Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Department 19: Battle Lines

Written by

Will Hill

Published by

HarperCollins Children's Books

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

First published in hardback in Great Britain by HarperCollins *Children's Books* in 2013
HarperCollins *Children's Books* is a division of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd,
77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London, W6 8JB.

Follow Will Hill on twitter
@willhillauthor

www.department19exists.com
www.facebook.com/department19exists

1

Text copyright © Will Hill 2013

HB ISBN 978-0-00-735451-1
TPB ISBN 978-0-00-746955-0

Will Hill asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of the work.

Typeset in Berylium by Palimpsest Book Production Limited, Falkirk, Stirlingshire
Printed and bound in England by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Conditions of Sale
This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form, binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser. All rights reserved.



FSC™ is a non-profit international organisation established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. Products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present and future generations, and other controlled sources.

Find out more about HarperCollins and the environment at
www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

MEMORANDUM

***From*: Office of the Director of the Joint Intelligence Committee**

***Subject*: Revised classifications of the British governmental departments**

***Security*: TOP SECRET**

DEPARTMENT 1 Office of the Prime Minister
DEPARTMENT 2 Cabinet Office
DEPARTMENT 3 Home Office
DEPARTMENT 4 Foreign and Commonwealth Office
DEPARTMENT 5 Ministry of Defence
DEPARTMENT 6 British Army
DEPARTMENT 7 Royal Navy
DEPARTMENT 8 Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service
DEPARTMENT 9 Her Majesty's Treasury
DEPARTMENT 10 Department for Transport
DEPARTMENT 11 Attorney General's Office
DEPARTMENT 12 Ministry of Justice
DEPARTMENT 13 Military Intelligence, Section 5 (MI5)
DEPARTMENT 14 Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)
DEPARTMENT 15 Royal Air Force
DEPARTMENT 16 Northern Ireland Office
DEPARTMENT 17 Scotland Office
DEPARTMENT 18 Wales Office
DEPARTMENT 19 CLASSIFIED
DEPARTMENT 20 Territorial Police Forces
DEPARTMENT 21 Department of Health
DEPARTMENT 22 Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ)
DEPARTMENT 23 Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)

PROLOGUE

CROWTHORNE, BERKSHIRE

In the village of Crowthorne is an alarm.

A direct copy of a World War Two air-raid siren, it is bright red, and sits atop a pole two metres above the ground.

The alarm is connected by an underground network of wires to Broadmoor Hospital, the sprawling estate of red-brick buildings that sits above the village, and which is home to almost three hundred of the United Kingdom's most dangerous, damaged citizens.

It is designed to alert anyone within a twenty-five-mile radius to an escape from the hospital, and has been sounded only five times in earnest in more than fifty years.

Ben Dawson had been asleep for about forty-five minutes when the siren burst into life. He jerked up from a dream about sleep, the kind of long, deep, uninterrupted sleep that had been impossible in the six weeks since Isla was born, and felt his wife raise her head slowly from her pillow.

"The baby OK?" she slurred.

"It's not Isla," he replied. "It's the siren."

"Siren?"

"The bloody Broadmoor siren," he snapped. It was deafening, a two-tone scream that made his chest tighten with anger.

"What time is it?" asked Maggie, forcing her eyes open and looking at him.

Ben flicked on his bedside lamp, wincing as the light hit his eyes, and checked the clock.

"Quarter to four," he groaned.

Not fair, he thought. *It's just not fair.*

Then he heard a second sound, in between the peals of the alarm, a high, determined crying, from the room above their bedroom. Ben swore and swung his legs out from under the duvet.

"Stay there," said Maggie, pushing herself to the edge of the bed. "It's my turn."

Ben slid his feet into his trainers and pulled a jumper over his head. "You see to Isla. I'm going outside, see if anyone else is awake."

"OK," said Maggie, stumbling through the bedroom door. She was barely awake, moving with the robotic lurch of new parents everywhere. Ben heard her footsteps on the stairs, heard her begin to gently shush their daughter.

Ben felt no fear at the sound of the siren. He had been up to the hospital several times, had seen the electric fences and the gateposts and the sturdy buildings themselves, and was not the slightest bit concerned about the possibility of a breakout. There had been several, over the years; the escape of John Straffen in 1952, who had climbed over the wall while on cleaning duties in the yard and murdered a young girl from Farley Hill, was the reason the siren system had been built. But the last time anyone had made it out had been almost twenty years ago, and security had been increased and expanded since then. Instead, as he stomped down

the stairs towards the front door, knowing the baby was already awake so it didn't matter, what Ben was mainly feeling was frustration.

The last six weeks had been nothing like the parenting books had suggested, or as their friends had described. He had expected to be tired, expected to be grumpy and stressed, but nothing had prepared him for how he actually felt.

He was utterly, physically, exhausted.

Isla was beautiful, and he felt things he had never felt before when he looked at her; *that* part was exactly as advertised, he had been glad to realise. But she cried, loudly and endlessly. He and Maggie took it in turns to go and check on her, to warm bottles or burp her or just rock her in their arms. Eventually, her eyes would flutter closed, and they would place her back in her cot, and creep back to their own bed. If they were lucky, they might get two hours of uninterrupted sleep before the crying began again.

Ben shoved open the front door. The night air was warm and still, and the siren was much louder outside. He walked out on to the narrow cobbled street and saw lights on in the majority of his neighbours' homes. As he lit a cigarette from the pack he kept for emergencies, like when he had been woken up for the third time before it was even four o'clock, doors began to open and pale figures in pyjamas and dressing gowns began to appear.

"What on earth is going on?" demanded one of the figures, a large, broad man with a huge bald dome of a head that gleamed in the light. "Why doesn't someone turn it off?"

Charlie Walsh lived next door to Ben and Maggie. Ben glanced at him as he made his way over, then returned his gaze to the hill above the village. The hulking shape of the hospital was visible as a distant black outline in the centre of a faint yellow glow.

"I don't think you can," Ben replied. "I'm pretty sure you can only turn it off at the hospital."

"Then maybe someone should go up there and see what's happening?"

"Maybe someone should," replied Ben.

"All right then," said Charlie. "I'll come with you."

Ben stared at his neighbour. He wanted nothing more than to go back upstairs, wrap his pillow round his head, and wait for the terrible ringing to stop. But that was now no longer an option.

"Fine," he snapped, and strode back into his house to grab the car keys from the table in the hall.

A minute later the two men were speeding out of what passed for central Crowthorne in Ben's silver Range Rover, heading up the hill towards the hospital.

Behind the desk in Crowthorne's tiny police station, Andy Myers was trying to hear the voice on the other end of the phone over the deafening howl of the siren.

Crowthorne police station was rated Tier 1 by the Thames Valley Police, which meant that its front desk was staffed entirely by volunteers. There were twelve of them, mostly retirees, who took turns to field the small number of enquiries that came in from local residents – everything from minor incidents of graffiti and vandalism, to requests for advice on traffic accidents. The station was not manned overnight, but one of the volunteers was always on call. Tonight, Andy Myers had drawn the short straw.

He had dragged himself from the warmth of his bed when the siren burst into life, grumbling, stretching, and feeling every single one of his sixty-eight years. The space in the bed beside him was cold and empty; his wife, Glenda, had occupied it for more than

thirty years before cancer had finally claimed her the previous summer. Since then Andy, who had spent his working years in the brokerage houses of the City of London, had been looking for ways to fill the hole in his life that she had left behind. Volunteering at the police station was just one of the ways he tried to do so; he was also on the board of the local Rotary Club, an active member of the Village Green Association and secretary of Crowthorne Cricket Club.

He dressed quickly and made the five-minute walk to the station. He did not hurry; he was no more concerned about the possibility of an escape than Ben Dawson was. But there were protocols in the event of the siren sounding, and Andy Myers was a great believer in protocol.

He walked into the station's car park, wincing at the bellowing noise from the siren that stood behind the building. It was little more than a converted house, sitting at the end of a row of terraces. He unlocked the door and went inside, flopped down into the worn leather chair behind the desk, reached for the phone, and dialled a number.

The official response to a suspected escape from Broadmoor was twofold: it required all local schools to keep children inside and under direct supervision of staff until parents could arrive to take them home, and it called for the establishment of a ring of roadblocks at a ten-mile radius from the hospital. Crowthorne station had a single police car, an ageing Ford Focus that was sitting outside, so Andy's only duty was to call the Major Incident Response Team in Reading, and request instructions.

"Say again, sir?" he shouted, over the din of the siren. "You want me to do what?"

"Drive up there," yelled the voice on the other end of the phone. "Go and see what the hell is going on. We're sending units out to set up the roadblocks, but we can call them back if this is a false alarm."

"What are they saying up on the hill?" shouted Andy.

"No answer," replied the officer. "We think their system's crashed, or gone daft, or something. Get up there, talk to the duty nurse, then radio in and tell us what's happening. Clear?"

"Yes, sir," shouted Andy Myers, and hung up the phone.

He swore heartily, the way that had always made Glenda widen her eyes at him in warning, and grabbed the Ford's keys from the hook above the desk. He locked up the station, climbed into the car, and pulled out of the car park. As he reached the edge of Crowthorne, he flicked on the lights and the siren, even though it would be impossible to hear over the blare of the alarms. Andy pressed down on the accelerator and pointed the little Ford along the same road that Ben Dawson's Range Rover had taken, less than five minutes earlier.

Charlie Walsh fiddled with the radio as Ben drove, flicking from one station to the next, until Ben gave him a sharp sideways look and he turned it off. They drove on in silence, climbing the wide, shallow hill that dominated the countryside for miles around. Both men watched the light rising from the hospital compound above them, until the Range Rover sped smoothly round the final bend and Broadmoor lay before them.

It had been opened in 1863 as Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum, terminology long since considered offensive. In the modern era it had been expanded to the size of a small village, a sprawl of low concrete buildings and trailers, of metal sheds and covered walkways. But the main buildings, where the inmates were housed and treated, were the same now as they had been more than a hundred and fifty years earlier: squat, Gothic structures of orange-red brick and grey tiled roofs that revealed their original purpose. The buildings looked, in every way, like those of a prison.

Ben slowed the car as they approached the outer fence. The tall metal mesh, easily seven metres high, topped with razor wire and electrified along its entire length, marked the edge of the exclusion zone that surrounded the hospital; inside it, tall brick walls, security patrols, deadlock doors and barred windows were designed to make sure that no inmate got anywhere near the fence. If they did, there was a sharp, unpleasant shock waiting for them.

The gate in the middle of the fence was standing open.

It ran on wheels, dividing in the middle, powered by an automated system operated from the security control room. There was a small box beside the gate containing a telephone, but it was rarely needed; very few people arrived at Broadmoor unannounced.

Ben pointed the Range Rover between the open gates and drove slowly forward.

"I don't like this," said Charlie Walsh. "We should go back. Let's let the police deal with this."

"We're here now," said Ben. "We might as well take a look."

Beyond the electrical fence, the road rose slightly to the main entrance of the hospital. The gatehouse resembled a medieval keep: two towers flanking a vast black gate, above which was set a severe-looking clock, fashioned in black and gold. The outer buildings of the hospital extended away from the gatehouse on both sides, merging into the looming ward buildings and the towering inner wall. The gatehouse gave the impression of being impregnable.

Unless the gate was open, as it was now.

Ben drove slowly through it, unease crawling in his stomach. The gates to Broadmoor were never open, and even if there had been a malfunction in the electric fence, they should never have been able to get this close to the gatehouse without being intercepted. That both gates should be standing open was unthinkable. And Ben

noticed something else. He pressed the button on the door handle that lowered his window, felt the mild night air flood into the car, and listened.

The siren screamed into the car, rising and falling. But beyond it, in the gaps, there was no sound.

The hospital was usually a hive of activity and noise, even this early in the morning. There should still have been the sounds of footsteps, the barking of the security guards' dogs, the chatter of the nightshift employees.

But there was nothing.

"What are you listening to?" shouted Charlie Walsh, making himself heard over the alarm. "What can you hear?"

"Nothing," shouted Ben. "Nothing at all."

He wound the window back up and gently pressed the accelerator. The big car crept through the gate; beyond it were two small guard posts, plastic boxes like the kind that stand at the entrance to toll roads. He peered into the one on his side as the car rolled slowly past. It was empty. There was no sign of movement, although there was a dark shape on the rear wall, like a tin of paint had been thrown against it.

"What about your side?" he asked. "Anyone there?"

"No one," replied Charlie and, for the first time, Ben heard the fear in his neighbour's voice. "There's no one here, Ben. Where the hell are they all?"

"I don't know."

They drove silently into the courtyard beyond the gatehouse. Modern administrative units stood on either side, but rising in front of them was the original Broadmoor building, a towering, imposing structure of dark orange bricks. There was a wide set of steps leading up to an ornate front door, and it was on these steps that Ben saw something out of place.

He stamped on the brakes of the Range Rover, throwing Charlie Walsh forward against his seat belt, causing him to yell out in alarm.

"What the hell—"

"Quiet," interrupted Ben. He flicked the car's headlights to full beam, illuminating the courtyard.

Lying on the stone steps was a man wearing a white hospital gown, much of which was soaked crimson.

"Oh God," whispered Charlie. "Oh God, Ben, I don't want to be here any more. Let's get out of here."

Ben didn't reply. He was leaning towards the windscreen, craning his neck upwards, awfully sure of what he was going to see. He heard his muscles creak, then saw it.

On the fourth floor, directly above where the man was lying, one of the windows was open to the night, its reinforced glass missing.

"He jumped," whispered Ben. "You can see the broken window. He jumped out."

Walsh leant forward, but his shoulders and neck were too wide to see where Ben was pointing. He slumped back in his seat, breathing hard.

"He's dead, Ben," he said, his voice wavering. "There's nothing we can do for him. We go home and we call the police and they can send an ambulance up here. Please, Ben, let's go. Please."

"Why is he just lying there?" wondered Ben aloud. "Why didn't anyone try to help him? Where are all the nurses?"

"I don't know!" screeched Charlie. "I want to go home, Ben, I want to go right now!"

Ben looked at his neighbour. The man appeared to be on the verge of a panic attack, his chest heaving, his eyes wide and bulging. And he was right, there was nothing they could do for the man: the puddle of blood beneath him was shockingly large. But everything

about the hospital felt wrong to Ben. It wasn't just the open gates; it was too quiet, too empty, and now one of its patients was lying dead in the courtyard and no one seemed to have even noticed.

He unfastened his seat belt, reached out and opened the door beside him.

Charlie let out a yelp. "What are you doing?" he shouted, over the deafening siren.

Ben ignored him. He stepped out of the car in something close to a trance, his mind racing with what he was seeing all around him, turning it over and over like a puzzle whose solution was dancing just out of reach. Distantly, he heard the passenger door open and Charlie Walsh step nervously on to the cobblestones.

"Get back in the car, Ben," he yelled. "Please, Ben."

The pleading in the man's voice brought Ben to his senses and he shook his head, as if to clear it.

"OK," he shouted, and saw Charlie Walsh's face crumple with relief. "Sorry, mate. Let's go."

He climbed back into the driver's seat and was pulling the door shut when the dead body stood up and looked at them.

It was a man in his late twenties or early thirties. His gown looked as though it had been dipped in dark red paint, and his left arm was pointing away from his body at an unnatural angle, but his face wore a wide, hungry smile and his eyes glowed the colour of lava.

Charlie Walsh let out a high, trembling scream, then pressed his hands against the dashboard as though trying to push himself backwards, away from the nightmare thing before him. Ben just stared, his eyes bulging, unable to comprehend what he was seeing. Then the blood-soaked figure ran forward, leapt on to the bonnet of the Range Rover, and smashed its fist through the glass of the windscreen.

Ben's paralysis broke, as Walsh screamed again. The noise of the

siren burst into the car through the broken windscreen, deafening them both. The man with the red eyes shoved his arm through the glass, tearing his skin to ribbons; blood splashed into the air as the man's fingers slid across Ben's throat, then lunged for Walsh's face. The man was yelling so loudly that he was audible over the din of the alarm, shouting words that were unintelligible to Ben's ears, his mouth working furiously, spit and blood pattering down on to the glass as he fought to reach the two men inside the car.

Then his grasping, searching fingers closed on Charlie Walsh's lower lip. With a primal roar of pleasure, the crimson, glowing monstrosity tore it from the man's face with a sound like ripping paper. Blood burst from the wound, spraying on to the dashboard and windscreen, and Walsh's screams reached a terrible new pitch.

Ben shoved the Range Rover's gear stick into reverse and floored the accelerator. Walsh was thrown forward in his seat and, for a terrible second, the patient's fingers gripped at his throat. Then momentum hauled him back, and he fell heavily on to the cobblestones of the courtyard. He was on his feet again instantly, bathed in the blinding gleam of the car's headlights as it hurtled backwards. Ben looked over his shoulder and saw the open gate approaching, dangerously fast. There was no time to correct their course; he could only hope that he had not turned the steering wheel since driving them into this terrible place.

There was a screech of metal as the car shot between the gateposts and a huge shower of sparks on the passenger's side as the panels tore along the brick wall. Charlie Walsh, who was sobbing between screams, wearing the look of a man who expects to wake up from a nightmare at any moment, leapt in his seat and almost fell on to Ben, who shoved him roughly back. Then the screeching stopped, and they were through the gate. Ben slammed on the brakes and

hauled the steering wheel around. The tyres smoked and squealed, then the big car was facing the right way down the road they had driven up, only minutes earlier. There was a thud behind them, and Ben glanced into the rear-view mirror as he shoved the car back into drive and floored the accelerator again.

The blood-soaked patient, who had torn Ben's neighbour's lip from his face as though it was less than nothing, had run headlong into the back of the car. There was a bright spray of blood across the rear window at the point of impact. The car leapt forward and Ben saw the man lying in the road; he seemed to have knocked himself out. But, as he looked at the fallen patient, he caught sight of something else that almost stopped his heart.

Dark shapes were dropping steadily into the courtyard, before moving quickly towards the gate. Ben pressed the window's button again and, over the howl of the siren, he could hear, very faintly, the crunch of breaking glass and a low, swelling roar, like the noise made by a pack of animals. He was still looking in the rear-view mirror as the car accelerated through the outer gate and down the hill; as a result, he didn't see the glow of blue and red emerging from around the sharp bend in front of them.

Andy Myers gritted his teeth and pressed his foot down more firmly on the accelerator. The siren was deafening, even from inside the car; the old vehicle's windows and doors were not as airtight as they had once been, and the sound was so loud the windows might as well have been rolled down. He was looking forward to finding out from the duty nurse exactly what was going on, radioing it in, and getting back to bed. There was a cricket match at noon and he was already glumly aware that very few of the club's players were going to be rested and at their best.

He turned the wheel gently, sending the car neatly round the bend that would take him on to the final approach to the hospital. Then everything in front of him was blinding light, and he had the briefest of moments to wonder where it was coming from before the Range Rover slammed into his car head-on.

"Look out!" screamed Charlie Walsh, the words mangled by his missing lower lip.

Ben dragged his gaze away from the rear-view mirror, aware that something had moved at the edges of his vision. Then red and blue light filled the windscreen, there was a sickening crunch of metal, and everything went black.

Ben emerged into a world of chaos.

His eyes flickered open and pain shot through his head as the siren pounded into it. Slowly, ever so slowly, he turned to look at Charlie Walsh.

His neighbour hung in his seat belt, his head lowered, his eyes closed. His face was covered in blood and a ridge of swelling was already beginning to rise across his forehead. As Ben watched, a small bubble of blood inflated and popped in Charlie's ruined mouth, followed by a second, and a third.

He's alive, he thought. *Thank God.*

Ben looked down at himself and felt relief wash over him; the big car's roll cage had held. There was a bulge behind the pedals where the engine block had been forced back by the collision, but it had not broken through; it would have crushed the lower half of his body to jelly if it had. Blood was falling steadily from his nose and he could see the dent in the dashboard where he must have been thrown against it. His head thumped with pain and he found

he couldn't think straight; he tried, but the thoughts drifted away from him, as insubstantial as smoke on the wind. He reached out with a shaking hand and opened the car door. He made to get out, but a sheet of agony bloomed up from his left ankle, and he screamed. Ben looked down, and saw that his foot was twisted almost ninety degrees to one side. The sight was so alien, so terrible, that he vomited into his lap, unable to stop himself.

Ben fumbled his mobile phone out of his pocket and dialled Maggie's number. He knew he should phone the police, but for some reason he felt unwilling to do so. Something had happened before the crash, although he wasn't sure what it was. Had there been another car? Had he *hit* another car? He held the phone to his ear as he peered through the broken windscreen. There were pieces of metal strewn across the road. He leant further forward, dimly aware that the car seemed to be higher than usual, that his view of the road was different, and saw a twisted hunk of metal lying beneath his front wheels. Ben stared at it blankly, until his eyes picked out a smashed pair of lights sticking out of the wreckage, one red, one blue, and everything flooded back to him.

The hospital, the man, Charlie Walsh's lip, the police car and—

He froze.

Oh God. The patients. The breaking glass. Behind me.

The siren screamed and roared, and he could hear Maggie's voice shouting down the phone, but could not make his mouth work to answer her. He forced himself to look into the rear-view mirror and saw a red glow descending the hill towards him, a pulsing, shifting mass of crimson that seemed to originate from a hundred pairs of glowing points of light.

"Run," he croaked into the phone. "Take Isla and run."