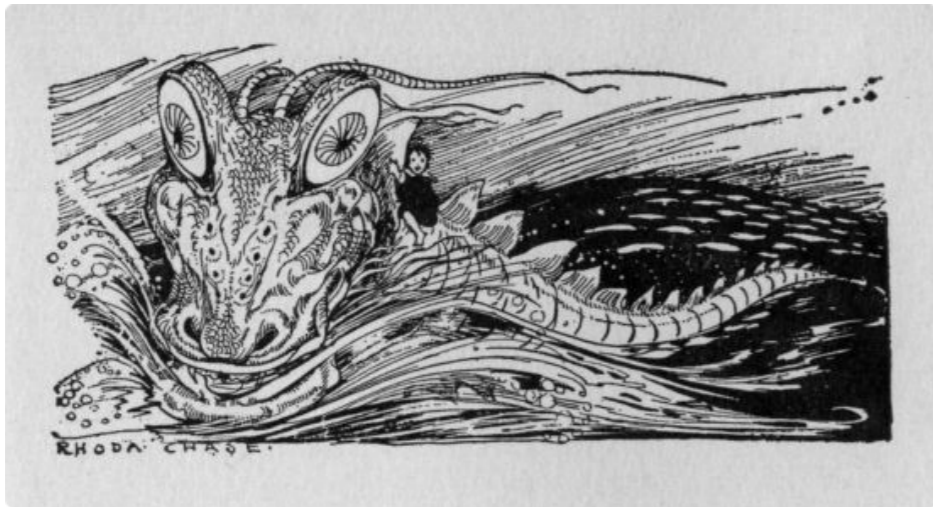


Ririro

The good sea monster



On an island of rocks out in the ocean lived a sea monster. His head was large, and when he opened his mouth it looked like a cave. It had been said that he was so huge that he could swallow a ship, and that on stormy nights he sat on the rocks and the flashing of his eyes could be seen for miles around. The sailors spoke of him with fear and trembling, but, as you can see, the sea monster had really been a friend to them, showing them the rock in the storm by flashing his eyes; but because he looked so hideous all who beheld him thought he must be a cruel monster.

One night there was a terrible storm, and the monster went out into the ocean to see if any ship was wrecked in the night, and, if possible, help any one that was floating about. He found one little boy floating about on a plank. His name was Ko-Ko, and when he saw the monster he was afraid, but when Ko-Ko saw that the monster did not attempt to harm him he climbed on the monster's back and he took him to the rocky island. Then the monster went back into the sea and Ko-Ko wondered if he were to be left alone. But after a while the monster returned and opened his mouth very wide.

Ko-Ko ran when he saw the huge mouth, for he thought the monster intended to swallow him, but as he did not follow him Ko-Ko went back. The monster opened his mouth again, and Ko-Ko asked, "Do you want me to go inside?" and the monster nodded his head. "It must be for my own good," said Ko-Ko, "for he could easily swallow me if he wished, without waiting for me to walk in."

So Ko-Ko walked into the big mouth and down a dark passage, but what the monster wanted him to do he could not think. He could see very faintly now, and after a while he saw a stove, a chair, and a table. "I will take these out," said Ko-Ko, "for I am sure I can use them." He took them to a cave on the island, and when he returned the monster was gone; but he soon returned, and again he opened his mouth. Ko-Ko walked in this time without waiting, and he found boxes and barrels of food, which he stored away in the cave. When Ko-Ko had removed everything the monster lay down and went to sleep.

Ko-Ko cooked his dinner and then he awoke the monster and said, "Dinner is ready," but the monster shook his head and plunged into the ocean. He soon returned with his mouth full of fish. Then Ko-Ko knew that the monster had brought all the things from the sunken ship for him, and he began to wish that the monster could talk, for he no longer feared him.

"I wish you could talk," he said.

"I can," the monster replied. "No one ever wished it before. An old witch changed me into a monster and put me on this island, where no one could reach me, and the only way I can be restored to my original form is for some one to wish it."

"I wish it," said Ko-Ko.

"You have had your wish," said the monster, "and I can talk; but for me to become a man some one else must wish it."

The monster and Ko-Ko lived for a long time on the island. He took Ko-Ko for long rides on his back, and when the waves were too high and Ko-Ko was afraid the monster would open his mouth and Ko-Ko would crawl inside and be brought back safe to the island.

One night, after a storm, Ko-Ko saw something floating on the water, and he jumped on the monster's back and they swam out to it. It proved to be a little girl, about Ko-Ko's age, who had been on one of the wrecked vessels, and they brought her to the island. At first she was afraid of the monster, but when she learned that he had saved Ko-Ko as well as her and brought them all their food she became as fond of him as Ko-Ko was.

"I wish he were a man," she said one day, as she sat on his back with Ko-Ko, ready for a sail. Splash went both children into the water, and there in place of the monster was an old man. He caught the children in his arms and brought them to the shore.

"But what will we do for food, now that you are a man?" asked Ko-Ko.

"We shall want for nothing now," replied the old man. "I am a sea-god and can do many things, now that I have my own form again. We will change this island into a beautiful garden, and when the little girl and you are grown up and married you shall have a castle, and all the sea-gods and nymphs will care for you. You will never want for anything again.

"I will take you out on the ocean on the backs of my dolphins."

Ko-Ko and the little girl lived on the enchanted island, and all the things that the old sea-god promised came true.