The Golden Boy*

STEPHEN BEHAN

Brendan was a very good-looking child and was usually very even tempered. But he had another side. Because he was the golden boy, he always wanted his own way. There was a vicious streak in him side by side with the personality of a sensitive little boy. I remember finding him one day with a little boy half his size up against the railings and the child nearly throttled. We pulled him off, but Brendan still wanted a go at the child who had angered him. Another time I discovered that he had tortured a dog which had bitten him a few minutes before. He played a dastardly trick on one of our neighbours in Russell Street.¹ He put sacks over the windows of her room so that when she woke up she thought she was blind. She didn't know whether it was night or day until someone opened the door three days later and let the light in. Brendan was also very jealous of any of the other children who managed to attract his granny's² attention. He didn't want his position to be usurped. Once he discovered that Seamus (his younger brother)³ had scrounged a penny from the granny. Brendan rushed up the stairs, grabbed Seamus and threw him down shouting, 'She is my granny, not yours'.

NOTES

Stephen Behan (1891–1967), Brendan's father. A house-painter, he married Kathleen Furlong in 1922. See 'Mr Stephen Behan: a Dublin Character', *The Times*, 15 July 1967, p. 12.

1. The Behans lived at that time in 14 Russell Street, off North Circular Road. Russell Street was on the perimeter of the Georgian slum area in Dublin. 'Our street was a tough street, and the last outpost of toughness you'd meet as you left North Dublin for the red brick respectability of Jones's Road, Fitzroy Avenue, Clonliffe Road, and Drumcondra generally' – Brendan Behan, *Hold Your Hour and Have Another* (London: Hutchinson, 1963) p. 149. (All subsequent page-references are to first editions of Behan's works.)

2. Granny English. When Stephen Behan's father died, his mother married another house-painter, Patrick English.

3. Brendan Behan had three brothers: Brian, Dominic, and Seamus; two stepbrothers: Rory and Sean; and one sister: Carmel.

* Ulick O'Connor, *Brendan Behan* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970) p. 20. Editor's title.