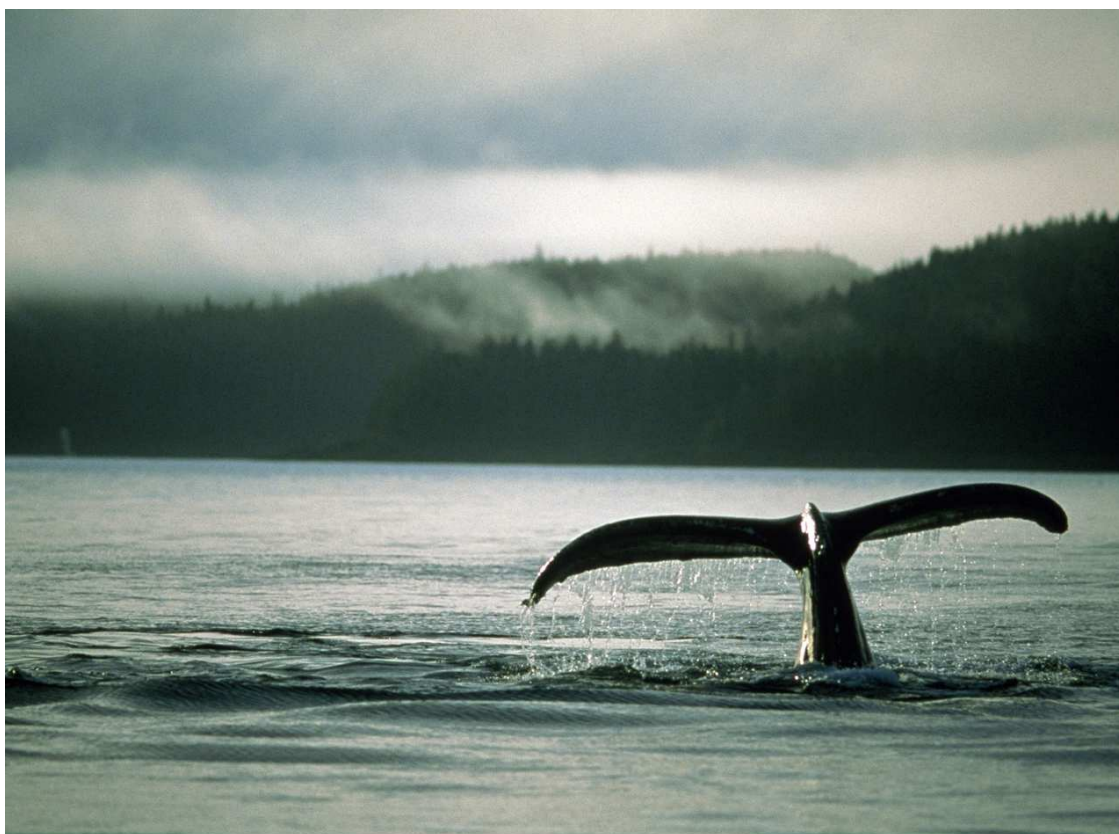


REVISTA LITERARIA KATHARSIS

The Whale Sound

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The Whale Sound

by Roger Dean Kiser

"Leave him alone" I yelled as I walked out of the orphanage gate and saw several of the Spring Park School bullies pushing the deaf kid around. I did not know the boy at all but I knew that we were about the same age, because of his size. He lived in the old white house across the street from the orphanage where I lived. I had seen him on his front porch several times doing absolutely nothing, except just sitting there making funny like hand movements.

In the summer time we didn't get much to eat for Sunday supper, except watermelon and then we had to eat it outside behind the dining room so we would not make a mess on the tables inside. About the only time that I would see him was through the high chain-link fence that surrounded the orphanage when we ate our watermelon outside.

The deaf kid started making all kind of hand signals, real fast like. "You are a stupid idiot" said the bigger of the two bullies as he pushed the boy down on the ground. The other bully ran around behind the boy and kicked him as hard as he could in the back. The deaf boy's body started shaking all over and he curled up in a ball trying to shield and hide his face. He looked like he was trying to cry, or something but he just couldn't make any sounds, I don't think.

I ran as fast as I could back through the orphanage gate and into the thick azalea bushes. I uncovered my home-made bow which I had constructed out of bamboo and string. I grabbed four arrows that were also made of bamboo and they had coca cola tops bent around the ends to make real sharp tips. Then I ran back out the gate with an arrow cocked in the bow and I just stood there quiet like, breathing real hard just daring either one of them to kick or touch the boy again.

"You're a dumb freak just like him you big eared creep" said one of the boys as he grabbed his friend and backed off far enough so that the arrow would not hit them. "If you're so brave kick him again now" I said, shaking like a leaf. The bigger of the two bullies ran up and kicked the deaf boy in the middle of his back as hard as he could and then he ran out of arrow range again.

The boy jerked about and then made a sound that I will never forget for as long as I live. It was the sound like a whale makes when it has been harpooned and knows that it is about to die. I fired all four of my arrows at the two bullies

as they ran away laughing about what they had done.

I pulled the boy up off the ground and helped him back to his house which was about two blocks down the street from the school building. When we reached his home his sister told me that her brother was deaf but that he was not dumb like the two bullies said. That he was very smart but could not say or hear anything. I told her that he did make a sound when the bully kicked him in the back. She told me that I must be mistaken because all her brother's vocal cords had been removed during an experimental surgery, which had failed.

The boy made one of those hand signs at me as I was about to leave. I asked his sister "if your brother is so smart then why is he doing things like that with his hands?" She told me that he was saying that he loved me with his hands. I didn't say anything back to her at all because I didn't believe her. People can't talk with their hands and everybody knows that. People can only talk with their mouth.

Almost every Sunday for the next year or two I could see the boy through the chain-link fence as we ate watermelon outside behind the dining room, during the summer time. He always made that same funny hand sign at me and I would just wave back at him, not knowing what else to do.

On my very last day in the orphanage I was being chased by the police. They told me that I was being sent off to the Florida School for Boys Reform School, at Marianna so I ran to get away from them. They chased me around the dining room building several times and finally I made a dash for the chain-link fence and tried to climb over in order to escape. I saw the deaf boy sitting there on his porch just looking at me as they pulled me down from the fence and handcuffed me. The boy, now about twelve jumped up and ran across San Diego Road, placed his fingers through the chain-link fence and just stood there looking at us.

They dragged me by my legs, screaming and yelling for more than several hundred yards through the dirt and pine-straw to the waiting police car. All I could hear the entire time was the high pitched sound of that whale being harpooned again. As we pulled away in the police car I saw the deaf boy loosen his grip on the fence and slide very slowly to the ground and lower his head into the leaves and pine straw. That is when I realized that he probably really did love me and he wanted to save me because he thought that I too was making the whale sound.

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