

DRAGON GIRLS

Zoe the Beach Dragon

by Maddy Mara

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Zoe sat on her yellow surfboard, floating on the water. She scanned the horizon. Were there any good waves coming?

Zoe had been going surfing with her dad and big sister ever since she was really small. Riding a surfboard felt almost as natural as walking. She loved being out in the glittering

sea, waves breaking around her. It was amazing how all Zoe's worries disappeared when she was on her board. Nothing beat the feeling of riding a wave all the way to shore! Zoe could do it all day.

That's why Zoe's mom had suggested sleep-away aquatics camp this summer. Zoe had jumped at the idea! So far, camp had been as good as she'd hoped. In fact, it had been way better. For one thing, she got to surf every day. For another, there were so many great kids to get to know. Zoe got along with most people. But she had formed a special bond with her cabinmates, Grace and Sofia.

All these things combined to make camp fantastic. But there was something else. Something that made it . . . magical. Zoe, Sofia, and Grace had found out that they were able to travel to another realm. It was called the Magic Forest. When they were there, they became dragons. Not just ordinary dragons, either. Sea Dragons, to be exact!

The three new friends had already had one adventure in the Magic Forest. They had helped the Tree Queen, who was the ruler of the Magic Forest, by rescuing a missing dolphin. Acing the quest had felt incredible, and the Tree Queen told them she would need their

help again. Zoe could hardly wait to return. She was glad that she had surfing to keep her mind busy until that happened!

Every day at camp, Zoe went with the other surfing kids to the local surf beach. Their coach, Stef, surfed alongside them, giving them tips to improve their skills. Zoe had already learned so much.

Zoe did not see her new friends during the day, because Grace was a swimmer and Sofia a diver. This meant they each had different activities in other locations. But that was fine. It was fun talking about their days when they caught up every afternoon.

Today, Zoe had already been in the water for

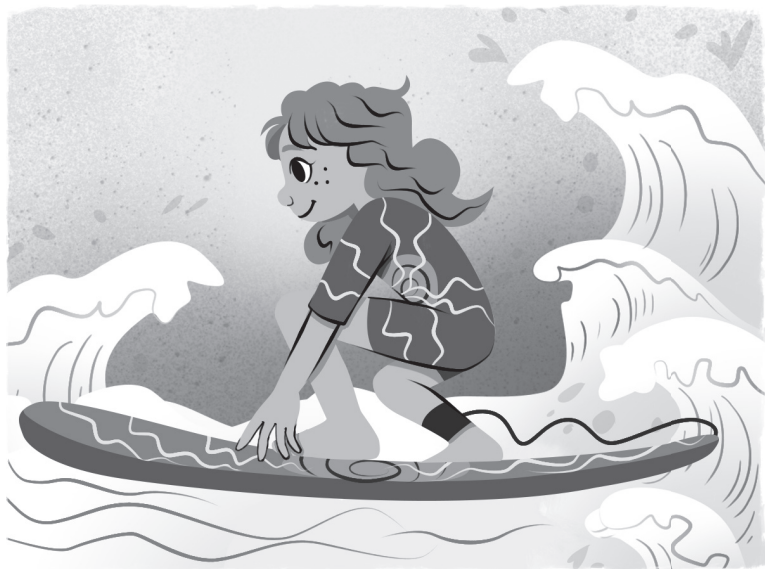
an hour. But it felt like only a few minutes.

Up ahead, she spotted a wave beginning to swell. Zoe started to paddle, getting herself into a good position as she waited for the wave to build. When Zoe was surfing, everything else dropped away. She thought about just two things: the board beneath her, and the movement of the water around her.

“Get ready, Zoe!” called Stef from nearby. “That wave is going to be huge!”

It was time. Zoe sprang up onto her board. She landed perfectly, crouching low, her left foot forward. She started coasting along the lifting wave. Foamy white droplets splashed down over her as the wave began to curve. Zoe

could hear the swell of the ocean all around her, the waves crashing on the shore. But she could hear something else, too.



Magic Forest, Magic Forest, come explore ...

Excitement bubbled in Zoe—and it wasn't about the perfect wave she was riding. She'd

heard that song before. It had been when she traveled to the Magic Forest last time! Was she about to go back? Oh, she hoped so!

The wave Zoe was riding stretched on and on. She felt like she was surfing through a beautiful blue tunnel. Zoe heard the song again. It blended with the sound of the sea itself.

Magic Forest, Magic Forest, come explore.

Zoe stretched out a hand and trailed it along the wave. Her silver bracelet with its fan-shaped shell glinted on her wrist. The Tree Queen had given one each to Zoe, Grace, and

Sofia. Usually the shells were white. But right now, Zoe's glowed pale aqua.

Zoe's heart thumped. She was sure of it. She was about to be sent on her second magical quest! She had a feeling that this quest would be even harder than the first. But that probably meant it would be even more exciting. Then she heard the final line in the song.

Magic Forest, Magic Forest, hear my roar!

Zoe grinned. She loved roaring when she was a dragon. It was such a powerful, freeing feeling. She couldn't wait to do it again.

Finally, the wave crashed, pulling Zoe off her board. Zoe went with the flow and closed her eyes. She hoped that when she opened them again, she would be in a very different place!