

1

Happy Birthday

'Listen to that!' hissed the nurse to the young man lying in the bed as the thunder rumbled ominously around them. The lights in the radiography department flickered for a moment, and the nurse swallowed. She hated thunderstorms. 'It's a good job we're safe and warm in here, and not out there! I hope it finishes before I go off shift!'

The lad didn't answer, no surprise really considering he was in a coma, and had been for two days. Smiling sadly the nurse tucked the blankets under his chin. The poor lad was only four years younger than she was. The lights flickered again, and the lightning flashed through the windows.

'Get a bloody move on!' she murmured impatiently. It was creepy being in the waiting area with only a half-corpse for company at this time of night, even without the weather, but the consultant would insist on the lad having the MRI scan now! Forty-five minutes it would take, and the clunking noise the scanner made always gave her the irrites! She tried to turn her thoughts to more practical things. That catheter needed emptying; the boy's pad needed changing, too, but that would have to wait until they returned to the ward. No way was *she* changing it! She was due off duty in an hour. One of the night staff could do it.

At last the radiographer, annoyed at being asked to do a scan this late in his shift, put his head out of the door.

'OK, we're ready. Wheel him in.'

Another flash of lightning and flicker of lights! Thankfully the nurse kicked up the brake, and pushed the bed into the room where the MRI scanner was waiting to receive its latest victim, just as the lights decided to go out altogether.

He ran.

If there was one thing Ash Tennant could do well it was run; in fact he was the best runner in the school, and had proved that in football practice. Mr Connor said he had a good chance of being selected to play on the right wing for the A team, an honour for a fourteen-year-old, since the average age of the A team was sixteen. It was a buzz, out-running and out-playing the lads who had been tipped to make the first team, but it hadn't made him any friends. Ash had been at Clapham Road School for six months, and had become a favourite with the bullies. He was an easy target, coming to the school after half-term from another city, talking with the wrong accent, being small for his age, and wearing a hearing aid, which earned him nicknames like 'Deffo', 'Ear Wax', 'Dumb and Dumber' and 'Jeff'.

He hated that bloody hearing aid! When he was nine he'd had a bad ear infection, leaving him partially deaf, and he had been stuck with it ever since. He didn't have a speech impediment, nor did he have to lip read or use sign language, but he did have trouble if people didn't speak clearly, so he had no choice but to wear it at school where the Liverpool accent was sometimes so broad he had trouble understanding what was being said. It meant he always had to sit at the front of the class. Dickheads like Lucas Jessop would shout slowly at him like he was thick. Out of all the kids at school Ash hated Lucas Jessop the most. He fantasized about killing him and his mates Jase Batten and Darren Finlay. One day those bastards were gonna get what was coming to them!

And so was Lucas Jessop's moronic brother, Lee Jessop.

Yeah, Ash could run, but he wasn't Superman; he couldn't run faster than Lee Jessop's souped-up Ford Fiesta! He put one hand against the wall outside the Feathers pub on the corner of Fraser Avenue to steady himself and catch his breath, glancing up in time to see a white car swerve round the corner: Lee Jessop and his crew! The screeching brakes and the *thump-thump-thump* of the bass from the Fiesta's sound system made Ash's bad ear ache.

Ash found his legs again, and darted into the pub.

'Hey!' Feeling a pull on his hoodie he found himself facing a large man with a bald head. 'Cheeky little swine, you shouldn't be in here!' Unable to hear the man's words properly through the hubbub of the jukebox, and the protests of a man whose pint he'd just knocked over Ash kicked out and wriggled free. 'OW! You little sod...!'

Ash disappeared into what he thought were the toilets, stopping short when he realised he was standing at the top of a very steep flight of stairs. The door he was holding open with his backside allowed only enough light for him to see the first few steps; it was pitch black from then on. He could sense Jessop's gang getting closer, so he shot down the stairs, missed his footing, and eventually landed on the cold concrete floor below, banging his head as he did so.

'Shit!' he groaned, before passing out.

He came round in time to feel himself being lifted and rested onto something soft. A bulb was swinging from the ceiling, its light shining in his face, and natural light from two large open doors fell on the barrels in the corner: he was in the pub's beer cellar. People were gazing down at him, two young women in green uniforms – paramedics – one with blonde hair and the other with dark hair, and three men with worried-looking faces. Ash thought he recognised the man who'd grabbed his T-shirt, but he couldn't be sure. Behind them stood another, much younger man, tall, well-built and muscular, dressed all in black, with a pale, almost translucent face, and very dark eyes, grinning down at Ash. Who was he? Ash shivered.

'Can you tell me your name, love?' asked the dark-haired paramedic kindly as she covered him with a blanket.

Ash, remembering what had happened and feeling more than a bit hacked off about it, decided not to say. His arm hurt like hell, and he felt a right dickhead lying there with them all gawping down at him. The paramedic told him to lie still when he tried to get up. Just as well, because it wasn't just his arm that ached. There was also blood pouring from his head. Great, this was all he needed when the football trials were coming up!

'Will he be all right?' asked the T-shirt grabber anxiously. 'We didn't mean to scare him, it's just that he's under age, and he ran into the pub, y'see...'

'He's lucky,' interrupted the blonde paramedic. 'Just a dislocated shoulder, that's all, and maybe some bruising. It won't take long to mend, but we're taking him to A&E to get him checked over; he's had a nasty bang on the head, too. Do you know him?'

'I do,' piped up another man. 'He's Rhonda Tennant's lad. Don't know *his* name, though, she, er, she never said, like.'

'Do you know where she lives?'

Grimly Ash focused his eyes on the barrels in the corner of the room as the men sniggered. Most men in Belle Valley knew where his mother lived! And so did Lee Jessop's dad.

'Number ninety-four, Dorian Tower, just up the road from here. She's not in the phone book. They haven't been here long, about six months.'

The man said no more, obviously not wanting to admit he had Rhonda's mobile phone number.

'Thanks. We'll see if he can give us a contact number later when he's up to talking. He can't seem to say much at the moment, can you, sweetheart?' The blonde paramedic patted Ash's hand.

'I'm not your bleedin' sweetheart,' snapped Ash irritably, clenching his teeth in pain.

The paramedics laughed. 'Not much wrong with you, is there? OK, let's get you in.'

He was wheeled out through large wooden doors, passing a small crowd on the pavement, and put into the ambulance. Ash raised his head slightly, examining the faces in the crowd for any sign of Lee Jessop and his mates, but he couldn't see them or their car.

Once Ash was safely in the ambulance the doors were slammed shut, and he was left with the blonde-haired paramedic for company.

Even though they were kind to him at the hospital, X-rayed him, put his shoulder back in place, fed him a cheese and pickle sandwich and a cup of tea, and rang his mother – who didn't answer – Ash had had enough of being stuck in a cubicle wearing only a hospital gown exposing his back and his undies, with nothing to look at but plain blue curtains, vomit-coloured walls, and posters about hygiene and hand-washing. They'd told him he could go home as soon as his painkillers arrived from the hospital pharmacy, but that had been two hours ago. If he didn't go soon he'd miss his dad's call from New York.

He grabbed his clothes, stripped off the gown, and struggled to get dressed, no easy feat with one arm. The effects of the analgesic injection he'd been given wouldn't wear off for hours, and when it did he would need the tablets, but paracetamol from the chemist would have to do instead.

He rummaged in his pocket for the packet of cigarettes Rhonda had sent him out for. Not there. They must have fallen out when he was being chased. Pity, he could have done with a drag himself right now. Rhonda would go ape when she found out he'd lost them, but she could whistle if she thought he was going out to buy any more. Let her go and get them, and be chased down the street by Lee Jessop and his gang!

At last he managed to lace up his trainers, and moved slowly towards the curtains, peering out on the bustle in A&E: a nurse walking past with a bedpan, doctors chatting to one another, and porters ferrying patients in wheelchairs and trolleys. Someone was bound to see him sneaking off to those plastic double doors...

He was about to make a bolt for it when the doors in question flew back, and people ran into the room, pushing a trolley, holding up drips, shouting out to one another, giving instructions, and passing on information. Two were paramedics, three were girls in pale blue scrubs, another was a grey-haired policeman, and one was a young man with a stethoscope around his neck wearing a white plastic apron and blue surgical gloves, pressing down on what appeared to be a bundle of bloodied clothes, except the bundle had legs. There was blood everywhere, up the doctor's arms, splattered on the nurses' scrubs, all over the trolley, leaving a trail on the floor. The nurse who had been looking after Ash hurried to their side.

With the racket made by people shouting and machines beeping Ash strained to hear what the doctor was saying, so he turned up his hearing aid.

'Quick, call the crash team and warn surgery!' Obediently a nurse ran to the phone. 'And get a consultant here fast! His innards – they have to be pushed in! We need the crash trolley and – and as many hands as there are to help, or he'll die!'

They all disappeared into a cubicle, and the curtains were drawn immediately on the copper, who huffed in annoyance. Fascinated, Ash watched the drips of dark blood forming a large puddle on the floor under the trolley. Then the plastic doors opened again, and this time two lads were being pushed in wheelchairs, followed by two more coppers, who immediately went into a huddle with their grey-haired colleague standing outside the closed cubicle. Another doctor and nurse appeared, demanding details about the new arrivals, while two men and a woman ran past them, wearing dark blue uniforms. One of the men had a large red rucksack on his back.

'Crash team!' he shouted.

'In here!' replied a nurse, and they disappeared through the curtains.

Meanwhile, the lads who had been wheeled into the cubicle opposite Ash were both as white as sheets, and there was sick all down their fronts. Ash quickly withdrew his head. He recognised them: Lee Jessop's mates, Terry Hale and Cal Iles! What were they doing here? Curiosity getting

the better of him he forced himself to peep again, his jaw dropping when he saw Terry shaking in the chair, muttering to himself. Cal was crying. His grey jogging bottoms were wet at the crotch. He'd peed himself.

'It's all right, lads, we'll soon get you sorted out,' said the paramedic who had brought them in. He shook his head sadly at the doctor. 'We followed the ambulance which brought in that poor sod in there.' Ash could detect a high-pitched whirring sound, someone yelling, 'Clear!' then a loud *thump*. 'They were cowering against the wall in the off-licence when we found them. Bawlin' the place down, they were!'

'Did they tell you what happened?' asked the doctor, taking Cal Iles' wrist in her hand. 'My God, his pulse is nearly through the roof! No!' she snapped at the copper who had approached to say he wanted to interview the lads. 'Wait, please! They're in no state to talk to you now!'

'They've been unable to say a word,' the paramedic was saying. 'How's he doing in there?'

'It's not good. He's in a seriously bad way.'

'Tell me about it!'

A few moments later the doctor who had gone into the cubicle with the badly injured patient came out with the three members of the crash team, his face pale. An older man, smartly dressed, appeared through the doors with his shirt sleeves rolled up, and pulled a plastic apron from the roll fixed to the wall.

'Well?' he snapped.

'You're too late, sir, sorry. We did all we could, but he didn't stand a chance. He died a few minutes ago. I'll notify the family...'

'I'll do it,' the grey-haired policeman said. 'I know where he lives, and it'll give me great pleasure! Well, well, well, Lee Jessop dead, eh! That's one less piece of scum the world won't miss!'

Ash drew in his breath! *Lee Jessop dead!* Suddenly Terry Hale and Cal Iles began to scream, and the nurses ran to them to try to calm them down. At that moment Ash saw his chance, shot out of the cubicle, and legged it to the double doors.

Lee Jessop dead...Lee Jessop dead...

The words spread through Ash's brain like wildfire, and made his spine shiver with relief and unrepentant joy. What had happened to Lee Jessop to cause those horrendous injuries; what had turned Terry Hale and Cal Iles into nervous, quivering wrecks? Something to do with the off-licence, the copper had said. Jessop's crew were always in the offy, nicking booze, abusing the owner, Mr Singh. Something had gone on, but what?

'Who cares?' whooped Ash, earning him looks of bewilderment from passers-by. 'The bastard's *dead!*'

It was starting to get dark when half an hour later the bus arrived at the shopping centre in Belle Valley. Ash wasn't planning on heading home straightaway. First he went to the chemist to buy his paracetamol, then he wandered over to the off-licence which was cordoned off with tape, and crawling with police and onlookers. The crowd stood four deep. Ash pushed his way to the front to get a better look at what was happening. Mr Singh wasn't there, but his son was talking to the police, and two of the girls who worked in the shop were being interviewed by a policewoman. Maybe Mr Singh had been taken to the hospital, too.

Ash concentrated hard on the words spoken by the man standing next to him as he was telling his neighbour all about: '...a bloody great big cloud coming out of the shop door! Like a swarm of mad flies, it was!' The man dragged on his cigarette, blew smoke rings into the air, and carried on. 'Told the bizzies, like, only they didn't believe me, even when Mr Singh told them the same thing. Poor old bugger! Never seen anyone so bleedin' scared in all me life!'

'I think I saw it, as well.' This came from a young woman with a sleeping baby in a pram. 'I went into the offy to get some ciggies when them three scumbags came in, but as soon as I clocked them I went straight out again! Bad news, they are, and that Lee Jessop's a dirty git, always trying to feel up the girls! Anyway, I took our Lily over to the park to feed the ducks

when I saw a black cloud coming over the trees. I thought it was a fire at first, but it was dead weird, it looked like it had the shape of a face. Then it vanished.'

The crowd laughed. 'A face?' The large bosomed woman behind her gave her a playful nudge. 'What was in them ciggies, Cher, magic mushrooms? Or have you been swigging a bit of gin on the side?'

Giggling, the girl blushed to the roots of her peroxide hair. Meanwhile, the shop assistant who had been talking to the policewoman was crying now and being comforted by her friend; and two men, one of whom was trying to take shots with a big camera, were being pushed away from the shop by a copper.

'Oh, come on, mate, just a quick word for our readers!' said the man who was waving a recorder in the copper's face.

'You know the rules, mate,' said the copper. 'You have to wait for an official press statement.'

'Tell us about the lad with the injuries, then, how's he doing? We can't get anything out of the hospital...'

'He's dead.' Ash's voice rose into the air. 'Lee Jessop's dead! His innards were everywhere! I saw them all over the floor!'

There were gasps of horror.

'It's true,' said Ash defiantly over the hubbub. 'He's croaked it!'

'Say that again, lad!' The recorder was shoved under Ash's nose. 'Lee Jessop his name was? Innards everywhere, you say? Dead, is he? How do you know?'

The camera was pointed directly at him, but before his picture could be taken Ash turned away, and covered his head with his hoodie. The last thing he wanted was his face plastered all over the papers, and for Lucas Jessop to come knocking on his door. Lucas idolised Lee.

'Holy Mother of God!' The woman who had nudged Cher crossed herself. 'His poor mam! It'll kill her!'

'He was a bit of a bell end, like, but there was no real harm in him!' sobbed Cher.

'Lee Jessop was a piece of shit!' scoffed Ash.

He ducked away from the swiping hand just in time. Its owner growled that it was wicked to speak ill of the dead, and suddenly everyone was shouting abuse and jostling Ash. Excited by all the chaos a small dog strained at its leash, barking furiously at him. Ash struggled free and started to run. A few of the men chased after him, but even with his bad arm Ash was too fast for them.

By the time he reached the Feathers pub where he'd had his accident Ash was safe. Puffing with relief he slowed down, and walked from the pub to the end of the road from where he could see the block of flats he'd moved to with Rhonda, his mother, only six months before. He spat in its direction, hating every inch of the place. In the short time he had lived in this area of Liverpool he had got to know his way around pretty well, because he didn't choose to stay in the new flat all that much. If he wasn't at school he was out, hanging round the shops, or at the park watching the kids playing football. They never let him join in, even if he was a good player; he was that weird kid with the funny accent from that place down south: Bristol. The fact that Rhonda was from Liverpool didn't matter to them, he was still an outsider.

The only time Ash was really ever at the flat was to go to bed. His mum didn't want him there when she had her male friends in, anyway, and probably wouldn't even notice if he stayed out all night, usually because she was often paralytic with gin or high on crack. Tonight, though, Ash was going to get a birthday call from his dad. Lloyd Tennant was due to ring at six o'clock UK time, in ten minutes! Ash picked up the pace and started to run again. He wanted to answer the phone before Rhonda did.

When he reached Dorian Tower Ash noticed the lifts were out of order again, so he proceeded to climb the four flights of graffiti-adorned stairs up to his flat, humming the lyrics to a song by one of his favourite bands while trying to ignore the stench of cigarette ash, stale beer and pee. He paused when he reached his landing to look at the neighbouring Rhodes Tower

where the Jessops lived. No sign of a police car yet. What wouldn't he have given to see the looks on their faces when they were told about Lee's death!

'Best birthday present ever!' he muttered, putting his key in the front door lock. 'Made my bleedin' day, that has! Mum! It's me!'

No answer. No sound from the living room or the bedroom, either, from what he could tell. Rhonda never usually brought men back to the flat until well past ten o'clock at night, anyway. She didn't get on with the other women on the block, so it wasn't likely she had gone visiting or food shopping, since that was Ash's job. There were only two places she could be, one was the pub, the other was on a street corner trying to get a fix.

There was another key on Ash's key ring which opened his bedroom door. He had got into the habit of locking his room at night when Rhonda had company. He also locked it before he went out, because he didn't want her taking any of his stuff to sell for money to buy drink and drugs. His specially amplified mobile phone had been sold for twenty quid in the pub, his laptop – which he couldn't use without broadband, anyway – had been snapped up for fifty before they'd left Bristol. Rhonda was a dirty thief as well as a dirty skank, and Ash didn't trust her as far as he could throw her.

He grinned at the birthday cards he had received in the post that morning, proudly stuck to his wall with blue tack. He could have put them on the mantelpiece in the living room like other kids did, but seeing as they were from his dad, his family in Bristol, and his mates at his Bristol school Rhonda would only have taken the piss. She had no idea Ash was fifteen today. As usual she'd forgotten his birthday, not that he cared.

There was also the mysterious, exciting jiffy envelope lying on his bed, with the words: *Not to be opened until you've spoken to your dad* scrawled underneath the address in Gran's handwriting. He couldn't wait to open that, but like Gran said he had to speak to Dad first. Ash looked at his bedside clock. Only three minutes to go!

Shivering, Ash put his hand on the radiator: stone cold.

'Bet they've cut the bloody gas off!' he muttered angrily. A threatening letter had arrived from the gas board last week, and Rhonda had just tossed it on the floor with the other unpaid bills.

It would have to be the electric fire in the living room, then, just to take the chill off his bones. He was also wondering what he could have for tea. He fancied fish and chips, except he didn't have enough money to buy any.

The living room was in darkness. He felt along the wall and pressed the light switch down. His eyes were immediately drawn to the sofa where he saw her lying on her back, one arm draped across her middle, the other hanging over the side. Judging by the loud snoring she was still alive. Lying on the carpet was an empty gin bottle; Rhonda never bothered with a glass these days. Next to the bottle was a saucer full of stubbed out cigarette ends, and on the coffee table there were traces of white powder and a rolled up scrap of paper.

Tutting, Ash dragged her onto her side. Stupid bitch! Usually he would wake her, get some black coffee down her neck, try to sober her up, but right now he was glad she was out for the count; she wouldn't hear the phone when it rang, and he would be able to talk to his dad without her interrupting.

Nor could she complain if he raided her purse for some chip money, if she had any. Yeah, she had a tenner, enough to buy her a fish supper, too, if she wanted it.

He sank down in the chair and glanced at the clock. One minute past six; his dad was late. As he watched Rhonda's heavy breathing Ash wondered if they would have a landline this time next week. The final demand had arrived in the post that morning with the threat of having the line disconnected; and now that the gas had gone how long would the electricity last out? Rhonda hadn't paid a single bill since they'd moved in. Most of the money his dad sent went on drink and drugs; there would be no money for food at all if Ash hadn't lost his temper over it one time and threatened Rhonda with social services. Rhonda had walloped him for that, but since she didn't want social workers poking around asking awkward questions she reluctantly gave up forty

quid a week to Ash for the shopping. The bills were a major worry, though; if the phone was cut off Ash was going to have to find another way of keeping in contact with his dad now he had no phone of his own. He was thinking about this when he heard ringing coming from the hall. Dad! He ran from the room, snatching the phone from its base station.

'Dad?' he said hopefully.

'Hiya, son!' replied Lloyd Tennant. 'Happy birthday!'

'Oh, shit, Dad!' Ash tried hard to choke back his emotion. It was so good to hear his dad's voice again! 'I don't half miss yer!'

'I miss you, too, lad. How are you?'

'All right.' Ash decided not to mention his accident.

'How's your mother?'

Silence.

'It's OK, lad, I can guess how she is! I wish you'd come with me like I wanted you to! You'd love New York!'

'I told you, Dad, I can't leave her!' said Ash defensively. 'She's got no one except me, has she? I don't blame you for leaving, though. She's a right bloody bitch to live with!'

'Ash! That's your mother!' reproved Lloyd, but he couldn't disagree.

Ash had said the same thing the day his father had left. He *did* understand why his father had walked out; his mum had always been a difficult woman, but when her behaviour had spiralled out of control his dad had had no hesitation taking the job offer in New York. Ash had desperately wanted to go with him, but thought he couldn't live with himself if anything happened to Rhonda. Someone had to keep her out of the gutter! Once Lloyd Tennant had gone Rhonda, who had never liked Bristol, had decided to up sticks back to Liverpool, although there was nothing for her up there, either. Her parents and family had disowned her over a theft of a large sum of money some years ago, and she had no mates.

It had been hard for Ash to leave his home and his best mate Stu Mitchell. As for Gran, who had begged him to go and live with her, she had cried when he said he must go with Rhonda. He was a bloody mug, he told himself, but at the end of the day she was his responsibility.

He answered his dad's questions with a heavy heart. 'Yeah, I like school; yeah, I've got new mates...'

Yeah, it was all a pack of lies, but he didn't want his dad to worry any more about him than he was doing already. Clapham Road School was a dump, and most of its pupils and their families were well known to the police, including the Jessops. There was one lad everyone talked about a lot who had stolen a car, gone joyriding on the motorway, and badly injured a family on their way home from Scotland. A four-year-old child was now in a wheelchair as a result. Damien MacIntyre had been sent to a young offenders' institution for seven months for this crime as well as expelled from school, so he was one less nasty piece of work Ash had to encounter. Ash also knew Lucas Jessop's mate, Jase Batten, had been in the car with MacIntyre, and had served three months for being a willing passenger. There were also stories about a third lad being involved who had ended up in hospital, apparently still in a coma, but Ash had yet to find out his name. Ash mentioned none of this to Lloyd, or what had happened to Lee Jessop. He didn't let on his mum had just downed a whole bottle of gin, either. Yeah, the flat was OK; yeah, his life was all right in Liverpool...

Eventually his dad asked, 'Have you got the envelope Gran sent you?'

'Hang on, it's in my room.' Carrying the phone Ash went into his bedroom, and picked up the jiffy envelope from his bed. 'I haven't opened it. She said not to till you phoned.'

'Open it now, then.'

Ash put the phone down, ripped the parcel tape off the envelope, and tipped the contents onto his lap: a cheque book, a deposit book, an official typewritten letter, a leaflet, and a note in Gran's writing: *Happy Birthday from Dad and me xxx.*

'What is it, Dad?' he asked, bewildered.

'I got your Gran to open an account for you at Lloyds TSB,' Lloyd Tennant told him. 'All the details are in the letter. You've got three hundred pounds in there for your birthday, and your Gran has put in fifty! Your mother won't be able to get her hands on it; it's all in your name!'

'Three hundred and fifty quid? Nice one! What couldn't he get for three hundred and fifty quid! Then he remembered the bills; he could pay the bills! 'Thanks, Dad! Thanks very much!'

'No spending it on anything other than a treat,' said Mr Tennant. 'Promise? Ash?'

Ash hesitated. He really did want to buy himself something with that money, a new phone, maybe, or a laptop. Both! After all, like his dad said, the money was his. The bills were a priority, though. Then suddenly he had an idea, one which would solve the bill problem if his dad agreed, and one which would also send his mum into a rage when she found out, but stuff her...

'Dad, you know the child support money you send to Mum?'

'Yeah?'

'Well, could you put it into my new account instead of hers?'

There was a short pause before his dad asked why.

'It'll be easier for me to pay the bills, see,' said Ash in a rush. 'Mum – she forgets, and, well – we're a bit behind...'

If the child support money was paid into his account Rhonda wouldn't be able to get her hands on it to spend on herself, but so what, let her use the money her men friends gave her for her fixes instead. It would also give him some control, not to mention dinner money for school.

'You don't have to say any more, Ash,' said his dad angrily. 'I'll get in touch with my solicitor and the Child Support Agency. Any sign of trouble from her, and will you promise me something?'

'What?'

'Call me, and I'll get you a one way ticket for New York without delay. Look, I have to go now; but get something nice with your birthday money, yeah?'

'Too right!'

'Speak to you soon, then. Love you, Ash!'

After ringing off Ash stared at the phone, and imagined he was back where he was happiest in Bristol with his dad and his gran and his best mate Stu. When he looked out of the window and saw the lights twinkling from the flats in Rhodes Tower he wondered if he should hold on to that dream. One wish had come true today: Lee Jessop was dead! Then his stomach rumbled, and he decided it was time he went out for those fish and chips.