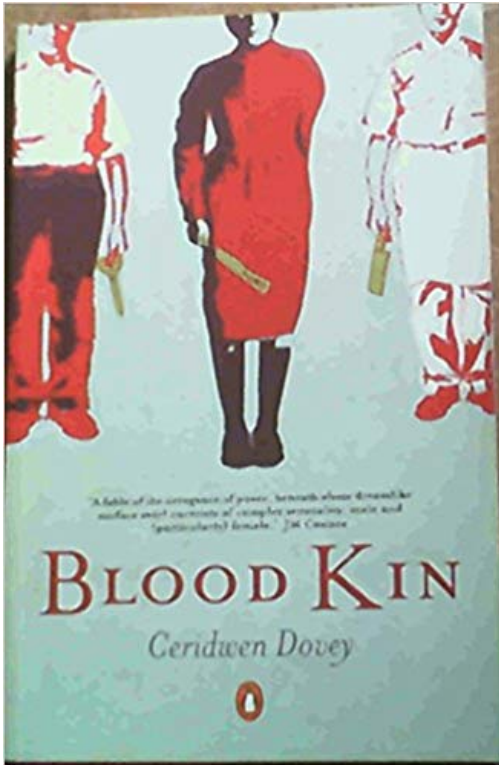


## Blood Kin by Ceridwen Dovey



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**Author:** Ceridwen Dovey

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A chef, a portraitist and a barber are taken hostage in a bloody coup to overthrow their boss, the President. They are held in a sparsely-furnished room, in a castle high above a nameless capital city. Far below them, chaos tears through the streets. The chef's daughter, the portraitist's wife and the barber's lover watch their men from the shadows. In such chaotic times, intimate relationships are as dangerous as political ones. As the old order collapses, so does the network of secrets and lies that hid the brutal truth about their own dark passions. Drawing her readers masterfully towards the novel's devastating climax, Ceridwen Dovey reveals how humanity's most atavistic impulses - vanity, obsession and vengeance - seethe, relentlessly, just beneath the veneer of civilization.



## Reviews of the Blood Kin by Ceridwen Dovey

Cemav

A political coup changes the government of a country and 3 men are taken into custody for reason they don't understand. As the story unfolds from each man's point of view an interesting story of the interrelationships evolves.

Cyregaehus  
ok read

Vikus

It was hard to follow the plot with all the different points of view. I felt indifferent towards most characters. There wasn't enough back story to get invested.

Fararala

From the first page I was really intrigued by this story - it has a great combination of insightful observations on human nature with a plot that moves along, interesting situations and characters. It is quite a unique book, refreshing - and I have recommended to others.

Gralmeena

When we think of the corruption of power, what typically comes to mind are the monsters of history: the dictators, the generalissimos, the presidents-for-life. While it's true that these sorts who do the most obvious damage, it's also true that, if power corrupts, it negatively affects everyone who benefits from it. In her *Blood Kin*, Dovey demonstrates just how far the blood line of political corruption extends by focusing on the lives of three of its indirect beneficiaries: the portraitist, barber, and chef.

These three characters remain unnamed throughout the entire novel--as is appropriate, first because they aren't luminaries but rather "ordinary," anonymous people; second because they're everyperson--they're you and me--in their capacity for being corrupted through association. In the novel's second part, these three anonymous voices are joined by three more, this time female. Moreover, none of the characters in the novel are named, neither the dictator whose political fall land the six members of the Greek chorus (so to speak) in turmoil, nor even the country where all this is taking place. Again, these details don't matter, because the country is everycountry.

One of the especially fine qualities of this novel is its willingness to wrestle with fundamental questions about human decency in the face of evil. The barber, painter, and chef, for example, each represent one possible response to tyranny: the barber is a coward, the painter pretends to be above politics, and the chef is a thuggish, willing collaborator. Given that these characters are everypersons, they serve as mirrors for readers that ask of us our own responses.

The eerie anonymity of the novel's characters and place gave me a taste, sometimes, of Kafka. The sparseness of language reminded me occasionally of Dovey's fellow-countryman, Coetze. The sheer absurdity of the characters occasionally reminded me of Lewis Carroll (especially, for some reason, his poem about the Walrus and the Carpenter). But the book, a modern passion play, is all Dovey's. I look forward to reading more of her.

Inth

Summary, no spoilers:

This book is told from the POV of several different characters, all of whom have some relationship with the three narrators from part one - a deposed president's chef, portraitist, and barber.

This book starts off with a wonderful, eerie feel to it. The country and background are wonderfully ambiguous, and although it takes place in fairly modern times, that is also vague.

You know that the president has been disposed, but you are not sure why, or whether any of these narrators are reliable, or are hiding some Big Secrets.

This is a quick, fun read. I will say that the finish did not live up to the suspense and the wonderful buildup, but it was enjoyable nonetheless. I also think that there are some clever ideas here, and I there were some passages that I reread just because they were so clever.

Recommended, with reservations.

Inerrace

This book is small so it was a quick read. I really enjoy novels about revolutions or politics or coups and things of that nature. This book had a little intrigue related to the coup, it had love, it had suspense. I enjoyed the way it was written. It starts off with three characters related to the president by their jobs. The second part relates to three women related to the first three characters we meet. It ends with us finding out about all the characters and how they are tied in together. It wasn't an amazing book that you will re-read over and over but it was a very good debut. I recommend reading it especially because of its quick length. If you don't like it at least you didn't spend too much time reading it.

I recently read this book and found it to be an enjoyable read. It is, perhaps, not the most original book, but it is engaging and well-written. My only minor complaint is that there are a lot of narrators (the narrators are constantly shifting from chapter to chapter) and I started getting them confused towards the end. Yet I have to admit, I am not immune to the charms of the idea of an unnamed country in an unnamed continent as a tool to illuminate aspects of the human condition (something like Ann Patchett's 'Bel Canto'). And I ended up copying a rather lengthy passage into my commonplace book (journal where I keep various quotes):

"From the earliest years of girlhood, it had been the dominant mystery in my life - whom would I marry? And when? - and suddenly it was solved, overnight, and the unseen force that had propelled me onward all those years wilted. I think that's why people stop caring when they get old: there are no more mysteries to solve; you know what job you've chosen, whether you've had children, how many, girls or boys, what their names are, what childbirth feels like, where you're living, how much money you earn, who your husband is, what he does, how often he makes love to you, whether your face wrinkled at the eyes or the mouth first. And then you get old enough to start putting pressure on younger people to solve their mysteries, because deep down you want them to suffer the same slow creep of boredom that you did."

I am certain this will prove to be a useful quote to me in the future, perhaps when someone I do not like too well proposes to me or an old person bugs me about having children. Here's to preserving (at least some of) life's mysteries!

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