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Opening extract from
Department 19

Written by
Will Hill

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DEPARTMENT 19

WILL HILL



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I have been one acquainted with the night.

I have walked out in rain – and back in rain.

I have outwalked the furthest city light.

Robert Frost

We want no proofs. We ask none to believe us.

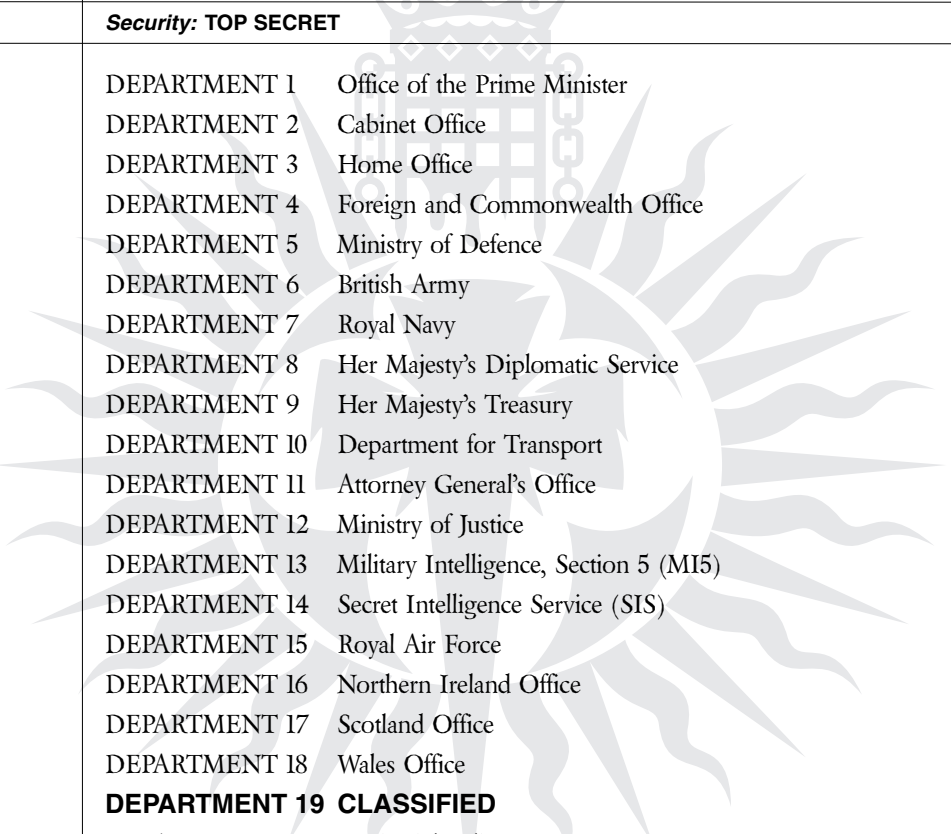
Abraham Van Helsing

MEMORANDUM

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)

PROLOGUE

*BRENCHLEY, KENT
3RD NOVEMBER 2007*

Jamie Carpenter was watching TV in the living room when he heard the tyres of his dad's car crunch across the gravel drive much, much earlier than usual. Jamie looked at the clock on the wall above the TV and frowned. It was quarter past five. Julian Carpenter had never, to the best of Jamie's memory, arrived home from work before seven o'clock, and even that was only on special occasions like his mum's birthday or when Arsenal were playing in the Champions League.

He hauled himself off the sofa, a tall, slightly awkward fourteen-year-old with a skinny frame and unruly brown hair, and went to the window. His dad's silver Mercedes was parked where it always was, in front of the garage that stood apart from their house. Jamie could see his father in the glow of the car's brake lights, pulling something out of the boot.

Maybe he's sick, Jamie thought. But as he looked closely at his dad, he didn't think he looked ill; his eyes were bright and wide in the red

light and he was moving quickly, putting things from the boot into his pockets. And Jamie noticed something else; he kept looking over his shoulder towards the road, as if he thought—

Something moved in the corner of Jamie's eye, near the oak tree at the bottom of the garden. He turned his head, gooseflesh breaking out suddenly along his arms and back, and he realised he was scared. *Something is wrong here*, he thought. *Very wrong.*

The tree looked the same as it always did, its gnarled trunk tilted to the left, its huge roots rippling the lawn and bending the garden wall out towards the road.

Whatever Jamie had seen, his father had seen it too. He was standing very still behind the car, staring up into the branches of the tree. Jamie looked closely at the tree and the long black shadows the moonlight cast across the grass. Whatever had moved wasn't moving any more. But as he stared, he realised that there was something different.

There were more shadows than there should be.

The tree's leaves were gone for the winter and the shadows should have been the straight lines of empty branches. But the dark patterns covering the lawn were thick and bulky, as though the branches were full of—

What? Full of what?

Jamie looked back to his dad. He suddenly wanted him in the house, right now. His father was still staring at the tree, holding something in his hand, something that Jamie couldn't quite make out.

Movement, again, by the tree.

Fear rose into Jamie's throat.

Come inside, Dad. Come inside now. There's something bad out there.

The shadows on the lawn began to move.

Jamie stared, too scared to scream, as the dark patterns began to

unfold. He looked up into the tree and now he could see the branches shifting as whatever was in there began to move, could hear the rustling of the bark as something – *lots of things, it sounds like there's lots of them* – started to move through the boughs of the oak.

He looked desperately at his father who was still staring into the tree, lit by the red lights from the car.

Why are you just standing there? Come inside, please, please.

Jamie turned his head to look at the tree. On the other side of the window a girl's face, pale, with dark red eyes and lips drawn into a snarl, stared through the glass, and he screamed so loudly he thought he would tear his vocal cords.

The face disappeared into the darkness and now there was movement as Jamie's father ran up the drive towards the house. The front door slammed open and Julian Carpenter burst into the living room at the same time his wife ran in from the kitchen.

"Get away from the windows, Jamie!" he shouted.

"Dad, what's—"

"Just do what I tell you and don't argue! There isn't time."

"Time for what, Julian?" asked Jamie's mum, her voice tight and high-pitched. "What's going on?"

Julian ignored her, taking out a mobile phone that Jamie didn't recognise. He punched numbers into the handset, and held it to his ear. "Frank? Yeah, I know. I know. What's the ETA? And that's accurate? OK. Take care of yourself."

He hung up the phone and grabbed Jamie's mum's hand.

"Julian, you're scaring me," she said, softly. "Please tell me what's happening."

He looked into his wife's pale, confused face. "I can't," he replied. "I'm sorry."

Jamie watched in a daze. He didn't understand what was happening

here, didn't understand it at all. What was moving through the darkness outside their house? Who was Frank? His dad didn't have any friends called Frank, he was sure of it.

The window behind Jamie exploded as a branch from the oak tree came through it like a missile and smashed their coffee table into splinters. This time his mum screamed as well.

"Get away from the windows!" bellowed Julian again. "Come over here next to me!"

Jamie scrambled up from the floor, grabbed his mum's hand and ran across the room towards his father. They backed up against the wall opposite the window, his dad placing an arm across him and his mother, before putting his right hand into his coat pocket and taking out a black pistol.

His mother squeezed his hand so tightly that he thought the bones would break. "Julian!" she screamed. "What are you doing with that gun?"

"Quiet, Marie," his father said, in a low voice.

In the distance, Jamie heard sirens approaching.

Thankyouthankyouthankyou. We're going to be all right.

Outside in the garden a grotesque high-pitched laugh floated through the night air.

"Hurry," Julian whispered. "Please hurry."

Jamie didn't know who his father was talking to, but it wasn't him or his mum. Then suddenly the garden was full of light and noise as two black vans, sirens blaring and lights spinning on their roofs, screeched into the drive. Jamie looked out at the oak tree, now lit bright red and blue. It was empty.

"They've gone!" he shouted. "Dad, they've gone!"

He looked up at his father, and the look on his face scared Jamie more than everything else that had happened so far.

Julian stepped away from his family and stood facing them. "I have to go," he said, his voice cracking. "Remember that I love you both more than anything in the world. Jamie, look after your mother. OK?"

He turned and headed towards the door.

Jamie's mum ran forward and grabbed his arm, spinning him round. "Where are you going?" she cried, tears running down her face. "What do you mean, look after me? What's happening?"

"I can't tell you," he replied, softly. "I have to protect you."

"From what?" his wife screamed.

"From me," he answered, his head lowered. Then he looked up at her and, with a speed Jamie had never seen before, twisted his arm free from her grip and pushed her backwards across the living room. She tripped over one of the smashed legs of the coffee table and Jamie ran forward and caught her, lowering her to the ground. She let out a horrible wailing cry and pushed his hands away, and he looked up in time to see his father walk out of the front door.

He shoved himself up off the floor, cutting his hand on the broken table glass, and ran to the window. Eight men wearing black body armour and carrying submachine guns stood in the drive, the barrels of their weapons pointed at Julian.

"Put your hands above your head!" one of the men shouted. "Do it now!"

Jamie's dad took a few steps and stopped. He looked up into the tree for a long moment before glancing quickly over his shoulder at the window and smiling at his son. Then he walked forward, pulled the pistol from his pocket and pointed it at the nearest man.

The world exploded into deafening noise and Jamie clamped his hands over his ears and screamed and screamed and screamed as the submachine guns spat fire and metal and shot his father dead.

TWO YEARS LATER

TEENAGE WASTELAND

Jamie Carpenter tasted blood and dirt and swore into the wet mud of the playing field.

“Get off me!” he gurgled.

A shrieking laugh rang out behind his head and his left arm was pushed further up his back, sending a fresh thunderclap of pain through his shoulder.

“Break it, Danny,” someone shouted. “Snap it off!”

“I just might,” replied Danny Mitchell, between gales of laughter. Then his voice was low and right next to Jamie’s ear. “I could, you know,” he whispered. “Easy.”

“Get off me, you fat—”

A huge hand, its fingers like sausages, gripped his hair and pushed his face back into the dirt. Jamie squeezed his eyes shut and flailed around with his right hand, trying to push himself up from the sucking mud.

“Someone grab his arm,” Danny shouted. “Hold it down.” A second later Jamie’s right arm was gripped at the wrist and pressed to the ground.

Jamie’s head started to ache as his body begged for oxygen. He couldn’t breathe, his nostrils full of sticky, foul-smelling mud, and he

couldn't move, his arms pinned and fifteen stone of Danny Mitchell sitting astride his back.

"That's enough!"

Jamie recognised the voice of Mr Jacobs, the English teacher.

My knight in shining armour. A fifty-year-old man with sweat patches and bad breath. Perfect.

"Mitchell, get off him. Don't make me tell you again!" the teacher shouted, and suddenly the pressure on Jamie's arm and the weight on his back were gone. He lifted his face from the mud and took a huge breath, his chest convulsing.

"We were just playing a game, sir," he heard Danny Mitchell say.

Great game. Really fun.

Jamie rolled over on to his back and looked round at the faces of the crowd who had gathered to watch his humiliation. They looked down at him with a mixture of excitement and disgust.

They don't even like Danny Mitchell. They just hate me more than they hate him.

Mr Jacobs hunkered down next to him.

"Are you all right, Carpenter?"

"I'm fine, sir."

"Mitchell tells me this was some kind of game. Is that true?"

Over the teacher's shoulder Jamie saw Danny looking at him, the warning clear in his face.

"Yes, sir. I think I lost, sir."

Mr Jacobs looked down at Jamie's mud-splattered clothes. "It certainly looks like it." The teacher held his hand out and Jamie took it and pulled himself up out of the mud with a loud sucking noise. A couple of people in the crowd giggled, and Mr Jacobs whirled round, his face red with anger.

"Get out of here, you vultures!" he shouted. "Get to your next

lesson right now or I'll see you all for detention at the end of the day!"

The crowd dispersed, leaving Jamie and Mr Jacobs standing alone on the field.

"Jamie," the teacher began, "if you ever want to talk about anything, you know where my office is."

"Talk about what, sir?" Jamie asked.

"Well, you know, your father, and... well, what happened."

"What did happen, sir?"

Mr Jacobs looked at him for a long moment, then dropped his eyes. "Let's go," he said. "You need to get cleaned up before next lesson. You can use the staff bathroom."

When the bell rang for the end of the day, Jamie made his way slowly up the school drive towards the gate. His instincts were normally sharp, especially where danger was concerned, but somehow Danny Mitchell had crept up behind him during afternoon break. He wasn't going to let that happen again.

He slowed his pace, drifting in and out of groups of children ambling towards buses and waiting cars, his pale blue eyes darting left and right, looking for an ambush.

His chest tightened when he saw Danny Mitchell off to his left, laughing his ridiculous laugh and waving his arms violently around as he made a point to his adoring gaggle of sycophants.

Jamie slipped between two buses and across the road, waiting for the shouts and running feet that would mean he had been seen, but they didn't come. Then he was into the neat, identical rows of houses that made up the estate he and his mother lived in, and out of sight of the school.

The Carpenters had moved three times in the two years since

Jamie's dad had died. Immediately after it happened the police had come to see them and told them that his father had been involved in a plot to sell intelligence to a British terrorist cell, classified intelligence from his job at the Ministry of Defence. The policemen had been kind, and sympathetic, assuring them there was no evidence that either he or his mother had known anything, but it didn't matter. The letters had started to arrive almost immediately, from patriotic neighbours who didn't want the family of a traitor living in their quiet *Daily Mail*-reading neighbourhood.

They had sold the house in Kent a few months later. Jamie didn't care. His memory of that awful night was hazy, but the tree in the garden scared him and he couldn't walk across the gravel drive where his father had died, choosing instead to walk around the edge of the lawn, keeping as much distance between him and the oak as possible, and jumping across the gravel on to the doorstep.

The face at the window, and the high, terrifying laugh that had drifted through the smashed window of the living room, he didn't remember at all.

After that they had moved in with his aunt and uncle in a village outside Coventry. A new school for Jamie, a job as a receptionist in a GP's surgery for his mother. But the rumours and stories followed them, and a brick was thrown through the kitchen window of his aunt's terraced house the same day Jamie broke the nose of a classmate who made a joke about his dad.

They moved on the following morning.

From there they caught a train to Leeds and found a house in a suburb that looked like it was made of Lego. When Jamie was expelled from his second school in three months, for persistent truancy, his

mother didn't even shout at him. She just handed in their notice to their landlord, and started packing their things.

Finally, they had ended up in this quiet estate on the outskirts of Nottingham. It was grey, cold and miserable. Jamie, an outdoor creature, a country boy at heart, was forced to roam the concrete underpasses and supermarket car parks, his hood up and pulled tight around his face, his iPod thumping in his ears, keeping to himself and avoiding the gangs that congregated on the shadowy corners of this suburban wasteland. Jamie always avoided the shadows. He didn't know why.

He walked quickly through the estate, along quiet roads full of nondescript houses and second-hand cars. He passed a small group of girls, who stared at him with open hostility. One of them said something he couldn't quite hear, and her friends laughed. He walked on.

He was sixteen years old, and miserably, crushingly lonely.

Jamie closed the front door of the small semi-detached house he and his mother lived in as quietly as possible, intending to head straight to his room and change out of his muddy clothes. He got halfway up the stairs before his mother called his name.

"What, Mum?" he shouted.

"Can you come in here, please, Jamie?"

Jamie swore under his breath and stomped back down the stairs, across the hall and into the living room. His mother was sitting in the chair under the window, looking at him with such sadness that his throat clenched.

"What's going on, Mum?" he asked.

"I got a call from one of your teachers today," she replied. "Mr Jacobs."

God, why can't he mind his own business? "Oh yeah? What'd he want?"

“He said you got in a fight this afternoon.”

“He’s wrong.”

Jamie’s mother sighed. “I’m worried about you,” she said.

“Don’t be. I can look after myself.”

“That’s what you always say.”

“Maybe you should start to listen then.”

His mother’s eyes narrowed.

That hurt, didn’t it? Good. Now you can shout at me and I can go upstairs and we don’t have to say anything else to each other tonight.

“I miss him too, Jamie,” his mother said, and Jamie recoiled like he’d been stung. “I miss him every day.”

Jamie spat his reply around a huge lump in his throat. “Good for you,” he said. “I don’t. Ever.”

His mother looked at him and tears formed in the corners of her eyes. “You don’t mean that.”

“Believe me, I do. He was a traitor, and a criminal, and he ruined both our lives.”

“Our lives aren’t ruined. We’ve still got each other.”

Jamie laughed. “Yeah. Look how well that’s working out for us both.”

The tears spilled from his mother’s eyes, and she lowered her head as they ran down her cheeks and fell gently to the floor. Jamie looked at her, helplessly.

Go to her. Go and hug her and tell her it’s going to be all right.

Jamie wanted to, wanted nothing more than to kneel beside his mother and bridge the gap that had been growing steadily between them since the night his father had died. But he couldn’t. Instead he stood, frozen to the spot, and watched his mother cry.

2

SINS OF THE FATHER

Jamie woke up the next morning, showered and dressed, and slipped out of the front door without seeing his mother. He walked his usual route through the estate, but when he reached the turning that led to his school he carried straight on, through the little retail park with its McDonald's and its DVD rental shop, across the graffiti-covered railway bridge, strewn with broken glass and flattened discs of chewing gum, past the station and the bike racks, down towards the canal. He wasn't going to school today. Not a chance.

Why the hell did she get so upset? Because I don't miss Dad? He was a loser. Can't she see that?

Jamie clenched his fists tightly as he walked down the concrete steps to the towpath. This section of canal was perfectly straight for more than a mile, meaning Jamie could see danger approaching from a safe distance. But although he kept his eyes peeled, the only people he saw were dog-walkers and the occasional homeless person, sheltering under the low road bridges that crossed the narrow canal, and he gradually began to let his mind wander.

He could never have articulated to anyone, least of all his mother, the hole his father's death had left in his life. Jamie loved his mother, loved her so much that he hated himself for the way he treated her,

for pushing her away when it was obvious that she needed him, when he knew he was all she had left. But he couldn't help it; the anger that churned inside him screamed for release and his mum was the only target he had.

The person it deserved to be aimed at was gone.

His dad, his cowardly loser of a dad, had taken him to London to watch Arsenal, bought him the Swiss Army knife he could no longer bear to carry in his pocket, let him fire his air rifle in the fields behind their old house, helped him build his tree house, and watched cartoons with him on Saturday mornings. Things his mum would never do, and he would never want her to. Things he missed more than he would ever have admitted.

He was furious with his father for leaving him and his mum, for making them leave the old house he had loved and move to this awful place, leaving his friends behind.

Furious for the glee he saw in the faces of bullies at every new school he was forced to start, when the whispers began and they realised they had been presented with the perfect victim: a skinny new kid whose father had tried to help terrorists attack his own country.

Furious with his mum, for her refusal to see the truth about her husband, furious with the teachers who tried to understand him and asked him to talk about his dad and his feelings.

Furious.

Jamie emerged from his thoughts and saw the sun high in the sky, struggling to push its pale light through the grey cloud cover. He pulled his phone out of his pocket and saw that it was nearly midday. Ahead of him a flattened trail led up the embankment into a small park, surrounded by tall birch trees. The park was always empty; it was one of his favourite places.

He sat down in the middle of the grass, away from the trees and

the short shadows they were casting in the early afternoon sun. He hadn't picked up his packed lunch because he would have had to go into the kitchen and deal with his mother, so he had filled his backpack with a can of Coke and some chocolate and sweets. The Coke was warm, and the chocolate was half-melted, but Jamie didn't care.

He finished eating, tucked his bag under his head and lay down and closed his eyes. He was suddenly exhausted, and he didn't want to think any more.

Fifteen minutes. Just a nap. Half an hour at the most.

"Jamie."

His eyes flew open and he saw black night sky above him. Sitting up, he rubbed his eyes and looked around at the dark park. He trembled in the cold of the evening and his skin began to crawl as he realised he was sitting at the point where the shadows cast by the trees met one another.

"Jamie."

He whirled around. "Who's there?" he shouted.

A giggle rang through the park.

"Jamie." The voice was lilting, like his name was being sung and allowed to echo through the trees. It was a girl's voice.

"Where are you? This isn't funny!"

The giggle again.

Jamie stood up and did a slow turn. He couldn't see anyone, but beyond the first ring of trees the park was pitch black, and the trees themselves were wide and gnarled.

Plenty of room for someone to hide behind.

Something was tapping at the back of his mind, something to do with a girl and a window, but he couldn't remember.

Something crunched underfoot, behind him.

He spun round, heart pounding.

Nothing.

"Jamie."

The voice was closer this time, he knew it was.

"Show yourself!" he yelled.

"OK," said a voice right beside his ear and he screamed and turned, fists flailing. He felt his right hand connect solidly with something and adrenaline roared in his veins, then froze.

On the ground in front of him was a girl, about his own age, holding her nose. A thin stream of blood was running on to her lip, and he saw her tongue flick out and lick it away.

"Oh God," Jamie said. "I'm so, so sorry. Are you OK?"

"You dick," the girl sniffled from behind her hand. "What did you do that for?"

"I'm sorry," he repeated. "Why did you creep up on me?"

"I was just trying to scare you," she said, sulkily.

"Why?"

"For fun. I didn't mean anything by it."

Something else was rattling around Jamie's mind, but he couldn't put his finger on it.

"Well, you did scare me. So, congratulations, I guess."

"Thanks," snorted the girl. She held out her hand. "Help me up?"

"Oh, sorry, of course," Jamie replied, and reached down and pulled her to her feet. She brushed herself down, wiped her nose with the back of her hand, and stood in front of him.

Jamie looked at her. She was very, very pretty, dark hair tumbling down her shoulders, pale skin and dark brown eyes. She saw him looking and smiled, and he blushed.

"See anything you like?" she asked.

"Sorry, I wasn't staring, I was just, er..."

“Yes you were. It’s OK. I’m Larissa.”

“I’m...”

Tumblers fell into place in Jamie’s mind and fear overwhelmed him.

“You used my name,” he said, taking a step backwards. “How do you know my name?”

“It doesn’t matter, Jamie,” she said, and then her beautiful brown eyes turned a dark, terrible red. “It doesn’t matter any more.”

She moved like liquid, covering the distance between them in an instant. She took his face in her hands, with a grip that felt horribly, immovably strong.

“Nothing matters any more,” she whispered, and he looked into her red eyes and was lost.