

THE STORY MUSEUM

Finding Australia

The birds told stories of a wonderful land far to the south, with plenty of room for everyone. All the creatures wanted to go, but how could they travel so far? Only the whale had a canoe big enough and strong enough for such a journey, and he was grumpy and bad tempered and refused to lend it to them.

The animals held a meeting. They were determined to go. If Whale would not lend his canoe, they would have to take it. But how? Whale must be distracted. The animals looked at one another. Koala was the strongest of them all, but his strength would be needed to push the canoe to the sea and only he had arms powerful enough to row them away from the shore. The animals turned to Circlefish. She was too small to be of any use in stealing the canoe but maybe she could do something to distract Whale for long enough for the others to take the canoe.

Circlefish was doubtful and really quite scared of Whale's temper but she wanted to go as much as anyone, so she agreed to try. While she sat by Whale's side and chattered soothingly to him, Koala and the other animals crept to the canoe and began to push it down the beach. Circlefish chatted and Whale grumbled, and Koala and the other animals pushed. Circlefish was terrified Whale would look over to his canoe but at last out of the corner of her eye she could see the canoe slide into the water. The animals piled in and Koala took the paddle. Careful though he was, Whale heard the gentle splash and turned, and saw his canoe was gone. He bellowed with anger and began to move down the beach. Desperately, Circlefish jumped onto his head and tried to hold him back. With his strong, powerful arms Koala began to pull away from the beach. Whale meanwhile was driven mad by the tiny clinging Circlefish. He thrashed his giant body and he shook his huge head to try and dislodge her but she clung tighter. Battered and bruised, she hung on. Until finally, as Whale reached the sea, he gave a final bellow and the tiny Circlefish flew into the air and landed smack in the waves, where the other creatures reached out of the canoe to pull her aboard. And now the chase was on!

Koala pulled on the oars, his strong arms bulging. Whale powered through the water in pursuit but the canoe remained just out of his reach. For days and nights they travelled until Koala was exhausted but still he pulled on the oars until his powerful arms ached, and still the whale followed. At last a cry went up from the front of the canoe. Land was in sight!

Hidden from Whale's sight by a stack of rocks, the canoe slipped into a narrow inlet. Quickly the animals pulled it up the beach and out of sight of the sea.

THE STORY MUSEUM

Hiding behind rocks and trees they watched the tiring Whale swim past and further out to sea.

The animals gathered round Circlefish and praised her and thanked her and told her how brave she had been, and how wonderful! But Circlefish was so afraid that Whale would return to find her that she crept down to the shore to hide in the rock pools and there she lives still, keeping out of Whale's sight. But she is no longer a Circlefish. Thrown around so much by the Whale, battered and bruised as he tried to dislodge her, she is now a Starfish. As for Whale- he has on the top of his head, where Circlefish clung and held on, a tiny hole out of which water spurts. And Koala, well- his arms are still powerful, though he uses them now more for climbing trees than paddling canoes.