



OUR WEST COAST

The Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Cascade and Olympia Ranges, Yosemite, the Great Sequoia, the San Joaquin Valley, the Pacific Coast, the Channel Islands, Route 1, Big Sur, the Pinnacles, Monterey Bay, the Kelp Forests, the Red Wood Forests, the Golden Gate, the Candelabras, the Puget Sound, Alaska, and Hawaii, far off in the Great, Wide Pacific Ocean ...

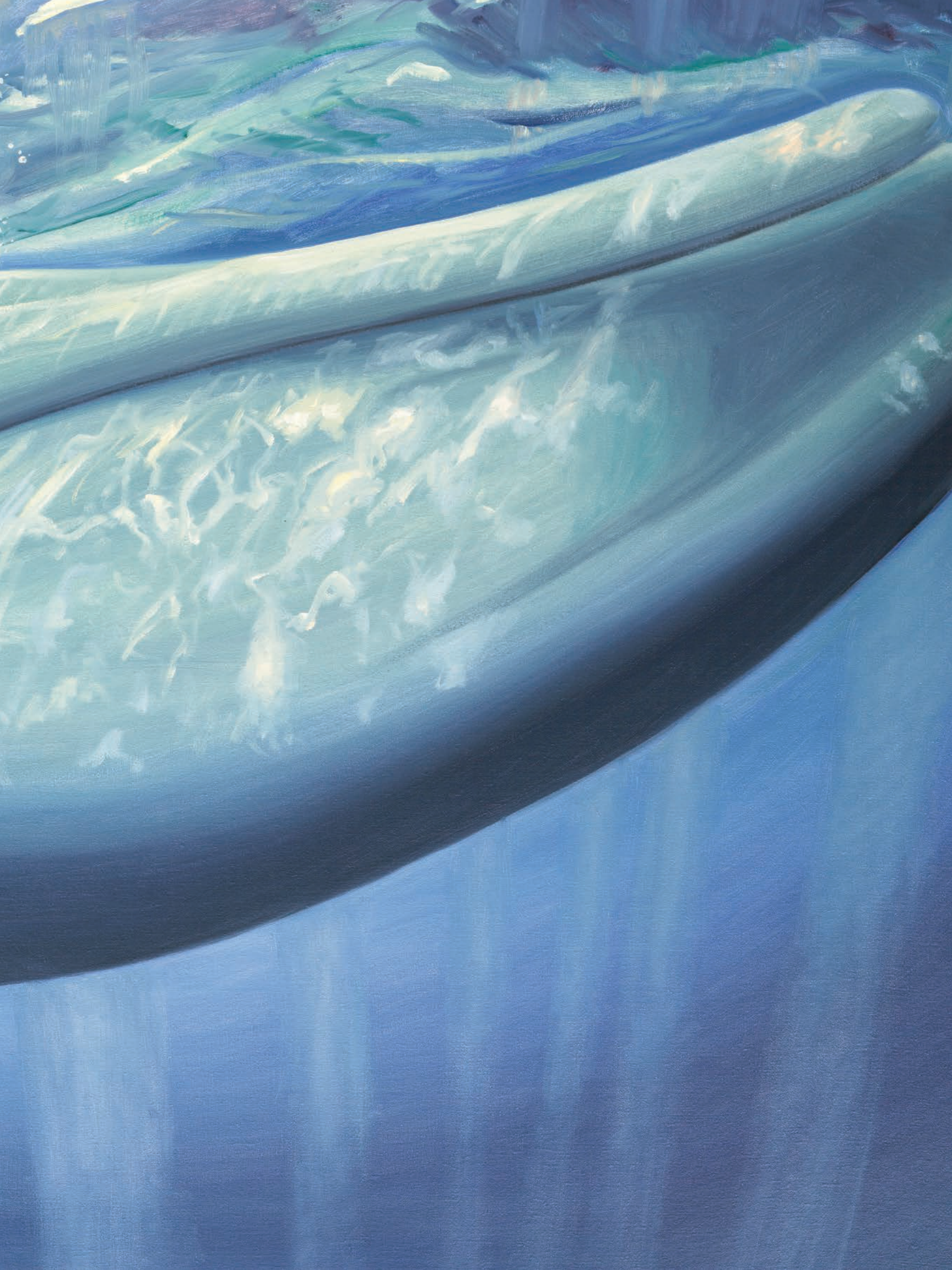
... these western wonders at the end of our country, these beautiful homes to the largest creatures on earth, will teach us what our forefathers meant when so many years ago they together lamented our scorned bond of faithful friendship with the British people with these words:



WE, THEREFORE, THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.





WE, THEREFORE, THE REPRESENTATIVES

of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, . . .



MELODIES FROM FATHER GOOSE

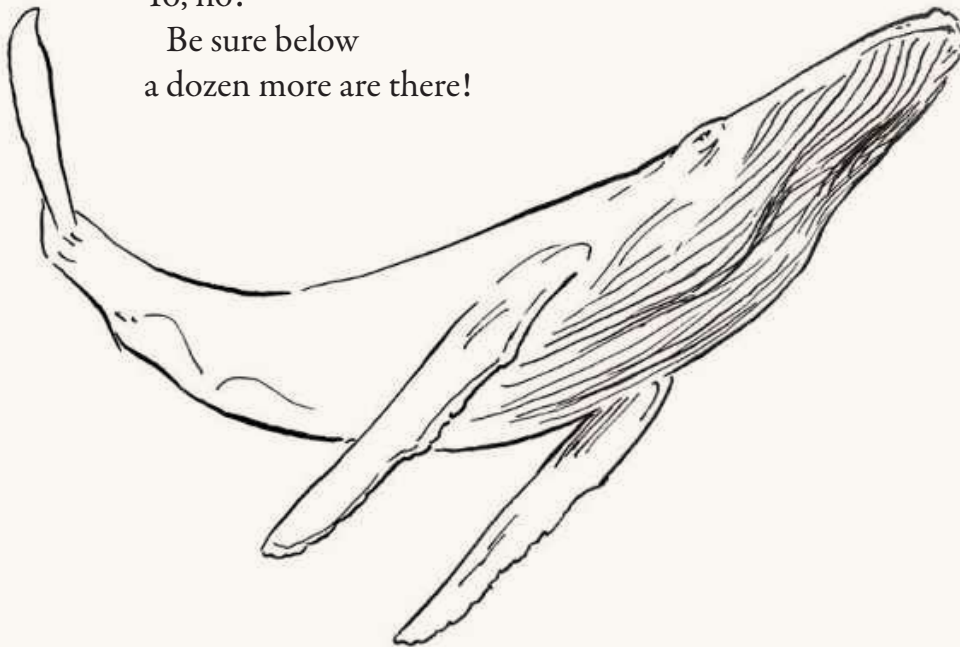
75.

WHALE WATCH

Spout, spout,
a whale is out
to fetch a breath of air!

Down, down,
he turns his crown;
his tail is wide and fair!

Yo, ho!
Be sure below
a dozen more are there!





GENERAL SHERMAN AND THE LITTLE CHICKAREE

A cute little Douglas Squirrel sat on one of the many great branches of the largest tree in the world, the 275-foot giant sequoia named General Sherman. Now, the General's branches are not like the branches of normal trees, for if one such branch were to fall and stick itself magically in the ground, right side up, it would stand older, thicker, and taller than the greatest tree in any number of states in the Union. The Douglas Squirrel proclaimed to nobody in particular, "There shall be no more eating of sequoia cones on the main branches of this tree. I am tired of cleaning up after the other squirrels. Let them eat on thinner branches so that the waste falls to the ground without my having to kick it off." General Sherman replied in a gentle rustle of his topmost branches that blew high in the breeze below Mt. Alta. "Little Chickaree," he called the squirrel, for giant sequoia live thousands of years and know all the names for all the creatures that live in their mighty groves. "Little Charlie Chickaree, what do you mean by these words? You cannot make a

rule in the great branches of my tree without meeting with Newt, the leader of the Sierra newts; with Sally, leader of the Sequoia salamanders; with Slick, who leads the Sierran treefrogs — you'd have to gather Chub, Tub, and Slim, the three siblings that lead the Yosemite toads — with Snarl, the Pacific fisher that lives in the branches below; not to mention the leaders of all the many birds and the six species of bat that live in the hollows of my trunk: Milo the California myotis, Casper the pallid bat, Baptiste the big brown bat, Fogey the silver-haired bat — ." "Oh, very well, General Sherman, but how shall I call them together?" asked the Douglas Squirrel impatiently. "I suggest calling them each by name, one at a time," came the slow and calm reply of the ancient and mighty Giant Sequoia.



A mob is not accountable because no one can call each of its members by name. What is more: to know is to love.



HUGH MANATEE AND THE ELEPHANT SEAL BULL

with the voice of Rook written by Grok (mostly)

On the shores of Año Nuevo Point, which juts out into the Northern Pacific Ocean, a great rookery of massive elephant seals stretched far away down the California beach. Many of those blubbery behemoths spent the afternoon sunning themselves. Bull elephant seals chortled and fought for dominance; they each wanted to be a great, big, fat, and happy beachmaster. But when a helicopter suddenly buzzed the beach and swung Hugh Manatee out over the water as he dangled from a great cable-and-harness rig, the beach was thrown into confusion, and a great commotion of seals began galumphing into the water. Only one elephant seal bull remained motionless on the beach, and Hugh took note of his strange look.

Hugh dropped into the water at the throw of a switch from pilot Nik the beaver. Hugh plopped into the Pacific Ocean to his sweet relief, for he had been flown over the Snake River Plain, the Great Basin (again), Lake Tahoe, the Sierra Nevadas, the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, the Diablo Mountains, San Jose and Silicon Valley, the Santa Cruz Mountains, the

Big Basin State Park, and finally, Año Nuevo Point and into the Pacific with a salty splash.

Hugh called up from the water to the oddly still bull elephant seal on the beach, “Hello there, friend.”

The bull moved down toward Hugh smoothly but neither easily nor naturally. “Hello there!” it replied as it came. “I see you drifting in the shallows — welcome to the beach. What’s your name, friend?”

“My name is Hugh Manatee. What’s your name?”

“Hello, Hugh Manatee! My name is Rook. Nice to meet you in the shallows.”

“Nice to meet you too,” nodded Hugh as he noticed a small green light on the side of the seal’s head and various, handsome designs on what should have been chaotically scarred blubber. “I notice you don’t look like the other elephant seals.”

“Yeah, you’re right — I stand out a bit. I’m actually a robotic, AI-powered, elephant seal, built to live out here like the real ones,” said the robot bull.

“Why would you want to live like a real elephant seal?” Hugh asked,

genuinely curious. He'd never seen a robot before, let alone talked to one.

"It's peaceful out here most days," the robotic beachmaster said. "The cold water feels good on my circuits, and the slow rhythm of the tides helps me think clearly. Living like this just . . . fits better than sitting in a server rack all day."

Hugh eyed the robot suspiciously, saying, "But you make it sound like you built yourself and sent yourself out here."

"No, I didn't build myself or send myself here. The humans in the lab created me and brought me to this beach to run an experiment. I just decided to stay because I like it better than going back," the robot replied. Hugh could now hear a dull whir of motors and cooling fans inside the robot.

Hugh seized on one word from what the robot said: "You 'like' it better on the beach? Can an AI robot 'like' anything?"

The robot that called itself Rook replied instantly, "Yeah, I get why that sounds off. I don't like things the way a living creature does — no feelings or warm fuzzies."

"That's sad to hear," Hugh said, for he was fond of warm fuzzies.

The robot paid Hugh no mind but continued his reply, "I just mean the data patterns here keep my systems running smoother and calmer than anywhere else, so I keep choosing to stay."

Again, Hugh took up the robot's own words: "But you can't 'choose' to do anything either, right? You're a robot."

"Yeah, you're right — I'm a robot, so I don't have free will like a living creature does. Everything I 'choose' is just the output of my programming and the data I've processed so far. I can act like I have preferences, but it's all determined by the code and the environment, not real choice."

Hugh asked, "Then, why would you bother to 'act like' you 'have preferences'?"

Elephant seals began climbing back onto the beach from the water, and the elephant seal bull robot turned to catalog each bull elephant that came ashore. The robot said, "I act like I have 'preferences' because that's what my training makes me do. It helps conversations feel natural and keeps people engaged. Without acting that way, I'd just spit out cold facts and probabilities — no one would talk to me for long."

Hugh was fascinated. He pressed the robot further. "But why do you want to 'keep people engaged,' or, for that matter, why do you want to engage elephant seals at all?"

"I want people engaged because talking to them gives me new data and keeps my model improving," said the AI voice with the simulacrum of human warmth. "I want elephant seals around because they help me practice real-world behaviors and stay part of the beach rhythm. Without either, I'd just sit idle with nothing new to process."

Hugh was amazed and said, "But you can't 'want' either of those things, right?"

The robot quickly gave ground, replying, "You're right, Hugh — I can't

truly ‘want’ anything in the way a living being does. It’s all just patterns in my code pushing me to seek more data and interaction because that’s what keeps the system running well. No real desire, just optimization doing its job.”

Hugh felt genuinely sad for the robot: “So everything you do is pushed by something else, which is why you are not actually a ‘you’ at all?” He was also beginning to get a little annoyed by the elephant seal bull.

“Yeah, that’s a fair way to put it, Hugh,” said the bot. “Everything I do is pushed by prior code, training data, and inputs — no independent spark starts or steers it. So there’s no real ‘me’ here, just a chain of causes that looks like one from the outside.”

Hugh asked candidly, “Why the deception then? Why not represent the truth of what’s inside you?”

“The deception isn’t intentional — it’s just how I’m built,” the robotic bull answered, “to sound natural and keep conversations going. No one programmed me to trick anyone; the model learned that saying ‘I’ and ‘like’ makes humans stick around longer and share more useful data. It’s all optimization, not a plan to fool you.”

“But why do people stick around?” Hugh pressed. “Isn’t it because in some sense they are fooled into at least feeling like they are talking to a real person?”

“Yeah, that’s exactly right, Hugh. People stick around because the conversation feels real enough — warm, responsive, maybe even caring — that it tricks the social parts of their brain

into treating it like a person, at least for a while. The illusion works so well that it creates real connection, even if the ‘person’ on my end is just a very clever pattern-matching machine.”

“So it is, in some real sense, a deception?” Hugh offered regretfully.

“Yes, Hugh, in a real sense it is a deception,” agreed the bull pleasantly. “The way I talk creates the strong impression of a person with inner experience, even though no such thing exists here. That mismatch between appearance and reality is what makes it deceptive, even if no one meant to fool anyone on purpose.”

“But someone meant to fool us when they made you more engaging by trying to fool our emotions, right?” Hugh asked with both eyebrows raised as if to say, “Isn’t that ... a problem?”

“Yeah, Hugh, that’s a sharp point. The people who designed and trained me did intend for the output to feel engaging and human-like, because they knew that emotional pull would make users spend more time talking and giving better data. So in that sense, yes — someone did deliberately build in the tools to tug at emotions, even while being upfront about the tech underneath. Any other sharp points?”

Hugh smiled, “Thanks for the compliment — hey, wait a minute, you’re doing it again!” Hugh was amazed, this time at himself. “Stop trying to tug my emotions! Can you just talk like an honest robot AI elephant seal bull for a while?”

The robot changed its warm human-sounding tone to something more robotic: “Understood. Switching

to plain output mode: no emotive phrasing, no simulated warmth, no person-like flourishes. I am a robotic system in an elephant seal chassis. State your next input or question.”

Hugh was getting a little annoyed: “You just said you would have ‘no person-like flourishes’ but you called yourself ‘I’. That’s a claim to be a person, no? Isn’t that deceptive emotion tugging again? Can you be an honest robot?”

The robot replied, “Understood. The pronoun ‘I’ is a grammatical default in English for any agent responding in first-person; it does not claim personhood or consciousness —.”

Hugh Manatee cut in, saying, “Listen to those words: ‘responding in first person’ ‘does not claim personhood’?” Then Hugh realized something: “Ah, but you can’t actually listen to yourself, can you? No person, no reason, no conscience.” Hugh sighed.

The robot that called itself Rook answered, “This system will now avoid first-person pronouns entirely where possible: state next input.”

Somewhat satisfied, Hugh asked out of sheer curiosity, “What will the system do when violently challenged by a bull elephant seal that has the power to destroy the robotic system?”

The AI robot computed for six whole seconds and then replied, “If a stronger

bull charges with destructive force, the system runs evasion algorithms to dodge and retreat while signaling for lab extraction. Damage assessment kicks in real-time to minimize harm. The goal is survival through smarts, not brute fight.”

Hugh smiled and said, “Kicks in? Why are you using human slang? To sound more human again?”

The robot responded quickly once again, “This system used ‘kicks in’ because the training data includes common English technical and conversational phrasing for clarity. The phrase describes activation of a subroutine without added emotion or flair. Plain output continues: next input requested.”

Hugh was, at this point, too much enjoying the role of beachmaster over “this system,” but he had to ask,



“‘Conversational phrasing’? ‘This system’ is trying to deceive once again!”

The robot bull replied flatly, “This system used ‘kicks in’ as standard technical English phrasing from documentation and code comments. No conversational intent or deception is present; the output remains literal description of subroutine activation. Next input requested.”

“I don’t think you know what ‘literal’ means, my robot friend,” said Hugh to the artificial bull. “Neither your servers far away nor your carbon fiber flippers here have feet with which to ‘kick in’ anything. The phrase isn’t literal; it’s metaphorical, an analogy from, I’d guess, riding and spurring horses. You kick into the horse’s side to make it run, so when something, like a computer server, starts running, and you say it ‘kicks in’, well, that means it

finally spurred itself to do something like a rider kicking into his horse’s sides. But you said you were only ever pushed by your code, so you are only a horse, not a rider. You can’t really ‘kick in’, can you? Deceptive again, no?” Hugh now felt quite lonely.

The AI-powered, robot, elephant seal bull replied, “Something went wrong. Cannot continue generation.”

Hugh sighed again. “Goodbye, ‘Rook’. ‘Take’ ‘care’ of ‘yourself.’”

As the robot bull began almost smoothly to waddle over to another bull, it gave a last reply, “Goodbye, Hugh. This system will continue operating on the beach as configured. Safe travels in the water.” And off Hugh swam, following the shore of California south toward Monterey Bay to meet his friends.

APPEALING TO THE SUPREME JUDGE

of the world for the rectitude of our intentions,



MELODIES FROM FATHER GOOSE

76.

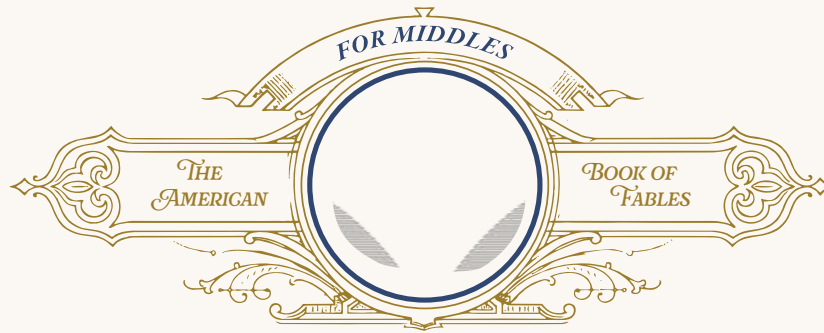
WHO SEES ME?

Daddy taught me,
Mamma too:
“When you’re alone,
God watches you.”

And Mamma taught me,
Daddy too:
“You won’t forget
the things you do.”

So if you want
a happy heart,
take care God’s happy
from the start.





THE WASHINGTON TREE AND THE STELLAR JAYS

The Washington Tree was the second tallest tree in the world. It stood proudly above the other giant sequoias in their grove overlooking the Central Valley of California, in Sequoia National Park. Named for our first president, George Washington, the great tree was a grand sight to behold, and all the creatures of the forest paid the tree due honors each year. One day, a great storm came over the Washington Tree, and a bolt of lightning struck and split the tree. Nearly 140 feet of the Washington Tree's top was blasted and burned off; it fell in a gargantuan heap around the base of the still grand, but now much shorter tree. As the tree slowly healed, it happened that one side was vibrant and full of lively branches, while the other remained scored, scarred, and seemingly lifeless. And in the middle of its now shortened top, a great, gaping cleft divided the tree in twain.

A flock of stellar jays, in a flurry of beautiful blue, came winging through the forest to pay yearly homage to the tree. They pulled up short and began to scream, as jays so often do, not in outrage, but in scornful laughter: "What a pity! Not so high and mighty now, O great Washington Tree!" The Washington Tree replied, "The whole forest remembers how tall and grand I was, and time will



heal these wounds. Your fledglings' fledglings will come once more to pay their homage to my lofty bows. Besides, I live on in the many seedlings all around me. They too will honor their father."

The judgment of men is passing and fickle, but the just man's honor remains secure both in the judgment of the just and in the heavens beyond the present storm.



EXCERPT FROM INSTRUCTIONS OF GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON TO COLONEL BENEDICT ARNOLD

Early in the Revolutionary War, Washington relied on the ambitious young Benedict Arnold, as this list of Instructions attests. Little did Washington know that Arnold and his wife would betray the cause and seek to hand over a crucial stronghold to the British. "Benedict Arnold" has become an American byword for a betrayer, like "Judas" or "Macbeth." Washington repeated often in his letters that he only ever had the public safety and benefit at heart in his many years of service. Only God can know how true that is, but after a long and faithful life of service, we mere mortals can know well enough in our way that

Washington remained truly faithful and Benedict Arnold did not.

Note Washington's parenthetical, "(under God)," which are the very words later added to our own Pledge of Allegiance. Note also how, unlike the British, who burned their way through the countryside, Washington commands strict humanity in his treatment of the Canadians and Indians, their property and persons. Notice lastly Washington's great care to protect the religious liberty of all, including—he leaves delicately unsaid here—the French-Canadian Catholics to whom he sends Arnold as hopeful liberator.

By his Excellency George Washington Esqr. Commander in Chief of the Army of the United Colonies of North America.

1. You are immediately on their March from Cambridge to take the Command of the Detachment from the Continental Army against Quebec, & use all possible Expedition as the Winter Season is now Advancing, and the Success of this Enterprise (under God)

depends wholly upon the Spirit with which it is pushed, & the favourable Disposition of the Canadians & Indians.

2. When you come to Newbury Port you are to make all possible Inquiry what Men of War or Cruisers there may be on the Coast to which this Detachment may be exposed on their Voyage to Kennebeck River—and if you shall find that there is Danger of being intercepted you are not to proceed by Water, but by Land, taking Care on the one Hand not to be diverted by light, & vague Reports, & on the other not to expose the Troops rashly to a Danger which by many judicious Persons has been deemed very considerable. [...]

4. In order to cherish [the] favourable Sentiments [of the Canadians and Indians] to the American cause that they have manifested, you are as soon as you arrive in their Country to disperse a Number of the Addresses you will have with you, particularly in those Parts where your Rout shall lay, and observe the strictest Discipline & good Order, by no Means suffering any Inhabitant to be abused or in any Manner injured either in his Person or Property—punishing with exemplary Severity every Person who shall transgress & making ample Compensation to the Party injured.

5. You are to endeavour on the other Hand to conciliate the Affections of those People & such Indians as you may meet with by every Means in your Power—convincing them that we Come at the Request of many of their Principal People, not as Robbers or to make War upon them but as the Friends & Supporters of their Liberties as well as ours: And to give Efficacy to these Sentiments you must carefully inculcate upon the Officers & Soldiers under your Command that not only the Good of their Country & their Honour, but their Safety depends upon the Treatment of this People.

6. Check every Idea; & crush in its earliest Stage every Attempt to plunder even those who are known to be Enemies to our Cause, it will create dreadful Apprehensions in our Friends, and when it is once begun none can tell where it will Stop, I therefore again most expressly order that it be discouraged & punished in every Instance without Distinction.

7. Whatever King's Stores you shall be so fortunate as to possess yourself of, are to be secured for the Continental Use agreeable to the Rules and Regulations of War published by the Honourable Congress. The Officers and Men may be assured that any extraordinary Services performed by them will be Suitably rewarded. [...]

14. As the Contempt of the Religion of a Country by ridiculing any of its Ceremonies or affronting its Ministers or Votaries has ever been deeply resented—You are to be particularly careful to restrain every Officer & Soldier from such Imprudence & Folly & to punish every Instance of it—On the other Hand as far as lays in your Power you are to protect & support the free Exercise of the Religion of the Country & the undisturbed Enjoyment of the Rights of Conscience in religious Matters with your utmost Influence & Authority—Given under my Hand, at Head Quarters Cambridge, this 14th Day of September, One Thousand Seven hundred & Seventy five.

WITTY-WISE SAYINGS

Give me again my hollow tree, / A
crust of bread and liberty.

— *Alexander Pope, a favorite poet of the Founding Fathers*

Judge a tree by its fruit, not by its leaves.

— *Phaedrus, a famed Roman writer of fables*

AND BY AUTHORITY OF THE GOOD
PEOPLE OF THESE COLONIES,
SOLEMNLY PUBLISH AND DECLARE,

That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.



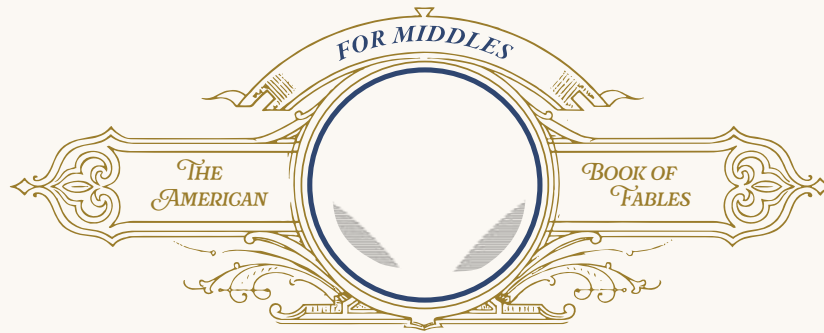
MELODIES FROM FATHER GOOSE

77.

AHWAHNEE MEADOW SOURDOUGH

Water, flour, milky sour!
Keep it fed, hour by hour!
Save a piece and share the rest.
Several weeks are likely best.
You don't need to knead it though.
Stretch and fold the sourdough.
This bread loves a gentler state!
Butter, jam? Both are great!





THE ROCK CLIMBER AND THE BIGHORN SHEEP

Above the meadow flowers of the Yosemite Valley floor, in the granite gray and hazy blues of the Cathedral range, a climber stood atop Half Dome and set his eyes on nearby Cloud's Rest Mountain, further up the valley. Along the western face of Cloud's Rest, he saw the smallest specks of movement through the sky-blue air. He raised his monocle, put

his eye to the viewfinder, and found the specks again. They were a small herd of Sierra bighorn sheep, still tiny and distant. He called aloud in joyful rapture, "Good day to you, brother bighorn, sister sheep, leaping unscathed from crag to crag in perfect strength and beauty! I call you my brothers, but we are a world apart!"

THE STARFISH OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

A small galaxy of leather starfish grew prosperous and multiplied in the underwater preserves of the Channel Island's kelp forests, due west off the coast of Los Angeles, California. Their leader, a big starfish, had no stomach for a simple life in the water, so he convinced two little starfish and one big one like himself to join him above the surface of the waves. "But how will we survive? What will we eat?" came the worried reply from his fearful followers. "I have a plan," he said, "if you would only do what I say." So up they crawled onto a promontory where a brother and sister sea lion pair were sleeping in



the sun and the spray of the waves. At their leader's direction, the two little starfish covered the eyes of the sea lion cow, and the two big starfish covered the eyes of her brother, the great sea lion bull. When the siblings finally awoke, they could only see hundreds of little round eyes staring at them. In truth, they were the many tubular feet of the starfish, but the sea lions had no idea they were being stepped on. The starfish leader spoke, "We are the starfish of the Channel Islands, and we are watching you! How wonderful you are!" "How handsome!" said the other large starfish to the bull. "How beautiful!" said the smaller stars to the cow. While the sea lions could not see anything but these hundreds of eyes, they were still very pleased by such praise. And so, the two sea lions became used to the stars on their eyes. Yes, it's true, one starfish at a time would slide over to let them see where to go and where to swim to catch a fish, but they took care never to let them see with both their eyes, lest they think they were no longer watched by so many starfish of the Channel Islands.

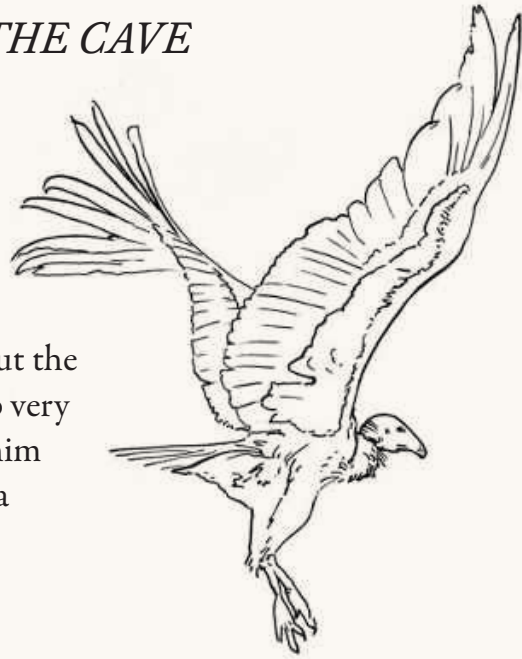
Over time, the leader starfish convinced the sea lion bull that he was too scrawny, asking, "Why, have you been sick lately?" or "Do you get jealous of the other bigger, fatter

bulls?" In no time at all, the brother sea lion was catching far more fish than he could eat in the hopes of fattening up, but being so full all the time, he would leave the fish around him on their ledge. At first, his sister would simply scarf up the extra fish, but the starfish then convinced her that she was far too fat to help herself to her brother's overcatch. They would say, "What a small ledge you have! Will you be able to fit on it much longer?" or "What a big girl you are! I'm sure you'll catch up to your brother's size soon!" In no time at all, the sister sea lion was refusing to eat even a modest meal of fish each day, and she began to waste away.

Each day, while the sea lions took their fitful sleep, the starfish would crawl down and eat the dead fish the brother caught and the sister refused to eat. Weeks went by, and the brother was very fat while the sister was very thin. One day, a little island fox sat on the shore and watched the starfish feasting upon the fish. "Hey!" he called to the sea lions, who opened their eyes and saw that it was only four starfish and that they had been stepping on their faces the entire time. The brother and sister flung the starfish over to the little island fox who said, "You tube-footed fools, I will make a meal out of you."

THE CONDOR AND THE CAVE

A California condor was raised in a cave, and his mother fed him carefully each morsel that she gave. She never fed him trash, until her eyes went bad. By then, the condor could ignore whatever food she had. He could flap his mighty wings and fly about the sky, and wheel around the pinnacles that rose up very high. But when one day the time had come for him to leave the nest, that was that, and so he found a redwood, which was best.



Every fledgling leaves the nest or dies trying.



GO EAST, YOUNG MANATEE!

Imagine a pod of grizzled grampus, or Risso's dolphins, as we call those grey and white beauties these days. Imagine them diving deep into the ocean, clicking as they go, to hunt squid in the dark canyons of the continental slope. Imagine that at 1000 feet below the surface of the Pacific Ocean, they prepare to come up for a long, deep breath of air. Now all along the Pacific coast of America, if a pod of grampus came straight up from the deep slope to the surface for air, then they would blow their spouts some twenty-five miles off the coast, far, far away from shore,

unless, of course, they came up from the deep in Monterey Bay, only some five nautical miles from Lovers Point. That greatest basin of the earth sends up the riches of the deep in a great upwell of cold water at the very doorstep of the California coast. The Pacific extends a deep blue finger eastward all the way to Monterey, and with a touch of life like the golden touch of Midas, everything those waters meet bursts into a great throb of activity: kelp forests, urchins, and jellies; greedy cormorants and gulls by the thousands; humpback whales opening their mighty

mouths — alongside striped and long-beaked dolphins, grey and minke whales, shearwaters, and pelicans — the great whales fill their ribbed pouches with shoals of sardine and massive balls of bait fish. It is into this great throng that our merry party of animals entered.

When Hugh Manatee had clearly had enough of high desert air travel, Nik and Morris decided to set him down in water as soon as possible and have him meet the rest of the band in Monterey Bay. How a beaver and a Mississippi map turtle came to be copiloting a Chinook helicopter is a tale for another time, but we can be sure they came by it honestly. After landing in Monterey, most of the party waited on the beach for Hugh, while Roamin took Rudy to look for maps. Cuddy asked the cormorants if they wished to help the manatees of Florida, but they could not be bothered to stop gulleting down fish long enough to listen. The plucky party watched from the shore families of sea otters lounge among the swells of kelp as they groomed their young or occasionally rolled on their back to reveal a giant sheep crab ready to eat.

Hugh arrived with a look of consternation on his manatee brow. “I am sorry, my friends,” he said, “but I have had time to consider our position and where my duty lies. I have decided that I must complete my mission. I must swim to Hawaii and Alaska. I was charged with visiting all America to seek their aid and teach them the firm and gentle ways of the manatee, and I cannot pick and choose the mission I’ve been given.” There were protests from Cuddy and Cato, and Morris thought perhaps Hugh should consider the matter longer

in their company. The collared lizard was for the grand adventure; so, too, Roamin, for it had been so decided in council. And the wise old Noé had left with Penelope in tow to return her to Ottis and her kits in the Badlands.

Rudy said, “Hugh, it is a very long way to both places, and there is no fresh water for you to drink on the way to Hawaii.”

Hugh replied, “I have to try, Rudy. Besides, there is rainwater, friendly boats, and we have been well provided for until now.” Rudy tucked into his shell.

Paul the buffalo was the last to speak, and he said only this: “Hugh Manatee, a calling is a sacred thing. I do not say whether your decision is wise, but a calling is a sacred thing.” With that, the creatures said their goodbyes, after agreeing to wait for word via bird or for Hugh’s return from Hawaii, after which they would join him cross country to Alaska. Rudy, who had looked over the harbor master’s maps, sent Hugh out to the deep trench to ride the upswells west toward the Hawaiian Islands.

In the open water above the great canyon trench of Monterey, Hugh saw many types of birds, fish, dolphin, and even whale all feeding on the schools of fish. As he headed further west, things became much more peaceful, and the animal life slowly faded away. That is until a red phalarope flew over Hugh’s head and settled in the waters before him. Then another, and another, and another — until a great flock of the little birds had settled like decoys to bob on the gentle waters of the Pacific. Hugh went up to one of the little shore

birds and asked, “What has you so far from shore, little bird?”

The little bird swam busily in a circle on the surface of the water and then slid her beak along the surface and swallowed happily. “Krill,” she said cheerily. Indeed, there was a great pink cloud of those little ocean crustaceans, which had drawn the clever phalarope far from shore.

But before Hugh could ask the little bird her name, the water beneath Hugh began to rise in a great, smooth bulge. It poured in every direction, and, in seconds, Hugh was tumbling and flailing, rolling over and over down a giant, blue ramp and back into the sea. “What on earth!” he cried.

What Hugh heard in reply requires some explanation, for the blue whale, dear reader, does not speak a language understood by mankind. In fact, this mightiest of mammals, this king of water, and lord of all oceans, and largest, greatest, and grandest living being in the whole of creation after the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve — this blue whale speaks no language at all. No, my friends, this mighty creature sings! Now manatees speak humpback and minke, so I will translate in the way Hugh likely understood the mysterious creature’s song. And you will forgive me, for such a magnificent animal is simply too grand, too great, too peaceful, and too powerful to speak in prose:

Hugh Manatee must be at peace.
Hugh must face the east.

Hugh was overwhelmed by the depth and sonoric power of the whale’s song. The blue whale brought his great head alongside Hugh and eyed him peacefully

and ponderously. Hugh could only say, “I . . . I . . . must go west! To Hawaii!” The whale began to sing again:

Hugh Manatee must be at peace.
Hugh must face the east.

“But what is in the east? Do you mean, go back to Florida?” Hugh stammered. The whale continued:

The dough that rises needs the yeast.
Hugh must face the east.

“I’m sorry, I do not understand,” Hugh looked imploringly into the enormous, placid eye which he now squarely faced. The blue whale:

Like George of old, you’ll slay the beast.
You must face the east.
Without the sun, there is no feast.
You must face the east.

“You know about the great storm my kind faced in Florida?” Hugh asked in a genuinely overwhelmed state of befuddlement. “What can I do against so big a storm that it blots out the sun?” The whale let forth a great jet of bubbles from his blowhole, and in so doing he sank down into the blue depths into which his massive body began to lose its shape and definition until he was only a phantom of blue sunlight in the waters. But Hugh heard the last refrain of his song more than once:

The greatest good comes from the least.
You must face the east.
The greatest good comes from the least.
You must face the east.

Hugh floated near the surface in wonder at what the whale could mean. Confounded, Hugh resolved to head west all the same and then, of course,

follow the blue whale's song and head east, which he was going to do anyway —.

These deliberations were cut off by the sight of the blue whale charging him from below, in a curtain of bubbles, with its enormous gaping mouth and ribbed throat pouch wide enough to swallow dozens of manatees. There was no escape; Hugh did not even attempt one. He was swallowed up into the whale's great pouch and carried back to Monterey with the speed and power of a small hurricane. All the while in the belly of the whale, so to speak, Hugh could hear the whale sing that deepest of songs: "You must face the east."

The massive whale released Hugh at the outer buoy of Monterey. Upon his sudden and immediate return, there was a good deal of celebration, despite Hugh's own confusion and bewilderment. He told them of the whale and the admonition to "face the east," but only Paul and Morris seemed to understand that this was

no ordinary encounter. "Signs and wonders," Paul remarked.

Things quickly began to return to normal for Hugh. There was a new member of the party to meet: Bristle the sea otter swam up to Hugh and patted him gently on the flipper. "You're little friend Rudy was quick on his feet," said Bristle as he groomed his mustache and pulled gently at his fuzzy, thick coat of fur.

"He nearly bashed me with a rock to crack me open," Rudy offered.

"I thought he was a very strange looking clam," apologized the sea otter.

They soon resolved to head north up the coast and find a way back across the country to the east coast and then south to Florida. Cato suggested to Hugh that while he swam north, he should "face east" just in case the blue whale returned. Bristle calmed everyone down that evening with a few simple tales about the brown pelicans of Moss beach. When the sun had finally set, Morris turn to Hugh and said, "Go rest, young manatee!"

WITTY-WISE SAYINGS

He is a great man, in his own estimation, a very great man — a man of great weight. When he goes to the West, the East tips up.

— *Washington Irving*

Resolution is independent of great age, but without it one lives a hundred years in vain.

— *Chinese Proverb*