

We are to stay in Gloucester Jail until they can allocate us places in other prisons. I share a cell with my brother. I'm scared, but there are no surprises. A bed at each end. A small window. Scratched surfaces. Right-angles. No secret places, nowhere to hide. The yells of other prisoners. The sound of keys nearby or far down the corridor, always locking, unlocking, locking. And that smell, like school, only the disinfectant's stronger.

We are given prison clothes to wear and our own kit is handed back in a pillowcase. My brother tips the contents of his pillowcase out on the bed and there's something that doesn't belong to him: an enormous pair of Y-fronts. He holds them up. They're ripped and covered in blood. We look at each other in horror. We've heard a lot about prison bullying: is this what's waiting for us? Or is it some kind of joke the screws are playing?

Within a day Shane and I are arguing and we're both demanding a change of cellmate. Shane goes off to share with our cousin and Daniel joins me. He's tall now, but he still looks anaemic. His body's painfully thin with blue veins at the side of his face and he still has the big baby eyes he had as a kid which make him seem about fourteen. All summer we created a crazy, drug-filled world of crime: others may have visited it, but we lived there together. So what if Dan doesn't appreciate sunsets the way I do? We're closer than mates, we're brothers.

For one hour in twenty-four we can walk round and round in a high-walled courtyard outside. A lad with a scarred face walks with us one day and gives us some advice when he learns that it's our first time. He explains that tobacco is a unit of currency here in jail.

'If you want to get on top of people, don't smoke all your fucking tobacco allowance. Just smoke half and at the end of the week all the other lads are desperate for a fag and you've got a quarterounce to lend the wankers. And, whatever you give, you get back double next week. See? Double.'

That's a wicked rate of interest. We sit thinking about it when we're back in our blank cell for blank hours with our potty to piss in. We agree that if tobacco's money, it's the key to power here. We're allowed to choose a book from the library every day and I read everything Orwell ever wrote, even though the essays are mostly boring. I'd read the back of a jam jar if I could, to let my mind out of the cell for a few minutes. The library gives each prisoner a bookmark that has a picture of a man climbing over a wall and the words *Escape With Books*.

I gain acceptance. Acceptance is knowing that you're in jail and you're not getting out soon. I live my life within a few small walls

and I live it to rules others have made. However, I can't settle because I know I'm not staying here.

Within a fortnight we're on the move again to Pucklechurch where prisoners meet from all over the country to be separated into groups for their destination jail. I never knew there was this vast human cargo system, silent and unseen, shuffling men around Britain all the time. And now I'm a part of it.

Daniel and Shane and I are going to Portland in Dorset.

'Portland!' say the other prisoners.

'What's wrong with Portland?' we ask. They shrug.

Finally someone says: 'It's got a reputation, see.'

We only know it is a Good Order And Discipline jail. That means it's a borstal. It feels like a long, long way, and when the bus approaches the south coast it is evening. The sun is sinking in the west and throwing its red light across the water. Another one of those beautiful sunsets, but I'm not stupid enough to mention it to Daniel or anyone else. The beach is a big dune of stones that stretches away into the distance and the bus is heading straight for it. I wait for the crunch, then I realise that we're actually on a road that runs along the spit. There is red water on both sides of us, filled by the sunset.

Portland looks like an island. It looms ahead, a grey mist hanging over it. Where it joins the sea, there is the desolation of industry: naval buildings, gas tanks, big storage buildings and any number of great grey, square places that might be borstals. But the bus doesn't stop here. It climbs the steep hillside, weaving in and out of dismally grey houses, its engine roaring in low gear. Then we get to the top of the hill and we look back and see that we are surrounded by ocean. Far below is the straight pencil line of beach that connects Portland to the mainland.

Suddenly the bus halts against a high cliff face. Everyone simultaneously takes one deep breath as we realise that we're really at the top and that the cliff's below us. In front now are walls. Massive, imposing, grey-white walls.

A huge gate in the walls opens and the bus drives in. I feel sick. The gates slam shut behind us.

The mist stretches right down to ground level here. We get out into clammy air and deep shadow.

As soon as my foot touches the ground in this ageless, timeless place, a voice roars: 'Get into fucking line!'

So I've arrived in borstal.