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...

For All Our Tomorrows

Written by Freda Lightfoot

Published by Harlequin MIRA

All text is copyright © of the author

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

All rights reserved including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form. This edition is published by arrangement with Harlequin Books S.A.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, locations and incidents are purely fictional and bear no relationship to any real life individuals, living or dead, or to any actual places, business establishments, locations, events or incidents. Any resemblance is entirely coincidental.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the prior consent of the publisher in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Harlequin MIRA is a registered trademark of Harlequin Enterprises Limited, used under licence.

Published in Great Britain 2015
by Harlequin MIRA, an imprint of Harlequin (UK) Limited,
Eton House, 18-24 Paradise Road,
Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1SR

© 2005 Freda Lightfoot

ISBN 978-1-848-45422-4
55-0715

Harlequin (UK) Limited's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes conform to the legal environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Chapter One

The oranges rolled across the narrow street, bouncing on the cobbles and bumping seductively against the feet of the two young women. Children were running helter-skelter in the Cornish sunshine, giggling with excitement, eager to catch one of these glorious golden orbs as they were tossed and rolled with such reckless generosity.

Gasping in amazement, the younger of the two women snatched one up, to sink her pretty white teeth into the flesh. 'This is wonderful!'

Juice spurted, running down her chin to leave little orange blobs on the bodice of her print frock as she greedily stuffed segments of fruit into her mouth. Not that she appeared to care one bit, nor that her expertly coiled, soft auburn hair had shaken loose from its pins as she'd run down the steep hill of Lostwithiel Street. All she wanted was to keep pace with the trucks, jeeps, gun carriers and goodness knows what else which were parading through Fowey town, and catch another of these glorious fruits.

She lifted her face to the grinning man high above her in his vehicle, and laughed.

Her sister too was laughing as she chased one orange, clearly heading for the town quay, while tossing a second to the child running excitedly beside her.

Other women were doing exactly the same. After four years of war, many of the children had never seen such a thing in their lives before and their mothers had almost forgotten the delicious, bittersweet taste.

Nor had they ever seen men like these.

These men didn't carry the weariness of war on their shoulders, nor were they dressed in utilitarian battle dress that didn't quite fit. Even their vehicles were blazoned with stars and nicknames such as 'Just Jane', 'Lucky Lucy' and 'Cannonball'. These men were fresh and smart and young, bristling with sexual energy which not a girl or woman in the crowd didn't recognise as such.

Bette Tredinnick certainly did. Her hazel eyes were teasingly provocative as she tore the skin off the fruit with her teeth. 'More please. Give me more!'

'What's it worth, honey?' the marine mischievously asked her.

'Name your price,' Bette shouted back.

'Hon, the captain would kill me with his own bare hands if he heard me make such a suggestion in a public place.'

Bette made a show of innocence as she shielded her eyes against the sun and gazed back along Fore Street in the direction of the jeep that was leading the parade. 'Take a chance. He isn't listening and I'm open to all reasonable offers.'

'See you later then, sweetheart, down by the quay.'

‘I’ll be there,’ she called, just as his vehicle swept away to be swamped by the crowd.

Sara Marrack, having made sure that both her children were each provided with the delicious treat, began to delicately peel her own orange, for once making no comment about her younger sister’s bold flirtatiousness but laughing with her, enjoying this unexpected holiday along with the rest of the flag-waving townsfolk.

Bette should be in their mother’s hairdresser’s shop, cutting and styling, and herself doing chores at The Ship Inn. But women in curlers were openly joining in the fun and the pub was fortunately closed till lunch time, so here they were, along with everyone else, stealing time off work to witness the arrival of these American marines.

They’d come by train only days ago, arriving at Fowey Station in the pouring rain on a gloomy autumn day. Now the sun was shining and everyone had turned out to give them a hearty welcome.

There had been times when no one had quite believed that this moment would ever come, in spite of the preparations made in recent months by the Construction Battalion, the Sea Bees as they were called, whose task it was to prepare quarters for the expected friendly invasion. They’d erected rows and rows of Nissen huts up at Windmill, a field high above town, cleared one or two beaches of mines and coils of barbed wire so that training for some operation or other could safely take place.

No one quite knew what that might be, but it had something to do with all this talk of the Second Front.

Sara didn’t care that there were jobs she should be doing, floors to scrub, beer pumps to flush out, or that when Hugh returned from his regular weekly trip to the brewery he would take her to task for neglecting them. What did it matter if she got a bit behind for once? This was an historic day for the town. Even the teachers recognised it as such, and had honoured it by closing the school and allowing their pupils to run down the hill to meet these new arrivals who had come to help win the war.

None of the other businesses in town were doing much trade either. The women who, moments before, had been queuing with their empty shopping baskets outside the greengrocers, hoping for half a cabbage or a turnip or two for the stock pot, were now revelling in the acquisition of much choicer fruit. Children no longer had their noses pressed against Herbie Skinner’s ice-cream shop window. Even an elderly man in the process of being fitted for a new suit at Williams the tailors, stood grinning on the pavement, uncaring of the pins holding it in place.

The townsfolk of Fowey had long since grown accustomed to disruption, to anti-aircraft guns, to the boom across the mouth of the River Fowey which had to be negotiated to allow for the passage of friendly shipping. They

no longer paid any heed to Pillboxes and searchlights, and took for granted the activities of the River Patrol on constant lookout for spies and saboteurs. They accepted the need for muster points and fire wardens, the ARP and all manner of other defence measures deemed necessary in case the posters plastered all over town warning of the threat of invasion, proved to be correct.

IF THE INVADOR COMES, screamed the headline. WHAT TO DO—AND HOW TO DO IT. STAY PUT was the chief message, instructing civilians not to block the narrow Cornish lanes which would need to be kept clear for military movement, for OUR OWN BOYS TO COME TO YOUR AID.

But it was the American marines who had come with their amphibious craft, rolling into their small town as if they owned the place. They were now the occupying force and the people of Fowey couldn't believe their luck.

As the last of the trucks disappeared along Fore Street, teachers began the difficult task of shepherding reluctant children back to their desks, shops opened their doors for business again and normal life resumed, at least momentarily.

Bette returned to the salon and a frustrated Nora Snell, her small round head still tethered to the permanent waving machine which was in turn fixed to the ceiling.

'Did you miss them?' Bette mischievously enquired, recognising the expression of frustration in the woman's inquisitive little eyes. 'What a pity.'

'Not so's you'd notice,' said Nora, as ever determined to have the last word. 'I could see everything through your window here, though a good clean would do it no harm at all. If you can find the time midst all your gallivanting.'

'I'll do my best, Nora, to be a model citizen, as you and the town council expect, though I can't promise. My talents lie in other directions, rather than on the domestic front. Isn't that right, Mam?' Bette added, as her mother breezed in and reached for her pink, floral overall from its hook behind the door, before getting back to work.

Sadie gazed upon her daughter with a jaundiced eye. 'I'd say the day you willingly lift a finger to do a bit of cooking or cleaning, or any sort of hard work for that matter, will be the day pigs start to fly and it rains pink elephants.'

'There you are, what did I tell you?' said Bette, apparently well satisfied with this damning opinion upon her character.

* * *

Sara too was hurrying back to work. It was as she ran across Trafalgar Square that she slipped. A final vehicle, an army jeep had unexpectedly rounded the corner just as she approached the front door of the pub. Sara took a step back, attempting to avoid it but her foot skidded on a piece of orange peel left carelessly about, and she went flying,

falling with an uncomfortable and embarrassing bump onto her backside.
She lay winded for a second, half aware that the vehicle had stopped and the driver was rushing across to her. She put up a hand and managed a smile. ‘I’m all right. Nothing broken. Don’t panic.’
‘Here, let me help you. I didn’t see you there. Jeez, I nearly ran you down. You’d have been Spam, for sure.’
Sara couldn’t help but laugh and then winced as a pain shot through her behind. ‘Oh dear, perhaps I spoke too soon. I do feel a bit sore. Bruised on fragile portions of my anatomy, I should think.’
‘And it’s all my fault.’
‘Well, you were driving rather fast for these narrow streets,’ she gently scolded him.
‘Right. You’re absolutely right, ma’am.’
With his assistance, Sara managed to get to her feet, saying she could manage very well now, thank you, but he insisted on taking her right to the door, taking her keys to unlock it for her and helping her inside.
He seemed pleasant enough, for all he was a reckless driver, an officer too, judging by the two stripes and star on his uniform, and earnestly anxious to put things right. He brought her a glass of water, even started to dust down the skirt of her dress but then stopped himself, flushing slightly with embarrassment.
‘Sorry, sorry,’ he kept saying, over and over. ‘Hey, I’m so sorry.’
‘If you were late before for the parade, you must be even more so now. Hadn’t you better report to your unit?’
‘I guess so, but I hate to leave you like this.’
‘Don’t be silly, I’ll be fine. Really!’ when still he showed no sign of moving.
He had the kind of physique one would expect of a soldier, rather broad and robust, not at all in keeping with the fuss he was making. His hair was dark brown with a slight tendency to curl, dampened slightly from beads of anxious moisture forming on a high brow.
‘You sure?’
‘Positive.’ She desperately wanted him to go before Hugh arrived. It simply wouldn’t do for her husband to find her here, with this man, yet she kept on sitting there, just gazing into his face. It was a very nice face, strong and square, and he had the gentlest brown eyes she’d ever seen.
‘You’re okay then?’ Still he made no move to go.
‘I’m fine, truly I am.’
‘I can’t imagine what I was thinking of to be driving so fast. I didn’t even see you.’
‘You can see me now, and that I’m perfectly all right.’
His wide mouth lifted into a slow smile, as if to say she was more than all right. ‘I’d best go then.’
‘Yes, you had.’

With great reluctance he took his leave, his parting words warning her to take things easy for a while. Sara smiled and nodded and waved him away but then the minute he'd gone, and despite her aches and pains, she ignored his advice completely and flew about, desperately trying to catch up on tasks that should have been done hours ago.

For once, The Ship was late in opening and an impatient queue had formed outside, a sternly frowning Hugh turning up just as she unlocked the door to let them all in. He cast a furious glance in Sara's direction then gave his full attention to offering humble apologies to his regulars. Her silver fair hair was still untidy and windblown, her normally pale cheeks flushed with a betraying pink but she smoothed down her skirt, pinned a smile of welcome on her face and calmly prepared herself for the expected lecture.

Chapter Two

For the next hour or more, husband and wife were far too busy pulling pints and selling pasties to have time to think, let alone talk.

Sara loved being part of a tightly-knit community, considered herself fortunate to live in this ancient inn right in the heart of town. She might well have long since grown oblivious to the constant cry of seagulls, but she adored the smell of the sea, customers breezing in and out, the feeling that she was caught up in their lives.

Today there was a particular buzz in the air, following the excitement of the morning.

'About time they showed up, that's what I say,' said Ethel Penhale.

'Aye, they nearly missed all the fun,' agreed her husband, Sid.

'They slouch,' said Nora Snell, setting her lips primly. 'And chew far too much of that dreadful gum.'

Sara enjoyed chatting to the regulars, listening to their gossip, the men happily leaning against the bar and the womenfolk nodding their heads together over a port and lemon on the window seats, so that they were able to keep half an eye on what was happening outside in the square. She didn't even mind hearing for the hundredth time how Hamil Charke caught a shark even if it was of the basking variety and barely had any teeth, and she'd learned to ignore Nora Snell's sharp tongue.

Only when the last straggler had reluctantly left at closing time and Hugh locked up for the rest of the afternoon, did he turn to her, his expression grim.

'I can't believe you did that.'

Sara started, a beat of alarm fluttering in the pit of her stomach. 'Did what?' Surely he hadn't heard about the incident

already? She hoped it had gone largely unnoticed as most people were still chasing after the parade.
‘Abandoned your duties to gawp at those dreadful men.’
‘Oh!’ She half turned away to collect up beer soaked glass cloths, desperate to compose herself; a part of her wondering if she could get away with not telling him at all as he’d only make a scene. ‘Don’t be silly, Hugh, I wasn’t gawping and why do you call them dreadful? They’re here to help us win the war, to fight against Hitler. Aren’t you glad to see them? Everyone else is.’
‘Everyone else doesn’t have my standards of moral decency. Even you can’t be unaware of their reputation for bigamy, divorce and unspeakable diseases I wouldn’t care to mention. Besides, I’ll not have you making an exhibition of yourself. I suppose your flighty sister was there too, behaving even worse. Didn’t I say there’d be trouble, the minute I heard they were coming?’
Sara hid a smile. This clearly wasn’t the moment to mention that Bette had already caught the eye of a GI, and made a date for the evening which she would undoubtedly keep. And why shouldn’t she, being twenty years old and fancyfree? Life was for living and who knew what tomorrow might bring?
‘There was no trouble, Hugh, none that I saw. I don’t see why you were expecting any. They seem perfectly nice, respectable boys to me. A tribute to Uncle Sam.’
‘They are well known for rudeness and inconsiderate behaviour, for throwing their weight about where it isn’t needed. Well, no GI is setting foot in my pub, I’ll tell you that for certain. I won’t have them in here chatting up the girls and throwing their money about.’
By ‘girls’ he meant herself, his wife, of course. Sara understood the implication even though she didn’t comment on it. God knows what he would say if he knew that one of these ‘dreadful men’ had been in the pub already, alone with her, after having very nearly knocked her down.
‘We need their money, Hugh, don’t forget.’
‘I believe I am still entitled to refuse to serve troublemakers in my own bar.’
Sara stifled a sigh. ‘Let’s wait and see if they are troublemakers first, before you start banning them.’
It was rare for her to criticise him, or even disagree, since she’d discovered the fruitlessness of this exercise quite early on in their marriage. He was a man with firmly fixed views and generally found a means to have his own way in most things.
‘Put the takings in the safe will you, while I give the bar a quick wipe over. Then we’re done for now.’ She smiled, to soften the fact that she’d given him an instruction but he briskly responded that he’d been about to do just that, and would she please hurry up.
Sara had been little more than eighteen when she’d married

Hugh Marrack, flattered by his interest and charmed by his maturity and good looks. He rowed on the gigs, sailed, swam, was athletic and strong, a risk taker and, at thirty, had seemed like a god to her. She had loved his tall leanness, that shock of blonde hair he would sweep back from a high forehead with the flick of one hand; the classically straight nose, the blue-grey eyes and the way they would gaze at her in a slightly perplexed fashion, as if not quite able to believe his good fortune. She'd adored his patient, old-fashioned courtship of her, and had been impressed by the good solid future that he'd planned for them by taking on the management of the inn.

She'd become pregnant with Jenny within months of their marriage, quickly followed by Drew. Two children was enough, Hugh had decided, and there'd been no more since. Some of the fizz had gone out of their sex life as a result, certainly so far as Sara was concerned. Hugh too seemed less interested, since he instigated lovemaking less often these days, which she thought rather sad. But then they both worked long hours and if sometimes she felt a tinge of disappointment with her lot, that she'd perhaps been a mite hasty in marrying so young, and that life hadn't turned out quite as she'd hoped, Sara blamed herself for having too many romantic notions.

Or she blamed the war, which had dominated their lives for so long and seemed to go on forever. But what could she do about that? Nothing, except endure, like everyone else. Hugh was a member of the lifeboat crew, and also carried responsibilities with regard to the coastguard service, so was very often unavailable when there was work to be done. Even when he wasn't out on training and doing 'his missions' as he liked to call them, he was busy with paperwork in the little office up in the eaves. His time, he told her, was far too important to waste on mundane tasks, which she supposed was true.

So here she was, seven years later, still only in her midtwenties, minding her children, feeding her husband and doing a hundred and one jobs each and every day. She served behind the bar, baked the pasties, did the cleaning, the endless washing and ironing, as well as catering for occasional bed and breakfast guests. Sara even cleaned out the beer pipes, as she'd done this morning, although not very well.

Not that she ever complained. Hugh was a very private man, liable to sulks and dark moods if she should ever object to the workload or claim that he was neglecting her.

And he was a good husband in other ways, caring and solicitous, perhaps too much so at times, almost suffocating. Sara frowned as she wiped down the bar counter, filled with a rush of guilt for viewing his assiduous attention in such a light.

Perhaps she craved a little too much freedom. Maybe the

fault was hers. After all, as he repeatedly informed her, he always had her best interests at heart.
As he was telling her now.
'You've got that glazed expression in your eyes again, Sara. I do hope you're paying attention. I can't stand about here all day explaining things your own common sense should tell you. I have more serious work to do. Do you understand?'
'Yes, Hugh. Of course, darling.'

She saw him soften, as he so often did when she addressed him thus. He came to her then and slid an arm about her slender waist. 'My God, no wonder I'm jealous of anyone else coming near you. Have you any idea how ravishing you look with that silver haze of soft curls framing your enchanting little face, and those large, adorable green eyes.'
Sara giggled. 'Don't exaggerate, they're more grey than green, and my hair is a mess.'
He slid one hand down the length of her thigh and, pulling up her skirt, slid it between her legs to fondle her possessively.
She pushed him gently away, laughing as she half glanced over her shoulder to the windows that looked out over the street. 'Be careful, someone might see. If Nora Snell walks by, she'll have a heart attack.'
'We could slip upstairs for half an hour.'
Chuckling softly, she dismissed his optimism with a kiss on his nose, then turned away to search for her purse. 'I have to go and collect the children, and they'll be bursting to tell you all about their exciting day so do try to be patient with them.'
'Make them damn well wait for once. I'd forgotten how much I fancy you,' he said, his voice urgent now, thickening with need. He pushed her back against the bar but Sara easily evaded his grasp.
'It's good to know that you do still fancy me, but I really don't have time right now.'
The smile instantly faded and his tone turned peevish, like a spoiled child deprived of a treat. 'You never do have time these days, or else you complain you're too tired.'
She was stung by the accusation, which Sara felt to be largely unjust. Hugh seemed to avoid intimacy far more
9781848454224_TS_txt.indd 22 2015-05-19 10:05 AM

than she did. 'I'm sorry if you think so, but I do work hard, Hugh.'
'Is that some sort of dig at me?'
'No, of course it isn't. We *both* work hard,' she added hastily. 'Perhaps we should both try harder to inject some romance back into our marriage.'
'You're saying I don't do enough in that direction, are you? You want me to bring you flowers every day?'
'No, no, of course I don't. Look, this is a stupid argument. I was simply agreeing with you that we should find

more time for each other, for romance.’
‘Did you see someone you fancied on those trucks then?’ Sara shook her head at him in a gesture of despair, even as she felt her cheeks grow warm. ‘Don’t be silly.’
‘Oh, silly is it, to want to protect my wife from those louts? I’ve told you, Sara, I’m not having those Yanks in The Ship.’
She was already on her way through the back door that led out onto the church path. ‘Look, I must go. We can talk about this some other time and perhaps later I will be able to convince you that there is no other man for me but you, my lovely husband.’ Blowing him a kiss, she hurried away, still smiling. Hugh remained where he was, scowling at the closed door.