

AVAM
PRESENTS

DEAD CITY

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SAMPLE CHAPTER

By

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As we start our sample, Sarah has just climbed over the wall and ventured into Dead City, where untold horrors await her...

* * * *

The roads of Dead City were not cared for as those outside the wall. Trash piled up, detritus escaping from the mounds on the wind and whistling along unkempt roads. Buildings long forgotten by living hands looked down on her with sad cracked-window eyes, like abandoned geriatrics in an old age home, hoping the next face that passes might be familiar, and yet it never would be. The street lighting flickered, a sickly neon yellow glow cast over her, as Sarah began a steady, purposeful walk. Reaching back into her bag, she withdrew a hand-drawn map, a line taking her from the point of arrival to her destination, sticking to main roads, avoiding alleyways where God-knows-what might be lying in wait.

As she passed boarded up buildings and side streets her stride hastened, the sound of unknown fiends echoing around her. Growls and mutters, whispers and whimpers, she couldn't imagine what savage monsters lay beyond her line of sight, and didn't wish to find out.

Finally, her destination was in view. An old casino, abandoned before the walls were built. Bold signage in a rainbow of colours, faux-velvet curtains withered by time and moths hung over the windows. Whatever lay beyond them was not for the view of casual passers-by.

Approaching the entrance, a behemoth of an unman emerged from the shadows of the doorway, his face half decayed, a worm nonchalantly weaving its way through his septum like a slimy living nose ring.

“What have we got here?” said the brute, his voice scratching, wheezy breath through lungs long ago worn through.

“I have an appointment.” she replied, trying to hide the quiver on her lips, the intense fear riding through her body.

“Right this way.” he gestured for her to enter, a smile crawling its way up what was left of his putrefying face.

She entered, followed by the slowly decomposing ogre, past rusting slot machines and dust covered roulette tables, to a room at the back with a sign marking it as 'private'.

She turned to the bouncer, who gestured with a giant, festering hand for her to continue onwards.

The room deep in the heart of the casino was

vastly different to everything else she had seen in Dead City, a tasteless opulence of velvet flocked wallpaper, furniture carved of oak, mahogany and pine all nestled together, unscathed by time and neglect, but mismatching nonetheless. At the centre of the room, behind a large wooden desk, sat the Necromancer.

Older – he would often tell people – than London itself. His long, unkempt hair had centuries earlier taken a life of its own, weaving its way under his skin, burrowing deep and continuing to grow out, over (or perhaps through) his eyes, burying itself back in at his jaw and out again at the neck, where it rested on his shoulders. His vision appeared all but obscured. “But I still see everything.” he would say, when some fool would query it. Not long before the Necromancer had his bouncer tear off a limb and insert it into the fool where an entire limb should not fit under normal circumstances.

He offered her a seat and Sarah took it, silent, unsure how to word her request. Her heart was beating so hard in her chest, she wondered if she could talk at all if she tried.

“What do you wish of me?” he hissed, a sickly smile crawling up his atrophying cheeks.

“It's my father” Sarah replied. “He's sick.”

“Mine is not to heal the sick.” hissed the creature. “But to return the life.”

“He's dying. Nobody can help him.” she paused, hoping she didn't cause offence. “Nobody alive, that is.” she tried to maintain eye contact with where she thought his eyes might be.

“Nobody alive indeed.” another smile. “You have what I asked?” his fingers rapped on the table one by one in anticipation of the gift she had for him. The young girl reached into her bag and withdrew a jar. A thick red stain washed up against the glass, trickling back down slowly as she rested it on the table. He took it, twisting off the lid and inhaled deeply.

“Aah, it's so hard to acquire fresh menstrual blood these days.” he said, sealing the jar and placing it in a drawer of the desk, opening another to find her purchase, taking a vial of luminescent yellow liquid and placing it in her hand.

“This will ward off your progenitor's death... for now.” he said, as she stuffed it into the bag, and turned to leave.

“Thank you” she muttered, hurrying herself out of the door.

The streets away from the casino were still empty as she strode back to her point of arrival, but the

presence of those that lay beyond the shadows had grown. The rumours of fresh meat seemed to have spread amongst the unliving, and the ravenous creatures were lusting from their coves in alleys and behind window panes.

Her walk became hurried, as she looked around, feeling eyes from the darkness watching her from every angle. She saw nothing, but imagined everything, every nightmare, every possible monster under the bed, every demon or devil she had ever seen in a movie.

The *click-clack* of her tiny feet on the pavement drew them out, beckoned them forth, and without thinking, she broke into a run. The map in her hands, she turned a corner, speeding straight, then another corner, looking behind her at every possible moment, in case she were followed. Dropping the map as she came to the last turn, the girl rounded the corner, as ice cold skeletal hands grabbed her. She tried to scream, but there was no voice in her throat, an inhuman, decaying beast stood over her. His back hunched, yet still he stood almost two feet taller than her, jaw hanging loose as if dislocated and never put back into place. It looked like it was holding on for dear life at the base of its skull by threads of fragile skin that, like the rest of

his epidermis, was practically translucent, useless grey veins etched along it as if drawn in pencil. The living nightmare gasped at her with breath whistling through holes in his chest, guttural sounds with the scent of rotting eggs that she heard as:

“Freeeeesh meeeeeaaaat!”

She struggled for freedom, as he lunged his head towards her, useless jaw flapping as he arched his neck. She felt his dry tongue scrape up the side of her face like sandpaper, and a gust of gentle, stinking wind as he inhaled her. Sarah's limbs went limp and she began to lose consciousness. Her mind started going blank, the fear dissipating, every feeling vanishing, and she wondered with her last thoughts if this experience was her soul being sucked from her body.

Then from nowhere, a flash, and a unholy *crunch*. The beast's grip on her loosened and all she could feel was falling, then nothingness.

When she came to, she didn't know how much time had passed. The ghoul's body was crawling around in the road in search of its moaning head, which was lodged in a drain farther down the street. Looking up, a silhouette stood over her. The rim of a trilby obscured her rescuer's face, long coat trailing in the wind, his right hand clutched a baton with

electricity dancing on the tip. He reached down for her hand and helped her up, his grip strong and warm. She looked into his eyes and saw life.

“I don't know what you're doing here, or whether that's contraband...” he said, referring to the vial of luminescent liquid, which had fallen out of her bag during the assault. “Now get yourself back over the wall, and don't *ever* come back here again.”

His face showed no signs of comfort or care, as if he wasn't helping her because it was the right thing to do, but because it was his job. He looked around to the darkness, to the creatures massing beyond it. The sounds of the unseen demons faded as they withdrew, as if knowing she was under his protection. He didn't make an introduction, nor did he attempt conversation as he lead her to her point of entry and watched her climb back up, until she disappeared over the top of the wall followed by the rope.

“Same thing every night...” he said under his breath, as he turned from the wall resumed his rounds.

* * * *

After the walls first went up, it soon became apparent that the unliving could not be left to their own devices. New York's Dead City collapsed almost as soon as it was up and running, as former Mafia

Dons created pulse-deficient crime families on the inside, their living heirs supporting them from the outside.

The result was all out war, but a war unlike any other, in which none of the combatants could die. Edward Koch, who had been Mayor for only a few years, had dedicated himself to cleaning up the city and city-within-the-city. His campaign banners declared 'Respecting Americans, Pulse Or Not', which was a great tagline, but in practice was more challenging to uphold.

When the turf war deep in the NYDC threatened to take the walls down, he was told he had only one decision; burn it down and start again. The city was napalmed, every unliving who inhabited the walls had the flesh melted from their bones, the army entering shortly after to literally crush them all to dust.

"Dust don't start wars!" one general said to the news cameras, after the city was locked down.

Everyone decided he was an asshole, and should not be allowed to talk to the public ever again.

The result of NYDC's fall was the unanimous decision that someone with no agenda should keep the peace, someone with a pulse. A liaison between the living and unliving. And although volunteers were far and few between, there was a noticeable decrease in uprisings and incidents since the program had been initiated.

* * * *

Jon Gilligan was the living liaison for London's Dead City. He strutted the streets in his long overcoat and trilby, playing the character of a noir detective, as he had done for as long as he could remember. It started as a game, a fantasy to while away the hours, but soon it became who he was. Philip Marlowe meets Van Helsing was how he

pictured himself, Sam Spade crossed with Solomon Kane. Or when he was having a bad day, Scooby Doo stapled to The Ghostbusters. When not coming up with pop culture comparisons, he narrated internally to pass the time.

'The dame safe, he knew his work for the night wasn't done – there were always more dames in danger, crooks round every corner...'

There were neither. The next few hours passed as they always did, walking the circumference of the City, a stretch of almost eleven miles with barely any interactions other than passing the occasional walking corpse who invariably nodded politely, as Jon looked for potential squabbles between unliving that he might diffuse.

When his circuit for the night was finally complete, Jon returned to the office the government had provided for him, the window on the door painted with his name and title.

*Jon Gilligan
Living Liaison*

Not that he needed a sign on the door, everyone in Dead City knew who he was and where he worked, but this was etched on the glass at his insistence,

part of his fictional alter-ego, the private dick.

ABOUT ABAM.INFO

ABAM, or 'A Book A Month', is a terrible experiment to see how long a former screenwriter can produce a original novella every month before he goes insane.

Alternating between dramatic and comedic prose, the books will be released on on the first Monday of every month in print, audiobook and as ebooks.

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Please visit the links below for more information and forthcoming releases.

<http://amazon.com/author/leeisserow>

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Thank you kindly for being an observer to my mental deterioration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lee Isserow is an award-winning screenwriter and filmmaker, with over fifteen years spent trawling the back streets and dark alleys of the entertainment industry.

He's pretty sure he has some traits of autism, because he's been constantly working and obscenely prolific for the entire duration, writing over a hundred screenplays, many of which he's adapting into forthcoming ABAMs, because very few people are willing to turn them into movies. For now.

He lives in Liverpool, England because he accidentally bought a house there. He's not quite sure how that happened – but assumes part of that is because he used to drink a lot.

If you'd like to watch the pretty things he makes, you may find them at Leelsserow.com.

You may also interact, call him names, and read his awful jokes and observations on Twitter; [@Lee_Isserow](https://twitter.com/Lee_Isserow).

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR



At 21, Cassie's life sucks. So on a whim, she starts farming her decisions out to Twitter.

Before she knows it, the lives of her family and friends hang in the balance, and she's racing against the clock to discover who's pulling her strings.