

# **VOG**

Written by

Anthony Pearce

FADE IN:

**INT. THE GAUNT - TWISTING HALL - NIGHT**

The obstacle course is a labyrinth.

A meaty voice roars.

G-CAFF (OS)

Believe!!

The wall shakes with a thud.

Something is slamming against it on the other side.

Again and again.

Another roar and the wall explodes open.

SERGE (shy of 30, runner slim) falls through...backwards.

He hits the ground hard, shoulders first. The back of his head rebounds off the floor.

His cover-alls - not quite a uniform - are now torn and dulled with dirt, oil, and blood. The colored patches and padding sewn into them offer scant protection.

His body slumps and lies still.

THE HOST (VO)

Did you *SEE* that?

**INT. REFUGE - NIGHT**

A beetle wanders through a landscape of well-scoured cans.

HANDEL (broad shouldered and brooding) leans over the counter, his eyes tracking the insect.

A monitor hangs above him, suspended by a tangle of wires.

ON MONITOR: Serge's fall repeats on a loop.

[NOTE: CUTS BETWEEN FOOTAGE ON MONITORS AND THE LIVE-ACTION BEING BROADCAST ARE FREQUENT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE STORY]

THE HOST (VO)

Straight through the wall!

Lost beneath The Hosts's snake oil bravado, Handel mutters to the insect, with a nearly inaudible chuckle.

HANDEL  
Shouldn't have come alone.

EM (OS)  
Just my 'alt-truth', Handel, but...

EM (frantic and underfed) runs her fingers along the edges of boards covering what was once a window.

In fact, every door and window is barricaded. Everything about this room says 'survival'.

Very few items are on the floor. Most are fastened down on shelves or hung from beams.

Upright supports run vertically every few feet. Some have items secured to them. All have one or more leather loops attached.

EM (CONT'D)  
...it's never gonna be no scrawny wirehead.

HANDEL  
Yeaah, you know everything, don't'cha?

EM  
Not everything. But --

Pausing her inspection, she looks over her shoulder at Handel.

EM (CONT'D)  
-- What are you doin' over there?

Handel's thumb hovers over the bug.

HANDEL  
Not a thing.

Squish.

Em crosses the dim cabin, eyeing Handel curiously.

EM  
What are you -- ?

Handel turns, pulling his thumb from his mouth.

HANDEL  
Nothin'.

EM  
 Did you just eat --?? Are you CRA--  
 ?!?

Her voice drops to a coarse whisper.

EM (CONT'D)  
 Are you insane?? The Many are  
 listening.

Her panicked eyes search the room, the ceiling.

EM (CONT'D)  
 They're always listening.

ON MONITOR: A logo for V.O.G.

ON MOITOR: The logo fades, replaced by a stat sheet. Beside Serge's face are a list of skills including 'Tek' and 'Languages'.

THE HOST (VO)  
 Our Bullgod, G-Caff remains  
 undefeated, but such a sad loss for  
 this Seeker. So close to salvation.  
 Let's take another look at Serge.

ON MONITOR: Serge appears, looking clean in his pre-game interview.

THE HOST (OS) (CONT'D)  
 I see you scored high on our  
 physical tests for reach and speed.  
 Tell me about this... 'Languages'.  
 How do you figure those will help  
 you in the The gaunt?

SERGE  
 Well, the Great Code is many  
 languages. Most dating back to long  
 before The Collapse.

He holds up a small DEVICE.

SERGE (CONT'D)  
 For example, The alpha-numeric  
 designation for this device  
 originates from a race called the  
 Roamings. The broadcast signal here  
 at VOG --

The Host shouts, abruptly interrupting the interview footage.

THE HOST (VO)  
Wait! He's up!

**INT. REFUGE - NIGHT**

Em and Handel both snap back to the monitor as...

ON MONITOR: The interview vanishes, replaced once again by the live feed.

THE HOST (VO)  
It's not over yet!

**INT. THE GAUNT - TWISTING HALL - NIGHT**

Serge groans. Dazed, he rolls over and struggles to his feet.

Checking the back of his head, Serge's fingers come back with blood. Some smears on his visor as he verifies it's still in place.

The roar again.

A blade searches through the hole in the wall, swung by a massive arm smeared with patches of gold paint.

Serge pulls himself to his feet, and stumbles on.

**INT. REFUGE - NIGHT**

Handel watches closely. His eyes narrow.

Abruptly, the image on the monitor breaks up and cuts out.

Em goes into a panic.

EM  
What...what happened? Handel? Where did it go?

Handel looks at her, then calmly grabs his tool belt and climbs onto the counter.

He tinkers with the cables extending from the ceiling.

Em is pacing in place, shifting from foot to foot.

EM (CONT'D)  
Han?

Handle cuts, disconnects, splices, reconnects. Things spark. Lights light then die. Then light again.

Em shuffles anxiously. Just as it seems she might burrow a finger through her own temple, the monitor blinks back to life.

She is unreasonably relieved.

**INT. THE GAUNT - SLATTED HALL - NIGHT**

Dim light. Hovering haze.

Horizontal slats make up the walls here, with a narrow gap between each.

Serge struggles around the corner. His fingers wrap through a gap, keeping himself upright.

A fresh grip. He pulls. And again, inching his way along the hall.

Ahead of him, a torn cloth drapes across the exit. On it is a roughly painted symbol, the logo for V.O.G.

A hint of relief in his eyes? No time for that.

Grunts and heavy footsteps echo from everywhere. Serge looks around, unable to tell where it's coming from.

He hears the chopping sound before the pain registers.

Serge screams as his fingers fall away into the darkness behind the wall.

He jerks, barely escaping G-Caff's sword jabbing through the slotted wall.

He avoids a severed throat, but takes a bad cut across his face. A piece of his visor falls away.

His good hand claws for the hanging barrier.

Another blade slices between the slats, low this time.

Serge's leg is clipped. He totters forward and falls through the cloth.