

‘Choosing’

by Cian O’Farrell

Derrin sat alone in an old abandoned house. Slowly, he removed his helmet and held it in his hands stretched out in front of him. Looking at the back of the helm, that usually encased his head, Derrin slowly turned it around in his hands so he could gaze upon its face plate. The helmet had a cold and uncaring feel to it and, as he looked at the front of it, Derrin adopted a cold face to match. The front was simple enough, just a standard metallic helmet with a composite visor. But its simplistic design held a deep secret. Looking at it like this, Derrin was reminded of all the technology contained within. The HUD (Hears up Display) tracked everything from his location, to his vitals, to the ammunition of his weapons. As well as that, the special zoom features enabled night vision and thermal vision modes. This helmet was designed for one thing and one thing alone, killing.

Derrin turned it back around and placed it on his head once more. As he did this, it lit up from within, showing him all the information he needed. Slowly Derrin rose to his feet stretching a little. Picking up his long high calibre sniper-rifle, he slung it on his back. Derrin turned his head towards the mostly intact mirror of the room and looked upon himself cracking the slightest of smiles. He looked like some sort of old world warrior dressed

in his all black Duright armour.

No part of Derrin was exposed. His chest plate and back plate, (as well as every other type of plate under the sun), ensured his athletic body was encased in a suit of armour worthy of the knights of yore. Derrin reflected again on his helmet, then on his gauntlets; the left one covered in buttons that had various functions and his right one concealing within a deadly blade and a grappling hook. The only colour being the brown backpack on his back and the silver auto-magnum on his belt. Even the rifle on his back was black, and all of it looked to be intimidating and deadly, exactly like the man behind them.

Derrin drew himself out of his thoughts as he saw the time on his HUD, swiftly walking out of the decrepit house out into the dead street. He walked at a brisk pace for a few minutes down the street, both hands at his side swaying in motion - ready to draw at a moment's notice. Coming to the end of the street Derrin began jogging across the bigger road at the end and into a small field. He continued on up the hill before laying down atop it.

Derrin pressed a button on his gauntlet bringing up a window on his HUD that displayed information on a man by the name of Selvic Reed. Derrin read all the information while drawing and setting up his rifle, aiming it directly at the end of the road he had just come from.

Mr Reed was a young man who had started up his own trading company,

hauling goods between the young settlements of Illinois. However, Reed had been so good at his job that he had put some very “powerful” people out of business; the very same people who had hired Derrin to ensure that Mr Reed had a little accident.

Derrin read a little more about his target’s appearance before he heard the sound of hooves on tarmac ahead. Quickly the window closed and Derrin looked down the scope of his rifle. His helmet automatically interacted with the scope to zoom his view and give him all the necessary information such as the distance to his target, the wind speed and how much ammo was loaded into the rifle. Derrin smiled to himself, it would be another easy pay-day when he got back to Corano. Soon people walking alongside mules laden with supplies appeared. Derrin took aim at the one his HUD identified as Mr Reed, but as he placed his finger on the trigger, Derrin hesitated. The young man was happily chatting to a very pregnant woman on the other side of the lead mule; she was laughing and looking at him as though the sun shone from his eyes.

Derrin continued to watch, feeling a lump form in his throat. This had never happened to him before. He had never had any second thoughts about taking a shot, about ending someone. As he watched Mr Reed through the scope he became lost in his own mind. This man hadn’t actually done anything wrong, in fact quite the opposite. He had toppled the Canzell family’s monopoly on trade in the area and as a result, many

considered him a hero for freeing up trade. Now that Derrin saw him speaking with this pregnant woman, he thought once more about killing Reed. Could Derrin really be the one to leave that poor woman and the child she carried alone in this withering world? Could he really live with the consequences of condemning a mother and child to death or worse all for a few hundred dollars? Derrin continued watching; it wasn't the woman's fault she fell for this dashing young man, and it certainly wasn't the child's choice to exist.

Derrin considered his options as he continued to watch, rifle trained on Reed. He knew he only had a few seconds before the trading caravan turned and headed into the ruins towards Corano. Derrin knew that if Reed made it there, the Cancells would want him dead. Just before the caravan passed out of his view, Derrin made his decision. In that moment, time seemed to slow. Derrin knew that his decision wasn't the smartest, hell it was dumb. No one broke faith with the Cancell family if they valued their lives. But Derrin didn't care in that moment. Coming so close to killing Reed for nothing but money had made him realise that he didn't want to spend his whole life as a weapon. He didn't want to kill innocent people anymore, and so he rose. Slinging his rifle on his back, Derrin shouted down towards the Caravan. "Hey! You guys need a new guard?" He hoped that they would accept him. He would tell them everything; he hoped he could protect them from the scum of Corano or at least die trying. Derrin had made his decision and so took fate into his own hands

and chose to walk a different road towards destiny; perhaps one he could be proud of.