

Grey, Mini. *Three by the Sea*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Print.

Mini Grey (yes, that's her real name; she was born in a Mini in a Wales car park) is an award-winning author of children's picture books including *Egg Drop* and *Traction Man is Here!*

In *Three by the Sea*, a black cat, a white dog, and a gray mouse share a hut on a pebbly beach. They lived together happily on the seemingly otherwise-uninhabited island. The dog did the gardening, which amounted to burying and digging up bones; the cat did the housework by simply throwing garbage out the window; and the mouse did the cooking – a cheese fondue. Every day.

However, one stormy night, everything changes for the three unlikely roommates, as a traveling salesman blows to shore on an inflatable raft and finds his way to the trio's beach hut. This Stranger, a fox in a double-breasted striped suit, announces that they are the lucky winners of a free visit from the Winds of Change Trading Company and proceeds to bestow gifts upon them. For Mouse, cookbooks and herb seed packets; for Dog, a shiny new collar; and for Cat, some tins of sardines. The gifts, however, are not truly free, as the Stranger also pointed out the inadequacies and faults of the friends' personalities and behaviour.

At dinner—a cheese fondue—the fighting begins, and insults are hurled. After deciding to pack up and go where his culinary talents would be appreciated, Mouse finds himself in a spot of trouble as he attempts to leave the island. Of course, in the end, friendship reigns, and all three agree it is time for the Stranger to go; however, the short visit has everlasting effects on their relationship and way of life.

This is a lovely story that will provoke discussion about the fox's motivations, though children younger than 5 years may find the concept a challenge. The illustrations are charming and are vintage and modern at the same time.

Recommended: 3 out of 4 stars

Reviewer: Debbie Feisst