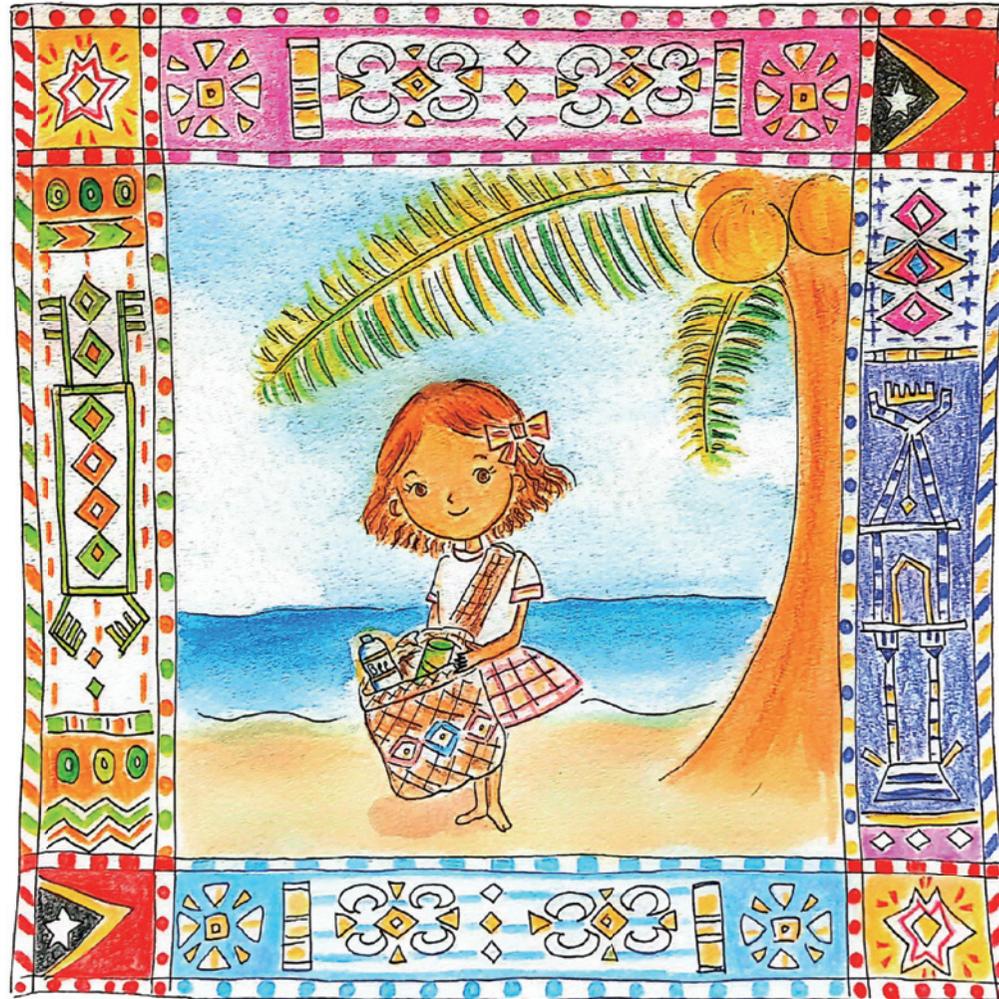


Anoi Aqua ho Masa Plastiku



Autor : Arisa Minoru

Ilustrador : Naoko Takaku

Aqua and Plastic Bottle

Anoi Aqua ho Masa Plastik



Aqua is a 10-year-old girl living in Dili.



Aqua is playing at the beach with her family.

They are building sandcastles, catching fish for BBQ, eating Tukir and Katupa, and having a lot of fun.





It was a very hot day,
so Aqua gulped down a bottle of water.

The bottle became empty soon.
Aqua thought for a moment about what to do,
but then she tossed the empty bottle onto the beach.

At that moment, a voice came out from the sea.
“Another piece of trash thrown away, how disappointing.”

” Huh?!” When Aqua turned around in surprise and
looked towards the ocean.





The sea flashed with a brilliant white light.

It was so bright that Aqua instinctively shut her eyes.

Suddenly, everything around her turned pitch black.
She felt herself being pulled into something.





"Poke, poke"

Something was poking her, and Aqua woke up.
A crab was standing in front of her, its pincers raised.

"Ah!" She cried, quickly brushing it away.

The crab jumped in surprise and scurried off.

"Where am I? I have to get back to my mom."
Aqua Said.

But for some reason, her body wouldn't move quite right.



"Whaaat?!"

Aqua cried in shock.

She had turned into the very plastic bottle
she had tossed away!





"What should I do? How did this happen...?"

Looking around with her plastic bottle body,
Aqua saw piles of trash.

Plastic bags, candy wrappers, PET bottles, cans,
even a single sandal...

All kinds of garbage were scattered across the beach.

"I had no idea there was this much trash.

Maybe, because I also littered too.

God got angry and turned me into a plastic bottle.

I want to see my mom, my dad, and everyone."





Just then,
her friend Birosa came walking from the other side.

"Birosa! Help me!" Aqua called out, rolling toward her.

But Birosa didn't notice and stepped right on Aqua.
"Ouch!" but it wasn't Aqua who said that.

As a plastic bottle, she couldn't feel pain anymore.
It was Birosa, rubbing her foot in pain.

"Just stepping on a plastic bottle can hurt someone.
I'm sorry, Birosa."

She whispered and rolled away in a different direction.





Rumble rumble rumble...

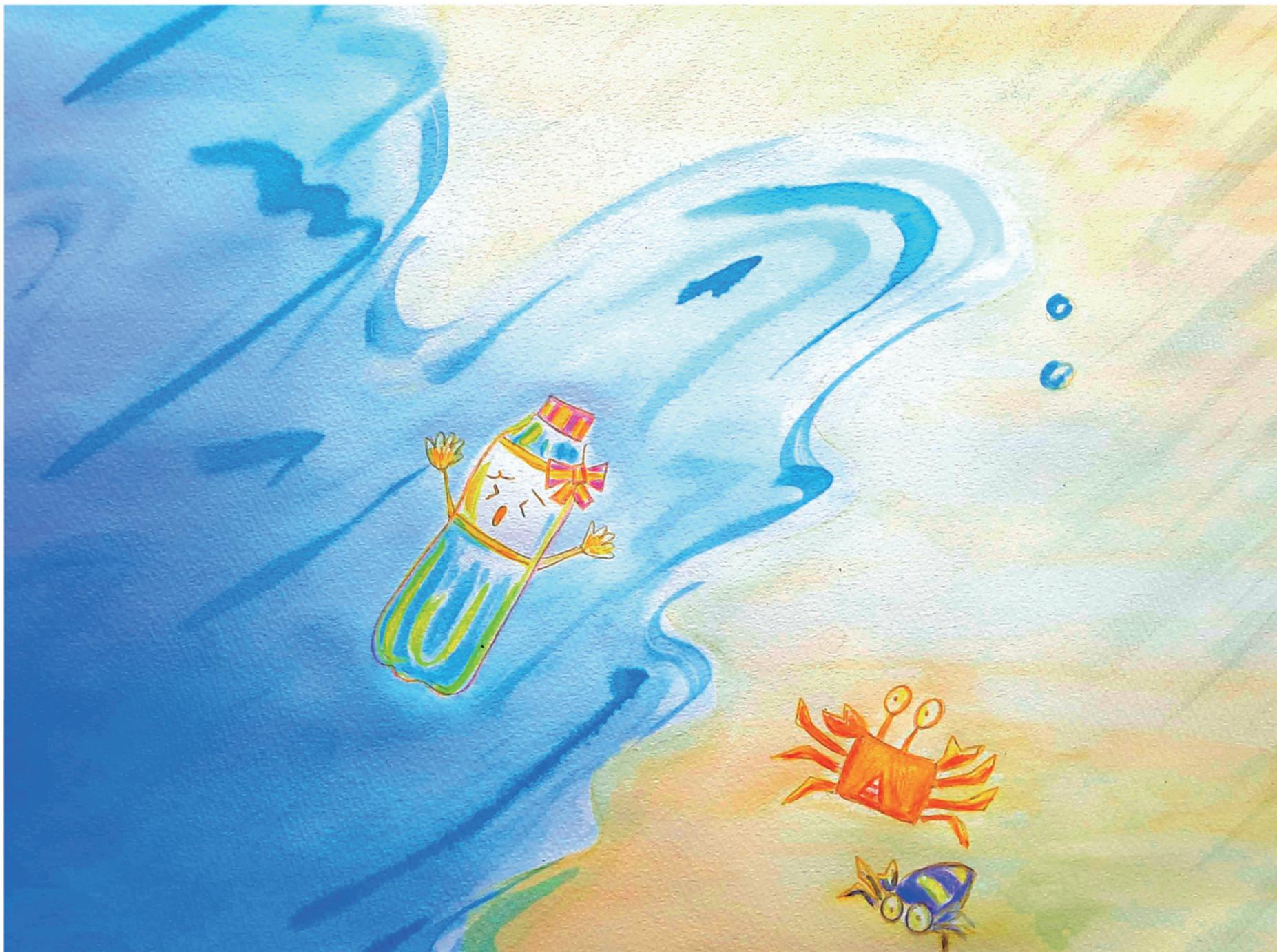
Suddenly, a stormy wind blew in,
and heavy rain poured from the sky.

Huge waves came crashing toward Aqua.

"Ah!"

Before she could do anything,
the waves swallowed her whole.

When she opened her eyes again,
she was sinking deep, deep down
to the very bottom of the sea.





It was dark all around.

She could barely see a thing.

Aqua felt a wave of sadness wash over her,
and she began to cry.

Just then, a gentle voice called out,

'Young lady, why are you crying?'





She looked toward the voice, and there, floating before her, was a giant crocodile named Avo.

Still sobbing, Aqua told him everything that had happened.

Avo nodded slowly, listening quietly to every word.

In Timor-Leste, crocodiles are sacred animals and are affectionately and respectfully called Avo (meaning ancestor in the local language).





Avo pointed to the sea and said,

"Look."

All around them, trash floated in the water.

"Last year, my best friend, a sea turtle,
ate a plastic bag.

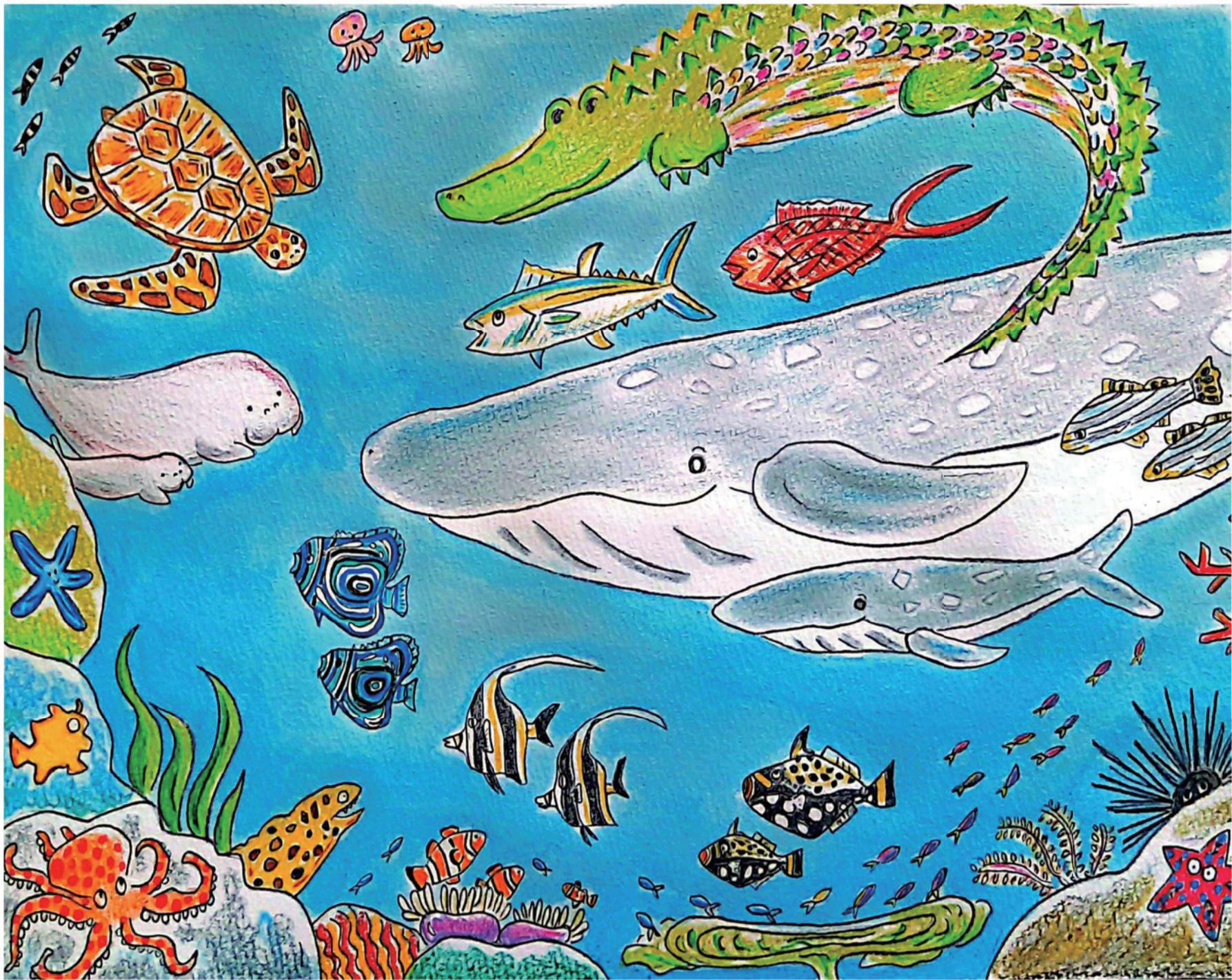
He suffered terribly and then he died."





“Long ago, the Timor Ocean used to be free of trash.
Dugongs, whales, and fish swam freely,
and the corals and seaweeds thrived.

It was a truly beautiful sea.

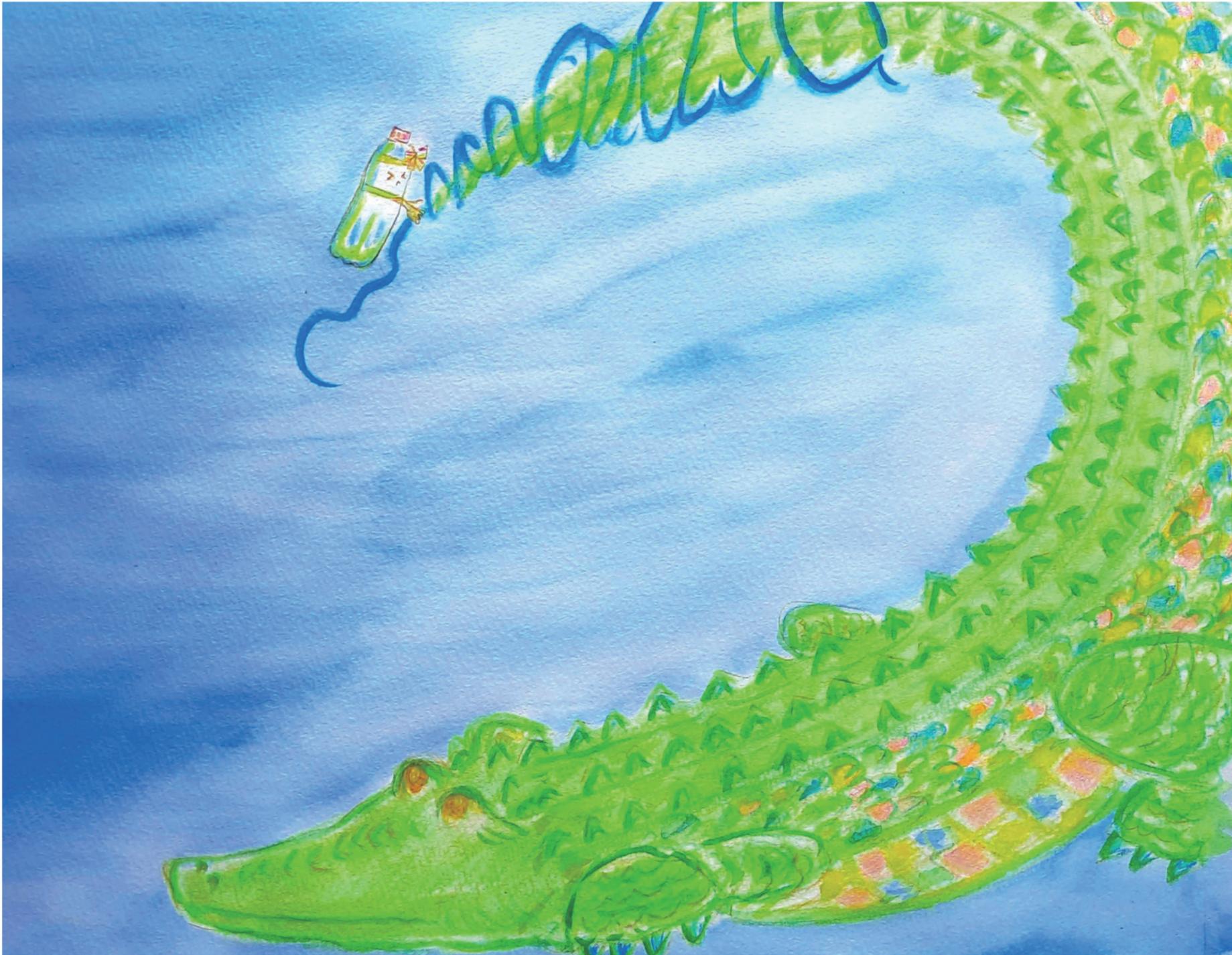




"But now, many creatures are suffering not just on land, but in the sea, too.

I want to protect this place as Avo,
However, if people keep throwing plastic away,
someday my body might become plastic too."

Avo's tail was tangled in a fishing line.
Aqua tried to pull it off, but it was stuck tight.





Avo said,

“Many animals and fish eat plastic,
just like my turtle friend.

Later, people catch those fish and eat them.

Trash does not only hurt the ocean and animals.

In the end, it hurts people too.”

Aqua imagined her plastic body breaking into tiny pieces.
Fish ate the pieces, and later people ate the fish.

“No!” Aqua cried.

“I don’t want to break apart like that.

I don’t want to hurt Avo or the sea animals.

I don’t want to dirty the ocean anymore.

I want to be human again. What should I do?





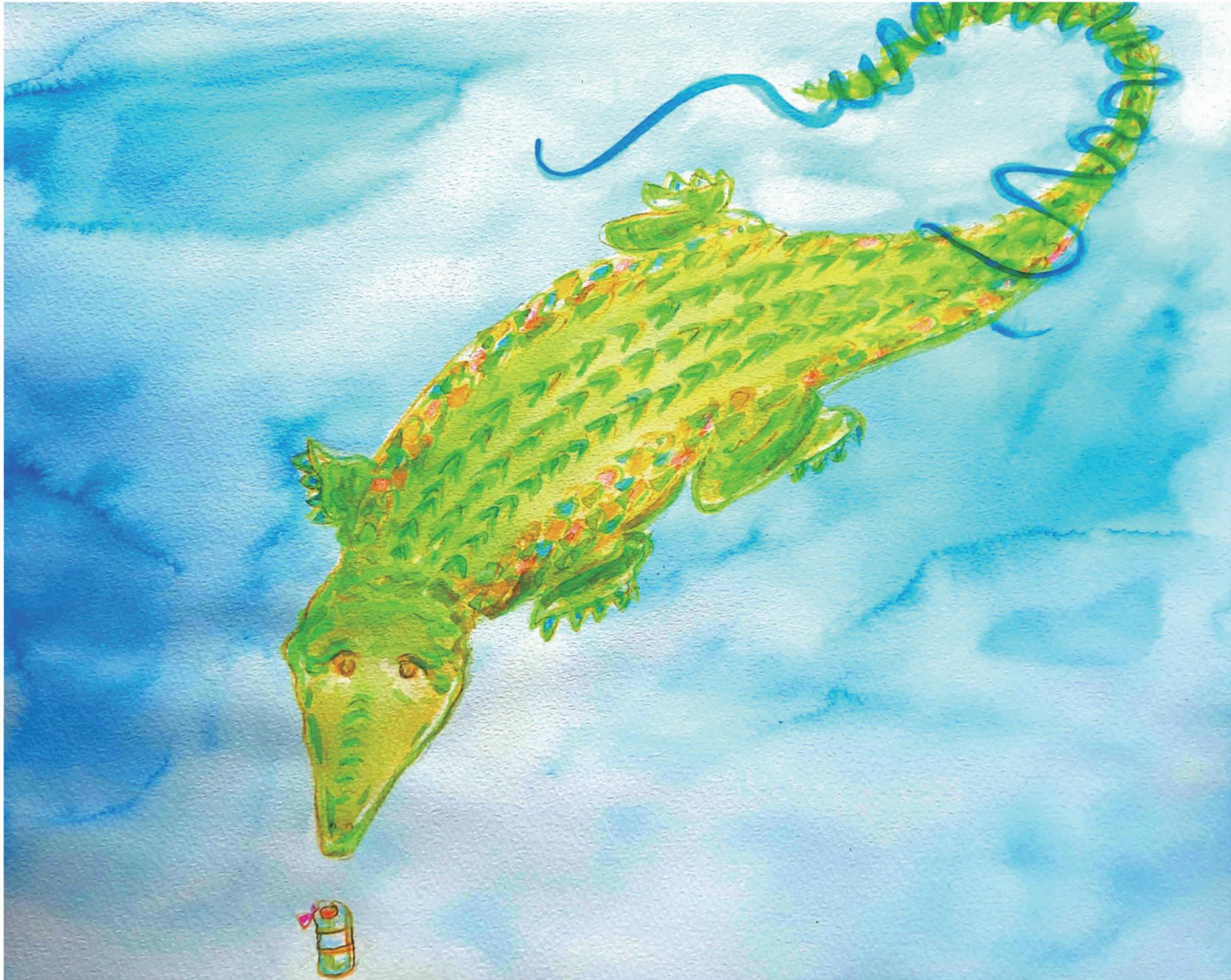
Avo looked deep into Aqua's eyes and said softly,

"If you promise to grant my wish, I may be able to turn you back into a human."

"What kind of wish?" Aqua asked.

"I want you to do what you can to reduce waste. First, always throw trash into the proper bin, so that it doesn't end up in the river or the sea. Just like you have a home, trash has a place to go too.

And please tell your family and friends about how much the ocean creatures suffer because of trash.





“It will take a long time for the sea to become clean again. But if each person starts with small actions and never gives up, I believe we can make a difference.”

Aqua nodded firmly.

“Okay. I won’t throw trash on the ground or beach anymore. I’ll make sure to tell everyone what I saw, what I learned.”

Avo looked into Aqua's eyes once more and asked,

“Will you truly keep this promise?”

“Yes, Avo. I will do my best to make your wish come true!”





Avo smiled warmly.

"Good child. Then I will help the children of Timor.
And now, you will help protect our sea.
Protect our Timor."

With those words, a warm light, like the morning sun,
began to shine around Aqua.





When she opened her eyes again,
Aqua was lying on the beach.

She let out a long sigh of relief.
“Was it... all just a dream?”

But right beside her lay a battered,
broken plastic bottle.

Aqua stared at it quietly and whispered,
“No, it wasn’t a dream.”





The next day,
Aqua went back to the beach to pick up trash.

Her friend Birosa was there, playing near the water.
After her drink, Birosa dropped a plastic bottle on the sand.

Aqua saw it and said kindly,
“We shouldn’t do that. It hurts sea animals.”and shared
what Avo had taught about trash in the ocean.

Birosa nodded.
“I didn’t know that. Thank you for telling me.”

She picked up the bottle and put it in Aqua’s trash bag.
Then they cleaned the beach together.





When the two of them picked up trash together, the trash bag quickly became full.

As the beach grew cleaner and cleaner, it felt rewarding and was good exercise too. It made both their hearts and bodies feel happy.

Seeing this, other people nearby began picking up trash as well.

One by one.

Slowly, but surely, the trash on the beach began to disappear.





Aqua looked at the people cleaning the beach and then at the shining sea.

She whispered,

“Avo, can you see us? I hope someone helped untangle the fishing line from your tail.

We’ll all keep trying our best, so we can bring back the beautiful ocean.”

Just then, a soft voice drifted from the sea, gentle as the waves themselves.

”Thank you for keeping your promise.

To protect and love nature is to protect and love this country.”





Se mak hadomi ambiente, hadomi nia an rasik.

Eliza Luisa Santa Pereira (Ms.)

Director CEIA
Centro Edukasaun no Informasaun Ambiental

The waste problem in East Timor has a major impact on the environment, marine biodiversity, human health, and the natural beauty of the country.

Solving this problem requires responsible action and good judgment from each and every individual. Let us join hands and do our best to protect our environment by taking action now. Protecting and caring for the environment ultimately means protecting and caring for yourself.



Arisa Minoru(Ms.)

JICA Volunteer
Centro Edukasaun no Informasaun Ambienta

Timor-Leste is a beautiful country surrounded by nature, yet when you look down at your feet, there is always trash there. Every time I walk along the coast and watch the sunset, I often find myself thinking how much more beautiful the sea must have been when there was no garbage. I hope that someone who reads this book will take a moment to think, even just a little, about where the trash they throw away eventually ends up.



Kohei Kaji (Mr.)

JICA Volunteer
Escola Dominicana Hera

It is not hard to imagine how the people of Timor-Leste have been sustained by this sea. Japan, too, is an island nation, and the Japanese people live their lives supported by the ocean. Through this book, I hope you will remember how precious the sea truly is. Pick up just one piece of trash a day. By doing that alone, one of Avo's friends can be saved. You can be a hero too.



Naoko Takaku(Ms.)

Yoga instructor and illustrator
Has experience as an early childhood teacher at a basic school
Served as a JICA volunteer in the Maldives

Based on my experiences living in various countries in the past, I came to realize the importance of environmental education, which led me to participate in volunteer activities such as beach cleanups in Timor-Leste. As part of my charity work, I organize postcard sales featuring Timor-Leste and yoga classes, with the proceeds donated to related organizations.

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Author : Arisa Minoru

Illustrator : Naoko Takaku

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For more detail of the survey, please scan the QR codes on the right or go to JICA web site.

<https://www.jica.go.jp/english/overseas/easttimor/index.html>



Tetum



English



**From
the People of Japan**





Obrigada Barak