

Don't Wake the Charioteer

By Thady Manley

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Thady Manley has written a suspenseful urban drama of youthful self-discovery, with political and philosophical debate, terrorism, vivid and frank hetero- and same-sex erotica, and episodes of action and danger amid the bustle of London and the natural beauty of Northern Ireland.

In Britain's Winter of Discontent in 1979 social tension mounts and terrorist plots threaten. The Labour government, undermined by its own radical constituents, totters to its demise while the Conservatives under Mrs Thatcher surge to victory. Brian Clarke, a provincial student, struggles to understand the dangers that surround him while his relatives, his landlord, a corrupt detective, terrorists and spooks exploit him emotionally, sexually, and seek to embroil him in criminal conspiracy. In his distress, he finds that loyalty wins true friends. The loser he wanted to shake off plays a decisive part in his liberation. This book explores the themes of naivety, sexual initiation and exploitation, intrigue, blackmail, shame, loyalty and escape.

The Author

Thady B Manley is of Irish and British descent. He has earned his living on the Atlantic, Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans, in a few seas and on land in Africa, the British Isles, and the Western Pacific area where he now lives. This is his first novel, but not his last.

Chapter 1

Welcome to Babylon

“Is that detective, George, still taking advantage of you?”

Brian made to reply, then glanced at the two men sitting on Ryle's left. The senior of the two, Mather, understood his hesitation. “Your sex life is of no interest to us, unless it bears on national security. We are not policemen.”

‘No’ thought Brian. ‘You are spooks - even more dangerous’. But he said “George is a policeman, and he's not only interested in my sex life, he's directing it.” George was doing likewise to Brian's land-lady, using Brian as a bizarre surrogate, but that was no business of these people, so he didn't mention it. He looked over at Ryle and shrugged.

Graeme, the junior spook, spoke up. “These people you have involved yourself with, ‘Eamonn's people’ as you call them -”

“That is no way my idea. George ordered me to suck up to them, in order to spy and to inform on them.”

“And why do you obey this blackguard” asked Ryle, “why do you let him screw you?” Ryle's jealousy broke through his genteel manners.

“He told me if I didn't co-operate fully with him, he would get me expelled from the mainland of Britain back to Ulster on suspicion of being a terrorist sympathiser. An exclusion order. That would bar me from most of my own country.”

“Your country?” The question reeked of contempt. Graeme had a Northern Irish accent, a deeper version of Brian's muted middle-class

one. Probably a Loyalist, a committed combatant in the civil war that was raging in their home province. Brian was by birth a member of the enemy tribe, the Ulster Catholics. He had no illusions that he could win this fellow's trust, so he didn't even try. "The UK is the country I was born into, the only one I've got."

Graeme looked levelly at him, his face expressionless but frozen. 'Oh, shit' Brian thought, 'he's broadcasting at me that the South is my country, that I don't belong in his Northern Ireland. Well fuck him, I do, I was born there and I am entitled to be there. I and my people will not go back in the Catholic ghetto and have you slam the door on us again. We've had three hundred years of that. We've broken out, into this society, and we will not go back to that prison, with you lot guarding it on the outside, and the IRA running it on the inside.' Brian detested the IRA and all its works, on a variety of grounds. The man would never believe that, but Brian had an argument that the fellow would accept, and that happened also to be true.

"Life in Northern Ireland as an expellee from Britain on security grounds would not be a pleasant one. Quite apart from the total destruction of any professional career I might hope to have. The RUC police and the Army would have me labelled. At the very least, they'd lock me up whenever a Royal visited, or a minister of state. And then there are the Loyalist militias; the Shankill Butchers with their power-drills. And I could never get out. No English-speaking country would have me. George made that quite clear. He had me fucked already, before he ever got in between my buns." Brian was bitter, and didn't care that it showed.

"And Eamonn has asked you to do something that may lead to a terrorist attack, maybe on a member of the Royal Family?" Mather asked. Brian nodded.

"How do you know that he and his colleagues are terrorists?"

"I don't know. I suspect so".

"Why? What has he done to arouse your suspicion?" asked Graeme.

“His use of words. Body language. Cultural cues. It’s all lightly hidden but obvious to me.”

“Like singing ‘Kevin Barry’ in pubs?” That was Ryle. Was he totally naive, or was he trying to lighten the mood? Maybe he realised that all three of them were ganging up on Brian, pressuring him. It was an interrogation session after all, in Ryle’s own flat, though it was not supposed to be a hostile one. Brian, after all, had asked to see them, he had discovered something dangerous.

Brian laughed. “Everyone does that, it’s a catchy tune. English people often ask me to sing it in the pub, they like it, it’s like ‘Danny Boy’. I’ve been asked by former soldiers, they sing it along with me, despite the reference to them in it.”

“The English sense of humour” said Graeme sourly. It was as exotic to him as it once was to Brian. His grim Puritan people wouldn’t sing rebel songs in a blue fit. They had their own set, most of which involved putting down rebels with relish and much violence.

The youngster continued, “Eamonn’s speech is something else, not that sentimental rebel mush. He despises that.”

“And you are afraid of him. You feel you are in a difficult position, caught between dangers. Is that it?” That was Mather speaking.

“Yes. But that’s not my only motivation. I happen to disagree profoundly with Eamonn’s politics, with his agenda. I think it would be disaster for my people.” Graeme would not believe that either, maybe none of them would, but the youngster didn’t care. His only colour card here was the truth.

Graeme put down his notebook and left the room. Mather did not pick up the book nor the pencil. The atmosphere in the room grew noticeably lighter, at least for Brian.

“How old are you, Brian?” asked Mather.

“Eighteen”

"You don't look it"

"That's the cause of all my trouble."

"And you don't trust George, despite him being a policeman."

"Well, a detective. That's not quite the same thing as a uniformed policeman. No, he wants to exploit me."

"Sexually."

"That, and other ways, as I've explained."

"We're not in uniform. So why would you trust us?"

"I trust Ryle. He's a friend. And he brought you to me when I told him I was in a fix. If he trusts you, I do – I have little choice. I only hope you are a professional, interested in preventing terrorism, not just in making an easy mark with the likes of me." He looked Mather straight in the eye, challenging him. He was in deep doo-doo's already, and if Mather was corrupt like George, Brian had already lost everything. His heart thumped uncomfortably. This man, like George, could destroy him in a variety of ways. He could label Brian a terrorist. Or he could betray the youngster to the IRA, in which case – well, he did not like to think about it. He tried to swallow, and failed.

"And Graeme? He's Irish like you. I'm not."

"My trust doesn't extend to your subordinate. And he returns the compliment. We both come from Northern Ireland, and I am the wrong tribe. In Ulster you can live in adjacent streets, and be complete strangers to each other, aliens, enemies. Different schools, different songs, different versions of history, different everything. To him I'm a rebel, a Croppy, a Papist, a Republican, a Fenian bastard, an enemy of the State and of the Queen, all because of my parents' religion."

"And you are none of those things? Why not?"

"I and my people are middle-class, with an education, some hope, some ambition, thanks to Rab Butler and his Education Act. We have

a stake, however contested, in this country. You may have noticed, the Catholic middle-class have not signed up to this civil war in Ulster.”

“Maybe” said Mather. “But you are doing more, you are risking your life to oppose those people, Eamonn’s lot, the patriot warriors who claim to represent you? Why?”

Brian made an explosive noise with his lips. “Fanaticism, civil war, sectarianism is not my thing. Life under them would be no better, probably worse. I have other ambitions for my life.” Brian wanted to enlist this English spook on his side, it was his only hope to escape from under George - literally - and Eamonn. “After two hundred and sixty years of putting us down Westminster gave us the key to get out of the ghetto, with the Beveridge Plan, the National Health Scheme, scholarships to University. And then Ted Heath sacking the Ulster Unionist government at Stormont five years ago. That gave us hope. It has taken us twenty five years to get where I am now, and I can tell you, we are not going back. Not for the IRA and the glorious Fenian dead that they claim to represent, not for that shaven-headed Shankill drum-beater, not for anybody. I will risk my life to prevent that.”

Mather looked at the small triangular face with the crown of red hair. An adult determination was emerging from the adolescent features.

When the interview ended two and a half hours later, Brian was exhausted. They told him to get himself a cup of tea, and he sat in Ryle’s kitchen, nursing the hot mug, brooding. How had he got into this situation? All he wanted was a tertiary education, the cultural freedom of this big city, and sex, the simple ordinary kind, with girls, not all this complicated mess in which others pursued him to satisfy their desires, physical and now political as well. He didn’t want to be part of their stupid civil war. As for their sexual needs, he had no particular hangups about that. It depended on whether they were friend or foe. Ryle was a friend, and Brian depended on him to get him out of this situation. But Ryle had been the unwitting agent of his involvement in the first place. But this mess wasn’t Ryle’s fault. No, it was Brian himself, his looks, maybe his manner, his walk, his body language, that was the cause of it all. He looked two, three years younger than his age. There must be

something about him that made girls his own age ignore him, angered younger men, but drew men like Ryle, lonely middle-aged men, who were as frightened to approach women as he was to approach girls, and who found Brian an attractive and accessible surrogate. And bullies, perverts like George, who regarded him as easy meat. And now Eamonn, with different intentions. Who next - Mather and Graeme? They would have him tied up like a sacrificial goat in no time, to trap their enemy. Tiger-bait, not spider-bait. Dread trickled through his insides. All this in just one year. Was there anyone in this city who was not a predator, after Brian's hide in one way or another? His thoughts went back to the day that precipitated these troubling events.

The cafeteria rang with the clamour of hundreds of voices as the red-haired youth came away from the counter with a laden tray and made his way to a table with a few familiar faces. As he put down his tray, the chairman of the previous evening's public meeting pushed back his lanky black hair and nodded to him. "I've seen you at meetings these past few weeks, Len Powell's the name."

"Brian" replied the new arrival as he offered his hand, "Brian Clarke, yes, I saw you last night."

"Begorrah!" said a voice to his left "I hear the swate tones of the Emerald Oil". Brian looked around as a fair-haired student with a receding chin broke into song. "Oh, Mary, this London's a wonderful sight!". The voice was a mixture of English and Scottish.

"Shut up, Olly," Len snapped, and spoke to Brian as he indicated the offender with a nod, "that's Olly Gray, our resident knowall, and second-year repeater."

"As you yourself once were, Len. And pwhat is a broth of a boy like yerself doing in the midst of the stranger" persisted Olly in his stage-Irish accent "studying chemistry, too! Compounds of nitrogen?" He leered knowingly.

"I don't know what you mean by 'stranger'," answered Brian, colouring slightly as he fought down a surge of annoyance, "I am European,

and I understand that this *is* part of Europe. Or do you disagree?" He looked at Olly with as much disdain as he could muster.

"Well said" broke in Len before the fair-haired youth could reply, "this noble Celt is a true internationalist, I can see. Consider yourself exposed for the chauvinist Fascist you are, Gray, and finish your meal". He spoke to the young newcomer, "there are plenty of people here who would dispute that this country is a part of Europe. Did you ever hear of the 'Times' headline of 1905 or thereabout, 'Fog in Channel, Continent Isolated'."

"No!" laughed Brian "but I can sort of understand the attitude, that little ditch kept out Hitler, after all, and Napoleon. But it hasn't kept civilisation out." He fell silent, feeling Olly's eyes on him as the older youth tried to decide if a compliment or some subtle insult was hidden in the remark.

"Oh, indeed," Olly finally remarked "we get a lot of people coming in here from overseas these days. They've no time for the British when they're at home, but they do appreciate our social services and our education system."

"Don't worry, they don't come to sponge on the wonderful services of this country, they mostly come to work. Even students pay their way! I think we visitors are subsidising you natives, so, pull your head in, Olly!" The voice came from Brian's left, and had an odd accent. The speaker extended his hand to Brian. "Clive Thompson, from Newcastle, New South Wales".

There was an awkward silence, which was broken by Len.

"Where exactly in Ireland are you from?"

"Rathnaree, a little town near Enniskillen, in County Fermanagh," answered Brian.

"But that's in Ulster," broke in Olly "you're a British subject, then! Why did you pretend not to be, just now?"

"I didn't. I said I was a European. You just jumped to conclusions."

"Hey, you two, don't start a fight here. Let's continue this over a beer at the pub after this afternoon's lectures, OK?" Len stood up, since all except Brian had finished their meals. As they left, he put a paper down beside the young Irishman. "I think you'll be interested in this. You're welcome to join our group if you want to."

The pamphlet announced that the next monthly meeting of the International Alliance for Support of the Oppressed would be addressed by a representative of the Palestinian Students Organisation. It went on to describe the Alliance. It was devoted to publicising the causes of groups who were oppressed for whatever reason, racial, religious or political, and to supporting them by all legitimate means. Did Len think his new acquaintance was oppressed because he came from Northern Ireland, Brian wondered. He didn't feel oppressed. If he lived in a West Belfast ghetto, he might well be, but at home he lived in a private housing estate inhabited by middle-class people who were not committed to fighting the current civil war. The Army and the RUC police did not regard the inhabitants automatically as enemies to be harassed. The former Ulster Unionist provincial government at Stormont would have classified Brian as an enemy of the state, because he was born to Catholic parents. That government had been sacked by Ted Heath in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday before Brian was old enough to know what that might mean. He decided to attend the advertised meeting anyway. Perhaps he would find out what 'being oppressed' was. He folded the paper away, brought his tray over to the counter, and stepped out into the well-lit street.

The roar of London traffic took him by surprise again, but it was not an irritant, to him it symbolised the busyness, the excitement of the giant city. It was such a contrast with the rural town he came from. This was Babylon, the pagan capital of a pagan empire, as he had been told in warning tones on leaving home. Babylon the Golden, the Sinful, the Free. Rattle of boxy black taxis, gasp of big red buses, swish of people, gyrating endlessly between train and pavement and warm lighted interiors. Carpet on every floor, the smell of cigarettes and feet, underarm

deodorant, perfume and shaving cream and the warm fuggy cloying smell of coal, of town gas, none of the sharp woody smell of peat turves here. Rural Ireland was never like this. The capital of, of, not just England, England was the nourishing substrate of this Petrie dish full of swarming, reproducing human bacilli. Everyone here was from somewhere else, Pakistan, Sweden, Nigeria, Australia, hardly a native-born Englishman to be seen, though they were there, owning it, running it. One of the capitals of the embryonic world community now being conceived, exchanging genes, here and in New York, in Los Angeles, Paris, Tokyo.

Lug-dun in Brian's ancestral Gaelic language, the Fort of the Sun-god Lugh, the place where the sun first rose on Brian's forebears the Celtic Britons, later on Romans, Saxons, Normans, generations of emigrants and refugees from Europe, now from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia. London, for centuries the bowl into which the wealth of the great English plain, of the mountainous Celtic areas behind it, drained and settled, dried and hardened into stone. Now wealth poured into it from the sea, from the air, from satellites out in Space, nutrients of capital from all over the world, financial capital, human capital, the most complex form of organised matter in the universe. Exhilarating.

He, Brian Clarke, was a spot on a gene in this reproducing cell, ready to contribute his little nucleotide to the DNA that would create a new world civilisation. Goodbye to the shuttered little world of West Ulster, to its grey stone towns with their age-old prejudices, where you could do business with a man all week on the friendliest of terms, but he could never invite you home to his house, never let you date his daughter, because your ancestors were on opposite sides of an English civil war three hundred and thirty years ago. Prods versus Papists, Planters versus Taigs, a dying world, a tomb wherein the living were imprisoned, to be ridden and beaten and raped and eaten by ghosts four centuries old, ghosts of religion, of ethnicity, Old English and Old Irish, mouldering corpses dead for centuries resurrected and armed with whips by modern political game-players who saw advantage for themselves in this cruelty. Protestants of Normano-Norse-Anglo-Scots-Irish origin who imagined themselves a purebred Teutonic racial elite, a branch of

Das Herrenvolk, trying to keep themselves distinct from Scoto-Norse-Normano-Anglo-Irish Catholics who imagined themselves to be noble Celts from the Bronze Age. The rest of the world, British, American, Indian, Yugoslavian, Czechoslovakian, Soviet, all the successfully merged nations with their co-existing races and religions, would laugh at them, if the plight of Ulster were not also tragic, and hideously un-modern with its war of ethnic and religious identities here in the late nineteen-seventies. Brian rejected the whole decadent quarrel. He was modern, he was free. He burned with longing for his destiny, for the future and, oh, God, above all, he yearned for sexual experience.

Here he would forge his destiny as a citizen of Earth. It was the abode of strange people from little-known places, who practiced unimaginable customs. Here he would rub shoulders with people who, like last night's speaker from the Iranian Revolution, were making history, or who, in quiet laboratories, were remodelling the future of the planet and of the human race. This was the centre of his earth, not as dangerous as New York but surely just as exotic, and pregnant with possibilities. Here, too, he would find the fulfilment of his erotic dreams, that had eluded him in his tightly-bound home town. Was there not a statue of Eros at the very centre of this city? And the museums, the galleries, the bookshops without number, it was going to take him years to see half of them. He liked Babylon, and was eager to experience it to the full.

Brian's lectures finished later than the others', and when he came through the frosted doors into the roar of the crowded pub Clive was at the bar. He pointed at a beer bottle and raised his eyebrows. Brian nodded and Clive pointed to the rear of the room. Len and Olly were there with two others and an impressive array of empties. "Here's some real beer for you," said the Australian, putting down in front of the Irishman a bottle with a blue label displaying a large letter F, "Fosters, not like the horse-piss you usually drink in this country."

Brian tried it. It was a lager in the German style, ice-cold and sparkling on the tongue. It was stimulating and refreshing. "Bloody good, I can see why you're keen on this over there"

“Wouldn’t touch it myself,” the remark came from Olly. “It’s full of chemicals, you know.”

“You two don’t agree on much, do you,” said Len, “I thought the Irish and the Scots would be more in tune, given that they’re related.”

There was a derisive snort from Olly. “Don’t insult the Scots.”

Brian looked over at him with what he hoped was a sardonic smile. “Shall I enlighten them, or will you?”

“Oh! do go ahead. I’m all ears.” The sarcasm was obvious.

“Well, there’s two kinds of Scots. There’s the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, who came from Ireland when the Romans left Britain. They’re Celts, like the original Britons. They colonised the western part, and named the country after themselves, Scotland.

At the same time, Germanic tribes came into the east of Britain, all along the coasts that face Europe across the North Sea. In the south these Angles and Saxons overran the British Celts. The south of the island is now named after them, England. In the North, these Germanic tribes colonised the East coast of Scotland and then collided with the Gaels. The southern regions of Scotland became arenas of dispute between the Saxon-Scots, who came to be known as the Lowlanders, and the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. There was continual tension on the borderlines, with cattle-stealing and punitive expeditions and the like. The Lowlanders learned to scorn all things Celtic, and to keep themselves apart from their neighbours until as late as the eighteenth century”.

Clive spoke up. “I can’t see the reason for the quarrel. You all look the same.”

“Even the same names on both sides” added Len.

“Yes. The differences between the peoples of the British Isles are minimal now, but back then it was a contest between two very different cultures. The Lowlanders sought every means to differentiate themselves from the Celts. When Calvinist Protestantism came to Britain

they embraced it with enthusiasm. It gave them an ideological backing for exclusivism, a superior religion for a superior people - disciplined, chaste, rational, Teutonic, unlike their anarchic, promiscuous, superstitious Celtic neighbours."

Brian paused for a drink, and continued.

"When King James of Scotland became king of England after Elizabeth 1 he faced the problem of pacifying the English-Scottish border, a no-man's land, a sanctuary for brigands and smugglers - the Armstrongs, the Grays, the Percys and Grahams and their ilk."

"The Grays, Olly." Len nodded meaningfully at the Scot.

Olly shrugged. "I'm not ashamed of the Borderers, I'm proud of them. We held our land against the English, against the Celtic ruffians, against all comers, with the sword." He broke into verse.

"Now we ha' harried the Vales of Tyne

Both lower folks and higher

And Eskadale, we ha' brent it hale

And left it a' on fire"

"Brent it hale? What's that mean?" Clive asked

"Burnt it whole." Olly raised his hands, palm up, simulating smoke. "Poof".

Clive looked taken aback. Len spoke up. "It was the Scottish Border four hundred years ago." He laughed.

"Or Catholic West Belfast ten years ago" said Brian.

They all stared at him.

"And West Belfast, we ha' gi'en a blast.

You know the next line."

“ Anyway”, Brian continued. “King James had a wizard idea. Why not ship his awkward fellow-countrymen off to his new province of Ulster on which Elizabeth had wasted her entire fortune. That, by the way, is how the Scots got their reputation for meanness - the poor man didn’t have two pennies to rub together after he got to London. He and his Scottish gentry were looking forward to getting their hands on all that English gold. But there wasn’t any, the treasury was empty. Elizabeth had spent all of England’s money conquering Ireland. She had even mortgaged her own Royal land to pay for the Irish Wars. The Crown was broke. So James sold the newly-conquered land of Ulster to anyone who would undertake to settle these Scots borderers on it and keep the natives from coming back. That’s how Protestant Ulster got established. It was wildly successful. These were the pioneers who later settled the American frontier, tough and enterprising people, completely uncompromising, very tough on natives. They made it work. And he got a tidy sum from land speculators and corporations. The guilds of the City of London bought the only town in Ulster, Derry, re-named it ‘London-derry’ and rebuilt it – there wasn’t much left when they got it. “

“Weren’t there earlier attempts at settling British communities in Ireland? I seem to remember some came even from Wales and the West Country” said David. “They were called ‘Plantations’, I think.”

“Yes, but those colonies failed, because the government used English settlers, or Welsh ones, who were seduced by Irish ways, went merrily native within two generations and vanished into the landscape. This last colony of Lowlander Scots, stern Presbyterians, had the secret of surviving among the sinful and seductive Irish, namely a horror of everything Celtic, the result of a thousand years of fighting the Gaelic Highlanders in Scotland. They built a barrier of religious and national apartheid around and over themselves like an igloo. The trouble with a community that passionately preserves its ethnicity, of course, is that it is exclusivist, it will not admit its neighbours to its society. And that included people like me.”

“Most cultures change over time, don’t they” remarked Len. It’s been four hundred years, give or take a few. Why didn’t Ulster change. They don’t strike me as stupid.”

"Well, it is perceived as a siege situation. They are convinced that the natives are still out there in the hills, glowering, plotting to take their country back and expel them."

"And are they?" Clive again.

Olly snorted. "They did in 1641".

"Mostly no. The Irish in general regard the Scots-Irish as natives. Awkward customers, and the wrong religion, but with some admirable traits. They think their country would achieve more with them in it. They would be an asset. And they can see what the Ulstermen contributed to the British Empire. But the Ulster Protestants will have none of them. They believe that the natives are enemies, that the IRA, the Sinn Fein, are plotting to take the country back by force."

"Well, aren't they?"

"I think they are, but I don't know. You'd have to ask them."

"Why don't you know? You are one of them, after all." That was Olly.

Brian pointedly ignored him and addressed Len. "Would you join the British National Party, Len?"

Len laughed. "Those bloody fascists, not likely."

"But they are patriots, British patriots, after all. Are you against patriotism?"

"Don't insult me, Brian, or the intelligence of these good people here. Just because they wrap themselves in the national flag doesn't make them patriots. Patriotism is their camouflage, to justify their violence."

Brian nodded. "That's my answer too. Did you get that, Olly?"

He turned back to Len and the others. "As Olly has just shown, the Protestants don't trust any Catholic."

"And you think they should?"

“They have a perfect right – and just cause, too, historically – to distrust the Catholic Church as an institution. But that distrust shouldn’t extend to every individual Catholic. Or every native Irish person. They distrust the Irish delight in words. What Queen Elizabeth the First called ‘blarney’. Cultural change, any relaxation of vigilance, is treason, weakening the settler race. Allowing the natives in is abhorrent, as well as being illegal under the Penal Laws that used to rule Ireland. That is how the Presbyterian colonists from Scotland survived as a separate nation in Ireland - to the great delight of the London government, I might add. The Ulster Protestants have become a distinct nation, with an overwhelming sense of identity based on religion and race, which they and their neighbours both perceive as Teutonic, stern, rational and uncompromising, as against the Mediterranean, loose and irrational religion of the Gaelic Irish. They won’t take no shit from no-one – English, Irish, Scottish Kings or Anglican Bishops or French Queens - or British Prime Ministers. The Ulster Protestants, Scots-Irish as the Americans call them - ‘God’s Frontiersmen’ - feel threatened by their non-Protestant neighbours, even by the tolerant and unarmed Irish Republic to the south of them, although there is no credible threat to them from there”.

“Well, isn’t there?” That was Olly.

Brian shook his head. “The southern Irish, frankly – I’ve spent time at school there - are a little afraid of the Ulster Protestants, who have a history of ferocity in defence of their survival, rather like the Israelis have in the Middle East, or the Boers in South Africa. But there really is nothing for them to defend themselves against any more. They are not Teutonic settlers in a land of aboriginal Celts today, as some of them imagine they are. In fact the former native Gaelic society has collapsed and disappeared. The Irish are completely Anglicised in language and culture now, and the Catholic religion to most of them is little more than a husk of belief propped up by inertia. The difference between Irish and English today is no more than that between Cornishmen, say, and Londoners.”

“So why is there a war of some sort going on over there. Bombs, shootings, every day.”