

Clint challenged himself by taking an idea he is developing in a longer story and converted it into a short story piece. His ideas are very unique and he isn't afraid to try something new. Clint's story is more of an experience than simply a piece of literature.

~ Bobbi Jo VanDeLoo, Tutor

Born to Die

By Clint DrewsKolb

"In a world of brutality, how much humanity is a man willing to sacrifice in order to survive?"

The future was not as bright as envisioned. There were hopes of space travel, flying cars, world peace or at the very least the maintaining of the status quo. But the fates are cruel, shortly after an aging Russ Feingold started his second term as president, everything went to shit. Civilization as we knew it disappeared in the winds of a warm September night. Only if it was the scorching flames of nuclear holocaust, or a devastating plague, or even the rapture or divine equivalent. At least then we would have something to blame and not have the blasted question of The Collapse.

Only one in a thousand avoided The Collapse. It caused the affected to tear away from civilization and turn into their true bestial selves. Why did this happen? What caused this to happen? What happens now? These questions swim amongst the stars searching for their hidden answers. Few helped to find the answers. Most looked to the earth not for answers, but for food, water and safety. Then there are those who questioned naught The Collapse and instead took it as a sign for them to take advantage of a world where the strong are destined to kill and the weak to perish. Who is right in a world where a breeze blowing the wrong way can end a man's life?

In a land covered in darkness, two globes of light showed the way down an old county road. The globes nestled in the front of an automobile: a bus that could be described to be from the bowels hell. Blood and flesh were splattered across the grille with human skulls lining the hood. The bus was riddled with bullets from a recent raid. Many more bullets were shot at the bus, but the modified plating and bullet proof glass with gun slits, deflected most of the gunfire. The finisher was the name of the bus painted on the side in red paint, "Hell Rider".

Inside heavy metal played as an average sized but frail man berated a shorter one. "Yuri, what the fuck!" shouted Craig.

"I thought you wanted me to shoot the old woman," Yuri tried to reasonably explain.

"Yeah, that's it Yuri." Sarcastically said Craig, "I wanted you to shoot that old crone before you plugged the nut readying his rifle."

"I guess I can't win with you guys, doesn't matter what I do. No matter what, you'll find something wrong with it."

This is when the six foot plus raider called Keg, (because of his likeness to one), charged into the conversation, "Well, Yuri if you weren't such a dumbshit we wouldn't have to complain!"

"Speaking of which *somebody* pissed in the sink last night. *Yuri!*" added the driver who had the name Tracy, forced on him because of his love affair with fedoras and trench coats.

"I guess today is 'say what is wrong with Yuri day,'" said a frustrated Yuri.

Otto, a man who with a broad beard to accompany his wide stature, piped up, “Actually I was the one who pissed in the sink. I always wanted to and last night seemed a good time.”

Craig was disgusted, “God damn it Yuri! You know you’re suppose to clean up after Otto!”

“What the hell? Since when?” Yuri asked perplexed.

Keg responded with his usual flame, “God dammit Yuri! You forget every. . .” He would be interrupted by Tracy.

“Hey Craig! Look there’s a guy ahead!” Under Tracy’s direction, he indeed saw a lone figure dressed in a cloth of shadows standing in the road. The raiders scrambled to look upon the loner.

“Hit’em good Tracy” said Otto, “you only got two with the grille tonight. A third would make you surpass Yuri’s kills tonight.” Otto wiped away the spittle forming around his mouth.

On their approach a terrible vibe hit Craig. A vibe so strong he hadn’t felt such a one since the night of The Collapse. This would only be confirmed as hidden spike strips ripped up the bus tires and the stranger lurched off the road. Tracy yanked hard to the right to make a sudden harsh turn. But this proved useless as the bus flew off the road into a barn. The metallic bus in a chorus of breaking wood, smashed through the walls and into the basement.

Otto was angry as he pulled himself off the dashboard of the bus. He set his fellow raiders to their feet. Craig was gasping for air and massaging his chest.

“You alright?” asked Keg, who had slammed Craig into the dashboard during the crash.

Sitting down Craig wheezed, “Kill the bastard. I’ll be alright.” Keg hoped for the best and picked up his rifle as he joined the others.

Yuri bit the dust when he saw the flash of rifle fire from the woods as the rest of the group let loose a metric ton of shot in response. As the echoes of the gunfire faded away, the raiders fanned out to find a corpse in the woods.

Tracy would find something else entirely. A rifle was attached to some sort of device with an antenna. He stepped forward to get a closer look.

This is when Otto heard an explosion followed by a sickening, bloody scream of pain. Otto hurried to the source. He would find Tracy’s legs in several pieces coating the forest floor and Tracy trying to force his innards back into his body. Tracy could no longer control his screams as his blood flowed freely; he was unlucky enough to still be alive. Keg arrived and only stared at Tracy for he knew the fate of Tracy. Otto pumped his shotgun, whispered a prayer and sent Tracy into the next realm. Otto looked at the blown apart skull of Tracy and wished for sweet revenge upon the killer but a shadow lurking amongst the fall breezes told him to stop. “We need to leave,” said Otto flatly.

“But where’s Yuri?” asked Keg as he looked into the dark forest with deep concern.

Yuri’s heart seemed about to burst as cold steel rested along his throat and a leather gloved hand covered his mouth. His captor smelled heavily of smoke. Yuri could only moan in despair as he saw his companions head back to the barn. The stranger pressed Yuri up against a tree, where he tied him tightly.

The stranger tore off the black ski mask revealing a pale face with sunken eyes. He smiled revealing a long toothy grin, “Scream and I’ll disembowel you.” Yuri kept his mouth shut. He had seen more disembowelings then he would care to think of. “Who is your leader?”

Yuri answered, "We have no leader."

The dark dressed man who smelled of smoke sighed and said, "Who plans the raids? Who's the fiend that decided to torch my innocent little township?"

Yuri said with a tinge of sadness, "Craig and Otto." Yuri was never a man who held up to demands very well. The stranger looked at the two figures sadly walking back to the barn and revealed a sinister smile.

"My revenge is nigh on you barbaric raiders. Your time of uncalled pillaging and raping shall end tonight," preached the vigilante, "For I have been shown by the spirits of the departed that it shall be here where the blood of corrupt and misguided men shall be spilled. It is here that you filthy barbarians shall meet a fitting fate". He approached Yuri taking in his look of fear and drew back his blade preparing to stab Yuri in the throat, fulfilling justice.

But this was not to be, for Craig with a deep roar akin to a Spartan, charged out of the brush. The vigilante turned, but too late. The stock of a ten gauge slammed into the vigilante's face breaking his nose and splaying him upon the ground. Wasting no time, Craig fired shot into the hand wielding the knife. The vigilante's face suddenly splattered with blood, erupted with coarse lines of pain as he reached at his bloody stump of a hand.

Craig's anger was strong, "Who the hell do you think you are? What gives you the right to attack us like this? Trying to be all strong and cool with your black attire and bitch traps!" Craig kicked the vigilante, "You killed Tracy! He had a family, two beautiful girls!"

Yuri had something to say, "We attacked his town and probably killed everyone he knows. We deserve to die, everyone of us."

"Shut the fuck up Yuri! We don't deserve to die!" shouted Craig shooting down Yuri. He returned his anger to the vigilante. "So it is revenge that makes you feel superior, huh?" Shouted Crag at the writhing vigilante. "I'll tell you what, you coyote, that makes you no better than a beast! So overtaken by your own emotions that you would damage others without profit!" Craig gave the vigilante another kick to emphasize his point. "We may kill and take but at least we do it for a profit. Do you think I enjoy being shot at every week and being compared to nothing more than a filthy raider! We don't do this for ourselves; we do it for a community. A community that is too large to sustain itself. We are heroes in our community because instead of letting our community slowly die from starvation and die from curable diseases, we go out into the night and take from those who do have it. We do what we must to survive because I would rather ride out in the night and kill a stranger than stare into my neighbor's eyes and know that one of us must die for the other to survive." Craig's anger resurfaced as he kicked the vigilante again, "God damn it! You killed Tracy, you black and white bastard! Can you not see beyond what your dying community instilled into you! Peace and civility is good when the times are good, but look around vigilante do think the times are good! Everything that we built and aspired to build, vanished into thin air when people decided that civilization wasn't good enough for them!" Yuri, who was already scared by Craig's outbursts, was scared doubly when he saw Craig go as cold as the fall night.

"You failed vigilante. You stuck too close to the campfire and got the powerful smell of smoke on you. Then you failed to notice we were down wind of you. Then you failed to notice that Keg and Otto left without much fuss. Finally you failed to notice my shadow encircling you." The vigilante's eyes grew wide as the shot gun barrel leveled at his head. "You failed, but don't worry, we were all born to die."