

SETTING: *The majority of the stage is taken up with two Kingdoms – one below the sea, belonging to King Neptune, and the other on land, belonging to Prince Caspian. We shift between the two using lights and sound. On stage left there is a structure that represents the Boat, used whenever a boat is mentioned.*

AT RISE: *Neptune's Kingdom. Three rocklike structures represent the coral reef. Music underscores; a celebration is at hand. WATER ENSEMBLE dance in from various directions, creating the Underwater World. (NOTE: WATER ENSEMBLE can range from 1 to 9 actors. How many are used in each circumstance is up to the discretion of the director. Keep in mind that some members of the WATER ENSEMBLE may also be doubling in other roles.)*

WATER ENSEMBLE

The Ocean.
The Seven Seas.
The Underwater World.

Floating seaweed
Pulsing tides
Fish and whale
Side-by-side

Bluish light and
Murky dark
Octopus
Great white shark

Sea slug stealing
Like a thief
Sand and cave
Coral reef

But... But... But... But... But...

WATER ENSEMBLE (cont.)

Of all the creatures that ever were made
None is more magical than the mermaid...

(SYRENA enters.)

Syrena!
Little Mermaid!
Happy... Happy... Happy...
Birthday!

(They begin to sing, swirling about her, a song with no words, just sounds. It starts off slow, then builds and builds, faster and faster – the proper song for a 16th birthday celebration.)

*Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh*

*Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh*

*Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh*

*Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh...*

(Suddenly NEPTUNE enters.)

NEPTUNE

Syrena!

(Singing and dancing crash to a halt.)

WATER ENSEMBLE

King Neptune!

(WATER ENSEMBLE kneels before NEPTUNE.)

SYRENA

Hello, Papa.

(He looks at her.)

I was just celebrating. It's here, Papa – my sixteenth birthday is finally here!

NEPTUNE

I know, child.

SYRENA

Shouldn't I be excited?

NEPTUNE

Of course. But as Princess of the Underwater World, you must temper your excitement with Royal Duty.

SYRENA

Yes, Papa.

NEPTUNE

Your grandmother and I have been preparing you for this day for a long time. Preparing you for your first Ascent to the World Above the Water. The Surface. Your life will never be the same.

SYRENA

Yes, Papa – and I feel very prepared to do my duty. Avia has taught me all she knows about the sky... the land...

NEPTUNE

Very well. The time has come. Let the ceremony begin.

WATER ENSEMBLE

(Quietly intoning, underneath)

Ahhhhhhhhhh.....

(NEPTUNE gestures to the center rock. SYRENA takes her place on it. NEPTUNE sits on the stage right rock. AVIA enters, holding aloft, a starfish necklace.)

AVIA

I am Avia...

WATER ENSEMBLE

Avia...

AVIA

Mother of King Neptune...

WATER ENSEMBLE

Neptune...

AVIA

Grandmother of Princess Syrena...

WATER ENSEMBLE

Syrena...

AVIA

And today, on the occasion her sixteenth birth, I present Princess Syrena with the Gift of Song.

WATER ENSEMBLE

The Gift of Song.

(Again, intoning under.)

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

AVIA

The Gift of Song contains the Power of All the Ocean. With it, you are able to communicate with all creatures. You can laugh with the dolphin...

WATER ENSEMBLE

(High pitched and very fast)

Hahahahhahahahahahah!

AVIA

Chatter with the shrimp...

(WATER ENSEMBLE snap their fingers rapidly)

Sing the song of the mighty Whale...

WATER ENSEMBLE

(Imitating the whale)

Ahhh-oh! Ahhh-oh!

AVIA

The Gift of Song allows even those who live in the World Above the Water to hear you and understand you. Wearing it is a Privilege and a Great Responsibility. Use it wisely.

(AVIA places it around SYRENA's neck.)

SYRENA

I can feel its power.

AVIA

It belonged to your mother, Queen Amphitrite.

SYRENA

I will take good care of it. Thank you, Avia.

AVIA

Happy birthday, my darling.

(She kisses SYRENA's cheek then takes her place on the third rock.)

WHINNY (O.S.)

Syrena! Syrena!

(WHINNY swims on.)

WHINNY

Syrena...oh!

(He notices the others.)

Your Majesties.

(He bows to NEPTUNE and AVIA.)

SYRENA

Whinny, you're late.

WHINNY

It's not my fault! I was on my way here when I ran into a *very* unfriendly crab. Crabs don't like seahorses. I barely got away with my life.

SYRENA

You missed my ceremony.

WHINNY

I'm sorry, Syrena.

(He spies the Gift of Song.)

WHINNY (cont.)

Ohhh, what are you wearing around your neck?

SYRENA

The Gift of Song. It contains the Power of All the Ocean and allows me to speak to all creatures, even those who live in the World Above the Water.

WHINNY

You mean you'll be able to talk to the Two Legs? The Humans?

SYRENA

Not only talk to the Humans, but sing to (them as well)...

NEPTUNE

(Interrupting, furious)
You will do no such thing!

SYRENA

Papa...?

NEPTUNE

You will not talk to the Two Legs! You are not to go near the Two Legs!

(He wheels on AVIA)

You told me she was prepared!

AVIA

Neptune...

SYRENA

Papa, what's wrong?!

NEPTUNE

The Two Legs are dangerous! Deadly!

SYRENA

I don't understand. How can they harm us? Avia taught me that Humans cannot breathe under water.

NEPTUNE

The Two Legs have built boats to carry them across the sea, and from these boats they hunt!

SYRENA

Hunt?

NEPTUNE

Whales and dolphins, marlin and tuna... So many more of our brothers and sisters have been caught in their nets or with their hooks. They even... they even...

(He cringes at the memory. There is too much pain.)

No! I will not speak of this! Syrena, I forbid you to go to the surface.

AVIA

What?!

SYRENA

Papa!

AVIA

I let you go, when you were of age.

NEPTUNE

This is different! She is my daughter. My only daughter!

AVIA

And you were my only son! Neptune, we can't protect our young forever. There comes a day when they must strike out on their own.

SYRENA

Papa, please – I have looked forward to this day for so long! Too see the sky, to feel the open air, to be free...

NEPTUNE

“To be free?!”

(To AVIA)

You see, Mother?! She refuses to focus on the danger!

AVIA

You have to let her go, Neptune. Syrena cannot ascend to the throne until she has ascended to the Surface. This is our law. As King of the Underwater World, you must uphold the law.

(Beat.)

NEPTUNE
 Very well. I will allow her to go...

SYRENA
 Thank you, Papa!

NEPTUNE
 ...but I'm going with her.

SYRENA
 What?!

AVIA
 Neptune, did you listen to a word I said?!

NEPTUNE
 She is *not* going to the surface alone!

WHINNY
 I'll go with her.

AVIA
 You, Whinny?

NEPTUNE
 How is a tiny seahorse supposed to protect my daughter from the Two Legs?

WHINNY
 I may be tiny, Your Majesty – but I have the heart of a sea lion. Just listen!

(He does his best to bark like a sea lion. It's pathetic.)

Aouggghhh...

(Beat.)

AVIA
 I think Whinny will be an excellent escort.

NEPTUNE
 Ridiculous! If anyone's going, it's me.

AVIA

Neptune, you are the Ruler of the Seven Seas. You have important duties which demand your *immediate* attention.

NEPTUNE

Like what?

AVIA

Like the whales and the seals who are fighting over fishing rights in the Southern Ocean.

NEPTUNE

Again?!

AVIA

And the salmon who are interfering with the sea turtles' migration pattern in the Pacific...

(He slaps his forehead in frustration.)

NEPTUNE

Holy Mackerel!

AVIA

And the sharks, who are getting ready to battle with the angelfish in the Atlantic. The kingdom will be in chaos without you. It is your duty to stay here and rule. It is Syrena's duty to ascend to the surface.

NEPTUNE

Duty... It always comes to that, doesn't it?

(Beat.)

Whinny, you will go with Syrena. You will protect her with your life.

WHINNY

Yes, Your Majesty.

NEPTUNE

And the Gift of Song – promise you will never let it out of your sight.

WHINNY

You have my pledge.

(He turns to SYRENA)

NEPTUNE

It is very different up there. You will learn much that will help you lead our world. But I forbid you to have any interaction with the Two Legs. You understand me? If you see a Human... a boat... a *harpoon*... you swim the other way as fast as you can.

SYRENA

Yes, Papa.

(Beat. He looks at her sadly.)

NEPTUNE

I can't help but wish you had stayed my little mermaid just a bit longer...

(NEPTUNE and some WATER ENSEMBLE swirl off.)

SYRENA

Avia, why does my father hate the Two Legs?

AVIA

Oh child, he has his reasons...

SYRENA

Tell me.

AVIA

He never wanted you to know...

SYRENA

Please.

AVIA

And I'm not certain you're old enough.

SYRENA

I'm sixteen! I wear the Gift of Song!

AVIA

Yes. Yes. Very well then. This story involves your mother, Queen Amphitrite...

WATER ENSEMBLE

(Softly, under)

Ooooooooooooo...