



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

THE MYSTERY OF THE COLOURFUL CORAL

SHORT PLAY



Written by Tania Nash, commissioned by Marine Education
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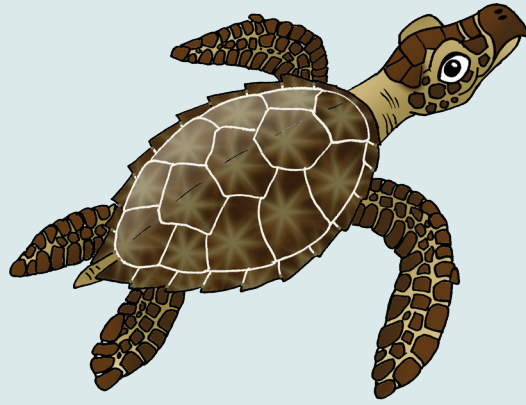


Australian Government

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THE MYSTERY OF THE COLOURFUL CORAL

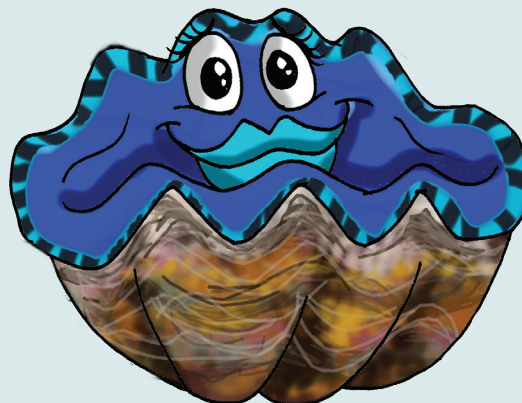
22 ROLES

CHARACTERS AND PERSONAS:

Big Mama (Giant Clam) – caring and worrisome
Major Greenway (Green Turtle) – knowledgeable and pompous
Bozo (Anemonefish) – protective and mouthy
Fluffy (Sea Anemone) – trusting and dopey
Spike (Crown-of-thorns starfish) – family man and proud
Spiney (Crown-of-thorns starfish) – young and naive
Sandy (Sea Cucumber) – knowledgeable and trustworthy
Pearly (Pearl Fish) – childlike and proud
Horsey (Seahorse) – laid back and friendly
Red Coral, Pink Coral, Blue Coral, Green Coral, Yellow Coral

THE FRIENDS:

Rassey (Humphead Wrasse) – slow and kind
Flip (Hawksbill Turtle) – smart and helpful
Snowey (Unicornfish) – scared and defensive
Greenie (Green Turtle) – giggly and friendly
Polly (Parrotfish) – nervous and shy
Snarkie (Whitetip Reef Shark) – funny and clumsy
Regina (Butterflyfish) – vain and mean
Troutie (Coral Trout) – smooth and friendly



SCENE 1

Big Mama's place – A Giant Clam stands on a central plinth, she holds court over a kids play area. Rassey, Flip, Snowey, Polly and Greenie are playing.

- Big Mama – Now kids, I've told you, don't go playing too close to Hollomans Reef.
- Rassey – Oh Mama, I've made some friends. Don't be such a party pooper.
- Flip – No, that's Snowey, she's the party pooper!
- Snowey – I'm not a party pooper! *(does a small white snow-like poop, releasing cotton wool from hand – keeping some for later poops)*
- Greenie – No, just a pooper!!! *(laughs hysterically)*
- Polly – Leave Snowey alone. She just gets a little nervous. I know how it feels.
- Snarkie – *(Sneaks up in them all)* Boo!
- (Polly covers her whole body in saliva (netting) by opening up umbrella).*
- Snarkie – I am so sorry Polly, I didn't mean to frighten you. Gosh, that's a good saliva bubble. *(Sniffs)* I don't smell a thing, where did Polly go?
- Flip – You are so funny Snarkie, I mean really funny.
- Big Mama – Stop your brown-nosing Flip. He's not gonna eat ya. Well, at least not today. His head is up and his pectoral fins are up.
- Snarkie – Yeah, my pectoral fins are down when I attack!!! *(Puts arms down and head down, hunching the back)....* Anyway, I had breaky at Capital Fisherman's Reef. He was delicious!! *(rubs tummy).*
- Snowey – *(Nervously pooping and releasing more cotton wool by hand)* Oh, I'm not gonna ask who 'he' is.
- Regina – *(Swimming in)* Morning all. Oh, Polly, what are you wearing?
- Greenie – She can't hear you; she had a fright.
- Regina – Oh gosh, she's wearing those saliva pyjamas again!! Get a life, Poll!
- Snowey – Oh Regina, that's not a nice thing to say. She has a life. She's here breathing, isn't she?
- Regina – If you weren't so stylish Snow, I'd dump you.
- Snowey – Is that a compliment?
- Regina – In a back handed way.
- Snowey – So, that's a yes?
- Regina – Yes. Now how about my dress? I'm rocking the orange aren't I?
- Troutie – Hey everyone, check this out *(he does a dance)*
- Snarkie – Nice Troutie!
- Rassey – So friends, are we going to Hollomans?
- Big Mama – I said 'no' to Hollomans.
- Rassey – Why Big Mama?

Big Mama – I just don't believe it's safe. There's colour down there!

Regina – Why, Big Mama, I'm as colourful as they get!

Polly – *(Comes out from her netting, by closing the umbrella)* I think I'm more colourful than you.

Regina – What's happened to your spit PJ's?

Polly – It's not spit, it's a mucous shield.

(All respond in disgust)

Regina – Stick with spit. 'Mucous' is not a word that anyone likes to hear.

Greenie – Shut up both of you. I think Big Mama is on to something.

Big Mama – Thank you, Greenie. I've heard there is colourful coral there and I'm worried that if you go, you will never return.

Snowey – *(Pooping and dropping more cotton wool)* Oh that sounds scary

Rassey – Ok Big Mama, we will play it safe. Now can we go?

Big Mama – Just play nice all of you. Especially you Regina.

Polly – Yeah Regina!!

Regina – *(Eye rolls)*

(They leave Big Mama)

SCENE 2

In an area out of ear-shot of Big Mama, the friends huddle together.....

Flip – You gave in pretty easily there Rassey.

Rassey – Did you not see my fins crossed when I promised Big Mama? Of course, we are going to Hollomans Reef, we are gonna find this colourful coral she talks of.

Polly – Oh no Rassey, I don't think this is safe.

Snowey – Nor me.

Greenie – My great uncle lives near Hollomans. Maybe we should visit him first and see if it's safe?

Flip – Great idea Greenie. Who's in?

Snarkie – I am for sure.

Troutie – I'm in because I might meet a lady who likes my dance moves *(dances again)*.

Snowey – Well you know Troutie, I like them.

Troutie – Thanks Snow, but I'm not sure if coral trouts and unicornfish would get along so well.

Snowey – Well, if you change your mind?

Flip – So, are we going to Hollomans?

Regina – I'm not missing out on this; colourful coral could bring out the colours in my fake eye. Oops! I shouldn't have told you it was fake *(puts hand over mouth)*.

Polly – We have always known it was fake.

Regina – No you haven't.

Snowey – Sorry Regina, it's true. I never thought it was an eye.

Flip – Only fooled me once. Then I saw where it was positioned—right next to your pattootie—I realised it was your protection mechanism (*patting Regina on the shoulder*). It's ok. We all have our insecurities.

Regina – I am not insecure; I was born with a beautiful third eye and I want to stop this conversation immediately.

Snarkie – Let her be guys, her third eye is whatever she wants it to be. Now, let's get to your uncle's place.

(They move on and come to a series of rocks and seagrass, bumping into them and each other, piling up in a line).

SCENE 3

Uncle Greenway's place. Uncle Greenway is on the central plinth reading the Seagrass Times. The friends swim into his area.

Greenie – This looks like Unkey Greenway's house.

Greenway – It's Major Greenway to you son..... (*rubbing his eyes*).....Oh it's you Greenie, how have you been?

Greenie – Great Unkey! We wanna go to Hollomans. We heard there was colourful coral.

Greenway – (*Suspicious*) Who told you that?

Rassey – Big Mama did.

Snarkie – Why is she called Big Mama anyway?

Flip – Because she's Mama to the Reef. She is home to corals and sponges that live off her shell. She is also home to algae that live in her colourful mantle. The algae are why she looks so pretty. They feed her too - it's a symbiotic dream!

Polly – What's symbiotic?

Flip – It means working together. Big Mama gives her algae a safe place to live, and in return, they feed Big Mama by turning sunlight into food!

Polly – That is so cool.

Greenie – How are you so smart Flip?

Flip – It must be all the sponges I eat.

Snarkie – You eat sponges?

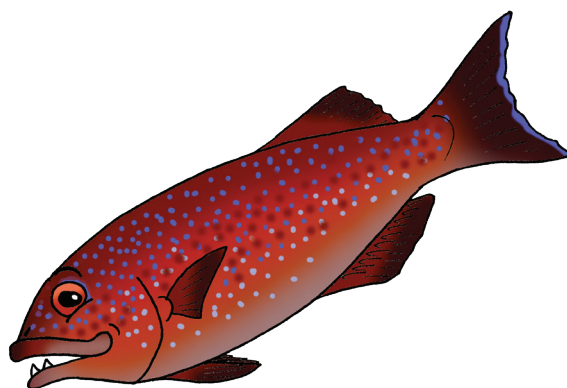
Flip – Yep—love 'em, keeps me happy.

Troutie – I dance to keep the ladies happy.

Snowey – Your dance makes me happy.

Troutie – Yes Snow. I know.

Greenway – Let's get back to the matters at hand - Mama knows better than to tell you about Hollomans.



Rassey – Why?

Greenway – Life is not how it used to be, son. Sadly, things have changed.

Regina – Oh here we go, “in my day!”

Greenway – Now, listen here Regina... There’s no need to be a smarty-pants.

Rassey – Please, go on Major Greenway. Ignore Regina. Even with her coral polyp seeking nose, she knows no better.

(Everyone laughs)

Snarkie – *(Laughing the hardest)* Oh that was a good one Rassey.

Greenway – Yes, I understand that her nose is rather pointed, her body kinda flat, all the better to manoeuvre around the coral and manipulate us with her fake eye.

Flip – Come on Major—a leopard seal can’t change their spots—leave her be.

Greenway – Well ok, I’ll carry on. Many years ago, all the sea for as far as the eye could see, *(laughing)* did you see what I did there?

Flip – Yes, yes, carry on.

Greenway – *(Still chuffed with himself)* The coral was not white but bright colours, reds, pinks, blues and yellows.

(Everyone is surprised)

Polly – Oh, I would love to see that.

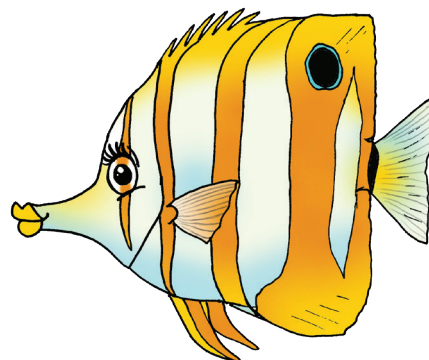
Greenway – It’s best you don’t.

Rassey – Why?

Snowey – Yes, why?

Snarkie – Why?

Greenway – It’s best you kids move along now. Go and play... but don’t go near Hollomans Reef, you hear me? Nowhere near.



SCENE 4

Moving out of ear-shot of Uncle Greenway, the friends chat in a huddle.

Polly – I wonder why we can’t go near it?

Regina – What’s wrong with colourful coral?

Snowey – We should listen to Major Greenway and just play at Kurt’s Reef.

Snarkie – Boooooorrrriing.

Rassey – Yep, boring!!! Who wants to see what this colourful coral is all about?

Flip – Well, I do.

Greenie – I'm with you Flip. Although, I'm pretty sure Unkey would have my guts for garters.

Regina – Why would he have your guts for garters? I've had ribbons as garters before but not someone's guts.

Greenie – It's an expression Regina, meaning he will severely punish me if he catches me.

Rassey – Well, let's make sure that he doesn't find out.

Polly – Are you sure about this?

Snowey – I'm a little scared (*pooping*)

Rassey, Flip & Greenie – We can see!

Snowey – (*Embarrassed*) shut up!

Troutie – It's ok Snow, I like your snow. Its kinda like my dancing—pretty!!

Snowey – Thanks Troutie, that's a really nice thing to say.

Rassey – Well, are you guys coming?

Snarkie – I am.

Flip and Greenie – Me too!

Regina – I'm in.

Polly – Ok, but promise me that we'll come straight back?

Rassey – Yes Poll, we will come straight back!

Snowey – Well you are not leaving me alone, I'm coming.



(They swim on. Exit stage).

SCENE 5

Bozo and Fluffy's Place – Bozo is darting around Fluffy in a protective manner and Spike and Spiney are seated still to one side. The friends enter.

Bozo – Who do you think you are coming into my anemone?

Snarkie – Heck, who are you?

Bozo – What do I look like Barry? A clown? (*angrily*)

Snarkie – Who's Barry? Yes, you do look like a clown... (*laughing as he tells a joke*) a clown fish!!! Get it everyone (*laughing at his own joke*).

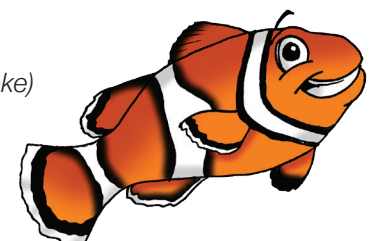
Bozo – The name's Bozo, Barry.

Snarkie – My name is Snarkie, not Barry.

Bozo – Oh, I thought you were Barry... Cuda! (*laughing at his own joke*)

Snarkie – I'm a shark not a barracuda. I'm just young.

Bozo – Listen, are you turkeys gonna move from my anemone?



Flip – Oh, I've heard of the Anemonefish—they're pretty aggressive about protecting their anemones. Again, another symbiotic relationship.

Regina – I'm starting to like you Flip. You're pretty smart aren't you!!

Flip – (*Flattered*) well thank you Regina, I try. But just be super careful of the anemone, they can sting you. Lucky you are so slim.

Rassey – Oh please, you two!! Next thing it'll be spawning season.

Bozo – You turkeys forgotten that I'm here?

Snarkie – You're pretty small for a clown fish.

Bozo – Well it's not my fault. I'm a juvenile fish. My folks are the big ones. Mum is the biggest, and dad is the next biggest. If mum was to leave, then dad would turn into Mum, and the next biggest would become Dad.

Snarkie – Oh man, that is too much for my brain to compute (*puts hand up to side of face*).

Fluffy – Listen fellows, I'm gonna have to ask you to leave. Bozo and I have a thing going...

Polly – It's like that, is it?

Bozo – We are in symbiosis—we do things for one another—like chase away Butterflyfish and she provides me with a safe place to live.

Snowey – So who's your spikey friend?

Fluffy – That's Spike. He's a Crown-of-thorns starfish and he can give you a nasty sting. So be careful.

Spike – I'm just into survival you know, I want my family to survive!!

Greenie – I think they are surviving, have you seen Demons Reef? Your family is everywhere.

Spike – Yes (*proudly*), we multiply like rabbits, that's our thing.

Spiney – Dad, what does that mean? Multiply like rabbits?

Spike – Well son, have you noticed every few months you have many new brothers and sisters?

Spiney – I have (*proudly*). The Spike family are everywhere.

Bozo – So, I'd like you to move along now kids. I've got to protect Fluffy.

Fluffy – Awww thanks Bozo, I do love you.

Bozo – Try not to be so sentimental Fluffy, it's my job.

Fluffy – Ok Bozo, I'll try to be more professional.

Flip – Which way to Hollomans Reef?

Bozo – It's that way (*pointing*) but why do you want to go there? Haven't your parents told you that's not a place for kids?

Regina – We don't listen to old folk.

Rassey – Mind your manners, don't talk for all of us. I love our elders and we learn from them.

Regina – So why aren't you doing as your told?

Rassey – Well... A kids gotta explore... but we can still respect our elders.

Regina – Why should we?

Spike – Well listen Missy Fake-eye, it's because we 'old folk' know a few things. We've lived longer and had more experience at 'life'.

Regina – Well, I've lived a while too.

Spike – Listen kid, I'll be 10 next spawning. What about you?

Regina – (*Shyly*) I'll be 2.

Rassey – Maybe listen to Spike, 10 is really, really, old.

Spike – Easy there tiger, 10 is middle age not old age!

Rassey – Yes sir, sorry sir!

Regina – I'm sorry sir, I think I'll listen a little more now that I know you've been around so long.

Flip – I'm really proud of you, Regina.

Regina – Thank you, Flip.

Polly – So what are we doing everyone, Spike says we shouldn't go, Big Mama says no, Major Greenway says no. Maybe we should just go to Kurt's?

Spike – Look kids, I think everyone should see what's at Hollomans at some stage in their lives but remember, you must promise to return.

Rassey – So, we could go but all we need to do is promise to return?

Spike – Yes, it's that simple.

Flip – I'm cool with that. I promise.

Snarkie – For sure, I promise.

Snowey – Oh, I'm not sure of this.

Polly – No, I don't like it.

Greenie – Well I'm in, I promise.

Regina – I promise I will return Spike.

Spike – That's a good girl.

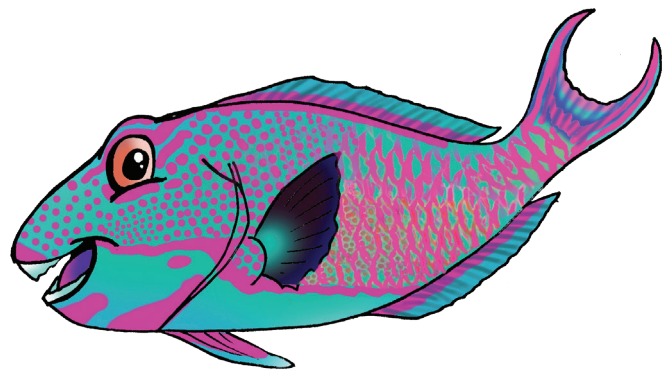
Polly – Oh ok-I promise too.

Snowey – Well if you promise Poll, I do too.

Troutie – If the ladies promise then so do I.

Spike – It's just over there, beyond the seagrass. See you fellows. Watch out it is cooler there.

All – Bye Spike, bye Bozo.



SCENE 6

Arriving in Hollomans—the Reef's corals are as bright as rainbow. Everyone is in awe. Corals are everywhere.

Horsey – Hey, dudes.

Greenie – Oh my who are you?

Horsey – I'm a seahorse. Be quiet because my babies are sleeping.

Greenie – But aren't you a dude?

Horsey – Yeah, it's seahorse dudes that carry the babies.

Greenie – That's cool, really cool.

Snarkie – *This is so cool everyone - (looking around at the Reef).*

Polly – Oh my, that is the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. It's so cool. I mean, it even feels cooler.

Flip – My heart has skipped a beat, it's amazing. I love the temperature of the water.

Regina – I've never seen or felt anything like it.

Greenie – Oh my scutes!

Snowey – I will never be afraid again.

Snarkie – So, we will never see you poop again?

(They all laugh)

Troutie – This place makes me wanna dance (dances).

Flip – Why would we be stopped from seeing this?

Greenie – I don't know.

Red Coral – Hello friends.

Snowey – Who said that? *(Pooping)*.

Snarkie – There she goes again *(pointing at Polly)*.

(Everyone laughs)

Blue Coral – Hello friends.

Polly – Yikes, I'm hiding.

(Polly covers her whole body in saliva (netting))

Flip – It's ok everyone, I think it's the coral.

Troutie – Ladies you are safe with me. It's ok, Snow. It's ok, Poll.

Yellow Coral – We are your friends.

Green Coral – Welcome to Hollomans Reef.

Red Coral – Welcome one and all.

Pink Coral – Welcome Friends.

Purple Coral – Hello to you all.

Regina – They seem kinda nice.

Yellow Coral – We are your friends.

Horsey – And so am I.

Greenie – You guys are so nice. So, why don't the elders want us here?

Purple Coral – Because we want you to stay.

Flip – Huh?

Pink Coral – We love having you here.

Regina – I must admit I love it here.

Polly – *(Releasing her saliva bubble)* I do too.

Greenie – It's so cool here!!

Sandy – Be careful – the colourful coral lure you in and you'll never want to return to your families.

Flip – Whoa, who are you?

Sandy – I'm Sandy, a Sea Cucumber, I clean sand.

Pearly – I'm Pearly. I'm a Pearlfish. I eat Sandy's poop before he poops it out.

(They all laugh)

Sandy – I've been around long enough to see so many come here. They never return to where they came from. You see, it's so beautiful here, so idyllic, so cool.

Pearly – I am full. No more for me today!

Greenie – Why isn't the rest of our world like this?

Sandy – It used to be. But the water temperature changed. Sometimes it would get really warm. Too warm. Corals can't survive when it's too warm for too long.

Flip – How can we reduce the temperature of the ocean here on our reefs?

Sandy – Good question, there are so many ways to try. Would you all help?

Regina – Well, I will.

Polly – I will.

Snowey – I will.

Greenie/Flip – Of course we will.

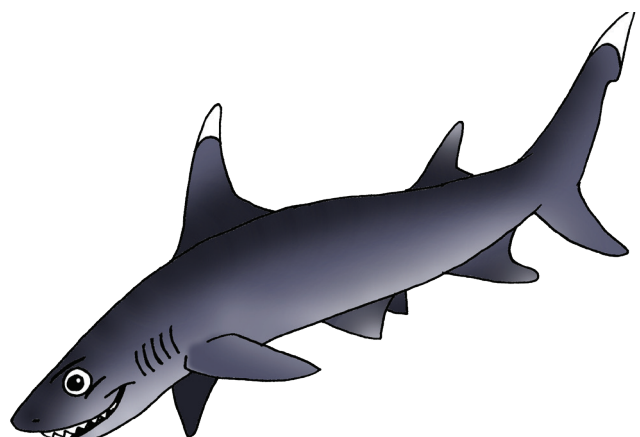
Snarkie – For sure, I will.

Red – Thank you my friends.

Blue – We need your help.

Snarkie – What do we need to do?

Pearly – You can help by doing your bit.



Sandy – Stop carbon emissions—that will reduce the warming of our oceans.

Regina – What's a carbon emission?

Sandy – That's a big question, let me see if I can answer it. A carbon emission is a gas that comes from burning stuff to make energy. When the stuff burns, it makes gas.

Flip – I bet there's a lot of that gas made.

Sandy – In the last hundred years yes, a lot!!

Regina – Can we see it, the gas?

Sandy – No. The gas is see-through. We can't see it. But imagine it's a big blanket over the earth trapping in the gas. This gas is preventing hot air from leaving our atmosphere, which is warming up our ocean.

Flip – Does anything else make this gas?

Sandy – Well yes, cows make methane gas.

Polly – What's methane?

Sandy – When a cow does a fluffy it releases methane.

Snarkie – So it's farting gas? *(laughing)*

Sandy – Yes Snarkie, it's farting gas.

(Everyone laughs)

Greenie – So, what do we do to reduce carbon emissions?

Sandy – One way is renewable energy. Instead of burning stuff for energy, use the energy from the sun or wind or water. If you want our beautiful corals to keep their colour, then why don't you all make it *your* mission to find out how to reduce carbon emissions in your neighbourhood.

Rassey – Ok, I will. I pledge to make it my mission to reduce carbon emissions.

Snarkie – *(Laughing)* You're a poet!!!! But I pledge to.

Flip – I pledge.

Regina – I pledge too.

Troutie/Polly/
Greenie/Snowey – We pledge too.

Greenie – It's time to go home and leave this beautiful place.

Flip – With a new mission! To find out ways to reduce carbon emissions.

Rassey – Thank you, Sandy. Pearly, keep him clean will you.

Pearly – I will friends.

Everyone – Bye, friends. We will return.

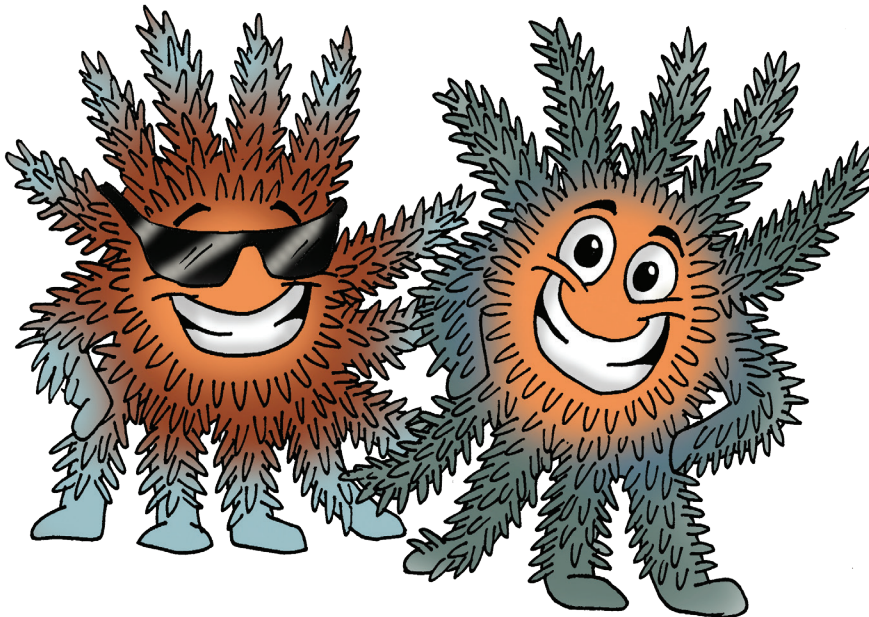
Corals – See you soon friends.

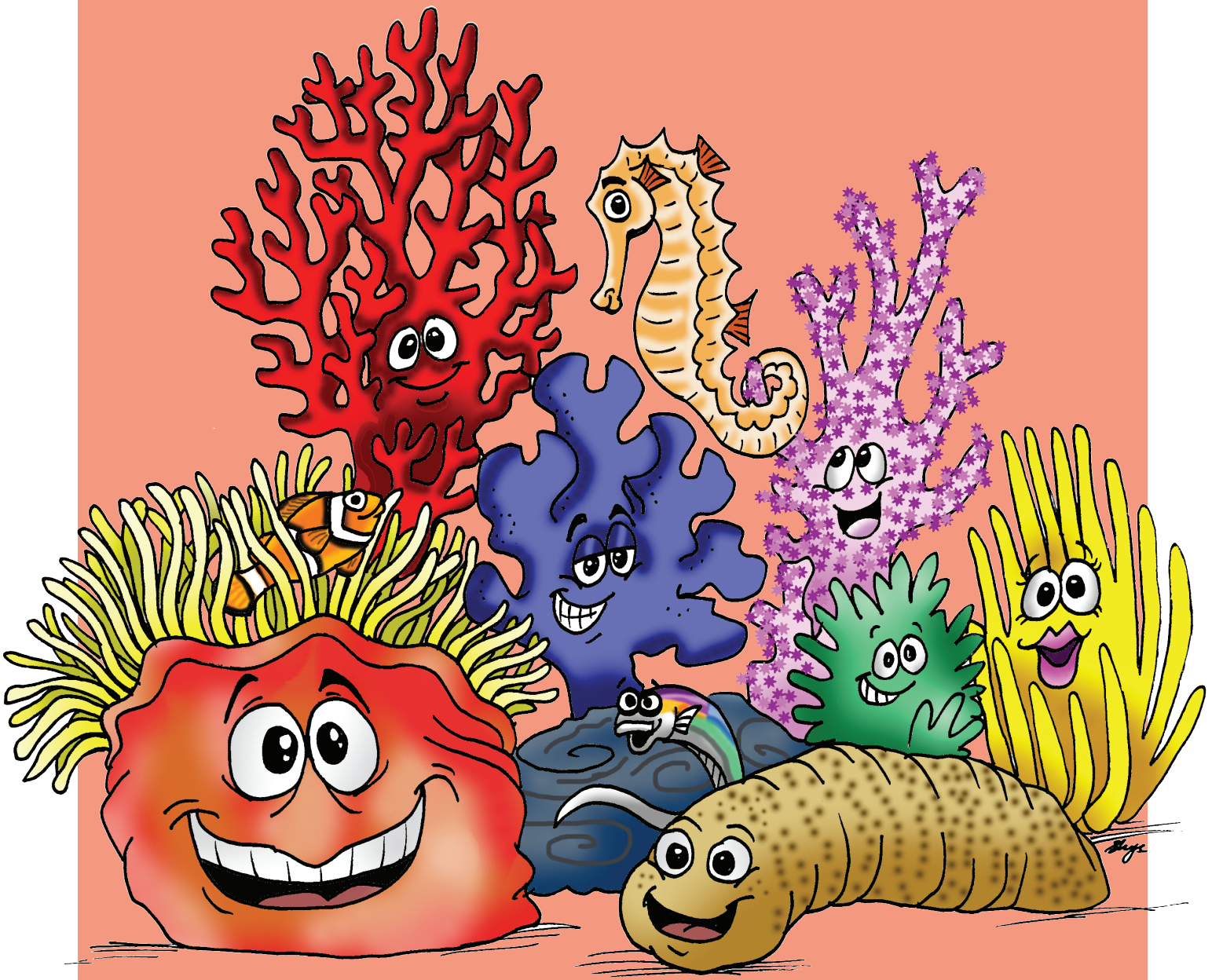
SCENE 7

The group swim off and end up back at Big Mama's place—she stands on the central plinth.

- Big Mama – Oh kids, I was worried about you. Major is here. He told me you went to Hollomans.
- Rassey – We did Big Mama and it was sooo beautiful.
- Big Mama – That is our fear, that it's so beautiful that you never want to leave.
- Snarkie – We definitely loved it, but we have a mission Big Mama.
- Flip – Our mission is to save the Reef.
- Regina – By reducing carbon emissions.
- Snowey – We pledged! *(poops one last time)*

Exit Stage. Return to stage and take a bow.





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