



What do you predict our next book will be about?

Look for clues in the picture.

May 22-15:02

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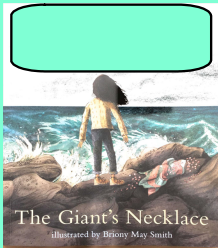
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Now you know the title, are you changing your prediction ?

Why?

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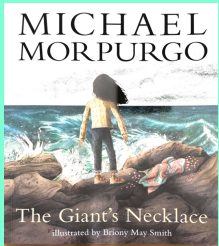
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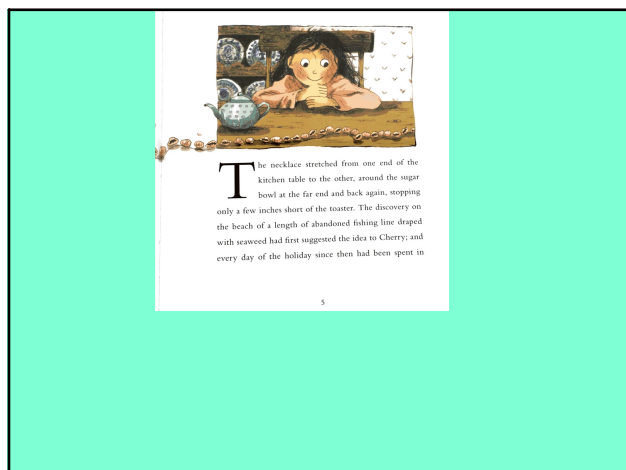
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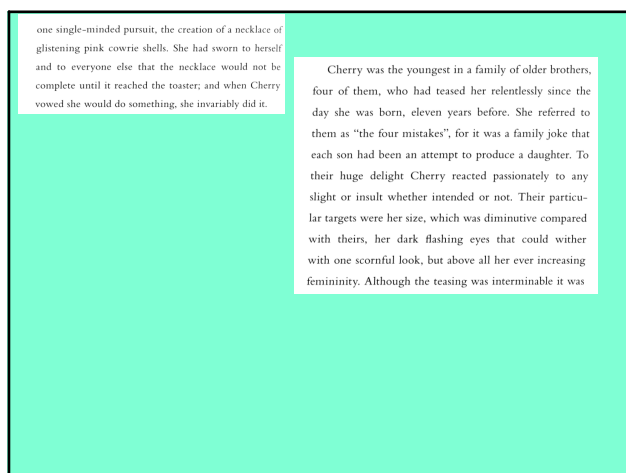
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"But they'll take hours to collect, dear," her mother said weakly, recognizing and at the same time respecting her daughter's persistence.

"Only a few hours," said Cherry, bending over, her brows furrowing critically as she inspected a flaw in one of her shells. "That's all it'll take. D'you know, there are five thousand, three hundred and twenty-five shells in my necklace already? I counted them, so I know."

"Isn't that enough?" her mother said desperately.

"Nope," said Cherry. "I said I'd reach the toaster, and I'm going to reach the toaster."

Her mother turned away to continue the drying up.

"Well, I can't spend all day on the beach today, Cherry," she said. "If you haven't finished by the time we come away I'll have to leave you there. We've got to pack up and tidy the house – there'll be no time in the morning."

"I'll be all right," said Cherry, cocking her head on one side to view the necklace from a different angle. "There's never been a necklace like this before, not in all the world. I'm sure there hasn't." And then: "You can leave me there, Mum, and I'll walk back. It's only a mile or so along the cliff path and half a mile back across the fields. I've done it before on my own. It's not far."

There was a thundering on the stairs and a sudden rude invasion of the kitchen. Cherry was surrounded by her four brothers, who leant over the table in mock appreciation of her necklace.

"Ooh, pretty."

"Do they come in other colours? I mean, pink's not my colour."

"Bit big though, isn't it?" said one of them – she didn't know which and it didn't matter. He went on: "I mean it's

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a bit big for a necklace." War had been declared again, and Cherry responded predictably.

"That depends," she said calmly, shrugging her shoulders because she knew that would irritate them.

"On what does it depend?" said her eldest brother pompously.

"On who's going to wear it of course, ninny," she said swiftly.

"Well, who is going to wear it?" he replied.

"It's for a giant," she said, her voice full of serious innocence. "It's a giant's necklace, and it's still not big enough."

It was the perfect answer, an answer she knew would

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they did, but if it tickled them pink to believe she did, then why not pretend?

She turned on them, fists flailing, and chased them back up the stairs, her eyes burning with simulated fury. "Just cos you don't believe in anything 'cept motorbikes and football and all that rubbish, just cos you're great big, fat, ignorant pigs..." She hurled insults up the stairs after them and the worse they became the more they loved it.

send her brothers into fits of hysterical hilarity. She loved to make them laugh at her and could do it at the drop of a hat. Of course she no more

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Boat Cove just below Zennor Head was the beach they had found and occupied. Every year for as long as Cherry could remember they had rented the same granite cottage, set back in the fields below the Eagle's Nest, and every year they came to the same beach because no one else did. In two weeks not another soul had ventured down the winding track through the bracken from the coastal path. It was a long climb down and a very

much longer one up. The beach itself was almost hidden from the path that ran along the cliff top a hundred feet above. It was private and perfect and theirs. The boys swam in amongst the rocks, diving and snorkelling for hours on end. Her mother and father would sit side by side on stripy deckchairs. She would read endlessly and he would close his eyes against the sun and dream for hours on end.



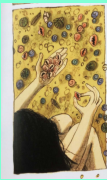
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Cherry moved away from her family and clambered over the rocks to a narrow strip of sand in the cove beyond the rocks, and here it was that she mined for the cowrie shells. In the gritty sand under the cliff face she had found a particularly rich deposit, so they were not hard to find; but she was looking for pink cowrie shells of a uniform length, colour and shape – and that was what took the time. Occasionally the boys would swim around the rocks and in to her little beach, emerging from the sea all goggled and flippers to mock her. But as she paid them little attention they soon tired and went away again. She knew time was running short.




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This was her very last chance to find enough shells to complete the giant's necklace, and it had to be done. The sea was calmer that day than she had ever seen it. The heat beat down from a windless, cloudless sky; even the gulls and kittiwakes seemed to be silenced by the sun. Cherry searched on, stopping only for a picnic lunch of potatoes and tomatoes with the family before returning at once to her shells.



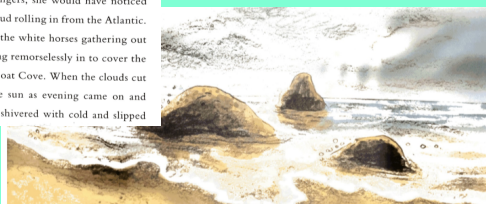
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In the end the heat proved too much for her mother and father, who left the beach earlier than usual in mid-afternoon to begin to tidy up the cottage. The boys soon followed because they had tired of finding miniature crabs and seaweed instead of the sunken wrecks and treasure they had been seeking, so by teatime Cherry was left on her own on the beach with strict instructions not to bathe alone and to be back well before dark. She had calculated she needed one hundred and fifty more cowrie shells, and so far she had found only eighty. She would be back, she



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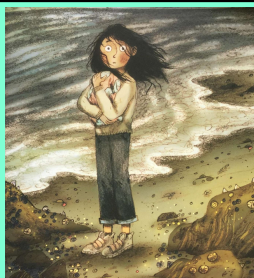
Had she not been so immersed in her search, sifting the shells through her fingers, she would have noticed the dark grey bank of cloud rolling in from the Atlantic. She would have noticed the white horses gathering out at sea and the tide moving remorselessly in to cover the rocks between her and Boat Cove. When the clouds cut off the warmth from the sun as evening came on and the sea turned grey, she shivered with cold and slipped



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time was running short so she went down on her knees again and dug feverishly in the sand. There were still thirty shells to collect and she was not going home without them.

It was the baleful sound of a foghorn somewhere out at sea beyond Gunnards Head that at last forced Cherry to consider her own predicament. Only then did she take some account of the incoming tide. She looked for the rocks she would have to clamber over



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revealed the rocks that marked her route back to Boat Cove. Then she realized at last that the sea had undergone a grim metamorphosis. In a confusion of wonder and fear she looked out to sea at the heaving ocean that moved in towards her, seeing it now as a writhing grey monster breathing its fury on the rocks with every pounding wave.

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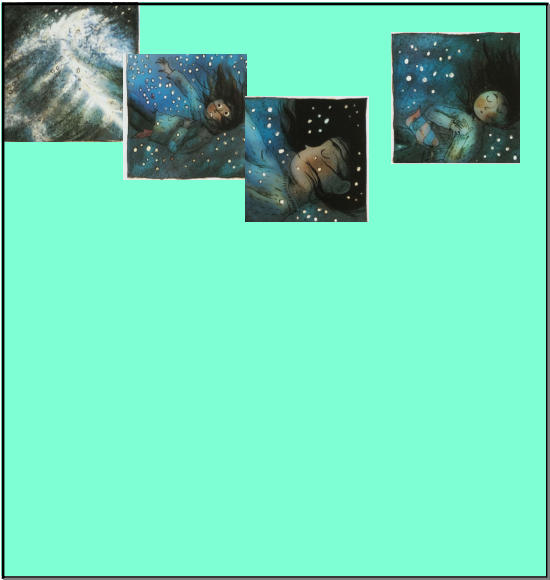
A detailed illustration of a young boy with dark hair, wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants, climbing a steep, rocky cliff. He is using his hands and feet to grip the rock face. The background shows a body of water and a forested hillside.

The rocks were slippery underfoot and more than once Cherry slipped down into seething white rock pools where she had played so often when the tide was out. But she struggled on until finally she had climbed high enough to be able to see the thin strip of sand that was all that was left of Boat Cove. It was only a few yards away, so close. Until now she had been crying involuntarily; but now, as she recognized the little path up through the bracken, her heart was lifted with hope and anticipation.

She knew that the worst was over, that if the sea would only hold back she would reach the sanctuary of the cove. She turned and looked behind her to see how far away the next wave was, just to reassure herself that she had enough time. But the great surge of green water was on her before she could register either disappointment or fear. She was hurled back against the rock below her and

covered at once by the sea. She was conscious as she went down that she was drowning, but she still clutched her shells against her chest and was glad she had enough of them at last to finish the giant's necklace. Those were her last thinking thoughts before the sea took her away.

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