

Dark September

Brendan Gerad O'Brien

Chapter Three

‘Where were the bloody sirens?’ The woman’s hysterical cries echoed off the battered walls of Shaftsbury Street as she staggered through the piles of rubble scattered all over the road. She held a cloth to her head. The cloth was saturated with blood.

‘I didn’t hear no sirens,’ she sobbed. ‘Why wasn’t there no sirens?’

All around her little knots of people were pulling at what was left of their homes. Some of them looked up at her and one or two of them even nodded in agreement. Then they turned back and carried on searching through the wreckage for their loved ones.

The miserable rain had created streams that poured down both sides of the road. It washed into O’Shea’s shoes as he stared in shock at what was left of Shaftsbury Street. How long he’d been standing there he didn’t know. He couldn’t even remember how he got there.

All he knew was he’d walked up this street on the way to work less than one hour ago and now there was nothing left of it. A huge crater split the road in two. Everything was peppered with lumps of shattered masonry and broken chimney pots. Bits of green and blue window frames jutted out of cracked walls like accusing fingers.

Thick clouds of smoke wafted in from all sides carrying the heavy smell of death and destruction with it. Pockets of flames danced around wooden rafters and caused roofs to crash down onto the shells with a deep grumble.

A policeman stood in the middle of the street with his hands hanging loosely by his sides. From the dazed look in his eyes it was obvious he wasn’t prepared for something like this. Yes, Newport docks and the steelworks had been bombed many times over the past few months. But this was different. This was far more ferocious, far more intense. He looked totally bewildered.

‘She’s right, you know,’ O’Shea called to him.

‘What?’

‘The sirens! There weren’t any air raid sirens.’

The policeman shook his head, causing droplets to fly off his wet helmet.

‘That’s because it wasn’t a bloody air raid.’ His eyes were red in a pasty grey face. ‘We were bombarded by warships out there in the Channel. They came at the crack of dawn and bombed everything along the coast with rockets and missiles. They hit Swansea, Cardiff, Newport. The English side too. Bristol.’

‘Oh my God ...’

‘Right now, even as we speak, Germans are coming ashore all over the country. They’ll be concentrating on securing the docks, the steelworks, the collieries.’ He gave a dramatic sweep of his hand. ‘It looks like Hitler has waited long enough. He’s coming over to sort it out himself.’

He glared at O’Shea for a moment before turning sharply and walking away down the street with his shoulders hunched and his head bowed.

O’Shea’s heart gave a sharp thump. Henry Street was still two blocks away. Suddenly there wasn’t any time left. He spun on his heels and sprinted back down Shaftsbury Street. If he hurried they could still get the train to Fishguard and catch that ferry to Ireland.

A rough shortcut took him across the wasteland at the back of the school, and it took him less than four minutes to reach the embankment at the end of Henry Street. But as he scrambled through the thick undergrowth and slid down the other side he knew he was already too late.

One side of Henry Street had taken a direct hit. Several houses were completely gone, and the ones on either side were just broken shells. Others had dense smoke billowing out through broken windows and cracks in the walls. Ugly shards of flame belched up through the shattered roofs.

Number fourteen was on fire and O'Shea howled as he charged down the road towards it. At this time of day there was only one place Heather and Adam would be – at home in bed. He had to get them out. There was no hesitation. He threw himself at the door.

It crashed open with a shriek and he fell in with it. But a wall of flame came bursting down the hallway and the searing heat drove him back out into the middle of the street.

As he landed on his knees he heard a deep, sinister rumble inside the house. Then the roof crashed down through the top floor. Sparks and dust spurted up in a swirling cloud and mingled with the dancing smoke.

O'Shea fell back and covered his ears with his trembling hands.

The crackle of burning wood sent another wave of smoke across the street. The rain had stopped now, but thick grey clouds still hung low in the sky and shrouded Henry Street in a miserable damp haze.

An hour, maybe two, had passed. O'Shea was curled up in a doorway on the other side of the street. He was too distressed to care what was going on around him.

Houses still burned fiercely, throwing fingers of flame in whichever direction the breeze blew. And smoke billowed around the group of men passing buckets of water to each other in a desperate attempt to stop the fire spreading to the others properties.

Farther down the street some women were piling boxes and suitcases out on the pavement, getting ready to move to a safer place. Their neighbours were trying to reason with them, saying it would make more sense to stay in their homes until they knew what was happening. Others just wandered aimlessly, misery etched on their faces and their haunted eyes darting all over the place as they looked for some kind of guidance.

O'Shea just sat there and ignored it all. His senses were torn to shreds. He couldn't believe he'd been so weak, so incapable of making a simple decision about the safety of his family. Why didn't he just take control and move them to Ireland? What madness made him hesitate like that? They should have gone months ago! Now he was consumed by the guilt of it. It welled up in his throat and almost choked him. He had to swallow hard to stop himself being sick.

Someone shuffled through the door behind him and he glanced up.

'Are you all right, Danny?' Mrs Evans put a hand on his shoulder.

'I'm fine,' he lied, shifting out of her way.

Mrs Evans wore her usual wrap-around housecoat. O'Shea had never seen her in anything else in all the years he'd lived in Henry Street. It was her trademark.

'You haven't seen our Harold, have you, Danny?' There was fear in her voice. 'Only I'm waiting for him to come home. He went to see his brother Sam to find out what's happening. But he's been gone ages. I hope to God he's all right.'

'I'm sure he is.' O'Shea wiped his mouth with his sleeve.

'I wish the bugger would hurry up, though.' Her face screwed up in a frown. 'I'm terrified waiting here on my own. I don't know what to do. What *are* we supposed to do, Danny? Should we just stay here or should we pack our things and get the hell out of Newport?'

When O'Shea didn't answer she gave another sigh.

‘So what are you and Heather going to do, Danny?’ she asked absently, her eyes still scanning the street. ‘Are you going to stay here or will you ...?’

She gasped and her hand went to her mouth as she realised what she’d just said. ‘Oh dear God, Danny, I’m so sorry. I wasn’t thinking. I didn’t mean ... I’m so, so sorry. I ...’

‘Ah, there you are.’ A gruff voice made Mrs Evans spin around and her knee knocked O’Shea on the arm.

‘Harold!’ she yelled. ‘I didn’t hear you come in. Where the hell have you been?’

‘I came in the back way.’ Mr Evans was over six feet tall and his enormous frame filled the doorway. ‘Sam and I had a scout around to see what’s going on. I came back through the lane.’

‘So what are we doing?’ Mrs Evans took his hand. ‘Are we staying here or what?’

‘Well, according to Sam there’s a massive crowd trying to get out of town.’ Beads of sweat glistened on his forehead. ‘Every road is choked solid. Sam says if the Germans come it’ll be bad news for anyone in their way. They’ll just bulldoze their way through. He says it would be suicide to get caught up in that.’

‘So are we staying put, then?’

‘Aye, we’re staying put.’ Mr Evans gave her hand a gentle squeeze and they both shuffled back down the hallway.

A moment later Mr Evans was back behind O’Shea. ‘I’m sorry about your loss, Danny. And your ... look, you can stay here with us if you want. Until you sort something out. That’s if you want to, like.’

O’Shea scrambled to his feet and wiped his hands on his shirt. ‘I ... yes. If that’s all right with you and Mrs Evans. Thank you. But I don’t want to be a burden.’

‘Then why don’t you go and fetch that boy of yours and bring him over.’

‘Harold!’ Mrs Evans jabbed him in the ribs and nodded towards the shell of O’Shea’s house. Her husband looked at it and then at O’Shea, and he scratched the top of his head.

‘But I’ve just seen him. I recognised that check shirt he wears. You know? The one Danny said was a real cowboy shirt his cousin sent him from America. It was definitely him.’

‘Where did you ...?’ O’Shea’s voice cracked and his head was suddenly light. He felt himself sag and he had to lean against the doorframe. ‘Where did you see him? Was he on his own?’

Mr Evans looked at O’Shea for a second before his eyes dropped to his hands. ‘Yes. He *was* on his own, I’m afraid. He was sitting on a swing over in the school playground. That’s probably why I noticed him because he was the only one there.’

O’Shea didn’t hear the rest. He was already bolting down the street towards the redbrick schoolhouse.

Chapter Four

As O’Shea rushed through the school gate he spotted the little figure in the far corner of the playground rocking back and forth on the solitary swing. And a cocktail of emotions caused tears to smart his eyes. He wiped them away with his fingers as he hurried across the yard and wrapped his arms around his son.

Adam looked startled and gripped onto the chains. And when he looked at O’Shea it was like he’d never seen him before in his life.

‘It’s all right now, son.’ O’Shea ruffled the boy’s hair and kissed him on the top of his head. ‘Everything’s all right now. Your Da’s here.’

It took a few moments for Adam to focus properly on the man kneeling on the ground in front of him. Then he gave a huge smile of recognition and threw his arms around his father. And he buried his face in his neck.

A gust of wind rustled the trees on the other side of the wire fence and spattered them with raindrops as O'Shea looked around the yard. It was empty. Adam was alone. He took the boy's arms from around his neck.

'Adam, where's your mother? Where's your mam?'

Adam blinked a few times. 'Mam's in bed.'

'Adam, listen to me, son. This is very important. Do you understand? I need to know where your mother is.'

'She's in bed, though.' Adam was looking everywhere except at his father.

O'Shea rubbed his eyes again. 'Adam, you wouldn't be out of bed all by yourself at this time of the morning. Now would you? And you certainly wouldn't be out in the street. Not on your own. If you're up then your mother would be up too, wouldn't she?'

The boy's face had gone blank again. He lowered his head and started to rock on the swing, pressing his toes hard on the ground. O'Shea sat back on his heels. He knew all it took to get a sensible answer out of Adam was a little patience. But right now he felt only frustration. And fear. And they were quickly eroding what little patience he had left.

'I heard something,' Adam said suddenly. 'I got up to see what it was.'

'And what was it, son? What did you hear? Was it your mam?'

Adam let his head roll back and he stared up at the sky. The vacant look was back in his eyes.

'Mam's in bed,' he said again.

'Then why are you dressed and out in the street?' O'Shea snapped. The tone of his voice startled Adam and he jerked up straight. And his lip quivered.

'I heard a big crash.' As he sputtered over the words his eyes filled with tears. 'I got up and put on my clothes and I went into Mam's room and the window was all broken and it was all over her bed and she wouldn't talk to me. Her eyes were open and she was looking at the fire but she wouldn't talk to me so I came downstairs. There was black stuff everywhere and I couldn't see. It was making me cough and I was sick so I said I was going outside but she never answered me.'

O'Shea's stomach heaved and he sagged back on the ground, gagging on the bile that stung the back of his throat. He didn't want to hear this. Adam must be confused. He was often confused. Heather would never let him wander off on his own like that. She'd be out looking for him right now.

But deep down O'Shea knew he was grasping at a thin wisp of hope. And right now Adam was in grave danger out here in the open like this. He wouldn't survive closer scrutiny if the soldiers came.

So for the sake of his son O'Shea needed to get a grip, drag himself back to reality and get out of there fast before they were spotted.

He looked around the school playground one more time and his chest tightened with the dreadful sadness that filled his heart. He took the boy by the hand and headed back over to Henry Street.

Chapter Five

Mrs Evans had closed her front door. O'Shea gave the brass knocker a quick rattle and listened to it echo in the hallway. After a few moments he heard the shuffling of her feet on the tiled floor.

'Hello?' Mrs Evans' voice had a cautious tone as she pulled the door open just enough to see who it was.

'Tis only us.' O'Shea put his hand on Adam's shoulder and guided him into her view. She gave a relieved sigh and opened the door wider.

A motorcycle roared into the street and they both jumped. The shiny black sidecar with German insignia lifted off the ground as the driver did a tight turn before sliding to a stop in a shower of dirt.

Everyone in the street turned to look at it. The men fighting the fire stopped in mid swing. And one or two lowered their buckets on the ground. Some women grabbed their children. Others shot back into their houses and slammed the doors.

In less than half a minute the only sound in the street was the purr of the motorcycle.

The soldier in the sidecar took off his goggles and his eyes narrowed against the watery sun. He looked startled by the sea of faces staring back at him. There was a map open on his lap. He glanced down at it then looked up again. The driver sat perfectly still. They both seemed very young. And very nervous.

‘Stupid bastard’s got himself lost.’ Mr Evans came out of the door and squeezed past O’Shea onto the pavement.

Nothing moved and the tension crackled in the stillness. The soldiers were getting increasingly anxious at the way everyone just stood gaping at them as if waiting for something to happen.

The man in the sidecar muttered to the driver and they both looked down at the map.

Then someone dropped a bucket and the sudden crash made the soldiers jump. The driver gave a strange squeal and revved the engine, making it roar like an angry bear. Then the motorcycle shot forward and tore off down Henry Street scattering everyone in its path.

They didn’t know Henry Street was a dead end. When they reached the bottom of the road they skidded to a halt. Obviously flustered now, the driver took a wide swing as he tried to turn around. But he misjudged the width of the street, bounced up onto the pavement and pinned the sidecar against the wall. And he got a flurry of abuse from the man in the sidecar.

The driver tried to move the bike backwards and in his panic he stalled the engine. Ripples of laughter from the watching crowd threw them into even more of a flap and their embarrassment was quickly turning into irritation.

It took three attempts to restart the engine. Then they roared back up the street. Everyone scattered again, running in all directions to get out of the way.

Little Elsie Taylor couldn’t run fast enough. The sidecar caught the back of her legs and threw her up in the air. And her head collided with the soldier’s helmet before she flipped over his back and landed in the middle of the road.

The screams of horror were drowned out by the roar of the motorcycle as it careered off the road onto the pavement. It clipped the wall of a house and spun back into the middle of the road. And once more the engine stalled.

A dreadful howl exploded from Mrs Evans as she charged out from behind O’Shea and ran up the road to where Elsie Taylor was sprawled on the ground.

Mr Evans followed her, mumbling incoherently and slapping his hands against his head. His lips were pulled back in a horrible snarl and words were coming out. But O’Shea couldn’t catch what he was saying.

Then the big man gave a heart-wrenching cry as he staggered across the road towards the motorcycle. ‘You mad bastards. You’ve killed our little girl. You’ve killed our Elsie.’

The driver looked shocked. The man in the sidecar was holding his head in his hands. Blood oozed from between his fingers. The driver yelled at him but he didn’t respond.

With the furious figure of Mr Evans rushing towards them the driver jumped on the pedal and tried to kick-start the engine again. But all he got was a dull sputter.

Mr Evans kept coming. The soldier pulled a pistol from his belt and waved it in the air. He was yelling. It was in German but the meaning was clear.

‘You stupid, murdering, sausage eating bastards.’ Mr Evans had spit dribbling down his chin. ‘You killed our little Elsie.’

The German pointed the pistol at the big man's face but Mr Evans was having none of it. He reached out to grab the soldier and the soldier clipped him across the face with the pistol.

Mr Evans staggered back and his face glowed bright red with anger. He glared at the German as he held his cut jaw with shaking hands. Then, foolishly, he tried to grab him again.

Two shots hit him in the head. He dropped in the road and lay perfectly still.

All over the street people threw themselves to the ground. The man in the sidecar was suddenly alert, shaken by the gunshots. He whipped out a machine gun from somewhere and swung it in a wide arc. The look on his face was total alarm.

A woman screamed and dashed across the street to drag her children out of harm's way. Another woman wrapped Elsie in a coat and was carrying her towards an open door. She froze for a second, glanced around then carried on.

The driver kicked at the motorcycle pedal again and squealed in rage when nothing happened.

A stone came from somewhere and clattered off his helmet. He gave a surprised cry and held his head. When he realised he wasn't actually hurt he leapt off the motorcycle and waved the pistol around as he tried to spot the culprit.

What he saw was Mrs Evans stomping towards him with mad eyes and a ferocious snarl on her face. He staggered back against the motorcycle. His hand started to shake and he howled at the other soldier again.

In his rush to get out of the sidecar the other soldier slipped and his leg got caught in the seat. He toppled out onto the road still holding the machine gun. And as he hit the ground there was a long burst of gunfire. Bullets sprayed all over the street and took large chips out of the masonry. In the confusion the driver fired too. Mrs Evans danced for a fraction of a second before dropping onto her back.

Everyone was scattering now, crawling along the ground to keep as low as possible before disappearing into any opening they could find and slamming the door behind them.

Arthur Martin and his wife barged past O'Shea and ran into the Evans' house. O'Shea grabbed Adam and went to follow them but the door had already slammed shut. He gave it a push, then an angry kick as he yelled for Martin to open up. Martin didn't answer. O'Shea kicked the door again and shouted through the letterbox. But still no one responded.

He couldn't see anyone either. They must all be hiding under the stairs. O'Shea and Adam ran to the house next door. That door was locked too.

O'Shea looked around in desperation. He was horrified that in less than a heartbeat every door in Henry Street was shut and bolted. Now he and his son were the only ones standing in the open.

The soldiers watched them warily. The one with the handgun had a weird sneer on his lips. He gave an arrogant wave of his hand and beckoned O'Shea to come closer.

A painful cry made the soldier jump. He crouched as he spun on his heels, holding his gun out straight. And he aimed it at the only thing he could see. A figure struggling to get back on her feet.

Mrs Evans managed to get on to her knees, then stand up into a crouch. Blood dripped from her hands.

The soldiers looked at each other and gave a chuckle of relief. The woman glared at them through bloodshot eyes. And as she staggered towards them the driver aimed the pistol at her head.

O'Shea didn't have time to think. In a split second he had a brick in his hand and he threw it with all the strength he could muster.

The driver glanced up and the brick hit him in the face with such force he dropped flat on his back. The pistol flew out of his hand and clattered along the ground.

The other soldier was still sitting on the ground where he'd fallen and he didn't see what happened so he was slow to react.

But when he spotted O'Shea racing towards him he rolled away and let off a burst from his machine gun. It tore lumps out of the tree behind O'Shea's head as his fingers scratched the ground and snapped up the pistol.

And he got off one shot before he too rolled away. It hit the soldier in the middle of the chest. He jerked with the impact and dropped his gun, and he looked down in horror at the hole in his uniform. His hand came up to touch the wound. Then surprise turned to fear and he sagged back and closed his eyes.

O'Shea dropped the pistol and scrambled to his feet just as Mrs Evans reached him. He went to hold her but she shrugged him away.

'Thank you, Danny boy,' she said. 'But you should have left them to me. I wanted to rip their bastard guts out.'

She took a kick at the driver.

'You're hurt' O'Shea tried to see what was causing so much bleeding.

'It's just a flesh wound.' She pushed him away again. 'Nothing's broken.'

Then her gaze fell on Mr Evans and she gave a soft sob as she sagged down beside him and cradled his head in her lap. 'Oh, my poor wee man,'

Doors began opening again and people filtered out, cautiously looking up and down the street. Someone covered Mr Evans with a coat and took a distraught Mrs Evans into one of the houses.

'What are we going to do now?' a woman asked in a shaky voice that was close to hysteria. 'There's soldiers coming down the next street. We'll all be killed if they see what you've done.'

Her eyes were fixed on O'Shea. His whole body was shaking. He wanted to run away but fear had paralysed him. Reaching out to Adam, he took him by the hand.

'You'd better get off the street,' a voice called from one of the upstairs windows. 'The soldiers are almost here.'

'They'll see the bodies and think we killed them. They'll take it out on us!'

'Well I'm not staying here to be killed. I'm off.' Mr Allen from number eleven was well into his seventies. He'd seen enough during the Great War to last him forever. He shuffled off down the road.

'Why don't we hide them?' Gary Fredrick stuttered and his hands were flapping all over the place. 'Before their friends get here. If they don't see them they won't know anything happened.'

'Hide them where? We haven't time to ... what are you saying? Hide them in someone's house?'

'Yes!' Peter Redman was O'Shea's next-door neighbour. Still in his early twenties, he'd already lost most of his hair apart from a sprinkling of wispy bits around his ears. They'd lived side by side for over six years and they borrowed bits and pieces from each other. But O'Shea could never warm to him. There was something too serious about Peter Redman. 'We can hide them in one of *those* houses.'

'What?' They all turned and looked at the burning ruins. 'How're you going to do that? You'll never get close enough. It's too hot. You'll roast alive if you try to drag them in there.'

More people were carrying boxes out of their front doors and scurrying down towards the wasteland at the back of the street. They probably thought they wouldn't meet any soldiers if they kept off the roads.

'Look, smash out the rest of that window,' Redman said. 'Drag them over to it and we'll throw them in as far as possible. There's enough of us to do it. Then we can throw something

in on top of them to make sure. No one will ever know what happened to them. So come on. We haven't got much time.'

The soldiers were unceremoniously dragged by the arms and legs across the street. Two men pulled the remains of the window frame from the wall. spurts of flame snaked dangerously close to them as they threw the bits of wood back into the fire.

The rest of the men lifted the bodies one at a time, swung them back and forth to get momentum and threw them as hard as they could in through the gap. They disappeared in a shower of sparks. Then the men all hurried back into the middle of the road and stood in silence as they pondered on what to do next.

'What about the motorbike?'

Young Michael Jenkins took a closer look. Apart from a few dents it appeared to be all in one piece. He climbed onto it and fiddled with the bits and pieces, twisting the clutch and crunching the gears. Then he jumped hard on the pedal.

To everyone's surprise the engine shuddered and gave a throaty growl. He revved the accelerator and made it roar. And the spontaneous burst of laughter was followed immediately by relieved clapping.

'Now take it and dump it somewhere.'

'What?' Michael Jenkins shot off the bike. 'I'm not taking it anywhere. I've got a wife and ... no, not me, I'm afraid. I'm not getting caught anywhere near it.'

'Well we can't just leave it here. It'll defeat the whole object of burning the bodies.'

'Can't we roll it into the house as well? It'll burn too ...'

'How?' Malcolm Taylor was spinning in little circles, apparently trying to decide if he should stay or if he should run after the others who were disappearing around the corner at the end of the road. 'It wouldn't fit in the door, would it? And we couldn't possibly lift it in the window.'

'Well we have to get rid of it. And quick. Someone has to take it away from here or we're all in the shit up to our necks.'

'Not me. If you're seen on that thing they'll shoot you on the spot. No thanks.'

'Then who? If we don't shift it now we'd all better start running. And keep running. There won't be any coming back.'

A shudder ran through O'Shea. If he was to keep Adam safe he needed to get him away from this place. And he needed to do it now. There was nothing left for him here anyway. His only hope was to go to Heather's mother in Tredegar.

But Tredegar was a long way from Newport. It would take days to get there if they had to walk. And every step would heighten the chance of being discovered.

'I'll do it.' The words were out before he could stop himself. And there was an awkward hush as everyone looked from him to Adam and back again.

'Danny, are you sure?' Paul Redman's face showed real concern. But there was relief in his eyes as well. He patted O'Shea on the arm.

'No,' O'Shea answered in a hoarse voice. 'I'm *not* sure. But we can't stay here. I need ... we need to get to Adam's grandmother.'

'It'll be an awful big risk, you know. Where does she live? Will this machine take you that far?'

O'Shea hesitated. He was suddenly aware the less his neighbours knew about where he was going the safer it would be. 'She lives way up there in the Brecons,' he lied. 'If I make it I'll dump the bike down some old mine shaft.'

Someone patted him on the shoulder, and someone else shook his hand.

'Thank you, Danny Boy.'

Malcolm Taylor went to hug him but tapped him on the chest instead. 'Good luck, Danny. And God bless you. Now go. Get out of here while you can.'

‘Come on, son.’ O’Shea put his arm around Adam. ‘Climb into the sidecar there.’

‘Mam?’ Adam looked over at the burning house.

‘Quickly now, son. We have to go *now*.’

Adam pulled away and shook his head. Tears filled his eyes. ‘What about Mam?’

‘Adam, please. Just get in.’

‘No. I want Mam. I want to stay here.’

‘For God’s sake,’ O’Shea snapped. ‘How the hell can you stay here?’

‘My mam’s here. I want to stay with Mam.’

O’Shea sighed bitterly and wiped his face on his sleeve. The fingers of panic were squeezing tighter around his heart and he felt the bile rise up in his throat again. He grasped Adam tightly by the arm and when the boy whimpered O’Shea let him go again. Damn! He took a deep breath. A bit of reasoning was all that was needed.

‘Look, Adam, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll go and see Nana. We’ll go and find Nana and then we’ll come back here. And Mam will make us a nice cup of tea. Wouldn’t that be nice, eh? A nice cup of tea. And maybe she’ll have some Welsh cakes for us as well. And we’ll put lots of butter on them. What do you say?’

O’Shea held out his hand. Adam stared at it for a moment, unsure, his eyes anxious. He glanced at the house then back at O’Shea. Then he walked over and put his hand in his father’s.

‘Welsh cakes, Dada?’

O’Shea lifted him into the sidecar and wrapped the heavy army blanket around him.

‘Welsh cakes, son. And plenty of butter.’

There was a set of goggles on the ground where the soldier had dropped them and O’Shea put them on before climbing onto the motorbike. He glanced around at what had been his life, at the wreck of his house, at the neighbours who gave self-conscious waves. He put the motorcycle into gear and gave a few turns of the handle. The engine roared and he pulled away and drove out of Henry Street.

Thank you

for taking the time to read [Dark September](#). I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. And if you have time to do a review please do.

About me:

I was born in Tralee, Ireland and now live in Newport, South Wales.

As a child I spent my summer holidays in Listowel, Co Kerry where my uncle Moss Scanlon had a Harness Maker’s shop. It was a magnet for all sorts of colourful characters, and it was there that my love of storytelling was kindled by the likes of John B. Keane and Bryan MacMahon, who often wandered in for a chat and bit of jovial banter.

The numerous short stories I’ve written based on those characters have been published in various anthologies and eMags over the years.

I have self-published twenty of them in a collection called [Dreamin’ Dreams](#) and also as stand-alone stories with Amazon.com.

My first novel, a thriller set in Wales during WW2, is called [Dark September](#)

[Gallows Field](#) is my second thriller and is also set in WW2, only this time in Ireland.

A Pale Moon Was Rising is a follow up thriller involving Eamon Foley again.

Footsteps is my latest thriller.