

# Prologue

## The Devil Has a Vagina

*Testing... one, two... Testing... one, two... one, two...*

**The time is 10:35 pm, August 7, 2005.**

**My name is J. Günther Douglass-J** for Johnny, which I hate. Always have. I'm a soldier with the Revenant Clan (or the Dead Bitch Army to all you haters), a member of Voodoo Posse. I'm not really sure *where* to start, or *how*, for that matter. I couldn't even give you a clear answer as to *why* I'm making these recordings, or *whom* I expect would listen to them. I figured I'd just get something recorded to put myself into some kind of a groove. So here goes....

Forty percent of the Revenant Clan had enlisted simply because it was the best option if you lived in their part of the world-was being the operative word here. You see, the thought process goes like this:

*Hmmmm.*

*Moral dignity* (life out in the wasteland): always hungry; moving from community to community; risking being robbed, raped, or killed just for trespassing on some whacked-out vigilante's property; starving to death, or at least coming damn close on a daily basis.

Versus...

*Survival* (linking up with one of the larger armies; in this case, the Revenant Clan): safety; security; peace of mind; three squares a day, plus you get to play with guns and tell people what to do.

The decision was easy for me.

You learn a few things about yourself when you've been dragged, kicking and screaming, to the precipice of death, as I had been on many occasions before I enlisted. I learned that I wanted to live... at all costs, and that I never wanted to feel like a victim again.

I used to be a decent guy back when the world was right. I try to remind myself of that as often as possible. Back then, I was the unassuming, slightly overweight horror geek you'd pass on the street or in a mall without noticing. I had a few good friends but did most of my socializing online, most of my movie watching at home (alone), and, as far as my sex life was concerned, all I can say is talk to the hand (chuckle).

Back then, guys like me... we were the new "normal."

I wish I could say the same thing now: that I'm a decent guy. After the things I've done... the things I let happen... I don't know what you'd call me.

G'ahead. It's all right. I've heard it all: cold-blooded killer, heartless bastard, coward, monster.

At least I'm alive (chuckle).

I'm writing this because I *do* have a heart. ~~Most... A lot of...~~ Some of the things I've done have been for just reasons way down deep. As for the others... well, I try not to think about that stuff. Instead, I just remind myself over and over...

I used to be a decent guy. I used to be a decent guy. I used to be a decent guy. I used to be a decent guy....

When I first enlisted, I vowed that I would use this experience to make myself into the kind of person who would never take shit from anyone. I wasn't one of these Bloody Mary fanatics in search of some mythic zombie to take me on a romanticized adventure across the wasteland. And I wasn't looking to become a disciple of the Ergeister Church.

I joined after the big separation. The Ergeister Church had been running one hell of a smear campaign against the Queen, and it was taking its toll on the troops. Many of them quit or deserted as a result. Membership was at an all-time low. The Ergeister communities that the Queen had helped to establish (back when we were a branch of the Ergeister Army) had turned on us. We couldn't even get within five miles of them before the shooting started.

You have to understand... the Queen... she's like a freakin' God to some-a-these people out here. Even without the church. And the church knows it. Plus, they're afraid that she'll eventually come after their asses. The Queen was raised in the church, and now they had abandoned her. From what I know of her past, she doesn't take that kind of thing lightly.

Between you and me, the Queen is just another megalomaniacal freak in a long line of nutjobs fighting for control of what's left of this planet. She just happens to be one of the more successful ones. And, like I said, I was tired of being the victim. I wanted to learn how to fight, how to kill without conscience. I wanted to know what it felt like to be feared. I know it sounds grim, but you don't know what it's like out there. Or maybe you do. I don't know.

You're probably wondering if I've seen her. It's one of the first things people ask. Most of them want to know if it's true—if she's really dead like the legend says. 'Fraid I can't tell you that. What I can tell you is that *she* (the Queen) is a real person: real as in physically real. I've only seen her fully suited up and from afar.

There *are* things about the Queen that you notice right away. The way she moves, for instance... or... or the overbearing smell of bad perfume—supposedly to mask the rot. And to this day, I've never seen someone so goddamn thin. I can't imagine that you haven't seen the shaky video footage from the rave back in 2000 and the “massacre on South Broad” as it's become known. Both show her unmasked, and rotten, like a Romero zombie with attitude.

They have become perennial images in the smear campaign of the National News Network (formerly the New Philadelphia News Organization). That bitch Linda Ludlow runs the NNN. Remember her?

I always assumed that the footage was doctored. My uncle Jay had imparted unto me a good deal of skepticism. He was the black sheep of my family, the liberal conspiracy-theory nut.

If you've seen the footage, then you've seen about as much as most of us. We just have better seats.

I *have* seen the new body armor that Professor Kagen designed for her: an exoskeleton wrapped in black Kevlar flesh. The helmet has a section for interchangeable facemasks and a tube running from the left side to a compact Freon regulator on her back

that, according to one of the mechanics I'm friendly with, pumps cold air through the suit to help preserve her. They made the thing from salvaged military parts.

Most of our artillery and vehicles (as well as our military-style designations) are "borrowed" from the traditional armed forces after they left them on the battlefield, if you didn't already know that. Calling our units "posses" was Colonel Davies' idea.

Small enclaves of military who are still loyal to what is left of the Federal Government remain engaged with their adversaries for dominance over their ever-shrinking territory. The Queen watches the attrition on the battlefield from a distance, waiting patiently for her opportunity to crush whatever forces remain on the disputed land.

In the suit, she looks like a post-apocalyptic dominatrix, her face hidden behind a never-ending collection of masks. (The one I saw looked like the stoic face of a Greek goddess.) They say it's because she's falling apart—literally. That's why she's become so shy about showing herself these days, too. The exosuit is supposed to protect her in battle and sustain her for as long as possible.

I'm not saying it ain't possible. A living dead woman ain't such a far stretch when you consider some of the toxic oddities that roam the wasteland. But I've always been a "show-me" kind-a-guy. It's sort of the way I felt about Jesus when I was a precocious kid. But you know what? I still went to church because, at the time, it was my best option.

So, naturally, I was fine with not knowing-was, again, being the operative word here.

You weren't going to catch me risking my ass to snap a picture of her without her mask. Do you know how many people have died trying to do that shit? Idiots.

**J. Günther Douglass, SIGNING OFF**