

IGNITE CLIMATE SHORTS:

Song of the Siren

BY

IYUNOLUWA YEMI-SHODIMU

Produced and Directed by Lucy Evans and Kate McAll

A journalist investigates a claim that there is a monster in the lake that sings at night. Upon finding the claim to be true, she struggles to inform the town.

Characters:

Laura - young passionate journalist, new to town and still unaware of how things work around here

Calvin - Laura's boss, son of the owner of the paper. He has grown up in this town and is slated to take over the paper

Phil - young fisherman who wants to fight for the life of his side of town. Caretaker of his sister Mae

Mae - Phil's younger sister and part time form-filler for her brother. An intelligent high schooler whose pre-existing condition has been worsened by the lake water

Radio DJ - sympathetic to Laura's story but ultimately just wants some entertaining content

Sarah - resident of the factory's side of town, one of the few people who didn't sell their house when the factory moved in

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OPENING CREDITS

SOUND: theme music plays under the opening credits

Ignite Climate Shorts: Song of the siren, by Iyunoluwa Yemi-Shodimu

SCENE 1: OFFICE OF THE GAZETTE

SOUND: office phone rings over office ambience

LAURA: *(on phone)* Gazette . . . This is Laura.

PHIL: Yeah, hi, um, this is Phil, I called last week about the creature. . . . in the lake.

LAURA: *(sighing, tired)* Yes Phil, the creature in the lake , of course. . . how could I forget?

PHIL: I've seen it again. . . and heard it. It's been singing. . . calling out.

LAURA: Look, I'm sorry Phil but I'm up against a deadline today, so I don't really have time to talk about . . . monsters. I really must go/

PHIL: *(frustrated)* But I can prove it, Laura. I have photos. The last time we talked you told me you needed proof, well I've got it, and I almost drowned getting it too. Come to the house and I'll show you.

LAURA: *(sighs)* Um, ok. Tell me where to meet you.

PHIL: Number 4 Lake St. Just past the chemical works.

SOUND: Laura puts the phone down

LAURA: *(calls)* Hey boss? I think I've got something.

SCENE 2: SOUTH OF TOWN

SOUND: car door slams, sounds of walking and street ambience continue under the following conversation

CALVIN: Laura, are you going to tell me why we're here now?

LAURA: You know the call I received just before we left the office?

CALVIN: Yes.

LAURA: Well, this guy has evidence that there is a giant monster in the lake.

CALVIN: *(sarcastic)* What, like Nessie or something? Now I see why you wouldn't tell me.

LAURA I know what you're thinking, Calvin, but that's not even the crazy part...

CALVIN: Did he tell you that it sings?

SOUND: walking stops

LAURA: How did you know that?

CALVIN: *(deadly serious)* Parents around here make their children cover their ears at night; the naughty ones get lured in by Mami's singing and swim into the lake never to be seen again.

LAURA: Mami?

CALVIN: That's what the locals call her. They say that every Christmas, her singing guides Santa to the town. *(he starts to snicker - he's kidding around)*

LAURA: I hate you!

CALVIN: *(trying to compose himself)* I mean, come on Laura, you hijacked me to "investigate" a children's bedtime story. Come on, let's go back to the office *(leaving)*

LAURA: Wait! I promised the guy I'd come. He says he's got photographs.

CALVIN: Yeah, right.

LAURA: Look, this is the house. Humour me, will you. It won't take long.

CALVIN: *(sighs)* You owe me for this.

SOUND: music sting for scene change, walking. Then a knock on the door and it opens

LAURA: Phil? Hi, I'm Laura. And this is Calvin.

PHIL: Come in.

SCENE 3 PHIL'S HOUSE

SOUND: door closes, walking

PHIL: Please make yourselves at home. This is my sister, Mae.

MAE: *(weak)* It's nice to meet you guys. Sorry I can't get up.

PHIL: Mae's sick. It's the water that caused it. We stopped drinking it when we knew but it had already done some damage.

LAURA: What's wrong with the water?

MAE: Well apart from the fact that it's toxic and has probably damaged our livers, it's perfectly fine! (laughs)

PHIL: I have a mate that works at the water treatment plant, he says they've been seeing high levels of chemicals in the water since the industrial park started running.

LAURA: That huge building complex on the edge of the lake?

PHIL: Yeah. They own all the land around there too. They tried to buy me out but I refused to go.

LAURA: And they are leaking chemicals into the lake? What chemicals?

PHIL: You tell them, Mae. You're better at explaining it than me.

MAE: PFAS. *(pronounced: P-FAS)*

CALVIN: What's PFAS?

MAE: P-F-A-S, "Forever chemicals" people call them. They're used in non-stick pans, make up, food wrappers. You know how plastic basically never breaks down? PFAS are the same, except they're practically invisible. And mostly

unregulated. Plus, they travel everywhere. They're in us now. In our blood. They've even found PFAS in polar bears. (laughs)

PHIL: That's why we think the monster is coming up to the surface. She's suffering . . . because of the chemicals.

LAURA: And you say you have photographs of this creature? Can we see them?

PHIL: Sure! No problem. (*rustles papers*) Here you go, the quality is not the best, I took it on one of those instant cameras.

CALVIN: (*trying not to laugh*) I'm sorry but what is that supposed to be? It's just a blurry picture of water. It could be anything.

LAURA: Phil, you gotta have more for us than this.

CALVIN: Let's go Laura.

PHIL: Please, don't leave.

LAURA: I'm sorry we couldn't help, good luck though, and let us know if you get any more proof.

MAE: Wait! I have more proof. When we went on the boat the last time, I took my phone and recorded it. The sound quality isn't perfect but..

PHIL: You recorded it singing!

MAE: Yes!

LAURA: Can we hear it?

MAE: Sure give me a second.

SOUND: the creature cries out

LAURA: That's amazing! When can we see it? When could you get us a boat?

PHIL: I've got a boat. We can go tonight. Midnight is the best time.

LAURA: Perfect, we'll be here!

CALVIN: We? Can we talk about this first?

LAURA: No time to talk. We'll see you later. Come on Calvin.

SOUND: walking, music sting

SCENE 4: ON THE MOTORBOAT

SOUND: motorbike on the lake

CALVIN: How much further is it? It's freezing out here.

PHIL: Not far now. We're nearly in the middle of the lake.

CALVIN: If you say so. I can't see a thing.

SOUND: engine stops, water lapping

PHIL: I can't put any lights on. We're not exactly supposed to be here.

LAURA: Pity Mae wasn't well enough to come.

PHIL: Yeah, but you guys really cheered her up. It means a lot that you've come out here tonight.

LAURA: Well, it's pretty quiet. We should tell each other stories or something, to pass the time

SOUND: big splash – the beast is awake

CALVIN: What the hell/

PHIL: She's here! Get ready

CALVIN: Get the camera Laura, give it to me.

SOUND: rustling

LAURA: Here you go, *(struggling to catch her breath)* my God, it's HUGE!

SOUND: beast cries again

PHIL: I told you! *(laughing)*

CALVIN: I can't believe what I'm seeing. It's coming towards us - - Phil Phil Phil we gotta get outta here!

SOUND: boat engine tries to start

PHIL: It won't start.

LAURA: Phil!
It's getting close now!
Phil!

SOUND: water crashes over the boat

ALL: Cry out

SOUND: boat capsizes

SCENE: 5 SIDE OF THE LAKE

CALVIN: Laura? Laura?

LAURA: *groans*

CALVIN: She's alive. *(sigh of relief)*

LAURA: *(gasp, panting)* Did you save the camera?

CALVIN: I thought you were going to die!

LAURA: I'm sorry, thank you for saving me. But you did save the camera right?

PHIL: Yes. And the voice recorder.

LAURA: This might be the find of the decade. It'll go down in journalism textbooks.

SOUND: dogs barking

CALVIN: I think I hear guards coming. Help me get her out of here will you!

SOUND: effort as they escape; music sting

SCENE 6: OFFICE OF THE GAZETTE

SOUND: walking, office ambience

LAURA: You're in early.

CALVIN: I've got good news and bad news.

LAURA: Ok. Hit me with the good news.

CALVIN: You've been promoted.

LAURA: Really?

CALVIN: Yep. I just got out from seeing the Editor. No more phone duty for you.

LAURA: Oh wow!

CALVIN: It comes with a nice pay rise as well. And we even have your first story lined up.

LAURA: I already have my own story, remember? Yesterday, when you took pictures of a folk legend? I almost drowned? Any of this ringing a bell? (Pause) Ok, give me the bad news.

CALVIN: The Editor won't run it.

LAURA: What?

CALVIN: He says there'll be panic and it'll be a huge blow to the town if the industrial site has to close.

LAURA: This wouldn't have anything to do with his brother *owning* the site, would it?

CALVIN: Keep your voice down.

LAURA: You're joking right? We risk our lives and he's cancelling the story? Hell no! Calvin, why would you even ask me to do this? Oh, I see. There's some good news for you in it too, eh?

CALVIN: I've already deleted the photos. Even if you wanted to tell the story, no one will believe you. Just take the job, Laura.

Scene 7: RADIO STATION

SOUND: radio station jingle, then sound of the creature

DJ: Wow, so that was a recording of the monster?

LAURA: The creature. Yes, it really is something isn't it. She's been quiet all these years but now she's got a message for us. Toxic chemicals are leaking into the water.

DJ: Well we're getting some reactions from our listeners . . . John is texting in from traffic saying 'This is a fake' and asking "why is there no picture evidence?" What would you like to say in response?

LAURA: (Laughs) My Editor had the photos destroyed, then tried to bribe me into keeping quiet. But I quit. I promise you that I am not foolish enough to give up financial security for a folk tale. It's not just about the creature, people are getting sick because of the water in the lake.

DJ: Fair enough, we will take one more call. Sarah is on the line, go ahead Sarah.

SARAH: Yes hi! I just wanted to say thank you, for everything. We hear the creature every night, but everyone we called at the council just laughed us away. This means so much to me.

DJ: Thank you Sarah. And thank you Laura for taking the time telling us your story.

LAURA: I won't stop till we get clean water. I promise you that!

DJ: Brilliant! Now, after the break "Cigarettes in your salad?"

SOUND: radio jingle

DJ: Find out the surprising secret that could spice up your next meal after this.

SOUND: music fades out

FINAL CREDITS

SOUND: theme music plays under the closing credits

In Song of the Siren by Iyunoluwa Yemi-Shodimu, Laura was played by Sade Philpotts, Calvin by Guy Amos, Phil by Sebastian Isaac, Mae by Mia Catalina Gill, radio DJ by Jerome Lance and Sarah by Siriol Jenkins. Dramaturgy was by Daniel York Loh, sound design by Ian Hunter and music by John Biddle. It was a Fierce Green and Rhiannon Media co-production, produced and directed by Lucy Evans and Kate McAll.

IGNITE Climate Shorts are supported by the Royal Society of Chemistry. They were recorded at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama with a cast of their members and with technical stage management by Chris Laurich.

Visit FierceGreenProductions.co.uk for more information on the project and the science behind the dramas.

SOUND: music rises to a climax before quickly fading out.

END.