

Sisters and Sealskins
by Sophie Katz

Setting: A rocky, sandy beach in Scotland. The backdrop shows the ocean and a cloudy sky. At the center of the stage is a big, long rock, large enough for two people to sit on and/or hide behind. The sound of waves breaking on the shore is constant background noise.

Characters:

KENZIE, a fifteen-year-old American girl

BONNIE, KENZIE's seven-year-old sister

ANNABEL, a selkie; youthful, playful, and sensitive

SIMA, a selkie, ANNABEL's sister; though just as youthful in appearance, older and more serious in behavior

SCENE I

(The sound of the waves is present even before the play begins. At the start of the play, the stage remains empty except for the rocks, but a seal's barking intermittently joins the background sound. Eventually, a louder splash is heard—the first of many, the sound of a person emerging or entering the water—and ANNABEL climbs onto the big rock from behind, a sealskin draped over her head and back. She quickly removes the sealskin and drapes it on the rock next to her; she is wet, has very long hair, and is naked. ANNABEL runs her fingers through her hair to untangle it, humming contentedly.)

(A beach ball bounces onstage, coming to rest at the base of the big rock. ANNABEL freezes. She slides off of the rock, pokes the ball, smiles, and then eagerly grabs the ball and starts bouncing it in the air with her head, like a seal would, laughing merrily.)

(A seal barks again, and ANNABEL catches the ball with her hands, standing up to look out at the ocean. She barks back, and stands there waiting, for an answer. But then—)

BONNIE

(from offstage)

That's my ball!

(ANNABEL jumps, startled. She drops the ball and quickly climbs back over the big rock, grabbing her sealskin and dropping out of sight. Cue splash.)

BONNIE

(running onstage)

Hey! Wait!

(picks up the ball, looks around, and calls)

Where did you go? Hello?

KENZIE

(enters, out of breath)

Bonnie! Don't... Don't run off like that!

BONNIE

I found my ball! The lady had it!

KENZIE

What... What lady?

BONNIE

The lady with the long hair! She was playing with my beach ball.

KENZIE

There's nobody out here but us, Bonnie.

BONNIE

But I saw her, Kenzie! She was standing right here... Maybe she ran into the water!

KENZIE

(looks over the rock, at the ocean)

There's nobody there.

BONNIE

Maybe she swam away. Here, I wanna see!

(BONNIE drops the ball and tries to climb on the big rock. KENZIE grabs her.)

KENZIE

Whoa there! No climbing! It's wet, you might slip and hurt yourself.

BONNIE

But I wanna see! It's not fair, you get to be tall and I don't!

KENZIE

You'll get to be tall when you're older. Here, I'll help you—but don't squirm!

(KENZIE lifts BONNIE up onto the rock, keeping a firm grip on her waist)

BONNIE

I don't see her.

KENZIE

I don't either. But look, there's a seal!

BONNIE

Where?

KENZIE

See that flat rock way out there? There's a seal sitting on it. Right there.

BONNIE

I see it! Hi, seal! ...but where did the lady go?

KENZIE

(setting BONNIE on the ground again)

Maybe you imagined her.

BONNIE

I did not! She was right here!

KENZIE

Come on, let's... Let's go find some seashells. I'll show you how to make a necklace with them.

BONNIE

(suddenly brightening)

Yeah! Let's make a necklace for Mommy!

KENZIE

Good idea!

BONNIE

We could put it in a letter and when she gets it she'll be so happy she'll feel all better!

(BONNIE grabs the beach ball and runs offstage. KENZIE lingers for a moment, distant.)

KENZIE

Yeah... Maybe.

(starts after BONNIE)

Bonnie, don't run!

(KENZIE exits. After a pause, a splash heralds ANNABEL and SIMA's entrance; they climb onto the rock, both wet, their sealskins hanging off of their shoulders.)

ANNABEL

Aw, they took the ball with them...

SIMA

It's for the best. You've made enough of a fool of yourself for one day.

ANNABEL

But it's fun, Sima!

SIMA

It's risky and foolish. Honestly, Anna, of all the empty shore you could decide to come out on, you choose the one place where humans are walking today.

ANNABEL

This is my favorite rock. And they had a beach ball with them!

SIMA

I don't know why I bother.

ANNABEL

The family camping on the other side of the bay left this morning. Maybe they left a ball there!

SIMA

Would you forget about the beach balls and listen to me, Annabel! If those humans realize what you are, they'll steal your skin, and you won't be able to come home again! Do you want that?

ANNABEL

No...

SIMA

Promise me you won't come this close to the humans again.

ANNABEL

I promise... Can we go find another ball, Sima?

SIMA

...yes, Anna, we can.

ANNABEL

(perking up)
And will you play with me?

SIMA

Yes, Anna, I'll play with you, if it'll keep you away from those girls!

(ANNABEL pulls her sealskin over her head and drops behind the rock. Cue splash.
SIMA shakes her head, picks up her sealskin, and follows.)

SCENE II

(At least a day later, midday. ANNABEL is sitting on the big rock, humming a merry tune and letting her feet hang in the air. She notices BONNIE and KENZIE's approach before they appear onstage and hides behind the rock.)

BONNIE

(singing)
Darling it's wetter down where it's better, take it from me...

KENZIE

It's "darling it's *better* down where it's *wetter*," Bonnie.

BONNIE

That's what I said!

KENZIE

No it's not. If you're going to make me listen to your one-woman Disney film, at least get the words right.

BONNIE

(wandering down the beach, singing)

Under the sea... Under the sea... Can I go swimming, Kenzie?

KENZIE

No.

BONNIE

Why?

KENZIE

'Cause I said so. You don't even have your swimsuit on.

BONNIE

We could go back to the house and get it.

KENZIE

And then I'd have to put on my swimsuit too, 'cause you can't swim on your own...

BONNIE

I'm a really good swimmer.

KENZIE

You're still learning.

BONNIE

I wanna go find the mermaid.

KENZIE

What mermaid?

BONNIE

The mermaid who took my beach ball!

KENZIE

Bonnie, I keep telling you – there's nobody out here. And mermaids are only in movies!

(pouts for a few moments)
Can I go swimming?

BONNIE

I just told you, no!

KENZIE

But whyyy?

BONNIE

The water's probably too cold. You don't want to go swimming now. You'll get sick.

KENZIE

Is that why Mommy couldn't come with us?

BONNIE

W-What?

KENZIE

Did Mommy go swimming when it was too cold?

BONNIE

No! And, and Mom would tell you to stay out of the water, too, so listen to me.

KENZIE

So why does she have to sleep over at the doctor's house?

BONNIE

Mommy's fine, Bonnie! She's waiting at home for us to get back! Stop badgering me!

KENZIE

(BONNIE starts to cry. KENZIE reigns in her temper.)

Hey. I'm sorry. Don't cry, Bonnie. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to shout. Let's go back to the house, okay? It's lunchtime. Don't cry. Let's go have some lunch.

KENZIE

(BONNIE nods. KENZIE takes her hand and they exit the stage. As they leave, ANNABEL climbs on top of the big rock, watching them leave. After a pause, a splash heralds SIMA's arrival. She climbs onto the rock to sit next to ANNABEL)

You're back here again.

SIMA

ANNABEL

The little one; she's sad...

SIMA

I told you, those humans are going to trap you out here!

ANNABEL

I think the big one's sad, too.

SIMA

Are you listening to me?!

ANNABEL

I wanna know why they're not having fun.

SIMA

It doesn't matter, Annabel! Humans are dangerous! They hunt us as seals and as women alike!

ANNABEL

I like these humans. They're nice girls.

SIMA

They may be girls, but they have a father. A man, Anna! He'll look at you and see a woman, a naked woman. Do you know what men do to naked women?

ANNABEL

The father never comes to the beach. It's just the girls.

SIMA

The point is, Annabel, you promised you wouldn't go near the humans again. But here you are!

ANNABEL

He never plays with them. I think family should play together.

SIMA

And you're not listening to me! Again!

(ANNABEL is silent, staring after the humans.)

SIMA

Why do you care so much about the humans?! I bet you care more about them than yourself! ...Well then, why should I care, if you don't? Go on, get caught if you want. I don't care.

(SIMA snatches up her sealskin and drops behind the rock. Annabel is alarmed.)

ANNABEL

Sima? Sima, wait!

(ANNABEL grabs her sealskin and follows SIMA.)

SCENE III

(Another day, late afternoon – the lighting is darker than it was before. BONNIE wanders across the stage, sulkily kicking the beach ball ahead of her. She has nearly reached the other side of the stage before KENZIE runs onstage after her.)

KENZIE

Bonnie! There you are, I've been looking everywhere— What are you doing?

BONNIE

Nothing.

KENZIE

Don't tell me you're looking for mermaids again.

BONNIE

She's not a mermaid. Grandpa says she's a selkie. They're seal ladies.

KENZIE

Bonnie...

BONNIE

Grandpa says they're seals and then they take off their sealskins and then they're ladies.

KENZIE

There's no such thing as selkies.

BONNIE

But Grandpa says—

KENZIE

Grandpa was teasing.

BONNIE

You don't know. You weren't there.

KENZIE

I don't have to be there to know. There are no selkies.

BONNIE

But there *was* a lady. Here with my beach ball.

KENZIE

No, there wasn't.

BONNIE

How do you know?

KENZIE

I just do!

BONNIE

I don't think you know anything.

KENZIE

I know more than you do!

BONNIE

Then why can't you tell me why Mommy's sick?

KENZIE

Mom is fine, Bonnie!

BONNIE

No she's not! I know she's not! I heard Daddy telling Grandpa—

KENZIE

I don't need this! I don't need you questioning me all the time! I have a million other things I could be doing, but I have to play babysitter all summer for my stupid little sister!

BONNIE

...did *I* do something?

KENZIE

What?

BONNIE

Is that why you're mad at me, Kenzie? Because I did something to make Mommy sick?

KENZIE

I'm not mad at you!

BONNIE

But you're shouting.

KENZIE

For god's sake, Bonnie, I can't handle this! For once in your life, would you stop bugging me!

(BONNIE sits on one of the smaller rocks, hugging her legs. KENZIE paces back and forth across the stage in silence before speaking again.)

KENZIE

I came to find you because Dad says Uncle Al and the cousins are coming over tonight. You need to come back and shower now.

BONNIE

I don't wanna.

KENZIE

Bonnie, we all need to look nice tonight. We're having company.

BONNIE

I don't care.

KENZIE

Get up.

BONNIE

No.

(KENZIE crosses to BONNIE and tries to pick her up. BONNIE squirms, kicks, and screams until KENZIE gives up in exasperation, dropping her again.)

KENZIE

Fine! Stay out here! Stay out all night! Stay out forever! I don't care, just do what you want!

(KENZIE storms off stage left. BONNIE stays seated on the ground until she looks over and realizes that KENZIE really isn't coming back.)

BONNIE

Kenzie?

(when there's no response, she stands up, taking a few steps towards stage left before shouting louder)

Kenzie!

(There is no reply. BONNIE wanders away, dejected, exiting stage right.)

SCENE IV

(It's late at night. The stage is very dark; the only lighting should simulate moonlight. The waves are loud. The beach ball is still onstage. KENZIE runs onstage.)

KENZIE

Bonnie?! Bonnie!

(as she speaks, she frantically searches the stage—looking around the big rock, out over the ocean, out over the audience)

Bonnie, where are you? Oh, god, Bonnie, where did you go? You— You better get back here right now, or Dad's gonna kill you— I'm gonna kill you if— No, no, I won't, I'm not gonna hurt you, just come back, please, I didn't mean it, I need you to come back!

(she slows in her search, picks up the beach ball, and hugs it to her chest, her back to the big rock so she does not see ANNABEL climbing onto it.)

Please... You gotta come back, Bonnie. If we lose Mom... I can't lose you, too. Please don't leave me. I'm scared, Bonnie, I'm so scared...

ANNABEL

Is she lost?

KENZIE

(whirls around, sees ANNABEL)

W-What?

ANNABEL

The little girl. Is she lost?

KENZIE

I... Have you seen my sister? She's about this tall, and— and I don't know where she is!

(ANNABEL drops back behind the rock, pulling her sealskin over her head. Cue splash.)

KENZIE

No, wait! Come back!

(KENZIE drops the beach ball and looks behind the rock. She glances around in confusion for a moment before running offstage again. The stage is left empty. The light of flashlights sweep across the stage while unseen men run and shout to each other)

MEN

Bonnie! Do you see her? She's not here! Where could she be? Bonnie, Bonnie! (etc.)

(The shouting dies away. There is a splash, and SIMA climbs onto the big rock, her sealskin over her shoulders. She stands up, letting her sealskin drop as she looks around.)

SIMA

Anna! Annabel, where are you? Anna, we have to go, now! Anna!

(A flashlight's beam lands on her)

MAN

I see someone! Over on that rock!

(SIMA panics, grabs her sealskin, and drops behind the rock again.)

SCENE V

(Very early in the morning. The beach ball is still onstage.)

(There is a splash, and ANNABEL emerges from behind the rock, carrying BONNIE, who is unconscious and soaking wet. She sets BONNIE on the ground and glances up and down the beach. Satisfied, she quickly ducks behind the rock again.)

(KENZIE enters stage right, exhausted and rubbing her eyes. She lowers her hands, sees BONNIE, and runs to her side.)

KENZIE

Bonnie! Oh my god, Bonnie! Wake up, Bonnie, please wake up!

(BONNIE starts to cough. KENZIE heaves a sigh of relief and helps BONNIE sit up.)

KENZIE

Oh thank god...

BONNIE

Kenzie...?

KENZIE

You're okay. You're okay. Oh, thank god, you're okay...

BONNIE

What happened?

KENZIE

You've been out all night. The whole family's looking for you. Bonnie, where have you been?

BONNIE

I was walking. And then I couldn't find my way back, so I went down where we go swimming.

KENZIE

Down by the pier?

BONNIE

Yeah. I slipped and fell off. Into the ocean.

KENZIE

Oh my god...

BONNIE

And now... Now I'm here.

KENZIE

But how?

BONNIE

Maybe it was the—

(she pauses—she thinks KENZIE won't believe her, so she changes what she's saying)
I guess I'm just a good swimmer!

KENZIE

I guess...

(Both are silent for a few moments, thinking.)

BONNIE

I called for you.

KENZIE

I know. I heard you.

BONNIE

But you didn't come back.

KENZIE

Bonnie, I am so, so sorry. I shouldn't have left you alone out here.

BONNIE

I'm okay, though.

KENZIE

Yes. Yes you are.

BONNIE

...is Mommy gonna be okay?

KENZIE

I don't know, Bonnie. I'm sorry, but I really don't know.

BONNIE

...are *we* gonna be okay?

KENZIE

(hesitates, then hugs BONNIE tightly)
Yes. Yes, we are. We're going to be just fine.

BONNIE

You promise?

KENZIE
I promise.

BONNIE
Okay. ...you were right. It *was* too cold.

KENZIE
Didn't I tell you? Come on, let's go inside.
(KENZIE picks up BONNIE and starts to carry her off stage left, calling ahead:)
I found her! Dad! I've got Bonnie!

(As KENZIE exits, ANNABEL climbs back onto the big rock to watch them go. After the humans have left the stage, there is a splash, and SIMA climbs onto the rock.)

SIMA
Anna.

ANNABEL
...Hi, Sima.

SIMA
Are you alright?

ANNABEL
Yeah.

SIMA
They didn't get you? Nobody touched you?

ANNABEL
No.

SIMA
I was looking for you all night. I came here, I called for you.

ANNABEL
I know. I heard.

SIMA
I thought I'd lost you.

ANNABEL
I was looking for the little one.

SIMA
Of course you were.

ANNABEL

And I found her! She was in the water. I got her out again.

SIMA

I know. I saw you bring her here.

(Both are silent for several long moments.)

ANNABEL

Are you mad at me?

SIMA

What?

ANNABEL

It felt like you were mad at me. For going near the humans.

SIMA

I'm not mad at you, Annabel.

ANNABEL

You left me here.

SIMA

I... You like being up here.

ANNABEL

But you left me here like you weren't coming back. And you said you didn't care if I got caught.

SIMA

I didn't mean it.

ANNABEL

Really?

SIMA

Really.

ANNABEL

Oh.

(looks down at the ball and slides off of the rock to pick it up)
Will you play with me?

(SIMA is silent for a moment. Then she slides off of the rock to stand with ANNABEL.)

SIMA

Yes, Anna. I'll play with you.