The SPINNING *Heart*

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Bobby

MY FATHER still lives back the road past the weir in the cottage I was reared in. I go there every day to see is he dead and every day he lets me down. He hasn't yet missed a day of letting me down. He smiles at me; that terrible smile. He knows I'm coming to check is he dead. He knows I know he knows. He laughs his crooked laugh. I ask is he okay for everything and he only laughs. We look at each other for a while and when I can no longer stand the stench off of him, I go away. Good luck, I say, I'll see you tomorrow. You will, he says back. I know I will.

There's a red metal heart in the centre of the low front gate, skewered on a rotating hinge. It's flaking now; the red is nearly gone. It needs to be scraped and sanded and painted and oiled. It still spins in the wind, though. I can hear it creak, creak, creak as I walk away. A flaking, creaking, spinning heart.

When he dies, I'll get the cottage and the two acres that's left. He drank out Granddad's farm years ago. After I have him

buried, I'll burn the cottage down and piss on the embers and I'll sell the two acres for as much as I can get. Every day he lives lowers the price I'll get. He knows that too; he stays alive to spite me. His heart is caked with muck and his lungs are shrivelled and black, but still he manages to draw in air and wheeze and cough and spit it back out. I was left go from my job two months ago and it was the best medicine he could have got. It gave him an extra six months, I'd say. If he ever finds out how Pokey Burke shafted me, he'll surely make a full recovery. Pokey could apply to be beatified then, having had a miracle ascribed to him.

What reason would I have ever had not to trust Pokey Burke? He was young when I started working for him – three years younger than me – but the whole parish had worked for his auld fella and no one ever had a bad word to say much beyond the usual sniping. Pokey Burke was called after the Pope: Seán Pól, his parents christened him. But his brother Eamonn was not yet two years old when his parents brought the new baby home and he decided the new baby was Pokey and everybody agreed away with him and little Seán Pól was stuck with Pokey for a lifetime. And beyond, if he leaves anyone behind that will remember him or talk about him when he's gone.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN something was up the day last year when Mickey Briars came in asking about his pension. Did ye boys know we're all meant to be in a proper pension? We didn't Mickey. Ya, with some crowd called *SIFF*. A proper pension like, not just the state one. Tis *extra*. Mickey's left hand was outstretched. It held the invisible weight of what he should have been given but wasn't. He tapped out his list of ungiven things, a bony finger slapping on sundried, limeburnt flesh. There were

tears in his yellow eyes. He was after being shafted. Robbed. And not even by a man, but by a little prick. That's what he couldn't get over.

He went over and started to beat the prefab door until Pokey opened it a crack and threw an envelope at him and slammed the door again, just as Mickey put his head down and went to ram him like an old billy goat. Mickey's hard old skull splintered that door and it very nearly gave way. Pokey must have shat himself inside. I want my fuckin pension you little prick, Mickey roared and roared. I want my fuckin pension and the rest of my stamps. Come out you bollocks till I kill you. For a finish he went on a rampage around the place, turning over barrows and pulling formwork apart and when he picked up a shovel and started swinging, we all ran for cover. Except poor innocent Timmy Hanrahan: he only stood grinning back to his two ears like the gom that he is.

Auld Mickey Briars lamped Timmy Hanrahan twice across both sides of his innocent young head before we subdued him. We locked Mickey into the back of Seanie Shaper's Hiace until he became more philosophical for himself. Then we left him out and we all dragged crying, bleeding Timmy up the road to Ciss's and fed him pints for the evening. Mickey Briars softened his Jameson with tears and told Timmy he was sorry, he was always fond of him, he was a grand boy so he was, it was only that he thought he was laughing at him. I wouldn't laugh at you, Mickey, Timmy said. I know you wouldn't son. I know you wouldn't.

Pokey had shouted after us to put the first round of drink on his slate. There wasn't a man of us put his hand in his pocket all evening. Poor Timmy puked his guts up early on in the session and we slagged him – good-naturedly of course – and he laughed through his snots and his tears and the blood on his head caked up grand and came off in one thin scab before we sent him walking

home for himself with a bag of chips and three battered sausages and a dose of concussion that could have easily killed him.

To this day there's a quare auld draw on one of his eyeballs, as if it's not able to keep time with its comrade. But it makes no odds to Tim; if there's a mirror in that house he hardly pays it any heed. And if he's thicker than he was before, who's to say? Who's to care? You don't need brains to shovel shit and carry blocks and take orders from rat-faced little men who'll use you all day and laugh at you all night and never pay in your stamps.

That's the worst of the whole thing. We all went in to draw our stamps and they only laughed at us. Stamps? What stamps? There wasn't a stamp paid in for any of us, nor a screed to the Revenue, either. I showed the little blonde girl at the hatch my last payslip. You could clearly see what was taken out: PRSI, PAYE, Income levy, pension. She held it in front of her with her nose wrinkled up like I was after wiping my armpit with it. Well? I said. Well what? What's the story? There's no story sir. I wasn't on the computer as an employee of Pokey Burke or anyone else. Did you never look for a P60 from your employer? A what, now? You're some fool, she said with her eyes. I know I am, my red cheeks said back. I think she started to feel sorry for me then. But when she looked at the line of goms behind me – Seanie Shaper, innocent Timmy, fat Rory Slattery and the rest of the boys, all clutching their dirty payslips – she started to feel more sorry for herself.

TRIONA LETS ON she doesn't blame me for being taken for a fool. Sure why would you have ever checked, love? It wasn't just you. He fooled everyone. My lovely, lovely Triona, she fairly let herself down when she married me. She could have gone with any of them smart boys that got the real money out of the boom: the

architects, solicitors, auctioneers. They were all after her. She went for me bald-headed though, as if to spite them. She put her hand in mine one night inside in town after the disco and that was that; she never let go of me. She saw more in me than I knew was there. She made me, so she did. She even softened my father. How did you pull her, he wanted to know. She won't stay with you. She's too good for you. You're her bit of rough, he said. All women goes through this auld phase. Ya, I thought, like my mother, except her auld phase didn't end until she died, twisted and knotted up and spent, exhausted, pure solid burnt out from him.

And now I can't pay for the messages. Christ on a bike. I had a right swagger there for a couple of years, thinking I was a great fella. *Foreman*, I was, clearing a grand a week. Set for life. Houses would never stop going up. I'd see babies like our own being pushed around the village below and think: lovely, work for the future, they'll all need their own houses some day too. We knew Pokey was a prick, but none of us cared. What matter what kind of a man he was, once the bank kept giving him money to build more and more? Once they buried that boy of the Cunliffes years ago and his auld auntie grabbed that land and divided it out among the bigshots, we all thought we were feckin elected.

That poor boy knew more than any of us. I remember when they carried him up to the Height, how the Penroses wheeled little one-legged Eugene out on to the street as he passed on his way to lie between his mother and father, and Eugene spat on the hearse and the big dirty gob slid down along the side window. He couldn't stop blackguarding that boy even and he dead. I remember him well. He got kicked around the place and all I ever did was laugh. He was the quietest boy you'd meet, he never threw a shape nor said a cross word, and he ended up getting shot down like a mad dog. And everyone was glad. We all hated him.

We all believed the newspapers, over the evidence of our own eyes and ears and a lifetime of knowing what we knew to be true. We wanted to hate him. He hadn't a hope.

I WAS as smart as any of the posh lads in school. I was well able for the English and geography and history. All those equations in physics and maths made sense to me. I couldn't ever let on I knew anything, though, that would have been suicide in my gang. I did pass maths even though I know I could have done honours. I never opened my mouth in English. A lad from the village wrote an essay one time and Pawsy Rogers praised him from a height; he said it showed great flair and imagination. He got kicked the whole way back to the village.

I had that King Lear's number from the start, well before the teacher started to break things down slowly for the thick lads: he was a stupid prick. He had it all and wanted more, he wanted the whole world to kiss his arse. I had Goneril and Regan pegged for bitches too, and I knew that Cordelia was the one who really, truly loved him. She wouldn't lie to him, no matter how much he wanted her to. You're a man and no more, she said, you're not perfect, but I love you. Cordelia was true of heart. There aren't many Cordelias in this world. Triona is one. I was scared before I knew I was, of facing down Josie Burke, and she told me. I was scared, imagine, even though I was in the right.

Pokey Burke left his father and mother to mop up after him. The auld lad said he didn't know where Pokey was, but I knew he was lying. He owes me money, Josie, I said. Does he now? Did he not pay you a fine wage? He was looking down at me from the third step before his front door. I might as well have had a cap in my hand and called him sir. My stamps. My pension. My

redundancy. I could hear my own voice shaking. The state looks after all that when fellas goes bust, he said. Go in as far as town to the dole office. He said no more, only kept looking down at me, down along his nose. Right so. Right so, I will. I didn't say I'd been there already, we all had, and it turned out Pokey had rowed us up the creek and left us there. I should have said I'd been on to the taxman and the welfare inspectors and the unions and they'd soon soften Pokey's cough, but I hadn't and I didn't and I turned away with a pain in my heart for the man I'd thought I was.

Triona said don't mind them love, don't think about them, the Burkes were always users and crooks dressed up like the salt of the earth. Everyone's seen their real faces now. The whole village knows what they've done. You're a worker and everyone knows it. People look up to you. They'll be fighting each other to take you on once things pick up. Everyone around here knows you're the only one can keep the reins on them madmen. Who else could be a foreman over the lads around here? Who else could knock a day's work out of fat Rory Slattery? And stop Seanie Shaper from trying to get off with himself? I laughed then, through my invisible tears. I couldn't stand myself. I couldn't stand her smiling through her fear and having to coax me out of my misery like a big, sulky child. I wish to God I could talk to her the way she wants me to, besides forever making her guess what I'm thinking. Why can't I find the words?

Right so, right so, right so. Imagine being such a coward and not even knowing it. Imagine being so suddenly useless.

I THOUGHT ABOUT killing my father all day yesterday. There are ways, you know, to kill a man, especially an old, frail man, which wouldn't look like murder. It wouldn't be murder anyway,

just putting the skids under nature. It's only badness that sustains him. I could hold a cushion or a pillow over his mouth and nose. He'd flail about, but I'd bat his hands softly back down. I wouldn't mark him. His strength is gone from him. I wouldn't like to see his eyes while I killed him; he'd be laughing at me, I know well he would. He'd still be telling me I'm only a useless prick, a streak of piss, a shame to him, even and he dying. He wouldn't plead, only laugh at me with his yellow eyes.

I was always jealous of Seanie Shaper growing up. Any time I ever called to Seanie's, I'd hear them laughing when I got to the bend before their house. They'd all be roaring laughing at some aping their father would be at, and their mother would be cooking and telling them to shut up their fooling but she'd be laughing herself. The odd time, I'd stay and eat, and Seanie and his brothers and sister would take ages to finish because they'd be laughing so much. Their father was wiry and kind-looking. He had a lovely smile. He'd warm you with it. You knew there was nothing in him only good nature. He had a big pile of old *Ireland's Own* magazines he'd look for when they had the dinner ate. He needed them for the song words. They'd all roll their eyes and let on to be disgusted but still and all they'd clap and sing along while he pounded out the songs: 'The Rathlin Bog' and 'The Rising of the Moon' and 'Come Out Ye Black and Tans'. It twisted my soul, the pleasure of that house, the warmth of it and the laughter; it was nearly unbearable to be there and to have half my mind filled with the chill and the gloom and the thick silence of our cottage. I hated Seanie Shaper for having a father like that and not even knowing his luck.

MY FATHER never drank a drop until the day the probate was finished on Granddad's farm. Paulie Jackman sent off a cheque that same day to the Revenue for the inheritance tax. He handed my father Granddad's savings in cash. Then my father went to Ciss Brien's and ordered a Jameson and a pint and drank them down and vomited them up and Ciss herself, who was still going strong that time, gave him a sog into the mouth of her experienced fist for himself. It took him months to train himself to be a drinker. He never wavered from his goal. He paid no heed to pleas or censure. He was laughed at and talked about and watched in wonderment by the old guard of Ciss's front bar; here was a man they always knew yet hardly knew at all, a quiet son of a small farmer who was never known for intemperance or loudness, a cute fucker they all thought, and he drinking out a farm. They loved him, or loved the thought of him, what they thought he was: a man who could easily have had a good life who chose instead their life: spite and bitterness and age-fogged glasses of watery whiskey in dark, cobwebbed country bars, shit-smeared toilets, blood-streaked piss, and early death. He could have helped it but didn't. They couldn't help it and loved him for being worse than them. He was the king of the wasters. He bought drink for men he didn't like and listened to their yarns and their sodden stories. He gave an eye filled with darkness they could mistake for desire to women he thought were only common whores. The day he spent the last penny that was got for the land he stopped drinking. It took him nearly five years to drink out the farm and when it was done he never took a sup again. He wasn't a drinker at all, really. The old guard were heartbroken after him. They couldn't understand it; he never looked at them again.

He drank out the farm to spite his father. It was the one thing Granddad said he knew my father wouldn't do, so my father did

it. At least I can trust him not to drink out the farm, Granddad would say. It was the *at least* that galled my father, I'd say. It meant nothing and everything: Granddad was saying he was good for nothing, every badness was possible with him, but he didn't drink and never had, so at least there was that one thing, one thing only that could nearly be seen as a good thing. My father called his dead bluff. I walked him home from his last session. I haven't a bob left now, he said, and if we went over this minute to my father's grave and dug him up, he'd be face down inside in the coffin. And he laughed and coughed and laughed and pissed down the leg of his pants and laughed and fell in the cottage door and woke up sober the next day and was never drunk again a day in his life.

I can forgive him for turning piles of money into piss and for leaving my mother to her holy hell, too mortified to sit up past the back row in Mass; walking quickly, head down through the village, sneaking about her business for fear of being forced to talk to anyone; sitting crying tears of frustration out beyond Coolcappa in a crock of a car with a burnt clutch and a steaming engine and a screaming child in the back of it while he sat silently swallowing her claim to a life. I'll never forgive him for the sulking, though, and the killing sting of his tongue. He ruined every day of our lives with it. Drunk, he was leering and silent and mostly asleep. Sober, he was a watcher, a horror of a man who missed nothing and commented on everything. Nothing was ever done right or cooked right or said right or bought right or handed to him properly or ironed straight or finished off fully with him. We couldn't breathe right in a room with him. We couldn't talk freely or easily. We were mad about each other, my mother and me, but he made us afraid to look at each other for fear he'd want to know were we conspiring against him again. We stopped

looking at each other for good for a finish and stopped talking to each other a few years later and the day we buried her I wanted to jump into the ground and drag her back out and scream at her to come back, come back, we'll walk to the shop and I'll hold your hand and we won't mind Daddy and I'll pick a bunch of flowers and leave them on your locker for you and if he calls me a pansy we'll tell him to feck off and we'll give back all these years of ageing and dying and stupid, stupid silence and be Mammy and Bobby again, two great auld pals.

I ALWAYS KNEW Pokey Burke was a bit afraid of me. Triona says I *exuded menace* when she met me first. She has a lovely way of putting things. There was no one stopping *her* doing honours English. She says I stood against the bar inside in the disco in town and stared at her. Her friend said what the fuck is that *freak* looking at, but Triona knew the friend was only raging I wasn't staring at her. Oh, don't look back, for Christ's sake, the friend said, he's from an awful family, they live in a hovel, the father is a weirdo and the mother never *speaks* – but Triona looked back all the same and when I scowled at her she knew I was trying to smile, and when I hardly spoke to her on the way home she knew deep down that I was terrified of the lightness and loveliness of her, and when she said are we going to shift so or what, I thought I'd never again regain the power of movement.

Pokey Burke had been mad after her; she'd shifted him weeks before, and he'd been rough, biting her lip and clawing at her bra, and I'd never forgive him for having touched her. Even when he told me I was foreman, and was handing me an envelope every week with twenty fifties in it, he was afraid of me, and I was afraid I'd kill him. But still and all he needed me, and I sneered at

him, and we all called him a prick, but now he's beyond, sunning himself in God only knows where, hiding from the bank and the taxman and probably trying to ride foreign wans. And here am I, like an orphaned child, bereft, filling up with fear like a boat filling with water.

HAVING A WIFE is great. You can say things to your wife that you never knew you thought. It just comes out of you when the person you're talking to is like a part of yourself. We went to a play inside in town one time; I can't remember the name of it. You couldn't do that without a wife. Imagine it being found out, that you went to see a play, on your own! With a woman, you have an excuse for every kind of soft thing. The play was about a man and wife; they just sat on the stage on either side of a table, facing the audience, talking about each other. Your man was like my father, only not as bad. The wife was lovely; she was dog-tired of your man's auld selfish ways, but she persevered with him all the same. He sat there, drinking a glass of whiskey that was really red lemonade and smoking fag after fag, grinning back to his two ears as she read him to the audience. He had an auld smart reply for every criticism. They aged onstage, as they were talking. I don't know how it was done. For a finish, they were both old and their lives were near spent, and at the very last, your man turned around and admitted he thought the world of her; he'd always loved her. He put his hand on her cheek and looked at her and cried. Christ, your man was some actor. On the way home in the car, tears spilled down my face. Triona just said oh love, oh love.

Josie

I LOVE my first son more than my second son. I often wonder should I go to confession and purge that from my soul. But is it even a sin, to love one child more than another? It's wrong, all right; I know that. I gave my second boy everything, to try to make up for it: my business, years of my time showing him what to do, enough working capital to allow for all sorts of balls-ups. Poor Eamonn only barely got the money to pay for his digs above in Dublin when he went to Trinity. There's neither of them thick enough to not know where they stood, though. I was always stone cracked about Eamonn. I couldn't understand how I never felt the same about poor Pokey. I even let Eamonn take his name from him. *Pokey*, he said, and pointed a fat little finger at the new baby, and we all laughed and told him he was great, and Seán Pól was lost forever. He never got a look in, the poor little darling boy.

I should have come down from the top step when Bobby Mahon came here the other day asking to know where was Pokey

and what was going to be done about stamps and redundancy and what have you. I should have taken his hand and shook it and told him how sorry I was it was all gone wallop besides snapping at him; I should have apologized to that man on my son's behalf. I snapped like that out of crossness with myself. I was too ashamed to look the man in the eye; Bobby Mahon, who never missed a day, who I was always so glad was foreman after Pokey took over – I thanked God there was a man there to keep Pokey from getting too big for his boots. Pokey was more than half-afraid of Bobby Mahon. He wished he *was* Bobby Mahon, I think. I have a feeling that he asked himself what Bobby would think of every decision he was making before he made it. It's only a shame he told no one he was mortgaging everything on the building of one last massive estate of houses that no one was going to buy and a share in some monstrosity beyond in Dubai. I should have shook Bobby Mahon's hand and thanked him, and apologized, besides leaving him walk off with his face red with anger and disappointment.

I think of Pokey and I feel disgust, with him and with myself. Wasn't it I reared him? Or maybe that's what went wrong; I left most of the rearing to Eileen. And isn't it a sacred duty, to rear your children? I got that all turned around in my head, of course. I confused providing for them with rearing them. I got a fixation on work and having enough money that waxed and waned for my whole adult life, but was always there. I never even really went into a shop and bought anything. Eileen buys my pantses and shirts and shoes and socks and underwear. I give out stink to her if I open the hot press and there's none at hand. I used to read her from a height at Christmas over the expensive presents. Lord God I'd take that back if I could. I'd give every single penny I ever had and more to go back to certain days and hours and change things just a little bit. I'd catch Pokey in time. I'd catch myself.

MY CHICKENS are gone woeful fat. Eileen says I leave them in too much corn altogether. She doesn't know that I also pick big caterpillars off of the cabbages and feed them in to the old fatsos. They see me coming and get into a right flap. They're the fattest, happiest chickens in Ireland, I'd say. I have a daughter too, you know. I can't bear talking to her any more. I used to think she was the bee's knees, but now I'd rather feed caterpillars to chickens than talk to her. What sort of a man am I at all? If you heard the rubbish she talks, though, about poverty and Palestine and carbon dioxide and Tibetan monks and what have you. And if you saw the cut of her – no bra, men's army pants, big auld boots – you'd rather look at chickens, too. I don't feel guilty about her at all. Isn't that awful?

I served my time in the sixties as a block-layer beyond in Liverpool, in a firm belonging to a great big fat fella from south Tipp. He was a horrible, ignorant man. I had no digs sorted out for myself when I got over there. He gave me my start on my first day off of the boat. I asked him where would I stay and he laughed at me, a big, fat, wet laugh. I don't know in the fuck, he said, and I don't care, once you're here in the morning at seven. I sat on the steps of a locked-up church all that night, frozen with the cold, and scared of every shadow. I wondered was it a Protestant church. I wondered what was the difference. I learnt my trade quickly, and didn't mess around. I hardly ever drank; it sapped the strength from men and made them forget themselves. I overtook that big fat man from Cashel. I went out on my own and put in for every job going. I brought four or five boys with me who I knew wouldn't argue with me. I undercut the prick all over Liverpool. He died of a heart attack at the door of a pub in Warrington. People stepped out over his body. I laughed when I heard. Then I thought more about it and felt

sick. But at least my laugh had been heard and noted. I was hard.

I came home and never stopped working. I bought the yard and a site and built a house and bought machinery and married Eileen and worked and worked and worked. I never stopped going. All through the seventies and eighties, I hardly drew breath. I built a beautiful estate of bungalows on a lovely site when no one else was building private estates. It was I started all that. I fell into the drink one time, for about six months. To this day, I don't know why. I ended up trying to force myself on a woman. She got away from me easily enough. I laughed at her and went back to my drink and saw men looking at me with satisfaction in their eyes. I knew then to stop drinking. I often thought to find that woman I handled roughly and say I was sorry. I often wondered did she know I had a wedding ring inside in my pocket and a pregnant wife at home crying over me. I wonder does she hate me still.

JOSEPH BURKE was my father's name too. Second sons were named for their fathers in those days as a rule. Second sons got a name and first sons got everything else. My father made us all afraid of dishonesty. The devil loves lies, he always said. The devil loves liars. It wasn't from me that Pokey learned deceit. He never paid in those boys' stamps. Imagine that. I used to have that done every year before January would be out. The Revenue Commissioners are roaring for VAT, the sub-contractors are arriving to the door with invoices every day. Honest men, who know only work, white with the shock of the sudden stop that everything is after coming to. When I think about it, what people must be thinking and saying, I can hear my heart beat in my chest. I can

feel a hardness, a tight pressure. I think of a hose with too great a flow through it, stretched and strained. Sweat starts to sting my forehead. Eileen says nothing. What's there to say? Her silence comforts me. If she blamed me, she'd say it. Who's to blame when a child turns rotten?

That's the thing though. Did he turn bad or did he start out that way? Either way it's my fault. There's no getting away from it. I'm the boy's father. His nature and his nurture were both down to me, when all is said and done. He got no badness from his mother, that's for certain. Eamonn and Pokey were always mad about each other as small boys. How's it they ended up so different? I did my damnedest not to make fish of one and flesh of the other; I counted out seconds in my head of time in my lap, the number of times I lifted each one up, the number of times I smiled at each one. Pokey had an unbelievable eye, though, to see a slight so small there was nearly none at all: he noticed every time I looked at Eamonn, patted his head, squeezed his little fat leg. He had a ledger inside in his head on which every single move I made was entered, and it never, ever balanced in his favour. I started resenting him, and nearly hated him. I did hate him. God forgive me, I should confess *that*. Imagine poor old John Cotter, how he'd stutter out my penance and redden every time I met him after. I'd nearly have to travel in to the Cistercians in the city, where my face would not be known or seen again. Or those Franciscan lads in Moyross: they'd have me right with God in no time. They'd never have me right with myself, though.

I haven't said a word yet to Eamonn about Pokey lighting out for the continent. He doesn't know about the big huge loan from Anglo, the Revenue, the lads' stamps, their redundancy, anything. I'm afraid of upsetting him. I'm ashamed opposite my own son to tell of his brother's badness. Eamonn teaches in the

city. They're all pure stone mad about him in there: the other teachers, the young lads, his wife's people. Jesus, what if I hadn't him? I'll have to tell him soon. The next time he calls with Yvonne and the children, he'll ask as he always does, is Pokey coming, and I won't be able to lie to the boy. I hope I don't start to cry like a fool. My tear bags are fierce close to my eyes these days. That Bobby Mahon and my Eamonn are very alike in ways. They're both men you'd be proud of, who you'd be embarrassed opposite, having to tell of the failings of other men and feeling as though those failings are your own.

And there's no one can say the whole fiasco with the business wasn't my fault, that's for certain. It was I handed over all to Pokey. I only kept our house and my pension. But there were seven years there where you could build houses out of cardboard and masking tape and they'd be sold off of the plans. People queued all night to buy boxes of houses all crammed together like kennels. Pokey cleaned up. He paid me a dividend and I fattened on it. We should have known it would all end in tears. Around here, it all started with tears: that boy of the Cunliffes getting shot in his own yard by the guards, and his land going to his auntie, who shared it out among us like the Roman soldiers with Our Lord's purple robe. That was no way for good times to start.