



By Eve

Les Mantes

de la

MAR



Preface

Beluga Whales are beautiful creatures,

Social animals that are luckily not amongst the endangered specimen list that seems to be ever growing this day and age.

But it is not hard to think of a day and age in which our favourite animals are critically endangered,

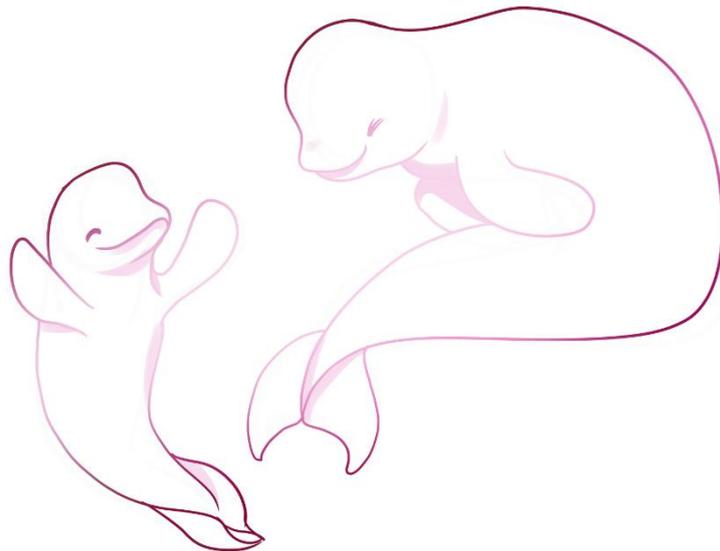
Each hanging on the brink of total eradication.

And even though it is addicting to wallow in the sadness, it's enlightening to imagine the ways in which we will grow as a race to one day save the animals we once put in danger.

We can sit through many depressing documentaries and videos of our polluted land, but it brings a tear to my eye to know that many are doing the actions required to steer us off our destined genocidal path.

My heart goes out to everyone who is working for the greater good and the bettering of the earth.

Thank you.





Les Chants de La Mer

2062,

A year not far,

Waters are mellow,

The marine animals are coping in their own ways,

Some went extinct whilst some thrived,

Many are imperilled.

A penetrating croon and a euphoric chorus of high-pitched trills.

Breaching,

Spy-hopping,

Lobtailing,

A set of acrobatics and communications to impress onlookers,

The Beluga whales were a beautiful stark-white,

Meant to blend in with ice but contrast deeply against the heavy depths,

They are frequently called “Canaries of the sea”,

Famous for their underwater songs and mystical transmissions.





Notes and pitches ranging and sliding into the next, a legato style,
Imitations of orchestral wonders and concertos underwater.
Belugas render trills adorned with a shimmering quality,
Human vocalists could never compare to their ranges in quavering.

Northern oceans carry that tingle of fresh,
But were sprinkled dangerously with predators to avoid,
Orcas, Polar bears, and Native Americans gather to feast on Belugas,
Each equally as menacing, to adults and calves alike.

One predator haunted them more than any animal could,
So minacious that certain pods must migrate South five thousand kilometres to get away,
Ice was the most lethal killer there was.
If one beluga were kept under the water for more than 25 minutes,
It would have the heart-wrenching death of suffocating.

Atticus and North, two Belugas, Son and Mother,
Traveling in their tight knight pod.
Under 12 Belugas there were,
Swimming together, four kilometres per hour,





Away from the frozen horrors of the North.

Their warm coats of blubber protected them from the acrimonious bite of the sea depths,

As they venture forth south from north,

They call out and eat,

Any fish in the vicinity were doomed,

As belugas were skilled in the hunt,

And the fish forgotten in a second as they get swallowed whole.

Atticus was flanking his mother North who guided him protectively under her fin,

His fluke flapping in sync with North's as they swim rhythmically under the blurry constellations,

They were inseparable, at least for Atticus' youth,

He wishes he could swim with his mother endlessly,

Alas, time is never fair to anyone,

Atticus will soon have to jump off the carousel of childhood and onto the rollercoaster of
adolescence.

Life is tranquil migrating south,

The smooth current couples with the harsh wilderness into an equilibrium of life,

Atticus was well acquainted with his life.





Some days he would fish the juiciest salmon,
Whilst others he struggled to catch a sea snail.

Today was an ordinary day for many Belugas alike,

Swim,

Ingest,

Rest,

But something lingered,

The distasteful feeling of negative overwrought.

Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Visible unrest grows in the marine.

Something was not right.

A deep thud sounded, Interrupting the collective unease.

The pod of Belugas slow down and measure their surroundings.

Another thud, louder than before.





A shiver was aroused from the ground and shook like an earthquake of high magnitude.

Sand pours up out of the ground in mystic swirls and floats back down to its normal state.

And again.

Fish in the distance gather into schools and perform an array of confusion to disarm the apparent predator.

A predator so big it shook the earth with all its might.

The pod starts swimming in speed,

North follows to ensure her own safety,

The sounds grow louder, ordering chaos and disorder among the sea life.

Every ten seconds like an alarm.

Atticus swam in place, dazed,

In shock and suffering from his dizzied conscious,

The sounds only grow louder.

Blast after blast,

Ear-shattering blood-curdling sounds,

Echoes from the floor 1498 metres per second,

Nothing but darkness is seen by Atticus,

His Echolocation blocked,





The source was a collection of seismic air guns,
Firing into the ground in search for oil,
Hungry like bloodthirsty hounds,
The sound created by the giant machines acted like a cloud over his senses,
Depression overwhelmed him,
He knew that if he swam away from the noise,
He would never hear his mother's songs again,
He starts sounding,
But he could not take his unrest and swam to the top,
His melon protruding the south waters,
All alone Atticus was, without his pod.

Atticus could sing his heart out,
He could perform as hard as he could,
But no one would be able to locate him if they tried,
No whale can save him now.
The sounds are put to rest.

No whale maybe,
But a different mammal,





Intriguingly different,

Their heads do not blend in with their environment,
But their coverings make sure they do, like a layer of camouflage.

Long, sickly protruding limbs stick out of the body,
Atticus is surrounded by nets and confusing communication,
A language he was never taught but had always heard when it was summertime and swimming
the coast of North America.

Humans were perplexing to him,
They seemed to want to communicate so he did sing back,
But once too close to the American borders,
Some of his pod would go missing and he never saw them again.

Their claws extend out to pull him into a large vicinity,
A container filled with water.
Trauma settles into his veins,
It hurts him, but he is numbed from his losses which were apparent beforehand.
Shame trickles up his spine.
He is like a heavy piece of flesh,
Unmotivated and melancholy,





Malleable to the humans' demands.

Atticus is woken by the rumble that trembles the small body of water,

Only darkness surrounds,

Light filters through, stabbing the pitch-black in exposure as Icelandic tongues spar in conversation,

His container is lugged out into the open,

Atticus swimming erratically,

Worried for his life.

The container is lowered and presents Atticus an opening,

He goes for it,

Even as his heart sings in tunes of sadness,

He senses he might be in danger once more.

He is in the open now.

He belts a downcast tune,

Belittled by his chances in life and taunted by what could have been,

Ringling out, his song reaches no bounds,

He feels like he has not escaped,





But is somewhere new.

And Big.

Atticus knew there was not an edge to the water close by,

So why was the echo so exaggerated?

A flash of white comes into Atticus' sight and he chants once more,

Many white figures glistening like pearls in the wake of the new light swim from around the new pool.

They warble joyously.

Chanting their lost songs of the sea.

But now found.

Canaries of the ocean,

Chirping in chorus,

Singing out Les Chants De La Mer.

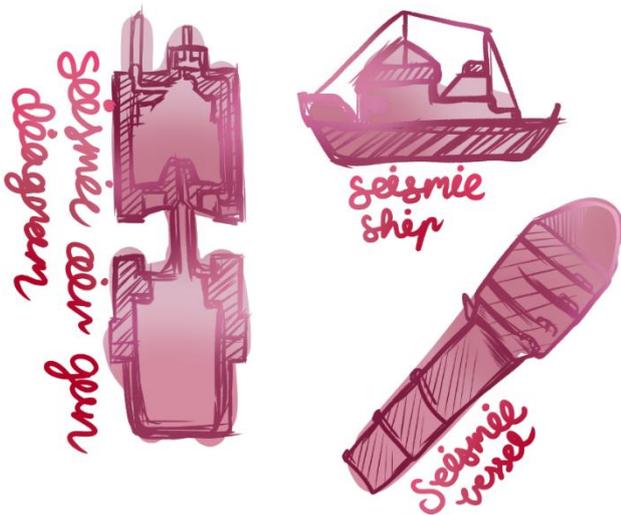




Postface:

Many whales like Atticus are displaced due to Seismic Air gun testing.

Seismic air guns are one of the loudest man-made sounds that shoot air at fast velocities to find oil in underwater deposits. They let out blasts every 10 seconds for days or even years. Seismic air guns are around 200-240 decibels, in comparison, a jet engine 30 metres in the air is 140 decibels. The sound of Seismic air guns can stretch a range of 4,000 kilometres. The



sound has been recorded to damage marine life severely, killing fish, micro-invertebrates, and messing up marine vertebrates' senses. Beluga whales and other marine mammals use echolocation to source food, measure surroundings and to communicate. Whilst Seismic air gunning acts like a cloud and masks their senses.

Luckily, we live in a day and age where every problem has a solution which we can invent thanks to the far reaches of science. Inventions such as the AquaVib is a safer alternative in which the machine pumps the same amount of energy into the water but at a lower sound and over a longer period, which does not disturb the sea life.

But most injured beluga whales will not get Atticus' happy ending.

Atticus was lucky enough to live in a period where Sea sanctuaries are a key part of conservation. Although still very new in 2020, sea-sanctuaries are like bigger zoos in which the





marine animal feels like it is in the wild but safe from predators. If sea sanctuaries can become bigger in the future, many whales who are separated from their pod or are injured can be rescued by sea sanctuaries, playing a big role in preserving animals who are endangered and/or injured. The first sea sanctuary is relatively new and located in Iceland. Two beluga whales named Little White and Little Gray have just moved in and the sanctuary is expanding fast (here's their website: <https://belugasanctuary.sealifetrust.org/en/>). If you want to help the cutest animals alive (Beluga whales) by donating to their sanctuary, here is the link: <https://app.donorfy.com/donate/KK1DKIBW91/HelpBelugas>.

Remember, spreading awareness is enough, and by telling our friends and families about the injustice happening to our ocean friends, us to can be a part of leading out society into a more sustainable future.





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All drawings are by me.

And a big thank you to those who work at STAT for giving me and other people this opportunity to learn more about our oceans and environment around us.

Written by Eve Tsolakidis, 2020.

