Flickering Embers

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by Subspace_Adventurer

Summary

Dealing with the aftermath of the Oni invasion was brutal, especially after finding out their leader—her little brother—died in the process.

Or, Nya recounts the fallout of the Tornado of Creation.

Happens before Reality Check

The Tornado of Creation certainly packed quite a punch, Nya thought as she pushed herself off the ground. Looking around at the destruction dealt to the monastery by the Oni attack, she watched as the others reached various levels of consciousness.

Her eyes stopped on Jay. *Her* Jay. *Her Yang*. He caught sight of her and she ran into his arms, breathing a sigh of relief. “We’re alive!” A tightness in her throat threatened to choke her up, but that only made her hug Jay even tighter. “We’re alive.”

Not too far from them, Cole sat up and rubbed his head before surveying the damage. “Kai!” He suddenly called out the fire ninja’s name, bolting across the courtyard toward a large fallen beam, and Nya watched as the earth ninja pushed the heavy wood off of her brother and helped him to stand. She sighed in relief when he brushed himself off uninjured and she stepped out of Jay’s embrace.

Zane was on his feet by now and had made his way toward the guys. That meant everyone was up except…

“Where is Lloyd?”

At the nindroid’s question, everyone scanned their eyes over the remaining debris until a pair of green legs were spotted underneath a pile of what used to be the monastery gate. “…oh no…”

Kai, Cole, and Zane all frantically ran over to the splintered wood and carefully moved the pieces off of their leader. As soon as there was an opening, they carried him out from the immediate danger and laid him on the ground a short ways away. Jay and Nya joined the others as her brother gently shook Lloyd. “Lloyd? Lloyd, buddy, wake up!” A sob choked in his throat and Nya’s heart broke to hear it. “…please?”

The green ninja didn’t react to any of the stimuli, and Nya grabbed hold of her yang’s arm like it was a lifeline as she watched the others’ fruitless attempts to wake him up. They couldn’t lose another brother, not after all they had been through! They had just beaten the Bringers of Doom, for crying out loud; they were supposed to be celebrating together! He couldn’t be… Zane’s death had taken a toll on them all, but because he was a nindroid he had been able to come back! Lloyd, however… Lloyd was only human… If anything actually happened…

She vaguely heard herself say something under the turmoil of her mind and her grip tightened as Cole began calling out for Wu. As much as she wanted to look away, she couldn’t help but stare at his unmoving frame, hoping to catch a finger twitch or some other faint sign of life.

There was none.

Master Wu soon appeared by his nephew’s side and grabbed the limp wrist, feeling for a pulse before slowly shaking his head. “There is nothing that can be done.”

Nya's world shattered. It couldn't be true. He had to be okay! He was just taking a long time to wake up!

Right?

She choked out a sob as her vision distorted from gathering tears. She broke away from Jay and knelt down to brush a stray strand of hair out of his face, then moved her hand to caress his still-warm cheek. Streams of tears rolled down her face and dropped heavily onto the stone courtyard beneath her, and her mind couldn't help but go back to that first time they mourned one of their own.

It wasn't fair… hadn't they already suffered enough?

The weight of a hand on her back brought her to the present again just in time to see a single golden petal gracefully drift between the ninja, passing over Lloyd before dancing into the sky. Her hand began to tingle and she quickly removed it from the still figure, gasping as a green energy began to surround the blond like a shield.

Several other sharp inhalations were heard as they all watched his bright, vigorous power spread from his head down to his feet before condensing above his heart and disappearing. Shaking herself out of her stupor, Nya quickly reached out to Lloyd's neck and felt for a pulse. It was there! Weak and barely noticeable, but present where it had not been previously.

Their sensei felt it as well, having been holding on to his nephew's wrist the entire time, and his eyes sharpened with urgency. "His heart has restarted, but he does not appear to be breathing! Zane, grab the medical kit and prepare to assist with CPR! Nya and Jay, find a working vehicle! We need to get him to the hospital immediately!"

The next few minutes were a blur as the courtyard exploded with a flurry of activity and everyone spread out to do their respective tasks. Lloyd's Ninja Nightcrawler was the only vehicle left in the hangar, and while Nya was thankful that it was a fast vehicle, she hoped it would be able to make the trip as it had not been fully repaired yet since they got it back following Garmadon's defeat.

Kai and Cole soon burst into the room with Lloyd on a stretcher between them and Zane close behind. The nindroid grabbed the green ninja and settled into the retractable rear seat while Kai jumped into the driver's seat. As soon as they peeled out, the rest of them boarded the Bounty and followed as fast as the flying ship would allow.

The trip was agonizing. Nya felt so powerless, sitting here piloting instead of being there with her little brother. To distract herself, she tried to think about how the others' trip was going. She imagined Kai racing through the streets of Ninjago City, breaking at least a dozen different traffic laws, before skidding to a stop in front of the Ninjago City Hospital. She could envision him barging into the emergency room lobby, screaming for a stretcher while Zane stayed in the car continuing CPR. The medical staff would probably pick up the pace after hearing that it was the Green Ninja in danger, and he would get admitted immediately. They would get him situated and hook him up with tubes and wires and whatever else they do with critical patients, and then the waiting game would start.

The all-too-long flight finally ended and they soon arrived at the hospital. They rushed to the private waiting area where Kai and Zane had been told to stay and Nya immediately crashed into her brother with a tearful hug. He returned the gesture and they stayed wrapped in each other's comforting embrace for several minutes before breaking away.

It was a long few hours before a doctor finally came in and explained the situation. "It's one of the strangest things I've encountered in my entire career. I won't sugar coat things; for all intents and purposes, he should be dead. Complete organ failure with little to no brain activity, a sure sign of biological death. But for some reason his element seems to think that he's not done yet, because it's keeping his heart pumping." The man shook his head in disbelief. "We believe it may be trying to restart other organs too, but we have him on life support in the meantime."

Kai, who had been staring at the doctor and listening with undivided attention, hugged himself as if the news had sapped all the warmth out of him. "…what exactly does all this mean?"

The doctor sighed heavily. "I'm no expert on the medical effects of elemental powers, but while it may be stabilizing his body, without brain activity he's essentially in stasis. If the Green Ninja is still in there, he's going to have to pull through on his own. We've done all we can."

The silence was palpable as they all processed this information. On the one hand, there appeared to be hope of him eventually recovering physically. On the other hand, would he ever recover mentally? No brain activity? Why would his element, strange mystery that it was, try to keep his body alive if his mind was already gone?

The doctor's voice brought Nya out of her thoughts as he flipped through papers on a clipboard. "We'll keep him in the ICU for a few days to monitor his condition, but if there are no significant changes he'll be moved to a special long-term care room to make visitation easier. With everything that just happened, the least we can do is give his team the ability to see him anytime."

As the man slightly bowed and turned to leave, Master Wu's voice trembled as he made a request. "…may I see my nephew?" Nya had never seen the sensei so emotional, so…broken before. It was unnerving seeing him vulnerable like this.

A small nod bobbed the doctor's head as he gestured for the old man to follow him. "Visiting hours are almost over, but there should be time for one person to see him." They both left the room, and about ten minutes later Wu reentered the room somber and silent. The mood hung in the air like a thick fog, and it wasn't until they had boarded the Bounty that all the questions finally spilled out, voices all sharing the same worry underneath.

"Is it really that bad?"

"What was it like in there?"

"His element is healing him, is it not?"

“…is he gonna make it?”

Their teacher closed his eyes and let out a disheartened sigh. “…it does not bode well for him. What remains of his element is merely a fragment of its full power, and I fear it does not have the strength to affect much more than it already is. I do not know why it is intent on keeping his body alive, but all we can do now is wait.”

The Bounty remained stationed over the hospital for the next week. While the primary purpose was to stay nearby in case there were any changes in Lloyd’s condition, it also put the ninja in a position to easily help with the recovery effort following the Oni invasion while their sensei immersed himself in research. Nya was extremely grateful for the temporary distraction it provided, but her mind always managed to drift back to Lloyd. From their earliest encounters, she had never expected that she would grow to think of the scrawny, bratty kid fondly, much less as family. But through all their adventures, all their struggles and victories, that little boy had grown up and wormed his way into her heart, forever cementing himself as ‘adopted little brother’ in her mind.

She sighed as she dumped an armful of debris into a waiting dumpster, letting her gaze linger dolefully on the hospital in the distance. If he could just hang on a little longer, they would find some way to help him.

Somehow…

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