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Opening extract from

Klaus Vogel and the Bad Lads

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1

We'd been together for years.

We called ourselves the Bad Lads, but it was just a joke. We were mischief-makers, pests and scamps. We never caused proper trouble – at least, not till that autumn. Round about the time we were turning 13. Round about the time Klaus Vogel came.

The Bad Lad regulars were me, Tonto McKenna from Stivvey Court, Dan Digby, and

the Spark twins Fred and Frank. We all came from Felling and we all went to St John's. Then there was Joe Gillespie. He was a year or so older than the rest of us, and he kept himself a bit apart, but he was the leader, and he was great.

Joe's hair was long and curled over his collar. He wore faded Levi's, Chelsea boots, Ben Sherman shirts. He had a girlfriend, Teresa Doyle. He used to walk hand in hand with her in Holly Hill Park. I used to dream about being just like Joe. I'd flick my hair back with my hand, wink at girls, put my arm around one of the lads after a specially good stunt. "We done really good, didn't we?" I'd say. "We're really bad, aren't we? Ha ha ha!"

All of us, not just me, wanted to be a bit like Joe in those days.

