



**NO
BEAUTIFUL
SHORE**

A NOVEL BY

BEVERLEY STONE

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Cormorant Books

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*For Cindy M. Koury,
who taught me how to be a friend*

PREVIEW NOT FOR RESALE

HOW DO YOU LEAVE HOME?

It should be so simple, Bride thought. We are here, and the road leads away from here. She looked out the window and up the road. We could just put one foot in front of the other and follow it, around ponds, over hills, through passageways blasted through the cliffs and off the little island. Then across the causeway and onto the bigger island. And so it would go until eventually we would be somewhere. I believe, thought Bride. I believe in somewhere else.

“The way I see it, we got fuck-all to lose,” Wanda said, interrupting the vision of the road that rolled out in front of Bride. Wanda stood with her ass against the countertop, her arms folded across her chest. The little piles of buds lay on the kitchen table between the two girls, broken into lots by eye and hand and without scales. The smell in the air was musky, oily and organic. Wanda sat and took the small, mini-baggies from the box and started to fill them while she talked.

“There’s nothing here for us except the same jackasses we went to school with. Now they’re bigger. And maybe even dumber.” Wanda closed the baggies with her thumb and forefinger, the plastic

making a sound like a small insect fluttering its wings. “And no work at all since the fish plant closed.”

Bride sat at the table and held her teacup. A large plastic pan of bread dough sat behind Wanda on the countertop, rising in a band of sunlight. “We going to punch down that dough?” she asked, holding the cup to her chest and pointing with her chin.

Wanda looked at the clock. “Few minutes,” she said. “I’m almost done.” She leaned forward and scraped the remaining weed into a small pile, and then brushed it from the table into her hand. “A bit for later,” she said, as if to herself, sniffing it, and then shaking it into a baggie.

Wanda tucked her hands into the pockets of her jeans, pulling them tighter. The waistband was low enough to expose her prominent hip bones, emphasizing the swell of her pelvis against the stick-like boniness of her torso. She wore a grey hooded sweat-shirt, unzipped and tucked back behind her arms. Underneath, a lime green tank top drew attention to her complete lack of breasts. Her nipples, visible through the fabric, were larger than a boy’s, but otherwise her chest differed little. The bones of her face were hard, giving an angularity to what otherwise would have been a heart-shaped face with apple cheeks and a small chin. She had blue half-moons under her eyes.

Bride went back to the window. The pane of glass took up most of the front side of the little clapboarded house that sat beside the road coming up from the harbour. Vertical wooden racks for drying small, plump capelin lay against the fence. Lynfield had piled a collection of car parts next to the aquamarine K-car that sat up on blocks, the grass growing around it to the window levels. In the front of the house were the other reclaimed things he had dragged up the path: a washer that had rusted from harvest gold to rotten red-brown and a plastic baby bassinet in which Ivey had planted some hopeful flower back in the time when she actually left the house. The bassinet contained a dry twig in hard clay now. A dog-

house made of pressboard and green plastic awning sat near the fence, Cereal's unused, oversized chain attached to it.

Wanda continued to talk to Bride's back.

"The way I see it is this — I'll have the money together by the end of the summer. Your grandmother will give you the cash?"

Bride looked down at her sneaker.

"Yeah, she will."

"She was smart to sell your pop's boat when she did. Right before they closed the fishery." Wanda stopped brushing the table. "I got to get that bread punched down. They'll be hungry little fucks tonight."

Upstairs the floor creaked. Bride could see a look of irritation flash in Wanda's face.

"Fuck. Now she's up. Sniffing around for her medicine." Wanda pushed the chair back and the legs scraped the linoleum. She walked over to the stairwell and yelled up.

"Ivey? You stay up there out of my way. I'll bring you the pills."

The footsteps retreated to the back of the house with a slow and heavy tread, a footfall that implied a sigh with each movement.

"That'll shut her up."

"She never says anything, Wanda."

"That's because she's always wacked on these pills." Wanda shook the pill bottle. "You want to stay here?" She pointed toward the empty road, the quiet houses. "Everyone is gone."



A TRUCK STOPPED IN FRONT of the house and a door slammed. Bride turned and watched Lynfield Stuckless walk up the path. He was drunk. He was walking very carefully to avoid staggering, lifting his feet high, keeping his back straight. The small rust-coloured dog flew over the grass to meet him, barking in falsetto, careful to keep a large circle around the man.

"You alright?"

Lynfield staggered two or three steps off the path as he heard her voice.

“Oh my, Wanda. I didn’t see you there. I think my eyes are getting worse.”

“It’s Bride, Mr. Stuckless. Wanda’s in the house with the boys.”

“Bride. You staying for supper? Wanda got supper on? Good boy, Cereal,” he said, not looking toward the dog.

“In the oven. I’m going home though.”

Lynfield stood in front of her, wobbling and staring at her with the empty look that blind people have. Bride thought, how is it you can know when someone can’t see you? It’s not just because they can’t focus. It’s more like a door into them has been shut.

“If you could just put your arm on mine and take me over to the porch, that would be great.”

Bride reached out and led him over to the front of the house. He put his hand on the worn floorboards, stroking the space to make sure that it was clear, and then lowered himself onto it. His knees fell outward and his spine bowed as he let go of the straightness in his back.

“Bride, my eyes is getting worse. That big black spot is getting bigger every day. I can hardly see to get up the path nowadays.”

“Hmm.”

“You know, I can’t see all the bags that people put out sometimes, and Morris has to yell from the cab of the truck to tell me where they are.”

Lynfield reached behind him and pulled a flask out of his pocket. He unscrewed the cap and took a drink.

“He’s a good head, Morris. Lots of fellows wouldn’t have hired me. Morris just laughs about it. He sits there in behind the wheel of the garbage truck and says ‘hot’ or ‘cold’ if I miss one.”

Lynfield paused a moment and nodded his head. “Eventually I find ’em though. The bags usually stink enough that I don’t need to see ’em to find ’em.”

“Maybe I should go help Wanda.”

“Some good girl, Wanda. What with her mother sick with the nerves and everything.”

Wanda’s voice came out of the kitchen window, “Sit still you little fucker.”

Lynfield shrugged. “Mouth on her though.”

“Yes, Mr. Stuckless.”

“Some good now that she’s finished school that she will be here full time with us. Don’t know what we would do without Wanda. Ivey just can’t handle it.”

Bride smiled and nodded. Then she thought, he can’t see that, so then she said, “Yes,” and went up the stairs and into the house. Wanda was bandaging Jason’s hand in the kitchen.

“... and if he ever says again to hold something while he swings an axe at it, you tell him to fuck right off, you hear?”

Jason nodded in silence, slipped off the chair and went up the stairs.

Wanda turned to look at Bride. “We got to talk about when we go.” She took a pack of cigarettes off the counter and lit one. She tilted back her head, exhaled.

“School’s over now. We got nothing to keep us here. I need a bit more time to get my shit together, make a bit more money. But I’ll be ready by the end of the summer.” Wanda paused to inhale. “You got to talk to your mother.”

Bride looked away. “Yeah.” She paused. “A bit later.”

Wanda made a small laughing sound as she exhaled.

“She’s going to think I’m running away from her.”

“Well, you are,” said Wanda.

“Is that what you’re doing? Running away from home?”

“Fuck no. All this?” Wanda stretched out her arm.

“I’m sorry, Wanda.”

“You got nothing to be sorry for. You’re running too. Nobody runs toward anything. They’re all just trying to get the fuck away from something.”

“Your dad thinks you’re going to stay here.”

“Surely you’re shitting me.”

“Nope. Just said how glad he was that you were done school and you’re staying home to look after everyone.”

Wanda walked away from Bride and looked out the window. “Here? He expects me to stay here?”

“Did you guys talk about it?”

“Me and who? They’re both totally checked-out of reality.” Wanda knocked on the window with the knuckle of her hand. “Hey,” she yelled through the glass. “Keep that little fucker in the yard. Close up the gate so he can’t get out in the road.”

“You didn’t think they’d notice?”

“No. They’ll notice. I just thought I’d be gone by the time they did.” Wanda started to take the bags of weed off the table and drop them in a khaki green shoulder bag.

“Wanda, who’ll look after them when you’re gone?”

“They’ll be fine.”

“They can’t be fine on their own.”

Wanda paused for a moment and then said, “Fuck, talk about running away. The two of them walked a long time ago.” She threw her bag into the corner. “You know what, Bride? I think home ran away from us. Half the people who used to live here are gone now. In fact, I think home ran away from me around the time I was born.”

“Okay. Jesus. Stop the drama. I gotta go.” Bride pulled her coat on. “Wanda, we forgot the dough.”

Wanda stared at her for a moment, and Bride thought, she has the same look as her father, only he really, truly can’t see out.

“Fuck. I’m too young to be worrying about bread dough.”

PRAISE FOR *NO BEAUTIFUL SHORE*

“A vibrantly rich and alive novel.

The characters had me from page one and kept hold of me right to the end.

Beverley Stone writes with beauty, and even better, with bite.” — Eliza Clark,
author of *Miss You Like Crazy*

“In this novel, two young women try to escape their outport village, as well as relationships that have turned to drudgery and the confinement of their poverty. You want them to succeed not because they are perfect but because Beverley Stone’s gifts of language and tough honesty have made them so achingly alive. A good and wise first novel.”

— Fred Stenson, author of *The Trade* and
Lightning

“With confident prose, Beverley Stone draws us into the world of two young women holding on to their dreams, on the very edge of existence in outport Newfoundland. *No Beautiful Shore* is beautifully written and moving.”

— Rui Umezawa, author of *The Truth About Death and Dying*

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