

Lazy Sunday
by Cecelia Ayres

It was an ordinary, lazy Sunday afternoon. Anders Black sat back in her chair, sipping a paper cup of hot coffee, the burning hot liquid feeling almost lukewarm against her tongue. Around her neck hung a silver chain and attached to that, the shining symbol of her holy religion.

She was sitting at her desk, looking through a two-way mirror, watching the animals held inside, one female, one male. They were both clothed in oversized-shirts of hospital white, both sitting on opposite corners of the empty room. They'd been placed there only minutes before, and seemed to be slowly gathering themselves.

Their forms were human, which disturbed Anders Black, but there were a few strange details on their bodies that made it so very clear that they were anything but pure human beings.

In the left corner, the male with red snake eyes and shiny black hair watched the female with a strange yearning twinkling in his bruised, blood red snake eyes. His limbs were littered with scars, marring his otherwise smooth skin. Looking over him again, Anders Black found silvery-green scales across his shoulder, left uncovered from the wide neckline of his shirt.

In the right corner, the female looked back at him with equal, if not more, wanting than the male, her brown eyes teary, brown hair limp. Her gaunt form was pale, so deathly pale that the blood and feathers sticking to her sweaty skin stood out like paint on a stretched canvas.

Anders Black watched as their mouths moved. They were speaking to each other, she guessed, settling back in her chair. "Translation," she ordered, and the speakers above her head quickly crackled to life. The prisoners were speaking some foreign language that she had no desire to learn. Anything strange or from another land that was not her own, was to be terminated, and learning to speak their tongue would be a sin. Her job was to protect the holy, not to mimic the cursed.

The girl opened her mouth and it moved, not matching the automated words that played from the speakers. "Escape, Edwin." She gestured with a weak hand to him, then her own chest. "We escape."

Anders Black's lips became a frown of disgust: the female couldn't even speak her own language properly. She checked the two sheets on the table in front of her. According to the reports, both of them had been in the holding facility for thirty-six hours now.

Edwin moved a bit closer, though stopped after a short inch. There were large black circlets of weight around each of his of his ankles, making his every movement slower, more labored. "You escape. I help."

As she realized more clearly what they were speaking of, Anders Black leaned forward in her chair, watching intently now. There was no way for either of them to escape - the daily routine of torture had obviously weakened their frail bodies and even then, there were too many barriers preventing them from so much as touching the door. Why The Director didn't go straight for the kill, as Anders Black might have, confused her, though not to the point of questioning her supervisor.

Most prisoners attempted to escape on their first day. Anders Black and all other guards reacted much too quickly, and before they could get so much as their head out of their holding cell, the prisoners were incapacitated.

She smiled. This was going to be interesting.

“Both escape,” the female insisted, also crawling closer, but just as she began making real progress, crawling across the floor like a blood-soaked slug, her body spasmed, and she fell back against the wall, mouth hanging open, red bubbling from her lips.

Anders Black grinned, even though she’d seen such a thing happen so many times, to different creatures with similar impurities. With her left hand, she brushed her thick fingers against the holy symbol at the center of her chest. It seemed that the divine revelation it promised was beginning to kick in.

Feathers sprouted from the female’s hands and neck as she shook, struggling as they sliced in and out of her skin, spraying blood across the pure white floor and Edwin, who was once again trying to get closer to the female. Her face, for a single second, flickered with a black beak and beady black eyes.

Anders Black could see that the girl was screaming in pain, though she couldn’t hear any of it through the soundproof walls. The translator speaker remained silent.

The girl was some failed bit of evolution who shifted into a bird, though she had no control over when the transformation happened. And with the addition of the technologically-advanced cuffs around her wrists and neck, she could only get halfway through the process, leaving her bloody and weak.

After another few seconds, the girl stilled, eyes closed as blood seeped from her eyes, nose and lips.

Edwin, was now only inches away from the female who seemed to have blacked out for a second. He reached out a hand and stroked her cheek tenderly. Anders Black raised her eyebrows, and a small spark of joy lit in her mind as she watched him pull her frail body into his arms, snake eyes closed with pain. Physical pain was exhilarating to watch of course, but when she could tell they were suffering psychologically, that somehow filled her with the invigorating energy of a child.

“Pearl,” he said, and though Anders Black could tell he was murmuring it, the speaker continued to drone on, in the same tone it had before. “Wake up.”

The female, Pearl, opened her eyes, though they were blank, pained. Her tongue slipped out across her chapped lips as they opened, swiping away the few droplets of blood splattered there. She met the male’s eyes and said, “Edwin. Escape.”

He nodded, and Anders Black watched as Pearl lifted her shaking hands to Edwin, who stuck out the ankle to which the weight was attached. Blood smeared from her bleeding fingertips as she nimbly began to tap in a code. Both anklets fell off, making thunderous sounds as they rolled away, across the white floor. Edwin loosed a sigh, holding Pearl’s wrists before placing them back at her side.

Anders Black felt for the seven-barrel silvershooter at her side. How had she known the code?

Edwin’s legs shifted, so that he was once again crawling, though now, scales were surfacing on his knees, strengthening the raw, bare skin there. Snake-people were a relatively new species, and nothing had been developed to stop their scales from emerging.

The long white shirt hung over his body, swaying like the skin of a ghost as he crept closer to the door. Anders Black felt anger flowing through her own body, anger fueling her need to protect the other humans from the monster that was about to try the door. She stood up and walked over to the entrance

into the animal's cell, watching from the window to see what the male did next. Her heart rate picked up, excitement rising.

"Wait." From behind him, Pearl interrupted Edwin's reach for the door, only making Anders Black's frustration levels rise. She wanted to kill them already. They didn't deserve the holding facility's mercy. Immediate death would be the most preferable alternative. "Look at mirror-window on wall. A guard hides behind."

Anders Black raised her brows. It was surprising that the beasts were smart enough to know such things. As far as she knew, it wasn't every day that they came into contact with two-way mirrors in whatever hell they were from.

"I know. I will distract. You will run." Edwin raised up to stand only on his knees, and replied with a smile that made Anders Black sicken. Their emotions were much too close to those of true humans for her liking. He pointed to himself. "I love Pearl."

Anders Black laughed to herself at that notion. She wasn't sure exactly how yet, but knew that he wouldn't get so much as a scaled fingertip to touch the door handle. Such insolent animals deserved to die.

Pearl crawled closer, and Anders Black frowned deeply, revolted by the female's behavior. She hadn't even bothered to resituate the shirt that slipped down to her waist, the only thing keeping her at least half-civilized. The girl touched Edwin's back for a short second, before letting her hand drop back to her side. "Pearl loves Edwin too."

Edwin nodded lifting his hand to the door handle, twisting it slightly. Anders Black, as if acting upon a programmed system, swiftly slammed a fist down on one of the buttons among the array before her. It instantly released paralysis gas into the air before him. Edwin's blood-red eyes widened as he took in a breath, then proceeded to slump forward against the door. Pearl's mouth gaped open as she gazed upon his blank features.

"Edwin?" She shook him lightly, a movement that must have sapped a good deal of her strength. Anders Black stood up, pulling a mask up over her mouth and nose. Pearl's eyes were teary now, as she grabbed him from underneath his arms, pulling him frantically away from the door. Anders Black could tell that she was beginning to freeze-up as well, but in a way that made her think that Pearl's breed was more tolerant to drugging than Edwin's. "Edwin's dead?"

Anders Black waited another second, watching with short breaths.

The female's body spasmed again, and feathers shot out, cutting through both her own and Edwin's skin. He didn't react, still staring blankly at the window with his venom-filled gaze. The girl opened her mouth in a silent wailing cry, a cry that even the translator machine couldn't be bothered with.

As the girl's shaking slowed, she looked down, hair slipping over her bloody shoulders. Pearl cradled Edwin's black-haired head against her bare chest, smearing red across his neck and shoulders. She was shaking again, though it wasn't at all related to her condition this time.

Anders Black smirked and placed a hand on the door handle, twisting it as she pulled the seven-barrel silvershooter out from its holster at her side.

The door made a loud sound as it hit the wall, the vibrations reverberating across the floor. The holy symbol around her neck almost hovered in the air, and it shone brightly against the sin that was the two monsters before her. Pearl's brown eyes widened, as the wall lit up with brighter white than before, in the same shape of her symbol.

Bang.

Bang.

Bang.

Anders Black fired three shots, filling Edwin and Pearl with twenty-one bits of silver, shared graciously between them. Dark red streaks trailed down the wall as Pearl slid to the floor, mouth open in surprise. Red splattered about the surrounding walls, and speckled Anders Black's face and forearms as she stood there, breathing heavily.

Slowly, so slowly the crimson liquid pooled on the floor, and Anders Black's anger slipped away with it, as she lowered the seven-barrel silvershooter from her two-handed grip. She patted triumphantly at the holy symbol at her chest. She could feel its strength soak into her, like the blood that soaked into Pearl's long white shirt.

Anders Black turned around, heart pounding with adrenaline. She brushed her hands off on her uniform pants, a gruff, satisfied smile appearing upon her face.

It had been yet another successful day.