

The Change

“Move over! You’re squishing me!” Kate squealed. She was only four years old but she had the attitude of a teenager.

“You have the most room!” Mat complained.

“Yeah!” now it was Pat, they were twin brothers.

That was what it was like every time Holly’s family had a road trip. This time they were going to the beach and the nine-seater car was full, hot and stuffy. There was Holly’s Mum, Gran and three Aunties, her two brothers and her sister and Holly herself. It was a terrible journey. The phrase *“are we nearly there yet?”* must have been said twenty times in the last half an hour and Holly had a headache and felt car sick.

Despite the journey, it was worth it when they got there. The sun shone down on the waves making them glitter like a starry night and the sand was warm and soft in between Holly’s toes. There was no one else to be seen. They had the beach all to themselves. However, the beauty was not to last. As they charged down the sand dunes, they suddenly went silent and stopped. There, along the beach lay a whale. Her tail thrashed as she tried to reach the sea; only a meter away. The skin on her back was cracked and dry and as the sun beat down she moaned as loud as thunder. She needed help.

Everyone started digging a trench around the whale, except for Holly and her Gran who got the buckets and threw water over the poor creature.

“Why...is...the whale...this far north...anyway?” Holly asked between breaths as she splashed water onto its back.

“Climate change,” whispered her Gran.

“What on earth is that?” Holly wondered as the whale groaned in protest as the trench began to wind round its enormous tail.

“The rise of the temperature of Earth in the last century,” Gran began, “A man made problem caused mainly by fossil fuels and deforestation.” She stopped for a breath as the whale thumped her tail on the ground.

“It is when the carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels floats up to the atmosphere and acts like a blanket, warming the planet up. It would be fine if we had enough plants which instead of needing oxygen like animals, they absorb the carbon dioxide and release oxygen. However we cut too much of the trees down so they cannot keep up. It also means animals lose their homes.”

“Oh!” blurted the twins at the same time.

“Yes, so when you two boys leave your PlayStation on it is harming the environment!” laughed the Aunties.

“How? That’s just superstition!” Pat babbled.

“We burn fossil fuels to make electricity. That powers the PlayStation.”

Just as their Gran was about to continue, there was a shout from the sand banks. It was Holly’s Mum:

“I tried to call for help there was no signal on my phone and no one about to talk to.”

As if in reply, the whale thrashed her tail and began to moan again. It was low and solemn as if she was saying hello to death. It filled the family up with a new purpose; this whale would live. It had to.

The tide came in and with everyone pushing and pulling the whale finally wriggled into the water. It disappeared under the water for ages but as if it was saying thank you; it came up and squirted water into the air before disappearing under the waves.

The family were triumphant. They whooped and laughed and splashed in the cool water until the sun began to set and they realised they were exhausted. They sat in the sand, their feet trickling in the water. The sky had turned a wonderful pink and the sun shone golden across the sea. Then their Mum declared that since they hadn’t got the beach day they had expected, she had bought three tents in the nearby town and were going to stay the night at the beach. Although she had fun, Holly couldn’t stop thinking about the whale.

“Are more whales going to get stuck here? Because of climate change?” she asked her Gran.

“It’s most likely. We humans might be improving a bit, but there are not enough people that believe, or even care about it. We need to stop thinking like humans and be responsible for our planet. We need to make other people believe. We need to make people think past money, power and greed. There’s a lot to do and many people don’t think it is possible, but nothing is impossible, just improbable.”

By Caoilinn