

Loyalty

A glass door slammed. Footfall faded.

He wondered what he'd done wrong. This time it had seemed different somehow. Her voice, her temperament, her manner, they had looked... stronger. More aggressive. She had cut deeper than usual. Would she be alright? He didn't think he'd done anything particularly wrong. After he'd told her he had just sat there, motionless, his limber thighs against his chest, his dainty arms wrapped around them. He'd looked at the space between his knees and how his hands framed that space just right to make a triangle. He'd stared at that, like usual, while she went off on him. He'd wondered if he could make a square with his knees and hands, and then he managed to make one. A pentagon had seemed out of reach, however. His mind had then wandered to his dog and where she was. Probably outside in the sunshine, running around and being fucked by the local stray again. He had that ugly gray fur, but somehow still seemed charming. Kind of like me, the boy thought. I wonder if I'm charming too. And-

She came back.

Carefully, his eyes poked out, perusing the situation. She was right next to him. She pulled his head up by the hair, his eyes quickly shut as he followed the commanded motion. Slap. Slap. Slap. Slap. Was she- Slap. She was done. His scalp burned even after she let go. He waited until the ringing left his ears. It didn't seem like she was here anymore. His weak limbs slowly pulled him up. A quick run to the bathroom sink, he washed his face of the tears and dried it tenderly with the crusty old towel. He extended his head out into the corridor, looking for any sign she was coming back again. His eyes perked up, his ears sharp. Nothing. This was different, too. He looked on for hours, days, weeks. Nothing. He ventured into the corridor, his hand on the aluminum wall, giving him courage and curiosity at the same time. The darkness was quickly engulfing him, urging him on, pulling him in. His shallow breath quickened and - he peeped into her room. She wasn't there. He turned around, half expecting her to have been behind him, and quickly pattered back down the corridor, lest he be discovered. He entered the living room again. Where was she?

He looked outside through the doggy door. His neighbors were grilling stray meat again, and the heavenly smell wafted in. He quickly caught his saliva before it hit the floorboard. She wasn't outside either. Maybe I should just wait here.

Weeks later, the police found him there¹ - tasting cigarette smoke from the couch.

Guido Petri / Sid

¹ A later autopsy revealed he had gone out with his boots still on.