

# Chilling

**Black Chalk** by Christopher J. Yates

(Harvill Secker, £14.99, out 19 September)

Everyone has witnessed a situation, big or small, that spirals out of control; that's why the situation arising here creates a truly chilling thriller, with campus-fun-gone-wrong echoes of Donna Tartt's modern classic, *The Secret History*. Six best friends in their first year at Oxford devise a game of consequences – silly, trivial dares such as breakdancing in the quad and begging for beer money outside the library. Inevitably, perhaps, the forfeits escalate, the fallout of which is devastating in some cases, examining just how far friends can push each other. Partly narrated 14 years later by one of the members, the game continues, to an unforeseen, unforgettable climax.

