Too late, she understood.

 She understood why Ferdy had been killed in that place, and at that time of day.

 The police had been wrong. She had got it wrong herself.

 But she had been right in thinking her every move had been watched. She had been afraid, and she had been right to be afraid.

 She wanted to scream! She was only just coming to terms with Frank’s death. Now she, too, had run out of time.

 She backed up against the door of the church. It did not yield and let her in as it had yielded for Ferdy.

 The murderer took a step forward. . .

It was two days since the funeral.

 Ellie had told everyone she would be perfectly all right on her own, but of course she wasn’t. The pills that doctor had given her weren’t helping, either. She couldn’t sleep at night, and felt half asleep all day. She knew she would feel more alive if she stopped taking the pills, but she wasn’t sure she could cope if she did.

 She stood at the French windows and stared down the slope of her back garden, across the alley and up to the church. The trees around the church had just started to turn yellow when Frank had been taken to hospital. There had been a sharp frost the night he died and now there were more leaves on the lawn than on the trees.

 They ought to be cleared up, or the grass would suffer.

 Frank had never been interested in growing things, but it had been the joy of Ellie’s life to transform a privet-bound patch of straggly grass into a pretty garden, massed with flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants. A sundial sat in the middle of a circle of lawn, reminding passers-by that ‘Time Passes and Man is Left to Account for it.’

Frank had passed on with Time. Ellie was still trying to account for it.

The soft green walls and comfortable furniture of the living-room behind her had once seemed a serene refuge from the world outside. Now there was dust on the scattered mounds of sympathy cards lying on the table in the bay window overlooking the road. A couple of half-empty coffee mugs sat abandoned on the sideboard, flowers dropped and died in their vases, and there was a litter of newspapers on the cream-coloured carpet by the settee.

You must get moving, Ellie told herself. Start clearing out Frank’s clothes, get out of the house to buy some food, return the overdue library books.

She tried to think positively. There was still plenty of colour in the garden even in November. The door of the garden shed had drifted ajar. She must go and secure it. Her shed was haunted by stray cats and a neighbour’s small boy . . . which reminded her that she hadn’t seen the boy since Frank died.

The sun was trying to come out, turning the stone of the garden seat and urns on the patio to a golden glow. Just before Frank had been taken ill, she had filled the urns with winter-flowering pansies and variegated ivies. They were doing well.

The sun weas getting brighter, making the church spire stand out black against the sky. It didn’t often stand out as clearly as that. It meant it was going to rain.

The grandmother clock in the magnolia-painted hall behind her chimed sweet and low. Time to get Franik his mid-morning cuppa. She started. No more mid-morning cuppa for Frank. Why couldn’t she remember that?

A heavy-set woman burst out of the side door f the church, arms flailing. Ellie registered that this was unusual, but did not move.

Mrs Dawes ran down the path from the church. Ellie felt a faint stir of interest. She’d never seen the stately Mrs Dawes run before.

Mrs Dawes fought her way through the gate which led from the church grounds into the alley. Crossing that alley she wrenched open the gate into Ellie’s garden. Mrs Dawes’ face was red and her padded olive-green coat flapped around her as she pounded her way up the garden and banged on Ellie’s kitchen door.

Ellie went to let her in, moving like a sleepwalker.

At first Mrs Dawes couldn’t speak properly. She tore the flowered scarf from her throat and gesticulated.

She needs help, thought Ellie, She felt something stir inside herself in response to Mrs Dawes’ need. She said, ‘Sit down’ and ran some water into a glass. ‘Drink this. Don’t try to talk for a minute . . .’

‘Phone!’ Mrs Dawes knocked the glass away, spraying water around. ‘Police! Dear man in church!’

Frank had passed on with Time.