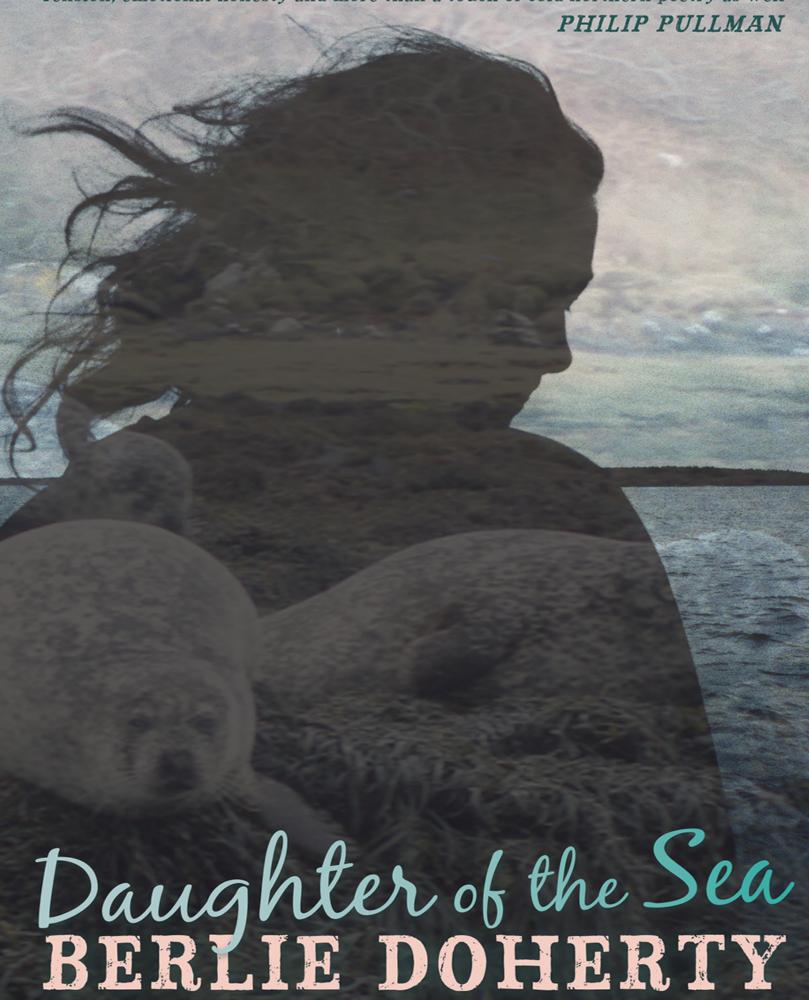
'Tension, emotional honesty and more than a touch of cold northern poetry as well'



Daughter of the Sea BERLIE DOHERTY

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To my daughters Janna and Sally

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AUTHOR'S NOTE



My tale is of the sea. It takes place in the far north, where ice has broken land into jagged rocks, and where black and fierce tides wash the shores. Hail is flung far on lashing winds, and winters are long and dark. Men haunt the sea, and the sea gives up to them a glittering harvest. And it is said that the people of the sea haunt the land.

My tale is of the daughter of the sea. The best way to hear the tale is to creep into the lee of the rocks when the herring boats have just landed. The gulls will be keening around you. The women hone knives on the stones, and their hands will be brown from the wind and the fish-gut slime. And as they work they talk to each other of things they've always known.

That's when the story's told.

Imagine a woman called Jannet, standing on the weed-wet stones. It would be dark, and the spray would be scraping her cheeks and the wind would be delving into her hair. She would be looking into the damsony dark and seeing nothing. And imagine her husband, Munroe Jaffray, crouching into his boat with the wild waves lumbering

round him. And there's another to think of. Eilean o da Freya. Some say she's as weak in the head as a stunned herring. Others say she has the wisdom of the ancients. Jannet, Munroe, and Eilean. They're the ones who know for sure what happened on the night of the freak storm.

This is the tale.



Jannet Jaffray had gone to bed early and woke to the sound of a wild kind of wailing, far out and away at sea. It faded as soon as she sat up to listen. She lay in the dark hearing only the waves and the wind and this shadow of singing, and then put out her fingers to touch her husband's arm. With a missing beat of her heart she knew that Munroe was not home.

In minutes she was down on the shore, her lantern high in her hand, and counting the fishing boats that had been beached up by the rocks. As her lamp guttered its last breath she had counted all home except for Munroe's. The sea was high and frenzied; the moon was a ghost face, hiding and squinting as the dark clouds rolled.

'Munroe!' she called uselessly. It was on nights like this that the sea snatched lives instead of yielding fish. Jannet heard footsteps treading the sand behind her, and turned,