



Nailer

Tom Phelan

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“A hard-hitting thriller.”— Books Ireland

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“Awesomely well-written novel.”—John Walsh, Hedgemaster

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In the Irish midlands, two former members of the religious Order of Saint Kieran, which once ran Dachadoo Industrial School for boys, are murdered within weeks of each other, their bodies found nailed to the floor.

Detectives Tom Breen and Jimmy Gorman are assigned to track down “Nailer,” as the killer is nicknamed. They warn local clerical outcasts that Nailer may be working off a list.

The editor of the national newspaper The Telegraph, delighted Ireland seems to have its own serial killer, dreams of a huge spike in revenues. Meanwhile, investigative reporters Pauline Byron and Mick McGovern are put on the story.

As Nailer continues to kill, Pauline surmises that he may be getting revenge—or justice—for something that happened in Dachadoo decades earlier. As the past is uncovered and the pursuit for Nailer heats up, the shocking truth about Ireland’s Church-run industrial schools is revealed.

In this gripping novel Tom Phelan once again brings the artistry and courage of his discerning eye to a disturbing and emotionally loaded subject.

Author Tom Phelan, who is a former priest, grew up in the long shadow of Ireland’s most notorious institutions for boys, Saint Conleth’s in County Offaly. The reputation of the place was such that as a child, Phelan and his contemporaries were often threatened with being sent to Saint Conleth’s if they didn’t behave.

This reformatory school was administered by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a religious order that advertised itself as experts in overseeing industrial and reformatory schools. Nevertheless, in 1970, conditions in Saint Conleth’s were found to be so criminally brutal that a government report recommended immediate closure.

According to the Irish writer John McGahern, “The true history of the thirties, forties and fifties in [Ireland]

has yet to be written. When it does, I believe it will be shown to have been a very dark time indeed, in which an insular Church colluded with an insecure State to bring about a society that was often bigoted, intolerant, cowardly, philistine and spiritually crippled.”

Tom Phelan’s Nailer is both a riveting whodunit and a deeply affecting indictment of the Catholic Church’s grab for power after the British departed from Ireland. Nailer shines a light on a very dark time in Ireland’s modern history.

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