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LifeBlood



Synopsis

Poisoned. Ruined. Silenced. A family story. The heart-breaking true story of one woman's fight for her family's future in the wake of one of the biggest medical scandals in the last 30 years. In 1988 Gill's daughter is born and she is transfused with four units of blood. She does not know that the blood is probably harvested from Scottish or American prisoners. The prisoners probably did not know that their blood was infected with the Hepatitis C virus nor that the virus is destroying their livers. For the first ten years, Hepatitis C has no symptoms save unreasonable fatigue. Gill is falling asleep a lot. She falls asleep against radiators, and raises blisters which leave both shoulders patchworked with scars. She falls asleep at the wheel, drives off the road into a culvert and writes off the car. She falls asleep so often that she worries she is missing her son and daughter growing up. When her daughter is seven years old, she awakens to a letter from the Blood Transfusion Service, advising her that her transfusion was contaminated. Gill is treated with Alpha Interferon. The treatment fails because it is too late. The lawyer explains she cannot sue, because it is too late. Gill explains this situation to the bank. The bank withdraws her overdraft facility. Minus a salary and with no overdraft facility, she appeals to the Inland Revenue. The Inland Revenue threatens to close her husband down. This is for you mum, say her children, slamming Chumbawamba's Tub-Thumping in the tape deck of the car she is about to sell. I get knocked down But I get up again You're never going to keep me down. She sells the car, they sell the cottage. Her health and finances recover long enough for her to resume her career, before the side effects of Alpha Interferon force her to resign. In a panic to secure tuition fees, the family flee to London. And there, in the British Library's Newspaper Archive, destitute again, Gill finds a quarter of a century of headlines. Lord Winston has called it the biggest treatment disaster in the history of the NHS. Despite years of warning from the United States, that Britain rely on safe blood donations from healthy volunteers, and build the new laboratory required to process them, nothing is done. When five thousand people are discovered to have been infected and two thousand die, the evidence is shredded. The slow poison of an official cover-up and an establishment refusal to hold a Public Inquiry almost finishes Gill off. They're never going to keep you down? insists her family. ^This is a story of medical incompetence, political malfeasance, financial hardship and real long-term horrible suffering. It is also one of the funniest, most buoyant, triumphant books I've read in ages - tragi-comedy at a very high level, delightful and admirable. ^ Sara Maitland, author of Three Times Table, Gossip from the Forest and A Book of Silence 'This is a tale of bad luck and its rippling effects, a portrait of a family stretched to its limits by uncertainty and lack of accountability. The misfortune itself is not unheard-of, yet Gill Fyffe's narrative approach is fresh and full of

surprises: no heartwarming clichés of love triumphing in adversity, no crusading campaigns. The result is writing that rings bold and true.' Jennie Erdal author of Ghosting and The Missing Shade of Blue More about Gill Fyffe

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Customer Reviews

Despite the horror of the situation that Gill Fyffe has found herself in the middle of, despite the injustice and the downright lies that she has suffered from, I found myself captivated by this book. Yes, I wanted to shout and scream on her behalf. I dearly wanted her to be able to expose the terrible cover-ups that went on at Government level, I wanted her and her family to be compensated for the years of hardship they had endured. I wanted her to be angry and fierce, and she is. She's very very angry, and determined and absolutely fearless about dealing with the establishment. I remember the 80s, when stories of AIDS and HIV dominated the media. The rumours, the misinformation, the total nonsense that we believed. Gill Fyffe gave birth to her daughter in 1988, slap bang in the middle of all of this. The birth was not easy, Gill lost a great deal of blood and

needed a transfusion. Despite her protests, her worries about infection, her belief in the AIDS story, she was persuaded by the medics that it was safe. That day was not only the first day of her daughter's life, it was also the day that would change Gill and her husband for ever. Gill never really felt well again after her daughter was born, and it was seven years later that she learnt that yes, she was infected, but she was not HIV positive. Gill had Hepatitis C and it was going to destroy her liver, it was incurable. LifeBlood is Gill's story of her battle that has raged for years and years. Her battle to expose the official cover-up about infected blood. Gill battled them all. She lost her job, the medication that was supposed to help her only made things worse, she and her husband had no money, they sold everything, they left their home, they fought on and on. Gill tells her story in a forthright and honest manner. She doesn't ask for sympathy, she is blunt. She despairs, she asks 'why me?', she rages at the unfairness and through it all she brings up her children and creates a loving family unit. Gill is often very funny. I don't think we are supposed to find a woman who cannot tolerate any light, who has to smother her face in thick emollient cream and cover her head funny at all, but Gill's writing does evoke laughter. Gill is not the only person to have been treated in this way. Thousands of people were involved, many died. LifeBlood is a fascinating insight into how difficult it can be to fight against the establishment. How the ordinary person can be reduced to just a number. It is also a story of humanity and bravery and hope and determination. Written straight from the heart, with passion.

Brilliant family story, it made me angry, sad, happy and laugh!! Struggled to put it down until I got to the end..and a brilliant end it was :)

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