BAD Mermaids

Meet the Sushi Sisters

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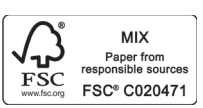
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Paris Is Leaving

Paris pulled up her trademark knee-high socks and sighed as she leaned against a giant tank of pufferfish on the airport runway.

'I don't think it's coming,' she said to her mother, as they watched the planes roll past.

Their plane – the one with a giant sock logo on its tail – was nowhere to be seen.

'And shouldn't you change the sock design, now that you no longer make socks?' Paris said.

It was a good point. The Silkensocks family had made socks for generations, but now Susan Silkensocks, Paris's mother, had given up and started selling *mermaid* make-up to humans instead.

That's where the tank of pufferfish came in.

They were promotional fish for the make-up brand



Flubiére. The problem was, no human would buy make-up modelled on a fish, and so Paris's mother decided the whole family had to move to a place that would. And that place, she decided, was Scotland.

'We could stay here,' Paris said. 'I like California. It's going to be cold in Scotland.'

'Scotland is famous for its *fish*,' her mother scoffed. 'It's full of people who go there just for the fish. And I

have a plan. I'm going to put all my promotional pufferfish in the loch next to our new home. That way, when people are fishing, they'll catch pufferfish covered in make-up and then they'll think, "Ah, I want some of that make-up." And that, Paris, is how I'll sell a lot of it.'

'That sounds … um,' Paris said slowly. 'I'm not sure people will want make-up that they've fished out of a loch.'

'After seeing these beauties, how could they *not*?' her mother said, pointing at the tank. A particularly large pufferfish was sliding its maroon-lipsticked mouth across the glass, making an unsightly smudge.

'Well, if we must go, we should get another plane,' Paris said. 'Clearly ours isn't coming.' She pointed at a bunch of people filing on to one nearby.

'We're not *sharing* a plane, Paris!'

'But most people do,' Paris said.

'Most people are idiots,' her mother snapped. 'If you have to share anything, you're doing it wrong.'

'That's not true,' Paris whispered to the pufferfish.

Just then, a tiny jet with a sock logo on it came

gliding in to land, then screeched to a halt in front of them.

The pilot clambered out.

'Sorry I'm late,' she said. 'It's Scotland, is it?'

'Unfortunately,' Paris said, flashing the pilot a smile.

'LATE!' Susan Silkensocks roared. 'My pufferfish could've crinkled, and most of them have smudged their lipstick!'

The pilot looked to Paris for answers.

'It's mermaid make-up,' Paris said. 'Modelled on pufferfish. Long story.'

'*Mermaid* make-up?' the pilot mouthed to herself in awe.

Paris climbed on board and sat on a plush sofa by the window. She pulled out her clamshell compact – the device she used to chat to her mermaid friends – and looked at it longingly. You see, Paris had a secret. She had once saved the Queen of the Mermaids from captivity, and as a reward she was given a magic necklace. When she shook it, she could morph into all sorts of things – a shark, a dolphin, a jellyfish, even a

mermaid. That was how she came to have mermaid friends. She was itching to get to her new house so she could call them.

As soon as the pufferfish were secured, they took off. Paris sighed as she stared down at the ocean far below them – and the spot where her mermaid friends lived. Soon they'd be far away.

'Oh cheer up, Paris. We're going to live in a castle!' her mother oozed. 'A real *castle*. Once home to knights and a queen, and all the other bits that go in a castle. Swords and stuff.'

'It sounds freezing.'

'It's grand, Paris. GRAND. And then there's the loch. An ancient patch of deep, dark water that's supposed to be haunted by a mermaid!'

Paris looked up hopefully. A ghost mermaid sounded interesting.