

Going For A Swim

by Sho Botham

Lolly edged her way into the water feeling a variety of pebbles and small rocks underfoot. She wore slip-on shoes with a sufficiently robust sole to protect her feet on the uneven seabed. And also, from any razor shells she might encounter. These could be lethal if stepped on with a bare foot.

Her eyes scrunched up against the bright sunshine beating down on her. Bit by bit she progressed over the small rocks. Every few steps she felt warm, feathery fronds of seaweed wrapping themselves around her lower legs. The water by now wasn't clear due to the gentle current stirring up the sand. Seaweed didn't worry Lolly. It was familiar to her as she waded out past the rocks towards the firm sand beyond.

Not far to go, she thought to herself as she felt gaps appearing between the pebbles under her feet. She never hurried as she knew from experience that it was too easy to slip on a rock and unceremoniously land in the sea. Although she was heading out to swim, she wanted to be the one to choose when she would dip her tanned shoulders under the water.

Despite feeling firm sand under her feet, Lolly knew there would be occasional rocks waiting to trip her up hidden below the water. It was getting deeper. Another few steps and her swimsuit would get wet. Lolly felt what she assumed was familiar seaweed fronds touching her legs. She stood on something firm but soft. Not like the usual hardness of pebbles or rocks. There is something strange about the seaweed – I can feel it, she said out loud to herself.

Something tugged at her leg. Lolly's body froze for a millisecond before she let out an ear-piercing scream that surprised even her. Seaweed floating on the surface and the murkiness of the water meant she couldn't see anything in the depths. Something quite large was bumping against her leg. Panic took over. Lolly's feet slipped causing her to fall backwards into the water. Her head ducked under making her take gulps of salty seawater.

She was splashing, spluttering, screaming and panicking. Her arms and legs failed to get her body upright. Her left hand felt the sand of the seabed for a moment as she scrabbled trying to stand up. Something bumped against her arm. She couldn't see what it was. She screamed. Something firm bumped against her hand. She was falling over herself again. Still failing to get upright. Still trying to get away. She heard loud splashing. Three people were rushing towards her. Slipping, sliding and falling in their efforts to reach her. Lolly tried to head towards them but something tugged at her leg, anchoring it. She couldn't get her leg free. Her head felt as if it was going to burst. She was terrified. Her balance steadied for a moment. Her frightened eyes looked down into the water. Two lifeless eyes stared up at her.