

Irish Killers

Bount Reiniger (prequel?)

by Neal Chadwick, 1964-

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This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.



May 1991... Somewhere in Northern Ireland...

"This man must die!"
The harsh voice broke the silence which had lasted for almost a full minute.

The decision was made.

The point of no return was passed.

"Death penalty for traitors!" another voice confirmed the first speaker. "As we used to handle such cases since the days, when our war of independence began..."

"You're right."

"Very right."

"So, let's talk about details!"

"Okay."

A black-and-white photo was lying on the rustic wooden table, and for a few seconds, none of the five men standing around it said a word. The one who had first spoken, and was obviously the leader of this group, was a tall, lean man whose hair must have flared red once upon a time. Now it was completely grey, except for a few streaks.

His intelligent eyes flashed. He gazed at his companions and seemed to notice even the slightest detail.

One of the men broke the silence again and said: "I have seen the guy before. In the newspapers..."

The grey-haired man nodded. "That's possible. He's a judge. His name is William Doherty. And he is a traitor because he forgot the people he belongs to and the nation he he ought to serve."

"I've heard the name before, too. People say he's a tough guy."

"Even though guys get buried one day."

"Do you already have a plan, Seamus?"

The grey-haired man nodded. "You can get ready." A faint smile dashed across his face. "You all know the other side is pricking its ears. So listen! Before we get started, we have to wait for further instructions from above..."

After a brief pause, someone asked: "What about the new man?"

Seamus pulled up his eyebrows. "McDowell?"

"Yes. I made sure he didn't come with us today. Just the way you wanted."

"What about him, Patrick?"

"Will he take part in the operation?"

Seamus screwed up his eyes a little and rubbed his protruding nose. He seemed to be thinking and not quite sure what to do. Then he looked up and declared: "Listen, Patrick, you can tell McDowell that an operation is about to take place and he may be allowed to take part. That's it!"

Patrick nodded. "All right."

"Don't give him any details. Neither who it's about nor anything else." Seamus turned away from Patrick and looked from one to the other. "I'll be back in one week", he said. "And then you will hear more."

That was the end of the meeting.

Patrick took the black-and-white photo from the table and looked at it closely before handing it back to Seamus. "That swine has deserved a bullet in his head, hasn't he?"

The corners of Seamus's mouth became tighter now. One of the muscles in his face jerked slightly. "He's deserved worse than that, Patrick," he replied. "Believe me!"

Patrick was loyal.

He never uttered any doubt about Seamus' words, his political statements or his strategy. He also never showed even the slightest difference to Seamus' point of view. Never, in all those years.

BOUNT REINIGER, THE well-known New York private investigator, stood at the window of his office and looked out at the bright blue sky above Central Park. His hands were in his pockets. He raised his broad, strong shoulders and took a deep breath before he turned back to the man who had taken a seat in his office.

The visitor was clearly overweight, and his three-piece suit was surely tailor-made and expensive. He had blond hair with a strong red tinge. His name was Rory Keogh, and he had made more money in real estate business than he would ever be able to spend in his life. Many problems could be solved easily with it, but not the one Rory Keogh was facing now. Money alone would not help.

"I would appreciate you telling me quite frankly what I can do for you, Mr. Keogh", said Bount, while he took a cigarette and put it in his mouth. He offered Keogh one, too, but he refused. Bount took a first puff, blew out the smoke, and added: "You've been asking me one question after the other, but you have not come to the point, yet. So, what is it, that you want?"

Keogh made a rather helpless gesture. A smile went over his bloated face and he shrugged his shoulders. "Okay", he murmured. "Why not? Perhaps you can prevent the worse from happening." He looked at Bount. "Perhaps I have to explain something."

"My ears are wide open", Bount said.

"I am the son of a poor Irish immigrant, Mr. Reiniger. When my father came to America, he had nothing. Nothing but his pregnant wife and his four children, my three sisters and me. Two years later, he died. He was a builder. A steel girder struck him. I was 15 then. It was a tough time for my mother, my younger brother, who was born after my father's death, and—and my sisters—and for me. I would like you to know that, so you can understand the situation better. I look like an American, I have an American passport, too. I don't even have an Irish accent. But in my heart, I have always remained an Irishman. I have never lost my ties."

Bount frowned. "I see", he murmured. But actually, he still didn't know what Keogh was getting at.

"Do you know the IRA?", Keogh then asked.

"The *Irish-Republican Army*? That's a paramilitary organisation committing terrorist attacks to make Britain withdraw from Northern Ireland, so the six northern counties can be united with the Republic of Ireland in the South."

"That's a very hostile way of describing it, Mr. Reiniger. But it doesn't matter now! It's about my son, Jack. He has gone into hiding, and I suspect he has flown to Dublin to join the IRA. Dublin is not necessarily the headquarters of the IRA, but there are a few groups there." Rory Keogh swallowed hard, and his face turned slightly red. "You can imagine what that might mean."

Bount raised his eyebrows. "What exactly are you worried about?"

"He might be sent to jail for a long time. Or even worse, he might become a murderer and ruin his whole life. Besides, he is still very naïve for his age."

"How old is he?"

"Nineteen."

"Oh!"

"He quit college." Keogh exhaled audibly. "As a matter of fact, he quit just about everything. He is a real loser, although everything was ready-made for him. He didn't grow up the way I did. He never lacked anything! As far as I was concerned, only the best was good enough for him. All he needed to do was reach out and take it. I would like him to take over what I have built up one day, but I don't see much hope for him when I am gone."

Bount nodded.

"And what makes you think he has gone to Dublin?"

Keogh looked at Bount closely, as if he were thinking about whether to tell him or not. "We had talked about it", he then said rather meekly. "We often talked about what is going on in Northern Ireland nowadays. About the injustice, the civil war. And now..."

He stopped talking, so Bount finished the sentence for him. "Now your son has gone to Dublin to prove he is a real tough guy!"

Keogh nodded. "Yes, sort of. At least, that is what I think has happened."

"I don't particularly like the IRA", declared Bount Reiniger frankly. "In my eyes, blowing up innocent people with car bombs is nothing to write home about. On the other hand—didn't the IRA announce an end to its terrorism?"

"Well, that's easily said. There are still armed groups that fight for the freedom of Ulster, you know."

"I don't care, what they are fighting for, Mr. Keogh. It is still abominable", replied Bount. "All I care about now is Jack. I fear for his life! Mr. Reiniger, you are my last hope. Bring Jack back home to New York! I'll give you a blank cheque if you are successful."

The private investigator came closer to Keogh and sat down on the desk half way. "But what if he doesn't want to come back?"

"Well..."

"What shall I do then? Kidnap him? No real practicable idea, I guess."

Keogh shrugged his shoulders. "Do whatever is necessary, Mr. Reiniger. And if he still can't be talked out of it, at least I have tried all I could!"

"And what if he hasn't even flown to Dublin in the first place?", asked Bount.

"Why else would he go into hiding? No, I am sure he is in Dublin, or at least trying to get there. He has withdrawn money from the account I opened for him. And once he even said quite clearly that something had to be done. Do you understand, Reiniger?"

"I'm not sure..."

"Lead an armed revolt to free Ulster!"

"I hope you're wrong", said Bount.

"So do I." Keogh took a deep breath. Then he added: "Oh, there is one more thing, Mr. Reiniger. I have found this among his things." He pulled a thick, rather tattered brochure out of the inside pocket of his suit and put it on the table. "It's a directory of all the private boarding houses in Dublin."

"I understand..."

Bount took the brochure and leafed through it. It still didn't prove Jack had truly crossed the ocean. Actually it seemed to point against it, because otherwise he would have taken it with him.

Then Bount did a double take. "A few pages have been torn out," he noticed.

"Perhaps they list the addresses he wanted to head for," said Keogh, and Bount nodded.

"Yes, that's possible..." Bount would obtain a complete version in a nearby travel agency. Perhaps that was a clue.

Bount looked at Keogh earnestly and, after hesitating for a short while, he asked: "Hasn't Jack left a note?"

"No."

"Perhaps not for you, Mr. Keogh. After all, your relationship wasn't all that good, according to what you've told me."

"Who else then?"

"Doesn't he have any acquaintances? Friends? A girl perhaps? Does your son have a girlfriend?"

Keogh took on a thoughtful expression, and then he finally nodded. "Jack never had many friends. But there was a girl. I saw her a couple of times. I think her name is Suzanne. He even lived at her place for a while."

"For a while? Did they split?"

"He moved back to my house two months ago." Keogh shrugged his shoulders. "He was very withdrawn. We never talked about it. Perhaps he cracked up because Suzanne ditched him."

"When did he disappear?"

"Four or five weeks ago."

Bount frowned. "Why didn't you contact me earlier?"

"I had assumed he had made up with Suzanne and moved back to her place. The day before yesterday, I heard that she didn't see him again at all after their separation."

"Have you reported him missing?"

"Of course, but you know how little that helps!"

"Where does Suzanne live?", asked Bount.

Rory Keogh pulled a booklet and a picture of his son out of the inside pocket of his jacket. "She should be listed in Jack's personal directory", he replied. "The picture is not up-to-date, but it will still allow you to identify him easily. Is there anything else you need?"

"Yes, I would like to take a look at his room and his personal belongings."

"Well, if you think that will help, Mr. Reiniger. If you ask me, you can book a flight for Dublin straight away!"

Bount nodded. "Maybe I will. But first I would like to gather a few clues. I need some more information before I pole around in such a deadly hornet's nest as the IRA. You've got to understand that."

Bount could see that Keogh considered it a waste of time. But Bount wouldn't let himself be talked out of tackling things his own way.

"I DO ASSUME YOU REJECTED the job, of course, Bount!" the private detective heard his assistant June March say shortly afterwards. She was a

beautiful woman with lovely blue eyes and shiny blond hair. She always seemed to make sure her clothes emphasized her dazzling figure instead of hiding it.

"I accepted," Bount said drily.

June, who usually had a secret crush on her boss, now looked at him as if he had lost his mind. "Did I get you right?"

"Yes, you did."

"Do you now what you are letting yourself in for?"

"June! I read the newspapers, too."

"But why, Bount? No blank cheque is worth being tarred and feathered!"

Bount had heard that IRA terrorists actually do that with people they consider traitors and spies. The private detective put on an optimistic smile. "I'll take care of myself alright."

"I hope so."

"I have a nice job for you, June."

She folded her arms in front of her chest. "What is it?"

"I need to know if Jack Keogh really is on his way to Dublin. I would like you to log into the computers of the local airports and check all the flights he might have taken."

June exhaled heavily and audibly. "You seem to think that is real easy, don't you?"

