

*Volume One of The Rook Maison Series*

# BRIAN BLACKWOOD

# FRACTURED



# Fractured – Sample

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Book one of the Rook Maison series

Brian Blackwood



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Dedicated to Michelle Morningstar,  
who let me play in her universe and do it dirty.









# Chapter One

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Rook screamed. His first breath was always a scream. It had to be. His soul would never neatly fit into another body again. None would ever be truly his again. The jagged edges of his spirit scraping into place, lighting every nerve on fire as if bared to the open air, would serve as a reminder that he was taking residence in a stolen shell. He was claiming someone else's body. Again.

With all his will, Rook gritted his teeth and forced strength into his new arms, straining against the pain. As he pushed his head up from the cool asphalt of the street, he flexed his fingers and dug into the dust and grime. Inch by inch, life returned to this body, his soul quickening the muscles each in turn as he focused on them. Thankfully, he was right about this body's heart. It thumped hard and powerfully. Yes, this body would suit him well.

Opening his eyes and sucking in the night air, Rook rolled back onto his knees. The pain was already subsiding, the alcohol in the body's system serving both as a painkiller and lubricant for the takeover. He looked about himself to

remember his surroundings and get his bearings. There he was —the previous him— lying lifeless just a couple of feet away. His head —his previous head— bled slowly onto the pavement. Between them floated a wisp of feathery dark energy, quickly dissipating as Rook rose to his feet.

“So sorry, old chap,” Rook said as he bent over to pull his coat off of his old body. Then, gesturing at himself, “Cheers for the upgrade. I’ll take good care of this for you.”

Rook chuckled to himself as he fitted his black Spector topcoat over his shoulders. He scoffed at the fashion choices this man had made, positing that he must have been in a mad dash to get laid tonight. Still, the clothes fit well, and the shoes had a classic British style. Something Rook could appreciate, despite them clashing with his favorite coat.

Turning away, Rook paused and thought a moment.

“Bloody cameras everywhere nowadays...” He looked at the body.

Shrugging, Rook pulled up the collar of his coat and walked away.



Rook fished the keys to his apartment door from the burgundy-lined pocket of his topcoat. His new fingers felt the bumps and grooves of each key as he searched for the least worn one. He had forgotten what most of these keys were for,



but he kept them anyway. When he found the one he wanted, he lined it up to the deadbolt and pushed. A twang of pain ran through his fingers, and he dropped the keys to the floor.

“Bloody hell,” he muttered. The bonding to the body wasn’t finished yet; it still protested his presence. “Quiet down, ya bastard.”

He leaned over and picked up the keys but straightened out to see the door already open. Standing in the doorway was a man of slight build with messy straw hair. His gray eyes stared at Rook with a sense of concern and urgency.

“Wh...,” the man started.

“Broccoli. Radish. Pineapple. Whatever the bloody safe word is.” Rook pushed past the man and entered the apartment.

“Rook?” The man took a step back and let the stranger pass.

“No, it’s the Spanish Inquisition,” Rook replied, dripping in sarcasm, as he tossed his keys into a dish beside the door and took off his coat.

The man sighed and closed the door.

“So, you did it again, huh? Couldn’t help yourself?”

“Something like that.”

“Well, at least I like the look of him. I can always be up for a twenty-something.”

“Keep your goddamn hands off,” Rook eyed him with a narrowing gaze. “It was a one-time thing, just me trying out

new tricks. Now, let's get the hell on with it."

"You were my girlfriend, Rook."

"And it was bloody magical. But that bird's been cold in the ground for a year now."

Mark looked defeated. He hadn't really meant to engage with Rook, but it happened, and he paid for it by enduring Rook's cutting words.

Rook started to turn away but lingered on Mark's face. He could read the emotion in it, the sadness his words had just brought him, but he felt no pang of remorse or empathy.

"What the hell are you still doing here, Mark? You know exactly what I am and what I'm capable of. So why do you insist on sticking around?"

Mark looked up and met Rook's eyes.

"Because apartments in London are expensive, mate. Besides, I know your standards. This would never be on your menu," Mark gestured to himself.

Rook walked past Mark and patted him on the shoulder.

"You're too hard on yourself," Rook chuckled, "just think of yourself as a last resort, if you insist on hanging about."

"Wow. Thanks."

"That's the state of it. You're living with a murderer. Your time is borrowed."

"And yet, this is the healthiest relationship I've ever been in..." Mark sighed and walked away. He headed for his bedroom and closed the door.



Rook smirked to himself.

“Remember, we’re doing that old bookstore at seven,” he yelled through Mark’s door. “This bloke had a bundle of cash, so you can pick yourself something nice while we’re there.”

“Maybe something on tarot?” Mark’s muffled voice came through the door.

“Don’t give a toss about your fairy tales. Just make sure that angelology book is the bloody real deal.”

Silence was all that followed. Rook paid it no mind and headed for his own room.



The golden light of the late-day sun spilled through the dingy windows of the antiquated bookstore. Three dusty old tomes, pulled from the shelves of the bookstore, sat upon a weathered wooden table before Rook. Their covers, painted in dark contrast to the fading light that spilled on them, faced him, each adorned with faded, flowing script. The first was titled *Eins Enoch* and possessed a subscript *Eine Deutsche Übersetzung*. The second was titled *The Paths of the Cross*. The third’s title was too worn to read, but Rook could make out the words *formation* and *celestial*.

Across from Rook and the books stood a man of advanced age. He had struggled to lay each of the books out on the table, and now, having done that, he waited for Rook

to make a selection.

“One Enoch?” Rook reached for the first book.

“Ah, yes. This is the German translation of the first book of Enoch. Very rare. Written three hundred years before any other translations were rediscovered in the eighteen-hundreds.”

Rook opened the tome. The printing appeared old enough, and the pages were a thin parchment or vellum. It felt pleasing to Rook’s fingers.

“You see, the monastic order of the Träumereien started this translation, and then it was hidden for years before being finished by the heretics of Lutheran and then being lost in the Wars of Reformation in-”

“Yeah, I noticed,” Rook interjected. “This one’s Middle German,” he continued flipping through the book, stopping halfway. “But this part here is High German.” He smirked. “These blokes weren’t used to it yet. You can tell by how they keep switching between ‘k’ and ‘ch.’ Obvious as fuck.”

The old man’s eyes widened. “You can read Middle German?”

Rook scoffed. “Yeah. Came up on it.”

The old man looked confused but then was horrified when Rook tossed down the book without a care for it.

“And who the hell hasn’t read the Book of Enoch? This ain’t gonna do us any good. Probably full of mistakes anyway.”

The old man hastily snatched up the book and inspected it for damage. “Sir, I must ask that you really t-”

Rook pushed the second book away.

“That book, The Paths of the Cross? Total bullcrap. You better torch it before your whole rep goes up in flames, mate.”

The old man looked aghast. “Sir, I assure you tha-”

“Burn it. Now this one...” Rook slid the last book toward himself and opened the cover.

A stained and blotched graphic, resembling something like a star chart or an interpretation of planetary bodies spread across the exposed pages. The artwork was hand-drawn by someone and meticulously detailed. It showed relationships between the various orbs presented on the page. This particular one highlighted an orb named Malakut, with the subtext underneath it in a script too faded to read.

The old man watched pensively as Rook motioned for Mark to come over.

“Oi, Mark! How about this one?”

Mark’s head perked up from behind a display of tarot cards and several varieties of divination boards and path-finding cards. With a card pack in each hand, he came bounding over to purposely bump into Rook’s shoulder and lean in dramatically to look at the book.

“Mmhmm. That’s angelic script.” Mark touched a knuckle of one of his full hands to the faded script and paused before nodding to Rook.

“Hmm...” Rook flipped through a few pages. The English was coming up rare.

“Enochian script,” the old man corrected, “though it’s been attributed to angelic writing. It’s more believed that a proto-ca-”

“How much?” Rook interrupted.

“Not for sale.” The old man looked at Rook with a severe expression.

“Really?” Rook was genuinely surprised.

“I’ll not sell to a young upstart like you. You have no respect for the works here.”

“Your glowing personality wins them over again, Rook.” Mark chuckled, choosing between the card pack in his left hand or his right hand, deciding on the left, and looking up at Rook.

Rook’s expression flattened.

“Tell me, mate, are you absolutely set on keeping this? I’ll make it worth your while. Name your bloody price.”

“No sale.”

Rook and the old man fell into a silence, regarding each other. Mark slid his chosen pack across the table.

“I’ll take this one.”

The old man stacked each of the three books on each other, making sure to place the one Rook wanted on the bottom. He then picked up the card pack and turned it over in his hand to read the price stickered to the back.



“Ten pounds.”

“Rook?” Mark looked at Rook expectantly.

Digging into his back pocket, Rook produced this body’s money clip. It was as sharp-edged and stylized as the shoes he wore. Pulling the stack of bills from the clip, Rook thumbed out a fifty-pound note and set it on the table, resuming his eye contact with the old man. They stared at each other as the transaction was made, but when the man held out the change, Rook turned on his heel and moved toward the exit.

“Thank you,” Mark smiled as he took the change. He picked up his box and followed Rook.

Rook stepped outside and breathed in the cool air, looking out over the bustling activity across downtown London. Mark stepped up beside him.

“That script really on the level, kid?” Rook asked without looking at Mark.

“Absolutely. What are you going to do now?”

“Eh,” Rook shrugged. “I reckon I have something to do after closing tonight.”

Rook stepped off the curb and headed down the sidewalk.



Crosthwaite  
BOOKS

# Chapter Two

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“**Y**ou’re sticking around here. If anyone comes sniffing, act like a lunatic or something.”

Rook gestured vaguely in the direction of the alley that ran alongside the now-closed Crosthwaite Bookstore.

“I dunno, man. Is it worth it to break in? What if it’s just a cookbook or something?”

Mark moved into place, looking uneasy as he shifted his weight from one foot to the other. The chill in the air caused him to puff out his jacket and shove his hands deeper into its pockets.

“And what if it’s the bloody key to setting heaven on fire, eh? Or tells me how to control those angel wankers and make them do all sorts of debauchery and party tricks?”

Rook walked deeper into the alley and spied a drain spout, tugging on it to test its anchoring.

“Right. Point taken. Anything to take down the establishment.”

“It ain’t just about them, Mark,” snarled Rook, giving Mark a hard look over his shoulder. “They ain’t satisfied with

just reigning over us. They abuse us. Manipulate us. Destroy us.” He turned back to the grimy drain spout and gazed up at the window ledge above it. “I’ve been alive for five hundred years, and I can tell you one thing: dying while those bastards are still in power ain’t worth a damn thing.”

Rook hefted himself up and climbed the metal bracings to reach the window.

“Some of us don’t have a choice, Rook,” Mark muttered under his breath, turning his attention to the street.

Rook pressed his palm into the window’s glass and shoved upward. To Rook’s surprise, the window jostled in response. He pushed again and dislodged it from its jamb. Paint crackled from the frame as it slid up. With a wind-up practice swing, Rook flung himself into the open space and rolled through onto the upper floor of the bookstore.

Rook stood up, dusting himself off, and readjusted his Spector. Taking a quick glance around, he noted an abundance of boxes taking up most of the space on the floor, with several having been opened, their contents partially removed. They were clearly back-stock boxes, mostly full, containing the garish knickknacks no self-respecting consumer should ever purchase, Rook thought.

Making his way toward the stairwell, Rook descended into the store proper. With the lights off, the cluttered shelves and over-burdened tables looked like a sinister flea market, though the bookshelves lining the walls and the paperback



islands proved easily navigable. Rook made his way to the table where he had last seen the books. Nothing remained from his previous conversation with the bookshop owner. Leaning over to inspect the back corners and the space behind the table, Rook saw nothing more to clue him in on the book's location.

Rook vaulted the table and looked at the back shelves from his new vantage point.

"If you were an incredibly precious book," he muttered as he looked in either direction, "stashed by some old codger, where would you be?"

Rook's eyes passed over the cash register, which sat perched on a cabinet with a large, central storage space with a narrow drawer below it. He paused, his eyebrows raising, as he realized he stood a chance to make a profit for his time here. He quickly looked around for anything to break the register open when he noticed no lock seemed to secure the cabinet. Rook tugged on the knob, and the cabinet door popped open.

A tiny, red light blinked lazily from the depths of the darkness inside, fused to the inner side wall, just inside the edge. Each blink illuminated the interior, and after a few, Rook noticed a stack of three tomes resting on the bottom of the cubby.

"Oh." Rook's eyebrows raised again.

He looked over the tome's covers as he removed them,

dropping the two he had rejected earlier to the floor. He tucked *formation* under his arm.

“And yet...,” he smiled to himself as he returned to rummaging through the cabinet. Pulling open the drawer, he spied a long, metal letter opener that sat upon a stack of what he could only presume were bills and the like. Taking the blade, he brought it up to the register’s drawer and slid the edge under the lock. With a quick shove, the simple latch popped, and with a ding, the till became exposed.

Rook sighed. “And yet, barely worth it.”

He reached in and grabbed the handful of singles and fivers, shoving them into one of the three asymmetrical pockets of his topcoat.

“Rook!”

Mark’s voice broke Rook’s concentration, penetrating the pane of glass of a bottom-floor window that faced the alley.

“Rook!”

Rook cleared the table again and bounded to the window. He felt for the latch across the top of the pane, unhooked it, and slid the window up.

“Oi, what?”

“You hear that?” Mark pointed upward and down the main street.

Rook looked and held his breath to listen. Sirens. Police sirens.

“The bloody Yard, innit?” Rook’s gaze flicked to Mark.  
“How long you been hearing it?”

“About since I heard you thud somewhere downstairs.  
They’re getting closer.”

“Shit, I must’ve set something off. Here,” Rook lifted the book and thrust it through the window, “take this and get the hell back to the apartment.”

Mark took the book and looked it over, confused.

“What are you going to do?”

“We need every damn second we can get with that before it’s swiped. Can’t have it looking like a bloody heist.”

Rook pulled himself back from the window and started looking around the shop again.

“What are you going to do, Rook?” Mark asked again, stretching the syllables out as he posed the question.

“What did I say about ‘The Paths of the Cross?’”

Rook saw what he was looking for. Nestled among the scented candles, incense sticks, and rolls of bound sage were a series of book-quote-themed match tins.

“Hilarious.” Rook smiled to himself.

Mark followed his gaze, “Rook, no! Just get out of there!”

“Fuck off already! Don’t be anywhere around here when they get here.” Rook sped off toward the matches.

“Shit!” Mark looked both ways down the alley and then back at the window. He huffed, turned, and sprinted down the sidewalk along the main street before ducking into

another alleyway.

Rook grabbed the match tin and tossed it up in the air to snatch it out of free fall as he walked back to the books he had left on the floor. He picked up “The Paths of the Cross,” opened it to a random page, and set it on the table. He slid the tin open and took out a match.

“Strike-anywheres.”

He then dumped the rest of the matches over the book, table, and floor. Sliding the match across the wooden surface of the table, it lit ablaze. He paused, only briefly, to take in the smell of sulfur and then tossed the match onto the book.

Dry and brittle, the tome caught on fire easily. As the embers raced out toward the edges, they met the strewn-about matches. Pops and hissing gave way to an inferno as the fire ate through the abundant fuel.

“Martin Luther, eat your Protestant heart out.”

Rook took the book by its binding and flung it at the paperback island in the center of the shop. As it flew, pages cast ash along the floor with a chunk of the book-that-was clumping on the ground and catching the matches there.

Rook ran across the floor back to the matches and grabbed another tin. He repeated his vandalous effort twice more, tossing a fireball at the hardcovers along the wooden shelves and another at the sage rolls.

The sirens blared through the growing noise of the fire, and Rook could see the blue pulsing lights through the



storefront glass. He eyed the window he left open, and thought to help increase the airflow by opening another, before taking up station just inside the main doors to await his guests.

Within a moment, the police were at the door. They shouted at each other, something about heading this way and that, to see about containing the fire. Rook wondered for a moment if they were even going to try the door and decided to help them out. It was getting a bit too warm, after all. He reached out and unlocked the storefront door. It was at this moment that the officer standing on the other side noticed Rook for the first time.

The officer reached for the door and flung it wide open. His wide eyes took in Rook in his dark overcoat and slim-tailored slacks and processed what he was seeing. It took a moment before he realized that Rook wasn't acting as though he was in danger, and the smirk on Rook's face sealed the suspicions that immediately formed in his mind.

"Halt!"

He brandished his nightstick and lunged at Rook, who raised his hands and shrugged.

"I wasn't planning on heading out, bobby. But it was getting a mite toasty."

The officer crossed the distance and used his nightstick to lock one of Rook's arms, sliding up behind him to force him out onto the street. Rook didn't resist but did complain as he

stumbled forward and out of the blazing bookstore.

“Oi, mate, I’m not fighting you. You got me. Pat on the back, have a tea.”

The officer forced Rook to the ground as another joined to assist him. After zip-tying his wrists together, they lifted him, each under an arm, and brought him to their vehicle, sliding him in the back seat. The car rumbled to life as a couple of the officers jumped in and pulled away from the bookstore, leaving the rest to deal with the blaze.

Rook leaned his head against the window and watched the fire burn.



Rook thumped into the metal chair inside the interrogation room. It was altogether too flat, too unforgiving for a living thing to rest in for too long. Cold, too, as he no longer had his Spector on to protect him from the metal backing. Perhaps that was the point, Rook thought, as the officer cut the second zip-tie to bind Rook’s wrists that night. Reflexively, he rubbed where the plastic had been and waited for the officer to sit in the decidedly more comfortable chair across the table.

“Alright, Mr...Morten? Mind explaining what you were doing at the Crosthwaite bookstore in the middle of the night?”

The athletic, muscular officer sat across from Rook. His

freshly removed, standard-issue patrol cap was placed on the table in front of him, revealing his matted hair, carelessly groomed a dozen or so hours earlier.

“Morten?” Rook raised his eyebrows. “I thought it was ‘Marten.’”

The officer looked confused and checked the papers he had in front of him on the table. He had said the name right, and so he narrowed his eyes at Rook and restated the question.

“What were you doing at the bookstore, Mr. Morten?”

“Trying not to breathe in that bloody smoke, honestly.” Rook shrugged.

The officer sighed and slid the papers to the side before clasping his hands together.

“I don’t see any reason to make this difficult for either of us,” the officer stated. “Though your record is clean, except for a scuffle outside the fabric nightclub, we apprehended you inside the building while it was burning.”

Rook nodded.

“And we found smoke permeating deep into your coat, suggesting you were there when the fire started.”

“I’d like that back, by the way.”

“But that’s after we caught you plainly on the surveillance cameras setting the fire.”

“Bloody cameras,” Rook muttered to himself, looking to the side. He wondered where they were and if he was

seen taking the book. He slid his eyes back to the officer and continued waiting.

“So, I’ll ask you one more time, Mr. Morten,” the officer leaned over his clasped hands. “What were you doing in the bookstore?”

Rook pondered a moment and then cocked his head.

“Need a good read, mate. Nothing better than settling in on a quiet evening next to a roaring fire. Don’t you think?”

The officer frowned.

“Fine, fine,” Rook sighed, “but it’ll be easier to show you. Get some lackey to grab my coat and drag it in here. I’m sure you wankers didn’t suss out what I had stashed in it.”

“How about you just tell me, Mr. Morten?” the officer responded with a cool tone.

Rook smirked.

“There’s no way you’ll find it, mate. You’ll probably trash it trying to.” Rook leaned back in the chair. “Besides, what can I do with a sodding coat? I’ll sit right here the whole time and guide you.”

The officer looked incredulous, continuing to stare at Rook for a moment as he worked through the possibilities of what could be hidden in the garment that their X-ray and metal detectors didn’t pick up. Still, he saw little harm in bringing the coat into the room.

“Officer Raynes!”

The door cracked open, and a young officer leaned in,



glancing at Rook and then at his commanding officer.

“Sir?”

“Bring me Mr. Morten’s coat. Check it for any suspicious contents or substances before you do, though.”

“Right away,” and with that, the door was once again closed.

The officer’s eyes met Rook’s again. They left it silent for a moment longer before Rook decided to speak.

“You a religious man, officer?”

The officer narrowed his eyes again. “I’d appreciate not trying to delve into my personal life, Mr. Morten. I don’t see how it’s relevant.”

“Don’t give me that bloody nonsense,” Rook smirked. “Even the worst of the lot will pray to some god or another. So, tell me, which one do you bow down to?”

The officer leaned back and let out a breath slowly, measuring the sense of the question. He crossed his arms and decided to answer.

“Christian.”

“Ah, Christian,” Rook’s eyebrows raised in mock interest. “What denomination?”

“Anglican.”

“Oh, one of the luckiest bastards to survive the Reformation,” Rook nodded.

The officer continued to study Rook through a pointed gaze.

“So, your church a bunch of pompous pricks or more of a loosey-goosey kind of deal?” Rook gestured with a flip of his hand.

“I don’t see what any of this has to do-”

“Tell me,” Rook leaned in on the table, smirking in the harsh light, “when was the last time you confessed?”

The door to the interrogation room opened, and the young officer came in with Rook’s coat in a thin plastic bag. Rook smiled as it was handed over to the senior officer.

“We found nothing out of the ordinary on it, sir,” Officer Raynes said. “The only metal was a bottle opener hanging from the inside pocket zipper.”

The older officer took the bag and opened it, the room filling with the smell of smoke. He whipped it once to lengthen it and then held it up in one hand, just far enough away from Rook as though to taunt him with it.

“Thank you, that is all,” he said to his junior. Officer Raynes nodded and left the room, closing the door again.

“There it fucking is,” Rook grinned, “a bloody masterpiece, innit?”

“Alright, tell me what we need to know about this coat, Mr. Morten,” the officer said, looking to Rook and noting his smile with a growing sense of concern.

Rook’s eyes locked onto the officer’s.

“Oi, copper. You gonna answer me, or are you too busy counting your Hail Marys?” Rook sneered. “Been to

confession lately?”

The officer lowered the coat to his lap and swallowed. The hair on his arms and the back of his neck rose. His stomach knotted. Everything about his body was telling him to leave right now. But, he had a duty, and so he screwed a measure of steel into his face and stared back at Rook.

“What does it matter to you?”

“One should never meet their maker with a heart full of regrets.”

On full alert, the officer dropped the coat and pushed his chair back, watching Rook intently. The hair on the officer’s body began to itch, their roots excited by something in the air around him. The air in the room quickly cooled, and the light began to dim. Looking around the room, the fluorescent lights seemed to struggle to emit their glow and began to scream in a barely audible whine. The officer looked back to Rook to see the man leaning back in his chair, the smile of a madman on his face, as the growing darkness surrounded him. Bits of the darkness glinted in the light as it swirled around Rook, appearing like a haze of gossamer caught in a whirlwind. Through it, the officer could see Rook’s body going limp and sliding down in the chair, but above it rose a condensation of black mist that knitted together into a form like a living shadow. A shadow made of broken glass.

The officer shot up to his feet and backed away, knocking into the table and toppling his chair. He looked around the

room in a desperate attempt to find something that could protect him but found nothing in this barren place.

Rook rose over the officer, his broken and fractured soul whipping into a frenzy of spinning glass. He paused, savoring the moment, his essence pulsing with anticipation. He waited for the inevitable pull of the underworld to tug on him, challenging it to take him before he would take this man's body, relishing how it was taking longer and longer for the familiar calling to attempt to claim him.

"Holy mother of G-" the officer gasped.

Rook dove forward, slamming himself into the officer's body. Being of nothing but soul, the man's flesh gave no resistance to Rook. Instead, Rook connected with something much more solid and resilient, deep within the officer's body. Rook latched on and tore, ripping the soul from the officer's body, disconnecting the solid thing, and snapping it off like a shard of ice. Discarding it, Rook descended into the body, bearing down on the brittle remnants of the previous owner's soul and anchoring to it. He watched as the officer's soul was flung away; the damage Rook caused it snaking fractures up the essence like the slow, shattering of a pane of glass. *Let's see how fast I can get it*, Rook thought as he forced his soul into the extremities of the body and arrested the necessary control. The pain began to well up in the body, and it mingled with Rook's own consciousness until it was no longer the body's pain but his own. He felt the rush enter his new lungs, giving

fire to his new muscles and jump-starting his new heart.

He screamed. Rook's first breath in a new body was always a scream. It had to be. And Rook opened his eyes to find himself leaning back against the corner of the interrogation room. He looked at his new hands and legs, and then over at his old body, still limp in the chair, and finally at the black soul that hovered in between them. He smiled as he saw the soul, form wavering, the shards of it clinging to each other magnetically, as it became aware of itself again. He watched as the eye-less voids in the vaguely humanoid form began to smolder like embers as the spirit's inborn anger and resentment shaped and transformed it. As it lost its purpose as a soul, it gained a new one as a wraith, and it set its hatred on its old body. But, as it began to drift forward and form claw-like appendages, it suddenly jerked downward.

"Don't fret, mate," growled Rook with a smirk, "I reckon the place is top-notch."

Like a sudden shift in gravity, the wraith fell into the floor and receded from view. Brushing himself off, Rook walked over, picked up his Spector, and slid it on.

"Aw, bloody hell," Rook scowled as the burgundy lining of the coat cut into his larger frame, the fit too tight to be comfortable. Still, Rook would not be without it and got it on despite how it fit. He flipped the collar up and walked toward the door. He took a breath, gave himself a good once-over glance, and then opened the door. He walked down the

hall with a long gait, keeping his eyes forward, ignoring the confused and questioning looks the other officers gave him.

“What was that scream?”

Rook walked through the front doors of the precinct and out into the street.