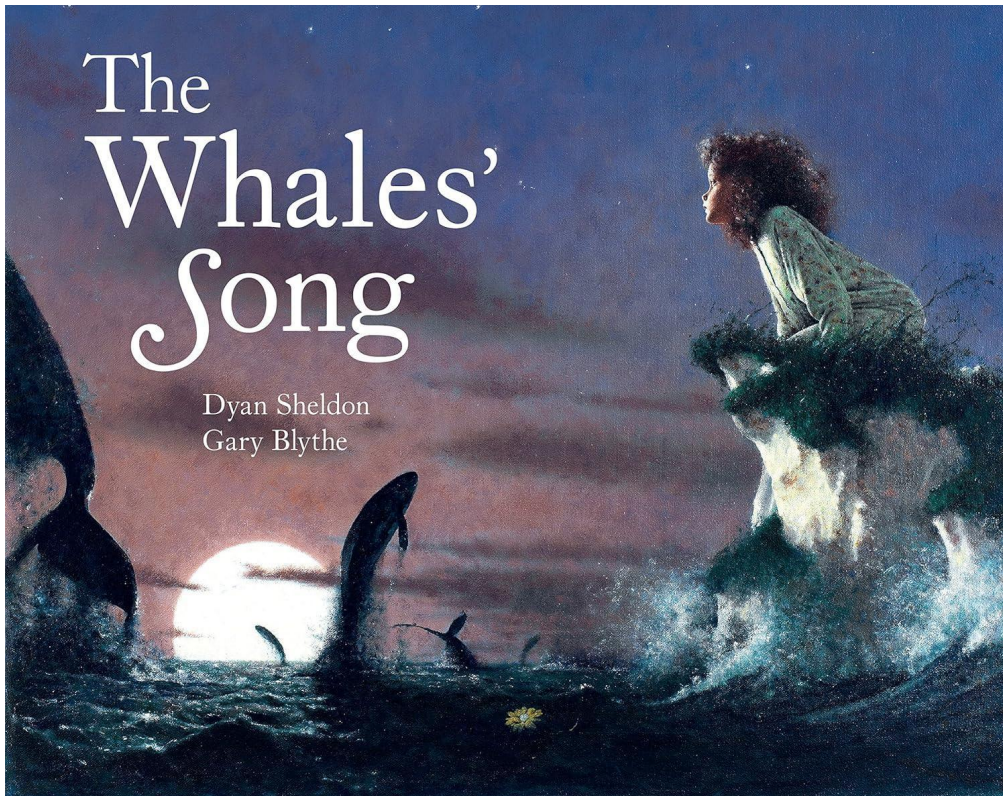


The Whales' Song

Dyan Sheldon and Gary Blythe



1990

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Lilly's grandmother told her a story.

'Once upon a time,' she said, 'the ocean was filled with whales. They were as big as hills. They were as peaceful as the moon. They were the most wondrous creatures you could ever imagine.'

Lilly climbed onto her grandmother's lap.

'I used to sit at the end of the jetty and listen for whales,' said Lilly's grandmother. 'Sometimes I'd sit there all day and all night. Then all of a sudden I'd see them coming from miles away. They moved through the water as if they were dancing.'



'But how did they know you were there, Grandma?' asked Lilly. 'How would they find you?'

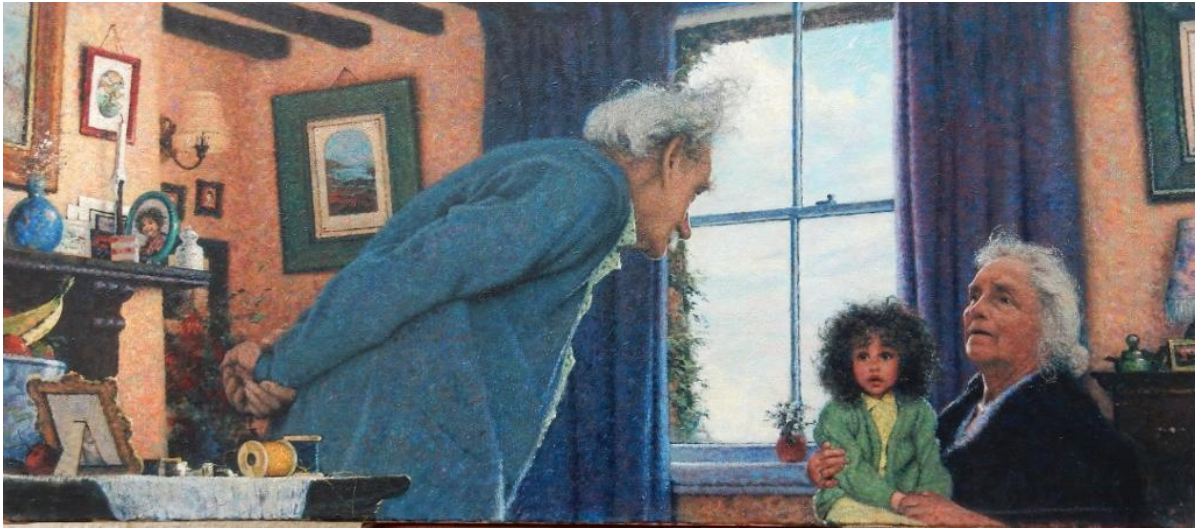
Lilly's grandmother smiled. 'Oh, you had to bring them something special. A perfect shell. Or a beautiful stone. And if they liked you the whales would take your gift and give you something in return.'

'What would they give you, Grandma?' asked Lilly. 'What did you get from the whales?'

Lilly's grandmother sighed. 'Once or twice,' she whispered, 'once or twice I heard them sing.'



Lilly's uncle Frederick stomped into the room. 'You're nothing but a daft old fool!' he snapped. 'Whales were important for their meat, and for their bones, and for their blubber. If you have to tell Lilly something, then tell her something useful. Don't fill her head with nonsense. Singing whales indeed!'



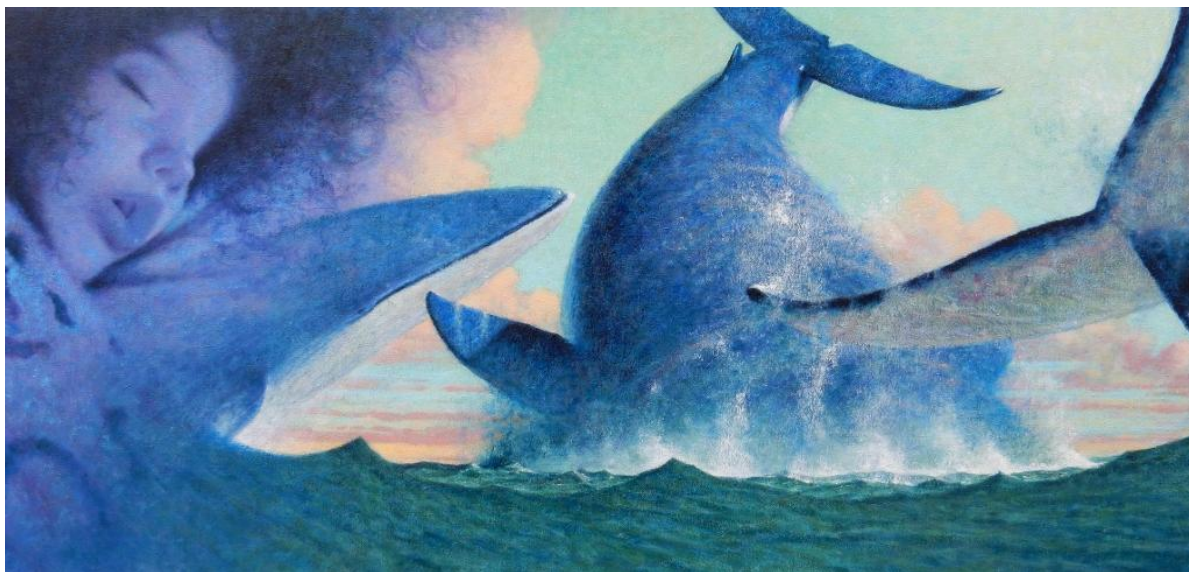
'There were whales here millions of years before there were ships, or cities, or even cavemen.' continued Lilly's grandmother. 'People used to say they were magical.'

'People used to eat and boil them down for oil' grumbled Lilly's uncle Frederick.

And he turned his back and stomped out to the garden.

Lilly dreamt about whales.

In her dreams she saw them, as large as mountains and bluer than the sky. In her dreams she heard them singing, their voice like the wind. In her dreams they leapt from the water and called her name.



Next morning Lilly went down to the ocean. She went where no one fished or swam or sailed their boats. She walked to the end of the old jetty, the water was empty and still. Out of her pocket she took a yellow flower and dropped it in the water.

‘This is for you.’ she called into the air.



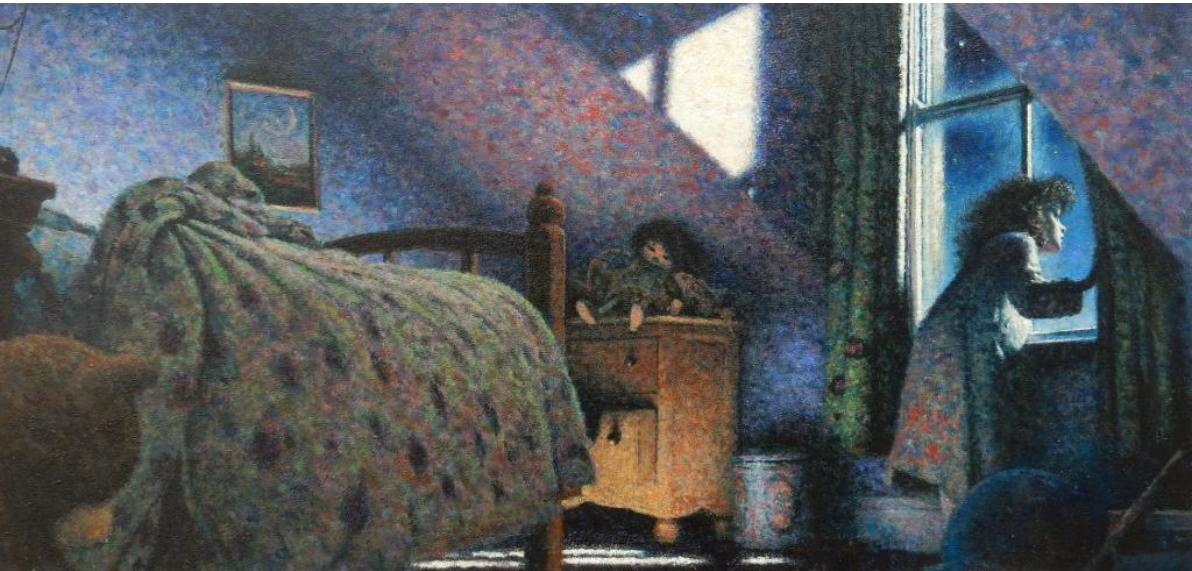
Lilly sat at the end of jetty and waited.

She waited all morning and all afternoon.

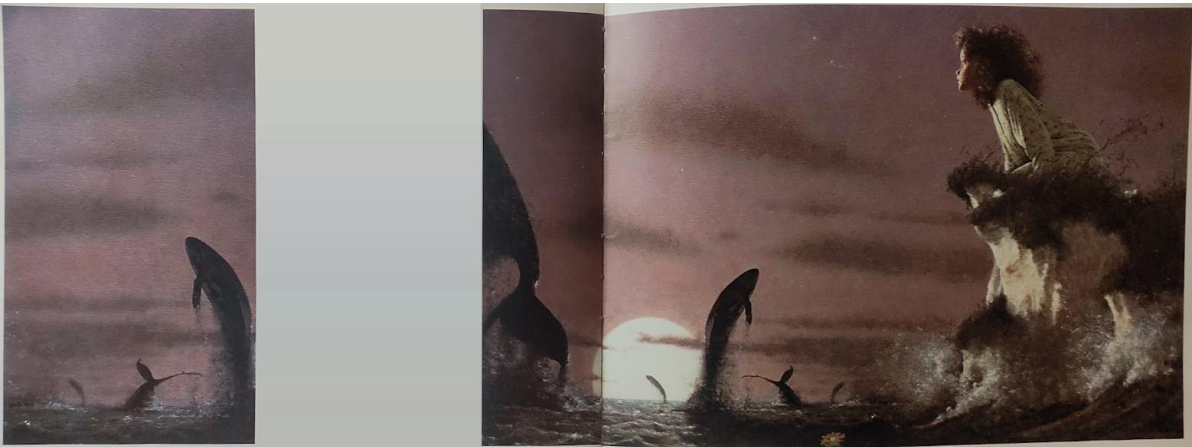
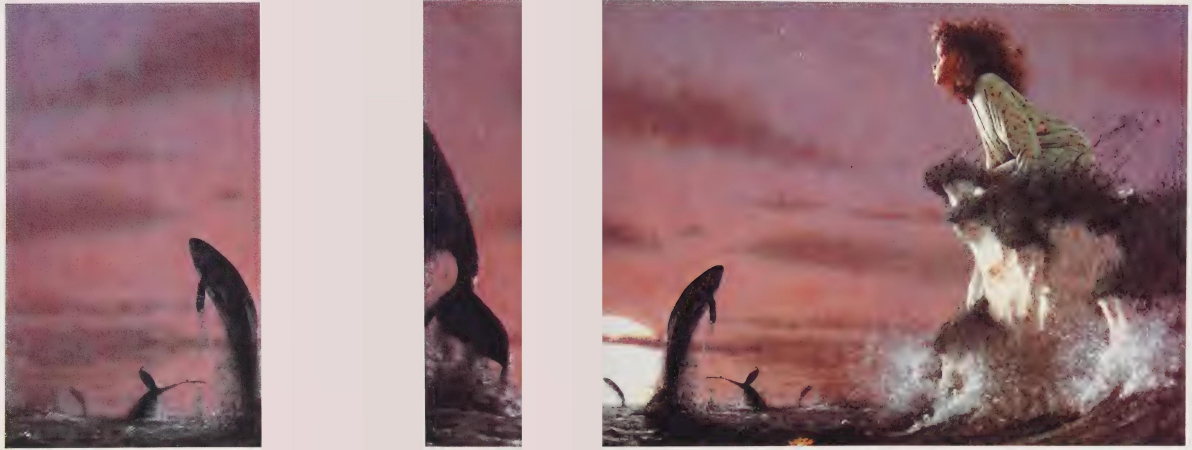
Then, as dusk began to fall, Uncle Frederick came down the hill after her. ‘Enough of this foolishness’ he said, ‘Come on home. I’ll not have you dreaming your life away.’

That night, Lilly awoke suddenly.

The room was bright with moonlight. She sat up and listened, the house was quiet. Lilly climbed out of bed and went to the window. She could hear something in the distance, on the far side of the hill.



She raced outside and down to the shore. Her heart was pounding as she reached the sea.
There, enormous in the ocean, were the whales.
They leapt and jumped and spun across the moon.
Their singing filled up the night.
Lilly saw her yellow flower dancing on the spray.



Minutes passed, or maybe hours. Suddenly, Lilly felt the breeze rustle her nightdress and the cold nip at her toes. She shivered and rubbed her eyes. Then it seemed the ocean was still again and the night black and silent.

Lilly thought she must have been dreaming. She stood up and turned for home. Then from far, far away, on the breath of the wind she heard,

'Lilly'

Lilly!

The whales were calling her name.



[Front & Back Matter]

[Dedication]

To Isha
D.S.

To Lin
G.B.

[Copyright]

This edition first published in 1995

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[Title Page]

THE WHALES' SONG

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[Back Cover]

'One of the most beautiful, poetic, mysterious and overwhelming picture books you are ever likely to read ... a dazzling and haunting book.'

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