

**MISTAKE
N
IDENTITY**

A Mick Murphy Key West Mystery

Michael Haskins

Also by Michael Haskins

In order written & year published

Revenge - 2011*

Tijuana Weekend – 2011*

Chasin' the Wind – 2009

Free Range Institution - 2012

Car Wash Blues - 2013

Stairway to the Bottom -2011

To Beat the Devil - 2013

Nobody Wins – 2014

Mick Murphy's Law – 2015

Alibi for Evil – 2015

Right As Wrong Can Be - 2016

**Mick Murphy Mysteries not set in Key West*

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

A Mick Murphy Key West Mystery

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright © 2018 by Michael Haskins

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination, or, if real, used fictitiously.

No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the author.

#

#

Published in 2018

Fenian Bastard Press

www.michaelhaskins.net

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."

Dorothy Parker

For my friend, Canadian playwright and actor Bryan Gordon Sinclair. Many thanks for bringing Papa to life on the stages of Key West.

PART ONE

*“In Dublin's fair city
where the girls are so pretty . . .”*

ONE

Kristofferson's voice wailed "Shake Hands with the Devil," into the night's darkness as I walked home on the moon lit, shadowy Key West streets from another evening at the local saloons. West. It took me a moment to realize it was my cell's ringtone and not my cloudy imagination. The phone's screen light blinked in the darkness. I glanced at my digital watch – 3:29 AM.

After shaking the alcohol-fog loose from my head, I answered the call.

"Yeah!" My voice scratchy from too much Jameson.

The reply came with sniffles, sobs and gasps for air. "Mick, they killed him!" A female's voice mumbled the words.

I clung to an alcohol haze and tried to shake it away. With the stress in her voice, I couldn't recognize the caller.

"Who killed who?" The comment seemed to hang in the air and I wondered if it made any sense to the caller.

"Bobby." The whimpers continued after a tick of silence. "They shot him dead!" She sobbed into my ear.

"Bobby who?" I know a few Bobbies.

"My husband . . . Bobby Montero." The voice whimpered followed by a loud sob.

"Bobby Montero?" He was an ex-Key West bartender who moved to Ireland with Brigid O'Malley a year or so back. "Brigid?"

"Aye," she sobbed.

"Are you okay? What happened?" I slowly became clear-headed. There's a five-hour time difference between Key West and Ireland. Brigid's call came at eight-thirty in the morning Ireland time.

She continued sobbing and didn't answer me.

"Where are you?" I stopped walking, only a few doors away from my house.

"Home," she whispered.

“Dublin?”

“Aye. The Guards just left.” She spit out the words between cries. *An Garda Síochána* were the national police of Ireland. “I had to identify him.”

It took me fifteen minutes to piece together segments of the story between her sobs and moans; sometimes she spoke so softly I had to ask her to repeat herself. Other times she wailed into the phone.

Bobby Montero bartended in Dublin and was trying to understand rugby. Having the friendly personality he did, customers soon invited him to rugby practice games and they explained the workings of the sport. After a while, the team invited him to the pub after a game. This had been going on for three months.

“Bobby called and said he was on the way home,” Brigid cried and blew her nose. “Someone shot him as he left the pub.” She spoke the words like staccato burst from an automatic rifle.

An Garda Síochána, had two officers, one a female, show up at Brigid’s home with the news. They drove her to the morgue and home again.

“Is there anyone with you?” I couldn’t hear voices in the background.

“Me sister is coming from Wicklow,” she sobbed.

“When?”

“Soon.”

“Brigid, what can I do?” I closed my eyes and saw her sitting on a barstool at Schooner Wharf Bar, after her shift at the Smokin’ Tuna Saloon, watching Bobby serve drinks. Her bright blue eyes twinkled with love each time he turned and smiled at her. Brigid’s natural beauty was highlighted by her auburn, shoulder-length hair and porcelain skin. She reminded me of a grown-up version of the ceramic dolls my mother and aunts had collected.

A long breath came before her words. “Bobby told me . . . if I ever needed . . . anything . . . and he wasn’t . . . here . . . I should call you.” Another long exhalation. “Why would . . . he say that?”

I didn’t have an answer for her. Occasionally they’d send me a postcard decorated with Irish writers or pubs, both signing it. I’m not even sure if I had their address in Dublin. Her question hung there between sniffles and sobs. Brigid was hurting and I felt helpless.

“What do you need me to do Brigid?” I broke the silence.

“Come to Dublin,” she said softly. “Bobby needs a friend to be at his funeral.”

TWO

Brigid didn't want to end the call. I knew the feeling. The perception of being safe at the home of her youth, with people she loved and who loved her had been shattered. Now, something had attacked her comfort zone and her home wasn't secure, no matter who loved her.

Bobby Montero had loved her. Now he was gone forever. Those feelings and memories of love would diminish in time, no matter what the poets said. I knew that, too. Unfortunately, diminished didn't mean forgotten.

Violence against a loved one is never forgotten, especially when it involves death. It consumes you or you learn to live with it. Both are difficult options. It devours you if you let it and if you live with it your life becomes full of guilt, questioning how you can go on living.

I made sure I had her phone number, country code included, and her address in Dublin. She wouldn't go until I promised to be there as soon as possible. I gave her my promise. I hoped it wasn't a lie.

At home, I walked into the kitchen and made myself a double *café con leche* and ate a bowl of cottage cheese mixed with packaged berries from the freezer. Together they almost washed the lingering taste of last night's Jameson away.

I couldn't think of anyone in the Keys who didn't like Bobby. It shouldn't have been any different in Dublin. You don't remain a popular bartender in Key West unless you have a good personality, memory and temperament. That described Bobby to a T.

I put the bowl in the sink and took my coffee into the living room. Looking out toward the cemetery, the sky remained dark so Tita's mischief-making ghosts could be out in the shadows playing their night games. They never crossed the street. Recently, I'd become more comfortable with the neighborhood ghosts than I was with the thought of angels.

My cell in one hand and the coffee in the other, I sat in the darkness, staring out the window.

Brigid would become more hysterical and despondent if her sister didn't arrive soon. Staying on the phone with her wouldn't have prevented that. She needed someone to comfort her, not talk into her ear. The longer we talked the less coherent she became. As for why Bobby was killed, all I could make out from her irrational mumblings was it had to do with drugs. The Bobby I knew shared my dislike for drugs. He preferred Jack Daniels and we often toasted to the good life, he with a shot of Black Jack and I with Jameson.

I still had family in Ireland. Two cousins were members of the Guards. A couple of years ago, Pauly and I ran into them in Dublin while I looked for my Uncle Cecil. Both Lorcan and his sister Patricia Fahey were in my phone directory. I dialed Lorcan.

“Co ceathrar Lorcan,” I said when he answered. My Irish is almost non-existent, but I knew a few words and called him cousin.

He’s must have picked up my waning Boston accent. *“Uncail Liam,”* he answered back, calling me uncle and by my given name, Liam. *“Early in the Keys, isn’t it?”* The tone in his Dublin accent told me he was in a good mood.

“Too early.” I couldn’t match his disposition.

“So what prompts my wayward uncle to be calling me?”

Lorcan listened as I told him about Brigid’s call. People’s voices filled the background but he ignored them and listened. When I’d finished and asked if he knew anything about Bobby’s killing, I received awkward silence in return.

Finally, he said, *“Liam, this isn’t a good time. Let me call you back.”* His tone business-like.

“Sure, Lorcan. Say hi to Aunt Rose and your sister.”

“I will.” He disconnected the call.

My cell sat on the sink counter while I showered. I didn’t want to miss Lorcan’s return call. Clean and finally awake, I dressed in my cargo shorts and floral shirt. The man in the mirror who stared back at me had my red hair and beard, but his green eyes seemed faded, old and too tired for me. When did that happen?

I decided to walk to Harpoon Harry’s for breakfast and knew if I walked slowly the eatery would be open when I got there. The early sky had begun to change from gray to blue and the day held promise of a comfortable March morning. Across the street, the ghosts had returned to their crypts or plots; shadows danced in their place as a light breeze swayed the trees and bushes.

My phone still hadn’t rung when I ordered my bloody Mary and breakfast.