

Rockpool

by Alexander Wiseman

Praa Sands, Cornwall.

A rockpool, low tide.

Kind waves.

Evening.

B enters – he is wearing a smart suit and is carrying a brightly-coloured plastic bucket and net.

He pauses. Puts down the items. Takes off his shoes and socks. Places the socks carefully in the shoes. Rolls up his trousers. Picks up shoes and items. Moves towards the rockpool, perches on its edge.

B

Hello again. Don't judge the get-up, please.

It's been quite the while, hasn't it? Sorry about that. This mad thing called life got in the way.

But I brought a bucket. *(he shows the bucket to the pool)* And a net. *(shows the net)*
Just like old times.

(a few moments. Glances skyward) Clear night, that's nice. Lots of stars; more than I remember. That's nice.

I don't really know why I'm back. I'd like to say I happened to be passing through, but you can't really pass through Cornwall – unless you're planning on swimming across the Pacific. But no, I was sitting in my shitty little office in my shitty little northern city, and out of nowhere I caught a whiff of the sea; y'know salt and seaweed and all that, I don't know where from, but I smelt it. I smelt it and I just had to come back. Here. To you.

It pulled me, y'know? Like a winch.

A few moments. B gently puts his hand on the water's surface – strokes it. He sighs deeply.

A enters – a woman in a woolly-jumper uniform with a chunky torch. B doesn't notice her.

A

'Scuse me.

B jerks around, accidentally knocking one of his shoes into the rockpool.

B

(going to grab his shoe from the pool) Shit, goddammit. Shit. Sorry.

A

Y'alright there, sir?

B

Yes, yes. Gave me a jump is all.

A

Whatcha grabbin' for?

B

My shoe!

A

Why's yer shoe in a rockpool?

B

I didn't put it there!

A

No?

B

I knocked it in. You made me jump, you surprised me and I knocked it in.

A

Ah. Apologies, then.

B pulls out his shoe and sock.

B

Brilliant.

A

Beach is closing soon, sir.

B

What?

A

You need to leave, I'm afraid.

B

But I only just got here.

A

I'm sorry, sir, beach is closing.

B

I don't understand, how can you close a beach?

A

We lock the gate.

B

Which gate? That tiny wooden one over there?

A

That's the one.

B

Can't people just climb over it?

A

That's not the point, sir. The beach is officially closed now so I must ask ye to leave.

B

Right. Listen, sorry, but I drove a heck of a way to get here, to be here – I don't have a hotel or anything, kind of a whim thing, spur of the moment – I need to, to –

A

A spur of the moment trip to Praa Sands? Now I've heard it all.

Look, sir, I'm sorry, I –

B

I grew up here, see, and I've come back to be nostalgic, so just let me be, okay? I grew up here.

I had my first kiss on this beach, I went to school in the village, I learnt to drive down the high street, I – I know these dunes like the back of my damn hands.

A

I grew up here as well, sir. And I've grown old here as well.
Y'need to leave. Sir.

B stares at A.

A

Sir, /you –

B

/My brother's in there!

A pause.

A

Sorry?

B

My brother is in this rockpool.

Does she take it seriously, does she look? She considers it.

A

What do you mean?

B

Look! *(B grabs A's arm and pulls her towards the pool.)* Look. Use your thing, your torch.

A

(pointing her torch into the pool) It's just rock and water.

B

No! No it's not! He's there, don't you see? Right there. There.

She looks. Genuinely searches.

A

I can't see him.

B

Well what am I, crazy, then?

A beat.

A

Of course not, sir.

B

No I think I probably am.

A pause.

A

What happened to him?

B

He drowned.

A

In that rockpool?

B

No. I don't know.

I just imagine it being here.

It's easier, y'know.

A

Sure.

B

I was just sitting at my desk and I felt this- God, I don't know, a pulling. Like it hurt, and was heavy, and I smelt the sea, so I knew it was here. That I was being pulled back here.

Which was really, really strange. I never get urges like that.

A

Let me tell you somethin'.

B

I need to leave, I know, /I know-

A

/No, just listen. Okay?

B pauses.

B

Okay?

A

Good.

So your brother's in that rockpool, right?

B

Yeah.

A

And he wasn't there before.

B

I don't know, I guess not. I only just –

A

Only just got the urge to come back here, picked the rockpool at random –

B

Wh –

A

Subconsciously at random. As an avatar of your brother, as a- a nostalgic shrine of grief and guilt.

Right?

So this is your dead brother, your dead little brother, some water in a rockpool.

But see the thing about rockpools is that that water there won't be there in three, four hours.

It'll've washed back into that vast wine dark sea, and a new gallon or so of water will've replaced it. All the crabs and critters, gobies and eels, will've been washed out, gone with it.

And something new will be there.

So now you're thinking, where's my brother? Where's the water that is my brother?

It's out there.

Now d'you wanna go try find it? Impossible. Ludicrous.

It's nowhere and everywhere. He's everywhere and nowhere.

But you've got a bucket, you think, you could – while you've got the chance – scoop up as much of your brother as you can into that bucket and take it home with you. You could carry that bucket of water around with you your whole life, carefully balancing and tending it so as to not spill any.

But that's tiring, isn't it? That's gonna mean you can't live your life right.

So what do you do?

You let it go. Let him go into the sea and be done with it, be content knowing that he's a part of something greater.

But he's not really some water in a rockpool, is he?

He's your little brother. And it's a tad more complicated than that.

So it's up to you.

B stares at the water.

A quietly exits.

B

How did you know he was my little brother?

B turns and sees that A has gone.

A few moments.

B picks up his shoes and items, and exits.

The tide rises. The rockpool disappears under the water.

End.