

The Executioner

by Peter Wood

No one knows where the wind comes from, but sure as hell it comes.

The car-park is deserted. A pink-orange lamp flickers, sets itself right, the orange becoming stronger, pink hue diminishing.

A mud-brown Fiat trundles through the entrance. Despite the early hour, there's a certainty to its movements. It chooses its destination, aims and parks.

The engine shudders, comes to a standstill. A pause. The door opens.

A scuffed black patent-leather shoe exits the car. A half-smoked cigarette drops to the ground, embers seething in miniature. A second leg uncrumples, joins the first on the tarmac. Cigarette tamped underfoot.

A body follows. The body is wrapped in plain anonymous grey suit.

The executioner has arrived.

The executioner is not an executioner. He has no axe, syringe of Pentothal or blood clotted clothes. He doesn't see himself this way, neither do his friends, his wife or his two kids (a girl, Daisy, 9 and a boy, 4, Stanley, 'Stan the Man' will be his moniker, many years from now). But the Executioner, the Hatchet Man and many other versions are what the red-tops and locals will call him.

When the executioner stumbles, falls on the sword himself hardly anyone will cry — but like his son's moniker, this is far in the future. No-one will raise a glass to his memory round here, that's for sure.

Right now he is plain Simon Farrow and he has a job to do.

Simon carries a Gladstone, red leather briefcase — not as battered as the Chancellors but otherwise the same.

He locks the car, walks to a grass-sided path and towards the granite-grey office block that stares down nonchalantly on the car-park.

The entrance to the building has an automatic slide-door, but it is too early for it to yawn awake.

The executioner knocks on the window. After hand-gesture communication, the door is opened by a tired, late-fifties looking doorman.

The executioner glances round the reception area. Nods to himself. Function versus form. Anodyne, instantly forgettable, like hotel rooms. Perfect.

The doorman ushers him to the lift, gives the executioner directions: third floor, straight along the corridor, at the double-doors turn right then the office is on the left.

As soon as the lift swallows the executioner, the doorman returns to coffee and crossword.

Execution, slang... seven and three.

