

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

“Are you feeling nervous?” Richard asked his wife on the eve of the start of the proceedings. “I know I am.” Eileen shook her head. The truth was that she wondered whether she really cared any more about the prospect of going to prison. If she did, would life really be any worse? It might be better as in prison she would not be constantly confronted by examples of her failure as a wife and a woman. Externally, for all intents and purposes, her doctor had pronounced her as fully recovered, but she had not recovered her desire to fight, her spirit to want to attract, captivate, and retain her husband. She had no evidence to show he had been, or was, unfaithful. She had no reason to reproach him for his treatment, or lack of care, of her during the long days after the operation. Sometime, somewhere in the middle of that period, she had convinced herself that it was too late and that any further effort would be futile. She just ceased to care about her marriage or the thought of losing him.

Eileen had not talked to Megan about it and she certainly had not mentioned it to Richard. Indeed, she had no firm plans about what she would do after the trial should the jury eventually consider that she was innocent. But she had resolved, before the first snowdrops reached up and opened into a white carpet under the lounge window, that she would leave and give Richard his freedom. He would be pleased to see her go. She still had a little money of her own, and there was always the chance that the life insurance company, reacting to the latest approach prompted by Mr Arrowsmythe, would pay up some of the sum she thought was due to her. Richard would then be unencumbered and free to follow what ever career he wanted; free to live with whomever he chose. There was no need for a divorce. Stephanie probably would never agree to marriage. They could just go their own ways. Where she would go she was still to decide. She could not ignore the possibility that Richard might be found guilty and her innocent. If he went to prison, would he really expect her to visit him? Megan could do that. She seemed to always be spending her time talking to him.

Mr Arrowsmythe was meticulous in his preparation and had numerous meetings with the defendants. He was observed to have a disproportionate number of meetings with Sandra, including taking her out to dinner on a number of occasions. He was always tactful and considerate when dealing with Miss Brown, always anxious never to upset her with the result that she never once felt uncomfortable in his presence and was prepared to talk, always slightly guardedly, with him about the incident with Detective Sergeant Oxer. His quandary remained. How was he to introduce this into the evidence for the defence without the risk of it being made public and have nearly everything he was working painstakingly towards destroyed. Together with Mr Vincent he attended to every minutest detail, considering the case from every conceivable aspect. “I have done this all before,” he explained to the assembled defendants, “and I know what can go wrong on such occasions if we are not absolutely prepared to cover every eventuality. What ever we do, we have to avoid upsetting the judge right from the outset. Now, I would like you all to be in court all the time that the court is in session. There actually is no requirement for you to be there during the committal proceedings but I would prefer for you to be present even if it causes temporary difficulties at the time. I will be doing my best to get the hearing over as quickly as possible, but that will depend on a number of factors outside our control.”

“Will there be a jury?” asked Gwilym.

“Not at the committal proceedings,” said Mr Arrowsmythe. “It is not a trial.”

The courtroom was darker and more sombre than Eileen expected it to be. It was strange that it should be the first time in her life that she had been in one, her preconceptions being based entirely on scenes from the cinema or television. She sat on Richard's left, just behind Mr Arrowsmythe and some distance from the Bench on which the judge was shortly to take his place. Mr Arrowsmythe turned and sought to encourage them by pointing out Mr Nelson, the person he described as his opposite number. Several people were busying themselves with papers, watching the courtroom fill with those, Eileen assumed, who had come to see a modicum of justice done. The case was hardly of the calibre of sensationalism

that would catch headlines and there appeared to be only a small number of people there including, in the public gallery, Mrs Brown, pale and anxious, giving the slightest of waves to encourage her family.

"I believe, Mr Arrowsmythe," said the judge in a ponderous, voice which carried deep into the four corners of the wood panelled room, "you are appearing and taking the lead for the defence? A note here says that you wish to address the bench before the proceedings start?" Mr Arrowsmythe was back on his feet, looking around at his defendants, smiling. Eileen did not feel reassured, but she did smile back. She noticed that Richard did not.

"If it pleases your Honour," said their counsel.

"Please proceed."

"I would like to bring to the court's attention some unusual and disturbing features of this case and the way in which the police investigation was undertaken," Mr Arrowsmythe said. It prompted Eileen to look around the court for Detective Sergeant Oxer but she could not see him.

"Would you elaborate, Mr Arrowsmythe, providing Mr Nelson has no objection?"

"The defence will demonstrate that the charges are ill founded and may have been brought solely due to the malice and malevolence in the mind of the arresting officer. In addition the evidence is inaccurate or incorrect. This is not a case that should have been brought before this Court at any time."

"I think I will be the judge of that, Mr Arrowsmythe." This remark caused Eileen some anxiety but it seemed to have no effect on Mr Arrowsmythe. "These are potentially serious charges," continued the judge. "I trust that you can substantiate them?"

"Indeed I endeavour to do so, your Honour. However, my immediate concern is for the good name of my clients who run, or are involved in the running of, a substantial building business and who have already been exposed to an unnecessary and unjustified amount of damaging publicity. I would therefore ask your Honour for the hearing to be held in camera or that press reporting is restricted until the conclusion of the Hearing."

"Press reporting is already restricted as this is a committal proceeding, Mr Arrowsmythe, but I perceive that you have something particular in mind. I think we had better recess to discuss this matter," said the judge, looking at, Eileen thought, Mr Nelson. "Court is adjourned for fifteen minutes."

Mr Arrowsmythe turned to his party as they all stood. "This gives me the opportunity to put some of the arguments to the judge in private," he whispered. "It may reduce exposure to the public and the media should we fail to win at this stage. Of course, if we do win we will want all the publicity we can get." Eileen thought he might have mentioned Sandra, but he did not, even if she was very much in his mind when he talked of reducing exposure to the media.

It was nearly twenty minutes before the court reconvened and the judge made his pronouncement. "I have considered the matters put before me in private and I am aware that some of the evidence will be of a sensitive nature and not the sort normally associated with cases of this kind. Nevertheless, in view of the serious nature of the charges brought against the defendants and the allegations of misconduct that will be made by the defence, I am reluctant to hold this Hearing in camera. There are issues of wide public interest here. I therefore direct that the public shall be admitted and there will be no further restriction on reporting restrictions."

"As it pleases your Honour," said Mr Arrowsmythe, displaying no sign of emotion. Eileen felt a surge of disappointment. They had lost their very first battle and she was turning to Richard to tell him so when her eyes strayed beyond him and into the public gallery where a number of newcomers were taking their seats. Richard must have seen the expression of shock and outrage on his wife's face, as he turned to follow her gaze and was consumed by electricity. There, sat in the front row at the opposite end to his mother, looking smart, radiant and lovely, was Stephanie. Eileen glared at her, then at her husband who appeared trapped, like a rabbit in the headlights of an oncoming juggernaut.

"Close your mouth," she hissed. "And why has she come? Did you ask her?"

"Me? Ask her? No - why should I?" Eileen looked at her husband with derision.

"Who else would?" she said with venom. "Who else but you?"

“Is this something important?” asked Mr Arrowsmythe, bending down to their level. “All this excitement?”

“No, no,” whispered Richard. “Nothing to do with this case. Really nothing at all.” But Eileen was fuming. As she watched, Stephanie smiled at him, then gave him a coquettish wave. She thought of all the things she could do, that she ought not to do, in response to the woman's presence, most of which would only make a bad situation worse. It was shameless, her being there. Absolutely shameless! And Stephanie could sit there and ogle at her husband, make eyes at him, and she could do nothing! Why did she not leap to her feet and address the judge, saying that there was the guilty party, this woman who had stolen one of her husbands and was now intent on inducing the other to run away! All this was going on under the judge's nose! She tried to distract Richard, but he was not paying her or the proceedings any attention. He was drawn by the dominant woman in his life, not the red-faced, animated, and suddenly quite attractive woman who was sat at his side, but the sullen, gorgeous, beauty who was blowing him imaginary kisses from the public gallery.

Mr Nelson was on his feet outlining the case for the prosecution. Eileen suddenly became aware that he was speaking and that she had missed a fair amount of his opening statement. It was that woman's fault. Perhaps she would grow tired of the proceedings and leave or not come again the next day? When she realised that Mr Nelson was going to take all of that legal day to outline the case against them, Eileen began to wonder if she would come again tomorrow. There was no doubt that Richard would and if he did, she would have to.

It seemed amazing to her that so much could be made out of so little a matter. Mr Nelson seemed determined to string out the prosecution with argument after argument and Mr Arrowsmythe seemed to be reacting to each and every point, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem to her. He would thumb through his papers, make marginal notes, whisper to his junior, occasionally turn around as if he was making sure that they were all still there. When the Court rose, he instructed them to remain together as there were several points he wanted to go over with them. Eileen, anyway, had taken the precaution of holding on tightly to Richard's arm. She could see that it irritated him. She knew he wanted to make a dash for the door, but she had no intention of letting him do such a thing. To her relief, when they did leave the court building, Stephanie was nowhere to be seen.

It was half way through the following day when Eileen heard Mr Arrowsmythe start making out the case for the defence, beginning with a statement that there was no case to answer and enjoining the judge to dismiss the proceedings. He was reminded that the defence would have to be heard if he wanted that as an outcome. He continued with the statement that Miss Logan had signed and Sandra had started to type. “This statement is central to the prosecution's case against my clients,” he said slowly. “One might take the view that it represents the only tangible evidence that the prosecution has placed before this Court. In fact, when one looks at the charges against Mr Arthur Brown, it is the only evidence against him. No notes of meetings have been produced. There are no written instructions. There is not even hearsay evidence to suggest that he knew about, let alone played any part, in this alleged conspiracy. The whole of the prosecution case against Arthur Brown rests on this one statement made by his former employer, Miss Emily Logan.”

Mr Arrowsmythe paused and took a sip of water. Then Eileen watched him as he produced a sheet of paper from those before him and held it up. “I have here a sworn statement made by Miss Emily Logan who will appear as a witness for the defence. In her statement she makes two points. Firstly she says that the statement she gave to the police is not the one produced in this Court. She states that she made no reference to Arthur Brown and she further states that any such references must have been inserted after she signed the statement and without her knowledge. Secondly, she admits that her statement was motivated by malice and a desire for revenge against members of the Brown family following a number of incidents and arguments with the said members. She unreservedly apologises to the Court and states that she would have acted earlier had she been aware of the discrepancies. However she was advised by the police to stay with her sister in Somerset until the case came to trial and was therefore unaware of what had occurred.”

“This is a surprising and disturbing development,” said the judge, writing. “Is Miss

Logan in Court?"

"She is attendance and will come to the witness stand if your Honour so desires."

"Mr Nelson?" said the judge. Mr Nelson was standing but still leaning backwards in conversation with two of the lawyers who accompanied him. Mr Arrowsmythe spun on his heels, unable to suppress a smile.

"That torpedo struck amidships and I would say that the prosecution is taking on water, but we still have a little way to go before we sink their case." Eileen glanced up towards the public gallery. Stephanie was there, looking pleased. The vision annoyed her even more. What right had she to share in their victories?

"If it please your Honour," Mr Nelson was saying. "I would like to hear the remainder of the case for the defence before I consider the matter."

"But Mr Nelson we have a serious accusation here; one that the police have falsified or tampered with statements."

"For which I am sure there is a straight forward explanation, your Honour."

"As I see it, Mr Nelson," continued the judge, "Miss Logan's statement is central to the prosecution case. The withdrawal of that statement or any part of it is most damaging. You have more to tell the Court, Mr Arrowsmythe?"

"Indeed I do," he said, looking around at Eileen. She could tell from the look on his face exactly what was in his mind and how he regretted what he was about to do. "The defence will now show that the bringing of the prosecution was prompted by an act of frustration and personal revenge after a failed blackmail attempt by one of the arresting officers." Mr Nelson was on his feet and the judge was peering down at Mr Arrowsmythe.

"I trust you can substantiate these comments, Mr Arrowsmythe," he said sternly.

"Indeed, I shall," said Mr Arrowsmythe, looking down at his papers. "Miss Brown, the daughter of Arthur Brown, one of the accused, works as a civilian employed by the police force. She will testify that she was harassed by one of the arresting officers over a period of several months and approached by him on the eve of the arrest and told that if she accommodated him, that is showed him certain favours, the charges would be dropped."

Eileen heard a ripple of excitement and comment run around the courtroom. Mr Nelson was back up on his feet, protesting, but Eileen did not catch exactly what he said as it was drowned by the noise of the gavel being brought smartly down in front of the judge. "Favours? Mr Arrowsmythe?" asked the judge. Eileen thought it was as well that Sandra was not in the room to hear this. She wished that she could go to her, to reassure her, but that was not practicable. Glancing up she saw that Stephanie had a frown on her face. She would know the kind of favours Sandra might have been asked to grant.

"It is a delicate matter of some intimacy. Miss Brown is not in the courtroom, but she is outside. However, I had hoped to spare her as much of this as I can. By favour, I mean a sexual favour."

In the recess that followed Eileen was torn between leaving Richard's side and failing in her vigil, or going out to comfort Sandra. He had his eyes still fixed on Stephanie. She knew he was longing to leave and go up to see her. She also knew that if he did, she would probably lose him for ever. In a way it seemed ridiculous. They were there, only feet apart, unable to talk to each other, whilst she looked on, barely able to maintain their separation. Suddenly Richard turned to her. "What does he mean?" he asked sharply. "How is Sandra mixed up in this?" Eileen did not answer, but held her finger up to her lips as Mr Arrowsmythe was returning which indicated the Court would soon be back in session.

"What is going on?" hissed Richard, perplexed, torn between the Hearing and the sight of his beloved; barely able to concentrate of the first because of the unavoidable distraction of the second. They were on their feet, Eileen clutching his arm, as they heard the judge order the courtroom to be cleared again. The remaining evidence for the defence would be held in camera. Now Stephanie was standing, smiling, and leaving. He watched he go. It was like a cloud obliterating the Sun. He would have followed her but for the vice-like grip of his wife.

Miss Logan was the first to be called to the stand. She came in faltering, her eyes fixed on the floor, never once looking in the direction of the Browns. She spoke in a

trembling voice and repeated what Mr Arrowsmythe had told the Court earlier. What was before the Court was not a true representation of her statement. It had been altered although she explained that she had not read what had been written down and had been given only the last page when she was asked to sign it. Mr Nelson was on his feet again as soon as Mr Arrowsmythe had finished.

“I must remind you, Miss Logan, that you are still under oath,” he said. “Now, is the Court to understand that you are now saying that the statement that you signed - the statement you voluntarily gave - is a tissue of lies? Is there no truth in it?”

“No, no,” said Miss Logan, appearing to Eileen to be flustered. “Not entirely.”

“So some of it is true?”

“Yes,” she admitted, suddenly turning to look at Eileen.

“Which parts of it are true?”

“As I have said, I made no allegations against Mr Arthur Brown. I have no wish to hurt him.”

“But you have a wish to hurt us,” thought Eileen, grimly. Mr Arrowsmythe was writing again.

“So that is the part that is not true?”

“It is not part of my statement, the one I made originally,” said Miss Logan, suddenly defiant.

“So the other parts are true?” persisted Mr Nelson.

“What I said in my statement was true, but it has been changed. It is not what I said, nor the way I said it.”

“If it please your Honour,” said Mr Arrowsmythe, getting to his feet with the weary air of one who thinks it is past the time when everyone should have gone home, “the Defence will concede that some of the facts stated in Miss Logan's statement are true. I have no doubt that a lengthy cross-examination would extract those details from the witness, but I do not feel that is necessary. What the defence is saying is not that the statement is totally untrue, but that it contains inaccuracies, has been redrafted and amended, and therefore is unsafe. In addition, the witness has admitted that her original statement was prompted by spite and not by a public-spirited feeling.”

“That would not alter the verity of the matter, Mr Arrowsmythe,” said the judge, “but I take your point. Have you any further questions, Mr Nelson?” Mr Nelson sat down, shaking his head, and started turning over his papers. Eileen watched Miss Logan slowly descend from the stand, glare in her direction, then leave the courtroom.

“That woman has not changed,” she whispered to Richard. Mr Arrowsmythe must have overheard her as he turned and whispered,

“At least she was willing to take the stand and tell the truth.” He turned away and called Miss Brown to the stand.

Eileen watched her approach, nervously, apprehensively. “Be brave, Sandra,” she whispered, although no-one heard her. “Be brave. You are a woman!” Yet there was something reassuring in Mr Arrowsmythe's look as he went up to and faced Sandra, and went through the formalities. In a slightly strained, but strengthening, voice she told where she worked and the nature of her duties. In response to his questioning she admitted that she had been the victim of some harassment although she could not always be sure who the culprit was.

“I believe that some of these incidents, however, occurred in places other than at the police station?”

“Yes,” said Sandra lowly. “One night, after a row with Gwilym - .”

“One of the defendants?”

“- Yes, in a coffee bar, Detective Sergeant Oxer followed me home in the dark. At least he would have done had I not hidden in a doorway.”

“Are you sure that he followed you?”

“Yes,” she said. “He stayed some fifty or so paces behind me all the time and where I went, so did he.”

“Do you think, did you think at the time, that this was for your protection?”

“No.”

“Why was that?”

“Because he remained a constant distance behind me, all the time until I hid in a doorway and he caught up and passed. It was then that I saw just who it was, when he paused under a street light.”

“And I believe that this was not the only occasion where something happened between you and Detective Sergeant Oxer?”

“No,” said Sandra, looking paler. Eileen knew what she was thinking. She could feel the tension growing inside her as the questions gradually took the two of them to the point they dreaded the most. “He tried to drag me out of a dance.”

“He tried to abduct you?”

“In a manner of speaking.”

“And this was at a function called the Tennis Club Dinner Dance which is one of the main events on the Eastgate social calendar?”

“Yes. I was dancing with someone else, also a policeman, and he cut in and pushed me towards the exit.”

“Why did he try to do this?”

“He said something about going down onto the sands with him.”

“And do you think that his attentions were honourable?”

“He made it clear at the time that they were not!” Eileen noted the air of defiance in Sandra's voice when she answered this question.

“Good,” she thought. “Keep it up, Sandra. Be brave!” If she could have gone up to the stand to hold her hand and comfort her, she would. Instead she could only look and try to appear reassuring every time Sandra turned her worried eyes upon her.

“Your Honour,” said Mr Arrowsmythe. “The defence can produce a number of independent witnesses who will say that they saw Detective Sergeant Oxer dragging Miss Brown off the dance floor at the function in question. They will say that it was plain that she was resisting him and that he was persuaded to leave without her only after a minor fracas. Now, Miss Brown, he continued turning back to her. “There is one thing I must clear up at this stage.”

“Yes?” she said softly, thinking that the tone of his voice was suddenly rather personal and far removed from that he had used previously.

“Did you, at any time, encourage Detective Sergeant Oxer in his advances towards you, or give him any voluntary indication that those advances would be reciprocated?”

“I certainly did not!” she said, again defiant.

“No encouragement at all? Not the slightest wink or hint?”

“None whatsoever! On the contrary -”

“On the contrary,” repeated Mr Arrowsmythe with obvious satisfaction. “Now, Miss Brown, can we come to the events that took place on the eve of the day the police raided the homes and offices of the defendants. Your Honour,” he said, lifting his voice, “I would seek the Court's indulgence at this stage. The recollection of these events, even now, months after they occurred, are painful to the witness who is still experiencing trauma as a result.”

The judge nodded and leaned forward. “You may answer in your own time, Miss Brown. You are not on trial here.”

“Now, Miss Brown,” continued Mr Arrowsmythe, his eyes seeming to implore her to be courageous, “I believe Detective Sergeant Oxer came to your office at lunch time of the day in question?”

“Yes. He brought me something he said he wanted me to type.”

“He gave this item to you, in particular? Why?”

“I was the only one there. The other two girls who I work with were at lunch.”

“Would he have known that you were alone?”

“He would have known that there might be only one of us there. He would have seen that it was me as soon as he came in.”

“Now, this thing that he wanted you to type - what was it?”

“He said it was a statement, but when I started to type it I realised that I could not

because it contained allegations made about members of my family. I told him I could not type it.”

“Do you know whose statement it was?”

“It was Miss Logan's.”

“So, I want to be entirely clear on this point. You are saying that Detective Sergeant Oxer brought you Miss Logan's statement and asked you to type it?”

“Yes.”

“And you said that you could not?”

“Yes. I did not see how I could type out something about my own family. It didn't seem right. I would be - I would have felt - compromised.”

“Did you type it?”

“No. I gave it back to him.”

“Did you read it?”

“Not fully. Obviously I read enough to realise what it was.”

Richard was tugging Eileen's arm. “Does she mean,” he whispered, “that she knew about the allegations before the police raided us, and she said nothing?”

“She did, and she told me,” whispered Eileen.

“You knew as well?”

“Yes!” she hissed. “Now be quiet and listen.”

Mr Arrowsmythe was continuing. “I believe, and I must ask you this although I will spare you as much pain as possible, Detective Sergeant Oxer then made a proposition?”

“Yes,” she said lowly. “He told me that he could do something about the allegations if I met him after work.”

“And what did you do?”

“I met him.”

“Of your own choice?”

“I felt that I had no choice.”

“Did you understand what this proposition entailed at the time?”

“I think so. He appeared to be saying that if I went with him, he would see that the case did not proceed. It was dreadful, something I really could not contemplate, but I felt I had no choice at all.”

“Why was that?”

“If I did not submit and the case went ahead I would be to be blame for not making a sacrifice.”

“A very substantial sacrifice?”

“Yes,” she said very softly.

“Your virginity?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“But in the final event, although you met Detective Sergeant Oxer after work and he took you to a remote spot in his car, you did not go through with it?”

“No,” she said slowly. “I found that I could not.”

“Your Honour, if it pleases the Court I do not want to ask the witness to re-live the details of the assault Detective Sergeant Oxer made upon her person,” said Mr Arrowsmythe, leaving Sandra for one moment and crossing to the judge.

“Mr Nelson?”

“Your Honour, this is all unsubstantiated and without substance,” he said, rising slowly to his feet. “Unless my learned friend can corroborate what he alleges to have happened, it is the witness's word against the word of a policeman who has a good service record.” Eileen could see Sandra's face darken at these words. She knew that the last thing her sister-in-law wanted was to be cross-examined and to have her word pitted against that of the man who had attacked her. Richard was whispering again.

“I had no idea about any of this!” he hissed. “Why on earth did you not tell me?”

“I couldn't,” she replied. She could see anger in his eyes. “I cannot explain now,” she added.

“Your Honour,” Mr Arrowsmythe was saying, “as the Court will know most cases of

rape or attempted rape, because that is how I would describe this, are, by their nature, un-witnessed. Although the defence cannot produce a witness to the actual, distressing, offence, I have an affidavit here from a Mrs Richmond who was, as she regularly does, walking her dog along the cliff path that very afternoon close to the spot where Detective Sergeant Oxer took Miss Brown. She has verified that she saw Miss Brown emerge onto the path in a distraught and dishevelled state, pursued by a man who was still adjusting his clothing and whom she will identify as Detective Sergeant Oxer. She states that Miss Brown ran off in the opposite direction whilst the man came past her, allowing her to clearly see his features, which she describes as angry and frustrated. She states she has no doubt that, although she did not witness it, an incident of some kind had occurred between the two and that Miss Brown was fleeing from Detective Sergeant Oxer. Miss Brown, in fact, went straight to the home of one of the defendants, Mrs Eileen Brown, who will also testify to the distressed state her sister-in-law was in."

"Mr Nelson," said the judge. "Do you wish to cross examine the witness?" Mr Nelson rose slowly to his feet, studying Mrs Richmond's affidavit.

"Not at this stage, your Honour," he said. "I would ask for an adjournment, however, to allow me to consider this new evidence the defence has produced."

"I do not consider an adjournment is necessary at this point. Have you anything further you wish to say, Mr Arrowsmythe."

"I would submit that the prosecution case against the defendants is unsound. It is based upon a suspect statement which has been altered from that originally given. One of the arresting officers has attempted to use blackmail against a young, innocent, woman, to satisfy his craven desires and I would submit that his evidence must be considered unsafe. The rest of the evidence is all circumstantial and speculative. I do not think that a prosecution could be safely brought before a jury and I would therefore ask the Court to dismiss all the charges against the defendants."

"Mr Nelson? Have you any further submission to make?" Mr Nelson, ungraciously, said he had not and the hearing was adjourned for half an hour whilst the judge considered the evidence.

"You were good, very good indeed," exclaimed Mr Arrowsmythe, holding Sandra by both hands. "I think you may have won us the day!"

"That may be so," said Sandra gravely, "but a public confession of what happened feels almost as bad as the thing itself."

"It wasn't all that public," he protested.

"It was public enough," she said, bitterly. "I could see it in all the eyes of the men around me."

"All of them? Every man's eyes?"

"Yes."

"Then you saw mine?"

"I don't know," she said, lowly. "No man will want me now."

"I couldn't agree less with you. I would for a start. I shall."

"I beg your pardon?" said Sandra, confused.

"Of this, more later." He turned to where his clients were sat. "Now, I must ask you to all remain here. I must confer with Mr Nelson just to ensure that the points are all firmly driven home, but I think the day may be won, and in time for lunch, too!"

Eileen watched him cross the court and turned to Richard who did not appear to be able to decide whom to address, her or his sister. "Are you actually telling me that you knew all this before the police raid, both of you, and neither of you said a word? You let them come and drag us from our beds and put my father in hospital without warning us?"

"Yes," said Eileen. "I could not tell you. Sandra begged me not to tell anyone."

"Why on earth did she do that? And why did you, my own wife, agree?"

"If you were a woman you might understand," she said coldly. It was not as if he had no secrets from her. Even as he stood there his gaze kept wandering up to the public gallery. She knew he was wondering whether the public would be re-admitted and whether she would be there. "Even she would understand," she added.

“Who?” he said, looking guilty.

“Oh, Richard! You are utterly disgraceful,” she said, and crossed to where Sandra was talking to her father. “Well done,” she said. “You were very brave.”

“Well done indeed,” said Mr Brown, “though I have already said that. I am not sure how her mother will take it when she learns the truth.”

“Must she?” said Sandra weakly.

“I think we will have to tell her,” said Mr Brown, gently. “If I do it, I will do it in such a way that she will be so outraged at what that man attempted to do that she will not be too concerned about the rest.”

“That's more than can be said for Richard,” Eileen said, looking back to make sure her husband was still there. He was talking to Gwilym.

“Richard told me that Stephanie was in the public gallery,” said Sandra as soon as the two women were alone.

“Yes! She was and he was sitting there ogling at her, not listening to a word of what was being said. I was dreading that she would be there when we went out last night, but fortunately she wasn't. I hope she will not be there when we go out today! It is pathetic! I do not know what it is she does to men!”

“Nor do I, except I do know that with a couple of exceptions I don't do the same thing. Except, Mr Arrowsmythe said something very odd just now.”

“Oooooo!” said Eileen. “What?”

“I don't really know. It was a strange little personal remark about him wanting me.”

“Well, I did warn you, didn't I?”

“I suppose you did,” Sandra replied.

When the Court reconvened the public and the Press were re-admitted. Eileen watched the handful of people take their places in the public gallery. To her relief, and to her husband's dismay, Stephanie was not amongst them. The judge's summing up was longer than she expected. At times, as he weighed the evidence against them, it appeared to her that he would decide to commit them for trial. Sandra would have to go through it all again and she looked up to where her sister-in-law was sat next to her mother. Yet, before her, Mr Arrowsmythe appeared to be confident whilst she could see that Mr Nelson clearly was not. When the judge came to the defence he appeared to use virtually the same words as Mr Arrowsmythe. He did not see how a jury could fairly find the defendants guilty and expressed the view that the trial judge might well stop the proceedings long before the hearing was concluded. He felt that it was unsafe to proceed and therefore he acquitted all the defendants who were to leave the Court without a blemish to their names.

Eileen did not realise at first exactly what had been said. She had expected a straight forward announcement that they were not guilty and not for the decision to be wrapped up in the middle of a long address which was still continuing. The judge was saying that there appeared to have been an abuse of police powers and that he trusted the appropriate authorities would investigate the matter and take the proper action.

“Don't worry,” whispered a voice in Sandra's ear. “I'll take the proper action.” It was Ken, sat in the row behind her. For a moment there appeared to be confusion in the Court as the judge rose and left and everyone tried to digest the import of what he had said.

“Is it really all over?” asked Richard.

“Not for Sandra, I fear,” said Eileen. “Not for Sandra.”

“She will get over it,” he said, looking around the room. The public gallery emptied rapidly and Mrs Brown hurried up to her husband and embraced him. Farther off, near the entrance, Eileen could see Mr Arrowsmythe talking to Sandra. Once again he was holding both of her sister-in-law's hands, but Sandra was smiling even if her eyes appeared to be lowered. They were too far away for Eileen to catch what was being said, but she formed the impression that the words were neither judicious nor of a judicial nature.

“I have a mission to undertake,” announced Richard. “I must go and break the good news to Miss Bernstein!”

“Oh, Richard! Cannot that wait?” He turned away. She felt that he simply wanted an

excuse to leave her, not to be with her in their moment of victory. It was probably, she thought, to punish her because she had kept Sandra's secret from him.

"No," he said firmly. "I said that I would go and tell her as soon as we had a verdict. Fortunately it is good news! I must go. You can travel home with the others and I catch up with you there." Helpless, without so much as a parting kiss or word of affection, she watched him go. Clearly he preferred the company of their unknown benefactress to that of his wife upon whom all his tribulations would be bestowed. For a while she stood alone, isolated, feeling wretched, disturbed only when the usher told her he was trying to clear the courtroom. At that point Mr Vincent came over and took her arm. "Congratulations," he said, "upon your victory."

"Yes," she said softly, feeling uncomfortable that her husband was not at her side, escorting her. "It doesn't feel very much like a victory, somehow. It is more like an anti-climax."

"You should feel proud and your relatives should be indebted to you. You did play a significant part in it, in persuading Miss Brown to tell her story and testify. I think things might have gone rather differently had that not been the case." Eileen nodded.

"It has been an ordeal for her and I am afraid that it may not yet be over for her."

"Oh, I expect not, but I think that she is in very sound hands. I think that Mr Arrowsmythe is thinking of looking after her, if you catch my drift. But I cannot see your husband?"

"He has gone to tell Miss Bernstein the news, and to thank her. He said he would once the hearing was over."

"Ah, yes," mused Mr Vincent. "The delightful Miss Bernstein. It is a shame that she could not stay to hear the outcome for herself."

"Stay?" said Eileen, puzzled. "Was she here, then?"

"Why yes! She was in the public gallery throughout until the judge cleared the court. You could not have missed her - a very attractive woman with red hair, sat at the end of the front row."

"In the front row?" cried Eileen, overcome with panic and desperation. "Oh dear Lord! He must not go! We must stop him, call him back!" She broke away from Mr Vincent's side and pushed and squeezed her way out of the building but although she ran up and down the entire length of the car park, there was no sign of the car. She was too late. He had gone. "No!" she screamed, stamping her heel on the ground. "No! No! No!"

"Eileen! Whatever is the matter?" said Mrs Brown, coming upon her.

"It's Richard," she cried. "He has gone to see Miss Bernstein!"

"How thoughtful! That is a really nice thing to do. What ever could be wrong with doing that?"

"Oh you don't know," Eileen sobbed. "You don't know the half of it!"

Despite the unusually warm evening the house felt cold when Eileen arrived home. She had prayed that he might be there, waiting for her, but he was not and she knew, in her heart, that he would not be. As she opened the door and called his name vainly to the empty rooms, she saw their home reduced to nothing more than a loose assembly of bricks, mortar, plaster, wood and nails. "The sum of the parts should be greater than the whole," she whispered as she closed the front door behind her. It was a silly thing to think, but what was she to think about other than the fact that he had left her. She tried to calculate how long it would have taken Richard to drive down to Dover, how long he would stay there, and when she might expect him back. Him come back? Would he ever come back? He had to come back! He was her husband!

Wearily, she collapsed into one of the chairs and stared at the plain wall in front of her. What should she do? No doubt he was there with her even now. She would be weaving her magic, entrancing him, ensnaring him bewitching him, wrapping herself around him. To think that after all those months of anxiety, fear, work, argument, pleading and planning, victory should be dashed from her grasp. To think that all the time this mysterious person who had provided Mr Arrowsmythe and funded their defence and whom they had all revered, had

been Stephanie herself. It could not have been anyone worse. No doubt she had planned it. No doubt her sole motive was to win Richard - should she say "back"? She had often wondered why the unknown benefactress had been so generous. Now she knew. The price of their victory was that she was to sacrifice her husband. That was what the Goddess demanded and would have.

Would he come back? If he did, would it be to stay? Owen had come back to stay, but things had been different then. If Stephanie was the Miss Bernstein she had heard so much about, somehow she had become the owner of a large house and estate and could dictate what she wanted. How on earth this had all happened Eileen could not begin to imagine. There was no justice in that someone as corrupt, immoral and wicked as Stephanie could be so rewarded whilst she, who had remained faithful and never considered as much as a liaison with a man other than her two husbands, was to be punished again. Richard might never come back. She had nothing to offer him whereas Stephanie now had everything. He would never come back. He had no cause to.

Eileen sat motionless as the hall clock ticked her life away and the sky grew darker. Outside the street light burst into life sending long shadows the length of the lounge. Still she waited, longing to hear the sound of the car stopping and his key in the door. Waiting! That was all that was left for her to do.