

WHAT IF...

You were a wild sea otter.

and something bad
happened to you, but
you ended up in a cozy sea park.

You made some great friends
that you loved with all your heart.

THEN YOU REALIZED...

IT'S TIME
TO GO HOME.

But your friends
couldn't join you.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

COULD YOU HAVE
YOUR SQUID AND
EAT IT, TOO?

Ollie the Otter

KELLY ALAN WILLIAMSON



Talking Critters series

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SUMMARY: A sea otter gets caught by a fisherman and is brought to a nearby sea park where he befriends the other animals there. Before his planned release, he convinces the domestic "lifers" to escape with him to his home, and experience life on the wild side.

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For Christina, Jessie, and Sean, who heard this story first.

*To my spiritual preceptor by whose grace
everything is possible.*



DISCLAIMER

While the author took great pains to research and portray otters and their natural habitat, this book is pure-fun fiction and its purpose is to entertain. The names of these make-believe characters do not represent any specific, known, or otherwise living animals. The names and descriptions of the fictitious places in this book do not represent any actual public aquarium, museum, zoo, or wildlife park. The author and publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained in this book.

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CHAPTER 1



Otter Rock

Not long ago there was a wonderful place for marine animals to live called Otter Rock. Sea otters frolicked there in peace for years, feasting on abalone and other tasty seafood.

The leader of the local teenage otters was a rough and tumble guy named Ollie.

One day Ollie and some of his friends ventured to an area they were not supposed to be — the far side of Otter Rock. They'd heard startling news from a pelican which prompted them to make the journey.

“A great white shark, deader than dead can get,” gossiped the

gawky brown bird. “A big one, belly-up on the bottom.”

The rumor grew until the tale was told that Tooth the great white shark was dead, brought to his death by a horde of vigilante otters.

On Otter Rock, Tooth was known as the meanest and ugliest predator in the Pacific.

The giant shark would cruise the outer kelp beds and taunt with a wicked laugh, “An otter a day keeps my tapeworm at bay! Ha, ha-ha-ha, haaaaaa!”

Tooth would then disappear into the dark emptiness of deep water and wait for the otters to forget. And forget they would, since they were happy and had much good food to eat. The most delicious of which was the red abalone, found in the depths of Tooth’s domain.

Sooner or later an otter would swim past the safety of the kelp and Tooth would strike suddenly and viciously. But now, Tooth was dead. It would be fun and safe for the otters to ditch their parents and make their secret journey.

The otters arrived at the backside of Otter Rock and flirted at the edge of the outer kelp, near the dangerous open water.

“Who wants to look for the dead shark with me?” asked Ollie.

None of the otters volunteered.

“Okay,” pressed Ollie. “Who thinks they can dive as deep as

I can?”

None accepted the challenge.

“Well, then I’ll tell you never-knowers how it looks when I get back. Humphhh.”

Ollie swam past the last kelp ribbons and dove into the dark water. He kicked his way to the bottom and looked all around. There was no dead anything, let alone Tooth the great white shark. *What a terrible rumor*, thought Ollie. *And what a bunch of bottom feeders we were to believe it.*

Ollie shot to the top quickly. All of his pals were lounging in the kelp leaves, rolled up like surf rats in blankets, snacking on brown turban snails.

“There’s no dead Tooth!” shouted Ollie. “Not even a little blue shark. What a bunch of calamari!”

“Ahh, don’t get your fur all matted up or you’ll sink,” said one of Ollie’s friends.

“I otter flap that pelican’s baggy throat for leading us on like that,” responded Ollie.

But he soon got caught up in otter games and forgot about the pelican and the dead shark that was supposed to be.

The otters were too busy being otters and didn’t realize how close a harvesting boat had come to Otter Rock. When they final-

ly paid attention they saw a huge black eel, with a mouth as big as a shark's, being lifted over the side of the boat and into the water. Some men in yellow slickers held onto the giant eel.

“Whoa!” shouted Ollie. “I’ve never seen an eel that big!”

“Let’s get a closer look!” urged one of his pals.

“I don’t know,” cautioned a third otter. “That thing looks dangerous.”

“Last one to the bottom is a mud sucker!” exclaimed Ollie.

The otters dove under the water. They watched as the slithering monster sucked everything off the ocean bottom. Urchins, abalone, rocks, starfish, everything. Two big shiny blades, that were somehow connected to the eel and looked like monster crab claws, sliced the kelp stalks at their roots. The big black eel inhaled the underwater forest as if the heavy kelp plants were weightless. Wherever the big eel moved, nothing was left, except for barren ocean bottom.

“Hey, you’re taking away all our food,” said Ollie.

Ollie swam up to the eel and punched it, then darted back, looking to see if it would come after him.

But the eel didn’t seem to notice Ollie. It kept devouring everything in sight and was about to inhale a prized bed of urchins.

“Oh no you don’t,” yelled Ollie, as he dove for the tasty morsels, gathering as many as he could before the eel could get them.

Otter Rock

Ollie was suddenly swept off his hindflippers and sucked into the mouth of the eel. The other otters watched in horror as the big black eel swallowed Ollie and the urchins in one gulp.

CHAPTER 2



Belly of the Black Eel

Ollie heard a loud vibrating noise as he was pulled deeper into the eel's mouth. He raked his claws at the sides of the giant snake-monster's throat, but couldn't hold on. He was being sucked down faster and faster and couldn't see where he was going. Finally the eel's throat exploded with a loud pop sound, like a stubborn abalone broken free from its shell.

Ollie slammed, back-side first, into a bunch of sharp needles and was blinded for an instant by a bright light.

Ollie's vision adjusted quickly to the twelve o'clock sun directly over his head. He saw that he was in a huge tub with thousands

of urchins, hundreds of abalone, and starfish and kelp everywhere. *This isn't the eel's belly after all*, thought Ollie.

Suddenly, something grabbed the nape of his neck from behind and lifted him out of the tub.

“Well, well, well. Whadda we got here?” said a big man with a red face.

“Throw the scraggly mutt overboard!” shouted another man with a thick, black beard, and black cap. “Help me move the suction hose.”

“In a minute,” said Red Face. “I’m gonna get a lot of money for this little guy. Lotta money.”

“No market for otters. We got real work to do. Understand?”

“Yeah, right,” groaned Red Face.

Red Face wiped some blood that trickled from one of Ollie’s forepaws. He looked closely at Ollie’s wound.

“Hope you’re not damaged goods.”

He inspected Ollie’s other paw and both hindflippers.

“At least these are okay. Worse comes to worse, I can cut that one toe off.”

Ollie bit the man’s hand as hard as he could.

“Ouch!” yelled Red Face, grabbing Ollie’s jaw. “You do that again and you’ll wish cutting a toe off is all I do!”

Belly of the Black Eel

Ollie tried to bite Red Face again, but was restrained by the mean man. Red Face opened a storage container that held some fish and crabs and threw Ollie inside. Ollie looked up with pleading eyes as the man was about to shut the lid.

“Don’t give me that puppy look,” said Red Face, as he closed the container.

Inside, it was mostly dark, except for strips of light piercing in through air holes. The container was only slightly higher than Ollie was tall but it was long and wide.

Ollie crawled, favoring his hurt paw, over to a corner and curled up next to a big halibut. The flatfish’s eyes didn’t move. Ollie touched it with the tip of his left hindflipper. The halibut remained stiff. From another corner a rock crab broke free from a tangle of look-alikes and scuttled towards Ollie.

With big eyes poking out from its shell, the rock crab piped up, “It’s dead. They’re all dead. And you’ll get boiled too if you don’t get out of here!”

“Boiled?”

“You don’t want to know, man,” said the crab.

“Survivors get blisters just talking about it,” spoke another crab. “If you promise not to eat us, we’ll help you get out of here.”

Ollie looked around the container. He gulped nervously, see-

ing hundreds of crab peepers and the many lifeless fish eyes, staring at him.

“Weasel face ain’t giving you an answer!” blurted a crab from the family heap.

“Yeah,” yelled another, closing his claws into horny fists.

“Get ready to rumble!” shouted yet another crustacean.

“Relax crabs,” said Ollie. “I’m scared just like you. I won’t eat you.”

“I don’t know,” said a crab from the cluster. “The otter could pick us off one at a time.”

“We’ve got no choice,” said the lead crab. “Let’s hope he’s a mammal of his word.”

“I don’t even like crabs,” explained Ollie. “I mean to eat.”

“Oh yeah,” said a crab from the pile. “Then what do ya eat?”

“Purple and red sea urchins, brown turban snails, squid — when my mom gets them for me, and red abalone is my favorite.”

“Okay,” said the lead crab, turning to his clan. “I say this otter’s clean.”

The lead crab then motioned with his claw for Ollie to come closer. Ollie leaned his head forward.

“Me and my pals have got a plan,” said the crab. “We’re gonna do a standard stack-up and flip-out.”

Belly of the Black Eel

“Maybe you can help with the getaway,” offered another crab.

“Let’s make the otter feel like he’s part of the team,” said the lead crab.

The multitude of other crabs all waved a claw.

“Hi,” said one of them, then another, and yet another, until all the crabs had welcomed Ollie.

Ollie tried to smile but couldn’t. The crabs and their escape plan didn’t concern him. Right now he had no idea where he was and all he’d ever heard about humans was that they weren’t any good. The many dead fish and nervous, day-dreaming rock crabs, only reaffirmed his fears.

“Like I was saying,” said the lead crab. “We’re gonna bust out of this joint. No problem. Let me give ya the details.”

Just then the latch to the lid clanked against its steel hasp.

“Now!” yelled the crab, as he raced back to the heap and scuttled to the top.

“Hey, you jabbed my eyeball!” groaned a crab at the bottom of the pile.

“You stepped on my feeler!” cried another crab.

“Why do you get to be on top?” demanded a third crab, as the lid slid back and daylight cascaded into the container.

Ollie huddled in the corner watching. *Would this crazy plan*

work? he wondered.

The crab on top of the crustacean heap reached for the lip of the container and grabbed hold firmly.

He's going to make it, thought Ollie.

But the crab in second position jealously yanked on the leader's hind leg. The lead crab lost his precarious balance and fell end over end to the bottom, breaking a feeler in the process. All the crabs began greedily pulling on each other and clawing to get to the top.

Ollie shook his head. *This entire pile of arguing crabs is doomed to stay in the container*, he thought.

Sure enough, the tower of crabs collapsed leaving the crazy crustaceans scurrying for cover under dead fish.

Red Face suddenly appeared and looked into the container. His hand was bandaged. He stared at Ollie who was curled up in the corner.

“Here's an abalone. Let's see a happy face, will ya. Nobody's gonna buy an otter with a scowl.”

The man jammed a wedge under the big abalone, freeing the sweet meat from the shell. He threw the food into the container, yet Ollie stayed in the corner.


“Well,” asked the man. “Aren't ya gonna dig in?”

Belly of the Black Eel

Ollie remained cautious, keeping a sharp eye on Red Face. Ollie wasn't going to eat with him watching.

“You'll chow down when ya get hungry enough,” grunted Red Face, as he closed the lid.

Ollie felt scared and all alone.

A black and white photograph of a wet dog, likely a Golden Retriever, shaking water off its fur. The dog is the central focus, surrounded by a circular vignette. Above the dog's head is a speech bubble containing text.

**I THINK THESE
PEOPLE DESERVE EXTRA
POOL TIME AND
FRESH SQUID!**

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The Ollie Song

Ollie the otter,
‘most wonderful little guy.
He frolics in the ocean waves,
‘might spit you in the eye!

Ollie the otter,
‘rough and tumble lad.
He swims and dives for turban snails,
‘latest teenage fad!

Ollie the otter,
‘loves to dance in kelp.
He laughs and plays with otter friends,
‘always there to help!

Refrain: OLLIE-OLLIE, OLLIE THE OTTER!
OLLIE-OLLIE, OLLIE THE OTTER!

Ollie the otter,
‘had to be set free.
He loves his spunky trainer Kris,
‘first love is the sea!

Ollie the otter,
‘not scared of any shark.
He knows the ocean can be rough,
But he’s ‘full of otter spark!

Ollie the otter,
‘loves his Sea Park friends.
Fandango, Bingo and Sadie,
‘their fun never ends!

Refrain: OLLIE-OLLIE, OLLIE THE OTTER!
OLLIE-OLLIE, OLLIE THE OTTER!

**SEE YA
LATER, GATOR!**

