

The Octopus Who Was Afraid of the Dark

Polpet was a small, peach-colored octopus who lived in a crevice at the bottom of the sea. During the day, he liked to play among the seaweed, count bubbles, and tickle the fish with his eight arms.

But when the sun began to set, he would run home.

“Darkness is coming!” he would say.

Polpet lit eight lanterns, one for each arm. He slept with his eyes wide open, and if a piece of seaweed touched a rock, he would hide under a blanket of sand.

One afternoon, his friend Ona, a peaceful turtle, suggested they go see the jellyfish dance.

“They only dance when the moon is out,” she explained.

“At night?” Polpet asked.

“Yes. They give off a beautiful light.”

Polpet wanted to see them, but just imagining the dark sea made his arms tie themselves in knots.

“I can’t,” he said.

Ona didn’t laugh.

“Being afraid doesn’t mean you can’t come. We can go slowly.”

When the sky turned violet, the two friends set off. Polpet carried the eight lanterns hanging from his neck.

“You could turn one off,” Ona suggested.

Polpet turned one off. Everything remained as it was.

They passed through the seaweed meadow. He turned off another. The seaweed moved gently, as if waving.

They reached the round rock. He turned off two more. Then he saw a starfish that shimmered slightly.

“I’ve never seen one before,” he said.

“Sunlight hides some wonders during the day,” Ona replied.

Further on, they heard a noise:

Splash, splash!

Polpet clung to Ona’s shell.

“What’s this?”

They waited in silence. A seahorse appeared from behind a rock, dragging an oversized shell.

“It was just someone going home,” Ona said.

Polpet took a deep breath. He blew out two more lanterns.

Now there were only two left.

The path led into unfamiliar territory. The little octopus felt fear in his stomach, but he was also curious.

“Can I be afraid and keep going?” he asked.

“Of course,” Ona said. “Being brave isn’t about not being afraid. It’s about moving forward despite your fear, when you know you’re safe.”

Polpet blew out the seventh lantern. With the last one in his hand, he reached an underwater clearing.

At first, he saw only darkness.

Then, a jellyfish lit a blue light.

Then another one glowed pink.

And another, green.

In an instant, dozens of jellyfish danced like living lanterns. They rose, fell, and twirled with the currents. The whole sea seemed filled with stars.

Polpet opened all eight arms in surprise.

“It’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen!”

He blew out the last lantern.

The darkness didn’t disappear, but it no longer seemed empty. There was the moon on the water, the shimmering jellyfish, the sounds of animals, and Ona’s safe shell beside him.

On the way home, Polpet only lit one lantern to find the entrance through the crack.

That night he closed his eyes. When a piece of seaweed brushed against the rock, he thought of the seahorse and the jellyfish dance.

“Goodnight, darkness,” he whispered.

And the darkness, filled with small lights that he hadn’t known how to see before, helped him to sleep.