



My Father's Secret

Sean Patrick Dolan

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Based in truth, the thrilling novel My Father's Secret involves history and the complicated aftermath of a terrorist attack.

In Sean Patrick Dolan's thriller *My Father's Secret*, a distant father leaves behind a video tape revealing his biggest regret to his son, who is left to piece together a nationwide conspiracy.

When Flight 281 went down in the 1970s after a terrorist bombing, Canadians were in shock. Though the bomb builder, who was linked to Irish extremists, was incarcerated, many people felt that justice was never truly served. Most of the suspects walked free. A journalist, Jack, penned a book on the subject; Patrick, a RCMP agent who was working during the incident, remained troubled by the events.

When Patrick dies in the early aughts, his son Declan is left to solve the mystery that his father never could: what happened after Flight 281? Though he's hesitant to fulfill his father's last wish, he links up with Jack and others from his father's past to go down an investigative rabbit hole, learning about the Irish diaspora and government cover-ups. In the process, he also confronts his childhood memories.

It is revealed that Patrick was a cold, emotionally unavailable parent; Declan expresses resentment toward his father, and is constructed as a conflicted lead. Still, he is drawn to the mystery by his moral code. He receives encouragement from his wife, Karuna, too. Declan relies on her as a partner in research, and their conversations lead to emotional revelations and new information. Initially, Jack is a cautious participant, but the story makes his paranoia seem justified: he was party to violence because of his past research, and in reviving it, he's being followed, subject to danger once more.

Moving between viewpoints—Declan's; those of Patrick's RCMP team; and those of the terrorists—this is a clear, contextual story. The political, religious, and cultural factors between Irish and British citizens are explored with empathy, even to the point where extreme ideas of revenge are confronted. But the terrorists are not the only characters with skewed moral codes: the RCMP also utilize questionable methods, including intimidation tactics used on LGBTQ+ people, with slurs involved. And after the bombing, manipulative language and clandestine actions convey how far both sides are willing to go to preserve their senses of self and nationalism.

The outcome of the terrorists' and RCMP's actions are known from the outset, though, dampening some of the book's suspense. Information repeats as the RCMP and the terrorists become aware of each other's activities. Still, as Declan connects the dots between individual, governmental, and legal rationalizations, surprises arise, forcing a confrontation between his past and his future.

Concerned with the aftermath of a terrorist event, the thrilling novel *My Father's Secret* delves into history to explore a government conspiracy in the wake of a terrorist act.

DELIA STANLEY (November 22, 2021)

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