

FROM THE CLASSIC ERA OF DOCTOR WHO

LETHBRIDGE

STEWART

SPECIAL

VAMPIRES OF THE  
**NIGHT**

CHRIS THOMAS

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# LETHBRIDGE STEWART

Chris Thomas



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Matatov trudged on through the snow, the flakes stinging his face a thousand times over as the wind blew harshly through the air. He was tired. He ached. He was hungry. *Curse being a lowly peshkon. Curse the Red Army of the Workers and Peasants. Curse the Great Patriotic War. Curse Stalin. And curse Hitler, too.* He sighed inside. Matatov was lost and he knew it. He should be cursing his own stupidity. The Motherland needed to be protected.

The pack on his back weighed heavily on him. He wasn't even sure he was still in the Soviet Union. Had he possibly advanced over the border into Poland? At least he was alive. That was more than he could say for his comrades. Ambushed from behind. The continuing blizzard meant such poor visibility that the Nazis had had the upper hand. But how they had managed to see was anyone's guess. Maybe they had invented some advanced device to improve vision?

And Matatov was still wondering how he'd escaped. He had fired back with his Mosin–Nagant as best he could. But he'd barely been able to see a metre or so in front of him. He was just firing wildly. Guiltily, he wondered if he had accidentally shot down any of his comrades. 'Fight to the death!' was the instruction from the Komkor. But some primal instinct had overtaken Matatov's body when he realised it was a lost cause. He ran, far, far into the night and snow, turning back to fire into the chaos. With his heart pounding, adrenaline racing and chest bursting, he didn't know where he was going – he was just getting away. To anywhere. Eventually, the sound of the gunfire and chaos stopped.

That's when he knew. They were all gone. No one left.

He was sure the Nazis would be after him. But it was hours later. Did they think no one had escaped? It was hard to see, after all. But it wasn't like them to give up, either, if there was a chance the enemy was still at large.

Deep in thought, on edge, Matatov kept blindly stumbling forward. If he just kept going, he would come across something eventually. A fence, a road, a house perhaps? Unless he was walking in circles, of course. Which would be very easy to do, given the snow. But there was no other option. He had no rations and it was essential he find food before fatigue set in. He cursed again at his situation, his inner turmoil bubbling and boiling furiously. His boot struck something in the snow. A dead animal, maybe? Frozen to death?

A paranoid thought struck Matatov. *Could it be a Nazi soldier? Waiting to attack him?*

Shaking his head, he realised how stupid he was becoming – if it had been, the soldier would have heard him coming and shot him instantly. So, what was it?

Crouching down, he started to move snow away from the lump. His already freezing hands went instantly numb but he ignored it, shovelling into the ice. Eventually, Matatov had exposed enough to see it wasn't an animal. It was a body. Not a threat to anyone any more. But as he dug further, he realised something was wrong, very wrong.

No. No. *This can't be.*

He recoiled in horror, dry-retching as he stumbled backwards. This was beyond the horrors of an already

horrible war. What in the name of Lenin could have done that to a human body?

Matatov had heard stories of what the Nazis were capable of. Even some sectors of the Red Army. But this was beyond abhorrent...

Overcoming his initial shock, Matatov took in the gruesome sight before him. The body was ripped open, all manner of organs and insides hanging out, frozen in time. Like somebody had cut the soldier open and torn out its innards completely randomly. Despite the (now-frozen) blood-soaked uniform, he recognised the man as a fellow comrade. But it was the placement of the body's frozen hand that bothered him... Could the soldier have actually been gouging himself?

It must have been some form of torture. To hold a man at gunpoint, get him to cut himself open and then pull his insides out. He wouldn't have put it past them. But in the dark recesses of his mind, he remembered whispered stories from the battlefield. Shared among comrades late at night, on the rare occasion they weren't on the march. Some creature, going from battlefield to battlefield, ripping bodies apart and feasting on the organs within. Not differentiating between the Nazis or the Allies. Or any poor soul who might cross their path. 'Vampires of the night', they were called. But Matatov, like many of his comrades, had dismissed these stories as wild rumour. Rumours spread to show there was more to be scared of than the enemy.

Matatov knew there was little he could do with such thoughts. He had to focus on what was happening now.

There was a very real possibility the Nazis who had killed his comrades might still be looking for him. It wasn't the time to focus on some vague horror story to help soldiers go into battle.

Freezing, starving, lost... survival was key. There was nothing left for it. Matatov knew what he had to do.

Trying to suppress his revulsion and gag reflex, he bent down to the frozen body and pulled out what he thought was a kidney. Closing his eyes, he brought it his mouth.

*Survival*, he told himself. *This is survival.*

Edward Travers wasn't sure what the Fourth Operational Corps had in store for him this time. Hence the briefing, he guessed. While he understood the importance of the war effort, of stopping the Nazi scourge, he couldn't help but think he was being used a little. Once again, he cursed Tobias Kinsella for dragging him into it all. He was pleased his background in science was being engaged – and the work *could* be stimulating – but it was as if he was being manipulated into using science for a darker purpose. At least he was being sought-after for his skills these days, rather than being mocked like ten years ago. And since Margaret's passing, he had to ensure Anne and Alun were provided for. *Wonder how they're doing in the country?*

Travers thought about the thousands of children that had been evacuated. *The Blitz, the Nazis, Hitler...* As he pondered the current state of the world, he arrived at his destination.

The Corps supposedly gave him *carte blanche* but, despite being a primarily scientific organisation, its military backing meant he had to follow orders. Travers walked down a stairwell, through a labyrinth of corridors, to find General Dornan in a concrete bunker, protected from the bombs. Despite the war, the efficiencies of day-to-day office life were still maintained.

‘Glad you could make it, Travers.’

*Is Dornan trying to be amusing?*

‘You asked me to come so I could be briefed on my next assignment.’

Dornan eyed Travers up and down. ‘So I did. But anything can happen at the moment. You never know what loss or gain we will incur next. Sit down.’

Travers did as he was told. He noted the chairs were completely mismatched. It was a case of making use of whatever you could nowadays.

‘The Russians have been up to something,’ Dornan said, knowingly. His eyes met Travers’.

Travers had heard the rumours, of course. But they were allies... He responded with a raised eyebrow.

‘You don’t have to play dumb, Travers. Most people know we’re allies out of necessity, not goodwill. Hate to think what they’d be like if we weren’t working together against a common enemy.’

‘The Baltic states again?’

Dornan shook his head. ‘Atrocious. But no. More your line of work.’

Travers said nothing. How could his line of work ever be compared to whatever the Red Army may be up to?



‘Don’t be offended,’ Dornan said, as if he could read Travers’ mind. ‘I’m talking about science. They have scientists too, you know. No matter what side you’re on, technology plays a crucial role in assisting military might.’

Travers, once more, decided not to respond. Obviously, Dornan was warming to his theme.

‘What do you think would help the war effort, out there on the battlefield?’

Presuming it wasn’t a rhetorical question, Travers replied, ‘Better weapons? More men?’

Dornan snorted derisively. ‘We don’t just need more soldiers, although that would help.’

‘Then what?’

‘More stamina. Specifically, soldiers with more stamina.’

‘And how do we do that?’

‘That’s where you come in.’

Shuffling around his makeshift desk, Dornan passed over several files all marked ‘Top Secret’. Taking the files, Travers couldn’t fathom why they weren’t just in plain folders. Indicating they were important was a red rag to a bull, surely? He started flicking through them.

‘The orders have come from Churchill himself. I don’t know where he gets his intel from. It’s like he has someone in a box who can pop out on the other side of the world in a heartbeat.’

The comment triggered a memory in Travers. A vast snowy mountainside in the Himalayas... Det-Sen Monastery... The Doctor and his blue box... Some days he thought he must have imagined it. Or been

hallucinating, due to the thin mountain atmosphere. But deep down, he knew it had been real. The silver sphere still in his possession proved it.

He studied the papers. It seemed the Soviet scientists had been working on something to make their men last longer in the field. Possibly even to create the ultimate soldier. Sometimes the parallels between the Soviets and the Nazis sent a shiver down Travers' spine.

'Some sort of sleep deprivation experiments, it seems,' Dornan noted, trying to summarise. 'With less or even no sleep, think how much more an individual soldier could achieve.'

'But what about fatigue? The basic need to re-charge the body?'

'Our reports indicate the Soviet experiment has been bypassing that need somehow. We want you to explore a similar line of scientific enquiry.'

No sleep. Was it possible? Travers immediately flinched at the idea. The only way to find out would be to put a human through some horrible experiment. Surely that would make him no better than the Nazis or the Reds? He didn't mention that his expertise wasn't in the medical sciences, as surely Dornan knew that. Perhaps the General believed Travers' eclectic dabbling was enough? Certainly, Travers knew a few basics but, beyond that, other men were better qualified. The only motivation Travers could think of was that he was expendable, in the case of something going wrong. Despite his reservations, he continued to listen to what Dornan had to say.

‘We’ve set up a base, out in the country. It’s all ready to go – you need to go in and take charge of setting up the experiment. Then monitor the results so, hopefully, your findings can be used in the field. Everything we know about the Soviet experiment is in the files. We’ve replicated the set-up as best we can, based on the intelligence that has come back to us. Obviously, there are some gaps in the knowledge but, with your scientific mind, I’m sure you’ll be able to piece it all together.’

If Dornan thought flattery would somehow bypass Travers’ ethical misgivings, he was mistaken. But Travers also knew he was working for the military now and had to follow orders. So he kept his next question fairly tame.

‘Who would be part of this experiment?’

Dornan coughed and looked straight at him. ‘Several of our brave men have volunteered. Soldiers in the British army who are willing to do anything to stop this Nazi insanity.’

There was a tone in Dornan’s voice, as if he was insinuating that Travers wasn’t fully committed to the cause. He thought of asking more questions but knew it would be useless. A commitment to end the war, by whatever means necessary, was Dornan’s goal.

*Some good has to come out of this,* Travers thought. *But can the end justify the means?* He was thinking like a scientist and, to a military man, science was simply a tool to be deployed. One of many strategies to be used. Nothing more. No curiosity merely for the sake of it.

‘You have your assignment, Mr Travers,’ Dornan said, clearly wanting to conclude the meeting.

‘I see. And do I have the pleasure of Eileen Le Croisette this time?’

Now it was Dornan’s turn to raise an eyebrow. ‘No, Travers, you do not. You may have recommended her to the Corps, but the section officer is not your personal assistant. You’d do well to remember that.’ Silence a moment, and then, ‘You will be picked up, as per the instructions in the files, and taken to the location. You are not to be made aware of the location. You will simply be taken there, undercover.’

And with that final note, Travers left the strange underground bunker and was on his way.

So it was, on General Dornan’s orders, that Travers found himself barrelling down an unknown stretch of road in a military vehicle. He hadn’t signed up for the soldier’s way of life – his hand had been forced, his own investigations and experiments re-directed into the war effort. At least it was still science. And there had been plenty of interesting twists and turns since he had become attached to the Fourth Operational Corps.

After what seemed like an eternity, they reached their destination. Travers was weary and tired. All he’d had to eat were some barely edible army rations that had done little to satisfy his stomach. A voice from the front of the vehicle cried out.

‘We’re here. Gerrouit!’

Travers threw himself over the canopy at the back and landed on the ground with his belongings, not quite correctly. Before he had properly righted himself, the

unnamed driver was off, and Travers was left in the pitch black of night.

Wise precaution, of course. Lights made you a sitting duck should one of the Nazis' Arados fly over. Unlikely out here, but you could never tell where the enemy might strike.

Gloomily, Travers trudged forward in what he guessed was the right direction. Was it not within the realm of even military logic to send someone to meet him, just in case he got lost? If this was such an important experiment, having the main scientist trip and break his neck before it even started might be difficult for General Dornan might to explain to his superiors. Or even Churchill.

'Private Barnett, sir!'

As if reading his mind, a soldier had appeared out of thin air, frightening the wits out of him in the process. His heart pounding furiously, Travers noticed the soldier was still standing to attention, saluting him.

'At ease, Private,' Travers said, still trying to catch his breath. 'No need to salute me, I'm not official military. Just a scientist attached to it.'

'Respect all the same, sir.' Barnett quickly saluted once again.

Travers shook his head inwardly. 'Your eagerness is to be admired, but perhaps work on how you approach people in future.'

'Have to check whether friend or foe first, sir. Get the upper hand.'

'Quite. How about you take me to the base where I'll

be working?’

‘That’s what I’m here for, sir.’

‘How about you just refer to me as “Mr Travers”?’

‘Yes, sir... I mean, Mr Travers.’

After a short walk in the dark, Travers realised he hadn’t been very far from the base at all. But there was no guarantee he would have found it without someone leading the way. From what he could make out in the darkness, it was a ramshackle concern. Perhaps originally a couple of cottages with sheds then built up around them, using whatever the soldiers could get their hands on. Wood, old bricks, local rocks, canvas coverings... Metal was in short supply, of course. Travers sincerely hoped the medical and scientific equipment inside wasn’t quite such a jury-rigged affair.

Private Barnett led Travers to a room, of sorts, presumably his quarters. No creature comforts but, at present, Travers didn’t really care where he slept. He was bushed. He dossed down with his sleeping bag and fashioned his pack into a pillow. He hoped Anne and Alun were more comfortable with his in-laws. It took several minutes, but he was soon asleep.

When he woke the next morning, Travers immediately knew sleeping on the floor had done his back no good whatsoever. Grimacing as he stood, he freshened himself up and went to find if there was some kind of mess hall. He heard general chit-chat coming from one of the other... he didn’t know what to call them. Rooms? Tents? He walked down the makeshift corridor to where he

might find some form of breakfast.

Private Barnett stood up as soon as Travers entered but seemed to know better than to salute him. The other soldiers looked on with mild interest at the new arrival – but also mild indifference, given their breakfast was being interrupted.

‘This is Mr Travers,’ Barnett announced, unnecessarily. Surely they all knew that any new arrival would be the scientist posted to the base?

Travers tried to be cheery but only half-managed it. ‘Good morning, all. ‘Hope you saved some for me.’

A stout, muscular – if a little short – soldier motioned for Travers to sit down. ‘Help yourself. Basic army rations. Best we can offer.’

‘Thank you, Captain...?’

‘Gampfer.’

Travers tucked in and put his breakfast away quickly. ‘Now, who can brief me on the situation here? I assume you know what we’re all here for, so if you can give me a status report on any scientific equipment and the volunteers we’ll be using, it would be much appreciated.’ He died a little inside when he thought of the people who would be subject to the experiment, but he had to move past it. ‘I want to get this operation up and running as soon as possible.’

‘All systems are go,’ Gampfer replied.

‘I’d like to give them the once-over. Just to check if there are any medical concerns with the volunteers.’

Gampfer eyed Barnett and the rest of the men. ‘The experiment has already begun.’

Travers tried to hide his shock. ‘Under whose orders?’ ‘Churchill’s,’ Barnett blurted out, as if Travers was some sort of imbecile.

‘Obviously. But I was thinking a bit closer to home. Who was the commanding officer that gave the order?’

There was a general restlessness in the mess hall. As if something was being discussed that shouldn’t. Gampfer finally responded.

‘I think you already know. General Dornan. He said you’d been fully briefed.’

Travers was irritated now. Someone was playing a game here and he didn’t like it. Or someone was playing him. The experiment was going to happen whether he was there or not. They just needed a scientist to legitimise it.

‘But the experiment wasn’t supposed to start until I arrived! Anything could go wrong!’ Even though he knew his protestations were fruitless, he felt he had to say something.

Gampfer looked at Travers. ‘Everything is under control,’ he said, steadily. ‘Phase one is working well. There have been no major incidents.’

Travers noticed some of the soldiers exchanging furtive glances. ‘Which might imply there have been some minor incidents? Anything you’d care to report?’

‘Given you’ve finished your breakfast, I’m happy for Private Barnett to show you more of our facility – and what has been achieved so far.’

If he was honest with himself, Travers didn’t know why he was so affronted. The fact the work had started



without him? Or that he simply hadn't been told? Maybe it was simply the nature of the experiment that put him at unease. None of these soldiers, not even Gampfer – who seemed somewhat distant – had done anything wrong. But he had a nagging feeling something was going on. He didn't know if it was the war making him paranoid or... His mind was suddenly cast back to Det-Sen Monastery, all those years ago. Ever since then, he had always been wary.

'When you're ready, Mr Travers.' Barnett was stood at attention beside him.

Inwardly sighing, Travers got up, and motioned for the Private to relax and lead the way. As he was leaving, Travers thought he should say something to Gampfer and the men.

'I hope I find everything to my satisfaction,' he smiled. 'After all, we want to make sure General Dornan is happy with our progress when the time comes to make a report, don't we?'

Walking along the strange maze of annexes, canvases and makeshift pathways, Travers kept in step with Barnett, wondering what he would find. Did these soldiers know anything about the scientific method? Had they used a control? Or even kept detailed, quantifiable data? He knew they wouldn't let him start over, but he hated to think how much of the experiment had already been compromised.

Soon enough, they reached their destination, one of the cottages the base had been built around.

‘Here we are, Mr Travers.’

There were a few other dead giveaways – medical equipment and the sterile air of the room. But perhaps the main one was the two patients isolated in their beds, clear plastic sheeting containing each of them.

Noticing Travers’ reaction, Barnett spoke. ‘There are more. We couldn’t fit them all in here, so we made use of the other rooms in the cottage. Helps with the isolation.’

Maybe there was more to the Private, after all. Or he just could have been regurgitating what others had told him. Either way, the setup was intriguing, in its own piecemeal way. Travers decided to inspect the patient closest to him and call on his limited medical knowledge. He saw someone had been keeping notes, so all may not have been lost. Picking up the file, he gave the pages a cursory glance and looked at the man before him.

‘Corporal Grayden?’ At first, the Corporal seemed not to notice. He was staring off into the distance, eyes red with irritation. Then quickly, he snapped around and glared at Travers, looking like a wolf about to stalk its prey. ‘How are you feeling?’

Grayden continued to stare at him but said nothing. An instant later, he threw himself over the bed and squatted down, huddled in the corner. Just like an animal, scared but ready to pounce.

Barnett didn’t seem to have batted an eyelid.

‘Are they always like that?’ Travers asked. ‘Do they ever speak?’

‘Depends.’

‘That’s not the most helpful answer. Could you

elaborate?’ Travers was on the receiving end of a blank look. ‘I mean, maybe you could tell me a bit more?’

‘Oh right.’ Barnett looked at Corporal Grayden. ‘It all depends on how long they’ve been in here for. They all started at different times. This one’s been here for a while now.’

Travers picked up on the use of ‘one’ rather than ‘man’. Given Barnett’s nature, Travers thought he must have picked it up from those around him – another disheartening thought.

He looked back at Grayden’s file. There seemed to be all sorts of stimuli used to keep the man awake. Lights, loud noise, spraying him with water, injections of goodness-knows-what... The rationale seemed to be ‘keep him awake, no matter what’. Travers tut-tutted and shook his head. It was a hodge-podge of scientific process – if you could call it that – and, in many ways, simply an abuse of mankind. People couldn’t keep blaming the war for these types of things. All he could do was make the best of a bad situation and see if he could bring both the science and humanity back to this experiment.

But if all the subjects were all on edge, like Grayden, he’d have to tread carefully. He wasn’t sure how he was going to deal with this man, given he was so cagey. He was mildly reassured the armed private was with him. Despite this, Travers was annoyed at Barnett’s seemingly complete disregard for the patient and the whole operation in general.

‘I must say, Private, the fact you take all this in your stride troubles me.’

‘Just following orders.’

‘Be that as it may, does this set-up not strike you as somewhat unusual? This patient could easily have been stationed with you. In other circumstances, he might have been someone you dined with in the mess hall.’

‘I doubt it.’ Barnett scratched the back of his head, for once showing signs there might be more than one thought in there.

‘Why is that?’

‘None of the patients are ever hungry. In fact, the longer we keep them awake, the more they refuse to eat.’

The comment gave Travers pause for thought. *What in blazes would cause that?* he wondered. If this was a test of stamina, then surely food and water would be necessary to help keep the body going. It would need fuel, even more so with little sleep.

He was suddenly pulled out of his ruminations by a piercing, almost inhuman scream. Some sort of horrible howling. Barnett was already legging it to another room and, despite his disorientation, Travers quickly decided to follow him. The howling continued, resonating through the cottage, as if it was penetrating Travers’ mind. He almost ran into the back of Barnett, who was now stopped in a doorway, rifle pointed at the ready.

Inside was another patient, contained in a similar fashion to Grayden. But this chap was far more feral and ferocious than Grayden had been. Haggard and unkempt, it looked like he’d spent several weeks in the wilderness. His eyes were red and wide, like a man barely clinging to sanity. The almost skeletal frame showed signs of

starvation, the body using up all the reserves it had. The man's beard only added to the wildness of his appearance. And all the while, he was screaming – constantly screaming.

*What could break a man down to such an animal level? And how can his fellow man just stand by and do nothing when he is obviously in so much distress?*

‘Does this happen often?’ Travers yelled, trying to make himself heard over the din.

‘More than you'd think,’ Barnett replied, in his ever-so-unhelpful manner.

‘So, how do you stop it?’ The sideways glance from the Private and the itchy finger on his trigger spoke volumes. Travers knew he had to tread carefully.

‘The threat of one of us here with a gun seems to quieten them down after a while. It's terrible when they all carry on at once. All hands on deck then.’

‘How long before they settle down?’

Barnett considered Travers' query and replied in his most matter-of-fact manner yet. ‘That's always the question,’ he noted.

They had gone. Finally. One of the others had grabbed their attention. Whether by design or accident, it allowed Grayden to make his move. The screaming made him feel like he, too, wanted to explode with rage, to go wild. To rip open everything in a glorious rampage and make everyone feel his inner turmoil. He felt something primal stirring. But he hadn't given in yet. There was still enough of the old Grayden left, enough of his cunning and

intelligence. If he escaped he could roam free and do whatever he wanted, beyond the confines of this so called experiment. He was a caged animal, halfway between man and beast, but soon he would be free.

Heart and adrenaline pounding, drooling at the mouth, Grayden knew it was time to go. Somehow, during the course of this experiment, his strength had increased. He didn't know how... but he did know that this cottage was so old that he could remove some of its stones easily, without bringing the wall down on top of him. When no one was looking, he had practised many times. But it wasn't until now he had felt the time was right. Whether it was because of the presence of the new arrival, the continued screaming from the next room or his body changing just enough, Grayden decided that this was his moment.

Now, in broad daylight, he removed the stones as he had carefully practised and wriggled through the opening. Within minutes, he was out and running – running like there was no tomorrow. Given the screaming noise throughout the base, all attention was elsewhere. The fresh air energised him even more. He was ready to do whatever his primal instincts urged him to do, with no sleep to hinder him.

And with that, Corporal Grayden was gone.

By now, Gampfer and the rest of the men had joined Travers and Barnett. Several were by Barnett's side, their sights firmly trained on the wretched, screaming man before them. It was something of a stalemate. And then,

just as suddenly as it had started, the screaming stopped. The patient looked ahead at the soldiers before him and didn't move.

'Right, the situation's been contained,' Gampfer said. 'But, to be on the safe side, let's keep an eye on this one.'

Travers was both furious and dumbfounded. The whole situation would have been verging on ridiculous if the implications hadn't been so serious. They couldn't just keep watching the patients, aiming their rifles and hoping for the best.

'Captain, I demand you put a stop to this experiment at once. For the safety of these patients, for the safety of your men and, quite possibly, the safety of Great Britain!'

He was met with a cool gaze from Gampfer. Barnett, along with the other men, looked to their captain.

'Under whose orders? I am the ranking officer here.'

'And I am the scientist assigned to this experiment, and my order is stop it at once! Can't you see something is seriously wrong here?'

'It is a military experiment, based on Russian intelligence. Pushing the boundaries – and our men – to the limit and beyond is how we're going to win this war.'

'This is like something the Nazis would do to their enemies.'

'Or their own men, if it would help Hitler win.'

Travers wanted to throw a punch. Was Gampfer seriously likening the British fighting forces to the fascist regime currently holding most of Europe to ransom? It made him sick to his stomach. And yet he knew the way of the military mind. Gampfer's next comment was a

foregone conclusion.

‘We follow General Dornan’s orders until otherwise instructed by him or another ranking officer.’

Knowing that saying anything else would be futile, Travers turned his attention to the patient.

The screaming and wildness had completely stopped. He was just standing there, staring into the distance. What was going on in this poor soul’s mind that he could go from one extreme to the other in an instant?

‘So be it,’ Travers decided. ‘If anything gets out of hand here, you and your men will be held fully responsible. I’ll make sure of it.’ Before Gampfer could speak, he continued. ‘Don’t worry, I’ll play my part in this dirty little secret. But I’ll be treating the patients as humanely as possible. Now, in the meantime, if you’re going to “keep an eye on things”, then I suggest whoever you station here gives me a full account of anything that happens, so I can add it to my observations. *That* is all part of the scientific method.’

Gampfer motioned for two soldiers to stay stationed in the troubled man’s room. ‘Barnett, stick with the “Professor” here. Allow him the access he needs, but don’t allow him to breach any protocols. As you were, *Professor*.’ Travers knew Gampfer was trying to get under his skin, so he made sure not to flinch in the slightest. With that, the Captain and the other men trudged away.

Despite Gampfer’s attitude, Travers – and Barnett – weren’t quite sure what to do next. ‘Perhaps I should look at the patients in the other rooms?’ Travers suggested. He had to do something, given Dornan had assigned him to



the base.

Barnett started to move forward when a corporal ran into the room.

‘Barnett! Mr Travers! One of the patients has gone!’ Turning on his heel, the two of them followed the soldier. Barnett fell into step with the Corporal as they headed back to where Travers had seen the first patient.

But the empty bed and the hole in the cottage wall left no guesses as to what had happened. The tension in the air was palpable.

‘Get Gampfer!’ Travers snapped. ‘We have an uncontained experiment. However shoddy this set-up was to start with, it’s a thousand times worse now.’

Without thinking, Barnett saluted and left post-haste.

Travers shook his head, sighed and looked at the Corporal.

‘Name’s O’Brien, sir,’ the officer said, gently. ‘You might want to sit down. Given the situation, there’s probably more you should know.’

While Gampfer and his men set out with a search party, Corporal O’Brien filled Travers in on everything that had happened during the course of the experiment.

Over the past few nights, some of the soldiers had gone missing. Gampfer suspected deserters, but O’Brien said the men involved were not the type. Worse were the stories that had come from the battlefields of Europe.

‘The Russians talk about “vampires of the night”,’ O’Brien said.

‘“Of the night”, you say?’ Travers noted drily. ‘If you

believe the legends, that's when vampires always do their bidding.'

'I don't think accuracy was on anyone's mind as these stories came about.'

'Go on.'

'It stems from lack of sleep.'

Travers pricked up his ears. It was like he had a few more pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, but still no idea how they fitted together, nor what the end result should look like.

'I'm sure you know this experiment is based on something the Red Army was doing,' O'Brien continued. 'But no one really knows what happened to their men. However, the Russians, French, English and Nazis all have similar tales of finding bodies ripped open, their insides mutilated and eaten. Soldiers see some terrible things in war, but, according to the stories, this was far beyond what anyone had come across before.'

Travers considered O'Brien's story. 'How do you know it's not just wild animals? Plenty of zoos have been shut down, and it wouldn't surprise me if a few animals had managed to escape being shot.'

'I've only heard this second-hand. But the damage to the bodies is nothing like an animal attack. It's as if someone had cut the bodies open and ripped out all the organs.'

'A new form of Nazi torture, then.' Travers was trying to maintain an open mind while also being steady and methodical in his reasoning.

'Many have thought that. But these "vampires of the night" don't discriminate between Axis or Allies.'

‘As much as I hate the idea, the Allies could simply be copying Nazi tactics. But how does this tie in with the Soviet sleep-deprivation experiments?’

O’Brien looked around, as if someone might be listening. ‘General Dornan ordered Gampfer to remove certain pages from the intelligence files before you got here.’ Then he shook his head. ‘No idea what was on them. Something they obviously wanted to hide.’

‘So they could avoid having the experiment shut down?’

O’Brien shrugged – but it was apparent he agreed with Travers’ thought.

Something wasn’t right here, Travers knew. He couldn’t put his finger on it but he felt his initial suspicions had been warranted. He considered what O’Brien had told him. Just the thought of the experiment made his blood boil.

Travers stood and began pacing, anger fuelling every step. A realisation was starting to come to dawn on him. He looked at O’Brien.

‘Did they not realise just how bloody dangerous this was?’

Looking sheepish, O’Brien replied, meekly, ‘The experiment? It’s to help against the Nazi menace.’

‘Pfft... think man! Does it not strike you as odd that I’m assigned to this base the moment things start to go wrong? I don’t think I was sent here to *oversee* the experiment.’

O’Brien looked puzzled. ‘What, then?’

‘I was sent here to fix it or contain it. My guess is the

experiment has already got way out of hand. I don't think many of the volunteers are actually destined to survive.'

O'Brien didn't say anything but his face was a picture of guilt.

'I know it's not your fault, Corporal. I'm just angry at this bloody war. This is what we've been reduced to. Turning our fellow men into nothing more than lab rats, just to get the upper hand.'

'I never said I agreed with it.'

'Yes, yes, "following orders" as they say. Young and impressionable lads like you wouldn't know much different.' Travers sighed and sat down again. He was glad Margaret wasn't around to see that the world was going to hell in a handbasket.

Barnett had a growing sense of unease. He'd been in battle before and, certainly, he'd had butterflies – but this was different. This situation just didn't feel right. Whether it was the experiment, some of the comments Travers had made or Gampfer's constant manner, it all felt a bit amiss. Either way, he was being extra-cautious, even though he was on home soil.

Moving from tree to tree, bush to bush, Barnett kept himself covered. A piercing screaming rang out, not dissimilar to the one that had confronted him and Travers in the cottage earlier. He tried not to think about the lack of humanity in the screech. Could it be the escaped Grayden? Had he succumbed to the strange, wild nature like the others?

And then he saw it. One of the missing soldiers they'd

been ordered not to tell Travers about. Stumbling through the woods, coming towards him. As the man came closer, Barnett could see he was ghostly white. There was a massive scratch across his face, and other wounds as well. Like he'd been cut open with a jagged knife. It was revolting yet fascinating at the same time.

Although he knew wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed, Barnett had military discipline and he understood what he had to do next. Cocking his rifle, he swallowed decisively. There was no other option. The future of Great Britain was at stake. He took a deep breath and readied himself.

It was at that moment the injured soldier collapsed. The Private decided to chance it and ran over to where he had fallen. Looking at the body, Barnett saw that, close up, things were much worse than he'd thought. As the bile rose to his throat, it was all he could do not to expel that morning's rations from his stomach.

With what remaining strength he had left, the mutilated man whispered. 'Kill me. Kill them. Stop.'

*This man is in agony*, Barnett thought. *How is he even able to speak?* He could think about the soldier's words later. For now, he returned to his original plan.

Captain Gampfer and two of his men were busy searching another section of the woods. Nothing was said but they were ready to spring into action no matter what presented itself. As they made a steady, methodical sweep of the area, a gunshot rang out.

'Sounds like we have some action, lads. On the

double!' Firearms at the ready, they quickly ran to the source of the sound, where they found Barnett with a body prostrate before him.

Running up quickly to the Private, Gampfer took in the situation.

'Barnett! What have you done? Were you attacked?' Despite his questions, Gampfer had a sneaking suspicion he might already know the answers.

'One of ours, sir,' Barnett said, indicating the uniform. 'He didn't have long. I don't know what could do this kind of thing... Do you think it's something to do with the experiment?'

Gampfer looked at him, the barest of flinches contained. *Do not speculate in the absence of fact*, he reminded himself. *Make sure you retain command. Whatever is happening, it is for the good of the war. Remain measured and calm.*

'It could be anything, Private. Yes, we have missing men but that could be due to any number of reasons. Our number one priority is containing the escaped patient and the experiment. Orders... Remember our orders!'

Motioning for his men to pick up the body, Gampfer resolved to take it back to base to let Travers give it the once-over. Despite being suspicious of the man, he knew General Dornan had assigned him for a reason.

'Barnett, you're with me now. We will keep up the search for our AWOL patient. Perhaps he just went for a stroll...' Gampfer might not have believed it himself but there was no way he could allow his men to be spooked. No more than they had been, anyway.

Meanwhile, O'Brien had led Travers around the rest of the cottage area, showing him the other facilities and the remainder of the volunteer patients. All were in various dishevelled states and gave them wild looks. But none had responded with the vile screaming they had experienced earlier. Begrudgingly, Travers admitted to himself the tools used for the experiment were up to par. It was just the method that left a lot to be desired.

Turning into one of the makeshift corridors, they could see out into woods surrounding the base. At the same time, both noticed two soldiers carrying what appeared to be another soldier's body. As they hurried outside, a wave of shock came over O'Brien.

'It's Davies! One of our missing soldiers I told you about!'

Travers wanted a closer look. 'Put him down.' As the men complied, he took in the atrocity that was before him. He looked at O'Brien.

'As sickening as they are to look at, do Davies' remains remind you of anything?'

'Vampires of the night,' a whispered voice blurted out. Everyone remained quiet. Travers, mulling over a hypothesis, finally broke the tension in the air.

'Get this body back to the cottage. I want to inspect it later. Then you're both coming with me to find Gampfer – and Grayden, wherever he may be. Corporal O'Brien, you seem to have more of a clue as to what's going on, so you're to remain here on guard. Whether it's guarding the patients, guarding against the enemy or

guarding from the sheer stupidity of the military mind, I don't care. Do all three. Just be on guard.'

Traipsing through the woods and undergrowth, Travers had the soldiers spread out to cover as wide an area as they could. He knew their findings might be grim but at least the men around him were military-trained, ready with a crackshot and, he hoped, to deal with the sight of blood or whatever unknown terrors presented themselves. Travers hoped they would find Gampfer or some of the other men; at least then they could pool their resources and deal with the pressing situation at base. Maybe the latest developments would make Gampfer see reason, especially once Travers put his hypothesis forward. The thought of that dead soldier, ripped apart, was uppermost in his mind. He wished he had his hip flask – a quick nip might have helped to bury the unpleasantness for a while.

Aside from lack of sleep, Travers couldn't see what could possibly be causing the reaction in the patients. It was possible the process was irreversible – and Travers hated to think what that might mean, given the trigger-happy soldiers around him. But was he thinking about this the right way? Instead of searching for a cure, should he be looking for an alternative? *Containing* the situation, rather than curing it, might be the only option. Which was exactly what General Dornan wanted him to do.

He was just swallowing his annoyance at playing right into the General's hands, when inspiration suddenly struck him. Whatever was happening, he couldn't cure it. Not in the time he had, anyway. But he could do the



*opposite* of what had been done in the first place. Rather than forcing them all to stay awake beyond their means, he could force them to sleep. Some sort of induced coma. For the first time since he arrived, Travers had a little bit of hope in his heart.

Thinking too much, rather than being on the lookout, caused him to trip and fall. Something beneath the forest's foliage had caught his foot. Travers' heart started racing. Whatever it was, it hadn't felt like a stump or a fallen tree branch. Bracing himself, he called out, ready to investigate.

'Over here!' The two soldiers accompanying him were quickly on the scene. 'I think I've found something.'

Scrabbling about, they managed to uncover what Travers had discovered. All of them went pale. It was another body – another of the missing soldiers. If Davies' corpse had made them question the horrors of the world, then this was something straight out of Hades itself. They eyed each other, unsure of what to do next.

At the same time, out of the corner of his eye, Travers saw something move quickly through the trees. A dog? Unlikely. He considered the body before him. A wolf? That would explain the horrific injuries. Wolves had been feasting on the remains. But he could tell the difference between scavenging animals and the injuries to the body. There were no incisor marks. And the other-worldly nature of the jagged cut down the main torso had too much in common with that Davies fellow. Were there more escaped patients he hadn't been told about? And could they be capable of this? Travers knew his medical

knowledge was limited but there was something about the injuries that didn't look quite right...

'Thought we heard something over this way,' said a voice in the near distance.

Travers looked around. It was Gampfer and his men, coming to join them. The Captain quickly looked down at the body.

'We found one like that, too. Ghastly.'

*He certainly is the master of understatement*, thought Travers. He was hoping these deaths – and the likelihood of similar finds – would sway Gampfer's mind about the experiment. But was Gampfer not telling him something? Or deliberately obfuscating details? Travers thought it was time to put his foot down.

'Will you listen to me now, Captain? Or will it take even more deaths to make you realise this experiment must be stopped?'

Gampfer smiled, meeting Travers' stare. No words were forthcoming.

'I'm not an imbecile, Captain. I know that you know the experiment is causing all this. Unless, of course, you believe there's some mythical creature on the attack, both here in Great Britain and all across Europe?' Travers was sure to emphasise the sarcasm in his last comment.

They continued to eye each other, each waiting for the other to back down.

Then the silence was broken. Screaming. More of that penetrating, horrible screaming, emanating from the base. Piercing their ears, almost shattering their eardrums. Despite an instinct to run away, they knew they had to

go forward and face whatever was happening.

Collectively, they all headed for the cottage, where they immediately ran into another soldier. Or something that once had been a soldier. They stopped in unison, aghast at the sight. He was howling and scampering around the room, wild-eyed and unhinged. Back and forth he scuttled, knocking things over, looking up and around. The men looked at each other, uneasily.

But his piercing shrieks were not alone. There was a cacophony of screeching, bawling and squealing, as if somebody had set off a firecracker in a zoo and all the animals had been spooked in unison. The other patients had clearly gone wild, too – and there was no telling what they might be capable of. Captain Gampfer motioned for his men to be on standby, rifles raised and ready for action. Travers joined them, his gun drawn. All were slightly uncertain whether they would be a match for this abnormal threat. But there was little else for it...

‘Barnett, keep an eye on...’ Gampfer hesitated, unsure his next word would be correct. ‘*Him*. We’ll go check what’s happening with the others.’

‘Best to keep someone here with Barnett,’ Travers said. ‘I’m not sure one man alone could withstand the brute force these patients seem capable of.’

Gampfer nodded and ordered a man to remain with Barnett. He indicated how his men should spread out into the other rooms. A trickle of sweat had formed on his brow but he seemingly remained oblivious to the perspiration. ‘You’re with me, Travers.’

Nodding his agreement, Travers followed the Captain

into one of the patients' rooms, the endless wild screaming penetrating their skulls. Gampfer was barely a few steps into the room when he stopped suddenly and vomited on his own boots. Taken aback and reeling from the smell, he saw what had caused the man to be so repulsed – and it was all he could do not to follow suit.

Before him was a man. Just like the others they had found in the woods, his body was ripped open, with organs displaced and hanging out. But he was alive. Screaming like the others but sitting down, unable to stand any more. Travers realised the man had torn himself open, using whatever tools he could find. He had ripped out his own insides and was now eating himself, feral, voracious. Blood vessels streaked across his eyeballs. He only stopped shrieking when feasting. Growing paler and paler, the man continued to devour himself, oblivious to the damage it was causing.

It reminded Travers of the dancing plague of the sixteenth century. Then, people had kept dancing for a month without any rest, before dying from exhaustion. But there were no reports of the people involved doing such gruesome things to themselves. No wonder the 'vampires of the night' myth had spread throughout the soldiers. Even the most bloodthirsty veteran would be disgusted by this atrocity. Well, among the Allies, anyway...

His thoughts were interrupted as a shot rang out. Instantly, the disembowelled man in front of them keeled over, and all the screaming throughout the base came to an abrupt halt. Travers turned his head to Gampfer. He

still had his rifle in the air, looking aghast at the mixture of blood and vomit at his feet.

‘You can put the rifle down now, Captain,’ Travers said, softly. ‘Before you ask, yes, you were right. As much as I hate to say it, there was nothing we could do for that poor chap. I just hope the others aren’t as far gone. There might be some hope for them.’

Gampfer snapped back to his officious manner. ‘The situation must be contained. Mass termination might be the only option if you can’t find a solution quickly.’

Travers followed him. ‘You do know I’m not a professor, don’t you, Captain? I’ve never taught in any official capacity. Nor am I a qualified medical specialist. Anthropology is my field.’

Gampfer snorted in response. ‘Either way, you’re smarter than the rest of us. Given the situation, you’re our best bet.’

As they made their way to another patient’s room, Travers found himself getting riled again. ‘Are you sure you’re not a member of the Nazi party? Treblinka would likely welcome you. The care factor for human life is about the same.’

‘If the situation weren’t so desperate, Mr *Professor*, I’d have you under military arrest for such treasonous remarks. I am simply doing what’s in the best interests of Great Britain. Good God, man, this is war. We all have to make difficult decisions and take action we might otherwise be averse to.’

‘I understand. But if there’s a humane solution to be found, then give me the opportunity to find it.’

They arrived at the next room, where two soldiers stood guard, ready for anything. Travers looked at the patient. He was still contained in the plastic draping, similar to Grayden's set-up. Travers couldn't see any signs of self-mutilation.

'This one stopped screaming at the same time as the others. Just went to being as you find him now,' one of the guards reported.

Travers looked at Gampfer square in the eye. 'You have to let me find an alternative option to terminating everyone.'

'I don't know how long these patients will stay calm for. Or when they might start eating themselves.' The Captain's manner was so deadpan it would have been comical if not for the seriousness of the situation. 'I'll keep my men at the ready but time is definitely something you don't have on your side.'

*Don't I know it,* Travers thought. Proper scientific method and process could take years. But necessity was the mother of invention. Look at how far radar had come during the war, especially the monopulse technique...

'I'll go back to your original records – what there is remaining of them,' Travers said, giving Gampfer a pointed look.

It was hours later and getting dark. Travers had been over everything – his original briefing, the experimental records held at the base and the various bodies and remains. There had only been one outburst of screaming in this time but, fortunately, it had only lasted ten

minutes, and Gampfer and his men had managed not to shoot anyone.

‘Are you certain this will work?’ Gampfer looked sceptical. Travers, injecting needle in hand, gave him a withering look.

‘Nothing’s certain when it comes to experimental science, as I’m sure you’re well aware by now. But with limited time to test everything, this is the best chance we’ve got. Now get your men to hold the patient down while I administer this serum.’

Five men had gone underneath the plastic drapes to ensure the patient did not move. He had struggled and screamed for a short while but now he was simply breathing rapidly, his eyes darting about. Travers injected the upper arm. Immediately, the patient cried out and started writhing, his body convulsing wildly. Travers was worried at such an adverse reaction. But after a few minutes, the patient went limp and his eyes closed.

‘“To sleep, perchance to dream.”’ Travers said, with a touch of sadness. He knew this wasn’t a solution. The best hope was to keep the men alive until a better medical answer could be found. ‘We just have to do the same to the others now.’

Gampfer grunted an affirmative response. ‘But how long will it last? For all we know, it could wear off in a few hours.’

‘I’ve used something that will ensure an induced coma. They can only be aroused by a similar means. I’m hoping that, in time, a more permanent solution can be found, to be administered before someone chooses to

wake them up. We need to move these patients somewhere more hospitable but also out of the way.'

'General Dornan isn't going to be pleased about this.'

'Then you better make sure you give him a full report, just as I will be. Your biggest concern now is finding Corporal Grayden and any other missing men. Unless, of course, they've succumbed to tearing themselves apart like the others. Find them, Captain. We want to keep this situation under control.'

'I'll get my men onto it.'

'By the way...'

'Yes?'

'Don't just shoot them because it's easier.'

Gampfer glared at Travers but said nothing. 'We will do what is required in the name of Great Britain,' he said, avoiding the accusation.

'Good,' Travers replied. 'I don't know whether the General will keep me assigned to this case or move me onto something else. But just promise me this, Captain...'

'Go on.'

'Look after these patients. They are British soldiers. Your fellow men. They deserve to be treated well. I wish I could snap my fingers and cure them but this is the best we can manage at the moment. Give them a chance. If the positions were reversed, you'd want them to do the same for you.'

As Gampfer went to leave the room, Travers' words hung in the air.

'I'll get Private Barnett to organise another search party.' And with that he was gone.



Travers stared after him, then looked back at the patient. A thought occurred... how many other similar experiments were taking place across Europe right now? Or even the world? With a heavy heart, he left the room, wishing, like so many others, that this calamitous war would soon reach its end.


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by Iain McLaughlin

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One thing connects these events; the cargo transported by Colonel Pemberton and Captain Knight in August 1968.

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Two; Owain Vine, who carries the seed of the Intelligence within, is in Japan on a pilgrimage to cleanse himself of the taint he feels in his soul. Soon a happy reunion takes place, and Owain learns that past friendships are not what they seemed.

Three; Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart, who finds himself haunted by the spectre of his brother, James, who refuses to stay dead.

The stage is set for the long, dark night of the Intelligence.

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by Sarah Groenewegen

To celebrate Lethbridge-Stewart's birthday, a romantic weekend is planned for him and Sally in a remote cottage in the Scottish Highlands. Unfortunately for Sally, freak weather causes her to crash her car.

Lethbridge-Stewart, meanwhile, is in Cairngorm investigating UFO sightings.

Elsewhere, the Daughters of Earth, a women-only peace movement, are making waves in the political world, but just who is their enigmatic leader? And what links the Daughters with the events of Cairngom and Sally's accident?

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LAMENT**

by Benjamin-Burford Jones

While visiting his mother, Lethbridge-Stewart is a little perturbed when Harold Chorley calls to ask for his help. A train from Bristol has gone missing, and Chorley is convinced it has something to do with the Keynsham Triangle, where over fifty people have vanished without trace since the early 1800s.

Elsewhere, Anne Travers is coming to terms with a loss in her family, and sets about preparing for a funeral. However, news reaches her that both Lethbridge-Stewart and Chorley have gone missing, and her help is required to find them. And, hopefully, solve the mystery of the Keynsham Triangle.

What connects the missing train to the Triangle, what has it got to do with a Wren from the 1940s, and just why does it appear that Lethbridge-Stewart and Chorley are in the village of Keynsham in 1815?

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