



Sisi Returns



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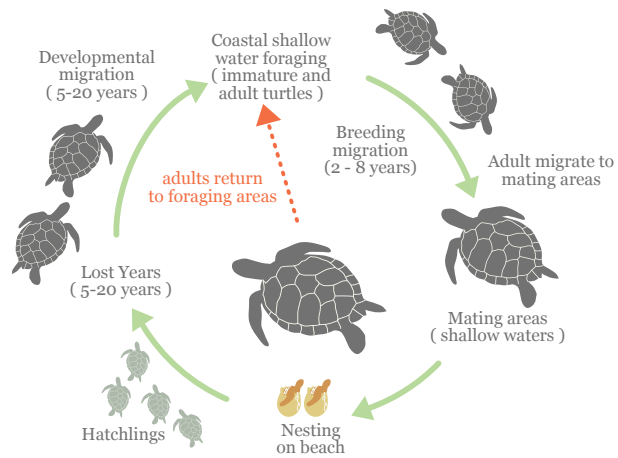
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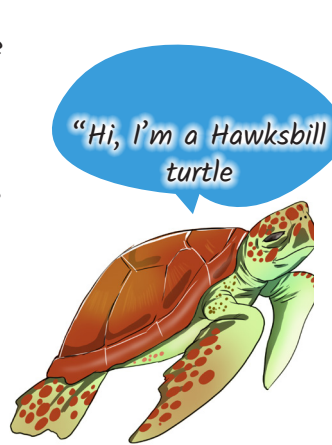


MARINE TURTLE LIFE-CYCLE

This life cycle is based on a green turtle life-cycle. Leatherback adults forage in open seas as well as coastal areas, and some loggerheads may too.



Sisi is a Hawksbill turtle (Vonu Taku) and is one of the seven sea turtle species in the world, five of which are found in Fiji's waters. The other four sea turtles also found in Fiji's waters are the Green turtle (Vonu Dina), Leatherback turtle (Vonu Dakulaca), Loggerhead turtle (Tuvonu) and Olive Ridley turtle (Sigawale).



Having hatched almost 30 years ago on Yadua Island Fiji, Sisi is now an adult. She is considered very fortunate since nine out of ten hatchlings do not survive for more than a year and only a few baby turtles survive to become turtles. So what has she been doing these past 30 years?

After emerging from her sandy nest as a hatchling, Sisi headed for the open ocean where she remained for many years. These years are called the “lost years” as not much is known about where baby sea turtles travel before returning to coastal waters as larger juveniles to feed amongst the seagrass beds.

One thing for certain is that Sisi has travelled long distances from her nesting beach and between feeding grounds each year.

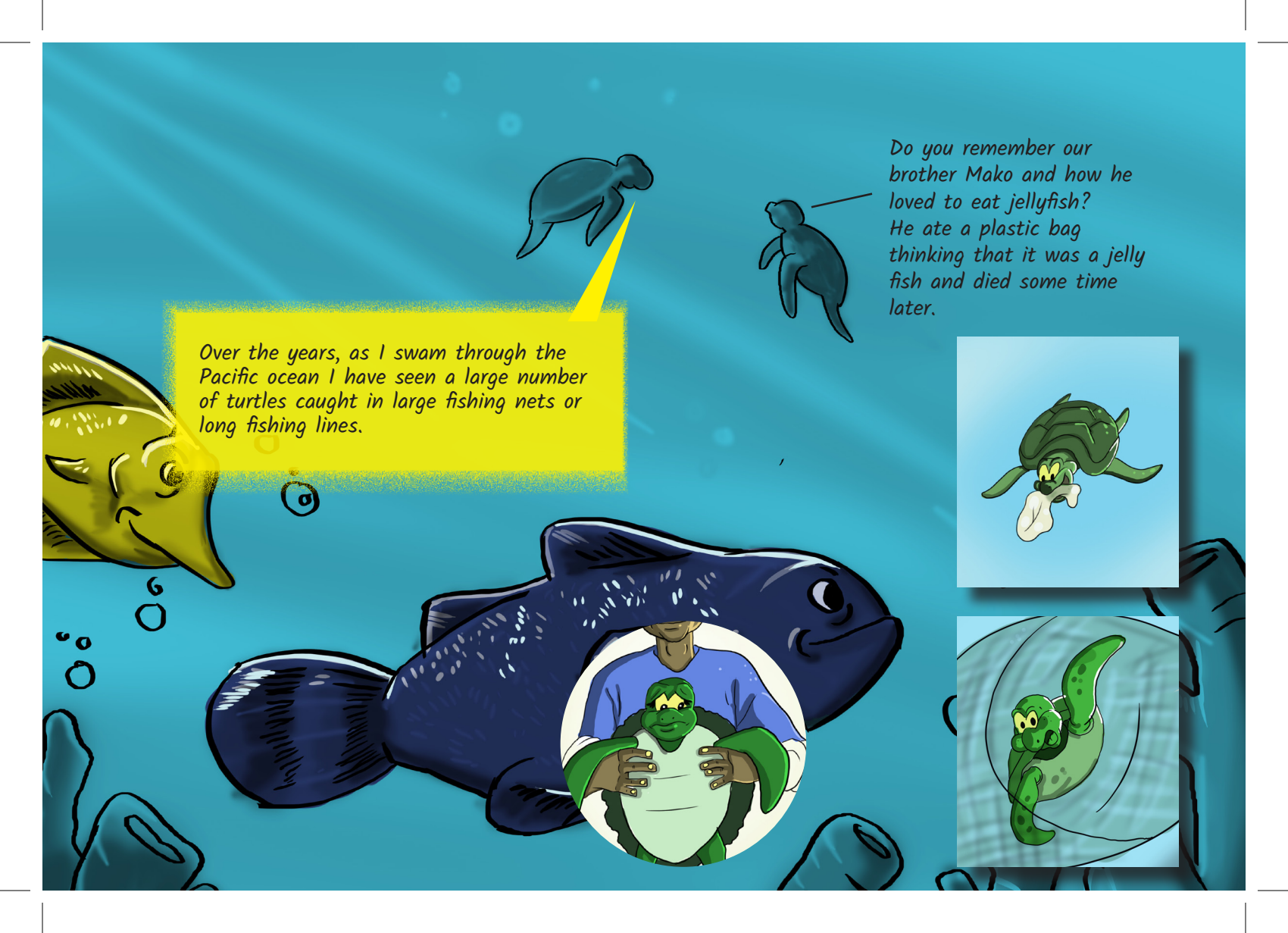


Now that Sisi is an adult turtle, she is returning to the coastal waters and beach where she was born to find a mate and safely lay her eggs.

Out in the ocean, Sisi meets her sister Lavi, who was born on the same beach. They have not seen each other for almost 30 years. Young turtles separate once they head out into the open ocean. The two are excited to see each other but Lavi has some sad news to share.

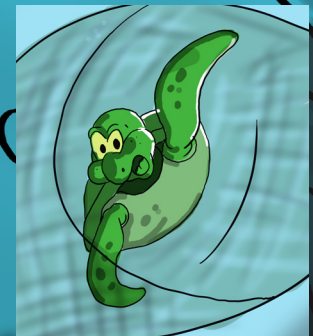


Bula Sisi it's been such a long time and we have finally made it back. It's just sad that some of our sisters won't be joining us for this reunion. Did you hear about Aunt Kara? We were feeding in some seagrass beds when two men grabbed her by her shell and lifted her out of the water. Poor Aunt Kara! I haven't seen her ever since. I was lucky to escape.



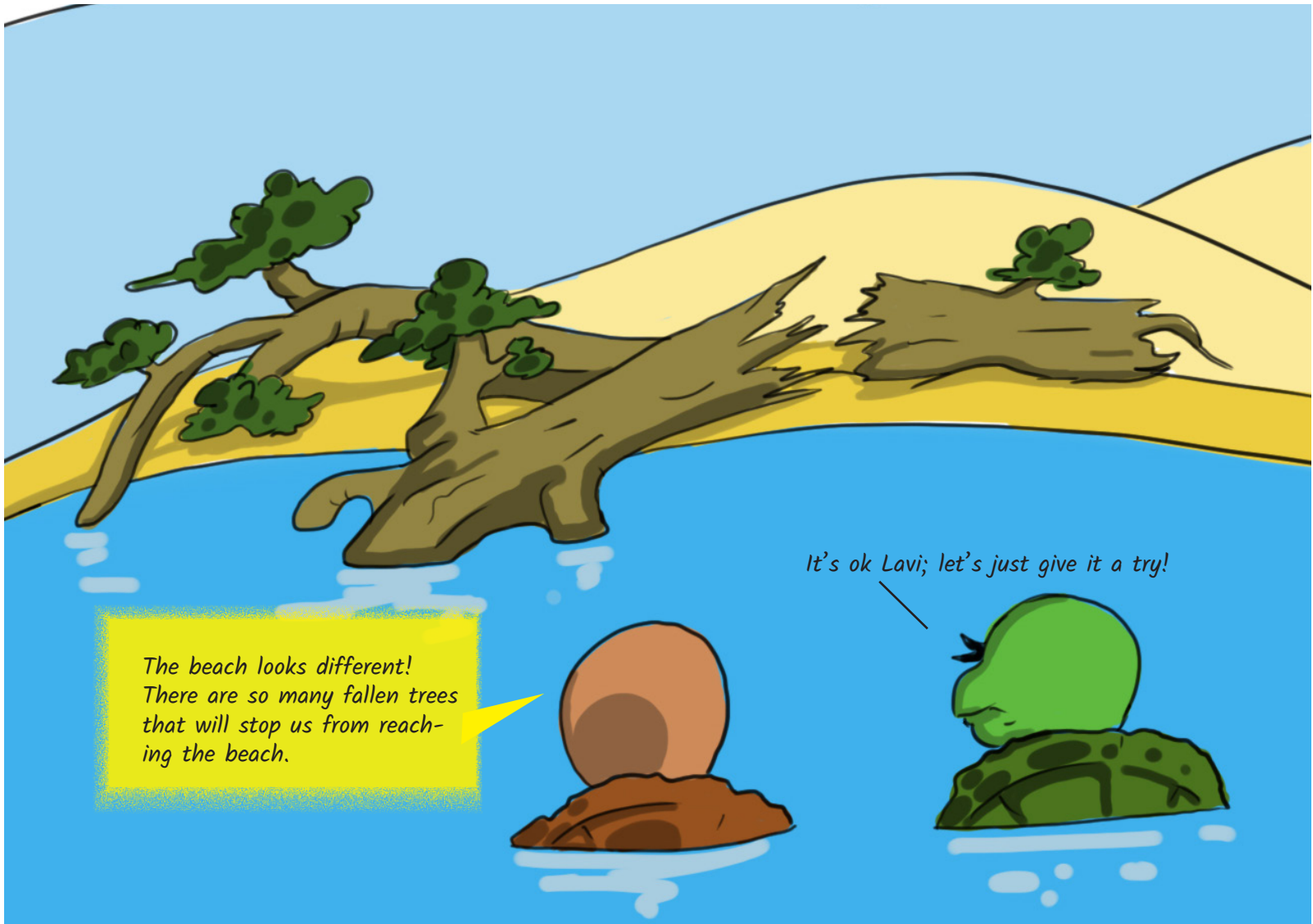
Over the years, as I swam through the Pacific ocean I have seen a large number of turtles caught in large fishing nets or long fishing lines.

Do you remember our brother Mako and how he loved to eat jellyfish? He ate a plastic bag thinking that it was a jelly fish and died some time later.




Lavi and Sisi swim past the reefs of Yadua, towards their beach of birth. As they approach the beach, they notice changes.





The beach looks different!
There are so many fallen trees
that will stop us from reach-
ing the beach.

It's ok Lavi; let's just give it a try!

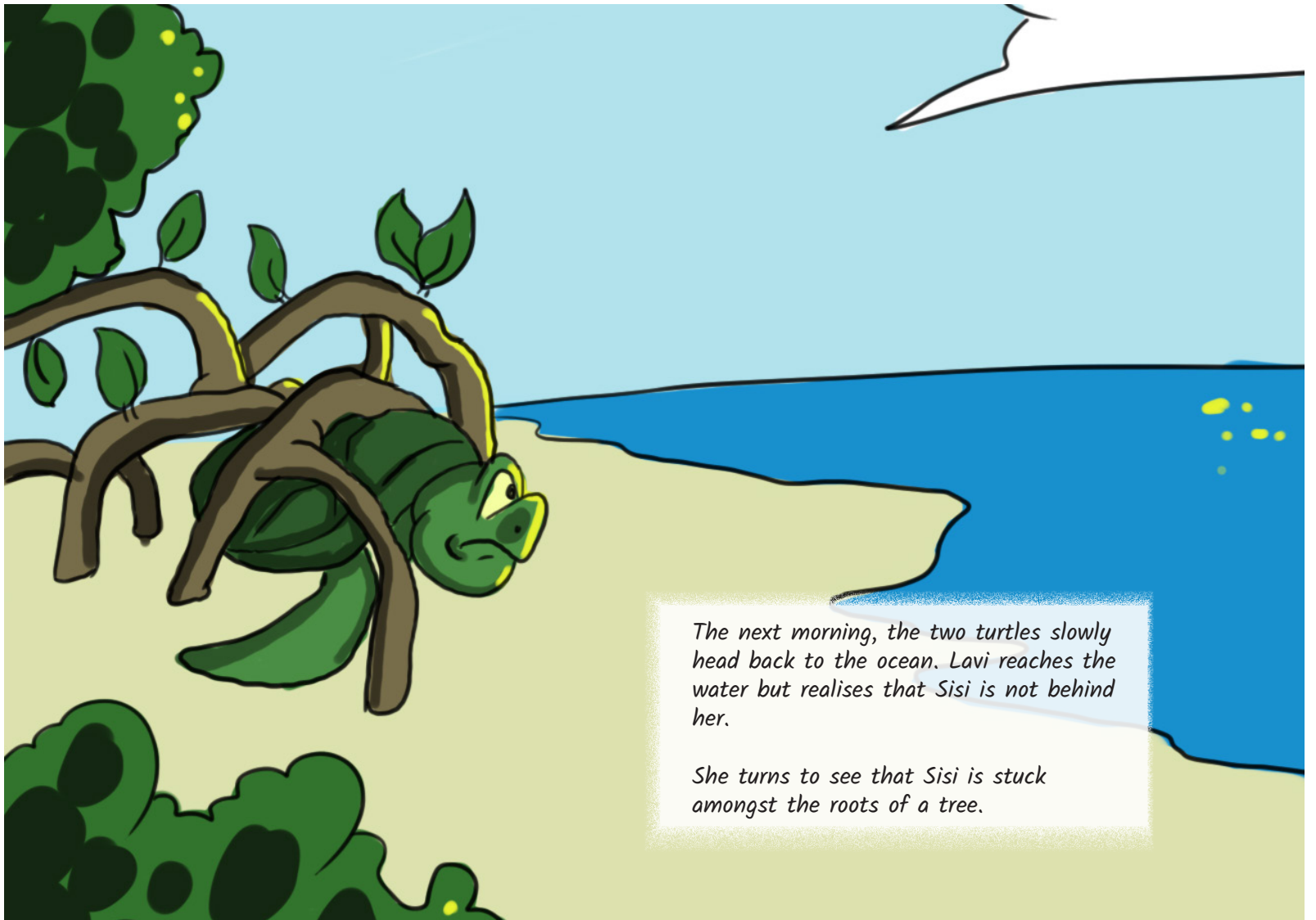


Lavi and Sisi also notice people on the beach. They are hesitant but as they watch, the people start to clear the fallen trees off the beach before leaving.

The people on the beach are called community turtle monitors or *Dau ni Vonu*. They help protect feeding and nesting turtles from illegal hunting and stealing of eggs. They also support the recovery of turtle populations by raising awareness and monitoring turtle nesting activities.

As night falls, the sisters make their way up the beach. They find suitable spots and dig a hole in the loose sand with their flippers and begin to lay their eggs. After a few hours, they carefully cover their nests.





The next morning, the two turtles slowly head back to the ocean. Lavi reaches the water but realises that Sisi is not behind her.

She turns to see that Sisi is stuck amongst the roots of a tree.

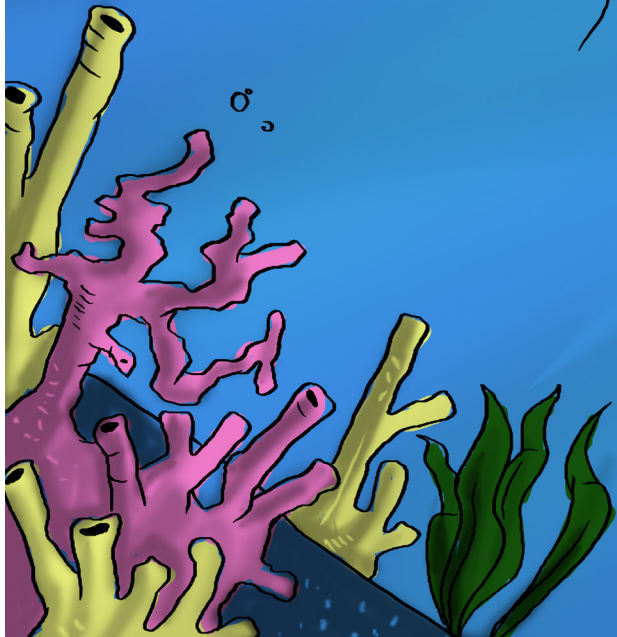
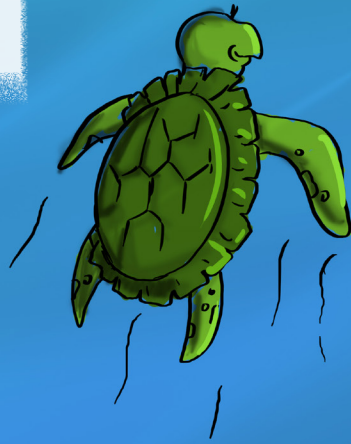


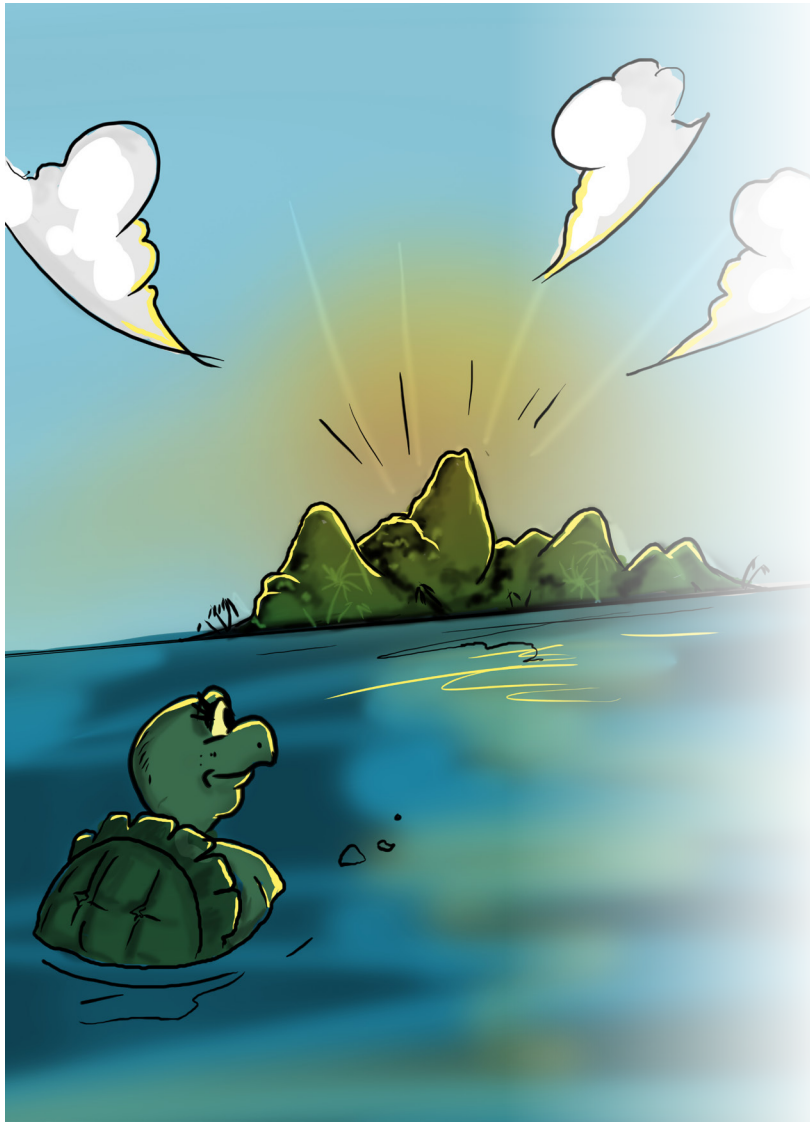
Lavi suddenly hears voices and sees the same people from the day before.

She immediately thinks of Aunty Kara and fears that Sisi will be taken as well, but to her surprise someone from the group frees Sisi and releases her into the water.



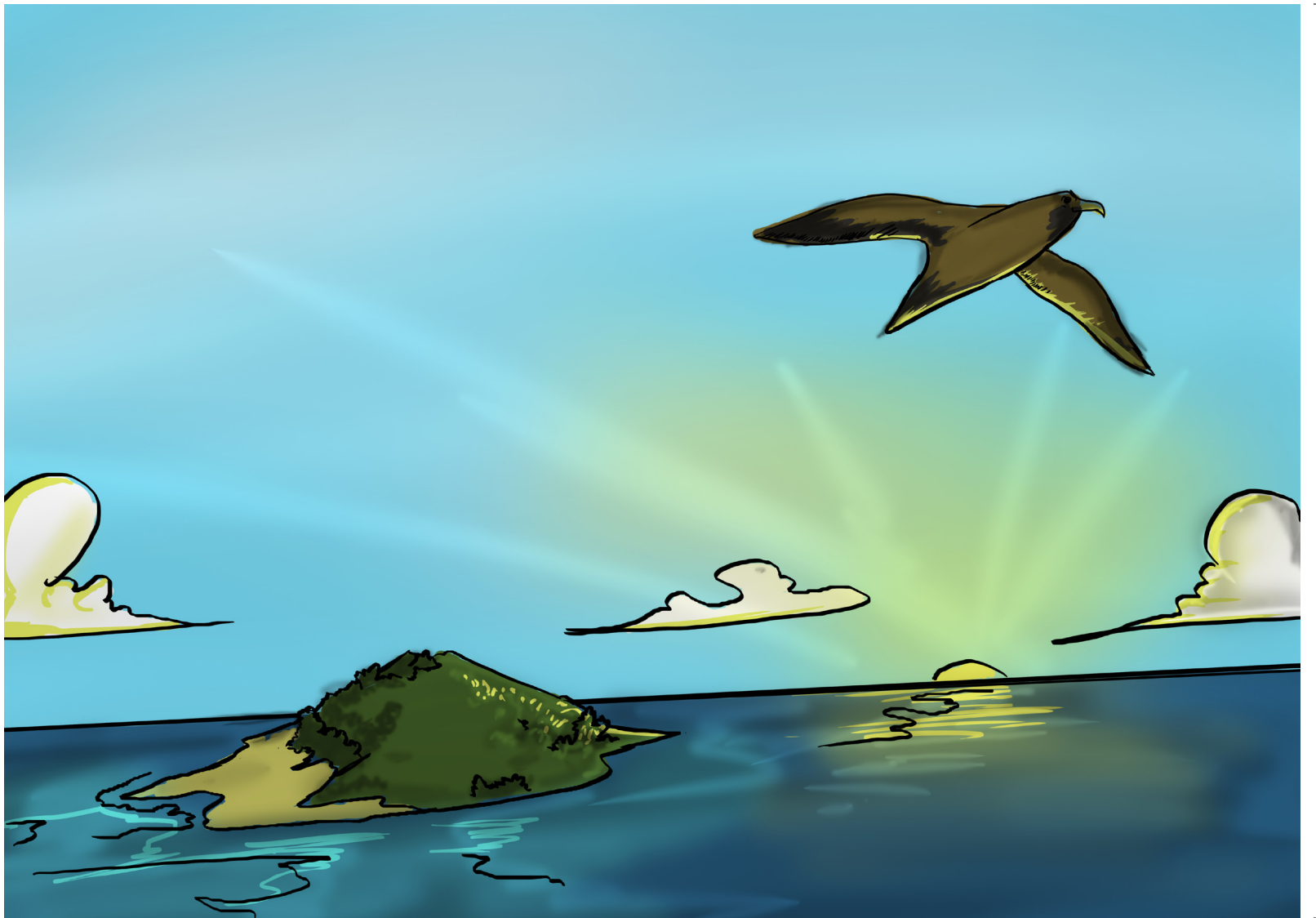
As Lavi and Sisi swim towards the reef opening and into the open ocean, they look back and say in unison "Goodbye my babies."





Questions

1. What are the five sea turtle species found in Fiji?
2. What are some challenges that sea turtles face?
3. Who are the Dau ni Vonu and how do they help turtles?



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