

An artistic illustration of a scene from a story. At the top, the stern of a boat with a dark blue hull and a light-colored wooden deck is visible, partially submerged in water. Below the waterline, a young girl with blonde hair is swimming underwater. She is wearing a green and yellow striped swimsuit and is holding a large, green, round object. Bubbles are rising around her. In the bottom right corner, a large, red, five-armed starfish is swimming, looking towards the girl. The background is a light blue, textured water surface.

**Costanza Cerrotta**

**Dorina in the  
enchanted sea of  
Capri**



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# **DORINA IN THE ENCHANTED SEA OF CAPRI**

**by Costanza Cerrotta**

**English translation by Giovanna Vuotto**

Drawings by Costanza Cerrotta, freely inspired by Cristina Lantoni's illustrations present in the book *Dorina e il mare incantato*, written by Costanza Cerrotta and published by *Youcaprint*, 2016.

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# 1

Once upon a time in Capri lived a little girl, called Dorina. She loved reading books telling stories set in the Sea.

She wished she could, one day, get into one of those books and become its heroine!

And... you know... good children deserve to be rewarded!

Because Dorina was a good child, the Great Mermaid, Queen of the Seas, decided to please her.

It was a grey, rainy day and, after doing her homework, Dorina decided to indulge in reading the new book she had been given as a present: *The Enchanted Sea of Capri*.

All of a sudden, by opening the book and starting reading its first page, a splash of water came out so high that the little girl instinctively threw the book away.



Dorina was all wet and, looking at her soaked clothes, she noticed a tiny starfish among the folds.

It was smaller than her hand and the two tiny eyes and the mouth of the little animal were amazing.

Dorina wasn't scared at all!

Actually, for children and their imagination, anything may occur in life!

Without losing courage, Dorina picked the tiny starfish with her hands and asked: "Who are you?"



And, by magic, the starfish replied: "I am Cinque Punte and I come from the wonderful Blue Sea of Capri! You must be Dorina! I was sent by the Great Mermaid to make your wish come true. From underneath the water we always see you reading books about us and fancying going down the seabed of your beautiful island! This is your greatest desire... isn't it? Today is your lucky day! Hold on to me!"

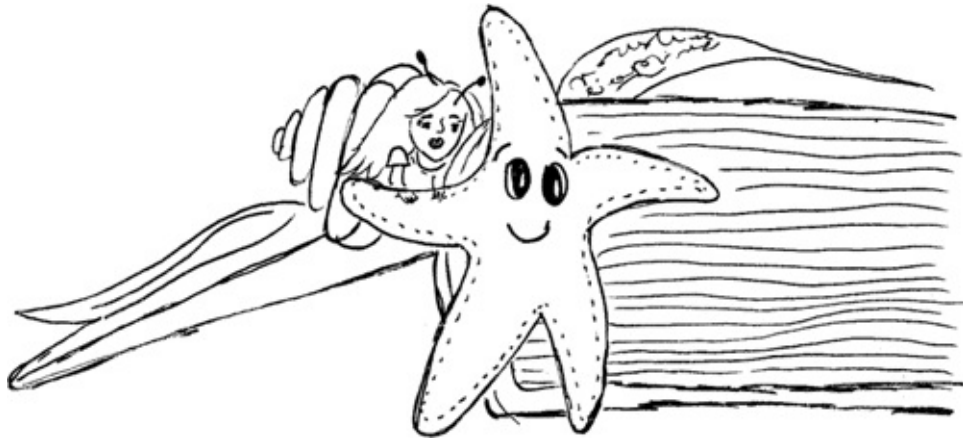
And Dorina answered: "But, how can I hold on to you if you are so tiny?"

Cinque Punte smiled and exclaimed: "You are right! You must utter the narrowing magic formula! So, repeat with me: "Oh Great Mermaid, oh Sweet Mermaid, turn me into a moray... oh no, no! Wait! It's not this! I don't remember the formula! Let's start again: "Oh Great Mermaid, oh Sweet Mermaid, turn me into a whale... oh no, no! It's not this, either! Wait... I need more concentration: OH GREAT MERMAID OF THE SEA, AT THIS VERY SAME MOMENT, CHANGE MY NATURE AND ME, AND VERY VERY SMALL LET ME BE! That's the formula! Come on, Dorina, repeat it with me!"

And Dorina, full of excitement, exclaimed: "OH GREAT MERMAID OF THE SEA, AT THIS VERY SAME MOMENT CHANGE MY NATURE AND ME, AND VERY VERY SMALL LET ME BE!"

And... it was magic!

Dorina started getting smaller and smaller. She slipped off her wet clothes and, in a while, she turned into a tiny sea snail. She was now even smaller than the starfish!



Proud of the occurred metamorphosis, Cinque Punte quietly showed the little girl, or better, the tiny sea snail, all that she needed to do: “Listen carefully: you will now hold your little body onto one of my ends. Don’t be afraid. We have to get into the book and then dive into the sea, but... Mind you! It’s not an easy task! Read again the book you were reading before. When you utter the word *diving*, I will jump on it. We have to get into the word *diving* and open the little magic door which will lead us into the Sea. Are you ready? Start reading!”

Without thinking that much, Dorina started reading: “On that day the little fish decided to ... *DIVE*”, and Cinque Punte cried: “Here’s the moment! Let’s jump on the little letters: D-I-V-E... here we are! The magic door is opening! Down, down, down... We are in the sea! Hooray!”

The magic gap was wide shut! Cinque Punte and Dorina were already swimming in the fantastic, immense BLUE SEA of Capri!



Dorina felt as if she was the happiest snail-child in the world! The sea of Capri!

Who could imagine it was so huge and welcoming and rich! How many colours! The sea wasn't blue only: you could notice thousands nuances and shades!

Still hanging on one of the ends of Cinque Punte, Dorina looked around and, with her heart full of joy, she admired the variety of colours and shapes of the corals, the fish, the underwater rocks, the seaweeds and much, much more! Everything, under the sea, was shining and moved sinuously. The emerald colour of the sea near Marina Piccola was stunning, seen from down there! Also, they found out colonies of beautiful black sea urchins in the sea bathing the beach of Marina Grande!

It was a fantastic world! Dorina couldn't stop watching in marvel all that was around her, at the point that she exclaimed: "I had an idea that life in the sea was great, but I couldn't imagine it was so gorgeous! Everything is F-A-B-U-L-O-U-S!"



A bit tired after the long walk and the weight of the little snail, Cinque Punte said: “Dorina, let’s slow down, let’s go on to the sand, so you can get off my body and lean on the seabed.”

And so they did.

“Well”, said Cinque Punte, “now let the current carry you... I will do the same.”

And so, both of them, lulled by the current, were carried as far as their destination: the Rock House of the Great Mermaid, Queen of the Sea, which was under the Blue Grotto.

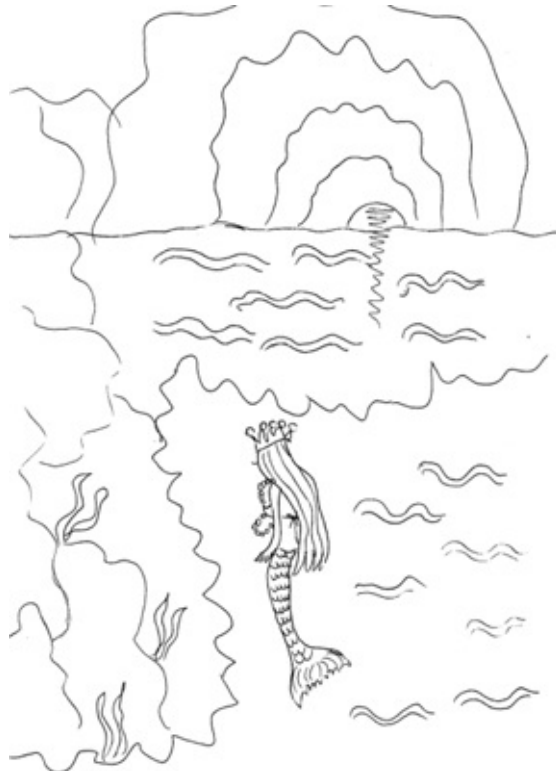
## 2

The Great Mermaid was indeed on the threshold of her House, which had been obtained from a huge underwater rock, just beneath the famous Blue Grotto of Capri, and she was waiting for little Dorina to arrive.

The Great Mermaid was loved by all the sea dwellers of Capri: she was so good and had always done her best to grant order and peace down there, in the life of the seabed.

In that area of the sea, it was told that, long before, the Queen had been a beautiful lady living on the Island. She used to have long, gold color hair, and to enchant everyone for her sweetness and gentle manners. Yet, it seems she had a problem which didn't allow her to walk properly. Therefore, one day, the Great Earth-King decided to take her to live in a place where, instead of walking, you only needed to move sinuously.

Earth-King turned her into a Mermaid and made of her a good, loving Queen of the marine seabeds, offering her a magnificent house just underneath the deep-blue sea of the magnificent Blue Grotto!



It was just because the Great Mermaid had been a child in her past life, that she now had the power to content all the good children who loved the sea and wished to discover its amazing depths!

She knew Dorina read a lot of books dealing with the Sea and its dwellers. Thus, she had decided to send the little guide, Cinque Punte, to her, so that the little girl could enjoy the marvels of the sea.

### 3

The Great Mermaid, with her brilliant, long, gold hair, her emerald-green colour tail and her amazing smile, was waiting for little Dorina to arrive.

She had arranged any detail for her visit, so that everything could be perfect. Yet, not always do things go smooth in fairy tales!

Even in the Huge Blue Sea of Capri, where the Great Mermaid ruled in peace, there were some rebel spirits.

As a matter of fact, the mullet fish, intolerant to any kind of rules, were used to doing all that they wanted.

They were the only fish who didn't respect the authority of the Great Mermaid.

The reason for their rebellion was the fact that they were convinced they were equally entitled to rule over the Sea of Capri as The Great Mermaid was.

Indeed, when Earth-King had turned the fair Girl into a beautiful Mermaid, he had done that by offering her a huge emerald-green color tail taken from a mullet fish.



Therefore, they demanded a half of the authority the Great Mermaid possessed, since it was also thanks to them that she was so beautiful!

Earth-King didn't share their belief, so he had made the Great Mermaid the only Mistress of the Seas.

The latter, on her turn, because of her immense goodness, acknowledged the mullets the merit for her beautiful emerald-green colour tail. Yet, she did have

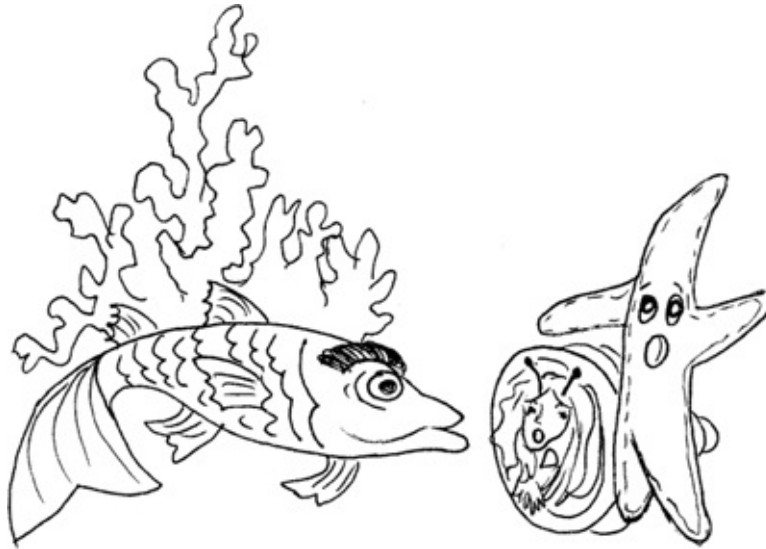
to respect the will of Earth-King, who had crowned her the sole Queen of the Seas.

When the mullets got to know that a little snail-child, called Dorina, was about to arrive in the nearby area, they devised a plan to do a wrong to the Great Mermaid: they decided to stop the child before she could reach her destination.



## 4

As they went past a huge, flexuous, gold coral, brightened by red reflections, the starfish announced they were going to get to the Rock House of the Mermaid. At that very same moment, an emerald-green colour tailed mullet got next to them and, with a strange kindness, he said hello to the starfish and the little snail in a very polite way: “Good morning! What are you doing round here?”



Cinque Punte was surprised to hear such an unexpected friendliness from the mullet. She was used to always seeing that kind of fish in rude and arrogant attitudes!

Anyway, just because she didn't want to appear ill-mannered, she replied with the same cordiality: “Good morning, Mr. Mullet, I am taking this little snail-child, called Dorina, to the Great Mermaid, who is waiting for her.”

The mullet, who was aware of everything, pretended to be surprised and exclaimed: “Really? Are you going to the Rock House? I am just coming back from that place and, to my regret, I witnessed a very disappointing scene. The Great Mermaid was there and, in a rage of fury, she cried out that, as soon as the child in the shape of a little snail arrived, she would capture and trap her in a sea urchin shell forever!”

And the starfish in astonishment: “What are you saying? The Queen would never do such a thing!”

But the mullet, once again prepared to that reaction from the starfish, promptly replied: “Dear starfish, you don't know what happened here, while you were away. A large fishing-net belonging to Capri fishermen caught

thousands of fish, big and small, off the Faraglioni Rocks area. The Great Mermaid is very angry for this, so she is looking for someone to punish. She has deliberately decided to catch little Dorina who, being a Capri dweller, will have to immolate for all the Capri people!”

Little Dorina, her tiny eyes wide shut in fear, held tight onto one of the ends of Cinque Punte. She didn’t know what to exactly do: FLEE!

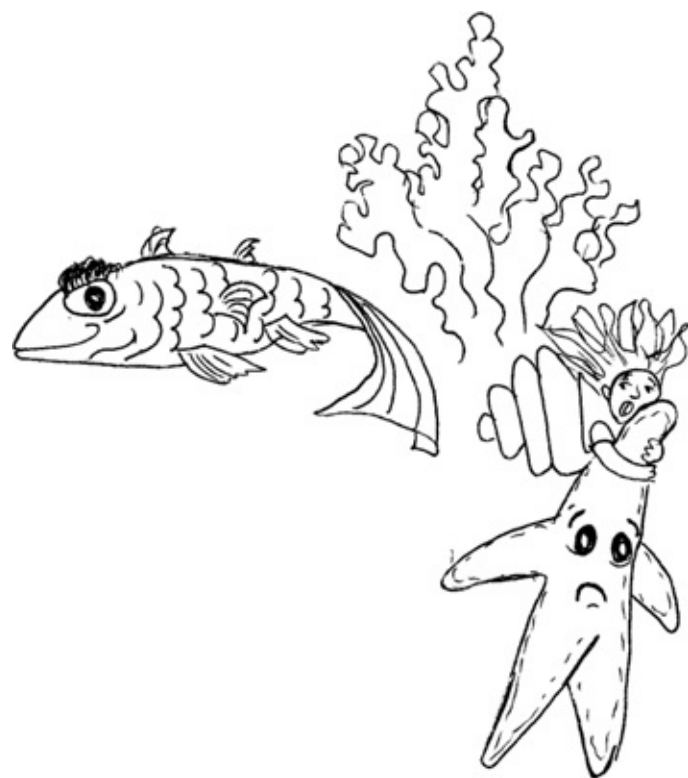
“Cinque Punte, please, take me away from here, I don’t want to stay in the sea forever! I have to return home!”

Cinque Punte didn’t know what to say. How could it ever be that the mullet was telling the truth? Was it wise to believe in that story? Still uncertain about what to do she asked again: “Mr. Mullet, are you telling the truth? What do you suggest we should do?”

The mullet, who had nearly reached his goal, replied: “Cinque Punte, how could I deceive two tiny, helpless creatures as you? Of course, I am telling the truth! Don’t take little Dorina to the Great Mermaid. Go away. At least the little girl will be safe!”

Now Cinque Punte was certain it was time to go back. Therefore, turning around themselves, without saying goodbye to the mullet, Cinque Punte and Dorina walked again on the sand: they were leaving that place.

The mullet had reached the peak of satisfaction, since he had accomplished his goal: he had been able to do a wrong to the Great Queen!



## 5

The Great Mermaid had been waiting on the threshold of her Rock House for too long. She was wondering about the cause of such a delay with the arrival of the girl and the starfish. Why hadn't they come yet? The only way to get to know something was to go personally and see what was happening in the marine depths of Capri.

So, the Great Mermaid left her house in search of the starfish and the little snail.

The sea was strangely rough. When she reached the stretch of sea just down under the Natural Arch, she noticed that the little fish were all very nervous and they were swimming in a hurry. The corals weren't moving in their usual sinuosity. It rather looked as if they were deeply upset. The little shrimps in Matermania Cove didn't manage to move as they normally did and they were pushed forth and back. Also, too strong marine currents were rising. And, to make matters worse, Cinque Punte and Dorina hadn't arrived yet!



Something wasn't going right. The Great Mermaid realized that her sea, the sea of Capri, usually quiet and well organized, was undergoing radical negative changes.

Since the time she had been appointed the Great Queen of the Sea by Earth-King, nothing similar had ever occurred.

Nevertheless, she remembered that, when she was turned into a mermaid, Earth-King had told her: "From now on, you will be Queen of the Sea and because of you, everything will go for the best. But, mind you: if, one day or another, you should witness turmoil in the sea, this will mean that someone among its dwellers is doing something unfair to you. In that case, I will make everybody puzzled and nervous: only by doing so, will you understand that it is time to take action and warn who is behaving badly."

Oh, yes! Maybe that moment had arrived! Someone in the sea was plotting against her person, the Great Mermaid!

And now, what to do? Well, it was necessary to hurry up and regain the lost order. She was the Queen of the Seas and thanks to her innate calm everything could be re-arranged!



## 6

To go back, Cinque Punte and Dorina would have preferred walking on the sand and follow their previous footprints. Unluckily, a sudden, violent, impetuous submarine current had wiped out the marks on the sand. They were feeling scared, because around them there was great turmoil and it seemed as if no little fish wished to help them! Everyone was running here and there in the grip of a strange excited move.

It is true, Dorina was a brave child: that sea, at first, had appeared to her as something gorgeous, but now... all was different!

She said to herself that she'd better return home.

Cinque Punte was trying to understand what was going on, but she couldn't! Everything was so strange!



The Mullet who had deceived the two little animals, had come back triumphantly among his equals and he was now explaining the whole matter to his fellows, but he realized that none of them was listening to him.

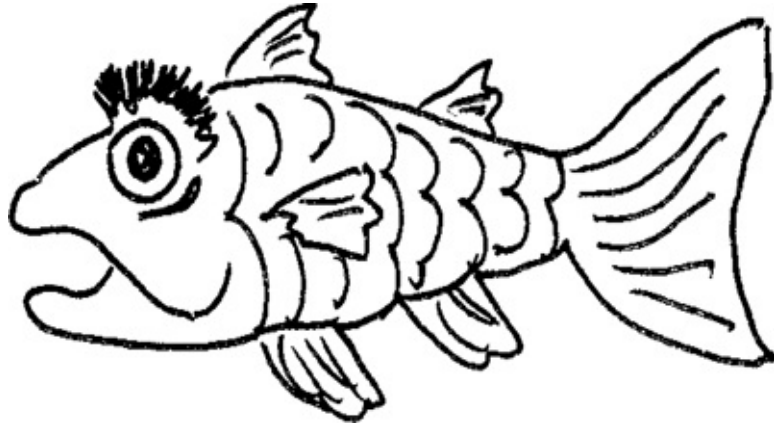
Both the big and the small mullets were nervous: they were moving their fins vigorously and it looked as if they didn't know which direction to follow.

The cheat mullet tried to stop them and talk about his successful plan, that is, doing a wrong to the Great Mermaid. But, he couldn't speak. There was too much chaos all around.

Now it was up to the Great Mermaid to re-arrange everything and everybody. She was the only one who knew what to do. She simply had to identify the maker of all that mess. Who might have been so rude as to bring such a mess

everywhere?

Besides being violent, the underwater currents had become whirling. The Great Mermaid knew that those marine currents were pushing all towards the one who had committed the mistake of betraying her. She followed the current and found out that, strongly blown forward, she had arrived at Rio Cove, where the entrance to the mullet-fish Shelter was located.



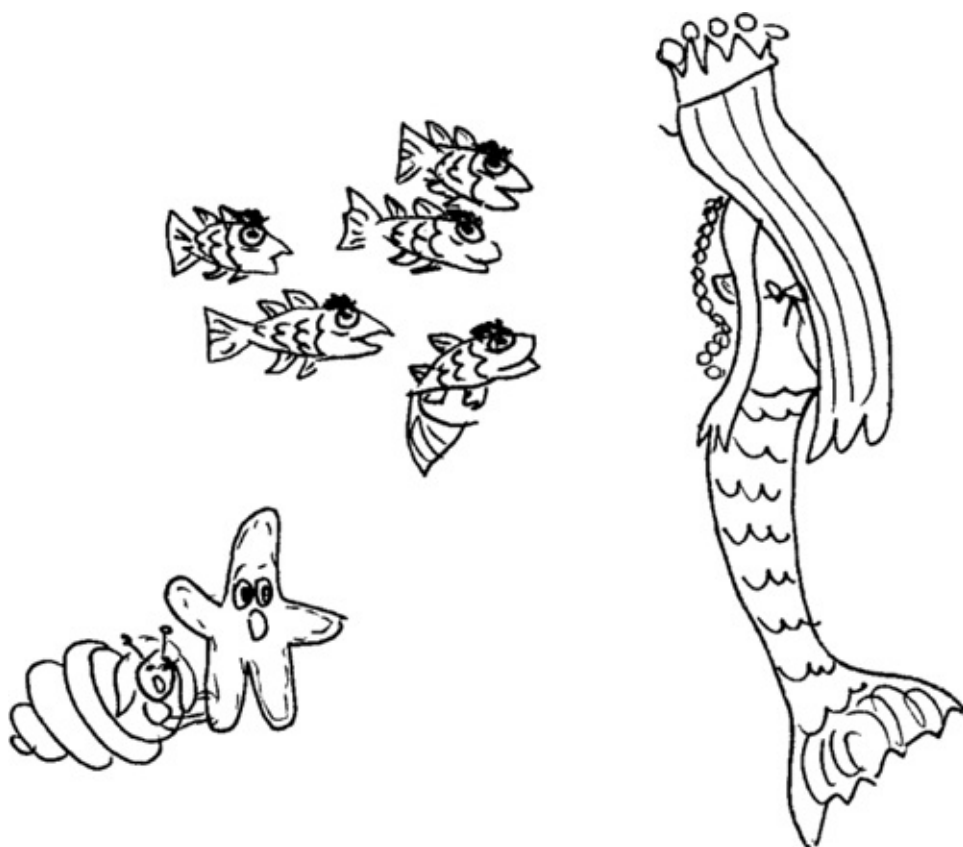
Cinque Punte and Dorina couldn't move forward any longer. The current was too strong and it was pushing them, but also the rest of the sea dwellers, to a precise spot: the mullet-fish Shelter.

Big and small fish alike, corals, shrimps, sea urchins, had all been dragged there and, among them, besides Cinque Punte and Dorina, was the Great Mermaid!

The cheat mullet was astonished: at the very same moment in which he was making a last effort to tell his fellow friends about his successful plan, the Shelter was filled with the entire population of the sea of Capri!

The mullet didn't know whether to flee or to try to understand what was occurring!

Actually, he had very little time to reflect. In front of him, in all her majesty and beauty, was the Great Mermaid! The fish would have wanted to have anyone else before his eyes, except her, the mermaid whom he had tried to do a wrong to, by deceiving Cinque Punte and Dorina.



After she had landed in that crowded shelter with Cinque Punte, Little Dorina started shivering with fear: in front of her the Great Mermaid had appeared:

the one who wanted to capture and trap her in the shell of a sea urchin!

## 8

Luckily, the Great Mermaid didn't look so fierce and revengeful as the creature depicted by the mullet. Contrariwise, after gaining room in that incredible mess, she got as close as possible to the mullet and spoke to him in a calm, sweet voice: "Dear mullet, of course I am very disappointed. As Queen of the Sea who knows everything and who can everything, I have realised that YOU are the cause of all this turmoil. YOU wanted to do me a wrong by denying the little girl the chance to reach me. That's not the way one must behave and I would appreciate if you apologized for your action, first of all with Dorina."

The little snail-child, nestled in her shell, was still trembling, when the cheat fish, full of shame for being unmasked before everybody, got close to her and asked forgiveness for unfairly depicting the Mermaid as a mean, revengeful creature.



But the mullet felt compelled to reply to the Queen: "Oh Great Mermaid, I admit I was wrong telling lies to the child, but let me add this: mullets should be equally entitled to have an authority over the sea. It must be so, since the marvellous emerald-green colour tail that you have, belongs to us, the mullets of Capri!"

The Great Mermaid already knew how to cope with that statement. Actually, she was the best Queen in the whole world!

Therefore, turning to the mullet, she said: "You are right, dear mullet. My tail belongs to your species. So I want to assign you and the other mullets a really important task: any time I decide to welcome a good child in the sea, exactly



as I did today with little Dorina, you will be the official guides of these children, and you will let them find out all the beauty of our gorgeous seabed! And, since we are all here, dear Mr. Mullet, YOU will start today: you will lead Dorina to the most beautiful places of our sea!”

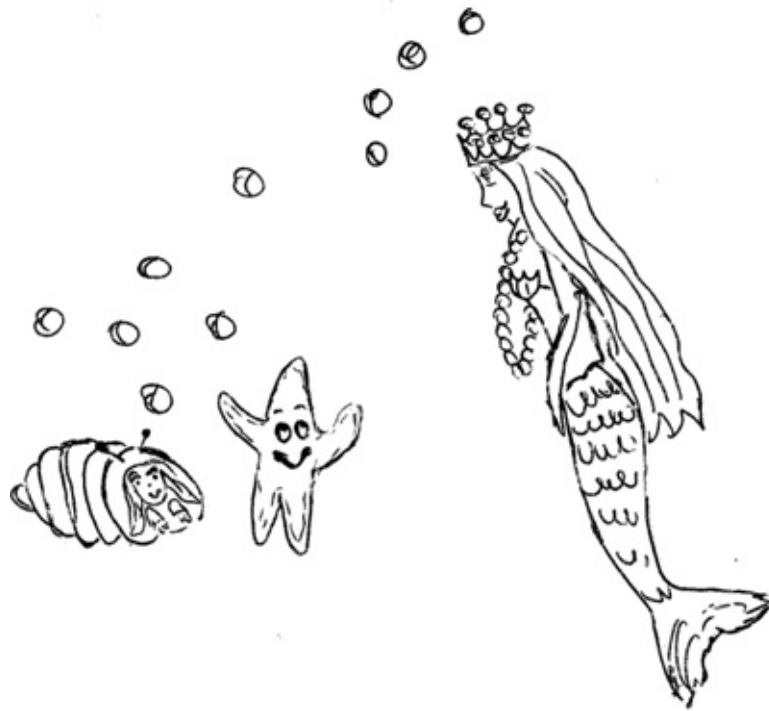
The mullets were overjoyed! After so long they had been acknowledged a role: the Official Guides of the Children in the Sea of Capri!

The Cheat mullet, who was now grateful and full of emotion, thanked the Great Mermaid and decided to start working on behalf of Dorina right away.

But, before the guided visit started, the beautiful Queen talked to the little snail-child: “Dorina, I let you be turned into a lovely little snail so that your journey under the sea could be more comfortable. I know you are a good child and you love reading. It’s for these reasons that I decided to reward you with a voyage in the sea of Capri. Unfortunately you experienced a time of great chaos, when Mr. Mullet behaved badly. But it’s all finished, now! Everything has gone for the best and order has been restored. You know, little Dorina, all of us may make a mistake, but what really counts is to regain the right path, trying to learn from our own faults and avoid repeating them. Our mullet friend was cunning and wanted to displease me, but he was very intelligent, too, in the end, because he decided to listen to me when I tried to meet his needs. And now, little Dorina, enjoy the guided tour across the wonderful blue sea of Capri. You are a good child!”

Dorina had completely forgotten all that she had been thinking of the Great Mermaid and also the fear that she could remain trapped in the shell of an urchin!

That gorgeous Queen, with her sweet, convincing words, had literally enchanted and charmed the little girl!



It was time to leave, but, before that, Dorina wished to talk to the beautiful Mermaid: “I have always imagined that the sea life was beautiful and rich of colours. Today, I found out that it is all true! As soon as I get home, I will write down a tale about this wonderful adventure. Goodbye, beautiful Mermaid!”

And, by saying that, Dorina held tight onto the fin of the mullet, who was ready to guide her all around.

But, there was someone who wanted to greet the child... Cinque Punte: “Bye, little Dorina. It’s up to the mullet to take you back home. Mind you: don’t forget the formula to make you big again! You can’t certainly go back home in the shape of a sea snail! Here are the words of the magic formula, which you must learn by heart:

OH BLUE SEA, OH BLUE SEA, I WAS TO YOU BUT I HAVE COME BACK NOW. FOR NO LONGER BEING A SNAIL, LET ME BE A CHILD AGAIN!”

Dorina made a big effort to learn those words and went away following the mullet and greeting loudly: “Bye bye, wonderful Mermaid! Bye Bye, friendly Cinque Punte! I thank you all for everything!”



The guide fish proved himself up to the task. He knew the sea of Capri very well and showed Dorina all the tiniest details of the underwater life: what the shrimps, dwelling off the Lighthouse of Punta Carena, ate; how the crabs, living in the narrow creeks under the majestic Faraglioni Rocks, took their naps. Going past Punta Tragara, they let themselves be carried by a huge *Caretta Caretta* turtle, which was passing by, and offered them a little rest on her beautiful, comfortable carapace! The mullet showed Dorina the range of colours of the corals beneath the Monacone Rock as well as the variety of starfish right under the majestic White Grotto. And much, much more!



When they were off the Bagni di Tiberio, a family of happy octopus greeted them: the tentacles which moved simultaneously made little snail-Dorina smile with joy: “Hello, nice octopus! You are so cute!”

The tour was, indeed, a long one, and Dorina was very pleased. She tried to memorize as many details as possible because, she was certain that, once home, she did have to write a story about all that she had experienced!

When they reached the wonderful deep blue sea of the Blue Grotto, Dorina asked Mr. Mullet: “Can I put my head out, inside the cave? “Please, Mullet!

Let me rise up the water just for a while! I want to see inside the Grotto!”

“That’s fine, Dorina! But just for a while! I am a fish! Of course, I can’t breathe in the open air! And you... you are still a little sea snail, actually!”

Therefore, the mullet let Dorina have a quick look with her little head out of the water, inside the Blue Grotto.

“Wowwww! What enchanting colours!”, tiny Dorina exclaimed, “But let’s go down immediately! Quickly! Quickly! A small boat is approaching with someone in, singing ‘*O Sole Mio*...!’”

Ad so... they ran away! With a fast jump they returned down under the seabed to complete the tour.

From place to place they had now arrived at the entrance of the magic door: it was time to go back home. So the mullet said: “Do you know how to pass through the magic door? It is my very first experience with magic doors. I don’t know what to do, that’s certain!”

Dorina looked at the mullet in marvel and answered: “Hum... I don’t know, either... when I got here, there was Cinque Punte to help me. I don’t know what to do, now. Also, there’s the magic formula, uhm... I don’t remember it that well... and NOW? What are we doing?”

The mullet didn’t lose courage. He stopped to reflect, then he added: “Well, first of all, try to remember the magic formula. I think you have to utter it on our crossing through the magic door, so that, as soon as you turn into a child again, I will be able to step back, before the magic door closes. Come on, Dorina! Get focused, focused, focused!”

And Dorina started: “*Oh blue sea, o sweet sea... no!* That’s not the one! *Oh blue star, o red star... no, no!* Help! I don’t remember the words! Wait... wait: O BLUE SEA, O BLUE SEA... here we are! I remember all the words! I am ready, and you, Mullet, are you ready?”

And the mullet: “Yes, yes, I am ready! Let’s do as I say: you will now start uttering the formula. When the magic door opens up, keep walking ahead and proceed with the formula. When you complete the whole sentence, pass through the door. As for me, I will run back as far as I can. Is everything clear?”

And Dorina: “Yes, it is! It’s all clear! Thank you Mullet. Mind you: behave properly, always! And now... I am ready! I am going to utter the formula: O BLUE SEA, O BLUE SEA”, the door started moving. Dorina stepped ahead, “I WAS TO YOU BUT NOW”, the door continued opening up. Dorina was



passing through it! “I HAVE COME BACK”, Dorina had now crossed it completely, “FOR NO LONGER BEING A SNAIL, LET ME BE A CHILD AGAIN!”

And, pluf! It was magic! Dorina kept her eyes closed and said to herself: “Shall I open my eyes?” Done! I will open them.”

Dorina opened her eyes: she was in her room, sitting at her desk. She was holding a pen in her hand. A notebook was in front of her and a lot of pages had already been written. So, she exclaimed: “When did I write all these pages!?!”

She flipped the notebook back to the first page, on which, who knows when, she herself had written down a title:

### DORINA IN THE ENCHANTED SEA OF CAPRI

“Of course! Got it now! This is the story I was going to write! Well! I know what I need to do: I have to keep on writing my tale!”

She leafed through the notebook again up to the last page. The latest words she had written were: *Shall I open my eyes?*

Dorina smiled and decided to continue writing about her adventure. When had she started that tale? The book entitled: *The enchanted sea of Capri* was no longer in her room! Who knows!?! It was so strange, or better... so magic!



On the other hand, the adventure she had experienced in the wonderful sea of her Capri had been kind of magic! And by the very same magic, the tale had been written on that notebook, who knows when... all was magic!

Dorina smiled, then, without thinking that much, she looked inside the pocket of her dress: one could never be surprised to see in that pocket a tiny shell of a little sea snail!

But, it is well known that anything can happen in the imaginary world of a child!



This is me:

Costanza Cerrotta, from Capri, Italy.

I graduated in Educational Sciences. I live on my Island where I dedicate myself to writing stories for children. I have always supported the psycho-pedagogical function of creative/fantastic narration.

The magical adventures that Dorina, the protagonist of my tales and illustrated books, enjoys with her friends, are never lacking deep educational values.



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