



The Snow Merchant

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News & Choice:

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Lettie Peppercorn lives in the draughtiest inn on the world's windiest shore. At twelve she is already its landlady. Her mother left when she was just a baby, and her father spends his time in the pub, 'The Clam Before the Storm', drinking and gambling. Lettie has been warned that the outside world is dangerous for her, and even her best friend, Periwinkle the pigeon, seems to be turning to stone.

On the night the book opens, she already has two difficult lodgers but the adventure really begins with the arrival of another guest, a frozen man with a suitcase full of mystery. This man claims to be an alchemist and he will transform Lettie's life.

Sam Gayton is a graduate of the Writing for Young People MA at the Bath Spa University that has already produced excellent writers such as Elen Caldecott, Jim Carrington and Sally Nicholls. Gayton is another exciting new talent: **The Snow Merchant** is exhilarating, entertaining and original, bursting with ideas. Language and images surprise throughout: Lettie's dad 'reeks of ale and tears'; finding a leaf in the ocean is 'like finding a sunset in the middle of the night or mustard in the middle of a Victoria sponge'.

Lettie's adventure takes her far away from home, brings her up against cheats and thieves, and exposes her to all sorts of strange magic. No matter how fantastical the action, however, the story is rooted in the stuff of real life: family, home; love. Adults have let Lettie down, not least her father, and she wonders if there's a grown-up alive who doesn't care about getting rich. She has to work even harder than she did in the guesthouse to reassemble her strange family but she does it, proving herself 'dependable, resourceful, stubborn and patient' and able to sculpt her own destiny which is the most important thing about being human?.

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