

THE
GLENCAIRN
GLASS

Short Story

ONE WITH THE GLASS



BLOODY  SCOTLAND

MORGAN CRY DEBORAH MASSON
STEPHEN O'ROURKE MARION TODD FRANCINE TOON

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CONTENTS

<i>About the Story</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>About the Authors</i>	<i>ii</i>

ONE WITH THE GLASS

The Future	1
The Present	3
The Past	17
The Present	21

ABOUT THE STORY

When Glencairn Crystal Studio asked if it was possible, as part of their sponsorship of both the Bloody Scotland Debut Crime Book of the Year and the McIlvanney Prize for the Scottish Crime Book of the Year, for a short story to be created the four shortlisted authors for the debut prize were approached. Along with Gordon Brown (Morgan Cry), author and one of the Bloody Scotland founding directors, the challenge to all five was simple – write a crime short story. After a quick Zoom meeting it was decided the best way to do this was for one writer, Marion, to kick off and once she had written a thousand or so words she passed it to Deborah and like a very slow relay race the baton was passed to Francine, Stephen and finally to Gordon.

With a little spit and polish and the editorial help of Noor Sufi (Commissioning Editor of Crime & Thrillers at Hodder & Stoughton) and Laura Jones (Bloody Scotland board member and co-founder of award winning publishing house 404 Ink), *One With the Glass* was born. Sponsored by The Glencairn Glass with match funding from Culture & Business Fund Scotland – we hope you enjoy it.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gordon Brown (**Morgan Cry**) has eight crime and thriller books published to date, along with a number of short stories. Under his expat alias, Morgan Cry, Polygon have published his new crime thriller, set in Spain, called *Thirty-One Bones*. Gordon also helped found Bloody Scotland, is a DJ on local radio and runs a strategic planning consultancy. He lives in Scotland and is married with two children. In former lives he delivered pizzas in Toronto, sold non-alcoholic beer in the Middle East, launched a creativity training business, floated a high-tech company on the London Stock Exchange, compered the main stage at a two-day music festival and was once booed by 49,000 people while on the pitch at a major football Cup Final.

Deborah Masson was born and bred in Aberdeen, Scotland. Always restless and fighting against being a responsible adult, she worked in several jobs including secretarial, marketing, reporting for the city's freebie

newspaper and a stint as a postie – to name but a few. Deborah started with short stories and flash fiction whilst her daughter napped and, when she later welcomed her son into the world, she decided to challenge her writing further through online courses with Professional Writing Academy and Faber Academy. Her debut novel, *Hold Your Tongue*, is the result of those courses.

Born in Greenock and brought up in Pot Glasgow, **Stephen O'Rourke** is a member of the Faculty of Advocates and practises at the Bar in Scotland as Queen's Counsel. His first novel, *The Crown Agent*, was published in hardback in November 2019 by Sandstone Publishers of Inverness. Over the years Stephen has written pieces for the Scotsman, the Guardian and the Caledonian Mercury. He is currently writing the second novel in the Mungo Lyon series. He lives in Edinburgh.

Marion Todd has had a varied career, having worked as a college lecturer, candlemaker and bar pianist. Always a keen writer she tried her hand at a variety of genres before settling on crime fiction. Her DI Clare Mackay series is set in St Andrews, a few miles from her home which means lots of trips to the historic town to check out the bars and restaurants, all in the name of research, of course. Marion is now a full-time writer and, when not creating problems for her protagonist, she can be found tussling with her jungle-like garden.

Francine Toon grew up in Sutherland and Fife. Her debut novel *Pine* was shortlisted for both the Bloody Scotland Scottish Crime Debut of the Year and the McIlvanney Prize in 2020 and longlisted for the Deborah Rogers Foundation Writers Award. Her poetry, written as Francine Elena, has appeared in *The Sunday Times*, *The Best British Poetry* 2013 and 2015 anthologies (Salt) and *Poetry London*, among other places. She lives in London and is a commissioning editor at Sceptre.

ONE WITH THE GLASS

THE FUTURE

Sammy's fingers tightened round his whisky, the Glencairn Glass snug in his palm, his thoughts drifting back with the gentle sway of the yacht. The sun was low now but still warm as he reached for a tissue to dab his forehead. Then he shaded his eyes. Out in the bay his dad and Craig scudded over the crimson waves on a pair of jet skis.

Craig. His brother. The reason they were all here. He'd always suspected something, of course. Wondered what Craig was up to. Where the money had come from. Crematorium workers weren't paid enough for Craig's lifestyle. And maybe — just maybe — if Jonno hadn't pushed Craig's buttons that night, if he hadn't come at Craig with a knife, maybe Sammy would have known nothing. Would still be on Jonno's bench back at Polly's.

The jet skis sliced across the bay in a wide arc, one chasing the other, the angry buzzing growing louder as they cut back towards the yacht.

A normal family, that's all Sammy ever wanted. A normal home life and a normal job. He'd kept his head

down, of course, and hadn't asked any questions. But he wasn't daft. He knew the money must be coming from somewhere. And he knew it took a particular kind of person to work at the crematorium. A person with a dark sense of humour. But Sammy hadn't realised just how dark.

Sammy took a long slow sip and gave a sigh of satisfaction. How far away it all seemed now. As the jet skis drew up alongside the yacht he smiled, watching the top of the rope ladder twitch. Then his dad appeared, his wiry frame tanned after months of sun, his Rolex catching the evening sun.

'You beat Craig, then?' he said, and his dad just laughed.

THE PRESENT

Dinnertimes were the worst. Especially when it was wet. Sammy dreaded the wet dinnertimes. The canteen wasn't big enough for him to sit away from the others. Away from Jonno's voice.

At first the others had said to come and sit with them. *Bring your pieces*, they'd said. And Sammy had smiled. He'd perched on the end, paying attention, trying to tune in. Thinking of things to say that they would like.

But then Jonno had put a stop to it. 'We don't sit with muppets,' he'd said. 'Especially one of *that* lot.'

'He's okay,' one of them had said, a careful eye on Jonno.

'Give 'im a break,' another, his voice low.

Jonno had thrown them a look and they turned their shoulders obediently away. Then he jerked his head at Sammy. 'Shift.'

And Sammy had shifted. Away to another table. But not far enough away to shut Jonno up.

Aye. Wet dinnertimes were the worst.

When it was dry there was a kick about outside, in

front of the factory. It was a broad sweep of grass, dotted with the occasional pile of dog crap which Jonno directed one of the lads to shift.

‘Gies a game,’ Sammy would ask but Jonno wouldn’t have it.

‘No Dirty Dug supporters in this team,’ he’d say. ‘Clan Court lads, only. Got it?’

To begin with Sammy would lie; say he wasn’t bothered about teams. The Dark Dog was his local and had a fierce, long standing football rivalry with the Clan Court. The Court’s punters referred to his pub as the Dirty Dug. In turn they called the Clan Court, the Clatty Court. He wasn’t really a Dark Dog man. Not like his dad. But he was quite good at football. Had been at school. If they would just...

‘Away ye big muppet,’ Jonno would say and the others would laugh. Well, some of them laughed. Others avoided Sammy’s eye.

After a couple of weeks the gaffer stopped by Sammy’s bench to ask how he was getting on. Sammy liked the gaffer. He’d told Sammy he’d been with Polly’s Packing since he left the school. *Nearly fifteen years*. He’d worked hard and it had paid off. Sammy thought maybe, if he stuck in, he might be a gaffer in fifteen years. He’d like that. If only Jonno would leave off.

‘He’s fine,’ Jonno answered for him. The gaffer raised an eyebrow at Jonno then looked back at Sammy.

Sammy felt the colour rising from his neck; felt his

face grow hot. 'Aye,' he said, his voice barely audible. 'I'm fine.' The gaffer eyed him but Sammy knew Jonno's eyes were on him too. He forced his mouth into a smile. 'Thanks,' he added and the gaffer moved on.

In time he got used to being excluded. To being *the muppet*. He told himself it didn't matter. *Sticks and stones*. Sometimes even tried joining in. Making a joke about it. But that seemed to make Jonno angry so he gave that up.

There was a spell when it had stopped. Well, not *stopped* exactly; more changed. When Jonno had discovered Sammy's brother worked at the crematorium.

'Watch yer backs, lads,' Jonno would say. 'Dr Death's in the room. Where's your sickle, eh?'

But that didn't last. Didn't get enough laughs and Sammy was soon back to being the muppet.

He'd done all right at school. Got his exams. Talked about college. And then the job at Polly's had come up. Not far from where his dad used to work at the Glencairn Crystal factory.

Sammy had to admit his dad had done well at Glencairn. Never seemed to be short, even after he'd stopped working. No worrying about the winter fuel allowance for him. But Glencairn weren't hiring.

And so Sammy had applied for the job at Polly's and got an interview. The gaffer, and the factory boss. They'd been nice and Sammy thought he'd done well. And then the gaffer had phoned and said how impressed they'd

been with his interview and how they'd like to offer him the job.

Sammy's dad, Bob, had taken him to the pub. Showed him off to the lads. 'Our Samuel,' he'd told them. 'Gonna be working up at Polly's.' And the lads had been impressed.

Sammy smiled but didn't say anything.

Bob had stood them all drinks, spouting on about the famous Glencairn Glass – how it was the finest way to taste whisky.

* * *

It was a Tuesday when the gaffer came around again. He headed straight for Sammy's bench.

'Bit of news for you, son,' he said. *Promoted post coming up. No guarantees of course but if Sammy would like to apply...*

Bob was all for it. 'Proud as punch I am, son,' he'd said. And he'd stood another round of drinks at the pub. Sammy hadn't gone with him this time. He didn't like to count his chickens.

The next morning Sammy felt Jonno's eyes on him again. He glanced over once or twice and, the second time he looked across, Jonno eased himself off his stool and ambled over. He stood, towering over Sammy, his Polly's polo shirt stained under the arms. Sammy could smell his breath, hot and sour with the odour of last

night's beer and this morning's fags. He'd never been this close to Jonno before and instinctively he leaned back a little. Jonno stood for a moment then said, 'That chat you had with the gaffer... at your bench. I heard what he said.'

Sammy's throat was tight. He wanted to swallow but he didn't want Jonno to see he was afraid so he resisted the impulse and felt his mouth begin to fill with saliva. He flicked a glance at Jonno's yellowed eyes.

'That promoted post thing. It's no' for you,' Jonno said.

Sammy said nothing.

'Young Rod,' Jonno nodded his head towards a sandy-haired lad. Jonno's neighbour at the bench. 'Been here five years. So it's his job. Right?'

Still Sammy said nothing.

'If I get to hear you've applied...,' Jonno said, and he walked away leaving the threat hanging in the air.

That night Sammy went home and told his dad that Polly's had changed their mind about the promotion.

'Never mind, son,' Bob had said. 'What's for you will no' go by you.'

'Is that right?' his brother asked, when their dad had gone to the pub. 'Or is there some other reason you're not going for the job?' But Sammy just shrugged.

* * *

Sammy stumbled sideways, reeling as Jonno's elbow delivered a hard dunt to his ribs. He raised his hand instinctively to cover the place where bone had hit fleshy bone but dropped it again as the reason for the blow became clear. The gaffer. Heading straight for them.

'Sammy, a word please.'

Sammy paused, his side still throbbing, Jonno's elbow just inches from him. He bit down on his lower lip and walked over to the boss, conscious, with every step, of Jonno's hard stare. He wished the boss had taken him to his office, rather than just off to the side of the bustling workshop.

The gaffer patted his upper arm as he reached him. Sammy glanced back towards Jonno and was met with a steely glare that caused his gaze to drop to the floor, his head hanging a second too long before he forced himself to lift it and make eye contact with the gaffer.

'Someone's only gone and bloody lost your application for the promotion.'

Sammy swallowed. He'd known this moment would come and now he had to do it. To tell the gaffer it wasn't for him. His mouth was suddenly dry and he swallowed again, clearing his throat. 'I didnae apply.'

Confusion creased his boss's features and then realisation, followed by disappointment. Sammy wasn't sure what was worse – sensing Jonno's eyes on him from across the workshop or seeing the gaffer's disappointment.

'Why not?'

He wanted so much to tell the truth. The daily taunts. The exclusion. The threats. He longed to let it all tumble out. But the shame of admitting what Jonno was doing, of what he'd endured at Jonno's hands – that shame would be nothing compared to Jonno's wrath if Sammy did tell the gaffer. If he even dared.

No.

He wouldn't. Couldn't. Even if it meant missing out on the promotion – on seeing his father proud of him. Like he was proud of Sammy's brother, Craig.

He stared at his boss, the noise of clattering and clanking filling the space all around them as the men and women worked; the smell of sweat in the air witness to how hard they were at it. He tried to swallow, his throat dry, knowing the words he was about to speak would sound brittle and dry as they crushed his hopes, once and for all.

'It's no' for me.'

His boss frowned. 'Not for you? How—'

Sammy had to get the words out. Fast. Done. He ran his tongue round his lips. 'I like what I do. I dinnae need to be doing anythin' else or getting grand ideas of being any better.' He almost sighed, relieved that what he'd tirelessly rehearsed had found its way out.

His boss's gaze swept over him. Searching. Trying to find answers in Sammy's face, his stare eventually darting across to Jonno and settling there. 'These grand ideas...'

Sammy bit his lip. Said nothing.

‘Your decision wouldn’t be influenced by anyone else, would it?’

Sammy shook his head. Hard. Wanting to look sure in his reply, needing Jonno to see he’d done as he was told.

The gaffer’s eyes stayed directed at Jonno for a minute, his lips pursed. Then he turned back to Sammy. ‘It’s a waste, you know. A mistake. You’ve potential for so much m—’

‘It’s what I want.’ Firm. The irony not lost on Sammy as to how he could be so brave in front of his boss but such a coward whenever Jonno was near.

As the gaffer tutted and turned to walk away, Sammy closed his eyes and let out a sigh, knowing he would remember this moment for a long time to come. He turned back towards Jonno and saw the steely glint was still there but now Jonno’s mouth, that cruel mouth, had formed itself into a smirk.

* * *

‘Son, you need to get up.’

Sammy burrowed deeper beneath the duvet, needing to hide, knowing he couldn’t look his father in the eye and lie.

‘Son?’

‘I’m no’ well. I feel sick.’ Sammy felt the hard tug at the duvet, heard the concern in his father’s voice.

He held the cover tight over his head. ‘Honestly, da’.

I just need to sleep. I'll phone work once the factory's open.'

He waited, relieved when he heard the creak of the floorboard by the door as his father left the room. He lay on, buried beneath the duvet, as if trying to hide his shame.

Two weeks had passed since his chat with the gaffer. A fortnight in which the promotion had been offered to someone else. Young Rod. Jonno's work bench partner. That move had left a space at Jonno's bench. A space that, to Sammy's horror, had been filled by him.

At first he thought Jonno wouldn't stand for it, that he would find a way to get him off the bench, just as he had with the canteen table. But he'd been wrong. Sammy's new hell had become Jonno's new sport.

'Sammy?'

Sammy was pulled from his thoughts by his older brother Craig's voice – muffled from above the duvet.

'Yeah?'

'Come out of there.'

'I'm no' feeling well.'

'I said get out of there.'

Sammy knew not to argue. You didn't argue with Craig. He raised his head above the duvet, fingers grasping at the cover's edge.

'What's all this shit about no' feeling well?'

'I don't. I—'

'Bollocks. You've never had a sick day in yer life.'

‘Well, I’m starting now.’

‘Yeah, and I suppose that’s nothing to do with being moved to Jonno McFall’s bench? Or lying to Dad about that promotion thing?’

Sammy coloured. ‘I... I didn’t think it was for me, but I didnae want to let Dad down.’

His brother shook his head. ‘You never were a good liar, Sam. You might fool Dad but I can see right through you.’

Sammy was looking anywhere but at his brother.

His brother’s cheeks were pink. ‘I’m no’ gonnae let this happen. You’re no’ taking this lying down.’

Sammy tutted. ‘I dinnae need you telling me what to do.’ He was acutely aware of how childish he sounded.

‘Maybe so, and that’s why I’ve no’ stepped in before now - through all the shit that Jonno’s been throwing at you. Figured it wouldn’t help you anyway. But this? You’re giving up on your future because of that twat? It’s no’ happening, Sammy.’

‘Please... don’t...’

But Sammy knew by the clench of his brother’s jaw, the way his lips tightened to a thin straight line, that it was his brother who wouldn’t be taking it lying down.

* * *

Sammy took himself to work, but for the rest of the day a sick, sluggish feeling congealed in the pit of his stomach.

He kept his head down and got on with things, but it was hard sitting beside Jonno. He felt caught between the idea of standing up for himself and the chill that ran through him whenever Jonno muttered something to him. In a way, waiting for Jonno's next jibe was almost worse than actually hearing it. As he worked through the morning, he kept thinking of dinner time. He knew his brother wanted him to be a man about it. *Thing is wi' these guys, he remembered his brother saying, You've gotta put them in their place. Find that one wee thing that'll pure floor him. And say it in front of them all. Get a laugh. Leave him raging. There's gotta be something.*

It had made Sammy laugh at the time but, in the cold light of the factory floor, his mind scrabbled for ideas. *Be tactical, man.* Easy enough for Craig to say. Where Sammy was scrawny, his brother was muscular, a guy who drank protein shakes instead of beers and whose second home was the gym. His humour belied an intensity that meant nobody messed with him, least of all Sammy. But now, when Sammy imagined talking back to Jonno in the canteen, everyone was laughing at him instead.

When dinnertime came around, he didn't feel hungry. He left the seat empty and bummed a cigarette from some guys outside.

'How'd it go?' his brother's voice boomed through to the lounge as soon as he got in from work that evening. Sammy concentrated his eyes on the TV screen until his

brother sat beside him, so close Sammy could smell the odour of the crematorium. ‘Tell me you actually grew a pair.’

Sammy smiled, looking into his lap. He’d been replaying the fantasy in his head that afternoon, practising what to say to his brother. ‘Come aff it. *Course* I told him. He was like, *Here, did you drive your hearse to work this morning?* And I was like that, *How? Are you wanting to buy it off me, cos it’s better than that shanner you’ve got outside.*’

His brother let out a deep, generous laugh and for a split second, Sammy felt as though it had all actually happened. The main thing was, his brother was off his back. It was a relief to hear that laugh for once.

‘I didn’t think you had it in you, Sammy boy, I didn’t think you had it in you. Here. I’m taking you out for a pint.’

There was a note of respect in his voice that Sammy had never heard before, and he couldn’t say no. Next time Jonno was on the wind up, Sammy would hit back for sure, he knew he would. A pint felt too good to miss, even though he knew his teetotal brother would order his usual lime and soda.

After the pub they walked home in the dark. Sammy’s brother lagged behind, tapping at his phone. His eyes were glued to the screen and he was smiling to himself. A girl, probably, Sammy thought. Although, now he came to think of it, he’d never actually seen Craig with

a girl. They reached a deserted stretch of road near the old industrial park, Craig still dawdling behind. Setting up a date, maybe. Sammy thought he might ask Craig about it. And then he thought he wouldn't. Even though they shared the same house, Sammy's brother kept his personal life to himself. In fact, Sammy wondered how he had any time for romance between work, long morning runs, and pumping iron. Maybe that was why he always seemed to have extra cash. Never any time to spend it.

'Ho, you!' A voice bellowed across the deserted road. A voice he would recognise anywhere.

He made out Jonno jeering from a cash point opposite. 'Dr Death!'

Somehow, away from the factory, he looked smaller, almost a little pathetic now his friends weren't around.

'Simmer doon!' Sammy's brother yelled back, as he ran to catch Sammy up. 'If I'm Dr Death you'll be first on my list.' His voice had an edge that cut through the air. Sammy could tell he wasn't kidding around. A quiet, but powerful anger would be rising within. He'd seen it often enough.

Craig caught up with Sammy, barely out of breath, giving him a look that said *Did I buy you a pint for nothing?* To Sammy's amazement, Jonno was still laughing, crossing the road towards them. 'Is that right, aye? Addams Family night out?'

Sammy could feel Craig bristle beside him, squaring his broad shoulders while slowly shaking his head at

Jonno. ‘Where are your pals now, wee sacks? Or do you no’ have any?’

Jonno was close enough for Sammy to smell the sour breath, to see the smirk. He began to wonder if there was something wrong with Jonno. Why the hell didn’t he know what was good for him?

‘I know who *your* pals are an’ all,’ Jonno began, jutting his chin in their direction. ‘Dorothy, the scarecrow and the tin man. I’ve seen you down the gym, seen the kind of guys you hang about with. *You absolute—*’

There was a loud smack as Craig rushed forward and punched Jonno square on the jaw. Jonno stumbled back, grasping for the corrugated fence. Then he righted himself and his hand reached into his jacket for something that flicked silver. He lunged at Craig, grabbing him by the throat but Craig twisted round and hit Jonno again. Jonno tried to hit back, flailing, then falling. Sammy froze as he saw the wild look in his brother’s eyes. It was all happening so fast. And then he heard the crack — a sickening sound that echoed round the deserted street as Jonno’s skull hit concrete.

THE PAST

Jonno's dad, Mike, had died on a cold, damp night in late December when Jonno was a college student, trying to pass an SVQ and Sammy was still at school. He bled out on a rain-soaked pavement, his eyes blinking, mind unable to comprehend what was happening to him. Ten minutes before his death Sammy's father, Bob, had clocked off at Glencairn. His clothes sodden with sweat. His mouth dry, his tongue a sun-baked rock and only one thing on his mind as he pushed through the factory gates. Lager. Three pints of Tennent's Lager to be precise — and his body's fluid balance would be back on an even keel. As he strode through the exit he imagined that first pint. Bit of a head on it, as the gas bubbles rose to the surface, condensation forming on the glass. Maybe a dribble running down the side. He imagined it coating his throat, slaking the thirst that plagued the end of his every working day.

For Bob was a glass blower. A skilled tradesman who pulled molten crystal from the furnace on the end of a blow pipe and worked it with the balletic grace of a

Bolshoi dancer. Spinning, blowing and manipulating the red-hot globule into a perfect hand-blown Glencairn decanter.

‘Hey, Skeletor.’

Bob froze at the sound of the voice. His heart hammered.

‘You got my money, Skeletor?’

Jonno’s dad stepped from the shadows. ‘Pay day, Skeletor. Where’s my slice?’

‘Mike,’ Bob whispered.

For two years Mike McFall had pocketed a quarter of Bob’s wages every fortnight. An amount that caused Bob immense grief back home. All on account of Mike catching Bob at the back of the The Dark Dog two Christmases ago with the wife of one his co-workers.

‘Jesus, Mike, this has to stop.’

‘I don’t think so, Skeletor,’ the nickname a reference to Bob’s emaciated frame from years of working in front of a furnace running at 1700 degrees. ‘Now pay up or I tell yer wife about you humping Andy’s missus.’

‘It was a kiss, nothing more. Just a drunken snog.’

‘Think yer wife will be any the less pissed off at that news, Bob? Now get over here and give me my slice.’

Bob knew this was never going to stop. Knew that he would never, *could never*, ‘fess up to his wife to end this. That he couldn’t allow Mike to carry out his threat. That the money would keep draining. That Mike was never going to get off this gravy train.

And then Bob's elder son had rushed from the shadows and Bob froze to the spot.

'Here,' Craig said, raising the knife Bob used to carve the Christmas turkey. 'You want a slice of something? Try this.'

And the knife was sticking from Mike. And Mike lay dying. And Bob had turned to Craig. And Bob had said, 'Jesus, son.' And Mike had died.

'Too long, Dad. He's been ripping you off far too long. I don't care what you did. He had it coming.'

'Jesus, son.'

'Dad — it's fine,' Craig said, gripping Mike by the arm. 'I've got this. I know how to get rid of his body. I've got it all planned.'

'Jesus, son.'

'The crem, Dad. The crematorium. Get him in my car.'

And God forbid, but Bob did just that. Wrapped Mike in plastic sheeting, helped Craig bundle the body into the car. Sat in silence as they drove to the crematorium where his son had started working the previous summer. Stood as his son fired up the cremation chamber. As his son stripped Mike of a watch and two stud earrings. As Mike was fried. As Mike was passed under a magnet to extract any metal. As Mike was crushed. As Mike became ash.

Bob watched as his son cleaned up the work area with an eye for detail that told Bob this had been a long time in the planning.

Then he followed his son outside. Out to the Garden

of Remembrance where ashes were scattered at the end of each day; and he watched as Craig scattered Mike's remains among the roses, bare of their foliage in the dead of winter, careful to stand upwind as the breeze caught the handfuls of silt.

THE PRESENT

Sammy looked down at Jonno on the pavement. ‘I think he’s dead, Craig. You’ve killed him.’

‘Like father like son, Sammy. No worries, bro. I’ve got this covered. Done it before.’

Sammy’s gaze left Jonno’s body and he looked at his brother. Craig was beaming.

‘Jesus, Craig.’

Sammy’s dad was round in five minutes, the engine idling while he took the plastic sheeting from the car. Sammy stared as his father and brother worked quickly and efficiently, wrapping and bundling Jonno’s body into the boot. *It’s like they’ve done this before*, Sammy thought but didn’t dare say.

He stayed close to them as they carried the sheeted figure in through a side door, with only their phone torches for light. Sammy had been to the crem a couple of times but never behind the curtains. And he’d certainly never watched as a body was loaded into one of the furnaces to be consumed.

‘Sammy,’ said Craig as he waited on the cremulator to

finish its job. ‘Do you want in on more of this shit?’

‘Shit?’

‘Aye, getting rid of bodies.’

‘What, killing people?’

‘Nah, others do that,’ his brother continued. ‘We just get rid of the evidence. I need a second pair of hands. Bodies are a bastard to move around. And Dad’s not getting any younger.’

‘What?’ Sammy’s jaw swung loose. ‘You *have* done this before.’

‘God, Sammy, yes. And it pays well.’ Craig paused and then added, ‘You’re not squeamish, are you?’

‘How many, Craig?’

‘What? How many bodies?’

‘Aye. How many bodies have you done?’

‘Thirteen, including tonight. I’m doing this as a freebie for you. The going rate isn’t basic wage, brother. You an’ me could make a bloody fortune and as long as we keep cutting in my boss and a few others...’ He stepped in a little closer. ‘...we could soon buy that yacht you’ve always fancied.’

Sammy sat down, stunned, shaking his head.

Craig sat beside him. ‘Look, Sam — these bodies,’ he jerked his head towards the furnace, ‘...well they’re not decent folk, ye know? It’s all scumbags killing each other. Saves the police tracking them down. And with no body, there’s no court case. These lads, well, they’d be bumped off, whether we help get rid of the bodies or not. Far

better getting rid of them here than having them pollute the rivers, yeah?’

Sammy stared at his brother, lost for words.

But two hours later, when Craig handed him an urn full of Jonno’s ashes, he weighed it in his hands, lost in thought. For, aside from the horror of the past few hours, an idea was forming.

‘He was a bastard, Sammy,’ Craig said, cutting across his thoughts. ‘Made your life a misery. Go on, chuck him outside while I clean up. Hard to prosecute with no body.’

But Sammy had no intention of scattering Jonno among the roses. He knew now what he was going to do with his remains.

‘Tell you what, Craig. I’ve a better idea. Let me dispose of him my way and then we’ll talk about that yacht. Deal?’

‘Do what you want, Sam. Just don’t get caught.’

* * *

For three days Sammy sat with Jonno’s ashes between his legs; Jonno’s remains lying inside a Tesco polyethene bag sitting under Sammy’s bench at the factory. Three days during which the police interviewed everyone about Jonno. About his disappearance. Three days in which Sammy barely packed a box. Three days cacking himself. Convinced that someone would sense Jonno was back in the factory. After the first day Craig asked him if he’d got

rid of the ashes and Sammy said he had. But each night Sammy took Jonno away and each morning he brought him back.

And just when he thought he'd have to take Jonno home for the weekend he got the call he was waiting on.

'They're blowing the football decanters this afternoon, Sammy,' said his friend at Glencairn. 'You said you wanted to see it done. Can you make it here double quick?'

Sammy, Jonno in hand, walked the two hundred yards to Glencairn and watched them prep the crystal furnace.

His friend stood beside him. 'It's taking a wee bit longer than usual, come have some lunch first.'

But Sammy asked if it was okay if he just sat in the reception area, telling his friend that his stomach was a bit dodgy and he wasn't hungry. Sammy watched as the last person left the factory floor, grabbed the plastic bag and raced for the door to the furnace room, his eyes everywhere, checking he was still alone. If he was caught in here there would be questions. Not least about the bag. God alone knew if DNA could survive what Jonno had been through but Sammy didn't want to find out. He picked up the metal bar that levered open the door to the furnace. His eyes watered and, as he threw Jonno's remains, bag and all, into the bubbling mass, he thought briefly of his dad who, for years, had worked in front of this heat, day after day.

That afternoon he watched as the glass blower blew twelve perfect decanters. Jonno's remains complementing the soda ash that, along with silica and lime, lay behind

the crystal formula. Jonno becoming part of the glass. One with the glass.

‘They’re picking them up Monday,’ said his friend as Sammy waved goodbye.

Come Monday, Sammy didn’t go to work. Instead, he hid in the trees across the way from the Glencairn factory, waiting. At just after ten he saw the owner of The Dark Dog get out of a BMW. The Glencairn boss walked out to meet him pushing a dolly loaded with boxes. Sammy moved in a little closer as the pub owner removed a decanter from one of the satin-lined containers and studied it. As the man admired the trophy, Sammy allowed himself a smile.

‘These are wonderful,’ the man said to the factory boss. ‘Such unusual light in the crystal. I’ve never seen anything so perfect.’

The boss nodded his head in appreciation of the compliment. ‘It’s what we do. By the way when is the presentation?’

‘Next week at the Legends’ Dinner. We’ve a dozen ex-Dark Dog players coming up to be presented. Soon these decanters will be on the mantelpieces and the display cabinets of some of the best players ever to kick a ball for us.’

Sammy couldn’t hide the grin. His brother already had another disposal lined up and Sammy had been surfing the web for hours each night looking at yachts. Maybe it was actually going to happen.

He watched as the boss helped the customer to his car. Watched him load the Glencairn decanters into the boot of his car. And, as he stood watching the pub owner start up his car, he thought about Jonno:

Jonno the bastard.

Jonno his tormentor.

Jonno the mad Clatty Court fan.

The Dark Dog's deadly rivals.

'Cheerio, now,' said the boss to the customer.

The customer turned. 'If you ever need tickets for a game let me know.'

The boss smiled. 'I think some of the lads drink at The Dark Dog.'

The man placed the last decanter carefully in the boot, saying, 'Then tell them to give me a call. There's always space in the Directors' box.'

As the man jumped into his car Sammy's grin was wider than the Clyde.