

## MERMAN ON THE BRINK

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A 10-MINUTE Play by Marc Littman

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*Logline: Merman on the Brink is a play about a depressed young man who tries to paddle away from his troubles only to get some uninvited help from a merman who has his own agenda.*

## Cast of Characters

Pete: Man in his 30s grappling with depression and anxious to find his life's path.

Trident: A merman.

## Scene

A simple set. A makeshift swan boat - just an exercise bike with a large papier mâché swan mounted on the front. Alongside the *swan boat* is a shallow water-filled kiddie pool. Trident is naked from the waist up. His lower body is clothed in a scaly fish costume but his flipper feet protrude from the bottom. He has a rubber trident, rubber fish and also a gold colored coin as props.

## Time

Present

AT RISE:

PETE is pedaling furiously for several beats before easing up on the pedals and slumping forward. He wipes sweat from his brow, oblivious to the MERMAN mimicking him by pedaling with his flippers in the air in the kiddie pool alongside.

PETE

What a man will do to leave it all behind.

(TRIDENT pokes his head up and smiles impishly.)

TRIDENT

But well worth the effort, Pete. Too bad this swan boat isn't on the ocean, then you really could leave all the chatter behind. Instead we're in the middle of a tiny man-made lake and you can still see all the losers on shore sucking in that chlorine scented air from the reclaimed sewage water. But, at least, we can't hear them.

(Startled, PETE blinks at TRIDENT)

PETE

What the - ?

TRIDENT

You never seen a merman? Name's Trident, like the three-pronged spear.

*(Brandishing trident)*

You can call me, Tri.

PETE

*(Shuddering)*

I'm hallucinating. It's the Xanax. I shouldn't have asked my doctors for a higher dose. Better get back to land and sleep it off.

*(PETE starts pedaling but TRIDENT grabs his foot.)*

TRIDENT

Relax, Pete, I won't hurt you. I'm here to help.

PETE

Let me go!

*(PETE struggles to free himself;  
TRIDENT, laughing, lets go.)*

TRIDENT

Okay. Guess you don't want to be rich...you know mermen are like the leprechauns of the sea. I can grant you any wish starting with that one.

*(TRIDENT tosses PETE gold coin)*

TRIDENT (Continued)

A little munchkin found her grandpa's lucky coin and used it as a skipping stone. *Finders, keepers*. That's enough gold to keep you in your house another month and also pay your electric bill. But there's a lot more where that came from.

*(TRIDENT splashes pool water)*

TRIDENT (Continued)

Come on in, Petey! I'll show you where to find all the money you need, and right now, you need a lot. No job, no lover... No prospects.

PETE

Am I going prematurely insane?! 'He's not real, Pete, a figment of your rampant imagination. We'll go home and take an Ambien, maybe two. You'll be okay'.

TRIDENT

Suit yourself, but if you leave now, Pete, nothing's resolved. Isn't that why you busted your butt to get all the way out here? You wanna figure out a path forward? I have one.

(TRIDENT points his spear toward horizon. PETE reluctantly looks.)

PETE

I shouldn't stay another second. I'm going off the deep end!

(PETE starts pedaling in earnest, but TRIDENT suddenly stands upright and stops the swan boat.)

TRIDENT

It's okay to jump. The lake's really shallow. What could happen? Come on, Man, talk to old Tri. You know I'm your friend.

(TRIDENT tugs on PETE's chin)

PETE

I'll drown! I can't swim!

(Laughing, TRIDENT releases his hold, flops back in the pool and frolics.)

TRIDENT

*(Singing)*

*Splish, splash, I was taking a bath...*

(TRIDENT splashes PETE again and again until PETE finally smiles.)

TRIDENT (Continued)

Made you smile. How long's that been, Sour-Puss?

(PETE sheds smile, is mute)

TRIDENT (Continued)

Since Gayle dumped you?

PETE

It was mutual.

TRIDENT

Ditto your job after they stole all your creative marketing ideas. Trouble with you, Pete, is you need to man up.

PETE

Says the creature who's half fish.

TRIDENT

*(Darkening)*

More of a man than you. I have a backbone.

(TRIDENT rises and hovers malevolently over PETE.)

TRIDENT (Continued)

Get in.

(PETE balks. TRIDENT brandishes his three-pronged spear.)

TRIDENT (Continued)

Grab my trident, Pete, and I'll make a man out of you. Trust me.

PETE

Trust a myth?