

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...

Get Even

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
GET EVEN

headline

Copyright © 2015 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 2015 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.

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 0099 0
Trade paperback ISBN 978 1 4722 0100 3

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

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

Headline'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 are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.



HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP
An Hachette UK Company
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London
EC4Y 0DZ

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

Prologue

God be merciful to me a sinner.

Luke 18:13

Sharon was drinking a glass of wine and wondering how her wonderful, charmed life had been reduced to this. She had once been the envy of all her friends. But the reality could not have been more different to the illusion.

She closed her eyes and pictured her first husband, Lenny Scott, in her mind's eye. She had started going out with him at thirteen and married him at seventeen, much to her parents' chagrin. But they had been so happy together – they had had two sons and that had cemented their relationship.

Then he had been brutally murdered, found tortured and battered to death one night – and that was it.

That same night she had also uncovered his secret – the secret he had kept from her and everyone around him for so many years. A secret that would have caused untold aggravation and upset in the world of Faces, affecting her boys' lives into the bargain, if it had ever been revealed.

But what good had keeping the secret done them really? Today she had visited her sons in prison, and they had acted like being there was just a game. They had killed someone and they thought it was funny. How had she allowed that to happen? How had she not realised that they were broken and turning into fucking thugs? Because that was all they were. They weren't

even true Faces; they had just beaten a man to death for no reason. She couldn't believe that her two boys, who she had had such hopes for, could have turned out so wrong.

She swallowed down her tears, because tears were useless. Life was shite, really. No matter how great you thought it was, it could always creep up and bite you on the arse when you least expected it. Well, fuck it! She had never known the reason behind her Lenny's death. She had lived all these years in ignorance – until tonight the one man left in her life that she trusted had told her the truth. And now there was no going back.

She gulped at her glass of wine. She needed the alcohol to get through this. Tonight she was going to right some wrongs. No matter what danger it might bring to her door, there was no stopping what was about to happen.

Young Lenny Scott and his little brother, Liam, were laughing raucously together. They were a handful, as the POs would say – protected, not just by their father's name, but by the man who had become their stepfather; the boys knew this as well as the POs did. They more or less had a free pass – it was galling, but it was the truth. Being on remand for the first time was an adventure, but one of the older prison officers, Eric Marks, could tell from experience that they were not as hard as they thought they were.

The younger one was not taking to prison life quite as easily as his older brother. Liam Scott was not cut out for the regime prison insisted on: slopping out, eating at set times, early fucking nights. Unlike his older brother, Lenny, he appeared to be losing interest in this 'adventure' on an hourly basis. The fact that their mother had cunted them into the ground in front of everyone on a visit earlier that day had not helped

matters either. Now they were being laughed at – just not to their faces. They might be in for murder, but they had clout and that could guarantee them a short sentence. It was such a waste, because they were clever, handsome, well-educated lads, and with a few quid behind them. Shame they didn't think about that – and their mother who had buried their father after he had been killed. Eric would lay money that that horror had left its mark on her, and probably on those lads as well.

He sighed heavily. Twenty years in this job and he was still continually disappointed in Mother Nature. Murderers, he had decided early on in his career, were a breed apart. Some of them had good reason, or were provoked, but he still saw so many lives ruined thanks to a drunken fight or a drugged confrontation that had got out of hand. And then there were the young Lennys and Liams of the world who simply thought it was all a joke.

One thing Eric would give their mother – she, at least, knew that what they had done was wrong and she had told them as much that afternoon in the visiting room. Maybe, just maybe, there was hope for these lads yet. Not that he would hold his breath, of course.

Sharon's daughter, Kathy, was frightened and ashamed. Everything had blown up in her face, and she finally realised the seriousness of what she had done – and what she had caused.

She felt the tears coming again, hot and wet. She had always been a good crier, and normally that was enough to make her dad give her what she wanted. But not tonight. Tonight she had known what it was to go too far; her mum and dad were not going to make it all right again as they normally did when

she fucked up. This time her actions could cause actual murder. Worst of all, her father would never look at her in the same way again. She had let him down badly, and her mum. Her dad had always given in to her – it had been her mum who had been the bad bastard, telling her a big resounding ‘no’ when she didn’t think she deserved or had earned whatever it was Kathy decided she wanted. Now she saw that all these years her mum had been trying to look out for her; Kathy had hated her for that when Sharon had simply been trying to help her daughter to help herself.

Kathy picked up her mobile and tried the number again, but there was no answer. She threw the phone at the wall in frustration. It was so unfair. Well, fuck him! He was always ignoring her calls so let him deal with her father himself. After all, that’s what she’d had to do.

Reggie Dornan was so angry he felt that he could take on Man Mountain Dean with one hand tied behind his back and come out on top. He had been mugged off, betrayed in the worst possible way, and there was no chance he was taking this lying down. Tonight was the end. And please God in His heaven it all worked out because that would finally make him feel that he had seen through his promise to look after Lenny Scott’s family. He owed Sharon because he had broken her heart once. Oh, he owed her fucking big time. He would do everything in his power to make sure that Lenny Scott would be remembered. And Reggie Dornan always paid his debts.

Sharon held Kathy in her arms but she was still furious with her; her daughter was a spoiled brat and that needed to be addressed.

‘I am so sorry, Mummy. Please believe me. I am so very sorry.’

Sharon looked down at her beautiful face. Kathy was just like her father: what she wanted she took, no matter who got hurt or who might have to pay the price for her enjoyment.

‘You’re not really sorry, Kath! You are just sorry it all fell out of bed.’

She pushed her daughter away from her and left her crying bitter tears. It amazed Sharon how dispassionate she could feel at her daughter’s obvious distress. But, then, was it really surprising after what she had heard this night? Her daughter’s predicament was nothing to her right now. Maybe tomorrow, if it all worked out, she would have the time and energy to try and help her out of the corner Kathy had finally painted herself into. But now she had other things on her mind.

Downstairs, Sharon looked around her beautiful home – the house she had furnished and decorated with such love and care. It was as if the place was mocking her, making her see that material objects meant fuck-all in the grand scheme. Oh, hindsight was a fucking wonderful thing. She’d had only two men in her life: one had been murdered and the other . . . Well, that remained to be seen. As her old mum used to say, where women were concerned, they never got mad if they were clever – they went one better and they got *even*.

When the call finally came she felt such relief that she could have wept. After all these years, she was finally in control of her own life. She only hoped it wasn’t too late. One thing she did know for sure was that she was going to see this through to the bitter end. It was all she could do for herself and her children. She wanted payback for what had been done to her and hers.

She felt a calmness wash over her. *This* was what she had been waiting for. She would do what needed to be done – no matter the consequences.

Chapter One

1984

‘You stupid little mare! I knew it!’

Sharon Conway rolled her eyes with the irritation typical of her youth, which did not calm her mother’s fury in the least. In fact, it was like a red rag to a bull.

‘Roll your eyes at me, would you? You idiot – tied to that fucking thug for the rest of your days. Honestly, Sharon, I wonder if you have even one iota of fucking intelligence in that made-up, backcombed head of yours. If you had actual brains you would be up that clinic getting the thing out of you faster than Billy Whizz. But not you! Oh no, Clever Bollocks, *you* think you can change him, *you* think he will become Mr *Perfect*. Well, I will let you in on a little secret: he won’t fucking change. *You* will, you daft fucking mare! You will be tied down for the rest of your life with that ponce, and you will never get shot of him once you produce his offspring.’

Sharon had already tuned her mother out. She knew exactly what she was going to hear, and experience told her that the best way to deal with her mum was just to pretend to listen and let the silly old cow get it all out of her system. It was pointless to argue; her mum was the queen of arguing – everyone

in the street knew that. If it was an Olympic sport, Ivy Conway would be world fucking champion by now.

Sharon's father, Derek Conway, known as Del, continued to read his paper as if the house was as quiet as a monastery. He had learned to ignore his Ivy early in their marriage. It had either been that or throttle the fucker to death and, in fairness, when she wasn't arguing, she was a great girl. But light the blue touchpaper and she was like a banshee – she could howl all fucking night.

He drank his tea. He had seen this coming and so had Ivy, though she had done everything in her power to prevent it. But their Sharon had been mad on Lenny Scott since they had started going out together when she was thirteen and he was fifteen. Now, four years later, he was the father of her child and they were going to get married. At least Lenny *wanted* to marry her – that in itself was a turn-up in this day and age.

Derek winked surreptitiously at his daughter in support but, unfortunately, her mother caught him in the act.

'Oh, I see! You think this is fucking funny, do the pair of you? Well, you will be laughing on the other side of your face, lady, once reality sets in. You mark my words . . .'

Sharon made a suitably contrite face and tuned her mother out once more. At the end of the day, she knew that Ivy was not going to let up, and she accepted it. What her mother didn't allow for was the fact that she was adamant she was going to marry Lenny Scott – no matter what she, or anyone else, might have to say about it. Sharon Conway was determined. Her mum wasn't the only stubborn fuck in this family, as she would soon find out.

Sharon held her hand up with a finality that actually stopped Ivy Conway in her tracks. 'He will be here soon with his mum

and dad, who are not pleased about the situation either, but unlike you, Mum, they see me and my Lenny as making the best of it. You would have more to say if he didn't want to marry me. But he does. We both want this wedding and, yes, it's a bit sooner than we planned, but there you are. It's happened. So get over it.'

Derek Conway was gobsmacked when his Ivy actually did shut that big galloping trap of hers. He had never believed that he would see the day.