

'The Whales'

by Evie Wyld

There are four of them footslogging single file along the trail. They sweat and wave their sticks at the flies, spitting the salt off their lips and feeling the rub of their backpacks, hot on their shoulders. A storm bird knows about them from miles off and lets out a wop-wop-wop, getting higher and louder as it goes. Jimmy watches Elaine look up at the gum-treed sky. He follows her gaze. No, he thinks. The bird is wrong; overhead is blue without a wash of cloud.

The crack of dry bark, the whistle of whip birds and sometimes a thundering in the undergrowth – a wombat, a pademelon – it all makes Jimmy feel younger. He can feel the muscles in his thighs working, can feel them thank him for not being stood at the assembly line six hours a day.

Five days of walking and now they are deep in the bush. In another day, they'll turn east, head for the sea, where if they make good time, they'll see the humpbacks heading south towards the Antarctic, their new calves in tow. There'll be a party that night, between the four of them. Terry the young bow-legged one from further down the line with a touch of the idiot about him, Yvonne his frizz-plaited, heavy cousin who runs accounts and her friend Elaine who is nothing to do with the factory and who returns his glances, smiling. Not a bad lot really, especially the girls.

Three days down the coast and they'll arrive home about ready for that soft bed and the meal without char-grit from the campfire, or the dog food pong of tinned meat. It's been good so far. He thinks of what was waiting for him if he hadn't gone bush this week – all those monkey-wrenches wanting to be set. It's been time to move on for a while, he sees that now. Only he'll wait and see what comes of Elaine and the damp hair that ringlets at the back of her neck.

Later in the day he spots a bower bird's chapel. Even this far in, the bird has found a blue toothbrush and bits of turquoise plastic to frame its humpy. He takes a photo, so that the side of Elaine's brown leg slides up the view finder.

'They only collect blue stuff', he says, mainly to Elaine. He feels the roots of his fingers strain as he reigns himself in, his stiff hands reminding him not to overdo it. *Steady on.*

Chances are, Elaine already knows more than him about bower birds – she told him she's walked the bush for six years, since she left varsity, this last two with Yvonne for company and he only knows from camping out when money gets bad. But he wants to show something to her. Elaine squats next to him and traces an arc with one finger in the dirt, looking at the toothbrush. She is smiling with her eyebrows pulled in.

'It's to impress the female – then she'll come down and he'll do a sexy dance.' As he explains, he wiggles his tail a little in a sexy dance and Elaine smiles wider.

Terry who has been leaning over them to get a look, gyrates around his walking stick. What his mating dance lacks in accuracy it makes up for in energy and the other three look on in silence while he makes the noise of a boombox with his lips pressed together. Jimmy's fingers stretch out towards the ground in embarrassment as he keeps his bad eye – the eye that he thinks of as his secret eye – on Elaine.

'You're a disgustin' specimen, Terry', says the stone-buttocked Yvonne. Terry quickens his hips and points, wiggling himself towards her.

Yvonne stands stiff and still like a wary buffalo. 'Never been the brightest crayon in the box', she says and they all push past him, smiles held down. Jimmy looks back to see him finish in a bunny squat and a flick of his head.

'Yeah!' says Terry loudly, arms raised and both thumbs up to the tops of the trees like they are his audience.

'Yeah' and he finds a cigarette in his back pocket, lights it and considers its glowing end before following on.

There'd been a night of heavy breathing when Elaine and Jimmy faced each other in their swags. They hadn't touched but they'd looked hard in the dark, seeing the glints of each other's tongues, teeth and eyes. There is a luxury in not touching, Jimmy thinks, in not just going with your gut; they don't have all the time in the world but they have this time, which won't end for another few days.

He looks forward to it, imagines the beach in an old film kind of a way. The last night when they will open the wine they've lugged all this way – they'll cool the bottles in a rock pool for a couple of hours, while they see what the beach has for them. He's a beach person at heart, it's where his childhood is at and he can't wait to show off about it. Terry's brought along his spearfishing gear and says he reckons on a good spot up at the point. Jimmy imagines striding into camp, a jewfish slung over one shoulder, a clutch of softly ticking crays hung from their whiskers in his other fist. When the moon's up and the salty wine is drunk, their fingers warm and sticky with sand and cray brains, he'll rub his foot over hers. He'll put his wrists either side of her jaw, so as not to touch her with his prawny fingers and he'll plant a long warm kiss on her mouth, one that shows them both that this is the start of things. He could think about staying on at the factory, him who hasn't stayed in one spot for more than six months at a time since he was 16. Or else, Elaine could come with him, go feral together up the coast. He gets the feeling there's not much holding her to the city anymore. He looks down at himself and he speaks softly to his hands *You're orright you bung-eyed bastard. You're an okay sort after all.*

Elaine breaks off from the group to take a pee in the scrub. She squats behind a paperbark and laughs. She's been hip deep in croc water, has woken up feeling a huntsman, as big as both of her hands put together,

tangling with her feet in her swag. But the idea that the group might hear the sound of her pissing makes it so that she can't go. Eventually, she manages and makes a wet stain on the gum leaves. She pulls her shorts back up and a twig cracks not far up ahead. Shadows rise and fall as something heavy moves away. She catches up with the others at a jog.

Jimmy, that trunk of a man with his duff eye and his bear hands and her pal Yvonne are arguing about a fish. The argument is snapper versus flathead, but in what capacity Elaine is not sure. Terry is unusually quiet for a conversation involving food and he walks a little way from Jimmy and Yvonne.

'Stone lighter?' he asks quietly.

'It was a pee', she says, but her face flushes anyway.

'Right', says Terry and he smiles a weird smile. Elaine accidentally catches his eye.

By five o'clock they reach a small billabong. They strip down to their underwear and jump in like kids, laughing, drowning each other with splashing. Terry tries to duck the girls under, Jimmy dives for yabbies and opens his eyes in the bourbon-coloured water. The white legs of the other three bicycle in the open water. When he comes up for air, he can see that Yvonne is pleased with her breasts and bobs them gently up and down making small waves to the bank.

Jimmy looks a long time at Elaine and she looks back. There is a water level smile between them. He is aware of the ripples that come from his heartbeat and he sees how Elaine's canines creep over her bottom lip. Her hair is dark now, but in the light you can see into it. Where the sun hasn't caught her, her skin is like the damp underside of a leaf.

Elaine thinks she's some wonderful creature. The water holds her in on all sides, she feels good in her skin. The billabong is black from the tea trees that line the bank and when she flicks her legs to the surface she's a pale

fish. She pauses before she puts her head under – a brief worry about spluttering and snotting in front of Jimmy, but then she thinks of the beach and the sea to come and she duck dives.

The dark water lifts her hair up and spreads it out, it pushes around her cheeks and taps on her eyelids as she reaches out for the leafy mud of the billabong floor, but even though she goes deep, her hands touch nothing. She kicks up for air and sends a flume of mist from her mouth. She smiles widely at Jimmy who floats on his back like an otter, hands clasped over his chest, dreaming of something.

Frogs and magpies are loud and someone finds a leech and then another and another and there's shrill laughing.

Terry shouts, 'It's eatin' the fuckin' kidneys out of me!' then, 'You girls want me to check under your bras?'

Even though everyone has had a leech before and every person has treated that leech with salt or the tip of a cigarette, quietly, without fear, they all pretend this is the first time they've been bitten and they wallow in the hysteria, enjoying it like gobble-mouthed kids.

Out of the water, damp shirts wrapped around them like towels, Jimmy burns a fat one off Elaine's shoulder. She looks at him sideways and curls a bit of paper bark around her finger.

'Ta', she says, as Jimmy passes her the cigarette which they share puffs from. He looks at her with his good eye. It creases in the corner.

The four of them set up camp a little way from the water hole, away from the leeches. Terry makes a small tepee out of kindling and rings stones around it to stop the fire spreading. Once it's lit they hang over a billy and drink tea while they watch the bats turning circles in the creeping darkness. Yvonne stirs up a thick damper and they bake it in a pan over the fire, to be eaten with a warmed tin of bean stew and rice pudding for afters. The birds are mostly quiet and the cicadas and frogs rev themselves up, as everyone slaps on Rid against the mosquitoes.

'Reckon we'll beat those whales, the way we're moving', Terry says cleaning his bowl with a licked finger.

'Fuckin' A.' Yvonne brings out a flask of bourbon to swill down the pudding with. She takes a long unflinching pull of it before passing it round and beginning a murder story.

'There's this girl went missing not far from Tully – all the kids hitchhike out there...' The dark gets deeper and everyone settles in, enjoying the creep of it. Elaine thinks that there's nothing you can't fix by putting your cheek to the land and feeling it settle. She studies the landscape of Jimmy's face. He is unashamedly enthralled by Yvonne's story. His funny eye looks directly at Elaine but doesn't see her. The lines on his forehead have dirt ground in. He's older than Elaine and she wonders what it is he's been doing all the time he's been alive.

In the silence, after Yvonne's concluding remark 'They only ever found her thumb', Terry farts, a loud one and everyone groans.

'Well, that's put that to bed', he says and they all unroll their swags around the fire and climb in for the night. Jimmy feels the hot weight of Elaine's foot on his and his fingers twitch on their own. Elaine sees Terry's wet eyes, tangerine from the fire and spreads her toes out. She stays awake for as long as possible, making up script after script of how it will go with Jimmy once they reach the sea. She replays the swim at waterhole until she's unsure if she's made parts of it up. She finally falls asleep with her heartbeat high in her chest.

Jimmy wakes long before dawn with a pressure like a stone on his bladder. He swears quietly and rolls out of his swag to ease the ache against a tree. In the undergrowth to his right, something scrabbles. He catches a strong scent and sees a wet snout or eye in the dark. A rumble in the brush and it's gone. Probably a pig or a dingo, but he's glad to get back to the group, where the coals in the fire are still orange. He checks each sleeper. Terry is spread at a diagonal, mouth open, not snoring but making noise. Yvonne

sleeps on her front clutching the loose material of her swag, not letting it get away. Elaine is on her side and a brown arm has slithered free. Her hair makes a perfect ring around her ear. As he watches she produces a little noise, a tiny pop from her lips as they're opened with breath. *Sleep speaking*, thinks Jimmy as he burrows back into his swag, careful not to jog her feet with his, but careful also that they are touching.

The morning is hot and blue from the outset. After tea and a tidy up, they set off, aiming to reach the sea before sunset. Jimmy looks forward to a swim in the bubbling salt, a proper clean down with no bloodsuckers. Terry starts to talk about food almost immediately,

'Lamb chops.' He says confidently to Yvonne. 'That's gotta be the best type of food; lamb chops with the whole grill piece; onions, mushrooms, boiled spuds – no tomatoes though, I'm so over tomatoes.' Yvonne rolls her eyes at him.

'Couldn't give a rat's ring, Terry,' but she hands him a date and a piece of chocolate. Elaine enjoys her feeling of emptiness. Her spit tastes of eucalyptus, she feels new, like the air and blood in her has been filtered out and changed for something better.

After midday, there's a yell from Terry up ahead.

'Get a look at this!' The other three catch up to find him crouching in a small clearing surrounded by stay-a-while and they peer over his shoulder. There's a dead butcher bird on the ground and following the line of Terry's finger into one of the thorny bushes, they see its larder. A small mouse impaled through the neck, stiff and dry, missing parts of its hind quarters, a large Christmas beetle, upside down with the thorn square through the middle and last, still twitching, its legs up and angry, barely impaled through its leaking abdomen, a mouse spider.

'Christssake' whispers Jimmy stepping back.

'How the poor bastard got it up here, I can't figure,' Terry says, pushing the bird with his foot to reveal the green ants starting on its wing. The mouse spider's fangs, black and thick and shiny are up and ready to strike. It waves its legs in the air. Terry picks up a twig to poke it with, but Yvonne knocks it out of his hand.

'Don't be a bum, Terry. I'm not carrying yer fat dead lump out of here if you get bitten. You can count on that.' Jimmy takes a photograph, in which Terry insists on including his own hand, so as get the scale of the thing.

They start to walk on, but Elaine stays behind a beat or two looking at the spider; its fangs reaching for her, legs pointing.

'The sky is falling, the sky is falling!' Yvonne shrieks in a chicken voice as thunder mumbles in the distance. Elaine looks again at the sky, but it's still clear. The thunder is a long way off, but you can smell it in the air, which is heavy and hot. The tips of the trees sway in the sky, but there's no breeze down on the bush floor.

A goanna clings to a Moreton Bay fig above them but nobody sees it.

Jimmy touches the side of Elaine's hand with his little finger and as he does, the leaves to the side of her snaffle and a striped snake comes streaking out of the ground, hitting her on the boot. She barks loudly and kicks trying to get her foot away. The snake's fangs are deeply embedded in the leather of her boot and she shakes her leg hard while around her the others dip and weave and try to help and point their sticks. Jimmy thinks he has control of the situation when he holds Elaine's arm and beats at the snake with his walking stick, accidentally cracking her on the shin. The snake is dislodged, but instead of bolting back into the undergrowth, it turns again and bites Elaine, once, twice, three times and a fourth; calf, back of the knee, thigh, deeply, deeply again on her inner thigh. It's snap-quick and Jimmy doesn't have time to understand and still has Elaine by the arm

so she doesn't get away. Finally, Terry gets it – a blow to the eye – and it's stunned. He stomps on the head, but it still twitches, so he beats it with his stick, smashing, till it changes colour, loses its stripes. It is still, but the bush crackles and carries on.

Elaine is tight-lipped and white. Yvonne cries softly into her cupped hands, the small beeps of a bird. Terry shoes leaves over the corpse of the snake and Jimmy still holds Elaine's arm, his grip hard from not knowing what to do, from doing the wrong thing. There is blood, Elaine thinks how it looks like she's got her period and then thinks she'd love a piece of liquorice from her backpack. She starts to turn around, to take her pack off, but her legs have lost their hardness and she is sliding back into Jimmy who is stiff and still.

'Jesus H Christ,' whispers Terry. He looks at the snake and away, prodding it rhythmically with his stick. 'Jimmy,' he says. 'Jesus, Jimmy.'

'S'just a nip,' says Elaine.

As she slides to the ground with the help of Jimmy who has become flesh again, Elaine thinks about the liquorice and then about how it was a tiger. A big dose of tiger and she's starting to feel it now, it feels like it bit her in the artery of her groin. The big one. The one where all the blood lives.

Yvonne straightens herself. She helps Elaine's pack off her back and slides it behind her back to prop her up. She pulls out her poncho and arranges it over Elaine's wounded leg, to keep it out of sight and then snaps the men into action.

'Hot water - get a fire on. Get the first aid.' She looks at the two men who are twisting their fingers. 'C'mon s'only a fuckin' snake bite, let's get it sorted and get on with it.' She's right and Jimmy says so. He says, 'Only a snake bite.' Smiling at Elaine, but what they all think, Jimmy, Terry, Yvonne and Elaine is *but it's tiger. And we are deep in. Deep.*

As Yvonne bandages the bites, Jimmy runs his palm over and over his face, drawing sweat and grit into his mouth and brushing it out again.

'It's a tiger?' he asks Terry, even though he knew it from the first flash of brindled skin.

'You'd know,' says Terry – but you can tell he knows too. He kicks at the dirt, throwing kindling into the fire, giving Elaine sidelong glances. 'What's the go?' Jimmy winces at the question. His organs feel waterlogged. He'd like to find a quiet spot away from the others where he could vomit and push his thumbs onto his eyelids till he sees sparks.

'We're a long way out, mate.'

'Yep.'

'Three days at a push.'

'Maybe two if we go it alone?' Yvonne hears this and looks up at them. Her face a mixture of fear and stone.

'Thing with a tiger,' says Jimmy, not wanting to say it. 'Is that you'd need anti-venom in a couple of hours.' He says it quietly but not so that Elaine can't hear. Because, of course, she knows it already.

'On the up,' Yvonne says, squeezing Elaine's arm. 'You're about as fit and healthy as they come,' she says like Elaine has caught the flu.

'Sometimes poison fails,' Jimmy says. Elaine's face holds the pale swelling of shock, but she starts to talk in short bursts,

'Other people do this walk. Someone might have a radio. Maybe closer to the sea. That would be best. Maybe a ranger's hut closer to the sea.' There's a beat of silence while they take in the slim chances offered. All of them feel as if there is some simple solution that they just can't put their fingers on.

Terry unexpectedly snaps them to attention.

'Righto. Elaine, Jimmy an' me'll carry you. Yvonne, you go ahead of us and scout for other people.' Everyone blinks, but they follow his instruction. There's nothing else to be done. Yvonne leaves a piece of paper weighted down by rocks.

Snake Bite

Heading East down costal path

Help.

The billy is packed away, the fire put out and Jimmy rolls the bottles of wine and cans of larger out of his backpack to make it lighter. The two men gather up Elaine between them, making a seat out of their crossed arms. Yvonne disappears at a trot ahead, sending out a piercing *Coo-ee* every half minute or so. They fall into quiet slog. No one talks because between the energy it takes to carry Elaine and Yvonne's bellowing, there is no room left.

With every footfall Jimmy thinks to himself, *Stupid bastard, stupid bastard, stupid bastard* and underneath Elaine, his fingers dig their stumpy nails into his forearm.

The sun is low over west when Elaine goes to sleep and they can't have done two K. Yvonne looks at Jimmy. Terry looks at the floor. They lay her on a swag and squat beside her, sweating. When she comes round Yvonne says to her, hoarsely, 'We're gonna rest a while, till you feel better'.

Terry is repacking; he takes out his spearfishing equipment and his heavy binoculars. 'I'll keep on,' he says. 'Bound to be someone up the coast.' Yvonne nods and Jimmy wishes he'd said it first. Elaine's lower lip has turned a cold shade of blue and her eyes are shut again.

Flying foxes coast the breeze above the gums and an early moon makes shadows on their eyelids.

'So!' says Yvonne, hidden beneath the raincoat that covers Elaine's legs, mopping at the bites that don't stop bleeding.

The bush gets grey and then black and sometimes Elaine is there and sometimes not. Yvonne dresses and redresses the bites. Jimmy attempts a scarification and tourniquet on the wounds but all that happens is Elaine kicks and screams and cries and says no. It's no good anyway, it's not even the right thing to do; even if it was, the two hours of leeway evaporated a

long time ago. So Yvonne goes back to the endless dressing that will continue until the blood runs out. She washes the bites with plain water, because there's no point in causing the girl more pain and using salt to clean it. No use at all. And Jimmy sits at Elaine's head, holding it when it drops forward and cleaning it when she vomits.

He holds a tin of water to her lips and she gets a couple of glugs down her. Then he gets the glugs right back, on his shirtfront. She giggles and sees Jimmy's bad eye and then starts to cry. He ignores the vomited water and quiets her, wiping her face first with his shirtsleeve, then with his hands. He worries his hands are too rough and goes back to the shirtsleeve. There's a bluey dusting all over her now.

Yvonne holds the legs and Jimmy holds the shoulders. There's already blood in the girl's mouth as he stuffs a sock in and her gums are pulled back like a dog. She snorts snot and blood out her nose and kicks Yvonne in the gut. Jimmy smells the sour heat of urine. He thinks about how she was hours ago. He's wanted to touch her all the way here and now he holds her as hard as his fists allow and now he stuffs his old socks in her mouth. His fingers make dimples in her clavicles and point up towards her throat. He knows what's coming next, how it will get worse. Knows that soon she'll be completely frozen, that her insides will turn to mush. He knows that her piss will turn brown; her broken muscles coming out her kidneys.

I know, fellas, he tells his fingers, I know, but we can't.

Deep in the bush, something stirs. Jimmy feels its wet nose breathing and its round eyes on him. But he stays still. He knows he must sit it out. In the first lemony blue of daybreak, rain starts to fall thick and heavy.

Yvonne wakes suddenly, like a bucket of water's been thrown over her. She gets straight to the business of sheltering Elaine, but sees the shallowness in her friend's body and her mushroom flesh. She sees the lines of blood,

from eye to nose to mouth, orange and faded from the downpour's rinsing. Yvonne knows there's nothing left in the girl. She looks for Jimmy, wanting a second opinion and sees him sat on the other side of the hissing fire, legs drawn up, watching, an unlit cigarette taking on rain hangs from his lip. He makes no attempt to get out of the wet, just looks at Elaine and turns his head diminutively to the left and back. He has watched all night and knows she is dead. Something in Yvonne clams up, she feels it in her mouth, her stomach and her backside.

The burial is uncomplicated. They will return with the authorities to retrieve Elaine within the next couple of days. At some point, maybe a week from now, there will be a proper ceremony with family and friends and people from work. But for now the earth is a cooler place to leave her and neither Yvonne nor Jimmy can stand to wait with the body.

The rainstorm has softened up the ground for digging and Jimmy goes at it with a tin can and the shit shovel, while Yvonne looks for some kind of a marker. She finds a large flint hidden beneath a fern, whose greyness seems to her more like water than stone and she lugs it back to the campsite. Jimmy looks up and watches the small woman hauling the big rock and notes the brawn in the tiny arms and the fury in the face. He doesn't dare ask if she wants a hand.

Yvonne goes to Elaine and uncovers her face. She brushes her hair with her own hairbrush and fixes her clothes till she looks like a cub scout. Jimmy digs some more, but can't help stealing a glance every now and then at this koala bear of a woman, fossicking around in a dead girl's hair, making everything right. You can tell she's done it before.

The hole is dug and Elaine is wrapped in the tarp, feet first so that she looks like a mermaid, a sea lion, a maggot and finally like a dead body. As they lift her, trying not to let her swing between them, Jimmy sees Yvonne's face is closed off like a nut. She says nothing and the only noise above the quabble

of magpies is the tired breath of the two of them trying not to let on how heavy she feels and how the tarp makes her difficult to get a hold on. They try to lay her gently in the hole, but she's slippery and it's difficult to remember that this is Elaine and not a sack of rocks: there is some tumbling, some unwanted noise and Jimmy thinks Yvonne will hear his heart. He wants it over. When they wrapped her in the tarp, her skin was gluey and she was already on the nose.

It made the earth different when it was a grave, moist and full of grubs and slaters. Not the same as the earth of a well or a tunnel, he thinks. There's death in there before you start – the land gets going on the rot before you begin digging. He wants to run away. The second the snake struck Elaine he'd wanted to run, which was why he'd hung on so tight, to stop himself. It's a terrible thing to be a coward. Real bad to open that one up to yourself. Once they get out of the bush, he's not sticking about. He's heading up north, making no contact with Terry or Yvonne or Elaine's family. Fuck the authorities who'll want him to stick around and explain himself; they'll have to find him first.

And there it is, she's in the ground and no one moves to cover her over. He looks to Yvonne, expecting her to say a few words, but she looks stonily back. There are a few minutes more of silence then she picks up the shit shovel and throws in a chunk of dirt. It sounds like heavy rain as it hits the tarp and it makes them flinch. The two watch as she throws down the shovel and uses her hands and arms, hugging the earth as she pushes it into the grave. She fills in the hole on her own. Jimmy does not move to help, instead, his bad eye looks off into the gum trees, watching for something.

They collect the stones they can find and lay them on top of the grave, with the big flint at the head. Yvonne arranges Elaine's billycan on top of the flint. They stand around, again and still she says nothing; no prayer, no few words – nothing. They stand there, their hats in their hands

not wanting to be the first to move away. The storm bird sings again, missing its mark.

With their footsteps still hanging in the air, the ground damp from their spilt tea and the trees fresh with their urine, four-legged things come out of the scrub and climb over Elaine's flint, smelling and snuffling at the dirt in-between the stones. A long-tailed thing unbalances her billy-can, which clatters to the ground and the thing hops to the safety of the undergrowth.

At a time of day that none of them notice, when the sun is starting gold above the trees, the bush begins to lighten. Now and then the dark earth of the floor is rucked up revealing pinkish sand beneath. The scribble gums have become interspersed with pineapple palms and black-boys and the mosquitoes have been swept away on a cooler wind. Terry appears up ahead and sees there are just the two of them. While Yvonne and Jimmy stand around, Terry cries a little with his arms at his side and his head low. Jimmy has a flash of anger, but it seeps out just as quick and they all move on.

Yvonne sees the sea first, but says nothing. Jimmy notices the shine of the Pacific and all three of them keep their eyes on it, like it will disappear if they look away. There are different things around them now. The sounds of plovers and seagulls, a different type of earth beneath their feet and a smell of ozone. Yvonne is up ahead and Terry drops back to walk in step with Jimmy.

'Jeez,' says Terry, 'what a tragedy – I'll miss her.' Jimmy holds onto the straps of his backpack and does not open his mouth.

They come out of the bush and the sun is a hot brick on their backs. The land above the sea is brittle and yellow, boulders of sandstone that can be ground away with a damp thumb. The noise of the sea is not a roar but a steady pulse, the waves cleaning the whole lot of everything. They stand

and look out over the cliffs, their ankles and calves being minutely feasted on by sand flies.

Damn it, thinks Jimmy. How big the water is and how blue and how silver.

Terry's stomach growls audibly over the rush of the ocean and Yvonne says flatly 'Well, that puts that to bed'. And the two of them move off up towards the cliff tops.

There's a white shoot of water far in the distance.

'Whales.' Jimmy says to his fingers curled in his camera straps, their pads tucked away like sleeping finches. His good eye watches the coast-line and he wishes his bad eye could see it too.