smiled, picked up an empty water bottle, and dropped it into a nearby public recycling bin.



Then a young man and two teenagers stopped their game of volleyball and grabbed some big, empty bags. More and more people started joining the cleanup!



The team grew and grew. Hands of all sizes worked together, clearing the sand until it shone like gold. The ocean looked happier now.



Nia put her hands on her hips and smiled a giant, proud smile. “We did it! We’re Ocean Heroes!”



The grown-ups high-fived the three young heroes and carried the full bags away. The sand was clean! But Nia still felt a quiet worry in her heart.



**“The beach is sparkling,” said Aaliyah.
“But what about the animals that live in
the water? The trash we couldn’t
reach?”**



Rowan pointed to a spot where the waves were breaking. “Look! What is that dark shape floating near the rocks?”



The dark shape bobbed closer. It wasn't a log or seaweed. It was a beautiful, but trapped, sea turtle! A ghost net, a piece of lost fishing line, was caught around its back flipper.



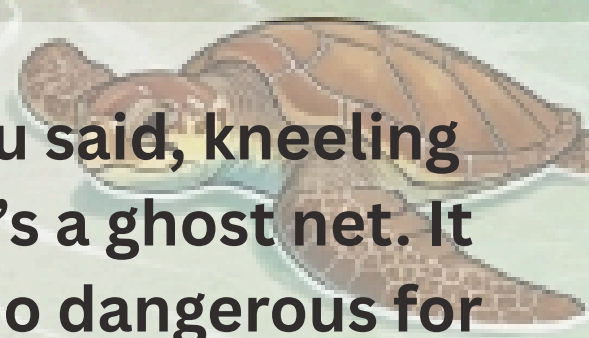
“Oh no!” cried Nia. “It can’t swim properly! We have to help it, but it’s too far out, and that net looks scary.”



Just then, a friendly man with a wide-brimmed hat and a conservation shirt hurried over. It was Keanu, the local Park Ranger.



“That’s a big problem,” Keanu said, kneeling down to see the turtle. “That’s a ghost net. It can hurt the turtle, and it’s too dangerous for you to touch alone.”





Keanu pulled out a special tool from his bag—a long-handled net. He carefully waded into the shallow water, moving slowly and calmly.



Slowly, gently, Keanu used the net to guide the turtle into a safe, shallow tide pool. He carefully snipped the tough ghost net away with special shears.



The turtle stretched its flipper and swam in a happy circle! “Thank you, Keanu!” said the children. “But why are these nets floating around?”



“Ghost nets and plastic travel from very far away,” Keanu explained. “People forget to recycle or toss trash where they shouldn’t. But the biggest heroes are the ones who teach others.”



Nia, Rowan, and Aaliyah looked at each other. “We can be the teachers!” they agreed. They started a new club: The Ocean Savers.



Every week, they walked the beach, not just cleaning, but putting up bright posters that said: “Be Kind to the Sea!” Nia knew that saving the ocean was a job for everyone, every single day.