

Chapter 29: My Fault

Raimie

My other half spun toward the noise, stumbling to a stop as soon as he had.

At the front of the room,, a black-eyed Enforcer was casually defending herself from Hadrion's attacks with an amused smile distorting her features, after a breath, Nylion sprinted for them, releasing a portion of the power he'd accumulated at her head. Deflecting the bolt with a shadow-coated hand, the Enforcer dragged an off-center Hadrion against her chest, lightly pressing her blade against his throat, and Nylion halted, spinning his arms to keep from careening to the ground.

"Oh, good," the Enforcer said. "I wasn't sure if you cared about this one, considering how much Corruption you were consuming."

Nylion, let me out, I said. I'm better at-

"Let him go," Nylion snapped.

What was he doing? This was neither the time nor the place for him to practice with his social skills and-

"Why would I do that? If I did, you'd only kill me," the Enforcer asked. "No. Let's play hostage exchange instead. If I were to release this weakling, I'd need someone more important than him as a replacement, perhaps someone my master's been wanting to add to his collection. If said person wouldn't need to have primeancy forced on him, it would be an added advantage."

When she flashed a smile, Nylion bristled.

"Are you talking about me?" he growled.

Godsdamned bitch, you godsdamned bitch, I will KILL you, I will... no, no. Cannot do-

Were those... Nylion's thoughts?

Nyl, you should do as she's suggesting, I said. Come on. You know we could escape her clutches later, once she's let her guard down. It would be so easy...

“Why would I do as you have asked?” Nylion said. “The exchange you are proposing seems uneven, to say the least.”

Frozen in our mind, I hissed *What the HELL, Nylion?*

And Nylion blinked.

Heart of my heart. You are not asleep, he said. *You- you should not be here. If this does not go well...*

No. You listen to me, I said. *That is Hadrion, Ren’s little brother. Go with the Enforcer. We’ll be fine, and you know it. Even if we couldn’t escape from her, we have Rhylix watching over us. Once we’re captured, nothing would stop him from rescuing us, not even death.*

“I thought you cared for this one, but perhaps I was wrong.”

Tightening her grip, the Enforcer pushed her blade into Hadrion’s neck hard enough to draw blood.

Taking a jerked step forward, Nylion said, “No! I will-”

But Hadrion cut him off.

“Don’t do it, Raimie! She’s going to kill me any-hrrk.”

Having punched the teenager in the throat, the Enforcer shook out her hand.

“That’s better,” she said.

Oh... I am going to DESTROY her. Godsdamned horrid bitch, just like her. All of them. I will annihilate them all!

With a slow breath out, Nylion calmly said, “What have you done with the rest of my people? Have you harmed them?”

Panic squeezed my thoughts into a pinpoint of need.

What are you doing? I shrieked. *Drop your weapons and give up! Or give me control back! I can-*

“They’re fine. I shade melded past them,” the Enforcer said. “The poor dears think that all’s well in here.”

Shifting Nylion lowered Silverblade a fraction more.

I cannot give you control, heart of my heart, he whispered. *If this goes poorly, I will not have it on your hands.*

...*What?* I said.

Ignoring the storm raging within us, Nylion said, "I will give myself into your custody as soon as Hadrion is safe in the hands of my people outside."

"Ha! Why in the *void* would I trust you enough to take the first step like that?" the Enforcer said.

"Because *I* am not like your master," Nylion growled. "When I give my word, *I keep it.*"

Holy hell, the outrage flooding from my other half... it washed over me, and I went limp beneath the deluge of it.

I was resuscitated when Hadrion's stance shifted, turning both me and Nylion cold.

"You can't give up, Raimie," he said. "You need to be free if we're to see Doldimar dead, so..."

Taking a few short breaths, he quirked a sad smile.

"Tell Ky I said I'm sorry."

Then, he grabbed the Enforcer's blade with his bare hands before using both his hold and a jerked forward body to open the artery in his neck.

"NO!" *NO!*

For a space absent time, two people controlled one body, completely in concert with one another, and the world slowed down. Hadrion slipped out of the Enforcer's grasp, uncaring of the sharp edge that was peeling away his skin. Behind the woman, the room's door banged open, revealing Kylorian's anxious face, and the Enforcer's eyes widened.

Screaming, Nylion and I shot Daevetch at the woman's legs, and everything below her knees disappeared. She dropped to the floor, and we leapt on her, vaguely aware of Kylorian sprinting past us. We swung Silverblade in violent curves above our head and into her flesh over and over and over and over and over and over...

When the average pace of time resumed, the Enforcer was meaty paste beneath Nylion's boots, and our throat was rubbed raw.

This is... my fault, my other half haltingly said. If I was better... or if I had seen-

No, it's mine, I breathed. I was supposed to protect him.

The sobs behind us could only be Kylorian, and we let his grief speak to our sorrow.

We always do this, don't we? I said. Assume responsibility for the horrible things others do. Neither of us is to blame for... this. She is.

Nylion kicked the last intact fragment of the Enforcer's head, sending it skittering across the floorboards.

“What happened here?”

At that threatening tone, Nylion twirled in place. Kylorian was hovering over his younger brother with his sword drawn, and his cold eyes bored straight through Nylion and into me.

With his voice choked, Nylion said, “She took him hostage while I was working on a Kiraak, and before I could remand myself into her custody, he cut his throat on her blade.”

“And *why* would he do that?” Kylorian asked, taking a step forward.

Oh, shit. He was looking for someone to blame, and we were the closest target. Fucking hell, *no!* Why couldn't it have been someone else?

Swallowing, Nylion said, *What do I say?*

And despite how bad of an idea it would be, I said, *Tell him the truth. It's what he needs.*

No matter how much it would most definitely hurt us. Kylorian was the one in more pain right now. *He* needed help. Not us.

Never us.

When Nylion spoke, the words felt as if they'd been torn from me, no matter that I wasn't the one speaking them.

“He believed that I must remain free so I can fulfill that damn foretelling and defeat Doldimar.”

Alouin, how that had hurt to say... or maybe hear, echoing in this miserable place like the loudest of bells.

“So, this is your fault,” Kylorian said.

Lifting his sword's point, he advanced on us like an approaching storm, and cautiously raising Silverblade, Nylion backed away.

“I did not ask him to do what he did,” he said.

“You were supposed to *protect* him,” Kylorian roared in response.

Stopping short, Nylion went stiff, and on feeling all that was coursing through my other half, I reached for him, only to touch him too late.

“I am only responsible for protecting *one person* in this world,” he said, “and it was *not* your brother.”

Oh... hell. Oh, no. Oh...

“I'll *kill* you!” Kylorian cried.

He attacked with a ferocity that startled me, but my other half countered it with ease. Every time Kylorian jabbed at us, Nylion blocked the strike. One of them swung, and the other dodged, but as in every fight I'd ever watched him in, Nylion had the upper hand.

When he landed a glancing blow along Kylorian's ribs, he gleefully hissed, and I knew something had gone very, very wrong with him.

Nyl, I think you should let go now, I said.

Snarling, my other half rained a flurry of blows on Kylorian. The other man dodged and evaded as best he could, but he rolled his wrist too far on a final parry, which had his sword flying out of his hands.

Nyl...

Triumphantly shouting, Nylion kicked Kylorian's feet out from under him before swinging his sword toward the other man's face.

GIVE ME CONTROL RIGHT NOW!

I barely stopped Silverblade from cleaving Kylorian in two. Rolling away, he retrieved his sword, warily watching for my next attack, but instead, I flung Silverblade away from me.

"You're right!" I said. "I was supposed to protect him, and I'm sorry that I couldn't. But I *didn't* kill him. That's on the Enforcer."

"You shouldn't have killed her," Kylorian hissed.

With a nod, I said, "I should have left that for you, yes. But ultimately, the blame for Hadrion's death lies squarely at his feet. He decided to die rather than pose a liability to me, never trusting that I could save him or myself, and now, we have to live with his decision."

"How dare you!" Kylorian choked out with tears spilling from his eyes. "He did it for you!"

"And it was very noble," I said. "But it was also a mistake."

For a moment, I hoped logic might have won out over emotion for once, but as I'd thought might happen once I was finished speaking, Kylorian rushed me. I sprayed a cone of Ele at his chest, pinning him to the far wall. Now, I only needed to maintain this flow of energy until...

Oswin and my best friend burst into the room. They started to take in the carnage, but I couldn't wait for them to process the scene.

"Rhy!" I shouted. "A little help, please."

My friend jerked his head up, flicking a thread of Ele into Kylorian's eyes, and as he lost consciousness, I gratefully released my hold on white light.

“What happened?”

I wasn't sure who'd said that, dazedly stumbling toward Hadrion's older brother as I was. I didn't know how long I stared at Kylorian's sleeping face before the numbness that had overtaken me slipped away, but once it had, I slid down the wall next to someone who could have been my friend, huddling in a ball.

“Rhy? Can you-?” I asked without hope, gesturing toward the mess by the door.

After a moment, my friend said, “I'm sorry. He's long gone.”

Nodding, I banged my head on the wall. The sensation felt nice, relieving some of what was threatening to tear me into pieces, so I did it again. And again.

I didn't understand why I was so upset. Sure, Hadrion and I had been growing closer, but even still, we hadn't had many interactions with each other. During the winter we'd spent in Tiro, he'd been more Rhylix's friend than mine.

Unconsciously, I skittered my gaze toward my friend, which was a mistake. Ryvolim had assumed the distant, otherworldly look he donned when he was in the midst of fighting off a breakdown. Compared to that or Kylorian's devastation—to Ren's yet to be realized loss—what was my pathetic grief?

Hadrion's gap-toothed grin floated into my vision, tearing through me, but before I could lose myself to the storm waiting in the wings, the door opened once more.

Little didn't bother with commenting on the scene spread before him. He simply crouched and took my hand, and that single point of contact stopped me from once more smashing my head against the wall.

“I bring you good news, Your Majesty,” he said. “The Birthing Grounds are yours. The day is won.”

At this, I scanned a room full of hanging Kiraak, a mash of paste that had been an Enforcer, and the corpse that had been a friend. I crookedly smiled before anguish dragged me, kicking and screaming, into the maelstrom of its relentless hold.

Revision #1

Created 14 September 2024 01:40:36 by FatalisticFable

Updated 29 August 2025 18:29:44 by FatalisticFable