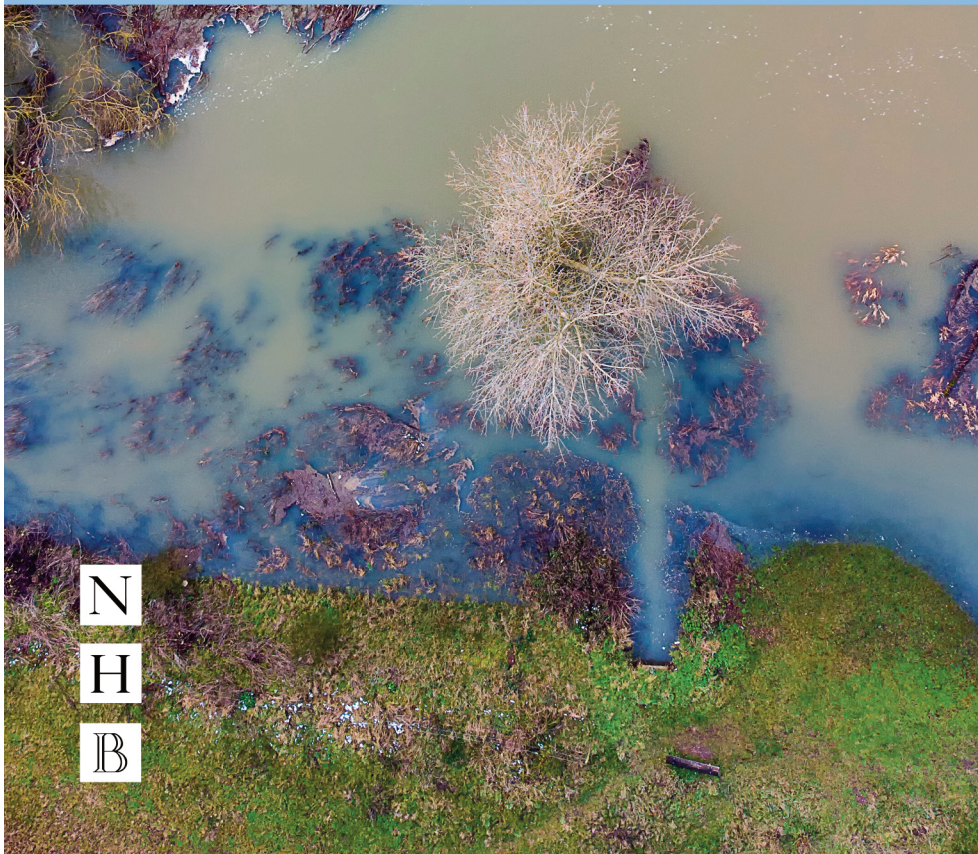




Sea Things

Hassan Abdulrazzak



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SEA THINGS



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NICK HERN BOOKS

London

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Characters

- 1) AGATHA, *community organiser*
- 2) NEIL, *drug dealer. Diver*
- 3) JAKE, *religious. Diver*
- 4) SAM, *obsessed with Agatha*
- 5) SALLY, *camp authority*
- 6) KIERAN, *camp authority*
- 7) PAT, *camp officer*
- 8) MALIKA, *brilliant engineer. Expecting*
- 9) NIKOS, *Malika's husband*
- 10) BECKY, *misses her dead father, into Korean culture*
- 11) TABITHA, *an unscrupulous plastic surgeon*
- 12) AMY, *Becky's friend, worried about her Korean obsession*
- 13) TINA, *expecting*
- 14) ARETHA, *Tina's sister. Protective*
- 15) MALCOLM, *Tina's partner*
- 16) KIT, *ex-theatre director, disillusioned*
- 17) JOHN, *IT salesman*
- 18) RICK, *cancer patient. Informant*

The cast also double up as the chorus.

Note on Text

Time: The year is 2050.

Setting: an English manor house and surrounding grounds / the sea.

A forward slash (/) indicates an interruption.

ACT ONE

Prologue

The sea.

CHORUS 01. We rage.

CHORUS 02. We foam.

CHORUS 03. We ebb.

CHORUS 04. We flow.

CHORUS 05. We bury people.

CHORUS 06. We bury secrets.

CHORUS 07. We are the giver.

CHORUS 08. And the destroyer.

CHORUS 09. We contain multitudes.

CHORUS 10. Suppressed voices.

CHORUS 11. Bubbling away.

CHORUS 12. Mutating.

CHORUS 13. Forming.

CHORUS 14. Taking hold.

CHORUS 15. Coming to the surface.

CHORUS 16. To shine magnificent.

CHORUS 17. Taking over.

CHORUS 18. Putting the world to rights.

Beat.

CHORUS 01. Three months ago we overwhelmed the town of Hellsworth.

CHORUS 02. Buried it under our waters.

CHORUS 03. Some fled up to the hill.

CHORUS 04. To Glenhope.

CHORUS 05. An English manor house converted into a camp.

CHORUS 06. For Internally Displaced Persons.

CHORUS 07. IDPs.

CHORUS 08. The camp is run by Maxscore.

CHORUS 09. A private, for profit, company.

CHORUS 10. The IDPs who end up there have nowhere else to go.

CHORUS 11. They hope to be ‘processed’.

CHORUS 12. Given more permanent accommodation elsewhere.

CHORUS 13. The manor has many rooms.

CHORUS 14. People fight over them.

CHORUS 15. We like them fighting.

CHORUS 16. We love to see them stressed.

CHORUS 17. We’re devouring them slowly.

CHORUS 18. Like a good meal.

Beat.

CHORUS 05. A countdown has begun.

CHORUS 06. A change is coming.

CHORUS 09. We ebb.

CHORUS 15. We flow.

CHORUS 04. We rage.

ALL. We are the sea!

Departure

A hall in the manor. It’s July. Temperature 42°C.

JOHN. This is goodbye, I guess.

KIT. I’m going to miss your clichés.

JOHN (*with a sigh or an eye roll*). Thanks, Kit.

AGATHA. Kit is kidding.

KIT. I can speak for myself.

AGATHA. Don’t I know it.

ARETHA. Where’re you going, John?

JOHN. Maxscore has found me a job in Manchester.

ARETHA. Lucky you. We’re still waiting to be processed.

JOHN. It’s in IT sales.

AMY. Sounds fab.

JOHN. It is... except for one thing... well, for two things, really. Or one big thing, depending on how you look at it.

SAM. Spit it out already.

JOHN. I hate sales. Oh and I hate IT.

BECKY. Then why are you taking it?

JOHN. Beggars can't be choosers.

KIT. If you drop the clichés, your life might improve.

JOHN. And your life would improve if you stop being so combative.

TINA. You're lucky to be getting out of this place.

MALCOLM. We're stuck here like wellies in cow shit.

KIT. I hope you'll have AC in Manchester.

BECKY. Anywhere but here must be better.

KIT. I doubt it. The country's gone to shit.

AGATHA. That's the spirit, Kit.

KIT. And your optimism, Agatha, is stifling like the weather, not to mention deluded.

SAM. Leave Agatha alone.

KIT. She's not your girlfriend.

NEIL and JAKE arrive.

NEIL. But she's mine. Hello, darling.

AGATHA. Hey, Neil. Hi, Jake.

JAKE. Hello... everyone.

NEIL. Fuck me, you all look like you're at a funeral. Lighten up. The worst has happened.

BECKY. You mean the flood?

NEIL. The flood and ending up here at the ironically named Glenhope. Once you're at the bottom, the only way is up.

KIT. Don't count on it.

NEIL. Run out of uppers, have you, Kit?

KIT. You're an unreliable supplier, Neil.

NEIL. John, mate, I've got something for you.

NEIL puts a carton of pills in JOHN's hand or pocket.

JOHN. I don't know, Neil.

NEIL. A trip for your trip.

JAKE. He doesn't want it.

NEIL. Sure he does.

JAKE. John, I'll pray for you to have a safe journey.

NEIL. Jesus wept.

JAKE. People are disappearing. They're leaving the camp and are never heard from again.

JOHN. People just want to put this place behind them.

AGATHA. John, you've got to tell the outside world about this camp. How badly it's run.

KIT. Yeah, I can really see John doing that.

AGATHA. Unlike us, he'll have internet access. He can start a campaign.

BECKY. Is that true, John?

JOHN. I'm not sure, Becky. The government is trying to regulate the internet.

KIT. You mean censor it.

BECKY. You could stream BTS all day long!!

JOHN. Stream what?

BECKY. BTS? The Korean band? You've never heard of them?

AMY. Few have, Becky.

BECKY. That's not true, Amy. BTS are huge.

AMY. They were, but like thirty years ago.

BECKY. My dad adored them.

AMY. It's 2050. Get with the times.

BECKY. The past was way better.

KIT. What happened in the past is what's led to this disaster.

SAM. People were afraid to look at the harsh reality.

NEIL. Not afraid. Just bored. Climate change is boring.

JAKE. How can you say that?

NEIL. I took a truth pill. I wish you would too.

ARETHA. Here is some money.

JOHN. What for?

ARETHA. Get formula for my sister's baby.

MALCOLM. She hasn't given birth yet.

ARETHA. You're stupid or something? She's due.

TINA. Don't kick off.

JOHN *hands ARETHA back her money.*

JOHN. I don't know if the army will allow me to come back here once I leave.

AGATHA. The camp authority should be supplying those things. And giving Rick his medicine.

JOHN. Rick, you haven't said anything.

RICK. I can't believe you're leaving.

JOHN. I'm going to miss you, mate.

They hug.

You're gonna be alright?

RICK. They tell me my medicine should arrive any day now.

KIT. You're better off dead.

JAKE. Jesus, Kit.

JOHN. That was inappropriate.

NEIL. Kit, darling, you need to chill.

JOHN. Remember what I told you, Rick.

RICK *nods*.

SALLY, KIERAN and PAT arrive wearing distinct uniforms. *The atmosphere shifts.*

NEIL. Here comes the law.

SALLY. Are you ready, John?

JOHN. I am.

KIERAN. Bags packed?

NEIL. What bags? Poor sod has only the clothes on his back.

KIERAN. We need to talk, Neil.

NEIL. I have nothing to say to you.

KIERAN. There are rules about what can be brought from Hellsworth and how.

AGATHA. If you were doing a better job, Neil wouldn't need to /

JAKE. Agatha!

KIERAN. Wouldn't need to what?

AGATHA. Nothing.

SALLY. Cat caught your tongue?

Beat.

John, Pat is going to take you to the train station.

KIERAN. In the company car. We will be charging you for the cost, I'm afraid. Not now, when you get paid.

PAT. The army has given us the all-clear to pass the checkpoint. It's about an hour's drive. You're in safe hands.

KIERAN. Ready?

JOHN. Yes.

The IDPS gather around JOHN and hug him.

The Kiss

Everyone exits except PAT and JOHN. They are in the car driving.

JOHN. I haven't been in a car in... I don't know how long.

PAT carries on driving.

I'm going to miss everyone. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad to be getting out. Even though I'll be doing a job I hate. I've always gone with the flow, ended up in jobs I hated, in relationships I've hated. But I adapt, you know. Is that resilience? If your life turns out shit, it's not resilience, just stupidity. I miss so much about the outside world... I miss... I miss takeaways. Yeah, I'd like to say I miss art galleries or the theatre or something. But no, I miss takeaways. I don't understand why they picked Glenhope to be an IDP camp. It's in the middle of nowhere. Did the government do this on purpose so we wouldn't talk about how bad the flood was? Sorry, there are lots of conspiracy theories going round. It must be hard on you, too. It's not like it was your childhood ambition to work as an officer for Maxscore, was it? Or was it?... Was it? Sorry I'll shut up. I talk a lot when I'm nervous. Well, when I am excited. When I am nervous and when I am excited. I'm babbling. I'll be quiet.

PAT stops the car.

Why have we stopped?

PAT gets into the back seat next to JOHN.

PAT. We've been watching you, John.

JOHN. Who is 'we'?

PAT. And we think you're ready.

JOHN. Ready for what?

PAT. It won't hurt. Much.

JOHN. Pat, you're scaring me.

PAT. You hate yourself, John, don't you?

JOHN. I... I don't.

PAT. You're going to be fine. More than fine. You're going to be great.

JOHN. Pat, I don't want to miss my train.

PAT. Do you trust me, John?

JOHN. No. Not really.

PAT. Shame. That means it's going to hurt more than usual.

JOHN. What will? /

PAT kisses JOHN. JOHN resists. Then relaxes into it. Just as he is beginning to enjoy it, she transmits something into him. His body begins convulsing. She breaks off the kiss and runs her hand through his hair as he continues to convulse and fall out of the car. He crawls, trying to get away.

(Barely getting the words out.) What... have... you... done?

PAT. You're welcome.

Agatha and Sam

A hall in the manor. AGATHA is looking through the list of signatures she's gathered. SAM enters.

SAM. Hey.

AGATHA. Hi.

SAM. You know this whole signature petitionary thingy you're doing?

AGATHA. Yeah. Trying to get signatures to petition the council.

SAM. I'm going to help.

AGATHA. It's fine! You've got other things to do, Sam.

SAM. I literally have nothing else to do.

AGATHA. But honestly, I've got it. It's fine.

SAM. Why don't you want me to help?

AGATHA. I don't not want you to help. And Neil has been helping out.

SAM. Fuck.

AGATHA. Me and Neil grew up down the street from one another. I don't get why you guys can't get on. You and I went to uni. He's one of my childhood friends. Just be mates!

SAM. I don't need... I don't need to be mates with Neil.

AGATHA. You could do with having more friends in this place other than me.

SAM. I didn't come here to be told off. I came to help.

SAM tries to take the signature list from AGATHA.

The lights go out.

Shit!

AGATHA. Not again. That's the second time today.

SAM. I have a torch.

SAM turns on her torch and shines it in AGATHA's eyes.

AGATHA. I can't see, Sam!

SAM. Give me the list.

AGATHA. I don't think it's a good idea.

SAM. Why not?

AGATHA. I'm doing this because things need to change. Maxscore makes so much money but there are power cuts all the time.

SAM. It's the shit food I can't stand.

AGATHA. That's if we get any food at all.

SAM. I know, Agatha.

AGATHA. The children in the camp are becoming malnourished. The council has to do something.

SAM. I know all this which is why I want to help.

AGATHA. I want the other IDPs to trust me. You... you aren't the friendliest person to approach.

SAM. What do you mean?

AGATHA. When Sally and Kieran gave our room to that family, you tried to hit the dad. You were super-aggressive.

SAM *towers over* AGATHA. *It's scary.*

SAM (*shouting*). He was being aggressive with me! I didn't randomly get aggressive with him!!

AGATHA. Okay.

SAM. I'M SORRY! Can we just move on with our lives and get on with the SIGNATURES!

AGATHA. Neil needs more divers. Why don't you help with that?

SAM *finally realises that* AGATHA *is trying to get rid of her.*

SAM. Did you... did you ask Sally and Kieran to put us in separate rooms?

AGATHA. What?

SAM. Oh my God, you so did!

AGATHA. Sam, look...

SAM. I'm such an idiot.

AGATHA. Sam, it's not like...

SAM. It's exactly like that.

AGATHA. I care about you.

SAM. The fuck you do! Fuck you and fuck Neil!

Neil and Jake

Outside. NEIL and JAKE are both wearing wetsuits. They have bags of some sort containing what they brought back from the town. (Note: the bags cannot be made of plastic.)

JAKE. Neil, wait!

NEIL. I'll race you up the hill.

NEIL and JAKE are running up the hill to the manor. JAKE looks despondent.

I never tire of beating you. What? What's wrong? We've had a great dive. We got loads of good stuff. What's wrong?

JAKE. I saw you take the drugs.

NEIL. And?

JAKE. You can't keep doing that.

NEIL. Oh God, here we go.

JAKE. They're going to catch you. Sally and Kieran. Maxscore is a private company, they don't want a black market on their doorstep.

NEIL. They get the bulk of their money from the council. They skimp on energy, food, medicine and that's how they make their profit. They don't care if we go diving to fetch things from Hellsworth.

JAKE. You're wrong. They're just waiting for the right moment to catch us. Kieren hinted he knows about our dives, didn't he? That was a threat. Hellsworth is supposed to be off-limits for security reasons.

NEIL. Everything good has been taken away from us for 'security reasons'. The government just doesn't want people finding out the extent of the disaster, not with the election coming up.

Beat.

You are such a scared little thing, Jake. It's almost adorable.

JAKE. Bad as this camp is, if we're thrown out, we'll end up on the streets. There's no other camp around for miles and miles.

NEIL. We won't be thrown out.

JAKE. Why do you deal in drugs?

NEIL. Seriously?

JAKE. Yes!

NEIL. To help myself. To help other people who need to /

JAKE. You're not helping other people!

NEIL. The money I'm making from this is going to help me meet up with my brother and sister after I'm processed.

JAKE. How are you going to be with your brother and sister if you're in jail or arrested?

NEIL. Look it's not like we're going to have some kind of like Cinderella happy fucking relationship. Is it? I have to get real about this. You cannot commit to me. That's the truth.

JAKE. I'm just worried you're not thinking straight and you're going to end up in a heap of trouble. Our dives are dangerous. There are the tides to think of, coast guards, sharks.

NEIL. The sharks are climate refugees just like us.

JAKE. Oh great. Maybe that will stop them taking a bite out of your arse.

NEIL. Maybe you want to take a bite out of my arse.

JAKE. I'm not joking.

NEIL. You're just angry about your situation.

JAKE. My situation?

NEIL. Because you're a fucking bible basher.

JAKE. You can't make fun of my beliefs!

NEIL. The beliefs that you've adopted all of a sudden.

JAKE. That's really... that's really small minded of you. I don't judge you.

NEIL. So why do you always disappear after we have sex? What's that all about?

Beat.

JAKE. I just don't want to see you get hurt.

NEIL. You're evading my question.

JAKE. In the old days, we were told it's okay to love, to lust after whoever. And that attitude meant people just followed their base instincts. Even if those instincts upset God.

NEIL. God is upset because you like dick?

JAKE. People laughed at the notion of sin. They thought it was medieval.

NEIL. It is.

JAKE. But then the calamities kept coming: viruses, forest fires, floods, wars, terrorism.

NEIL. These things have always happened.

JAKE. But not with this intensity. Hellsworth went under in a week. That's not what the scientists had predicted.

NEIL. So they got it wrong.

JAKE. They got it wrong because they didn't believe in God.

NEIL. What kind of God gets off on people drowning?

JAKE. Our God is wrathful. The bible is clear about that. We ignored the warnings for far too long.

NEIL. And that's your excuse for staying in the closet?

JAKE. Don't ask me for more than I can give right now.

Beat.

NEIL. I'm going in... coming?

JAKE. Wait. I'm not done.

NEIL. What now? More guilt trips?

JAKE. No. I got you something.

NEIL. What?

JAKE. A present.

NEIL. You got me a present?

JAKE. Why are you surprised?

NEIL. You don't want the others to know we see each other and you got me a present?

JAKE. Okay, forget it. Let's go in.

NEIL. Show me.

JAKE. Forget it.

NEIL. I can't now, can I?

JAKE *unzips his wetsuit slowly.*

Oh this is getting interesting.

JAKE. If you're going to make fun.

NEIL. I won't... I won't, go on.

JAKE *takes out a scrunched-up plastic bag.*

Jesus wept! You're having a go at me for dealing pills and you're messing with single-use plastic?!

JAKE. I saw it floating in the water. Beautifully lit, like some kind of exotic sea creature.

NEIL. It looks so harmless but this thing nearly ended all marine life.

JAKE. I couldn't believe it when I found it. A banned object. I immediately thought it would make the perfect present for you.

NEIL *kisses* JAKE.

NEIL. I love you, you weird, closeted, bible-bashing, plastic-dealing, freak.

JAKE. I love you too.

New Arrivals

A hall in the manor. SALLY, KIERAN and PAT are talking to the IDPS.

SALLY. We're really very, very, very... aren't we, Kieran?

KIERAN. We are very... yes... we definitely are.

SAM. You can't even say it.

SALLY. Say what?

BECKY. Sorry.

SALLY. Don't be, love. You've done nothing wrong.

SAM. No, you stupid cow. She meant *you* haven't said sorry.

KIERAN. Consider it said.

SAM. Except it isn't. Agatha, say something.

AGATHA is avoiding direct confrontation.

AGATHA. I've got nothing to say to them.

KIERAN. There you have it.

AMY. Unbelievable. Third day with no milk or bread and you won't say sorry.

SAM. This camp is a joke.

PAT. Next item on the agenda /

RICK. What happened to John?

SALLY. John is in Manchester.

RICK. He hasn't been in touch.

KIERAN. The phone network is down.

KIT. Stop saying that. It isn't down. It's shut down just like the internet.

PAT. There really is no need for conspiracy theories, Kit.

ARETHA. We've been in the camp the longest and we haven't been processed yet. Can you tell me why?

SALLY. It takes longer with families unfortunately.

ARETHA. Other families have come and gone.

KIERAN. Every case is unique. It takes time to find placement.

PAT. And the army can be slow to issue clearance.

TINA. People are disappearing.

MALCOLM. We don't know that, love.

TINA. People leave this camp and we never hear from them again.

PAT. Not true.

RICK. What about John? Why hasn't he called?

PAT. Probably busy having a good time in Manchester. Now shall we move this along.

SALLY. The main item of today. There are newcomers.

ARETHA. Are you kidding me?

MALCOLM. The camp can't take any more. There are almost a hundred and fifty of us already.

TINA. We don't have food for babies and you're taking on more people!

AGATHA *snaps*.

AGATHA. They get paid by the quota.

SALLY. I'm disappointed in you, Agatha. Surely you, of all people could appreciate that there is a humanitarian need.

KIERAN. Pat, would you let them in?

PAT exits then returns with the newcomers: MALIKA, NIKOS and TABITHA. MALIKA is four months pregnant.

SALLY. Newcomers, would you please introduce yourselves.

MALIKA. I'm Malika.

BECKY. Hello Maleeka.

MALIKA. It's Malika, actually.

BECKY. Oh God, I'm so sorry.

ARETHA. Malika. Maleeka. Who cares?

MALIKA. My mother for one, she named me.

AGATHA. And Aretha has no comeback. Hi Malika... I'm Agatha.

NIKOS. I'm Nikos, Malika's husband.

SALLY. Malika is an engineer. And Nikos, what is it you do, Nikos?

NIKOS. I was in the army.

MALCOLM. Were you? So was I... Regular army?

NIKOS. Is there another kind?

MALCOLM. Maybe you were on the wrong side in the war.

TINA. What are you talking about, Malcolm?

MALCOLM. I've got this, Tina. When the war started in India, many lads, many new converts, went over there to join the fighting. Were you one of them?

NIKOS. I wasn't with the terrorists if that's what you're implying.

ARETHA. Don't mind Malcolm. We don't, do we, Tina?

TINA. He's been unemployed for so long, he's forgotten his manners.

NIKOS. It's okay.

ARETHA. But you weren't with the terrorists, right?

NIKOS. No. I was sent by Britain to India as a part of a peacekeeping force. We built schools, we put out forest fires, evacuated people from flooded areas. I'm proud of what we achieved.

SALLY. And this is Tabitha. Who I believe used to be... a doctor of some kind?

TABITHA. A surgeon. I was hoping to work in your clinic if at all possible.

KIERAN. I'm afraid, Tabitha, we're fully stocked up on doctors.

TABITHA. I've heard the medical facilities are excellent here.

BECKY. You must have watched the Maxscore ads? They're ace.

KIT. First-rate works of fiction.

SALLY. You'll die of cynicism, Kit.

ARETHA. Where will they sleep?

KIERAN. They'll share your room.

MALCOLM. Our room? No way.

TINA. It's crowded.

SALLY. There is space.

AGATHA. Sally, that's a bad idea.

SALLY. You don't run the camp.

KIERAN. We do.

BECKY. What kind of surgery did you do, Tabitha?

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