

Blotched
Porcupine fish
inflated!



Blotched
Porcupine fish



All About MERMAID

Hi Kids!

I have always loved books that took me into another imagined world, and snorkeling over coral reefs in Okinawa, Japan, made me think

“Anything could happen here!”

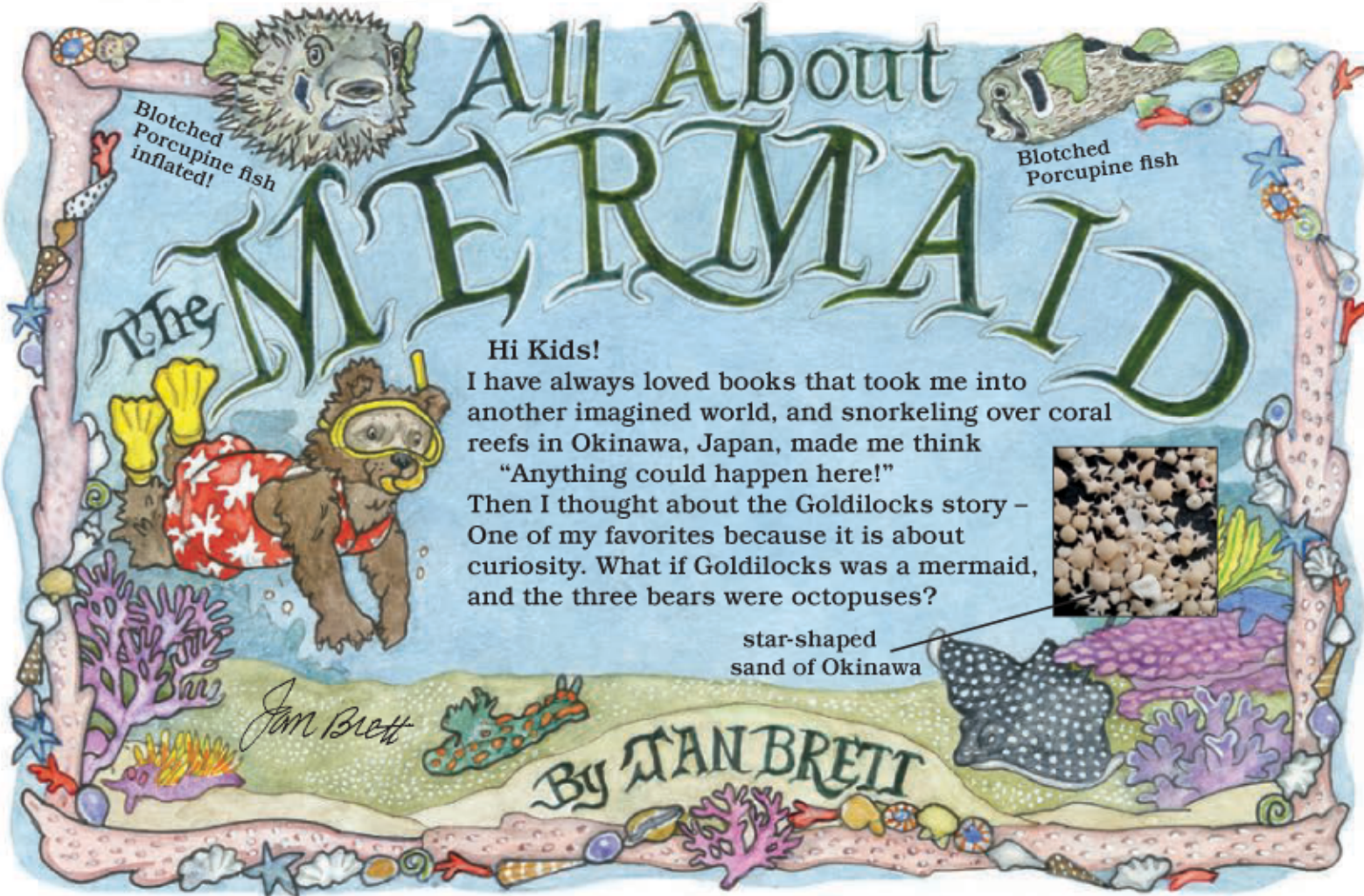
Then I thought about the Goldilocks story – One of my favorites because it is about curiosity. What if Goldilocks was a mermaid, and the three bears were octopuses?



star-shaped
sand of Okinawa

Jan Brett

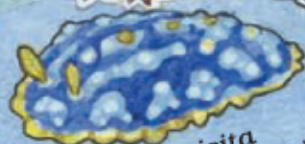
By JAN BRETT



NUDIBRANCH PARADE



Chromodoris



Phyllidia exquisita



Hexabranchus sanguineus



Goniobranchus tinctorius

Bizarre and Beautiful!



Chromodoris magna



Ardeadoris rubroannulata



Doriprismatica atromarginata



Diversidoris crocea



Glaucus bennettiae



Sagaminopteron ornatum

Ceratosoma magnifica



Mexichromis pusilla

Some people keep canaries, but the octopuses in my book keep a tiny, colorful mollusk called a nudibranch for a pet. They are nicknamed "butterflies of the sea".

Shisa

These fierce looking beasts protect the house

OKINAWA JAPAN

I set my story in the coral reefs around Okinawa Island, where I visited my daughter, Lia, and husband, Tom, both Marines, over a period of twelve years. Thank you, Tom and Lia!

I modeled the underwater seashell house after traditional Okinawan dwellings that have charming red clay tiles instead of seashells on their roofs.

The Ryukyu Islands are known for beautiful fabric made there. My octopuses, though, wear garb colored by indigo (blue). Mother octopus wears a hat modeled after traditional ones. Coincidentally they are much like the coconut shell covering octopuses in the wild use to hide.

In olden days walls made of coral rocks sheltered against wind.

Okinawa House



Ryukyu dancer in traditional court dress

Okinawa is one of the Ryukyu Islands. Formally a kingdom with royalty, and language, it is now part of Japan.

Baby has 8 Nudibranch wooden toys— my spin on the delightful wooden traditional toys of Japan



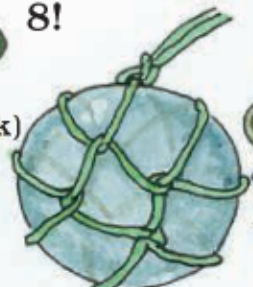
Folding Fan... mother octopus has 8!

Okinawan curiosities Can you find them in my book?

Blueberry Cone shell Hermit Crab



Nudibranch (a marine mollusk)



Glass fishing-net float

"Sy" the New England Aquarium's
Giant Pacific Octopus



The tiny blue
ringed octopus
also lives around
Okinawa. It inflicts
a strong venom.



At the New England Aquarium in Boston I observed "Sy" their giant Pacific Octopus female. She put on quite a show! Because I was illustrating this book, I was also able to go behind the scenes to have a "arms" on experience with her thanks to her aquarist and curator of fish, Steve Bailey. She wrapped her arms around my arms and tasted my skin. Her suckers were very powerful, even though I thought I knew what to expect after reading Sy Montgomery's book *Soul of the Octopus*. (It is one of my favorite books ever!)

AMAZING OCTOPUS TIDBITS

- Octopuses are highly intelligent, like a dog (they remind me of elephants)
- Octopuses have 8 arms, not tentacles
- A powerful beak, used for feeding is hidden where the arms meet
- Octopuses can change color, pattern their skin, and raise bumps to camouflage
- A very large octopus weighed 156 lbs and had an arm span of 32 feet