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Very much my kind of book.’

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set in the Second World War. The Cobb Street
Commandos will stop at nothing – NOTHING – to
keep their home turf safe.’

Judith Eagle, author of *The Blitz Sisters*

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chaos of WWII must have appeared through the eyes
of a child. **Funny, cleverly written, emotive**
and educational. **A must for anyone curious**
about wartime London.’

Gavin Puckett, author of *Blanksy the Street Cat*

‘Pacey, satisfying-to-read, highly illustrated
series opener.’

School Reading List

**Tales
of the COBB
STREET
COMMANDOS**

TONY BRADMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEKSEI BITSKOFF

faber

First published in the US and UK in 2026
by Faber and Faber Limited,
51 Hatton Garden
London EC1N 8HN

Typeset in Gill Sans
Printed by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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

ISBN 978-0-571-38812-7



Printed and bound in the UK on FSC® certified paper in line with our continuing
commitment to ethical business practices, sustainability and the environment.

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Our authorised representative in the EU for product safety is
Easy Access System Europe, Mustamäe tee 50, 10621 Tallinn, Estonia
gpsr.requests@easproject.com

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

*For our grandchildren – Lily-Rose, Oscar,
Joseph and Zachary*

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In the darkest days of the Second World War,
Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany seemed utterly
invincible. His brutal armies crushed all opposition
and conquered most of Europe.

Only Britain and its empire stood between the evil
dictator and world domination. And among those
who fought for freedom against tyranny was a
band of intrepid kids. Their story has never
been told – until now.

**Prepare to encounter . . .
the Cobb Street Commandos!**

1

ALL TOGETHER NOW!

It all started with a bright new poster on the wall of a bombed-out shop.

James Arthur Wilson – Jimmy to his friends – was strolling down the street when it caught his eye. He stopped to take a look, even though he was late for school.

SPITFIRE WEEK, the poster said in big, bold letters. There was a thrilling picture of a Spitfire on it



too, the type of RAF fighter that had shot down so many German aircraft. The RAF had other, different planes that were great, of course. But Spitfires were fast, sleek and deadly, and Jimmy thought they were **absolutely amazing**.

He quickly read the rest of the poster with growing excitement. Apparently the aim of Spitfire



Week was to raise money so more of these wonderful planes could be built. The country needed as many Spitfires as possible, but it needed plenty of other stuff as well, like more guns, tanks and warships. That all cost lots of money, and the government just didn't have enough. So they were asking the nation to help.

Spitfire Week was due to happen quite soon and was being co-ordinated in Jimmy's district by the local council. You had to let them know if you wanted to take part – they would keep a record of who was doing what, and how much money was raised. At the end of the week there was to be a **parade** at the town hall. So long as horrible old Hitler, the German leader, didn't order a raid that day, Jimmy thought.



The poster said you could simply donate money, if you had any to spare, or buy some National Savings Stamps at your local post office. Other suggestions were to organise an event such as a concert and sell tickets, or put on your own parade and collect money from people who came to watch. These were things that could be done anywhere, the poster said – in factories, offices, high streets, even schools . . .

Jimmy focused on that last word, his mind racing. This was the **most thrilling** thing that had happened to him for a long time. The sun was shining down on the East End of London, and there were no German bombers in the blue sky. But Jimmy knew they'd be back, and he wanted them to be met by plenty of Spitfires when they came again. Spitfires that would owe their existence to him and



to the **secret force** he had created for just this kind of task. Jimmy smiled to himself and hurried on.

Oh yes, he thought. This was a job for the Cobb Street Commandos . . .

They were finally going to war.

It was usually dead easy to sneak into Cobb Street Elementary without being seen. Jimmy was often late, so he had done it many times before. He avoided the front gate, climbed over the back wall of the playground and slipped into the red-brick building through the rear door. After that, it was just a question of keeping his head down as he **crept silently** along the empty corridor to his classroom.

But today it seemed that his luck had run out. He was only a few paces from safety when he heard

a door creak open, and **a dark shadow fell** ominously across him.

‘Ah, good morning, James. So nice of you to grace us with your presence.’

Jimmy froze, then slowly turned to face the person who had spoken. Mr Grindling was Cobb Street’s ancient headmaster. He was tall, thin and bald, he always wore the same black suit, and he rarely looked



happy. Everybody knew he wanted to retire, but there was a shortage of teachers and headmasters because of the war, so he couldn't. Jimmy, however, thought he'd probably just been born **a misery guts**.

'Blimey, sir, you nearly made me jump out of my skin!' said Jimmy. 'Er . . . sorry I'm late, but there was a Jerry raid late last night and our street took a pasting . . .'

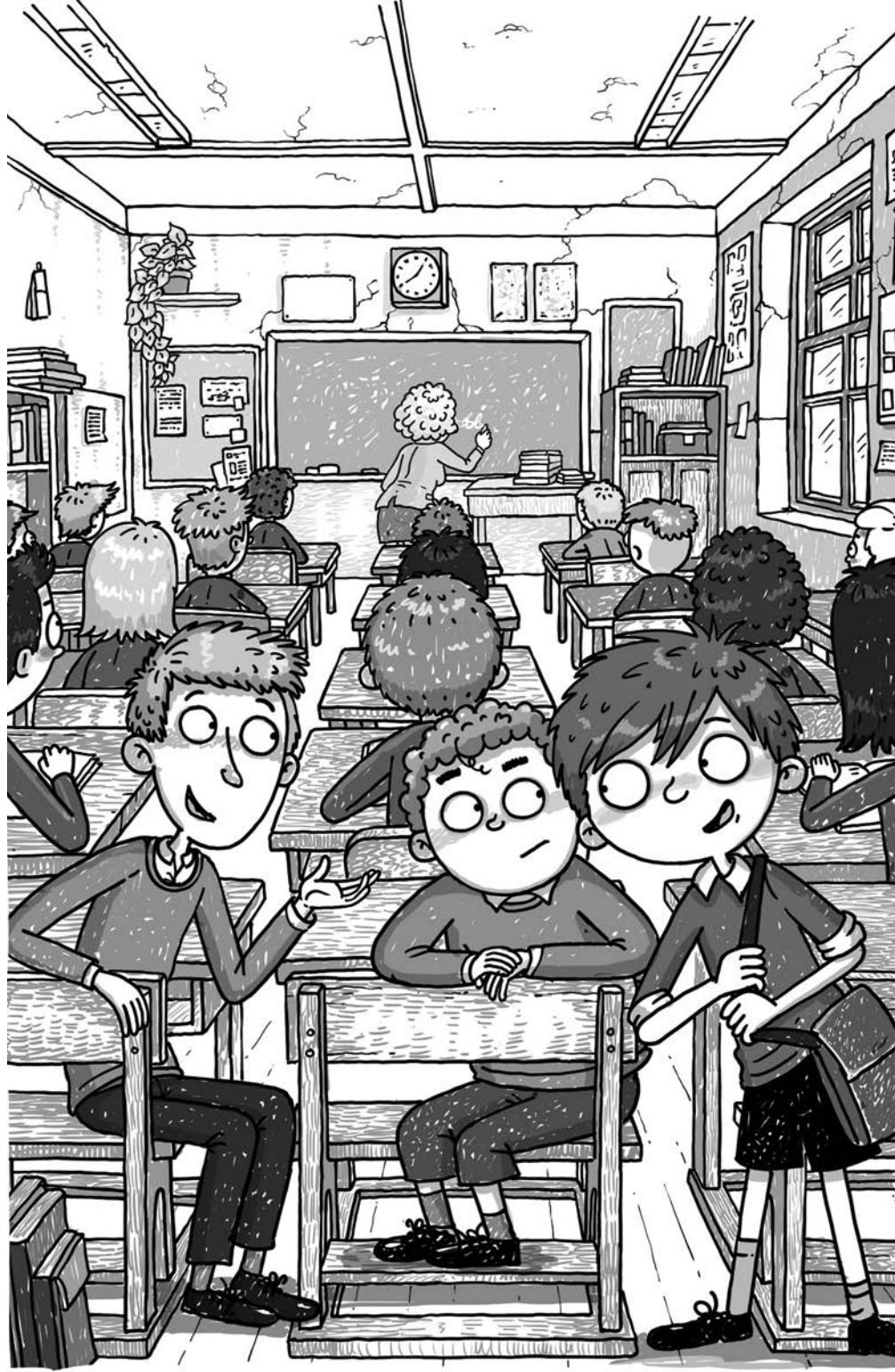
'Jerry' or 'the Jerries' was a common nickname for the Germans. Although Jimmy had heard grown-ups use much stronger words, especially during an air raid.

'Now we both know that's not true, James,' said Mr Grindling with a deep sigh. 'There were no raids on the East End last night, thank goodness. So your punishment is one hundred lines, to be brought to me by the end of the day. You will write ***I must not be late to school*** or tell Mr Grindling such appalling

fibs. Now run along and try to behave yourself, or at least keep the mayhem to something manageable.’

Jimmy shrugged and did as he was told. He would easily get his lines done during lessons. There were over forty kids in his class, and their tiny, grey-haired teacher, Mrs Rathbone, couldn’t constantly keep an eye on all of them – she certainly missed a lot of what went on. She *had* retired a few years before the war, then came back into teaching when it started, and she was probably older than Mr Grindling.

She was writing on the blackboard when Jimmy slipped into the classroom, and **didn’t see him**. His desk was at the back, next to those of his mates Bill and Stanley. Bill was short and stocky with a mop of springy ginger hair, while Stanley was tall and lanky, his blond hair sitting perched on top



of his head like a small furry creature. Jimmy was taller than Bill, shorter than Stanley, and his hair was brown.

They were wearing the Cobb Street Elementary uniform, but the word Mr Grindling used most often to describe them was '**scruffy**'. Jimmy couldn't see the problem. So what if his socks fell down, his shorts were baggy and his shoes were always scuffed? The only thing he wore that he really cared about was the **small badge** pinned to his hand-me-down jumper with the letters 'CSC' inked on it.

