

Pictures

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A vast desert of buttons and switches lay before me. They almost seemed familiar, I had gotten to know them in the several times that I'd been up here.

Shit, this was so pathetic.

But I couldn't help it.

As usual, I left the light turned off; only the dull blue gleam of the screen was illuminating the walls around me.

It was the same. So familiar, like every night.

Even though being here, doing what I did was so fucking embarrassing, it didn't really matter in the end. What should I care about it? There was no pride to lose, no self-respect to abandon. This and his ignorance, it didn't make a difference, it was the way I wanted it.

So my remaining time I spent here, every night.

I was watching. Listening. Observing every one of his movements. It didn't make me feel guilty. That was not it. It just felt so damn futile. And I hated it.

The screen in front of me was changing pictures now. I didn't have to switch though the many channels of all the surveillance cameras to find the one I was searching for. I cringed at the thought of how often I had done this to know everything so well.

The monitor showed me a room that was stacked up with trophies and cups, all furniture polished and perfectly clean. It looked like hell to me.

If it wasn't for the owner I had probably spat at the thought of watching this room for hours.

The low humming of the console was nearly blowing my ears out. It was not the sound that I wanted to hear; I preferred the deafening silence.

I let my eyes lose their focus to just hear. Listen for the slow, deep breaths. Last I had heard them not coming through the speaker, it was back in the days at the orphanage. Only that back then, I hadn't come to know that I would ever fucking miss them.

Damn, had I sunk low...

Fuck.

The breathing was drowning out all outside noise and its sound mingling with the one of my own.

I stared absentmindedly at the pictures flowing in front of me; white shoulders lifting and lowering while the moon and clouds outside the window drew patterns on the

floor and the bed.

I wished it had not been mere pixels changing colors in front of my eyes and sound waves hitting my ears. It would have been so much better seeing it in reality. Damn.

He had always been too naïve to notice it. But I, too, did my best to conceal it. In the situation I was in now, I was almost happy about it. Had he noticed, what the hell could have happened? He would have abandoned me, probably. The perfect boy on the surface, as he'd always been. There was no space for someone like me; I had always wondered how he could even accept me as a friend, since I was the polar opposite of him. Not that it really mattered to me.

He had told me once that I was like brother to him. I had wanted to fucking kick something that evening, when he was standing in front of me with that damn innocent smile on his face, a plaster sticking over the bridge of his nose. But still I had looked at him morosely, glowering at him from under my beanie, scolding him for being a sentimental fool.

And now I was being just the same. An incapable idiot who couldn't get one word over the tip of his tongue, waiting for him to get it.

Or the opposite, expecting him not to realize, as he did not. It was best this way.

All of that which brought me in this fucking situation; sitting in a cold room in the dead of the night when everyone was sleeping, staring at a monitor like a damn idiot, watching light and shadow splashing over white skin.

I had to remind myself often enough that it didn't matter how much of an asshole I was, since there was not much time left for me. The thought left a strange but pleasing feeling in my stomach. It was right this way.

Even though I hated the frustration in his eyes every time I looked at them, it was right. If I accepted his friendship now, it would be unforgivable. I would have had to push him away again and again.

Why was it all about protecting and saving? Why couldn't he get into his head that there were some that didn't want to be saved?

Pictures were rising up in my mind, floating in front of my inner eye; the expression in his eyes, feeling unbearable sorrow over his sister's death and even greater pain over his own failure. That had always been a part of him that I couldn't understand, didn't want to understand.

If there was something like hell, the expression in his eyes would be the picture shown to me, endlessly, but this time presenting the face of a seventeen-year old, not a boy of eight years.

It would be easiest for both of us if everything stayed the way it was. I had endured this feeling for more than three years now, there was no possibility to change it and I was all right with it.

The picture in front of me now turned to a dirty grey as clouds smeared all contrast into one dull color. It made him look even paler. He had not shifted his position once since I came up here; he had always been a calm sleeper.

A sudden jerk of pain ripped through my chest. It made me cringe and curl up reflexively. I turned blind for a second as hot pain flared up in my stomach, blinking to see again.

Damn. I had accidentally hit one of the levers.

While I had my arms wrapped tightly around my stomach, the camera was painfully slowly zooming in. Right onto his sleeping face. The part in the picture I had always avoided to look at.

The blood was pounding like a drum in my ears, pain ripping at my insides, my head

was only a few inches over the console, staring at the white face. It looked so fucking pure.

Over my shallow breaths I realized that his mouth was moving in his sleep, saying words that I couldn't hear over the storm in my ears. I tried to read from his lips, wanting to make out the words, but couldn't.

When the pain began to subside slowly, his lips were back to their usual half-parted state, no word for me to catch up anymore.

It was all fading around me, along with the pain, everything was disappearing.

His face was blurring, mingling with his silver hair, turning to liquid. It was white, so white.

Snow that was melting from my grasp.