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The Hunger for Justice

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Contents

Book One

Prologue	5
Chapter 1	10
Chapter 2	21
Chapter 3	30
Chapter 4	38
Chapter 5	47
Chapter 6	51
Chapter 7	60
Chapter 8	69
Chapter 9	75
Chapter 10	83
Chapter 11	88
Chapter 12	95
Chapter 13	106
Chapter 14	114
Chapter 15	121
Chapter 16	128

Don't go chasing things that aren't there . . . You'll end up missing the truth for want of a lie."

- Stuart Neville

"The responsibility of the writer is to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves."

-Albert Camus

Journalism is the profession that "bestows the greatest fame on the chroniclers of the greatest chaos."

Gay Talese

Book 1

Prologue

October 1966

The nuns from St. Ignatius exploded into Jimmy's view. Their black habits absorbed the silver sunlight that had been streaming through the alley. Sister Miriam, the principal, was in the lead, her veil blowing in the breeze like superman's cape.

"I see you James MacSwiney O'Hara. Don't dare to move."

One other boy was standing watch with Jimmy at the entrance to the Kingdom. As the nuns marched up the alley, Sister Miriam called his name too, freezing him in the sunlight, like a troll. Lunchtime raids were common, so Jimmy and the other boy were standing guard, straddling the entrance to the Kingdom. They could see intruders and warn their friends who were a few feet away, around the concrete corner of the building at the end of the alley and out of sight. It was a long walk up the narrow passageway to the Kingdom. Enough time for the others to run to the hole in the fence behind their lunchtime hang-out and into the vacant lot. Once they were through, they could scramble across the lot, over the empty beer cans and construction debris. They'd be gone by the time the nuns reached Jimmy and his friend, today's sacrificial lambs.

The boys had drawn lots to pick the lookouts for the day, and Jimmy insisted that he pick first. When he pulled the short stick, he protested, "I did it last time. You rigged it so I'd pick the short one again." All the others laughed. As Sister Miriam and the nuns marched up the alley, Jimmy vowed to pick last next time. The only good thing was that one of the six boys who was scurrying through the hole in the fence was carrying the

joint they had been smoking. At worst, they'd be nabbed for smoking cigarettes. It was Jimmy's idea to smoke cigarettes while they pulled on the joint. The smell of tobacco would mask the smell of pot. As the nuns approached, he had doubts about his plan. Getting caught with a cigarette was one thing. That would be cool. But being nabbed with pot was different. He'd be branded a dope fiend.

The nuns seemed to be moving in slow motion. *Was it the pot?* Jimmy thought. Their arms pumped in unison as if they were a pipe and drum band, marching in the St. Paddy's Day Parade. But there was no music, no deep thud from a bass drum to set their pace. They marched to a different beat. *The Lord's beat.* Their pace spoke determination to Jimmy. But Sister Miriam's face screamed something else. As she came closer, he could see her clenched teeth through her slightly parted lips. The corners of her mouth stretched horizontally across the bottom of her face. Her clenched eyebrows formed a horizontal line above her squinting eyes so that her face seemed square. *Righteousness,* Jimmy thought. He tried to conjure an image that would make him laugh and loosen the knot that was forming in his stomach. So he pictured fat Sister Gertrude, who was at the back of the pack, wearing a bass drum. Arms flailing away. Drum sticks pounding tightly stretched canvass. The frame of the drum vibrating off her lifeless tits. Just as he grinned at this image, Sister Miriam was on him.

"Whack!" He didn't have time to duck. "Do you think this is funny, Mr. O'Hara?" When he didn't answer immediately, she raised her big hand again and said, "Do you?"

"No Sister."

"How dare you!" she said, swatting the Chesterfield from Jimmy's right hand.

She stepped on the cigarette and drilled it into the cement. “Wait ‘till I tell your grandfather. Won’t he be disappointed?” She waved a finger in Jimmy’s face.

Then Sister Gertrude spoke. “Look Sister Miriam,” she said as she pointed across the vacant lot to the boys who had just disappeared around a corner onto Woodlawn Avenue.

“Who were the other boys?”

Jimmy looked to the ground, wishing Sister Miriam would go away.

“Answer me when I speak to you. And pick up your head. Let me see your eyes.”

Jimmy lifted his head and said, “I don’t . . .”

Whack! She hit him right on the same spot. Jimmy’s face burned now and tears filled his eyes. He squeezed them shut so the drops wouldn’t slide down his cheeks. *Was it red? Did she leave a mark?*

“Open your eyes and look at me. Don’t tell me you don’t know. Your grandfather raised you better than that.”

When Jimmy shrugged his shoulders and shook his head, Sister Miriam worked on the other boy. He was smart enough to say, “They don’t go here.”

Back at St. Ignatius Grammar School, the boys were interrogated separately in Sister Miriam’s office. Jimmy listened as his friend cried out when the wooden paddle hit his soft flesh. In between the sounds of the paddle slaps, Jimmy could hear voices, but nothing of what was said. Then it was his turn. He stood before Sister Miriam, arms extended, the whites of his forearms turned up. A yellow fire rose in her green eyes. Jimmy watched the flame dance as the paddle crashed into his right forearm. “What were you doing? Who were the other boys?”

Sister Miriam's voice was far away. He shook his head because he feared he would cry if he spoke.

"Other arm!" she said.

Phlam! Jimmy gritted his teeth. He cried openly now, but still shook his head. There was a knock, and the door cracked open.

"Sister Miriam?" Mrs. Tiernan, the principal's secretary, whispered through the thin white space. "Father Weber is here."

The door swung open and in stepped the priest. All six feet three of him. His fiery red hair cooled the yellow flame in Sister Miriam's green eyes. "Sister Gertrude said you might need my help. Any luck with this one?"

Sister Miriam shook her head. Jimmy knew why the cat suddenly had her tongue.

"Okay then," Weber said as he held his hand out to the principal. Sister Miriam handed over the paddle without a word. "Drop your pants, O'Hara."

"Not that Father. Please," Jimmy said as he danced around.

But the priest raised his voice: "Drop 'em!"

Sister Miriam stepped in between them before Jimmy could reach down to his belt and said, "God's watching you, Jimmy. Just tell us the names."

There was never any question in Jimmy's mind about telling his grandfather. He would see Sister Miriam at mass on Sunday. But he'd probably hear about it before then. Maybe he'd see father Weber in Finnegan's Pub. It was hard to keep secrets at St. Ignatius.

“I’m very disappointed, Jimmy.” He hated the sound of those words. Hated disappointing his grandfather.

“It was my first cigarette, “Jimmy lied.

“It’s not the smoking I hate to see you do it, but I started myself at fourteen. It’s the other thing. Father Weber told me how easily you broke.”

I wish Father Weber were dead, Jimmy thought and quickly regretted it. *That’s gotta be a sin.*

He re-focused on his grandfather. His voice was rising. “Men don’t turn in their friends.”

“But Father Weber was . . .”

Even when you’re being threatened. Remember what I told you about the man you’re named after? Remember what he said?”

Jimmy tried to remember. Why couldn’t he? It was right there, on the tip . . . Then he had it. “He who endures wins?”

“Remember it next time. A man endures pain. It doesn’t last. But a reputation does. And now you have one. As a tout.”

Jimmy heard his grandfather use that word before, but he wasn’t sure. “A tout?” The words slipped out before he could stop them.

His grandfather shook his head. “A snitch.” Cano watched him take a deep breath. “Go to your room,” he snarled. You’ll take no dinner tonight.”

Chapter 1

The New York Times
September 30, 2002

Gerry Adams Linked to Death Squad

By Delores Hines

Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, one of the political parties in Northern Ireland, has always tried to distance himself from the IRA. In a new book, journalist Ed Moloney challenges Adams' portrayal of himself. According to *A Secret History of the IRA*, Adams formed an IRA death squad which was responsible for a number of murders in the 1970s, including the death of a mother of ten. Mr. Adams has long maintained that he had nothing to do with the "disappearances" of ten people who were snatched from their homes or off the streets of Belfast, killed and buried in locations that remained undisclosed for two decades.

In the 1970s, a death squad, called the "unknowns," was formed to deal with informers who provided British intelligence with information about the IRA's paramilitary activities. The British government has long called these activities terrorism while the IRA considered them to be part of a justified military campaign to oust an occupying force. Gerry Adams has said repeatedly that he had nothing to do with the "unknowns" or the "disappeared" informers because he was in prison at the time. Ed Maloney claims that Adams was "very much at large at the time as leader of the IRA in Belfast and it would have been inconceivable that the order to kill informers would have been issued without his knowledge."

One of the most infamous of the "disappeared" was Jean McConville, a Belfast Protestant who married a Catholic man. By the 1970's she was a widowed mother of ten, caring for her children alone. According to Maloney, the IRA learned that she was providing information to the British Army and warned her to stop. When she continued, the "unknowns" caught and murdered her. It is beyond belief, Maloney says, that Gerry Adams had no knowledge of this murder.

Roger thundered through the newsroom like a high-strung basketball coach watching his team lose its final game. Giving them a losing record. In the last year of his contract. A coach like this isn't hard to imagine. He'd be the one sweating through his sports coat in the final game, pacing the sidelines, screaming instructions to his players, and cursing the referees. When the game didn't go his way, he'd explode. Think Bobby Knight. Once, when a ref blew a call, Knight threw a chair onto the court. During a practice, when one of his players missed a simple layup, Knight choked him. Volatile? Yes. Inappropriate? Without a doubt. Successful? One of the top five coaches in the game.

As the deadline for tomorrow's edition of the *Sentinel* approached, Roger paced along aisles of the newsroom and into the margins of the stories his reporters were writing. The top button of his shirt was open, his tie loosened to accommodate the swelling of his throat as he barked orders in between the bites he stole from his sandwich. Strands of shredded lettuce leaked to the floor. Chewing seemed to calm him, but then a new emergency emerged. "Where did I leave my god-damned coffee. . ." He found it after searching only two desks. With mug in hand, he zipped from section to section, asking tough questions about the stories for tomorrow's edition. At the city desk he hunched his shoulders. "Have you tracked down those sources? Why the fuck not? You gonna make up quotes?" After reading a story at the international section, his face was red, like he'd been slapped: "Still the same angle?" Then he stopped to read someone's "finished" story on a terroristic threat in London. "Are you kidding me?" He waved his

arms like a Baptist minister at the height of his sermon. “Jesus! This is exactly what the AP reported twelve hours ago. Add to the story or drop it.”

A few hours earlier, just after the morning rundown meeting, Roger was a different man. The beige herringbone coat he wore was buttoned once, and the top button of his shirt was closed. His tie was pulled tight into a neat Windsor knot. He carried his coffee like a dad strolling through the mall on an easy Saturday morning just before Halloween. “Let’s go folks,” he said to encourage his young reporters. “No great American novels today. We’re a daily and we have a deadline.”

But as the deadline for the day shift approached, Roger became hard and monstrous, ready to crush anything in his path. His jacket was off and his sleeves rolled up. There was a coffee stain on his shirt, just below his left pocket. He barreled around the newsroom screaming at assistant editors and section chiefs. “Is this what you call a lead? Who gives a fuck the guy has a goatee. That doesn’t belong in the lead. Is that what I get from Columbia’s J school? ‘More Violence in Iraq?’ Really? You call that a headline? You think that’s gonna sell papers?” Slowly he became a hulking shadow, a black hole that absorbed the silver rays of the late afternoon sun pushing through the dirty third floor windows. “Where’s my coffee? I left it right here? Which one of you schmucks took it?”

Three years ago, Jimmy O’Hara was able to escape Roger’s rant as he thundered and whirled his way to each day’s deadline, like a Tasmanian devil after food. All Jimmy had to do was walk down two hallways and around three corners, and he would be safe in the comfort of his office, Roger’s tirades reduced to white noise. But that was before the

takeover and redesign. The *New York Sentinel* had fallen on hard times in 1999. Circulation was down. Advertisers were starting to explore the Internet. The balance sheet was a mess. When it really looked like the paper was going to fold, Kyle Davenport III appeared out of nowhere and took over. He added the *Sentinel* to his growing media empire which included Canadian Broadcast Company, the New Zealand Herald, a local New York news channel, a cable news outlet, and a host of emerging online newspapers.

Jimmy was grateful the paper was out of bankruptcy but cautious. Every new leader had an agenda. Davenport's was to move the newsroom into the twenty-first century. In his first remarks to the staff he said, "This place is still functioning like it's the eighties when paper with little marks on it gave us the news. The digital revolution has begun and the *Sentinel* is behind. The Internet is delivering news to a younger audience faster than ever before. Our website isn't even . . ."

Walls and partitions fell, like a condemned building hit by a wrecking ball. The third-floor labyrinth of offices for departments like sports, art, business, and layout disappeared. The old balcony was destroyed and the newsroom took on the appearance of an airplane hangar. Editors' offices were moved to the perimeter of the newsroom like they were luxury suites at the Garden. Conference rooms joined them. Departments were integrated to flatten the hierarchies and speed up the processing of the news. The third floor became less compartmentalized. Departments lost their swagger. And the room lost its history. "We'll create a community space," Davenport said. "It'll belong to all of us. The Internet has broken down barriers. And so will we."

New Dell PCs appeared overnight. They hovered in space on mechanical arms that reminded Jimmy of C3PO from *Star Wars*. Flat screens TVs and monitors became

ubiquitous. Screen savers with the new logo dominated the landscape. As part of the redesign, public relations had refashioned the *Sentinel* logo. On the masthead, the letters in the paper's name now seemed taller and thinner. They leaned ever so slightly to the right as if the words were speeding by. In late 2000, when the renovations were complete, every employee received *New York Sentinel* coffee mugs, the words Davenport Media Group emblazoned on the handle, as if they needed to be reminded about where they worked.

Davenport wanted to distribute the mugs personally so he came down to the third floor newsroom from his ivory tower eleven floors above. Jimmy was standing with Saul Goldstein. Together, they watched the publisher. An intern followed him, pushing a cart full of new mugs. "What kind of crazy bullshit is this?" Jimmy asked after they received their mugs. He gave his to Saul. "Are we Apple now?"

"Does Jobs hand out coffee cups?"

"No fucking idea. I was being metaphoric."

Saul smirked and tossed the mug back to Jimmy. "You should know better. No metaphors. Just clean, crisp prose. Stick to the facts."

Saul was the senior copy editor, king of the super desk. Keeper of the *Sentinel* style book. But Jimmy was a columnist. He created stories. Developed characters. Much of the time the arc of his stories turned on a single phrase. Sometimes one that violated a rule in the style book. Jimmy hated the idea of Big Brother leaning over his shoulder and picking at his prose, so he began calling Saul the Grammar Gestapo. The first time Roger, the managing editor, heard the nickname, he said Jimmy was being inappropriate.

"People are too sensitive these days," Jimmy said. "I can't even tell a good joke."

“You haven’t told a good joke in years.”

“Really?” Jimmy said and thought for a moment. “What did Christ say when he looked out over Jerusalem from his cross . . .”

Jimmy’s office was in the northeast corner of the renovated newsroom. He was fortunate to have one. Most of the senior reporters and assistant editors had lost their offices in the redesign. But Jimmy was a columnist, and a popular one at that. Polls had shown that Jimmy’s columns kept working class readers, especially the Irish, loyal to the *Sentinel*. There were other writers with a following, but Jimmy’s name popped up again and again when readers were asked about their favorite part of the paper. When Roger read the polls at a morning meeting some time ago, he said, “Jimmy’s like the little Dutch . . .” Then he sized Jimmy up. “Check that. The big Dutch boy. Keep your finger . . .”

“Please don’t say it, Roger,” Jimmy said. “You’re being lame.”

Jimmy had built a readership with effortless prose and compelling stories, most of which focused on New York City’s Everyman. When he wrote stories about city politics, violent crimes, or international terrorism, he told them through the eyes of regular working people. He didn’t search out politicians or CEOs. *Sentinel* readers appreciated this perspective. His colleagues called Jimmy the “voice of the people” even though he winced at the cliché. He preferred Saul’s, “Vice of the people.” Whatever they called him, Davenport knew he was one of the reasons the readers stayed instead of flocking to another tabloid or to the Internet. He was happy to have Jimmy’s column in the paper

four days a week. Three would have been better for Jimmy, but his contract specified four. Four columns and his own office.

In spite of the redesign and the uncertainties it caused, life was good then. Alannah was pregnant and Jimmy was going to be a grandfather for a second time. Sean was working for the AP, a job Jimmy helped him get, and he just published his first photograph for the *Village Voice*. And Patty had her first art exhibit in twenty years. “I raised two kids,” she said, “and now it’s my time again.”

So the problem Jimmy faced at work was that he couldn’t use his office to escape Roger’s daily rant. Now, the managing editor could look across the newsroom and scream to one of the interns or copyboys walking by: “Hey you! Kid! Is Jimmy in his office? Whaddaya mean you don’t know? Go and look!” Jimmy wished that was his only problem.

On the afternoon of September 30, 2002, Jimmy heard Roger scream “Hey you, kid!” and a few moments later, the managing editor was standing in Jimmy’s doorway, sucking the life out of the room.

“So what are you going with today? The FBI souvenir hunter at ground zero or the Iraqi restaurateur on the wrong side of the tracks?”

“I didn’t say he was Iraqi, Roger. He’s Muslim, he’s from Afghanistan, and he owns a deli.”

“Okay. Okay. Spare me the details and tell me your lead.”

“You’re the editor and you don’t want details? What the hell have you been yelling about for the last hour?”

“I’m not in the mood, today, O’Hara. Just tell me your fucking lead, so at least I know someone has a story for tomorrow.”

Jimmy studied him.

“What are you looking at?” Roger asked. “Don’t you have a lead?”

Jimmy rose from his desk, closed the manila folder he had been using. It caught the sticky corner of one of the yellow Post-its on the frame of his computer monitor and pulled it off. “Call Patty,” it said. He slapped the Post-it back into place and eyed Roger who swiveled in his chair to watch Jimmy walk around the file boxes on the floor and to the door.

“Why are you closing the door?” Roger asked.

“Because I respect you.”

“Fine. Now tell me your lead and stop being an asshole. I’m dealing with too many today.”

Jimmy pushed aside a mound of folders on his desk. Two fell to the floor and out slipped napkins and receipts covered with Jimmy’s left-handed scrawl. There were a few pictures, too. Even a ten dollar bill with writing on it. Jimmy ignored his notes and sat on the right corner of his desk, a few feet in front of Roger. He leaned in: “What the fuck’s wrong with you? Don’t talk to me like I’m cub reporter. I’m your columnist!”

Roger opened his mouth like he was about to scream, and then stopped. He took a deep breath and looked down at his pants. They had been neatly pressed this morning but wrinkled now. He brushed them off as if there were crumbs. Then he took off his horn-rimmed glasses and ran his other hand through his light brown hair. He sighed. “I’m sorry Jimmy. This has been a tough week.”

“It’s Monday.”

“Yeah, well, the fucking publisher’s been on my back again. The new website isn’t getting hits like it should. He wants more sensationalism. Better headlines.”

“Then he should’ve bought a supermarket tabloid, not the *Sentinel*.”

“He said he tried to buy the *Enquirer* but American Media wouldn’t deal.”

“You serious?”

He raised his right hand. “As God as my witness . . .”

“You don’t believe in God, remember?”

“I was drunk when I said that and you never let me live it down.” He took a deep breath

and added, “I had no right to yell at you like that. I know you got your own shit going on. You should be the one running around screaming. Not me.”

“Yeah, well . . . I thought I’d take a break.”

Roger nodded and looked around Jimmy’s office. Jimmy tried to move the book that was

on his desk, but Roger stopped him. “What are you reading?”

“Just a book.” Jimmy was glad it was face down, but he couldn’t hide the colors on the cover: green, white, and orange.

A playful smile spread across Roger’s face. He began shaking his head from side to side.

Before Roger spoke again, Jimmy said, “It’s just something to keep me occupied on the train.”

“Really? What’s the title? Let me see.” Roger rotated his right index finger in tight circles to make it clear that he wanted Jimmy to turn over the book.

Jimmy turned it half way as if it was copy of Penthouse, and Roger read the title aloud: “A Secret History of the IRA.” He looked at Jimmy. “Still obsessed, huh.”

“Not obsessed,” Jimmy said. “Just trying to stay informed.”

“Then read the paper.”

“Already read three.”

“You still do that?” Roger asked.

“Yup.”

“All three?”

“Right there on my dining room table. Even the *Times*,” Jimmy said.

“You should be the editor. Not me.” Roger paused and looked at the cover’s art work. “So what’s the book about?”

“Gerry Adam’s mostly.”

“Biography?”

“More like an expose. Remember Ed Moloney?”

Roger’s face was blank.

“He used to be the editor of the *Irish Times*?”

“Vaguely.”

“He’s been studying the IRA for twenty years.” Jimmy picked up the book and held it. “In this book he charges Gerry Adams with all kinds of things. Collusion with the British government. Involvement with death squads that killed informers.”

“And this surprises you?”

“It doesn’t surprise me. But it hurts his credibility. He’s the leader of Sinn Fein. Played a big role in the peace treaty. This undermines him.”

“Good reporting does that.”

“I guess. I’d just hate to see the peace process jeopardized. Hate to see heroes fall.”

Roger grinned playful smile. “Some think Bush is a hero. Would you be unhappy to see him fall?”

Jimmy laughed.

Roger paused for a moment. He shifted in his seat. The playfulness had disappeared from his face. “How are things at home?”

“Quiet. No one there but me and Banshee.”

“Banshee?” Roger repeated and then added, “Sean’s dog, right?”

“It was his dog. I’m thankful he’s with me. He gets me out for walks. Lord knows I can use it.”

Roger laughed and shifted in the seat again. After an uncomfortable silence, Roger looked at his watch and said, “I have a paper to get out. When will we have your column?”

“I’ll have it to the super-desk in twenty minutes. And I’ll chop off Saul’s fingers if he tries to hack it.”

Chapter 2

New York Times
October 8, 2002

US Citizen Detained in Belfast and Held Under Anti-Terror Laws By The Associated Press

A US citizen was detained by the Police Service of Northern Ireland and questioned about his involvement with a Sinn Fein spy ring in Stormont Castle, the seat of the Northern Ireland Assembly, a government source told the AP yesterday. According to this source, Jeffery Smyth, spokesman for Northern Ireland Secretary John Reid, the unnamed New Yorker has been under surveillance in Belfast for some time. He is suspected of aiding members of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, in the acquisition of sensitive government documents.

Sean Farrell, chief of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, told the Associated Press that the American would be questioned for the next 48 hours. However, he could be held for up to a week under the new provisions of the UK's anti-terror laws which were ratified in the wake of the 911 attacks in the United States. Farrell refused to name the American and declined to comment when asked how a New Yorker could be facilitating the acquisition of sensitive government documents in Northern Ireland.

When asked about how a spy ring might affect the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process that has resulted in a delicate power-sharing agreement between Nationalists and Unionists, he said the First Minister would have more to say on that at a later time.

It was 6:07 AM, and Jimmy was shaved and fully clothed, his gray-black hair slicked back in the style of the Baldwin brothers. His wife, Patty, fought with him about his hair all the time. "You look like a fat Alec Baldwin with gray hair. And I hate him," she used to say. "The hairstyle makes you look obnoxious. Can't you just cut it shorter?"

He couldn't do that. Maybe in a few years, but not now. Cutting it shorter would start a domino effect. If he cut it and didn't like walking through life with a bagel-sized bald spot on the crown of his head, the next step would be to shave it off. A toupee was out of the question. *Did men even wear them anymore? Car salesmen, maybe.* But he wasn't ready to be bald either. So the logical choice was long gray-black hair that he could push back. When he was honest with himself, he recognized that he was doing almost exactly what his grandfather had done, something Jimmy laughed at privately. He would have never laughed openly at his grandfather. The difference was that Jimmy's comb over went front to back, which seemed natural. His grandfather's went back to front, and when the wind blew, he looked like a cockatoo.

Jimmy was sitting in the dining room which he had converted to an office after Patty left. The large Victorian table was his desk. A radio was in the china closet. The flat screen TV that used to be in the living room was now mounted to the dining room wall, covering the space left by the painting that used to hang there. A sports jacket was on the back of his chair. Jimmy owned seven sports coats for his five-day work week. If he had only five, he knew he would fall into a blue-tweed-on-Monday-and-brown-check-on-Tuesday pattern. Seven helped him avoid that. He called it his rotation, like he was a pitching coach. Patty used to suggest sweaters on some days. Maybe the odd cardigan. But that took too much effort. He liked it this way. Varying his wardrobe took no thought, which left room for other things. Like his morning routine.

Jimmy had always relied on habit to get him through tough times. Familiar routines grounded him. He was up before the sun had risen over Jamaica Bay, before the early, sparkling light pushed through the windows and displaced the darkness in his home on Beach 135th Street in Belle Harbor, Queens. He showered and shaved, and after he had fed and walked Banshee, his son's Labrador, he turned on CNN but with the sound off. News for dummies is what he called CNN. Not only did the anchors talk at you, but the editors flashed text onto the screen that highlighted what the anchor had just said. He didn't need both, so he muted the sound. If something important happened, the remote was close by. The sound he preferred came from NPR. After firing up the television and radio, he poured himself a cup of freshly ground coffee, the steam rising into the chill of the morning air, and sat down with his column. Like it was an old friend who he met four times a week for breakfast. Each morning he admired his column before he read it. His name in bold on page five, that picture of him, taken just before his son had passed, and his prose out there for all the world to see. Sometimes when he read, he winced at the tiniest of mistakes. A comma that didn't fit or a preposition that sounded repetitive. But what he most enjoyed was when he read a sentence that lingered in his mind like the chorus of a song.

After his column, he scanned the rival newspapers. The *New York Times*, the *Post*, *Newsday*. When Roger learned Jimmy did this, he said, "That's my job. You checking up on me?" Jimmy told him it was an old habit. His first job, as a desk man in Chicago, was to read rival papers and make a list of stories that the *Tribune* had missed. But habit wasn't the real reason. Jimmy was looking for something, that one big story he felt he was missing. The story that had always eluded him. The one he'd been chasing his

whole life. The one he was born to tell. He looked for it everywhere. In the subtext of interviews. In the footnotes of history books. On the pages of New York's daily newspapers. Somewhere there was a seed he could grow. The one he was meant to sow and harvest. The one that would lead to the book he would leave behind when he died, like a towering oak tree pushing toward a deep blue sky. He wanted to do what Toni Morrison had done with *Beloved*. She found an obscure seed-of-a-story about an escaped slave who sliced her daughter's throat rather than deliver her into the wretched arms of slavery. And then she turned it into one of the best novels of the last twenty-five years. But his search, this indulgence of his, felt strange at times. Almost selfish. With all the things going on in his life, why did this obsess him?

Jimmy read the *Times* world brief again. He was surprised the *Times* ran this story. Now that the armored cars and tanks and guns were gone, Northern Ireland rarely made the cut for international news. There were other things going on in the world. The post-911 world. But a mysterious New Yorker who might be involved in a spy ring across the Atlantic? Well, that was newsworthy. He set the *Times* aside and looked through the *Sentinel* to see if Herb the rewrite man had picked up the AP dispatch. A *missed opportunity*, Jimmy thought. But then he heard Roger's criticism in his head: "You don't think straight when it comes to Ireland."

Jimmy had a soft spot for Northern Ireland. His grandfather had been born there. On The Falls Road, in the heart of Catholic Belfast. After some trouble, he immigrated to America. "Gone in body, but not in spirit," he said. He travelled back as often as he could, but even after he had lived in New York for almost twice as long as he lived in

Belfast, he always said he was going home. Belfast was a home away from home for Jimmy, a perception his grandfather nurtured.

Home. That was a complicated idea for Jimmy now. The house where he read the morning papers felt less like a home after Sean died. When Patty left, it ceased being one altogether. It was just a structure now. Bricks and wood and plaster. If home was where his heart was, then this home was dead. Because his heart was broken. More and more, he had been thinking about his childhood home on 239th in the Bronx, a block away from Van Cortland Park. That's where his grandfather taught him how to be an Irishman. A professional Irishman he used to say. Instead of reading Jimmy bed-time fantasies like "The Three Little Pigs" or "The Billy Goats Gruff," his grandfather waxed poetic about Ireland's bold revolutionaries: Wolfe Tone, the father of Ireland; Daniel O'Connell, the Great Liberator; Pearce, Connolly, McBride, leaders of the 1916 Rebellion. Or Bobby Sands and the other hunger strikers. These were men who had fought and died for the Cause. To end colonial rule in Northern Ireland. To prevent the persecution of Irish Catholics. To strike back against the Unionists, Protestants who believed in the *union* between the UK and the North. As a child, Jimmy fantasized about escaping to Ireland and joining the IRA. When he was a teen he realized that would have made him something of a mercenary, although the IRA didn't pay much. A few pounds a week at best.

As a reporter, Jimmy's Republicanism, his support of the IRA, had been rocked by the wake the Cause left behind. He had covered the "Troubles" during the eighties. He remembered the sectarian bombings, the eye-for-an-eye murders. The restaurants and pubs with gaping holes in them, the skeleton frames of burned out Hondas and Land

Rovers. The dead in the street. He could still see the recurring newspaper headlines: “Catholic Civilian Found Dead on the Shankill Road” or “Two Constables Die When Car Bomb Explodes.” The North had become a perpetual cycle of violence and mayhem, Yeats’ “Second Coming” fully realized: “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. . ./The ceremony of innocence has drowned.”

He read the AP dispatch a fourth time and shook his head. “We made a mistake with this one,” he said aloud. IRA spies in Stormont was the equivalent of Russian spies in the US Senate. The story might just have legs. He decided to talk to Roger about it when he got in.

Jimmy looked up at the flat screen and CNN. His friend, *New York Times* editorial writer Tom Friedman, was being interviewed by John King. Earlier, Jimmy had read Tom’s piece on the rush to war in Iraq. Jimmy reached for the remote and turned up the sound. King was speaking.

“You said that Bush has to be wild but not crazy as he deals with Saddam Hussein. What did you mean?”

“Look,” Tom began. “This is like a game of chicken. Hussein and Bush are two drivers barreling head-on at one another. If you are one of the drivers, the best way to win, before the race even starts, is to take out a screwdriver and very visibly unscrew your steering wheel and throw it out the window. The message to the other driver is: “Hey, I’d love to chicken out and get out of your way, but I just threw out my steering wheel – so unless you want to crash head-on, you better get out of my way.”

Then the phone rang.

“Are you watching King?” the voice said before Jimmy could pit the phone to his ear.

“Where are you, Roger?”

“In my office.”

“Did you sleep on the couch again?”

“Are you watching King, Jimmy?”

“I am.”

“Why doesn’t King interview one of us?”

“Because Freidman doesn’t write for our editorial page.”

“The fucking publisher is going to be pissed. This is exactly the kind of exposure we need. Use television to bring eyes to our paper”

Roger’s obsession with exposure was beginning to bore Jimmy. He talked about it all the time. What Jimmy wanted to know was why Herb the rewrite man hadn’t picked up the AP dispatch.

“Ireland again, Jimmy?”

“A US citizen arrested in Belfast? A spy ring? Isn’t this news?”

“Might be.”

“Did you even see the AP dispatch?”

“Of course I did.”

“Why didn’t we run it?”

“There wasn’t space. We’re a tabloid, Jimmy, not the *Times*. We have to pay the bills.”

“What replaced it? A Macy’s Columbus Day sale? You’re the managing editor. Stop worrying about advertising revenue and pay attention to the news.”

“And you’re a columnist. Don’t tell me how to run my news department.”

Jimmy took a deep breath. This was an old debate.

“What will you have for me today?”

“It’s 6:17. A little early for the morning rundown, isn’t it?”

Before Jimmy left for work, he logged into his email account. It had been a couple of days since he had been able to check. There weren’t enough hours in the day to keep up with three email accounts, iNews-his breaking news software, interviews, phone calls, the stories for his column, meetings, deadlines, his empty house, his orphaned dog, and his estranged wife. Not to mention breathing. He deleted most of the messages without opening them. For a while, Jimmy had made the mistake of giving vendors his e-mail address. Now his in-box overflowed with meaningless ads from Old Navy, Starbucks, and Broadway Direct. And countless others. It was maddening. It was bad enough that the *Sentinel* was filled with needless ads that squeezed out good stories. Now his email was infected. It was like a virus. Delete. Delete. Delete. Click, click, click went his mouse, like a light-weight metronome. More scrolling and more click, click, clicking and then Jimmy found the e-mail he had been expecting, sandwiched between ones from Macy’s and Ticketmaster. He opened it and was shocked by what he read.

From: Connor Maguire
Sent: Wednesday, October 5, 2002 11:29 PM
To: James O’Hara
Cc:
Subject: Weird

Jimmy:

I don't want to sound paranoid, but I think I'm being followed. Everyone keeps telling me Belfast's a small town, but I saw this guy four times. Once at the hotel when I went out for dinner and then outside the restaurant where I ate. I took a bus to see Hughes again and I would swear that the same dude passed me in one of those little Euro cars when I got off the bus. I just went down to the lobby to get a towel and he was there again. Reading a newspaper and trying not to watch me. Why would someone be following me?

Cano.

Chapter 3

Cano was the son of Liam McGuire, the eleventh IRA man to join the hunger strike that Bobby Sands started in 1981. Bobby died in May of that year. Nine more men followed. Ten Irish martyrs. All of them have been immortalized in murals, books, and songs. Sands was the most famous. Many in the world saw him as a revolutionary, a hero who stood up to the British government. Streets were named after him. One in Iran. Liam McGuire was number eleven, the striker no one talked about. There were no songs about him or streets bearing his name. Perhaps the only one who talked about him was Cano.

In 1981, the Irish hunger strikers were protesting their political status in Her Majesty's Prison Maze, just outside of Belfast in Northern Ireland. The British government called them terrorists. Bobby and his men considered themselves soldiers, freedom fighters, men who were trying to oust the last bastions of colonial rule from Ireland. All eleven men, including Liam, were IRA volunteers; all eleven refused to be treated like common criminals and demanded POW status because they believed they were fighting a war against an occupying force; all eleven had been convicted of serious crimes. Some for possession of guns or explosives; others for attempted murder, and a few for assassinating prison officers who worked in the Maze. Screws the IRA men called them. Screws. The prison officers were killed for retribution. It was well known that the screws tortured the IRA men who served out their sentences on H-block, that section of the Maze where IRA soldiers were held.

The IRA was bent on chasing England out of Northern Ireland. This was their Cause. It was an eight-hundred year old cause. That's how long England had been on Irish soil. Sod the Irish called it. The ole' sod. In those eight hundred years, the Irish tried to break away from England many times. The Easter Rising of 1916 is the most famous of these rebellions. Under the leadership of men named McBride, Connolly, and Pearce, a band of Irish volunteers took control of municipal buildings including the General Post Office where Pearce exclaimed the existence of the Irish Republic and read a Proclamation which declared, "the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland." After a few heroic days defending the GPO, the British navy anchored its warships at the mouth of the River Liffey and blew the volunteers to hell. Like they were in the Somme. Those who weren't killed were captured and executed. The Rising didn't have popular support in Ireland. But after McBride, Connolly, and Pearce were executed, Pearce had to be pushed out to the firing squad in a wheel chair, the Irish viewed them as martyrs. And there was nothing the Irish liked better than a martyr. It was in their blood, their DNA, their Sunday morning worship.

In 1919, the guerilla war began. IRA volunteers attacked British army barracks and intelligence officers. In retribution, a ruthless group of marauders called the Black and Tans killed fifteen civilians at an Irish football match on a day that came to be known as Bloody Sunday. In response, the IRA wiped out a British army company and then the British burned down Irish villages and towns. The IRA began executing informers and the British fired 9000 Catholics who were employed in the Belfast shipyards. "An eye for an eye," each side said. Like they were characters in the Old Testament. The violence continued for two years until a peace treaty was signed. It partitioned the country in two,

like battling brothers would divide their room in half. “You stay on your side, and I’ll stay on mine.” The southern twenty-six counties became known as the Irish Free State, free of colonial rule. And the northern six counties remained under British control, part of the United Kingdom. This became known as Northern Ireland. Staunch Republicans rejected the partition. They wanted a united Ireland, completely free of England. A civil war followed between the free-staters and the Republican opposition, but nothing changed the partition. And hence the Cause continued because men like Bobby Sands and Liam McGuire refused to let it die.

Liam didn’t die on hunger strike like his ten comrades. The families of the first ten respected their wishes and let them die for the Cause. When Liam lapsed into a coma on the 56th day of his strike, his mother was the first to break ranks. She ordered intravenous feeding and saved his life. This was something the mothers of the previous strikers refused to do. When Bobby Sands’ mother was asked if she would save her son, she paused and said, “I love my son just like any mother does. But I wouldn’t. I can’t. I promised him not to.” Promised to let him die. Mrs. McGuire made no such deal with Liam. Nor did his wife, Eva. So they saved him. But a year later, suffering from survivor’s guilt, he killed himself, or so the story goes.

Jimmy met Cano, Liam’s son, in January 2002. He was working on his column when the phone rang.

“There’s a young man down here to see you,” the security officer said.

After 911, Kyle Davenport III added a security desk to the lobby of the *Sentinel* building. All guests had to pass through this checkpoint. Davenport did this grudgingly

because it created a barrier to the free flow of news, something he detested. But he couldn't ignore the security measures a post-911 world demanded, especially a lightning rod like the New York tabloid.

Jimmy assumed the young man had a tip. "Felix Brown handles tips now. There's the website, too," Jimmy said.

"He insists on speaking directly to you."

Lots of people wanted to speak directly to Jimmy. He was a New York celebrity. Not as famous as Hamill or Breslin had been, but getting closer every day. Jimmy couldn't speak personally to every person who dropped by for an autograph or to give him a tip on an important story. There was a procedure now. The tip desk, where Felix Brown worked. Preferably the "TipSpace" on the *Sentinel* website. Davenport had created this. He often spoke about his fantasy: a new online network, a bulletin board or something that would let people send a blurb to a reporter electronically. Electrons carrying the news. That's what the publisher wanted. Jimmy heard the security guard explaining this to the visitor. He was about to hang up when he heard, the young man say, "I don't have a tip. Tell him I'm Liam McGuire's son."

"I'll be right down," Jimmy said into the phone.

After they shook hands, Cano handed Jimmy a folder.

"I've been following you."

It sounded creepy at first, like the caller in the Clint Eastwood flick: "Play Misty for me." But then Jimmy opened the file and saw the story he had written in the spring of 2001 commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Bobby Sands. A series of articles

followed this, each focusing on the life and death of one of the ten hunger strikers who had died in 1981.

“The twentieth anniversary of my father’s death is coming up.”

Jimmy nodded as if he remembered the date. He thought he saw a flash of disappointment in Cano’s eyes. Then he said: “August 29th. My father died on August 29, 1982. I want you to do a story on him, too.”

Jimmy was flattered. The families of the hunger strikers had very little to do with the media. They rarely gave interviews. Since most of the eleven original strikers were young men, few of them had children. But none of these children were in Belfast. Their mother had moved them away. None of them spoke publicly. Jimmy knew Irish reporters who had been chasing leads on the children of strikers for years. And here was one who fell into his lap. Jimmy agreed to write the story, but his labor came with one condition. A chance to get to know Cano. So they had a cup of coffee at Jimmy’s favorite Starbuck’s on Ninth Avenue.

Cano was three when his father died. Until he was eleven, he thought his father died of cancer. That was his mother’s doing. “His death was too sad. Too hard to explain,” she told him. It was easier for her to show Cano a picture of Liam on the last days of his strike, sitting on a white hospital bed, his hair wild, his bones pushing through his skin, and say, “Cancer. Your father died of lung cancer.”

Cano’s mother liked to carve, he told Jimmy. It was an odd hobby for a woman in her family. One of her uncles had taught her. She sculpted soft balsam wood into

religious figures and placed them around her apartment. “Santos,” she called them. “The day she told me is carved into my brain,” Cano said. “I feel like it bleeds when I remember it.”

He was sitting in his living room on Walton Avenue on the anniversary of his father’s death. August 29th. The window was open. The sounds of Salsa blew in on a wind that felt like a dragon’s breath. Flies followed through a hole in the screen and buzzed around the room. Cano swatted at them with a newspaper as his mother pushed an envelope toward him. He put down the copy of *el Diario* and pulled at the envelope. Inside, he saw pictures of his father. On top was the one of his skinny father on the hospital bed, sick with cancer. Cano knew this one by heart. But there were the others. Wider shots with the camera pulled back to reveal the bars. Other skinny men. And prison guards. The screws. “It wasn’t cancer,” she said and tried to explain the concept of a hunger strike to him. It would be years before he understood it. What Cano remembered most from that conversation was the word “suicide.” He knew the word because one of his mother’s sisters killed herself. He also thought of the first boy he met in elementary. It was an odd thought, Cano told Jimmy. “My mind just rushed back to the first grade.”

Cano was sitting in a large classroom on a warm September day. Colorful pictures of animals were on the walls. The letters of the alphabet hung from a long string above the blackboard. The windows were opened, but the smell of paint still hung in the air. Freshly painted walls welcomed the students back each year.

Cano and the boy in the desk next to him talked at snack time and sat at the same table during lunch. When Cano pulled out a package of Yodels from his lunch box, the boy asked if Cano's mother had packed them.

"Yeah," he said.

"My mom doesn't let me eat Yodels. Devil Dogs either," the boy said.

"My mom lets me choose. On Mondays I get Yodels. On Tuesdays I get Twinkies."

The boy thought about this for a moment and then said, "My mom chose me."

When Cano didn't respond, he said, "I'm adopted. Just like that. I'm adopted. Like he was dying to get it out."

The word was new to Cano. No one in his world had ever adopted a child.

"Adopted?" Cano repeated to his new friend.

"My mother didn't have me in a hospital. My parents chose me. That's better than being born. They chose me."

When Cano's mother told him the truth about his father, Cano thought about what his first-grade friend said: "My parents chose me."

Jimmy listened to Cano's story as he sipped coffee. He tried to be objective, to not usurp the narrative and write it in his own head. "Let him tell the story. Don't interfere. Don't project," Jimmy told himself. But he was having trouble. Cano's story felt too familiar. When he used words liked "abandoned" and "lost," Jimmy's chest

tightened and his throat clenched. When Cano linked his first grade friend to his father's hunger strike, Jimmy's stomach rolled. "My father chose death over me," Cano said.

Chapter 4

Jimmy was still upset that Roger had ignored the AP dispatch. He realized that every inch of the paper mattered these days. There was little room for fluff. Not that a spy ring in Belfast was fluff. But in Roger's eyes, it didn't qualify. Yet. Roger was a country boy at heart. He often told Jimmy that "everyday news" was like water flowing through a lazy stream on a warm summer day. But when a storm sent rain run-off cascading into that stream, gorging it so it became an angry river, then it left a high water mark. That mark is what I consider newsworthy. There were other stories. He knew that Roger hadn't run a Macy's ad instead of the AP blurb. He was wrong to say that. But he also knew the pressure Davenport was putting on Roger. The paper's circulation had to increase. Each day, Roger's decisions affected the choices readers made at the newsstand. And he needed them to choose the *Sentinel*. His job depended on it. Jimmy knew all of this, but he couldn't shake the feeling that Roger was wrong.

After he read Cano's email, Jimmy fired off three replies to Cano: one after he read Cano's message; one after he cleaned the dishes; and one after he took Banshee for a walk. While poking out the third message on his keyboard, he said out loud, "This is a little OCD." Then he left for work.

As he bounced along on the A train into Penn Station, Jimmy tried to distract himself from Cano's e-mail. He was glad the Yankees had been eliminated in the first round of the playoffs. He hated them. But in the National League, he had to choose between St. Louis and San Francisco. A West Coast team? He couldn't. Los Angeles had

stolen the Dodgers. But then Cano's words rose up: *Why would someone be following me?* Jimmy shook his head to clear it. Could he root for St. Louis? A Midwestern team? Or was Missouri a southern state? He wasn't looking forward to the Fall Classic, so he turned to football. The Giants had beaten Dallas on Sunday, 21-17. Sweet. Now they're a respectable 3 and 2. Bye week coming up. Even if the Giants had been 0 and 4, a win against Dallas would have redeemed them in Jimmy eyes. He hated Dallas more than he hated the Yankees. He had no use for Texas, the state where John Kennedy was killed. But there were Cano's words again: *Why would someone be following me?* The needle in Jimmy's head was stuck on that track. He thumped his scalp with the heel of his hand, and then looked up to see if anyone saw. A Hispanic woman about his age watched him and smirked.

Jimmy was the reason Cano was in Belfast. Within two months of their conversation at Starbuck's, Cano and Jimmy met regularly for a drink. Jimmy drank beer, but Cano preferred Bacardi. No matter what they began talking about, their conversation always circled back to Liam. Cano was obsessed. "My father's a ghost to me," Cano told Jimmy. Transparent and fuzzy along the edges. Ill-defined. Cano wanted to get to know him, understand him, but he didn't know how. He thought Jimmy could help.

Cano worked evenings at the Garden. An uncle of his had gotten him a job as a waiter in one of the hospitality suites. Sometimes he met famous athletes, like the Core Four: Derek Jeter, Andy Pettitte, Jorge Posada. And Mariano. Edgardo Alfonzo and Rey Ordonez dropped in from time to time. So Cano had time during the day. Jimmy arranged an internship for him so he could read the *Sentinel* archives from 1981. Initially, Roger objected to this.

“The kid doesn’t even have a college degree.”

“He’s trying to figure things out,” Jimmy said.

“That’s what a community college is for.”

“He won’t find what he’s looking for at Bronx Community College.”

“Well, what’s he looking for?”

This is where Jimmy felt self-conscious. He tried to evade Roger’s rapid fire questions like it they were playing dodge ball, but eventual he spit it out. “He’s Liam McGuire’s son. One of the hunger strikers.”

Jimmy heard Roger’s response before the words left his lips: “Ireland again?”

They argued about it some more, but Roger dropped the issue when Jimmy said he’d pay for Cano’s stipend himself.

After Cano had been through the archives, Jimmy suggested a few books. He even took Cano to a yearly dinner organized by the Rockland chapter of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians to remember the hunger strikers. The hall was just outside of Pearl River. Ireland on the Hudson, it was called. This is where white flight took the Irish who wanted to leave Woodlawn in the Bronx when it became too integrated.

At the end of the dinner, there was a candle-lighting ceremony. On the stage were ten empty metal chairs. A small candle was perched on the front of each. One by one, pre-selected members of the AOH spoke the name of a hunger striker into the microphone, placed a large, framed photograph on the chair, and lit the candle. Bobby Sands was first. Michael Devine was last. There was no eleventh chair.

“They left out my father,” Cano said.

Cano appreciated all that Jimmy did for him, but it wasn't enough. He wanted more. That's when he started talking about a visit to Belfast. Jimmy had connections there.

It was just before nine, a few hours after Jimmy had read Cano's message. Jimmy was in his office, but far more anxious than he usually was in the morning. His door was open to the newsroom that was slowly coming to life, an orange sunrise of ringing phones and breaking iNews alarms was slowly calling the dayside staff to life. The same track was still playing inside Jimmy's head: *Why would someone be following me?* He sat in a leather chair which had seen better days. Anything that supported Jimmy's six-one, two-hundred-and-twenty-five pound frame on a daily basis got worn out. A new idea pushed out Cano's words: *Is that what had happened to Patty?*

In each corner of his office, was a scuffed and chipped cherry wood bookcase. After the renovations, when Jimmy relocated into his new office, one of the movers broke a shelf in a bookcase. Jimmy fashioned a piece of white pine to take its place. An unopened can of Minwax cherry wood stain sat on the unfinished piece of wood. It doubled as book end, pressing books by Joyce, Yeats, Breslin, Hamill, and Hersh into the right wall of the bookcase. He eyed the yellow can and said aloud, "I have to get a brush." A thought he had been having for more than a year. Jimmy liked being surrounded by his books. "Comfort food for the soul," he called them. Like a bowl of Rice of Crispies at ten o'clock at night when the house was empty.

Red, green, and blue file folders were randomly arranged in empty spaces on the shelves or atop the rows of books. Jimmy liked to have his important files within arm's

reach. There were three pictures in his bookcases. One of Patty and Jimmy on their honeymoon in Ireland, standing on the edge of the Cliffs of Moher, their backs to the Atlantic. One of his son, Sean, in desert fatigues on assignment in Serbia during the Kosovo War: his helmet on, camera hanging from his neck, sun glasses reflecting the photographer who has just snapped his picture. The gray-black smoke of a burning vehicle rose behind Sean. And Jimmy's favorite: the shot of Alannah and Sean on the beach at Cape Cod from 1980 or 81. A storm is blowing in and Alannah's red hair is wind-blown and wild. She is four or five. Her red and white striped bikini stands out in sharp contrast against the gray Massachusetts sky. Sean is a rail, his ribs sticking out like he was malnourished. His crew cut reveals the gentle slope at the back of his head. They are both running away from the camera, backs to Jimmy, arms up as if they are floating on the wind. Just before Jimmy snapped that picture, he had finished reading *Johnathan Livingston Seagull* to them: "Don't believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with your understanding. Find out what you already know and you will see the way to fly."

Jimmy pushed aside a pile of folders on his desk and pulled the phone closer. He called a friend at the *Irish News*, the newspaper Republicans read, and asked what he knew about the unnamed American arrested in Belfast. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. He hung up. It was warm for October or maybe Davenport was skimping on the air. So Jimmy turned on the fan on top of the bookcase with the unpainted shelf and called another friend at the *Belfast Telegraph*. The "Protestant rag" as the Republicans called it. Jimmy knew some of the writers who worked there. They were fine reporters even though they saw Northern Ireland as a place with no room for the IRA. They were

equally intolerant of the other paramilitary groups which traded gunfire with the IRA: the Ulster Volunteer Force, for example. Jimmy held the phone to his ear with his shoulder and smiled at the woman's unmistakable Northern Irish accent.

"We're as curious as you are, Jimmy," her voice rising at the end of her sentence.

"It's not every day a Yank gets lifted for spying."

"Will you call me if you learn anything new?"

"Don't I always?"

He reminded her about the Omagh bombing in '98. "Twenty-nine people killed. Over two-hundred injured. You called me after the fact."

"Aye. That was different, love. Couldn't let a Yank scoop me. Especially a Republican. The old man here would have had me head."

"Hey Fiona. That's a Republican-American to you," he teased.

She laughed.

"And you forget. Your editor doesn't read my paper. Says it's a rag."

"Oh, he reads it, alright." She paused here for timing. "In the loo."

After Jimmy finished with Fiona, he called Brendan O'Neill, a cousin on his mother's side, in Portadown. A town about 20 miles south of Belfast.

"We all read the news, Jimmy, but we haven't heard a thing. It's clear who the Shinnners were, but . . ."

Jimmy had to think about that word for a second. *Shinnners? Right. The members of Sinn Fein.* The political wing of the IRA, the ones who were arrested at Stormont.

His cousin continued. "But the police are being real tight-lipped about the American. I've talked to some of the lads in Belfast. No one knows."

Jimmy weighed this silently.

“And what’s with your man? Liam’s son? He hasn’t come to see me.”

“That’s why I’m calling, Brendan. I got a weird message from him two days ago. Said he thought he was being followed.”

“Ah. He’s daft, Jimmy. Why would anyone be following him?”

Jimmy hung up and tried to get back to work. The deadline for tomorrow’s column was a little less than eight and a half hours away, but Jimmy felt like it was 5:20, like Roger was on another tirade. Jimmy had to decide on a story, so he opened iNews, an online subscription service which tracked breaking news. Jimmy missed the sound of the ticker tape machines. Although reading online was easier than the tape. At least he could control the size of the font. The three Post-its on the frame of his monitor fluttered when the rotating fan blew his way. He looked at the flapping reminders and added one more: “Call Cano’s grandmother.” He’d wait two more days. If he hadn’t heard from Cano by then, he’d call Grandma McGuire. Patty’s name appeared on three other Post-its. He had to call her today.

He scrolled down the iNew alerts. Nothing red at the moment. No urgent news. After Jimmy opened a few orange and yellow alerts, he shook his head. When did it come to this? After Davenport took over, he had insisted on upgrading to the latest and most advanced version of iNews. “This is how we’ll keep up with the *Times*,” he said. Jimmy knew it was a pipe dream. Unless Davenport was willing to quadruple his work force and have paid correspondents near every major city in the world, “keeping up with the *Times*” was impossible. Jimmy hated using iNews to structure his day. Instead of getting out on the streets, pounding the pavement and doing real spade work to dig for that gem

of a story, he was sitting at a desk behind a computer. Even though he had been using iNews for two years, it still felt like a sham.

Jimmy clicked on the local tab in iNews and read: “After Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg made a personal appeal to the president of the union representing New York City firefighters, the union agreed yesterday to find somewhere other than Times Square to hold a large rally for better pay. The mayor was concerned that a large-scale rally in Times Square would hurt commerce.” The news alert also said Stephen Cassidy, the union boss, agreed. “We want the mayor to get all the tax revenue he can because he needs to give us a big salary raise,” he said. The rally was re-scheduled for Thursday in Central Park.

In a flash, Jimmy knew this would be the subject of Friday’s column. Labor rallies made for good stories. And Cassidy was a good friend who lived next door to Jimmy in Belle Harbor. Jimmy loved his style. He had been a courageous firefighter, a lieutenant who was always the first one into a fire. He didn’t leave until every man from his company was out. Even if he had to carry one of them out. That courage made him a great labor negotiator. He’d called Cassidy to set up an interview.

Mixing it up with the firefighters and getting their personal take on labor negotiations was fodder for one column at least, but the thought of being with them gave Jimmy reason to pause. Maybe he should reconsider. He could name a dozen firefighters who knew his son, Sean. If Jimmy saw them, they’d ask about the family. These weren’t questions Jimmy wanted to answer.

He continued scrolling down through the news alerts.

iNews was reporting that that “complaints against New York City taxi drivers have dropped by nearly a third from their peak two years ago.” As Jimmy was considering whether he could get a column out of interviewing Manhattan cabbies, his cell phone rang.

He pulled his phone out of the inside breast pocket of his jacket. It was Alannah. He let the call go to voice message. He’d catch up with her later.

Chapter 5

“Did you forget mom went to see the doctor, yesterday?” Alannah asked him when he got around to calling.

“How about saying hello first?”

“Sorry, Daddy. Hello. How are you?”

“I’m doing fine.”

“So did you forget?”

“No. Just got caught up with some things at work. I was gonna . . .” His voice trailed off. “What did the doctor say?”

“He still thinks mom has PTSD. He adjusted her medication. Added a sleeping pill. He said the months of September and November are gonna be tough for her.”

“All the months are tough.”

There was silence. He heard Alannah take a couple of breaths as if she were getting ready to say something.

“Does she talk about him?”

“All the time. It’s getting hard.”

“What do you mean?”

She paused again.

“Are you alone, Alannah?”

“I’m never alone. The kids are with me.”

Jimmy had his doubts. He knew that Patty often sat across from Alannah, following half the conversation. After she hung up, Alannah would repeat what she could not hear. Patty wasn't speaking to Jimmy but she still wanted to know what he had to say. If he asked about her. What he did with his time.

“Is your mother up to talking to me?” Jimmy asked.

Alannah paused and then said. “She’s asleep.”

She’s there, he thought. Probably sitting right across from her at the kitchen table.

“Where are you?” he asked.

“In the kitchen. Why?”

“Oh nothing.” He pressed the phone to his ear with his shoulder and began scrolling through iNews again. Not really seeing. “For a minute it sounded like there were people with you.”

“There are people with me. Little people.” She made a noise that sounded like a forced laugh. “The kids are running around. That’s all.”

More silence. Jimmy looked out into the newsroom. The good-natured, supportive Roger was strolling around like a suburban dad. *Wait till later.*

“The doctor suggested counseling again.”

Jimmy sighed and swiveled in his chair and faced the back wall of his office. He studied the pictures that hung there. One of him with Bloomberg at the St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Another with Giuliani at the Columbus Day Parade. He looked at the shot of Fred Wilpon at Shea and turned back to his desk. Sean was there that day.

“I don’t know, baby. How would counseling help? She keeps saying she wants a divorce.”

“I’m not sure she does.”

“Did she say that?”

“Not exactly.”

“Well, what did she say? Exactly.”

“That she’s confused.”

Jimmy stopped fidgeting and grabbed the phone with his right hand. He tried not to sound too eager. “About what?”

“Hold on a minute.” He could hear that she was moving. There was a “thunk” which sounded like Alannah put the phone on a table. But he could still hear her voice.

“Let’s watch TV,” she said to her children. “Mommy wants to talk to Grandpa.”

When she came back, she said, “This is hard for me, you know?” She sniffled. “I feel like I’m sixteen and my best friend just broke up with her boyfriend.”

“I’m sorry, baby.”

“I know you are but it’s still hard. Having her here with me. Talking about Sean. Railing on about you.”

“She rails?”

“Sometimes.”

Jimmy made a clicking sound with his tongue.

“Well, you did . . .”

“Did what?”

“Nothing.”

Jimmy let that go. Instead he asked, “What did she say about counseling?”

“She’s open to it, but she still wants you to sell the house. She’s firm about that”

Chapter 6

Jimmy started working the phones early on the morning of October 10. Instead of spending his early morning hours in his dining room, he spent them in his office. It was already after noon in Belfast.

“It’s 6:45. Kind of early for you,” Roger said when Jimmy walked through the glass doors on the third floor of the *Sentinel* building. His office was just past the entrance. He wanted it that way, wanted to watch the traffic in and out of the newsroom.

“Couldn’t sleep today. Figured I’d get an early start.”

His first call was to Cano’s grandmother. She had not seen him in three days. “He said he had some things to do but promised to have breakfast with me today. But he never showed.”

“Oh. That’s right. He wasn’t staying with you,” Jimmy said.

“That upset me.”

“Did he say why?”

“Just that he didn’t want to impose. Imagine the idea of a grandson imposing on his grandmother?”

“Where was he staying?”

“At the Fitzwilliam,” she said.

Mrs. McGuire seemed worried, but evasive when Jimmy probed deeper. Jimmy pressed her until she said, “There’s news around town that an American’s been lifted. I’m worried it’s him.” When Jimmy asked why she added, “Coincidences are rare in Northern

Ireland.” But like the Belfast reporters Jimmy had spoken to, Cano’s grandmother had no proof that the American was Cano. Just a hunch. Jimmy understood hunches, those embryonic ideas, just out of your reach. Those gut feelings that had a life but little form. He had followed many such feelings in his career. So Jimmy picked at his hunch, the way one might pick at a scab until the tender new skin underneath is revealed. “How many times did you see him?”

“A few.”

“Was he nervous?”

“No.”

“Troubled?”

“Not really.”

Interviewing her was like chopping away at a large and solid ice block with a butter knife. Each time he picked at her, the knife glided along the surface, especially if he had the wrong angle. Sometimes, he dislodged only fine shavings. A tooth sized chip here and there. Never chunks.

Jimmy didn’t call her expecting the truth to come easy. He had covered Northern Ireland before. He was there during the Troubles. The attack on the Europa hotel. The Shankill Road murders. The suburban assassinations of prison officers. Jimmy was there during the last few days of Bobby Sands’ life. And the massive funeral that followed. He covered the decision Liam’s mother made to save her son’s life. He knew that three decades of Troubles, and hundreds of years of oppression, had demanded a code of silence from the Irish. In the 1970s, the IRA hung posters along The Falls Road, the Catholic part of town: “Loose talk costs lives.” So Jimmy tried another approach.

“You remember Ray McCreesh, don’t you, Mrs. McGuire? The third hunger striker . . .”

“Course I do. He died three weeks after Bobby.”

“Before he died, I interviewed his brother.”

“Would that be Jack?”

“No. Mrs. McGuire. Jack was dead by then. Don’t you remember?”

She was silent on the other end of the phone.

“It was Brian,” Jimmy continued. “He told me something about the truth that I’ve never forgotten. ‘The truth,’ he said, ‘has the power to change the future.’”

“I’m sure I don’t know what he meant by that, Jimmy.”

“His father was no Republican. He wanted his sons to have nothing to do with the IRA. Do you remember that?”

“I do.”

“Well, Brian told me that Ray was only seventeen when he volunteered. His father had a hunch something was up and he kept asking Brian if Ray was in the Army. Brian denied it of course. But he regretted it. If he had been truthful, his father would have sent Ray to America on the next plane out of Belfast. And that would have changed his future.”

Mrs. McGuire thought about this for a moment and then said, “Connor’s been speaking to Travis Hughes.”

“Who?”

“Brendan’s son.”

Brendan Hughes was a major source for the book that Ed Maloney wrote about Gerry Adams, the one implicating him in the use of IRA death squads and the Disappeared. Jimmy had finished this book around the time he received Cano's messages. Its allegations were shocking. Explosive. Maloney's claims could undermine Gerry Adams. If they were true, the accusations could tip the balance of power in Northern Ireland. What could Cano and Travis be discussing? How had they found one another?

"Connor visited me after he had a drink with Travis. He seemed angry and withdrawn."

"Do you know what they talked about?" Jimmy asked.

"No."

After a few more questions, Jimmy realized he'd get no more out of her. His next call was to the Fitzwilliam Hotel, on Great Victoria Street in Belfast. The clerk at the front desk wouldn't reveal any details about Cano's stay. The manager was a pompous ass who kept citing hotel policy "prohibiting hotel employees from revealing information about their guests." Then Jimmy called Alannah.

"It's kind of early Dad. Everything okay?"

He had forgotten the time. 7:40AM.

"Everything's fine. How's your mom?"

"She's okay. Still sleeping. Do you want me to . . ."

"I need a favor, baby."

Jimmy explained how to get the staff who answered the phone at the Fitzwilliam to transfer her to housekeeping. "Once you get a chambermaid on the phone, ham it up.

Say you're Cano's fiancé. Cry a little. Tell her you haven't heard from Cano in five days. And that you're worried. Hell, tell her you're getting married next week if you have to. Just get her to talk."

She called him back ten minutes later. "Okay. I actually spoke to the chambermaid who cleaned up his room. She said Cano was paid up until October 14th, but he hadn't slept in his room for a couple of nights. She couldn't remember exactly."

"You're a doll, Alannah."

"There's something else."

"Tell me."

"She said the PSNI something was there," Alannah said.

"PSNI?"

"Yeah. That's it. Are they the police?"

"Yes."

"She said the PSNI had been there with some detectives, too. She had to open Cano's room for them."

Jimmy was silent.

"Dad? Is everything okay?"

Jimmy followed a hunch next. He knew that the Castlereagh Barracks in Belfast had been officially decommissioned as an interrogation center. There had been hundreds of complaints of torture. Men who were suspected to being members of the IRA were hooded and deprived of sleep. Water boarded. Beaten mercilessly. Really inhumane stuff. All of this was secretly sanctioned by the government. A few years before, Amnesty

International released a scathing report of the abuses at Castlereagh and the government came under intense pressure to close it down. Jimmy had spoken to a contact at Sinn Fein. Officially the interrogation of suspects was no longer carried out at Castlereagh, but rumor had it that high-level offenders were sometimes interrogated there. For the shock value. Fear of Castlereagh was deeply engrained in the soul of every IRA volunteer. So Jimmy called.

“PSNI Offices at Castlereagh, Constable Desmond Finley speaking. How may I help you?”

“Constable Finley, this is James O’Hara calling from the *New York Sentinel*, a newspaper in America. I’m trying to locate one of your detainees, a US citizen by the name of Connor McGuire.”

The space between Belfast and New York was filled by the silence that followed.

“Please hold the line, Mr. O’Hara.”

After an uncomfortable pause, Jimmy heard, “Chief Superintendent Hugh Flanagan here. How may I help you?”

Straight to the top, Jimmy thought. *That’s what I like.*

“Superintendent Flanagan. This is James O’Hara from *New York Sentinel*. I am calling to confirm that you have an American citizen . . . ”

“James O’Hara, is it?”

“Yes sir. I’m calling . . . ”

“Is it the same James O’Hara who wrote for the *New York Sentinel* in the 1980s?”

“I write for it now.”

“Aye. But in the eighties. Did you write for it then?”

“Yes.”

“So you’re the Jimmy O’Hara who wrote about Bobby Sands?”

Jimmy felt like he was being interrogated.

“Have I got that right, Mr. O’Hara? You covered Mr. Sands’ *unfortunate death* in 1981, right?”

“That’s right.”

“I heard tell that Jimmy O’Hara once wrote that the British army’s intervention in Northern Ireland was akin to the Soviet Union’s occupation of Czechoslovakia? Was it you that wrote that.”

“I wrote that, yes.” *This is slipping away*, Jimmy thought.

“And let’s see,” he said like he was checking off a list. “In that same article, you said Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was a cross between Stalin and Pinochet.”

Jimmy was silent now.

“Well, that’s grand. Then you’re the man who called the PSNI a terrorist force in Belfast, aye? ”

The Superintendent waited for Jimmy to respond, but all he could manage to say was, “I’m surprised you remember that.”

“Well, don’t be, Mr. O’Hara. We’ve long memories in the North. You should know that.”

It’s hard to know where thoughts come from, but in a flash, Jimmy’s friend Sy Hersh came to mind. Hersh was the fiery investigative reporter who has hammered at presidential administrations since Nixon’s. A journalist who has revealed more deep,

uncomfortable truths than just about anyone out there. George Bush once called him “the terrorist of American journalism.”

Jimmy drew strength from Sy. Maybe too much strength because he said, “To be accurate Superintendent Flanagan, I called the Royal Ulster Constabulary a group of terrorists, not the PSNI. But I realize they are one and the same.” He thought he heard the word “gobshite” slip out of the Superintendent’s mouth. “Did you say something, sir?”

“Ahm. No. Just Listening.”

Jimmy continued to push. “Are we playing twenty questions here?”

“I’m not playing, Mr. O’Hara. And to answer *your* question, we no longer detain suspects here.”

“Is that what Connor McGuire is? A suspect? What is he being held for? Has he been permitted to see counsel?”

Jimmy heard Flanagan breathe deeply on the other end. “As I said, this facility is no longer used as a holding centre. It is purely administrative now.”

“Well then maybe you can correct the information I have. My sources tell me that Connor McGuire was detained under Section 4 of the Anti-terrorism Act which allows the PSNI to hold someone who is suspected of being a foreign terrorist indefinitely.”

“I know the law, Mr. O’Hara.”

“A source told me he’s being held in cell number . . .” Jimmy shuffled some papers to make it seem like he had notes. “Here it is. Cell number 3. And that he was interrogated and denied access to a lawyer.”

“Where are you getting your information from, Mr. O’Hara?”

“That’s privileged.”

“Your sources sound like rubbish. Don’t Yanks confirm sources?”

Jimmy hated that word, but he wanted to try to salvage the interview. “Are you always this hostile to journalists?”

“I’m hostile to anyone who calls the PSNI terrorists.”

“I’m just trying to locate Connor McGuire. His mother asked for my help.”

“Well he’s not here and I’m not aware of any American being held in Northern Ireland. Good day, Mr. O’Hara.”

Chapter 7

Jimmy felt all of the telltale signs. The chills at the base of his neck, the hyper-awareness that made him feel like he was on speed, and the chattiness that transformed him into a sixteen year old girl. Of the three, it was the chattiness that got to him. But he couldn't help it. A good story made him frenetic. He wanted to talk about it all the time. When they were living together, his wife thought it was cute. She called him, "Chatty Patty," a nickname her father had given her when she was a teen. When Jimmy found a story that had legs, he was altered by it. His adrenaline would kick and his body reacted. "Journalistic fight or flight," he called it. The problem was the older he got, the harder it was to turn off. Sometimes he'd obsess about a good story. He'd wake up at night thinking about his research. He'd view it from as many perspectives as he could, trying to decide what it revealed. If he had written a draft of the story, he'd reorganize it in his head. He'd be his own red team. A good story would reduce his sleep time to four hours a night. An exceptional one? Two-and-a-half. It wasn't healthy. His doctor said it was anxiety and gave Jimmy valium so he could sleep.

After his phone calls to Belfast, the feelings intensified. Mrs. McGuire was right: there are no coincidences in Northern Ireland. Where there's smoke . . . That night, as he lay in his empty bed, his windows open to the salty October air of Belle Harbor, he fought the urge to take a valium. He needed to be sharp tomorrow. Cano's life might be in danger. He watched the soft reflection of warning lights from the airport across Jamaica Bay as they danced on the ceiling. He concentrated on the ebb and flow of the

surf to lull him to sleep. As he drifted off, he reminded himself of one important fact. This wasn't just a story. This was Cano. And Jimmy was worried about him.

The following morning, instead of reading the sports pages on the A train, he reviewed his notes, contemplating his next move. Once he arrived in Manhattan, he felt the need for caffeine, so he stopped at Starbuck's and bought a large dark roast. In his office, he sipped his coffee as he listed the calls he would make. "Organize" his inner voice said. A good story urged Jimmy to organize, a trait that he lacked in most other situations. He needed dates on his notes, categories in the columns, and a folder to contain them. He looked around his office. There had to be an empty one here. He thumbed through the pile on his desk. But they were filled with material he would "get to soon." Ideas for an expose, an outline for the novel he would write someday, the first verse of a narrative poem. He heard Patty's voice: "Everything can't be important. You have to throw stuff away. Don't be a hoarder." He ignored the voice; the information was important. No throwaways here. He restacked the folders and pulled open the file drawer beneath his desk. It was a tangled snake pit of books, papers, and folders. No order to it. During the renovation, Jimmy had procrastinated. While everyone was packing, he was chasing down a story or visiting his new grandson. A day before his section was due to be moved, he behaved like a college sophomore on the last day of the semester. He threw an armload of files and a stack of books into his desk's file drawer, vowing to clean it up later. Only later never came, and now wasn't the time for it. Searching through the cabinet would be a waste. He looked at the stacks of folder on his shelves. The ones that were too important for the file drawer, but not important enough for the surface of his desk. He thought he saw two that looked empty. He pulled on the narrow corner of a file,

gently dislodging it from the pile so it wouldn't topple. The action reminded him of playing Jenga with his kids when they were young.

He pulled out a thin folder. The yellow and jagged edge of a newspaper clipping slid out and touched his thumb. He thought he recognized it. Jimmy read the tab on the folder and pushed it back as if the pile would topple without it. He sat in his chair and stared. He was muttering to himself. "No need to look at that now. It'll put me in a bad place." He left his office and walked across the newsroom. He found Saul and talked to him for a bit. He tried the men's room next. He forced himself to pee, washed his hands, and left. *Maybe I'll check on Roger*, he thought. But when he peeked in, the office was empty. Then he heard Roger screaming from the international section. It was a little early for that. He decided that he needed another cup of coffee, so he headed for the Starbuck's on Ninth and 44th. Back in his office, with a steaming latte, his eyes were on the pile again. *Reliving it on your own terms is supposed to help*, he told himself. So he pulled out the folder.

Photojournalist Killed When Tower Collapsed

By The Editorial Board
September 16, 2001

The last call he made was to his father, *New York Sentinel* columnist, Jimmy O'Hara. "Don't worry, Dad," he said. "I'm with the firemen." Twenty minutes later, at 10:28, the North Tower collapsed on Sean O'Hara, the firemen he was with, and Father Mychal Judge, O.F.M.

Sean O'Hara was a freelance photojournalist who worked for Reuters. His photographs have appeared in the New York Times, The Village Voice, and the New York Sentinel. At 9:00 AM on September 11, Sean was at Le Café Coffee East 14th Street when he learned

that a jet had crashed into the North Tower. According to Hector Ruiz, a counterman at the café, Sean handed him a five dollar bill and ran out of the shop without his bagel. “That’s how Sean was,” Ruiz said. “Everyone knew he was a photographer. He carried around this portable police scanner and one minute he’d be talking to you and the next minute he’d say, ‘Gotta go.’”

After leaving the bagel shop, Sean sprinted back to his apartment on East 12th Street, grabbed three cameras, his press badge, and ran two miles down to the Twin Towers. He called his girlfriend, Rosa Morales, on the way to tell her what was happening. “Be careful,” was the last thing she said to him.

Details are sketchy after his arrival at Ground Zero. Lee Daniels, a photographer from the *New York Sentinel*, saw Sean arrive at the scene. “It was surreal. There were all these firemen running toward the towers. Guys that came in on their days off and had no way to get downtown because all the trucks were out. At one point, I watched about a dozen of them run through a shower of burning papers that were raining down on us, and there was Sean, right in the middle of the pack.”

Lots of the firemen knew Sean, and Lt. Jack McConnell remembered seeing him run into the North Tower with five men from Engine 33. “Sean had that same fearlessness as the guys on the job. He was all adrenaline. If he saw something explode, he’d run toward it. Not away.” According to McConnell, the North Tower collapsed about ten minutes after Sean and Engine 33 entered.

Sean was reported missing the following day and his body was recovered on September 15th amid the rubble at Ground Zero. His cameras and press badge were also found among the debris. To date, he is the only journalist who died on 9/11. (See Photojournalist on page 6)

(Continued from page 3)

The staff at the *New York Sentinel* remembers Sean well. He was reared in the newsroom. He was with his father, Jimmy, every chance he had. When there were half days at his elementary school, St. Francis DeSales School in Belle Harbor, Sean would board the A train at Rockaway Park station instead of going home. His destination was Penn Station, one block south of the *Sentinel* Building. If his father was out on assignment, Sean would hang around the newsroom, soaking up the chaos as the deadline approached.

Roger Blythe, Sean’s godfather and managing editor of the *New York Sentinel*, choked back tears as he remembered Sean: “We all watched Sean grow up. He was a great kid with that natural curiosity that kids have. We always told Jimmy his son would make a great reporter. Sean was always nosing around the newsroom. He’d walk up to a man on the rewrite desk and ask, “What ‘cha working on,’ like he was an editor.”

Senior copy editor, Saul Goldstein used to taunt Jimmy O'Hara by trying to get Sean interested in copy editing. "This would be the last thing a columnist would want for his son. But it was no use. Sean loved the art department and the photographers. He'd spend hours in the darkroom with those guys. He was a great kid and an exceptional photojournalist. We are all deeply saddened by his loss."

Sean O'Hara will be laid to rest at a private service in Belle Harbor in Queen, NY on September 19, 2001.

Jimmy slid the article back in the folder and buried it under the pile in the bookcase. He missed Sean in ways he couldn't articulate. That was the most frustrating part. When his grandfather died in '97, Jimmy felt untethered, as if the rope to his anchor had snapped, sending him drifting out to sea. When his mother died in '99, a great hunger descended upon him. He had gained thirty pounds since. But with Sean . . . with Sean . . . there was just despair, a leaden weight of anguish in the pit of his stomach that never receded. He tried to picture his son: his ironic smile, his witty jokes, the gentle curve of his cheeks down to a soft chin that reminded him of Patty. As much as he grieved, she suffered even more.

After the funeral, her panic attacks began. The sound of the planes taking off from JFK, which was right across Jamaica Bay from their home, brought them on. She'd break into a sweat, her heart would race. From deep within her chest, rose this feeling of doom she couldn't shake. Jimmy took her to see a therapist once a week. When he returned to work, Alannah stayed with her during the day. The attacks got out of control in November when American Airlines Flight 587 crashed into Belle Harbor, four blocks from their house. It was two months and one day after 9/11, a little after 9:00 in the morning. Alannah was with her: "The house shook when the plane hit, and I swear I felt a blast of hot hair blow through the window. Mom was white as a sheet, screaming

Seannie's name. She threw up all over me. Said her throat was closing and she couldn't breathe. That's when I called the ambulance. I thought she was having a heart attack."

But every free ambulance in the area was at the site of the plane crash. Thank God for Steve Cassidy, the fireman next door. Something made him check on Patty and Alannah on his way over to the crash site. He brought them to St. John's Episcopal.

"A severe case of PTSD," the hospital psychiatrist told Jimmy and Alannah later. But Alannah was confused. "I thought that was a war veteran's disease."

"For a long time, it was," the doctor explained. "But we've learned a lot more about it in the last few years. Any traumatic experience, a car accident, a rape, witnessing a violent crime, can trigger PTSD. Since 911, we're seeing a lot more cases."

The doctor prescribed Klonopin for Patty, but two days after her release, she began hallucinating. Became suicidal. Both side effects of the drugs. The meds were worse than the disorder. They went to see a PTSD specialist in Manhattan and he prescribed Ativan instead. She needed therapy twice a week. After three sessions, the psychiatrist said joint sessions would help. "Your wife has some issues to work on and she needs your help, Mr. O'Hara," he told Jimmy.

One night during a particularly bad week in May 2002, just before Sean's birthday, Patty and Jimmy were with the therapist.

"911 keeps replaying inside my head. The planes crashing into the buildings. The fireball. The Towers falling. I even hear Sean screaming."

The therapist waited.

"I know that's impossible. I'm not crazy."

“Of course you’re not crazy, but you know what to do when you experience those intrusive thoughts, right.”

“*Redirect them,*” she said screwing up her face.

“Don’t be sarcastic, Patty. He’s just trying to help.”

She looked at Jimmy like she was seeing him for the first time. “You should have helped.”

“I’m trying to help, Patty.”

“No I mean you should have helped me with Sean.”

Jimmy looked at the therapist, unsure of what to say.

“Explain to us what you mean, Patty.”

“I just mean he should have helped me. Guided him a little.”

“Guide him to what?” the therapist asked.

“I don’t know.” She paused. “Manhood?”

Jimmy jumped in at this point. “He was a fine man, Patty. A professional. He was fearless. A great photographer.”

Patty was silent.

“What do you mean, Patty?” the therapist asked.

Why was he pressing her like this? Jimmy thought.

“Can we talk about something else,” she asked trying to smile.

“You’ve mentioned this before in our sessions, that you wished Jimmy had helped, but I never get a sense of how Jimmy could have helped.”

Patty became agitated so Jimmy said, “Hey doc, let her talk about something else.”

Then something changed in her in her face. She clenched her jaw and narrowed her eyes. Turned away from Jimmy. “You’d like that wouldn’t you?”

Jimmy leaned back in his chair and said, “Look, Patty. I don’t know what this is all . . .”

“You could have convinced him not to be a photojournalist. Got him to go into another field. But no. The *Sentinel* was his destiny. Just like you wanted it to be.”

The therapist let her words hang there.

“Are you blaming me, Patty?”

A few days later, Patty told Jimmy she wanted to sell the house. She repeated this twice a week until she left him in July. She couldn’t stay in the house and live with the memories. Everywhere she looked, she saw Sean. On the stairs he used to slide down when they were carpeted. In the upstairs bathroom he used to hog just to annoy his sister. She saw him every time she passed his room, his chocolate lab, Banshee, asleep on his bed. She swore that the dog was dreaming about Sean when she cried out in her sleep. Patty demanded that Jimmy clean out Sean’s bedroom. But he couldn’t. Posters of Metallica and Gun n Roses still hung on the wall over his bed. Prints by Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, and Diane Arbus over his desk. His Mets hat was on the bedpost where he had left it the weekend before 9/11 when he visited last.

Jimmy needed tangible objects to hold onto Sean because with each passing day he felt like his memories of his son were slipping further away. When Sean died, all Jimmy had to do was close his eyes to see him. Every feature. His red-brown hair, his blue eyes, his broad shoulders. He could see the cheesy smile he made when he posed for

a picture and the scar just above the bridge of his nose. He could hear Sean's high pitched laughter when joy swallowed his face. But by the middle of January, when Jimmy closed his eyes, the scar had faded. In March, Sean's hair was there, but just as hair. No color. And by May, he couldn't see Sean's smile without looking at a picture. Jimmy needed his son's bedroom to stay the same, so he wouldn't forget. The objects? Posters and prints, old cameras and hats? His son's spirit inhabited them. His clothes and bedspread? The dirty socks rolled up in a dusty corner? Jimmy was convinced Sean's scent was still there. He couldn't let go of that.

Chapter 8

Son of Hunger Striker Arrested as Part of IRA Spy Ring

By Dermott Hardy

11 October 2002

Belfast—The name of the US Citizen who was arrested on 7 October 2002 outside the historic Grand Opera House, on Great Victoria Street, was revealed to the Belfast Telegraph late yesterday. Officials close to the investigation have identified the American as Connor McGuire, a.k.a. Cano McGuire, son of the man who ended the hunger strike in Maze Prison in 1981. McGuire's arrest on 8 October came only minutes after the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) raided the offices of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA. The raids were conducted as part of a year-long investigation into Sinn Fein's alleged involvement in a spy ring that had been gathering confidential information on British security personnel.

According to David Trimble, First Minister and leader of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the information collected by the spy ring could have been of great use to terrorists bent on derailing the Good Friday Agreement: the 1998 power sharing arrangement between Nationalists and Unionists that has led to the longest ceasefire between the IRA and the British government in more than thirty years.

McGuire's arrest occurred as opera fans were waiting in a queue in front of the red brick façade of the recently renovated Opera House, a few blocks from the Fitzwilliam Hotel where McGuire was staying. These fans were horrified as they watched armed police, some in paramilitary uniforms, swoop down on McGuire and quickly secure him. Within seconds, they put him into an unmarked, dark gray Honda CRV and sped off. Nora Flaherty, an opera fan and long-time Belfast resident, said it brought back the worst images of the Troubles. Flaherty added, "When I saw those guns and helmets and black uniforms, I thought I was a goner. It all happened so fast. I didn't even have time to say my prayers."

Minutes before McGuire's arrest, armed members of another PSNI unit raced up the stone steps of the Stormont Parliament Building, across the Italian marble floors of the Great Hall, and into the offices of Sinn Fein. With news cameras rolling, the office doors were locked as police searched the premises. An hour later, they emerged with three suspects and computers that allegedly contained the confidential information. According

to government sources interviewed later, the suspects “were charged under anti-terror laws introduced in the wake of September 11, and accused of possessing information likely to be of use to terrorists. They have been arraigned and all pleaded not guilty.” Raids were also conducted on the homes of several Sinn Fein officials.

Government officials were guarded (See Hunger Striker’s Son on C-5)

Hunger Striker’s Son

From page C-1

when questioned about McGuire’s involvement. When asked to speculate about his presence in Belfast, Edward Waters, senior member of David Trimble’s staff, said “Mr. McGuire disappeared from Belfast more than two decades ago, when his father, Liam, died, and has reportedly been living in the Bronx with his mother. I cannot speculate about his involvement with the spy ring. He is being interrogated under the special provisions of the anti-terror laws.”

When asked if the arrests would further destabilize the peace agreement, Waters responded, “First Minister Trimble was outraged when he learned that the British government has known about the spy ring for a year and has done nothing. He holds Prime Minister David Blair personally responsible and is demanding that Sinn Fein be expelled from the Northern Ireland Assembly. He is calling the power sharing agreement a farce.”

When Jimmy walked into his office, he found a copy of Dermott Hardy’s article on his desk along with a note from one of the overnight staff: “Fax received from Fiona Robinson, Belfast Telegraph, 3:12 AM New York time. Cover sheet includes message for you.” He turned to the message stapled to the back of Hardy’s story. “You were right. Call me. Yours, Fiona.” *Coincidences are rare in Northern Ireland*, Jimmy thought. It was 9:30 in New York but 2:30 in Belfast. He felt like the day was slipping away.

The first thing Fiona said to him was, “Rumor has it that you badgered poor Superintendent Flanagan yesterday.”

“Now why would I do something like that, Fiona?”

“Well, Hardy owes you one. An anonymous source “close to the investigation” rang Dermot up yesterday afternoon and dropped the story in his lap. Your call must have shaken them up. The PSNI rarely volunteers information. The least you could’ve done was give Flanagan my name. I haven’t broken an important story in ages.”

“Doubt a reference from me would’ve helped. Flanagan was a real prick. Is that how he treats reporters?”

“No. Only trouble-making Yanks,” she laughed.

“So what else have you heard?”

“Well, yer man Connor is at the PSNI Headquarters on Knock Road now.”

“Was he at Castlereagh?”

“They won’t say.”

“Anything else?”

“No. You got the rest right. He’s being held under Section 4 of the Anti-terrorism Act. No telling when he’ll get out.”

“Any idea if he was really involved with the spy ring?”

“You’ll have to ask your Sinn Fein friends that, Jimmy. Gotta go. Cheers.”

Roger sat behind his large Victorian desk, not unlike Jimmy’s except for the absence of clutter. His jacket was on and his tie neatly pulled to his collar. Steam rose from his *Sentinel* mug. His office was neat compared to Jimmy’s. No teetering piles of folders. No yellow post-its on the frame of his computer monitor. A daily planner was

opened before him, much of his time already allotted. Copies of New York dailies hung on a rack behind him. The *Post*, *Newsday*, and the *Sentinel*. Five television screens were neatly recessed into the wall to his right and framed by two Victorian bookcases. The TVs tuned to NY1, CNN, MSNBC, Fox, and the BBC. There was a white board easel to his left. Reminders were scribbled in his unmistakable left-handed cursive: Rush to war? Senator Byrd? Bloomberg ban on smokes? The *New York Times* was spread out on his desk, some passages highlighted, but he was reading Dermot hardy's article as Jimmy waited. When he finished, he said. "Talk to me."

"I want to do my column on him until he's found."

Roger reached back to his newspaper rack and pulled out the October 9th edition of the *Sentinel* and turned to Jimmy's last column.

"Read that," he said.

"Why . . ."

"Just read it."

"Service with a Smile in the Cabs of New York."

"Not that bonehead." He pointed. "This."

"Jimmy O'Hara. Speaking Truth from the City's Streets."

"You're a city columnist, Jimmy. Not international."

"Belfast's a city."

Roger raised his eyebrows. "Look, writing a column on this kid is the least of your worries. He was an intern here. If he's involved in this spy ring, we could be implicated, too. I want you to stay away from this. I'm sure Davenport will say . . ."

"Fuck Davenport! You channeling him now? And when did you become . . ."

“He’s our publisher Jimmy.”

“And you’re the managing editor. Grow a pair of balls.”

Roger looked over Jimmy’s shoulder, through the glass windows, and out into the newsroom. He got up without a word, slammed the door and closed the blinds. Still standing he said, “You need to watch your step.”

Jimmy was boiling now. His Irish was up, right to the tips of his reddening ears.

“Yeah? Or what? You gonna fire me?”

Roger paced back and forth. Jimmy watched the seconds tick away in four different time zones on the clock on the rear wall of the office. “Okay. Let’s calm down.”

“I don’t want to calm down. This kid’s in trouble.”

“And you’re personally invested. This happens every time you get wrapped up in this Irish shit.”

“Careful what you call shit. Cause friend or not . . .” Jimmy stopped himself this time, but Roger continued.

“Let me remind you what happened when you got involved with McGuire and his crowd in 1981.”

Jimmy interrupted him. “I’ll tell you what happened. Our circulation grew by twenty percent.”

Roger ignored this and continued: “In 1981, you personally insulted Margaret Thatcher. What did you call her?” He paused. “What was it?” Jimmy wasn’t going to help him. “Oh, I remember,” Roger said, “The Stalin of the UK.” He shook his head. “Stalin!” he repeated incredulously. “You got yourself blacklisted in Belfast. Accused of being a propagandist for the IRA.”

“You say that like I should be ashamed. I’m proud of that. Thatcher was the devil. She let ten men die.”

“That’s a matter of perspective.”

“No, Roger. That’s fact. She could have ended that strike by giving those men what they had before she entered that sorry office. POW status.”

Roger was back in his chair now. He leaned forward so his forearms rested on the *New York Times*. Jimmy watched him reread the Belfast article.

“So let me get this straight. If we capture Osama bin Laden, you think he deserves POW status? He says he’s fighting a war against the United States.”

Jimmy snorted and shook his head. His gaze locked on Roger’s eyes. He stared at Jimmy like Sister Miriam had when she busted him in the Kingdom.

“I’m gonna investigate this whether you approve or not. I’m the reason Cano’s there. I suggested the trip to Belfast. I put him in touch with people. I’m not turning my back on him.”

“I’m going to have to think about . . .” Roger began.

“You can think all you want. I told you what I’m gonna do.”

“Don’t be rash, Jimmy.” Roger looked at the article again. “Let’s talk about Connor some more.” He paused like he was remembering something. “And why do you call him Cano?”

Chapter 9

Jimmy asked that very same question when he first got to know Cano. The name didn't sound very Irish, and Jimmy had a hunch he'd find a story there. Cano is a nickname Puerto Ricans give to a light-skinned boy in the family, often one with light hair, too. And Cano fit the bill to a tee. He had dirty blonde hair, white skin until summer sun tanned it, and deep green eyes that glowed like phosphor. When he was younger, his mom called him Canito. A loose translation is little white one. As he got older, he shortened it to Cano because he was a man. The "ito" diminutized him, and no Puerto Rican man, even an Irish one, would accept a nickname that made him seem like a boy. The nickname, Cano, helped him in the neighborhood. Being called Connor would have identified him as a white boy, a liability in the circles he kept. Cano, on the other hand, left a little room for doubt. A space in which he could tell his story. After all, most Puerto Ricans had a Cano in their family. His name was the way Cano passed.

Roger asked the question again. "How does an Irish kid, get the name Cano?"

Jimmy told him the story in the same way Cano had given it to him.

His mother, Eva, grew up in the mountains of Puerto Rico, a town in the center of the island called Orocovis. She had aspirations. She wanted something more than being a wife at eighteen. Having a brood by twenty-six. Moving into a house on her father's land where she would raise children and help her husband grow coffee and plantains. She wanted to look forward to more than killing a chicken every Saturday for dinner or

roasting a pig for her parents' anniversary in June. An education is what she wanted and then a career. She wanted to be a history teacher.

There was never any doubt Eva would attend college. Her grandfather, the patriarch of the family and a college professor at the University of Puerto Rico, had demanded that each of his grandchildren receive a college education. Expand their horizons. Eight of Eva's nine siblings followed Papa Pedro's advice. They registered for college and earned their degrees. Four of them found spouses at university, so that was an added bonus. Even though Eva's family was progressive, marriage was important. But Eva took Papa Pedro's advice to the next level. She started her degree in history, and then decided she wanted to see the world. Expand. Grow. After all, Papa Pedro had done it. He lived in Boston in the early nineteenth hundreds and earned a degree from Harvard. So Eva decided to go to New York, as if that was the world.

In 1974, only a year away from her Bachelor's degree, she left Puerto Rico and moved to the Bronx where she lived with an aunt. One of her mother's sisters. It took her almost a year to get acclimated, but by the fall of 1975, she had registered in Lehman College to finish her degree. She needed five more courses, only one more history class. She wanted to take a course in Latin American history, but Lehman was just recognizing the field of Latin American studies. This was the seventies, after all, and people of color were just entering the academe. She laughed when she heard that word for the first time. "Academe," she repeated when an advisor used the word. The only academe she knew about was the Roberto Clemente Academy of Hope on 138th. It was a halfway house.

Since Eva couldn't take a class in Latin American history, she chose a course called Irish History and Literature: 1898-1922. Papa Pedro knew something about Irish history and told her about it when she was young, so it wasn't exactly foreign to her.

Eva was the only Latina in the class. She assumed the white students were Irish. They were polite but ignored her for the most part. Except for a guy with green eyes and long blonde hair. During the first two class meetings, Eva noticed him looking in her direction. She assumed his green eyes were fixed on one of the white girls to her left. During the second week of class, he sat next to her, introduced himself as Liam McGuire and offered his hand. Eva didn't take it. Liam was about to say something when the professor walked in.

During their break, Eva sat down on the beige linoleum tiles down the hall from her class and began reading Yeats. She noticed Liam reading one of the cork bulletin boards in the hall. He kept looking her way. There was a water fountain a few feet away from where she was sitting. Liam headed for that next. She heard him slurp at the water and then his voice: "Hi again." When she didn't respond he added, "So you're a Yeats fan?"

"I'm a fan of doing my homework."

"I could help you. I know Yeats pretty well."

"I think I can manage."

Eva had not finished reading the poems for class. She had worked late the night before. The job her aunt got for her at the Rye Hilton was the best Eva could do at the moment, but the four-to-twelve shift was rough. Between her fatigue and the way Liam's

sneakers kept fading in and out of her peripheral vision, she found it hard to concentrate on Yeats.

“My favorite poem is “Easter 1916.”

After being in class for three weeks, she was getting used to his accent. Although it was hard to follow, she liked the way Liam’s voice rose at the end of each sentence as though he were asking a question. There was a lyrical quality to it. He spoke a lot in class, and Eva enjoyed listening to him, even more than the professor. But then her aunt’s warning about white boys dulled her fascination with his accent. *They want one thing from Puerto Rican girls.* She turned away from him and back to Yeats.

The distant sound of voices down the hall began to fade and Liam said, “Looks like we’re going back in.” She waited until he left, and then walked back to class.

During break the following week, Eva found a chair in the hallway around the corner from class. She sat there and read. After a few stanzas of “The Second Coming,” this was the last week they’d read Yeats, Liam was there again.

“You look more comfortable there than on the floor.”

Eva looked up brief and shrugged and returned to the poem.

“Sorry. I mean . . . I was just curious. Why’re you interested in Irish history?”

“Why? Is it a private club,” Eva said.

Eva felt a twinge of regret when she noticed the tips of Liam’s ears reddening, but she wished he would just leave her alone. As she stared at him, the blush spread.

“Ahm.” He cleared his throat. “Ahm . . . Aye. Sorry. I’m not trying to offend you, I’m not. But look around. You can see the Irish in all the faces here.”

He was making it worse. She closed her book and stood. Eva was the tallest of her sisters at five-seven, but she barely reached Liam's shoulders. She was surprised when he backed away. "Are you saying I don't belong?"

He was flustered now. "No. . . Ahm. . . Of course you belong. This is America."

Eva smirked and shook her head. This made him appear even more nervous. He started and stopped and started again and said, "I mean. . . I'd love to learn more about Che Guevera and Fidel. Like take a class? We've heard of them in Ireland, you know?"

"So why don't you?"

"Don't have the courage. It'd be hard to be the only white face in a class."

"How do you know you would be?"

"I don't know. I just assumed."

"Well you shouldn't."

"Shouldn't what?"

"Assume."

"Right." He turned away, and then spun back and said, "I just think what you're doing is grand. That's all."

Eva looked at him and kept thinking about what her aunt had told her about white boys. But she was transfixed by his green eyes, the same shade as her father's. "Well, I like history," she said.

"But why Irish history?" He smiled and his eyes twinkled a little like her father's did when he smiled. She decided to give him a chance. So she took out a sheet of paper and wrote the name 'Pedro Albizu Campos.' She handed it to him and said, "This is why I'm interested."

“Who’s this?”

She decided to play with him. “Do you know your Irish history?” she asked.

“Do I . . .” He was incredulous. “Of course I do. Backwards and forwards.”

“And you don’t who Pedro Albizu Campos was?”

“Not a clue.”

“Then you don’t know anything.” And she walked away.

“Hey,” he called after her. “You want to give me a hint?”

Without turning around, she said, “He had something to do with the Irish constitution.”

“Bollocks,” she heard him say.

He didn’t make it to the next class meeting, but at the one after that, when he entered the classroom and saw her, he walked straight for her. No hesitation.

“That was a wild goose chase,” he said after he plopped down.

She had a mischievous look in her eye. “What did you say?”

“A wild goose chase.”

“The Wild Geese had nothing to do with it. That’s what historians call those countrymen of yours who fled Ireland in the sixteenth century and ended up in Puerto Rico.”

“I know who the Wild Geese were and . . .” He looked in her eyes, wagged his finger at her and said, “You’re playing with me, aren’t ya?”

“Just about the Wild Geese.”

“How do you know . . .”

“When you find out about Campos, I’ll tell you.”

“My mates never heard . . .”

“The ask someone older. Someone who remembers 1922. Ask *that* person who helped DeVelera write the constitution.”

“You’re daft,” he said.

He was waiting for her outside the class next time. He looked a little defeated. She started to pass him and stopped when he said her name. She waited for him to say more. When he didn’t, she said, “Well?”

“Ahm,” he began. “That Campos guy helped Dev . . . ahm . . . sorry . . . DeVelera write the constitution for the Irish Free State in 1922.”

Eva started at him.

“How did you know that?” he asked.

She was silent for a long time and then said, “He’s my grandfather.”

After class, Liam took Eva for a drink at Finnegan’s pub on McLean Avenue in Woodlawn where he introduced her to Guinness. She told him it tasted like *Malta*, a soft drink she drank as a child in Puerto Rico. It was brewed from malt, but with no alcohol. They listened to Irish music and talked politics. Liam was surprised that she sympathized with the Irish Cause. He should not have been. Eva was an *Independentista*, part of a political party in Puerto Rico that believed the island should be completely free and independent of the United States. “We both hate colonialism,” she told him. When Liam ordered their second beer, she noticed he returned one to the bartender and said something to him. When the bartender brought it over, a smiley face was stenciled into the thick and brown foamy head of the beer. One of the eyes in the face was winking. She

laughed, refusing to drink the beer until the head receded and the face was gone. The bar had grown crowded, so they pulled their chairs closer so they could hear one another. Eva spoke with her hands and everyone once in a while, she touched Liam's shoulder or forearm. When their hands touched on the bar, she let hers linger before slowly pulling it away. She insisted on buying the third round and added, "Next time, we drink my drink."

"Next time?" Liam said hopefully.

Eva didn't respond. The drink had loosened her tongue.

"So what's your drink?" he asked.

"A Cuba Libre."

He shook his head. "What's that?"

"A Bacardi and coke."

"What did you call it?"

"Cuba Libre?" Eva said.

"What does that mean?"

"Free Cuba."

"I like that," Liam said. "Like it a lot. It'll be my new favorite drink."

Eva looked into his green eyes which had been dulled by the alcohol.

"I was hoping there'd be a next time," Liam said.

That's when they shared their first kiss.

Chapter 10

Jimmy and Roger came to an understanding. He would meet with Ed Denning, the chief legal counsel at the *Sentinel*, and tell him about Cano, how they met, what Jimmy knew of his background, and what Cano was doing in Belfast. If Denning felt the paper could not be connected to Cano's actions in Northern Ireland, then Jimmy could look into Cano's arrest. But only after he had written his column. When Jimmy felt he had a story to tell, the three of them would meet to decide if the *Sentinel* could run it. Jimmy hated negotiating to write a story in his own column, but this would do for now. When Roger asked to hear more about Cano, Jimmy shared only what he felt Roger should know. After all, his grandfather had not raised him to be a *tout*.

During the next ten October days, Jimmy called every newspaper contact he had in Belfast, every office in the PSNI Holding Centre in Knock, every Northern Irish politician who would come to the phone, but he couldn't uncover anything new about Cano. The official line was, "Connor McGuire has been arraigned and charged with providing material support to suspected terrorists. Since the investigation is ongoing and is related to national security, no further information will be provided at this time."

But then a little after 8:00 AM, on October 21st, a man in a gray suit knocked on the front door of Jimmy's home in Belle Harbor. When he opened the door, his son's dog, Banshee, was at his side. The man in the suit took a small step back and kept an eye on the dog, easy to do since she was ninety-five pounds. There was a black van with tinted windows parked at the curb twenty feet away. Jimmy had seen the van before. The

house up the block, the one on the corner of 135th Street and Cranston, had been vacant for about a month. One morning, a few days ago, as Jimmy was on his way to work, he noticed the van parked in the driveway and the “For Rent” sign gone. It seemed harmless enough at the time.

The man standing on the stoop was tall, at least six-four with broad shoulders. A *former football player*, Jimmy thought. He was white, had gray eyes which matched his suit, and a military style haircut: buzzed close on the sides, a little longer on the top with a subtle part on the left. He identified himself as Special Agent David Kettering of the FBI. His credentials seemed legitimate. When he asked Jimmy if he could come in, the columnist smiled, stroked Banshee’s brown coat, and told her to sit.

“Not until you tell me why you’re here.”

He handed Jimmy a letter and said, “This is a National Security Letter from the Department of Justice.”

Jimmy had a pen in his hand and he used it to break the seal. The first line said, “The Department of Justice has learned that you are in possession of documents which may . . .”

“What’s this?” he asked.

“A little over two weeks ago, a man named Connor McGuire contacted you . . .”

No emotions. Jimmy thought. Be a stone. Don’t touch your face. It shows you’re nervous. Don’t react.

“. . . McGuire was detained and questioned about his involvement with a terrorist organization, the IRA. Mr. McGuire is being investigated by an Allied government . . .”.

The IRA? Jimmy thought but said, “What does this have to do with me?”

“Mr. McGuire is in serious trouble in Northern Ireland and we have reason to believe he sent you information that might be useful to the investigation.”

“Reason? What reason?”

The agent looked around. “I’d prefer not to have this conversation on the front steps of your home. May I come in?”

“Do you have a warrant?”

“No, sir.”

“Then I don’t give a shit what you’d prefer.”

Kettering took a deep breath and slowed his speech. “As I said, we know that Mr. McGuire has been in touch with you via e-mail. We also know that he mailed a document to you. That letter,” he said gesturing with his head, “directs you to preserve all of your electronic files and any tangible items relevant to Mr. McGuire while I seek a subpoena to obtain them.”

How do they know about my email? Tangible items? A subpoena? Be cool. “You still haven’t told me why you think this involves me.”

“We have evidence . . .”, Kettering said.

“What evidence?”

“Look, Mr. O’Hara, I think it would be better if I came in . . .”

Amazingly, a low growl rose up in Banshee’s throat and Kettering slid his foot down one step.

“You can’t come in. And for me to take this bullshit seriously, you’re gonna have to explain. Right here. On my stoop.”

Kettering sighed and backed down the stoop. “Give me a minute, please, Mr. O’Hara.”

“A minute’s all you got. I have to go to work,” Jimmy said as Kettering walked back to the van.

The driver lowered the window and spoke to Agent Kettering in hushed tones. As the window rose, Jimmy saw that the driver had taken out his phone. Kettering walked around to the passenger side and got in.

When the agent returned, he said, “You’ve been under surveillance, Mr. O’Hara. A short time ago, we obtained a FISA warrant, the Foreign Intelligence . . .”

“I know what FISA stands for.”

“Good. We obtained a warrant that allowed us to read your e-mail messages and listen to your cell phone conversations.”

“You tapped my phone?”

“Since we had reason to believe that you had been in touch with someone who was suspected of international terrorism, we were authorized to monitor your electronic communications.”

“I’m going to call the *Sentinel*.”

“Before you call, you should read the letter in full. I need you to know you are hereby ordered to preserve . . .”

“You already said that. I’m good at listening. I’m a journalist.”

“Right. Well, the letter also warns you that Section 215 of the Patriot Act prohibits you from discussing this letter with anyone, other than a lawyer. Not your editor, not your agent. Not your wife.”

“My wife doesn’t live here.”

“We know.”

“Fuck you!”

“Please read the letter, Mr. O’Hara. If you discuss this with anyone other than your lawyer, you will be arrested and charged with obstruction of justice.”

Chapter 11

Ed Denning, chief legal counsel at the *Sentinel*, took Jimmy's call immediately.

"Jimmy! How are you? Loved your column the other day. That one about the cabbies?"

"Thanks, Ed, but I . . ."

"But you should have interviewed me. The cabbie I had the other day was a real SOB. You should have seen . . ."

"Ed! The FBI just paid me a visit."

Rather than discuss the FBI by phone, Ed Denning asked Jimmy to meet him in his office. It was on the twelfth floor of the *Sentinel* building, where the corporate brass hung out: the president of the news division, financial officers, and Denning. Jimmy didn't get up there often. His life was on the third floor with all the other journalists. But when he did make it to the upper floors, he felt out of place. Like he was stepping into the old world offices of Park Avenue executives.

Most of the ceiling lights were off. Brass desk lamps illuminated Denning's work space. The light from the huge fish tank behind him cast long dark shadows on the plush, blue carpet. The deep brown mahogany of Ed's desk and bookcases gave his office that old-world feel. Pictures of people Jimmy assumed were Denning's wife and children were neatly arranged on the built in shelves to his right. Color coordinated legal books lined the shelves. Upright file organizers were dispersed throughout the large office. *Nothing like my office*, Jimmy thought. When Jimmy sat down, the fact that the four

televisions built into the wall opposite Denning desk were turned off struck the columnist as odd. *Doesn't he follow the news?*

Denning was seated at his desk, talking to two other men when Jimmy entered. He walked across the blue carpeting to the columnist, shook his hand, and grabbed his elbow as if they were old friends. But then he said, "You lied to me Jimmy."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"When we met with Roger, I asked you if Cano sent you anything more than the e-mail you shared." Denning paused, "And you said no."

"I'm working on a story. Cano is a source. The information he shares with me is protected."

One of the other men spoke up. "Reporter's privilege doesn't give you as much protection as you think. You should have told Ed the truth."

"Who . . ." Jimmy asked, but Ed interrupted.

"These are my associates," Denning said. "Brian Fitzpatrick and Kevin Monroe."

"Why do we need them?"

"They have experience with FISA."

"What about the Patriot Act?" Jimmy asked.

"We're all learning about that," Fitzpatrick said.

Denning looked at the letter in Jimmy's hand. "Is that what Agent Kettering gave you?"

Jimmy nodded.

The lawyer held his hand out and said, "May I?"

"This letter is called an NSA letter. I've never seen one before."

“I don’t give a fuck about that letter,” Jimmy said. “Kettering said they tapped my phone, read my email! Is this true?”

“You should give a *fuck* about the letter,” Fitzpatrick jumped in. He was the one who tried to tell Jimmy about the Shield Law. There was something about the way he said “fuck” that reminded Jimmy of Queens. “This letter can be the start of a very painful process.”

Jimmy turned back to Ed Denning. “Did they really tap my phones?”

“It looks like they did. Frankly, we’re not sure why Kettering told you about FISA. The USA Patriot ACT gives the government the ability to monitor communications without subpoenas. That means they don’t have to notify you.”

“They can do this to journalists?”

“That’s a question we’re trying to answer,” Ed said.

Denning went on to explain that the language in the USA Patriot Act is vague but potentially far-reaching. He moved the mouse on his desk in tiny circles and looked at his PC. “I want you to hear the exact language of the Act.” He scrolled down and began reading: “To deter and punish American terrorists in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigating tools, and for other purposes.”

Fitzpatrick joined in: “The language is really very vague. The phrase “and for other purposes” looks like the mathematical symbol for infinity when I read it. It’s so broad, it can go on forever. Cover everything.”

“Why does that give them the right to read my email from Cano?”

“Who?” Denning asked.

“Oh,” Jimmy said. “Connor. Cano is his nickname.”

“Cano?” Denning repeated with the accent on the “o” instead of on the “a.”

“I could explain it,” Jimmy said, “but it’s a long story.”

Ed raised his hand and waved off the explanation like a parent dismisses a complaining teen. Then he said, “The FBI has that right because McGuire’s an American citizen who was charged under UK anti-terror laws. The United States government has a national security interest here. That was all the reason they needed to implicate you and use FISA. Kettering told me . . .”

“Wait a minute. You already spoke to him?” Jimmy asked.

“I called the local FBI office as soon as I got off the phone with you. Kettering called me back.”

“So quickly?”

“They’ve got your case on the fast track,” Denning said. “Kettering said MI5 is involved. They’re the ones who contacted the FBI.”

“Are you serious?”

Denning nodded.

“Are you’re sure they can come after me like this?”

Fitzpatrick jumped in again. “We aren’t sure of anything. That’s the scary thing. The use of the Patriot Act is cloaked in secrecy. There’s little precedent to go on. We don’t really know how many journalists the government has gone after because recipients of NSA letters can’t challenge them. They can’t talk about them. There’s no judicial review. Just this Orwellian power to control information.”

“Then why did they tell me I could talk to you?”

“I think they’re trying to be careful. When the FBI wants something tangible from a journalist, not emails or electronic communications, the Department of Justice requires them to negotiate first. As near as I can figure, they’re really after the document they say Connor sent to you. They’re calling it a treatise. Do you have it?”

Jimmy ignored the question and stood up. His face was red, and he began waving his arms. “Look. Cano isn’t the Unabomber. Jesus! A treatise? This is insane.”

“Calm down, Jimmy,” Denning said. He motioned to the chair. “Please sit down.”

After Jimmy was seated, Denning said, “Let’s slow down for a minute. We need to ask you some questions. Get some facts straight. Okay?”

Jimmy nodded.

“Okay. Did this Connor . . . uhm. . .,” Denning stumbled over the name, “Cano McGuire? Did he e-mail you?”

“Yes.”

“And did you respond?”

“Yes.”

“Do you have the document the FBI says he mailed to you?”

Jimmy had thought about this on his train ride into Manhattan. “Whatever I have, Ed, is relevant to a story I’m working on. Cano’s a source.”

“Reporter’s privilege is a shaky defense these days, Jimmy. I need you to be honest with me. We’re on your side.”

“Honest? Those fuckers tapped my phone! Read my e-mails. How could they do that without the *Sentinel’s* help?”

“Look, I told you, Jimmy. 911 and the Patriot Act changed the rules of the game. The FBI has powers it never had before. If they believe someone has information relevant to national security or terrorism, they now have tremendous leeway in what they can do. Think about what the government has done to reporters recently.”

Jimmy remembered some recent stories in the news. At the beginning of the year, Vanessa Leggett was jailed for five months for refusing to hand over her research to a grand jury. A few months ago, U.S. prosecutors sent a subpoena to MSNBC demanding a reporter's notes, e-mail, and other information as part of an investigation into a hacker who broke into computers at the *New York Times*. And then there was the CNN story about the *Daily Examiner* just the other day. The report still echoed in Jimmy's head: “Investigators from the Los Angeles County district attorney's office, armed with search warrants, raided two offices . . . they demanded access to the *Examiner's* computer servers in order to search for the identity of a subscriber who had posted a comment on the newspaper's website about a recent homicide at UCLA.”

Jimmy looked at Ed. “This is New York. We're the *Sentinel*. I'm a columnist.”

“They've been testing the waters for a year now Jimmy. I think they're ready to push the envelope with you”

“I'm not turning over my source.”

Ed looked around at his associates. “We're not asking you to do anything now. As far as we can tell, the FBI is following the book on this. We think they are going to try to negotiate with you. They don't usually do this.”

“So why do it with me?”

“Because *we are the Sentinel*. If this goes public, they will be under tremendous scrutiny.”

“Oh, it will go public.”

Fitzpatrick jumped in. “Jimmy, you can’t. Just listen to me.” He waited until Jimmy met his gaze. “Let us do our job. Give us a chance to look into this. You can’t go public with this. They’ll probably start negotiations through us, but if you refuse to turn over the documents . . .”

“I never said I had the documents.”

“Okay. I’ll say it this way. They believe you do. And what *they* believe matters to the Attorney General. If they can’t get what they think you have through negotiations, they will serve you with a subpoena. The most important thing is not to talk about this. If you do, you can be charged with obstruction of justice.”

Jimmy didn’t respond.

“Look at me Jimmy,” Fitzpatrick said. “Just promise me you’ll keep your mouth shut until we figure this shit out.”

Queens accent or no, Jimmy didn’t know if he could trust him.

Chapter 12

It was 3:40 PM, early for Jimmy to submit his column to Roger for tomorrow's edition. But he had been planning this since his last meeting with Ed Denning and Agent Kettering three weeks ago. It went just as Denning had predicted. Kettering showed up three times to negotiate with Jimmy. He wanted the document Cano had mailed. At the first meeting, Kettering was professional and courteous. He explained that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had been watching the Belfast spy ring for a year. He wasn't sure how Cano was involved, but knew that Cano had met with Dennis Donaldson, a high ranking Sinn Fein officer. Donaldson was the leader of the ring. Kettering had a photograph of Donaldson handing an envelope to Cano. The picture had been taken by MI5.

Even though Ed had counseled him to remain silent, Jimmy asked, "What was in the envelope?"

"We don't know. The PSNI couldn't find it when they searched McGuire's hotel room. We thought you'd be able to help us."

Jimmy was silent.

At the second meeting, Kettering produced a Northern Ireland postal receipt with Jimmy's name on it. Underneath was the Ninth Avenue address of the *Sentinel*. "That just proves Mr. McGuire mailed it. It doesn't prove my client received it," Ed Denning said.

For a second time, Jimmy refused to admit he had received a package from Cano and threatened to go public. The FBI agent warned him he would be thrown in jail if he did.

At the third meeting, Kettering handed Denning a United States Postal Service log. “Connor McGuire’s package was processed at the GPO on Eighth Avenue. When it was delivered, someone would have been required to sign for it.” He looked at Jimmy. “It’s getting closer. Why don’t you . . .

“I have nothing to say.”

“Okay.” Kettering reached into the inside pocket of his gray suit jacket. He always wore gray. He handed Ed Denning an envelope. Inside was a copy of subpoena for the *Sentinel* mail log for the last three months. He looked at his watch. “About five minutes ago, one of my men served that subpoena to the VP of operations.”

Denning’s phone rang, but he ignored it. A moment later, his secretary knocked. She didn’t wait for his reply before she cracked open the door. This reminded Jimmy of the way Mrs. Tiernan stuck her head into Sister Miriam’s office all those years ago.

The secretary said, “VP Martin is on the line.”

Agent Kettering rose. He turned to Jimmy and said, “I’ll be gong now. Think about this for a couple of days. Talk it over with your lawyer. When I confirm that the package arrived in your mailroom, I’m going to march into the Attorney General’s office and have him sign a subpoena requiring you to hand over your computer, your notes, and the document.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Then you’ll be held in contempt of court.”

Jimmy knew it would take time for Roger to get to his column, but when he did, he heard the editor scream across the newsroom to an intern who was working nearby. “If O’Hara is in his office, tell him to see me.”

After Jimmy was seated, Roger closed the door and shut the vertical blinds behind the glass wall that separated his office from the newsroom. He was amused the last time Roger did this, but now Jimmy felt trapped.

He waved the column in his hand. He read the title. “FBI Threatens *Sentinel* Columnist with USA PATRIOT Act.” Jimmy watched him shake his head. “I spoke to Denning. We can’t run this.”

“You spoke to Denning? I thought you were my . . .”

“You broke the law by showing this to me. You implicated me. Did you discuss this with anyone else?”

Jimmy looked around before answering. His mind was racing. This was not the reaction he expected from his friend. *This is news. The public should know.* The televisions in Roger’s office grew louder. “Today, the New York Times is reporting . . . the FBI failed to connect all the dots about the 911 hijackers . . .” And louder. “They may have had information . . . to predict the attacks . . .” So loud that he almost got up to lower the volume. “Bush said that the 911 Commission . . . will thoroughly investigate any and all allegations that our intelligence systems failed.”

This wasn't the first time the volume of the world was cranked up inside Jimmy's head. It started when he was a child. When he had a fever, he would have this recurring dream. He was in the cockpit of a rocket ship, travelling through space at the speed of light. He was seated upside down; below him was his co-pilot. They were head to head. The G-force of the trip was so great that it was forcing Jimmy head down onto the skull of his co-pilot with bone-crushing pressure. His screams filled Jimmy head as he neared death, but there was nothing Jimmy could do. It was out of his control. Jimmy always woke just before his co-pilot died. But he woke with the grave certainty that he had died just beyond the fringes of his dream, off-set like a Hitchcock film. When Jimmy remembered this nightmare by the light of day, it seemed harmless and absurd. But at night, it became his greatest fear.

He had this nightmare one night when his mother was away, visiting a cousin. Jimmy's grandfather was in charge. When his mother left, she said, "Mind your grandfather. He's in charge." *That's silly*, Jimmy thought. *He's always in charge*. A little after midnight, little Jimmy woke with the fright of his recurring nightmare. His head was throbbing and he had the chills. The television in the living room was on and rain was falling outside. As he recalled the nightmare, the sound of the drops slowly increased until they were rocks falling onto the roof. The volume of the television rose until it sent vibrations through the walls. When he told his grandfather how he felt, the old man gave him two St. Joseph's aspirins and a glass of milk. He let Jimmy sit on his lap until the boy fell asleep. Then his grandfather carried him back to bed and tucked him in snugly. The chills were gone. But the way his grandfather had wrapped him up made him feel hot and confined. He tried to loosen the blankets, but his grandfather said. "Ah, it's alright

now, son. Keep the covers on and sweat out the fever.” Jimmy began to cry. He didn’t want to be alone. His grandfather’s voice grew stern, “Be a man, now.”

Jimmy looked around Roger’s office like he was there for the first time. *That Payne Award. For ethics? When did Roger put that up? Got that for the information he surrendered to the government. The Taliban and national security. The war effort. Told him not to. I’d be embarrassed to hang it.* Jimmy studied the photographs on the shelf of one of Roger’s bookcases. *Shit. Are those his kids? They got big. What happened to the old pictures?*

“Are you with me?”

Jimmy looked blankly at Roger.

“Did you tell anyone else?”

The volume inside his head was a constant. He struggled to talk, “You’re not . . . not running . . . my story? It’s been . . . twenty years since you . . .”

“This breaks the law Jimmy. It puts the paper in danger. Let’s go talk to Ed.”

Fitzpatrick and Monroe were with Denning, seated on thick leather chairs on each side of Ed’s mahogany desk, computers in their laps. There were no handshakes this time. The curtains were pulled back so the gray glow of the late-afternoon November sun illuminated the room.

“You can’t be here, Roger,” Ed Denning said as Jimmy and Roger entered.

“He told me everything, so what’s the difference?”

“The difference is that I’d be breaking the law by including you in this conversation.”

“You told me the gag order wouldn’t hold up in court,” Roger said.

“I said I thought it wouldn’t. But no guarantees”

“Well, you’re not going to say anything I don’t know. When Jimmy’s story came across my desk, he implicated me. So he’s fucked, not you.”

“Thanks Roger,” Jimmy said.

Fitzpatrick spoke now. “Nobody’s fucked. Nothing’s happened. We just need to advise Jimmy.”

Roger waved Jimmy’s column in the air. “And now you need to advise me.”

Fitzpatrick started to respond, but Denning stopped him. “Roger, let me . . .” He paused and looked at Fitzpatrick and Monroe. “Let us do our jobs. We need to be cautious here.”

“So be cautious with me in the room. I’m not leaving.”

“Roger, you have to . . .”

“Okay. If I leave. . .” Roger turned and grabbed the brass knob of Ed Denning’s office door. “I’m going to walk up to Davenport’s office and break the law right on the jaw. I’ll tell him what’s going on. Then we’ll both be back down here.”

“You can’t do that,” Monroe said. “You’ll just make it worse.”

“Watch me.”

Watching Roger, Jimmy’s head began to clear. He was a bulldog. Three Ivy-league lawyers weren’t going to intimidate him. Roger wasn’t going to run the column, but he wasn’t going to abandon Jimmy either.

Denning looked from Fitzpatrick to Monroe. "When Jimmy gave Roger that story, he widened the circle, not you." Monroe said. "But it's your call."

Denning leaned back in his leather chair and thought for a moment. "Fuck it," he said to Roger. "Sit down."

Denning stuck out his hand and asked for the article. The whole story was in print, from Kettering's visit to Jimmy's house three weeks ago to the negotiations in Roger's office.

"You know we can't run this," he said.

Jimmy was feeling a little better. "Since when do you work for the news division?"

"Why are you being so hostile? We're just trying to help . . ."

"The only help I need is fighting the FBI. If you can't do that . . ."

Denning opened the folder that was on his desk and pulled a sheaf of papers, bound together with a red, spring-loaded clip. He passed them to Jimmy. "This is the mailroom log Kettering wants. I have to send it by tomorrow."

"The what?" Roger asked.

Denning explained how the FBI had followed the trail of the package McGuire had sent from Belfast. "A few days ago, they learned it had been processed at the GPO on Eighth. When I send this, they'll see . . ."

"Why do you have to send it?"

Denning held the copy of the subpoena Kettering had served to the VP of operations. He finished his sentence by saying, "When I give this to Kettering, he'll know the package made it here." The room grew silent. It was darker now that the setting sun

had fallen toward New Jersey. Monroe got up and turned on a bank of lights. One of the high hats was directly over Jimmy's head. He felt like he was being grilled.

Roger turned to Jimmy. "What's in the package?"

Jimmy didn't miss a beat. "That's privileged information. I'm writing a story and Cano is a source," Jimmy said.

Fitzpatrick threw up his hands. "We've been over this. Reporter's privilege won't . . ."

"So call his bluff."

Ed stared at Jimmy. "Do you want to send Floyd Martin to jail?"

"I'm missing something," Roger said.

"Floyd was served with this," he held up the subpoena, "because he controls the mailroom. If we don't turn it over, he goes to jail."

The men sat in silence. Jimmy could feel their eyes on him. He didn't meet their collective gaze. *They want me to say something*, he thought. But he stared out the darkening window as if there was a fireworks display over the Hudson.

Roger was the first one to speak. "Can we go back to the idea of reporter's privilege? Why doesn't that . . ."

Fitzpatrick interrupted as if he knew what Roger was going to ask. "They're saying that Jimmy wasn't acting as a journalist when he received the package." He suddenly realized that he had cut Roger off. "Is that what you wanted to know?"

Roger nodded. "But I still don't understand."

"Kettering is claiming Jimmy was acting as a friend when he received the package."

“That’s preposterous,” Jimmy said.

Fitzpatrick reached for a folder on Denning’s desk and removed the emails that Cano had sent to Jimmy in early October and the flurry of unanswered ones that Jimmy sent after Cano was apprehended. “The FBI sent us these,” he said. “The PSNI recovered these from McGuire’s e-mail account. They show that he thinks of you as his friend.” He read one that Cano sent when he first arrived in Belfast. He thanked Jimmy for helping him arrange the trip and signed it *Your friend*. “Kettering says there are more of these.” Fitzpatrick passed them to Roger.

Jimmy felt flushed again. His vision was a little blurry. The volume of their voices began to grow and he tried to calm himself. He looked into the huge fish tank across the room. The gentle dance of the fish. *It lowers the blood pressure, maybe it will .*

..

“So the Shield laws don’t work for a friend? What happens if that friend gives you a tip?”

Denning explained that protection under the shield law was fuzzy. The intent of the New York Shield law was to help journalists to protect their sources. But the case the FBI was building against Jimmy was federal. And there were no federal shield laws.

When cases like these reach the courts, he said, judges are not sympathetic to journalists.

But Roger persisted. “C’mon, Ed, that’s not true. The court has upheld reporter’s privilege. Wasn’t there a case in the eighties . . .”

Monroe cut him off. “That was Zarelli v. Smith. It was a civil case. The judge ruled in favor of the journalist, but he took a lot of heat for his decision. Many jurists disagreed.”

Jimmy concentrated on his breathing and the waltzing fish. The soothing hum of the filter put Jimmy into the rhythm of Belle Harbor, where the rise and fall of the tide gave balance to his world. The voices were coming back to normal.

Brian Fitzpatrick was talking now. "Have you ever heard of Judge Richard Posner?" he asked Roger.

"Sure. The appellate court justice in Illinois."

"Right. He is one of the senior judges on the seventh circuit. One of the most respected jurists in the country. And one of the most conservative. He's getting ready to hear a case very similar to Jimmy's. *McKevitt v. Pallasch*."

Jimmy was back.

"McKevitt was charged in Ireland with membership in a banned terrorist organization, the IRA. Allegedly, he was responsible for the Omagh bombing. Do you remember that?" he looked at Jimmy.

He wasn't firing on all cylinders, but he remembered Omagh: "Over 200 hundred people injured. Close to 30 killed."

Fitzpatrick continued: "The Irish government's main witness against McKevitt is an IRA informer. That's where Pallasch comes in. He's a *Chicago Sun Times* reporter. Coincidentally, he's been working on a biography of the informant. And he recorded a series of interviews for his book. According to McKevitt's lawyers, the interviews would exonerate their client, so they petitioned an Illinois court to force Pallasch to turn over the tapes. And of course, Pallasch refused, citing reporter's privilege." Fitzpatrick grabbed a glass of water on Ed's desk and took a sip. "The Illinois court judge ruled in McKevitt's favor and after a series of appeals by Pallasch's lawyers, the case has made its way to

Posner on the seventh circuit. That's where it is now." Fitzpatrick paused and looked at Denning.

Denning continued: "Legal scholars have been following this case. One scholar wrote about a recent line of questioning between Pallasch's attorney and Posner. He asked the attorney to explain why this case was different from a famous landmark decision in the seventies."

Jimmy's stomach tightened, like a spasm, but he asked anyway. "What case?"

"*Branzburg v. Hayes*"

"Fuck," Roger said.

"In 1972, the Supreme Court ruled . . ."

Roger cut Denning off. "We know the case. You don't need to explain . . .".

But Denning continued, "The Supreme Court ruled that reporter's privilege is not guaranteed by the First Amendment."

Chapter 13

Jimmy needed a confidante. Kettering was right. He had the package. But he didn't know what to do. Cano had been writing a memoir. Most of it was harmless. There were short chapters about his father, information he discovered by reading old newspaper clips, stories he learned by talking to his mother and to Jimmy. Then there were longer chapters on the Troubles, where he recreated the evolution of the urban war in Northern Ireland. He speculated about how his father was drawn into it. Where he fit. There were chapters on the hunger strike and the Maze prison. After this, Cano poured out his soul. Explained the void he felt. Father loss he called it. Some of it was angry. Cano had obviously read about the stages of grief because he called what he was going through post grief. Jimmy thought this phrase was spot on. All of this was gathered into chapters Cano called "How I Became the Hunger Striker's Son."

What worried Jimmy was the section Cano called the epilogue. This is where he struggled to make sense of it all, especially his father's death. His "suicide." Cano used quotes around the word. He wasn't convinced his father took his own life. This is where the narrative shifted. It was clearly Cano, but not. It reminded Jimmy of how his old audio cassettes played when the batteries in his radio began to die. The song was still there, just slower and slightly transformed. Here Cano developed his conspiracy theories. And this is where it got a little scary. Sometimes he blamed the British and the PSNI and vowed to take revenge. Other times he said it was the IRA that had betrayed his father.

Read in a vacuum, Cano's memoir and epilogue were no different than the journal Jimmy kept when he was a child. This is when the stories his grandfather had told him about Irish history began to coalesce. This is when he internalized them and made them his own. He idolized the revolutionary figures in Irish history, the men and women who gave their lives for Irish independence. He felt their pain. Identified with their struggle. Believed in their Cause. When he was twelve, Jimmy donned his own radical cape when he wrote, "I can see myself dying to help Ireland be free." It was innocent pre-adolescent fantasy more in keeping with the cartoon *Johnny Quest* than real-world radicalism. But if anyone but his grandfather had seen that, they would have thought Jimmy had gone off the deep end. Clearly Jimmy hadn't. He got over it, went to college, started a career. The problem was that Cano's memoir would not be read in a vacuum.

Jimmy needed a new perspective to help him sort things out. He immediately thought of Patty, but talking was something they didn't do well these days. There was her anxiety disorder of course, but there was the other thing, too.

They were in therapy because of Sean, making progress, moving beyond the blame game Patty was playing. She believed that Jimmy had coerced Sean into becoming a photojournalist. In their sessions, Jimmy descended into the role of the victim. "I'm hurt that you could think that," he said. "How can you blame me? Sean made his own way in life." But Jimmy was never comfortable with playing the victim. His grandfather had taught him that. "There are only heroes in our families," he told Jimmy again and again. "Never victims. Never losers." That was the Irish way. Jimmy had studied abroad in Belfast during his senior year of college. He was interning for the *Irish News*, the

Republican paper that favored the world view of Sinn Fein and the IRA. That was the year an all-Catholic Rugby team from the Northern Irish city of Derry made it to the first round of the world cup. And their opponent? A scrappy British team from Coventry. The game went to triple overtime and Derry lost. Jimmy was at the game in Celtic Park and he was despondent. “Don’t worry,” a friend said. “By the end of the night, after the lads have had their fill, they will have convinced themselves the loss was nothing short of heroic.”

Jimmy wasn’t a victim. The world didn’t mold him. He shaped the world. Victims made excuses. Men took responsibility. So one night, during a therapy session in March, when Patty accused him of having an affair, Jimmy took responsibility and confessed to his only affair. One affair too many. The one that happened three months after Sean died when Patty was in and out of the hospital. In retrospect, his grandfather notwithstanding, admitting it was the biggest mistake he made in his life. Some truths should remain untold.

He tried to explain, tried to help Patty see how the deaths in the last five years—first his grandfather, then his mother, and now Sean—had left him unmoored. Cast out to sea in an empty boat that was spinning out of a control. In stormed tossed waters. His boat, he told Patty, was taking on water, he was drowning, and one drunken night at the holiday Christmas party, he misinterpreted the advances of a correspondent from Belfast. He thought she was a life saver. He had a one night stand. One hour. Only ten minutes, really. He vomited as soon as he left her. The whole thing was so wrong and he was deeply sorry.

As Jimmy confessed, Patty reaction surprised him. She listened intently but seemed disconnected, like he was talking about some other couple. Then she exploded. “Don’t talk to me in metaphors you asshole. You wanna talk about empty?” Patty had said. “Empty! I lost my parents. Then I lost my son. I’m empty, emptier than you could ever imagine.” She began to cry and the therapist moved to console her, but she pushed his hand away. “I carried that boy. He grew inside *my* body. I bled delivering him. And now he’s gone. I feel his loss here,” she said, pounding her belly. She grabbed the soft flesh of her abdomen: “This is what’s empty. But you don’t see me trying to fill it with dick, you pig.”

Patty left Jimmy that night and moved in with Alannah and her husband in their home in Garden City. She talked about getting a divorce and actually hired a lawyer that Jimmy paid for, but she never filed the papers. For this, he was grateful because it gave him hope. But it still meant that his number one confidant was gone.

So he called Alannah and took her out to dinner in Garden City. They went to Leo’s. The restaurant that Jimmy and Patty called their place. The owner was always glad when Jimmy dined there because he was well known. Even though the town always had an air of exclusivity, Doubleday publishing executives once lived there as did the heirs to the Motts apple juice fortune, newspaper readers eschewed the *New York Times* and read the *Sentinel* instead. The hostess immediately recognized Jimmy and said, “Where’s the missus?”

He lied and said she was sick. Alannah shot him a quick glance. What else could he say? We’re separated because I fucked a reporter from Northern Ireland?

The hostess led them to the booth she knew to be Jimmy's favorite. The oak, bench-style seats had classic high backs with elaborate carvings that reminded Jimmy of The Book of Kells. When Jimmy sat in those seats, he used to joke around with Patty. Said he felt like a Celtic king sitting on his throne in ancient Ireland. Before he gave up drinking and before Patty gave up on him, he would toast her as his queen. Now, the booth felt alien and hard without Patty there. Jimmy and his daughter made small talk as they ate burgers and looked out onto Franklin Ave and the line of imitation gas lamps that were meant to recall the year 1942 when Leo's was built. Some passersby recognized Jimmy and waved.

After they ate, he told her about Cano, the FBI, and the lawyers. She asked what would happen next.

"Once they get the mail records and see that I received Cano's package, they'll hit me with subpoena."

"And then?"

"The lawyers will duke it out. It could be in the courts for weeks. Maybe months."

"Will you win?"

"Not sure."

"What happens if you lose?"

"A judge will find me in contempt."

"What does that mean?"

Jimmy took a big gulp of water and wished he hadn't given up drinking. He blamed alcohol for his affair. But that was an excuse. Eventually it would have happened even without the drink. He needed to feel something more than grief because after Sean

died, that was all he was able to feel. He wanted just one night when the grief didn't seem like it was infused into his blood. It was pure selfishness. He realized that now.

Alannah asked her question again and Jimmy said, "I could end up in jail."

Alannah was still picking at her sweet potato fries and almost choked on one. "You can't go to jail," she said in between coughs. "Think about your grandchildren. Think about Mom."

"You think your mother cares?"

"I know she does. She's just really angry."

"Yeah. And if there's one thing your mother can hold onto. . ."

"Don't say it, Daddy. She's confused. She still loves you. She says it all the time."

"She does?"

Alannah continued as if she hadn't heard him. "But in the same breath, she says she hates you for what you did. There are days when she can imagine forgiving you. Then she goes the other way. Says it took her twenty years to build faith in you, and she doesn't know if there are enough years left for her to feel that way again."

Jimmy lost his nerve after dinner. During his drive home, he wondered if he had it in him to go to jail. Was he really that full of principle? Could he sacrifice himself like that? Subject himself to miserable conditions? Live in an eight by eight cell? Wear prison jump suits? Eat bad food? Endure isolation and pain? He always thought he was that guy. But now that he was on the brink, he wasn't so sure.

His cell phone rang. The caller ID said Alannah.

"If you're doing this," the voice said, "because you think I'll feel sorry for you, forget it."

“Hello to you, too, Patty.”

She didn't respond.

“This isn't about you Patty.”

“Then what's it about? Think of the grandkids.”

“Alannah said I should think about you.” Jimmy heard the muffled sound of a hand covering the mouthpiece. Even though her voice was just above a whisper, he thought he heard Patty say, “Why would you say that?”

Jimmy dropped the phone in his lap when a police car passed him. Patty was talking again. By the time he brought it back to his ear she was saying, “Are you there?”

“A cop passed me. I had to drop the phone.”

“It would have served you right to get a ticket.”

“You called me,” Jimmy said.

“You answered.”

It went on like this for a few minutes, each of them jabbing at the other. Trying to bruise, maybe draw blood. Before she hung up, she asked, “What is it about you? What are you chasing?”

Roger had asked Jimmy a similar question. What was he chasing? Was he running toward something? Or away?

After a few miles, Jimmy's resolve hardened. If his conversation with Alannah had given him doubts, the one with Patty spun him the other direction. He felt like a weather vane. During a restless night's sleep, his recurring nightmare returned and the doubts bubbled up again, like soapy water in the shower when the drain is clogged with hair.

He decided to call his friend Sy.

Chapter 14

When it came to investigative reporting, there was no one better than Seymour Hersh. Sy had broken stories about Watergate, the Vietnam War, and Iraq. He went after generals, senators, and presidents. It didn't matter. The bigger the better. He was fearless. A lone wolf in the wilderness of secret deals and government cover ups.

Sy Hersh rose to fame in 1968 with his report on the Mai Lai Massacre, when U.S. army soldiers murdered hundreds of innocent Vietnamese civilians and tried to cover it up. His investigative journey began with a tip about an unnamed soldier who was facing a secret court martial for the massacre. Sy began to dig. Phone calls. Clandestine interviews. Freedom of information requests. In his search for information, he subtly suggested that he was a military officer in civilian clothes. That was a good day. On the bad, doors were slammed in his face. His livelihood was threatened, but he continued to dig.

Early in their relationship, Hersh once told Jimmy that an investigative reporter was like an archaeologist. A comparison Jimmy never forgot. When an archaeologist is on a site, he removes each layer of dirt with care. He caresses it, sifts it to see what is left after the dirt is removed, and analyzes the remains. No matter how small they are. The archaeologist knows the best clues are sometimes the ones he can barely see. It's painstaking work, and even when he digs deep enough, all he finds is mummified truth. And then he unwraps that.

When Sy came to the phone, he said, “James, how are you?” He was one of two people in the world who called Jimmy by his full name. The other was his grandfather. That’s why he liked Sy so much. “Got any good tips for me?”

“Why would you need a tip from a guy like me?”

“A guy like you? Don’t underestimate yourself, James.”

“I write a column, Sy.”

“And a damn good column. One of the best around.”

Jimmy didn’t always feel like one of the best. Sometimes his column felt like a chore. A task. A product that had to be fabricated and sold. A commodity. Is that what his stories were? Is that what the truth was? Something that could be bought and sold?

“I appreciate that, Sy, but there’s a big difference between a column and investigative books like yours.”

“The only difference is length, James. You have that kind of writing in you. I always said that.”

“Yeah, well.” Jimmy paused long enough to hear conversations and music in the background. “Did I catch you at a bad time?”

“I have some guests. But I’m never too busy to talk to you.” It sounded like Sy sipped a drink. “As a matter of fact, I’ve been thinking about you.”

“Oh yeah? Why?”

“I’ve been following the stories in the *Times* about the Belfast spy ring. And that kid from the Bronx. It sounds like there’s a fascinating story there.”

This is why Jimmy liked Sy. They shared something. A wavelength. A frequency. Something that put them on the same plain. His grandfather came to mind again. When

Jimmy told his grandfather that he was serious about a girl, the old man said, “Hmmm. Patty, I’d say.” Didn’t even ask it as a question. Just said it like he had known all along.

“You’re uncanny, Sy. Sometimes I think you can read my mind.”

“Are you calling about the spy ring?”

Jimmy didn’t respond until Sy called his name. Then he said, “What I’m about to say is illegal. I could end up in jail for telling you.”

“Let me escape into the other room,” Sy said.

Jimmy broke the law for a second time and told Sy all about Cano and the FBI. It felt good to have someone’s undivided attention. Sy was a great listener. He let Jimmy talk and didn’t judge. Every once in a while, he’d punctuate one of Jimmy’s sentences with a long drawn out “HmMMM” or “Ahhhh” as if he were listening to a familiar symphony. When Jimmy was silent, Sy waited for him to fill it. The only time Sy asked a question was when Jimmy withheld information. *No wonder he writes such great books,* Jimmy thought.

After he was done, Sy said, “We’re living in frightening times, James. The Patriot Act is an attack on us not on terrorism. I’ve been hoping for one of those NSA letters. That’s when I’d know I had my next great story.”

Jimmy laughed.

“Seriously. I thrive on that, even at my age.”

“What would you do, Sy?”

“Do you mean if I received one?”

“Yeah.”

“I’d dig even harder. Like the fossil hunter who sees the tip of a bone and imagines a brontosaurus under his feet.”

Jimmy felt butterflies and chills run down the back of his neck.

“So you’d keep on pushing?”

“Of course I would.”

“What would you do if they subpoenaed your notes? Asked to see your sources?”

“I’d tell them to go fuck themselves,” Sy didn’t curse often, but when he did, it was well-placed. “And then I’d make copies and send them to a trusted friend. Just to be sure.”

“Would you go to jail?”

“Now that’s a tough one. If you’re in jail, you’re out of the loop. You’re not investigating. You’re not writing. And that’s what they want.”

“But if you had a trusted source? Someone you were trying to protect?”

Seymour Hersh was silent for too long. Just when Jimmy was about to ask if he was still there, Sy said, “If I was faced with revealing a source or going to jail, I’d choose jail. It would be a sacrifice, though. If a guy like you goes to jail, the world’s going to know. And there will be a gaggle of reporters on the trail that you blazed. If you go to jail, someone else might tell your story. That’s the chance you take.” Then he added. “But there will always be another story.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of.”

“What do you mean?”

Jimmy was afraid that his time was running out. Was this the story he was made to tell? What if this was a once-in-a-lifetime thing? Then he swung back the other way.

With everything that's going on, why does this matter so? Shouldn't he be thinking of his marriage? Then there was the other thing. Is Cano just a story? This was all way too complicated to share with Sy, so Jimmy said, "I'm a columnist. Always working toward the next deadline. It distracts me. I can't just stop to write a long investigative piece. I'm not like you."

Sy's end of the phone was quiet again. Jimmy could feel him thinking. "You've been with the *Sentinel* for almost your whole career, haven't you?"

"Well, I was at a real small local in New Hampshire when I started. Then out to Chicago for my first big break. And the *Sentinel* after that."

"But you've always been with a tabloid, right?"

"Yes."

"That's your problem right there. You're institutionalized, James. Part of a team. Beat reporters, rewrite men, copyboys and editors, photographers and graphic people, advertising salesmen, presidents and vice presidents. A publisher."

"But that's how you put out a paper."

"Exactly. As a columnist you're part of that team. The daily product is your goal. Investigative reporters work alone over protracted periods of time. They reveal hard truths, James. Ultimately, institutions have other interest. Advertisers. Shareholders. Sometimes they get in the way of the truth."

"So you're saying the *Sentinel* has me in shackles? That's a bit melodramatic, isn't it?"

"Look at what you're facing right now. You're telling me you have this story, right? The FBI is chasing you and threatening you with the Patriot Act."

“Yeah.”

“And Roger is pressuring you to drop it, right?”

“Not Roger.”

“Not yet, James. When you get down to it, editors are company men.”

Jimmy thought about his cut story but said, “I never saw Roger that way.”

“Scratch deeper. You’ll find the company man.”

Jimmy changed the subject. “So far, I feel like the pressure’s coming from the lawyers. They keep talking consequences. Subpoenas. Jail. I feel like they’re trying to scare me.”

“Have they advised you to turn over the document?”

“Not in so many words.”

“Do they know you have it?”

“It’s pretty obvious once you look at our mail records.”

“Have you admitted it?”

“Not yet.” More silence and then, “What would you do Sy?”

“You just said I’m not like you, James.”

“I know, but I need an objective perspective.”

Sy laughed. “I can’t be objective when it comes to a good story. I only know one way. I’d chase the story. I’d protect my sources, because without sources, I’m nothing. And I wouldn’t turn over a single fucking page. If they served me with a subpoena, I’d rip it up and let them arrest me. Then I’d let the chips fall where they may.”

Jimmy started to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Sy asked.

“Your nerve. You . . . you just astound me. How do you keep doing it?”

Hersh started slowly. “It’s the chase Jimmy. I love it. I’d suffocate without it. Tracking down the sources. Not quitting at dead ends. Facing your fears. Calling back after someone hangs up on you. Knocking again when an irate cop with his hand on his holster slams a door in your face. Calling the bluff of a CEO who threatens your job. Being proud when the president of the United States calls you ‘a terrorist of American journalism.’”

“I was thinking about that the other day, Sy. That made you proud? To be called a terrorist?”

Sy turned the question on him: “How did you feel when Maggie Thatcher blacklisted you?”

“Like a million bucks.”

“Then you and I are more alike than you think. There’s no better feeling in the world than knowing you saw through the bullshit, followed a story no one even knew existed, and reported it to its core. And then watched people jump up and down when you publish the truth.”

Chapter 15

Jimmy loved St. John's cemetery in Middle Village, Queens. He didn't admit this often, but when he did, people who knew the place looked at him with their heads slightly askew as if to say, "Really?" St. John's was in a rotten section of Queens, on Metropolitan Avenue, one of the ugliest roads in the city by far. It was pockmarked with potholes and clogged with angry motorists with obnoxious car horns. Buses belched toxic fumes into the soot-filled air. The elevated, rusty span of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway cast long, dark shadows across chop shops and bodegas. When the traffic was moving on the highway above, a constant hum filled the air. It sounded like a mosquito buzzing before the bite. Jimmy would agree that the world outside the cemetery was rancid, but once inside the wrought iron gates of St. John's, the world changed.

Even though there were gravesites in the cemetery that were only a few feet from the crumbling red brick wall of the BQE, there were other spots that invited reflection and meditation. It wasn't hard to find shaded hamlets with gentle rolling hills. Or green grass and tree-lined roadways. In many places, knee-high tomb stones eulogized the dead. Some spoke of "supportive fathers," others of "devoted husbands," but many more of "loving mothers." Tall monuments and Gothic statues gave texture to the landscape. Imposing gray crypts suggested that Middle Village may have once been opulent. And if you went there on a clear, late-afternoon day in November, and chose your spot carefully, you could watch the setting sun fill the Manhattan skyline with an orange light that made

the Empire State Building glow. It was only there for a moment. And then it was gone. Like a fleeting soul.

Truth be told, Jimmy had a thing for cemeteries. He visited St. John's seven times a year. Three for birthdays, two for Father's and Mother's Days, one each for Christmas and Easter. Now that Sean was here, he'd be there eight times a year. He enjoyed the birthday visits the most, if one could enjoy a cemetery visit. On these days, the cemetery was empty and peaceful. He could think and remember better times. "Different times," Patty had encouraged him to say before their troubles. "The times weren't better. That would make the present time worse. They were just different."

The holidays were hard for Jimmy when St. John's turned into Grand Central Station. "Hyperbole," Patty would sing when he said this. "It was just busy." And Jimmy did more than his part to add to the crowds. He had a routine on Easter and Christmas. "A pilgrimage" Patty called it. Jimmy visited four cemeteries before the holidays: St. John's, Woodlawn in the Bronx, Calvary in Maspeth, and Resurrection in Staten Island. It was an all-day affair. His "Day of the Dead," Patty named it. On the holidays, he not only visited his grandfather, his mother, his father, and Sean in St. John's, but he also visited the gravesites of Patty's parents, his three uncles, Patty's two aunts, one cousin who died in the Korea, and his grandmother who was buried with her family on Staten Island. He never understood the choice his grandmother made to be buried on Staten Island rather than in Queens with her husband. But he was glad his grandfather was close by.

On each of his Days of the Dead, Jimmy spent more than five hundred dollars on palm crosses and grave blankets for thirteen gravesites. Over a thousand dollars a year. Plus the flowers and arrangements for the birthdays. A small fortune. In addition to the

money, he had to deal with traffic in three different boroughs. Crazy drivers on the highways. And bad food because he ate on the run. Aside from his wife, no one ever thanked him, because he refused to advertise his visits. He didn't visit gravesites for praise from the living; he did it to honor the dead. Because it was the right thing to do. So on the day after his conversation with Sy, Jimmy made an unscheduled visit to St. John's. He needed help.

At the time, his phone conversation with Sy made perfect sense. Jimmy had to protect his sources. Of course he'd ignore the subpoena. He'd go to jail willingly and let the chips fall where they may. But Jimmy didn't want to go to jail. He had a bad back and sleeping in an unfamiliar bed made it worse. If he didn't use his Tempur-Pedic pillow with memory foam, he got a stiff neck. And if he didn't listen to the steady hum of his fan, it took him three times as long to fall asleep. What prison guard would enable such nonsense? He'd be laughed out of the place. The other problem was that Sy saw things very clinically. It was the story that mattered to him. Always the story. But that line of thinking reduced Cano to a text. Dehumanized him. "Cano's more than a story," he told himself again and again. But was he? Was Jimmy being honest with himself? Wasn't Cano's story as fascinating as Sy had said? Why was Jimmy so intent on "saving" Cano anyway? Why was it his responsibility? Maybe this was the big story he'd been looking for. The one that would give him the satisfaction, the fix, he craved. The story that would keep him distracted from his disintegrating life. He hoped a trip to St. John's would help him answer these questions.

Jimmy knew his way around St. John's by heart. At the other cemeteries, he needed a list to keep the other gravesites straight. He used hand-sketched maps, so he

could find his way. But once he turned off Metropolitan Avenue, he could find his way to the O'Hara plots with his eyes closed. Section 39. Range M. Graves 13 and 14, the pair under the shade of an oak tree, on the gentle swell of a hill. His grandfather and son shared the same grave. Two Sean O'Haras on the same stone: their births separated by seventy-one years; their deaths by four. His mother and father were on the other.

Elizabeth Grace O'Hara: 1932-1999. "Our shining star." Brendan Patrick O'Hara: 1931-1962. "Brendan the Bolt Man. He rode the High Steel."

Jimmy's father was an iron worker. A man who walked the high steel with the Mohawk Indians of Brooklyn. And was proud for it. Once the foundation for a skyscraper was poured, Brendan and his crew rushed in and built the skeleton frames of buildings that clawed at the heavens. As the building grew, great cranes reached down to swing huge iron girders into place. Brendan rode these like a cowboy rode a bucking bull. There was a picture in the family album of Jimmy's father sailing through the air, one hand on the cable supporting the steel beam and the other holding four-foot wrench. He was all smiles. Brendan was a bolt man; he bolted girders into place. He made the first connection. "The most important connection," he said. Then the rivet men followed behind him to make it permanent.

In 1962, he was working on the Verrazano Bridge. He was climbing up to the top of the tower closest to Staten Island to inspect the cable connections. It was his last run of the day. A less experienced man was with him. Half way up, his partner said, "I forgot my safety harness." When they got to the top, Brendan gave his harness to the man. Instead of securing the guide rope to the safety ring on the tower, Brendan ran the rope through it and attached it to his belt. Like an umbilical cord. It was a windy day and

Brandon reminded his partner to lean into the wind. But only a little bit. They paused to admire the setting sun and the sparkling trail it made in the water, like the wake of a great ship. Then they got to work. But the wind suddenly subsided, and the man lost his balance and reached out for Brendan. They both fell. Brendan was suspended in an awkward position, his back to the water below, and as he twisted to grab hold of the ladder welded into the tower, his belt snapped. He plunged 693 feet into the gray water of the Narrows. He was the second man to die on the bridge. Jimmy was ten.

Iron work is a trade that's usually passed down from father to son, like an inheritance. It wasn't uncommon for an iron worker to be atop one building in lower Manhattan and look uptown to another and say, "My grandfather built that one and my father the other." Someone once said that the skyline of Manhattan is an iron worker's family tree. A nice thought. But Brendan's death uprooted their tree. His mother lost her husband to the high steel. She wasn't going to risk her only son. Tradition be damned. Jimmy's grandfather agreed. Even though he was an iron worker himself, a welder, he was more cerebral, which made him more critical and less a slave to tradition. He always said if he had finished school, he would have been a history teacher, not an iron worker. He read all the time. Mostly Irish history, but he dabbled in American, too. His favorites were the naval battles of World War II. He loved the big ships. Before he escaped from Belfast, Jimmy grandfather had apprenticed in the Belfast shipyards, but there was no future there for him as a Catholic. When he escaped to America in the 1930s, he found work in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When it closed in 1966, he worked on Manhattan's skyscrapers, but he was too old to ride the high steel. Not that he wanted to. His son's death was still fresh in his mind.

Grandpa Sean's life as an iron worker left him arthritic. He often told Jimmy it was as if the molten steel had seeped into his bones and transformed his hands into frozen claws. As he aged, it became harder and harder for him to turn the pages of the history books he loved so much. So Jimmy read to him as often as he could. He remembered those moments, reading about the battles of Midway or the Guadalcanal, as he stood before his grandfather's tomb stone. The one he shared with his grandson.

Jimmy asked the Seans what he should do. He looked around before he said it. The cemetery was mostly empty, like it was on the birthday visits. An old man pulled up in a Cadillac two sections away and in range K, a slightly younger woman placed three small rocks on someone's gravestone. So Jimmy asked again, louder this time, "What should I do?" He wasn't sure what to expect. Perhaps a sign or the flash of some memory that would give him the perspective he desired. He listened, but all he could hear was the steady hum of the BQE traffic, punctuated by the blast of a car horn, the squeal of tires, and a scream that sounded like, "You stupid fuck!"

Jimmy waited. And waited. But there was no epiphany, no flash of lighting, no stone rolling away to reveal the miracle of a tomb. Just the noise of Metropolitan Avenue. Maybe he had asked the wrong question. Perhaps saying "What should I do" was asking too much. What did he expect, really? Direct intervention? A voice to provide an answer? Who did he think he was? Moses on the Mount? So he asked the question a different way. "What would Grandpa Sean do?"

The memory rushed in like a rogue wave. The one that just continues to roll up the beach when the tide is about to change. Jimmy watched it roll, certain it would run

out of force, sure not enough water was behind it, confident it would never reach him.

Until it did.

Chapter 16

They exploded through the doors of the *Sentinel* newsroom in a blur of blue and yellow, moving as a single unit. Yellow letters stood out in sharp relief against the dark blue of their hats and jackets. “FBI,” they said. “No one move.” Even though it was a cloudy December day outside, they all wore sunglasses inside. Some had on latex gloves. Others were carrying white boxes. Their suits were gone.

Jimmy stood in his office door at the north end of the newsroom and watched them enter. *This is it*, he thought. He knew this day was coming. The subpoena demanding that he release Cano’s memoir was about two weeks old. He appeared in court with Denning at his side a few days after he received it. When the judge said the court was ordering him to release the documents, Ed Denning began to speak but Jimmy interrupted him. With Ed pulling at Jimmy’s arm, he said, “I respectfully refuse to turn over the materials I received from my source. I am a New York journalist, investigating a news story, and am invoking my right under state’s shield law.” Denning apologized to the judge for the outburst. He approached the bench and negotiated a new appearance in front of the court. Three days hence, Jimmy refused to appear and waited for the FBI to come.

He had expected this moment to be heavy with the weight of the inevitability. The last two months had been plowing toward it. But the moment was devoid of weight. It was almost a relief, and the lightness of it shocked him. *Is this what Christ felt like hanging on the cross, the prophesy on the verge of being fulfilled? Relieved that they day*

was finally here? He heard Patty's voice: "You're being hyperbolic." She had a way of keeping him in check.

Jimmy was surprised by something else. He didn't panic. His mind didn't race as it had in Roger's office when the managing editor cut Jimmy's story, nor did the sounds of the room increase in volume. He was not a panicked spectator. Jimmy was completely in the moment and focused on the agents swarming through the room like bumblebees, thick and heavy with purpose. Time slowed down for Jimmy so that he noticed the smallest of details: the missing handle of the *Sentinel* mug on the rewrite desk and the poppy seeds beside it; the peeling paint on the illuminated column near the sports section; and the way the agents' gold badges sparkled in the bright fluorescent lights as they moved toward him.

For a split second his mind flashed to an NPR story explaining why moments of crisis seem to happen in slow motion. Even as he was recalling this report, he asked himself, *Why now? Why am I remembering this now?* It seemed completely absurd, but the memory unfurled like thin white sheet hanging on a clothesline, caught by a soft summer wind. In the story, the NPR reporter deconstructed the moment of crisis and demystified it. He reduced it to biology. Pure science. Survival-of-the-fittest kind of stuff. "The fight or flight mechanism takes over in a moment of crisis," he said. "The brain becomes hyperaware and notices all the small details: escape routes, weapons, weaknesses in an enemy. All of this to prepare for flight or flight. The brain doesn't slow down. It actually goes into warp speed and soaks up more information than people are used to processing. The frame-by-frame capture of data makes the experience feel like slow motion because the brain is not used to handling so much information at one time."

Jimmy stood in his office door and absorbed the details of the scene. Sister Miriam came to mind. And the way she and the other nuns had absorbed the light in the alley that day so long ago. He looked out over the vast sea of desks in the newsroom. Three staffers and a rewrite man huddled together under the six clocks in the International section. It was 9:02 PM in London. With wide eyes and gaping jaws, they stared at an agent who approached them. He pointed to some empty desks. "Sit," he ordered, like they were dogs. And they obeyed. Ted Orlofsky, one of the assistant editors, moved toward Roger who was screaming about something, but another agent gave him the same command. "Sit." The assistant editor turned to Jimmy as if to ask for permission, but when the agent repeated his command, Ted dropped his eyes and collapsed into a chair.

Coward, Jimmy thought.

Three senior editors tried to join Roger who was chasing the men in blue as they descended on Jimmy. But other agents cut them off and sent them back to the hub, the enormous horseshoe-shaped desk where editors meet to review final copy for the next edition. They looked at Jimmy and their helplessness saddened him.

From under the bank of flat screens tuned to CNN, MSNBC and God knows what else, Saul Goldstein met Jimmy's eyes and held them. He turned his head toward the FBI agents guarding the four exit doors and then to the group moving toward Jimmy. He nodded his head and clenched his fist, mouthing the words, "Be strong." Suddenly, Jimmy felt guilty for calling him the Grammar Gestapo for all those years.

Roger was running after the agents. He was waving a piece of paper in the air, shouting a command which came to Jimmy in slow fragments.

“This . . . Grab . . . Everyone . . . Film.”

When the agents were a few steps away, Roger’s words became clear. “Everyone! Grab your cameras and film this.”

And then they were on Jimmy. Turning him. Pushing him. Slamming him into the wall just outside his office. Slapping on handcuffs. They were rough with him as if they expected Jimmy to put up a fight. He laughed and said, “Take it easy. I’m not resisting. This is the way it’s supposed to be.”

Kettering was there, and Jimmy could see that the agent was surprised by his passivity. “I’m not gonna fight you, David. Do what you have to do.”

Secret Agent Kettering stuttered. “Ja . . . Ja . . . James O’Hara. You are under arrest . . . for . . . for civil contempt of court . . . You have the right to remain . . .” His words drifted away from Jimmy. He wanted to tell Kettering to calm down, but the thought of it felt too patronizing.

Three agents held Jimmy there, against the wall, while others moved into his office. One opened his cabinets and knocked over the coat rack. Another disconnected his computer and carried it out. A third collected Jimmy’s files from his desk, the shelves, and even the floor. For a moment, Jimmy smiled. *My office will actually look clean for once.* But then he saw Sean’s picture crash to the floor as the third agent stuffed the files from the shelves into a white box marked evidence. The glass shattered. The agent picked it up and yelled to Kettering, “Do we need this?”

“Leave it. It’s useless.”

The third agent let the shattered frame fall to the floor. He stepped on it as he moved.

“Be careful with that, you fuck!” Jimmy snapped. “Have some respect. That’s my son. Pick it up,” he screamed.

Now Jimmy began to resist. “You motherfuckers,” he screamed. “Pick that up!”

More agents joined the three who had handcuffed Jimmy. They grabbed at his arms and shoulders. The more they pulled at him, the harder he fought. Roger stepped forward to intervene and two more agents grabbed him.

The agents swarmed around Jimmy. They formed a shield around him the way secret service agents surround a president under siege and hurried him through the newsroom. The screams and curses invigorated Jimmy’s colleagues. Some of the photographers began snapping pictures. *Sean would have done that*, Jimmy thought. Others were taking notes on their pads. Roger was giving orders: “Someone call Denning!”

The agents marched Jimmy out of the newsroom, walking in double time, and into the hallway toward the reception area. This hallway was known as Front Page Row, where famous *Sentinel* headlines from the past were displayed.

Hitler Dead

Assassin Kills Kennedy: Lyndon Johnson Sworn In

Martin King Shot to Death

The First Footstep

I Am Death Wish Vigilante

As they passed the reception desk and the reproduction of the *Sentinel* masthead which covered the wall behind it, Davenport and Denning crashed through the elevator doors before they had fully opened. Davenport began to speak but Denning pulled him back to let the agents pass. As they manhandled Jimmy into the elevator, he met Denning's eyes and tried to stop. "Call my wife and daughter . . ." he began to say, but one of the agents pushed the palm of his hand into Jimmy's face. "Shut up and get onto the elevator."

The memory rolled up again, like a tidal wave, like it had when he was at St. John's, and Jimmy knew it would reach him. He opened himself up to him in spite of the hands that restrained him. He heard his grandfather's voice: "He who endures wins."