

by  
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Either young Gillian's legs were getting longer or her skirts were getting shorter. Fiona thought her daughter was growing up much too quickly, but at fourteen was still neither woman nor girl. She was just Gillian, bright, loveable, kind and on the brink of life...their only child. Fiona felt a pang of envy for a life that was just starting with so much promise ahead. She waved and called, "Have a good time!" as Gillian pulled the gate shut behind her.

The bus stop was just outside their narrow front garden ...no more than a few strides away. Gillian turned and beamed; her face burnished in the bright sunlight.

"Bye, Mum. Don't wait up. Helen's Dad is going to run us home."

Fiona pulled the window shut and began to clear the kitchen table.

She looked up startled by the grinding scrunch of metal on stone and then suffocating silence...broken by a heart-stopping, head-splitting, life-strangling scream from her neighbour. She ran outside and her

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Two months after Gillian was crushed against the wall, her killer was 'severely admonished' by a court that made much of his 'unfortunate' and 'discouraging' home life. The defence council emphasising his neglect by a drug addicted Mother and his remorse when Danny McClung claimed that he did not know that the steering on the stolen car was faulty. "I tried turning, ye ken, honest, but nuthin happened...it was'na my fault, honest . . . your majestics, your lord, judge...sir."

"I fear you have been watching too many court room dramas on television, Mr McClung." The presiding Magistrate intoned.

Twenty-one silent days and black, sleepless nights after the verdict, Brian Haston's wife sat up in bed, railing against injustice in general, the powerlessness of the police for good measure and her husband in particular. Next morning she packed the larger of her two suitcases, flung her gold wedding ring in the dustbin and left the house they had shared for nearly twenty years.