

DANI HOOTS

Klop



# KLOPF

**Written by:**

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**D**ust. And buildings. That's all that was left of this place. That was all that could be left after what had happened. No life, no happiness, just death and destruction.

Except for one man, one lucky soul in all the land, at least he figured he was the last one alive. He still wasn't sure and didn't know how much was destroyed. For all he knew, it could only have been this place that was attacked. He had searched throughout the entire neighborhood and thus far had found nothing but rubble and rotten flesh. All his friends and family were gone, his neighbors and those he never got the pleasure of meeting. They were all gone in a blink of an eye. He didn't know why or how he survived, but figured it had to do with him being a coward. Or a survivor, though sometimes there wasn't much of a difference.

The city smelt of death, it was almost unbearable for him to suffer through. A week or so had passed and the smell of rotting flesh still lingered in the air. He wore a gas-mask anytime he ventured out of the hellhole he found himself in, but even with that he swore he could taste the foul stench that lingered in the air.

There was still some food left, he was thankful for. Cans and cans of fruit and veggies. Some spam even. He had locked them away in his cellar and, as he did, they survived.

Nothing in the kitchens had remained. Not the cupboards, not the table or chairs, not even the refrigerator. They didn't make them like they used to.

So he had a small amount of rations, probably enough for a few months at most. He even had some water stored away in the bunker, although he didn't know if it was contaminated or not. He knew if it were contaminated, so would every other water supply in the area, so there was no escape.

He still hadn't ventured far into the city. He was postponing the inevitable, of finding out that he was the last man alive. But he had to find out, he had to see if there was anything left.

The morning of the tenth day, he packed a few things and headed towards the downtown. The sun beat down on him but he didn't care. He still wore the military uniform he swore to always wear and kept on the mask even though he knew there was no use. He didn't want to see or breath the things around him clearly. The mask was the only thing that could keep him separate from all the things around.

It was twenty miles to the city center, a good six or seven hour walk. He used to hike when he was younger and had always wanted to walk all the way to the downtown, but always ended up taking the bus or train instead. Now he finally got his wish.

Ignoring the destruction of each and every neighborhood, he passed through the streets. Only shadows remained of the once living. Even with all the horror accumulated inside of him, he couldn't cry another tear. He ran out of tears the third day after it all happened and knew that they wouldn't be coming back. Nothing would be coming back.

Except for the beings that had done this.

He waited and waited for them to come back, to see if what they did really had destroyed the entire city, and for all he knew, the world. Maybe they didn't have time, maybe they were still attacking more innocent areas. The explosion seemed big enough, though, that nothing would survive. Except for him, that is. Someway, somehow.

He carried a gun with him, as if that would make a difference. It was a Walther P38, his father's gun while he was in the service. It was simple and easy to use, and he loved it for that. It made him feel secure and he thought that if they came back, he might be able to take down one or two of those basterds before they did him in for good. And that was worth it in the end.

As he ventured further and further towards the city's core, he thought about why he didn't just end his life then and there. All he once knew was gone and there wasn't anything left. Was it

out of pure stubbornness that he didn't take his P38 and shoot himself right in the head then and there? Was it because he didn't want to give them the satisfaction? Or did he actually have hope that there was still someone or something alive out there in the world and he wanted to know the truth?

It could take the rest of his life to find someone, and that was if he could find clean water or a food supply. Today's venture would help determine if there was anything left to salvage. He doubted anyone ducked into a shelter that night. It was unsuspected, he was lucky to have seen them coming. And lucky to have hid.

Others, it appeared, weren't so lucky. So far he had found nothing alive. Not many had bunkers under the homes, nor did anyone prepare for the worst. Although none really had seen it coming, it wasn't like anyone could prepare. All of a sudden there was fire and everything was gone. In a blink of an eye, all the beauty of the world diminished to dust.

Every once in a while he hears something stir, or sees something move in the corner of his eyes. There's nothing there.

He wondered if his hopes would be dissolved the moment he saw the city, the moment he realized what had truly happened. He didn't think it could be possible, he didn't think that in a blink of an eye all of this would be destroyed. It didn't seem possible, it didn't seem likely... yet here he was.

The walk to the city didn't seem reassuring. He was past the five mile mark and so far there was nothing, not a living creature in sight. It would have been easier, he knew, if there was at least something, he could keep going. He could realize life would be worth it, to keep fighting, to keep trying to search.

But there was nothing here, nothing yet anyway.

Even if it was a cat or dog, a smile would have appeared on his face. But that smile never came and as he kept stepping one foot after the other, that smile seemed more and more impossible.

It seemed like an eternity had passed since he had seen another smiling face. It would have been easier if he had grabbed someone to hide with him, if he hadn't been so weak and afraid. If he wasn't such a coward. But he couldn't help it, there were so many and...

He didn't want to think about it. He wanted to keep searching for someone else, someone that he could believe in.

To see the outskirts of the city in such a state... It was almost unimaginable for this man. He was glad the mask separated him from the world, he didn't want to feel like he was actually there, but looking through a lens. It was the only way to cope.

The buildings were almost unrecognizable, rubble really. At moments he thought he was lost, roads having disappeared and some buildings complete gone. But he knew what way was west, and he knew that was the way to the city.

Ten miles down, ten to go. He wondered if it was a bad idea to walk out here, if he should have just stayed where he was. But then he would have never known the truth. Whether or not there were others.

The closer he got to the city, the more destruction there seemed to be. Instead of buildings still having some form of shape, there was nothing but dust and rubble. The closer he got, the worse it was. He didn't know what to do. He debated turning back, as it was getting worse and worse. But that didn't mean there would be nothing there. That didn't mean to give up hope.

The air was thicker and thicker as he approached. It was only a couple of miles now, he was almost there. His heart raced as he kept looking forward, kept searching for anyone or anything. It was just so complicated, it was just so hard. Why would such a thing happen?

Once he reached the city, he found exactly what he suspects. Nothing. He thought that there could be supplies still, underground. He knew of a few places that would store things underneath the city, but it would be hard to reach. Today he was just surveying the area, find somewhere to stay for the night, and go back to searching the next day.

Stumbling through the area, rubble among rubble among death made up the city. As he glanced around, he saw something standing out in the nothingness.

A journal.

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*August 12, 21--,*

*I found a blank journal in one of the abandoned stores today in my search for food. I would have rather found food. I stared at it for a while, blankly, wondering if it was even worth while. I'm still not sure but at least it will give me something else to do.*

*I guess I should introduce myself. I am Hans Ritter, twenty-five years of age, living alone on the outskirts of Berlin, or at least what was once Berlin. I'm not sure what it is anymore.*

*It's been over a week. That, at least, is what I have counted. Eleven days. I should end it, I really should, but I can't. Something inside me stops my hand from clenching that trigger. So I keep on living, if you can call this living. It really isn't.*

*On to the point. I finally grabbed this journal to tell the story of what has happened here. I don't know if there is really a person to leave this to, but it is the least I can do after all. Especially since...*

*They came out of no where. Hundreds, if not thousands. The city didn't even see it coming. I somehow had a lucky guess and hid, if you call this lucky. I haven't found anyone left. There is nothing but shadows and dust. That's all there is out there, but isn't that in reality all there is? All we will become in the end? Shadows and dust.*

*Night is coming and I shouldn't use up the candles I have found for such a daunting task as this, writing my thoughts down for what will likely be for no one to read. Maybe I really shouldn't bother.*

\*\*\*

He found a place to stay for the night. It wasn't great, barely even covered by a roof. He wasn't even sure if it would hold through the night, but nor did he really care. If it fell on him and killed him, he could have a way out of this. But that wasn't the case. He survived the night to go about it another day.

After writing in the journal, he didn't even want to look at it the next day. There was so much that made him wonder, such as if there would be anyone to read it in the end. He wanted to tell his story, but he didn't want to waste time in case there was no one there. He didn't want to give those who did this that satisfaction.

A couple of days passed as he looked through the city. There were very few buildings left, but there were a couple that had items he could savage. Some cans of food, some bottled drinks. It wasn't much but it meant another few days alive.

He hadn't seen the sun or stars for days now, as the dust still covered the sky. He never took his mask off, never wanted to breath in that air that tasted like death. Maybe someday he could take that mask off and breath in the old air that once was. But it wasn't that day and he knew it wouldn't be for quite some time.

There were no sounds out at night, only of the wind howling. There were no cars, no people talking, no planes flying through the air. It was like a desert wasteland, yet only moments before it had been alive.

He thought it was strange that such a lively world, one that worried about climate, meteorites, all of the things that were possible to destroy the human race, that it would end like this. That an outsider could come along and destroy such beauty without warning, snuff out an entire place because it wanted to. It wasn't fair and he knew that.

There were so many questions that he wanted answered, such as why they would do such a thing, why they would destroy most of the planet, if not all of it. It made no sense to him, but then again he didn't think like a monster.

Deciding to keep pushing further, to start heading towards the next towns, he put a bag together of all the things he found that he could use and started forward. He pondered taking the journal, wanting to leave it behind, but something about it made him decide it could be a worthy companion.

So off he went into the distance, never looking back.

As it got dark, he found a shelter that didn't look too destroyed. There was no one there, of course, so he used it for the night.

And that's when it happened.

\*\*\*

*August 15, 21--*

*I decided to come back to this, knowing in reality that even if no one did find it, at least it gives me something to do. It actually feels almost like talking to another human being. Almost.*

*I also wanted to record what happened last night, if not early this morning. It is hard to tell these days. I woke up to knocking at my door. I didn't answer, I was too afraid. It couldn't have been a person, the knock sounded eerie, not that of a natural human being. It may seem strange to call a knock eerie but you weren't there. You didn't hear it. It went away after a while and I dismissed it as my imagination. Being alone can do things like that to a person.*

*I don't know what else to write in this, it still feels like a waste of time. Who am I kidding.*

\*\*\*

Although he was good at maps, finding the next city was a bit tougher than he thought. As landmarks were gone and the sky seemed to have disappeared with the rest of the Earth, it made it difficult to figure out which was north.

But it didn't matter. After a few days of wandering, after a few days thinking that there would be no end, he found a city. Even having lived in Germany for all his life, he had no idea which one it was. Either way it meant more supplies. At least, he hoped.

He hadn't heard the knocking again, which he wasn't sure was a good or bad thing. Of course if he had, he would have ignored it yet again. There was no way it could be real yet... he just wasn't sure what it could be. There was no one here, there was no way those monsters would come back. They did their task and that was the end. That was the end of everything.

\*\*\*

*August 20, 21--*

*Found some canned peaches today and bottled water. Didn't think there was any good food left.*

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He searched throughout the city but there was still nothing but scraps, other than the miraculous can of peaches he found the day before. He just wished he could be that lucky again. The more he searched, the more he realized that when the food supply was done, so would he. He just didn't know if he hoped that day would come soon or not.

Ignoring the fact that most of the dust and rubble was not just made up of rock and buildings, but those that once lived in the area, he stepped across the city. There wasn't a soul here, let alone even a fruit fly. It had all been wiped away. Why exactly he survived, he still didn't understand.

Even though he had hid in an underground lair, seeing all that was destroyed, and the lack of any living thing made him wonder if this was all truly real, or if he was just having a horrible dream. He knew he shouldn't have been alive, he knew that after everything, he should have died alongside the others. It was unfair.

He tried not to think about the past, about everything that had happened. It was too painful to say the least. He wanted to have hope, he wanted to wish that somewhere, out there in the world, there were others just like him. Those who could band together and bring back the Earth that once was. But if each city looked like this, if all the land was covered in dust, it felt almost impossible for him.

There was so much he hadn't done in his life, so much he wanted to see. It was heartbreaking for him, to say the least, as he ventured further through Germany. At least, he knew, that there had to be something out there, or else fate has played a nasty game with him.

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*August 22, 21--*

*The dust made the sky, or at least what I figured was sky, red this morning. I guess you could call it crimson, maybe scarlet. I don't know, I was never good at literary work. Ruby. We will go with ruby. I never had seen a sky so red, not since the first day this all happened.*

*As I wrote earlier, they came out of nowhere. In the sky, on the ground, from the water. Everywhere. The sky may have been red, but so was the streets. So was the river. So much blood. So much death. I...*

\*\*\*

It had been a while since the attack happened. Not a day went by that he didn't think about his family, his love, his old life. Was this just a dream, he wondered, or did a nightmare truly develop for this world. He didn't have the answers, he didn't even know how to find out the answers. Would it ever be possible?

And then there was that noise he heard. That noise that haunted him.

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*August 25, 21--*

*I heard it again. The knocking. Same time, in the darkness. Several knocks. It could have been the enemy, which was probably why I never answered. I did, however, look outside. The moon was full, bringing enough light on the streets. There was something out there. Something tall and dark stood at the door. It didn't have shape, it was just there. I didn't answer it. Finally it moved on.*

*There was still no sign of anyone. I had truly hoped that I would find something, but nevertheless I am alone. I kept my gun close, in case they came back. I had almost discharged it a few times, small little noises making me paranoid, but I resist the urge. I have one bullet left in my gun and I was keeping it until I needed it.*

\*\*\*

He kept moving, as it was the only thing he could do. He searched thoroughly for food and water, but the more he moved, the more it felt like it was all harder to find. He wondered if his days were starting to run out, if he would be taking his last breath through the mask soon. His gun looked nicer and nicer every day, but he resisted the urge, just in case there was someone else out there.

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*August 29, 21--*

*I've heard the knocking every night since my last entry. It hasn't left. I wonder if it's my mind playing tricks on me or if there is something in the night calling for me.*

\*\*\*

He didn't know what to do about the knocking, he didn't know if it was his imagination or if there was something out there. He wondered if it could be the monsters that did this, or if it was someone who needed help. If either of those were the case, then he knew they would have said something, that they would come in the daylight, not in the darkness. There was something more going on here, he knew, and he had to solve it once and for all.

\*\*\*

*September 2, 21--*

*It's already a new month. How time flies. Not really. The cold is coming, I can feel it in the air. I don't know what I am going to do to keep warm. There is nothing to start a fire with. Maybe this journal, but then I would have nothing.*

*The area is still warm though, I figure it is because of the aftermath of everything. Dust, fire, chemicals, it all can play a part in warming the atmosphere. The rain washed most of it away the other day, but I can still smell it. That stench. I won't take my mask off, only to eat and drink.*

\*\*\*

*September 8, 21--*

*The nights have dropped drastically in temperature. It's wet and cold. I found a place that had a fireplace and some things to start a fire. I moved my things there. It seemed like the smart thing to do now that it was getting colder.*

*The knocking followed, the creature in the night. I ignore it until it goes away. The sound echoes through my lodgings. I don't let it bother me.*

\*\*\*

It had been a while since he had gone to any other city. It was getting colder as the fall season was beginning. He missed the change in trees, the cool air that once swept across the country side. Now he only could tell it was getting colder by the rain that fell through the dust and the chilly nights.

He knew that he should keep searching, but when he thought about what destruction he would find, he started thinking about staying still. Even if he ran out of food, he knew that it would be better in the end. Maybe death was the only thing waiting for him.

\*\*\*

*September 10, 21--*

*I hear their voices sometimes. People I once knew. I can hear them calling to me at night, before the knocking starts. I can't sleep anymore, the nights go on and I just lie there, hearing their voices. They call out to me. Over and over again.*

\*\*\*

His sanity was beginning to deteriorate, though it was a miracle he lasted this long. With no one to talk to, with no one to tell him it was going to be okay, he came closer and closer to pulling the trigger. He would never write that down though, he would never let anyone know he had such a weakness.

He still hadn't left the area he was in. He was tired of moving, tired of running, tired of everything. Maybe, he thought, if he stayed still someone would come to him.

\*\*\*

*September 12, 21--*

*I can't stand it anymore. I can't sleep. I haven't had a good night's rest in almost a week. I can hear them, I can hear all of them. They call me a traitor. They call me a coward. It wasn't my fault. It just wasn't.*

\*\*\*

Memories of what had happened came to him every time he closed his eyes. He just wished he could erase everything, make it all go away, but he couldn't. Maybe one day he would find others who had survived, those who had done the same thing as he did, as if that would make it okay. But that wasn't the case and now that this time had passed, he knew that the possibilities of that happening were near none.

As each night passed, the cooler and cooler it seemed to be. He wanted to keep traveling south, to be able to find some place warm, but he knew it wouldn't be worth it. There were a lot of mountains he would have to cross and it would be near impossible for him to do such a thing without freezing to death.

So he was stuck here, hoping someone would rescue him, hoping the whole world wasn't like this. If it was, well then, that gun would look more beautiful each and every day.

\*\*\*

*September 14, 21--*

*I need to tell someone of what happened so many weeks ago, maybe it will get rid of the constant knocking. I don't know how to start this or what you will think of me after, if there ever is a you. Ugh, here goes.*

*I was part of the military that was to guard the citizens when the attack came. I was supposed to fight, I was supposed to be there for my colleagues. Only, I wasn't. I ran. I hid. I couldn't fight; I panicked. Why you may ask. Because I didn't want to die. I didn't want to suffer*

*like they did. You weren't here, you didn't see them. This is my sin and I am here, alone, paying the price of abandonment.*

\*\*\*

He knew that even if he fought with the others, that everything still would have been destroyed. The only difference would be that he was dead. He thought that dying like them would be worse, that living had to always be better. He was finding that he was wrong.

After he confessed his sins to the journal, he almost felt relieved, as if he told a secret that had been burdening him for quite some time. Though he knew that the journal wasn't a living being, he could at least treat it as such. It was all he had.

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*September 15, 21--*

*The voices left but the knocking did not. For a while I didn't think it would come but it did. It always does. I confessed everything for nothing. I am still here and I am still alone.*

\*\*\*

The man felt as if time was coming to a close, as if these past few weeks were all for nothing. Maybe this world wasn't real, maybe it all had been an illusion. He couldn't be sure and couldn't see the truth. There was something going on and as he stared at the fire, he tried his hardest to put the pieces together.

\*\*\*

*September 17, 21--*

*This will be my last entry. I have at last put the clues together. I have at last figured out the mystery of the knocking in the night. So farewell to you who read this. I wish you luck in this strange new world and sorry I cannot join you in searching for life.*

*Because death is knocking at my door and it's about time I answered it.*

\*\*

The man stepped outside and took his mask off. There, in the dark clear sky he saw it.  
The answer to everything.

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## About the Author:



Dani Hoots is a graduate from Arizona State University with a Bachelor's in Anthropology and a Masters in Urban and Environmental Planning who loves anything with a story. She travels around the Northwest and Southwest working at comic conventions and selling her stories. Currently she lives in Washington with her husband and two cats.

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