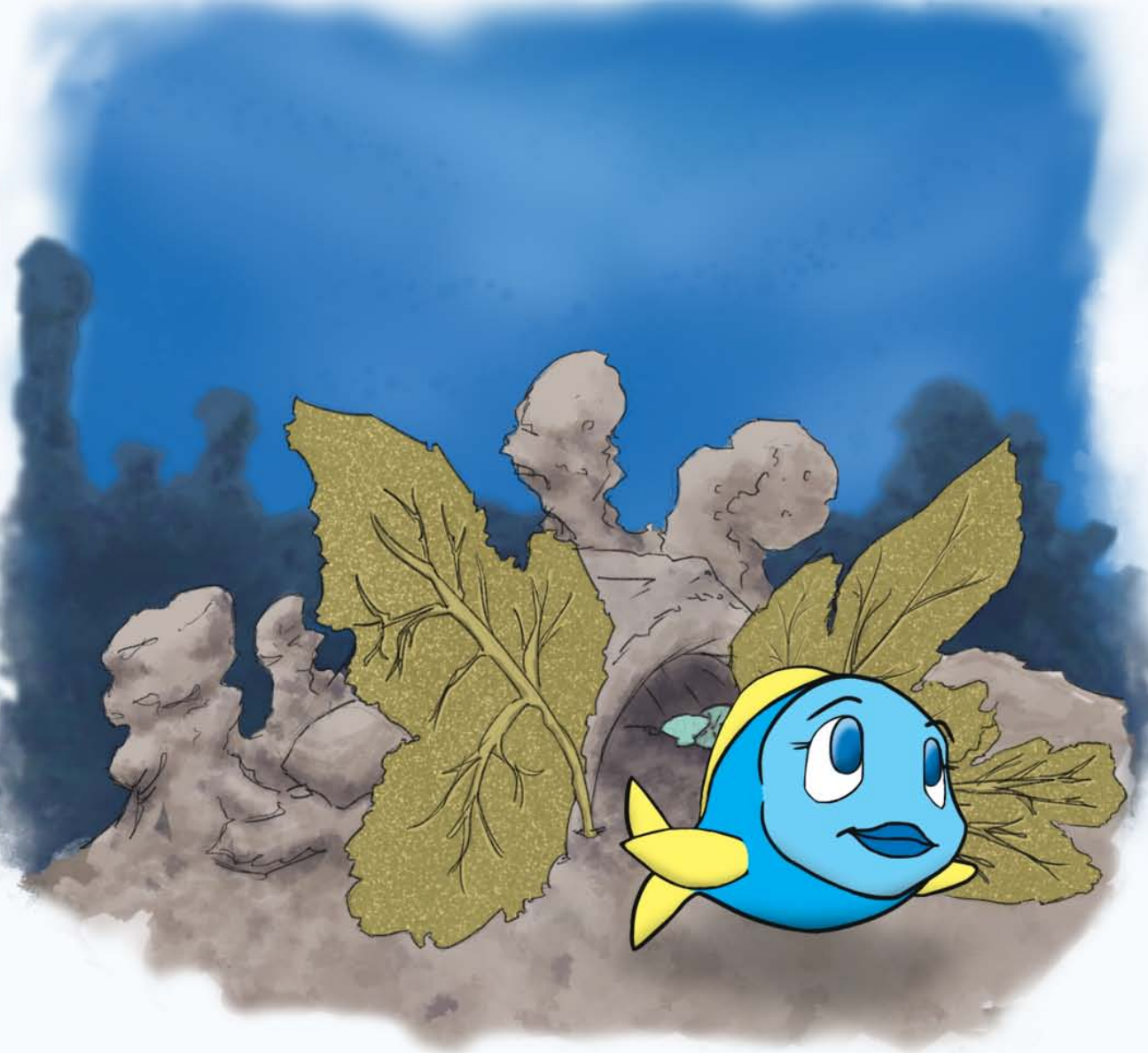
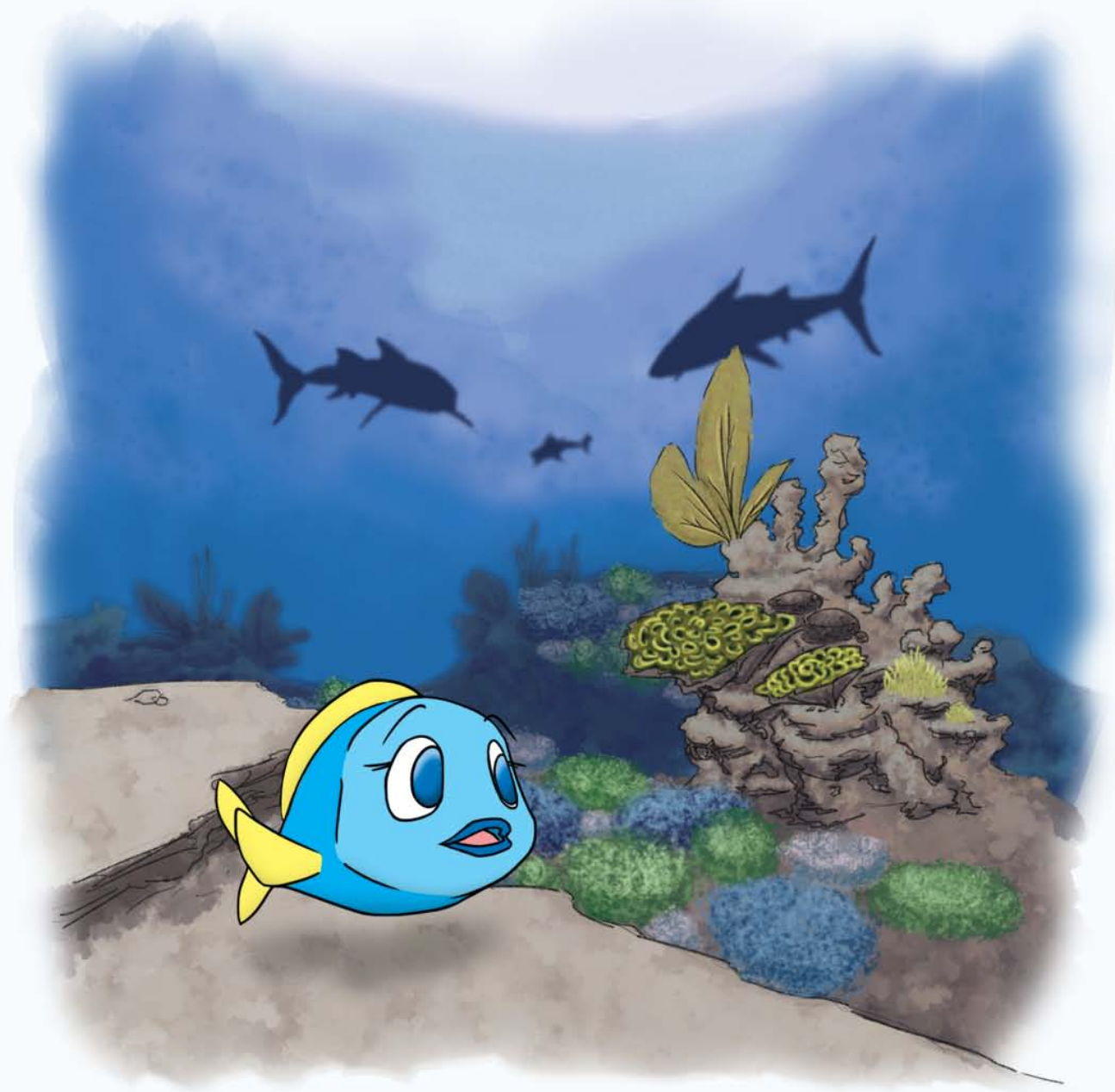


In looking back, Gracie thought that she should have seen that a storm was coming.



When she woke up that morning, the colors on the coral reef in her Red Sea Home looked a little darker. The water even felt heavier, as if a giant were pressing down on the surface of the sea.



When she looked at the other sea creatures, most did not seem to pay attention to any of these things. She did notice that the sharks were all swimming to deeper water, but you never could tell with sharks. They might take off at a moment's notice.

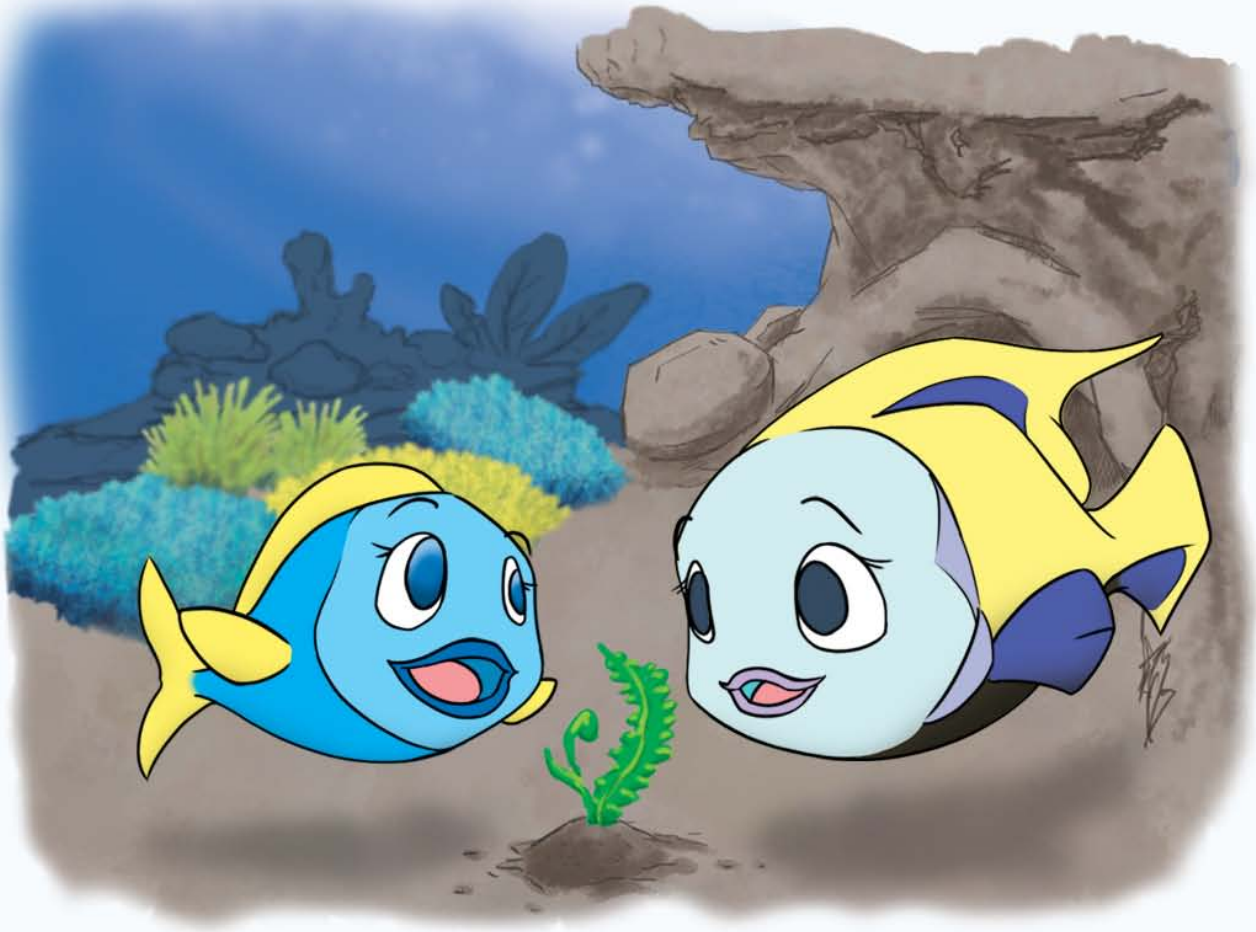
So Gracie decided to ignore those feelings that something was not quite right and swam off in search of her friends.



She found Angie Angelfish tending one of her special algae plants that grew well in warm water.

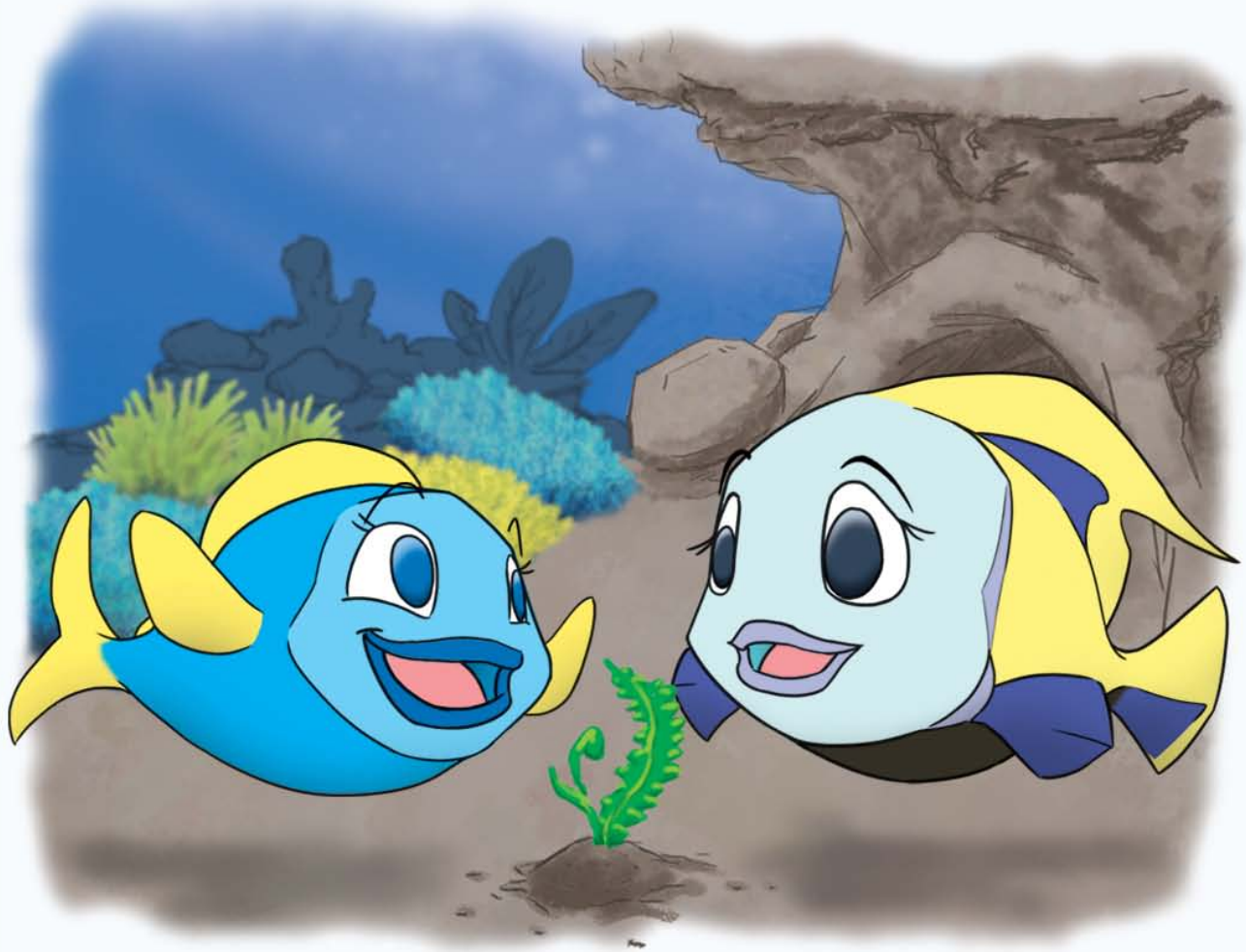
“What’s new, Angie?” asked Gracie.

“Not much, Gracie,” replied Angie.



“Ephraim Eel has a new home in that hole under the next reef. He likes it there, because it is darker and more protected. Maybe we should bring him a housewarming gift.”

“That’s a great idea, Angie. What does an eel need in his hole?” thought Gracie aloud.



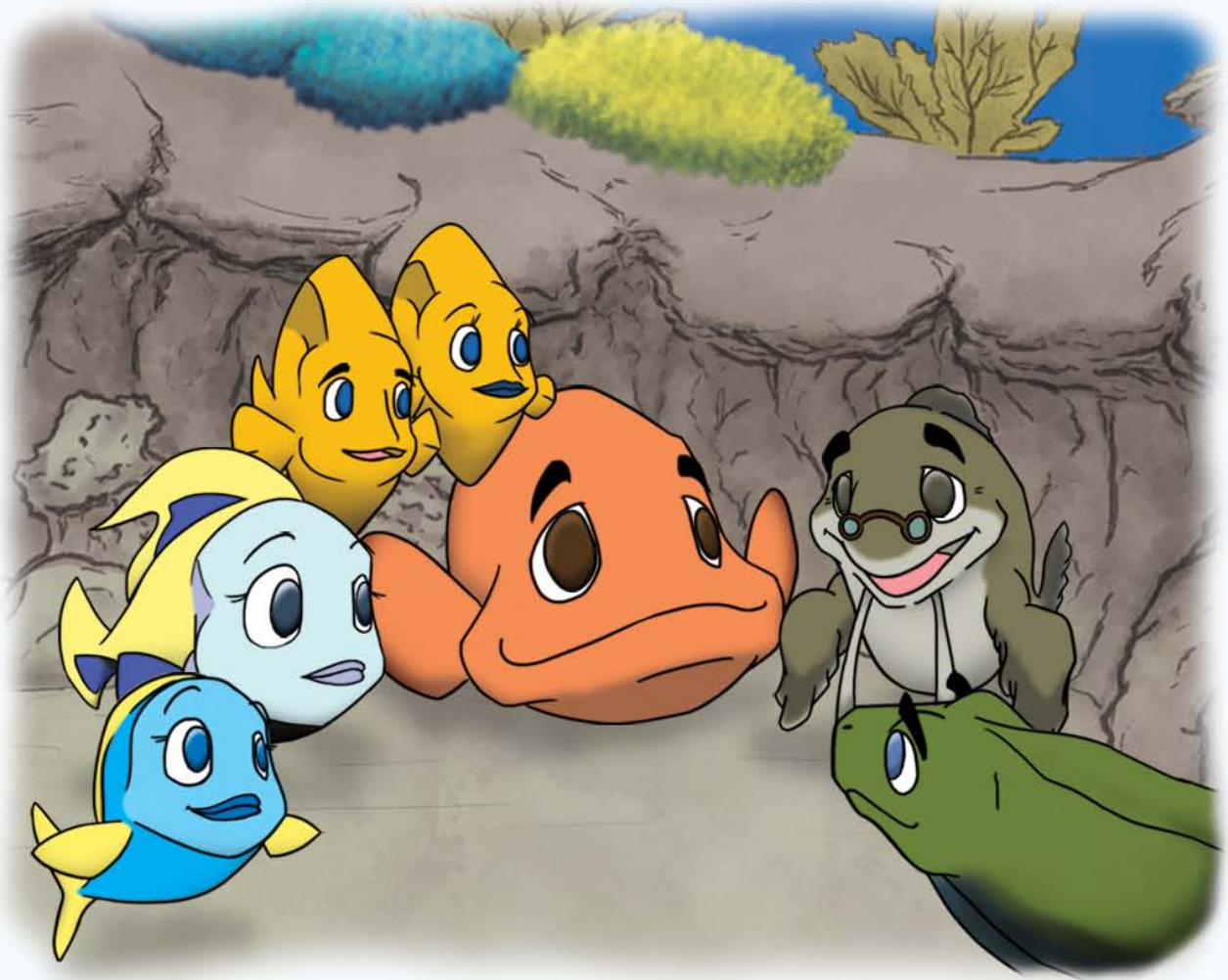
“Maybe you could take him one of the shells from your collection to make his home more beautiful,” replied Angie. “I think I’ll bring one of my algae seedlings, so that he will have good food.”

So they headed to Ephraim Eel's new hole, each bringing her housewarming gift. When they arrived, they saw they were not alone, as many of their other friends had gathered to wish Ephraim well.



Benji and Belinda Butterflyfish were there, as were Gus Grouper and even Old Codfish, who was about to offer a blessing for Ephraim's new home.

“Bless this home, O God of the Sea,” prayed Old Codfish. “May it be a place where friends gather, songs are sung, food is shared, and you, O God, are remembered.”



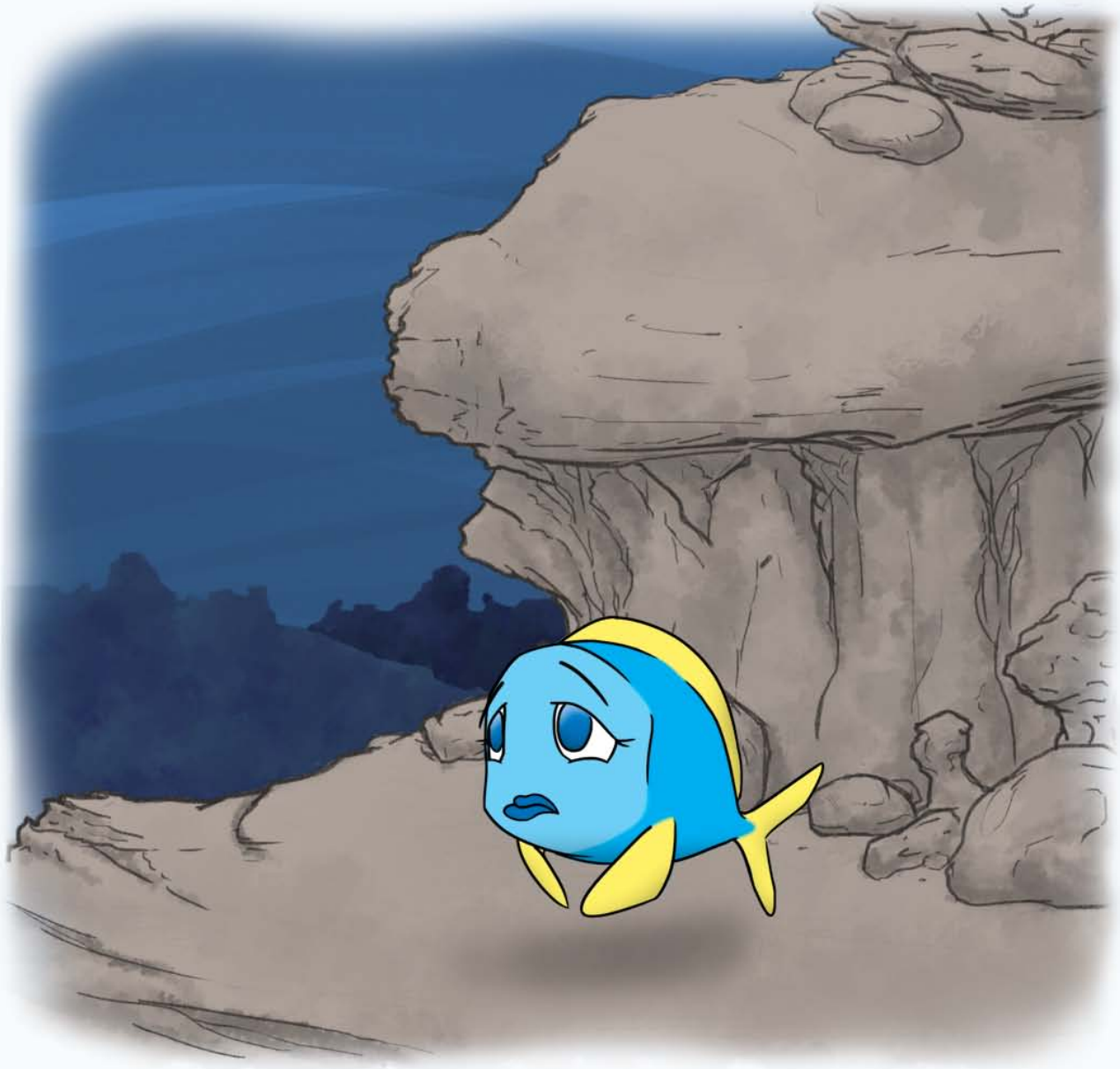
All the other fish bubbled their agreement with this blessing. Ephraim was happy to have all his friends surrounding him.

As they were sharing the feast of many different types of algae that Ephraim had prepared, they noticed the sea had gotten much darker and that the water was moving so rapidly that some of the smaller fish had to grab onto the algae and coral to not be carried away by the current.





“There must be a storm brewing,” said Old Codfish. “I can’t remember the last time we had a big storm, but we must make preparations. Everyone should take cover and go someplace safe.”

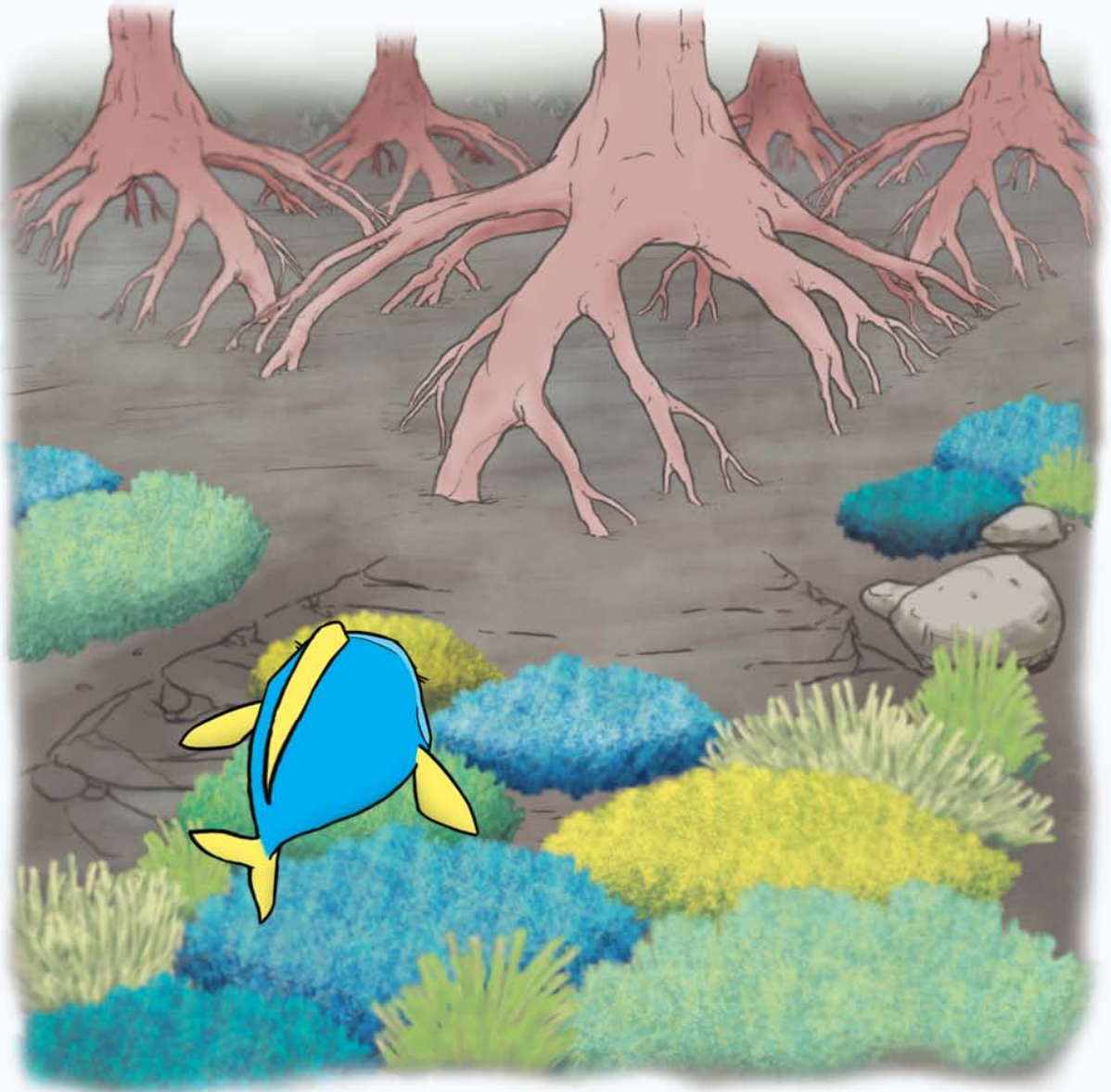


Some fish began swimming into caves or under large pieces of coral. Gracie thought that she would like to go back to her fan coral home, but was that safe? Most of her friends had already left, but here she was still trying to make up her mind where a safe place might be.

“Hurry, Gracie,” Old Codfish encouraged as he swam towards the bottom of the sea.



“I know!” said Gracie. When she had gone on her fieldtrip to the nursery a while back, she had been told that the nursery was in the Mangrove tree roots because this was the safest place to be when a storm hit.



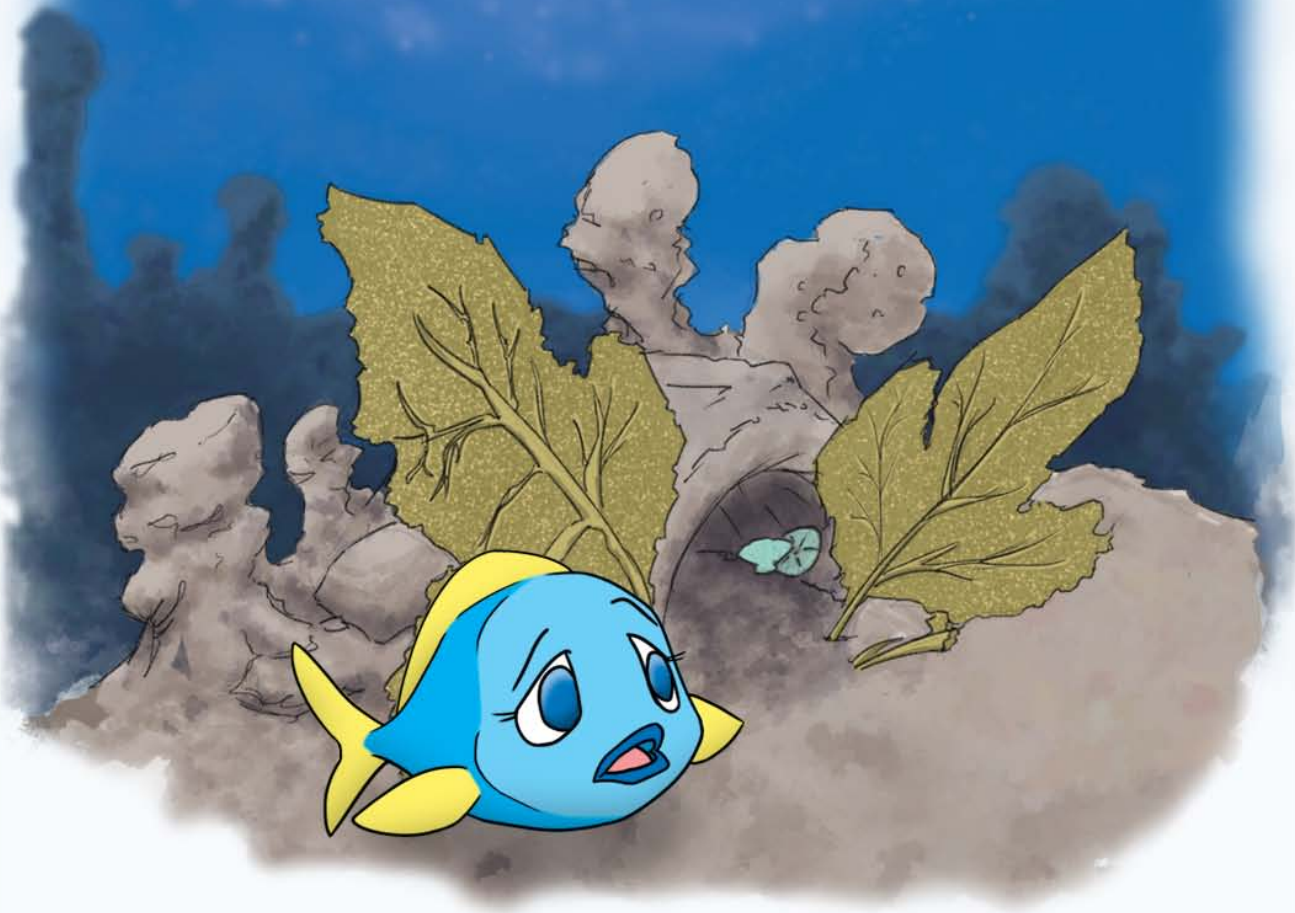
Gracie swam as quickly as her little fins would take her to the nearest mangrove tree and huddled with the infant sea creatures, who were experiencing their first storm and were very frightened.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Gracie, even though she was a little afraid herself. “God will watch over us.”





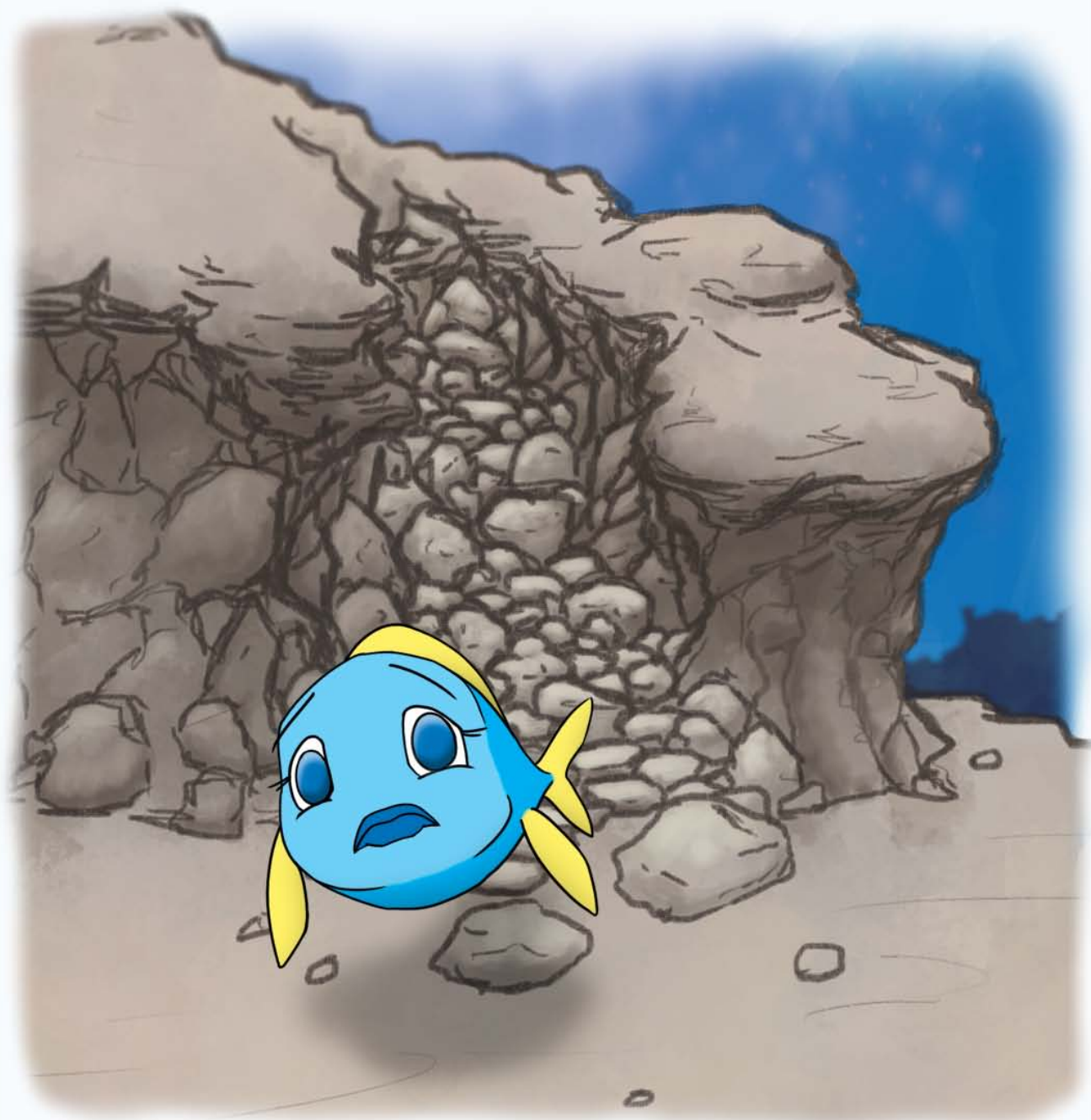
This seemed to reassure the young fish, and they waited as the waves and thunder continued to roar around them. After a while the storm began to calm down, and Gracie thought about returning to the reef.



She went first to her home and discovered that one of the fans in her coral had broken off in the storm.

She swam by Angie's plants and saw that many were uprooted and were leaving the reef to wherever the currents took them.





She swam quickly to Ephraim's new home and saw that his beautiful hole had collapsed.

Gracie began to panic and bubbled all her friends' names at once. "Angie, Benji, Belinda, Gus, Ephraim, Old Codfish." There seemed to be only silence. Where could they be?



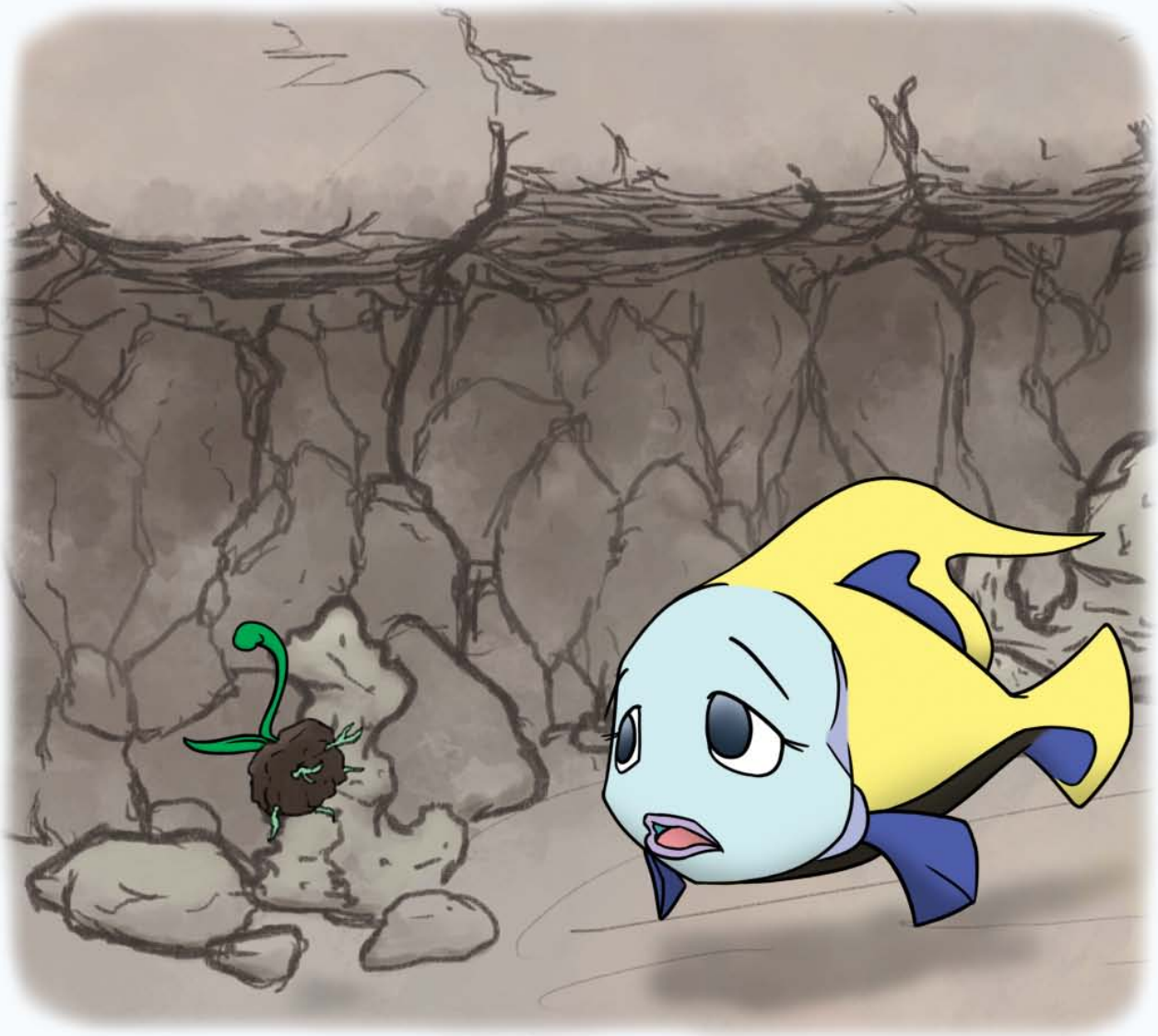
Then she heard a noise behind her and with relief she saw that all her friends were beginning to emerge from their safe hiding places.



“Our home looks so different,” said Belinda.

“Where are we going to live?” asked Ephraim, who was looking sadly at his new home and the remains of the feast.

“What are we going to eat?” asked Benji, who was always a little concerned about food.



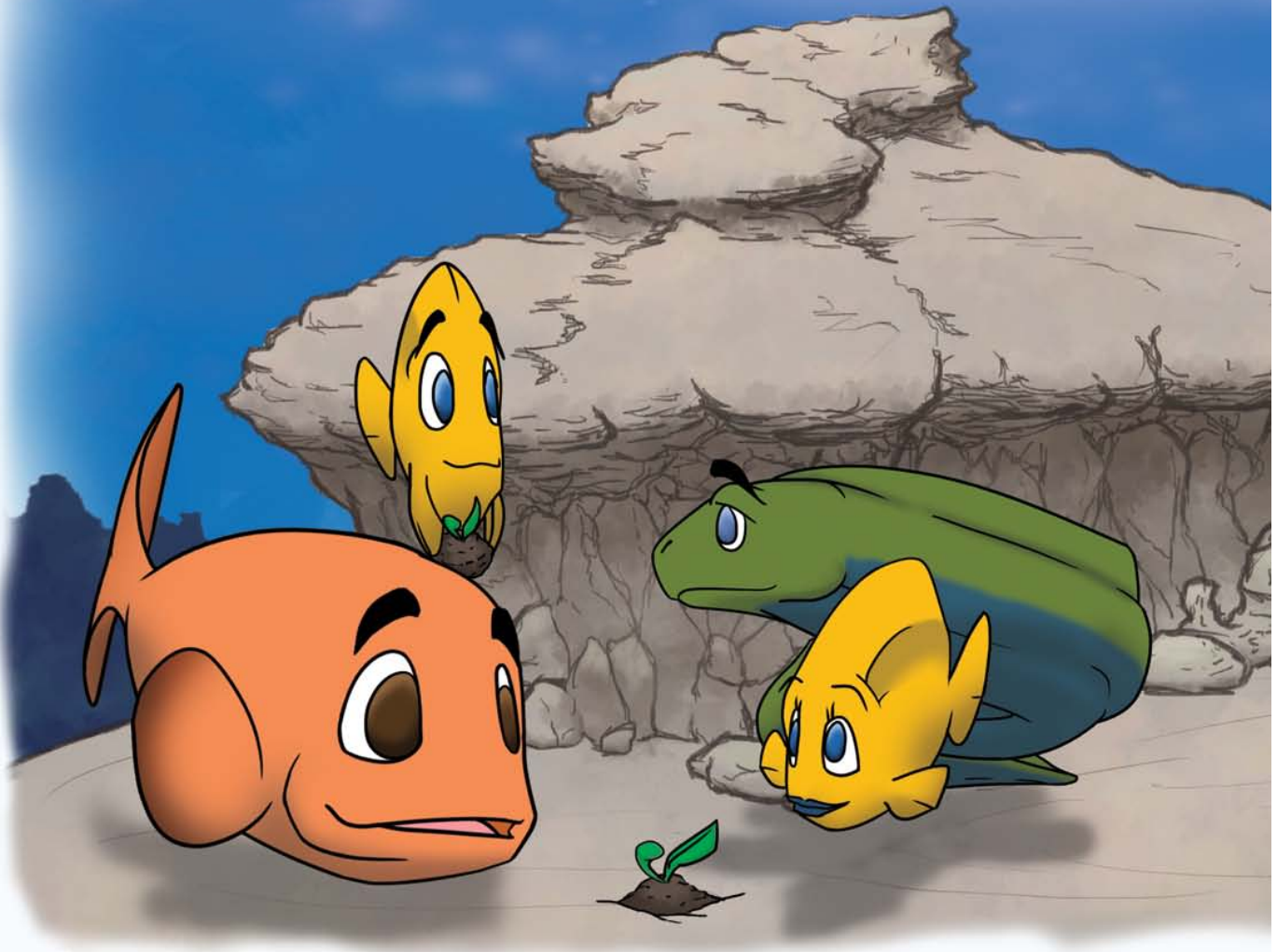
“Maybe we’ll all have to move some place else that didn’t have a storm,” said Angie, who was watching another of her beloved plants float by.



“But you blessed this place, Old Codfish,” said Gracie. “Did God hear you? Did we do something wrong?”



“My little friend,” began Old Codfish, “God does not punish us by sending storms. God is not angry. We are still blessed. It may just take all of us working together to make this place our home again.”



So all the sea creatures large and small began to help each other clean up their homes and dig new holes for creatures like Ephraim who had no place to live. Some tended to the algae plants remaining and collected new seedlings.



As they worked, they sang a bubble song of praise to God and realized that Old Codfish's blessing had happened. They were friends gathered, singing songs, and sharing food, just not the way they had imagined.

For Younger Children

1. Talk about times when you have experienced a big storm. How did you feel? What did you do to stay safe? Who helped you during and after the storm?
2. How did Gracie and her friends help each other after the storm on the reef? How have you seen people helping each other after a big storm or earthquake? Pray for people around the world who may still need help after a disaster.
3. Choose a story of a real disaster from the OneGreatHour of Sharing materials. Tell this story to others as you collect money in your fish bank.

For Older Children

1. Read the account of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27:1 - 28:10. Act out the story, with some being the people and the others being the storm.

Compare this account to the Gracie story. What was the same and what was different?

2. On a world map, look for places where recent natural disasters have occurred, such as Haiti and Japan. Pray for the people in these places, and find out what One Great Hour of Sharing has done to help in their distress.

3. Choose one real-life story of people coming together after a natural disaster that speaks to your faith and share it with others as you are collecting money for this year's offering.