

## **The Silver-billed, Duck-billed Platypus**

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Once upon a time there was a silver-billed, duck-billed platypus. Everytime he opened and closed his mouth, it went “Clank.” Clank when he said hello, clank when he ate, and when his teeth chattered, it was like he had castanets for in his mouth. He was tired of it, so one day he went to the wise magician, a gray-haired shark woman who knew how to do many magical things.

“Please remove the silver from my mouth,” he pleaded.

The magician agreed. She said, “In order for me to help you, you must bring me three clovers. You will find the vibrant red clover in the depths of the ocean by the vents in the ocean floor. Then from the reeds of the midlevels you must bring me a star-shaped clover. Finally, from amongst the seaweed beds at the edge of the water, you must bring me a cloud-shaped clover. Go on, now.”

So the silver-billed duck-billed platypus headed for the first clover. He carried with him some bottles of cold water, because he knew that the hot water by the vents was so hot he could not stand it for very long. He thought that when he got too hot he would just let out some cold water under his fur to keep his body cool. Down, down, down he went and the water got warmer and warmer until he undid the first bottle of cold water. It cooled his whole body, except of course for his bill which was sticking out in front. Finally, he found the red clover, and headed back up. His bill was turning red from being so hot, as well.

Next he headed for the reeds. They were very rough, like a forest of sandpaper, and he wrapped himself as best he could in a swath of flat, rubbery seaweed to protect his body. But of course, his bill would be ok because it was covered with silver. He swam through the reeds, not noticing the flecks of silver trailing behind him.

Lastly, he swam to the soft, billowing seaweed at the edge of the water to look for the cloud clover. The seaweed caressed his body, buffing his bill. He searched for 15 minutes until he

found the last clover. Desperate to make his wish come true, he swam as fast as he could back to the magician.

He handed her the clovers, saying “here you are, I’ve brought the three clovers. Could you please get the silver off my bill right now?”

The magician smiled and studied the young platypus’ bill. Just as she had planned, the warm water had loosened the silver, the rough reeds had scraped it off, and the soft seaweed had smoothed away the remaining flecks. The bill was just like every other platypus’ in the ocean. But the young platypus had been so busy doing the work, that he had not even noticed.

The magician cleared her throat, and said, “You must eat the three clovers, and then the silver will disappear.” The young platypus looked at her, then the clovers, and ate them right up. The magician pulled out a mirror and held it up to the platypus.

“Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!!” said the platypus. “You work wonders!”  
And the platypus swam off to play.

The magician just smiled, and put away the mirror.