

# Mackerel and Chips by Michael Morpurgo

A month ago we were on the Isles of Scilly again for our holidays.

'Make a wish, Leah,' said Mrs Pender, who keeps the bed and breakfast where we stay. My birthday. Ten years old. I blew out the candles on the cake and cut it slowly, gazing out at the lifeboat in St Mary's Bay, the same lifeboat I could see from my bedroom window every morning, every evening. I wish, I said inside my head, I wish I could go out in the lifeboat, just once.

'Tell, tell,' cried Eloise, my little sister, pulling at me. But I told no one.

My present from Mum was a morning of mackerel fishing on Nemo, Mr Pender's launch. Mr Pender would take me all on my own.

Like lots of visitors, I'd been out in Nemo before. She's one of the open blue and white boats that take you to look at seals off the Eastern Islands, or puffins off Annet. Her engine purred and throbbed as we cleared St Mary's harbour and turned towards St Martin's.

'We'll find mackerel off Great Arthur,' said Mr Pender, pushing back his sailor's cap. 'Be a bit of a swell, out there. You don't get seasick, do you?'

I shook my head and hoped.

