

Bård: A girl?

The remaining of the week I spent with Matthew and Jane went smoothly. Between work at the university and their homework we had only the weekend to have a good time. Anyway, it went better than I thought it would a er the 'forgetting about them' incident. Even Mary calmed down, and was not calling every five minutes with concern ringing in her voice. Which was making things easier for me.

The week was one of the most full and busy weeks I had had in a long time, in a positive way. I was glad that both the kids and I had an amazing time, while Vegard and Mary got to relax and enjoy a week away from the madness. I managed to see Catherine only in class, since I had to cancel on the lesson on Thursday because Vegard and Mary announced that they were coming to pick up Matthew and Jane on their return. I did however tell Catherine, that I would be going to work whenever it suited her. All in all, it turned out to be a win-win situation for all of us.

The doorbell rang announcing Vegard and Mary's arrival. Before I could even react to the sound, Jane was up on her feet making her merry way towards the door, running as fast as she could manage. It was normal, she missed her mum and Matthew did too, although he was not showing it as much as Jane was.

Mary might have been a workaholic, but she always had time for her children. Both of them had really. It was the first time she had been away for that long. Vegard was there when Mary was at work-related seminars, but le without them both fell hard on Jane. Matthew did a better job dealing with it, but given that he was the older one it was understandable.

"Mummy!" I heard an extended click of enthusiasm escaping Jane, and a group of mu led sounds presumably coming from the cause of excitement in Jane.

Matthew and I headed to the hall as well, only to be met by Mary and Jane hugging, or to be more precise Jane had her arms wrapped around her mother's neck and was tightly pressed against Mary's shoulder. Vegard was standing next to them, intently looking at his ladies, hoping to get his turn for a hug. He looked up at me, and we both exchanged a faint smile. He knew I could understand his impatience perfectly, we always had that reading each other's thoughts connection, which most of the time was paying o beyond explanation, and besides we had always been close so I could recognize each and every gaze, movement, posture. And, so could he.

A er all the hugs and kisses one would presume needed and exaggerated were exchanged, and a er I managed to properly greet and welcome Vegard and Mary, we all entered the living room. When they all settled comfortably in their seats and I took the orders, feeling like a waiter for a moment, and I hastily moved to the kitchen to get the necessary beverages. As I was opening one kitchen unit a er another, preparing the trencher and the glasses, before filling them up; unintentionally I managed to catch upon the conversation in the living room – my curiosity enraptured and intrigued right away.

"So, did you spend a good time alone with your uncle?" Mary asked, her voice being barely audible, as per usual. However, as my interest was aggrandized I would have detected it even if it were in a di erent city.

"Ah, we weren't alone all the time. We had a visitor." Jane let the cat out of the bag, before I could do anything to intertwine. I felt that I was tensing up, even more persistently trying to catch the conversation that was bound to develop a er that statement.

"A visitor? Which one? He mentioned nothing," Vegard inquired. I knew that he wouldn't leave the subject rest, without getting the answer. So, my interruption at that point wouldn't have changed a single thing. Therefore, I stayed out of the way, miraculously hoping it will be finished, but it was already done and that subject was not being dropped until answered.

"No idea. She was not familiar," Matthew said, and I could even picture the nonchalant shrug of the boy, whilst both Mary and Vegard must have been flickering their gazes towards him.

"Men, hun var vakker." Jane whispered, ever so gently. I smiled at the sweetness with which Jane said those words, being right on the point as Catherine was beautiful. Wait, what? "Som en prinsesse."

"She?" Both Vegard and Mary gasped in astonishment, while I was still standing astounded at the easiness with which I agreed with Jane's words, and then Mary asked my brother: "Is it possible she is his girlfriend?"

Vegard was quick to answer. "No, he would have told me."

I entered the room with a cheeky smile, being met with their shocked faces as they were looking at each other's eyes – the weirdest expressions I have seen on either one of them, staring at the other reproachfully, while saying: "Yes, I would have told you." I smug mockingly cocked my eyebrow. "Gossipers!" I accused.

"Sneaky eavesdropper," Vegard shot back, teasingly. I could still see his interest was sparked, under all that air of disinterest he had submitted his expression under.

"So, you don't deny it?" Mary questioned, training me away from those thoughts. Vegard was silently staring at me, looking for answers in the best way he knew – in my expression. I found myself focusing hard on not letting anything slip, not understanding fully why I was doing so.

"Deny what? That I had a lady in my house? Why should I?" I teasingly asked, unsuccessfully trying to laugh. Vegard's piercing gaze, examining my face, was not letting me breathe properly.

"Well, I don't know," Mary mumbled, blushing mildly at the words.

"Besides I don't think I can't do it a er what Jane and Matthew just told you. Speaking of which, you little traitors." At those words I moved towards Matthew, to have my revenge – more of a tickling marathon, who le his seat and ran away. He noticed my intention, but Jane was still in her seat. Before she could take any notice, I moved towards her not allowing her to escape and started tickling her.

Her smiles filled the room while she was desperately trying to hide behind a cushion and defend herself. Vegard and Mary joined in and Matthew as well, although he was still keeping at safe distance.

"Please, Uncle Bård. Please," she plead in between laughs, hoping that I will let her go. Seeing that her first plea didn't do anything to stop me, she went on: "I will do whatever you want me to, please!"

"Oh, really?" I asked. "Whatever I want, whenever I want?"

"Yeah."

"Good then you owe me one. Agreed?" I asked her, o ering her my hand for a handshake to seal the deal. She gladly took it. I le the room to finish my work in the kitchen. While leaving, I threw a look at Matthew and pointed a finger at him, informing him: "You owe me one too." The conversation was seemingly le at rest, but when everything was served and we finally managed to get comfortable into our seats, Vegard continued as if though an interruption never occurred. My dread was finally confirmed, he was not planning on leaving it unfinished. He fastened his quizzical gaze at me as he asked: "So, who is she?"

"A friend," I said. Was she though? A friend? I never actually thought about it until that moment, but I seemed to want her to be one.

"You mean a girlfriend," Vegard uttered, emphasizing on the 'girl'.

I shook my head in disbelief of his teasing, rolling my eyes so evidently for everyone to notice. I lightly chuckled, before defensively saying: "No, not girlfriend. Just a friend, I think. She is preparing her PhD in architecture. So, we will be colleagues."

"You think she is a friend? What does that mean?" Vegard asked, proving time in time that he never missed a single thing related to me.

"Nothing really," I whispered, sending him that one look that told him to leave this for some other time. He caught the hint and I thought that the subject would be to my great relief immediately closed. His clasped hands on his lap made a little twitch of confirmation, and he bit his lip, casting his eyes downwards, which meant he was letting it go. I knew that Vegard and I will still have time to discuss it some other day. However, it was not just Vegard's curiosity that was peaked.

"Are you going to see her again, then?" Mary pitched in. "If you are soon to be coworkers it should happen."

"I did see her. A few times actually," I stated. I simply didn't mention that it was during my classes. It was turning into an uncomfortable conversation for me, so before giving the chance to anyone to ask yet another question related to Catherine, I started a new topic: "Hey, so how was your trip?"

Vegard and Mary looked at each other, a gaze full of passion and love. He reached out and interlaced his fingers with hers, giving a gentle squeeze. There was that spark which informed me that the previous week must have been the time of their lives. They didn't need to say anything else, I could see it. And I was glad of it, given that I could help out by taking care of the kids.

Still, at that moment as I looked at them exchanging words of love with only a glance, I couldn't stop myself from thinking that I would like to have someone who was going to share such looks with me. I had an enormous wish to have someone who would love me unconditionally, for who I was. I wanted to find what Vegard had – a little bit of comfort, honesty in love and a home.

As the sparks in their gazes lit, I could only think of my wish to wake up to a smiling face in my embrace and to a pair of warm eyes which radiate love. To wake up to a face that would make my heart skip a beat every single day. To have a person who would be everything to me.

"Oh, it was unbelievable," Mary whispered, a deep sigh escaping her lips, waking me up from my wandering thoughts.

"I am glad," I echoed back, sending her a smile. Indeed, I was glad of it. I was glad Vegard and Mary were so happy as to find each other. Ever since I first saw them together, I knew it was meant to be. They simply were adorably perfect. And, so was their first meeting.

It was Vegard's voice that returned me back to reality completely. As I looked at him, I was met by his gaze. His eyebrows were cocked and he was teasingly smiling at me. "What about here? Was it hard to keep up with two kids out of nowhere?"

"It was not that bad actually. Once, I remembered that I had guests. Besides I have had them here before," I stated, chuckling lightly at the yet unrevealed situation that had me bring Catherine over in the first place.

"Yeah, but they were younger."

"Well, we managed somehow," I said, winking in direction of Jane. She shot me back a smile. "There were a few incidents."

"Incidents?" Mary's radar beeped at those words.

"Yeah, it was my fault actually. I lost track of time at work the previous Thursday," I admitted, knowing that it was the exact time to come clean on that.

"What?" Mary snapped at me, her smile growing cold and near deadly within seconds.

"Oh, that is why you seemed to be so down when we spoke on the phone," Vegard cut in, completely una ected by the intensity of Mary's exclaim nor the change in the expression.

"Yeah, I am sorry but I did rush back home a er I saw the time. Am I forgiven?" I asked in a whisper, looking at Mary. I knew Vegard wouldn't hold it that much against me, but I was hoping that Mary would understand it as well.

"Forgiven? No way," she angrily replied.

Before I could manage to partially explain things to Mary and try to make her understand me, Matthew interferred: "Technically, it wasn't his fault even though he said it was."

"What do you mean?" Both I and Mary asked at the same time, and I glanced at him at him puzzled as to what Matthew was trying to say. He seemed unaware of it, but he nevertheless continued: "Well, he was with her, so that is why he lost track of time."

"What do you know?" Vegard addressed him, joking on his account. But Mary still seemed upset, though Matthew's comment made her smile.

"Look, Mary I am sorry. I didn't want to worry you while you were on the trip, so that is why I didn't mention it. But, I thought you should know. I will understand if you don't want to leave them at my place without supervision again. It would be only normal given that I am the biggest kid in the room."

Mary chuckled at my words, teasingly staring me down, before saying: "Fine, fine. You are forgiven."

"Thank you, Mary. You are the sweetest soul I know."

"Yeah, yeah I know. Still don't think that it is getting you out of watching the kids some other time," she mischievously joked.

"I wasn't trying to get away. Just so you know."

I didn't need to ask for Vegard's forgiveness. I could read it in his eyes. I knew when he was crossed. And while Mary and I were talking, he followed us with a smile on his face. It was more than enough for me to know that he wouldn't say anything about it. Not a single word of reproach. However, I also knew, that the glint in his eyes would soon transpire in me being locked in a room with him, and interrogated about Catherine. I could avoid it, but not for long.

When they all le, the house went back to its original state of peaceful quietness. Far too much peace a er a busy, interesting week.

Soon enough, the same loneliness that was lurking in the shadows of my empty house a week or so before arose again. It was beginning to drown me, the silence of the walls who could hear my cry-outs but couldn't understand them. A lump began forming in the base of my throat, each second moving more to south nesting in my chest, not giving me the ability to at least relax. Therefore, the plan of spending the free Friday out of the house was made in a split of a second.

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