



Blood Drive

This blood of mine is not red. It's burgundy, like the petal of an intense rose, obtrusive, passionate. Capillary blood is young and thin and inexperienced, straight from the heart to the skin, cut yourself and you'll bleed carmine, slash an artery and it will spurt out alizarin crimson, signalling crisis like a siren of colour. Veinous blood, however, is sluggish, old and disappointed.

Did you exercise before you came? the man asks me.
I nod, yeah, I've been running.
I can tell, he says. Your blood is almost purple, all the oxygen sucked from it.
Is that bad?
No, he says. It doesn't matter. Blood is blood. We're grateful. It's the plasma we're after. And you're O Positive. The universal donor.
Common as muck, then.
He smiles.
Perhaps. But it's the type we need most. We always run short. Because it's so common, everyone needs it. Don't tell anyone I said so, but the service is in crisis. That's why we have these drives.
Glad to oblige, I say, and close my eyes.
The truth is, I've been running for days. I haven't stopped running. Scared that if I stop, it'll catch up with me. Purple blood is the smallest price to pay.

Have you been exercising a lot today? the girl asks.
Yeah, been running. That's why it's purple. Deoxygenated. Does it matter?
No, she says, but you'll feel more tired. Make sure you have a nice cup of sugary tea and a biscuit before you go.

Best use the other arm, I say to the nurse. Better veins there.
Do you give blood often? she asks.
Mmmh, I say.

Have you already - ?
No, it's an insect bite.
Okay, he says, ties the band around my arm, and prepares the syringe.

My blood is very purple.
Are you all right? she asks. You look a bit pale.
I'm always pale, I say.
There's tea and biscuits at the front. Have a little rest before you go.

I ran before I came. I ran for the first blood wagon. Walked towards the second, then the third. Near crawled towards the fourth, just about made the fifth. They're parked around different parts of town, on this day, National Blood Donor Day. Don't think I'll make the sixth, so tired, so tired. They call it the Blood Drive, because the stocks are short. The service is in crisis.



Because it was night, her blood looked black; not red, not purple. It glowed like a tarry puddle under the dim light of the street lantern. I've been running for days, ever since I left her lying in the road and drove off, but I couldn't get that ink black swell out of my mind even after I sobered up. Can't get it out of my mind, got to get it out of my body until I have no more left to give, so I can't feel it in my veins rushing, crushing my heart, drowning it in a crisis-crimson tide.