

Lylac Learns a Lesson

A Hues Fable, by Miranda Wright

Once, a long time ago, Lylac was out wandering the world, bringing song and cheer to everyone he met, as was his wont, when he got a message from Hazil, who had of course remained at home. "Come home," her letter pleaded. "Please. Pal'let won't smile anymore and I don't know what to do."

"Oh, no!" said Lylac, and he mounted his trusty donkey steed and set off for home. He traveled the whole of Prismal until he arrived, a song on his lips and his lute in his hands. To please his sister, he scraped the dust of his travels off on the welcome mat, then let himself inside with a burst of song.

"Shhh!" said Hazil, and slapped her hand over his mouth.

"Mmphblrgh!" Lylac said.

"Pal'let's out back, in the garden."

"Mmphfleblph?"

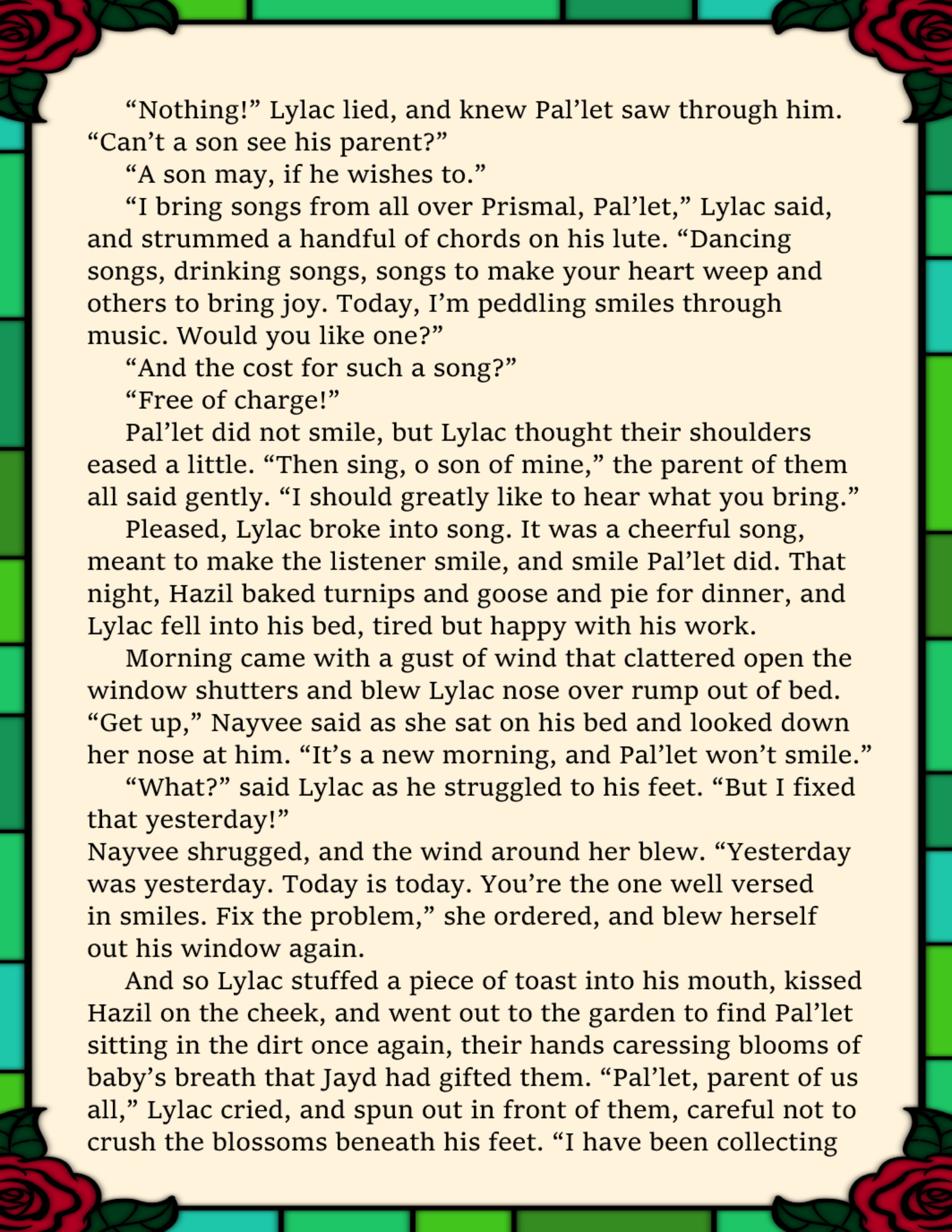
"I don't know why. They're spending most of their time there, these days."

"Mrph."

"Yes, fix the problem." Hazil waited, then removed her hand from Lylac's face. "And thank you for wiping your feet."

Lylac grinned, kissed her cheek, then left to the garden for Pal'let. It was a warm day, full of springtime, and Pal'let, parent of all the gods, was seated in the dirt with sparrows on their shoulders. "Pal'let!" Lylac called, as cheerful as cheerful can be, and plopped down next to them beside a field of honeysuckle. "Can I interest you in a tune?"

Pal'let fed the birds with a scattering of seed. "You've traveled far, my son," they said, and touched Lylac's cheek. "What brings you home?"



“Nothing!” Lylac lied, and knew Pal’let saw through him.
“Can’t a son see his parent?”

“A son may, if he wishes to.”

“I bring songs from all over Prismal, Pal’let,” Lylac said, and strummed a handful of chords on his lute. “Dancing songs, drinking songs, songs to make your heart weep and others to bring joy. Today, I’m peddling smiles through music. Would you like one?”

“And the cost for such a song?”

“Free of charge!”

Pal’let did not smile, but Lylac thought their shoulders eased a little. “Then sing, o son of mine,” the parent of them all said gently. “I should greatly like to hear what you bring.”

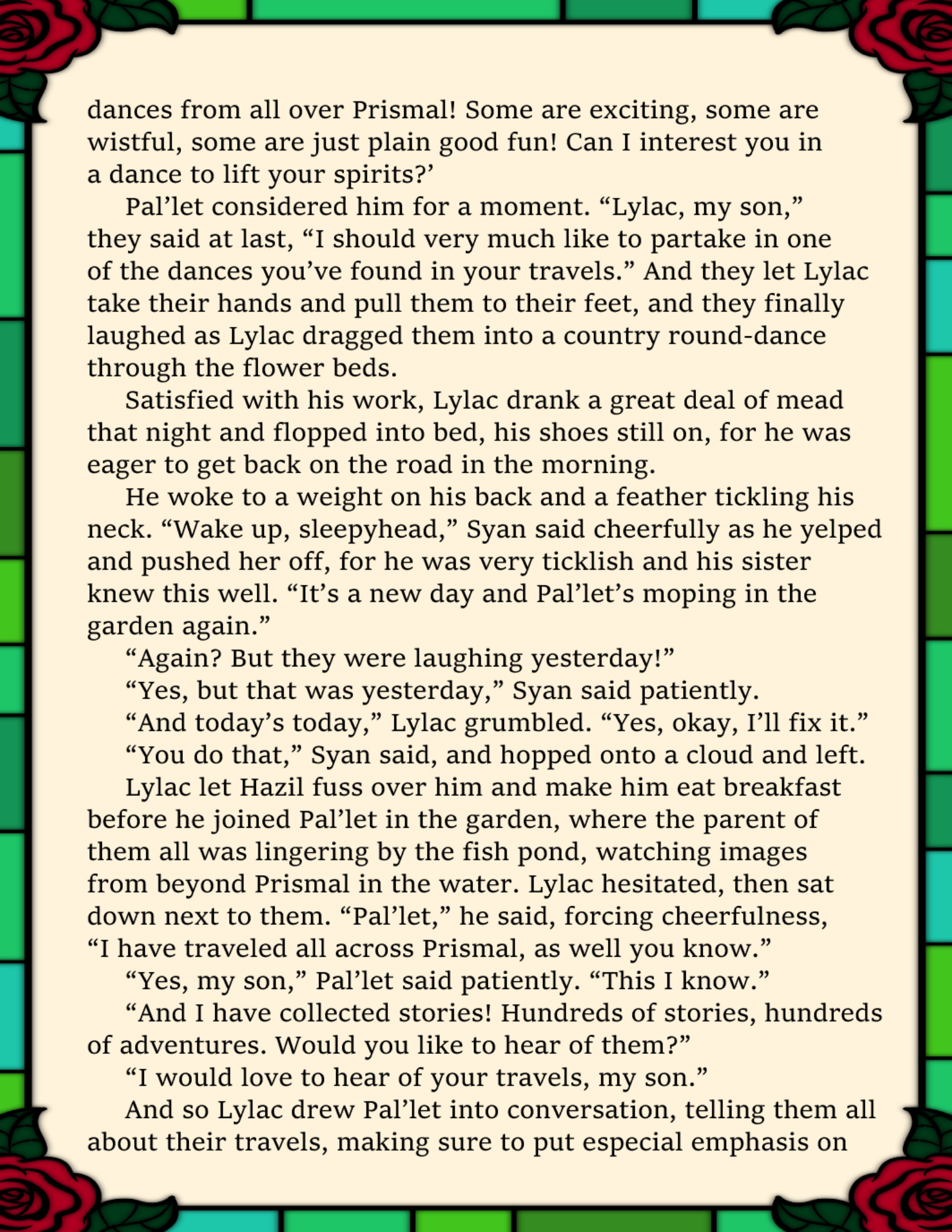
Pleased, Lylac broke into song. It was a cheerful song, meant to make the listener smile, and smile Pal’let did. That night, Hazil baked turnips and goose and pie for dinner, and Lylac fell into his bed, tired but happy with his work.

Morning came with a gust of wind that clattered open the window shutters and blew Lylac nose over rump out of bed. “Get up,” Nayvee said as she sat on his bed and looked down her nose at him. “It’s a new morning, and Pal’let won’t smile.”

“What?” said Lylac as he struggled to his feet. “But I fixed that yesterday!”

Nayvee shrugged, and the wind around her blew. “Yesterday was yesterday. Today is today. You’re the one well versed in smiles. Fix the problem,” she ordered, and blew herself out his window again.

And so Lylac stuffed a piece of toast into his mouth, kissed Hazil on the cheek, and went out to the garden to find Pal’let sitting in the dirt once again, their hands caressing blooms of baby’s breath that Jayd had gifted them. “Pal’let, parent of us all,” Lylac cried, and spun out in front of them, careful not to crush the blossoms beneath his feet. “I have been collecting



dances from all over Prismal! Some are exciting, some are wistful, some are just plain good fun! Can I interest you in a dance to lift your spirits?’

Pal’let considered him for a moment. “Lylac, my son,” they said at last, “I should very much like to partake in one of the dances you’ve found in your travels.” And they let Lylac take their hands and pull them to their feet, and they finally laughed as Lylac dragged them into a country round-dance through the flower beds.

Satisfied with his work, Lylac drank a great deal of mead that night and flopped into bed, his shoes still on, for he was eager to get back on the road in the morning.

He woke to a weight on his back and a feather tickling his neck. “Wake up, sleepyhead,” Syan said cheerfully as he yelped and pushed her off, for he was very ticklish and his sister knew this well. “It’s a new day and Pal’let’s moping in the garden again.”

“Again? But they were laughing yesterday!”

“Yes, but that was yesterday,” Syan said patiently.

“And today’s today,” Lylac grumbled. “Yes, okay, I’ll fix it.”

“You do that,” Syan said, and hopped onto a cloud and left.

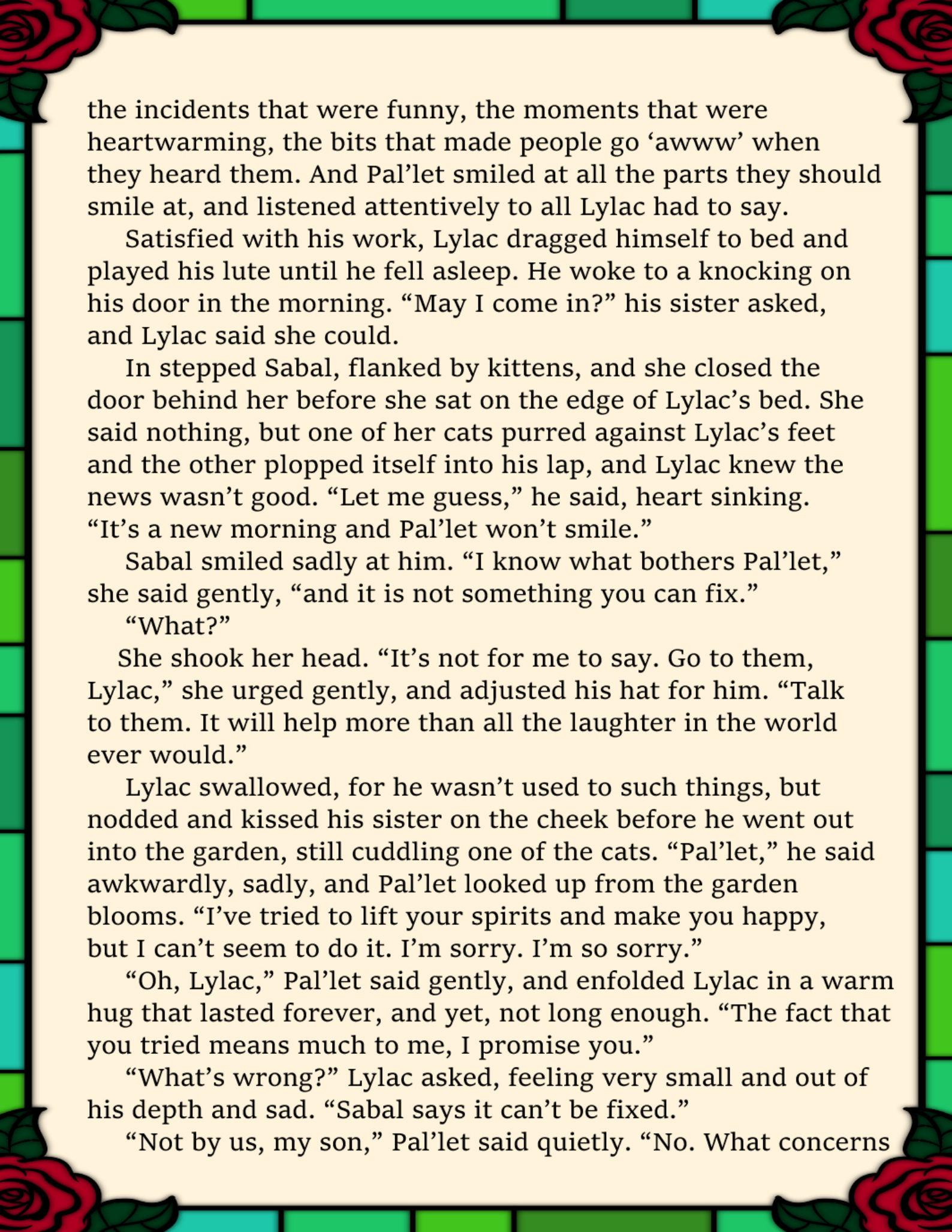
Lylac let Hazil fuss over him and make him eat breakfast before he joined Pal’let in the garden, where the parent of them all was lingering by the fish pond, watching images from beyond Prismal in the water. Lylac hesitated, then sat down next to them. “Pal’let,” he said, forcing cheerfulness, “I have traveled all across Prismal, as well you know.”

“Yes, my son,” Pal’let said patiently. “This I know.”

“And I have collected stories! Hundreds of stories, hundreds of adventures. Would you like to hear of them?”

“I would love to hear of your travels, my son.”

And so Lylac drew Pal’let into conversation, telling them all about their travels, making sure to put especial emphasis on



the incidents that were funny, the moments that were heartwarming, the bits that made people go ‘awww’ when they heard them. And Pal’let smiled at all the parts they should smile at, and listened attentively to all Lylac had to say.

Satisfied with his work, Lylac dragged himself to bed and played his lute until he fell asleep. He woke to a knocking on his door in the morning. “May I come in?” his sister asked, and Lylac said she could.

In stepped Sabal, flanked by kittens, and she closed the door behind her before she sat on the edge of Lylac’s bed. She said nothing, but one of her cats purred against Lylac’s feet and the other plopped itself into his lap, and Lylac knew the news wasn’t good. “Let me guess,” he said, heart sinking. “It’s a new morning and Pal’let won’t smile.”

Sabal smiled sadly at him. “I know what bothers Pal’let,” she said gently, “and it is not something you can fix.”

“What?”

She shook her head. “It’s not for me to say. Go to them, Lylac,” she urged gently, and adjusted his hat for him. “Talk to them. It will help more than all the laughter in the world ever would.”

Lylac swallowed, for he wasn’t used to such things, but nodded and kissed his sister on the cheek before he went out into the garden, still cuddling one of the cats. “Pal’let,” he said awkwardly, sadly, and Pal’let looked up from the garden blooms. “I’ve tried to lift your spirits and make you happy, but I can’t seem to do it. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“Oh, Lylac,” Pal’let said gently, and enfolded Lylac in a warm hug that lasted forever, and yet, not long enough. “The fact that you tried means much to me, I promise you.”

“What’s wrong?” Lylac asked, feeling very small and out of his depth and sad. “Sabal says it can’t be fixed.”

“Not by us, my son,” Pal’let said quietly. “No. What concerns

me is something mortals must solve, though they know it not.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You travel Prismal alone,” Pal’let said gently, “not the other realms. Tell me, Lylac, do you ever speak to those who survive terrible things?”

“Often,” Lylac said. “Those are the ones most in need of cheer.”

“And do you listen to their tales?”

“When they wish to speak.”

“Listen to them more often, my son,” Pal’let said, and Lylac felt the truth of it and bowed his head. Pal’let lifted his chin up with their fingers, gentle and soft. “Listen to them and hear their tales of destruction and violence and kindness, and you will find what troubles me. Once you have, then, perhaps, we may discuss what can be done about it.”

“I will.”

“Oh, my son.” And Pal’let smiled, sad but proud. “Thank you for your efforts. I promise you, though they could do no more than lighten my spirits briefly, they were loved and needed regardless.”

“I’ll fix the problem, Pal’let,” Lylac promised recklessly. “I’ll find a way, I swear.”

“That,” Pal’let said, “is something I look forward to seeing.”

And with a final hug to send him on his way, Lylac saddled his donkey and set off into Prismal again, this time to hear of the terrible things in the world and find what saddened Pal’let, so that he might find a way to fix it truly instead of using bandages on his heart, for a smile without anything to root itself in is a smile that will not last long at all, as Lylac at last understood.



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