

## SYNOPSIS OF FLAT OUT

Alex Hale, a forty-ish lawyer in a small firm on the fictional island of Albany, witnesses a shooting. Alex, who narrates the story in his own faintly pompous style, finds himself in the middle of a whodunit. He is legal adviser to the flat-owners of Slaughter House where residents drop like flies. Many clues lead to his colleagues at Potter & Fogg.

Alex is also at the apex of a love triangle with his loyal, sentimentally-inclined secretary and the efficient and voluptuous investigating DI, Bridget Bosham, with whom he intermittently shares a bed and many discussions of the suspects. He also confers occasionally with an enigmatic elderly widow, Delia Earleigh-Bird, who has unexpected insights.

Much of the plot and many red herrings flow from the poisoning of an inquisitive reporter, Luke South. Luke's notes disclose a complex web of links from past scandals to characters known to Alex, focusing attention on a colleague (and Alex's *bête noir*), Simon Scrivener. The next killing (of a hapless student) switches the limelight on to randy taxi driver, Rick Shaw. Alex and DI Bosham pool intelligence and get closer, until Alex himself becomes a suspect. Alex is consoled by his secretary, leading to a crisis of conscience. As suspects bite the dust, others bubble up to replace them, with Alex often acting as reluctant confidant.

After six deaths, several rows and amorous reconciliations, a good deal of guesswork and not a little anxiety that Alex might be next, the truth eventually comes out and the romantic entanglements are resolved (partially, at least). By the end, the identity of the killer(s) is established although which detective was successful is less certain.