

**THE SOCIABLE  
SAND WITCH**

**BY T. L. SAPPINGTON**

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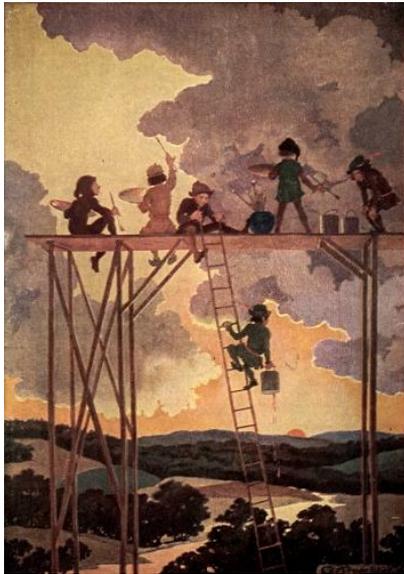
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# THE SOCIABLE SAND WITCH



Getting ready for autumn.

## THE SOCIABLE SAND WITCH

Of all the witches that may be found in all the fairy tales ever told there is none more delightfully sociable than the Sand Witch. This Witch, who lives underneath the heaps of sand at the ocean's edge, where, in the summertime, you dig with your shovel, is not at all like other witches. She never rides on a broomstick, and she never goes down chimneys. In the first place there are no broomsticks or chimneys on the beach at the sea-shore, and in the second place she would not know how to ride on a broomstick or climb down a chimney, if there were. All the Sand Witch knows how to do is to sink into the sand when anything scares her, and to come up through the sand when she sees a chance to get acquainted with a person she never was acquainted with before. So now you know what a Sand Witch is. And if Junior Jenks, seven years old, and dreadfully sunburnt, had known what you know, he would have been much better prepared to face the one that came up right under his nose all of a sudden one hot July morning.

Junior was supposed to be in bathing. His mother, and his father, and his sister were in among the breakers having a fine time, but Junior, although he was wearing a bathing suit just like they were, preferred the good old sandy, sunny beach where foam-crested waves could not tumble you over and over, and fill your mouth with salt water when you yelled. He had tried bathing once, and no amount of coaxing could induce him to try it again, so his folks left him to play by himself while they took their dip.

The first Junior knew about the Sand Witch was when the tip end of a steeple hat began to come up through the sand in front of him.

Up, up it came until the whole hat was showing; then followed a long nose, two big, black eyes, a big mouth, and a sharp pointed chin; after that the rest of the Sand Witch followed very quickly, until at last she stood before him as cool as a cucumber.

"Well," she said, not paying the slightest attention to the way Junior's hair was standing up, "here I am. I've heard you digging for some days. I suppose you thought you'd never find me."

"Find you?" said Junior, staring with all his might. "I wasn't trying to find you. I never knew there was such a person. I wasn't trying to find anything."

"You weren't?" said the Sand Witch. "Then what in the name of peace were you digging for?"

"Why," said Junior, "I—I—I was just digging for fun."

"Well," said the Witch, "did you find any fun?"

"Find any fun? Of course not! You don't find fun, you—you just have it."

The Sand Witch pushed her hat on one side and scratched her head in perplexity. "I don't think I understand. You said you were digging for fun, didn't you? And when I asked if you found any fun you say you don't find fun, you just have it. Well, if you have it, what do you dig for? Tell me that?"

But though she waited very politely for Junior to tell her, he made no answer. He just looked at her with his mouth open, and wiggled his bare toes deeper into the sand.

"My goodness," said the Witch, at last, "are you deaf? I asked you a question."

"I—I know," said the boy, "but—but I can't tell you. I—I don't know how."

"Suffering sea serpents!" exclaimed the newcomer. "You certainly are the queerest *I* ever met!"

"No queerer than you are," responded Junior, indignantly. "You're the queerest person *I* ever met! Coming up through the sand in such a way!"

"Humph!" retorted the Witch. "How else *could* I come up? There's nothing else here but sand to *come* up through. You can't blame that on me."

"Oh, I'm not blaming you," said Junior. "I'm only telling you. I don't suppose it is your fault that all this sand is here. It only seemed so strange for a person to be underneath it. You don't live there, do you?"

"I certainly do!" replied the other; "and all my family, too."

"Underneath the sand? Why, I never heard of such a thing! I—I can't believe it!"

"Now look here," said the Sand Witch. "I won't let anybody talk *that* way to me. If you don't believe I live underneath the sand come on down and see for yourself. Just hold your nose tight with the fingers of your *right* hand, put your *left* hand above your head, draw *in* a deep breath; and down you go, like this."

Thrusting a hand above her head, and grasping her nose, she took a deep breath, and zip—she sank through the sand like a flash, just the way Junior's father always sank into the ocean when he was

bathing. Then bing—the next moment she popped up again, smiling cheerfully. "See how easy it is? Come on, now you try it!"

"No, thank you," said Junior. "I'd rather stay on *top* of the sand."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed the Sand Witch, "I never saw such a 'fraid cat! You're not only afraid to take a sea bath, but you don't even dare to take a sand bath. I'd be ashamed!"

"Well, be ashamed, if you want!" said Junior, hotly. "I don't care! I don't like baths of any kind; in the ocean, or in the sand; or even in the bathtub. What's the use of them, anyway?"

And with that he started digging again. And then it was that the Sand Witch showed what a thoroughly sociable nature she had, for although the boy had turned his back to her and was paying no attention, she wasn't in the least discouraged. "Did you ever see a crab wait on the table?" she asked.

"Why, no," said Junior, whirling about and looking very much interested. "I thought all a crab could do was to pinch you."

"Not at all! They wait on the table fine if you let 'em. And I've got a shooting starfish, too, that can't be beat. You come on down underneath the sand, and I'll show you. Oh, I've got dozens of delightful things down there. Why, the sand pies I make are the most delicious things you ever tasted. And I know you'll laugh when you see the clams skip rope."

Well, you may be sure all this sounded very, *very* good to Junior. He had often heard of starfish, but never of shooting starfish. A crab waiting on the table was bound to be interesting; and a clam skipping rope, even more so. As for sand pies, he had often made them himself, but never so they could be eaten. If there was a way

to do the trick, he'd like to know it. In fact, it was like being promised a free ticket to the circus. So throwing his bucket and shovel aside he got to his feet without further parley.

"Very well," he said, "I'll go with you. But I've got to be back in a half hour. My father is going to take me sailing as soon as he is through with his bath."

"That's all right," said the Sand Witch. "When you're ready to go back, you just go back. And now do just as I do."

So Junior held his nose tight, put his other hand above his head, took a deep breath, and then bing—he and the Sand Witch sank through the sand in a jiffy, and the next moment came out underneath it.



So Junior held his nose tight

"Oh!" cried the boy.

All about was a beautiful, white, glistening, sandy city; houses, fences, streets, all of sand. The place where they were standing seemed to be a sort of park with cute, little, carved, sandy benches amid the sand grass, and several tall fountains spouting sand in a fine spray.

"Well, how do you like it?" asked the Witch.

"Fine!" said Junior; "but where are the clams and the—"

"My goodness," said the Witch, "but you *are* in a hurry. I've got to find my children, first. You don't expect me to neglect my children that way, do you?"

"Oh, no," replied the boy, "of course not. But—but I didn't come here to see your children, you know. I can see children anywhere."

"Not children like mine," said the Sand Witch, proudly. "If there is a more beautiful child than little Lettuce Sand Witch I'd like to see it. And as for dear little Ham Sand Witch, he is the *cutest* thing."

"Ham Sand Witch! Lettuce Sand Witch!" exclaimed Junior. "Are those the names of your children? Why—why, it sounds like things to eat!"

"Well," said Mrs. Sand Witch, "why not? Both of them are certainly sweet enough to eat."

With that she opened her mouth and gave a piercing yell. "Children!" she shrieked. "Come to mother, quick! I've got a little boy for you to play with!"

And presently, racing across the park toward them came the two little Sand Witches, one a girl and the other a boy. But though their mother thought them sweet enough to eat, Junior did not. Both had long, pointed noses and chins; big, black eyes and dreadfully wide mouths, just like Mrs. Sand Witch. When they saw Junior they just stood and stared, and gnashed their teeth.

"Hello!" said Ham Sand Witch, after a moment. "Who are you?"

"Yes," said his sister, Lettuce Sand Witch, walking about and examining Junior from all sides, "who are you, and where did you come from?"

"I'm Junior Jenks," replied Junior, "and I came from the beach up above to see the clams skip rope."

"Pooh!" said Ham Sand Witch. "That's no fun! We're not going to play with them any more. They want you to turn the rope all the time. If you don't, they nip you."

"Well," said Junior, "if I can't see the clams skip rope, let me see the starfish shoot."

"All right," said Lettuce Sand Witch, "we don't mind. But you'll have to pay his fare if you want to see him shoot."

"Pay his fare?" responded Junior. "I don't know what you mean."

"Ahem!" put in Mrs. Sand Witch. "Perhaps you thought he shot with a gun. Well, he doesn't. He chutes with a chute! And you know as well as I do, you've got to pay your fare when you chute with a chute."

"Oh," cried Junior, in dismay, "I see. But—but I haven't any money."

"Then," said Mrs. Sand Witch, "if you want to see him chute, we'll have to charge it to your father. How about it?"

"Well," said the boy, "I guess he won't mind, as long as I never saw a fish chute before."

So Mrs. Sand Witch took the children to the chute the chutes on the other side of the park, and told the proprietor, a very shaky old jellyfish, that Junior would pay the starfish's fare, and to kindly coax him out of the ocean to take a ride.

So the jellyfish went to the ocean, which was just back of the chute the chutes, and yelled for the starfish to hurry up if he wanted a free ride. And the starfish, highly flattered at the invitation, lost no time in making his appearance.

"I'm awfully obliged to you," he said to Junior, as he whirled about in the sand to dry himself. "And to show I am I'll let you sit with me."

So Junior and the starfish, and Ham Sand Witch, and Lettuce Sand Witch, climbed into the car and went shooting around the chute the chutes.

"Isn't it great?" shrieked the starfish, as they scooted down the inclines. "It makes your insides turn somersaults! It beats swimming all hollow, *I* think. If ever I get rich I'm going to build one of these things in the ocean."

And when at last the ride came to an end he insisted on Junior shaking hands with every one of his five points. "Any time you fall overboard when you're out sailing," he said, "stop in and see me. My place is the third clump of coral just beyond the bathing grounds. Good-by!"

"Now," said Mrs. Sand Witch, who had waited while the children and the starfish took their ride, "I've got to go home and get dinner. You children amuse yourselves, and after dinner maybe I'll take you to see the mermaids."

So Junior, and Ham Sand Witch, and Lettuce Sand Witch, wandered about the park hand in hand. Although the little Sand Witches were so ugly, Junior was beginning to like them right well, now that he was getting used to them; and they seemed to like him, too.

"Why don't you stay all summer?" said Ham Sand Witch. "We could have lots of fun."

"I'd like to," said Junior, "if my father and mother and sister were here."

"Well, why not ask 'em to come down?" suggested Lettuce Sand Witch.

"Oh, they wouldn't do it," said the boy. "I know they wouldn't. They like it better on the boardwalk and at the hotel. And now let's see if we can't find those clams that skip rope."

"All right," said Ham Sand Witch, "but if we do, they'll make you turn for 'em *just so*. They're awfully snappish."

And sure enough when presently they came upon the clams sitting on a bench near one of the fountains, and Junior asked if they would skip rope for him, they said they would if he turned for them *just so*.

"I don't know what you mean by 'just so,'" said Junior, "but I'll do my best."

And he certainly did do the best he could. While Ham Sand Witch held one end of the rope he turned it very, *very* carefully as the two big, white clams solemnly skipped. They were slow enough until they got warmed up.

"Now give us butter and eggs," said one of the clams, suddenly.

"Butter and eggs?" said Junior. "You mean pepper and salt, don't you?"

"I certainly do *not*," said the clam who had spoken. "I mean butter and eggs. Pepper and salt is *fast*, but butter and eggs is *lightning*; and see that you do it right."

But though Junior turned the rope with all his might and main he simply could not turn it fast enough to suit the clams. And presently with a scream of rage they rushed at him snapping their shells angrily.

"Run! Run!" shrieked Lettuce Sand Witch, "or they'll nip you!"

"Run! Run!" yelled Ham Sand Witch. "They pinch awful."

And maybe Junior did not run. And maybe the clams did not run after him. But luckily, just as they were about to grab him, one of them tripped and fell and cracked its shell, and wept so when it did, that the other clam stopped to help it. So Junior, and Ham Sand Witch, and Lettuce Sand Witch finally reached Mrs. Sand Witch's house and were soon safe indoors.

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Sand Witch, as the children stood before her, panting. "What has happened?"

And after they had told her she said they were never even to *speak* to those clams again. "I never did care for clams, anyhow," she said. "They're always disagreeing with people."

Then she told them that dinner was almost ready and that she knew they would enjoy it. "We've got the most delicious sandpaper garnished with seaweed," she added; "to say nothing of sand pies for dessert."

And when she said that both the little Sand Witches jumped up and down with glee, and cheered and cheered. "Oh, goody!" they cried. And Junior, being a very polite little boy, cheered also, although he felt quite sure that while he might like the sand pies, he never, *never* would care for sandpaper garnished with seaweed.

And then as he sat in the parlor waiting for dinner to be served, he heard a clatter of dishes in the next room, and peeping in, gave a gasp of astonishment, for there was a big, green-backed crab putting the dinner on the table, singing cheerfully to itself as it did so. And this is what it sang:

'Twas a beautiful day at the bottom of the bay  
In the mud where I always dwell,  
But being a crab I longed to grab  
At the bathers and make 'em yell.  
So I took a swim to the water's rim  
And looked about for a toe;  
And then as I looked some fellow hooked  
Me out of the water-o.  
He hooked me into a great, big boat  
With a piercing yell of joy,  
And I do declare I'd still be there

Except for his little boy.  
But that blessed lad unlike his dad,  
With fright he simply roared—  
He gave one squeal as I pinched his heel,  
And kicked me overboard.  
And now the aim of my humble life  
Is to find that boy some way,  
And to thank him quick for the kindly kick  
That saved my life that day.

And as the crab sang a funny feeling came over Junior. Only a week or so before *he* had been out with his father in a boat, and *his* father had caught a crab on his fishing line, and pulled it into the boat. And Junior, being in his bare feet, had been awfully scared for fear the crab would pinch him, and then, sure enough, before he could get his feet up on the seat, it did, right on the heel; and in trying to kick it loose, he kicked it overboard. He wondered if this could possibly be the same crab.

So when they all went in to dinner he looked at the crab carefully to see if he could recognize it, but as one crab looks like another, he couldn't be sure. But the minute the crab saw *him*, it was very different.

"Oh!" gasped the creature he had been observing, staggering backward and almost dropping the dish of sandpaper and seaweed it was carrying. Then, putting the dish carefully on the table, it bent over and looked Junior in the face.

"'Tis he!" it shrieked, with a dramatic gesture. "'Tis he! my rescuer!" And if Junior had not leaped from his seat it would have thrown its claws about his neck.

"'Tis he?" exclaimed Mrs. Sand Witch, frowning at her amphibian servant. "What do you mean by 'tis he'? What are you talking about? This is a nice way to behave before company."

But after the creature had explained matters, Mrs. Sand Witch and the little Sand Witches were even more excited than the crab was.

"My, my, how romantic!" said Mrs. Sand Witch; "and how lucky it is, Bertha, that you're a lady crab. *Now* you can marry him!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Bertha, the crab, trembling violently. "I never thought of that! I'd just love to, if only to show my gratitude. But—but maybe he wouldn't care to marry me. Would you?" she asked, turning to Junior, who had once more resumed his seat.

"Marry you?" said the boy, wishing he hadn't sat down again. "Why—why, of course not. Why—why—I—I—why, I'm only a boy. I—I, my mother wouldn't let me get married. I know she wouldn't."

"Oh, bother your mother!" retorted the crab, crossly. "She'll never know anything about it. We'll get married and settle down here, and she'll never know where you are. And now, when shall it be?"

"Never!" shouted Junior, springing up once more. "I'll never do it. Boys never marry crabs. Boys never marry anybody!"

"Never marry anybody?" put in Mrs. Sand Witch. "Dear me, then how do they ever get married?"

"They don't *get* married," said Junior. "They—they just play."

"Well," responded the crab, "you can play. I won't mind. You needn't stop playing just because you're married to me. No, sir-ee!"

But Junior shook his head. "I'm very sorry," he said, "but I can't do it." And though the crab kept on coaxing and coaxing, he wouldn't give in.

"Now look here," said Mrs. Sand Witch, "if we keep this up the dinner will be cold. So run along, Bertha, and maybe after Junior has had a good dinner he will change his mind."

"No, I won't," said Junior. "And what is more I want to go back to the beach right off. I told you I was going sailing with my father in a half hour."

"But," replied Mrs. Sand Witch, as she smacked her lips over the last of her sandpaper, "that was before you were engaged to be married."

"I'm not engaged to be married," stormed the boy; "and if I had known you were this kind of a person I'd never have come down here."

"Now, now," said Mrs. Sand Witch, "I'm every bit as old as your mother, and I know what is best for you. You wouldn't like me to spank you, would you?"

And when she said that, Junior decided he might as well give himself up for lost. Soon as a person began to say she knew what was best for you, you might as well make up your mind, you are done for. "Good gracious!" he said to himself, "whatever shall I do?"

And when dinner was over, and he went into the park again with the little Sand Witches, he was so depressed he wouldn't play or do anything; and finally, Ham Sand Witch got tired trying to cheer

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