

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...**

# Only Daughter

Written by Anna Snoekstra

Published by Harlequin MIRA

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Lovereading.  
Please print off and read at your leisure.

---

**ONLY  
DAUGHTER**

**ANNA  
SNOEKSTRA**

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.

First Published in Great Britain 2016

By Harlequin Mira, an imprint of HarperCollins *Publishers*  
1 London Bridge Street, London, SE1 9GF

Only Daughter © 2016 Anna Snoekstra

ISBN: 978-1-848-45540-5

0916

Our 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

For my mother.

I've always been good at playing a part: the mysterious seductress for the sleazebag, the doe-eyed innocent for the protector. I had tried both on the security guard and neither seemed to be working.

I'd been so close. The supermarket doors had already slid open for me when his wide hand clamped on my shoulder. The main road was only fifteen paces away. A quiet street lined with yellow-and-orange-leaved trees.

His grip tightened.

He brought me into the back office. A small cement box with no windows, barely big enough to fit the old filing cabinet, desk and printer. He took the bread roll, cheese and apple out of my bag and laid them on the table between us. Seeing them spread out like that gave me a jolt of shame, but I tried my best to hold his eye. He said I wasn't going anywhere until I gave him some identi-

fication. Luckily, I had no wallet. Who needs a wallet when you don't have any money?

I attempted all my routines on him, letting tears flow when my insinuations fell flat. It wasn't my best performance; I couldn't stop looking at the bread. My stomach was beginning to cramp. I've never felt hunger like this before.

I can hear him now, talking to the police on the other side of the locked door. I stare up at the notice board above the desk. This week's staff roster is there, alongside a memo about credit card procedures with a smiley face drawn on the bottom and a few photographs from a work night out.

I have never wanted to work in a supermarket. I've never wanted to work anywhere, but all of a sudden, I'm painfully jealous.

"Sorry to bother you with this. Little skank won't give me any ID."

I wonder if he knows I can hear him.

"It's all right—we'll take it from here." Another voice.

The door opens and two cops look in at me. It's a female and a male, both probably about my age. She has her dark hair pulled back in a neat ponytail. The guy is pasty and thin. I can tell straightaway that he's going to be an asshole. They sit down on the other side of the table.

"My name is Constable Thompson and this is Constable Seirs. We understand that you were caught shoplifting from this store," the male cop says, not even bothering to hide the boredom in his tone.

“No, actually, I wasn’t,” I say, imitating my stepmom’s perfect breeding. “I was on my way to the register when he grabbed me. That man has a problem with women.”

They look at me doubtfully, their eyes sliding over my unwashed clothes and greasy hair. I wonder if I smell. My bruised and swollen face isn’t doing me any favours. It was probably why I got caught in the first place.

“He was calling me foul names when he brought me back here—” I lower my voice “—like *skank* and *whore*. Disgusting. My father is a lawyer and I expect he’ll want to sue for misconduct when I tell him what went on here today.”

They look at each other and I can immediately tell they don’t buy it. I should have cried.

“Listen, honey, it’s going to be fine. Just give us your name and address. You’ll be back home by the end of the day,” the girl cop says.

She is my age and she’s calling me pet names like I’m just a kid.

“The other option is that we book you now and take you back to the station. You’ll have to wait in a cell while we sort out who you are. It will be a lot easier if you just give us your name now.”

They’re trying to scare me and it’s working, but not for the reason they think. Once they have my fingerprints it won’t take them long to identify me. They’ll find out what I did.

“I was so hungry,” I say, and the tremor in my tone isn’t fake.

It's the look in their eyes that does it. A mix of pity and disgust. Like I'm worth nothing, just another stray for them to clean up. A memory slowly opens and I realize I know exactly how to get myself out of this.

The power of what I'm about to say is huge. It courses through my body like a shot of vodka, removing the tightness in my throat and sending tingles to the tips of my fingers. I don't feel helpless anymore; I know I can pull this off. Staring at her, then him, I let myself savor the moment. Watching them carefully to enjoy the exact instant their faces change.

"My name is Rebecca Winter. Eleven years ago, I was abducted."



# 1

*2014*

I sit in an interview room with my face down, holding my coat tightly around myself. It's cold in here. I've been waiting for almost an hour, but I'm not worried. I imagine what a stir I've caused on the other side of that mirror. They're probably calling in the missing persons unit, looking up photographs of Rebecca and painstakingly comparing them to me. That should be enough to convince them; the likeness is uncanny.

I saw it months ago. I was wrapped up with Peter, a little bundle of warmth. Usually I got teary when I was hungover and just spent the day hiding in my room listening to sad music. It was different with him. We woke up at noon and sat on the couch all day eating pizza and smoking cigarettes until we started feeling better. That

was back when I thought my parents' money didn't matter and all I needed was love.

We were watching some stupid show called *Wanted*. They were talking about a string of grisly murders at a place called Holden Valley Aged Care in Melbourne and I started looking for the remote. Butchered grannies were definitely a mood killer. Just as I went to change the channel, the next story began and a photograph came up on the screen. She had my nose, my eyes, my copper-coloured hair. Even my freckles.

“Rebecca Winter finished her late shift at McDonald's, in the inner south Canberra suburb of Manuka, on the seventeenth of January 2003,” a man said in a dramatic voice over the photograph, “but somewhere between her bus stop and home she disappeared, never to be seen again.”

“Holy shit, is that you?” Peter said.

The girl's parents appeared, saying their daughter had been missing for over a decade but they still had hope. The mother looked like she was about to cry. Another photograph: Rebecca Winter wearing a bright green dress, her arm slung around another teenage girl, this one with blonde hair. For a foolish moment, I tried to remember if I had ever owned a dress like that.

A family portrait: the parents looking thirty years younger, two grinning brothers and Rebecca in the middle. Idyllic. They may as well have had a white picket fence in the background.

“Fuck, do you think that’s your long-lost twin or what?”

“Yeah, you wish!”

We’d started joking about Peter’s gross twin fantasies and he forgot about it pretty soon. Nothing stuck around long in Peter’s mind.

I try to remember every detail I can from the show. She was from Canberra, a teenager, maybe fifteen or sixteen at the time she went missing. In some ways, I was lucky the side of my face was bruised and swollen. It masked the subtle differences that distinguished us. I’ll be well and truly gone by the time the bruising fades. I only need to buy myself enough time to get me out of the station, to the airport maybe. For a moment my mind wanders to what I would do after that. Call Dad? I hadn’t spoken to him since I left. I had picked up a pay phone a few times, even punched in his mobile number. But then the sickening sound of soft weight crashing against metal would fill my head and I’d hang up with shaking hands. He wouldn’t want to talk to me.

The door opens and the female cop peeks in and smiles at me.

“This won’t take too much longer. Can I get you something to eat?”

“Yes, please.”

The slight embarrassment in her voice, the way she looks at me and then quickly averts her eyes.

I had them.



She brings me a box of piping-hot noodles from the takeaway next door. They're oily and a bit slimy, but I've never enjoyed a meal so much. Eventually, a detective comes into the room. He puts a file on the table and pulls out a chair. He looks brutish, with a thick neck and small eyes. I can tell by the way he sits down that my best chance with him is ego. He seems to be trying to take up as much space as possible, his arm resting on the chair next to him, his legs wide open. He smiles across the table.

"I'm sorry this is taking so long."

"That's okay," I say, wide eyes, small voice. I turn my face slightly, to make sure he's looking at the bruised side.

"We're going to bring you to the hospital soon, okay?"

"I'm not hurt. I just want to go home."

"It's procedure. We've been calling your parents, but so far there's been no answer."

I imagine the phone ringing in Rebecca Winter's empty house. That was probably for the best; her parents would just complicate things. The detective takes my silence as disappointment.

"Don't worry, I'm sure we'll get a hold of them soon. They'll need to come here to make the identification. Then you can go home together."

That's the last thing I need, to be called out as a fraud in front of a room full of cops. My confidence starts to slip. I need to turn this around.

I speak into my lap. "I want to go home more than anything."

"I know. It won't be too much longer." His voice is like a pat on the head. "Did you enjoy those?" He looks at the empty noodle box.

"They were really nice. Everyone has been so amazing," I say, keeping with the timid-victim act.

He opens the manila folder. It's Rebecca Winter's file. Interview time. My eyes scan the first page.

"Can you tell me your name?"

"Rebecca." I keep my eyes down.

"And where have you been all this time, Rebecca?" he says, leaning in to hear me.

"I don't know," I whisper. "I was so scared."

"Was there anyone else there? Anyone else held with you?"

"No. Only me."

He leans in closer, until his face is only inches from mine.

"You saved me," I say, looking him right in the eyes. "Thank you."

I can see his chest swell. Canberra is only three hours from here. I just need to push a little harder. Now that he's feeling like the big man, he won't be able to say no. It's my only chance to get out of here.

"Please, will you let me go home?"

"We really need to interview you and take you to the hospital to be examined. It's important."

"Can we do that in Canberra?"

I let the tears start falling then. Men hate seeing girls cry. It makes them uncomfortable for some reason.

“You’ll be transported back to Canberra soon, but there is a procedure we need to follow first, okay?”

“But you’re the boss here, aren’t you? If you say I can go they have to do what you say. I just want to see my mom.”

“Okay,” he says, jumping out of his seat. “Don’t cry. Let me see what I can do.”