

The Smallest Whale Child

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The Smallest Whale Child

by [Sholio](#)

Summary

Baby Rodney meets the whales.

- Inspired by [A Clear And Different Light](#) by [naye](#), [Sholio](#)

The whales of Lantea did not name the sea. It was just the Sea, the only one. They did not name the City, because there was only one, and besides, like the mainland, it was part of the dry, and not much went on there. At least not now.

But the whales lived a long time, and remembered a long time more, because each new whale child shared in the collective memory of the pod. From the deeps, they watched the cycles of habitation in the City as the drylanders came and went. For a long time (though not so long to the whales) there had been only one or two drylanders in the City at a time -- gatekeepers, of sorts, though it was hard to understand what they thought they were keeping. Their minds were strange and cluttered, hard to read.

But there were no children there, and had not been for a very long time.

Until now.

The whales couldn't help being curious. Small human children were not that different from whale children -- open and uncritical and curious about the world around them. The whales could brush the tiny mind from afar, but couldn't do much more than that until the child's mother brought him out onto one of the piers, spread a blanket for the baby and sat down with a book.

These particular humans were more standoffish than most; the whales hadn't managed to do more than catch glimpses of them. Curious, they circled under the pier, and one or two of the younger ones sent up polite greetings.

The adult woman only winced, and rubbed at her temple; the whales sensed the backward spike of pain that their polite mind-touch had caused her, and hastily desisted. Humans were so fragile. The child, however, went crazy with excitement, babbled something along the lines of "ablflghzaklhlwhale!" and rolled off the blanket, over the edge of the pier into the water, where he sank like a rock.

This wasn't too different from the behavior of newborn whales, so one of the elder pod members ducked under the sinking podling, caught him on the tip of her nose and hoisted him back up to the surface, wet and very startled.

The mother screamed, grabbed him off the whale's nose and fled into the City.

The whale sank back down and offered a mental shrug to the rest of the pod. Drylanders. Go figure.

Donna McKay hated Atlantis, hated her husband for accepting the waystation assignment, and particularly hated weird-looking alien whales who tried to eat her baby. She had every intention of never going near the water again. What finally forced her out onto the pier was the nagging certainty that an active toddler in a floating city really should have some idea how to swim. Besides, Meredith had been fussy and unhappy ever since the near-drowning

incident. The only thing that seemed to calm him down was opening the windows of his twentieth-floor nursery so that he could smell and hear the ocean.

This time, she went prepared, wearing a bathing suit herself, with a set of water wings on the baby. She stared out at the benign, whale-free ocean for some time, Meredith squirming in her arms, before nerving herself to slip over the edge into the water.

Meredith turned out to be a natural at it, pistoning his chubby arms and legs and thrashing around. Donna made sure to have an anti-drowning charm included with their next supply shipment from Earth, and with that done, she could safely ignore Meredith most of the time -- the McKays were great believers in allowing children to grow up independent and autonomous. Hugs and praise were doled out very sparingly, and neither parent cared to spend much time catering to the needs of an active and precocious child -- Robert McKay was researching quantum-level magic, while Donna spent most of her days secluded in her room, writing her memoirs and trying to pretend that she wasn't on an alien planet.

And the whales raised little Mer.

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