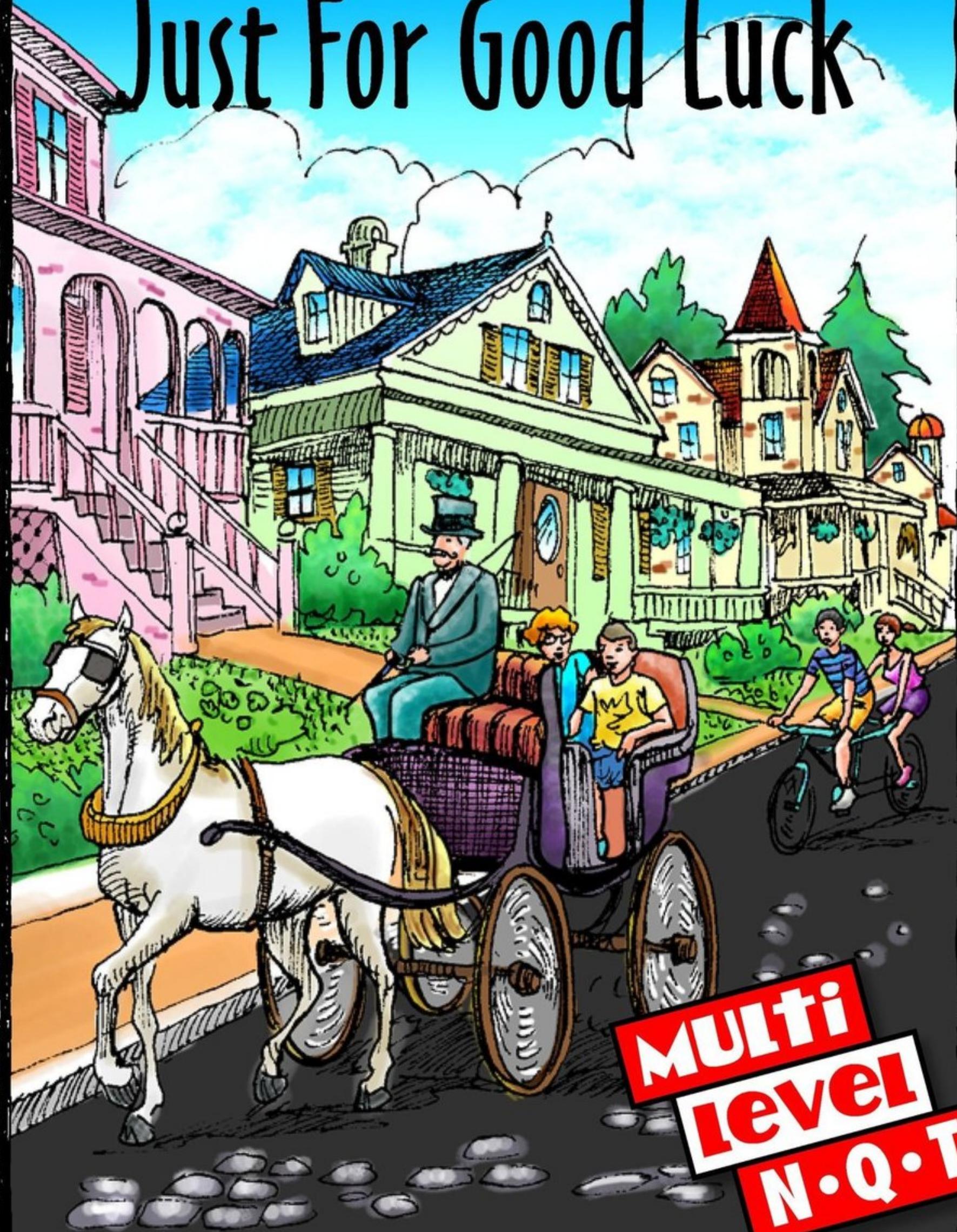


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Horseshoes Aren't Just For Good Luck



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Written by Deborah Ambroza
Illustrated by Marcy Ramsey

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Introduction

I had my best summer vacation when I was nine. I went to visit Gram, my great-grandmother, and I saw the ocean for the first time.

Life by the Sea

I rode on a train from the city, all by myself. Gram and her friend Jim met me at the train station, and we drove to Gram's big gray house. In her small beach town, most people walked or rode bicycles. I even saw horse carriages!

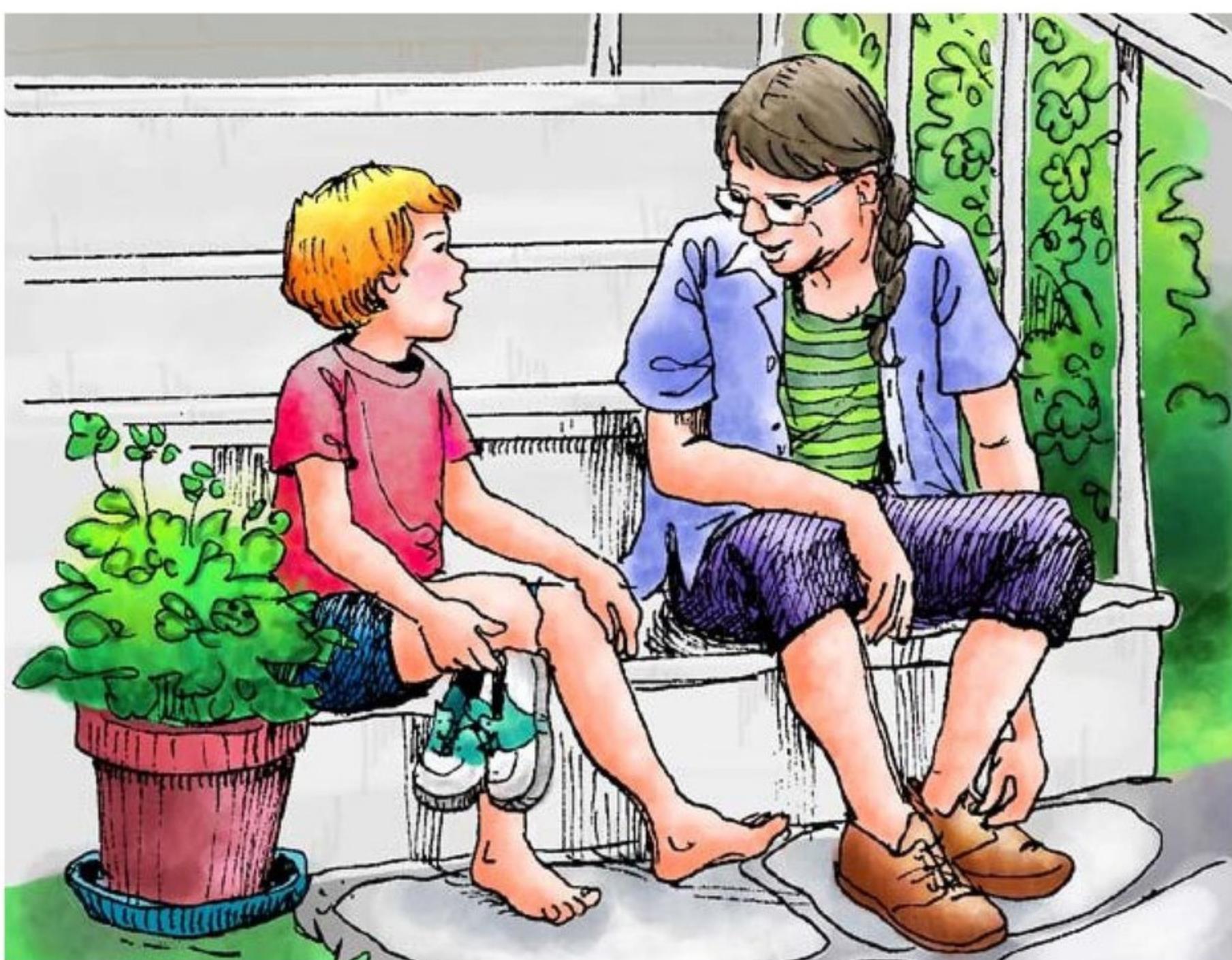


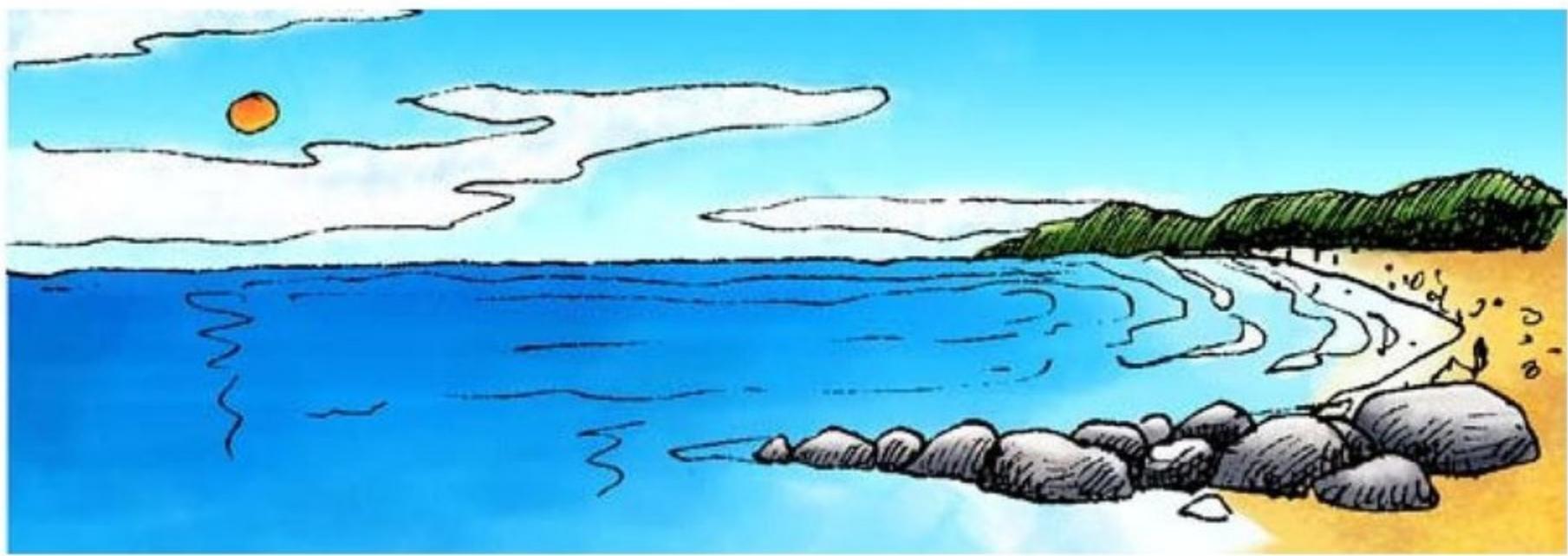


Gram's house had a colorful flower garden and a big front porch. She told me to pick the bedroom I wanted, so I picked the yellow room. It had a window that faced the ocean.

My Summer Home

It was very quiet in Gram's house, but I could hear the sound of the waves. I wanted to see them up close! I ran downstairs to go to the beach. Gram stopped me. She said I couldn't go to the beach alone until I had learned the rules of the sea. We took off our shoes and walked to the beach together.





Gram said I could walk along the beach between two rock jetties (JET-ees). The jetties were walls of rocks that helped to keep the beach sand from **eroding** (ih-RO-ding) away into the sea.

Gram said not to go into the water unless she or Jim were with me. She told me about currents (KUR-ents). The currents were strong flows of water that could drag me far out into the ocean. I learned a lot. That night, moonlight streamed into my room. I went to sleep listening to the waves.

Horseshoe Crabs

I woke up with the sun shining on my face. I dressed quickly and ran downstairs as Gram called, “Remember the rules!” I nodded as I hurried out the back door.

When I got down to the beach, I saw the sand was covered in brownish-gray round things. They had shells and pointed tails. Some of them were lying on their backs and wiggling.





At breakfast, I asked Gram what those creatures on the beach were. She said they were horseshoe crabs, a type of **arthropod** (AR-throw-pod). She said the waves carry them onto the beach.

I told Gram about the wiggling ones turned upside down. She said they use their tails to try to turn themselves back onto their legs. If they can't turn over, they get too hot and die.

Gram told me that when the tide goes out, some crabs are left stranded on the beach.

To stay cool, they try to dig into the wet sand. She said the female crabs lay green, jellylike eggs a few inches under the wet sand. One female horseshoe crab can lay eighty thousand eggs in one season!

Gram said that within two weeks, the **larvae** (LAR-vee) that develop from the eggs wash out to the ocean. The new larvae don't have tails yet. Toward the end of summer, they molt, or shed their skin. Then they grow tails.



After breakfast, we walked down to the beach. Gram turned over the upside-down crabs. She also put stranded ones back into the ocean.



She said when crabs get tired of swimming, they turn over onto their backs and float on their shells like little boats. When they are hungry, they let themselves sink slowly to the bottom of the ocean. On the bottom, the crabs eat plants, small clams, worms, and other tiny sea animals. They grind food with their legs, so they have to be walking to chew their food!

Scientists study horseshoe crabs to learn more about their nine eyes and nervous systems. Also, their blood can be used to test for some human **diseases** (diz-EEZ-es) and to test new drugs. Gram said horseshoe crabs have been around since dinosaurs roamed the Earth!

Rescuing

Gram gave me a job to do. Every morning I hurried to the beach to save as many crabs as I could. I would turn them over and toss them back into the ocean waves. Sometimes I'd toss them from the end of the jetty and wave "good luck" to them. I also tried to chase birds away when I saw them eating the eggs. But Gram told me not to do that because the birds needed the eggs as food to survive.



One morning, all the horseshoe crabs were gone. When I ran back to the house, Gram said they were done laying eggs until next year. She told me that next year I would have to come back and save more crabs!

I walked back to the beach and lay down on the warming sand. Saving the crabs was exciting, but my summer vacation had just begun. What would I do now?



Glossary

arthropod (<i>n.</i>)	an animal that has jointed legs, a body with two or more parts, and a skeleton on the outside of its body; arthropods include insects, crustaceans (such as crabs), and spiders (p. 10)
diseases (<i>n.</i>)	illnesses (p. 13)
eroding (<i>v.</i>)	wearing away caused by wind, water, or ice (p. 8)
larvae (<i>n.</i>)	the newly hatched forms of certain animals that look very different from their parents and that change greatly in appearance as they become adults (p. 11)
molt (<i>v.</i>)	to shed skin, fur, feathers, or a shell before they are replaced with new growth (p. 11)

Note about the series: Horseshoes Aren't Just for Good Luck is the first book in a three-part series written by Deborah Ambroza. The books that follow are: Ants in My Bed and Bats in the Attic.

Horseshoes Aren't Just For Good Luck

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Written by Deborah Ambroza

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