

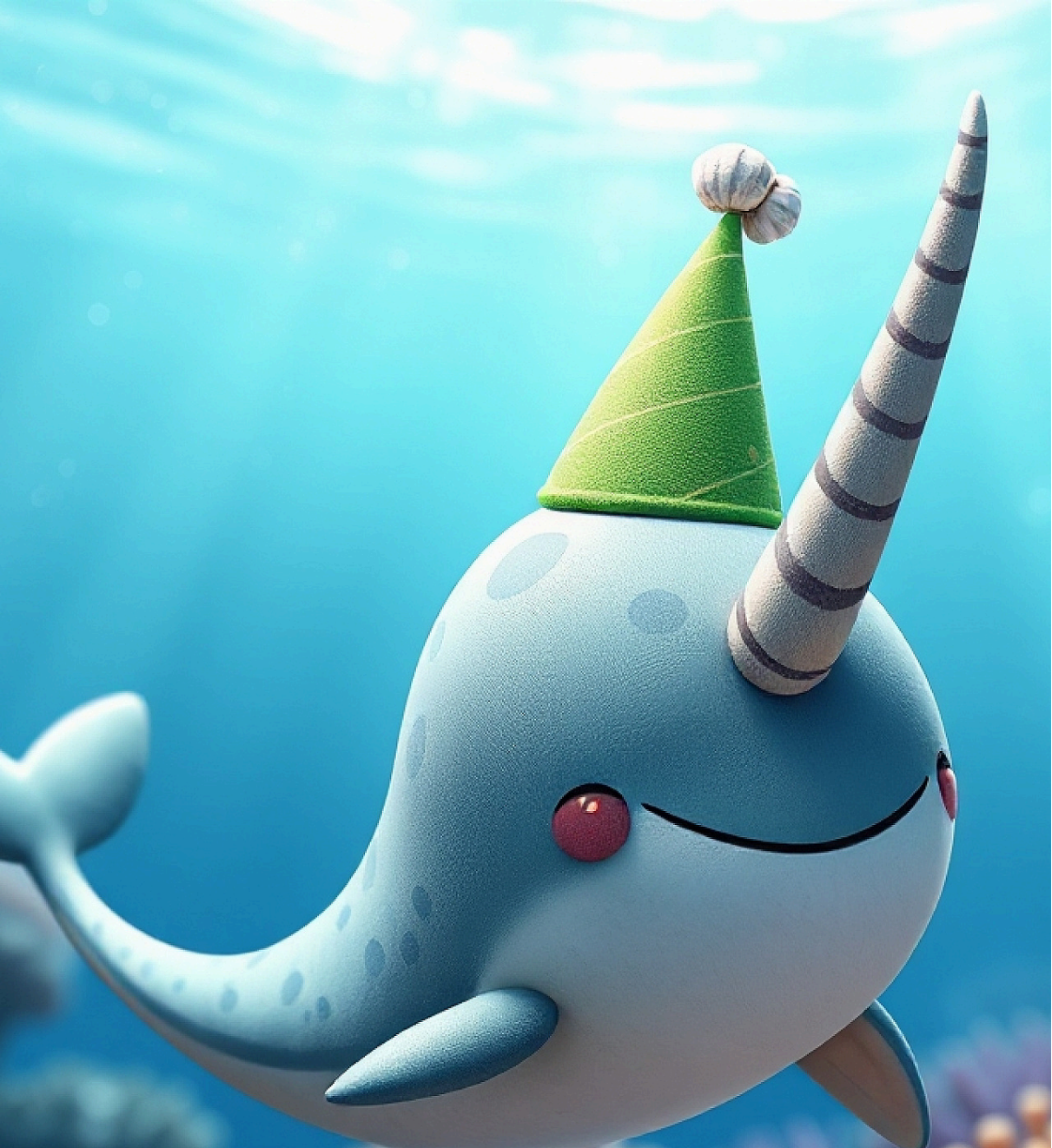
The Narwhal's Birthday



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Deep down in the sparkling blue ocean, where sunbeams danced like silver ribbons, lived a gentle narwhal named Nori. Nori had smooth blue-grey skin with pale mottled spots and a long spiral tusk that pointed forward like a friendly spear. Today was Nori's birthday, and the whole sea seemed to hum with excitement. Nori's small dark eyes twinkled as he swam through the coral gardens, hoping his friends would come.



Nori's best friend, Bella the beluga, was already busy planning a surprise. Bella had creamy white skin, a round head with a soft melon bump, and a big cheerful smile that never faded. She wore a coral-pink scarf that fluttered in the water as she zipped around. 'This will be the best birthday ever!' Bella said, her dark eyes shining. She gathered shells, seaweed, and shiny pebbles for decorations.



Bella called all their friends to help. Tilly the sea turtle swam slowly, her patterned brown-and-green shell glinting in the light. She wore a string of tiny pearl shells around her neck and smiled gently. Sammy the seahorse darted about, his golden-orange body curling and uncurling. A tiny purple flower was tucked beside his head. 'Let's make everything beautiful!' Bella cheered, and everyone nodded happily.



They chose a cozy spot near a tall kelp forest. Bella hung strings of glowing bubbles that sparkled like tiny stars. Tilly arranged colorful shells in a neat circle on a flat rock. Sammy tied ribbons of soft seaweed to the coral branches. Nori watched with a shy smile, his green party hat with a tiny shell on the tip sitting snugly on his head. 'It looks wonderful,' he whispered.



But just as Bella placed the last decoration, a big wave rolled through the kelp forest. Whoosh! The glowing bubbles popped and drifted away. The colorful shells tumbled off the rock. The seaweed ribbons swirled up and vanished into the blue. Everyone stared at the empty space where their beautiful decorations had been. The party looked plain and sad.



Tilly's amber eyes filled with tears. 'All our hard work is gone,' she said softly. Sammy's curled tail drooped, and he hid behind a piece of coral. Nori felt a lump in his throat. He had been so happy just moments before. Bella looked at her friends' sad faces, and her cheerful smile faded. For a moment, the whole ocean seemed quiet and still.



Bella swam in a slow circle, thinking hard. She didn't want the party to be spoiled. Then her dark eyes lit up. 'Wait!' she cried. 'We don't need decorations to have fun. We have something much better—our voices! Let's sing happy songs instead!' Tilly blinked. Sammy peeked out from behind the coral. Nori's shy smile slowly returned.



Bella started with a lively tune about swimming through the bright blue sea. Her voice was high and clear, like a bell ringing underwater. Tilly joined in with a soft, steady hum. Sammy added a tiny, tinkling melody that sounded like bubbles rising. Nori listened, and then he began to sing too, his voice low and warm. The music drifted through the water.



The songs grew louder and happier. Other sea creatures heard the music and came to listen. Little fish danced in swirling schools. A wise old octopus waved her arms in time. Even the shy crabs tapped their claws on the rocks. The ocean filled with joy, and Nori's heart felt light. He forgot all about the lost decorations.



Nori looked around at his friends, all singing together. Tilly's gentle smile had returned. Sammy's blue eyes sparkled with delight. Bella's pink scarf fluttered as she sang and danced. Nori realized that the best part of his birthday was not the pretty things, but the friends who made music with him. He smiled so wide that his whole face glowed.



Bella swam up to Nori and gave him a gentle nuzzle. 'Happy birthday, Nori!' she said. 'This is the best party ever, and we didn't need any decorations at all.' Nori nodded, his green party hat bobbing. 'You're right,' he said. 'Friendship and fun are the best gifts.' All the guests cheered and sang even louder.



They sang song after song—silly songs, sweet songs, and songs about the deep blue sea. The music echoed through the kelp forest and beyond. Nori's tusk gleamed in the soft light as he sang with all his heart. The sea itself seemed to join in, with gentle waves keeping time. It was a celebration no one would ever forget.

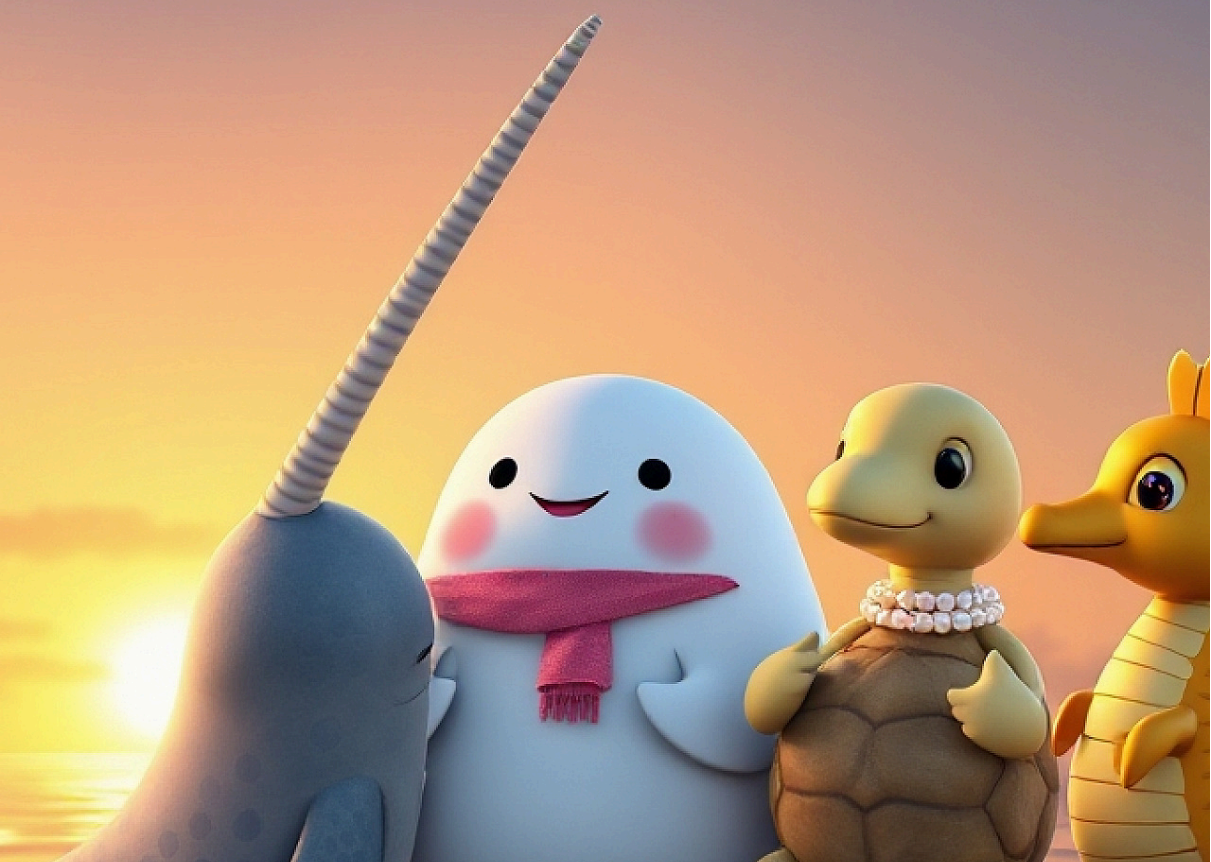
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As the party went on, Bella had another idea. 'Let's make a song about today,' she said. 'A song about friends and singing and the sea!' Everyone helped add words and tunes. Tilly suggested a verse about slow swimming. Sammy added a chorus about tiny bubbles. Nori chose the ending: 'With friends by your side, every day is a party.'



They sang their new song together, over and over, until they knew every word. The ocean shimmered with happiness. Nori felt warm and loved. He looked at Bella, Tilly, and Sammy, and his shy smile turned into a big, bright grin. 'This is the best birthday I've ever had,' he said. 'And it's all because of you.'



The sun began to set, sending golden rays through the water. The friends gathered close for one last song. Nori's green party hat tilted to one side, and his spiral tusk pointed at the sky. 'Thank you for making my birthday so special,' he said. 'I'll remember this day forever.' Everyone cheered and clapped their flippers.



As the stars appeared above the waves, the friends said goodnight. Nori swam home with a happy heart, his blue-grey spots glowing softly in the moonlight. He knew now that friendship mattered more than fancy gifts or decorations. The music they made together would echo in his memory always. And that, he thought, was the best birthday gift of all.