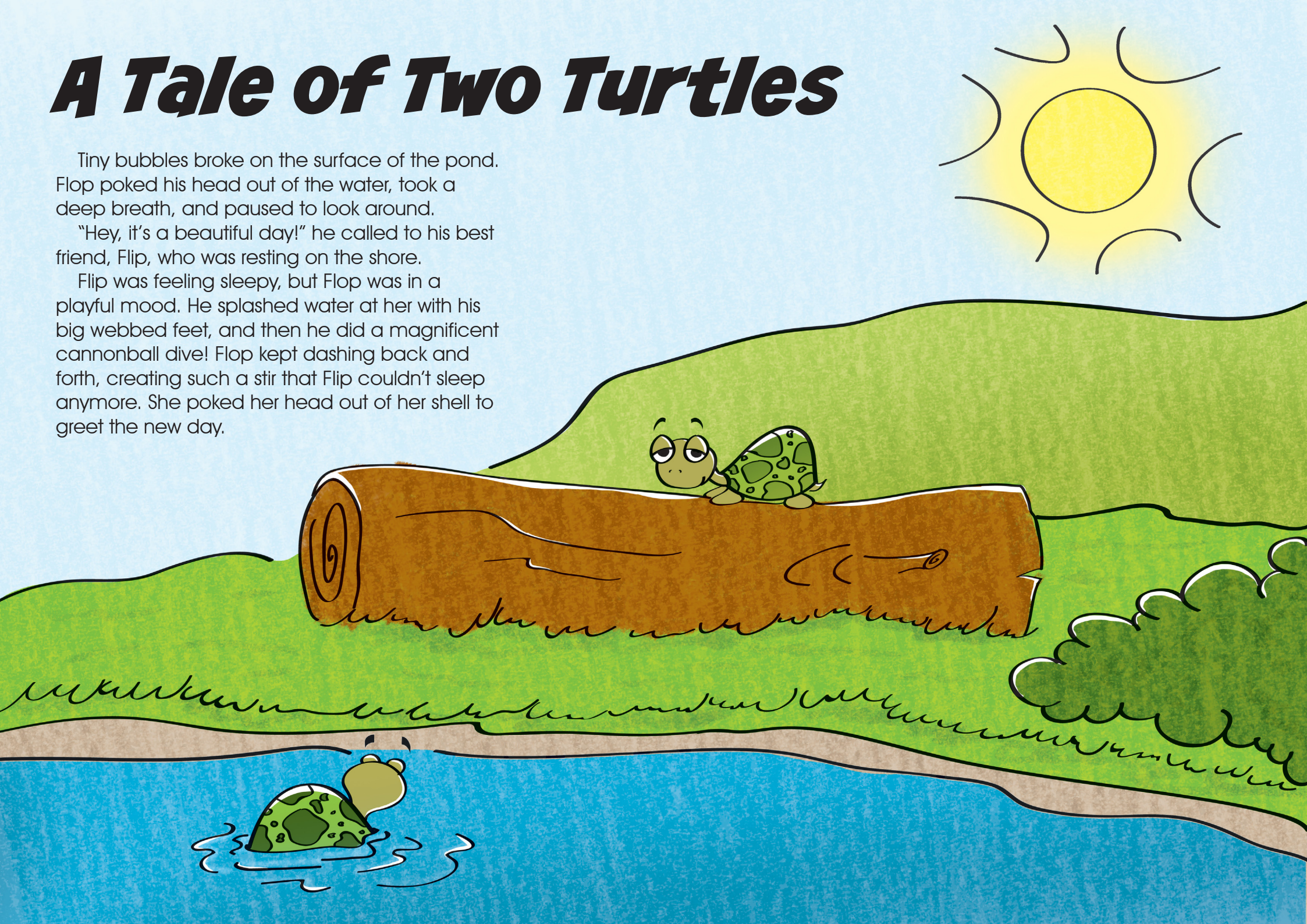


# ***A Tale of Two Turtles***

Tiny bubbles broke on the surface of the pond. Flop poked his head out of the water, took a deep breath, and paused to look around.

"Hey, it's a beautiful day!" he called to his best friend, Flip, who was resting on the shore.

Flip was feeling sleepy, but Flop was in a playful mood. He splashed water at her with his big webbed feet, and then he did a magnificent cannonball dive! Flop kept dashing back and forth, creating such a stir that Flip couldn't sleep anymore. She poked her head out of her shell to greet the new day.



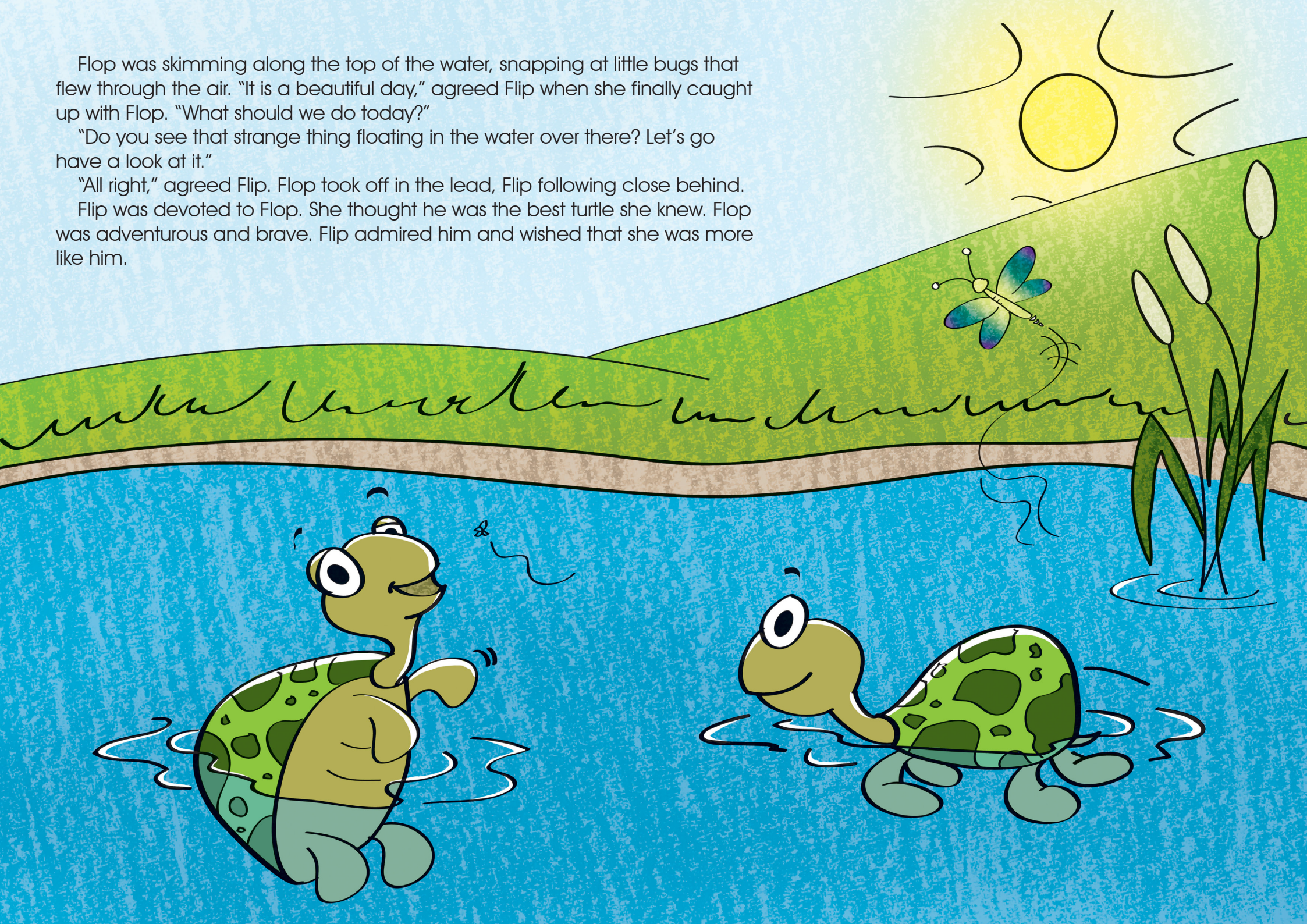


Flop was skimming along the top of the water, snapping at little bugs that flew through the air. "It is a beautiful day," agreed Flip when she finally caught up with Flop. "What should we do today?"

"Do you see that strange thing floating in the water over there? Let's go have a look at it."

"All right," agreed Flip. Flop took off in the lead, Flip following close behind.

Flip was devoted to Flop. She thought he was the best turtle she knew. Flop was adventurous and brave. Flip admired him and wished that she was more like him.





Flop had been swimming at a fast pace, but as they got closer he slowed down to avoid colliding with the floating object. It was big and round and stuck partly out of the water. When Flip bumped up against it, it felt hard and smooth.

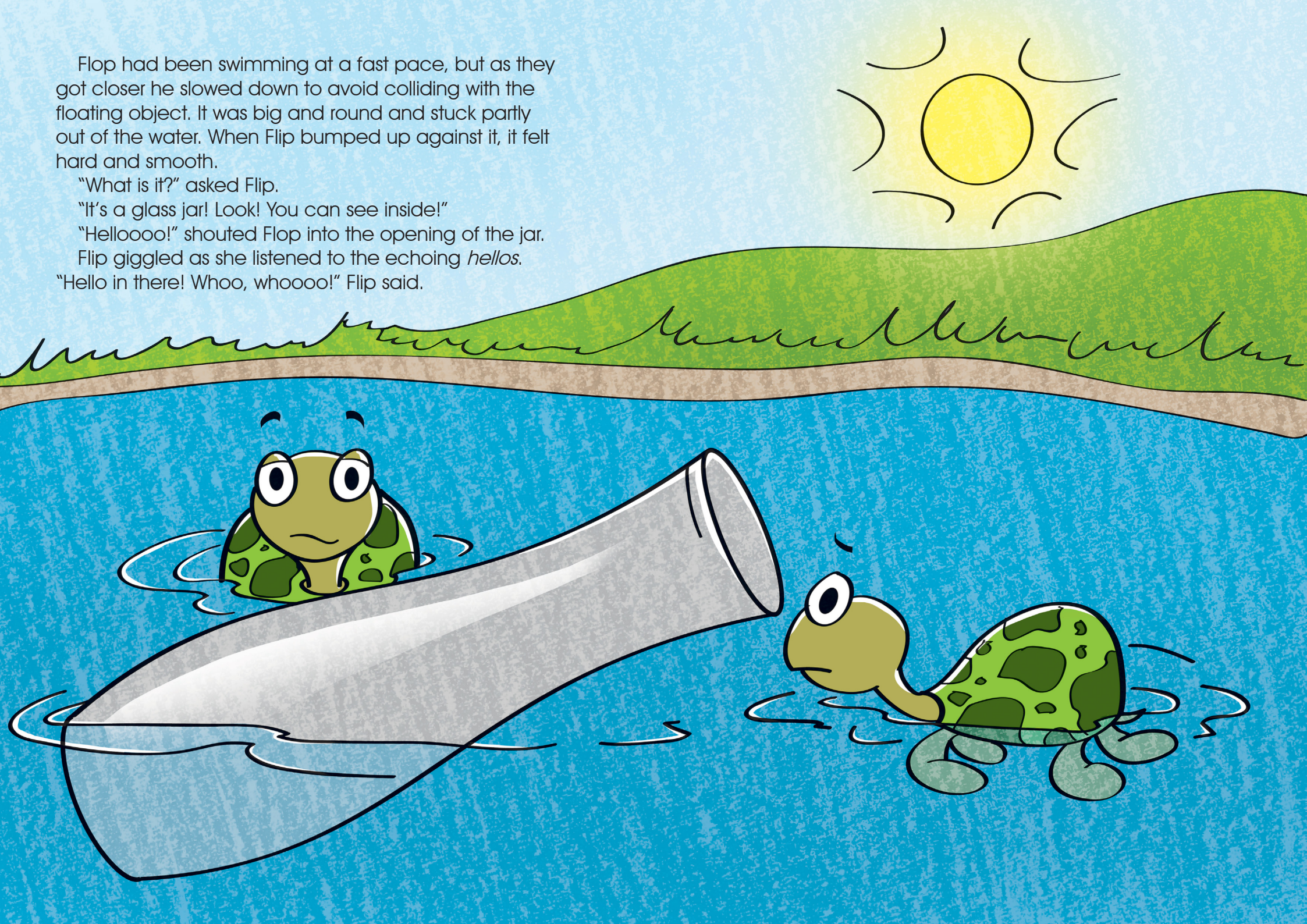
"What is it?" asked Flip.

"It's a glass jar! Look! You can see inside!"

"Hellooooo!" shouted Flop into the opening of the jar.

Flip giggled as she listened to the echoing *hellos*.

"Hello in there! Whoo, whooooo!" Flip said.





"Let's go inside," Flop suggested.

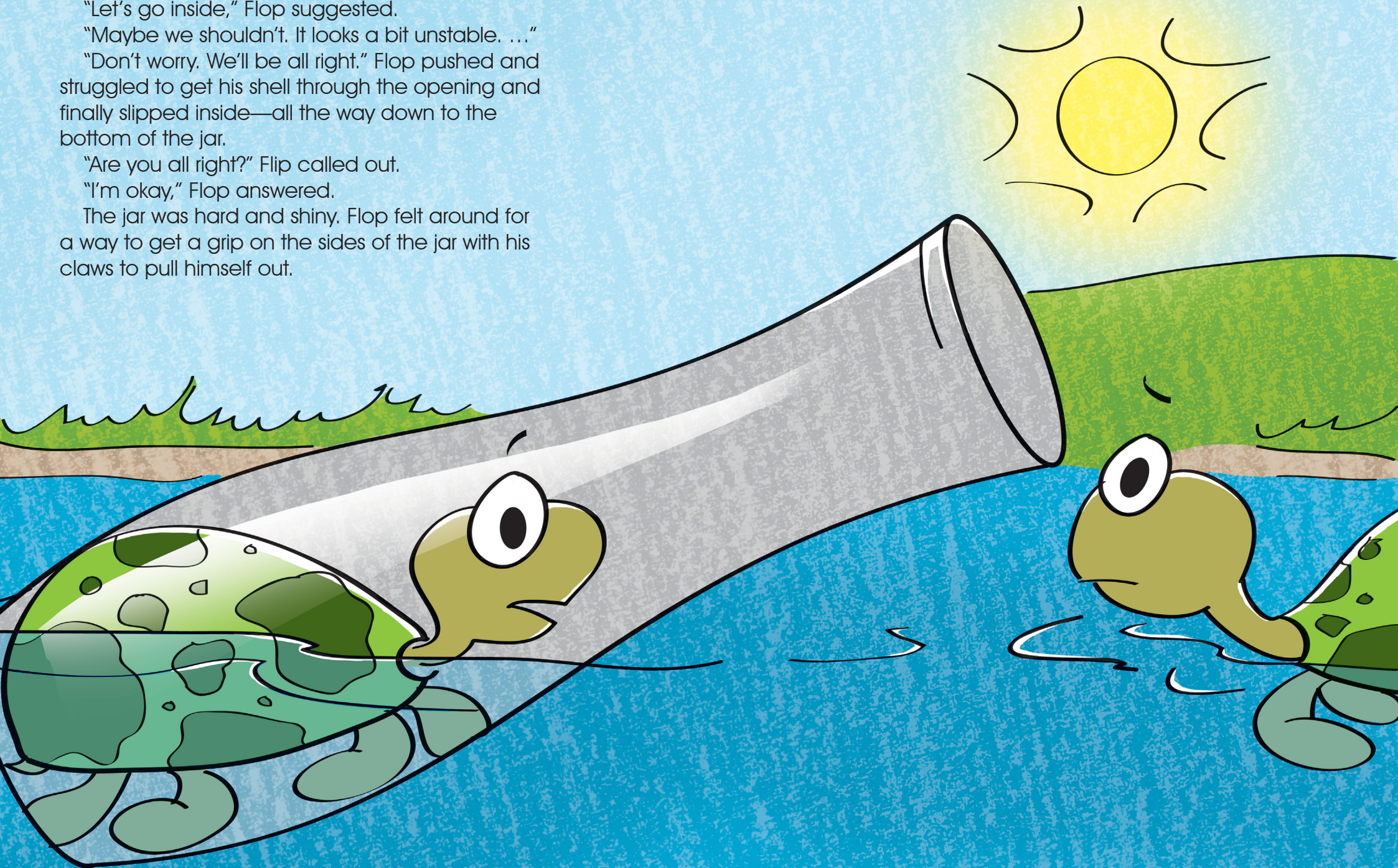
"Maybe we shouldn't. It looks a bit unstable. ..."

"Don't worry. We'll be all right," Flop pushed and struggled to get his shell through the opening and finally slipped inside—all the way down to the bottom of the jar.

"Are you all right?" Flip called out.

"I'm okay," Flop answered.

The jar was hard and shiny. Flop felt around for a way to get a grip on the sides of the jar with his claws to pull himself out.

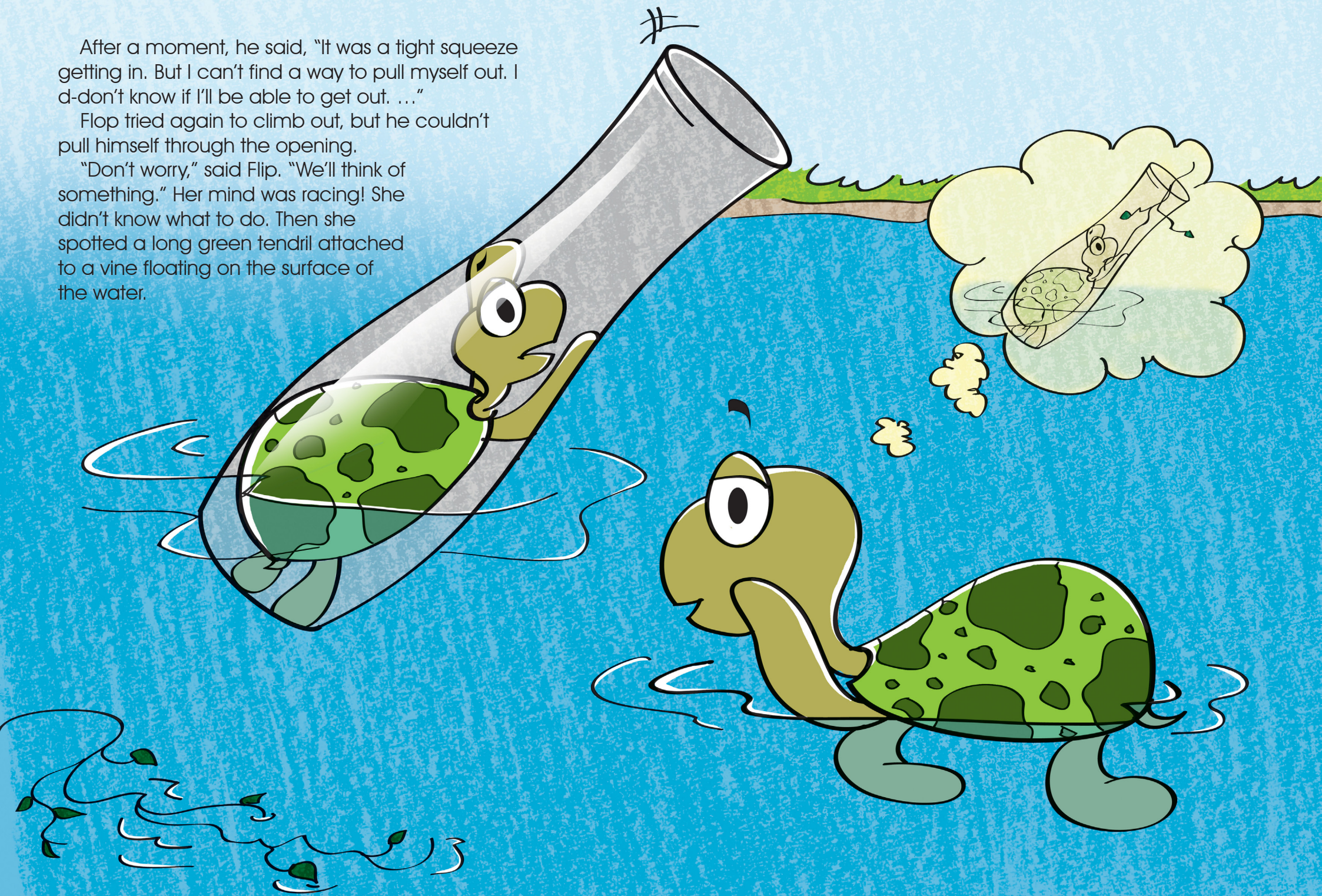




After a moment, he said, "It was a tight squeeze getting in. But I can't find a way to pull myself out. I d-don't know if I'll be able to get out. ..."

Flop tried again to climb out, but he couldn't pull himself through the opening.

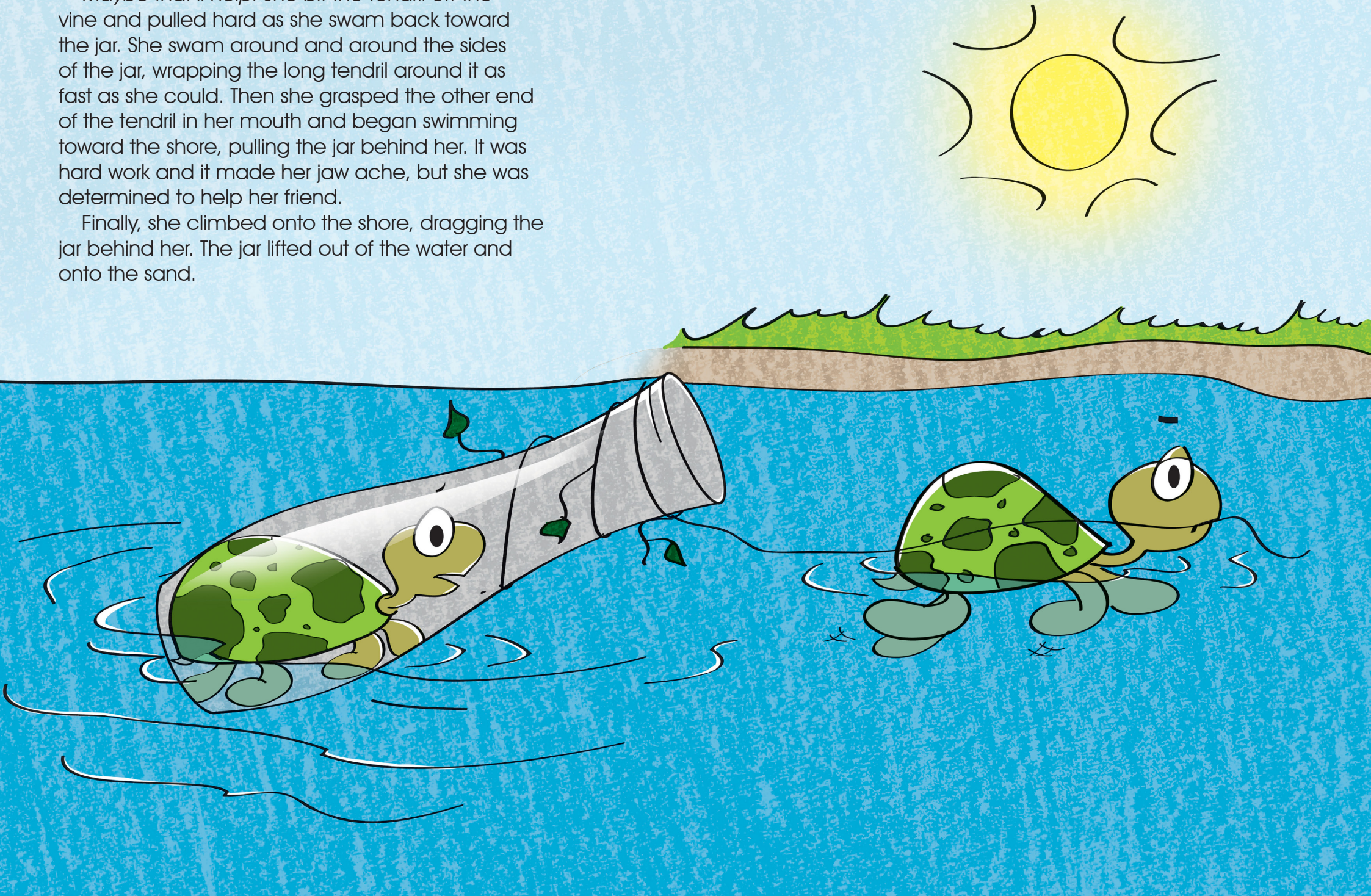
"Don't worry," said Flip. "We'll think of something." Her mind was racing! She didn't know what to do. Then she spotted a long green tendril attached to a vine floating on the surface of the water.



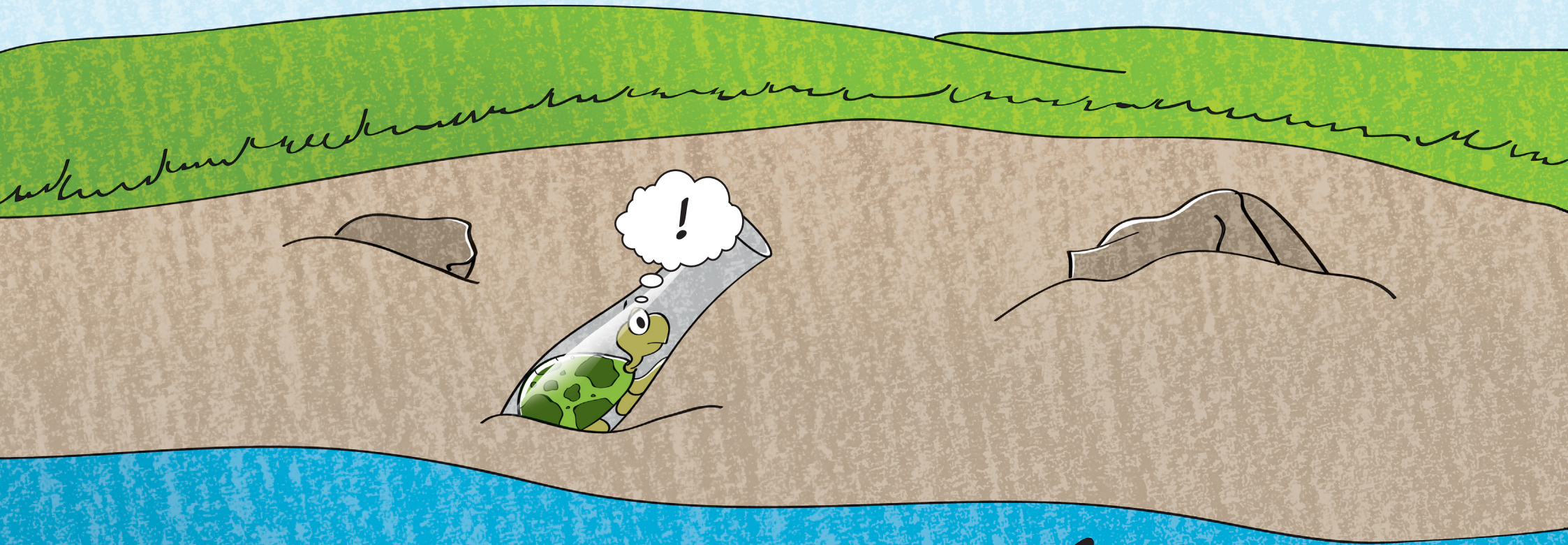


*Maybe that'll help.* She bit the tendril off the vine and pulled hard as she swam back toward the jar. She swam around and around the sides of the jar, wrapping the long tendril around it as fast as she could. Then she grasped the other end of the tendril in her mouth and began swimming toward the shore, pulling the jar behind her. It was hard work and it made her jaw ache, but she was determined to help her friend.

Finally, she climbed onto the shore, dragging the jar behind her. The jar lifted out of the water and onto the sand.





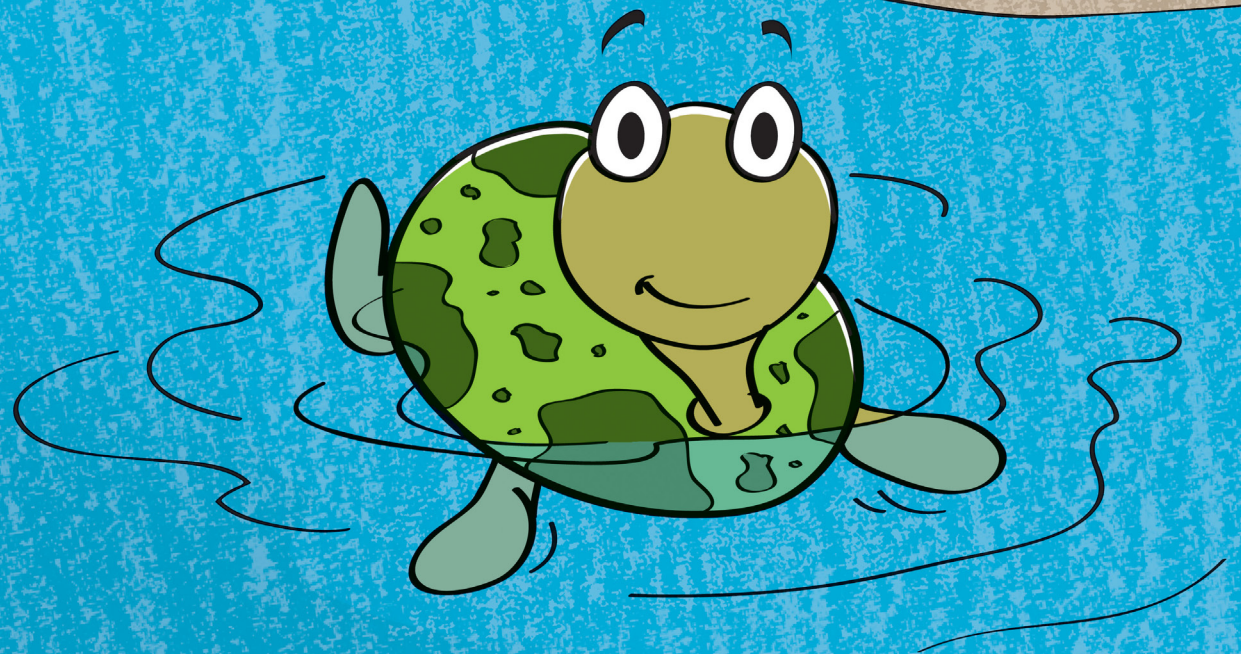


Flip dropped the tendril and raced toward the jar to see if Flop was all right. *Yes! There he was, crouched at the bottom of the jar, peeking out at her.*

*Maybe I could make one of those rocks up on that ridge roll down and smash into the bottle,* thought Flip. *But then Flop might get hurt. No, that's probably not a good idea!*

Then she had another idea. "I'm going to swim over to the north side of the pond to get something. I'll be right back."

*The north side of the pond?* thought Flop. *Why would she be going there? That's where that slimy green algae is, which we usually try to avoid.*

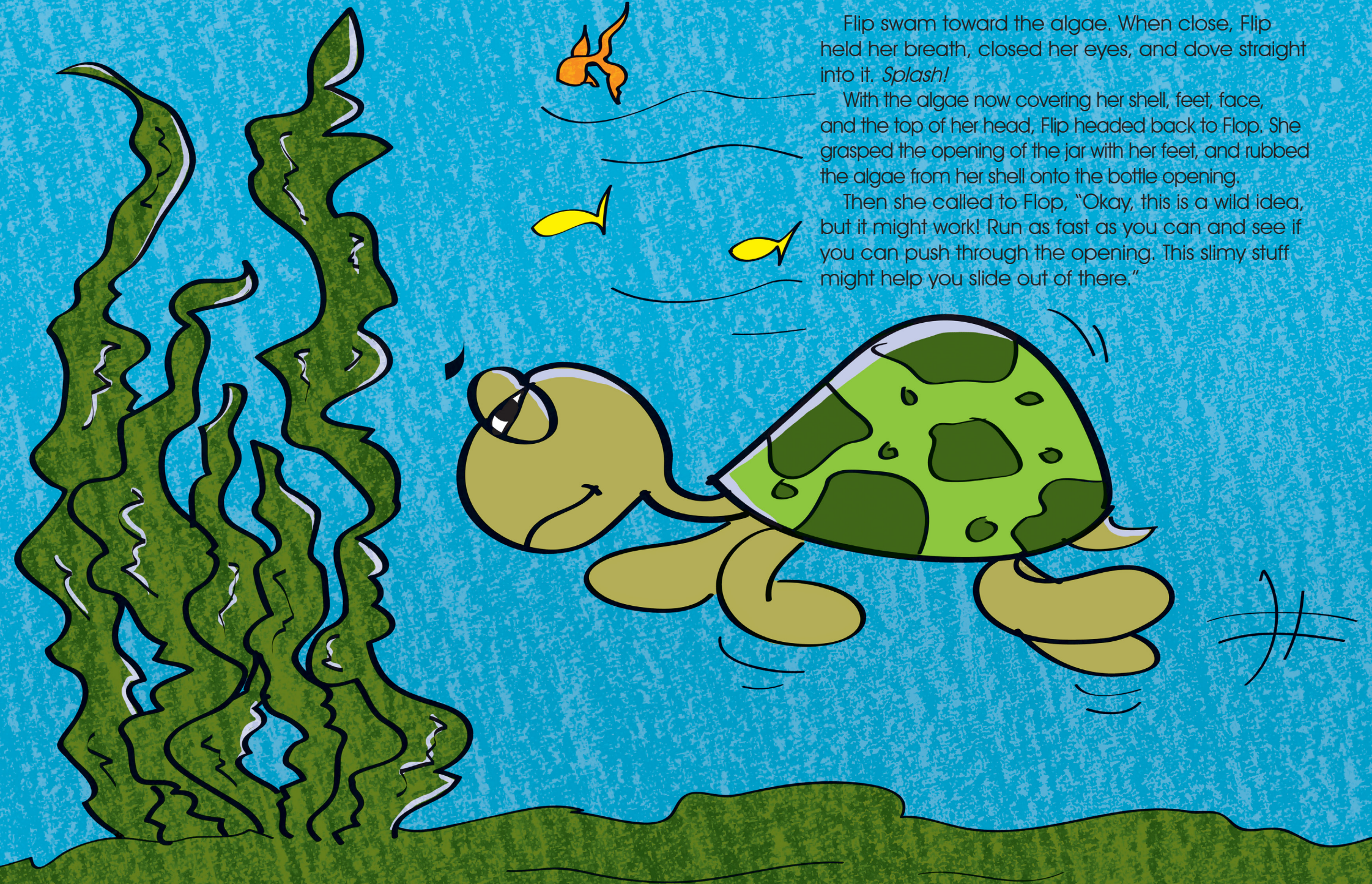




Flip swam toward the algae. When close, Flip held her breath, closed her eyes, and dove straight into it. *Splash!*

With the algae now covering her shell, feet, face, and the top of her head, Flip headed back to Flop. She grasped the opening of the jar with her feet, and rubbed the algae from her shell onto the bottle opening.

Then she called to Flop, "Okay, this is a wild idea, but it might work! Run as fast as you can and see if you can push through the opening. This slimy stuff might help you slide out of there."





Flop backed up as far as he could. He used all his strength to kick off from the bottom of the bottle and made a dash for the opening—out he shot!

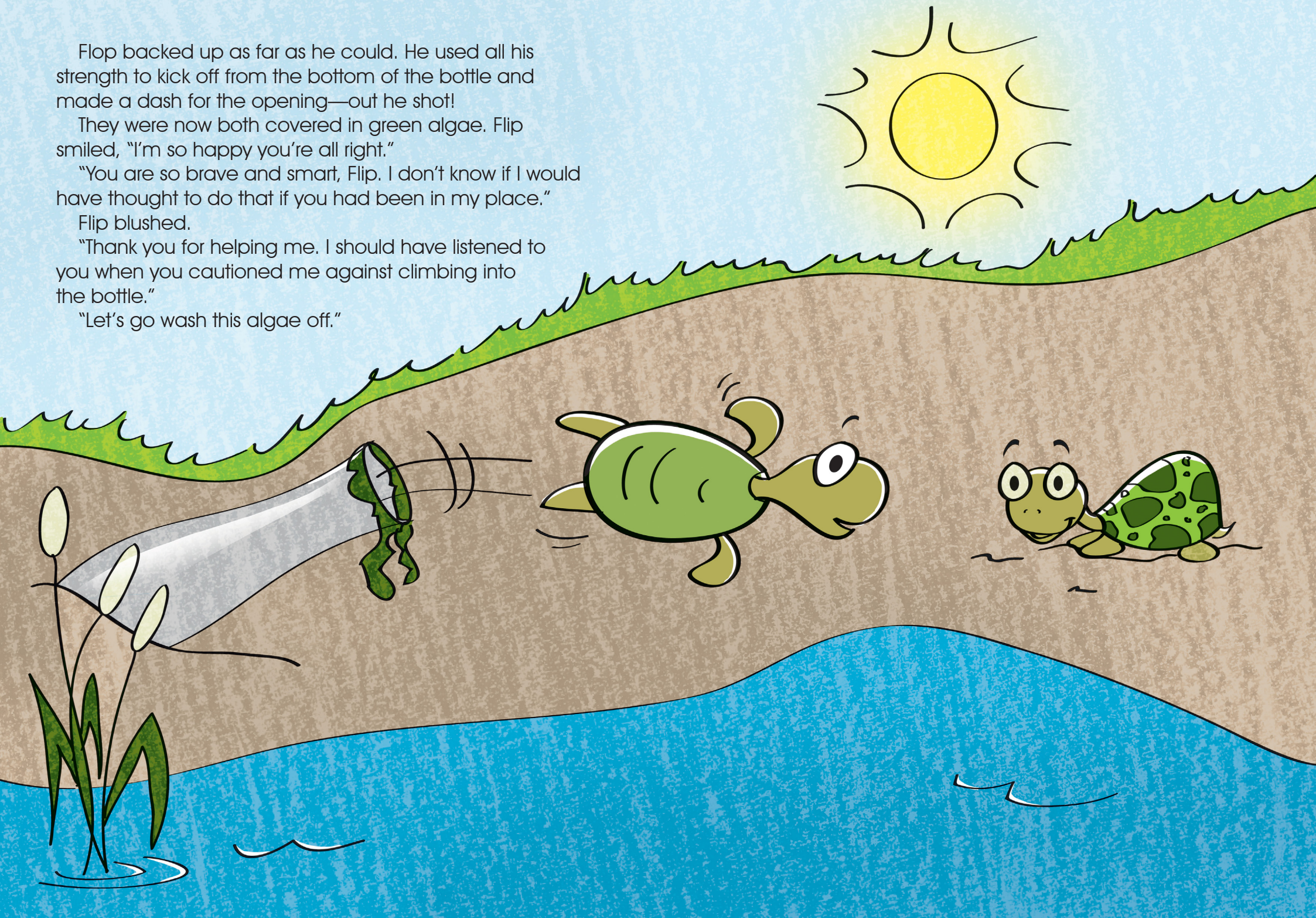
They were now both covered in green algae. Flip smiled, "I'm so happy you're all right."

"You are so brave and smart, Flip. I don't know if I would have thought to do that if you had been in my place."

Flip blushed.

"Thank you for helping me. I should have listened to you when you cautioned me against climbing into the bottle."

"Let's go wash this algae off."





They dove under the water down through the leaves, wriggling and jiggling until all the algae was washed off. Once they were both clean, they popped up above the surface again.

It was still a beautiful day; the sun cast beautiful gold and orange reflections across the water. Flip and Flop crawled up on a log and sat side by side enjoying the sunshine. Neither of them said anything for a long time. They watched as bugs flew by and the trees waved in the breeze. It was good to be safe.

