



# The Shipwrecked Sailor: An Egyptian Tale with Hieroglyphs

By Tamara Bower

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**The Shipwrecked Sailor: An Egyptian Tale with Hieroglyphs** By Tamara Bower

This story is based on one found on a papyrus scroll of hieroglyphs from the nineteenth century B.C., Egypt. It tells the tale of a voyage on the Red Sea to a mysterious and enchanted land of riches located south of Egypt.

On his way to the King's gold mines, a sailor is shipwrecked on a magic island, the Island of the Soul. Not long after he arrives, a gigantic serpent with scales of gold appears and reveals to the sailor that he is the Prince of Punt, and is also a lone survivor. The two become good friends, but one day a ship comes to rescue the sailor. Bearing gifts from the Prince, the sailor returns to Egypt with full hands, and a full heart.

This is a tale of the surprising (and fortuitous) bonds that unite us, and of the good that comes to us when we least expect it. Tamara Bower's lush illustrations are rendered in Egyptian style, and phrases from the story appear in hieroglyphs with their literal translations.

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 1-5-Children fascinated by ancient Egypt and hieroglyphs should enjoy this retelling based on a tale found on an ancient papyrus scroll from the 19th century B.C.E. The sole survivor of a shipwreck relates being washed up on the shore of a paradisiacal "Island of the Soul" inhabited only by a huge serpent. As the sailor and serpent become friends, the creature tells how he lost his family and predicts the man's rescue, after which the island "will disappear forever under the waves, but it will always be with you, for it lives in your heart." The story, with its mystical snake and mysterious island, will hold readers' interest. The book is most successful, however, as a peek into ancient Egyptian folklore, art, and language. Bower's captivating pictures illustrate the story in the style of ancient Egyptian artists, utilizing vivid earth tones, blues, greens, and reds to depict a world that seems orderly even as a ship is overturned and its sailors drown. Hieroglyphic representations of highlighted phrases with their phonetic Egyptian translations appear on most pages of text. Five pages at the end give fascinating background. Pair this tale with Eric Kimmel's *Onions and Garlic* (Holiday, 1996) in a shipwreck-survivors storytime for school-aged children.

*Louise L. Sherman, formerly at Anna C. Scott School, Leonia, NJ*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 3-5. This captivating picture book for older children, based on a four-thousand-year-old papyrus scroll now in Moscow's Hermitage Museum, tells of a sailor, the sole survivor of a shipwreck, who finds himself on an island paradise, the Island of the Soul. A huge serpent, with scales of gold and lapis, finds the man and assures him he will soon be rescued. When the prediction comes to pass, the serpent gives the man "precious things" to take back with him, asking only that the sailor speak well of him. The pictures beautifully reflect the colors and hieratic forms traditionally associated with ancient Egypt, and children interested in hieroglyphs (virtually all children) will be fascinated by the bands of hieroglyphs shown and translated on the text page. They'll have a great time comparing the text to the pictures. The book includes a map, notes about the story, an explanation of the symbols, and a bibliography. *GraceAnne DeCandido*

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About the Author

**Tamara Bower** has been creating art all her life, encouraged by her mother, an artist. Ms. Bower first became interested in ancient Egypt at age ten, checking out every book on the subject in her school library. She learned archaeological illustration at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and later drew pictures for the Egyptian Department of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. She has assisted many scholars and worked on-site at excavations in Egypt, Turkey, Spain, and California. Her first book was *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, published by Atheneum in 2000.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Ms. Bower now lives with her cat, Tennessee, in New York City.

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