

Excerpt: *Secrets in the Sky*

Bella looks incredulous, but before she can respond, there's a brisk knock at the front door.

Bugger, I think, who the hell's that? Surely not someone trying to sell us solar panels in this weather? Bella's busy concocting our dinner, so I gather myself and head for the door.

When I open it, I find a tall woman with wavy auburn hair standing with her back to me. She's wearing a chic navy suit with a peplum jacket, which shows off curves like Jessica Rabbit.

Then she whirls around on one heel and proclaims, "At last! *You're* the one sleeping in my husband's bed!"

With that, she steps forward, and thrusts out a hand. Instinctively, I take a step back, but then notice her wide, mischievous smile.

"I'm so pleased to meet you," she says. "I'm Amelia."

I shake her hand cautiously. Her grip is enthusiastic and she's wearing a huge cocktail ring which winks at me, despite the gloom outside.

"I'm sorry," I say, apologising immediately for something I haven't done. "But I'm not sleeping with your husband."

But I'm really thinking: Joey – the scumbag – is he married and hasn't told me?

"No, darling, not *with* my husband. Just in his bed, right? And I should have said ex-husband."

"Umm..." I'm still not getting it.

"You're house sitting, correct? For Michael Hargraves? You're wearing his dressing gown, you know."

Now I get it. Bella's Uncle Mike. And this is *his* dressing gown? Ugh. I hope it's been washed.

"Well, I'm Amelia Hargraves. I own the estate agency in the village."

"Oh," I say. The penny drops. I've seen her occasionally in the post office and the baker's, always dressed beautifully and talking in that deep, posh way. "Sorry. Yes. Would you like to come in?"

Amelia strides past me happily, not needing, of course, to be shown the way. I shuffle after her, making sure the belt of Mike's dressing gown is tied securely.

Amelia's standing in the middle of the room, head swivelling as she assesses her former home. Even though I am entirely blameless in the sleeping-with-the-husband department, I still feel awkward.

"Where the bloody hell did that come from?"

She's looking, of course, at Stanley, who opens both eyes, lifts one clawed foot off his perch and echoes "Bloody hell!" at the top of his voice, adding "Feed me!" for good measure.

"He's temporary," I say. Great. Now she's taught Wol's parrot how to swear. Some guardian I make.