



Be different: buy direct  
from [tslbooks.uk](http://tslbooks.uk)

## OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

April ~ May 1954

In the Youth Employment Office Mr Marley ground out his cigarette in an ashtray, no doubt fantasising the receptacle to be a vital organ of my body, and glared at me. He was tall, sinister and balding, with heavy horn-rimmed glasses and reminded me of Reginald Christie, the notorious Rillington Place murderer who had featured in the newspapers during the early Fifties.

'I guess you're getting as sick of seeing me as I am of seeing you!' he snapped. 'Have you ever considered working in a shop?'

'I'll have a try,' I piped up manfully as he handed me a chitty.

His parting words rang in my ears. 'And for goodness sake put a decent shirt and tie on. And if you don't get the job come straight back here.'

He was quite right of course. I didn't intend to return home jobless this time. Fear can be a terrible spur and I suppose I had tried his patience somewhat. It wasn't that I was work-shy. As a child I simply lived for each day as it came along without giving much thought to the future. I vaguely assumed that when I left school I would inevitably work at the Kodak factory in Harrow with much the same certainty that I would have to start shaving one day. As it happened Kodak didn't want me and neither did the Stationery Office (vacancy filled), neither did a local machine shop (no knowledge of machinery). From then on in panic I suggested training to be a chef, landscape gardening – even a child film actor. No wonder Mr Marley was losing his patience with me.

If I failed this one I was really dreading facing the bald and bespectacled ogre. He would probably tear my throat out. For one mad moment I considered asking him if I could be employed in his office as an office boy but somehow I didn't think this suggestion would go down very well.

On my way home I studied the chitty. The firm was called *G.A. Dunn & Co. Ltd. Hatters and Outfitters*, and the address was 259 Station Road. I just couldn't recall the place, which irked me as I lived at 50 Station Road. On the way home I checked all the shops and found it. I must have passed it hundreds of times with its two square oak-framed windows and narrow