

# Clem's Mermaid Adventure

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1 EXT. OCEAN CITY - DAY

1

Open on montage: Ocean City, Maryland at the height of summer vacation season. Families swarm on the beach, people crowd the boardwalk, traffic jams the bridge, roller coasters race by.

Crash cut to the weekend after Labor Day. All the tourists have gone. The boardwalk is mostly empty, the beach only has metal detectorists on it, the amusement park rides stand silent, and there is no traffic in the streets.

2 EXT. MINI GOLF - DAY

2

CLEM, 11, digs around in the bottom of a drained fountain in the middle of the mini golf attraction. She is always a little sweaty, and sunburnt on his cheeks and neck. She has a bright smile, and tends to imagine ordinary life as being part of a magical adventure. Right now she's wearing rubber gloves and boots, and her adventure consists of scooping a summer's worth of trash and muck into a bucket.

She tosses another scoop of wet filth into the bucket and it squelches. She laughs, and tries to replicate the sound with another scoop, and it splashes onto her and the ground.

NANCY, 52, pokes her head around from behind a gaudy statue to yell at Clem.

NANCY

Clem! Try and aim for *inside* the bucket!

CLEM

Yeah but it makes a funny sound, listen!

Clem tries again, succeeds in making quite a rude noise and a bit of a mess. She laughs. Nancy scowls.

NANCY

How are you making it messier than it was to begin with?

Clem ignores her, starts to become bored with the noise. She digs around in the pile of goop, picking out rocks and lost golf balls, which she starts to throw.

CLEM

Aunt Nance, how long until lunch?

Nancy doesn't answer. Clem is content to pick up rocks and

throw them until her patience wears out, maybe five seconds.

CLEM  
NANCE! HOW LONG TIL LUNCH?

Nancy yells back from behind the fake rocks.

NANCY  
Alrighty, come on out and I'll make  
you a sandwich.

CLEM  
Okay!

Clem goes to pick up and throw one last rock, then stops when she sees that it's not a rock at all, but a SHINY SEASHELL. In awe, she scrapes around the pile of debris to see if there are any more, but it's just the one. She wipes it on her shirt to clean it, looks around. Her gaze lands on the large plaster mermaid near the edge of the dried fountain. Its eyes seem to look directly at her. Clem walks left and right, but its gaze seems to follow her. She's transfixed.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
(whispered)  
You're beautiful.

NANCY  
(O.S.)  
I thought you were hungry, girl!

Clem is shaken from her trance, pockets the seashell, and runs off.

CLEM  
Okaaaaay!

She clambers over the side of the fountain, keeping her eye on the mermaid until she is out of its sight.

3 INT. CLEM'S BEDROOM - DAY

3

Clem enters her bedroom and empties her pockets onto her bed with stuff she's picked up while cleaning the mini golf fountain. She's got COOL ROCKS that she puts in a box of other rocks, COINS that she throws into a jar, and a GREEN GOLF BALL that she adds to a pile of other green golf balls. Finally she picks up the shiny seashell and thinks, not knowing where to put it. She decides to drop it into her GOLDFISH TANK. She stares at it, pondering its origins.

DONNY, 17, Clem's older brother, walks by Clem's bedroom door on the phone.

DONNY

(O.S.)

She was definitely the hottest mermaid this summer.

Donny's voice fades as he walks down the hall to his own room and shuts the door. Clem jumps up onto her bed and presses her ear to the wall, where she can just make out Donny's voice.

DONNY (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

Fine, don't believe me, but that's what happened! Right on the beach! Total mermaid.

(beat)

Whatever.

(beat)

Yeah probably, after Jenny's party? Hey is Brad still coming?

Clem takes her ear off the wall and plops down on her bed.

CLEM

Whoa.

Clem scrambles out the door and runs down the hall.

4 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

4

Clem bangs on Donny's door, who shouts through it.

DONNY

What!

CLEM

Um, did you see a real life mermaid before?

DONNY

Go away!

CLEM

Only, because I heard maybe you did somewhere and I was wondering if you could show me-

Donny opens the door, exasperated.

DONNY

Clem. Not now.

CLEM

How 'bout tomorrow we could go look  
for-

Donny slams the door in her face. Clem walks away, dejected.

5 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

5

Clem sits at the kitchen table eating CHOCOLATE BREAKFAST CEREAL. She's also sketching a mermaid in a NOTEPAD. Her DAD, 38, is packing a lunch. Clem finishes her bowl, pours herself another, and tops it with CHOCOLATE MILK. She talks with her mouth full.

CLEM

Dad, are mermaids real?

DAD

Oh, sure, Clem.

CLEM

Really? Have you ever seen one?

DAD

Oh sure, plenty of times.

CLEM

Nuh-uh.

DAD

Sure have.

MOM, 36, enters. She takes the packed lunch from Dad.

MOM

But not in a while, right?

DAD

Yes, honey, no mermaids for me in,  
what, fifteen years?

MOM

(feigned sternness)

Eighteen. Unless there's someone I  
don't know about?

DAD  
(laughing)  
No, there's only you.

Dad kisses Mom on the cheek as she heads out the door.

CLEM  
(under her breath)  
Gross.

Dad shoots him a look.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
You saw mermaids too Mom?

MOM  
I-

Dad interrupts.

DAD  
Your Mom never saw one, because she  
didn't do the dance.

CLEM  
The dance?

DAD  
Yeah, you've got to wave your arms  
like you're swimming, and shake  
your bottom like it's a big tail,  
like this-

Dad demonstrates, knocking playfully into Mom.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Come on, Rosie!

Mom laughs, escapes his dancing advances.

MOM  
Goodbye, you two, love you!

Mom exits. Dad looks after her.

DAD  
That's why she never saw one.

Clem writes this down.

CLEM  
The dance. Got it. That's it?

DAD

Oh, no, there's a lot more you have to do to get a mermaid to swim up to you.

CLEM

Like what?

DAD

Well...

6 EXT. FISHING PIER - DAY 6

Clem is interrogating a FISHERMAN.

FISHERMAN

They only come up if you've got a tuna for them to eat.

7 INT. WOCKENFUSS - DAY 7

Clem is questioning a CANDY STORE CLERK.

CANDY STORE CLERK

... and only at midnight, under the fullness of the moon...

8 INT. ARCADE - DAY 8

Clem is asking an ARCADE JERK.

ARCADE JERK

... and you might have to fight like a giant monster...

9 EXT. SURF SHOP - DAY 9

Clem is asking a SURF BUM.

SURF BUM

... on the beach at thirty-second street. That's where the most magical waves are...

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10 INT. SOUVENIR BOARDWALK SHOP - DAY

10

Clem is asking a SOUVENIR SHOP PROPRIETOR.

SOUVENIR SHOP PROPRIETOR  
Did you get a mermaid charm yet?  
You'll need one of those for sure.

CLEM  
What's that?

SOUVENIR SHOP PROPRIETOR  
Oh, something special with hidden  
powers to summon her out of the  
water...

The proprietor motions towards a giant rack of tacky  
souvenirs. Clem can't contain her excitement.

SOUVENIR SHOP PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)  
Maybe a sparkle keychain, or an  
airbrushed-

CLEM  
YOU MEAN LIKE A SUPER SPECIAL  
MAGICAL SEASHELL?

This catches the proprietor off guard, but they quickly pivot  
to small bottles filled with garish seashells.

SOUVENIR SHOP PROPRIETOR  
Yes, I think that would-

CLEM  
Okay, thanks, I have to go now,  
bye!

Clem vigorously shakes their hand and runs out of the shop.

11 INT. CLEM'S BEDROOM - DAY

11

Clem bursts into her room and shoves her hand into the  
fishtank, splashing around, until she pulls out the SEASHELL.

CLEM  
Yesssssssss.



12 EXT. BACKYARD - DAY 12

Montage: Clem putting seashell in her pocket, putting on helmet, flipping up the kickstand on her bike, pedalling away.

13 EXT. LAYTON'S RESTAURANT - DAY 13

Clem bikes through the deserted streets to LAYTON'S RESTAURANT. She pulls up and drops her bike to the ground, then drops her helmet on top of it before walking inside.

14 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY 14

Clem enters, still panting from her bike ride. LARRY LAYTON greets her from behind the diner's cash register.

LARRY  
Hey there Clem, chocolate milkshake like usual?

CLEM  
No thank you is Donny here?

LARRY  
Sure, he's behind the counter.

CLEM  
Thank you Mister Larry!

Clem runs away, then after a beat re-enters his field of vision.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
Um, actually, could I maybe just have a small one to go in this?

She hands him the water bottle from her bike. He smiles. Clem walks over to the lunch counter and hops up on a seat. Donny is folding napkins over silverware with JENNY, 18.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
Hi Donny, what are you doing right now?

Jenny sees Clem, gives her a sweet smile, and heads to the kitchen. This upsets Donny, who watches her go.

DONNY  
I'm working right now, buddy. What do you need?

CLEM  
Nothing, just, I wanted to show you  
this-

Clem pulls out the magic seashell and shows it to Donny.

DONNY  
(beat)  
And?

Clem waves it closer in front of his face.

CLEM  
Look closer!

DONNY  
Look, bud, I don't know what I'm  
looking for. It's just a seashell.

CLEM  
(proudly)  
Wrong! It's my MERMAID CHARM. And  
now that I have it, I'm ready to go  
find a mermaid with you. Because  
I've practiced the dance, and I  
know what beach to go to, and  
tomorrow night is a full moon, and  
I still need to get tuna, but-

DONNY  
Whoa, wait, slow down. I can't go  
tomorrow night.

Clem deflates.

CLEM  
Why not?

DONNY  
(whispering)  
Because it's Jenny's party.

CLEM  
But Mom and Dad don't let you go to  
teenager parties.

Jenny walks by, picking up some silverware. Donny waits for  
her to leave.

DONNY  
I'm a teenager!

CLEM

No you're not, you're twelve and forty-eight months. Besides, we haven't done an adventure in a long time.

(beat)

We could go after your party.

DONNY

Buddy, Mom and Dad definitely won't let us go to a beach at midnight. Plus the party probably won't even be over by midnight!

CLEM

But, can we go during the full moon next week then?

DONNY

I don't think that's how the moon works.

CLEM

But-

Larry enters with Clem's milkshake-filled water bottle.

LARRY

Clem, Donny's got to go take care of table five now, okay?

DONNY

Yes Mister Larry.

CLEM

Yes Mister Larry.

Clem slides out of her chair as her brother exits. She tries to sip milkshake through the bottle top. She fails.

15 INT. CLEM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

15

Clem lays in her bed, wide awake. She's waiting, listening. Soft footsteps walk past her door, then a door shuts distantly in the hallway; her parents have turned in. Clem jumps up, revealing she's fully clothed. Quickly, she gathers the necessary items into her backpack: flashlight, seashell, compass, pocketknife, chapstick, notebook, squirt gun, action figure. She's interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps. She drops all of her stuff and jumps back into

bed, just in time. The door opens; Mom is there.

MOM  
Goodnight, honey, sweet dreams.

CLEM  
(out of breath)  
Sweet dreams, Mom.

Mom pauses.

MOM  
Everything okay in here?

CLEM  
Yep, love you, good night!

Mom doesn't buy it 100%, but closes the door. The footsteps fade away again. Cautiously this time, Clem gets out of bed, pulls on her helmet, and opens her window.

16 EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

16

Close on the bushes outside of Clem's house. We hear a window open. A bedsheet rope drops down into the bushes. We hear Clem struggling to climb down. Moments later, Clem drops into the bushes, not even close to the rope. We cut wide to see that her window is on the ground floor, and the rope was just for fun. Clem brushes herself off, straightens her helmet, and grabs her bike. She duct tapes the flashlight to the handlebars, then walks it quietly down the driveway. Once she's in the street, she mounts it and takes off.

17 EXT. MINI GOLF - NIGHT

17

Clem bikes down the street, and pauses outside the mini golf place. The mermaid with the spooky eyes glares down at her.

CLEM  
Hi, um, I'm going to go meet you  
for real tonight if that's okay.

Clem fumbles with her CHAPSTICK, then approaches the mermaid. She climbs the fence to look at it more closely, waiting for it to respond.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
Okay. Well. Oh, thanks for the  
magic seashell.

The mermaid doesn't answer. Clem takes that as a worrying

sign and bikes off.

18 EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

18

Clem ditches her bike in the sand duns and runs out onto the beach, but slows when she sees the ocean. The sea is dark and menacing, the full moon reflects on the inky water. The waves seem extra loud. She flips on her flashlight and looks around, but it's just her.

She makes her way to the edge of the surf and checks her WATCH; it's almost time. She plops down on the sand and fishes a SMASHED LOAF OF BREAD, A JAR OF MAYONNAISE, and A CAN OF TUNA out of her backpack. She struggles with the POCKETKNIFE to open the tuna, but eventually gets it. She makes a sloppy tuna fish sandwich, but is satisfied with the result, and sets it aside.

Next she takes out her NOTEPAD and checks her notes. Her watch says she still has a couple minutes to go, so she runs through the steps under her breath.

CLEM

Dance, tuna, monster, seashell...

Dance, tuna, monster, seashell...

Dance, tuna, monster... monster?

A bright light hits Clem from behind. She turns, a GIANT SAND CLEANER is approaching quickly, combing the trash off the beach.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Monster!

Clem scrambles to shove things back into her backpack. She looks around frantically, but there's nowhere to hide. The thing approaches. Clem runs down the beach, away from it. She comes across a LIFEGUARD CHAIR that has been set down for the night. She struggles to right it as the machine draws inexorably closer. At the last second, she is able to scramble up the tall chair and hide on it.

Clem peeks over the top of the chair, and when she thinks the coast is clear, she jumps up, pulling her SQUIRT GUN out of her backpack. She shoots at the back of the tractor.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Take that, sand monster! Haha!

Clem fire the squirt gun into the air victoriously, getting herself wet in the process.

CLEM

Oh.

Carefully, Clem slithers back down the lifeguard chair and checks her watch. It's 12:01.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Yes!

She dumps out the contents of her backpack. She double-checks her notepad, then begins the ritual: the dance. Clem waves her arms like she is swimming, and swings her butt around like her dad did in the kitchen.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Mermaid, mermaid, in the sea. Come ashore and dance with me!

Clem quickly grabs the tuna fish sandwich from the sand.

CLEM (CONT'D)

I offer you: this fresh tuna!

She places it down carefully at the edge of the lapping waves. Then she pulls the seashell out of her pocket and meaningfully raises it up towards the full moon. She closes her eyes in concentration.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Mermaid, mermaid, in the ocean.  
Come ashore, um, without much commotion?

Clem waits for a long moment before peeking at the water. Nothing. She holds up the shell again, redoubling her concentration. Still nothing.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Okay, I'll wait.

She sits down in the sand, somewhat dejected. She turns the seashell over in her hands idly. Clem is bad at being patient. After a few more moments she picks up the tuna sandwich and sizes it up. There's not too much sand on it.

Before Clem takes a bite, she hears A FEMALE VOICE giggling in the distance. She drops the sandwich and jumps up, following the sound. She walks faster, then runs along the edge of the surf.

CLEM  
Hello? Mermaid? Hello?

Clem stops when she sees a FIGURE with long hair laying half in the waves.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
No way...

The figure turns and the moonlight hits her. It isn't a mermaid at all, it's JENNY, 18. She quickly sits up, revealing Donny next to her in the sand.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
What the-? Donny, you DO know a mermaid!

Jenny is flustered, so she quickly gets up and runs back to the street.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
Oh.  
(beat)  
Oh!

Donny gets up and faces Clem.

DONNY  
Hey, Clem, you won't tell Mom and Dad, will you?

CLEM  
I hate you!

DONNY  
What?

CLEM  
(nearly in tears)  
You said you met a mermaid. And you wouldn't come with me, and I had to fight a sand monster by myself, and-

DONNY  
Whoa, whoa, back up a second. I never said I met a mermaid.

CLEM

Yes you did, you told Todd on the phone the other night and I heard you!

It hits Donny.

DONNY

Oh, Clem, buddy, that's just what we call really hot babes who like to make out on the beach.

CLEM

So there's no real mermaids?

DONNY

No, of course not.

CLEM

Then-

DONNY

Come on, let's go home, I can-

CLEM

No! You're a liar! Everybody's a liar!

Clem runs away into the darkness. Donny chases after.

DONNY

Clem! Wait!

Clem evades him in the dark. We see Donny run by the foot of the lifeguard chair, then the camera finds Clem curled up, crying, in the seat.

19 EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE

19

Clem wakes up on the beach, having slept on the sand with her backpack as a pillow. She's confused at first, then the previous night's events come flooding back to her. She rips the pages out of her notepad and eats them angrily. Then she fishes in her pocket for the "magic seashell." She winds up and throws it as hard as she can into the ocean.

Clem collects her things and turns her back on the sea. Donny comes running up the shoreline.



DONNY

Clem!

Clem, startled, runs for the pylons of the fishing pier, ditching her backpack for speed. Donny chases her, and they have a brief stalemate between the pylons of the pier, running from one side to the other.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Hey! Just stop running for a second! C'mon! I was looking for you all night, you little fart!

CLEM

Just go away, turd muncher!

Donny finally outsmarts Clem and tackles her to the sand.

DONNY

Just hold still for a second, god! Look, Clem, I'm sorry, okay?

Clem doesn't buy it. She is near tears.

DONNY (CONT'D)

I mean it, I shouldn't have ditched you to go to that party. I just, I don't know. I was a jerk.

CLEM

A big fat jerk.

DONNY

Yeah, a big fat jerk.

Clem stops struggling, Donny lets her sit up. Clem wipes tears out of her eyes. Donny looks out at the sunrise.

DONNY (CONT'D)

You know, I used to think mermaids were real too. Everyone told me they were out there, and one time I thought I saw one when I was surfing. It was probably just a dolphin, but that entire summer I went to the beach every day and looked for her.

CLEM

Why did you stop looking?

DONNY

Well, I guess because I found real girls.

CLEM

Ew, gross.

DONNY

Real girls are pretty great, you know. They're... I don't know, different.

Clem doesn't get it. Donny laughs.

DONNY (CONT'D)

You'll see in a few years.

CLEM

I don't think so.

(beat)

Donny, what's "making out"?

DONNY

It's like kissing, but more.

CLEM

Does it always have to happen on the beach?

DONNY

No, it's just more romantic.

CLEM

Oh. It seems like you would get really sandy.

Donny laughs.

DONNY

Yeah, maybe.

They sit in silence for a second.

CLEM

I still think mermaids are out there. Even though I didn't see one last night.

DONNY

What will you do if you find one?

CLEM

We're going to play and swim and she can probably show me her magic abilities and maybe also sunken treasure.

DONNY

That does sound pretty cool.

CLEM

Yeah.

(beat)

Mom and Dad are going to be mad, huh?

Silence again.

DONNY

Hey, look, I promise I'll hang out with you more. You are right, it's been a while since we had an adventure.

CLEM

Would you help me find a mermaid?

DONNY

Sure.

Clem hugs Donny. Then realization hits her.

CLEM

But I just threw away the magic seashell!

DONNY

That's okay, we'll find another one. There's a lot of magic around this place.

Clem runs, Donny gives chase again, this time light-hearted and playful. They run off the beach together.

As they are leaving, the camera moves to the ocean, where a MERMAID surfaces, holding the magic seashell. She watches Clem and Donny run off the beach, then dives below the surface.

END.