

Adrian McKinty was born and grew up in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. He studied law at Warwick and politics and philosophy at Oxford before emigrating to New York in 1993. He lived in Harlem for seven years, working at various jobs, with various degrees of legality, until he moved to Denver, Colorado to become a high school English teacher. In 2008, he emigrated again, this time to Melbourne, Australia with his wife and kids. Adrian's first crime novel, *Dead I Well May Be*, was shortlisted for the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger Award and was picked as the best debut crime novel by the American Library Association. The first of the four books in the Sean Duffy series, *The Cold Cold Ground*, won the 2013 Spinetingler Award; the second, *I Hear the Sirens in the Street*, was shortlisted for the Ned Kelly Award and longlisted for the Theakston Best British Crime Novel Award. The third, *In the Morning I'll Be Gone*, won the 2014 Ned Kelly Award.

#### PRAISE FOR *GUN STREET GIRL*

'*Gun Street Girl*'s roots in historical fact render it a superb satire of its time and place' Declan Burke, *Irish Times*

'McKinty, with his machine-gun prose and cold hard characters, drops us slam-bang into the racing heart of the fourth Sean Duffy thriller. Strap yourself in' *RTE Guide*

'Duffy always reminds me of one of Iain Banks's jaded-but-idealistic narrator-heroes, and not just because of the protagonist's taste for pharmaceutical-grade cocaine. Anyone missing their Banks fix should give McKinty a go' John O'Connell, *Guardian*

#### PRAISE FOR *THE COLD COLD GROUND*

'*The Cold Cold Ground* is a razor sharp thriller set against the backdrop of a country in chaos, told with style, courage and dark-as-night wit . . . A brilliant novel with its own unique voice' Stuart Neville

'It's undoubtedly McKinty's finest . . . Written with intelligence, insight and wit, McKinty exposes the cancer of corruption at all levels of

society at that time. Sean Duffy is a compelling detective, the evocation of 1980s Northern Ireland is breathtaking and the atmosphere authentically menacing. A brilliant piece of work which does for NI what Peace's *Red Riding Quartet* did for Yorkshire' Brian McGilloway

'The setting represents an extraordinarily tense scenario in itself, but the fact that Duffy is a Catholic in a predominantly Protestant RUC adds yet another fascinating twist to McKinty's neatly crafted plot . . . a masterpiece of Troubles crime fiction' Declan Burke, *Irish Times*

'*The Cold Cold Ground* confirms McKinty as a writer of substance . . . The names of David Peace and Ellroy are evoked too often in relation to young crime writers, but McKinty shares their method of using the past as a template for the present. The stories and textures may belong to a different period, but the power of technique and intent makes of them the here and now . . . *The Cold Cold Ground* is a crime novel, fast-paced, intricate and genre to the core' Eoin McNamee, *Guardian*

'Adrian McKinty is the voice of the new Northern Irish generation but he's not afraid to examine the past. This writer is a legend in the making and *The Cold Cold Ground* is the latest proof of this' Gerard Brennan

'Detective Sergeant Sean Duffy could well become a cult figure . . . McKinty has not lost his touch or his eye for the bizarre and the macabre, or his ear for the Belfast accent and argot . . . McKinty creates a marvellous sense of time and place . . . he manages to catch the brooding atmosphere of the 1980s and to tell a ripping yarn at the same time' Maurice Hayes, *Irish Independent*

#### PRAISE FOR *I HEAR THE SIRENS IN THE STREET*

'It blew my doors off' Ian Rankin

'A strain of rough and visual, sly and lyric narrative prose in service of one hell of a story. Sean Duffy is a great creation, and the place comes alive – a uniquely beautiful and nasty part of the world' Daniel Woodrell

‘Duffy is one of the most interesting, convincing and sympathetic police officers in recent crime fiction . . . McKinty gets better and better’ Marcel Berlins, *The Times*

‘Not everyone could tackle such a splintered society, but McKinty seems to relish its challenges as much as its opportunities’ Mary Leland, *Irish Examiner*

‘This is crime fiction at its best: a police procedural with dialogue that’s crisp and occasionally lighthearted; blistering action that’s often lethal; McKinty’s mordant Belfastian wit; and a protagonist readers won’t want to leave behind’ *Booklist*

‘This novel is atmospheric, beautifully paced, precisely constructed, and genuinely hard to put down. Fans of the likes of Billingham, Rankin and Lehane will not want to miss out on McKinty’ *The Age*, Melbourne

#### PRaise FOR *IN THE MORNING I’LL BE GONE*

‘Smart and irreverent . . . a clever and gripping set-up that helps make Duffy’s third outing easily his best so far’ John Dugdale, *Sunday Times*

‘This is an older, more sobered Duffy, still unconventional and willing to take chances, but more reflective, more Sherlock Holmes and Edgar Allen Poe than Rambo and Robocop . . . there is plenty of excitement and suspense in this gripping yarn’ Maurice Hayes, *Irish Independent*

‘Structurally, *In The Morning I’ll Be Gone* is gemlike, embedding a locked-room mystery within a terrorist thriller’ *The Age*, Australia

‘Already claimed as the finest of the new wave of Irish crime writers, McKinty is as good as any novelist around. His lovely flair for language is matched by his feel for place, his appetite for redemptive violence leavened by some seriously mordant wit and his seriously cool appreciation of characters who reject conformity. His Duffy novels echo, among many, Dennis Lehane and Robert Crais’ *Weekend Australian*

Works by Adrian McKinty published by Serpent's Tail

**The Dead Trilogy**

*Dead I Well May Be*

*The Dead Yard*

*The Bloomsday Dead*

**The Sean Duffy thrillers**

*The Cold Cold Ground*

*I Hear the Sirens in the Street*

*In the Morning I'll Be Gone*

*Gun Street Girl*

*Hidden River*

*Fifty Grand*

*Falling Glass*

*The Sun is God*

**ADRIAN  
MCKINTY**

**GUN  
STREET  
GIRL**



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A complete catalogue record for this book can  
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First published in this edition in 2015 by Serpent's Tail

First published in 2015 by Serpent's Tail,

an imprint of Profile Books Ltd

3 Holford Yard

Bevin Way

London

WC1X 9HD

website: [www.serpentstail.com](http://www.serpentstail.com)

ISBN 978 1 84668 982 6

eISBN 978 1 78283 051 1

Designed and typeset by Crow Books

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Mackays of Chatham,  
Chatham, Kent

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Now the rain's like gravel on an old tin roof,  
And the Burlington Northern's pulling out of the world,  
A head full of bourbon and a dream in the straw,  
And a Gun Street girl was the cause of it all . . .

Tom Waits, 'Gun Street Girl', 1985

I do not yet know what your gift is to me, but mine to you is  
an awesome one: you may keep your days and nights.

Jorge Luis Borges, 'Blue Tigers', 1983





## 1: A SCANNER DARKLY

Sssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss . . .  
Silence.

Sssssssssssssssssssssss . . .

Silence.

‘I can’t get it, sir.’

‘Keep trying.’

‘Yes, sir.’

Midnight.

Midnight and all the agents are asleep, and on the beach there are only disaffected, cold policemen silently sharing smokes and gazing through binoculars at the black Atlantic, hoping to catch the first glimpse of the running lights on what has become known to the ironists in Special Branch as the *Ship of Death*.

Sssssssssssssssssssss . . .

Drizzle.

Static.

Oscillating waves of sound. A fragment of Dutch. A DJ from RFI informing the world with breathless excitement that ‘*EuroDisney sera construit à Paris*’.

We’re on a beach near Derry on the wild north coast of Ireland. It’s November 1985. Reagan’s the president, Thatcher’s the PM, Gorbachev has recently taken the reins of the USSR. The number-one album in the country is Sade’s *Promise* and Jennifer Rush’s torch song ‘The Power Of Love’ is still at the

top of the charts where it has remained for a dispiritingly long time . . .

Ssssssss and then finally the young constable in charge of the shortwave scanner finds the radio frequency of the *Our Lady of Knock*.

‘I’ve got them! They’re coming in, sir!’ he says.

Yes, this is what we were waiting for. The weather is perfect, the moon is up and the tide is on the ebb. ‘Aye, we have the bastards now!’ one of the Special Branch men mutters.

I say nothing. I have been brought in purely as a courtesy because one of my sources contributed a tip to this complicated international operation. It is not my place to speak or offer advice. Instead I pat my revolver and flip back through my notebook to the place where I have taped a postcard of Guido Reni’s *Michael Tramples Satan*. I discreetly make the sign of the cross and, in a whisper, ask for the continuing protection of St Michael, the Archangel, the patron saint of policemen. I am not sure I believe in the existence of St Michael the Archangel, the patron saint of peelers, but I am a member of the RUC, which is the police force with the highest mortality rate in the Western world, so every little bit of talismanic assistance helps. I close the notebook and light a cigarette for some evil-eyed goon who says he’s from Interpol but who looks like a spook from 140 Gower Street, come to keep an eye on the Paddies and make sure they don’t make a hash of the whole thing.

He mutters a thank-you and passes over a flask which turns out to contain high-quality gin.

‘Cheers,’ I say, take a swig, and pass it back.

‘Chin, chin,’ he says. Yeah – MI5.

A breeze moves the clouds from the face of the moon. Somewhere in the car park a dog barks.

The policemen wait. The spooks wait. The men on the boat wait. All of us tumbling into the future together.

We watch the waves and the chilly, black infinity where sky

and sea merge somewhere off Malin Head. Finally at 12.30 someone shouts 'There! I see her!' and we are ordered off the beach. Most of us retreat behind the dunes and a few of the wiser officers slink all the way back to the Land Rovers to warm up over spirit stoves and hot whiskies. I find myself behind a sandbar with two women in raincoats who appear to be Special Branch Intel.

'This is so exciting, isn't it?' the brunette says.

'It is.'

'Who are you?' her friend asks me in a funny Cork accent that sounds like a donkey falling down a well.

I tell her but as soon as the word 'inspector' has passed my lips I can see that she has lost interest. There are assistant chief constables and chief superintendents floating about tonight and I'm way down the food chain.

'About time!' someone says and we watch the *Our Lady of Knock* navigate its way into the channel and towards the surf. It's an odd-looking vessel. A small converted cargo boat, perhaps, or a trawler with the pulleys and chains removed. It doesn't really look seaworthy, but somehow it's made it all the way across three thousand miles of Atlantic Ocean.

About two hundred metres from the shore it drops anchor and after some unprofessional dithering a Zodiac is lowered into the water. Five men climb aboard the speedboat and it zooms eagerly towards the beach. As soon as they touch dry land the case will come under the jurisdiction of the RUC, even though all five gunrunners are American citizens and the ship has come from Boston.

Skip, skip, skip goes the little Zodiac, oblivious of rocks or hidden reefs, of which there are many along this stretch of coast. It miraculously avoids them all and zips up the surf on to the beach. The men get out and start looking around them for errant dog walkers or lovers or other witnesses. Spotting no one, they shout 'Yes!' and 'Booyah!' One man gets on his

knees and, emulating the Holy Father, kisses the sand. He has dedication, this lad – the tarmac at Dublin Airport is one thing, but this gravelly, greasy beach downwind from one of Derry's main sewage plants is quite another matter.

They open a bottle and begin passing it around. One of them is wearing a John Lennon sweatshirt. These young American men who have come across the sea to bring us death in the form of mortars and machine guns.

'Yanks, eh? They think they can do what they like, don't they?' one of the Special Branch officers says.

I resist the temptation to pile on. Although these Irish-American gunrunners are undoubtedly naive and ignorant I understand where they're coming from. Patriotism is a hard disease to eradicate and ennui stamps us all . . .

The men on the beach begin to look at their watches and wonder what to do next. They are expecting a lorry driver called Nick McCready and his son Joe, both of whom are already in custody.

One of them lights a flare and begins waving it above his head.

'What are they going to do next? Set off fireworks?' someone grumbles behind me.

'What are *we* going to do next?' I say back, loud enough for the Assistant Chief Constable to hear. I mean, how much longer are we going to have to wait here? If there are guns on the boat, we have them, and if there are no guns on the boat we don't have them, but either way the time to arrest them is now.

'Quiet in the ranks!' someone says.

If I was in charge I'd announce our presence with a loudspeaker and spotlights and patiently explain the situation: *You are surrounded, your vessel cannot escape the lough, please put your hands up and come quietly . . .*

But I'm not in charge and that is not what happens. This being an RUC-Gardai-FBI-MI5-Interpol operation we are headed for debacle . . . A high-ranking uniformed policeman begins

marching towards the men on the beach like Alec Guinness at the beginning of *Bridge on the River Kwai*.

‘What the hell is he doing?’ I say to myself.

The gunrunners don’t see him yet and the one with a flare is making it do figures of eight in the air to the delight of the others.

The uniformed officer reaches the top of a dune. ‘All right, chaps, the game’s up!’ he announces in a loud *Dixon of Dock Green* voice.

*All right, chaps, the game’s up?*

The Americans immediately draw their weapons and run for the Zodiac. One of them takes a potshot at the uniformed peeler, making him hit the deck. *I say, chaps, that’s a little unsporting*, he’s probably thinking.

‘Put your hands up!’ another copper belatedly yells through a megaphone.

The Americans fire blindly into the darkness with an impressive arsenal that includes shotguns and assault rifles. Some of the policemen begin to shoot back. The night is lit up by white flares and red muzzle bursts and arcs of orange tracer.

Yes, now we have well and truly crossed the border into the realm of international screw-up.

‘Lay down your arms!’ the copper with the megaphone shouts with an air of desperation.

A police marksman brings down one of the Yanks with a bullet in the shoulder, but the gunrunners still don’t give up. They’re confused, seasick, exhausted. They have no idea who is shooting at them or why. Two of them begin pushing the Zodiac back towards the surf. They don’t realise that they’re outnumbered ten to one and that if by some miracle they do make it back to the *Our Lady of Knock*, they’re just going to get boarded by the Special Boat Service.

The surf tosses the Zodiac upside down.

‘This is the police, you are surrounded, cease firing at once!’

the men are ordered through the megaphone. But blood has been spilled and they respond with a fusillade of machine-gun fire. I light another ciggie, touch St Michael and make my way to the car park.

I walk past the rows of Land Rovers and get in my car. I turn the key in the ignition and the engine growls into life. Radio 3 is playing Berlioz. I flip to Radio 1 and it's a Feargal Sharkey ballad – Feargal Sharkey's successful solo career telling you everything you needed to know about the contemporary music scene. I kill the radio and turn on the lights.

A box of ammo explodes with a deafening blast and an enormous fireball that I can see from here. I lean my head against the steering wheel and take a deep breath.

A very young constable in charge of car-park security taps on the driver's-side window. 'Oi, where do you think you're going?'

I wind the window down. 'Home,' I tell him.

'Who said you could go?'

'No one said I had to stay, so I'm leaving.'

'You can't just leave!'

'Watch me.'

'But . . . but . . .'

'Move out of the way, son.'

'But don't you want to see how everything turns out?' he asks breathlessly.

'Farce isn't my cup of tea,' I tell him, wind the window up, and pull out of the car park. The me in the rear-view mirror shakes his head. That was a silly remark. For out here, on the edge of the dying British Empire, farce is the only mode of narrative discourse that makes any sense at all.

## 2: A PROBLEM WITH MR DWYER

**F**ireworks behind. Darkness ahead. And if that's not a metaphor for the Irish Question I don't know what is.

Once I was off the slip road I drove insanely fast on the A6 until the carriageway ran out at Glengormley. From Glengormley it was just a short hop up the A2 to Carrickfergus. It was a cold, wet, foggy night which discouraged both terrorists and the British Army's random roadblocks, so the run was relatively easy and fortunately I didn't kill myself doing 110 mph on the stretches of motorway.

I got back to Coronation Road in Carrick's Victoria Estate at just after 1.20.

In the middle-class streets after midnight all was quiet but out here in the estates there could be *craic* at any hour. The *craic* now was two doors down, where a bunch of lads were drinking Harp lager, eating fish and chips and playing what sounded like Dinah Washington from a portable record player on a long lead outside Bobby Cameron's house. Bobby had clearly hijacked the owner/operator of a mobile chip van and forced him to provide food for him and his mates. Bobby was the local paramilitary commander who also ran a two-bit protection racket and dealt unexcised cigarettes and drugs. His stock had been low for years around here but lately had risen because, with the assistance of the Glasgow Orange Order, he had kidnapped back and deprogrammed a Carrickfergus

girl from a branch of the Unification Church in Scotland. The Moonie temple had been burned to the ground in the incident and half a dozen Moonie guards had been shot in the kneecaps. ‘Stay out of Scotland and Northern Ireland!’ was the message the crippled security personnel had carried all the way back to Korea. It was a big win for Bobby and now you sometimes heard people muttering that if ‘you want something done, don’t go to the police, go see Bobby Cameron’, which was exactly the sort of thing that the paramilitaries loved to hear.

Our eyes met. Bobby looked a bit like Brian Clough, but Brian Clough after a 3–0 defeat to Notts County.

‘You’re a wanted man, Duffy,’ Bobby said.

‘Oh yeah?’

‘Didn’t you have your police radio on?’

‘No.’

‘We’ve been listening to the scanner. They’ve been looking for you, Duffy. Miss Marple’s not available, so why not the intrepid Inspector Duffy, eh?’

‘Thanks for the tip,’ I said and locked the car.

‘You want a fish supper?’ Bobby asked. ‘I’m paying.’

I walked over to the chip van and looked at the driver, an older man with an abstract sadness about him. ‘I’m a police officer. Are you being held against your will or coerced to be here tonight?’

‘Oh no, not at all,’ he said quickly. ‘I’m just doing Bobby a favour.’

I didn’t know whether I believed him, but he didn’t look afraid for his life, which was something. ‘In that case I’ll take a sausage supper.’

The other diners moved aside to let me get to the chip-van window. It was quite the collection of crooks and ne’er-do-wells, and when my life becomes a BBC drama the casting director will love this little scene as an opportunity for showcasing his ugliest and weirdest extras.



The hijacked chipman gave me a sausage supper wrapped in newspaper and I thanked him and offered him a quid.

‘On the house,’ he said, and gestured towards Bobby.

I ate a chip or two. ‘How was Scotland?’ I asked Bobby.

‘You heard about that?’

‘Interesting fact. The Reverend Moon was raised as a Presbyterian. The Moonies are basically radical Korean Presbyterians.’

Bobby shook his head. ‘I won’t debate theology with you at two in the morning, Duffy, not when you’ve got a busy night ahead of you, but I will say that the problem with you Catholics is that you don’t understand the Protestant religion.’

‘No?’

‘Unlike your Church which is a top-down faith – Pope, cardinal, bishop, priest, congregant – ours is a democracy. Our ministers, our moderator, our elders and our congregants are all equal. That’s why the *Reverend* Moon, as you call him, could never be considered a Presbyterian, cos he sets himself above his flock.’

The Jesuits had beaten the Counter-Reformation dialectic into me to such an extent that even at this unholy hour I could have martialled half a dozen arguments against Luther, Calvin and the other heretics, but I was just too weary for any of that now. ‘Maybe you’re right. See ya,’ I said, and went inside my house.

I turned on my pager and carried the phone into the living room. If they really were looking for me they’d keep trying until they got me.

I got some ice and poured myself a pint glass of vodka gimlet and put on the best album of 1985 so far: the much-delayed release of Sam Cooke’s *Live At The Harlem Square Club*.

I drank half the pint and cranked the volume on ‘Bring It On Home’, which built to the vibe of an old church revival. When I was sufficiently solaced I dialled the station. ‘Duffy,’ I told Linda at the incident desk.

‘Thank God, Inspector! Chief Inspector McArthur has been looking for you.’

‘I’m not supposed to be on tonight. Sergeant McCrabban is duty detective.’

‘Chief Inspector McArthur specifically asked for you. He’s been very insistent. Where have you been?’

‘I was up in Derry, I just got in. I’m shattered. I really need to go to bed, Linda, love.’

‘I’m sorry, Sean, but the Chief Inspector has been pulling his hair out. He’s got a real situation on his hands. He’s asked for you specifically.’

‘Where is he?’

‘Uhm, the, uh, the Eagle’s Nest Inn on the Knockagh Road . . .’ she said with more than a trace of embarrassment.

‘McArthur is there right now?’

‘That’s what I’ve been led to believe.’

‘And he’s got himself into some kind of trouble?’

‘I’m not, er, privy to the details, Sean.’

‘All right, if he calls again, tell him I’m on my way.’

‘Do you know where it is?’

‘Uh, yes, I’ve been there before . . . in a professional capacity.’

‘Of course.’

I scarfed another couple of chips, pulled a leather jacket over my jeans and sweater and went back outside. Bobby and his cronies were playing petanque with scrunched-up beer cans and Mickey Burke was walking his aged, toothless lioness on a leash at the other end of the street, something he promised me he would stop doing.

‘Ah, they found you, Duffy!’ Bobby said triumphantly.

I held up a finger to tell Bobby I’d deal with him in a minute.

‘Mickey, what have I told you!’

‘Just getting her some air, Inspector Duffy,’ Mickey said apologetically.

‘Get her back inside! We’ve discussed this!’