

Chapter 1: The pod

"Look!" Izzy cried. "Over there!"

Ben looked across the water. The rocking of the boat was making him feel sick but he tried not to let it show. He saw nothing but grey waves and grey sky.

Izzy was Ben's older cousin. She had lived on the Isle of Skye all her life. She was used to the sea. But Ben was only visiting for the holidays. He liked solid land beneath his feet.

Uncle Pete looked through his binoculars. "Well spotted, Izzy."

Ben still couldn't see anything.

Uncle Pete handed Ben the binoculars. At last Ben saw dark shapes gliding through the water. "Wow!" he cried. "Are those whales?"

Izzy nodded. "Pilot whales. A whole pod of them."

One of the whales leaped out of the waves. Another whale leaped, then another and another. "That's so cool!" Ben gasped.

"I didn't know they could jump like that."

Izzy frowned. "It's called breaching, actually."

Uncle Pete laughed. "I think they're putting on a special show for you, Ben."

Ben had forgotten all about feeling seasick! He grabbed his phone and snapped some photos.

Izzy rolled her eyes. "Do you have to do that? You look like a tourist."

"Be nice to Ben," Uncle Pete told her. "Family should stick together. We're in the same pod just like those whales."

A red and white fishing boat was chugging towards the whales. "That's Jack Hendry's boat," Izzy grumbled. "He's going far too close. He's scaring the whales."

Uncle Pete agreed. Then he looked up. The sky was thick with inky black clouds. "We should head home. There's a storm coming."

Chapter 2: Stranded!

By the time they reached the harbour, the wind was whipping the waves into great walls of water. When Uncle Pete's phone buzzed he looked worried. "It's the lifeboat station," he muttered.

Uncle Pete finished the call. "A tour boat is in trouble in the storm," he said. "I need to join the lifeboat rescue. You two will have to walk home on your own." He gave Izzy a stern look. "Look after Ben."

Izzy marched off along the coast road. Ben had to run to keep up.

Over the howling of the wind, Ben heard a strange whistling noise coming from the shore. He peered through the rain. At first, he just saw black rocks. Then one of the rocks moved ... "Izzy!" he shouted. "There's a whale on the beach."

"Don't be silly!" Izzy yelled. But then she saw it too. "Oh no! It's a young pilot whale. It's stranded."

Ben scrambled over the rocks. Izzy caught up and pushed past him. "Stop!" she cried. "Don't touch!"

Ben burned with rage. How could Izzy be so cruel? "We can't just leave it here to die!" As he pulled away from her, Ben slipped on a patch of slimy yellow seaweed. Pain jolted through his twisted ankle.

"You have to know what you're doing or you can harm the whale more," Izzy explained as she helped Ben up. "There are special volunteers on the island who are trained to help stranded whales. Dad is a volunteer but he's out on the lifeboat. So are all the others."

Ben knelt next to the whale. It was lying on its side in a shallow rock pool. "There must be something we can do." The pilot whale flicked its tail. Its huge black eye looked up at Ben. *I'm sure it's trying to tell me something*, he thought.

The whale shuddered. Suddenly Ben knew what was wrong. "It can't breathe!" he cried.

"You're right," Izzy said. "Its blowhole is stuck below the water. We need to push the whale up so it can get some air. Quick! Before it's too late."

The cousins pushed with all their strength. At last the whale rolled onto its belly. "Watch out!" Izzy shouted, as air jetted out of the blowhole. Ben almost got a face full of spray. Izzy laughed. "I think that means thank you!"



"Does that feel better?" Ben asked. The whale opened its mouth as if to reply. Ben spotted some tangled blue rope in its jaws. "What's that?" he asked.



"It's a fishing net." Izzy shook her head in anger. "Someone must have dumped it in the sea. It's probably why this poor whale has got stranded on the rocks. It happens when they're in trouble or in pain."

Izzy jumped up. "Let's run back up to the harbour and fetch help. The volunteers should be back from the lifeboat soon. They'll be able to cut the net away."

Ben tried to stand but his twisted ankle gave way. "I can't run anywhere!" he groaned. "You go for help. I'll stay here."

Izzy frowned. The rain had stuck her hair to her face like seaweed. "Dad said I had to look after you ..."

"I'll be safe with the whale," Ben said.



Izzy raced off up the beach. "You could try singing to it," she called back over her shoulder. "People say that helps."



"Are you serious?" Ben shouted. But the wind carried his question out to sea.

What kind of music do whales like, Ben wondered. Something about the sea, maybe? He tried a song that Mum liked about a bridge over troubled water. The whale whistled along softly. Ben kept singing. If only my friends could see this ... he thought.



Chapter 3: Mystery solved

At last, Izzy came back with a tall red-haired man. "This is Jack Hendry," she said. "He was just bringing his boat into harbour."

"You kids can go home now," Hendry said. "I'll handle this."

"We're staying," Izzy and Ben said as one. They weren't going anywhere until their whale was safe!

Jack Hendry looked angry. He began pulling the tangled net out of the whale's mouth, hacking at the ropes with his penknife.

"Be careful," Izzy said. "You'll hurt it."

"I know what I'm doing!" Hendry snapped. "If you want to help, go and frighten the other whales away."

"When one whale is in trouble, the rest of the pod try to help," Izzy explained to Ben. "They often end up getting stranded too." The two cousins turned to the sea, flapping their arms and shouting. "Go back, whales!" Ben yelled. "It's dangerous for you here!"



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At last, Uncle Pete and the other volunteers came running down the beach. Their orange life jackets glowed through the rain. They rolled the whale onto a huge padded stretcher to protect it from the sharp rocks.



Ben and Izzy helped to slide the whale into the sea, carefully holding it upright until it was strong enough to swim.

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"Well done, everyone," Uncle Pete said as they watched the whale join the rest of the pod. "I wonder what caused it to get stranded."

"It must have been that fishing net," Izzy said.

The volunteers looked puzzled. "What fishing net?"

"The one Jack Hendry cut from the whale's mouth,"

Ben told them. He looked around for the tangled blue net.

It had disappeared. There was no sign of Hendry either.

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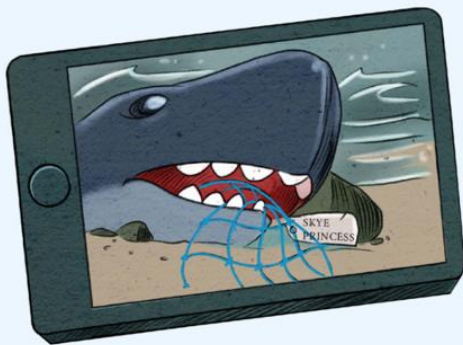
Izzy slapped her forehead. "I bet it was Hendry who dumped that fishing net in the sea. No wonder he was so keen to take it away. He didn't want anyone to know that this was his fault."

Uncle Pete sighed. "I think you're right. If only we had some proof."

Ben suddenly remembered something. While he was waiting for Izzy, he had filmed himself singing to the whale to show to his friends. He held out his phone. "This might help!"

Uncle Pete peered at the screen. "Yes! You can see the net in the whale's mouth."

Izzy grinned at Ben. "Nice singing too!" She grabbed the phone and zoomed in. "There's a label on the net. It says *Skye Princess*."



"*Skye Princess*?" Uncle Pete repeated. "That's Hendry's boat."

Ben pointed to his phone. "I've got photos of his boat out near the whales today too."

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Everyone cheered. Uncle Pete patted Ben's shoulder. "Well done, lad. This is all the proof we need."

Ben shivered. Izzy was blue with cold too.

Uncle Pete smiled. "Let's get you two home for some dry clothes and hot chocolate."

Ben stumbled. His ankle was really hurting now.

"I'll give you a piggyback," Izzy said. "After all, we're in the same pod."

