

Right here waiting for you

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Autumn just had started and on most parts of Neopia there still were a few warm and sunny days. The floating island however showed typical autumn weather at its best - a dull grey sky and rain. Garven Hale was walking through the wet streets of the Darigan Citadel. His thick fur was protecting him from the coldness but when wet it was unpleasantly heavy. But it was just a mere thing. For him he would bear far more than that.

"After you are one of Tandrak's friends I thought you should know. Don't worry, he's alright now."

If a phone call from Vickles started like this he immediately knew that something terrible had happened.

There had been an accident with a Clockwork Yooyu. As Layton said Tandrak had been recovering very fast but he still suffered from amnesia.

Krawk Island still would have had friendly matches against other teams but if Hale had to decide between his career and Tandrak he didn't even have to think about it for a second.

Dasher was pissed when he had heard that the new team captain just chucked in his job and left the duty to him to either find a substitute or get back into the team himself but he didn't care about that too much right now. Besides he didn't plan to stay away for months. He also had no reason to fear about his job because he was too much of an ace as goalkeeper to be thrown out immediately when he got his own way just once.

Right now he was searching for the street Tandrak was living in. He already had been sent home from hospital after there was nothing more the doctors could do for him. His memory should recover on its own.

He finally was standing in front of the right house. Dark like all the others around. Hale could never imagine to live in the Citadel for longer. He needed sun, the sand under his feet and, most important, the sea around him and not several hundred meters under him.

The pirate rang the doorbell and only had to wait a few seconds until a very well known and beloved Gelert opened the door. Tandrak gave him a sceptic look.

"This time someone I know for real or just another fan who wants to take advantage of my amnesia and tries to be close to me?"

"Garven Hale, captain o' th' Krawk Island team."

"Ah, I have heard our teams normally rather have friendly competitions on the field

than battles for the win."

"Aye, an' we two are ... are friends for a few years now."

Hale wasn't too sure if starting with the truth immediately was a good idea. He never had been a slow beginner - back then he started their relationship by pushing the other against a wall and kissing him, but back then he had nothing to lose while now in the worst case he could lose the love of his life.

"That's good...at least I think so..." Tandrak still sounded unsure but then quickly shook his head. "Sorry for letting you stand in the rain the whole time. Where have I left my thoughts again? Maybe on the training field where the Yooyu exploded right in my face. Come in."

Hale's first thought when he entered the house was, 'No wonder that Tandrak always is in such a dark mood.'

The inside was much like the outside, mainly in black and purple, but at least it was dry and warm and as soon as the Bori's eyes got used to the dim light he saw that there also were a lot of other colours he at first just had thought to be black.

"I'm sorry that everything is so dark but I can't turn the lights on. Too much brightness is still making my head hurt."

"Ah, I don't mind that too much. Yer recovery 's more important than my sight on yer furniture. Ye know, I'm glad that ye've been able to recover that fast. Could've been a lot worse."

Tandrak smiled. "Well, people tend to see me as weaker as I actually am. But I think that I also was very lucky. Layton told me that we already had to search for a new goalie because of an accident with a Yooyu. It's still burning but my fur can cover most of the scars that will remain and I also hope that my memory will come back soon if people just tell me enough about what I should know."

The rest of the day Hale spent telling Tandrak what he knew about him and a lot about what had happened during the past Cups. Only about their time together he talked less. He still wanted to wait until Shaye knew him better before telling him the truth. And until that time he still had to do as if they were friends only.

It just had been two months since the Cup had ended and they had said goodbye thinking that they wouldn't be able to meet each other before the next summer but now Hale was able to spend each day with his love again. The only difference was that they now were talking more than ever before. And that he had to give Tandrak time to fall in love with him again.

The two were walking through the streets of the Citadel. This evening the sun was shining for a change though there were still clouds and it was still quite cold. After days Hale now finally decided to mention Tandrak's former friend Terr. This time had been the darkest part their relationship had to get through and even if the Bori knew how much pain it once had been for his love and better not wanted to tell him it was part of his life nevertheless and another step in bringing back his memory.

"He was the guy who raped me, wasn't he?" Tandrak suddenly asked.

Hale didn't give him an answer at first. He was surprised that the Gelert knew about it and somehow shocked how emotionless he was asking it.

"Aye, but where d'ye know that from?"

"Layton. It's a strange feeling. I know what had happened to me once and I also think it was a lot of pain I had been through. Not just the thing with Terr, also during my life as a street kid. But everything feels so far away as if it had happened in another life and not in the one I'm living right now. They are stories and though sad they just

remain stories."

The pirate nodded but didn't know anything to say. After so many days spent with his friends Tandrak knew nearly everything about his past life but only because they had told him. The more days Hale had spent with him the more he had lost hope that he would ever remember again. Besides the longer his amnesia had lasted the more depressed and silent he had gotten. But he never had sounded so emotionless like right now.

They walked through the streets in complete silence for a long time. Hale just wished he could do more to help the other. Tandrak's depression and the growing assurance that their relationship would forever be like it never had existed were hurting.

Without noticing they had reached the edge of the Citadel and now could look over the ocean and at the sunset. After such a long time in the dark city the light was hurting in the pirate's eyes although the sun was half covered in clouds and he turned to the Gelert to see if he was alright for the light might hurt him even more. The Draconian was just standing there with eyes closed, breathing in deeply the sweet salt sea air and for a second Hale had a picture in his mind he had seen just three months ago when he had been walking to the Altadorian bay with Tandrak and they were standing at the edge of the wood watching the sunset. After a few more seconds the Gelert whispered, "I have the feeling as if Altador is lying behind me although I know it's not. This already had happened, not too long ago. We both were standing close to the beach and watching it." He shivered. "But it was a lot warmer. I can even feel that damn coldness through my coat."

"Wanna take mine?" the Bori offered. "Have taken it with me but don't need it because of my thick fur."

But there also was something different now that was warming him from the inside. It had been the first time Tandrak had remembered something no one told him and it was something that had to do with the two of them. There was still hope left.

"Oh, thanks a lot." He put it over his own coat, then looked at the sunset again. "If it wouldn't be so cold and look so much like rain I would feel like I'm back in Altador."

"Aye... me too", Hale said and still couldn't take his eyes off the Gelert. His thoughts were still at the night at the beach and suddenly a whispered "I love ye, Shaye" came from his lips. It was out before he could hold it back but it already had been held back for too many days and already had been struggling too hard to be said.

"W-what?"

The Draconian turned his head. His flabbergasted look told the pirate that he had heard exactly what he had said and that he now had no other choice anymore than moving forward.

"It ... 'tis true. That's th' only thing I haven't told ye so far 'cause I was afraid of yer reaction, 'cause I feared I could do more harm than good. We're ... more than just mateys."

"No, it can't be", Tandrak shook his head and made a step back. "My team mates told me that I'm a ladies man. That so many girls are waiting in line I should lead a ladies in waiting list."

"They only see the screaming fangirls waiting in line but none of them ever had been your girlfriend."

The Gelert made a few more steps back.

"Don't you think Layton would have told me if it was that way? He told me that my only experience with a man had been with Terr and he did it to harm me. I thought I could trust you."

Hale didn't follow him. Coming closer could be a big mistake now but it already had been a mistake that he even had started speaking. The little bit of hope was fading with every second and he had no clue what to say or do to still save the whole situation, to make Tandrak believe him.

"I'm tellin' the truth an' harmin' ye is the last thing I ever wanted."

"I'm not sure what to believe anymore." He slowly shook his head but didn't stop backing away. "I ... I only want to be at home ... alone." He turned tail and ran away.

The pirate was still staying where he was. He thought the time finally had come to tell him the truth but he never had been so wrong. Pain filled his heart. Was there now even the smallest piece of hope left that Tandrak would believe Hale never wanted to do the same as Terr did?

He had remembered the sunset at the Altadorian beach...

Tandrak leaned against the door and slowly slid down until he was sitting at the floor. The thoughts were spinning around in his head. It couldn't be... If it really was true Layton would at least have mentioned it but he just had said there were a lot of girls who loved him. Loved him... Had he ever mentioned if Tandrak also loved any of those girls back? Fangirls... Of course, he was a famous player, he had a lot of them but he never truly loved one of them. But why did none of his friends know about a relationship between him and Hale then? Why didn't he possess anything that remembered him of this love? Besides he would never dare to fall in love with a man. Yooyuball was his life and if it ever came out that he was in love with another male player it would cause the greatest scandal in the Altador Cup history and affect his career. For a few seconds he blankly stared into the darkness. Yes, it was a good reason to keep that love a secret, even from friends.

He wrapped his arms around his body and now noticed that he was still wearing Hale's coat. Something deep inside of his mind wanted to break free, screamed "Remember me", but as soon as he tried to grab it it disappeared again.

Somebody was knocking at the door.

"Who's there?" Tandrak asked although he already thought he knew it.

"Shaye? 'Tis me. I only came to talk t'ye. Ye don't even have to open th' door if ye don't want to."

Should he open? Part of him said yes, part of him no. The no part won.

"Okay, you can talk, I will listen. But don't await too much."

"Well, first of all I wanted to make sure that I'm not like Terr at all. I slept with ye for fun not to harm ye and made sure it was fun for ye as well. I would even give my life to prevent ye from harm. It would have been never a problem to me to freely tell the world who I am in love with but 'twas yer decision to keep it a secret. I'm sorry that I was keepin' it a secret now as well but I was afraid that ye wouldn't believe me and stay away from me from the beginning. When ye mentioned ye could remember the sunset in Altador I hoped 'twas the right time but I guess I was wrong. But still I don't wanna give up hope. And if yer amnesia will last for years I will stand it through with ye for years as well. I'll never let ye down."

Tandrak still sat silently and tried to calm his raging thoughts. Everything Hale said sounded so honest. He had already been through so many depressing days with him and still he was there. He also couldn't blame his friends for not staying with him all the time because they still had matches against other teams all over Neopia but then again the same counted for Krawk Island and Hale just ditched his own team to be there for him.

"Okay, I ... will think about it...", he was finally able to say.

"Take yer time and even if it will take ye years to remember I'll be right here waitin' for ye."

It sounded as if Hale left. For minutes Tandrak was staring into the darkness. Outside it started raining again and it slowly got colder. He closed his eyes and wrapped the coat tighter around his body. It smelled like sweat, leather and Yooyu. And suddenly he thought about a storage room in the colosseum that had a similar smell. He was pushed against a shelf, rough demanding lips on his. His eyes snapped open. Was it just his imagination or another memory part successfully breaking free? Something inside of him was telling him that it really had happened a long time ago. Slowly he stood up. The rain had gotten heavier. When he walked by a window he saw someone half sitting half lying against a wall on the other side of the street. He really was right there waiting. Didn't he just feel like going anywhere else or was his hope that strong that he believed Tandrak could come out to him any moment that he stayed here in the cold rain? Suddenly the Draconian felt very bad for not already letting him in when he wanted to talk.

He went outside, over to him and knelt right next to him. Hale was fast asleep. His ears twitched when Tandrak laid a hand on his shoulder but he didn't wake up. Carefully the Gelert touched his ear just because he somehow felt like it at the moment and felt the scars underneath the fur. Another part of his memory struggled to get free and finally was successful. He saw himself shooting a fire Yooyu at the goal but it hit Hale instead, burned his left ear. The Bori didn't want to visit any paramedics and used a Snow Yooyu for cooling his wounds instead. 'He still has the Yooyu', Tandrak thought, 'It's called Bob.'

Somehow he felt cold and tired and wanted nothing more than to get into his bed but on the other side he also didn't want to leave Hale sleeping outside. He gently shook him.

"Hale, wake up. You can't sleep in a cloudburst."

The pirate Bori groaned but then opened his eyes.

"Shaye... how long have ye been sittin' here? Yer soakin' wet."

"You too, that's why I wanted to get you in."

"Into yer house? For real?" He sat up. "Ew, I hate it when my fur is drenched and heavy."

"Yeah, for real. Now come."

Hale tried his best to dry his fur. The towel was wet pretty fast and he still dripped on the floor.

"What changed yer mind? Have I convinced ye that I was tellin' the truth?"

Tandrak reached him a new towel and shook his head.

"No, it was my memory. The first things I rememberd after days. I did it because I feel that this is part of my life. You're part of my life."

For a moment the Bori stared at him then a smile spread on his face and he pulled Tandrak into a hug - a very wet hug - and placed a kiss on his forehead.

The Gelert didn't back away, rather leaned in a bit closer. Shouldn't being kissed by a male feel wrong? But this was Hale, being kissed by him couldn't have been righter.

"I knew ye would start rememberin' again. And ye will also remember the rest, I'm sure. Even if it takes ye years I will stay it through with ye", Hale whispered into the other's ear.

And this time Tandrak believed him immediately.

