Clancy and Eric’s Way Out

By James Shang | Raffy’s Ocean Friends



Clancy landed on a low branch.

“Eric? I thought we were meeting here.”

“We are. I’m down here,” came a voice from below.

“Where?”

“In the hole, Clancy.”

Beyond a clump of grass was an old stormwater pit. At the bottom stood Eric, an echidna, with his nose tilted towards the sky.

Clancy fluttered onto the edge.

“What are you doing down there?”

“Trying to get out.”

Eric pressed his claws against the wall and scrabbled for a moment before slipping back down.

“I can’t get a grip.”

“I’ll get some help,” said Clancy.

“Who?”

But Clancy had already flown, leaving Eric looking up at the empty sky.

“I hope they’re good at climbing.”

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Clancy found Patrick, Wally and Kevin beside the beach track.

“Eric’s stuck in an old drain!”

Kevin dropped his ball.

“Who’s Eric?” asked Patrick.

“My friend,” said Clancy. “Come on!”

Kevin reached the pit first and stopped at the edge. Patrick and Wally hurried after him.

Eric looked up at three faces peering over the edge.

Three dogs.

He backed into a corner and lowered his head, showing his spines.

“Give him some room,” said Clancy in Oceanese.

The dogs stepped back, and Eric lifted his nose. He knew those sounds from the Oceanese Clancy had taught him.

“Friend?”

“Yes,” Wally answered in Oceanese. “Friend.”

“I’ve never spoken it with a dog before,” said Eric.

“And we’ve never spoken it with an echidna,” Wally replied.

Clancy shuffled proudly along the edge.

“Well, now you have.”

Eric came a little closer.

“I can’t climb these sides.”

“Then we’ll find another way,” said Patrick.

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“I can jump in,” said Kevin.
“But how would you get out?” asked Wally.
Kevin looked at the steep wall.
“Oh.”
Patrick studied Eric’s spines.
“We can’t carry you in our mouths.”
“No,” said Eric. “That would be prickly.”
He pressed a claw against the wall.
“I need something rough to climb.”
Wally looked towards a fallen branch.
“What about that?”
Eric lifted his nose.
“That might work.”

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Patrick and Wally dragged the branch over while Kevin followed with a smaller stick.

“Against this side,” called Eric. “I’ll move out of the way.”

They eased the branch down until it reached from the bottom to the rim.

Eric put his front feet on the bark, but the branch rolled beneath them. He stepped back.

“That bit needs to stay still.”

Clancy spotted a forked branch nearby and stayed with Eric while the dogs fetched it.

“Beside the first one,” Eric directed. “Yes. There.”

The fork held the branches together. Kevin’s stick filled a gap.

Eric tried one foot, then another. This time, the branches stayed still.

“Better.”

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As Eric began to climb, Clancy hopped along the rim and the dogs waited back from the edge.

First Eric’s nose reached the sunlight. Then his front claws caught the top.

A scrabble.

A shuffle.

Out!

Kevin’s whole body wriggled.

“You did it!”

He bounded forward, then stopped before reaching Eric’s spines.

Eric looked up.

“Hello properly.”

“Hello properly!” said Kevin.

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Our ocean. Our planet. Our friends.
Let’s look after them together.

A note for families: If you find a wild animal trapped or hurt, keep back and tell a grown-up who can contact a wildlife rescuer.

Eric rested in the shade with the dogs settled nearby. Patrick looked at his claws.
“Good digging feet.”
“I dig for ants and termites,” said Eric.
“For dinner?” asked Kevin.
“Yes.”
“I usually get a bowl,” said Kevin.
Eric flicked out his long, sticky tongue.
“I catch them with this.”
Kevin tried stretching out his own tongue.
“Mine doesn’t do that.”
“But we can dig,” said Patrick.
He scraped his paws through the loose dirt, and Kevin joined in so eagerly that leaves landed on Wally.
“Yes,” said Wally, shaking them off. “We’re very good at digging.”
Eric’s nose twitched.
“We could dig together sometime.”
“Raffy likes mud,” said Kevin.
“I prefer dirt,” said Eric.
“Dirt’s a bit like dry mud,” said Wally.
“And mud is good!” said Kevin.
“Then dirt must be good too,” said Eric.
Clancy looked at their paws and claws.
“I see. I’ve introduced a digging club.”
“Room for one more?” asked Patrick.
Clancy tucked his feet firmly beneath him.
“I’ll watch.”

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A little more to share

By James Shang | Raffy's Ocean Friends



A hidden friend: Steve

Steve is peeping out from the scrub. Can you spot him in picture 6? Which colours helped you find him?

Oceanese to share

Eric: "Friend?"
Wally: "Friend."

Take turns offering a friendly greeting. Your partner can answer with a word, a sound, a movement or their own familiar way. There is time to listen and reply.

Raffy and his friends invented Oceanese so different animals could talk to one another. In their make-believe world, they use sounds, movements and expressions, with time for each friend to reply.

Our ocean. Our planet. Our friends. Let's look after them together.

Enjoy watching wildlife with a grown-up. Give animals space, leave their homes undisturbed and take your belongings and rubbish home.

Story and characters by James Shang. Illustrations created with generative AI and developed through author-directed revisions. Raffy's Ocean Friends is a fictional series inspired by Australia's animals and waterways.

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Thank you for reading!

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We hope you enjoyed our story and your reading time together.

Visit raffysoceanfriends.com for songs, games and colouring in. There's more fun to share with Raffy and his friends!



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