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Then I spotted something slicing slowly through the water towards me. It was a fin. Shark! I thought. Shark! And a warm shiver of fear crept up my back. Then I saw the head and knew at once it couldn't be a shark. It was more like a dolphin, but it wasn't. It wasn't quite the right shape. It was too big and too long to be a dolphin. It was big enough to be a whale, a real whale. Now I knew what it was. With a face like that I knew at once that it had to be a bottle-nosed whale. It's the only whale that's got a face like a dolphin. (I know quite a lot about whales because my uncle sent me a whale poster he'd got out of a newspaper, and I've had it pinned up in my bedroom over my bed ever since. So that's why I can recognise just about all the whales in the world, narwhals, belugas, sperm whales, pilot whales, minkies, bottle-nose whales, the lot.)

To begin with I just stood there and stared. I

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thought I was still dreaming. I couldn't take it in. I couldn't believe my eyes. I mean, a whale in the Thames, a whale in Battersea! He was close to the shore now, in shallower water, and still coming towards me. I could see almost all of him, from his head to his tail. But after a bit, I could see he wasn't really swimming any more, he was just lying there in the shallows, puffing and blowing a bit from time to time. He must be resting, I thought, tired out after a long journey perhaps. And then I noticed he was watching me as hard as I was watching him, almost like he was trying to stare me out, except I could tell from the gentleness in his eye that he wasn't being unfriendly towards me. He was interested in me, that's all, as interested as I was in him.

That's when I knew – don't ask me how, I just knew – that he wanted me to come closer to him.







