

One night...



The moon was full, and shining so brightly that it cast shadows of an old man and a young boy across the inky-black waves. They sat – fishing in friendly silence – while the sea licked the timbers of their wooden rowing boat.

In the distance, a tiny beach nestled at the bottom of high cliffs. If the man and boy had looked at it, they might have noticed a small, upturned boat lying on the sand, with an old piece of drainpipe poking out of it. A whisper of smoke

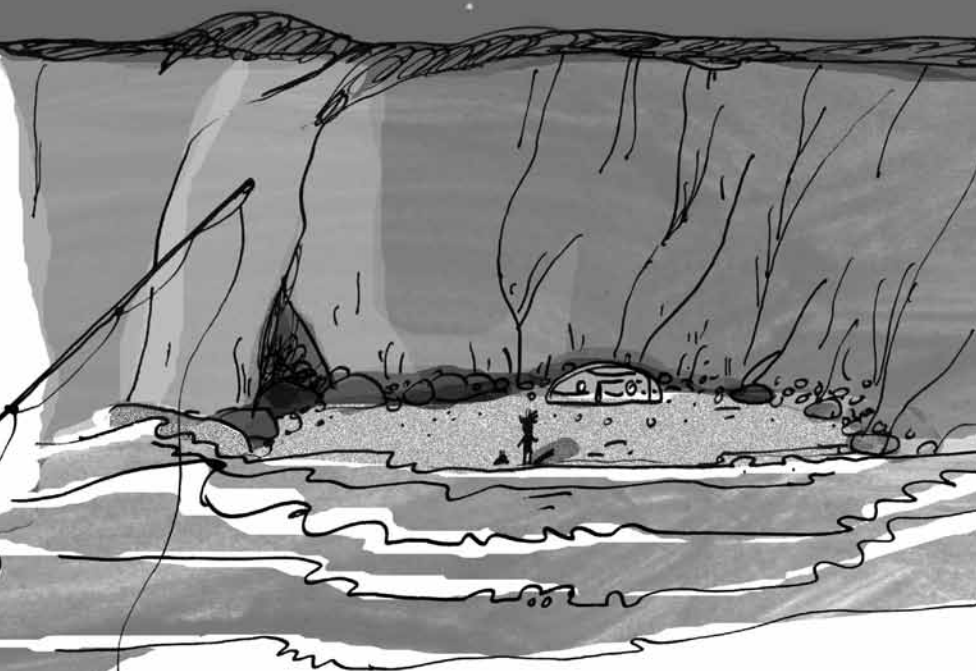
curled through it into the night sky, as if a cosy fire was burning inside.

A sudden movement on the sand caught the boy's eye.

"What's that, Grandpa?" he asked.

The old man followed the boy's pointing finger, his eyes creasing as he peered at the moonlit beach. He could just see the outline of a knotted tangle of driftwood and string.





*"There's nothing there," he said at last.
"Nothing but flotsam and jetsam."*

*The boy watched. For a moment, he thought he
saw a glint of silver...*

*But maybe it was just a trick of the moonlight.
He shrugged, and went back to his fishing.*

*On the beach a tiny hermit crab was being
taken for a last stroll before bedtime. The
crab scuttled into the waves, his back*

glinting silver in the beams of the moon. When he returned from the water, someone reached down and patted him. Then they both turned away and disappeared through a crack in the upturned boat.

On the little beach, nothing moved. Nothing stirred but the sea. Nothing disturbed the silence but the gentle lapping of the waves, and the rise and fall of soft, contented breathing that drifted from the doorway of the boat house.



A heap of feathers



Flotsam and
Jetsam lived in
an upturned boat
on a tiny beach.

Jetsam's hair was wild and knotted old string. The top of Flotsam's bald head was worn as smooth and round as a pebble. Both had jet-black eyes peering out from brown driftwood faces. Ropy legs ended in chunky, toeless feet. Stringy arms bore shapely hands, with nimble, stick-like fingers.

The tiny beach had been their home ever since a moonlit night when something had

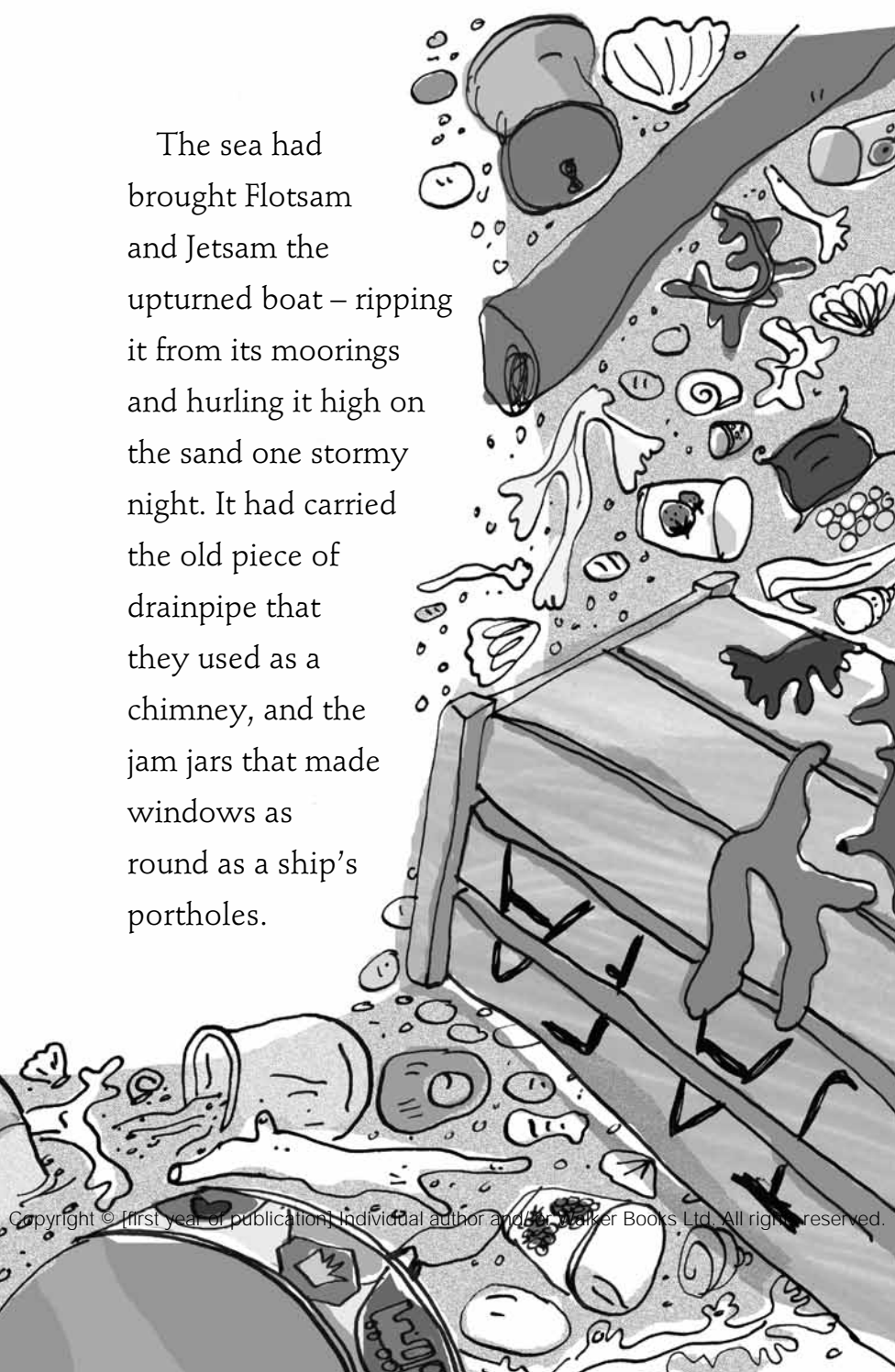
stirred in the inky depths of the sea and they had drifted to the surface. The tide had carried them in and laid them down gently on the soft, welcoming sand.

And every day since then, the sea had brought them some new treasure.

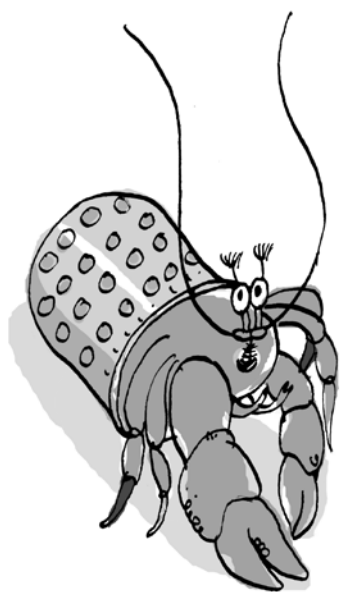
Twice a day the tide went out. Sea anemones drew in their sticky fingers. Limpets sucked down tight on rocks. Crabs scuttled to hide in pools as the water ebbed away. Twice a day the sea returned, flooding rock pools and cooling sun-baked sand. There was a magical moment of high water when the sea paused and seemed to rest for a minute before the tide turned. And it was then that it would lay down a line of strange and wonderful things on Flotsam and Jetsam's little beach.



The sea had brought Flotsam and Jetsam the upturned boat – ripping it from its moorings and hurling it high on the sand one stormy night. It had carried the old piece of drainpipe that they used as a chimney, and the jam jars that made windows as round as a ship's portholes.



Their bed – a sturdy wooden box with the word JA FA painted on the side – had slid from a cargo ship and been washed up on their little beach. They had lined the JA FA bed with dried seaweed and topped it with an old baby's blanket. The sea had given them their biscuit-tin table, their drinks-can chairs, and all the pots and jars that they stored their food in.



The sea had even brought them Sainsbury, a tiny hermit crab who had lost his shell in a spring storm. They hadn't been able to find another shell that fitted him, so Sainsbury now wore a silver thimble which had rolled from the deck of an ocean liner.

The sea could be loud and frightening with its wild storms and terrible rages. But Flotsam and Jetsam knew that whatever its mood, the sea was their friend.

One evening in early spring, a great storm was brewing. It hung in the air, weighing it down and making the little beach feel hot and heavy and uncomfortable.

Flotsam and Jetsam were sitting on the sand, leaning against the boat house watching Sainsbury scamper in and out of the waves.

“’Tis terrible warm,” sighed Jetsam. “And damp at the same time. ’Tis hard to breathe proper. ’Tis nasty old weather. Sure as eels is eels. Sure as piddocks is piddocks.”

Flotsam was watching the clouds gather on the horizon: clouds that blackened, and grew taller and taller until at last they looked as huge as the cliffs that towered above their little beach.

“I is thinking,” said Flotsam, standing up suddenly and grabbing Jetsam’s hand. “I thinks a terrible storm is coming. Us must get inside right away.”

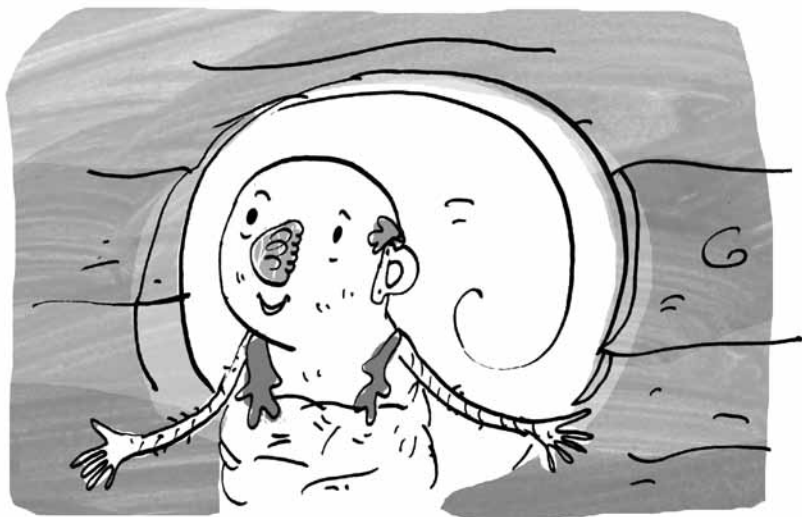
Whistling for Sainsbury, Flotsam and Jetsam ran for the boat-house door. They made it inside just as the first drops of rain started to fall. Flotsam and Jetsam huddled in their JA FA bed. At the far end of the boat house, Sainsbury buried himself in the sandy toe of the red wellington boot where he slept.



The storm raged and crashed. Flashes of lightning split the sky as they hurled themselves like jagged spears into the waves. The wind howled, the thunder roared and the sea screamed. And then, cutting through the terrible noise of the storm, came the piercing cry of a bird far out at sea – a bird who sounded lonely and afraid.

Sainsbury pulled a clump of seaweed over his head and trembled nervously. Flotsam and Jetsam exchanged an anxious glance and burrowed deep down in their JA FA bed. They could do nothing against the might of the storm. They could only wait for the morning.

When the sun rose, the sea was perfectly calm. Flotsam climbed out of bed and peered through a jam-jar window at the brilliantly blue sky.



“Is it storming?” called Jetsam from beneath the blanket.

“No.”

“Is it raining?”

“No.”

“Drizzling?”

“No.”

“Well, what *is* it doing?” Jetsam threw the blanket aside and sat up.

“’Tis sunning.” Flotsam smiled happily.

“’Tis sunning good and proper.”

In the warmth of the bright spring morning, Flotsam and Jetsam set off to see what had been washed up during the night.

It seemed as if the sea had turned itself inside out. The storm had wrenched strange objects from the depths and strewn them across the sand. There were conches and cowries and shiny green abalones. There were spiky urchins, and delicate pink starfish. There were dazzling white cuttlefish bones, and black mermaids' purses.

And right in the corner of the beach was the strangest thing the sea had ever brought them. A huge heap of bedraggled feathers was piled on the sand.

"'Tis terrible odd," said Jetsam, walking around the heap.

"'Tis most peculiar," agreed Flotsam, scratching his bald head with a stick-like finger.

“What does you think it’s *for*?” asked Jetsam. “What can us *do* with it? Us must be able to use it for something or the sea wouldn’t have put it there. Sure as jam jars is jam jars. Sure as yoghurt pots is yoghurt pots.”

Before Flotsam could answer, Sainsbury scampered up to the heap, took a single feather in one small claw and gave it a curious tug.

In one terrifying movement, the heap of bedraggled feathers erupted and changed into a bird. A very large bird. A very large, very indignant bird. A very large, very indignant bird that towered above Flotsam and Jetsam and looked as if it could swallow poor little Sainsbury in one gulp.

They all stared at the monstrous creature in horror.



But at the very moment the bird stood up on its gigantic webbed feet, it seemed to get dizzy. It swayed to one side, and then swayed to the other. It took two lurching steps towards them and then...

"Look out!" shouted Jetsam. "I thinks 'tis going to—"

The bird collapsed flat on its face, just missing Flotsam and Sainsbury.

"—fall!" Jetsam finished.



The bird lay horribly still on the sand.

There was a long, hushed silence.

At last Jetsam whispered, "'Tis a terrible big bird. Sure as gannets is gannets. Sure as albatrosses is albatrosses."

"But what kind of bird is it?" puzzled Flotsam. "'Tisn't a seagull."

"'Tis not a seagull," agreed Jetsam.

"Which is just as well. Seagulls is nasty, bad-tempered things. But suppose that bird there is just as dangerous? What shall us do then?"

Sainsbury's claws clacked together at the thought.

"There, there," soothed Flotsam, patting the little crab gently. "That there bird has got a nice rounded beak. 'Tis blunt at the end, not all sharp like a gull's. 'Tis a beak for dabbling, not pecking. 'Tis a duck, I reckon. A shelduck. I thinks you is safe, Sainsbury."

Sainsbury's beady black eyes blinked nervously. He didn't look at all sure.

“That duck has been battered by the storm. I think that bird was what made that noise in the night. ’Tis not a well bird,” continued Flotsam. “Not a well bird at all.”

“Right,” said Jetsam firmly. “Then us shall just have to make it better, shan’t us?”

It was no easy task. The shelduck was taller than Flotsam and Jetsam, and a colossal monster as far as Sainsbury was concerned. They couldn’t



carry it into the boat house to look after it. Instead, Jetsam fetched the baby's blanket from their JA FA bed and threw it into the air so it landed across the duck's back.

"'Tis terrible chilled, poor thing," said Jetsam. "'Tis proper cold." Not knowing quite what to do next, she sat and rubbed its webbed feet. She felt rather anxious, and couldn't decide if she wanted the duck to open its eyes or keep them shut.



Meanwhile, Flotsam made some food to offer the creature. He fried up some seaweed fritters and spread them with sea pink jelly. Placing them on the lid of a yoghurt pot, he carried them out of the boat house and laid the lid on the sand. Then he fetched a jam jar full of seaweed tea and put it down by the duck's beak.

For several long moments, the duck did nothing. Flotsam and Jetsam watched it anxiously. But, at last, the bird lifted its head, opened its eyes and let out a single, grateful quack. And then it began to eat.

Dipping its red bill into the jar of tea, it dabbled and swallowed until the jar was empty. When Flotsam offered it a piece of seaweed fritter, the duck accepted it graciously, throwing its great head back so that it could swallow.

"'Tis working!" said Jetsam happily.

"Us can make it better!"

“Us can,” said Flotsam. “And then it can go away, back to where it belongs.”

Sainsbury waggled his thimble in agreement.

The duck lay on the little beach all day. When it had been fed its tea – seaweed sausages and milkwort mash – it got to its feet unsteadily. The duck shook the sand off itself and preened its bedraggled feathers until they were smooth once more. Then it looked around.

Sainsbury scurried to hide behind Flotsam’s legs.

“It’s all right, Sainsbury,” said Flotsam gently. “’Tis going now. Us has made it better!”

“I expect you’ll be off now,” said Jetsam to the duck. “Us is very glad you is feeling better. Goodbye!” She waved.

The duck didn’t move.

“You’ll want to be off home now, won’t you?” said Flotsam. “Farewell!” He waved hopefully.

Still the duck didn’t move.

From behind Flotsam’s legs, Sainsbury extended a nervous claw and waved desperately at the duck.

At last the bird began to waddle purposefully away. Flotsam and Jetsam and Sainsbury heaved a sigh of relief.

But the duck didn’t waddle down to the sea and swim off as they had expected.

Instead, it waddled over to the boat house, lowered its head and disappeared inside.

Sainsbury gave a squeal of dismay.

“No!” cried Jetsam. “You musn’t go in there!” She grabbed Flotsam’s arm. “Tell it not to, Flotsam! Tell it not to!”



They hurried after the duck, but when they entered the boat house a terrible sight met their eyes.

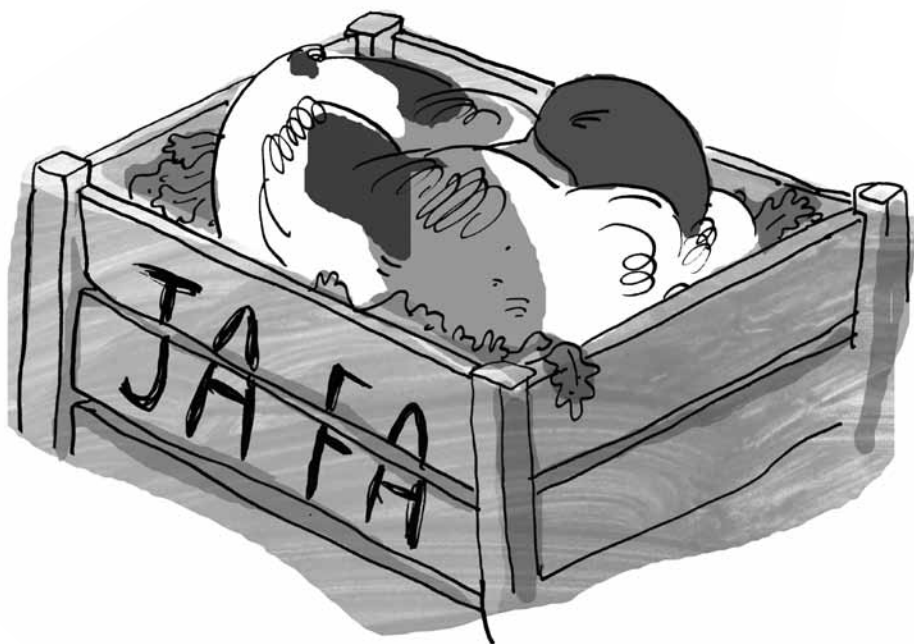
The duck had climbed into the JA FA bed.

It turned round once, turned round twice, and then settled itself deeply into the dried seaweed with a contented quack.

“That there’s our bed!” protested Flotsam.
“You can’t get in there!”

But the bird already had, and nothing, it seemed, could make it get out again.

They asked it politely. They said please and thank you in all the right places. When that didn’t work they *ordered* it to leave the boat house. The duck simply shut its eyes, tucked its head under a wing and went



to sleep. They tried to tip it out of the JA FA bed, but the creature was so heavy they couldn't lift even one corner of it. They pulled, they pushed, they heaved and they shoved, but the bird stayed put.

Flotsam and Jetsam had to make a new bed for themselves. They stuffed empty crisp packets full of dried seaweed to make a mattress, which they put next to Sainsbury's wellington boot and covered with the baby's blanket. It wasn't as nice as the JA FA bed, but they didn't have any choice: the duck was there to stay.

And then, feeling rather uneasy about their new guest, Flotsam and Jetsam and Sainsbury sat leaning against the side of their boat house, and listened to the shelduck's soft, contented snoring as they watched the sun sink slowly beneath the waves.