

The Cormorant's Camera



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Cormo the cormorant lived by a quiet bay. He had sleek black feathers that shone blue-green in the sun, a long curved neck, and bright emerald eyes. Every morning he fished and watched the waves. But today, something strange bobbed on the water: a small silver camera with a bright orange strap. Cormo lifted it gently with his hooked grey beak.



Cormo turned the camera over and over. A tiny button clicked. Click! A picture of his own webbed foot appeared on the back screen. His emerald eyes went wide. He slipped the orange strap around his neck and flapped his wings. The camera felt like a treasure. He wondered what else it could show him. Only one way to find out!



With a splash, Cormo dove under the sea. The water was cool and clear. Sunbeams danced on the sandy bottom. He swam deeper, past wavy green plants that swayed like ribbons. Then he saw it: a bright coral reef, bursting with color. Fish darted everywhere. This was a world he had never truly seen before.



A tiny orange fish zipped up to Cormo. It had three white stripes outlined in black and round dark eyes. "Hello! I'm Pip," it said, fins fluttering. "What's that thing around your neck?" Cormo explained about the camera. Pip wiggled with excitement. "Take my picture!" he cried, posing in front of a purple coral. Click! The camera flashed.



Pip became Cormo's guide. "Follow me!" he said, and they swam past a sponge as yellow as a lemon. "Look at these wavy plants," Pip said. "They hide little shrimp." Cormo snapped a picture. Click! The shrimp peeped out from the green leaves. Cormo's emerald eyes sparkled. He was seeing more than he ever had before, just by looking closely.



Next, Pip led Cormo to a patch of coral that looked like a brain. It had swirls and ridges in soft pink and orange. "This is my favorite," Pip said. "It's called brain coral." Cormo took a picture. Click! Then a school of silver fish swam by, turning together like a shiny ribbon. Click! Cormo's camera kept clicking, capturing every hidden wonder.



Cormo saw a seahorse curled around a sea fan, its tiny tail holding tight. Click! He saw a crab scuttling sideways across the sand. Click! He saw a starfish with five arms, bright red like a sunset. Pip laughed. "You're a real photographer!" Cormo felt proud. His camera was like a magic eye, showing him secrets of the reef.



But then Corno noticed something sad. A piece of plastic bag drifted past, tangling in the coral. A few coral tips were pale and broken. Pip's round eyes looked worried. "The reef is getting sick," he said quietly. "Too much trash, and the water is getting warmer." Corno's heart sank. He wanted to help, but how?



Cormo kept taking pictures, but now he also took pictures of the trouble: the plastic bag, the pale coral, the places where the reef was hurting. Click! Click! He didn't know what else to do. Pip swam close. "Maybe your pictures can show people," he said. "People don't always see what's under the sea." Cormo nodded slowly. Maybe Pip was right.



Back on the surface, Cormo shook the water from his feathers. A tall woman in a teal wetsuit with yellow trim was walking on the beach. She had short curly dark hair and a dive mask pushed up on her forehead. "Hello, little cormorant," she said kindly. "What's that around your neck?" Cormo let her see the camera. She gasped at the pictures.



"These are wonderful!" said Marina, the marine biologist. She scrolled through the photos: bright fish, wavy plants, colorful coral, and the sad plastic bag. "You've shown the reef's beauty and its trouble. May I share these?" Cormo nodded. Marina smiled. "We could have an exhibition. People will see the reef and want to protect it."



Marina printed the pictures on big boards. She hung them in a bright hall. People came to see: children, parents, fishermen, and teachers. They stared at the glowing coral and the funny clownfish. They saw the plastic bag and the pale coral too. "I never knew the reef was so beautiful," said a girl. "We should clean it up," said a boy.



Soon, many people joined a reef conservation team. They picked up trash and planted new coral. Cormo and Pip watched from the water as the reef began to heal. Cormo kept his camera and kept taking pictures, showing the world the hidden wonders under the waves. He learned that watching closely helps us see the beauty all around us and take care of it.



Cormo and Pip became the best of friends. Every day they explored the reef together. Pip posed for silly pictures, and Cormo clicked away. Sometimes they just floated and watched the fish swim by. "You know," said Pip, "you're not just a photographer. You're a reef hero." Cormo's emerald eyes shone with pride.



Marina came back often. She brought more people to see the reef. She always smiled when she saw Cormo. "Your pictures changed everything," she said. "You showed us the reef's hidden beauty. Now we all want to keep it safe." Cormo felt warm inside. His camera had done more than take pictures. It had opened eyes and hearts.



And so, Corno the cormorant learned a gentle lesson: the world is full of wonder, if we only look closely. With a camera around his neck and a friend by his side, he kept diving, kept watching, and kept sharing the hidden beauty of the reef. And the reef, with a little help from its friends, kept shining bright.