

# THE SQUIDEPHANT

KAIDEN KELLEY

It was a quiet gray morning at sea, and choppy waters were visible through the murky port windows. The wind rocked the ship gently and gulls flapped overhead. A strong smell of salt hung in the air, and Cape Elizabeth was faintly visible in the distance. Simmons had found a hidden spot in the Gulf of Maine with a few little boats around. It was the ideal location.

Two days before this, we had gotten a grant to examine the waters in the Gulf for three days. Today was the last day, and we had so far discovered nothing to study. If we came back empty-handed, we would lose a lot of money, which would be devastating to our research. Lost in thought about this, I stood on the deck staring into the water as if there might actually be something there to see.

Suddenly, the buzzer dinged, signaling that something was caught in our net. Hardy rushed to the hauler and flipped the switch to start the winch and pulley system. As the net came up, I could spot a long silver shape, about two feet long. When it had reached its peak height we could all see clearly that it was a squid, but it had eleven tentacles.

We brought it to the deck to study it more, and saw that what seemed like the eleventh tentacle was really an appendage like an elephant's trunk! Hardy maneuvered the grabber arm and clutched the pachyderm/calamari. With the ease of her years of experience, she dropped it perfectly into the research tank.

Simmons and I moved over with the testing equipment and camera but when we were within ten feet of the tank it let

out a deafening trumpet. I set down the lab materials and rushed below deck to get a sedative. After we injected it the creature calmed down, and as we looked at it we began to talk about names. We debated for about ten minutes over Elemari and Elepus and then settled on Squidephant. After several tests we confirmed that it was indeed a new species, and not a squid that had been mutated by toxins in the ocean, as we'd suspected. Heading back to shore with our discovery, we knew we had only just begun to learn about it.

Back at the lab, we opened some wine. Above the clutter of our equipment sat the tank, the Squidephant inside. Simmons munched on some nuts from a bowl, and walked with it over to the tank, dropping one inside. "A celebratory treat!" he explained. The creature snatched the nut and munched on it. When it was finished, it grew before our eyes from two to four feet. That's when we figured our work had just begun.

*KAIDEN KELLEY is a twelve-year-old sixth grader at China Middle School. He enjoys collecting bugs and travelling the world. His story was based off an idea he had, after visiting with Gulf of Maine Research Institute, that he thought would fit perfectly with the encounters theme.*