KATYA BALEN

The LIGHT in EVERYTHING

'Spirited, moving, heartfelt and bold'
Ross Montgomery

BLOOMSBURY

Praise for

The LIGHT in EVERYTHING

'This is Balen's best book yet: ambitious, funny, spirited, moving, heartfelt and bold all at once. She's a force to be reckoned with'

Ross Montgomery

'I loved this book. The deftness with which Katya creates such passionate, funny, broken, brave characters. What an achievement. Katya Balen can break your heart and make you snort with laughter in the same sentence'

Natasha Farrant

'This story literally took me by storm. A brave heart-dive into the deep emotions of Tom and Zofia, it's beautifully told with care and tenderness'

Jasbinder Bilan

'I loved this book!'

Hilary McKay

‘A bold, bright story of blended families, and how two remarkable children cope when their lives change dramatically. Katya Balen’s writing fizzes with her trademark originality and voice. This is another stunningly good read from one of my favourite authors’

Emma Carroll

‘Katya Balen is rapidly becoming one of my favourite writers. This is a beautiful book that will capture you from the first page. An incredible book by an incredible writer. I loved it’

Lisa Thompson

‘A sensitive story about stitching a new family together from frayed pieces. So vividly imagined you can taste the salt in the air’

Aisha Bushby

Books by Katya Balen

The Space We’re In

October, October

The Light in Everything

The LIGHT in EVERYTHING

KATYA BALEN

BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS and the Diana logo
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain in 2022 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Text copyright © Katya Balen, 2022
Endpapers and hand lettering copyright © Sydney Smith, 2022

Katya Balen and Sydney Smith have asserted their rights under
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified
as Author and Illustrator of this work

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior
permission in writing from the publishers

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: HB: 978-1-5266-2299-0; TPB: 978-1-5266-4740-5;
eBook: 978-1-5266-2301-0

Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com
and sign up for our newsletters

For Lucy Mackay-Sim,
who is always right

Contents

Chapter 1	1
Chapter 2	4
Chapter 3	7
Chapter 4	11
Chapter 5	13
Chapter 6	15
Chapter 7	16
Chapter 8	19
Chapter 9	22
Chapter 10	24
Chapter 11	26
Chapter 12	31
Chapter 13	33
Chapter 14	37
Chapter 15	39
Chapter 16	41

Chapter 17 43
Chapter 18 46
Chapter 19 48
Chapter 20 51
Chapter 21 53
Chapter 22 57
Chapter 23 59
Chapter 24 60
Chapter 25 62
Chapter 26 64
Chapter 27 66
Chapter 28 68
Chapter 29 70
Chapter 30 75
Chapter 31 77
Chapter 32 81
Chapter 33 83
Chapter 34 86
Chapter 35 88
Chapter 36 89
Chapter 37 91
Chapter 38 94

Chapter 39 96
Chapter 40 97
Chapter 41 99
Chapter 42 102
Chapter 43 105
Chapter 44 107
Chapter 45 108
Chapter 46 110
Chapter 47 112
Chapter 48 119
Chapter 49 123
Chapter 50 125
Chapter 51 128
Chapter 52 132
Chapter 53 134
Chapter 54 135
Chapter 55 137
Chapter 56 139
Chapter 57 142
Chapter 58 145
Chapter 59 147
Chapter 60 148

Chapter 61 150
Chapter 62 151
Chapter 63 154
Chapter 64 158
Chapter 65 160
Chapter 66 161
Chapter 67 163
Chapter 68 166
Chapter 69 167
Chapter 70 169
Chapter 71 171
Chapter 72 172
Chapter 73 174
Chapter 74 177
Chapter 75 179
Chapter 76 181
Chapter 77 182
Chapter 78 183
Chapter 79 186
Chapter 80 189
Chapter 81 191
Chapter 82 194

Chapter 83 196
Chapter 84 199
Chapter 85 202
Chapter 86 206
Chapter 87 211
Chapter 88 213
Chapter 89 215
Chapter 90 218
Chapter 91 219
Chapter 92 222
Chapter 93 224
Chapter 94 225
Chapter 95 227
Chapter 96 229
Chapter 97 230
Chapter 98 232
Chapter 99 234
Chapter 100 235
Chapter 101 237
Chapter 102 239
Chapter 103 241
Chapter 104 242

Chapter 105 244
Chapter 106 246
Chapter 107 247
Chapter 108 249
Chapter 109 252
Chapter 110 255
Chapter 111 256
Chapter 112 259
Chapter 113 261
Chapter 114 263
Chapter 115 264
Chapter 116 266
Chapter 117 268
Chapter 118 270
Chapter 119 273
Chapter 120 275
Chapter 121 277
Chapter 122 279
Chapter 123 281
Chapter 124 282
Chapter 125 284
Chapter 126 286

Chapter 127 288
Chapter 128 290
Chapter 129 291
Chapter 130 293
Chapter 131 294
Chapter 132 296
Chapter 133 297
Chapter 134 299
Chapter 135 301
Chapter 136 302
Chapter 137 304
Chapter 138 306
Chapter 139 308
Chapter 140 310
Chapter 141 313
Chapter 142 315
Chapter 143 319

Acknowledgements 321

ZOFIA

I was born in a storm. The sky cracked with lightning and thunder shook the sea. The rain lashed the cliffs and it was like the whole world had tipped upside down and the ocean was falling from the sky. The weather was furious and so was I. The midwife said she'd never seen such an angry baby and in all the photographs I am a red-faced ball of fury and my fists are clenched and my mouth is a shouting *O*. I sometimes feel like that storm blasted its way into me. That's what Dad says too when I'm being loud and rowdy and raucous and shouty. Which is a lot of the time apparently. But I feel a spark and rumble inside me and it's like the storm is stretching itself and waking up. Sometimes it goes back to sleep. And sometimes it really doesn't. And that's when Dad says things get *turbulent*.

Dad and I are a pair. Two peas in a pod. Two halves of a whole. Two guinea pigs in a hutch. I once read that you can't ever have one guinea pig because it'll be so lonely that it might die. In Switzerland it's actually illegal. I can't imagine being sent to prison and locked up day and night because you only had one guinea pig but I guess that's what happens. Anyway even though guinea pigs will die of loneliness, if you try to introduce a new guinea pig into the hutch then the other one will attack it and probably bite its head off or something. I'm happy with a dog and a cat.

Dad and I like most of the same stuff. Well, he doesn't like very loud music or wearing gold Doc Martens or eating twenty Oreos in a row but he loves the sea and jokes and watching really really bad TV and spicy food and graphic novels. And he might actually like Oreos but he's never quick enough to find out.

Dad and I live in a cottage with sloping stone walls and a bright yellow front door and a front garden full of every wild flower in existence ever. If you look out of the windows or stand in the garden or just look up

then you can't just see the sea but you can hear it and smell it and sometimes you can taste it too.

Our cottage looks like something out of a picture book. It has roses around the door that I used to make spells and potions with when my best friend Dommo and I were little, and it has a winding path up to its yellow door. It's the kind of cottage from that kind of book where you see a mum and a dad and a little girl and maybe a dog that can fetch slippers and it's a perfect little life. And that's what it's like. Well, we have the dog but he's more likely to eat slippers than fetch them and Mum died when I was a baby but otherwise it's exactly what it's like.

I wouldn't change a thing about our lives right now.

TOM

The dark around me is filled with light. That's what I tell myself. There is the acid orange glow of a street lamp just beyond the curtains. There is the gentle spill of yellow melting on to the carpet from under my bedroom door. There is the slow red eyeblink of a charger plugged into the wall opposite.

But the space around me is stained with soot and ink and shadows. The shadows slink and twist and reach and grasp. They slither and slip into something new and their edges blur and stretch. My fingers twitch. I gulp lungfuls of dirty dark air. Try to slow my breath and push away the black. Be my own light. My heart is clawing in my chest. I count the shapes I can see.

One. Two. Three.

The shadows that creep and swirl on the walls are nothing but shapes. Just a collection of angles and

lines bound together by black. Shapes can't hurt you. They're nothing. The dark can't hurt you.

Four. Five.

But what's hiding in it can.

Six.

My heart is on fire.

I reach out in the blacknothing that swoops around my face like the flap of a bat and flip the emergency switch next to me.

Light.

Light streams and pours and floods. Light swallows the darkness whole and shrinks it backwards into scraps that only flicker in the corners. Light splinters through the glass prisms that sit on my desk and the walls are a dance of rainbows. I stop counting seconds and count the colours instead. I run through them like the names of friends. I race through the syllables.

Redyellowgreenblueindigoviolet.

Redandyellowandgreenandblueandindigoandviolet.

Red and yellow and green and blue and indigo and violet.

My heartbeat slows a little to something that isn't a dull howl against my ribs.

I tap the clock on my bedside table and it glows. So does the liquid light in my lava lamp. I have six different types of light in my room.

I made it one minute and thirteen seconds without it.

I get out a piece of square paper and I fold it. I follow the lines my fingers know and I don't even have to think about the shapes I'm making. My heartbeat starts to match the slow and careful turns and by the time I finish the paper star everything is in rhythm again.

I pull the duvet up to my chin and turn to face my lava lamp. When I close my eyes, there's no darkness but instead illuminations painted on my lids like fireworks.

In the morning before school the sun is hung in the sky and the darkness only scurries in corners.

ZOFIA

I stand where the waves first start to lick the shore. I'm barefoot and I wriggle my toes to make prints in the sand that the sea rushes hungrily to fill. In seconds it can be like I wasn't even there.

I run at the waves and slip beneath them like a fish. The water and the light turn me to silver. The sea roars in my ears and crashes against the sand and salts my skin. I tumble and turn and twist underneath a slick blanket that covers a whole new world. Puffs of silver fish dart through my toes and ribbons of seaweed dance around my ankles. When I burst through the surface and breathe in the sky again I feel like a whole fresh new Zofia. The salt and the spray scrubs away any aches or worries that were starting to drumbeat inside me.

My babcia in Poland always wanted me to have a

baptism and Mum and Dad said no when I was a tiny baby, but maybe she'd like me doing this even though it's probably not quite the same. But any time I feel like my anger or annoyance or even a stupid little mouse-peek of loneliness might be getting too big then I run down from the house to the beach and let the salt wash it all away. I can see the sea from my bedroom window. I can hear it and smell it too. I used to say it was my friend and even though I'm old enough now to know that the sea can't be your friend I still sort of think it somehow.

I tread water. In the distance blurred against the dark sky is my number-one nemesis. Dommo said it was a ridiculous name for a yawning mouth of rocks biting and chopping against the waves. Fiji. It's called Fiji because Fiji is beautiful and tropical and in the middle of a warm blue sea and this is not. I think this is meant to be funny but I'm not sure I get it. Anyway people call it Fiji and so it's called Fiji. And it's my nemesis. This is the year I'll defeat it. I'll swim far enough to stand on top of it and bellow into the sky. I'm going to swim every single day, and every single

day I'll get a bit faster and a bit stronger and a bit closer.

When I am scrambling out of the water I hear Dommo's voice. She's laughing her Dommo-laugh which is like a hyena crossed with an albatross. It always makes me laugh too. Then I hear Halima. I blink the sand and wind away from my eyes.

Dommo is carrying a large shape. I squint and she unfurls it and starts to run. The wind picks it up and throws it high in the air. A bird-shaped kite dances in the sky.

Dommo is flying a kite. With Halima. Without me. The wind roars in my ears and a hurricane starts to spin inside me.

Dommo spots me and waves. She's shouting something but the wind whips away her words. She staggers towards me and the kite bucks and dips like a furious horse. I want to do that too. I want to rage into the swirl and swoops of the wind. I want to twist myself in the air and howl. She didn't want me here and I am being left out. Dommo and I do everything together. Just like me and Dad.

Dommo finally makes it over to me and she's still grinning and she says *we knocked at yours but you weren't in obviously because you're in the sea do you want a go* and I feel a rush of relief that lifts me higher than the wind ever could.