

LESSER OF TWO EVILS: TERRITORY

Written by

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FADE IN ON:

INT. CELL BLOCK - DAY

SCRAAAAPE. Rusty hinges protest. A metal door with a small window flies open - CLANG!

One shove, and ELISE (gangly 20s) stumbles in. Blood drips from her cheek. Wiping it away, she whips around...

ELISE
Let go of me!

A rough male voice laughs.

KIRK (O.S.)
I just did. It's your lucky day!

KIRK (30s) looms in the doorway. Silhouetted, his red gang jacket lends a demonic look. The MACHETE he holds, helps too.

Elise eyes the space between Kirk's arm and the door. Should she make a run for it? What's she got to lose?

Ducking low, she darts forward.

Kirk shoves her back. Elise pinwheels. Tripping over something, she goes down!

Chains JANGLE. A female voice shrieks. And it's not Elise.

Dazed, Elise rolls over - finds herself face to face with:

ELISE
There's! They caught you, too?

Slumped under a barred window, THERESE (50s) nods. Hair that hasn't seen water for weeks flops in her resigned face.

There's holds up one manacled wrist; raw skin underneath.

THERESE
Don't make him mad, Elise.

KIRK
(chuckles)
You shoulda told her that an hour ago. Oh, my mistake. You're *both* in here.

Kirk clamps a cuff on Elise's wrist. CLICK!

She struggles, but Kirk shoulders her into a wall. Elise winces from the smell. As a second cuff SNAPS into place.

Leaving Elise pinned, vulnerable. Kirk looms over her. A threat, in so many ways.

Until he turns away. Flashing: a "Patriot" logo on his back.

KIRK

Welcome to hotel Fall-In-Line.
Girly, enjoy your stay.

He slams the door behind him. CLANG! Theresa and Elise exchange looks.

Elise fumbles with her manacles; tries to slide them off her wrists. Worth a shot, but it fails. Her skin rips and bleeds.

Therese watches the attempt with sad eyes.

THERESE

Don't. Those cuts will get
infected. Trust me.

ELISE

So? I'll treat them when I'm home!

Elise's eyes follow her chain; to RUSTED ANCHORS in the wall. The cement around them looks eroded.

Jumping up, Elise runs forward - full tilt.

Chains SNAP as she reaches the end of their length. The sudden stop wrenches a shoulder, whips her off her feet.

One anchor *almost* pulls loose. But not enough.

Elise rocks in pain. Therese crawls over, caresses her hair.

THERESE

Shhhh. If your shoulder's broken,
squirming just makes it worse!

Without warning, Therese twists the joint. Elise groans, but suppresses a full scream.

THERESE

That settles it. Either you have no
nerve endings left, or I'm betting
on a sprain.

She hugs Elise - clumsy, quick. Then settles down besides her. The two women stare in silence at the door.

THERESE
Where'd they catch you?

ELISE
Sector 4. I was scavenging a 7-11
for canned food. A Patriot grabbed
me between the aisles. Stupid me,
both arms were full. There was
nothing I could do.

She pivots towards Therese, eyes wide.

ELISE
I didn't even know you were...
missing.

THERESE
(chuckles)
Communication's limited these days.

ELISE
How long's it been?

THERESE
I stopped counting. Four weeks.
Maybe more?

ELISE
Melissa's been alone *that* long?

THERESE
No. They caught her in the same
sweep, too.

ELISE
Where'd they take her?

Therese stares at the floor.

THERESE
Somewhere good. They let her visit,
now and then. The situation's...
complicated.

ELISE
When we get out of here, I promise
we'll spring Mel, too.

THERESE
(frowns)
That would be nice. But security
there's extra tight.

Elise limps to a window. Standing on tiptoes, she looks out.

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE

Sucked dry from climate change. MEN in red jackets mill around, clearly part of Kirk's gang.

ELISE

Patriots - they're everywhere.
Fucking cockroaches!

INTERCUT BETWEEN DESERT LANDSCAPE AND CELL

A sly smile plays across Therese's face.

THERESE

For now.

Somewhere, an engine ROARS. A sedan rolls into view, parks.

WAYNE (30s, dressed in a blue suit) steps out. Clean shaven, Wayne's eons more evolved than Kirk. Though impossible to tell from this distance, he surely smells better too.

With a grin so dazzling, you can see it through a dust storm. Patriots grunt. Elise recoils.

ELISE

The Racques are here? Crap-tastic.
Just when you think things can't
get worse!

THERESE

The Racques aren't all *that* bad.

ELISE

Not that bad?!? Remember what
happened to Sandy?

THERESE

How could I forget? But that wasn't
the Racques' fault.

ELISE

Yes it was! She died after they
barricaded the road we needed to
reach her medicine. Sandy couldn't
breathe for days!

THERESE

The Racques *had* to cut off supplies
to protect us from Patriots. Being
divisive won't bring her back.
Blame them!

Elise snarls through gritted teeth.

ELISE
I blame them all.

Outside: Kirk sidles up to Wayne: suave executive meets brute. The two bro-hug, an incongruent look.

The two men head towards the building entrance.

Elise shudders as they slip from view. Her eyes drift to the loosened anchor in the wall.

She pries at it with her fingers, escape efforts renewed.

Therese circles and paces - as far as her chains allow.

THERESE
Stop. You'll get us *both* in trouble!

ELISE
Look around. We're in trouble now!

THERESE
Don't you get it? The Racques are reaching across the aisle. They're negotiating with the Patriots for peace. That's how you get things done!

ELISE
Get what done; throwing more of us in cages? In what world is that a "smart move"?

THERESE
You shouldn't be so negative.

Therese pouts. Elise stops digging, stares.

ELISE
To you, this is... fine?

THERESE
You want to be a purist? I'm not. I know how the world works. There's two choices. We have to choose.

ELISE
I choose freedom, thank-you-very-much.

Elise digs into the anchor. Chips a nail below the quick.

ELISE

Ow!

Theresa grabs Elise's hand. Dabs blood away with her shirt.

THERESE

You're too young to understand. We have to be pragmatic. The Racques are *better* than the Patriots. That's obvious. Just look at them!

ELISE

I'd rather not.

THERESE

Then *listen*, for Heaven's sake. With the Racques, there's still a chance!

Elise pulls her hand back, drops to the floor.

ELISE

What do you know about these "negotiations"?

THERESE

The Patriots are trading girls to the Racques. Melissa was... one of the first. She tells me over there, it's not so bad. They gave her a bed. Clean sheets. Food.

Therese picks up a SLOP BUCKET, waves it around.

THERESE

REAL food. Not canned, either. Fresh, like we used to have!

Elise side-eyes her companion.

ELISE

Groovy. What's the catch?

THERESE

The catch? What... do you mean?

ELISE

The trade off. What do Racques get in return?

Teresa's eyes drop to the floor. The bucket, too.

THERESE

Well, Mel has to provide services-

ELISE
They're trafficking her? I'll
fuckin' kill them, they try that
with me!

Two PATRIOTS strut past the window. One peeks in, points. His friend slaps the bars - CLANG!

Elise flips them the bird. The men laugh, walk away.

ELISE
(to Therese)
If the Racques are here, that means
a trade's imminent. We've got to
escape now!

THERESE
Be realistic. There's no way to
survive out there on your own.

ELISE
I did before. I'll take my chances
now!

Elise scours the floor for makeshift weapons. Finds a small pebble. Harmless. She tosses that, looks for more.

Therese buzzes over Elise like a anxiety riddled shadow.

THERESE
Don't be so privileged!

Elise looks up, confused.

ELISE
...excuse me?

THERESE
Pretend your little fantasy worked,
and you *did* get out. The Patriots
and Racques would replace you with
someone else. Because of your
selfishness, that girl's blood
would be on *your* hands!

TAP TAP in the hallway. Elise squints out the door window.

INT. HALLWAY

Kirk and Wayne approach. Judging from their smiles, they've reached accord.

INT. CELL BLOCK

Elise glares at Therese.

ELISE

You blame this on me, not them?

She points out mold. Cockroaches. More. Therese shrugs.

THERESE

Embrace your blessings. Give it time.

ELISE

How long? Weeks, months, years?

THERESE

Change comes gradually. You can't ask for everything at once!

CREAAAAK. Wayne and Kirk slip in, softly shut the door.

Therese cringes. A defiant Elise stands tall.

Kirk beams at both prisoners, points his machete at Elise.

KIRK

See? That one's feisty.

WAYNE

Admirably so. It's a deal. We take her. In return, I authorize Racque withdrawal from Sector 4.

KIRK

Which part?

WAYNE

All of it. Consider the territory yours.

THERESE

(whispers to Elise)

See? Sacrifice works!

WAYNE

(to Kirk)

A win-win for everyone concern.
Less land for our side to maintain.

Wayne leers, and winks at Elise.

WAYNE

And we improve one life.

Pulling out handcuff keys, Kirk shuffles over to Elise.

KIRK

Your hotel's been upgraded, Girly.

One touch from Kirk, and Elise freaks. She lunges against her chains.

...the anchor rips loose from the wall!

Improvising, Elise swings the metal at Kirk's head. CRUNCH. A direct hit above his eye. Bone shatters. The thug drops.

Alive, but injured. Elise pounces on Kirk. Wraps chain around his throat, yanks it tight.

But it's a thick neck, and Kirk's a fighter. He gurgles and thrashes. It takes all Elise's energy to keep him down.

ELISE

(to Therese)

Help me here!

Therese crumples into fetal position, shakes her head "no".

With a growl, Kirk sits up. Elise howls as pain shoots through her sprained shoulder.

She slams the anchor down with both hands. The metal tears through eye, then brain. Instant death for Kirk.

Elise cheers. But around her, awkward silence.

Panting, she looks up. Wayne smiles down, strangely calm.

WAYNE

The Pat was right. You've got spirit. Good.

ELISE

Good? Mister, don't you realize you're outnumbered?

Wayne points to terrified Therese, shrugs.

WAYNE

We both know she's harmless.

He nods towards the closed door.

WAYNE

And a few minutes ago, I passed about 50 Patriots in the hallway - all loyal to this...

(kicks Kirk's body)
Deplorable you've just murdered, in
cold blood. That's the very
opposite of "outnumbered".

Elise groans. He's got a point.

WAYNE

That shoulder looks dislocated. Why
fight? Doctors back at our base can
fix you up.

THERESE

Take the offer, Elise. Think harm
reduction, please! You're safer
with the Racques.

ELISE

Ultimately? You told me Mel
couldn't escape. Which is worse:
being enslaved a lifetime, with
"good sheets"? Or a few more days
in this cell?

THERESE

Be reasonable. This isn't a utopia!

WAYNE

She's right, sweetheart.
Compromise. Come with me.

Wayne reaches down for Elise.

She thrusts upward, with Kirk's FALLEN MACHETE. Wayne's smirk
turns to agonized surprise.

ELISE

And you're no "lesser evil". Offer
denied!

Elise twists the blade. Wayne drops - gutted. Blood pools
quickly, stains his expensive blue suit.

Scooping up Kirk's keys, Elise unlocks her wrists. Runs to
Therese, frees her too.

And drags the hesitant woman towards the door.

THERESE

No! There's an army outside. We
can't win now.

ELISE
I'd rather fight for what I want
and lose, than settle for...

She waves at the grimy cell.

ELISE
All this.

Despite Therese, Elise flings open the door and yells.

ELISE
Oh my god. Help! That Racque - he
just killed Kirk!

PATRIOTS run in, alarmed.

Elise grabs Therese, winks. In the chaos, the two slip out.

FINAL FADE OUT: