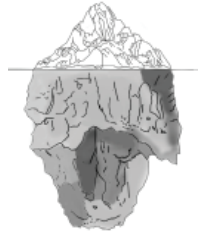


Chapter 12

Sharkface Explores an Ice Cave



When Sharkface said good-bye to Louie, he was off the northern tip of Baffin Island. He had managed to cross the frozen sea and was now in the Atlantic Ocean. He was proud that he had swum from one ocean to another but he knew it was mostly luck. He was tired, but most of all, he was hungry.

The ocean in Baffin Bay was rough, but nothing like the waves in the Bering Sea. At times, there were large ice patches, but the sea was never frozen over and there was always an open track to follow. Sharkface felt at home now among ice floes; he knew how to handle himself, or at least he thought he did.

His route brought him near the coast of Greenland, where the water was mostly free of ice. At first he thought the hundreds of white specs on the horizon were islands covered with snow, but

when one rolled over, he knew something else was going on and he decided to go over and have a look. He swam close to the ice island; a sheer white wall towered high above his head.

When glaciers reach the sea, their ice rivers continue to push out over the water; in the spring pieces break off and float away as icebergs. Sharkface was now next to a very large one and he was curious. "I wonder how much of this thing is under water," he thought to himself as he stared straight up at the white cliff that seemed to go on forever. He was underwater for nearly half an hour, diving under the massive berg, until he came up on the other side. It looked like an upside-down underwater mountain. There were ridges and valleys and the remnants of what looked like a river all above his head. He was amazed at the sight of this topsy-turvy ice world.

On his next dive, he saw a crack leading upward to inside the iceberg; he could not quell his curiosity and swam into the crevice. The blue light coming from above and the smooth, glowing walls drew him farther and farther into the marvelous icy realm.

Not far into the crack, it started to rain, but instead of water droplets, it was a shower of tiny creatures falling from the walls above his head. The light drizzle turned into a downpour as the living droplets got larger and larger. There were worms and creatures with many legs, sponges and starfish and a blizzard of shrimp-like creatures that clouded the water, but the most bizarre were the huge spiders that crawled around his head and body. He

tried to eat them, but there was nothing there to eat but spindly legs. Soon, the storm of creatures fleeing their homes on the ice stopped and the water cleared. Some of the smaller creatures made a sort of bubbling sound as they fell, others cracked and popped. The sponges fell silently, and the spiders made a kind of clattering sound as they scurried about, but there were other noises, noises coming from inside the iceberg.

At first it was a low rumble that Sharkface felt throughout his body, then a groan that increased in pitch until finally, a loud, sharp crack caused the ice around him shudder.

“Maybe it is time to get out of this frozen world,” he thought and headed back the way he had come, but things looked different. There was a solid wall of ice blocking his path, and time and oxygen were running out. He would have to find a way out in the next few minutes or it would be like the frozen sea all over again. Then there was another loud, sharp sound, and everything turned upside down. The iceberg had broken apart and the piece in which he was trapped turned over; what once was a stark, white wall of ice was now open water. Sharkface lost no time making his way to the surface for a breath.

After a few minutes, he reflected on his narrow escape. “How stupid was this?” he thought to himself. “Here I was again caught in the ice with no way to get back to the air. I should have learned my lesson in the frozen sea.” Once again, Sharkface was lucky to have escaped with his life. It was foolish to go inside the iceberg,

but his curiosity overcame his caution, as it often did. He vowed to himself that he would not be so stupid the next time, but deep in his heart he knew that when he had the chance again, he would probably explore despite the danger. Also, he had another thrilling story to tell.

