

# Mermaids TO THE RESCUE

A stylized, black silhouette of a mermaid's tail, positioned behind the word 'Mermaids' and extending downwards and to the right.

Cali Plays Fair

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# Chapter 1

Professor Korla passed back the exams to the royal mermaids and magical seaponies at the Rescue Crew School. Her long, lovely tail swooped along the floor as she returned to her desk.

“Some of you did quite well on this quiz,” she said to the class. “Others should have studied sea plant identification a bit more.”

Princess Cali looked at her test and then peeked at her twin brother Cruise’s paper.

They had both gotten a ninety-seven. She frowned and raised her hand. “Can we do anything for extra credit?”

“Certainly.” The teacher paused. “But you performed very well, Cali.”

*And so did Cruise.*

“I want a perfect score,” Cali said. One that would make her stand apart from her brother. They’d always been “Cali and Cruise.” Or “Cruise and Cali,” or “the Twins.” For the last nine years, everyone had treated them as one.

Now that they were in Rescue Crew School, Cali was ready to shine on her own. She had to. Cali would be performing rescues with her seapony partner, Rio. Cruise wouldn’t always be with her. Cali had to

prove she could do things herself—and do them well. She wanted to be the best—or at least better than her brother.

The teacher crossed her arms. “Very well. Anyone who wants extra credit can collect samples of five plants and present them in class tomorrow.”

“What if I bring in six instead of five?” Cruise asked.

“You’re not going to get a grade higher than one hundred, but if you want to collect six samples, feel free to do so,” the teacher said.

*Then I’m going to get seven,* Cali thought. She could not let Cruise beat her—at anything.

She turned to her magical seapony partner, Rio. “We’ll start looking right after class.”

Rio gave her a funny look. "I'm happy with my ninety-three. If we go looking for plants, we won't have as much time to read the pet book. You still have to decide what kind of pet you should get. You don't really need the extra credit."

Cali frowned. Rio was an amazing seapony partner, always kind and fun. Cali



hated bickering with Rio, but the truth was, they didn't always agree.

“We can talk about pets while we look,” Cali said. “I wish Cruise and I could each get our own pet. But Mom and Dad said we have to agree on one and share it.”

Cruise smiled at her. “An electric eel would be amazing. We'd have so much fun with it.”

Cali sighed. “What about a puffer fish? They're so cute!”

“Boring!” Cruise said. “We've got to choose something cool!”

“I'm not sure you two are ever going to agree on which pet to get,” said Cruise's seapony, Jetty.

“We have to pick one before we go home at



the end of the weekend, or we don't get one at all," Cali reminded him. But she worried that Jetty was right. Lately, she and Cruise seemed to argue and disagree more and more—about everything! How could they ever agree on something as important as a pet?

The bell rang and Professor Korla closed the textbook on her desk. "Class is dismissed. And make sure to be here on time tomorrow! There will be a very exciting announcement."

The class chattered, wondering what the news might be, as they swam out of the classroom.

Cali zoomed outside and did a somersault.

Cruise swam up beside her and did two.

Cali put her hands on her hips. "I can do

better than that.” She tumbled in a circle three times.

Then Cruise did four. Cali did five. Cruise did six.

Rio sighed.

Jetty shook his head. “Don’t make me hit you with a stun bubble.”

Cali laughed. That would be funny to see, especially since Cruise was so proud of Jetty’s Sea Savvy. Stun bubbles were cool, but Rio could blow protection bubbles. After they’d chosen their seapony partners in the match ceremony, Cali and Cruise had spent hours arguing over whose Sea Savvy was better.

Cali’s friends from class swam up to her.

“Come on, Cali. Let’s look for plants!” Princess Nixie said.

Cali felt dizzy. “Hang on. I have to do seven somersaults.”

Princess Lana grabbed her hand. “No you don’t. You can’t even swim straight right now!”

“I’m the somersault champ!” Cruise pumped his hands in the air. “Want to go search for plants with me?”

Cali almost said yes—then realized Cruise probably just wanted her to be there so he could gloat when he found more plants than her. “No, thanks,” she said.

Cruise’s smile fell. “Fine.” He swam off.

“Why does Cruise copy everything I do?” Cali wondered aloud. He was making it very difficult for her to stand out.

“Well, you’ve always done everything together,” Rio said.

Cali crossed her arms. “We’re not little kids anymore.”

“Just forget about it. Let’s go to the park,” Rio said. “You can get samples from the seaweed garden and then we can read the pet book.”

They swam to the park and saw Cruise with his friends Dorado and Drake.

Cruise waved a handful of plants. “I’ve already got five!”

“Good for you.” Cali tried her best to ignore him.

“I wonder what Professor Korla is going to announce tomorrow,” Lana said.

“No more homework for the rest of the year?” Nixie joked.

“Sign me up!” Cali said.

Cali and her friends laughed.

“Watch how long I can stand on my hands!” Cruise flipped upside down and put his hands on the sandy sea floor. “Bet you can’t do it longer than me, Cali.”

“Don’t do it, Cali,” Rio whispered.

But Cali couldn’t help it. She was great at standing on her hands, and her brother knew it. She swam up next to him and flipped upside down. “I can do this all day.”

“I could be here all week if I wanted to,” Cruise said.

“I could live the rest of my life like this,” Cali said.

“Cali, let’s collect our plants!” Lana said.

Cali turned her head to see Lana—and tumbled out of her handstand.



“Ha! Beat you!” Cruise said.

“Well, I’m faster than you.” She zipped across the park, and he zoomed after her, right on her tail.

She was way ahead of him when Nixie’s older sister, Princess Cascadia, swam into the park. She was on the Rescue Crew, too, but she’d graduated from their school the year before. “Hey, guys!” she called.

Cali and Cruise stopped their race.

Cascadia’s eyes were wide. “I need everyone’s help!”