

Captain John Paul Jellyfish Serialized



21.

The Battle

Thus began the great jellyfish battle that history books would later call The Battle of the Medusae. It began as a slight mist rose off the ocean, and dawn's breeze ruffled the water. It began as the man-of-war armada drifted slowly forward, and it began as Captain John Paul Jellyfish barked orders left and right.

"All hands! All hands, ahoy! Battle quarters! Hustle! Hustle! Here they come, lads!"

Much shouting and confusion and rushing about followed, as the jellyfish prepared for battle.

"Cleared for action-o, Cap'n," reported the first mate.

"As ready as we'll ever be, sir," said the lieutenant.

An eerie silence fell upon the sea as the valiant jellies waited and watched the great U of blue floats advance toward them.

The lieutenant, first mate, and navigator gathered around their captain.

"Gentlemen, here is my plan," John Paul said. "Our fleet will form two parallel columns. Both columns will sail straight toward the enemy lines and break up their formation. Meanwhile, the lobster will strike their flanks, preventing any blue bags from circling around and attacking our rear."

"The plan is brilliant-o, Cap'n," said the moon jelly.

"It has the John Paul touch," admitted the yellow sea nettle.

"Furthermore," the captain continued, "Lieutenant, you shall lead the leeward column. I shall take the one to windward."

"But, Cap'n," the first mate spoke up. "The lead jelly will be takin' the brunt of their attack-o. Shouldn't someone else take your place?"

The captain, being John Paul Jellyfish, sneered at moon jelly. "You have your orders, Mr. Brown. Now, everyone, to your stations."

Moments later, John Paul inspected his fleet, now formed into two crooked lines. He noticed the fear on the jellies' faces and the quiver in their jelly.

"Steady lads. Steady there," he called out. "Don't rush out. Wait for the word. *Remember, England expects every jelly to do his duty.*"

Finally, as a good-sized wave rolled under the fleet, the captain gave the orders. "All ahead full! Let's burst their bubbles, boys!"

The two columns sailed headlong toward the giant blue sacs. At once, a large man-of-war on the far left disappeared beneath the waves. No doubt, the blue lobster had begun his pulling. Seeing this, the jellyfish let out a whoop and surged forward with greater zeal.

The captain was the first to reach the enemy's line. For several desperate seconds, he fought alone.

"Take that, you overblown bag of gas," he snarled, darting toward a man-of-war. "Feel my sting, foul bubblehead!"

John Paul stung quickly and retreated before the other could bring a tentacle to bear. At once, he started toward a second blue sac. "Pick on innocent children, will you! Well, take that and that and that and that!"

Now the other jellyfish sailed into the thick of things.

"Remember your advantages! Your advantages!" John Paul shouted.

The fighting, tentacle to tentacle, sac to sac, grew as fierce as any jellyfish could remember. Blue floats were everywhere. Over and over it was dart, sting, retreat; dart, sting, retreat.

In the midst of fighting, the captain spotted a man-of-war snag a gray nettle and drag him under. Before John Paul could act, a gray sac returned to the surface, torn to ribbons.

As John Paul watched the grizzly scene, the first mate shouted, "Cap'n! A Jelly Sandwich!"

"Bags!" John Paul shouted. Two men-of-war were attacking his flanks, one to starboard and one to port. The captain shot forward, but too late. The men-of-war rammed him from both sides.

"Double bags!" John Paul cried, feeling tentacles coil around his middle.

Luckily, the moon jelly was there. Again and again, he pounded the men-of-war's broad sides.

Twisting and tugging, John Paul broke free of his foe's clutches. Almost free. One man-of-war still held two tentacles.

“Har! Har! Har, Captain!” the enemy snarled. “I’m gonna rip these spindly things outta your blankity-blank-blank hide!”

A sharp pain raked through John Paul’s jelly. His whole sac jolted. He was free, but the two tentacles were gone.

