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Under the Sea

A 10-Minute Play

by

Ross Peter Nelson

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CHARACTERS
1W / 1M / 1 Either

SHARKY: Female; late 20’s; real name Kim

SQUIDLINGTON: Male; late 20’s

SPONGE-O: Either sex. Any age; mute – communicates via bike horn, a la Harpo Marx

SETTING
The break room of a low-budget amusement park

TIME
The present
Under the Sea
By Ross Peter Nelson

(The grounds of a low-budget amusement park. SHARKY, wearing a shark costume, and SQUIDLINGTON, dressed as a squid, are walking toward the same goal: an unobtrusive door.)

SHARKY
Good day, Squidlington. You’re well, I trust?

SQUIDLINGTON
Why I'm perfectly squidlicious, Sharky. And yourself?

SHARKY
Tooth-errrrr-riffic!

(They notice something, probably a small child, and make a dash for the door. After some jostling, they make it inside to the employee locker room and slam the door behind them.)

SHARKY
Made it. Little bastard was coming at us with an ice cream.

SQUIDLINGTON
They're the worst.

SHARKY
Can you help pull my head off?

(SQUIDLINGTON tugs on SHARKY’s costume.)

Here, Sharkey, have some ice cream. Mash, mash, mash.

SQUIDLINGTON
I think it's stuck.

SHARKEY
Then your paycheck’s docked for the cleaning fee.

(The costume releases, SQUIDLINGTON goes flying.)

SQUIDLINGTON
Whoa!

SHARKY
Oh god. Thank you.

SQUIDLINGTON
You're welcome.
SHARKY
You need help with yours?

SQUIDLINGTON
No, I'm cool.

(SQUIDLINGTON leaves his costume on.)

SHARKY
I wish I was. I would give serious coin for cool. Whoever designed this costume should be forced to spend an entire summer wrapped in thirty pounds of foam rubber.

SQUIDLINGTON
It's probably a violation of the Geneva Convention.

SHARKY
Yeah, I can just see the army using it on prisoners of war, “Confess, or we’ll put you in the shark suit.”

SQUIDLINGTON
Could they even do that? What about people who aren’t allowed to eat sharks?

What?

SHARKY
Shark isn’t kosher.

SQUIDLINGTON
That’s kind of beside the point. It’s not a real shark. It’s a costume.

I know but....

SHARKY
What?

SQUIDLINGTON
It still matters, don’t you think? I mean, if you thought sharks were evil or unclean or whatever and they made you wear a shark suit...

SHARKY
I do think sharks are evil.

SQUIDLINGTON
You do?

SHARKY
I do now.
SQUIDLINGTON

I didn’t know you were Jewish.

SHARKY

I’m not! I’ve just spent three goddamn years stuck inside this suit, earning minimum wage, being mauled by eight-year-olds, vomited on by three-year-olds, and taking surreptitious punches from fourteen-year-olds who think they’re too cool for Fantasea-Land. Of course I hate sharks. Don’t you hate squids?

SQUIDLINGTON

No.

SHARKY

Well, good for you. You’re a better man than I am, Gunga Din.

SQUIDLINGTON

You're not a man.

SHARKY

Thanks for noticing. Not that anyone else does. This job has ruined my love life. Do you what it’s like to be on a date and have a guy lean over and say, "What’s that perfume?" and you have to answer, "Oh, that? It’s the scent of foam rubber that’s seeped into my pores because I sweat profusely in my shark costume." There is no soap on god's green earth that can get that smell out of your skin. Believe me, I’ve tried.

SQUIDLINGTON

Why is that anyway?

SHARKY

I don't know. It's probably some industrial chemical that's worked its way into my liver ensuring that I'll die a horrible death before my thirty-fifth birthday.

SQUIDLINGTON

I mean, why are you a girl?

SHARKY

I have two X-chromosomes?

SQUIDLINGTON

No! I mean, on TV, Sharky's a boy. Why did they hire you to be Sharky?

SHARKY

My voice. It’s too high for most guys.

SQUIDLINGTON

I don’t remember the voice.
SHARKY
The cartoon only ran one season; I'm surprised anyone does. That's the only reason some cheap-ass outfit like Fanta-Sea-Land can even afford mascots.

(Sponge-O enters wearing an outfit consisting of glued-on kitchen sponges and a bicycle horn.)

(Sponge-O)

Honk.)

Hi, Sponge-O.

(Sponge-O)

(Honk.)

I rest my case.

(Sponge-O)

(Honk?)

Never mind.

(Sponge-O)

(Honk)

Squidlington

So has every Sharky been a girl?

Sharky

As far as I know.

(Sponge-O)

(Honk. Honkety-honk honk.)

Squidlington

Really?

Sharky

What?

Squidlington

On TV? Bart Simpson is a girl, too?

(Sponge-O)

(Honketa-honketa-honk.)
SQUIDLINGTON
No kidding? Rocky? What about Bullwinkle?

SPONGE-O
(Honk!)

SQUIDLINGTON
That's so cool. I never knew that.

SPONGE-O
(Honk.)

SQUIDLINGTON
See you later.

(SPONGE-O heads out, then turns to SHARKY.)

SPONGE-O
(Honk-honk.)

(SPONGE-O waits. SHARKY realizes she didn’t say goodbye.)

SHARKY
Oh, sorry. Bye, Sponge-O.

(SPONGE-O exits.)

SHARKY
How do you do that?

SQUIDLINGTON
What?

SHARKY
Talk to him. Her. It.

SQUIDLINGTON
Sponge-O?

SHARKY
Yeah. Is it some kind of code?

SQUIDLINGTON
No. He just says—

SHARKY
He doesn't say anything. He honks.
SQUIDLINGTON
Well he means things, and I just ... just know what they are.

SHARKY
Like I said, you’ve been here too long. … Break is almost over. Aren't you going to take off your costume?

SQUIDLINGTON
No. I like wearing it.

SHARKY
(Poking in her locker.)
Oh, crap! I forgot my lunch.

You want my shrimp chips?

SHARKY
No thanks.

SQUIDLINGTON
I might have a can of sardines.

SHARKY
Ugh. I can just imagine smelling my own sardine breath trapped inside humid latex, mixed with the sugary caramel apple and funnel cakes outside. I would heave. But thanks for offering. … How long have you worked here?

SQUIDLINGTON
Forever.

SHARKY
And it doesn't bother you? The heat, the screaming kids, the abuse?

SQUIDLINGTON
Not really.

The low pay?

SHARKY
Better than nothing.

SQUIDLINGTON

SHARKY
I've got a Master's degree. In library science. I should be sitting in a cool, air-conditioned building, helping people do research, find books, learn things – advancing human knowledge. Instead, I pose for blurry pictures with grimy-faced children of people I don't want to ever meet again.
SQUIDLINGTON

Why don't you do that then?

SHARKY

You think I haven't tried? Do you know how many résumés I've sent out? How many interviews I’ve gone on? All after futile attempts to resurrect my smashed-down hair and scrub the scent of this place from my skin so I seem like normal human being.

SQUIDLINGTON

Sharky.

(SHARKY, in a momentary funk, does not respond.)

Sharky?

SHARKY

Will you stop calling me that! It's our break. We're off-duty. We don't have to be in character.

SQUIDLINGTON

Sharky.

SHARKY

My name is KIM.

SQUIDLINGTON

Kim.

WHAT?

SQUIDLINGTON

You've something on your leg. It looks like barfed up cotton candy.

SHARKY

Aaaahh!

(SHARKY has a bit of a run-around-, stomp-around-, intermittently-try-to-clean-her-leg- freak-out, after which, exhausted, she flops into a chair.)

SQUIDLINGTON

You seem tense.

SHARKY

Do I? ... And just how do you cope? Or don't you have any higher aspirations?

SQUIDLINGTON

I ... I just think of other things.
SHARKY
That's it? Pretend you're not oppressed, stinking, uncomfortable, and inconsequential?

SQUIDLINGTON
It's not pretend. I rest my thoughts on the world to come.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes