# Story Brief template (with ideas)

## Title/author

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## What stage is your story in (outline, partial 1st draft, complete 1st draft, revised)?

Finished and complete 1235 words

## What is the key climate solution proposed in this story?

Re planting coral in the ocean

## Do you include other climate solutions? If so list.

No

## Story/story outline (if outline, please include any ideas on how to make it engaging to read)

The Caretaker

Corals are very old animals, and when I say old I don’t mean creaky boned, press a shiny coin into your hands granny old; I mean beyond the limits of our imagination and our 9 to 5 lives. Think of the Pyramids, square base, triangular sides, pointy topped toblerones. A vast three dimensional tortilla crisp, but older much older than its cheesy tasting counterpart, and a great deal older than gran. 4,650 years old; now multiply that roughly 200,000 times and that’s what I mean by old. That is when coral first appeared in our oceans, creeping, colonising, along with their wobbly, transparent cousins jellyfish.

They are neon light show pleasing, or rather the animals that inhabit the coral, radiating blues, purples, greens, reds and pinks, a gay rainbow of ocean fauna. Little animals with the appearance of nettles, hedgehog backs, bathroom sponges and dermatitis these polyps terraform the ocean floor.

In my childhood coral were abundant, perhaps 500 types if I counted them all, plentiful loaves and fishes at the feeding of the 5,000. Talking of fishes the coral sustained maybe a 1,000 reef fish, though I was barely conscious of their darting, skulking or marauding presence. I swam, I dived, I harvested and they were there, ubiquitous. I didn’t bat an eye lid, this array of life and colour was the backdrop to my youth, its permanence unquestioned.

At first it was fishing, spears, nets and baskets, scooping as much of the seas rich harvest as was possible. Sad, but no tragedy, people need to live, sustainability the key, as the fish stock and coral bounced back. Then in early adulthood I witnessed bigger nets scooping thousands of fish in one greedy swoop and anchors crashing through coral, a wrecking ball to an increasingly decrepit old house. Still the oceans coped although fish stock wobbled and the coral struggled to repair, sticking plasters to an increasing wound.

I sensed we would survive, but as I moved through my middle aged years my naivete, that faith and trust in the good, or at least common sense of humankind was sorely exposed. Vast nets dredged the ocean floor, ripping apart the reef. I went down in the fifth a combination of punches battering my head and torso. Winded I climbed to my feet ready to recover. Then in the eighth came a series of conscussive blows, as nutrients and pesticides from land runoff decreased the oxygen in the shallow coastal waters. I gasped for air and fought to survive through the onslaught as algae covered the surface feeding off the rich nutrients. The fields of seagrass and plants that I remembered withered, and with them the fish and crustaceans. Even then I still believed I could survive the fight, as I bear hugged my opponent to stop the flailing body shattering arms. Then came the assault from which I could never recover, climate change, that one two to the body and with it the uppercut of rising ocean temperatures. I hit the canvas, Ali felling Richard Dunn again and again. But this time I wasn’t going to make the count, I couldn’t hear the shouts from my corner, my legs had gone and with them my spirit, and my fight to survive.

That was it, the multiple assault left the ocean scarred and lifeless. So I dived, I swam amongst the scarred wreckage of reef, scattered and lifeless, the grim reaper’s harvest complete. Gone were the forest of seagrass, leaving an underwater desert of pale-yellow sand stretching towards the darkness. Deserts hold no life and this was no exception. The occasional lone fish that had lost its way, or perhaps working on instinct, remembering more abundant times. I dreamed at night of the olden times, where the reef put on a show of colourful glitz, the backdrop to an all singing all dancing cabaret of colourful sea creatures. Each day a party, each day a riot, I was young and times were good. But now, as I enter my older years my memory is jaded, my limbs stiffen, my eyesight fails and it is a blessing that I have little appetite, as food is scarce. Each day is a living nightmare, as I patrol the desert searching for something, anything that will give me hope. On the land it is no better, empty villages stand where there were once thriving fishing communities. With no reef for protection the coast is flooded, rendering fertile land, saline and useless. This attitude of take take take and screw the future has done just that; a brief moment of abundance followed by wasteland.

My continuous patrolling of this once abundant shoreline now turned to waste, akin to the Marie Celeste, floating aimlessly. Nameless passengers with no destination, all life long since perished. Venturing to a part of the shoreline that I haven’t visited for a while in hope, I struggle, wheezing, muscles stiff, limbs that ache, everywhere another jag, a sharp stick to the ribcage, a dull thud to the spine. It seems the years have finally caught up with me and everything beneath the waves is misty. The fog of my eyes, the creak of my body make searching that bit harder. Then a something catches my eye, an irregular structure on the barren floor of the ocean. Turning to investigate I see a wooden frame and attached young polyps of coral. Through my blurred vision I see clearly the beginnings of life, a nursery of toddlers has been magically transported to the seabed. Normally I would have returned but my excitement dulls the pain, soothes the limbs and I continue. Another frame, this one nearly covered with coral. I see blue, pink, green, I had forgotten its beauty and around it, the beginnings of snails, fish, life. I swim further and first I am greeted by sporadic fish, then a clump of coral , and another, and another, an ocean garden replanted.

Perhaps there are more further on, but I am tired and turn away. The exhilaration, the extra distance have exhausted me more than I think, so I barely notice the small boat draw alongside, the strong hands that lift me out of the water.

“Hey what we got? Come on old boy lets have a look at you.” Placed onto the deck, hands turn me feeling my limbs, stroking my forehead, checking, a patient at the doctor’s surgery. “How old do you reckon this fella is?”

“Maybe 50 years, he’s been around the block that’s for sure.”

“He was probably here before the reef was decimated.”

“Yeah amazing that he’s still alive. Here I’ll just tag him and we’ll put him back.”

“That’s so cool, perhaps we’ll see more turtles now that we’re replanting the reef, I’ve already seen reefs forming and a whole load of marine life returning.”

“Yeah let’s put him back in.” I feel hands lower me over the side of the boat and gently into the water. “See ya fella.”

“Yeah and good luck.” The boat doesn’t move as I swim slowly away, they are loath to let me go and I feel the affection in their distant gaze. I hear the engine as the boat heads away towards the fledgling reef. They are now the caretakers and I know that although a small beginning, in their hands, I might once again dive in rainbow seas teeming with life.

## Follow up information

Over fishing, global warming, nutrient runoff have over the years destroyed a coral reef and its accompanying life. Our protagonist has seen the change from seas teeming with myriad rainbow life to an ocean desert, bleak and lifeless. Now in their older years they witness the first signs of coral replanting on wooden frames, which encourages further marine life. It is only at the end we realise that they are a turtle that has swum there all their life.

## What makes you think it (specify which solution) will make a difference. How did you find out about it? What are your sources?

Up to 50% of the world’s coral has already been lost. Protection in places such as the Solomon Islands is already underway <https://www.coralreefecosystems.org/coral-reef-rescue-initiative/>

And regeneration has started, eg there are 20 coral nurseries in the Caribbean. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/restoring-coral-reefs>

These efforts need to be continued and increased to save and restore coral reefs

## How confident are you in your judgement i.e. are you expert in this field or have you consulted an expert – give details (please complete for each solution)

## What can the reader do to progress this idea? How we can get from where we are now to the ideal outcome. Who/what is required to get to ideal outcome? (policy, finance, research?)

Government agencies working with charities and local communities to protect and replant.