



SHADOW OF IRELAND

G.M. COLLINS

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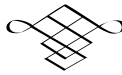


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Excerpt from
SHADOW OF IRELAND



To aid her escape, Shadow had secured the remaining end lower than its partner in the nearer wall and she clipped on the wheel of a special handlebar on the cord before sliding across to the other building. Climbing down would not be an option, people would be looking for individuals and questioning them as suspects or potential witnesses so ascending was her only choice. As if she were a lizard, Shadow crawled upward which took some time since the newer building was taller than the original one she left, inter-dispersed with ledges, until she finally climbed over the lip of the roof.

She had prepared for such potential problems, Shadow always did and that is what made her good as a thief, she always had a way out no matter what, and there was always an alternate plan. Sounds below and across were faint from this roof and with barely a pause Shadow strode across for gear she had stowed there weeks before she breached the first building.

The sound of a rolling stone brought her up short. No bird had taken flight or she would have heard it, a startled pigeon made a great deal of noise and this building was too tall to invite such birds to roost. Besides,

Shadow always checked for such potentially revealing noises long before she began a breach.

Blinking, Shadow scanned the area about her and realized to her discomfort that there were enough obstacles to hide more people than just her, if they possessed a similar suit, but someone would have to know all her plans because she could have chosen any number of escape routes. Her gear was always well hidden and looked as if it belonged wherever she stowed it. No matter how good she was at her job Shadow never taunted authorities by leaving signature items and kept a low profile, let others brag foolishly, anonymity kept her safe. Clients knew her worth and her discretion.

No other sound came to her ears, but all the same, Shadow advanced with more care so that she truly appeared as her namesake just a shadow and with studied speed, she donned a special suit over her current gear. It was then she felt, rather than saw, a figure materialize near her and Shadow instinctively avoided the hand that appeared from nowhere like a striking snake, she knew how to take care of herself.

The figure was a good deal larger than she was, but size did not help the person, Shadow trained with many senseis and combat experts, she could kill if necessary though abhorred such brutality. A flurry of blows exchanged between them until the opponent audibly swore identifying him as a man, not that it would help him as Shadow's open palm connected with his chest and sent him flying backward onto his back.

With the man stunned, Shadow bent to grab her pack to assemble a hang glider until she heard hurried footsteps of more people and knew she would never secure it in time to get off the roof as planned, she ran for the edge of the roof. An arm appeared out of the darkness as a barrier for her to run into so it would knock Shadow down, but she ducked and delivered a crippling blow to the figure's knee, again a man cried out in pain.

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Diving and rolling, Shadow came up facing several more shadowy figures, apparently men from the muted swearing, but this time she caught the flash of metal in the dim light, most likely a knife. The man with the knife lunged and found his body sailing over her in a judo move, while the other men closed ranks to overwhelm her. Instead of running, Shadow used her body as if it would a log and launched at the men's legs literally knocking them off their feet, she sprang to her feet, sprinting in the opposite direction to the lip of the roof ripping off the second suit as she ran so she could use the special pads. The muted sound of rotors close by told Shadow that these people were not the authorities, no one shouted for her to stop nor were there sirens.

In a graceful dive, Shadow prepared to find a hold on a one of the ledges surrounding each floor, possibly one of the flag poles at each corner on the levels if her trajectory was not far off.

"Stop him," screamed a male voice up and behind her and barely registered they assumed she was male.

One hand luckily caught one pole and the other the cord to extend the flags so she used her momentum to swing up like a world class gymnast to make her way to the windows and walls to descend. The rotors sounded like they were on top of the roof briefly and unfortunately she found out that these men were tenacious.

Keeping her descent erratic so that what turned out to be a stealth helicopter could not stay level with her, Shadow continued to search for an alternative way to escape the building. There was a very tall flag pole lower down, so once Shadow reached a low enough ledge, she ran about the narrow edge of the building as if it were a road with the helicopter following and took another dive, this time toward the flagpole. The extra suit would have protected her from snags and abrasions on the metal pole even if it was never intended for such use, but Shadow could not have descended the walls with it so she prepared to feel her suit tear.

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As she dropped through the air Shadow felt a sharp pain in her thigh and her body literally jerked back by the same thigh so that she was dangling below the helicopter. Pain lanced through her leg as tension abruptly snapped and stars sparkled in her vision from the jolt, she was able to see she was rising due the building flashing by. She hit the wall then roof hard enough to wind her as the helicopter hovered over the edge of the building roof to set down, and then Shadow saw several figures leap out of the vehicle. Men were advancing menacingly until another figure descended over her waving an arm in warning for the others to back away.

In her daze, Shadow felt down her thigh and found an object that reminded her of the special darts she used to secure the cord between buildings, it expanded after leaving her flesh so it would not pull out. A similar cord she used attached to the end protruding from the back of her thigh and her captors held the cord, she would not escape this particular situation.

The figure that stood over her, as if guarding her, stooped and tossed Shadow over a shoulder as if she was no inconvenience. She felt him pause, sensing vibrations in one of his arms, as if he was manipulating something. Shortly afterwards, the man carried her aboard the helicopter followed by the other shadowy figures. She was able to see enough about the men to confirm her original assessment that these people were not the authorities.

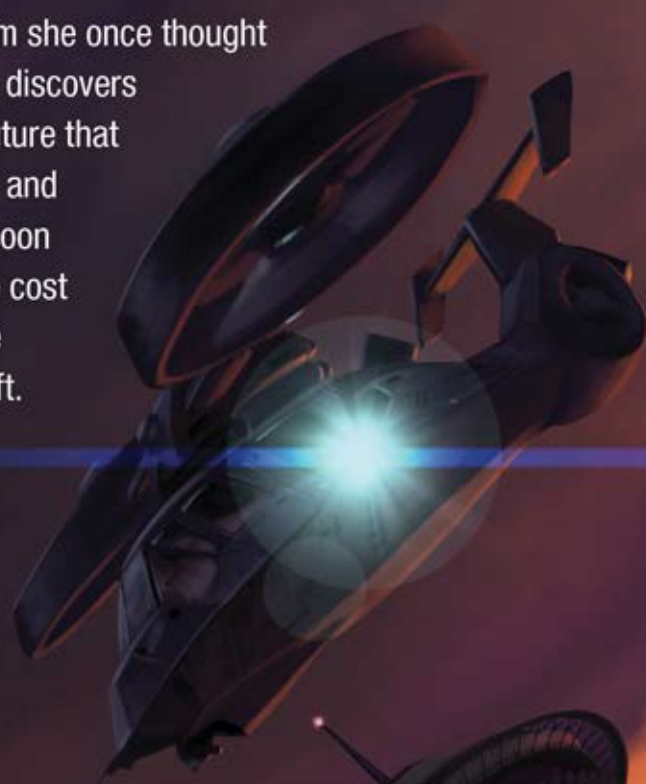
Bending over, the man that carried Shadow set her down gently to her surprise because such consideration seemed peculiar to him rather than the other men as she heard soft snarling comments about her.

“The bastard broke my arm!” and “He blew my knee!” Well, they did not expect her to go quietly, did they? And he? They did think she was a man for some reason.

Fleeing from Ireland to North America, Fiona Keane hides the birth of her beloved Bryn by allowing her criminal husband to believe she is dead, but her lover is spotted and life as they know it ends in a chase that kills them both leaving her only child critically wounded.

Blind, hunted, and forced into hiding, Bryn faces what seems like insurmountable odds until one day a seemingly lucky meeting changes everything.

Acquiring freedom she once thought lost forever, Bryn discovers options for her future that brings adventure and wealth, but she soon finds out the true cost of what she once thought was a gift.



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