

SCENE FOUR: ARIEL'S GROTTO

(From the deep emerges a veritable museum of human artifacts that Ariel has collected over the years, dominated by a huge, discarded bust resembling Prince Eric. A braid of red sea anemones is draped about its neck. Ariel, distraught after her fight with Dad, sits among her treasures holding her newly acquired fork. Flounder tries to comfort her.)

FLOUNDER

Ariel!

ARIEL

He doesn't understand me! He doesn't even try. I've never felt at home here.

FLOUNDER

Home's with your family, isn't it?

ARIEL

What if home isn't the place where you were born? What if it's a place you have to discover for yourself—

FLOUNDER

I'd miss you if you were gone.

ARIEL

You would?

FLOUNDER

(his cheeks redden)

Not in a dopey way. Not in a "crazy, hopeless, I'm-so-in-love-but-she-doesn't-know-I'm-alive" kinda way. Not like that at ALL.

(Everything poor Flounder says just seems to leave him more exposed, more vulnerable. The best he can do? Escape.)

Uh, I gotta go.

(And Flounder darts away.)

ARIEL

(affectionately calling out)

Flounder, you're very sweet.

(now alone with her thoughts, addressing the bust almost as if it were Prince Eric)

Daddy's never even met a human, but he still thinks the worst of them.

(Ariel holds the silver fork and marvels as it catches the light.)