

Signs of a Coming Atrocity

By

Stephen Kane

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Stevie Kane
The One Light Collective
3055 Columbus Ave NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418
USA

INT. DAVID CONLON'S LIVING ROOM, BELFAST - CHRISTMAS DAY.

PAUL, six, pushes a toy truck around, underneath a lit Christmas tree, littered with ripped wrapping paper and unopened presents.

Dressed in pajamas and seemingly lost in his own thoughts, he grabs an action figure and plants him on top of the truck, then makes ROCKET NOISES.

Slowly, he lifts the truck, treating it like a spaceship and starts spinning it around the nicely decorated room.

SEAN, nine, lounges on the sofa in his own pajamas as he plays furiously on his NINTENDO 3DS.

Every now and then, a smile breaks out on his face.

Through the door into the kitchen, MIRIAM CONLON, forty five, can be seen fiddling with the oven. She wears a simple sweater and skirt and seems at ease in her work.

She steps to the doorway, sticking her head in.

MIRIAM

You two monsters OK for something
to eat? Dinner isn't 'til after
mass.

She looks at SEAN.

He doesn't so much as blink as he plays the game.

As she's staring at him. PAUL flies past with his truck-cum-rocketship.

PAUL

Fire maximum thrusters, captain!

He runs past without acknowledging her.

She stares at no one in particular, with a dry look.

MIRIAM

No, i suppose not.

As she goes back to the oven, DAVID CONLON, forty five, in a cardigan and pressed trousers, comes in.

He stands over SEAN.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

Shift.

Without looking away from the game, Sean brings his legs up, creating a space.

David sits down, grabbing Sean unceremoniously toward him, resting him on his chest. Sean doesn't complain, but keeps playing.

David grabs at a TV remote, aims, and CLICKS.

The TV opens at a NEWSROOM, in the middle of a newscast.

The NEWSCASTER is a younger middle aged woman in a dress suit and the obligatory serious face.

NEWSCASTER

The latest spate of violence in the province has seemingly been put on hold for the Christmas holidays.

David's eyebrows raise a little.

NEWSCASTER (cont'd)

A spokesperson for the newly reformed Loyalist Volunteer Force has announced a "Cease of operations", from today until the end of the year. We now turn to Stephen Montgomery, reporting from Portadown.

David straightens in his seat as the channel switches to YOUNG REPORTER standing in a dreary, somewhat snowy street.

REPORTER

The Loyalist Volunteer Force, or LVF, has been at the forefront of the resurgence of violence in Ulster since Nationalist politicians gained a majority in the new assembly. On the heels of other paramilitary groups, today, it announces a ceasefire.

Cut to a shot of a portly, MIDDLE AGED MAN in a bedraggled raincoat, surrounded by microphones and cameras. He reads from a soggy piece of paper in an affected voice..

SPOKESPERSON

People say the LVF has REFORMED. We have NOT reformed. We, have never

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SPOKESPERSON (cont'd)
BEEN disbanded. We continue to
fight against the de-Britishisation
and Gaelicisation of daily Ulster
life.

David rubs his eyes a little. Sean doesn't stir.

SPOKESPERSON
Despite CONTINUED assertions by the
British government and our
Republican apologist of a minister,
that the situation is under
CONTROL...

David rolls his eyes.

SPOKESPERSON (cont'd)
...self-styled REAL IRA splinter
group, Óglaigh na hÉireann has
CONTINUED to operate with impunity
in our dear land.

He begins to fold the paper.

SPOKESPERSON (cont'd)
We will always fight to protect the
Protestant people of Ulster against
republican forces, but we recognize
the need for peace at this special
time.

Cut back to the reporter.

REPORTER
As 2013 appears to have been a
difficult year for the people of
Northern Ireland, with continuing
conflict at interface areas across
the province, and the yearly parade
issues, the ceasefire is a
receiving a warm welcome. Newly
elected First minister, David
Conlon, had this to say:

Cut to a shot of David. Sean SHOUTS without looking up.

SEAN
Mum, dad's on the TV!

Miriam comes running in.

DAVID (V.O.)

While i applaud a ceasefire, and the notion that the LVF recognise that the Christmas season is an important time for peace, i hope that they, and those of their ilk, recognise that there is not a time that is NOT important for peace.

He smiles.

DAVID (V.O.)

May you all have a Happy Christmas.

As it cuts to the Newscaster, David turns the volume down.

MIRIAM

You knew, then? Why didn't you mention?

David shrugs.

DAVID

Didn't think they'd go through with it. They've been making empty promises to Stormont all year. They just don't want to talk to a Catholic.

Suddenly, Paul ZOOMS past with his rocketship.

David and Miriam smile at each other.

EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - DAY.

David and family exit the large, stately house, dressed for the cold in smart clothes.

Across the street, a VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT sits with TWO YOUNG MEN inside.

David notices them and gestures for his wife to get inside their car while he walks over to the Passat.

The driver opens the window as David nears.

DAVID

Merry Christmas, lads.

PSNI OFFICER

Sir.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

Did you not hear about the
ceasefire. All over the news, don't
you know.

The officer looks a little perturbed.

PSNI OFFICE

Aye, we did, sir.

David beams at them.

DAVID

Then I'll be fine. Away on and
enjoy your Christmas.

PSNI OFFICER

But, orders, sir.

David dips his head like a school teacher.

DAVID

I believe my orders supersede
anything that our fart has to say.

The passenger smirks, but soon stops when his colleague
turns to him.

DAVID (cont'd)

Go on, son. Away and take it easy.
Special day.

He pats the officer on the shoulder and walks away.

INT. ST MARTIN'S - DAY.

A FULL CHURCH CHOIR is beginning OH HOLY NIGHT.

CHOIR

Oh holy night! The stars are
brightly shining...

EXT. ST MARTIN'S PARKING LOT - DAY.

David and family are getting out of the car, as the SINGING
exits the chapel.

CHOIR (O.S.)

... it is the night of our dear
savior's birth.

Miriam gets excited.

(CONTINUED)

MIRIAM

Oh, i love that song!

She gives a David a fake-annoyed look.

MIRIAM (cont'd)

And you just had to see the end of
Indiana Jones!

David shrugs and smiles as he picks up Sean, who's still
playing his 3DS.

CHOIR (O.S.)

Long lay the world, in sin and
error pining...

DAVID

In your pocket. Now!

Sean GROANS

EXT. ST MARTIN'S - DAY.

The family walk around the side of the church, David holding
Sean's hand, Miriam, Paul's.

CHOIR (O.S.)

...til he appeared and the soul
felt its worth.

From in front, a YOUNG, and a MIDDLE AGED man approach.

David looks up from teasing Paul about something. He
registers the men, narrows his eyes a little.

CHOIR (O.S.) (cont'd)

A thrill of hope, the weary world
rejoices...

Suddenly the younger man pulls out a pistol.

David reacts instantly, pushing Paul toward his wife.

CHOIR (O.S.) (cont'd)

... for yonder breaks, a new and
glorious morn.

The pistol raised, the man fires TWO SHOTS in quick
succession.

David is blasted backward with TWO HITS to his chest.

(CONTINUED)

CHOIR (O.S.) (cont'd)
Fall, on your knees!

David spills backwards, blood blooming on his shirt, Miriam looking on in terror.

CHOIR (O.S.) (cont'd)
Oh hear, the angel's voices!

David's cheek hits the ground, his head turned toward his family.

Miriam screams SILENTLY as the Paul BAWLS, and Sean looks on in shock.

CHOIR (O.S.) (cont'd)
Oh night divine!

The men advance on David, the older dropping to one knee, pressing a pistol to David's temple.

ASSASSIN
The LVF will always protect the
Protestant people.

He fires ONE SHOT into David's head as Miriam SCREAMS.

CHOIR (O.S.)
Oh night, when Christ was born.

David lies, spreadeagled, in an ever increasing pool of blood as passersby run to him, the men run away, and his family cower in a corner.

CHOIR (O.S.) (cont'd)
Oh night divine. Oh night! Oh night
divine...

As more and more people crowd the scene, the choir fades away into the voice of the reporter.

REPORTER (V.O.)
... at point blank range this
morning, prompting Real IRA
splinter group Óglaigh na hÉireann
to declare quote "All out war
against those who would do
Nationalists harm", end quote. In
turn, Loyalist dissidents have
declared similar intentions in the
opposite. Acting First Minister,
Nuala Delaney has called an Eight
PM curfew in Belfast, and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

REPORTER (V.O.) (cont'd)
surrounding suburbs and urged
citizens to exercise caution in all
security matters outside and inside
the home.

FADE OUT.

Yep, another grim one, and to tell the truth, the story is of little importance to me, it's really the back-story. I'm still working on the breakdown of *The Fire Sword* and so i researched what might actually bring NI back to the brink, and even further. So, really, this was just an exercise in that. Believe it or not, this short piece took me days to research.

Doing that, i noticed that war or similar conflict breaks out when a number of factors work together: A major shift in the balance of power, historical conflict, continuing issues (particularly over borders or past atrocities), and finally, a high profile assassination.

Also, I've had an execution put to *Oh Holy Night* in my head for years, but it was always very stylized, with the victim looking up into the rain in slow motion and all that shite, when really, this is how assassinations really look. And for anyone unmailiar with NI, yes, this shit really happens.