

The Story of Honu Cove

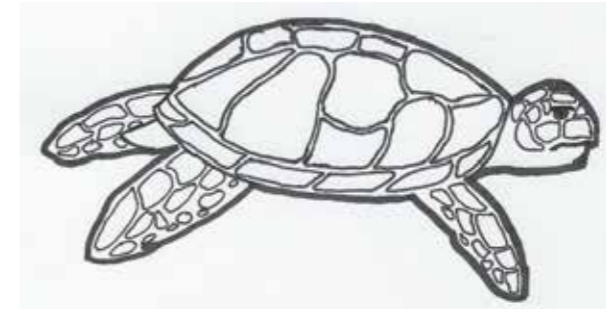
Lilian Campbell



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Written & illustrated by

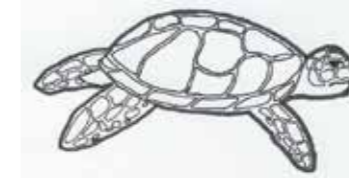
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Published by Saronti Ltd

Facilitated by Nikki Young at Storymakers

Chapter 1



The heat was utterly nauseating. The sun beat heavily down on us as time dragged, sickeningly slowly, on. The nagging heat was enough to drive me crazy. In fact, it practically did. I felt like I was being roasted alive. Bright green leaves adorned the vast expanse of lush shrubbery, and not a cloud hung in the pale blue sky, but even the calm beauty of the summer did little to settle my irritable mood. Humidity hung in the air like a sloth on a tree branch: it just wouldn't move. We had been driving through the monotonous heat for more than an hour now, and I was thoroughly sick of it. If this was how hot it could get early in the morning, I wasn't sure I would be able to cope, come midday, when the sun would be at its hottest. I felt as though I was sitting in a super sized *oven*. I picked up my water

bottle. Empty. I groaned. I was tired of the heat. Tired of being bored. Tired of-... But my train of thought was interrupted.

"Isn't this exciting?" a voice came from the front of the car.

"How can you even say that? We are literally being cooked alive in a metal box on wheels," I moaned in reply. "When will this end?" Mum ignored me, instead continuing,

"This trip is looking to be quite something, isn't it? Off to the seaside - it's *literally* a 'city break' for us!" This was met by an awkward silence. Laura, my sister, groaned. Trying to perk up the mood, she added, "We're going to see turtles hatching on the beach we'll be staying near to!" Suddenly, despite the heat, I froze. Turtles. It couldn't be.

The truth was, I had a secret. A terrible, ridiculous secret. A secret I hadn't told anyone about. Not even my own mother. All because I was too nervous about how they would react. All because...

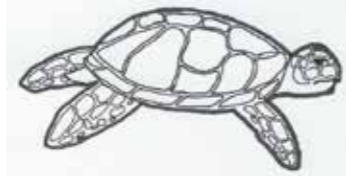
All because I was scared of turtles.

It was true. True. So utterly, ridiculously true. I couldn't tell anyone. How would I even start? What would I say? Most

importantly, how *would* they react? No. I just couldn't tell them. I couldn't.

Couldn't.

Chapter 2



I tossed and turned in the hotel bed that night. The sheets were sticking to my skin, and I was panting heavily from the heat. That wasn't what was bothering me, though. It was a memory. From when I was seven. The reason I had my fear of turtles. I can still see the scene in my head, the thought fresh and vivid in my mind's eye. The scene where my life took a turn. 23rd May, AKA *World Turtle Day*.

Our school had arranged for a marine biologist to come in and talk to us about turtles. It was before I knew how I felt about turtles, so I was actually *delighted* when I was invited to go to the front of the assembly hall and have a closer look. As I walked up to the front of the hall, I remembered feeling hundreds of eyes upon me, gazing enviously at the turtle tank. That feeling of everyone paying attention to you. Paying

attention to me. As the biologist welcomed me at the front, I got a closer look at the turtle. I started, reeling back immediately and toppling over as my momentum flopped backwards. I had to be taken by the school nurse for a check over, and someone else got to go to the front, but what I saw was enough. Those angry, beady eyes that seemed to glare at me. That jagged, snapping beak that always looked like it was about to bite me. I still shiver at the memory. From that day on, I could never hear the word 'turtle' without my blood running cold.

Later that night, I had a dream. *I was standing on a beach, in the middle of nowhere. The waves sloshed on the shore happily, and I was bouncing happily with them. When I looked behind me, though, I found myself in a very different place. All around, hundreds of turtles were popping up from beneath the sand, only to find they were growing at a breakneck pace. Rising from the depths of the shore, more and more baby turtles emerged, and each one grew until they must have been ten times my size, with bulging, black eyes and sharp beaks poised to bite. The tallest of them all walked towards me, opened its sharp beak and...*

The next thing I knew, I was awake again, panting heavily and clutching my duvet. I sat up in bed.

What was I going to do? I couldn't just turn up on the beach and throw a fear tantrum the second the turtles hatched! No, I needed to address my fear, and I thought I knew just how...

The next morning, as soon as I was dressed, I headed across the road, once again in the pounding heat of the sun, to the turtle sanctuary on the shoreline of the beach. As I arrived, I heaved open the door. A lady was waiting at the desk in the entrance. I took a breath.

"I'd like to see some..." I winced even as I said it, "I'd like to see some turtles, please. On... A tour." I handed the lady some money and looked down at the ground, "If that's okay." The lady looked at me in surprise.

"No need to pay!" She laughed, "We're a charity, not a tourist attraction, but if you want, you can put the money in our donation box, and I suppose I could show you the turtles we'll be releasing soon..." I looked up at her eagerly.

"Oh, thank you so much! You have no idea what this means to me, Miss... Umm..."

"Amelia. Call me Amelia." She put in helpfully, holding open a door marked 'Recovered'. I cautiously took a step forward.

Surely, then, five years after the last time, I wouldn't be as scared?

The second I entered the room, however, I regretted my decision. Turtle heads turned eerily around to stare. Large, dark eyes regarded me angrily from every corner of the numerous tanks, and beaks snapped ferociously at me. Words spun in my head, the world grew blurry around me, and dizziness and vertigo swallowed me whole.

After that, everything went black.

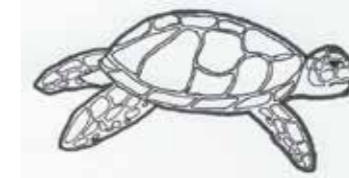
When I awoke, at first, I had no idea where I was. Everything was still spinning violently. As the world around me gradually came into focus, I could just make out a person.

"Oh, are you waking up now? Good, that was fast, now I don't need to call an ambulance. When you fainted, I didn't know what had happened to you. Are you okay now? I can give you a lift home, if you like? Where do you live? Or are you staying in a hotel?" I blinked. Then I blinked again. Amelia. The sanctuary. The turtles. Everything came flooding back to me.

"I'm just across the road in that hotel. I'm okay." I stood up. "Thanks for everything. Bye!" I dashed out quickly. I could feel Amelia's confused stare behind me, but there were more

important things I needed to do. Like finding a way to get out of seeing the hatchlings. There was no other way. If I fainted at the sight of seeing seven or eight turtles, then how was I going to cope with hundreds of baby turtles?

Chapter 3



The day after the turtle incident, I knew what I had to do. In the morning, I waited until my mum was awake, and pounced upon her.

"Mum!"

"Aya, is this about the turtles again? It's eight o'clock in the morning!" I had been asking about the turtles incessantly since I got back from the sanctuary, and at no point had I been given a straight answer.

"But mum-"

"Look, I understand that you're excited, but I don't know much about it. All I know is that we're meeting your grandmother at the beach, and she's excited for us to be there." This

information came as a shock to me. I hadn't known Grandma was coming. And if she was looking forward to me being there, even if I did get out of seeing the turtles, I'd never forgive myself. No, my next path was clear then. I would have to tell my grandma my turtle secret, and if that meant she was disappointed, then at least I'd know she knew the truth.

"Mum..." A groan from beneath the duvet. "Where is Grandma staying?"

Later that day, I stood in front of a hotel door marked 'E71', and took a deep breath. This was it. I rapped my knuckle against the door.

"Grandma? It's... It's me, Aya." Almost as soon as the words had left my mouth, a gentle voice replied,

"Aya. I've been expecting you." She opened the door to reveal a simple bed and desk in the corner of a small room.

"You- You have?" She smiled kindly at me.

"Don't think I haven't noticed your fears. Whenever you come over to my house, you make it quite apparent."

"I have?" I asked, taking a nervous step into the room.

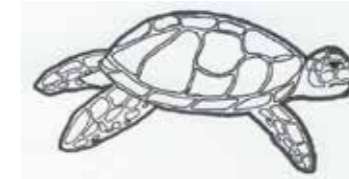
"Of course you have. Have you not noticed?" She looked at me kindly. "My house is *full* of turtles." I looked at her, startled. How had I missed that? Unless- "Pictures, not real ones." She laughed, seeing my confused expression, "But *you* never go near any of them, and, Aya, I know why. You don't yet know the story." she paused. "The Story Of Honu Cove." I looked up.

"Hoe-new?" I asked. She laughed.

"Honu. The name of the beach around the corner. It means 'turtle' in Hawaiian. You see, Aya, there's a lot more to turtles than you realise. You have no idea what struggles they are forced to put up with." And with that, everything began to make sense. "They are under threat. Threat of extinction. Being wiped from the face of our planet entirely. I know Aya, that you are afraid, you know they scare you, but what you don't know is the reason I care. How would any of us humans like it, if turtles flung single use plastic onto our dinner plates without a care. All the plastic we throw into the ocean resembles the turtles' food, and so they consume the plastic and wind up fatally ill. Every day brings hardships. This world is one that has become very different to the world they evolved to live in. The turtles need help. Their story is one of struggle and grief. Loss and cruelty. Most of all, their future is one that is not yet written.

That means that it is up to us now to make up for the past, and help the turtles. I know that we can never truly reverse the current effects plastic pollution has brought or undo the changes that have reshaped their world, but we need to give it a good go. And to do that, Aya, you need to understand. Understand just what it is humans have done. Understand our next task." I looked at her, her eyes staring intently into mine as she spoke. And as I sat down on the bed that day, I listened.

Chapter 4



The next day, grandma and I paid the Honu Cove turtle sanctuary one last visit before the turtles hatching, that night, to face my fears one last time. I stepped into the room, with Grandma and Amelia behind me. At first, I thought I was going to faint again. I stood still for a moment, squeezed my eyes closed, and took another brave step forward. I needed this. Another step. I had to do it. I opened my eyes again. I took a deep breath. I was doing it. I took one last step towards one of the tanks and breathed a sigh of relief. The dark brown eyes of the turtle inside no longer seem to glare angrily at me, but instead gaze trustfully into my eyes.

"You aren't scared anymore." I could hear Grandma's voice behind me, and I knew she was right. My breathing was steady. My heart beat was slowing down. I could stand straight. I wasn't

scared. I, Aya, had overcome my fear. I had done it. I was ready. I was ready to do this. I had nothing to fear.

Because I could do it.

That evening, I walked along to the beach with my mum, dad, sister and grandma with a spring in my step. This time when I saw the turtles, I would be ready. With the sun shining behind me, I gazed out into the gentle wake of the sea. Everything was going right.

Later that evening, I watched the beach in anticipation. Experts forecasted that hundreds would be hatching that night. I took a deep breath. It would be difficult for me, I knew, but I couldn't hide forever. Turtles were my friends.

After a long wait in anticipation, a small patch of sand began to move. We carefully approached for a better view. A tiny sinkhole had formed, and sand was caving in. I squinted through the dusky light. I could just make out a tiny flipper, reaching out to see the world for the first time. It was quickly followed by a tiny little head, and shell, until eventually, the whole turtle had heaved itself up onto the surface of the sand. It was magical. That little turtle was the first of many others,

and before we knew it, what must have been close to one hundred little turtles were waddling over the sand. But something seemed wrong. Then I spotted it.

"Grandma?" I whispered into the darkness.

"Yes, Aya, my dear?"

"Are the turtles supposed to be going to the sea?"

"Yes... Why?" She asked carefully,

"Well... Then why are they heading in the direction of the town?" I heard a gasp in the dusky gloom.

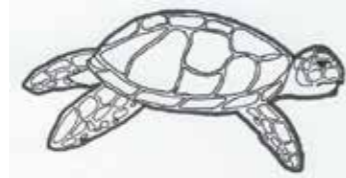
"Aya" She whispered. "that town is too dangerous for them. They need your help. I was worried this would happen. The light pollution... Take this." She handed me a torch. "Stand next to the sea and point it at the turtles. It needs to be at their level. I can't reach that low. You are their only hope, Aya, you can do it. Guide them to the sea with the light. They follow the brightest light source. Be a brighter light than the city. It's too dangerous for them. Quickly!" I paused, taking the information in. "Aya! Run, they're heading to town!" I took a breath. I needed to do this. I rushed down to the sea, and turned on the torch as bright as it could go. I waited for a second, before realising it

was no use. The light from the city was too bright. Unless... I shoved my free hand into my pocket, and rummaged around. I had been camping not long before, and had left a torch in my pocket. It could still be there. I held my breath, and felt around. Suddenly, in my hand, I felt something cold and cylindrical. Relief swam through my veins, but the job was not done yet. I wrapped my fingers around it, and pulled it out. I flicked on the switch and held both torches out in front of me. *Please work*, I thought, *Please...* I looked at the turtles. One of them had seen me. It started crawling, not toward the town, but the sea. Gradually, others followed. Soon, all the turtles were waddling over. A heavy weight lifted off my shoulders. They were on their way to the sea. My moment of glory was short, though, because as the turtles drew nearer, shock realisation dawned on me. They weren't heading to the sea at all. They were heading for me. Suddenly, behind my eyes, I saw my dream. The turtles drew nearer and nearer, opening and closing their mouths hungrily. Their half open eyes drilled through me, and I wanted to scream. There were no tanks like in the sanctuary to hold them. This was no dream for me to wake from. Was this the end? And then I heard it. A voice. It was Grandma!

"Aya! Shine the torches onto the sea! They'll follow that instead!" I took a breath. That was it! I turned to the sea, just in time for the turtles to change their course yet again. I looked towards the turtles for one last time, as each one swam away into their new beginnings.

"Good luck," I murmured, "out there."

Chapter 5



The car journey back seemed to go by in a flash. Maybe because I was busy. Perhaps, though, it was also because I wasn't the same person as I had been before. I had been working hard since that night on a campaign to dim lights in seaside towns where turtles hatch. I had done some research, and now I understood the position of turtles even more. I was designing a petition sheet for people to sign to show to the authorities in coastal towns, Honu Cove in particular, to stop the turtles getting confused. After all, I knew from experience, all people really needed to know was why the turtles needed our help. I had donated money toward charities protecting them, and I was raising awareness of the problems light pollution presents. This was more than overcoming my fears. It was something bigger.

Something massive.



We hope that you, your family and friends enjoy the book you have created. This project was coordinated and facilitated by author Nikki Young for members of her Storymakers writing club.

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Aya has a secret. A fear, not once shared. One she has never entrusted anyone with, not a friend, not a sibling, not even her mum. A secret fear... Of turtles. But when she goes on holiday to a beach where turtles are going to be hatching in their hundreds, it's not looking like it's going to stay secret for long. Can Aya overcome her fears before the world discovers them, or will she break down in front of an entire town at the hands of hundreds of baby turtles?