



# Pretty Ugly

*Sean Hillen*

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## **Pretty Ugly** Sean Hillen

Cosmetics create beauty, but when that turns ugly, it's lethal.

A thrilling, intriguing ride through the murky undercurrent of corporate and political machinations bridging the complex worlds of medicine, media and modeling, in both the United States and Ireland.

What physical horrors can rogue nanoparticles, a thousandth time smaller than a human cell, create when they flood through your body contained within a simple cosmetic? Facing the terrible truth, an unlikely trio – Colm, an investigative journalist, Dr. Gray, a skin specialist and Patricia, a celebrity model - embark on a dangerous mission. If they move fast enough, they can save lives. If they don't ...

'Pretty Ugly' is a high-end contemporary fiction, grounded in cutting-edge medical science, with a hint of magic realism, focusing on the challenges facing the trio in a race against time as they struggle to lift the veil of secrecy on a powerful cosmetics company intent on concealing the health hazards from toxic ingredients in one of its key products. Ironically, the greatest risk is contained inside an ordinary concealer - nanoparticles so tiny they infiltrate nerve and blood cells causing untold damage.

'Pretty Ugly' embraces the three 'Cs' of celebrity, cosmetics and Celtic mythology and confronts two key issues of our time - the decline of traditional media such as newspapers in face of the all-reaching Internet and the lack of research on potential dangers associated with the ever-expanding and largely unregulated use of nano-technology.

Sensing a national exclusive after an encounter with the consumer advocate and skin specialist, Dr. Gray, Colm Heaney, an impassioned medical reporter on a US daily, embarks on a strange quest to a remote region of northwest Ireland, in search of Patricia Roberts, a former Miss America in hiding after a bizarre accident left her severely scarred, both mentally and physically, and a close friend in a coma.

After discovering that the beauty queen is involved in a medical experiment using the most ancient of skin rejuvenation remedies – simple bog peat - Colm then finds himself involved in a major investigation that reveals corruption at the highest levels of American society, with high-ranking figures in both the corporate and political arenas facing off and willing to risk everything to protect their exalted positions and principles.

While the mission before them is clear as is the enemy who will stop at nothing to stop them, including herding the paparazzi in their direction, all three also face phantoms from their own past, with redemption seemingly beyond reach. Colm is an emigrant from troubled Belfast, where a tragic incident involving a loved one has left him guilt-ridden and emotionally fragile. Patricia has journeyed traumatically from the high-life of canapes and champagne in Manhattan and Milan and other glittering fashion centers to the low-lying bogs of Ireland, amidst tabloid accusations of harming her close friend and confidant. Haunted by thoughts that his medical skills could have saved his teenage daughter, Dr. Gray also faces accusations of cloaking a personal vendetta in the guise of a public health crusade.

Can all three find peace of mind in the pursuit of justice amidst the clamor for ever-more lucrative profits and high political ambition? In such grim circumstances, perhaps an inspiring touch of Old World magic from Ireland's ancient Celtic past is exactly what's required.

'Pretty Ugly' is the first in a proposed series of novels featuring emigrant Irish journalist Colm Heaney as a sleuth-like main character unveiling intriguing truths that should matter in shaping today's fast-changing world.

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