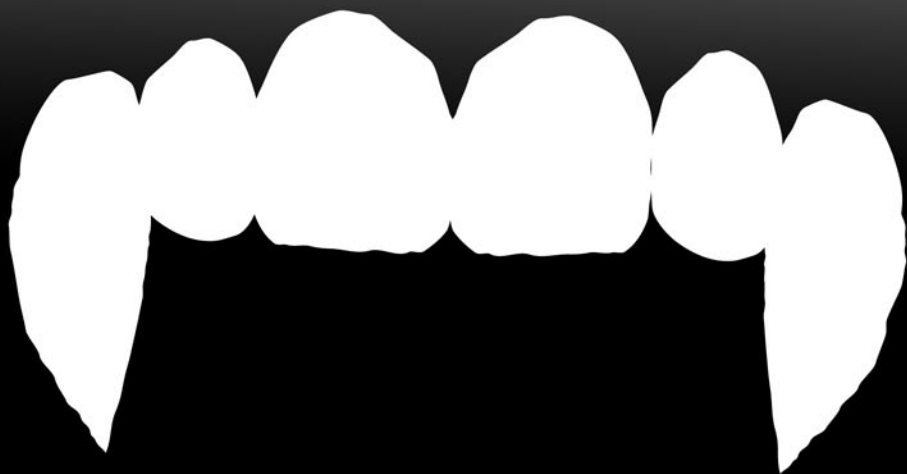




# JVH

JAKE: VAMPIRE HUNTER



**SECRETS  
REVEALED**





**VOL 1, No. 1**

**“SECRETS REVEALED”**

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## “SECRETS REVEALED”

**M**others tell you stupid things when they want you to be quiet, or calm you down, or help you feel better about yourself. Jake’s mother was no different. But while many mother’s were telling their children, “It’s OK honey, there’s nothing to be afraid of in the dark,” or “don’t worry, there’s no such thing as monsters” as the tree branches scratched against the window, his mother was spinning a far different story:

*It’s OK to be different.*

*Don’t worry, people won’t treat you badly just because of who you are.*

*Deep down, people are really good. You’ll see.*

Only that was part of the problem—he did see. Where others saw average people walking down the sidewalk—mothers pushing strollers, business men in their stuffy suits swinging briefcases, college students recovering from a night of festivities on the way to class, children frolicking in late summer days—Jake saw something different.

It took him a while to really catch on but when he looked at certain people, well, they seemed a little grey.

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At first, he just thought it was him, especially the first time. Jake had been leaning against the wall of the corner liquor store, the one that smelled of cat pee and old fish and other things he just couldn't put a name to. His back was pressed against the layers of graffiti covering the brick wall, doing what he normally did—watching people. As that proverbially “loner” kid, he didn't have anybody he really called friend. He always felt better when he was on the outside, observing everyone else. He felt like it allowed him to gain a perspective on the world:

*I don't ever want to end up like that guy. He looks miserable.*

*Wow, you think people would be happy being married and with kids. That couple looks like they hate life.*

*Is that what Mr. Henry does when he's not teaching 9th grade English? Could he look or walk any more like a Zombie?*

It was on a rainy September day, hanging at the same place he always hung out after school, when he saw his first grey person. She was probably someone's grandma. She looked like what his mom called “from the old country.” Somewhere in Russia was all that Jake knew. Regardless of where she came from, she was old with a long black skirt that looked as if she'd worn it all her life. She had a black sweater wrapped around her and a black shawl covering her grey hair. She even had those old-lady shoes like those that nurses wear with the thick rubber soles but in black.

Just like everyone else, she had walked out of the liquor store, the bell dangling as the door opened and swung back closed, clutching her bag tightly as if that would ward off anyone trying to take it from her. Like her, Jake knew it was a rough neighborhood.

Jake had turned his attention from the cars moving through the intersection, churning up the dirty water from the Autumn's first strong rain, to her, to comment to himself how much he didn't want to be like her.

And as his eyes focused on her, he lost his breath as if someone had punched him in the stomach.

His chewing gum tumbled from his mouth as his jaw dropped.

She didn't stop as she passed him but she had a disapproving look on her face. Later, when Jake thought about it again, he wondered if her scowl had been because he had stared at her, the fact that he dropped his gum, or his clothes, his black jeans and black t-shirt, and black sweatshirt. One of *those* kids.

But as she walked by him, her shoes squishing on the wet pavement, heading to one of the thousands of dirty, grimy apartments that shadowed the little market square, Jake was certain she was grey...as if she'd been printed on a black-and-white printer instead of the photo printer.

Jake was usually very discrete when he spied on people's lives like this, glancing at them out of the corner of his eye, turning his head only when he was certain they weren't looking. He believed that people were more honest about their true selves when they didn't feel like they were being watched, as if the life that we saw was a stage production and real life happened in the wings.

But when he saw that old lady, the first time he'd ever seen anyone grey, he couldn't be discrete. So he gawked unapologetically at her as she walked away, each step in slow motion. As she stepped into

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the street to cross, away from the shadows of the building. Jake felt another wave of fear flood over him as questions flashed through his mind:

*Am I dead?*

*Am I sick?*

*Do I have brain cancer?*

Because away from the buildings, in the overcast gleam of a hidden sun, the old woman looked almost translucent. She was still there. Jake could make out everything about her he'd just seen, but he could also see the other side of the street through her.

Jake didn't need an invitation to panic. Without another glance at her, he sprinted up the street to the grimy apartment he lived in with his mother, knowing that she'd be at work for the next few hours. He locked himself in his room, pulling the shades down and flopping onto the bed, listening in the darkness to the sound of his own breathing.

It had taken him a good couple of hours to finally convince himself that he had been seeing things, that the overcast and gloomy day coupled with mist hanging over the streets had tricked him. Shaking it off, he'd managed to find a Coke in the fridge and plant himself in front of his computer—the one he'd bought with his own money picking up groceries and doing odd jobs after school for various people in his apartment building.

Even though Jake felt like he was easily lumped into the “loner and loser” crowd at school, he didn't mind. He enjoyed being on the computer and had plenty of people with whom he talked with in the

chat rooms. People he could call friends. People who listened and discussed things and weren't always thinking about the way they looked or the brand of jeans they were wearing. But he made a promise to his mother, and himself, that when he got the computer that he would continue to go outside. Part of him enjoyed it. He had to admit that he like going outside to observe people. It made him feel like he was still connected to the real world and he wondered if that's what happened when kids went crazy and started dropping out of school—they became disconnected.

He didn't want to end up like that so he kept going outside after school, at least for half an hour, back to the liquor store wall, hood pulled up. He knew that no one noticed him but each day after that encounter with the old lady, he began to see more of them.

More grey people.

He started to notice that some were more transparent than others and that it didn't matter who they were or what they did. Business men, moms, doctors. They were all grey.

It started to happen so much that Jake started refusing to go outside.

He'd tell his mother everyday when she got home that he had gone outside, like he'd promised. She liked that he still felt connected to the world even though she knew he really loved being on the Internet. But what she didn't know was that when he got home from school, he immediately closed himself in his room, making it as dark as possible before lighting everything up with the glow of his 20-inch flat screen monitor.

The hum of the technology, the softness of the screen's light

provided him comfort against what he saw outside. It pushed away the growing fear that something was really wrong with him that he should tell his mom what he was seeing. But it also gave him more time to think about why they were grey.

He began to find websites devoted to it. Blogs. Twitter posts. Whole videos on YouTube, although you couldn't tell anyone was grey in the videos. He began to wonder why he never saw any grey kids at school, wondered if it had something to do with being an adult.

September bled into October and Halloween loomed.

Jake hadn't been outside for weeks. The last time he'd gone to the liquor store to buy some gum, he'd wanted to run away screaming. Not only were there hundreds of grey people walking to and fro, seemingly unknowing of their state, but there were others as well. Shadows that milled around the grey people.

Jake started calling them the *half-theres*.

And it almost seemed like the shadows were living off the *half-theres*, attached to them somehow.

Jake read as much as he could on the Internet. He joined a few chat rooms and forums and tried to get as much information as possible, although he stopped posting on them since most of the time the people were creepy, talking about vampires and the undead.

One thing was for certain.

He didn't think he was sick anymore.

He didn't believe he had a brain tumor or that he was slowly dying.



No, he was sure it was really happening and for some strange reason, he'd been given the ability to see them whether he wanted to or not. Something told him, though, as he hovered over his keyboard into the wee hours of the morning on Halloween, clicking on picture after picture, on story after story, that if he didn't figure something out soon, like how to get rid of the grey people sightings, he was going to spend the rest of his life in his room.

His mom had let him stay home from school on Halloween because he said he needed a break. She was cool like that. As long as he kept his grades up, she let him skip an occasional day. She also said she would be home well after midnight. Something about inventory at the store she worked at.

And so it was a knock on the door around 11:30am that had finally woken him up, after a great sleep-in.

He couldn't remember what time he had gone to sleep but he knew it wasn't that long ago. He'd found a particularly interesting site, almost a compendium of information on seeing the *half-theres*. It seemed that there was historical reference to them going back centuries, that the sight, when properly channeled, allowed those gifted to see into the other world as well, although Jake couldn't find any description of what that world was.

So when the knock, a pounding more like it, woke him up, he stumbled to the door, realizing that he was still wearing yesterday's clothes. He opened the front door to find Ms. Charzbasky holding out her weathered hand in which was a crumpled piece of paper.

"Your mother said you home today," she said, her voice raspy and old from years of smoking. Jake believed that she had a thick, Russian

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accent. At least her accent sounded like those in the movies. He had wanted to ask but growing up in the apartment building, his parents had impressed upon him many rules about what they called *old world people*. One of those was to keep away from asking personal questions.

“She said to keep eye on you, make you go outside.”

Jake rubbed his eyes.

“You taking nap? Not good. Young boy like you should be outside.”

She thrust the grocery list, and 25 dollars, into his hand. He yawned.

“OK Ms. G, I’ll head down to the store in a little bit.”

But she just stood there.

“Sunny day today,” she said. “Stay out little. Get some sunshine. You look like spending too much time in front of computer.”

“Sure Ms. G,” Jake said, starting to close the door. “I’ll bring the stuff by later this afternoon.”

She looked hard at him as if trying to confirm some suspicion.

Without another word, she turned around and shuffled towards the stairs where she began to hike up to her top floor apartment. Jake closed the door slowly and put the list and money on the counter. Yawning in front of the refrigerator, grabbing a piece of cold pizza,

Jake knew that he should probably get showered and head out before Ms. G came knocking on the door again. He liked her in that

my-goodness-she-annoys-me sort of way but knew there was no escaping it. Ever since his father had disappeared six years ago, his mom had begun to rely more and more on the other tenants to look after him. It was like having a hundred grandparents.

*Old world way*, his dad would have called it.

Taking a bite from the pizza and popping the top off a Coke, Jake vaguely remembered the day when his father left almost seven years ago. He knew that his dad had been a rare-antiquities dealer (although his mom preferred the title of “junk collector”) but Jake couldn’t remember exactly what his father had been looking for when he’d left one morning, without warning. All Jake could remember, no matter how hard he tried, was that his dad was angry and almost possessed about some ancient artifact. He glanced at the closed study door, wondering for just a second what was so important that his mother would not allow him in there since his father had left.

*There must be maps in there, or clues. Maybe some phone numbers,* Jake thought. *We could find him...*

The last bit of news that they got from the U.S. State Department was that his dad had last been sighted somewhere in Tibet, traveling towards the Himalayas. They had received the information almost 18 months ago and nothing since.

It was like his dad had simply vanished.

For now, Jake obeyed the order from his mother to leave the room undisturbed. But it felt too much like acknowledging his dad was dead, like they were preserving the room how his father had left it like parents do when their kids die.

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And then suddenly, as if someone had taken an eraser to his thoughts, he stopped thinking about the study. He stared at the closed doors for a second, blinking, unable to remember anything for the past few minutes.

Shrugging, wondering what he had been thinking about, he wolfed down the pizza and grabbed another slice because it tasted so good. Jake knew that the tenants his mom relied on weren't all bad. There was Victor on the top floor. He was an artist. Jake had seen some of his paintings once, delivering groceries for his neighbor, Mr. Fritzki. Viktor had left his door open just a little and Jake, not intentionally being nosy, had peeked inside. Goth. All doom and gloom. When Viktor realized that Jake was standing outside, staring at the paintings in his family room, he had mumbled some words Jake didn't understand, waved his hands, and slammed the door. In Jake's mind, that just made Viktor a little cooler.

And then there was Esme. She went to the same school as Jake—Flaggerty Jr. High. He had tried a few times to find her at school but no one seemed to know her. Yet Jake saw her every day, leaving just about the same time as he did from the apartment. She'd wave to him before disappearing out the door or around the corner. No matter how fast he was (or how hard he tried to ambush her) she always disappeared before he could offer to walk with her.


Anybody who could be unseen like that made Jake jealous. That was his special skill—standing in plain sight, like on the corner, and going completely unnoticed.

That made her even cooler than Viktor.

Of course there were other people in the building as well—young

couples, average Joes from the Midwest—but it seemed that there was a strong nucleus of that old world there, looking out for Jake.

Washing down the pizza with some more Coke, he headed to his room to get ready for a quick shower. As he glanced at his dark computer screen he promised himself he would read the rest of the website he'd found the night before when he got back from getting Ms. G's groceries.



**P**ulling his familiar black hoody over his head, Jake pushed out the through the front doors of the apartment building and into some nasty Halloween weather.

*No trick-or-treaters tonight*, he thought as thunder rumbled overhead.

It was just after lunch and the sidewalks had a fair number of people returning to work after lunch break. Although his mom had never said it, he felt that the neighborhood, more than just his apartment building, was *old world*. Lots of little old women in black dresses with shawls. Lots of little men with suits and hats. All with wizened looks on their deeply creased faces. Old men played checkers in front of their apartment buildings. Shop owners hung outside their stores, talking to friends and strangers alike. Cars passed by intermittently—most of them old and drab—and people frequently walked across the streets as if they didn't care about being hit.

And that's what struck Jake most. It was like a blanket of apathy hung over the neighborhood. People slouched, hunched. People shuf-

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fled along the sidewalk. It was as if life was too hard to live, required too much work, weighed down upon everyone.

Of course, he noticed *them* as well. The *half-there*s. But now that he'd done his homework, he wasn't so freaked out about them. He was more curious. Old. Fat. Housewife. Businessman. Plumber. Lawyer. It didn't matter who the people were or their "walk of life." And he wanted to know what caused it. What made one person grey and not another? But he hadn't found anything yet. Nothing online had pointed to a source, just that people had been able to see them for hundreds of years. And again, references to that *other world*.

*What happens when they disappear completely?* He wondered, stopping for a moment to watch a mother, almost entirely translucent, push her stroller with her twins, dragging two other small children behind her, down the sidewalk.

It was tough to see her face, across the street in the poor early afternoon light, but he caught a glimpse of it. Dejection. Finality. Like she was giving up despite having a family to care for.

Jake shook his head and headed into the grocery store.

Finding Ms. G's items wasn't too hard. The grocery store he went to specialized in strange, foreign ingredients. Things that Jake never even knew existed before many of the older people in his apartment building started asking him to do their grocery shopping.

Roots of special plants.

Herbs and spices specially prepared.

Even meats from some animals of which he'd never heard before.

Jake knew all the grocery stores in a three-mile radius. Some of them were pretty mainstream, like Safeway. But a few of the others gave him the creeps when he walked in. He could feel the eyes of the shop owner on him as he walked up and down the aisles. Jake knew what he looked like—one of the neighborhood hooligans, one of those kids who spray-painted graffiti. But he didn't care. But after a while, the shop keepers came to know him, even asked him to deliver messages to other people in his building. Weird messages, though. Envelopes sealed with wax. Little boxes with locks.

“Morning Mr. Parvmonsky,” Jake said, raising his hand in a salute as he walked past the counter and up the far aisle.

“Guttentag, young man,” Mr. Parvmonsky replied, looking up from his paper just enough to see Jake pass by. It wasn't until Jake was halfway down the first aisle, grabbing a strange jar filled with small things that looked like olives, from the third shelf that Mr. Parvmonsky piped up.

“Why are you always wearing that same clothes?” he asked.

“I wash them Mr. Parvmonsky.”

“Yes, but would look nice to wear something different, no?”

“I like these clothes Mr. Parvmonsky.”

“You kids all same. Same this. Same that. Never do anything different.”

“What should I do different, Mr. Parvmonsky?” Jake rounded the aisle and headed into the second one, looking briefly at Ms. G's list before grabbing two packets of a spice. Ms. G had carefully written out

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the name of spice packet and even drawn a picture.

“Try different clothes. Who knows, maybe girl find you interesting.”

Jake gave Mr. Parvmosky a look as he rounded the turn and headed up the third aisle. Mr. Parvmosky was still behind his paper.

“How come you’re always doing the same thing, Mr. Parvmosky? You’re always sitting behind that counter reading the paper.”

Jake reached the back of the store where the produce was. Despite being a small shop, Mr. Parvmosky kept everything in amazing condition. The produce, fruits and vegetables that Jake didn’t see anywhere else, glistened underneath the small misters as if Mr. Parvmosky gave them his personal touch.

“When older, you understand. Already been different. No need anymore. People expect me to be here, behind counter, reading. Makes them comfortable.”

Jake couldn’t argue with that.

He looked down at his list, one more item.

“Mr. Parvmosky?”

“Yes?”

Jake wasn’t sure why he was going to ask the question. Perhaps reading so much on the Internet last night about the half-there’s had gotten him thinking. Perhaps it was seeing that grey, dejected mother across the street...



“Are you happy here?”

Jake suddenly felt a pang. First, he wondered if he’d overstepped his place. His parents, and many of the older women in the apartment building, often reminded him that the world had an order to it. Good, evil. Black, white. Respect, insolence. And that the *old world* adhered very strictly to that order. Second, he’d forgotten to address him properly when he asked the question. He sighed. Even though he didn’t like it all the time, he realized that life was governed by rules to keep balance.

And so there was a pause in the story. Not a sound beyond that of the hum of air units and misters. Not even the shuffling of Mr. Parvmonsky’s paper.

“Sorry. Are you happy here, Mr. Parvmonsky?”

This time, the answer came almost immediately. Order had been restored.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, in the store. Here, the same place, every day. Doing the same thing.”

This time, even though Jake couldn’t see it, Mr. Parvmonsky lowered his paper.

“I tell you when you finish shop.”

Jake quickly went through the list, grabbing every item, going up and down the aisles. Each time he approached the counter, he looked at Mr. Parvmonsky, half expecting him to lower his newspaper and tell

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him the story of his life, but much to his disappointment, he acted like he wasn't even there.

When he was finished, Jake put the handbasket on the counter and pulled the money from his pocket. He was pretty sure the 25 dollars Ms. G had given him would just about cover the bill exactly. She had some strange, sixth-sense about what all the items would cost.

Mr. Parvmosky lowered his paper and looked Jake in the eyes.

“Lower your hood,” he said, quietly.

Jake pulled the hood down, pushing his shaggy black hair behind his ear. He thought briefly that he needed to dye it again.

“First, remember respect. Don't ask questions like that.”

Jake started to say he was sorry but Mr. Parvmosky slammed his hand down on the counter.

“Second, I am very happy. I live to open store. Every morning, when I walk downstairs and turn on lights, I wonder who will come shop today. Different things every day. May look same, but that's because you only see one thing.”

Jake didn't say anything.

“\$22.50,” Mr. Parvmosky said, never once touching the register.

Jake looked at him, his grizzled hands gently placing items into a paper shopping bag.

*Twenty five dollars,* Jake said to himself, laying the money on the

counter and just as he was pulling his hand back, Mr. Parvomnsky grabbed it fiercely, his grip shockingly strong.

Jake almost gasped it happened so suddenly. But it wasn't half as shocking as his eyes—bright, vibrant blue, almost electric with energy.

“It when things become too much same,” he said, letting go of Jake’s hand, “that you have to worry. That when the darkness comes.”

And despite his protestations, despite how much stronger Jake thought he was than the wizened old shop owner, Mr. Parvomnsky pulled him closer until their faces were almost level.

“When people start turn grey.”

He pulled him even closer.

Jake felt like he was desperately trying to pull away, like he was using every muscle he thought he had to fight against him. But something about the old man’s eyes commanded him closer.

Their faces were so close that Jake could see every detail in his eyes, smell the peppermint that Mr. Parvomnsky chewed almost religiously, feel the agedness of his skin.

“When *other* things start to appear.”

And with that, he let go. At least Jake thought he let go because he was standing there, bags in hand as if nothing had ever happened. Mr. Parvomnsky was sitting just he had been when Jake entered the store—behind the counter, paper in front of his face.

“You need something else?” he asked from behind the paper.

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Jake shook his head emphatically.

“Good. You get home now. She waiting for groceries.”

Jake backed away from him, crashing into a stack can display, scattering them to the floor.

Jake pushed open the door and disappeared into the dreary afternoon.



Jake spent the better part of the 10-minute walk back to the apartment telling himself that he’d imagined the whole thing. He knew there was no way that the old man could have pulled him in that closely. And those eyes.

Jake shivered when he thought of them.

He was walking past familiar landmarks, stores he often visited, people he often passed. In a deep part of his mind, he recognized the sameness of it all. But it wasn’t enough to break him from his single-minded focus, the “automatic” path he was walking, focused on the events in the store. He was just another part of the stream of humanity and he felt caught in it despite the burning image of Mr. Parvmonsky’s eyes.

Until he entered the street of his corner liquor store.

Gripping the grocery bags tightly, he barreled into the chest of a tall, lanky man. Stumbling backwards until finally going down on a knee, Jake let loose of one of the bags, the contents scattering on the

cold cement.

“S-s-s-orry,” the man stuttered, bending down almost immediately to help retrieve some of the scattered groceries.

It all happened so fast that Jake didn’t really have time to think. But as he scrambled to retrieve the groceries as well, suddenly upset that he’d been so clumsy to drop Ms. G’s items, he was struck by the sudden strangeness of the situation.

The man was unusually tall and skinny. His shockingly white arms seemed to stretch unnaturally out of his black, crumpled suit.

As the man scrambled to retrieve the items, his hands darting almost impossibly fast, snatching and stuffing a dozen items back into the bag as Jake had only retrieved a few, Jake found it difficult to actually see his face. It never seemed to stay in one place as if the lanky man didn’t want someone to see him; as if he didn’t belong where he was.

The only detail that Jake could be certain of was the paleness of his skin, like porcelain.

“Again, s-s-orry,” the man mumbled, getting up.

“Are you OK young man?” a woman’s voice suddenly asked.

That was when Jake noticed the woman who had just spoken. She was standing just off the left of the lanky man. She was dressed smartly, as if she’d just left the office or the bank.

And that was when Jake noticed the lanky man’s hand on her shoulder.

Jake looked quizzically at her and then at her companion who was no

longer paying any attention to him, and then looked back at the woman trying to understand why she would be with the strange, pale man.

“Are you OK young man?” she asked again. And then she said it a third time, her voice almost devoid of any emotion. Jake shuddered. Something suddenly felt very strange. He couldn’t put his finger on it but the whole situation didn’t seem right.

The lanky man leaned closer to her, pushing aside her shoulder-length brown hair until his mouth was brushing against her ear. Jake could see that he was saying something but he couldn’t quite hear it.

And then his mouth, hovering near her ear, moved down her neck. The woman didn’t seem to notice. She kept staring at Jake but not focusing on him, as if she was looking somewhere else entirely.

“Excuse me, miss? Are you all right?” Jake said, returning the same question that she had been asking him just a moment ago.

Suddenly, the lanky man’s lips parted, revealing his teeth, pearly white. As if everything was moving in slow motion, Jake had time to see those teeth. Sharp. Jagged. And before he could say anything to warn the women, they clamped down on her slender neck.

Jake wanted to scream. He dropped both bags of groceries and staggered backwards.

The lanky man snapped to attention, his lips still attached to her skin, his gaze focusing squarely on Jake. No longer did the man seem worried about other things, about people seeing him, about the situation.

His head came up, his mouth separating from her neck with a sick-

ening slurp and Jake could see the mark on her neck where the man had bitten her.

*He bit her!* Jake screamed in his head. *He BIT her!*

She just stood there as if nothing had happened, as if nothing was going on around her. But the lanky man knew exactly what was going on—someone was watching him feed and he couldn't have that.

He stepped away from the woman for a second and towards Jake. His eyes flashed. They were almost golden, strangely dazzling and hypnotic and Jake felt riveted to the spot.

Almost like Mr. Parvmosky's intoxicating eyes.

But all Jake saw was anger steel over the man's face and he felt like he'd cornered a wild animal.

"What's going on?" the woman mumbled.

Jake could see her shaking her head, putting her hand to her neck where the man's lips had been. The lanky man's attention snapped back to her and he quickly resumed his position, putting his hand on her shoulder, whispering something in her ear. Jake watched her face glaze over.

"M-m-m-ind your business," the man hissed, turning his gaze upon Jake again. His teeth clenched, his pale almost bloodless lips barely moving. His face a mask of menacing threat.

Jake didn't reply as the lanky man squeezed the woman's shoulder and they pushed past him, practically shoving him out of the way. They walked swiftly away, the lanky man almost guiding her around the cor-

ner, squeezing her shoulder as they went. Jake was left with the faint odor of rotting garbage and a distinct, but sudden realization, that the woman had a slight touch of grey to her, an aspect that he didn't think he'd noticed when he'd first bumped into the lanky man.

He stood there for what seemed like an eternity, people passing him, walking around him. Some half-there's. Some kids. Some in groups. Some by themselves. He paid no attention to them, his mind a whirlwind of questions and images.

The lanky man.

The *half-there* woman.

His grip on her shoulder.

The bite.

And finally Jake ran. Picking up the two grocery bags, uncaring for the items that had spilled, he felt like the world had come unbuckled, unhinged, split in two. Dealing with the *half-there's* was one thing. He'd come to learn how to stomach it.

But biting people?

Turning them grey?

It was just too much.

He didn't pay any attention to whom he bumped into, to the "heys" and the "look-where-you're-going's" that were yelled out at him as he ran. With single-minded purpose, he ran the three blocks to his apartment building, his lungs burning by the time he reached the front glass



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doors. But he didn't stop there. He burst inside and took the steps two at a time, bounding up to the top floor to where Ms. G lived. He pounded on her door before he dropped the groceries and flew back downstairs to the third level.

His heart pounding, chest thumping, he fumbled with the keys for a moment before finally getting the door unlocked. He could hear Ms. G calling to him from up the stairs, asking if there was anything wrong.

But Jake paid her no attention. Wrestling the door open, he flung himself inside and locked it behind him, the image of the lanky man, the odor of rotting garbage, haunting him even as he dove underneath his covers and tried to block it all from his mind.



**TURN THE PAGE TO FIND OUT  
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!**

# IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF JAKE: VAMPIRE HUNTER

*If Jake hadn't been totally freaked out before about the lanky man, he was now. Looking at Mr. Tartikhov, reaching out to touch his cheek, he concluded that the old man was frozen solid. But that wasn't the strangest part. Sure, sitting on the bottom step, candy bowl in front of him, frozen solid was pretty strange. But the look on his face was what really caused the hair on Jake's neck to stand up.*

*Fear.*

*No, abject terror.*

*It looked like Mr. Tartikhov had seen the most terrifying thing he could imagine before he froze.*

*Jake didn't know what to do. He didn't know if Mr. Tartikhov was dead, didn't know how to check. Didn't know if he should run away or back to his apartment .*

*Should I call 911? He wondered, the panic slowly starting to sink in. He got up and backed away from Mr. Tartikhov, turning around, suddenly seeing open doorways, kids in costumes, the patrons of his apartment building. All frozen.*

*Run Jake, a voice whispered in his head.*

*"Who's there?" he asked frantically, steadying himself by grabbing onto the stair railing.*

*Run from building. Get help. The voice seemed vaguely familiar. Jake scrambled towards the stairs, looking down. Only two levels to the ground floor. He knew from practice that he could get down them and out the door in under 60 seconds...*

## About the Author

Jason Thibeault has been an aspiring/failed/re-born writer for over twenty years. He finished his first novel *If This is Adventure...I Don't Need It* when he was sixteen (thankfully unpublished). He wrote his second novel, *Ordinary Magic* (a magical realism novel set in Haiti), while in the Campus Wide Honors Program at the University of California, Irvine. Focusing on creative writing, he spent a lot of his time working with the faculty of the Graduate Writing program as well as at numerous writing conferences including Squaw Valley. He also helped edit, publish, and develop the UCI Journal of Fiction, *Faultline*.

After getting his undergraduate degree, Jason spent time abroad, working for HarperCollins London and trying, unsuccessfully, to publish numerous short stories and *Ordinary Magic*. Upon his return, he finished his formal writing education at California State University, Northridge and wrote his third novel, a hard sci-fi dystopian titled *Red Dust Storm*. He also founded the Phoenix Writing Project, a literary journal and local reading series featuring CSUN, local community, and celebrity writers. Jason has also taught numerous creative writing classes at various colleges and universities.

Taking a decade off from serious writing, Jason finally returned to fiction in 2007 focusing on young-adult. Paying attention to what his children were reading (from *Harry Potter* to *Cirque du Freak* to *Percy Jackson*) Jason began to understand that his imagination and writing style were ultimately suited to young adults and pre-teens. With less concern for the details of adult-oriented novel (and far more suspension of disbelief), Jason found quickly that he could generate young-adult fiction at a frighteningly fast pace.

Jason is currently the author of several of DimeNovel Publishing's series (*Barty the Kid*, *Jake: Vampire Hunter*, *Conjunction*) and the creator of many of Dime Novel Publishing's syndicated storylines.