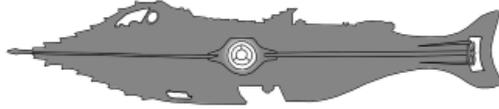


Chapter 7

Diving Dreams



When Sharkface spun to escape the grip of the irate killer whale, the whale's teeth raked his body from snorter to flippers leaving parallel spiral wounds. Eventually they would heal and leave scars that would be the source of a great story, but now they really hurt. He wanted desperately to crawl up on his sunny beach on Guadalupe Island, throw some sand on his back and go to sleep, but he was far from home and all he could do to soothe his injured body was to float in the sea. He was so discouraged by his encounter in Haida Gwaii that he had thoughts of calling off the whole trip and returning down south, but after a few days he decided he would continue at least as far as Alaska; after all he was more than half way there. And he was still very curious about his relatives on South Georgia Island. After a couple of days just floating, Sharkface continued his journey north.

When Sharkface travels from place to place, he dives deeply. At first, powered by a flip of two of his hind flippers, he glides

downward at an angle, then flutters like a falling leaf; sometimes he lies on the bottom of the sea for a nap. When he is diving and drifting, he is covering distance along his route, so as he drifts and flutters and lies on the bottom, he is traveling and resting at the same time. When he awakes from his submarine snooze, he again uses his hind flippers to start his return to the surface. In effect, he is using gravity and his own buoyancy to get from one place to another while burning very little energy. In fact, Sharkface uses less effort on his journeys than he would sleeping on his home beach.

As Sharkface descended on his first dive since leaving Haida Gwaii, he quickly went to sleep. As he coasted downward he dreamed he was flying in a sky filled with millions of blue stars. It was very beautiful, and as he watched, the stars moved around and formed different patterns. Sometimes they blinked on and off in a regular way and sometimes they all went out at once. One time he thought the moving and blinking stars were talking to him, but he could not understand their language. When he awoke briefly at the bottom of his dive, he was surrounded by a cloud of moving and flashing lights the same color as the stars in his dream. Then he realized he was inside a school of lanternfish and the cool blue lights on the sides of their bodies were blinking on and off as they swam about. Sharkface went back to sleep as he headed for the surface and resumed his star-filled dream.

This was not Sharkface's first diving dream. Once when he was off the coast of Costa Rica, he dreamed he saw a

strange-looking creature, as big as a whale that moved through the water silently, without making any swimming motions. As it got closer and closer, Sharkface could hear a gentle humming noise that was unlike the constant clicking and squeaking of any whale he had ever heard. There was also a bright eye, larger than any whale's, on the side of its body where no eye was supposed to be.

The creature's shape was like that of a bottlenose dolphin with a narrow beak at the front, but its skin was hard and rigid, like the metal hull of a ship, and it had sharp scales on its head and chin. It looked very frightening at first but as it got closer, Sharkface could see there was a man standing in the middle of its glowing, bubble-shaped eye; he was dressed in red robes and looked very calm and regal. He had his arms crossed and was looking curiously at Sharkface staring back at him. Just as he was about to speak to the man in the red robes, something else caught his eye. It came rapidly up from deep, underneath the ship-like creature, and wrapped its many arms around its middle. The man in the eye disappeared and the metal creature and the giant squid embracing its hull rose to the surface and out of Sharkface's dream.

As he got closer to Alaska, Sharkface's diving dreams ceased. He was only a few hundred miles away from where all the seals gathered for their twice-yearly feast. It would take him another week or two of his sleepy dives to get there.

