

Poor Unfortunate Soul: A Tale Of The Sea Witch

By Serena Valentino

Reviewed by Joshua Radford

Name: Joshua Radford

Grade: 12

Book Title: Poor Unfortunate Soul: A Tale of The Sea Witch

Author: Serena Valentino

Number of Pages: 196

Rating (On A Scale of 1-5): 3

Character List:

- Ursula - The protagonist of this story and the main antagonist of "The Little Mermaid" story. She is a physically repulsive sea creature that is fueled by hate. She desires nothing more than the authority and respect she thinks she deserves, but will go to extreme lengths to get it.
- Three Odd Sisters - Lucinda, Ruby, and Martha are three powerful witches and the driving force of the story. Their constant use of manipulation and sadistic methods to get what they want leads to numerous conflicts between the other characters. They are the ones who cursed the Beast Prince. In "Poor Unfortunate Soul," they work alongside Ursula to help her get what she wants, but they begin to wonder who's side Ursula is really on.
- Nanny - Nanny is the grandmother of Princess Tulip of the Kingdom of Morningstar. She is a witch who has lost most of her power over time. She uses her little magic to protect her granddaughter as she is bombarded by manipulations and enchantments from the likes of Ursula, the Beast Prince, and Maleficent.
- Pflanze - The pet cat of the Odd Sisters. He is sent to spy on Princess Tulip and Castle Morningstar while the sisters and Ursula work their plots.
- Triton - The father of Ariel well known from "The Little Mermaid." He becomes the main antagonist in this story since the perspective is that of the "villains." However, the backstory exposed about Ursula gives question to his morality and the legitimacy of Ursula's motives. Perhaps he is more, or in this case, worse than just the stubborn father we know from the Disney movie.

Review:

This story is essentially a spin-off of "The Little Mermaid" from the perspective of Ursula along the same setting. The book opens with Ursula's destruction of her home town of Ipswich and Triton's condemnation of Ursula's actions. We then follow Ursula as she reconnects with the Odd Sisters and vow revenge on Triton for all he has done to Ursula. We learn about Ursula's relentless victimization for nothing more than her looks and her interests. These witches then go about their trick with Ariel to get to Triton, as well as trying to find their lost sister Circe, who has abandoned them for their crueler actions. Only now, the waters have been muddied (no pun intended). No particular party is entirely in the right and we are left to analyze each individual moral that is introduced. There is more nuance and gray areas in the

seemingly polarized Disney universe we have come to know. These are the things that the book does exceptionally well. The execution and storytelling from which these concepts are portrayed are also where the book's flaws lie. The story claims to be a retelling from particularly Ursula's point of view. But, the book is constantly alternating between perspectives for each chapter. It becomes a guessing game as to what narrations are reliable and only serves to confuse the reader. In addition, the inclusion of the side-story with Circe and the Kingdom of Morningstar distracts from the contrast they are trying to create with Ariel's story. The potential introspection and reflection is squandered by drawing attention away from where Ursula's point of view means something. Another minor annoyance is the language that is used. Often it is the overdramatic, but charming nature of Disney dialogue, but other times it tries to be gory and explicit to try and be edgy and fringe for older readers. It is inappropriate, not for its own sake, but in its inconsistency with the rest of the book. This book is great, nonetheless, for anyone still nostalgic about Disney's golden years, but anyone uninterested with that area will, unfortunately, find little of value here.