

Betrayal

Von Aqua111

Stumbling Tandrak ran through the corridors. He pressed his hand against his mouth. If he didn't he else would have vomited. Or started to cry.

"Hey, Shaye, what the heck..."

He had run into someone who just had come round a corner, from the voice he thought it was Elon from team Maraqua, but he neither stopped to say sorry nor even looked at the other one. All he had in mind was to get away from this damned room, and away from Hale.

Finally he had reached his room, locked the door behind him, leaned against it and slid down to the floor. He bit his lips nearly hard enough to cause them to bleed. Draconians never cried. They were drilled from an early age to never show this weakness. But right now Tandrak really had to fight the tears.

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Only minutes before Tandrak had been on the way to Hale's room. The Cup now already lasted for over a week and still they had barely seen each other aside of their encounter on the field. They hadn't even met on the day all teams had arrived in Altador which already had been strange enough but after a few more days it was as if Hale avoided Tandrak on purpose. Was he still mad about what had happened in Terror Mountain during the off-season? It had looked as if the Bori had forgiven but maybe he hadn't completely deep inside his heart.

Tandrak knocked at the door. No response but he noticed it wasn't locked so he decided to enter - after five years of relationship he didn't really see a reason why he shouldn't be allowed to simply enter the other's hotel room.

He froze on the spot when he saw the scene in front of him. At least Hale and the girl in his arms still had parts of their clothes on but it was obvious what would have followed if Tandrak hadn't interrupted.

"Fuck it; can I never have any privacy in this damn insane asylum?" Hale groaned.

"Privacy? *Privacy???*" Tandrak shouted as soon as he could stop staring and move his mouth again. "Why the hell are you fucking around with this ... this slut? Don't you give a shit about our relationship anymore?"

He didn't care if the girl - *A Faerie Zafara! Of all inhabitants of Neopia why did he have to choose one of the cutesy ones?* - witnessed their relationship crisis as long as he could burn Hale with the fire of his rage.

The pirate stood up and walked closer to Tandrak but remained out of reach.

"Open relationship, ye mean", he said with a glare. "'Twas yerself who declared it that

way by fuckin' around with thieves o' Terror Mountain."

"Kanrik was a one-night-stand. We were caught in the heat of the moment."

"Ah, yeah, o' course. And this is just a one-day-stand. I'd been horny and no one else been around to fuck."

Tandrak shivered with anger and he felt sick. His fists itched to make acquaintance with Hale's jaw. But was that scum really worth the trouble that would follow after beating a Yooyuball player senseless? Without a further word he turned around and rushed out of the room.

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The afternoon passed and still he sat motionless leaned against the door, unable to feel anything else but pain. The past scenes were running in loops before his eyes, questions hammering in his head. Why had Hale done this? What had gone wrong? Why had they sworn each other undying love a few months ago if it now was put to a sudden execution anyways? Why? ... Just a generic Why...

The sky already had darkened and Tandrak stared out of the nearest window he could see from his position, stared at the stars without really noticing them.

Something scratched at the door and when he didn't react the scratching became louder and impatient. He carefully stood up - his legs hurt after sitting in the same position for hours - and opened the door. It needed him a while to notice the Snow Yooyu to his feet. It had a Krawk Island coloured bandana around one of his ears and a sheet of paper in its arms.

"Bob?" Tandrak asked.

The Yooyu stretched out his short arms and wiggled the paper around to make sure Tandrak knew it was for him. And suddenly the Gelert felt anger boiling in his chest again. Hale wasn't facing him with whatever he wanted to say - he just wrote a note. And if he already was afraid to talk to Tandrak in person why didn't he just walk to his room and shove the note under the door or placed it somewhere else where Tandrak sure would have found it? No, he sent his Yooyu. At first he only wanted to kick the Yooyu away but a second later he already felt bad for that thought. Not that it would have hurt Bob - he once had been a Yooyu trained for the Cup after all, maybe he even would think it was funny being kicked over the corridor, just be slightly annoyed that Tandrak still didn't get it that the message was for him and started playing Yooyuball instead - but he already had let his anger out on innocent bystanders too often. He picked up Bob and took him and his message back into his room.

This time he sat down on his bed and switched on the lamp before unfolding the note. It was pretty short:

"Please give me a chance to explain my reasons. All I can say in this note is: It was childish and I'm sorry."

"Childish?" Tandrak huffed. "He really calls cheating childish?"

"Naah, ee-edge", Bob made.

The Gelert stared at him. Had he really just heard a Yooyu trying to talk? Well, why not? He knew a lot of Petpets who were able to copy language. Bob repeated the last word several times until Tandrak finally understood what he tried to say.

"Revenge?"

"Aye", Bob said.

So that was the answer to an earlier question. Hale might have said he had forgiven him but that didn't mean the wound in his heart already had healed. And he really

thought he could change anything about that by returning the pain?

"Well, after the damage is already done, why couldn't he just come and talk to me in person instead of sending a mysterious message?"

Bob stared at him with big blue eyes the quickly coiled up.

"What the... Oh, you mean ...he was afraid?"

The ball wiggled as if he wanted to nod.

Tandrak let himself fall back and stared at the ceiling. Yes, it had been better if Hale didn't show up and sent Bob instead. Tandrak surely would have blown up into his face. But what should he do now? A last rest of his anger remained but at least he wasn't boiling of rage anymore. Should he go to Hale? There was something inside him preventing him from doing so. Part of it was pride - no Draconian would crawl before anyone else; it was Hale who had betrayed him so it also was Hale who had to crawl before him. Another part was a sense of guilt - if he hadn't given in to Kanrik's seduction they wouldn't be in this situation now. But the biggest part was fear. What if Hale had decided it would be better for them if they broke up? He had written he was sorry and wanted to explain his reasons but that didn't mean he hadn't come to the conclusion they should go separate ways from now on.

Tandrak grabbed Bob and cuddled him. The Yooyu made a purring noise and somehow it was calming.

What should he do?

The alarm clock rang but Tandrak needed a while until he could force his eyes open. He had an ice cold feeling in his guts and it wasn't just because Bob was lying on his stomach. They had their second match against Kreludor, the last time they encountered it had been a painful loss and so today was important. And Tandrak went to it with a broken heart, a nagging feeling of guilt and about five minutes of sleep. What a great start. But at least his mind was set now - he wanted to talk to Hale today. Either that or he wanted to run away forever. He wrote down a note - "Meet me at the Colosseum after the KD match" - then sent Bob back to his owner.

A lot of people stared at him when he was on his way. At first he didn't pay much attention - fans weren't something unusual - but then he slowly realized there was something strange about it. Normally fans asked for autographs, screamed, followed him or tried anything else to get his attention. Of course there was the usual bunch of screaming fangirls but most other people only stared and quickly looked away when they met his gaze. A few players of other teams were among them.

"Hell, they tried to make our team look ridiculous before and since that barely worked they changed their tactic and now come up with such kind of stories", Tandrak heard Reshar rant as soon as he entered the locker room. "And of course they have to do it today because it's an important match for us."

"They can try but they won't succeed", Layton said in his usual calm manner. "We will continue fighting like winners, no matter what a trash paper writes about us." He noticed Tandrak and turned his word to him, "And I know after this crap you have enough fire to burn the Haunted Woods down but please let it out on Kreludor and not on us today."

The Gelert gave him a confused look. What was he talking about?

"Haven't your read about it? It was all on the Daily Neopets today" Layton said. "Well, I guess it's better if you don't ..."

But Tandrak already had grabbed the Daily Neopets Tormo was holding. He didn't

need to search for too long. The headline "Cup of the broken hearts" caught his eyes. He quickly flew over the long article following it. If there had been a cold feeling in his guts before they now were deep frozen. So that groupie had nothing better to do than to make everything public she had heard.

He noticed the gazes of his team mates on him. At least it didn't look as if they believed a single word of the article but they still waited for an explosion. The Tandrak outside managed to give them a crooked smile, to say "I have never read a greater shit than this" and to toss the paper away. The inner Tandrak broke down with a blood curling scream. How much more pain could he still bear?

He quickly changed his clothes and grabbed his gear.

"Alright, I'll keep your advice in mind, Layton, and will let my anger out on our opponents. Let's vaporise Kreludor."

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"It was a great match and though we might have lost there's no need to feel down", Layton tried to cheer his team up after the match. "Kreludor is the strongest team this Cup but we are the only ones to give them a worthy fight and a reason to be afraid of us. We will continue fighting like winners during the next matches and the next time we meet Kreludor we will sweep them off their feet."

At the moment it looked like he was the only one who believed in those words.

Tandrak could have slapped himself. He had been close to the goal with the Yooyu several times - so many opportunities to score and at least end the game with a draw and he had bungled them all. Secretly he thought their loss was just his fault. If he only had been in a better shape. And what made the whole thing even worse was that he met with Hale a bit later. He still was afraid of what could be decided in this talk.

"I'm off for a walk", he mumbled and left the locker room.

He had walked around the Colosseum for a while when he suddenly heard a scream.

"Oh my gosh! There he is!"

No, not them... A bunch of hysteric fangirls following him was the last thing he needed right now.

He took the nearest entry back into the Colosseum and stormed through the corridor. Behind him he heard a door being slammed open and trampling feet.

No matter which corridors he turned to, he still could hear them not too far away. It seemed like it was impossible to escape them today.

A door at his side opened, someone grabbed his arm and dragged him into a dark room. He was pushed against a large body and thick fur.

"Fuck, Shaye, 'tis insane. A bunch o' them already followed me an' I'm sure I would 'ave never escaped if I didn't toss my shirt at them. Fer a few seconds they were busy tearing that apart an' 'twas enough time to find a place fer hidin'."

For a moment Hale kept his arms protectively wrapped around Tandrak- if someone had seen them he rather would have thought the Bori had just saved the other one from a pack of blood-thirsty Grrrls and not a few fangirls - but as soon as the crowd had stomped past the door and their steps faded in the distance he let go of him again.

The Gelert's eyes now had adjusted to the darkness enough to see they were in a small storage room. The day of their first encounter - sexual encounter to be precise, but it still was the day it all started - suddenly shot through his mind. They were also

hiding in a dark storage to escape a bunch of fangirls and then... The place where everything started and - as he now feared again - where everything would end. His legs suddenly felt too wobbly to carry him much longer so he sank down and leaned against a shelf. Hale sat down beside him. Tandrak felt his gaze on him.

"Shaye..." "Hale..."

They both tried to talk the same time and now became silent again but it only needed a few seconds before Hale made another start.

"I ... I am so sorry fer what I did. At that time I didn't think 'bout th' consequences anymore. All I only wanted to do was to hurt ye 'n let ye feel th' same pain I had felt. I was such an idiot fer believin' makin' it look like I was makin' out wit' a groupie would do any good. I already thought I had lost ye 'cause o' that childish revenge."

*'Making it look like'*

So Hale hadn't even wanted to go further from the beginning.

Tandrak needed a while until he regained control over his voice and could speak.

"I have more reason to feel sorry. Since I already have been a douchebag and wildly slept around I at least should have given you more assurance that it was an accident that will never happen again and that I still loved you. But no, after two days I was going back to the Citadel and concentrated so much on training, games and my career in general that I couldn't even call you. I am the fucking idiot."

But still he wished Hale had chosen another punishment. Something that didn't hurt as much as a broken heart. Breaking all of his bones for example.

Sitting around in complete silence also didn't help. Tandrak started biting his - already sore - lips again. He felt as if he still needed to say something but he couldn't find the words. Again it was Hale who broke the silence first.

"Never would have thought she immediately would go and tell th' world what she heard 'bout us. Well, we can't make it undone now an' the people gunna remember what had been said 'bout us. But we can either make them believe everythin' th' paper wrote was just a hoax by repeatin'ly tellin' we're friends only or we deal wit' it 'n let them know 'bout our reunion or final breakup - whatever ye decide."

The last few words finally loosened his tongue and before Tandrak could control the tremor in his voice he blurted out, "I don't want this to end now. I don't care about what people will remember, I don't care about anything anymore just ... just as long as you stay with me. I don't ... don't want it to be over. I ... don't want to lose you."

His voice faded when Hale put his hands on Tandrak's cheeks. The Gelert now realised that tears he couldn't hold back anymore had been running down his face and he hated himself for this weakness.

"Same fer me", Hale said, "I might have spent most of my time grievin' or thinkin' to hurt ye the same way but deep inside my heart I knew I still loved ye."

He smiled at Tandrak's try to wipe away his tears without wiping Hale's hands away.

"Ye know, it sometimes can do a lot o' good to just allow yer feelings to break through. I barely did anythin' else yesterday."

Tandrak stopped wiping his tears and now only looked into Hale's eyes. It was too dark to see colours but he could imagine the amber glow in them.

And then he pulled Hale closer and kissed him. He did it carefully because of his still sore lips but he tried to put as much love into it as possible. As if he only had one last kiss to tell Hale how much he loved him.

"Ye still haven't told me what should happen 'bout our relationship and the publicity", Hale asked a while after they had broken apart for air. "Will we stay friends only

before other people and keep our love a secret or shall we make it public for real?" Tandrak lowered his gaze. He knew Hale was ready for it for years and only waited for him. Maybe it was already time. ... No, he still was too frightened of the idea how the people around him would react.

"I ... don't think I'm ready for a coming out ... Please, for now I want it to stay as it had been before."

Hale gave him another quick kiss. "Sure, 'tis yer own decision."

When they left the Colosseum a while later Tandrak knew for sure he didn't want to live that way forever. Sooner or later he would have the courage but for now they were facing the world as friends only again.