

From the Private Scrolls of Headmistress Flora at Fairy Tale Reform School

CASE STUDY #2:

The Transformation of the Sea Siren (hence forth known as Madame Cleo)

Evilness Scale: 7 out of 10

Most Famous Evil Act: The Sea Siren, also referred to as the Sea Witch, agreed to swap the little mermaid's tail for a pair of very painful feet so the sea princess could meet the prince she once saved in a storm. Of course, the greedy sea siren's deal came at a price: the little mermaid had to give up her beautiful singing voice in order to make the deal happen and once the little mermaid became human she could never return to the sea again. Oh, and there was also that little detail about how if the prince chose someone other than her to marry, the little mermaid would perish and become foam in the sea.

Outcome: Not good. The prince fell for a neighboring king's daughter that he swore really saved him from drowning and chose to marry her instead! Devastated, the little mermaid prepared to die.

Update: There was no way the mermaid's sisters and grandmother were going to let the little mermaid perish. They scoured the ocean for a spell that could help the heartbroken girl change her fate and get her voice back. And when the grandmother learned the sea siren had disguised

herself and was about to become the prince's bride, she went full tilt grandma and set things right—battling the sea siren and sending her oceans away in a sea spout during a storm so the little mermaid could finally tell the prince who she really was.

Update this AM: The sea siren has been captured in the coastal village of North Captiva where I will confront her.

“The ship just arrived this morning, miss,” the grimy dock worker told me, walking me down a long plank and pointing towards the large sailing ship tied to the end of the wharf. The sky was bright and clear, a fine sailing day, but this ship would not be making a voyage anytime soon. The ship listed to its left side, its mast in tatters like it had been through a great battle. “She was caught in the fishing nets. We tried to help the fish out, but she got angry with us so we dumped the fish in one of our fish tanks.”

“*Fish*, Mr. Weather?” I said evenly. My own transformation has made me more aware of people's poor perceptions of those different from themselves. It is a trait I once shared. “I believe you meant to say mer-folk.”

“Whatever,” he says, wiping his nose with his dirty sleeve. He leaned closer and I wrinkled my nose at the overwhelming fish smell he was giving off like rotten cologne. “She's a sea witch, what she really is! Every time we tried to untangle her, she begins yelling at us and then storm clouds gathered, thunder rolled in, and lightning crackled. She can control weather, I tell ya! And when she's not crying, she's meaner than the harshest storm on the open sea and so forgetful! One moment she says she knows how

she got here and we're all going to perish for taking her hostage. The next she can't even remember her own name!"

We hear a wail rise up from the bowels of the ship and the boat begins to sway along with the dock. The once blue sky begins to darken as big, gray clouds, the shape of spun cotton begin to gather. The wind whips up, making me gather the shawl around my neck and reach for one of the pier's posts.

The dock worker rolls his eyes. "Great, she's at it again! The fish witch is going to sink that ship and the dock along with it!"

"*Mermaid*, Mr. Weathers," I correct him again.

"Whatever! I'm just saying when I knew it was her, I had to send ya a Pegasus Post. Ya got to do something quick! The men are afraid to come to sail with her here!"

I sighed and looked at the swaying ship. I'd never been one to enjoy a voyage of any kind on the water. Even a row around the former Galmour Estate lake with the girls was known to make me queasy, but the sound of the wailing couldn't be ignored. I had to help her. I let go of the pier post, stepped away from Mr. Weathers, and climbed on to the leaning ship. The cries grew louder as I descended the damp, dark ship with only a lantern. The smell of the sea and fish grew stronger as I entered the holding room where large tanks containing freshly caught fish were being held along with one very depressed mermaid.

I'd never met the sea siren before, but I could see the stories about her were wrong. She was a beautiful mermaid (those octopus rumors were apparently untrue). Today, however, her hair was disheveled, flashing black, then green, then pink with every

cry she let out. Her shimmering tail looked dull and frayed at the edges like it was shedding, and the mermaid's face was red and blotchy.

“Don't look at me!” she hissed when she realized she had company. “I'm as puffy as a puffer fish!” She cried harder and her tears fell so hard and fast they rose to the top of the tank and swished over the side. “Go away! I have no deals to make! Not anymore!”

“I have not come to strike a deal.” I stepped through puddles to reach the far side of her tank. “Well, not so much a deal as an offer of my own.”

The mermaid's eyes flashed darkly and the ship began to rock violently. “You dare think you can offer anything of substance to the great sea siren?” she bellowed, her hair turning a fiery shade of red.

Water splashed over the side of her tank pushing a seahorse to the ship's floor. I scooped it up unsteadily and dropped it in another open tank.

“I cannot be bought! I cannot be tricked! I am the mighty—OH!” The mermaid's hair turned a pale blue and her eyes opened wide in surprise. “Hello! Please excuse my appearance. I seem to be stuck on some sort of fishing ship. You see, I was in a terrible storm and I believe I hit my head on some rocks and well, here I am! Could you possibly help me out of here?”

Hmm...mermaid amnesia or a trick? Interesting. “Not just yet,” I told her. “You're a wanted mermaid for what you did to the little mermaid.”

At the mention of the young princess, the sea siren's hair turned black again and her eyes darkened. “What I did to her? How about what she did to me! That little sardine stole my true love! She had her chance to win over the prince, but she couldn't do! I could! And I was this close to happiness too,” she said, squeezing a piece of coral stuck

to her seashell bra top and turning it to dust. “Until her and her grandmother took it away!”

The sea siren was heartbroken. This was beginning to make sense. She didn’t just want to make the little mermaid miserable. She did it so she could keep the prince for herself. “They never took anything that wasn’t the little mermaid’s to begin with,” I reminded her. I’ve learned sometimes the best way to make people see the errors of their ways is to confront them with their bad deeds head on. That is what Princess Ella did with me and it was painful, but it worked. “You tricked that young girl into making a deal that she was doomed to lose! You stole her precious voice that would have helped remind the prince where he had met her.”

“The prince wasn’t hers to win! He was mine!” the sea siren wailed, her hair turning pink. “I’ve loved him from afar forever, and when the little mermaid told me the story of how she rescued him, I knew that could be my way into his heart,” she said softly. “If he thought I was the one who saved him...” Her eyes brimmed with tears. “We were so happy for those few days before those mermaids ruined everything and sent me spiraling off through time and space to this wretched place.”

“It’s not so wretched,” I told her. “We are only a short swim from Enchantasia, one of the most beautiful kingdoms in the land.”

“I have no interest in seeing your kingdom,” she said and turned away. “I have no interest in going anywhere without the prince! I will win him back! I will make him fall in love with me again!”

“He doesn’t love you,” I said bluntly. All this swaying on the ship was beginning to make me seasick. How did fish manage in these rocky conditions? “He loves her.” The

sea siren's hair began to turn gray and ashen and she covered her ears to avoid listening to the words she knew to be true. "You know it in your heart. It was always her that he loved. He's already made her his bride."

The sea siren sunk in her tank and cried harder. Her hair turned a shade of pale green. "I know you're right!" she said, sounding beaten. "He loves her! Not me! You can't make someone love you! I've tried one too many times. This time though..." she looked wistful. "I thought I had him." Her eyes opened wide again. "Oh! Where are we? How did I get here?"

I touched my hand to the outside of her tank and looked into the mermaid's beautiful but sad eyes. "Sea Siren, you can be happy, you know. You may not have the love of the prince you desire, but if you come with me, if you try to change your evil ways, there is a chance you could find greater love than you could ever imagine."

"Evil?" the sea siren looked aghast. "Have I been evil? I seem to recall doing something terrible but I...I keep blocking it out." She looked at me. "But I do believe I know it's there. I tried to steal the love of someone's life, didn't I?"

I nodded. "Yes, but I'm offering you a chance to make up for that. You could help mer-folk and other magical children change their ways so they can avoid the same fate as you. If you help me, I will even talk to the sea king about lifting your ban on the sea."

The sea siren's face lit up with a smile so magnetic I could see how the prince was so easily swayed. The siren was truly beautiful when she wasn't being terrifying. "You would truly help me?" she asked. "What ever for?"

"Because I believe people can change if they truly want to," I said. "You just have to be willing to open your mind and listen."

The sea siren's tail swished back and forth for a moment before she spoke. "And what of true love? Can you help me find that too?"

I shook my head and the sea siren's tail sank. "Only you can do that, but I trust you might find love again, if you open your heart in a way you never have before. So what do you say? Will you give it a try?"

The sea siren's hair morphed into a rainbow of colors. "Yes. For love, I'll try anything. You've got a deal."