

SAM HAIN
OCCULT DETECTIVE

A NIGHT IN
KNIGHTSBRIDGE



BRON JAMES

*This is a preview for Sam Hain: A Night in Knightsbridge
For the full version, please visit www.samhainscasebook.co.uk*

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The interdimensional entities are real, though.

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PROLOGUE

At the end of a long and stressful day, Elena Turner stepped into the shower. Her time had been spent, rather tediously, sorting out the study; unpacking boxes, moving furniture, and setting up the computer. A lot of the stuff had already been unboxed and simply needed organising. She'd moved one of the bookcases to put it by the side of the desk, only to discover that rising damp had started growing up the wall and on the back of the bookcase, even spreading to damage a number of the as-yet-unpacked boxes too. Moving house was rarely a relaxing experience at the best of times, without the furniture getting covered in mould too.

Between cleaning mould off of the walls and shelves and anything else that had been damaged, Elena also had to look after Charlie, her seven-year-old son. By the time she'd finished cleaning everything and had moved the bookcases back to where they should be, and Charlie was happily playing with his dinosaur toys in the living room, everything looked exactly the way it had done before she had even started that morning. Her husband, Lloyd, had not been happy when he came home only to find that nothing had been done in *his* study (despite the fact that they'd agreed it was a shared work room). Quite why he couldn't do it himself, especially if it really was as easy as he kept saying it was, was beyond her.

Another wasted day, she thought to herself, turning the shower taps as far as they would go. A powerful stream of steaming hot water shot out of the shower-head. Closing her eyes, she tipped her head back and let the water spray onto her face and trickle down her body. She was quite ready to call it a day, just relax in the shower for quarter of an hour and then get into bed. Not that she was getting much sleep at the moment, anyway. She rolled her head around, feeling the aching tension that had been built up in her shoulders, and sighed.

She'd only been in the shower five minutes when she suddenly heard something crashing. Opening her eyes, she paused and listened out for anything else, but heard nothing. Turning off the shower, she stepped out into the steam-filled bathroom, wrapping a towel around herself. Over in the corner she could see that the contents of the cabinet had emptied out onto the floor, the cabinet's door hanging wide open. Shampoo and conditioner bottles were strewn about the room, and numerous other cosmetics lay in a pile beneath the cabinet. Elena picked up the scattered toiletries and started to put them carefully back in the cabinet. She closed the cabinet's door, and stepped back in fear. Across the steamed-up surface of the cabinet's mirrored door, in big, capital letters, were these words.

THE VOID AWAKENS. DARKNESS IS COMING.

'Very funny!' Elena said sarcastically, walking into the living room with her dressing gown wrapped around her, her hair hidden up inside the large beehive-like towel on her head. Lloyd was sat in the armchair by the fireplace, reading a book.

'What've I done now?'

'The writing in the mirror. You know how spooked I've been about all this ghost stuff recently. I don't like you taking the piss out of me like this!'

Ever since moving in, Elena had been convinced she'd seen a ghost wandering around the house, and on occasion had thought she'd seen it knocking crockery off of the kitchen counters. Sometimes she even thought she could hear someone whispering to her in the dead of night (although she couldn't hear what they were saying), or walking up the stairs and opening and closing doors. There was never anybody there, though.

'What writing in the mirror?' Lloyd had a look of genuine confusion on his face. Elena felt her heart sink. If it had been him, he would have had that irritating smirk plastered across his face.

'That wasn't you?'

'I haven't done anything. Wasn't Charlie?'

'Darling, I don't mean to sound sarky, but do you really think a seven-year-old would write a message of foreboding like "the void awakens, darkness is coming," on a mirror he can't even reach?'

Lloyd sat in a vacant silence. He briefly glanced down at his book, and then back up to Elena. He cleared his throat uncomfortably. 'No, I suppose not.'

Fiddling nervously with one of the rings on her fingers, Elena sat down in the chair opposite her husband. She gazed distantly into the fireplace, lost in thought. 'We need a psychic, a medium or an exorcist or something,' she said conclusively. Lloyd looked up at her sceptically, and returned to reading his book.

CHAPTER I

It had been a slow week for Sam Hain.

The life of an occult detective was a strange and unpredictable one, one which was often spent dealing with the weird and the fantastical, but, much like most other walks of life, the supernatural sleuth would hit the occasional slump. There was the odd mysterious occurrence, inexplicable bursts of light in the sky or things that went bump in the night, but Sam was starting to feel bored. The transmudane was beginning to seem more and more mundane. The most interesting case that had been presented to him that week, which had promised to be an exciting hunt for a particularly destructive poltergeist, turned out to be little more than a mischievous and clumsy cat.

It was only while he was browsing the internet one evening, perusing paranormal forums for a good mystery or extraordinary event to sink his teeth into, that Sam finally found something that sparked his interest. It was exactly the kind of thing he'd been looking for and, he thought, a good introductory case for his new associate, Alice Carroll.

It had been over a month since Alice had last seen Sam. Their first and last meeting – when Alice had been haunted by the visions of a being from another realm on Halloween – had left her feeling like she'd tumbled down the rabbit hole into a world far stranger than she could ever have imagined. She had checked out the occult detective's website shortly after their first encounter, to try to find out more about this strange man. His blog hadn't really given her much more of an insight into the life of Sam Hain; he didn't update it very regularly, and when he did it was either to write brief overviews of former cases or vague, mysterious posts.

Since then, Alice had been feeding her curiosity, trying to learn more about the supernatural world and researching the paranormal (when she wasn't busy with work), and she'd tried to keep in touch with Sam as and when she could. He wasn't the easiest person to keep in contact with, and at one point she didn't hear from him for over a week, but he always got back to her in the end.

She'd been asking him about his line of work, enquiring about the supernatural and learning more about the wondrous and fantastical things which exist just outside of the boundaries of reality. In between being cryptically vague about his own experiences, Sam had suggested a number of resources for Alice to read through, but warned her that in amongst the mystery, intrigue and magick, darker forces often lurk in the shadows. As much as Alice's own experience had left her feeling shaken, and Sam's sinister and foreboding warnings had further added to her fear, she felt far too intrigued to simply turn away from all of this now. A part of her still remained dubious, but her own curiosity drove her to find out more.

In her spare time, she'd browsed the websites Sam had recommended, with a mix of fascination and cynicism. Some of the "eye-witness" testimonies and rumoured happenings sounded like works of fiction, and others were clearly written by people who were desperate to find something extraordinary

in the ordinary (her favourite of these was the idea that all clouds were secretly alien spaceships, simply disguised as clouds so they didn't startle anyone), but amongst them all there were a few cases which Alice thought seemed credible. Some even bore similarities to her own experiences.

In addition, Sam had also sent her what he called his “official manual”, or as she'd now dubbed it: “Demonology for Dummies.” It wasn't so much a manual as it was a large, well-worn notebook with Sam's handwriting scrawled across its pages in an almost entirely illegible manner. Amongst the pages of scribbled sentences and bullet-pointed notes from former cases were a handful of poorly drawn illustrations of things Alice couldn't even begin to recognise. Somewhere towards the middle of the book, between a page about metaphysical parasites and something about interdimensional portals, was a surprisingly normal shopping list.

Alice had only briefly skimmed over the pages of the notebook, but amongst the scrawlings and indecipherable text, some of it had caught her interest. Before meeting Sam, she had never really given the supernatural much thought – not since childhood, anyway – and had it not been for him then she probably would have ended up seeing a therapist about her delusions. But everything Sam had introduced her to since Halloween had reignited her imagination and opened her eyes to a new world. She wanted to discover and experience these things first hand and, after much deliberation, she decided to take Sam up on his offer. She was ready to join him on one of his cases.

One evening, after amusing herself with reading the latest blog post on a website titled “Clouds: What are they really?”, she sent Sam a message asking about joining him on one of his adventures, and waited. It was almost three days before he replied to her, and when he did it was ambiguous and brief.

Would be my pleasure, the message read, have just the thing in mind. Meet in Knightsbridge, outside the tube station, tonight, 6pm. -SH

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