FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Obit
Anne Emery
ECW Press
978-1-55022-754-3
(May 28, 2007)

Rarely is the impetuousness of youth undertaken with thoughts of legacy. In *Obit* by Anne Emery, one man's political devotion becomes his children's ultimate terror.

The book's spirited ride is piloted by barrister Monty Collins, the first-person narrator who a year earlier had successfully defended Father Brennan Burke against a murder charge. Brennan invites Monty and his family to join him in New York for a family wedding, unknowingly pulling them into a vortex of mystery, mayhem, and murder.

Brennan's father Declan, a powerful Irish immigrant patriarch believes an obituary is not a report of a death but a portent of his own. Brennan, equally convinced, shares the obit with a skeptical Monty who wonders if Declan's guilt over actions as a youngster in the IRA is not distorting his sensibilities. When the threat becomes a reality and shots are fired at the wedding of his daughter, seriously wounding Declan, Monty and Brennan have no choice but to solve the mystery. Their search leads down a path of secrets and violence encompassing unrequited love, the IRA and the Mafia. The ghosts of Declan's past are as numerous as they are foreboding and malevolent.

Unlike many first-person works, the narrative is not only used sparingly but as a well-aimed arrow to further the plot rather than expound on the narrator's internal observations and feelings. The action of the work is well served by its vibrant voice.

> *It happened without warning. A sound like 'pop, pop, pop' against the wall facing me. I saw Declan drop to his knees at the same time I heard Brennan shout for him to get down.*

The sub-plots of *Obit* are as thick as the depth of inherent intrigue: the unchaste priest, the husband who longs for reconciliation while dating, and a daughter's psychic sight. The players are real yet extraordinarily diverse, a virtual carnival cornucopia of characters: the elderly priest who was once a commanding officer in the IRA, the aging diva and the militant devotee. The dialogue is realistic and appropriate, witty and intelligent:

'Did you get an apology yourself?'

'Did the sun become black as sackcloth and the moon become as blood, and the stars of heaven fall unto the earth?'

'I'll put that down as a no. You certainly let him have it in return. Can't say I blame you.'

'Leo took me to task for that. Gently.'

'Sent you off to say three Hail Marys, did he?'

'Something like that.'

Anne Emery is a graduate of Dalhousie Law School. She has worked as a lawyer, legal affairs reporter, and researcher. Her first book *Sign of the Cross*, first introduced Father Brennan Burke, and Monty Collins. *Obit* as indisputable evidence, she is a natural and talented storyteller.

Donna Russo Morin