



EXCERPT

# MARSOPA'S TALE

a 10-minute monologue play

—  
by

Tara Meddaugh

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# EXCERPT

MARSOPA'S TALE (EXCERPT)

by

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A 10-minute play  
For one actor

**EXCERPT**

MARSOPA'S TALE

Character Breakdown

MARSOPA                      A mermaid, late teens to young adult

Setting

The sea. There is a rock or two. The set need not attempt to be realistic, and much may be conveyed through lighting; it may be merely an impression of the world Marsopa is in. The time may be longer ago than now, but there is no indication of a specific time period.

AT RISE: The sea. A rock or two may be visible. MARSOPA is a mermaid, late teens to young adult.

MARSOPA

That sea serpent. He's laughing at me again. Snickering, as his snivels by. Oh, his voice grates on me. This piercing bellow, "HAHAHAH!"

(pause)

I want to tear my hair or tail fin out when I hear that! It's as though he's never seen the heart of a mermaid crushed before! And this crushing—it brings him joy. He seems truly happy to see me in pain! And I—I want to yell to him to stop mocking me! To leave me alone and go back under instead of circling me with this torturous taunt! Stone says never talk to a sea serpent though. She says, "They don't respond to reason. Or, if they do respond, it's by coiling their bodies around you until you no longer breathe." I've heard all the stories too. The old tortoise tells of boats toppled over and sea serpents vomiting up sailors from their bellies, all because the men were whistling a tune that did not agree with the sea serpent. Stone's father's father said he once heard of a bull shark squeezed in two, just for staring at a sea serpent's tail with its beady eyes. A bull shark can't help having those beady eyes!

(pause)

But Stone, who is here with me every morning, is not here today. She is looking for a mate. So at this moment, she cannot warn me. But I think of her. I always think of her...

(pause)

Stone is—she's my sister. She's a dolphin, but my sister nonetheless. Her dorsal fin is sliced so it almost looks like two. A boat injury from some time ago. She's self-conscious about this, although she needn't be, because I think she's perfect. But every morning, when we meet here to bathe by this rock, she asks, without fail, "Does my dorsal fin look normal yet?" "Almost exactly." I tell her this every time she asks. And then she says, "I don't like those large loud boats." And I say, "It is dreadful what that boat did to you!" And she says, "Most dreadful." And I say, "Why, you have experienced more dreadfulness than any of us in the sea!"

But then she says, “Well...” Because we both know I’ve gone too far. And she points out, “I haven’t been eaten alive.” And I say, “No, you haven’t had that.” And she says, “And there’s many who have.” And I say, “Indeed.” And she says, “One must always keep life in perspective, Marsopa.”

(pause)

And this is how our morning bathing by the rock always begins. And has always begun, since she found me on the rock as a child. I named her Stone, because she was gray and smooth. She named me Marsopa because she didn’t know what I was. There are tales of mermaids, many tales and stories that we tell and know, but neither Stone, nor I, has ever met another one like me.

(pause)

I don’t remember my life before the rock. Before Stone took me in and became my sister. I must have come from somewhere, but only remember here. And her.

(pause)

Without Stone, I am very alone.

(pause)

Until...the first day I notice that cruel sea serpent—because it’s also the first day, I notice the man. This is some months ago. Stone and I are bathing near the rock and I am sympathizing with her dreadful life and it’s just as she tells me that “one must always keep life in perspective,” that perspective and life meet, along with fear and love, and they mix together and...I see him...

(pause)

He’s a phoenix. Head in the sky. Body in the water. As he straddles the horizon like the king of the seahorses.

(pause)

Oh...

(pause)

The longing...my heart...

(pause)

But he’s not the king of the seahorses. He’s not even of the water. And in an instant, I know my heart must be crushed. “Get under water, Marsopa!” My dolphin-sister-rescuer-mother orders me. “Drop the pumice! We can bathe later. He must not see you!”

(pause)

How many times have I heard these words? These words which are implanted in every ocean creature since the time one can understand what saltwater is. "One must not let them see us." "Hide." "Go under water." "Stay where it's safe."

(pause)

But what are stories that are safe? The stories—well, the good ones—the good ones are always the ones...when they see us.

(pause)

I think this, the first day I see him, as I dip behind Stone to become out of site. She reads my mind and says, "What you may have heard—those are only tall tales, Marsopa. Tales you hear of love and glory and adventure in meeting those who walk the land. Those stories are never told by the ones who meet them. Only by those who claim to have witnessed the disappearance."

(pause)

And I say, "Maybe." And she reminds me, "It is not the same—the words of a witness for a moment and the life of the one who leaves." And I say, "You're right." And she says, "Why do you say I'm right with a look in your eyes?" And I say, "How else can I look, Stone?"

(pause)

And she smiles at me. She's not my mother after all. She worries, but we are not the same species, and while she has mates to choose from here...she knows this man makes me feel a way I have never felt for a creature in the sea.

(pause)

So I am willing to have my heart crushed. Daily. Because despite the pain, there is also ecstasy...and hope.

(pause)

He has been coming every day since then. --

## END OF EXCERPT

For the entire copy of *Marsopa's Tale*, please visit:  
<https://www.tarmeddaugh.com/marsopas-tale-a-10minute-monologue-play>