

## Mission to Kill by Frank Hibberd

The knife slid easily between her ribs and penetrated her heart. He caught her as she fell. The light from a street lamp allowed him to see her face, as she mutely conveyed in the last few seconds of her life that she understood the justice of the deed, and bore him no resentment, acting as he did to further a greater cause.

That was how Brian envisaged the coming action. But at that moment the headlights of a car caught them both, and their eyes met, reflected in the shop window the woman was viewing,

She turned to face him, and smiled – a good-looking middle-aged Asian woman.

‘Hello, young man. Can I help you?’ She showed no fear.

His murderous resolution crumbled as it met her simple humanity.

‘Er – no, I was just admiring that rather elegant Edwardian dining chair.’

The woman smiled again.

‘Victorian, I think. Not where one expects elegance, is it? Are you keen on antiques?’

Brian shook his head.

‘Only a passing interest. Well, very nice to meet you, but I must be off. Good night.’

‘Good night, young man. And take care! You never know who you can trust in this neighbourhood.’

They sat on adjacent gravestones. Across the road the fish-and-chip shop, the convenience store and the hairdresser’s were busy, but the churchyard was deserted.

‘Look,’ said Brian. ‘The woman was really kind – really pleasant. I just couldn’t bring myself to kill her.’

Kevin shook his head sadly.

‘Collateral damage, old man. Nice, nasty, villainous, heroic, whatever – it can’t be helped. Even family and friends.’

Brian looked doubtfully at him.

‘Is this really the right way to go?’

‘There’s no other way.’ Kevin was firm. ‘We just have to keep going. Try again this evening.’

The knife slid easily between her ribs and penetrated her heart. He caught her as she fell . . . . Brian’s preconception faltered as he felt there was something vaguely familiar about the woman.

She took a puff on her cigarette and turned towards him. Her lipstick, lavishly applied, looked as black in the light of the street lamp as her smeared mascara.

‘Fancy a quick one, dearie?’

‘Thank you, madam, but I don’t drink.’ Brian looked again. ‘Good heavens, it’s Mrs. Fielding. What are you doing here?’

‘Brian! I could ask you the same question, sweetie.’

Brian fingered the knife in his pocket. Even family and friends, Kevin had said. But no, he couldn’t bring himself to kill Kevin’s mother.

‘Well, must be off. Take care, won’t you.’

Mrs. Fielding grinned. ‘Don’t worry, I know my way around these parts, love. But do you? You never know who you can trust in this neighbourhood.’

‘Yes,’ said Kevin, ‘I can’t fault her for her venture into private enterprise. It’s what our party stands for, after all.’

‘So I shouldn’t have killed her?’

‘I wouldn’t have blamed you if you did – she was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But I suppose it’s just as well. Anyway, try again this evening.’

Brian turned to go, but turned back.

'I really don't think this is going to do any good. They had a majority of three thousand in the last election. Are we supposed to kill that many? There wouldn't even be room enough for them in this churchyard.'

Kevin clapped him on the back.

'It may take time, but don't worry, this will eat into their confidence. Just keep going!'

The knife slid easily between his ribs and penetrated his heart. He ....

Just a minute – he had a knife as well!

'Higgins! What the hell are you doing?'

'I'm on a mission. What about you?'

Brian put his knife back in his pocket.

'Don't tell me you've been talking to Kevin Fielding!'

Higgins nodded.

'You too?'

'Yeah. Let's grab him tomorrow in the churchyard.'

The three sat on adjacent gravestones.

'How the hell did you convince us to join this damn silly mission,' said Brian.

'We've been on the internet, checking out these "red revolutionaries",' Higgins said accusingly.

'Yes,' said Brian. 'They're more like timid pinkos.'

Kevin grinned.

'Pinkos, stinkos,' he said. 'They all deserve what they get.'

Brian glared at him angrily.

'We think you're a bit of a ....'

'A bit of a bastard.' Kevin finished his sentence for him. 'Yes, I am. OK, mission over. What about some ice creams. We've just got time before school.'

'As long as you're buying.'

Kevin shrugged.

'OK. Race you to the shop!'

They ran off.