

Wallace wants to be famous, but he's not quite sure how to achieve it - although he doesn't really care! Being famous - that's the thing - if only he can become famous he'll be really happy . . . or will he?

Wallace's Dream

Wallace picked his way over the dunes and tufts of grass until he reached the beach. Would this be the day when his dream came true?

He loved the early morning. Quiet except for the gentle swish of the waves breaking over the sand and the occasional gull, screaming, overhead. There were never many people on this beach. It was far from the town or any main roads. A secret, really. A secret paradise. Yet this morning, as usual, Wallace thought about his dream. To become famous.

He'd had the dream for as far back as he could remember. His life was so ordinary. He could see it stretching in front of him, year after year, unchanging, and when he died it would be as if he had never existed. No-one would remember him.

Wallace longed for excitement. He wanted to be somebody. His name in the paper, to be recognised in the street, to be envied by others. But how all this was going to happen, he didn't know.

Perhaps he had a hidden talent for painting, or writing. Perhaps he would be discovered and become a film actor or a pop singer. Maybe he would find something washed up on the beach. Treasure from a sunken galleon or the bones of a dinosaur.

As he walked he kept his eyes on the sand but there was nothing but seaweed.

He reached the outcrop of rocks which marked the end of this little beach and sat down. He'd brought his silver flute with him, as usual, and he began to play.

Suddenly, a movement made him look up.

A girl sat watching him. She was perched on a rock several metres out to sea.

'Don't stop', she said. 'I do love music'.

She was pale with long, fair hair and she sat with her legs dangling . . .

Wallace blinked and then squinted, the sun in his eyes. Her legs seemed to catch the light and sparkle in many facets. Strange.

'I didn't see you arrive', he said, sliding off the rock and walking towards her.

She smiled, shyly, and half turned away from him towards the sea. But not before he had seen that instead of legs she had the pearly scales of a fish's tail.

She was a mermaid!

After that, she often came to hear Wallace play his flute and she would tell him tales of life under the sea and ask him what it was like to be a human being. For a while he forgot his desire for fame in the excitement of her company. He sat, spellbound, by her words of wisdom and insight into life.

'Are you happy?' she asked him, one day.

'Happy?' he answered, and was surprised that he couldn't reply, immediately.

'Do you understand what happiness is?' she asked.

He thought for a moment, sat on the rock beside her. 'Being content, knowing what you want out of life?' he said.

She smiled. 'And do you know what you want?'

'Oh yes'. There was no hesitation now. There was no stopping him. He told her about his dream of fame and recognition and she listened, watching him with her clear blue eyes.

It was later that he realised just how his dream could come true and the next morning, when he went to the beach, he took his camera with him.

'I'm going to take your photo', he explained. 'An image of you will come out on a piece of paper'.

'But, you can see me', said the mermaid, 'why do you want me on a piece of paper?'

Wallace smiled. 'So that I can remember you and know that you're real'.

The next morning, Wallace was not alone when he went to the beach. With him was a photographer from the local newspaper, who made jokes about mermaids and laughed loudly as they walked.

The mermaid was shy and refused to come close. She sat with her back to them on the furthest rock from the beach. The photographer was unconvinced but clicked his camera and went away grumbling about not having got a clear picture.

Nevertheless, a picture of the mermaid appeared in the paper at the weekend and Wallace smiled with satisfaction and cut out the article. There he was, on the front page!

But not many people would see it, and by next week something else would make the headlines. Wallace had other plans.

When he saw the mermaid again he showed her the paper. 'This week we were in the local paper but tomorrow the National Press are coming. We can be famous, both of us. No-one has ever photographed a mermaid before, in fact, not many people even believe in them'.

'You can believe in me', she retorted. 'You can see me'.

'But no-one else will believe it', insisted Wallace.

'If that will make you happy', she said, her voice low and sad.

When the National Press came, with a reporter and a photographer, she allowed them a better picture with Wallace as well. This picture made the front page too but this time people all over the country could read it.

Other papers and magazines began phoning Wallace, in fact, the phone never stopped ringing, even as early as six o'clock in the morning. He was so busy that he often didn't have time for his usual quiet walks along the beach and he missed them.

When he did meet the mermaid again, he said, 'The TV people are coming on Friday. Then I'll be famous all around the world'.

Soon, Wallace's diary was full with requests for interviews and appearances on chat shows. He was asked to give talks about the mermaid and a publisher asked him to write a book. His photo with the mermaid appeared everywhere and people began to recognise him in the street and ask for his autograph.

Wallace revelled in it all.

Still, when he could, he took his silver flute and went down to the beach in the early mornings to play and talk to the mermaid. But she came less and less. There were nearly always people on his strip of beach now, hoping for a

