



# PORTUGUESE MAN-OF-WAR

Floating  
Misery



by Natalie Lunis

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**Afraid  
of the  
Water**

# **PORTUGUESE MAN-OF-WAR** Floating Misery



**by Natalie Lunis**

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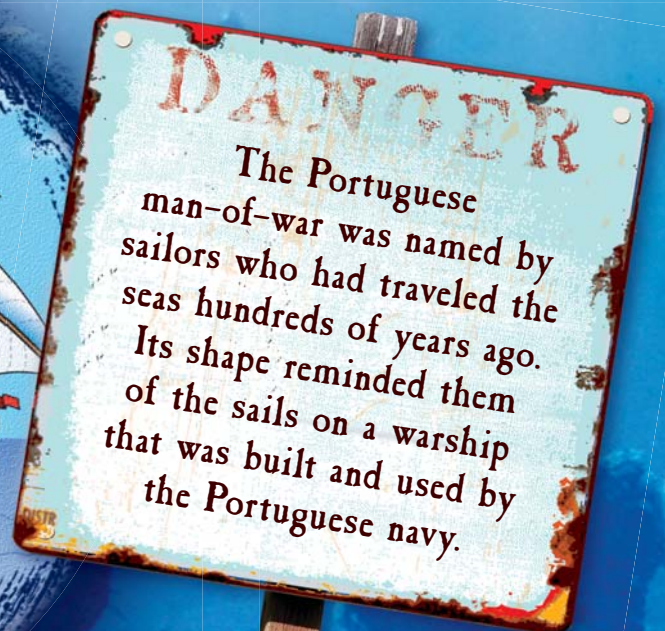
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# A Bad Day at the Beach

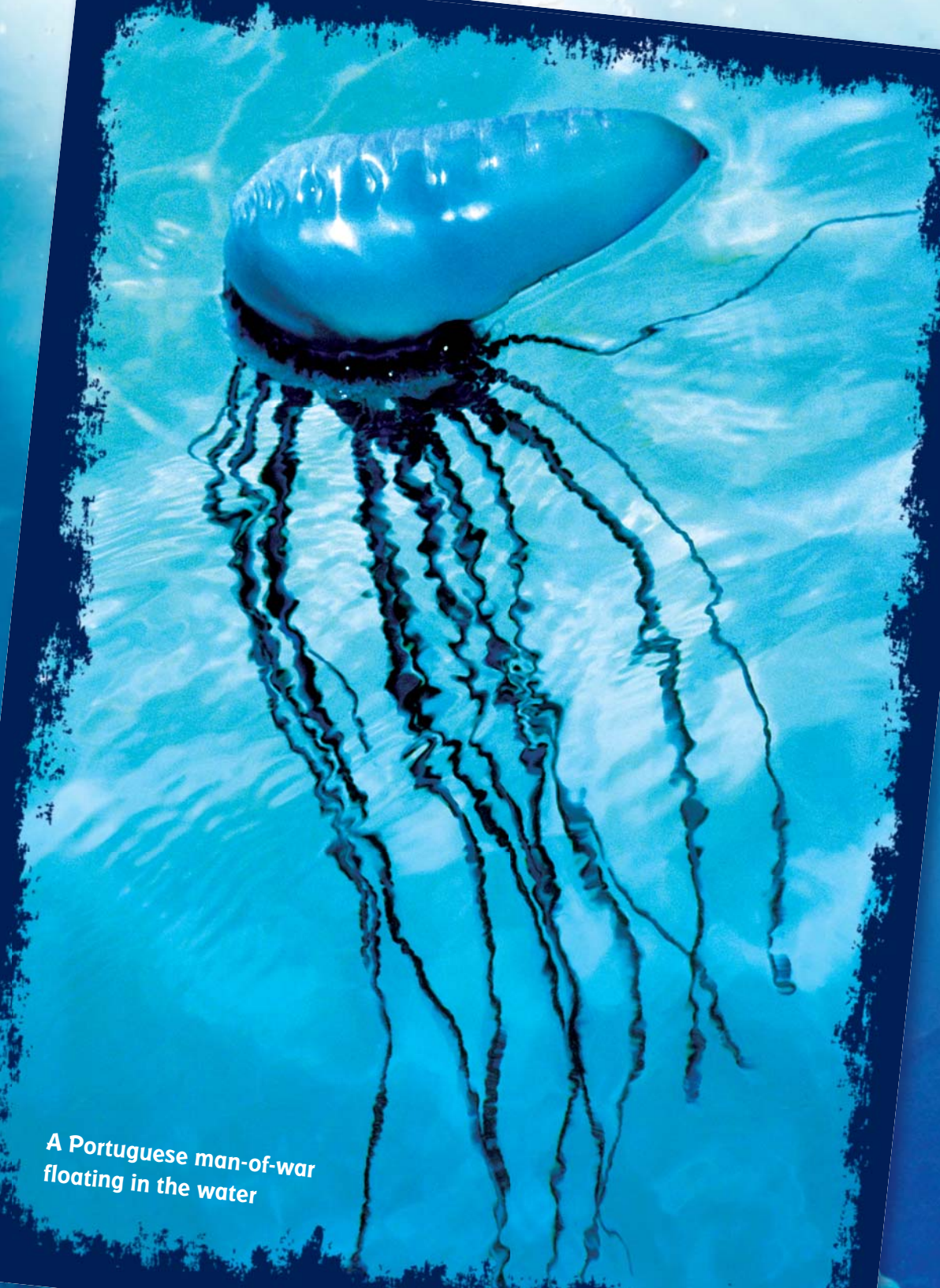
Cameron Moeller was taking a swim off Clearwater Beach, Florida. As a lifeguard, he swam just about every day. A long workout in the water was part of his regular training.

Just as the six-foot-tall (1.8 m) lifeguard stretched out his arm to take another stroke, he touched something stringy. At first, it seemed like seaweed. Then Cameron felt the first sting—"like a hot knife going in," he later recalled. The dangling strings Cameron had touched weren't seaweed at all. They were part of something very different and very dangerous—a floating, stinging Portuguese man-of-war.



A Portuguese man-of-war sailing ship



A photograph of a Portuguese man-of-war (Physalia physalis) floating on the surface of the ocean. The organism has a reddish-brown, oval-shaped bell with a textured, ribbed surface. From the bottom of the bell, numerous long, thin, and wavy tentacles hang down into the clear blue water. The entire organism is surrounded by a fine mist of water droplets, giving it a misty appearance. The background is a deep blue, slightly rippled sea surface.

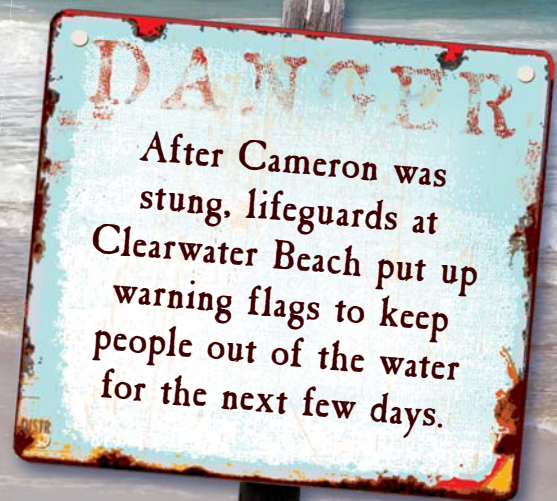
A Portuguese man-of-war  
floating in the water



# Tangled in Tentacles

Cameron had swum into a trap—a long, stringy mass of man-of-war **tentacles**. He swam toward **shore** to get away from the stinging strands. The more he moved, however, the more tangled he became. The tentacles were now wrapped around his arm, chest, and back.

Finally, Cameron ran onto the sand, still dragging the man-of-war with him. He pulled the tentacles off his skin, but he was feeling awful and having trouble breathing. Lifeguards helped Cameron get to a fire station for first aid. He was then sent to a hospital where he was given medicines to reduce the pain. Doctors told Cameron he was going to be fine, though he needed to take it easy for the next couple of days.







**Cameron Moeller, lifeguard at Clearwater Beach, Florida, showing scars that remained after being stung by a Portuguese man-of-war in May 2008**



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## Learn More Online

To learn more about the Portuguese man-of-war, visit  
[www.bearportpublishing.com/AfraidoftheWater](http://www.bearportpublishing.com/AfraidoftheWater)

## About the Author

Natalie Lunis has written many science and nature books for children.  
She lives in the Hudson River Valley, just north of New York City.





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# PORTUGUESE MAN-OF-WAR Floating Misery

Cameron Moeller was taking a swim off Clearwater Beach, Florida. As the six-foot-tall (1.8-m) lifeguard took another stroke, he touched something stringy. At first, it seemed like seaweed. Then Cameron felt the first sting. The dangling strings weren't seaweed at all. They were part of a very different, very dangerous living thing—a floating, stinging Portuguese man-of-war.

The Portuguese man-of-war may look like a tangle of seaweed—but it isn't. Look inside for the surprising truth about what this floating stinger really is. You'll also find out where it lives, what it eats—and how to stay safe if you meet up with one in the water.

**BLUE-RINGED OCTOPUS**  
**SMALL BUT DEADLY**

**BOX JELLYFISH**  
**KILLER TENTACLES**

**MORAY EEL**  
**DANGEROUS TEETH**

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**FLOATING MISERY**

**SHARK**  
**THE SHREDDER**

**STONEFISH**  
**NEEDLES OF PAIN**

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