

# The Great Reef Burn

Ariela Zibiah



The Asia Foundation



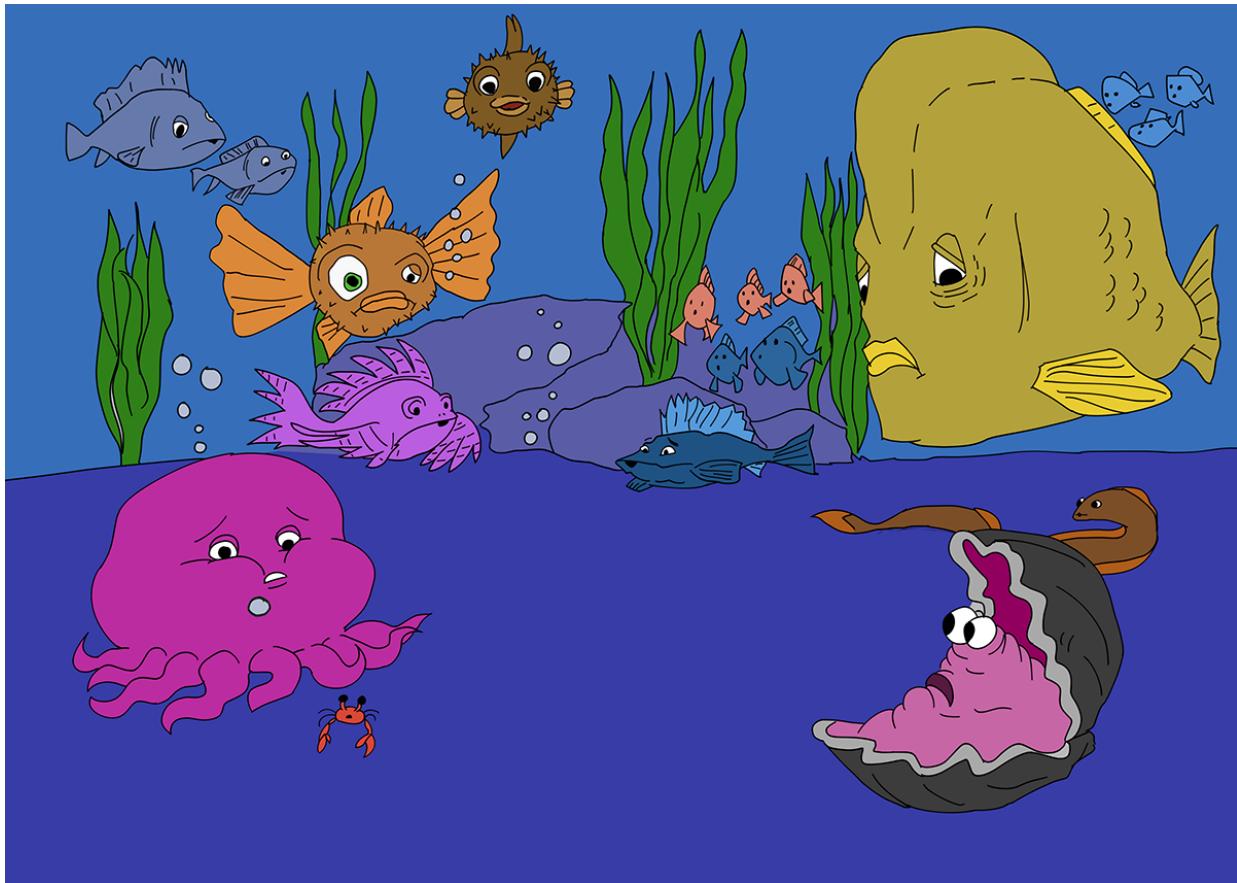
At sunrise, Maria runs along the shore. She looks for her best friend, Hokihoki. She sees his head bob out of the water. “Oh, I love high tides,” says Maria. “It makes finding you much easier.”



Hokihoki is quiet. “What is wrong?”  
Maria asks her friend.

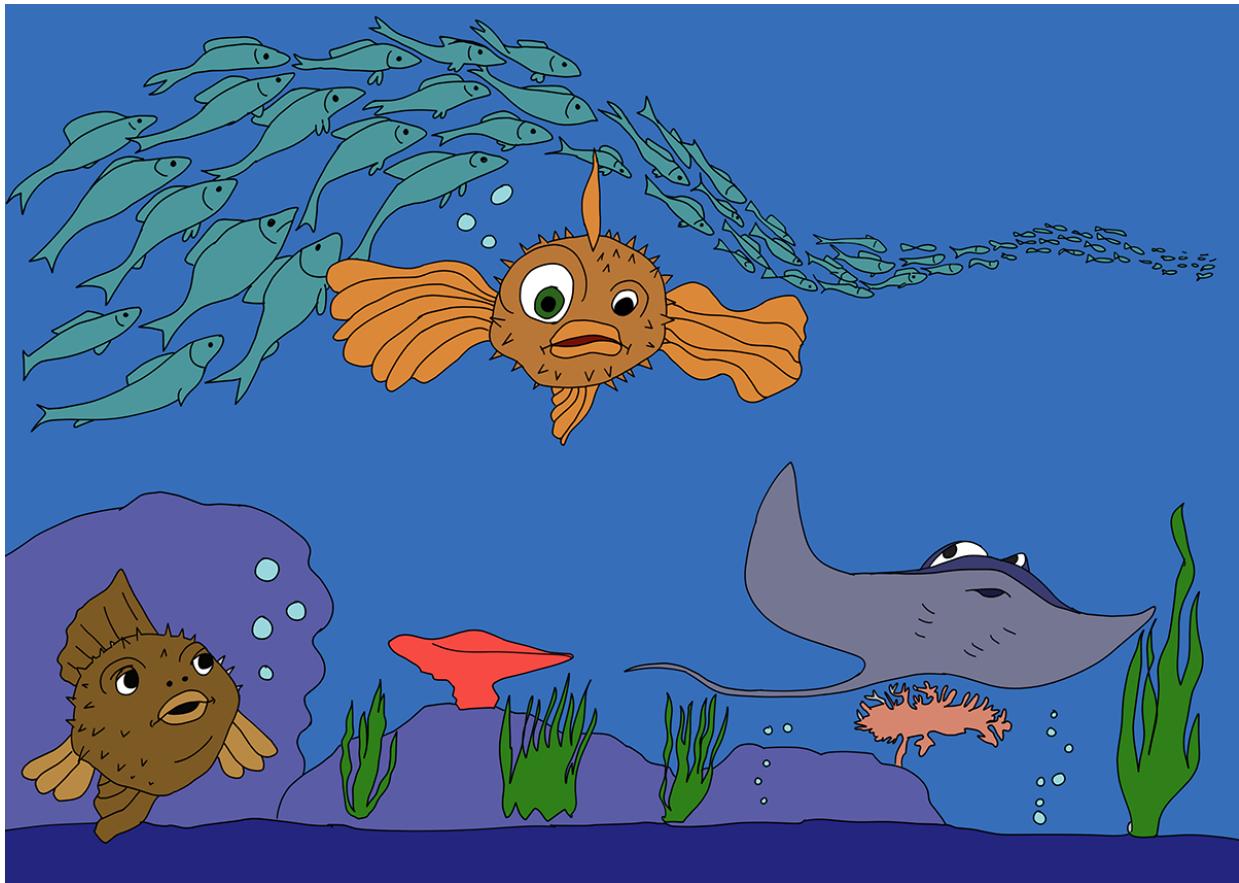


“Oh, Maria, the Elders of the Great Reef met last night. They meet only for big problems. Even the moon listened in.”

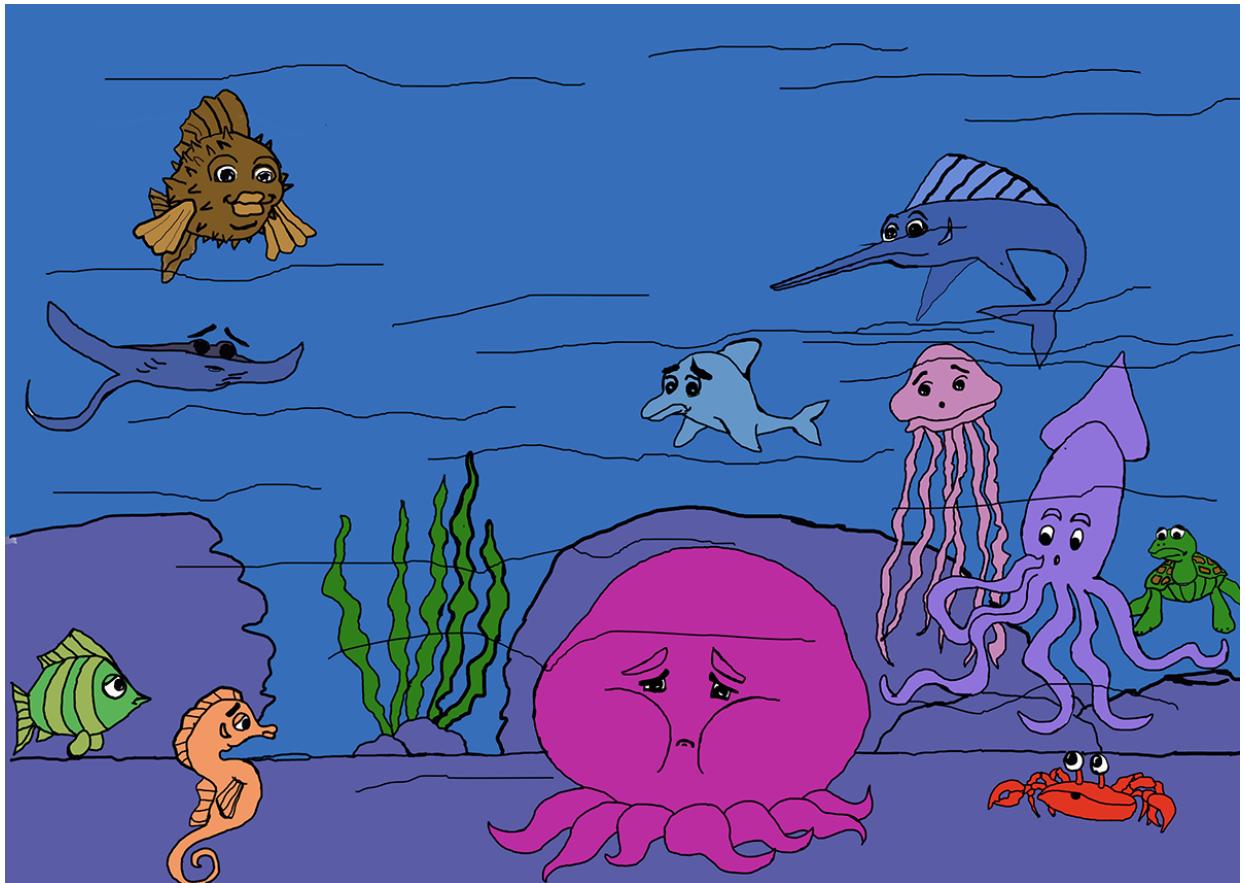


Rani, the centenarian clam, spoke first at the meeting. Rani said, “I’ve lived for 100 years. Things are changing. The water is much warmer. Fish are smaller. The Great Reef seems weaker. It is harder to find what we

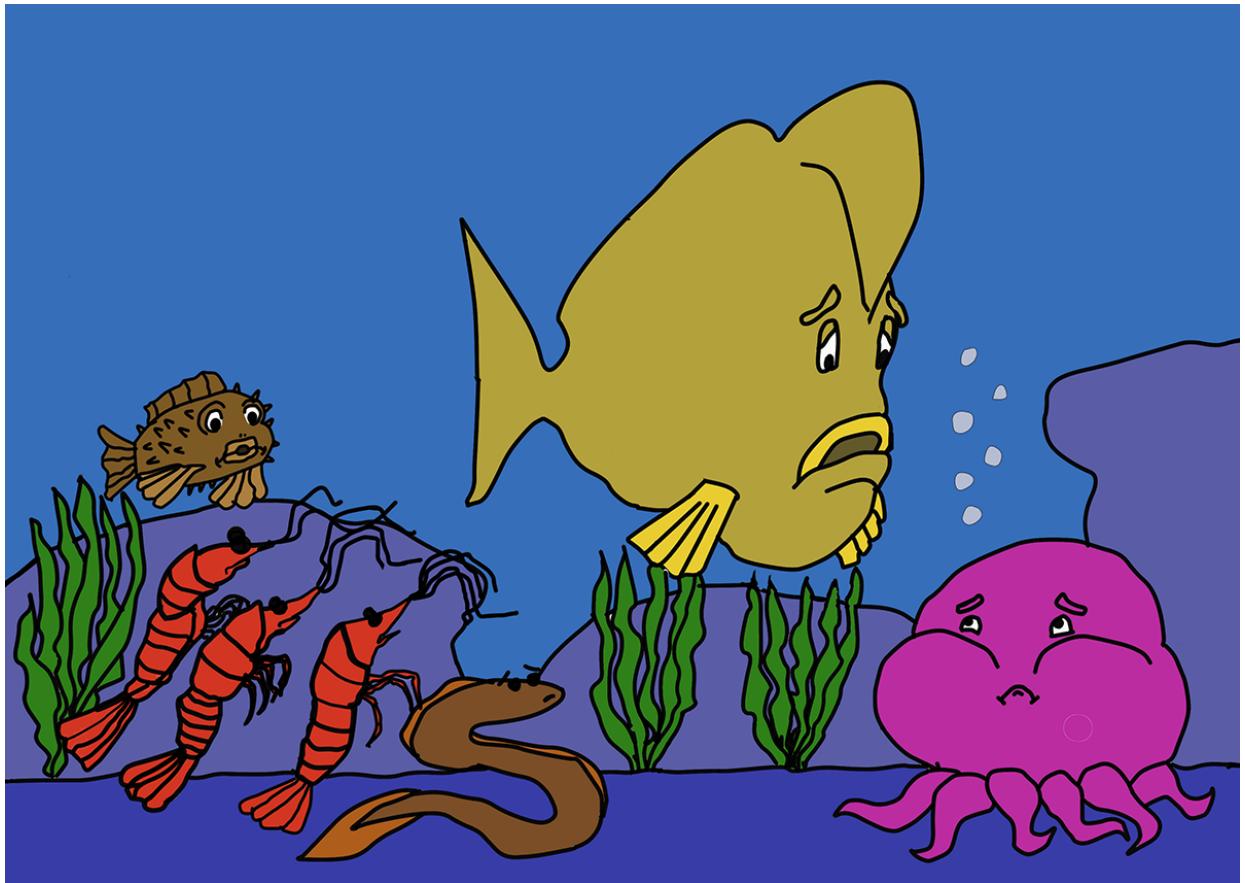
need in order to build and fix our shells.”



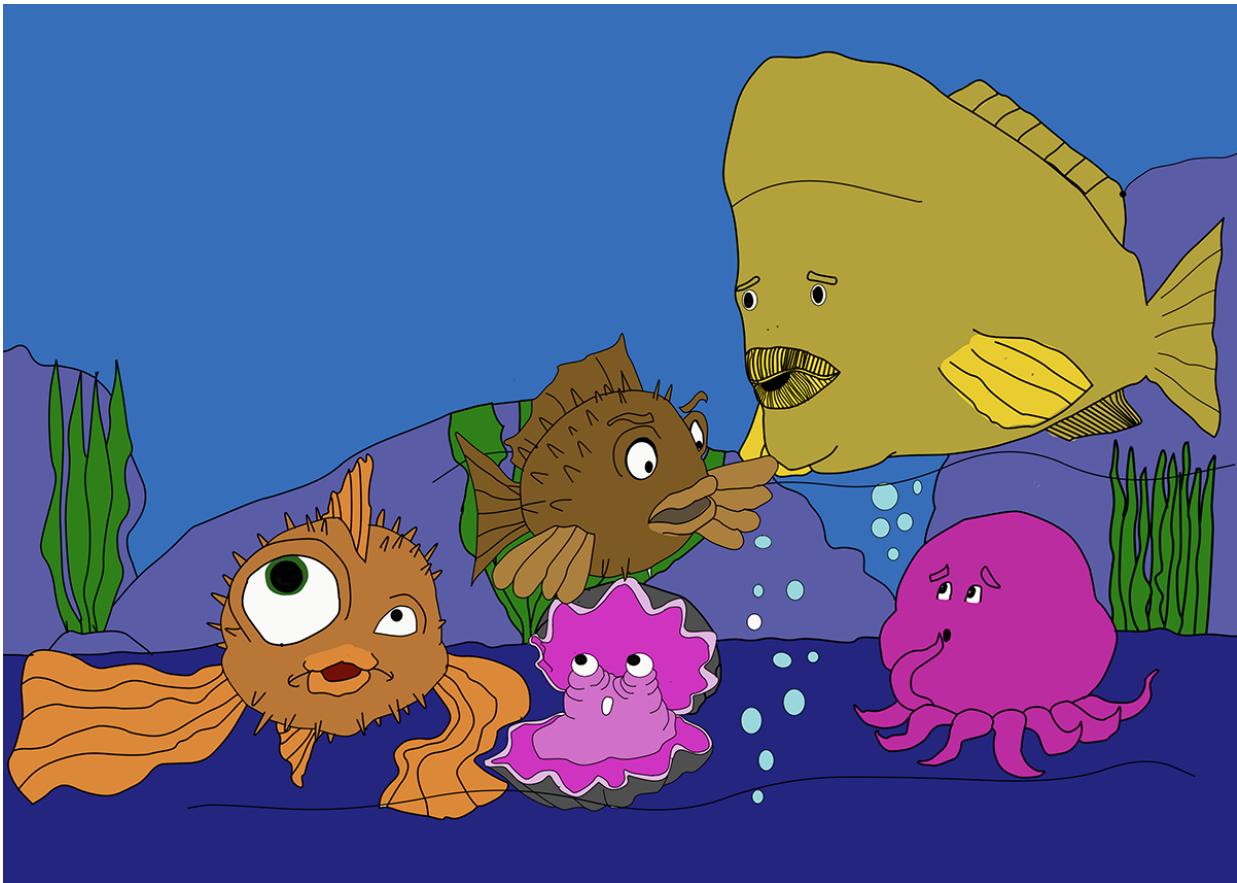
“Some of us can’t hear anymore,” Oti, a puffer fish, said. “Some of us are changing. Like me.”



Raja spoke for the octopus family.  
“We could eat a whale. We’re always  
hungry.”



“The Great Reef is losing a lot of seaweed and coral polyps,” Kali, a parrotfish, cried. “I feel bad using the reef for food, but if we have nothing else to eat, we may have to.”



Kali was silenced by a sudden screech. “Then who will make the sand?” Hokihoki cried. Hokihoki knows that a parrotfish can make up to 2,500 kilograms of sand a year. The sand comes from the corals they eat. Hokihoki is afraid of what could

happen without the parrotfish. There may be no seashore for Maria to walk on.



“Oh no, Hokihoki! No reef means no sand and no you,” Maria sobs.



“We have to do something,” says Maria. Maria runs home as fast as her legs can carry her. “Mom! Mom!” she calls. “I might lose my friend Hokihoki.”



Mom holds Maria close until she calms down. “Let’s go talk to Dad and Grandpa,” Mom says finally. Maria repeats Hokihoki’s story about how the Great Reef is getting warmer. Dad and Grandpa listen quietly. As fishers, they have also seen some changes.

They have needed to go to deeper waters for bigger fish.



The next day, Grandpa calls a village meeting. The fishers explain what is happening under the sea. People want to help.

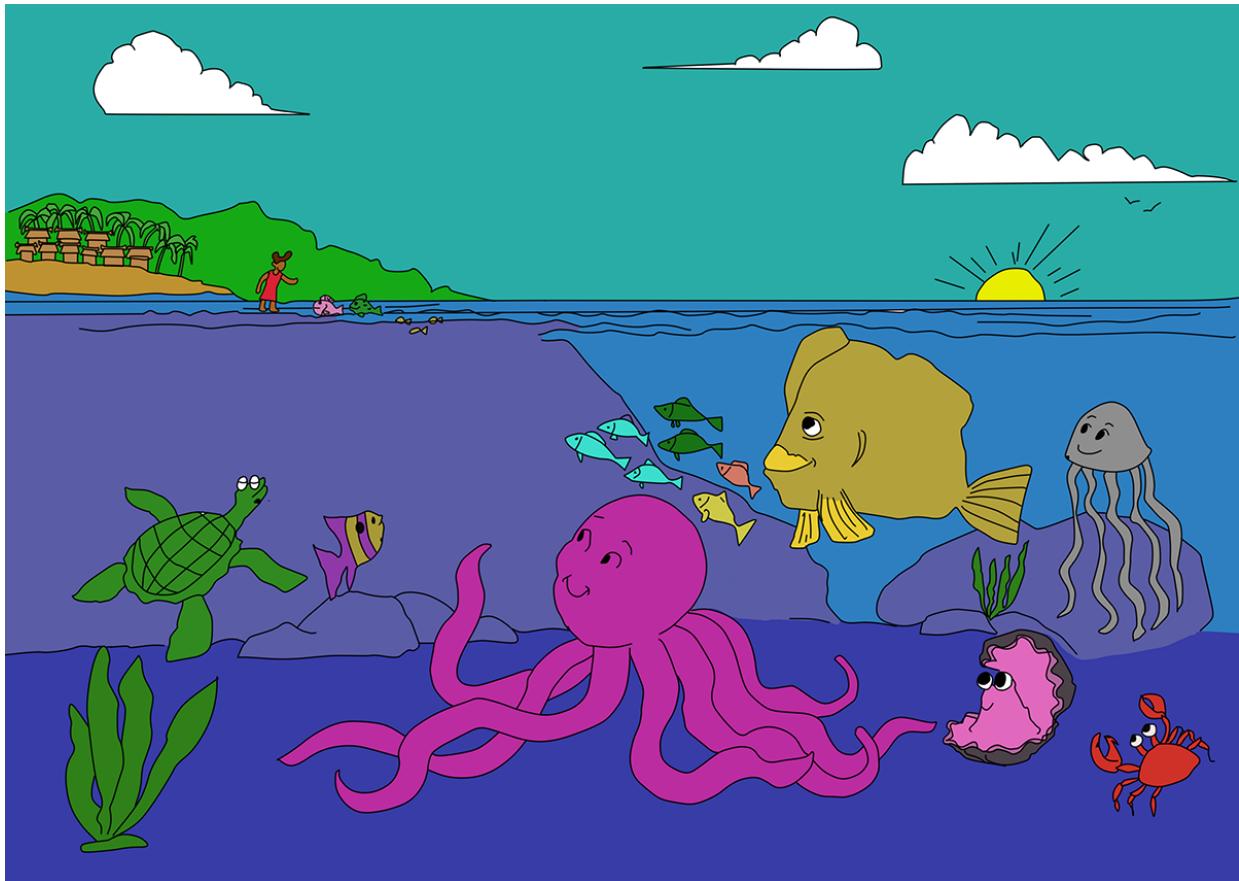


The next morning, the two seashore friends meet as usual. “Hokihoki.” “Hello, Maria.” “The families agreed to stop disturbing the Great Reef for one year, Hokihoki!” “Really, Maria? I hope it stops the reef from getting warmer,” Hokihoki says. “We don’t

know if it will. But the Great Reef and all of you who live on it have one year now to heal,” Maria says. “We will plant new corals, the sort scientists say will beat the heat. Then we will wait.”



Maria is still talking when Hokihoki starts swimming away. “I’m going to share the good news with the Reef Elders now!” he says. Hokihoki swims faster than he has ever swum in his life.



A year later, the friends meet again on the shore. Hokihoki now comes to see Maria with his three lively babies in tow. “Remember what it was like, the warming reef last year?” Maria asks Hokihoki. He smiles to show how happy he is.



Our Changing Ocean

When we use fuels such as coal or gas, another gas called carbon dioxide goes into the air, and some of this gas goes into our oceans. About 200 years of burning

gas and coal has raised the amount of carbon dioxide in both the air and in the ocean. In the ocean, the additional carbon dioxide changes the environment for the plants and animals that live there. Sea creatures that have shells or skeletons, such as clams and corals, cannot harden. Coral grows more slowly. Other animals and plants cannot find food and die. People depend on the oceans for many things. For example, without healthy oceans people will not be able to fish. This causes people to lose out on a large food source. We must do more to protect our oceans.

Brought to you by

Let's Read is an initiative of The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program that fosters young readers in Asia and the Pacific. [booksforasia.org](http://booksforasia.org) To read more books like this and get further information, visit [letsreadasia.org](http://letsreadasia.org).

Original Story The Great Reef Burn,  
Author: Ariela Zibiah. Illustrator:  
Sakiusa Volavola. Published by The  
Asia Foundation - Let's Read,  
<https://www.letsreadasia.org> © The  
Asia Foundation - Let's Read.  
Released under CC-BY-NC-4.0.

This work is a modified version of the original story. © The Asia Foundation, 2022. Some rights reserved. Released under CC-BY-NC-4.0.

For full terms of use and attribution,  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>