



“Well, now, as I was saying, in spite of the efforts of the suckerfish to improve my look and feel, my being white has made me unlucky with ladies. I used to be quite popular with them, and they scarcely let me alone. They would say “Hey, Ben, you are my only sweetheart, so don’ t you ever flirt with other girls,” while pinching me there. But now they say I am a whale god, and keep aloooof from me. Hum, that’ s OK with me though, for I think I have already known enough of them to know them better, if you know what I mean. Besides, even I can use some vacation once in a while, you know. But, you see, unless you are in Arctic or Antarctic - if you know where they are - where white is the color of the background, being white is a great handicap. Yes, like the suckerfish, I too advertise my presence to my enemies, in the air or water.

“First, a couple of nasty seagulls came and pecked and picked on me. They eat things like oyster on me but not only that! They have come to enjoy tasting our skin and the flesh underneath. Oh, it’ s very painful and, you know, they kill a child whale sometimes this way. So, I had to dive more often and thus I could not enjoy peaceful sun-tanning.

“Then, ravenous orcas would not fail to find me, and they come by many. Five is OK but more than that I run away. Unlike sharks they work in a team, a team of well-organized synchronism. They are diligent too. For example, they train themselves to be a good beach hunter. Normally, to go aground on a shoal or shallows means a death to whales - but orcas are rare exception. From youth they practice hard to gain the skill of going over a beach and wriggling back to water unharmed. This way they can chase a walrus or a seal or the like right on to the shore above the waterline, and grab the victim and drag it back to the water like an alligator does. There are some who witnessed them killing a polar bear on iceberg. So they are the strongest gang in the ocean and on the water edges and are nicknamed killer whale.

“Now, the other day I had ten of them on me. At first I noticed only five approaching

from behind, so I planned to smack them dead with my flukes; but then I found, with the help of a sucker in charge of patrolling, that five others were lying in ambush beyond the waves ahead - cunning creatures. As you know, we sperm whales cannot see ahead for the eyes are on the sides of our head, like your ears. So it's time to run away, but not through the waves, for they can swim more than three times faster than we can. However, we sperm whales can dive deeper than they. They come only 300 meters deep or so and give up, but I can go as deep as 1100 meters, and one of my cousins has a record of 3002 meters - a desperado! Incidentally, he said that at that depth the sea bed is like a bright starry sky twinkling with many luminescent creatures and organisms, and not without occasional shooting ones.

“Anyway, I took a deep breath and, raising my flukes high in the air, dived and went down perpendicularly as fast as my flukes could drive me. I heard one orca shouting “Gosh, the whitey has found us! Go catch him!” and they dived after me and in a moment neared me dangerously close. If two or more of them could bite hold of me at my flukes at the same time, my flukes are stayed and the game is over. One caught me hard there; so I quickly bent my body and gave him a full swing - this must have caused him unconscious and he at once released me. Now, as I go deeper, an advantageous phenomenon takes place in my body. As the water gets colder and the water pressure higher, and as my body, especially the soft large forehead, is squeezed in, it begins to shrink and harden on its own, and at the depth of about 200 meters my body becomes quite streamlined and the body weight substantially overbalances the buoyancy so that I can increase my speed.

“This happened as usual, and the orcas gave up. It was a narrow escape though. If I went up too soon, the orcas would be waiting above to attack me again. They would try to prevent me from taking breaths by pushing and pulling me down until I drown. So I had to stay underneath for quite some time. We can stay long in the depth - two hours or even more if we take many deep breaths before diving. Anyway I had to recover enough buoyancy to be able to go up without much labor. The recovery, that is re-inflation of my body, occurs naturally by the body heat, which has increased due to the desperate diving; but it occurs faster in a hot spa, and I am a great lover of hot spas! It's not difficult to find one for often bubbles are going up from spas, and I can hear the

bubbling if it is not too far.

“I found a cozy one in a small ravine and, descending into it, hidden my body among craggy rocks and let the hot rushing bubbles and water massage and warm my cold body. How comfortable it was! Then, I carefully applied the wounds I got from the seagulls and the orca to the bubbles for disinfection and prompt healing. A very good medicine. It kills parasites as well. I must warn you however that you must not inhale or swallow the bubbles. They are very poisonous when inside your body. Now, as my body got warmer I dozed and fell asleep as usual; but this time not without a problem.

“Octopuses were no problem to me when I was not white and could sleep hidden among the rocks and corals; but now they find me without difficulty, because what is a big white thing in the dark background if it ain’ t a stupid sleeping snow white whale? And they say white color incites their appetite. One biggish octopus is enough to paralyze a whale. First it hugs you with the long huge sucking legs or arms, whichever you like to call them, and the hugging is a nasty, sticky, spirally wrenching one. A shark would swoon if it is twisted by this hugging. However hard you may dance the many-armed partner will never let you change partners. Meanwhile, the octopus injects paralyzing saliva into your skin. Then, sooner or later, he would start devouring you and, as you know, they have very strong beaks. Only you do not feel the pain thanks to the anesthetic effect of the saliva, which prevents you from going wild, to the benefit of the epicurean devourer.

“So, I was awoken by a huge octopus as it hugged me round and started twisting my body. I shook and swung my body to escape but it seemed too late. Soon I began feeling numb where I was touched by the octopus and thought that my painless end was nearing. However I was lucky then, for I noticed that this particular octopus had not as many legs as the name of his species informs, and when I asked him what had happened to his missing legs, he said with a curse upon himself that he had been so hungry that he ate four of them himself - which made him - ah uno, dos, tres, yeah quatropus, right? Ha-ha-ha. So, I took courage and said to myself, “All right, I’ ll do my last dance as wildly as possible no matter what!” And so did I, and scratching his head against a huge rock, I

was able to break away from his hugging, and did not look back when he yelled at me to return and return his precious leg that had been torn off anew - leaving him a tripod. That torn leg was stuck and wriggling on my belly as if it were another suckerfish, and I thought it would make a good takeaway for my sucker friends waiting above - and also would be an unmistakable evidence to prove to them that my next adventure story in the octopus' s garden was not a makeup. Incidentally, I hear octopus' s legs are disposable because they grow anew.

“Now, my brother, ‘That’ s enough!’ was what I declared to myself, and I repented and changed my mind. I knew God is merciful and forgiving. He might give back to me the dark skin. So I turned and rushed back through the gate to swallow you, as God had ordered me in the first place - which I have done like a good circumcised whale should, as you have witnessed from outside and then inside.

“...How is it that you have not suffocated in my stomach? Well, I can tell you that, but I’ m afraid I must use some technical terms you may not have heard yet. OK? Well, then, I will try to explain it as simply as I can. First you must know that our stomach is made up of four rooms in series. You are in the foremost one, which is called fore-stomach and is by far the largest of the four. There almost no digestive juice is secreted, or tapped. So, so long as you stay where you are, you will not be digested ...if pickled. Oh, by the way, Jonnie, please feel free to help yourself to any fish, squid and sea weed round you. They are nicely pickled too.

“So, going back to the subject, the fore-stomach is primarily for crushing and softening big tough food. So it has a powerful muscular system. Of course I’ m not working it now, for God’ s order is to keep you alive; and as a result I must keep fasting as long as you are in. No appetite anyway with a monk praying in my tummy.

“Now, as you know, we sperm whales have to dive deep for extended periods of time for

various reasons, and therefore we need to stockpile as much oxygen as possible in our body. Thus, our lung has come to acquire a capacity of transferring oxygen from the inhaled air into our blood by 80 to 90 %, which is very high compared with your 10 to 15 %. Also, in order to stay long in the depth, our body is made capable of reducing our buoyancy through volume reduction under high water pressure and cold temperature, like our forehead as I already explained. Likewise, our ribcage is made flexible to allow temporary lung collapse. And now, correspondingly as our volume decreases, our heart rate is slowed gradually until it is halved, and our metabolism also slows down significantly to slow the oxygen consumption.

“...Are you following so far? ...Oh, you don’ t understand metabolism, do you? Well, don’ t worry about that, I too learned the real meaning of it only recently. That’ s sort of how fast your body consumes your stock of what you have eaten, drunk or inhaled. So, the faster the metabolism, the faster you get hungry, thirsty and in need of breath. In other words, the slower the metabolism, the longer you can stay undersea without taking oxygen. “...What!! you don’ t understand oxygen either?! Holy cow! Didn’ t your rabbis teach you some basic chemistry? ...No, it has nothing to do with ox! Oxygen is something in the air that keeps you alive. ...No, it’ s not God!...but, maybe you are close. Anyway, know that oxygen is the thing in the air that keeps you from suffocating.

“So, turning back to my explanation, in order to keep more oxygen in our body, our myoglobin, which stores oxygen in muscle tissue, is by far more abundant than that of any other creature. Also, our blood has an extra-high density of red blood cells, which contain oxygen-carrying haemoglobin. Thus our blood can even be over-saturated with oxygen temporarily, and this over-oxygenated blood becomes the source of oxygen gas, as I will explain later.

“Now, as we stay undersea, the oxygen level of our body decreases with time and when it becomes lower than certain thresholds, the oxygenated blood is selectively directed towards essential organs only. Thus, the longer we stay undersea, the more essential an organ must be to continue receiving the oxygenated blood. The top-most priority is given

to none other than the fore-stomach - the brain only the next. The reason for this is that when we dive deep, whether to escape from an enemy like orcas or to hunt for food, we swallow a newborn, if any is with us, into the fore-stomach for protection while we fight or hunt. Then we need to prevent the baby from suffocating. Thus the oxygenated blood is kept supplied to the fore-stomach so as to maintain a certain level of oxygen concentration in the atmosphere there. So, even when we are brain-dead, the baby survives in our fore-stomach where oxygen gas is created from the blood, which is supplied to it so long as our heart beats. The baby can sneak out when it is safer.

“Now, we’ ve come to the difficult part: how the oxygen is released from the over-oxygenated blood. In our fore-stomach the mucous membrane forming the inner surface of it is said to have a capacity of triggering a reaction between the blood and carbon dioxide and certain enzymes, whereby the extra oxygen is separated from the blood in the form of oxygen gas into the atmosphere. This reaction mechanism however is very complicated and has not been satisfactorily determined yet, although many scholars have postulated various theories. According to a most recent theory, which received a prize, the thin hydrogen peroxide, which is produced by organisms in our stomach, such as facultative aerobes, acts as the priming or catalyst to urge the blood to continuously give away extra oxygen into the atmosphere.

“I was absorbed in reading a pamphlet containing the summary of this prize-winning theory and, in particular, studying the chemical formulae involved in the proposed reactions when God called me to put me on this errand of delivering you. So my knowledge stops here and is incomplete, but I suppose what I have told you so far is enough to satisfy you that you will not expire so long as you stay where you are. So don’ t you ever start writhing and kicking again in my soft tummy lest you slip into the second-stomach where you’ ll be perfect jelly.

“...So, all in all, that’ s about how I have been able to give you a safe harbor in my oxygen-flowing fore-stomach, ...which...ugh...I already regret I did! I knew this was coming! I’ m beginning to feel very sick... Woo, I feel like vomiting, as I had

expected, and so did I warn my God from the beginning, didn' t I?! ...Ugh, I need some good stomach pill! Brother, do you have one to spare?"

Such and many other things did Jonah hear in his dream, and if the author were to write down all of them, it would take up dozens more pages without adding any substance to the story of the prophet. So, I cut it here. It must be cautioned however that Jonah heard all of this mysterious talk only in his dream, so that the readers should not try to swallow it for who knows Ben' s was but another fish story.

Now, eventually Jonah awoke, and found himself no longer terror-stricken despite finding himself in the fish' s belly. Thanks to some chemical reactions that had been taking place in the bodies of more sensitive creatures, a pale bluish phosphorescence had dawned in the room, which enabled him to know its landscape. He moved to a place where he would be less interfered by his room-mates, and started praying earnestly with his hissy voice and did not fall asleep again.

Jonah had been in the belly of the whale for three days, when God heard his prayer and caused the whale to feel a great nausea in the stomach. At once the whale vomited everything left inside its stomach.

Thus Jonah and his room-mates together with seaweeds were spewed out into the salty sea. Not knowing how to swim, Jonah thought he would drown, when immediately he felt his body flying in warm air and then land on a soft ground. He did not know what was happening, for having been in the darkness for so long, his eyes were blinded by the dazzling daylight. As his eyes recovered from the blindness, lo and behold, what he saw with his thinly opened eyes was this!

Lying on his back with seaweeds round his head, he saw two parallel transparent walls

soaring high, one on his right and the other left. Through these walls, he could see many fish and other sea animals swimming. Above, he saw a strip of cloudless blue sky cut between the upper edges of the walls. A seagull crossed the narrow sky. He raised his head and found he was on a sandy passage, which stretched between the walls. Many sea animals were flip-flopping on the passage. And he could have a glimpse of something like a beach with green at the far end of the passage. So he was on the seabed. He thought the sea was divided in two. But he was wrong for, looking round, he found the passage was terminated in his vicinity in a semicircular shape - where the walls joined together and were the highest, about two-giraffe high. The walls stood vertically but their surface was wobbling like an udder of a cow full of milk as when she walks hastily to escape a team of bees, flourishing her tail.

Suddenly, in the right-hand wall, Jonah saw a huge shoal of fish quickly separate in two in the middle, as if it were stage curtains drawn apart to open a show; and lo! in the opening the white whale was seen approaching at high speed. Jonah froze, for the last thing he wanted was to be swallowed by it a second time; but behold! no sooner had the wall swelled exceedingly than the whale shot out of it and broke into the opposite wall, stunning the prophet with its godlike dizzy white body, the entirety of which was momentarily in the air between the walls. From the large breakages made by the whale, the water walls began to collapse and flood the passage. Jonah jumped up and ran up the passage racing against the tumbling, roaring water.

He tried not to step on rocks or sea animals as he ran, but soon slipped on a jellyfish and fell. His right foot, with which he stepped on it, cramped, and he could not rise. He looked back and saw a huge wave surging high against him between the collapsing walls; at the same moment he also saw a big turtle lying upside down on the sand and trying hard to get back on its feet. Jonah crawled back to it as fast as he could, turned it over, and hugged its shell with all his might, when they were drunk by the huge wave and violently rotated; Jonah did not let the turtle go. Then the turtle swam up and up and surfaced with Jonah on its back (for it thought it had been hugged by a deadly octopus and the best thing it knew to do was to let the enemy dry in the sunlight), and now the surging waves pushed and carried them rapidly until they were thrown on the dry beach.

Jonah looked and saw no sign of the passage nor of the whale in the sea. Then, he heard laughter and shouts of girls, who were merrily playing with a ball on the beach beyond a sparkling rivulet flowing into the sea. Jonah let the turtle go, and walked with unsteady steps into the mouth of the rivulet, for he was terribly thirsty. It was only knee deep; he scooped the water, but it was too salty, for the tide was rising.

Although the cramp in his right foot had left, he could not seem to walk upstream from hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. Moreover, the scorching sunlight was hurting his acidified skin as if by so many needles. He thought he must seek help from the girls, whoever they were, when he saw their ball rolling towards him. He trotted to cross the rivulet and his hands caught the ball just before it dropped into the water. He stepped onto the bank and threw it back, but it did not go even halfway.

Falling on his knees in the sand, he waved for help to the girls. He cupped his hands and pretended he was drinking from a cup to show he needed water. But he was so nearly naked they could not approach.

Then, a slender girl, with her face looking downward, came and picked up the ball with her hands, and then she raised her face and, fixing her eyes on his and pointing at a large rock nearby with her chin, said, "Hey, Mister, if you go behind that rock, we can come by to help you." Jonah marveled at her dignified manner, and obeyed.

Then, the girls one after another came with food and drink and also half-dried clothing, for they had come to the beach for laundry in the rivulet. A girl threw the clothing over the rock so it would land on the prophet's head, and they laughed and danced as it did so. Jonah hastily wore it. The girls marveled at his handsomeness, and, while he ate and drank ravenously, asked questions at once such as where he was from, what had

happened to him, who he was, where he was going, where he would put up for the night, and so on. But he could hardly speak beyond hissing. Then the wind turned about, and the girls, except the first one, suddenly pranced away laughing, for he smelt terribly. He thanked her...and God.

Thus ends Jonah' s unsuccessful escape from God.

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