



13-27 October, 2022

Hello everyone

Thank you to the readers and libraries participating in the Together We Read campaign. It is a real compliment to have been chosen.

Long before my writing career began I chose a career in libraries, the idea of being surrounded by books all day, was hugely appealing. I ended up working in mainly specialist libraries, ranging from a medical library in New Zealand to English Heritage's specialist library in the UK. Libraries – both public and school – from the very beginning, have, to me, been a place of solace and somewhere I can feed my imagination.

*To the Sea* is set on a pine plantation overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Iluka (a fictional setting) is home to eighteen-year-old Ana, who lives there with her grandfather, mother, uncle and aunty. From the outside their lifestyle looks simple and idyllic. But Iluka holds secrets, and when a stranger arrives, Ana soon realises she can't trust her family and that for her whole life they've been lying to her. Ana must decide whether to put her trust in a stranger or to keep her family's secrets.

In this book I wanted to explore the idea of home and what it means to people, and I also wanted to explore the often mentioned phrase: 'The ocean/beach is my happy place'. Both of these sound like quite lovely concepts, but I was writing a psychological thriller, so I turned those ideas on their head and delved into the more creepy and unsettling side of these themes.

I have loved hearing the feedback from people who have read *To the Sea*. I love how passionate they are in their feelings for the characters; the shock they share with me on reading the opening chapter; and the place they have envisioned Iluka's landscape to be in real life – how many people get a sense of knowing their own Iluka.

I hope you enjoy *To the Sea* and I look forward to discussing it with you soon.

Happy reading!

Nikki Crutchley