



“Cora, over here!” Amber waved at her from near the fin-ball goal.

It was the last minute of the match. Cora saw three mermaids from Ocean Mist dorm charging down the pitch towards her. She quickly flicked the ball to Sparkle, her dolphin, who headed it on to Amber.

Amber controlled the ball expertly with her tail and whacked it at the goal. It flew past the outstretched fingertips of Mila, the Ocean Mist goalkeeper, and hit the back of the net.

“Yay!” Amber cried, spinning round in delight.



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“Three goals to two! Moon Pearl dorm win!”

Whooping loudly, Amber’s dorm-mates, Isla, Maya and Cora high-fived with each other and then high-finned with their dolphins, Flash, Bubble, Rainbow and Sparkle.

Cora felt happiness rush through her. Just a few weeks ago, she’d been nervous about starting at Mermaid Academy. She loved her home and old school and didn’t like it when things changed, but now she was really glad she’d started here.



Cora and Sparkle

Having a dolphin to partner with was amazing, and the more she got to know Amber, Maya and Isla, the more she liked them. The only thing that could make it more perfect would be if she and her twin sister, Isobel, were in the same dorm.

Cora glanced to where Isobel was commiserating with the rest of her Ocean Mist dorm-mates. Seeing the disappointment on her twin’s face, Cora’s happiness faded. It felt weird being on different teams. “Well played, Issy!” she called, swimming over.

“You too. It was a great game,” said Isobel.

“Your two goals were brilliant.”

Isobel smiled. “Thanks, Cor.”

“Maybe we could change the teams round next time,” Cora suggested hopefully. “Have two from our dorm and two from yours.”

Isobel gave her a look as if she’d just suggested cuddling a porcupine fish. “Why would we do that?”



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It's much more fun if we play dorm against dorm. Rematch soon?" she called, as Cora's Moon Pearl dorm-mates came swimming over to join them.

"Definitely!" said Isla.

"If you think you can face losing again, of course," teased Amber.

"Flippers to that! It'll be your turn to lose next time," said Isobel, grinning.

Their good-natured bickering was interrupted by the sound of a distant conch shell being blown, letting them know that afternoon lessons were about to start. "We'd better get a swish on!" said Maya. "We've got Mer Culture this afternoon with Ms Seafern. We don't want to be late."

"We've got Oceans of the World with Ms Samphire," said Isobel. "See you later!"

"Bye, Issy!" called Cora, but her twin was already zooming off. Cora sighed. She wished that Issy missed her just a little bit more. Before they'd



Cora and Sparkle

come to the academy, they'd done everything together.

"What's wrong, Cora?" Sparkle said, nudging her.

Cora smiled at the pretty light-blue dolphin. She was so happy that Sparkle had agreed to be her dolphin partner when they started at the academy. Sparkle always sensed what Cora was feeling and she was a really good listener.

"It's just Issy," Cora said. "We've always been best friends but now she spends most of her time with her dorm and I miss her."

"You'll see her more in the holidays," said Sparkle. "I love my two sisters and my brother but I hardly see them here at school. They've got their friends and I've got mine. We still have lots of fun once we're back home with Mum, Dad and all our aunts, uncles and cousins!"

"Mmm," said Cora, imagining how busy



and lively Sparkle's home must be. "I guess it's different because Issy and I are twins and there are only the two of us."

Sparkle nuzzled her. "Just because Issy is spending time with the rest of her dorm doesn't mean she likes you less. She might have new friends but she'll never have another twin sister."

"Thanks, Sparkle," Cora said, kissing her nose.

"You always know what to say. I'm so glad we're partners. I hope we bond soon."

"Me too!" said Sparkle.

When a student and a dolphin bonded, their tail fins changed colour to match. Isla and her dolphin, Bubble,



had already bonded and both of them now had violet-and-yellow tail fins.

Isla had also discovered her magic – she was able to conjure up streams of bubbles whenever she wanted. Every merperson had their own special type of magic. Cora couldn't wait to find out what hers would be!

"We should catch up with the others," Sparkle said, glancing to where Maya, Isla and Amber were swimming away towards the school. "We'll have to link up. Grab my fin, Cora!"

Cora took hold of the fin on Sparkle's back and felt a surge of magical energy. They flicked their tails and the next moment they were racing through the water at double speed.

Cora's thick light-blue hair streamed out behind her and she laughed in delight as they plunged into a school of tiny blue and yellow fish. They raced with them for a few moments before the cloud of



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fish swirled away. Happiness fizzed through her as she and Sparkle zoomed on through the turquoise water. Even if she couldn't be with Issy all the time, Cora loved being a student at Mermaid Academy!

