

gravel driveway. The cottage was just off the main road out of Harting and was the largest in the village. Through the dripping beech hedge, she caught glimpses of the place. It was red brick, and had exposed beams, like many in the village, but the front door was crimson, with a long stained-glass panel of all colours, much brighter and swirlier than anything Kitty had seen in church, and obviously new. There was a large garage at the end of the drive, from which a loud *chuckchuck* noise was coming. Kitty recognised the sound: there'd been an electricity generator at the Macklows', where she'd worked as a kitchen maid after leaving school, too.

As she approached the house, Kitty noticed a woman's round-toed shoe on the front lawn, its high heel skewed in the mud. Bending down, she tugged it free. It was quite large for a woman's shoe, and the sole

"No one else will answer that advert, knowing who she is," Lou had said. "And I'll bet they want one person to do it all: cooking and skivvying both."

was shiny with wear. The inside was soft cream leather, the outside brilliant green and scuffed. She tapped it on the stones to remove some of the mud, then walked around to the back of the house.

Squinting through the rain, Kitty could see a stream and a line of willow trees at the end of the garden, before which was some kind of building that looked like a tiny house. Plants seemed to be everywhere, spilling over the paths without any apparent order; the large lawn needed a cut. Amongst the daffodils, Kitty caught a glimpse of a woman's rain-streaked backside, sculpted in stone.

She straightened her beret, tried to comb out the ends of her hair with her fingers, and knocked at the back door.

Immediately there was a series of high yaps, and when the door opened, a little grey dog with large ears, a straggly beard and black eyes jumped at Kitty's legs. Kitty stooped to scratch its head. When she was very young, her father had owned a docile Jack Russell, who'd never minded the sisters dressing him up in bonnet and bootees. The grey dog caught hold of Kitty's cuff and gently licked the rain from its edge.

'Don't mind Blotto, he gets excited with strangers.' A tall girl of about twelve stood in the doorway, chewing a piece of her long blonde hair. 'Who are you and why didn't you knock on the front door?'

Kitty straightened and held the shoe behind her back, suddenly worried that the girl would think she was stealing. The rain was coming down harder and she hadn't brought her umbrella. Her beret must look

flat and ridiculous by now, like a wet lily pad on her head.

'I've come about the position, Miss.'

'Position?'

'Is your mother — is Madam in?'

'Who?'

'Madam — Mrs Steinberg, Miss.'

The girl frowned and chewed. 'I don't know,' she said, not letting the strand of hair drop from her mouth. 'What have you got behind your back?'

Kitty glanced down at the girl's dirty knees. She was wearing a very short and ill-fitting tulle skirt with an orange cardigan.

'I found it on the front lawn, Miss.' Kitty held the shoe out to the girl, who shrugged.

'That's been there for ages,' she said.

Kitty let her arm drop. 'Have I come to the right place?'

'I don't know.' The girl bent down and scooped up the dog, which buried itself in

her hair and began licking her ear.

'There was a notice, in the *Herald*. For a plain cook, Miss.'

Rain was dripping into Kitty's collar now. She tried to see into the kitchen, but the girl shifted and blocked Kitty's view.

'Ellen never said anything to me.'

'Perhaps I'd better be going.'

The girl stared at Kitty for a moment. Her eyes were startlingly blue.

'But then, she never tells us anything, does she Blotto?' She kissed the dog on his nose and was licked right up her forehead. 'My name's Regina, but that's horrible so everyone calls me Geenie, and this is Blotto, he's a miniature schnauzer, which is a very good breed of dog.'

'I think I've made a mistake.'

She'd be dripping all the way back on the bus by the time it came.

'Geenie! Who's there?'

So she was American.

'She won't tell me her name and she's got your shoe.'

A tall woman came to the door. She was wearing an embroidered red jacket and wide-legged mauve slacks. Her hair waved above her high forehead and was the colour of brown bread. She wore no jewellery. Her nose was huge; the end of it looked like a large radish. She blinked at Kitty.

'What's your name, please?'

'Allen, Madam, Kate — Kitty — Allen. I've come about...'

The woman stuck out a hand and Kitty met it with the shoe.

'What's that?'

'It's been on the lawn for ages,' said Geenie.

New Releases

Blood Tender

Rachel Ingram
Tindal Street Press



Blood Tender is the first novel by Rachel Ingram. It's a story about personal choice, love and loss. Marlena has dual identity, being both Italian and British. She is working in a strip club in Catania, Sicily while her damaged past holds many secrets.

One night, she has a brief encounter with Jula, whose Romany ancestry transforms Marlena's life. She's drawn into a chilling relationship with Paulo and his psychotic friends, caught between crossfire and anti-gypsy prejudice and right-wing politics. She befriends a Romany woman, and through their friendship she learns more about herself.

After leaving Catania to find Jula, their relationship blossoms, but his creepy brother and difficult mother put many strains on the relationship.

Blood Tender is an excellent read, with bits of dialogue in Italian, it has a real authenticity and compelling plot. A highly recommended read.

Cherie Federico

The Invention of Everything Else

Samantha Hunt
Harvill Secker



A novel overflowing with an array of different forms of love, *The Invention of Everything Else* follows Nikola Tesla, a real-life eccentric inventor living out his final days in the brilliant art deco Hotel New Yorker. An exceptional mind who gave us radio and AC electricity, the Serbian scientist has long been forgotten, leading a solitary life of reflection about his failure to believe in love.

Enter Louisa Dewell, a hotel chambermaid drawn to Tesla by their shared love of pigeons. With a father mourning his dead wife and a new acquaintance who claims to know her closely, Louisa too feels dislocated from society, questioning the nature of relationships. The alternate voices of Tesla and Dewell's narration ensure that historical anecdote unites with rich imaginative discourse to create a dazzling tale set against a gritty mid-century New York City, which pays homage to an underappreciated genius. *The Invention of Everything Else* is a great read for the summer holidays.

Rachel Nardiello