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POEMS &  
READINGS  
FOR  
FUNERALS

JULIA WATSON



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*Poems and Readings for Funerals*

Julia Watson was born in Wales, and read English and Drama at Exeter University.

Her many television appearances include several series of *Casualty* for the BBC playing Dr Baz – she recently paid a final visit to Holby! – and Thames TV's long-running comedy series *Never the Twain* with Donald Sinden and Windsor Davies. She has worked extensively in theatre, and has appeared in *Danton's Death*, *Major Barbara*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Wild Honey* for the National Theatre.

In 2003 she received a Grammy nomination (Best Performance) for *The Woman and the Hare* with the Nashe Ensemble.

Julia Watson is married to the poet David Harsent. They live with their daughter in Barnes, south-west London.



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for Funerals*

EDITED BY JULIA WATSON



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## Foreword

From time to time my husband David Harsent and I are asked for suggestions for readings. As poet and actress respectively, we are thought to know about these things – in reality we have to do the research too. Each occasion has its own specific requirements. Thus the idea for this collection came about.

These poems and readings have been chosen to be read aloud at a service celebrating someone's life, although the very short pieces are also suggestions for inclusion on a printed order of service.

Funerals, unlike weddings, are rarely planned. Even with the knowledge that death may come soon, no one wants to give up hope of that life and organize the sending-off. My father, knowing he was dying, planned his funeral – the readings, music, everything. It gave us, his family, some comfort in those incredibly difficult days following his death to know that we were giving him the exit he wanted.

Sometimes friends who are not used to reading in public come for advice. It is important to be very familiar with the piece. Practise it aloud in private, checking the rhythm if it is a poem, remembering to acknowledge the line breaks and being clear about what it all means. It is often not possible to have a practice in the place where the service is being held, and only in the larger spaces will microphones be offered. The way to ensure that one is speaking loudly enough is to do the reading to the people at the back. This makes one naturally raise the voice. I have attended several services where the readings have been inaudible. A lot of effort has gone into the selection – it is therefore important that the piece is heard. But at the end of the day it is not about the performance; it is all about the celebration of someone's life.

*Julia Watson*



*Remember me when I am gone away . . .*

Seasons turn and rivers flow  
Mourn me hard and let me go.

'Last Wish',  
Asa James (1972-)

