

The Good Girl

by Sue Hitchcock

“Do get your nose out of that book, Moira.”

Moira made a face. There was only one more chapter and now she would have to wait till the afternoon, when they had been to Sunday school, had their Sunday roast and she had helped Mum with the washing up.

“You shouldn’t sulk, Moira. It makes you look ugly.”

The trouble was she was a little jealous of her young sister, who had been born when Moira was spending a while with her grandparents to keep her safe from the bombs on London. The little girl had been petted and indulged. It wasn’t that she was naughty, but she didn’t know the rules. On the way home from Sunday school, they had to pass a Roman Catholic church, where the congregation would litter the road with unwanted leaflets. The little girl with her friend from two doors down would pick them up and post them through letterboxes. It was harmless, but not what their Baptist church would approve. Moira knew no way to stop them.

Over the years Moira had become obedient and it had its rewards. She was liked and trusted at school, becoming a prefect and winning a place at a well-regarded university. Of course she had fun and good friends, but always keeping within the bounds of respectability. As a keen reader she graduated with an upper two degree and began her career as a teacher.

Life changed when an old school friend invited her to her wedding. There she met her future husband, who was also a teacher. Unlike her parents, he was open to new ideas and politically engaged. His tendency to shout, when he disagreed, with her or even her parents caused disapproval, but secretly Moira was glad of an excuse to shout back. If they had not needed the free childcare when their son was born, they would have moved away sooner. Her mother was distressed when the boy was old enough for nursery and they moved away. Surely Moira would miss her mother! Not at all! Now she could explore her talents, seeking instruction from books.

Her skills were indubitable. She followed every recipe to the letter and cooked brilliantly. She learned tailoring and made a sports jacket for her husband, but had to buy new patterns for shirts and blouses as they grew fatter.

Alternative solutions were something she could not imagine. When her young sister phoned with odd suggestions which might make her life easier, she was irritated. The girl hadn't made much of a success of her life. Who was she to offer advice?

Despite good pensions, Moira and her husband continued in their set ways, their only indulgence being an annual holiday abroad. What more could they want?

Old age gave her no new freedom. Now it was her doctor who made the rules. Every pain needed medicating, introducing more symptoms from side effects of the original treatment. Life became a round of tablet taking and trips to specialists.

Moira tried very hard to live for ever. Why? Because it was the right thing to do.