A Harbor Seal Pup Grows Up

By Joan Hewett

Story Vocabulary:

young    examines    mammal    normal    hunger    rescued

By the Ocean

The harbor seal pup is 2 weeks old. Her name is Sidney. Sidney stays close to her mother. She drinks her mother’s milk.

Waves crash on the rocky beach. Harbor seal families lie in the warm sun.

Sidney and her mother lie in the sun too.

Sidney’s mother gets hungry. She dives in the water to catch fish. The water is too cold for Sidney. So Sidney stays on the shore.

The seal pup waits for her mother. She waits for 3 days. She is very hungry.

People notice the seal pup. She is alone. Will her mother come back?

The next day, the pup is still alone. The people call for help. Sidney is rescued.

Nursed Back to Health

Sidney is brought to a sea mammal center. A scientist named Peter is in charge. Peter takes care of young seals. He lifts the thin pup from her cage.

Sidney is weak from hunger. Peter knows just what to do. He puts a tube in Sidney’s mouth.

Then Nicole pumps a drink into Sidney’s stomach. The drink is like a mother seal’s milk.

Sidney is full. She is also very tired. She falls asleep.

When Sidney wakes up, her eyes are bright. She looks around.

Peter examines the pup. Her heartbeat is normal. So is her temperature. She is healthy.

Sidney has a full set of teeth. That means she is at least 3 weeks old. Sidney is small for her age.

Sidney gets her drink 3 times a day. She becomes stronger.
A child’s plastic pool becomes Sidney’s playpen. She likes the water. She swims faster and faster.

Nicole shows Sidney a fish. Sidney does not want it.

Nicole does not give up. Day after day, she wiggles a fish in front of Sidney. Then one day, the pup swallows it.

Before long, Sidney wants to eat fish. She waits for her bucket of fish in the morning.

The pup is gaining weight. She no longer needs her healthy drink.

Sidney is 5 weeks old. She has a thick layer of fat. The fat will keep her warm in the cold winter.

Sidney is ready to be on her own.

Returning to the Ocean

Peter puts the pup in a carrying case. Other scientists take over. They carry Sidney onto a boat. Sidney is excited by the ocean’s salty smell. She shakes the case.

The boat heads toward an island. When they are almost there, the boat stops. It is time to say good-bye.

A scientist tips the case. “Good luck, little one,” she says.

Sidney slips into the water. She will find other seals. She will catch fish. Sidney will grow up in her ocean home.