

Black Dog

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Preface – Auschwitz, 2009

Andy took a deep breath.

Chapter 1

He was glad to be leaving. He had stood on those damned tracks that led to hell for three days, sorting through the smells. Still, after so many years, the horror clung to the place; the fluids, both sterile and toxic, remained pervasive.

Andy had done his research, though spending so much of one's life in the mind of Nazi doctors had surely changed him in ways he couldn't, and dared not, imagine. Knowing, and being able to put a face to all those smells, was tough. When he smelled blood, he could picture the delicate parts of humans being roughly removed; he'd seen the pictures. The scent of the final solution, the Zyklon B, brought another diatribe of horrible images, the dead screaming for eternity. And the dogs. The ever-present scent of the dogs made his blood boil and his throat become slick in preparation of a howl, one to carry all the sorrow of the wronged.

Every time he visited the death camp, he would piss everywhere he could, not really trying to make the territory his, but to add something personal, something mildly pleasant to the layered scent of atrocity. It never worked. When he returned, inevitably, to freshen the scents, his own was long gone, buried beneath the foul stench of history.

Andy flashed his passport at the attendant. Cute smile, big Polish breasts, another true cliché. She waved him through, remembering him this time. He always used the airport at Warsaw, though Krakow was closer. He trusted the bigger airports. Maybe that was a side effect of his life's work. Radicals were born when overseers were few. He wanted people to be seen, watched, corrected. Big Brother didn't scare him; Big Brother would have stopped the Nazis.

Or would he have had another agenda?

The first class section was small and filled with the scents of coach, though tinged with the amenities; the champagne and orange juice, the freshly laundered linens. It made being in a big metal tube with a shitload of humans almost tolerable. Almost.

He found his nose plugs and ear plugs in his carry on, almost put one in the wrong hole before figuring it out. The input now dampened, he made his way to the back of the plane, through coach to the toilet. Once inside, he peed, about half, and worked his way back to the first class bathroom. There he peed the other half, and feeling a little more secure, settled into his seat. Rolling to his side, hands beneath his face, he slept the flight away.

Chapter 2

He dreamed of Block Ten. The whimpering of the women and the dogs became one. In the dream, he was himself: young, black and proud. He was there to find evidence, to prove that the semen had been extracted from animals, that Clauberg wasn't joking, not just creating an unbearable psychological torture for the inseminated women. There were some, maybe a dozen or so, of the three hundred women, who had been selected to conceive, bear and breed animals.

Mostly dogs. Dogs, they'd decided, had a better chance to take. Disgusting as it was to accept – and as many morally minded people were reticent to admit – the Nazi's games and experiments had bred some true science. When it came to the dogs, they'd been right.

In the dream, Andy turned one of the dreary corners, and there was Hitler himself, his dogs spread before him. He held them under taut control with a leash made from an umbilical cord. It was wet and mucky in his outstretched hand.

He yelled, something like German, but more of a noise, a guttural command, a sound that would come out of an animal. Andy understood it. Kill.

The dogs came, barking and frothing, but stopped short. Andy reached out, touched them with his hands and nuzzled them with his human snout. They would not hurt him

Andy pounced, taking Hitler down and tearing at his throat. For a moment, he was an animal himself, just long enough to justify the lengthened teeth. When Hitler's throat was on the floor, Andy was human again.

The door was ahead. He put his shoulder to it, and heard the scientists and doctors cry out in anger as the wood gave way. Their shouts and racial slurs joined the whining of the women and the howling of the animals. He took them apart, one by one, turning into an animal each time, to gut them with his claws or close off their terrified screams with his jaws. Finally, there was only Andy and the twelve women. They had been selected because they were different. This was one way that the dream mimicked reality. Five Jewish women, two gypsies, two other Europeans and three black girls. And they were *young* girls, the black women; amongst them, impossibly, his fourteen year old mother. Somehow, due to the dream magic, she was already swollen with child, though only recently inseminated.

Suddenly she was screaming, and her mouth twisted in agony. Her eyes were open and wide, but she saw nothing. One of the others, an older woman, soft and thin, looked to him.

"It's going to be a boy," she said.

Andy reached down, between his mother's legs to receive the package...

And was awoken, mercifully, by the dinner cart.

Chapter 3

He was hungry by the time he got off at JFK; he hadn't been much in the mood for food on the plane. He had even growled at the poor flight attendant.

The scents of food dominated as he walked through the crowded terminal, so much so that he barely noticed human smells at all.

But he noticed one. Standing in the food court, he caught a whiff of something familiar.

No way, he thought. This was a new record. Usually, after picking up the scents in Poland, it took a while to pan out. Most times, he got nothing. The times he did, the scents often turned out to be the scents of innocent victims.

But he'd also had successes, and he wasn't willing to let go the possibility of one such success due to speed of discovery. He tried to focus, pick out the layer that he needed.

There. He saw a man, and the scent pointed to him like a flashing arrow. It was what he thought of as the Intangible. It was that thing that all the war criminals had. It wasn't the fluids, or the gas, or the blood or the semen; it was something beneath and hidden. It was the foundation, the undisturbed basement of an old, crumbling house. It was the mold, the dank, the

dark, and the weeds that grew between bricks and mortar to tear a structure down from within. The Intangible was the evil that men do.

It was the evil that Nazis did.

Andy fell into step. The man wore a grey, flat-brimmed hat and a beige trench coat. He was elderly, as all the unpunished were by now. And like the others, he stood upright, walked soundly, as if age were a debonair companion and not a crippling adversary. It was another reason to be disgusted by them, if anyone needed another. Somehow they'd escaped their proper fates, and the elements – age, Hell or high water – had no power to buckle them.

Andy followed the man through the terminal, keeping a good distance though never letting him leave his nose. The man smelled of manly things; after-shave and generic soap. Hand sanitizer, Tide laundry detergent, onions from a sandwich, leather and skin layered atop the Intangible. But it was there, ever present, and like a jack in the box, huddled and waiting, it could become prominent and present again. As soon as the handle was finished turning and the music stopped, the devil could be ready to pop out.

Andy was not okay with that. The man would plead, turn to jelly before him, and claim he would never again do wrong, even boldly claim that he had never done wrong since, or at all. He was just an assistant, an orderly, or he was only taking orders. It meant nothing. If the Intangible was there, so was the evil. Evil perpetuated evil. Andy was done with allowing that to happen.

The doors slid, and again, and the cold of the winter air hit Andy in the face. An instinct rose, to cover his flesh, but he suppressed it. The Nazi hailed a cab. Another instinct, to chase the car down, while the cold wind whipped through his hair. It was a familiar one and a silly one, even easier to ignore. He hailed the next cab and instructed the cabby to follow. At first, the man

looked back at him like he was crazy, but Andy could smell that the man was a timid sort. A low-level growl bristled the cabbie's small hairs and got things underway.

They followed the other cab to a townhouse. Andy instructed his driver to pull in across the street. He handed the man a twenty and told him he could keep the change if he would hold on a minute more. The cabbie nodded.

Andy rolled down the window and inhaled deeply, trying to get a lay of the surrounding area. He could hear dogs a ways off, a dozen or so televisions, car radios, two couples fucking. He could smell the sex, the static, and the yeast from the nearby bakery. As the Nazi got out of the cab, the Intangible filled his nostrils, nearly erasing the other scents.

"What the fuck, man?" the cabbie said. The sound was like a jackhammer to Andy's tuned-in senses. "You the only two guys got no luggage from the airport?"

"Yea, yea, whatever," Andy said. The aroma of the man's blood flooded Andy's nostrils. That always happened when he was annoyed with someone; they instantly became possible prey. It was another instinct Andy had learned to ignore.

Andy got out of the cab and tapped the window. The cab drove off as the Nazi climbed the steps to his place, digging in his pocket for keys. Andy cruised across the street, low and fast, needing to get closer for that one important piece of sensory input.

The old man closed the door behind him, and Andy strained to hear. The noise didn't come. The Nazi had not locked the door. Andy listened further, but heard no beeps, or buzzes, nothing electronic. Door unlocked, no alarm. Fuck these assholes were bold. But who would try to break into a Nazi's house? He probably wanted that, so he could cut their tits off and cook them for supper.

Andy moved silently to the steps, and took them two at a time. He pressed his ear to the door and received an aural map of the man's actions. He listened as the man went to the bathroom, filled and plugged in the kettle, changed into his pajamas and began to put on his slippers.

"Oh, I'm sorry," the voice came from within. "Had you wanted to retrieve my slippers for me?"

Andy stepped away from the door, his logical brain kicking into motion, telling him he'd heard wrong. Without warning, a loud, whining noise filled his brain, and he could hear nothing else. He whirled, smelling the hot friction of running, leather shoes on pavement, saw the men in time to be afraid, but not in time to act. The electrodes from the taser punched into his neck and blackness wrapped around his head.

Chapter 4

Something wet hit him in the face. He woke, his eyes blurry, and through the processed meat on his face, the Intangible scent filled his nostrils. He was sitting on a chair in what felt like a small room and a man was bent down before him. The man, short and bald, had a tin of dog food in his hand. He was laughing.

You first, Andy thought.

"I'm Kirk Goodman," a voice from the dark corner of the room said. The man stepped forward into the light as Andy's vision cleared. It was the elderly man from the airport.

"Kirk Goodman, my ass," Andy said, spitting the dog food away from his lips.

"Dr. Kirk Goodman, would you prefer?" the man asked. He had only the hint of an accent.

Andy looked around, taking in his surroundings. There was a loud song playing, above a whining static, and the scent of the Nazi was so strong that sight was the only sense left at Andy's disposal. There were three other men in the room, besides Goodman. The short bald guy, and two others, both tall and thin and also bald.

"Skinheads? Are you fucking kidding me?"

"A coincidence, I assure you," Goodman said. "This man," he said, gesturing to one of the taller men, "is Grand Dragon Constant."

Andy looked at the Nazi like he had two heads.

"Do you not know who the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan is, Mr. Gold?"

"I fucking know. I just don't believe you."

The Nazi laughed. "Of course not. You're an animal. You behave, think and track, like an animal. It would not occur to you to become organized, or to protect yourself. You thought you could create your own little jihad, without the Christians noticing?" He gestured again to the man he'd referred to as the leader of the Klan.

"Hilarious," Andy said, spitting away more of the dog food. It tasted good and that made him angry. "Wait, what do you mean become organized? Who the fuck am I supposed to organize with, people who hate Nazis? That is an organization, asshole. It's called the rest of the fucking world."

"He doesn't know," the short man said. "He thinks he's alone."

"If you believe me capable of it," the Nazi said, "I would like to forward my sympathy, young man. You have family out in the world, those who are like you. I'm sorry you have never had the chance to meet them. It's important to be around like-minded people."

"Can't we just kill the nigger and be done with this, Aaron?" It was the other man, the one who had not yet spoken. He was asking the Grand Dragon.

"Quiet," Constant answered. "I'm enjoying this."

Andy had been trying to remain still and calm, but the anger was getting the better of him. He attempted to move, but his hands were tied behind him. His feet were also immobile, fastened to the legs of the chair.

Fine, let's hear some more, he thought, keeping his breathing even.

"I don't think he understands us," the short man said. "He's too stupid."

Constant laughed. "A negro and a mongrel, what chance did he have?"

Goodman leaned in. His stench filled Andy's head.

"How old are you, boy? Twenty, twenty-five? Do you even know what you are?"

"I'm twenty-seven," Andy said.

Constant smiled. "Old dog," he said.

"You don't have much time left, is what my friend here is saying. Did you know that?" Goodman asked.

Andy shook his head, trying to look confused.

"I didn't know this was going to be an all night thing, I got dinner plans, boss," the tall man said.

"Fine, Gerry, you can go."

Andy wasn't done, but he didn't want the man to leave, either. "You pussy," he said.

"Can't handle the wet work, Gerry?"

Gerry balked, but turned to leave just the same.

Hit him where it hurts, Andy thought. "You going out there to suck some dicks, Gerry? A good old night in the park with some good old boys? First thing I thought when I woke up was that you looked like a cocksucker."

Gerry came across the floor in three strides and slugged Andy across the temple. Despite the excess noise in the room, he heard the finger break.

"Son of a bitch!" Gerry yelled. He held his hand and hopped like a pogo stick.

"Control your peons, would you Aaron," Goodman said.

"What's your name, old man, your real name?" Andy asked.

"My German name, you mean? Koersten, Koersten Golbel. Don't you like the ring of Goodman, dog?"

"Fuck you. You said there was more of us, how many?"

"Don't tell him anything," the short man said.

"Why?" Andy said. "You're going to kill me anyway, right?"

"We've come across a couple, like you, who survived and multiplied," Goodman said.

"Other dogs. But none that have...embraced their gifts so heartily. The others were mere facsimiles of people, but you, you seem to be both things at once. It's quite remarkable. It's why we decided to lure you in and capture you. I'm curious, you see. I've always been a bit of a scientist."

Andy allowed himself to smile, making sure to hold back his teeth. "Well, I have a little information for *you* before you die. There aren't others like me. My great-great-grandfather

Andrew was born in Poland, of a fourteen-year-old black girl. He searched and found a willing host to carry on his particular traits, an older Jewish woman, luckily still fertile. My great-grandfather, another Andrew, found his quest easier. You see, he was very honest with the Jewish woman he found, honest about what he was and why he wanted his son to have a Jewish mother. The Jewish people have an amazing resiliency, and they haven't forgotten, Golbel. The next of us, Andrew the third, was betrothed to the daughter of a wealthy Jewish family. They again betrothed their son to a strong, young Jewish woman named Sally. My mother."

Constant cleared his throat. "This is boring the shit out of me, now, Goodman."

Andy could barely hold back the teeth. "But there's more. For nearly seventy years we've kept the names, the traditions, remembered the crimes, and allowed that hate to fester. I am a born instrument of revenge and I'm not sorry to say, you men are my targets."

"How bold," Goodman said. "But how do you think you can hurt us? So far, you've been such a good boy." The Nazi smiled at his poor joke, and Andy decided he'd had enough. He smiled, and let the teeth grow. Both sets of incisors top and bottom, overlapped as his jaw unhinged and jutted forward. Goodman recoiled in horror. The short man tripped over his own feet and Gerry forgot his broken finger. Constant stood perfectly still, mouth agape.

Andy let the hair come too, saw it thicken above his brows and crawl up under his eyes. His shoulders disjointed and repositioned and a growl, burning deep in his belly, rose and sat, reverberating in his gullet. The change tore the ropes from his wrists and his legs from the chair. As the chair fell away he remained crouched, his hind legs twisted and became more stacked with muscle, supporting his now broadened chest and shoulders.

Andy threw back his head and released the howl that had been coalescing since his first whiff of the Intangible.

Ever the self-preservist, Goodman leapt for the door. Andy was there waiting. He took the man's hand and snapped the wrist. Spinning, he flung the old man against the far wall. The music stopped. Andy heard Gerry whimper, smelled the shit and piss. Both Constant and the short man had soiled themselves.

Andy took care of the whimper first, swatting Gerry's head from atop his body. It took a moment before the body realized it was un-piloted and fell to the ground. The short man, still on the floor, Andy ground underfoot, allowing the thick claws at his toes and heel to churn deep in the man's guts. He didn't scream for long. Andy scalped the man, clean, and held the prize up for Constant.

That was enough for the Klansman. He bolted for the exit. Andy leapt, digging all fours into the man's back, driving him hard into the door. The man's neck snapped, flip-topping his head so it looked at Andy upside down when he landed atop the body.

Should have made you suffer, Andy thought. It was harder to think in the heat of the transformation, but just like he never lost the dog when he was human, he never completely lost the human when the dog emerged.

He moved swiftly across the floor to the old pile of bones that used to be a Nazi Doctor, inseminating innocent women in Auschwitz. The man's rattled breathing signified a nearness to death. Allowing the man to die at this point would be a mercy. Andrew had not been taught mercy, nor had he ever had much use for it.

"What are you?" Goodman managed as Andy hovered over him.

"I'm your son," Andy said, allowing a grotesque smile to split his face, showing the Nazi all the big white teeth amongst the dense, black fur.

"Bad...dog," Goodman said. He began to smile, but Andy caught him in the act, biting deep into the man's shoulder, sending a penetrating scream throughout the room and out into the night. Andy matched it with a bellow of his own. For miles, the dogs howled in heroic response.

Chapter 5

The mausoleum had been expensive, but his grandmother's family had had money, and they'd wanted it to go to no greater 'cause than the one devised by his great-great-grandfather.

Revenge.

Andy slapped the body bag, near the head, and the body inside stirred. He unzipped it from the top and locked eyes with the terrified doctor.

"Good morning, Koersten."

"Don't call me that," the Nazi said. "I haven't been that for years."

"Oh, not you too," Andy said. "Do we have to play this game?"

"I've been good, I swear," the man said, beginning to cry.

"You were keeping some strange company for someone being so good," Andy said.

Goodman broke into a fit of blubbing, snot coming out to mix with the tears.

"Pathetic." Andy summoned some of his strength and pushed the stone lid aside.

"What's that? What are you going to do to me?" Goodman cried.

"You were right about my age, Nazi," Andy said. "I just pray to God that you didn't figure that out through nefarious means. I don't even want to know. If you hurt others, your punishment will encompass that as well."

"I didn't hurt anyone, we just watched. We...found out about you, there were only a few of us left. When you started picking us off, we had to defend ourselves! But we didn't hurt anyone, we tracked some of the survivors, we watched, but we did nothing. They weren't hurting anyone."

"You were going to kill me," Andy said.

"That was survival, what would you have me do?" Goodman said.

Andy began to think of a profanity-laced answer, when movement interrupted him.

Goodman, bitten, heard it too.

"What was that?"

Andy smiled, letting his teeth grow a little. "I'd guess, Bernhard. He was the most recent."

"What? What do you mean? What's that smell?"

Andy laughed, unable to control his pleasure. "I call it the Intangible. It's you, asshole, though I suppose you probably like your own brand."

"It's everywhere," Goodman said.

"I know."

Realization appeared in the Nazi's eyes. "They're here! And they're..."

"Say it, you stupid old fuck," Andy said.

"Alive?"

Andy picked up the body bag, the old man inside, and dropped it down into the sarcophagus. It hit the bottom with an audible thump.

"Alive? You've kept us alive?" Goodman cried.

"As you figured, dogs like us don't live as long as humans. Now that you're bitten, at your age, I'd give you only a few years. We can die of old age, but not any other way, Goodman.

These fellas, I thought that biting them and leaving them would be an ordeal of a few days, weeks, months at best. But Bernhard there, he's been here for two years, and he still kicks when you poke him."

"You monster! How can you do this to me! You're burying me alive?"

Andy laughed again. "It's why I'm gonna miss you assholes. When you call me a monster, you're the only people, the only ones who can say it, and it rings ironic."

Andy pushed the stone slab over the sarcophagus and listened to the screams.