LoveReading

YOU LOVED YOUR LAST BOOK...
BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO READ NEXT?

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

Opening Extract from...

A LONG WAY FROM HOME

Written by Cathy Glass

Published by HarperElement

All text is Copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is brought to you by **LoveReading** Please print off and read at your leisure.

A long way from home

ALSO BY CATHY GLASS

Damaged
Hidden
Cut
The Saddest Girl in the World
Happy Kids
The Girl in the Mirror
I Miss Mummy
Mummy Told Me Not to Tell
My Dad's a Policeman (a Quick Reads novel)
Run, Mummy, Run
The Night the Angels Came
Happy Adults
A Baby's Cry
Happy Mealtimes for Kids
Another Forgotten Child
Please Don't Take My Baby
Will You Love Me?
About Writing and How to Publish
Daddy's Little Princess
The Child Bride
Saving Danny
Girl Alone
The Silent Cry
Can I Let You Go?
Nobody's Son
Cruel to be Kind

WRITING AS LISA STONE
The Darkness Within
Stalker (June 2018)

THE MILLION COPY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

CATHY GLASS

A long way from home

How many heartbreaks
can a little girl take?

HARPER element

Certain details in this story, including names, places and dates, have been changed to protect the family's privacy.

HarperElement
An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

First published by HarperElement 2018

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

© Cathy Glass 2018

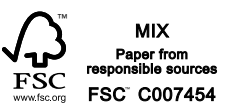
Cathy Glass asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-00-827589-1

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers.



This book is produced from independently certified FSC paper to ensure responsible forest management

For more information visit: www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A big thank you to my family; my editors, Carolyn and Holly; my literary agent, Andrew; my UK publishers HarperCollins, and my overseas publishers who are now too numerous to list by name. Last, but definitely not least, a big thank you to my readers for your unfailing support and kind words. They are much appreciated.

Some stories have to wait to be told to gain the full picture and a better understanding of what happened. Anna's story is one of them.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

LANA

Although the children weren't babies, they appeared as helpless as the day they were born. Dressed only in nappies and ragged T-shirts, they were sitting or lying on the hard floors, or incarcerated in their cots. Their large eyes stared out blankly from emaciated faces. Some children were obviously disabled, others not, but all were badly undernourished and clearly developmentally delayed. The four rooms in the orphanage were hot and airless in the middle of summer. Flies circled around the broken ceiling fans and buzzed against the grids covering the windows. The only toys in any of the rooms were a few balls and a handful of building bricks, but no child played with them. And the silence was deafening and unnatural. Not one of the thirty or so infants cried, let alone spoke.

'This nice one,' the care worker said in broken English, pausing at a cot containing a Down's syndrome boy. 'He no give you trouble.'

Elaine looked with renewed horror at the child rocking back and forth in the cot. A few wisps of fair hair covered his otherwise bald head, open sores bled on his lips and his face was so pale it was doubtful he had ever felt the

sunlight. He stared blankly into the distance. Elaine went to speak to him but the care worker was already moving briskly to the next cot. 'Or this one,' she said, tapping the metal bars of the cot and ignoring the fact that the child had been sick.

Elaine fought back tears and looked to her husband to say something.

Ian cleared his throat. The care worker – a large, brusque woman – seemed to be in charge. He didn't know what role she played and didn't want to upset her and risk their chance of a child. 'I'm sorry, we don't understand,' he said, almost apologetically. 'We were supposed to adopt a particular child. She's called Lana. We have a photograph of her here in our paperwork.' He went to unclip his briefcase.

The care worker tapped his arm. 'No. No. Lana, that baby dead. You choose another baby. We have plenty.'

Elaine's hand shot to her mouth. 'Dead? When?' she cried.

'We weren't told,' Ian said.

The care worker shrugged. 'You on plane.'

'She died yesterday?' Elaine asked, horrified.

'Maybe too late to tell you. You choose another baby. Plenty. Over here.' She led the way to another cot on the far side of the room.

'I want to go,' Elaine said, taking Ian's arm.

'We are leaving,' he said to the care worker, who was waiting for them by the cot.

'You come here and see baby. Talk to it.'

'No!' Elaine cried.

'You no want baby?' the care worker asked, a mixture of incredulity and impatience.

'Not like this,' Ian said. 'We came here for Lana and you tell us she is dead. We are very upset.'

'But you can choose another baby,' she said, as though they were in the wrong.

'No,' Ian said firmly. 'We can't.'

'Suit yourself,' she said, clearly offended. Leaving the cot, she headed out of the room and towards the main door, a bunch of keys jangling at her hip. They followed. 'Lots of other parents come here and take our babies,' she snapped.

'But not us,' Ian said, annoyed.

They waited while she unlocked the door. Ian hung back as Elaine stepped outside. 'Where's the doctor we've been dealing with?' he asked. 'He was supposed to meet us here.'

The care worker shrugged, either not understanding or refusing to answer.

'Dr Ciobanu,' Ian tried again. 'We spoke to him on the phone. Is he here?'

She shook her head. 'You go now. I'm busy.'

'You tell him we came?' he said, but she pushed at his arm, signalling for him to leave.

Ian and Elaine stepped outside and the large metal door clanged shut behind them. A lone child screamed from inside.

Elaine burst into tears and Ian put his arm around her. 'I don't believe it,' she sobbed. 'All this time, working towards the adoption, and that heartless woman tells us our baby is dead.' Although they'd never met little Lana, they'd felt a bond with her ever since they'd first received her details and photograph, and considered her their daughter. This was supposed to have been the final stage in the adoption process that had begun nearly two years before and had included a

detailed social worker's report, references, medicals, and endless form filling and expectation. Today they should have met Lana for the first time, given the doctor their paperwork and signed the forms for court. And while they waited for the court hearing they would have visited Lana each day, loving her more and more. But that had all come to an abrupt and distressing end. Their baby had died.

Ian gently guided his wife to the taxi they had waiting.

'No baby?' the taxi driver asked, seeing their faces as they got into the back.

'No. The baby died,' Ian replied, his voice shaking with emotion.

'Oh dear. It happens in this country,' the driver said matter-of-factly. 'Many babies die here.'

Ian nodded as Elaine wiped her eyes. They knew about the high infant mortality rate and the shocking conditions in some of the state-run orphanages that had contributed to their decision to adopt from this country.

The driver glanced at them in the rear-view mirror, started the car and pulled away. 'I find you a healthy baby,' he said. 'My cousin knows a lady who finds couples babies. You no worry. She find one for you, and she very cheap.'

'That's kind of you, but no thank you,' Ian said politely. They'd been warned about these types of arrangements by other couples who had adopted from this country. There were many parents on the internet who were happy to share their experiences of international adoption to help others. While not always illegal, these private adoptions were fraught with problems, and money was demanded at each stage of the process. Yet ironically they'd followed the correct procedure and look where it had got them!

'You think about it,' the driver said. 'I give you my telephone number when we stop.'

'OK,' Ian said, without the strength to protest.

The air conditioning in the reception of their three-star hotel was a welcome relief after the heat outside. Ian and Elaine, desperate to be alone, caught the lift straight up to their room on the third floor. The maid had been in and everything was clean and tidy and the bed made. It was such a stark contrast to the poverty outside that Elaine felt a familiar stab of guilt.

'I don't think we're meant to have children,' she said, utterly defeated and sitting on the bed.

Ian sighed and poured himself a glass of water from the flask that was refreshed daily. 'I don't know,' he said, as dejected as his wife. 'I expected to face some hurdles, most of those we've been talking to who adopted from here did, but I never imagined this. To arrive and be told our child is dead, and then be shown other children, is heartless beyond belief.'

'Do you think what she's doing is legal?' Elaine asked.

'Who knows?'

'Those poor children. She kept calling them babies but they weren't. Some of them could have been six or seven, and most of them were disabled.'

'I suppose they are the ones no one wants to adopt,' Ian said sadly. 'That care worker probably thought as Lana had died we'd be desperate and grateful for any child.'

'I feel awful but I really can't take on a disabled child. I told our social worker that right at the beginning.' Her voice caught. 'I'm just not cut out for it.'

'I know, love, me neither. We've been honest, and it wasn't fair to put us in that position.' He sat beside her on the bed and rested his head back, exhausted.

They were having to deal with so many emotions: bereavement, shock, disappointment and anger. At forty-two and thirty-eight respectively, this had been Ian and Elaine's last chance of a family. Elaine was infertile, IVF had failed, and they were considered too old to adopt a baby or very young child in their own country, the UK.

'I think we should just go home and forget about it,' Elaine said, leaning her head on Ian's shoulder.

'Yes, I agree. But I'm going to speak to that Dr Ciobanu first and tell him what I think. I don't want other couples going through what we have.'

Half an hour later, when Ian felt up to it, he telephoned the orphanage but was told by a care worker that Dr Ciobanu wasn't there, so he left a message (which he wasn't sure the care worker understood), saying he'd call back later. After two hours, having heard nothing, Ian tried again and was told bluntly, 'No doctor.' But later that evening, with plans to change their flights to the following day so they could return home as soon as possible, they received a phone call from Dr Ciobanu.

Ian steeled himself to say what he had to; he wasn't an aggressive man and avoided confrontation, but this needed to be said. Yet before he had a chance, Dr Ciobanu said, 'Mr Hudson, I'm sorry I wasn't there to meet you today but my wife was taken to hospital.'

Thrown, Ian said, 'Oh, I see. I hope it's nothing serious.'

'It wasn't, thank you. A funny turn. She is home now. If you come to the orphanage tomorrow morning you can meet your child.'

'I don't understand,' Ian said, shocked and confused. 'We were told our baby was dead.' Elaine moved closer to the handset so she, too, could hear.

'Yes, Lana died,' the doctor said evenly. 'She was a sickly baby so perhaps it was for the best that it happened here, rather than when you got home. I have another child. She is not sickly. You come here tomorrow and I will arrange it.' Ian glanced at Elaine, not knowing what to say. 'You come tomorrow and we go ahead,' he repeated. Taken completely unawares, Ian looked at Elaine for direction. 'You come here tomorrow at eleven and meet Anastasia. Now I have to go to my wife. Good night.' The line went dead.