

## WALTER'S WORST HIDING PLACE

By Leslie Wisdom

Word Count: 988

(1-2)

**WALTER** (*Illo note*: Walter's signature) loves to play Hide-and-Seek.  
But hiding isn't a great fit for a blue whale.  
They're BIG.

(3-4)

BIGGEST ANIMALS EVER KNOWN TO EXIST big.  
BIGGER THAN THE LARGEST DINOSAUR big.  
THREE SCHOOL BUSES PARKED END-TO-END big.  
WEIGHING AS MUCH A MOUNTAIN OF GRAND PIANOS big.  
Walter's tongue weighs as much as a small elephant for crying out loud.  
Where can he possibly hide?!

(5-6)

Nowhere. (*Speech balloon(s)*: Hee hee hee! Can't find me!)  
**SIGMUND** (*Illo note*: Sigmund's signature) plays along because Walter has a great big heart. Seriously. It's as big as a car.

(7-8)

**KAREN** (*Illo note*: Karen's signature) doesn't play along with anything.  
One day -this what bound to happen: (*Speech balloon*: He's right there)  
"You found meeeee!?" wails Walter.  
"Of course. You're ginormous," Karen crabs.  
"KAREN!" scolds Sigmund.  
Too late. Walter's car-sized heart hurt BIG.  
He decides then and there to find a hiding place for his big huge blue self.  
And he does.

(9-10)

Sigmund looks everywhere he's ever looked.  
And everywhere he's never looked.  
It takes FOREVER because seahorses are the slowest swimmers in the sea.  
He's lost and exhausted. (*Speech balloon*: Have you seen a blue whale?)  
No answer. Obviously.  
"Hlllllooooo?" squeaks Sigmund.  
Still no answer. Because it's a plastic bag.  
"FYI, I am LOST and TIRED! I can BARELY hold my head up!" Sigmund gets dramatic when he's hungry, which is constantly since seahorses don't have stomachs and pass food quickly. They eat 30 TO 50 TIMES A DAY! MAJOR poopers.  
"It's DROOPING!" Sigmund droops.  
Silence.  
Snackless Sigmund snaps. "The jellyfish I know are NICE!"

(11-12)

**HAZEL** (*Illo note*: Hazel's signature) has been watching Sigmund's bagversation. "Do the nice jellyfish have writing on them?" she asks. "Look close, honey. That's a Land Thing."

Sigmund has never seen a Land Thing. He tells Hazel that he's come from very far away in search of his very big blue best friend.

"You can't miss him," Sigmund hopes.

"Apparently you can." Hazel is sassy.

"I've looked EVERYWHERE," droops Sigmund.

"Everywhere but where he is," sasses sassypants Hazel.

Sigmund doesn't need sass right now. He needs help. And he asks for it.

"If you're not too busy," hopes droopy Sigmund.

"I haven't been busy for 45 years." Hazel is in! She has snacks and a plan.

(13-14)

Hazel takes Sigmund to a BIG patch of Land Things.

TWO TIMES THE SIZE OF TEXAS big.

250 PIECES OF PLASTIC FOR EVERY PERSON IN THE WORLD big.

WEIGHING AS MUCH AS 500 JUMBO JETS big.

(15-16)

Land Things wrapped around Swimming Things.

Land Things injuring Swimming Things.

Swimming Things eating Land Things.

"Rory, that's not food!" cries Hazel.

"It smelthss thsoo good," mumbles Rory through a mouthful.

Stunned Sigmund asks where Land Things come from.

"Our Land Friends," says Hazel with zero sass.

Land Things don't look very friendly to Sigmund. "It's so different here," he whispers.

"We live in the same ocean. Here will be there eventually." Hazel wishes she's wrong, but she hasn't been wrong much in 79 years.

Suddenly: HELLLLLLLLLLLP!

It's Walter!! They follow his voice...

(17-18)

"Walter!?!?" squeals Sigmund.

"You found me," whimpers Walter.

"Come out!" cries Sigmund.

"I CAAAAN'T!" wails Walter. Tears pour through the fishing nets that hold him tight.

"It's hard to breathe," wheezes Walter.

"I know, honey." Hazel promises to return with help in a jiffy.

"Hurry," whimpers Walter.

"Please," pleads Sigmund.

Hazel does.

(19-20)

It doesn't feel like a jiffy. It feels like forever.

The ropes and nets make it difficult for Walter to swim at the surface for air. "I'm sooooo tiiiiiiired," he wheezes.

"Don't give up," whispers Sigmund. But his big blue best friend starts to sink into the big blue ocean.

Suddenly...

(21-22)

REINFORCEMENTS!

**RORY! SUSIE SUE! BRIAN T! BRIAN K! BRIAN S! OTHER BRIAN S!**

Even crabby **KAREN!** (*Illo note:* Character signatures)

They help Walter back to the surface for air.

They try to de-knot the knots. To unloop the loops. To detangle the tangles.

(Another) arm is lost! Luckily they grow back.

Claw down! Bye forever claw.

Walter wheezes.

Sigmund stress snacks.

Hazel Hazels. (*Speech balloons:* Steady now. Just a little more! Good job. You can do it!)

(23-24)

But nothing works.

Hazel runs out of ideas. And snacks. And hope.

Hearts sink.

So does Walter...

Suddenly: **KEVIN KELTZERMAN** (*Illo note:* Kevin's signature) the scuba diving oceanographer!

(25-26)

Thank goodness Kevin Keltzman the scuba diving oceanographer is studying the ocean and taking Land Thing samples from this very spot!

He uses the tools from his toolbelt to cut the ropes and nets from Walter.

"Hee! Hee! Hee! I'm free!" cries Walter.

Everyone cheers!

One Claw Karen high-fives Six-Arm Allen!

(27-28)

Wise Hazel asks their new Land Friend Kevin Keltzman for two favors:

1) share what he knows about Land Things.

Kevin Keltzman knows a lot:

-Their Land Friends put 26 billion pounds of garbage into the ocean every year, and much of it is plastic. A dump truck worth of plastic enters the ocean every minute of every day.

-Plastic doesn't go away. Some of it breaks down into tiny pieces like confetti which Swimming Things can easily eat.

-Half the garbage is discarded fishing nets, lines, pots and traps, which they well know are dangerous for Swimming Things.

-The garbage is pushed by ocean currents into five patches around the world. The largest is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which they're in.

2) Deliver a message to their Land Friends.

Kevin Keltzman uses his dive slate and pen that writes underwater to write the message.

"Tell them we DON'T HAVE HANDS!" crabs Karen.

Crabby Karen has a good point, and Hazel listens, as good leaders do.

Dear Land Friends:

1. Please KEEP LAND THINGS ON LAND.

2. Land Things HURT Swimming Things.

3. Swimming Things DON'T HAVE HANDS to get rid of Land Things.

4. Your Swimming Friends are COUNTING ON YOU.

Gratefully,

**(SIGNATURES)**

(29-30)

Wise, sassy Hazel knows she doesn't have many more than the 79 years she's been swimming in the big blue ocean.

She decides then and there to form the Big Clean Ocean Team with their Land Friend.

They vow to tell everyone to keep Land Things on land so the ocean will be a place where Walter can never hide again.

Will you join them?