On a Scale of One to Ten Ceylon Scott

2 Palmer Street, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DS chickenhousebooks.com

## Text © Ceylan Scott 2018

First published in Great Britain in 2018 Chicken House 2 Palmer Street Frome, Somerset BA11 1DS United Kingdom www.chickenhousebooks.com

Ceylan Scott has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

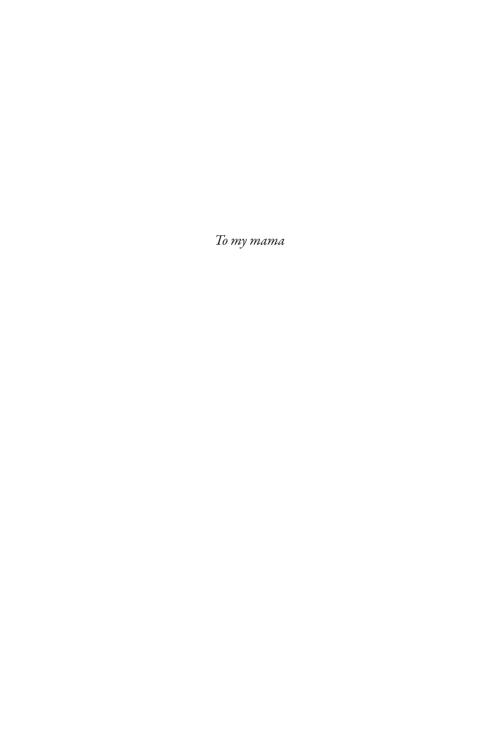
Cover design and interior design by Helen Crawford-White Typeset by Dorchester Typesetting Group Ltd Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

The paper used in this Chicken House book is made from wood grown in sustainable forests.

13579108642

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data available.

ISBN 978-1-911077-24-4 eISBN 978-1-911077-53-4





The two girls had been drinking since three, a swig for every crash of the river. The Golden Virginia they were smoking like shrivelled worms falling out of rolling paper. They tried to blow rings in the sticky air.

Failing.

Giggling.

Heads spinning. Could be the alcohol, could be the heat.

Now it was late, and the sky was pale pink, like the smooth inside of a conch. Cans of cider glinted in the grass and trees flopped like vast ivory wigs, heavy from the weeks of rain. Henna patterned the girls' bare arms, a memory of windswept festivals bleeding colour.

The blonde girl swigged.

The second girl made daisy chains the lengths of her legs. She picked them up and threw them into the river, where they floated like tiny lilies. A crow leered over a piece of overgrilled bacon from a discarded barbecue. It squawked, its black eyes shining. The girls talked.

The first girl beckoned to the surging river ahead of them, brown and black and foaming. They laughed. The second girl nodded.

Their fingers interlocked in a drunken clasp and they swayed as they stood up. They didn't put any shoes on. The weir in front of them shouted.

'We're such idiots,' said the blonde girl.

'Such idiots.'

They stumbled over soapy tangles of moss and their calves turned pink with the cold. The branches of a dead tree sprawled like bones and the blonde girl's faded lilac streaks echoed the sunset.

'Jump, Iris,' she said. 'I'll follow you.'