

SANDRA THE ANGRY TURTLE

By Phillip W. Weiss

**Phil's Literary Works LLC
19 West 34th Street
Penthouse
New York, NY 10001
Tel. (212) 388-8690
Email: pwnycny@aol.com
Website: www.philsliteraryworks.com**

Copyright © Phillip W. Weiss

This story is a work of fiction. Any similarity between the characters in this story and any actual humans or creatures, living or dead, is purely coincidental and entirely unintentional. Likewise, any similarity between the geographical locations noted in this story and any actual locations is also purely coincidental and entirely unintentional.

Synopsis

Sandra, an angry female sea turtle, vows to wreak revenge on those who killed her family. While fulfilling this vow, she encounters many obstacles and undergoes a spiritual transformation.

Genre: fantasy.

Tagline: Turtles have feelings too.

Main Characters

Sandra – a loggerhead sea turtle

Gertrude – a loggerhead turtle, Sandra’s mother

Carlos – a loggerhead turtle, Sandra’s father

Sonny – a young crab

Charley – an adult crab, king of the crabs

Abigail – a crab, Charley’s sister

Arnold – a sea turtle, Sandra’s mentor

Clarissa – a squid, Sandra’s friend

Larry – a loggerhead turtle, Sandra’s lover

Cleo – a seagull, leader of the seagulls

Norma – a seagull, Cleo’s friend

Aloysius – a seagull

Josiah – a man on the beach

Enid – Josiah’s wife

Captain Brockmeyer – a police officer

Cliff – a homeless man

CHAPTER ONE

A beach can be a dangerous place, especially for a baby turtle. Lurking on the beach are many creatures that consider baby turtles a scrumptious delicacy. There are the hordes of crabs that attack the frail little hatchlings without mercy, killing and eating them by the score. But even more terrifying are the seagulls that patrol the sky, ever searching for a tasty innocent toddler to devour. These rapacious carnivores swoop down from above and pounce on the tiny helpless creatures without warning. For these poor, little hapless babes, all alone and defenseless against powerful pincers and sharp beaks, an early death was a foregone conclusion.

But one baby turtle was determined to survive. That turtle's name was Sandra. She was a loggerhead sea turtle. Sandra was the last of a clutch of one-hundred eggs that her mother, Gertrude, had deposited in a nest she had dug on a stretch of beach located on the eastern shore of Florida. Sandra's father, Carlos, was king of the sea turtles but the king was nowhere to be found. Like all male turtles, his main role was to impregnate the female, an arrangement that met with the approbation of the males as long as they did not have to help build the nest. But Carlos was different. He cared. Gertrude remembered the time when she told him that he was going to be a father. He was overjoyed.

"I'm going to be a father!" Carlos exclaimed, elated. "I can't believe it! I'm so happy!"

“Well, it’s true,” Gertrude said calmly.

“So, when will the babies arrive?” Carlos asked.

“In about a month,” she replied.

“Where will you build the nest?” Carlos persisted.

“Probably in Florida,” Gertrude said nonchalantly.

Alarmed, Carlos exclaimed, “Florida! Why there? The beaches are filthy and dangerous and crowded with humans, and the seagulls there are vicious and nasty. Can’t you build the nest somewhere else?”

“Like, where?” Gertrude asked.

“Maybe in Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic?” Carlos suggested. “The beaches there are wonderful and the humans are nice.”

“I thought about that, Carlos, but those beaches are too far away and I have to build the nest soon otherwise the eggs inside me will die, and Florida is the closest spot, so that’s where I’ll have to go,” Gertrude insisted.

“Do you want me to go with you?” Carlos asked, worried.

“No. This is something I must do alone,” Gertrude replied firmly.

“I’m really afraid that none of the young ones will survive on that disgusting beach,” Carlos persisted.

“I’ll try to find an isolated area and dig a deep nest. Maybe that will help,” Gertrude said, trying to assure Carlos.

“Maybe it will, but I still want to go with you,” Carlos insisted.

Losing her patience, Gertrude shouted “No! You know the law. Only the females can return to the beach, never the males. Your job is to father the babies, mine is to do everything else to make sure that the babies hatch. So, no more talk of going with me. And besides, on the beach you would be a target for abuse from every human and you know how mean they can be, and I don’t want you to get hurt because you are a beautiful turtle and I want you to stay that way.”

Carlos was deeply moved by Gertrude’s remarks.

“Oh, Gertrude, how I will miss you,” Carlos exclaimed. “I will always remember how we swam together in the waves and enjoyed each other’s company. It was like a dream come true and now I will be a father. It just hurts that I’ll never see my children.”

“I know that, Carlos, but that is just the way it is,” Gertrude said with sadness in her voice. “The children must fend for themselves and there is nothing we can do for them once they are born. On land we’d be as helpless as the children themselves and once they reach the sea they wouldn’t need us anyway and besides, even if we saw them again, they wouldn’t even know who we are.”

“That is true. Gertrude, I love you so much, I really do,” Carlos said with much emotion.

“And Carlos, I love you too.”

Gertrude and Carlos reached out to each other with their front flippers and touched each other’s shells, which is a turtle’s way of showing deep affection.

“Good luck and take care of yourself, and may the supreme leatherback from the deep protect you always” said Carlos.

“And the same to you, my love,” Gertrude replied.

Gertrude and Carlos then turned and swam away from each other, never to meet again.

Back on the beach, Gertrude intuitively knew that the baby turtle developing inside that one-hundredth egg deposited in the nest would be destined for greatness and named the unborn baby Sandra, which in turtle language means “special one” or “great one.” After depositing the eggs, she carefully covered the nest with sand, bid her gestating brood a fond farewell, and then, with tears of joy flowing from her eyes, but also with a twinge of sadness, dragged herself back to the ocean, never to return.

A week later, Sandra hatched. She was about four inches long and had a beautiful soft shell. Within minutes after hatching, she had tunneled her way to the surface of the sand. Upon reaching the surface, she saw that she was not alone. With her were all of her brothers and sisters who, like her, were also all newly hatched. Now in order to survive they would have to make a perilous trek across the beach to reach the ocean where they would be safe. No one craved to feel the refreshing swathe of the cool ocean surf more strongly than Sandra.

Although small and vulnerable, Sandra was determined to live; and for a little gal she had a lot of spunk. Boldly thrusting her legs deep into the sand, she began her journey to the ocean. With each step, she implored her brothers and sisters to make haste.

“Let’s go! Move quickly!” she cried. “If we don’t make it to the ocean we will die!”

Undaunted by the dangers on the beach, Sandra, whose audacity was unmatched, placed herself at the front of the group and led the march to the sea. Immediately after taking the lead a young crab named Sonny jumped out of the sand and started to attack, but he was small and inexperienced in the ways of killing, and Sandra was able to fend off the marauder with little difficulty.

“Get out of here!” Sandra roared, and punched Sonny squarely on the nose.

Sonny recoiled in pain and shock, not having expected the turtle to fight.

“Why did you do that?” he asked. “You’re not supposed to do that!” Sonny said, feeling both indignation and embarrassment.

“Says you!” Sandra shouted mockingly. “I’m not going die for you and neither will any of my brothers and sisters, so get out of here, NOW!” she screamed.

With that, Sandra kicked the hapless crab on his butt and watched as he scampered away, whimpering like a little baby.

“I showed him who’s boss,” Sandra told his charges.

“You sure showed him,” they all agreed.

But dealing with the seagulls proved to be a far more challenging task. From every direction these dangerous and vicious denizens of the

sky swooped down, picking off Sandra's brothers and sisters one by one. Sandra herself almost succumbed, but she was able to evade attack by crawling under a piece of wood that was imbedded in the sand. From that vantage point, Sandra could observe her brothers and sisters being systematically killed and eaten as they attempted to reach the ocean.

The sight filled Sandra with rage and, seething with an anger that she could barely contain, she swore that one day she would take revenge on those creatures who had caused her kind so much misery and death. "Why should turtles be treated so horribly?" Sandra wondered, utterly infuriated. "We have a right to live too," she thought with great indignation and conviction.

Finally the carnage stopped. No more baby turtles could be found. The seagulls circled the beach one more time looking for any isolated stragglers and finding none flew away. After the birds had gone, Sandra, now alone, crawled out from her hiding place and continued her now solitary march to the ocean. As she was nearing the shoreline she observed the carcass of one of the baby turtles whose half-eaten body was now rotting in the sand. This gruesome sight made Sandra's blood boil with anger and reinforced her determination to one day make the beach safe for her kind.

Suddenly a huge crab appeared from behind a rock and charged straight toward her. This crab, whose name was Charley, was big and powerful. Among his kind, he was known as the prince of the beach and

lord of all the crabs. But Sandra did not know that nor did she care. She just wanted to survive and so she was forced to fight for her life. With one quick swoop, Charley grabbed Sandra in one of his pincers and started pulling her toward his ugly, gaping mouth. But Sandra fought back. With a strength that surprised the vicious crab, she broke free from the Charley's grasp and then bit him on the top of his head, causing Charley to retreat in confusion and pain. This was a truly amazing event, a baby turtle actually fighting the king of the crabs, and winning. It was unprecedented. The other crabs on the beach took notice of this and Sandra was bothered no more.

Exhausted but glad to be alive, Sandra finally reached the ocean. With the grim knowledge that all of his brothers and sisters were dead her anger was boundless. But as soon as she entered the water she felt immediate pleasure and relief. It was as if she was relieved of a tremendous and intolerable weight. She no longer had to crawl; she could now swim. She soon came to know and admire the myriad of creatures that inhabit the ocean. There were fish in all shapes and sizes, and they all seemed to be very friendly. There were also huge clumps of seaweed where Sandra, who was by nature a vegetarian, could eat kelp and sleep undisturbed at night. Living in this secure and comfortable environment helped to ease Sandra's pain and anguish.

Sandra thoroughly enjoyed her life in the ocean. For her it was a time of bliss. As the years passed, Sandra grew to be big and strong, and

when she reached full maturity, she was an impressive and imposing sight to behold. She was over five feet long and weighed almost five hundred pounds, which was huge, especially for a female sea turtle. She was a handsome turtle too, with a large, majestic head and a magnificent shell that displayed a kaleidoscopic array of colors. She was the envy of the sea. The males of her species constantly approached her, trying to gain her attention and mate with her. They would bring her all sorts of presents, like pretty pieces of coral or the choicest cuts of kelp, which were considered a rare delicacy within the sea turtle community. A few would even try to provoke her by playfully touching her with their flippers, but Sandra was indifferent to their advances. Although she was popular, Sandra had more important things on her mind, things that would allow for no frivolous distractions, no matter how attractive or persistent. The only male that Sandra respected was a small, sad-looking turtle named Arnold. He was old and frail but wise to the ways of the sea and of sea turtles. Sandra often went to him for advice. One day she asked Arnold about her mother.

“Arnold, I want to know about my mother. Why did she leave me?” Sandra asked, with much sadness.

Arnold thought for a moment and, placing his leathery front flipper on Sandra’s smooth and shiny shell, gazed directly into her eyes and replied, “Your mother left you because it was the law which she had to obey. One day you will understand what she did.”

Perplexed by that answer, Sandra wanted Arnold to further explain what he meant, but knew from past conversations with him that the more questions she asked, the more confused she became as each answer gave her more food for thought, and if nothing else, Sandra was a most thoughtful turtle.

Over the years Sandra made many friends. Her best friends were Suzie the stingray, with her long pointed tail and majestic body, Bobbie the porpoise, with her perennial smile and powerful flippers, and Clarissa the squid, with her big beautiful eyes, long legs and shiny beak. All day long they laughed and frolicked in the waves, led by Sandra who organized all the fun. Often a cute little tuna fish named Alicea would join the fun and whenever she showed up she was treated just like one of the gang. But one day Alicea disappeared. She was nowhere to be found. Later on, Olivia, the moray eel who sometimes swam by to watch the fun, told them that Alicea was killed by humans on a boat. Olivia said that, for reasons unknown to her, the humans seemed to have a special predilection for tuna and described in stark detail how they killed Alicia with a spear right through the heart. Sandra and the others were appalled and saddened by this horrible news and stopped playing for an entire month while they were in mourning.

But despite her popularity, Sandra lacked peace of mind, for she never forgot her vow. One day, while playing tag with Clarissa, Sandra suddenly turned away and started swimming west. Greatly surprised,

Clarissa quickly swam over to Sandra, and asked, “Why have you stopped playing?”

Sandra stopped swimming and told Clarissa solemnly, “I have to return to the place of my birth.

“But why must you leave?” Clarissa asked. “Everything you need is here,” she implored.

Sandra, becoming more emotional, responded, “I know, but I must keep my vow.”

“What vow?” Clarissa asked, perplexed.

“It’s something you wouldn’t understand,” Sandra said sadly, with tears welling up in her eyes.

“I thought we were friends,” Clarissa said, now feeling hurt.

“You’re my closest friend, Clarissa,” Sandra said. “But I must leave now.”

“I’ll miss you,” Clarissa said and started crying.

Sandra said, “I’ll miss you too, but I’ll be back some day, I promise.”

Clarissa continued to cry as Sandra swam away, tears now flowing from her eyes.

CHAPTER TWO

Despite her traumatic experiences on the beach, Sandra had a friendly, easy-going disposition. While growing up she never hurt anyone

and was always helpful to others. But while swimming back to the place of her birth, Sandra's personality dramatically changed. The anger, which had been long suppressed and almost forgotten, suddenly welled up from inside her, and grew stronger and stronger with each passing day. This anger in turn fed the obsession that impelled her to swim on and on, completely oblivious to her surroundings or physical needs.

One day while gliding through the waves Sandra had an unexpected encounter with a former childhood playmate, Larry, another loggerhead turtle who she had not seen in many years. Larry was born in the Dominican Republic. He had often talked about the warm sands and friendly creatures that inhabited the beaches there, a far cry from what Sandra had known in Florida. One day Larry disappeared, which was not surprising because when male turtles reach a certain age they leave their friends and live solitary lives, re-emerging only when driven by the overwhelming urge to mate. For Larry, the time to mate was now, and soon he was propelling himself through the water, determined to catch up to Sandra and satisfy the call of nature. As Larry approached, Sandra felt an unexpectedly strange feeling engulfing her. Instead of disinterest which had marked her previous encounters with male turtles, she now felt an overwhelming physical attraction for this immense, imposing swain and an irresistible desire to be physically close to him. Soon they were swimming together in tandem, the beginning of a brief but intense courtship.

Flushed with excitement, Larry said, "It's wonderful seeing you again," and placed his front flippers around Sandra's outstretched head.

Sandra, flushed with excitement, responded by rubbing her nose against Larry's shell, an instinctual gesture that for sea turtles is an unmistakable signal of sexual arousal.

"Don't talk," said Sandra, her excitement building. "Just hold me."

Larry swam behind Sandra and then, grabbing her roughly, flipped her upside down, exposing her underside.

Now on the verge of hysteria, Sandra screamed, "Come on, Larry, do me! ... Do me now! ... Do what you want! ... JUST DO IT! ... We don't have all day!"

"Okay, baby, I'm gonna give it to you but good!" Larry shouted feverishly, now fully aroused.

"Shut up and just stick it in me, NOW!" Sandra desperately implored, now at the height of sexual frenzy.

Sandra and Larry spent the next several hours furiously mating. The impact of their shells and the shrieks, cries and groans emanating from their wide-open contorted mouths could be heard miles away, which attracted the attention of the other sea creatures from all over the area which swam by to investigate the noise and stayed to watch the show, mesmerized by the shameless exhibition that was occurring before them. Finally, the fire of their passion quenched, they bid each other fond adieu and went their separate ways. Satiated, Sandra resumed her journey.

After swimming continuously for five weeks, during which she lost all track of time, Sandra saw in the distance the stretch of beach where she was born, and almost died, so many years before. During her journey, she had not eaten. Yet she did not feel hungry. What she did feel, instead, was an unshakeable belief that she had something important to accomplish, something that she had to do, indeed was destined to do, even if it meant her death.

As she quickly approached the beach, Sandra did not know that she was embarking on something that no loggerhead turtle, male or female, had ever done before. For the first time in the history of her species, an adult loggerhead turtle was returning to the place of its birth with no intention of building a nest. Heretofore, only females would return to the beaches to lay their eggs and then quickly leave. Arnold had carefully explained to her that the beach was a dangerous place for an adult sea turtle, male or female, and that the females made the journey only when they had to deposit their eggs. Otherwise, the beach was strictly off limits to sea turtles. But Arnold's words were of no avail and if he had been speaking to Sandra now, it would not have deterred her in the least. Sandra had arrived and was determined to take care of business. The beach would never be the same.

CHAPTER THREE

It was night when Sandra swam onto the beach. The beach was deserted. But that did not cause her any worry. Instead of feeling loneliness or fear, she felt strangely invigorated, elated and bold. And instead of feeling sluggish from the weight of her massive shell, she felt almost as light as a slither of seaweed. With little effort, Sandra walked across the beach, found a comfortable looking sand dune covered with grass, dug a hole in the sand, and soon fell asleep. While slumbering Sandra had a brief but intense dream about her mother who told her that she was destined for greatness and was very proud of her. As she was about to say something to her mother the dream ended.

Sandra awoke with the dawn. She felt refreshed and ready to meet the day. She paused a moment to think about her mother and her dream and then proceeded to explore his surroundings. The beach was littered with refuse left by the humans who used the beach during the day. Wherever Sandra went she saw empty soda bottles, paper bags, and cigarette butts. She was disgusted by the condition of the beach. The feeling of resentment again welled up inside her. Now she understood why her mother had left the beach. Being a proper female sea turtle, her mother had fled the beach because she could not bear the filth and stench, so Sandra believed. So now she had a further score to settle, not only with the creatures who had killed her brothers and sisters but also with the humans who had turned her birthplace into a garbage dump, had killed her

friend Aliciea, and had caused her mother to have to abandon her nest, thereby exposing her babies to all sorts of dangers.

“The world must learn to respect the turtle,” Sandra thought, immersed in self-righteous indignation.

Then she saw a chilling sight. At a nearby sand dune two seagulls were fighting over the remains of a baby loggerhead turtle. Carefully concealing herself in the sand, Sandra slowly and stealthily approached the birds. Not knowing that they were being observed, the birds continued to shriek with delight as they fought over the tiny turtle’s mangled remains. To them, devouring a baby turtle was as natural as breathing or flying. After all, they were the masters of the beach, so they thought, and nobody could tell them what to do, and it would be foolhardy for any creature to challenge them, especially a slow moving sea turtle who, if it valued its life, would think twice before trying to confront a group of aggressive seagulls.

“Oh what a scrumptious turtle,” one seagull crowed to the other, a morsel of turtle meat hanging from its beak.

“It sure was,” the other happily agreed. “I can’t wait to find some more.”

It would have never occurred to them that turtles had feelings too, and they would have laughed out loud at the very thought of it. To them a turtle was an ugly, dumb object, not even worth one moment’s thought other than as a source of food meant to be consumed so that other more noble creatures could survive. And what creatures were more

deserving to survive than the mighty and regal seagulls that patrolled the beach and feared nothing, not even the humans? So, believing in their superiority, they abused and killed turtles at the slightest whim. Who would stop them? And why would anyone or anything care?

As they continued to cackle with delight, they did not suspect, nor could they possibly know, that soon their world was going to change, forever.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sandra sneaked closer and closer to the seagulls, who continued to partake in their bloody feast. Suddenly, with a burst of energy Sandra, using her powerful flippers like springs, leaped up from the sand and charged straight toward the unsuspecting birds.

The seagulls froze in shock. They never saw a turtle behave this way before. Sandra bellowed at them, “Leave that turtle alone!” and continued to charge at the birds, who, having recovered their senses, had taken to flight. Flying above Sandra, one of the seagulls, named Cleo, asked, “Why are you angry at us?”

“Because you birds are nothing but murderers,” Sandra said, looking up at the circling seagulls. “I was born here, and as a baby turtle I saw what you birds did to my brothers and sisters and now I’m back to seek my revenge.”

“But it wasn’t us. We had nothing to do with that,” Cleo complained. “We want to be your friends,” she insisted.

“While you continue to kill defenseless baby turtles, you talk about wanting to be my friend?” Sandra asked with contempt. “Obviously you have not listened what I’ve been saying, so let me make myself absolutely clear: Stop killing the baby turtles, NOW!”

“But we’ve got to eat,” Cleo implored, “and if we stop preying on turtles we will die.”

“That is not my concern,” Sandra retorted. “I will protect the beach from marauders like you. Now GO AWAY!” Sandra shrieked.

The birds continued circling above this difficult turtle. Finally, another seagull named Norma said to Sandra, “What you’re saying is wrong. This is the way things are and the way things have always been. We’re sorry about what happened to you when you were a baby, but we were not even alive at the time.”

“So what! That means nothing to me,” Sandra responded angrily. “You are the descendants of the criminals who killed my brothers and sisters and so you must pay the price for what your ancestors did. So be off with you now and tell all your friends not to return. And remember, when I was a baby turtle you murderers tried to kill me too, but that won’t happen now, NO WAY! If anyone is going to do any killing, it will be me, especially if you oppose me,” Sandra said emphatically. “So get lost, you dumb clucks!” For a seagull, being called a dumb cluck was the ultimate put down.

Angry and bewildered, the seagulls flew away. Sandra turned to the half-eaten remains of the baby turtle. With a profound feeling of reverence she buried the remains of the turtle deep in the sand and after saying a special prayer for deceased turtles that Arnold had taught her, resumed her exploration of the beach, ready to protect any turtle in distress.

CHAPTER FIVE

It was still early in the morning. The humans had not yet appeared on the beach. Sandra walked along the shore and then returned to the sand dunes. While crossing the beach, she saw the mangled remains of other baby turtles who had failed to reach the safety of the ocean.

“There must be other nests around here,” Sandra thought.

After walking about a quarter of a mile, she came across a mound of sand that appeared to be moving. She watched with great excitement as baby turtles suddenly began emerging through the sand. It was a glorious sight to behold and Sandra was beside herself with joy.

“Hello,” she said to each little cousin as they poked their heads through the sand.

“Hi!” each little turtle replied. “Who are you?”

“I’m Sandra and I’m going to make sure that you reach the ocean safe and sound.”

“Why do we need your help?” they asked.

“Because there’s danger on this beach,” she explained.

“On this beautiful beach?” the baby turtles replied incredulously.

“That’s right,” Sandra said. “And soon you will understand what I’m talking about.”

Sandra could see in the distance a huge flock of seagulls flying toward the nest, led by Cleo and Norma. When the seagulls were directly over the nest, Cleo shouted to Sandra, “Now we’ll teach you a lesson, you big, ugly log!” For a turtle, to be called a log was the ultimate insult.

Sandra shouted back, “If you so much as even touch one of my cousins , I will crush you in my flippers!”

But the seagulls were not deterred. They continued to fly high above the turtles’ heads, preparing to attack. Finally they started to dive.

“Here they come!” Sandra called to her frightened charges. “I’ll protect you!”

The seagulls, with Cleo in the lead, swooped down for the kill. Screeching, “You’ll not chase us away!” they attacked with blinding speed, causing panic among the terrified baby turtles who frantically scurried about trying to avoid the angry birds’ beaks. But Sandra, moving like a whirlwind, repeatedly drove the attackers away.

Every time a turtle was attacked, Sandra shouted, “Leave that turtle alone!” and charged straight at the offending birds.

“No!” the seagulls in unison shouted back. “The beach is ours, not yours, and we’re hungry!” they cackled defiantly.

“The beach belongs to the turtles too!” Sandra retorted, “and I am here to make sure that my little cousins survive.”

Cleo screamed back, “You can’t stop us, you stupid oaf!” Being called an oaf, and especially a stupid oaf, was the second-worst insult one could call a turtle.

“I will stop you,” Sandra said.

Then the unimaginable occurred. Sandra caught one of the seagulls in her flippers and began squeezing the bird with all of her might. Then she began devouring the bird. Appalled and stunned, the seagulls stopped what they were doing and gasped in horror. The sight of one of their kind being killed and eaten by a turtle filled them with revulsion and despair.

“Look what you’ve done!” Cleo screeched at Sandra.

“I warned you what would happen, but you didn’t believe me,” Sandra said, with no trace of remorse.

“You’ll pay for this!” Cleo said, livid with rage.

“You made me do it!” Sandra said in reply, not for a moment backing down. She then swallowed the dead seagull with one final gulp.

Cleo ordered the attack to stop and the seagulls retreated, flying high into the sky. Through her bold efforts, Sandra had saved all of her little cousins from death.

When the seagulls were gone, Sandra said to the baby turtles, “Now is your chance to reach the ocean. Follow me!” With Sandra in the lead, the group resumed their march to the ocean.

Having witnessed the defeat of the seagulls, the crabs at first remained hidden. But as the turtles crawled by, some of the crabs, believing that they could evade Sandra, darted out from their burrows in the sand and began grabbing baby turtles. However, each time a crab snatched a turtle, Sandra would charge at the offending crustacean which, frightened, would relinquish its victim and then frantically bury itself in the sand to escape Sandra's wrath. Most of the crabs were able to escape without being harmed. But one crab wasn't so lucky. Her name was Abigail and she was Charley's sister. Sandra caught her before she could scurry into the sand, and with her brother and all the other crabs watching in horror, ripped the unfortunate beast into pieces and then ate each piece until the entire crab was devoured. Hysterical with despair, Charley fled into the ocean, never to return. Soon after, the other crabs, now terrified of Sandra, also ran away, and the baby turtles were not bothered by them anymore.

Confident that there would be no further trouble, the turtles, with Sandra leading, continued their trek to the ocean. But little did they know that this peaceful interlude would soon be shattered.

CHAPTER SIX

As the humans began arriving at the beach, they were shocked and amazed by what they saw. A large turtle, running about on its flippers, was

fending off hundreds of seagulls that were attacking it from all directions. The seagulls had returned in force to settle their score with Sandra. No one among the humans knew what had caused the fight nor did anyone care.

The fighting got steadily intensified as more and more seagulls joined in the fracas. Soon the turtle was totally obliterated from view.

Humans from other parts of the beach came running to see what was going on and in a few moments a large crowd had formed. The commotion also attracted the attention of the police, who attempted to cordone off the area where the fighting was occurring.

Sandra remained completely oblivious to all the attention she and the seagulls were attracting. All she knew was that she was fighting for her life and for the survival of her little cousins who wanted desperately to reach the ocean.

“I’ll protect you,” Sandra called out to her charges.

Meanwhile the seagulls continued their relentless assault on Sandra, who fought the birds with all of her might.

The humans did not appreciate the drama that was taking place. To them, the fighting involved a bunch of dumb animals who didn’t know any better and were ruining an otherwise beautiful beach day.

While the police were trying to figure out how to quell the disturbance, the fighting escalated; within minutes several hundred more seagulls had joined the fracas, trying to kill Sandra.

But the seagulls' efforts failed, for Sandra was too strong for them. Scores of dead and injured seagulls soon littered the beach. This delighted the crabs who, driven by hunger, had gradually returned to the beach and now quickly went to work devouring the seagull remains.

Undeterred by the heavy losses they were incurring, the seagulls redoubled their efforts to destroy Sandra. And Sandra, undaunted, continued to fight back.

“Go away!” she screamed and would crush a seagull between her powerful legs.

“You go away!” the seagulls yelled back, and would continue stabbing at Sandra with their beaks.

After a while, the seagulls began arguing among themselves as some of the birds, beginning to tire from their efforts to drive away the turtle, felt that further struggle was useless.

However, for the seagulls who wanted to continue fighting, the choice was clear – either defeat Sandra or die. To them the very survival of their species was at stake. They feared that if defeated by the turtle, they would be denied their major source of food and would starve.

“But why should we fight?” a seagull named Aloysius asked. “There are other sources of food, and besides, we can't defeat this big, crazy turtle.”

Hearing this defeatist talk, the hawkish seagulls, led by Cleo, became crazy with rage.

“What are you saying? We are the masters of the beach and no turtle will ever drive us away!” Cleo screeched, outraged.

“C’mon, guys, let’s teach that stupid turtle a lesson!” she exclaimed to her followers, and with those words ringing in their ears, the birds renewed their efforts to destroy Sandra, who continued to kill them one by one.

Sandra hoped that the aggressive seagulls would listen to their pacifist partners and stop fighting. But they would not listen, and so the battle raged on.

While the fighting ensued, the seagulls, focusing their efforts on Sandra, completely ignored the baby turtles who continued to inch their way toward the ocean. With cries of joy they finally reached the shoreline and with one final lunge each one plunged head-first into the refreshing surf.

As the baby turtles disappeared into the water, the seagulls gradually broke off their attack. Even their leader Cleo realized that further fighting was useless. Sandra was victorious; her revenge complete. The seagulls’ domination of the beach had finally been broken. Seeing that the fighting had stopped, the police left the beach. But Sandra was soon to discover that her struggles were not yet over.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Although to the turtles Sandra was a heroine, to the humans on the beach she was a threat. Nobody knew what to do with this big, aggressive turtle and not understanding her, they feared her instead.

Now Sandra was not fond of humans either. She saw close up how badly the humans had fouled the beach with their garbage and how they trampled on the turtles' nests, completely insensitive to the rights of turtle. In some ways, they were worse than the seagulls and Sandra wanted to right this situation at once.

Hiding behind a sand dune, Sandra noticed a man, a woman, and two young children sitting on a blanket that, unbeknownst to them, they had placed directly on top of a turtle's nest. Infuriated, Sandra charged straight toward the family. Seeing this huge reptile coming straight at them, the children began screaming while the man and woman threw their beach chairs at the charging turtle in an effort to defend themselves and their children.

"Let's get out of here, Enid!" the man shouted, as he flung a beach basket at the intimidating intruder. "Get the kids, now!"

"Look out, Josiah!" Enid screamed as the turtle continued its mad rush toward them.

They frantically continued hurling objects at Sandra until finally Enid struck Sandra on the top of her head with a thermos bottle, momentarily dazing the reptile. While Sandra was staggering, Josiah and Enid gathered up their children and quickly left the area. Soon Josiah, now hysterical, was on his cell phone calling the police. Moments later Sandra, who had now regained her bearings, started chasing other people away from their blankets and chairs, and soon the beach front was in a state of

pandemonium, as this maniacal turtle rampaged up and down the beach, completely demolishing scores of chairs, beach umbrellas, blankets and towels.

Again the police appeared, this time to quell the disturbance caused by this weird and troublesome turtle. But the police were in a quandary. Under the law, the loggerhead turtle was a protected species, so the police had to make every reasonable effort to capture Sandra without harming or killing her. But Sandra proved to be one tough and resourceful turtle. First the police threw a net over her, but she bit right through the cords. Then they tried to put a noose around her head, but Sandra just shook the noose loose. Then they tried to shoot her with a tranquilizer shot from a rifle, but the needle bent. Now desperate, the police decided to call for help. Soon a military helicopter was hovering over the scene. Hanging from a cord fastened to the helicopter was a large steel cage. After several attempts, the helicopter succeeded in placing the cage over the turtle. Upon seeing this, the police shouted for joy and were preparing to transfer their prisoner to the local zoo authorities when something truly astonishing occurred. Using her large, powerful front flippers, Sandra started digging a tunnel and a few minutes later stood outside of the cage. The police, now totally frustrated, had to again confront this most formidable adversary.

“What can we do with this crazy turtle?” they asked each other with despair. “Let’s shoot it!” one irate officer demanded. “It’s only a turtle,”

other officers said. The large crowd of onlookers agreed with the police. “Kill it! Get rid of it!” many yelled.

Captain Brockmeyer, the officer-in-charge, listened to these comments and after giving the matter some thought, reluctantly gave the order to kill the turtle, justifying the decision on the grounds that the turtle posed a threat to the public safety and would eventually hurt or kill someone if not put down. As the police prepared to carry out the order, it seemed that Sandra had just a few more moments to live.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sandra watched intently as the police slowly approached her, guns drawn. She sensed that something bad was going to happen, but made no effort to flee or defend herself.

“What are these nasty humans doing and why are they holding those metal objects in their hands?” Sandra wondered. “Don’t they know that I am now mistress of the beach and protector of the turtles?”

Of course, the police could not know what Sandra was thinking, and if they had been told, they would not have believed it and would have called anyone who did believe it mad. The possibility that animals could actually think like human beings was an idea that most people found preposterous. True, many people had pets, such as dogs and cats and birds, and even turtles, and lavished them with love and attention. But to believe that their

pets were capable of abstract thought was something that almost no person was willing to accept. Because if that were the case, then the relationship between humans and animals would have to be redefined since the inferiority of animals could no longer be taken for granted.

On the beach, however, no one was troubled by such thoughts. To the police, Sandra was nothing but a dumb reptile whose aggressive behavior posed a threat to the safety of the public. And for that she was going to pay with her life.

CHAPTER NINE

Soon a group of police officers formed a circle around Sandra, each officer holding a gun aimed straight at her head. They were waiting for the order to open fire. Suddenly an old man ran out from the crowd and started pleading with the police not to shoot.

“Don’t shoot!” the old man said. “I can talk to this poor creature!” he insisted.

Hearing that, everyone started laughing. The old man, whose name was Cliff, was known as the town crackpot. He was often observed wandering aimlessly around town and talking to himself. But he was considered harmless, so people indulged him in his fantasies and left him alone.

Cliff, however, persisted. “Please, I beg of you, let me talk to the creature,” he pleaded over and over again.

Moments later the old man was weeping inconsolably and the other humans began feeling sorry for him. Captain Brockmeyer ordered the police officers to put away their guns and went over to Cliff who was sitting in the sand, wiping the tears from his face.

“Okay, Cliff,” Captain Brockmeyer said. “I’ll let you try to talk to the turtle. But if the turtle threatens you or anyone else here, in any way, we will have to take action.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you!” Cliff said, looking up at the stern looking but kindly police commander.

Cliff got up, brushed the sand from his shabby clothes, and began walking slowly toward the turtle.

“Take it easy, take it easy. I’m not going to hurt you,” Cliff said, trying to reassure Sandra.

While Cliff was approaching Sandra, Sandra was sizing up Cliff. Unlike other humans, Cliff seemed to be friendly, and Sandra liked making friends. So she decided to let Cliff come closer.

Finally Cliff was standing directly in front of Sandra. Then he got down on his knees and looked straight into Sandra’s eyes. Sandra, unperturbed, stared straight back at Cliff. She liked Cliff’s face, with its long beard, shaggy hair and twinkling eyes, and knew instinctively that Cliff would not harm her.

“Oh, what a beautiful turtle you are,” Cliff said. Cliff then placed his hands on Sandra’s shell and said, “Through me you shall talk.”

Skeptical but curious, the police and the crowd of onlookers watching this strange spectacle moved closer to this unusual pair to hear what the turtle would say. In an instant, Cliff lapsed into a trance. Then, in a deep, powerful, and melodious voice that found expression through Cliff's now mechanical-like mouth, Sandra began to talk.

“I am Sandra. I was born on this beach, and came back to protect my little cousins from harm. The seagulls are my worst enemy because they kill so many of the little turtles, and you humans kill turtles too when you step on our nests. Please stop stepping on our nests. We want to be friends. We have a right to live. If I scared anyone, I am sorry, but I was sad and upset. Please understand. If you want to hurt me, go right ahead. I will not fight. But please do not harm the little baby turtles.”

Hearing Sandra's impassioned plea, several humans started weeping and soon she was surrounded by a large crowd who wanted to touch her and be her friend. One portly man, the owner of the local seafood restaurant, announced that he would no longer be serving turtle soup. Another, a rough looking local fisherman, said that he'd be throwing away his fishing net, and Enid and Josiah promised that in the future they would be more careful where they set their blanket. Sandra soon forgot her anger and began making friends too. She showed her friendship by waving at the humans with her flippers. Then with a final wave of her flippers, Sandra, now feeling joy, turned around and returned to the ocean. The humans followed her into the water, frolicking with her in the waves, her shell

glowing in the sunlight. Then with one final plunge into the surf, Sandra disappeared into the sea, gone forever, her mission complete.

As for Cliff, he went back to his dilapidated shack, fell asleep on his worn-out mattress, and dreamed sweet dreams about large, beautiful turtles.

THE END