

The Devil's Nest

By GeekToAuthor

Published on Stories Space on 13 Sep 2012

Frank Baxter was a prisoner in hell on earth, The Devil's Nest, then fate paid a visit.

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It was an anomaly of nature that housed nature's anomalies. Jutting hundreds of feet out of the cold North Atlantic was an island pillar of jagged rock forming a platform above the frigid waves. Sitting on top was a true hell on Earth. A relic of the Cold War, once a fort used by the Americans to watch for Russian ships that would dare attempt sailing the glacier filled waters, has since been turned into a prison they called the Devil's Nest. Standing alone for hundreds of miles around, this geological spectacle that used to protect one country from another now protects the world from the ones housed inside. The Devil's Nest is where countries, that know of its existence, send their criminals they want to forget. The kind that are too dangerous to be kept but so violent, evil, and twisted they have to be studied. Once the academic shrinks were finished, or killed in the process, of studying them they were shipped off to the Nest to rot. The only guards on the island were there not to maintain order in the prison but to protect the single dock, the prisoners themselves were not their concern. Lined with barbed wire, concrete barriers, and locking gates the path down to the boats, for the most part, was impassible. A large boulder, 10 feet high, sitting between the prison and the top of the path was painted bright red by the guards as a message. Known by the inmates as the Blood Rock, anyone that steps past it they are killed on site, no verbal orders to stop, no warning shots. As the word spread about the guards new pretty red stone a young, cocky new arrival by the name of Johnny K tested that rule. He first taunted the guards like they were the push overs from the main land prisons. Johnny danced around, flinched as if he was going to cross over, at one point he climbed on top of the rock. However, the moment his foot slipped passed the Blood Rock, with the rest of the inmates watching, five guards put over twenty rounds in Johnny K without hesitation. Johnny K was dead before he hit the ground. What happened next solidified the Blood Rock's name and sent the message loud and clear that this was the law of the land. Johnny's friend ran over to his is bullet filled body, either to try to save him or drag him back. As he passed the Blood Rock, he too was filled with the guard's wrath just as quickly. Their bones still sit where they fell, on the other side of the Blood Rock. On the prison side of the Blood Rock there was no official rules, no warden, no watch towers, no patrols, no schedules, no guns. The criminals were on their own. The guards only cared about protecting the boats, the Nest's cliffs and open sea ensured no one was going anywhere. If someone

wanted to leave they would have to scale the slippery, often ice covered cliffs, without falling to the razor sharp rocks below. By the remote chance one was to make it unscathed to the water's edge, the 40 degree North Atlantic waters would not allow anyone to survive more than 5 minutes, not that anyone knew which direction the closest land was anyway. The Devil's Nest was it's own guard, the ocean was the enforcer, the ones sent here alive received a sentence is worse than death. No matter how barbaric, violent and evil they were eventually survival instincts took over and the ones that wanted to live, hanging on to hope they would get off this horror one day, came together and formed whatever regulating structure they could. Those who stood in their way or broke their rules were killed quickly and their bodies were sent to the only other building on the island, the incinerator. Near the path to the docks, sat a smaller, rectangular building with a large smoke stack rising out of the center. The thick black smoke streamed out over the sea, the only sign that there was activity on this desolate monolith. Inside was the furnace fueled by sporadically delivered oil. When that ran out they burned anything they can to keep the heat flowing and the inmates from freezing. When an inmate dies, naturally or not, their body is sent out there to be disposed of. Placed in a make shift coffin and set outside the prison doors, the inmates ring a huge bell on the tower to alert the guards of a death and disposal. After a man by the name of Freddie Malkin faked a death bell ring, hid in the coffin and killed two guards before he was gunned down, they don't take any chances of a repeat event. The guards approach the coffin, wrap a chain around it and attach a padlock, then take it, to the incinerator. Inside the longest resident of the Devil's Nest and the only prisoner allowed past the Blood Rock, Viktor Krupin, waits to dispose of the recently departed. The guards place the coffin on a rail, take off the chains and Viktor quickly slides the coffin in to the flames, locking the steel door behind it. Viktor's age, withering health, and years of favors to the guards got him his current job, the one job the guards didn't want to do. He has accepted his fate that the Nest will be his tomb and is now waiting for his time. Born in Russia he joined the military and was training in the inhospitable expanse of northern Siberia. While he was in Afghanistan he used his new found skills to kill innocent women instead of the enemy. In a very public arrest and trial and the International community watching he couldn't be disposed cleanly the only choice was permanent exile. His training allowed him and others to survive in the harsh, cold environment throughout the years. He no longer poses a physical threat and has helped the right people at the right times. Now he is the caretaker of the building delivers the heat that keeps them all alive. The prison administrator, the inmate Leader, has made it clear to the rest that Viktor is untouchable. --- Frank Baxter arrived six years ago and in the first hour he stepped foot off the boat he made it clear to the rest who he was. Before he got to his bunk he killed three inmates with his bare hands that tried to give him some new fish hazing and broke the leg of another. He walked to the center of the prison, looking up to all the bunks, and let the others know that as long as he received his fair share of rations further incidents would be avoided. Short in height he made up for with his massive muscular build. He didn't spend time reading books, writing letters, or sitting and staring at the walls while he sat in his cell. The time was spent doing thousands of pushups, sit-ups, pull-ups and training anyway he could. 37 men dead from the hands of Frank Baxter and the only reason he avoided the gas chamber was his defense in every murder,

everyone he killed deserved to die. Murderers that got off on a courtroom technicality, child rapists, woman beaters, and violent drug dealing thugs. The judges, juries, and lawyers deep down agreed with him but couldn't let this murdering vigilante go and they couldn't let him die either for the 'good' he did. So they sentenced him to life and sent him to Devil's Nest. Day in and day out Frank ran his routine. Without the restrictions of 23 hours stuck in a cell he used the grounds for his daily workouts. Jogging around the facility, keeping within the boundaries of the Blood Rock, using the massive stones laying around as makeshift weights, and doing it in his shorts and shirtless to toughen up in the extreme freezing rain and wind that battered the island. For six years this was his routine, no one bothered him since his first day and any troubles were kept out of his way. One morning as he was running around the prison he heard a group of men yelling and screaming near the Blood Rock. As he rounded the corner, the group came in to view, he paused to assess the situation. On the prison side on the Blood Rock stood three men Frank recognized as pain in the ass tough guy wannabes; Roger, Willy, and John. All loudmouths who talk more than they act. Standing on the other side near the incinerator was Viktor eating an apple and holding a bag of many more. Apparently Viktor was getting leftovers from the guards and he was seen bringing them back to the only place the other prisoner's could not go. Frank stood behind the group out of their sight, watching them yell and scream realizing that Viktor had a stash of food and he was holding out on the rest. Viktor didn't acknowledge their presence, probably pissed at himself he was seen bringing in his special perks from the guards. He walked to the door of the incinerator and closed the door. A few minutes passed and the three dispersed and disappeared back into the stone fort. The prisoners knew that Viktor was untouchable and any actions against him would result in immediate death, but as Frank continued his morning run he thought to himself that the rule may no longer be enforceable once the word spread. Later that evening Viktor returned to his room in the prison, not saying a word to anyone as he passed, no one saying anything back. Frank stood at the railing from the 3rd level looking down on the atrium of the prison. The whispers, the shifty conversations, the tension was building in the air, Viktor was in trouble and wouldn't live through the night. The hours passed, lights went out one by one just like any other night, the sounds of sleep floated up to Frank still leaning against the rail watching, waiting. Perhaps he was overreacting and this would go by as another non-issue, all talk and no actions. Just to be sure he walked down to the 2nd level past Viktor's room. He wasn't going down there to just check on the situation but send a message to the rest that he was watching. A quick pause at the door he could hear the rhythmic snoring of the old man. As he headed back to his room he found no eyes watching him, heard no whispers. He fell asleep quickly. Screams shattered the silence and ripped Frank from a deep sleep. Shooting out of bed he knew what was happening before he looked down on Viktor's room. At the rails the entire prison was out watching the latest scene of violence, throwing items down below toward the attackers, some cheering, others screaming to end it. Through the crowd chants Viktor's voice rang out again, "HELP ME!" Frank ran toward the stairs, shoving through the others as they came out of their dorms to watch the melee. Those that saw him coming moved on their own knowing that being an obstacle meant a sudden end. He grabbed the rail and in a fluid motion spun down the staircase. At the bottom stood one of the three

from the afternoon, John, the bulkier of the group. "Easy there tough guy, just a little problem getting worked out, get back up stairs and mind your own business.", John called up with his hand raised, apparently thinking he had any intimidation toward the man flying down the stairs toward him. Frank grabbed the extended wrist, pulling it toward him with speed and power. John's burly frame became off balanced but was set back upright with a firm fist to his gut knocking the wind out of him instantly. As he desperately gasped for air, fighting to breathe, he forgot that his hand was still in the grips of a determined man. His arm was spun and twisted behind back, the sound and pain of his elbow snapping made him forget about not being able to breathe. Before Frank released the wrist he placed a swift downward kick to John's knee, breaking it. As John crumpled the floor behind him, with no air to scream out a warning, Frank set his sights on Viktor's room. Standing in front of the door, with his back to him, stood Willy. The weakest and skinniest of the three. He stood barking out orders to Roger inside Viktor's room. Between the screams of the prison and his own yelling, Willy never heard Frank approach from behind. Wrapping around him with his thick, muscular arms, Frank brought Willy's head down on railing sending off a dull ring. Blood started to pour down the skinny ringleader's face as he moaned in pain and slumped to the floor. Now at his feet Frank brought back his size 12 boot and swung it across Willy's jaw ending the moaning. Viktor's screams rang out again as Frank jumped over the unconscious, bleeding body of the second man to get in his way. When he reached the door Frank saw Viktor and Roger in a struggle on the floor. The old man was on the bottom, covered in blood, using his remaining strength to hold off the attack. In their hands was some wort of makeshift weapon dripping with blood. A few seconds more and he would have sunk it into the old man's chest. As he saw Frank enter the room Viktor called out, "Help me... please." Roger glanced over his shoulder to see Frank's fist coming at his face. He jerked back dodging the blow and letting go of Viktor he jumped to his feet, weapon in hand now pointing at Frank. "What are you doing in here Frankie boy? This is private business, don't concern you!", Roger sneered. "Killing an old man for doing nothing to you isn't what I'd call fair." "Fair!? That old man has been stockpiling the good stuff while we in here have to eat scraps. Is that fair? Don't you want to eat?" Frank looked down on Viktor who was now holding his side in pain, blood oozing between his fingers. "You kill him, I kill you." "You can try tough guy." Roger chuckled out before he shot across the room aiming the weapon right for Frank's face. Swinging his left arm out he deflected the thrust and followed with his right fist into Rogers temple sending him spinning to the floor. Frank followed Roger to the floor, grasping onto Roger's neck and dragging him out the door. Filled with rage and adrenaline he lifted him up with one hand and pinned him against the rail. Roger flailed and punched at Frank with whatever he had left, each swing the grip on his neck became tighter. A circle of black began to consume his vision. With on last attempt he swung as hard as he could trying to connect his hand carved wood knife into any part of Frank. Instead of slicing through his flesh, he hit what felt like a cement wall, Frank had caught his arm in the air. Quickly letting go of his neck, Frank chopped at Roger's elbow collapsing his arm and shoving the weapon into his neck. Without saying a word Frank grabbed onto Roger's legs and flipped his body over the rail, landing with a thud in the atrium below. The cheers in the prison grew silent and they watched one man take down three of the toughest most, intimidating crew in the prison.

A few below circled around the body, checking to see if he was in fact dead. In a matter minutes his body was stripped down by the others, his clothes, the weapon pulled from his neck, and anything else of value gone. Frank re-entered Viktor's room to check on the old man locking the door behind him. In the corner propped up against the wall the old man was writhing in pain. He wasn't a doctor but has seen enough to know how to tend to wounds. Looking at Viktor he knew he was hurt bad, the dark blood was not a good sign. In the Devil's Nest you prayed that your wounds were deep and fatal, to get a flesh wound in here was a slow painful ordeal which usually ended in an infection followed by death anyway. "Viktor, let me help." Frank knelt down to Viktor and pulled back his hands to get a look at his wound. The amount of blood was astonishing, it was hard to see how deep the cut was. It had to be cleaned and soon. Looking around the only suitable material were the bedsheets. Ripping several small strips he wetted them in the old sink in the corner. Viktor had managed to get him self to his bed and lay down. "Easy there old man, you have to stop moving." Frank told him as he laid the strips across Viktor's abdomen. The water and fabric quickly got the blood cleaned up enough to see how bad it was. Viktor looked down as Frank pulled the strips away revealing the spot where Roger made his mark, he swore in Russian and looked at Frank, "Son, don't worry about me. He caught me off guard I was able to stop him before he got me good. This is just a flesh wound, I have had worse." Frank wasn't so optimistic, he has seen his share of stab wounds, most of them he was the deliverer of and to him this looked like the kind you don't get up from. Regardless of that, he just took on three guys and killed one. They have friends and they will be after him and the old man. He knows they need to stay alive until morning. "Viktor, it'll be morning in a few hours, we need to stop the bleeding and get you sewn up." "Why did you help me Frank? You haven't said two words to anyone since you got here, why me?" Frank didn't know how to answer, he only knew that those the deserve to die should. He looked down at the old man, "Three guys against one old man, don't seem fair." Viktor's eyes fired up, "Old? Son, I was trained in hell. In my age I could take you out if I wanted." His over exuberance shot a firestorm of pain through his body sending him into a coughing fit. Every day of his old age was showing now. Frank did his best to calm him down. Viktor continued, "Frank, I know you." "What do you mean?" "I have been here since the beginning, I have seen all types of men come and go all of them born from Satan's evil, rotten to the core since the day their were conceived, but you are different. You aren't like the others, like me. A killer sure, but you don't kill for pleasure." Frank stared into the old man's eyes, for the first time in his life he met someone that may begin to understand him. Listening him speak was like listening to himself. He knew why. He knew the reasons. "Frank my boy, you don't need to be here." "Viktor, your wounds need attention." "No, that's not what I meant, you don't need to be here at The Nest. I can get you off this hell hole." A grin came across Viktor's face. Frank didn't believe what he just heard. A way to get off this island, this tomb? But how? His mind raced with the possibilities, the experiences, the life he could restart. Viktor's coughing snapped Frank back to the moment. "How can you get me off this rock?" "Did you kill all three of them or just the one?" "Just Roger but I think I may have cracked Willy's skull, he's in rough shape. The other one will not be bothering anyone for a while." "Ok, listen carefully then. They'll take the dead and clean them up and get em' in the coffin. The coffin will stay in the atrium until sunrise to

allow mourning, prayers and all the cry baby crap. Follow me?" Frank nodded but unsure where he was going with this. "At midnight the tower bell rings to alert the guards there's a death and the coffin is taken out the edge of the Blood Rock just before sunrise. At first light the guards come, chain up the coffin and take it to me at the incinerator." Frank didn't say anything and let Viktor finish. "What you need to do is after they take the coffin outside get into the coffin with the body. When the guards deliver it to me, I let you out, put you into a supply crate set for the mainland and in 3 days you are on your own, free." "What do I do with the other body? I can't fit in there with the corpse." "The coffins are all made the same size and they are all made big enough to fit garbage, belongs, and other crap they want burned. The guy you killed is small enough you can both get in there with the door closed." Frank didn't like the sound of that, sitting in a small box with a dead body. "But what about the guards, don't they watch you burn the bodies?" Viktor hesitantly responded, "That's the catch. The guards will stay until the furnace is closed and the flames are turned up. But that's not a problem, I have done this so many times I can get you out and the body back in and burning before the guards notice a change in the smoke stack." "How do I get on the boat after?" Viktor coughed and wheezed his words, "We ship stuff off weekly, the next shipment out is in two days and it's a one day ride to the mainland. They never look in the boxes. I have a crate with valuables, personal effects from the dead that will be shipped back. You get in there, stay quiet for a day, then bust out when you get to land. After that it's up to you not to get killed, because they will not recapture you if they find you. They'll just dump your body overboard or shoot you on site." Frank pondered about his proposition then looked over the old man. "Viktor, you are wounded, how do I know you will be out there to get me out?" "This is nothing, I told you. The bleeding has almost stopped. I'll sew it up and the safest place I can be is out there. After tonight I will probably have to move out there permanently. This will work. It's not the first time I have provided help. Trust me." Trust was a word that didn't exist in the Devil's Nest. Trust got you killed. Frank pondered his life that could be. He could stay in the Devil's Nest and die, naturally or not, or have a chance to be free away from this place, ready to start a new life. Viktor could see the uncertainty in Frank's eyes, "My boy listen to me carefully, you will have to grow eyes in the back of your head now until the end of your days if you stay here. You killed a guy with friends who will be out for blood after tonight no matter the rules. I can be protected, you cannot. That's the way it is here. Get back to your room, lock yourself in until the bell rings." They stared into each other's eyes, each looking for any sign of deception. Frank grabbed Viktor's hands and pressed them down hard on his wound and instructed him, "Keep pressure on this. I'll see you in the morning." --- The sun sunk down past the window draping his room with the oncoming moonless night. All day he laid low locked in his room, listening to the muffled sounds of the others telling stories, laughing and crying for the recently departed. The thoughts of seeing his child again kept his mind off of it, what it will feel like to hug her again, hear her laugh. Anticipating what it will be like to be in her presence outside of a prison visitor's room. The hours passed by as he stared at the ceiling mentally preparing for what was to come. Getting out of the prison unseen was easy, he'd done a hundreds of times over the years. Getting into the coffin would be easy too, but how early or close to sunrise should he go. The thought of laying on a body for that long wasn't sitting well, but it meant freedom and it will be

pitch black inside so he wouldn't have to look at him. Promptly at midnight the tower bell rang out, echoing through the Devil's Nest, loud enough to raise the dead. Frank got off his cot and slowly went out to the walkway looking down at the atrium floor. To his surprise there was not one but two coffins sitting there. He began to panic. He must have stomped Willy's face harder than he thought. How will Viktor know which one I am in? His heart raced as he watched a group of men carry the wooden boxes out to the Blood Rock one at a time. There was no turning back, if Frank wanted to get off this rock alive now was the time. The rest he will have to leave to fate. With no possessions or mementos he wanted to take from this place, Frank took one last look at his room and headed out toward his freedom. Walking toward the stairs, everyone cleared out of his way. A silence preceded him, not even a slightest whisper could be heard as he passed by. The last thing he wanted to have is the eyes of everyone in the prison on him. Getting outside without raising any further interest meant he had to head away from the front entrance. There was a storage room in the back by the kitchen, he used on occasion to slip away from prior incidents, that had a window. Doubling back Frank finally lost the other's attention. Waiting a few minutes and convinced he was alone, he sipped out the window into the chilly night. He made his way to where he could see the two coffins near the Blood Rock. From his vantage point Frank could see a dim light from the guard station slowly get brighter. It's rhythmic bouncing could only be one thing, guard with a flashlight coming to the Blood Rock. Were they going to take them now? Is he going to chain them up? How would I get in? He watched the uniformed man approach and draw his firearm as he neared the rock. The light scanned the two coffins and the area around. Frank hit the ground flat and lay motionless. Minutes seemed like hours as the guard stood there swinging his light across the area. Frank could see that one of the coffins was covered in what appeared to be writings, graffiti, messages from the other inmates. That must be Roger's that's covered with messages of 'respect' from the others. The second one had nothing. The guard did one final scan with his light and turned back toward the station. A sense of relief flooded over Frank as he laid on the cold, wet ground. He watched as the light faded away and finally disappeared. Which one should I get in? It's possible that Roger had friends with the guards and might open to get one last look. Less attention the better. Crawling slowly toward the coffins he continually kept an eye on the prison doors, getting caught out here would surely mean death and if he was lucky they would kill him first before tossing him over the cliffs into the sea. The dark, moonless night was both an advantage and a hinderance, but if he couldn't see, no one could see him either. When he reached the coffin he ran his hands over the cover, the rusty hinges in place, no sign of a lock. Slowly lifting up the lid the hinges lets out a little creak stopping him immediately. Looking around one last time to make sure he wasn't being watched he quickly flung open the cover and crawled inside. The shadow of the body inside sent a chill down his spine. Thank God it's pitch black out here. Laying down inside Frank shoved the body over the most he could and closed the lid on top of them. Blackness. Now it's up to Viktor. --- Waiting for freedom, laying on top of a man he killed, Frank tried to think of anything he could to pass the time. Dreaming on what his daughter would look like 6 years later and working out his plan on how he's going to get off the boat kept him focused. Finally in the distance he could hear the muffled conversation and the rattling of chains as the guards

approached. From the sounds there must be 6 guards, maybe more. With every muscle cramping, he became perfectly still, silent. There was no room for error at this point only certain death, no questions or explanations. As the coffin started to get lifted, the rattling of the chains being thrown around the box and the lock being snapped in place was bone chilling. Frank could hear one of the guards say something that made his heart skip a beat in fear. "This guy is one fat bastard. Why is this thing so heavy?" Those words shot an image of the guards stopping and opening up to take a look inside. Another guard jumped in, "Toughen up girly, they probably filled it with all this guys crap that wasn't worth diddly. We're almost there, quit being a Sally and pick up the pace." The dull, hum of the furnace grew louder as they approached. Almost there. With a hard thud the coffin was set down on the furnace rail, the force threw Frank's face against the dead body's. The guards unlocked the chains and dragged them off as quick as they could. The moment the last chain link scraped off Frank felt a sudden rush of movement then a slam as the furnace door was closed behind him. Here we go. The rush of the burners firing to life pulled the air out of his lungs, the heat was felt instantly. A few more seconds to go. Sweat started to run down stinging his eyes. How much longer? The heat from below was getting stronger, smoke swirled around burning his nostrils. Concern blossomed into panic. Where is he? Frank tried to lift the cover open but was only able to move it an inch before hitting the top. The flames started to lick through the cracks each time he banged on the top. The walls now were too hot to the touch and he could feel his shoes melting. Frantically he banged on all sides as best he could being jammed next to the body. One last effort was with every ounce of killing strength Frank rammed his fist up on the cover. The fire had weakened the wood enough his hand burst through, splintering the charred coffin lid. All he could see was the burners and in the corner of his eye the iron furnace door closed. Trying to call out for Viktor only filled his lungs with putrid, toxic fumes. The flames had penetrated the interior, the heat was now unbearable. His hair singed, his clothes smoking, the wood now in fully engulfed in flames Frank looked around for anything that might save him or signal that he was in there. Instead, illuminated by the encroaching flames, he found his fate. Now illuminated by the roaring fire Frank stared at the face he was sharing fate with. Staring back with a lifeless gaze was Viktor.