

WILBUR

THE



LOST WHALE

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED

BY ALEXANDRA ASPINALL

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Wilbur the Lost Whale

Chapter 1

There once lived a whale called Wilbur. Although he was ENORMOUS, Wilbur felt so small in the deep blue sea, because he was lost and all alone.

When he was a baby whale, Wilbur travelled the entire ocean with his mother. They'd travel from warm, tropical waters to the icy cold depths of Antarctica to meet their family. The oceans were bursting with life!

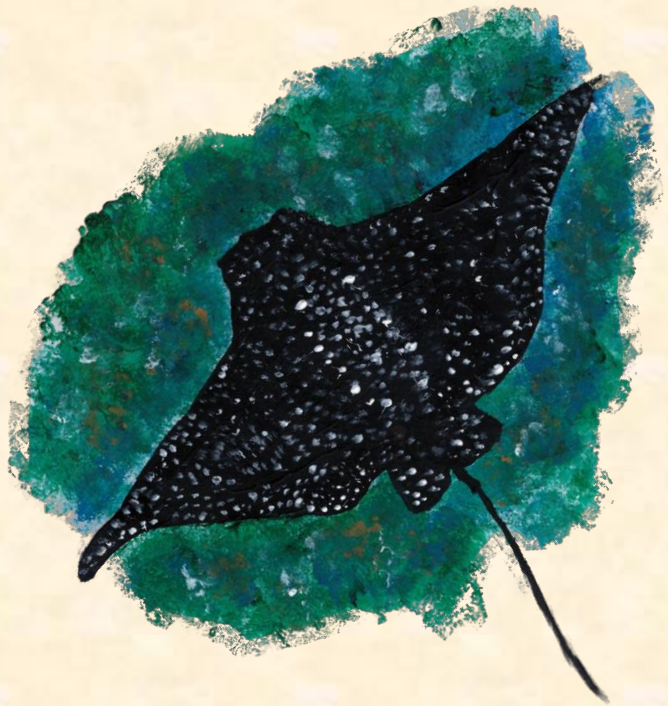


"I have to find my family," thought Wilbur. "Maybe one of my friends on the coral reef knows where they are!"



Coral reefs are bustling underwater cities, full of permanent residents like butterfly fish, and visitors like rays.

Every fish on the reef has its own specific job which helps the community to thrive!



When Wilbur was young he used to love playing with all his friends on the reef.

He'd play fin-chase with feisty trigger fish...



He'd spend hours in
a game of hide and
seek with the
sharks and...

...over the course of several days, he'd try to solve the wise
octopuses' riddles.

The reef was his favourite place to pass the time because it
was so vibrant and colourful!



But, as Wilbur arrived at the reef he could see that something was wrong, very wrong.

Where beautiful coral once stretched out as far as the eye could see, there was now nothing but wasteland. Nothing but a ghost town.



There wasn't a single fish to be seen!
Bleached white coral skeletons littered the sea bed.

Wilbur looked around and a shiver ran down his spine, as he swam over the coral graveyard.

“Where have all my friends gone?!” cried Wilbur.

A small clown fish fluttered out from behind a bright white anemone.



“The sea’s got too hot!” The fish cried out.

“The humans have polluted so much, with their cars and factories and planes, that the whole ocean is heating up! They’re calling it climate change!

“...But that doesn’t explain where my friends have gone,” replied Wilbur.

“Maybe you thought that coral were rocks or plants, but they’re actually animals and they need the sea to be a certain temperature,” explained the fish.

“It’s getting too hot for them to survive and without the coral, none of us have a home!

The coral have all died and the fish have all run away to search for a new home. It’s a disaster!” the fish cried.

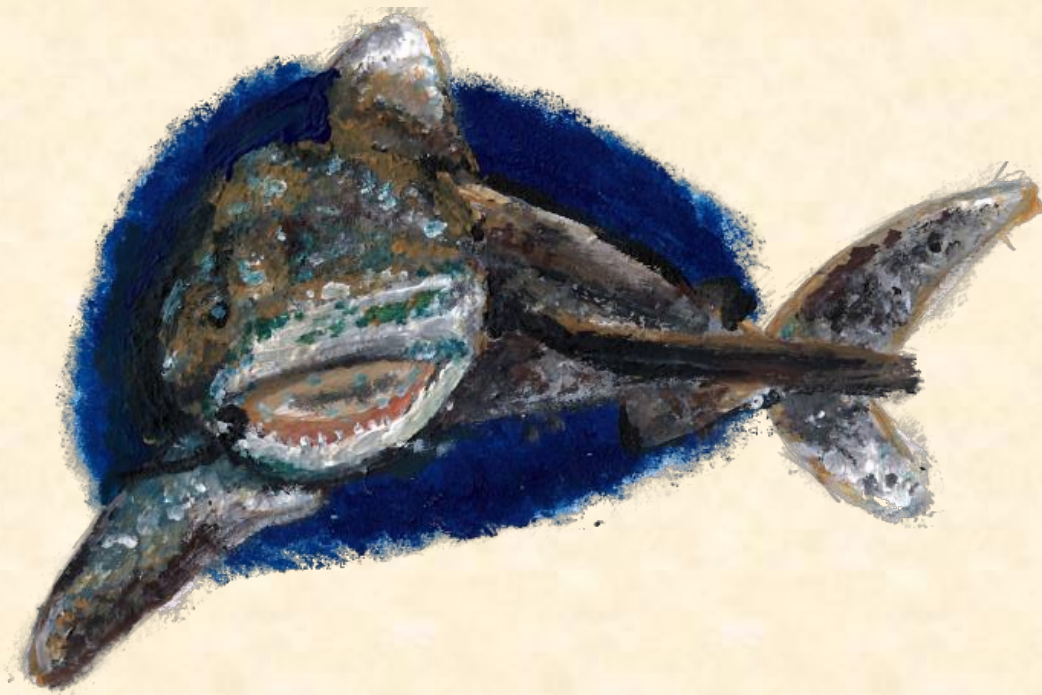


“Why would the humans do this to us?” questioned Wilbur, as he swam on.

Chapter 2

Wilbur returned to the open ocean and returned to his search for his family. He called out for them into the blue, his haunting song echoed into the deep. Suddenly a flash of silver darted in front of him...

It was a shark!



“Could you stop that racket kid!” cried the shark.

As the shark circled him, Wilbur noticed he had something sticking out of his mouth... an enormous hook!

“Excuse me,” said Wilbur. “Have you seen my family? I’m all alone and I’m trying to find them.”

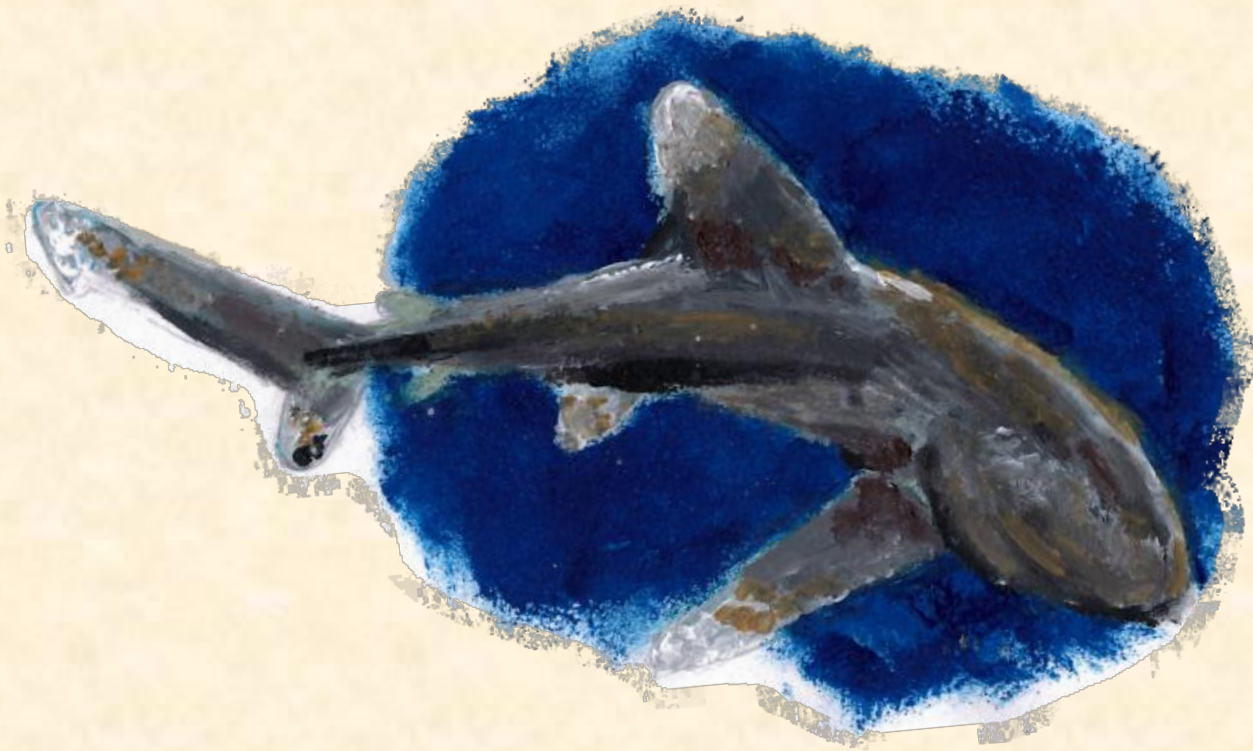
“I don’t know about your family, but I just watched the humans take mine! I barely escaped with my life!

Tough Boots they call me. And tough as old boots I am. But not this time.

They came with enormous boats and nets and hooks that stretched for miles. I’d get out of here if I were you, kid,” warned the shark.



As quickly as he had arrived, Tough Boots disappeared into the shadows.



Wilbur was all alone, once again.

“Maybe one of my friends at the seagrass meadow can help me,” he thought.

Chapter 3

Seagrass meadows are found in sheltered, shallow waters along the coast, where they help protect humans from big waves and storms.





Wilbur used to love playing
in seagrass meadows
because they're used as
nursery areas by lots of
different animals,
especially sharks and rays.



He and the sharks would
chase each other around
the meadow for hours,
often annoying the wise old
turtles just trying to graze.



Blades of grass used to dance and shimmer
in the crystal clear waters. But, as Wilbur
approached now he could tell something
was wrong, very wrong.

The water along the coast was so cloudy and
dirty that he could barely see! As he fumbled
around in the murky abyss, he collided with
something. Something, or someone...

Someone that was very large and strong.

“Who’s there?!” cried out Wilbur.



It was a tiger shark!

“Don’t worry, I don’t want to hurt you, I’m just trying to understand what’s happened here,” replied the shark.

“I used to come here to hunt, but it looks like the humans have destroyed the meadow with their pollution. It’s too murky for the seagrass to grow and no seagrass means my food has nowhere to live!”

“Why are the humans doing this?” asked Wilbur. “Do they want to hurt us?”

Chapter 4

Wilbur was distressed as he swam on once more, back to the deep blue to search for his family. He sung his song, louder this time, calling out into the abyss. In the distance, a shadow emerged from the depths.

Something was gliding along with the current, slowly and gracefully.

A turtle!



“Excuse me!” called out Wilbur. “Do you know where my family are?”

“I’ve not seen any other whales around here, I’m afraid,” the turtle responded. “Have you seen anything else I can eat? These jellyfish aren’t filling me up. Actually, they’re making me feel kind of weird.”

“Wait, stop!” Cried Wilbur! “Those aren’t jellyfish you’re eating, they’re plastic bags! I heard that the humans use them all the time.”

“These aren’t jellyfish?” The turtle asked confused. “But they look exactly like them. Why would the humans throw plastic in the sea? Don’t they care about us? Mother Turtle said the humans are a compassionate species.”



“I’m sorry, I really wish I could do something to help,” said Wilbur, earnestly. “But I have to try and find my family. Perhaps one of my friends in the kelp forest knows where they are.”

“Good luck, kid!” Called out the turtle, as he disappeared into the blue.



Kelp forests are made of huge seaweed – and just like forests on land, they provide food and shelter for lots of amazing animals.



When Wilbur was younger, he used to love exploring the mystical forest with sea otters and seals as they'd search for mythical dragons...



...sea dragons that is. Delicate little
seahorses that camouflage themselves
amongst the kelp.



Kelp forests used to shimmer
and sway in the current, but as
Wilbur approached the seabed
he could tell that something was
wrong, very wrong.



Ugly black creatures
covered in spikes
coated the sea bed.

“What on earth are you?!” cried Wilbur. “Where has all the kelp gone? Where are my friends?!”

“We’re sea urchins,” the creatures replied. “We’ve eaten all of the kelp,” one of them grimaced menacingly.



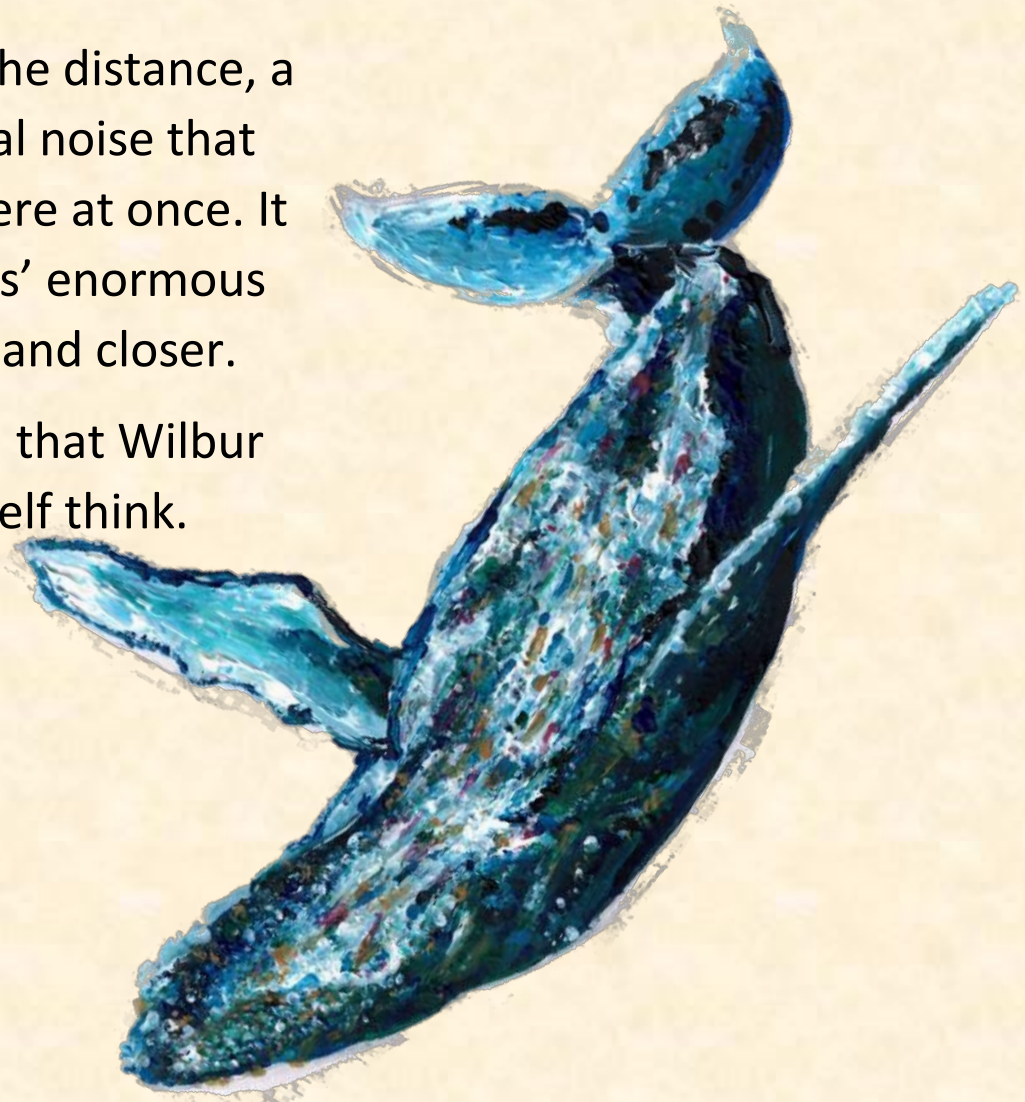
“How the tides have turned! Sea otters and big fish used to eat us, but since the humans came and took all the fish, the otters have left and we’ve taken over,” he laughed frighteningly. “No-one can control us now!”

“Why would the humans upset the balance of the kelp forest like that? Do they not understand what they’re doing?” Wilbur sighed.

Once more, he returned to the deep blue in search of his family. He tried to call out again, but this time his song was cut short.

There was a roaring in the distance, a deep, loud, mechanical noise that seemed to be everywhere at once. It was one of the humans' enormous boats, coming closer and closer.

The noise was so loud that Wilbur couldn't hear himself think.



He just knew he had to escape.

After taking a huge breath, he dove down deep.

Deeper and deeper still, until the sunlight faded away and the blue turned to black.

Chapter 6

The deep sea is a strange place, a mysterious extra-terrestrial world full of weird and wonderful creatures. Some have enormous fangs, some are translucent – and others even glow in the dark.

As Wilbur's eyes adjusted to the darkness, flashing alien lights appeared before him.

"What are you doing all the way down here?" asked one of the creatures.

"I'm trying to escape the humans. They're everywhere, they're ruining everything!" replied Wilbur.



“You can’t even escape them down here, I’m afraid,” replied a voice from the darkness. “Their fishing nets reach all the way down here. They scrape along our coral beds and take all of our friends too.”



“That’s awful!” exclaimed Wilbur. “I never imagined that the humans could affect you down here!”



“It’s even worse for us down here,” said another voice. “Our corals grow so slowly in the dark, they can take thousands of years to grow and they can be destroyed in a second by the humans’ fishing nets.”

“And we all grow so slowly too,” chimed in another. “Us deep sea fish often live to over one hundred years, we don’t have babies until we’re old! It really affects our whole community when the fishermen take us.”



“I’m so sorry,” said Wilbur apologetically. “I wish I could help you, I’m going to try and find my family, maybe they’ll know what to do!”

Chapter 7

He returned to the shallows and carried on his search.
He sang as he travelled onwards through now icy
waters. Colossal creatures suddenly appeared all
around him.

Whales!



Not his family though, these were killer
whales!

“Excuse me!” cried Wilbur. “Have you
seen my family?”

“Yeah, I think we saw some humpbacks pass by here not too long ago. We’ve been pretty distracted trying to find food.

The humans have been here, with enormous boats, much bigger than you or me. They took everything they could and now we have nothing to eat.”



“Oh no! Why would they do that? Surely they don’t need fish more than we do?” questioned Wilbur.

“Good luck, kid. I hope you find your family!” called the killer whales as they raced off into the depths.

Wilbur swam on once more. “This is hopeless,” he thought to himself. “I’ve been looking for so long, I’m never going to find them! I can’t even hear myself think over all this noise...”

But for once, the noise wasn’t the usual rumbling of an engine, it was a deep, haunting melody coming from many miles away.



“My family!” cried Wilbur.

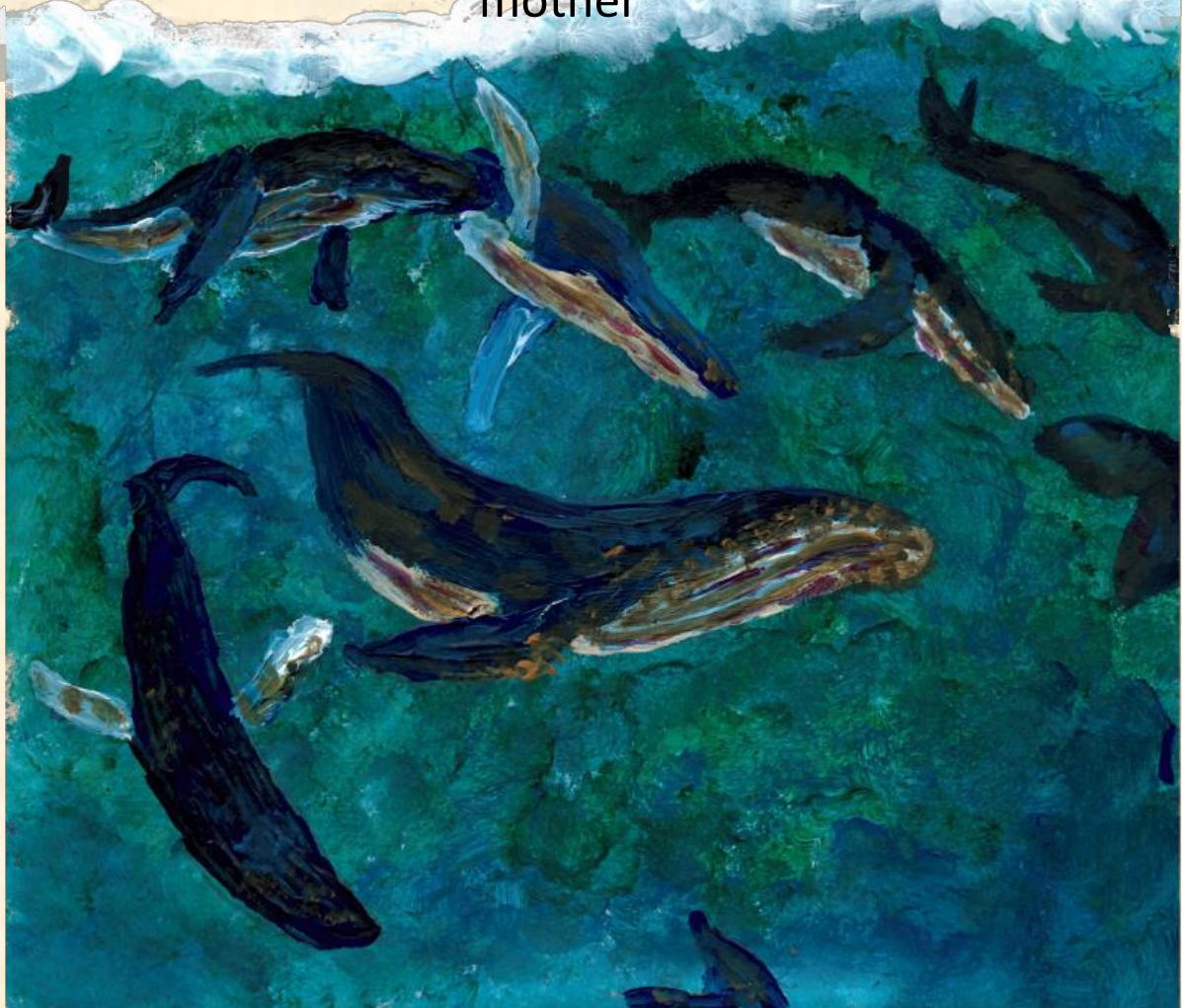
He headed towards the singing as quickly as his tail could carry him.

After many miles, enormous shadows emerged from the depth. Gargantuan creatures. Whales! Humpback whales! His family breached, splashed and sung with happiness as they saw Wilbur had finally arrived!

“We were so worried about you!” cried his mother, “I was scared I’d never see you again!”

“I’ve been on such an adventure,” replied Wilbur, “you won’t believe all the things I’ve seen! All of our friends are in danger! We’re in danger!”

“Shhh, calm down Wilbur, we’re safe here.” soothed his mother



“No we’re not! It’s the humans, they’re ruining everything!”

“I know sweetie, but some of them are trying to save us, too! That’s why we’re here, they’ve made special areas where we’re completely protected from those huge fishing boats and from pollution and all the other terrible things! Where we’re finally safe!”



“...but what about all of our friends?
At the coral reef, the seagrass, the
kelp forest, even the weird ones
down in the deep sea?”



“They can be protected too! Marine protected areas can
be used to protect all of our friends across the oceans.
They protect them from pollution and fishing and then
their habitats like coral reefs and seagrass become
stronger!

As they become stronger, they can cope better with
even bigger problems, like the ocean becoming warmer!”

“So... the humans do care about us?” asked Wilbur.

“Some of them, yes. More than you could even imagine, Wilbur. They’re working hard every day to try and protect more of our home.”

And Mother Whale’s words rang true in Wilbur’s mind, as he knew his mother was speaking honestly.



Way ahead in the murky abyss, he saw a flash.

This time, it wasn’t a shark.

It wasn’t a plastic bag.

It was hope. It was a sign of purity in the pollution that filled the oceans. It was the humans.

They were the only ones who could save Wilbur and his friends now.

While there was so much more to be done, Wilbur believed in the humans.

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