

More Tales From The Brink

SAMPLE



**Lost In The Arctic:
A Blue Whale Story**

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Lost In The Arctic: A Blue Whale Story

By Neil Harwood

The Storm

Above the sea, a storm was raging. Huge black clouds were being driven across the grey sky by a wind strong enough to knock a man off his feet. A ship, far from any safe port, was being thrown around like a toy boat in a bath. Its captain, a man who had worked at sea from the age of fourteen, had sailed through many storms. He had seen few to rival this one.

Sheltering behind some metal containers on the deck was a group of seabirds. Caught by surprise by the strength of the storm, they sat and waited for it to pass. It was either that or take their chances in the sky.

As the bow of the ship rose over another mountainous wave, the birds may have wondered if they had made the right decision.

Beneath the sea, however, it was a different world. The turmoil on the surface was barely noticeable. This barren place, far from any coast, was dark and cold. But not empty.

The ship passed overhead and sailed on through the storm. As the noise of its engines faded, another sound filled the dark depths of the ocean. A sound so low that no human ear could have heard it. A sound that seemed to be as old as the sea itself.

Another sound came in response. Two ocean travellers were talking to each other. Although they were several miles apart, their powerful voices were carried by the water and could be heard over great distances.

A dark shape appeared against the gloomy, grey-blue background. The shape grew bigger, and bigger still, until there could be no doubt about what was approaching.

The whale appeared out of the darkness swimming at a steady, unhurried pace. Its grey

skin looked blue under the water, which is why this particular species of whale was called the blue whale. The animal was huge: blue whales are the largest species ever to have lived on the earth.

The whale spoke again, and other voices answered. There were six blue whales in the group, spread out over many miles.

Behind them, a seventh blue whale followed. This whale did not talk, and seemed oblivious to the presence of the other whales.

This whale's name was Arthur. Arthur was not a sociable whale. He only talked to the others when it was absolutely necessary, and even then he would use only the shortest sentences he could.

Arthur spent most of his time thinking. He thought about a lot of things: at that moment he was wondering about the huge metal floating thing he had seen when he had last gone up for air.

'Ships', they were called. They were big – much bigger than him, and he wasn't exactly small. Ships were also very noisy. So noisy, in fact, that sometimes they prevented him from hearing the other whales. Although that didn't particularly bother Arthur. He was often so absorbed in his own thoughts that he didn't hear the other whales anyway.

He had heard the ship long before he had seen it. Like all blue whales, Arthur had very good hearing. He could tell that there was a storm on the surface, and he could hear the ship's engines struggling against the wind and the waves.

Arthur wondered where ships came from, and what they were. They weren't alive: at least, not like he was. He wondered if they could think. He knew that they were immensely powerful: a whale he had known had been badly hurt when a ship had sailed into him. They seemed to be more like bits of floating land. He knew that they came from the land, and all they ever seemed to do was travel between different bits of land. What was the point?

End of sample.

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