Ari and the Door Beneath the Waves



An original fictional ocean adventure drafted with AI, with an AI-generated cover. Interior illustrations and photo-to-character generation are still in development.

Twenty complete story scenes, conversation prompts, vocabulary, an explained puzzle and a paper activity. Make a private name-personalised PDF at partytrailgames.com/stories/create. The adventure illustrations remain fictional.

SCENE 1 OF 20

The yellow submarine

Ari loved drawing little maps. At home, Grandad called humming while thinking a useful habit for an explorer. On a visit to a coastal research station, Ari joined a supervised ride in a little yellow submarine. The pilot checked the sealed dome. Outside, silver fish parted like a curtain.

SCENE 2 OF 20

A door where a cliff should be

In the seabed cliff stood a round stone door. Around its edge were three shell-shaped hollows. A friendly octopus hovered beside it, holding an empty spiral shell. Whenever the submarine came closer, the octopus moved between it and the door. “A guard?” asked the pilot.

SCENE 3 OF 20

The shrinking gap

Beyond the door, little fish gathered near a narrowing opening. A turning ring of water was pushing the stone shutters together. The pilot held the submarine safely back. Ari noticed a trail of pale shell fragments. Nothing here looked quite as simple as a locked door.

SCENE 4 OF 20

A very wrong hello

The pilot switched on a flashing signal. The octopus turned pale and hid its eyes behind two arms. The fish scattered. Ari asked for the flashes to stop. “It noticed us,” Ari said. “But I don’t think that means it understood us.”

SCENE 5 OF 20

An ordinary little detail

A familiar tune could turn separate sounds into a pattern. Ari watched quietly. The octopus held up the empty shell, then pointed towards a patch of tangled ribbon beside the cliff. The same ribbon had caught on one of the moving stone shutters. “It’s showing us something,” said the pilot.

SCENE 6 OF 20

The three hollows

The door’s hollows were round, ridged and spiral-shaped. Three loose shells lay in a row nearby. Ari drew their outlines on the cabin’s paper pad. The octopus tilted one eye towards the drawing, then carefully brought the shells nearer. It had not brought a key made of metal.

SCENE 7 OF 20

A tidy first answer

Ari put the drawings in size order. Small, medium, large: a lovely tidy row. The pilot held it up to the window. The octopus tapped the spiral shell instead. The biggest hollow was not the biggest shape on the drawing. Size alone had not explained the pattern.

SCENE 8 OF 20

A better comparison

Ari compared edges instead: a smooth curve, little ridges, a turning spiral. The octopus answered with three gentle taps against a rock. The little explorer listened for a beat, then quietly matched it. Now the shells matched the hollows for a reason the whole team could explain.

SCENE 9 OF 20

The creature who would not move

Even with the shells ready, the octopus still blocked the doorway. The pilot could have nudged forward, but did not. Ari remembered Grandad often said that one small try was enough to begin. “Maybe the door isn’t what it wants us to open yet.” They waited for the next clue.

SCENE 10 OF 20

What the shell was carrying

Inside the spiral shell, almost invisible, rested a little cluster of eggs. The shell had sheltered them. The water turning through the narrowing door would sweep straight past that spot. The octopus was not keeping everyone out for fun. It was keeping something small from being washed away.

SCENE 11 OF 20

A different rescue first

The station’s marine team guided the pilot by radio. They identified a sheltered rock alcove away from the current. Only the trained pilot operated the submarine’s external equipment. Ari helped by keeping the three shell drawings in order and watching the octopus’s signals.

SCENE 12 OF 20

An invitation to move

The pilot positioned a smooth empty shelter at the alcove. The octopus inspected it, then carried the egg-filled shell there itself. Nobody pulled the creature away. Nobody took the eggs. A little problem the team had almost missed had changed the entire rescue plan.

SCENE 13 OF 20

One shell at a time

With the octopus beside them, the pilot placed the three loose shells into their matching hollows using a gentle remote gripper. Round. Ridged. Spiral. Ari checked each against the drawing. The stone ring shifted, but the shutter with the ribbon still stuck halfway.

SCENE 14 OF 20

The ribbon clue returns

The pale fragments and bright ribbon had looked like decorations at first. Now Ari could see how the ribbon caught each time the shutter moved. The marine team checked for any animal tangled in it before the pilot carefully freed the obstruction.

SCENE 15 OF 20

A way through

The stone shutters opened wider. The current softened. Little fish streamed through the gap in a glittering ribbon of their own. The octopus watched from beside the sheltered shell. Ari had expected a treasure room. What lay beyond was a safe passage between two parts of the reef.

SCENE 16 OF 20

The quietest thank-you

The octopus held one empty arm against the submarine window. Ari laid a hand against the glass from inside. They could not touch each other. They did not need to. The octopus turned gently towards the alcove, where the little shell remained in calm water.

SCENE 17 OF 20

The wrong title

Back at the station, the pilot began a report called The Difficult Octopus. Ari frowned. “Could we change that?” Together they tried another title: The Octopus Who Showed Us What We Missed. It was longer. It was also a much better account of the afternoon.

SCENE 18 OF 20

A page for home

Ari drew the three shells for Grandad. There would be a new page to draw together after their next bedtime story. There was a place for the yellow submarine, a place for the safe passage and a small blue corner for the sheltered eggs. The octopus took up a very large part of the page.

SCENE 19 OF 20

What stayed behind

The team kept the rubbish they had safely removed, recorded where it had caught and checked the passage again. They left the shells, eggs and reef creatures where they belonged. Not every discovery had to become something to carry home.

SCENE 20 OF 20

The next question

That evening, Ari looked at the drawing beside Grandad. “What was the treasure?” Grandad asked. Ari pointed to the open passage, then the small blue corner. On a fresh page, a new submarine waited. This time the first question was not “How do we get in?”

Questions worth talking about

1. What did the first flashing signal change? Was that the same as communicating?

2. Which clue made the octopus’s behaviour understandable?

3. Why did the team change the order of the rescue?

4. What did they bring home, and what did they leave in the sea?

Read it again, differently

Watch the empty-looking shell, the ribbon and the octopus’s repeated pointing. Which clue did you misunderstand at first?

Three words to take away

current

Water moving in a particular direction.

alcove

A small sheltered space set back from a larger area.

obstruction

Something that blocks movement or a passage.

Match the evidence

Draw a smooth shell, a ridged shell and a spiral shell in different sizes. Ask someone to match them by shape first, then by size. What instruction would make the answer unambiguous?

Answer & explanation

A clear rule might say “match the pattern on the edge, regardless of size”. Different sorting rules can be valid; a good explanation states which one was used.

Draw a fair mystery

15–20 minutes · Paper and pencils.

1. Draw a creature apparently blocking a path.

2. Add two clues that explain what it is protecting.

3. Draw a solution that helps the traveller and the creature. Ask someone to guess before revealing it.

For the grown-up: This is a paper activity. Do not approach wildlife, handle eggs or go into water to copy the fictional rescue.

Story & reality: The ancient sea-door is fantasy. Octopuses really do lay eggs; the rescue and shell mechanism here are invented and are not wildlife-care instructions.

Your drawing, plan or next idea