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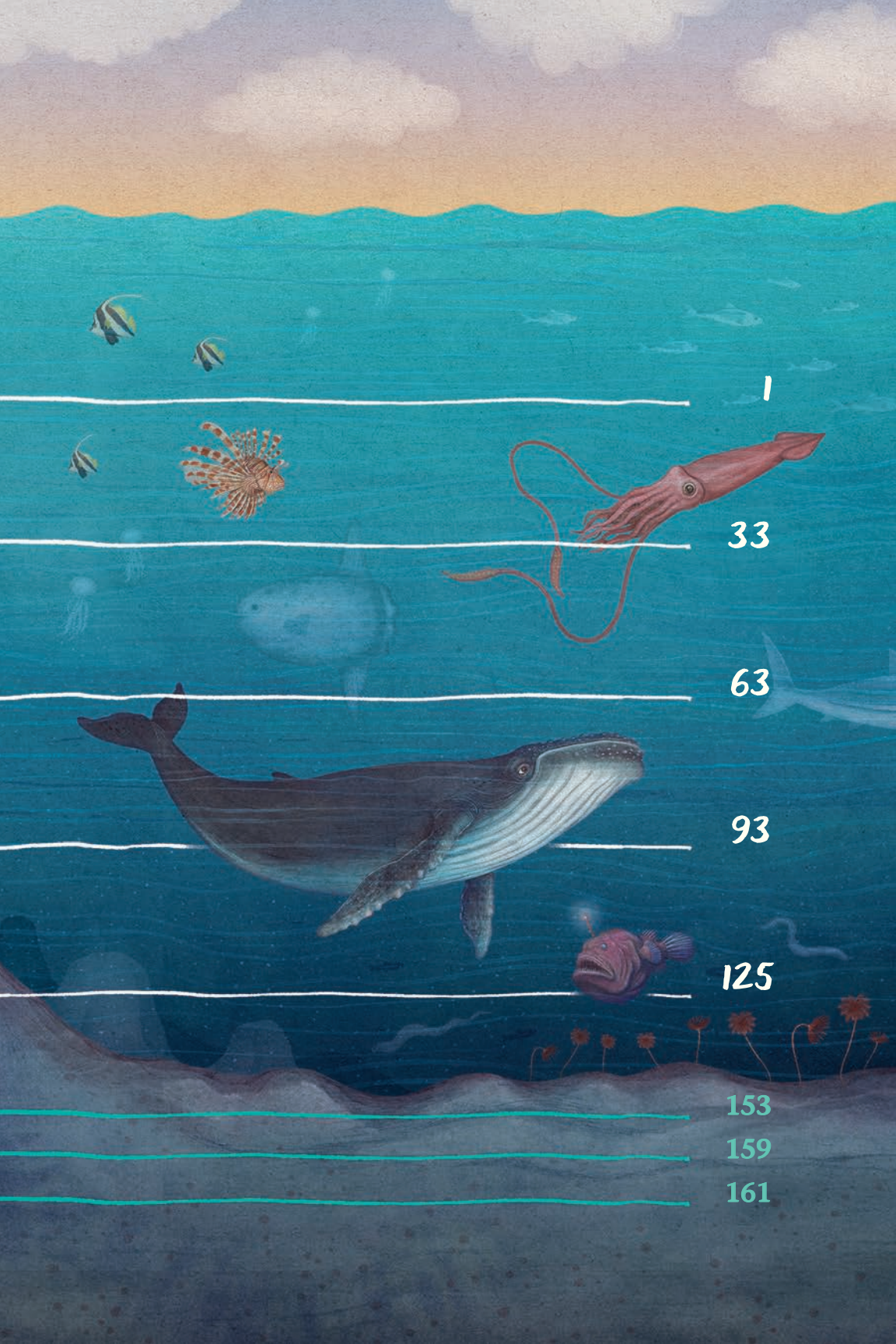
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*How many are your works, LORD!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.*

PSALM 104:24-25



ASTRID

THE MULTICOLOR SEA STAR

A Tiny Blob

THE BRIGHT SUN sparkles on the surface of the Pacific Ocean near the Hawaiian Islands. The warm sea flows in rushing currents. Water swirls and glides, moving with the tide. Just below the water's surface, a tiny sea star drifts. Astrid, one of the most minuscule ocean animals, is only a few weeks old. Astrid floats alone in the sea with no parents to bring her food or protect her from danger. How can such a



small sea star, so helpless and on her own, survive in the vast ocean?

Swirling around Astrid, vibrant creatures swim and dance. She floats with tiny transparent jellyfish. Sparkling microalgae spin around her like miniature ocean jewels. Young fish, crabs, and other baby ocean animals flit by.

Astrid also shares her world with enormous blue whales larger than buildings. Both miniature and massive—the contrast of creatures could not be more radical. God’s creative design fills the ocean with more living things than you can count!

This tiny blob doesn’t look like the beautiful star she’ll become. For now, Astrid lives afloat in the water. But Astrid’s every cell knows the creature she’ll grow to be. God, who designed Astrid, knows too. Yet dangers await.

Can Astrid find enough food to survive and grow to adulthood? A spunky little creature, she must avoid becoming another animal’s dinner as she looks for her meals. Astrid needs a safe tide pool to call home.

OCEAN NOTION

Adult female sea stars can produce millions of eggs at one time. They release them into the water, where the eggs float along with ocean currents. Once fertilized (with the help of males), the eggs develop and become free-swimming **larvae**. Sea star larvae look very different from adult sea stars.



Drifting Along

No larger than a grain of sand, Astrid looks like a bubble with tiny bands of hair along her sides. These bands of hair flutter, but they aren't strong enough to move her around. The water carries her along. Will the currents take Astrid toward danger or toward her dinner?

Hunger gnaws at Astrid. Sparkly, plant-like plankton surround her, glimmering in the sunlight. Astrid munches on these smaller creatures as they glide by. But Astrid isn't the only hunter in the ocean. Many hungry mouths would love an Astrid-sized mouthful—they wait at every turn. Out of the millions of sea star blobs, only a fraction live long enough to grow sea star arms and settle into a rocky home.

A giant whale shark lumbers by. The water swooshes, pulling at Astrid. The whale shark sucks in great gulps of water and feeds on the plankton floating in it. Will Astrid be slurped into the whale's mouth with the other tiny creatures?

Astrid spins and tumbles in the swirling water, gliding out of the whale shark's reach. She does not get scooped up! For Astrid and her plankton friends, one danger after another lurks. She has to grow and gain strength to survive the shifting currents and the creatures who call this water home.



OCEAN NOTION

Most **plankton** are tiny plant-like or animal-like creatures. They are too small to swim against the water's movement. Nearly all plankton are so small they're invisible without a microscope.

OCEAN NOTION

Whale sharks are the largest fish in the ocean. They can reach the size of a school bus! These giants suck in mouthfuls of water. Then they strain food through filtering pads in their throats. They can eat close to twenty kilograms of plankton a day. That's the same weight as two car tires!

