

Marine Explorers



SZCZECIN
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL

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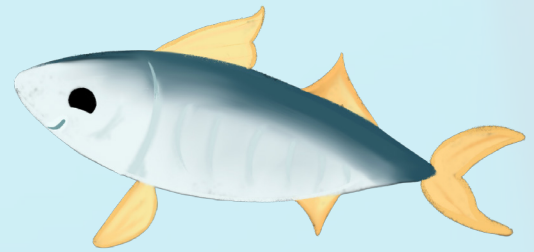
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Some time ago, in the Atlantic Ocean, two animals were living peacefully in the water. These were a shrimp and a mackerel. The shrimp's name was Gabriele. He was always very hungry, but nice to everyone. The mackerel's name was Mackie. She dreamed of being a musician, since she loved music and writing poems. Those two animals had known each other for many years and were good friends. They loved spending time with each other and talking about adventures. It had been like that for many years. They met when they were young. They lived peacefully, playing in the Atlantic Ocean every day.



One ungrateful day, some humans took them and put them in two different containers. They were really scared in those kinds of situations. After some time, they got used to the place and felt a bit more comfortable because they learned their families were somewhere near them.

After a very long time, they were taken out of the containers and placed in a confusing body of water. There they found a whale and a squid. They were disoriented at first, but when they asked what was going on, the creatures seemed friendly. They talked together and got to know why they were there. The place in the Atlantic Ocean was highly polluted by garbage and chemicals, so humans needed to transport them to another place.

They were sad because they needed to leave their home for good. When they asked for the names of the whale and squid, they answered kindly. The whale was named Miguel and came from Mexican waters. His dream was to travel back to Mexico. He had a lot of pride for his home country.

The squid, although friendly, kept his distance. When Mackie asked him about himself, he came closer, and to her surprise, he was





beautifully blue. The squid said his name was John. He was very friendly to everyone, but reserved because he was extremely scared of noise. His dream was for noise pollution to stop. John was from the United States.

When Gabriele asked where they were, John answered that they were in Chilean waters. Miguel said that John and he had been there for a very long time and had spent about three years in those waters. Mackie, who was very adventurous, was confused.

- Why were YOU here for that long? - she asked.

John answered that he was afraid of noise and frequent changes, and Miguel, John's best friend, wanted to stay with him. Gabriele and Mackie were angry because they didn't want to stay in one place for so long.

Suddenly, Mackie and Gabriel realized they had forgotten to ask a very important question. Mackie asked why they were transported to Chile and not anywhere else in the world. John said that for a long time Chile was not polluted, so humans brought them there.

- When I came here, I thought it would be nice, but after living here for over 3 years, something changed for me. It looks like these waters got more polluted and dirty. It was very loud for the past few months - said John sadly.

- Then why won't you go anywhere else? - asked Gabriele.



- We were planning to, but we just don't know where to go so it will be safe and quiet - replied John.

A few days later, Miguel had the idea to go to Mexico because it would be much safer and maybe cleaner and it is his home country. Everybody agreed since no one else had any idea. John also liked the idea since they could use the Humboldt Current flowing along Chile. Everybody agreed. Mackie and Gabriele planned to start the big adventure in three days.

They decided to sleep, since it was already midnight. They slept through the night. Over the next two days, they gathered food and resources. Everybody was excited, especially Mackie and Miguel. John was a bit stressed, but after over three years in Chile, he was also ready to go to Mexico.

- It is time to go to Mexico! - John announced excitedly on the day of departure.

Over the next hours, Mackie, Gabriele, John and Miguel and their families swam happily through the Pacific Ocean. After some time, everybody was hungry. John wanted to eat some algae. He packed them for the journey even though he didn't like them very much. Suddenly he noticed it was missing. He asked everyone if someone had seen his food, but nobody knew.

Miguel ate some plankton by swimming with his mouth open, since plankton is everywhere in the water. Mackie was also hungry, so she checked her food, but it was missing too. She asked if anyone knew what happened, but no one answered.

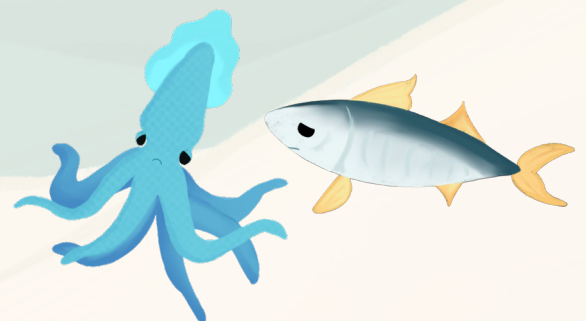
Now John and Mackie were very hungry and needed to rest.

- We can't continue like this! - said John.

Miguel noticed that Gabriele was quiet the whole time.

- Gabriele, have you seen any of John's or Mackie's food? - asked Miguel suspiciously.

- Uhm... I'm sorry, guys. I was hungry because I forgot to pack my food.



Everyone was angry at Gabriele because of this. Because of him, the animals couldn't swim any further.

- Well, I guess we have to find some food again - said John.

The animals decided that Gabriele should go find food, since he was the one who ate it all. They followed him so he would not eat anything he found.

Miguel saw something that looked like algae, so he swam closer and brought it to John. John looked at it and took a bite. His face twisted in disgust.

- Guys! This isn't algae!

- Then what is it? - asked Gabriele.

- I don't know! It has a weird smooth and thin texture. It tastes awful.

- Oh! Maybe it is a plastic bag! People use them a lot! - shouted Mackie.

- Yes, it could be that. But what's a human plastic bag doing here in the ocean? - asked Gabriele.

- It doesn't matter, let's keep looking for food - said Mackie.

The group swam around for some time, gathering small bits of food until they had enough. Miguel got hungry again and ate some zooplankton. Suddenly, it tasted strange.

- Why does this plankton taste so weird? - he asked. Nobody knew why. It tasted like sand, but artificial, and it was hard and sharp.

- I don't feel hungry anymore. Let's continue.

They swam for some time until a barrier of plastic bottles, nets, and other garbage blocked them.

- We can't swim through here! - said Gabriele. - We could get badly cut or even infected!

- We have to find a way around this. I don't want to go back to Chile - said John.

- I think we should swim around it - suggested Miguel.



Everybody agreed.

- Do we go left or right? - asked Mackie.

- I think if we go right, we might reach the shore where the plastic comes from, so we should go left - replied Gabriele.

They swam west, hoping the barrier would end soon so they could reach Mexico. It felt like they had already swum hundreds of meters.

- The wall doesn't seem to end! - said John, scared.

- I don't think so either - said Mackie.



They kept swimming, meeting schools of fish trying to get through. They swam for kilometers.

Finally, they saw a small opening.

- We should swim through there - said Mackie.

- All of you are small. I'm a whale. I won't fit. You have to go on without me - said Miguel.

- Oh, don't think like that! You should try - said Gabriele.

- Okay... I will try. Thanks for supporting me.

All the smaller animals swam through the hole and reached the other side. They found lots of algae there!

- I feel sorry for Miguel, but look at all this food! - shouted Gabriele.

Miguel slowly swam through the polluted water, trying not to get cut or tangled in nets. He accidentally swallowed some microplastics.

On the other side, the animals became worried, but Miguel soon caught up. He was badly cut, but because of his countless layers of fat, he had no major injuries.

Later, they met a baby anchovy named Stuart. They introduced



themselves and invited him to join them.

- Where are you going? - asked Stuart.

- We're going to Mexico - answered Mackie.

- Can I come with you?

- Won't your parents be worried? - asked Mackie.

- Don't worry. They swam this direction as well and I know when bedtime is.

Miguel, Gabriele, Mackie and John agreed. But after a while, Stuart started crying and screaming madly.

- I'm hungry! - he said.

- What would you like to eat? - asked Gabriele.

- Water plant!

The animals were thinking for a while, what could "water plant" mean. Right before Stuart would start screaming even louder, John realized it might be algae. After they helped him, they continued their journey.

Soon they reached areas near Mexico. They noticed they were slowly drifting to the right, not in a straight line. Because Stuart was satisfied with the food he received earlier, he didn't throw any more tantrums. As they weren't swimming in a straight line, they were traveling closer to occupied land. Now that they were close to the land, they heard an extremely loud noise. John, Miguel, and Stuart got very scared. Mackie and Gabriele were not as scared, though they were still disturbed. It turned out that they were already used to the noise because it was normal in the Atlantic Ocean. The loud noise wouldn't stop, and Stuart started crying extremely loud again. Because of it, everybody quickly backed off from the noise before Stuart swam away from everybody



in an unknown direction.

- What is that noise? - asked Miguel loudly.

When Miguel was backing off, he hit a sharp rock, causing him to bleed.

- I don't know! - everyone else shouted.

- Maybe I can swim upward to see where the noise is coming from - suggested Gabriele.

- Ok, just be careful - replied John.

Gabriele swam up as the noise got louder and louder. Suddenly, Gabriele was ascending too quickly! He got very confused from the noise, so he didn't know where he was going. When he got his head out of the water, he saw a giant construction site in the sea off the coast. That's where all the noise had been coming from. Before he could suffocate, he got back down into the water to tell everybody. Little did he know, bubble lesions were already forming inside his skin, causing him to get infected. The bubble lesions had most likely developed as a result of sudden pressure spikes - in other words, decompression.

He wanted to tell everyone what he saw, but then Stuart interrupted him and started talking about his bedtime and that he needed to go home, so Mackie volunteered to take him back home. Mackie swam with him for some time. Meanwhile, the other animals were trying to come up with a plan to get through the terrible noise. When Mackie was swimming with Stuart, he got really tired, but he still managed to swim. After an hour, she found Stuart's school and his parents. His parents were worried sick about him because



he went for a little swim, and when they shouted that it was time for lunch, he was nowhere near.

When Mackie brought Stuart back, his parents gave her a gift: several shiny, smooth rocks. They said that it was the best they could give for now.

Meanwhile, Miguel, John, and Gabriele were still thinking about the ways to cross pass the noise, until Mackie showed up. John had the idea to use the rocks that Mackie had brought with her to cover their statocysts or otoliths (internal ears) while they swam across. Mackie and Miguel couldn't hear him because of the loud noise from the construction side that disturbed the frequency they used for communication, but when he showed them by placing rocks on his statocysts, they understood. Miguel did not fully follow this advice, as he perceived sounds through almost his entire skull, so the pebbles were of no use to him. However, he covered his head with his fin (like a hand). This brought him some relief.



Now all that was left to do was to swim across. They started out fine, but unexpectedly, Gabriele suddenly weakened and couldn't swim any further. That for sure was caused by the bubble lesions. Fortunately, Miguel carried him, but he had to take one of the fins off his skull (causing him to get a big headache). When he grabbed Gabriele, he couldn't hold him, swim, and cover his head with his fin at the same time, so he uncovered his skull. This slightly damaged his hearing.

When they couldn't hear that terrible noise anymore, they needed to think about what to do with Gabriele, who got infected by bubble lesions. They saw some dirty bandages in the water, but they were in water and useless. They thought for an alternative solution. John took some clean algae and wrapped it around Gabriele. After waiting hopefully for Gabriele to do something, he said that he needed some rest. They gathered food for him and waited until he felt fine. After that he ate the algae that was on his body, because he was not satisfied with the food he received.



When he was all better, they decided to keep swimming because they had a feeling they were getting close. Miguel already tasted the Mexican water before, so he knew that this feeling was right.

They started to swim faster and faster as they were very impatient to get there.

Finally, they reached their destination – the warm and welcoming waters of Mexico. It made them happy and relieved.

- What should we do now? – asked Mackie and Gabriele.
- Maybe we should find a place to live – replied John.

They swam for some time until they found the perfect place. The place had lots of algae, coral reefs, and rocks. Everybody took a nap except Mackie. She was thinking about what to do now. She wanted to relive this journey as she was very adventurous. She didn't want it to end, but she knew it had to. At least all of her friends were happy, and she could live in a pollution-free place. She decided to go to sleep too.

In the middle of the night, they heard a loud noise and felt extreme heat. They all woke up, and to their surprise, there was a damaged ship right above them. It turned out there is an oil leakage coming from it.

- Oh no! It seems that this place is not pollution-free! – shouted John.

They swam away, looking in terror at what was happening to their new home. The thick, black oil blocked all the sunlight, causing the plants to die there. It will create anoxic deserts and make life impossible for aquatic fauna as well. They swam away in shock, sadness, and pain.



- It turns out there can't be a pollution-free place on Earth - said everyone sadly.

- Humans are responsible for it, and now we can't do anything. What should we do? - asked Gabriele. - We would need to tell our story to the people.

- Wait! But why not?! I once met a very nice girl! - shouted John. - Her name was Lily. Maybe we can ask her if she can help us. She was from the U.S.A., if I remember correctly.

- Huh, I have also met a human who was friendly to me and fed me - said Miguel. - His name was Antonio. He was from Mexico. Maybe we can find him somewhere here. Let's just avoid the oil spill.

- I have also met a girl who took care of me. She was from Poland and traveled to Portugal on vacation. Her name was Anais - said Mackie.

- Wait! When I was in France, I met a boy named Bob! He was very friendly to me. I guess we should go on another adventure to find them and to tell them our story - said Gabriele.

- Let's do it! - the others shouted, eager.



Do you think they found them?

