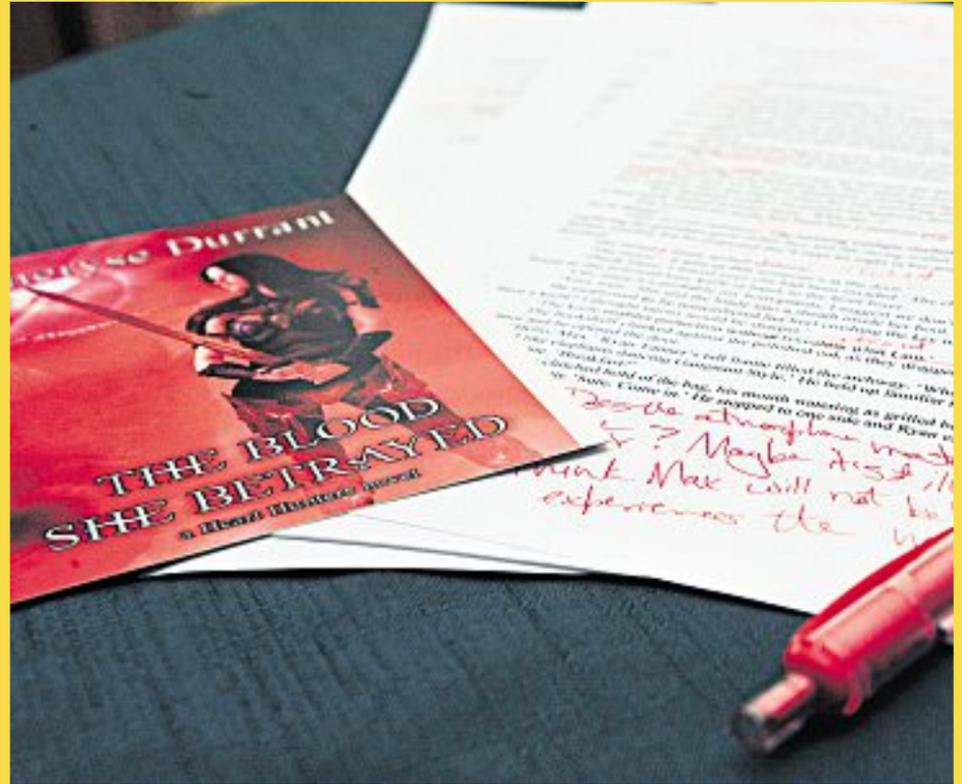


WEEKEND



WELCOME to the WEEKEND section, where in Explore, you can discover why Townsville is a winning place to visit and get some great mates' rates deals. Plus discover the delights of the Greek Islands. In Easy Eating, learn how to knock up a great-tasting Asian soup and ramble among the grapevines in Grape Expectations. Then dig into our Gardening section and kick back with Relax and Screenlife.



WRITEFEST: From red pen corrections to promotional book-cover postcards, Cherie Curtis looks forward to the release of her first novel, *The Blood She Betrayed*. Photo: Max Fleet/NewsMail

A little girl's big dream is coming true

Photos of the week



A unique violet in Bundaberg. The flower has two colours on the same plant.

PHOTO: BILL WATSON



ABOVE: Cloud formation at sunrise.

PHOTO: BETTY LOUIS

LEFT: A beautiful old Bunya pine with the engravings dating back to 1923.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Send your favourite photos to editorial@news-mail.com.au with some details including the photographer's name.



From notepad to being published, author held onto her dream

VANESSA MARSH

WHEN Cherie Curtis was just seven years old, she marched up to her mother and declared she was going to be an author when she grew up.

Thirty-three years later, that little girl's childhood dream is on the cusp of reality, with her first book set to hit shelves in just a few weeks.

Mrs Curtis, who will go by the pen name of Cheryse

Durrant, has landed a three-book contract with Clan Destine Press for her urban fantasy Heart Hunters series.

She's come a long way for someone whose dream began to blossom in a moving vehicle, as her little sister Tammy sat nearby belting out tunes at the top of her lungs.

"Cherie started off her writing career sitting in the back of the car cross-legged with a notebook and pencil in her hands writing down whatever it was Lorraine (her mum) and I were talking about or whatever she saw that was interesting," Cherie's proud father John Murphy said.

And while her writing space has changed to the comfort of the Bargara home she shares with husband Shane, her dream has not.

"There's a lot of steps in taking your book from something that is well written, accurate and technically a book of fiction to something that is a magical world that keeps people turning the pages in your world for 90,000 words," Mrs Curtis said.

The book, *The Blood She Betrayed*, follows heroine from another world Shahkara and her journey on Earth to save

her home world from the heart-devouring Taloners.

Much of the book is based in Brisbane, with our town also receiving a mention.

"It even has a mention of Bundaberg Rum on the first page," Mrs Curtis said.

"Shahkara was born as a short story that was unable to be contained and then my goal was to write a brilliant stand-alone novel – and then the other books just tumbled out.

"It's Hollywood in a book. It's action, romance and fantasy."

Mrs Curtis has received plenty of attention for her book, with New York Times Best Seller and author of *The Vampire Diaries* LJ Smith publicly endorsing the series.

"I entered a competition that LJ Smith was judging and Lisa wrote back and said 'I really really love your book but I'm disqualifying you because I think you're too good to be an amateur'," she said.

"She loved it and she's been asking for the sequel."

After completing Louise Cusack's Year of the Novel course in 2009, Mrs Curtis pitched her manuscript to Harper Collins acquisition