

The Song of the Selkie (screenplay)

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FADE IN:

INT. SHIP - NIGHT

A young GIRL sleeps peacefully in a hammock. The ship is almost silent, save for an ever-present creaking and the beating of the waves. All of the other hammocks appear to be empty.

The girl is suddenly awoken when she is grabbed by the arms and pulled from her hammock.

Two LARGE MEN, accompanied by a third, smaller WELL-DRESSED MAN, grab the girl's arms as she begins to scream.

The men lift the girl from the floor and begin to drag her towards the stairs.

She kicks and screams, resisting her captors.

GIRL

Mama! Papa! Help me, please! Someone help me!

EXT. SHIP - CONTINUOUS

The three kidnappers pull the girl above decks. Here she notices that everyone on the ship, crew, passengers, and officers alike, have gathered, and are watching and jeering as she is pulled towards the gunnel.

The men stop mere inches from the side of the ship, turning the girl to face the crowd. The well-dressed man approaches her.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Young lady, are you in commune with Satan, the Lord of Lies?

GIRL

What? Of course not! What would make you ask such a question?

Her eyes dart through the crowd.

Another man steps forward, this one wearing spectacles.

SPECTACLED MAN

Oh, come now, George, surely you must see that this superstition is harmful madness.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Silence, doctor. We all here can see that this voyage is cursed. The spoilt food, the draught of wind, that godforsaken illness.

He turns to address the crowd.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Surely, we all can see that this one - secluded, quiet, seemingly untainted by disease or disheartening - must be the cause of our woes!

The mob cheers in unison.

Out of the corner of her eye, the girl spots her mother and father, refusing to make eye contact with anyone else.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Well then, I hereby banish you from Christian society, sorceress. In the naval tradition of the late captain of this vessel, I offer you this pistol, with one shot.

He produces a pistol from beneath his dark cloak, and hands it to the girl.

She begins to sob uncontrollably.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Should you see fit to send your sorry soul back to its dark master.

He turns away, delivering one final line.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Haunt us no more, you godforsaken wench.

The two men still holding the girl by her arms take this cue to turn her away from the crowd and lift her legs over the gunnel.

The girl has just enough time to let out one final sobbing, pitiful scream before falling into the water below.

FADE TO:

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

The girl wakes up on a large, rocky outcropping. There is no vegetation or cover from the sun, but several large pieces of driftwood dot the shore.

The outcrop is surrounded by much smaller rocks, incapable of sustaining life. Far off in the distance, the mainland can just be seen peeking over the horizon, distorted by the evaporation off of the water. It is much too far to swim.

The girl sits up and pulls herself out of the water and onto the island. The pistol is still clutched in her hand.

Beat.

The girl begins to cry, hugging her knees.

She lifts the pistol up in front of her, taking a moment to examine it.

Slowly, she uses her other hand to pull back the flintlock. She raises the weapon to her temple.

The pistol clicks, but the wet powder fails to catch.

The girl swallows her saliva. She exhales heavily.

She sets the pistol down on the rock next to her.

Her eyes lock on to something in the distance.

Sitting on a rock some way away, a fleshy shape can be seen. Its proportions seem human, but instead of legs it seems to have a long, tubular body, ending in a tail like that of a seal. Its upper body appears to be cloaked in a slick, furry material, matching the coating of its tail.

The girl stands and begins to walk towards the creature. She sets foot in the water. Fortunately, the island has a shelf that reaches out past its shoreline.

As she steps out further, she sinks lower and lower into the water. Soon she is up to her waist.

She takes one last step, but as the shelf drops off into nothing she plummets into the water.

Panicking, she inhales seawater before regaining her composure and swimming towards the surface.

Reaching the edge of the shelf, she pulls herself up and brings her head out of the water.

She coughs and sputters, turning to look towards the creature.

As she does, it slips off the rock and beneath the waves.

The girl brings her gaze back towards the edge of the shelf and, as she does so, she notices a school of codfish which she had scattered by falling into the depths.

Watching and waiting, she sees them regroup just within reach, at the edge of the drop-off.

Moving slowly, she brings her hand into the water near the fish and lets them become accustomed to her.

Suddenly, she strikes, successfully grabbing one of the fish in a lightning-fast motion.

She laughs, holding the flopping cod in her hand.

EXT. ISLAND - DAY/NIGHT

MONTAGE OF THE GIRL LEARNING TO SURVIVE

The girl strikes together two rocks, successfully sparking them.

The girl collects driftwood which has gathered on the shoreline.

She uses the driftwood, along with portions of her clothing and seaweed she has collected to build a small shelter.

She roasts codfish over a fire.

She places her pistol in the sun to dry out the powder.

She weathers a nasty storm in her shelter, singing quietly to herself.

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

The girl emerges from her shelter after the storm.

As she looks around, she discovers that the island is now covered in debris. Bits of wood and canvas are strewn about, both on land and in the water.

She notices a larger piece of driftwood, carrying a peculiar, pale shape.

Her eyes widen as it is revealed that the shape is, in fact, a person.

The girl runs towards the water before diving in to swim towards the body.

After a short sprint, she reaches the makeshift raft and attempts to climb up next to the body.

The raft pitches violently, shifting the body, and knocking the girl back into the water.

The girl grabs the raft and begins kicking back towards the island.

She struggles to keep her head above water, as her swim back is slowed significantly by the extra weight.

She coughs and sputters, her kicking slows, and her arm's originally controlled strokes become more frantic.

Finally reaching the shore, she pulls herself onto dry land first, before turning to pull the body off of the raft and onto the rock.

As soon as her ward is safe, the girl collapses onto the ground, panting and coughing.

She continues to catch her breath for several moments.

Finally, she glances back over at the person she has fished out of the water.

He is a young man, in his mid-to-late teens, with short, blond hair and a touch of peach fuzz. His skin is pale, with a distinct green tone, and despite his age, his eyes have distinct marks of exhaustion and experience.

His oversized shirt and dark breeches are similarly worn, with evidence of both fire and water damage evident.

She pauses over the BOY's body for a moment, before suddenly and violently striking him in the chest with her fist.

The boy jerks violently in reaction before becoming still again.

BEAT

He sputters, coughing up almost a pint of seawater, as the girl watches on.

After taking a moment to recover, and to start breathing again, he sits up slowly and turns his head to take in his surroundings.

After scanning the environment, the last thing his eyes land on is the young girl sitting next to him.

He jumps.

BOY

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, lass.

The girl winces, hearing another voice for the first time in a while.

BOY

Not storm, nor fire, nor Neptune himself could claim my spirit, but you near ripped it clean out me chest.

He waits for her to respond.

BOY

Well, have you anythin' to say fer yerself?

BEAT

BOY

Oh, hells bells. Of all the godforsaken rocks in this godforsaken water, I had to wash up on one inhabited by a deafmute.

He stands and begins to walk towards her driftwood hut.

She scrambles to follow.

He inspects its construction, circling twice, before peeking inside.

BOY

You may be an idjit, but you build a damn fine shelter, girl.

He kicks it.

She winces and waits for a collapse that never comes.

He ponders to himself, staring down at the small hut.

BOY

So, if you've a shelter, you've almost certainly got some source a food n' water.

The girl's lips quiver as she struggles to mouth something.

He turns to look towards her.

BOY

Lord knows the things I wouldn't do fer a scrap o' bread and a sip o' water.

BEAT

Her throat scratches before the words finally come out.

GIRL

I am not an idjit.

A smile appears on the boy's face.

BOY

Well, Well. I'll be damned. The preacher always said Christ could make the dumb speak. Course, he also said he could raise the dead, and 'taint never seen one walkin' who'd been stiff before.

GIRL

I thought at first that you might have been dead.

The boy pauses at this for a moment, before making an attempt to lighten the mood.

BOY

Well, aren't we just God's funniest pair of miracles.

BEAT

He claps his hands together, breaking the silence.

BOY

Now about that food...

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

MONTAGE

The girl teaches the boy how she has survived on the island.

She shows him how she has been catching fish with her hands.

She demonstrates how she has been collecting rainwater to drink.

She shows off the stones that she uses to light a small cooking fire.

The two collect canvas and other scraps from the shipwreck to improve their dwelling.

Through each of these, he seems disinterested, instead looking at the shelter she has constructed.

After she catches two fish for dinner, he takes half of hers to eat as well.

When they settle in to sleep for the night, she is forced to curl up in a corner of the shelter to allow him to sleep comfortably.

FADE TO:

EXT. ISLAND - MORNING

The girl awakens in the rock of the island.

She takes a moment to stir before sitting up and taking in her surroundings.

Her eyes still adjusting to the light, she inhales deeply through her nose.

Her driftwood shelter is in flames. Heavy black smoke rises up into the early morning light.

The boy stands nearby, fanning the flames with a piece of canvas from the makeshift dwelling.

She stands up and begins to approach him, quickening her pace as she gets closer.

BOY

Ah! Mornin' to ye, lass. My keen eyes spotted a vessel to the nor'east just passed sunup.

He stops fanning in order to converse with her.

Reaching the shelter, she pauses for a moment.

BOY

And I says to myself, "Boy," I says, "Now you're a smart lad..."

She notices her water collection vessel sitting just outside the reach of the flames. She grabs it and rushes to fill it with seawater.

BOY

"There must be some way ta - " Now hold on a moment. What on God's earth are you doing, girl? green

The girl throws her first load of water onto the inferno and moves to collect a second.

The boy intercepts and grabs her wrist.

INTERCUT OF THE GIRL BEING PULLED OUT OF BED

BOY

I asked you a question. Now yer gonna answer me.

The girl struggles in vain to free herself.

BOY

Damn ye. I says I want to know why yer tryin to hold us from salvation. Are ye going nutter on me again?

INTERCUT HER BEING PULLED ONTO THE DECK

She slaps him. He lets her go, more shocked than injured.

BOY

Bitch!

GIRL

You damned fool. Clearly your ill-conceived attempt to catch their attention failed. And now we are without appropriate shelter from nature's worst elements.

He takes a step forward.

BOY

You should stop talking now.

GIRL

You utter ignoramus! Your short-sightedness has doomed us to perish on this rock and all you can think of is the insult to your honour inflicted by a woman daring to be upset with you.

At this he lunges forward, grabbing her violently and using a rough hand to cover her mouth.

INTERCUT HER SEEING HER FAMILY FOR THE FINAL TIME

BOY

That's enough, whore. I can't believe I preferred it when you were feeble minded.

She struggles unsuccessfully against his grip, her eyes filling with panic.

He pushes her towards the ground.

BOY

At least then you kept yer tongue to yerself.

Now straddling her, his hand still over her mouth.

Her eyes begin to tear up, her resistance becoming more desperate.

BOY

Fortunately for both of us...

Her free hand manages to wrap itself around a loose rock.

BOY

I know how to deal with -

His sentence is cut off as her improvised weapon connects with his head.

He falls to the side, releasing her and using his hand to stop the blood now flowing from his forehead.

She scrambles to stand, desperately searching for something else to use to defend herself.

The boy begins to sit up, observing his bloodied palm.

BOY

You stupid whore! Yer only making it worse fer yerself.

He begins to stand.

She notices the handle of the pistol poking out from below a piece of unburnt driftwood.

INTERCUT HER RECEIVING THE PISTOL

He approaches her.

BOY

This godforsaken rock is too small fer ye to hide from me. I'll have my way, by the Lord's hand I'll -

A gunshot rings out over the waves.

The girl holds the smoking pistol out in front of her.

The boy stumbles backwards. He glances down at the blood pouring from the hole in his stomach.

He takes a step towards the girl before collapsing onto the rock.

The girl slumps to her knees, taking a moment to breathe, before beginning to sob loudly.

She collapses onto the rock, next to the boy, still crying.

The crackling of the fire settles as the last of its fuel is spent.

FADE TO:

EXT. ISLAND - LATER

The girl wakes up in the same place she fell asleep.

The shelter has stopped smoldering, and the last of the life has drained from the boy. Only the waves and the wind can be heard.

The girl blinks several times, clearing her eyes as she stares at something far off in the distance.

The same creature she had seen earlier, appearing human and draped in sealskin, can be seen lounging on a rock some distance from the island. Instead of legs, the creature's body becomes sleek, ending in a tail which would be useful for swimming, and coated in the same sleek fur as her garment.

The girl gets to her feet slowly. And begins to walk towards the creature, a puzzled look on her face.

She steps over the boy's body and dips her toes into the cold water.

With each step she sinks deeper and deeper into the sea. First her knees, then her hips, her waist, and her chest.

Finally, still moving closer and closer to the beast on the horizon, her head disappears beneath the waves.

The creature looks on, silently.

Everything is calm and still.

FADE TO:

EXT. SHIP - DAY

A JUNIOR OFFICER stands upon the forecastle of a ship. He pulls a looking glass down from his eye, and turns towards the stern, addressing the SENIOR OFFICER.

JUNIOR OFFICER

Hark! Sir, you'll want to see this.

The Senior Officer steps up beside his Junior.

The junior hands him the telescope, which he promptly raises to his eye.

He sees a rocky island, not much more than an outcropping. On it appears to be the remains of a large bonfire, and the decomposing body of a young boy. Other trinkets and signs of survival dot the rock.

Further off, he sees two seals lounging on a smaller rock.

The senior lowers his telescope, sighing heavily as he does so.

JUNIOR OFFICER

What's our course of action, sir?

SENIOR OFFICER

Carry on, Master Fitzroy. Best not meddle in the affairs of the sea.

The Junior Officer eyes him warily.

JUNIOR OFFICER

Aye, sir.

In the distance, the two seals slide gently into the water.

FADE TO BLACK.