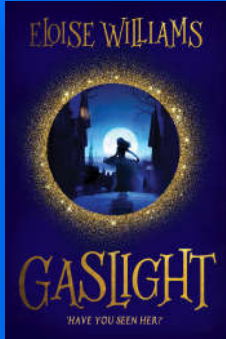


Eloise Williams



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“Reading makes you a
magician - you can go
anywhere and be
anything!”



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I was born in Cardiff and grew up in Llantrisant, in the South Wales Valleys. We lived opposite a library so every weekend my mum would cross the road with me, and I'd sit in there for hours travelling to amazing places with my imagination.

I went to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Guildford School of Acting and then was an actor for more than ten years. I played some brilliant and demanding roles; Lady Macbeth, an elf, a hippy and part of a fence. Some were more demanding than others! I also fell off stage once!

Things I like: walking around graveyards because they are peaceful and filled with wildlife. Vinegar sandwiches. Visiting historical buildings. Shakespeare. Reading -of course! The sea. Misty days. Ravens. Colours. My dog - Watson Jones.

I live in a cottage that is so small it is almost like a doll's house!

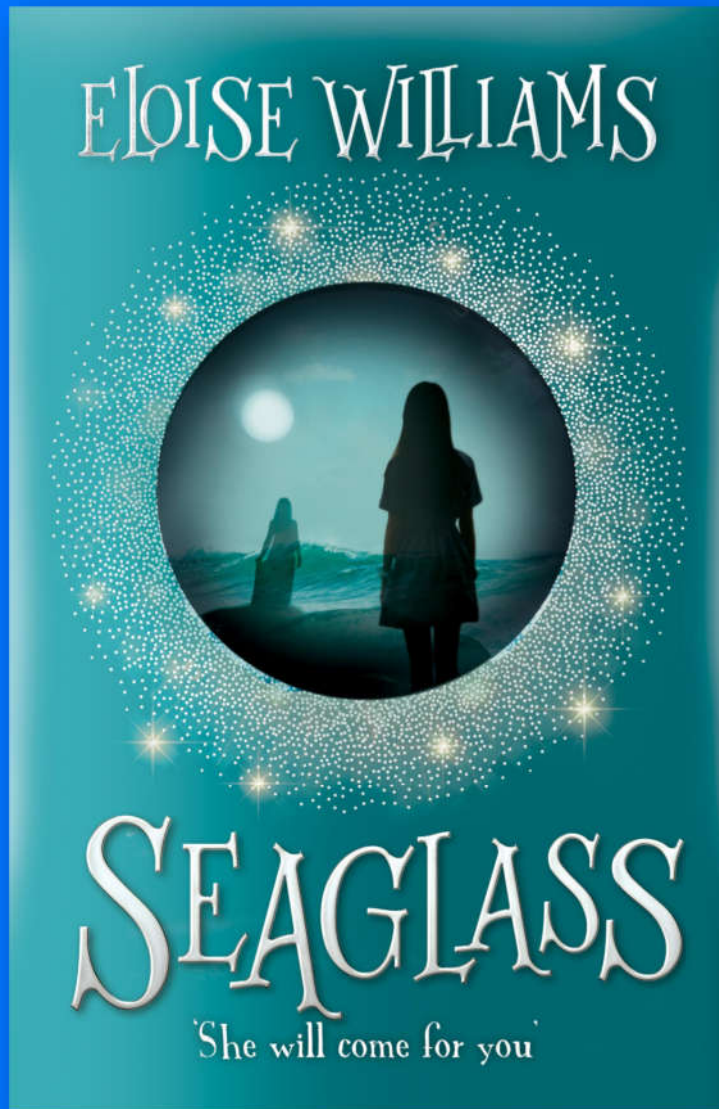
Every course I did at college I got financial help towards because I am working class and couldn't afford it! I applied for bursaries, wrote to famous people to ask for help, got lots of jobs in cafes and shops, asked for sponsorship, ran events to raise money. I never let a lack of money get in the way of pursuing my dreams! I just worked really hard.



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There's no sea glass here. I should go back, but I'm fairly certain I can survive some fog. I check that Snow isn't following. I can just make her out at the very edge of the stream. It makes me feel guilty to see her shoulders slump and hear Sherlock's mournful whine. I can find my way back in three seconds flat. It's hardly like I've abandoned them. I'll only be a minute or two.

Taking on the challenge of another set of rocks, I convince myself that it's fine to leave my little sister alone on a beach where we are not allowed to be in the first place with fog coming in. She'll be OK if I'm really quick. It's not fair that I have to be the carer all the time. Dark thoughts scuttle around my brain like full-bodied spiders. I just need one piece of sea glass and then I'll turn around. I won't leave her alone for long.

Sherlock starts howling. I almost lose my balance on a rock and hear a few crunches under my boot. 'I'm so sorry, things that live inside shells.'

I can hear Sherlock, but when I look back I can't see them anymore. That part of the beach has been engulfed in white too.



Seaglass extract from Chapter 5



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And finally, a frosted-ice aqua gem peeks up from the sand. I pick it up as if I just won the game of life.

Smiling with relief, I start back. My stupid boots slide on the rocks and I shriek and have to put my hands out to balance. I can hardly see my own outstretched fingers, which is fascinating but also scary as hell.

The light has dropped out of the air, and the previous faintly fishy smell has been replaced by something else, something eerie and indescribable. I try to place it – washing on a wet day, the moment before snow falls, the numbing taste of an ice cube. Everything is shivering, billowing clouds. The waves sound so close I have to check my feet to make sure I'm not paddling. I try to find the second rock to climb but I can't. It isn't where it was before. Sherlock howls again but he's further away and in a different direction.

Closing my eyes, I attempt to get my bearings from the sound of the sea, but it echoes all around me and instead of lapping, it's roaring. My body shakes, my hair is dripping, my clothes suck at my skin. Saltwater seeps into my eyes and makes my vision bleary. I rub at them but that just makes

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them smart. I'd never thought about it before. The weight of water. But now it's getting heavier with every step.

I think of all the sailors drowned out there in the *Dead Eye* wreck. I think of the bomber pilots. I remember the stories of how quickly the tide takes its victims. I think of them perished with seaweed tendrils of hair and oceans in their eye sockets.

As I am thinking about the dead creeping their way towards me, I feel I'm not alone. 'Snow, is that you?'

No answer.

'Snow. Clap your hands so I know where you are.'

Nothing. There's someone there, I know there is, watching, close. The salt of the sea mingles with the fresh sweat all over me. I'm on fire despite the cold.

'Who's there?' My voice sounds deadened by the space. The fog blinds me, switches directions, comes closer. The hairs on the back of my neck prickle. I spin around but the motion just swirls the fog into new confusing patterns.

Squeezing my hands into fists and gritting my

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teeth, I force myself to think rationally. I bet some of the gang have arrived here early. Gwenni maybe, trying to scare me because we aren't friends anymore. She's probably sniggering at me, just out of reach.

'Oh, you are so funny, aren't you?' My voice sounds frail, unconvinced. There is no answer.

I'll get out of this any second and find Snow and Sherlock waiting safely for me.

Without warning, I walk straight into the sea. It soaks up as far as my shins. The water sucks, trying to drag me out. I topple forward, drenching my clothes. I manage to right myself, only to be knocked again by an even bigger wave that slams me into the rocks. I feel sharp pain in my side, my shin, my wrist. I've got to get out of here. I need to keep calm.

Flailing, I grip a jagged edge of rock and drag myself out of the waves. My clothes are so heavy, so cold. I will myself to keep walking, keep the sea at my back, keep up hope. I need to get away from whatever it is that's hiding in the fog. I don't understand how I know it's something bad, malignant, nasty, but I do. I can feel it in the offbeat rapping of my heart.

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A sound chills me to the bone, so near it is almost on top of me. Laughter, so close to my ear I can feel its breath. I stagger, my sodden clothes dragging me down. The ground gives way beneath me and I fall, cracking my head, a burning slash of pain.

I see a figure looming towards me.

I begin to believe in ghosts.

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Seaglass extract from Chapter 5



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