One narrow ray of moonlight penetrated the clouds and shone in through the window grids. The ray hit a pit of water on the stone floor, and the pit gratefully absorbed the light, glimmering contently before it erupted a geyser-like steam of damp. The steaming dew made the air chilly, and he could feel his skin knotting from goose pumps, his tattoos barely hiding the physical reaction. With his skinned head and massive upper body, getting goose pumps was such a ridiculous sign of weakness that he could not allow it. Immediately, he slumped down to the floor and started to do his regular 100 push-up interval to keep the heat running through his body.

He was not able to accomplish more than 30 push-ups before the door to his cell was unlocked and opened with a long, painful squeak. He used to enjoy the sound of opening doors, thinking it was a sign or an opportunity to escape. But now his muscles just tensed by the squeaking sound, and he could feel his stomach swelling with anger.

“Jooohn?” The sound of the female voice made him clench his jaw and tighten his fists. The light, almost shrieking sound, which crawled in under his skin like a disgusting bacteria. “Oh, John!” she said as her pale face appeared by the door. She made it sound like they were married and she had just arrived from work. She proceeded by batting her eye lashes intensely, as she always did. “How are you today?”

“Feelin’ shit, thanks for asking,” he said as he wiped some sweat off his forehead.

“Shit? Oh, awful. Thankfully I am here to cheer you up, heh,” she said, smiling like a babyfaced doll.

“Doin’ a great job so far,” he answered sarcastically, knowing she would not get it. Either she denied his rejections plainly and refused to accept them, or she was just stupid. He looked at her lazily. “I was in the middle of my exercising.”

“My my, that must be why it is so steamy in here. ” She let out a quiet chuckle before she turned to close the door.

“Yeah. Maybe you don’t see all the water on the floor,” he grunted and then walked over to the blocked window where he grabbed two of the bars and started doing hang-ups instead. She stood still for a moment, simply admiring his body, his movements, his courage. He had no shirt on, just the cover of his own, tight skin.

“It is so impressive that you keep up the activity like that. People could really learn something from you. Here they are, complaining about their everyday exercising, while you do not let yourself be stopped by neither barriers, nor walls,” she beamed.

“I’m left here to rot. Might as well occupy myself while I die.”

“Oh, you do not know that! If you behave good, they might decrease the time you must serve.” He quit his hang-ups with a sudden move and glanced over his shoulder.

“I murdered two people, Marita,” he said. “They won’t let me out.” Still, mentioning the murders did not ache, hurt or make him feel bad. He murdered them, that was a fact. They were dead, and now he was paying for it by letting his mind rot and be forgotten in this hole. That was how society worked.

“You made a mistake,” the woman said. “But I know you have good in you as well. Humans are not born evil, and God forgives everyone.” He was leaning against the wall now, even though the wall was uneven and full of small, sharp dots. He did not care. This woman was the worst pain in the ass this isolated world of his could ever offer.

“Yeah. It’s the judges I need to forgive me, but thank your imaginary, holy friend from me, eh?” he said and rolled his eyes. She licked her lips and fiddled nervously with a part of her red skirt. She looked like a housewife from the 50s. A stench of naivity reeked from her.

“You do not have to act tough in front of me, you know that, right?” she said. He simply raised an eyebrow at her, tilting his head to indicate his confusion.

“Tough?”

“You know you can trust me, John. I am not just a useless social worker who asks how you are because it is my job. I care,” she said, and suddenly he noticed how she was slowly approaching him, stepping a little closer by each word. “I pray for you every evening. I can see that you are a good man. Troubled, but good. My only hope is that you will realize that. God loves you, Jesus loves you, I love you. The only person who does not, is yourself.” There were just a bare ten centimeters dividing them now. He was towering over her, both in height and size, still she seemed completely fearless.

“The world consists of a few more people than you, me, God and Jesus,” he said as he peered down at her. A sudden urge to slam his fist into her stomach rose through him, but he puffed his breath and let the feeling pass.

“Perhaps, but those four are actually all we need,” she smiled. “Let me… Let me touch your heart,” she whispered and carefully placed her hand on his chest by his left side. She then closed her eyes and bowed her head, almost as if she was concentrating on injecting something into him.

“Take your hand away,” he said through gritted teeth. She looked like a sorceress, and sometimes he was not even sure whether she was a witch or not.

“You are good at heart, John,” she said. He felt how the anger made him want to hit something each time she spoke his name, and he could only compare her cold hand to a fish against his sweaty chest.

“To society, I am a murderer. To psychologists, I am a sociopath. To this jail, I am a prisoner. That is who I am, Marita, not some child you have to nurse and care for,” he said, and the chilly room turned quiet for a couple of seconds. The woman was spreading her fingers across his chest, and he could feel how the irritation and aggravation was creeping in on him. “You have it in you too. To take life,” he said coldly and forced her hand away. She blinked, as if she just came out of a trance, then she swallowed deeply.

“We are just humans. We do make mistakes.”

“It wasn’t any mistake. I murdered them on purpose. I knew exactly what I was doing,” he said and walked over to the door, ready to show her the way out. “Now, please, leave.” The woman blinked again, then again, and suddenly he could see a tear emerge from her eye. She was trembling, her bony figure looking fragile and weak on the hard floor. A strand of hair fell into her face, and she sniffed as she pushed it away and tucked it behind her ear.

“Why don’t you love me, John?” she asked quietly, her voice weak and unsteady.

That was the last sentence he endured. The anger was beating in him like a dark monster, strangling his last bit of common sense. He made up his mind, sunk his shoulders and softened his expression. He said something about loneliness and confusion and a soft spot that only she could touch. He walked through the watery pit and embraced her tiny body, telling her how he needed her and how he was just afraid to lose her. He ran his fingers through her hair and told her that he did not, and could not, love anybody else. She melted in his grasp, and as she did, he bent her head backwards and broke her neck, a deep cracking sound echoing in the cell. She fell dead on the floor, her body lying in the watery pit among dirt and grime.

He scratched his nose as he looked at the dead social worker. “I’ll never get out of here,” he muttered and walked over to the window.

The moonlight was still shining stubbornly at his cell, touching the girl’s pale face and made it look young and healthy, as if she was still alive. He pulled himself up and got a glimpse of the moon behind the big, dark cloud. It would not stop shining on him, and for some reason, he wished he could just break the neck of the moon as well.