The Shape of the Tide

Short synopsis • Naria Khan

Salvage diver Tamsin Kedge gives up a job that would pay her rent to rescue a ferryman during Nacre's regatta. In her cuttlefish body she feels a pulse from inside the floodgate before it breaks. Engineer Ilan Saye believes her, but five years ago he recommended evacuating Bell Quay. Her family never went home.

Together they discover that an altered gauge overstates how much water the basin can hold. The Board plans to release the excess through occupied streets still marked as cleared. Ilan admits he knew the earlier promise to repair the quay had been withdrawn. Tamsin takes him to supper with her father, and they become lovers. Next morning Ilan learns Bell Quay will flood first. He delays telling her while he measures another route. Trusting his message, Tamsin lets the evacuation ferry leave.

Ilan admits both delays in public and loses his authority to sign off on work. Tamsin agrees to dive on terms she sets. When a captain orders fresh water through her passage, she turns back to the saltwater refuge her crew prepared. Before she goes again, Ilan helps shut off the wash and residents clear Merchants' Square to take part of the flood.

On her second dive Tamsin reaches the bell, changes back underwater and frees the drive pin with human hands. The keepers divide the flow. Shops take water, but Bell Quay is spared the full force. Months later Ilan brings Tamsin a job offer before deciding for them both. They plan the time apart together and make a home above her workshop.