

## Young Shetland Writer 2010

Age 7-11 Winner - Freya Stout

### *Stranger From the Sea*

The moonlight trickles along the black water like a stream that makes its way down the hillside. The tide is gently rolling over the shingle on the shore. I dip my fingers deep into the sand where it is cold and wet, untouched by the light and heat of the day. I carefully sieve the soft grains through my fingers, I watch them slip off my hand and down to the ground where they bounce off the rocks and seaweed. I wonder if there are as many grains of sand in my hand as days that have passed since I have seen him.

It was five long years ago, I remember how the day started well.

I quietly stepped out of my bed, as I came through to the kitchen. I heard the sound of the man on the radio's sombre voice, I took no notice and went over to mum who was sitting at the kitchen table, lines of anxiety on her face.

"The men from the village are leaving with their boats for the French coast, your father is joining them." my mother explained.

"You mean to rescue the soldiers?"

My mother nodded,

"And is Matthew there?" I asked, perplexed

My mother sighed.

"I do not know where your brother is. We can only hope he returns safe."

At this I quickly slipped on my dress and shoes and rushed out to get on my bike.

"Come home quickly" my mother called, a slight hint of agitation in her voice, I got what she meant.

I leapt off my bike at the village harbour just in time to say good bye to my father as the little fishing boats bobbed away over the sea.

"Good luck" I called to him,

"I love you" I waved to him from the pier possibly for the last time.

I made my way down to the beach, light drops of rain fell in my hair and upon my face as though the earth itself was crying.

I started to root through the sand and pebbles, looking for pretty shells or sea glass, once I had a fair amount I started sorting them into piles, fiddling with them and observing their shape and colour.

I walked aimlessly along the sand dunes, each step leaving deep, lonely footprints.

And then I saw, near the old pier, what looked like a man lying on the shore, the tide curling around him every once in a while, his arms splayed as though he were dead. I leaped across to him running as fast as I could. I crouched down beside him and saw his white, unemotional face. I could see he was a boy of no more than 18, the same age as my brother. His eyes opened, both piercing and dull, they made me think of the crashing waves on a stormy sea.

He used me to steady himself, he shivered in his dripping hair and clothes.

"Are you ok?" I asked

I hauled him up the rickety staircase to the loft of the boatshed. Inside was where my father kept his useful boat parts, sails, rudders and the like. The boy and me sat in amongst some boxes.

"Please, tell me how you got here."

"Well" he said. "I was flying off the coast of France. I got shot down by enemy warships, I tried to get near to land but I had to eject." He gestured with his hands. "And then I turned up on this shore."

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Yosef Schmidt" he said, "And yours?" He stared unblinkingly at me with his cold grey eyes.

"Ivy." I said as I stood up and looked around. "You could stay here couldn't you?"

"Yes" he said, an air of puzzlement on his face.

"Good, I shall be back soon."

"Where are you going?"

"To get some dry clothes" I shouted from outside the front door.

I grabbed my bike and headed up the hill, it then struck me what a ridiculous idea this was, how could I possibly think I could keep him hidden from everyone else in an old boatshed, feed him, keep him company, all the time no one knowing what I was doing. But I couldn't turn him in.

"I shall have to do my best," I thought.

I found a spare t-shirt and trousers, a blanket and an old jumper. I packed everything into a large bag along with a loaf of bread and some vegetables I had pulled from the garden.

I called to him as I came up the stairs, he turned away from the window, his face wore a weary smile.

The next day father still wasn't back, the breeze was soft today but sharp, and icy, I hated to think what it was like at the boatshed. I wanted to go and see him as soon as I could.

I could slip in easily to the boatshed, for no one was watching, all eyes were on the sea waiting for the boats to come back.

Yosef was pleased to see me, he told me endless stories about flying above the water like a seagull and dancing over the waves. He made it sound so elegant and beautiful, but the reality was that it was grim.

I asked if he wanted a carrot.

"I am not hungry," he replied.

I did not want to leave, I wanted to stay with him longer and listen to his stories but I knew I had to go.

"I must go now, mother will be worried," I said with a sigh.

"Very well."

I walked out towards the door and as I did he said one last thing.

"Your brother will return" he said leaning against the banister.

"Sorry?" I replied, shocked.

He turned and disappeared up the steps.

A few days later things turned for the worst, or so it seemed.

I was running down the hill towards the boatshed, gifts and books wrapped up in my petticoat when I saw father. At first I was overjoyed, and without thinking I called to him and waved and he waved back, then I stopped suddenly and a wave of realization poured over me.

Father was unlocking the door to the boatshed. I ran behind a parked car and put my head in my arms, what had I done! A tear trickled down my cheek and fell to the ground. I watched as he walked in and climbed the stairs to the attic. I heard clatters and then he walked out and sat on the ground. I gently walked over to him and sat down next to him.

"I'm so sorry!" I sobbed.

"About what?" he asked.

"The loft of the boatshed."

"It's a bit messy but you know I don't mind you going in there as long as your careful," he said calmly.

I was utterly confused, why hadn't he seen Yosef? Perhaps he'd hidden.

My father started to talk about the rescue.

"Did you see Matthew?" I asked impatiently.

"No, but you never know" he paused "He may have come with another fishing boat."

"Is it likely he's alive?" I asked

"Yes ..., but many soldiers have died and we can't dismiss the possibility. A German pilot just a couple of days ago got shot down, one of the boys saw the body in the water, just a young man they say, poor soul."

At this he sat up and started seeing to his boat. I didn't want to go and see Yosef right now. Not while father was just outside.

Much later that night, I came down to the beach to find Yosef standing at the waters edge. I strolled over to him but he didn't acknowledge me, he just focused on the horizon staring sadly at the black water, the reflections glinting and shivering over his face.

"It is time for me to leave."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to the sea," he turned to me and smiled, then, vanished.

I am on that very beach now. It is five years later, though not much has changed. I wonder when he will be here. I have been waiting quite long now. I hear footsteps, someone is walking down the gravel path to the beach, and I can see him. I go over to hug him, I have not seen my brother for so long.