

Plot: Mayor Gerald McAllister is caught between rock and a hard place as his town demands answers over shady government construction in the area. Being the humble mayor of a small town, he exhausts his authority as much as he can to gather as much intelligence as he can to find the truth behind it. What he finds out is much more sinister than he once thought.

Character:

Mayor Gene McAllister
Liz McAllister
Frederick Dowry (VT Agent)
Paul Gallo (VT Agent)
Reggie McKenzie (Militia Leader)
Ms. Miranda Polly
James (VT Higher-Up)
Loyal (VT Higher-Up)
Vinn (VT Higher-Up)

Before The Fallout

An audio drama by Preston Hardin

(Taking place in October 2077 in the small town of Fort Griffin, TX, the following tells the tale of conspiracy and impending doom. When the construction of Vault 54 puts Fort Griffin on edge, the lines of government and populous have not blurred this much since the start of the revolutionary war. An honored mayor, a rising cooperate star and a hermit cross ideals in a world that's mere weeks from ending and changing...)

(A holotape can be heard turning on and a reel of tape starts recording)

Gerald:

My name is Gerald McAllister. As I speak to you now, I am the mayor of Fort Griffin, Texas; far west of the lone star state. However... I suppose that title doesn't matter now, as I have been sequestered into the deep confines of Vault 54. It is... apparent, that the worst of the world's fears have been realized, as

atomic war and nuclear fire destroyed everything and everyone we hold dear, who hasn't been rushed to a vault.

(Concerns Over The Vault)

INT. - DAY. City Council.

Gerald:

... And if that is all for today, I formally declare this meeting adjourned-

Before he can bang the gavel, Reggie McKenzie rushes his way to the front and slaps a stack of papers in the podium.

Reggie:

WAIT! Wait!

There's an audible groan from the room (they're used to Reggie's frequent outbursts).

Gerald:

Ahhh, Reggie McKenzie: back here again with no prior appointment for your own time to speak? Oh, but that's right, you don't care much for government and its "rules" - how could I have forgotten?

Reggie:

(Catching breath) You're right about that, mayor. But I ain't here with no theory, boy! This time I've got evidence! Evidence that you guys can't sneer at this time!

Gerald:

And what "evidence" might this be, McKenzie? Ohhh, I see you've brought photos this time. What'll it be today? Wendigo pictures from ten miles away filmed with a russet potato, or perhaps you've captured the Pint Sized Slasher in your basement - only

to find out it was only a kid trying out his Halloween costume,
hm?

There's an audible laugh in the court.

Reggie:

Ahhhh you can laugh at me all you want, but *this time*, I've got
up close and personal shots of all that "construction" that's
been going on just outside of town: this isn't your usual
project neither!

Gerald:

I must ask you to relax, Mr. McKenzie. Everyone knows that
construction project is being done as yet another part of a land
development deal for a shopping center. It's going to be an
eyesore for sure, but thus is the times...

Reggie:

Oh, I can only say I wished that were the case, and that's
saying a lot coming from me... But face paint it.

Gerald:

Are you telling me you literally skulked the property yourself
without permission? Last I checked, that land was fenced off for
a reason...

Reggie:

Look here, *mayor*; unused to *work* on construction sites back in
my younger days, and ain't no "shopping center" builds a
foundation on a giant crater in the ground!

*He slaps the pictures on the projector and shows the entire
audience.*

There's some commotion amongst them with these bizarre images.

Gerald:

Now hold on! Hold on! We have remember that all of these claims
are unsubstantiated until confirmed! Order! Order I say! Please...

Reggie:

For goodness sakes, mayor, don't let my investigative reporting go in vain! These are *real* pictures! The same pictures I've taken of government documents! The *same* pictures I've taken of zetan aircraft spying on us!

Beat. There's still some commotion.

Gerald:

Alright! Alright! (Sigh) Listen, mister McKenzie, understand that you're only out for the interests of this humble town, but I suppose you can understand that my doubts have merit: every *month* you present me with

(Gerald talk to Reggie)

*Gerald arrives on the front porch of Reggie McKenzie in his car.
He steps out and halts Liz from doing the same.*

Liz:

Huh?

Gerald:

Sit in the car, honey, I won't be but a minute...

Liz:

But I won't—

Gerald:

I won't be but a *minute*. I'll keep the car running; just hang tight.

Liz:

Well... alright...

Gerald:
Gun's in the glove compartment, right?

Liz:
That's right.

Gerald:
Okay, one moment.

Gerald shut the door and cautiously approaches Reggie, who's on his front porch, rocking in a rocking chair – his rifle slung over his arm.

Beat.

Gerald:
McKenzie! How you been?

Reggie:
Mayor... (hacks spit).

Gerald:
(Nervous chuckle) I see you still got the old truck! She's looking good! I appreciate folks that hold off on upgrading: those gas models are only going to go up in value.

Reggie:
Hate to shoot you down, mayor – that old rust bucket ain't gone nowhere in nary a month.

Gerald:
Awww, well I'm sorry to hear that.

Reggie:
Can't afford trips to town in it. Gas gone too high. Got to go once about every 40 days to get a grocery run. That's all I can afford...

Beat.

Reggie:

(Clears throat) Yup... that's how it goes these days. I see you have no trouble getting around in that nice black Chryslus, though. Must feel like "freedom".

Gerald:

Heh, yeah... yeah, well... (clears throat) look, Reg, I wanted to see if I could afford a chat with you.

Reggie:

Afford!? (Chuckles) no use in trouble in your wallet for me, Mr. Mayor, you can just *take* my precious time and chat with me.

Gerald:

I don't want any trouble, Reginald, I only want to have an honest talk with you. Is that OK?

Beat.

Reggie:

... this about that vault? This about you finally listening to me?

Gerald:

(Deep sigh)... we may have some small concerns—

Reggie defiantly stands up.

Reggie:

IS THIS... about you... finally listening to me..? ... because you can keep hearing me all you want, but it takes a real change to finally listen to a man—!

Gerald:

Yes!... yes... Mister McKenzie, I paid a visit to the construction site and demanded some simple answers, but was met with a cold crowd... And frankly, some pretty shady hats. Now look; an

innocent project (federal or not) is fine by me, but the people here want a definition for this! People including me.

Reggie:

(Chuckles) I knew it would only be a matter of time. Fine. Perhaps if the situation weren't too dire, I'd have demanded my rightful land back from you... But, 'suppose I could wait.

Gerald:

"Dire"?

Reggie:

Can't talk out here in front of God and everybody. 'Need to come inside. That your wife in the car? Bring her too – might as well...

Reggie turns around and enters the home.

Gerald:

(Sigh)... come on out, honey!

Transition

(Gerald visits the site)

Gerald walks away.

Paul:

Well, *he's* sure chafing!

Fred:

Yes, I find it annoying, but rather wholesome in a backwood hick town sort of way. Walk and talk with me, Gallo...

They do just that around the construction site.

Fred:

It's an age-old thing, Paul. The price we pay to halt those who inhibit progress is unlimited. The times our government had to make that happen? Bottomless – don't count. You can never clash your duty with your mortality, my friend – you'll never make amends with yourself.

Paul:

Well, that concludes the actions we're taking as immoral...

Fred:

Not quite, my friend. Yes, I could simply ask you to look at things through a different lens, but I find that lazy. Understand *why* we must do the things we do. Society cannot run happily and Willie-Nillie like it is today without *structure*, and structure isn't just walls and buildings: structure is the justice system, big business, and authority. (Chuckles) I mean... What do they think? Everything from a hard day's work to a child playing hopscotch at the park just... "*is*"... Pfft! Why, without asserting ourselves to the common people from time to time, projects like these cannot operate properly if at all. A longevity of convenience is not earned without sacrifice of occasional *inconvenience*. Do you see what I'm saying? Am I getting through to you?

Paul:

Well... I–yeah. I... suppose you're saying it's just fine to keep your nose in the air from time to time.

Frank:

For the sanctity of humanity... I would proudly clash the shoulders of everyone who passed...

They stop walking until they reach the edge of the deep crater that serves as the foundation of Vault 54.

Beat.

Frank:
Beautiful, isn't it?

Paul:
It'll be beautiful if we strike water down there.

Frank:
(Chuckles) I can assume the beauty of America's vast southwest can't compare to the daily clamor of your beloved New Jersey?

Paul:
'Not even that: this damned place is hotter than the devil's armpit, and Vault-Tec couldn't provide more in terms of shade..?

Frank:
We won't be long: this facility is expected to be one of the fastest the corporation has ever built. Pre-cut and shipped all the way from Washington.

Paul:
"Pre-Cut"? Is that even safe?

Frank:
Well... We shall certainly see. But I doubt either of us will have this project on our minds if the inevitable were to happen. Hopefully, we'll be tucked away in the safety of our respective vaults. I wouldn't worry about it so much; VT manufactures some of the purest and most reliable steel and hardware I've ever laid eyes on.

Paul:
Perhaps you're right about it being inevitable...

Frank:
Hm? Why?

Paul:
I've heard of rush projects before, but this right here is something else.

Frank:
Why? You didn't read the order forms? The shipping and
processing?

Paul:
Didn't need to: I've read enough of them

(Gerald Meets The Big-Wigs)

(Fred Loses His Spot)

*Inside of his hotel room, Fred has music playing over the radio
and pours himself a scotch before going over to the phone and
dialing a number.*

The other line rings.

A receptionist picks up.

Receptionist:
Hello, this is Vault-Tec HQ, New York! How may I prepare your
future?

Fred:
Alice? It's Fred Dowry, calling in from Fort Griffon. Is
everything okay over there?

Receptionist:
Oh, Mister Dowry! Why it's just as swell as it's ever been over
here! But the building seems so empty around here without your
wit! (Chuckles) How is everything over there??

Fred:
Oh, dandy, just dandy. The weather is much more merciless than
we'd once thought. The locals are friendly enough, but

naturally, there are a few raised brows here and there. I think we picked the perfect spot for the vault. So, do I have any messages? I tired calling Stancy earlier, but I think sh'ed taken off early. Think you could check for me?

Receptionist:

Oh, yeah, sure! Stacy passed along a note to me just like you'd asked if you had anything. Past few days have been quiet, but...

She's heard going through her cabinet and pulling out a folded paper.

Receptionist:

Ohhhhkay... mm...

Fred:

What is it?

Receptionist:

(Kind of worried) Okay, it looks like you *do* have something from earlier today. It looks like your wife Clorinda had something urgent to tell you. I apologize.

Fred:

Urgent?! W-what does it say??

Receptionist:

Here, let me put you through. I'm so sorry for not checking it sooner, Mr. Dowry!

Fred:

That's fine! That's fine! Put me through.

Receptionist:

Right away!

She transfers the call to Fred's house, where Clorinda picks up the phone.

Clorinda:

Fred..?

Fred:

Clorinda! I'm terribly sorry for this dealy! I-I was working all day and hadn't been able to get a moment to the phone until now!

Alice just told me my secretary left her a note, and-

Clorinda:

Frederick!

Fred:

Y-yes!

Clorinda:

Nothing's on fire, I promise you, its just... no one's in trouble or anything, but...

Fred:

Tell me dear. I take anything you have to say that's urgent very seriously.

Clorinda:

Look, I know you and I have been going back and forth with this whole vault thing for years now, but I suppose I have to admit to you that in the back of my mind... I've been a little worried since talk of all that began.

Fred:

Did you have another one of your panic attacks?

Clorinda:

No, but... I'm surprised I haven't. In fact, I... resorted back to my disbelief of the whole red scare to keep my waters calm, but.. (sigh), long story short, we were denied access into the vault this morning...

Fred:

(Shocked) WHAT!?

Clorinda:

The letter reads it off plain as day: we were valued vault-Tec assets, but we just didn't qualify. Just a.. A "no" from them.

Fred pops up from his seat and paces around the room.

Fred:

(In disbelief) Wha-I... but I don't understand: how could this have happened? We're nearly a 10-year family of civil defense! We... we gave so much... and to just have a "thanks but no thanks" dear-John letter? This makes no sense - we shouldn't even need a request form! I truly thought it was a given...

Clorinda:

Yes, me too! And you're right; I'm surprised nuclear security would be provided as one of your benefits! H-how-?

Fred:

I dunno, honey, I dunno. I'm going to have to put in a call to the company and get this worked out. This *has* to be a mistake... it *has* to be!

Clorinda:

On my way to work today in the car, the man on the radio said something about the threats of total disaster going up. On top of getting the mail just a second earlier... (scared sigh).... It was all just too much.

Fred:

What about the kids? Did you tell them anything about it?

Clorinda:

Of course not... I don't even think Jangles The Moon Monkey could explain atomic warfare to them if he tried. (Deep breath)... please hon, I admit ot - you're right, okay? You're right about everything. Just be sure you can get us where we need to be whe- *if* the time comes. And hurry back from that scorching landscape as soon as you can, okay!?

Fred:

You have my word, dearie. Get yourself a drink from the shelf, eh? We'd rather not have the kids see your feathers in a ruffle, huh? Heaven forbid westill can't get a way back in, but if push comes to shove, I'll arrange an escort to have take you three down here.

Clorinda:

(Deep breath)... Okay Fred... I believe in you. Do everything you can to keep this family alive, okay?

Fred:

Oh Clorinda... you can count on it. Love you dear. Bye.

He hangs up and gulps down the last of his scotch. Fred sits down on the edge of his bed, overlooking the small town through his window.

Fred:

(Deep sigh)

Transition

(Fred confronts the big wigs)

INT - NIGHT. Presidential suite of a local hotel. VT higher-ups (JAMES, LOYAL, & VINN) congregate around cushy chairs and drink/smoke.

VINN:

Harsh hellscape. Perfect real-estate.

LOYAL:

Heh, only reason to be down all this way.

VINN:

I... dunno; maybe if you carve out some of these old rocks, you can put in a nifty little fun center: artificial beach, maybe? Could be the next Miami.

LOYAL:

Nahh. Places like this? The earth takes back. No use dumping that much cash in a place like this.

JAMES:

And that's what you think is happening here? ... think ol' mother earth's gonna gobble up this little project of ours?

Beat.

LOYAL:

... n- nah. Just... just places meant for pleasure and all.

JAMES:

Heh. 'Suppose we can discount the living quarters, lounges, bath houses, and other amenities planned for Vault 54. (Chuckles) I mean, you're there to *survive* after all.

VINN:

(Chuckles) Good point.

LOYAL:

(Chuckles) Earth won't eat it if there's a decent enough trade-off, huh? Ha!

JAMES:

(Chuckles) Exactly.

The door to the room opens. FRED bursts in, obviously furious.

LOYAL:

Whoa!

FRED:

(Panting)

VINN:

Heeey, look what the cat dragged in...!

JAMES:

Frederick! What a surprise to see you. Are you in a rush,
because we'll be here until-

FRED:

(Catching breath)... I... want to know, how the *HELL* you could so
carelessly discard my family's name from the Project Safehouse
register! Do you forget how much of my blood, sweat, and tears
have gone into this company- this- *vision!! Huh!?*

Awkward beat.

VINN:

Geeze, good to see you too, Dowry...

FRED:

Shut your trap, Vinn!!

VINN:

Hey!

FRED:

I have *never* been pushed to a point such as this before, but now
that my blood pressure is this high, I'll have you know that you
never - *NEVER* deserved the seat you have!

LOYAL:

Hey-hey!

FRED:

NO amount of respect of mine can be had for you - you bastard!
Do you even know how much I've sacrificed - put on the line!?
All for you and "daddy's money" to place you ten steps above
me!? I come from privilege too, but dammit - I *earned* this spot!

VINN:

Are you and me gonna have a problem!?

FRED:

Oh, we've had a problem since day one, you bastard! I should've known better than to let your cancerous existence marinate among the others here-!!

VINN:

If you wanna come in here with *that* energy, boss, I've been dyin' to blow off some steam in the right person!

JAMES stands up and steps in.

JAMES:

Hey-HEY...!... both of you - cool the hell off, eh!? (deep sigh)
Fred, talk to me: what's this all about? Geeze, have a scotch or something. Here...

JAMES hand FRED his glass and he sheepishly guzzles what's left of it.

LOYAL:

Get those feathers back in order, Freddie my boy. We're all friends here, eh??

JAMES:

Yes... friends. Now, what's this about a vault, hm?

FRED:

Ohh, I think you and I both know what's going on here.

VINN:

No... we don't...

JAMES:

Vinn, shut up for a moment. You were saying?

FRED:

I'd like you to explain why my wife calls me last night from the Big Apple basically sweating through the phone because our spot was declined...

...

FRED:

Gentlemen, what I'm about to share to you is extremely confidential...

VINN:

Yes.. we know..

JAMES:

Don't patronize, Vinn; this is the highest level of info we'll probably ever get to see in our lifetimes.

FRES:

Precisely. As you may notice here, Vault 54 is going to be a rather large vault compared to many we've been able to see. Vault-Tec's efforts to locate the local cavern system were successful, so, a few, well.. major changes were made to the blueprint.

LOYAL:

Is that a whole... *handful* of floors I'm seeing here!?

FRED:

Yes. In fact, production is moving so fast that I doubt what I'm showing you know isn't even the most updated version of the blueprint.

JAMES:

And the effectiveness of the structure itself? How do we know it'll hold up correctly?

FRED:

(Sigh) We don't. But that's a risk the company's willing to take. That's... off the books, by the way.

JAMES:
Got it, go on.

FRED:
Here... is where Project Conveyance will lie.

VINN:
You mean the fuckin' car?? I never got the big deal; just plop a Corvega down there with the instruction manual for God's sales—!

JAMES smacks VINN.

JAMES:
Dammit, Vinn!! You ain't even supposed to *think* about what this shit is about! Don't—

VINN:
I was just—

JAMES:
Don't say it again! Just let the man talk!

VINN:
Damn... fine.

Beat.

FRED:
The project will undergo constant construction and study throughout the... well... however long it takes those appointed to solve what we couldn't. When that happens, the proper officials will be contacted, and a lift will be properly unlocked and activated to safely secure the prototype.

JAMES:
And the residents? What's keeping them from asking questions?

FRED:

Something still in the works. Maybe a little contest, maybe a bogus vote to keep them occupied. I don't know, but I'm glad brainstorming those ideas isn't my job. What matters now is the placement, and those who can be trusted with it.

LOYAL:

So what's here that we can actually help?

FRED:

Construction speed, and what comes first is what. We have an orchestra out there playing Freeform and we get to decide where the number goes. If any of you have a concern, a grievance... say it now. The four of us should converge on it *now* while we have the time.

VINN:

Anything?

FRED:

Anything. If anything looks like a bad take to you, make it known.

JAMES:

Hmm...

Transition

(Ending Monologue)

Narrator:

And just like that, in a snap, the world as you once knew it was gone. Enveloped by a sheet of bright crimson that looked like a tsunami was running a marathon. *Beat.*

All that recorded advancement from the time when man first played the symbols with rocks to the robotic butlers we have now. Where did it all go wrong? 1945? Some would say that, but

others wouldn't buy it. I mean, we went all *this* time without making another pair of blackheads on the world: guess whenever it came down to it again, earth would see a full-on breakout...

huh...

Beat.

And even then, what does that *mean*? Does humanity really require a ceiling? No, can't be. That's our whole thing - our purpose.

No more than a bear needs to hibernate for the winter. Maybe...

maybe that's all there is... see how far we go, and - when we can't handle it... hit the reset button again. Eh, then again, the old lady down the street always seemed to get along just fine without nuclear holocaust being her solution to life's problems.

Some leaders out there and corporate bigwigs, however (clears throat), well, you get the picture.

Beat.

And after all this talk, all this prep, what do you have at the end of the day? Just a bunch of scared Jack, Jill's, and

Johnny's about to go stir-crazy underneath the crust as the world they once knew burns just above them... I always thought about those first vault dwellers: must've been a regretful first few days; the kind of regret that makes you remorse the ticket that kept you alive...

(End Monologue)

Gerald:

The initial catastrophe has seemingly mulled over up top for now (at least that's what I think has happened). The muffled roars and rumbles of atomic war had subsided in place of a dreary silence, but perhaps that was all in our imaginations. These steel walls... these cold, steel walls had left us with our imaginations hindered by what we last saw outside. Now, everyone's settled into a bizarre state of grief; not only for their loved ones who couldn't make it - but for all of humanity.

(Deep sigh) The moment that door closed, the problems and plagues of our outside world had ceased and become irrelevant for the most part... McKenzie and I haven't talked since the 23rd...

and now we're expected to hold our vault's first election. Hm. Maybe my way of leadership may have represented the old way of doing things, but old Reggie has a mind for resourcefulness. A mind I do not have the capacity for in this... "new world"... (Sigh)... I may still have much of the town's support, but after saving me that day, I... I think he deserves it. Besides, none of us know when the vault door opens, so we might as well leave this in the hands of our town's best survivalists. I'll forfeit the race... it's the least I could do. Have me appointed as an advisor or a coffee boy - that's fine. I'm too green for this stuff anyway. I know this will upset a good many of my supporters, but... It must be done. Might as well get to it now and not delay the wait. I only hope... I only hope we manage to keep the peace in here. We are in a vault now... and nobody can hear us scream...