

# OUR JOY, OUR POWER

## BY JULIAN WINTERS

To absolutely nobody's surprise, Jasmine is late.

It's kind of my best friend's thing—being fashionably unpunctual to events. Usually, I don't mind. It's part of what makes our friendship work. She rolls up late, we bicker about it, then she ensures I will have the most memorable time ever in a sincere attempt to apologize. It typically works. By the end of our hangouts, I've long forgotten her poor excuse for keeping me waiting in the first place.

But why'd it have to be tonight? The one time where I want—no, *need*—to be somewhere other than inside my own head.

I check my phone: 7:56 p.m.

The ball started almost thirty minutes ago.

Minutes before the sun sets, the city is bursting with nerdiness. I love downtown this time of year. When, at any moment, sidewalks are teeming with mini parades of people in costumes. Anime characters to all the best sci-fi creatures. Harley Quinns talking to Ewoks. Peter Parker holding hands with Miles Morales. Everyone braving the insufferable heat to show off their craftsmanship.

Infinity Con brings out that loud, proud geek we rarely show off the other fifty-one weekends a year.

Outside the Rosa Parks Freedom Museum, kids who don't look much older than me excitedly climb the stone steps toward the annual Geeks in the Night teen ball. As always, Infinity Con has gone all out for this evening's spectacle. Moving spotlights. A long red carpet leading inside. All my favorite music pouring into the late-summer air like a siren's song.

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My heart races with anticipation. It's like that first kick on a skateboard where you're unsure if you'll fall or glide.

I can't wait to dance the evening away with my people.

Well, I *think* they're still my people. I'm not too sure anymore.

Somewhere in my head, the announcer's voice from earlier today repeats:

*"And in fourth place . . . Jalen Harding!"*

Fourth place. Not even runner-up. I wasn't good enough to stand with winners.

"No, no," I whisper while pacing the sidewalk outside the museum. "You're fine. Remember Gramps's words."

*"Don't you dare let them dim your shine."*

*Easier said than done*, I think.

Maybe I would be fine if Jasmine were here. Especially because this isn't just any Infinity Con. It's our first adult-less Infinity Con. An entire *ball* for teen geeks like us.

Yet, here I am, alone.

I pull out my phone again. Since the Geeks ball has a strict "no reentry" rule, I can't pop into the museum's bathroom to check my appearance without leaving Jasmine behind. Both our tickets are in my jacket pocket.

I open the camera on my phone—ignoring all the passersby shooting me annoyed looks because I'm in their way—to angle the lens up high and inspect my fit.

My naturally black curl twists are temporarily dyed dark green. The crimson tie looks sharp against my white button-up. My gray suit jacket fits a little big. I did the best I could tailoring it. At least I found a pair of hunter-green slacks at a thrift store along with some fire-red Air Jordan Retro 11s that I'll spend the rest of my life paying Gramps back for.

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Totally worth it.

I look just like my favorite anime character, Deku. Mostly. We're both sixteen. He doesn't have my rich brown skin or dark eyes. The thick Hard-ing eyebrows. Plus, at the rate I'm growing, none of these clothes will fit in a year.

Deku also doesn't sweat like he just ran a marathon in the middle of July. My face is glowing with perspiration.

Self-consciously, I scan my surroundings. No one's paying attention to me anymore. Just like when I lost that cosplay contest.

*There you go again.*

On the second to last step, I spot a handkerchief. Perfect. It looks clean, freshly dropped. The silky, expensive material is royal purple with the initials PCW stitched into a corner.

"Sorry to this man." I chuckle softly, wiping all the sweat from my face.

When I go to check my face one last time, I realize I'm not standing alone anymore. There's a boy in a suit behind me. I almost drop my phone.

"Whoa. Sorry, sorry!"

His voice is gentle, a little deep. He throws his hands up, palms out like he means no harm. Yeah, creeping behind someone doesn't leave that kind of impression.

"If you were trying to take a selfie, I was gonna offer to take a photo for you?" He scratches at the side of his neck. "Y'know, so you could get a full shot of your dope costume?"

"I wasn't," I reply, still slightly breathless. "Trying to take a selfie, I mean."

Wait. Did he say my cosplay was . . . *dope*?

"Oh. Sorry again." He's backing away, shyly rubbing his forehead.

I take him in. Somewhat taller than me. Short, tight brown curls. Fair

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gold-brown skin with features that are simultaneously soft and sharp at once. He's wearing one of those cheap black domino masks that's been bejeweled with violet stones around the edges. The perfect juxtaposition to his tailored black suit with purple accents.

To be honest, *beautiful* is too understated for this boy.

"Should I—maybe I'll just go wait over there." He points toward a corner of the street where I suppose he came from. The top button of his shirt is undone. Pinkish blush rapidly spreads from his collarbones to his jaw.

I bite on a smile. "Are you waiting on someone?"

"My best friend. *Ex*—best friend. He's dead to me for being late."

He's still walking backward, almost tripping on his own feet.

A snort-giggle I'll never forgive myself for escapes my body. "Same," I say. "Late is my bestie's default."

"Sorry about that."

I shrug, unable to loosen the hold this ridiculous grin has on my cheeks. "Not your fault."

Another group of teens dressed as the Avengers marches past us, up the steps to the ball.

"So. I'll wait." He anxiously brushes a hand over his curls. "Over there."

There's a hesitance in his backward steps. Almost like he doesn't want to go. I don't think I want him to leave either. Only because I enjoy company at these things. I like talking to strangers in line, waiting for autographs from our favorite actors. Or, like backstage today, when I struck up a chill conversation with two girls about music.

Minutes before my disastrous contest finish.

"Find somewhere else to get your happiness," Jasmine told me this afternoon while brushing disappointed tears from my face. "We'll plan for next year later. Right now? Let's focus on having the time of our lives."

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*And maybe you'll meet a cute boy*, is something Jasmine didn't say, but knowing her, it was implied.

"I liked your cosplay earlier, by the way." He stops walking. "I thought it was great."

I'm snapped back to reality by that deep, timid voice.

I blink hard. "You saw me?"

He nods like he's unsure if he said the wrong thing. And he kind of did. But only because I'm embarrassed that he witnessed what happened.

"Guess it doesn't matter if I lost," I struggle to say against the dejectedness in my voice.

The guy shrugs. "They got it wrong."

Despite hearing those same words from Gramps and Jasmine and all my online followers after posting behind-the-scenes photos, it sounds more genuine coming from this stranger.

"I'm Jalen!" I say.

His lips twitch into a smile that reveals a pair of dimples. "Carter. My name, I mean. Er, Carter."

Another snort-giggle. Seriously, this is the worst.

"We can wait together if you want?" I offer.

Crinkles form in his brow. He's thinking. And what's wrong with me? Number one rule of being an adult-less teen at a convention: Don't agree to hang out alone with a complete stranger. Always in groups. Always with a friend one text away.

Carter checks his phone. He nods, smiling while strolling back toward me.

"Sounds like a plan."

Thank Cyborg, Jasmine's not around to see me. I'd never hear the end of the way my entire face lights up at those four words.



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Actually, this was a pretty bad plan.

Carter and I do nothing but stand around, drowning in our silence. Two awkward Black boys on a sidewalk.

More and more teens scramble up the steps to the ball. In the distance, the sky melts from blue to a peach-lilac as the sun gradually sinks behind the cityscape. The heat fades just enough that my pits aren't damp anymore. Yes, that's what I'm focusing on: perspiration issues rather than the fact that my best friend is possibly standing me up.

"So." I turn to Carter.

His eyebrows raise but he doesn't follow up on my obviously poor conversation starter.

"Uh. Never mind."

Back to the quiet we go.

I bob my head to the music roaring from the museum every time those golden-glass doors swing open. It's a mix of old pop-rock and classic hip-hop. I can only imagine the okayish-to-creaky dancing being showcased inside.

In my peripheral, I can see Carter checking his phone. It's the third time he's done that in the last ten minutes.

"Something wrong?" I ask.

"N-No. It's nothing."

"You sure?"

I notice his hands are shaking as he pockets the phone.

He nods quickly, then winces when more music blares into the streets.

"Sorry. Not a fan of loud places."

"But you came to . . . a ball?" I say.

"I like irony?"

Once again, I can't resist the snort that tickles my nose. To be fair,

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Carter's funny when he's not, you know, looking like a nervous squirrel. Then there's the dimples. Jasmine would approve. So would Gramps.

"Whoever he is betta make you laugh and not cry," Gramps always warns me whenever the topic of potential boyfriends comes up. "Life's too short to let anyone steal your joy."

*Especially if you're Black, queer, or both*, I always want to add, but I think Gramps already knows that part.

"Do you want to, maybe, go for a walk?" Carter asks.

"A walk?"

"Just around the block?" He makes a circular gesture with his index finger. "Unless you think your friend's gonna be here soon?"

I wrinkle my nose. The way today's been going? Highly doubtful. But leaving a very public place with a somewhat stranger is still questionable. I text Jasmine. A few choice emojis should do the trick.

"Okay," I reply.

"Okay?" Carter looks surprised.

I squint at him. "Do you not want to—?"

"No!" He waves both hands around. "I'd love that."

I can't fight the smile that pushes my cheeks higher.

I forget how pretty this city is at night. Mainly because I live in the suburbs with Mom and Gramps. And I'm sixteen with a strict curfew. Streetlights on? I better be inside or somewhere with an adult chaperone.

Around us, darkened glass buildings reflect the purplish sky. Neon signs paint the sidewalks in rainbow hues. Restaurants heave breaths of freshly cooked food in our faces. Honking cars can't compete with a Hard Rock Café's jazz soundtrack. Adult cosplayers hang out on street corners, waiting for the After-Dark Prom to start once the ball concludes.

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Tomorrow, they'll all be hungover and still up early for the Infinity Con parade.

It's my favorite part of the weekend.

Since I was knee-high, Gramps has brought me downtown to watch the Sunday morning parade. He'd hold my hand while we wiggled through the massive crowds. Show off all his favorite heroes. Rant for hours about the dozens of big-budget movies they made before he finally got to see his *first* with a Black main character in theaters.

He's too old to do all the con things now. It's kind of cool he wants me to carry on the tradition.

I point out all my favorite costumes to Carter as we walk. He nods and smiles, tight shoulders gradually relaxing. "Still not as good as your look today," he comments, nudging my elbow.

*Is he flirting with me? Or did he really love my costume? Both? Nab. It couldn't be that.*

Another voice enters my head. An older white woman who, even when being kind, still looked like she smelled a fart:

*"We didn't think you embodied your character as well as the others . . ."*

It takes a second to shake off the memory of those words.

"Thanks," I say as we pause at a crosswalk. I want to remind Carter I still lost.

It's my own fault. I was too confident. After the months I put into designing and creating my costume, I really thought the judges would see a determined boy dressed as Spike from *Cowboy Bebop*, another one of my favorite anime characters, and think he was worthy of first place.

But all they saw was a Black boy who didn't cosplay as a Black character, and it was an instant "No."

*"We just think,"* another judge tried to explain, *"if you'd maybe gone in a*



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*different direction—like Black Lightning! Static Shock! Black Panther! Maybe . . .”*

I don’t even remember the third judge’s comments before I walked off the stage.

They’d made their point.

Unexpectedly, the side of Carter’s hand brushes mine. Like he’s trying to get my attention. Because I’m drifting. Mom says I do that a lot. Get lost in my head.

Carter smiles crookedly. “They clearly didn’t see your greatness.”

I roll my eyes. “Okay, sure.”

He beams like he’s so right and I’m so wrong about myself.

It’s the same way Gramps was earlier. Our conversation hits me like a cold splash of water in the winter.

*“With great power comes great responsibility . . .”*

“Gramps, I have no power.” I was slouching in the passenger seat of his old SUV as we sat parked outside the convention center. “The judges practically said it to my face.”

“Jae, our *joy* is our power,” he insisted, gently grabbing my chin until I stared him in the eyes. “They can’t have it. It’s yours. Don’t you dare let them dim your shine. You never know how your light might brighten someone else’s darkness.”

The crosswalk signal changes. Carter and I shuffle with the small crowd. We take a left. I’m not thinking as much about the ball. Only him as his shoulder grazes mine. He smells sweet. Like kiwi and honey and deodorant.

I gravitate toward him.

“It’s not like I’m not used to it,” I say, shrugging half-heartedly. “It happens all the time to us.”

I’m not bitter. It’s just facts.

The moment someone finds out you’re Black in a high-profile fandom,

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they always ask, “What’re you doing here?” or “Shouldn’t you be in a different space?” Or they say, “I didn’t think you would be into this.” As if liking things like anime or comics or freaking Star Trek is revolutionary. A concept beyond a sixteen-year-old queer Black boy.

Breaking news: It isn’t. Kindly dump your micro- and macroaggressions to the left.

“That doesn’t mean things can’t change,” offers Carter.

I laugh dryly. “Pretty sure that same group of judges have done this for years.”

I remember at least two of those faces from last year when I was in the audience.

“Infinity Con’s one big flaw,” I sigh.

As much as I love the con, I recognize it’s an institution that resists change. The same organizers and venues. Same judges and hosts, all the way down to who does and doesn’t get invited. But it’s my only option here.

“They’re changing CEOs, though,” says Carter as we pass Coretta Scott King Park. From the entrance, I can see the memorial fountain lit in blues and greens. It’s Jasmine’s and my favorite spot to chill between con events.

“He’s one of us!” Carter grins.

“I’ve heard.”

Justin Washington, former comic bookshop owner turned movie director and now CEO of Infinity Con. Not gonna lie—it’s nice to have someone who looks like me at the top. Brown skin with dreads and the kind of smile you can trust. But who knows if it will actually make a difference.

“Let’s just hope he doesn’t become another puppet for the corporate gods keeping us on the outside looking in,” I grumble.

“He’s not,” Carter says almost confidently. When I flick up an eyebrow, he corrects, “From what I’ve read online.”

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Again, I shrug lazily. Carter's pinkie almost hooks with mine, then falls away. Heat rushes to my cheeks thinking about holding his hand.

He nods earnestly. "It's gonna get better."

As nauseating as it is to admit, his optimism is contagious.

I find myself telling him about all my favorite bands with Black lead singers. How I almost came to Infinity Con dressed as Prodigy, another queer Black hero from the X-Men books. We talk TV shows. Favorite movies. Make faces at each other while scrolling through past Halloween costumes on our phones.

"I don't know about you, but I made a handsome Gambit," he insists.

I crinkle my nose to soften my smile as we round another corner.

"Have you ever thought about going into costume design?" he asks when I'm quiet for a few steps. "Your looks are next level."

My frown is inevitable. All I can picture are the judges' confused expressions as I walked to center stage.

Carter must notice my face. "Or . . ." he starts, "maybe acting? Like, be *in* the movies?"

I've considered it. Jasmine always says I'm too dramatic about everything. There's a side of me that wants to star in a reboot of one of the classic superheroes. Batman or Spider-Man. But I also want to play an original character. Be the first time a kid like me sees a hero they can relate to on the big screen.

I don't want to wait decades for that to happen like Gramps did.

"Maybe," I reply.

"You have the face for it." Carter bites his lip but doesn't look like he wants to take it back.

This time, our hands brushing *isn't* accidental.

"What about you?" I ask, tapping into my deflection skills like a pro.

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A brown-skinned girl dressed as Jubilee hoverboards past us.

We stand on a corner. The stars in the sky sluggishly blink awake. I peek at Carter. His left dimple flexes. Enthusiastically, he says, “Nah. No acting for me. I want to be behind-the-scenes. I like to write. Maybe I’ll draft an epic screenplay. Start a writers’ room filled with people like us. Be that guy who makes space for all of us in fandom.”

He cues up a video on his phone. A trailer for an upcoming TV series I haven’t heard about. It’s a majority Black and brown cast, centering a family of superheroes like the Incredibles.

Endorphins explode inside my chest.

“This is *sick*,” I say, refusing to hide the awe in my voice.

“My dad says we all deserve a win,” Carter whispers. “That’s how I want to make us feel.”

There’s so much certainty behind his words. Nothing like that stammering, jittery boy I met outside the ball.

“But not right now. I’m only sixteen,” he announces, pocketing his phone, “I’ve got time.”

I like that too. The way he’s in no rush. Like every single thing he does won’t make it or break it for all of us. He’s not carrying the weight of everyone else’s dreams on his shoulders. Just his own.

Carter rubs the back of his head, that nervousness returning. Like he’s said too much.

I want to tell him he hasn’t said enough. I could listen to him talk all night.

Instead, we follow the pavement back toward the museum. I can already hear the music. See the latecomers in their last-minute costumes high-stepping toward the lights.

Now would be a good time to ask for his number. Or his social media handles. Is it too soon to slide into his DMs?

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Does that almost-hand-holding moment mean we could have an almost-kiss too?

“Hey, Carter, would—”

“Jalen, where the hell have you been?! You said you’d be gone *ten minutes*.”

It’s Jasmine, rushing up to me as best as she can in a full-on Valkyrie-from-the-Thor-movies-inspired outfit, blue cape flapping wildly. By her side is a dark-skinned boy with a low fade, light brown eyes, and a black T-shirt that reads THIS IS MY COSTUME in bold white print.

He shoots a smug grin Carter’s way.

Jasmine smacks my arm hard. “Answer my question!”

“Me?” I reel on her, incredulous. “Where’ve you been? You’re late, late, *late*.”

“I was . . .” Jasmine trails off. She has all the features to pull off this look—round face, expressive mouth, kill-you-with-a-glare eyes. Her curly hair is teased big and messy. Her gaze flits in the other boy’s direction and even the gold and ivory battle armor she’s wearing can’t hide the way my best friend’s *blushing*. “Preoccupied.”

“Seriously?” I gasp, scandalized. “You ghosted me for—”

I cut myself off to size up the cheesing boy. “And you are?”

Before he can answer, Carter says, “Landon, my best friend.”

*Oh, you have got to be kidding me.*

“Look at you!” Landon jostles Carter. “Meeting someone. Wandering off to—”

“Shut up,” Carter hisses, his face screwed up.

I spin back toward Jasmine, trying not to overanalyze what Landon was about to say. “Explain. Now.”

Sighing, Jasmine gives a brief synopsis of her disappearance: She and Landon met in the Starbucks line today while I was suffering a painful dismemberment via those racist cosplay judges. He commented on her

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Tomb Raider costume. She snarked about his lack of fandom-inspired outfit in the middle of a convention.

“Not really my thing,” says Landon, shrugging nonchalantly as if he wasn’t eavesdropping on our conversation. “I do it all for Carter.”

This guy is all charisma, no indecision. A.k.a. Jasmine’s type.

“We hit it off,” whispers Jasmine, like she’s in that stage of pretending this is nothing when we both know it’s *something*. “We texted all day. Met at a café for bubble tea. And—”

“Forgot your best friend was waiting to go to the most important party of the weekend?” I provide. “His one chance to forget what happened to him during that nightmare cosplay contest?”

“Technically, yes, but not as brutal.” Jasmine peeks past me at Carter. “Besides, I’d say you found someone else to help you forget things.”

She leans closer to whisper, “He’s hot.”

I almost mouth, *I know*, but I can feel Carter’s embarrassment reaching nuclear levels from here.

“You’re deflecting,” I tell her.

“I’m giving you facts and facts only.”

Landon’s “Mm-hmm” doesn’t go unnoticed, but I don’t get to call him out too.

A tall woman in a sleek onyx suit with an umber complexion, skin fade, and all the badass energy of the Dora Milaje from *Black Panther* walks up to us. Her eyes fix on one person.

“Prince Washington, I’ve been texting you. Your father is waiting!”

“Damn, we’re busted,” Landon says, then quickly throws a hand over his mouth.

The woman is seconds away from unleashing fury on him when Carter stammers, “Hi, Toya. Sorry about that. I got lost?”

She *pfffs*. Carter’s an unconvincing liar.

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“I’m really sorry.” He inhales deeply. “And I’ll explain.” Over his shoulder, his eyes flicker toward me. “If you’ll give me five minutes.”

“Two,” replies Toya, stiffly. Her mouth curls at me and my organs dissolve. “Hurry. Mr. Washington needs you by his side when they announce him.”

“Okay,” grumbles Carter. He turns to me, motioning a few feet away. I blink at him, confused. He swallows, wincing. “Can we, uh . . . ?”

“Go talk to him,” Jasmine whispers to me in the least discreet voice.

I close my eyes, sighing. “Sure.”

When we’re away from everyone, I say, “So, what—you’re a prince? Like con royalty?”

“No.” He laughs shakily. “Prince is my first name. Carter’s my middle name. It’s easier than explaining that my dad was obsessed with the singer growing up.”

I nod slowly, trying to process all of that.

“And your dad is . . .”

“Justin Washington, the new CEO of Infinity Con,” he replies. His face reddens.

So, he *is* con royalty. Kind of.

I’d seen pictures of Mr. Washington before. His wife too. But they’ve done a good job of not thrusting Carter into the spotlight. The online news blitzes never even mentioned a son.

“All of that—back there?” I jerk my head in the direction we walked. “Was that for PR? To hype up your dad?”

“No, no, no.” Carter steps closer.

I edge back.

He frowns. “I said it because it’s *true*. My dad’s always wanted to build something that our community could be proud of. That other Black nerds like me could aspire to.”

Like Gramps.

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“Things are changing. And not just because the con finally recognizes that a person of color should lead them into the future.” Carter scrubs a hand over his curls. “Because of people like you and me.”

“People like you and me?”

He smiles, dimples activated. “Yeah. The ones who never half-step. Who are great even though others keep reminding us that great is only *one thing* we have to be.”

I swallow, heart climbing closer to my throat.

“The ones who exist when, sometimes, that’s the hardest thing for us to do,” he says quietly. For the first time, his fingers find mine. They twist and twine and it takes everything inside me to stand still.

“We’re better than fourth-place finishes,” he continues. “You believe that, right?”

My lips part. Nothing comes out. I’m . . . confused. I want to be everything Carter just said, even when people like those judges tell me I’m not. But it’s difficult.

“Prince!” Toya’s voice booms from the steps. “Time to go.”

It’s not me who breaks our fingers apart. It’s Carter. Or maybe it is me. Because I haven’t said anything. I haven’t done anything but breathe and stare. He gives me a reluctant grin, then walks in Toya’s direction.

Just as quick as he appeared, Carter’s gone.

“Jalen Anthony!”

I’m not prepared for Jasmine’s thump to my shoulder, but I should be. More than once, I’ve been on the wrong side of her left hook. But this one feels particularly ruthless.

“Ow!” I stumble back.

“Why did you let him *leave*?”

I wave a hand to where Toya was standing thirty seconds ago. “What was I supposed to do?”



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“Look, I know we just met,” says Landon, “but knowing my bro Carter, it’s best you say what’s on your mind.” I notice he is still attached to Jasmine’s side. “He’s always lived in his parents’ shadow, so he kind of needs to be pulled into his own light sometimes.”

As much as I want to inform Landon he can keep his unsolicited advice to himself since, in fact, we *don’t* know each other, my brain drifts back to what Gramps said.

*“You never know how your light might brighten someone else’s darkness.”*

Was I—did I do that for Carter?

Tug him out of his own darkness? Remind him how remarkable we are as just queer Black geeky boys?

I shove my hands into my pockets, defeated again. My fingers catch on something velvety. The handkerchief. My throat goes dry as I outline the initials. PCW.

*Prince Carter Washington.*

I spent most of the ball wandering around the city with a prince.

My gaze falls on the steps. I wish he was there. I wish I would’ve said—  
“One more thing!”

I blink three times. It’s Carter, almost falling down the steps with an annoyed Toya following behind. He’s breathless when he reaches me. Bright eyes and dimples and domino mask removed. Even the imprints it left behind on his face are charming.

“I know I’m going out on a limb, but hear me out,” he pleads, gasping. “There’s an annual spotlight dance in five minutes. A Geeks ball tradition.”

His fingers wiggle at his sides like he might grab mine again. He doesn’t. But his eyes search mine. A hopeful smile pushes at his lips. “I’m a really bad dancer. I get so nervous around others . . . except with you tonight, Jalen.”

I lick my lips, still unsure what to say.

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“Would you like to—join me?”

My eyebrows lower. “This isn’t to impress anyone, right? To make your dad look—”

“Jalen, I like you!” he shouts, startling both of us. He briefly grimaces but doesn’t shy away from me. “I want to spend tonight and tomorrow at the parade and *whenever* talking to you.”

We inhale together.

“If that’s cool with you?”

Behind Carter, Landon’s gesticulating wildly. Jasmine’s staring me down in that you-better-not-overthink-this way she’s mastered.

And I’m not.

Because I’ve done that enough.

Because I can’t let one more person take away who I am.

I take his hand. “On a scale from one to ten, how bad is your dancing?”

“Negative two. All this melanin and no rhythm. It’s tragic.”

I sputter a laugh that fills my whole chest. His fingers squeeze around mine. Then he relaxes, beaming as he leads me up the steps and into the ball.

We don’t look back to see if anyone’s watching.

We know they are.

How could you not look at us shine?