

Extract from *The Deviants* by C. J. Skuse

I'm sitting beside the café window when I see the man running up the beach and I instantly know it's washed ashore. The sand flicks up behind him as he sprints. And he's screaming.

His face is alive with fear. He's running so hard to get away from it, what he's found. In those brief moments, I am the only person in the café to see him. But, within seconds, the quiet crumbles into chaos.

'Somebody! Help!'

'What's he saying?'

'Did he say a body?'

Someone calls my name, but I don't turn around. I keep walking, out of the café, into the morning air, along the Esplanade, down the steps and onto the wet sand, like the sea is a magnet and I am metal. People overtake me. Someone shouts, 'Call the police.' Thudding footsteps, snatches of breath. The sand's covered in a billion worm hills and tiny white shells. A group of crows squawks nearby. They're all clustered around an object, pecking at it. 'Let the police handle it.' 'Don't look. Don't look.' I keep walking towards the mound, until I can see for myself what the man was running from. Until I can see for myself what I have done.