

DEATH ROW

by
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KRAVEN TAYLOR CHEWED his steak slowly and thoroughly, allowing the juicy succulent meat to overcome his pallet. It felt so good to finally have something which had taste and flavour, unlike all that hopelessly dull boring ‘slop’ which he had been eating for the past six years. Prison was a punishment and therefore luxuries were few and far between. As long as the prisoners were kept alive and given their minimum requirement of nourishment and supplements the system was doing its job. Not that the ‘psychos’ in here deserved anything. They were society’s worst of the worst; the scum of the universe, the very personification of Satan himself. Such people were not human, they were vermin. Kraven laughed at such labels. In his eyes the people in here were merely going against the grain; the grain of society and the rules that it laid down.

‘You got another five minutes Taylor’ said a guard walking buy Kraven’s cell. ‘Eat up now, chop chop!’

‘Such a shame to rush such a wonderful meal Officer Miller’ Kraven replied, still with some meat in his mouth.

‘Death does not wait for scum like you!’ shouted Officer Fielding from down the hall.

Kraven chuckled to himself. Mind you the officer had every right to despise him. Kraven had hardly been a good law abiding citizen. Five counts of rape and a triple homicide. One of the murder victims was a cop who had been assigned to his case. Kraven had gone to his house, raped his girlfriend before crucifying him in his garage. After committing this final ‘daemonic act’, as the Judge labelled the crime in court, Kraven simply called the cops and confessed to the crime. He then waited for the police to arrive. He was unarmed and did not resist. That was the first of two anomalies of the Kraven case: his surrender with no resistance at all. The second was his decision to plead innocent and defend himself in court. The prosecution had a field day with Kraven but the press dented their prestige by claiming that he was mocking the system. This man did not fear the law at all. Had he not confessed they might never have found him. He even ‘requested’ to be given the electric chair.

SO KRAVEN CONFESSED, was tried and convicted, and given the electric chair. He had to wait six long years for his fate. In those six years he killed four fellow inmates. One of them was a simple ‘beaten to death’ case, though it was

noted in guard's report that the wounds received by the victim, Dudley Murray, indicated that Kraven possessed 'enormous physical strength'. Somehow he had lifted the two hundred pound plus Murray over his head and brought him crashing down onto his knee, snapping his back in two. If that was not enough to do the job Kraven then pulled his nose bone right out of his skull, stuck his fingers into the resulting cavity and literally pulled off Murray's face. Several guards requested a transfer after that incident, one of them had to be admitted to a mental asylum. Kraven sent him some flowers to 'lift him up'.

The other three murders all happened together and in unexplained circumstances. Murray had been the head of a Neo-Nazi cult called 'The Broken Eagles'. Kraven found that name very amusing; it was supposed to symbolise that these men were against American capitalism and wanted to 'break it'. But in truth it sounded more like they were a bunch of impotent low-lives who had been 'broken in' through gay sex. The remaining three members of this cult were not very happy with the death of their leader. They decided to jump Kraven in the shower. He got a blood nose and a fractured forearm as a result but that was peanuts compared to what his attackers' received. All of them died of heart attacks; the most violent the prison doctor, Doctor Monroe, had ever come across. It was complete heart failure, all at exactly the same time. The other strange thing was the water in the shower, it had an electric current. It was mild and receding but there was evidence that it had been much stronger just moments before. One of the guards that escorted Kraven back to his cell also reported that he felt a strong static charge on his skin when he first touched him.

Since that day Kraven got his own cell. He also gained an undisputed level of respect from the rest of his peers. No one bothered him. Everyone, even the meanest, toughest, most dangerous inmates gave Kraven the red carpet treatment. The only hint of aggression between Kraven and the rest was during the annual arm wrestling tournaments. He always won too. Some thought it was because people let him win, others believed that he was in fact the strongest of them all. Much of his time was spent meditating and practicing his 'katas'; an elaborate display of self defence techniques which Kraven claimed was unlike any other. He called it the 'Raging Fury'. During his meditations Kraven was lost in his own world. He stayed focused for hours on end. One of the guards claimed that he was able to move things around his cell, but no hard evidence was ever documented. Strangely enough, during the time he was meditating, the electricity in his block often flickered. In the six years that he was in prison, there was a total blackout seventeen times.

During the failure in power the entire prison was shut down; except for one small section which remained unaffected. None of the inmates knew what was there. They were never taken there but word around the campfire was that it was a military scientific wing. Gossip spread threw the grapevine that they were using the prisoners as guinea pigs for biological research. Some people believed that Kraven knew about this place and perhaps even wanted to be part of it. Maybe he already was part of it.

THE GUARDS OPENED Kraven's cell door. He had just about finished his steak. Officers Miller and Fielding both removed him from his cell. In the hallway he was welcomed by Warden Richards.

'Hope the steak tasty' he said, with a smile.

'One of the best Derrick' Kraven replied. 'Did your wife make it?' Warden Richards frowned, his face twitched slightly and he took a deep breath. As much as he wanted to hit Kraven right across the face he was weary of the man's ferocity and did not want to risk being his last victim, or one of three for that matter; Kraven could easily kill them all. But he seemed very calm and passive, almost excited.

'You seem unusually merry Kraven. Was there a bottle of rum stashed with your meal?' Richards said, trying to get one back at Kraven. It did not matter very much in any case; Kraven would be dead within the next thirty minutes.

'Even if there had been, I would have touched the stuff. Getting drunk is hardly the course of action to be taken given my current predicament. Besides, drinking alcohol is such a_'

'Okay, that's enough Kraven' Richards interjected. 'Let's get a move on'.

The two guards *gently* held Kraven's arms. So gently in fact that they looked like they were two homosexual fathers escorting their adopted daughter down the aisle to get married. Kraven found it very humouring and could not resist a giggle. Warden Richards led the way down the hallway. At the end a heavy set of metal doors opened up to reveal two more guards escorting a priest.

'Greetings son' he said to Kraven, trying very hard to make it out that he actually cared for this 'spawn of Satan' standing in front of him.

'Hello Father' replied Kraven, his voice lacking any emotion.

'Do you wish to confess?' the priest asked, hoping that Kraven would say no.

'Next time you talk to God, ask him where he has been for the last two thousand years' Kraven replied in a sarcastic tone.

The priest did not respond but instead gesture to Warden Richards that they should all continue. Richards led the way down another two hallways, split by yet another large metal set of doors. At the end of the second hallway the path narrowed to a corridor with a heavy wooden door at the end. Richards knocked twice on the door. A small slit at eye level opened to reveal the face of yet another guard. He automatically opened the door and let everyone enter.

THE ELECTRIC CHAIR stood alone on a raised platform in front of a small empty auditorium. People were allowed to come and watch the execution but it seemed that nobody had booked time off to witness Kraven's demise. Kraven himself did not have any paternal family. He had been raised in a foster home and was adopted by Charles and Julia Caudill. Not able to have children, they had decided to adopt one child and raise it as best as they could. Kraven ran away from home when he was only fifteen. They had never heard from him

since. It seemed they did not want to see him again, no matter the circumstances. Also absent was Jenny Green, the girlfriend of the cop Kraven crucified. He was hoping that she might attend so that he could see her one last time. Obviously she could not bear to see his face again. *What a pity* Kraven thought.

The four guards worked together to get Kraven strapped in and a technician fired up the electric generators connected to the chair. One of the guards put a wet sponge on Kraven's head and held it in place with the head plate used to deliver the electricity straight to his brain. Some of the water trickled down Kraven's face.

'Ah, that beautiful freshness of prison water, I shall miss it' Kraven said, looking at Richards.

The technician gave the thumbs up; the chair was ready. The priest began to read a passage from the bible, almost completely silently. He then spoke aloud with his own words.

'Oh, Lord bless this day when one of your lost sons shall return to your realm to learn from his ways. May you receive him and in time forgive him for his crimes and help him rediscover his belief in you' he said, looking both at Kraven and the ceiling, as if he was speaking to the Almighty. He gestured to Richards to indicate that he had finished.

Richards took one deep breath and started to get things rolling, 'Kraven Taylor, the city of Detroit found you guilty of rape and triple homicide. It now falls on the city of Texas to carry out your execution by means of the electric chair. Do you have any last requests?'

'Just one; tell your wife she could do better' Kraven said with no fear in his voice.

'God damn son of a bitch! Fry him!' Richards shouted, unable to contain his anger any more.

The technician flipped the switch and the generator came to life. A large sound of electric static shot through the wires connected to Kraven's head. His entire body began to spasm and his neck muscles tensed up. Richards had a faint smile on his face as he watched Kraven get electrocuted. After fifteen seconds the technician cut off the power. Kraven's body collapsed in a slumped position, his head resting on his left shoulder. Richards won't be happy; he had had the last laugh.

All of a sudden Kraven lifted his head. He looked directly at Richards and smiled.

'You...can't even...do...your job...r-right' Kraven said, in a quiet distorted voice.

'Hit him again!' Richards shouted to the technician, who was in a state of disbelief.

The switch was flipped again. Kraven's body again began to spasm out of control. The electricity was going to be left on for long this time. Richards looked on, now feeling slightly easy. *How much could Kraven take?*

THE ELECTRICITY WAS kept on for over thirty seconds. Richards finally gave the order to shut it down. Kraven's body stopped shaking, his head rested on his left side; he looked dead this time. The priest let out a sigh of relief. There was a quiet pause from everyone in the room. All of a sudden Kraven lifted his head and smiled at Richards.

'This is becoming a joke Warden' he said, spitting blood onto his legs.

'God damn you Kraven! Hit him again damnit!' Warden Richards yelled, his voice going up a semi-pitch of two. He was afraid.

The technician flipped the switch again. Kraven's body was once again going crazy, his muscle began to spasm out of control, and his neck was taint. But something was different. He was smiling this time. The readings on the electric chair's gauges indicated an increase in output. Kraven's body was now covered in static energy and it appeared that he was taking in the electricity. The power output continued to rise, now approaching dangerous levels. The lights in the auditorium began to flicker. Radio conversations revealed that the whole prison was experiencing a blackout, except of course for the 'special' wing. Warden Richards was panicking. The priest had already run for cover. Kraven's face was fully aware of all the people in the room. He closed his eyes as if he was being overcome with a feeling of raw ecstasy.

'Sir, we have to shut her down!' the technician screamed.

'Not until he is dead!' Richards yelled back.

'Sir, if we continue we will all be dead!' screamed the technician.

'I want him dead!' Richards screamed back.

The technician was about to disregard Richards, who had clearly succumbed to some kind of mania. With his hand on the switch he was about to switch the power off when amazingly the grid shut off by itself. At almost the same time all the lights in the auditorium exploded. Warden Richards and the priest were now lost in the dark. The four guards scrambled for their flashlights. They shone them on the Warden.

'Not at me you fools, take a look at Kraven!' he shouted with signs of panic filling his voice.

The guards shone their lights onto the platform where the chair was. Kraven sat on it, completely still.

'Maybe we got the son of a bitch!' one of the guards chuckled'

Kraven's head suddenly rose and looked him straight in the eye. 'Far from it!' he said.

Kraven pulled his arms free from the straps holding him down. He forced his legs out of their shackles. His body broke through the leather harness holding him in the chair. He reached up and took off the metal plate from his head. His eyes were glowing bright blue; his smile was almost as wide as his face. The guards were in complete shock. Warden Richards could not believe what he was seeing.

'Gun him down!' he yelled.

Before they could even reach for their weapons, Kraven struck all the guards with intense lightning bolts from his finger tips. All of them died within seconds, their hearts completely failing. Only the Warden and the priest

remained. Kraven walked towards them, his movements so elegant and graceful as if he were half his original body weight.

‘For six years I have waited for this moment’ Kraven said, his voice was slightly more high pitched and had an echo. He raised his hands in front of him and lightning passed between them. Richards tried to get reinforcements on his radio but there was static interference.

‘What the hell are you?’ he screamed.

‘I was a warrior. Now you have turned me into a king’ Kraven said as he reached over and lifted Richards over his head with one hand.

‘Look at you now Warden. Where is all your power now? People like you are so primitive. You have no idea what powers lie within.’

Kraven increased the voltage through his hand and electrocuted Richards. The intensity was so great that his body shook frantically. Richards tried to scream but his body his muscle spasms were uncontrollable. Kraven’s eyes began to glow an intense bright blue. The electricity through his arm was increasing. Richards muscle spasms were so hard that he snapped his own back. Blood shot out of his mouth and nose. Finally, his body exploded, covering Kraven and the priest in a thick coat of blood and pieces of flesh and bone. The priest was on the floor shaking uncontrollably with terror.

‘Tell me Father, where is God now? What would HE think of me? More importantly, do you think he could even stop me? Kraven said with an insane twang to his voice.

‘Have m-m-mercy s-s-son! Please!’ the priest yelled in terror.

‘God has mercy. I don’t!’ Kraven shouted as he blasted the priest with lightning bolts from both hands, causing him to explode into a pile of blood and broken bones.

KRAVEN WALKED THROUGH the hall leading from the execution room. Any guards he encountered were instantly terminated. Occasionally some of them were able to open fire on him. However when the bullets made contact with his skin the wound closed so quickly that Kraven did not even flinch. Some guards tried to get close and beat him with their truncheons but Kraven easily pushed them aside using his magnetic field. The electricity used to kill him and now made him a supercharged psychotic killer with the power of Zeus. No one stood a chance against him. He easily made his way to the mysterious wing of the prison. There he was greeted by army soldiers who put up more of a fight than the prison guards. But they too were hardly a match for him. He killed every single one of the. Then using his electric energy he short circuited the main door.

Inside he found a handful of holding cells each with their own magnetic door. Kraven made his way to the security centre. Already the personal had run for their lives. He made it to the control desk and shut off the security doors. All of the holding cells opened. Kraven made his way to the hallway. Slowly one by one the prisoners emerged. Some hardly resembled humans anymore. Others were too sedated or injured to make their way out. But those who did stood before Kraven. They numbered only about half a dozen.

‘Hello my brothers, I have come to offer you salvation in exchange for your servitude’ Kraven said like a natural warlord.

‘These people took your freedom away from you. Come with me and I promise you a chance at revenge. I know of a place called The Sanctuary. There you shall be safe.’

Kraven broke through one of the main walls of the prison complex and led his liberated fellow inmates to freedom. Under the cover of the night sky they soon disappeared into the surrounding forest. Any attempts to find them were in vain. Back in the execution room the puddles of blood and bone that were once the priest and Warden Richards greeted the salvage teams. Only the priest’s cross remained intact.