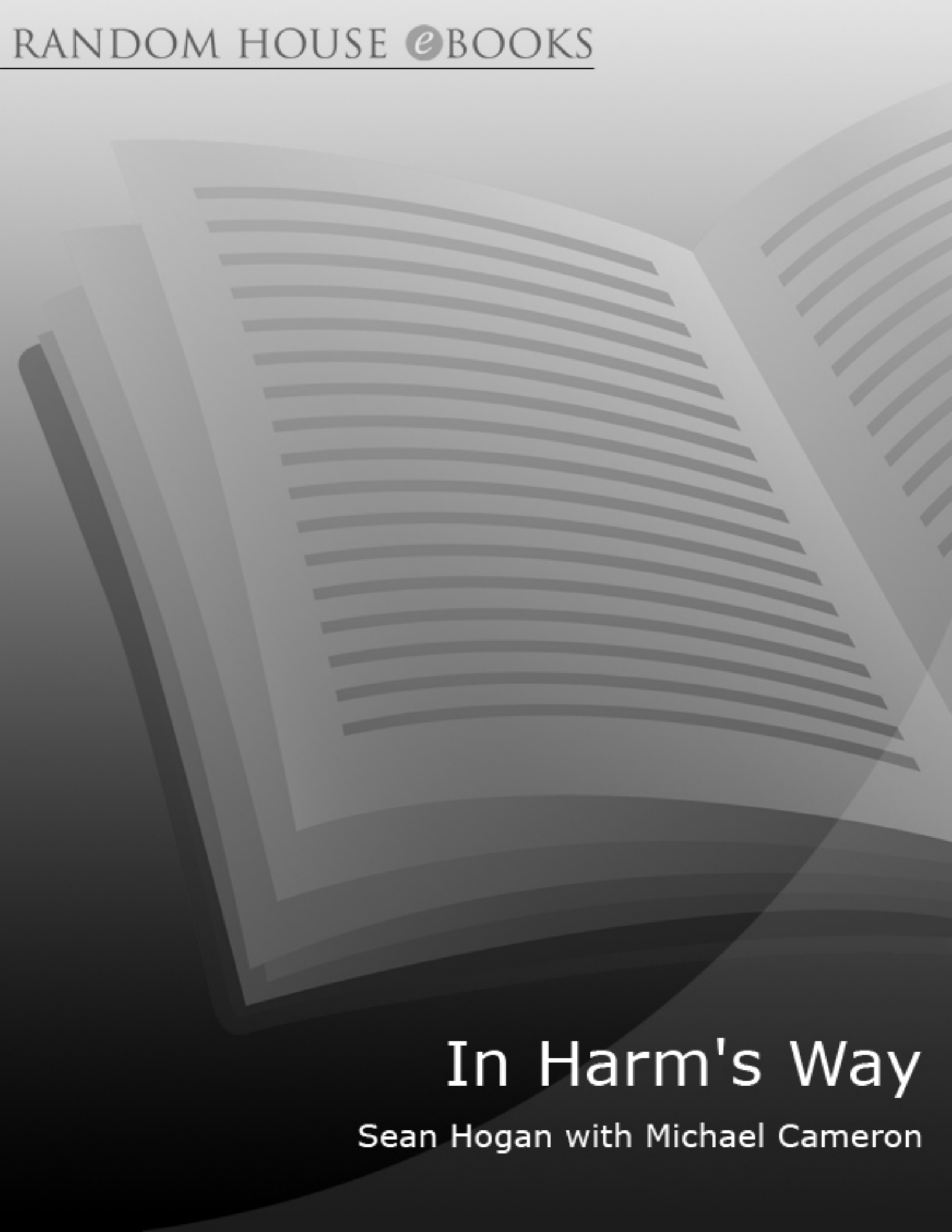


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In Harm's Way

Sean Hogan with Michael Cameron

About the Book

'I don't feel sorry for myself. Today everything is all right. I look at it is this way, it can't ever be as bad as it was then ...'

Sean Hogan was just eight years old when he was confined in the notorious Artane Industrial School under the brutal regime of the Christian Brothers. In and out of care throughout his childhood, Sean was so badly neglected by his alcoholic parents that he never even knew what day his birthday fell on, or how old he was – things he only learned as an adult. But when he arrived at Artane, instead of receiving the care he so desperately needed, he entered into years of horrific sexual abuse at the hands of the Brothers.

Now, for the first time, he feels able to tell his story – and reveal the devastating truth of what really happened in Ireland's industrial schools. *You Mustn't Tell* is a powerful and moving story of astonishing hardship and near despair, but also of triumph over terrible adversity.

In Harm's Way

Sean Hogan
with Michael Cameron



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I would like to dedicate this book to my wife; she gave me the strength and courage to talk about the past and to write about it. Also to Danny, the only real friend I ever had - you are always in my thoughts and prayers - and, of course, to all child prisoners throughout the world.

About the Author

Sean Hogan was born in Dublin and spent much of his childhood living in the infamous Keogh Square estate and in various Irish care homes. He now lives in the north of England, and has been happily married to Mary for over twenty years. They have two children. He still suffers from the effects of the violent abuse he received as a child but in his own words, he copes '... because that's all I can do!'

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Prologue

The chapel, Artane Industrial School, August 1968

The paint is peeling off the chapel walls, there are hymn books lying around in messy piles and only last week the priest had found mouse droppings in the sacristy. I don't know why, but the chapel is the scruffiest place in the Artane.

There is a little flickering oil light behind a red lens and when it is lit it means the priest is in the confessional – a wooden box, with two doors and two curtained windows, that is, like the rest of the building, a bit shabby and run down.

I kneel near the front. Brother Murphy walks by each bench and every time a boy leaves the confessional he taps one of those waiting on the shoulder and tells them to 'Get in there, smartly now, lad.'

It is my turn. My footsteps echo on the flagstones. The door squeaks as I open it and the wooden kneeler creaks under my weight, rough against my bare knees.

I make the sign of the cross.

'Forgive me, father, for I have sinned ... It's a week since my last confession ... I've been wicked. I've done things ... and ... and they've done things to me ...'

There is silence, though I can hear him breathing on the other side of the fine mesh that separates us.

Then: 'Carry on, my son.'

'Can I tell you who it is, father? What I've had to do, father ...?'

But he doesn't reply. I wait and then I say, 'Can I tell, father?'

And he says, 'No, my son. You mustn't tell.'

Part One

KEOGH SQUARE

Blackpool, August 2001

THE SIGN ABOVE our shop says, 'Hogan's Hot Spuds!' And underneath in beautiful italic writing, '*Fifty ways to fill a potato!*'

I'm proud of it. I stand outside the shop door most evenings, last thing before I go home; I stand there looking up at the sign and my heart swells with the pride of it.

When Mary's dad retired and I took over the business he said, 'Change the name to your own, son!' But we didn't, not for ages; then one day we decided the time was right. Mary organised it. She got in the sign writer and he painted over 'Mick's Quick Potatoes'. We were going to put 'Sean Hogan, Hot Baked Spuds'. Then we thought, 'Sean's Potato Place', but finally Mary said, 'Let's just say "Hogan's Hot Spuds", and be done with it.'

It's got a nice ring to it, that name. My establishment. My emporium. Hogan's Hot Spuds. You know what you're going to get with a name like that. It's not fussy and it tells the truth. And we do really have fifty fillings, well, twenty five basic, but fifty if you count the extra large portions and sauces. Anyway, when I read that sign, I think, You've come a long way Sean.

It's a fine summer's evening and I've tidied up and handed over to Betty and the lad who run the evening shift. I used to do fifteen hours a day – but what's the point? I'd rather have a life.

I leave the shop by the little side door. I look up at the sign and I smile; there's already four or five lads queuing up for a spud and curry on their way to the pub.

There is warmth in the air. Perfect. It's a nice walk along the Golden Mile on my way home, watching the holiday-makers on the beach – fat mums screeching at noisy kids, dads, who should know better, making bad sandcastles or showing off in the sea to their kids, who don't care. I'm jostled by families heading for their cars and hotels, by men reckoning they've done their bit for the day and heading off for a pint, and by teenagers necking and walking hand in hand on their way to the Lucky Star arcade or an evening at The Pleasure Beach. I love Blackpool of a summer's evening. Everyone's happy.

I stop, just like I do every night, in the same place; I'm a bit of a creature of habit, I like a routine. I stop on the other side of the road from The Big One but I ignore its lights and the screams of the terrified punters and I look out to sea – blue, clear, free – and I breathe in the smells of the seaside: sun lotion, the sea, chips and vinegar, sweet candyfloss, burgers and seaweed.

I'm a happy man. Happy in my work. Happy in the evening sun. Happy with my family and happy where I live, here by the sea, where a man can stop at the end of the day and look out over the waves to whatever lies beyond and not care if he ever goes there or not ...

We've got a nice house, and if I say so myself, we deserve it. We've built up the spud business and made something of it. I'm allowed to be proud of my house; I never dreamed I would own one – I'd hardly ever even been in one until I was in my late twenties – and now I own a nice detached place with four bedrooms.

A little later on, soaking in a bath, I'm still thinking life is good. Yes, life is good, and I can smell the tea that Mary is cooking downstairs – chops, peas and onion gravy. She'll be making some nice creamy mash, not that plastic stuff in packets but proper spuds from the shop with butter and milk. Mary's mash, you just can't beat.

The kids are in their rooms. Dan's doing his homework and I guess Mick is assassinating another pedestrian on his PlayStation, or whatever it is they do.

The phone starts ringing, which will annoy Mary, because I know she'll have 'The Street' on while she's cooking.

'Sean,' she calls. I might have guessed, just when I'm relaxing. 'The man says it's urgent ... You'd better get down here!'

Jesus, I think. What's so urgent that I can't lie in my bath? I stand up, dripping, and pull a towel around myself, puddling water down the stairs and into the hall.

The voice on the other end of the line has the old familiar brogue from home.

'Mr Hogan? Mr Sean Hogan? My name's O'Donnell ...'

And I know what he'll say next. I can tell because they all sound the same, once you know them.

'It's Detective Garda Finn O'Donnell, Mr Hogan. Look, I'm sorry to bother you but it's about the past, Mr Hogan. It's about the Artane ...'

I don't reply. I have a sudden picture in my mind of dark walls closing in on me and I can hear, as if they were real, the shouts of boys in the yard and the stomping of hobnail boots.

'Mr Hogan ...? Are yous there, Mr Hogan ...?'

I watch Mary at the stove through the kitchen door. The last twenty years have been good. I've pushed the bad things away and left them where I can't find them, and that's been fine.

'Mr Hogan ...?'

Keogh Square, Dublin, November 1965

ME DA DRAINED the last of the Guinness out of the bottle and held it up to the candle to check if it was really empty. It was, but to be sure he gave it another tap on the side of his glass and a drop more of the black stuff dripped into the froth.

He took a swig and sighed as he put the glass back onto the rickety table. We were all sitting round in the front room, which was unusual, because for once me da was here and not in the pub. He must have run short of cash or me ma had finally put her foot down.

My brothers Joe, Nick, Jem and Alec were sitting with me on the floor by the fire, me ma was on the sofa with my sisters Averil and Margaret, and baby Anna was squashed in between them. Ma had her own Guinness and she was drinking it from a teacup. The candles were lit around the place and luckily this time there was enough coal on the fire to keep the room reasonably warm, though it was bitter out.

With the candles and an old blanket thrown over us it felt almost cosy. It was the only time I really liked our flat, at night like this.

If you went outside into the dark and stood in the middle of the square and looked up, you would see the windows all around twinkling with candlelight or with the yellow glow of oil lamps. Sometimes in the winter, on my way back from whatever it was I'd been up to all day, down at the dump or playing with the Waters kids, I'd stand outside and look up at all the lights and the shadows of our neighbours moving around and I'd think this is all right, this is.

Mind you, in the dark you couldn't see the rubbish in the doorways or the brick walls of the old barracks and the peeling paint on the window frames.

As I walked up the hill on the way home, I'd see other houses and flats with the electric lights behind their net curtains or even a telly flickering, but even so, I decided that I preferred our square, where no one had the electric at all. It was, well, it was magical and mysterious.

This particular night, we were sitting and chatting about this and that. As I say, it was unusual because Da was there, and because me ma wasn't in a state about where he was and swearing that she'd kill him when he got home. More importantly to me, the baby wasn't crying; my older brothers, Joe and Nick, weren't teasing me; my younger ones, Jem and Alec, weren't annoying me; and the girls weren't trying to be all grown-up and bossy. With nearly five and three-quarter years of the experience of life under my belt, I reckoned that this was about as good as it got.

Me da had been telling us about when he was a young man back in the 1920s. He could tell a good tale, Da could. He liked the craic and with a drop of Guinness he'd talk for the Republic. With a drop too much, he'd just talk.

'In the late 1920s,' he was saying now and he had on that voice that Joe called his pub voice, 'when I was a young man, you didn't see the cars around like you do now ... You step outside today,' he said, tapping the bottle again, in case he'd missed a little, 'and you'll fall over the cars. Dublin is a city of cars.'

He waved his hand at the imaginary cars and I could almost see them.

‘But in those days most of the people in this country had a hand cart, and if they were really fortunate they had a horse and cart. That’s the way it was. We were a nation ...’ he paused to tap the bottle again, ‘... a nation of horse owners.’

He looked around at us triumphantly but was met by blank looks. I don’t think any of us were paying much attention, understood what he was going on about or cared very much. Truth to tell, I think we were all a bit sleepy in the glow of the fire.

‘So,’ he carried on, ignoring our bored looks, ‘when I told me da, who was an educated man, that I was going to be a mechanic, that I’d got meself an apprenticeship with a garage, well ... You can imagine, can’t you ...?’

He looked at Joe, my oldest brother. Joe was picking his nose and eating the bogies. He wasn’t interested in what me da was saying, but he grunted like he might have been.

‘Quite,’ said me da. ‘Shocked, he was. Shocked to his very middle, he was. But I said, Da ... I said, Da, you have to understand that the only people who can afford cars are people with cash and if they have cars they’ll have the cash to keep them running, so they will. And cash, boys ...’ he looked around at his sons, ‘... cash is what it is all about!’

‘Well, it’s a pity you never fockin’ have any,’ said me ma.

This seemed to deflate Da and he stood up and took his glass into the little kitchen. When he came back there was a good slug of whiskey in it. He poured a little of it into me ma’s teacup and settled back onto his chair.

We sat quietly for a minute or two and I was wondering how long the coal would last. We only had the one piece left and when it was gone we would be cold for the rest of the night. Me brothers and me would have to steal some more in the morning, which could be exciting but pretty dangerous.

Me ma and da sat sipping their whiskey for a while until me ma looked up and shook her cup at Da.

'Is there another drop in there, Conor?' she asked.

He shook his head. 'You've had the lot. The bottle's empty.'

He offered her a fag and they puffed away for a while, adding to the fog that always seemed to hang around the flat, and then, with a big effort, he rose to his feet.

'And now,' he said, 'I have to go, because I promised Beads that I'd meet him at the Liffey Bar to discuss a little business! Are you comin', Ma?'

She shook her head. 'I am not. It's too bloody cold,' she said. 'But bring back some whiskey, will you, Conor.'

'With what?'

'With the bloody money he'll give you for whatever it is he's going to ask you to do!'

Me da grunted.

'Fair enough, then,' he said.

With that he looked round at us and seeing that I was near him, he bent over and patted my head and we both felt uncomfortable. Then he stomped off through the front door, letting in a rush of cold air.

Now that he'd gone and the coal was nearly finished and the place was freezing, there wasn't much for it but to go to bed. This was a complex arrangement, there being so many of us. Me, Alec and Jem curled up under the blanket on the sofa which was where we always slept, the girls took the baby off to the bedroom they shared with me ma and da, and Joe and Nick went off to their own bedroom.

Satisfied that we were all where we should be, me ma blew out the candles and went in to join the girls. I could hear the splutter from a match as she lit another candle to see them into bed. I knew that she'd lie there now for ages, long after the girls had gone to sleep, under a blanket or her old coat, until Da came back. I knew, too, that he'd be drunk and would fall over as he came in, and that she'd

shout at him because he'd have forgotten the whiskey and woken us all up. I knew, because that was how it always happened.

I lay on the sofa feeling the familiar warmth of my brothers and I knew when they were asleep because Jem always snored and Alec would move his legs up and down like he was running for a few minutes after he dropped off. But I couldn't sleep. I lay there listening to the noise of the flat and of the square beyond the window. I could hear me ma's bed creaking as she moved on it and I could hear the girls whispering to each other. Averil was fifteen and Margaret was thirteen and they had taken to having long whispered conversations with me ma in private and whenever I tried to listen in they'd shut up, which just made me more determined to find out what they were talking about. I was too tired now, though, to creep over to the door and press my ear against it, also it was too bloody cold.

I could hear the old iron fireplace tick-ticking as it cooled down and somewhere outside a drunken voice sang 'Molly Malone' until another voice told it to 'Shut the fock up!' A door banged on the other side of the square and footsteps clumped down the stone stairs and went along the path to the archway onto Emmet Road.

There were a few dogs barking, as there always were here in Inchicore, and there was the occasional burst of raucous laughter as someone left the boozery, the door opening and closing behind them.

I turned over and pulled the coat me da wore for working on cars closer round me. I breathed in the smell of old oil and petrol and booze and ciggies, which was the smell of me da, and Alec kicked me.

I woke up to the sound of hooves echoing round the square. The flat was bitter now that the fire was out, so I lay on the

sofa under me da's coat, hoping that I would go back to sleep. I stared up at the ceiling and watched me breath steaming in the cold morning air as I tried to breathe out more slowly, in the hope that the warm air from it would fall back on me face and warm it up a bit.

Then I heard the laughter of a woman and another making excuses as to why she couldn't pay the coalman this week. With a big out-breath of excitement, I jumped out of bed and ran barefoot, hopping on the cold floor, over to the window. Sure enough, I could see the coal wagon stood in the square below, with the old grey horse that pulled it steaming gently from its exertions and tossing its head as it tried to get some more grain from the bottom of its nosebag.

I was dressed, quick as a flash - it didn't take long to pull on a pair of wellies, shorts and a threadbare sleeveless jumper. It wasn't much on a cold morning like this but it was about all I wore most days, winter or summer.

It was important to get down into the yard before the coalman left. I dashed across the front room, through the door and jumped down the stone stairs to the yard three at a time. I slipped on the ice on the bottom one and arrived in the yard sitting on my arse.

I'd got down there just in time. Joe and Nick were already there, as were Ted and Seamus Waters and a few other kids from the flats.

'Where the fock have you been?' grumbled Joe.

'Thanks for waking me,' I said, rubbing my backside.

'Have you got fockin' piles?' asked Ted Waters.

'Fock no!' I assured him, though I wasn't sure what piles were.

Mrs Doherty was just paying for a bucket of anthracite and we boys quickly arranged ourselves around the square.

Nick and Joe stood ready by one of the archways that led out of the place and Seamus Waters and me, as the youngest and lightest, braced ourselves ready to run.

I could feel my stomach tightening into a knot of excitement. In my imagination I was a brave soldier, a commando I thought, ready to attack, risking life and limb. My right hand tightened round the butt of an imaginary rifle ...

Pocketing his couple of bob, Mr Brannigan, the coalman, pulled himself up on the seat of his wagon and snapped the reins to get the old grey walking. As he turned the horse towards the archway, Joe and Nick charged across his path, shouting at each other, as if they were playing some stupid game. Mr Brannigan had to rein in the horse and as he swore at the boys, Ted and I sprinted from the doorway we'd been hiding in and leaped as light as we could onto the back of the cart.

We did this every time Mr Brannigan came into the square and yet he never noticed. Watched by a little audience of our mothers and sisters, who were leaning out of the windows of the flats, Ted and I started to lift pieces of coal off the back of the wagon and throw them at a group of the older boys, including Joe and Nick. Who dodged in and out of the doorways to the flats, catching the lumps we threw, dropping them off inside the stairwells.

No one made a sound. No one dropped a single piece of the flying coal, or black treasure as I called it in the other game I was now playing in my head, where I was a pirate boarding a Spanish galleon. It only took us a minute or so, but by the time we jumped off the back of the wagon, as the old horse made its laborious way out of the square, there were quite a few good pieces of coal to divvy up between us, take up to our flats and give to our mothers.

It was a good game. Me and Ted were happy, our mams were happy, everyone was happy. Except for Joe. My brother Joe, at ten years old, was not what you'd call clever, but despite hardly ever going to school he was sharp and he thought about things a lot. He thought a lot about the

coal and I could tell that he thought our game for getting it was stupid.

He was thinking there must be a better way of getting the coal than climbing on the wagon.

'You'll get caught,' he said. 'He's got to see you one day!'

I shrugged. If I got caught, I'd get my ears boxed. They'd been boxed lots of times before, so what?

But you couldn't get Joe off an idea once he had it. He was like a dog worrying away at a bone.

At the back of Keogh Square was a churchyard and right next to the churchyard was a coal yard. That's where Mr Brannigan's coal wagon loaded up and that's why the square was always his first or last port of call.

Jo reckoned we should be nicking the coal straight out of the yard.

'Slogical,' he explained. 'Sflockin' logical!'

He'd looked through holes in the fence at the sacks and sacks, and piles and piles of coal, and you could see him thinking, If I could only get in there ...

Now, my family, particularly my brothers, were already getting quite good at finding their way into places where they weren't meant to be, and this made the coal yard even more of a challenge for Joe.

But the fence was too much for him. It looked easy but it was too high and too solid.

He'd spend hours staring at it, trying to figure out how to get over it, under it or through it. He had this great penknife which he'd nicked from the ironmonger's on Inchicore Road, which me and Nick were dead jealous of, and he even tried to cut through the wooden slats, but it was a good fence and the wood was much too thick. He just couldn't work out a way through.

It drove him mad.

A few days later, after the latest visit from the coalman, me, Joe and Nick were mooching round the back of the

square, keeping ourselves out of mischief or, to put it another way, skiving off school.

It was a nice day and we were sitting around chucking stones at nothing, when Joe saw this cat. So he did what a boy does with a handful of stones and a cat in sight and throws one at it.

Well, it looked to me and Nick like he missed by miles but the cat leaped into the air, ran towards the coal-yard fence and suddenly vanished. It ran behind a big clump of grass and never came out the other side.

'I've killed the bugger,' said Joe.

'Have you fock!' said Nick.

'I buggering have so,' said Joe.

The three of us walked a bit nervously towards the clump of grass. I'd never seen anything dead and I wasn't too sure about seeing a cat with a stone between the eyes.

There wasn't any cat. But there, about a foot off the ground, behind the tall grass, was a little hole in the fence, just about big enough for the cat to have got through.

'Jaysus!' said Joe. 'It's a hole!'

'Fockin' genius!' said Nick. 'So it is.'

It wasn't much - I doubt if the owner ever thought to mend it, it was so small - but it was a hole.

'We can get through it,' said Joe.

Nick bent down to examine it.

'You'll never get through that,' he said, standing up. 'You're too big.'

'I know,' said Joe. 'And so're you.'

'We'll have to get Jem.'

'Jem'll get it all wrong. He's too young,' I said.

The three of us stood looking at the hole like it was a precious thing in a museum, until I got bored and turned to go.

'Hang on,' said Joe. 'We've got to do it now we're here! The bugger may fix it tomorrow!'

Then they both looked at me. I didn't like the way they looked at me because suddenly I knew what they had in mind.

I was a very small child, skinny and thin as a pea stick but even so, looking at that hole, I didn't think I was that small. I started to back away from my brothers and then I jumped back as Joe tried to catch me.

I turned on my heel to run like buggery but Nick grabbed me from behind and before I knew what was happening they'd both flipped me off my feet, pulled off my wellies and were shoving me, heels first, through the little gap. I was screaming and my knees were being filled with splinters and my shorts were pulled up into the crack in my arse, but Joe just told me to shut up, put a hand over my mouth and kept pushing me harder, until I popped through the hole and into the yard on the other side like a cork being pushed into a bottle.

I stood there rubbing my bruises and trying to regain my dignity as I pulled my shorts out of my bum and picked uselessly at the worst of the splinters with my fingernails, which were blunt from being chewed.

But I didn't get much chance to sort myself out.

'Get some of the coal,' Joe was hissing, his face pushed up against the hole. 'Chuck it over or push it through the hole.'

I looked around, terrified that the owner of the yard would leap out on me from behind one of the coal heaps and smack me round the ears, or worse, call the gards.

'I'm coming back,' I said.

'You come back,' said Joe, 'and when your head comes through that hole, I'll give it such a smack ...'

I looked around again. I knew that Joe had a hell of a fist on him and at least the place seemed quiet, so I turned my attention to the nearest heap of coal. They were mainly big lumps. In those days coal came in big pieces. If you bought a bucketful you were lucky if you got four lumps and you'd

have to break those up with a hammer. I didn't have a hammer.

'The hole's too small to push these buggers through,' I said to Joe, through the gap.

'Then get the smaller stuff, then. Eejit,' he grumbled at me. 'What are you, tick or something?'

I resented that, seeing as how I was the one who'd been pushed through the hole, and they'd be safe on the other side when Mr Brannigan or someone else turned up.

Keeping a wary eye on the big gates on the other side of the yard in case they began to open, and listening out for the sound of a horse, I started poking around. By going under the big pieces of coal at the edges of the piles, I found some smaller bits and pieces that I could chuck over the fence or push through the hole.

Eventually we had quite a large heap on the other side of the fence and I told Joe that I was finished, and that he could hit me as much as he liked but I was coming back.

'Awright,' he said. 'You've not done so bad.'

I scrambled back through the gap as far as I could get, which was about to my waist, and then Nick and Joe grabbed my arms and my neck and pulled me through, which was even more painful than going the other way.

'Look out, you buggers,' I screamed. 'Me mickey's caught!'

'Don't worry,' said Nick. 'It'll stretch!'

They carried on pulling, dragging my shorts down to my ankles and exposing my backside to the elements until I was through. I sat on the grass surrounded by bits of coal. I was black from head to toe, I was bleeding and bits of me were grazed and bruised.

We took the coal home to me ma in the baby's pram. She looked at the big heap of it with her arms folded and grinned. She wasn't often happy, me ma, but she seemed dead pleased now.

‘Put a bit in the bucket by the fire,’ she said, ‘and then get round to the Waterses and the Maguires, tell them it’s a penny a lump, take it or leave it.’

Me ma was always on the lookout for a bob or two.

I WAS HUNGRY. We never ate much but today had been especially bad. There'd been a bit of bread and a cup of tea when I got up, but when me and me brothers got back home at dinnertime, me ma was out with the baby and me sisters weren't in, either.

We'd looked in the little kitchen but there was nothing except a piece of hard soda bread which we took it in turns to have a bite of. We checked the pot in the front room but the fire was out and it was empty. We'd be going to the Sisters of Mercy on Friday for the free stew but today was only Wednesday, so unless me ma came back with a bit of something we were going to be hungry all day.

Jo said, 'Let's nick something down the road.' But when we got to the bottom of the hill, there was a gard wandering along the street. So we went to the tip, where sometimes people chucked a bit of fruit or veg away. But it looked like the gulls had come in off the Liffey before us and got any of the pickings that might have been there.

We were too hungry to muck around in the square or wander round the streets, so we sat in the flat being bored and moaning at each other about our hunger pains. We couldn't even make a cup of tea, because the fire was out and none of us had matches. So we annoyed each other while we waited for me ma to come home.

We sat there for a long time and it was getting dark outside.

Nick said, 'She'll not be back now. She'll be in the pub.'

'She's forgotten us,' said Joe, 'and she'll have forgotten to get any food in.'

It was very quiet outside – people were either eating their tea or not in yet or on their way to the pub – so we just sat there doing nothing.

I was closing my eyes for a bit of a doze when from outside we heard a clicking sound, a kind of 'clip-clopping', echoing around the empty square. It was a strange and creepy noise. It was the sort of sound that made you look up and wonder.

Because we had no matches we couldn't light our candles or the paraffin lamps, so the only light was from the moon, beginning to climb in a clear sky. Joe glanced at Nick and I could just make him out raising an eyebrow in the gloom.

We'd all stopped talking and we were listening to the odd sound but it was fading now, going off into the distance.

'That'll be the horseman,' said Joe.

'What horseman?' I asked.

'Is it the rag-and-bone?' asked Jem.

'At this time!' said Nick.

Joe sighed.

'No,' he said. 'It's the headless horseman of Keogh Square ...'

I looked at him in the dusk but I couldn't see his face, and I couldn't tell from his voice if he was being funny.

'That's right, isn't it, Nick?' he said. And I thought he might be grinning at him.

'That'll be it, all right,' said Nick and then very quietly and mysteriously, 'Yep. That's him all right.'

'What's the Headless Horseman?' asked Jem, in a frightened voice.