

DOLPHIN WALLPAPER

When Sam chose the new wallpaper for his room he did not realise just how magical it would be.

His mother had asked him what pattern he would like.

“Don’t know,” Sam shrugged. “Don’t care.” Sam hated wallpaper and he hated going shopping for wallpaper.

But his mother insisted and so on Saturday morning they went to the wallpaper store. Sam picked the first pattern he saw.

“That one,” he said, pointing to a blue and grey design by the door. “I’ll take that one. Let’s go home. I want to go swimming.”

“Are you sure?” asked his mother. “I didn’t know you liked dolphins.”

Sam looked again at the wallpaper. Sure enough, there were hundreds of blue and grey dolphins looking out at him. And they were smiling.

He nodded. “Yes, I’m sure.”

They went home and Mum and Dad put up the wallpaper in Sam’s room. “Wow!” said Sam. “There are a lot of dolphins on my wall.”

“Well,” said Dad, getting off his stepladder, “you chose the wallpaper. And it stays.”

That night Sam had trouble sleeping. He thought he heard clicking sounds coming from his wall. It was as if something was calling to him.

He got out of bed and went over to the wall. It was very dark in his room but moonlight was coming through the window and dancing on the dolphins - and on the ocean they were swimming in!

Sam put out his hand and tried to touch the moonbeams. Suddenly there was a flash of light! And slowly, slowly, Sam was pulled into the wallpaper.

He tried to pull back but it was too late. His body was being sucked into the blue water. He was swimming! Swimming with dolphins!

They were really graceful, weaving and winding around Sam, nudging him with their bottle noses. And smiling at him.

Soon Sam was playing tag, diving under one, over another. He was having a great time! There was a lot of clicking going on and gradually he was beginning to understand what they were saying.

“Hello, Sam!” clicked the dolphin nearest him. “You swim really well. For a human.”

“Thank you,” said Sam. “You do, too.”

“Well, I am a dolphin. It’s what I do!” And he swam away, shaking his head.

“Don’t mind Dooley,” said another dolphin. “He’s not in a very good mood.”

“Why not?” asked Sam.

“He doesn’t like being stuck on wallpaper. By the way, my name’s Dewey. Would you like to swim with me?”

“Sure!” said Sam and they wove in and out together, ever deeper into the dark blue ocean.

Soon Sam was seeing all sorts of sea creatures which he hadn’t known existed. Pink and blue coral were underneath him and swimming in and around were starfish and jellyfish, lion fish and angler fish. A sea-horse galloped through the water and winked at him. Sea daisies, sea lilies and sea cucumbers floated past. Crabs and lobsters scuttled along the bottom.

“Have a bit,” said Dewey pointing to a shoal of fish.

Sam shook his head. “I don’t like fish.”

“Oh, they’re yummy. My favourite food.” The dolphin opened his mouth and took a large gulp. He must have swallowed hundreds of fish!

Suddenly Sam heard an “oh-oh” behind him. That didn’t sound good.

“Quick! Swim faster!” Dooley whooshed past them and pointed with his flipper. “Shark!”

Sam turned and saw a steely grey head with lots of teeth pointed straight at him. The teeth were smiling. The shark was looking forward to his dinner!

“Help!” Sam called out. Then “burble-burble-burble” as he swallowed lots and lots of water.

Soon all the dolphins were swimming around Sam in ever smaller circles. They were protecting him! And thrashing the water to scare away the shark!

“He’s gone now. You can come out, Sam.”

“Are - are you s-s-sure?” he asked , peeping out from underneath Dewey’s flipper.

“Yes, Snarky the Shark won’t bother us anymore. He’s had his fish so he won’t want to eat you.”

“But why didn’t he eat you? Aren’t you fish?” asked Sam.

There was a furious clicking sound from Dooley. He slapped the water so hard with his flipper that it propelled Sam up to the surface.

Dewey followed him and waved his head back and forth. “Never call a dolphin a fish. We’re cetaceans. And we’re closely related to humans. Why, our brain is almost as big as yours”

Sam was treading water and trying hard to stay afloat. “Really?” was all he could say.

“Yes. Haven’t they taught you anything at school?”

“I guess not,” said Sam. “And I suppose I’d better get back to bed. It’ll be morning soon and I don’t want to get into trouble.”

Again Dewey shook his head. “It’s not that simple, Sam. Once you’ve crossed through the portal between your world and our world you can’t go back.”

“What!” Sam screeched and slapped the water with his hands. “Do you mean I can’t go home?”

“Hmmm. What have we here?” Another dolphin had joined them. He was bigger and longer than Dewey and had lots of scars on his flanks.

“Sam, this is Decimus,” said Dewey. “He’s our oldest and wisest dolphin. If anyone can get you home, he can.”

Decimus balanced on his tail and circled round Sam. “Tell me, young man, why do you want to go back to dry land when you can live in our beautiful ocean?”

“Well, sir,” said Sam, trying not to cry. “I miss my family. And I’m awfully tired of swimming.”

“Hmmm,” said Decimus, “that’s a pretty good reason. But we’ll need a magic formula to get you through the wallpaper portal. And then you can use it whenever you want to visit us.”

Sam looked puzzled. “What magic formula?”

“Well, a word or a sentence that allows you to travel between your world and ours.”

“Wow! Really? That would be so cool!” shouted Sam.

“But, Sam, you can only return home on one condition,” said Decimus. “That you tell humans about us. That we are intelligent beings. And they mustn’t hurt us. Or take too many of our fish. Do you promise?”

“I promise,” said Sam.

“Don’t trust him,” muttered Dooley. “Humans are all alike. The next thing you know he’ll be using us for experiments.”

“No, he won’t!” said Dewey. “Sam’s different. He wants to understand us. And help us. Don’t you, Sam?”

Sam nodded his head through the water. “Yes, I do.”

“Right,” said Decimus. “Let’s all think of a word that tells the humans what dolphins are like. That will be our magic formula.”

The dolphins swam round and round and Sam joined them. They all tried to come up with just the right word.

“Dolphins are daft?”

They all laughed. “Well, Dooley is. But no, that won’t do.”

“Dolphins are dangerous?” suggested Sam.

“No!” came the slapping, flapping answer.

“Dolphins are delicious?”

“No, no, no!” The sound was deafening.

“I’ve got it!” shouted Sam, waving his arms excitedly. “Dolphins are delightful!”

“Yes, that’s it!” The dolphins raised themselves on their tails and pirouetted around. “We are delightful, we are delightful!”

“Well done, little human!” said Decimus, smiling at Sam. “All together now!”

“Dolphins are delightful!” they all chorussed. With the whooshing sound of a whirlpool, Sam found himself twirling out of the ocean, through the wallpaper and back into bed.

Soon the sun was shining through the window. Sam rubbed his eyes as his mother gently shook him.

“Hello, Sleepy Head. Gosh, I’ve had trouble waking you. You were miles away!”

Sam smiled to himself. “You’ve no idea, Mum.” Then he looked at his watch and leapt out of bed.

“I’d better hurry! I’ve got to give a report today at school.”

“What’s your report going to be about?”

“Dolphins,” said Sam, giving his mother a hug. “I’m going to tell everyone all about dolphins. And how delightful they are!”