

CHAPTER 4

Meeting the Whales

The next day the ferry boat docked at an Alaskan port. The harbor was full of big cargo ships loaded with fish and timber. It was time for Vern and John to say goodbye to Al and Dave.

They unloaded their kayaks from the ferry. Then they changed into wetsuits and pushed off into the ice-cold waves. They paddled for several hours along the seacoast. At the entrance to Icy Bay they pulled their kayaks up on shore.

John said, "I'll go into the ranger station and tell him of our plans." In a few minutes he was back with maps.

"Let's paddle straight across the bay," he said.

"No, John. Let's stick to the shoreline. The sun is still high, but it's getting late. Summer days are long in Alaska," said Vern.

"OK. Let's go," John said.

For hours they paddled along the shore. John

said nothing about stopping to set up camp. Vern's arms and back were tired. His legs were stiff. He was cold. But he wouldn't say, "Let's stop now." He wanted John to say it first. He wanted John to think he could keep up.

Finally John shouted, "Pull in!"

"Where?" Vern called back.

"On the beach!" shouted John.

"There's only rocks and ice. Can we sleep there?" Vern called.

"Sure," yelled John. Nothing bothered John.

Then Vern saw a tent. That's why John wanted to camp here. They would have someone to talk to.

They paddled up to shore. They untied the kayaks' spray covers from their waists and jumped out. They dragged the kayaks above the tideline. They set up their tent.

Then they walked to the other tent. It was torn and broken. There were no people there.

"I'll bet a bear looking for food did this. The ranger told me there were grizzly bears around here," John said. He didn't seem afraid.

Vern wondered what they'd do if a grizzly bear came. He decided to say nothing. But he went to check the kayaks to be sure they were ready for a fast getaway. Then he crawled in his sleeping bag