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### Resurrection Man

Eoin McNamee  
Picador Books, 1994  
Hardcover, 236pp

Meet Victor Kelly: The Resurrection Man. Victor is as coldblooded a bastard and singleminded murderer as you'd ever hope not to meet in a darkened alleyway. Especially an alleyway in Northern Ireland.

"Resurrection Man" is a dark and moody piece of work, clothing violence and bigotry in the sombre language of everyday life in a city. In this case, the city is Belfast and the topic is sectarian violence.

Disconcerted at first, I came to realise that in this case we are dealing with a man working on the fringes of the Protestant paramilitary organisations, rather than the usual fare of such stories, which seem irresistibly drawn to the IRA taint of foulness. It hardly matters - ethical considerations of 'right' or 'just' went out the window years ago, the bigotry is the same from whichever irrational side it comes, and religion gets no showing in this book.

Of course, the violence and the political situation in Northern Ireland has been used as the setting for novels many times before; but not, I'd say, in the way Eoin McNamee has textured his work. Human nature is at issue here; passages of his writing are dense and grey, and as sullen as his characters. There is a beaten and longstanding weariness to the two journalists who alternately pursue, and are manipulated with forced tidbits, the gruesome story of the Resurrection Man.

McNamee has painted his alter-hero in the story with the leaching horror of the city in which he lives, and carries out his

work. At first, Victor seems a tearaway Jack-The-Lad, a sort of knife wielding defender of the faith, carrying out the death sentence upon kidnapped 'taigs' (Catholics) with ear-to-ear efficiency.

However, through the murky course of the novel, he is seen as the obsessed and ghastly distorting influence that he undoubtedly is. His gang is broken up and imprisoned, and still, fear of him keeps his identity concealed from those who seek him. Thus, one of his 'side's' key figures begins a subtle campaign designed to deliver his identity to the trailing journalists.

Eoin McNamee has pulled all the sorrow and futility of 'the troubles' into one novel: it is a powerful and compelling crime novel in a setting of urban grief. Jack Higgins he is not, and the murderous Victor has no redeeming features. There is no glamour in this tale, and there is no redemption for the Resurrection Man.

ALEX WHEATON

### Lunch

Karen Moline  
Macmillan 1994  
Paperback, 374pp

For Karen Moline, it began at a business lunch with her editor. She realised she was under observation from one of a nearby party, and the experience provided the beginning (and the title) for her first novel.

"One of the men decided I was going to be his tasty little crumpet, and he, he was looking at me like I was lunch... he was stalking me, would not take his eyes off me, and it was an immensely creepy feeling," she explains.

'Lunch' is the story of three people: a beautiful artist (Olivia), a very famous movie actor (Nick Muncie) and the actor's minder and facilitator (The Major or, simply, M). Nick is the impossibly handsome kind of guy who always gets what he wants; he spies Olivia in the way described, and is driven to possess, and to dominate her. She is reluctant, but is won down as Nick, with the help of M, plots her seduction. Nick Muncie, you understand, is only driven to greater efforts by her rejection of him.

For the purposes of this review, let's establish Karen Moline's credentials. 'Lunch' is her first work of fiction, but by no means does this mean she is a newcomer to the world of showbiz and sleaze. A New York based journalist and writer, Karen Moline has observed the species close up; interviewing and writing articles on many celebrities (no names), who have provided the raw material for her characterisations in 'Lunch'.

"I have always been fascinated by people who are unworthy of, yet get into, positions of power," notes Karen. Of many of the most famous actors she says, "They aren't particularly nice, they aren't particularly moral, they are often incredibly stupid... I mean,

why do we care about these people?" And yet the character of Nick Muncie serves the purpose of being stereotypically identifiable to readers of her book the world over.

M is by far the more interesting character; a dispassionate observer of the affair as it unfolds, who passes his time (when not doing his master's bidding) reading lengthy classic literature.

"Feeling for him is pain. To me the story is told by him, he sees it." Karen Moline has sharpened the tension in every scene by heavily underscoring the differences between the two men. One is the man of action, inconsiderate of his actions; the other is all too aware, and his defence is to hide away.

The story revolves around the passions of the affair, in the lovers' secret retreat, a flat wherein Nick's need for sado-masochistic pleasure is revealed. Olivia consents to the relationship within the confines of the flat for her own protection...

"Olivia is like many women: she feels guilty because she let herself get ensnared into this relationship, so she feels she deserves to be punished. A way of absolving the guilt," as Karen Moline explains. "The sex is incidental, it's part of the unfolding of the saga of three people," she says, disarming objections she has faced about the book's supposed pornographic content.

'Lunch' contains passages of erotica - the lovers have a consensual relationship. And yet, as the author admits, she "has a few problems with Olivia's behaviour, and I also had a few problems with myself writing this plot: I don't believe in violence perpetrated upon women, it goes against the grain of everything I believe in."

The final scene in 'Lunch' is all the more chilling because it takes place outside the retreat, outside the confines of the relationship to which Olivia has consented.

This is a fictitious consideration of the psyche, of the power games within a relationship, and it is vividly and shockingly realised. 'Lunch', for all its simplicity, is a masterful work, and it works on many, many levels. It is not pretty, nor is it intended to be, but the descriptive passages are wonderfully crafted; the drama is wrenching, the moral dilemmas exacting. 'Lunch' is not a gratuitous exercise in titillation or sensationalism - it is demanding.

ALEX WHEATON

**"One of the men decided I was going to be his tasty little crumpet, and he, he was looking at me like I was lunch... he was stalking me, would not take his eyes off me, and it was an immensely creepy feeling"**



Author Karen Moline.  
Photo: Deborah Feingold



**dB has three copies of Karen Moline's 'Lunch' to give away to readers of fine fiction: see Puff'n'Stuff for details.**

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