

Chippy

Brian Wharton

The lad lay on the bed sobbing. He had been there for a while waiting for sympathy. An eternity passed until he heard a timid tapping on the front door, then the sound of mixed voices.

His mother shouted, 'Brian it's for you!'

He got off the bed tearfully and at the top of the stairs wailed, 'Tell him I'm not going back!'

'Come down and speak to him!'

'No! I don't want to. Not after what he called me!'

He heard a brief exchange and his mother closed the door.

Time passed before the lad bravely faced his mam. She was preparing the tea and getting ready for work. She was too busy to look at him.

'He's coming back later. You'll have to talk to him.'

He ate his tea quietly. Fish fingers, beans and chips were his favourite meal, but the nerves in his stomach made them difficult to get down. Time moved on and the autumn darkness closed in. Another knock on the door. He opened it reluctantly. Arthur's fat son Fred stood there,

'Dad's found the keys and he wants you to come back.'

'No! Tell him I'm finished!'

After much pleading and shaking his head, Brian shut the door. These words came easily to the lad, as he hated the 17-year-old spoilt brat who was known for burning five-pound notes in front of his poorer friends. Brian felt quite pleased as frog-faced Fred walked away sheepishly. In fact, he was more than satisfied with himself, as the whole incident had set him free from his burden in the chippy.

Before: 'Was it you looking for a job?' said Arthur.

'Yes,' Brian lied.

'Can you start on Thursday after school?' The boy nodded excitedly.

Thirteen-year-old Brian crossed the road, wondering what he would say to his younger brother who had asked for the job. He took the chippy tea home and blurted out that he had got a job with Arthur. His brother Stevie went berserk until their mother stepped in and calmed them down.

He started on Thursday the next week after getting changed. This seemed to be okay with Arthur until he demanded that the boy come straight in at 4p.m. in his school clothes. This bugged Brian as he only had one uniform. Arthur also wanted him to come in on the Saturday for lunchtime and work until the chippy opened at 9p.m. so he could help clean the place.

His job involved opening big bags of spuds and putting them in a bath where he would remove the eyes. Then he would put the spuds into the slicer and, when needed, tip them into the fryer. He was given £2 for his work and after giving his mother 50p, he would spend the rest on a second-hand Motown album from Edwards in Kensington. Brian hated the job and Arthur's family for their penny-pinching ways, so when he lost the shop keys after enduring three arduous months, it gave him an ideal excuse to leave without a final goodbye!