

Dolphin SUMMER

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Dolphins had seemed almost magical to me for as long as I could remember. With their sleek bodies and playful personalities and the graceful way they leaped out of the water, they were just plain amazing. All I'd ever wanted was to be near them. Because then maybe some of that magic would rub off on me. But even though, technically, I lived on an island, it wasn't exactly easy to find dolphins in New York City.

"Too bad there aren't any dolphins at the aquarium anymore," I murmured with a sigh. I leaned on the railing and watched a walrus swim

lazily back and forth. He was huge, and looked ridiculous whenever he waddled onto the artificial rocks in his enclosure. But in the water he was sleek and graceful. Not as graceful as the sharks across the way, though, or the otters next door, and definitely not as graceful as a dolphin.

The lack of dolphins didn't stop me from coming to the aquarium as often as I could. There were plenty of other interesting creatures to see: sea lions and penguins and eels and sharks and rays. Dolphins might have been my favorite, but I loved all the creatures of the sea. I wanted to be a marine biologist when I grew up, even though everyone said that was a crazy goal for an ordinary girl from Brooklyn.

The walrus stuck his head out of the water, staring around with droplets clinging to his bristly whiskers. I was smiling at his funny expression when I felt my phone vibrate in the pocket of my shorts.

It was a text from my friend Julia.

Hey Lily! Wassup? We saw a frog in the lake today and thought of you. Well I did, but Amber got freaked out, haha . . .

“His name’s Archie,” a boy’s voice said beside me.

I jumped, startled. I’d been so busy glaring at the text that I hadn’t even noticed anyone coming up beside me.

“Who are you?” I blurted out, taking a step back.

“Sorry.” He waved a hand toward the display. “I didn’t mean to scare you. I, uh, thought you might be looking up more info about the walrus.” The boy’s earnest brown eyes darted to my phone, then back to my face. “I was just telling you, his name is Archie—short for Archibald.”

“Oh.” I blinked at the boy. He was around my age—twelve—with close-cropped dark hair. He wore khaki shorts and a short-sleeved button-down shirt, which seemed a little odd—most of the boys in my neighborhood lived in jeans or athletic shorts and T-shirts all summer.

Before I could say anything else, a woman bustled over to us. She was dressed in khaki shorts, too, with a tidy white pin on her shirt pocket that read *Susan: Water-Quality Technician*. I'd seen her once or twice during previous visits to the aquarium, though I'd never been up close enough to read her name tag. Or to see her expression, either, which at this moment was crabby and impatient.

“You,” she snapped, pointing at the boy. “They’re looking for you in the lab. What are you doing out here?” She turned her suspicious glare toward me, as if blaming me for distracting him.

“Sorry,” the boy muttered. After shooting me one last look, he scurried off and disappeared around the corner behind the gift shop.

The woman ignored me as she turned away and walked back over to the otter exhibit. I watched out of the corner of my eye, fascinated to see her at work. She grabbed a couple of plastic bottles out of a bucket and then reached into the tank, scooping up some of the water.