Catherine: Weekend of Joy

Nothing worked to my advantage, my brother refused to speak to me as much as a word, the professors kept increasing with the workload on their subjects – extra projects, essays, and at the same time didn't fail to also increase the study material. So, just when I was supposed to be in my best element, and remain focused on studying I couldn't even be bothered to touch a book. The fact my brother ignored my constant phone calls, and forced my mother to tell me he was out whenever I called was taking away all of my abilities to focus.

So, consequently, without giving much notice to the other variables in my life, I got up on the first flight to Britain right after my Friday lessons, and in a couple of hours found myself standing on the cool London breeze, in front of Heathrow fishing for a cab. I took my phone out, turning it on only to be greeted by a missed phone call, which both surprised me and peaked my curiosity. Why would he call me on a Friday, when he usually texted if he had to cancel on a lesson?

I would have texted to ask what the reason for his call was, but it seemed rude and since he bothered to actually call in the first place, I figured it wouldn't cost me anything but money to return with the same cordiality. So, I called him back.

It barely rang once, and he already picked up the phone, "Hei." It was new and strange how he managed to cheer me up with a single syllable, how the tone of his voice momentarily brightened my mood and convinced me I, at least, had one friend to talk to if ever needed.

"Hello," I greeted back. 'Each in their mother tongue,' I thought. 'How adorable?' Needless to mention, my feelings at the moment were making the thought more of a sarcastic remark, rather than an actual sign of affectionate friendship.

"Hey, are you okay?" His voice was so full of care, almost trembling with worry – or so it appeared to me. I could feel a smile curving my lips involuntarily, and almost instantaneously I felt my heart beating just a little bit faster. Knowing I mattered was nice, even though maybe it was just a little.

"Yeah, I am fine," I responded, snapping out of my reverie with hopes it passed undetected. "Sorry, but my phone was off. How are you?"

I could hear a puff of breath, followed by what I could only presume was a warm smile, one of those rare smiles when his entire face would light up, and his blue eyes would sparkle, but would at the same time remain serious. "No need to apologize. I am fine too," he whispered.

As I held my phone against my ear with a pressure twice the needed, I began pacing along the side of the road. It wasn't a pace of impatience, nor was it one of annoyance. It was more of a mode to calm my nerves. Why I was so overwhelmed to talk to a friend was something I had no answer to.

"Is there anything urgent?" I asked, clearly in a lack of a better question.

"Well, it depends whether you would categorize it as urgent, but I just wanted to check on you. And, uhm," he hesitantly paused for what seemed to be a few minutes to me, though in all logic it couldn't have been more than a few seconds. "I wanted to ask you out for a cup of coffee, or maybe even," and then in the most ridiculous attempt at a British English, "for a cup of tea, just to cheer you up."

I couldn't help but laugh. It was both nonsensical, and sweet, and so much like Bård that it made it impossible to keep a straight face. I could forgive his horrible accent because of his impeccable sense of humor, and that spoke a great deal.

Curving a strand of hair behind my ear, I replied, "It's not that I wouldn't like to, but I really can't. I am back in London."

"Oh," his excitement immediately fell. "Well, then I guess I should say have a nice weekend, and leave you to it." And, those words made me feel defeated and weak, and alone again. "See you around, Kate."

"Ye–" The call disconnected all too hastily, leaving me slightly disappointed, and subconsciously I let my phone lay flat on my palm, staring at it for more than a minute, before being able to pull out of the mysteriously induced trance.

"Right, I should get home," I mumbled to myself, before making my way towards the closest available cab.

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Before soon, I found myself standing before the door of my home, quite certain it would be yet another surprise for my mum to see me back home for another weekend, and entirely uncertain of the outcome from welcoming I would receive from my brother. Sighing one last time freely, I rang the doorbell, expecting my mother's astonished face to greet me.

Only, to my utter surprise, it was my brother who opened the door, and as consequence to my inability to gather my own thoughts, we both remained dumbfounded and ended up uselessly entering a staring battle in silence – before mum came out of the living room, a question on her lips, "Fred, who is at the door?"

We both jumped slightly up, my eyes flickering over to where my mother was supposed to appear, before they settled back on my brother's face.

My mother's question, however, didn't come that much of a surprise to me. "What are you doing back home?"

I was going to reply with one excuse or another, I truly was, and it would have been a covered up version – since I couldn't very well say I had decided to get back home for the weekend, after having Fred so desperately begging me to do it, and after he had decided to ignore all the calls I had tried to connect and that consequently, instead of spending the weekend in banging my head against the books, trying to cover the material with which I had fallen behind, I bought a plane ticket and once again surprised them upon appearing on the doorstep unannounced – but I couldn't make my lips form anything, aside from the sigh, which escaped my lips upon noticing how restrained Fred appeared to be.

"Hello, Fred," I greeted my brother, but received no response. Instead, he dismissed my words, and while pouting, he stormed up the stairs, and by slamming the door of his room quite forcefully announced he had withdrawn in his hiding place.

My mother stood dumbfounded at his actions, staring up the stairs for few brief moments and looking back at me most likely in search for answers as to why he behaved in what was never his way.

I greeted her with a hug and a peck on the cheek – before I hastily explained how things stood, easing on the details slightly, reassuring her we would definitely stop behaving like cats and dogs by the end of the weekend.

At least, she was glad to see me, and maybe only because it was so, she decided not to press any further. We ended up talking for most of the day, but once I realized Fred had no intention on coming back down to talk to us, I bid my mother goodnight, and went up the stairs with the intention to enter Fred's room to try and smooth out his crazy little nerves.

I imagine, he did have the right to be a little angry, but I guess most of it came from missing me rather than being actually annoyed with my behavior, and I could understand that. We were quite an age difference to be sure, but one thing I was absolutely certain of – my brother and I got along much better than people would assume, given the obvious contrast in personalities Fred so selflessly provided. He was all I was not – spontaneous, funny, carefree and confident – but we knew our tempo, and we grew closer after dad's death, since we had only each other to rely on, so knowing I was the reason for the drastic change relating cheerfulness, made me feel a little guilty. And, very sad.

I knocked on the door of my brother's room, moments after I dropped off my backpack in my own, letting it rest on the bed unpacked. No reply seemed to come my way, my brother denied to acknowledge my presence entirely and was clearly determined about it – go figures he would be as stubborn as dad used to by dismissively ignoring each and every attempt at a conversation throughout the evening.

"Fred, come on, open the door. I am here now, and I thought you wanted me to be here so that we could talk," I insisted for at least the tenth time, but nothing but silence was greeting me back.

Few moment passed and I was about to knock on the door once again, however I decided at the last moment it would be better to let him sleep on it, and maybe give it a try in the morning. Besides, I was certain mum was listening from downstairs, and I didn't want to make an unnecessary scene happen.

Therefore, I went back to my room, grabbing my backpack in consideration whether I needed anything to take something out. Opening it, I scanned through the contents, before grabbing, as initially intended, Bård's book. I settled back on the bed, supporting my weight against the headboard – a pillow in between to ease the pressure of the wood, and opened the book where I had left a mark. I was already halfway through it, and despite Bård's insistence I would regret buying it, I actually found the book quite educational, and surprisingly funny. Who would have thought that architecture could sound so amusing when written in black and white, with all its art and science? The art people usually liked, the science they most likely ignored, but I was fairly certain even someone who despised the whole idea of architecture would have enjoyed reading the book.

A light knock on my door startled me, and I simply assumed it was my mother, so I replied, "Come in."

Upon looking up, I was greeted by my brother's messy hair peaking in, an apology plastered on his face. I dropped the book back on the bed not even bothering to mark the page, and got up hastily to meet him midway. I pulled him in an embrace as soon as he was within my reach. I heard a sniffle as Fred tightly hugged back, and I knew both the source and the reason behind it.

"I am sorry, Katie," he said, the sound muffled against my shoulder.

I whispered the same back.

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The wind was whirling around me, impertinently playing with the wild strands of my hair, as I stood as quiet as I rarely had before, silently looking at my father's grave. My fingertips were gently placed over the top of the gravestone, and my other hand was resting over dad's engraved name. Closing my eyes, I could remember him effortlessly – a beaming smile on his face, the old, familiar warmth radiating from his eyes, and a smile always in place. In contrast to that picture, everything else seemed cold, pointless, and I felt a lump tying knots in my chest, suffocating me.

I let out a nearly silent sigh – as I recalled the picture of my brother welcoming me in a way which spoke more than I'd deemed possible, both reluctant happiness and partial anger radiating from his eyes, and then smiling at the memory of waking up in the morning with his arms wrapped around me and the most earnest smile of happiness on his face – before taking a seat on the bench, and fixing my gaze on the ground covering my father's body, as I spoke, "Hey, dad. I'm sorry I haven't been here in a while, between Norway and home I really couldn't find the time to come here. I wouldn't have done it today either, I believe, if it wasn't for the need to get some fresh air."

As much as I felt happy to let Fred continue his rest in my room upon sneaking out in order to avoid waking him, I couldn't stop but ponder over his crying fit from the previous night. The fact he couldn't stop his tears was the one which resulted in falling asleep together.

"Goodness, dad, he is crying now," I continued, the defeating sadness readable all over my expression, the ring of desperation in my voice. "He is more lost than ever, and it shouldn't be happening to a twelve year old boy. He should be a cheerful youngster, who would wish to return from school only to go out and have fun with his friends, but he is not doing that. And, I don't know what to do to help, since he doesn't open up to me either."

The previous night was definitely a step up, but having my brother hide how he'd felt for over two months from me was something new for both of us – another trial to overcome. We'd always shared everything, and the knowledge he couldn't tell me – or worse didn't want to – had me entirely broken.

"I feel that the choice to go to Norway might be as much of a mistake as it was an advantage, since it is driving a wedge between us, and I keep fearing, what if it never goes back to what is used to be?"

I curled my fingers in halves through my hair, futilely attempting to fix it in one place, fastening it enough as to be able to fight off the strength of the wind.

"I want to be there for him dad, I promised that to you and I would never abandon those words, but I just can't find a way to do it when he is shutting me down. It's why I miss having you around – you could make a mute talk."

I remained sitting in silence, allowing my mind to wander as my gaze took off over the branches and down the paths. I allowed my body to relax with each new breath of fresh air. Not much of a surprise when the first thing which my mind provided was the thought of Bård, and nearly every conversation I've ever had with him – from the night we'd met to the phone call about a proposal for a cup of coffee.

So, since I was already fully aware of the fact we were both in need of, I decided Bård's idea would work well for me and my brother. I was sure a cup of coffee wasn't my brother's cup of tea, but I also knew ice cream could remedy any problem whatsoever, and bring at least a few smiles on his face. After all, I owed him as much, and a sister would never back out of something knowing it would be a win-win situation.

And, than my thoughts roamed back to Bård again. And, the phone call from the previous day. It was surprising to hear just how honest he'd sounded, just how much he actually seemed to care, and it made me realize I had made a friend without even putting any effort in it.

Bård happened to find my company pleasant, and he'd mentioned on one occasion that he never felt himself easier than when with me. I'd smiled at those words then, as I was smiling at the moment, since it was a mutual feeling what he had described. It had been years since I've felt free to share all my thoughts – and he was the first one to make me feel like I belong somewhere again, he reminded me how it helped to share truths with the world, to show the pain, and the appreciation.

"I met someone, dad," the whisper of those words was out before I'd even had the chance to detect it. "He is a very nice guy, and he makes me smile. It's like everything he says has a charm of its own, and one can't help but feel the same. He is childish on occasion, and it would be a bad thing, if he weren't so adorable about it. And, he is really smart. Probably one of the smartest people I have come to work with, but I don't think he is aware of it. It is like he deliberately downsizes his quality, which for a star is strange."

I paused, those were words just coming out of every little thing I'd learned about the man, but each word felt as though I was just becoming aware of it. As though each opinion was fresh as the morning air, and as though with nobody to listen but the birds and the sky, I'd come to realize how I looked at Bård. So, it was helpful, and I allowed myself to continue.

"And, then there is his celebrity side. The one where he is all goofy and crazy, from the little I have seen. There again, he sets his talents aside, partially and as much as he can. I've seen videos of him behaving all cocky and confident, but I assume it is more of a defense mechanism to hide his true self. Not that he manages that, all together, since underneath all that male bravado, it is still just him, and sometimes it can be seen in the way he smiles, or in the crinkles around his eyes, and I like him very much," my voice dropped an octave lower in realization. "I like him very much."

The buzzing of my phone made the interruption. I fished the device from my pocket, the text message flashing on the screen, and Bård's name proudly stating the person responsible for it. It simply read, "Good morning, Kate. I hope that rubbish book of mine you insisted upon buying isn't poisonous enough to ruin your weekend. See you on Monday"

"Did I mention he was also recklessly insane and incredibly self-deprecating?" I mumbled under my breath, a certain dose of humor in it as well.

I opened a blank text to reply, and hurriedly typed, "Good morning to you too. If it didn't poison you while writing it, which depending on the side-effects of the poison might even be debatable in your case, I can surely live through the read. See you soon." And, send.

Nothing better than to greet your professor with a hint of English sarcasm early in the morning. Even though logic would scream at me to actually feel bad about the said text, knowing that Bård would most likely take it as a joke, or even worse as a compliment, I somehow found myself grinning on my way back home.

I did however, made my way home in a rush, sprinting through the door and basically slamming it behind my back, at my mother's upmost surprise. She barely even got to look at me, before I was jumping stairs on the way to my room. Fred was still sleeping on the bed, where I had left him, so I simply threw a pillow at him, exclaiming, "Get up, and get dressed. We're going out."

It seemed to be a way to enthusiastic greeting first thing in the morning for my little brother, since a displeased grunt was directed at me as a response, not much of a surprise given my initial outburst, but I didn't care. It was my firm decision to have the best of times throughout the day. And I had a certain Bård Ylvisåker to thank for that.

I grabbed a sweater from my wardrobe, and made my way to the bed, taking a seat on the edge and ruffling Fred's hair, again much to his displeasure. Another groan, more sardonic than the first, followed before my brother looked at me – his eyes squinted either with annoyance or because of the morning light, in my personal opinion probably both. On the positive side, at least, I got the attention I required.

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The day out with Fred was both a refreshment for me and for my brother, and in the end I ended up returning home alongside my brother with the taste of strawberry ice cream on my lips, a vanilla flavor in my hair, and warmth in my heart. That is until, my mother opened the door for us, and spotted the remaining evidence of the foolish ice cream fight we had on our way back home, scolding us and sending us to our respective rooms like five year olds to clean up.

To Fred's luck, and the obviousness of my inability to retaliate his attack, his hair and his clothes had remained mostly intact, maybe a small smear here or there. Mine however, where a whole other scenario, especially my hair, so I ended up under a hot steam of water to seal one of the best days I had recently shared with my brother.

The rest of the weekend tumbled up in the same manner, getting together for a hint of a day out with my recently engaged cousin, and planning things with mum all too early as well. And, as much joy as the weekend had brought me, I couldn't help the weird tingle of excitement in me as I sat on the plane, heading back to Norway, and both dreading and looking forward to seeing Bård again.

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