

NO RILLS K I N C I D E N T



MARAUDERS' DIARIES



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To Erin and her siblings.

1

- UNTIL I DROP DEAD -

- Another round!

The barman leaned on the wooden bar and tried to look Ivan into the eye. They were completely lost somewhere else, far away from there.

- No more booze for you!

Ivan was tipsy, but sober enough to answer back.

- How about I bring you some souvenirs from a special place?

- I've seen you pull the last roubles from your dirty wallet. You don't have means to pay me.

While Ivan stared at him, the sound of a low quality russian polka, probably from an AM radio, filled the void.

- How about... – Ivan continued resting his elbows on the bar and leaning slowly - ... I bring you a souvenir from Norilsk?

The barman burst out laughing removing his almost finished cigarette from his mouth and putting it out on the wooden bar.

He looked both ways to check everybody was distracted enough and leaned a little bit more towards Ivan.

- If you bring me the Bear Insignia from Norilsk's entrance I'll give you a whole year of free booze.

Ivan smiled, while the barman continued his speech.

- Now, you go to that forsaken place and you die... Do you know what happens when you die, idiot?

The barman got a completely blank look for a response.

- Do I go to Heaven?

- No! My children don't eat because you're not here to pay for more booze!

- The city is empty – Ivan refuted.

- And why do you think it's empty? Because they ran out of booze and all the drunks like you are here?!

- No, I haven't drained what could have been left of alcohol – he said holding his laughter.

- It's not funny! Nobody has ever come back! Soldiers, exploreres, Spetnaz... all disappeared!

- That's because they don't know Norilsk.

- That's because the devil himself most likely walks those streets. Since the incident hundreds have tried to enter and

look for whatever thing destroyed the city, but... have you seen any of them?

- In the obituary...

- I'll pay to publish yours then!

The bar door slammed open.

- Ivan... you rat! Come here!

A built up man rushed in turning over some chairs while Ivan hastily picked up two raggy backpacks and his leather cut off gloves from the counter.

Grabbing him from the hood of his military jacket, he started dragging him out.

- You haven't packed idiot! We have to leave already!

Ivan didn't offer any resistance while he was dragged and some more chairs fell to the floor.

Some people raised their heads to see what the racket was all about while the rest remained indifferent minding their own business as if they were used to this kind of scene.

- Vasily! Your brother owes me six hundred roubles!

Sticking his hand in his right pocket he grasped a handful of coins and threw them towards the wooden bar. The sound of metal against the floor effectively caught everyone's attention at the bar.

- These are Euros, don't complain and keep the change!

Vasily stood Ivan up violently and pushed him out. Some pedestrians, alerted by the situation, quickly switched sidewalks. A pair of teenagers videorecording the low flight of an Antonov¹ plane with their cell phones changed the focus of attention as they laughed.

- *Privet* Youtube! – Ivan extended his hands waving them.

Kicking Ivan in his butt, Vasily took him to the back of an old GAZ-53 transport truck with closed cargo box. The door opened from the inside and after getting up he closed it violently.

- Here he is! Where the heck were you?!

Yegor handed over two thousand roubles to Nikolay. He had lost the bet.

- I knew it! – Nikolay said.

- He hasn't packed yet! – Vasily was furious.

- Don't worry. I knew Ivan was going to be drunk, so I packed the things for him – Arkady added from a corner.

Vasily looked at him for a few seconds and then gave Ivan an eye to eye full of rage look. He sat on the floor while Ivan remained standing up, leaning against one of the metallic walls of the cargo box.

Nikolay moved an empty plastic crate to the center of the circle and placed it upside down. He quickly searched his pockets to pull out a small and compressed paper rectangle.

¹ One of the largest cargo airplanes in the world.

After unfolding, it revealed an old map of the city of Norilsk and its surroundings.

- I know it's somehow old, but it's the most up-to-date map I have been able to get. All the satellite maps show a black spot over the city for no reason.

- That's good, we'll check the routes later.

Arkady got everyone's attention.

- The weapons are ready. Three AK-103², two AK-74, Makarov and TT-33 pistols and some hand grenades. I have also got this five packages of C4³ to bury whatever there is in the crash site.

Everybody looked at him in amazement.

- This last I stole from the military warehouses of course – he added.

- Holy Mary... – Ivan exclaimed - ... good enough! I thought you had spent our money in explosives!

- Anybody's got anything else? – Arkady said trying to round off the topic.

- I have brought my GP-25 grenade launcher to attach to any of the assault rifles and some ammunition – Yegor said.

- Anything else?

² The AK103 and AK74 are modern versions of the AK47 assault rifle, known for its modern usage in guerillas and ex-USSR countries.

³ Powerful plastic explosive of military usage.

- Yes... – Nikolay added - ... I have my old spear gun.
- What? A spear gun?
- Just in case we have to drag any boats from deep waters to the shore.

Everybody nodded.

- *Da*, if there is nothing else we'll pick up the weapons and ammunition as we exit Dudinka⁴. I know it will be heavy, but I managed to get five magazines for each one of us in case we encounter wild animals in the city – Arkady summarized.
- Sounds good. Since we have vehicles we can carry them at least beyond the docks to then start the walk.
- Speaking of vehicles... – Arkady turned to Yegor.
- Five ATVs, full tanks plus an extra fuel can each. That will be enough to carry us to the exchange point.
- How about their condition?
- Good. Four bought, one stolen, which means we can't take much longer to depart.
- It's not like the Police is going to look for them in Norilsk!
– Ivan laughed.
- So, what's the plan Nikolay?

⁴ Dudinka is a city located 50 miles west from Norilsk

- First, we need to vote the main approach: through the riverside or through the plains?

- Who knows what garbage the river has carried here from the crash site, it flows this way... – Ivan was now leaning against the metal wall with his eyes closed - ... the pollution would kill us like flies.

- Lookey, lookey! He's not that drunk after all!

- I'm missing a pair of bottles to get there – Ivan answered roughly between his teeth.

- He's right – Yegor pointed out – we will fall like flies, so, the plains it is. Keep on Nikolay.

- We will approach through the plains and I have thought that getting to the lighthouse would be useful. We could use it to scout the way up to the docks in case something has changed or can compromise our route plan.

He stopped for a few seconds and searched his pockets. Pulling out a marker, he drew a red circle in the map.

- We get to the docks, find a functional boat or repair one and sail straight to the heart of the crash site. We will then reclaim Norilsk to its rightful owners – he nodded while pointing at his chest.

- What are we going to do with the pollution?

- Vasily was in charge of the equipment.

Standing up, he dragged a large military bag and moving the fish crate with his feet to spread its content in the middle of the circle.

- PMG⁵ masks, GP5, magazine carriers...

- Wait... – Nikolay interrupted – GP5? It's a mask from the Chernobyl era! What did you spend our money on, candy?!

Vasily ducked clearly annoyed and grabbed a bulletproof vest from the pile.

- Fetch! – he yelled while throwing it at him.

Nikolay caught it, falling on his back against the metal floor.

- What the heck did you do to these? – he answered going back to where he was and closely examining the jacket.

- I asked the contact who sold them to me to add a thin layer of lead in case there is high radiation. The same with the helmets, pads and boots.

- Well, at least you have learned something on our looting trips to Pripyat – Arkady said.

- Speaking of... ¡Our two magical... – he said lifting two old and worn out yellow Geiger detectors - ... and this new baby!

Pulling up some cords, a modern grey detector plugged to a pair of speakers came out of the bag. They oscillated in the air for a few seconds.

⁵ PMG gas masks are modern gas masks of both civilian and military usage.

- This detector speaks when it reaches specific levels of radiation!

- And I imagine that the speakers were your idea – Yegor laughed.

- Typical – Ivan answered.

- It wouldn't be that efficient with a pair of earphones! – Vasily counterattacked to justify himself.

- We're kidding, it's a good idea.

- Ivan walked towards the center of the circle with his arms extended, like a fancy television show host.

- My friends... – he began - ... whatever thing hit Norilsk took everything from us; our homes, our wives and children, our life. It's time to get even and retake what belongs to us by inheritance: Live in Norilsk, die for Norilsk!

Ivan reached into his jacket and pulled out a hip flask.

After looking at everybody into the face, he took a sip of Vodka.

- When we get there... – he continued – we will go to the Bol'shoy Medved' as we did before...

- And drink until we are so drunk we can't stand? – Arkady said bursting out laughing.

- Exactly! I'll drink until I drop dead, come on!

2

- THREE BULLETS -

The ATVs roared throughout the empty field.

Arkady could almost see the city's silhouette in the horizon, which indicated they were no further than 25 miles away.

Yegor raised his fist in the air diminishing his speed.

- But what...?!

The other ATVs got by his side surrounding him.

- What's wrong Yegor?

- My mask is steamed up, can't you see idiot?!

- I don't know, mine's glass is anti fog.

- I am sure I hit a hot air current – he tried to explain as well as trying to convince himself about it.

- Sure, the Brazilian Carnival just passed through here – Ivan added with sarcasm.

- It doesn't matter what it was... we'll wait a few minutes and get back on the move.

The scenery was completely unusual. Normally as you approached the city you could see a column of smoke from

the factories and mineral processing plants. Some cities like Las Vegas have neon signs, but Norilsk used to receive its visitors with a massive column of toxic gases.

It had been more than one year after the incident. For the neighbouring cities and the world in general, the object that destroyed the city was a blessing since the polluting emissions had stopped, but for those that had survived for the simple fact of not being there at that moment, it was a ghost that had taken life away with all its purpose.

Some tried to return despite the pollution, but they never came back.

The ATVs' noise disturbed the peace once again and the caravan departed again.

It didn't take much time until the trip was interrupted once again.

- Vasily, do you see that?!

Still riding, Nikolay pointed at some strange lumps in the snow.

Suddenly the snow burst in front of them revealing a group of unidentifiable creatures. With quick and skillful maneuvers they could avoid them.

- What the heck were those?!

- They looked like wild boars but the bastard I saw didn't have eyes nor hair!

- Look behind! They are following us!

A group of almost ten creatures ran outrageously towards them.

- Holy saints, we are doing almost 90 and the swines are reaching us!

- Let's turn back, let's give'em lead!

Riding the ATVs full speed the show began as if it was a bullfight.

Three of the vehicles opened up and flanked the creatures putting them under fire.

Some of them rolled in the ground squirting blood out of the holes the assault rifles' ammunition opened in their backs but the rest absorbed the damage.

- These bastards are tough! What are these creatures?!

- Who cares?! They belong dead! – Ivan shouted while he raised his AK-74.

Just when he finished his battlecry, one of the creatures bashed his vehicle.

The impact was such that the pieces flew through the air like toy parts. Ivan landed violently rolling on the frozen floor.

The beast shook its head trying to recover.

Moving back on his hands and feet, he looked around trying to find his Kalashnikov. The ATVs tried to secure the area, but with an amazing display of intelligence, the creatures closed a circle isolating him.

The prey had been chosen. The hunt was over.

The vehicle Basher was ready to deliver the *coup de grace*.

- Eat this!

From where the vehicles were, an explosive round flew directly from the AK-103 mounted grenade launcher, whistling through the cold wind.

The direct impact in one of the creatures raised a column of dirt and snow spreading its parts through the area and throwing the rest of the pack to the ground.

The almost unison choir of pain pierced the frozen air while the creatures bled out of the orifices by the sides of their heads.

- Their ears! They don't have eyes but hear like the devil!

The beast began to run towards Ivan while he tried to draw his Makarov pistol.

Three detonations delivered lead to the Basher's forehead which kept advancing as if nothing had happened. While the three hot bullet cases sank in the snow, Ivan tried to move back even more to stand up and begin his retreat.

Five more detonations emptied the clip splashing snow while missing the target.

Like a swarm of wasps attacking an invader, four full magazines of 7.62mm⁶ ammunition were unloaded onto it.

The Basher tripped over, falling half a metre away from Ivan and sprinkling his pants and jacket with blood and saliva. The eyeless beast laid with its mouth open, showing sharp and irregular teeth.

Ivan took his gas mask off to quickly vomit by his side.

The hunt was definitely over, it had come to an end.

The ATVs quickly approached.

⁶ 7.62mm ammunition is pointed ammunition used in war scenarios. It can pierce concrete and metal.

- Holy mother... - Yegor said sitting in his vehicle.

Arkady got off his and turned on his telephone's camera while Vasily helped Ivan get back on his feet.

- That was close! – he said as he pulled his brother's arm up.

- Close? Close?! My vehicle is completely trashed, I almost snap my neck and that thing was ten feet away of eating me alive... I don't know how much closer you can get!

Meanwhile, Arkady frantically shot videos and took pictures of the creature.

- Hey Ivan! How much do you think we can make for each one of these photos? – he said trying to cheer him up.

- Something with six figures for sure. I bet the scientists from the *Obinsk* *Naukograd*⁷ will pee their pants when they see this.

- Yes, also probably because this bastard is so ugly that it's even disgusting to poke it with a stick.

- Who knows what the heck might be in the city if this is the welcome party – Ivan said trying to clean his clothes.

Yegor had gone away a few minutes ago and was now returning driving his ATV and holding before Ivan's dented fuel can.

⁷ The Naukograds or "Science cities" are cities with great concentration of scientific institutes, some of them secret.

- Your ride is completely wrecked and dripping gasoline, all I could get was this and half of it got spilled in the snow.

- I'll take you with me – Arkady offered while pointing at the back seat with his thumb while looking at Ivan.

Vasily opened his thermos and started spilling vodka on the floor.

- What?! Don't do it, give me a sip at least! – Ivan rebuked.

- You will have more than this when you sell a slice of your prey to those scientists – Vasily replied while handing him over a hunting knife from his leather belt.

Ivan didn't feel worthy to take the prize, but in the end, what determined who was the hunt and who was the hunter was the one that ended up dead or alive. Tightly closing the thermos filled with snow and a slice inside, he put it into one of his backpacks and jumped up on Arkady's ATV.

- Let's get out of here, I don't want to know if there are any more of those around here! – Arkady said while he throttled.

It was already possible to see the lighthouse. Now, scouting the terrain carefully was more important than ever.

END OF SAMPLE