Bård: Headlong

Monday morning came and I was in such a fuss! To begin with, I'd forgotten to set up my alarm so I slept in. Irony was, I had never turned it o before. Only God knows why I did it on Friday. I recall the excuse was somewhere along the lines of being able to sleep in during the weekend for a change, unintentionally making the decision the worst mistake I had made in a period of few seconds. It was nonsensical turning it o, useless too – as if I had never bypassed an alarm. Then there was also the fact, in addition to the hastily-building disaster, I had spent the weekend being absolutely lazy, which resulted in having no outfit prepared for my classes, at least not something decent. And, most important of all, I was completely freaking out about seeing Catherine again. I didn't know if the reason behind my so obvious anxiousness was the fear I'd overstepped some boundary in a way by asking her out, or whether it was just the same buzz, the equal reaction as always. Whichever it was, I knew I wasn't going to like where its presence was leading. Shockingly enough, the awareness relating the issue made me even more anxious. I was in too deep, waters I should have avoided in the first place. About one thing I was absolutely certain. The pace I had set upon waking, managed to produce an ironed suit, allowed me to get my freaky hair in order, and above all had me at the university but five minutes too late. Which of course was great, since that small a period of time I could account for as a traic problem, or any other mundane excuse. Not that anyone would beat themselves to find out about the reason behind the delay in the first place. One thing however, I couldn't control or reign myself in any way. The first thing I did as I walked into the auditorium was trying to locate

Kate. I spotted her in her usual seat, her books splayed on the desk and her eyes fixed on me. I addressed her one swi , seemingly undetectable to anyone else smile, which I couldn't entirely be sure she herself even noticed, since her expression remained the same. Then I greeted the class. I briefly scanned through my notes, as the group was quieting down, and began my lecture. As much as I wanted to make myself believe I was only focusing on the words that came out of my mouth, I knew I was lying myself and caught myself in that lie on numerous occasions when my gaze would land on Catherine, traitorously conveying each sentiment which bewildered me the very morning. Somehow, strangely, it was only then I realized, or mentally noted her words about writing down in my lectures as well while looking at the board. Remembering the conversation was challenging enough for

me to be able to avoid a grin, so upon realizing that was what was happening at the very moment, I couldn't help the traitorous twitch my lips gave at an attempt to smile. Despite proceeding which my lecture right away, the thought remained a reminder at the back of my head during the whole span of the lesson. Once class was over, I waited for everyone to clear out the auditorium, believing that just as any other day, it would be Kate who would remain last. I really needed to talk to her, ask how she was, and I couldn't explain even to myself as to why I was so eager to do it sooner rather than later. However, my luck as always, seemed to disappear whenever needed the most, so before I could notice Catherine was already out of the room, and when I tried locating her

I cursed under my breath, my constant bad luck annoying more than it should have been. I made my way to the o ice, as hurriedly as I could manage. I had yet another class, and then I would have to spend a few arduous hours in the o ice doing bloody paperwork, checking assignments, and making sure to build the list of points I was going to eventually need for my grading system. It was those few little things nobody who wanted to become a professor even knew. Everyone just figured the job included doing a class or two, and ditching all to the TA, make them work it which was the case if one had been on the job for more than forty years and were about to retire. Speaking about bad luck, I really couldn't catch a break. As I turned the corner to my o ice, Vegard was leaning against the doorframe of my o ice, his phone in hand and his fingers fidgeting over the screen, not noticing me, even though I knew exactly the purpose of his visit. He just wouldn't let it rest.

outside the room, in the hallway, she was nowhere to be seen.

Most of the days, I would love to hang out with my brother, but not on a day which started horribly, and kept moving in a direction which was for me entirely unplanned. Logically, at the very moment I couldn't handle being interrogated, especially not about Kate and most definitely not a er spending a whole weekend thinking about her. It was a recipe for disaster. "Vegard," I called out, as I was making my way towards him. I didn't want to startle him since him being annoyed with me would make his insistence a tenfold worse than his usual interrogative demeanor. In normal circumstances, I would most definitely have done some kind of prank. Nevertheless, I wasn't up for a crossed brother at the moment. "Hello, brother dear," he replied, li ing his gaze to lock it in with mine.

"Sarcasm, really Vegard? You too?" I teased, though the words carried an unnamed weight, thus making my brother frown in confusion.

"Nothing," I whispered, shaking my head in a way of dismissal to my

'Shit, a bit too much information.'

"What do you mean?" he asked.

own words. Turning around, I unlocked the door of my o ice and stepped inside, allowing my brother to do just the same. Once I heard the door click shut, I inquired, "What can I do for you today Vegard?" I walked behind my desk, taking a seat and motioning for my brother to take one opposite me. He slipped in the chair, and mumbled, "You know why I am here. We agreed on a conversation, and it is long overdue." "Oh, Vegard, can we please not do thistoday?" I mumbled, dropping my notes in the top folder on the desk, and picking up the stack of papers lying on my right, lining them up for grading. Good thing was, half of them were finished. Bad thing was, there was yet another week for my students to hand in their papers, which meant there were more to pile up in the crowd.

"No, we have to." My brother's response was immediate. "I wouldn't be a pain in the ass of an older brother, if I didn't force you to talk about it now," He finished, as he winked at me, to which I only replied with an eye roll, and a shrug. Vegard however wasn't perplexed by it,

he kept to his apparently firm intention. "Who is she, Bård?"

And, then right on cue, thanks to the impeccable timing of a person I will forever be grateful to, a knock on the door interrupted us. I smirked, running a hand through my hair. "Saved by the bell," Vegard annoyingly muttered under his breath, as I called out, "Come in," a bit too enthusiastically, and way to happily to escape my brother's notice. He was staring at me, and to my upmost disappointment, there was a smirk on his face giving me a silent promise of 'This isn't over yet.' I addressed him one swi , marginally teasing smile, accompanied with a quirked eyebrow - an expression I knew would later cost me all tranquility, but I couldn't help the opportunity and keep it in me. Then, I looked towards the door victoriously, only to be greeted with a very serious, and a quite confused Catherine. And, on yet another queue, my heart skipped a beat, before peeking up in pace a tenfold.

Maybe not so grateful, a er all.

about the paper, but I can see you're busy. Should I come back later?" "No, no, come on in," I insisted all too hastily, for it to escape my brother's notice. From the corner of my eye, I could clearly perceive Vegard observing our interaction intently, and with a tone of amusement. Oh shit I was buggered. Thinking I might as well proceed, I stated, "Knowing his persistence and my desire to annoy him, this guy will be here all day, so I might as well help you with the paper." I grinned at Vegard, who in all surprise remained silent. Catherine frowned in confusion, but inquired no more. She stepped inside my o ice, turning her back at us both for the sole purpose of closing the door, and allowing my brother a moment to look at me, his eyebrows shot up under his curls, and a "Er det henne?" to be muttered under his breath. I squinted at him, my eyes darting to Catherine briefly in a span of a second, to see if she had taken a

notice of his words. She might have been just a beginner in the realms of Norwegian, but I was entirely sure even she could make it

To my relief, short-lived as it might have been, she appeared

"Am I who?" Kate wondered, cutting my thoughts short, her

questioning eyes getting fixed on Vegard for a second, before finding

and knowing her most likely feeling awkward.

then I'd never hear the end of it.

oblivious, or at least with no intention to comment if the words were noticed. She was standing in the middle of the room, looking at me,

"Take a seat," I told her, and she did so, placing herself on the other chair, next to Vegard. As much as I liked finally having a chance to speak with Kate, the chaperoning of my brother was definitely unwanted. I couldn't shoo him away though, or rather I could, but

out, whispered or not.

Her expression quickly morphed into a small smile. "I am sorry for interrupting professor," she began, her hands raising to form a series of gestures, as she continued her explanation, "I had a few questions

their way back to my gaze. I hung my head, forcing all the control in my being to prevent the groan which was threatening to escape my throat, hating the fact I almost always spoke too soon. "Oh, just ignore him," I waved o my hand in Vegard's general direction, wiggling my fingers midair, as I teased, "I do." Vegard interrupted me before I could get anything else out. "Aren't you going to be a normal person for a few moments and introduce us?" With those words, he mischievously smiled at me, something he was paying for a er we were le alone. "Right, Catherine this is my brother Vegard. Unbelievably, and ironically, he is the older one," I sco ed, my brother's reply nothing but silence. "And, Vegard, this is Catherine. Happy now, brother dear?" I mockingly imitated his words from only a few minutes ago. Ignoring me, he outstretched his hand to Catherine, and she gladly

took it, both of them exchanging 'Nice to meet you.' along the way.

I turned my attention to Catherine. "Anyway, what can I help you

She ran her hand through a few strands of hair, pushing them behind her ear, and I tried my hardest not to follow the movement. I also failed at it, completely. She seemed unaware of it, so I was safe there. Unfortunately, even though I couldn't be sure, I was considering the fact that obliviousness wasn't Vegard's forte, at least not when it

I fixed my gaze back on Kate's face, just as she began, "Well, you said that the cover for the paper should contain a quote from the author relating the book we are working on. And, I looked it up, trying to find something, but as far as I can tell the author never commented on

"Well, it would be nice to hear the thoughts of the author upon the piece, but if you can't find anything, you can use some of the author's quotes on other works, or on architecture in general," I shrugged, "or

with?"

came to me.

this particular work."

on my book?"

situation changes again."

besties with my brother."

maybe even a certain design, as long as you point out to what the line in question is referring." "I understand that, but I was wondering... Hypothetically," Kate paused, biting on her lower lip. "If I could get the author to give me an opinion, and I have the permission to make that opinion public, would it be okay to use it, even though there is no source to follow up on that information." "I honestly doubt you would be able to get anything, if the person in question never deemed it in his capacity to comment on the piece in the first place." I o ered her a smile. "If you could pull it o, I would be impressed, and it would most definitely not be a problem." "I am sure he wouldn't mind stepping up and giving a few shy words about his thoughts on his work to a friend." My eyebrows quirked in surprise, as I was impressed. "Oh, you know the author then?" 'I do, actually," she whispered, a smile dancing on her lips. "I am looking at him right now."

Taken aback, it took a few moments for me to register her words, and I shook my head, before stammering out, "So, in fact, you are working

Kate nodded vigorously. "Poisoning the community was next on my

I chuckled, but before I could provide a response, Vegard cut in the conversation, addressing her, "Are you trying to flatter him, or insult him? I finally think I've gotten a grasp of the intention, and the

She looked at him, and smiled. "It was his words, not mine. The

'To do' list, so I figured it would be the quickest way."

poisoning bit I mean. So, I guess I am not insulting him. I was already reading the book when the assignment was given, so not flattering either. I am teasing, maybe." "I like you," Vegard stated, matter-of-factly. "Finally someone is secretly making fun of my brother, me excluded." Catherine chuckled, and I cleared my throat, purposefully trying to gain the attention of the room. "I am right here you know," I announced. Vegard seemed to not give a dime, and even though Catherine addressed me a glance, I could see she wasn't going to stop my brother either. "He never liked being teased, so as an annoying older brother, I guess I am on your side for trying to get him out of his shell."

"I'll give you the quote," I nearly exclaimed. No way was I allowing Vegard to do his brotherly duty, and share something embarrassing, considering he had plenty to share, if willing. "Just stop becoming

She looked a ronted by the proposition for a moment, before, "Are

you saying that if I stop talking with your brother now, you are going to give me a quote? Isn't that a form of extortion?" "Yes to both. And, I am proud of my proposal, since I gave you an option to choose whether you'd accept it or decline it." Vegard's expression was amused, his lips tugging in a smile, and I mirrored it. "I will take it," she nodded, clearly joking, before turning to Vegard and shrugging. "Sorry." He burst out laughing, throwing his head back, managing just one word. "Smooth." When he calmed down, over a few deep breaths, in faked disappointment he proclaimed, "I finally get a new friend, and

she dumps the friendship in the water for a quote. So humiliating."

And, it was then, that Catherine did something which took me entirely by surprise. She reached out, leaning over the armrest of the chair, laying her hand on my brother's forearm and said, "Don't worry, a er I get the quote we will pick up where we le o."

She tapped a few times on his arm in reassurance, before

withdrawing her hand, and somehow I couldn't help but be jealous. I

was glad she connected with my brother that quickly, but the gesture was more than what I'd gotten since I'd met her, even though I ached for it. Realizing that the o ice suddenly grew quiet, I looked up from between the chairs to find two pairs of eyes directed at me. I cleared my throat again, saying, "Sorry, uhm, when do you finish?" Without a second thought, she provide, "My last class ends up at five." "Okay, so I will probably be done by six, so if you want to go and grab a cup of co ee, and I will give you the quote you need. Sound good?" "Yeah, sure. I will leave you guys to chat now." She got up, my brother and I did the same as well. She turned to Vegard, stretching out her arm, and saying, "It was a pleasure to meet you."

She turned towards me. "See you later. Bye," and with that she le

It was barely a few seconds a er the door shut behind Catherine's back, that my brother spoke, "So, that is the girl Jane and Matthew

"What?" I enquired, not quite catching what my brother was saying,

"That is her," he simply confirmed once again, without my explicit confirmation. There were two things I could do at that point – lie in order to avoid the topic, or tell the truth and ask my older, and

"How did you know?" was the first thing which came to my mind.

Vegard just made his are-you-seriously-asking-me-that face, before

He shook it. "The pleasure was all mine."

as I was still looking towards the door.

infinitely wiser brother, for an advice.

saying, "Was it supposed to be a big secret?"

the o ice.

"Yes," I firmly stated, before swallowing a lump and choking out a small, defeated 'no'. "Oh, come on Bård. Don't be like that. I know you inside and out. Did you really think that I wasn't gonna notice?" I remained silent, because deep within I knew he would, but somehow I presume I hoped he'd not. Without waiting for a reply, he went on, "Your eyes lit up like a Christmas tree when she walked in the room. And, you teasing around your students I'd believe, but taking them out for co ee to help with a project?" I took a breath, aiming for an interruption, but he raised his hand and continued, "And, when she touched my arm. I could swear you'd kill for it to have been you, and I am your marriedbrother. Am I wrong?" I took another deep, stabilizing breath. Maybe facing the fact I liked Catherine too much for my own good, and talking with Vegard about it would be beneficial. Thus, "I'd love nothing more than to say you are wrong. But, you are

absolutely right. What is wrong, is me liking her. She is my student,

"That would be an understatement Vegard," I half-exclaimed. "I like her. Enormously, and I know the university has this policy. I am not going to make a move or anything, I know how to control myself that

"She is dierent, like a good, refreshing dierent, not the weird creepy one." A er a few awkwardly silent moments, I continued, "What I am saying is that I would like to take her out on a date."

My brother smirked. "Well, you do have one at six, if Iam any judge."

"It is friend capacity, as always. I'd like a both-parties awareness."

"No, actually. Aside from university, it was an accidental meet up at

"I might have approached her, even though she had company."

"As always?" Vegard asked. "So, not the first time?"

My brother cocked an eyebrow. "Accidental?"

"A boyfriend? Or a boy, in general?"

and I just," I trailed o, not knowing how to proceed.

"You're freaking out."

much, but I can't help liking her."

"She seems a nice person."

the shopping center."

I shook my head. "No, a friend. Female. She is staying at Adela's house, and Adela was showing her around town." My brother hummed in agreement, before leaning forward, trying to get my full attention. "Look, Bård. You are besotted with the girl, and don'teven argue about it with me. My point is, you have not been attached to anybody since your last relationship, so take it slow, if you are planning on taking it anywhere at all. And, if not, just step aside before it is too late for you." I thought he'd said everything he intended to say, but then he continued, "Also, I don't like insinuating anything, but you know our status, and if being a celebrity is the draw in for her, then maybe..." I cut in. "She isn't like that. Besides, she didn't even know I was one until Adela told her. And, even a er that, she was pretty much the same." Catherine might have been a lot of things, uninterested amongst them, but being an attention seeker was something I for sure knew she wasn't. I trusted her that much, which was surprising

given I learned just how not to trust people a er the last blinding fiasco. So, if I decided she was worth the trust in that short a period of

Vegard only shrugged, dismissing an argument on the point the conversation was heading into. He was good like that, and I was nearly always glad of it. "I am not going to be the judge of that. I trust you are able to make your own decisions. All I am saying is to take

time, then I was man enough to stand behind my belief.

care, and look out, and if you need anything call me."

ba led expression, I elaborated, "Her last name is Fox."

picnic out of it?"

even know the song at that point."

"I am not sure I'd want to know."

"I will. Do you know, the first day of the semester, when she introduced herself, the auditorium went crazy?" At my brother's

A full-hearted laugh came over my brother, and it took him a few minutes to get his breathing in order. "Oh, God. Did they make a

I chuckled. "Yeah, like you wouldn't believe it. Worst of it is, she didn't

"Oh, boy. Who knows what she must have thought," he commented.

I habitually glanced at my phone, catching the time, realizing that I was going to be late for my class again. Only this time around, I was still at university grounds so I had no excuse. "Vegard, I have to get going," I stated with alarm ringing in my voice, getting out of my seat, and my brother following straight behind. I grabbed the needed literature from the desk and headed for the door. Once outside, I locked the o ice, walking Vegard down the corridor, bidding him

Six o'clock couldn't come fast enough. All throughout the lesson I kept glancing at my watch, and even when I made it back to the o ice and needed my focus to grade as much papers as possible, all I could do is count the time. It was slightly annoying to speak the truth, not being able to work when it was required the most. It would have been pointless to leave Catherine waiting for an extra hour for me, when all I could do is pace back and forth in my o ice, fidgeting about with the stack of papers instead of actually working through them one at a

Change of plans. I will be done at five as well, so I will meet you at the

A er that, somehow, I managed to put my thoughts aside for an hour and get some actual work done. That is, until I realized that five o'clock was rapidly approaching. The more anxious I grew the less clearly I thought, so next thing I remembered was the typed text already being sent to my brother. I hate you, you compulsive planter

goodbye and heading in direction of the auditorium.

time, so I took my phone out and texted her.

main entrance a er your class. Bård

You are welcome. Have a nice time;)

her, saying, "Hey, Earth to Catherine."

somewhere."

five minutes away."

enough free tables for us.

right about now."

exam or a blessing?"

drink. "The latter for the first."

of ideas!!! I HATE YOU

My brother's response was immediate. What's going on? You had to plant me the idea of this being a date, didn't you? Now I can't stop freaking out. It took a while for his next message to arrive, so just as I was giving up on the idea of him actually replying, and was about to shove the phone back in my pocket to restrain myself from pointlessly playing through the device, when the screen flickered a few times. Oh, baby brother, that is just sad. What are you - a high school student? Get a grip man, or should I buy you diapers? I chuckled before texting him back. This is your fault. And, mocking me just gained you a punch in the face next time I see you. I'd like for you to give that a try. Then when you start weeping on the floor because I've beaten you, then I will surely be able to get a certificate which would state you should wear diapers forever. And then it would be o icial, at last! Despite the fact the message made me laugh, I replied in a mock fury. It seemed my brother managed to actually achieve his goal, since in all the joking around I completely forgot about my dancing nerves. Fuck you!

I groaned, and got up from my seat, collecting my things and leaving

She seemed to be braced in some thoughts, so I slowly approached

She shyly smiled once she looked up. "Hei, yeah, I spaced out. If it'd have taken you a bit more, I probably would have transported

"Don't be mean," I mumbled. She only addressed me another smile

Glancing sideways at her, I responded, "There is a co ee shop about

We were attended to right away, and once the girl stepped away with our orders, I turned to Catherine, saying, "They make the best, well everything, and those drinks can keep up a person on their toes for three days in a row. It is blessing for any exam craze, and I need one

She swirled the spoon in the warm drink before her. "You need an

I spontaneously followed her lead, repeating the motion in my own

"Exams are still about a month away," she exhaled, supposedly finding an excuse for the low spirit of my words, though if her tone of voice was to be any indication, she understood me completely. "And, besides I can't believe you are the one complaining, and doing so in a presence of a student who has to study for five completely di erent

Catherine simply nodded, and we continued walking in silence. Luckily for us, considering it was basically the end of the day, and everyone just wanted to get home, the co ee shop was not full of people. Maybe an occupied table here or there, but more than

the o ice. Not considering for once I was without a reply from Catherine, I headed towards the main entrance, and just as I presumed she was standing there, waiting. Her hair was slightly

ru led up, presumably from a whole day at university.

back, and said nothing, so I suggested, "Shall we?"

"Where exactly are we going?" she swi ly enquired.

subjects." "Need I remind you about the pile of papers I would have to go through to grade you all?" I was raising my defense, no actual heat in my words. "That is way too many di erent handwritings and ideas." "One of which is a language she is completely horrible at," she bickered back. "Unfortunately a grand compilation of nonsense, as well," I explained. She nodded, the motion being so short, that one would assume its presence shouldn't have been detected. "There is also the fact she needs to hand in a few project beforehand." "And, the fact, he has to check all those beforehand-handed papers, and has to publish his own." "Which he could copy from a student, or an unfortunate TA." She squinted her eyes at me, raising an eyebrow provocatively, challenging me not to retaliate. "Which she could copy from the internet, and pretend it's hers." "I'd argue, but since you are going to come up with a reply anyway, I

deem it pointless to try." She shrugged, all the enthusiasm of the ti

"Give it a try," I whispered, getting my posture in order, trying not to convey how a ected I was by her defeated countenance. It wasn't a topic for an argument, it would seem, something else was bothering

"It is not about university. Doesn't matter," she whispered, confirming my suspicions, her gaze no longer challenging as earlier, and was now not meeting mine for the first time in the exchange. "Anyway, you

"I believe I did," I smiled as she looked at me, and she addressed me a

"What was your opinion on the book while you were writing it?"

were promising some king of a quote?"

weak smile. "What do you want to know?"

entirely gone.

her.

"I hated it, and still do." I chuckled upon noticing that she was sending daggers at me with her gaze. "I told you when you bought it. It is a horrible book, and doesn't do justice to anything I had tried to "What do you mean it doesn't do anything justice?" she feistily wondered. I only smiled, knowing there was more to come before she would be finished. I could see that passion about the subject, the same one I had when I was her age, and I knew she had a lot to add as a second thought to her initial words. Therefore, I just waited. I wasn't wrong. "From what I have read, not only did you give an accurate representation of every work, but you also gave the history and your thoughts. It isn't necessary for those to overlap with those of the creator, but nonetheless it doesn't make them any less of an opinion."

"You are by far my least severe critic," I stated matter-of-factly, before even realizing the words had le my lips. I shot her a smile, and took a sip from my drink. "The thing is I am never satisfied with a work because I have this belief that one can't represent something which

Kate crashed her wrists together, placing her elbows on top of the

centuries have built through one essay."

table and rested her chin on her open palms. She tilted her head to the side, and with that rarely noticeable glint in her eyes and through a smile said, "Why makes you think that?" "The reason I immersed myself in the world of architecture is because I thought it would help me get a better perception of the world." "And did it?" she eagerly wondered. I chuckled at her impatience. "Architecture is not just the outer show of a building, just as people are not only the appearance they carry. When we look at a person, it is not just the color of the eyes we catch, I teased. She smiled back. However, she scorned, "You can't take anything seriously, can you?" "What are you talking about?" I conveyed outrage as best as I could. "I am perfectly serious," I mumbled, before continuing, "For me, it is the same with architecture. We don't just look at the appearance of

the building, we look for what's within it and the beauty hidden in the walls. Upon getting to know a person we want to know what makes that person tick. And, well, we also want to know the story of a building so that we can admire it, and its appearance." She squinted her eyes at me. "Well, isn't that usually the purpose? Knowing the building?" "Not for many people. There are those who just cherish the contrast of shades, and combination of shapes, which makes it truly remarkable when one thinks of the fact they can divide that from the soul of the place." "So, some people don't see it as a complete study, just a partial one?" "Exactly," I a irmed, nodding absentmindedly.

nor is it the way the person smiles. Those are the additional benefits,"

"So, how can they call themselves architects if they don't care about the story of what they are studying?" She looked perplexed. "I don't understand." "Me neither," I commented. As much as I would have loved to remain chatting with Catherine, one look at my watch was enough to let me know I needed to get home. For one, I was tired. I had quite a lot of paperwork to cover, Catherine back to the university, where we parted. and sliding in the driver's seat, finding tranquility for the first time during the day to rethink on the gravity of my brother's words.

and I had a long day ahead of me, so I asked for the check and walked I rushed to the parking lot, throwing my things in the back of the car, Continue reading next part □