

Cecelia Ahern

The Time
of my
Life



Cecelia Ahern

The Time of my Life



HarperCollins*Publishers*

Dedication

For my precious girl, Robin

Epigraph

‘You used to be much more ... “muchier”.
You’ve lost your muchness.’

The Mad Hatter to Alice in the film of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)

Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[Chapter One](#)

I didn't read the rest. I didn't need to, I...

[Chapter Two](#)

I'd heard about this kind of thing happening which is...

[Chapter Three](#)

I was halfway through the bottle of wine by the...

[Chapter Four](#)

On the fateful Saturday that I'd been dreading ever since...

[Chapter Five](#)

Sunday. It had loomed over me all weekend like that...

[Chapter Six](#)

Silchesters don't cry. It was what my father had told...

[Chapter Seven](#)

'We were up at four thirty this morning,' he panted,...

[Chapter Eight](#)

A week later I awoke at seven a.m. in a...

[Chapter Nine](#)

'He did the Inca Trail last week, did you see...

[Chapter Ten](#)

I took a forkful of my three-bean salad, in which...

[Chapter Eleven](#)

We had arranged to meet the following day in Starbucks...

[Chapter Twelve](#)

He wanted to begin our journey together by seeing where...

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

I was standing on the fire escape, secret smoking location...

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

I regretted arranging with Melanie to meet the following night.

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

'So tell me about your dad,' Life asked the following...

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

'What do you want to do today?' I asked.

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

'I have to go to him,' I said, pacing.

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

'What are you talking about?' I stayed at the door,...

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

I was woken by the clatter of keys on the...

[Chapter Twenty](#)

'So you're Lucy's life.' Nosy was sitting on the edge...

[Chapter Twenty-One](#)

I sat at the dining table in my parents' home...

[Chapter Twenty-Two](#)

'Don, I'm so sorry,' I said straight away, ignoring my...

[Chapter Twenty-Three](#)

I didn't sleep very much that night. Life wasn't snoring...

[Chapter Twenty-Four](#)

From the corner of my eye I saw Jenna slip...

[Chapter Twenty-Five](#)

Blake and I were face to face in the people...

[Chapter Twenty-Six](#)

'I'm sorry, I need to do what?'

[Chapter Twenty-Seven](#)

I awoke to a fully dressed Life watching me from...

[Chapter Twenty-Eight](#)

'Mum, are you awake?'

[Chapter Twenty-Nine](#)

'Blake.' My voice was a barely a whisper but they...

[Chapter Thirty](#)

I lay in bed for a week – at least...

[Epilogue](#)

[Other Books by The Same Author](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Publisher](#)



CHAPTER ONE

Dear Lucy Silchester,

You have an appointment for Monday 30 May.

I didn't read the rest. I didn't need to, I knew who it was from. I could tell as soon as I arrived home from work to my studio apartment and saw it lying on the floor, halfway from the front door to the kitchen, on the burned part of the carpet where the Christmas tree had fallen – and landed – two years ago and the lights had singed the carpet hairs. The carpet was a cheap old thing chosen by my penny-pinching landlord, a grey worn industrial yarn that looked as though more feet had trodden over it than the apparently 'lucky' testicles of the bull mosaic in Galleria Vittorio Emmanuele II in Milan. You'd find a similar kind of fabric in my office building – a more appropriate location as it was never intended to be walked on barefoot, made only for the steady stream of on-foot shiny leather-shoe traffic moving from cubicle to photocopier, photocopier to coffee machine, coffee machine to emergency exit stairwell for a sneaky smoke, ironically the only location which failed to alert the fire alarm. I had been a part of the effort to find the smoking spot and each time the enemy had located us, we began efforts to find a new safe house. The current place was easy to find – hundreds of butts in piles on the ground to mark the spot, their lives sucked out of them by their users in panicked distressed frenzy, their souls floating around the insides of lungs while their outsides were dropped, stamped on and deserted. It was a place more worshipped than any other in the building, more than the coffee machine, more than the exit doors at six p.m., most certainly more than the chair before the desk of Edna Larson – the boss lady – who ate good intentions like a broken dispenser that swallowed your coins but failed to spit out the bar of chocolate.

The letter lay there on that dirty singed floor. A cream woven envelope with grand George Street font declaring my name in certain no-doubt-about-it black ink, and beside it, a gold embossed stamp, three swirls joined together.



The triple spirals of life. I knew what it was because I'd received two similar letters already and I'd Googled the symbol. I'd failed to make an appointment for either of the requests to meet. I'd also failed to phone the number supplied to rearrange or cancel. I'd ignored it, swept it under the rug – or would have if the Christmas tree lights hadn't set fire to the shagpile that used to be there – and forgotten about it. But I hadn't really forgotten about it. You never forget about things you've done that you know you shouldn't have done. They hang around your mind, linger like a thief casing a joint for a future job. You see them there, dramatically lurking nearby in striped monochrome, leaping behind postboxes as soon as your head whips around to confront them. Or it's a familiar face in a crowd that you glimpse but then lose sight of. An annoying *Where's Wally?* forever locked away and hidden in every thought in your conscience. The bad thing that you did, always there to let you know.

A month on from ignoring the second letter and this one had arrived with another rescheduled appointment, and no mention of my previous failures to respond. It was like my mother – its polite failure to acknowledge my shortcomings was making me feel even worse.

I held the fancy paper at the corner between my thumb and forefinger and tilted my head to read it as it flopped to the side. The cat had pissed on it again. Ironic really. I didn't blame him. My illegally owning a pet in a high-rise apartment block in the middle of the city and holding down a full-time job meant the cat had no opportunity to go outside to relieve himself. In an attempt to rid myself of my guilt I had put framed photographs of the outside world around the apartment: the grass, the sea, a postbox, pebbles, traffic, a park, a collection of other cats, and Gene Kelly. The latter obviously to service my needs but I hoped the others would dispel any longing he had to go outside. Or to breathe fresh air, to make friends, to fall in love. Or to sing and dance.

As I was out five days a week from eight a.m. often to eight p.m. and sometimes didn't come home at all, I had trained him to 'eliminate', as the cat trainer had phrased it, on paper so he would get used to using his litter