

How to Breathe Under-Water

In the depths of the country there was a quiet cottage, and in the cottage there was a bedroom with thousands of books. A soft breeze rustled through the cherry tree and filled the room with a sweet scent of blossom. Sunlight danced across the room filling it with golden sun-beams. Sapphire the cat, purred contently as she snuggled up on a heap on the fresh bed sheets. On the shelves there were copies of every book that had ever been written. But one was missing. Ninety-nine years ago someone hid its cover underneath the floor-board of the cellar, and the book quietly vanished. The book was called "How to Breathe Under-Water."

At night, when the parents are asleep in their cosy bed, the books come to life! The dim light of lamps fill the room with a gentle glow; the aroma of freshly-baked bread wafts through the windows and doors and the shrieks of laughing children can be heard from miles around. On a shelf of Terrifying Tales beginning with the letter S, a girl named Lila lived. One evening, Lila's cat chased a rat into the cellar, and when she tumbled after her, she tripped over a loose floorboard. When she looked back she found the cover of the missing book. Lila decided there and then, no matter what she would find that book. "If we find that book," she said "We will discover the secrets of the ocean!"

Every evening for three years, Lila and Sapphire searched for the book. They searched under the dust filled bed clambering over boxes and peering into every nook and cranny. They looked in every draw of the clattered desk, lifting things as big as the pair combined. They even looked at the top of the towering, dark wardrobe, disgusted at the amount of clothes they found left lying around. Then one evening, they came across four salty sailors, wearing snorkels, waist high in shimmering water. They surely didn't know about the book. Each of the men had long flowing, silver hair. "You've came for this haven't you," said one of the sailors. "Yes...but" mumbled Lila. With one swift gesture he led her through the door, ignoring her completely.

Lila followed the salty sailor into a book and out onto a pebbled shore, whilst the evening sun sunk below the horizon, and the sound of the sea chewing away at the shore filled the air. The smell of salt came up to their nostrils, whilst the sailor strode on with Lila close behind. "Where are we going?" asked Lila intrigued. "To see Water Women," replied the Salty Sailor. Eventually they reached a clearing. There, sat on a rock in a middle of a murky lagoon sat Water Women. Lila asked about the book. "You must not read it!" she whispered. "I'm the only living being in history to have not lost their minds because of the book. I thought I could glide through the reefs and discover new species. But I found that I lost my friends, because they were scared and frightened, everybody called me horrid names and my family started leaving me out. It was a world of darkness, glumness and despair," mumbled Water Women sadly. She sat as still as a statue. "Don't read it," whispered Water Women urgently.

"I won't read it," promised Lila

"You were smarter than I," said Water Women. And she led her back to earth.