

The Highest Tide: A Novel

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A mesmerizing, allegorical, and beautifully wrought first novel about one boy's fascination with the sea during the summer that will change his life.

One moonlit night, thirteen-year-old Miles O'Malley slips out of his house, packs up his kayak and goes exploring on the flats of Puget Sound. But what begins as an ordinary hunt for starfish, snails, and clams is soon transformed by an astonishing sight: a beached giant squid. As the first person to ever see a giant squid alive, the speed-reading Rachel Carson-obsessed insomniac instantly becomes a local curiosity. When he later finds a rare deepwater fish in the tidal waters by his home, and saves a dog from drowning, he is hailed as a prophet. The media hovers and everyone wants to hear what Miles has to say.

But Miles is really just a teenager on the verge of growing up, infatuated with the girl next door, worried that his bickering parents will divorce, and fearful that everything, even the bay he loves, is shifting away from him. While the sea continues to offer up discoveries from its mysterious depths, Miles struggles to deal with the difficulties that attend the equally mysterious process of growing up. In this mesmerizing, beautifully wrought first novel, we witness the dramatic sea change for both Miles and the coastline that he adores over the course of a summer—one that will culminate with the highest tide in fifty years.

Miles O'Malley, 13-year-old insomniac, naturalist, worshipper of Rachel Carson, and dweller on the mud flats of Skookumchuck Bay, at the South end of Puget Sound near Olympia, Washington, is the irresistible center of *The Highest Tide*. He says, "I learned early on that if you tell people what you see at low tide they'll think you're exaggerating or lying when you're actually just explaining strange and wonderful things as clearly as you can" and "People usually take decades to sort out their view of the universe, if they bother to sort at all. I did my sorting during one freakish summer in which I was ambushed by science, fame and suggestions of the divine."

And what a summer he has! Miles, who is licensed to collect marine specimens for money, slips into his kayak late one night when he can't sleep and begins his exploratory rounds. What he sees is not the usual collectibles. He hears a deep exhale, a sound of release, and comes eye to eye with a giant squid. But, there are no giant squid in Puget Sound or anywhere around it--and when they are seen by humans, they are always dead. His discovery is confirmed by Professor Kramer, a local biologist and Miles's friend. Television cameras arrive, everyone wants to interview this small-for-his-age but very smart boy and the events of the summer begin to unfold.

Jim Lynch has an ability to tell a tale that glows on every page. He knows everything that lives in or near the water by name and habit. This knowledge and his sense of wonder at the natural world brings the reader very close to his story, both in its setting and its characters. One early morning Miles says, "...the water was so clear I could see coon-stripe shrimp ... and the bottomless bed of white clam shells ... Those shells, as unique and timeless as bones, helped me realize that we all die young, that in the life of the earth, we are houseflies, here for one flash of light." Such insights are perfectly natural coming from Miles, whose interests are not garden-variety. He has a mad crush on the mixed-up 18-year-old girl next door, a randy age-mate named Phelps, and a deep friendship with Florence,

the elderly woman his mother refers to as "a crazy witch." Florence is a psychic of sorts and her powers come into play when she predicts an extremely high tide on a certain day.

All of these relationships and what is happening between Miles's parents are part of this event-filled, life-changing summer. Early on, Miles says off the top of his head, when asked by a TV reporter why a deep-sea creature has found its way to his front yard, "Maybe the earth is trying to tell us something." What the earth and the sea and the people in Miles's life are all trying to tell him is what he susses out in the days that follow--before that high tide.

This absolutely luminous first novel has all the earmarks of a classic. The Highest Tide is destined to be read, re-read, and to remain on bookshelves for the enjoyment of generations to come. --Valerie Ryan

Jim Lynch has won national journalism awards and published short fiction in literary magazines and spent four years as the Puget Sound reporter for the Oregonian. A Washington state native, Lynch currently writes and sails from his home in Olympia, where he lives with his wife and daughter. The Highest Tide is his first novel.

Other Books

Dot to Dot, Award winning finalist, USA Best Books 2011, Children's Fiction. Twelve-year-old Dot is grieving from her mother's sudden death when her Aunt Tab decides that the two of them need to travel from their home in Seattle to England... Dot to Dot by Kit Bakke is the story of a girl who goes on a journey of distance that turns into a trip where she discovers a lot about herself as well as the people around her. -Cynthia Hudson, Mother Daughter Book Club.com Bakke faces Dot's pain head-on...the shifting relationship between Dot and her aunt, as well as Dot's tender memories of her mother, are especially well done. With complex characters and eloquent prose, it's an absorbing story of a girl's surprising path through her grief. -Publishers Weekly Kit Bakke adeptly follows the mercurial moods and dawning insights of the book's twelve-year-old protagonist, Dot, on her journey through grief. This is a banquet table of a book, filled with real and imagined heroes, would-be friends, irritating family, cherished memories, new experiences, and leaps through time. True to the best children's novels we are treated to a plethora of clues that must be solved and secrets that must be uncovered along the way. -Lynn Grant,

Yellowwallpaperwriters.com "Dot to Dot is a wonderful and endearing story about the power of books and travel to heal us. Kit Bakke has written a young adult novel that is a perfect mother-daughter book. Following Dot's trip to England with her eccentric aunt takes the reader on a touching and fantastical journey that also cleverly celebrates the wisdom of Jane Austen and other inspiring women writers of her era." -Jim Lynch, author of national bestseller The Highest Tide "Dot to Dot is a tale of a plucky young teen's journey through grief after her mother's horrific death. Reluctantly, Dot embarks on a trip to England with an oddball aunt who is now her guardian. Once in the old-world land of Jane Austen, Mary Shelly and other inspiring females, however, Dot is enchanted to discover rather magical and amazing things about herself, her mother and modern life." -Jennie Shortridge, best-selling author of Love Water Memory

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turns into a trip where she discovers a lot about herself as well as the people around her."