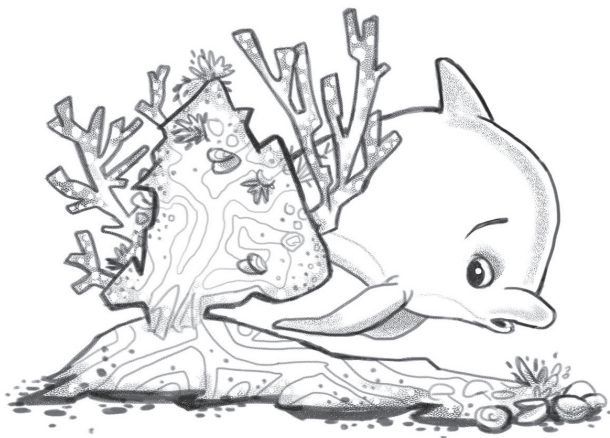




Splash's Secret Friend



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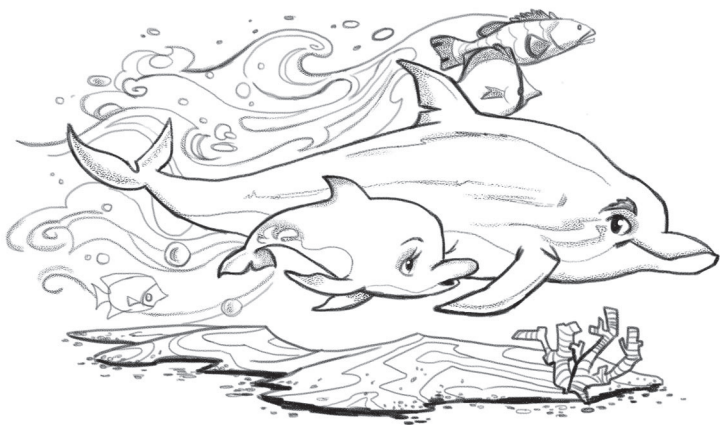
The Shark Migration

“THANKS FOR SWIMMING ME TO SCHOOL again today, Dad,” Pearl said.

Her father smiled. “You’re welcome, Pearl,” he said with a flick of his tail. “I know you’re used to swimming to school by yourself. But it’s best for all dolphins to be careful during the shark migration.”

Pearl shivered and glanced around. The Salty Sea was calm and peaceful. Bright

sunlight filtered through the clear water all the way to the shallow, sandy seafloor. Schools of colorful fish darted in and out among the coral, and a jellyfish floated near the surface. Everything looked normal. There were no sharks in sight.



Still, Pearl felt a little bit nervous. It was the time of the annual shark migration, when lots of sharks moved from one area of the Salty Sea to another. Her class had been learning all about it in Ocean Lore.

“Mom told me the sharks don’t usually come close to Coral Cove Dolphin School,” she said. “I’m glad about that!” Pearl had been nervous about leaving her pod’s safe home lagoon, even with her father along. But her mother said the waters in their part of the sea were mostly too shallow for the larger sharks.

“It’s just a precaution,” Pearl’s mother had told her. “Sharks can be unpredictable.”

Sharks could be scary, too. Pearl’s father had a scar on his fin from a shark attack when he was young. Every time she saw it, Pearl could only think one thing: Stay away from sharks!

She was glad when the familiar school reef came into view. Coral Cove Dolphin School was encircled by a large reef made up of every kind of coral, sea fan, sponge, and algae Pearl could imagine. It was also the home to

countless other creatures, from anemones to fish. Pearl always felt safe when she was inside the school reef's colorful walls.

“Be careful swimming back,” she told her father.

“I will,” he promised. “Be sure your friends swim you home after school, all right?”

When Pearl swam into the cove, her friends Echo and Flip were floating near the entrance. The two of them were members of the same large pod. They usually swam to school together, along with a group of older students from their pod.

“Pearl!” Echo swam over. “Did your dad swim you to school again today?”

“Yes,” Pearl said. “He said we’re being extra careful until the migration is over.” She looked around. “Where’s Splash?”

“He’s not here yet.” Echo sounded a tiny bit worried. “That’s weird, right?”

Pearl nodded. Splash was the fastest swimmer in their class. He was usually one of the first dolphins to arrive at school.

“I’m sure he’ll be here soon,” Flip said. “Anyway, he’s fast enough to outswim any dumb old shark.” He did a flip in the water. “Just like me!”

At that moment an older student swam past. His name was Mullet, and he was friends with Splash’s older brother, Finny. That didn’t mean he was friends with Splash and the others, though. He loved to tease and make fun of the younger dolphins whenever the teachers weren’t looking.

“What are you babies talking about?” Mullet asked with a smirk. “Let me guess—

your fins are quivering because you're scared of sharks?"

Echo frowned at him. "It's smart to be cautious of sharks," she said. "Even Old Salty says so. He says that if we see a shark, we should swim fast in the other direction."

Old Salty was the principal of the school. He also taught Ocean Lore. He knew just about everything about all the creatures under the sea.

"It's smart for babies like you to be cautious," Mullet said. "If you saw a shark up close, you'd probably—"

He stopped talking suddenly. Pearl soon figured out why. One of the teachers, Bay, was swimming toward them.

Bay was Pearl's favorite teacher, and she taught her two favorite classes—Magic and Music. "It's almost time for school to begin,"

Bay told Pearl and her friends. “Mullet, shouldn’t you be heading to class, too?”

“Yes, Bay,” Mullet said sweetly. “I was just leaving.”

“He’s such a sneak!” Echo whispered to Pearl. “He always acts nice in front of the teachers.”

Pearl just nodded. She wasn’t really thinking about Mullet anymore. “I wonder where Splash could be,” she said. “He’s still not here.”

“I hope he didn’t run into some migrating sharks,” Flip said.

“Don’t say that!” Echo exclaimed. “He’ll probably be here any second now.”

But Splash still hadn’t arrived when Music class started. Pearl kept looking toward the school entrance, but there was no sign of him.

Bay told the class that they would be working on a magic-strengthening song today. All dolphins had natural magical abilities, and when they sang, it made their magic stronger.

“Why don’t you start, Wiggle?” Bay said to one of the boys. “Sing the first section of the song we learned yesterday, and then the dolphin next to you can sing the next part. We’ll go around the circle like that.”

“Okay.” Wiggle was a small dolphin with a pointy snout. He hardly ever stayed still for more than a second. He darted up to the surface to take a breath, then settled himself back in his spot with a wiggle of his fins.

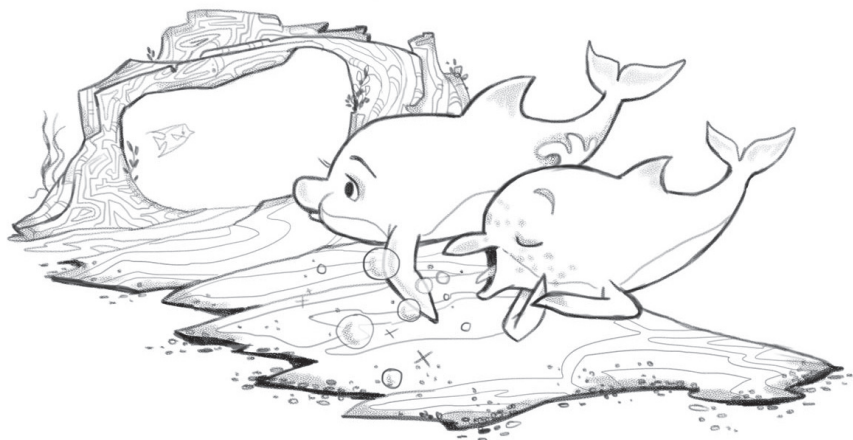
Then he started singing. After a moment, the girl next to him took over.

Meanwhile, Pearl looked over at the

entrance again. Where could Splash be?

She got distracted from her worries when Flip started to sing right next to her. He was loud but kept messing up the tune.

There was a flash of movement over near the entrance. Pearl looked that way, hoping it was Splash. But it was only a colorful angelfish swimming by.



“Pearl? Pearl!” Bay’s voice broke into her thoughts. “It’s your turn.”

“Oops!” Pearl quickly turned back. “Sorry. Um, where were we?”

Flip sang the last line again. Pearl nodded and sang her part.

But as soon as she finished and Echo took over, Pearl went right back to worrying about Splash. What if he’d run into something unexpected on his way to school—like a hungry shark?