

# wilber

the whale calf's  
adventures in distant seas



Lőrincz Judit Livia  
Bonczföldi Andrea  
Kosaras Mihály



# **Wilber the whale calf's adventures in distant seas**

The book was written by Lőrincz Judit Livia

Illustrated by Bonczöldi Andrea and Kosaras Mihály

Translated from the Hungarian by Tavaszi Kinga

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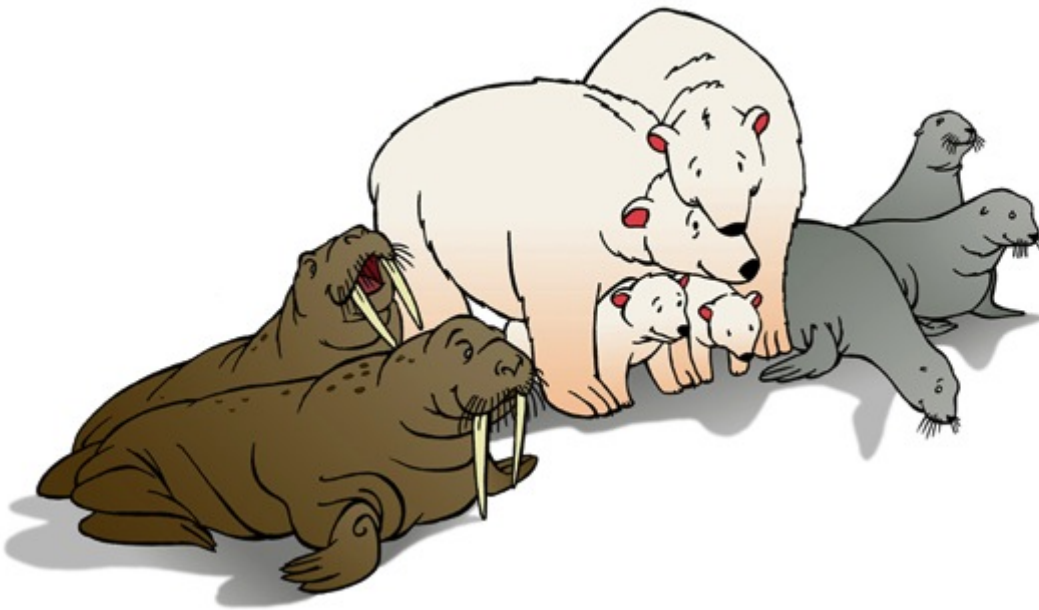
## Wilber Is Born

Wilber, the whale calf, was born on a wonderful spring night when the northern light lit the Greenland skies. He really was a beautiful baby whale, and was admired by all the animals in the neighbourhood.

“What a nicely shaped body he has! Just like a barrel!” said the seal. “If he could crawl with his flippers, he’d be the most beautiful seal cub.”

Wilber’s mother just smiled. “He’ll be an excellent swimmer with those flippers!”

“What a nice strong tail he has!” added the walrus. “If he had tusks, he could be my son too.”



“Tusks?” laughed Wilber’s father heartily. “We whales eat such tiny things that we don’t need tusks.”

“What a lovely big baby!” said the polar bear admiringly. “If he had fur, he could come hunting with us on the ice floes.”

Wilber’s mother looked surprised. “Fur? His blubber will keep him as warm as the thickest fur.”

“What an enormous mouth he has!” said the killer whale. “It’ll be perfect for singing.”

“That’s right!” exclaimed Wilber’s father. “Everyone the world over admires the singing of whales!”

“You’re the most beautiful whale calf, my dear!” said his mother smiling at him. “Who’s ever seen a whale crawling, hunting or having tusks!”

Wilber smiled sweetly at his mother.



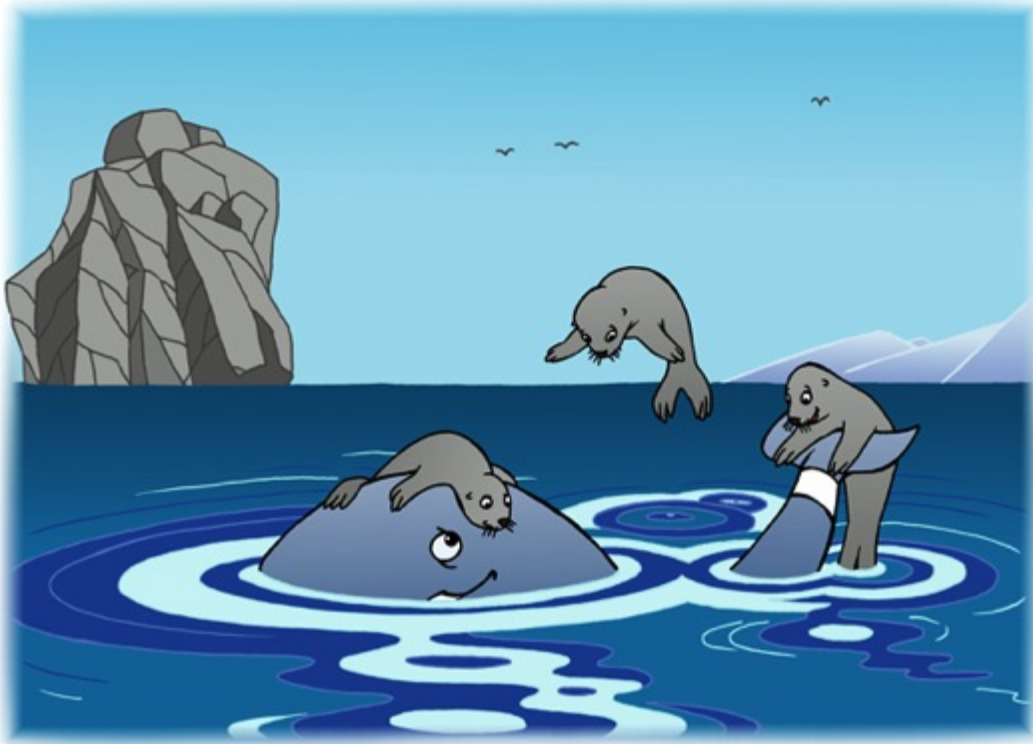
The months passed and little by little Wilber grew. He got to know the bay where his family lived, and he learned which were the safe places nearby. His mother often warned him:

“Wilber, dear, don’t swim out to the open sea. There are strong currents out there. Don’t let them carry you away because you might never find your way home again!”

“No, Mum, I won’t. I’ll be very careful!” answered Wilber, and he kept his word. He never swam beyond the Grey Cliff out to the open sea. He played a lot with his friends the seal cubs, who called on him every morning and challenged him to a swimming race. They swam to the edge of the bay and romped about among the dazzling white ice floes. In the race to the Bare Rock and back Wilber always came last, but he didn’t mind because winning made the baby seals so happy. When they were tired of swimming, they romped about again.

“Give me a swing on your tail, Wilber,” begged the youngest seal.

“Me too, me too!” shouted the others.



“All right, everyone can sit on my tail for a while, but nicely one after the other,” said the whale calf nodding. He waited for the littlest one to climb onto his tail, then he swung it to and fro rocking the baby seal. After the third swing the seal did a somersault in the air and dived into the water with a big splash. Then Wilber rocked all the others one by one and no one was left out. They laughed and shouted as Wilber’s tail swung from side to side. It was just like a real swing.

“I have to go now!” Wilber said suddenly. “I promised the fish I’d play with them too.”

So after the swimming race and swinging the seals, he went to play hide and seek with the fish.

It was Wilber’s turn to choose the one who would close their eyes.

There are big fish, there are small,

Go and hide, I’ll find you all.

Play around in the sun,

Let’s never stop - Let’s have fun!

The fish who was pointed to at the end of the verse was chosen, and he closed his eyes. The others scattered quickly and hid in cracks. But Wilber couldn’t hide anywhere because he was so big that he couldn’t fit into any of the holes. In the end he found an ice cave and hid there. But the tip of his tail just wouldn’t go in so the fish found him straight away.

“Found you, Wilber! I can see your tail. It’s sticking out of the cave! Now it’s your turn to close your eyes!”

He had to count to five so that everyone could find a hiding place.

Lobsters, crabs, count one and two,

Let the whale calf taste you too.

Three bites, four bites, just one more,

Run or I will catch you all.

“What comes after three and one more?” He was stuck. “Seven perhaps? No, it can’t be seven because that comes just after six. But what comes before six?” he wondered. He racked his brains but try as he might he just could not remember. He decided to ask his mum when he got home. “Now I’d better look for the others! Ready or not, I’m coming!”

He looked among the rocks and ice floes one by one.

“Where are you, fish? I’m coming to get you!”

“We aren’t here!” shouted the fish.

“If you weren’t there, I wouldn’t be able to hear you, so you must be there!” laughed Wilber, and he found the fish because he knew all the caves and cracks in the bay.

“Here you are, you mischievous fish. It’s not that easy to trick me!” he told the crest-fallen fish.

“You’re coming tomorrow too, aren’t you, Wilber?” asked the fish.

“Of course I am - if my mum lets me!”

Wilber’s favourite pastime was swimming about among the ice floes. Near the ice floes by the side of the Grey Cliff lived the old sea gull. Wilber loved listening to Old Father Gull’s stories about far away places where there was no ice and where strange animals lived, which didn’t look anything like either whales or seals.

“Tell me about the butterfly fish!” begged Wilber. “What are they like?”



Old Father Gull was happy to share his adventures with the whale calf.

“They are very delicate creatures. They are as thin as one of my wing feathers,” explained Old Father Gull.

“Their blubber can’t be very thick then! Don’t they get cold?” asked Wilber in amazement.

“How could they get cold? Where they live the sea is warm.”

“The sea - warm? What’s it like where the sea is warm?”

“Where the sea is warm, there are no ice floes just coral reefs. The colour of the water is not dark blue but turquoise, and beautiful coloured fish live there.”

“Colourful fish? I’ve never seen colourful fish! What do they look like?”

“Colourful fish are wonderful! They sparkle just like the northern light.”

“Like the northern light? I’d like to go with you there once and see the colourful fish. Please, Old Father Gull, take me with you!” Wilber begged the old gull frisking around happily, ready to set off there and then, but Old Father Gull stopped him.

“Wait, wait, little one! It’s not as simple as that! The warm seas are far away and you have to fly a lot to get there. Not to mention the many dangers awaiting travellers!”

“Fly? But I haven’t got wings!”

Old Father Gull thought about this. After racking his brains for a while, he said sadly,

“And I can’t swim. So you can’t come with me. You’ll have to stay here with your parents and your friends.”

Wilber was downcast when he arrived home. His mum could see that something was wrong so she stroked her son's head gently with her flipper.

"What's the matter, little one?"

"I'd like to see the colourful fish," answered Wilber with tears in his eyes. "But Old Father Gull won't take me with him because I can't fly."

Wilber's mother was very surprised to hear what strange things her son was thinking of. He wants to see colourful fish? What a silly idea! All fish are silver! She had also heard about colourful fish, but she thought they only existed in fairy tales.

"Come on, Wilber, my dear little calf. Colourful fish only exist in fairy tales!" she said, trying to comfort him.