

= The Sea Urchin (1913 film) =

The Sea Urchin is a 1913 American silent short romantic drama film directed by Edwin August and starring Jeanie MacPherson and Lon Chaney . The film was the earliest known character role by Lon Chaney and the first screenplay by MacPherson . The story follows a hunchback fisherman , who finds a young girl and raised her into womanhood with the intention of marrying her . A handsome boy soon gains her affections and the hunchback threatens him with a knife . The next day , the boat tips over during an argument and the hunchback saves the girl . As the young lovers reunite , he sees how happy they are together and he takes his leave . The film was released on August 22 , 1913 and was played across the United States . The film is presumed lost .

= = Plot = =

A hunchback fisherman finds a young girl tied to a mast , the sole survivor of a shipwreck , and raises her into womanhood with the intention of making her his wife . Ten years pass and the woman , out of gratitude , promises to marry him . The hunchback hires a handsome stranger , the boy . The boy and the girl fall in love , but the girl refuses to marry him . The hunchback sees the two embrace and threatens the boy with a knife . The next day , the three go fishing in the boat and an argument breaks out . During the argument the boat tips over and the girl is washed away . The hunchback and the boy search for her , until the boy becomes exhausted and collapses on the shore . The hunchback finds the girl on a rock and brings her ashore . As the two reunite , he sees how happy they are together and takes his leave .

= = Cast = =

Jeanie MacPherson as The Girl
Lon Chaney as Barnacle Bill / Barnacle Ben
Robert Z. Leonard as The Boy / Bob

= = Production = =

The film was a Powers Picture Plays directed by Edwin August and distributed by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company . The film 's production number was 0101 . The screen play was written by Jeanie MacPherson who also played the role of The Girl . Simon Louvish , author of Cecil B. DeMille : A Life in Art , states this uncredited screenplay was the first one to be authored by MacPherson . Louvish also refers to this film as a two @-@ reeler . Lon Chaney and Robert Z. Leonard had previously worked together for the Ferris Hartman Troupe . Three years prior to the release of the film , the two were involved in the production of musical comedies for the Troupe . In 1918 , Leonard would later direct his wife , Mae Murry , and Lon Chaney in Danger , Go Slow .

= = Release and legacy = =

The film was released on August 22 , 1913 . The Moving Picture World said the film was a memorable offering that contained vivid scenes along a picturesque coast . In an advertisement in Rushville , Indiana the film as billed as the " story of a Hunchback 's Love and Renunciation " . The film was also advertised , perhaps alternatively or erroneously , as Sea Urchins . Advertisements for the film included theaters in Pennsylvania , Texas , Kansas , Louisiana , Indiana , Utah , and New York .

The film is important as the first known character role by Lon Chaney . Martin F. Norden , author of The Cinema of Isolation : A History of Physical Disability in the Movies , describes the plot as following the prevailing industry standards of disabled characters , where the figure " nobly " withdraws from the relationship after plotting revenge and then saving his beloved . Norden cites a quote from Chaney , saying this film made Chaney realize that " the screen was more interesting

than the stage " . The film is now considered lost . It is unknown when the film was lost , but if it was in Universal 's vaults it would have been deliberately destroyed along with the remaining copies of Universal 's silent era films in 1948 .