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The Battle of the Winds

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Old Father Neptune says he does not cause the sea to make big waves and toss about the ships, and one day when a Little Mermaid asked him why the waves rose so high and made so much trouble for the sailors, he told her this story, and some little bird, flying over the rocks where they sat, listened.

A little bird, you know, always tells, and that is the way this story got abroad. Just whom he told it to cannot be discovered, but anyway, here is the story:

"Sit down beside me, dear," said Father Neptune, "and I will tell you about the battle of the winds," so the Little Mermaid curled up beside him on the rocks and listened.

"One day when I was taking my nap at the bottom of the ocean," said Father Neptune, "this was many years before you were born, my dear—I was awakened by hearing the trumpeting of the sea shells, and, jumping up, I went to the top of the water.

"There I heard the North Wind in a very angry voice calling out: 'Get out of my way; I shall blow wherever I like.'

'Not if I can help it, and I think I can,' answered the East Wind, blowing at a terrible rate toward the North Wind. 'You do not own the ocean; get out of my path.'

"Not thinking they would do any harm, I sat down on some rocks to watch them," said Father Neptune, and the Little Mermaid was so interested and afraid she would lose some part of the wonderful story she did not say a word, but kept as quiet as a mouse.

"Nearer and nearer came the North Wind," said Father Neptune, "and the East Wind grew more angry. 'If you come closer I shall drive you back,' it screamed.

"I have never changed my course for anyone, and I do not intend to be driven by you, Mr. East Wind,' howled the North Wind furiously.

"By this time I saw there was to be a battle, and down to the bottom of the



ocean I went in a hurry," said Father Neptune, "and called for my sea horses and chariot.

"Then I called to Triton, my trumpeter, to call his helpers and follow me, and in a very few seconds we were at the top of the ocean. Oh, my child, such a scene as met our eyes. North Wind had kept his threat to go where he wished, and East Wind would not be frightened, so they had met in a terrible battle, which was raging when we reached the scene.

"I urged Triton to blow his loudest blast, and I waved my trident high over my head, my faithful sea horses dashed over the waves at high speed, but the noise of those two furious winds was above all.

"The ocean, of course, was lashed into a terrible fury by the two winds, and for a minute it seemed as if even my power could not still it, but at last one mighty wave, higher than all the others, my powerful seahorses mounted and I made myself heard.

"Then I dashed between the North Wind and the East, and I separated them, driving each to his home growling and snapping all the way."

"But Father Neptune," said the Little Mermaid, as he stopped speaking. "I thought you were the one who caused the waves to grow big and the sea to roar and the ships to be tossed about."

"No, my child, that is a story which has been told so long it has been thought true by many who do not know, but the truth is that when the sea is dashing and rolling the winds are battling and angry.

"Why should I, who live in the deep waters, cause them to be troubled? Restless they are, to be sure, but never do they grow troubled unless the angry winds are lashing them when they are having a battle."

"Oh, I am so glad you have told me," said the Little Mermaid. "I could not bear to think you made the poor sailor toss about and sometimes drown, for you are so good and kind to all your subjects it did not seem possible you were cruel to mortals."

"No, my dear, I help the sailors always, and that is the reason I will not allow you and your beautiful sisters to come out on the rocks often, because your wonderful beauty attracts the attention of the sailors who should be attending to the ship. When he sees one of your family, he forgets all else but you and sometimes lets his ship run upon the rocks. Mortals have everything about us mixed up, for I have heard it said that I send you out to wreck the ships, but you know, my dear, that is not true."

"Oh, no, indeed, good Father Neptune, we know quite well that is not true, for

you keep us under the water always when a ship sails along."

"Well, here comes one now," said Father Neptune. "Jump into the sea and run home before more harm is laid to us."

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