

## No One to Point the Finger

by Stuart Finegan

Victoria Painting lowered her feet until they reached the hard discoloured wooden floor. Leaning back in her father's rocking chair, she pushed hard on the soles of her feet. Within seconds she was back in his loving arms. Her blue eyes smiled as a tear slowly emerged and rolled down her face. On the radio the afternoon play was just starting. Back and forth she rocked as the warm summer sun invited a select few tiny insects into the kitchen.

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One by one they gathered in the double-height waiting room of Mr Robinson's office. They were early. The green velvet wallpaper and brown carpet were in desperate need of cleaning and a makeover. The stiff-backed chairs clearly weren't designed for comfort. Despite his obvious wealth the owner wasn't interested in ensuring his clients' waiting room was comfortable. It was all about the money. Above them the booming voice of the family solicitor could clearly be heard in his office. A young junior who had brought the wrong papers to court that morning was obviously regretting his decision to ignore his master's advice. Outside as the morning rush hour traffic snaked around the road works by Stephens Green, a young woman stepped off the No 4 bus.

Craig, the eldest of the five brothers didn't have a good relationship with Mr Robinson. Over the years they clashed repeatedly as the family fortune was passed between a few individuals Craig didn't trust. Least of all his mother. While the others talked between themselves, Craig paced the room ranting wildly about what a waste of time this was going to be. In between numerous swear words and finger pointing in the direction of Mr Robinson's office above, no one noticed Mrs Joyce enter the room. A softly spoken woman, her facial expressions signalled Mr Robinson would see them now.

The old Victorian winding stairs creaked underfoot as, in order of age, the brothers made the familiar ascent up to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, in silence.

John Martin Robinson was a seriously overweight man. Privately educated in England he returned to Dublin with a posh English accent that he never lost. Blunt, often rude, he cared little for Craig and his questioning of his methods as he managed their family fortune. Downstairs the doorbell rang. It was the lock-hard man with a delicate, yet beautiful lady in a bright blue dress.

Upstairs Mr Robinson greeted his clients with his usually weak, sweaty handshake and directed them to the six chairs careful placed in front of his green leather clad desk. The wood panelled room reeked of cigar smoke and fear. As they took their seats they questioned among themselves the spare chair at the end. Assuring them he would answer this in good time, Mr Robinson carefully placed a serious of envelopes on his desk in front of them. As tea was ordered, he placed an expensive bottle of whisky in front of them and poured himself a large glass.

As they looked on in disgust he emptied the glass in one go and then refilled it with a nervous expression on his face. He could sense Craig was brewing for an argument. Leaning back in his chair, tapping his fat fingers on his waistcoat he proceeded to explain their late mother's dying wish. They struggled to understand what he was saying. Every now and then he pointed at the envelopes and in between Craig's numerous questions, he swore loudly at this unruly ungrateful individual whom he had known since he was a boy. He was expecting their business dealings to end that morning.

Craig stood up.

John his younger brother, known as the sensible one, grabbed his arm and pulled on his oversized jacket sleeve. The atmosphere turned ugly. Money, family money, did this and Mr Robinson knew it, but this was an unusual situation. In the waiting room below, Helen Crawford White stared motionless at the ceiling. Her hands shaking uncontrollably. Despite repeated requests from Mrs Joyce, she was too scared to leave the room. Encouraged by the gentle warm hand of Mrs Joyce at the small of her back, she carefully climbed the stairs. As the raised voices within Mr Robinson's office grew louder, the large oak door opened with a slight nudge from his faithful assistant.

Silence quickly descended.

Lifting his large frame from the chair she was greeted by a red faced and sweating solicitor whom she had only spoken to on the phone. Four of the individuals she had never met looked on bemused, the other one stood up, straightened his jacket lapels and smiled.

Helen good to see you again, thank you for coming.

Pa...Paul.

Please take a seat. Can I introduce you to...