

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Generations: Part 7

Blake Jackson · Friday, September 3rd, 2021

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He didn't introduce himself to Kino. He couldn't. Not when he knew what his part was to play in the story of his life. It broke Jed's heart more than anything, but that was how it had to be.

Jed bought the apartment next door and watched from the sidelines as Kino began to show. Jed say hi to Kino every now and then, but he never looked closely at the grumpy old man next door. Why would he?

Nine months later, Hexlia was born. And Jed got to see her grow up. Walking and stumbling down the corridors. Later when she began to grow older, she would come to him to rant about her annoying primary teachers or cute girls she had crushes on. She felt safe with him. He was so grateful for that.

When Byaz moved into the neighborhood, Jed became a member of the Roughts to put Kino and Hexlia under his protection. Didn't stop a rogue teen from robbing Kino and Hexlia, but the youth was punished appropriately by Byaz. No one went near them again after that.

And years later, when Hexlia came home from her trip to the dimensional engines, Jed was there, waiting. He sat down with her and told her the truth about everything. As she deserved to know. She'd grown up with her second dad. She just hadn't known it.

That weekend, they visited Kino in the hospital. It shocked Jed to see Kino this frail, but then again he was much the same now. Hexlia helped him over to the bed and into the chair next to Kino. Nervous, Jed reached out, grasping his hand.

Kino stirred. "Hexlia?"

"I'm here, dad," she smiled. "And someone else is here too."

Kino's eyes drifted over to Jedrian's face. They searched his eyes, and snapped into

focus. Tears welled up in his eyes. "Jed?"

Overwhelmed with emotion, all Jed could do was nod. He pushed himself out of the chair and wrapped his arms around Kino. Something he thought he would never do again. Kino feebly pulled him in for a passionate kiss.

"You came back," he warbled. "You came back to me."

Jed brushed a stray hair from Kino's forehead. "Of course I did." He glanced over at Hexlia. "And we made one hell of a daughter."

Kino laughed, his smile unchanged since the last time Jed had seen it walking through the door of their home. "We sure did."

"I missed you. So so much."

"So did I." Kino beckoned Hexlia over and motioned for his Glass. He grabbed at it and swiped upwards.

Images fluttered and filled the room. Kino's paintings. The same image in different variations. The portrait of a man surrounded by endless stars. Portraits of *him*. The paintings hung in different galleries, some minimalist and others rich and full with vibrant colors. All of it for him.

"I never stopped painting you." While Jed's eyes were on the paintings, Kino's had never left his. "How could I? My man of the stars."

Jedrian knew he had made it home. And he would never leave it again.

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