

Long Live the King

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Long Live the King

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Summary

Word broke out not too long after King Edward's passing, with an equally fast word that Graham, the winning heir, was his successor.

One of the rewards for winning the Knights Tournament was the chance to be a part of King Edward's knighthood. And as incredible as it sounded for a knight trying to find a new court to be a part of, that was not the selling point of the tournament... not really. The main factor as to why the knights competed so fiercely into winning was for the other prize. The prize of becoming the next ruler of Daventry... something usually deemed to his heir.

In truth, this felt like such a far-fetched dream, something unattainable. And yet, he won. Through perseverance, wit and compassion, Graham was the winner of the tournament.

There were days where sometimes he would wait for one of the Royal Guards to walk over and to tell him to pack his things to leave since there was a mistake, but the King would come in and remind him to breathe. There were day where Graham would forget and greet himself as Graham from Llewddor instead of Sir Graham of Daventry, but King Edward would chuckle and wait with abnormal patience while the feather capped knight frantically apologized. There were some days where he would be convinced he wasn't the winner, that he wasn't mean to win. That it should have been someone else. But Edward would just smile and place a calming hand on his shoulder, telling him that he has known no better a knight then Graham.

After all, who else could he have trusted to actually succeed in reclaiming the lost treasures?

Graham stared at the mirror in the Throne Room with his arms crossed, watching it tease him with glimpses of the future by occasionally placing the crown over his hat. It would have been somewhat funny had it not been the case that Edward was laying in his bed, ill. Instead, he felt a heavy weight on his chest watching the mirror flicker about, almost excited to show him everything.

He would be lying to himself if he did not admit that what little adventures he caught a little of excited him just a bit. After all, he did love the quests he was sent out on, seeing Edward smiling and knowing he helped the kingdom when it needed him most made him feel proud to be a knight since that was all he wanted to do: to help.

"Graham?" Royal Guard Number One's voice spoke up, almost gentle... almost sad.

The feather capped knight looked over at him, startled a little as the mirror went back to be just a reflective decor. "Yeah?"

"His Majesty would like to see you now..."

"R...right."

He followed the guard out the Throne Room, down the hallway facing at the closed door to the King's bedroom. Suddenly, it felt like his legs were slowly turning into stone just at the mere sight of it all. "Pockets." Royal Guard Number One called out in a low whisper, his hand already placed on the knob.

Graham shook his head out of his own thoughts, took a deep breath, and stepped inside the dim room.

The room itself was not nearly as grandiose as the other rooms in the castle, in fact, it felt a little warmer in here (though that might be because of the lit fire place that allowed for the low glow throughout the room). Still, he couldn't help but feel small like he stepped in on some fragile peace. Graham looked to the massive canopy bed and found the laying figure that is King Edward. He then glanced over his shoulder where Royal Guards Number One and Two stood by the now closed door, standing frighteningly still save for Number One who made a small gesture with his hand for Graham to step closer to the King's bed.

Graham took a breath and stepped closer to Edward's side, and out of respect, took off his hat and held it rather tightly. One would think after so many years under the King's employment and praise, Graham would have relaxed. But no, he only relaxed somewhat. He knew well to not step over any lines... least he wants to receive an earful from the Royal Guards (especially Number One).

If it wasn't for the fact that his chest was moving, Graham would have been convinced the King had passed, though thankfully, the King slowly opened his eyes, glancing sideways to Graham with a warm but fragile smile.

"Ah, Sir Graham." He greeted softly. "Just the knight I wanted to see."

"Your Majesty." Graham greeted with a bow, muscle memory at this point.

"Please, take a seat." Edward gestured to the wooden seat beside him. "No need to stand."

"Yes, Your Majesty." He nodded and took a seat, scooting the chair just slightly closer so he could hear him better.

"Breathe, Sir Graham."

Graham didn't realize he was holding his breath and did as such, a sliver of a smirk at the side of his mouth hearing Edward laugh but recomposing himself.

"I know these last few adventures have been... rather difficult." Edward began, speaking slowly and methodically. "Traveling all across Daventry... facing perilous challenges... yet you have done so with such... kindness. And wit. Always thinking of the... of the people first."

He forgot that word traveled absurdly fast in Daventry.

"Tell me, Sir Graham." Edward continued. "Do you perchance, remember the conditions of... of winning the Knights Tournament all those years ago?"

He wasn't sure if it was a rhetorical question or not. But based on the awkward silence that was lingering, he knew he had to speak. "I do, Your Majesty."

Edward nodded and extended his hand out for Graham, waiting for the knight to place his hand in. And as such, Graham obliged, feeling like he didn't just slightly stepped, but vaulted

over the line he shouldn't have crossed. But he noted the strong grip Edward had, almost like it he was putting forth all of his strength in that hold.

"I am so happy that you were the winner... for I see no one else I would have felt more confident entrusting this kingdom to."

"W...what?" Graham felt his heart sink, registering the King's words but unable to process what was happening.

"All I ask, is that you show that same kindness as the new King like you did as a knight. Can you promise me that?"

His throat felt tight, but since he was already over the line, he held the King's dying hand with both of his, firmly but not painfully, and nodded.

"I promise."

Word broke out not too long after King Edward's passing, with an equally fast word that Graham, the winning heir, was his successor. The Royal Guards moved around at rapid speed preparing the funeral arrangements, knowing that the attendees were those who worked for the King as well as the civilians themselves. Whether or not those in the surrounding kingdoms were going to come was still up in the air.

Graham, however, sat numb to everything. Words and his surroundings becoming a massive blur as he walked out the King's room to his own, letting his feet guide him via muscle memory until it led him to a nearby chair in his room, his hat collapsing by his side as he stared off into nothing.

King Edward was dead. His parting words were asking for Graham to watch the people. To be their new King. He was no longer a knight but a King. Their King. The new King of Daventry.

King Graham.

He kept repeating those facts over and over again but no matter how many times he did, nothing sunk in. He knew this day was coming, he knew what he signed up for when he charged into the tournament, but he simply could not grasp the new reality. He looked at his hands, just moments ago feeling the faint warmth of Edward's hands in his before it turned slowly but surely cold. How many hands did he touch that it cost them their lives?

And now he was in charge of a whole kingdom? To protect their well beings? Their lives?

Their lives.

It was all in his hands now, wasn't it? One wrong decision and it could cost someone everything. He could mean well and not even know who he has hurt, or maybe he could be so caught up that he can't help them. What then? Who... how... he went from protecting one life to now protecting who knows how many. Their lives were all in his ill-prepared hands.

The room felt like it was closing in, his chest turning around into an insufferable knot as he clenched his hands into a fist before kneeling over and gripping his hair tightly and shut his eyes that was rapidly brimming with tears as he tried desperately to calm himself.

“B...b....breathe...” Graham stuttered, “just breathe. Please just breathe...” He wasn’t fooling himself. “Breathe. Breathe. Breathe... brea... bre...” his own throat betrayed him as it slowly turning into a knot itself, making it impossible to tell himself to breathe. To be strong. But right now, it felt like his world was collapsing at an alarming rate with this new found promotion.

It was a knock on the door that stopped the room from squeezing him to death.

Graham sat up quickly trying to wipe his eyes and hide any and all evidence of... whatever just happened. “C... come in...” He permitted, even though he desperately wanted to fling himself out the nearby window.

The door opened slowly, revealing Larry and Kyle who, for once, were not stacked up on each other (probably due to the low door frame).

“Hey Gr-- erm... Your Majesty.” Larry greeted softly, walking in first as Larry stepped in shortly afterwards, closing the door behind him to allow the three of them some semblance of privacy. “We heard the news...”

Graham sagged just slightly in his chair and looked to the floor, nodding. Hearing that title just... it didn’t feel right.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Kyle then asked, his voice being equally soft. “I know we’re all mourning but... feels like you could use the shoulder more than any of us right now.”

He contemplated for a moment, weighing the pros and cons of expressing his feelings on being in charge of the lives of the many, but instead shook his head and looked to them. “No thanks... I just... I just need a moment to process everything.”

“It’s quite a lot to process, isn’t it though?” Kyle responded. “Couldn’t imagine handling it myself-- ow!” He rubbed his side, courtesy of Larry’s elbow.

“What he’s trying to say is that we’re worried that you won’t have someone to lean on at the moment. And we want to be there for you.” Larry explained. “Either that or Royal Guard Number One coming to talk to you, and we all know how... enthusiastic he can be at times.”

“Especially now.” Kyle nodded.

“Oh.” Graham looked to his hands. “I um... I see...”

The two guards looked at each other for a moment before looking back to the new King. “Tell you what.” Kyle then spoke, “You don’t have to talk. Not right now. But just know that we’re here if you need an ear. Alright?”

“You just say the word and we’ll come running!” Larry sounded enthusiastic.

Graham looked back to the two of them, it wasn't much, but a small weight felt like it just slightly lifted and a small but now sincere smile on his face. "I'll keep that in mind... thank you."

The two nodded and gave a small bow, turning a knot slightly in Graham as he watched them open the door to leave when Kyle stopped and looked over his shoulder. "May I offer one advice though?"

"I um... y-you may." Graham nodded.

"Step outside, fresh air helps clear thoughts." He suggested. "Again, not now right at this second, but... keep that in mind."

The newly appointed king, tired of nodding and shaking his head, once more nodded. "I'll be sure to stow that to memory."

"Good." Larry said and followed the other guard out of the room, leaving Graham alone once more.

Graham sat there, for... well, he couldn't say how long. His forearms rested over his knees as he thought over everything, still finding it difficult to come to terms with what was happening. He looked to the floor where his hat laid unattended to and slowly picked it up. He wasn't sure what to do next, he still wasn't sure, but one look out the window had him thinking of taking a walk.

That... was a good first step, he figured. He'll deal with everything later.

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