

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Lovereading will help you find new
books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Bad Blood

Written by Julie Shaw

Published by HarperElement

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Lovereading.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

Certain details in this story, including names, places and dates,
have been changed to protect the family's privacy.

HarperElement
An imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

First published by HarperElement 2016

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

© Julie Shaw and Lynne Barrett-Lee 2016

Julie Shaw and Lynne Barrett-Lee assert the moral
right to be identified as the authors of this work

A catalogue record of this book is
available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-00-814285-8

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted,
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the
prior written permission of the publishers.



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C007454

FSC™ is a non-profit international organisation established to promote
the responsible management of the world's forests. Products carrying the
FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come
from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and
ecological needs of present and future generations,
and other controlled sources.

Find out more about HarperCollins and the environment at
www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

Would you turn back time if you had the chance?

Would you run away or stay?

Like the smoker who thinks his time is up,

Then gets news of a clear X-ray.

His promises to God are forgotten then,

He dodged another bullet,

He continues to play Russian roulette,

Trigger finger poised to pull it.

Cross the line, step into the abyss,

Now there's no going back,

You've lost control, you've gone too far,

There's no defence, so attack.

You are no longer you, and you no longer care,

Join the ranks of the depraved.

One thing is sure from this moment on,

The pathway ahead is paved.

*But would you change things if you could?
Can you see where it all went awry?
Would you not do that thing that set this course?
Would you really even try?
The past can't be changed, but the future can,
Starting right here, right now,
You don't have a lifetime to turn it around,
And no one can teach you how.*

Chapter I

Bradford, July 1981

Christine squinted as her eyes met the bright July sunshine, and shuffled awkwardly down the front path to the car waiting in the road. Of all the cabbies in Bradford who could have picked them up, today of *all* days, it just had to be Imran. Imran who, in the absence of a female to leer at, would probably chat up a pot plant.

‘Lovely day for it, innit, ladies?’ he shouted conversationally, as Christine clambered awkwardly into the back. He had no choice. He was currently competing with a warbling Shakin’ Stevens, because, as was usual, he had his car stereo turned up loud enough to wake the dead.

Not to mention the soon to be born, Christine thought wretchedly, as the next contraction began to build. It was like a giant elastic band, gripping vice-like around her middle, and the panic began engulfing her again. Why hadn’t anyone *told* her how much it would hurt? Her own mum, for instance. The thought made her tearful. She’d never felt pain like this in her life. Ever.

Julie Shaw

‘Lovely day for what?’ her friend Josie snapped, as she climbed in beside her and slammed the door. ‘And, Christ, Im, turn that frigging shit down, will you?’

Imran beamed at the pair of them through the rear-view mirror. ‘Keep yer ’air on!’ he said. ‘I was only being friendly. Anyway,’ he added, leaning forward to turn the volume down a fraction, ‘where we off to today, girls? Somewhere nice?’

‘St Luke’s Hospital,’ Josie snapped. ‘And put your foot down as well. Seriously,’ she added, as Christine began to wail. ‘Or there’ll be more than our Christine and bloody Shaky making a racket. Get a *move* on! She’s already trying to push!’

It was only now, having twisted a hundred and eighty degrees in his seat, that Imran seemed to understand what was happening.

‘You’re about to have a *baby*?’ he yelled, wide-eyed. ‘A frigging *baby*?’

‘No,’ Josie deadpanned. ‘She’s about to have a wardrobe, you idiot. Now bloody *move* it!’

Christine sent up a silent prayer of thanks that Imran didn’t seem to need telling again. He shoved the car into gear and they squealed away down the road towards the hospital, the strains of ‘Green Door’ filling the air in their wake.

It was only a three-minute drive from Christine’s home to the hospital, but, in her terror, and with the lurching caused by Imran’s panicked driving, every yard felt like

bad blood

twenty. That was the main problem, she decided through the fog of increasing agony. That it felt as if a wardrobe was exactly what she *was* having. How could a baby, so small and soft, feel so enormous and full of edges? More to the point, how was she ever going to get out of Imran's taxi and up to the maternity ward in one piece? She felt as if her whole body was trying to turn itself inside out; that if she moved so much as a muscle she'd rip in two.

But get out she must; they were now outside the maternity unit entrance and Josie, who'd leapt out and come round to open the other door for her, was tugging at her arm and trying to coax her out of the car.

'C'mon, mate,' she was saying. 'That one's dying down now a little, isn't it? Which is why we have to get you in, before the next one comes along.'

Not for the first time, Christine was grateful to have Josie here to help her. Calm, capable Josie, who'd not batted an eyelid when Christine's waters had broken and flooded the kitchen floor, because she'd done all this herself two years back, having her Paula. Who was nothing like her mother. Who was there for her. Who was her *friend*.

And Josie was right about the contraction, which was why it hadn't even been a question. The pain was dying off as quickly and as decisively as it had come. Gripping her belly, Christine shuffled her legs round and onto the pavement.

'You and all,' Josie said, sticking her head back into the car as Christine tried to climb out of it.

Julie shaw

'Me?' spluttered Imran. 'What you on about, woman?'

'You,' Josie told him. 'Assuming you'll want paying. Come on, out. I need you to help me get her inside.'

Christine privately agreed. Josie was tiny. There was nothing of her. And though Christine had never dared to ask, she imagined that was why her friend's nickname had always been Titch. And there *she* was, like a whale, a great lumbering whale. And with the shakes now. She felt woozy and unsteady on her feet.

'Me?' Imran said again. Then he shook his head firmly. 'Sorry, love, but I can't be doing that. S'pose someone sees me? They'll probably think I'm the fucking father!'

'You wish,' Josie replied in disgust. 'Mate, she doesn't go near *your* type.'

'Mate,' Imran parroted. 'I don't go near *hers*. No offence, love,' he added, as he came round to the kerbside. He grinned and his fabled gold teeth both winked at her in the sunshine. 'Come on,' he coaxed. 'Let's be having you before the little bleeder plops out in the road.'

Christine cringed with shame and embarrassment as the two of them dragged her none too gently from the parking bay to the maternity-ward entrance, the words 'your type' going round and round her head. She loved Josie – couldn't manage without her, truth be told – but she wished she would shut up for once, because what she was saying to Imran was really too close to the bone.

Up until now, she had kept the paternity of her unborn child a secret. Told anyone who asked to mind their own

bad blood

business. But the time had come now. She'd be keeping her guilty secret no longer. In a couple of hours – probably less, given how her insides were feeling – everyone would know who the father of her baby was. Or they'd make an educated guess. And they'd be right.

The Maternity Department at St Luke's sat at the furthest end of the huge sprawl of hospital buildings, and seeing the familiar entrance calmed Christine a little. A place she'd never once so much as glimpsed before the nightmare had happened, it had become something of a sanctuary for her over the past few months – a safe place where no one ever questioned her or judged her. A place where they didn't care about the whos and whys and wherefores of her pregnancy – where they simply took care of her, were kind to her, were concerned about her well-being. Was she sleeping? Was the baby kicking? Was she taking her vitamins? Was she exercising enough? Was she eating the right foods?

It was a place she'd mostly visited alone, too, and that was fine by her. Though Josie had come with her on her first visit, when she was feeling so ashamed and scared, she'd since been happy to trot down to her antenatal appointments on her own – even had her mam offered to go, which, unsurprisingly, she hadn't. She had about as much interest in Christine's pregnancy as she had about Christine herself – which meant precious little, just like always. Christine hadn't minded. She didn't exactly want

Julie Shaw

her mam involved. This was her kid, her future, and she vowed, over and over, that she was going to do things differently. Do it better. Do right by the child growing inside her. Be not at all like her own mam.

So she'd been happy to sit there with all the other expectant mothers – much preferred it, even. Here she was just one among many other waddling women, all chattering away, in the bright, busy waiting room; like a warm enveloping hug telling her everything would be okay. That girls just like her became mothers all the time. That it wouldn't be the end of the world.

But now it felt like it, and Christine was horrified to hear that Josie wasn't allowed to come in with her now. 'Sorry, lovey,' the nurse at the admission desk told them. 'Your friends will have to wait out here. We need to whisk you off for an examination. See how baby's doing, see how far you are along.'

Imran pulled a face, and let go of her as if jolted by a sudden electric shock. He was only lingering, Christine knew, because he was still waiting for his fare.

'Don't you worry, mate,' Josie reassured her, pulling a purse out from her handbag. 'You're in safe hands now, and I'll go and track your mam down, okay? Get her down here to look after you.' Though both of them knew there was a good chance, what with her mam currently being at the bingo, that she wouldn't get there in time even if she wanted to. Which, despite Josie's constant attempts to change things, Christine was pretty sure she wouldn't. Josie

bad blood

meant well, but she didn't get it – they just weren't like her and her mam.

So she tried to stay calm, knowing Josie was right. She was in safe hands, and now she was here, they'd take charge of things. Indeed, were already doing, because almost immediately Josie had left with Imran, a second nurse, after some consultation with a big whiteboard behind the first nurse, seemed to scoop her up almost – it felt as if she was being propelled along the corridor – and into an empty consulting room just off the waiting room, at the very point when the next contraction hit her.

The nurse helped her up onto the big trolley bed and, once again, being examined – as she had been, so many times, some on this very table – Christine was stunned by the intensity of the pain.

'No wonder you're pushing, love,' the nurse said, peeling latex gloves from her fingers. 'You're eight centimetres! This little one of yours is obviously anxious to be born!' Then she popped her head around the consulting-room door and yelled, 'Someone fetch me a wheelchair!', and within moments it seemed everyone was panicking.

This was it, Christine thought, as everyone hurried and fussed around her. All these months of wondering what labour would be like. She was frightened, but at the same time there was nothing she could do to stop it and all she could do was surrender herself to the inevitability. Only one thing was certain, or would be, she reckoned. That,

Julie Shaw

good or bad, nothing in her life was ever going to be the same again.

The maternity wards were up on the second floor of the unit, and Christine was taken up in the wide hospital lift, which smelled of disinfectant and creaked as they rose. Only the week previously, a group of mums who had similar due dates had been shown around one of the wards, which, with its bright bays, patterned curtains and crisply made beds, had seemed a place in which nothing bad could happen. Though it had the same clinical smell everywhere else in the unit seemed to, it had a cheerfulness about it; a sense of homeliness, even. And there'd been a lull in labours – only one bed had been occupied, and the woman had been sleeping – and Christine had felt an unexpected surge of confidence. With the sun streaming in and the sense of calm and order, she could almost believe that whatever rows she had coming from her mam, it would, in the end, all be okay.

She was wheeled along the corridor, groaning now, almost growling – she couldn't seem to stop the embarrassing animal noise coming out of her – right past the wards to one of the delivery suites. Here there was no such sense of calm. There was no way of dressing it up. It was a room with one purpose – one all too evident from the huge cylinders of oxygen strapped to the far wall, evident from the scales and instruments, from the functional Perspex cot and, worst of all, from the leather foot straps that hung from the ceiling and swayed above the bed.

bad blood

‘Here we go, love. Let’s get your things off,’ the midwife commanded. Her name was Sister Rawson, and Christine was relieved to see her – even if a little earlier than expected. She’d last seen her only on Monday, and wasn’t due to see her again till next week, because she was still a good ten days from her due date.

Sister Rawson was middle-aged and hefty. Her uniform strained across her huge bosom and she had chubby pink hands; hands that held Christine firmly as she helped her out of her hateful borrowed smock, and into a crackling hospital gown that did up with tapes down the back. ‘Anyone coming? Baby’s dad?’ She held a monitor in her hand now. ‘No, it’ll be your mam coming, won’t it?’ she said as she began to strap the monitor around Christine’s belly. ‘She knows you’re here, does she?’ she asked conversationally.

Christine shook her head, gasping as a fresh wave of pain hit her. ‘She’s out. She doesn’t even know I’m here yet. My friend is going to let her know.’

Though it really was doubtful whether Josie would be able to get word to her in time. She’d left only an hour back for bingo, leaving the girls to their own devices. Down the Mecca on Little Horton Lane with her cronies, same as always, all trying to win the big one; the jackpot that might change their lives.

They never did, of course. They spent as much on cheap lager as they did on the bingo, and on the slot machines that hardly ever paid out. And they’d stay there, through

Julie Shaw

the afternoon and on into the evening, topping up on lager till they left to go down the pub. No, there was little hope of her mam coming to help her, even if she was struck by a sudden rush of love and maternal feeling.

Which was also doubtful, even *before* she saw the baby. Christine was under no illusions on that score, and never had been. She knew intuitively that whoever had turned out to be the father, her mother just wouldn't want to know. It was exasperating sometimes, how people didn't get it. How they kept saying, 'She doesn't mean it. She'll come round, just you wait and see.' How they imagined that when it came to it her mam would become somehow different – how she'd suddenly realise how much she'd be missing. How, when it came to it, she'd be so excited to be a granny.

Christine had long since given up trying to enlighten anyone about this. Not Josie's mam, June. Not Mr Weston, who she worked for in the café down on John Street. And though Josie knew better – one of the very few people that did – she still didn't quite get how bad it was, not really. She still hung on to the idea that there was this unbreakable maternal bond; just that it was very deeply buried. But there wasn't. There really wasn't. But no one wanted to hear that. So Christine didn't bother enlightening Josie further either. Her mam cared about two people, and that was pretty much it. Herself and her bastard of an on-off boyfriend, Rasta Mo.

At the moment, that was. That was all subject to change now. What hadn't changed so far was how her mam dealt

bad blood

with the pregnancy. First she'd been furious, then resigned, then just irritable and resentful. Especially in the last weeks, when Christine had had to give up her waitressing at the café. With the extra money no longer coming in, Christine's mum had all but washed her hands of her – at least (as she'd been fond of remarking, over and over) till she got off her fat backside and sorted out her dole. 'You made your own frigging bed and you're just going to have to lie on it, girl,' she'd told her. And she'd know all about that. Because she'd had to do exactly that herself. Not just when she had Christine, but also when she'd given birth to her older brother Nicky – neither of them knew who their dads were, and never would.

And it hadn't helped that Christine had stuck so resolutely to her guns. Because, like her mam before her, she hadn't told anyone who the father was, either. Hadn't and, in fact, couldn't, even though there wasn't a shred of doubt. Though, in the vain hope that things might not turn out as badly as she expected, she'd not rushed to contradict her mam when she'd reached her own conclusions; deciding that it was probably Paddy Sweeney's – the lad Christine had been seeing briefly before she'd left school. 'That bloody half-wit,' her mam had said. 'Trust you to pick that no-hoper. There'll be no hope of any support there – not from that bloody family.'

If only she knew, Christine thought. Because it was so much worse than that.

* * *