

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...

A Family Scandal

Written by Kitty Neale

Published by AVON

All text is copyright © of the author

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

This novel is entirely a work of fiction.
The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are
the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to
actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is
entirely coincidental.

AVON
A division of HarperCollinsPublishers
1 London Bridge Street,
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

This Paperback Edition 2016
1

Copyright © Kitty Neale 2016

Kitty Neale asserts the moral right to
be identified as the author of this work

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

ISBN-13: 978-1-847-56247-0

Typeset in Minion by Palimpsest Book Production Ltd, Falkirk, Stirlingshire

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

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
permission of the publishers.



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C007454

FSC™ is a non-profit international organisation established to promote
the responsible management of the world's forests. Products carrying the
FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come
from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and
ecological needs of present and future generations,
and other controlled sources.

Find out more about HarperCollins and the environment at
www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Hardip Bhamra, who sadly died in 2015.

He has been described by his colleagues, friends and family as a beautiful soul, a modest, gentle, kind and honest man; a devoted husband and father who is survived by his wife, Marianne, and daughter, Kristina.

Hardip Bhamra was also a talented artist who could create beauty with just a few strokes of a brush, and now, every time I see a wonderful sunrise or sunset, it reminds me of him and some of his wonderful paintings.

Chapter One

Peckham, Spring 1965

‘Pete’s done us proud, ain’t he?’ Lily Culling grinned at her daughter as she looked around her new kitchen with delight. ‘Mavis, look at that, proper hot water and everything. And a new cooker too. It’s the first time I ever had one of those. I’ll be able to do some lovely sausage and mash on that, Pete, your favourite.’

Pete beamed at his wife but shook his head. ‘It’s only what you deserve. God knows we’ve waited long enough for it. I’m only sorry it took ages to get it all finished. I wanted it done while Bobby was still young enough to keep out of mischief but look at him, there’s no stopping him now.’

Bobby paused when he heard his name, but then carried on chasing James and Grace around and into the patch of garden at the back of the house. He was two and a half and into everything. It didn’t help that he was the youngest of the household too and spoilt rotten.

‘It’s lovely to see them playing together,’ Mavis said. ‘It’s funny to think that Bobby is the youngest. He’s their uncle, but I doubt he understands that.’

‘Well, love, it is a bit complicated,’ Lily replied. ‘How do you explain to a two-year-old that you’re my daughter from my first marriage, and that he’s from my second? Same mother, but different fathers so you’re his half-sister. Not only that, you already had James who is now eight and Grace who is six when I gave birth to him.’

‘It’s enough to confuse anyone.’ Pete commented.

‘I’ll explain it all to him when he’s older,’ Lily said as she once again looked around her new kitchen. ‘Oh, I love this house, Pete. You’ve done a wonderful job of converting it into two generous-sized flats.’

‘I love it too, Mum,’ said Mavis. ‘James and Grace will have their own bedrooms instead of sharing. It’s not like when I was their age is it? I remember that damp, old kitchen in Battersea and you didn’t have anything modern or new then.’

‘Don’t remind me.’ Lily shuddered. ‘Your dad off gambling all our money away, me never knowing where the next penny was coming from and if I’d be able to feed you or not.’ She patted her hair, reluctant to remember those days of extreme poverty. She didn’t intend to go back to that hand-to-mouth way of life. Even though she was well into her forties she still took care of her appearance, using the peroxide often enough to stop the roots showing through, determined nobody would notice if she was going grey or not. She prided herself on keeping her figure – not something many women who’d had a child at her age could boast of. ‘Still, you didn’t know no different when you were little. And half the stuff was still rationed. Those three out there don’t know they’re born. Nothing but good times ahead for us now, pet. You just see if I’m not right.’

Mavis smiled and crossed her fingers. ‘Hope so. Now we’re here it’s a fresh start for all of us.’

‘That’s the spirit,’ said Pete, proud of all he’d done to keep this family together. He was a bricklayer by trade and had worked his fingers to the bone until he’d had enough money to set up his own company. He had started off by doing small jobs but finally was in a position to go for the bigger projects, and that had all been down to his own hard graft. Now he’d found this big house and finally got it done up. Nobody else need know about the enormous loan that had made it possible. Good times were on their way for his business and nothing was going to spoil it. He’d done all this without a helping hand from anybody, and still had to pinch himself when he realised he really was married to Lily and he’d given her the life he’d always known she deserved. He certainly wasn’t going to worry her by telling her about the loan. There were no flies on Lily, but he knew it was his job to be the provider for the family, and that was exactly what he intended to be.

‘Best thing about this place is there’s a decent pub just round the corner,’ he said. ‘I fancy a pint and reckon I deserve it after all that lifting. You coming to join me, Lily, just for a change? See if we can get to know any of the new faces?’

Lily turned to her daughter. ‘I might go, just the once. It’s something to celebrate, after all. I won’t be long. You’ll be all right, stopping here with the kids?’

Mavis nodded. ‘You go and have a good time. You worked hard for this and helped to pack a lot of my stuff too when I was busy sorting out James and Grace. Don’t worry about me. Tommy will be over later to see how we got on.’

‘You got a good man there.’ Lily approved of Tommy. When he’d first come on the scene she hadn’t been sure about him as he’d been a bit of a tearaway in his youth, but he’d turned into a real tower of strength for Mavis just when she needed one. ‘Be giving him a tour of your new bedroom, will you?’

‘Mum!’ Mavis quickly checked that the children were all out of earshot. ‘Don’t go saying that. It’s all very well for you, but I’m not rushing into anything. Tommy knows that. So don’t you go putting ideas into his head.’

‘You’ve been seeing him for ages, and if you ask me the man’s a saint to wait for so long.’

‘Mum!’ Mavis warned again.

Lily grinned and then winked at her husband. ‘Come on then, Pete. I might let you show me a good time, an’ all.’

Pete caught her round the waist, grinning from ear to ear. He might not be much of a looker, with his boxer’s face and skin still scarred from teenage acne, but he loved her mum, thought Mavis. He’d done them proud all right and she was grateful to him for that. ‘You go on, I’ll make sure Bobby goes to bed on time.’

‘And we’ll be back before its James’s bedtime so you won’t have to worry about leaving any of them on their own in a different part of the house.’ Lily grabbed her handbag. ‘See you later. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.’ She allowed Pete to open the newly painted door for her and they were gone.

Well that didn’t rule much out, Mavis thought ruefully. How different her mother was to her. Lily had begun her affair with Pete not long after Mavis’s father had gone missing, which Mavis, a lonely teenager at the time, had

found unbearably hard and impossible to accept. By the time her father finally reappeared, close to death after years of gambling and drinking had ruined him, Lily and Pete had been living together. They'd only married after Mavis's dad had died and when Lily was heavily pregnant with Bobby. It had scandalised the neighbours when they eventually found out, but then they had moved away to Peckham and a fresh start.

Mavis had to open a few cupboard doors to find the teapot. She remembered when she was a girl that her mother would use the same tea leaves several times as they couldn't afford fresh. Mavis grimaced, remembering how dreadfully clumsy she had been which had tried her mother's patience. She'd also been considered backward because she couldn't learn to read and write.

As she made the tea, Mavis found herself thinking about Rhona Foster and knew she would miss having her vivacious friend and neighbour popping in from next door now that they had moved away from Harmond Street. Rhona wouldn't have thought twice about showing Tommy her bedroom, Mavis thought. Though they had become friends, they were as different as chalk and cheese.

Everything had changed for Mavis when she'd married Alec, James and Grace's father. After leaving school with no qualifications she'd helped his snobbish mother run her house. It was Alec's mother who realised that her inability to read and clumsiness wasn't caused by lack of intelligence. It was due to word blindness, and though she had never learned to read, she had managed to overcome her clumsiness. No, she wasn't backward, Mavis thought ruefully, but she had been very naïve and what she hadn't realised was that she was being groomed by

Alec's mother to be his perfect submissive wife. Because she'd been desperate to get away from Lily and Pete, she'd fallen for it – and ended up in a terrible abusive relationship.

When the domineering old woman had died, Mavis had found the courage to leave Alec. He'd sold the house that he'd inherited from his mother two years ago, hadn't given Mavis her share of the money, and moved out. He'd disappeared without a trace, but nobody was sorry to see the back of him. Except that, as she had no way of making contact with him, she couldn't get a divorce.

'I'm thirsty. Can I have a drink please, Mummy?'

'Of course you can,' Mavis said, smiling fondly at her son. 'Orange juice?'

James nodded and as she mixed the juice with water, Mavis's mind was still full of memories. Grace could hardly remember her real father and James's memories of him were fading day by day. That was a good thing as Alec had beaten James badly, although not as often as he'd beaten her. Mavis shuddered as she recalled the pain of the frequent bruises she'd had to keep hidden for so long.

'I want some juice too,' another voice demanded.

'Grace, you won't get anything unless you ask for it properly,' Mavis said sternly.

Grace looked sullen for a moment, but then said, '*Please* can I have some orange juice.'

'That's better,' Mavis said approvingly and when Bobby appeared she made him a drink too.

Once finished they all ran off again, while Mavis poured herself a cup of tea and then stood sipping it whilst watching the children through the kitchen window.

James was now running around without a care in the world. He was still a thoughtful little boy, often seeming older than his eight years, and he wasn't as withdrawn and fearful as he'd once been. As for Grace, even when a toddler she'd always said exactly what she thought – nobody had ever had to teach her how to put her foot down. She was more like her Granny Lily than anyone else and Lily was very fond of her granddaughter.

Mavis smiled ruefully again. As a girl she had found school hard, which had led to her being friendless and awkward. Grace on the other hand was fearless. She was a force to be reckoned with, and her teachers didn't know whether to praise her for her willingness to speak up in class or to punish her for never shutting up. Yet she was generous and kind-hearted – there she was now, making sure Bobby was all right after he'd taken a tumble. Mavis started, wondering if she should rush out, but Bobby didn't cry and she could see he'd only grazed his knee. He was made of tough stuff, the spitting image of Pete right down to the squashed nose. He'd known nothing but love all his short life and responded by loving everyone right back.

Mavis decided she'd finish her tea and then call them in as the light was fading and it would be getting cold, even if they were running about like champion athletes, exploring every nook and cranny of the new garden. She'd give them something to eat and a Corona fizzy drink for a treat to mark their first day in their new home. Then Tommy would be here.

Tommy. Her heart flipped over. Despite what Lily said, Mavis wouldn't be giving him a tour of her bedroom in the upstairs flat, no matter how much she might want

to. It wasn't so much that Mavis craved respectability; she'd done that once and a fat lot of good it had done her. It was fear that held her back, along with the fact that she doubted she could ever completely trust a man again, even Tommy. He appeared perfect, kind, and caring, but Alec had seemed kind too. All that changed when she married him and she had been through too much to risk making the same mistake again.

'I'm not bloody having it!' Rhona Foster, screamed in frustration as they neared the end of their shift. 'How the hell do they expect us to do the same work but faster? Whose bright idea was that? They can stuff it, I'm not going to do it.'

'Yes you are and you know it.' Jean Barker, at twenty-six – seven years older than her hot-tempered colleague – had seen and heard it all before. Anyone could tell from a glance at her that she took no nonsense, from her sensible shoes to her tidy brown hair, now hidden under the regulation scarf they were all meant to wear on shift, though the younger ones often ignored the rule. 'It won't make any difference what we say. You've been at this factory for three years now, Rhona, and can you remember a time when the foreman ever listened to us? So we got to put up with it and get on with it. Unless you want to lose your job, which I can't see your mum being very happy about. I sure as hell don't want to lose mine.' She began to fold the cardboard boxes that had been stacked flat in the back room of the factory. 'Come on, let's make a start.'

'Rhona's right, they're picking on us,' moaned Penny, who at eighteen was the youngest of them, a year younger

than Rhona and half a head shorter. She shook her mass of wavy blonde hair. 'It's not fair. I'll break me nails. I don't know why we have to lift those horrible filthy things anyway.'

'It might have something to do with someone round here chucking the foreman's nephew last week,' Jean said. 'I'm not casting aspersions, just saying. There he was, thinking it was love's young dream, and then he gets the old heave-ho before he even knows there's something wrong. Get bored, did you, Rhona?'

Rhona shut her eyes in exasperation. 'For God's sake. He was awful. Hands like a wandering octopus, and he kissed like a flabby sponge. Couldn't dance, couldn't get me backstage. What earthly use was he? I only went out with him 'cos he said he could get free tickets to the Talisman club and then it turned out we had to pay anyway. Good riddance to him. I'd rather stack boxes than get stuck with him for another evening, and that's saying something. Sorry, girls, that's the truth.'

'So my nails get ruined 'cos you chucked Andy Forsyth?' Penny glared at her friend.

'You don't seriously expect me to make up with him for that?' Rhona glared back. 'And put your scarf back over your hair or you'll get it full of dust and then you'll blame me for that as well.'

'I hate wearing it. It makes me look like me Auntie Rita and she's nearly fifty.' Penny made a face as if she couldn't imagine anything worse. But she did as she was told, because getting factory dust out of her curls took ages and she hoped to have better things to do with her time. She noted that Rhona still hadn't put her own scarf on.

‘Well, you should be used to it,’ said Jean without sympathy. ‘Get on with it, Penny, or we’ll be here until Saturday, and I’m sure you’ve got other ways to spend your weekend than finishing off this lot.’

‘I know I have,’ said Rhona and gave them a wink as the thought of what was in store brightened her mood. ‘I’ve found myself another hot date. He’s gorgeous, he plays the guitar and guess what he’s got backstage passes to?’

Jean shook her head as she really didn’t care, but Penny was beside herself with curiosity, her curls bobbing up and down. ‘Where? Go on, don’t be mean, what are you up to? Has he got a friend, can I come? Aren’t you going to tell us?’

Rhona pretended to turn away but she couldn’t resist her moment of triumph. ‘I’m going all the way up to North London to see the Rolling Stones. How about that?’

Jean shrugged, as she couldn’t see what all the fuss was about. Penny screamed and quickly covered her mouth with her hands. Rhona glowed. ‘Yep, he’s called Kenneth and he knows everybody, I mean everybody, and he’s going to introduce me to the band and everyone behind the scenes. So why do I care about this stupid factory?’ She tossed her hair, which she tried to style like Brigitte Bardot’s, though that wasn’t easy working in such a place. She liked it when people said she looked like the film star though – and there was a reasonable resemblance, as Rhona’s eyes were dark and wide, and her hair a similar blonde. ‘You heard it here first, folks. He might be my ticket away from all of this.’