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Opening extract from

Just So Stories

Written by

Rudyard Kipling

Illustrated by

Chris Riddell

Published by

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Foreword

A true portrait of the man often referred to as 'the poet of the British Empire' is somewhat difficult to paint. Joseph Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay in 1865 and as a young child 'Ruddy' often had to be prompted by his parents to speak in English rather than the Hindustani vernacular. In the celebrated verse and prose of his adult life he glorified the British soldier, but also satirised elements of the British administration in India. He refused the Poet Laureateship and a knighthood, but accepted the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907, the first writer in English to be awarded the Nobel Prize.

Kipling was inexplicably abandoned as a child for some years. His foster family only became known to his parents through a newspaper advertisement. Such a harrowing experience in early life no doubt contributed to Kipling's acute consciousness of childhood sensibilities throughout his adult life, and it is his work for children he is most celebrated for today, most notably *The Jungle Book* and *Just So Stories*.

The many tales that were to become *Just So Stories* were developed during one of Kipling's many journeys to South Africa, children gathering eagerly around him to hear delightfully logical accounts of how the natural world's eccentricities came to be. The collection received much critical praise on publication in 1902, G. K. Chesterton declaring Kipling had 'written new legends', and since then it has been

cherished by generations for its wit, joyful wordplay and insistence on placing the infinite wisdom of the child and its‘ ’satiable curiosity’ at its heart. *Just So Stories* continued to exert its influence throughout the 20th century inspiring, among other works, a musical, *Just So*, first staged in 1985, and an animated Soviet feature film, *The Cat Who Walked by Herself* in 1988.

The illustrations reproduced here are those of the 1902 first edition, created by Kipling himself, the only occasion that he would illustrate his writing. In addition, eight evocative colour illustrations by the award-winning Chris Riddell add to the *Just So* experience in this Heritage volume.

Contents

I	How The Whale Got His Throat	1
II	How The Camel Got His Hump	8
III	How The Rhinoceros Got His Skin	16
IV	How The Leopard Got His Spots	22
V	The Elephant's Child	34
VI	The Sing-Song Of Old Man Kangaroo	48
VII	The Beginning Of The Armadillos	57
VIII	How The First Letter Was Written	71
IX	How The Alphabet Was Made	87
X	The Crab That Played With The Sea	105
XI	The Cat That Walked By Himself	122
XII	The Butterfly That Stamped	140



I

How The Whale Got His Throat

In the sea, once upon a time, O my Best Beloved, there was a whale, and he ate fishes. He ate the starfish and the garfish, and the crab and the dab, and the plaice and the dace, and the skate and his mate, and the mackereel and the pickereel, and the really truly twirly-whirly eel. All the fishes he could find in all the sea he ate with his mouth – so! Till at last there was only one small fish left in all the sea, and he was a small 'stute fish, and he swam a little behind the Whale's right ear, so as to be out of harm's way. Then the Whale stood up on his tail and said, 'I'm hungry.' And the small 'Stute Fish said in a small 'stute voice, 'Noble and generous Cetacean, have you ever tasted Man?'

'No,' said the Whale. 'What is it like?'

'Nice,' said the small 'Stute Fish. 'Nice but nubbly.'

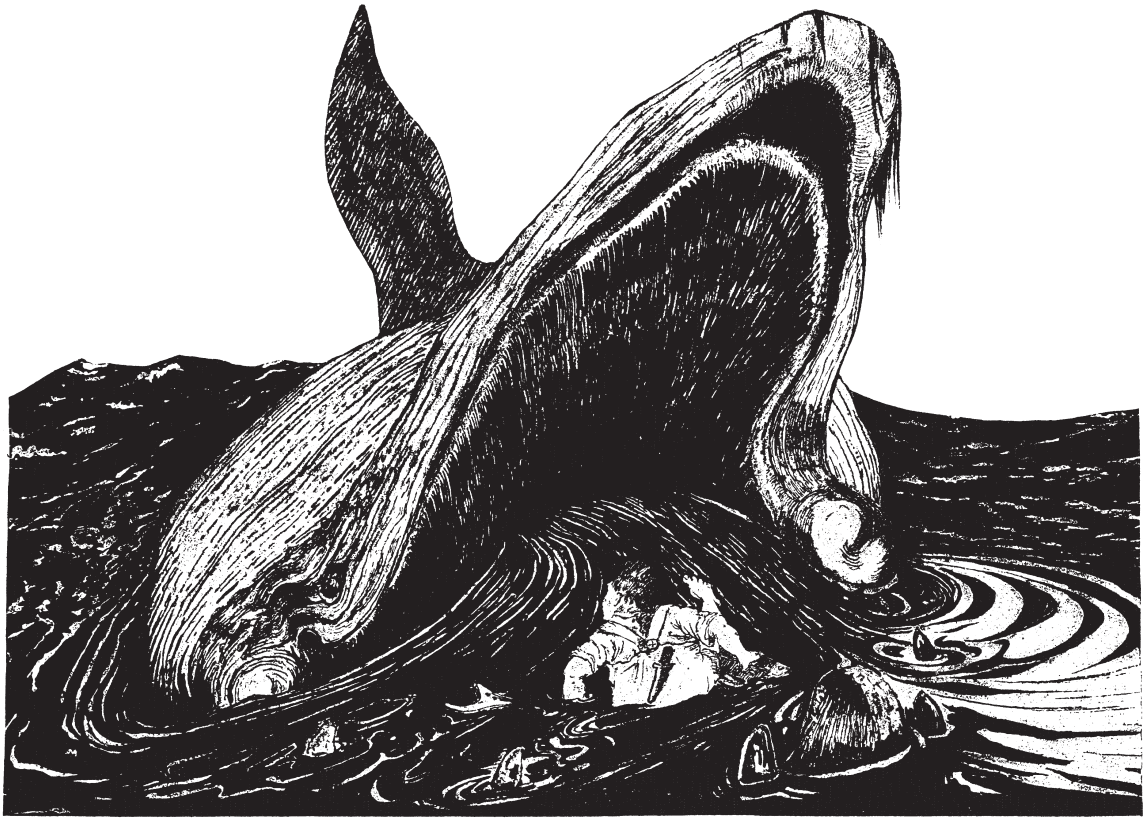
'Then fetch me some,' said the Whale, and he made the sea froth up with his tail.

'One at a time is enough,' said the 'Stute Fish. 'If you swim to latitude Fifty North, longitude Forty West (that is Magic), you will find, sitting *on* a raft, *in* the middle of the sea, with nothing on but a pair of blue canvas breeches, a pair of suspenders (you must *not* forget the suspenders, Best Beloved), and a jack knife, one shipwrecked mariner, who, it is only fair to tell you, is a man of infinite-resource-and-sagacity.'

So the Whale swam and swam to latitude Fifty North, longitude Forty West, as fast as he could swim, and *on* a raft, *in* the middle of the sea, *with* nothing to wear except a pair of blue canvas breeches, a pair of suspenders (you must particularly remember the suspenders, Best Beloved), *and* a jack knife, he found one single, solitary shipwrecked mariner, trailing his toes in the water. (He had his mummy's leave to paddle, or else he would never have done it, because he was a man of infinite-resource-and-sagacity.)

Then the Whale opened his mouth back and back and back till it nearly touched his tail, and he swallowed the shipwrecked Mariner, and the raft he was sitting on, and his blue canvas breeches, and the suspenders (which you *must* not forget), *and* the jack knife – he swallowed them all down into his warm, dark, inside cupboards, and then he smacked his lips – so, and turned round three times on his tail.

But as soon as the Mariner, who was a man of infinite-resource-and-sagacity, found himself truly inside the Whale's warm, dark, inside cupboards, he stumped and he jumped and he thumped and he bumped,



This is the picture of the Whale swallowing the Mariner with his infinite-resource-and-sagacity, and the raft and the jack knife and his suspenders. Which you must not forget. The buttony things are the Mariner's suspenders, and you can see the knife close by them. He is sitting on the raft, but it has tilted up sideways, so you don't see much of it. The whifty thing by the Mariner's left hand is a piece of wood that he was trying to row the raft with when the Whale came along. The piece of wood is called the jaws-of-a-gaff. The Mariner left it outside when he went in. The Whale's name was Smiler and the mariner was called Mr Henry Albert Bivens, A.B. The little 'Stute Fish is hiding under the Whale's tummy, or else I would have drawn him. The reason that the sea looks so ooshy-skooshy is because the Whale is sucking it all into his mouth so as to suck in Mr Henry Albery Bivvens and the raft and the jack knife and the suspenders. You must never forget the suspenders.

and he pranced and he danced, and he banged and he clanged, and he hit and he bit, and he leaped and he creeped, and he prowled and he howled, and he hopped and he dropped, and he cried and he sighed, and he crawled and he bawled, and he stepped and he lepped, and he danced hornpipes where he shouldn't, and the Whale felt most unhappy indeed. (*Have* you forgotten the suspenders?)

So he said to the 'Stute Fish, 'This man is very nubbly, and besides, he is making me hiccough. What shall I do?'

'Tell him to come out,' said the 'Stute Fish.

So the Whale called down his own throat to the shipwrecked Mariner, 'Come out and behave yourself. I've got the hiccoughs.'

'Nay, nay!' said the Mariner. 'Not so, but far otherwise. Take me to my natal-shore and the white-cliffs-of-Albion, and I'll think about it.' And he began to dance more than ever.

'You had better take him home,' said the 'Stute Fish to the Whale. 'I ought to have warned you that he is a man of infinite-resource-and-sagacity.'

So the Whale swam and swam and swam, with both flippers and his tail, as hard as he could for the hiccoughs; and at last he saw the Mariner's natal-shore and the white-cliffs-of-Albion, and he rushed halfway up the beach, and opened his mouth wide and wide and wide, and said, 'Change here for Winchester, Ashuelot, Nashua, Keene and stations on the *Fitch*burg Road.' And just as he said 'Fitch', the Mariner walked out of his mouth. But while the Whale had been swimming, the Mariner, who

was indeed a person of infinite-resource-and-sagacity, had taken his jack knife and cut up the raft into a little square grating, all running criss-cross, and he had tied it firm with his suspenders (*now* you know why you were not to forget the suspenders!), and he dragged that grating good and tight into the Whale's throat, and there it stuck! Then he recited the following *Sloka*, which, as you have not heard it, I will now proceed to relate –

By means of a grating,
I have stopped your ating.

For the Mariner he was also an Hi-ber-ni-an. And he stepped out on the shingle, and went home to his mother, who had given him leave to trail his toes in the water; and he married and lived happily ever afterwards. So did the Whale. But from that day on, the grating in his throat, which he could neither cough up nor swallow down, prevented him eating anything except very, very small fish; and that is the reason why whales nowadays never eat men or boys or little girls.

The small 'Stute Fish went and hid himself in the mud under the door-sills of the Equator. He was afraid that the Whale might be angry with him.

The sailor took the jack knife home. He was wearing the blue canvas breeches when he walked out on the shingle. The suspenders were left behind, you see, to tie the grating with; and that is the end of *that* tale.



Here is the Whale looking for the little 'Stute Fish, who is hiding under the door-sills of the Equator. The little 'Stute Fish's name was Pingle. He is hiding among the roots of the big seaweed that grows in front of the doors of the Equator. I have drawn the doors of the Equator. They are shut. They are always kept shut because a door ought always to be kept shut. The ropy-thing right across is the Equator itself; and the things that look like rocks are the two giants Moar and Koar, that keep the Equator in order. They drew the shadow-pictures on the doors of the Equator, and they carved all those twisty fishes under the doors. The beaky fish are called Beaked Dolphins, and the other fish with the queer heads are called Hammerhead Sharks. The whale never found the little 'Stute Fish till he got over his temper, and then they became good friends again.

When the cabin portholes are dark and green
Because of the seas outside;
When the ship goes *wop* (with a wiggle between)
And the steward falls into the soup-tureen,
And the trunks begin to slide;
When Nursey lies on the floor in a heap,
And Mummy tells you to let her sleep,
And you aren't waked or washed or dressed,
Why, then you will know (if you haven't guessed)
You're 'Fifty North and Forty West!'