

TSBA 8-Book Challenge – The Girl From The Sea

The Girl from the Sea by Molly Ostertag is a sweet and relatable story about a teenage girl discovering how to be herself. This story is told in a manner that lets you connect with the characters and leaves you wanting more. With a gentle fantasy undertone, the author takes the classic 'misunderstood magical being saves someone and they begin fall in love' theme and flips it on its head. By having the main character be secretly gay, and the 'magical being' a slightly more obscure creature, the writer creates an interesting dynamic for the story to be set.

The main character, Morgan Kwon, has always kept her life in boxes. Ordered and contained, she has a plan; finish school and leave her small island village behind for good. But everything goes wrong when she meets the selkie that would steal her heart. Morgan's life is ripped apart by Keltie, the selkie who pulled her out of the sea and saved her life. When the two become close, Morgan's friends start to get suspicious. And when it becomes clear that both Morgan and Keltie are keeping things from each other, what will Morgan do? Stick by Keltie's side or lose Keltie to stay ordinary?

My favourite character is Keltie, a selkie, who is a human in seal form that every 7 years. But if she finds something, or someone, to tie her to land then she could be free of her seal-skin and be herself. What I like about Keltie is her easy-going and playful attitude towards life. As she has always lived as a seal, she does not understand the complexity of being human. This means that Keltie is always herself no matter what and takes nothing for granted; as she may not experience humanity again for another 7 years.

What I find interesting is the contrast and similarities between the main characters. Morgan is neat and contained, while trying her best to appear normal around her friends. On the other hand, Keltie is open with her thoughts and feelings, and does not care what people think of her. This gives the reader a new perspective of being grateful for what you have and discovering who you are, or want to be.

Furthermore, the addition of the huge yacht creates an interesting element in Keltie's role as the protector of the rookery. The book opens the reader's eyes to the effect that large boats can have on local ecosystems and how damaging they can be.

I would recommend this book to someone who wants to see more adorable gay couples in fiction. Anyone aged 10+ will love this heartwarming, funny, easy-to-read story. The fact that it is a graphic novel makes it very accessible to all readers, even if books are not your forte. I love this book; it is one of my favourites and I am so glad to see it on this year's list.

By Orla – Emanuel School