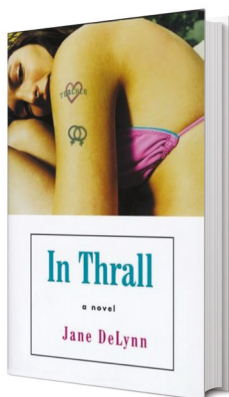


## IN THRALL

by JANE DELYNN  
*Divided, £11.99 (reissue)*



**L**ike *The Fate of Mary Rose* (p. 18), *In Thrall* is not an obvious contender for a recent novels section, it being first published in 1982. But it's going to be new to most people, and is still startlingly original, so deserves your attention. Set in 1964, the year after an assassin's bullet left John F. Kennedy "deader than a mackerel" (description courtesy of the protagonist's oafish boyfriend), it deals with a vivacious New York schoolgirl's last year before heading off to college somewhere. At 17, Lynn can move about the city with relative freedom, although is not so independent as to be excused family obligations, such as a visit to Aunt Lou and her neighbour Rudolf, who confirms his homosexuality with talk of linen closets and curtains. Whether among family or her tight cohort of girlfriends, Lynn is never short of a fizzy opinion, and having reached her social zenith as a member of the senior year, is cursed with that terrible mixture of being at the top of the pecking order yet far from confident in her tentative steps in "dating", sex and love. Boys are just a burden to be tolerated, such as the sort-of boyfriend Wolf, whose groping away at her in the cinema adds "a certain piquancy to the movie, trying to keep my mind on two

**"It didn't seem fair that for all these years I had been forced to hear the drecky details of other people's lives, and now, when I really needed it, I couldn't find anyone willing to listen to me."**

FROM *IN THRALL*, BY JANE DELYNN

A teenager, possibly convinced that no one has ever felt life more intensely than she has.



# SEX CANNOT BE TAUGHT, JUST LEARNT

*A lippy sixties New York schoolgirl enters the realm of sex under the guidance of her English teacher.*

things at once." She even thinks that perhaps she underestimated him when she feels his tears against her cheek, "Then he pulled away, and I realized the moisture was snot, not tears." Already, these creatures with their leaking noses are evolutionarily light years behind, and Lynn's true emotional voyage of discovery is with her English teacher Miss Maxfeld. "I was always getting crushes on my teachers", she announces. But having been assigned an essay on "the tragic hero" and choosing herself as

the subject, her relationship with Miss Maxfeld, 37, mushrooms from tea, with its elaborate warming-the-pot ritual hinting at the bewildering complexities of adulthood, to sex and obsession. Lynn brings plenty of knowing melodrama, while Miss Maxfeld communicates her own low-temperature loneliness in her voice of authority. This vaguely *Catcher in the Rye* coming-of-age scenario obviously cannot last, not that Lynn is especially coy about keeping it from her friends, who have their own experiments to enter into the record. But is there an adult she can confide in? What about Uncle Leonard with his stylish wardrobe and strange object in his scarf drawer – could he be a homosexual too? The unbearable weight of these questions! Something has to give, but if it does, what will follow? Scandal, shame, or just adult life? And the biggest question of all: who would be a teenager?