

Prologue

November, 1984

The blueprint for the raid was immaculate: Harry Rawlins would not have had it any other way. A wealthy antique dealer specialising in high-priced artwork, silverware and jewellery, Harry and his wife Dolly made a formidable couple. But there was another side to Harry Rawlins. An accomplished criminal and money-launderer, he drew from his men a deep respect and loyalty – but he was a cold, calculating and lethal enemy. And although the police suspected him of being heavily involved in crime, Harry Rawlins had never spent a single day behind bars.

The plan was simple and, as ever with anything Harry Rawlins led, had been rehearsed over and over again in every detail. Four of them, wearing balaclavas, would hold up a security wagon at a pre-set marker in the dual carriageway Strand underpass. A bread truck in front of the security wagon, driven by one of the gang, would act as a blocker by slamming on its brakes. As soon as the security wagon ahead halted, the three men following in a Ford Escort van would take up position. One would hold up the traffic behind at gun point whilst the other two, using blasting gelatin with a wired detonator cap, would blow open the back doors of the security wagon. The driver of the bread van would join them and each man would fill the others' rucksacks with money bags before three of the armed raiders ran the last fifty yards to the exit of the underpass to waiting getaway cars. The fourth raider, covering their escape, would then drive the bread truck to a pre-arranged hideout.

As the bread truck, the security wagon and the Ford Escort van entered the Strand underpass, everything seemed to be going to plan.

The raiders, all seasoned villains, were prepared for the next phase. But then, suddenly – the unexpected happened. A short distance behind them, a police car appeared, heading down the underpass in pursuit of two young joyriders.

As the sirens blared, the driver of the Ford Escort van turned to look behind him in panic – and in that same split second, the driver of the bread truck, continuing with the raid as planned, slammed on his brakes, forcing the security wagon to do the same. By the time the driver of the Ford Escort van turned back, it was too late. He ploughed into the back of the security wagon and the joyriders ploughed into the back of him.

The almost simultaneous impacts caused the raider in the front seat to lurch forward. The blasting gelatin flew out of his hand and hit the dashboard, setting off an explosion and fireball that engulfed everything inside.

The three armed raiders were trapped inside their own vehicle; the flames and smoke making it impossible for anyone to wrench open the driver's door. No one could reach them, no one could help them, but everyone could hear their screams as the petrol tank finally exploded and blew what remained of their van apart.

In the awful confusion that followed, no one noticed the driver of the bread truck. He watched in disbelief for a few seconds, then ran back to the van and drove out of the underpass.

* * *

All three charred bodies from the Ford Escort van were taken to Westminster Mortuary. Two days later, the Forensic Pathologist completed his examination and identified them officially as Harry Rawlins, Joe Pirelli and Terry Miller.

As the driver of the Ford Escort van, Harry Rawlins' body had taken the full impact of the gelatin explosion. The upper part of his body had been literally blown to pieces, the head and skull so badly

fragmented it couldn't be reconstructed, and both legs were charred down to the bone. However, still attached to the wrist of a burnt and mutilated left forearm, was a gold Rolex watch with the now blurred inscription: To Harry – love, Dolly – 12/2/62

Although police had suspected from the first that the second body was Joe Pirelli, the face was too badly burned down one side to be 100% certain. He had a criminal record, but no fingerprints could be taken, as neither hand was found intact. In the end, a forensic odontologist had to be brought in and eventually identified the body from dental records to within reasonable doubt.

With three previous convictions, Terry Miller was identified by a partial thumb and forefinger print on what remained of his burned left hand.

All three men had been married. All three wives were now widows.

CHAPTER 1

Dolly Rawlins stood in her kitchen ironing the shirt collar and cuffs she had carefully starched, just the way Harry always liked them. Beside her the laundry basket was piled with ironed sheets and pillow cases. Wolf, the little white poodle Harry had brought home after Dolly had given birth to their still-born baby boy and their hopes of a family were dashed, sat at her feet, his head drooping. Always alert, every time Dolly moved he padded after her.

Dolly had been washing, ironing and dusting since she had returned from the police station. It was now after one pm. Sometimes she would stop and just stare into space, but then she would feel the pain building up, and she'd begin working again; anything, anything to stop that pain inside her. The police wouldn't let her see Harry's body as it was too badly injured, and part of her refused to accept what she had been told. They were lying to her, she was certain. Any moment Harry would walk back into the house.

* * *

Linda Pirelli had stood frozen to the spot in the cold mortuary, her long dark hair framing her ashen face. She wished she had someone with her, she wished for a lot of things but, right now, she wished that this was a bad dream and any second she'd wake up.

'Dental records suggest this is your husband, Mrs Pirelli, but, as we didn't find all the teeth, we'd like you to take a look as well,' the mortician said. 'One side of his face is not too badly burned, so if you remain standing where you are, you'll be fine. Ready?' Before Linda had chance to answer, he'd pulled the white sheet back.

Linda gasped held her hand to her mouth and froze. She felt something warm trickling down the inside of her leg.

'Toilet, I need the toilet . . .' she started to mumble softly.

'Is this your husband, Joseph Pirelli?' the escorting policewoman asked.

'Yes, yes, it is. Now please get me out of here,' Linda pleaded.

The policewoman gripped Linda's arm, and gently guided her from the mortuary to the toilets in the corridor.

* * *

Audrey, Shirley Miller's mother, was worn out and fed up. She glanced down at her old woollen shapeless dress, her bare legs and her ankle boots with distaste. Catching a glimpse of herself in the kitchen window, Audrey saw the grey roots were showing in her dyed orange hair; she needed a tint to feel human again. As she stared at her haggard reflection, she could hear her daughter sobbing her heart out upstairs.

Shirley lay on her bed, her eyes red-rimmed from weeping. Every time she wiped her eyes she started crying again, repeating his name over and over.

'Terry ... Terry ... Terry ...' Shirley screeched, clutching a framed photo of her husband to her chest.

Audrey bustled in carrying some hot milk and buttered toast on a tray, but Shirley couldn't touch it so Audrey polished it off instead. As she ate, she looked at the small silver-framed photograph of Terry clenched in Shirley's hand.

Sitting back on the edge of the bed Audrey considered her beautiful daughter, the pride of her life. Shirley was a stunning young woman, with a curvaceous figure and long natural blonde curly hair reaching to below her shoulders. She had the sweetest, most trusting temperament and had only ever gone against Audrey's wishes once, and that was to marry Terry Miller. She'll get over him, Audrey thought to herself. In time she'll be herself again. But for now it was best just to let her cry.

* * *

At two pm Dolly dragged herself and the ironing up the stairs of her immaculate Potters Bar home. Wolf followed sleepily behind. Wolf's normal sleeping spot in the living room was on the thick Persian rug in front of the ornate fireplace. The mantelpiece displayed a lifetime of photographs of Dolly and Harry: their wedding at Chelsea Registry Office, with Dolly in a Chanel suit, carrying a small bouquet of white roses, their honeymoon in Paris, and then from every anniversary, Christmas and Charity Ball after that. In the winter, the open log fire warmed Wolf's little body and in the summer he enjoyed the cool air circling the room from the open sash windows. When Harry was away on business however, Wolf always curled up next to Dolly on the plush red velvet sofa with gold tassels.

Dolly opened the bedroom door. Inside, the bedside lamp gave a soft warm glow across the spotless room, the matching draped curtains, bedspread and scatter cushions were all neat and tidy; nothing was out of place. After putting the ironing away, Dolly dug her hand into her apron pocket and lit her hundredth cigarette of the day. As she gulped in the smoke she felt her heart heave heavily inside her.

Back downstairs, Dolly opened the mahogany doors of the stereo cabinet, switched on the record player and gently placed the needle on the LP that was already on the turntable. She had played it over and over since she got home from the police station: the deep rich tones of Kathleen Ferrier singing 'Life Without Death' seemed to soothe her.

Dolly sat in the living room smoking, with Wolf curled up at her side. She sat there all night. She didn't cry, she couldn't – it was as if someone had drained every emotion from inside her. She thought back to the morning two days ago, when Harry had kissed her goodbye. His business trip to buy some antiques should only take a couple of days, he'd said. She'd missed him every moment he was gone and last night had just been preparing lasagne for dinner on his return home – Harry liked it with the cheese crisped up over the pasta – when the doorbell rang.

She had wiped her hands on a dishcloth as Wolf yapped and bounded towards the studded mahogany front door. She went to follow him into the hallway and froze. There, outlined in the stained glass panels, were two dark figures. The doorbell rang again.

The two detectives had shown her their warrant cards and asked her whether her husband was at home. The law had come knocking a few times in the past, so Dolly was immediately guarded and non-committal, telling them Harry was away on business. They had then told her to get her shoes and coat on and accompany them to the station to identify something they believed belonged to her husband. They were unhelpful in the patrol car, refusing to answer her questions, which scared her. What if they had arrested Harry? She decided not to say or ask anything until she knew more.

At the station they took her into a cold, bare room with a Formica-topped table and four matching hard chairs. A uniformed policewoman stood beside Dolly as a detective handed her a plastic property bag containing a gold Rolex watch with a diamond encrusted face. When she tried to open the bag, the detective had snatched it away.

‘Don’t touch!’ he snapped. He put on white forensic rubber gloves, removed the watch and turned the face over to reveal the faded inscription.

‘*To Harry – love, Dolly – 12/2/62*,’ whispered Dolly. Somehow she managed to maintain control. ‘That’s my husband’s,’ she said. ‘That’s Harry’s.’ And her world collapsed.

‘We took it from the wrist of a dead body.’ The lead detective paused to gauge her reaction. ‘The charred, dead body of a man.’

Dolly grabbed the watch, backing away from the detective until she hit the far wall of the room. The female officer came after her, hand held out.

‘That’s evidence!’ she said. ‘Give it here!’

Dolly held on to the watch with all her strength. Shock had made her lose all inhibition. ‘You’re lying!’ she screeched. ‘He’s not dead.’

He's not!' As Harry's precious watch was prised from her fingers, she hissed, 'I want to see him. I *need* to see him!'

The female officer had had enough. 'There's nothing left to see,' she said coldly.

All the way home in the police car, Dolly kept telling herself that it could not have been Harry, even though the voice in her head kept whispering to her . . . She'd given that watch to him on their tenth wedding anniversary. He'd kissed her and promised that he would never take it off. Dolly had loved the way he would glance at it; would hold his arm out straight, turn his wrist and watch the light catch the diamonds. He was never without his Rolex – even in bed. For their next anniversary, she had bought him a solid gold Dunhill cigarette lighter engraved with his initials. He'd laughed and told her that, like the watch, he would always carry it with him.

But even so she could not accept that he wouldn't be coming home.

* * *

Audrey had arranged Terry's funeral. It was a quiet family affair, just a few drinks back at the house, nothing special; besides, Shirley was still in such a state that it was all Audrey could do to get her dressed.

Greg, Shirley's brother, helped out as best he could, but he was still very young and couldn't cope with his older sister's outpourings of emotion. When Shirley had tried to jump into the grave on top of the coffin, he'd been so embarrassed he'd walked off and attached himself to a completely different and far more dignified funeral party.

No headstone had yet been ordered because Audrey hadn't liked to ask for money, but she planned to arrange something as soon as Shirley was back on her feet. She had high hopes of Shirley going back onto the beauty queen circuit; with her stunning looks

Audrey thought her daughter could make it through to the ‘Miss England’ heats. In fact, she had already put her down for ‘Miss Paddington’ . . . she would bring that up later, when Shirley was not crying so much.

* * *

Linda was in the living room of the crowded Pirelli family council flat. All Joe’s relatives had been invited to the funeral and wake and were howling and carrying on in voluble Italian, dressed from head to toe in black. Her mother-in-law, Mama Pirelli, had been cooking for days, preparing a feast – pasta, pizza, salami – you name it, it was on the table. Linda was an orphan and had no family of her own to invite. As for friends, the lads from the arcade where she worked never really knew Joe, so, Linda was getting very drunk on her own. She could sense the guests watching her, shaking their heads at her bright red dress. She didn’t care.

Looking round the sea of tearful faces, Linda suddenly spotted a woman at the far end of the room and recognised the little blonde slag she’d seen with Joe a few weeks ago. Blazing with fury, she pushed her way through the guests towards the weeping woman.

‘Who the hell invited you?’ Linda screamed. She’d give her something to remember him by! She threw her glass of wine over the girl and would have laid in to her if Gino, Joe’s younger brother, hadn’t pulled her away in time. Holding Linda tight as she sobbed, Gino whispered soft comfort in her ear, and casually placed his drunken hand on her right tit.

* * *

Consumed by grief, Dolly Rawlins had barely eaten. She felt as if night and day had blurred together, but somehow, on auto-pilot, she had agreed to bury her husband. She sat in the living room

wearing a neat black suit and black hat with a small veil. She smoothed her black kid-leather gloves over and over, feeling her wedding and engagement rings through the soft leather. Wolf sat on the sofa beside her, his little warm body pushed against her hip.

Even today, Dolly was a strikingly composed figure; her sandy hair was immaculate, her make-up was discreet and her manner was business-like. She was a woman determined to let no one share her very personal and very private grief. They couldn't possibly understand and the last thing she wanted was anyone suggesting that they did.

* * *

Dolly's partnership with Harry had been a very special one. They had met when she was running her late father's antique and junk stall in Petticoat Lane, but it wasn't Harry's flash E-type Jag, his good looks and charm that had drawn her to him, although of course she noticed them. No, the connection went much deeper than that.

When Harry proposed with a solitaire diamond ring, he took Dolly's breath away. Harry's mother Iris had been equally breathless, but for very different reasons. She couldn't believe that her son wanted to marry a girl she saw as a common money-grabbing little tart. Iris had brought up her only son single-handedly after his father was imprisoned for armed robbery and died of cancer shortly after his release. She established a very successful – and apparently legitimate – antique business, made sure Harry got a good education, and saw that he travelled extensively to further his knowledge of antique art, silver and precious stones. By the time he took over the business, Iris was struggling with arthritis and blinding migraines and ready to retire. Her final ambition for her only child was to see him married to a rich young woman with class and social connections. It was the first time Harry had ever defied his mother.

Dolly never told Harry about the day she had called on Iris in the elegant St John's Wood flat her doting son had bought. Not exactly elegant in those days, Dolly was nevertheless not quite the brassy blonde that Iris had envisaged. She was attractive, broad for a woman and with hands that had seen hard work, but she was demure, feminine and quietly spoken. Iris had gathered herself and offered tea.

'No thank you, Mrs Rawlins,' Dolly had replied. Iris winced at the girl's East End accent. 'I just want you to know that I love Harry and whether you like it or not, we are going to get married. Your constant disapproval and threats only drive us closer, because he loves and needs me.'

Dolly had paused for Iris to respond – to apologise if she had any sense. Instead, Iris slowly looked Dolly up and down, sneering at her ordinary clothes and unimaginative flat shoes.

Dolly shrugged and went on. 'My dad was a dealer in the antiques business and he knew your husband, so don't give me all your airs and graces. Everyone knows he fenced stolen goods and done ten years in Pentonville for armed robbery. Everyone knows you used the proceeds to run the business while he was inside. And let's be honest, you were lucky to get away with it.'

No one had ever talked to Iris like that before. 'Are you pregnant?' she asked, gobsmacked.

Dolly smoothed her pencil skirt. 'No, Mrs Rawlins, I'm not, but I do want a family, and if you want to be a part of it then you should zip your mouth. Harry and me are getting married, with or without your permission, and threatening to cut him out of the business is just cutting off your nose to spite your face.' Dolly turned to leave. 'I'll show myself out.'

'If it's money you want,' said Iris. 'I'll write you a cheque here and now. Name your price.'

Dolly held out her left hand with its diamond solitaire engagement ring.

‘I want the gold band to go with this, cos you don’t have enough money to pay me off. He’s all I want and I am going to make him happy. Like I said, you can be part of our lives or not, it’s up to you.’

Once again, Dolly headed for the door. Once again, Iris’ words made her pause.

‘If you’re thinking of running the antique business with Harry you’d better lose that common East End accent.’

‘I intend to, Mrs Rawlins.’ Dolly glanced over her shoulder and looked Iris square in the eyes. ‘Just as you managed to lose yours.’

* * *

Eddie Rawlins, the cousin Dolly couldn’t stand, breezed in with his cheeks flushed from the cold, and interrupted her thoughts. He was similar in looks to Harry, but whereas Harry had been strong and muscular, Eddie seemed like a weak version.

He rubbed his hands and gestured out of the window at the funeral cortege. ‘They’re all here,’ he said, beaming. ‘Hell of a turn out. The Fishers are here, not to mention the law watching in a car down the road. You can’t even see the end of the line, there must be fifty cars out there!’

Dolly bit her lip. She hadn’t wanted it this way but Harry’s mother, Iris, had insisted: Harry was an important man who had to be buried in style. Dolly knew how much Iris must be hurting too, so she had given her what she wanted. She’d never be thanked for it, but it would make Dolly’s life less stressful in the longer run.

Collecting her black leather handbag, Dolly stood and smoothed her skirt, checking herself in the hallway mirror on the way out. Just as she got to the front door, Eddie stopped her and took from his pocket a small brown packet. He leant forward and spoke in a hushed voice even though they were completely alone.

‘This is for you, Dolly. I know it’s probably not appropriate right now, but the law’s been sniffin’ round my place and Harry gave me this to pass on to you if anything ever happened to him.’

Dolly stared at the package. Eddie shifted his weight and moved closer.

‘I think it’s the keys to his lock-up,’ he said.

Dolly slipped the packet into her handbag and followed Eddie outside. She couldn’t believe she was about to bury Harry. All she wanted to do was to lie down and die. Her little dog was all that kept her alive now.

The neighbours were out on their driveways and, as Dolly walked down her front garden path, she could feel everyone watching her. Car after car was lined up, waiting patiently to follow the hearse, which was weighed down with wreaths and bunches of flowers. Dolly had never seen so many hearts and crosses; the splashes of colour standing out in contrast to the line of black cars.

Eddie ushered Dolly into the back of a black Mercedes Benz with dark tinted windows. As she bent her head to step into the car she saw her mother-in-law in the Rolls Royce behind. Iris mouthed the word: ‘bitch.’ Dolly ignored her, just as she had done throughout most of her married life.

Once she had settled herself, Dolly gave the nod for Eddie to follow the slow-moving hearse. Through the driver’s mirror, he saw the trickle of tears start to run down her ashen face. She made no effort to wipe them away as she spoke in a tight voice.

‘I hope you told them I’m doing nothing back at the house after the funeral . . . nothing. The sooner this is over the better.’

‘Yeah, I did,’ Eddie replied cautiously ‘But I think Iris is havin’ a few folks back at her flat. She asked me to go and said she’s paid for everythin’’. Dolly closed her eyes and shook her head. Iris hadn’t been financially self-sufficient since retiring so ‘paying for everything’ actually meant that Harry was paying. Or, more accurately now, Dolly.

Harry Rawlins was buried in the style his mother wanted, with hundreds gathered at the cemetery, and even more flowers surrounding the graveside. Throughout the ceremony, Dolly remained solitary and unmoved. She was the first to leave the graveside and the nosy, intrusive crowd of mourners raised their bowed heads to watch her go.

Amongst the mourners was Arnie Fisher, in his navy cashmere coat, immaculate tailored suit and shirt. As soon as Dolly's car moved off he nodded to a huge bear of a man standing at the back of the crowd. Boxer Davis pushed his way forwards. Boxer's suit in comparison was shoddy and threadbare and even his shirt was grimy and stained. His big stupid face appeared moved by the ceremony, and his flattened nose dripped from the cold, which he wiped with the back of his hand. Arnie Fisher flicked a look at Dolly's slow retreating Mercedes and nodded for Boxer to follow. Boxer shuffled, slightly embarrassed.

'Don't you think I should wait a few days, boss? I mean she only just buried him.'

Arnie stared at Boxer for a couple of seconds, jerked his head towards the Merc again and turned away. Conversation over.

Standing a few feet away from Arnie was his younger brother Tony, who towered above everyone, making even Boxer look small by comparison. The cold sun glinted off the diamond in his right ear as he fingered it while he chatted to some friends. He came to the end of some joke he was obviously telling and they roared with laughter. Unlike his brother, Tony was a handsome man; in fact, the only similarity between them was their steely blue ice-cold eyes. Arnie was short-sighted so he wore rimless glasses – but there was something about those unfeeling, unemotional eyes they both shared. Boxer looked from Tony back to Arnie and obediently made his way through the dispersing mourners to follow Dolly back to the huge, empty home where she and Harry had been so happy for so long.

A short distance from the main crowd, Detective Sergeant Fuller leant against a tombstone, making and made a mental note of everyone there. My God, he thought, it's like looking at the mug shots down the Yard: all the lags were there – the old timers and the new blood. A diligent young officer out to impress the powers-that-be, Fuller was pissed off to have been sent on what he considered a fool's errand. His boss, Detective Inspector George Resnick, had been obsessed with catching Harry Rawlins for longer than Fuller had been alive. 'There'll be something, Fuller,' Resnick had barked to Fuller and Detective Andrews that morning. 'Every criminal in London will be in that graveyard today, either to pay their respects or to make certain Rawlins doesn't come back from the dead. So, there'll be something. And I want to know what.'

Detective Inspector Resnick had always believed that Harry Rawlins was the ringleader behind three armed security van robberies. His attempts to prove it became an overwhelming obsession – and had been a constant irritation to Rawlins. Eventually Rawlins took action. Resnick was photographed accepting an envelope from a known criminal and, when the story was leaked to the *News of the World*, he had found himself under investigation for corruption. It took him months to prove his innocence, and by the time Resnick returned to work, the stigma had ruined any hopes of promotion. The irreparable damage to his career fuelled Resnick's festering hatred for Rawlins and he swore that one day, no matter how many years it took, he would see Harry Rawlins behind bars. Death had beaten Resnick to it, but it was an obsession that seemingly extended beyond the grave.

Fuller didn't care about Resnick because he didn't believe for a second that Resnick cared about him – he had put nothing and no one above catching Harry bloody Rawlins. However, they both cared what the Fisher brothers were up to and who they were talking to, so Fuller watched them like a hawk. Fuller was ambitious

to climb the ranks; and the Fishers had been on every copper's 'most wanted' list ever since he was a uniformed recruit. They'd be the catch of the century now Rawlins was dead!

After the mourners dispersed, Fuller threaded his way between the gravestones towards the exit. He was about to get into the waiting police car when he noticed the mud on his forty-pound shoes and, irritated, wiped them on the grass verge. Detective Andrews grinned at him from the driver's seat. Fuller was not amused, particularly as he also had mud on the hem of his best trousers.

Fuller opened the car door and sat down heavily inside. He took a clean, white, perfectly ironed and folded handkerchief and spat on it before wiping the mud from his right trouser leg.

'See anything interesting?' Andrews was making conversation. He'd watched Fuller looking bored shitless for the past hour.

'That prick Resnick can ruin his own career if he wants to, but he's not ruining mine.' Fuller snapped back.

'I remember reading about him in the *News Of The World*. Andrews was on top of all the gossip. He thought it impressed the female officers at the station. 'Suspended from duty for taking bribes. The crooked cop who took a pay-off'

'Am I supposed to care?' Fuller snarled. He slammed the car door shut and jerked his head for Andrews to drive.

'He got two Commissioners' Commendations for bravery before he was even a sergeant,' said Andrews as he put the car in gear. 'He was a good officer.'

'Well, he's not now!' Everyone knew that Resnick's chances of promotion were scuppered – he kept his rank as DI by the skin of his teeth but, every time his name was mentioned for promotion, someone dragged up the dirt and he was passed over. It was only recently that DCI Saunders had persuaded the CID Commander to let Resnick have an operational posting again, and he had been reluctantly given a small cold crime investigation team to run.

‘Every copper associated with that chain-smoking dinosaur is seen as just as big a joke as he is. I’m not taking that lying down, Andrews, I can tell you that much.’

Fuller flipped open his ever-present notebook and stared down at the list of names he had taken at the funeral. ‘Now, he’s a fool chasing ghosts. Our attentions should be on the living.’ As the car moved off, Fuller turned and stared at the throng of people waiting in the car park, looking for Arnie Fisher, but he had already left. Fuller frowned and tapped his book.

‘Let’s take a look at Rawlins’ old lady’s gaff, see who’s at the wake to pay their last respects to that bastard.’

CHAPTER 2

Dolly sat in the plush velvet chair watching Boxer carefully pour her a brandy. He was drinking orange juice, trying to make a good impression no doubt. Why on earth had she let the big stupid idiot in? Why him, of all people? But she found his presence strangely comforting; in his own funny way he seemed genuinely moved by Harry's death. She slipped her hand down to touch Wolf, sitting as always close to her side. The tiny dog looked up and licked the tips of her fingers. She felt lonely, terribly, terribly lonely.

Boxer was a waste of space, but he'd thought a lot of Harry and considered him to be a friend. Harry wasn't Boxer's friend of course, Harry had simply chosen to look after Boxer and give him the odd handout, not because he liked him, but because he could manipulate him. Boxer followed Harry, like Wolf followed Dolly; the difference was that Wolf was smart enough to realise he was truly loved back.

They drank in silence. Boxer, who was still standing, seemed ill at ease, as if not sure whether he should move his bulky body into one of the chairs. Dolly nodded and he sat down, holding his now empty glass on his knee. Dolly was tired, her head ached, she wanted him to go, but he just sat there. Eventually he coughed and touched his collar.

'They want Harry's ledgers,' he blurted out.

'They?' Dolly hid her frown as she looked at him. She was giving nothing away.

Boxer got up again and paced the room nervously. 'I'm working for the Fisher brothers now, Dolly . . . They . . . they want Harry's ledgers.'

'I don't know what you're talking about,' she replied.

‘They’ll pay good money for them.’ Boxer’s voice trembled slightly. He was trying to sound serious, but not demanding.

Dolly’s apparent lack of interest was making Boxer anxious. She knew him well enough to know that making him anxious also made him careless. He’d tell her everything without even realising.

‘Harry’s ledgers,’ Boxer continued. ‘He was famous for them. He named names, Dolly, you know he did. Every lag he ever came across and maybe some he hadn’t yet, but knew he would. If the filth gets hold of them ledgers, there won’t be a decent villain walking the streets of London.’

‘I told you, I don’t know. . .’

Quick as lightening, Boxer was beside her, bending down, his big moon face close to hers as he pointed at her with his index finger. Dolly didn’t flinch. He wasn’t angry – he was frightened.

‘Yes, you do! You do know! So, where are his ledgers, Doll?’

In a flash of uncontrollable anger, Dolly sprang to her feet. Boxer backed away. ‘Don’t you call me that, you hear me? Only Harry ever calls me that! I don’t know nothing about no ledgers! And what’s it got to do with the Fisher brothers anyway?’

Boxer gripped her upper arms as he desperately tried again. ‘The brothers have taken over his patch. They sent me and if I go back empty-handed it’ll be Tony visitin’ you next, so do yourself a favour and tell me where they are!’

Dolly stepped back, face twisting with rage as she clenched her fists, nails cutting into her palms. ‘I only just buried him, for Christ’s sake!’ For a split second Dolly’s grief surfaced at the thought of Harry being replaced so quickly by lowlifes like the Fishers.

Boxer recognised her grief instantly because he felt it himself. Suffused by guilt, his face softened. ‘I’ll come back.’

‘I don’t want nobody round here! Nobody! Get out!’

‘It’s all right, Dolly, don’t worry. Just don’t go to anyone else, okay? The Fishers wouldn’t like it. I’ll come back.’

‘GET OUT . . . GO ON, GET OUT NOW, BOXER!’ she shouted and hurled her glass at him. He ducked just in time and it shattered against the door. Raising his hands in surrender, he turned and made a hasty retreat.

As soon as the front door slammed, Dolly went over to the record player. As the heavy beautiful voice of Kathleen Ferrier filled the room, she felt her anger calm. She sang along to the record: *‘What is life to me without thee? What is life if thou art dead . . .’* Suddenly she remembered the package that Eddie had given her before the funeral. Picking up her handbag, she tipped out the contents, dropping them on the floor in a jumbled mess. Dolly fell to her knees, scrambling to pick a piece of paper wrapped round a set of keys, hoping and wanting it to be a message from Harry. Quickly unwrapping the note, she instantly recognised Harry’s neat writing.

Bank vault – H. R. SMITH – PASSWORD – ‘HUNGERFORD’.
Sign in as Mrs H. R. SMITH

There was more written below.

Dear Doll,

Remember the day you signed at the bank with me for the deposit box? It’s all yours, now. The keys are to the lock-up near Liverpool Street. You’ll find some things there, but you need to get rid of them.

Harry

Dolly knelt on her plush cream carpet with Wolf by her side and clutched the paper to her chest. She read and reread it, trying to make out when it was written. There was no date, no message of

love, just simple instructions. The bank vault contained the ledgers, she was sure of it. She'd always known they existed because Harry was always making lists. His mother, Iris, had taught him that without the trust of contacts – criminal or legitimate – any business would fail. She had showed him how to keep a ledger, recording names, dates and purchases made, legitimate or illegitimate and insisted he keep the ledgers safely locked away; they would be insurance against anyone who turned against him.

Dolly memorised the letter before burning it, and slipped the keys onto her own key ring. Harry would have been proud of her. As she carried Wolf up the stairs, she repeated the password over and over to herself: '*Hungerford, Hungerford*'. The name was easy to remember and the sign-in at the bank was simple, too: 'Mrs', then Harry's initials and then 'Smith'.

As she got ready for bed she wondered how much money the Fisher brothers would give to get their hands on the ledgers. She brushed her hair and then went over to the bedroom window. An unmarked police car was parked a little way down from her front gate, waiting, watching. 'Bastards,' she muttered to herself and pulled the curtains.