

The Mermaid Trilogy

# The Merrow's Red Hat

Christie Selph

The Merrow's Red Hat

BOOK 3



The Mermaid Hunters/Selph

# The Merrow's Red Hat

**A novel by Christie Selph**

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty  
of their dreams."

Eleanor Roosevelt

"And I believe that good journalism, that good  
television can make our world a better place."

Christiane Amanpour

This book is a work of historical fiction. The events are accurate and the historical figures are real though the dialogue has been imagined by the author.

## CONTENTS:

- Part One: Stormy Weather
- Part Two: Mayhem on Both Sides of the Pond
- Part Three: Ancient Seas and Modern Perils
- Part Four: Uncharted Waters

The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

Part One: Stormy Weather

**Montgomery, Alabama: Spring 1986**

“Have you lost your mind?” John asked Lorelei.

She watched his jaw muscle clench and his high forehead crease as he leaned against the doorjamb with his arms crossed. His black eyes looked straight through her. He talked at her instead of to her and as he spoke his voice got louder.

“I thought that conversation in the jungle about St. Bede's not being good enough for Brennan was so much malarkey, that you just wanted to distract me from beating Philp to a pulp. Apparently, you're serious about taking him to Ireland. How do you know the schools are so much better? How do you know he wants to go? Just because you want to write a book doesn't mean you need to drag him into a war zone. Are you crazy?”

Lorelei had prepared herself for this outrage or so she thought.

His barrage of accusations swirled around her:

“I thought you loved being a war correspondent and wallowing in the trenches with Philip. You've never written a book; what makes you think you can be an author. Fear get the best of you....”

She lounged in the comfy chair in their bedroom where she liked to read, braiding her long auburn hair, and let him rant while she watched a graceful, weeping willow sway like a hula dancer. She gave him credit for being perceptive. Her interjection about Brennan's school had been a distraction. ‘I couldn't let John whack off Philip's family jewels under some palm tree in Nicaragua just because a DNA test proved Philip was Brennan's father, not John.’

His charge about fear peaked her anger. She and Philip rarely discussed being afraid, well not until afterwards. And she never told John about the dangers she had encountered.

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

War stories made him crazy and prompted outbursts; PTSD and all those other demons, you know.

“I told you at Christmas, how much Brennan and I miss you,” said John.

This time, Lorelei kept quiet and didn't blame her absences on either her profession or her ego.

Then John's voice rumbled like thunder and Lorelei's pulse quickened.

“Now you want my son to go to some Irish school for a fucking year. What am I supposed to do? Sit here alone and scratch my balls.”

‘He's going down that same old road, again,’ thought Lorelei and their argument took a predictable, nasty turn. For months, in fact since the end of last year, they had argued about her writing a biography of Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Féin, the revolutionary party supporting a unified Ireland, and taking Brennan to study in Galway City, on the west coast of the Republic.

Lorelei got up, hands on her hips, and stood her ground. They cursed and glared and shouted and battled like Vikings, well not the mace and axe part, but there was a lot of posturing. She described St. Enid's, how it was Jesuit and all-boys just like his alma mater, Gonzaga College High in DC, but John was adamant in his opposition.

“And Galway City is as safe as Washington, DC,” she interjected. “Maybe safer when you read about all the crime at home, these days.”

“I don't give a tinker's damn about his experiencing Irish culture. That's your heritage. Remember? I'm Welsh. Who gives a shit, if 150 years ago your great-grandfather came from Ireland or 350 years ago, my ancestors came from Wales? Aren't we all Americans, now? Or is there something else you're not telling me?”

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

“Where you come from is important. Your heritage helps you understand yourself,” she countered.

“If that’s so fucking important then why don’t you take Brennan to Greece and let him wallow in Philip’s heritage?”

Not wanting to slog through that swamp, Lorelei returned to her chair and pretended to stare at the willow tree. One part of her hoped her plan would force John to leave Montgomery, the city she despised and “live up to his potential,” as they had argued that horrid night in Boston at the Lenox Hotel. Another part of her was not certain what she wanted though one part of her was certain she needed time with Brennan to strengthen their bond and to prepare him for what lay ahead. But Lorelei did not admit that to John. That she would have the opportunity to explore the machinations of a very private man, she considered pivotal in the fight against oppression, was the icing on her plan and she didn’t admit that either.

John admitted he couldn’t keep Lorelei out of harm’s way, but he had to be damned certain that Brennan would be protected. So, he argued that Adams had a target with a big bull’s-eye on his back and so would she, and so would Brennan, and what in the hell would she do for security? He knew how easy it was to kill someone if you really wanted to. The Marines had taught him well; years of war had honed his skills.

“For Chrissakes,” she argued, “we’re targets for goons in pointy hats right here in fucking Montgomery. I don’t have to remind you about the Klan, the crosses, and their setting your office ablaze, do I?”

John opened their bedroom door and slammed it behind him. This wasn’t a one-off argument, just another dogfight with no winners, inflicting wounds which festered and oozed.



## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

Lorelei refused to back down. Like Eleanor Roosevelt, she believed, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

Since Brennan had been a toddler, Lorelei had chastised herself for being an inadequate mother – too much a journalist, too little a mother – never enough time. Brennan with John or Maizie or Sylvie or Billy or Francis, but not her. Not even that time she took off a few years ago, after a bomb had buried her and Philip in Beirut, had been enough time.

Lorelei's ego drove her. Somewhere deep inside hid that little girl with a mother belittling everything she did who needed vindication. Brennan would turn eleven come June. ‘Time scurries like an ant at a picnic,’ she told herself. ‘Any more delay would not be prudent.’

Realizing the scandals she had exposed required time before the guilty were flayed, her work, now in the capable hands of the *Washington Post's* City Desk, would continue. She admitted she was tired and it was time to move-on. Her years with one of the country's most prestigious newspapers had been successful beyond her wildest dreams, but it was time to branch-out.

Writing Adam's biography appealed to her commitment to freedom and democracy and her crusade against oppression. Her editor at the *Washington Post*, Ben Bradlee, had agreed she could continue writing two columns a week, which balanced their finances; so as far as Lorelei was concerned, those issues had been resolved. The \$10,000 from her Pulitzer she had stashed away for Brennan would more than pay for his tuition.

Brennan needed time as well – time to understand Philip was his father, time to meet his grandparents, Yannis and Eirene, and time to experience his heritage. Though Philip's Greece

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

and her Ireland were only inches away from each other on Brennan's globe, they are disparate lands with distinctly different cultures.

'They share similar values of family,' thought Lorelei and she was curious how Brennan would react. 'The odd thing about time is it increases your past and erodes your future. I'm nearly forty,' and mentally counted on her fingers — 'John will be forty-three, Philip's almost forty-eight, and Daddy turns sixty-four. Christ, that's a lot of fours!'

And for a few moments, she thought about her last forty years: she and Pippa cheerleading at La Plata High; Sam, recently unearthed, still hiding from his bloviating father, Larry, in Alaska; and of course, her mother Anne and sister Rosemary, both sexually abused by Anne's father, skeletons which still rattled around in her mental closet where she stashed stuff she did not want to confront.

So, she steeled her resolve, one more time, and told John, "I am not crazy," and searching for a truce, at least on this particular day, she quoted a few lines from J.R.R. Tolkien about "sitting by a fire" and "when a winter comes without a spring," and watched him from the corner of her eye.

For a few moments there was silence, then John asked, "Will there be a seat aside your fire for me?"

"Yes, if you wish, and a rocking chair for each of us," and she watched the willow branches swirl in the breeze, grateful her distraction had worked and that he seemed more malleable.

### **A Bishop and a Castle: Northern Ireland – November, 1985**

Several months earlier just before Thanksgiving and on the sly, after cajoling Gerry Adams into submission, Lorelei made her boss, Ben Bradlee, swear an oath of secrecy. Only then, did she board a plane for Shannon, Ireland instead of flying to DC as she had told everyone else.

She was determined to witness the yearlong end of the Anglo-Irish Conference at Hillsborough Castle to see if their agonizing, often fraught-filled debate would lead to peace. Covering this story wasn't the only reason Lorelei kept this trip quiet for she had other priorities on her mind, priorities which required a delicate approach, even diplomatic one might say. Besides, her ongoing argument with John was another reason for her chicanery.

Black cumulus clouds were stacked like skyscrapers on the horizon. 'Bad weather's a-coming,' thought Lorelei, as the plane's undercarriage lowered. Within minutes, the Aer Lingus jet taxied to the terminal.

Since she traveled alone, Gerry advised it was safer to meet in the Republic because violence had heightened in the North since the talks began. A large black sedan with tinted windows sat on the tarmac. She saw a silver-flecked beard with thick rimmed glasses when the window rolled down. Mick, one of his men, scurried to the stairway to help her with luggage.

The first droplets of rain splattered as Timmy, the driver she remembered from the road chase in Belfast, put the car in gear. He looked at her in the rearview mirror and twitched his little ginger mustache as if he was waving.

"Just in time, me darlin' ninja," said Gerry, looking at the black clouds and then at her. He took both her hands in his, "Me eyes take kindly to the sight of ye."

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

Lorelei liked the moniker Gerry had given her since she had confronted a couple of Orangemen intent on murdering him in Derry. That was a fearful night but she had shrugged off the possible consequences.

The sedan sped down the runway before turning onto an access road. No customs, no immigration, no entry stamp in her passport. Such was the power of Sinn Féin's president. He uncorked a bottle of Jamison's and poured shots around. "*Slainte,*" they toasted, as they drove north towards Galway City.

The Slieve Bloom Mountains, blue with mist, guarded fields divided by verdant hedgerows and stone fences. Silver blue lakes puddled the valleys. Matisse could have painted this landscape. They conversed easily even though a year had passed since they'd been face-to-face. She showed him the latest pictures of Brennan and John taken in Alaska and spoke of her reconnection with Sam Milligan. She watched while Gerry's thumb traced a smiling Brennan with curly black hair, holding his prized fish, and saw sadness fill his eyes.

"Guess your world's still not safe for you to have another child?"

"Barely safe for my wife," he said, commenting they had lived apart for most of their married life. "My life imperils theirs. And what about you? Will you have another child?"

Shaking her head, no, she changed subjects and asked if the agreement, likely to materialize from the talks, would change matters, but Gerry didn't answer. His arm, which had been draped alongside the seat, grasped her shoulder and pulled her closer.

"I've missed you, my good woman," he whispered. "My need of your words is as great as my need for your company."

She rode in the crook of his arm as the sedan straddled the curves, rounding the glens and hills of Connemara. For some reason, her mind hopscotched from her father Billy to John, then

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

to her somewhat absent, husband Philip and back to Brennan — the dark-haired, dark-eyed, alpha men in her life and the son whom, in a few years, might be taller than all of them.

Sitting next to her was another alpha man, not as dark-haired as the others, but with the same black, brooding eyes which pierced pretense and saw the truth. Although Gerry espoused the need for her counsel and company, she couldn't imagine why out of all the people in the universe he had chosen a red-haired journalist from a little podunk town, south of Washington, DC. 'Must be my Maureen O'Hara hair,' she laughed to herself.

She glanced up at Gerry, his eyes half-closed, strap-hanging with one hand and holding her with the other, as the car dipped and swerved like a ship in a stormy sea. His well-trimmed beard hid half his face and a mustache covered a portion of his upper lip.

He pushed back his glasses, looked down at her, and a slight smile creased his cheeks. He tightened his grasp on her and she felt the tension in his body and worried about his having one more person to keep out of harm's way. Then she felt the heaviness of the Colt in her purse and relaxed a bit. What she did not know was, that after the street-side ambush in Belfast which had nearly killed Adams, this vehicle had been armored and was bullet-proof.

A few hours later, at a crest in the road near where the North Atlantic bites the sands of County Donegal, Gerry pointed to the Abbeyglenn Castle Hotel perched on the other side of the valley. He checked his watch and told her she would have time to rest and freshen-up before dinner. Gravel crunched beneath the tires as they parked at the entrance of an elegant, ivy-covered hotel complete with turrets. The Irish tri-color flapped in the breeze and the rain had lessened to a mist. Lorelei had the strange sense of coming home.

The Hughes were welcoming hosts. Their energetic son, barely in his twenties and bubbling with Celtic charm, carried her luggage to a suite warmed by a peat fire. They sat in opposite

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

chairs aside the hearth and drank a couple shots of Jamison while the tub filled. The heat of the whiskey and the fire relaxed her.

She nodded yes when Gerry asked if he could stay and she left the bathroom door ajar so they could chat. Floating in a sea of lavender bubbles, dizzy from jet-lag and too much whiskey, she smiled when he agreed to her writing his biography and laughed when he concurred with Brennan's schooling. He recommended St. Enda's, *Coláiste Éinde*, an all-boy preparatory school under the auspices of the bishop of County Galway. 'That was way easier than I thought,' she told herself, blowing a fluff of bubbles into the air.

Pouring himself another shot then not thinking, he reached through the partially open door for her empty glass, sitting on the rear ledge of the bathtub.

"*Jaysus*," muttered Gerry. "You're a mighty woman" and blushed when he realized the liberty he'd taken. "Sorry, Lorelei. I didn't mean to presume."

An hour later, they walked down the stairs to the dining room. Neither of them looked at the dinner menu. All around them through floor-to-ceiling windows fall fluttered, leaves red and gold drooped in the rain; some fell while others clung bravely to the branch, waiting for another day.

Both of them were quiet, subdued even. Maybe the scenario in the bathroom had unhinged them. His large hand, touching hers as they raised their glasses and toasted "*Slainte*," caught her off-guard. Then lowering his eyes, he asked a question which unhinged her further.

"How many times have you been in love?"

She paused for a moment, attempting to collect herself yet unable to stifle a laugh.

"I guess I've been in love two-and-a-half times."

Then a full-throated laugh erupted from her.

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

“Never fear, Gerry Adams, I’m certainly not calling you half-a-man however falling in love with you would be a half-assed idea. Ours would be a liaison of todays with no tomorrows.”

Oddly, Gerry remained silent. The awkwardness of the moment dissipated and the remainder of the evening, they discussed the peace talks and their journey in the morning to Hillsborough Castle. That night, she slept alone and wondered what it would be like to have a “today” with Gerry Adams.

Hillsborough Castle is not a castle. Rather, the rambling stone building is a Georgian manor house built in the 1700’s by Willis Hill, the first marquis of Downshire.

A few miles southwest of Belfast, the estate’s beauty and serenity clashed with the war-torn reality of Northern Ireland’s capital. Telling her they had arrived late in order to make an entrance, Lorelei repeated his instructions.

“Yes, I’m to walk slightly behind you and sit on your right,” then she quipped, “I’m Prince Philip to your Queen Elizabeth II.”

They looked at each as they walked into the conference room, trying to act as decorous as the situation dictated, and failed miserably because they both grinned like leprechauns. Adams took his proscribed seat at the head of the table reserved for the Sinn Féin delegation. Lorelei sat to his right, not in the gallery where the media was corralled. John Hume, leader of the Social Democrat and Labor Party (SDLP), who was sympathetic to Adams’ cause, already had been seated.

Tables for each faction were arranged in a hollow square. Scanning the room, she tallied some of the Irish Republic’s attendees — *Taoiseach* Garrett FitzGerald, *Tánaiste* David Spring,

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

and Peter Barry, respectively the prime minister, deputy prime minister, and the minister of foreign affairs.

At the next table were the Unionists, Ian Paisley and James Molyneaux, leaders of Northern Ireland's two most important parties, plus a gaggle of other prominent Orangemen. Earlier in the month, they had petitioned Thatcher to cease these talks.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, her Minister of Foreign Affairs Tom King, and a bevy of underlings occupied the table at the top of the square. Assorted clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, including Archbishop Daly from Derry, whom Lorelei had met on her first visit with her father, sat on the fourth side.

Unlike Julius Caesar's famous hollow-square, protecting his legions from penetration, these attendees faced their enemies and glared at them from within. All of the meetings in this elegant, damask wallpapered room with two Waterford crystal chandeliers had been conducted in secret.

Thatcher, some claimed, had bowed to pressure from President Reagan, in turn spurred by Sen. Ted Kennedy, to sign the agreement. Consequently, Garrett FitzGerald, knowing a resolution was a *fait accompli*, had opened this session to the press. For a group which had met off and on for nearly a year, there was little conviviality and barely a few smiles. In Lorelei's mind, these adversaries reminded her of the Hatfields and the McCoys, feuding since America's Civil War.

'The Loyalists grimace like they've eaten sour pickles,' thought Lorelei. 'Thatcher's primed for a photo opt with those supercilious eyes, fluttering like some hoity-toity dame,' and she smirked when she wondered how much hairspray the prime minister used to keep her signature flip in place.



The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

Rev. Ian Paisley droned-on like Monday morning traffic.

“I am not going to sit down with bloodthirsty monsters who have been killing and terrifying my people.”

Then he interspersed his monotonous monologue with the fiery rhetoric the evangelical Protestant spewed regularly from his pulpit.

“I no longer will listen to the calls for union these Papists, who bow before the scarlet woman of Rome, demand.”

Adams leaned towards her and whispered, “Welcome to our circus. Have you ever seen a more maudlin cadre of clowns? Fuck all will happen today.”

Checking his watch, Adams nodded to Daly who tapped his timepiece, then to Hume and his bodyguards. Except for Lorelei, the Sinn Féin delegation rose in unison. Rev. Paisley, stopping mid-sentence, cursed Adams. Gerry's retort took aim at his arrogance.

“I'm sick of your senseless blather. You, your kind, and Madame Prime Minister are horrific examples of humanity. Your inaction will cause the deaths of many more of our people. The Troubles will continue. Sinn Féin will no longer participate in this charade.”

Then all of a sudden, Gerry pulled Lorelei from her seat, and they were outside walking quickly, almost running to the cars. Doors slammed and their three-car caravan sped towards Belfast and made a sharp turn at the outskirts of the city.

Gerry appeared agitated. He clenched and unclenched his hands until they reddened. No one spoke. A miasma of apprehension thickened the air and obscured reality; the landscape blurred. Lorelei felt as if her mermaid's rock had vanished in the fog, and she couldn't find her way to safety.

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

When the road turned to gravel, their speed did not decrease. In fact, Gerry told Timmy to go faster. Lorelei watched Timmy check the rearview mirror and felt the car accelerate. She saw no fear in his eyes however she did not remove her hand from her pistol in her pocket. The gravel ricocheted and sounded like gunshots when they made another abrupt turn.

Then the motor switched off and they coasted into a copse of trees until the undergrowth slowed them to a standstill. Silence. One man from each car emerged and pushed back through the undergrowth towards the road, their pistols by their sides, while Gerry kept an eye on the car's rear window. Minutes later, the men reappeared, smiling.

"All's safe, me darlin'," Gerry said to Lorelei, as he opened the door and helped her out.

Leaning down, they walked through a tunnel in the brush until in front of her stood a traditional thatched cottage, not unlike the ones in her childhood picture book, though substantially larger than the footprint of *Dado Liam's* in County Sligo, overlooking the Atlantic. Elongated like a shoe box, the cottage's location on the lake was spectacular.

"Where are we?" she asked, resetting the safety on the pistol jammed in her jacket pocket.

"Lough Neagh," he answered. "The English claim it's the largest lake in the British Isles which galls me every time I think about it."

"Are we still in Ulster?"

"Yes," he laughed. "But the question remains, where? Only County Fermaugh doesn't touch her shore."

"If I make you guys tea will you tell me what in the hell happened at the castle?"

For a safe house, the kitchen was well-stocked and Lorelei found everything she needed including a massive, tarnished teapot, which looked to be a couple of centuries old. Later, she

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

was told the house belonged to Gerry's bodyguard, Mick. The spoons stirred and the cups clanked before Gerry answered her.

"Our good Archbishop gave me a sign," he explained. "This is the Orangemen's third attempt to disrupt the conference. We were forewarned there might be violence, that some of us might be at the wrong end of a pistol. I've got enough holes in me, already. Besides, 'the die is cast,'" and he handed her a copy of the agreement which would be signed on Friday. Give it a read. I'd like your help in drafting my response."

"That's two days from now," she said.

"Plenty of time for you to write your story and score a scoop."

She headlined her article, "Anglo-Irish Conference Leaks Agreement" and wrote:

*Prime Minister of Great Britain Margaret Thatcher and Garrett FitzGerald, the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, will sign on Friday, 15 November an agreement determining how Northern Ireland will be governed. Armed revolt between the Republicans and the Loyalists has been ongoing for sixty years. Not only is this a war for sovereignty and democratic rights but a struggle between Catholics and Protestants in play since before the reign of King Henry VIII.*

*Informed sources indicate the present status of the North will remain unchanged. However, a power-sharing deal between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain is being touted as a way to reduce violence and implement a roadmap towards peace.*

*Observers concur this agreement does not satisfy either the Loyalists, who wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom, or the Republicans who clamor for a united Ireland. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, condemns the agreement and the IRA is expected to continue their violent campaign....*

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

When the six men in Gerry's cavalcade with beers in hand had disappeared to play poker, Gerry perused her piece. Lorelei worried she'd had no time to verify his information however she trusted him and called the *Post* on the satellite phone Ben had loaned her to dictate her story. An hour or so later he called her.

"Yeah, Lorelei," said Ben. "I just finished reading it. Great job. We'll use it as a second lead."

She confessed her confirmation concerns, but Ben Bradlee also trusted Gerry Adams.

"Besides," he laughed. "Leaks aren't always true."

Then Lorelei and Gerry drafted his response:

*The formal recognition of the partition of Ireland is a disaster to our nationalist cause and outweighs the powerless role given to Dublin. The Anglo-Irish Agreement signed today, changes nothing. Sinn Féin cannot endorse this travesty. The IRA has promised to protest with more violence. I am disheartened that more innocent people will die....*

Instead of writing new copy for her Friday column, Lorelei used Gerry Adams' statement with an introduction, detailing the yearlong negotiations. Then, she wandered to the front of the cottage and sat on a log bench, overlooking the lough, and dialed John.

Hearing Brennan's voice in the background, she asked to speak to him, first. She told him about the beautiful thatched cottage and the castle hotel in Clifden. Hearing the excitement in his voice, she promised they would return soon, but she did not disclose her plans for St. Enda's. Then she asked Brennan to put his daddy on the phone.

"My article in tomorrow's *Post* might cause you some concern," she said to John. "I want you to know that I'm in a safe house in Ireland and should be home in a couple of days."

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

All she heard was the drone of a dial tone.

Unfazed, she leaned back against the bench and watched two swans with bandit eyes paddle on the lough directly in front of her; behind them, the sun cradled the horizon and shone red. Two doves cooed and, in the distance, an owl omened the night. She took a deep breath. The aroma of heather mixed with pine was intoxicating. How such beauty could co-exist with such despair confounded her.

She flinched with surprise when Gerry's voice from behind her said, "We should have a clear day tomorrow," and then he told her Mick would take her to the train station in the morning. "I must be in Belfast by Friday and I don't want you there. You'll be in harm's way."

"I hate that idiom," she said, remembering John's deployment to Vietnam and her assignments in Lebanon. "I have a follow-up article to write. I can't leave before the treaty is signed. There's nothing to worry about, I've been in war zones before."

No amount of persuasion would alter Lorelei's decision. Then she changed the topic and, pointing to the swans, told him a story about the many avian species which mated for life though only three-percent of mammals were monogamous.

"What's that supposed to mean?" he asked, and sat down beside her.

"I guess I'm talking about myself. I don't want you to get the wrong idea about me."

Lorelei had not dwelt on her infidelity since she had joked with him the first time they'd met in Derry, and she'd said, "Don't you think a married woman who lives with her lover and looks with lust in her heart at a third should be considered promiscuous?"

He stretched out his long legs and rested his arm on the back of the bench. He took his time and watched the swans, then he asked if her actions bothered her or if she questioned or found herself comparing the men in her life?

The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

She shrugged her shoulders and lied, "Not really."

"Am I a catalyst?" he asked.

"Yes. Obviously, I've questioned my inability to choose between John and Philip, for years. That's why I want you to understand my private life. We'll be embarking upon a project together. Although I'm at odds, emotionally, I'm steady as a rock, professionally. You can trust me."

She talked about Philip's inability to love another woman and the importance of John in shaping her identity. She used her journalist's ploy of revealing truths about herself to put the other person at ease.

"John made me a woman and Philip made me a journalist."

"And what role do I play?"

"You give me confidence. When I'm with you, I'm certain again my life has meaning. Lebanon is such a wasteland and Greece still struggles with her recently reinstated democracy. However, I remain certain the career I've chosen can make a difference. In the States, I've exposed a handful of scandals though resolution seems so ephemeral, the wheels of justice turn so slowly. Here, I'm more hopeful."

Gerry made a crack about Ireland's problems having not been resolved in six-hundred years, then he turned serious and looked her in the eye.

"Well, then the three of us must have value. Each of us, in a different way, apparently complements you. I find no shame in that situation, do you?"

Lorelei lowered her eyes and waited, not wanting to answer him.

"We should feel blessed if we have more than one friend, don't you think?" and then he dislodged himself from the bench, and ambled back to the cottage, alone.

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

On Thursday, they jumped off the world's merry-go-round. The sailor's ditty proved true. The day was clear and just warm enough for fishing off the bank and a picnic complete with wine. Resting with his arms behind his head, Gerry closed his eyes and lazed in the sun. Then she leaned back on the blanket next to him and listened while he spun some ancient, geomythology tales.

"Take Lough Neagh, for example. You'd think us Irish would tell you about geological periods like the Cenozoic or massive faulting but no, we're caught in a time warp so we tell stories about fairies and merrows and pots of gold."

"Goodonya" she joked, using an Irish expression, she'd just learned. "I love a good story."

So, he began the story about *Fionn mac Cumhaill*, the famous giant warrior Finn McCool, and his fight with a marauding Scottish giant who was encroaching on his property.

"He scooped up a handful of dirt," said Gerry. "Well you can imagine how much dirt a giant can hold and he threw it at the Scottish giant as the intruder fled into the Irish Sea."

"And then what happened?" she asked.

"Well not much else except that's how Lough Neagh was made and how the Isle of Man came into being."

"I see, I see," she laughed. "Got another one?"

Then he told her how the Lough could turn wood into iron though only if it were a limb from a holly tree. How, after seven years, the part of the branch stuck in the muck would turn to iron, the section under water would turn to stone, and the rest of the limb above the water would stay green and produce red berries.

"Have you ever seen that happen?" she asked, but he just chuckled.

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

"If this is how regular people live then I'd like more of it," he said, and groaned contentedly as he stretched.

"I don't have many days like these either, well not recently," and she told him how bored she was that year when she had tied on an apron and stayed at home. Deciding no more personal revelations were required, she changed the subject and they debated how to end The Troubles.

"Violence certainly has not changed anything," she said. "In fact, matters here have worsened. War destroys, peace rebuilds."

Squinting at the sun, he sighed, "I'm afraid I've allowed myself the luxury of needing you," then changed his tone and spoke with greater resolve. "I used to equate need with weakness instead, you give me strength, the courage to continue. I am so weary of warfare. I don't control the actions of the IRA. Only they can stop the violence."

Then in an even stronger voice he asked, "Would you lay down your arms so your enemy could slaughter you?"

Pulling at a dandelion, she heard in her mind's ear her college French teacher explain that *dent de lion* meant lion's tooth. To her, Gerry Adams was like a lion, fluffy maned and courageous.

She blew at the puff, watched the seeds float away, and remembered a story Philip had told her. Not until that moment, did she realize that Gerry, like Odysseus, navigated strange and stormy seas. Like the Greek hero caught between Charybdis, a treacherous whirlpool, and Scylla, a monstrous, man-eating, cliff-dweller, he as well was "between a rock and a hard place."

Then she propped herself up on her elbow and looked at him, his face in repose, eyes closed with no telltale lines of worry on his forehead.



## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

“Guess we're damned if we do and damned if we don't,” she said. “If someone shoots at me, I'm going to shoot back.”

All of a sudden it was Friday morning and Lorelei and Gerry went their separate ways. Caressing his cheek in farewell, she told him she carried him in her heart and to be careful.

With her pistol in her purse and three armed body guards, she returned to Hillsborough Castle, the danger too ominous for him to accompany them. Taking refuge, Gerry hid in another safe house off Falls Road in the Catholic area of Belfast and waited, waited for the violence he knew would erupt.

Like all ceremonial signings in times past, the inevitable photo-op presented itself. An immaculately coifed Margaret Thatcher smiled for the cameras, but Garrett FitzGerald's expression appeared apprehensive, like a little boy considering his first plunge off the high dive. He knew many of his constituents in the Republic supported a united Ireland and his signature to this treaty put his political career in jeopardy. He would be right. Opposition party leader Charles Haughey, in the next election, would regain the *Taoiseach's* seat in Dublin.

Lorelei clicked away and elbowed her way to the front. While Thatcher yammered-on about “a new hope for peace,” she cornered FitzGerald.

“Why did you sign an agreement no one wants?” she asked him.

His grin turned sheepish and muttered he could trust no one except the British prime minister. Then he cupped his hands as if to say his political fortunes rested with Thatcher.

On the plane home, she wrote her article headlined, “Thatcher's Iron Grip Squeezes FitzGerald,” and added a “News Analysis” banner she hoped Ben would okay because her caustic pen skewered the powers-that-be and condemned the power-sharing agreement as a

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

sham. Then, using Adams' words, she wrote that in an Ireland, still partitioned, violence and oppression would continue. And as Gerry had predicted, it did.

### **Montgomery, Thanksgiving 1985**

Lorelei was back in her kitchen, back from Northern Ireland, making sandwiches from leftover Thanksgiving turkey when Ian Paisley addressed a crowd of hundreds of thousands of Loyalists in Belfast. Like "a watched pot trying to boil," opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement had gathered steam slowly.

Earlier in the week, Northern Ireland's Secretary of State Tom King was attacked, narrowly escaping death. Now no longer simmering, the Unionist rage overflowed and they blamed the IRA for attempting to murder one of theirs. A vast majority of the Protestant Loyalists, Unionist who swore their allegiance to the British Crown, wanted a divided Ireland, and opposed the treaty which shared power with Dublin, the capital of the Irish Republic.

Unsurprisingly, the Catholic Republicans, revolutionaries who wanted a united Ireland, polled the opposite.

To no one's surprise, violence escalated, making the period from 1984, the most murderous since the War for Independence in the 1920's. In the ensuing three years, nearly three-hundred people would die. Perhaps, considering the course of history, this number seems small, but only 1.5 million people live in Northern Ireland.

Watching BBC footage in her kitchen as she simmered stock for the inevitable, post-Thanksgiving turkey soup, Lorelei watched the veins above Paisley's liturgical collar turn purple.

With a face the color of blood, he raved:

## The Merrow's Red Hat/Selph

“Where do the terrorists operate from? From the Irish Republic! Where do the terrorists return to for sanctuary? To the Irish Republic! And yet, Mrs. Thatcher tells us that the Republic must have some say in our Province. We say Never! Never! Never! Never!”

She switched off the video when she saw Morris and John come up the walk. Since her surreptitious trip to Ireland, John had been more distant than usual, and Rev. Paisley's allegations about the safety of the Irish Republic would only flare his anger and give credence to his position against Brennan going to Ireland.

On a brighter note, during the past year, many of the men, imprisoned by testimony from disreputable snakes-in-the-grass, whose lies had convicted so many revolutionaries, had their convictions overturned, thanks in part to legal arguments supplied by John and her father, Billy.

Morris Dees, enthusiastic his Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) had gained international prominence, stopped by to thank Lorelei, personally. The next day, a courier delivered a package containing a pair of diamond earrings. The note read:

*To an excellent journalist and a lovely woman who has captured my heart.*

*With deepest regards,*

*Morris.*

John, humming a refrain from “We Shall Overcome,” insisted on putting the earrings on her himself.

During this same time, and as he had promised at a Memorial Day picnic a couple of years earlier, Julian Bond called Lorelei from Atlanta, telling her he would file as a candidate for Georgia's Fifth Congressional District.

The Democratic primary would be a withering runoff between two Black titans of civil rights, Julian Bond and John Lewis. Two famous activists, from different sides of the track,

Please buy me. Only \$3.99 USD.

[Buy Now!](#)