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Darkest Night

Written by

Will Hill

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The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost

We have learned to believe, all of us – is it not so? And since so, do we not see our duty? Yes! And do we not promise to go on to the bitter end?

Abraham Van Helsing

MEMORANDUM 1

***From*: Office of the Director of the Joint Intelligence Committee**

***Subject*: Revised classifications of the British governmental departments**

***Security*: TOP SECRET**

DEPARTMENT 1 Office of the Prime Minister
DEPARTMENT 2 Cabinet Office
DEPARTMENT 3 Home Office
DEPARTMENT 4 Foreign and Commonwealth Office
DEPARTMENT 5 Ministry of Defence
DEPARTMENT 6 British Army
DEPARTMENT 7 Royal Navy
DEPARTMENT 8 Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service
DEPARTMENT 9 Her Majesty's Treasury
DEPARTMENT 10 Department for Transport
DEPARTMENT 11 Attorney General's Office
DEPARTMENT 12 Ministry of Justice
DEPARTMENT 13 Military Intelligence, Section 5 (MI5)
DEPARTMENT 14 Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)
DEPARTMENT 15 Royal Air Force
DEPARTMENT 16 Northern Ireland Office
DEPARTMENT 17 Scotland Office
DEPARTMENT 18 Wales Office
DEPARTMENT 19 CLASSIFIED
DEPARTMENT 20 Territorial Police Forces
DEPARTMENT 21 Department of Health
DEPARTMENT 22 Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ)
DEPARTMENT 23 Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)

MEMORANDUM 2

***From*: Chief of the General Staff**

***Subject*: Updated lists of the global supernatural departments**

***Security*: MOST SECRET**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	National Security Division 9 (NS9) Restricted Compound 7C, Nevada Test and Training Range, Nevada, USA
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	The Office of the Supernatural (FTB) Complex 17, Dortmund, Germany
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Supernatural Protection Commissariat (SPC) Restricted Area A12, Polyarny, Russia
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	The People's Bureau of the Supernatural (PBS6) Military Centre W, Western Hills, Beijing
THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT	Section G (G-Sec) Al-Mazar Precinct, Cairo, Egypt
CANADA	The Office of Supernatural Affairs (OSA) Building 31, Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Trenton, Ontario
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA	Military Detachment Alpha (MDA) Installation 25, Gauteng Province, South Africa
THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA	National Defence Unit C (N-DUC) Security Complex G341, Gujarat, India

THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL	**Federal Security Unit 12 (F12)** Basin Airbase, Amazonas, Brazil
JAPAN	**Supernatural Self-Defense Force (SSDF)** Intelligence Command, Naha, Okinawa

PROLOGUE

Jamie Carpenter soared over the battlefield, carrying Frankenstein effortlessly beneath him, marvelling at the scale of the fighting taking place below.

His view of it was fleeting, such was the speed he and the rest of the strike team were travelling, but it was enough to make quite an impression; the battle was already spread out across more than a mile of blasted landscape, the air full of movement and gunfire and screaming, the ground littered with black-clad bodies and soaked with vampire remains. Jamie tore his gaze away and focused on the looming shape of the medieval city, its pale stone darkening in the fading light, and, as he rose over the outer walls, his squad mates close behind him, he saw a distant figure floating near the summit of the hill, high above the raging battle.

Dracula, *he thought, his heart leaping in his chest.* Right where they said he would be.

This is going to be too easy.

Jamie swooped over the walls, rising above the wide cobbled street that led up through the city. He accelerated, the evening air cool as it rushed over his uniformed body, the rooftops passing below him in a blur, and allowed a smile to rise on to his face. As he soared over a wide square, he heard something above him, something that sounded like a

flock of birds, and rolled to the side so he could look up and see what it was.

The sky above him was full of vampires.

They dropped silently out of the clouds, a vast dark swarm, and ripped into the strike team like a bolt of lightning, sending them spinning towards the ground. Something connected with the side of his helmet and he saw stars, his vision greying at the edges as his grip on Frankenstein loosened and gave way; the monster slipped from his grasp and fell towards the ancient city. Jamie lunged after him, but was hammered from all sides by heavy blows that drove him back and forth, bellowing with pain. He fought back furiously, but might as well have been trying to punch the wind; there seemed to be vampires all around him, as insubstantial as smoke, apart from when they struck. He ducked under a swinging fist and looked desperately around for his squad mates, but it was like trying to see through a colony of bats that had taken wing at the same time; all around him was darkness and churning movement.

A boot slammed into his stomach. Jamie folded in the air, the breath driven out of him, and sank towards the ground, barely able to even slow his fall. Cobblestones rose up to meet him, and he hit them hard enough to drive his teeth together on his tongue, spilling warm coppery liquid into his mouth. Pain raced through him, before being driven away by the heady taste of his own blood.

He leapt to his feet and scanned the narrow street he had landed in. There was no sign of his squad mates, or the vampires that had attacked them. He looked up, expecting to see them hurtling down towards him, but the sky was clear and empty; it was as though they had never been there at all.

Stupid, *he told himself, and felt his eyes blaze with heat.* Arrogant. Stupid.

Jamie leapt into the air, determined to locate the rest of the strike team and get their mission back on track.

A hand closed round his ankle and whipped him downwards.

Surprise filled him so completely that he didn't get his hands up until it was too late; his helmet thudded against the ground, and everything went black.

SIX MONTHS EARLIER

ZERO HOUR
PLUS 2 DAYS

1

HOME TRUTHS

CAISTER-ON-SEA, NORFOLK, ENGLAND

Jamie Carpenter stared at his father.

Time seemed to have stopped; there was utter silence, as though even the wind that had been gently rustling the trees around the cottage had paused. Jamie's heart was a solid lump of ice, his limbs frozen in place, his eyes unblinking, his mind stuck on a perpetual loop.

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

His father looked different than the last time Jamie had seen him; he looked *old*. His face was deeply lined, and pale, as though he had not seen the sun in a long time. There were streaks of grey in his still-thick hair, and he looked worn out, like he was stretched too thin. But his eyes, the bright blue eyes that his son had inherited, still danced in the yellow glow of the light bulb above the door, and it was into them that Jamie found himself staring as his mind tried to process what he was seeing.

The still, silent moment lasted an unknowable length of time. The two men – one young, one old – stood motionless, a distance between them that was far more than merely physical; it contained an ocean of history, of grief and loss and wasted time. Then a noise

emerged from Jamie's father's throat, a thick, involuntary sound like a gasp for air, and the spell was broken. The inertia in Jamie's mind spun loose, replaced by outright horror, by disgust so strong it was almost physical. He was suddenly full of the desire to run, to turn and flee from this place, from this apparition from the past, but, before he could force his reeling body to move, his father swept forward and lifted him into a hug so tight the air was trapped in his chest, and the disgust was replaced by a shuddering wave of relief, of something utterly, essentially *right.*

His eyes closed of their own accord, and his face fell against his father's shoulder, his hands dangling at his sides. He could feel his dad's heart pounding, feel the tremble in his arms as they held him tight. Jamie gave himself over to the emotions flooding through him, powerless to resist them; grief, pain, relief and desperate, sharp-edged happiness combining into a sensation he could barely endure.

Then his mind conjured up a single memory: his mother, standing beside him at the funeral of her husband. She was dressed all in black, and her beautiful, dignified face was etched with pain and covered in the shiny tracks of her tears. She was gripping his hand as though it was the only thing keeping her from collapsing to the floor, and she looked utterly lost, as if she had been thrust unwillingly into a world that no longer made sense, that was full only of pain and grief. The memory cleared Jamie's mind in an instant, wiping away the bittersweet cocktail that had momentarily overwhelmed him and replacing it with a single, burning emotion.

Fury.

He raised his arms and pushed his father backwards, breaking the embrace. Julian stumbled, a frown of confusion on his face, then regained his balance and stared at Jamie.

"What's wrong, son?" he asked, his voice low and thick.

"What's wrong?" growled Jamie, fury boiling and raging inside