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## Beach Boy

Tim walked to the back yard where he kept his horse Tena. It was early in the morning but the sun was very hot. He wore only a pair of swimming trunks because he was going to the beach.

Over his right shoulder hung a canvas bag. In it were his lunch and all the things he'd need for the day. Swimming during the winter months was one of the things Tim liked best about living in Florida. Riding Tena on the beach was another.

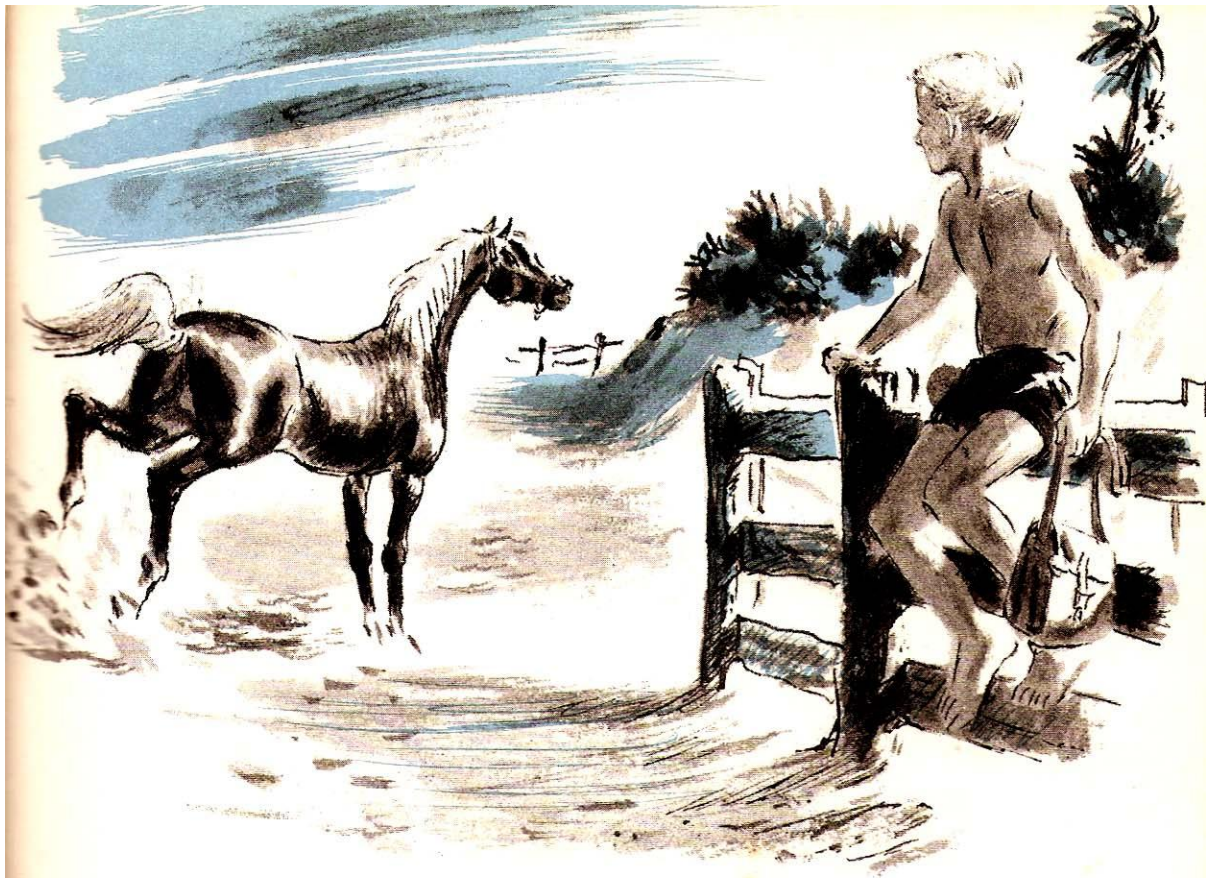
He saw the horse lying in the deep sand be-

hind the fence. Her eyes were closed and she seemed to be sleeping. But maybe she was only sun bathing. It was hard to tell. She liked the hot sun and sand. Maybe that was because she was a purebred Arabian. Her real name was Al-Marah Athena. At least that was the name on the papers that had come with her. Tim just called her Tena, which was shorter and better anyway.

As soon as Tena heard Tim coming, she opened her eyes. Then she got to her feet and shook her chestnut body clean of sand. She waited until Tim was climbing the fence before she began running away from him.

This was a game she played almost every day. Tim could not understand why she liked it so much. He knew she wanted to go to the beach as much as he did. Yet she pretended she didn't.

He knew he couldn't catch her if he tried. So he just sat on the top rail of the fence and waited for her to stop running around. Tena went from one end of the sandy paddock to the



other, her golden mane and tail flying in the wind. Tim didn't really mind the extra time it took for her to come to him. She was very beautiful to watch. Her hoofs hardly touched the ground when she ran.

Every time she came near him, she sent the sand flying in his face. Tim kept telling her, "Tena! You cut that out!" But she just kept running.

“You’re wasting an awful lot of time, Tena,” he finally called out to her. “We could be half-way up the beach by now.”

Not too long afterward she came to him, and Tim knew the game was over. He took a lead rope from his bag and fastened it to Tena’s halter. “Okay,” he said. “Let’s go.”

The sand was hot under his bare feet as he led the horse to the gate. He wondered how Tena could stand it all the time. She didn’t wear shoes, either. But then, she was used to it. She was outside day and night. She never went into her shed except at feeding times.

After opening the gate, Tim mounted Tena from the top rail of the fence. She was excited and wanted to reach the beach in a hurry.

Tim had never had a horse of his own up north, where his family had lived until just a few months ago. There had been no place to keep one, no place to ride. He guessed he would never have had a horse if his father hadn’t been taken sick.

The doctor had said his father needed a

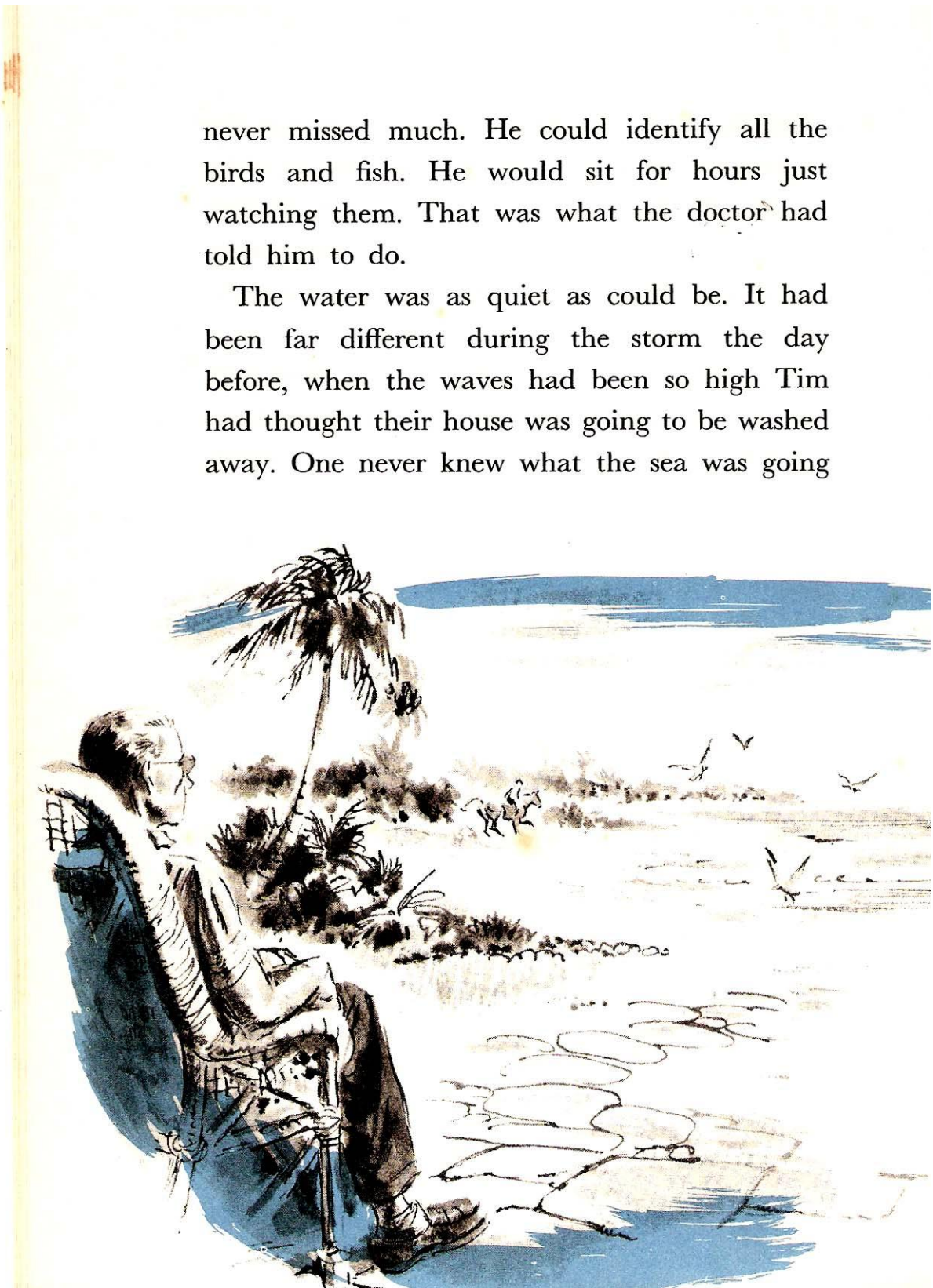
warmer, more restful climate, so the family moved to Florida. Tim knew that his mother and father had given him Tena to help make it easier leaving his old friends behind. They hadn't needed to do it. He was old enough to know that his father's health was more important than all the friends he'd left up north. But they were right about Tena's helping a lot, especially on week ends and vacations when he was alone most of the time.

Tim and his family lived on a key, which was a long thin island with the bay on one side and the sea on the other. It was a beautiful place, but very, very quiet, with the nearest house miles away. Tim understood why they lived there instead of on the mainland. But it would have been nice to have had just *one* friend to talk to. Of course he had Tena, but that wasn't quite the same as having a buddy to share all the things he did.

Now he rode Tena around the house and onto the beach. Dad was sitting in his beach chair, watching everything that went on at sea. Dad

never missed much. He could identify all the birds and fish. He would sit for hours just watching them. That was what the doctor had told him to do.

The water was as quiet as could be. It had been far different during the storm the day before, when the waves had been so high Tim had thought their house was going to be washed away. One never knew what the sea was going



to be like from one day to the next. It was like a sheet of glass now, except for the whirling schools of small fish breaking the surface. The terns and pelicans were diving into the water and having an easy time getting fish for breakfast.

Tim touched Tena's neck. She snorted and ran across the wide beach. The deep sand slowed her down until she reached the firmer footing near the water's edge.

Tim saw that the tide was going out. This meant they'd have lots of hard sand to run over. That always meant a faster ride on Tena! The water was clear, too, so the swimming and diving would be good. It was going to be a very fine day!

Tena ran faster, and Tim bent his head down against her neck. Riding her was part of the great fun of living on the beach. She was free and so was he!

Tena wore neither saddle nor bridle, and there was only a light halter on her head. Yet Tim could guide her with no trouble at all. She

would run for miles and miles if he let her. There was scarcely a day that they didn't go fifteen miles down the beach and back.

During these rides Tim never saw anybody. Nobody lived where he and Tena went. There were only fish and birds and crabs and turtles and porpoises and alligators and rattlers and coral snakes and water moccasins and barracudas and sharks. Most of them, but not all of them, were Tim's friends.