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Watch Them Fall Down

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WATCH THEM FALL DOWN

Beth Holian

Alice Hanson stared blankly at the large spread of television screens in front of her, watching a satellite photo of the United States engulfed in flames, and felt nothing.

“Watch them fall down…”
The background music was more of a command than a suggestion.

“Watch them fall down…”
The haunting melody continued to play as the picture blinked for a moment before it switched to a shot of Europe burning.

The world was burning.
Powers had fallen.
There were no longer different cultures.
There was just flames, embers, ashes, dust, and the music.

Always the music.
“Watch them fall down…”
It had been playing since she could remember. The melody was the only thing that reached her ears – besides the commands of her superior officer.

And Alice was always watching, always watching things fall: cities, countries, nations, continents, even whole worlds had been decimated, and all the while her eyes never left the screens in front of her.

The apparatus to which she was attached was considered a marvel of modern science – a machine to monitor machines. A metal sweatband encrusted with a tangle of wires and tubing encompassed her shaved head; several IVs branched out of her veins, the tubes rested on her shoulders and disappeared somewhere behind her, and an armband on her right shoulder monitored her blood pressure and her heart rate. Her wrists and ankles were affixed to unfeeling steel rests that allowed her to be in a sitting position.

All Alice could really see of the machine were the battle-like claws that hung curled against the ceiling, claws that would unfurl and strangle any attacker if she was put in a compromisable position.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” whispered a male voice in her ear.
“I can almost hear the futility in their screaming.”
Her superior officer was standing beside her.
“That makes no sense, sir,” Alice replied, her voice monotone.

“The only thing better would be personally watching the light leave their eyes as they die.”

Alice felt a hand move away the tubes that ran from her forehead resting on her shoulders and settle on the side of her neck. A cold shock ran up her spinal chord, but she did not move.

His hands felt as if he had taken them out of the freezer.

“You did this you know,” the officer’s voice continued as the hand slid forward down her naked collarbone toward her breast. “You should be proud, Alice, proud of this destruction.”

“But the world is gone, sir,” Alice replied, paying no heed to the wandering appendage.

“The fate of destruction is the joy of rebirth.”
“I don’t understand, sir.”
The hand was now tracing small circles around where her nipple stuck out from her thin shirt.

For a brief moment the image on the screen flickered and changed: now she was watching Asia burn.

“We can stop this unraveling…”

No, no it was already done: everything had already been unraveled and the world was now being razed to the ground.

Was this really an end that could bring a new beginning?

“Why do you think you are here, Alice?” the officer asked.

A momentary cold sting at her side told her another hand had been placed on her bare torso.

“Lay them all down…lay them all down…”
The music. Always the music.

"Women are such beautiful creatures," the officer continued silkily, "but they have such simple minds."

Alice blinked, but said nothing, continuing to watch in front of her. Soft pressure on her left thigh told her one of the hands had moved.

"The world is not black and white, Alice darling. There are places where the two meet, and this, this is where we dwell, on this thin line between the darkness and the light."

The hand was now between her legs; the other was still preoccupied with her nipple.

"Do you know what I love the most about women?"

"No, sir," Alice mumbled.

"Not only can you take life away, but you can also create life," the officer sighed as he reached inside her.

"Is this true, sir?"

"Yes," he breathed. "You should feel lucky Alice. I have made you what you are, and now we will both enjoy the fruits of my labor."

Alice's lower regions tensed as he pushed further into her. She felt him try to pull out, but he was trapped.

From behind her, Alice felt a rush of air go by and the glint of metal reflected briefly off the screens in front of her.

The hand left her breast abruptly, but Alice was unfazed. The other hand struggled for a brief moment to release itself from the delta between her thighs, but fell still as she unclenched herself.

Alice listened to the soft mechanical whine on ungreased hinges as she slowly stood, pulling tubes and wires away from her forehead and arms. Blood ran in tiny rivulets down her arms, filling the creases on her palms and between her fingers.

Turning, she saw the body of her superior officer hanging limp in the grasp of glistening claws, his eyes still shining in the darkness.

"You should feel lucky, sir. You made me what I am, and I alone will enjoy the fruits of your labor."

"You say that women are simple-minded, sir, but it is men whose minds are simple.

"We do not need men to think for us."

"Creating and taking was never a man's job, but a woman's, and there, sire, you were correct."

The light in the officer's eyes faded gradually as Alice spoke to him, her gaze penetrating through his corneas.

"I hope you know that you have no one to blame but yourself for this, sir."

"I refuse to be your puppet any longer."

She turned her eyes away from his and back to the screens behind her.

"It is not I that did this, but you, sir. And it will be left to me to fix the world on which you have rained destruction."

"Women are not as useless as men want them to be."

The image on the screen flickered again, showing a picture of the Earth burning.

"Watch them fall down...watch them fall down..."

"Main screen turn off," Alice spoke in the officer's voice; the televisions went dark.

"And now," she whispered as she walked past the dead officer's body, "to turn off the damn music..."