

# Kids Corner

## Sunflowers in the Sea

by Margo Fallis



Shauna was a bright yellow starfish that lived in a shallow tidal pool at the edge of the North Sea. She looked just like a sunflower; with her five star legs pouring out from the center, much like petals. Her color added much beauty to the pool. She was a happy starfish, never complaining about anything.

Shauna wasn't the only sea creature in the tidal pool. There were a few tiny blue fish, a sea urchin, a few sea anemone, a small crab, and many barnacles that had made their home on a piece of driftwood. "I love this tide pool," Shauna said to the others, who were sometimes not as happy to be there as the cheerful starfish.

Kyle, the grumpy crab, hated being in the pool. He walked along the bottom stirring up the sand and then hopped up on top of a rock, looking out towards the North Sea. He wanted the high tide to come in so that he could float out of the pool and be in the open sea. When he heard Shauna proclaim her love for the tidal pool, he turned his red and cream-colored body towards her and said, "Well, little miss sunflower, you might love it here, but not me! In fact, I hate it here!"

Shauna looked at the angry crab. "But, Kyle," she said, "it's so beautiful. Look around you. How could you not love it here?"

Kyle snapped his front claws together and angrily answered, "I can't wait for high tide," then he turned back to face the open sea again.

Ally, a sea urchin, clung to the rocks on the side of the pool. Her short, purple spines added color and beauty to the pool. "I love it here too," she said to Shauna. "I don't have to worry about otters eating me, and I can't possibly get crushed by an octopus as long as I stay in here," she added.

Just then a small group of children and their momma came over to the tide pool. "Oh Momma, look at the bright yellow starfish. It looks like the sun shining under the water. Can I touch it?" a little girl asked.

"Be very gentle and don't try to pick it up off the rock," her mother warned.

The little girl reached her hand into the water and softly stroked Shauna's legs. "It feels hard and has sharp points on it," she said, touch-

ing the starfish again. Shauna loved it when the children came. It made her happy seeing how excited they would get watching and feeling the creatures in the pool of clear seawater. As the little girl was petting Shauna, a little boy picked up some sand and threw it into the pool. It dirtied the clear water. Kyle covered his eyes with his claws and Ally closed her mouth tightly.

Momma said to the boy, "Don't throw sand into the pool. Can't you see that it bothers the sea creatures?" She showed her little boy how Kyle had to cover his eyes to keep the sand from irritating them.

He looked at the crab and said, "I'm sorry, little crab. I'm sorry, little starfish. I'm sorry, spiny sea urchin."

Momma took the children and left the pool and as soon as the sand settled, the creatures were relieved. Shauna left the rock and floated over to where Allan sat. "Allan, are you all right? I don't think the children saw you way over here behind this rock," she asked.

"I'm all right," said the pale blue animal. He wriggled his tentacles in the water. Shauna watched them swaying back and forth.

She asked the tiny blue fish how they were. "Are you all right, guys?"

The fish blew bubbles and called out, "We're all right, Shauna. We hid behind the rocks so the children couldn't touch us."

Shauna floated back to her rock and set herself down on it. Just then, the first water of high tide came over the rocks into the pool. Kyle clapped his two claws together. "Yeah! High tide! I'm free," he yelled.

As the minutes passed, more and more water came rushing into the tidal pool. Shauna, Allan, and Ally held on tight so they wouldn't be washed over the rocks into the North Sea.

Kyle let the tide catch him and sweep him out into the deep blue waves. He laughed with delight.

Shauna watched the waters close in deeper above her. She could see jellyfish swimming above, their long dangling tentacles reaching

down towards her. She watched as the seaweed gathered into clumps and washed in upon the beach. She also saw pieces of driftwood rolling in on the waves towards the sand. She turned and looked for the piece of barnacle-covered driftwood that had been in the pool. It was gone, heading towards the beach, like the other pieces. Seals played in the waves above her. Dolphins jumped in and out of the water, frolicking in the floating seaweed.

Night fell and it became very dark under the sea. Shauna and the others in the pool fell asleep as the waves crashed above them. In the morning, when they woke up, it was just they and their little tidal pool once again. Shauna looked around. Allan was still there, his light blue body clinging to the rocks. Ally, the urchin, was still there. Shauna could still see the tiny blue fish swimming through the clear water. Then she heard, "I hate this pool! I thought I was rid of this place forever, but wouldn't you know it, the last wave deposited me right back here. I can't win!" Shauna looked over to see Kyle sitting on top of a rock, complaining as he looked out to the open sea.

"Welcome back," said Shauna. Kyle mumbled a few words then went off to sulk. Shauna looked around the tidal pool. "I love this pool!" she said.



### Starfish Facts:

1. A starfish is a very different kind of animal. It has the shape of a star, but it not really a fish. It is a kind of "echinoderm" which is a sea animal with spiny skin. The spines look like little bumps on the skin of the starfish.
2. Starfish cannot swim - they crawl and climb. Most starfish are less than eight inches across, but a few kinds can be as big as a small car! There are many different kinds of starfish. Some of them are the goosefoot, burrowing starfish and cushion star.
3. Starfish have "arms". Most have five, but some have as many as twelve! Each arm has a "foot" on the end with a "sucker" that helps the starfish stick to rocks and catch food.
4. Starfish are pretty strong and tough against their enemies. Their spiny skin does not taste very good to other sea creatures. If a fish bites off a starfish's arm, the starfish can grow a new one!
5. Starfish breathe through their feet. They also have little breathing tubes all over their bodies.
6. Starfish don't have eyes, but on the tip of each arm they have a "eyespot" made of cells that can see light and dark. They cannot see shapes clearly.
7. The starfish's mouth is in the middle, on it's underside. They eat shellfish using their "suckers" on their feet, they are able to open the shell.

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