

THE LITTLE SHARK

A Pantomime written by Gareth Barsby,
based on the Hans Christian Andersen story
“The Little Mermaid” and the author’s own
story “The Little Shark”

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SYNOPSIS

The Little Shark is a retelling of the classic Hans Christian Andersen story *The Little Mermaid* and a loose adaptation of the author's own story of the same name (it can be read at this link - <https://myweirdwriting.wordpress.com/index/> - but the story is meant for an older audience than this script and has a more bittersweet ending than the script. Some stories on the blog also contain foul language).

Derek is a shark that is unhappy with his lot in life. He hates being feared and hated and he hates Dark Side, the evil embodiment of shark's killer instinct that is trying to get him to do monstrous deeds. One stormy night, he saves a human girl, Jenny, from drowning, and falls in love with her, deciding he wants to be human.

That's where Gwen comes in. She, along with her idiotic assistants Bob and Rob, have been building a machine that turns fish into humans. Thus, thanks to her, both Derek and his friend Acacia are converted to human form. Derek, however, still finds himself haunted and tortured by Dark Side, who wants him to kill and menace people on land. The only way to defeat Dark Side once and for all is for Derek, along with Jenny, Gwen and Jenny's mother Wendy, to go into Derek's mind using one of Gwen's inventions and rebuke Dark Side and his skeleton army.

CHARACTERS

OSCAR – the octopus narrator

DEREK – a shark of about 18 who wants to be human

ACACIA –Derek’s sarcastic shark friend of the same age

JENNY – a human teenage girl, about 18, who Derek falls in love with

GWEN – a mad scientist sea-witch, around her late 20’s, a green scaly humanoid

DARK SIDE – Derek’s dark side who wants him to eat fish

BOB AND ROB – Gwen’s stupid lab assistants

WENDY – Jenny’s mother

SEA CREATURES – a FISH, a CRAB and a TURTLE

SEASIDE-GOERS

TEACHER

STUDENTS

SKELETONS

THE LITTLE SHARK

SCENE ONE

UNDER THE SEA

The sounds of bubbles can be heard in the background. There's coral and plant life everywhere, and it's all bathed under a bluish-green light. All of a sudden, various sea creatures – a fish, a crab and a turtle – arrive and they all begin to dance and sing.

Song 1

These sea creatures are then joined by an octopus, his name is OSCAR.

OSCAR Behold the majestic ocean, home to a variety of beautiful and wondrous creatures. Take for example, this fish. **(Gestures toward fish)** Look at how her lovely scales shimmer in the sunlight. And then there's the crab. **(Gestures towards the crab)** Look at those big, powerful claws, a truly mighty and proud specimen he is. And then there's the turtle **(Gestures towards the turtle)** and you know what, I think more people should be like turtles. They take things at their own pace, and take time to observe the world around them. They have more appreciation for the little things than we do. However, our story doesn't concern any of these creatures.

FISH Hey, I take offence to that! I have a very interesting story to tell about my life, thank you very much!

OSCAR Sheesh, calm down. Anyway, as I was saying...

FISH Don't you want to hear about how I almost won *Stickleback Come Dancing*?

OSCAR As I was saying, our story is not about these creatures, but another sea creature entirely. One considered terrible and frightening, with razor-sharp teeth and a mighty fin that tears through the water. A species so frightening the humans have made countless horror movies about them, though that's mostly because vampires have gotten boring.

TURTLE You...don't...mean...

OSCAR Oh, I do mean. I mean more than anything I have ever meant...I mean meant, that's what I meant. **(the other sea creatures giggle)** Don't be mean. Anyway, the creature I'm talking about, the focus of our story, is a...

CRAB **(points)** Shark!

Everyone, including Oscar, runs away as our shark, DEREK, bounds onto the stage. The music that plays is frantic and tense when he first appears, but gets slower and then stops as Derek looks around the stage, scratching his head.

DEREK Oh dear, it's happened again. **(turns to audience)** Oh, hello, my name's Derek, and as you've might have guessed, I'm a shark. **(spins around)** Well, I've got razor-sharp teeth and a mighty fin that tears through the waters. You're not going to see those and think I'm a cute little kitten, are you? Though times I wish I were a cute little kitten because it'd be much better than being a shark. I mean, did you see what happened just there? Whenever I come near, everyone just swims away in fear. **(encourages audience to "aww")** So I don't have any real friends. Most of the creatures down here are afraid of me, and I'm not too popular with the other sharks either. I keep suggesting to them to try meals other than fish, but they always laugh at me. I don't know why, though, there are plenty of good meals that aren't fish, like **(gestures towards plant in the background)** that plant there. I bet it's tasty and nutritious. Delicious and nutritious even!

Just as Derek is about to go to the plant, the lights turn red and dark, mysterious music is heard. This is to set the stage for DARK SIDE, the embodiment of Derek's shark instincts, who speaks offstage in this scene.

DARK SIDE **(o.s)** Why bother with that puny plant? Wouldn't you like a nice big tasty fish instead?

DEREK Do you hear that, boys and girls? That's the worst thing about being a shark.

DARK SIDE **(o.s)** Yes, I am the little voice in sharks' heads that makes them attack. Whenever you see a shark rip a seal to pieces, that's because I told it to. Whenever a shark devours a human, that's because I told it to. Derek, on the other hand, has been resisting me for years, but all that's about to change. I'm going to mould Derek into a killing machine that every human will fear.

DEREK Oh no you won't.

DARK SIDE **(o.s)** Oh yes I will!

DEREK **(encourages audience to join along with him)** Oh no you won't!

DARK SIDE **(o.s)** Oh yes I will!

DEREK Oh no you won't!

DARK SIDE Silence! Derek, you may not listen to me now, but just you wait. You can't live on plants forever. Admit it, deep down you truly do crave an innocent little morsel to munch on. You're a killer, Derek, a monster, and you have no choice to embrace it. The sooner you realise that, the better. You haven't seen the last of me.

The lights return to normal, and the eerie music stops.

DEREK That's the thing, isn't it? That's all there is to being a shark. Just swimming around and eating poor little fishies. Is that my purpose in life? Certainly

there's got to be more for me out there than just that. Surely there must be a way I can help people, entertain people, without scaring or eating anyone. I mean, if I were a kitten, maybe I'd get loads of Youtube views.

Oscar reappears, taking a look at Derek.

OSCAR Yes, boys and girls, this is the star of our show. You've heard of *The Little Mermaid*, now prepare to hear the tale of *The Little Shark*. Speaking of *The Little Mermaid*, do you remember the big scary sea-witch from that story? Well, did you know that sea-witch had a family? And that her descendant Gwen Wickiton would pursue science instead of magic?

DEREK Oh, I've heard of Gwen. People say she's a bit of a weirdo.

OSCAR Well, boys and girls, we're going to meet her and see how much of a weirdo she really is.

They both leave.

SCENE TWO

GWEN'S LABORATORY

We now enter a laboratory, one that's underwater as we can see from the giant window in the background. There's also a table filled with lab equipment like beakers and Bunsen burners. In come two figures, BOB and ROB. Bob is holding a mop.

BOB Hello, boys and girls! **(encourages audience to say "Hello" back)** A little louder please? **(Waits for audience to say "Hello" louder)** That's it! Loud enough to wake the dead!

ROB Wake the dead? I'm pretty sure Gwen tried to do that once.

BOB Oh yeah.

ROB Well, anyway, I'm Rob and he's Bob. We're the lab assistants of the great scientist Gwen Wickiton. **(walks in front of the table)** She doesn't pay that much, but who wouldn't pass up the chance to work in a weird lab?

BOB Yeah, I mean, cleaning up a creepy building where insane and terrifying things happen is a bit more interesting than cleaning up a school.

ROB Aren't those two the same thing?

BOB **(Mops the floor)** I'm going to make this floor so clean I can see my face in it.

ROB Why would anyone want to see your face in anything?

Bob then hits Rob with his mop, sending Rob tumbling into the table, knocking the table over and sending the flasks and beakers everywhere.

BOB Oh no, you knocked over Gwen's chemicals!

ROB Me? You pushed me! Now there's dangerous chemicals all over the floor! Good job keeping things clean!

BOB **(sniffs)** Still smells better than our old school dinners.

ROB This isn't funny! You do remember that Gwen is a hideous monster descended from the Sea Witch of *The Little Mermaid*?

BOB But she still looks better than our old dinner lady!

(All of a sudden, Gwen arrives. She is a humanoid monster that resembles the Creature of the Black Lagoon; she has green scaly skin, no hair, flippers for feet and big webbed ears.)

GWEN What are you two yapping about now? **(looks at collapsed table and gasps)** You idiots! What have you done?

BOB Well, we knocked over the table and...

GWEN Oh, it was a rhetorical question! I was working on a very important experiment! **(turns to audience)** Oh hi, boys and girls! My name is Gwen Wickiton, one of the greatest scientific minds ever! For example, did you know once I created something that let you see through walls? Then it turned out someone else had already invented that, and called them “windows”. I did, however, fuse a turkey with a millipede, so everyone got a leg for Christmas dinner, and I fused a dog with a stick insect, creating a creature that fetched itself! My greatest achievement so far, however, is this! **(She pulls out a strange metallic helmet)** Ta-da!

BOB Nice! I’ve been needing a new cycling helmet!

GWEN No, it’s a helmet that allows someone to enter their own mind. Not that you two could find use for it. Now, would you like to hear about my latest experiment, one these two morons have ruined?

ROB Hey, come on, where would you be without us?

GWEN On Cloud Nine. Anyway, you may have heard the story of *The Little Mermaid*. The innocent young mermaid wants to become human so she can see the handsome prince, so she makes a deal with an evil sea-witch to gain legs.

BOB A good story that is.

ROB I dunno, I kinda liked **(popular movie)** better.

GWEN Well, you might have heard that that I’m related to that sea-witch. But don’t worry, I’m not evil. And come on, my great-grandmother wasn’t either, she was just trying to help. People just say she’s evil because of yellow journalism!

BOB But wasn’t she green?

GWEN The magic needed to turn sea-creatures human was a special one, one that could only be done on a certain night of the year. But I’ve been working on a device that can do the same thing all year round, only using science instead of magic. You see, I don’t think humans and animals are that different. For example, I knew a man who could do really good animal impressions.

ROB You mean he did the noises well?

GWEN He didn’t do the noises, he did the smells. Also, I once met a man who thought he was a dog. I asked him how long this had been going on, and he said “Ever since I was a puppy”. When I asked him to take a seat and talk to me about it, he said he wasn’t allowed on the furniture.

BOB Who wouldn’t want to be a dog? They do nothing but run around, sleep and eat meat all day.

GWEN

They also sniff a lot of bums... *(sniffs)* ...which isn't that different from being with you two. Speaking of smells, clean up that mess you made so I can continue with my work.

BOB AND ROB

Right-o! ***(They then bump into each other as Gwen rolls her eyes. Then all three of them exit.)***

SCENE THREE

UNDER THE SEA

Back under the sea, Oscar returns.

OSCAR Well, she does seem pretty weird, but that's not a problem. I mean, I like weird people. If there were no weird people, the world would be an awfully boring place now, wouldn't it? The world needs a little weirdness, weirdness is the spice of life!

As he's saying this, a female shark comes up to Oscar, and looks at him with a bewildered expression. This is ACACIA, an old friend of Derek's.

ACACIA What are you blabbering about?

OSCAR Oh, I'm just telling the audience about how wonderful weirdness is.

ACACIA You're weird. Now get away before I chew your legs off.

Oscar walks to the far left of the stage, but doesn't leave.

ACACIA Okay, I'm hungry. What is there to eat around here? Hey. ***(turns to audience)*** Do you lot see any fish for me to eat around here? ***(waits for them to respond)*** Do you see any seals? ***(waits for them to respond)*** Well, I'm hungry, and if there's nothing else around here to eat...

DEREK ***(o.s)*** Acacia! ***(bursts onto the stage)*** Don't eat the audience!

ACACIA Oh, Derek, you haven't changed a bit since I last saw you.

DEREK Oh, hello, boys and girls, this is Acacia, we used to know each other.

ACACIA Regrettably.

DEREK Oh, don't be like that.

ACACIA Oh, come on, Derek. You're not still on that whole "why do we have to eat fish" thing or "what's the purpose in our lives" thing? Why do you have to complain all the time?

DEREK Well, it's just...don't you think there's more for us out there?

ACACIA Like what?

DEREK Well, um, well...I don't know but there's got to be something!

ACACIA Very eloquent.

DEREK Yeah, you know, in fact, I would rather be an elephant than a shark. At least then I'd have a trunk.

ACACIA I'll stuff you in a trunk in a minute.

DEREK I was actually just about to look up at the surface.

ACACIA Now why would you want to do a thing like that?

DEREK You know, to see what's up there. Do you wanna come with me?

ACACIA Why would I want to?

DEREK You know, to see what the humans are up to.

ACACIA Why would I care? If I wanted to look at someone boring and annoying, I'd look at that octopus there. *(points to Oscar)*

DEREK Oh come on, it'll be fun!

ACACIA *(sighs)* Oh, alright then.

The two sharks walk to where Oscar is.

OSCAR Indeed, Derek often got bored of his life under the sea. That, or he'd get troubled by thoughts of what he was and what the world meant for him to be, so he'd take a look at what the humans were up to.

A spotlight illuminates a group of humans in summer clothes; these include JENNY, a young woman in a t-shirt, denim shorts and sandals, holding a drawing pad, and her mother, WENDY, who is wearing a floral-patterned dress. They all dance around singing "I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside" or another song in the same vein. In other words:

Song 2

WENDY Oh, hello boys and girls. Isn't a lovely day at the seaside? Ice creams, donkey rides and sunburn galore. Makes me think of when I almost went on holiday to the Bahamas. I was at the airport when I realised I forgot to bring my best pair of jeans...and that's where I had left the tickets. You know, once I asked the travel agent to get me something I could get my teeth into, and he gave me a glass of water! The nerve! I told him I wasn't that old and I had the face of a twenty-five year old girl, and he told me "Well you better give it back, you're damaging it something awful!" Ugh, men these days, am I right, ladies?

JENNY Mum, we haven't properly introduced ourselves.

WENDY Oh, you're absolutely right. Hello, my name is Wendy, and this is my daughter Jenny. She's very smart, my Jenny is. Very artistic too. Sometimes she likes to come here and sketch what she sees. She likes to come by the sea sea sea, to see what she can see see see, but most of the time all she can see see see, is that big blue sea sea sea. Still, she has a good eye, like Van Gogh.

JENNY Van Gogh? He had a good ear too.

WENDY Oh yes, but I'm sure someday you'll be just as famous as he is. Maybe sometime I'll let you paint my face.

JENNY Oh, you want me to paint your portrait?

WENDY No, I want you to make me look like a cute little kitty cat. Put some whiskers here **(points at her cheeks)** and make my nose nice and pink.

JENNY Mum, the face-painting stand is over there if you want that. **(works on her drawing)**

WENDY **(looks at Jenny's drawing)** That's a lovely drawing of that big old blue sea sea sea. Speaking of which, are you looking forward to our little boat trip this evening?

JENNY Yeah, mum, you know, this place at night is a really nice sight. Huh, I'm a poet and I didn't know it. Anyway, speaking of sight, Mum, do you get the feeling you're being watched?

WENDY Of course I do, my dear, the men can't help but look upon my beauty!

JENNY No, not like that. Is there someone watching us, boys and girls?

Derek gives a gesture to the audience to keep mum. All the characters wait for the audience's response: No.

JENNY Oh, guess I was just being paranoid. Okay, Mum, you want to get some soda?

WENDY No, thank you, Jenny. Remember the last time I had some soda?

JENNY Oh yeah, you guzzled down nine bottles...

WENDY ...and I brought seven up.

JENNY Well, maybe we can go back home and have some tea before our little outing this evening then.

WENDY Ah yes, we go to see the sea, then we go for some tea, then go again to see the sea. That suits me to a T.

The humans leave the stage, and the spotlight turns off. The two sharks move to the centre of the stage.

ACACIA Well, that was pointless.

DEREK I don't know, those people seemed to be having a lot of fun.

ACACIA I didn't need to hear that story about the soda, Derek.

DEREK That face-painting thing sounds nice. Can you imagine if someone painted me to look like a kitty?

ACACIA It would wash off in the water, you moron. Now, if you're done with those idiots on the surface, I'm off.

Acacia swims away, and as she does, the stage is lit in red again, and sinister music starts up.

DARK SIDE ***(o.s)*** She's absolutely right, you know. Those humans aren't worth bothering having a look at. The only thing they're good for is lunch.

DEREK Hey, come on, that Jenny seemed nice.

DARK SIDE Her? All she did was paint pretty pictures of the ocean, ugh. And that mother of hers...I'd recommend you eat her but she'd probably taste awful.

DEREK I wasn't going to eat her anyway. I'm not eating any of the people up there.

DARK SIDE Just you wait, Derek. One day you'll see a human sink down here, and you'll think to yourself, I wonder what that tastes like. You'll eat him, and then you'll want more. And more!

Derek screams while holding his head. He exits while the red lights fade, the music stops and Oscar walks to the centre of the stage.

OSCAR Indeed, Jenny and her mother did go on their boat trip that night. Unfortunately, that night there was a massive storm. ***(pauses as sound of thunder plays)*** There was rumbling, screaming and chaos, pretty much the same thing you get from ***(despised political figure)***'s speeches. The boat was careening and rocking about, and of course, this caught the attention of the sea creatures.

Oscar walks off stage, and Acacia walks on, as thunder rumbles in the background, and lightning periodically illuminates the stage. She stands for a while, looking up, before Derek comes in.

DEREK Hey, what are you looking at?

ACACIA Why do you want to know?

DEREK Just curious, is all.

ACACIA Look up!

DEREK ***(looks up)*** Oh no, that boat is caught in a storm!

ACACIA Exactly! Now this is what I want to see when I look at humans!

DEREK Oh no! That human fell from the boat! She could drown!

ACACIA Ooh, I wonder how she tastes!

DEREK No! ***(runs off)***

ACACIA Oh no, you're not...oh yes, oh yes you are. Hey! Drop that human! This is embarrassing!

Acacia runs off stage. A spotlight illuminates a spot of the stage, where Derek walks to, carrying Jenny. He sets her down in the spotlight.

DEREK Okay, that should do it. Hey, you're that girl I just saw today, the one who was talking about doing the drawings. I'd love to see...oh wait, I forgot. Humans can't understand sharks. You don't know what I'm saying. Well, goodbye anyway. **(walks off stage)**

JENNY **(trying to regain herself)** What happened? Was that a...I think it was a... **(lies down again)**

WENDY **(o.s)** Jenny! **(runs onto the stage)** Oh, my little Jenny, are you alright? **(picks her up)** Are you awake? Are you alive? How many fingers am I holding up?

JENNY You're not holding up any fingers, Mum.

WENDY Oh no, you're de...oh wait, I'm not, am I? Oh, Jenny, my baby, you're alright!

JENNY Yeah, mum, I guess I am. It's the weirdest thing...when I fell from that boat, I was sure I was a goner, but I swear...I swear I was saved and brought to shore by...by...

WENDY By a what?

JENNY Not by a what, by a shark!

WENDY A shark? My word, you must be delusional then! Sharks are nasty, vicious creatures who eat people!

JENNY But I swear it was a shark! Wasn't it a shark that saved me, boys and girls? **(waits for response)** If they say it was a shark that saved me, then it was a shark who saved me!

WENDY Oh no it wasn't!

JENNY Oh yes it was!

WENDY Oh no it wasn't!

JENNY Oh yes it was!

WENDY Well, it doesn't matter who saved you as long as my little baby is alright! Come, Jenny, let's go home.

They leave, the spotlight turns off, the whole stage is then illuminated, and Acacia and Derek reenter.

ACACIA I can't believe you just did that.

DEREK I couldn't just let her drown.

ACACIA If you did, then I could have eaten her!

DEREK But then her mother would have been devastated!

ACACIA Who cares about her mother? In fact, who cares about the girl?

DEREK I do!

ACACIA You...love her, don't you?

DEREK Well...maybe.

ACACIA But she's a human!

DEREK Well, maybe I would rather be a human than a shark.

ACACIA Well, that's ridiculous, don't make me laf.

DEREK Humans are nicer and they don't kill.

ACACIA Oh yes, they do, and it's often for thrills.

DEREK They have nice cafes with nice things to eat.

ACACIA The only thing they're good for is their meat.

DEREK They make music, create art, have a ball.

ACACIA Most just lounge around and do nothing at all.

DEREK They have arms to hold things, and on legs they stand.

ACACIA **(scoffs)** I think I'd know what you do if you had hands.

DEREK I don't know why we're even talking in rhyme.

ACACIA Because, you moron, this is a pantomime!
And right now, I don't want to hear you cry,
So I'm going now and saying goodbye. **(walks off stage)**

DEREK **(sighs)** I really do wish I was human. Humans have a purpose. They get to make things, build houses, create art, tell jokes...all sharks do is swim around in the sea and eat fish. If I were human, I could take long walks across the beach, sketch the sea, read books, and maybe even be with Jenny. **(sighs longily)** But that can never happen. I was hatched a shark and I'll die a shark.

Song 3

After singing, Derek leaves, looking down at the ground.

