

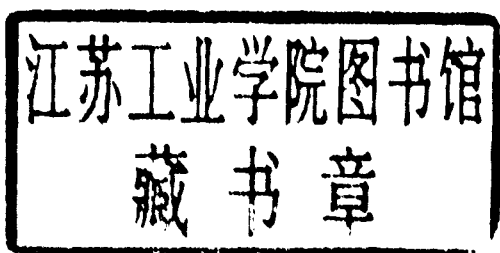
JOE CRAIG

TIME TO STOP HIDING
TIME TO FIGHT BACK

JIMMY COATES: REVENGE



**JIMMY
COATES:
REVENGE**



Also by Joe Craig

Jimmy Coates: Killer

Jimmy Coates: Target

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HarperCollins *Children's Books*

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About the author

Joe Craig studied Philosophy at Cambridge University, then became a songwriter. Within a year, however, his love of stories had taken over and he was writing the first novel in the *Jimmy Coates* series. It was published in 2005. He is now a full time author and likes to keep in touch with his readers through his website www.joecraig.co.uk.

When he's not writing he's visiting schools, playing the piano, inventing snacks, playing football, coaching cricket, reading or watching a movie.

He lives in London.

CHAPTER ONE - THE VISITOR

Jimmy's eyes opened before he even realised he was awake. His head was throbbing – another nightmare that vanished before he could grasp it. When he was asleep, his programming took over his brain completely. It grew like a vine, reaching into every part of his psyche. It spread dangerous knowledge and developed his amazing skills. Day by day Jimmy found himself becoming more lethal – and there was nothing he could do about it. Time was turning him into a killer.

What had woken him, he wondered. Judging by the eerie half-light it was the early hours of the morning. Jimmy didn't dare move his head from the pillow in case someone was watching him, but he listened, analysing every sound. He felt a familiar agitation in his chest – a paranoia he could never shake off. It was part of his nature now and he had learned to trust in it.

His right calf twitched under the duvet. Was that a

sign? It could be nothing. He realised that his muscles probably trained while he slept. How long had it been since NJ7, the most covert and advanced military intelligence agency in the world, had burst into his house to take him away? It felt like forever, but might not even have been more than a fortnight.

Since then, he'd had to live with the knowledge that NJ7 had manipulated human genetics to grow him – an organic assassin, designed to reach active-service capability when he was eighteen. It was crazy. Jimmy still thought of himself as a normal human boy. But he was far from normal. He was only 38 per cent human.

He pictured millions of tiny electric pulses emanating from his brain to the tips of each limb, making them ever more resilient. But the sensation he had now was something more than just his programming.

A drop in temperature. There was a draught from somewhere. The window had been shut when they went to bed. Jimmy was facing away from it now, so he couldn't check it. But how could anybody have broken the window without waking everybody?

He scanned what he could see of the room, his eyes quickly enhancing every shape, enabling him to see in the semi-dark. Three beds stuck out into the middle of the room, their headboards against the wall. In the bed next to Jimmy's, his friend Felix Muzbeke was fast asleep. A slow thread of drool trailed from his lips, glistening like a spider's web in the rain.

Out of the corner of his eye, Jimmy could discern the end of the third bed. His sister's feet made a reassuring bump in the duvet. *OK, he thought, so Felix and Georgie haven't been abducted. That's a good start.*

Jimmy was constantly aware that it wasn't just his own life under threat. As well as Georgie and Felix, there was Jimmy's mother. They'd all arrived at the Bed and Breakfast the night before, on the run from NJ7. Felix's parents, Neil and Olivia, had already been in hiding there.

Deep inside, Jimmy's human self was now starting to wake up. With this came a surge of anger, brought on by the thought of his own father – or at least the man he had always believed was his father. The man's words would never leave Jimmy's head: *"You're not my son."* To him, Jimmy was nothing but an enemy of the State. He had been ever since overcoming his programming and refusing to kill for NJ7. Now Ian Coates, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, wanted him eliminated.

Then Jimmy heard it. A sound so faint that Felix's drooling almost drowned it out. Immediately, an image popped into Jimmy's head that identified the noise – grease trickling down wood. It told him two things. One: the room had definitely been breached. Two: whoever had broken in was highly dangerous.

They've found me, he thought. Terror shook his entire body, but with it came a blast of confidence – the

artificial self-assurance of his programming. It seemed to flick away the fear. Before he could even think about it, Jimmy exploded into action.

He kicked his right leg up and back, sending his duvet flying towards the window. It wrapped itself around an approaching figure. In the same movement, Jimmy flipped up into a handstand by his pillow – just in time. The intruder slammed the duvet back on to the mattress, then rolled to his feet on the other side of the bed.

Jimmy used his bare feet to push himself off the wall. He cartwheeled over and landed, standing, opposite his attacker. They had both moved without a sound. Felix and Georgie hadn't stirred. Now, for the first time, Jimmy was able to look at the person who had broken in. He was small – only just taller than Jimmy, in fact – and his physique was slight. His face was masked by a black balaclava, which matched the black combat uniform. On his chest Jimmy noticed three small vertical stripes. Even though his night-vision made it hard to distinguish colours, Jimmy knew that they had to be green – a green stripe was the emblem of NJ7. But why were there three of them? He shrugged off the inconsistency and noticed the contrast between the black military outfit in front of him and the Kermit pyjamas that he'd been forced to borrow from the B&B owners. He shivered, suddenly aware of his vulnerability.

Jimmy picked out the intruder's eyes – their pale blue was intensified by his night-vision. The eyes looked Jimmy up and down.

"They're not my pyjamas," Jimmy insisted. "I usually sleep in a T-shirt and..."

"What's going on?" Felix interrupted. His face was scrunched up like a new-born piglet and he was peering around blindly. For him, it was too dark to see.

Jimmy only glanced at him for an instant, but he knew straight away it was a mistake. In that split-second, the masked figure dived at him. Jimmy dropped to the floor and slid out of the way on his back. He went straight under Felix's bed and out the other side.

"Is that you, Jimmy?" Felix asked, with no clue what was going on.

The intruder landed with a roll, then sprang up and leapt at Jimmy again – right over Felix's head.

"Morning, Felix," Jimmy grunted, flipping himself up, feet first. He caught his attacker in mid-air – with his knees locked around the intruder's neck. "Bit of help would be nice."

The two fighters tumbled over each other across the floor. The noise woke Georgie.

"Jimmy, you OK?" she whispered frantically. There was no answer. She jumped out of bed and stumbled for the light switch.

Jimmy clung on to the attacker with every bit of strength he could muster. They twisted together, a

flurry of limbs wrestling for control. Jimmy's programming was serving him well. He wrenched one arm free and clamped a hand down on top of his assailant's head. With one twist, he threw him off balance. The intruder's face hit the floor and the balaclava came away in Jimmy's fist.

Jimmy pounced, holding him down. Except, he gradually realised – it wasn't a him. There was a tickling sensation on Jimmy's lips. Stray hairs fluttered around his face. He spat them away, conscious of not loosening his hold. There was a strange smell in the air. Was that coconut shampoo?

Finally, Georgie found the light switch – but it didn't work. She clicked it on and off frantically. The room remained dark. Instead, she went for the door handle. In a burst of strength, the intruder performed a back flip so powerful it took Jimmy along too. She landed on him, knocking the wind out of him, and immediately launched herself at Georgie.

As Georgie pulled the door open a centimetre, the intruder slammed into the small of her back. The door banged shut, with Georgie's face pressed against the wood. She tried to scream for help, but before the breath even reached her lungs, she was pulled away and flung back on to her bed. The mysterious figure wrapped the duvet across Georgie's face and spun her over like a log down a hill. Georgie tried shouting again, but the bedclothes completely muffled the noise. She

was rolled up so tight she couldn't move her arms from her side.

Jimmy was slightly dazed, but he shook it off and hurled himself at the base of Georgie's bed. It knocked into his attacker, throwing her off-balance. Immediately, Jimmy rolled under the bed, out the other side and slammed into her ankles. He tried to pin her to the floorboards again, but she spun like a break-dancer, planting a foot in Jimmy's face with each revolution.

Felix was out of his bed now, tentatively shuffling across the room with his arms outstretched. When he reached the wall, his hands felt about for the light switch, not knowing Georgie had already tried that. From inside her duvet-cocoon, she hollered and squirmed, gradually wriggling her way out.

"Don't worry, Jimmy," Felix announced. "I'm coming." Then, at the top of his voice, he yelled, "Help!"

"Quiet, Felix," Jimmy snapped, crawling backwards to avoid another kicking. The last thing he wanted was the neighbours arriving. That would give away their hideout to NJ7 in no time. "Get out and get my mum."

Felix went for the door, but the intruder turned to stop him. That was the distraction Jimmy needed. He flipped on his front and hooked his legs underneath the empty bed behind him. Then, with a thrill flooding his muscles, he bent his knees and heaved the bed off the floor. He lifted it right over his head with just his legs. It scraped

the ceiling, then came crashing down in front of him. One leg snapped clean off and the frame smashed into splinters. The bed had landed upside-down – right on top of Jimmy's opponent.

Finally, Jimmy dragged her out. He dug his knee into her spine and his elbow into the back of her neck. She wasn't getting out from his hold this time.

"I'm on your side!" came her muffled shout. The tension in Jimmy's gut eased slightly, but he was far from relaxed.

"It's a trick," Georgie urged. She had made it out of the duvet at last.

"Who are you?" Jimmy demanded. It was becoming clearer by the second that this person was not part of an NJ7 assault team. She dipped her hand in her pocket. Jimmy clenched his muscles again, ready for anything, but his opponent pulled out nothing more than a small round piece of black plastic. It looked like the remote locking device on a car key. She clicked the button and on came every light in the room.

Jimmy felt her muscles relax. It was as if she was deflating slightly. The fight was over. She was giving up – for now. Jimmy stood up and slowly backed away.

For the first time, the intruder's face was revealed. Jimmy, Georgie and Felix let out a gasp. The person on the floor in front of them was a girl about their age. A flurry of auburn hair tumbled around her face. Jimmy was astounded. Felix was mesmerised.

"I've come to have a conversation with you," the girl said. Her voice was soft, with a very faint accent that made her sound slightly exotic.

Jimmy remained deadpan. "If that's what you call a conversation," he replied, "I can't wait for us to argue."

CHAPTER TWO - SEEDS OF RETRIBUTION

"Was I too rough for you?" the girl pouted. "I'm sorry. I was playing. I wanted to see what you could do." She stood up, moving with a strange elegance that didn't seem to fit someone so young.

"If I'd wanted you dead, Jimmy Coates," she continued, "you would never have even known I existed. I could have killed you quietly, quickly and from a distance." She moved towards him, almost gliding across the floor, her eyes never wavering from Jimmy's. "I think I would have done it painlessly though. You seem nice." Then she winked. Jimmy lost all feeling in his cheeks for a second. He was a picture of astonishment.

"My name is Zafi Sauvage." The girl held out her hand, which was covered in a black leather glove. In a daze, Jimmy shook it. The whole thing felt so bizarre. He wouldn't normally shake hands with anybody – especially not some strange girl, and *especially* not one who, only seconds before, had been trying to break his neck.