

It's never safe  
to go in the water ...



# ESCAPE

SOPHIE  
McKENZIE

Illustrated by  
**MELANIA  
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*For Louisa*



# CHAPTER 1

Bernice loved the sea and everything that lived in it. She wanted a job looking after sea animals when she left school. Today, she was on a school trip to Eco-Marina, near where she lived. Eco-Marina was a sea-life sanctuary where scientists and vets looked after sick and injured sea creatures.

“Get into groups of three!” ordered Mr Willis, the teacher in charge.

“Hey, Bernice!” said her best friend, Molly. “We’re in a group with Rylan. I’ve already asked him!”

This was not good news. Rylan Alexander was the most annoying boy in their year. Molly had a massive crush on him. Bernice had no idea why.

Mr Willis handed out worksheets. Bernice took one.

“Listen, everyone, please!” the teacher boomed. “You have two hours to find the answers to the questions on your worksheet. You’re free to go anywhere you like within the sanctuary.” He frowned. “Eco-Marina is not

open to the public, and it is a huge privilege for our school to be here today, so you must follow the rules on the top of your worksheet.”

Bernice glanced down at the paper as Mr Willis read the rules out loud:

**Stay with your group at all times.**

**Do not go anywhere marked  
out of bounds.**

**Above all, behave!**

**That means don't go near the animals,  
no shouting and no littering.**

Bernice sighed. No way would Rylan stick to those rules, especially the one about behaving.

He was always showing off. And he always thought he was right. Even when he wasn't.

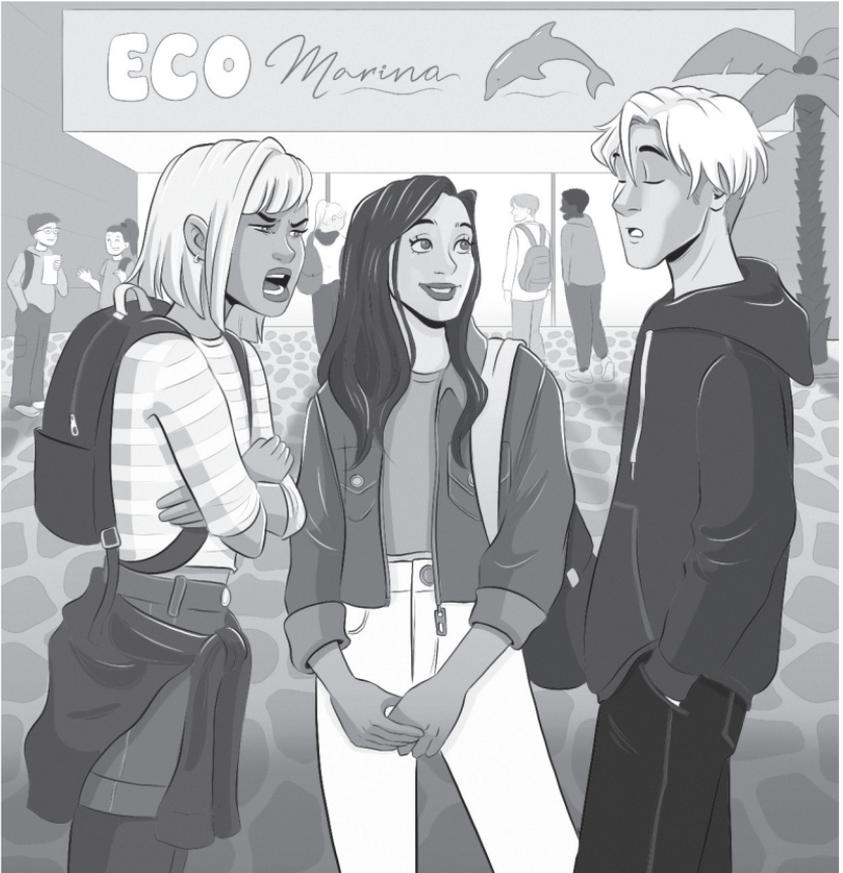
“Boring!” Rylan said softly so Mr Willis couldn't hear.

Rylan had messy blond hair that was always falling over his eyes. He was tall and sporty. Molly thought he was amazing. Bernice thought he was ridiculous.

“Sea animals aren't boring, Rylan,” she said.

Rylan made a face. “Whatever, Bernie.”

“It's *Bernice*.” She frowned.



Rylan gave a shrug. “I was just telling Moll that the sharks are the only thing worth seeing here,” he said. “Let’s forget everything else.”

No way! Bernice couldn't believe what Ryan had just said. "But I really want to see the dolphins they rescued from the aquarium and the injured grey seals in the care pool and the sea turtle recovery area—"

"Like I said – *all really boring!*" Rylan snorted.

Bernice turned to Molly. Up until a few weeks ago, Molly would have been as excited as Bernice to be here, but now all she wanted to do was hang out with Rylan.

"I'd like to see the sharks best too," Molly said. She pointed at the map of the sea sanctuary. The sharks were in Shark Bay, at

the far end of Eco-Marina. “Let’s go there first, then we’ll fit in some other things on the way back. Please, Bernice?”

Bernice sighed again. Mr Willis had insisted they stay in their groups. “OK,” she said. “But we *have* to see the rescue dolphins straight after the sharks. I’m not missing them.”

“Sure thing,” said Rylan with a wink at Molly.

Bernice turned away. She felt more fed up than ever. Then she spotted a notice next to the map.

## **ARE YOU INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH SEA ANIMALS?**

Eco-Marina is offering one lucky young person the chance to work here for the summer.

To apply for this amazing job, you must be aged 16 or 17 and be passionate about marine life!

An email address was underneath. Bernice felt excited. As soon as they'd finished their tour of the sanctuary, she was going to apply for the summer job. If she got it, it would take her a big step closer to her dream of working with sea creatures.

An info sheet on shark myths was pinned next to the ad. Bernice already knew a fair bit about sea creatures from all the internet videos she watched when she was supposed to be doing her homework. She read it quickly. There might be facts here she could use when she applied for the job.

“Let’s get to the sharks!” Rylan cried.

Bernice turned around. He and Molly were already walking fast, down to Shark Bay. Bernice felt annoyed, but there was nothing she could do. They were her group; she had to stick with them. She sighed and followed them down the path to Shark Bay.