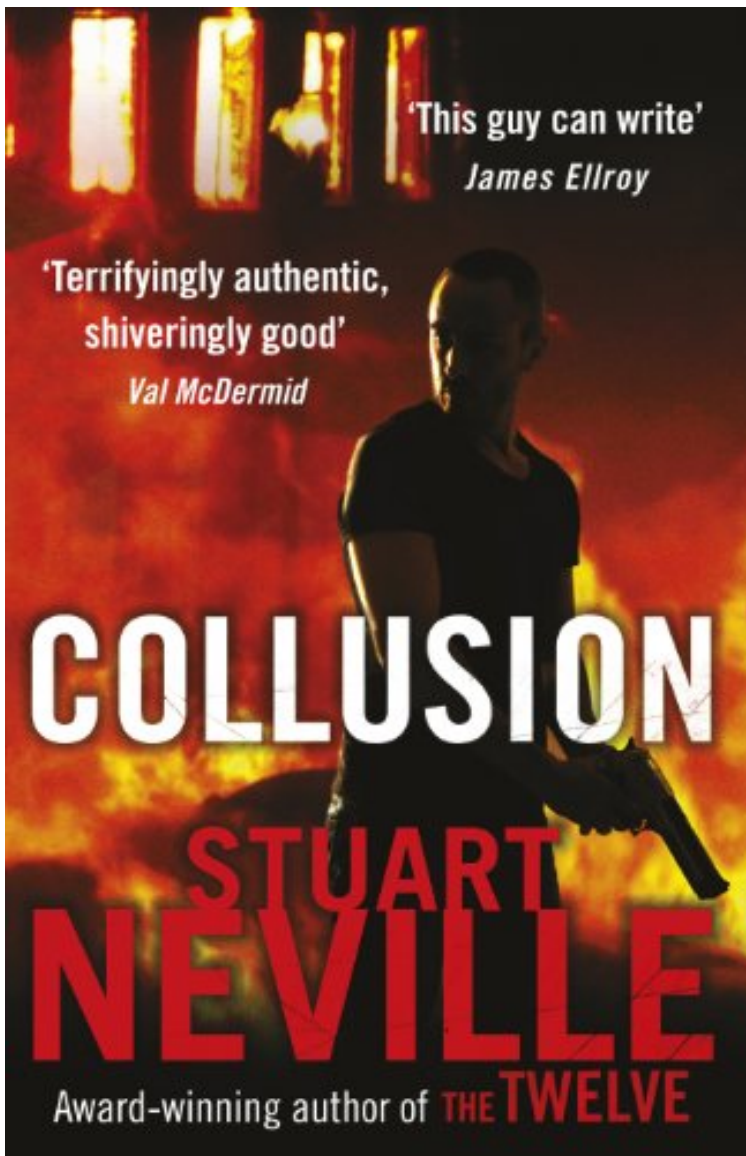


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# Collusion



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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurGARRY FEGAN: the former hit man is hiding out in New York, having cut all ties wiht his old life. But he made a fatal mistake: he spared the life of Bull O'Kane, a ruthless gang leader who will stop at nothing to get his revenge.THE TRAVELLER:a merciless assassin who kills without pity or remorse, The Traveller is hired by O'Kane. His instructions are to find - and terminate - Fegan, and O'Kane knows the perfect bait to lure Fegan back to Belfast.JACK LENNON:his family have disowned him and his colleagues don't trust him. But when he discovers that his ex-partner and young daughter are helpless pawns caught up in O'Kane's thirst for vengeance, Lennon must enter into a desperate alliance if he is to save them both.ExtraitCHAPTER 1 "We're being followed," Eugene McSorley said. The Ford Focus crested the rise,

weightless for a moment, and thudded hard back onto the tarmac. Its eight-year-old suspension did little to cushion the impact. McSorley kept his eyes on the rear-view mirror, the silver Skoda Octavia lost behind the hill he'd just sped over. It had been tailing them along the narrow country road since they crossed the border into the North. Comiskey twisted in the passenger seat. "I don't see anyone," he said. "No, wait. Fuck. Is that the peelers?" "Aye," McSorley said. The Skoda reappeared in his mirror, its windows tinted dark green. He couldn't make out the occupants, but they were cops all right. The tarmac darkened under the growing drizzle, the sky a blank, heavy sheet of grey above the green fields. "Jesus," Hughes moaned from the back seat. "Are we going to get pulled?" "Looks like it," Comiskey said. "Fuck." Hedgerows streaked past the Focus. McSorley checked his speed, staying just below sixty. "Doesn't matter," he said. "We've nothing on us. Not unless you boys have any blow in your pockets." "Shit," Hughes said. "What?" "I've an eighth on me." McSorley shot a look back over his shoulder. "Arsehole. Chuck it." McSorley hit the switch to roll down the rear window and pulled close to the hedgerow so the cops wouldn't see. He watched his side mirror as Hughes's hand flicked a small brown cube into the greenery. "Arsehole," he repeated. Comiskey peered between the seats. "They're not getting any closer," he said. "Maybe they won't pull us." McSorley said nothing. He raised the rear window again. The car rounded a bend onto a long straight, the road falling away in a shallow descent before rising to meet the skyline half a mile ahead. He flicked the wipers on. They left wet smears across the windscreen, barely shifting the water. He'd meant to replace them a year ago. McSorley cursed and squinted through the raindrops. A white van sat idling at a side road. It had all the time in the world to ease out and be on its way. It didn't. Instead it inched forward to the junction, the driver holding it on the clutch. McSorley wet his lips. He felt the accelerator beneath the sole of his shoe. The Focus had a decent engine, but the suspension was shot. Once the road started to twist, he wouldn't have a chance. He eased off the pedal. The van drew closer. Two men in the cabin, watching. McSorley's stomach flipped between light and heavy, heavy and light, while adrenaline rippled out to his fingers and toes. He fought the heaving in his chest. "Christ," he said out loud, without meaning to. "Nothing to worry about. They're only cops. They're going to pull us, that's all." The Focus neared the white van, and McSorley saw the men's faces. They stared back as he passed. His eyes went to the mirror. The Skoda's reflection swelled. Blue lights flickered behind the grill, and its siren whooped. The van edged a foot or two out of the junction. The Skoda accelerated, disappeared from the mirror, and reappeared alongside the Focus. McSorley saw white shirts and dark epaulets. The woman cop in the passenger seat signalled to the side of the road. "Fuck," McSorley said. He gently squeezed the brake and shifted down. The Skoda slipped past as he let the Focus mount the grass verge. It skidded on the wet grass and mud. The Skoda stopped a few yards ahead. Its reversing lights glared, and it rolled back to stop just feet from the Focus's bonnet. "Keep your mouths shut, boys," McSorley said. "Answer them when they talk to you, but don't give them any lip. Don't give them any excuses. Right?" "Right," Hughes said from the back. "Right?" McSorley said to Comiskey. Comiskey gave him a quivering smile. "Aye, no worries." Two cops got out of the car, donning hats and bright reflective jackets. The woman wasn't bad looking, light brown hair swept up under her cap. The man was tall and in good shape. His deep tan looked alien beneath the grey sky. They approached the Focus, the man leading. The wipers scraped across the windscreen, the rubber-on-glass creak in counterpoint to McSorley's heartbeat. He put his finger on the button, ready to lower the window when the cop asked. Instead, the cop grabbed the handle and opened the door. Rain leaked in. It had been raining for nearly three months solid. All day, every day, no let-up. McSorley blinked as a heavy drop splashed on his cheek. "Afternoon," the cop said. He had an English accent, hard and clipped. "Shut your engine off, please, sir." McSorley turned the key. The engine died, freezing the wipers in mid sweep. "Just keep your hands where I can see them, there's a good chap," the cop said. That accent, McSorley thought. Officer class. It spoke of parade grounds and stiff salutes, not traffic patrols and police checkpoints. The cop ducked his head down. "You too, gentlemen." Comiskey put his hands on the dashboard; Hughes placed his on the back of the passenger seat. McSorley gripped the steering wheel and studied the cop's face. His skin was a deep brown, not the shallow tan of a week at the beach. His lips were slick from balm applied to the cracks, as if they'd been baked in some arid place. A vision of this cop crawling across a desert flashed in McSorley's mind. The image terrified him, and he couldn't think why. The cop's hands stayed out of view until he reached in and took the key from the ignition. A black leather glove, expensive looking. "What do you want?" McSorley asked. His voice bubbled in his throat. The cop straightened and looked back down the road. "You're not wearing your seatbelt. Any reason?" "I forgot," McSorley said. He looked to the rear-view mirror, knowing what he'd see. The van pulled out of the junction, turning towards them. The woman cop walked to the passenger side. She

leaned down and peered in, first at Comiskey, then at Hughes. Comiskey gave her a weak smile. She did not return it. "Well, that won't do," the tanned cop said. "You don't want points on your licence, do you?" The van filled the rear-view mirror. The woman cop waved, and it pulled alongside the Focus. The tanned cop reached in and hit the button to open the boot. It would have sprung up a good six inches when the car was new, but now it just loosened itself from the seal. The woman cop went to the back of the Focus, and the boot lid whined as she opened it fully. Cold, damp air kissed the back of McSorley's neck. The smell of manure from the fields around them mixed with the bitter sting of his own sweat. The two men stayed in the van's cabin, but McSorley heard heavy feet moving inside, and then its rear doors opening. He went to crane his head around, but the tanned cop hunkered down beside him, smiling. McSorley studied the peeler's face and all at once knew every tale the lines and cracks told. He had been in a dry and barren place, crawling in the dirt, hunting his prey. Iraq, maybe Afghanistan. Maybe somewhere the Yanks and the Brits would never admit to. And now he was here, not far from the Irish border, his sun-scorched face blank and unyielding. Just another job. "You're not a peeler," McSorley said. The cop's hard smile didn't even flicker. "Where are you headed today, sir?" "I said, you're no peeler. What do you want?" Footsteps scuffled somewhere behind the two vehicles. Something screeched and groaned as it was dragged along the floor of the van. Voices issued orders, hissed and strained. The cop's eyes never left McSorley's. A voice said, "On three. One, two, three--hup!" The Focus lurched and leaned back on its rear axle as something monstrously heavy was dumped in the boot. "What the fuck was that?" Comiskey asked. Hughes turned in the seat, but the parcel shelf blocked his vision. McSorley watched shifts in the light in his rear-view mirror. He wanted to weep, but smothered the urge. He heard more scuffling, then the thudding of feet clambering back into the van. The car's boot lid slammed home, and McSorley saw the woman cop through the back window, along with a heavysset man. The parcel shelf didn't quite find home, something pushing it up from beneath. The woman cop carried a long sports bag. The heavysset man raised an automatic rifle. It looked like the Heckler Koch G3 McSorley had fired behind a Newry pub years before. The man approached from the driver's side, keeping the rifle on McSorley. McSorley felt the heat of tears rising behind his eyes. Fuck if he'd cry. He swallowed them. The rear passenger side door opened. He looked back over his shoulder. The woman cop reached in and dropped something metallic. Its weight thudded on the carpet between Hughes's feet. "Oh, fuck," Hughes said. He scuttled sideways, behind McSorley, away from whatever lay there. She tossed something else in. It clanked against the first object. "Oh, Jesus," Hughes said, his voice rising into a breathy whine. The woman drew a pair of long cylinders from the bag. McSorley stared at them for a moment, his brain struggling to catch up with what he saw, before he recognised the twin barrels of a shotgun. She placed it butt-first into the foot well, letting the long barrels fall across Hughes's thigh. "Fuck me, they're guns," Hughes said as the door swung shut. "What's going on, Eugene?" McSorley looked back to the tanned cop. The cop smiled, winked, and closed the driver's door. He held up the car key, showed it to McSorley, and thumbed it twice. The locks whirred and clunked. The cop placed the key on the bonnet, just beneath the glass. "Christ," McSorley said. "What are they doing, Eugene?" Comiskey asked. "Oh, Sweet Jesus." McSorley crossed himself. His bladder screamed for release. He fought it. The two cops, who McSorley knew were not cops at all, got back into the Skoda and pulled away. The van eased in front of the Focus. The man with the rifle grinned at McSorley. He kept the gun trained on him as he climbed into the open back. Comiskey tried the handle. "Open the locks," he said. "Can't," McSorley said. Tears warmed his cheeks. "The bastard double-locked it. You need the key to open it." The van moved off, picking up speed. The man with the rifle waved. McSorley's bladder gave out. "Oh, God," McSorley said. "Jesus, boys." Comiskey slammed the window with his elbow. He tried it again. Hughes lifted the shotgun and rammed the butt against the rear window. McSorley knew it was pointless. "Oh, Christ, boys." Hughes hit the window once more, and it shattered. He lurched to the opening. Comiskey scrambled to climb back and follow. Waves of rainwater smeared the windscreen as the van grew smaller in the distance. Hughes roared as he forced his shoulders through the gap. "Jesus," McSorley whispered. "Jesus, boys, they killed us." He barely registered the detonator's POP! before God's fist slammed him into nothing. *Revue de presse* "Terrifyingly authentic, shiveringly good." *Val McDermid* I read this new novel with something bordering on awe. Nobody should be as damn talented as Stuart Neville. *Collusion* is a magnificent novel. *Ken Bruen* *Collusion* is that rare beast: a second novel that not only lives up to the promise of the first, but actually exceeds it. Thankfully, it seems like Stuart Neville is going to be with us for a long time." *John Connolly* The violence in Stuart Neville's novels about Northern Ireland is about as nasty as it gets in noir crime fiction. *The New York Times Book* Riveting.... Neville's deft style builds mounting tension, and his characters, all tragic figures, are skillfully

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