WELCOME TO FISH U!

ISSUE 24

VEEFRIENDS



GARY VAYNERCHUK

ALI CASTRO

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ISSUE #24
FISH UNIVERSITY

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WELCOME TO FISH U!
Orientation Day!
The future starts now

MEET BASHFUL BLOBFISH. FIRST DAY. NO PLAN. NO CLUE. JUST A LOT OF PRESSURE... AND EVEN MORE UNDERWATER.

WHY AM I EVEN HERE?

THE DEEP TANK DORM D

BOOM BA-DOOM

HEH-

ROOMIE!

YOU MADE IT! WELCOME TO THE DEEP TANK, BABY!

BABOOM!

YOU LIKE KELP CHIPS OR KRILL PUFFS? 'CAUSE WE GOT BOTH!!!

UH...

YOU BETTER BE READY! WE'RE GETTING *LIT* ALL NIGHT!

BOOM

PA-TSS

I DIDN'T COME HERE FOR THIS.

THIS PLACE IS LOUD...

WHAT AM I EVEN DOING HERE...

MAYBE I SHOULD GO?

5

RING RING

WE'RE JUST SO PROUD OF YOU, SWEETIE!

FIRST BLOBFISH IN OUR REEF TO GO TO COLLEGE!

GONE FISHING?

TALK TO YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR TODAY!

YEAH...

IT SURE IS *SOMETHING* HERE.

FEAR

I COULD ALWAYS LEAVE?

...MAYBE I JUST NEED TIME TO ADJUST.

Click

GULP

YOU ALL LOOK TIRED!

WAKE UP!!!

IN TWO WEEK'S WE'LL HAVE ONE-MINUTE SPEECH PRESENTATIONS!

CORAL COMMUNICATIONS 101

UM, IS THERE A... NON-SPEAKING OPTION?

NOPE! REMEMBER, YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

FISH U IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO PRACTICE USING IT!

GREAT. FIRST ASSIGNMENT AND I'M ALREADY DROWNING HERE.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEXT RAGER, LITTLE DUDE?

ANOTHER ONE?! OLLIE, I HAVEN'T HAD A QUIET NIGHT YET...

DUDE, F*CK YEAH! GOOD FOR YOU! LET'S KEEP IT GOING!

THIS PARTY IS SPACE THEMED!

LATER

BASH! I SIGNED US UP FOR ANOTHER KARAOKE SONG! GET UP HERE!!!

UH-HEH... I CAN ONLY SING ROCKET MAN SO MANY TIMES!

BRO, NO WORRIESSS! WE'LL DO FLY ME TO THE MOON!

30 MINUTES LATER

1 HOURS LATER

BINK

3 HOURS LATER

GRRRRR

ENOUGH!

I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE. I KEEP PARTICIPATING IN ALL THESE EVENTS BUT I AM DRAINED! YOU'RE GREAT OLLIE, BUT I AM NOT LIKE YOU.

I CAN'T KEEP GOING. I NEED TIME TO ADJUST, TO BE CALM, AND CENTER MYSELF. THAT'S SOMETHING I'M NOT ASHAMED OF!

...LAME.

WHACK

WHOA, THAT'S SO REAL.

HE'S REALLY BRAVE FOR SAYING THAT.

TO BE HONEST, I FEEL THE SAME WAY.

1 NEW FOLLOWER
1 NEW FOLLOWER
1 NEW FOLLOWER
1 NEW FOLLOWER
1 NEW FOLLOWER
HEY BRO... SORRY FOR PRESSURING YOU TO KEEP UP WITH ME. I TRULY DIDN'T KNOW HOW YOU FELT.
THANKS. BUT, IT'S ON ME. I COULD HAVE SPOKEN UP SOONER.
I CAN GET A BIT BASHFUL IN OVERWHELMING SITUATIONS. IT CAN PUSH ME TO A BOILING POINT LIKE TONIGHT...
AND NOW I'M TRENDING ON GLUB-GLOP...
DING
NEW FOLLOWERS
@FISHANDBONES_
@SHREWDSHARKY
@ALIEN_ADAPTS
@KINDNOWAR
@EELWITHENERGY
MEGAMOTIVA
WHOA, YOU GAINED LIKE 50K FOLLOWERS! EVEN THE FISH AND BONES SOCIETY FOLLOWED YOU!
THAT'S INSANE!!!
THE WHAT?
PFFFFT... ONLY THE OLDEST ELITE ***SECRET SOCIETY,*** IN ALL OF THE BLUE SEA! THEY HAVE AN ACCOUNT BUT, NEVER POST. STILL ALMOST EVERY CREATURE FOLLOWS THEM!
COOL, I GUESS. I'M GOING TO GET SOME REST, OLLIE.
YEAH... OKAY! NIGHT, DUDE.

I CAN FEEL THEM WATCHING ME... I BET THEY THINK I'M DRAMATIC.

LOOK IT'S HIM!

WHOA, IT'S BASH BLOBFISH!

HEY BASH!

I'M SPONTA. I FOUND YOUR SPONTANEOUS OUTBURST TO BE REFRESHING.

OH- HI!

HE'S THE FISH WHO GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE TO SAY NO!

OH, *GULP* THANKS. IT WAS A VULNERABLE MOMENT

F.O.M.O. KEEPS EVERYONE ON EDGE HERE, IT'S COOL THAT YOU KNOW WHAT YOU LIKE.

AHA! WOW, THANKS GUYS!

WE CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR YOUR SPEECH! I'M SURE IT WILL BE INSPIRING AND AUTHENTIC.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, PRESENTATION DAY IS NEXT WEEK. ONE MORE WEEK OF PREP! ANYONE NERVOUS?

NOT ME. I'VE RETAKEN THIS CLASS 3 TIMES SO I'VE HAD PLENTY OF PRACTICE.

SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU SHOULD PROBABLY PRACTICE A BIT MORE...

SIMMER DOWN... TO SPEAK FROM THE HEART IN FRONT OF YOUR PEERS IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN YOU MAY THINK. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM ALL OF YOU.

ESPECIALLY YOU, BASH!

OKAY BASH... YOU SURVIVED KARAOKE. YOU SURVIVED A VIRAL VIDEO. YOU CAN DO THIS.

NO, THANK YOU. I DON'T WANT ANOTHER SEAWEED SLIDER.

NO, I DON'T WANT TO JOIN YOUR SEA SPINNING CLASS. I GET ***DIZZY!***

THANKS BUT, I'D RATHER NOT GO TO THE RAVE. I NEED A QUIET NIGHT.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN. MEAN WHAT YOU SAY AND MAYBE... THEY'LL STILL LIKE YOU ***ANYWAY!***

AH-HEM..

!

...

..YOU GOT THIS, DUDE.

THANKS.

THIS GUY AGAIN?

UH... THE OCEAN IS BIG AND FULL OF LIFE. SO... YEAH. FOLLOW YOUR FINS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT. JUST BE REAL.

...HI.

THIS IS HARD FOR ME.

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE HERE. I DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN. BUT... I'M STILL HERE.

I USED TO THINK BEING QUIET MEANT I DON'T BELONG HERE. THAT IF I WASN'T LOUD OR FUNNY, OR FEARLESS.... I DIDN'T FIT IN.

BUT IT TURNS OUT...

...YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHOUT TO TAKE UP SPACE. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE WILLING TO SPEAK.

I LIKE QUIET NIGHTS. I NEED TIME ALONE. I HATE FISH PONG.

AND I LOVE BEING ME!

. . . . .

THAT'S MY ROOMMATE!!!

HEY BASH, I GET ANXIOUS IN BIG GROUPS... I FEEL AWKWARD.

WE CAN MAKE YOU UNSHAKABLE IN SMALL GROUPS. THAT'S WHERE IT STARTS.

MOST INSPIRING BASHFUL BLOBFISH

HE'S A WHOLE MENTOR FOR INTROVERTS NOW!

WHAT A LEGEND!

OKAY BUT, SERIOUSLY! ONLY STAYING AN HOUR OR TWO TOPS.

BASH... MIND IF I STEAL YOU FOR A CHAT?

OH, I MEAN- I DON'T MIND BEING STOLEN.

I LIKED YOUR SPEECH. IT FELT LIKE... YOU WERE FINALLY SAYING WHAT I'VE BEEN TO AFRAID TO ADMIT.

YEAH? I WASN'T SURE ANYONE WOULD GET IT.

I DID

SUP FISHIES!

HEY, OLLIE... WANNA DO A DUET?

DEW-A-DUET WITH ME!

OH OH OH KARAOKE?! WHO *ARE* YOU?

THAT'S THE FISH I TOLD YOUS 'BOUT. HE HAS POTENTIAL.

THAT SQUISHY DUDE?

I TOTALLY SEE IT.

ONE HOUR TURNED INTO FOUR. AHA! WORTH IT THIS TIME.

CRUNCH

WHAT THE KELP IS THIS?

...TOTALLY NOT OMINOUS AT ALL.

IS THIS REAL?

You are hereby invited to join
-The-
Fish & Bones
Society
meet @ THE TRENCHES 11PM DONT BE L8.

BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO SHOW UP AS YOURSELF. YOU NEVER KNOW WHO'S WATCHING.

BUILDING CHARACTERS

Alongside concepts like *Doggy Daycare* and *Farm Fights*, *Fish University* (or *FISH U*) was one of the first ensemble books Gary Vaynerchuk brought to our first comic offsite to brainstorm.

The core idea was simple and strong. An underwater "school of fish," a bashful freshman, and a cast of students all trying to find their place before the real world hits.

As we started to build it out, artist Ali Castro jumped in early with character designs inspired by Gary's ideas. From there, things opened up fast. Could fish wear accessories? Clothes? Hairstyles? Should fish even have hair? The more we pushed it, the more personality the world gained.

Usually, we'd spend time debating assignments or bringing in new artists. This time, Ali just ran with it. The sketches were strong right out of the gate, and it was an easy call to have her lead the book.

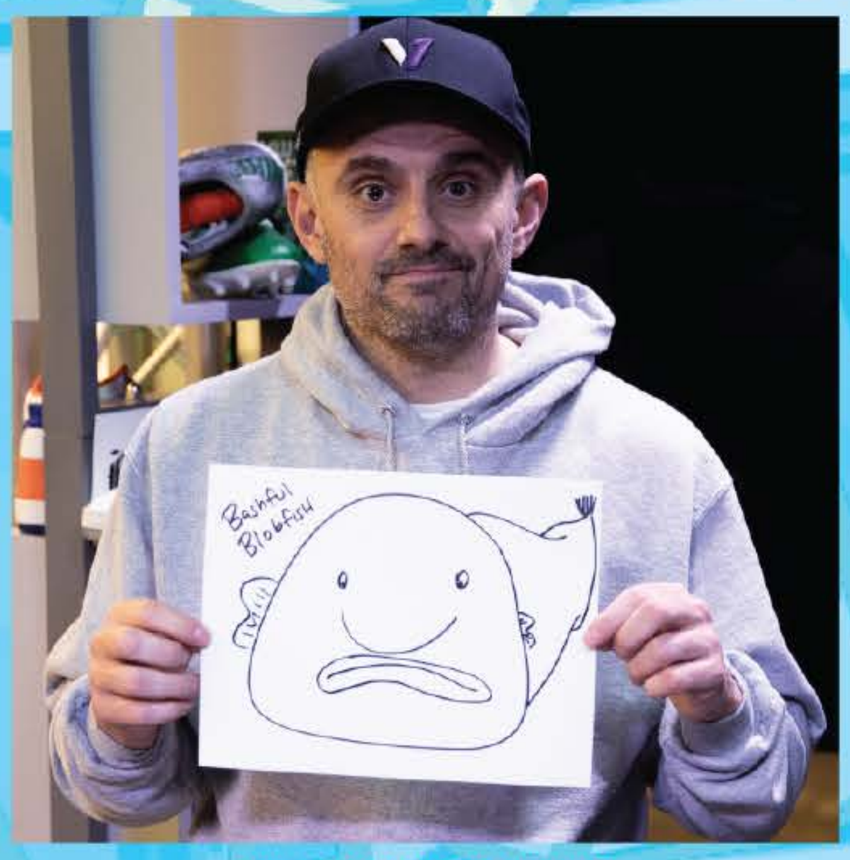
You'll see some of Ali's original sketches from the offsite in the pages ahead.

We also had a lot of fun with the tone. The underwater setting led to way too many puns, to the point where Gary started calling Chris Fason and I "*the Pun Brothers.*"

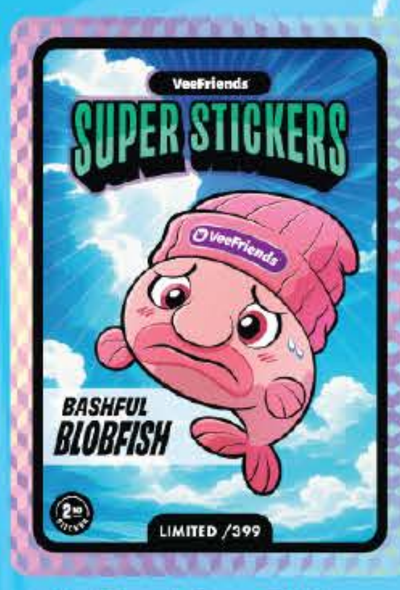
Fun fact, even though *Doggy Daycare* (VeeFriends Issue #14) was Ali's first published book, she actually drew *Fish U* first. It was originally planned as Issue #8, but that slot landed on Gary's birthday, and he wanted *Gary Bee* to launch that day (November 14). One shift led to another, and *Fish U* found its home here in late July 2026, which ended up being perfect for a back-to-school vibe and lined up nicely with San Diego Comic-Con.

We hope you enjoy the issue. If you want more *FISH U*, let us know at comics@veefriends.com. We're listening.

— D.J. Coffman
Creative Director, July 2026



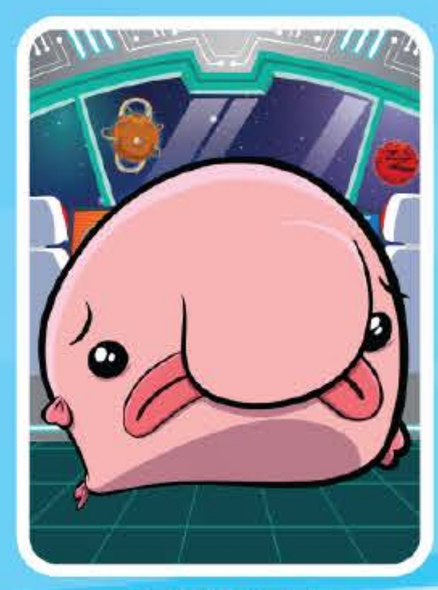
Gary with his Original Drawing of Bashful Blobfish



VeeFriends Super Stickers Manga Series Bashful Blobfish, Manga Clouds



VeeFriends Super Stickers Spectacular Series Bashful Blobfish, White Ice



Bashful Blobfish Mega Head Illustration



Outgoing Octopus Original Illustration



Joyous Jellyfish Original Illustration



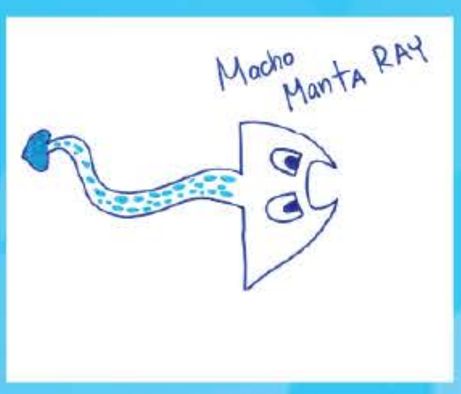
Candid Clownfish Original Illustration



Spontaneous Seahorse Original Illustration

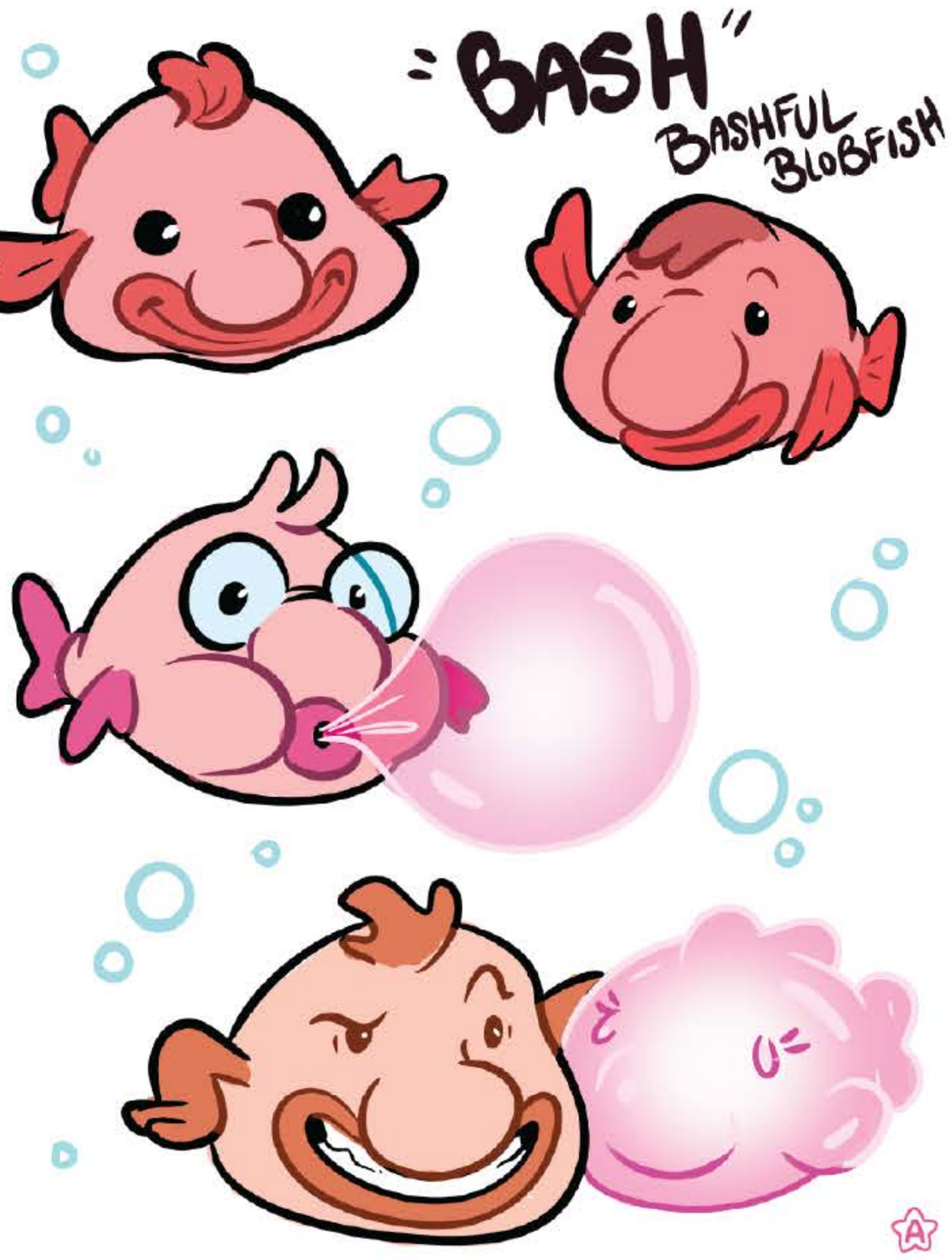


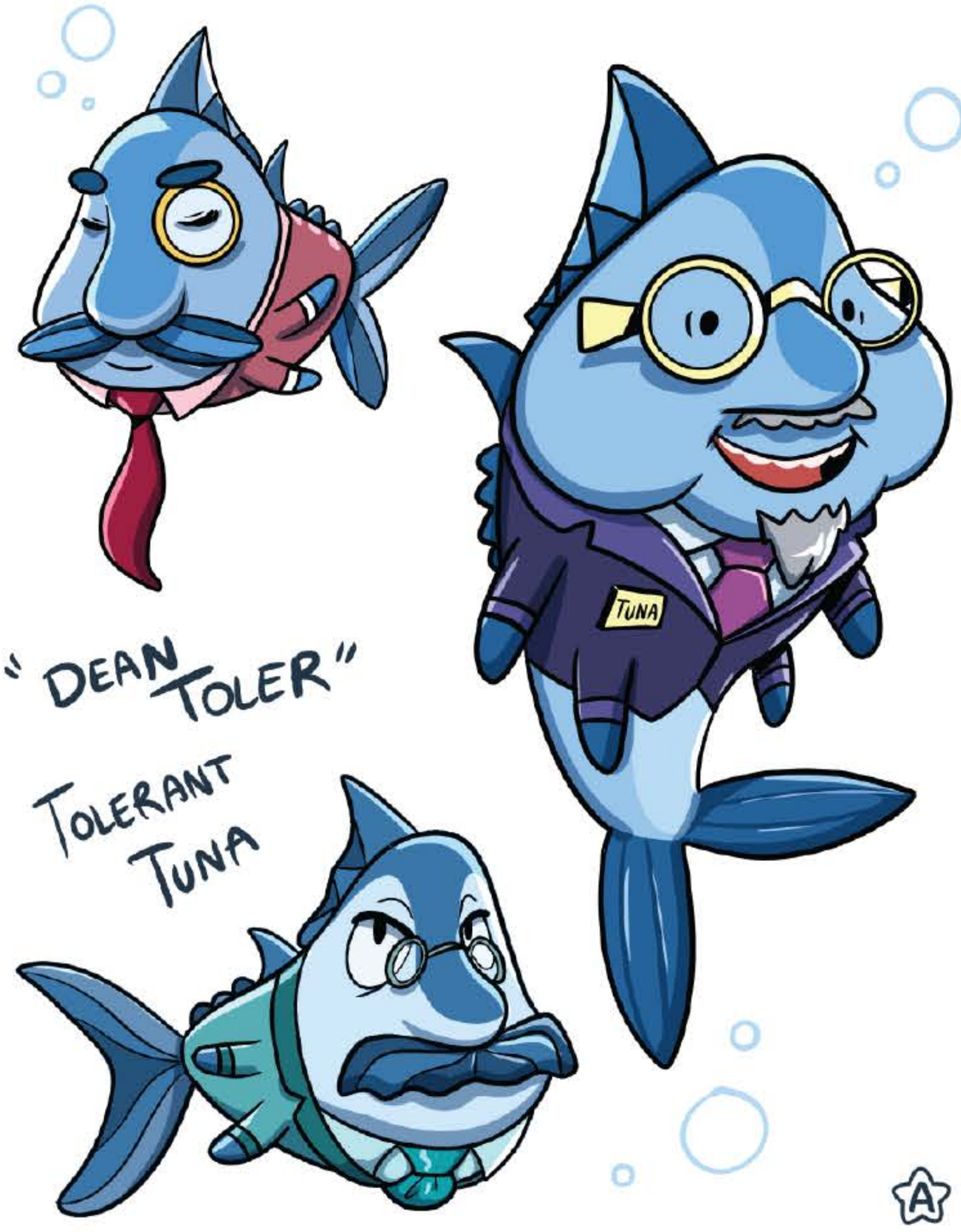
Swaggy Sea Lion Original Illustration



Macho Manta Ray Original Illustration

ALI CASTRO SKETCHBOOK



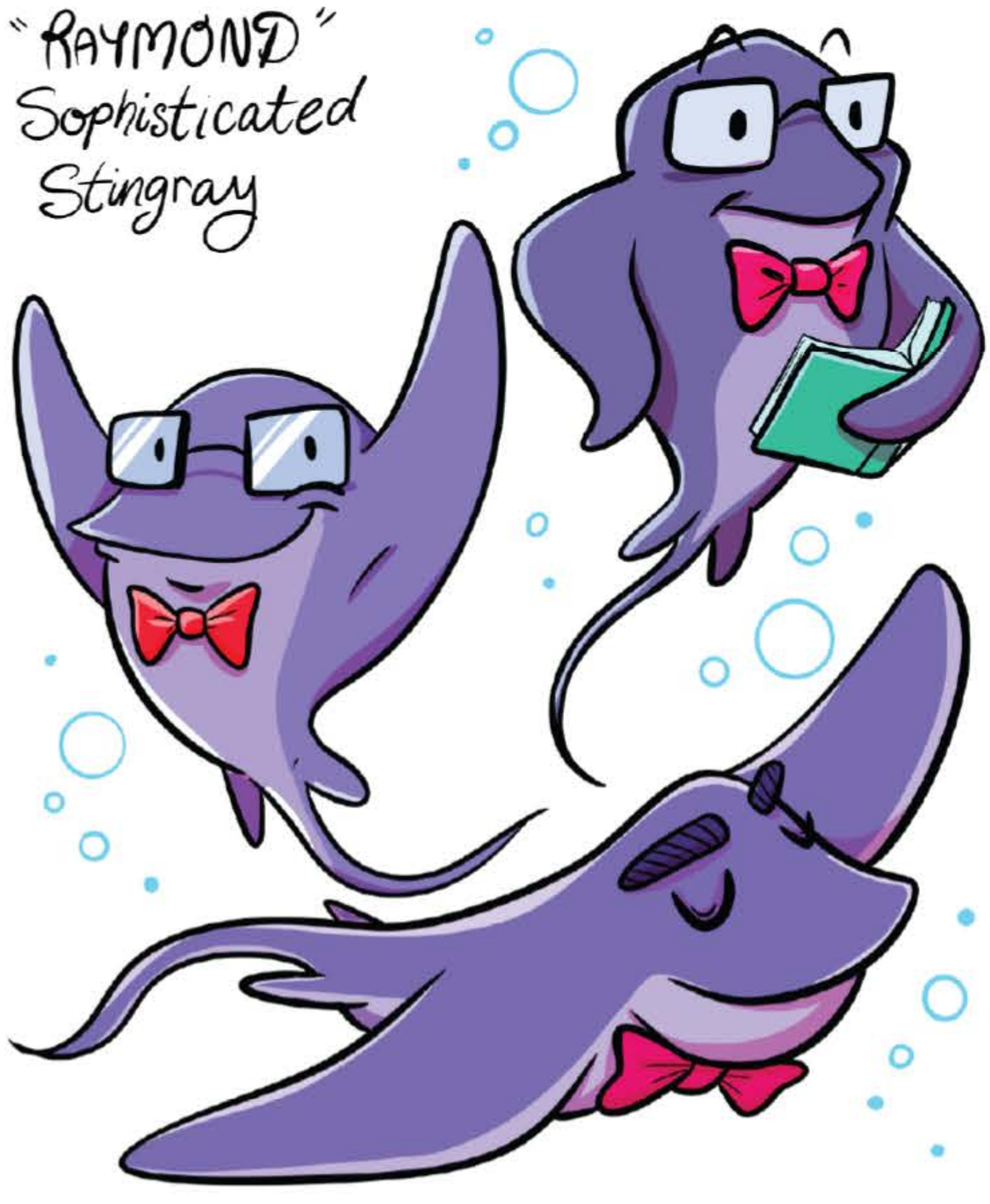






Here's a look at some of Ali's first character designs, many from the brainstorm session. Some made the cut, some didn't. Which is your favorite?









BONUS FISH U Comic Strips by Ali!

CLAP!

ROARING APPLAUSE!

CLAP!

CLAP!

DANG, BASH WAS AMAZING. HE REALLY OWNED WHO HE IS.

MAYBE I'LL DO MY ORIGINAL SPEECH INSTEAD OF *LITTLE FISH, GENTLE FISH.*

...

EH, HEM-

KRILL!!

RISE UP!!! WE DON'T HAVE TO BE PREY! TOGETHER, WE CAN BE DANGEROUS! WE CAN BE

KRILLERS!!

SPONTA!!! PRETTY LADYYYY! I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU EVERYWHERE! GOOD THING I FOUND YOU, YOU'RE PROBABLY ***SO*** SCARED AT THIS BIG PARTY.

UGH... THIS GUY.

I WAS JUST CHOMPING ON SOME KRILL AND SWAM LIKE 20 LAPS FOR FUN. NOW, I'M TRYING TO GET MY GROOVE ON WITH FLYEST FISH UNDER THE SEA.

AND THAT'S ***YOU*** BABY!

I SUDDENLY FEEL FAINT! OH NO! I WISH I HAD A KELP DRINK TO SIP ON!

MOVE!

I CAN GET IT! LET ME GET IT!

OH... HEY.

NAH, I'M NOT BUSY.

BASH, WHERE ARE YOU?

DID YOU READ THE LETTER FROM BOSS MAN?

YEAH, SAYS HE WANTS A FISH WITH AN UNEXPECTED STRENGTH.

I HEARD A BASHFUL BLOBFISH GAVE A RADICALLY AUTHENTIC SPEECH THE OTHER DAY.

DEFINITELY WASN'T EXPECTING THAT FROM SUCH A TIMID FISH.

HMMM...

HE COULD BE THE EXACT TYPE OF CREATURE BOSS IS LOOKING FOR.



COVER ANATOMY

This issue features two special alternate covers.



Cover B Art





Art from Rachel's Instagram

Cover B by

RACHEL HOO

While Rachel has never published comics before, she has a massive following for her pop-culture and fan artwork on Instagram @ raychelwho. She actually works at VaynerMedia NYC (Gary's Creative & Media Agency) and was introduced to us really early on before the comics team was formed. We'd love to get her drawing an actual story! Which VeeFriend would you like to see her draw?



Cover C Art

Cover C by

JIM RUGG

Fish U continues the VeeFriends three-cover comic format with a new Cover C by Jim Rugg, a creative producer on the VeeFriends comics team and an acclaimed cartoonist. Collectors can look forward to three unique covers in every VeeFriends comic pack: Cover A as the base, Cover B at a 20% pull rate, and Cover C at a 10% pull rate.