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Song in the Dark

Christine Howe

University of Wollongong, chowe@uow.edu.au

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Song in the Dark

Abstract

Where do you end up when you have nowhere to go, and no one to turn to? Paul isn't thinking clearly. After destroying a series of relationships - with his friends, his flatmates, his mum - he finally hurts the one person he cares about most of all. And then he runs away. An extraordinary and heartrending story of love, betrayal, addiction and hope.

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SONG IN THE DARK

Christine Howe grew up on the Far South Coast of New South Wales, and currently lives in Wollongong. She has a PhD in Creative Writing and teaches at the University of Wollongong. *Song in the Dark* is her first novel.



**SONG
IN THE
DARK**

CHRISTINE HOWE

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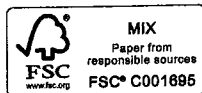
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*For my grandmothers, Olive Daisy Howe and
Enid Grace Edenborough.*

PROLOGUE

Sunlight streams in the windows. Hetty's sprawled on the floor in her nightie, and over by the armchair, smashed glass glints in the sun. Pain spreads inwards from her hip to her belly and up to her chest, flashing across the inside of her skull. She feels too heavy and old to move. The sun pouring through the window is a pounding dryness in her head and throat. The screen door down the hall is open, swaying backwards and forwards in the breeze. Hetty feels the room recede, drawn up into the harsh light.

'Mrs Taylor? Can you hear me?'

The brightness of the walls is overwhelming. Her elbows lie on smooth, cool sheets; her feet are cold. The air is dry and sharp with the smell of disinfectant. The back of her tongue feels like it's been plastered with sand and old tobacco, and she longs for something fresh and sweet from her garden that will clean the taste from her mouth.

Mulberries. A small boy's face and shirt covered in bright stains, and an offering of berries held up to her in a grubby hand. His eyes sparkle, big and brown and intent on sharing his

find with her. She bends down to take the gift and watches him ride away, his little muscular legs propelling the bike along at an ever-increasing speed, bumping across the backyard and pulling up with a spray of dirt underneath the mulberry tree. The berry bursts in her mouth and the juice leaves a red stain on her finger, the same colour as the roses growing beside the back porch.

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