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Katherine is a journalist who writes about science, environment and society for the BBC, the Guardian, The Week Junior Science+Nature and more.

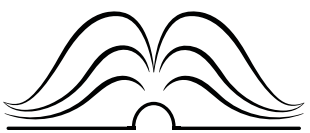
Katherine enjoys messing about in the sea, running and yoga. She lives in a little village between the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley with her husband, three children, dog, cat and chickens.

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Ink

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1

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Set in Grenadine MVB

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For Bill Squid,
Sammy Shark and
Sophie Salmon



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Contents

Harvest of the Sea	9
Rising Tides	15
Supermoon	21
Beached	27
Storm Lilith	33
Out of the Deep	37
Do You See It?	47
Aya	51
Harvest for the Sea	55
Tentacles	59
Maelstrom	67
The Smell of Toast	73
Ink	76

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Harvest of the Sea



Click-clack! Click-clack! Ragged men danced on the cobbles, beating wooden sticks. Accordions droned. A black-beaked man with beady eyes thumped his staff on the ground with every step. Thud, thud, thud! The beat led the townspeople, who sang as they

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marched, through the streets and down to the ocean. This was the Harvest of the Sea Festival.

I put my hands over my ears, as if I could mute my new hearing aid. I was drowning in noise. The voices merged into one and the celebrations sounded like the currents of a stormy sea, drawing me down to the inky depths.

My dad dragged me along with the crowd as we followed the flower boat—an offering, a thanks for all the fish.

The fishermen's deep voices carried across the wind as they sang...

When the stars alight
And the Moon is bright
Puff up your sails and pray.
When the seas rise high
And the cormorants fly,
Speed home little boat! Away!

While mourners weep
It'll tow you deep

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To the bottom of the ink black sea.
It may bite
When the Moon is bright,
The Devil of the Deep Dark Sea...

I shivered. Not from the chill wind, but at the thought of **The Devil of the Deep Dark Sea**. That song always gave me the jitters.

Houses, braced against the bite of winter, were hung with nets and hooked with fish carved from driftwood. Strings of shells covered in dried seaweed chattered in the wind. Children sat on barrels, cheering on the procession. They waved white hankies and screamed in joy when gusts whisked them away like tiny ghosts. Fishermen, festooned with rainbow-coloured fishing flies, clinked their tankards and cheered and laughed.

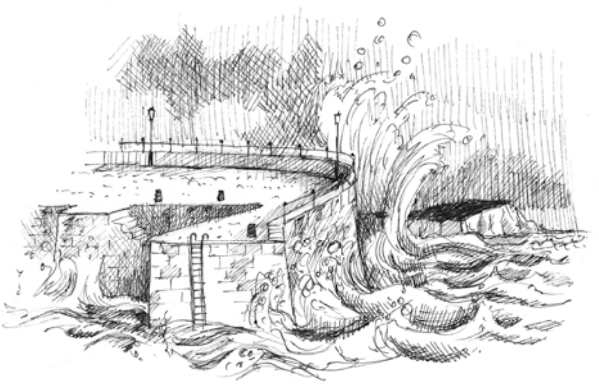
Above the crowd, a hand waved. A voice mouthed my name: ***Finlay! Finlay!*** My best friend was shouting something. I adjusted my hearing aid. Then I saw Dad. He dipped his head. ***There's Jack***, he gestured. He was my

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ears. Then he took my hand and we ran down to the beach.

Sand, picked up in the wind, pelted my face. Away from the houses, the beach stretched out in a wide crescent and disappeared into the distance. Tents flapped, clinging on for dear life. Steam from mussel pots rose in great puffs. The scent of cockles and crabs and mackerel made my nose tingle and my tummy rumble. Seagull's shrieked as they swooped on flocks of tourists eating hot pasties.

Waves like white horses reared up against the harbour wall under a bright clear sky, and



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clouds raced in from the horizon. Rising from a bed of mist, the distant Devil's Island lay like a sleeping giant—dark, enduring, forbidden.

The leaders of the procession walked straight into the surf. The foam swirled about their knees. They lowered the flower boat from their shoulders. Petals sailed into the air. They pushed forward, up to their waists, but the sea pushed back. Breakers crashed into the bow and the little boat lifted. Again and again, the sea threatened to break that little boat.

Then they swam, out to the dancing buoys. A cheer came from the shoreline. At last! The boat was free to voyage alone.

Then there was music and dancing and feasting on the beach. The sky turned pink and purple and orange. The sun became a great dripping ball of honey, then it dipped below the mist.

'We're up, Fin,' said Dad, as he led me away from the celebrations, towards the lifeboat station.

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It took seconds for the powerful lifeboat to slide down the launch ramp and into the sea.

Soon, the search light flashed over the rolling sea and our boat bumped over the surface with ease. A waxing Moon lit the night sky, fat and brilliant. We sped out beyond the harbour wall. The motor resonated through my fingertips, up my arms and through every sinew in my body. I held tightly onto the gunwale like Dad had showed me as wave after wave pounded the bow.

Then, in the silvery light, we saw it. The little boat was a miniature shipwreck, smashed to pieces on the rocky shore of Devil's Island. And in the moonlight, I watched the waves reach and curl like tentacles.

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