

IGNITE CLIMATE SHORTS:

THE LITTLE MERMAID

BY

HELENA FOX

Produced and Directed by Lucy Evans and Kate McAll

Characters:

Little - a confident and passionate young woman with something to say.

Hans Christian Andersen - a bemused but amiable writer who has been transported from the past to the present.

Ray - the arrogant, slimy, and self-serving owner of a scallop dredging company.

The Sea Witch - a magical and determined woman who has been cut off from the other sea-folk for existing outside of their expectations.

Father - Little's doting father.

Sister - one of Little's older sister who is frustrated by how much her sister gets away with.

Available under a Creative Commons License:



Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

OPENING CREDITS

SOUND: theme music plays under the opening credits

Ignite Climate Shorts: The Little Mermaid by Helena Fox

SCENE 1:

ROOM, WITH DISTANT SOUNDS OF SMALL FISHING HARBOUR

LITTLE: Right. *Go* We haven't got long.

HANS: Yes, but, you see, the whole *'being summoned from the past to rewrite something one wrote nearly two centuries ago'* is rather a lot to get one's head around...

LITTLE: But you're here now, Hans, so you might as well get on with it.

HANS: And then...?

LITTLE: And *then*, everyone will know the story as it's meant to be. Not the stupid version you wrote before.

HANS: Well, thank you very much.

LITTLE: And *maybe*, they'll do something about it. Come on!

HANS: ***Now, 'Once upon a time, there was a bustling fishing harbour...'***

LITTLE: *(she takes a deep breath and jumps into the sea)*

SCENE 2:

UNDERWATER . RIPPLES OF WATER, INTERMITTENT BUBBLES

ATMOS

Music

HANS: **'The underwater kingdom was enchanting. An expanse of deep turquoise. Skate, herring, and cod darted through the water, glistening, and scallops nestled next to maerl.'**

F/X: **A SPLASH – SOMETHING EMERGING FROM WATER.**

SCENE 3: **WE'RE BACK IN THE ROOM WITH DISTANT HARBOUR**

LITTLE: Argh, you're already getting it wrong. Give it here.

SOUND **A TUSSLE OVER A PIECE OF PAPER.**

SCRATCHING AS LITTLE STARTS CROSSING OUT AND REWRITING

LITTLE: O . . . kay. The kingdom was... pretty rubbish, frankly.

ATMOS: **A DESOLATE, INDUSTRIAL UNDERWATER SEASCAPE. DRONING OF MACHINERY**

'It was a boring wasteland with the occasional fish, the odd scallop, and half-dead reefs.'

ATMOS CUTS

HANS: You can't write that! That's not how stories start!

LITTLE: Well, it's how this one starts..

F/X: **A PLUNGE UNDERWATER**

SCENE 4: **UNDERWATER**

LITTLE: Daddy! I'm going out. See you later.

FATHER: Make sure you're not late again, my little mermaid. Granny's making prawn cocktails.

LITTLE: Yeah, whatever.

FATHER: And watch out for the scallop dredgers!

LITTLE: I know, daddy.

FATHER: And the sea witch! And the acid!

F/X: **A DOOR SLAMS WITH A WATERY, SUCTION-FILLED SQUELCH**

F/X: **A SPLASH**

SCENE 5: **ROOM WITH DISTANT FISHING HARBOUR**

HANS: Acid?!

LITTLE: He was talking about acidification.

HANS: Acidi-who?

LITTLE: Ocean acidification. It's a part of climate change.

HANS: Climate change?

LITTLE: Ugh. Have you been living under a rock, Hans?

HANS: I've quite literally been dead for 150 years.

LITTLE: Oh. Yeah. Well. In a nutshell: human activity is warming up the earth, and it's causing a *lot* of problems. All the life is being destroyed. Really, really quickly.

HANS: And the ocean acidifi...thing?

LITTLE: Carbon dioxide gets sent into the air, and the sea absorbs some of it. When it meets the water, it becomes carbonic acid.

HANS: I have a feeling that isn't a good thing. *(Pauses)* Why doesn't anyone do anything about it?

LITTLE: Some of us are trying. Carry on!

ATMOS: **THE GRIM UNDERSEA WORLD**

HANS: **'Each day, the mermaid spent longer and longer away from home. For she had a secret. She had become enchanted by the Land Above the Sea, and all that it promised.'**

'There was one shining thing that drew the little mermaid to the land above all else: a human man. He came to represent all that was hopeful about a life on earth. Day after day, she would return to the harbour to speak to him. She was in love.'

LITTLE: Uh I was not in love. He just... had good chat. I wasn't that bothered, okay?

SCENE 6: **EXT. THE HARBOUR, AT WATER'S EDGE**

LITTLE: (Giggles) Ooh, Ray! You're so funny! I think I'm in love with you.

F/X: **HER TAIL SPLASHES AGAINST THE WATER**

RAY: Oh, careful, don't get my suit wet! It's designer.

HANS: **'The Little Mermaid *was* in love. The more she thought about the world above the waves, the more her mind was made up. One night she decided to sneak out of her home-'**

LITTLE: I did not sneak!

F/X: **A PLUNGE UNDERWATER**

SCENE 7: **BLEAK UNDERWATER WASTELAND**

FATHER: Little? Where are you sneaking off to?

LITTLE: Oh, Dad, um... I just need to nip out. Can't sleep.

FATHER: You're not going anywhere. Not at this hour.

LITTLE: But *dad*, it's so *boring*. I... I'm going to live on the land. I want to be where the people are.

FATHER: Oh, going to become a human, are you? Polluting our waters?
Dredging our beds?

LITTLE: They're not all like that. Don't be stupid.

FATHER: Stupid! Yet you're the one that seems to have forgotten one
tiny problem... you've got a big, splashy tail. I don't recall
humans walking around on those.

LITTLE: I've thought about that. I'm getting legs. And feet.

FATHER: Don't be ridiculous! How would you even poss- (Pause) No.

LITTLE: You can't stop me.

FATHER: Little, please. She's evil, she'll do terrible things to you.

LITTLE: I've already made my mind up. I'm going there now.

F/X: **DOOR SLAMS WITH A SQUELCH**

ATMOS: **THE DRONING MACHINERY GETS MORE DISTANT AS THE
SILENCE BECOMES MORE OPPRESSIVE**

HANS: ' So the beautiful young mermaid went to the sea witch's lair
and cut a deal. She would be granted her wish of having legs
and feet. But the wish did not come for free.'

SCENE 8: **SEA WITCH CAVE UNDERWATE**

SEA WITCH: I need your voice.

LITTLE: You what?

SEA WITCH: Your voice. I want it. I watch the harbour, too. I see you there,
day after day after day, eyes wide and jaw dropped, speaking
to that man.

LITTLE: S-so?

SEA WITCH: I know about him. He owns half the boats here.
He's trawling the seabed. Scallop dredging.

F/X: **A DREDGE RAKES THE SEABED**

RAY (*reverb*) You see, little mermaid, the money's in the shellfish.

LITTLE: And this is to do with me because...?

SEA WITCH: It's decimating the reefs.

LITTLE: Yeah, but like, that's not his fault, is it? He's not the one raking his way across the sand.

SEA WITCH: And you think his fishermen have a choice?

RAY (*reverb*): If you don't bring back the catch, you don't get the wages. I'm sorry lads, I don't make the rules. I have to pay my way, too.

HANS: Is this where we go back to the a-cid-if-ic-a-tion thing?

LITTLE: Yeah. Listen.

SEA WITCH: The reef is struggling with the acidic waters. All the maerl, the crustaceans, anyone who needs to calcify to stay alive – they're having to work twice as hard to do it. And just as the reef's about to recover itself, along comes a dredger and obliterates the progress.

LITTLE: This is touching, but all I want is to be *up there*. To leave this wasteland behind. The seabed isn't going to be my problem anymore.

SEA WITCH: (Laughs) Oh, it is. Here's the deal. You get your legs and your happy ever after if I get your voice. You have 24 hours precisely to persuade your *beau* to *stop dredging*. If you fail, splash! Back into the sea you go, tail and all.

HANS: The Little Mermaid agreed to the arrangement. The witch performed the transformation. It was painful-

F/X: **A DISTANT, PIERCING SCREAM**

HANS: 'Like a thousand hot knives'

LITTLE: 'But it was what the mermaid wanted.'

ATMOS: **OCEAN AT NIGHT. THE SOUND OF WAVES AND WIND. ARMS PADDLING ON WATER, BREATHING**

LITTLE: 'She paddled to the shore with her arms, because her legs were new and weird and she didn't know how to use them, and she was just about to get out of the sea and find the man, when-

ATMOS: **OCEAN SOUNDS END. ROOM BACKGROUND.**

LITTLE: (voice breaks. Silence) I- I can't. I hate this part. You do it.

ATMOS: **THE OCEAN AT NIGHT RESUMES**

HANS: '-when, suddenly, one of her sisters appeared way out to sea,

SISTER: Little! It's father! He- he's ill. Oh Little, come home!

F/X: **FATHER SOBBING, DISTANTLY**

LITTLE: What's wrong?

SISTER: It's his brain. It's shutting down.

ATMOS: **INT. THE SITTING ROOM**

HANS: (Pauses) I don't understand.

LITTLE: The acid. A merperson is more fish than human. He... his system couldn't cope with the carbon dioxide.

HANS: You mean he was... dying?

ATMOS: **EXT. THE OCEAN AT NIGHT**

HANS: **'The mermaid stared out at her sister. The floor seemed to disappear below her newly-formed toes.'**

SISTER: Come home!

HANS: **'her sister repeated. But the mermaid could no longer swim. She had lungs and feet, not gills or fins.'**

MUSIC

SCENE 9: EXT. THE HARBOUR AT MORNING

HANS: **'That morning, her human hunk came down to the harbour as usual to meet the mermaid. He was delighted when he found her washed up on the shore, legs and all.'**

RAY: (Laughs) A little ex-mermaid all of my own

HANS: **'he smiled, his devastatingly white teeth flashing.'**

LITTLE: **'The little mermaid started to wonder if she had made a mistake.'**

RAY: Another ocean trophy to add to my collection! Perhaps you could be the figurehead for the scallop company. A gleaming oyster's pearl for me to display.

HANS: **'The little mermaid was faced with a choice.'**

LITTLE: **'To let the spell wear off, and return to the sea, and her dying father. Or to use her voice as the sea witch had instructed, and try to save the home and the family she had left behind.'**

SCENE 10: ROOM WITH DISTANT FISHING HARBOUR

HANS: Well, what happened?!

LITTLE: Still got legs, haven't I?

HANS: So he stopped dredging? The sea's recovering?

LITTLE: (Pauses) I... I don't know. He gave his word, yeah. But I don't know if he meant it.

ATMOS:

EXT. THE HARBOUR AT MORNING

RAY: You see, little mermaid, the industry's hardly regulated. And I have a business to run.

ATMOS:

INT. THE SITTING ROOM

HANS: What about your father? Did he survive?

LITTLE: Just about. Sometimes the witch comes to the harbour and tells me how he is.

HANS: Aren't you angry with her?

LITTLE: The witch?

HANS: For getting you into this mess.

LITTLE: She wanted to save the kingdom. I don't blame her for that. She was right. And I'm still trying. I've got to. I'm telling people, about the acidification, and the dredging, and the destruction... I'm using my voice, like she said. (Pauses) Look, I should let you go. He'll be home soon. Just promise me you'll spread the word?

F/X:

A PEN SET DOWN ON A TABLE

HANS: What, that's it, then? The end of the story?

F/X:

A FRONT DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES

RAY: Little mermaid? I'm home!

LITTLE: Oh, no. It's my story, isn't it? It's not over until I say so.

LITTLE: *(she takes a deep breath and jumps into the sea)*

FINAL CREDITS

SOUND: theme music plays under the closing credits

In The Little Mermaid by Helena Fox, Little was played by Kathleen Collins, Hans by Kieran Smith, Father by Campbell Wallace, Sea Witch and Sister by Grace Lilley, and Ray by Thomas Hill. Dramaturgy was by Katie Bonna, 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.