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

Street Duty Knock Down

Written by

Chris Ould

Published by

Usborne Publishing Ltd

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Chris Ould has written more than eighty hours of television drama, including episodes of *Casualty* and over forty hours of the hugely-successful UK police drama *The Bill*, winning a BAFTA for one episode. Chris lives in Dorset with his wife and son. This is his debut YA novel.

STREET DUTY

case one: knock down

Chris Ould



For Rachel – at last, and without whom…

First published in the UK in 2012 by Usborne Publishing Ltd., Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT, England. www.usborne.com

Text copyright © Chris Ould, 2012

The right of Chris Ould to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

The name Usborne and the devices  are Trade Marks of Usborne Publishing Ltd.

Cover photography: Hooded teenage girl © Justin Paget/Corbis, Background photography © George Logan/Corbis

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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

ISBN 9781409547280 JFMAMJJ SOND/12 00055/1

Printed in Reading, Berkshire, UK.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The characters and events in this novel are fictitious. However, the law and police procedures – with the exception of the TPO training scheme – have been kept as close to reality as possible.

HOME OFFICE PRESS RELEASE:

“The Trainee Police Officer programme is a pilot scheme which will enable the Police Service to enrol and train new recruits from the age of sixteen. Training will last two years, combining Academy study with Street Duty placement at selected operational stations.

On completion of the initial two-year training course, Trainee Police Officers will serve an additional year as Probationer PCs before joining their selected station as regular officers.

We anticipate that the TPO programme will enable the Police Service to more actively engage with younger elements of the community, as well as provide a fast-track entry to the Service for recruits demonstrating outstanding ability.

The TPO programme will be conducted on a trial basis in England and Wales and applicants will be chosen by selective interview. It is anticipated that the first intake of TPOs will number fifty, divided between three areas of the country: the South-west, North-east and the Midlands.”

ENDS

FRIDAY

1

In the evening darkness it was hard to tell that Ashleigh Jarvis was crying as she hurried blindly across the uneven paving stones of the precinct. Her long dark hair straggled across her face and hid the tears. The racking sobs that welled up from her chest came silently, hard and choking.

But even if you couldn't tell that she was crying, you might have thought there was something odd about the way she moved. She hugged her arms tightly round her body, making her movements clumsy and off balance; but if you'd looked you'd probably have thought that it was just because she was cold. There was a chilly wind and her thin polyester cardigan clearly wasn't enough to retain any heat.

So, if you'd noticed Ashleigh Jarvis at all, you'd probably have seen just another silly fourteen year old who'd gone out without a coat – just trying to keep warm as she hurried to her destination. No one could really have known she was crying, or that she was hugging herself because it was the only way she knew to keep herself from collapsing in broken pieces on the ground.

No one did look at Ashleigh though – not closely; not with anything more than a passing glance. So no one stopped her to ask if she was okay. No one registered the fact that she was leaving bare footprints whenever she trod

on dry flagstones after wet ones, and no one thought she wouldn't pause when she reached the kerb at the side of the road. In fact, no one really noticed her at all – not until they heard the skidding of tyres on tarmac and the surprisingly loud thud that came almost simultaneously.

No one saw the impact, not even Ashleigh Jarvis. She knew nothing about it. The driver of the lorry saw her stumble into the road, but with only two or three metres between them she was immediately lost from sight below the level of his windscreen, and by then it was too late.

Even by standing on the brakes the driver was unable to stop the truck for another twenty metres, and by that time Ashleigh Jarvis was lying bleeding and unconscious in the gutter behind him.

She was no longer hugging herself though, and perhaps that's why she looked as if she had finally fallen apart.

On the other side of the Cadogan Estate Charlie Atkins had his fleece zipped right up to the neck so that it covered his collar and tie. There was nothing he could do to hide the suit trousers and polished shoes below the fleece though; and nothing he could ever say to convince his father that choir practice didn't need Sunday-best clothes. All he could hope was that the darkness would hide what he was wearing if he passed any of the Kaddy Boys on the ten-minute walk to the church.

As yet he hadn't seen anyone, so perhaps this time it

would be okay. But even though he was off the estate, he was still alert – so when he heard the sudden thud and the crack of the shop window fracturing beside him he jumped and instinctively stepped sideways, away.

Even as he did so there was another dull thud, and when Charlie looked he could see that both impacts had been caused by a figure in a hoodie wielding a heavy ball-peen hammer inside the shop. The glass was starred in two places, with longer cracks radiating out from these points, but the window's refusal to shatter was clearly annoying the person on the other side of the glass because he was already bringing the hammer back for a third blow.

This time he put so much effort into the swing that his hood slipped back on his head and, a split second before the glass fractured again, Charlie saw the face of Tyler Smith, contorted with effort and concentration.

Wide-eyed, Charlie was transfixed by the weirdness of the scene. As he stared he became aware of other figures inside the minimart – at least two – and of a general noise of breaking and shouting coming from the open door. For a second he wondered if it was a robbery, but if it was, why was Tyler Smith trying to break the window from the *inside*?

Charlie was still trying to make sense of all this when he realised that Tyler's gaze was now locked on him through the crazed glass. The older boy was mouthing something unintelligible, but for Charlie the threatening gesture of his

fist was clear enough – he didn't want to be standing there when Tyler Smith came out of the shop. Quickly, Charlie swung away from the window and started to run.

Two or three minutes later, breathless and heart pounding, he vaulted up the church steps two at a time and fumbled in through the door as the organ swelled and voices rose in a few bars of "Everything I Need".

Reverend Michaels was just inside and he turned at Charlie's sudden entrance.

"Charlie? You been running again? How do you expect to sing for the Lord if you're always out of breath?"

"Sorry, Reverend," Charlie said. "I was— I didn't want to be late."

"Okay, well you'd better take a minute to catch up with yourself, then we'll start properly, okay?"

"Okay," Charlie said. "Thanks."

And as he started along the aisle towards the rest of the choir he was glad to be safely in the one place he knew neither Tyler Smith or any of the other Kaddy Boys would come looking for him.

2.

TAMLIN ROAD
19:09 HRS

Holly Blades was running. She was trying to keep up with PC Oz Sitwell, watching for puddles and kerbs in the darkness, dodging the other people on the pavement, and trying to pay attention to the radio traffic in her earpiece, all at the same time.

"*Delta Mike from Nine-Five. Re Gatemead Road. Confirm one injured party. Teenage female in collision with HGV. Urgent medical attention requested. Over.*"

"*Nine-Five, received. Ambulance service on way. ETA three to four minutes.*"

"*Understood. Three-One-Seven from Nine-Five, location please?*"

A couple of paces ahead Holly saw Oz Sitwell raise a hand to his radio without breaking stride: "Nine-Five from Three-One-Seven. We're on Tamlin Street now, Sarge. Two minutes..."

"*Received. Eight-Three-Two from Nine-Five…*"

Holly stopped listening in order to concentrate on running. Below her uniform beret her ponytail swished against the fabric of her stab vest in time with her strides. Even though she'd been wearing the bulky vest and heavy utility belt almost every day for the last two weeks they still seemed to weigh as

much as they had when she'd first put them on. Weren't you supposed to get used to them the more you wore them?

Oz cast a glance back towards her and Holly knew he was checking she was still there. She made an extra effort and pushed harder, catching up with him as they rounded a corner and emerged onto the main road. He hardly seemed to be breathing any faster than normal, but Holly knew he was a regular half-marathon runner, so this was only a jog for him.

"Warmed up yet?" Oz asked with a grin.

"Just a bit," Holly panted. Five minutes ago she'd been complaining about being cold as they walked their patrol across the Cadogan Estate. Not any more.

Oz gestured. "Just down there," he said.

Ahead Holly could see the blue lights of Sergeant Stafford's patrol car. It blocked half the road and there was a long line of stationary cars behind it. Others were just barely crawling past in the opposite direction, out of Weston city centre.

Holly and Oz covered another thirty metres at a run and then Oz put his hand out, slowing them to a jog, then a brisk walking pace for the last few metres. When Holly looked at him quizzically he nodded to the crowd of people ahead.

"Try not to turn up out of breath," he said. "Panics people. Get your breath first, then you can ask questions, yeah?"

Holly nodded. "Right."

"Okay, go on then." He gestured her to go first.

Holly hesitated. She couldn't even see over the crowd and

although her uniform made her look bigger than she was, she'd have much preferred just to follow in Oz's six-foot-two wake. But she was out in front now and, with Oz waiting, there was little choice but to go for it.

"Excuse me! Stand back please," Holly called out, trying to sound as convincing as she could. "Stand *back* please!"

For a moment nothing happened, but then a man at the rear of the crowd looked round, saw the two officers and stepped aside. A woman did the same and then, miraculously, the crowd was parting.

Perhaps they only saw the uniform, Holly thought – not the sixteen year old inside it – but she couldn't help feeling a pleasing sense of authority as she carved her way to the front of the crowd. And then she saw the broken figure in the road and the pleasure evaporated in an instant.

The girl was lying on the tarmac, shielded from the traffic by the patrol car. A foil survival blanket was draped over her body and Sergeant Eddie Stafford was kneeling beside her, one hand pressing a wound dressing to her arm, the other making sure her head didn't move. There was blood trickling slowly from the girl's nose and ear, but for some reason what drew Holly's attention most were the two bare feet she could see protruding from the survival blanket.

"Sarge…?" Holly said, uncertain what to do now.

Stafford looked up, first at Holly, then at Oz. When he spoke it was to Oz and his tone was urgent but calm.

"We need to get the ambulance through," he said and

nodded towards the traffic. “See if you can shift that lot and get it in, okay?”

“Got it,” Oz said and went off to deal with the vehicles.

Stafford looked to Holly.

“Anyone else here yet?”

“No, Sarge. I haven’t seen anyone.”

“Okay, come here.”

Stafford was in his late forties with short-cropped, greying hair. He had a reputation for being tough but fair – maybe tougher than he was fair when it came to Trainee Police Officers like Holly – but at least you knew he was the real thing: still on the street after nearly thirty years in the Job.

“Have you dealt with an injured person before?” Stafford asked as Holly moved closer.

“Yes, Sarge. Sort of.”

The “sort of” was an old lady who’d tripped on some steps and gashed her knee in the fall. All Holly had done was apply a gauze pad to the bleeding and stay with the woman till the ambulance came. This was different though, and Holly knew it.

“Right, come round here then,” Stafford said. “Kneel down.”

Holly did as she was told. When she was in position, Stafford took her hand and placed it on the wound dressing on the girl’s arm. “Press there, keep the pressure on. Use your other hand to stabilise her head. Don’t let it move, okay?”

“Yes, Sarge.”

“Right.”

Stafford straightened up with a grunt and stepped away, moving immediately to deal with the crowd of onlookers and speak to the man who was sitting on the kerb some metres away: the driver of the lorry.

Holly looked down at the girl’s face. Her skin was pale, almost grey, and streaked with make-up. A purple-pink swelling from the collision was already distorting her cheekbone and right eye.

What was she? Holly wondered. Thirteen? Fourteen, maybe? She seemed very frail, very damaged and only the weak bubbling of blood at her nostril gave any sign that she was still breathing.

“It’s all right,” Holly said to the girl. “My name’s Holly. You’ll be okay.”

Then, in the distance, she heard the two-tone siren of an ambulance. It was getting closer.

“That’s the ambulance,” Holly told the girl. “They’ll be here soon. Don’t worry.”

On the damp tarmac the girl didn’t move.