

The Ocean of Peace

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There, where the coral reefs hug the shore like children held close to their mother's breast, the story you are about to hear came true.

It happened in the underwater land of Understand, not far from where the sea kisses the sand. The sun shines down on families of merpersons who live in large and beautiful caves inside the coral grottos.

The merpersons are happy and peaceful, tending their gardens of seaweed, ocean vegetables, and flowers. In their grottos, they put up little mottos, like: A wave in time saves nine, big fish from little minnows grow, and things like that.

In one cozy grotto lived a mer family, including a mergirl named Hanalei, and a merboy named Hanaloo.

Usually these two went to school, but it was summer vacation and the sun was warm upon the waves. They could play all day.

One thing they loved to do was to ride around on giant seahorses. These giant seahorses have never been seen by any landperson. They swim through the water very gracefully, curving their bodies as they glide forward, just like little seahorses do. The merchildren make saddles out of seaweed, cling tight with their arms, and wrap their fishtails all around.

Well, one fine day Hanaloo and Hanalei decided to go for a long ride on their two favorite seahorses. One was named Giddy and the other was named Up. They told their parents they'd be gone until mid-afternoon and promised to be careful.

But little did they know that that same day, a grey metal ship with guns on its deck was going to pass near the beautiful bay under which they made their home. Of course, the merpersons were hundreds, sometimes thousands of feet under the water, so it should have made no difference to them, except that this ship had divers on it who were exploring the ocean floor.

These divers weren't looking for pearls in oysters. Nor were they studying schools of fish. The merchildren knew that some landpeople loved the creatures of the sea and tried to learn more about them. But these divers from the cold grey ship were not friendly at all.

They carried spearguns and sometimes they shot a sea creature and laughed when it got hurt. To make a long story short, they were mean as can be. They were planning to put a strange-looking machine on the ocean floor that would shoot poison straight up into the ships of other countries when they passed.

But Hanalei and Hanaloo didn't know about any of this, and in fact the merpeople, underneath the sea all around the world, long ago learned how to cooperate with each other and live in peace.

So off went Hanaloo and Hanalei, riding Giddy and Up through the warm pathways of the sea. They stopped to say hello to many of their friends -- from the tiny shrimp to the large and gentle manatee and all the other animals in between.

They rode and rode, out past the huge barrier coral reef that sheltered their land of Understand, dancing free into the wide open sea.

Oh, it was a glorious day. The flying fish were shining in the sun. Even that grumpy octopus on the ocean floor unraveled all his wrinkles, stretched out all eight of his tentacles, and actually smiled!

Hanalei and Hanaloo were happy as they could be -- they laughed and used their strong and beautiful fishtails to help the seahorses glide along. They sang a song:

*“We’re as happy as we can be
Riding through the open sea
With a swish swish swish and a
Swoosh swoosh swoosh and a
Hey fishy ho fishy ho ho ho!”*

*We love to be in motion
Gliding through the ocean
With a swish swish swish and a
Swoosh swoosh swoosh and a
Hey fishy ho fishy ho ho ho!”*

*This is such a lovely day
For Hanaloo and Hanalei
With a swish swish swish and a
Swoosh swoosh swoosh and a
Hey fishy ho fishy ho ho ho!”*

And the soundwaves of their song radiated through the ocean, tickling the seaweed on its feet and toes, delighting the dolphins, calming the sharks, and making the lobsters and crabs dance their sideways minuet across the ocean floor. The teenage starfish thought this minuet the most old-fashioned thing they'd ever seen, as they rocked and rolled and somersaulted, breakdancing between the sea anemones.

But suddenly this beautiful music was interrupted by a low roar, growing louder and louder. It was the huge engine of the cold, grey ship with the guns on it, as it cut cruelly through the waters of our Mother Earth.

Then the noise stopped, and the merchildren continued their romp through the sea. Hanalei and Hanaloo had never gone out this far before, but they were not afraid because they knew all the other ocean dwellers watched over them.

They met a large blue whale who promised that he'd let them frolic and play up on his waterspout the next time he came up for air in their neighborhood.

But the whale also warned them that there was a huge heavy ship upon the waters and said they should stay away from it, because you never knew what those land people might do.

The whale said he knew there were some landpeople who wanted to save the whales. But the whale also knew that some bad men from another ship had killed his brother, then sold him so somebody could make perfume from him. A gigantic teardrop welled up in the large blue whale's eyes, just thinking of his brother.

Just then a cry of pain shook the waters. Hanaloo was thrown off his seahorse. Up, the seahorse he was riding, had been shot through the tail with a sharp, barbed piece of metal. The divers from the ship must have been shooting at something far away, with a very powerful spear.

The spear came hurtling through the water like an arrow of steel and pierced poor Up's tail. He neighed in pain and rose up in agony. What evil men these were who lurked in the ocean that day, with their weapons of war, and their plan to place a poison machine on the ocean floor.

The first thing to do was to remove the spear from poor Up's tail. But they were too far away from home to get help there. Fortunately, just as they were wondering what to do, Hanalei spotted a dignified sturgeon swimming through the waters just above them. They sent a nearby tiger shark up to tell the sturgeon what had happened.

You see, sturgeons are the surgeons of the sea, and this sturgeon/surgeon knew exactly what to do. He took out his electric eel beeper and sent electric signals to the nearest large stingray and the closest swordfish. He had the stingray sting the giant seahorse right near the place where the spear went in, which helped to numb the pain. Then he borrowed a few stiff needles from a nearby sea urchin to do a little acupuncture on the seahorse so the pain went away completely. He used the sword of the swordfish like a scalpel to carefully cut near the entrance of the spear. Then he clamped his powerful jaws around the end of the spear and, pulling carefully backward, slowly removed it from Up's tail.

Fortunately, the spear did not go through any vital organs, and the sturgeon thought Up would recover completely in a few months.

The sturgeon squeezed some juice from a sea herb inside the wound for medicine then carefully bandaged it up with seaweed and other plants. Hanalei remembered the time she'd bruised her mertail on a sharp piece of coral and the sturgeon had helped her. That time, it had been two weeks before she was able to swish her tail happily again.

After the operation on the seahorse the sturgeon sat back, with his goggle eyes looking like glasses on a doctor's forehead, and listened to Hanalei and Hanaloo discuss the dangerous situation with all the inhabitants of the ocean who gathered. They all wondered what to do.

After a long discussion, they came up with a plan. They decided to send the whale off on a very special secret mission. Then they sent out the call for hundreds of hammerhead sharks to come as soon as possible. And they sent the sturgeon toward the land, to travel up the rivers where most of them could not go, because sturgeons can swim in both salty and not salty water.

Where did the whale go? She went to a place down deeper than any landpeople could ever imagine. She went to the very deepest valley in the ocean, winding her way through giant caves and rocky passageways, down into the lair of an incredibly powerful creature. This was the home of the Peaceosaurus.

Have they told you there are no more dinosaurs? Well, as far as *they* know, there aren't. But, really and truly, deep down beneath the sea there is a family of wonderful dinosaurs who love peace.

The whale knew that only the Peaceosaurus could do battle against that cold grey ship of war whose divers shot sharp spears against defenseless seahorses. Because, you see the Peaceosaurus is enormous! This great and good guardian of the seas is simply gigantic!

As the whale told the Peaceosaurus what was planned, the kindly dinosaur nodded its huge head sadly and wisely. The dinosaur decided to help because it hated war, and because it knew that if something wasn't done soon there might be no more world for anyone on land or sea.

This was quite an enormous decision by the Peaceosaurus, because it had not come out of its lair for thousands of years, but as the Peaceosaurus said, "the time has come when the landpeople of this planet need to learn a lesson."

Meanwhile, the hammerhead sharks began to gather deep below the ocean, near the spot where the mean men from the grey ship were putting together a killing machine on the ocean floor. They watched these men with sharp eyes, making sure they understood how the men were putting the metal and wires together.

And the sturgeon, the wise old sturgeon/surgeon, he was heading full steam toward San Francisco Bay.

Back in the deepest part of the ocean, the Peaceosaurus and the whale began to rise through the caves and tunnels, finally breaking into the open sea. Just see that Peaceosaurus soar through the water, like a seagull swooping in the sky, like a giant condor spreading its wings over the Andes mountains.

Soon the Peaceosuarus and the whale were several hundred miles away from the cold metal ship. The whale went ahead to tell the others they were ready.

By now the mean men had finished putting together their box of poison in the ocean and were heading back up to the ship. The hammerhead sharks were circling the poison machine.

The sturgeon/surgeon was chugging through the San Francisco Bay and making his way into the beautiful delta just below Sacramento, with all its bending and curving watery passageways, as all the rivers gather together before meeting the sea. The sturgeon knew exactly where he was going. He was heading for a little swimming hole on the American River, where in the summer landchildren came to swim and splash and play.

Sure enough, there were some children playing. He called out to some nearby frogs to kiss two of the children's feet. This cast a magic spell so the children from the land could talk to the sturgeon from the underwater land of Understand.

Now these two children were named Brooke and Sarah. Brooke and Sarah laughed when they felt the frogs tickling their feet with their kisses. Then they listened as the wise old sturgeon told them about the merchildren named Hanalei and Hanaloo, the giant seahorses, the cold grey ship, mean men, and the killing machine. Then he explained what the creatures of the ocean planned to do.

When the sturgeon told them how much they needed the help of the landchildren, Sara and Brooke jumped out of the water immediately. They got themselves all dried off and dressed, and headed back to their home in Berkeley. Once there, they started making zillions of phonecalls.

They called all their classmates and neighbors. They called their friend Anna in San Francisco, who began calling all her friends, who began calling all their friends, who began calling all their friends. Friends of friends called friends of friends until millions of landchildren all around the world knew exactly what to do.

And here is what happened: Just as all the mean men on the grey ship were getting ready to go to sleep, the enormous Peaceosaurus raised its monumental tail out of the water and brought it down across the middle of the ship, shaking them all out of bed. Then it rose, like a huge mountain against the sky, and ripped off all the guns and cannons with its mammoth claws.

A special team of octupi stood by to make sure all the life boats were ready, as the mean men, terrified by the great Peaceosaurus, escaped into them.

When all the mean men were in the little boats, being pulled by hundreds of powerful tuna, then the Peaceosaurus roared in rage and delivered a final karate chop with its tail to the cold grey metal ship, smashing it to smithereens.

Deep underneath the sea the hammerhead sharks were pounding on the poison box. Sometimes they called in a swordfish to cut a connection. Sometimes they needed a lobster's claw to use as wrench. Bit by bit those hammerhead sharks pounded that poison box to bits and buried all the pieces underneath large rocks that a team of whales pushed over the broken and twisted wreckage.

Meanwhile, on the land, the children of peace gathered in all the countries of the world. In San Francisco, children went down to the Bay with signs calling for "Peace Now!" and "No More War!" They passed out newspapers they'd made on the computers at school which told all the people about the mean men and the grey ship and the poison box. When the team of tuna brought the lifeboats with all the mean men on them into the Bay, the children booed and hissed, then shouted out against war and sang songs of freedom and peace.

In other countries, wherever streams made rivers and rivers poured into the oceans, millions of children gathered, shouting out for peace on land and sea. They passed out papers telling about the cold grey ships that mean men in their countries made, asking all the people to bring an end to wars and guns and bombs and bullets. Chinese children gathered near the Yangste River, African children all along the Nile, Russian children shouted on the Volga and the Don, millions from South America lined the banks of the Amazon.

Yes, from the Mississippi to the Ganges, it was as if each child were a tiny spring of fresh water, joining together with other children to make a stream, as all the streams ran into rolling rivers which ran into a wonderful ocean of peace.

The children unfurled gigantic banners with huge letters printed on them, saying:

LET THE OCEAN NEVER BE A PLACE OF WAR

**LET LAND OF UNDERSTAND BRING LESSONS TO THE
PEOPLE ON THE SHORE**

**LET THERE BE, ON LAND AND SEA, LOVE AND PEACE --
FOREVERMORE!**

And as they gathered along the waterways of the world, the children all together sang a song:

*Gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside
Down by the riverside, down by the riverside
Gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside
Gonna study war no more*

*Gonna join hands around the world, down by the riverside,
Down by the riverside, down by the riverside,
Gonna join hands around the world, down by the riverside,
Gonna study war no more...*

And way out in the ocean, the merpersons heard the singing of the landchildren and it made them very happy. Hanaloo and Hanalei began to sing along, and soon all the fish began to dance, the crabs and lobsters did their minuet, the teenage starfish their cartwheels and somersaults, the electric eels swayed back and forth, and on a large rock jutting out from the ocean a manatee hummed along as she held her baby to her breast.

In the deepest part of the ocean, the Peaceosaurus smiled a smile as big as all outdoors.

And this all happened in the land of Understand, not far from where the sea kisses the sand. There, where the coral reefs hug the shore like children held close to their father's chest, the story you have just heard came true.

