

# The Last Stand at Miller's Creek

---

## An Exclusive Feral Outbreak Story

*By Sean Liscom*

---

September 12th, 2023.

I'd been staring at the same patch of forest for the better part of an hour when Kyle finally broke the silence.

"You see that?" he whispered, not moving his head.

"The rager by the big cedar? Yeah, I saw him ten minutes ago," I kept my voice low and my eyes on the tree line across Miller's Creek.

"Not him. Eleven o'clock, back in the shadows."

I shifted my aim slightly and found what he was talking about. Another one, this one moving with a lot more purpose than the first. It stopped, tilted its head like it was listening, then disappeared back into the darkness under the trees.

"Well, shit," I muttered.

"Yeah," Kyle agreed. "That's what I was thinking."

We were crouched behind what used to be somebody's Ford pickup, back when people still drove pickups for fun instead of survival. The truck had been sitting here long enough that moss was growing on the north side of the tires. The creek itself wasn't much, maybe twenty feet across, running clear over smooth rocks. Pretty, if you were into that sort of thing. I was more interested in what was on the other side.

Buck had sent us out here three weeks ago with a simple mission: scout the old lumber mill at Miller's Creek, see if it could work as a forward outpost. Simple, except nothing was simple anymore. Not since the world went to hell in August.

"How many you figure?" Kyle asked, still not moving.

"Saw three so far. But you know there's more."

“Always more,” he said flatly.

That was the truth. The infected, the ragers, whatever you wanted to call them, they didn’t travel alone anymore. They were learning to hunt in packs, and that made them a hell of a lot more dangerous than they’d been a month ago.

My legs were starting to cramp from holding position, but I didn’t move. Movement meant sound, and sound meant we’d be running for our lives. I’d done enough of that lately to last me a lifetime.

The mill sat about a quarter mile upstream. From where we were, I could just make out the corrugated metal roof through the trees. The place looked intact, which was good. The fence line looked solid too. What wasn’t good was the three ragers that had just walked out onto the loading dock.

“You seeing this?” I asked.

“Yeah,” Kyle’s voice had gone flat. That was never a good sign.

The three ragers were moving across the dock in what looked like a formation. Not a tight one, but they were definitely coordinating. Then something else came out of the building behind them, and my stomach dropped.

“That’s an Alpha,” Kyle said what I was already thinking.

The thing was taller than the others, moved smoother, more purposeful. It stopped at the edge of the dock and just stood there, like it was surveying its territory. Then it turned its head and looked right at us.

“It can’t see us,” I said, trying to convince myself as much as Kyle. “We’re downwind, we’re in cover.”

The Alpha raised one arm and made a sweeping gesture. All three ragers immediately changed direction and started moving toward the creek. Toward us.

“Time to go,” Kyle said, already backing away from the truck.

We moved in a crouch, using the scattered junk along the creek bed for cover. My heart was hammering, but my breathing stayed controlled. Panic killed faster than any infection. We’d made it maybe fifty yards when the first howl cut through the morning air.

“Son of a bitch,” I hissed.

The howl was answered by others, coming from multiple directions. The Alpha had called its pack, and they were responding.

“The ravine,” Kyle said, pointing ahead. “We can lose them in the ravine.”

We broke into a run, abandoning stealth for speed. Behind us, I could hear splashing as the ragers crossed the creek. They were fast, a lot faster than they had any right to be.

The ravine was a natural cut in the landscape, maybe thirty feet deep with steep sides. It was choked with fallen timber and loose rock, which would slow the ragers down. At least, that was the theory. We slid down the embankment in a shower of gravel and hit the bottom hard.

I spun around, bringing my rifle up. The first rager appeared at the top of the ravine, silhouetted against the sky. I fired once, and it went down. Two more appeared, and Kyle’s rifle barked twice. Both dropped.

“How much ammo you got?” Kyle asked, ejecting his magazine and slamming in a fresh one.

“Three mags left. You?”

“Same. We’re gonna need to make them count.”

The howls were getting closer. I counted at least six distinct voices, maybe more. Too many for a straight fight with the ammo we had left.

We moved deeper into the ravine, putting distance between us and the creek. A massive cedar had fallen years ago, creating a natural barricade. Kyle pointed to it without speaking, and we took up positions behind the log.

From here, we had a clear field of fire back the way we’d come. The steep walls would funnel the ragers into a killing zone. If we were going to make a stand, this was as good a place as any.

“Buck’s gonna be pissed we didn’t make it back,” Kyle said, checking his rifle’s action.

“Buck’s always pissed about something,” I replied.

“True enough.”

Despite everything, I found myself grinning. If this was how it ended, at least I was with my brother. That had to count for something.

The first rager came around the bend at a full sprint, arms outstretched, mouth open in a silent scream. I fired, caught it center mass, and it went down hard. Two more followed, and we fired in sequence. They dropped in a tangle of limbs.

Then the Alpha appeared.

It didn't charge like the others. It moved low, using the terrain for cover, and I realized with a cold certainty that this thing was thinking, planning. I fired and missed, the bullet sparking off rock. The Alpha darted behind a boulder and disappeared.

"Where'd it go?" Kyle asked, scanning the ravine.

"I don't—" I started to say, then saw it. The Alpha had climbed up onto the ravine wall, clinging to the rock face like some kind of nightmare spider. It launched itself, covering an impossible distance, and landed ten feet from our position.

Kyle's rifle roared, but the Alpha was already moving. It hit him with enough force to send him sprawling, his rifle clattering away across the rocks. I swung my weapon around, but the Alpha was on me before I could fire. One clawed hand wrapped around the barrel, wrenching it from my grip with terrifying strength.

I fell back, reaching for the knife on my belt. The Alpha loomed over me, and up close, I could see what it had been. Male, maybe mid-thirties, wearing the tattered remains of what might have been a park ranger uniform. Its face was twisted, the skin mottled gray, dark veins spider-webbing across exposed flesh. But it was the eyes that got me. There was intelligence there, cold and calculating.

It opened its mouth, revealing teeth that had been filed to points, and I knew I was about to die.

The gunshot was deafening in the confined space. The Alpha's head snapped back, black blood spraying across the rocks. It staggered, turned, and I saw Kyle on one knee, his pistol extended. He fired again, then again. The second shot took the Alpha in the chest, the third in the throat. It collapsed, twitched once, and went still.

Kyle lowered his pistol, his hand shaking. "You okay?"

I nodded, unable to speak. My heart was trying to punch its way out of my chest. I retrieved my rifle, checked it for damage. The barrel was bent slightly, but it would still

fire. Probably.

“We need to move,” Kyle said, helping me to my feet. “That gunfire’s gonna draw every rager within a mile.”

We climbed out of the ravine on the far side, moving as fast as our exhausted bodies would allow. The howls had stopped, which was somehow worse than hearing them. It meant the infected were hunting in silence, coordinating their search.

By the time we reached the rally point—an abandoned ranger station five miles from Miller’s Creek—the sun was setting. Buck was waiting for us, along with Janice and two other militia members. The old man’s face was carved from stone.

“Report,” he said simply.

Kyle gave him the details. The mill’s condition, the presence of an Alpha and its pack, the ambush at the creek. Buck listened without interruption. When Kyle finished, Buck was quiet for a long moment.

“The mill’s a loss,” he finally said. “Too many infected, too well organized. We’ll mark it on the map, avoid the area.” He looked at both of us, and something that might have been approval flickered in his eyes. “You boys did good. Survived when you shouldn’t have, brought back intel we can use. That’s all anyone can ask.”

I felt the tension drain from my shoulders. We’d made it. Against all odds, we’d survived Miller’s Creek.

That night, we sat around a small fire, sharing a meal of canned beans and stale crackers. The kind of meal that would have been unthinkable two months ago but now seemed like a feast. Kyle was quiet, staring into the flames.

“What are you thinking about?” I asked.

“I’m thinking,” he said slowly, “that Miller’s Creek won’t be the last time we face something like that Alpha. The infected are changing, learning. And I’m wondering if we can change fast enough to keep up with them.”

I didn’t have an answer for that. Neither did anyone else around the fire. We sat in silence, watching the flames burn down to embers.

In the distance, a howl echoed through the night. It was answered by another, and then another, a chorus of the damned calling to each other in the darkness.

Kyle and I looked at each other. Tomorrow we'd return to the compound, to the relative safety of walls and numbers. But we both knew the truth. There was no safety anymore. There was only survival, one day at a time, one fight at a time.

And Miller's Creek had taught us that sometimes, survival meant knowing when to run, when to fight, and when to make your last stand.

---

## Epilogue

---

September 15th, 2023.

Three days after we got back from Miller's Creek, a patrol returned with news that made my blood run cold. The lumber mill had burned to the ground. The fire had been so intense it consumed everything within a quarter mile radius. No bodies were found, infected or otherwise.

Buck ordered increased patrols and reinforced the compound's defenses. He didn't say it out loud, but I could see it in his eyes. He was thinking the same thing I was.

The Alpha had known we were coming. It had been waiting for us, testing us. And when we escaped, it had eliminated the evidence and moved on.

If it could plan an ambush, if it could coordinate a pack, if it could think tactically enough to cover its tracks, what else could it do?

I kept these thoughts to myself. No point in adding to everyone's fear. But at night, when the howls echoed across the valley, I found myself wondering if the infected were the ones adapting, or if humanity was simply running out of time.

Either way, I cleaned my rifle, checked my ammunition, and prepared for the next day. Because in the world of the Feral Outbreak, there was always a next day.

And it was always worse than the last.

---

*This story is set between Books 1 and 2 of the Feral Outbreak series. For more adventures in this world, read the complete trilogy available now.*

**© 2024 Sean Liscom. All rights reserved. This story is exclusive to members of The Feral Pack community.**