

Octavia and the 8

Written by Jacqui L'Ange | Illustrated by Julie Smith-Belton



Octavia the Octopus lived in the kelp forest, in the cool, clear waters on the edge of an African shore.

During the day, she came out from her rocky cave to float between the tall fronds and play in the beams of sunlight that filtered from above.

There were bright-coloured corals on the sandy floor, and cosy caves to hide in. Octavia loved her garden, because she had a special trick – she could change her colour to match whatever she was resting on. She could even change her skin to look rough like stones, or spiky like coral.

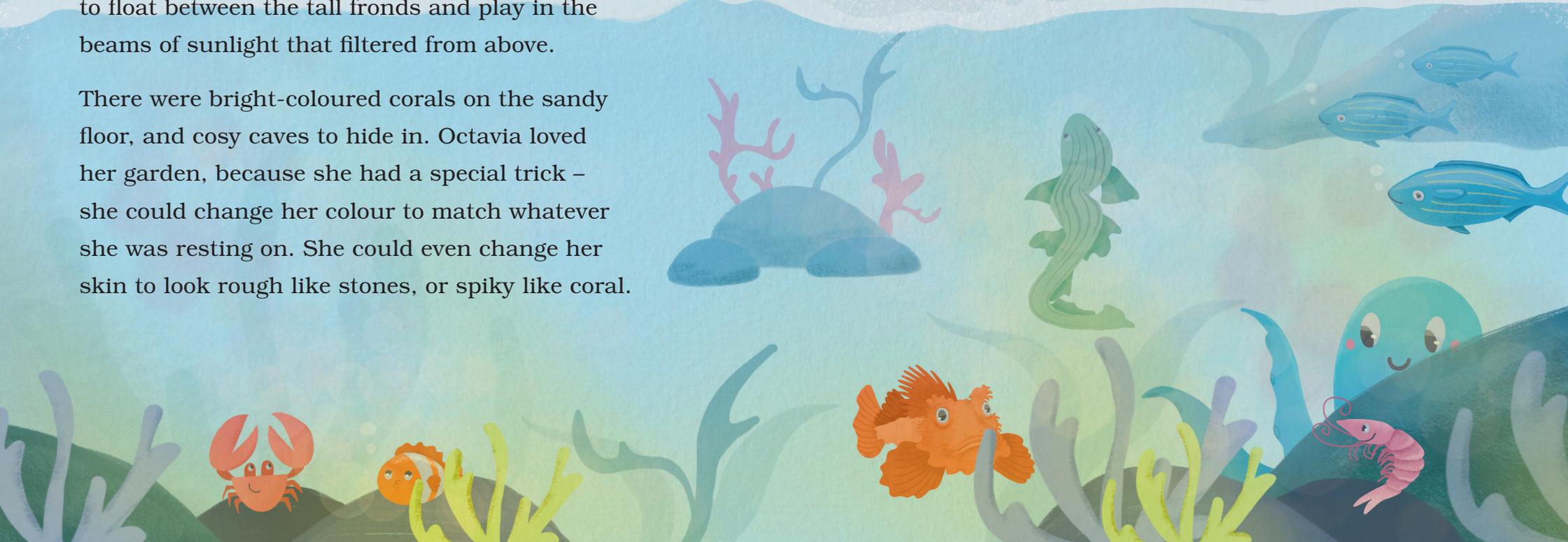
This made her especially good at playing hide-and-seek, because her friends could never find her! Sometimes she hid so well that her friends got bored looking for her and swam away. Then she would speed after them by pushing a jet of water out behind her.

But she always stopped when she came to the sea shelf.

This was where the seabed dropped away into the deep, deep dark. Octavia was scared to go out there.

“I like to be where I can hold on to something,” she told her eight best friends.

“We only go a little way,” they said, “and we always come back.”





But no matter how hard they tried, they could not convince Octavia to go with them. She would wait for them on the edge of the shelf, gazing into the deep dark until she saw their bright colours coming out of the gloom.

One stormy day, the water was very wild. White waves crashed on the surface, and underwater currents pushed the sea grasses in every direction, and made the anemones dance.

Octavia went looking for her friends near the sea shelf – and got swept right over the edge!

The current tumbled her down and around and around. In her fright, Octavia squirted out a stream of jet-black ink. Now she couldn't see anything at all – and still she was swirling and falling. All three of her hearts were beating hard, and it felt like her stomach had flipped inside out.

“Help!” she cried.

In the dark, she felt something catch hold of one of her tentacles. It was curved and smooth.

“I’ve got you!” said Khalo the crab.

“Me too!” said Stella the starfish, attaching her pointy arm to another tentacle.

“Me three!” said PJ the pyjama shark.

One by one, her friends swam up out of the dark and each caught hold of a tentacle. The world began to steady. Octavia held on tight and let them guide her back to her garden.

When they found the perfect spot, Ray spread out his wide fins to shelter them from the storm currents, and they all cuddled up, happy to be together.

And because of Octavia’s special trick, you soon couldn’t tell where one friend began and the others ended!



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Ideas to talk about

Octavia was scared to go out further than the edge of the sea shelf. What are you scared of? What can you do to feel better when you feel scared?

Please share a moment when you were scared and someone or something helped you.



Visual

Go to the activity sheet here: <https://nalibali.org/story-supplies/activity-sheets>

Use the last picture of the story to help you colour in Octavia's friends.



Reading

Read the story again and make a list of all the things that are found in the ocean.



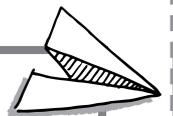
Writing

Make a blank fish-shaped book or ask an adult to make it for you. Write and illustrate a story about life in the sea in the book. Or draw the pictures and ask an adult to write the words you tell them.



Craft

Paint the inside of a box blue and then create a small underwater world using shells, pebbles and sea creatures and plants that you have made from recycled materials and coloured paper.



Performance

Pretend that you are a sea creature or a sea plant: sway like kelp, swim like a small fish, swim like a big fish, move sideways like a crab and move through the water like an octopus.

