

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

There was nothing outstanding about the house Mr Hiller bought in Wordsworth Street. It was a standard, between-the-wars, semi-detached, low-cost house, built on speculation by a local builder as the development of suburbia took form and oozed out over the countryside. Somewhere close by had been a small village which had all but been engulfed in this process and of which very little remained, and that only to the eye of the informed observer. The houses in the area of Wordsworth Street fell into the “three up two down” category and were relatively new when Joyce moved there with her infant daughter. For her it was a welcomed improvement over the high, dark, damp, Victorian terrace in Canterbury, but she had not then seen the well appointed houses in Salisbury Gardens or the mansions of Blenheim and Marlborough Crescent. She found that the opinion of townfolk was divided between the relative merits of the two extremes. Most would have liked to live in Marlborough Crescent but became concerned at the thought of the upkeep of such a house. Those who lived in the Marlborough Crescent area did not have to worry about such trivialities. There were older, spacious, houses nearer to the railway stations, but Joyce did not have a choice in the matter. She would never have said that she had fallen in love with No 29 at first sight, but she soon came to like it and living there.

The front garden had a small, knee-high brick wall topped with a crenellation on which it was possible to hurt yourself if you were careless. There were three dark green wooden posts which extended above the wall and which, until the outbreak of war, had supported a pair of spiky chains which stretched from the gate to the neighbouring boundary. Now only the posts remained and these were rotten at the base. Mr Hiller talked of replacing both the posts and the chains, and they even progressed as far as selecting the size and type of link, but this was one of those things that was never done, only talked about. In odd moments, when she stood in the sun as it streamed through the front room bay window, looking out on the road, the thought would flash into her head and Joyce would ask “what ever happened to my chains?” Mr Hiller knew exactly what she meant and would always murmur that he intended to attend to them that coming weekend, but he never did.

The heavy front door had a leaded stained glass window depicting a brown sailing ship set in a green sea under a blue sky. Below, the letter box and door knob were brass and were maintained gleaming by Joyce who did attend to these matters at weekends, regularly, pausing in her work to look down the tiled path to the gate to ensure it was still there, hanging properly, and shut. She sometimes thought it would be nice to have a porch, perhaps linked to the bay, and did mention this to Mr Hiller. After all, he worked for a builder, but nothing came of her suggestion and she continued to struggle to abstract her key from its sanctuary in the recesses of her small handbag as she sought shelter from the mean protrusion under the small bedroom when it was raining heavily and no-one had come to open the door in response to her frantic knocking. A porch, blended aesthetically with the house and not looking like an afterthought as many along the street did, would have made life so much easier.

No 29 was the left hand of the pair of houses so the stairs rose on the left of the small hall which afforded access to the two downstairs rooms and the kitchen. In the area at the bottom of the stairs, once the pram no longer stood there, Joyce placed a small table on which she kept a vase of cut flowers from the garden when they were in season, declaring that it helped to brighten up the hall. She had a long debate with herself as to whether the front room should be reserved for best and Sundays, as was the front room in Debbie's house at Dover, but she eventually decided against it. At the rear she did prevail on Mr Hiller to provide an extension to the kitchen which gave them enough room to sit and eat as well as cook and wash up. Upon the commissioning of this new facility Joyce declared that the front room would be the “lounge” and the rear room would be the “dining room” although it was rarely

used for this purpose other than at Christmas or on Stephanie's birthday. It was years before Joyce realised that all she had done was reverse the arrangement of rooms and, in effect, still had her "Sunday best" room. It simply was not the front one as it had been in Dover.

The gardens to all the houses on that side of the road were long. The first half of their plot was laid out to lawn surrounded with flower beds. Beyond, ostensibly, was the vegetable garden, but this fell into relative disuse once vegetables became more readily available after the War. There was no disagreement as to whether vegetables from the garden tasted better than those from the greengrocer in the High Street, and every Autumn Mr Hiller would talk about growing some next year, even take the fork from the shed and clean it in readiness for turning the ground, but it was another of those things which never happened. Still, Joyce liked her garden and would relish the thought of simply walking all the way down it on a summer's evening to the trees and bushes that barred the end.

Upstairs, she and her husband slept in single beds in the front bedroom. As there was no-one to come and stay with them, as soon as she was old enough Stephanie was allowed to leave the small adjoining front bedroom which had been used as a nursery and occupy the larger rear bedroom which she kept meticulously tidy without any prompting from her mother. Joyce expressed the view many times that her daughter was not like ordinary children, citing her bedroom as justification for this opinion.

Most of the furniture had been brought with them from Canterbury. It was dark, heavy, and most unsuited to the way in which Joyce imagined their new house, but there was little she could do about it. She longed to have modern furniture in lighter woods, like teak or pine, or even a light oak, but she was stuck with an aged, heavy, stained mahogany. She sometimes wondered whether it had been painful for Mr Hiller to leave the house where he had been born and had lived so many years. Did he find comfort in still having the furniture that had been his mother's around him, or would he have preferred a new start? If he had a view on this, he never expressed it but, then, he was not given to expressing regret or any other emotion for that matter.

So, the extendible, square, polished dining table the six matching, stern, erect, chairs with their ornately turned legs, moved into the dining room. The wide, tall, wardrobe, the matching dressing table, and the two brass-ended beds were placed in the front bedroom, and a tall, mirrored, sideboard and the drab chairs and settee ended in the front room, squeezed in with an upright, wooden-framed, piano which would never stay in tune. Stephanie was more fortunate in that they bought her all new furniture. However, it was not of similar quality to the family heirlooms that filled the rest of the house and Joyce agreed with her husband that it would not last. It did not.

The presence of the Canterbury furniture presented Joyce with a problem as it was very difficult to find room to add anything else and, when she tried, very difficult to find something that would be in harmony with it. She scanned the pages of the mail-order catalogues but never saw anything that she was confident of ordering. She would make brief expeditions into the large Department store which stood further down the High Street towards the South station, but these were largely fruitless and other than the table in the hall and the furniture in Stephanie's bedroom, over the years they bought very little. Oh, she would admit to buying oddments, knick-knacks, the odd ornament, pieces of china, vases, small objects frequently bought on the spur of the moment and certainly not items that fitted into any particular grand plan of things. She realised these were gestures, just to have something of her own, something she had chosen, there in her home.

She did learn that whether or not Mr Hiller was adverse to leaving the house at Canterbury, he had no intention of parting with the furniture. When she complained that the wardrobe doors were about to fall off and that they ought to buy a new one he was very emphatic in saying he would fix it although she had to wait until the one on her side, one morning, dropped into her hands before he did. And when she complained about the drab appearance of the three-piece suite, he rapidly procured a new set of covers with no further prompting from her, saying that no new furniture would last like this older furniture and that they would have to be mad to replace it whilst it was still serviceable, a state he expected it to remain in for many years to come.

When she looked back on the early years, Joyce thought their life together had been comfortable. She would never describe it as happy. She would not have applied that term to any period of her married life. They lived at an even pace, seemingly unaffected by what was going on around them, never desperate for money because she worked, and never rich because neither of them earned enough to make them so. Nothing dramatic ever happened. Each day would follow the preceding day, quietly, almost imperceptibly, into history. No, she would never have claimed she was happy; that would have been far too strong a word for her state of mind; but then she was not desperately unhappy, either. Could she have said she was content? Content, perhaps, to the extent that all her hopes had been dashed and there was no longer any direction in her life, but she lived in a kind of stable harmony. Yes, perhaps she was content, with a very small "C", stable, safe and secure. All that was before, in her folly, she became wise, and before she met Michael again.

Joyce often thought that part of her life started to decline after their meeting that dark, wet, evening outside the staff entrance of Woolworth's. In many ways things went downhill afterwards although in other ways she was revitalised and it was as if she was reborn. Alternatively, she might look upon that evening as the point at which her life started to go right and everyone else's went wrong. Could she really think of it as a meeting? She thought of it often as she did their subsequent meetings but, then, they were meetings. No, it wasn't exactly a meeting. It was more of an encounter, and a very brief one at that. For him it was planned and contrived. For her it was an unbelievable shock followed by divine revelation. But afterwards, it seemed to her she had struggled through the dark years of her marriage of necessity, dragging herself from one day to the next with no hope for the future whilst nurturing dimming memories of the past, caring for a daughter who she both loved and hated, tending for a husband who she neither liked nor disliked, a man who would have nothing to do with her. He would lie in the bedroom beside her but the invisible wall he created between them was as formidable and un-breachable as any prison wall.

No, it was not exactly a meeting. At first, in that first moment when the Universe was being reborn within her, she did not recognise him and then she simply would not believe the evidence her eyes presented to her. Then she was overwhelmed as all the memories she thought she had forgotten or at least suppressed flooded back dashing her composure and filling her with panic. She had to run, to run as fast as she could, but from him and not towards him. What would have happened had he caught her she did not know but as she reached the High Street a number forty-seven bus was just pulling away from the stop and she leapt on. She rode for two stops before, still gasping for breath, she got off and paused on the pavement before starting to walk slowly and aimlessly.

Joyce realised almost immediately that she could not go home unless she was prepared to face him. It was clear that Michael knew where she lived. How else would he have found out where she worked? That meant that he had been to the house! It was too early for her husband to be home. That meant that he had seen Stephanie! Perhaps he had found out about Stephanie and that was why he had come to see her. Why else would he do that after all this time without a word? If he did not know, she would have to tell him but that was something she wanted to do in her time and in a place of her choosing. Not on a dark wet street. Not in the small dingy front room of their house as Stephanie sat there in the kitchen struggling with her homework or banished to her bedroom as if she had done something wrong. And there was Mr Hiller's reaction to contend with. What would he say if he knew Michael had put in an appearance after all these years? It was best that he should not know. She could not meet him at the house. There was no question of it.

Perhaps Michael had not known, but now suspected? No, unless he had changed that was not the way his mind worked. It would be like him to have even forgotten what had happened at the cottage on that wintry night yet, if that was the case, why was he here now? Perhaps Christina had died? Her heart leapt at the thought. "Perhaps Christina has died," she repeated to herself as she sheltered in the dark, smelly, doorway of a tobacconist. If that was so, why was he here? Was he here for her? What an irony if he was, because she was married, something he was unlikely to know! Someone might have told him. Mr Hiller had friends; no,

she would not call them that; Mr Hiller had colleagues with whom he had kept in touch over the years. But they were not the kind of people Michael was likely to talk to concerning matters other than business and even if they, or someone else, told him that Mr Hiller had got married, they were unlikely to mention her. After all, virtually no-one outside of the Canterbury office knew Michael was seeing her and of those who did only Arthur knew who she was. Michael could not know that she was married. There was another point. If Christina had died she would have read about it in the newspapers. She had seen her name mentioned in connection with a charitable undertaking only the week before. Christina appeared to be very much alive then. No, it could not be because Christina was dead. Her heart fell.

Joyce walked on, still without any defined purpose. If she could not go home, where should she go? She would have no alternative but to face him if he knew where she lived. She would have to go to a place he would know and where he would find her. There was only one such place.

“My God!” exclaimed Debbie when she opened the door to her. “I did not expect to see you here. Why have you come? Has something happened?” It was not fair on Debbie, she knew. All those years when she had all but lost contact with her sister and done no more than send her a card on her birthday and at Christmas, no address, just a note to say she was all right. For all those years Debbie did not know where she was or what she was doing, and that was a poor way to repay her sister back for looking after her for all those years. And now for her to turn up on her doorstep like this, unannounced. “You had better come in,” she said sharply. “You look soaked.”

“I am,” Joyce admitted softly. “I walked up from the station. There are no trams now and I was not sure which bus to catch.”

“The trams went years ago. Surely you remember that much? Anyway, I will find something dry for you to wear,” said her sister, sounding vexed. “Go through to the kitchen if you can remember the way. The stove is alight.”

“It all looks just the same,” Joyce said softly when Deborah returned with some of her clothes and a large white towel. “It is all just as I remember it. You've even still got the blue and gold rimmed egg cups up there on the dresser. What has happened to my room?”

“It is just as you left it when you ran away,” said her sister filling the kettle. “I always believed you would come home eventually.”

Joyce changed her clothes in the bathroom and wrapped the towel around her wet hair. “Well?” demanded her sister when she returned to the kitchen and sat at the table. “Is it all over, your marriage?”

“No,” said Joyce hastily. “No, nothing like that.”

“What then?” Debbie was right to be angry. This was the inevitable confrontation that Joyce had dreaded and fretted about as she sat on the train, not sure what her sister's reaction would be. She had treated her sister very badly and, as the years had gone one, she dreaded the meeting even more. Each successive year seemed to make it more difficult to find the right thing to say, to find anything to say. “What has brought you here after all these years? It's him, isn't it?”

“Oh, Debbie,” said Joyce wearily and feeling herself close to tears, “I'm sorry. I'm so terribly sorry.”

“What have you done?”

“It's not that. It's not that at all. It's the way I've treated you over these years. The gratitude I showed you for all that you did for me. How you must hate me after all that has happened with me, the child, Angus, everything. It was all my fault, but I loved him, do you understand? And I still love him, despite being married to Mr Hiller. I still love him.”

“You have seen Michael?”

“He came to see me. I came out of the store, Woolworth's, where I work, and he was standing there, in the rain, waiting for me. I did not know what to do or where to go. I couldn't face him so I just ran and escaped. I couldn't go home because I knew he had found out where I lived. I don't know how, but he has. And I cannot have him coming to the house, not with Stephanie there. Yet I have to see him. This seemed to be the only place I could think of, the gardens. He will follow me here. I can get my thoughts in order before he does. I still do not

know how he found me.”

“I told him, Felicity. He came here and threatened me. I told him.”

“But Debbie, you did not know where I lived. I took great care never to tell you.”

“Did you really think I was prepared to let you go off like that without keeping tabs on where you were? Angus told me that you had married Mr Hiller and it was not hard to find out where he moved to when the Canterbury office closed. I have known where you lived virtually from the day you moved to Bromley.”

“You've known? And you've never contacted me?”

“No, I have never attempted to contact you, Felicity. It was you who left home. It was you who sent me birthday cards and Christmas cards yet took great care not to tell me your address. Why should I be the one to take the first step in all this?”

“I know, Debbie. It is all my fault. Perhaps I shouldn't have come here at all but I couldn't think of anywhere else. I just need somewhere to stay for a day or two.”

“You can stay as long as you like,” said her sister sharply. “I thought this was likely to happen, sooner or later. What have you been doing all these years and why didn't you want me to know where you were? Honestly, Phoebe, when I think of all I did for you and all that I was planning for you. You could have had a great career. You could have been someone famous. Look at you now. Working in Woolworth's did you say? To think it has all come to this. I know I ruined my life but you, you had every chance, every chance in the World.”

“I know,” wailed Joyce. “I know. There is nothing you can say that I haven't said to myself over and over again, nothing at all. It is all true. I did throw it all away and I got nothing in return. No, that's not true. I did get something, but I cannot enjoy it. I did send the cards.”

“Cards!” said Debbie contemptuously, pouring the water into the teapot and scouring the dresser for the cup that her sister had been accustomed to using when she had lived there. “You just cut me out of your life! Just like that! One day everything was normal, the next thing you were gone, and the very next thing I heard, you were married. It was Arthur who told me. Everyone was scandalised, my sister running away and marrying a man who by all accounts she hardly knew. They told me that I should go after you or employ a lawyer to get you back or have you certified. I would have none of it. I said I would have nothing further to do with you. If that was the way you wanted it, that was the way you could have it!”

“And now?” whispered Joyce.

“I have said that you can stay. I would not turn my sister away, what ever she had done. But why did you cut me off like that, your own sister? I would always have looked after you.”

“I'm sorry, Debbie. There was so much, with Michael leaving and me expecting Stephanie. I suppose I was worried about the scandal, about what you would think and say, what Moira and her father would say.”

“It would only have been words, Phoebe. Only words, certainly as far as Angus and I were concerned.”

“There was more,” said Joyce reflectively. “I did not want Michael to know any more than I want Stephanie to know that Mr Hiller is not her natural father. I didn't want either of them to find out the truth. I suppose I will have to tell Michael. How else will I explain to him why I married Mr Hiller? But I am determined not to let Stephanie know anything.”

“Not even about me, her aunt?”

“No, Debbie. I do not want to risk it. I know it may seem like a lot to ask, but I have kept it from her all these years. If she knew she had an aunt down here she would somehow eventually discover the truth. She is an inquisitive child. There has never been any need for her to know anything and none of this is likely to change that. Why did I go to Mr Hiller? I suppose I panicked. He had once offered to help me if I had an hour of need, so I went to see him. He suggested I married him as that would at least give Stephanie a father even if the certificates showed that she was conceived out of wedlock. I've tried to keep those from her and not without difficulty. She is in to everything. I could not do anything but accept his kind offer and once I had agreed to marry him there seemed no way back to you or the life I had known here. It wasn't that I was ungrateful or anything like that. I had just stepped beyond the

pale. It all seems like a distant nightmare now that I look back on it.”

“It was very lonely here without you especially after Angus died.”

“I know. I thought of coming to see you when Mr Hiller told me. He found out from one of his contacts. I wanted to come and see you and comfort you, but how could I? All I could do was to write. You did receive my letter?”

“Yes. It was that letter that drove me finally to find out exactly where you were living and I nearly replied to it. But I thought the first contact should come from my sister, not from me.”

“Oh, Debbie! I have made such an awful mess of my life. And now Michael has turned up and I don't know what to do. I don't know what I will say to him when I face him.”

“Give him a piece of my mind! That's what I did when he called here.”

“It's not beyond him to come here again,” whispered Joyce. “I think I know him well enough to say that he wouldn't have gone to the trouble of finding me unless he had a good reason. He wouldn't have done it out of casual interest and he has done it himself. He has not used an agent which means he does not want his wife to know. I cannot imagine what has happened.”

“Perhaps he has divorced his wife or she has died. She wasn't killed in the blitz or anything like that, was she?”

“No, Lady Christina was alive and quite well two weeks ago, according to the newspapers. And he would never divorce her, nor she him.”

“But he will come here after you, you think? Will he come here tonight?”

“He will follow me. Of that I am sure. Not tonight because he has gone back to the house. After I had run from him I did make my way back to our road and I am sure it was him sat in a car on the opposite side of the road. He will come down here, probably tomorrow. If it is a nice day I will walk up to the Gardens. I would expect him either to go straight there, or he might come here. In which case you can give him another piece of your mind just so long as you tell him where he can find me.”

“You do want to see him?”

“I cannot avoid seeing him. I can't run away from him for ever. If he is determined to find me he will. He has the money and resources to ensure that he could. I thought about little else on the way down here on the train. I have to face him and tell him that I am now married and that I can have nothing further to do with him. I will tell him everything but I must keep him from Stephanie. He could easily ruin her life completely as he did mine. No, I take that back. He did not ruin my life.”

“If he didn't, I don't know who did,” said Debbie emphatically. “Do you want something to eat? I should have asked before, but it is a little of a shock, you arriving like this, even if I did expect you sooner or later.”

“No,” said Joyce, lowering her head. “And Michael did not ruin my life. It was someone else, someone before him, if anyone did.”

“Oh, Felicity! Someone else? You mean there were others before Michael?”

“No, no! Not in that way.”

“It wasn't Kurt, was it?”

“No, Debbie, it wasn't Kurt. It wasn't anything like that. I can't explain. I mean that Michael isn't to blame alone. And I had a hand in it.”

“He took advantage of you.”

“No! It wasn't like that at all. It wasn't crude, it wasn't fumbling in the dark or being forced. What happened between Michael and me was one wonderful, marvellous, moment, one I never shall forget. I was as willing a party as he. It just seemed so right, so proper to do. I can't explain it. I have never had another moment like it since.”

“Just as well,” grumbled her sister.

“But then, it was as if I pulled at a piece of wool and the whole thing unravelled. And with it went my life.”

“And there was me, with such plans for you,” said Deborah, dreamily. “You could well have been amongst the best, you really could. Does Stephanie show any talent?”

“She has the posture and bearing,” said Joyce with a half-smile. “She has the looks,

but I would say that her figure is going to be a little to full, not that she is fat, far from it. Anyway, she has not shown any inclination towards dancing which is just as well as lessons would be quite expensive. She is probably too old now to start.”

“And you would not encourage her?”

“No,” said Joyce.

“You should have sent her to me to look after. Except you felt you could not, you said.”

“No, I could not. Do you still teach?”

“No,” said Deborah gloomily. “I had to give up during the War. First it was most of my pupils being evacuated, then the hall was bombed. I don't think I'll start again now. Are you sure you don't want something to eat?”

“Well, only if you are going to have something. I must admit I didn't have anything before I caught the train. But this is all about me. I haven't asked how you are? I am so sorry about Angus.”

“It was your Michael's fault, you know. He caused it to happen.”

“Oh, surely not, Debbie, not Michael. What ever he might be, he is not cruel or wicked. He might be thoughtless at times but he would never knowingly inflict harm on someone.”

“Wouldn't he?” said Deborah, lighting the gas cooker. “Look what he did to you!”

“But he did not do it intentionally, I am sure of that. He was always promised to Christina. It was something arranged by his father, over his head and without his knowledge. We could not help falling in love.”

“He could have stood by you. That's what any decent man, any man who called himself a Gentleman, would have done.”

“I would not let him,” said Joyce defiantly. “He would have done. He offered to do so, and I would not let him. It was I who said “no” all the time.”

“Not often enough it seems to me,” grumbled her sister. “Look at him and Stephanie.”

“I am not sure that he knows,” said Joyce reflectively. “There were times when I told myself that he must know, that someone must have told him. Then there were times when I asked myself how he could know and whether I should contact him.”

“Of course he knows!”

“You have told him?”

“Of course not! I wouldn't do a thing like that. But I am sure he knows and has known all along. You can bet on it, Phoebe.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Joyce sadly. “Perhaps he heard, was told, early on. There were contacts. Arthur might have said something at the Canterbury office and it would have got back to him somehow. Or Moira might have said something to his wife. Then he has stayed away all these years. Why has he come to see me now?”

“He may have come to see her. Perhaps he wants to take her away. She is his daughter.”

“He can't do that.”

“Moira did write to his wife, you know, when Angus had all the trouble. But, of course, you don't know anything about that. The contract went horribly wrong and they wouldn't pay Angus. Moira wrote to Michael then to Lady Christina but they did nothing. The firm went bust. That's what killed Angus, the disgrace, losing the firm, losing everything. That's what killed him.”

“I am sorry, Debbie. I am sure that Michael would have done something if he had been able to. He was not at all like his father.”

“If he had been able to? He had all that money and all that influence and he wasn't able to use it to save a small builder's business? Do you know who owns this house as a consequence of what happened? Michael!”

“Never!”

“He does. He has changed, Phoebe. What ever he was when you knew him he is different now. People do change, you know.”

“Not Michael,” said Joyce softly. “He would not have come looking for me had he changed.”

“Really Felicity! I find it quite extraordinary that you are so ready to defend him after what he has done to the two of us. Quite extraordinary.”

Joyce sighed. “That's easily explained. It's simply because I have to admit, to myself, to you, and to him when I see him, that I still love him. I didn't realise how much I love him until I saw him there, standing in the rain. It was such a shock. I was so excited and rendered so defenceless by his presence. Had I not run, had he caught me, he could have asked anything of me, anything, and I would have done it. I had to escape and collect my wits.”

“So you came to poor old Debbie,” her sister said sourly.

“There seemed to be no where else I could sensibly go and still have him find me.”

“So you came here believing that he would follow you, knowing that I would be would be hostile to both you and him if he came, to put it mildly. What are you doing, Phoebe? Are you testing him or attempting to punish him. And what will you do if he doesn't come?”

“I don't know. Perhaps I do want to punish him a little bit, but I do not want to hurt him. He will come. I know that he will come. He will come to the house, I am sure of that. But I won't be here. It will be a nice day and I will be up at the monastery, sat on the wall, watching the boats in the Channel, waiting for him”

“And if it is wet?”

“It won't be,” said Joyce stubbornly. “God would not do that to me. Not now, not after I've waited for this all these years. It will be fine, I know it.”

The meal was over and Joyce stood again in her accustomed place at the draining board, drying the dishes as her sister removed them from the washing-up bowl. “It seems strange to cook for two, or find myself washing up twice the amount I normally have,” said Debbie. “You know that Moira married Arthur?”

“I heard through Mr Hiller and his contacts. How are they? Have you kept in touch?”

“I hear from Moira from time to time. They are moving up to Eastgate. Arthur is planning to start up a building business there. Moira says there are too many sad memories here. I can understand what she means. But they have a couple of children, a little boy called Richard and a little girl called Sandra. Except perhaps I shouldn't call them little anymore. Richard must be, what, eight or nine.”

“A little younger than Stephanie.”

“And Sandra is a couple of years younger than Richard. I do hope they succeed but there's so many looking for work now. Arthur tried to get started here without much success. You ought to go and see them.”

“Me? I can't do that. Not after all these years.”

“Why ever not? I can give you their address, or even their new one as soon as I have it.”

“I don't think Moira would want to see me. She wouldn't approve of me. She never did. She always looked down her nose at me in a moral sense. I am sure that she was the first to say I told you so when I got into trouble. No, I don't think I could face her again, not even after all this time.”

“People do change,” said Debbie.

“I cannot imagine Moira changing. She had a strong puritanical streak in her. I bet her two children are little angels.”

“I think Moira might well as been as upset about what happened as you were.”

“I doubt that,” said Joyce.