



BOND HUNTER

"A taut international thriller - a young lawyer is plunged into danger when she discovers Hitler's link to Wall Street . . ."

a novel by

KIA MCINERNY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Between 1924 and 1930, through the U.S. "Dawes Plan" the cash starved Weimar government acquired capital through foreign loans. Backed by gold, and with interest payable in U.S. dollars, the bonds were aggressively sold throughout small-town America, by one of Wall Street's most prestigious banking houses. Shortly after Adolph Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the Third Reich defaulted on the loans, using the issuing banks to buy back the bonds from panicked investors for pennies on the dollar. Following Hitler's defeat, Germany was pressured to repay all of its debt. Through political sleight-of-hand, Germany did not pay it all back, leaving many U.S. investors unpaid after 80 years. This is the subject of BOND HUNTER. *[Find more history and images on Amazon's Kia McNerny Page.]*

For and in grateful acknowledgment of ~

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3 October 1994, Manhattan

Quiet autumn rain was falling in the street outside the brownstone offices of Rand & Rand, Attorneys at Law. Inside, Kenna Rand sat at her grandfather's desk in the ground-floor library they had shared as law partners. A fireplace of pale limestone dominated the high-ceilinged rooms and a low fire had been burning for some time within. Kenna sat in silence, acutely aware of the warmth and comfort, in striking contrast to the terror of the day before.

She took a sip of Barry's tea with milk that she had brewed simply as an excuse for getting out her mother's tea set. She inspected the teacup, saucer, and small plate. The graceful shapes of the Irish-made china gave form to her past.

Her mother had preferred Lapsang Souchong, a strange smoky tea that made Kenna gag and moue up her face. She knew this preference of Moira Rand because she had been told by her grandfather, keeping alive for her some memory of the parents who had died when she was three. But her parents were gone. And now, grandfather too. Gone.

At the first burp of the fax machine, she stood up. She hovered over it, willing herself to wait until the sound stopped completely. Two double-spaced pages reposed in the in-tray. This, then, would be the report of her grandfather's attending physician she had insisted he fax over to her. She skipped the preliminary remarks and turned to page two, ignoring her racing pulse: "Findings:"

“Deceased expired within four hours of the onset of symptoms: delirium, high fever, rapid heart rate. Cause of death: heart failure. Noted: small amounts of an unknown viral agent of high toxicity in subject's blood... tests inconclusive.”

Bloody cold, she murmured, adopting an expletive of her grandfather's. Bloody damn bleeping chilly account of the death of someone whom she'd never imagined losing.

Seating herself again at the desk, she stared at the words. She had thought the report would galvanize her. Now the question came: galvanize her to do what?

The rain struck the window like the rapping of an insistent stranger. She turned to the darkened glass. In her reflection, the events of yesterday commenced unfolding like a series of movie stills. She was lost in the horror of it once more.

2 October 1994

Kenna glanced behind her and saw the woman, still twenty yards behind them, advancing with long striding steps. The cruelty of the stranger's face briefly shocked Kenna, the impression etching itself into her unconscious. How could it not? The man's Fedora, shading her cheek line, what little of it remained exposed beyond the frames of the aviator glasses she wore. Leather coat zipped up tight at the woman's throat. Pointy boots.

The woman looked to be in her late forties, with an austere European style. Fashionable again to wear hats, Kenna thought. But mostly among twenty-somethings like herself. The effect was a bit of drama that did not quite fit the morning's Sunday-in-the-park motif.

Kenna resisted the impulse to walk faster. She felt herself frowning, gave the stranger a few seconds more, then shifted her attention to her grandfather, her emotions still uncertain after the contentiousness of half an hour before.

The gray dawn had turned into one of those crisp, brilliant October Sundays the city was known for, when a seductive breeze and dazzling sun drew every child, woman and man to the outdoors. It was understood people would drift outside to sample what paradise must be like. The kind of day, Kenna later thought, with bitterness at Nature's guile, on which John Lennon had been killed.

“Tis beautiful in New York today,” Jack Rand said, lapsing into his native Irish manner of speech. “Ye were right to get us out of the office.” He squinted upward. “Sun’s fierce this morning. We’ll be bronzed into a California tan before noon.”

His words were a gracious attempt to dismiss her cloudburst from this morning. She felt the small sense of shame over her remarks and pushed it away.

He studied her silent profile. “Not all about winning, lass. Sometimes pitching the pebble into the water is enough. No need to drain the lake.”

“I hope you’ll be happy then, with a Pyrrhic victory.”

“Are we onto that again?” He cocked his head in mock appraisal. “And do ye know who King Pyrrhus was?”

“Do you?”

“That’s my girl.”

She decided to meet him half way. “Greek King who lost so many men in his battle with the Romans, he remarked: ‘Another such victory and I shall be ruined.’”

“I don’t intend to lose this battle.” His smile returned. “Anyway, ye cannot say the subject lacks romance. The Weimar bond portfolio hasn’t been seen since the 1950s.”

“Shouldn’t we ask why?”

He linked her arm through his. “What thinks ye about touring the Aran Islands on me way back? Won’t be cold in Ireland for another month. Bit of fishing. Golf. On that wind-swept tundra they call a fairway. Fireside chess over a pint of Guinness and soda bread sandwiches. Ye could meet me in Shannon, lass. Aye, could do with a spit of a holiday – after the Swiss bankers.”

So he would make the trip to Basel, in spite of her misgivings. Project still on then. All systems go.

The woman was gaining on them. Or was she pacing them? Was this the kind of person the German government would send to check out her grandfather? As she watched,

the figure disappeared behind a man jogging with twin strollers. She felt relieved.

“Remember our trip to Kilgornin – when ye was a kid? Scramblin’ over McCarthy Castle with your cousins. Couldn’t tear ya’ away. Even at the gloom of dusk when the chill clung fierce as death.” There was a catch in his voice when he spoke of Ireland.

“It was the Norse broke down our castle, grandfather,’ ye said.” He lifted his head in a sly smile. “Bloody Norse.” His rancor against Ireland’s early invaders was a secret jest between them.

“I’d love to go there again,” The urgency in her voice was fresh, and surprised her.

Jack Rand paused to adjust his neck scarf, a thinly veiled attempt to hide his shortness of breath. She had been walking too fast for him, a pace that had not been a problem a year ago. Or even last spring.

“How about it, then? Good for one more turn around the park? We’ll make ourselves fierce for tea and sausages.”

They reached the shortcut path to Tavern on the Green. The eleven o’clock bells rang out pure as a child’s laughter, a sudden breeze swept the last scent of blossoms her way. Kenna had to confess she was looking forward to a cup of Earl Grey and plate of sausages and eggs.

“Let’s turn down now,” she said. “Stake out our table before the brunch-crowd.”

As she spoke, her eye caught the stranger behind them. Chill out, why don’t you? What the bloody hell is your hurry? Instinctively, she led her grandfather closer to the stone bridge. He smiled into her own green-gray eyes, tucking a dark curl behind her ear. She returned his smile, a small one, and resolved to refrain, at least this morning, from further discussion of the Weimar bonds.

She heard the swish of leather in movement. Felt the pressure of something behind her. The next moment Jack

Rand was clutching his shoulder. His face flinched in pain, his strong features contorted.

“Gramper. Gramps. Are you okay?”

Even as she supported him, she flipped open her cell phone, tapped in the numbers and heard the brisk greeting of the emergency receptionist. “Nine-One-One. Where are you?”

What instinct caused her to look up?

In chocolate Fedora and leather jacket, a woman's back was vanishing among the joggers of Central Park.

“Stop! Please. Help!”

Kenna turned back to her grandfather who had crumpled to the sidewalk.