# Stone Cold

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Stone Cold
by Robert Swindells
Chapter 1
You can call me Link. It is not my name but it’s what I say when someone asks. I am a homeless boy and I live on the streets. I feel like an invisible person because no one looks at me.

Daily Routine Orders 1
Shelter. Yes I like that name. It means something that is safe. That’s what all the homeless people want and I am here for them.

Chapter 2
I was born on March 20th 1977 and my dad left home when I was young. My mother met another man. His name was Vince and he came to live with us and Carole, my older sister. Vince became my ‘step-father’ and he said I can call him ‘Dad’.

But Vince is a horrible man and I don’t call him ‘Dad’. He drinks too much beer, he speaks rudely to my mum, and he is always angry with me. Something bad happened between Vince and Carole so Carole left home. Mum was different too and I didn’t feel close to her. I left school and had five GCSEs but I could not get a job. Vince was not happy. One day I came home and he had locked me out of the house so I had to sleep at Carole’s house.

Vince started to hit me and so I decided it was better to leave the house and to be homeless than to live with him.
**Daily Routine Orders 2**
I like my new name. Good morning, Shelter, I say to the mirror in the bathroom. Soon it will be time to find some **recruits**.

**Chapter 3**
I was very unhappy in my town because I **felt embarrassed** when my friends saw me **begging** for money.

Being homeless is very **uncomfortable** and very **dangerous**. There is nowhere **soft and warm to sleep**, there is no money to buy food and it is not **safe**. Other homeless people try to **steal** your things.

**Daily Routine Orders 3**
I went out tonight. I saw lots of homeless people. One asked me for money. I do not like the way these people look. I think they make the area look bad. I want to turn these young people into **soldiers**, into men. I will get homeless people off the streets.

**Chapter 4**
I felt very sad and **depressed** because I could not find a job because I was homeless. I had no money.

At Christmas time I went back to Carole’s house but it was not a happy **celebration**. Mum and Carole gave me a **sleeping bag** for Christmas. This made me feel bad. Also, Vince was rude to me because I was
homeless. He called me names like ‘scrounger’ and ‘layabout’ to show that he thought I was lazy.

As soon as I got back to the streets, I was annoyed by an old drunk man. I gave him 20p and he went away.

Daily Routine Orders 4
I am now nearly ready. I have got a cat. I call it Sappho. People will think I am a good man because I have a cat.

Chapter 5
I decided to move to London and with the last of my money I booked into a cheap B&B (bed and breakfast) hotel. I needed to find some work soon. I only had enough money to sleep at the B&B for two weeks. I would be homeless again if I did not find a job.

Daily Routine Orders 5
I have my first recruit. It was a cold, wet night and I found him in a doorway. I told him I worked in a hostel on Plender Street but that it was full tonight. He looked sad. Then I told him he could sleep on the sofa at my house.
He came back with me and I gave him some soup. Then I ended his misery. Now he isn't cold and hungry, no one will miss him and the streets will look better.

Chapter 6
The landlord in the B&B asked me to pay for the next week’s rent but I could not afford it because I did not have enough money. The landlord was angry and aggressive. He grabbed my shirt and told me to give him the money.

I needed to move back out onto the streets. I felt very sad about this because last week I thought I would be able to get a job and things would be better. Now things will get even worse in the future.

Daily Routine Orders 6
If you kill someone when you are a soldier it is not murder but if someone finds me they will say it is murder. Killing is easy but I need to hide the bodies. I will put them under the floorboards.
Chapter 7
After I left the B&B I was very cold and hungry. I found a doorway where I could get out of the wind and try to get warm.

I needed to use the toilet so I went to the toilet in the station. I wanted to pay but I didn’t have the right money. I jumped over the turnstile without paying. The attendant saw me and was very angry. He tried to punch me but I ran away.

When I got back to the doorway, there was another homeless man there. I told him I was there first, but the man didn’t care and he wouldn’t move. Then he took the watch my mother gave me. I wanted to cry.
Daily Routine Orders 7

I need to be careful so the police do not find me. I will kill in lots of different ways.

I have a new recruit. She is a woman. I found her when she came out of a hotel. I told her I was a security guard and needed to speak to her. Then it was easy – taxi, Sappho the cat, dry clothes, soup, sleep forever.

Chapter 8

I met Ginger after the man took my watch. We shared a doorway and Ginger told me he had been homeless for six or seven months.

We fell asleep but the police woke us up at six o’clock so we went to an all-night kebab house. Ginger told me to be careful and never to tell anyone if I had any money. He said a lot of people hate seeing young people begging. Some newspapers say that the children begging are not really homeless. They say that they go home with the money and spend it on drink.

We found somewhere where we could beg for money. I looked at the faces of the people who were walking past us. Some people tried not to look at us; other people shook their heads and shrugged.

Later, we went to St James’ church and had a cheap cheese roll for lunch. I hated being homeless but it was nice to have a friend, a full stomach and to be in a café in the warm.
Daily Routine Orders 8
Two young homeless people asked me for money. I said no but I could hear them laughing. I never forget faces and next time I see them it will be funny for me. They will not laugh next time.

Chapter 9
I went with Ginger to Trafalgar Square. I started to beg for money, but it was very difficult because people gave me strange looks. I asked myself why people can feel sadness in a painting but they can ignore a person who is begging and just walk away.

We begged for a long time. At the end, I had £3.81 and Ginger had £2.44. We went to buy some pizza. Then I bought some cigarettes and gave them to Ginger. I wanted him to stay with me. He offered me a cigarette and I took it. It was my first cigarette and I didn’t like it.

It is very hard to live on the streets. The wind is strong and freezing cold. You have to sleep on floors made from stone, tile, concrete or brick. They are always cold and hard.

I remember when my watch was stolen. Some homeless people have been beaten up by young men who were drunk. It is difficult to sleep because there is always the worry that something bad like this will happen.
It is always difficult to sleep because of the cold, hard floors. Sometimes I think about my mum and I miss her because I want to see her again. I don’t know if my mum misses me too. I remember when I lived happily at home, but I try not to think about it.

I went to an office to see if I could get any money from the government. They said I could have nothing because I chose to be homeless. I felt lonely and depressed and like an outcast, because I was different from all the other people.

I met Ginger and felt very sad because I knew I could get no money and it was impossible to find a job. He saw I was very depressed and said we should go to Captain Hook’s hostel because then we would be able to sleep in a real bed.

**Daily Routine Orders 9**

Three is a special number and now I have three recruits. That means I am a serial killer. If people find out what I have been doing, someone will make a film about my life.

I have cut their hair and lined them up in the cellar. Now I need to get them some boots.

I told the third recruit I worked at a hostel on Plender Street. I said there were beds there and it was free but first I had to go home. He came back with me. He said he had tried to get a job but there was no work. Then he went into the army but he hated it. That made me very angry. I hit him on the head with a tin of cat food. He looks a lot better now I have cut his hair and put him under the floorboards.
Chapter 10

Ginger took me to Captain Hook’s hostel. Captain Hook’s real name is Probyn. He bought six canal boats and now he puts 60 people in each one. It costs £3 to sleep there. When I walked in I thought it looked like the picture of a slave ship and it smelt horrible. Probyn took our money and his big Rottweiler dog growled at us. But it was warm and dry and I had a good night’s sleep.

Next morning we went to Camden Lock market and I looked at all the people spending lots of money on things they do not need. We went to some toilets where we could have a good wash.

Then three people came into the café where Ginger and I were having a cup of tea. Ginger did not tell me their names but they were his friends and they started talking. I felt a bit jealous because they have shared many difficult times together. They have shared experiences that they can talk about. I worry that if Ginger left me I would not know what to do.

Ginger asks his friends about someone called Doggy Bag. They say he has suddenly disappeared. No one knows where he is. I start to think about all the homeless people when they were babies. I think of their
parents and how upset and sad they would have been to know that their baby would one day end up homeless. I think about Doggy Bag and how he is so unimportant that he can disappear and nobody cares.

**Daily Routine Orders 10**
I saw the two boys who were laughing at me at Camden Lock market this morning. I am going to follow them and when they separate and are not together I will recruit them. I cannot do it if they are together because they will be too strong. So I will watch and observe my two laughing boys and then we will see who has the last laugh.

**Chapter 11**
The end of January was horrible. It was so cold that I nearly went back to Vince. I was always wet and cold. Because of this it was almost impossible to sleep. The wind was freezing and I was also really hungry. No one gave us money when we were begging. I was so cold I could not think clearly.

I could not get a job because all my clothes were wet and dirty. My hair was long and messy and I smelt bad.

Then it was February and the weather was a bit better. People started to give us money again. Ginger told me he was going to meet some of his friends. I felt lonely and waited for him to come back at the station. I waited for such a long time that I fell asleep and when I woke up it was after eleven o’clock at night. I went to look in all the places we slept in but Ginger was not there. In the end I used the last of my money to pay for a night at Captain Hook’s hostel.

**Daily Routine Orders 11**
Laughing Boy One. The job is finished and now I need to explain what I did.

I followed Link and Ginger and waited for them to separate. I only attack people when they are alone.

I stand outside the train station and wait. I can see Link waiting too but then he falls asleep. Then Ginger comes out of the station. I tell Ginger that I have hit Link with my car and Link is at my house and is badly hurt. At first, Ginger doesn’t believe me, but in the end he comes back to my house.
I took him to the settee where I had put a blanket. Ginger thought Link was under the blanket. I had even put blood on it from some meat that I bought. I hit Ginger when he ran to the settee.

That was Laughing Boy One. I went back to the station to find Link the Stink, but he was not there. I will get him tomorrow.

Chapter 12
The next day was a Friday. I looked everywhere for Ginger. In the end I went back to the station. I saw a man I knew who was selling the Big Issue. He told me that he heard Ginger talking and shouting with an old man about the hospital. He also said that when they were talking he heard the old man say, “Link has been in an accident”.

I could not sleep after this but the next day I saw the girl Ginger spoke to in the café. She doesn’t know where Ginger is, but she told me that she saw Ginger on Thursday. She thought he has found a job in another place. She told me her name was Toya but she went away quickly. I understood that she did not want to be friends with anyone because that makes life more difficult. If you have a good friend it is sad when they go away.

Later that day I was in a café and a beautiful girl came in. I knew she was homeless and a dosser but she looked clean and as if she had slept for a long time. I could not believe it when she asked to sit with...
me but I didn’t want to talk to her for a long time because I was going to be like Toya and have no friends. But then she said her name was Gail and that she needed help to live on the streets. I decided to stay with her.

**Daily routine orders 12**  
I made a mistake. I should have been looking for my next victim – Link. Instead, I went shopping for some army boots to put on the bodies of my other victims.

Now Link has a new friend. I will have to think of a new plan.

**Chapter 13**  
It is like being an outsider when you are homeless because you can’t do things that other people can do easily, like having a haircut or going to the dentist. There are many other normal experiences other people have that homeless people do not. It makes you depressed and sad because you are living outside the world around you – you are not part of it.

![image of boots](image1.png) ![image of haircut](image2.png) ![image of dentist](image3.png)

But I was very happy with Gail. She bought chips for us because she had money and I showed her a good doorway where we slept for the night. I felt I was normal again because when you are homeless you don’t feel like other humans; you feel more like a different species.

When I was with Gail I didn’t feel like an outsider. I was still cold and hungry, but I didn’t notice it as much. We decided to share all our money and we went begging in Trafalgar Square.

**Daily Routine Orders 13**  
I have now got seven recruits. I am going to get rid of all the riff-raff that’s making the country bad. This is my business and all my recruits can be happy. They are not hungry, and they all have a roof over their heads, and a floor as well.
Chapter 14
I was happy with Gail but it made me want to find a job so that I could get a house for us. I had two interviews but I didn’t get the jobs because I didn’t have an address.

One Saturday, a man came to speak to us. He said he was looking for his daughter. He showed us a photo – it was Toya. He wanted to find her. He said that someone had seen her with an older man and that she went into a house in Mornington Place with him.

We told Toya’s father that we would look for her and that if we saw her we would ask her to phone him. I wished that there was someone who loved me enough to try to find me.

Daily Routine Orders 14
A man knocked on my door last night. I looked at him from behind a curtain. He looked sad and angry and I thought he was related to one of my recruits. I didn’t answer the door.

I am always very careful to make sure no one suspects me. I use weak light bulbs so that people can’t see into the house from outside.

Chapter 15
Nick, the Big Issue seller, came to me and Gail and said that he saw Toya talking to the same man that he saw Ginger with. It makes me feel suspicious because both Toya and Ginger are now missing.

Toya’s dad told Nick that he went to the man’s house but that no one came to the door when he knocked. I was very worried about this and said we should go to the police. Nick said the police won’t care because Toya and Ginger are ‘only’ dossers who have probably gone to live somewhere else.

We decided to watch the man to see if he did anything. Gail said she had to phone her sister so I waited for her in the sun.
When she came back we went to the police because I was very worried about Ginger. But Nick was right. The police sergeant isn't interested and tells us that the police have already examined the case and found nothing wrong.

Daily Routine Orders 15
Ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha. That is me laughing because I have won.

The police came to my house. At first I didn’t want to open the door. Then I thought that if I was shy and caring, the police would think I am a nice person, and not at all crazy.

So I opened the door, and was very concerned about what has happened to these poor people. I said I had asked Toya to my house to give her some food but that she left at ten o’clock. The police believed me and told me to be careful and not invite strangers into my house because there is a bad person around. I tell them I will certainly be careful, but what I mean is ‘careful not to be caught by the police’.

I make sure I am respectful to the police, and make them feel very important.

Chapter 16

Gail left me to find out where Nick is living. While she is gone I think about how my life is much better since meeting her. But something worries me about her. Maybe she isn’t really homeless – she doesn’t seem screwed-up enough – she does not feel depressed or hopeless.

We went to watch the house where Ginger and Toya were last seen. We watched the house for forty-five minutes but no one came in or out.

We went back the next day and saw a man come out to buy a newspaper. I felt sure that terrible things have happened in that house, but the man who lives there looks very ordinary – there is nothing special about the way he looks.

We went away and did some begging but then it started to rain. I said to Gail that it was time to go back to Mornington Place but she did not
want to stand in the wet. She said she needed to do other things so I went to watch the house by myself. I saw the man who lives there and started talking to him. He asked me if I had seen his cat because it was missing and he could not find it. Then he asked me in and said he would give me something to eat and a warm coat that he doesn’t wear any more. I didn’t want to be rude so I went into the house with him.

Inside, I saw that the house is very, very tidy. I think that it is not possible that bad things could have happened here, and I start to feel more comfortable.

But then I see a watch on the man’s sideboard. It is my watch – the one that was stolen by that other homeless man. This makes me start to worry.

Then the man returns to the room. This time he looks different. His face is contorted, and I realise he must be the mad man, Shelter, who has killed Ginger and Toya. I start to panic.

Shelter suddenly moves some floorboards and shows me the bodies of the people he has killed. I know then that I must escape, and I kick the front window but the glass only cracks – it doesn’t break. Then Shelter throws me to the floor, my head looking into the hole where I can see Ginger’s body. Shelter is trying to strangle me, and I feel I am losing consciousness.

He lets me go for a few seconds while he goes to get some rope to tie around my neck. Just then the police cars arrive outside the house with their sirens screaming.

The police break into the house and drag Shelter away. Gail tells me that she came back, and when I wasn’t there, she called the police.
Then she tells me who she really is – she is a TV journalist who is researching homelessness. At first I feel so angry with her for not telling me the truth about her life. Then I realise that I am still feeling upset after the fight with Shelter so I say sorry to Gail.

Gail has to leave to go back to her job, but before she goes, she gives me a wad of banknotes, and wishes me good luck.

I thought about me and Shelter. Shelter will go to prison, where he will be warm, have a roof over his head and will get to eat three times every day. I am still living on the streets and often hungry. Shelter is getting better treatment than me.

Gail is going to make a television programme about being homeless. I hope that lots of people will watch it and feel bad about it. Maybe, if people know how bad life is for homeless people, things can be done to improve the situation. Maybe there can be other ways for people like me to live, other than sleeping on the streets.
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