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Opening extract from

Emily Windsnap and the Monster from the Deep

Written by

Liz Kessler

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and the

Monster from the Deep



LIZ KESSLER

Decorations by Sarah Gibb



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For Hannah, Barney, Katie
. . . and Mum



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Below the thunders of the upper deep;
Far far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth . . .

From 'The Kraken'
by Alfred, Lord Tennyson




Allpoints Island
Barracuda Point
Strong currents
North Bay
Double Arch Bay
Kraken's Cave
Grand Caves
Lagoon
Emerald Caves

Chapter One



Close your eyes.

Think of the most beautiful place you can imagine.

Are you seeing golden beaches? Gorgeous clear blue sea? Perfect sky? Keep your eyes closed.

Now multiply it by about a hundred and you're halfway to picturing what my new home was like. The softest, whitest sand, palm trees that reached lazily out from the beaches, tall rocky arches cusping the bays, sea that sparkled like crystals in the sunlight. All thanks to Neptune.

He'd sent me here with my mum and dad to start a

new life. Somewhere we could live together. Somewhere my secret would be safe.

One of Neptune's guards, Archieval, accompanied us here. He's a merman. He swam beside our little sailing boat all the way, swishing his long black hair behind him and occasionally ducking under, flicking his tail in the air, silver and sharp, like a dagger.



We edged slowly into a horseshoe-shaped bay filled with shiny turquoise water. Soft foamy waves gently stroked the white sand. A few boats were dotted about in the bay, half sunken, silently sloping. Some were modern yachts, others great wooden craft that looked like ancient pirate ships.

A tall rocky arch marked the end of the bay. Through it, the sand and sea continued round a corner. I caught my breath as I stood and stared.

'Shake a tail, someone,' Archieval called up. 'I could use some help here.'

I leaned across to help him pull the boat up alongside a wooden jetty as Dad swam round to the back and tied the ropes to a buoy. Mum was still inside with Millie. That's her friend from Brightport. She used to read fortunes on the pier. She did a tarot reading for Archieval before we left and he liked it so much he invited her to come with us.

She said she'd have to let the cards decide, so she set

the pack out in a star shape and sat looking at it in silence for about ten minutes, nodding slowly.

'Well, it's obvious what I have to do. You'll never catch me ignoring a call from the ten of cups,' she said enigmatically before throwing her black cape over her shoulder and going home to pack her things. She says everything enigmatically, Millie does. I've learned to just nod and look as though I know what she's on about.

Archieval swam round to the side of the boat. 'This is it then,' he said. 'North Bay, Allpoints Island.'

'Why's it called Allpoints Island?' I asked.

'It's right in the centre of the Triangle.' He stretched out an arm as he spun slowly round in a circle. 'Where the three points meet.'

The Bermuda Triangle. I shivered. He'd told us about it on the way here, about the boats and planes that had mysteriously disappeared inside it. An ocean liner had been found totally intact but utterly deserted. Twenty tables were set out for dinner. Another ship was found with skeletons on the decks, its sails ripped to shreds all around them. Others had vanished without trace, often after frantic mayday calls from pilots and fishermen who were never seen again.

I didn't know whether to believe the stories at first, but something had happened out at sea. We'd been sailing along normally, the swell rising and falling, the boat gently making its way though the peaks and troughs. Then it changed. The water went

all glassy. The engine cut out, everything died. Even my watch stopped working. It felt as if the sea had frozen, almost as if time itself had frozen.

Then Archieval yanked his long hair into a pony-tail with some string and disappeared under the water. A few minutes later, we got moving again, gliding silently across the glassy sea.

'That was it,' he called up. 'Bermuda Triangle. That's what'll protect you from the outside world now. No one knows how to get through it except for a few chosen merfolk.' He threw a rope onto the deck. 'Well, a few chosen merfolk and . . . no, I'd better not tell you about that.'

'What? Tell me.'

Dad turned up then. 'I hope you're not filling my daughter's head with any more of your lurid tales, Archie,' he warned him. 'She has enough nightmares as it is.'

Archie lowered his voice. 'Just be careful,' he said. 'That glassy plane marks out the Triangle, but it's only like that on the surface. It's a raging torrent below: a huge well leading down to the deepest depths of the ocean. And you don't want to go disappearing down a hole like that.'

I rubbed at the goosepimples crawling up my arms.

We'd sailed on calmly after that, slipping through water that grew clearer and lighter every moment, melting from deep navy to a soft baby blue.

Gradually, the island came into view. It was quite

small, perhaps only a few miles across: a tall cliff at one end, a couple of lower peaks at the other and a low, flat stretch in between. As we drew closer, I could see the coastline was made up of long white bays fringed with tall palm trees and clusters of rocks and arches. It looked like a postcard. I'd always thought those pictures must be made up, somehow, and that when you got there, you'd just find a clump of high-rise apartments next to a building site.

But it was real. And it was my new home.



'Where's your dad?' Mum joined me on the deck, straightening her skirt and bending down to check her reflection in a metal railing.

I pointed ahead. 'Helping Archie.'

Mum looked slowly round the bay. 'I think I've died and gone to heaven,' she murmured as she grabbed the railing. 'Someone's going to have to pinch me.'

'I'll do it!' Dad's head poked out of the water, a glint in his eyes as he wiped floppy wet hair off his forehead. Mum smiled back at him.

A second later, the side doors crashed open and Millie clambered out. 'Tell you something,' she said, rubbing her large stomach. 'That Slippery Elm mixture works wonders on the seasickness.' She covered her mouth as she hiccupped. 'Especially

washed down with a spot of brandy. Now, where are we?'

She squinted into the sunlight. 'That's it!' she said, pointing across at a wooden ship lying on a slant in the bay. It had three tall masts, polished pine railings and a name printed on the side: *Fortuna*.

'That's what?' I asked.

'Your new home. Archie told me.'

I looked at Mum. 'What's wrong with *King of the Sea*?' That's what our boat's called. I've lived on it with Mum all my life.

Millie pinched my cheek as she squeezed past me. 'Well, your dad can't live with you on a regular boat, can he now? Don't worry. I'll look after the place for you.'

Dad swam round to the side, staring across at *Fortuna*. 'Flipping fins! Bit different from where I've spent the last twelve years,' he said as he reached up to help Mum off the boat. Dad was in prison before we came here. He's not a criminal or anything. Well, he broke the law but it was a stupid law. He married a human. That's my mum. He's a merman. Makes it a bit difficult when she can't swim and he can't go on land, but they manage, somehow. She used to be a brilliant swimmer till she was hypnotised into being afraid of water. Neptune did that, to keep them apart. She's still nervous about it now, but Dad said he's going to teach her again.

Mum hitched up her skirt and stepped across onto the jetty. It led all the way out to the ship, bouncing

and swaying on the water as we made our way along it.

I climbed aboard our new home. It was huge! At least twenty metres long with shiny brown wooden decks and maroon sails wrapped into three neat bundles. It lay perfectly still at a small tilt, lodged in the sand. It looked as if it had been waiting for us.

I stepped into the cabin in the middle of the boat and found myself in a kitchen with steps leading forward and behind. I tried the back way first. It led to a small cabin with a bed, a beanbag and a polished wooden cupboard. Circles of wavy light bounced onto the bed from portholes on either side. Definitely my bedroom!

I ran through to the other side. Mum was twirling round in a big open living room, a table on one side, a comfy-looking sofa tucked snugly into the other.

'What will we do with all this space?' she gasped. Sunny golden rays beamed into the room from skylights all along the ceiling. Ahead, a door led to another bedroom.

'What about Dad?' I asked. 'How's he going to live here?'

Before she had a chance to reply, a large trapdoor in the floor bounced open and he appeared below us. That was when I noticed there were trapdoors everywhere, leading down from each room into another one below. The ship was lodged in the seabed with a whole floor half submerged, so you could swim around in it underwater.

'You want to see the rest of your new home?' Dad's

eyes shone wide and happy.

I inched down through the trapdoor to join him. Almost as soon as I did, my legs started to tingle. Then they went numb. Finally, they disappeared altogether.

My tail had formed.

It does that when I go in water. Sometimes I'm a mermaid, sometimes I'm a girl. That's what happens when a woman and a merman have a baby.

I'd only found out recently, when I went swimming with school. Thinking about that first time made me tremble. In fact the thought of Brightport High made me feel sick, even now. I'd dreaded going there. School itself didn't bother me, only some of the people. One in particular: Mandy Rushton. Just thinking about her was enough to make my skin prickle. All those times she'd humiliated me, calling me names in front of the class, tripping me up, stealing my friends, turning them against me. I used to have nightmares about her staring at me inside a huge tank, calling me a freak. I'd wake up, cold and sweating, and then have to face her all over again in real life.

At least I'd got my own back in the end when I turned into a mermaid in the pool, right in front of her eyes. It was worth all the bullying just to see the look of stunned silence slapped across her face that day.

No it wasn't. The only thing that made the bullying worth it was knowing I would never, ever have to see her again.

Bullies like Mandy Rushton were a thing of the past.



'Bit bigger than *King of the Sea*, eh?' Dad said as I lowered myself down towards him. He took hold of my hand and we swam round the lower deck together. 'Look!' He pulled me through an archway in the centre and through purple sea fans that hung like drapes from the ceiling. Fern-like and feathery, they swayed delicately with the movement of the water. Dad squeezed my hand.

A couple of red and white fish swam in through an empty porthole, pausing to nibble gently at the side of the boat before gliding between the drapes. One of them swam up to slide along his tail. 'Glass-eyed snappers,' I said as he flicked it away. Dad smiled. He'd taught me the names of all sorts of fish on the way here.

I swam back to the trapdoor and hoisted myself up. 'Mum, it's amazing!' I said as I watched my tail form back into my legs. Mum stared. She obviously hadn't got used to it yet. She'd only seen it happen a few times.

Then Dad joined us and Mum turned to sit with her legs dangling over the trapdoor, gazing at him. He reached onto her lap to hold her hands. She

didn't seem to notice the bottom of her skirt was soaking wet. Just grinned stupidly down at him while he grinned stupidly up at her.

I realised I was grinning stupidly at both of them.

Well, most people don't have to wait till they're twelve before they get to see their parents together. I never knew it would make me feel so warm, so complete.

I decided to leave them to it. They wouldn't notice if I went out to explore. They'd hardly noticed anything except each other since we set off to come here! Not that I minded. After all, I'd nearly got imprisoned myself, getting them back together. I guessed they wouldn't mind a little time on their own.

'I'm going out for a bit,' I called. 'Just for a look round.'

'OK, darling,' Mum replied dreamily.

'Be careful,' Dad added.

I nearly laughed as I climbed out of the boat. I looked out at the turquoise water and marshmallow sand. Careful? What of? What could possibly hurt me here?



I walked along the beach for a while, watching the sun glint and dance on the water in between the ships. The sand was so white! Back home, or what used to be home, in Brightport, the sand was usually a dirty beige colour. This sand was like flour. My feet