

As you can see at this present moment, this episode is not a recording at all. This part of the story is currently being written down by my person. So what has caused such an unusual state of affairs?

This is being written down by me, Semovit. As some may remember, I am the brother of the actual author of this story - Rostislav. I will, however, use the name Rostik in reference to him. He will not be able to read this episode, but I will use this name out of respect for him.

A certain part of you must have guessed that I must be blind, like my wandering brother. I would agree with you, as far as the physical point of view is concerned. However, I have been gifted with psionic powers that make me a unique being. I can see, but not like ordinary people.

Another thing that is probably bothering you... why the author of this part of the story is not Rostik, but me? If you have an assumption that my brother fell during his mission... eh... wait until the end of this episode. And probably the end of this story.

My brother stopped telling his story, as he and a group of mercenaries were leaving the grounds of an abandoned factory and heading to a location called Dark Valley. This whole thing with the stalker who was supposed to pay him was going to end right there.

I know about all this because Rostik called me. When he and the Wolfhound's group made a stop, my brother walked away from them for a while so he could contact me. The text option was not possible for obvious reasons.

So I was able to find out that he managed to contact the mercenaries and even cooperating with them. I also know about contacting another group of mercenaries, gathering information from them and finding the location of this Grim.

We also talked about something else. Rostik is not stupid and suspected that his comrades at the time might want to get rid of him after the whole problem was solved. He asked me for help, only it couldn't be direct. I guessed what he meant.

Perhaps someone was surprised that my brother asked for help. Yes, he is a loner, however, sometimes a loner also needs help. Besides, he is not offended by his family. Quite the opposite, I would say. And I won't leave anyone in the family who needs help.

We came up with a little plan to at least ensure that my brother would survive the entire mission. The fact that he might not make any money from it all was something he had to come to terms with. I was slightly surprised that he accepted it with such calmness.

I'll just mention that I'm not going to tell the story of how it all turned out from Rostik's perspective. So I can say that I will be a kind of third-person narrator of my brother's story.

My blind brother and the group of mercenaries he was with at the time were leaving the grounds of an abandoned factory. They used a shortcut at the time, so they wouldn't have to go through Garbage. This location is not very safe. Even, by the Zone's standards.

They walked through the wilderness, which, as you may have noticed, is not one of Rostik's favorite things to go through. I suspect he would have preferred exploring Pripjat, given the number of buildings there to lean on.

He had seasoned comrades at the time, so he could feel relatively safe at that point. The problem was that they were mercenaries and if they really cared about anything, it was money.

"So what's the plan?", Vanya asked.

"Fucking hell...", Wolfhound sighed. "We go to the gas station by stealth, blast everyone out except Zhora, whom we pick up for information."

"Then maybe we should approach it from the south?"

"We don't have time for that. He may escape before we get there, if we do."

"We can continue along this road, but we will approach from the south."

"Good thing I'm in charge here...", leader of the group muttered. "We won't do that. End of discussion."

"And do we know who may be there with him?", Tolia asked.

"I bet on the people from Freedom", Rostik said. "I doubt that he would have picked up the bandits for all the action."

"The mongrel is right", Wolfhound replied. "And our relations with Freedom are not the best, so everything must be carried out discreetly."

"If you have enough people then you can surround the building."

"A few will surely stay outside to prevent the bastard from escaping."

"I certainly won't, because you know...", canine laughed briefly.

"A shotgun can come in handy."

"For mutants? Sure. Apparently, a bloodsucker used to prowl there..."

"I killed it in my old days", Vanya said with pride.

"I still can't fucking believe that you did that", Wolfhound chuckled.

"When I remind you of this story, you are more drunk than usual."

"Right... Then we'll talk about it another time. We have work to do."

Perhaps I should mention a detail. Despite the fact that Rostik (or Balis, as others call him) has been to Dark Valley, he doesn't know it as well as other locations. People from Freedom faction would probably like him, but there is no guarantee of that.

If the words of his companions at the time are to be believed, they found themselves close to their destination, when it was practically evening time at that moment. It doesn't take an expert to figure out that this increases the chance of a successful ambush.

Several mercenaries were sent as scouts. They were to make a reconnaissance for the area, where the mission was about to start. And given their professionalism, this activity took a considerable amount of time.

During the reconnaissance, the rest of the group took care of things not necessarily related to the whole operation. According to Rostik, part of it was administrative and logistic matters. He added that it was conducted in their style.

They finished discussions rather quickly, so for a while, they sat in hiding and did practically nothing. Until then, because the scouts who had been sent earlier returned with detailed information about this gas station.

Then, they were able to establish a more detailed plan as to how their operation would proceed. Some were even relieved when this happened, because they wanted some action at last. After segregating duties, the team proceeded to attack.

What was Rostik supposed to do? He was in the main team, along with Wolfhound and several of his subordinates. He was to be a "seeker for anomalous threats". He was quite happy with that, because he wanted to catch Zhora himself.

A few mercenaries were tasked with preventing the Grim's escape, while the rest had to storm the building. Some did this from behind, to climb up that ladder to the very top and from there, descend to the top floor.

However, the main part entered from the main door. Or at least the hole where the door used to be. They entered one at a time. Rostik was one of the first inside the building.

My brother immediately sensed that Burnt Fuzz could be found inside. So moving slowly inside the gas station was even more of a requirement than before. This, of course, did not please the mercenaries.

Someone jumped on Rostik, but my brother was really alert at the time. And given that he had a shotgun in his hands, one shot was enough to bring down the opponent. Sneaking was not an option anymore. However, they learned another interesting thing.

"Shit", Tolia mumbled.

"What is it about?", Rostik asked.

"You can tell by the outfit that it's a bandit."

"Indeed...", Wolfhound commented. "Things keep getting interesting... Search the area."

Everyone was on full alert. While they were searching the first floor, they found two more bandits, whom of course they neutralized. They were no match for the experienced mercenaries, who had good equipment.

A few mercenaries from the main group stayed on the first floor, while the rest went upstairs. However, they had support from above. The ones up there had cleared out more bandits. There was no option for Zhora to escape undetected.

They found Grim, when he tried to jump out the window. He was caught by one of the mercenaries. The stalker wanted to break free, but was far too weak to do so. He was left with no choice, but to surrender.

"Fuck...", Zhora muttered.

"Hello, Zhora", Rostik said with confidence.

"I see you are sticking with them..."

"We have a common goal. However, I kept my word."

"Do you have proof?"

"I do", Wolfhound replied. "In here, you have pictures of your former comrades. As you can see, they are no longer breathing."

"So should I pay him?"

"This stalker? For what?"

"I agreed to find info on those mercenaries who killed his colleague", Rostik replied. "Job's done."

"I wanted to make an alliance of bandits and mercenaries. We earned more together."

"You were not the first to try", Wolfhound said coldly. "However, you would spoil our reputation. It's time to put an end to it."

A single shot was fired, which most likely ended Zhora's life. One of the mercenaries took the bag that their target was carrying, as he mentioned. No one could have expected what was inside the bag. Immediately everyone rushed to see it.

"Holy shit...", Wolfhound was surprised.

"Will you say what you see in there?", slightly nervous Rostik asked.

"Money. A lot of money."

"Do we share?"

"Sorry", the leader of the group unlocked the gun. "No witnesses."

"So we part ways... Semek!"

I used my powers to disable the mercenaries. They certainly experienced a paralyzing headache and a big rush of thoughts. I can certainly say that the whole endeavor was very tiring for me.

Rostik took his bag and started running away from the whole complex. He did it really fast. He knew that I couldn't use my powers for a large amount of time. When I stopped using psionic powers, the two of us started running away from the location.

"Holy crap...", Rostik said heavily. "It was close. Thanks, brother."

"I don't leave my family in need", I replied, nodding.

"However, I would like to count the money inside. Will you help?"

I agreed. Rostik put the bag on the ground. Then, he opened it and I began to count the money that was inside. It was supposed to be forty thousands inside and that was the number I was going for. However, I was surprised, when I saw the real amount.

"There are not forty thousands here", I stated. "There is more... Much more. A quarter of a million at least."

"We will need such cash", Rostik replied. "We go straight to the family."

I agreed, being extremely overjoyed. Not only will I escort my brother to his family, but also with this money, we will function better. It's good that there are good endings in the Zone.