

Disney

# SCHILLERS



Part of your Nightmare



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## #Strawssuck

**C**ircle up and pay attention, students!' Mr. Aquino attempted to corral his class, a rowdy group of Year 7s from Triton Bay Secondary School, as they gathered around the main aquarium exhibit. When the chatter died down only a little he raised his voice again. 'Now, who can tell me what this marine animal is called?' he said, pointing to a large graceful creature paddling through the rippling blue water.

Before Hannah could stop herself, she stuck up

her hand. 'Leatherback sea turtle.'

'Very good, Hannah,' Mr. Aquino said. 'Now, why do sea turtles eat plastic bags?'

'Cuz they're dumb fish!' Kevin Watson said, prompting snickering.

'Actually, they're not *fish* – they're *reptiles*,' Mr. Aquino said with a disapproving frown. 'And they're *not* dumb. They're actually very smart! Now... anybody else?'

Hannah was secretly glad that he'd shut Kevin down. *Serves him right*. She watched the sea turtle drift past the sunken pirate ship and treasure chest that decorated the faux-undersea environment. It wheeled around a rusty, barnacled trident, the centrepiece of the exhibit, which stuck out from the bright white sand. Suddenly, a huge reef shark swam behind Mr. Aquino.

'Watch out!' Kevin yelled, pointing to its huge jaws, filled with jagged teeth. Gasps and nervous giggles rang out. 'Megalodon just tried to chomp Mr. Aquino's head!' he said.

*As if anything could swim through the glass,*

This meant Katie wouldn't send in a complaint after all and risk discontinuing school trips to the aquarium. Hannah nodded at her.

'All right, let's head back,' said Katie, leading the twins across the catwalk.

But Hannah couldn't fight her guilt and she glanced back out to sea. There, atop a white-capped wave, bobbed the cup before something reached up... and pulled it under. It looked like a black tentacle. Hannah blinked. But the cup was gone, along with whatever thing had grabbed it.

'Did you *see* that?' Hannah asked, but Katie and the twins were already by the door.

'Let's go,' Katie called back to her. 'Unless you want to stay out here with the fish.'

Before Hannah could follow, she heard a strange noise. It sounded like someone was laughing. And not in a nice way. Then the cackle was drowned out by another noise: *roaring water*. The roaring grew louder. Hannah jerked her gaze back to the ocean, just in time to spot a huge wave that had materialized out of nowhere. It was ten feet tall and

moving toward the catwalk.

Moving *fast*.

Hannah yelled as the wave hit her square in the face. It knocked her off the catwalk and sucked her down towards the open ocean. Then it pulled her into a swirl of fizzing bubbles and dark water that crashed into her nose, mouth and ears.

She tried to swim for the surface, towards the dim light overhead, clawing through the cold water but the undertow latched on to her like a vice. Still she struggled against the strong current, gulping salt water. Her lungs burned and screamed for air. She was going to drown.

Then she felt something curl around her ankle. Something slimy. Cold.

It tightened its grip.

And pulled.



## *Part of Your Nightmare*

heard a voice.

*'My dear, sweet child. Go ahead. Don't be afraid.'*

The voice was rich, and kind, and as deep as the sea itself. A voice full of laughter, it seemed to emanate from *inside* the shell.

'H-hello?' Hannah whispered, unable to take her eyes from the vibrant nautilus.

*'Go ahead, dear... take it. It was my gift to you. Go on. Take it. Take it!'*

Hannah touched the nautilus.

And fell through the floor.



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## **Part of Your Nightmare**

**C**old water enveloped Hannah as she plunged. She spiralled down through what appeared to be tangles of kelp.

What was happening to her? Where was she going? Finally, she somersaulted to a stop in a dim underwater cavern.

She began to swim, holding her breath, not sure where she was going but knowing she needed to find an exit, to find air. But seaweed snagged at her ankles, trapping her.



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## Green Around the Gills

**H**annah woke up clawing at her throat on her bedroom floor. Her lungs pulled at the air, but something felt different. She couldn't explain it. It took longer to get enough oxygen. As she caught her breath and her vision cleared she looked around her room. Morning light flooded through her curtains. Half asleep and very groggy, she stood up on autopilot and staggered to her wardrobe to pick something to wear. After she got dressed, she inspected the state of her hair

in the mirror, wondering how long she'd have to spend taming it with the hair straighteners. As she gathered it up, she gasped and backed away.

'What is that?' she hissed at her reflection. She stepped closer to the mirror to inspect what she had seen. On each side of her neck were parallel slits. When she breathed, the slits flared open, freaking her out even more. *What happened to my neck?*

She wondered if she'd injured it at the swim meet. But nothing jumped to mind.

The day before, her neck had been normal. She was sure. That wasn't something one failed to notice, like a spot on a chin that was just beginning to blossom. No, that was unmissable. They were completely noticeable, especially with the whole flaring-open-when-she-breathed thing.

'What happened to me?' she whispered to her reflection, studying her neck slits.

A door slammed down the hall, making her jump back from the mirror with a start. She was late. Any second, her mother would rap on her door and let her know that the bus was waiting. She