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OUR Teacher TRAVELS inside a WHALE

"Ride! "Ride! Anyone need a ride?"

The voice came from the ocean. A tall geyser shot upward close to shore. A short time later, a giant blue whale rose to the surface.

"Ride!" the whale called. "Anyone need a ride?"

"Ruff! Ruff!" went MD.

"Ahoy, whale!" Our Teacher called. "Where are you headed?"

"Across the Pacific Ocean to the coast of Oregon, sir," the whale said. "I'm leaving right away."

Here is the Spouting Whale Our Teacher saw:



"Oregon? That's where I live," Our Teacher said. "Could you take me and my dog with you? Could you take us home?"

"Certainly. Plenty of room inside. You're lucky, sir. If you'd been here any earlier, you might have missed me."

Our Teacher rubbed MD behind the ear. "Patience does have its rewards, old pal," he said. "Things work out."

Carrying the beagle, Our Teacher waded up to his thighs into the ocean. The blue whale's mouth opened wide, and Our Teacher stepped inside.

The interior of the whale had more light than expected. Glowing jellyfish showed the way into the whale's stomach. Our Teacher sat on a small driftwood stump. The whale's white ribs arched above him. Ribbons of seaweed, Styrofoam floats, a Frisbee, and clam shells littered the bottom of the blubbery belly.

"This is nice, isn't it, MD," he said. "Not a bad way to cross the ocean."

The whale's voice boomed through the large open space. "We're off, sir. Flank speed. I'll have you home in time for supper."

Our Teacher felt as if he were going down on an elevator.

"The whale is diving, MD," he said.

"*Ruff! Ruff!*" went the beagle.

"I feel like Jonah in the Bible and Geppetto in Pinocchio," Our Teacher said. "They both traveled inside a whale."

Other than the echoey beat, beat, beat of the whale's heart, the vast inside of the whale was quiet. The ride was so peaceful Our Teacher closed his eyes to take a short nap. But no sooner had he nodded off than MD barked again.

"Go away, mad mutt," said an angry voice in the tail of the whale. "Avast there!"

"MD, come here," Our Teacher called. "Who's with you?"

The beagle appeared with something in his mouth. He dropped a blue lobster at Our Teacher's feet.

"Leave me be, you bag of fleas!" the lobster shouted. "Away, cowardly cur!"

Our Teacher studied the lobster. Besides its unusual color, it was missing a claw.

"I've never seen a blue lobster before," Our Teacher said.

The lobster's beady eyes turned upward. "Now there's a clever lad. Blue I am, me hearty. A one in ten-thousand rarity. I hail from Nantucket, Massachusetts. Please to make your acquaintance."

Here is the Blue Lobster Our Teacher saw:



"I'm from Newport, Oregon, and you've already met my dog, MD. I'm not rare or anything. I'm just a boy, trying to get home in time for supper."

"Aye, and you should teach your pooch not to pick on a poor disabled lobster. Lost me claw to a great white shark, I did. Hard managing without it."

MD crouched low and growled.

"But don't lobsters grow back new claws if they lose one?" Our Teacher said.

"Aye, a brilliant lad you are, me hearty. I've heard of you. You're the lad who's been searching the four corners of the world for the Thinking Cap."

"Now the Thinking Cap is lost at sea," Our Teacher said. "I guess I won't know what I was meant to do in my life until I do it or it's too late to do it."

"Foolish knowledge anyway, me hearty," said the Blue Lobster. "Too much information clogs the brain."

"But haven't you ever had an itch, a feeling that you should be doing something besides what you're doing?" Our Teacher asked. "A longing to play music, write a book, or build a tower."

The lobster waved his single claw. "Not one time," he said. "Me life is just fine"

"How do you get along?"

"Carefree, me hearty. Carefree. I live off the bait of fishermen in harbors and when I get bored, I hitch a ride in a whale to the next port."

"Sounds wonderful," Our Teacher said. "Travel is educational."

"Aye, it's the carefree life for me," the Blue Lobster said. "I've swum in every one of the Seven Seas and slept in all the great ports of the world from Acapulco to Zanzibar."

Our Teacher liked the Blue Lobster. He seemed content with his life. He lived without a plan, without regret. He was full of spirit, and he certainly wasn't a bore.

All too soon, Our Teacher felt the whale slowing down and rising to the surface. The whale's mouth opened, and he called out, "You're home, sir."

"Good luck to you, me hearty," said the Blue Lobster. "I'll get out in the nearby harbor. I hear Newport a fine place, and the pickings are easy."

"Just be careful," said Our Teacher. "If someone spots a blue lobster in the bay, you'll surely end up in the aquarium."

"Aye, but I have the special survival skills, don't you know. Never been caught in me life."

Our Teacher picked up MD and walked out of the whale. He stood in shallow water not far from a sandy beach, the same beach where he had freed the sea lion.

"We're home, MD," he said. "We've traveled around the world, only to end up back to where we started."

