Ocean Eyes

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by SilverInk

Summary

The Christian Frank — Nicolò — was handsome, in an unusual way. Yusuf could write poems upon poems about Nicolò and his bright eyes like the sea at a sunny Mediterranean beach, his reserved smiles, his strong-featured profile. He was the most beautiful man Yusuf had ever met, and now that they'd gotten past the point of trying to kill each other, Yusuf realized he was also the kindest.

But he didn't say anything to Nicolò about his feelings. Since they couldn't die, they were going to be around each other for potentially hundreds of years, and Yusuf couldn't bear to start their new life by admitting to something Nicolò didn't reciprocate. It was likely just a crush, one of the fleeting bursts of affection and fascination he so often had for people, which always eventually faded...

A newly immortal Yusuf is in love with Nicolò, but is in denial. Of course, the universe has plans for them, and doesn't let him avoid his feelings for long

Notes

Originally posted on AO3 in i think 2022 or 2021?? Part of my ADHD Joe agenda

The Christian Frank — *Nicolò* — was handsome, in an unusual way. Yusuf could write poems upon poems about Nicolò and his bright eyes like the sea at a sunny Mediterranean beach, his reserved smiles, his nobly strong-featured profile, and his gentle and callused hands. He was the most beautiful man Yusuf had ever met, and now that they'd gotten past the point of trying to kill each other, Yusuf realized he was also the kindest.

But he didn't say anything to Nicolò about his feelings. Since they couldn't die, they were going to be around each other for potentially hundreds of years, and Yusuf couldn't bear to start their new life by admitting to something Nicolò didn't reciprocate. It was likely just a crush, one of the fleeting bursts of affection and fascination he so often had for people, which always eventually faded. He hadn't known how to explain it as a young man, and he'd broken his first lover's heart by telling him he loved him on a foolish whim, believing and hoping it was true, then losing interest only a few weeks later.

He wouldn't do any of that to Nicolò.

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The first time Nicolò died at the hands of a stranger, Yusuf was terrified and furious. He killed the man who'd done it, a man who had tried to rob an elderly woman before Nicolò stepped in and made him stop, his voice quiet and confident, and his hand resting on the hilt of his sword. When the man was dead, Yusuf threw his scimitar to the side and knelt by Nicolò where he lay in the road.

Were they only invulnerable to wounds inflicted by each other? Would this be the end, now that it was someone else's blade that pierced Nicolò's flesh?

He touched Nicolò's face and realized his hands were shaking badly, and he only had time to fist them frustratedly in the cloth of his own tunic, before Nicolò was gasping back to life.

"Nico," Yusuf gasped, and then Nicolò looked up and they were clutching desperately at each other's hands and arms.

"Yusuf." Nicolò groaned low in pain as the wound in his side knitted back together, and he pressed his face into Yusuf's shoulder, panting.

When he lifted his head again, his intense eyes met Yusuf's and his hand squeezed Yusuf's bicep. Yusuf cupped his face wonderingly, adoringly, and pressed his lips to Nicolò's. Nicolò kissed back, open mouthed, and when they drew apart, they only separated far enough to press their foreheads together.

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They had to flee the town quickly to avoid being noticed, so they didn't have time to talk about that first kiss. But later, after another week or more of traveling, Nicolò kissed Yusuf again one morning when they were just barely awake. They had slept side-by-side for warmth, and Yusuf woke up with his arms around Nicolò and Nicolò's face pressed into his chest, and it felt too natural not to reciprocate when Nicolò pressed soft, lazy kisses to Yusuf's cheeks and forehead and lips.

Yusuf, still half asleep, had slept again for a little while longer, and when he woke fully and remembered what happened, he cursed himself and his foolishness. Luckily, Nicolò didn't mention it at all, just smiled and handed Yusuf the water skin and a piece of nut- and fruit-filled bread. He could only hope Nicolò had been as half-sleeping as he was and did not remember what happened.

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More than a month passed without another such incident, and Yusuf was hoping that that had been the end of it. Only two mistakes, easily forgotten. The thought made his chest fill with a heavy ache.

That night, he dreamt of the two women again. The dreams didn't come every night, still every few nights at least, and this was one of the more intense ones he had experienced so far. The Greek woman, Andromache, was lying on her back in a pile of pillows and blankets, naked, while the Asian woman, Quynh, kissed her deeply, then pressed countless more kisses down her throat and chest and stomach, and then between her legs, and Andromache was tossing her head back and moaning with abandon —

Yusuf jolted awake, a low moan catching in his throat. Next to him — it was still too cold at night for the two of them to sleep apart — Nicolò gasped quietly and pressed back into Yusuf like he couldn't help it. When Yusuf saw his face in the light of the fire, his brows were drawn tightly together.

"Did you see — ?" Nicolò asked roughly, and Yusuf nodded.

"Yes. Yes, Nicolò, come here," Yusuf said, a little nonsensically, and Nicolò turned in his arms like he could read his mind, and nearly devoured Yusuf's mouth with his kiss. Yusuf moaned and kissed him back just as hard, fisting a hand into his hair.

"*God*," Nicolò moaned, nearly a whine, "you kiss me like that, but then we never talk about it again — "

Yusuf froze, and Nicolò made a little noise of complaint, and opening his eyes. "I'm sorry," Yusuf stuttered out. "I did not think you — cared," he went on, and he sounded like an idiot,

because of course Nicolò would care. He had wanted to spare Nicolò's feelings by not promising anything he couldn't be sure of, but he'd still led him on…

Nicolò said something in Ligurian that Yusuf thought was a curse. "Of course I care, Yusuf. I care very much about how a man I kiss feels for me."

"I don't know," Yusuf told him, floundering. Almost all his arousal had vanished now. "I don't know how I feel, I've never done this before. I fear it will be too complicated, too much effort for you…"

"I'm not afraid of putting in a little effort." Nicolò still sounded upset and hurt, the words a little biting, and he lay down and turned away from Yusuf again. Yusuf, to his surprise, fell asleep again quickly.

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A few days later, just after sunset, they were attacked on the road by a band of robbers. They were both killed painfully, and Yusuf felt horribly vulnerable when he revived again, with no sign of the robbers in sight. Nicolò was still beside him, and they reached for each other instinctively.

"Nicolò, thank god," Yusuf murmured, taking Nicolò's hand. They were both unharmed, and even though he knew all of their valuables were gone now, Yusuf could only breathe a prayer of thanks that Nicolò was still with him.

"Oh, Yusuf." Nicolò gently cupped his cheek, looking into his eyes earnest and worried, and Yusuf turned his face to nuzzle into Nicolò's hand. Unconsciously, his other arm was already wrapped around Nicolò's waist, and Yusuf came to a realization that made his eyes fill with tears.

"Yusuf, are you alright?" Nicolò asked, looking worried suddenly.

"Nico, I'm so sorry, I just — "

Nicolò tilted his head, soft and curious and still concerned.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, but — " Yusuf took a deep breath, and spoke in a rush, unable to be anything but terribly honest now. "I think you're very handsome," Yusuf admitted, looking at the shoulder of Nicolò's worn tunic, "and you're kind, and I like you very much, but these things have never lasted for me. No matter how intensely I think I feel, it just fades away after a while, and I don't want to hurt you like that, but I am truly, truly fond of you."

Yusuf wiped the tears from his eyes, and resolutely *did not* look Nicolò in the face. Just hearing the way Nicolò's breath caught in his throat, and the pause afterwards, made Yusuf tense in fear or rejection.

“Can we try?” Nicolò asked softly, his fingers stroking through Yusuf’s beard, and Yusuf finally looked up and met his eyes. Nicolò’s wonderful ocean eyes were wet too, and he looked hopeful and almost pleading.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” Yusuf whispered. “I don’t want the affection I feel for you to fade, ever.”

“Oh, *Yusuf*, my darling,” Nicolò murmured and kissed his cheek. “I want to experience this, and if we end up losing interest, so be it. And if our interest and affection for each other only grows… then so be it.” Nicolò was smiling by the end, bright eyed, and Yusuf had to kiss him, first on the cheek and then on his lips.

“I want to experience this too,” Yusuf started, and Nicolò held him tighter.

“That’s all I needed to know. We can work everything else out and see where our lives take us.”

“I’m sorry I explained it so badly, before,” Yusuf whispered, leaning his forehead against Nicolò’s shoulder, relieved and astonished and happy. Nicolò only laughed and squeezed his shoulder.

“It’s alright, I forgive you,” Nicolò teased. “I wanted to be with you anyway, remember?”

Yusuf smiled and smiled, and they kissed and kissed, and slept wrapped around each other next to the fire that night. They did the same the next night, and every night after.

And a thousand years later, Joe's love for Nicky had not faded — and he still kissed Nicky every day, and held him in his arms every night.

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