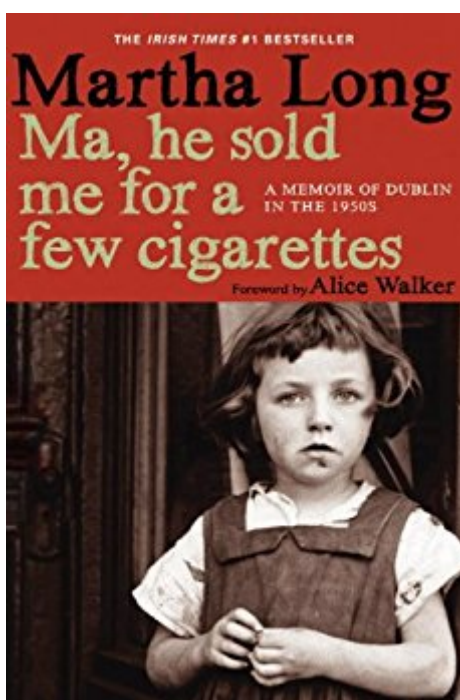


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Ma, He Sold Me For A Few Cigarettes: A Memoir Of Dublin In The 1950s (Memoirs Of Dublin)



Synopsis

"Not for the faint of heart, Long's story is a gritty, grueling, and heartbreaking testament to one girl's unbreakable spirit." — Publishers Weekly, 5-starred review

When Martha Long's feckless mother hooks up with the Jackser ("that bandy aul bastard"), and starts having more babies, the abuse and poverty in the house grow more acute. Martha is regularly sent out to beg and more often steal, and her wiles (as a child of 7, 8) are often the only thing keeping food on the table. Jackser is a master of paranoid anger and outburst, keeping the children in an unheated tenement, unable to go to school, at the ready for his unpredictable rages. Then Martha is sent by Jackser to a man he knows in exchange for the price of a few cigarettes. She is nine. She is filthy, lice-ridden, outcast. Martha and Ma escape to England, but for an itinerant Irishwoman finding work in late 1950s England is a near impossibility. Martha treasures the time alone with her mother, but amazingly Ma pines for Jackser and they eventually return to Dublin and the other children. And yet there are prized cartoon magazines, the occasional hidden penny to buy the children sweets, the glimpse of loving family life in other houses, and Martha's hope that she will soon be old enough to make her own way. Virtually uneducated, Martha Long is natural-born storyteller. Written in the vernacular of the day, the reader is tempted to speak like Martha for the rest of a day (and don't let me hear yer woman roarin' bout it neither). One can't help but cheer on this mischievous, quick-witted, and persistent little girl who has captured hearts across Europe.

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Customer Reviews

Ughh, heartbreaking, very well written. Hard to put down. Hard to keep reading. This will lead you to other Martha Long books as it did me, all equally as sad with an optimistic character just trying to live her life. This is a memoir written from a child's perspective and not just any child but a very observant and knowing child.

The book was long and drawn out leaving the reader to really expect something at the end. After the descriptive and vividly detailed memories of nearly daily life it ends and doesn't tell you the outcome. What happened to Charlie, Sally or Jackser. Did Jackser ever pay for his crimes, but ahhh there's another sequel of a book if you will. I'm disappointed because I never got to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Wow, this book. I found myself trying desperately to try to figure out how this girl's voice must have sounded because her accent is so thick in the narrative. You really get a sense of her. She is a very precious child, with lots of spunk despite the terrible circumstances she is in.

I couldn't put it down. It broke my heart at times, I felt like all of her misfortunes couldn't keep up. Unfortunately they did. Her spirit and intelligence kept her going and all of courage and bravery are more than a lot of grown men have. The only reason I gave it four stars was at times things just jumped ahead & there was no closure after something dreadful happened. I would recommend this to all mothers, and possibly older teenagers to know how bad things really do happen and there are so many children who really have to live in such deplorable conditions. I am starting the second book today, I have to find out what happens next.

As sad and horrible as Martha's early life was, I really enjoyed this book. Martha was a extremely smart and resourceful child. Her descriptions of the squalor and inhumane treatment she received from the adults around her made me want to rescue her from her horrible life. She must be a brave

and strong person to have survived her upbringing. This was a hard book to put down. I'm anxiously waiting for the sequel.

The fate of poor, young, unwed mothers and their children can be so cruelly controlled by men such as Jackser who are only interested in their own needs. This story of intimidation and abuse is a horrible and eye opening example of how easily the life of a child can be turned upside down so quickly with the bad choices of a lonely and desperate mother. Martha endured so much in her few short years covered by this book. The really sad reality is that it has been repeated in the lives of far too many children even to this day. Unfortunately, most children in her situation are not as resourceful as Martha. I found this to be a very sad, horrifying, yet inspiring read.

I enjoyed this book greatly. Many of the words are written phonetically in Irish dialect, so it took a bit to figure out what the words meant. Once I did that, I sped through the book. This is not a pretty, feel good story. However, it's a great testimony to human spirit and the will to survive- and Martha lacked neither of these attributes. It ends rather suddenly but there is a follow-up book, so I'll be reading that soon. I must know what happens in Martha's life next!

Unless you've got grit like Martha. Martha had within herself the power to change her direction in life. But the family situation she was born into almost stole away her will to live. "The kid didn't stand a chance" but she managed to break away from the brainwashing inflicted up on her by people who were supposed to love and protect her. I'm sure she had regrets to live with, but what other choice did she have?

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