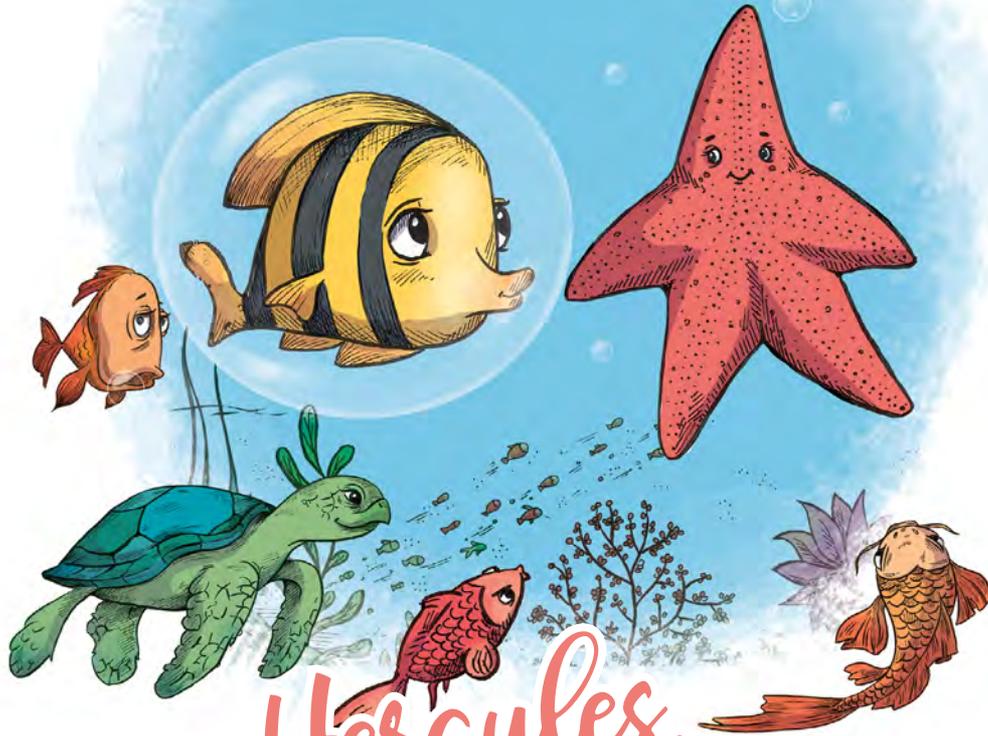


CHILDREN OF GENETICS

Sonia Goerger and Élodie Garcia

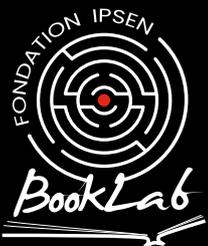


# Hercules, the Little Bubble Fish



European  
Reference  
Network  
for rare or low prevalence  
complex diseases

Network  
Intellectual Disability  
and Congenital  
Malformations (ERN ITHACA)



Sonia Goerger and Élodie Garcia

# Hercules, the Little Bubble Fish

CHILDREN OF GENETICS





Hercules is a young fish living in the Caribbean Sea. He has everything to be happy: loving parents, a wide variety of underwater fellows, a home with a breathtaking landscape ...

But despite all of this, Hercules lives in a bubble.

It is a real bubble which completely surrounds him and never leaves him.

For as long as he can remember, Hercules has always been living in this bubble, ever since he was a child. The bubble grows with him. Nobody has been able to pierce it, not even his gentle and watchful parents. They have tried many times though.

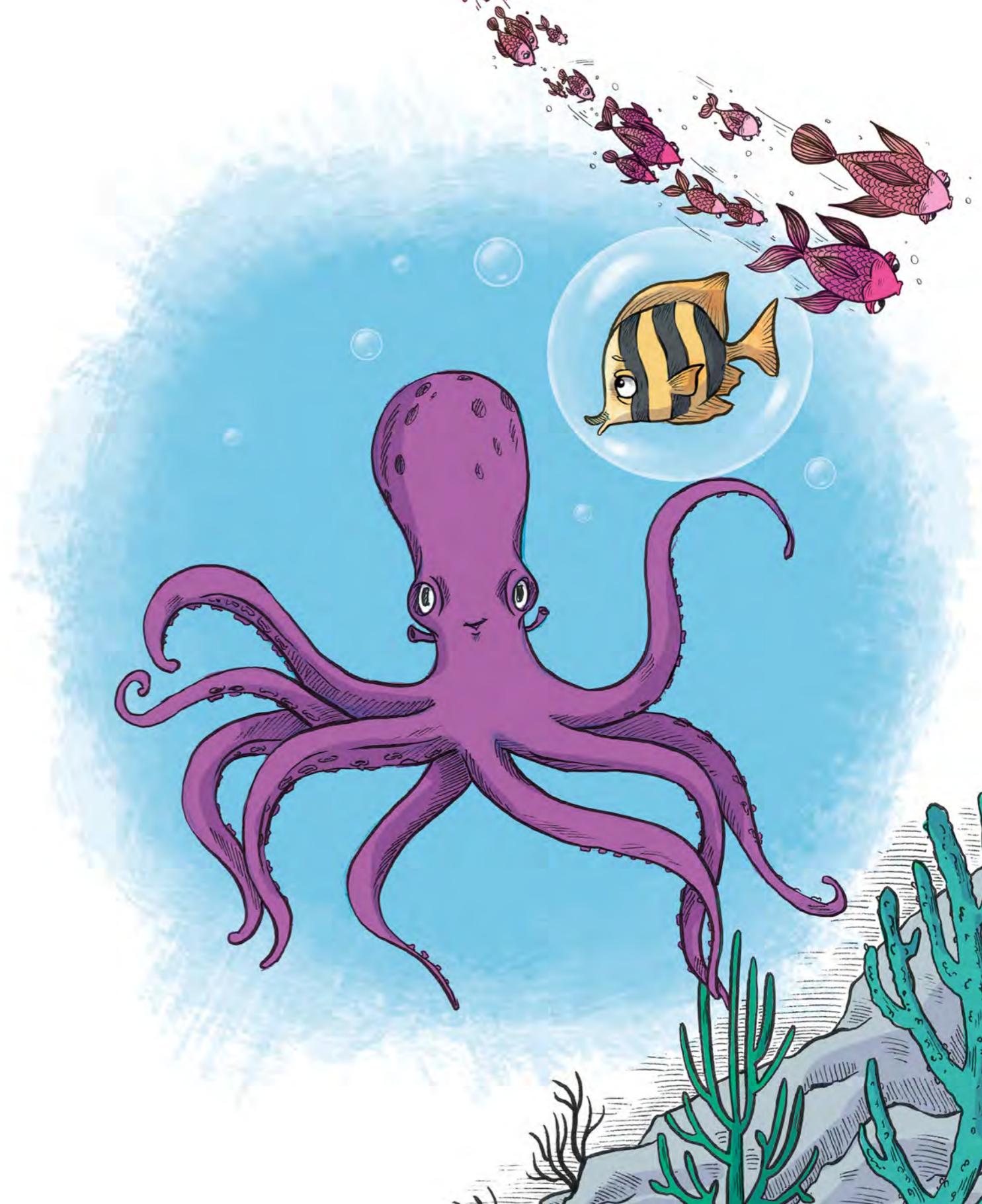
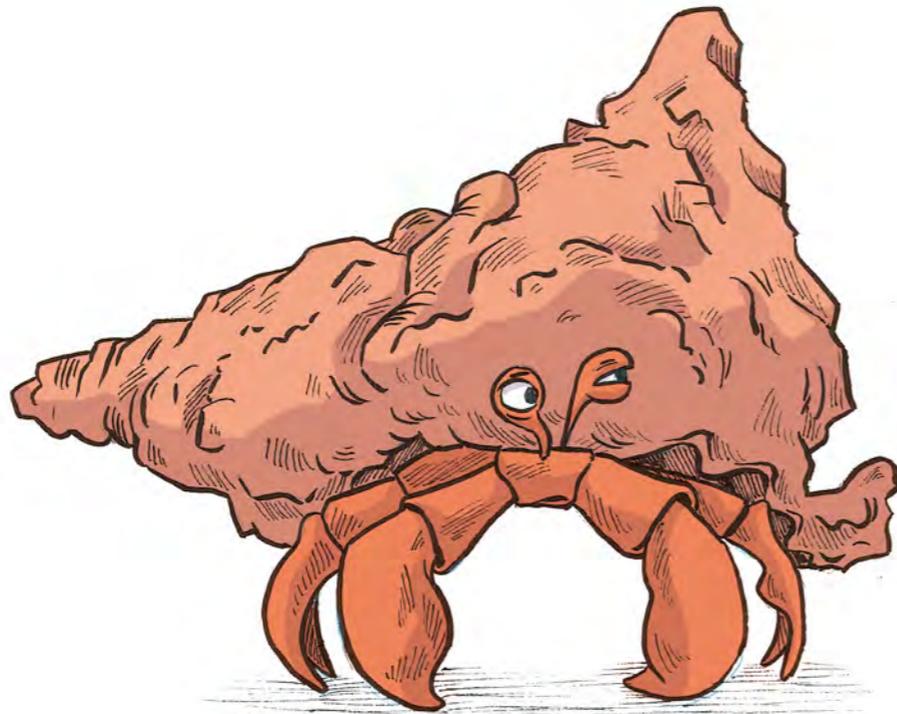


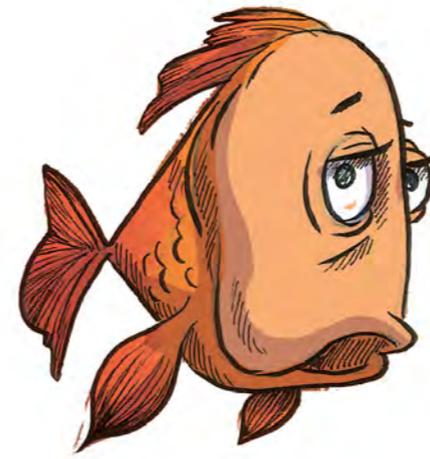


Even the best doctors have failed to treat Hercules. His parents had to come to terms with the situation and are doing their best to look after their son, despite the bubble that separates them.

Unfortunately some people do not like Hercule's bubble. When Mr Crab sees Hercules swimming quitly, he tries to pierce his bubble with his claws.

Ms Octopus uses her tentacles to have fun juggling with Hercule's bubble.

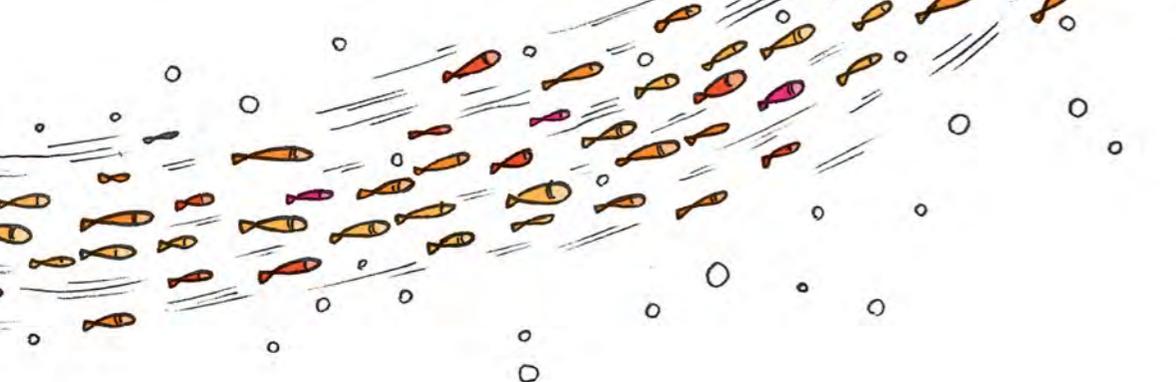




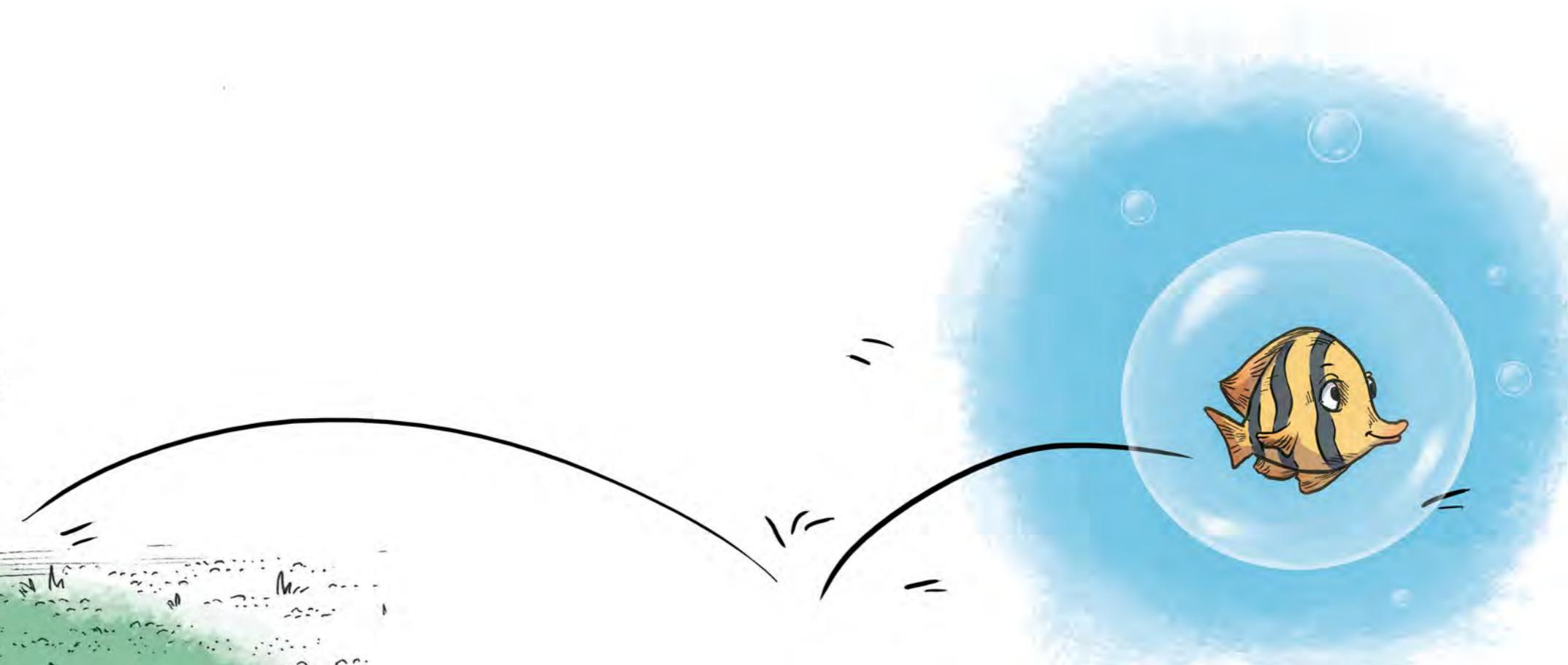
Hercules' playmates refuse to play with him because his bubble takes too much space.

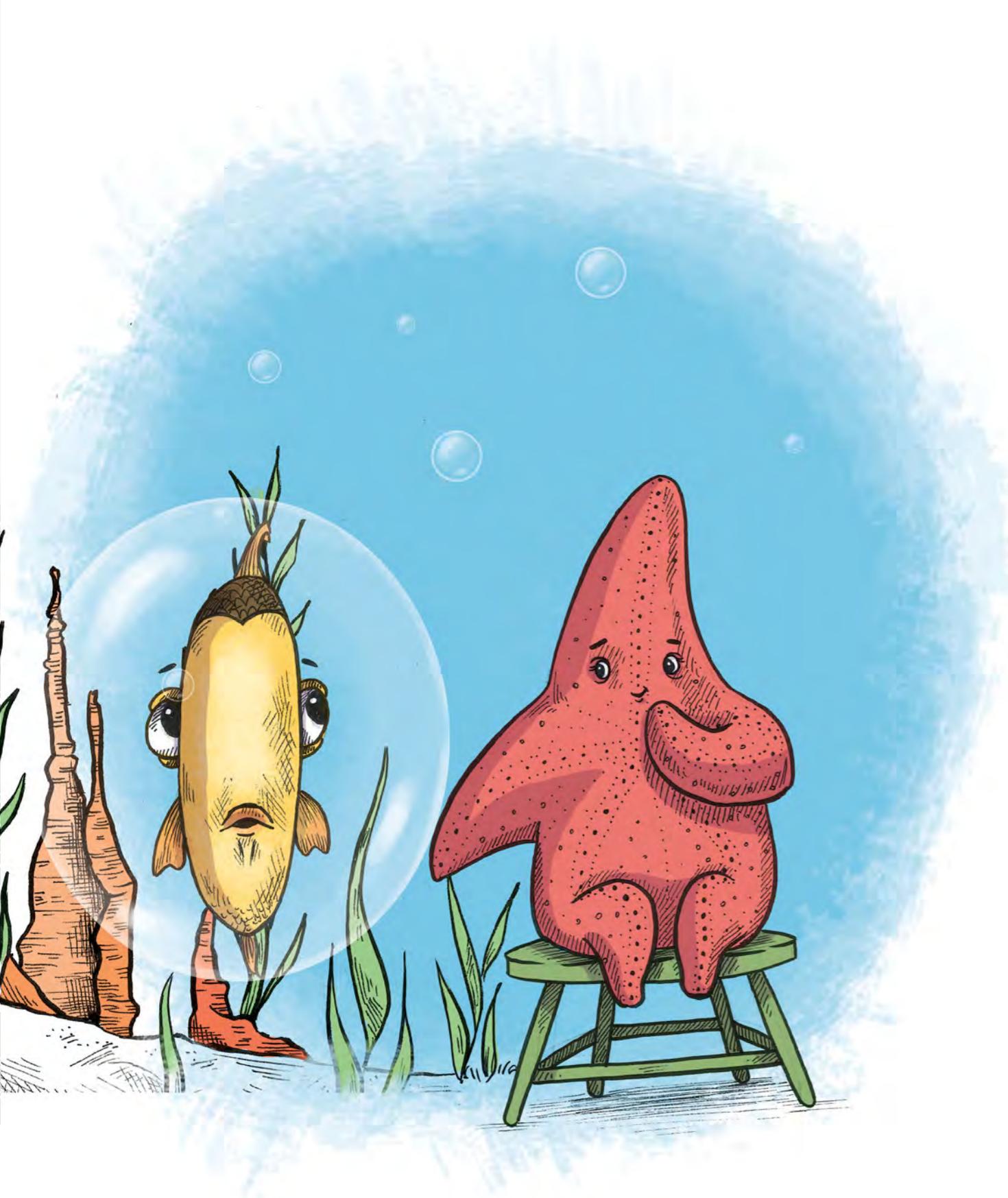
"Get out of the way, Hercules, you take up all the space with your bubble! they often tell him. - Hercules, you should get out of your bubbles from time to time", his teacher Mr Turtle advises him.





But Hercules cannot get out of his bubble ... So he stays stuck inside, playing tirelessly alone and safe from the outside world.

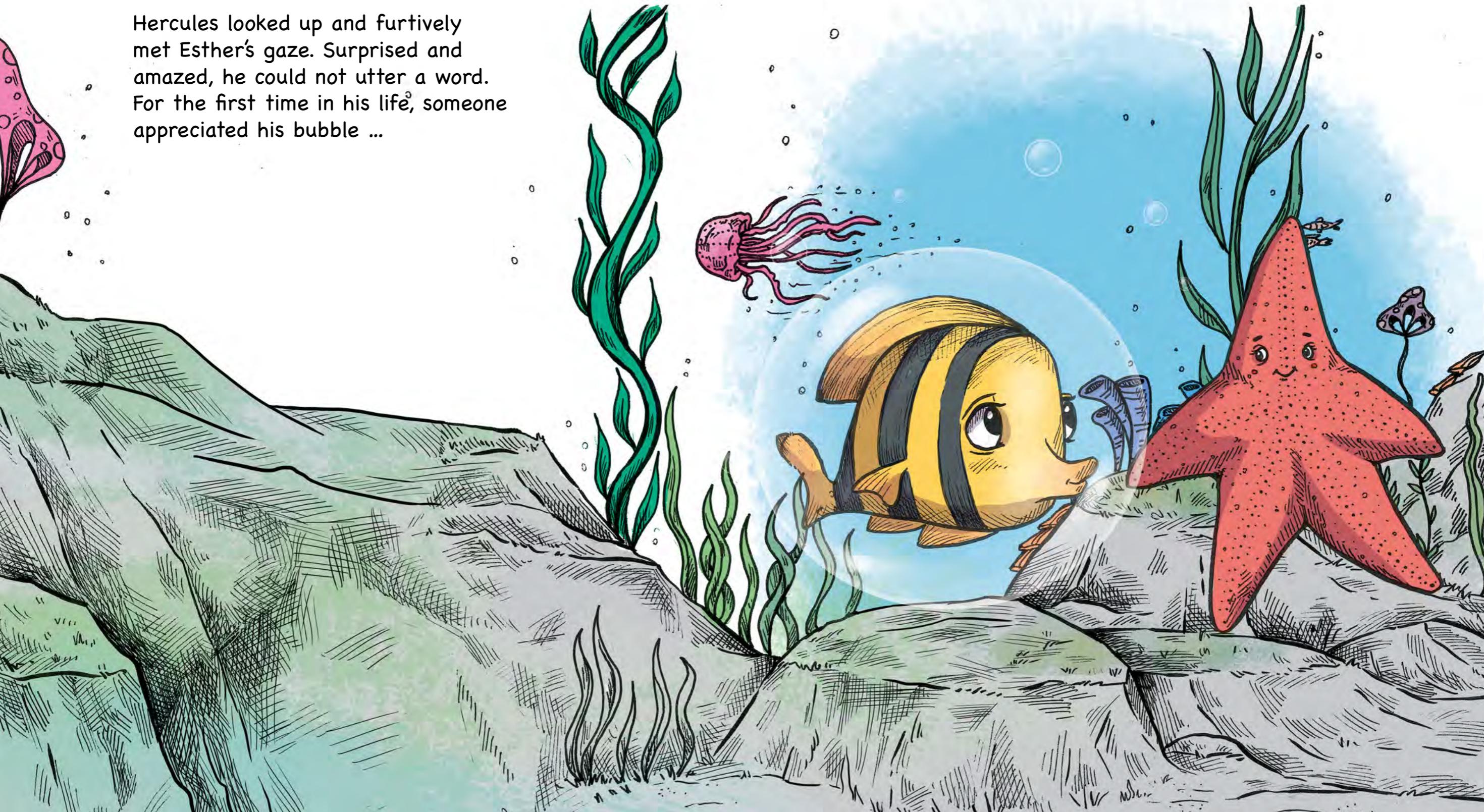


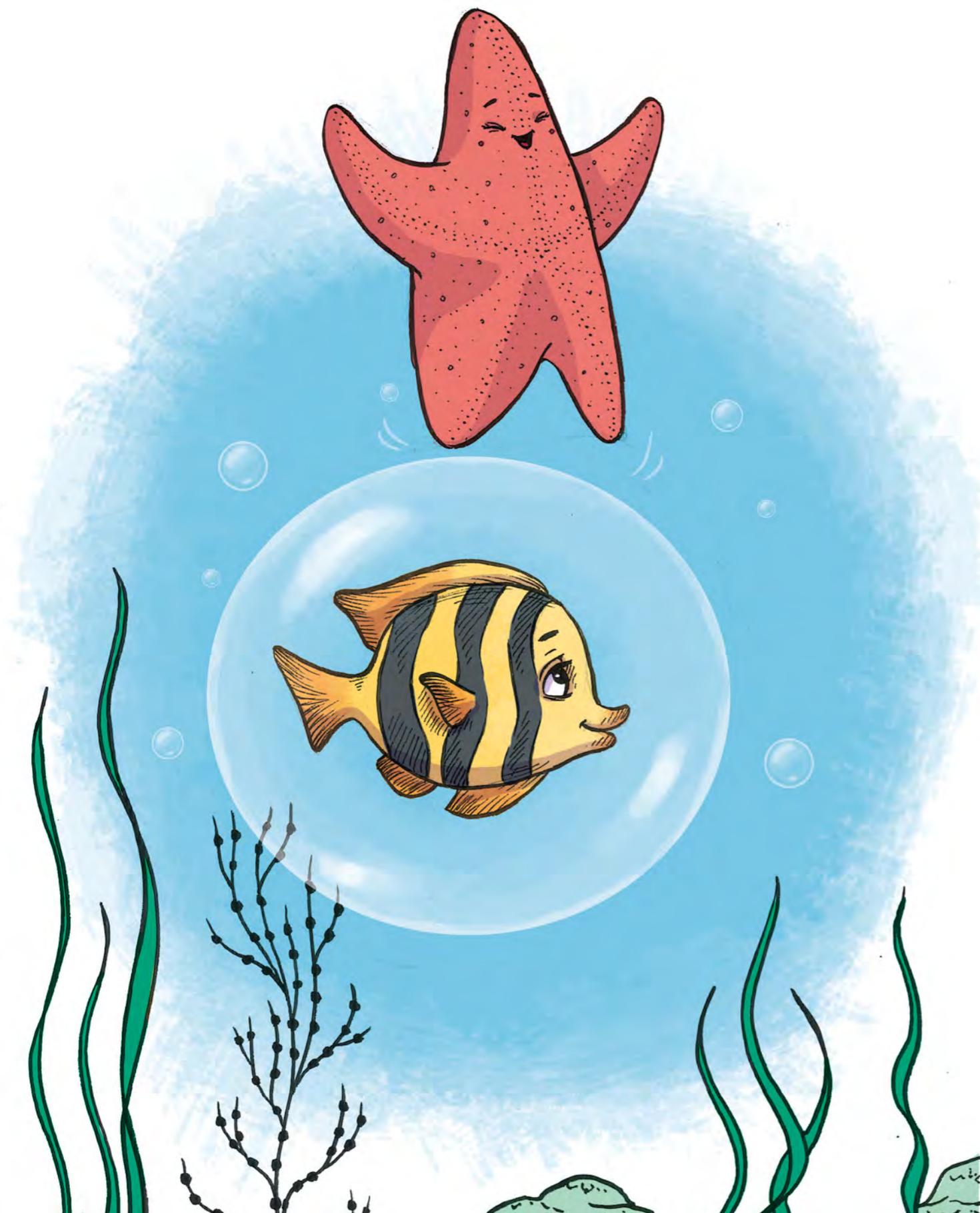


One day, Hercules was sitting in the back of the classroom. As it often was, he could not hear what the teacher was saying because of his bubble, when he saw a lovely starfish enter the room. Mr Turtle introduced her to the class and the new student sat down on the only seat available, next to Hercules.

“Hello, I am Esther, she said looking at Hercules. Wow, your bubble is so nice!”

Hercules looked up and furtively met Esther's gaze. Surprised and amazed, he could not utter a word. For the first time in his life, someone appreciated his bubble ...

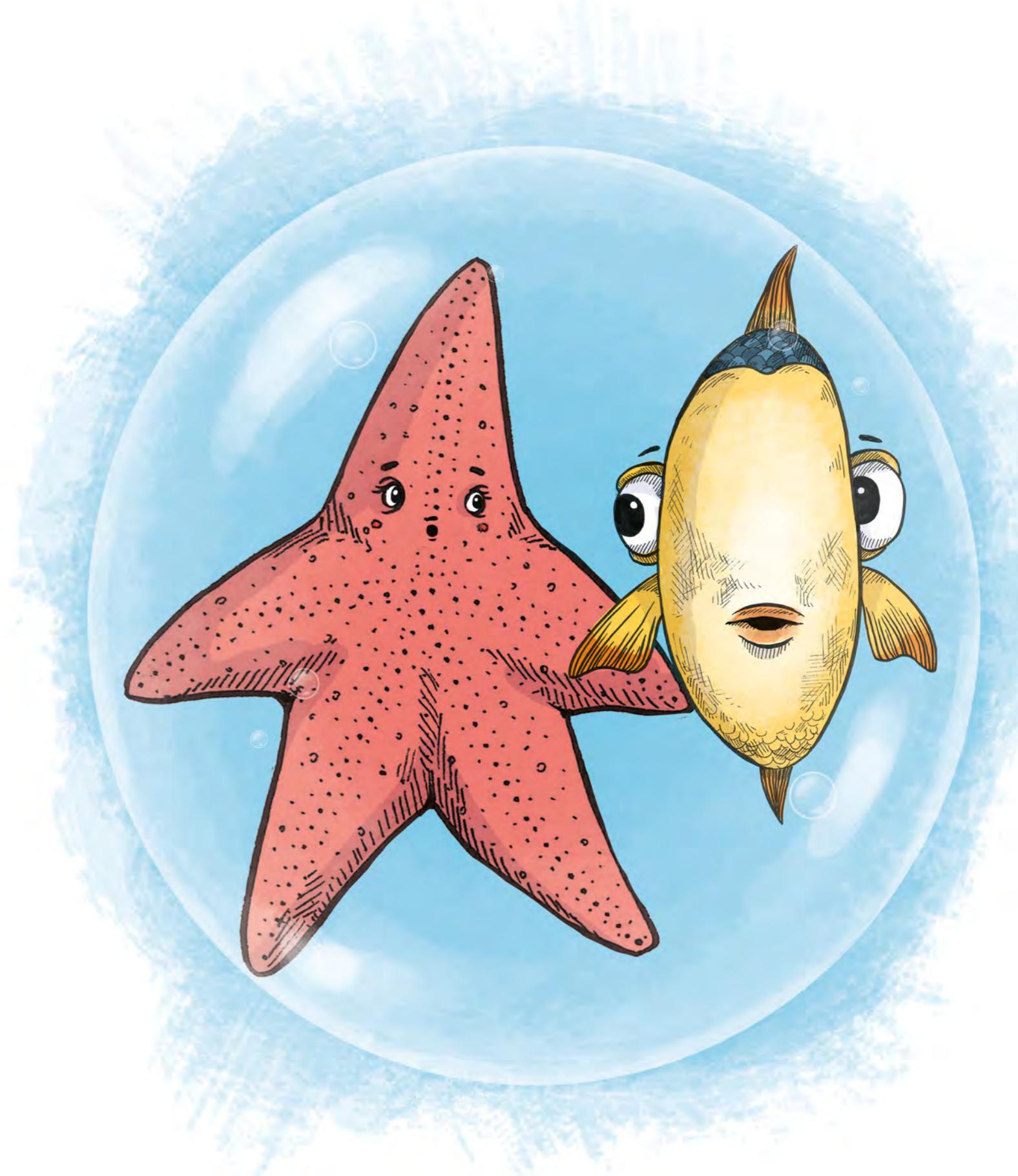


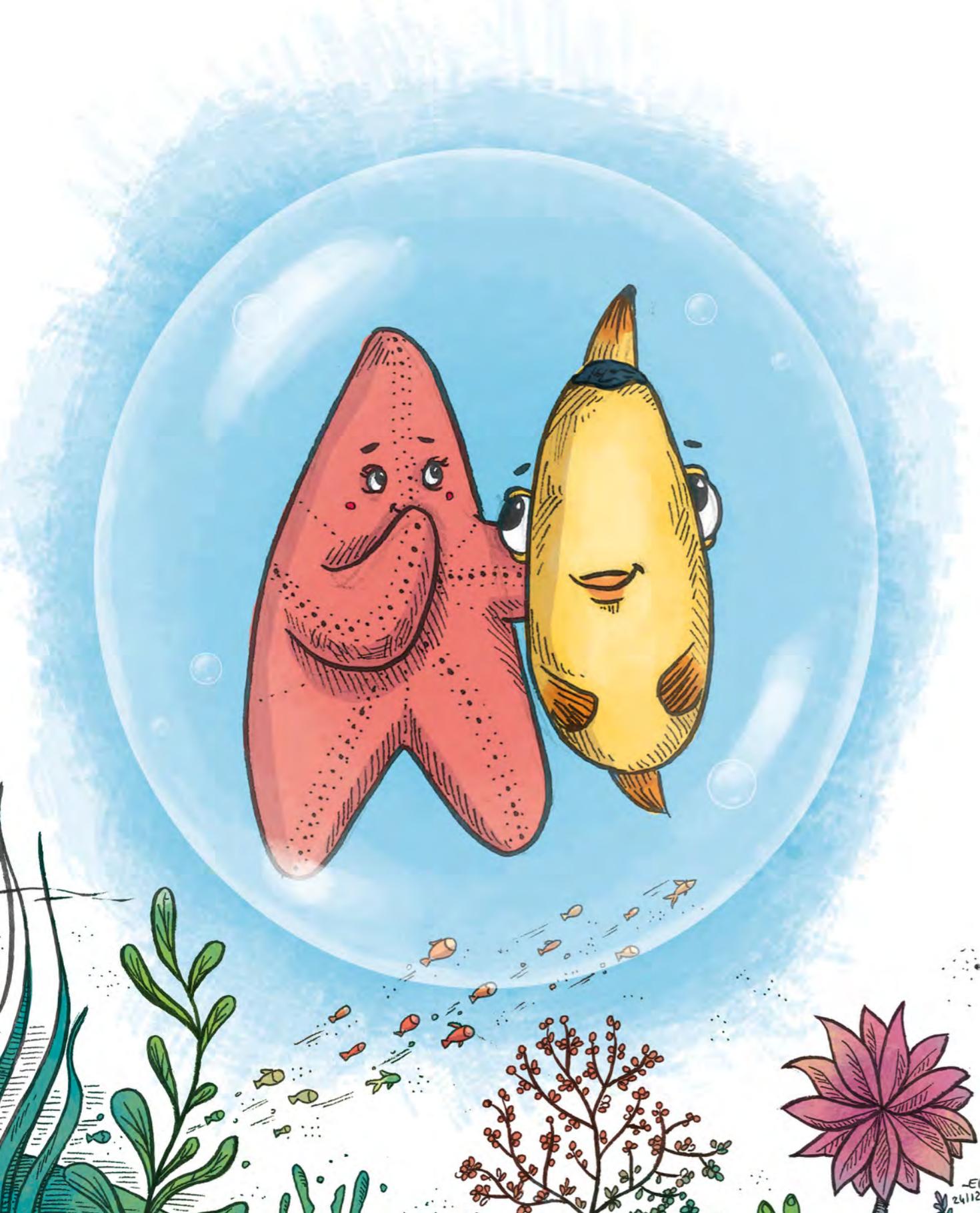


As days went by, the young fish and the starfish became friends. They played together at playtime, using Hercules' bubble not as an obstacle but as toy.

One day, the bubble served as a ball; the next day as a bowling ball and sometimes, is even as a trampoline ... For the first time, Hercules was laughing out loud. And by playing together, a miracle happens ...

Without knowing how, as if by magic, Esther found herself in Hercule's bubble, just next to him, her arm against his fin. Hercules had never had any physical contact with someone before, so he recoiled slightly. Then, reassured, he moved closer to Esther again, feeling an unknown warmth spreading in his whole fish body to his last scale.





Since that day, Esther could go as she wanted in and out of Hercules' bubble and she regularly visited what she tenderly called 'Hercules' little world.'

"Hercules, promise me that one day you will get out of your bubble so you can visit mine", Esther whispered with a tender look.

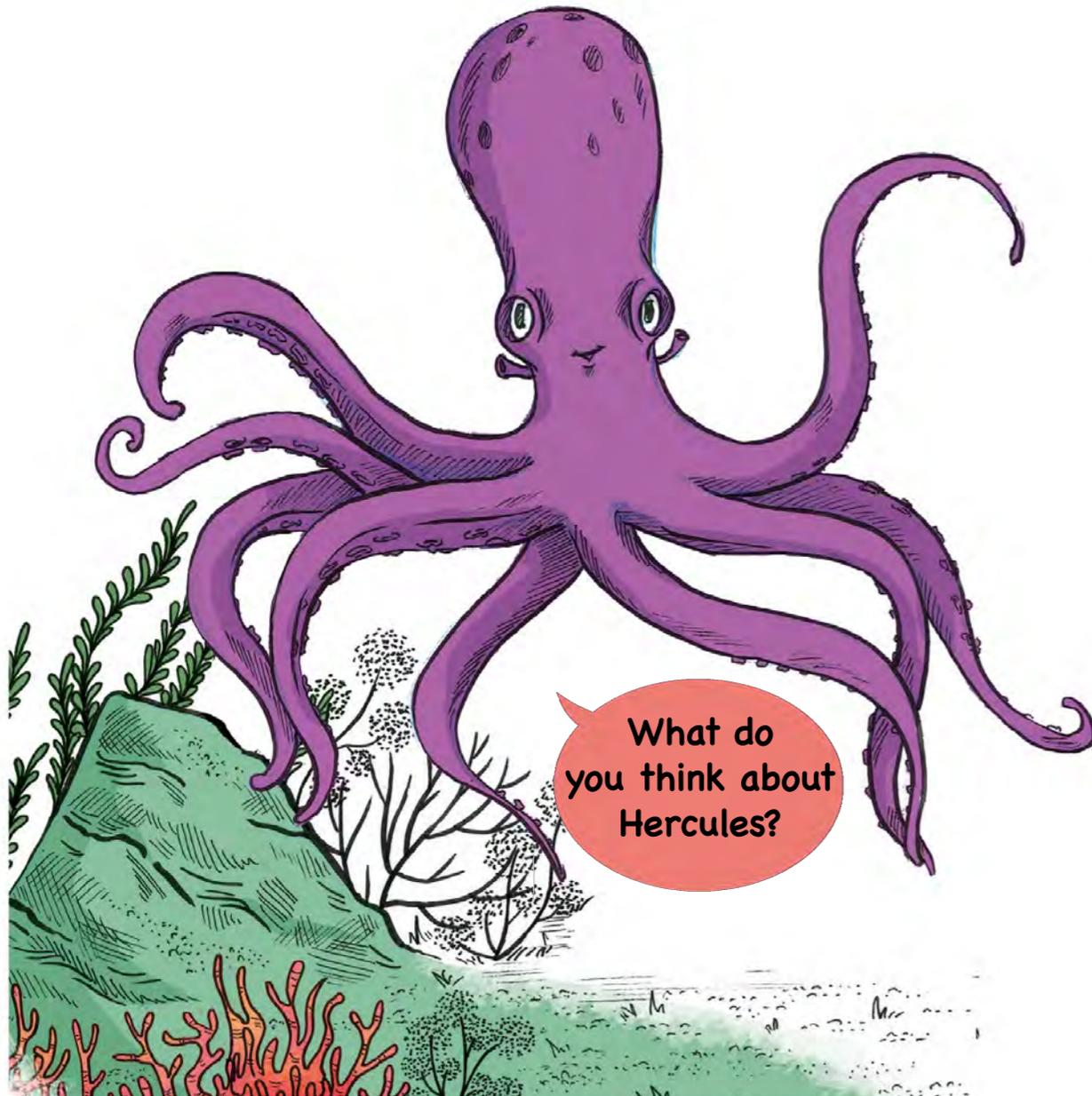
Hercules flashed a fond smile that Esther took as a sincere promise.

Because in the end, everyone has their own bubble, that you can see ... or not.

**Open the debate!**

Continue the story with the children!  
The questions on the next page will help you think about it.





Do you know someone who always stays alone in his “bubble”, like Hercules?

Do you find it difficult to reach out to others or it easy for you to make new friends?

Do you have ideas about how to play with a kid like Hercules?

### **About autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**

Autism spectrum disorders are developmental disorders characterised by poor social interactions and communication, and restricted and repetitive behaviours.

Parents generally detect symptoms during the two first years of their child’s life. In France, it is estimated that autism affects about 1 in 500 people. Many associations have been created to support families.

### **About the Author**

Sonia Goerger is a medical secretary who has been welcoming and meeting many genetic patients for several years. This inspired her to create the “Children of Genetics” book series for children.

The books in the series deal with the difficulties that patients may experience in their everyday lives, using simple words and endearing characters. To bring them to life, Sonia Goerger collaborated with Christine Juif, a clinical psychologist who assists patients with genetic diseases and their families during the diagnostic process.

### **About the Illustrator**

A graphic designer for several years, Elodie Garcia is an author and illustrator of children’s books and comics. The delicacy of her line allows her to approach, in a gentle way, difficult subjects. By illustrating the “Children of Genetics” book series, she hopes to help families facing rare diseases.

## About the ARGAD Association

The Association for Research in Genetics and Support for Families and Professionals of Dijon-Bourgogne (ARGAD) is a non-profit association under the 1901 law, created in September 2010.

ARGAD engages in numerous activities:

- Improving reception and care conditions for patients with rare diseases in Burgundy, within the Genetics Centre of Dijon CHU;
- Raising awareness among health professionals in the Burgundy region, and among the general public regarding rare diseases;
- Contributing to a better and improved training of health professionals involved in rare diseases;
- And, supporting clinical and biological research activities in the field of genetic mutations associated with abnormalities in development and intellectual disabilities in Burgundy.

To support the ARGAD Association and its mission, visit: <http://www.translad.org/>



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Book # 10.8

Have your say!



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Hercules the little fish lives in a bubble.  
No one dares venture too close, and  
Hercules remains alone, isolated from  
the nastiness that surrounds him.  
Yet one day, a friendly starfish manages  
to get close enough ...



“Children face many challenges in their lives.  
Disease is hard to discuss. These books explain that every child is powerful  
and that their spirit is greater than any disease.”

– James A. Levine

MD, PhD, Professor, Fondation Ipsen, President  
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