The Mermaid School series

Mermaid School
The Clamshell Show
Ready, Steady, Swim!
All Aboard!
Save our Seas!

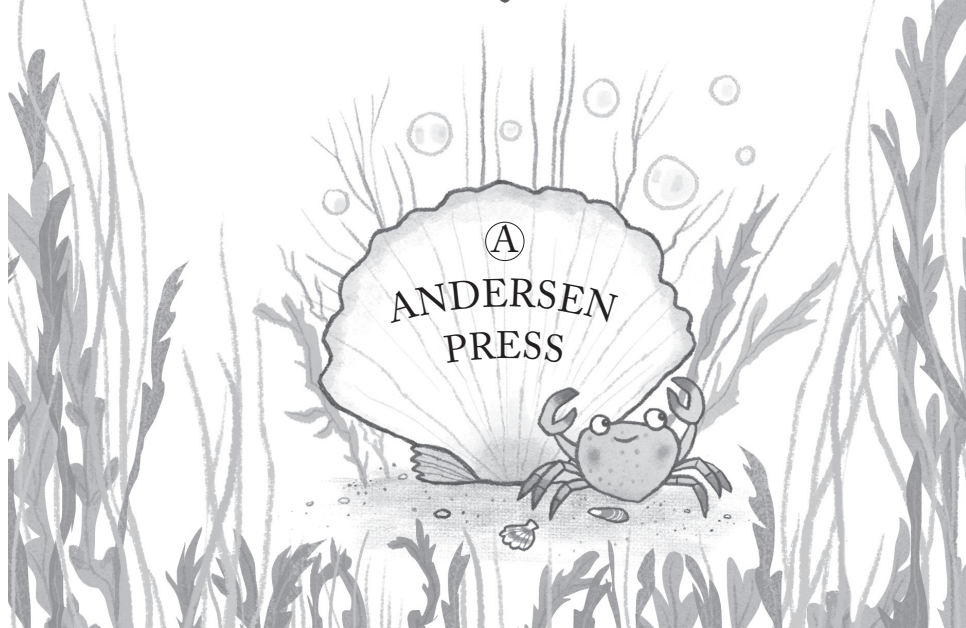
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MERMAID SCHOOL

Save our Seas
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LUCY COURTENAY

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ANDERSEN PRESS

First published in 2021 by
Andersen Press Limited
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 2SA
www.andersenpress.co.uk

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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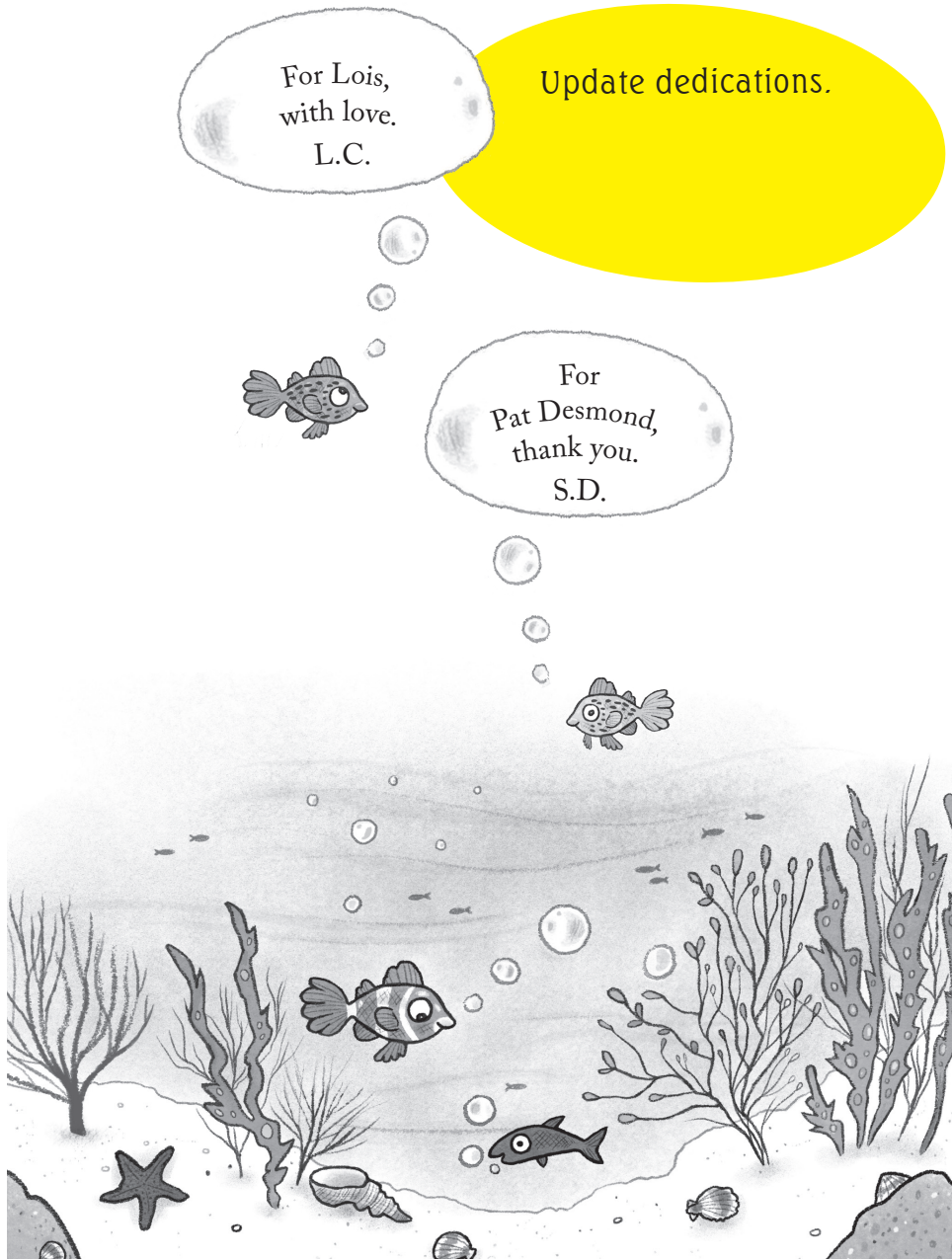
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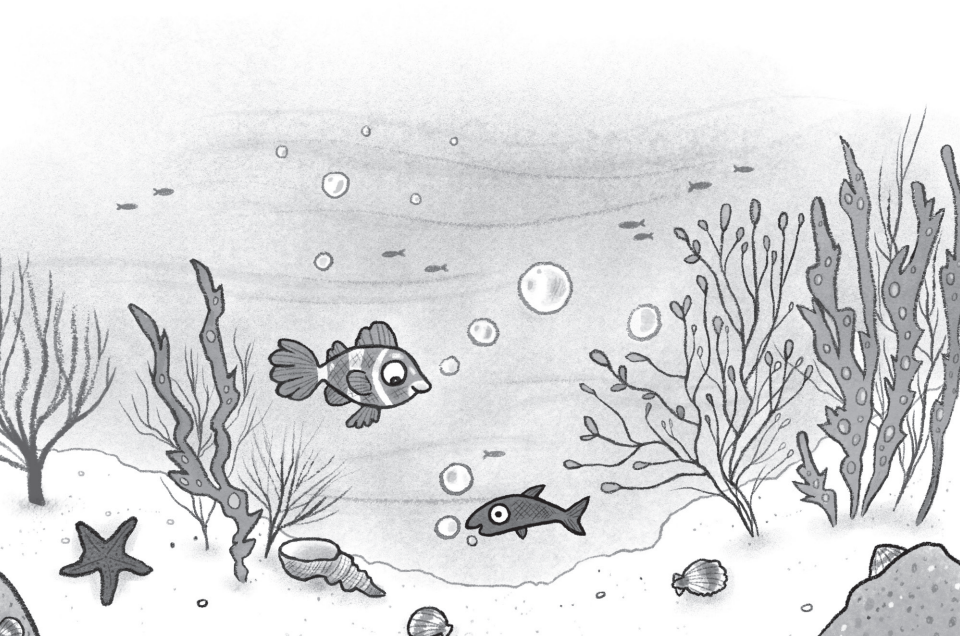
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

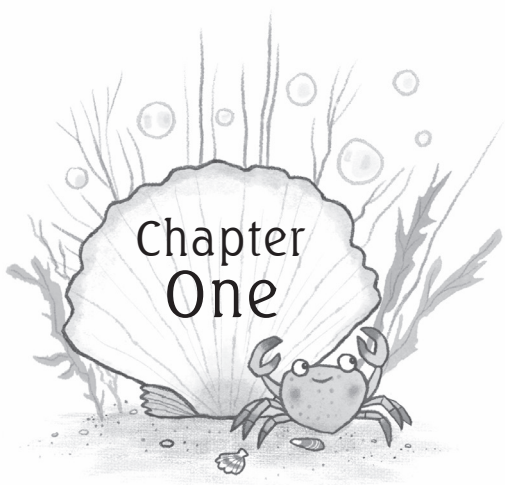
ISBN 978 1 83913 048 9

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.




Pearl's House
Galloping Scallop Cafe
Lord Foam's Atoll Academy
Mermaid Lagoon
Not to scale
Coral Ridge
East Lagoon Rocks
N
W
E
S
Sheena to provide: Whale and Hearty (new vet's surgery) - Lucy to advise Andersen on placement.
Clamshell Grotto
Radio Seawave
Marnie's House
Ola's House



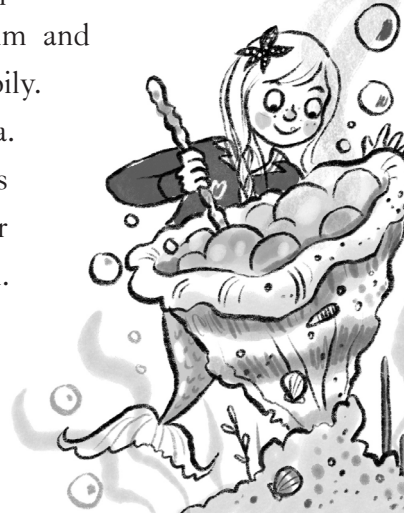


Chapter One

It was warm in the Food Tech Cave at Lady Sealia's Mermaid School, thanks to the hot-water vents steaming and spouting on the cave floor. Marnie Blue carefully swam across the cave with an armful of ingredients and dumped them in her clamshell pot. She pushed a strand of blonde hair out of her eyes and started to stir.

Sweets and Treats was the most popular food tech lesson of the year, because they learned sweetie recipes and tested them out. Everyone's pots bubbled with kelp toffee, air-bubble gum and fizzy whelks. Marnie sniffed happily.

'Marnie!' called Dora Agua. She adjusted her sea-glass goggles and turned up the heat on her hot-water vent. 'Come and watch. This is the cool bit.'



Marnie was surprised to see that Dora's mixture was bright pink. She glanced at the deep green kelp-toffee mixture in her own bubbling pot.

'Are you making fizzy whelks?' she asked.

Dora shook her head. 'I'm inventing something new for my Brinies Inventor badge,' she said with pride. 'I'm going to call it "dolphin poo".'



Marnie wasn't sure she would eat anything called dolphin poo. But she was too nice to say so. 'What's the cool bit I'm supposed to watch?' she asked.

'It's going to turn blue,' said Dora. She stared at the page of seaweed paper in her hand, which was covered in squiggles of squid ink. 'I hope I'm reading my recipe right.'

'What's the deal, moray eel?' said Marnie's best friend Orla Finnegan, swimming across the cave with her long dark hair flowing behind her.

'I'm making dolphin poo,' Dora said.

'What the flippering flippers?' Orla said. 'Dolphin *poo*?'



A red-haired mermaid with steamed-up glasses looked up from her own pot of bubbling green goo. 'Who's making dolphin poo?' she asked with interest.

'I'm not *literally* making dolphin poo, Pearl,' Dora said. 'Because I'm not actually a dolphin. It's a new sweetie recipe I've created for my Brinies Inventor badge.'

Pearl Cockle looked disappointed. She went back to stirring her mixture.

'I don't get this Brinies stuff,' said Orla.

Marnie didn't either, but she was interested to hear about it.

Dora beamed. 'It's *krilliant!* she said. 'We do loads of cool stuff, like camping and inventing and building driftwood dens. You should join. Ms Mullet is always looking for new members. Hey, Mabel!' she shouted across the cave.

Mabel Anemone looked up from a mixing bowl. 'Yeah?'

'What are you doing for your Brinies Inventor badge?'

'I've made a cleaning tool which you attach to your tail,' said Mabel. 'It cleans the floor in hardly any time. I've called it the Flic-n-Span.'

Dora whistled. 'That sounds orcasome!'

'I'm inventing something too,' said Gilly Seaflower. She didn't like it when her friend Mabel got more attention than she did. 'And my invention's JUST as orcasome as Mabel's.'

'What is it then?' said Dora.

Gilly tossed her blonde curls. 'I'm not going to tell YOU. You'll just steal my idea because it's so good.'

'Ignore her, Dora,' said Orla. 'Everyone else does.'

Dora sighed and turned back to her clamshell pot. Her mixture was still pink. 'Why isn't it turning blue?' she said in frustration.

'Maybe you just need to boil it a bit more,' Marnie suggested.

A large octopus with a chunky coral necklace drifted about, tasting everyone's mixtures. It was Miss Tinkle. Monsieur Poisson, the school cook and the food tech teacher, was ill that morning, and Miss Tinkle had enthusiastically volunteered to cover his lesson.



She was enjoying it a little too much, and had already eaten half of Gilly's fizzy whelk mixture and most of Lupita Barracuda's kelp toffee. 'Five starfish minutes, everyone!' she trilled. 'Five more minutes until the end of the lesson!'

'I think something's happening,' said Dora suddenly.

The mixture in her pot was turning a gentle lilac.

'That's blue,' said Dora. She looked hopefully at the others. 'Right?'

'Definitely,' said Marnie.

'Bluer than a blue whale,' agreed Orla.

'What's bluer than a blue whale?' said Pearl, looking up again. Pearl enjoyed conversations about marine life.

'Dora's mixture,' said Marnie.

Pearl adjusted her steamy glasses and peered into Dora's pot. 'I'd say it's more lilac.'

'It's BLUE,' said Marnie firmly.

'DEFINITELY blue,' said Orla.

The tip of a tentacle suddenly swooped into Dora's pot.

'This smells interesting,' said Miss Tinkle. Her eyes shone greedily behind her shell-encrusted spectacles. 'Do I smell extract of pearl?'

'Yes, Miss Tinkle,' said Dora. She looked a little anxious at how much of the sweetie mixture was on Miss Tinkle's tentacle. 'I've been experimenting with squid-sucker slime too. I'm entering it for my Brinies Inventor badge.'

'If there's any left,' Orla murmured in Marnie's ear.



Miss Tinkle licked her tentacle clean. 'Scrumptious,' she said. She scooped up some more and ate it with a happy sucking sound. Then she checked one of the starfish watches on her many wrists. 'Oops. Time to finish your recipes and start clearing up now, mermaids!' And she drifted away.

Marnie, Orla, Pearl and Dora stared at the sad remains of Dora's sweetie mixture.

'That is the smallest dolphin poo I've ever seen,' said Orla.

Marnie patted Dora's shoulder. 'Maybe you only need a tiny bit to win your badge?' she said.

'Maybe,' Dora said glumly.

The mermaids put their pots in the hot-vent dishwashers and wiped the work benches clean.

'I will tell Monsieur Poisson how hard you've all worked today,' said Miss Tinkle, raising her voice over the underwater bell which rang for the end of the lesson. 'Off you go now – oh, *excuse me* . . .'

A small cloud of ink puffed out of Miss Tinkle's behind. It swirled about for a moment, and then disappeared. Miss Tinkle turned red.

'Did Miss Tinkle just parp?' said Pearl.

Orla giggled. Marnie did too.

'Miss Tinkle just parped.' The whisper started spreading. 'Miss Tinkle did a parp . . . did you see? Did you see that cloud of ink?'

'Out you go, mermaids!' said Miss Tinkle, a little shrilly. There was a second little puff of ink. She waved



her tentacles hastily. 'Quickly now! Come on!'

'I think she just parped again,' said Pearl.

All the mermaids were giggling now. Some were trying to control their faces. Others, like Orla, weren't

trying at all. Marnie was torn between laughing and feeling sorry for her octopus teacher. It must be SUPER embarrassing to parp in front of the class.

'Out!' squealed Miss Tinkle. She rushed out of the cave, leaving another small puff of ink behind. 'Out of my way!'

'I must have added too much squid-sucker slime,' Dora said as the giggling first years all followed their teacher. 'That's why the mixture didn't go blue.'

'Is it just me,' said Pearl, 'or does Miss Tinkle look bigger?'

The octopus was definitely looking rounder. She was floating higher off the rocky floor as well. In fact, she was almost bumping her head on the ceiling of the corridor with her tentacles pressed firmly to her behind. Her face was bright pink.

'She's trying to hold it in,' Marnie said.

'Stop!' Orla leaned against the rocky wall with one hand on her tummy. 'I honestly can't take it. I feel like *my* stomach is going to go pop.'

Miss Tinkle was still rising, getting rounder and rounder. A crowd of mermaids gathered underneath.

'Let it out, Miss Tinkle!' shouted Lupita. 'You know you want to.'

'Miss Tinkle's going to EXPLODE!' squealed Gilly.

'What is going on?' Lady Sealia Foam, the head of Mermaid School, swam out of her office into the corridor with her silver dogfish Dilys in her arms. She frowned up at poor Miss Tinkle, who was now stuck to the ceiling.

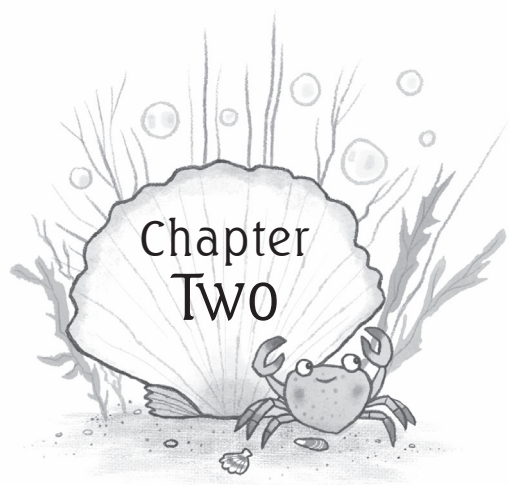


'Miss Tinkle?' Lady Sealia demanded. 'Why are you on the ceiling?'

'Oh dear,' moaned Miss Tinkle. 'I'm sorry, Lady Sealia, I . . .'

PRARRRRRPRRPPPPP!





Chapter Two

'Begin at the beginning.' Lady Sealia made a steeple out of her fingers and glared across her desk. She looked more frightening than Marnie had ever seen her.

Dora, Pearl, Orla and Marnie floated awkwardly in the middle of Lady Sealia's office. Miss Tinkle sat on the coral stool beside Lady Sealia's desk, sniffing. Curled up on her sea-moss cushion, Dilys was snoring.

'It was an accident,' said Dora.

'It really was, Lady Sealia,' said Marnie.

'Dora forgot the properties of squid-sucker slime,' said Pearl. 'It could happen to anyone. Although probably not me,' she added, thoughtfully.

'Orla?' said Lady Sealia in her chilliest voice. 'Do you have anything to add?'

Orla shook her head. Marnie realised her best friend had stuffed a seaweed hankie into her mouth to stop herself from laughing out loud.