



# Tonight's Bedtime Story

Fairy Tales for Sleepy Children

presents

## The City Under The Sea

*From "The Firelight Fairy Book" by Henry Beston*



Once upon a time, in a country of mountains which bordered upon the sea, dwelt a rich merchant who had three sons. The eldest and the second-born were his joy, for they were merchants too, and remained at his side; but the youngest often caused him much anxiety. Not that this youngest son was a wild or a bad lad; but love of the sea and desire for adventure ran like fire in his veins, and he could not bring himself to sit beside his father and his brothers in the counting-house.

Weary at length of the constant reproaches of his kinsmen, he turned away one night from his father's house and joined a ship as a common sailor. Clad in sailor blue, wearing a little cap, a blouse open at the throat, and trousers cut wide at the bottoms, the runaway lad sailed over the sea to foreign lands and isles. And as the years passed, one by one, and brought no tidings of him, his father and his brothers gave him up for lost.

Now the King of the country in which the rich merchant and his son dwelt loved rare gems and precious stones more than anything else in the world. Hidden secretly away in the deep foundations of his castle lay his treasure-room: it was circular in shape and built of black marble, and at equal distance one from the other, along the curving wall, stood a hundred statues of armed men, holding ever-burning lights. A hundred coffers of green stone lay on the floor, one at the base of each statue, each coffer piled high with gems.

Night after night, when all was still, the King would descend to the secret chamber, and throwing open the covers of the jewel-chests, would gaze long and silently into the gleaming mass within.

One night the King led his neighbor, the Emperor of the Seven Isles, to the jewel-room, and showed him his treasures.

"Are there fairer jewels to be found in the whole wide world?" said the King proudly.

"They are indeed noble," replied the Emperor, nodding his gray head. "But how happens it that the Emerald of the Sea is not among them? The Emerald of the Sea is the most glorious jewel in the whole wide world. Years ago a fisherman of the Land of the Dawn found it in a strangely carved box which a storm had washed into his nets. I saw it when I was but a young prince; it hung by a chain from the throat of the Princess of the Dawn, and shone there as if the very secret of the sea were hidden in its heart."

"Where is this emerald to be found?" asked the King, who was consumed with the desire to add the jewel to his possessions. "Tell me, that I may at once send an expedition in search of it."

"I have not heard of it for many a long year," replied the Emperor, "but I think it is still in the Land of the Dawn."

So great was the King's impatience to become the owner of the Emerald of the Sea, that he could scarcely wait for the morning. All night long he slept not a wink for thinking of it, and

hardly had the red shield of the morning sun risen above the thin mists lying at the edge of the sea and sky, when he sent for the rich merchant to come to the palace at once.

Wondering much at the summons, the merchant made haste to the palace, and was there taken instantly before the King. When the King saw him, he said:—

“You are the greatest and richest merchant in my dominions. Know, then, that I have a task worthy of you. In the Land of the Dawn there is a jewel called the Emerald of the Sea; it is your task to discover it and purchase it for me. To possess it, I would give all the gold in my realm. Take heed that you return with it, for if you fail me, my anger shall strike you down.”

At these words the merchant bowed low, and replied that he would that very day sail for the Land of the Dawn in his fastest ship. Then, returning home, he gave orders that the best vessel in all his fleets be immediately prepared for the journey; and so swiftly was this done, that the merchant sailed for the Land of the Dawn on the morning tide.

Many days and many leagues he sailed, over shining seas, till he reached the harbor of the Land of the Dawn. Ships were entering and ships were leaving the lovely mountain-circled bay. How the broad sails tugged at their ropes as a steady wind filled their curving white depths! How silver-clear shone the furrows of foam flowing back from the onward-hurrying bows!

Making her way out toward the great, still mirror of the summer sea, was a strange black vessel, with sails as red as fire.

The merchant anchored his ship in a quiet bay, and hastened ashore to find the Lord Treasurer of the Kingdom. He found this nobleman at ease on a balcony of his castle which overlooked the sea. Upon hearing the merchant’s story, the nobleman started with surprise, and said:—

“You are just too late! At the command of my royal master, the Prince of the Land of the Dawn, I sold the Emerald of the Sea only an hour ago to the master of a strange vessel. See, there she is now.” And the Lord Treasurer pointed out over the sea to the black ship with the red sails, which was just then disappearing over the horizon.

Thankful that the other ship was still in sight, the merchant hurried back to his own vessel and gave chase. Luckily for him, there was a full moon that night, by which the shadowy hulk and the swaying masts of the mysterious ship could be seen.

All the next day they sailed, but never an inch nearer to the other vessel did they come, though the merchant loaded his ship with all the canvas she could bear. Another night and another day found them no nearer. Finally, late in the afternoon of the third day, a great storm came sailing over the edge of the sea; a blast of wind struck the merchant’s ship, then a torrent of rain, and night came on just as the storm was at its height.

When the daylight came again, the other ship had completely disappeared; and though the worried merchant sailed here and sailed there, never a sign of the stranger could he find. At last, with a heavy heart, he gave up the quest and returned to his King with the evil tidings.

The King, I hardly need say, was beside himself with rage and disappointment. Scowling so terribly that his eyebrows almost met, he cried to the merchant:—

“Wretch, through you I have lost the finest jewel in the world! If you do not find it within a year, your life and your possessions shall be forfeited to me.”

On hearing these terrible words, the merchant turned pale, for he had no more idea where the Emerald of the Sea was to be found than had a new-born child. His two sons, however, when they had heard his story, bade him not to despair, and declared that they would that very night go forth and seek the emerald through the world.

Now, because the poor merchant could not bear to be left quite alone, it was finally agreed that only the eldest son should go in search of the jewel, while the second-born should remain at home. This, of course, was much against the will of the second son; nevertheless, so it was arranged.

And so the eldest son sailed away. The days lengthened into weeks, the weeks into months, the months into a year, yet the eldest son did not return. A guard of soldiers led the unhappy merchant before the King.

“Well, have you found the Emerald of the Sea?” said the King.

“No,” replied the merchant, hopelessly. And now all would certainly have been over with the poor merchant, had not his second son begged and pleaded with the King for a year of respite in which he, too, might search for the emerald through the world. Though at first unwilling, the King at length yielded to the plea, but exacted one half of the merchant’s possessions as a forfeit.

And so the second son sailed away. Days lengthened into weeks, weeks lengthened into months, the months into a year, yet the second son did not return. Cruel storms wrecked so many of the merchant’s ships that he lost the other half of his possessions, and was forced to take refuge in a miserable cottage by the marshes beyond the town.

On the last night of the year granted to him by the King, the unhappy man sat in his poor house by a crumbling driftwood fire, listening to the surf breaking on the beach that edged the marsh. Far away, he heard the bells of the royal city sound the midnight hour. Neither the eldest son nor the second-born had returned. The second year of respite was at an end; nothing now could stay the anger of the King.

Suddenly there came a vigorous rat-tat-tat on the door.

“I am lost,” murmured the poor merchant to himself. “The King’s soldiers are already at the door.” And advancing unsteadily across the room, he threw the door open wide.

A gust of wind from the sea blew in, which bent back the flame of the taper in his hand, and then across the threshold stepped the youngest son. He was still a sailor and clad in sailor blue, and there was a cutlass in his belt. So shaken with joy was the merchant that for some time he could not utter a word, but merely clung to the strong shoulders of the young seaman.

As for the sailor son, he managed to let his father know that he had returned from distant lands only that very evening, and had just heard of the disasters which had overtaken his family.

As they talked, steps were heard outside; and then, without waiting to knock, a sergeant of the King's guard forced open the door, and, followed by a handful of soldiers, entered the wretched room and took the merchant and his son prisoners. They spent the night on the straw in the royal dungeons, and in the morning were led before the King.

On seeing the merchant, the irate King scowled more angrily than ever,—for the loss of the Emerald of the Sea had never ceased from troubling him,—and said:—

“Well, have you found the Emerald of the Sea?”

“No,” said the poor merchant.

“Summon the executioner!” cried the King.

And now the poor man would certainly have bade farewell to earth, had not the youngest son, like his brothers, interceded with the King.

At first the King would hear not a word of it, and called to his guard to take the prisoners instantly away; but it being whispered that the sailor, although not much more than a lad, had once fought bravely and been sorely wounded in the royal service, he at length gave ear to the youngest son's prayer and said:—

“Yes, you shall have another year. But know that this year shall be the last. If you do not return with the Emerald of the Sea within a twelvemonth, nothing shall save you. I have spoken.”

And thus the sailor son went in search of the Emerald. What happened to him upon his search, in what situation he discovered his brothers, and how he visited the City under the Sea, you shall shortly hear.

Now the youngest son had a little boat of his own. It was so small that, when the wind no longer filled its sails, it could be rowed along, and in this boat the sailor lad began his voyage. From harbor to harbor, from nation to nation, he sailed, but never a soul he found who could tell him aught of the strange black ship with the fiery sails or the lost Emerald of the Sea. Even the people of the Land of the Dawn could tell him only that the gem had been sold to an unknown prince.

Presently the winter of the year overtook him, and in one of the sudden storms that heralded the coming of the cold, his little boat went ashore on a rocky coast, and was soon pounded to pieces by the breakers. Thrown into the sea during the wreck, the sailor was himself so tossed and trampled by the waves that he reached the shore far more dead than alive. Indeed, had it not been for a poor fisherman and his wife, there would have been no more story to tell. These good people, I am glad to say, rescued the sailor from the fury of the waters and nursed him back to health and strength again.

When his strength was quite restored, the sailor told this good couple the story of how he had gone forth to seek through the wide world the Emerald of the Sea.

“But my poor lad,” said the kind fisherman, “the Emerald of the Sea has vanished forever from mortal eyes.”

“What! You know of the emerald?” cried the sailor.

“Alas, yes,” replied the fisherman. “Two years ago the Prince of the Unknown Isles sent the finest vessel in his fleet to the Land of the Dawn to buy the jewel. A beautiful ship was she, with a hull as black as night and sails as red as fire. My brother and I sailed in her crew. The jewel was taken aboard. Our brave ship set sail for the Unknown Isles. Hardly were we three days out of the sight of land, when a storm overtook us and sank the vessel. I chanced to be tossed in the water near a great fragment of the mast, and clung to this until a passing vessel found me. Of all aboard, I alone survived. Forty fathoms deep lies the Emerald of the Sea, never more to be seen but by the dumb creatures of the waters.”

At these tidings the brave sailor’s heart became like ice; nevertheless, he cried:—

“Alas, good friend, I know that what you say is true, yet shall I not despair; for, come what will, I must save my father!”

Hearing this, the fisherman’s wife, a quiet, good body who had had little to say, whispered that it would be well first to consult the Witch of the Sands.

“The Witch of the Sands? Who is she and where can I find her?” cried the sailor.

“The Witch of the Sands dwells a hundred leagues from here,” replied the fisherman’s wife. “All the mysteries of the waters are in her keeping and she has an answer for them all. You must go to her and ask her to help you.”

So the sailor thanked the good fisherman and his wife, and set out to walk the hundred leagues to the house of the Witch of the Sands. His path lay along a desolate and lonely shore, on whose rocky beaches the wooden bones of old wrecks lay rotting, half buried in stones and weed. Just as the third day’s sun was sinking in the shining waters, the sailor arrived at the Witch’s dwelling.

The Witch made her home in a deserted old ship, which a storm of long ago had cast far up the sands. As for the Witch herself, she was a woman so old that the sailor thought she

surely must have been living when the moon and the stars were made. A fringe of sea-shells circled the crown of her high hat, and round her wrists were bracelets of pearly periwinkles.

Just as the sailor approached the Witch's door, a young fur seal, who had been basking in a little pool left along the beach by the tide, hastened out of his puddle, and running swiftly toward him on his flappers, nuzzled his hand with his sleek, wet head, just like a young dog.

"Down, Neptune, down!" cried the witch shrilly.

"Good evening, madam," said the sailor in his politest manner.

"You are the third person who has come here to ask me the question you are going to ask," screamed the Witch of the Sands, whose magic powers had revealed to her the reason of the sailor's coming. "I know you! You are the youngest son. Your two brothers have been here to ask me the way under the sea, and I told them; but bless me, they have n't come back yet. Just like young men to forget an old woman's warning. I've a good mind not to tell you the way to the under-waters; indeed, I would n't if you were n't a sailor and a child of the sea. Yes, I can show you the road to under the sea; but you must not ask me about the emerald, because I don't know where it is myself. It was in the Land of the Dawn, and that's the last I heard of it! When you do get to the under-waters, don't forget that. You'll have to hurry back like the wind, for the year which the King gave your father is almost gone. Don't ask me questions! I know you are going to ask one, because I'm not a man; and I know what you are going to ask, because I'm a witch."

And the strange old lady laughed and, putting her hands on her waist, swayed so violently from side to side that the sea-shells on her hat rattled and clicked. Then, after a pause to gather breath, she continued: "Before you can go down into the waters, I shall have to give you an enchanted ring. Mind you bring it back, for there are only three of them in the whole wide world, and your brothers have the other two. Goodness me, but I don't know why I let them take my magic rings. Now that I come to think of it, I don't know as I shall let you take my ring. However, it has been on my mind for some time to tell the King of the City under the Sea that he's been telling the tide to come altogether too near my ship. You can take the ring if you will promise to deliver my message. Promise!"

There was a pause, and the sailor, who had listened to the Witch's every word, solemnly promised to carry her message to the King under the Sea. He was just about to ask a question or two, when the Witch of the Sands, drawing another long, long breath, cried out again:-

"Don't ask questions! I've told you once and I've told you twice, and I'll tell you as many times as there are drops of water in the sea! The path to the City under the Sea begins a hundred leagues to the north; in the high cliffs there, when the tide is low, you'll find the mouth of a great cave; walk down this cave, and down and down and down, till you feel water rising round your feet. Then put on my ring and walk boldly ahead. In a little while you will see the city shining in the waters. Once there, seek out the King and tell him of your quest. But on no account" (and here the Witch solemnly turned round three times) "eat or drink anything offered to you while you are in the under-waters. If you do, you will forget

everything of your past life, your father, your quest, and the Emerald of the Sea. Let one drop pass your lips, and you will spend the rest of your life under the waves. Here is the enchanted ring. Put it in your pocket.”

With these words, the Witch took from a little leather purse a simple golden ring and handed it to the youngest son, who put the ring in his pocket, thanked the Witch, and set off for the cavern, which led to the City under the Sea. You may be sure it did not take him very long to find it. After feeling carefully in his pocket to see if the ring was still safe, the sailor plunged on into the winding cave. In a short time, the roar of the breakers on the beach, which had been loud at the mouth of the cavern, began to fade and grow faint, and the tunnel grew dark and cold. Feeling for the wall of the passage with one hand, the youngest son advanced into the blackness. Creatures of the sea, with round shining eyes, stared at him from shallow pools, and now and then his hand, running along the wall, would touch and shake from its place a starfish or great snail.

Down and down and down went the sailor. Presently he heard the lapping of wavelets in the darkness, and a few minutes after, he felt himself advancing into deepening water. Stopping for an instant, he put on the golden ring. Then, walking on again, he felt the water rise from his ankles to his waist, and from his waist to his throat. One step more, and the water closed over his head.

Once under the waves, the sailor hesitated, uncertain as to which way to turn. Little by little, however, his eyes grew accustomed to the touch of the water, and he saw, lying on the bottom a few feet ahead of him, a small ball glowing with a pale phosphorescent light. Stooping to touch this strange object, the sailor discovered it to be a small round sea-plant which had anchored itself to a stone, and presently he discovered that this light was but one of thousands which together formed a long straight line across the level floor of the sea. Rightly imagining these lights to be signs of a sea-world road, the sailor advanced along them. A slow walk of ten long leagues brought him to the gate of the City under the Sea.

There was very little light there, save for that which came through the waters from the world above, and this was but a faint, pale green glow, which lay, more like a shadow than a light on the roofs and tower-tops of the submerged town.

The sailor walked unchallenged through the gate, and found himself in the great street of the city. Along the broad avenue grew giant sea-plants with brown leaves, set out in rows like trees; and through the foliage which moved heavily in the currents, little fish darted like birds. Many people walked slowly to and fro—strange people of the sea, all dressed alike in tight-fitting garments of shining, fish-like scales.

The sailor looked into their faces and saw that a broad golden ring encircled the pupils of their eyes. Suddenly two men of the sea, distinguished from the others by swords of red stone, moved through the water, and seizing the sailor in their webbed hands, hurried him before the King of the Under-Waters.

On a coral throne, in a great hall roofed with a high circular dome, sat the King. The flowing waters within were bright, and a queer, pale green light pierced through the hall from a kind

of fountain of light in the centre of the floor under the dome. Approaching this shining fountain, the sailor discovered it to be a mass of glowing sea-creatures, living flowers of the deep, which, even as he looked, stirred their mysterious petals.

“Welcome, Wearer of the Enchanted Ring,” said the King, staring hard at the sailor with his large golden eyes. “You come at a fortunate time. This very evening we celebrate the wedding of the second of my three daughters with the mortal wearer of the second ring. Stand you upon the steps of the throne, for they are coming at once. Let the trumpets sound!”

At this command, two youths of the sea lifted huge conch-shells to their mouths and sounded them.

Great doors instantly opened wide, and a gorgeous procession entered. First, appeared a dozen pages; then, in walked the Sea King’s second daughter, hand in hand with a merry young man, in whom the sailor recognized his second oldest brother.

Presently the conch-shells sounded again.

“The Prince and the Princess!” cried a voice.

The King leaned over from his throne and whispered in the sailor’s ear:–

“My eldest daughter and her husband. They were married just a year ago. The Prince is a youth of the world above, and wears the first of the enchanted rings.”

Now entered the eldest Princess of the Sea, walking by the side of her husband. And in the husband the young sailor beheld the elder of his two brothers. And though the young sailor stretched out his arms to them, neither of his brothers remembered him, for while faint and hungry, they had forgotten the warning of the Witch of the Sands and had eaten of the bread of the under-world. Thus had the memory of the world above, the lost emerald, and their father’s plight faded away.

The conches sounded a third time.

“Come to the wedding banquet,” cried the King. “You shall sit beside my youngest daughter.”

And now the sailor lad, willy nilly, was hurried into the banquet hall, and seated at the royal table beside the King’s youngest daughter. And she was quite the most beautiful of all the three. Noticing that the youngest son touched no food, she said to him:–

“Why do you refuse to taste of the wedding banquet?”

“Princess,” replied the sailor, “I have come to the Under-Waters to seek the Emerald of the Sea; for if I return to my own country without it, my father’s life will be forfeited. Would you have me forget?”

“But you will never find the Emerald of the Sea!” cried the Princess.

“Never find the Emerald of the Sea! What do you mean?” said the sailor anxiously.

“The Emerald of the Sea has disappeared,” continued the little Princess, fixing the sailor with her golden eyes. “Years ago it was stolen from my father’s treasury by a wicked Prince of the Under-Waters. My father pursued him and overthrew him, but in the struggle the emerald was lost, and rising to the surface, drifted to the shores of the Land of the Dawn. There it remained till the Prince of the Unknown Isles purchased it and took it away in his black ship. This ship, overcome by a storm, sank; but where it lies we know not, though we have searched far and wide through the waters. Whosoever finds it shall be master of the land under the sea, for the emerald is master of us all. My father will not lift a finger to help you find it; indeed, if he knows that you are in search of it, he will force you to eat of the bread of the under-waters. Say nothing, therefore, of your quest.”

At these words, the brave sailor’s heart sank very low. Mindful of the Witch’s warning, he dared touch no morsel of food, yet he knew that hunger would soon bring weakness in its train. Either he must find the emerald at once, or he must abandon all hope of finding it. He could not live long if he touched no food, and if but one morsel touched his lips he would forget the upper world.

Far away, the poor merchant, whom the King had now cast in prison, watched the days pass one by one, and the last year approach its end. Every morning he would ask for tidings of his sailor son, and ask in vain.

Now, when the wedding banquet was over, and the ball which followed was at its height, the eldest of the princesses called her sister, the bride, aside and said to her:—

“We must rid ourselves at once of this newcomer. Do you not see that he is the younger brother of our husbands? I beheld him stretch out his arms to them as they passed. Who can tell but that he may lead them away from us? Let us tell our servants to lie in wait for him and deliver us from such a danger.”

So said the eldest sister, of the golden eyes. Alas, I fear that the people of the under-waters are sometimes quite as shocking as those of the world above.

Later that evening, just as the poor sailor was standing by one of the great doors, a dozen or so stout rogues in the service of the eldest sister fell upon him, bound him with cords, and dragged him through the water to the royal stables.

Now the people of the under-waters, having no horses,—for sea horses are but tiny creatures,—had tamed great dolphins to carry them about. A hundred of these monsters, each with a bronze ring in his nose, were ranged along the sides of the stables, and on the fiercest and angriest of them all, the Princess’s servants tied the sailor. How the great fish, fastened to a bar by a chain and his nose-ring, pulled, rolled, swerved aside, and thrashed his tail! But all his twistings were of no avail, for the poor sailor lad was soon fastened to his back with a

rope of seaweed. Then the creature was released from his chain, given a blow on the side with a whip of shark-skin, and turned into the wilds of the under-waters.

For half an hour, the fish, frightened at his burden, fled at lightning speed over the roofs of the city, and sped on into the lonely plain. Then, ceasing his mad flight, he tried again to shake himself free of the sailor. He turned, he leaped, he dived, but all in vain, for the sailor was securely fastened to his back. Terrified anew, with a swift motion of his great fins, he shot violently to one side and rushed on and on into the dark. All that long night he fled. Toward the morning of the next day, however, the sailor managed to work one arm free, and draw the cutlass from his waist. With this he made short work of his bonds and rolled off the fish's back. The great animal, delivered of the weight which had lain upon it, rose on the tip of its tail and shot madly toward the surface, and the sailor tumbled through the waters to the bottom.

Weak and hungry, the poor young seaman gazed about in the half-gloom, and found himself on the lower slopes of a sunken mountain rising from the ocean floor. In no direction could he find a sign of the City under the Sea. Hoping, however, to see better from the mountain's top, he decided to climb it. Strange plants and shells lay in the crevices of the weedy rocks, schools of bright fish fled past him like living arrows, and huge crabs scuttled away as he appeared. Suddenly, lying on her side in a little ravine of the mountain, he saw a ship—the black ship of the Emerald of the Sea! Weary and weak though he was, it took the sailor but a moment to clamber aboard, and hurry past the broken masts into the captain's cabin. A steady, green radiance shone in one corner of the weedy room, and hastening toward it, the sailor found, at last, the Emerald of the Sea. The box which had enclosed it had rotted away and fallen apart.

“Victory!” cried the sailor, “victory! The emerald is mine at last, and I shall save my father.”

He took the great jewel from the broken box and rested it in the cup of his two hands. How it glowed on the pale flesh! Then, thrusting it into a pocket and holding onto it with one hand, he hurried out again to the mountainside.

In the world above, it was high noon, and the level rays of the sun beat deep into the green waters. So bright had the slope become, that the sailor lad felt sure that he could not be far from the surface of the waves. Moreover, if the mountain-top rose above the waters, it would form an island in the upper world. And so, indeed, it was. Climbing on toward the top of the mountain, the sailor first scaled a steep cliff, and at the top of this he found a gentle slope of sand. The sun's rays now illumined the water so brightly that the air seemed only a little distance away. Presently a beach-crab ran nimbly away from beneath the sailor's feet. The water grew very much warmer. The shore was at hand! A few steps more, and the youngest son emerged on the beach of a beautiful isle.

Half-blinded by the sun, he walked toward the dry land. There he found some delicious fruits growing, and a rippling brook of crystal water. He ate and drank, and his strength returned.

Himself again, the sailor took the Emerald of the Sea in his hands, and cried,—

“By the power of the Emerald of the Sea, I summon here the two elder princesses of the under-waters, and my two brothers, their husbands!”

There was a sound of far thunder under the clear blue sky, and a moment later, four heads rose out of the waters, and shaking the salt spray from their eyes, the princesses and the brothers walked through the shallows to where the sailor was standing. Now, the princesses were very much frightened when they beheld the sailor holding the all-powerful emerald, and falling on their knees before him, begged him to forgive their misdeeds, and not to take away their loved ones. Tears fell from their golden eyes, and mingled with the drops of the salt ocean still coursing down their black scales. As for the brothers, they would have hurled themselves upon the sailor, had not the magic force of the emerald prevented their approach.

“Be merciful and forgive,” said the younger of the sisters. “After all, had we not caused you to be spirited away, you never would have found the emerald.”

“Yes, that is true,” said the sailor. “My brothers shall decide for themselves. Break, then, the spell which binds them to the under-waters, restore to them their memory of the past, and if then they choose to remain, I shall not try to lead them away. Reverse the spell!”

“That is easily done,” said the elder sister. “Let them but touch the food or drink of the upper world and their memory will return.”

And in less time than it takes to tell it, the sisters offered the enchanted brothers water from the rivulet. When they had drunk of it, both the brothers became pale as death, their eyes opened wide, and they stared as strangely as men suddenly waked from sleep. Then, seeing their younger brother, they ran to him and threw their arms about him, and asked a thousand questions about their father and the quest of the emerald.

The golden-eyed brides watched them with sad faces, and finally broke into quiet tears. Imagine their joy, when their husbands returned to them and bade them be of good cheer.

Thus was true love found to be mightier than the mightiest spell.

Now, when the princesses of the sea had dried their tears, the sailor and his brothers took counsel as to how the Emerald of the Sea might be brought to the King in time to save their father’s life. You may judge of the sailor’s horror when he discovered that because of a bad error in the calendars and clocks of Sixes and Sevens (a city he had visited in his search for the emerald), the life of his father had been forfeited to the King three days before!

But now we must return to the poor merchant himself.

All the third year the poor man had lain in a small cell in the royal dungeons, waiting anxiously, oh, so anxiously, to hear the quick step of the sailor son on the winding stairs just outside his prison door. But the year came to an end, as you know, without his return. For the third and last time, the castle guards led the poor man before the King. Now the King

had never forgiven the merchant for the loss of the jewel; his chagrin, indeed, had increased with the years, and he was very glad that he could at last take his revenge.

“Have you found the Emerald of the Sea?” said the King, harshly. He stood erect on the steps of his judgment-seat, arms folded, eyes fixed in a fierce, black frown.

“No,” said the merchant quietly.

“Then you shall seek for it yourself,” cried the King. And he gave orders that the merchant be tied hand and foot, and tossed into a little boat without food or drink, and then sent adrift to die helplessly in the lonely seas. And so this awful sentence was carried out.

Bound hand and foot, scarce able to roll from side to side, the merchant lay motionless in his little craft and stared up at the blue sky. Presently a merciful sleep overcame him, and while he slept, a wind arose which swept the little boat along with it.

Meanwhile, on the beautiful island, the sailor and his companions, stunned at their discovery, began preparations to return to the under-waters. Just as the twilight fell, all walked together to the margin of the darkening sea, and advanced into the waves.

Suddenly, the sailor, whose eyes were the keenest, saw a little boat rapidly drifting ashore. Now caught in a current of the shallow beach, it drifted sideways; now propelled by the rising tide, it floated on, bow pointed to the shore. The sailor hurried toward it and seized it. Suddenly he uttered a ringing cry! The old merchant lay on the floor of the boat. He still lived, for they could see him gently breathing. Lifting him up tenderly, the three sons carried him to the shore, unloosed his bonds, and brought him back to life.

Now when the merchant was himself again, the sailor, through the power of the emerald, caused the waves to carry a great ship to the island, and on this ship the three sons, the two princesses, and the old merchant returned to the merchant's country. All landed secretly, however, for they knew that the angry King would seize them if he knew of their return. And so it came to pass that, one night, shortly after the homecoming, word was brought to the sailor that the King had heard of the merchant's escape and was sending guards to arrest the merchant and his companions.

It was almost midnight when the sailor lad received the warning. Taking the emerald with him, he advanced to a window by the ocean, and cried out over the moonlit waters,—

“Waters of the Sea, rise and overwhelm the palace of the King!”

Now the King's palace stood apart by itself on a tongue of land running far out into the tide, and soon the rising waters were flowing over the marble floors and pouring in through the windows. One by one, the lights in the thousand rooms, touched by the waves, hissed, sputtered, and expired. The servants of the palace, one and all, ran away pell-mell, and left the dark castle to its fate. Little by little the advancing water crept from the walls to the balconies, from the balconies to the towers, and from the foot of the towers to their very tops. Finally, all the moon could see as it shone upon the flood was the weather-vane of the

highest turret of all. You should have seen the little waves ripple and break about it! And finally, even the weather-vane disappeared under the black waves.

Locked in his secret treasure-room, opening the jewel coffers one after the other, the King remained quite ignorant of the disaster. For some time no sound reached him in his hidden retreat, because the door of the treasure-room was very thick and strong. Suddenly he heard behind him the sound of falling water, and turning toward the door, beheld streams of water gushing through the passages between the door and its frame. Horror-struck, he watched the door burst from its locks and hinges; a roaring cascade of cold sea-water came pouring in the room, and a moment later the whole castle crumbled and fell to pieces.

Now, when the King had met his deserts, the people of the country, who greatly respected the merchant, offered him the crown; but he refused it and conferred it on his two elder sons. Thus it came to pass that the country had two kings. Each brother in turn reigned for six months of every year, and spent the other six under the sea with the golden-eyed people of the waters.

As for the sailor lad, he sailed the sea for many years, and finally married a pretty niece of the Witch of the Sands. Then, like all sailors, he went to the country to live. His house is built of gray stone, ivy climbs over it, and apple orchards lie beneath its windows.

And the all lived happily ever after.

To get more stories

Go to [www.tonightsbedtimestory.com](http://www.tonightsbedtimestory.com)

## License

While the text and the illustrations used in this work are out of copyright, the unique presentation created for those elements is copyrighted. You may use, copy and distribute this work freely but you are not authorized to use this work for commercial purpose and you may not alter, transform, or build upon this work in any way.