The *Sanguinaccio* (Blood Sausage)

In the meanwhile, their father had appeared on the kitchen threshold, brushing the blood from his hand on his pant legs, and nodding to the guests to come forward, to come in. They came in and, despite the heat, took places around the hearth.

Simone looked around, greeting the things he knew so well: the smoke-blackened walls, the low roof, the matting on which he had slept deeply as a teenager, the rough benches, the cork containers, the leathers and the stones, and all the other sheepfold objects that smelled of cheese and leather, making the rough room resemble a tent of biblical shepherds. Opposite the little window that showed the green wood, you could see, through the open door, the nearby little room, which also had a door opening towards the clearing: the clean environment, with Marianna’s white tiny bed, the table, a little picture and a mirror on the wall that contrasted with the one in the kitchen. (…)

“Your father made me kill a sheep: tell me what I have to cook, and whether I must prepare the blood sausage. Consider that I have no spearmint, just two bay leaves. Here they are.”

She showed them to him with her fingers covered with blood, and she also went to take the salt, the cheese, and a little bit of ground barley bread. Everything was mingled
with the blood gathered in the sheep’s ventricle, clean like a velvet bag; and the ventricle was then stitched with a cane needle and placed under a heap of hot ash to be cooked. (...)

When dinner was ready, she sat among the men, around the meal set on the floor, in front of the open door. The table was a cork board, a whole tree bark, broken and levelled; also the trays and the containers were made of cork, and the cups of horn, carved by the shepherds; the big unperturbed servant, working as a carver, breaking the roast bones with his strong fingers. When the portions were ready, he pushed the chopping board in front of Marianna and said with a somber voice:

“Put on the salt.”

And she picked up the salt between her fingertips, and as gently as she had mixed the bay leaves with the blood, she sprinkled it, thoughtful, with her head bowed on the fragrant roast.

They were eating in silence. The red moon was rising like a quiet fire among the cork trees over there, at the edge of the clearing, lightening the fields with a blood sausage brightness; the woman, with her scarlet corset, made even redder by the light of the hearth flame, shone in the middle of the figures of men, like the moon among the trunks.

After the roast, the servant took the blood sausage from the middle of the ash, cleaned it a bit, broke it, and again offered the chopping board to Marianna.

“Put on the salt.”

(from the novel Marianna Sirca, 1915)