



The Eye of the Whale: A Rescue Story

Jennifer O'Connell

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On a cool December morning near San Francisco, a distress call was radioed to shore by a local fisherman. He had discovered a humpback whale tangled in hundreds of yards of crab-trap lines, struggling to stay afloat. A team of volunteers answered the call, and four divers risked their lives to rescue the enormous animal. It was the first successful whale disentanglement performed off the West Coast of the United States and prompted a rare and remarkable demonstration of animal behavior.

As people found out about the event, questions arose. Did the whale help the divers by staying still and calm as they cut the lines or was she just exhausted? Was the whale full of joy after being freed or did she swim in circles to stretch out her huge body after being tied up for so long? How do we explain the whale nudging all the divers, then looking directly at them? (The divers said that this was one of the most fantastic moments of their lives.)

This celebrated story, beautifully depicted in Jennifer O'Connell's mesmerizing paintings, will make you wonder about animal emotions and the unique connections we can have with other animals, even whales.

To research *The Eye of the Whale*, Jennifer traveled to San Francisco where she met Captain Mick Menigoz and rode his rescue boat, *Superfish*, out into the Pacific Ocean to the area where the events in the book took place. This experience fueled her inspiration as she created the images and words of this extraordinary story.

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