This is the fairy tale The Little Mermaid Story. It is part of our Classic Bedtime Stories for Kids Collection. It has been adapted from Hans Christian Anderson's version and Disney's version. It is brought to you by Stories to Grow by.

Far out in the sea 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. 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.

**For the Little Mermaid’s voice was the most beautiful one under the sea.**

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 told 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 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.

**When she came back she had many wonders to tell her sisters about!**

All this the Little Mermaid heard with wonder.  It wasn’t fair that she had to wait the longest!  At last the day came when she turned 15, too. Now she could rise up over the surface and see for herself.

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 laughing and having a fine time. It must be a party! Now and then as the waves lifted up the Little Mermaid, she could see better.  A handsome young man stepped out on the deck. When he did, a hundred rockets rose in the air. The party was for him. Was it his birthday? She swam closer. The men all seemed to like that young man.  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.”

**At last the day came when she turned 15, too.**

Suddenly, it became very dark and the wind picked up.  The sailors started to run about on deck.  They pulled down the sail. The ship dipped and swooped.  It rolled side to side, and up and down on the high waves.

Then lightning.  Thunder.  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 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 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 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.

**All of a sudden, he started to stir.**

Just then, she heard a group of girls come over.  At once, 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 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 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 course it is much too dangerous to go to her.”

The Sea Witch!  Before she knew it, the Little Mermaid was headed to the far corner of the sea, where the Sea Witch lived.

**“The only one who can do that is the Sea Witch.”**

“This is no problem,” said the Sea Witch when 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.”

“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. 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!

**The Little Mermaid took the potion and drank it.**

“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 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 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 from when he had been rescued.  Of course, it could not be his wonderful new friend who was not able to talk, let alone sing.

**By her face and eyes, he knew that she understood.**

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 him.  But gloom filled her heart.

**The Little Mermaid felt fear.  She knew what would happen to her when the prince married someone else!**

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 agreed.

**The wedding was to take place at sunset.**

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 – 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.

The angry princess stormed off the wedding ship.  And her family followed close behind.

When the Sea King arrived, the scepter was floating in the sea, as if it were waiting for him.  With a sweep of his arm, it was his again.

“Well!” said the Sea King.  “I see my daughter is in good hands.” and, with a wave of his scepter, he lifted the Little Mermaid back onto the ship.

The prince put his arms around her. “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 “yes” with a warm smile.  And a wedding on board ship took place after all.

