



*Daughter of the Sea*

**SYLVIA BROADY**

Allison & Busby Limited  
11 Wardour Mews  
London W1F 8AN  
*allisonandbusby.com*

First published in Great Britain by Allison & Busby in 2020.

Copyright © 2020 by SYLVIA BROADY

The moral right of the author is hereby asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

*All characters and events in this publication,  
other than those clearly in the public domain,  
are fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons,  
living or dead, is purely coincidental.*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent buyer.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

First Edition

ISBN 978-0-7490-2591-5

Typeset in 11/16 pt Adobe Garamond Pro by  
Allison & Busby Ltd

The paper used for this Allison & Busby publication has been produced from trees that have been legally sourced from well-managed and credibly certified forests.

Printed and bound by  
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

## Prologue

The midsummer night air in the room was humid and on the bed lay a young woman, bathed in perspiration and in her last stage of labour. The midwife wiped the young woman's brow and then checked the birth canal. This baby seemed in no hurry to come into the world. 'And who could blame it,' the midwife muttered to herself. 'Push,' she urged the woman. And then a miracle happened. The baby slipped out of its mother's protective womb into an uncertain world. Cutting the umbilical cord and cleaning the infant's face, the midwife wrapped her in a clean cloth.

Placing the infant in the open arms of the mother, she said, her voice softening, 'You have a daughter, love.'

She watched, seeing the glow of tenderness light up the young woman's eyes as she gazed upon her daughter's red, crinkly face.

Then she continued with her duties while she waited for the placenta to come. It came in pieces with a great gush of blood, soaking the young woman's body and bed. Swiftly, the midwife took the baby from its mother's arms and laid her to rest in the

crib lined with white satin, covering her with the white woollen blanket. Against the pureness of her crib, the baby girl's hair shone as auburn as her mother's.

Then she turned, focusing all her energy and attention back to the mother. She gathered fresh clean towels to stem the flow of the woman's lifeblood. But it was to no avail. 'Lass needs a doctor,' she muttered. Hurrying downstairs and outside to the nearest house, she banged on the door.

An upstairs window opened and a sleepy-eyed man stuck out his head and yelled, 'Where's the fire?'

'I need a doctor at once or yond woman might die.'

The man closed the window and was down the stairs and opening the door in a flash. The midwife pushed coins into his hand, saying, 'Get the doctor and hurry.'

Back with her patient, she looked in horror at the lake of blood and reached for more towels. The woman's translucent face was hot and feverish and the midwife bathed her face in cold water.

'My baby,' the woman whispered.

The midwife lifted the sleeping infant from the crib and held her close to her mother's face. The young woman kissed her daughter's cheek, and in that instant, the baby opened its eyes to see her mother. The young woman's eyelids flickered and she gave a faint sigh as she slipped gently away from this world leaving behind her newborn infant. Their daughter.

The doctor came. He was old and grumbled and was none too pleased at being woken up from his sleep. If only he could retire. 'Too late,' he stated the obvious as he gave the young woman's body a cursory examination. And then wrote out the death certificate.

The midwife told him who to make out his bill to and he raised an eyebrow at the mention of the man's name, but he didn't comment, he just said, 'I'll arrange for the undertakers to call.'

When he'd gone, she sat down on a chair feeling tired and in need of a cup of strong tea. The cry of the infant roused her. She knew she had no option but to take the child to the only person who would take her in. Her father. She bathed the child and put her into a nightgown and nappy, then wrapped her in a pure white shawl of finest wool and went out into the night.

By the time she reached the big house overlooking the Humber Estuary, dawn was breaking. She hurried up the steps of the silent house and rapped hard on the front door and waited with the sleeping child cradled in her arms. She listened to the sound of footfalls, heavy as they drew nearer, and then the door was flung open to reveal a fine figure of a man, despite being clad in his night attire, of about thirty.

He stared at her and then he saw the bundle move in her arms. Stepping nearer to him, she thrust the bairn to him, saying, 'Yond lass died giving birth to your daughter.'

He clasped the baby to his chest and tears wet his eyes as he looked down to gaze upon his sleeping daughter. Then he lifted up his head and said to the midwife, 'Take care of—' A choking sound erupted in his throat and he couldn't speak.

'I'll take care of her, sir.' For a few seconds they stared at each other.

Suddenly a woman's voice called out from within. 'Who's there?'

The midwife turned and hurried away, knowing the man would pay for all the expenses occurred. Right now, he would have some explaining to do to his wife.

# Chapter One

February 1937, Hull, East Yorkshire

She slammed the door behind her and raced across the lawn towards the Humber Estuary wanting to obliterate their angry voices. Along the rough path she trekked, her heart racing with fury and her mind and body incensed with the knowledge of how they planned to treat her so.

After some time, she slowed her steps, uncertain where she was. Fog rolled in off the Humber, and swirled round her, its dampness clinging to her face. She peered into the murkiness for the familiar landmark of the dock office and safety, but it wasn't there. She must have taken a wrong turn because she didn't recognise the area, seeing only ghostly shadows of an unknown street. Shivering, she clasped her arms about her body, wishing she wore a coat and hat now that the hot anger, which had filled her body and mind, had evaporated.

Suddenly, she heard the raucous laughter of men. Listening, it came nearer. The dank darkness of the fog protected her as she edged along a brick wall of a building, and with relief she backed

into a shop doorway. Attempting to be invisible, she wrapped her arms tightly around her trembling body, feeling the rapid thud of her heartbeat. She screwed her eyes tight shut and held her breath as they lumbered past.

And then a rat scuttled across her feet and she screamed. A loud piercing noise filled the eerie space around her.

Three young trawlermen backtracked their steps and appeared in the doorway. They stared at her. She froze, hoping they would move on and she just stared back, taking in their snazzy onshore suits. The whiff of strong beer caught the back of her throat and the ingrained odour of fish on their skin made her cough. She wanted to run, but her feet felt set in concrete and refused to move. Never before had anyone from the fishing community confronted her and she was uncertain how to address them to make them move. Hastily, she scrambled words together, but before she could say them, one of them spoke.

‘Well, well, what have we got here?’ he slurred.

His breath reeking with alcohol hit her face, making her wince.

‘I know I fancied a quick shag, but I didn’t expect it so soon.’ He lunged forward and made a grab for her, but she dodged him by moving aside, scraping her back on the metal door handle. ‘Yer wanna play it rough, eh, lass?’ He swayed as he made to thrust at her again.

His two mates laughed and egged him on, enjoying the banter. ‘Go on, yer drunken bugger, show us what yer made of. Get stuck in there.’

Anger rose in her throat and she shouted as loud as she could over their voices. ‘Don’t you dare touch me! I will set my brother Claude on to you.’

‘Claude,’ he mimicked, ‘who the hell’s he?’

‘He’s Claude Kingdom who pays your wages!’

The men, struck dumb at the mention of the hated name of the new trawler owner, stared at her, peering closer.

‘Lord Almighty, it’s Kingdom’s daughter,’ one of them said in a shocked voice. ‘What the hell are you doing here?’

‘Yes, I am Jessica Kingdom.’ She was about to add, *and it is none of your business*. Knowing it would be foolish to stay here now, she said, ‘I need lodgings for the night.’ And by the look on their astonished faces, she guessed they would wonder why she, Kingdom’s daughter from the big house, would want a bed for the night. Her body began to tremble; she knew she was at the mercy of these men. She thought of her warm bed back home and knew if she went back there what it would mean. No, never!

Sobered up, the trawlermen looked at one another. Then one spoke, ‘Will yer mam take her in, Rick?’

‘Hell no. I daren’t take a lass home. She’ll skin me.’

The smaller of the men said, ‘No good looking at me, our lass’ll kick me out.’

The man who tried to grab Jessica shook his head and said sheepishly, ‘Sorry, miss, about, yer know.’ He stared down at the floor, not meeting her eye.

‘Mrs Shaw might tek you in,’ said the one called Rick. He waved a hand in embarrassment, adding, ‘You’re safe with us.’ The other two nodded in agreement.

Jessica felt a wave of relief sweep through her body and her trembling slowed. Head held high, she walked, flanked by the trawlermen, through the eerie streets. She was glad of the darkness because she knew she must look a total mess, not like the daughter of a trawler owner, except now she wasn’t. Her brother, Claude, inherited their father’s business, now he was the new owner. Although she had threatened to set Claude on to these men, she doubted if he would have come to her rescue.



They came to a halt outside a house tucked in a row of identical houses all in darkness. Rick lifted the letter box of the front door and bellowed, ‘Mrs Shaw, open up.’

A light came on in the upstairs window. The sash frame rose with a squeak and a woman’s head, in tight curling pins, leant out across the sill and glared down at them. ‘Shush yer noise. What’s up?’ And then she recognised Jessica. The window closed and in the matter of seconds, the front door opened and she beckoned Rick and Jessica inside, shooing the other two away.

Elsie looked Jessica up and down, but didn’t comment. Instead she raked the ashes in the fire grate into life and swung the kettle across to make a hot drink.

With the tea poured and the three of them sitting round the kitchen table, Elsie Shaw spoke, ‘Now, what’s ter do?’ She stared at Jessica.

Jessica avoided eye contact with Elsie as a wave of shame flooded over her. She clenched her hands around the comforting warmth of the mug and then looked up into the sincere, grey eyes of the woman sat opposite her. ‘I’m sorry to intrude upon you, Mrs Shaw. My name is Jessica Kingdom, and I find myself without a bed tonight.’ She turned to face Rick, who winked at her. ‘This kind man informed me you might help.’

Elsie’s expression was unreadable and she didn’t speak. Jessica lowered her gaze, studying the daisy-patterned oilcloth covering the table. Rick lit a cigarette, spluttering as he took a drag, inhaling the smoke.

‘Yer look done in,’ Elsie said to Jessica, and rose to her feet. ‘I’ve never turned a wanting soul away from my door yet, so you’re welcome to a bed.’

Relief raced through Jessica’s body and mind. ‘Thank you, Mrs Shaw. I—’

Elsie put her hand up, saying, ‘Yer can tell me in morning, lass.’ She turned to Rick. ‘You best get home or yer mam will send out a search party.’

Rick didn’t need telling twice, he was off.

Jessica followed Elsie up the narrow staircase and along the landing with three doors leading off. Elsie opened the door of the far room and switched on the light to reveal a small, square room with a single iron bedstead, chair, dressing table and a wardrobe all in a dark wood. On the back of the chair was a white cotton nightdress and, picking it up, Elsie handed it to Jessica. ‘I always keep this here, in case one of my daughters comes. There’s a guzzunder.’ And on seeing Jessica’s puzzled expression, she pointed to under the bed and said, ‘Lavvy’s outside. Now get a good night’s sleep and we’ll talk in the morning.’

For a few seconds Jessica stood there, alone in a strange house with a woman she didn’t know, but who had shown her great kindness. Tears welled up and trickled down her cheeks, but she dashed them away. Self-pity wasn’t the answer, though what the answer was to her predicament, she wasn’t sure. Undressing, she pulled on the nightgown, smelling its fragrance of lavender, and folded her clothes onto the back of the chair. She slipped between the cool sheets and nestled her head on the soft pillow. For a few minutes all the terrible happenings that had gone on at the house played out in her mind, but soon she drifted off to the land of sleep.

The sound of tapping on the door stirred her. She opened her eyes and for a few seconds wondered where she was. And then the nightmare goings-on flooded back into her mind and she wanted to snuggle back down into the bed and obliterate them.

The door opened and Elsie entered carrying a bowl of warm water and a towel. She set them down on the dressing table. ‘Come down for breakfast when you’re ready.’

‘Thank you. You are kind,’ Jessica murmured.

‘That’s all right, lass. I’ll help anyone in trouble.’

Jessica guessed the news of her exit from Glenlochy House was now travelling around the fishing community.

The smell of fresh toasted bread drifted up the stairs and her stomach rumbled. It was many hours since she’d last eaten. In haste, she washed and dressed, and dragged a comb through her tangle of dark auburn curls.

She ate a satisfying breakfast of toast and scrambled eggs with two cups of tea. When she had finished, Elsie sat opposite her at the table.

‘Now, lass, do you want to tell me what’s wrong?’

For a moment, Jessica looked down at her hands clenched together on her lap and then she looked up into the kind eyes of Elsie and gave a big gulp and spoke. ‘It’s ever since my father died, Mother has been acting strange and saying cruel things. She and Claude, my brother, want me to marry an older man so they can have his money for the business. And . . .’ Here she faltered. How do you explain to someone that the woman she’d called ‘Mother’ all her life said she wasn’t her mother and had resorted to violence? Jessica touched the bruises on her arms, still hurting and hidden from view by the sleeves of her blouse. She couldn’t tell. Instead she asked, ‘What is a whore?’

Elsie gasped and put her hand over her mouth, but within a few moments, recovered her composure. ‘Why do you ask?’ It wasn’t a word she would use. Yes, there were street girls and some of them were coarse, and some women operated from their own homes, none of which she approved of, but she would not refer to them as whores.

‘Mildred Kingdom told me she wasn’t my mother and that my mother was a whore.’

Silence filled the room and outside came the distant sound of children on their way to school. Elsie dredged the recesses of her mind to recall a rumour from years ago, which once circled the community about an unmarried lass dying in childbirth, but she couldn't remember if the child survived. She pulled her body up straight and replied, 'It's a nasty word and one that Mrs Kingdom should never have used so it's best forgotten.' She felt shocked that a woman of her class would say such a word, so goes to show they are no better than anyone else.

Jessica rose from her seat and said, 'Thank you for your kindness and letting me stay the night.'

'Where will you go, lass?'

'I'll go to my friend Enid's house.'

'If you have no luck, you're always welcome to a bed here.' She handed Jessica a plaid woollen shawl. 'You can borrow this for now.'

On impulse, Jessica gave Elsie a hug, feeling ample body beneath her wrap-around apron.

Elsie stood at her front door watching Jessica, with her head downcast, hurrying down the street. Indoors, she tutted, 'There goes a naive lass.'

Jessica, warmly wrapped in the shawl, hurried to her friend Enid's home towards the village of Hesse. With her head down and her eyes downcast, no one took notice of her. It was about twenty minutes later when she rang the bell of the palatial house. Conscious she didn't look her best, she pushed the tangle of hair off her face. Once she settled into Enid's home, she would send for her clothes and belongings.

The door opened, and the maid stared at Jessica open-mouthed.

'I have come to see Miss Enid.' She was just about to enter when the maid barred her way. Jessica's foot slipped on the doorstep and she went down on her knees, crying out in shock.

Enid's mother appeared at the door. 'What is the commotion about?' she stated haughtily. Then she looked down at Jessica and her features hardened. 'What are you doing here?'

Jessica levered herself up by the door jamb and, feeling shaken by the bizarre manner of the maid, replied, 'I came to see Enid and to ask you if I may stay here.' She looked into Mrs Harrison's eyes, but saw no hint of kindness or welcome.

The woman's voice was icy cold as she replied, 'No, not after your wicked behaviour towards Mildred. I have forbidden my daughter to have any contact with you.'

The blast from the slamming door stung Jessica's face. Shocked and bewildered, she stumbled down the steps onto the gravel driveway. She turned to look upwards to Enid's bedroom window and saw her move away from it without acknowledgement.

Jessica walked on, not thinking or caring where she was going or noticing the odd looks people gave her. When she stopped, it was to find herself outside Elsie's front door. She could hear the neighbours gossiping about her, but she was too tired and past caring.

Elsie opened the door on the first knock and took one look at the unhappy, dejected-looking young woman before ushering her inside. She held Jessica close, feeling the racking of her body as she sobbed. 'You're safe with me, lass,' she whispered.