

Irish Republican Army Ceasefire Statement

August 31, 1994

“Recognising the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic process and underlying our definitive commitment to its success, the leadership of the IRA have decided that as of midnight, August 31, there will be a complete cessation of military operations. All our units have been instructed accordingly.

“At this crossroads the leadership of the IRA salutes and commends our volunteers, other activists, our supporters and the political prisoners who have sustained the struggle against all odds for the past 25 years. Your courage, determination and sacrifice have demonstrated that the freedom and the desire for peace based on a just and lasting settlement cannot be crushed. We remember all those who have died for Irish freedom and we reiterate our commitment to our republican objectives. Our struggle has seen many gains and advances made by nationalists and for the democratic position.

“We believe that an opportunity to secure a just and lasting settlement has been created. We are therefore entering into a new situation in a spirit of determination and confidence, determined that the injustices which created this conflict will be removed and confident in the strength and justice of our struggle to achieve this.”

Two years later.

August 28, 1996

There were five of them in the car, and between them they had killed more than a dozen men. The man in the front passenger seat was Joe McFee, the oldest of the group and the most experienced. He had killed two British soldiers, three policemen, and a drug-dealer, and had slept like a baby after each murder. He had a kindly face and ruddy cheeks, like a beardless Father Christmas, and the only sign of tension was his tendency to crack his knuckles from time to time.

The clouds had been threatening rain as they had driven across East Belfast, and now the first flecks began to hit the windscreen. Willie McEvoy flipped the wipers on and they swished across the window leaving greasy streaks on the glass. He looked at the digital clock set into the dashboard. It was just before eight o'clock and there were few other cars on the street. They had chosen the time carefully. Late enough to miss the rush hour, early enough that five men driving around wouldn't attract the wrong sort of attention. 'Great weather for ducks,' mumbled McEvoy.

Gerry Lynn checked the action of his semi-automatic. It was his operation. He'd researched the target and planned the hit, and he'd gone to the Army Council for permission. It had been readily granted. The target had long been a thorn in the side of the IRA and they would be happy to see the back of him. Lynn was sitting behind McFee. As the leader of the group, Lynn's rightful place was in the front seat but he'd wanted to show respect to McFee. McFee had been Lynn's mentor for more than a decade. It had been McFee who seen Lynn throwing rocks and petrol bombs at British Army Landrovers and taken him to one side and told him that there were more fruitful ways of striking back at the occupying power. It had been McFee who had taught Lynn to kill and Lynn had been a willing pupil

Sitting directly behind McFee was Adrian Dunne. Dunne was in his early thirties, and was all muscle. During the day he worked as a drayman, delivering beer barrels around the city. Most evenings he was in the gym, lifting weights. Dunne had been Lynn's first choice for the operation. They had worked together before several times and there had never been any problems. Dunne slid his gun out from its holster under his left armpit, ejected the magazine, and then slotted it back into place. He looked across at Lynn and nodded.

'Nearly there, boys,' said McEvoy. The rain was falling faster now and he upped the pace of the windscreen wipers. The rain was a good sign, thought Lynn. It would cut down on visibility and keep people off the streets. He took a black woollen ski mask from his pocket and pulled it down over his face. Dunne did the same.

Sitting between Lynn and Dunne was Noel Kinsella, the youngest of the group, barely out of his teens. He had the looks of a young Pierce Brosnan, with jet black hair and a strong jaw. He was breathing heavily through his nose and his eyes flicked between McFee and Lynn. 'Are you all right there, Noel?' asked Lynn.

'I'm grand,' said Kinsella.

'It's the boy's bleeding,' said McFee. 'He'll be fine. He'll make his dad proud.' Kinsella's father was in the Maze prison, serving life for the murder of two UDF activists.

'Put your mask on, lad,' said Lynn. 'And check your weapon.'

Kinsella did as he was told. McEvoy brought the Saab to a gentle halt at the roadside. They were in Casaeldona Park, a suburb with well-tended gardens and mid-range saloon cars parked in the driveways. Lynn had spent weeks watching the semi-detached house and he knew that once the man who lived there arrived home he was in usually in for the night. The target was a careful man. He always parked his car in the garage and used the internal door to enter the house. The sitting room was at the front, as was the first floor bedroom where the man and his wife slept. Their young son slept at the back of the house in a room overlooking a large garden. An old couple lived in the house to the left. The husband was almost deaf and the wife was in a wheelchair. In the house on the right lived a middle-aged couple and they had just left for a two-week holiday in Spain. No one would interfere with the men and what they had planned.

Lynn took a deep breath. His heart was pounding but it was from anticipation, not fear or anxiety. McFee put his ski mask on and then massaged his gloved hands. He looked at Lynn expectantly and Lynn nodded. 'Let's do it,' said Lynn. 'And remember, Carter is a hard bastard. Don't give him any room to manoeuvre.'

McFee got out of the car and walked to the rear of the car. McEvoy pressed the button to unlock the boot and he gunned the engine. 'Easy, Willie,' said Lynn. 'This isn't Formula One.' McFee reached into the boot and pulled out a sledgehammer.

'In we go then,' said Lynn. 'Let's go get the bastard.' He opened the passenger door and climbed out of the Saab. Kinsella followed him and stood with his gun held close to his leg. Dunne got out of the other side of the car and stood looking at the house. McFee walked down the path to the house, cradling the sledgehammer in both hands. Lynn and Kinsella hurried after him.

Lynn looked over his shoulder and saw Dunne heading for the front door. There was a narrow strip of grass between the garage and the fence and McFee squeezed through. Lynn motioned for Kinsella to follow McFee. Kinsella's eyes were wide and he was breathing heavily. Lynn squeezed his shoulder. 'You're doing fine,' he said. Kinsella nodded and rushed after McFee. Lynn followed.

At the back of the garage was a small paved yard. It was overlooked by a large kitchen window but the lights were off in the kitchen. High up on the wall was a motion-sensitive security light but McFee stopped before stepping into its range. Kinsella and Lynn joined him. They crouched in silence. Lynn looked at his watch and counted off the seconds. On the other side of the city, a man should have been making a call from a phone box. They waited. Kinsella was breathing heavily, his mouth wide open.

They all stiffened as they heard the phone start to ring inside the house. It rang for a few seconds and then was cut short as someone in the house answered it. Dunne

pressed the doorbell. It buzzed. He pressed it again. They heard Carter shout 'get the door will you, love' and Lynn pointed a finger at McFee. McFee walked quickly across the yard towards the kitchen door. The halogen light clicked on.

They heard Carter on the phone, asking who was calling.

McFee raised the sledgehammer and swung it at the kitchen door. He put all his weight behind the door and the wood around the lock splintered. He stepped to the side and Lynn kicked the door open, then rushed through the kitchen, his gun arm outstretched. As he reached the doorway that led through to the hallway he saw Carter standing with the phone to his ear, a look of surprise on his face. Lynn pointed the gun at Carter's chest. 'Put down the phone and put your hands behind your head,' he said. Carter slowly replaced the receiver.

Carter's wife was standing by the front door, looking over her shoulder. She was a good five years younger than her husband with long red hair framing a freckled face. She was wearing a pale green silk dressing gown with a dragon on the back. 'Open the door, now!' Lynn barked at her.

The woman slowly reached for the lock, her hand trembling.

'Do it!' said Lynn, gesturing with his gun.

The woman fumbled with the lock and the door crashed open. Dunne pushed the woman back into the hallway, kicked the door shut behind him and pushed the muzzle of his gun under her chin.

'Don't move,' he warned her.

Kinsella joined Lynn and aimed his gun at Carter's face. 'Hands behind your head, now!' yelled Kinsella.

Carter did as he was told.

A small boy wearing pyjamas came out of the sitting room holding a teddy bear by one leg. 'Mum?' he said. His mouth dropped when he saw the men in masks. 'Mum!' he cried.

The woman moved towards her boy but Dunne grabbed her by the hair. 'Stay where you are,' said Dunne.

'Let her get the boy,' said Lynn. 'Carter, get in the kitchen, now.'

Dunne released his grip on the woman's hair and she scurried over to her son. She picked him up and hugged him. 'It's okay, Timmy,' she said. 'It's okay.'

'Don't worry, Timmy,' said Carter.

'Kitchen, now,' said Lynn, gesturing at Carter with his gun.

Carter backed into the kitchen. McFee had closed the kitchen door and was standing with his back to it, still holding the sledgehammer.

'Get out, you bastards!' screeched Carter's wife. 'Get the fuck out of my house!'

The little boy began to cry.

'You're upsetting the boy,' said Dunne, pushing her against the wall.

'Don't you touch me!' she said.

'Keep your mouth shut or I'll shut it for you,' said Dunne, raising his gun.

'Elaine, leave it be,' said Carter. 'Don't antagonise them.'

'Do as your man says,' said Lynn, keeping his gun aimed at Carter's chest. Carter had his hands up but his eyes were darting from side to side, looking for something, anything, to use as a weapon. 'Don't even think about it,' said Lynn. 'Start anything and your wife and boy will get hurt.'

'You scum,' said Carter contemptuously.

'Pot calling the kettle black, is it?' said Lynn.

'Robbie, tell them to go, please,' said Elaine.

'I warned you,' said Dunne. He raised his hand to slap her and she flinched. 'One more word,' he warned. Elaine glared at him through her tears but said nothing.

'Turn around, Carter,' said Lynn, gesturing with his gun. 'And lie down on the floor.'

'Not in front of my wife and child, lads,' said Carter. 'For God's sake, have a heart.'

'Turn around,' Lynn repeated. Carter did as he was told. Lynn pointed his gun at the back of Carter's left leg and pulled the trigger. The gun barked. Carter's kneecap shattered and blood splattered across the kitchen floor.

'No!' yelled Carter's wife. The small boy's mouth dropped open in horror but before he could scream his mother pulled him to her chest and buried his face in her neck. 'You bastards!' she shrieked. The teddy bear dropped from the boy's grasp and fell to the floor.

Carter's left leg collapsed and he fell to the side, then grabbed at the back of a chair in an attempt to get his balance.

'I told yez, down on the floor,' said Lynn. 'Now do as yer feckin' well told.'

Carter glared at Lynn in defiance, his upper lip curled back in a snarl. 'Four of you against one man,' he said. 'That's the way you fight, is it?'

The gun barked again and Carter's right knee buckled as blood soaked through his trouser leg. He pitched forward, face down, and slammed into the tiled floor.

His wife screamed again, an animal howl from deep within her. Lynn pointed his gun at her face. 'Shut the hell up or I'll do you too, you bitch,' he said.

'Elaine, no!' said Carter. He tried to push himself up as blood ran down his legs.

'Robbie!' gasped his wife.

'It's okay,' said Carter. 'Just leave them be.' He fell forward and lay face down, panting. 'Leave her be, lads, this is between you and me.'

Dunne stepped forward and pushed his pistol against the back of Carter's head. 'Shut the fuck up,' he yelled.

'Leave him alone!' said his wife. 'He hasn't done anything.'

'Elaine, please, don't talk to them,' said Carter. 'Don't give them the satisfaction.' Blood was pooling around his shattered knees.

Dunne stood up and looked across at Lynn. Lynn patted Kinsella on the shoulder. 'Okay, lad,' he said.

Kinsella was trembling. He aimed his gun at the back of Carter's head. His breathing was coming in short, sharp gasps. The gun wavered and he used his left hand to steady it.

'Get a feckin move on,' said Dunne.

'I can't,' said Kinsella.

'You have to,' whispered Lynn.

'Jesus wept,' said Dunne. 'Get on with it.'

'Okay, okay,' said Kinsella, his voice shaking. His finger tightened on the trigger.

'Take a deep breath,' said Lynn.

Kinsella inhaled. His legs were quivering and Lynn could hear his metal watchstrap rattling on his wrist.

'Now do it,' ordered Lynn.

Kinsella nodded his head and pulled the trigger. The gun jerked in his hand and the bullet thwacked into the floor by Carter's shoulder, then ricocheted into the cabinet under the sink. Carter's wife screamed.

'Again, fire again,' said Lynn. 'Come on, just pull the bloody trigger.'

Kinsella took aim at Carter's head but then his chest heaved and he threw up. Vomit sprayed across the tiles. Kinsella staggered against the fridge and threw up again. He fell to his knees as vomit tricked down the front of his jacket.

'Jesus wept,' said Dunne. He stepped towards Carter and fired. The back of Carter's head exploded.

Lynn grabbed at Kinsella's collar and yanked him to his feet.

Dunne pointed his gun at Carter's wife. She was sobbing into her son's neck. 'Say anything to anyone and we'll be back to do you and the kid,' he spat.

McFee headed for the front door, still holding the sledgehammer. Lynn pushed Kinsella after him. 'Come on,' he said to Dunne, who was standing looking down at Carter's body.

'Let's shoot the bitch as well,' said Dunne. His took aim at her face but she didn't flinch.

'We've done what we came to do,' said Lynn.

'She called us cowards,' said Dunne. 'I'm no feckin coward.'

'Sticks and stones,' said Lynn. 'You've killed her man. You've done enough.'

Dunne's lips tightened, then he turned and followed McFee and Kinsella down the hallway. The little boy was crying and the woman rubbed the back of his head and nuzzled his ear.

Lynn slid his gun back into its holster. A thick, treacly halo of blood had formed around Carter's head. Lynn felt no sympathy for the dead man, and no remorse for what he'd done. He was at war, and Carter had been the enemy.

'I swear before God Almighty, I will find you,' said the woman through clenched teeth. 'I will find you and I will kill you.'

Lynn turned to look at her. She was glaring at him with a fierce intensity, still clutching the boy to her neck. There were tears running down her face and he could see a vein pulsing in her temple. Lynn opened his mouth to speak but then he turned away and hurried out of the room.

They left through the front door and got back into the car. They were all breathing heavily. 'How did it go?' asked McEvoy, putting the car into gear and pulling away from the kerb.

'How it always goes,' said Lynn. 'Bang, bang, he's dead. Now get us the hell out of here.'

McEvoy stamped on the accelerator and the Saab leapt forward.

Lynn took off his ski mask as McEvoy drove quickly down the hill to the dual carriageway that led to safety of the Republican Falls Road area of West Belfast.

'Well done boys,' he said. 'You done me proud.'

Kinsella had his head down and was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. 'I'm sorry,' he muttered.

'It's okay, Noel, the first time is always hard, no matter what anyone says.'

'I fucked up, I'm sorry.'

'You pulled the trigger, lad, and there's a lot can't even do that.'

Kinsella started to tremble and he put his head in his hands. McFee opened the glove compartment and handed a bottle of Bushmills whiskey to Dunne. 'Give the boy a wee dram,' he said.

Dunne unscrewed the top off the bottle and tapped it against Kinsella's shoulder. 'Here lad, this'll help.'

'I'm sorry, Adrian. I'm sorry I let you down.'

Dunne put an arm around Kinsella's shoulders. 'Like Gerry says, the first time is the worst. You've been bloodied now, that's all that matters. The next time will be easier, trust me.'

Kinsella nodded gratefully and took the bottle of whiskey from Dunne. He drank deeply, then began to cough as the alcohol burned into his stomach. 'I'll do better next time, lads, I promise,' he said.

'That's for sure,' laughed Lynn.