



Tracy Wells

Adapted from the tale by Hans Christian Andersen
Illustration by Edmund Dulac

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING
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*For Natalie—
whose love of fairytales
and creative spirit
inspires me every day.*

The Little Mermaid

CLASSIC. Adapted from the fairytale by Hans Christian Andersen. Melody, a teen mermaid, lives in the undersea kingdom of Undinia with her father, grandmother, older sisters, and her albatross, seahorse, and sea turtle friends. When Melody turns 15, she is allowed to swim to the surface for the first time to view the world above. When she reaches the surface, Melody watches as Prince Dylan is knocked overboard in a storm. She saves the unconscious prince from drowning and lays him on a large rock, where Princess Camilla discovers the Prince and takes him to safety. Desperate to be reunited with Prince Dylan, Melody seeks the help of a fearsome sea witch, who has a potion that will transform Melody's mermaid tail into human legs. In return, the sea witch demands Melody's beautiful voice as payment and warns Melody that she will never be able to return to the sea. In addition, if Prince Dylan should marry someone else, Melody's human body will dissolve into sea foam. Despite the warning, Melody drinks the potion and is discovered on the beach by Prince Dylan, who is instantly smitten with her. But Melody soon learns that Prince Dylan is determined to marry Princess Camilla, who he mistakenly believes saved him from drowning. As the Prince's wedding day approaches, Melody's sisters cut off their long hair and give it to the sea witch in exchange for a magic knife, which Melody must use to stab Prince Dylan in the heart in order to save her life. Unable to kill the prince, Melody resigns herself to her fate, but Prince Dylan has another plan in mind. Audiences of all ages will be enchanted with this play's humor, whimsy, and romance and its timeless themes of selflessness and self-sacrifice.

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes.



Portrait of Hans Christian Andersen, 1836. Statue of the mermaid from "The Little Mermaid" in Copenhagen, Denmark.

About the Story

Danish writer and poet Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) wrote "The Little Mermaid" in 1836, and the story was published as part of a collection of fairy tales entitled *Fairy Tales Told for Children* in 1837. Andersen was born in Odense, Denmark and was an only child. Andersen's father introduced Andersen to *The Arabian Nights*, spurring Andersen's love for fairytales. Andersen's father died in 1816 and his mother was forced to work as a washer woman to support herself and Andersen. Andersen attended a school for poor children, where he received only a basic education. He then worked as an apprentice to a weaver and a tailor. Despite his humble beginnings, Andersen became known for his children's stories and has now become one of the greatest children's writers of all time, with his stories having been translated into more than 150 languages. "The Little Mermaid" is one of Andersen's best-loved stories and has spurred numerous film and stage adaptations. Some of his other well-known fairytales include "The Emperor's New Clothes," "Thumbelina," "The Princess and the Pea," and "The Ugly Duckling."

Characters

(7 M, 15 F, 4 flexible)

(Doubling: 6 M, 13 F, 4 flexible)

MELODY: 15 years old, a mermaid with the most beautiful singing voice in the sea; fascinated with the human world; falls in love with Prince Dylan, a human; female.

KING MERRIK: Melody's father, the ruler of the Seven Seas and the undersea Kingdom of Undinia; wears royal garb befitting an undersea kingdom; has thinning hair; male.

GRANDMOTHER: King Merrik's mother and Melody's grandmother; wears royal garb befitting an undersea kingdom; female.

MARYN: Melody's sister, a mermaid; female.

MARITZA: Melody's sister, a mermaid; female.

MOSELLE: Melody's sister, a mermaid; female.

MORGAN: Melody's sister, a mermaid; female.

MARINA: Melody's sister, a mermaid; female.

MARIELLA: Melody's sister, a mermaid, who has a crush on Melody's suitor, Mathias; female.

MATHIAS: Mer-man who King Merrik has chosen to escort Melody to the grand Mer-ball; gave Melody the nickname "Chum Bucket" as a child; male.

FILLY: A seahorse and friend to Melody; wears a seahorse costume; female.

SNAPPER: A sea turtle and friend to Melody; dressed as a turtle; flexible.

ARNIE: An albatross and friend to Melody; wears an albatross costume; flexible.

NARISSA: Fearsome sea witch who yearns to rule the Seven Seas and uses her magic to create thunder, lightning, and storms at sea; can appear as any menacing sea creature; wears dark colors; female.

- SLITHER:** Sea serpent who helps Narissa by churning up waves to create fearsome storms at sea; wears a sea snake costume; flexible.
- SKULK:** Sea serpent who helps Narissa by churning up waves to create fearsome storms at sea; wears a sea snake costume; flexible.
- PRINCE DYLAN:** Human prince whose kingdom lies at the edge of the sea; male.
- KING FREDRIK:** Prince Dylan's father, who would like him to marry Princess Camilla from the Kingdom of Asgard; male.
- QUEEN ELINOR:** Prince Dylan's mother; female.
- FRANCISCO:** Royal palace artist who is never satisfied with his art; male.
- MISS SPRAG:** Strict palace mistress who does not approve of Melody; female.
- CAPTAIN COLVERT:** A sea captain who serves as an advisor to Prince Dylan; wears a sea captain's uniform and hat; male.
- SCULLY:** Captain Colvert's first mate; wears a sailor's uniform and hat; male.
- PRINCESS CAMILLA:** Princess from the neighboring kingdom of Asgard who is to be betrothed to Prince Dylan; wears a fine gown and long cloak; female.
- EDITH:** Lady-in-waiting to Princess Camilla; wears a fine gown and long cloak; female.
- THERESA:** Lady-in-waiting to Princess Camilla; wears a fine gown and long cloak; female.

Options for Doubling

EDITH/GRANDMOTHER (female)

THERESA/MARYN (female)

MATTHIAS/SCULLY (male)

Costumes

All humans should be dressed in medieval garments. Mermaids, King Merrick, Grandmother, and Mathias wear a tank top or bathing suit with a green fish tail. Other nautical elements such as starfish, seaweed, and flowers can adorn the costumes.

Setting

Undinia, the undersea kingdom of the Mer-people, and King Fredrik's seaside palace.

Sets

Undinia, the undersea kingdom of the Mer-people. The stage can be mostly bare with a few stand-ups of coral or undersea plant life. There is a large seashell-shaped throne rear CS and a "stone" or two that are large enough to sit on. A backdrop or scrim with water projection can be used to enhance the scene, if desired.

Seashore. A backdrop of a seashore with a castle in the distance is present. The deck and partial exterior of a boat is present. The front end of the boat with a sail coming out of it is SL. A rock large enough for Melody to sit on is SR. Blue fabric or cardboard representing water is positioned along the front of the stage and can be moved by stagehands for a moving water effect.

King Fredrik's palace. The interior of the palace is decorated to look like an elegant ballroom with regal décor. There are two thrones rear CS. A small table and two chairs are brought on as needed.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Kingdom of the Mer-people.

Scene 2: Seashore.

Scene 3: Kingdom of the Mer-people.

Scene 4: Seashore.

Scene 5: King Fredrik's seaside palace.

Scene 6: Kingdom of the Mer-people

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1: King Fredrik's seaside palace.

Scene 2: Seashore.

Scene 3: King Fredrik's seaside palace.

Scene 4: Kingdom of the Mer-people.

Scene 5: Seashore.

Props

Flowers	Magic knife (can be plastic)
Pail	Book
Trowel	Plates
Hand hoe	Dessert spoon
Watering can	Dinner fork
Partially completed portrait of Dylan	Bread knife
Sheet music	Wineglasses
Sculpture of Dylan	Fine gown, for Melody
Paintbrush	Ring
Palette	Assorted wedding decorations for ship
Blank canvas	6 Bald caps, for Mermaids
Bucket	Royal wedding attire, for Dylan
Long cloak with hood, for Melody	Wedding dress, for Camilla
Potion bottle filled with water and red food coloring	Bridal veil
	Bridal bouquet
	Boutonnière, for Scully

Special Effects

Sound of wind

Clap of thunder

Lightning

Haunting song, for Melody (prerecorded)

Blue lighting should be used for scenes taking place under the sea.

Bright light effect/spotlight can be used for when Melody loses her voice/mermaid tail.

Undersea sound effects, opt.

Sound of waves, opt.

Sound of seagulls, opt.

*“Life itself
is the most wonderful
fairy tale.”*

— Hans Christian Andersen

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Undinia, the kingdom of the Mer-people, under the sea. There is a large seashell shaped throne rear CS and various stand-ups of sea coral and sea plants and stones are present. Lighting should be in blue tones with an optional backdrop or scrim with water projected on it. Maryn, Maritza, Moselle, Marina, Mariella, and Morgan enter. Maryn and Maritza are carrying flowers, Moselle is carrying a pail, Marina is carrying a trowel, Mariella is carrying a hand hoe, and Morgan is carrying a watering can. They enter and begin gardening tasks.)

MARYN: What a lovely day to tend to our sea gardens. It's so beautiful under the sea. I love being a mermaid.

MARITZA: Oh, yes. These flowers will look lovely here near the palace throne room. They'll sparkle like beautiful gems.

MOSELLE: All the cute, cuddly sea creatures will love them. And, of course, Father will, too.

MARINA: The palace will look so festive for tonight's grand Mer-ball to celebrate Melody's fifteenth birthday. I bet there's going to be lots of good food. I'm starving!

MARIELLA: I wonder if Melody is nervous about her performance tonight. I would be. There's going to be so many handsome Mer-men at the party tonight, I would be terrified to sing in front of them. Luckily, Melody has the most beautiful voice in the sea.

MARINA: Where is Melody? She's always running off when there's work to be done.

(Melody enters, dreamily. She is carrying a canvas portrait of a half-painted Prince Dylan.)

MELODY: I'm right here.

MARYN: Where have you been, Melody?

MELODY: Just swimming around, Maryn.

MARITZA: (*Indicating portrait.*) What have you got there, Melody?

MELODY: Just another treasure I found from the human world, Maritza.

MOSELLE: Let me take a look at that.

(Moselle snatches the portrait away from Melody.)

MELODY: Give that back! It's mine!

MARINA: (*Holding up her arms.*) Pass it over here, Moselle.

MOSELLE: Catch, Marina!

(Moselle throws the portrait to Marina.)

MARINA: (*To Melody, studying portrait.*) Why would you want this old painting? It's not even finished.

MARIELLA: Let me see. (*Takes the portrait from Marina. To Melody.*) Let me guess...you want it because it shows a picture of a... (*Sing-song.*) ...human.

MELODY: That's none of your business, Mariella! Now give me back my picture!

(Melody tries to get the portrait back, but Mariella holds it out of her reach.)

MORGAN: (*To Mariella.*) That's not nice. Give Melody her picture back.

MELODY: Thank you, Morgan. You heard her, Mariella! Give me my picture back!

MARIELLA: Go get it back yourself!

(Mariella throws the portrait toward SL. Grandmother catches the portrait as she enters.)

GRANDMOTHER: (*Looking at portrait.*) My, what unusual weather we are having today. It appears to be raining pictures of handsome princes.

MELODY: (*With head down.*) That's mine, Grandmother. I'm sorry.

GRANDMOTHER: I should have known it was yours, Melody. None of your sisters share your fascination with the human world.

MARITZA: It is a foolish waste of time, if you ask me. What concern do we Mer-people have with the human world above?

MOSELLE: We have enough to worry about down here like getting this gardening finished before tonight's ball.

(Moselle and Maritza return to gardening.)

MORGAN: (*To Grandmother.*) She's interested in it because she is the only one of us who hasn't been to the surface yet.

GRANDMOTHER: She will have her chance soon enough. Every mermaid gets a chance to rise above the ocean's surface on her fifteenth birthday. She may sit on the rocks and watch the great ships sail by.

MELODY: (*Twirling in a circle.*) I can't wait! I just know the world above the ocean is a magical place!

MARYN: My favorite part of the human world was lying on the sandbank in the moonlight when the sea was calm and gazing at the big city near the coast, where the lights were twinkling like a hundred stars. I loved listening to the noise and stir of traffic and people, seeing all the towers and spires of the churches, and hearing the ringing of church bells.

MARITZA: My favorite part was the sky at sunset when it was a blaze of gold and the lovely clouds, crimson and violet, sailing high overhead.

MOSELLE: When I went to the surface, I swam up a wide river and saw green hills planted with grapevines as well as

farms and castles. I heard the singing of birds and the warmth of the sun.

MARINA: When I went to the surface, I stayed on the shoreline, where I could see for miles around. I saw dolphins turning somersaults and great whales spouting jets of water.

MARIELLA: My favorite part was the human children who were playing in the curve of a little bay. They splashed in the water and looked like they were having so much fun. Oh, how I longed to join them!

MORGAN: My fifteenth birthday was in the winter, so I saw great icebergs floating on the surface as beautiful as pearls. They glittered like diamonds and were the strangest shapes.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, Melody will get her chance to see it all after tonight's ball.

MELODY: I hope I get to see a real human when I go to the surface. (*Looking at the portrait.*) Maybe even the handsome prince in this portrait.

GRANDMOTHER: There won't be any princes or any trips to the surface if we don't get you ready for tonight's ball. (*Looking around.*) Now where is Snapper? He was supposed to bring the music for your performance tonight.

(*Carrying sheet music, Snapper enters followed by Filly.*)

SNAPPER: I'm here! I'm here! Don't snap at me!

FILLY: (*To others, announcing.*) That's right. Filly and Snapper are here. Now the party can really begin.

GRANDMOTHER: (*To Snapper.*) Do you have the music?

SNAPPER: (*Holding up the sheet music.*) I've got it right here.

GRANDMOTHER: Then we'll let you get to it. (*To Sisters.*) Come along, girls. Melody has to practice if she's going to be ready for her performance tonight.

(*Grandmother and Sisters exit.*)

FILLY: Now that everyone else is gone, I just have one question: Who's ready to party?

SNAPPER: It's not party time, Filly, it's practice time.

FILLY: Snapper, when are you going to learn that when your friend Filly is around, it's always party time?

MELODY: *(Chuckling.)* What would I do without you two? You are the best friends a girl could ask for.

SNAPPER: As your best friend, I need to make sure you complete your royal duties before you have fun.

FILLY: *(Puts his arm around Melody.)* And as your very best friend, I need to make sure you have lots of fun. So why don't you and I go out exploring and leave old party-popper, here... *(Indicating Snapper.)* ...alone before he really snaps?!

(Filly starts to lead Melody offstage.)

SNAPPER: Stop horsing around, Filly! We've got work to do!

FILLY: All right, all right! You can't blame a seahorse for trying.

SNAPPER: Now, are you ready to practice, Princess Melody?

MELODY: How can I even think about practicing when tonight I will go to the surface and meet my handsome prince?

(Snapper takes the portrait from Melody.)

SNAPPER: Snap to it, Melody! We have work to do! *(Looks at the portrait.)* I don't understand what you see in this prince, anyway. *(Turns portrait to face audience, showing that only half of the Prince's face is completed.)* He only has one eye and one ear. If you ask me, humans are an ugly, lopsided species.

MELODY: *(Putting her arm around Snapper.)* Oh, Snapper, anyone can see the portrait isn't finished. *(To Snapper's surprise, reaches around and takes back the portrait.)* And

anyone can see he is the most handsome man in the whole world!

SNAPPER: I doubt your father would agree with you.

MELODY: (*Frightened.*) You're not going to tell him, are you?

(*King Merrik enters with Mathias.*)

MERRIK: Tell me what?

SNAPPER: (*Standing up straight.*) Your Majesty! I didn't see you there.

FILLY: (*To Melody, aside.*) It looks like King Merrick has brought a friend to our little party.

MELODY: Father, we were just getting ready to practice for my performance tonight.

MERRIK: (*Puts his arm around Melody.*) I can't believe my little girl is already fifteen.

MELODY: You know what that means, don't you, Father?

MERRIK: I suppose you are referring to your trip to the surface tonight. I still don't agree with that tradition. I don't know why a mermaid feels the need to go up to the human world.

MATHIAS: I couldn't agree more, Your Majesty. In my humble opinion, the Mer-Kingdom of Undinia has everything a mermaid could ever want.

MERRIK: That is one of the many reasons I like you so much, my dear boy. (*To Melody.*) You know Mathias, don't you, Melody?

MELODY: (*Unhappily.*) I do.

MATHIAS: Melody and I go way back, Your Majesty. (*Approaches Melody.*) All the way back to that unfortunate day on the playground at Mer-elementary. Remember that, Melody?

MELODY: (*Brushing off Mathias.*) Unfortunately, I do.

FILLY: All right, I really must hear this story!

MATHIAS: Melody was what you would call *awkward* back when we were kids. One day, on the playground, all the kids were playing a rowdy game of kick the clam –

SNAPPER: (*Sadly.*) My sympathies to my shelled brothers and sisters.

MATHIAS: No clams were harmed during the playing of kick the clam, I assure you.

SNAPPER: (*Doubtful.*) So you say...

MATHIAS: So we were playing kick the clam, and when it was Melody's turn to kick the clam, she swung her tail around so hard that she fell face first into a pile of chum! (*Laughs.*)

MERRIK: (*Chuckling.*) I remember that. It took us a week to get that smell out.

MELODY: And it took me another five years to get rid of my nickname "Chum Bucket."

MATHIAS: (*Laughing.*) That's right! I forgot about that!

MELODY: How could you? You were the one who gave me the nickname in the first place!

MERRIK: Now, Melody, that was a long time ago. In fact... (*Puts his arm around Melody and steers her away.*) ...Mathias has expressed his interest in escorting you to the party tonight. I, for one, think that would be a fantastic idea.

MELODY: (*To Father, aside.*) You must be joking, Father. Mathias is nothing but an arrogant, opinionated yes-man who would do anything to get in your good graces.

MERRIK: Nothing would get in my good graces more than if he were to show my little girl a good time at her birthday party tonight. (*Escorts Melody to Mathias. To Mathias.*) I'm happy to say that Melody would love for you to escort her to the party, Mathias.

MATHIAS: Wonderful! You have made me the happiest Mer-man in the world, Melody. (*Bends to kiss Melody's hand and then straightens up. To Melody, aside.*) Just make sure you look your best for me this evening. Mathias must be seen with only the most beautiful mermaids in the ocean.

MERRIK: Come along, Mathias. Melody has to practice for her performance tonight.

MATHIAS: I look forward to escorting you this evening, Chum Bucket... *(Laughs.)* ...I mean, Melody!

(Mathias and Merrik laugh as they exit.)

SNAPPER: Are you ready to practice now for your performance, Melody?

MELODY: *(Infuriated.)* No, I'm not, Snapper. In fact, there isn't going to be a performance tonight. I won't let Mathias get the best of me, and I won't let my father control me. It's my birthday. All I want to do is go to the ocean surface to see the human world and maybe catch a glimpse of my prince, so that's what I'm going to do. Come on, Filly, let's go! *(Exits.)*

FILLY: Now this is what I call a party! *(Exits.)*

SNAPPER: *(To himself.)* I'm no doctor, but I'd say that girl has snapped!

[END OF PREVIEW]