

A DIVE IN THE SEA

STORY BY PATRICK VAN HOESERLANDE ILLUSTRATION PETER BOSTEELS

It was going to be an adventurous day for Skubba and because he was nervous, he didn't sleep well the night before. Normally Skubba would dive with his instructor Nella, but today she was away with Fred. Skubba would instead dive with another instructor. That was not why he was nervous though. He was nervous because it would be his first dive in the sea. In saltwater.

Skubba's dad had loaded all his diving equipment into the back of the car. Skubba double checked to make sure all of his equipment was there, and ready. He was a real diver now and therefore responsible for his own equipment even when someone else took care of it. Everything was in good order and they could leave.

It was a long drive because they had to drive across the border into another country. They were going to the Netherlands.



"Am I diving abroad today?" asked Skubba.

His Dad laughed for a moment and confirmed that Skubba would indeed be diving abroad. Many divers went to dive in the Netherlands because it was easy to do and not that far away.

When they arrived at the dive site, Skubba saw a lot of cars. Some cars had divers and marine animals painted on them, and others advertised diving schools or shops. His Dad was right, this place was clearly very popular with divers.

They looked for Skubba's buddy's car. They would immediately recognise it because it had a large dive flag painted on it. Fred had told him that the dive flag was blue and white and it was missing a small triangle.

Skubba's Dad parked their car next to it and Skubba started unloading his equipment. He neatly placed everything down, side by side. When all his equipment was assembled, they prepared themselves for the dive. While Skubba put his suit on, he saw his buddy and instructor for this dive, Britt, check over everything. She told him that he needed to add a little more weight than usual to his belt because saltwater would make him float more. He made a mental note to tell Fred all about this later.

When they had both completed their preparations, Britt gave her briefing with a detailed explanation about the dive site. Once in the water, she connected them together with a buddy line and they checked each other's equipment. They briefly repeated a few dive signals and they were ready to go.

They saw all kinds of marine animals. Because he had never

dived in the sea before, everything was new to him. He saw an anemone that pulled in its tentacles as they swam by, a sea urchin, a little crab looking for protection in a small gap, a shrimp swimming away, a flatfish was moving like a flying carpet over the ground... and so much more.

When Britt signalled to tell him it was time to surface, Skubba obeyed, but he really wanted to dive longer. Together they went up and surfaced at the same time. He had barely just taken his regulator out of his mouth when he started to list everything he had seen. And he did not stop talking until he fell asleep on the car journey back.

It had been a fun and exhausting day. Skubba was so excited to next see Fred as he had so much to tell him.