

SAM HAIN  
OCCULT DETECTIVE



VOLUME I

BRON JAMES

*This is a preview for Sam Hain: Volume I. For the full version, please visit [www.samhainscasebook.co.uk](http://www.samhainscasebook.co.uk)*

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The interdimensional entities are real, though.

~

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*For Sarah,  
who left this world too soon.*

## Foreword

Writing *Sam Hain* has been an adventure. A most unexpected one, at that.

It all began late one night, at the usual hour of 3am, when reality ceases to be real and insomnia has a habit for inspiration. “Samhain,” I thought, the oft-mispronounced Pagan festival from which Hallowe’en was born, “Sam Hain... Sounds like the name of a noir occult detective.” I chuckled to myself, fell asleep, and didn’t think much more about it. I returned to life working as a freelance journalist and a would-be actor, who spent more time throwing his headshots at film studios than he did actually working in said film studios. But the idea never quite left me. Sam Hain rattled around in the back of my mind, just waiting for his time.

It wasn’t until one day in late September of 2013, while I was in a taxi heading back from a costume fitting (for a film which was so Eighties that I was clothed in a sequined vest, flared jeans, and a pair of very large, very vibrant, very red platform shoes), that the idea finally came together. The pieces fell into place. I would write a short story. It was only a month before *All Hallows’ Read* (the tradition of giving scary books around the season of Hallowe’en, started by renowned fantasy author and my unknowing mentor, Neil Gaiman), and I decided I would write the story for it. It was to be a short, one-off, thing; a quick read for the season of spookiness.

And so, *Sam Hain: All Hallows’ Eve* was conceived. I was especially proud of the title; a story about Sam Hain on samhain, to be released on All Hallows’ Eve. Looking back, I think I was more excited by this pun than I was the idea of actually writing a story to go with it. I got to work with writing what would become the first draft of *All Hallows’ Eve*, feeling my way through the story as I wrote, figuring out who this Sam Hain was, and how he fit (or, as the case may be, did not fit) into the world.

I released the first short story as a free download on Hallowe’en night, and I was surprised by the reception. Not only did people download it, but they actually *read* it and, beyond that, even *enjoyed* it. And I did as well. I enjoyed writing Sam as a character, how Alice accidentally caught a glimpse of a world beyond, playing with the concept that maybe things are not as normal as they may seem, and what strange, metaphysical mysteries might be hiding just behind the veil of the real. And, more than that, I was thrilled by the fact that other people enjoyed my story too.

But, as you can tell by the fact that this is a book with over four-hundred pages instead of a print-out on ten sheets of A4 paper, that was only the beginning. More ideas formed in my mind; more stories stirred themselves up. What happened next to Alice Carroll, after she had her eyes opened to the weird and wonderful? What was Sam Hain up to outside of that case on Hallowe’en? How much work, precisely, does an occult detective get, and how could he possibly afford to live in London’s ever increasingly expensive accommodation? I took a pen and a notebook, secreted myself away in a café off of Carnaby Street, and began to draft out more story ideas.

There were some good ideas, some bad ideas, and some ideas which didn’t really get any further than having a witty or amusing title. Out of this, six ideas stood out the most; six stories which would form the first series of *Sam Hain* novellas. So I returned to that same café, with an old laptop which would overheat if I tried to do anything more taxing than open a word document, and began writing.

From there, it developed exponentially. *All Hallows’ Eve* came in the top ten of Inkitt’s user-rated *Shiver* competition for paranormal stories in 2015. In 2016, I found myself sitting behind a table at one of London’s comic cons, with the first three *Sam Hain* novellas spread out before me as actual, real, physical paperbacks. They had ISBNs and barcodes and a copyright page and everything. Somewhere along the line, I had accidentally become an author, which caught me quite by surprise.

The reception I received from readers was beyond anything I could have hoped for. People would return to me over the comic con weekend, expressing their enjoyment of the stories, and, in a couple of cases, cursing me for making them miss their tube station the previous day because they had been too engrossed with reading. Which I feel is the best possible way to inconvenience someone. Knowing that people

appreciate my stories, and want to read more, is a driving force for me to keep on writing more. Not just for my own enjoyment, but also to share with others who enjoy it too.

So, as I see the word count on this foreword edging over its limit while I ramble, here we are. From a one-off short story to a collection of adventures, which has grown into something beyond my expectations, with even more in the works. It's not been an easy path, often sheltering away from distractions/people/the sun to focus on writing, revising and editing the drafts ad nauseam, but it's one I would not change for anything. The adventure and the joy of writing these stories, and the excitement and immodest pride of seeing my words coalesced into this volume is beyond description.

Thank you, dear reader, for picking up this tome, for reading its pages, and for encouraging and indulging my addled imagination. The feedback I've received from people reading my tales, the response each new instalment has been met with, has helped spur these strange stories on. Without the people who enjoy his adventures, and share a slice of my Imaginarium, Sam Hain would not exist. These books, this compendium for Volume I in the series, would not have been made possible without your enjoyment and your support.

And a thank you to Camilla Winqvist, who provided the cover for this book and created the illustrations contained within. She came into my life quite by chance (although, of course, there is no such thing as coincidence; the Universe is rarely so lazy), inspired me with her artwork in ways I hadn't expected, and has been a great support to me, even when she may not have realised it. Camilla's art has captured the essence of the world inside my head, without which this compendium would not be half as exciting as I believe it to be.

The stories contained within these pages are, in a roundabout sort of way, inspired by myriad events in my life. Some elements are true, some are exaggerated to make them more interesting, and others are pure fabrication. As for which parts are which, I shall leave that to you to decide. I hope you enjoy reading these as much as I have enjoyed writing them.

Be aware of the things which lurk in the shadows, shine light onto the darkness which may try to cloud our lives, and believe in the magic and wonder of the world. There's more to it than meets the eye.

-Bron, by the river in Richmond upon Thames, April 2018

*The Veil between Worlds thins this Night,  
Giving rise to things both Dark and Light.*

# ALL HALLOWS' EVE



## CHAPTER I

That Halloween had started out just like any other.

The annual after-work costume party had kicked off early in the evening, rapidly descending into an alcohol fuelled frenzy. Inebriated skeletons and zombies danced the night away, while the vampires tried desperately to get off with the scantily clad nurses. The other drunken denizens of the night – those who had come dressed as something other than the undead, like the inside-joke-costumes and the mock-costume of Geoff from Admin – sat in the corner, explaining to one another the inspiration for their outfits and exactly why they were supposed to be funny.

Unlike previous Halloweens, Alice Carroll had decided to leave the party early. The turning point for her had come somewhere between King Kong throwing up on her shoes, and the party-goers spontaneously deciding to go tipsy trick-or-treating. At one o'clock in the morning. In the east end of London. As far as brilliant ideas were concerned, this was not one of them. Alice could only see a group of drunk Halloween caricatures knocking on people's doors in the small hours of the morning turning out particularly poorly.

Having rinsed the last of King Kong's vomit from her formerly bright yellow shoes in the kitchen sink, Alice brushed back her blonde hair and put the comically springy antennae of her sexy bee costume back on her head. Throwing her denim jacket around her shoulders, she took her leave.

She managed to leave the party with very little hassle. Alice had let her flatmate, Rachel, know she was going to start heading home, to which Rachel had responded with an 'aw, no, you should stay' before drunkenly dancing off in the direction of Frankenstein's Monster. Other than that, everyone else seemed too wrapped up in their night to notice the girl in the yellow-and-black striped corset leaving.

Alice walked through the crowded hallway, pushing through groups of chattering ghosts and werewolves, squeezing past the wholly unsettling sight of Marilyn Monroe making out with the Creature from the Black Lagoon. She slipped out of the front door, sidling through the team of off-duty Ghostbusters who were congregated, chain-smoking, on the doorstep, and began to make her way down the road. She was thankful she didn't have to keep explaining she was leaving to everyone she passed; there was nothing more frustrating than repeatedly having to answer that yes, she was leaving, and no, she couldn't stay a little bit longer, when all she wanted to do was get home. It did feel surreal, though, going straight from the loud, crowded house party onto the quiet, empty streets, alone and without really saying goodbye to anyone.

The walk home was an old and familiar one. Alice had moved to Islington a little under a year ago, but she had already found the roads which made her feel most at home. Her favourite part of the walk home was up through an old street just off of the main road. It was the kind of old, side-alley street which would host a farmers market on Wednesdays and an antiques fair over the weekend. There was a distinctly quaint, Old London air to it. It felt like a small bubble in the city, separated from the rest of metropolis, and seemed perpetually stuck in the past.

For Alice, it was a homely street. It was where she frequently bought her fresh vegetables mid-week and where one weekend she had bought an old mantel clock for a fiver, only to discover upon getting it home that it did not work. However, this night, on Halloween, in the cold of winter, when no other person was about – save for the small groups patrolling the main road an alley or two away – there was something eerie about this old cobbled street. Alice's every footstep echoed off of the aged, soot-covered brickwork. In the distance, she could faintly hear the noise of parties finishing their pub crawls out on the main road. The distant sound of the crowd made her feel almost safe, not entirely alone in the night, but somewhat vulnerable too. Getting home, she thought, could not come soon enough.

She walked through the empty streets back to her flat, the boggle-eyed springy antennae bouncing annoyingly as she went. The sexy bee costume had been a dare, a forfeit for having to work a slightly longer shift and turn up late to the party. It had never really occurred to Alice exactly why the sexy bee costume existed; it wasn't the most intuitive of sexy costumes. Most bee drones lived out their entire lives as virgins, and queen bees were hardly renowned for being gentle lovers. Honey bees, despite being associated with the sweet, sticky food, had a particularly bad time of things, as they ripped out most of their internal organs in the process of stinging their victims, leaving them to die a slow and painful death. In fact, Alice thought, there was very little that was traditionally sexy about bees. It also wasn't the best choice of costume for walking home on a cold winter's night, but here she was in the stripy corset and black lace tutu, walking the cold, dark streets of Islington.

Maybe it was the in-depth thoughts she was having about bee costumes, or the mild detachment from reality caused by more jellied-vodka eyeballs than she would care to count, but Alice had failed to notice that she was being followed.

A short distance behind her walked a man. He was hunched over, his neck craning forward and his head angled almost entirely parallel to the ground, with a hood pulled low over his face. He shambled along the cobbled street, stumbling on the uneven road, and stopped in his tracks when Alice eventually turned to look at him. The man stood eerily still. Although she couldn't see his eyes, Alice could feel him watching her. The noise from the nearby main road had fallen silent, as if everyone had suddenly decided to call it a night, and a haunting quietness hung heavily in the air. It was as if the world had abruptly ground to a halt. There wasn't even the faintest whisper of a breeze. The night was perfectly still.

Alice carried on, quickening her pace. She was a good five minutes walk from home, but she really didn't fancy being in the street with this man for any longer than needed. One of the street lamps ahead of her flickered uncertainly. She could hear his footsteps behind her, uneven and clumsy, but gradually speeding up. His footsteps matched hers. She didn't want to provoke anything by breaking into a run, but she quickened her pace further, gradually picking up speed. She continued to walk faster and faster, almost approaching a light jog. The man sped up also, and Alice could feel her heart pumping rapidly in her throat.

Suddenly, something slammed into her. She was pushed to the wall of the street in one whirlwind motion, knocking her jacket from around her shoulders and winding her as she hit the hard brick surface. The force that had pushed her moved away, and she turned around, staggering and dazed from the impact. As she struggled to regain her balance, she saw the man who had been walking behind her charge past at full pelt and come to an abrupt stop. He turned slowly, unnaturally, and out of the corner of her eye she caught a glimpse of another person standing over her. A tall figure silhouetted against the orange glow of the street lamps, dressed from head to toe in black, a greatcoat flowing down to his ankles, and a fedora-style hat perched on his head.

'Run!' the silhouetted figure shouted, gesturing towards one of the nearby side-streets. Alice stood for a moment, dumb-founded, and watched as this other man squared up to her initial pursuer. The hooded man moved towards them, slowly, purposefully, and his head juddered unnaturally. For a brief second, the street lamps went out, leaving the alleyway in darkness. With a buzzing sound, the lights struggled back on, albeit dimmer than before. The man in the coat and hat turned to her again and waved his arm frantically in the direction of the street. 'Go!'

She didn't think to question the man's orders. She ran. The bee antennae bobbed up and down irritatingly in front of her face, swinging back and forth and bouncing off of her forehead as she sprinted away. She didn't stop to catch her breath as she ran, and even sacrificed one of her shoes to the night as she continued to sprint as fast as she could through the winding alleyways. Behind her, Alice heard a loud zapping sound, and something not unlike the crackling of electricity. She turned to see the street behind her illuminated by a bright blue flickering light. She squinted at the light for a second, before carrying on running in the opposite direction. Away from whatever that was, and, unwittingly, away from home.

She had not been down these roads before and, in her panic and confusion, she had lost all sense of direction.

Rounding a corner, Alice allowed herself to slow her pace, from a sprint to



a jog to an exhausted but hurried walk. Eventually, she came to a stop. She leaned against a wall, struggling to catch her breath as a mix of panic and exhaustion overwhelmed her. Looking around, Alice tried to get her bearings. She was in a back-alley, the narrow street lined with old, scorched brick walls, and every few feet sat small piles of black bags. The way was lit by only a few dimly glowing street lamps, giving everything a gentle orange hue.

An icy wind blew through the alleyway, chilling Alice to the bone. She shuddered, wrapping her arms tightly around herself to brace against the cold. In her panic, she hadn't stopped to pick her jacket back up before running from... She paused, thinking, trying to make sense of what had just happened. She vigorously rubbed her arms, which were starting to pimple in the cold of the night, to keep at least a little warm. Whatever had happened back there didn't matter, she concluded; what did matter was getting back home, back into the warmth, and as far away from strange men in hoods and overcoats as possible.

Reaching into the breast of her corset, Alice pulled out her phone. Thankfully, she didn't like leaving her valuables in her jacket pockets. She fumbled with the screen-lock as she tried to calm her sudden rush of nerves. She flicked her way through the pages of apps and tapped at the Maps icon impatiently, desperately hoping it would tell her what road she was on now, and the best route home.

*Location settings disabled. Insufficient data.*

'Shit,' Alice muttered under her breath. She tried calling Rachel, but it didn't matter where she stood, there was no signal. She sighed in frustration, and squeezed her phone back into the corset's breast.

As she stood there, perplexed and alone and more than a little bit frightened, a tall figure loomed out of one of the pitch black alleyways. It stepped into the dim, orangey-yellow glow of the street lamps. Alice let out a slight whimper when she caught sight of the ominous silhouette. The figure stood for a moment, eerie and unmoving. The recognisable shape of the coat and hat did nothing to calm Alice's already frayed nerves.

'Sorry about that,' the figure spoke in a calm and friendly voice, the greatcoat billowing out behind him as he made his way forward. As he came closer, Alice knew for certain it was the man from a few moments before, and although it seemed like it would be a good idea, she didn't feel compelled to start running again. The man leaned against the wall next to her. 'Are you okay?'

'Really? Do *you* think I'm okay?!' Alice immediately exclaimed, staring almost accusingly at the man. 'I've been followed home by some creepy guy, been pushed into a wall, run from a fight, I've had King Kong throw up on my shoes – one of which is now missing – I'm cold, I'm tired, I'm dressed like a slutty bee, and I don't know where I am any more. Am I okay?! You bloody tell me!' Most of Alice's fear and panic had converted itself into anger. She just wanted to get home and be done with the night.

The man simply looked deep into her eyes, and smiled kindly at her. 'I'm sorry you had to experience all that,' he said, far too calmly for Alice's liking, 'these kind of things, they shouldn't happen. Difficult to keep on top of it all at this time of year, of course.'

She glared at him, and got the first proper look at the man since he'd rather abruptly slammed her into the wall. He must have been in his mid-to-late-twenties, possibly early thirties, and a little over six foot tall. His scruffy, mid-length dark brown hair flowed out from under his hat and rested on the upturned collars of his overcoat. A silver talisman, a five-pointed star contained within a circle, hung from a cord around his neck. It looked as if he'd decided to dress as a contemporary Van Helsing for Halloween.

'What? What are you talking about? What was all that back there, and who the hell are you?' Alice asked, still on the offensive. 'And what about the other guy?'

'One question at a time,' the man said wearily. 'First of all, that was something which crossed the threshold from another world and into this one. I came to send it back.' Alice simply stood staring at him, incredulous. He continued. 'This is one of those strange supernatural stories people read about online or in Esoteric Express. Most people dismiss these stories as myths, rumours or hoaxes,' he chuckled, 'if only they knew.'

He was incredibly matter-of-fact about the whole affair, and Alice couldn't help but wonder if this was all some kind of elaborate Halloween prank.

'It's gone now, though. Back to the Void space where it belongs. At this time of year, the veil between worlds is incredibly thin; easier for them to cross the threshold, but easier for me to send them back too.' He straightened his lapels with the air of a man congratulating himself on a job well done.

Alice was silent for a while, just staring at this man, taking in everything he was saying, but refusing to believe a word of it. She shook her head, and with a sarcastic 'yeah, right' she began to hobble away. She



took off her remaining shoe to even herself out. She'd had more than enough of this evening, and wasn't going to put up with much more of this nonsense. She just wanted to go home.

'No, you're quite right. It's all rather hard to believe. Too far-fetched,' he retorted, and tipped his hat in her direction. 'Have a good evening.'

Alice turned to give him a snarky response – her evening had been far from good by anyone's standards – but he had vanished. It was as if he had evaporated into thin air. *I've definitely had enough of this evening*, she concluded, and scurried back the way she had come, hoping to find her way back to somewhere she recognised. It didn't take long for her to find somewhere vaguely familiar, and once she had got her bearings, she headed straight for home.

Almost falling through the door to her flat, Alice stumbled in, overcome with stress and fatigue and alcohol, and she unceremoniously flopped herself onto the sofa. She had barely taken the ridiculous bee antennae off of her head before she fell asleep, and drifted off into a strange and uneasy night's dreaming.

That night, her dreams were haunted by strange visions. Of tall men in overcoats fighting demons in hooded jackets, of a giant gorilla climbing the Empire State building with a yellow high-heel shoe, and of bees with weirdly cartoon-y eyes on springs, dancing seductively. It was not the best night's sleep she had ever had by any means.

If you have enjoyed this short excerpt from *Sam Hain: Volume I* and wish to buy the full book, please visit [www.samhainscasebook.co.uk](http://www.samhainscasebook.co.uk) for this and more in the *Sam Hain – Occult Detective* series.