snapshot, freezeframe

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by tangential

Summary

tenna goes somewhere very, very special while dying.

What he came back to was a feeling of frigidity.
Tenna was completely frozen, unable to move even a smidgen.
Then, the pain rolled in. Earthshaking waves of raw nauseating pain radiated up his entire body, particularly concentrated on his shoulders and head, only continuing to immobilize him. He tried to vocalize, call out for anything or anyone listening, but he could barely open his mouth. All that came out was a quiet whine overtaken by static.
It'd also come to his attention by this point he was rapidly bleeding out, oil spilling out of the lacerations trailing through the sockets of where his arms used to be. It had completely soaked his side as well as the ground underneath him. His carnage was a stark contrast to the soft white snow underneath, dampened by his oil staining it black. Easy to spot, if anyone were to look.
He'd realized by then this was likely how it was going to end, and it was unlikely he'd survive.
With whatever strength he could muster, he curled into himself, pulling his knees up to his chest. He tried to give himself even the slightest bit of comfort he could in this predicament. And he cried, being the little solace he could give himself in the wake of betrayal and bloodshed. Tears ran down his screen, breaking through the cracks and hitting the snow underneath him.He caught glimpses of a dark blue sky above when his vision allowed it, the grain overlaying his vision almost making it look starry.

It was a beautiful place to die, at least.

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The artificially starry snowy landscape cut out abruptly, replaced with endless darkness. Immediately, he noticed the pain was ripped away when his vision was, although he was still a bit teary-screened. It was also very atypical for him to be conscious when blacked out like this. But nothing about this was typical, the shade of his surroundings was unusual, darker than dark, enshrouding him entirely in an embrace that almost felt... caring. Maybe it was his imagination.

"H- Hello?" He called out, in any hope there was something out there. That this wasn't all it was, all it ever would be, him alone in the dark forever...
Or, atleast, until he died anyway.

Maybe this was death. Maybe he pushed everyone away, including any chance at peace post-mortem. This is what he deserved, isn't it? Alone and crying in the dark, ripped to shreds because of one decision done in desperation.

A footstep emerged from further down. He realized there was nowhere to run to, and if he wasn't dead yet, he was about to be.

A stark white figure pierced the darkness, warping it to their control. They seemed to recognize him, though Tenna wasn't sure if this truly was anybody, or just the figment of a dying automaton's imagination. They approached Tenna with their hands out regardless of the answer, and, despite his better judgement, he let them come near.The figure helped him up into a standing position, one hand on his back to counteract his offset balance, the other in

front in case he toppled.They seemed to be speaking to him, but in a way he couldn’t understand. It only resembled garbage noise.
“I... I Can-t- understand you. I’m sorry...” His voice came staticky and warbled on its way out, probably from the attack. He hoped, because he didn’t like the other answer. The possibility he was always this pathetic and weak, and that anything else was a facade. He tried not to think about it.
The figure nodded deeply, as if understanding, placing their other hand on Tenna’s head in between his antenna. He heard a shock, and Tenna flinched back like it would hurt, but it was painless. All it really was was cold.

“IS THAT BETTER?” The figure’s voice was boisterous and crackly, but held no tone of aggression. Just honest curiosity.“Y- Yes, I can hear you now. Thank you.”“GOOD TO HEAR.”

The two hushed themselves quiet, but many things hung on Tenna’s mind....

“A- Am I, ... dead?”
“NOT QUITE.” *That's... reassuring.* Tenna thought to himself, not entirely sure if he was being sarcastic or not.
“IF THE PROPHECY HOLDS TRUE, YOU WILL BE.”
The figure recalled, “THE LORD OF SCREENS CLEAVED RED BY BLADE.”
“THAT IS WHAT IT FORETOLD.”
They took a pause.
“AND YET, YOU ARE SHROUDED IN DARK, HERE, WITH ME. SPEAKING, BREATHING, WALKING, OPERATING AS YOU SHOULD DESPITE THE ODDS.”

“HOW VERY, VERY INTERESTING.”

The figure had turned themself towards Tenna by that point.
“I don-t... really. know much. about... that.” He was really struggling to get the words out.
The figure cocked their head.“The proph-ecy. I was, I was never told... about that part.”
“I AM AFRAID BETRAYAL IS BEST TAKEN COLD.”

A mirror of the dark world, perhaps reality as Tenna would declare it, rippled itself past the smog. He couldn’t figure out if the figure had done that or not.

An arm and pointed hand was raised.
“THERE YOU ARE.” His body was completely shut down, limp and curled into himself in the snow. His arms were strewn far away and behind his body, which was coiled in a black oil. The splotches on the ground almost resembled wings, sprouting from his upper back and stretching themself outward and up.

Tenna wasn’t sure what to make of it. He’d heard a few stories before of seeing yourself in third person, an out of body experience they’d call it, but it was never described to be anything like this. Seeing his corpse through a hole in the void with a monologuing stranger to his side, it was hard to believe to put it lightly. But it was harder to believe this is something he’d imagine.Speaking of the stranger, he should probably tune into what they were saying...

“IS THE PROPHECY WRONG?”
Tenna wasn’t sure how to answer that, nor if they even wanted an answer. Maybe it was rhetorical. He was missing some context after all.
“YOU APPEAR TO BE ALIVE. UNSTABLE BUT CONSCIOUS.”...
“DO NOT MIND ME, JUST MUSING TO MYSELF.” Well, that answers that.
Although, one question that held itself high in Tenna’s head remained unanswered and even more unclear. “Who... a-ar-e you?”

“A SCIENTIST. FORGOTTEN TO TIME. MAYBE A MAD MAN. DEPENDS WHO YOU ASK.”

The stranger seemed to be laughing to themself. A humble, but hearty chuckle. “IT SHOULD NOT CONCERN YOU. I MEAN NO HARM, I AM JUST AN ONLOOKER.” That claim was proving to have some weight to it. Tenna was in a very precarious position, and in a quite fragile state, but this stranger had done nothing but help him. They could have easily taken him out with no effort, and yet... They were keeping him company.
“... Tha-ank yo*-u*.” He chose not to worry about how glitched out his voice had been. It was pretty reasonable to assume his chest had been damaged during all of that, and since he really doubted anyone would come back to save him... He’d best get used to it and not fret the small details.

“I SHOULD BE THANKING YOU. YOU HAVE BEEN A WONDERFUL EXPERIMENT.”
“Wh-what do you*-*” Tenna’s voice gave up on him, despite his numerous questions. *What do you mean by that? Why do you sound like you’re preparing to leave? Where are you going?*
The stranger shook their head, a smile barely visible.
“YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR ROLE EXCELLENTLY. IT WAS VERY PLEASANT TO MEET YOU FACE TO FACE. BUT
THIS IS NOT YOUR FATE.”

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Suddenly, Tenna is brought back to the dark world, packed into the snow once more with his body roaring at him in anguish.
And there were footsteps again.

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