

VOYAGE t1D

A STORY FOR EVERY CHILD STARTING THEIR JOURNEY
WITH EARLY-STAGE TYPE 1 DIABETES



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INNODIA is an international non-profit organization providing specialized services to medicine developers focused on curative therapies for people living with type 1 diabetes (T1D). These services are delivered through its network of members and INPACT associates (the trained community of people living with T1D).

EDENTIFI is funded by the European Union, the private members, and those contributing partners of the IHI JU. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the aforementioned parties. Neither of the aforementioned parties can be held responsible for them.



A JOURNEY BEGINS

Will Crosswater sat in the doctor's office, his heart racing. He'd recently been screened for type 1 diabetes, and now Doctor Glyco had the test results: there were autoantibodies in Will's blood. Two or more of these special markers meant Will was in the early stages of type 1 diabetes.

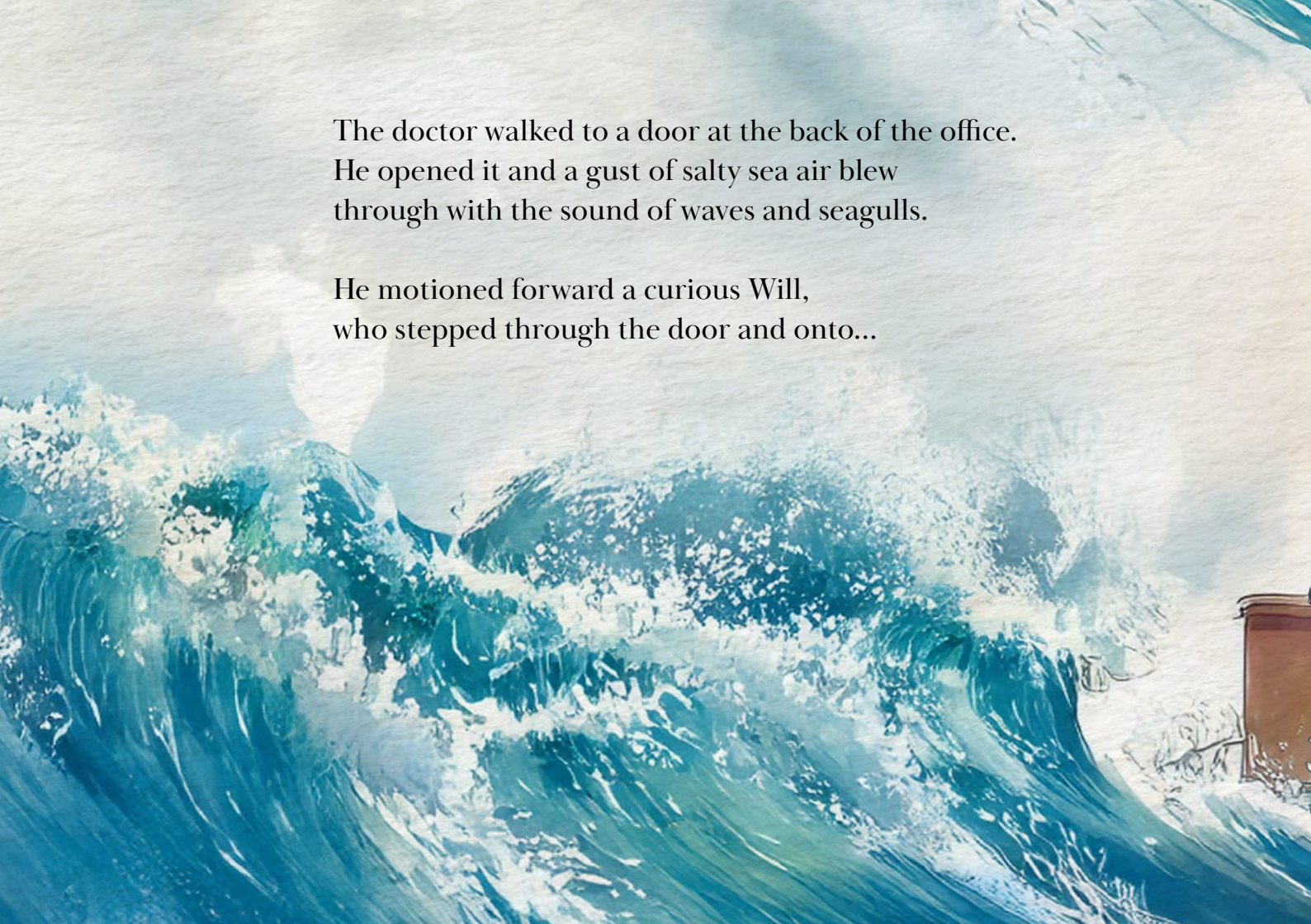
"What does this mean?" Will asked, his voice small.

Doctor Glyco smiled kindly. "It means there's a journey ahead of you, Will. But I know a place that will help you master it that only a special few know about."

References for more information

1. Phillip M, et al. Diabetologia. 2024;67(9):1731-59
[simultaneously published in Diabetes Care. 2024;47(8):1276-98].





The doctor walked to a door at the back of the office.
He opened it and a gust of salty sea air blew
through with the sound of waves and seagulls.

He motioned forward a curious Will,
who stepped through the door and onto...



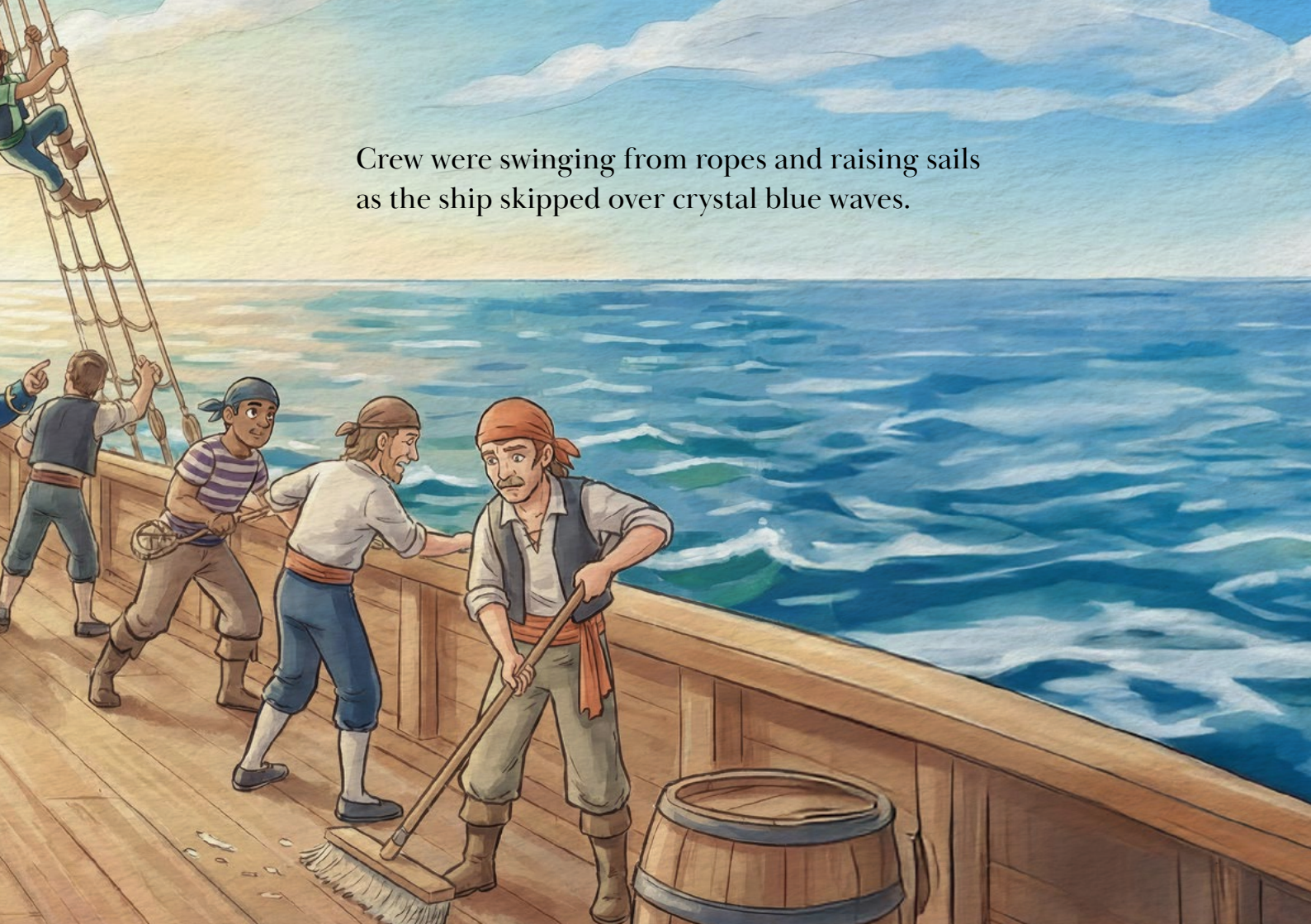
...the deck of a magnificent ship: the S.S. Voyage TID!
Will's eyes were wide as he took in the wonder of it all.



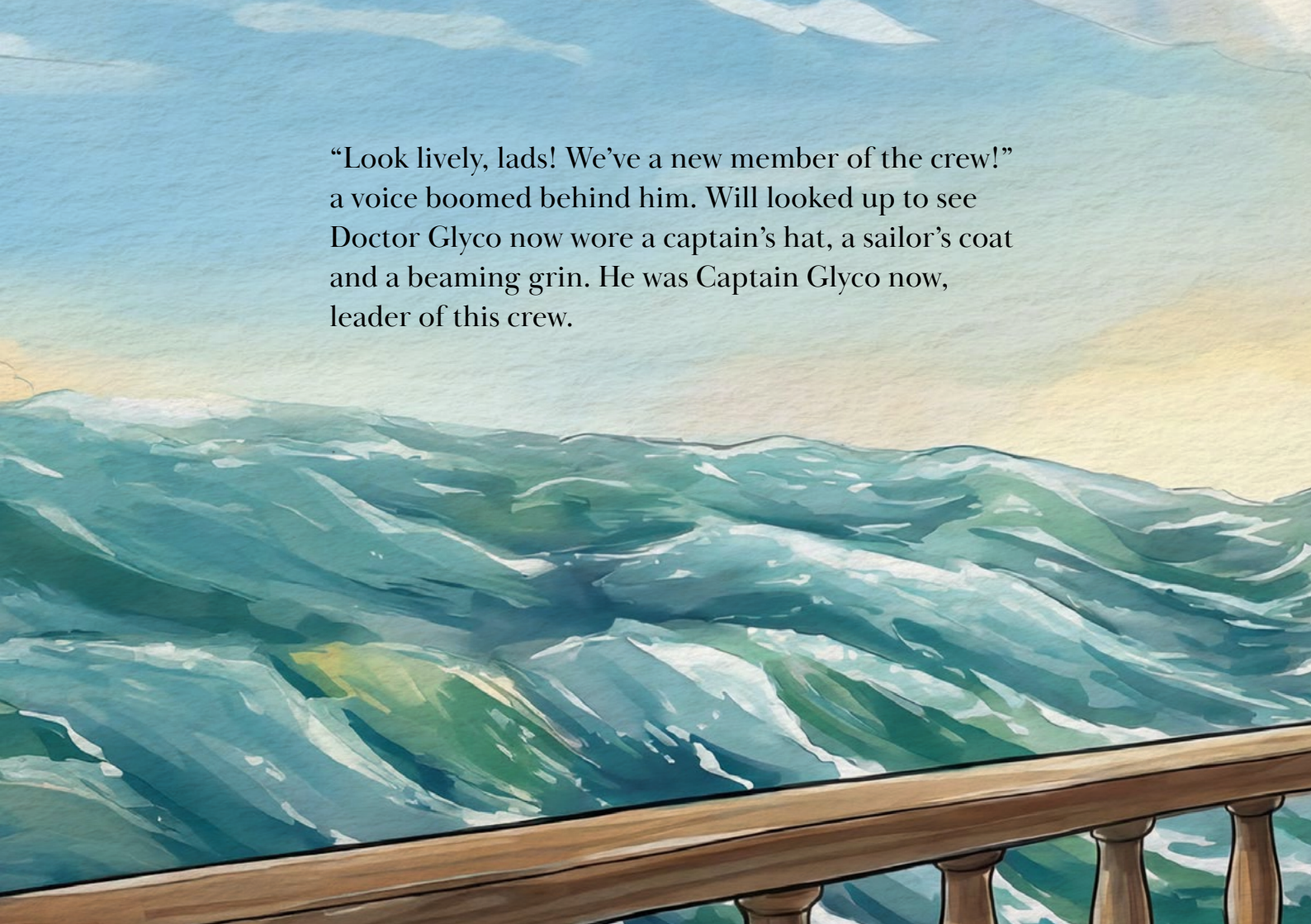




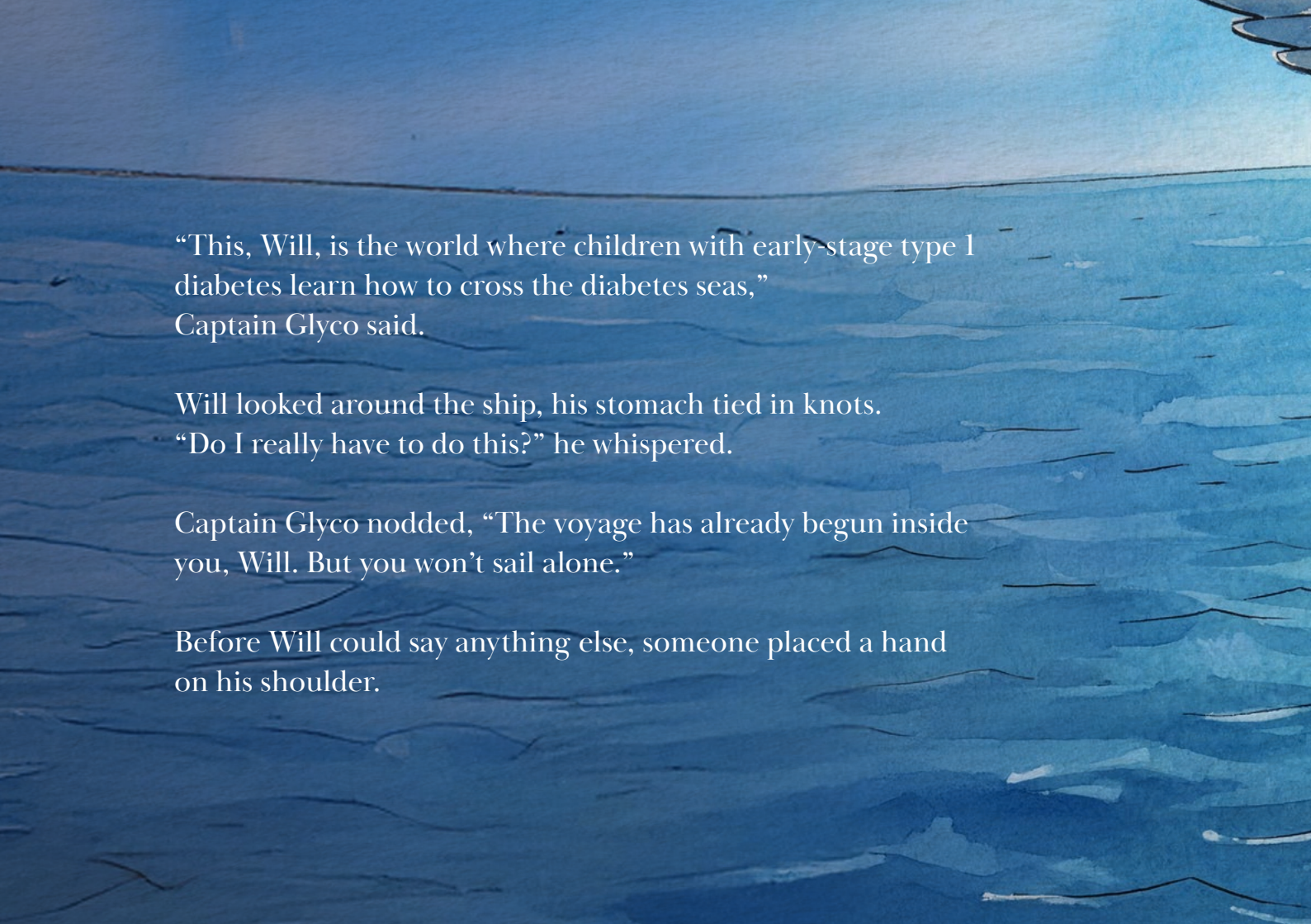
Crew were swinging from ropes and raising sails
as the ship skipped over crystal blue waves.



“Look lively, lads! We’ve a new member of the crew!”
a voice boomed behind him. Will looked up to see
Doctor Glyco now wore a captain’s hat, a sailor’s coat
and a beaming grin. He was Captain Glyco now,
leader of this crew.







“This, Will, is the world where children with early-stage type 1 diabetes learn how to cross the diabetes seas,” Captain Glyco said.

Will looked around the ship, his stomach tied in knots.
“Do I really have to do this?” he whispered.

Captain Glyco nodded, “The voyage has already begun inside you, Will. But you won’t sail alone.”

Before Will could say anything else, someone placed a hand on his shoulder.



It was Ally Anchor, one of his new crewmates. She wore a beautiful starfish necklace, and her smile was warm and understanding. “Will, this is my first mate Ally Anchor,” said the Captain, “She’s sailed the type 1 diabetes seas for many years, and she’s here to help you too.” Will was still stunned and more than a bit nervous. Ally could see it on his face. “It’s normal to feel this way,” Ally said gently. “Remember: you can always talk about how you’re feeling with someone you trust.”



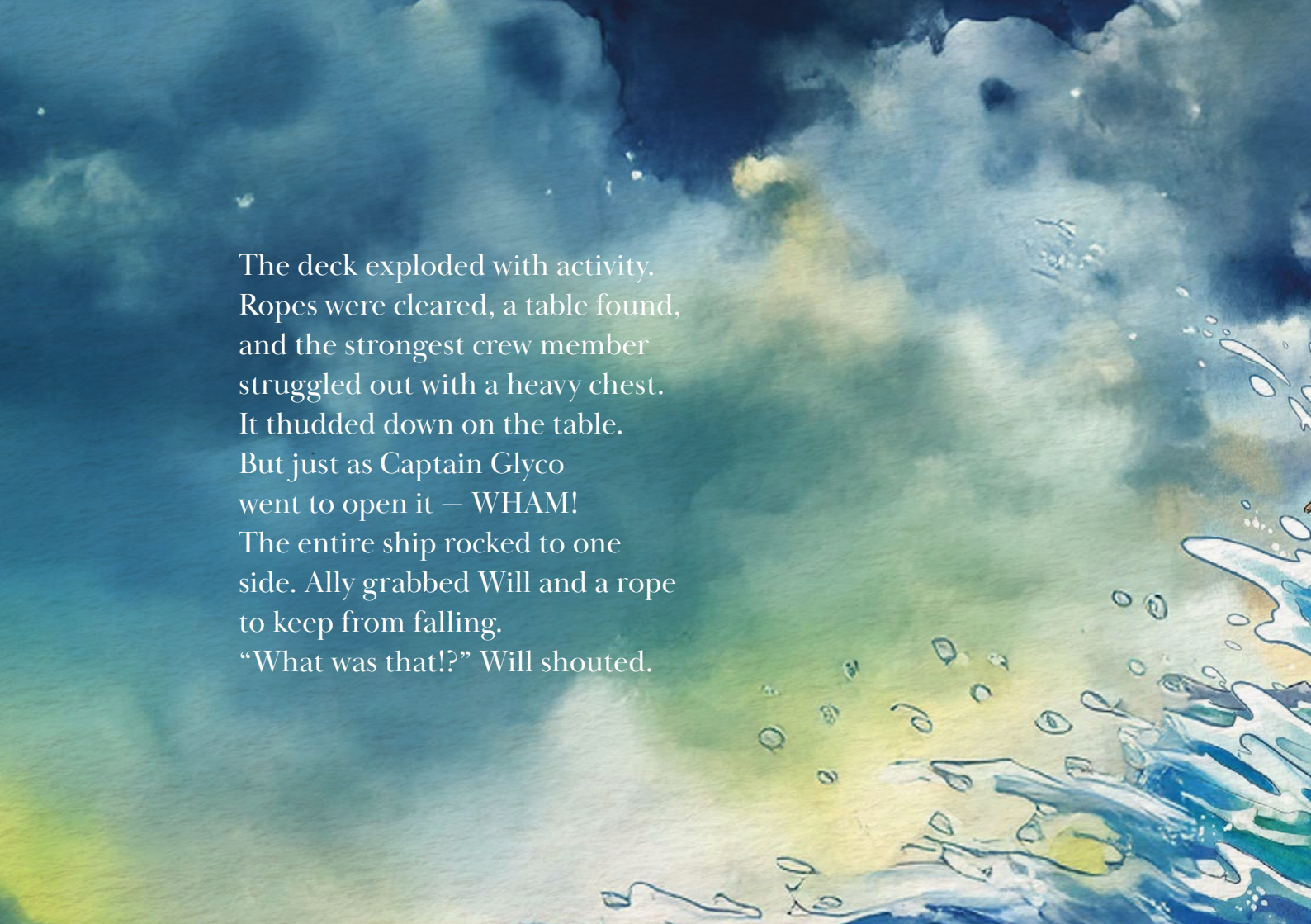


The background of the page is a watercolor illustration of a ship's wooden rigging. Several thick, brown wooden beams run diagonally across the frame, with thinner vertical spars intersecting them. The sky in the background is a mix of light blue, green, and yellow, suggesting a bright, hazy day. The overall style is soft and painterly.

THE MISSING MAPS

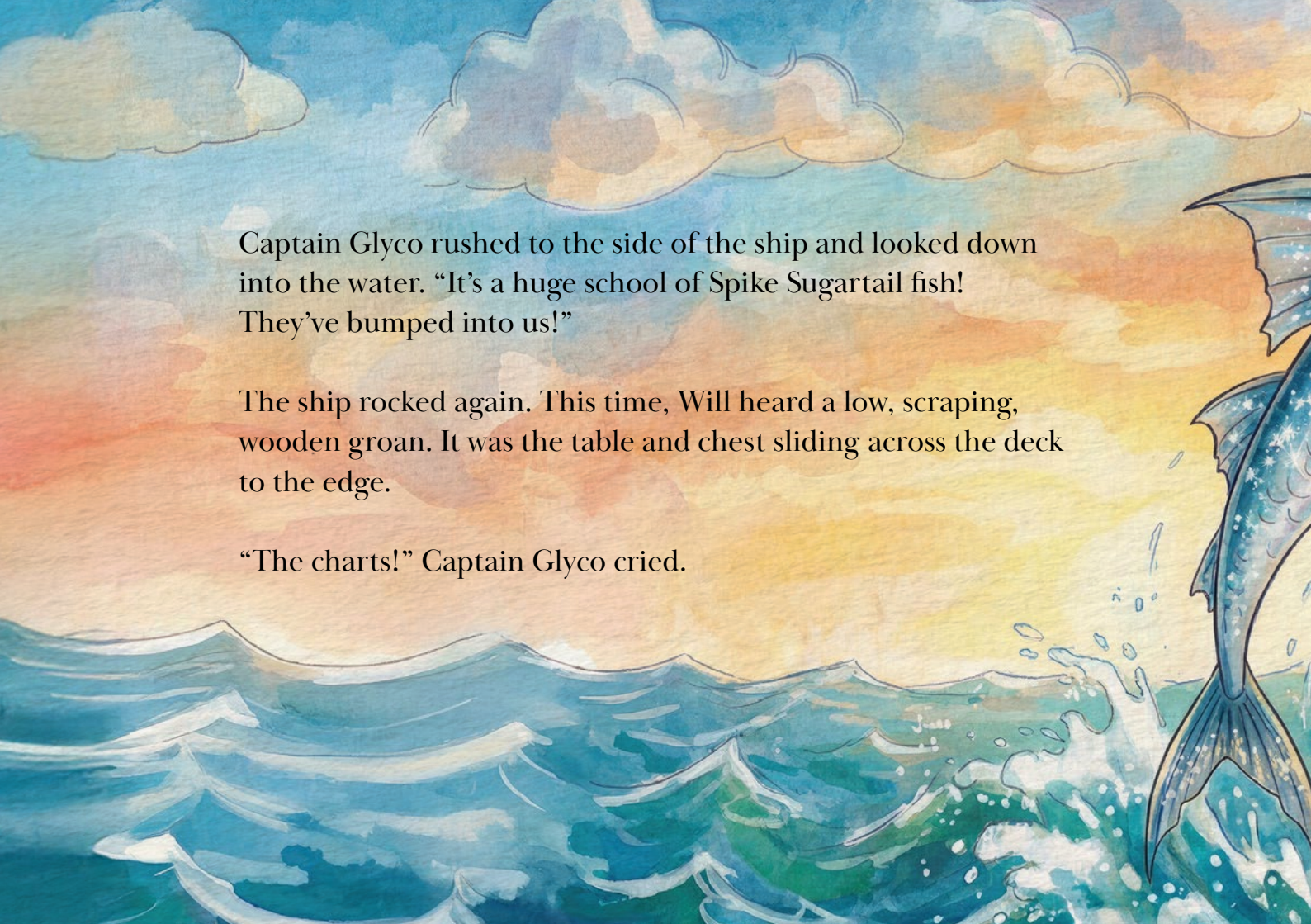
Captain Glyco jumped onto the rigging for the whole crew to see. “Someone get me the chest with the charts inside! Let’s show young Will here where we’re bound for!”





The deck exploded with activity.
Ropes were cleared, a table found,
and the strongest crew member
struggled out with a heavy chest.
It thudded down on the table.
But just as Captain Glyco
went to open it — WHAM!
The entire ship rocked to one
side. Ally grabbed Will and a rope
to keep from falling.
“What was that!?” Will shouted.





Captain Glyco rushed to the side of the ship and looked down into the water. “It’s a huge school of Spike Sugartail fish! They’ve bumped into us!”

The ship rocked again. This time, Will heard a low, scraping, wooden groan. It was the table and chest sliding across the deck to the edge.

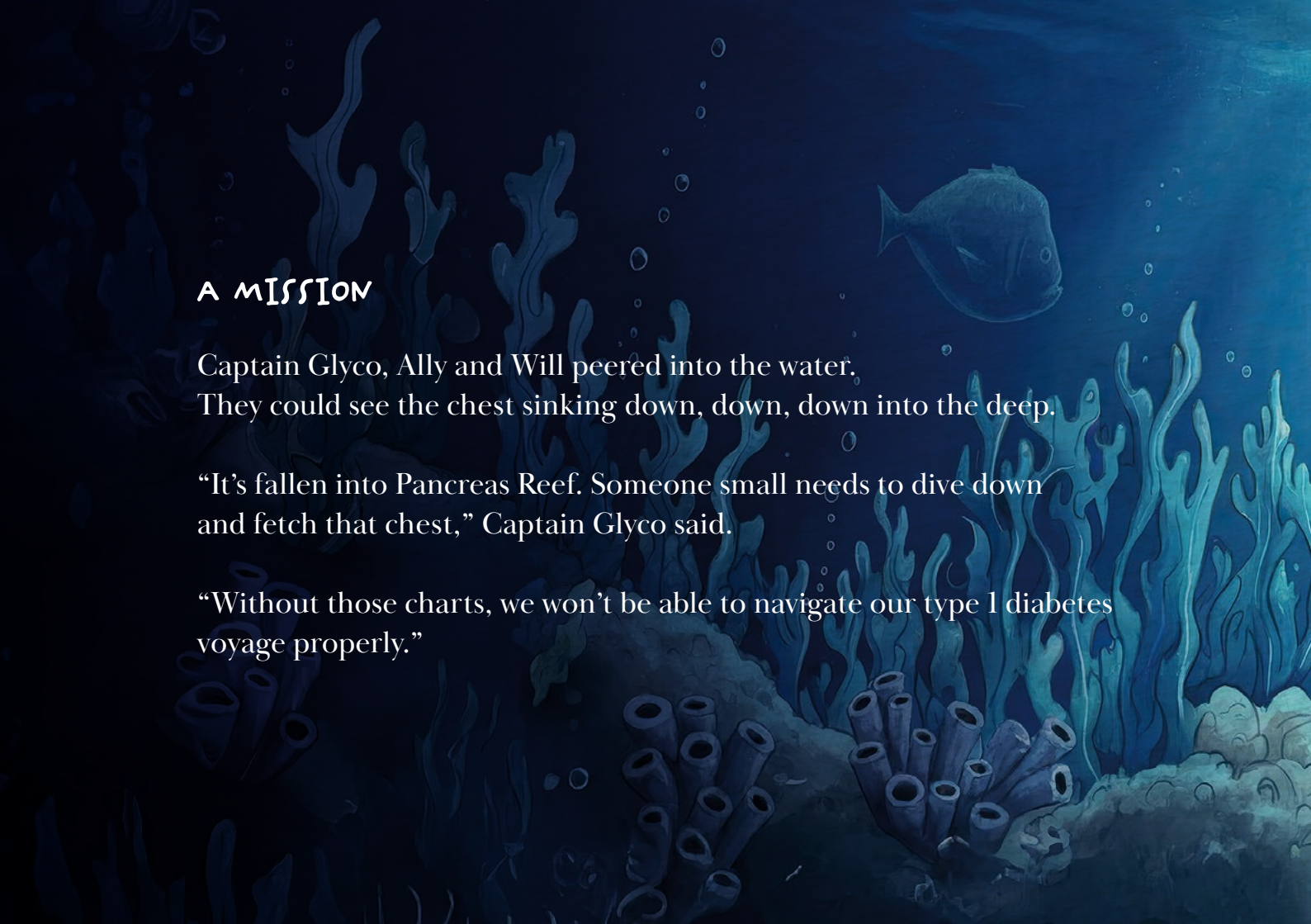
“The charts!” Captain Glyco cried.



Will and Ally ran toward the chest, but they were too late.
With one more rock of the ship, the chest tumbled over the railing
and splashed into the sea below.





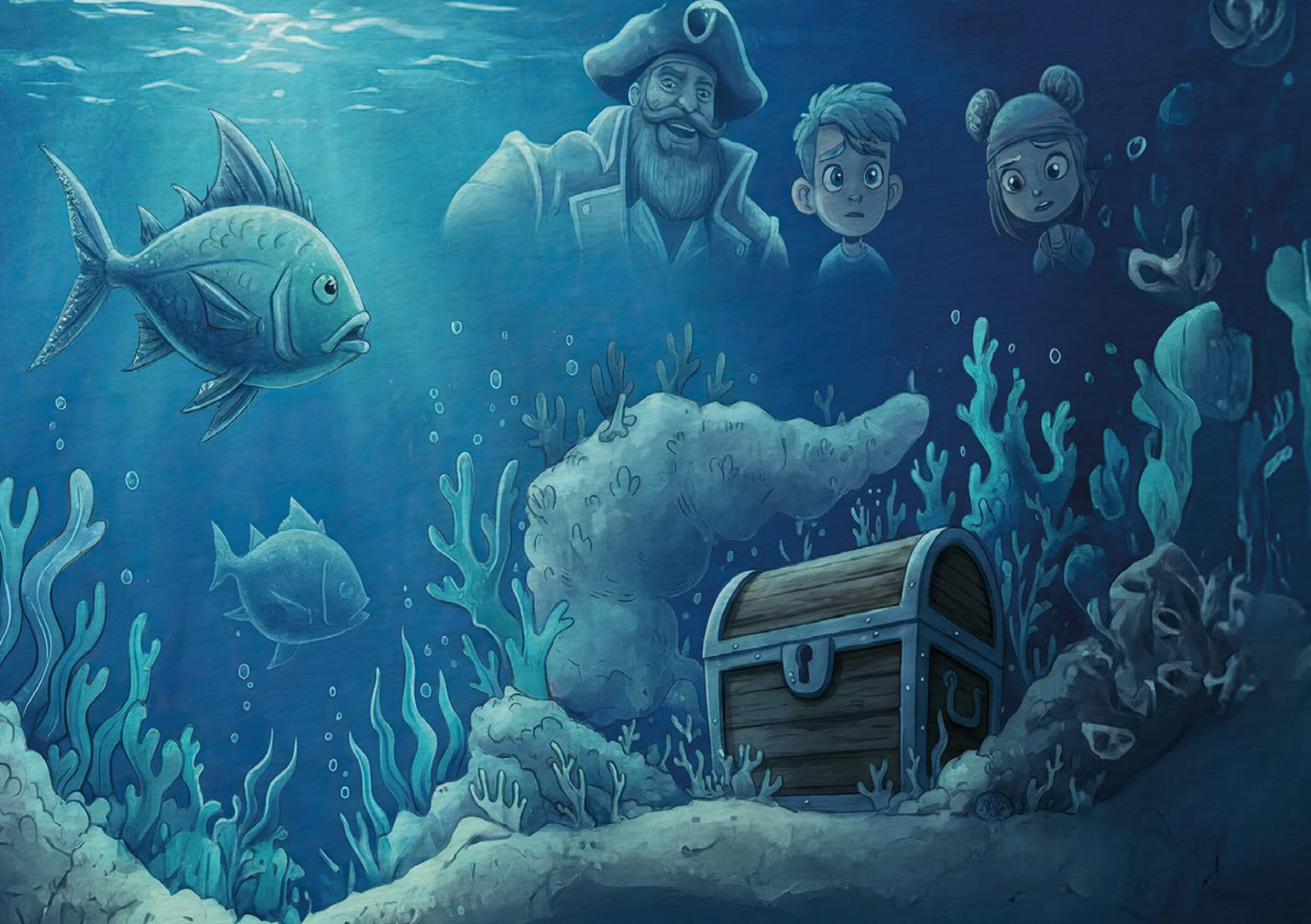
The background is a dark blue underwater scene. In the upper right, a single fish swims towards the right. The water is filled with small, white bubbles. The bottom of the frame is covered with various types of coral, including branching corals and tube corals. The overall lighting is dim, creating a mysterious and deep-sea atmosphere.

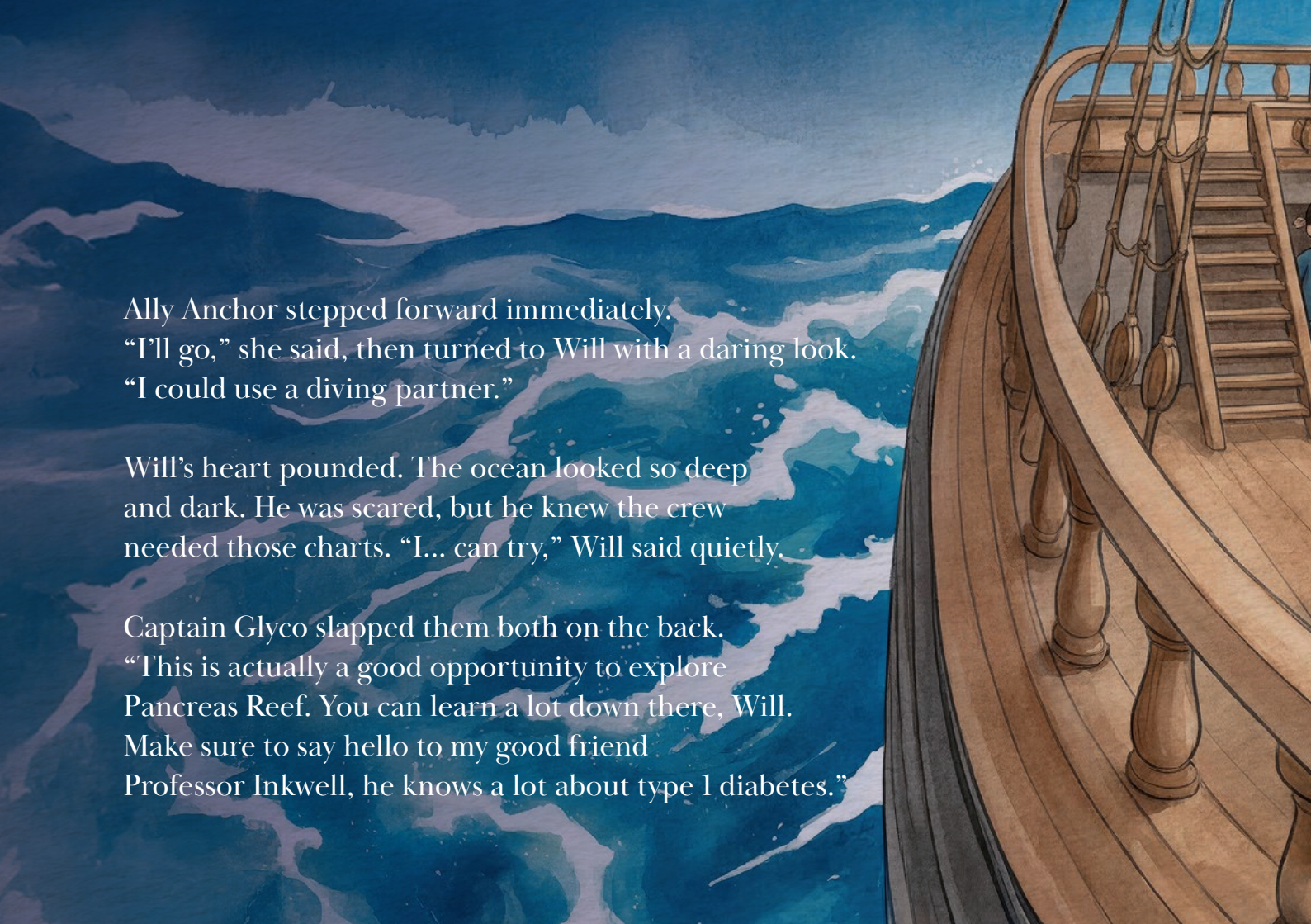
A MISSION

Captain Glyco, Ally and Will peered into the water. They could see the chest sinking down, down, down into the deep.

“It’s fallen into Pancreas Reef. Someone small needs to dive down and fetch that chest,” Captain Glyco said.

“Without those charts, we won’t be able to navigate our type 1 diabetes voyage properly.”



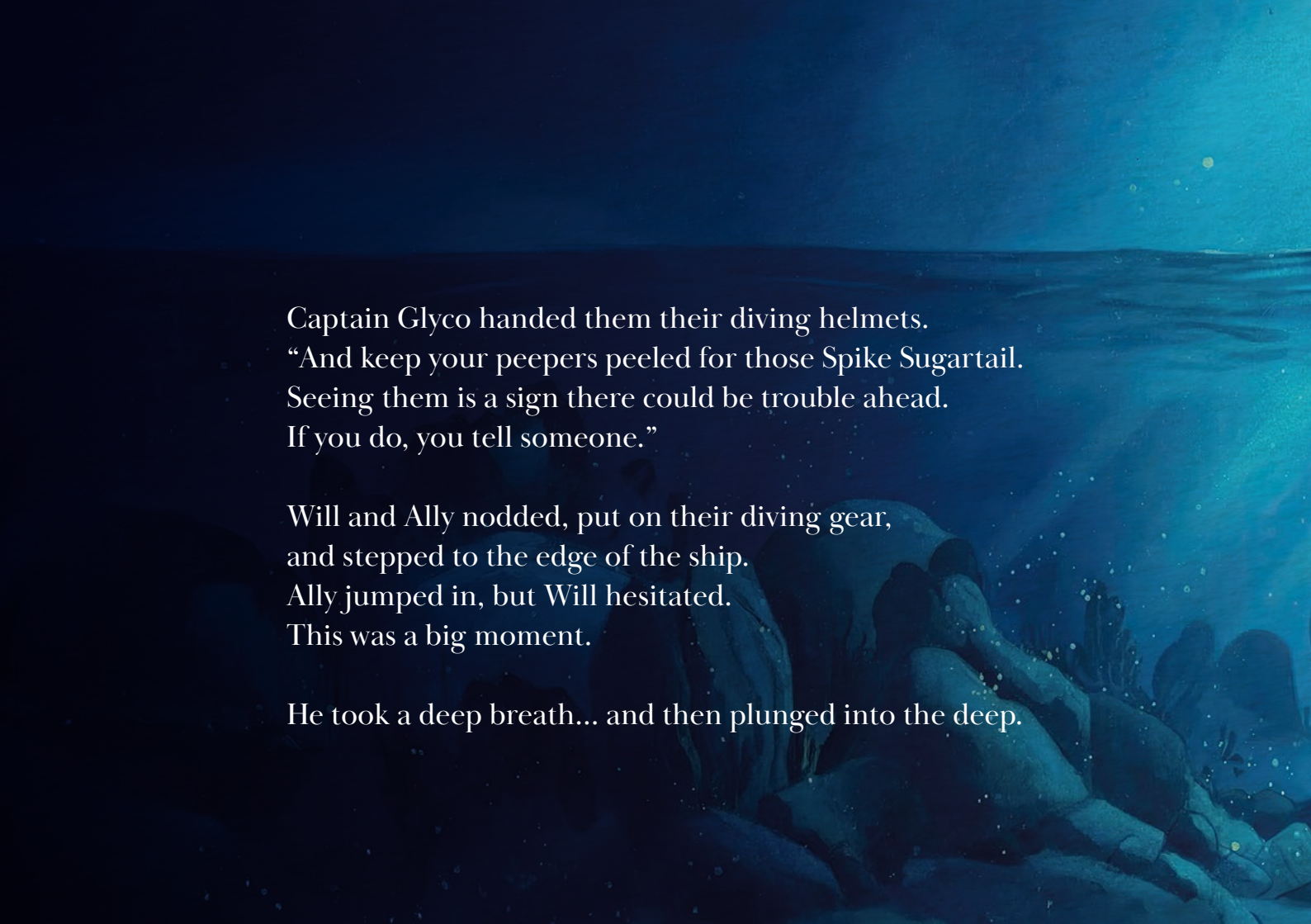
An illustration of a ship's deck on the right side of the frame, featuring wooden planks, a curved railing with balusters, and a set of stairs leading up. The ship is looking out over a vast, dark blue ocean with white-capped waves under a heavy, grey, overcast sky. The overall mood is somber and adventurous.

Ally Anchor stepped forward immediately.
“I’ll go,” she said, then turned to Will with a daring look.
“I could use a diving partner.”

Will’s heart pounded. The ocean looked so deep and dark. He was scared, but he knew the crew needed those charts. “I... can try,” Will said quietly.

Captain Glyco slapped them both on the back.
“This is actually a good opportunity to explore Pancreas Reef. You can learn a lot down there, Will. Make sure to say hello to my good friend Professor Inkwell, he knows a lot about type 1 diabetes.”



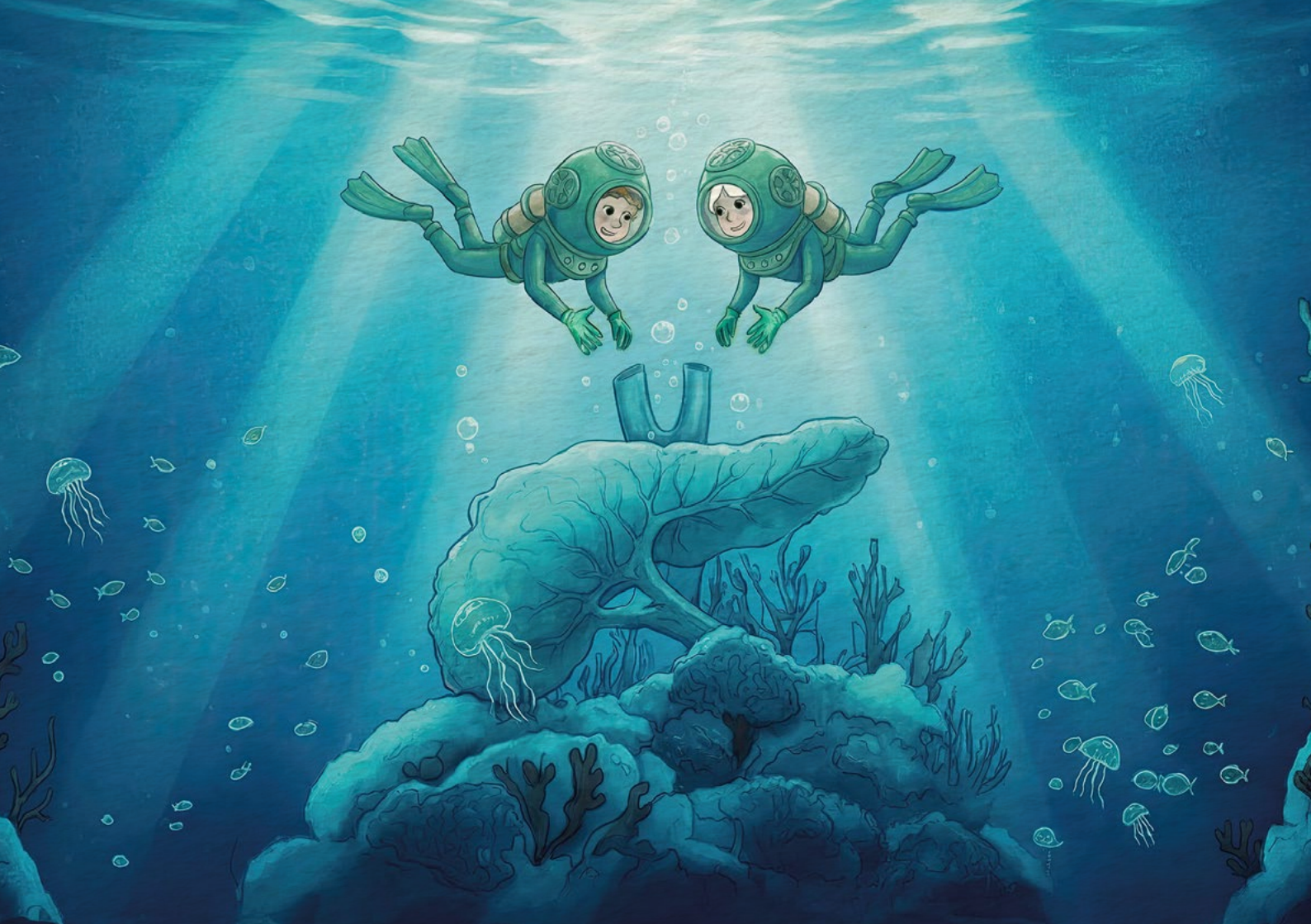
The background is a deep blue underwater scene. In the distance, the dark silhouette of a shipwreck is visible on the ocean floor. The water is filled with small, glowing particles, possibly bubbles or light reflecting off the seabed. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and somber.

Captain Glyco handed them their diving helmets.
“And keep your peepers peeled for those Spike Sugartail.
Seeing them is a sign there could be trouble ahead.
If you do, you tell someone.”

Will and Ally nodded, put on their diving gear,
and stepped to the edge of the ship.
Ally jumped in, but Will hesitated.
This was a big moment.

He took a deep breath... and then plunged into the deep.





An illustration of an underwater scene. On the left, there is a large, branching coral structure. Several small fish are swimming in the water. In the center, a diver is visible, though somewhat faint. The background is a deep blue, suggesting the ocean floor and water.

DIVING INTO PANCREAS REEF

The water was cool and blue-green. Will and Ally kicked their fins, swimming deeper and deeper.

Below them, the reef came into view. A beautiful field of strangely shaped coral as far as the eye could see.

“This is Pancreas Reef,” Ally said through her diving helmet speaker.

“What’s a pancreas?” Will asked, amazed by the coral reef.

“It’s the part of our bodies that isn’t working so well,” Ally replied.

EXPLORING WHAT'S INSIDE THE PANCREAS

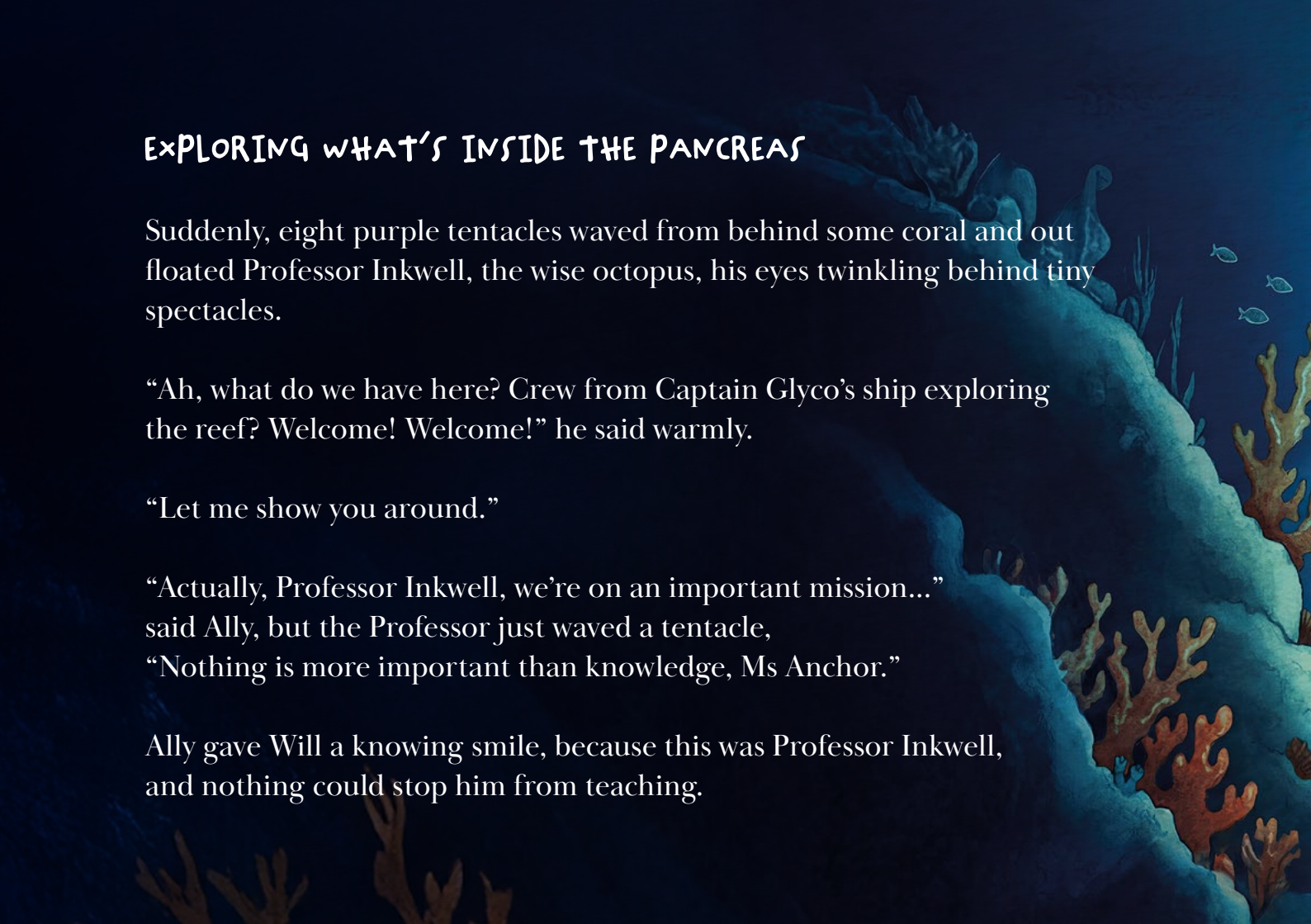
Suddenly, eight purple tentacles waved from behind some coral and out floated Professor Inkwel, the wise octopus, his eyes twinkling behind tiny spectacles.

“Ah, what do we have here? Crew from Captain Glyco’s ship exploring the reef? Welcome! Welcome!” he said warmly.

“Let me show you around.”

“Actually, Professor Inkwel, we’re on an important mission...” said Ally, but the Professor just waved a tentacle, “Nothing is more important than knowledge, Ms Anchor.”

Ally gave Will a knowing smile, because this was Professor Inkwel, and nothing could stop him from teaching.





Professor Inkwel gestured with his tentacles at the nearby coral.

“See, your pancreas helps control levels of something called glucose. This comes from the food you eat and gives you the energy you need to run, swim and play.”

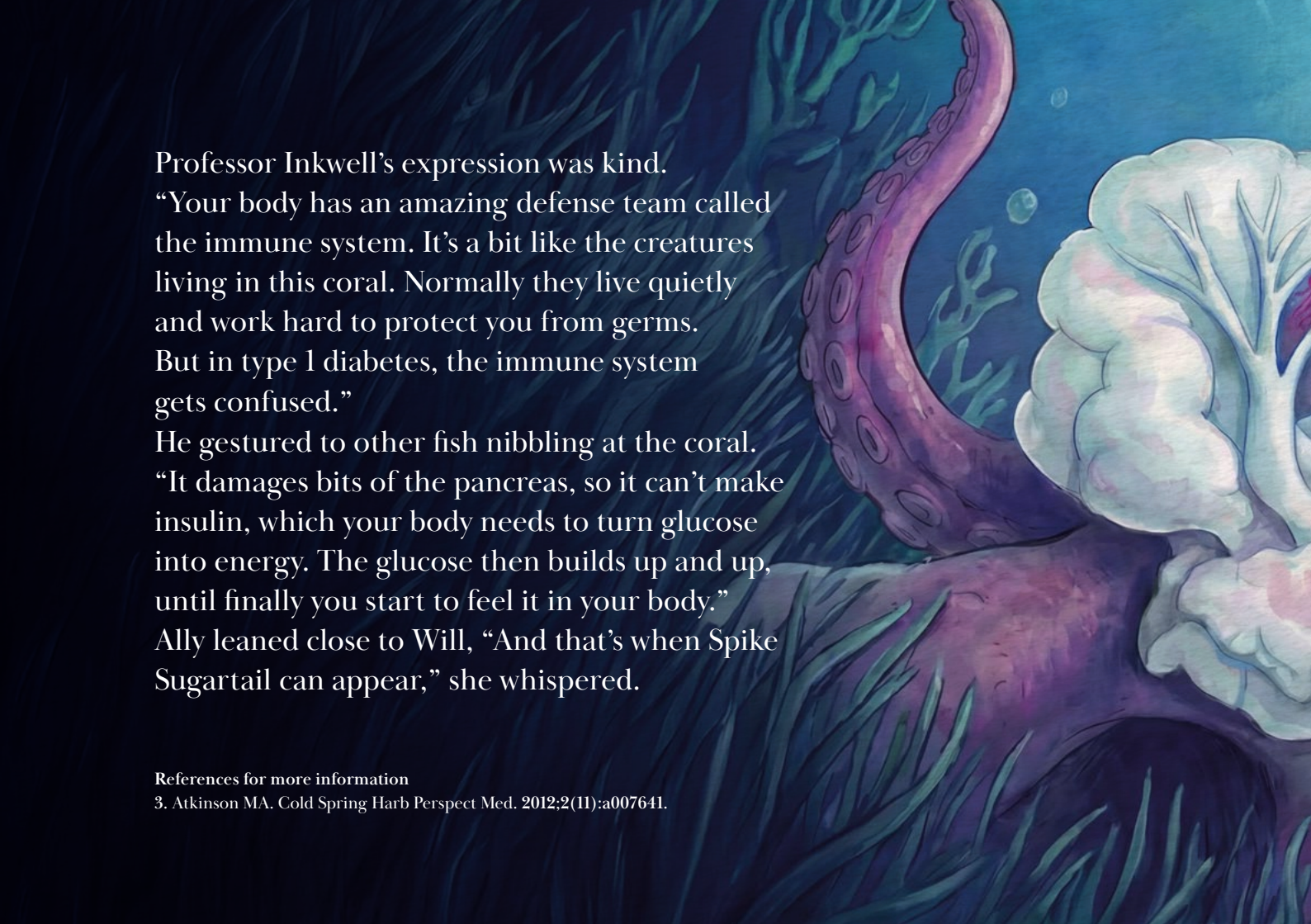
References for more information

2. Röder PV, et al. *Exp Mol Med*. 2016;48(3):e219.





Will swam closer, fascinated
by the coral. “So what’s
wrong with mine?”
Will asked sheepishly.



Professor Inkwell's expression was kind. "Your body has an amazing defense team called the immune system. It's a bit like the creatures living in this coral. Normally they live quietly and work hard to protect you from germs. But in type 1 diabetes, the immune system gets confused." He gestured to other fish nibbling at the coral. "It damages bits of the pancreas, so it can't make insulin, which your body needs to turn glucose into energy. The glucose then builds up and up, until finally you start to feel it in your body." Ally leaned close to Will, "And that's when Spike Sugartail can appear," she whispered.

References for more information

3. Atkinson MA. Cold Spring Harb Perspect Med. 2012;2(11):a007641.



The Professor counted with his tentacles,

“Too much glucose can make you:

- Feel very tired
- Feel very thirsty
- Need to use the toilet more often than usual
- Feel very hungry even after you’ve eaten
- Lose weight even though you’re eating”

Will’s eyes widened. “That doesn’t sound good.”

“In early-stage type 1 diabetes, your pancreas is still able to keep you healthy,” Professor Inkwell explained. “But in the future, you’ll need help to use that sugary energy properly.”

References for more information

1. Phillip M, et al. Diabetologia. 2024;67(9):1731-59 [simultaneously published in Diabetes Care. 2024;47(8):1276-98].
4. Diabetes UK. Diabetes signs & symptoms. Available at: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about-diabetes/symptoms> (Accessed February 2026).



Ally swam up beside Will.

“It’s okay, Will. There’ll be time to get ready for this. You just need to know how to look out for those feelings and tell an adult when you feel them. Now, let’s go find that chest!”

THE SEARCH FOR THE CHEST

Professor Inkwell's eyes lit up.
"Ah yes! I think I saw a chest float
past just a few minutes ago. Follow me!"

The three of them swam away from Pancreas Reef,
heading deeper into the ocean.

As they left the colorful coral behind,
the water grew darker and the ocean floor
stretched out vast and shadowy below them.

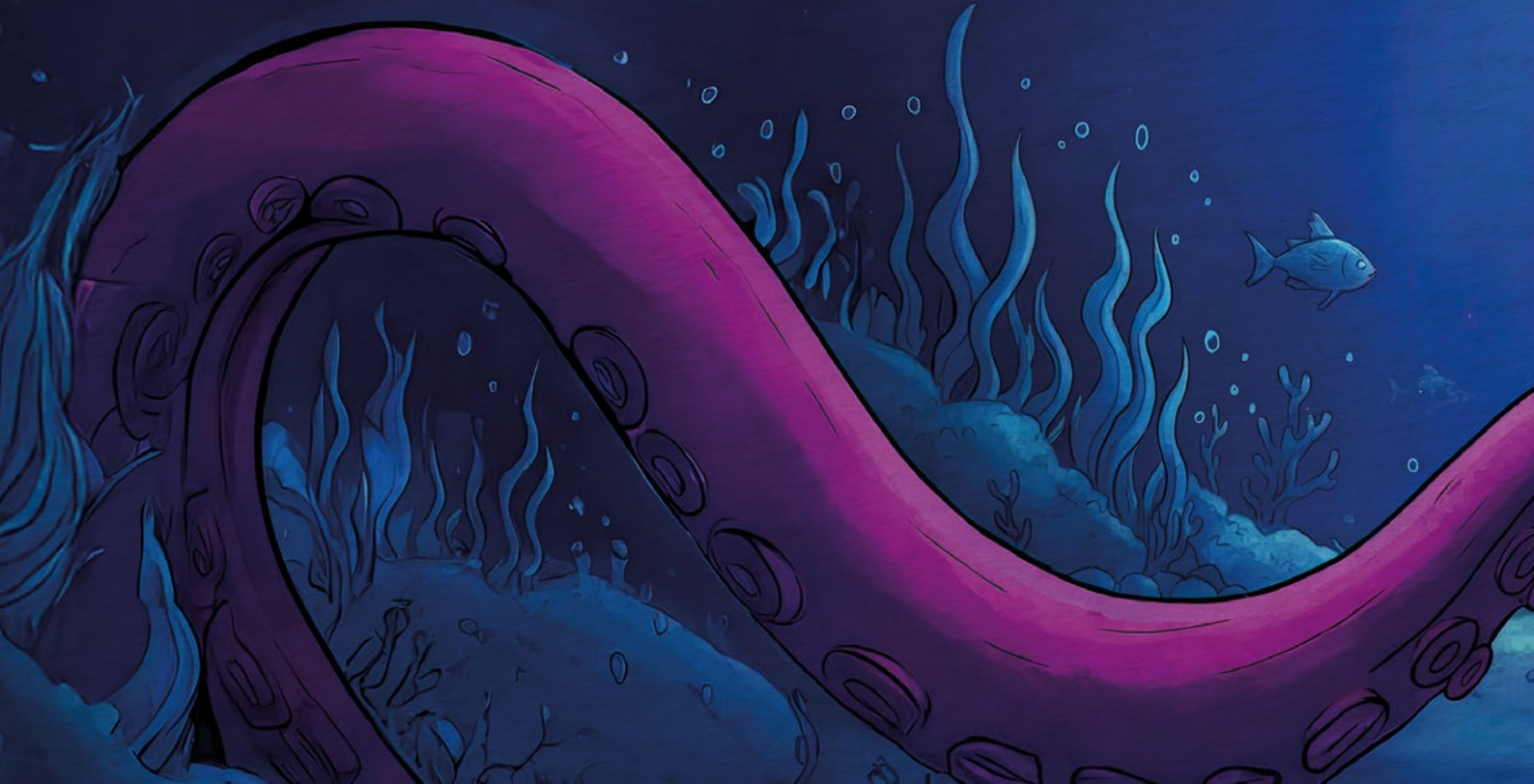




Will felt a flutter of fear in his chest.
It was so big and dark out here.
But Ally squeezed Will's hand
and whispered, "You're doing great,"
and suddenly the water didn't seem
quite so big and dark.

“There it is!” Professor Inkwell pointed at the chest with a tentacle.

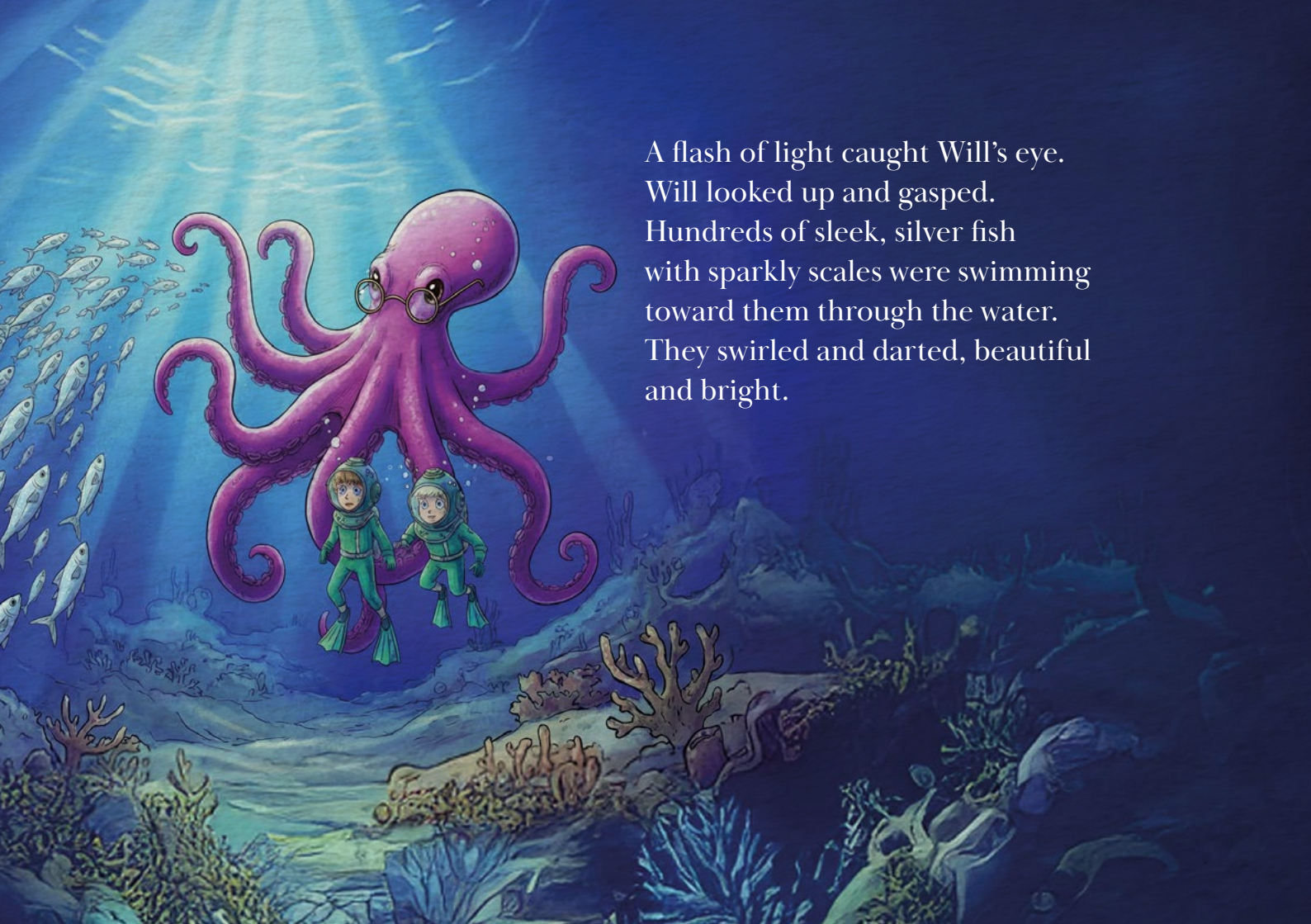
In the distance, resting on the sandy ocean floor, was the wooden chest with the charts inside.



They swam toward it, Will's fins kicking steadily. They were almost there when...



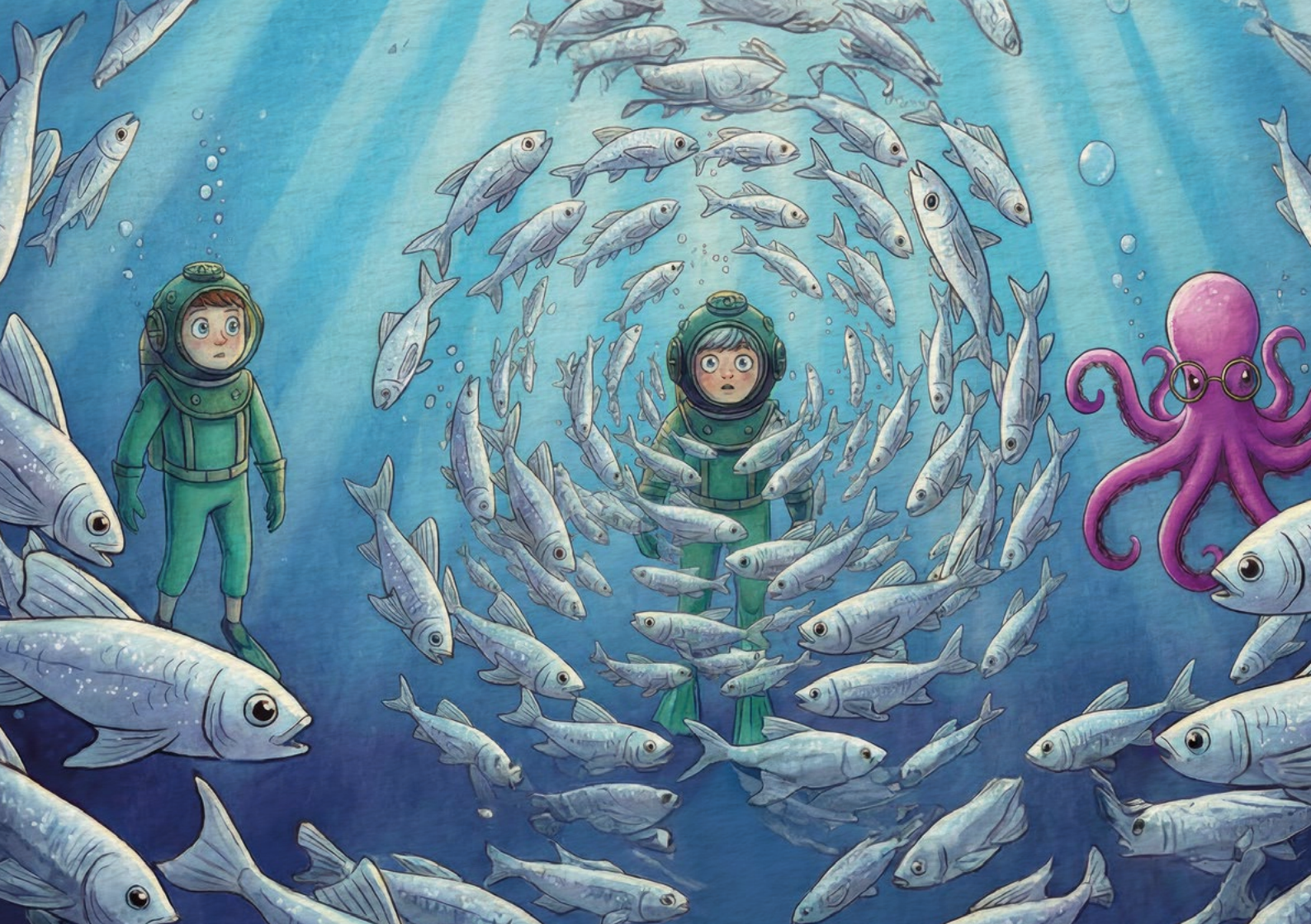




A flash of light caught Will's eye.
Will looked up and gasped.
Hundreds of sleek, silver fish
with sparkly scales were swimming
toward them through the water.
They swirled and darted, beautiful
and bright.

“Oh look, that’s Spike Sugartail!”
Will said, remembering Captain Glyco’s
warning. But the fish weren’t swimming
toward Will, they were surrounding Ally!
Professor Inkwell nodded seriously.
“Good eye, Will. Spike Sugartail
are attracted to anyone with lots of
glucose. Remember my lesson?
Ally has too much glucose in her blood.
That’s why we need to look out for them.”









Ally floated in the middle of the swirling school of Spike Sugartail fish. She reached into her diving belt and pulled out a strange device.

“That’s a glucometer,”
Professor Inkwell whispered to Will,
“It tells Ally how much glucose is in her blood.”

Ally calmly pressed it against her finger.
Beep-beep-beep it went.



Pale and shaking, Ally pulled out another strange device, an insulin pen.

“I need to inject myself with insulin,” she said. “It’s a medicine that helps balance the glucose in my body.” She tried to inject herself...

...but it slipped from her hand and began to sink to the bottom of the ocean!

“No!” Ally cried.

She was stuck, unable to see and move as the bright, colorful fish dazzled around her.

References for more information

5. Hatan S, et al. J Clin Res Pediatr Endocrinol. 2024 Sep 4;16(3):245-55.



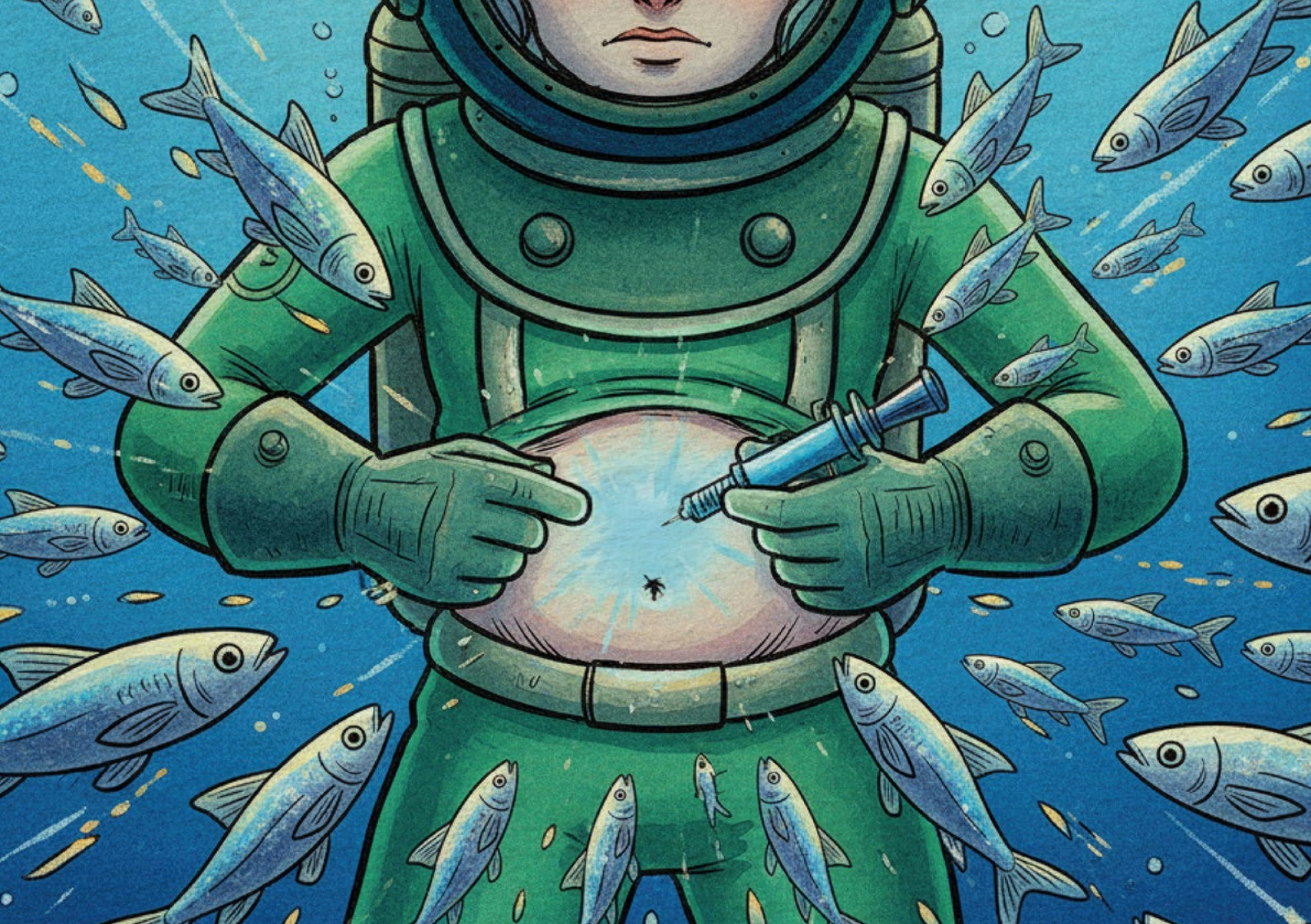
Will knew what he had to do.

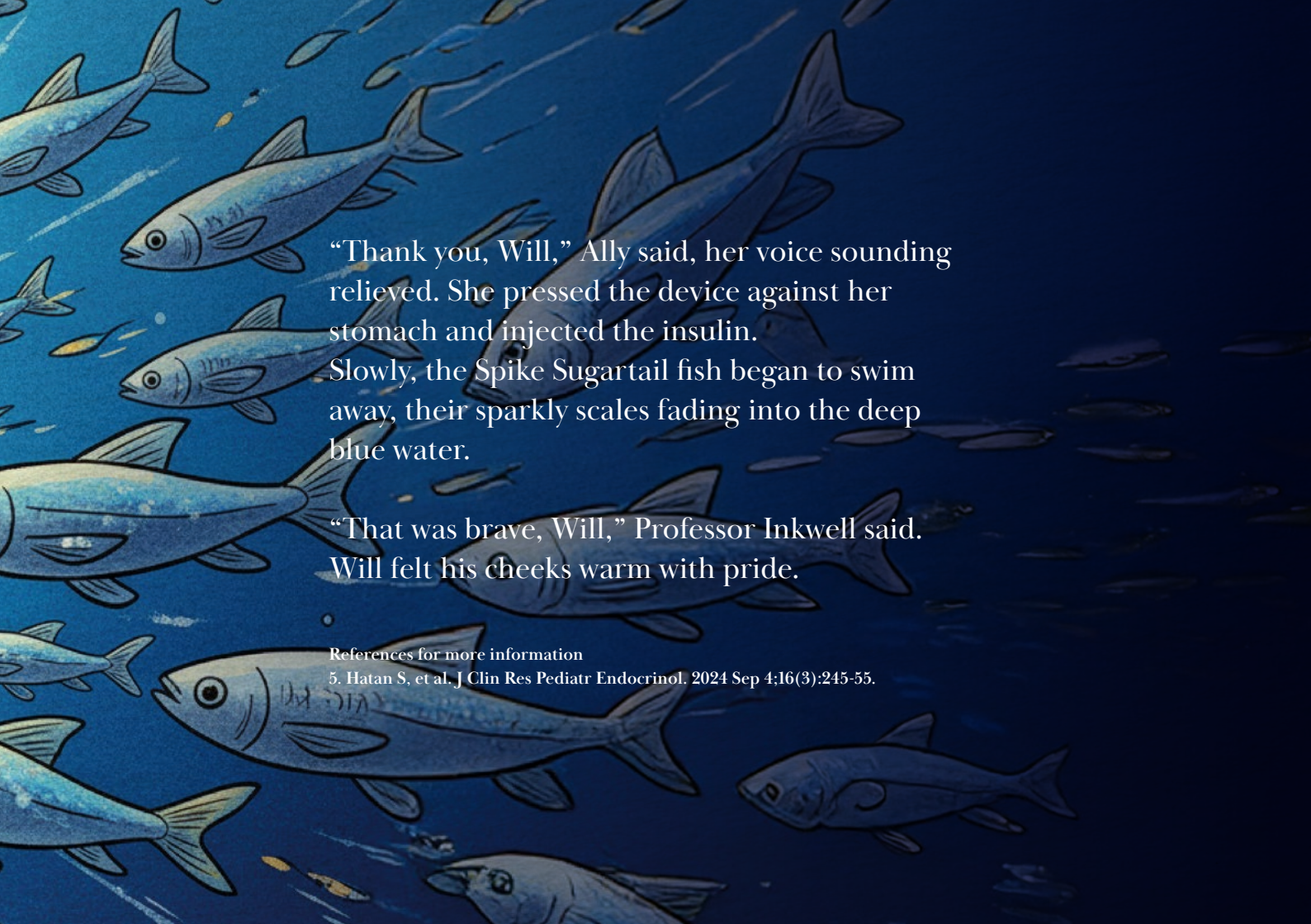
He dove down, his fins propelling him through the living cloud of Spike Sugartail until he reached the ocean floor.





Sand floated away as he dug and dug. Finally, his fingers closed around the device. Will swam back up to Ally and put the device in her hands.



The background of the entire page is a detailed illustration of a school of fish. The fish are depicted in various shades of blue, from light sky blue to deep navy blue, with some having lighter, almost white, underbellies. They are swimming in a deep blue, textured water environment. The fish are of various sizes and are scattered throughout the frame, creating a sense of movement and depth. Some fish are in the foreground, while others are further back, creating a three-dimensional effect. The overall style is that of a classic children's book illustration, with clear outlines and a rich color palette.

“Thank you, Will,” Ally said, her voice sounding relieved. She pressed the device against her stomach and injected the insulin.

Slowly, the Spike Sugartail fish began to swim away, their sparkly scales fading into the deep blue water.

“That was brave, Will,” Professor Inkwell said. Will felt his cheeks warm with pride.

References for more information

5. Hatan S. et al. J Clin Res Pediatr Endocrinol. 2024 Sep 4;16(3):245-55.



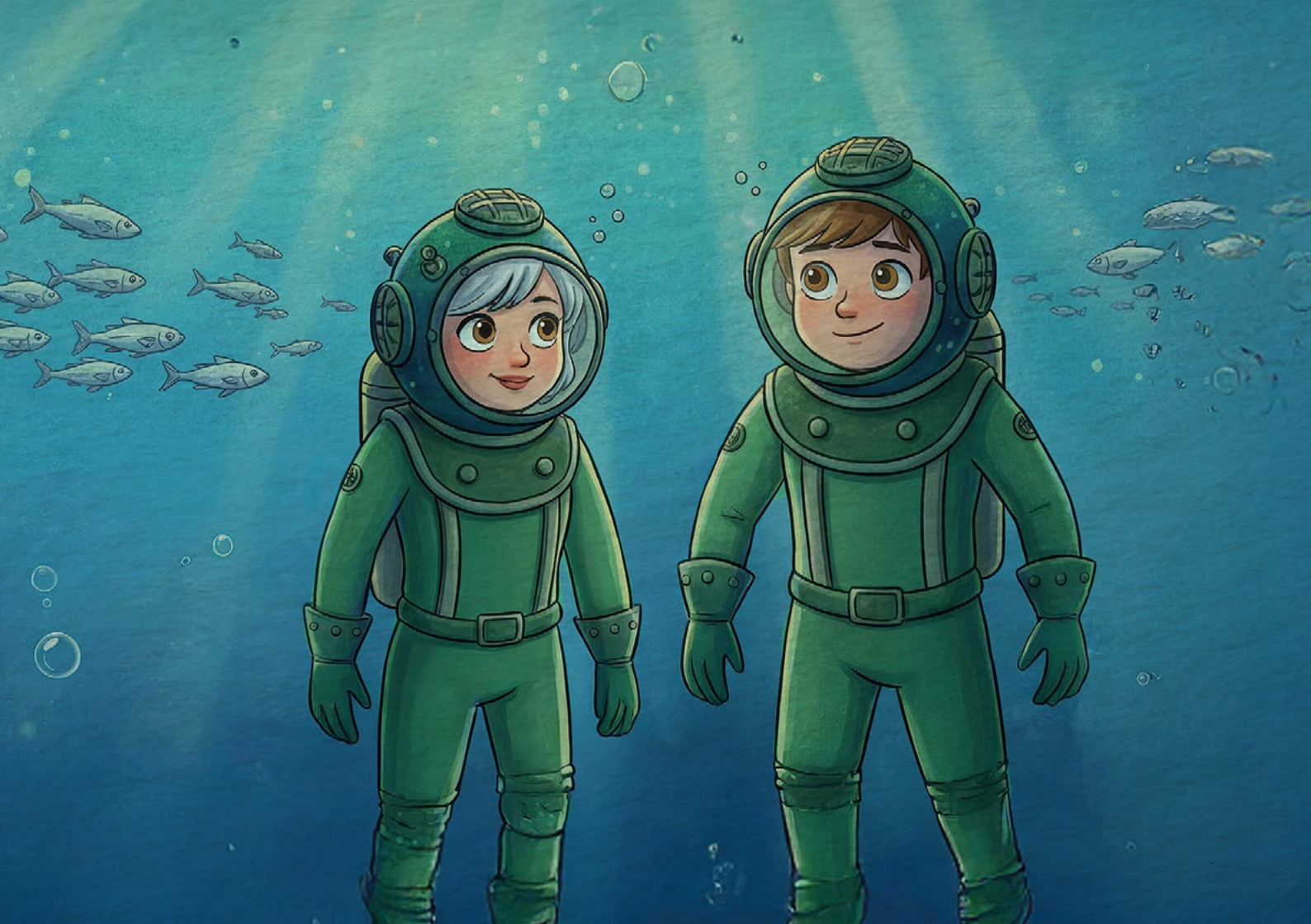
Ally tucked the device away.

“You won’t need to use this device yet, Will. It can take months to years before people with early-stage type 1 diabetes need to take insulin. When you do need it, it’ll help you stay healthy.”

Will nodded, understanding. He wasn’t at that stage yet, but one day he might be. And when that day came, he’d know what to do.

References for more information

1. Phillip M, et al. *Diabetologia*. 2024;67(9):1731-59 [simultaneously published in *Diabetes Care*. 2024;47(8):1276-98].
6. Atkinson MA, Raghavendra GM. *Cell Metab*. 2023;35(9):1500-18.



RETRIEVING THE CHEST

The trio swam the last few meters to the chest. Professor Inkwell wrapped his tentacles around one side, while Will and Ally grabbed the handles.

“On three!” called Ally. “One, two, three!”

Together, they lifted. The chest was heavy, but they heaved as hard as they could, knowing that inside were the charts they needed to cross the diabetes seas.





With all three of them working together, they managed to carry it up through the water to the ship above.

As they waited to be picked up, Ally looked at Will with a sparkle in her eyes, “You really were brave today, Will. Early-stage type 1 diabetes puts you on a different journey from others, but I’m sure in time you’ll master the voyage.”





A HERO RETURNS

Back on deck, Will stood dripping wet in a puddle of seawater. Something was different about him.

He felt taller somehow, even though he was the same height as before. Ally gave him a thankful hug as Captain Glyco walked over and put his hand on Will's shoulder.

“You faced the reef, young Will. And it sounds like you learned about early-stage type 1 diabetes while you were down there.”

“Yes,” Will said, smiling. “Professor Inkwell taught me about the pancreas. And we saw Spike Sugartail, too! They swam off into the deep.”





“That’s good to know,” Captain Glyco said.

“We’ll have to keep a watch for them, to make sure the ship stays steady.

At this stage in your voyage, Will, there’s no need to change much.

Keep doing what you’re doing, remember to eat a balanced diet,

and stay alert for Spike Sugartail. That’s all I ask of new crew!”

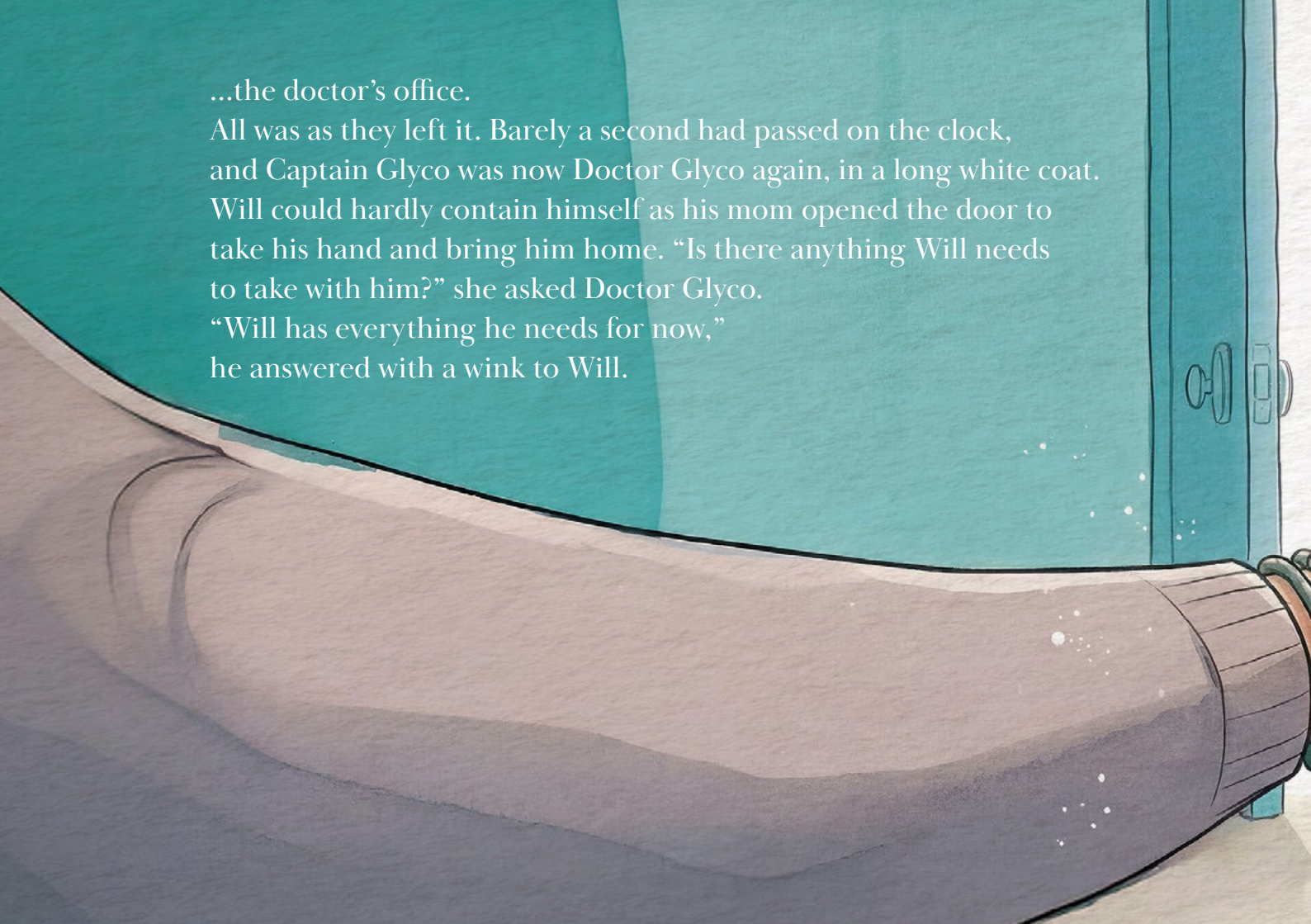
And with that he opened the door to the captain’s cabin,

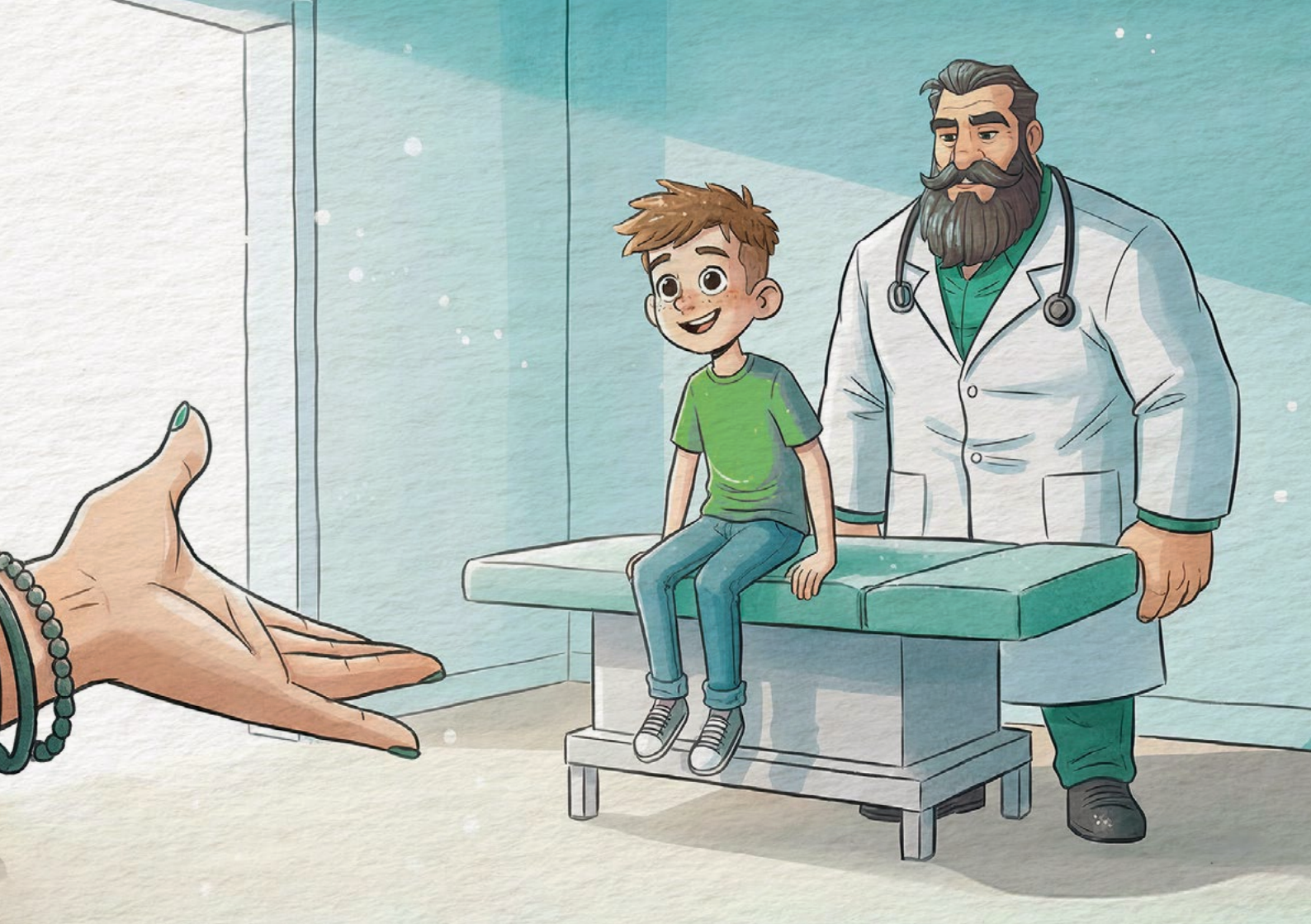
and Will stepped through into...



...the doctor's office.

All was as they left it. Barely a second had passed on the clock, and Captain Glyco was now Doctor Glyco again, in a long white coat. Will could hardly contain himself as his mom opened the door to take his hand and bring him home. "Is there anything Will needs to take with him?" she asked Doctor Glyco. "Will has everything he needs for now," he answered with a wink to Will.





As they left Doctor Glyco's office behind, Will tucked his hands into his pockets. He felt something inside one of them.

Will pulled out his hand and opened it to find Ally Anchor's starfish necklace!

Will's crew was out there, ready and waiting to help him.

"Mom," Will said softly,
"You'll never believe what just happened."



PROFESSOR INKWELL'S ACADEMY

We're below decks on the S.S. Voyage T1D with Professor Inkwell. He's come aboard to help us on our journey by explaining the full science behind type 1 diabetes.

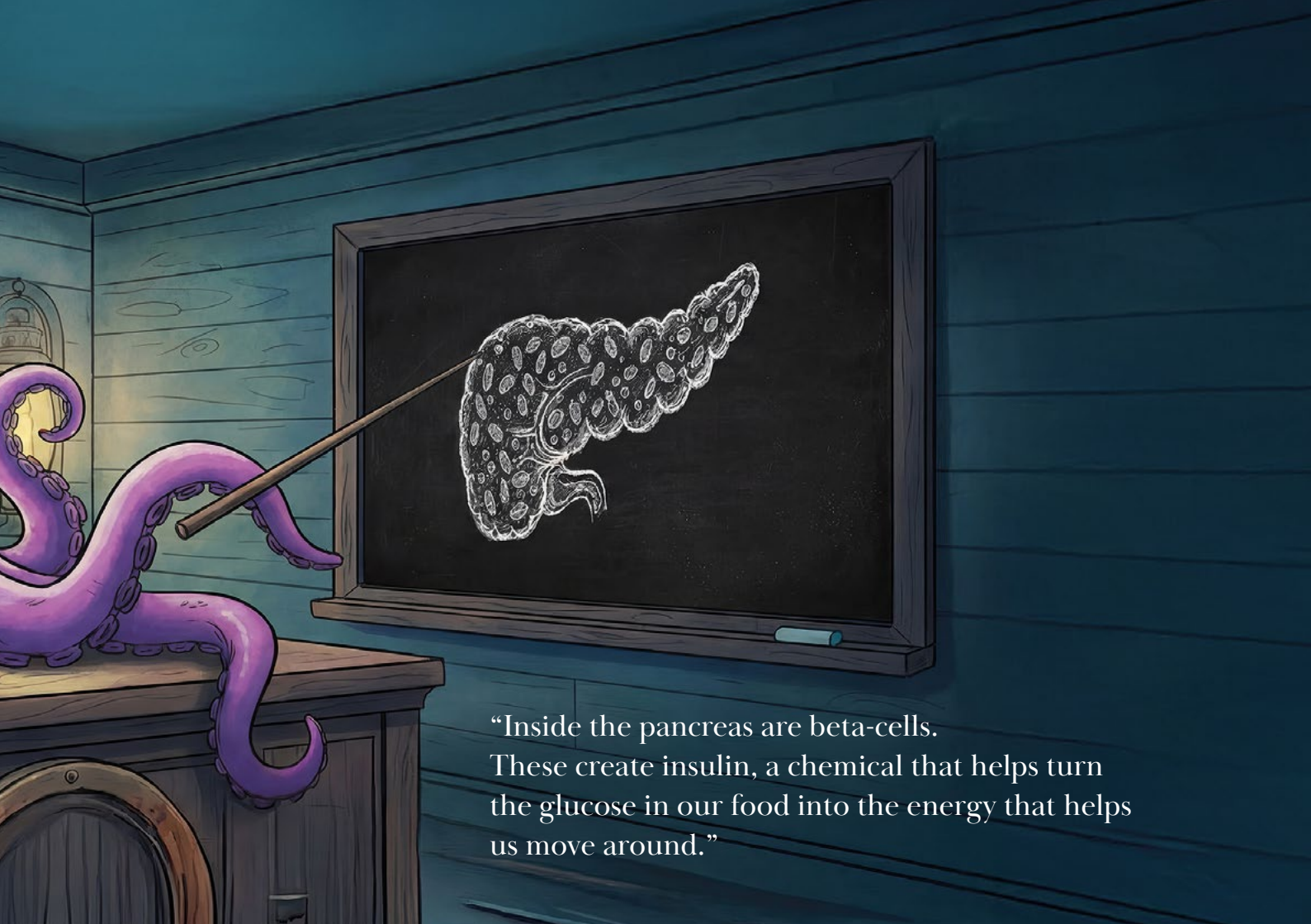
"Now, you won't have to remember all of this to stay happy and healthy, but it's always good to know what our bodies are doing!"

Professor Inkwell draws a picture of the pancreas.

References for more information

2. Röder PV, et al. Exp Mol Med. 2016;48(3):e219.





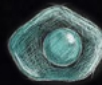
“Inside the pancreas are beta-cells.
These create insulin, a chemical that helps turn
the glucose in our food into the energy that helps
us move around.”

He adds to the picture to show the immune system attacking beta-cells,
“Remember those creatures from before? The ones nibbling at the reef?”

Well in your body, the immune system acts like them, attacking the
beta-cells. Over time, this means they create less insulin and that’s how
glucose builds up.”



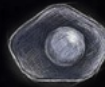
INSULIN



BETA CELLS



AUTOANTIBODIES



DAMAGED BETA CELLS

References for more information

3. Atkinson MA. Cold Spring Harb Perspect Med. 2012;2(11):a007641.





Stage 1



Stage 2



Stage 3



“You have early-stage type 1 diabetes – that’s Stage 1 or Stage 2 – which means you might have a little too much glucose, but you still won’t feel different right now. Regular tests can help Captain Glyco predict when Stage 3 is about to start. Stage 3 is when you’ll feel symptoms and at some point need to start using insulin. So, like Captain Glyco said, just remember the symptoms, keep eating and moving like you do now, and tell an adult if you ever feel like you’ve got too much glucose!”

References for more information

I. Phillip M, et al. Diabetologia. 2024;67(9):1731-59 [simultaneously published in Diabetes Care. 2024;47(8):1276-98].

Professor Inkwell points to the symptoms of hyperglycemia (high blood glucose):

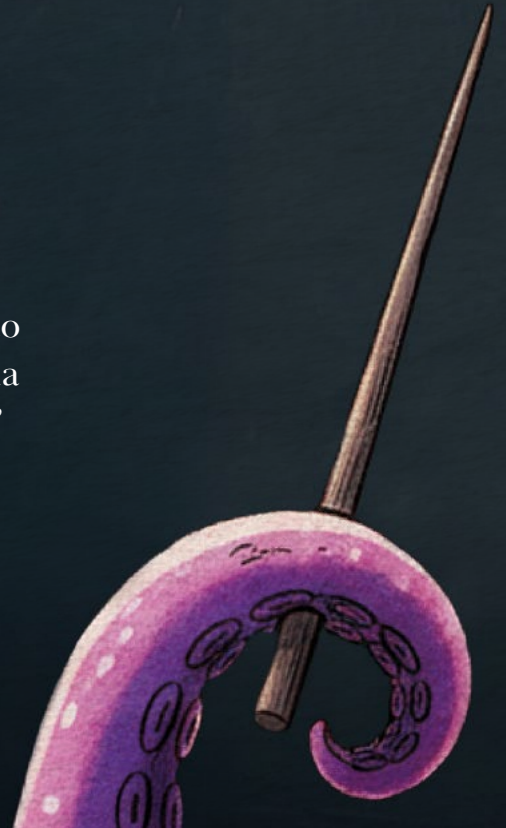
- Feeling very tired
- Feeling very thirsty
- Needing to use the toilet more often than usual
- Feeling very hungry even after you've eaten
- Losing weight even though you're eating

“Don’t worry,” Professor Inkwell said,
“You won’t see or feel them yet. But one day, further into your voyage, you’ll feel in your body when hyperglycemia is happening, and that’s when you need to tell an adult.”

References for more information

1. Phillip M, et al. Diabetologia. 2024;67(9):1731-59 [simultaneously published in Diabetes Care. 2024;47(8):1276-98].

4. Diabetes UK. Diabetes signs & symptoms. Available at: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about-diabetes/symptoms> (Accessed February 2026).





GLOSSARY

HYPERGLYCEMIA

Said “hi-per-gly-seem-ee-uh”, this is when there’s too much glucose in your blood. This happens when your pancreas doesn’t make enough insulin.

INSULIN

A chemical that acts like a key. It helps glucose get around your body. Without enough insulin, glucose stays in your blood, and causes hyperglycemia.

GLUCOSE

A type of sugar your body uses for energy. When you eat, food is turned into glucose, which helps you play, think, and grow.

PANCREAS

A small organ that helps digest food and makes insulin.

BETA CELLS

These cells live in your pancreas and help make the insulin you need.

TYPE 1 DIABETES

A condition where your immune system attacks the beta cells in your pancreas. This means you have less insulin and more glucose, which can cause hyperglycemia.

IMMUNE SYSTEM

Your body's natural defense crew. It's made up of special cells that protect you from getting sick.

AUTOANTIBODIES

These are tiny things in your blood that your immune system makes. They can tell us when you have early-stage type 1 diabetes.

References

1. Phillip M, et al. Diabetologia. 2024;67(9):1731-59 [simultaneously published in Diabetes Care. 2024;47(8):1276-98].
2. Röder PV, et al. Exp Mol Med. 2016;48(3):e219.
3. Atkinson MA. Cold Spring Harb Perspect Med. 2012;2(11):a007641.
4. Diabetes UK. Diabetes signs & symptoms. Available at: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about-diabetes/symptoms> (Accessed February 2026).
5. Hatan S, et al. J Clin Res Pediatr Endocrinol. 2024 Sep 4;16(3):245-55.
6. Atkinson MA, Raghavendra GM. Cell Metab. 2023;35(9):1500-18.

Voyage T1D is a great ship with one mission: to help children with early-stage type 1 diabetes confidently navigate the diabetes seas. But when newly diagnosed crewmate Will Crosswater joins, the ship runs into trouble that only he and a friend can solve. It'll take courage and teamwork to save the day. Will they get Voyage T1D back on course?

Set sail on an educational story to help children understand their early-stage type 1 diabetes diagnosis. By reading it with your child, you can help them to navigate the story, answering any questions they have and reassuring them about the journey they're now taking.

This story is fictional and meant to educate about early-stage type 1 diabetes. Characters and events are imaginary. Do not use glucometers or insulin devices underwater. Always follow your licensed healthcare provider's guidance for insulin use, storage, and diabetes management.

