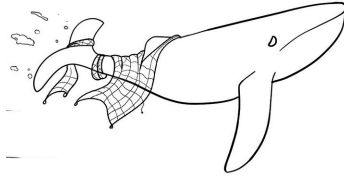


# A Journey with the Gentle Giants



A CREATIVE WRITING  
COMPANION PACK



## A JOURNEY WITH THE GENTLE GIANTS

The ocean stretched out around them, a deep blue that sparkled under the Hawaiian sun. Rowan and Parker were on another adventure with their family, sailing off the coast of Hawaii. After spending the morning learning how to sail, they were READY to explore the water and see what surprises the ocean had in store.

"Ready to snorkel?" Rowan asked, adjusting his mask. Parker was already peeking into the water, eager to dive in.

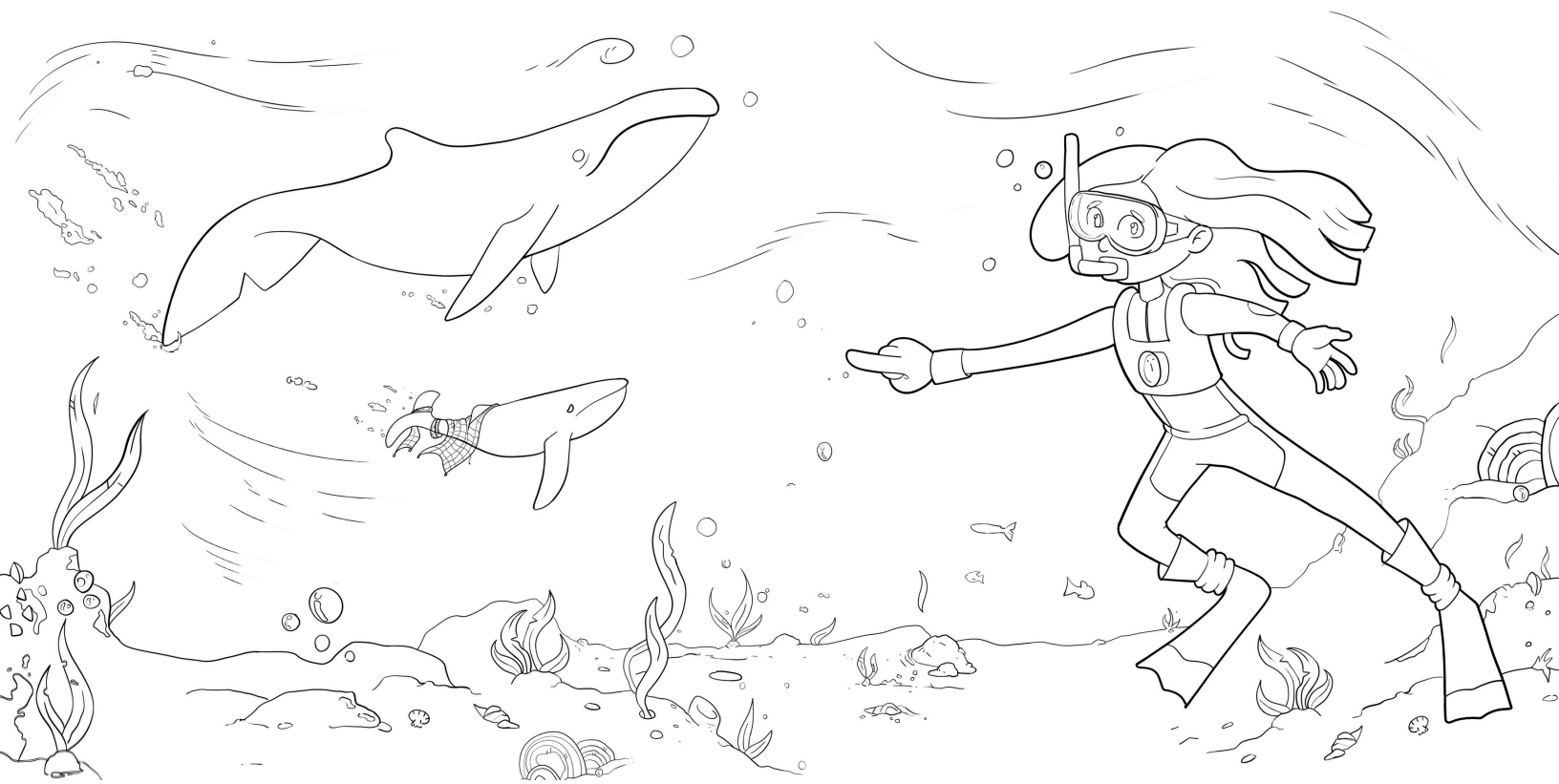
"Always!" Parker replied with a grin. She loved being out here, surrounded by the sea and the promise of discovery.

They slipped into the warm water with a splash, immediately surrounded by colorful fish swimming around the coral below. As they floated, Rowan noticed something large moving beneath them—a manta ray, gliding through the water with wings that seemed to stretch forever.

"Look, Parker!" Rowan pointed, his voice muffled by his snorkel.

Parker's eyes widened. "It's huge! Did you know their wingspan can be as wide as a bus? And they do those rolls to catch plankton while letting water pass through their gills."





The manta ray performed a slow roll, almost brushing against Rowan as it passed with a gentle whoosh. They swam alongside it, amazed by its size and the gentle way it moved.

As they marveled at the manta ray, Parker suddenly noticed something else in the distance. A large shadow was moving just below the surface, much bigger than anything they'd seen so far. She tapped Rowan and pointed toward the shadow, motioning for him to follow her.

Rowan nodded, and together they swam closer to investigate. As they got nearer, the shadow took shape, revealing a humpback whale with her calf. But something wasn't right—the calf was struggling, tangled in what looked like a fishing net.

Rowan and Parker surfaced to get a better look. "The calf is stuck," Rowan said, his voice steady but concerned.

"We have to help," Parker replied, though her eyes were wide with worry as she saw the net wrapped around the young whale's tail.

They swam closer, moving slowly to avoid startling the whales. But as they approached, the mother whale turned, positioning herself between them and her baby. She let out a deep, powerful moan, warning them to stay back.

Rowan felt a rush of excitement, mixed with a bit of nervousness, as they drew nearer to the massive creatures. The size of the mother whale was incredible, and Rowan could feel how protective she was. He glanced at Parker, who was looking a bit uneasy.

"She's really big," Parker whispered, her voice shaky.

Rowan nodded, trying to stay calm. "I know, but remember—humpbacks don't have teeth. They're filter feeders. They eat krill and small fish, not anything big like us."

Parker took a deep breath, feeling a little more reassured by what Rowan said. "Okay," she said, her voice steadier. "Let's go around to the side. We can do this together." They moved to the side of the calf, trying to stay out of the mother whale's direct line of sight. Rowan's mind was racing with what he knew about humpback whales. He thought about their incredible migrations—how they travel thousands of miles from the cold waters where they feed to the warm waters where they have their calves. The mother whale must be so tired from the journey, yet she was still fiercely protecting her baby.

Rowan took a deep breath and dove down to check the net. As he reached the calf, he could see how tightly the net was wrapped around its tail, making it hard for the young whale to move. He noticed the calf's small dorsal fin—a sign that it was still very young and just starting out on its first big journey.

Rowan surfaced with a gasp, his heart pounding. "The net's really tight. We need to cut it off before the calf gets more tangled."

Parker's worry hadn't completely gone away, but she was determined to help. "I'll hold the net steady while you cut," she said, feeling braver with her big brother by her side. Rowan nodded, grateful for Parker's support. He dove down again, pocket knife in hand, and began cutting through the tough, knotted net. The calf's movements made it tricky, but Rowan was careful not to hurt the young whale. The water around him felt heavier, and he knew they had to work quickly.



Finally, with one last snip, the net loosened. But just as Rowan was about to surface, the calf made a sudden, strong movement, knocking the pocket knife out of his hand. Rowan quickly grabbed the remaining part of the net, holding on as he kicked back to the surface.

"Are you okay?" Parker asked as Rowan emerged, breathing hard.

"Yeah," Rowan replied, catching his breath. "But I dropped the knife. We need to make sure the calf is completely free."

With a determined look, Parker took a deep breath and dove down without hesitation. Rowan quickly followed, knowing they needed to act fast. They worked together, removing the last bits of net still clinging to the calf. Finally, with a few careful tugs, they freed the calf completely.

The calf, now free, swam up to its mother, who let out a deep, joyful song that seemed to echo through the water. Rowan and Parker floated at the surface, watching with wide eyes and pounding hearts as the calf swam confidently beside its mother. They had done it—they had helped save the baby whale.

As they caught their breath, Parker grinned, her earlier worry replaced with excitement. "We did it!"

Rowan smiled back, his adrenaline still pumping. "Yeah, we did."

They swam back to the boat, where their parents pulled them up with proud smiles. As they dried off, Parker and Rowan told the story, still buzzing with excitement. They talked about the manta ray, how it used its wings to gracefully glide and barrel roll to catch food, and how humpback whales were known for their incredible migrations and the deep bonds between mother and calf.

As the sun set, turning the sky shades of orange and pink, the family sat together on the deck, watching the horizon. Rowan and Parker, side by side, reflected on the day's adventure.

"Sometimes all it takes is a little courage," Rowan said, nudging Parker.

"And a great team," Parker added, smiling.

The sailboat rocked gently on the waves as the humpback whale and her calf swam off into the deep blue, reminding Rowan and Parker of the ocean's wonders and the importance of protecting its incredible creatures.