I'm wondering what if.

What if the football hadn’t gone over the wall.
What if Hector had never gone looking for it.
What if he hadn’t kept the dark secret to himself.
What if …

Then I suppose I would be telling myself another story. You see, the what ifs are as boundless as the stars.
Miss Connolly, our old teacher, always said start your story at the beginning. Make it a clean window for us to see through. Though I don’t really think that’s what she meant. No one, not even Miss Connolly, dares write about what we see through that smeared glass. Best not to look out. If you have to, then best to keep quiet. I would never be so daft as to write this down, not on paper.

Even if I could, I couldn’t.

You see, I can’t spell my own name.

Standish Treadwell.
Can’t read, can’t write,
Standish Treadwell isn’t bright.

Miss Connolly was the only teacher ever to say that what makes Standish stand apart is that he is an original. Hector smiled when I told him that. He said he personally had clocked that one straight away.

‘There are train-track thinkers, then there’s you, Standish, a breeze in the park of imagination.’

I said that again to myself. ‘Then there is Standish, with an imagination that breezes through the park, doesn’t even see the benches, just notices that there is no dog shit where dog shit should be.’