The Woman at 72 Derry Lane

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Beyond Grace's Rainbow
The Life You Left
Every Time a Bell Rings
The Things I Should Have Told You

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The Woman at 72 Derry Lane

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For my godparents, Ann and Nigel Payne.
As a child you held my hand and now,
as an adult, you hold my heart.

Chapter 1

STELLA

Derry Lane, Dublin, 2014

Stella held her breath as he circled her. He moved slowly, methodically, inspecting every inch of her body. His breath nipped the back of her neck with menace. He combed through her hair with long, cool fingers. She willed herself not to move, not to shudder, not to react.

'Very nice,' Matt whispered and, despite herself, she exhaled in relief. The air crackled and shifted with his elation at her reaction. She knew he was getting off on her fear. She would have to work harder not to give him that satisfaction.

Her reprieve was short-lived. No sooner had the word 'nice' been uttered, than a long, dissatisfied sigh was exhaled through his perfect white teeth. His face scrunched up in a frown and the vein on his forehead throbbed in protest. Matt stood back and shook his head slowly, disappointment tainting the air around them.

Damn it. What had she missed? In a frenzy Stella went

through a quick mental checklist. Hair blow-dried poker-straight by her hairdresser and friend, Charlie, earlier, exactly as Matt liked it. Her make-up was applied carefully, with neutral shades that accentuated her eyes and complemented her nude lips. Stella thought back to the night a few years ago when she'd paid sorely for experimenting with a new look. Matt had walked into the bedroom, watching her as she stained her lips red. She felt glamorous and sexy. Until he stood behind her, groping her left breast and squeezing it so tight that his fingernails marked her skin.

'You're hurting me.' She protested, trying to wriggle free from his grip.

'Oh, you don't like this?' he asked, placing another hand on her behind and smacking it hard.

'No!' She exclaimed. She was stunned, completely immobilised by his tone and actions.

He pulled away from her and said, 'Well, you surprise me. Because this . . .' He pointed to her face, 'this trashy make-up will result in a similar response from every man you meet. You look like you belong in a whorehouse.'

Was he joking? No. His face was anything but jovial. She felt annoyance bubble up inside her. How dare he say such nasty things to her?

'What do *you* know about whorehouses?' she lifted her chin in defiance.

Looking back, she could see how bloody naïve she'd been back then. That was a time when she still believed in Matt and their marriage. Yes, he had the odd 'off day', was prone to mood swings. But she could forgive him those, because he loved her. Because he was all she had. That was then. This is now.

'What did you say?' His voice was quiet. Menace laced every word. Stella shuddered as she watched him change in front of her. She tried to locate traces of the kind, charming man she thought she'd married. Then the force of his hand landed hard across her cheek, smearing her blood-red lipstick over her chin.

The impact had been so forceful she reeled backwards against the corner of their dressing table, stabbing her side as she fell. An old injury moaned in response to his sudden assault and she tumbled down to the ground in an undignified, shameful heap. She stayed there in shock and in pain, unable to speak as she watched him come at her again. He was precise, he considered his next move. Then he kicked her hard in her side. Right where her scar was. She found her voice as she cried out in horror and pain and she begged him to stop. But if he heard her, he didn't show it.

He told her afterwards that he'd lost control, that he was ashamed of his actions, that it wasn't who he was. His calm, cold face and his precision in where his blow landed made a liar of him. Matt always knew exactly what he was doing. With stark realisation, Stella knew that he enjoyed every blow.

What had she missed this evening when she'd got ready? Here she was – immaculate, yet still somehow – wrong.

Stella was brought back to the present when Matt circled her once more and her eyes followed him. 'How many times do I have to tell you that it's all in the fine detail? You really are so careless. I swear, I don't know what you would do without me.'

So many lies in their marriage.

'I'm sorry,' she kept her voice steady, light, without a note of whining. He hated it when she had 'histrionics'. She steeled herself to look at him directly. Was it the fading light in their white kitchen playing tricks, or had his eyes changed? How long had it been since she saw love there? Had she imagined that in the first place? Now, it was like looking into the eyes of a monster. Cold and dark, his pupils dilated so much that they dominated his eyes.

He raised an eyebrow, watching her, as if he could read her mind. She looked away first, pulling her gaze from him. He always won, much better at the game than her.

Her mother's face flashed into her mind. She closed her eyes and tried to focus on that. Dark-blue jeans, with a sloppy, long cream cardigan that she always wore around the house. She'd had it years, it was wrapped up in every memory she had of her mam at home.

She used to say, 'Your nan wore a housecoat nearly every day of her adult life. Whenever she got home, she'd put it on, over whatever she was wearing. This cardigan, well, I suppose it's my housecoat. Just snugglier.'

Stella remembered a time when all her troubles could be snuggled away sitting beside her mam, with the cardigan wrapped around them both. A blanket of love and protection in that cardigan. Oh Mam . . .

Her mother's voice whispered to her a lot these past few weeks. Repeating words of wisdom she'd given Stella. They had just watched *About a Boy* and Hugh Grant's character was busy making a fool of yet another unsuspecting female. Mam had paused the movie, then turned to her, saying:

'How a man treats you is how they feel about you. Do you understand? You must always believe them when they show you who their true self is.'

Stella wished with all her heart she could be back in that cardigan's embrace, safe and loved.

'I don't think Matt likes me very much, Mam.' As tears pricked, she felt her eyeliner creep its way into her eyeballs, stinging her.

But who else is there, but him?

Her mother's voice was stern now. 'No time for tears. Think! Don't let emotions cloud your next move. Think, my darling girl.'

She played through her options. She could implore him to let her off whatever transgression she had committed, or she could brazen it out, say nothing and hope for the best. Somehow or other, she knew that either would likely result in the same reaction from him. She'd done this dance with him so many times, she knew the drill. This was a game to him, a cruel game of cat and mouse, where the rules changed daily.

Tonight it appeared he wanted to play.

'You think this is acceptable?' He pointed to a small, fine white thread that poked out from the hem of her Louise Kennedy dress and flicked it with his index finger. Her stomach flipped when she saw the offending article, so small, yet with the power of a deadly grenade. She must have snagged it when she removed the tag earlier.

You idiot. You bloody stupid idiot.

'I'll sort it out, I'm so sorry, I don't know how I missed that.' She kept her voice light, calm, even, then moved towards the hallway, to the stairway. His voice halted her.

'Just *where* do you think you're going? Come back here now!' His voice grew louder with every word and her body trembled in response. She moved back into the kitchen, standing beside their large granite island.

She bit hard on the inside of her mouth to stall anguish. Later, while he slept, she could allow herself the luxury of tears.

She glanced at the back door. How far would she get if she ran for it? She could climb the fence into next door's garden, bang on the woman's back door and beg for safe refuge. She tried to remember her neighbour's name. It was a pretty name. Rea. That was it. Despite the fact that their houses were conjoined, semi-detached buddies, she knew little about the woman. She never left the house and gossip on the street was that 'she wasn't all there'. No, the tired face of her neighbour, seen peeking through her window every now and then didn't inspire confidence. Not an option.

Who else was there? The house to their left was empty. On the market for months, ever since the owner died. Linda? She lived opposite with her teenage son. But she was never in. Always out on dates. Matt called her a slut. Stella thought she was lovely, always had a smile and a kind word for her when they bumped into each other.

Was it fair to bring this drama to anyone else's door? Probably not.

That was that, then. She didn't really know anyone else on Derry Lane. Matt always said, 'I like to keep myself to myself.'

He liked to keep *her* to himself, more like it. She was utterly alone. No family. No friends. There was just *him*.

Tonight they were out to impress his boss, she had a role to play: the dutiful corporate wife. Remembering this fact gave her hope. The meeting was important. He'd been talking about it all week, the need for a perfect performance from them. His boss, Adrian, was a family man. Traditional, conservative. She was sure he'd not appreciate a black eye on the wife of one of his team.

'Thank goodness for your beady eyes. What would Adrian think if he saw me in a right old state?' she asked evenly.

I'm thinking, Mam. I'm being brave. She felt her mother's approval.

Matt responded with a small nod and then walked to the kitchen cabinet. She knew not to move nor make another sound. She'd pushed it enough by mentioning Adrian. Now it was time to appear contrite, seek forgiveness for her fine-thread transgression. She looked down at the wisp of cotton and her eyes blurred once more as she realised that her life had been reduced to this. There were many times when she felt like she was clinging onto her sanity and life by a fine thread, but this was ridiculous.

She glanced in the cream, ornate mirror that hung over their dining-room table and, not for the first time in her married life, didn't recognise the woman standing there, looking terrified.

The sound of cutlery jangled against each other as he searched the drawers' contents. Each clink rang out into the quiet and only heightened her growing fear. What would his next move be? He looked almost cheerful as he searched. He'd be whistling next. Hatred filled her

body once more and she held onto it tight, using it as a shield to protect herself from whatever he had planned.

Every time he did this, she swore it would be the last. That she'd leave.

'That's enough.' This time it was her father's voice in her head. *Yes, Dad, I think perhaps it is.*

Matt held up a pair of kitchen scissors, long blades with sheared edges and black handles. 'Here we go,' he said cheerily.

'Now, what will we do with these?' He smiled sweetly when she flinched as the cold steel caressed the side of her cheek. He traced every inch of her face until suddenly he stopped, pressing the tip of the blades to her throat. He continued putting pressure on the tips and she waited for her skin to puncture. Despite using every ounce of her resolve, she couldn't hide the telltale tremble in her body.

Stella closed her eyes and braced herself for the pain.

This was it.

'The grim reaper finally caught up with me, Mam', she thought. You can only dodge his evil snare so many times. And, yes, there were occasions when she lay in her bed, as Matt slept beside her, snoring quietly, that she wished for the sleep of death. But the thing was, she wanted to live.

She wasn't ready to die. Not today. Not like this.

'Why are you shaking like a leaf? What am I to do with you?' Matt asked. She opened her eyes and could see amusement dancing though his own, enjoying her living nightmare. Contempt for this man that she once loved and who she thought loved her, consumed her. There

was so much she wanted to say to him. There was so much she wanted to do.

Say something, then. Scream, tell him to fuck off, run, fight, just do something!

Yet she remained silent, trapped in fear. Fear of being alone again. Fear of the darkness inside her. Shame now replaced her anger and she thought, maybe I deserve this. I'm weak.

'You're wrong, love,' her mam whispered to her, reminding Stella that deep down she knew that wasn't her truth. Somewhere inside of her was a woman who once was strong, who once fought to live over and over again. She needed to find that girl again. She needed to fight back.

Matt trailed the blades of the scissors down over her right breast, hovering over the nipple for a moment and then continued downwards. He hunkered low, the muscles in his thighs rippled taut against the fabric of his grey trousers. For a moment she considered raising a knee hard, sharp into his face.

She did nothing. Because she was a coward. Because she was afraid. Because she wasn't ready. Because she had nowhere to go. Because she had no one to turn to. Oh, she had a lot of reasons, excuses.

Matt snipped the offending white thread and held it up between his manicured fingers, waving it lightly in front of her nose. It turned blood red in front of her eyes. A little red thread that suddenly became ominous.

Blood would be shed. Hers? Or his?

Stella glanced towards the scissors and wondered if one hard jab, straight into his heart, would kill him. Life

in prison would surely be better than these concrete walls that imprisoned her.

'There. That's better.' He looked at her, up and down and declared, 'Now, you're perfect.'

But she wasn't perfect. She was just Stella, a girl who fell for the wrong man and was paying a high price for it. She'd promised her mam that she would always stay strong. Stay true to herself. But her mam wasn't here any more and it's a lot harder to stay strong when you're completely alone. She hated herself for the bright smile she forced herself to flash at him. And she hated even more her voice, timid and weak, as it asked, 'Do I look okay now?'

'Simply perfection, my darling. You are my masterpiece and tonight, every man and woman at our table will think so when they look at you. They will be jealous, wishing they were me. Because I'm the one who gets to call you his very own.' He pulled her into him and, with one hand around her waist and another behind her neck, held it tight. 'Such a delicate little neck.' He kissed it as he pinched it hard enough to let her know that he could snap it in two if he so wished.

'Just two glasses of wine with your dinner, remember. You don't want to get tipsy. We all know how loose your tongue gets when you've had a few. We wouldn't want you to say the wrong thing, now, would we?' His reminder was unnecessary. Stella needed all of her wits about her.

'I'll just get my coat.' She walked to the hall closet and her hand hovered on her black Jasper Conran trench. Instinct made her glance at Matt to check if he approved. He shook his head once, nodding to the white wool

cashmere full-length he'd bought her for Christmas. Totally unsuitable for the warm evening, but it cost more and, more to the point, looked expensive. He wanted to show off to his cronies.

As he helped her into it, Stella saw her reflection once more in their hall mirror. The perfect couple. How many times had she been told that over the past year? Matt, the stockbroker; handsome, charming, strong. And Stella, his beautiful, elegant and well-spoken wife. Perfection.

There was no such thing.

Her private shame that she had married an abusive man weighed her down so heavily that she thought she would drown.

Chapter 2

REA

Next door, 72 Derry Lane

While Rea slept, the thick putrid stench of rotting food contaminated the air in her house, sneaking its way from the kitchen, up the stairs and into her bedroom. Maybe it was the smell that interrupted her slumber or maybe she sensed that dickhead next door was at it again. Either ways, she was awake. She fumbled towards her phone, knocked the bedside lamp sideways in the process, cursing as she did so, then clicked the home button. The smell was making her gag now, so it took two attempts to speak.

'Siri, what time is it?'

'The time is 23:59.'

Almost midnight? If she hadn't been half asleep she might have enjoyed some banter with her iPhone friend, but instead she opened her eyes to confirm which end of the day she was at. Pitch-black darkness. Damn it. She'd only been asleep for a few hours.

The smell worsened, clogging up her airwaves. 'There's

a special place in hell for you, Louis Flynn, you extortionate little fecker,' she muttered. It was her bloody bin in the kitchen stinking the house up. Louis, who did odd jobs for Rea, like taking the bins out, knew he had her over a barrel. Fourteen years old and with a mouth on him that had no business on one so young. He was playing hard ball, staying away, proving a point. Showing her that she needed him more than he needed her. She'd a good mind to phone him, wake him up and see how he liked to be inconvenienced.

Rea got up and went downstairs, opening the windows, then stepped back, wafting her arms manically, trying to disperse the air around her. She positioned herself in front of the slight breeze that ran its way around her and, hopefully, the rest of the house. Such was her relief from the dispersing stench that at first she didn't hear them. But the welcome caress of the cool breeze faded as the hairs on the back of her arms stood to attention. Her eyes opened wide and her heart began to quicken as she strained to listen. She could hear them. Or rather, she could hear *him*. Because, as normal, the woman was mostly silent.

A loud crash rattled around the room, followed by a dull thud. Had he thrown something? Or was it her falling? Rea closed her eyes as imagined scenes of what was unfolding next door prickled her. Damn it, he was beating her again.

She'd only spoken to her next-door neighbour once before in person. He had a plummy south Dublin accent and within seconds she knew that she didn't like him. He wore an expensive suit; one of those ones that had the label on the outside, just in case you didn't realise it cost

the price of a regular mortgage. He'd looked her up and down, blatantly, without even bothering to hide his obvious contempt for her. Downright rude. He didn't need to say out loud what his conclusion of her was. It was written all over his pompous, arrogant face. She was just the fat, greying lady from next door, who meant nothing to him. Inconsequential. Irrelevant.

The funny thing was, when he raged at his wife, his posh, arsey tone slipped and a much coarser accent was left. He cursed like a rabid dog. And tonight he was pissed at his wife again, for some unfathomable reason, and was letting her have it good time. As his temper flared, his shouting grew louder.

'. . . you made me do this . . .'

'. . . only yourself to blame . . .'

'Why can't you listen to me . . .?'

Rea stood close to the window, helpless. With every word uttered, there was the unmistakable sound of an accompanying slap. Sweat trickled down the small of her back as her own body reacted to the sound of him when he battered the young woman. Damn it, she never asked for this. She didn't want to be a silent witness to their domestic rows, but she couldn't un-hear them either.

Now small, pleading whimpers of the woman began. *What the hell have you done this time, Dickhead?* Rea couldn't listen any more, so she went back upstairs to her bedroom. She slammed the door hard behind her. Enough already. She wanted no part of this.

But even though the door was shut and she could no longer hear the cries, it was not as easy to quieten her conscience. She had to try to help. Again. What if that

was her daughter, Elise, in trouble? They'd be much the same age. She'd want someone to rescue her, wouldn't she? As the thought of Elise threatened to undo her, she banished her from her thoughts. She needed to focus on the woman next door. The problem was that she'd rang emergency services several times following other incidents like this one. And to what end? Because the Gardaí would arrive and Mr and Mrs Perfect would give an award-winning performance. He'd smile and tell them that all was okay and she'd agree, standing shoulder to shoulder with him, saying that they'd just had a heated debate. There was nothing to worry about, all a false alarm. Or words to that effect, she assumed, because the Gardaí would walk away, leaving her to his cruel hands once more. Why did she lie for her man like that?

At first, despite herself, the woman made Rea want to scream. She should speak up, stand up for herself. Why did she let him get away with his crap time and time again? She thought of Elise again and her conscience pricked her. That woman next door was someone's daughter too. Who was she to judge, when she knew, better than anyone, that nothing was ever as simple as it appeared?

Terrified, no doubt. Trapped. She looked at the walls, the windows, the door. If anyone knew what it felt like to be trapped, it was her.

She walked down to the hallway, peering through the peephole of her front door. Derry Lane was quiet. Cars parked on either side of their road, under leafy oak trees. The street lights were on, casting shadows. Her house, number 72, was right in the middle of the

cul-de-sac. She noticed a light on, across the way, in Louis's house. She wondered if he was still awake. Probably on his iPhone; he was never off that yoke. But then she copped a strange car parked out front. Ha! A sure sign that his mother had a new man visiting. Linda might as well put a red light above the door and be done with it, the amount of traffic that went in and out of there.

Maybe she should call her all the same and tell her about the goings-on next door. Ask her to help. But no sooner had the thought struck her than she discounted it immediately. Linda Flynn was a silly, vacuous woman, who only had one thing on her mind – men. Maybe she was right. But at any rate, she'd be no use nor ornament to the plight of Mrs Dickhead next door. This was going to be on her shoulders, no one else's.

At least the smell of the bins had eased, escaping through her opened windows. There again, she may have just gotten used to its stench. That was the thing with bad smells, eventually you didn't notice them any more. Is that what it was like next door? The woman didn't notice any more?

Rea felt powerless. She fantasised about running out of her home, jumping over the fence between their houses and pounding on his front door, demanding to see the woman. She'd bring a weapon. She looked around her and her eyes settled on the black poker sitting beside her fire. That would sort the boyo out good and proper. She'd land that up his arse and he wouldn't sit down for months afterwards. Ha!

But thinking and doing are two entirely different crea-

tures altogether. And Rea hadn't stepped outside her house now for near on two years.

Her hand hovered over the phone. The last time she'd rang 112 they made her sound like an interfering old busybody. Someone who enjoyed the drama. They couldn't be more wrong. She'd had enough dealings with the Gardaí to last her two lifetimes. She had no want nor will for any of this.

Rea wished her family were here. Luca would be out that door, George right by his side, ready to fight for that young girl.

Suck it up Rea, you're on your own.

Turning to her phone, Rea asked the closest thing to a friend she had these days.

'Siri, should I call 112?'

'Calling emergency services in 5 seconds.'

'Righto Siri, there's no messing with you, my robot pal.' In truth she was relieved that she took that decision from her. Rea gave the operator the details quickly and then waited. It was now as quiet as a graveyard next door. The walls of the Victorian semi-detached they lived in were thick, which made it difficult to hear anything unless a racket was being made. But when the windows were open in both houses, sounds would drift over. They snuck their way through the crevices of the houses, telling tales on what went on behind closed doors.

The saying 'if walls could talk' had never felt so apt.

Rea had been trying to distract herself by watching one of her favourite programmes, *Suits*, when she finally heard a car pulling up outside. She rushed to look through the

peephole. There they were, the boys in blue. Although she didn't believe in any God, she still found herself praying that the woman was okay. Rea didn't even know her name. Wasn't that the craziest thing? They'd moved in next door nearly a year ago and managed to avoid any real interactions with her or anyone else on the road. Okay, she wasn't that sociable herself these days, but still. It was strange that nobody knew anything about them.

She used the banisters to help pull herself upstairs and peered out of her bedroom window to get a better view of the street below. There were two officers standing side by side in front of number 70. They pounded loudly on the front door and she held her breath, waiting.

The porch light flicked on and someone opened the door. Rea strained her neck, her head pressed close to the window pane. The cold glass was a welcome relief to her hot forehead. Someone moved forward out of the shadows, towards the Gardaí. She held her breath once more and crossed her fingers behind her back. Let the girl be okay.

Dickhead stood there in all his glory, holding his two hands up, gesturing wildly, to match the wild tale he was no doubt spinning. She couldn't see if anyone was beside him, no matter how far she leaned over the windowsill. Maybe if she opened the window wider, she could see it all.

No big deal, you can do this, she thought. Her heart started to hammer in her chest so fast that her head buzzed. A vision of an exploding head popped into her mind. Only the head looked a bit like a big watermelon. That's it, she'd officially lost it.

Her hands shook and her stomach began to flip as she

pushed the window open wide. The boundaries of her prison were closing in on her day by day. She could open the windows downstairs, but found it difficult to do so up here. There was no rhyme nor reason to it.

She looked around her bedroom in panic and thoughts crashed in on top of her. *I'm getting worse.* Soon, I'll not be able to leave my bedroom, never mind the house. An image of her lying dead on her floor, becoming cat food for an imaginary pet, made her gasp out loud. 'I never liked cats,' she said to the listening walls.

As she backed away from the open window, with every step her breath slackened. Finally she was at a distance that she could manage, that she felt comfortable with. With every foot she moved away, her levels of anxiety dropped tenfold. Calm again, she closed her eyes to concentrate and listened to the voices that were drifting upwards. It was better, she wasn't noticed hanging out of the window anyhow. She didn't want the neighbours to see her; a silent witness, rubbernecking their lives.

One of the Gardaí spoke first of all. He sounded like Daniel O'Donnell, with a lovely soft Donegal accent. 'Good evening, sir, we received a call that there was a disturbance coming from your house. May we come in?'

She couldn't hear the response. 'He'll be feeding you a line of bullshit,' she whispered to his unhearing ears. 'Arrest the dickhead, wee Daniel, there's only one place fit for the likes of him.'

'Even so, we'd still like to come in, see for ourselves, that everything is in order,' the guard replied, firmly. Good man, Daniel. You might have a lovely soft voice, but you are no fool. There was no nonsense with this one. She appreciated

that. Then they all disappeared from her sight and it went quiet once more. They must have gone inside. The soft click of the door closing confirmed that. She pointed to her head and said, 'Up there for dancing, Siri, up there.'

'Let me check on that. Okay, I found this on the web, options for dinner and dancing,' Siri replied in an instant.

She was puzzled for a moment. Then she realised that Siri, of course, wasn't privy to the inside joke she and her husband George had shared for decades.

When was it they'd turned the popular phrase, *up there for thinking, down there for dancing*, around for the first time? Before the kids, anyhow. Whenever one of them would get something right, they'd point to their heads and say, 'up there for dancing' and the other would finish it off and say 'down there for thinking'. Comedy gold. Well, it always made them laugh leastways.

Oh George, why aren't you here with me? He'd be snorting with laughter in appreciation right now. He always had done. Now she had nobody to make laugh. Things could be worse, she surmised. She, at least, had an iPhone robot. Albeit with questionable humour.

She looked down at her phone at the lists of websites with details of dinner and dancing events on the screen. Rea smiled to herself at Siri's literal take on her words.

'You're funny, Siri.'

'Yes, sometimes I do feel funny.'

'There's tablets for that.'

'I'm not sure I understand.'

'You know what? I'm not sure I do either.' Rea said, suddenly feeling stupid for having a conversation about

a forgotten inside joke with a bloody phone. She swiftly turned Siri off.

It had been years since she'd gone out to dinner and even longer since she danced. There was a time when she could jive and twist with the best of them. And many a time George told her that she was as light as a feather on her feet. Those days were over.

She felt anger burn her stomach. You, young lady, whoever you are next door, if Dickhead hasn't done you in, this is the time to be brave. Tell the Gardaí that your husband hits you, that you are scared. Let them help you. Don't let that bastard get away with it one more time. You still have time to have fancy dinners and dance. Get out. Please . . .

Twenty minutes passed and when Rea didn't hear sounds of ambulance sirens belting on their way towards Derry Lane, she hoped that meant that the woman was walking and talking.

Alive. Be alive.

At last, she heard noises from the street below and she jumped up to peep outside.

'If you change your mind, Mrs Greene, you just call us. And, Mr Greene, we'd rather not have the need to call by here again. Your wife has been 'clumsy' far too much for our liking. You've been warned.'

Mr and Mrs Greene. So that's what they are called. You know what? Dickhead suits you far better.

As she heard the guard drive away from the house, Rea had a terrible sense of foreboding about it all. A nagging feeling that the only way her neighbour would stop was when he'd killed that young woman.

And there wasn't a damn thing she could do about it.