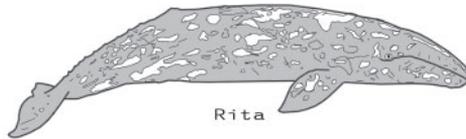


# Chapter Three

## Sharkface Begins His Journey



**A**fter nearly three months on the beach, Sharkface's wounds had completely healed. His left eye was gone and he had a large scar almost completely around his right. He had made some short trips and found he could get along very well with only one eye. He was well rested and well fed and looking forward to his next adventure.

When he was young, he heard there were elephant seals on the other side of the world and now he wanted more than anything to visit his distant cousins. He knew the journey would be long and full of dangers but the lure of the stories he would hear, the strange creatures he would meet and far-away places he would visit vanquished any fear. He was very excited about his upcoming adventure and was ready to get started right away.

He planned to head for Alaska. He had traveled up there many times before and he knew the route well. The fish and squid in those northern waters were so abundant he could easily eat enough to give him the layer of fat he needed for his long cold trip. Although he had never been north of the Aleutian Islands, he heard about a route across the top of the world from his friend, Cuvier, who heard it from an old bowhead whale, who had once swum between the two oceans. He said there was one warm line north of the Bearing Sea that turned to the east. If there was such a pathway, Sharkface was sure he could find it and make his way through.

There was a story about a walrus who swam all the way to England and back. He said it was a very difficult and dangerous journey and there was quite a lot of ice, but that didn't frighten Sharkface.

"If a clumsy walrus can do it, I can certainly make the trip with ease," he said to himself. (After having survived his encounter with the great white shark he was quite confident.) "If such a large shark can't do me in, what harm can a little ice do?" he thought.

Once in the Atlantic, he would head to the island of South Georgia where his relatives lived. He had not yet figured out how to get back home but there would be plenty of time for that.

One sunny day, Sharkface left his warm comfortable beach on Guadalupe Island and began his journey. As he headed east he ran into Cuvier, and they had a fine chat. Cuvier was a beaked whale, a very deep diver, and a world traveler. He and Sharkface had been friends for a long time and the stories the wandering whale had told were so fascinating, the young seal wanted to see all the oceans of the world for himself. They were both excited about his upcoming journey. Cuvier gave him some messages to give to his relatives in the Southern Ocean and told him some stories about things he might encounter along the way. After their talk, they said their good-byes and Sharkface gave Cuvier a hearty slap with his flipper and headed off to the north.

On the second day of Sharkface's journey, he was swimming close to the Mexican coast. For the last few hours he had been hearing whales talking to each other in the distance. They were on their way southward to the sheltered lagoons where, in a few weeks, they would give birth.

As a lad, he had listened to gray whale's gossipy conversations and had learned their language at a young age. He was not paying much attention to what they were saying, until he heard one of them mention the word Alaska. They were talking about how good the feasting had been and how fat they had all gotten. Then one of them told a story that made Sharkface listen carefully.

“Did you hear about Rita? She nearly lost her baby to a pack of killer whales last year. She and her calf were headed back up north when they were attacked. She tried to push him towards the

beach but the pack got between them. She got a bad cut in her lower lip and the baby was bitten on his flipper, but old Rita put up quite a fight. She tried to ram them but they were too fast; she thinks she hit one with her tail.”

Another whale chimed in. “I knew Rita from Mexico. She is very feisty”.

The first gray whale continued her story. “They kept attacking until Rita heard a loud clicking sound, and the killers all left in a big hurry. Have you ever heard of anything like that before?”

No one answered.

“After the killers left, Rita and her calf were bleeding badly, but they kept swimming. I saw them this year in Alaska and they were doing fine.”

Two or three other whales chimed in “Good for her.”

As their voices faded, Sharkface could hear them still telling their stories but he could not make out any words.

Early in the evening of the fourth day Sharkface passed the lights of San Diego. He was just about to start a long dive when he heard a bottlenose dolphin coming in his direction from a long way off. She was constantly chattering to herself as she swam. He decided to stop and hear what she had to say and she was only too happy to oblige him with her tales.

