

Coral's Color Comes Back

An Outer Banks Ocean Story



Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

All materials in this book may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.



Deep beneath the waves, where sunlight dances like ripples of gold, lived a tiny coral named Coralita—but her friends called her Coral.

She wasn't just one creature—she was many! Tiny coral polyps, all living together, building their stony home one bit of calcium at a time.



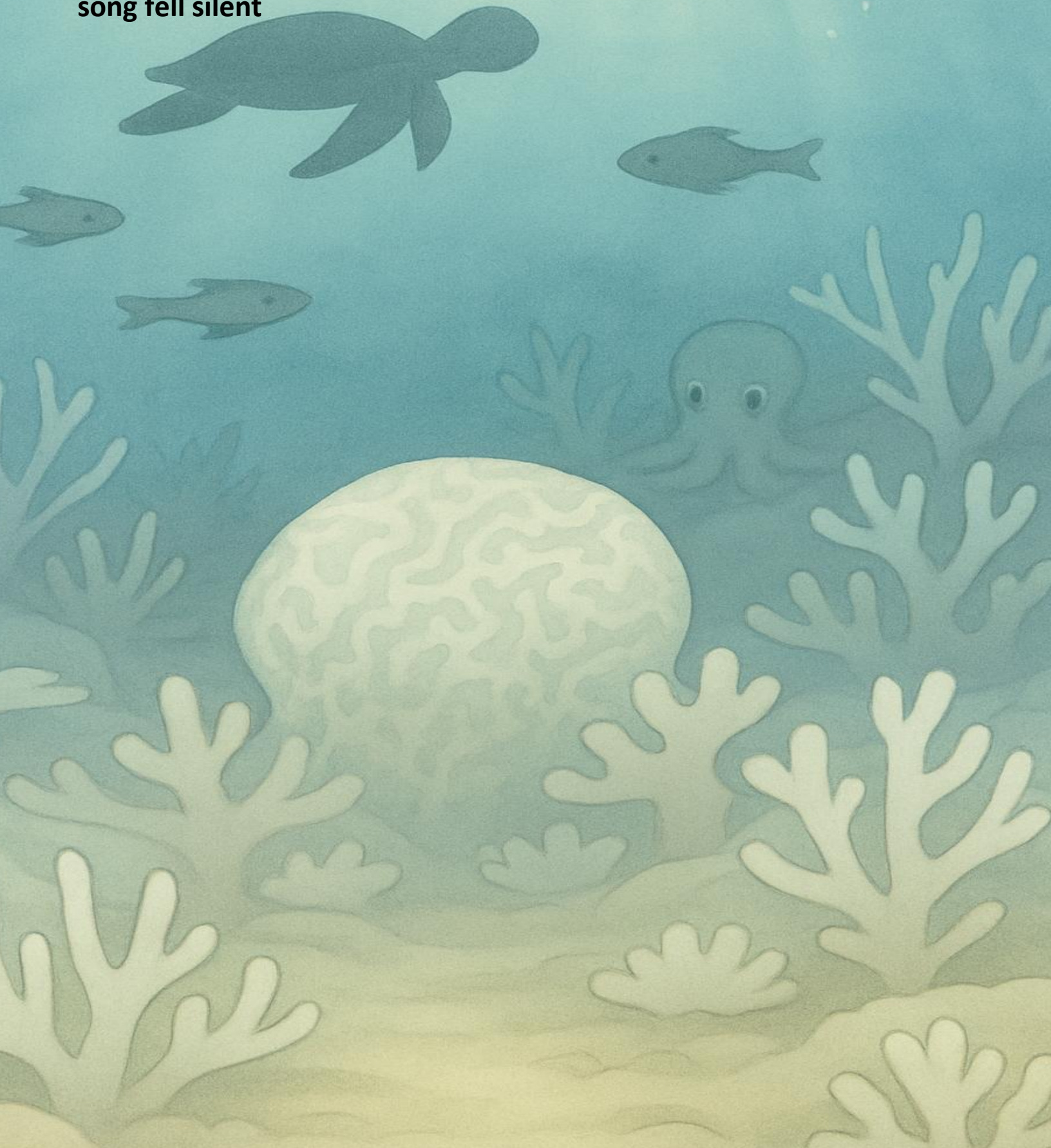
Her reef was a rainbow: pinks, purples, oranges, and blues. Fish darted between the coral towers, sea turtles glided above, and even shy octopuses peeked from their hiding spots.



But one summer, the water grew *too warm*.

At first, Coral felt sleepy. Then, one by one, her colors began to fade.

The bright fish swam away, and the reef that had once been alive with song fell silent

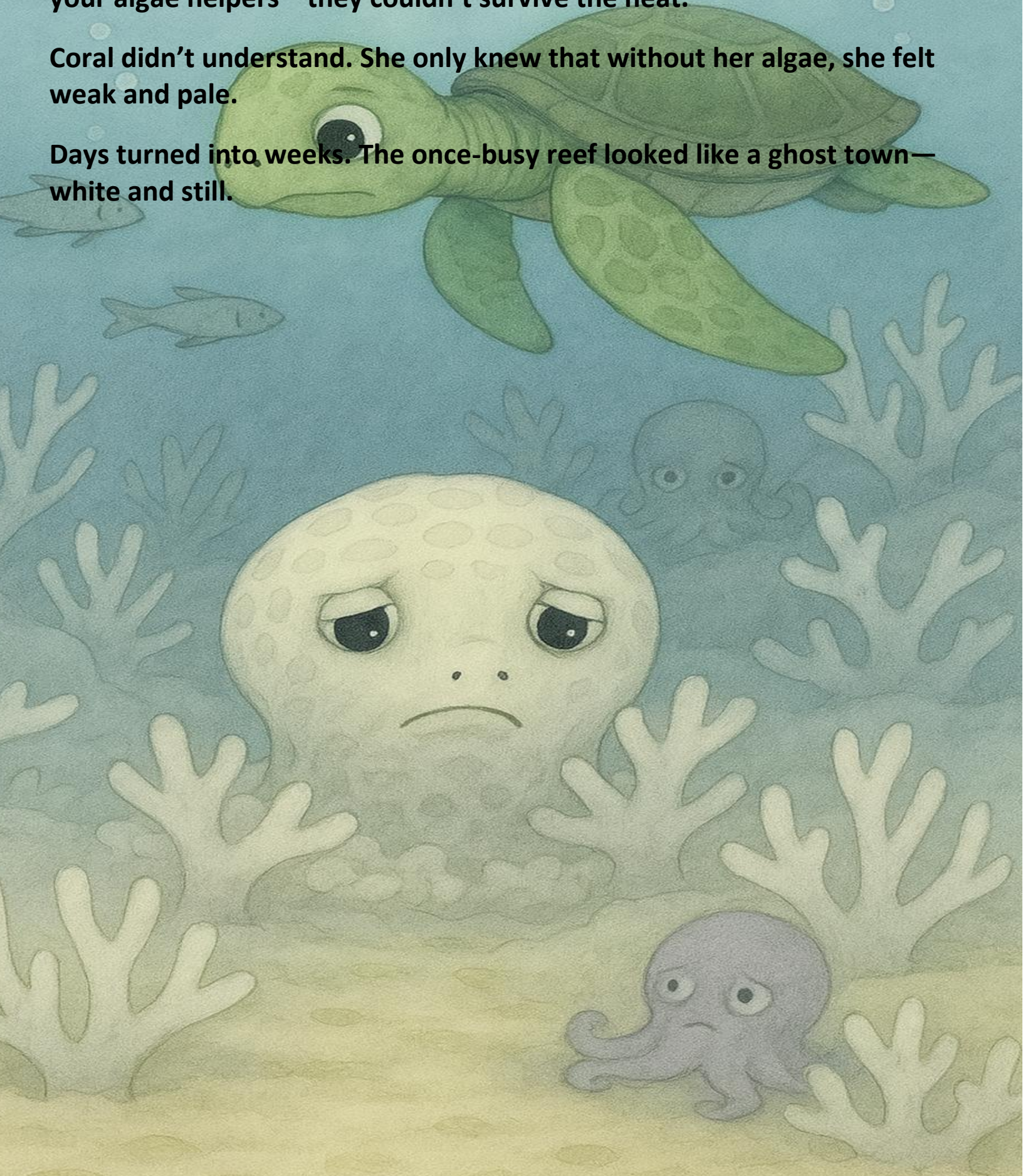


“Where did everyone go?” Coral whispered.

A passing sea turtle sighed. “The water’s changing, my friend. You’ve lost your algae helpers—they couldn’t survive the heat.”

Coral didn’t understand. She only knew that without her algae, she felt weak and pale.

Days turned into weeks. The once-busy reef looked like a ghost town—white and still.



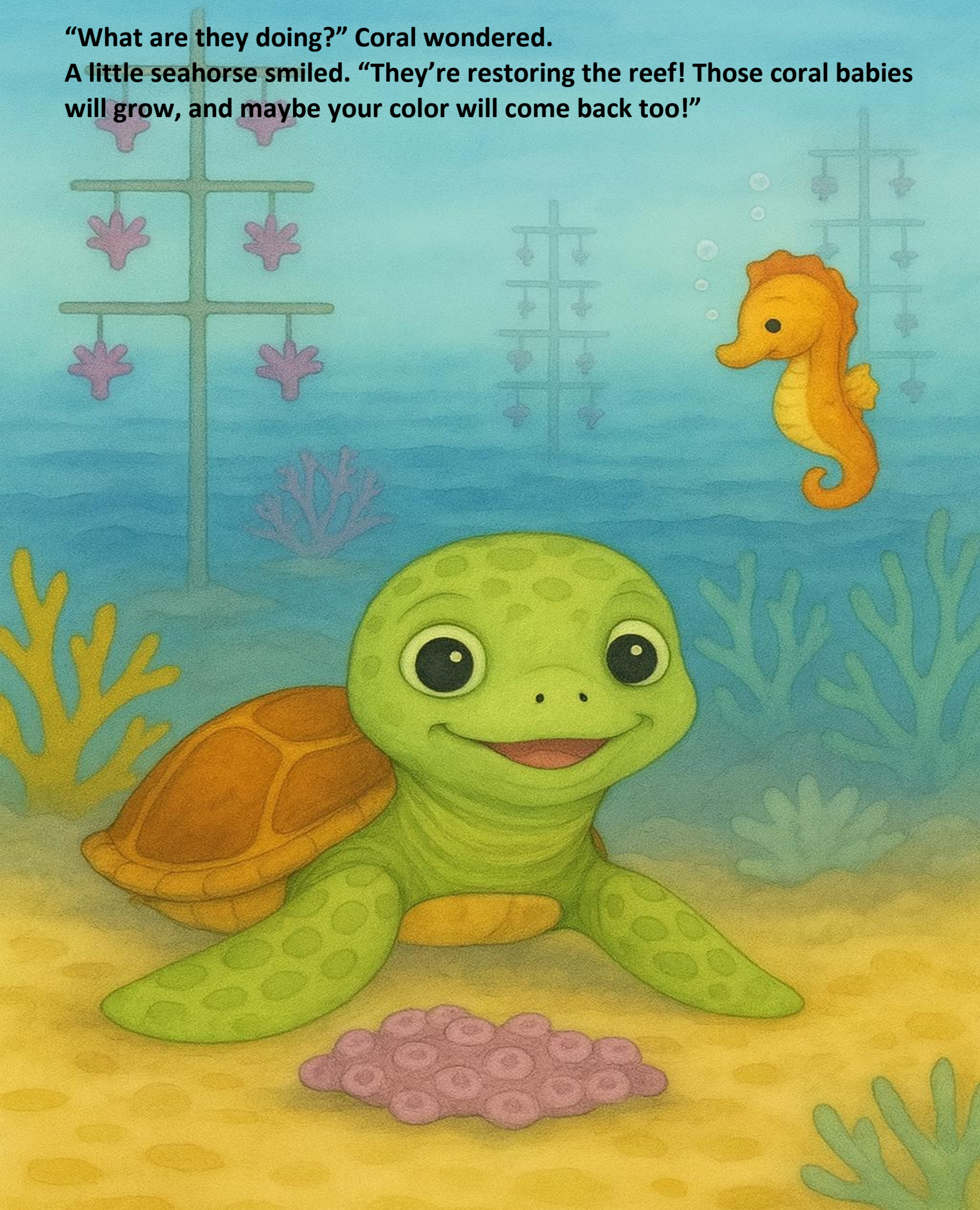
Then, one morning, Coral heard something strange: *clink... clink... clink.*

Down from the surface came a group of divers, planting small coral pieces onto frames that looked like underwater trees.



“What are they doing?” Coral wondered.

A little seahorse smiled. “They’re restoring the reef! Those coral babies will grow, and maybe your color will come back too!”



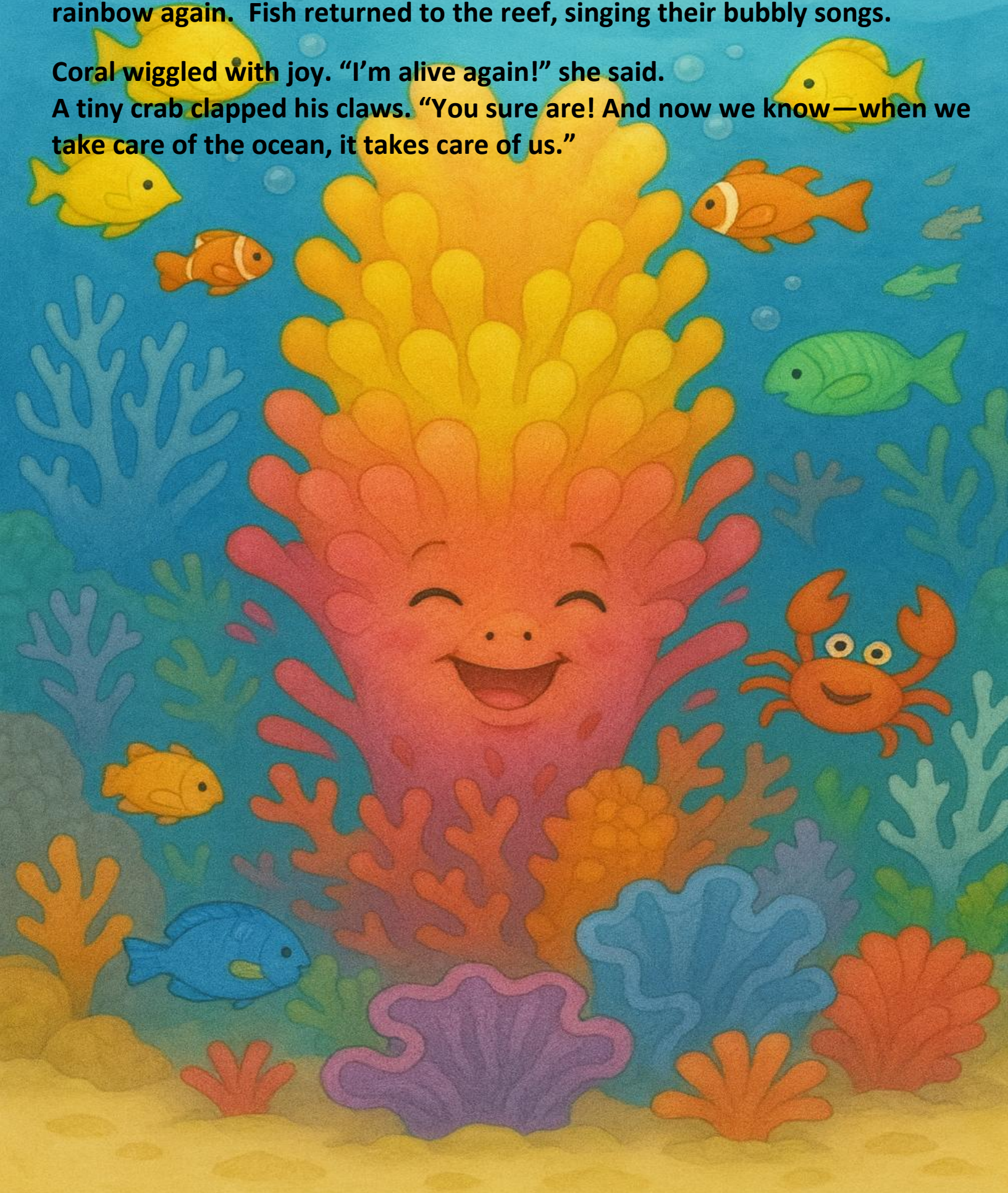
The divers worked carefully, cleaning away algae and attaching coral fragments. They brought hope—one piece at a time. Slowly, as the ocean cooled, Coral felt warmth again—not from the sun, but from her new algae friends returning.



She began to glow—first a blush of pink, then orange, then her full rainbow again. Fish returned to the reef, singing their bubbly songs.

Coral wiggled with joy. “I’m alive again!” she said.

A tiny crab clapped his claws. “You sure are! And now we know—when we take care of the ocean, it takes care of us.”

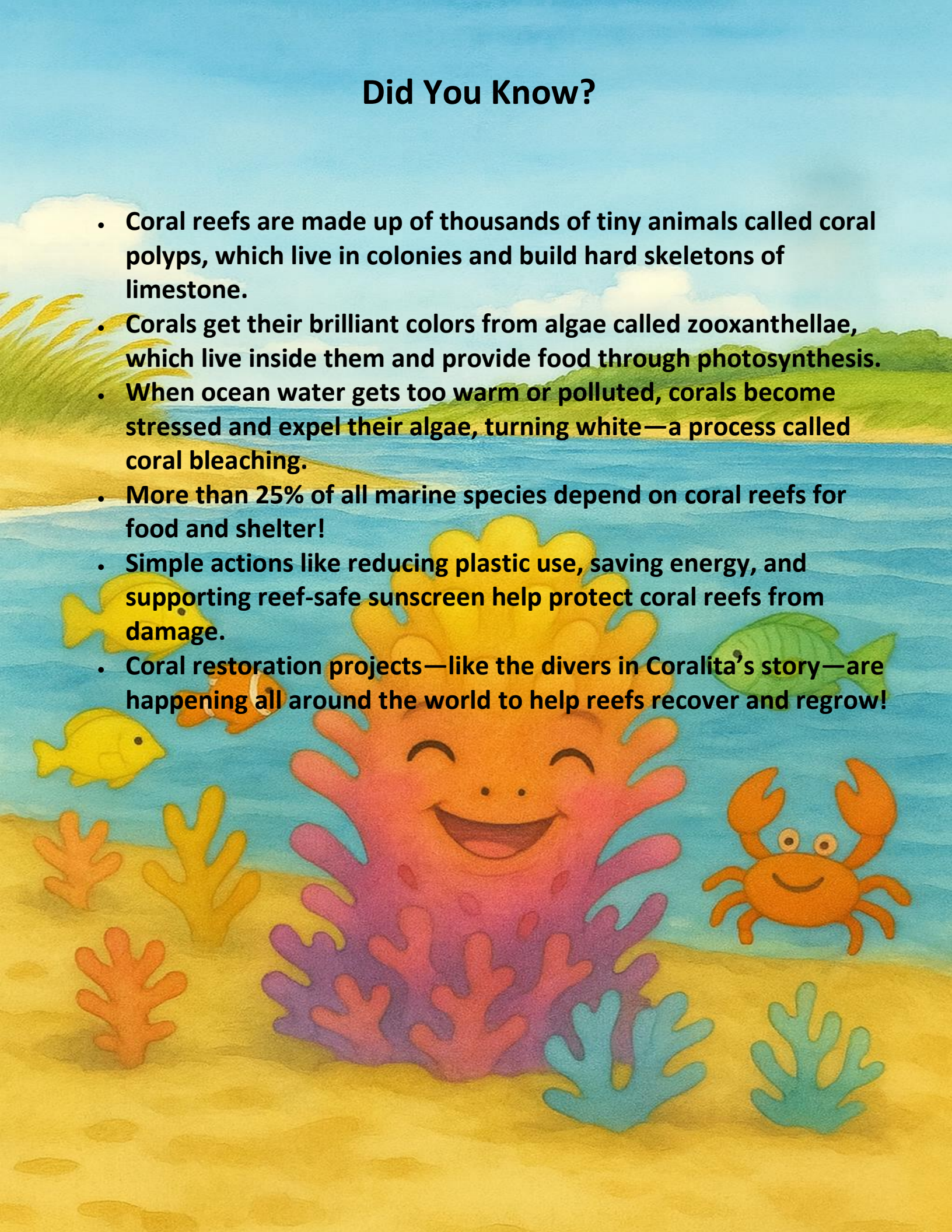


When we protect our planet—by keeping the ocean clean, reducing pollution, and slowing climate change—we help life's colors come back. Every small action adds up to a brighter, healthier world.



Did You Know?

- Coral reefs are made up of thousands of tiny animals called coral polyps, which live in colonies and build hard skeletons of limestone.
- Corals get their brilliant colors from algae called zooxanthellae, which live inside them and provide food through photosynthesis.
- When ocean water gets too warm or polluted, corals become stressed and expel their algae, turning white—a process called coral bleaching.
- More than 25% of all marine species depend on coral reefs for food and shelter!
- Simple actions like reducing plastic use, saving energy, and supporting reef-safe sunscreen help protect coral reefs from damage.
- Coral restoration projects—like the divers in Coralita's story—are happening all around the world to help reefs recover and regrow!



References

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