

Captain John Paul Jellyfish Serialized



13.

In the Fog

The current carried the fleet steadily northward. The fog remained thick, and the air nippy. To make matters worse, the water became murky and began to stink. Now bits of plastic, pieces of Styrofoam, two Popsicle sticks, a champagne cork, and a doll's leg drifted along with the jellyfish.

Although nothing was clear fore or aft, Captain John Paul Jellyfish knew he was sailing through a busy shipping lane. Out of the gloom tumbled the growl of motors, the rattle of chains, the toll of bells, and the muffled shouts of seamen.

"Two points to starboard, captain!" called the lookout. "There's a rainbow, and it's floating on the water!"

John Paul raced forward to inspect the swirling band of colors resting on the surface of the sea.

"It's pretty," he said, taking a whiff of the stuff. "*Phew!* But we will detour around it."

Still later, the captain spotted what appeared to be a fellow traveler—a yellow, three-legged sea creature with a pointy head. "Ahoy! Ahoy!" he hailed, but received no reply.

"I'm a jellied mariner new to these parts," the captain went on. "I wish to inquire about any protected place nearby where my fleet could sack out for the night."

At this point, the first mate broke in, "Beggin' your pardon, Cap'n."

Ignoring the moon jelly, John Paul continued to chat with the silent sailor. "Now, good fellow, speak up, if you please. It is impossible to see things in this pea soup, and my crew, after a triumphant skirmish this morning, deserves a comfortable anchorage tonight."

"Er, Cap'n, sir," the first mate interrupted again.

John Paul spun around with a wrinkled brow.

“Really, Mr. Brown. What’s so important that you must disturb my conversation with this shy sailor?”

“With all respects, Cap’n,” the moon jelly said, lowering his voice. “But that thing you’re chattin’ with is no sea creature. It’s a banana peel, Cap’n.”

John Paul turned in time to watch the pointy head of the yellow fruit flop to one side. One leg rose before the entire piece of garbage sank out of sight.

The captain checked the moon jelly’s face for a smirk. “Very well, Mr. Brown,” he said. “Set a new course, if you please. Head for shore.”

In no time, the fleet reached the coastline. Here, the fog was so thick that the lookout failed to notice a tall, black, iron wall before sailing into it. This tall monolith, newly painted, raised straight out of the water, before sloping gradually outward to an amazing height.

The captain checked the area. “No wind. Plenty of food. Good protection from a man-of-war attack. An ideal spot to drop anchor.”

What followed was the most peaceful evening the jellyfish had all journey. First, they feasted on a whole menu of seafood—mussels, barnacles, seaworms, and periwinkles—that lived by the iron wall.

After the meal, Skippy, a handsome blue fire jelly, who was the bo’s’n’s mate, entertained the crew by singing ballads in his sweet tenor voice. One particularly beautiful love song left not a dry eye in the fleet. It went like this:

*Across the sea lies my love, Maggie.
Floating soft and smooth as a pint-size Baggie.
My dying wish,
Is for one last squish,
Wrapped in her tentacles again.*

*How my heart longs for Maggie,
My soft and smooth puffy Baggie
I don’t care,
If she’s full of air.
Winds blow me home again.*

(Listen to [Maggie, My Baggie](#))



Sometime during the night, the fog lifted. The night watch had drifted off to sleep, so no jelly was awake to see the air clear. No jelly noticed where the fleet was anchored, in the midst of an enormous port. Surrounding them with all its lights, buildings, cars, streets, and 600,000 people was the great city of Boston.

And what was the tall iron wall next to which the jellyfish fleet rested? That was the bow of the mighty ocean liner *Queen Mary II*, which was about to set sail on a round-the-world cruise.

