

## As Sure as the Sea

**Jamie Ogle**

Tyndale Fiction (Feb 11, 2025)

Hardcover \$32.99 (345pp)

978-1-4964-7971-6

In Jamie Ogle's historical novel *As Sure as the Sea*, romance blossoms between a coral diver and a burdened pastor as anti-Christian fervor boils over in Rome.

310 CE is a difficult time for Christians: Emperor Diocletian enacts a series of edicts aimed at stamping them out. Against this backdrop, Demi makes a living diving for coral and pearls. She works for a merchant who overlooks her faith and absence of an imperial token.

At night, Demi and her brother travel upriver to the port city of Myra. After a horrific accident, Demi's brother contends with an infection that forces her to take increasing risks to earn money and provide for their community. The new pastor, Nikolas, hopes to retrieve his family's lost wealth; he avoids other divers while keeping his faith secret. He risks much to ask for Demi's help and plans to give the gold he earns to the children he cares for and other believers. He and Demi begin shuttling goods to Myra—until the empire's fury boils over and descends upon them.

Demi and Nikolas refuse to lose their faith, even though their lives would be easier if they joined the empire. Poetic descriptions of the landscape reflect the threats that they face: "The tombs towered over the river, facades of homes and temples stacked one upon the other." And when the local Christians worship, Demi notes that "the darkness crafted an illusion of isolation but the worship left the deception shattered. They were here. Together." Their shared grief connects them and gives romance ample room to seed and grow.

A romance novel about forbearance, *As Sure as the Sea* roots its love story in a connection based on shared beliefs, the desire to overcome grief, and the threats poised by an empire.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January / February 2025)

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