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

Bloodline

Written by

Kevin Brooks

Published by

Barrington Stoke Ltd

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

First published in 2004 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

This edition published 2015

Text © 2004 Kevin Brooks

The moral right of Kevin Brooks to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in any part in any form without the written permission of the publisher

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library upon request

ISBN: 978-1-78112-491-8

Printed in China by Leo

CONTENTS

1.	NO SUMMER IN HERE	1
2.	AN EMPTY MESS	11
3.	STUNNING	21
4.	JAMES BOND	32
5.	BLACK HEAT	41
6.	A DEAL	47
7.	THE CLEVER PART	55
8.	INSURANCE	64
9.	TWO OF US	73
10.	I DON'T KNOW	85
11.	LIKE DAD SAID	91

CHAPTER 1
NO SUMMER IN HERE

I don't know about you, but when I read a story I like to know what's going on right from the start. I don't need to know *everything*. I don't want to know about stuff that doesn't come into the story. But I need to know what's going on right from the first page. I want facts. I want to know who's who and what's what.

And then I just want to get on with it.

So if it's all right with you, I'll start with who's who.

First of all, there's me.

Name: Finbar Black.
Age: 15.
Looks: tall, dark, handsome, charming …

Oops, sorry. I was dreaming there. I'll do that bit again.

Name: Finbar Black.
Age: 15.
Looks: normal.

That's better.

Next, my dad.

Name: Alfred Black.
Age: 35.
Looks: boring.

Third, Dad's dad, my grandad.

Name: Ronald Black.
Age: 57.
Looks: dirty, mad, sad, greedy.

And last of all, Grandad's dad, my great-grandad.

Name: Albert Black, known to everyone as Grag.
Age: nearly dead.
Looks: hard to see. Never gets out of his chair and almost never speaks.

OK. So that's who we are. The what's what and the where is easy. It's Saturday afternoon of the last week in June, and the four of us are sitting in Grandad's front room, watching TV.

The time is nearly four o'clock, and we've been sitting here since lunchtime.

I'm bored to death. From outside I can hear the summer sounds of little kids playing in the street. In the distance I can hear chimes from an ice-cream van. Hip-hop beats boom from the radio of a car near by. I can imagine the hot sun, burning down from a bright blue sky outside.

That's all outside.

In here, in this dusty old room, the curtains are shut and the outside world feels as if it's a million miles away.

There's no summer in here.

All we've got is horse-racing on the TV, a roomful of stale air, and three living corpses – Dad, Grandad and Grag. They haven't made a sound in the last half-hour apart from the odd sly fart. They never *say* anything. They just sit there – Dad and Grandad are slumped together on the sofa. Grag is in his lumpy old armchair. All three are staring blankly at the TV screen. They seem to suck the life out of everything around them.

Dragging me down.

Are they alive at all?

I wouldn't feel so bad if they weren't my own family – my own flesh and blood. But they *made* me. And every time I look at them, I wonder if that's how I'll look in years to come. Is that how I'll be in the future? Thinking like that makes me shiver. I don't want to end up like them. I don't want to be old. I don't even want to *think* about being old.

'So,' I tell myself, 'don't think about it. Think about something else.'

Like what?

'I don't know ... anything. Think about Amy –'

No, I don't want to think about her.

'Why not? Just because –'

Shut up.

Those last two words are so clear in my head that for a moment I think maybe I've said them out loud. I feel a bit embarrassed, so I look up carefully ... Did anyone notice?

It's all right – they're all still staring at the TV.

Mind you, this lot wouldn't budge if a bomb went off. They don't notice anything.

Back to Amy. She's my girlfriend ... or rather, she was my girlfriend.

In fact, I've only ever spoken to her twice. The first time was last week when I asked her to meet me at the bus stop tonight. The second time was last night when she rang me up and told me she had something better to do.

I hear myself say, “Shall we open the curtains?”

No one replies.

“Dad?” I say.

“What?” he grunts.

“Can I open the curtains?”

“No,” Grandad says. He goes on staring at the TV.

“But it’s a really nice day –”

“Just leave ’em,” mutters Grandad.

I look at Dad.

“The sun’s too bright,” Dad says. “It glares on the TV screen.”

“Hurts my eyes,” Grandad adds.

“It hurts his eyes,” Dad repeats.

“OK,” I say.

And we all sink back into silence.

What am I doing here?

I always visit my dad on the last Saturday of every month. I don't want to, and I don't think he wants me to, but I've been coming here on Saturdays for so long now that we don't think about it much. It's just something that happens. It's what we do. On the last Saturday of every month, I get on a bus and rattle across town to visit my dad.

I don't have to visit him. I mean, it's not the law. My mum and dad aren't even properly divorced. They just don't live together. They haven't done for the last seven years.

I remember Mum said to Dad, "What's the point in getting a divorce? No one in their right mind is going to want to marry you, and I won't get married again for all the tea in China. Let's not waste loads of money on divorce lawyers. I'll stay here with Finbar and you can go and live with your dad. We'll leave things at that – OK?"

"But –" said Dad.

"*OK*?"

"OK."

And they didn't talk about a divorce after that at all.

It's out of habit that I'm sitting here now, at Dad's, bored stupid. I wonder how much longer I can stand it. I don't have to stay here. I can go whenever I want. I could go right now. The trouble is, I always stay for tea, and if I leave now, they'll all ask me questions –

"What's the matter, Finbar?"

"Why are you going now?"

"Where are you going?"

I don't want questions. Questions mean answers, and answers mean lies, and I can't be bothered to make up any lies.

But I don't want to stay for tea. We have tea around five o'clock, and that's almost an hour away. Then I've got to go to the chip shop, come back, dish out the chips, wait for everyone to finish, make a cup of tea, then *another* cup of tea. And then it'll be getting on for six o'clock. At last. That's when I can go.

Six o'clock?

'No way,' I'm thinking to myself. 'Six o'clock is two hours away. Two more hours of this? You must be joking. I can't sit here for another two hours. If I sit here for another two hours –'

Then –

CRASH!

"What was that?" Dad says. He looks towards the door.

"Back door," I say, standing up. "I think –"

BANG!

The sound of the back door slamming shut –

CLACK – CLACK.

And someone bolting it.

Dad turns to Grandad. "Are you expecting anyone?"

Grandad shakes his head.

And now we're all staring at the door. We're listening hard to the sound of footsteps crossing the floor and moving quickly towards us in the front room. Time seems to have frozen. No one

moves. No one says anything. There isn't time. The sound of the footsteps is all there is.

Clomp, *clomp*, *clomp*.

'It's probably nothing ...' I start to think.

Then someone dressed all in black and wearing a motorbike helmet bursts through the door and points a gun at my head.