

The background of the entire cover is a deep blue, representing the ocean. It is populated with several dolphins of various sizes, rendered in a soft, painterly style. In the top left, a large dolphin's head and eye are visible. In the top right, another large dolphin is shown from the side. In the center, two small dolphins are swimming. On the right side, a medium-sized dolphin is depicted. At the bottom left, a large dolphin is shown from a low angle, looking up. At the bottom right, another large dolphin is visible. The overall composition is a circular arrangement of dolphins, with the title text in the center.

Why was I born?

Questions asked by Children in Japan

**Edited by
Free Space ZERO**

“Why was I born?”

Questions asked by Children in Japan”

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First edition printed on May 5, 2017

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Osaka*

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Kitakatsuragi-gun, Nara 635-0823, Japan*

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Printing and Bookbinding by Morimoto Printing

*This book was produced with the generous assistance of
many of Japan’s mothers and fathers.*



Chapter 1
Why was I born ?!

Kaede opened her eyes and found herself floating in a big blue ocean. She looked up, down, and all around. Everything around her was water, water, and more water, as far as her eyes could see. She looked up. Sunlight was flickering through the water in soft rays. “I feel so free here!” Kaede thought to herself.



“This water feels good. I hope I stay here forever.”

She loved the feel of the water around her. She started to wonder where she was. Where was this place that she was floating in? She tested the water by flicking her tongue. It tasted like...

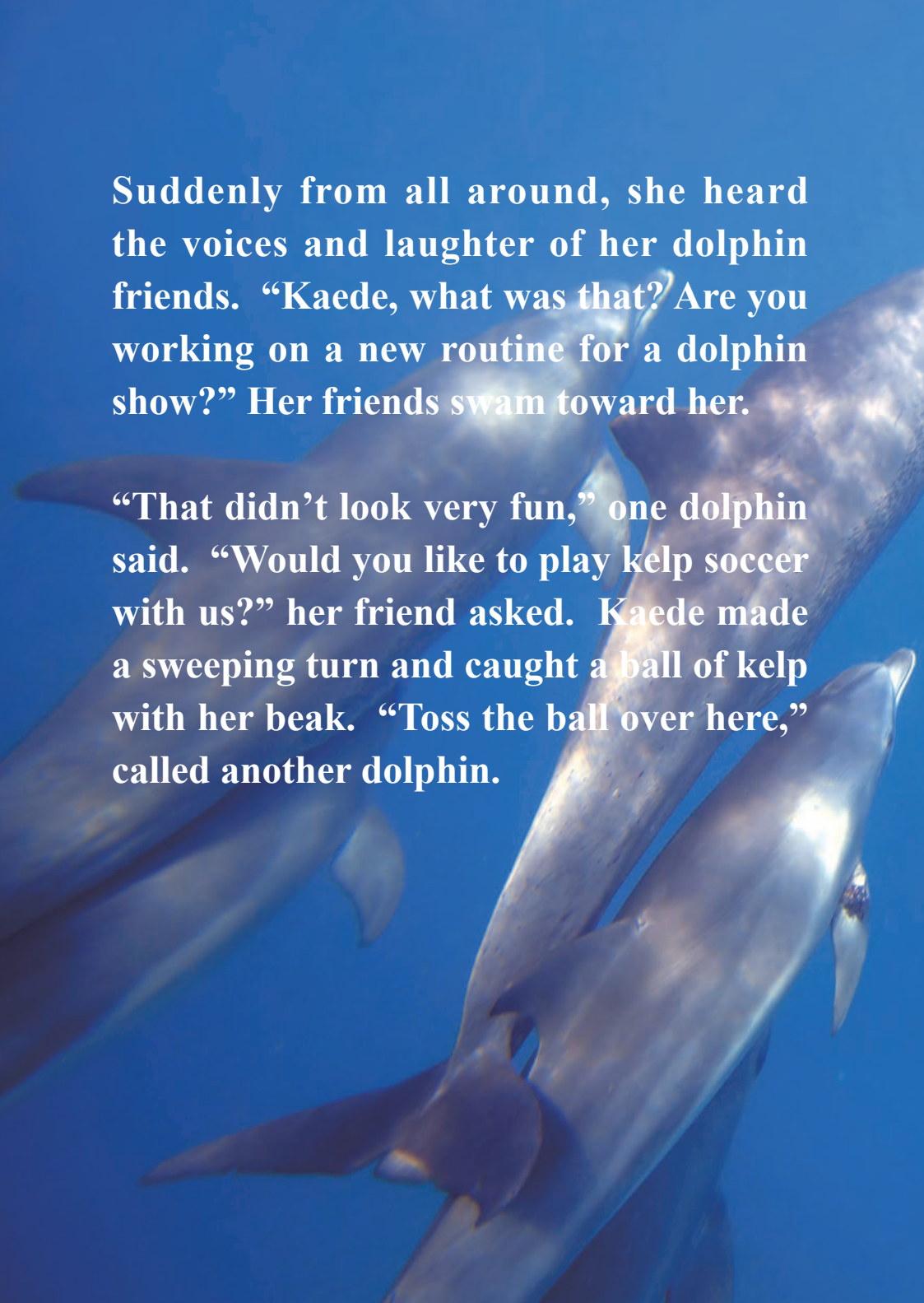


“Salt!” She exclaimed.

Kaede realized that she was floating in the middle of a deep blue sea. “I can’t swim!” She exclaimed. Kaede suddenly felt very scared. She kicked her fins and tail, held her breath, and swam with all of her might to reach the surface. She opened her mouth and gasped for air. Ocean water filled her nose, mouth, and lungs. “I don’t want to drown!” She thought to herself.



I can't swim!

A group of dolphins is swimming in clear blue water. One dolphin is in the foreground, swimming towards the right. Another dolphin is behind it, and a third is further back. The dolphins are sleek and grey, with white underbellies. The water is a deep blue, and the lighting is bright, creating a clear and vibrant scene.

Suddenly from all around, she heard the voices and laughter of her dolphin friends. “Kaede, what was that? Are you working on a new routine for a dolphin show?” Her friends swam toward her.

“That didn’t look very fun,” one dolphin said. “Would you like to play kelp soccer with us?” her friend asked. Kaede made a sweeping turn and caught a ball of kelp with her beak. “Toss the ball over here,” called another dolphin.



Kaede had somehow turned from a little girl into a swimming dolphin. She was now in the big ocean playing in the kelp with her dolphin friends.

“I’m tired of playing kelp soccer, is there anything else we can play?” Asked one of the dolphins.

“Let’s go surf the waves,” suggested one dolphin.

“There aren’t any waves today, and there aren’t any big boats for us to chase.” said another.

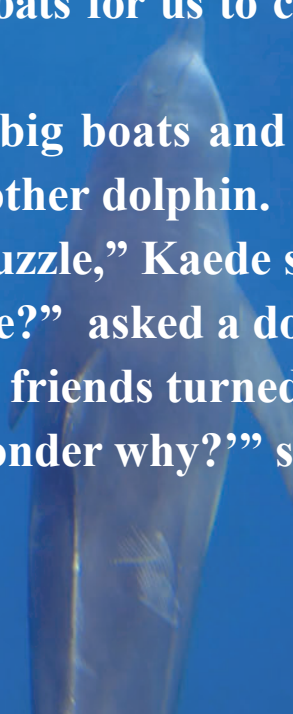
“I love chasing big boats and riding the waves,” said another dolphin.

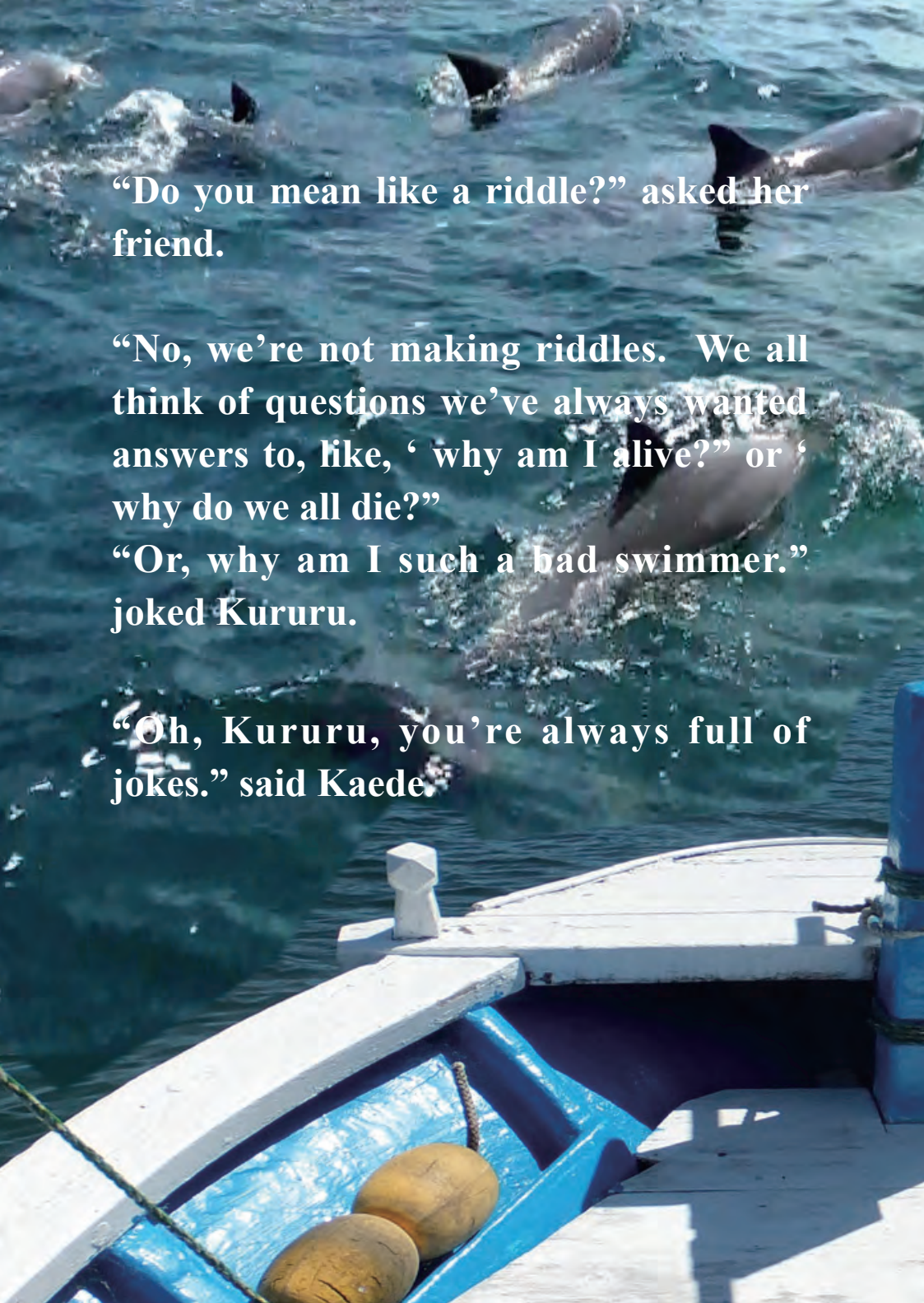
“How about a puzzle,” Kaede suggested.

“What’s a puzzle?” asked a dolphin.

Kaede’s dolphin friends turned to listen .

“Let’s play ‘I wonder why?’” said Kaede.



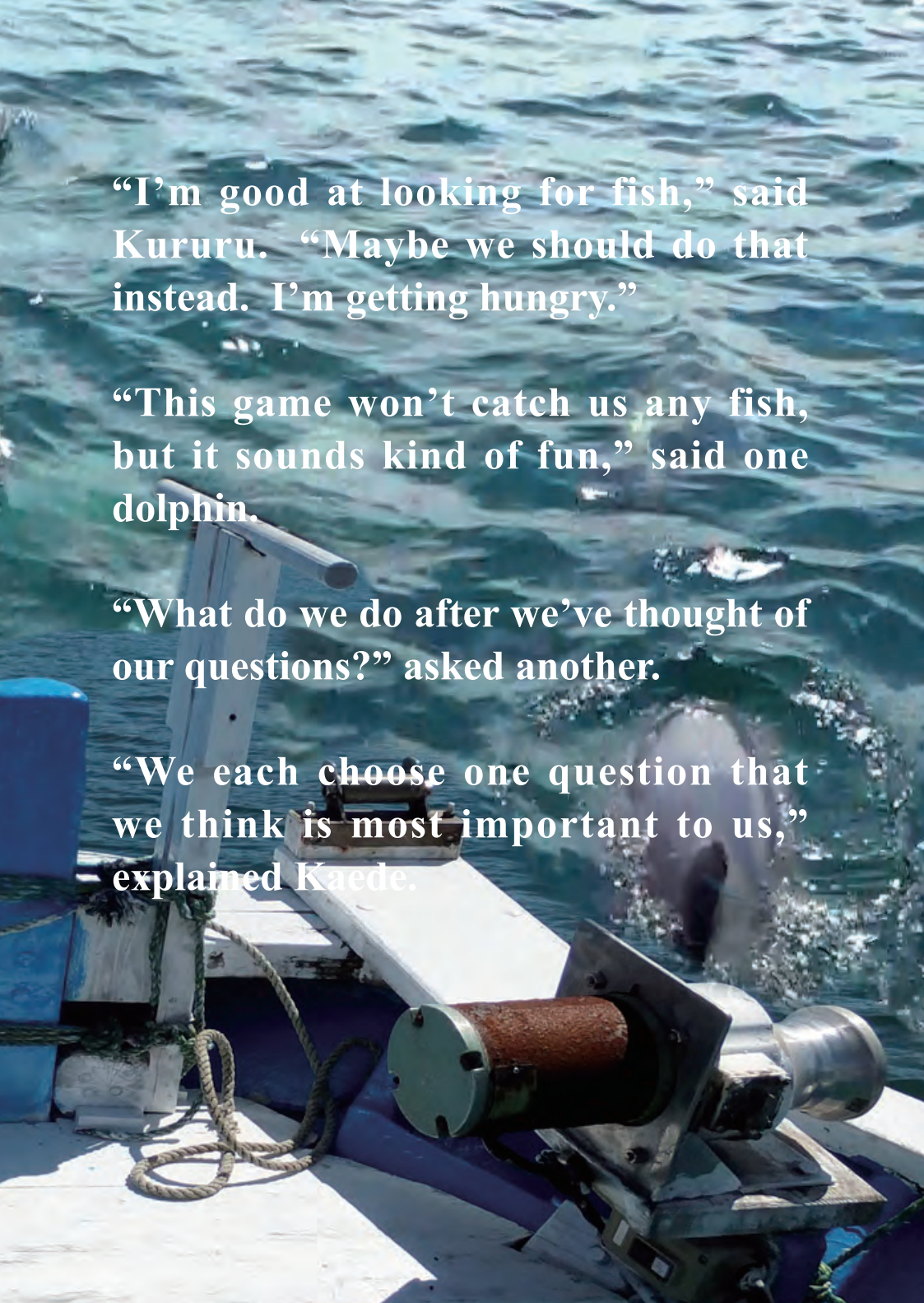
A group of dolphins are swimming in the ocean. In the foreground, the white and blue hull of a boat is visible, with two yellow buoys in a blue tray. Several dolphins are visible in the water, some with their heads above the surface. The water is a deep blue-green color.

“Do you mean like a riddle?” asked her friend.

“No, we’re not making riddles. We all think of questions we’ve always wanted answers to, like, ‘ why am I alive?’ or ‘ why do we all die?’”

“Or, why am I such a bad swimmer.” joked Kururu.

“Oh, Kururu, you’re always full of jokes.” said Kaede.

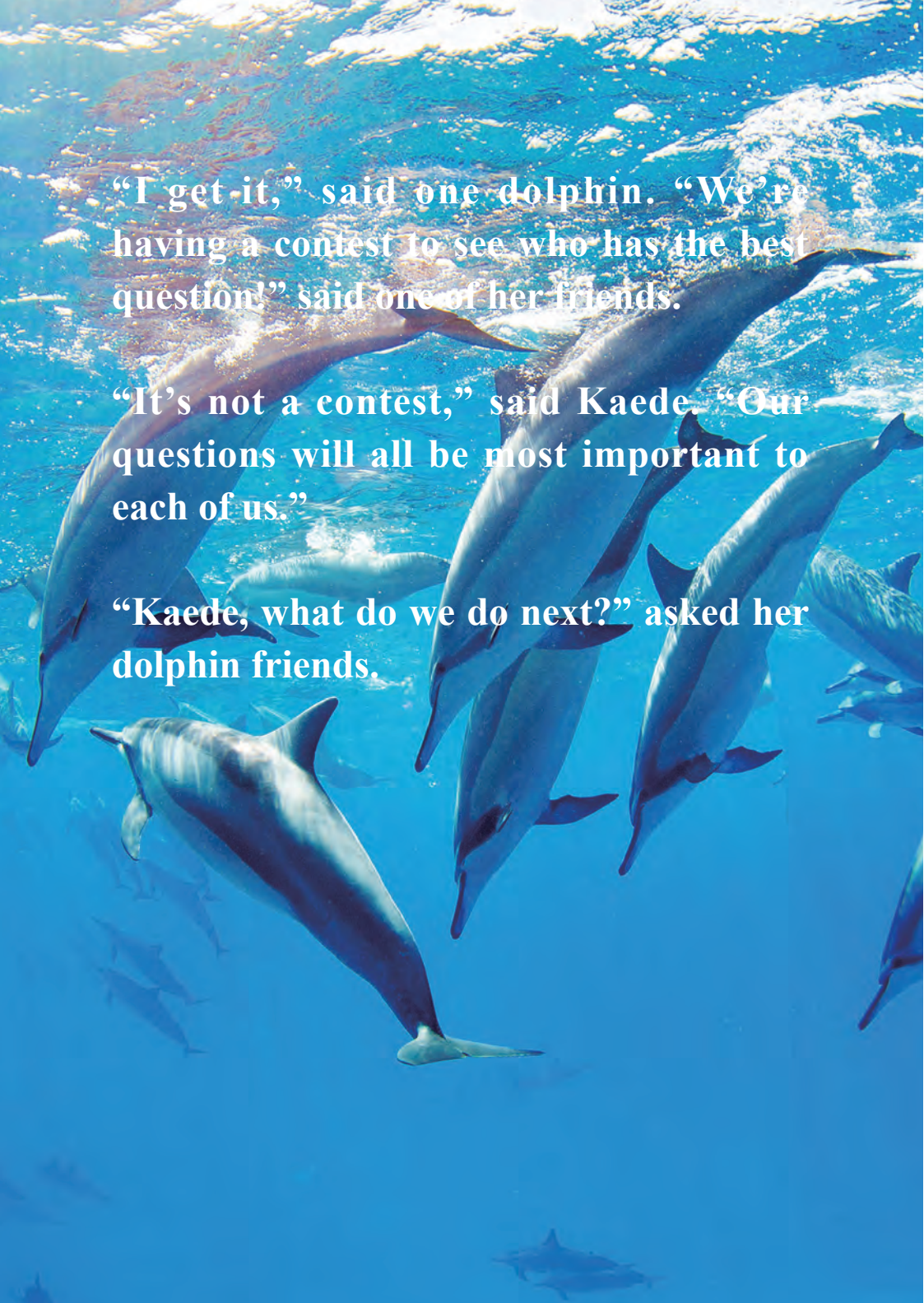
A dolphin is captured mid-leap, its body arched and white against the deep blue, rippling water. In the foreground, the white and blue structure of a boat's deck is visible, featuring a rope and a mechanical winch with a rusty drum. The scene is set on a bright, sunny day.

“I’m good at looking for fish,” said Kururu. “Maybe we should do that instead. I’m getting hungry.”

“This game won’t catch us any fish, but it sounds kind of fun,” said one dolphin.

“What do we do after we’ve thought of our questions?” asked another.

“We each choose one question that we think is most important to us,” explained Kaede.

A group of dolphins swimming in clear blue water. The dolphins are sleek and grey, with some showing white underbellies. They are swimming in various directions, some towards the camera and others away. The water is a vibrant blue, and there are some white foam patches near the surface. The dolphins are of various sizes, suggesting a pod. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

“I get it,” said one dolphin. “We’re having a contest to see who has the best question!” said one of her friends.

“It’s not a contest,” said Kaede. “Our questions will all be most important to each of us.”

“Kaede, what do we do next?” asked her dolphin friends.

“We think about why the question we chose is important to us.” explained Kaede.

“Well, that doesn’t sound any fun. And it won’t fill my stomach like eating fish. But I guess I’ll try it out.” said Kururu.

“It will be fun,” said Kaede. “I promise it will.”

The chatter of the young dolphins faded as they disappeared into the deep blue sea.



In a neighborhood in Japan, Kaede's smartphone went off at 6 am. Her alarm was usually soft and quiet, but today it startled her when it rang, shaking the table where it lay. She usually started her day as soon as her alarm went off, but today, she felt a little different. She had dreamt that she was a dolphin in the ocean and had woken from her dream before her alarm. She lay there quietly pondering in her thoughts when her alarm went off loudly and shook her back into reality. She suddenly knew exactly what she would choose as her most important question.



Kaede lived near a dirt path that lead to a cattle ranch at the top of a grassy hill. She loved walking on this path along the hillside. Just as she did every morning, she headed out on the dirt path toward the ranch at the top of the hill. This morning, she kept thinking of her dream and wondered what she would have chosen as her most important question. She had lots of questions that she wanted answers to.



For instance, “why am I not allowed to do what I want?” And, “why do I always get blamed for everything?” She also wondered why her thoughts were stuck on her dream. “And why am I on this ranch?” She wondered.

Although she was on her usual morning walk on the hill, she kept thinking about her dolphin dream and of being deep in the big blue ocean.



**“I’ve been running away from things.”
She thought to herself. “I’ve been
running away from having to go to
school, my school mates, my parents, and
everyone else that I know.”**

“Who will go first?” asked Kaede the dolphin.

She looked around at her friends, but no one volunteered. Kururu was off on his own world playing in the gentle current and making bubbles with his mouth.

“Kaede, why don’t you start?” suggested one friend.

Just as Kaede was about to speak, her friend Yuzu lifted her right fin and said, “I’ll go first!”



Yuzu's Questions

“When I was a little girl, I would sometimes get lonely and scared for no reason. The loneliness would be all around me. I felt like it may swallow me. Why was I feeling so lonely?”

“Sometimes, I would get so tired of going to school. It wasn't that I hated going to school, but at school, I felt so overwhelmed. Why was school so overwhelming?”

“When I was younger, everything was so much easier. As I got older, I would be more bothered by things. Where do feelings like love, happiness, or anger come from?”



“Sometimes, I feel like animals and plants can talk to us. Can they talk to us and understand us, too?”

“And, what does it mean to grow up? Is it good to become an adult?” Yuzu pictured her parents who were grown-ups. She thought it was funny that when she thought of her parents, they were human and not dolphins...

“Yuzu, you’re thinking too much. With all that thinking, you’ll lose your appetite for lunch!” said her friend, Kururu.

“Kururu, the only thought that’s every in your head is food!” laughed another dolphin.

“I’ve thought of my question, too.” responded Kururu.

Kaede turned to Kururu, “Kururu, share with us what you came up with.”

Kururu’s Questions

“Why was I born in Japan? Why are there lots of different countries with different languages and cultures?”

“Why do we have wars? Why do people have to fight and die?”



What does forever mean?
Why do people and animals
exist in the world?

“Why do people and animals exist in the world?”

“What does forever mean?”

Kururu was born in the town of Ogaki, Japan. He remembered how he would talk to the fish and animals in the ocean while walking along the ocean shore.



“Am I having a dream about being a dolphin, or is a dolphin having a dream about being me?”

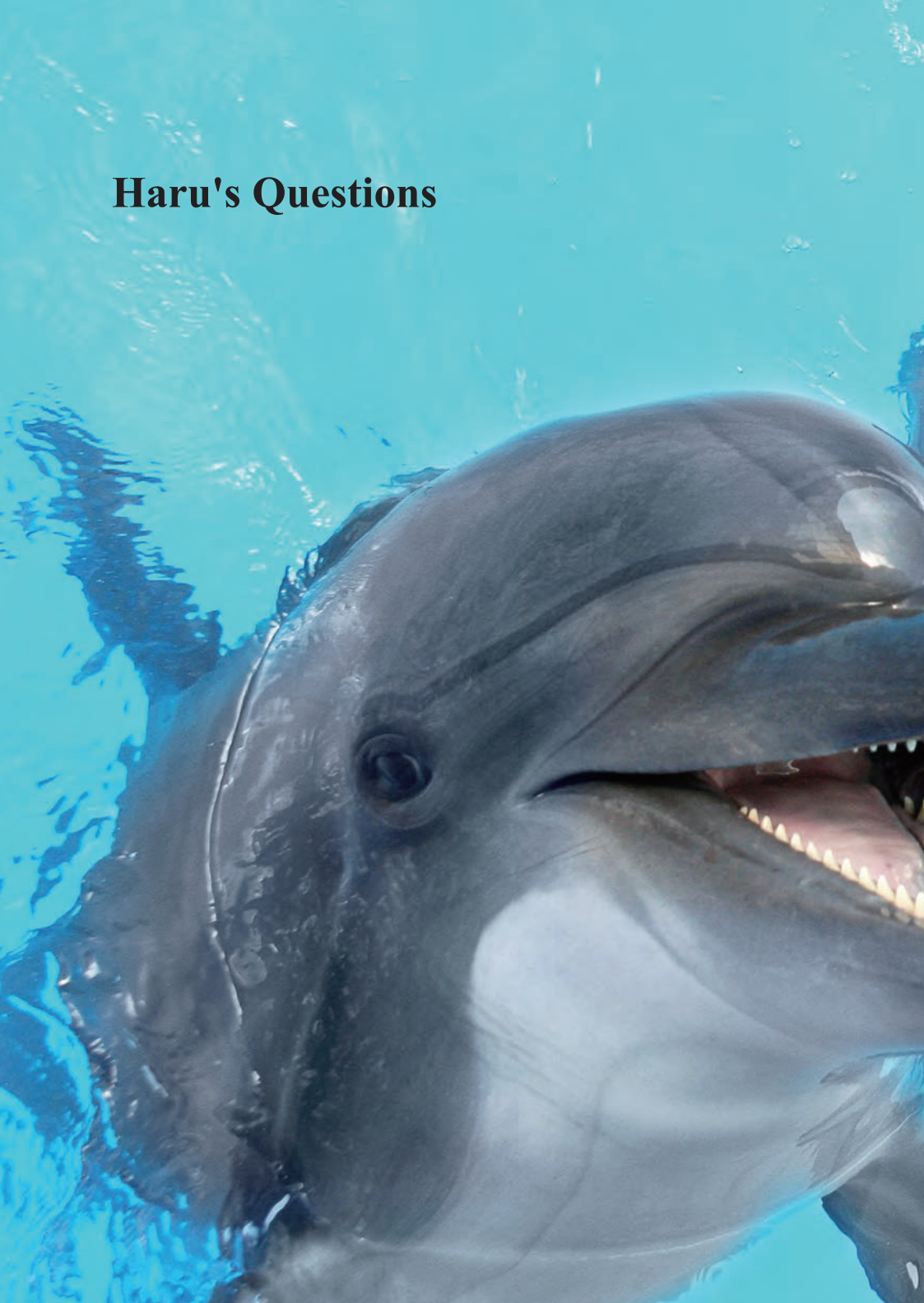
Kururu wondered to himself.

“Kururu, you have lots of good questions. I thought you only had food on your mind!” Yuzu beamed at her friend Kururu.

“If we are dolphins, why are we talking about countries and languages? Do dolphins have countries and languages?” wondered Kaede.
“I must definitely be dreaming.”



Haru's Questions





Natsu's Questions

Haru's Questions

“Why did my dad cheat on my mom?

“Why is everyone so competitive? Why is winning so important?

“People always say that we all have different personalities, but what is a personality?

“I always hear people saying that they are stressed, but what is stress? Why are people stressed?

Natsu's Questions

“Why did my mom have to marry my dad?

“Why is my family poor?

“Why does my mom always wear make up?

“Why does my mom yell at me?

“Why did my mom become a preschool teacher?

Everyone listened quietly to Natsu knowing that she was thinking about her parent's problems at home.



Why are people
so emotional?

“Sakura, I think it might be your turn,” said Kururu.

“Yep!” responded Sakura. Sakura was the oldest in the group, and spoke quickly to break the silence.

Sakura’s Questions

“Why do humans have two arms and two legs?

“Why are people so quick to switch from being happy to sad to angry? Why are people so emotional?

“Sometimes I hear people say that it’s not good to push yourself too hard, but I think it’s good that people push themselves to reach their goals. Is it bad?

“Why do people need to find answers to things they don’t know?

“Why are there suicides?

Kururu was hoping for a more cheerful topic, but Sakura's last question wasn't a very happy one. Kururu remembered that Sakura's close friend had recently committed suicide. Kururu could see how sad Sakura felt about losing her best friend.

Her friends all wondered to themselves,
"Why would anyone want to die?"

The youngest dolphin in the group chimed in. "My turn!" said little Mame.

Mame's Questions

“Why do I have to go to school?”

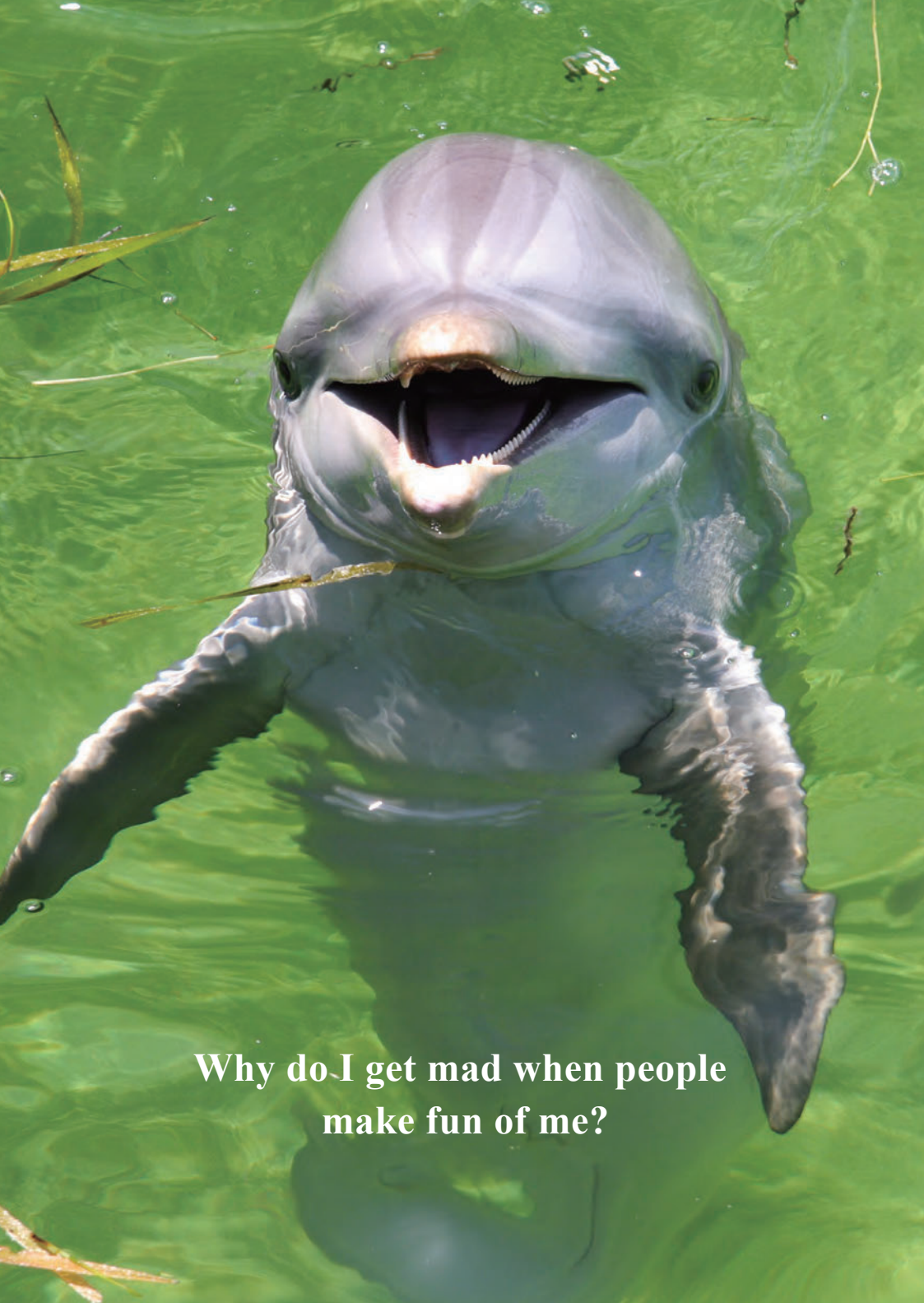
“Why do we die if we don't eat food?”

“Why are there lots of different countries?”

“Why do I get mad when people make fun of me?”

“Why is it so fun when I play with my friends?”

Mame thought of how fun it was to play with her friends at the park. At the same time, she thought of how fun it is to be a dolphin and play in a big ocean.



Why do I get mad when people
make fun of me?

Finally, it was Kaede's turn to share her questions.

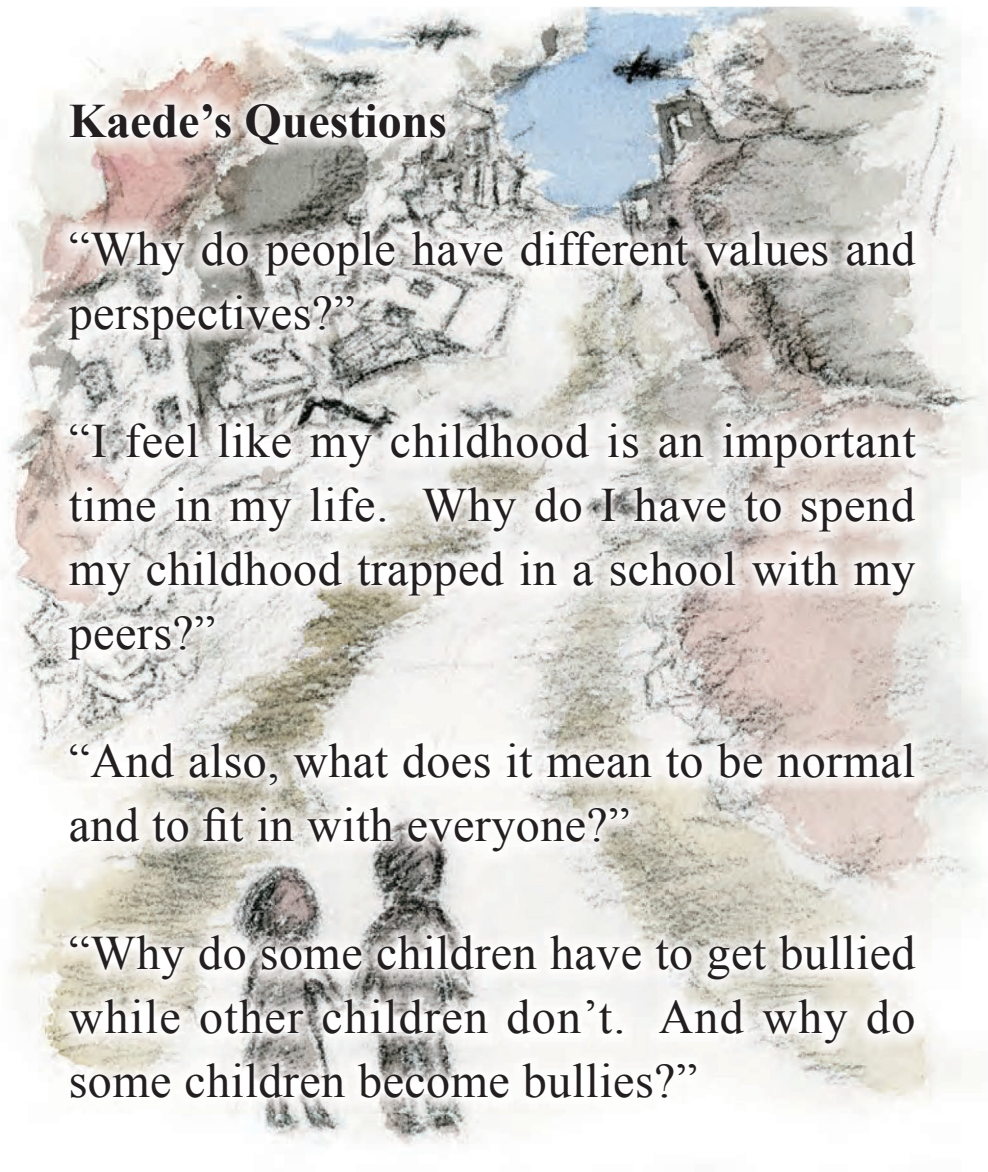
"Everyone had some great questions to think about. If I can think about my own most important questions, I have a feeling I'll be able to go back to being human."

Kaede thought to herself.

"I wonder if I turned into a dolphin so that I can ponder my thoughts in this deep blue ocean and find some answers."



If I can think about my own
most important questions.

The background of the page is a watercolor illustration. It depicts a town with a prominent church spire and a body of water. In the foreground, two children are standing, looking towards the town. The colors are muted, with a lot of grey, brown, and blue tones.

Kaede's Questions

“Why do people have different values and perspectives?”

“I feel like my childhood is an important time in my life. Why do I have to spend my childhood trapped in a school with my peers?”

“And also, what does it mean to be normal and to fit in with everyone?”

“Why do some children have to get bullied while other children don't. And why do some children become bullies?”

“Why do we have war in the world if we all learn in school to get along?”

“Now that we have everyone’s questions,” Kaede continued, “let’s all look at our lists and decide which question is most important to us.”

“Let’s do it quickly, right now,” said Kururu.

“I can’t decide that quickly. I need more time to think,” said Yuzu.

So do I,” chimed Sakura.

“I often dream that I’m a little human girl.”
Sakura added.

Kaede wondered whether all of the dolphins
were part of someone’s dream.

Chapter 2

The Most Important Question



“Yuzu, let’s start with your questions,” started Kaede. “What was your most important question?”

“Mine was, ‘why was I born into this world?’ I feel like this is my biggest question.” responded Yuzu. “I’d feel really good if I could figure out what I’m supposed to do with my life.”

“When I listen to what different religions tell us, each one seems to say something different. I’m not even sure if any of them are right. I don’t know if believing in any of them will be any good.” She said thoughtfully.

“When I asked myself what is most important to me, what I came up with was the question of why I was born in the first place.”

Yuzu finished sharing her question. Then, suddenly, she felt something in her heart.

“What I need to do right now as a young child is to keep going to school so that I’m ready for what comes into my life in the future.”

She thought to herself.

“Yes”, said a message from her heart, “*you can answer your own question, the answer is right here in your heart. Deep down, you already know why you were born into this world. I wish you a happy future.*”

“Who was that?” wondered Yuzu.



Kururu's Question

“Kururu, it's your turn,” said Kaede.

“I'd like to know why I was born in Japan,” answered Kururu. “I could have been born anywhere else, like the U.S. or Australia, but I was born in Japan where I have to learn lots of Chinese characters at school every week.”

“That's true, Kururu. You could have been born anywhere in the world, but there is a reason that you were born exactly where you were. You'll soon learn why you were born here in Japan instead of somewhere else. Right now, what I can tell you is that you were born exactly where you should have been, and that there is a good reason

that you are here.”

“Who just said that?” asked Kururu.



Haru and Natsu's Question

“Haru and Natsu, what did you choose for your question?” asked Kaede.

“We want to ask why our dad cheated on our mom. Why did they have to get divorced?” asked Haru and Natsu.

“Why did our mom choose to marry our dad?” asked one of the girls.

“Our parents always fought and we always wished that they wouldn't.” they said.

“It may look like it was solely your father's fault, but if you look into both of their hearts, your parents may have both been at fault. They both had a lot of bitterness in their

hearts. This was because both your mother and father weren't aware of who they really were inside. That was why they would get angry at one another or blame each other for their own problems. It was why they would argue and fight.

It's not only your parents who aren't aware of who they are, it's also the same for everyone else - your friends, your neighbors, people everywhere - we're all the same. We wish to always get along and help one another, but we aren't always able to. Do you know why we have a hard time getting along with one another? This is going to be an important question for you to think about as you grow older."

"Who was that?" asked Haru and Natsu.

“You heard that, too?” asked Yuzu.

“It sounded like it came from inside me.”
said Haru and Natsu.



Sakura's Question

"I didn't hear anything. I wonder why?"
wondered Sakura.

Kaede thought for a moment. It seemed that whenever one of the dolphins asked their question, the answer came pouring out from inside their hearts.

"I sure hope I get an answer to my question,"
she thought to herself.

"Can I go next?" asked Sakura. "Sure, go on," replied Kaede.

"I want to ask why people sometimes choose to die, why there are suicides. And why is suicide bad?"

Sakura was thinking of her best friend who had just committed suicide. Sakura remembered times when she had also thought of dying or had wondered why she was even born in the first place. Perhaps her friend had felt the same before she had died.

Sakura thought that maybe it's normal to sometimes feel sad or depressed and not want to be alive. *"It must be something that everyone goes through at some point in their life"*, she thought to herself.

“Maybe”, she thought, “maybe it’s okay to sometimes wish you were dead, but it’s not okay to tell yourself that you’re not feeling sad or lonely.”

“Maybe what’s wrong is that we pretend that everything is okay when it’s not.” she pondered.

“Maybe there just isn’t a clear answer”, thought Sakura.



“People have lots of answers as to why people go through depression or try to end their lives, but none of those answers are truly right. What do you do when you can’t find the right answer to your questions? If you find yourself wishing that you could end your life, look deeper into yourself and ask why you’re feeling this way. Ask yourself these questions and look deep into your heart. Something will come up from within you, an emotion or a feeling, and that is what you need to find in yourself.”

Mame's Question

“My questions is, why do I have so much fun when I’m with my friends?” asked Mame.

“I have lots of fun playing with my friends.” said Mame. “We have so much fun together that I don’t ever want to go home, even when it’s time for dinner. I wish they were my brothers and sisters. That way, we could be together all of the time.”

“Even when we get mad at each other, we always make up and become friends again.” she said. “It’s not fun to be alone, I’d much rather be with my friends. We hang out together and talk about everything that’s on our minds.” said Mame.

“I don’t ever want to grow up and become a boring adult. If I grow up, I won’t have any time to spend with my friends.”

“Its great that you have such good friends that you like to spend time with. It’s important to spend time playing and having fun. You may not want to grow up right now, but when you do, you might find that being a grown up is fun, too.



You can ask your parents what they think about being a grown up. It might surprise you that being a grown up is actually fun. Your parents may be your best friends, too. Your parents may be your closest friends who care about you most and spend time with you every day. Perhaps when you get a little older, ask your parents what they think about your question.”

“Kaede,” said Kururu. “I think it’s now your turn.”

Kaede's Question

“What does it mean to be normal and to fit in?”

Kaede thought of this when she first turned into a dolphin and was spending time with her dolphin friends. When she was a human girl, Kaede always had a hard time at school trying to be like everyone else. She couldn't dress or act too differently from the other kids or they would give her funny looks. She couldn't be too quiet or the other kids would bully her.

“How do you fit in and act normal?” she wondered. She was always trying to blend in with the crowd, but had a hard time. Kids at school would call her names. Kaede had been having such a hard time at school that she finally stopped going to school.

She turned into a dolphin and started living in the deep ocean. Dolphins in the ocean didn't have to follow any rules or have to fit in. They swam when they wanted, rested when they wanted, and no one ever told them what to do. As a dolphin, no one told her that she had to fit in or that she needed to act like everyone else. She loved being a dolphin and swimming freely in the ocean every day.

Now that she was a dolphin, Kaede no longer needed to worry about what everyone else did, what they wore, how they looked and acted. She could do exactly what she wanted everyday. Sometimes, her actions would get her into trouble, but she didn't mind working out her own problems since she made her own decisions. She was now living freely

as a dolphin, which made her question even more, “why should I have to fit in?”

“What does it mean to be normal?” she asked out loud.

“Kaede, did you hear anything?” asked one dolphin.

“I don’t hear anything.” said Kaede. She felt heartbroken.

Kaede was hoping for an answer, but she heard nothing. The ocean was silent except for the quiet sound of the moving current. She waited, then couldn’t stand the quiet any longer. She pointed her dolphin nose toward the surface and flipped her tail, swimming as fast as she could. She



leaped out of the water into the air. As water splashed around her, Kaede felt a tear falling from her eye.

When she awoke, Kaede found herself lying in a bed at a pediatric hospital. She was no longer in a big, deep blue ocean, but in a room surrounded by white sheets and white walls. From the window, sunlight hit the walls making the room even brighter. Kaede tried to sit up and felt something sharp in her arm. She looked down and noticed a needle in her left arm attached to a tube.

“I’m glad to see that you’re awake.” someone said.

She turned to see a nurse at her bedside. Her head felt foggy and unclear. She looked around the room and realized that her parents were sitting next to her. Their faces held looks of concerned as they peered into her face.

Kaede had stopped going to school after being bullied and having a hard time trying to fit in. At school, she was always worried about what the other kids were thinking, and especially of what they thought of her. She liked school and loved to learn. She loved learning new things and loved to read the books in the library. The library was like her own private classroom filled with lots of new things to learn. Even though she stopped going to school, she still had good grades and never failed any of her subjects.

Kaede hoped to go to high school and to college, so she made sure not to miss any school days that she needed to attend in order to pass a subject.

On those rare days when she did show up to school, everyone at school would stare at her.

“There’s that weird girl,” the other kids would say.

“She thinks she’s better than us.” They would whisper.

“She thinks she can do whatever she wants because she’s smart.” Kaede would hear them say.

“What a brat, she only comes to school when she has to pass a class.” they said.

“She’s a hermit, she has no friends.” she would hear them say.

The more the kids name-called, the more Kaede wanted to skip school.

When she got home, her mom would give her a an equally hard time. She tried to stay out of her mom's way. She tried to always do exactly what she was told, but she seemed to always get in trouble.

"Maybe I shouldn't be alive."

She thought sadly.

"But if I die, my parents will be heartbroken."

She thought again.

With all of the thinking she did in her head, she no longer had an appetite to eat. She stopped eating meals. After several days of not eating anything, her head seemed to clear and she felt like she could see everything clearly. She seemed to be able to think even more clearly than she did before.

She started to look online for a place to live on her own, a shelter where she wouldn't have to deal with anyone she knew.

Kaede couldn't remember what had happened next. When she opened her eyes, she was in a hospital bed. She learned that she had collapsed in front of her computer after not having eaten for many days. Her parents had rushed to call an ambulance and had rushed her to a hospital.

“Was my life as a dolphin an imaginary world that I made up?” Kaede wondered.

A strong feeling came welling up from inside Kaede's heart.

“Kaede, I didn't think I should answer

your question for you. This is a question that you need to find the answer to for yourself. You'll hold this question in your heart while you grow older, and you will find your own answer that lies within you. I will, however, give you one clue. When you asked, "Why can't I fit in?" or "What's normal, anyway?", perhaps what you are really feeling is that you want to be special and different, that you want people to acknowledge who you are."

Questions from Parents

We asked parents to think back to their own childhoods to remember what kinds of questions they had while growing up, and to answers their own childhood questions.

Here were some of their childhood memories and questions they had as children.

“As a child, up to the age of 10 or so, I used to hear and see things that were not visible to other people. Sometimes, I wouldn’t be able to sleep from thinking about what happens after we die. One day, I asked my mother and she responded, ‘I don’t know, ask your father.’ When I asked my father, he responded that when we die, our lives end and there is nothing after that. I remember

as a child being stricken by my father's response."

"As a child, I didn't like crowds. When I was in a crowded area and surrounded by people, I would sometimes get scared and start to shake. I would feel like crying and didn't know why."

"When I was a child, I was always wondering what I needed to do to find happiness."

"Since I was very little, I always felt sad, lonely, and wanted to die. I figured I felt this way because of my family, because of where I was born, and because things were not good at home. I wanted to run away and live on my own."

“Ever since I was young, I felt like there was something missing in our lives and that we were missing an important point. I wasn’t sure what was missing or why I felt like this.”

“I would wonder why my parents fought so much, and why had to be born into a family like this.”

“I would wonder what to do about being bullied by other kids.”

“I wondered why I felt unhappy even though everything was okay?”

“I wondered why holding my mom’s hand made me feel so safe.”

“I wondered why I had to have the mom

that I had.”

“I had no real friends. I would wonder, ‘what are real friends? Are there really true friendships?’ I would wish that I had friends that I could call real.”

“I often wondered why my mother would yell at me even when I was being good. Before I knew it, she would get so angry that I’d never know what she might do next. I would often wonder, ‘Why is mom so mad?’ I never understood why my mother’s anger.”

“When I was young, I had lots of phobias. I was afraid of heights. I was afraid of fast moving things. I was afraid of the dark. I was afraid of small spaces. I was afraid of sharp objects. My phobias were so bad that

I would hyperventilate in fear.

When I would go somewhere high, I would get dizzy and would feel like I might go crazy. I didn't know why I had such terrible phobias."

"I used to wonder, 'where is happiness? How do you find it? And why have to feel sad?'"

"I used to love looking at outer space in the encyclopedia. When I would gaze at the photos of stars and space, and I would think about the universe. I would lose myself in my thoughts."

"I always wondered, 'why were we born?'"
I would think about how every day, there are babies that are born and people who die. I would often wonder why I was born and for what purpose. I would wonder what will

happen to me when I die. I would think, “after I die, will the world go on without me as if nothing happened? And if the world can go on without me, then what am I here for?” I would ask my mother and she wouldn’t have an answer. As I grew older, I stopped wondering about my existence and my purpose in the world.”

Parents came up with many good questions from their own childhoods. None of these questions have easy answers. Among them, the question of why we exist is an important one. It’s a tough question and one that everyone has in their hearts. One of the mothers responded to this question with the following response.

As an adult, you can go back to tell your childhood self that there was definitely a good reason for you being born. The answer will come to you if you spend time looking at the thoughts in your heart. Instead of looking for purpose in your current life, look into your heart and you will find who you really are.

You'll find that you exist in warmth and happiness and you'll get to know your true self. You'll realize that you have a lot of warmth and gentleness inside you. You'll realize that there's nothing happier than finding who you really are in your heart.

You'll see that all of those tough times, times you felt sad and lonely or unhappy, were all important for you. It was even important for you to feel that you couldn't stand to feel sad

or unhappy any longer. All of those feelings are part of your heart. You can be thankful for all of those feelings and everything that has happened in your life. You're lucky to have been born so that you can find who you really are. We're all lucky that we were born from our moms. You'll find that you feel this way inside your heart.

Thank you for the opportunity for me to communicate with my childhood self.

It gave me an opportunity to think back to my own childhood. It made me happy that we could find answers within ourselves to the earnest, sincere questions that we had as children. I'd like to remember the sincerity of my childhood and continue to look at my own heart through an honest and sincere lens.

From the Editor “Free Space ZERO”

People often ask us what we are trying to achieve by opening a free community space. Whenever I’m asked, I am stopped in my tracks unable to provide a decent answer.

Although I opened this community space, I didn’t have a set purpose in mind. I wanted to create a space that was open to the community and free to use in any way. I wanted to create a space for freedom. I figured I would start with a blank slate and the space would shape itself. Once the space opened, it took on a life of its own. Often sitting at the community space, ideas for what create in the space pop into my head.

