



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 3, 2012

## Big Miracle: True Story That Will Tug at the Heart

Every now and then, Hollywood releases a film that tugs at the heartstrings and reminds viewers that the world truly is full of godly people. *Big Miracle* is no exception. Based on a true story about a community's efforts to launch a rescue effort for helpless animals trapped in a small area of unfrozen water in an otherwise frozen wasteland, it exemplifies God's wonder and glory, and underscores what the kind of power God's grace can have when it works within people.



Set in 1988, the film features Adam Carlson (John Krasinski), a young blossoming reporter in Alaska. Though he loves his hometown of Barrow, he finds news stories few and far between. He does the best he can to report on local news stories, but cannot help but feel a sense of longing when he watches as other young reporters seem to be getting an opportunity to shine in the national spotlight. He hopes for his own moment to shine, and gets it in the most unusual way.

While filming one of his humdrum news stories featuring someone doing tricks on a snowmobile, Adam discovers a family of California gray whales trapped in a small area of unfrozen water. Noting the dropping temperature, he knows that the section of unfrozen water will soon close up.

Still, despite the sad plight of the whales, Adam resolves himself to the reality that they will not survive. Until, that is, he recognizes that he has the power to be the voice of the helpless whales.

Initially, Adam sees this merely as an opportunity to get national attention. He hopes it will be the chance he's been looking for to launch his career; however, as time progresses, he begins to recognize that there is in fact a deep emotional element in the situation. People from all over the United States care for the animals, and he begins to develop an emotional attachment as well.

But Adam's transformation is not without the help of his ex-girlfriend, Rachel (Drew Barrymore), a Greenpeace volunteer who some may argue is a bit extreme in her advocacy of animals. But if not for Rachel and her dedication, the animals would likely have died. It is she who brings the plight of the whales to the attention of the state's Governor, and convinces him to enlist the help of the Coast Guard in a rescue attempt. Before long, that effort attracts the attention of even the White House.

Rachel's love for the creatures is so significant that she does everything she can to help them, especially the baby whale which is visibly struggling to breathe. She is even willing to swallow her disdain for an oil company seeking approval for a new pipeline because she knows that the company is in possession of a barge big enough to break through the ice and help free the whales.



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It is this kind of love and willingness to sacrifice that makes the film so beautifully positive.

People from around the world offer their services to the helpless animals. Local whalers worked vigilantly to cut breathing holes in the ice, while a ship from Russia helped smash ice for the whales.

The movie's plot does a wonderful job of proving that people with seemingly opposite personalities can rally together around a worthy cause.

For example, Rachel and Mr. McGraw (Ted Danson), the owner of the big oil company from whom Rachel seeks assistance, butt heads rather often throughout the film, but in the end, they recognize the necessity to work together to help the whales, and they set aside their differences.

Therein lies another positive moral: No one should be defined by their surface personality or apparent state in life, but by their underlying qualities. After Rachel and the owner of the oil company work together, she tells him, "You're not as easy to hate as I thought," to which he replies, "You're not either."

What is unfortunate about the film, however, is that one would expect a movie such as this to have far more spiritual content. The title itself includes the word "miracle" in it. And yet the religious references are minimal, although there are some — centered mostly around an older man in the village who offers up a particularly special prayer for the suffering whales.

The movie does take a somewhat anti-oil stance at the end, when there is a short reference to the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill and criticism of Reagan's environmental policies and his support of oil companies.

Still, the film does an effective job of capturing the drama of the real-life event, without demonizing any of the groups involved. In fact, for the most part, it stays virtually apolitical, humanizing all of those involved in the rescue efforts, and revealing less-than-righteous sides to those that one might have expected to be portrayed as complete altruists. For the most part, the movie seems to indicate that all parties involved initially had an agenda of their own, but that they eventually developed selfless concerns for the helpless animals.

*Big Miracle* also does a good job of portraying the significance of the collaboration between the United States and Russia in the rescue mission.

My only other criticism is the film's inclusion of a romance between Rachel and Adam. The plot itself was already so rich without it that one wonders what compels writers to feel the necessity to include some sort of love story in every film. And truth be told, there seemed to be no chemistry between Krasinski and Barrymore.

That is not to say, however, that Krasinski and Barrymore struggled in their roles. In fact, Barrymore's skills manage to transform what could have been a caricature-like character into one that seems multi-dimensional. Yes, she is a bit overzealous in her love for whales, but that love manages to reach audiences and produce understanding from even the most cynical moviegoers. The loveability of Drew Barrymore bodes well for her in this film.

Krasinski's character in *Big Miracle* is reminiscent of the character Jim Halpert portrayed in *The Office*. Here, he is the same goofy but loveable guy who, though he may be driven by selfish ambitions, manages to recognize what his priorities and values should be just in the nick of time.

And, according to those who are old enough to remember the actual events as they unfolded in 1988, the film is mostly accurate, though there was plenty of Hollywoodesque additions.



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For these reasons, and for its simple entertainment value, *Big Miracle* should prove to be a good film for the family, though as a word of warning for parents of younger children, there is some slight foul language throughout.

It might not have the depth and warmth of other marine tales of this nature, but overall, *Big Miracle* is an enjoyable and positive film.



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