WHY DID YOU BOTHER KILLING THE SEA WITCH?

A 10-minute comedy

By Jenna Jane

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Summary

The little mermaid and her prince realize they're not going to sail off into the sunset together after all. A 10-minute comedy.

Cast of characters

A note from the playwright on gender references, below: These are only suggestions. Gender is just a performative social construct, anyway. Do whatever feels right to you.

MERMAID: Female, teens to mid-20s. Earnest, genuine, naïve, inexperienced, totally out of her element. Believes the world is a great adventure. Tries too hard.

PRINCE: Male, mid-20s to mid-30s. Practical, brooding, sick of having to live up to others' expectations.

Setting

Onboard PRINCE's ship.

Lights up. MERMAID and PRINCE stand side-by-side, down center, looking off into the distance and breathing heavily. This should last about 10 seconds. We hear seagulls screeching and waves splashing. PRINCE looks exhausted. MERMAID looks like she has enough energy to perform every role in an entire musical right fucking now. They are both head-to-toe soaking wet.

MERMAID

(Abruptly.)

Wow! That was amazing!

(MERMAID starts pacing and waving her arms around, reenacting the battle. PRINCE sits down on the ground with a splat and sighs. He puts his head in his hands. He's just trying to catch his breath.)

I mean, you did it! You defeated the evil sea witch! You were like, POW! And then you were like, BAM! And then you were like, DIE, EVIL SEA WITCH, DIE!

(MERMAID laughs. PRINCE sighs with exhaustion.)

And now, my handsome prince, we can get married and live happily ever after!

PRINCE

(PRINCE's head snaps up to look at her.)

I'm sorry, did you say "married?"

MERMAID

Of course! That's why you defeated the evil sea witch – so we can sail off into the sunset together as king and queen! You're the prince charming I've always dreamed of.

PRINCE

You mean, these past few days that we've been hanging out – this whole time you were trying to… seduce me?

(An uncomfortable pause with constant eye contact.)

Whoa. I feel really objectified right now.

MERMAID

(Bewildered.)

What?

PRINCE

I just feel like you're totally objectifying me. I thought we were friends.

(MERMAID sits down on the ground next to him with her legs out to the side, knees together, weight on one hip.)

MERMAID

I don't understand. Objectifying you – how? I'm in love with you. I gave up being a mermaid to be with you.

PRINCE

Even if you used to have fins, you're just like every other princess I've ever met. All you princesses ever see is a pretty face, biceps and a palace.

MERMAID

(Reaches out to touch his bicep, then pulls her hand back abruptly.)

That's not true!

PRINCE

You don't know anything about me. What do you even like about me?

MERMAID

Well, you're…

(Uncomfortable pause. MERMAID wrings out her hair. She's trying to think.)

Brave? You… defeated the sea witch? You have…

(PRINCE shakes some water out of his hair.)

Nice hair?

PRINCE

(Deadpan. His hair looks like shit.)

I'm brave and have nice hair.

(MERMAID nods.)

You don't even know my middle name. As a matter of fact, what's my last name?

MERMAID

Prince…

(She blows air out one side of her mouth.)

Smith?

(PRINCE stands and steps away from her. He adjusts his wet clothes, uncomfortably.)

PRINCE

You realize this is the first conversation we've ever had, right? You just got your voice back, like 20 minutes ago. You think I'm so shallow that I'd marry someone I've never had a conversation with? What's your 5-year plan? What's your 10-year plan?

MERMAID

My what?

PRINCE

How old are you?

MERMAID

Sixteen.

PRINCE

Sixteen?!

(MERMAID stands and adjusts her wet clothes.)

MERMAID

(Defensively.)

Sixteen!

PRINCE

I’m 28! You’re 16! That doesn’t seem, I don’t know, creepy to you?

MERMAID

Why is everyone always screaming at me that I’m only 16? First Daddy, now you?

PRINCE

(Trying to adjust his wet pants.)

I’m not interested in any part of your Daddy issues.

(Shaking out his wet hair again. He’s uncomfortable and frustrated.)

Gaaah, I’m so damp!

MERMAID

(Wringing out her dress.)

Water is so much more unpleasant with clothes on!

PRINCE

Well, there’s a line I’ve never heard before.

MERMAID

Why did you bother killing the sea witch if you’re not in love with me? I thought we had an unspoken connection!

PRINCE

(As if it’s the only possible answer.)

What else do you do with a sea witch?!

MERMAID

Look, I saved your life! When you were on this very ship, and that big storm hit, and you fell overboard –

PRINCE

(Pauses fussing with his wet clothes.)

That was you?

MERMAID

I rescued you! I dragged you to shore and sang at you until you regained consciousness.

(MERMAID faces the audience, takes a step or two downstage, puts her hands over her heart, and inhales. She is about to sing.)

PRINCE

Don’t!

MERMAID

What?

PRINCE

Please don’t!

MERMAID

Don’t… sing?

PRINCE

Don’t sing!

MERMAID

Why not?

PRINCE

I remember what happened now. I woke up covered in sand, the sun was in my eyes, a woman was hovering over me, belting. To be honest, it was… pitchy.

MERMAID

Bitchy?!

PRINCE

(Overemphasizing the p’s.)

Pitchy. With a “P.” Like pineapple. Or please don’t sing.

MERMAID

(Genuinely hurt and confused.)

But I saved your life! You would have drowned!

PRINCE

So, what, that means you’re entitled to me now? Romantically?

MERMAID

No, that’s not what I –

PRINCE

Sexually?

MERMAID

You’ve got this all wrong –

PRINCE

I didn’t ask you to rescue me. I didn’t ask you to stop wearing clams on your tits. Now, you think I owe you something? A marriage? Offspring?

MERMAID

I rescued you because I loved you at first sight!

PRINCE

Because you objectified me the moment you saw me.

MERMAID

Because I thought we would be compatible!

PRINCE

Are you a dog person? Because that’s a non-negotiable for me.

MERMAID

(Beyond frustrated and confused.)

What’s a dog?!

PRINCE

(Slowly, trying to find the words.)

It’s a pet. An animal companion.

MERMAID

I’ve only ever had crabs!

PRINCE

(Pause. Realizes she means crustaceans. Changes the subject.)

What are your hobbies? What do you do for fun?

MERMAID

Well, I collect things.

PRINCE

You collect things.

MERMAID

Human things.

PRINCE

(Getting more creeped out by the second.)

Human things.

MERMAID

Artifacts. Candelabras, and marble busts, and –

PRINCE

First of all, I do not want a hoarder in my palace. I am a minimalist, which you would know if you bothered to try to get to know me beyond “he has nice hair.”

MERMAID

(She reaches for his bicep again, catches herself, pulls back.)

What's a hoarder?

PRINCE

Second, I'm not just another human artifact to add to your collection. I'm not an object for you to look at and admire.

(He looks down, then out at the audience, broodingly.)

I have feelings. I have thoughts.

MERMAID

When I looked up at you from the waves for the first time, standing at the wheel of this ship, I knew you were an explorer like me. All I've ever wanted was to see the world – the human world. I've already explored under the sea, now I'm ready to spread my legs and explore the surface.

PRINCE

That's not really the right phrase for –

MERMAID

(Not listening. Lost in her vision of their life together.)

We'll sail from land to land together, king and queen explorers. We'll discover new cultures, travel to all the great wonders of the world, see all the –

PRINCE

I don't want any of that.

MERMAID