

## Chapter One

**B***elfast, Northern Ireland* – John Malone had been sitting alone at a back table in the pub for half an hour nursing a Guinness. He would give it a little more time. Patrick Coogan was not often punctual.

“Good to see ya, John,” Coogan greeted Malone as he took a seat and shook Malone’s hand.

“Been keeping well, Patrick?”

“Well enough considering.”

“So what’s this important information that brings me out on a night like this?”

“Major piece of intelligence, John. We need you to feed certain information to the R.U.C. brass about a weapons conduit to the U.F.F. We’ve also identified a major weapons depot. Rather have the coppers do their job and seize it instead of us.”

“Why do you need me? Why not just give them the intel yourself,”

“Ah, there’s the rub. We have information that implicates certain high-ranking R.U.C. officers cooperating with the U.F.F. We’ll tell you who they are so you can go over their heads. The fuckers will sweep it under the rug coming from us. Can’t do that with you blokes have’n the story.”

“The last information you fed me was useless. We could not confirm, therefore we didn’t publish. That’s the rules,” Malone said. “So what do’ya give me on this that’s different?”

“Knowing what sticklers you are, there’s information here that you can trace that will confirm the R.U.C. officials’ involvement. Should be a real story in here somewhere for you blokes, especially if the coppers raid the arms cache. Should be able to get some front- page pictures.

Coogan handed Malone a thick envelope.

“Implicating the R.U.C. supporting the Protestant paramilitaries is the real I.R.A. interest isn’t it, Patrick?”

“Of course, John -----

Patrick Coogan was cut off in mid-sentence as the entire front of the pub exploded inward.

Mason Devereux sat on his apartment balcony having coffee. It was mid-morning, promising already to be a warm autumn day on the Mediterranean. The view was magnificent. He looked down from the cliffs of the old town sector of the tiny French principality. Sailing craft and yachts were in abundance. The water was a deep, rich blue. It was relatively quiet, the beaches being some distance away. In general, Monaco was quieter than the other adjoining Riviera beaches of France on its western border, or Italy to the east.

He had moved to Monaco soon after the death of his wife and joining the Reuters news agency as a correspondent. Assignments usually placed him closer to Europe anyway. He had wanted a new start far away. What better place than Monaco. The sun, the Mediterranean, the urbane elegance, and no income tax. Furthermore, he spoke French.

The apartment was in an older building, under extensive remodeling when he came across it. It had cost him an extraordinary amount of money to purchase, and even then it had been a lucky find. It had more than tripled in value in the ten years he had owned it, but there was no interest in selling. It was convenient. The building manager and his wife looked after things during his long absences, and took care of the housekeeping.

He had been home almost two months. The first draft for his latest book had been completed and sent off to his agent the

previous week. Devereux was satisfied with the result. Two years in Haiti, Peru, and Mexico had produced a compelling photographic work. It was an eclectic mix of violence played against a backdrop of differing social situations and politics. His publisher was enthused with the galleys, his agent was ecstatic. Devereux was equally as pleased with the writing as he was with the photographs. None if this however dispelled a depression he was unable to shake.

On the patio table a single picture lay next to his coffee cup. It was not one of the photographs included in the book. He had taken the shot as the Mexican Army overran the guerrilla band. It was one of the last shots taken before he was captured. It showed a young Mexican army officer, probably in his mid-twenties. It was the face of the only man that Devereux had ever killed.

The book captured a sequence of horrific photographs of the executions of several Mexican Army officers by the Zapista rebel band Devereux was with. Captured later by the Mexican Army, the remaining rebels were subjected to torture and anticipated execution. A foreign journalist could not be allowed to witness the retribution. The justification of the act did little to attenuate the continual reliving of the image of killing the man up close with a knife.

Since his business was world strife, Devereux kept up with events by receiving newspapers from New York, London, and Paris. His procedure was to scan the entire paper quickly. He knew the major areas of international conflict and had a good understanding of the background. He reviewed all the paper but tended to focus more on articles several pages inside which gave a broader perspective when followed over a period of time.

Major news events started out on the front page, but progressed deeper into the paper as the event value waned. Subsequent information had a half-life as news value, quickly becoming relegated to the inside pages. Such an article appeared on the fourth page of the London Times.

Most homicides never make a major paper, but Northern Ireland always had a newsworthy potential in London that would result in publishing accounts of almost anything violent

that happened. A comparable murder in Devonshire would receive no space.

Devereux could have easily overlooked the small quarter column article. Perhaps it was the mention of a journalist's murder in the title that drew his eye. The story reported a bombing of a West Belfast pub the previous day. Several were injured, three killed. One of those killed was identified as John Malone, a journalist for a Dublin newspaper.

Devereux didn't know John Malone, but he knew his brother, Egan. Egan Malone had been a close friend during graduate school at UCLA. Malone was Irish, studying at UCLA on a fellowship. Malone had flown in from Ireland and stayed with Devereux for a couple of weeks after the death of Devereux's wife. Devereux knew this must be Egan's brother. The article indicated that John Malone worked for Egan's newspaper.

Devereux called Dublin immediately, leaving messages for Egan Malone at his office and on his answering machine at home. A few hours later, Malone returned his call.

"Mason, thanks for calling. I guess you've heard," Malone said. The hurt in his voice was apparent.

"Jesus, Egan, I'm so sorry to hear about your brother."

"Thanks, Mason. You know, he was only thirty-three. Married with two beautiful kids.

"I guess being a reporter puts you at some greater risk than other professions. But Christ, this is not like what you do, Mason. Hearing about your death would grieve me terribly, but wouldn't be a surprise. But Johnny was only a reporter. Sure the *troubles* make the North a meaner place, but its not a war zone," Malone burst forth in a release of frustration.

"I didn't think of it as was a war zone, but I guess it is. The fucking violence has been going on for so long it may never change."

Malone was quiet for a few moments. Devereux could almost hear the tears.

"Egan, it's been years since I've seen you. I'm coming up tomorrow,"

"That's kind of you, Mason, but you really don't have to."

"Of course I don't have to, Egan. I want to. Maybe even need to. I know you've got Jenny and your kids. You're got your family to help you through this. But I remember when Angela died. You were there for me. I didn't even want you there. I wanted to crawl into a hole. But you came anyway. I've thought about that often, Egan, because I think about Angela often. I've got to come, Egan."

Tears came to Devereux's eyes. He hadn't talked with Malone for almost two years. Had not seen him for almost ten years. Had never met his family. He felt guilty as hell. They had been very close friends for several years. Devereux made few close relationships, but Malone was important in his life. Malone had been his only other real friend, other than Angela. The fact that they had fallen out of touch did nothing to change that.

Devereux arrived in Dublin in the early afternoon the next day. Malone had insisted he stay at his home. Devereux had insisted that he would make his own way from the airport. Malone lived in the seaside village of Malahide, to the north of Dublin, and only about ten kilometers from the airport.

The taxi driver extolled the virtues of this delightful village. Everything here was history. In particular, Devereux would certainly enjoy the local attraction, Malahide Castle. The place that was Malone's own house was a grand structure, built one hundred-fifty years ago Devereux learned later.

Malone's wife Jenny greeted him at the door with a hug and kiss on the cheek. She was somewhat embarrassed at her own display of affection. She had never met Devereux.

"My Lord, it seems like I know you, but I've never met you Mr. Devereux. No, I shall call you Mason. I do know you well enough to call you Mason," Jenny Malone said. "Do come in. Egan's in Belfast, but he'll be back this evening."

Devereux liked her instantly. His old friend had been as lucky as he had been. Jenny Malone made coffee and took the opportunity to get to know this Mason Devereux she had heard so much about for so long. Devereux thoroughly enjoyed their conversation, almost forgetting the reason for his visit.

"Thank you for coming, Mason. I know this will help Egan. We both hurt deeply. Johnny was like one of my own brothers."

Jenny Malone started to cry softly. Devereux held her hand.

Malone's two teenage daughters returned from school in the afternoon. They had heard their father speak about Mason Devereux. At first shy, the girls quickly warmed to him and asked him all sorts of questions. He was rescued by Egan Malone's return around six o'clock.

"Mason," Malone said, embracing Devereux. Tears streamed down both their cheeks with no self-consciousness.

Devereux and Malone talked for two hours, catching up on news of each other, graduating soon from coffee to whiskey. Jenny Malone and her daughters retreated to the background, eventually leaving to the kitchen to prepare a late dinner.

The next day they spent a few hours at Malone's office in Dublin. Late in the afternoon, Malone took him to his favorite pub.

"Egan, we heard about your brother. Can't tell you how sorry we are," the barkeeper said, extending his hand to Malone.

"Thanks, Pat, I appreciate that. I'd like you to meet an old friend of mind from my college days, Mason Devereux," Malone said.

The barkeeper extended his hand to Devereux. "Pleased to have you in my establishment, Sir. Any friend of Egan Malone is always welcome here, Sir. Devereux? Don't sound Irish. Perhaps French?"

"The name is French, and I speak French, but I'm from the U.S.," Devereux answered, extending his hand.

"Well French or American, its all right by me. Just so as you're not British, or a Protestant from the North," the barkeeper said, firmly shaking Devereux's hand.

At Malone's request, Pat pulled two pints of Guinness. The proper drawing of Guinness was a slow process taking several minutes. After the ritual, Malone and Devereux took their drinks to a table in the corner of the pub.

"The story in the London Times indicated that a Protestant paramilitary group was suspected. Was your brother working on a story?" Devereux asked.

"I don't know. I talked with Kevin Flanagan, a friend of Johnny's, and also a reporter for the paper. If he was, Kevin

didn't know about it. Hard to say. Could be he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. It was a Catholic bar, in a Catholic working class neighborhood. But it wasn't near where he lived. Kevin didn't know the place as somewhere Johnny went to. Who knows. Could have been following a lead. Could have been just fishing around," Malone said.

"You know what Belfast is like," Malone blurted out, looking intently at Devereux. "Its like air travel. The statistics say its safe. But when something happens, it occurs at random, and you're usually dead."

Devereux didn't quite see the analogy, but didn't comment.

"It's not a crime ridden place. There's far less of a drug problem than here in Dublin. Yet when you're there you can feel the tension. Like something could happen at any moment. I imagine it's something like those drive-by shootings that happen in Los Angeles. The randomness, the unexpectedness.

"Johnny used to talk about what it was like. Said it was a pleasant place, a vibrant place. Friendly people. Economically in better shape than here in the Republic," Malone said, motioning to the barkeeper for two more.

"Than how do you account for the continuing violence. Christ, we've been hearing about I.R.A. terrorism for years," Devereux said.

"It wasn't the I.R.A. who killed Johnny, Mason. Don't get me wrong. I've never approved of the I.R.A.'s methods. I think they're terrorists. But it's not just the I.R.A. There's the other side that does much the same. The police suspect a faction of the U.F.F. They're outlawed too. I.R.A. are Catholic, the U.F.F. Protestant. Except religion has nothing to do with it."

"I've often wondered why the world press doesn't give them the same attention to their acts of violence. I.R.A. violence gets at least three times the copy space as the comparable attack by one of these Protestant paramilitary groups."

"And you're right, it has been going on forever. Everybody says over twenty-five years. But it's been much longer. The I.R.A. goes way back. The modern *troubles* seem to use the 1969 riots in Derry, as the demarcation point."

Malone continued. "You know, all the world thinks this is only about some rebellion to join the North to the Republic. Make Ireland whole so to speak. To the average Catholic in Northern Ireland, it's often much more basic and personal. The I.R.A. gets much of its continuing support because of simple discrimination if not outright persecution."

"The average working class Catholic, and that's essentially all there are, experiences virtually the same discrimination as did blacks in America during the fifties and sixties. It's as blatant as apartheid in South Africa. Catholics are a minority in the North and they have all the problems minorities have everywhere."

"With the disbanding of the old parliament in 1972 there has been some progress. Direct rule from London has been better than the Protestant dominated Northern Ireland Parliament."

Devereux asked a few questions, letting Malone go on. It was cathartic. Along with his monologue, Malone ordered several whiskeys with Guinness chasers.

"Are you going to Belfast with us for the funeral, Mason?" Malone asked.

"Of course, Egan."

"God, I'm glad to see you, Mason," Malone gripped Devereux's shoulder.

The next day, the Malones, their two daughters, and Devereux drove the two hours to Belfast. Jenny Malone was glad for the diversion that Devereux brought.

With copies of Devereux's books in the house, the Malone girls knew of his exploits into war zones. The entire ride was filled with a constant barrage of questions from the teenagers, taking up where they had left off the day before. By the time they arrived, both were madly in love with this handsome, romantic friend of their father's.

Devereux's first glimpse of Belfast was a revealing shock. He understood the security checkpoint at the border of the Republic of Ireland with Northern Ireland, which was part of the United Kingdom. However, an army checkpoint as they entered Belfast was unexpected.

"Thought things had eased here, Egan," Devereux said as they came to a stop in a queue at a security checkpoint.

"Not entirely, Mason. Note that these are British army personnel. That's at the crux of the turmoil. Not that long ago, the British army patrolled the streets of Belfast in full combat dress and armored personnel carriers. That's eased, but not the British presence."

"The British sure as hell don't see this as a pleasant place with friendly people, Egan," Devereux commented.

Devereux spent an uncomfortable first two days in Belfast. As much as everyone welcomed him, including Johnny Malone's widow, he still felt like an outsider. He reminded himself that he was here for Egan's sake, the same as Egan had done for him. He could feel that his being here had helped. Jenny Malone had touched his shoulder, and smiled into his eyes at a poignant moment, acknowledging her thanks simply by her expression.

The funeral turned out to be a much larger affair than planned, even though John Malone's widow had declined the suggestion to have a joint funeral with the others killed in the bombing. Hundreds turned out. Obviously, most could not have known John Malone. Egan speculated to Devereux that I.R.A. sympathizers undoubtedly organized the turnout. Catholic deaths were an important I.R.A. propaganda instrument.

The day after the funeral, Egan invited Devereux to a wake for his brother. A number of his friends had arranged the traditional celebration at Johnny Malone's favorite pub.

The concept of a wake was to celebrate the life of the deceased and how that life touched others. It was not devoted to grieving over the loss.

Malone and Devereux entered the pub late in the afternoon. They were greeted first by Kevin Flanagan, John Malone's friend from the paper. Flanagan made the introductions round the pub. Pints and whiskeys were in full flow. After a time, Devereux, Malone, and Flanagan found a table.

Flanagan was in his late twenties. Slender, even gaunt, with unfashionably longish hair, leather jacket and jeans. John Malone had been his boss, mentor, and friend.

“Well, Mason, what do you think of us Irish?” Flanagan said, raising his beer and downing the remaining half glass.

“Probably thinks were stereotypical drunkards,” Egan Malone quipped. “Seems I’ve had him drinking ever since he arrived in Ireland.”

“I’m meanin’ about the *troubles*, Egan” Flanagan said.

“It’s a curiosity, Kevin,” Devereux said. “Most people think the I.R.A. is some old-time terrorist group that continues to do some violence. But to be honest, Kevin, Northern Ireland is lost in a long list of troubled spots in the world. Many parts of the world are suffering horrific slaughter and brutality of thousands of people. “

“Egan says the fundamental issue is discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland. That being so, it’s hardly unique in the world today. Real bad shit is genocide. Discrimination isn’t in the same league, Kevin.”

Flanagan was already well into his fourth pint and at least two whiskeys. “So what you’re saying is, unless there’s a lot of violence with hundreds dying, the rest of the world will pay little attention.”

“The rest of the world doesn’t even care about those hundreds that are dying. Its just news. The people just don’t have any connection. They’re not touched by it.”

“Shit. This is a wake for my brother. Let’s forget the goddamn politics, Kevin” Egan Malone said.

“Ah Jesus, Egan, I’m sorry. It’s the liquor talking. I don’t mean to go on. It’s just that--well, I report on what’s going on, but it’s bloody hard to stand apart from it,” Flanagan said.

“I’m sorry, Mason. I didn’t mean to attack you. I’m just so fucking mad. Johnny Malone was the best. He was a great newspaperman. He was a Catholic, but he reported things the way they were, whether it was pro-republican or pro-unionist.”

“He taught me a lot. Taught me about reporting. Taught me about objectivity. Taught me about the craft. Most of all, he taught me how to think. Then some asshole fanatic, probably too stupid to have ever read a newspaper, kills him. Kills him with a fucking bomb. Doesn’t even give a shit who he kills as long as they’re Catholics.”

Flanagan cried. It was not embarrassing. His were not the only tears shed for Johnny Malone that evening.

After a few moments, Kevin Flanagan regained his composure. "You know, this here's the third wake I've been to for someone I've known killed by the Prods or Brits. This isn't how most of the world lives, at least not in Europe or the United States. It's not Africa or the Balkans."

Flanagan took a long swig of another whiskey, "You know what it's like here in the six counties, it's like the civil rights struggle with your blacks in the U.S. Read a book by a black man, James Baldwin. What he describes from decades ago is what goes on in Northern Ireland in the nineties of today. You've got internment, which is imprisonment without trial. Or you have simple murder. Contrary to world opinion about the I.R.A., more Catholics die than anyone else."

"Listen, Mason. I'm a newspaperman. I know what's going on in the world, all the bad shit, all the wars, all the genocide," Flanagan was showing the effects of his liquor intake. "But look at this. What country in the West, what industrialized country, has such a war going on? Unrelenting violence for decades? No country does. That's the answer. What has gone on here for years is unique," Flanagan continued passionately.

"God damn it, Egan will attest that I don't agree with the I.R.A.'s methods, but the Prods' killers, the British backed killers, are as much a part of the problem. They make this a war."

"You know why the I.R.A. gets all the negative press?" It's their acronym. It's as simple as that. The fucking I.R.A. should give the enemy an acronym, and make it easy on the press," Flanagan said.

By now Kevin Flanagan was getting drunk. He excused himself to go to the lavatory.

"There's no getting away from politics here, Mason. Everybody has a position. You can't just take what happens here as a natural course of events. There's always the politics. There's always the history," Egan Malone said.

"How do you feel, Egan? Do you hate the group responsible for John's death? Or do you just hate the circumstances?" Devereux asked Malone.

"Both, goddamn it! I'd like to see the bastards that killed Johnny hung. People of good cause don't set bombs in public places," Egan too was feeling the drink. His anger was surfacing.

"I'll tell you my feelings, Mason. I think England is an occupying power in the North. So do most Irish. I would like to see them gone. They've a terrible history here in Ireland."

"I don't think the majority of the Protestants want to discriminate against the Catholic's. Like everywhere in the world, it's some faction that's the cause of the violence and the misery. Fucking fanatics have always shaped history. Most people just want to survive."

Malone continued. "God, I'm sick, Mason. Johnny's dead. Killed by some thugs. An I.R.A. bombing could have just as easily killed Johnny. He could have been doing a story in a Protestant pub. So who do I blame?"

"There's nothing I could say to ease your pain, Egan. You blame the environment here that causes violence. It's exactly that kind of thinking that separates you from those that need to lay blame on some group they've been taught to hate," Devereux said.

"The masses, huh? You make me out to be what the communists would call a bourgeoisie. An elitist I guess," Malone remarked. "I hate all the murdering bastards here."

"Bullshit, Egan. You share the same opinion I do that the majority of people anywhere just follow some sort of lead. Most often based on some prejudice."

"You're a thinking person. Are you an elitist because of that? Maybe, but what thinking person would follow the kinds of nonsense we see in the world today? The fanatics can only move the stupid, the blind, or the willing. Don't chastise yourself because you're not one of the sheep," Devereux said.

Kevin Flanagan navigated back to the table with some difficulty. He downed the remainder of his whiskey. "God, I loved Johnny. He was my best friend."

With that, both Flanagan and Malone held each other and cried softly. Devereux went to the bar and ordered another round, leaving them alone for a few minutes.

Upon his return, Flanagan said, "Mason, I've seen your books. You follow the violence in the world. You've got the eye. The photos make me angry. Not at you, but at what is going on. Some make me want to cry. That's why they're good. What about doing a book about Northern Ireland?"