

FEAR-TASTIC FOUR

Brown-and-yellow kelp swished back and forth against my mane. It was so soothing. I had my sketch pad perched on my tail, waiting for **fin-spiration** to strike for my next drawing. Normally, the way the kelp swished helped me concentrate, but not a single idea popped into my head.



"Oh, blobfish," I moaned. "I'm never going to come up with a costume for the Scary Splash Monster Bash."

Scary Splash was my favorite holiday. **Every-fishy** dresses up in creepy costumes, then swims to creatures' doors and screams "Swim-or-sweet!" to get **hoof-fuls** of candy. It's **mer-mazing** and scary in a fun way!

The best part of Scary Splash is the Scary Splash Monster Bash! That's a costume contest where **every-fishy** wears their scariest outfit. Whoever has the creepiest costume gets their very own float in the Scary Splash Parade.

I really wanted to lead the celebration this year.

I'd drawn all kinds of costume ideas like fish skeletons and mermaid zombies, but nothing felt quite right. I wanted to dress as something that had never been done before.



Just as I lifted my pencil to draw a mummy manatee, a shadow passed over my right shoulder. Tingles ran up and down my tail, and my mane itched like it always does when I'm nervous.

"Hello?" I called.

Another shadow passed on my left. It slithered away through the kelp.

Slithering had to mean it was the electric eels my friend Ruby and I had seen here before. We thought the eels were angry at first, but they were just hungry. I always kept a couple of Ruby's cupcakes that she made with her **Baking Sparkle** by my side, just

in case any of our eel friends needed a treat when I came to draw in the kelp forest.

All mermicorns and sea creatures in Mermicorn Island have magic that we call SPARKle. Ruby has her Baking SPARKle, which lets her make baked goods. Flash has magical superspeed like all seahorses. And because she's a dolphin, Echo has echolocation, which lets her find whatever she's looking for.

My SPARKle hasn't shown up yet, but I have a treasure chest of magic seashells that hold all kinds of SPARKle. It was given to me by Poseidon, the

most powerful mermicorn in the seven seas.

Maybe there was a magic shell full of SCARY IDEA SPARKLE. I could sure use one, or else I would never win the costume contest at the Scary Splash Monster B-

“BOO!”

“AH!” I screamed. “MONSTER!” I flung my sketch pad down and squeezed my eyes shut. My heart raced and my mane itched all over again as I expected some creepy critter to shriek at me.

But instead of monster roars, I just heard laughter. I peeked an eye open to



find Echo, Flash, and Ruby doubled over in giggles.

“You practically scared the scales off my tail,” I said. Relief washed over me that I wasn’t about to be eaten by some mermicorn zombie.

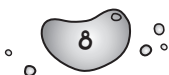
“Sorry,” Ruby said through a smile.
“We just couldn’t help it.”

“Yeah,” Flash agreed. “You were so deep in thought, it was the perfect opportunity to sneak up on you.”

“And get you inspired for the Monster Bash,” Echo added. “How can you come up with scary ideas if you’re not scared every once in a while?” She put a flipper out to help me up from the seafloor. “No hard feelings?”

I took a deep breath to settle my beating heart. “You got me pretty good.”

“Maybe we should change our name to the **Fear-tastic FOUR** instead of



Fin-tastic Four!" Flash said, talking super fast just like he always does. "It's the perfect name for us during Scary Splash."

Flash, Echo, Ruby, and I were BFFs: best fin friends forever. We called our group of pals the **Fin-tastic Four**. Maybe Flash was right and we could pick a new name for the scary celebration.

"That's a **mer-mazing** idea!" I said. "I can't believe how scared I was. It's like I thought you were the Great Ghost Shark or something."

wait a minnow.

"That's it!" I said. "You **fishies**



scaring me *did* give me **fin-spiration**.

I know what my Monster Bash costume will be!”

“Ooh, what is it?” Ruby asked. “You know I always love dressing up!”

I tried to wave my hooves back and forth as creepily as possible. “The Great Ghost Shark!”