

THE LITTLE MERMAID



IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEA...

FAR OUT IN THE SEA...

...the water is very, very blue. You can see through it. Below the water is a strange world of beautiful trees and plants.

Fish swim in and out of them. This is the home of the Sea King. His palace is here, under the water.

After the Sea King's wife died, his old mother looked after him. She loved the Sea

King's six children, and they loved their grandmother, too. These children were beautiful mermaid princesses.

The youngest princess was the most beautiful: her eyes were as blue as the sea and her face was as white as snow.

But mermaids do not have feet. The top half of her body was the body of a girl, and the bottom half was the body of a fish.

Sometimes the old grandmother told stories to the mermaid princesses. 'There are many people in the

...where the water is very deep, the Sea King ruled the undersea world.

In the deepest spot of the sea was his castle. The walls were made of blue coral. On the roof were shells that opened and closed when the water passed by. And that is where the Sea King lived with his mother and four daughters, each one born a year apart.

The youngest of the four princesses was the Little Mermaid. She spent much of her time swimming to ships that had fallen to the bottom of the sea. The ships held

treasures from the world above! She would fill her arms and set up her collection here and there. All the while she would sing.

As she did, fish circled around to hear her. For the Little Mermaid's voice was the most beautiful one under the sea. The girls knew that when they turned 15, they could swim up to the surface for the first time.



world,' she said. 'Some people live in the sea and some live on the land. The land people are different. They have feet.'

'Tell me everything,' the youngest mermaid said. 'These people are men,' her grandmother said.

'They have ships and they have great cities. There are mountains and gardens with

beautiful flowers. Fish fly through the sky and sing beautiful songs!' (These 'fish' were birds, but she called them fish. The little princesses did not know about birds.)

On your fifteenth birthday, you can swim to the top of the sea,' their grandmother said. 'You can sit there at night and see the ships. And you can learn about men.'

The youngest sister wanted to swim to the top of the sea more than the other sisters.

The next year, the oldest sister was fifteen and she swam to

It would be a long time that the Little Mermaid had to wait, as she was the youngest! So she made her grandmother tell her all about life up on land. Tales about ships and towns, and every bit of stories about humans that she knew.

Soon the eldest sister turned 15. She was the first to be allowed to rise up to the surface. When she came back, she had many wonders to tell her sisters about! She talked about resting on soft white sand. High above was a deep blue sky with puffy white clouds. Later the sun set, she said, and the whole sky

turned gold and red. She had watched the birds fly high above her, dipping and making turns in the red and gold sky.

When the next sister turned 15, it was winter. She told of icebergs floating in the sea and shining bright.

All the ships stayed far away from the icebergs, she said, as if in fear. But the icebergs did

the top of the sea. She came back and said to her sisters, 'I saw many things. I saw a lovely big city. It was near the sea and there were a lot of lights. People sang and talked. I wanted to go there but I stayed in the sea.'

'Tell me about the city again,' the youngest princess said. The next night she stood near her open window and looked up

through the sea. 'I can hear singing,' she thought.

The five sisters were very happy. They sometimes went to look at ships, cities and men. But they came home and forgot these things. 'Our home is more beautiful than anything above the water,' they said.

'Oh, I want to be fifteen!' she thought. 'I want to see the land and the people. I want to swim to the top of the sea!'

not seem lonely. They were like friends, floating close to each other.

When it was the third sister's turn, she told about moving as close as she could to the gate of a town. She heard people call out, horses that went clip, clopping down the street. And even music that she had never heard before.

All this the Little Mermaid heard with wonder. It wasn't fair that she had to wait the longest!

One day her grandmother said, 'Today is your fifteenth birthday. Now you can go to the top of the sea.'

At last the day came when she turned 15, too. Now she could rise up over the surface and see for herself.



The little mermaid swam up above the water that night. She saw a big ship on the sea, and there were hundreds of lights on the ship. She looked through the windows and saw a lot of men in rich clothes.

When she came up over the water, the Little Mermaid was next to a large ship. On the ship beautiful music was playing. Sailors were dancing on the deck. They were having a fine time.

	A
The	handsome
most	young
beautiful man	man
was a young	stepped
prince with	out
big blue	on the
eyes.	deck.

'I want to stay here,' the little mermaid thought. 'I want to look at this beautiful prince.' But there was a strong wind, and the sea was suddenly dangerous. Water went

When he did, a hundred rockets rose in the air. It must be a party! The party was for him. Was it his birthday? She swam closer. The men all seemed to like that young man.

into the big ship. The little mermaid liked the bad weather, but the people on the ship were afraid. Suddenly the ship broke into two halves and it started to go down.

'Now the prince can come to my city in the sea,' the little mermaid thought. 'I want him to visit my palace. But can men live in water? He'll die! I don't want him to die!'

She swam quickly to the prince and put her hands under his head. His head was above the water, but he did not open his eyes. Morning came, and the little mermaid touched the

prince's face. 'Don't die!' she cried. She looked at the land. It was winter and there was a lot of snow on the mountains. There was a wood near the sea, and a big church in the wood.

The little mermaid swam to the land with the prince. She left him near the church, then she went back to the sea. A young girl came out of the church. She saw the prince and

down the sail. The ship dipped and swooped. It rolled side to side, and up and down on the high waves.

Then lightning. Thunder.

When he spoke, the sailors would laugh. Sometimes they patted him on his back in joy. Once that made his crown fall off. The men laughed and picked it up.

"A crown," said the Little Mermaid. "He must be a prince." Suddenly, it became very dark and the wind picked up. The sailors started to run about on deck. They pulled

A strong rainstorm hit. The poor ship started to tip on the rough waves! It was so dark that the Little Mermaid could see nothing. Then lightning lit up the sky, and she could see the young prince on deck.

He seemed to be the only one still there! He was working hard to keep the ship afloat. He was throwing ropes out to his men who had jumped. But



was afraid. 'Is he dead?' she thought.

She called other people from the church and they helped the prince. From the sea, the little mermaid saw the prince open his eyes. He was not dead!

'What happened?' the prince asked. 'I can't remember anything.' They took him into the church. The little mermaid

then, all at once, the waves got very high and the ship started to tip over. The Prince was flung to the side of the ship and thrown overboard! Down into the sea he fell.

He dropped very fast. What was the Little Mermaid to do? She knew that human beings cannot live under the water. She dove deep and fast.

She reached out and was able to grab his shirt. Then she swam up to the surface as fast as she could.

At last she could pull his head above the water. There the two

was very sad. 'He doesn't remember me,' she thought. She swam back to her father's palace under the sea.

'What did you see?' her sisters asked her, but the little mermaid did not answer. She often went back to the church and looked for the young prince.

Now it was spring. There was no snow on the mountains and there were flowers in the woods. But she never saw the prince. Then she told her story to one of her sisters. 'I'm sad because I love the prince,' she said

of them floated as the waves rose and fell. By morning, the storm had passed. Yet the prince was as still as he had been all night. From far off the Little Mermaid saw tops of hills.

"Land!" she said.

She swam to the shore, pulling him behind her. It was not easy to pull the young man up onto

The sister told the story to the other princesses and they told their friends. One friend knew about the prince. 'He lives in a palace near the sea,' she said. 'Come, little sister!' said the princesses. And the six mermaids swam to the top of the water in front of the prince's palace. It was a great white palace with beautiful rooms. 'This is the home of

dry sand, but she did it. Was he dead? She sang a sad song. All of a sudden, the prince started to move.

"Oh! Are you all right?" she asked, and touched his forehead. Just then, he started to stir. At once, she heard a group of girls come over. She dove into the sea and hid behind a rock. They must not see her - a mermaid!

The girls found the prince, who was now awake. They called for help and soon he was led off. The prince would never know that she had saved him. The Little Mermaid sank

my prince,' the little mermaid thought.

She went there every night. She looked in at the young prince through the windows, and she listened to his servants.

'The prince is a good man,' they said. She liked the people on the land. 'I want to live here,' she thought. 'I want to go on a ship. I want to walk in the gardens and woods.' 'I want to know everything about the land people,' she said to her sisters. We don't know anything about them,' her sisters said. 'Ask grandmother.'

into a deep gloom. When she went back home, her sisters wanted to know all about her trip. But she was too sad to say anything. Days went by. Then weeks. The sisters went to their grandmother for help. The old



'Do men live for a long time?' she asked her grandmother.

'No, they die. Their lives are shorter than ours. We live for 300 years, then we change into sea water. We never live again. Land people have souls. Their bodies die, but their souls go to a beautiful place in the sky. Then they're very happy.'

'I don't want to live for 300 years,' the little mermaid said. 'I want to be a land person. I want a soul. I want my soul to go to that beautiful place in the sky. Tell me, how can I get a soul?'

'Sometimes a man loves somebody more than he loves his father and mother,' her grandmother answered. 'He marries her and she can stay with him. Then she gets a soul. But you can't live on the land! The people on the land are afraid of mermaids. And you can't walk without feet!'

woman went to her granddaughter.

"Child, what is the matter?" she said.
The Little Mermaid cried out, "Grandmother, I will never be happy again!" She told about meeting the prince and saving him. Then having to leave him behind. "Unless I can somehow walk on land and be with that young

man, I will be sad for the rest of my days!"
"My dear," said the grandmother, "you know as well as I do that it is not possible for a mermaid to walk on two legs! Why, the only one who can do anything like that is the Sea Witch. But of

The little princess looked sadly down at her body. 'I'm beautiful,' she thought, 'as beautiful as the people on the land. But I haven't got any feet. A friend told me about an old woman. She knows about magic, so perhaps she can help me.'

The Sea Witch!

course it is much too dangerous to go to her." Before she knew it, the Little Mermaid was headed to the far corner of the sea, where the Sea Witch lived.

"This is no problem," said the Sea Witch when

There were a lot of ugly plants with long arms near the old woman's house. There were dead people in their arms, and the little mermaid was afraid. But she remembered the prince and swam past them.

the Little Mermaid told her what she needed. "I fix problems much harder than this. Why, to have legs all you need to do is to drink my potion." Then she turned to face the girl. "But I don't just give it away, you understand."

She found the old woman. 'What do you want?' the old woman said. 'You want to have two feet and live on the land? You want the prince to love you and give you a soul? I can help you, but you'll be very unhappy. Here's a magic drink. Take it to the land, then drink it. You'll have



feet, but they'll hurt. Do you understand? Do you really want to be a land person? You can never be a mermaid again.'

'I do want to be a land person,' the mermaid answered. She wanted her prince and she wanted a soul. 'Then marry your prince, or you'll die,' the old woman said. 'You can't go back to

your sisters. You'll change into seawater. And there is one more thing. On the land, you won't speak or sing.'

'But how will the prince love me then?' the princess asked.

"Oh!" said the Little Mermaid. "What then is your price?" In her heart, she felt a lift. So there was a way she could have two legs and be with the prince after all!

"Oh, not too much," said the Sea Witch. "For one, you must give up your voice."

"My voice?" said the Little Mermaid. She knew her voice is what everyone loved about her the best.

"You don't need it," said the Sea Witch. "Chitter, chatter, what a waste of time! But know this, little pretty. If the prince marries someone else, the next day you must die. And your voice will stay

with me forever
But then again, who knows? He might choose
YOU...."

The Little Mermaid's heart leaped. The Sea Witch held out a glass with the green potion.

"So!" she said. "What are you going to do? Make up your mind! I don't have all day." The Little Mermaid took the potion and drank it. At once she felt dizzy and in pain, as if a sword was being passed through her body.

'The prince will love your beautiful face. And you can speak to him with your eyes,' the old woman answered.

'He'll love you. Do you want the magic drink?'

'Yes,' said the little mermaid.

She swam to the prince's palace and drank the magic drink. Her legs, her arms, her head... everything started to hurt. She fell down and slept. When she opened her eyes again, the beautiful prince was there.

'Who are you? Where do you come from?' the prince asked her. She looked at him with her blue eyes, but she could not speak. The prince took her into the palace. She walked beautifully and everybody looked at her. But her feet hurt and she wanted to cry. At the prince's palace, he gave her lovely clothes. She was beautiful. But she could not speak or sing. This made her sad.

She spun and jerked about, then fell. When she awoke, she was on the same dry land as when she had rescued the prince. Lifting up her head, she could see that her dream had come true. Where her tail had been, she had two human legs!

"Say, Miss, are you in trouble?" It was none other than the prince! She tried to say something but no words came out of her mouth.

"Can you not speak?" said he. She shook her head "no."

"Oh! Well then, let me take you to the castle. You can clean up there and get some dry clothes to wear." You can be sure the Little Mermaid was very happy to join the prince at the castle!

At first, walking on her two legs was shaky. But soon she got the hang of it. That night, the prince showed her around the castle rooms. He would point to a portrait and tell her all about the person. When he said something funny, they



'I want the prince to hear my beautiful songs,' she thought.

The little mermaid walked through the woods with her prince. She went to the mountains and to beautiful gardens with him. Her feet hurt, but she could not speak. And she could not cry. At night, she went down to the sea near the prince's palace and put her feet in the cold water.

laughed together. When the story was sad, her kind eyes told him that she knew why and she felt sad, too. The next day was a royal party. The prince had not been not looking forward to going to it.

Hours of standing with finely-dressed people who talk and talk and have nothing to say! He asked the Little Mermaid if she might come with him. She nodded a big "yes"! That day, with the Little Mermaid by his side, the prince felt glad. Sometimes he would make a comment in a low voice to her.

And by her eyes and face, he

'Where are my sisters?' she thought. One night, she sat with her feet in the water, and her sisters came. 'Everybody in our father's palace is sad because you left us,' they told her. Every night after that the five sisters came. One night they brought their old grandmother. One night they brought their father, the great Sea King. But these two old people could not swim near the land so they could not speak to the little princess. The young prince loved the little mermaid. 'You are very beautiful,' he said. The little mermaid was afraid. 'He loves me but will he marry me? I have to marry him. I don't want to die!' she thought.

'Do you love me?' her eyes asked the prince. He kissed her. 'Yes, I love you,' said the prince. 'You're a good, kind child, and you love me. I can't marry you. I was on a ship one day and the ship went down. The sea threw me onto the land

knew that she understood. After that, the prince wanted the Little Mermaid by his side every day. He thought he could even fall in love with her. But he still held out hope to marry the one with the lovely voice he remembered. Of course, it could not be his wonderful new friend who was not able to talk, let alone sing. The King called for his son one day.

"Son," he said, "your mother and I have made a decision. It is time that you took a bride. Lucky for you that we already picked one out for you."

"What!?" said the prince. He

only wanted to marry the woman with the beautiful voice that he remembered. "Who is she?"

"A princess from a nearby land. Tonight she is coming with her parents. We will make the wedding plans."

The prince was crushed. And the Little Mermaid felt fear. She knew what would happen to her the day after the prince married someone else!

That night her troubles got even worse. What the Little Mermaid did not know was that the Sea Witch had put her voice into this princess. She was a stuck-up princess who thought only of herself. Yet when she spoke, it was the Little Mermaid's voice that came out! The prince was stunned. He asked the princess to sing. It was the Little Mermaid's voice that filled the room.

The prince could not believe his luck! At last, he could marry the woman he had longed for all this time! When he shared his joy with the Little Mermaid, she tried to show that she was happy for

near a church. A girl came out of the church and helped me. I only saw her for one day, but I want to marry her.'

'He doesn't remember me,' the little mermaid thought sadly. 'I'm going to visit a beautiful princess,' the prince said to the little mermaid one day.

'My father and mother want me to see her. But I won't marry



her - I don't love her. You're my best friend. Come with me on the ship.' He kissed her on her mouth and took her in his arms. The little mermaid was very happy. At night, on the ship, everybody was asleep. The little mermaid sat and looked down into the sea. She saw her sisters. They looked sad. 'I'm very happy,' she thought, 'but I can't tell my sisters that. I can't speak.' The next morning the ship

came to a great city, and they went to see the princess. 'She's the girl from the church!' the prince cried. 'I want to marry her.' And he kissed the princess's hand. The little mermaid looked at him sadly. 'He'll marry the princess,' she thought, 'and then I'll die.'

So the prince married his princess. The little mermaid stood near them and watched. But she saw and heard nothing. 'Now he can never marry me,' she thought. 'Now I'm really going to die.' That night, the

him. But gloom filled her heart. The next morning at dawn, the Little Mermaid went to the sea. Her sisters, worried since they had not heard from her, rose above the water to see how she was. Their youngest sister let them know the trouble she was in. The prince's wedding was going to take place the very next day! And the day after that she must die. The sisters said not to worry, that they had an idea! They told her to come back to the shore later that night. Then they dove back into the sea.

That night, the Little Mermaid came back to the shore as she was told to do. The three sisters rose up again. Gone was their beautiful long hair. For they had cut it all off to give to the Sea Witch in exchange for a knife. With the knife, the Little Mermaid must kill the princess that very night. Then the wedding could not take place and she could return to the sea and be with her family. She took the knife for she knew how much they had done for her in love. But in her heart she knew she was not going to kill the princess.

The wedding day had arrived. The Little Mermaid stepped up to the wedding ship with the other guests. The wedding would take place at sunset. In the meantime, the three sisters had returned home. They were met with an angry father. "Where is your sister?" the Sea King shouted. "Where have you all been?" They told the father the trouble their youngest sister was in. The father swam up to the wedding ship. He saw the prince and princess getting ready to marry. He knew that his daughter did not use the

knife the night before. At once, the Sea King rushed to see the Sea Witch. She laughed. She said there was only one way to save his youngest daughter from her fate. If he would just hand over his scepter to her, the Little Mermaid could be saved. With the scepter in her hand, the Sea Witch would rule the underworld kingdom! The Sea King took a deep breath. What else could he do? So, he

prince and the princess went onto the ship. There were lights everywhere, and everybody was very happy. But the poor little mermaid was sad. 'I left my home. I can't speak and sing. My legs hurt, and the prince will never be my husband,' she thought. 'I have to die now, so this is my last night.' When everybody was asleep, her sisters came out of the sea. 'We went to the old woman,' they told her. 'Kill the prince before tomorrow morning, then you won't die. You'll lose your feet and you'll be a mermaid again. But be quick! We're waiting for you.' They swam away. The little mermaid went into the prince's room. He was asleep.

'No!' she thought. 'I love him! I can't kill him.' She kissed him and left.

'I'll die,' she thought. Then she jumped into the sea. She saw the ship and the sky above her.



Then she heard a sound. There were people in the sky! She looked at her body. She was not a mermaid - her body was the same as the people in the sky! She flew up and up into the sky. Who are you?' she asked people. 'We're the children of the sky,' was the answer.

'We aren't land people or sea people. We help other people. We bring rain and flowers to

agreed. The Sea Witch grabbed the scepter and laughed in glee. She rushed to the wedding ship to see her victory. The Little Mermaid saw the Sea Witch rise out of the sea. She saw that with the scepter, the Sea Witch had become a huge sea monster. Tentacles were twisting out from all over her body like an octopus.

The Little Mermaid knew she must protect the prince and even his new bride. So she took out the knife. Just then, one of the Sea Witches tentacles reached out and lifted the Little Mermaid right off the ship! "This is the end for you!" crowed the Sea Witch. Before the Little Mermaid knew it, she was wrapped up by the tentacle. She was spun to the very chest of the Sea Witch. And the knife she was holding - the Sea Witch's very own knife

dry lands. We make sad people happy. We do good things for 300 years, and then we go to a great and beautiful country in the sky. You, little mermaid, are also a good person. You helped the prince. Now you can make other people happy. Now you are a sky person.'

The little mermaid looked down at the ship. She saw the prince with his pretty young wife. They looked sadly down at the sea. Where was she? Was she in the sea? She went down near to the prince but he could not see her.

'I'll do good things for 300 years,' she thought. 'Then I can stay in that beautiful place up in the sky and I will always be happy.'

'Sometimes it isn't 300 years,' said a sky sister. 'We go into children's houses. Nobody can see us, but we're there. Sometimes we find a bad child, and then we stay here for another year...

- she used it and dove it deep into the chest of the monster. The Sea Witch reeled back in pain and the Little Mermaid was freed. On the ship, the guests ran around in fear. The prince shot arrow after arrow at the monster. Finally, the Sea Witch dropped down under the water.

As she fell, the Little Mermaid's voice was let go, and it returned to her. The princess then shouted in a gruff harsh voice, "What a lousy kingdom this is! You can't even have a proper wedding!" The prince heard the princess and knew that she was not who he thought she was. Then the Little Mermaid started to sing. The prince knew that the voice he remembered belonged to the very one he had grown to love.

"Now I know it was you all along!" said the prince. "Will you marry me?" The Little Mermaid had her voice back now.

But with all the happiness in her heart, she could not manage to speak. So she nodded

...And a wedding on board ship took place after all.

...But one day we'll live in that beautiful place in the sky.'



