

The Whale and the Penguin



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Willa was a young whale with deep ocean blue skin and a pale speckled belly. She loved to swim through the wide, wide ocean, leaving a trail of sparkling bubbles behind her. Every year, when the water grew warm, she began a long journey to the cold, icy seas. "Off I go!" she sang, and her voice rolled over the waves like a song.



Far to the south, Percy the penguin stood on a floating piece of ice. He had a black back, a white belly, and a tiny red scarf around his neck. His big brown eyes were full of curiosity. "What is out there?" he wondered. "I want to see the whole ocean!" But his penguin colony stayed close to shore, and Percy felt a little brave and a little scared.



One bright morning, Willa swam near the icy shore. She poked her rounded head above the water and blew a happy spout. Percy had never seen a whale before. He waddled to the edge of the ice and waved his flipper wings. "Hello!" he called. "I'm Percy!" Willa smiled with her gentle dark eyes. "I'm Willa," she said. "Would you like to see the ocean?"



Percy hopped onto a small ice floe, and Willa swam beside him. She showed him dolphins leaping and flying fish gliding. Percy laughed and flapped his flippers. "This is the best day ever!" he shouted. Willa's tail swished happily, and bubbles sparkled all around them. They talked and played until the sun dipped low. "I like you, Willa," said Percy. "You're kind."



But while they were playing, the wind picked up. It pushed Percy's ice floe away from the shore, faster and faster. "Willa!" cried Percy. "My colony is gone! I can't see them!" He looked around at the big, wide ocean and felt very small. Willa swam close. "Don't worry, Percy," she said gently. "I'll stay with you. We'll find them together."



Percy's flippers trembled, and his big brown eyes filled with tears. "But I don't know the way home," he whispered. Willa nuzzled the ice floe softly. "I know these waters," she said. "My journey takes me near your colony. We can go together." Percy took a deep breath. "Okay," he said. "I trust you, Willa." And the two friends started across the wide ocean.



They swam for hours. Willa's deep blue back rose and fell with the waves. Percy stood on his ice floe, watching for landmarks. "Look!" he cried. "A big rock shaped like a hat!" Willa nodded. "That's one of my favorite places," she said. "We're on the right path." They passed the rock and kept going, with Willa's sparkling bubbles trailing behind them like a string of tiny stars.



Soon the sky turned gray, and the wind blew cold. Percy shivered and pulled his red scarf tight. "I'm scared," he admitted. "What if we never find them?" Willa swam closer. "I get scared too," she said. "But we're together. That makes us brave." She hummed a soft whale song, and Percy felt a little warmer. "That's pretty," he said. "Sing it again."



As they traveled, they met a friendly sea turtle. "Have you seen a penguin colony?" asked Willa. The turtle pointed with a flipper. "Over the next big wave," she said. "But watch out for the strong current." Percy gulped. "Strong current?" Willa smiled. "We can handle it," she said. "Hold on tight, Percy!" And she swam carefully, using her strong tail to glide through the swirling water.



The current pushed and pulled, but Willa kept Percy close. She swam steadily, and soon the water grew calm again. Percy cheered. "We made it!" he shouted. Willa blew a happy spout. "We made it together," she said. They rested for a moment, floating side by side. Percy looked at Willa's gentle dark eyes and smiled. "You're the best friend I ever met," he said. Willa's heart felt warm.



Then Percy heard a sound he knew. Squawk! Squawk! It was the call of his penguin colony. "That's my family!" he cried. Willa swam toward the sound. They rounded a big iceberg, and there were hundreds of penguins, waddling and squawking on the shore. Percy's flippers flapped with joy. "I'm home! I'm home!" he shouted. The colony cheered when they saw him.



Percy's family rushed to greet him. His mother hugged him with her soft flippers. "We were so worried!" she said. "How did you find your way back?" Percy pointed to Willa, who floated just offshore. "My friend Willa helped me," he said. "She swam beside me the whole way." The penguins thanked Willa with happy squawks. Willa smiled and blew a gentle spout. "I'm glad I could help," she said.



Percy waddled to the edge of the ice and looked at Willa. "Will you come back?" he asked. "I'll miss you." Willa nodded. "Every year, when I journey south, I'll stop here," she promised. "And we'll have more adventures." Percy hugged her as best he could with his short flipper wings. "Goodbye, Willa," he said. "Goodbye, Percy," said Willa. "Until we meet again."



As Willa swam away, Percy watched her go. He felt a little sad but also very happy. He had made a friend across the wide ocean. And he knew that no matter how far apart they were, their friendship would always bring them back together. He waved his red scarf high in the air. "See you next year!" he called. Willa's tail splashed a happy goodbye.



Willa continued her journey, leaving a trail of sparkles behind her. She thought of Percy and smiled. Friendship, she knew, can cross great distances. It can stretch over waves and icebergs and wide, wide water. And when two friends meet again, the whole ocean feels like home. She sang a soft whale song and swam on, happy and warm.



Back at the colony, Percy told everyone about his brave journey. "I was scared," he said, "but Willa stayed with me. That's what friends do." The other penguins listened with wide eyes. Percy looked out at the sea, hoping for next year. And somewhere out there, Willa swam and dreamed of a little penguin with a red scarf. Their friendship would last forever, across the wide, wide ocean.