

RAG & BONE – FRAGMENTS

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I can't explain any of it. I thought that I knew and understood where I stood in this fucked up world. Now I don't know. I'm just an old man with an old typewriter that is quickly running out of usable ink ribbons.

My brother used to tease me for keeping this cast iron albatross, he would laugh and threaten to buy me one of those brand-new candy colored iMac things that Apple Computers had released right before The Collapse. God, I miss Eric.

I wish that I could remember his face before the infection took him, before I locked him in our parent's basement. I couldn't put him down. It was just too much after our mother got sick from The Kiss. The Kiss, that shit still pisses me off. Who came up with this crap? It was H195 but then that red neck on the radio got half the United States all riled up and started spewing his toxic hyperbole across the airwaves on his syndicated radio show, The Truth, Plain & Simple. Maury Povich had more journalistic integrity than that clown, if that tells you anything.

There I go again, rambling off course and filling these yellowed pages with little more than the first thoughts that cross my mind. Does it matter anymore? No one is left alive to read this. And if they were alive, who knows if they would even understand any of my references... Do you? Understand them?

Well, I guess there is no delaying the inevitable. I need to keep doing the exercises to keep myself sane. I am still sane, not that it is much of a comfort here. It's dark most of the time. The hydroponics are running, and the garden is doing well but I can't see past the walls. Sure, Maisy painted them, they're beautiful really but they aren't real. Those trees and skies are just paint and wishful thinking.

We all know what the world looks like now. A grey and empty corpse, just like each and every one of the poor suckers that thought that this thing actually had a cure. That there was a way to vaccinate ourselves against it. That our government had our best interest in mind.

Fuck me with a rusty chainsaw... the exercises, the mission. I forgot about them again.

Name: Kalib "Kal" Mohammed Balir

Age: 67

Location of First Contact: 38.027976/121.884631

Blood Type: AB Negative, Confirmed

Infection: 30 full days before termination

Height: 5'11 Weight: 155 lbs.

Subject Delta Green 1190 exhibited full loss of cognitive functions earlier than 1175. It has become apparent that increasing the dosage of X-9 has only resulted in a delay of the effects of the virus, rather than a full remission of the necrotizing pathogens within the brain.

Fuck me. This is becoming harder and harder to focus on. What has it been? Five years since they abandoned me here in this box? Maybe longer... maybe not. The scratch marks in the cafeteria got all sorts of cluster fucked when I fell off that ladder replacing the oil in the lantern that we hung in the gymnasium.

I was out for a while...no telling how long. Cracked skull, broken leg. No telling how long at all. You can't get rid of me that easy, God, you hear me? Of course, you can't...you died alongside the rest of the assholes.

Do you even care if I keep duplicating these god-forsaken pages? I've done this so many times that I have almost every single word memorized. Sometimes I don't even look at the page anymore. I just copy it from my memory. What does that tell you about my sanity? I'm still here and I'm sharp as a tack. I'm old though. I feel old. Tired.

I've eaten every one of the twenty-three flavors of MREs over 79 times each. They say that they aren't good past ten years on the shelf, but these are mostly fine, some are green where they shouldn't be. I don't taste much anymore any way.

Name: Rebecca Marie Wilcox

Age: 44

Location of First Contact: Internal Acquisition

Blood Type: AB Negative, Confirmed

Infection: Stable for 21 full days

Height: 4'10 Weight: 115 lbs.

Subject Delta Green 1203 rejected treatment much more quickly than the other subjects that had been placed on the higher dosage of X9 alongside a steroid booster. The results were promising at first, but the rejection of the treatment was swift and violent.

I miss dogs. I don't really miss people anymore, but I really miss dogs. Their wet noses and big friendly eyes. I ate the last dog that I saw back in 06...was that 13 years ago? 14? 10? How the fuck should I know? The calendars don't work anymore, we're out of time. Hanging in the empty expanse of a universe that has decided that human beings just aren't necessary any longer. We are REDUNDANT. An unnecessary evolutionary hiccup that has been resolved and replaced with a more efficient and effective life-form, a virus that rides a human corpse like a puppeteer work a marionette.

I got no strings to hold me down, I got no string make me fret or make me frown, I had strings but now I'm free, there are no strings on me! I fully and completely hate puppets. I always have. Eric used to taunt me with that stupid clown puppet that Aunt Rita built from yarn and felt. It was a nightmare. I still dream about it staring at me. I can't remember Eric's face, but I remember the face of that clown.

I got no strings.

Name: Vernon Joseph Hammond

Age: 71

Location of First Contact: 40.44078/-79.99676672

Blood Type: AB Negative

Infection: Stage 5 necrosis

Height: 6'5 Weight: 132 lbs.

Delta Green 977 had already succumbed to his infection and was nearly lost. Given the lack of viable subjects, it was decided to proceed with the injections. The results were as expected, however, there was a significant delay in the loss of full brain function and the subject performed well in the rudimentary testing. Advanced testing however was cut short due to necessary termination.

I am a reasonable man. I know that I can't last forever eating rotten old military rations and whatever I can scrape out of the garden. I know that the well is going to eventually run dry or become toxic...if it isn't already. I know that no matter how hard I try that--eventually--I am going to die. Just like Maisy, Richard, Kirsten, Michael, Brent, Jamal, and Cho. And Eric and that horrible clown puppet.

Are you still paying attention? Should I keep going? The work isn't going to do itself. I started this vigil with 157 black and red dual typewriter ribbons, and I've reused each one twice already and working my way back around to a third pass. How many years is that? Can my life be measured in all the type-writer ribbon that I've ruined? How about the lives that I've ruined?

There aren't enough people left in the world to justify what they are doing to them.

I am not entirely sure that anyone, anywhere is still alive...other than me. And Eric. God, he's been a nuance, but I love my brother. He's always smiling. Just staring and smiling but never talking. You'd think that he would have something more important to do than watch me so closely while I do this important research.

This work is important. Necessary.

I remember thinking that the end of the world would be loud and quick. I was so stupid in my youth. But Smells Like Teen Spirit has melted away into Smells Like Molded Beef Noodle MREs and too much sweat and not enough water to wash with. Eric doesn't seem to care, and he never looks dirty.

My brother is dead. He can't be smiling at me. Just get back to work soldier, make your service worth something. That typewriter that you have carried through the fires and swarms of the dead has saved your life more than once. It keeps your mind sharp and has given you a purpose.

It isn't true, Eric. You always were the one that they loved more easily. more quickly. I had to work for it. You just smiled. Well, it doesn't work on me, not anymore.

So, fuck right the hell off and let me get back to the mission.



Name: Eightball (no pre-Fall connections)

Age: Unknown, Subject is estimated to be in their late teens/early twenties.

Location of First Contact: 39.952335/75.163789

Blood Type: AB Negative

Infection:

Height: Weight:

Subject Delta Green 1209 seems to be more resilient than the others, we have implemented a series of operatives that are introducing the program into the wild as of Subject 2003. The Ferals are a prime source of fresh data and provide few complications once tranquilized. This subject is one of the first in that series of experiments. No restraints or confinement, only remote observation and data collection. We are activating new protocol to facilitate the operation and expect some attrition due to the difficulties inherit in the monitoring process. Still, given the failures of controlled testing, we need to remove any wild variants that may be produced through the introduction of naturally occurring factors. X9 has been reacting positively to certain pollens and other biological outliers.

Some days feel like an eternity, and I forget so much of what the world was like before this. I remember some of my favorite episodes of television. I hear songs in my head from time to time that almost convince me that someone, anyone is still running a radio station. But I know what is real and what isn't. And the world is empty. Everyone is dead. I am alone and there is no hope.

Hope died when the missiles flew and the entire East coast became an impassable wasteland, when the state of California fell into the ocean, when the last real radio broadcasts from overseas told us about power plants failing. No future. That was the headline. Then those gangs starting spray painting it on everything and it was like we had collectively signed a contract that humanity had to agree to. The terms of our rental of this floating ball of water and dirt had officially expired and we were being evicted.

Do not pass Go, Do not collect \$200



I know what you're thinking. I know what you're thinking because you're me or I'm you. Whichever. It doesn't really matter anymore.

I used to follow the protocol strictly, but I think that we can both be honest with each other at this point.

We're alone. It's just you, me, and Eric now.

Smiling at us again. There in the corner of the dark room. I won't give him a lantern. The oil is too valuable. We have it rationed out for just three hours a day, then we sit in the dark until we start this important work again.

Eric is there, just quietly watching you and me.

It isn't surprising, is it? After what you did to him? You ruined everything and now we both have to sit here and hope that mission is still worth serving.

What's your operating code? Do you still have clearance and priority access to the files? The computers are dead, but we have the backups on disc and the printout. Reams and reams of paper with row after row of sprocket feeding holes neatly punched along the sides like soldiers on duty. We're still on duty here too, sir.

We saved it all and we made copies all because my brother teased me about being sentimental when it came to this old typewriter. Get a word processor they said, computers are the wave of the future...

No, they aren't. Rotten flesh and death, flies and maggots, putrid sickness and the end of all things is the future, Eric. You understand.....don't you.

Name: Achira Sampson

Age: Unknown, no records found outside of Atlanta Georgia. Estimated age mid-twenties.

Location of First Contact: 39.840177/-76.11815

Blood Type: AB Negative

Infection:

Height:

Weight:

Subject 2013 is not a Feral, though she presents herself as one. She was detained by our operative and held under sedation long enough to confirm our initial testing. No Infection is present. X9 is ineffective and neutralized within the bloodstream. Brain function is normal. The Subject is healthy. Operational procedure has already green lit a full-scale evacuation however our operative was neutralized by an outside force, and we have lost contact with Subject 2013. All remaining resources are being redirected to acquire and hold the asset. Top priority clearance has been given to use any and all methods of reacquisition. Channel 156.800 is designated for code transmission. Delta Green Priority Alpha 011

Eric, you keep smiling there in the corner and I'll make some supper. Don't get up, no no. It's my turn to cook, you made that green and grey stroganoff last night. One meal a day, might as well make it an occasion. One meal, seven five thousand two hundred and six punch holes on the reams of paper that hold our precious reporting. Sixteen pallets of typing paper, two years of clean water remaining in the tank, 3 months of oil if we aren't wasteful. Then it is lights out. Be quiet boys, it's bedtime. No more roughhousing you two.

Like when I put that kitchen knife into your chest and then threw you down the stairs at mom's house...she is going to be so pissed off when she gets back from office...

Dinner is served, Eric. The Chicken Stew only makes you vomit a little when you taste it but leaving it open for a day or so let the maggots get in and provide some good nutrition for you.

What? Aren't you hungry?

Smiling Eric, sitting like a statue just staring at me. Well, I blame you for Eric's lack of appetite. But I made us something to eat too.

Something special.

I found the pickle jar that I had put the middle fingers of my left-hand in. They weren't helping with the mission anymore and we could spare them. The maggots found them too.

The meat tastes so good.

Don't just stare at me, Eric. Smiling away like you know something that we don't. Oh? so now you're standing? About fucking time.

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