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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Goldfin and Silvertail

Nelly was a girl who loved swimming in the sea. However, she was not allowed to swim for a few days because she had a bad cold, and her mother had forbidden it. "Oh, how I wish I could be a fish, seagull, or a mermaid, then I could always be in the water and play there all the time," she mumbled to herself. Suddenly, she was startled by a Great Seagull who appeared next to her. He was wearing a chain with a red stone.

"Today is your lucky day!" the seagull exclaimed in a loud voice. "I can grant one of your wishes. Which of the three will it be? Do you want to turn into a fish, a seagull, or do you prefer to be a mermaid?"

"But mermaids don't exist, do they?" she stammered, not knowing what was happening to her.

"No one can see them," said the Great Seagull, "unless I make them visible. But tell me now what you want, and I'll be on my way."

"Then I choose to be a mermaid," said Nelly determinedly.

She had barely said it when the seagull disappeared before her eyes. And in the waves, she saw two very lovely mermaids appear.

"Come play with us, Nelly!" the girls called out to the girl kindly.

"I want to, but my mother won't let me," Nelly replied.

"What is a mother?" one of the mermaids asked.

"Oh, don't you have a mother?" Nelly asked in surprise.

"No, we are born from the moon and the sea," the mermaids replied.

"Oh, how terrible,"

stammered Nelly. "But if you don't have a mother, who takes care of you? Don't you have a home?"

"The sea is our home. It's wonderful here. Come on in. We can help you turn into a mermaid, and then you can experience how much fun it is."

Because one mermaid had a golden tail, Nelly named her Goldfin, and the other mermaid had a silver tail, so Nelly named her Silvertail. Although Nelly found it quite

exciting to just dive into the sea with these strange girls, it was her curiosity that made her decide to jump in. The mermaids held a straw and asked Nelly to drink from it.

"I don't like the salty water," said Nelly.

"Then you won't be the same



as us," said Goldfin. "You won't know what it's like to be a mermaid."

So Nelly took a sip, and there was an immediate change. Her legs turned into a colorful fish tail, and Nelly could easily move like a fish in the water.

"Now I'm very happy!" Nelly exclaimed, embracing her mermaid friends. She kissed the mermaids, who were surprised by her gesture.

"What are you doing?" the mermaids asked the girl.

"I'm giving you a kiss because I like you very much," the girl replied.

The mermaids said they didn't understand. They didn't have a heart, so they couldn't feel the same way.

"Don't you have a heart?" she asked, frightened.

"No, we don't need one. We play and have fun. We sing and sleep. Isn't that enough to be happy?" asked the mermaids.

"What strange creatures they are," Nelly thought, and she asked the mermaids if they liked her.

"Of course, we like you. You're our playmate!" the mermaids replied.

After Nelly was taken to the depths of the sea, she was disappointed by the dull and quiet environment, despite her expectations of beautiful coral and colorful sea flowers. She saw some old sea men with long grey beards sitting in a corner, while little mermaids slept in large shells. Nelly tried her best not to show her disappointment until she finally asked the mermaids if this was what they enjoyed so much.

"Yes, isn't it lovely here?" answered the mermaids. They gave Nelly some shrimp to eat, and she ate it with

pleasure, although she would have preferred a sandwich, but she didn't dare to ask.

"There aren't so many mermaids here," Nelly thought aloud.

"No, we're always few in numbers," answered Goldfin.

"New mermaids will come soon, and then we'll have new playmates to play with. And when there are too many



mermaids in one place, the Old Mermaid sends some of them away so there is more space. Come, I'll take you to the Wonder Tree."

As they swam further, Nelly thought about her little brother, whom she liked to play with and now began to miss terribly.

"What happens when you die?" Nelly asked curiously.

"We can get very old, and then in the end, we sit quietly in a corner until we turn to stone. That's how we help make rocks," replied Goldfin.

"Oh, we humans are buried when we die," Nelly told them. "Our souls go to heaven." At that moment, Nelly was very glad she wasn't a real mermaid.

"What is that? Heaven?" asked Silvertail.

"It's a very beautiful place, where angels take care of you. With a lot of love," Nelly added seriously.

The mermaids looked as if they understood, but they didn't. They asked Nelly if she wanted to play with them and the crabs. She wanted to, and soon she was not

only playing with crabs but also with lobsters. But she got bored with it quickly.

"Can't you show me something beautiful now? I think crabs and lobsters are ugly creatures. Are there no flowers or birds here?" Nelly asked the mermaids.

"Oh, yes, we have beautiful sea anemones in different colors. And we have flying fish, dolphins, and whales.

Would you like to take a ride with them?"

They swam up, and when Nelly saw the blue and red flying fish, she was happy and clapped her hands. "No, we don't have anything as beautiful as this on land," she exclaimed cheerfully.

Above the water, seagulls were flying. "Look, we have birds too," said the mermaids.

"It's wonderful here!" Nelly exclaimed. "It's wonderful to be a mermaid and not have to attend school or obey a mother. Besides, I can swim as much as I want, and no mother to forbid me!" However, she didn't feel comfortable because she knew she wasn't a mermaid and had a heart and conscience. And of course, it wasn't very nice of her to think so poorly of her dear mother.

It became dark, and it was time to sleep. The mermaids made a bed for Nelly out of a shell with seaweed, and she was so tired that she fell asleep right away. Not long after, she was awakened by the mermaids.

"Come on, the evening is beautiful. It's a full moon, and the moonlight gives the waves a beautiful shimmer. And here is the Wonder Tree," said the mermaids.

The tree was full of buds, and one by one, small sea children popped out. They looked like tiny sticklebacks,

but instead of fins, they had little arms and fingers. They swam in small groups in the water, where they were taken care of by older mermaids. In the moonlight, they learned how to use their tails and their sweet voices.

As the day began to break, they disappeared to the bottom of the sea, where they slept in the shell beds that were prepared for them. No further care was needed, and no one did anything else for them. They could play with each other, and that was it. Nelly played with them and tried to start real friendships with them. But the little creatures didn't understand, and they laughed when Nelly spoke seriously to them and jumped away when Nelly tried to kiss them.

Nelly began to withdraw more and more. It seemed that nobody was really interested in her. Nobody said anything when she was angry or impatient. She began to tire of this strange, lazy life, and she began to long more and more for her old life. She missed her little brother, who crawled into bed with her in the morning. Now she had to live with wet water creatures that darted away when she needed a kiss or a hug. She knew she couldn't return home. For the first time, she wished she was a real mermaid, without a heart and without feeling.

"Show me something new," she said to her mermaid friends, "everything here is getting incredibly boring."

"We never get bored," said Goldfin.

"You have no sense," Nelly said spitefully. "You can't think, and you don't care. I need to learn something and I want to make others happy."

"I can take you to a shipwreck," said Goldfin. "Then you'll see something made by humans. Usually, things made by humans don't last long in our sea."

"It would be lovely to see or feel something made by humans," Nelly said.

When they arrived at the shipwreck, Nelly became a little scared. "Where are the people?" she asked Goldfin cautiously, afraid she might encounter a drowning person.

"The people who were on the ship were saved," Goldfin said. "It was a cargo ship, so there were no passengers on board. There was a woman and a child on board. But they were saved."

Nelly was happy to hear this. There were apples. The mermaids didn't like the fruit, so Nelly asked if they would help her let the fruit wash up on the beach. There the children could still enjoy it before it spoiled. The mermaids helped her, and Nelly could see the happy faces of the children eagerly collecting the apples. But the children couldn't see her.

Nelly became sadder and sadder in her existence as a mermaid. One day she asked an old wise duck if there was a way to become a human again.

"Only the Great Seagull can do that," answered the old wise duck. "He is the king of the seagulls. He appears every few years. You should ask him if you see him."

From that moment on, Nelly looked out every day for the arrival of the Great Seagull. Her mermaid friends didn't find Nelly so fun anymore and left her to play with other sea creatures. One day she saw the Great Seagull. "Help me become human again," she asked him.

"Are you sure you want that?" the seagull asked.

"I was foolish to think that life as a mermaid would be better than my life on land. I would like nothing more than to be a human child again."

"Alright then," replied the Great Seagull. "And will you always be good and obedient?"

"Yes, I certainly will be!" Nelly replied determinedly.

The big bird picked up Nelly with his talons and flew her over the water to the coast. Nelly was scared to death, but closed her eyes so she wouldn't have to look down into the depths. There, the bird dropped her and when she rubbed the sand out of her eyes, she saw that she was wearing her old clothes and had the form of a girl again. "Oh my goodness, you've been sleeping for so long," she heard her mother's familiar voice say. She leaned over to look at Nelly's face. Her brother was hopping around her. "Oh, my dear mom, how much I've missed you," said the girl. "How long have I been gone? Didn't you think I drowned?" "No, of course not," said her mother. "You wouldn't have gone into the water against my wishes, would you? You slept for more than an hour." "Oh, did I dream then? I thought I was a mermaid!" said Nelly. "Well, I hope not," said her mother. "I prefer you just the way you are now. But tell me everything about your dream before we go home." Nelly crawled onto her mother's lap and told her the whole story. And as she told it, she felt so wonderful being a regular girl with a heart and emotions. She looked forward to going home, where it was warm, cozy, and clean. It was the most beautiful and wonderful place, and the place she loved the most!