The Little Mermaid

The Little Mermaid was written by Danish author, Hans Christian Andersen, back in 1837 and has since then seen a number of adaptations with the most popular being Disney’s classic take on the story.

**The Movie** One night, 16-year-old Ariel swims to the ocean surface and sees a grand ship sailing in the waters. She gets closer as celebratory music only gets louder and sees Prince Eric – a human man that she falls in love with at first sight. Things take a turn for the worse rather quickly, and the ship is destroyed in a storm. Prince Eric almost drowns but Ariel saves him and sings to him until he regains consciousness. The prince then vows to find the singing maiden and marry her.

Triton eventually finds out about this and, in a rage, destroys all of Ariel’s human possessions. This allows Ariel to easily be manipulated by Ursula the sea witch. She tells Ariel that she can turn her human in exchange for Ariel giving up her voice. However, if Ariel can’t receive a kiss of love from the prince within three days, then Ariel’s soul would be trapped for all of eternity in Ursula’s collection. Ariel agrees and is given a pair of legs.

When it looks like Ariel is getting close to achieving her goal, Ursula disguises herself as the singing maiden that Eric is looking for (using Ariel’s voice) in an attempt to foil Ariel’s plans. Ariel exposes Ursula but it’s too late. The third day is over and Ariel belongs to her now. Triton makes a deal to take his daughter’s place to save her, and with a crown and trident in hand, Ursula becomes the ruler of the seas – that is, until Eric stabs and kills her with a ship. After the shrivelled King Triton is returned to his Mermaid form, he turns Ariel human and she marries Prince Eric, living happily ever after.

### The Story

In Andersen’s story, The Little Mermaid is never given a name. She is 10 years old and has five older sisters instead of six. Like the Disney adaptation, her father is the Sea King and while she also has no mother in this story, she does, however, have a grandmother.

The Mermaid and her sisters are all born one year apart. In Anderson’s story, it is explained that on her 15th birthday, a mermaid is allowed to swim to the surface and look at the world above. Each year, The Little Mermaid listened eagerly to the stories of her sisters anticipating her own 15th birthday. All of the Mermaid’s sisters were fascinated with trinkets and items they found from the wreckage of human vessels. The Little Mermaid however, only cared for her red flowers, and for a marble statue of a handsome boy that had fallen to the ocean floor. The Little Mermaid would constantly dream about life on the surface and how it would be. Unlike in the movie, traveling the surface is never forbidden by the Sea King. Once a mermaid has reached the age of 15, there are able to go and come as they choose. The Little Mermaid has an established relationship with her grandmother who tells her about the human world and the way the world works.

Eventually, her 15th birthday came and TLM travelled to the surface. Once there, she spotted a grand ship and could hear songs and celebration coming from on board. She approached the ship and listened to all of the music and cheers and spotted a handsome lad on the ship whose appearance captured her heart almost right away. He was a prince and the Mermaid couldn’t keep her eyes off him. However, a great storm sank the ship.

The mermaid swam with all her might and rescued the Prince from drowning. She took him ashore and the Prince was found and taken back to his castle, but it saddened the Mermaid that he would never know what she did for him. The Mermaid returned to her home and told her sisters about what happened. The sisters knew about the prince and his kingdom and took their little sister to show her the prince’s home. After that, The Little Mermaid would always dream about life in the Human world.

Her grandmother goes on to tell her that Mermaids live for sometimes 300 years, and that upon their death, they become sea foam. Humans, however, have a much shorter life span, except when a human dies, their soul lives on eternally and ascends to heaven. The mermaid asks her grandmother if Mermaids could ever have souls, and she responds, telling her granddaughter that only if she were to marry a human who loved her more so than his own parents and family, that a part of his soul would enter her and she would have a soul of her own. It’s important to note that the Mermaid not only wants to be with the prince, but would gladly give up her extended life to have a soul.

One night, when the underwater kingdom is having a ball, The Little Mermaid decides to go to the Sea Witch, hoping for a way to become human. The sea witch tells her that she is foolish, and that it would only end in heartbreak for her, but the mermaid persists. The sea witch tells her that in exchange for her ability to speak, she could be human. However, every step she takes will feel like a knife through her legs, and if the prince does not marry her, then the morning after his wedding, the Mermaid would die and become sea foam. The mermaid agrees and the Sea Witch takes a knife and cuts the Mermaid’s tongue out.

The Prince finds the Mermaid and takes her back to his castle where she is dressed richly. The Mermaid starts to dance as well despite it causing her great pain and she gains the prince’s attention. She even climbed with him to the top of mountains, always being happy despite her tender feet starting to bleed.

One night, the Mermaid spotted her sisters in the water and beckoned for them to approach her. Once they recognized their human sister, they told her how much sorrow their family was in that she was gone. After that, her sisters would come every night to visit her and one evening, the little mermaid even saw her grandmother – who hasn’t come to the surface in a long time – and her father looking at her from the ocean surface. They outstretched their hands towards her longingly, wishing for her to return to them, but they didn’t dear go near land.

The prince loved the mermaid, but he loved her as he would a little child. He told her that she was dear to him, but that he was in love with the girl who rescued him. He had only seen her twice.The Mermaid is happy, thinking that she is close to winning over the prince’s heart, but then the unexpected happens.

The prince and Mermaid sail away to another kingdom after his parents forced him to meet its princess. On their way there, he tells the mermaid that his parents cannot force him to marry the princess, and that he would rather marry the mermaid who has been so loyal to him. The mermaid grows happier but when they arrive at the town, her world – and heart – is shattered. The princess is the same girl from the temple that found him on the beach, and the prince had finally found the girl that had rescued him.

The prince married the princess. That night, on the prince’s ship, the little mermaid waited for the sun to rise and for her imminent death. It was then that she saw her sisters surface from the ocean depths with all of their beautiful hair cut short. They gave her a dagger, saying they all sacrificed their hair to the sea witch in exchange for a way to save their sister’s life. The Little Mermaid would have to plunge it into the heart of prince and let his blood drip over her feet, then, she would turn back into a mermaid and would be able to live out the rest of her life.

The mermaid – holding the knife in her hand – walked into the prince’s chambers where he and his bride slept, and couldn’t muster the strength to kill him. After everything, she still loved him so much. She threw the dagger overboard, and as the sun started to rise, she threw herself into the ocean, her body turning into foam.

However, something peculiar happened, the little mermaid started to rise up into the sky. Her body was destroyed but she was now an ethereal being, and there were a lot of other ethereal beings around her. They explained to the mermaid that because of her struggle to achieve a soul, that she had become a Daughter of the Air. After 300 years of doing good deeds for mankind, a Daughter of the Air is rewarded with a soul and is given entry into the Kingdom of God.