

The Tale of the Lovely Little Mermaid

A long time ago, in a kingdom under the sea, there lived a mermaid named Gemma. Anyone could argue that Gemma was the loveliest mermaid in the sea. Her long, wavy blonde hair shone like the sun, her eyes were as blue as the sky, and her tail was as pink as the prettiest coral. She was playful, friendly, and sweet. She loved playing with the young merfolk, creating homes for the fish, and splashing around in the waves.

But even though she was a sweet, loving mermaid, Gemma was also a prankster and loved to play tricks on the humans that lived on land and sailed in boats.

One day, Gemma saw a handsome human prince sailing across the sea in a wooden raft. The prince had spiky brown hair and dark blue eyes. His name was Spencer, and he was from the Bomb Kingdom, where robots and humans resided peacefully together, but when enemies from other kingdoms attacked, they would go into battle with their bombs, hammers, dynamite, and other destructive weapons, which would literally blow anyone away.

Gemma thought it would be fun to get Prince Spencer's attention, so she picked up a pole and started prodding the raft with it. At first, it was only a gentle touch, but then she started to poke the raft until it tilted up. The prince was horrified and wondered what was going on. He tried to cling to dear life on the mast, but as he grabbed on, Gemma lifted the raft and it tipped over, causing Prince Spencer to fall into the sea.

Realizing what she had done, Gemma dove into the water to save Prince Spencer. Grabbing him by the hair, she pulled him to the surface with all the strength she had, even though he was almost as heavy as a one-thousand-ton anvil. She tossed him onto the beach, where she observed him carefully as she sat on a nearby rock. She couldn't quite tell if he was dead or just wasn't regaining consciousness just yet. A few minutes later, she saw a human girl walk over to Prince Spencer. She had long blonde hair and blue eyes, just like Gemma, and was almost just as lovely. The differences were that she had straight hair instead of wavy hair, and she walked on two legs. The girl's name was Wendy, and she was the princess of the Bomb Kingdom. Spencer and Wendy came from different families, and Spencer seemed to have a great liking for Wendy.

As Gemma saw Wendy arrive, she ducked behind the rock, because she knew merfolk were not supposed to be seen by humans. Despite this, she decided it wouldn't hurt to just take a peek from behind the rock to see if the prince was going to wake up. Sure enough, after a few seconds, Spencer's eyes opened, he saw Wendy standing next to him with a concerned look on her face.

"Wendy?" said Spencer, who was feeling a little dizzy. "Is that you?"

"What happened, Spencer?" asked Wendy. "Are you okay?"

"I think so," said Spencer. "But my head hurts a little bit. I was exploring the sea in my wooden raft when something tipped it over and I fell in the water. I think someone saved me from drowning, but I don't know if it was a fish or a girl or what. If you ask me, it was really scary."

"Spencer, you know better than to sail out to sea on a flimsy wooden raft," said Wendy. "Come on, let's take you back to your palace to get some rest."

Still peering from behind the rock, Gemma saw Wendy help Spencer to his feet and carry him away. She was shocked and confused at the sight of it.

"That girl looks almost like me," she said to herself. "No wonder the prince doesn't know who rescued him. He must think it was that human girl. I have to tell him that it was a mermaid that saved him."

But there was only one problem; Gemma lived in the sea, and Prince Spencer lived on land. Gemma couldn't just get out of the water and stand on her tail fins on land. Standing up and walking like a human would be next to impossible to do. She did not want to be seen flopping around like a fish out of water, because that would make her look ridiculous around Spencer. After making sure that no one was around, she sat on the rock to think. After a minute or two, she had an idea.

"Spencer's a human, and humans walk on two legs," she thought. "If I want to get Spencer's attention, I should become a human myself. But, how am I going to do that?"

She decided that it would be best to find someone who would help her become a human. Without further hesitation, she dove back into the sea. In the underwater kingdom, she tried to find a mermaid or merman to ask where she could find someone to turn her into a human. After a while, she ran into one of her friends, Pearl.

"Hey, Pearl!" said Gemma. "Do you know anyone who can help me turn into a human? I want to gain the attention of a human prince I just met."

"Well," said Pearl. "Why don't you ask the sea witch? She makes a lot of different potions. Maybe she'll give you one that will turn you into a human."

Gemma wasn't so sure if this was a good idea. She heard that the sea witch was evil and her potions almost never worked the way she said they were supposed to. A lot of merfolk were afraid of her and avoided visiting her cave at all costs. But if she were able to advise Gemma and help her become a human, the young mermaid decided that it would be worth a shot. Without further hesitation, she swam off to find the sea witch's cave. It was a dark and dangerous journey. Gemma crossed bubbling hot mud, dodged swirling whirlpools, and darted past slimy seaweed. At last, the craggy cave doomed up ahead. The sea witch stood at the entrance. She looked almost like any of the merfolk, except she had tentacles like an octopus instead of a fish tail.

"Hello, dearie," said the sea witch as Gemma carefully approached. "My name is Octavia. How may I assist you today?"

"I saved a human prince from drowning, but he thought it was someone else who looked just like me," said Gemma. "I decided that I need to become a human so I can prove to him that it was me who rescued him, not the other girl."

"Oh, how adorable!" said Octavia. "You want to become a human so you can walk on land! I think I can help you with that. Follow me."

Octavia led Gemma into her cave, where Gemma could see shelves with different bottles containing strange liquids and a giant cauldron.

"I shall brew you a potion that will split your tail in two and give you human legs," said Octavia. "But it will come at a price."

"What will it cost for the potion?" asked Gemma.

"Only five seashells," said Octavia. Seashells were a kind of currency among merfolk, and they used them like humans used regular money. Gemma decided that five seashells didn't seem like an awful lot for a special potion, but she had to pay the sea witch anyway or she wouldn't get it. She took out five seashells and handed them to Octavia.

"Thank you for the shells," said Octavia. "Now, let's get to work!"

Gemma watched as Octavia got started on the potion. She grabbed some of the bottles on her shelf and poured them into the cauldron, adding a pinch of kelp and algae for good luck. Then she stirred all the ingredients in the cauldron until it began to bubble and turn a purplish color.

"Perfect," said Octavia. "The potion looks ready."

She took out a glass chalice and filled it with some of the potion, adding in two apple cores for an extra special taste.

"Before you drink the potion, there's something you should know," said Octavia. "Walking on legs might get a little used to, as it is not an easy task. Your new legs might be a little wobbly if you try to stand up for the first time. I've tried this potion on some merfolk before, and they say it has worked, but the effects were usually temporary as they got their tails back after a few days. Some of them decided that they don't like having legs and asked me to give them their tails back. If you don't want your human legs anymore, I'll give you another potion that will turn you back into a mermaid. All you have to do is ask. Do you trust me on this?"

"Is it poisonous?" asked Gemma, feeling a little unsure.

"No, not at all, my dear," said Octavia. "My potions are hardly ever poisonous, but they sometimes contain a few side effects. So if you feel all tingly after drinking this potion, or lose all your hair, or whatever, you know...that's my fault!"

The sea witch gave a cackling laugh, but Gemma didn't think her remark was all that amusing.

"Are you sure about this?" asked Gemma as Octavia handed her the potion.

"Oh, I'm sure you will not feel any side effects from the potion," said Octavia. "Just drink it up and you will be human in no time."

"I dunno," said Gemma. "It smells kinda weird..."

"Do you want to do this or not?" asked Octavia, getting a little impatient. "You asked to become a human, and so you shall drink the potion I brewed for you. Remember, I only did this to help you out. I'm normally not that kind to merfolk, but for you, I'll make a small exception. You can drink the potion anytime you want, but I highly advise that you wait until you get to the surface. Merfolk are unable to swim or breathe underwater once they've lost their fish tails, and there's a very likely chance they could drown if they don't learn to use their new legs to swim. Don't say I didn't warn you. Now go, drink the potion! I'll be here in my cave if you ever need me."

"Okay, see ya," said Gemma as she left the sea witch's cave. "Thanks for the help!"

Gemma immediately swam to the surface, with the potion-filled glass in her hand. She climbed onto a sea rock near Prince Spencer's palace. She was a little nervous about drinking the concoction that Octavia brewed for her, but she knew it had to work. Taking a deep breath, she slowly raised the glass to her mouth and drank the potion. It tasted kind of bitter, but not too bad. Then she jumped into the water and swam for shore. Suddenly, she started to sputter and splash around. She felt like she was going to drown at any minute. Luckily, a robot wearing a waterproof suit took notice. It waded into the water and pulled the mermaid to safety. Once Gemma was on shore, she looked down and saw that her fish tail was gone. It had split into legs. She was equipped with two magnificent legs, and they were beautiful. But alas, she was so accustomed to her fish tail that she could not swim. If anything, she was glad that she got pulled onto the shore just in time.

Gemma crawled onto the beach and decided to try out her new legs. She tried to stand up. It was a little difficult at first, but she was able to keep her balance. Then she tried walking. It took a little practice to walk properly as a normal human would. After a few minutes or so, Gemma was impressed at how human legs worked.

"Wow," said Gemma to herself. "That potion really worked! Octavia might be evil, but she sure is a genius when it comes to making those potions."

Suddenly, she looked down and realized that she was not wearing anything besides her seashell bra.

"Good grief," she muttered. "I'm naked. Guess I should've asked that sea witch to conjure up some clothes for me or something."

She didn't want anyone to see her not wearing anything below the waist, so she looked for something that would help her cover up. After a bit of searching, she wrapped herself up in a large piece of pink cloth to look like she was wearing some sort of sarong. Suddenly, she saw Spencer walking by, with a metal detector in his hands. Now was her chance. She immediately rushed over to the prince to try and talk to him.

Spencer was looking for some mechanical parts that might have been buried in the sand, but when he turned around, he saw a girl wearing a seashell bra and a pink sarong run toward him.

"Hi!" said Gemma. "You're Prince Spencer, right?"

"You seem a little familiar," he said. "But I'm not sure why. What's your name?"

"Gemma," said the mermaid-turned-human.

"Gemma, huh? That sounds like a pretty nice name," said Spencer. "What happened to you? It looks like you've been in an accident and washed up onshore."

Gemma knew she wasn't supposed to tell Spencer that she was actually a mermaid. Even though the seashell bra she was wearing was a dead giveaway, she didn't want to say anything that would make him suspicious. She heard that nobody in the Bomb Kingdom knew mermaids were real, so she thought he wouldn't believe her, anyway.

"Um...yeah, I've been in a little accident," she said at last. "I could use a little help and a place to stay until someone finds me."

"Well, then, maybe I can help you," said Spencer. "Would you like me to take you to my castle?"

"Sure!" said Gemma eagerly. She hoped that while she spent a little time with Spencer in his castle, she would make him realize that she was the one who rescued him because she accidentally tipped over his raft. She knew she could do it.

Spencer took Gemma to his castle, where all the servants were little robots. The robot maid gave Gemma a nice, warm bath and let her pick a new outfit. Gemma settled for a pink dress and matching slippers, complete with a pretty pearl necklace. She looked very pretty in her new outfit and hoped that it would impress the prince. As she arrived at the castle foyer, Spencer was more than happy to show her around. He even invited her to join him for dinner. As they sat at the table together, Gemma tried as hard as she could to act like a regular human girl doing regular human things. She chattered away and spun a tall tale while they ate their food.

"Boy, you will not believe what I had to go through before I came here," she said. "You see, I was on this boat, but it somehow got caught up in a tsunami during this crazy storm. I was tossed overboard and swept about for days until I ended up on the shore. Guess I kind of...lost my clothes and forgot how to stand and walk during the time I got tossed around in the sea. Am I lucky to be alive or what?"

Prince Spencer couldn't help but chuckle at the story Gemma had made up. "You're a real storyteller, aren't you?" he said. "I like that."

Gemma smiled because she could make humans laugh just as much as she made merfolk laugh back in her underwater kingdom. But she needed to remember that the effects of the potion she drank wouldn't last long, so she didn't have much time before she turned back into a mermaid. Still, she knew she had to tell Spencer the truth somehow. She couldn't spend all of the time she had covering it up with tall tales and little white lies. That night, as she was getting ready for bed in the guest room, Gemma looked out the window. She could see frothy waves dance on the rocks below. Staring wistfully at the ocean, she began to think of a plan to tell Spencer the truth. She thought that the best way possible was to show him what a great girl she really was, and reveal the differences she had with that silly Princess Wendy. She had only been on land for one day, but she couldn't believe how many great things were there. They were almost better than the things she had under the sea. As she laid on her bed, she felt how nice and soft it was. Nothing under the sea had ever been that comfortable. She couldn't wait for the next day to arrive. She knew she was going to like being a human for a while.

The next day, Spencer took Gemma for a walk around the kingdom, showing her everything she needed to know about it. Gemma thought everything on land was much different than where she was from. For example, she didn't know what trees were, but the way they looked made her fascinated by them. Spencer could tell Gemma was really excited, and he liked her enthusiasm to see things and learn about them. Gemma thought all the things humans invented on land were amazing, and she never thought she'd see so many of them all together in one place. This particular day was Market Day, so Spencer took Gemma to the marketplace so they could see some things that would interest her. The shops and stands were all automated and run by robots, but Gemma didn't mind one bit, as they had a lot of nice things to offer. She was fascinated by all the products sold at the stands, and she never knew that humans (or robots) would think of making something so marvelous. In one part of the marketplace, she saw humans and robots dancing to music that she had never heard before. But even though she thought the music sounded a little weird, it was also wonderful. She just had to dance along. She ran to the middle of the dance circle and tried her moves out. She lifted her shapely arms, got up on her tiptoes, and skimmed across the floor. As she danced, all the humans and robots who watched were in awe. No one had ever danced so well. Each movement set off her beauty to better and better advantage, and her eyes spoke more directly to the heart than any of the music-playing robots could do. She charmed everyone, especially Spencer. He had never

seen such a graceful dancer as her before. Gemma herself was also amazed by how well she could dance. She thought the things humans could do with their legs were absolutely wonderful. She couldn't wait to tell her friends about it once she managed to tell Spencer the truth about his rescue and the effects of the potion wore off.

"You dance very well," said Spencer as he clapped for Gemma after her dance.

"Thank you," said Gemma. "I've never tried dancing before, but it sure is fun!"

Later that evening, Gemma couldn't help but feel as though she had fallen in love with the prince, even though she had just met him. Now that she had managed to charm his socks off, she was ready to tell him how she saved him from drowning and reveal that she was a mermaid. Hopefully, he would believe her. As she and Spencer returned to the palace, Gemma decided to ask Spencer something in order to put her plan into action.

"Spencer, did you ever notice someone who looked like a person you knew before?" she asked.

"Why, yes," said Spencer. "I almost drowned, but then a lovely girl came and rescued me. I can't remember who she was, but she looked like Princess Wendy, my one true love. In fact, you kind of look like her."

"You don't say?" said Gemma. "Well, the funny thing is..."

"I'm planning on getting married to Wendy so we can rule the kingdom together," said Spencer. "I shall give her an engagement bomb as a way of declaring my love to her. There will be a lot of things we'll need to do in order to plan our wedding. You're welcome to attend the ceremony if you'd like."

"But..." said Gemma, trying to tell Spencer that the girl who rescued him was her, but the prince had already gone back into the palace. Gemma sighed heavily. Spencer still didn't know that it was her who saved his life, and he didn't give her a chance to tell him. But she wasn't going to give up just yet. She still had a few days until the effects of the potion wore off, so she had to think of something fast.

That evening, Gemma saw Spencer leave the palace after dinner with a bomb in his hands. She followed him to the forest, where she saw him walking over to Wendy and kneeling down on one knee, presenting her the special bomb.

"My love," he said. "You have no idea how much I've given my heart to you. I've always had my eyes set on you ever since we first met. We've fought many battles together with our bombs and weapons, and nobody, be it human or robot, will ever tear our relationship apart. So now, I think it's time we took that relationship to the next level. If I were to choose a bride, I would choose you in a heartbeat. So...Will you please marry me, Princess Wendy?"

"Oh, Spencer, I would love to!" said Wendy, taking the bomb from her beloved prince's hands. "I promise I shall care for you and give all my life to you even after we've been married."

Gemma was outraged. She thought about walking over to Wendy and giving her a slap in the face, but that would just be rude and disrupt the proposal. Instead, she went back into the palace to think about her next move. But she wasn't sure what to do. Later that night, as she looked at the sea from her window with a sullen expression on her face, she saw her friend Pearl rising up from the waves.

"Pearl? What are you doing here?" asked Gemma.

"I heard that you turned into a human by drinking a potion that the sea witch gave you," said Pearl. "And now you're trying to tell the prince that you saved him from drowning?"

"Yes," said Gemma. "But it's not going so well. He's more focused on marrying another girl than hearing the truth from me. What do you think I should do?"

"Well, I think you should try using this," said Pearl as she gave Gemma a dagger. "I bought this dagger from the sea witch for two sand dollars. She said the best thing to do is to stab the other girl in the back. But don't worry, the blade isn't that sharp. It's actually laced with a truth potion, so if you stab the other girl in the back, she will admit to the prince that you were the one who saved his life. Maybe he might even dump her so he can hook up with you instead."

"Are you sure that'll work?" said Gemma.

"Well, the last part could be possible, but who knows?" said Pearl. "All you have to do is get close to the other girl when she's not looking and stick that dagger right into her back. Once that truth potion enters her blood, she will help you come clean to the prince. Good luck!"

"Thanks," said Gemma as she took the dagger from Pearl's hands and watched her friend jump back into the waves. She curiously looked at the blade and gently touched the tip of it with her finger. She knew that her next move would be pretty risky, but as long as it was going to help her reveal the truth to Spencer, she was all for it. She went to bed, thinking about her plan.

The next day, Gemma followed Spencer to the forest again, where she saw him discuss his wedding plans with Wendy. Gemma looked at the dagger in her hands and back up at Wendy. She knew this plan had to work. She ducked behind a few trees so she could get a little closer to the princess. Then, slowly and carefully, she walked up behind Wendy, keeping the dagger out of view. She looked at Spencer, and then back at Wendy, before slowly pulling the dagger out from behind her back.

"Spencer, I think I might have something to tell you," said Wendy.

"And what could that be, by any chance?" asked Spencer.

Gemma knew this was her chance, so she raised the dagger up and prepared to stab Wendy in the back with it. Suddenly, Wendy saw what Emma was doing from the corner of her eye, and she immediately whipped around and grabbed the mermaid-turned-human by the arm.

"What do you think you're doing?" she said.

"I...I'm trying to get you to tell Spencer the truth about me," said Gemma.

"By stabbing me with that stupid knife?" said Wendy. "I don't think so! Besides, I don't think he knows you as well as he knows me. You're just a stranger who randomly appeared out of nowhere."

"Oh, he knows me, all right," said Gemma. "I know he's just met me, but I've been making his life a little more interesting by telling stories about my life before I came here. However, I've only been using those stories to cover up the truth about me. Until now, that is. Since I'm unable to tell the truth to Spencer, I shall have you tell it for me."

"Is that why you want to stab me?" said Wendy. "Well, go ahead. Stab me all you want. But I've got weapons that are bigger and better than your scrawny knife."

"Okay, I think we're getting a little too tense here," said Spencer, feeling a bit uncertain about this situation. Before he and Gemma knew it, Wendy pulled out a bomb from behind her back.

"I'm warning you, girl," she told Gemma. "If you even try to stab me with that thing, you'd better be fast. I have a bomb with me, and I'm not afraid to use it."

"Wendy, please be careful with that," warned Spencer. "We're nowhere near a battlefield, and I don't want anyone getting hurt."

"Is that how it's going to be then?" said Gemma. "Very well. But this dagger is just as powerful as your bombs. It has the power of truth, and once it enters your blood, you will not be able to blow me away."

"Go ahead," said Wendy, steadily aiming her bomb. "Fight me. I'm always ready for a good battle."

Gemma looked at her dagger, knowing that she didn't have a choice but to fight Wendy if she wanted to insert the truth potion into her.

"All right," she said, poisoning the dagger above her head. "Challenge accepted."

And so, the girls started to fight. They punched each other, slapped each other, and pulled each other's hair. All the while, Gemma was trying to hurl her dagger in the right direction. Wendy kept the bomb steady in her hand, preparing to blow it up in Gemma's face at any moment.

"Come on now, hold still!" said Gemma. "I've got to come clean to the prince!"

"Forget it, chump!" shouted Wendy. "He's mine!"

"Girls, girls!" cried Spencer as he tried to separate them. "Calm down! Break it up before someone gets seriously hurt!"

But the girls didn't listen, and without warning, Wendy threw her bomb right at Gemma's feet. Gemma knew she had to finish Wendy fast, so she grabbed the princess and turned her around so she could stab her in the back. She was going to make Wendy tell Spencer the truth once and for all. Suddenly, before Gemma could use her dagger on Wendy, the bomb exploded, which knocked the two girls off their feet and sent them flying. The next thing Gemma knew, she was back in the palace, sitting in the bathtub, nursing some broken bones, and an equally broken heart.

"I can't believe this was all for nothing," she grumbled. "The prince is still with that stupid Wendy girl, and I never got to tell him that I was the one who rescued him or win his affection. I hope that sea witch has a potion that will give me my tail back."

And luckily, she did. While Gemma was away, Pearl had asked Octavia to brew a potion that would turn Gemma back into a mermaid. When Gemma heard the news, she asked one of the robot maids to bring her to the beach. Because both her legs were broken from the bomb explosion, she had to be carried out in a

wheelchair. Pearl handed Gemma the potion, which was contained in a glass chalice and a pinkish color. Gemma took the potion and looked back at the palace from behind her.

"Are you ready to return to your life under the sea?" asked Pearl.

"Yeah, I think I am," said Gemma. "Humans are stupid, anyway. I'm fine with Spencer marrying Wendy because I don't need to be meddling with their lives. Let's do this."

Taking a deep breath, she slowly raised the glass to her mouth and drank the potion. It tasted a lot sweeter than the last potion, and had a hint of seafoam in it. After Gemma drank the potion, the robot maid lifted her from her wheelchair and tossed her into the water. Gemma could feel her legs and feet grow together and become a fish tail. She was finally a mermaid again. Gemma was so happy that she threw off her dress and dove into the welcoming waves, with Pearl following her. As she returned to her underwater kingdom, Gemma realized that she was more content with being a mermaid than she was as a human. She went back to playing with the young merfolk, creating homes for the fish, and splashing around in the waves. But something was different. Whenever Gemma saw a human sailing on a boat, she decided to leave them alone, as she did not want to repeat the same mistake she made last time. For now, she was happy with her life below the surface. Now that Gemma was smarter, she never messed with or pranked another human again.