

THE LITTLE MERMAID Adapted by Rob John

A long time ago, in a beautiful world under the sea, there lived mer-people. Merpeople were strange magical creatures with bodies like you and me but long fish's tails instead of legs.

Although mer-people were happy in their under-sea kingdom, sometimes, just for fun, they would swim up to the surface and take a look at our world.

Sometimes they would see human beings sail past on their great ships and say, 'What strange lives those humans lead!'

The king of the mer-people had six mermaid daughters. All were very beautiful, but the loveliest was the youngest. Not only was she beautiful, but the Little Mermaid had the best singing voice of all the mer-people. When the Little Mermaid sang, everyone would stop what they were doing and listen. Even the fishes seemed to swim more slowly as if they too were enjoying her singing.

Mermaids were not allowed to go up to the surface to see the world of human beings until they were fifteen years old, and each sister on her fifteenth birthday swam up to see our world for herself. When they came back they told of huge ships plunging through great storms, of children playing happily on sandy beaches, of white creatures that seemed to float gracefully through the air, and of strange sad music that floated from the towers of tall buildings.

Each time one of her sisters went to the surface, the Little Mermaid would plead with her father to be allowed to go with her.

'Be patient, little one,' her father would say. 'Your turn will come.'

At last it was the Little Mermaid's fifteenth birthday and, towards the end of the day, her father looked at her and said, 'The time has come, little one. Come back and tell us what you find.'

The Little Mermaid kissed her father, said goodbye to her five sisters and began the long swim to the surface.

Up and up she swam and it was night time before she came close to the surface. She saw a bright light dancing on the water, then moments later her face burst through the waves into the moonlight.

For the first time the Little Mermaid saw stars shining in the dark night sky and felt the gentle sea winds on her cheeks. She saw a sailing ship lit by hundreds of lanterns and thought that she had never seen anything so beautiful in all her life. She swam closer to the ship...and, upon hearing strange music, she just had to find out what creatures made those wonderful sounds.

Looking through a window in the side of the ship, she saw what seemed to be a birthday party and the special guest was a young prince. He stood in the centre of the room and everybody seemed to be smiling at him.