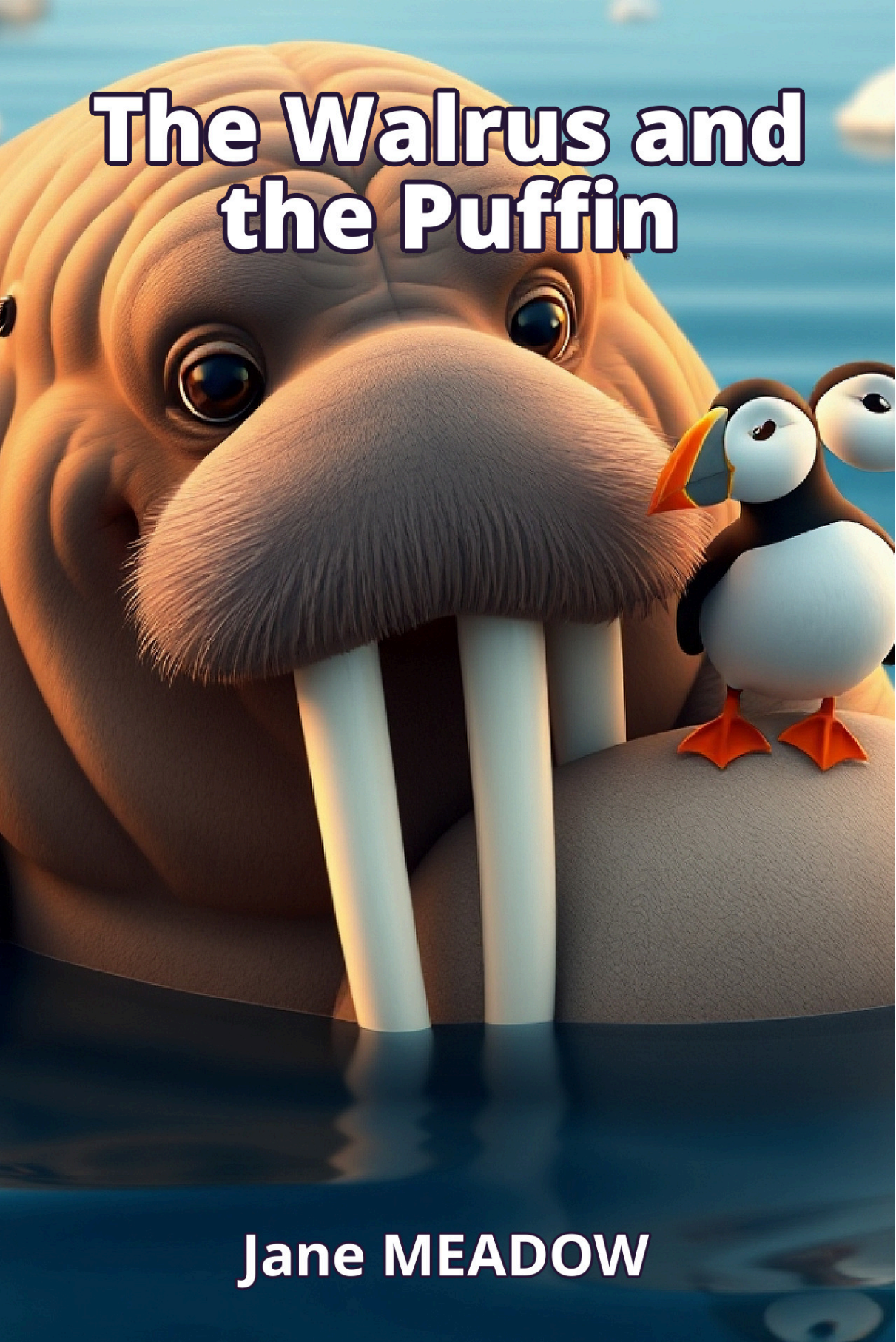


The Walrus and the Puffin

A close-up illustration of a walrus's face, showing its large, wrinkled brown skin, small eyes, and a thick, grey, bushy mustache. Two long, white tusks extend downwards from the mustache. To the right, two small puffins with black and white bodies and orange beaks and feet are perched on a grey rock. The background is a blue sky with soft white clouds.

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On a cold blue bay, where icebergs floated like giant sugar cubes, lived a walrus named Walter. He had a broad, wrinkled grey-brown body, long white tusks, and the kindest dark eyes in the whole sea. Every morning he swam slowly through the chilly water, humming a low, rumbley tune. He was big and calm and never in a hurry.



One bright morning, a little puffin came whizzing over the waves. His name was Percy, and he had black and white feathers, a bright orange beak, and round orange feet. Percy landed on a rock near Walter and shook his wings. 'Hello, big fellow!' he chirped. 'What a lovely bay this is!' Walter smiled a wide, whiskery smile.



Walter and Percy became friends right away, even though they were so different. Walter was huge and slow; Percy was tiny and quick. Walter liked to float and watch the clouds; Percy liked to zip and dive and splash. 'You are very small,' said Walter. 'You are very big,' said Percy. 'But we both like it here.'



Percy showed Walter the best fishing spots, and Walter showed Percy the warmest rocks to rest on. Percy told funny jokes that made Walter's whiskers wiggle. Walter told long sea stories that made Percy's little eyes grow wide. 'Friends come in all sizes,' said Walter. 'And all shapes,' said Percy, tapping his bright beak.



Then one afternoon, the sky turned grey and heavy. The wind began to push and pull at the waves, and the sea grew rough and choppy. 'A storm is coming,' said Walter, frowning at the clouds. 'We should find a safe place.' Percy nodded bravely, but his short wings were already getting tired from the wind.



The waves grew taller and wilder. The wind blew so hard that Percy tumbled across the water like a little feather. He flapped his short wings as fast as he could, but he was small and getting tired. 'I can't find a safe rock!' he called out. 'Everywhere is too splashy and too windy!'



Walter swam close and kept his big body between Percy and the crashing waves. 'Stay near me!' he called, his deep voice warm and steady. Percy tried to fly, but the wind pushed him back. His round orange feet paddled hard. 'I'm so tired, Walter,' he said. 'I don't think I can keep going much longer.'



Walter looked at his tiny friend bobbing in the rough water. Then he had an idea. 'Percy, climb onto my back!' he said. 'My broad back is wide and steady. You can rest there.' Percy was not sure. Walter was very big and slippery. But he trusted his kind friend, so he flapped up and landed gently on Walter's wide grey-brown back.



It was the safest place Percy had ever been. He tucked his little orange feet under his warm feathers and held on. The waves crashed around them, but Walter floated like a big calm hill. 'Are you all right up there?' asked Walter. 'I am perfect!' said Percy. 'You are the best boat I have ever ridden!'



Slowly and steadily, Walter swam through the storm. Percy sat on his back, watching the white waves leap and hiss. The wind tugged at them, but Walter kept going. 'Just a little farther,' he said. 'I know a cozy rock that stays dry even in a big storm.' Percy held on tightly and trusted his friend.



At last they reached a snug rock by the shore, tucked behind a tall cliff. The wind could not reach it, and the waves only whispered around its edges. Walter lifted his great body and let Percy hop down onto the dry stone. 'Here we are,' said Walter. 'Safe and sound.' Percy shook his feathers and let out a happy little chirp.



Together they waited as the storm rolled and grumbled. Percy snuggled close to Walter's warm side and said, 'Thank you for helping me, Walter. You carried me all the way here.' Walter's dark eyes twinkled. 'That is what friends do,' he said. 'We help each other, especially when the waves get rough.'



After a while, the wind grew quiet. The clouds drifted away like sleepy sheep, and the sky turned soft and pink. 'Look!' said Percy. 'The storm is gone!' The sea grew calm and smooth again, and the sun peeked out and sprinkled gold across the water. Walter and Percy watched the sky clear together.



Percy hopped up and down on the rock. 'I was so tired and scared,' he said. 'But you helped me find a safe place.' Walter smiled his wide, whiskery smile. 'And you were brave,' he said. 'Being brave is not about being big. It is about trusting your friends and holding on.' Percy nodded happily.



From that day on, the walrus and the puffin were the best of friends. Percy often rode on Walter's broad back across the bay, and Walter never had to swim alone. They learned that friendship can grow between anyone who cares, whether they are big and slow or tiny and quick, as long as they help each other.



So if you ever visit that cold blue bay, look for a big grey walrus and a puffin with a bright orange beak. They will be there together, floating and laughing, watching the clouds drift by. And if a storm ever comes, you will see Walter carry little Percy safely home, because that is what friends do.