

## RUNNING FROM THE WAVES

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They were standing together where the shingle gives way to sand and the sea sounds like his Dada's hand sifting through lego.

Daniel waited hesitantly watching the waves rise. As the sound sucked back into the swell, his palm tightened in his Dada's. A giggle formed in his chest as his always restless feet began to turn, sweeping little circles in the stones. The sea hung suspended as the laughter broke and they

- Go Dada! GO!

The noise crashed as the wave threw itself at the shore rising as a flood that chased their heels threatening to drown their cries in the rasping roar.

The shingle grasped at Daniel's feet, holding them momentarily before rising to fill his fingers with tiny pebbles and his voice with shock.

- Dada!

For a moment nothing. Dada ran a couple steps more and didn't see. Up on the beach his sitting Mama stood and started to shout.

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Earlier, when he had come jumping through the hall, his Dada had been pumping the tyres of Daniel's bike.

Mama had walked into the kitchen frowning.

- Are we cycling?

he heard Mama ask.

- I thought so. It isn't far. Not worth taking the car.

- But the things...?

- Do we need to take the things? If we're not going to swim?

Mama didn't answer. That was one of the ways that adults were different. When adults asked him a question then Daniel was meant to answer and if he didn't answer then they would ask the question again sometimes louder and sometimes crossly and then Daniel would answer even if he wasn't sure what the answer was.

But adults could ask questions like they were normal words.

They had talked more (talking is another thing adults did) and Mama had looked as though she might get cross, but she hadn't and instead turned to him and said

- Daniel, what would you like to do? Take your bike or go in the car?

Daniel didn't know. He liked being on his bike especially with Dada behind him telling him which arm to signal with but the hill on the way home was big (sometimes very big) and he couldn't always go on Dada's shoulders.

- Can I go on bike on the way there and in the car on the way back?

Mama had smiled but Dada hadn't and said

- That kind of defeats the object, doesn't it?

which Daniel hadn't understood but they had gone in the car both ways which Mama said was easier anyway but Dada said nothing.

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In the car they played his birthday party songs and Mama asked if the sea was going to be in or out (they never seemed to go to the beach when the sea was normal) and Daniel had asked whether it always came back to the same place after it had gone in or out.

- That depends on the time of the month. And when in the year...

Dada said but Mama said

- ... but yes. It always comes back to where it was.

The light was red and Dada stopped the car slowly then suddenly. He turned his head to look at Daniel

- The sea is rising though.

This didn't make sense but it did sort of so Daniel asked

- How do you mean?
- Climate change.

which also made sense because that is what the recycling was for but climate change was the environment and nature not the sea so Daniel said

- I don't understand.

Dada had turned back to look at the road.

- Well, you know all the gases we put into the air...
- ...pollution...

his Mama said

Dada paused as he made the car move again and Daniel said

- Yeah?

and Dada said

- That... pollution... stays in the atmosphere... At the top of the sky. Like a blanket. And like a blanket it is making the whole world warmer. Because of this the ice at the North Pole and at the South Pole has begun to melt and that water goes into the sea making it higher.

The trees of the park went behind and the old buildings filled his window

- Will we be able to watch it as it gets higher?

- No... It is happening slowly. You can't really see it. It will take a long time.

The car swung round the roundabout as the pier went into the sea

- Plus it won't really happen here.

- Not at our sea?

Dada said

- No.

and Mama said nothing and then said

- Our sea is going to be fine.

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The water was cold and tasted of the waves.

The hand that he didn't even know his Dada was holding lifted him up into the air and against his chest

- You're okay.

His Dada carefully stepped up the beach with the boy on his hip

- You just took a tumble that's all

passing him into his Mama's open arms

- Oh Daniel, look how wet you are!

Daniel began to feel the shivers coming as his Mama pulled off his shoes and he wanted to cry but he didn't at least not until his Dada wrapped the rug round them both.

They watched as Dada scrunched some of the water out of Daniel's trousers and went to put his shoes in a plastic bag.

- Don't worry about the shoes

his Mama said not to Daniel but to Dada

- I think they are done anyway

Daniel turned his head and was surprised how quiet his voice was

- How do you mean?

Mama held him close to her chest

- Those shoes are pretty old and they won't fit much longer. Don't worry, we can get you some more.

- But what will happen to those?

- I think we will just throw them away.

- Can't we give them to Archie?

Archie was Lola's brother and he was littler than Daniel and when Daniel got too big Archie sometimes got Daniel's clothes.

- I don't think Archie will want them Danny. They are getting all broken at the front from riding your bike but it didn't seem right that his shoes should get thrown away as they could dry on the radiator and yes they were getting a bit small but they were good shoes that Daniel liked a lot.

Warm in Mama's lap Daniel looked past the waves across the sea to the distance where the electricity windmills were.

- I think we should ask him anyway

said Daniel and Mama said

- Okay. We'll ask him and see what he thinks.

and Dada put them in the plastic bag with his trousers that were still wet.

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Under the rug his bare legs felt funny and he wiggled in his car seat as the bag with his wet trousers socks and shoes lay on the floor under his feet.

Mama was drinking coffee from her special cup that she always brought when they went to the cafe and weren't going to sit and Dada tapped his fingers against the steering wheel waiting for the lights to change.

And then Daniel couldn't help himself anymore and

- Will the sea ever rise so much that it would be at the front door?

Mama turned to look at him and smiled and reached out her hand through the seats and held his

- No. It will never get this high.

but then Dada who hadn't been watching because of the lights had said

- At least not for a few generations yet.

and Daniel had wanted to ask him what he meant but Mama was looking at Dada in that way that she did in the same way as Mrs Lean did when she was waiting for year one to be quiet and said

- It is not something that you need to worry about, Danny

but he was a little bit worried anyway.

But then he thought even if the sea did reach his door then his Dada would probably do something to fix the door to stop the sea coming in (Dada was good at fixing things) and besides his bedroom was upstairs anyway so that would be okay even if the water came in and if he got scared then he could always go next door into Mama's bed and Dada would have to go in the spare room but that was also okay because that was at the top of the house so he would be okay too.