Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

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...

Dead Gorgeous

Written by Elizabeth Flynn

Published by Lion Hudson

All text is copyright © of the author

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

DEAD GORGEOUS

Elizabeth Flynn



LION FICTION

Text copyright © 2014 by Elizabeth Flynn
This edition copyright © 2014 Lion Hudson

The right of Elizabeth Flynn to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

All the characters in this book are fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Published by Lion Fiction
an imprint of
Lion Hudson plc
Wilkinson House, Jordan Hill Road
Oxford OX2 8DR, England
www.lionhudson.com/fiction

ISBN 978 1 78264 131 5
e-ISBN 978 1 78264 132 2

First edition 2014

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

Printed and bound in the UK, September 2014, LH26

Prologue

Early May

The *Passionista* magazine third anniversary reception had begun well. With the lights, the wall coverings, and the highly polished black floor, the stevedores who once worked in this converted docklands warehouse would have had trouble recognizing the place. Designers, columnists, editors, models, trendsetters, fashionistas, and a galaxy of stars mixed and mingled, making air kisses as they came together and small talk as they moved on. *Passionista* had laid on the champagne and hors d'oeuvres with a lavish hand, and every one of the "faces" obliged with a photograph in return, adding their smiling, designer-clad endorsement to the grand *Passionista* logo sparkling on the wall.

A fashion show added attraction to an already glamorous evening. The magazine had persuaded a couple of the big houses to let their junior designers loose to showcase their work. In a large salon just down the hall from the main party, a whole team of people had been working all evening to get ready for the event.

Amid the maelstrom in this other room, a young woman stood, tense with excitement. Behind her, chaos reigned. One of the fledgling designers, in meltdown, darted here, there and everywhere, not even trying to hide his panic. "Is *Vogue* in?" he asked, of nobody in particular. "Where's my coffee? That hem's dropped a bit. This is a disaster; everything's going wrong. What about *Style* and *Harpers*? That button's coming loose; we need a stitcher – over here – *now*! Has anyone seen if their seats are

filled? Oh my! I really think that's got more tease than the law allows. Turn round, darling, I need to see if that back seam sits right." Somebody called in a stage whisper that they'd seen one or two well-known fashion bloggers taking their seats, and a fraction of the anxiety disappeared from his face. Nobody paid him a great deal of attention; they were all too busy trying to get his collection onto the catwalk. Only the models remained still and docile as make-up artists covered incipient zits and downplayed the shadows of too-deep cheekbones, hairdressers hoped and prayed the gel was up to the job, stitchers got on with last-minute alterations and dressers eased them carefully in and out of garments few of them could afford. And when they were ready, they were checked again, the hair, the make-up, the threaded eyebrows, the waxed and spray-tanned legs.

The woman had her back to them all. This booking meant so much to her; she was determined not to blow it. An event like this could get her noticed by Balenciaga, Gucci, Ivano King or someone like that. Her family back home in Russia, in a village near the Estonian border would easily recognize such a name. They'd all chipped in to help her get to England and she wanted to make them proud.

She was the first on and stood ready, even though most of the guests still hadn't come in from the reception. Someone shouted her name and she turned carefully so as not to dislodge her hair, and saw her new-found Polish friend, Asia, threading a way towards her through all the chaos.

"Klara!" said Asia, as she reached her. "Is so exciting; I speak with assistant to a designer who thinks her boss will like my work." Asia's eyes shone. "Even more, there is possibility of internship at her company. She will show him my designs and contact me."

"Brilliant!" Klara responded, keeping as still as she could. "I also have news. We have chance of rooms in a house."

"Oh *tak*! Wow! Is true?" Both young women longed to leave the hostel where they had met and really get started on their big adventure in the London fashion world.

"*Da*, *da*," said Klara. "Is in nice place – Richmond – I get details later when I see Igor."

"OK, OK," said Asia, "is on tube line, I think." They were new to London but had quickly grasped how pivotal the underground transport system was to life in the capital. "I go now; cir… er… cir-cu-late some more." She beamed at her friend. "Many people now coming in from reception; fashion show will start soon."

Klara inclined her head carefully and turned back to face the direction in which she would move onto the catwalk. She knew the excitement she felt right now could not compare with the rush of adrenaline she would experience when her turn came.

The show began. Her music. Her signal. She raised her six feet of beautifully proportioned frame onto the runway, allowed herself a second to savour the moment and moved forward into the glare of the lights. She'd come a long way to make this short walk.

An hour later she could tell it had gone well. Klara's part finished with the first collection, and she was able to get changed and watch the second from the back of the room. She heard the buzz, sensed the excitement, watched the nodding heads and animated conversations and knew the evening had been a success. Two columnists passed her and she heard a snatch of conversation.

"I've always had a bit of a pash on *Passionista*."

"Oh, darling, that's excruciating, but I won't forgive you if you don't use it in the byline." They laughed and passed on to more champagne. Klara didn't get the joke. Her English wasn't up to it. She scanned the room looking for any sign of Asia, but couldn't see her. She presumed her friend must be networking

until the last possible moment. By this time she had other concerns. She looked around for Igor and saw him on the other side of the room. He'd been helping set up the show earlier and would no doubt soon be busy with dismantling it all again. Right now, though, he was leaning against the wall, watching her, knowing she would have to seek him out eventually. He stood up as she approached, a small, malicious smile playing around his mouth.

"You have it?" she asked.

"*Da*." He reached into his pocket and brought out the tiny plastic pouch with its precious stash of white powder. He held it up as though to keep it out of her reach.

"Give!"

He shrugged and handed it to her. "Relax, Klara; I tease only."

She snatched the packet, turned away from him and moved across the room. Orderly, disciplined activity had replaced the earlier sense of chaos and panic as everything that had been used in the show was packed up and moved out. Klara, oblivious to it all, made her way to the ladies' toilets. She hoped she wouldn't have to wait too long for a cubicle.

Chapter One

A Monday morning, late June

Kirsty Manners drove her Ford Ka past the Lebanese food wholesalers which marked the beginning of the trading estate. She went along the uniformly constructed row of buildings, pulling up in front of the one at the far end just beneath the sign, Ivano King.

In the rear-view mirror she saw a silver Porsche convertible gliding by. It slid into a bay further along. The occupant emerged, unfolding his sinewy form as he stood up. He was Ian King, the man behind the label. As he came past her to enter the building, she made sure her bare, silky legs were just emerging from her car. He paused, letting his gaze travel all the way up from her perfectly turned ankles to her beautiful face. She stood up, smoothed down her very short skirt, ran a hand through her luxurious dark hair and treated him to one of her smiling pouts.

Ian hid a sense of irritation. They were having a fling, for goodness' sake, so why keep on preening and posing like she was trying to impress him? Then he remembered. "Morning, Kirsty," he said in a non-committal tone. "I think Jenni's got quite a bit of paperwork for you to do today. I know it's still a way off, but things will become very busy in the run-up to London Fashion Week."

Kirsty's pout took on a mulish character. She wasn't about to be deflected. "Yes, but you're having a shoot here today and I don't see why – "

"Tall women only, Kirsty, and we've got shed-loads of them. Minimum of five-ten, for a magazine campaign, and it's nothing to do with us; they're just using our premises." Ian turned towards the front door and Kirsty fell into step beside him.

"But they're using your girls, though," she said, as they reached the building. Ian paused and looked questioningly at her. "From Massingham's," she explained.

He frowned. "Just because we use models from Massingham's agency a fair bit doesn't make them 'ours'. Other people use them as well." He held the door open for her to precede him into the building. Kirsty smiled to herself as she entered. If she couldn't be a part of the shoot she'd at least managed to ensure that her flatmate, Sandra, a model who did meet the height requirement, wasn't on it either. She'd known of the casting but hadn't given Sandra the details. She wasn't having her strutting about the flat going on about it.

From a first-floor window, Eleanor Chandler watched the arrival. In spite of herself, her heart softened for a moment, as it always did at the sight of Ian. Her lip curled, however, as she watched Kirsty's performance.

Seated at her desk on the other side of the room, busily sorting the post into separate piles, Jenni, who ran the office, paused in her work and glanced up. She watched Eleanor's face, saw its expression soften then harden again, and addressed the safest option. "Kirsty's arrived, has she?"

Eleanor turned towards her. "How can you tell from over there?" she asked.

Jenni grinned. "I don't need to look out of the window. I just know from the look on your face."

Eleanor pursed her mouth into an expression of disapproval and came over to Jenni's desk. "I do wish Ian wouldn't mix business and pleasure. She's in Gucci today. I bet it's a knock-

off. I don't suppose for one moment she earns enough for the real thing. Not as a clerical worker and receptionist."

"And in-house model, don't forget," Jenni reminded her.

"Yes, and I get the impression that she thinks the next step is the catwalk at Fashion Week. As if."

"She doesn't even walk all that well, really, does she?" said Jenni.

"No. She doesn't stand a chance. She'd be advised to stick to photographic work because it's probably all she's going to get." Eleanor looked down at her jacket and checked the creases of her sleekly fitting trousers. As Ivano King's head stitcher, she knew more about clothes than most.

"That's a nice outfit, Ellie. Is it new?" Jenni asked. She knew it had been a mistake to mention Kirsty and leapt at the excuse to steer the conversation into another channel. Eleanor could be a bit of a stuck record on the subject of Ian's women.

"Thank you; Julien Macdonald, in case you didn't recognize it; I decided to splash out a bit."

"It's very elegant," said Jenni. I've got to hand it to you, Ellie, you've really come on since – " She stopped abruptly, blushed and cast a hurried glance up at her colleague.

Eleanor smiled. "Don't worry, Jenni, I know what you're thinking and you're right. I've spent years turning out the most gorgeous clothes for the industry but was never seen in them myself. It's true; until Mother died I looked a complete frump."

"Things weren't *that* bad," said Jenni, "but in any case, nobody could call you that any more."

"Thank you," replied Eleanor. "Sometimes I feel a bit guilty when I think of how I've moved on from her ways, but there you go; nothing's going to bring her back, is it?"

"No, you're right about that." Secretly Jenni often used to wonder how a woman in her forties could be so under her mother's thumb, but here stood the evidence right in front of her. She sniffed the air. "That's nice; you don't normally do perfume."

"I got it last Christmas; thought I might as well give it a whirl."

"It's lovely!"

Eleanor smiled. "Ta." She went to the sewing room, sat at her machine and gazed, without seeing, at the material-laden shelves, the stacks of cottons and the bindings. Several mannequins were festooned with a variety of fabrics. One had on a complete outfit while another, tucked into a corner, was draped with a piece of beaded, diaphanous stuff that would have done Salome proud. A few moments later the door opened. She caught the scent of a very familiar, very expensive aftershave as Ian entered the room and came across to her desk. Her heart did its usual little leap at his presence. She'd given up trying to kid herself she didn't care for this man years since, even though she knew she had no chance. At least he was straight. She'd known some undiscerning female colleagues over the years fall for gays with very embarrassing results.

"Morning, Ellie, good weekend?"

"Morning, yes thanks; how are things?"

"Busy; been fine-tuning the collection. I'm not at all sure about the hemline on those jackets now."

"That's only the third change of mind. What's the betting you end up back with the first choice," she joked.

He grinned. "It's because I'm more nervous than usual, I keep thinking I've left it rather late in the season to change direction. It's all a bit risky."

"Yes, but I think it's a gamble that's going to pay off, Ian. It's a younger, fresher look from you. I think you'll knock 'em dead come September." She became aware that his eyes were on her. He seemed to be studying her almost as if he had never seen her before. "Is everything all right, Ian?" she asked.

"What? Oh sorry, was I staring?"

Eleanor smiled. "Stare, stare, stare; drink me in," she wanted to say. "No problem," she answered.

"Hmm. I just hope you're right, about the gamble, I mean."

Eleanor said nothing. She could guess what was on his mind and knew he wouldn't thank her for pointing out that his last two collections had been given the thumbs down by the media. Besides which, Jenni had told her Harvey Nichols and Harrods had both dropped his stuff. They had no outlet left in London at the moment but their own shop in Chelsea. And a batch of dresses had been returned from New York last week.

"Right," he said. "I'd better get on." He grinned at her and left the room.

Eleanor sat at her desk watching his back as it disappeared into the corridor. *Unrequited love; it sucks,* she said to herself.

Two types of photographs lined the walls of Ian's bright, cheery office which overlooked the front of the building. They were either of celebrities wearing his creations on a variety of red carpets or they were of Ian with his arm around said celebrities at some reception or opening. Normally, just looking at them gave him a thrill, but this morning he sat at his crowded desk and stared moodily at the original jacket design. He felt his mobile phone vibrate in his inside pocket. He reached for it and checked the message. Kirsty had written *11 out of 10 for last nite u hunk*. He deleted it and put the phone back in his pocket. He could see this developing into a problem. He'd have to do something about it, but Kirsty was a slightly different kettle of fish from his previous women; he'd need to disentangle himself with some care. Meanwhile, he had more urgent matters to consider. He ought to touch base with his business partner at the shop in the King's Road.

He picked up the office phone and pressed the speed dial. A few seconds later he heard a clipped, no-nonsense voice. "Nigel Summers."

"Nige; Ian. Morning."

"How goes it in Wandsworth?"

"I still can't quite decide about those jackets."

"You'll sort it," said Nigel, with confidence. "Is everything set up for the shoot?"

"Yes." Ian stood up and looked out of his window. "I can see some of the models arriving. Oh – and the photographer's here now. It's Leon; he gets around, doesn't he?"

"Ah yes, much in demand, from what I hear," agreed Nigel.

"I must say, I wasn't at all sure about taking these premises at first, but that big space at the back has proved to be a nice little earner for us, hasn't it?"

"You see, you just stick to designing the clothes, *Ivano*, and leave the business side of things to me."

Ian grinned. "Yeah, your decisions have all come good so far. Want to sort out my love life while you're at it?"

"What; has Kirsty come to the end of her tenure, then?"

"I think so, but she sees me as her ticket to a supermodel existence or a rich and glamorous lifestyle, and I don't think she'll go quietly."

"Mmm. I found her quite tenacious, too. I had to be very firm in the end. And she's still stringing Darren along, isn't she?"

"Oh yes, she was his girlfriend even when she was seeing you. But you knew that. She's the sort who always has someone on the back-burner. Why did you dump her, by the way?"

"A couple of things, really. It dawned on me she thought we were a real couple, you know, like, long-term. And she showed far too much interest in things that are no business of hers."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes, well, I thought I'd give her a taste of how things go in this industry, took her to a bash in Wapping, you know, the one *Passionista* magazine threw. You remember? You couldn't go because you had the flu."

"Oh yes. Was that wise, taking Kirsty, given who provided the entertainment that night?"

"Oh, you'd have to be *really* in the know to suss that one out. Leon was there too, come to think of it, busily snapping away. Anyway, Kirsty was surprised by all these Ukrainian and Russian models being there. She asked me how they got to know about the 'in' parties when they could hardly even speak English. 'Well, darling,' I says, 'that's what it's like now. There are loads of them over here. The old Eastern Bloc has more tall model types than you can shake a stick at; and they learn English soon enough.' Then she got into conversation with one or two of them and I left them to it, although, I have to say, I didn't take her to the party to network on her own account. I expected her to stick with me because, you can't take it away from her, she looks good on your arm. And then there were the lines."

"Ah. Shocked was she? Had no idea it goes on?"

"Oh, I think she knew it went on, but to see it happening so blatantly pulled her up a bit. Then, if you please, she wanted to know who supplied the stuff."

"No way!"

"I kid you not. 'Kirsty,' I said to her, 'you're a big girl; be sensible.' It's there if you want to try it, but either snort up or shut up. There are some questions you just don't ask."

Just at that moment the door to Ian's office opened and Kirsty walked in with some letters in her hand.

"Ah, Kirsty," said Ian loudly, so that Nigel would hear. Into the phone he said, "I'll catch you later," and replaced the receiver. Kirsty, with the same smiling pout that had been on her face in the car park, walked over to his desk and perched herself on the edge of it.

"I'm loving the hemline like that," she said.

A sudden silence came over the room. "What do you know about this hemline?"

A look of alarm came and went in Kirsty's eyes. "Nothing, Ian, I'm just saying I like it."

"Hmm, of course; thanks for the post."

Kirsty relaxed and smiled. "Leon wants to know if you're up for a drink when the shoot breaks for lunch."

"I'll let him know," replied Ian. "Don't bother to go back to him with a message. I'll go down and see him in a minute. You just get back to Jenni."

Kirsty shook her head in a way that made her hair fall languidly back over her shoulders. She opened her eyes wide and let him take in the pose before she spoke. "OK; you'd be amazed at how much I'm learning about the business in this job. I could be a help to you."

Ian seriously doubted that. It would take more than a smattering of knowledge to turn this self-regarding princess into a useful colleague.

"Really?" he said in a voice heavy with sarcasm.

"I thought you were interested in taking on an intern. I could put you in touch with a good one."

"Don't bother. Nigel's already told me about one, a Polish woman. I interviewed her and thought she was suitable but she didn't turn up for work; so much for wanting to get on. Anyway, I've changed my mind about employing an intern now. I'll see you later," he said, by way of dismissal. He shook his head as the door closed behind her. She really didn't get it; that stride was never going to get her onto the catwalk. As he leaned over and switched his computer on, his eyes flicked to the calendar on his desk. Only a few weeks to go and he'd be celebrating his forty-fourth birthday. What a thought. He could still pull the young women, though. And the not-so-young ones, he thought, as a picture of Ellie came into his mind. He'd known for ages how she felt about him.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright. A thought had entered his head. Ellie… She could be the solution he needed. He definitely had to do something about Kirsty; now, Ellie… Would it work,

hmm? There were distinct possibilities in the idea. He couldn't imagine it would be difficult. She had become a presentable woman these days, no problems there. A bit older than him, but that didn't matter. She'd blossomed a lot recently. He sat there for a while before getting on with his morning's work. A plan began to form in his mind.

Standing by the window of his office, Nigel Summers put the receiver down after Ian's call. It rang again and he turned away from the window, giving himself a mental shake. A framed photograph of him with his mother at a gala dinner stood by the phone and he smiled at it. "Good morning, Mother; I'll call you later," he said to the picture. He picked up the phone once more and gave his customary salutation: "Nigel Summers."

In a cluttered room at the back of the unit. Darren Carpenter walked along racks of garments methodically checking the items against his inventory and pushing everything back to make more room. Very soon now a small army of leggy females, all part of the magazine shoot, would descend on this place. Although, in theory, only the room next door had been hired models, make-up artists and dressers always overspilled into his section as the day wore on. He could neither see nor hear Kirsty's car from here, but he knew she had arrived nonetheless. She'd go past his bike in the rack, of course. He thought proudly about the new white mudguards and reflector tape he'd stuck onto them. He left it on the end stand especially so that she would see it. Darren and Kirsty were an item, a situation about which he wished he didn't feel so insecure.

He heard his mobile phone ring from the desk in the corner and went across to answer it. He recognized the voice of Kirsty's flatmate. "Hi, Sandra, thought I might see you here today."

"Oh, really, why?"

"We've got a shoot on. From the look of the girls, I reckon you're the same type."

Sandra let out a wail that was half-anguish and half-anger. "My agent never mentioned anything, but I bet Kirsty could have given me the details so I could have tried out for it. I bet you. The cow!"

Darren let a moment pass without saying anything. The uneasy relationship between Kirsty and Sandra bewildered him. "I know what you're going to tell me," he said.

"You do?"

"Yeah, I seen her, didn't I? She was with him."

A brief pause ensued. It briefly crossed Sandra's mind to wonder about this "sighting" but she didn't want to go down that route. All she could do was to add a rider. "She came in around midnight and left at the usual time this morning."

Darren's jaw hardened and the pulse in his temple throbbed. "So much for the girls' night in with you, then," he said.

"Is that what she told you she would be doing?"

"Yeah."

Sandra could see at once that Kirsty hadn't even bothered to think up a plausible lie, but she didn't say so to Darren. She didn't want to upset him too much. Sandra had her own hopes for Darren, and getting him to look upon her as something other than a listening ear into which he could pour his woes about Kirsty was proving to be a delicate business.

"Don't worry, I'm here for you Daz," she said.

"Thanks, Sandy, you're a star. I'd better go; talk to you later." He put the phone down and stared into space. He clenched his fists and flexed his muscles, making the huge biceps bulge at the tops of his arms. If things went on like this, he knew he would soon be teaching her a lesson. Kirsty was his girl. She had to get that through her head.

Kirsty sat at the desk opposite Jenni's and got started on

her day's duties. She looked at the pile of filing she'd been given with dismay. Office work hadn't been part of her career plan, but almost the first thing she'd learned in this industry is that you didn't spend your time dashing from one exciting modelling job to another. In fact, some weeks you considered yourself fortunate to even get sent to a casting. Still, she had an ace up her sleeve. Things had gone well with Ian the previous evening; a top designer like him must surely be able to use his influence to get her jobs. She had high hopes for her future.

Raj Wickramasinghe, the pattern cutter, breezed into the room. "Morning each," he said. "Hope we all had a good weekend."

Kirsty smiled uncertainly at the newcomer. Raj seemed impervious to her looks and charms so she didn't really know how to relate to him. Jenni did, however. She took in the rolling-eye signal he threw at her with an infinitesimal nod. "Kirsty," she asked, "would you mind popping down to the café and getting me a latte, please? You know how I like it."

"Ooh, be a doll and get one for me please, Kirsty," added Raj.

"Sure," responded Kirsty, jumping up from her seat, glad for an excuse to put off the filing for a bit longer.

Left alone, Raj smiled and raised an eyebrow at Jenni.

"Come on, out with it," teased Jenni. "I know that look on your face, you've got some *goss*."

Raj grinned and came over to her desk. He leaned forward, speaking in an unnecessarily low voice. "Our lot, the family, went out for a drink last night."

"Oh, really, still trying to persuade you to marry and produce grandchildren?"

Raj clicked his tongue. "Ha! Yes my mum is anyway – in her dreams! Still, she means well, bless her heart."

Jenni gave a guffaw of laughter. "I don't see it somehow," she said.

"Yeah, tell me about it," said Raj. "Anyway, we went to this nice little pub in Hampton Hill."

"Oh yes?" Jenni knew that Raj liked his listeners to pick up on the nuances of his gossip, so she added, "Quite a way out."

"Yes indeed, but however far you go, you can never count on being safe from prying eyes, can you?" Jenni shook her head, smiling in expectation. "Well, who should I see?" Raj leaned in closer to her. "*She* was there," he said, pointing his thumb in the direction of the door through which Kirsty had just disappeared, "with Ian."

"That's hardly juicy gossip, Raj. Have you made me send Kirsty out for a coffee I don't really want just for that?"

"No, no, no, listen. We all know about Ian and Kirsty."

"And her plans to get her feet under his table," said Jenni.

"Yeah, silly tart; like *that's* ever going to happen." replied Raj. "No, the thing is, Darren was there as well, hiding in a corner. He was watching them."

"Oh wow!" Jenni shivered. "Are you sure it was him?"

"It was him all right."

"I must admit I've always found him a bit intense, but that's more like borderline stalking."

"Creepy," agreed Raj.

The door opened and Eleanor came into the room. Raj straightened up and Jenni spoke. "So your mum hasn't given up hope, then?"

"No, but I've learned to live with it. Morning, Ellie."

"Morning, Raj," replied Eleanor. "I left some swatches down here." Just at that moment, Ian walked past in the corridor. Eleanor quickly grabbed the swatches and hurried to take the opportunity to walk along with him. "I'll catch you later at coffee," she said to Jenni, as she headed through the door.

When Ian and Eleanor reached Ian's office, he had to cut across her to enter. Suddenly he paused in the doorway. "Ellie,"

he said quizzically, his nose twitching. "You're doing perfume today; that smells nice."

Eleanor could hardly believe what she was hearing at first. *Keep it cool, Eleanor,* she said to herself. *He's got a good nose, remember, that's all it might be.* "Yup," she said. "I don't normally, but I thought I'd give it a go."

"Hmm," he smiled and, Eleanor could have sworn, nearly winked. "Well, it's very sexy; I approve."

Sexy; he said sexy. He did, didn't he? Yes he did. Eleanor went slowly back up to the stitching room. Well, this was a turn-up. What was *that* about?

Kirsty's mobile phone vibrated in her pocket as she made her way back to the office laden with coffees. She'd received a text from Darren. *U on 4 lunch?* She stifled a sigh as she balanced the cardboard tray of coffees in one hand and texted back with the other. *Yeh, c u @ 1*. She had been getting weary of him even before she started seeing Ian. She found Darren intense and possessive. She felt certain he'd been lingering outside the house where she shared a flat with Sandra, more than once. He hadn't been loitering outside last week, though. She'd come back from the gym to find him in the living room talking to Sandra while he waited for her. Kirsty paused in her thinking. She'd better watch that. She had a suspicion Sandra liked Darren and she wouldn't stand for that. Darren was her boyfriend and she hadn't finished with him yet, Ian or no Ian.

Still, it would all stop when she and Ian could finally take their relationship to the next level. Kirsty gave a smile. Oh yes, that would raise eyebrows. Kirsty Manners would be somebody then.