

It's All In The Blood

Carol J Forrester

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This book is dedicated to my grandmother, my grandfather,
and my great-grandmother. People who have passed but still
walk with me each day.

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Content

Poems In The Undercurrent	1
Grandfather	2
Young Explorers	3
Second Hand Blades	4
Cutting Ties	5
Until The Light Gets In	6
Earth	7
A Death In The Family	8
Sundays	10
Selkie	12
Farmer's Daughter	13
Newborn	14
Expectant	16
Alarm	18
Old Fears	19
In The Kitchen	20
Against All The Signs	22
Intimacy Illogical	24
Countryside Wisdom	26
Wrung Out	27
This Was Supposed To Be A Love Poem	28
Red Dress	30
Questions I Still Have	31
Trousers	32
Home Bird	34
Preacher	35
Legs Eleven	36
Made A Vase	38
Megera	39
Since The Beginning	40
Sanctity	41
Changing Rooms	42
New Year Run	43
An Ever-Changing Beast	44

Sunsets	45
Jörmungandr	46
Safe Harbour	48
Where The Water Breaks	49
Echoes	50
Like You	51
Ugly Duckling	52
Crewe In April	53
In Contradiction	54
Back Through The Blood	56
Words	58
First Dance	60
Tongue And Cheek	61
Girls Night	62
The Way Things Go	64
On Our Last Day In Japan	65
Zeus Is Spearfishing Over Stranraer	66
If I Were...	68
In The Garden	69
Persephone	70
Don't Call It Healing	71
Glacial	72
Bard On Blore Heath	73
Persephone (No. 2 - Homecoming)	74
A Life Like Helios	76
Bloom	77
Standing The Test	78
Balance For Better	79
Trickle Down	80

Poems In The Undercurrent

It's as if someone forgot to turn the radio off.
Not in this room,
but the one across the hall, or down the corridor,
in a somewhere that can't be found
no matter how many corners are checked
or drawers overturned.

The distance turns voices to static,
punctures partial comments,
slipped between floorboards,
strings of mists on summer mornings.

Even if I press my ear to the wallpaper,
I can't link the lines into one another.
The harder I try
the deeper the crackle in the speakers.

I busy myself,
turn the dishwasher on,
boil the kettle,
fill the house with the rattle and clatter
of things needing to be done.

A hiccup in the static leaves a sentence
pressed against my ear
burrowing its way through
to reach the next line
in the mess of grey matter inside.
All the while the radio continues playing
in a room I cannot find.

Newborn

It all takes too long.
Sheep too narrow, lamb too big,
rain hammering on a tin roof
scattering the quiet.

Sunrise still sulks out of sight,
out of mind.
The farmyard a black mirror,
midden cloaked in shadows
until the security light catches
on a fox scurrying for shelter.

Knelt in the straw,
concrete cold on her knees,
her breath is mist.
Knuckles tucked between
the new-born's ankles
as she pulls it free.

She lays it straight,
rubs a fistful of bedding
to its ribcage.
Tries to scrub breath
back into its body.

Twenty miles away,
her own child will be sleeping.
Her husband's mother
holding her place
until Spring runs its course.

She lays the lamb by the door,
notes to call Bradshaw's
in the morning
and tries not to carry it home

Countryside Wisdom

Always greet red dawns with caution.

Farmer's daughter,
I turn countryside sayings over
and over
like hard-boiled sweets
in my mouth.

Syrup long since sucked
from the centre,
they are crunch and brittle.
shards prick my gums
in warning.

No amount of scoffing,
will keep my grandmother
from speaking to the dawn.

Soft, familiar,
she chants the same song,
myth now made fact.

Red mornings,
beautiful
and looming.

We should watch
for a change in the winds.

Second Hand Blades

My mother shaves her legs
with second hand razors.
Breaks them in
on my father's stubble.

Fresh from the packet
they hold too much edge,
too likely to bite
round ankles, over knees,
for her to trust.

In the bath
she strips her shins,
calves,
smooth and hairless.

The men's cost less.
Twenty to a plastic packet
blue and uniformed
like bent necked police
lined up to attention.

She leaves them in the window,
bathroom graveyard
of shampoo bottles
Allen keys
and pennies,
stacked like bonfire kindling.

Megera

They name me
jealous one.
Plait snakes through my hair,
till it rises about my shoulders
a mane of venom.

Perhaps this is true enough.

They say I crush men,
the ones who come to me
through their own will
and actions.
Lay the cruelty of betrayal
at my feet.

I am not my sisters,
blood avenger, unceasing
in pursuit.
I am an emotion painted
upon every action
I set forth.

I am furious and bright,
burning beyond recognition
till they shield their eyes
and call me ugly.

I am a woman of power.
Until The Light Gets In

She'd stuff teapots
with carrier bags.
Oranges, blues,
yellow, and pinks,
sunsets in ceramics,

perched on windowsills.

Later,
when they came to pieces
in her hands,
plastic wilted
like dried up petals
she let them fall to dust.

We, the ones left behind
took turns choosing
which to keep.
Shook loose remains
from the curved bone
of these empty bodies.

Found only parts of her.
Enough
that we remembered
some of who she was,
but never quite all.

Earth

At school I learnt how tectonic plates moved,
their shifting, wanderings
always there beneath the earth's skin.
I learnt how the Amazon Rainforest
was considered the lungs of our planet,
and watched presenters with sweat slicked skin
meandering in small wooden boats
along its main, arterial vein.
I learnt that I was part of a predator,
its jaws already closed around the world,
teeth sunk into flesh.
I learnt that I would be needed to do my part
and watched as change
crept along, stuttering and stalling.
I hoped that all the little parts,
would be enough.