

## **SAVED BY THE SEA.**

**1956**

‘You’ll never make anything of your life because you don’t do what you should. You don’t behave properly!’

‘Sorry, mother. I’ll try harder next time.’

‘That’s what you always say. The truth is you just don’t care.’

Mary’s words cut Sophie’s sense of herself into even smaller pieces than it had been in before. What had been the raw meat of a developing personality, now became the mince that is produced by a well-oiled machine. Sophie’s mother was that well-oiled machine. She saw it as her duty to shred any sense of self that Sophie had in order to make her ‘a good girl’, one that a future husband might find attractive.

‘And don’t wear skirts that are too short. I don’t want Grannie to think that I haven’t brought you up properly. Do you understand?! Your father was drowned in the war for people like you. And don’t you forget it!’

How could Sophie forget? Every night she was made to stare at the black-and-white photo of her father in his uniform, stern-faced, only his eyes hinting at emotion, the rest of his face modelling the correctness that was expected. Sophie had been too young to know him well, but she suffered the pain that his passing had caused her mother. It was a pain that was heaped on Sophie every day of her life.

As she lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, Sophie hadn’t yet understood the deep source of her mother’s anguish and she knew she could not ask. Sophie suffered from the ripples, but she dared not ask about the stone.

**1971**

Sophie was a young woman now and she had decided to join the Royal Navy. It was an unusual choice for a woman, but Sophie wanted to follow her father.

When she arrived on her first ship, Sophie felt at home. There was one sailor that she formed a bond with. His name was Alex, and the sight of the deep water of Alex’s eyes created ripples in Sophie’s heart. It was as if the blue water of those eyes had reversed the normal sequence and propelled the ripples outwards, towards the stone edifice that Mary tried to create in her daughter’s heart.

That morning, Sophie and Alex stood on the deck, alone. Their eyes met.

‘What I love about you, Sophie, is that you care. You care about other people.’

‘No, Alex, I care about you.’ At that moment, their lips met.

**1972**

When the day of her marriage to Alex came, Sophie kept a photograph of her father concealed under the top of her dress. At last, she had understood that the disappearance of her father, plunged beneath the waves of the sea, had created the ripples of her mother’s anger. These ripples had driven Sophie back to the sea to escape.

'I love you,' she said to Alex as they kissed in front of the altar, her father's photograph by her heart.

'I love you too.'