

### The Sleepy/Spunky Mermaid

Once upon a time there was a little mermaid who was serenely floating in the ocean. She existed in perfect bliss, gently rocked by the waves. One day, a wave pushed her near a shore where sat a handsome young man who was fussing with a big contraption. "How funny you look," he said, "with a fish tail instead of legs to carry you! You'll never be able to go to the forests and mountains as I did."

"What are forests and mountains?", said the little mermaid. "You can't imagine them if you've never seen them," he said. "They are exciting to explore and filled with life and adventure."

Little mermaid swam down to the bottom of the ocean where reigned the Great Sea Woman. "Give me legs," she cried, "so I can explore the forests and mountains with the beautiful human on the shore."

"Are you sure?" said Great Sea Woman, "Do you know what you are asking for? With legs you'll no longer be able to float smoothly in our deep waters. Once you get legs, you'll live in

air, not in water. Your lungs will change for that, but air does not caress you and rock you the way water does. Your skin will hunger for the smooth silky flowing beatific feeling you have in the water."

"Oh, but I want excitement and adventure with the handsome stranger," said little mermaid. "I want to go to the forest and mountains. I don't need to be rocked any more, I want the use of legs!"

"Oh," said Great Sea Woman, "guess you want your fling on earth, too, the way I did, eons ago, before I relinquished the incessant struggle of Earth People. All right, then, I'll change your body. You'll have feet and legs and lungs and sexual organs like Earth People. And I'll give you special feeling antennae so you can feel human caresses when they come to you. Perhaps that'll make up for <sup>losing</sup> all the comfort to your skin and body that you're now getting, though I doubt it. You don't realize, little mermaid, that being human is not only excitement and adventure, it's pain also."

"Yes, yes," said the little sea-nymph impatiently, "Please just let me have those legs and anything else that goes with them. Only please hurry!"

And that's how little nymph got up on earth to join the handsome stranger on the beach, little knowing that long ago, at a time he himself had forgotten about, he too had come up from the waters also to look for excitement and adventure.

The young man was very pleased to see the little nymph with all her limbs. "Hey, you made it!" he said. "You're beautiful. Will you caress me?" "Gladly," said <sup>the former</sup> little mermaid, a little breathlessly, for she was not yet quite used to the atmosphere, "I didn't know I was beautiful. I'll do whatever you want, because you know so many things I don't know." "Of course, of course," said the young man, "just take care of my needs for nurture, caress me and cater to me; I'll help you figure out what I need and I'll tell you whatever else you want to know. I've been feeling very empty and lonely, lately. I don't know what it's all about, but I'm sure you can help. Mainly I'm sure I need caressing." So little nymph caressed him, and catered to him; she brought, and fetched, and carried, and whenever he was listless or angry she sang to him softly and soothed him.

In return he caressed her once in a while and told her she was beautiful. She discovered that her sexual pieces were exciting and fun to have, and she thought that maybe that was what she had wanted the legs for. She forgot that she had wanted legs in order to go to the forests and the mountains; she was satisfied with listening to the young man tell her about them while they caressed.

One day he told her he was ready to fly up to the moon. "But we haven't yet explored the forests and the mountains together," said little nymph, "we've just stayed on the beach." "Yes, yes," said the young man, "but by now I'm bored with forests and mountains and the beach too. I want to go to the moon. I had built a moonship before you came, but I felt too disconsolate to use it. Now I feel energetic again. You've replenished me with your caresses and I'm ready to go off. I appreciate all you've done for me, and I'll take your picture with me to the moon."

"I want to go with you, please," said little nymph. By now I've gotten to depend on your caresses. I didn't need these caresses when I lived in the sea and I didn't think I'd need them here. Now I need you desperately."

"Sorry," said the young man, "there's only room for one in my moonship. Don't you see that? Exciting adventures are started alone. Can't stay around any longer, I'm getting awfully bored." With that, he flew off.

"Great Sea Woman," wailed little nymph, all alone on the beach, "what do I do now? I feel lonely, scared and lost. You warned me and I did not understand. Take back my legs and let me revert back to my former existence again."

"That is not possible now," said the Great Sea Woman, appearing from the waves. "You're not a little mermaid any more. Now you're a little woman who lives on earth. You'd just drown in the sea. But have you forgotten why you wanted legs in the first place? You wanted to explore forests and mountains and you haven't even seen them yet. You just stayed on this secluded beach. Look at yourself; you have feet and legs to carry you. You can stand straight and you can walk. Maybe you'll travel alone and maybe you'll find company along the way. I know your skin yearns for smooth caresses and that earth's air doesn't just give them like the sea. Well, maybe you'll find a way of getting some, and maybe you'll do without."

You don't know it, but you do have a reserve supply within you, that got into you, long ago when you swayed in the ocean. That can hold you quite a while!

"There's something else you don't know now, little woman. You feel empty and depleted, because you were giving out caresses and nurture as a waylaid little nymph, not as a human woman. Go to the forests and the mountains, go on your own exciting life's adventures and you'll have other things to give, out of the richness that adventure and pain will provide you. Yes, pain. What you suffer now from being left behind is nothing compared to what might yet be in store, but there will be joy also. There will be exultant, beautiful joy. Sometimes, you'll be so filled with it, you'll be brimming over with it. You'll want to hand out gifts to others gladly and freely and generously because you'll have so much, at times. Don't push for joy, though. You can never plan it, and I don't promise it to you, either. But I do promise you this, little woman. There will be a time, eventually, when you will come back and rejoin us here, in the elemental waters of time. You won't come back as a little mermaid or as a little woman. How you'll come back,

and when;- that I can't tell you now;-yet you'll know, you'll know." And with that the Great Sea Woman disappeared into the surf.

Little woman wiped her eyes. Salty drops were pouring down her cheeks. They tasted like sea water. "These are my first tears," she said to herself, "and that's how I'll still carry the ocean with me." How did she know the word for tears?, she wondered. She had never known tears before. Suddenly she realized that she knew many things. She had tears like humans and she could feel like humans and she could say things like humans. She would go find some others. Other humans, feelings, things, words? She would go seek.....

Dear Reader:

Now you have read this tale, please don't just think of it on the biographical feminist level. Rather, please also read it with your imagination on its more basic, primitive level. This is the story of your birth or mine, be you male or female.

Little mermaid is the Sleepy infant emerging from the deep waters of the womb, and the handsome stranger who challenges, then appreciates, then demands, then loses interest and goes elsewhere is the spirit of Life itself, which rather indifferently beckons, teaches, forces learning and then expects our Spunky Child to continue exploring for purposes that we do not know, yet vaguely apprehend.

Great Sea Mother is the Cosmic Universe which allows us perception, feeling and premonition and which promises that we will all rejoin the Great Unknown whence we came from.