

Single-Crewed: My Life as a Police Officer

Sample chapter:-

CHAPTER 1

December 2005 – Lincoln north

It was just a regular, normal shift, just like the hundreds of others that I had done over the last eight years. It was a dark, damp, and chilly December evening, and I was driving my patrol car; cruising around the streets of a housing estate in north Lincoln. Through the windscreen, I could see the glint of ice beginning to form on the road's surface, illuminated by the occasional passing vehicle. It was starting to get cold, but within the car, I was toasty-warm. The heater was churning out tepid dry air, and I was wearing my full uniform; white shirt and tie (there were no comfy polo shirts back then), black work-wear trousers (acquired from my time on the riot squad – PSU team), a chunky police-issue fleece, and my bulky body-armour. Over the top of this, I wore a fluorescent yellow blouson-style waterproof jacket, allowing access to the utility belt that I wore around my waist. And on my feet, I wore my Hi-Tec lightweight combat boots. But sitting in the car was not a comfortable experience. My body-armour rose up, pressing against my throat, and constricting my movements. My CS spray dug into my hip, my extendable baton caught on the seatbelt to my left, and my rigid-handcuffs rested across my lower back, aggravating my extensor muscles. Somewhere in the car was my police cap; probably tossed on the back seat along with my file of tickets, statement sheets, and my ever-increasing list of “routine” jobs that needed to be done. Although *single-crewed*, the car was not silent; there was the ever-present chatter of the two radio systems. One fitted within the car's dashboard, the other, my personal radio, constantly transmitting directly into my ear-piece in my left ear. Although late in the shift, I was alert; monitoring the radio reports, constantly scanning the streets left to right for known suspects, suspicious behaviour, or vehicles needing to be stop-checked.

Having completed my last priority job moments earlier, I was in transit to an address where a burglary had occurred two days before. It was a low priority job, one that had been allocated to another officer when it first came through to the Control Room, but which, due to other more pressing commitments, had been pushed further and further down the list of jobs to be done. Having not been completed by the end of their shift, it was reallocated to their successor (who was also unable to complete it due to higher priority incidents), and finally, two days later, I had received it. I knew I would get a frosty reception from the home-owner, and who could blame them, having reported a crime to the police, but having received no response until two days after the event! It was an indication of policing at that time; too few front-line officers, and too large a workload. Priorities had to be set, and as a result, someone had to suffer - in this case, the poor home-owner.

As I headed for the address, my mind wandered. This was my *last week* as a police officer. Only another 3 or 4 shifts left to complete. I had to attend Magistrates Court in Lincoln on my last day, to give evidence in an assault case from months earlier, but after that I was a free man. I had made arrangements to fly to The Seychelles in the Indian Ocean in the

New Year, to spend three months SCUBA diving, working on a conservation project. Excitement was already building towards my impending departure date.

But that was for the future. Suddenly the radio sparked into life.

"November-Romeo-Five-One, are you available for a domestic in your area?"

"Yes. Yes. Go ahead," I said.

"November-Romeo-Five-One, yeah, we're getting a report of a violent domestic coming in at *such-and-such* address. Can you attend as a matter of urgency? Reports of persons injured."

"All received. Making way."

I turned on my blue lights and activated my sirens as I increased speed, heading for the address. I needed to take care on the greasy road surface, what with ice starting to form. My mind was working at a hundred miles an hour. What would I find when I got there? Had the domestic finished already? What were the details of the offence? Over the din of the sirens I radioed Control,

"Control from Five-One."

"Go ahead Five-One."

"Yeah, re this incident, has there been any previous at the address? Any mention of weapons used?"

"Just checking...No, no previous at that address, and no weapons reported. Update on arrival please."

"Will do. November-Romeo-Five-One out."

The address was not far away, and I arrived within minutes.

"Control, Five-One AT."

"Received."

I exited the car into a residential street, a mixture of semi-detached and terraced houses with small front gardens, each separated from its neighbour by low wooden fencing. This was not an affluent area; the houses were run-down, the gardens littered with discarded rubbish and dumped children's toys. At least the street lighting was working here; I could clearly see a group of 5 or 6 people crowding around the front door-step of one of the houses.

As I approached, the noise from this group increased. There was clearly a lot of anger here; directed towards whom, I did not know. The crowd parted, and sat on the step was a middle-aged woman, huddled forward, her head in her hands, rocking slowly, and shaking from head to foot. She was crying hysterically, the crowd trying desperately to comfort her. As she looked up towards me, I could see a pleading in her eyes. Her entire face and shoulders were covered in fresh, dripping blood, but she was unable to speak, an incomprehensible babble being emitted from her mouth.

I asked what had happened, but got no reply. Instead, one of the crowd shouted,

"They're in the house KILLING each other!" She pointed towards the house next door.

"Who are? What's going on?" I said.

"It's just the boys – they're drunk – go an' sort 'em out."

"Have they got any weapons on 'em?" I asked.

"Nah. Just go sort 'em out – quickly."

With that, I stepped over the knee-high fence into the next-door garden, and approached the front door, which was ajar.

"Control, November-Romeo-Five-One. Can I have an ambulance to this address? One I/P with severe head injuries. Suspects in adjacent property, reportedly still fighting. If there are any units nearby, can they make their way to the area as back-up? Not urgent at the mo, but might be soon."

“For your information November-Romeo-Five-One, all units are currently committed, but I’ll try and free someone up.”

“Received. I’m entering the property now.”

Not knowing what I was about to walk into, I drew my extendable baton, and ratcheted-out the shaft to form an 80cm length of hardened steel for my defence. I edged towards the door, pushing it open with the toe of my boot, my baton in its stand-by position against my right shoulder. Beyond, lay a short hallway with an open door to the right leading into a cramped living room. There was loud shouting and crashing noises coming from this room so I approached tentatively.

As I peered around the wooden door frame I was shocked by what I saw. Within the room were an older man and two younger men, in their 20’s. All three were holding what looked like pick-axe handles, and they were using them to batter each other. Each person was covered head-to-toe in blood from numerous injuries, and there was blood-spatter adorning the otherwise immaculately decorated walls. As to what the argument was about, or who was fighting who, I had no idea; it seemed that all three were fighting whoever happened to be nearest at the time.

I took one step back, drew my CS spray and shook it vigorously for a few seconds to mix the CS particles into the propellant spray solution. With this canister in my right hand and my baton in the left, I entered the doorway. I pressed the red “emergency” button on my radio, requesting *urgent* back-up, and creating an open channel through to the Control Room.

“POLICE! Put the weapons down and stand against the back wall NOW.” I roared.

All three stopped hitting each other and stared at me with a confused, dazed look on their faces.

“I said drop the weapons now.”

They glanced at each other quickly, before looking back at me with a sneer on their faces.

“Let’s get ‘im. Fucking copper.”

They moved towards me, pick-axe handles raised as if to attack.

“CS spray – stand back or I’ll use it.” I cried, but they took no heed.

As the older man neared, I fired a burst of CS at him, hitting him straight between the eyes. He dropped his weapon, clutched his face, and screamed in pain as he dropped to his knees. The first of the younger men was just behind him, and had to step to the side to get past his dad. As he did so, I fired a second burst of CS which hung in the air like a cloud. He inadvertently stepped into this curtain of gas, taking the full brunt in his face, but still he advanced. I stepped forward and used a two-handed push to shove him backwards such that he tripped over his prone father and hit the ground heavily with his back.

By this time, the third man was too close to use CS. He swung his weapon at me, but I saw it coming and managed to avoid the impact. In the ensuing chaos, I managed to swap my baton to my right hand, and struck him hard on the upper arm causing him to lose his grip on the weapon. But still he tried to attack me, this time with his bare hands. I struck him a second time with my baton, the blow glancing off his shoulder into his neck, and then a third time to the outside of his thigh, causing him to drop to one knee. From this position, it was relatively easy to get my handcuffs on him, securing his arms to the rear, and pushing him onto the ground, on his right side.

I called Control using my radio.

“Control, November-Romeo-Five-One...”

“Go ahead. Are you OK? You transmitted over the radio.”

“Yes, yes. Three in custody. CS deployed, and baton used. Urgent assistance required, all three are aggressive and violent, and I’ve only got one set of cuffs!”

“Out to you...Anyone free, officer requires urgent assistance?”

No reply. Total radio silence!

“I say again, officer needing urgent assistance.”

“Yeah, from Seven-Four, we’re double-crewed, but we’re dropping off a van at the moment. ETA 20 minutes.”

“Received.” Control replied. “Any other units?”

Silence again. A few seconds later,

“Control from Sierra-Eight-Three – I’m turning out from the station with the Inspector. We’ll be with you in five.”

“Thanks for that Sarge.” I replied.

I went through the official routine of formally arresting all three men, cautioning them, and warning the two who were not handcuffed that if they tried to escape or attack me again, I would have no hesitation in using my baton on them. And I waited for my back-up to arrive. The fact that I was single-crewed and had to deal with three violent offenders on my own, and the fact that when I requested support, nobody was available; were both indications of the problems facing all UK police forces at that time. But this was not an isolated incident. With the increase in workloads and the decrease in resources, this was happening time and time again, all over the country. I was lucky, I had eight years of experience to fall back on, but what might have happened had a newbie been dispatched to the incident?

But things had not always been like that. When I started out in the police, morale was higher, we were still short of numbers, but we acted more like a team, we used initiative, and when a difficult situation was anticipated, we did not wait to be dispatched; we dropped what we were doing and got to the scene as fast as humanly possible.

Where had things gone wrong?

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Come with me as I take you back to the beginning, back to the start of my career in the police. Experience the highs and the lows of life as a police officer, and see how things used to be in the good-old-days...

If you enjoyed this excerpt from my book, the entire story is available from Amazon Worldwide in Paperback and Kindle E-Book formats.

Alternatively, you can access further information on this (and other) books, and click through to the sales page via my website at:-

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Also by the author:-

Book #1 in “The Memoir Series” – **Beyond the Waves: My Royal Navy Adventures.**

As a child, the author dreamt of action, adventure, and foreign travel. At the age of 20, he took the first tentative steps towards achieving those goals; he joined Her Majesty’s **Royal Navy** as an Artificer Apprentice.

Beyond the Waves follows his progress from a naive recruit at HMS Raleigh, to a Petty Officer Weapons Engineer in charge of his own section aboard the aircraft-carrier, HMS Invincible.

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Both books are available via my website (above), or from Amazon Worldwide.