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Dramatic Publishing

THE LITTLE MERMAID

A Play In Two Acts

by

WILLIAM GLENNON



Dramatic Publishing

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(THE LITTLE MERMAID)

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THE LITTLE MERMAID

A Play in Two Acts
For 5-8 Men and 4-7 Women, Extras, with doubling

CHARACTERS

THE LITTLE MERMAID

KING NEPTUNE her father

MINNOWMAID her older sister

GRANNY her grandmother

THE SEA URCHIN Major-domo to the King

TURT an assistant to the Sea Witch

THE SEA WITCH

TORT another assistant

OLLIE the Prince

TEACHER ONE*

TEACHER TWO*

TEACHER THREE*

SERVANTS*

ATTENDANTS*

A SEA CAPTAIN*

} the Prince's trainers (male or female)

*Doubling possible

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The play should unfold with as much ease as possible, relying on cut-out scenery, interesting music/sound effects and imagination to give it flavor and an uninterrupted flow.

To help create the illusion of the Kingdom Under the Sea, each performer might develop some kind of special movement to *suggest* swimming, avoiding a realistic imitation—short, quick steps, perhaps, with small hand gestures, all of which should look like fun and not slow down the tempo of the story, and above all encourage the audience to use its imagination.

MUSIC at the back of the script.

ACT ONE Scene One: Under the Sea

ACT ONE Scene Two: Above the Sea

ACT TWO: Above and Under

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The Kingdom Under the Sea. An arrangement of platforms and spaces used throughout the play with the addition of props and scenery, seemingly created by a gifted child, to suggest the various locations both below and above the sea.*

AT RISE: *Sounds of music to enhance the mysterious underwater atmosphere. Flickering, reflected lights, perhaps. One steady light picks out the LITTLE MERMAID, DC, looking alert and expectant. She is seated or semi-reclining on a small platform or stool. As the sounds fade under, she begins to sing, "At the Top of the Sea" [When I Rise]*

MERMAID.

**What will I find
Who will I be
When I rise?
How will I change
Will it be me
When I rise?
Give me a friend who'll share it with me
That wondrous new world at the top of the sea
When I rise, when I rise, when I rise!**

(The lights increase a little and three characters enter and swim to separate spaces. Her father, KING NEPTUNE, up-

stage, her GRANNY, to one side, and her older sister, MINNOWMAID, to the other. They look front.)

MERMAID (*speaking*). In case they ask me how I feel, I'll tell them excited. And scared. Very scared. (*KING, GRANNY and MINNOWMAID smile and nod. As the MERMAID continues her song, they all assume rapturous, almost goofy looks, transfixed by the sound of her singing. They lean toward her inch by inch during her song.*)

(*Singing.*)

I'll take a star

Best make it two

When I rise.

One for good luck

And the other for you

When I rise.

Show me your moon! Point out the sky!

Stir up surprises to dazzle my eye

When I rise! When I rise! When I rise!

(*When she stops singing her family members all snap out of it, straighten up and sigh happily.*)

GRANNY. My little guppy.

MINNOWMAID. My baby sister.

KING. My own little Mermaid. (*All shake their heads and speak together slowly.*)

ALL. I can't believe it's her turn. (*A loud whistle shatters the mood, followed by lively music, and those on stage begin working feverishly. The KING deals with a proclamation, GRANNY cleans a bracelet, and MINNOWMAID selects pieces of candy from a box to fill a small pouch, occasionally sampling one herself. They all use exaggerated movements and gestures except during the passages of dialogue.*)

(TWO SERVANTS, carrying a few greeting cards and props necessary for grooming, enter, swim to the MERMAID and go to work. Another blast on the whistle brings on the SEA URCHIN, a high-ranking, very efficient member of the court. He toots his whistle again, checks a list and swims toward the KING's space.)

URCHIN (a few quick bows as music fades under). Greetings, most noble King Neptune!

KING. You, already! Where does the time go?

URCHIN. Where, indeed. Just swims away, I guess. All finished?

KING. Let me tell you something, Sea Urchin. This proclamation will turn you upside down!

URCHIN. It's that good?

KING. One of my best! Be sure and save a copy.

URCHIN. Yes, sire. (Reaches for it.) How's the spelling?

KING (holding it away). The spelling's just fine, thank you!

URCHIN. Better let me check.

KING. No! (Looks at document.) Still needs a little polish. For this event I must have perfection, absolute perfection!

URCHIN. Nothing wrong with perfection, sire. But we do have a schedule to meet. Remember, Time and Tide—and Risings—wait for no one, not even a King.

KING. Where do you dig up all that stuff, Urchin?

URCHIN. The proclamation, if you please.

KING. One moment, if you please.

URCHIN. Just one more. While I do some checking. (Starts to withdraw.)

KING (whispers loudly). Speaking of checking, what about the Sea Witch?

URCHIN (whisper). Checked and double checked.

KING (*whisper*). No chance she'll raise her ugly head and spoil everything?

URCHIN (*whisper*). None. They say her fortunes have dwindled to nothing. She's a thing of the past. All gone.

KING (*whisper*). I hope so. But knowing how she likes to plot makes me nervous. What with the Rising and all.

URCHIN (*whisper*). You'd do better to expend your royal energy on the proclamation.

KING (*whisper*). I expect you're right.

URCHIN (*whisper*). And if there's any time left over, comb your beard.

KING. Out of here! (*Lively music rises as the URCHIN moves toward GRANNY.*)

URCHIN (*near*). Ah! Dear Granny, honored mother of our noble King!

GRANNY (*yells*). Great sharks and stingrays! I've dropped a shell!

URCHIN. You what?

GRANNY (*frantic*). The smallest one on the bracelet! A shell! Wouldn't you know! Must have been cleaning too hard. Pesky thing just fell off!

URCHIN (*kidding*). The curse of the Sea Witch!

GRANNY. Don't joke about that one. Well, make yourself useful, Urchin! Careful you don't squash it! Come on, move! Must be my nerves.

URCHIN. Surely we can survive without one little shell?

GRANNY. Nope! Bracelet's gotta be the same as always!

URCHIN. If you say so. (*He picks up the shell.*)

GRANNY. I'd be scared to let her trust it otherwise!

URCHIN. Calm your fears, Granny. Take a peek. Is this it?

GRANNY. Sufferin' sardines, it sure is! Come to Granny, you itty bitty scamp you! (*Kisses it a few times.*) Trying to

mess things up for Granny! Whew! Urchin, you're a life-saver!

URCHIN. I try.

GRANNY. Well, now. All we need is a little dab of sea-goo. (*Holds it up.*) Special bracelet, Urchin. Same one I wore. For luck.

URCHIN. That should please your little guppy. (*He withdraws.*) No more delays, Granny.

GRANNY (*muttering*). Gotta get the sea-goo...(*Once more the lively music as the URCHIN approaches MINNOWMAID's space. She has just popped a piece of candy in her mouth.*)

URCHIN (*calling*). Sweet Minnowmaid!

MINNOWMAID (*trying to swallow quickly as he enters her space*). Oh, am I ever busy!

URCHIN. You are?

MINNOWMAID. How many of this kind? One more like that? Problems! Problems!

URCHIN. Sweet ones?

MINNOWMAID. Yes! I'm filling this pouch, see? Candy from my own collection.

URCHIN. Ah!

MINNOWMAID. But I have to be very selective. On account of the size. (*Holds up pouch.*) She said "Just a little pouch, Minnowmaid, I'll be too excited to eat!" Ever hear such twiddle twaddle? Too excited to eat!

URCHIN. Ridiculous.

MINNOWMAID. She'll need all the candy she can carry. It's a long swim, believe me!

URCHIN. Well, you fill your pouch and I'll check on our little friend.

MINNOWMAID. Urchin?

URCHIN. Yes?

MINNOWMAID. Our little friend has me worried.

URCHIN. She does?

MINNOWMAID. I think she's building up to a big let-down.

I mean all those wild ideas about the Rising.

URCHIN. I have noticed her imagination dancing every which way of late.

MINNOWMAID. Just what I mean! Plus Granny's stories.

Mark my word, that's where she got the idea of a Prince, from one of Granny's stories.

URCHIN. A Prince?

MINNOWMAID. Oh, yes. She's been telling everyone, "I'll have a Prince to guide me!" All I had was sea gulls.

URCHIN (*chuckling*). You didn't like the sea gulls?

MINNOWMAID. Well, sure. But then I didn't expect the greatest Rising of all time, the way she does. Come on, Urchin, bet you have some doubts, too.

URCHIN. Maybe. But you know what I always say, when in doubt, eat! (*He shares a piece of candy with her, popping it in her mouth.*) It won't be all let-downs, not if she has a pouch of your candy. Umm. You should open a shop, Minnowmaid. I'd be your best customer.

MINNOWMAID. Second-best, right after me!

URCHIN (*as he withdraws, laughing*). Seafoam fudge!

MINNOWMAID. Coral caramels!

URCHIN. Jellyfish gumdrops!

MINNOWMAID. And lots more! (*Calling after him.*) You tell her to calm down! (*They both "Mm mm!" as he leaves her space and swims to the LITTLE MERMAID.*)

URCHIN (*calling, half-singing*).

"Show me your moon! Point out your sky!"

MERMAID (*a quick response*).

"Stir up surprises to dazzle my eye!"

(Speaking.)

Urchin! Come quick! Look! More cards! Isn't it wonderful? I'm going to save all of them.

URCHIN *(now near)*. Any funny ones?

MERMAID. All kinds. *(Hands him some.)* Now, tell me. *(She poses playfully.)* Am I too beautiful for words?

URCHIN. You're beyond beautiful.

MERMAID. Well, I should be. *(Smiling at SERVANTS.)* They've been working for hours. *(They smile back and continue.)* 'Cause I can't sit still.

URCHIN. Too excited?

MERMAID. And scared. Read some cards. You'll love them. While we finish the transformation.

URCHIN *(selecting a card)*. The transformation? From what to what?

MERMAID. From Granny's guppy to the Prince's Mermaid. Go on, read.

URCHIN *(reading)*. "Waves of good wishes from all of us fishes! Happy Rising!"

MERMAID *(laughing)*. My friends at the school!

URCHIN. The Prince's Mermaid? I've forgotten. Which Prince is that?

MERMAID. The one with the huge vessel.

URCHIN. Oh, that one. With the boat.

MERMAID. Uh huh. And it's enormous. Great white sails the size of...whales! *(The SERVANTS laugh.)* They think it's all my imagination.

URCHIN. But it isn't?

MERMAID. Nope!

URCHIN. He isn't by chance part of some story you made up?

MERMAID. No! Go on, read another.

URCHIN. Let's see. "Just because I think you're great, I'll grab my flags and wave all eight! Happy Rising!"

MERMAID. Can't you guess? All eight? Hint-hint.

URCHIN. All eight?

MERMAID. The Octopus! (*She and SERVANTS wave their arms.*) Don't you just love the Octopus?

SERVANT. There! I do believe we've finished.

MERMAID. You must be exhausted.

SERVANT. No. Excited. The way you are!

MERMAID. Me? I'm calm as a clam! (*She shakes her hands and head nervously.*) See?

SERVANT. Stay neat and tidy, little clam! (*They gather up props.*)

MERMAID (*"freezing"*). I won't move a muscle! (*They laugh and withdraw. She maintains the "freeze" as she calls after them.*) I thank you! My sister thanks you! My Granny thanks you!

URCHIN (*mock pompous*). The King thanks you!

MERMAID (*relaxes*). The Prince thanks you. (*A touch of dreaminess.*) Did I tell you, Urchin, he has music on his vessel? Imagine, music, all the time! Everywhere he sails!

URCHIN. Ah, yes, the Singing Prince. Is he handsome, too?

MERMAID. Mmm. Beautiful. Beyond beautiful. Way beyond.

URCHIN. What if he's busy elsewhere, or he turns out to be a sea gull?

MERMAID (*determined*). He'll be there. And I'm going to follow him, no matter what, the whole world over. (*The URCHIN shakes his head and smiles. The MERMAID half-sings.*)

"Give me a friend who'll share it with me...when I rise...when I rise..."

KING (*calling out*). Urchin! Good news! I've finished! I've done the deed!

URCHIN. Now, who could that be?

MERMAID. I've no idea!

KING (*shouting*). And I need your help! Come on, Sea Urchin, get with it!

URCHIN. Now, remember, don't be nervous.

MERMAID. But I will be nervous.

URCHIN. That's all right. So will I.

(As the URCHIN goes to the KING's space, a SERVANT enters with a card and goes to the MERMAID.)

URCHIN. So it's all finished, is it?

KING. Finished and fabulous.

URCHIN. Of course. (*Reaches for the proclamation.*) I'll have a peek.

KING. No! It's perfect the way it is. No need for you to mess around. No changes.

URCHIN. That way lies danger, sire.

KING. We've just enough time for you to comb my beard. (*Hands over a comb.*) Here. (*Lights change to a focus on the MERMAID. Ominous music. The others all freeze.*)

SERVANT. Look what I have!

MERMAID. Another card?

SERVANT. You'll never guess who delivered it.

MERMAID. Who?

SERVANT. A turtle.

MERMAID. A turtle? But I don't know any turtles.

SERVANT. Apparently one knows you. Said he'd wait for an answer.

MERMAID. He did?

SERVANT. Yes, but he's gone. One of our sea horses chased him off. *(The SERVANT laughs and goes out. The MERMAID toys with the card then slowly opens it.)*

MERMAID. I wonder if it's a funny one. *(Reads.)*

“Come see my gems and pieces of eight
Learn about fortune and magic and fate!
Try transformations, they're easy to do,
I've got surprises up both sleeves for you!”

Not exactly a funny one.

(Reads.)

“Just follow the turtle.

Your secret friend, the Sea Witch. P.S. Happy Rising.”

The Sea Witch? I wonder who she is. *(Thinks.)* Well, I've never had a secret friend. That might be fun...*(Lights are restored in all areas and ominous music fades under.)*

KING. All right! All right! That's enough, Urchin! You're combing too hard!

URCHIN. Not on purpose, Your Majesty.

KING. Never mind. How do I look?

URCHIN. Beyond beautiful. *(Calling out.)* Attention one! Attention all!

KING *(over-riding him)*. Now hear this! Now hear this!

(All turn to face the KING. ATTENDANTS and SERVANTS enter and join in.)

KING. My proclamation's ready! *(Cheers.)* Right on time, too! *(Cheers.)* Yes, indeed, all ready for proclaiming! *(Cheers.)* And who's the best little proclaimer in the business, as if we didn't know? *(The URCHIN preens.)*

GRANNY *(calling out)*. My friend, the squid!

KING *(handing over the document)*. Here you go, Urchin. You're on.