

Excerpt from Carby's Fate

A wet and blustery October evening in Rathdangan, and P.J. Finnegan's, the only pub in this south Leinster village, was beginning to buzz with the regulars. The local band was tuning up for the Wednesday night ballad session, and the first couple of pints were beginning to soothe the raw edges of the bone-chilling day.

Five kilometers away, a sleek Mercedes-Benz sedan with a German vanity plate marked "MD" (Managing Director) pulled in at a bus stop, about a kilometer south of a busy crossroads. In spite of the swirling rain, all four windows of the sedan were wide open. The signpost held three black and white markers: "Dublin 60 km; Kilkenny 14km; Rathdangan 5 km."

The driver was a stylishly dressed businessman in his late fifties. He sported an expensive Swiss watch and gold cuff links. He turned to the passenger, smiled stiffly, said something in parting, and looked impatiently at his watch. The passenger, a small, pockmarked man who'd been crouched down in the passenger

seat, sat up, looked about, and quickly shook hands with the driver. They exchanged no further comments; the passenger stepped into the rainy night, and the driver quickly closed the windows before turning the Mercedes north on the Dublin Road.

The passenger watched it drive out of sight, then glanced furtively about before pulling a rusted Raleigh bike from behind a hawthorn hedge. He rode the bike up to the intersection and stopped, cars drenching his trousers as they swished by in the gathering dusk. He looked at the drowning moon, then walked the bike across the new, six-lane M5. He nervously checked the traffic, remounted, and pedaled doggedly down the narrow road marked “Rathdangan.”