

THE DARKEST HOUR

Written by

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EXT. RUINS - SUNSET

Old stone ruins stand in defiance of the encroaching trees and plants, a vague impression of the structures that once stood there.

JACOB BROHM (40s, hiking gear, rain hat) surveys an empty space that might once have been a large room. He fixes his gaze on the remains of a doorway.

JACOB (PRE-LAP)
What did you find there?

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A PRIEST (30s, black shirt, clerical collar) sits at a table with a pained, faraway look, a glass of water and a beer untouched between them.

PRIEST
Do you believe in the Devil, Mr.
Brohm?

Across from him, Jacob sits in rapt attention.

JACOB
Is that what you think you saw?

PRIEST
No. But it was a demon.

Jacob leans away from that statement.

SUSAN (PRE-LAP)
It was a monster.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER - MORNING

SUSAN (20s, Black, drug-addled, grimy) fidgets nervously in the booth. She scours her empty breakfast plate for crumbs.

SUSAN
I know how that sounds. I'm not
crazy. It was a monster.

Jacob patiently sips his coffee and waits.

SUSAN
I wasn't on drugs then, you know.
That came...after.

JACOB

What did the monster look like?

Susan pulls a worn journal out of a dirty knapsack. She tentatively slides it to Jacob. He opens it.

Pages of rough sketches of a tall, gangly humanoid. Arms too long, ending in clawed fingers. Waist too thin. A demonic face with pointed teeth, wide eyes, serpentine tongue, and pointed ears on either side of its hairless head.

JACOB

You and Billy were streamers.

SUSAN

Ghost hunters. We went to investigate after what happened to that little girl.

EXT. WOOD CABIN - DAY

MARK (40s) splits a log with one stroke of his axe. He wipes sweat from his brow.

MARK

You ever feel helpless? I mean really helpless, like there isn't a damn thing you can do?

Jacob stands back, keeping his eye on the axe.

MARK

You have any kids?

JACOB

A daughter. She killed herself.

MARK

Then you know what it's like to lose the most precious thing in the world, the thing you would die to protect. When that thing grabbed her, I tried to stop it. I tried to fight it. I was savage, a fucking animal.

He swings the axe suddenly, with such force it's embedded deep in the moss-covered stump.

MARK

It never even looked at me. I had to watch as it carried my little girl through that door, and then she was gone, like she'd never even been born.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

A fire crackles within the ruined chamber. The crumbling walls are alive with shadows.

Jacob drinks hot soup from a metal cup. He looks at the empty doorway.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER - MORNING

Jacob sips his coffee, pondering.

JACOB

I saw the video.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT - VIDEO

BILLY (20s, Mexican, rain jacket, cargo pants) enters the ruined chamber. The overlay reads 2:58AM August 11, 2018.

BILLY (ON VIDEO)

This is where he said it went through.

The camera is set down and Susan walks into frame. She's focused, confident, nothing like the junkie in the diner.

SUSAN (ON VIDEO)

Motion sensors set, infrared and ultraviolet rolling. Ultrasonics picking up the usual so far.

BILLY (ON VIDEO)

If we're right, something should happen in the next minute.

They go still, watching the empty doorway. The video time clicks over to 2:59AM.

BILLY (ON VIDEO)

Whoa! What the fuck is that?

Billy is suddenly lifted into the air by an unseen entity. He punches and struggles to no avail.

BILLY (ON VIDEO)
It's got me! Do something!

SUSAN (ON VIDEO)
Billy!

Susan grabs a tripod and swings. It bounces off empty air.

Billy pounds his fists on the entity, and then he crosses the doorway and vanishes.

SUSAN (ON VIDEO)
Billy! No!

Susan runs after him, but it's just an empty doorway.

INT. TRUCK STOP DINER - MORNING

Susan recoils, shaking off the memory.

SUSAN
Then you saw. I tried.

Jacob flips through drawings in the journal.

SUSAN
I know what you're going to say. We had a million subscribers. When that leaked you know what they all said? That it was fake. A hoax. A gimmick. It was REAL.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Jacob takes a sip of his beer.

PRIEST
I'm an investigator for the church. I see hoaxes all the time. The rest of the time it's people seeing what they want to believe.

JACOB
Had you ever seen a demon before that night?

PRIEST
Not walking the Earth like that. It shouldn't be allowed.

JACOB
What time was that at?

PRIEST
12:20AM, April 21st, 2012.

EXT. WOOD CABIN - DAY

MARK
2:38AM, March 20th, 2015.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT - VIDEO

CU of time stamp shows 2:59AM August 11th, 2018.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

Jacob checks his phone. 3:53AM, June 10, 2021.

JACOB
One minute.

He rubs his hands over the fire.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Jacob quietly weeps in the booth, his beer empty.

PRIEST
You can't do this. It won't bring
your daughter back. Even if you're
taken to Hell, you can't expect to
find your daughter.

JACOB
I won't stop until I do.

The priest regards him solemnly.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

Jacob stands and faces the doorway.

JACOB
Come on, you bastard. Every three
years in the darkest hour. Well,
here I am. Come and take me.

Jacob's hands curl into fists, ready. His eyes suddenly go wide and all thought of fight flees his face.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jacob sits at an empty table, unshaven, sunken eyes, a shadow of the man he was. He's been crying.

JACOB

Have you ever looked into the face
of pure evil?

A PODCASTER (20s, geeky, overweight) leans closer, hanging on every word. He shakes his head in reply.

JACOB

It oozed malice. It's gaze was
contempt. It looked right through
me, right into my soul, and it
laughed. It was the worst sound I'd
ever heard.

PODCASTER

Then what happened?

JACOB

It walked right past me. I went
after it, attacked it, tried
everything I could think of to get
its attention, to focus on me. But
it found that camper instead. I
even ran through the gate when it
did, but it still wouldn't take me.

PODCASTER

Why do you think that is?

Jacob's pained look shows how much he has lost of himself.

JACOB

Because that is how it could hurt
me the most. It doesn't go after
the most vulnerable, or the one
that deserves it. It leaves behind
the one with the most to lose.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

The Podcaster hurries towards the parking lot. He makes a call on his cell.

PODCASTER

Hey, it's me. It's the same as the
others. It's happening again, next
month, and we're gonna be there.
We'll call it "The Darkest Hour."