Lampyridae

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by DragonWolf

Summary

Some lost children come back eventually.

Notes

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Raz fidgeted in his seat.

Logically he knew the chair was uncomfortable but he couldn’t really feel any of it. It was old and disused, pulled out of some ancient storage room in Otto’s lab since he didn’t normally have visitors who’d stick around for long enough and really didn’t want to give up his own chair to water damage.

The man in question was talking, had been talking for the past half an hour, at speed and non stop, and maybe it was due to the fact that Raz only came to an hour ago and still felt very fuzzy on the memory front, but he didn’t catch a lot of what the man was talking about.

Or maybe he wouldn’t have understood it either way, since some of what he did catch was scientific things he only had a vague understanding of.

He didn’t feel as bothered by it as he expected. He got the main parts that he was supposed to get anyways.

A lot of it was about him. How he was something close to an astral projection but more solid, more in control, more permanent or something like that. How since he didn't have a body or a brain anymore it was bonded to water, or possibly just the idea of it. How he was probably drawing on the traces of psitanium in the area to stay together. How this was the first recorded case of this happening and it all was so fascinating, and all the science behind the new psi-portal they used was new almost untouched territory and the fact that it worked at all was proof of… something.

He didn't know what to feel. He was almost glad at that moment that most of his memories for the past two years weren't all that clear. His mind was unfamiliar, like a dusty machine left unused for a long time, but at the same time it felt raw, frayed, damaged but not healed.

Sasha left them at some point during their walk from the forest to here and Raz almost didn't notice. He'd got too caught up staring at the bright lights that he belatedly identified as fireflies and only just caught sight of the man walking a different direction from him and Otto.

He had said he had to do something, notify someone of… something. He didn’t say who or of what though, and trying to figure it out felt like it would give him a headache.

Not that he could actually have one, apparently. Or so said Otto. No nervous system and all that. Or anything physical at all.

It didn’t really sink in yet that his body wasn’t real. He didn’t think it would for a while.

He really ought to have been more distressed about it but he just didn’t feel anything. It was just odd, how the feedback it was giving him was muted, how it almost didn’t feel like he was moving when he did, but otherwise he felt nothing.

Maybe that part of him wasn’t there yet. Or maybe it was denial. Whatever. He would figure it out later. Maybe. Hopefully.

He was fine though, he thought at least. For being ‘awake’ for an hour after not being there for just over 2 years he was ok enough.

Otto was still talking, more to himself than him, typing something into some machine of his, sometimes checking on others, getting a readout on what looked very much like check paper every once in a while. He seemed really excited. It radiated off of him in waves. It was a nice feeling.

He… He missed this. He missed people, he missed Otto, and Sasha, and all the other Psychonaut agents, and his friends, and his family.

His family. Where were they even? It’s been so long, and last he remembered they hang out at the Motherlobe and questionable area? intermittently while also traveling around.

They were away on tour last time he was aware. Were they still around here somewhere, did they move on? Were they ok? How did they take… what had happened to him?

The feeling, grief or sadness or whatever it actually was, didn’t hurt as much as he expected it to.

A piece of wadded up paper flew by him and missed the trash can by about half a meter. Otto didn’t even turn around from where he threw it over his shoulder, still going through his notes, now scribbling something as he talked.

Raz stared at the paper. Sparks like fireflies danced in his mind as he reached out to it and picked it up with TK to gently toss it in the can. It landed with a muffled sound and the spectral hand of telekinesis evaporated without incident.

He was fine, all things considered. He was fine.

His actual hands were see-through. The water was clear but seemed solid, tinted a very slight purple. The feeling of touching anything was muted, there but like it was relayed to him through a wall of static, a bit like clairvoyance felt like. A bit weird but not bad.

Just. Disconnected.

He let his hands drop and his gaze wandered over the room. It looked the same as he remembered it. The constantly moving parts of the brainframe spun and slid around without any interruption, jars with brains with them wizzing by constantly.

The vague memory, years old by this point, of Otto telling him his brain would live on there someday came to mind. He laughed at the concern he felt back then. The chuckle he emitted tasted almost bitter. Take that terms of agreement.

The room was mostly quiet, the one sided conversation having died down to occasional mutters that he couldn't quite make out.

It was in this quiet that there was a sudden clunk of metal and the big sliding doors leading into the laboratory started slowly opening. Raz looked up at it. Otto dropped his papers and pencil and turned around to see who was coming in.

From where he sat shielded by the table and half of a book case the boy couldn't see who came in but he could feel them. There was the familiar solid presence of Sasha and there was someone else.

He saw them a few seconds later and locked eyes with them. The silence probably lasted a second or so but felt much longer.

Raz smiled awkwardly and raised a hand in a wave, because what else could he do?

“Uh, Hi Milla”

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Sasha was not telling her what was happening.

It was 5am, and he just came back from doing something out in the Forgetful woods and was really nervous but relieved and he wasn’t telling her what was happening and she was concerned.

Milla tried to get a hint of what it was through their link but it was like he was blocking that memory off, like it was a big secret, and while they didn’t share Absolutely Everything with each other it still put her on edge.

She asked him directly. He just said she would see in a minute, that it was longer to explain than to just see.

So there they were. En route to Otto Mentallis’ lab to see something secret.

Concerning. And kinda intriguing honestly. Exciting almost.

The building was quiet, the usual red lights flashing in the hallway as they approached the main lab entrance. The doors opened slowly, creaking ominously. The owner of the lab turned to see who’d walked in and waved at her, but as she walked further and her eyes panned across the room she saw someone else.

The figure was familiar, she’d recognize them anywhere. The half smile on her face dropped into something of a frown.

The boy locked eyes with her for a moment, smiled slightly and waved. The LED lights of the lab shone right through his hand.“Uh, Hi Milla”

He was quiet but his voice was real, if echo-y and with something else under it like wings of insects, but it was there.

“Hello, Raz?”

The boy winced, just slightly. His smile, already awkward, strained.

“So.. how’ve you been?”

His eyes were an opaque green, glowing slightly, but seemed focused, despite not having any pupils.

He didn’t seem confused, like he was actually there, aware.

“Are you ok?”

“Uh, yeah, I'm alright. It’s a bit weird ‘cause i’m like an astral projection, but also-”

He was rambling but didn’t get to finish his sentence because she'd gathered him into her arms in a hug so tight it was almost like she was afraid he'd been an illusion. Maybe she really was afraid of that. She didn't think about it because he was tangible and actually real, actually there.

He spluttered something and just. Hung there for a second before clinging to her shawl like it was a lifeline. Cold water was seeping into her clothes but she didn’t care, she wasn’t letting another child go.

“I’m sorry” He whispered into her shoulder. His voice sounded like he was crying. She held him tighter.

“It’s alright. You’re ok.” She muttered “It’s not your fault, darling”

“I missed you”“I missed you too, Raz” she’d had nightmares before, but she thought she was fine. She wasn’t. There were tears flowing down her face “I missed you”

And maybe she levitated them both off the floor in her excitement and relief. Maybe. Their boy was ok. They were ok.

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The hug lasted what felt like 20 minutes. Honestly it probably was actually 20 minutes.

He almost felt warmth. He was still cold, and it didn’t bother him because nothing like that really did anymore, it really couldn’t, no nervous system and all. Still. He was happy.

And he missed Milla. He was happy to see her.

Vestiges of grief still clung to her as they talked, and she looked so tired, but she was ok. Relief and some sort of melancholic happiness radiated from her.

From others too. Otto didn’t even bother to hide it, though maybe he was happier about all the experiments of the last few months being successful, he could never tell with that man. Sasha’s emotions were more controlled, slightly more muted, but he couldn’t hide them. Raz didn’t even have to look at him to know he was smiling stealthily.

And so the hour crept up on being 6am, and they were tired but happy. The night was just starting to give in to dawn.They would be ok. Tomorrow they’ll be ok.