Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

The Good Life

Written by Martina Cole

Published by Headline

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

MARTINA COLE

THE GOOD LIFE

Headline Publishing Group

headline

Copyright © 2014 Martina Cole

The right of Martina Cole to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in 2014 by
HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP

1

Apart from any use permitted under UK copyright law, this publication may only be reproduced, stored, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, with prior permission in writing of the publishers or, in the case of reprographic production, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

'The Good Life'
Music: Sacha Distel
French lyrics: Jean Brousolle
English lyrics: Jack Reardon
With the authorization of Prosadis

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Cataloguing in Publication Data is available from the British Library

Hardback ISBN 978 1 4722 0095 2
Trade paperback ISBN 978 1 4722 0096 9

Typeset in ITC Galliard Std by Palimpsest Book Production Ltd, Falkirk, Stirlingshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Papers used by Headline are from well-managed forests and other responsible sources



HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP
An Hachette UK Company
338 Euston Road
London NW1 3BH

www.headline.co.uk
www.hachette.co.uk

Headline Publishing Group

Prologue

There is love of course. And then there's life, its enemy.

Jean Anouilh

Headline Publishing Group

Jenny woke up early. She lay in her bed for long moments, savouring the warmth before suddenly remembering why she was so anxious. Today was the day she had been waiting for for a long time. Now it had finally arrived, she wasn't sure how it was going to go, what to expect and whether, at the end of it, she would regret the choices she had made all those years ago. She felt physically sick, wondering if she had made the right ones. Truth be told, she was terrified – terrified but also excited.

She stroked her body, feeling the softness of her skin, cupping her breasts which were still full even without the firmness of youth. The last time he had held her felt like a dream. She had always been so in love with him she had felt it was like a mania. Cain Moran had been everything she had ever wanted. He still was – but would he feel the same after so many years away from her, away from the real world? Would he still carry the guilt over the brutal death of their boy, his namesake? Would it always be there between them?

She missed her boy every day; it was like a vicious wound that never completely healed. A song, a word, an image, brought the pain back in seconds, each time bigger and more heart-breaking than before. She knew it had to be discussed, finally

Headline Publishing Group

be put to bed, but it wasn't a conversation she was looking forward to. In the prison it had been too difficult to talk openly about it, and at the funeral there had not been time to discuss it properly. They were both so full of grief, so full of heartache. Even though they had spent one precious night together, and he had done murder for her that day, part of her had held a grudge for what he had cost her. Would they get past it? Could they really take up their lives again after all this time?

Well, tonight she would know the answers. She got out of her bed and went through to her kitchen. As she put the kettle on she looked out of the window; dawn was breaking and lighting up the sky. How different her view was now from when she was a girl growing up on an East London council estate. In those days, there was no escape from looking into other people's homes and lives, as they had looked into hers. She had watched so many petty dramas play out: fights, arguments, police raids, lovemaking and, of course, children of all ages playing and living their lives as best they could – as she had herself. A drunken mother and a father she had never once clapped eyes on didn't make for the greatest of upbringings.

But then she met Cain Moran and everything had started to make sense to her. She had fallen for him in such a big way, and he had been her life ever since, even though he had not been an actual part of it for many years.

She had lost so much – her only child, her youth – but while she had Cain – or the promise of him – she had been able to cope. Now, faced with the reality that he was finally being released, the fear had set in. Would he find her old? Would he feel the need for a woman with less baggage and tighter skin, who still had the freshness of youth on her side? Because he could easily find one. Men like Cain Moran were

Headline Publishing Group

magnets to certain women – she knew that better than anyone. Twenty-five years was a long time to be apart, but it had passed. That was the thing – eventually the time did pass and, now it had, Jenny prayed that Cain would still want her as she wanted him. Because, God, how she wanted him.

Caroline Moran was tall, heavy breasted and dangerously fat. She loved her food and she wasn't ashamed to admit it – she was always eating something. People seeing her now for the first time in years would be amazed at the change. As a young woman she had been magnificent – long dark hair, hazel eyes and a slender body with curves in all the right places. She had been a head turner in every way.

Now, as she sat in her transport café, eating a huge fried breakfast, shovelling the food into her mouth, her son Michael watched her with distaste. She was colossal but no one had the guts to mention it any more; it was pointless anyway – she just lost her rag. Food was Caroline's only pleasure, and she wouldn't listen to any kind of criticism or warning about her health. As far as she was concerned she was fine; Michael had learned long ago not to rock *that* particular boat. The strange thing was, she still looked after her skin and her hair. Her make-up was always perfect, her nails manicured, and painted her signature red. If she dropped the weight, no doubt she would still be the beautiful woman she once was.

Caroline finished chewing her food before saying aggressively, 'So, God Almighty is coming home today, is he?'

Michael nodded. Taller than average, with thick dark hair and deep blue eyes, he had the handsome, Irish look about him just like his father. He couldn't disguise their similarity in looks which he knew must be hard for his mother. She loathed

Headline Publishing Group

his father, a man who had dumped them without a backward glance when he had found something better.

'Are you going to be OK, Mum?'

Caroline snorted. 'Fuck him! He means nothing to me, the two-faced filthy rat. He made his choice – for all the luck she brought him! I told him that God pays back debts without money, and look what happened. It all went wrong for him when he met her.'

The venom in her voice wasn't lost on her son; he knew that no matter what she said, deep down, she still loved the man. It was the weakness of women. There had never been another man for her and at first it had not been for want of suitors. They had come thick and fast. She had had a lot to offer – not just in looks, but because she was also very well set up. A good businesswoman, she had revamped this café, turning it into an American-themed diner, even down to the red leather booths and iconic Wurlitzer. The place was always packed – not just with the usual lorry drivers, but also with families who came there to drink in the atmosphere and enjoy the excellent food. And the food was top notch – Caroline made sure of that.

Headline Publishing Group

Caroline buttered more toast and spread it thickly with jam. Taking a large bite, she chewed it thoughtfully for a few seconds, before saying seriously, 'I bet you he comes to see me. I bet you he can't help himself and, when he does, I am going to tell him a few home truths.' She sounded almost pleased at the prospect, and Michael Moran simply sighed, resigned to her delusions.

David Hannan had been up since the dawn, and he sat nursing a pot of coffee until it was time for him to leave. He was

thrilled to be the one chosen to pick up Cain Moran – the man was a legend! He had been banged up for years, but before that he had been one of the hardest men in the Smoke, amassing a fortune that no one seemed able to find. He was David's idol growing up, and his father had told him many a story of the man's heroic exploits.

In honour of the occasion his suit was freshly cleaned, and his shirt and tie were brand new. He knew he looked good – a keen body builder, he took care of himself in every way. The birth of his first child – a little girl called Mae – had given him an added impetus to do well for himself. Today he'd be in receipt of a big wedge for a few hours' work. Even so, he was nervous. After all, a man changed after years behind the door. It was only natural, David supposed. Away from family and friends, living in a vacuum, it must have been hard. Even in the poke, Cain Moran's legend had still grown. The man had thwarted two attempts on his life, and each time he had come out on top. Not an easy thing in such a controlled environment, especially one ruled, more often than not, by the people incarcerated there in the first place.

David hoped Moran was up for a few words; it would be fabulous to get his advice on life and how to best present yourself. But either way, he was just glad he'd be able to tell his grandkids that he had spent some time alone with the great man – that in itself was worth a fortune to him. He knew it would raise his profile, make people take notice. He was determined to make sure he did a good job, and prove himself worthy of the trust placed in him.

Joe Biggs was annoyed. Even though he had always known this day would come, he wasn't happy about it. If ever a man should

Headline Publishing Group

be dead it was Cain Moran – God knew it wasn't for want of trying. He was like a fucking cat – lives coming out of his arsehole. Joe had to sit back and see how Cain was going to react to his new-found freedom, and if he was going to try and re-establish himself as a Face to be reckoned with. There were still plenty of people willing to stand behind him – his rep made sure of that. He had sat out a big lump and that alone demanded respect. Even Joe had to give him credit for that.

He had arranged Cain's pick-up; he had a good young lad called David Hannan on the case – he wasn't going to send some old lag to pick him up – and he had arranged a drink in a local hostelry. Joe had to do this – it was expected from him as the main Face about town. But having to kowtow to that fucking old has-been rankled. The man had taken everything from his family once; he had never forgotten that, and he never would. Fucking piece of dirt, he was. He had his own personal beef with Cain 'High and Mighty' Moran. The man was a fucking piece of shite, but he was also a very charming and enigmatic piece of shite. Men and women loved him – he was both macho and good-looking – but he was still a piece of work when he wanted to be and people had forgotten that. But not Joe. He would never forget just what he was dealing with in Cain Moran.

Headline Publishing Group

He was not about to let everything he had strived for be taken away – he had worked too long and too hard to let that happen. He would play it by ear for the time being, see what the man's intentions were, and then decide the best way to proceed. After all, Moran was a wily, strong old bastard, and not someone to be dismissed in any way, shape or form.

Joe Biggs might be a lot of things, including vicious, vindictive and violent, but he was also capable of great patience when

the time called for that. It was now time to sit back and see what occurred, keep his ear to the ground, and wait his opportunity. He could wait – after all, he had already waited long enough. So what was another few months?

Cain Moran had packed – not that he had much to take with him. Most of his stuff had already been distributed around his fellow cons. All he had left were a few books and a small amount of clothing. He couldn't admit it, of course, but he felt a trickle of fear at being allowed home. After so long he knew this was natural. But fear was an alien concept to him, and he felt it acutely.

He *wanted* to get out, that was a no-brainer, but it was how the world would be now that bothered him. He had been away a long time and he had not had access to the outside world except through visitors and going to his boy's funeral.

It was a completely different world he was going back to. He had read the papers, educated himself, absorbed every piece of information that he could lay his hands on, but the bottom line was he had no real idea of how the world had changed. How could he? It was a never-ending sameness in prison, each day merging into the next. TV wasn't enough to prepare him, and the probation service had not allowed him any weekend leave. A few days ago he was just told to pack because he was on the out – simple as that.

There was such a lot to look forward to, most of all his Jenny, his beautiful Jenny. He couldn't wait to hold her in his arms again; it had been what he missed the most, just holding her close. It wasn't even the sex – just being near her, the smell of her, the softness of her skin. He closed his eyes in anticipation; that at least he could look forward to – a night

Headline Publishing Group

together at last. No sounds of men groaning in their sleep, no clattering of POs as they made their rounds, no more lying awake looking at nothing, willing the dawn to break so he could get out of his cell, dreaming of decent food and a drink in a real pub, wondering what the rest of the world was doing, wishing he were still a part of it.

Now it was here – what he had wanted for those long years – and he felt ambivalent. Part of him was raring to get out, while the thought of what he might find was holding him back. Still, he had no choice now; he was on the out. He just had a few debts to pay – both good ones and bad ones. He had to see Joe Biggs and sort out what they were going to do about the situation they found themselves in.

That was the first thing on his agenda – make the bastard pay if he didn't toe the party line. The thought instantly made him feel better, made him feel powerful.

He was whistling as he went to the day room to make himself a final cup of coffee.

Headline Publishing Group