

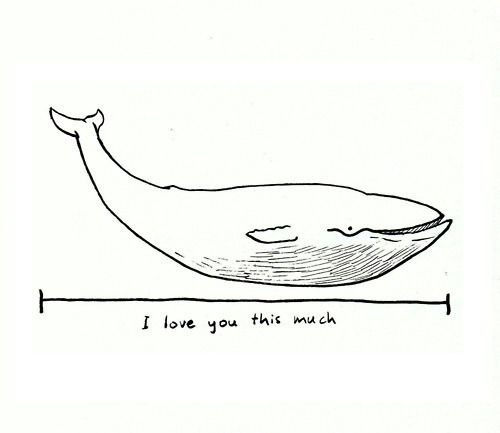
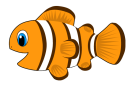
BOBBY BLUE WHALE

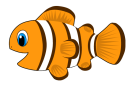
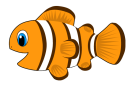
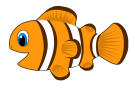
and the big secret

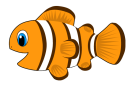
Written and Illustrated\* by

Zarin Rahman

\*drawings not drawn to scale







Deep, deep down in the cobalt blue waters of the Pacific Ocean, lived a baby blue whale named Bobby.

Bobby had just finished a day at school and was swimming home for a snack and nap.

He passed by a school of clown fish who were laughing among themselves, but when Bobby passed by, they all fell silent.

Bobby shifted his eyes toward them, and there was a murmur among the orange and white fish.

Bobby listened closely to their hushed whispers.

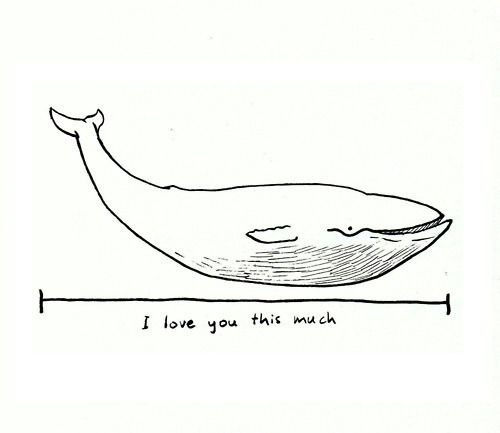
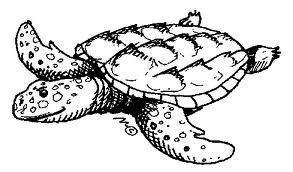
“There goes Bobby the blue whale,” one said.

“Did you hear?” another asked the group.

“Hear what?” a perky clownfish replied.

“That blues whales are…”, here, the head clownfish paused for a dramatic effect. His three other friends moved in closer eagerly. “*…endangered*.”

A unanimous gasp rose among the clownfish. Bobby grimaced at their conversation, unsure of what to think or do.

**

*Endangered*? he thought as he retreated from the group of whispering fish. *What does that mean*? *Have I done something wrong*?

With questions in his head swarming like krill, he quickly swam towards home. Bobby knew the perfect person who may be able to answer his questions.

When Bobby arrived to the rocky coral reef near his home, he began to search for his friend.

“Mr. Javier? Mr. Javier? Are you here?” he called out, desperately. “Mr. Javier, it’s important!”

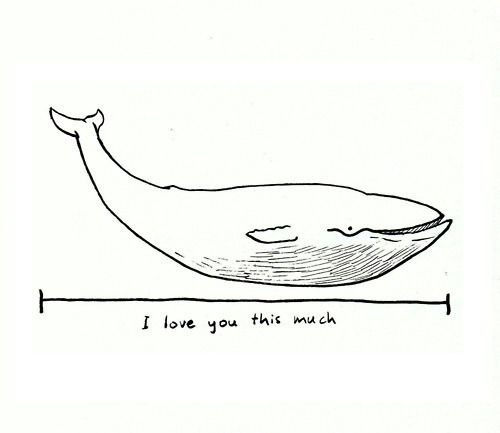
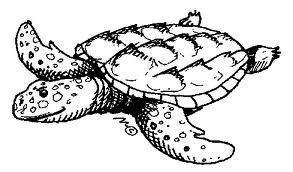
“I’m over here, Bobby.” Bobby looked up, and spotted the 95-year-old Mexican sea turtle resting on a rocky cliff by the coral reef.

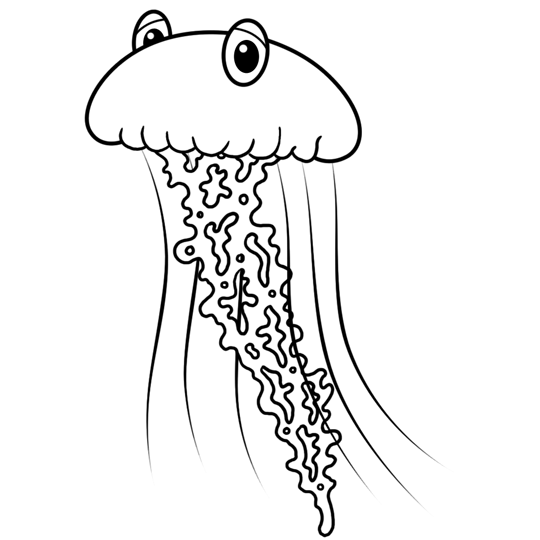
“Oh Mr. Javier! I just passed a group of clown fish…”

“…you know better than to listen to those joking mongrels, little one.”

“Yes, but they were talking about how I was *endangered*! What does that mean, Mr. Javier?”

The old sea turtle hung his head in despair. He had known this day would come. But how would he explain this sad news to his little six-year-old friend?





“Mr. Javier!” a high-pitched voice sang out from around the corner. “Where are yooooouuuu?”

Bobby and Mr. Javier turned and were approached by their friend, Lola, the jellyfish.

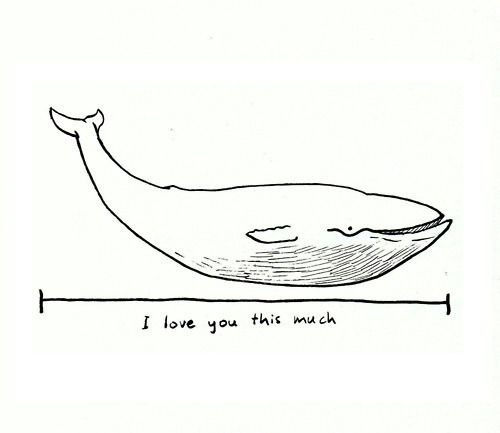
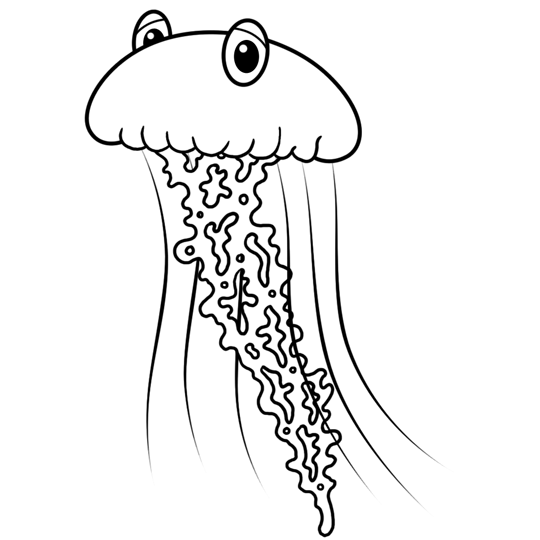
“Mr. Javier! I need to do a report on another animal of the sea. An inspirational animal, for biology class!” Lola exclaimed when she reached her two friends.

“Why don’t you do it on little Bobby over here?” suggested Mr. Javier, happy for the distraction.

“Oh hey, Bobby! Sure! I just need to ask you a few questions…”

“Okay!” Bobby smiled, excitedly, forgetting about the secret Mr. Javier was to explain to him.

As Lola conducted the interview, Mr. Javier swam back and forth, trying o think of a way to tell Bobby this big secret.



“So, Bobby,” Lola began. “What’s your *genus* and *species*.”

“My daddy just told me this yesterday! *Balenoptera musculus.*”

“Sweet. Now Bobby. Describe yourself.”

“Okay. I am a warm-blooded, carnivorous mammal. That means I only eat other organisms. Like krill. We eat 4 tons a day I really like krill. Muy delicioso as Mr. Javier says.” Mr. Javier laughed. and so did Lola.

“I heard krill was good. I only eat plankton. And sometimes caviar.”

“Cool! Well, I’m a whale, but more specifically a baleen wale. I have this finger nail-like stuff on my jaw.” He opened his mouth and showed his translucent friend. Lola jotted this down in her notes.

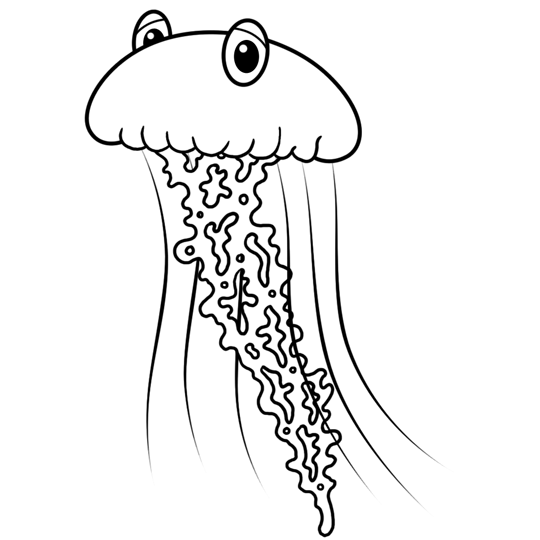
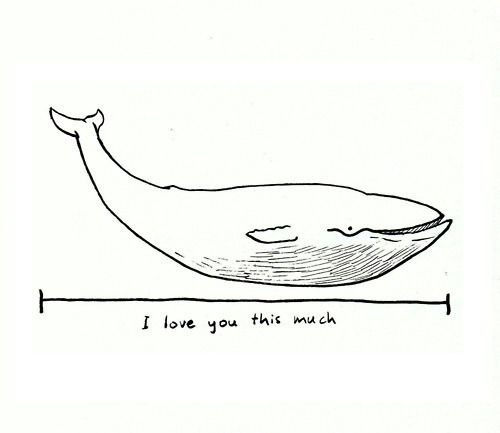
“I may look really blue underwater, but really, I am more of a bluish-grey. And,” he flipped over onto his back, “my belly is kind of yellow because there are lots of microorganisms living in my skin. In symbiosis!”

“Now way, Bobby!”

“Way! Wait until I tell you about how big I get!”

“How big? You’re already way bigger than me!”

“We blue whales can reach up to 100 feet and weigh 200 tons!”



“WHOA. That’s so big!” Lola exclaimed. “So. Do you migrate? Or hibernate? Like birds and bears?”

“We migrate sometimes. In the summer, we might go towards the north pole, and the winter, we go towards the Equator. We don’t hibernate, though.”

“Nice.” Lola scribbled some more in her notes.

“Tell me about blue whale relationships.”

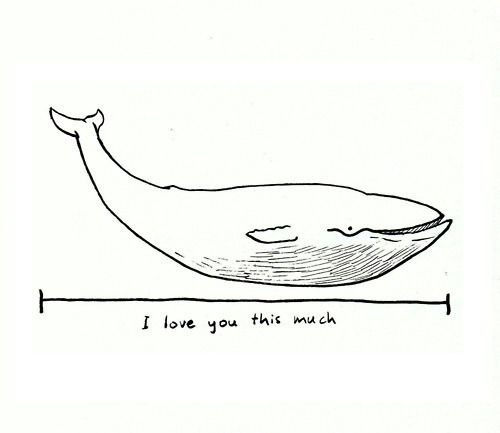
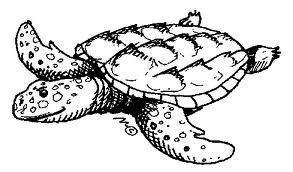
“I’m too young for relationships!”

“Oh, please Bobby, you know what I mean.” Lola said exasperatedly.

“Well, we blue whales usually live individually, but sometimes, we live in small groups called pods. Typically, blue whales have one mate. And, like most mammals, the female blue whales give birth to their children, and feed them, as well, for six months.”

“That’s so fascinating! Fabulous. This biology project will be great! Thank you so much Bobby.”

“You’re welcome!” With that, little Lola floated away.



Mr. Javier took a shaky breath and approached the curious little blue whale.

“So. Mr. Javier. You’re going to explain endangered to me…”

“Oh little one, this is hard for me to tell you. But endangered means that you and all the other blue whales are at a risk for disappearing…forever.”

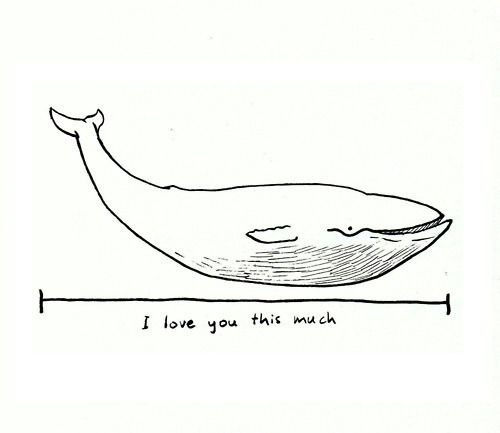
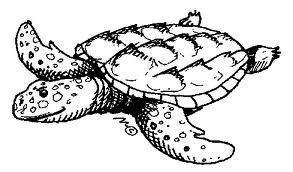
Bobby gasped, his big blue eyes staring blankly at the old sea turtle.

“Wh-what? This can’t be, Mr. Javier. Why?” Bobby stammered, his voice breaking.

“Sadly, little Bobby, it is.” Here, the wise old turtle sighed. “Before you were born, in the 1990s, many humans hunted blue whales just like you down, and now there are only a few thousand left.

“Also, even though blue whales are big and strong, often, they are preyed upon by sharks, killer whales, and, even more commonly, ships.”

“Oh no, Mr. Javier! What can we do to stop this? I don’t want us to disappear!” Bobby exclaimed.



Mr. Javier paused, thinking the little blue whale’s question through. “The damage has been done. But what we need to do is educate people about the problem…”

“Educate!” Bobby declared.

“Yes, and you have to keep yourselves healthy and safe from bad things such as manmade predators like ships.”

“Stay safe!”

“Yes, yes. And hopefully, in the future, you blue whales can grow into a stable and non-endangered population.”

“Grow!” the little blue whales eyes shone with enthusiasm. “Thank you, Mr. Javier, for explaining. I’m going to go and tell ALL the other blue whales about this!”

“Okay, you do that, little one. I’ll be here, if you need any help.”

“Okay. Thank you!” And with that decree of appreciation, the little blue whale swam into the endless azure.

He may be little.

But he can change the way everyone thinks about blue whales. He can change the world.