**A Survivor’s Journal**

25.05.2020. Boston. Small shed.

This epidemic has lasted for 7 years now. It’s not safe here. The infected are everywhere. Yeah, I’m writing a diary while these monsters are walking around my hiding place. But it’s good to remember every day. Even if they’re the last ones.

Clickclickclick… I hate this sound. So creepy. Clickers. These ugly none-eyed monsters with these… hubs fused on the heads of creatures once called humans. Yeah, their eyes and noses disappeared under this fungus. This is the 3rd stage of infection. They’ll be Bloaters soon. It is funny because Clickers are colourful. Definitely it makes their ugliness prettier.

I don’t think that the small shed is a good place to hide. I hope she can’t hear me writing. Yep, that was a woman. I can see she used to be beautiful. Another fact: Clickers have a very good sense of hearing. Anyway, I hope she’ll let go and go away. Well, I can only wait. Then I’ll be heading for Wyoming. I heard it’s less dangerous there.

27.05.2020. Boston’s bridge. Evening.

I wish I hadn’t run away from the Quarantine Zone. Being there has some advantages, for example you feel safe and you can sleep well. But you get sick of soldiers controlling you from head to foot. And you may be accused of being a Firefly. I don’t mind Fireflies but I don’t see a good future for this organisation. Ironically, I’m sitting in front of their logo written on the wall. ‘Look for the light,’ it says. I’m looking for it and what? I still see the darkness. This damn darkness overwhelming humans’ minds and hearts.

29.05.2020. Boston. Hotel.

I don’t believe that nobody misses coffee. Well, I miss it looking at the espresso machine. I miss the taste of coffee my dear Lauren used to prepare. If she worked in a coffeehouse, she would make an awesome barista. This kind of drink reminds me of her.

I should stop writing and go to find some food. I’m hungry. I need more ammos and medicines, too. I think I caught a cold.

01.06.2020. Boston’s suburbs. Apartment.

Children’s Day. Nobody celebrates it now. There’s more important business than such ‘shit’. Children grow up without mothers and fathers in the Quarantine Zone’s orphanage. Lauren really wanted to have a family. She was very tutelary. She loved kids. She was forever saying how adorable and amazing babies are. Irritating, I thought, but now I must say it could be nice to bring up a happy toddler. I’m thinking about it looking at a baby’s bed standing in front of me. I’m in a kid’s room. There are a lot of toys around me. Cars, Legos, plastic soldiers, dolls... Nowadays children wouldn’t know what to do with these things. Now they are small soldiers. Treated as mature people and taught how to kill.

02.06.2020. Boston’s suburbs. Car.

Just 30 minutes and I’ll cross the border of Boston. There’s a really long line of forgotten vehicles. They’re standing in the traffic jam which will never end. I dunno if I’ll survive this long road to Wyoming alone. But I can’t trust anyone. This is the basic rule of the new world.

05.06.2020. The road to New York.

I guess I haven’t mentioned how much I hate the infected. I’m sick and tired of them. Today I killed a small herd of Runners. They’re very fast. Their red glowing eyes make blood freeze in my veins. It’s the first stage of infection. They’ll be Stalkers soon. The Stalkers will be Clickers, the Clickers will be Bloaters. I’ve never seen the last kind but I heard that they’re huge, silly, fat and really aggressive. One of my mates from the Quarantine Zone said that they can rip someone’s jaw apart barehanded or they can twist your neck or grab your head and smash it. What’s more, they rip off sacks from their bodies and throw them like grenades into their enemies. These disgusting things explode emitting toxic gas. It’s difficult to kill these monsters. My mate said that you need two Molotovs to finish them off.

Having said that, killing the infected is a piece of cake when compared to killing someone you love, used to share bed, problems and your whole life with. Now there’s no love. There’s fear.

08.06.2020. Chinatown. New York.

I’ve found a working car! I couldn’t believe that I managed to start it. Now I have to be careful. Hunters would be horribly jealous seeing somebody driving a car. I hate Hunters so much. To meet them is to meet death, if you’re not a fighter. They strike at defenceless people, kill them and look for stuff in their victims’ pockets and bags. Having found nothing, they leave the corpse and go away to keep plundering. Hunters are the worst gang that has ever existed. They’re always pissed off but they never feel sorry for their actions. Does killing make sense?

13.06.2020. Pennsylvania. New Castle.

This state is really wild. I mean unsafe. I didn’t expect that somebody could survive here. I was wrong. I met a young woman on the road. She looked exhausted and defenceless. I know I had promised myself to trust no one. But I stopped to ask if she needed my help. She said that the Hunters had robbed and hurt her. I noticed that she was gazing at my new car. I was helping her when she suddenly took my shotgun.

She couldn’t know that I had practiced karate as a teenager. It was a piece of cake to overpower her. Yet, I felt it would be better if we could cooperate not fight. She was afraid of being raped and I was afraid of being killed and robbed so we were suspicious of each other. But we came to a compromise and she trusts me a little bit more.

Her name’s Amanda. She thinks that she’s strong and smart but I think she’s sensitive and lost inside. Everyone is lost and desperate. I can relate to that. She agreed to come with me to Wyoming. Now we’re resting by the campfire. She looks cute and calm when asleep.

10.08.2020. Tekamah. Iowa.

It’s been a long time since I made my last notes. It was a horribly long and tiring road trip. But I managed to get to know Amanda better. She’d been an archaeology student and she has an older brother living in Jackson, Wyoming. What a coincidence! We hope he’s still alive. We drove across half of the USA and it’s a miracle that *we* are still alive.

It’s good to have a fellow traveller. Amanda is grumpy and mannish but still very nice. Sometimes it’s hard to get on with her, she thinks she has better skills and experience than I do. She’s quite good at killing. But has she ever had to kill somebody she loved? I remember that day when a sudden infection caught my wife. Nobody can describe the feeling when you see your beloved one trying to eat you. It makes you grab a kitchen knife and stab blindly your love. And then cry. No, she won’t understand this.

14.08.2020. Scotts Bluff. Nebraska.

I finally saw a Bloater and now I regret it. When we were exploring a hospital, he appeared in the hall. This battle took a while. There was no time to think. We had to act quickly and spontaneously. We split so that one of us could distract the monster to confuse and defeat him successfully. I always believed that kind of things only happens in horror movies, but we did it in real life. Only doing it yourself is a desperate fight for life not great fun. Anyway, I’m glad we survived. Amanda was being very nimble, I must say. She looks badass fighting.

19.08.2020. Mills. Wyoming.

Clickers again. We’d rather avoid them ‘cause we’ve run out of ammos and I’m tired of endless fighting. I remember I used to dream of having crazy and adventurous life like Indiana Jones or Nathan Drake. It was before I got married and even some time after that. But now, when I’m living such a life it turns out to be tragic. There are no temples or artefacts to be looked for. There are no bad guys wishing to rule the world. This is the real apocalypse.

30.08.2020. Riverton. Wyoming.

This city used to be quiet. Now it is silent. And the infected are here, though not a lot of them, I must say. We found a safe place to build a campfire. I finally told Amanda my story. I didn’t expect that she would understand me, but she did. She’s not being as rude as when we first met. Her life wasn’t happy, either. Her brother Jason had moved to Jackson a year before the epidemic spread. Amanda got a message from him that he was safe. This is why she is going there.

15.09.2020. Jackson. Wyoming.

Finally! We got to Jackson. It’s very quiet and its citizens are suspicious of strangers. They had to make sure that we were not infected. But after that a very nice couple, Tommy and Maria, invited us into their home. They found a house for us to keep. It’s a small bungalow with one king bed. I hope Amanda won’t mind. But I guess she has a crush on me.

Her brother is somewhere here, too, and we’re gonna find him. I’m so glad that we don’t have to live in a rush anymore and I hope I will die here of old age rather than in battle or of infection. In this world some people deserve to rest for a while. Or to start a new life. I won’t forget about the people I once loved, but I must stop living in the past. It’s time to think about the future.

Buck Milles