Where the Sea Learned to Fall

Short synopsis • Naria Khan

When a fish drops out of the sea above Nareth and lands in her tea, bell tuner Sella asks her friend Dema for five minutes before she reports the fault. An inspection could cost Sella the promotion that would let her rent rooms above the flood line. Then her bell cracks. Water tears through a bootmaker's shop, and a boatman named Ivo falls onto her platform. Sella cuts him free of his rope and goes to help an eleven-year-old with a broken arm. She promises the girl the bell is safe.

Ivo takes Sella beneath the tower, where a sea creature called Keth lies yoked to the bells. They hold her song at the pitch that keeps the sea overhead. Keth is failing, and the keepers intend to fit another animal to the harness. At Ivo's floating home, Sella learns his crew deliberately weakened her bell to reach Keth. Of the two companions Ivo asked about, one comes home dead. Ivo admits what he did, and he and Sella find a way to lead the water down an old river channel. The warden gives them six days to open it and evacuate the low streets. While Dema helps people move, she brings forward her wedding to Etti. At the wedding Ivo sketches his cabin boat with Sella beside him on the deck. She asks if he'd really take her west, and they kiss.

When a girl falls from a roof, Sella raises the bell against Dema's warning. The mother pulls her child up, but Sella strikes the wedge again to give Dema time to reach them. The captive calf answers, lifting water and wreckage against the bridge. All three children escape. Dema dies beside Sella.

At the last crossing, Sella could raise the note to help Ivo, but patients are still being taken up the terrace. He lets a rescue rope go so he can guide the animals clear. At his signal Sella pulls out the tuning wedge. Both animals emerge from the gorge. His

boat disappears. Eleven days of searching bring no answer. At the hearing Etti asks what Dema told her, and Sella has the warning entered into the record. Months later, aboard Ivo’s cabin boat, she hears three knocks in the fog. Among the boat crews, three knocks ask, ‘Where are you?’ Sella knocks twice in answer.