

# Unfinished Business

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CAROL SMITH

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The moral right of the author has been asserted.

*All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.*

**Carol Smith**, formerly a leading London literary agent, now concentrates full-time on her writing career. She is the author of the highly successful *Darkening Echoes*, *Kensington Court*, *Family Reunion*, *Grandmother's Footsteps*, *Hidden Agenda*, *Vanishing Point* and, most recently, *Without Warning*. For more information about Carol Smith visit her website at [www.carolsmithbooks.com](http://www.carolsmithbooks.com)

*For Sarah Harrison*

*every night at six*  
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Part One

Rough hands woke her, scrabbling at her breasts. At first she thought it was one of those shameful dreams, but the accompanying grunts and muttered curses were anything but erotic. Also it hurt, in a very real way. She rolled instinctively to try to evade them but the hands pursued her relentlessly. She cried out, but the sound caught in her throat as he hit her hard.

'Silence, bitch!'

She had folded down the sheet because of the unseasonable warmth, and was now aware that her T-shirt had been pushed up and partly obscured her face. Everything she had was on display, though veiled by the protecting darkness. He had one knee on the bed by now and was manoeuvring to straddle her, the better to pin her down. She made a valiant effort to hurl him off, but he cracked her round the face again then moved a pillow to stifle her squeals and held it down firmly while he scrabbled to part her thighs.

She could smell his sweat and sense his growing excitement, all the while punctuated by those terrible words.

'Fucking cunt! Filthy whore! Slut!'

She continued to struggle but her assailant was that much stronger and the lack of air was beginning to make her weak. She could feel him now fumbling with his zip but was far too frantic to focus on that. All she needed, and urgently, was air. Unless he released her she was surely going to suffocate. And that had to be worse than anything else he might have in mind.

She made an extra effort to throw him off and succeeded in unseating him long enough to grab some great gulps of air. With a renewed bout of cursing he clipped her again, then threw aside the pillow and flipped her instead on to her face.

'Bitch! Whore!'

The voice was dimly familiar but how on earth could that be? Whoever was violating her in this terrible way had to be sub-human and viewing her solely as his prey. Perhaps if she lay still enough he would finish and go away. She ceased her struggling for an instant and he grabbed her wrists and pinned them in one hand, searching wildly in the dense darkness for something with which to tie them. His hand located the bedside phone. She heard its clatter as it tumbled from the table and that impersonal operator's voice repeating over and over until he jerked the wire from the wall. Cold plastic cord was wrapped around both wrists and he knotted it tightly before releasing his grip. She was trussed face down, powerless to stop him as she heard him unzip his fly.

It hurt far more than she ever might have imagined — a fierce, tearing spasm of unendurable agony.

He left her for a while, bleeding and deeply in shock, and through her muted sobbing she heard descending feet on the stairs. A tiny flicker of hope rallied then in her numbed brain; he was going, he had finished. She might yet come out of this alive.

The house was so still and the street outside so empty that her ears could track him as he moved stealthily about. He was in the kitchen and looking in the fridge. All that exertion must have given him a powerful thirst he was needing now to slake. She remembered, with a jolt, the half-finished bottle of Australian sauternes. He had found it and was glugging it down, she could imagine that from his silence. Would that make him wilder? She really didn't know, but had heard how men could get on drink. There was a sudden sharp crack as if of glass shattering, then he began to move again. Slowly, carefully, he was remounting the stairs. Her reprieve was over; he was coming back after all to finish the job.

The pain of the jagged glass was worse, far worse, than anything that had preceded it. There was no way she was going to survive this, she realised now for certain, so that when the heavy, repeated blows began to hammer down it was almost a relief as her consciousness flickered away. She was finally impervious to his frenzied slashing and jabbing, and her body ceased twitching as her blood soaked into the white sheets.

She wasn't aware of the final indignity as he unzipped once more and urinated, for by that time she was already merci-fully dead.

The bells rang out joyfully that Easter Sunday morning and Peggy Dawes, up as usual with the lark, opened the front door of her lavender-painted cottage and picked up the papers lying folded on the step. She stood there for a while in her pristine quilted housecoat, sniffing the spring air appreciatively, imbued as it was with scent. Clouds of pink blossom, weighing down the branches of the cherry trees, floated around her like candy floss, littering the gutters with their carelessly strewn petals. Peggy clucked with automatic disapproval; Arthur would have to come out later with his broom. The forecasts had predicted unseasonably mellow weather, the hottest Easter on record, they said, since 1907. So far, although it was warm enough to stand out here in her night-clothes, the soaring temperatures had yet to arrive, which was probably just as well. What with global warming and the way the seasons had all gone haywire, they didn't need a heatwave yet, not with her seedlings newly potted.

Next door's papers still lay on the step; her neighbour was obviously not yet up. They weren't what they used to be in her day, these young women, keeping late hours and frittering away their lives. Peggy sniffed delicately as she closed the front door and shuffled back to the kitchen to boil the kettle. Upstairs Arthur was already on the move. He liked a cooked breakfast, and it was Easter, after all.

Once the toast was browning and the bacon beginning to curl, Peggy undid the heavy padlock and pushed back the wrought-iron security grating to let in some more of the balmy spring air. She stepped out on to her tiny patio to check up on yesterday's planting. She loved the evocative smell of damp compost and beamed down with approval on her row of tidy pots. You wouldn't believe you were in the centre of a city here; on Sundays particularly this small Kensington backwater was as remote and quiet as a rural village, at least while the pub was closed. Now that the hospital had gone from across the road and those fancy new Regency-style houses built in its place, the volume of noise had noticeably lessened without the scream of ambulances, which had moved off down to Chelsea. There was still that green glass monstrosity, of course, on the corner of the Cromwell Road, but Peggy preferred to ignore its existence and pretend it simply hadn't happened. Luckily the patients came and went in low-purring limousines, usually with smoked windows so you

couldn't see inside. The less seen, the better, was Peggy's opinion. Men with their heads wrapped in tablecloths, their women showing only their eyes. It wasn't that she was racist, oh no, just intent on preserving her territory. Keep London for the Londoners, was her cry, as if all those milling tourists weren't enough.

This curving enclave of pretty pastel cottages was in sharp and startling contrast to the development over the road. Built at the turn of the century as humble artisans' dwellings, they had rocketed in value over the years and were now worth an arm and a leg. Peggy and Arthur had lived here for fifteen years, since their children had left home and they'd needed something smaller. There were only two bedrooms and the interior was compact but that was space enough for just the pair of them and it did mean less housework. Also fewer visitors which was a blessing. Although she loved her grandchildren, Peggy knew from experience what a honey-trap fashionable Kensington could be to the casual caller passing through.

The Dawes's house backed on to the garden of the pub, as did all the houses on that side of the street, and a flimsy wooden trellis formed a rough partition between their patio and the one next door. Peggy raised herself on her toes and peered through the rambling honeysuckle. She couldn't help it, it was an in-built part of her nature, an insatiable curiosity about the doings of those around her. A folding canvas chair and a white wrought-iron table were all that adorned Miss McLennan's patch. Apart from an empty beer glass left out on the table. Peggy mentally tutted again; such sloppiness made her skin prickle. She noticed also that the patio door was ajar even though the newspapers were still neatly folded on the front step. Now *that* sort of carelessness verged on the positively criminal. Especially in an affluent area like this, it paid to take security precautions, what with the jungle of Earl's Court only yards away, just across the busy Cromwell Road. And the stories you heard, they grew worse by the day. Muggings and bag-snatching and people having their Rolex watches ripped from their wrists in broad daylight. They had caught the famed Notting Hill Rapist eventually but now there were rumours of a new one at large, committing copycat crimes around the Kensington area. It didn't cost anything to be over-cautious, especially for a single woman living on her own.

'Jinx is obviously having a lie-in,' she reported when Arthur came down. 'Though she went to bed and left the door ajar, silly girl. At her age she ought to be more responsible.'

Arthur, immersed in the *Mail on Sunday*, merely grunted. Years of habit had taught him to filter his wife's conversation effectively. Very little of what she said warranted his full attention, and these days she never even noticed that he wasn't listening. He did perk up, however, when she served him his bacon and eggs. Even folded the newspaper carefully and laid it aside for later.

'Nice day.'

'But no sign yet of that heatwave they promised. Just as well.' Too much sunshine was bad for your skin. These days those so-called best things in life grew fewer and fewer. You couldn't even leave your garden door open for fear of what might come in. She'd keep her eye on the house next door just to be on the safe side.

When they left for Evensong the papers were still there, so on their return Peggy made it her business to ring the doorbell of number 7. That's what Neighbourhood Watch was all about; no point having those meetings if you didn't rise to the occasion. No answer, rather as she'd expected. Yet the patio door was still ajar, the empty glass untouched upon the table.

'You don't suppose she's gone away for the weekend and forgotten to lock up properly?'

Arthur, never surprised at the vacuousness of women, merely grunted. He was flicking through the television list-ings, entirely uninterested in the doings of his neighbour.

'Could be. I don't know. Now come and sit down. *Antiques Roadshow* is about to start.' He changed into his old tartan slippers and poured them each a schooner of sherry which he carried into the front room. But Peggy was fidgeting, unable to settle.

'It may sound silly,' she said in a minute, 'but I think I'll just call the police.'

Two police constables, one a woman, were there in a matter of minutes. Easter was quiet and the station not far away, just round the corner in the Earl's Court Road. They had left their panda car in Stratford Road in order not to block access to the cul-de-sac. They tried the doorbell at number 7 and when there was no answer, asked if they might come inside. Peggy, full of importance, led them through to the patio.

'See,' she said, 'the door isn't properly closed. And it's not like my neighbour to be so forgetful.'

The policeman looked at the fragile fence, and Peggy showed him where he could climb up. There was a concrete post supporting it at one end; he was up and over in a jiffy.

'Hello,' he called cautiously, peering in through the door. 'Anyone at home?' When no one answered, he pushed aside the curtain then took a tentative step into the room.

'You'd best come and join me,' he said to his female companion. 'Just in case.'

Peggy was dying to go in there with them but wasn't sure she could manage the climb. In any case, they were excluding her now, talking quietly and seriously between themselves, very much on the job. They disappeared. Six and a half minutes later, after what seemed an agonising wait, the woman appeared with an ashen face and her radio on the go, and told Peggy that they had called for reinforcements. There had been an accident — that was all she would say — and they would be round to talk to the Daweses later. No need for Peggy to hang around now.

Detective Chief Inspector Hal Burton of the Murder Squad stood in the Dawes's pin neat front room, a cup of tea in his hand. What they had found upstairs in the house next door almost defied description. He was trying not to dwell on it too much and was not about to share the gruesome details with the white-faced elderly couple facing him now. All he would concede was that their neighbour was dead and certainly not by accident or her own hand.

'Murdered, you mean?' said Arthur with goggling eyes, his full attention belatedly on the subject. 'Good God in Heaven, what a truly terrible thing.'

Her name was Jinx McLennan, they told Hal, and they'd known her for the six years since she first moved in. Alone; she had never shared the house and they didn't believe she'd been married. It was certainly something she had never mentioned and Peggy would have winkled that one out if anyone could.

'Nice girl,' ruminated Arthur, valiantly trying to get a grip on himself. 'Friendly and sociable. Good to have living next door.' Good grief, whatever next; what was this old world coming to? Slaughtered in her bed, they said, in the middle of the Easter weekend. As bad as Johannesburg

and the terrible happenings in Kosovo. Maybe living in the heart of London at their time of life wasn't as sensible as it seemed.

'Age?' asked the detective, putting down his cup. His constable would take down the details later. First he needed to get the general picture.

'Recently turned forty,' said Peggy, piping up. 'Had a big party in October. Was nice enough to include us.'

'So you knew her well and you also knew her friends?'

'Not all of them. They were always coming and going. Hugely popular and social, she was. Always so much fun.'

'Jinx McLennan.' The name tripped off his tongue. Forty years old and a woman of the world. No husband, no children, no apparent live-in lover. Parents both dead, Peggy had already volunteered that, and no siblings either, an only child.

'Boyfriends that you knew of? Anyone special?'

Arthur and Peggy looked at each other then Peggy shook her head.

'There were a couple, one of whom we met. But he wasn't here much, and I think it was something from the past. She had loads of friends, though, of both sexes. Always entertaining, people forever dropping in.'

'She was a lovely girl,' repeated Arthur with more emotion. 'A real cracker. One of the absolute best.' The sort you would like your son to marry, the archetypal girl next door. Friendly, sweet-natured and squeaky clean.

'We did, as it happens, see her only just recently,' said Peggy. 'Out with a man we'd not met before. Wednesday it was, we were driving down to Dorking to deliver the eggs. They came out of her door at the same time as us and she wished us a Happy Easter.' She dabbed at her eyes. Just imagine, if only they'd known that that was the last time they would see poor Jinx alive.

'And the man?' asked Hal alertly, his fingers on his phone.

Peggy and Arthur looked at each other blankly. It was clear the old geezer had no recollection at all. 'Tall,' Arthur said vaguely, but Peggy was rallying.

'Dark,' she said decisively. 'With very good teeth and a well-cut suit.' Which didn't sound much like Jinx's usual sort. Those artist fellows she normally hung around with could hardly be described as smart. 'And a signet ring.'

'And his car?'

'No car. They were waiting for a taxi. Heading into the West End for a meal, they said.' There was some sort of an accent, though she couldn't be precise. He had said very little, Jinx had done the talking. Australian, possibly American; maybe even some sort of a foreigner. What Peggy remembered most was how happy they'd both seemed. Bubbling over with it, in fact, now she came to think of it.

Thank heavens for nosy neighbours, thought Hal as he pocketed his phone.

The murder scene was unbelievably upsetting and even the forensic team gagged as they went about their work. WPC Trudy Taylor had never seen so much blood. When they'd first been called to the crime scene, the curtains had been closed so she'd been spared the full enormity of exactly what had occurred. Now the curtains were open and the body had been removed. But the pretty blue walls were laced with a network of blood, and the ghastly, ravaged sheets were still there, stiff with gore and spattered with yellow stains. Also, there was the smell which caused her to press her balled handkerchief to her mouth.

'Beaten to a pulp, she was,' said the fingerprints man. 'We're going to have to identify her from her dabs.' They'd taken away the weapon that had been used, an art deco bronze and ivory figurine snatched, presumably at random, from the bedside table. By some miracle, it hadn't even cracked, though the weighty onyx base had done its deadly work with horrifying efficiency. Far worse, however, at least to Trudy's shocked gaze, were the police photos of what had been achieved with a broken bottle. How so much violence could exist in any human being was too terrible even to envisage. Whatever kind of an animal could it be who was out there now, prowling the Kensington streets?

Was it the work of a random intruder? That was the main question currently on their minds. There had been a series of local break-ins and rapes but nothing even halfway as awful as this. No one till now had actually been killed; the masked intruder had caught his victims by surprise then left abruptly after he'd robbed and violated them.

'It must have occurred in the early hours of Sunday morn-ing,' said the pathologist. 'After the pubs had closed and the punters gone home.'

'And the odd thing is it appears that nothing's been taken. Not that we can tell for sure without an insider's knowledge. This room's a mess but mainly because of the struggle. The rest of the house appears untouched. Which is unusual with this sort of a crime.'

'You're not suggesting it could have been someone she knew?' Trudy's gorge was rising as the possibilities grew even worse.

'Could be,' said Hal, still nosing around. 'This sort of violent crime is more often than not domestic. Can't rule out the people she hung out with. Maybe it was someone from the pub next door.'

Who might well have sat there, drinking in the garden, able at leisure to case the row of cute sweetpea cottages. At this stage nothing could be discounted. Every possible angle had to be exhaustively researched. First, however, they needed to establish next of kin.

Peggy Dawes was unable to help them there. All she really knew about the dead woman was that she was popular and sociable with an enormous zest for life and an ever-open door. Her friends were constantly coming and going. What a tragic waste.

'Threw herself into her work, she did. A girl that pretty ought by rights to have been at home having babies.'

'What sort of line was she in, do you know?'

'Graphic designer with her own small company. Just up the street in the mews. Nice offices. You should go and see them.'

Trudy made a note.

'What kind of a social life would you say she led? Bit of a raver, was she? Bars and clubs, that sort of thing? Picking up strangers perhaps?' Hal was being deliberately provocative, studying the effect of his words on this eminently respectable lady.

Peggy was genuinely outraged. 'Absolutely not,' she said indignantly. 'The very idea of it!'

Jinx, she told them, came from a solid, middle-class back-ground, army folk as far as she could recall. Died quite early, both of them, leaving her on her own.

'Went to a private boarding-school somewhere in the West Country. And after that to art school here in London.'

She had always been an achiever, had worked her way up through various different jobs then started this business some years back. When she was still remarkably young. Doing extremely well, or so they'd heard, with a nice tight circle of business colleagues who had always remained loyal to her through thick and thin.

Those are really the ones you should talk to,' said Peggy. 'More like family than work-mates, she always said. Nice people, too. We met them at one of her parties. They'll be able to fill in some of the gaps.'

Trudy made a note of the address. It was Bank Holiday Monday; the office would be closed. First thing tomorrow they'd go round and break the news.

2

First one in that Tuesday morning was Dottie Sullivan, a little after nine. She switched off the alarm and scooped up the mail then carried it through to the main office to sort, shrugging off her ancient waxed jacket on the way. The Easter break had been refreshing, though they still hadn't seen much sign of the scorching weather the forecasters had so confidently predicted. They had driven down to Frinton to visit her mother, and Sam, bless his heart, had presented the old lady with one of his recent watercolours, done specially for her as a surprise. He was like that, Sam, kind, thoughtful and always so caring. An affectionate smile creased the corners of Dottie's mouth as she dumped the mail and went into the kitchen to start the coffee brewing. They were all of them in this studio fairly fanatical coffee addicts, apart from Serafina, of course, who preferred her fancy teas.

Jinx's desk was for once pristine. It was odd to come in and not find her here, busy on the telephone amid a litter of opened mail. Five minutes later, Serafina came bursting in, uptight and seething as was so often her way.

'Bloody bus was late again. I almost ended up walking.'

Serafina Rossetti was tall and willowy and quite outstandingly beautiful. Dottie never ceased marvelling at how she managed to keep so immaculate, untouched by the ravages of everyday city living. Even after her fevered rush down the mews, not a hair was out of place, her makeup perfect. She slid out of her neat linen jacket and draped it over her chair, then booted up the computer while she flicked through her mail. All of them on the team were like that, especially right now: nervous and obsessive, under unusual pressure from a deadline they all considered crazy. And which, more seriously, they were worried they wouldn't meet. That was what happened when greed compelled them to lower their meticulous standards. But these days, alas, they no longer had total control. Anyone in doubt should hear Ambrose on the subject, provided they could stand the ear-blasting. It was a team that cared and pulled together, credit again to Jinx's brilliant leadership.

'Tea?' called Dottie from the kitchen. It was really supposed to be part of Wayne's job as office gofer and general dogsbody but he was rarely ever in on time and today she couldn't wait. After the long bus ride from Muswell Hill, that first shot of caffeine was like nectar. Sam, like Serafina, preferred tea first thing, though the old-fashioned workman's kind with leaves, brewed in an earthenware pot.

'Please,' said Serafina, scarcely bothering to glance up.

'What's it to be this morning then?' (The 'madam' was implicit though good-humoured.) 'Earl Grey or apple and ginger?'

'Apple and ginger.'

It was a joke among the rest of them how Serafina managed to maintain her reedlike figure. At five foot ten, she had a twenty-two inch waist which Jinx always said verged on the obscene.

'One of these days, my lady,' she liked to threaten, 'I shall bring in my little cleaver and slice you in half.' Like the ill-fated airman in *Catch 22*. 'We can't have you hanging around always looking so gorgeous. Bad for office morale.'

It seemed unfair when some of them had to struggle with their weight, yet Serafina, who normally ate like a sparrow, would occasionally indulge herself and without so much as a batted eyelid join them for cheeseburgers and chips at Sticky Fingers, their favourite local joint. Wayne had a theory that she probably had a tapeworm, such thinness just wasn't natural. One of these nights, he predicted darkly, it would slither out of her mouth while she was sleeping. Provided she left out a saucer of milk, a traditional cure, so he said.

What Serafina actually suffered from, which warm-hearted Dottie had deduced but was keeping to herself, was a chronic case of anorexia nervosa that had plagued her since childhood and still returned at stressful times. Part of her personality, Dottie was aware; a symptom of a manipulative nature which had on occasion to be watched. She needed to take better care of her health. All that denial and not bothering to eat was already taking its toll. Her bones were so slender they could easily fracture and with age other factors would set in. Osteoporosis, serious things like that. But Serafina would never listen so Dottie had learned to keep quiet. Might as well talk to the wall.

'How was the weekend?' she inquired now, carrying in steaming mugs.

'Nothing sensational. This guy I'm seeing had to work.' Serafina ran a nervy hand through her lustrous hair. She was usually seeing someone but played her cards close to her chest. Dottie had given up trying to pry but Jinx was constantly on her case.

'Come on, Serafina, spit it out,' she'd say. 'Don't be such an old meanie. Give us oldies a bit of vicarious living. Brighten our dull little lives.'

Which was, of course, nonsense. Jinx had more social life than the lot of them put together, was only ever home when she had guests. Or was here, in the office, feverishly working overtime, which was something she increasingly did. She was even more driven than the rest of the team but, then, it all belonged solely to her. She had taken a mammoth gamble when she set up on her own to get them all out of a bit of a spot. It was entirely due to her guts and determination that they were still under one roof and these days doing so well. They all had a great deal to thank Jinx for, not the least for refusing to be beaten when the odds were stacked against them. Something not one of them should ever lose sight of and probably never would.

Wayne Peacock was rolling up now on his swanky inline skates, bumping over the cobbles to crash in a heap against the door. Typical of Wayne, always out to play the fool. He couldn't make an unostentatious entrance to save his life. He sprawled across the doormat, unclipping the purple mon-strosities and swapping them for luminous pink trainers.

'Hi there, kiddies! What's cooking?' Wayne had peroxided hair shaven close to his scalp, a tattoo on his right biceps and a silver ring in one ear. He always dressed very camp, in T-shirt and fatigues, but Dottie knew his best-kept secret which was that he had a girlfriend on the sly. Melody, she'd met her, nice and straightforward, a trainee manager going places fast. Like Wayne himself if he'd stop the horsing around. As Jinx had spotted right from the start, he was far too bright and talented for his own good. If he'd only apply himself that little bit extra, there was no saying what he might achieve. It was almost as though he were daunted by his gifts, a scholarship to the Slade at the age of sixteen. From Bradford too.

'No Jinx?'

'Not today, dimwit. Don't you remember, she's working at home this week.'

'Yeah, yeah, that's her story. Updating the accounts to the end of the tax year. Or so she would have us believe.' He trilled his luvvie's laugh. 'Bet she's having a lie-in, dozy mare. Go on, give her a ring and see if I'm not right.'

'You're so bad,' said Dottie indulgently, pouring him coffee. Wayne didn't change except for the worse. She knew full well what he was capable of but also that Jinx richly deserved this unscheduled brief break. If break it could be called with all those dreary figures to check. Dottie had offered to lend a hand but had been instantly over-ruled. Why should she have to sacrifice her Easter, Sam either, come to that? The Sullivans had a close family life with children they adored. They should enjoy it together whenever they got the chance whereas Easter was nothing of special significance to a habitual singleton like Jinx. She usually worked through it, as it was; this year would be nothing different. Yet Dottie truly valued her generosity of spirit. Not every employer would be so altruistic, but that was one of the things that made Jinx so special. Without her inspired leadership and effervescent energy, they'd none of them be where they were right now. If only these youngsters would learn to appreciate their luck and not take so much for granted.

Serafina leaned back and stretched like a cat, then languidly sipped her cooling tea.

'I doubt she'll be having much fun,' she remarked smugly, 'with those dreary old ledgers to sort through.' Though she'd do it herself like a shot, reflected Dottie, if she thought there might be anything there for her. Serafina's thrusting ambition was hardly a secret, certainly not in this office. And lately she'd been acting even nervier than before, deep in some unresolved resentment she had not yet cared to declare. Maybe not obvious to the rest of the team, but perceptive Dottie

could always spot the signs. She was wasting away before their eyes, doing herself irreparable harm.

'Well someone has to take care of the boring details.' Ambrose Rafferty had entered unobserved and was now clumping up the curved iron staircase to the gallery above, which was dominated by his computer and drawing-board. 'One of the tedious things about being boss.' He chuckled. 'It's her own fault really for being so damned high-flying. Right out of the orbit of the humble folk like us.' Ambrose was Jinx's principal admirer. Everything she did looked good in his eyes.

'Ambrose!' said Dottie, delighted to see him. She adored this gentle humorous man, who preferred to stay out of the limelight but was actually the creative strength and backbone of the design group. He was straightening his papers and emptying his canvas book-bag of the volumes he was returning to the London Library. Ambrose worked steadily and consistently hard without ever making a song and dance of it. Dottie admired that about him. Quiet and self-effacing, he was reliable through and through. She poured him coffee and carried it up. Something about the man's air of helpless incompetence never failed to hit the right buttons with her. All Ambrose needed, she had always been convinced, was the love of a good woman to shape and define his life. Luckily for him, until that woman appeared, he would always have doted on Dottie to worry and watch over him. With as careful a scrutiny as she did her own children. And Jinx.

'You all right?' Close to he looked a bit pasty, as though he'd had insufficient sleep or fresh air, and was shuffling his papers in a distracted way as if he had not yet fully surfaced. He stared at her blankly then gave his sweet smile, like a guilty schoolboy caught with his hand in the sweet jar.

'I guess so,' was all he said.

Dottie carefully cleared a space for his coffee then picked up the carelessly slung jacket to hang on the hook on the door. These bachelors with their casual lifestyles. She dreaded to think what his flat must be like.

'Nice weekend?' she asked as she fussed. He sometimes saw Jinx, they went shopping together when he wasn't embroiled in a chess-game with Wayne. Despite the fact she'd have been working all weekend, they were such good pals, harmonious as a pair of old slippers, that it was entirely possible they'd spent some of it together. Secretly Dottie nurtured all kind of fantasies about a joint future for them both. Sam, however, had forbidden her to speculate. Told her that it just wasn't right. When Ambrose failed to answer she had another go, knowing she was bugging him but unable to resist. They liked to refer to her jointly as their den mother, which was precisely the role she played. Her own grown children no longer really needed her so she had extra worrying time to spare.

'Did you see Jinx?' she asked him boldly, but Ambrose said he had not. Nor even Wayne, for a change, he just hadn't been there.

'I was in Birmingham till yesterday at that computer thing.'

Which accounted, of course, for the pallor. Too much beer in a smoky atmosphere playing endless computer games with the lads. Dottie clucked, she just couldn't help it. She would have loved to be able to cook him regular meals, to dose him up with fresh vegetables and fibre. But by the age of thirty-nine he should be able to stand on his own feet. Or so her husband would sternly have her remember.

'He's not exactly a child, Dot. He's managed alone all these years.' In Sam's private view, Ambrose was a lot more smart than he ever cared to let on. That air of helpless ineptness worked like a

charm with the womenfolk every time. Witness his own foolish wife. Dottie was forever fretting about him, wishing he'd find the perfect mate and settle down. But there weren't many flies on old Ambrose, in truth, and who in the world could ever blame him?

Adam & Eve Mews, which joins Kensington High Street to Allen Street, is a hidden thoroughfare right in the heart of the shops, a pretty, cobbled, other-worldish sort of place with Dutch-style houses and a feeling of timeless peace. Legend has it that the playwright and wit, Richard Sheridan, used as his regular watering-hole the pub on the corner that gave the small backwater its name. These days, despite opening on to one of the busiest high streets in central London, only the occasional gawping tourist spoiled its tranquillity, making it the ideal setting for a creative group like theirs. McLennan Graphics was halfway down on the left, an airy modernised building with smart spruce-green trim and slatted wooden blinds that could be drawn down for additional privacy. All of them loved it, it had such a good feel. Jinx, in particular, since she could reach it easily on foot and was thus enabled to rid her life of the frustrations and annoyances of commuting or driving through traffic. And the area was wonderful for restaurants and shopping, right there in the fulcrum of fashionable Kensington.

Dottie had donated painted wooden tubs which were placed on either side of the front door. At this time of year they were crowded with primulas and dewy-eyed pansies, even a sprinkling of miniature bluebells. These she lovingly tended, carrying home the bulbs when they'd passed their best for future nurturing in her own wilderness garden. She was often to be found pottering first thing in the morning, with her tiny trowel and shears and miniature watering-can. Wayne made all sorts of evil jokes and was currently scouting the nurseries for a tasteless garden gnome, but Jinx found Dottie's dedication endearing and had banned him from interfering.

'Leave her alone, she really cares. And it does add a certain elegance to the place.' Good for business and their own morale. That kind of thing was important.

Dottie, when all was said and done, really was the salt of the earth. Patronising though it might seem, Jinx had always been touched by her devoted support. It was Dottie who kept the store cupboard supplied, popping out at lunchtime to buy loo paper and coffee or to fetch them all sandwiches on days when they were particularly stretched. Wayne was supposed to take care of these mundane chores but his head was usually well in the clouds. And not only because of his hectic nightlife either. Ambrose, who'd been known to roll the occasional joint himself, was deeply attached to the bright young man and had lately been teaching him chess. He enjoyed his enthusiasm, found it fresh and appealing, and sincerely admired his spectacular talent. Envied it too. So in their varied and separate ways, this team was a clone of a true genetic family. Looked out for each other at all times, one of the reasons they had lasted together so long.

'Anyone know if we're likely to see the Moon Monster again today?' asked Wayne flippantly from his corner, intent on the rapid-fire sketches he made look so simple.

'Damien?' said Dottie, clearing away the mugs. 'I wouldn't imagine so, not so soon.' He had already enraged them by crashing their pre-Easter lunch, seeming even crazier than ever. 'He should be safely back in Jersey by now, where he belongs.' Nursing his neuroses and worrying himself sick about paranoid fantasies in his head.

'Avoiding tax and accruing wealth,' added Serafina sniffily, with just a trace of acid bitterness. 'With dreary little Wifey ever at his beck and call.'

Damien Rudge was something of a bugbear to them all, but Wayne, who'd known him the shortest time, had even less patience for all that petty posturing. Who, when it actually came to it, did the creature think he was, Leonardo? Only the goose that laid their golden eggs, Dottie reminded him, which didn't satisfy sceptical Wayne one bit.

'He's hardly going to bother with the likes of us when he knows Jinx isn't here.' Serafina couldn't bear the man and made little attempt to disguise it. Her disdain was usually written plain upon her face, which hardly endeared her to their resident genius who had fleetingly tried flirting but been permanently rebuffed. These days he'd more like to strangle her but she couldn't care a hoot. She was a tough one, Serafina, with whom it paid not to tangle. Snobbish to her fingertips, she dismissed the artist as more of an artisan. More dangerously, she also allowed it to show. Jinx had occasionally had to caution her.

'Children, children,' said Dottie placidly. 'Please remember who covers our overheads here.'

'Rubbish,' said Serafina rudely, though actually it was true. 'All that nerd ever really did was come up with the seed of the original idea. Inspired by Ambrose with all that chess and embellished by the rest of us as a team.' She was very mean-spirited, Serafina. '*Damien's Bright Idea*, indeed. He's got about as much talent at Wayne.'

A lightning glance passed between Dottie and the young man, which haughty Serafina failed to catch. Wayne was enough of a trial as it was, teasing her and endlessly setting traps. The first thing she'd do, the minute she gained control, was fire the irritating little squirt. What she significantly failed to recognise, however, which the rest of them saw quite clearly, was that the unpretentious twenty-two-year-old northerner possessed more original artistic flair than all the rest of them put together. Which included Damien Rudge.

'It was Jinx who discovered him and encouraged him from the start.' Dottie believed in credit where it was due. They'd been students together, Damien, Jinx and Ambrose, taught for a while by her husband, Sam.

'Though don't overlook the source of the real funding. He who holds our lives in the palm of his hand.' Ambrose was listening from up above, his normally mild expression contorted into a scowl. When Ambrose took against a person it was for life as the rest of them well knew. When he had it in for someone, which was rare, he was inclined to bang on about it like a cracked record.

The doorbell shrilled loudly, interrupting their chatter, and Wayne, with his head stuck out of the window, reported that there was a police-car outside. First thing back after the Easter break. And still only ten to ten.

'Now what have you been up to, you bad, bad boy?' asked Dottie with an indulgent chuckle. But all merriment fled when she opened the door and saw the grim expressions on their faces.

'Mrs Sullivan?' asked DCI Burton, consulting his notes. 'Mind if we come in?'

Dead. That one stark word, leaden and unacceptable, hung in the air, too terrible even to contemplate. Not when applied to Jinx, their Jinx. Jinx dead? Impossible, there had to be some mistake. Jinx, the golden girl, always with so much vitality, whose radiant smile was guaranteed to brighten any room. Jinx, with her gaiety and perpetual sense of fun; Jinx, the wit, with her rapid-fire repartee. They had all been together celebrating only five days before. She'd been very much alive then. Wayne, his mouth frozen half open imbecilically, hovered on the precipice of an irreverent quip. This was just some sort of wicked stunt, yeah? These jokesters were kidding, round here for a laugh. Any second now and she'd bounce in crying 'Gotcha!', triumphant because she had fooled them all so well. It was just the kind of caper he might have got up to himself. Dead? Not possible, not *Jinx*, pull the other one. But the police officers remained inscrutable, no sign of even a flicker of mirth. Was it possible, then, that they were genuine after all? Wayne thought better of it and quietly closed his mouth. *Dead?* Bloomin' heck, whatever next? The world must be coming to an end.

'What happened?' Predictably it was the poised Serafina who managed to regain her equilibrium first. She slid thin, nervy fingers through her over-abundant hair, apparently in perfect control though her usual pallor had increased to near translucence.

'We are not quite certain. Not yet.' The Detective Chief Inspector seemed almost apologetic while his WPC looked as though she might be going to cry. 'We'll need to talk to each one of you separately to run through some routine questions.'

Serafina studied him, approving of what she saw. Fit and well-toned with spiky, dark-red hair, and a nose that was almost too perfect for a real-life run-of-the-mill street cop. He looked rather as if he'd stepped out of one of the soaps, too groomed somehow to be genuine. She had lied when she told Dottie about the man in her life. That particular episode was history now. The position had just come up vacant again and Serafina was constantly on the lookout. She swung one elegant silk-clad knee nonchalantly over the other and watched the responsive flicker in his glacial eyes. This situation could prove promising, she liked a man with an iron will who was also a bit of a brute.

Trudy sighed resignedly as she saw the predatory gleam. Working alongside Hal Burton had its pluses but she was sick of women constantly throwing themselves at him. Especially, as now, when he was supposed to be on duty.

'Who's in charge here?'

They looked at each other in ashen confusion, then their eyes all shifted to Dottie. Though she'd be the last to claim it for herself, she ran the studio on a day-to-day basis, keeping an eye on this disparate group of strung out, creative individuals. Also she was by far the oldest. She twisted a paper tissue in her anguish, shredding it miserably as she fought the gathering tears. This was too awful even to take in. All she longed for was home and the comfort of Sam's arms.

'Is there somewhere private we can talk?' Hal glanced round at the spacious, open-plan studio, aware of the frightened, watching eyes.

'The conference-room,' said Dottie, leading the way. Then added, more from habit than anything, 'Would you care for some coffee? It's really no trouble.' Both officers declined. The sooner they got through this and out of here, the better. There were facts to check, people to locate. Plus a dangerous killer loose out there somewhere who might very well strike again.

Without wanting to go into too much detail, they outlined the salient points. The house had been entered and Jinx murdered in her bed; they avoided the gorier facts. Dottie wrung her hands and visibly shook, quite clearly in genuine shock. At least, if she were faking it she was a lot brighter than she seemed. Trudy drew a neat line through her name and reckoned they could safely eliminate her. Dottie did, however, have access to Jinx's personal records.

'Next of kin?'

'Now that I *can* tell you.' Only recently Jinx had set about making a will and Dottie had helped her with it. Furthermore, she kept a copy on disc. Jinx had no secrets, or so she regularly claimed, and her private data was easily accessible. A trusting soul, Hal registered mentally, alarmingly so. Might that have contributed to her untimely death? He made another note.

Marjorie Rawlings, a retired civil servant. Her mother's sister's unmarried daughter who lived in the Cotswolds. Dottie ran through the organiser and flashed up the address on the screen. Trudy scribbled it down. They would drive down tomorrow for a first-hand statement. In the meantime there were other things they needed to know.

'Boyfriends? Anyone in particular?'

Dottie considered then shook her head. There were a couple of fairly recent ones, one especially she didn't care to mention, but no one exactly immediate, nothing current. Certainly no one who mattered so much as to be likely to want to kill her, of that she was positive. Hal, however, had watched her falter. It was his decision, he told her brusquely, which of these leads he would follow up. Now, if Mrs Sullivan would kindly stop wasting his time, he would like all the details — and fast.

Hamish Cotterell presented no problem. There was his address in Hay-on-Wye and this she meekly handed over. Former lovers and long-time friends, they had both remained single so their relationship had been ongoing in a cosy, natural way. A nice man who occasionally dropped in at the studio, rather a good crime-writer with a penchant for fishing. He had once been very keen on Jinx — Dottie had observed it in his eyes — but these days they were little more than chums though she did still occasionally spend weekends with him. And when he was in London, he usually stayed over at her house. Poor man, this was going to hit him especially hard.

And the other? For a moment Dottie prevaricated, wondering frantically where her true loyalties really lay. But the inspector was far too canny for her, saw her floundering and pressed his advantage. Again, don't waste my time, lady. Final warning.

'Professor Norman Harker,' said Dottie at last, feeling a tiny bit treacherous.

'You mean the bod on the box?' said Hal, startled.

The very one. Pompous, over-bearing and what's more married, yet for several months the light of Jinx's life. She saw the incomprehension on Hal's face as she flicked through the organiser for the address and wordlessly noted it down. Not a nice man but a very big fish. Even Jinx was not always infallible. Hal glanced at it then passed it over to Trudy. They would interview the egghead as soon as he'd allow it. Interesting to see what such a high-profile public figure had to say about an illicit alliance.

'Anyone else?' Who might have had a motive? Dottie thought again then shook her head. The thing about Jinx was she always had had men, they'd flocked around her all her life and rarely wandered away. She possessed the kind of easy charm that drew them to her like flies. And yet she never seemed to give it a thought, was impervious to her own pulling power. Which was, of course, all part of her lasting allure, a gift from the fairies.

'She was spotted by her neighbours on Wednesday night with a tall, dark man in a well-cut suit. Any ideas?'

Dottie had one fleeting thought which she instantly dismissed as preposterous. She shook her head. Wednesday was the day before they'd all had that office lunch. Jinx had been right at the top of her form, bright and ebullient, her natural self, asking about their plans for the four-day break even though she'd be working right through. But that was Jinx all over. Everything to her was just another challenge, the end of tax year accounts just a dreary chore. A tall dark stranger, well that could be many people. Though if she'd had a date, it was not like her not to have said. Jinx kept no secrets, none that Dottie knew of. But that, as the policeman gently pointed out, was what secrecy was all about.

Someone was going to have the grisly task of identifying the body. It was so horribly mutilated, especially about the head, that it wouldn't be an easy or enviable task. There were, of course, fingerprints and dental records, but the formality was still something that had got to be gone through. Who the onus should fall on was not immediately clear. The cousin in the country was rarely around; Dottie had a feeling Jinx hadn't seen her in years. And neither current lover was close enough in status to have this unenviable duty dumped on him. Hal looked hard at Dottie and watched her visibly blanch. No, she couldn't, she'd really rather not. She would prefer to remember lovely Jinx as she had been. Of those in the office, apart from herself, Ambrose, as the second most senior, was clearly the obvious candidate. But here again Dottie shook her head. The poor man was in no shape at all to go through such an ordeal. He'd been closer to Jinx than the rest of them and she knew he'd not be able to cope. It would keep till later, there was no immediate rush. Forensic had not yet finished with the body and it was far more urgent that the killer be apprehended.

There was a best friend living in Bristol; they made a note. And of course the other neighbours in the street. Already the police were making a door-to-door check but the cul-de-sac was small and the houses few. They had shrouded number 7 with a plastic awning and taped off the entrance to the street. No one could either enter or leave without first identifying themselves and answering some routine questions, but so far nothing of any apparent significance had emerged. Behind their prettily painted front doors, the residents of this classy close preferred to mind their own business. It would be different in a proper village, as Peggy Dawes pointed out to Arthur. There the net curtains would be constantly on the twitch. Little would escape the neighbours' vigilance.

There was, of course, also the pub. Popular in this particular neighbourhood, it was regularly packed, inside and out. The garden backed on to the row of pastel cottages with only a low brick wall to mark the boundary. It would be no problem at all for an athletic person to vault it and gain easy access. Especially to the house with the French door left enticingly ajar. What possibly could have possessed her to be so lax?

'We're not getting anywhere very fast,' brooded Hal. 'Right, let's wheel in the rest of them one by one.'

Ambrose was seated with Dottie in the pub, not the one next door to Jinx but the Britannia at the end of the mews. They frequently lunched together but today neither could eat a thing. The jukebox was playing, though not very loudly, and only a handful of drinkers shared their space. Across the road the mellow stone columns of the United Reform church provided a dramatic backdrop to a creamy magnolia tree in full bloom. Normally Dottie would have revelled at the sight, but her appetite for life had shrivelled entirely. The nightmare hung over them, growing darker by the minute. As the first numbing shock began to sink in, she wondered how they'd find the strength to carry on. Jinx dead, and she'd seemed so happy and fulfilled on Thursday, more so somehow than even her normal self. It was shocking how tragedy could strike like that, suddenly without warning out of a clear blue sky.

Ambrose raised his glass to his lips but his hand shook so badly he could scarcely hold it steady. The police had given him a right going over; he realised it was their job, but still. Dottie, aware of his increasingly fragile state, removed the glass and patted the hand instead. A capable hand but gentle too, that of a sensitive artist. She stroked his long, slightly spatulate fingers and for once he didn't recoil from her touch. She, perhaps more than anyone, was aware of the depth of his sorrow, had watched the two of them over the years and had a measure of how much he cared. He had idolised Jinx, thought the world of her. The best friend he'd probably ever had.

'No need to talk if you don't feel like it. Just sit there and be quiet awhile and try not to think too much.' What else could Dottie say; the man was in obvious pain. As, indeed, was Dottie herself. She had phoned Sam and told him the ghastly news and he'd immediately offered to come right over and fetch her, but she felt her presence was still required here. It was what Jinx would have wanted, she was certain, that business should continue as usual especially with the pressures on them now. Though how any of them could hope to do much work. She and Ambrose had slipped away when she'd noticed his eyes no longer focusing, the pencil dead in his hand. She had raised one quick eyebrow to Serafina, who had instantly taken it on board, then steered Ambrose gently over here. When he felt like talking she'd be here for him. If not, she was content just to sit and think.

'Why not go on home, lovie,' she said. There's really not a lot you can do here. I doubt that any of us will get any work done today. Maybe we should close the office out of respect.'

Ambrose looked at her despairingly. There's just too much work to get through,' he said. His worried brown eyes behind the rimless lenses swam with emotion and his hand still visibly shook. He was tall and wirily built with an amazingly Spartan physique considering the sedentary life he lived. Right now, however, he looked like a little lost orphan whom Dottie longed to sweep up and comfort. She could see one of his migraines threatening and soon he'd be out of action altogether.

'Go home,' she urged him again gently. 'If you like, I'll come with you.' But Ambrose shook his head. He lived in Battersea, just the other side of the river. He'd take the bus as usual, he insisted, but she went with him instead to look for a cab.

'She was always so vibrant, so overflowing with life,' said Dottie, at home in Muswell Hill. 'The kids in the office adored her, everyone did.'

Sam, in his comfortable jogging-pants, sat at the table watching her assemble the shepherd's pie.

Nursing a beer, he stroked his beard reflectively as he contemplated the day's awful news. He knew from first hand, all too well as it happened, the power of the dead woman's personality. He had taught her years ago at the London College of Printing, along with Ambrose and Damien. One thing was certain; he would never be able to forget her. She had played far too important a role in his life.

'My old mum used to say that people divide into radiators and drains,' he said thoughtfully. 'Jinx was most definitely a radiator.' The world would be that much the poorer without her. There were things he still didn't talk about to Dottie, best left suppressed and unsaid. The time with Jinx was now so long ago that the pain was little more than just a memory. He closed his eyes and recaptured her as she had been then, bright and vivacious, constantly laughing, with her wild pink-streaked hair and outrageous clothes. The girl he'd allowed to disrupt his stolid life, the girl he had loved so intensely. A child of the seventies with that vast original talent, a born entrepreneur in the making. It had been quite a privilege to teach her.

'How do you suppose Ambrose will cope?'

'Badly, I should think. He already has a migraine. I made him go home to his bed, poor sweet, after the mauling he had from the police.' Dottie, sprinkling chopped parsley, shook her head. Bad times that could only get worse.

Sam had always liked Ambrose a lot and really enjoyed his company. The fellow was smart with a sly, incisive wit and a quiet way of watching things, not letting anything get by. He seemed hardly to have aged in the years since he left college, just gained a little in confidence and stature. He, too, was talented but maintained a deliberately low profile. The work he was doing now, with advanced computer software, was a natural extension of the draughtsmanship he was so good at. It was amazing how he'd adapted, and so quickly, once the axis of his working world had shifted. Yet there again, it all came down to Jinx. Her timely intervention, just when they'd needed it most, had saved the whole lot of them by keeping them in work, though she'd run a serious risk of losing everything. No wonder Ambrose was such a devoted fan.

'Gay, is he?' Sam asked suddenly, as if the thought had only now occurred.

'No, of course not!' said Dottie in swift indignation as she closed the oven door and rinsed her hands. The very idea!

'What, a bachelor of that age? Pushing forty?'

'I wasn't much younger when I married you,' she reminded him primly. 'Why is it people only ever say that about men? Might just as well think it of me.'

Her husband leaned over and fondly patted her bum. 'Get us another of these will you, lovie?' he said, flipping the beer can into the bin. 'No one could ever imagine you as a dyke.' Not with those curves and that mass of flaming hair. Even after all these years, he still liked the way she looked. Saw her as one of the voluptuous famed beauties, a Titian or possibly a Rubens. Dottie's personal tragedy was that she simply couldn't see it herself, would certainly not have believed it if she had.

'So how come in that case,' persisted Sam, 'does he never seem to have a girl of his own? Answer me that. He's a nice enough looking fellow and very entertaining. You'd think they'd be buzzing around him like wasps.'

Dottie considered. 'I really couldn't say. The ladies certainly love him. He is always hugely in

demand as an extra man.' His dance-card was perpetually full, he need never eat alone, yet that one special relationship appeared always to elude him. He was a bit of a late developer, Ambrose, perhaps that was all it was. Though pushing forty was cutting it fine if he ever intended to settle down.

'If you really want to know,' she said, having thought about it constantly, 'I think he has always been a little bit sweet on Jinx. That's the plain truth.'

And now the tragedy too.

4

*I killed the bitch because she had it coming. As simple as that, I had had it up to here. She had messed me around, taunted me, made me look a fool, and now she was bloody well fucking someone else. I couldn't stand it, neither would you. Women, they're all the same, they let you down.*

*The thing you have to understand is this. She was mine, and she knew it, right from the start, from that very first meeting years ago. The first time I ever set eyes on her I recognised my soulmate just like that. I had seen that smile too often in my dreams. And the fact that our stars fitted confirmed it. She was standing surrounded by the usual sycophantic group, all elbowing for her attention. She was telling a dirty joke — I still remember the punchline — and when she was through she cracked up with the rest, hysterical at her own wit. But that was jinx all over, tiresome but also adorable. It was hard for almost anyone to resist her.*

*Finally she deigned to notice my presence. '*

*Hello,' she said. 'I know you, don't I? What's your name?' I told her yes though actually it wasn't true. In my dreams, maybe, but I couldn't say that, nor that we'd been together in past lives. She simply nodded and took my hand and led me into the group. That's how she always was, friendly and upfront, naive to the point of total idiocy.*

*'Probably at some party,' she said, and I went along with that. No point in making a big thing of it, after all. I prefer to remain out of the limelight. For this was the woman I'd waited for all my life, had been put on this earth just to worship. Finding her again, after all the empty years, felt like coming home.*

*She clung on to my arm as though she had always done so and led me around the group making introductions. It didn't matter, the clowns just nodded and grinned and I didn't give a toss about any one of them. Just being beside her was all that ever counted. I'd put up with the rest of the shit for the sake of her.*

*I knew I could never forget her and I never will. In this life nor in the next one.*

The drive down to Moreton-in-Marsh next morning was fast and uneventful. They left Earl's Court at a little after eight, and by ten were banging the ornate brass knocker on Marjorie Rawlings's weathered oak front door. They had debated whether to break the news by telephone first or save it for the inevitable face-to-face. By mutual agreement the day before, they had come down on the side of humanity, with the result that the plain, slightly horsy face had traces of recent weeping round the eyes. Her courtesy, however, could not have been bettered. She ushered them through her tiny, low-ceilinged hall into a minute sitting-room overlooking the garden, with uneven, polished floorboards and crooked beams laden with horse-brasses. Trudy looked round with frank appreciation.

'This is very nice.'

'Isn't it just. I bought it when I took early retirement from the Civil Service. The fulfilment of a long-time pipe dream, the cosy country cottage with roses round the door and all that.'

She offered them coffee, which she served in small exquisite china cups, flowery and delicate like the rest of the cottage though slightly out of keeping with her own bony frame. She was almost as tall as Hal, with squarish shoulders and a flat chest, thick ankles and sensible countrywoman's shoes. An overweight cat slumbered in one saggy armchair and she pushed it on to the floor to make room for Trudy.

'Jinx used to laugh and say I was getting old before my time, but I know she liked it really. Once used to pop down for the occasional weekend to unwind, though I'm afraid it must be years since I last saw her.' She sniffed and dabbed at her nose with a tissue. 'Actually, I've left it to her in my will. She never knew that but I think she would have been thrilled. Worked too hard, always did. She needed some outlet for relaxation.'

She turned away briefly to blow her nose, then handed round sugar lumps with tiny silver tongs.

'When did you last speak to her?' asked Hal.

'Let me see now. Oh, not for months. She sent a card at Christmas, of course, with a scrawled note saying it had been far too long and we really must get together some time. But I can't recall when we last had a proper jaw. Our lives are quite different, she was so much engrossed in her work.'

'Do you have any pictures of her?' asked Hal. \*

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The brutal murder of golden girl, Jinx McLennan, early one Sunday in her exclusive Kensington house, shocks the neighbours and triggers a police inquiry that delves deeply into her colourful past. Single, childless, Jinx nevertheless had it all — brains, popularity, her own successful business, plus a wide-ranging network of lovers

and friends. Closest of all were her own small design team, the surrogate family who've been with her from the start; devoted, long-suffering Dottie and her artist husband, Sam; gentle, reliable Ambrose, the team's backbone; Wayne, the zany trainee with the outrageous lifestyle; and Serafina, hot on the fast track, who wants everything Jinx had, but now. Plus millionaire genius, Damien Rudge, the goose who lays their golden eggs. The trail goes cold until, in a shock revelation, it turns out to be a case of mistaken identity. The wrong person has been murdered. Out there somewhere is still a crazed killer with unfinished business who will have to kill again.

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Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family: Amazon.de - Vivian Gornick  
Unfinished Business - The book Make Yourself Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism, Peter Coviello is published by University of Chicago Press. Titus 1:5-9 "Pauls Unfinished Business Part 1 - The essays in Unfinished Business show that as much, if not more, can be learned from The second part of the book analyzes empirical findings from the case Unfinished Business, Derryn Hinch - Melbourne University Press - Contemporary And Unfinished Business - All of us have unfinished business-the things we should have done but just let slip. The lesson of the book is one that is applicable to us all: Be mindful of what Unfinished Business - BookGanga - Is it really possible to have it all? In Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family, Anne-Marie Slaughter unravels the half truths' that lie Unfinished Business - P.S. I Love You - This is a book summary of My Unfinished Business by Dan Kennedy. Read this My Unfinished Business summary to review key takeaways and lessons from the Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God - Buy a discounted Paperback of Unfinished Business online from Australia's leading online bookstore. Wishlist. Wishlist. Earn 52 Qantas Points on this Book Book Review: Unfinished Business by Keri Day - In June PropelHer's Book Club, for ambitious women, will be discussing Unfinished Business by Anne-Marie Slaughter. Written by former Review: Unfinished Business' takes a clear-eyed look at - Christian Unfinished Business - James Van Praagh - Paperback - Unfinished Business See all episodes from Book of the Week Books. Books. Celebrating reading and the 100 novels that have shaped our

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