

AND THE FALLS OF FORGOTTEN ISLAND



Liz KESSLERO

Orion

First published in Great Britain in 2018 by Hodder and Stoughton

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Text © Liz Kessler, 2018 Illustrations © Lisa Horton, 2018

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

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

ISBN 978 I 5101 0232 3

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

The paper and board used in this book are from well-managed forests and other responsible sources.



Orion Children's Books
An imprint of
Hachette Children's Group
Part of Hodder and Stoughton
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y ODZ

An Hachette UK Company

www.hachette.co.uk www.hachettechildrens.co.uk www.lizkessler.co.uk

Dedication

I'm writing this in the aftermath of a bombing in Manchester, UK, a city where I lived for twenty years. The youngest fatality was eight years old, and as I write this, many other children are still in hospital.

Like all the books in the Emily Windsnap series, this book is about different communities who think they have nothing in common finding ways to overcome their differences and learning to live together, work together and create harmony.

In this context, and with a firm belief that the next generation has the power to do good things with this beautiful world of ours, I am dedicating this book to all those who work in their communities to help others, and to those who believe that spreading love, kindness and empathy will eventually win the day.

And I'm taking this opportunity to share a phrase I've loved for nearly thirty years.

"Practise random kindness and senseless acts of beauty."

Liz Kessler, 5th June, 2017



The first sign of trouble was the rain.
Rain that fell like a river. Like a torrent. Like an avalanche crashing down with such ferocity some thought it would split the earth in two. Others argued the earth could not break, but that it might perhaps be drowned.

Most didn't argue at all. They ran. They hid. They protected themselves and their families as well as they could, waiting out a storm the likes of which no one had ever seen before.

The likes of which no one would have thought possible.

The likes of which, surely, could only have been created by magic. Nothing of this earth could produce such ferocity.

The rain continued on and on, as hours spilled into days. It fell into the ocean with such relentless force that the sea levels rose. It swirled across swells, rising into mountainous peaks; drilled down into whirlpools; darkened the sky so that it seemed the rain had even drowned the sun.

And then, like a hungry shark closing in on its prey, like a wizard finding the perfect ingredient for his spell, the rain zoned in on what it was looking for: the island in the centre of the ocean. The island with no more than a hundred inhabitants.

The rain wanted only one of them.

Elsewhere, the sky lightened. But not above this island. Above the island, it seemed all the darkness of the world, the darkness of a thousand nights, the darkness of the most tortured soul, was gathered together into one cloud.

The cloud was now so large, it was as if the very fabric of space had opened up to swallow the island whole.

For a moment, the world held its breath.

And then the cloud erupted. Like a giant dragon breathing fire, the darkness unleashed its demons upon the island. Down they rained, sparks flying across the sky like fireworks as the spell was cast.

The rain poured so hard into the centre of the

island, it drilled a hole all the way through it.

Enormous arrows of rain continued to pour down all around, so hard that the island's edges were beaten and hewn into rough, ragged cliffs. Gigantic jagged teeth that refused to let anyone in or out of the land beyond them.

Tides rose: huge, angry swells that it seemed would never again become calm.

Eventually, the cloud reached the final side of the island. The longest, straightest edge.

The first cannonball of rain crashed against the foot of the cliffs so hard it dented the cliff itself.

The second punched a hole above the first. Three more times the cloud fired explosions of water at the cliff, higher and higher, as if it were chasing its prey to the top.

Who was the prey, though?

The people retreated as the balls of water crashed into their land. Each explosion sent them deeper and deeper into the island's hidden forest, forced them into shelters, contained them in clearings and caves.

There were those who saw a large figure rising out of the water – a figure of giant, contorted proportions.

There were those who heard words streaking through the air.

- "... Betrayed me ..."
- "... We had a deal ..."

"... Never forgive ..."

The words grew softer as the rain climbed higher and higher up the mountain beyond the cliffs.

As the rain slowed, the cloud took moisture from the fierce swells, growing and growing so that soon, the entire island was hidden inside the cloud.

Eventually, the sky beyond the island cleared. It was over.

All that was left was a fierce swell, an island cut to shreds and a thick blanket of fog surrounding it. An angry, raging waterfall screamed down the cliff side, forming a deadly barrier to the bay behind it.

Those who had survived crept out of their hiding places to find they were now trapped on the island by the cliffs and the falls. Closed off from the world. Forgotten. Abandoned.

And for more than five hundred years, that was how it stayed.





Limily, are you listening to me?'
My best friend's voice jolted me so hard I jumped and splashed myself in the face. 'What?' What?' I spluttered. 'Sorry, I must have dozed off.'

'Ha!' Shona said with a laugh. 'I'm clearly not very interesting!'

'No!' I protested. 'You are! Of course you are. I'm just . . .'

'You're exhausted.' Shona finished my sentence for me.

'I am a bit,' I admitted. 'Sorry.'

'Don't be,' Shona said. 'Your life has been manic lately. I'm surprised you're still in one piece.'

Shona was right. We'd recently come home from a geography field trip that had been the latest in a long line of adventures.

'I barely am,' I said. 'I mean, can you actually think of more than a week at a time when I wasn't being almost squeezed to death by a sea monster or getting trapped with sirens in a forgotten underwater cave, or dodging hammerhead sharks to get my dad out of Neptune's underwater prison?'

Shona flicked her tail as she swam up to the water's edge. Shona's a mermaid. Kind of like I am, except she's a full-time one. I'm only a mermaid when I go in water. I'm an ordinary girl the rest of the time.

We were hanging out at Rainbow Rocks, our special place.

'Well, yes,' Shona replied. 'There was the time when you escaped from Neptune's evil brother in the frozen Arctic. You weren't doing any of those things then.'

I laughed. 'Exactly. And to top it off, we go on a school trip where the most exciting activity is *meant* to be studying local rock formations, and what happens? I discover a spooky underwater ship and have to rescue a boat full of people who are trapped in the mysterious land of Atlantis!'

Shona smiled as she swished her tail, spreading

droplets of water in a sparkly arc above the sea. 'Craziness!' she said. 'You need a break.'

'I probably do,' I admitted. 'Just a little one. What are the chances that will happen?'

Shona frowned. 'Hmm. Slim. It is *you* we're talking about, here.'

I splashed water at her and she laughed and ducked under the surface.

'It's true though,' Shona went on. 'You're addicted to adventures – you just can't resist them.'

'I don't do it on purpose,' I protested. 'They come to me!'

'Yeah,' Shona agreed. 'You're like an adventure magnet.' She swam around me towards a large, smooth rock and pulled herself on to it. Her tail flicking in the water, she perched on the edge of the rock and ran a hand through her hair, squeezing sea water out of it and patting it down into neat strands.

Shona's one of those mermaids who cares about things like her hair. Before she met me, she wanted to be a siren – you know, the whole sitting on a rock, singing beautiful songs and luring fishermen to watery graves thing. She feels differently now that humans and merfolk are a bit more aware of each other, but she still likes to look good. Me, I don't care so much. I just like to have fun. Trouble is, my fun usually ends up as . . . well, trouble.

'Now I think about it,' Shona went on, 'what do

all these adventures have in common? Or, should I say, *who* do they have in common? Other than you.'

I thought for a moment. 'I guess *you've* been by my side in most of them.'

'Exactly.' Shona smoothed her hair and slid back into the sea. 'And so I think I am qualified to tell you that I am officially declaring both of us in need of some downtime, before we collapse in a heap of jellyfish goo. I am completely adventured-out and so are you. Let's swill out for a while.'

'Swill out?'

Shona shrugged. 'Like chill out. But in water. Come on, let's make a deal. Let's try to be boring for a while. Time out. No more adventures.'

I thought for a moment. 'OK. Let's do it. No more adventures.'

Shona flicked her tail to push herself upright in the water and indicated for me to face her and do the same. She held a hand up. 'You too,' she said.

I swished my tail and held my right hand up, palm facing hers.

'OK, repeat after me,' she said. 'I, Emily Windsnap.'

I cleared my throat. 'I, Emily Windsnap,' I repeated, trying not to laugh.

'Do solemnly declare.'

'Do solemnly declare.'

'That I shall not be tempted by adventures, risks or mysteries for at least one month.'

'That I shall not be tempted by adventures, risks or mysteries for at least one month.'

Shona raised an eyebrow. 'Think you can do it?' 'I am *desperate* to do it,' I replied.

'Swishy!' she replied. 'Bring on the boring.'

I grinned as we slapped hands in a watery high five. 'Bring on the boring!'



Shona had gone back to her family in Shiprock. That's the merfolk town under the sea near us. I was swimming home for dinner.

I live on a boat in Brightport with my mum and dad. Mum lives on the upper deck of the boat, as she's a human. I do too, when I'm being a human and spending time with Mum. I also like to hang out in the lower deck with Dad. That part is under the water because Dad's a merman, so it's how we manage to all live together.

I pulled myself out of the sea and perched on the edge of the boat. As I sat there, I watched my tail flicker and shimmer. Droplets of water sprinkled off the end of it, glinting in the late afternoon sun. Then, gradually, my tail stiffened up, straightened out and began to tingle. Finally, it disappeared altogether as my legs came back.

You'd think I'd be used to it by now. I first discovered that I become a mermaid when I go in water just over a year ago, when I was twelve. It still amazes me every time it happens.

I leaned over the side of the boat to squeeze the water out of my hair. Then I went inside.

Mum and her best friend Millie were huddled together on the sofa, flicking through magazines.

'Hi, sweet pea,' Mum said as I came in. 'Nice time?'

'Yep. Swishy,' I said. *Swishy* is Shona's favourite word – but I like using it too. It makes me feel like a real mermaid.

'That's nice, darling,' Mum replied.

'What're you doing?' I called over my shoulder to them as I went into the galley and poured myself a drink of orange squash.

'Looking through holiday brochures,' Millie replied airily.

'Really?' I took my drink and went to join them in the saloon. 'I didn't know we were going on holiday.'

'We're not,' Mum said.

'Yes, you are,' Millie countered.

I stared at Millie. She glanced up and stared back. 'Your mum's got SAD,' she said with a meaningful look in her eyes. Millie does most things with a meaningful look of some sort. You learn to ignore it after a while.

'What are you sad about, Mum?' I asked. 'Has something happened to Dad? Are you OK?'

Mum waved an arm at me. 'I'm fine!' she said. 'I'm not sad at all.'

'But Millie said—'

'I said she's *got* SAD, not she *is* sad,' Millie interrupted.

'Oh,' I said. 'I see.' I didn't actually see at all. I squeezed on to the sofa next to Mum. 'Actually, what exactly is the difference?'

Millie sighed. 'S-A-D,' she spelled out. 'Seasonal Affective Disorder. I've been reading about it. Your mum is exhausted and drained.'

'Is she?' I asked. 'Are you, Mum?'

Mum shrugged. 'I suppose I am a bit,' she conceded.

They sounded like me and Shona. Hadn't we just been saying pretty much the same thing? Maybe I had this SAD thing too.

'Can it be treated?' I asked. 'What can we do about it?'

Millie held up one of the holiday brochures they were looking at. 'WINTER SUN' it said in big letters on the front page.

'Sunshine,' she said. 'That's what your mum needs.' Then she squinted and pushed her reading glasses up her nose. 'In fact, you're looking a bit on the pasty side too, Emily. A bit of winter sun wouldn't do you any harm either.'

Just then, I heard a swooshing noise underneath us. 'Dad!' I yelled. Dad had been working on building new caves with some of the merfolk in Shiprock. The swooshing meant he was home from work.

A moment later, he popped his head through the trapdoor that links the boat's two floors.

Mum got up and went over to him. 'Hi, darling,' she said, bending down to kiss him. 'How was your day?'

'It was swishy!' Dad said, glancing across to wink at me. 'And you know the best news of all?' 'What's that?' Mum asked.

'They're giving us all the week after next off.'

'Oh, that's wonderful,' Mum said. 'You can spend the week at home with us.' She moved to stand up again and snagged her trousers on a broken floorboard. Then she glanced around the boat and nodded her head towards the table in the middle of the saloon, propped up by a pile of books in place of its missing leg. 'Maybe we can use the time to get a few jobs done around the place.'

'Sounds like a barrel-load of fun,' Dad said with a grimace.

'Wait. The week after next? That's my half term, isn't it?' I asked.

'Sure is, little 'un,' Dad replied.

Millie slammed her brochure shut and pursed her lips. 'Well, that settles it,' she said firmly. 'Forget your little jobs around the place. I'll move in and get to work on them for you while you go and enjoy yourselves.'

Mum's face fell. Millie might be her best friend, but she's not exactly the most practical person in the world. If you left your to-do list in her hands, there'd be a fairly strong chance that she'd turn the list into a floaty scarf and try to hypnotise the jobs into doing themselves. 'Honestly, Millie,' Mum said carefully, 'you really don't have to do—'

Millie held up a hand to stop her. 'I'm insisting on it. And it's not just me insisting.'

I looked around. 'Um. There's no one else saying anything,' I pointed out.

Millie gave me one of those knowing looks and, lowering her voice, she said, 'Serendipity herself has intervened.'

'Seren - what?' I asked.

Millie impatiently shook her head. 'Serendipity. Synchronicity. Coincidence. Call it what you will. It's all coming together. Your half term, your mother's needs and your father's time off.' She held up her brochure and waved it in the air. 'You're going on holiday, the lot of you. Fate has decreed it.'

Dad looked at Mum. 'Millie's right,' he said. 'We could *all* do with some time off.' With a wink, he added, 'And if fate has decreed it, who are we to argue?' He held a hand out to Millie. 'Come

on, then,' he said. 'Pass me one of those. Let's book ourselves a holiday!'



It was later that day, and Mum, Dad, Millie, Aaron and I were flicking through brochures.

Aaron's my boyfriend. He's a semi-mer like me – the only one I know, of my age anyway.

Mum and Millie were on the sofa, pointing at pictures and mumbling, 'Oooh, look at that,' and 'What about this one?' and 'Oh, my!' every other minute.

Dad was leafing through his with increasing impatience.

Aaron and I were sitting on a beanbag looking at one together, but mostly using it as an excuse to huddle up close. I leaned into him as I turned the pages.

'Look at the colour of the water!' Aaron exclaimed as I turned a page.

'Check out the size of the pool,' I added, pointing at the hotel as Aaron pulled me closer to look at the picture.

A couple of minutes later, Dad closed the last of his brochures and sighed loudly. 'This is stupid,' he said. We'd been looking through the brochures for the last hour. 'There's *nothing* in here that we can do together.'

Dad was right. We couldn't exactly go to some high-rise hotel for a holiday together. Dad would have to spend the whole week in the swimming pool. It would be like us going on holiday and him being kept in an aquarium!

'Wait!' Millie suddenly rose from the sofa.

Dad stopped still. I put my brochure down, Aaron froze, and Mum looked up. We all stared at Millie as she waved her brochure in the air.

'I've got it!' she announced. 'I've found the perfect place for your holiday.' Millie held the brochure out to me. 'Show your dad, go on.'

I dragged myself out of the beanbag and got up to take the brochure from Millie. Studying the pictures, I made my way across the boat.

'The Tiptoe Hotel at Majesty Island', the page read.

I didn't read any more of the words. I was too busy looking at the pictures. The bluest, clearest water I'd ever seen, the most golden sand you could imagine, and a line of little huts stretching out from the beach into the bay.

I passed the brochure to Dad. Mum got up from the sofa and came to join us.

'Majesty Island,' Dad murmured. 'Sounds grand.' 'Listen to this,' Mum said, reading aloud over Dad's shoulder. '"Majesty Island is a small island oozing with natural riches and wonders. With the softest golden sand, and the bluest, clearest sea, it is a jewel in the middle of the ocean. A place where you will definitely feel like royalty."

Aaron joined us and read aloud from further down the page: "Wake up to the sound of the sea, and within seconds, you can slip into the sparkling waters of Bluefin Bay."

'It sounds incredible,' I said.

'It does. You have to go!' Aaron said. Then he grabbed my hand and whispered, 'Even though I'll miss you like crazy.'

'Me too,' I whispered back.

Dad looked at Mum. 'It does sound romantic,' he said.

Mum did that gooey smile back at Dad that she does sometimes. 'It really does.'

Which, yeah, might be nice for them. But if this was going to be some kind of second honeymoon, I didn't really want to play gooseberry.

But maybe I didn't have to. And perhaps I didn't have to miss Aaron.

'Mum, Dad, can Aaron and Shona come too?' I asked. The thought of spending a week with my two favourite people was probably the most perfect thing I could imagine.

'Two friends? I don't know,' Mum said. 'No offence, Aaron, but I thought the whole idea was that it would be a relaxing holiday for me. Looking

after three children doesn't sound like much of a break.'

Aaron waved his hands in front of him. 'It's fine, honestly, don't worry about it,' he said.

Millie loudly cleared her throat. 'Sorry, don't mind me,' she said, thumping her chest.

'You wouldn't have to look after us,' I said to Mum. 'We'd hang out together all the time! And we'd leave you guys to be all soppy and romantic.'

Dad laughed as he stole a quick kiss on Mum's cheek. 'Sounds good to me,' he said.

Mum sighed. 'Oh, I don't know,' she said.

Millie coughed again, even more loudly this time. Mum turned to look at her. 'You OK, Millie?'

'What, me? Oh, yes, I'm fine,' Millie replied airily. 'Just a tickle.' She picked up another magazine and, as she nonchalantly flicked through it, she added, 'I always get a bit of a virus this time of year. It's just the weather. I'll be fine, though. Don't worry about me. You carry on with your plans.'

Mum laughed. 'Millie! I thought you wanted to stay and look after the boat?'

'What? Oh, yes. That's right. Go on, you get on with your planning. Ignore me.' She coughed once more and pulled her scarf up to cover her throat.

'I suppose . . .' Dad said. 'If we had a third adult

there, it would be someone else to watch the kids.'

'Dad's right,' I said to Mum. If Millie joining us meant more chance of my friends coming too, then I was all for it. 'Plus you'd have someone to keep you company if Dad wanted to take us on any underwater trips.' I turned to Aaron. 'You'd like to go out exploring beautiful, jewel-like waters with Dad, wouldn't you?'

Aaron's eyes were wide. 'Errr, yes!'

'That is a good point,' Mum agreed. She turned to Millie. 'OK, Millie, do you want to come?'

Millie slammed down her brochure and pulled her scarf off her neck. 'Count me in,' she beamed. 'Wouldn't miss it for the world.'

Dad laughed. 'Right,' he said. 'I'll talk to Shona's parents. Aaron, ask your mum. If everyone agrees to it, then yes, all right, we'll book it.'

I squeezed Aaron's hand as he got up to leave. 'Hope she says yes,' I said.

'She will,' Aaron replied. 'I'll make sure of it.'

I looked at the pictures again as Dad and Aaron left. It looked so beautiful. The perfect place to do what Shona had said and 'swill out'. A week of doing nothing. No adventures, no mysteries, no anything. Just lying around in the sunshine, swimming whenever we felt like it and not having a care in the world.

It was going to be the most perfect week of my life.