

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

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

---

**Opening Extract from...**

## **Second Hand Heart**

Written by Catherine Ryan Hyde

Published by Black Swan,  
an imprint of The Random House Group Ltd

All text is copyright © Circles in the Dirt, Inc / Catherine Ryan Hyde 2010

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Lov**reading**.  
Please print off and read at your leisure.

---

# **Second Hand Heart**

*Catherine Ryan Hyde*



**BLACK SWAN**

TRANSWORLD PUBLISHERS  
61–63 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SA  
A Random House Group Company  
[www.rbooks.co.uk](http://www.rbooks.co.uk)

**SECOND HAND HEART**  
**A BLACK SWAN BOOK: 9780552776622**

First publication in Great Britain  
Black Swan edition published 2010

Copyright © Circles in the Dirt, Inc./Catherine Ryan Hyde 2010

Catherine Ryan Hyde has asserted her right under the Copyright,  
Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

This book is a work of fiction and, except in the case of historical fact, any  
resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,  
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out,  
or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior  
consent in any form of binding or cover other than that  
in which it is published and without a similar condition,  
including this condition, being imposed on the  
subsequent purchaser.

Addresses for Random House Group Ltd companies outside the UK  
can be found at: [www.randomhouse.co.uk](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk)  
The Random House Group Ltd Reg. No. 954009

The Random House Group Limited supports The Forest Stewardship  
Council (FSC), the leading international forest certification organisation.  
All our titles that are printed on Greenpeace approved FSC certified  
paper carry the FSC logo. Our paper procurement policy can be  
found at [www.rbooks.co.uk/environment](http://www.rbooks.co.uk/environment)

Typeset in 11/15pt Giovanni Book by  
Kestrel Data, Exeter, Devon.  
Printed in the UK by  
CPI Cox & Wyman, Reading, RG1 8EX.

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1



**Mixed Sources**  
Product group from well-managed  
forests and other controlled sources  
[www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org) Cert no. TF-COC-2139  
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

In memory of my niece Emily, whose heart gave  
out on her, and in honor of my niece Sara,  
who survived with distinctive grace.

## **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I want to thank a wonderful local team of cardiac and cardiothoracic surgeons, Drs Stephen Freyaldenhoven, David Canvasser and Luke Faber, for their generous contributions to this work, which included not only reviewing the manuscript for medical accuracy, but allowing me to observe an actual 'open heart' surgery first-hand. Such opportunities do not come along every day in the life of an author, and I'm deeply grateful.

Many thanks also to John Zinke MD, and Nancy Vincent Zinke RN, BSN, for reviewing the early manuscript and referring me to the surgeons mentioned above.

I also want to note that the aforementioned details of cardiac surgery are quite removed from the fictional scientific opinions of my researcher character, Connie

Matsuko. I have read and studied extensively the writings of the neuroscientist Candace Pert and the psycho-neuroimmunologist Paul Pearsall, and their research was helpful to me while creating the purely fictional Connie Matsuko and her views. I do want to be clear, however, that Connie Matsuko is neither Candace Pert nor Paul Pearsall, and that I created her myself through my own interpretations of such studies. Those who argue with her theories on cellular memory should definitely see them as coming from me and no one else.

Finally, I want to thank my friend Lee Zamloch for allowing me to borrow a small but rich detail of her life, taken from a story she once told me of waiting with her daughter for a donor heart that never came. It's these small truths that bring fiction to life. I'm sorry you had to live it, but appreciate your generosity in allowing it to be used.

**VIDA**



## **On My Upcoming Death**

I'm probably going to die really soon. Maybe in my sleep tonight. Maybe next week. Maybe three weeks from Thursday. It's kind of hard to tell.

I guess that'll sound like a big deal to you. Whoever you are. Whoever will read this someday. It doesn't sound like such a big deal to me. I'm pretty used to it.

I've been practicing for almost twenty years. Ever since the night I was born.

Not to rock your world too completely, but you're going to die, too. Probably not as soon as I am, but you never know. See, that's the thing. We don't know. None of us. I could get a donor heart and live happily ever after, and you could walk out in front of a bus tomorrow. Hell, today.

Here's the difference between you and me: you think



you're not going to die anytime soon. Even though you could be wrong. I know I probably will.

Sometimes I wonder what it feels like to go to bed every night figuring you'll definitely wake up. Lots of people do, I guess. Every day. But I have no idea what it would feel like to be them.

I only know how it feels to be me.



## **On My Mother**

My mother named me Vida.

I think it's the stupidest name in the world. But I have to try to be patient with my mother. She has issues.

First of all, I'm an only child. And also, even though she's had just as much practice as I have getting used to the idea of losing me, she hasn't made much headway so far. She says it's because she's a mother, and I really have no choice but to believe her. For myself I wouldn't know. I'm not a mother and I never will be, unless I adopt. My heart could never take childbirth.

I'm lucky it got me through today.

In case you don't know any Spanish at all, 'Vida' means 'life'. Get it yet? You know. Like, make sure this kid stays alive. Not that we're Spanish. We're not. But I guess naming your only daughter 'Life' or 'Alive' might be a little weird. Even for her.

My mother has control issues, but I honestly don't think she knows. I haven't told her yet because she has a lot going on, and I'm not sure I want to stack that on top of everything else.

She rules our little world very tightly.

It's funny, too, because . . . Well, it's hard to explain why it's funny. But if you saw her, you'd get it. She's about four foot ten (she says five feet but she's totally lying), and has apple-red cheeks and a big smile, and looks like one of Santa's elves. If Santa had girl elves. She doesn't look like the dominatrix type.

But man, can she hold on.



## **On My Really Good Friend Esther**

Esther used to be in a concentration camp.

Buchenwald.

When I say Buchenwald it comes out sounding different than when Esther says it. Even though she's been in this country for more than sixty years, she still has a very thick German accent. Most people drop the accent after a few years, but Esther hasn't dropped it yet. So she must still need it for something. When she says Buchenwald, the 'ch' sound does this very complicated hissy thing in her throat (which I could not do if I tried, and I've tried), and the 'w' sounds like a 'v'.

When Esther was my age, she was in Buchenwald.

She's very old now. I don't know how old. She won't tell me. But you can figure the years based on when the Allies liberated the camps (I'm very good on the Internet, because I spend so much time indoors, and it's

something I can do without anybody getting worried and telling me to take it easy), and then do some simple math and figure she must be at least ninety.

She actually looks older. So I'm thinking maybe she lied a little about how young she was when her whole family got rounded up and put on the train.

I guess it's like my mother saying she's five feet tall when she's only four ten. I guess people do that a lot.

I don't. I tell the truth. I'm not even sure why.

Esther gave me this blank book. The one I'm writing this all down in, right now. The one you must be holding if you're reading this.

She said it's a journal, but it looks like a book. A regular bound book. Just with nothing on any of the pages. I was very excited when she gave it to me, because I figured it was a real book. I like books a lot. I rely on them.

This is true of most people who can't do much of anything without dying.

Esther said if I wanted it to be a real book I'd have to write in it myself. I'd have to write my own. Sounded like a tall order, especially for someone who might be a little short on time. I guess in a weird sort of way that was part of the idea of the thing.

Esther says nobody can tell you when you're going to die.

She says a few days before the Allies came and liberated Buchenwald, one of the camp guards laughed

at her and taunted her in German. When she tells me this story – which she does a lot – she repeats what he said in German. I can't do that. But anyway, what he said translates to mean something like, 'You will die here, little Jewess.'

Esther figures that guard is dead now. I figure she's probably right, which is a satisfying thought.

She's our upstairs neighbor and she's my best friend. She also gave me the worry stone.



## **On the Worry Stone**

The very first day I was in the hospital (and by that I mean this time around – there have been lots of hospitals and lots of times), Esther came to see me and brought me the worry stone.

It's some kind of quartz, and it's very smooth. About the size of a walnut, but flatter. Esther said she brought it all the way from Germany with her. I think that means she must have gotten it after she was liberated. Because I don't think they let you keep any of your stuff when they put you on the train.

I guess it makes sense that when you've spent years in a concentration camp, and you are the only member of your very large extended family to walk out alive, and you're about to go all by yourself to a new country on the other side of the world, you might want something that could possibly absorb your worry.

What I don't get is why she gave it to me. I love it. I just don't get why she gave it up.

She came in that very first morning. As soon as visiting hours started. She was wearing a scarf on her head, and a coat with a big fur collar. And, honestly, it wasn't very cold outside, so far as I knew.

She showed me how she had worried a slightly smoother spot on to the stone by rubbing it with her thumb all the way to America.

She went on a boat and it took weeks.

She told me I could put all my worry into the stone. And maybe it would even wear a groove into solid rock.

I said something like, 'You're kidding. This is only skin.' And I held up my thumb so she could see what was only skin.

'Water is only water,' Esther said. 'But water can wear away stone.'

I took the stone in my hand and held it. I liked the weight of it, and the warmth of it, from being gripped so tightly in Esther's palm.

I said, 'Maybe I won't have time.'

'Or maybe you will,' she said. 'No one can tell you when you are going to die. You die when you are done. Not a moment before. Not a moment after. No matter what anyone says. No matter what anyone wishes for you.'

'Thank you for the worry stone,' I said. 'But I actually don't think I'm very worried.'



'Really?' she said.

'I don't think so.'

'Most people in your situation would be worried.'

'Maybe because they were never in my situation before. I've always been in my situation.'

Esther shook her head and clucked with her tongue.

'Maybe you have worry and you don't know. Just like you have air all around you, but you don't know. If sometimes you had air and sometimes not, then you would know.'

'Maybe,' I said.

'It really doesn't matter what you have,' she said.  
'Whatever it is, give it to the worry stone all the same.'

So I've been rubbing it smooth(er) ever since.



## **On Lying in the Hospital Waiting for a Heart**

I'm number one on the list for a heart. That's sort of the good news and the bad news all mixed up into one. Short version, it means I'm more likely to die than anybody else on the list, as best they can figure these things. So it's one of those contests nobody's dying to win. No pun intended. Then again, if there's a heart, it's nice to be number one on the list for it.

It's all very emotionally complicated.

Here's the bad news: there isn't any heart right now for anybody on the list. Not even number one. That could change at any time, I suppose. But this is now. And there isn't a heart.

Ready for the statistics that go with the 'urgent' category? The majority of patients on that list will either die or be transplanted within two weeks.

So this life of mine is coming down to the wire. One way or the other.

Last weekend was a late-spring holiday. One of those ones nobody really cares about. Just a stupid excuse to give everybody Monday off.

My mother was nervous and guilty all weekend long.

She just kept moving. All weekend. She moved into my hospital room. She moved out of it. She walked from my bed to the window. She walked back. She dusted the food tray. (Right, like dust is always a problem in hospital rooms.) Pulled dead petals off the flowers. Went out for a walk in the hall. Came back.

If I'd had more energy I'd have screamed. But I can't even breathe well enough to breathe, not to mention to scream.

Not that I don't get where she's coming from. But when you're nervous and somebody else is nervous, too, you feel like you want them to help you stay calm. Maybe it's not a reasonable request, but you do. Otherwise their nervous kind of stands on the shoulders of your nervous, and then the whole nervous thing is so big and tall that it gets to be too much nervous for anybody to bear. Especially anybody with a bad heart. And then the whole shaky system wants to come crashing down.

So, even though I know it's probably not really fair, it was hard not to blame *her* nervousness. If for no other reason than the sheer volume of it. Figuratively

speaking. It didn't literally make any noise. But in another way it drowned out everything else in the room. Hell, everything else in the *world*.

Now. In fairness to my mom, here's what was so hard about this weekend in particular: there are more traffic fatalities on a holiday weekend. Really, if you know the statistics, you know the chances are very good that someone will die.

This is why she was nervous: because maybe nobody would. Or, worse yet, maybe somebody would, but they wouldn't have a donor sticker on their license. Or their family would get squeamish, and decide to bury them all in one piece.

That drives her out of her mind.

Also, this is the part probably nobody knows but me. This is the secret part about why she was feeling guilty: because maybe somebody would. Because part of her was wishing somebody would.

Nobody did.



## **On Dying**

I think I look at it differently than other people do. And I think the way I look at it is right, and the way other people look at it is wrong.

I don't say that about too many things. I'm not vain. I'm not one of those people who always thinks I'm right about everything. I'm just one of those people who always thinks I'm right about this.

Here's why, and I think it's a very good reason: let's say the subject is something else besides death. Say it's a mountain. Or a tree.

Yeah. Let's say it's a tree.

I'm standing under the branches of it. Close enough to reach out and feel the texture of the bark against my palm. The rest of you are two or three miles back, peering through binoculars with foggy lenses.

Now. I ask you. Who knows more about the tree?

Here's what I think about dying: I think it's not so much about being and then not being. I think it's more about *where* you are. Not *whether* you are.

Take me. I'm lying on this hospital bed. Dying. Unless someone dies suddenly in an accident while they're still young and healthy and gives me a heart, and they die in a way that it can be harvested in time, and it gets to me really fast. But let me tell you, there's not much time left for all that stuff to fall into place. Meanwhile, here I am getting weaker and weaker. Like this light that just dims and dims. Until after a while you can't see it at all. Maybe it gives a little flicker. And then nothing. Out.

My mother cries and says, 'That's it, she's gone. No more Vida.'

But somewhere else, in some other place – some very different place – there's this little flicker of light, and somebody is saying, 'Look. What's that? Someone new is here.' And I think they're very happy about that.

And maybe the someone new isn't *exactly* Vida. Definitely not in every earthly sense of the word. And definitely she doesn't have my skinny body. But it's me.

I still *am*. I'm just not what you expected me to be, from experience.

You can live with that. Right?

Not if you're my mother you can't.



## **On the Heart**

It wasn't even a holiday. Just a regular weekday night. And some woman skidded off the road in her car.

I don't know too much about her. Just what my mother told me. That her name was Lorraine Buckner Bailey, and that she went by Lorrie. And that she was thirty-three years old.

And the accident was pretty close by, too. San Jose. Maybe an hour by car, though I doubt that's the way they'll send the heart.

I wanted to know if she had any kids, but I was afraid to ask. My mom gets very emotional around stuff like that. Even though when she was telling me about the heart she was very, very happy. Like, if you didn't know better, you would think it was too much happy to ever knock her out of.

But I know her pretty well. And it was too much happy, really.

It's like when you're a kid and your mom sees you roughhousing with your cousins and screaming with laughter, and she says something like, 'You're laughing now, but in a minute somebody's going to be crying.' Because you're overexcited.

It's like there's a fine line between hyper-happy and falling apart.

Actually, I only know that from watching my cousins play. I could never afford to get overexcited. I wonder if I'll be able to get overexcited when I get the heart. Or whether I'll stay mostly pretty quiet out of habit.

Either way, I don't have it yet, and I definitely can't afford too much excitement right now. And my mother was sort of wearing me down. Actually, my mother was definitely wearing me down. After a while my cardiac surgeon, Dr Vasquez, came in and congratulated me, and said how happy she was for me, and told my mom I needed rest.

So I actually got a little time alone. As you can tell, I'm using the time to write in my journal.

While I'm writing, I'm picturing my mother out in the hallway, jumping up and down as quietly as possible.





## **On My Mother and the Heart**

My mother feels guilty.

She won't say so. But I know. I know her pretty well.

She feels guilty because she's so happy. And she knows she shouldn't be happy when a woman just died. She keeps saying she's sad that the woman died, but happy that her husband was willing to donate the heart.

That's not entirely true, which is why she feels guilty.

She didn't know Lorrie Buckner Bailey. And she knows me.

Probably we should feel bad when anybody dies. I mean, if you're not into my flickering-out theory. If we're going to feel bad about anybody, then we should feel bad about everybody. Even if we don't know them, we should still feel bad.

But we never do.



## **On How Much I Have to Hurry**

The heart is going to be on its way to us soon. Right now it's still in this poor donor, who's being kept alive on machines. But still, I think I might only have around an hour and a half, maybe two hours if I'm lucky, before they come prep me for surgery. They like to get a good head start on that, and once the heart is out and on its way to us, believe me, nobody wastes any time.

And there's all this stuff I want to write down before that happens, because I won't be writing for a few days, if not longer, and there'll be all the painkillers, and all the pain, and I'll be in the intensive-care unit for three or four days at least, and there's really no privacy at all in the ICU, and besides, maybe afterwards it'll feel like everything's different. Maybe everything I was thinking before the surgery will seem really far away, if I even remember what it was. I probably won't, though.

I'll probably have forgotten all the things I wanted to write by then.

The stuff I'm going to write is mostly not about the heart, and it'll seem like I'm getting off track, but I still need to write it. I'm going to get down as much as I can as fast as I can, and if my writing is messy, it'll just have to be messy.

That's just the way things are sometimes. First the days go by so slowly in the hospital, and every minute seems like an hour. Then they find you a heart, and everything happens all at once. Everything happens really fast.