

## **Horror in the Night**

*Horror in the night, do you bite?*

*Or, do you just scare me?*

*You seem like you might, but not quite.*

*I think you can't hurt me.*

*If I'm in the right, there's no plight.*

*I've got God helping me.*

*I'm ready to fight; help me light!*

*Now nothing can stop me!*

## **Chapter Twenty-Seven: Shadows and Abominations**

I don't remember much of the next day. I know I started this section talking about how sleep was unnecessary, but seriously three nights without sleep is ludicrous to experience. With the world warping between what was real and imagined, I couldn't trust anything I saw. There was a time that I stared at a sign outside a store when my faith was running out, and the words morphed to say "Trust God." My cup was refilled in that moment, and for the next hour, I thought about and tested if the CIA was beaming thoughts into my head. This involved trying to trick the hidden spooks into revealing their hand by thinking as unusual thoughts as possible, with the hope that I was random enough that any intrusive thoughts would stand out like a blue lobster.

That consists of half of all my memories for the daytime. I can't exactly place the other half of things I remember, but sometime during all this, I happened to stumble across the library on Tenth Street for the first time. Grateful that I could finally use the internet, I shuffled inside and up the stairs, then plopped myself in front of my laptop, which I used to contact Vince for the first time in a while.

I asked, "I've been up for days now. How long do I need to stay awake?"

About ten minutes later, I got a reply. "Sounds rough, but I've done that before. Just stay safe and you'll sleep soon enough." And so I trumped up my resolve to wait until I received a synchronicity from either the CIA, the aliens, or God Herself telling me I was finally allowed to sleep.

Then it was night. I was not doing well. I remember nodding out for fractions of a second as I walked across the Hawthorne Bridge. I actually had to hold onto the steel railing at one point to avoid falling into the street next to me where cars were rolling with a racket as they crossed over the metal grates that constituted the road. With a white-knuckled death grip, I pulled myself over to where I was supported by the railing, and I stared into the inky blackness of the river rushing far below my feet. A little voice in my head told me to jump, to end all this madness. I almost did. But, with pure grit, I continued, making it to the branching path that allowed pedestrians to descend to the stretch of park on the eastbank of the river.

I can't express how out of it I was. I couldn't keep a thought straight. Running entirely on fumes, I shambled up the path on autopilot. If something didn't give me the command to sleep soon, I was going to lose it in one of my trademarked meltdowns or collapse into a coma, if not both.

Somewhere on the concrete path between the parking lots and the firestation, I got the notion that I was being followed. I turned around and there was a man who stopped when I spotted him, but carried on when he saw I wasn't going to let him stalk me. I watched as he drifted into the miasma that my eyes told me was ahead of me, disappearing into another plane of existence possibly. I felt uneasy, as he had snuck up close to me, unheard, and that fear of being followed persisted. I looked over my shoulder one last time, and that's when I saw them.

Shadow people. Just black voids in the shape of a human body, maybe two hundred meters away, silently floating maybe an inch off the ground so there was an uncanny fluidity to their motions, like you'd expect ghosts getting blown around by the wind would have. There were three of them, possibly more. All of which drifted around and behind objects, but not through them as I saw one bounce off a bench a couple times. So, they behaved like they were material, not aethereal.

"What the hell?" was really the only tangible thought I could muster. I wondered if I should rub my eyes, but my curiosity kept me staring. But, you know what they say killed the cat. It took a second, but I had the second thought of "What if they spotted me?" and as I consciously acknowledged the possibility of danger, that's when I saw them stop motionless where they were and turn their faceless heads in my direction. Every muscle in me locked up in alarm at the sudden other-worldly attention and animation.

I didn't need to question my safety; you don't just bump into spectres of unbridled doom and invite them to your birthday party. I might not have known what they would do to me, but my gut told me that if they reached me, I was done for. The thought of turning and running came, but my legs were Jell-O in that moment. However, the shadow people were just standing there, like smooth onyx statues that curved space-time around them. What were they doing? Staring, sure. Even within the void of their perfectly round heads, I could tell they were completely focused on me. But, why were they as frozen in place as I was?

As I tentatively weighed my options, I blinked. When my eyes opened again, I saw they moved. My mind summoned the likeness of some popular baddies from science fiction, but even with so

many examples to draw from, I knew nothing had prepared me for this. I had to keep the upper hand. Forcing myself to move again, I stared as long as I could while backing up. Yet, I couldn't help it. I blinked again, and they all teleported several meters closer to me. One was near a trash can that was previously twenty or thirty meters in front of it. Damn, that was not good!

It's easy to talk about this now, but it's hard to convey the terror I felt in that moment. My mind addled by sleeplessness, thoughts barely drifting into the realm of coherence, I regressed to pure animal instinct. Calling what I experienced a fight or flight response is an understatement that could win an award. To my primitive reptile brain, this was the pinnacle of catastrophic doom, the likes of which could only be born in Hell. But, here it was, this cruel scenario of imminent agony after crawling out of some demonic pit in search of a soul to haunt with its rabid despair, and it had picked me to wrap its fetid hands around.

I had walked backwards maybe fifty meters when I tripped and instinctively looked behind myself. I realized my mistake all too late. As I whipped my exhausted head forwards, I saw that the shadow people were substantially closer. If they were real people, I could see the whites of their eyes. These were the furthest thing from real people though. They were just figments, but how can figments cause this much dread?

With these shadow demons almost towering over me, I bolted to my feet again. But, with my heart racing, I felt an overpowering surge of light-headedness instantly. The trials of the last few days combined with the shock this sudden trepidation had on my system sent my blood pressure dropping. I remember my vision fading into patterns like if you pushed on your eyes, and then I felt myself fall backwards. I hit my head, I know that, but I didn't feel it. I was out.

For how long, I don't know. I just recall sitting up confused, partially forgetting that I was in Portland, before suddenly remembering the danger I was in. I whipped my head and eyes around in every direction while getting back on my feet, readying myself to run, or if I had to, fight. But, there was nothing. I was alone for the first time in what felt like forever.

Taking a moment to catch my breath, I gulped down a sip of my water, grateful that I was alive. Then I carried on, saying fuck it; I was going to find that spot behind the bushes from the first day and let sleep take me over. I got close to doing just that, but unfortunately for me, the night had one more surprise for me.

It happened underneath a bridge. Which one, I don't know, but it was dark where the yellow halogen lights couldn't reach. I was still spooked, keeping my eyes peeled for more shadow people, but it crept up on me in the darkness.

What crept up on me? Only if the words existed could I tell you. It's no exaggeration to call it an eldritch abomination of epic proportions that not even H. P. Lovecraft could conjure up and put on paper with the prestige he's known for. If I could give describing it a shot though, I would start by saying it was the size of a Volkswagen bug, at least I think it was. It didn't exactly have a definable shape, as it had tendrils and appendages sticking out at all angles, which wiggled and

twitched and vibrated freely on their own accord, and with no rhyme or reason as to where they manifested from on the grotesque, bile-colored body that lurked beneath the outer edge of this creature's bizarre body. It had lesions all over its leathery skin, but that skin was loosely stretched over its lumpy, amorphous form, like it had flayed a much larger creature and was now wearing its severed flesh. I saw no eyes, nor did I see an obvious head, but I knew that it knew I was there, because it was gliding ever closer to me.

The shadow people were ants compared to this beast. In an instant, I felt the adrenaline rush up my back with its icy, tingling fingers like I knew from when my dad would grab me and throw me like a ragdoll growing up. It signaled that all hope was gone; that my body was giving me its all and it still didn't think I would survive. I was going to die, if not worse. Helpless to powers beyond my imagination, I collapsed to my knees and prayed to God, offering to do anything, anything at all to escape this fate. My life flashed before my eyes and I thought of every mistake and transgression and sin that I had ever done or made. In that moment, I was the epitome of sorrow. I wept.

But then, just as the abomination reached me, it went off to my left side and kept gliding. A man was behind it, seemingly pushing the hellspawn along. He stared at me, confused, but ultimately ignoring me. I just stared at the devil's servant. Then he reached the edge of the bridge's shadow, and I saw that the corrupted spirit of raw horror I had just come face to face with was actually that man's shopping cart, which was packed to the brim with a random assortment of things he had collected.

I sat there a minute or two, possibly ten, just feeling how I felt. I was relieved, but the gripping fangs of fear lingered for some time. Eventually, I felt alright in my own skin again. I would then get up, finish my walk to the secluded spot I found behind the bushes, and try to sleep. It wasn't happening. I was too worked up, but that was alright as God worked Her magick once more. As I lay there, dazed but aware, I saw a host of bikers with dazzling lights all over them and their bikes blaze by. They said nothing, but something about the uniqueness of it triggered the feeling of a synchronicity in my head.

Then, as I sat up, bringing the world beyond the bushes into focus, I saw a nearby lamp flicker. I simply knew that it was a higher power talking to me. This was followed by another flickering light just next to the first one, and then a third. I followed, and this series of flickering lights continued. I was being led by the divine hand of God! My faith filled to the brim as I marched my way around the side streets in the industrial section on the east side of the Willamette River, where I crossed paths with many vehicles with flashing lights which guided me ever onward just like the crows assisted me during the daytime. Certain I was protected from even the monstrosities I had just encountered, I would continue following this slip stream of synchronicities back downtown. I was no longer tired, to the point that I even ran a bit when it felt like I was supposed to.

However, before noon of the next day, I would finally get the signal to sleep from an unlikely source. With the help of the crows, I found the Scientology Building, where an older lady was

sitting next to a table full of interesting things. Wanting to grow as much as I could, I went up and inquired about Scientology, saying I was in a cult before and that I'm of two minds about it. This led to us talking, which led to me failing a test the woman gave me, one about controlling my attention, which was impossible in that moment. My brain was filled with nothing but static, so of course I looked at her hot assistant who said, "Hey!" in a really alluring voice as she passed by me. Sensing that this was not my best, the woman giving the test said to me, "You work hard. Keep it up, but don't forget to rest sometimes."

That was the magick spell. With the echoes of her words now bouncing in my skull, I made my way to a parking lot not too far from the Scientology Building, where my body finally gave in, and I collapsed to sleep like a boulder until it was dark out. When I finally did wake up, I felt like a starship had hit me at maximum warp, but it was alright because the CIA let up on their brainwashing inputs for a little while. Likewise, I was allowed to sleep on a regular schedule from that point on, except when the aliens sent me on specialized missions, which were pretty frequent, but having survived a face to face encounter with the most unfathomable denizens of Hell, they were a cakewalk, comparatively.