

On the
Other Side
of the
Glass

Wow! There are
so many different
animals to see! Where
should we start, Kat?

The bears,
of course!



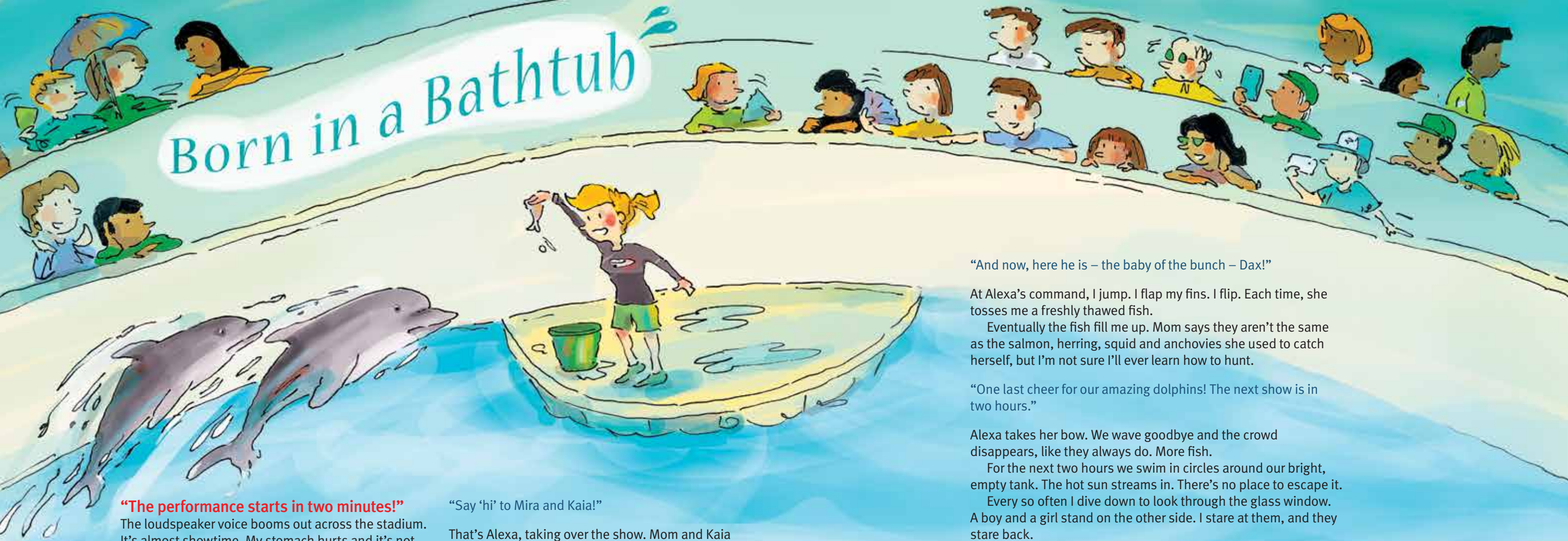
When you love animals, a trip to the zoo can seem like the perfect chance to get up close and personal with wildlife. After all, where else can you see so many different animals together in one place?

With such amazing diversity on display, zoos can be an exciting way to spend a few hours. But what about the animals who have to spend their entire lives there, day after day in the same space?

The next time you visit a zoo, take a moment to put yourself in an animal's place. How might it feel to be on the other side of the glass, looking out? You might just be surprised at what you discover!



Born in a Bathtub



“The performance starts in two minutes!”

The loudspeaker voice booms out across the stadium. It’s almost showtime. My stomach hurts and it’s not nerves. I can’t wait to eat.

“Get ready to see our resident dolphins jump, flip, splash and play!”

That’s us. We live here in this tank of water on the land. My mom says our family clan lives far away, in the deep blue Pacific Ocean.

“Meet Alexa, our expert dolphin trainer!”

Time to focus so we can have lunch. Mom and I swim with our tank mate, Kaia. Mom and Kaia both used to live in the ocean, in different groups with different languages. Until dry day. That’s the day they were herded into nets and hoisted out of the water.

I was born in this tank. Kaia had a calf, too, but he was taken away. Off to a different land tank. When they took him, her screams echoed off the walls. Now it’s just the three of us.

“Say ‘hi’ to Mira and Kaia!”

That’s Alexa, taking over the show. Mom and Kaia wave to the crowd. It’s one of the tricks we’ve been taught.

Mom says she wishes she could teach me, like her mother taught her. Not tricks, but how to hunt and stay safe in the ocean. It’s different out there, she says.

In the ocean, our big family travels in pods and herds with ten or a hundred or even *thousands* of other dolphins. They make special whistles to stay in touch, and they use the sound echoes to find fish and navigate around reefs. They play in the waves and can dive 20 times deeper than our land tank. And they can swim 100 kilometres a day! I can’t imagine a tank that big.

Sometimes I swim as fast as I can, around and around. I pretend I’m traveling through the ocean. Mom says I’d need to circle the tank almost 2,000 times to go as far as she swam in the ocean in just one day. And we don’t whistle much in our tank. The sound waves bounce off the walls and back at us. They’ll never reach the ocean.

“And now, here he is – the baby of the bunch – Dax!”

At Alexa’s command, I jump. I flap my fins. I flip. Each time, she tosses me a freshly thawed fish.

Eventually the fish fill me up. Mom says they aren’t the same as the salmon, herring, squid and anchovies she used to catch herself, but I’m not sure I’ll ever learn how to hunt.

“One last cheer for our amazing dolphins! The next show is in two hours.”

Alexa takes her bow. We wave goodbye and the crowd disappears, like they always do. More fish.

For the next two hours we swim in circles around our bright, empty tank. The hot sun streams in. There’s no place to escape it.

Every so often I dive down to look through the glass window. A boy and a girl stand on the other side. I stare at them, and they stare back.



THOUGHTFUL REFLECTIONS

All animals in captivity need the Five Freedoms of animal welfare. If you visit a zoo or aquarium, here are some questions to consider:

- 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst:** What do the animals eat? Do they find or hunt for their own food? Is there a constant source of fresh, clean water? What do whales and dolphins drink?
- 2. Freedom from pain, injury and disease:** Do the animals ever get sick or injured? What is the cause? Who treats the animals? Where do they stay while they recover?
- 3. Freedom from distress:** Can the animals escape public view when they want? If they are a social species, do they live with others of their own kind or by themselves?
- 4. Freedom from discomfort:** Do the animals have comfortable places to rest? Is the climate the same as their natural environment? Can whales and dolphins escape the sun’s rays? Do they get sunburnt?
- 5. Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being:** Can the animals travel the same distances, through the same environment, as in the wild? Can they explore? Are caregivers changing the enclosure so that it is different and new to keep the animals from getting bored? Do the animals perform tricks or do what they would naturally do in the wild?

Keep Dory off your fish wish list!



The animated Disney movie *Finding Dory* is a huge hit but will it harm real fish? The movie centres around Dory, a loveable blue tang fish on a quest to find her parents. In her journey she meets up with Nemo and his father, Marlin, from the movie *Finding Nemo*.

After *Finding Nemo* came out in 2003, pet clownfish became very popular. Everyone wanted their own “Nemo” swimming around their fish tank. Though clownfish can be bred in captivity, most actually come from tropical coral reefs in the wild. According to marine experts, the world’s population of clownfish has now dwindled to the point they have all but disappeared in places they once flourished.

Experts say the popularity of *Finding Nemo* was a major cause of the decline.

While *Finding Nemo* hurt clownfish, the new worry is that blue tang fish will be next on everyone’s fish wish list. This could spell real trouble for blue tangs because they cannot be bred in captivity. Blue tangs can only come from coral reefs. And the world’s coral reefs are already in danger – many are dying from overfishing and a rise in ocean temperature caused by global warming.

What you can do:

- ➔ Enjoy the movie, but discourage friends from even thinking about getting clownfish or blue tangs as pets.
- ➔ Your family could “adopt” a coral reef. Google “adopt a reef” to learn more.
- ➔ Help reduce global warming by walking and biking instead of driving in a car.
- ➔ Plant a tree. Trees store carbon which reduces global warming.

WHY ARE CORAL REEFS IMPORTANT?

Reefs make up less than one per cent of the earth’s undersea ecosystems, yet they shelter 25 per cent of all marine species. Reefs also protect shorelines from erosion. People benefit by fishing and exploring around coral reefs.