The unexpected knock on my o ice door made me look up from the documents, I was arranging, for a split of a second. I wasn't scheduled to meet with anyone in particular, but I dismissed the thought, since it was no wonder I had someone stopping by, given I was in the middle of my o ice hours. It seemed o ice hours was something all students waited for, since they seemed to barge in constantly whenever they would get the chance. Some of them used the periods to ask reasonable questions,

Bård: Dream On

and others came just to show their face in my o ice hoping that it would gain them bonus points or positive remarks. It was needless to attempt to comment how wrong they actually were. There was no way they were going to get bonus points whatsoever if they didn't understand a single word of what they were asking. Which some of them didn't, to my utter disappointment. I lowered my head, shaking those thoughts away, and fixing my gaze back on the paper, before loudly giving the permission needed, "Come on in." The door opened, but before I could manage to look up and meet my companion's gaze, I heard a familiar voice greeting me, "Excuse me

professor. Am I interrupting? Should I come back?" I tried to ignore the fluttering of my stomach, and how much that voice had become dear to me over the last few months. I paused at her words, my entire body growing rigid, thinking bitterly to myself, 'Professor? I am a professor now, not Bård.' My heart started beating faster right away at the thought of how disheveled I probably was. I could feel my blood coursing through my veins wildly, heading to one particular destination, with the intention of making me blush. It was not longer than a few moments later, and I was certain the outcome was showing, as I silently prayed Catherine didn't notice anything whatsoever, hoping that if in case she did, she would prescribe it to the huge pile of files on my desk and the mess

that my o ice was. "No, not interrupting. Come on in," I finally voiced out, trying to calm the trembling in my voice to something less noticeable. I cursed under my breath – the period I had remained silent, most likely gawking at the woman before me, wondering what she was doing at my o ice door. Catherine seemed oblivious to the debates battling for Troy in my mind, as well as the change in my behavior. towards me while shutting the door. Those ten seconds while I was out of her vision entirely, provided enough time for me to look at her

I sighed silently, as she walked into my o ice, turning her back countenance, shamelessly scanning her figure completely. She was wearing a dark blue dress which was only reaching slightly above her knees, her back slightly revealed by the opening in the model. My eyebrows furrowed on their own accord at the fact she appeared to be a few inches taller, and my gaze immediately tracked down her shape and settled on her feet. The dierence in height I had noticed was easily explained away with the heels she was wearing, dark blue just like her dress. She had a bag thrown over her le shoulder. Her hair was let down, pinned only at a single place on the right side. I brought my gaze up only seconds before she turned around and looked directly in my eyes, addressing me a swi smile. As I

responded with one of my own, I eagerly asked, "Okay, what can I help you with?" She opened her bag, her expression puzzled as her fingers danced inside. When she looked up again her cheeks were flushed. I gave her an encouraging smile, and she took out a notebook and looked at me, while saying, "Do you mind if I," she cut herself of, as her finger pointed to my le side, right next to me on the same side of the desk. It became clear as a day to me that she was insinuating, or rather wondering, if she could pass on my side of the desk. It would prove to

be more useful because that way she could follow up on my explanation more easily. Yet, I knew it to be a danger zone, but I couldn't very well say no to her, now could 1? So, I nodded

a irmatively in her direction and whispered one tiny, hesitant 'Sure'.

She headed towards her destination, by my side, while opening the notebook and looking for the problem, her eyebrows furrowing at her apparent inability to locate it. When, she shu led closer and was standing right next to me, she exclaimed, "Hah, here it is." She placed the notebook and therefore the problem on the desk in front of me. Her hand gently landed on the desk next to her notebook, and she leaned in, supporting herself on her palm. Since she was standing all too close to me as to disrupt my ability to block out her presence, I could feel myself lost in the heat radiating from her body. I couldn't really deny her presence once I practically sensed her breath on my skin. Uneven, but calm. Focused. With all the strength I could gather, I chose to ignore it. Ignore everything that was close to making me jump out of my chair and kiss her right then and there. Chose to ignore what her presence was doing to my mind and body. How it controlled me as though it was a toxin designed strictly to elicit such response from me.

I tried to focus on the question at hand, the one she had placed in front of me, but from the corners of my eyes I was able to observe her moves mostly against my will and blurry at best, as it seemed my mind was set on ruining every bit of self-control le in my body. I decided to shake the thoughts away, and instead persistently and irreversibly fixed my gaze on the page. Once I set my focus where it was needed, I could see the di iculty of the problem and I could also see the solution – the way to get to it, at least. But, before doing the solving for her, I put aside the fact she was by far the best student in the class, wanting to make sure whether she had tried to do it by herself.

"Did you try to solve it?" I asked, glancing at her. "A few times – all I got is on the next page. I know that the procedure I am using is correct, I can just see that the number I am getting is in no way correct." Turning on the following page, I scanned the solution and was quite amazed that she had managed to see that slightly existent distance from the correct answer. I found her mistake in just a few moments, it was more of a mix up rather than lack of knowledge, so I picked up a pen to write it down for her. Knowing she hated scribbles in her notebooks I got a separate piece of paper to write on, but she interrupted the action with the words, "I don't mind if you write in there too." I raised my eyebrow quizzically. "Really?" I was questioning if she was

being skeptical, or if she was trying to tease me, but when I was met with an extremely serious expression I realized it was none of the

I started writing the le -out details down, and she leaned in closer in order to follow the written better, but what she didn't predict was my reaction when in the process a strand of her hair le its position and

That was it. I couldn't hold it in anymore and it was then or never. The

I le my chair with speed I rarely applied, at which she pushed herself

above.

"Yes, really," she whispered.

brushed my shoulder, tingling my neck.

latter I wasn't willing to tolerate.

from the desk, stalking a step or two backwards, as I faced her, using the opportunity to lock my gaze in hers. I placed my hands on her cheeks grasping her face tightly and leaned in to kiss her. I couldn't have anticipated the amount of joy which coursed through my body as our lips sealed together, let alone perceive and describe the feeling. Only aware of how long desired the action was, I realized it was just as electrifying as I thought it would be. When I let go of her cheeks and parted our lips with a clearly audible sound in my silent o ice, she stepped back a little, her eyes a riddle I couldn't read. I thought the response which would greet me back would be a disciplinary slap. However, proving my prediction wrong, she moved back towards me, and closed the gap between us again, returning the kiss. Both of us were moving to the rhythm of our interlocked lips, as the

so ness of her inviting mouth impeccably drew me closer by the moment, and I was growing more aroused at each sigh and exhale. I clinched her at the waist, as her hands found their way to my back.

Every move her hands made, every gasp she let out in the open, every warm wet breath we shared struck me within each cell of my body, making me beg for more in silence. My desire for her was unstoppable, and wanting to be with her was beyond a description of any words. Slowly, I moved towards the door of my o ice, leading her there with me, aware I had to make sure it was locked. No way was I letting someone interrupt us despite the time or place, nor was I capable of permitting circumstances in spoiling this intoxicating moment. I almost forgot how firmly I was holding on to her, but my attention was drawn to that particular detail when I had to let go and back her against the door.

I heard her exhale against the shell my ear in a breathless moan, and involuntarily I shuddered, my entire body covering in goose bumps. I knew I wasn't better either, when my breathing turned into a string of weak moans. I turned the key into the lock making sure the job was done properly by pulling on the handle. Once I was convinced we were sure not to be interrupted, I could let go of the tension between my shoulder blades. My eyes were dancing over her face, her eyes were closed and her cheeks undeniably flushed. I had to bite the inside of my cheek to suppress a groan. Suddenly, she opened her eyes and fixed them on me, asking through her heavy breathing, "Why did you stop?" The desire with which she asked me that question was liquid gold for my ears. She was in my o ice. We were alone, our bodies sealed to one another's. It was everything I ever wanted. I had no idea why I had stopped, so her question remained unanswered. But I did move in for her lip, wanting to kiss her once again.

However, without my instruction my hands got there before my lips. My thumb was trailing on the edge of her lower lip as the rest of my hand rested lifelessly over her cheek. The moment her lips connected with my thumb, they stirred a reaction of lust through me, taking me by the surprise behind the action. Her hand fell on top of mine as means to grabbing ahold of mine and moments later she laid another kiss on the palm of my hand. Her other hand was lying flat on my back mapping out my body, before finding a rest on the small of my back and she pulled me closer to her body, bringing her lips against

my ear and whispering, "You shouldn't have stopped."

She withdrew halfway and our lips met again, beginning an even deeper and more tantalizing kiss, which carried all the sloppiness and mystery of first kisses. It was polished with all the unfamiliarity

nobody ever wanted lost, thus making me desire it as a constancy in my life. She gasped in the kiss, and I took the opportunity to ask for permission to invade her mouth, and as my tongue was allowed to explore her mouth and my hands were already set on the task of exploring her body, I knew I was making sure her breaths fastened their pace significantly. Her grip on me kept shi ing, but also grew tighter with every new moment, until I felt pain on my back from the very intensity with which she held me. I skipped on her lips with a so groan, and locking her gaze in mine, I whispered, "Are you trying to bruise me? Because there are easier and more visible ways to mark." She gave me an unamused glare, and if I were to be honest, said gaze was deserved thanks to my last remark. That was enough of a distraction, and even though it took her a while to realize the intensity of her grasp, as soon as she did she loosened it up a bit, with a mumbled apology. Her cheeks tinted bright pink, and I smirked. I dipped down to trail kisses against her craned neck, and since I was

far too aroused to continue the shy foreplay we'd settled upon, I took a drastic action in placing my hands on her hips under her dress and picking her up from the ground, forcing her to wrap her legs around my waist. She complied with the same enthusiasm with which I had

My hands moved to touch her skin, so desired a price as to make me unable to contain my advantage for more than a few brief moments. I began nipping on her collarbone, intending to leave a visible mark there, never – in the slightest – expecting Kate to make the next move. I was proven completely wrong when her hands le the few strands of hair they had been entangled in and started unbuttoning my shirt. I wasn't planning on addressing a complaint. I could hear her every breath against my neck, each exhale I detected on my skin

made the invitation.

and every moan sent a vibe through my body. Forbidden fruit always was the best and she was nothing but forbidden. I let go of her once she finished unbuttoning my shirt and gently put her down, allowing her to take it o of me. Slowly she did just that, her hands moving along my skin as she was taking her time in sliding it of my shoulders and arms, not paying it attention as the shirt was brushed o my body. As the shirt descended on the ground, Kate began kissing my neck with roaming hands over my entire body, converting every clear thought into undeniable consideration of my arousal. As though we were connected, the craving for more enveloped us both and we could feel it in the strength with which we held on to each other. I recognized the feeling in her, and by the look she was giving me, I was certain she could see it in me as well. The clothes started piling on the floor quickly as we disrobed with enthusiasm, until we found each other stark naked in the middle of my o ice. Our gazes met for a moment, before I picked her up once

again and our thighs interlocked, the nakedness of which added to the thrill. I moved towards the sofa, a piece of furniture which I usually hated to see in my o ice and which was quickly earning, its

Refusing to even begin to imagine the consequences of being caught, I caged her body with mine, finding settlement when she parted her thighs to welcome me. Her breathing was hitching, growing more labored. Her hands were playing in my hair, drawing circles on my

I wanted the kiss to last a long while, but I was feeling the eeriness of an unprompted question, so I broke it o, bringing my lips against her ear, and asking, "Are you sure you want me to go on with this?"

There was no doubt in the fiber of my being I wanted her entirely

scalp and she pulled me down to seal our lips in a kiss.

long desired, bonus points.

surrendered at the very moment, but I simply had to make sure she was truly there. The desire which burned in me would have been di icult to fight o, but is she chose so, I was more than willing to stop. Only, I wanted her to believe we should take that step further. "Bård, Bård! Hey!" were the words spoken, which broke through to my consciousness. My brother's voice was slowly, but surely drawing me away from my dream, which in the state of dazed confusion made me curse. I wanted so desperately to hold on to the dream, as it was without doubt the best I've had in quite a while, and most definitely one I would wish to turn into a reality. The persistence of my brother called me out of the sweet slumber, nevertheless, and once I was able to open my eyes for long enough to realize where I was, and grasped on the fact the last time I had such a dream so vividly, I was practically a teenager, I cursed again for an entirely di erent reason.

Groaning in the process, I reluctantly picked myself up from the bed, glaring at my brother once I was up-righted. I didn't wish for it to sound like a snarl, but when I spoke it was hardly anything else,

My brother had an amused smile dancing on his lips accompanied with an amused expression on his smug face, and I didn't want to think about the boner I was spotting at the time, so I arched an eyebrow at him and luckily he spared any comments on the matter. I

could only hope it would be of lasting duration.

"What do you want?"

"Dinner is almost ready. Everyone is waiting for you to get down," he mumbled. I ran a hand over my face, realizing how better it would be if I were likely to be interrogated if anything slipped past Vegard, either intentionally or accidently. My brother was making his way out the room, and I sighed in relief, only to do it too soon since as he was at the door he teasingly sang through his words, "Might wanna take a cold shower first." The groan which le my lips was followed by a snarl, "Get out." As per fashion, the reply I got was a sassy smirk and a sco. It was, however, better than the occasional outright laughter of lunatics on Vegard's menu. I resisted throwing a pillow at him. I got up to get sorted, praying that at least this once the family would be able to look over the lack of private life I had, and leave that conversation for a time when I wouldn't be so obviously mopping over someone.

Shaking my head to the obvious upcoming disappointment, knowing Vegard would definitely bring the subject up to mess with me, I dug through my suitcase in search of a good shirt and a pair of proper trousers. Once I fished them out of the pile, leaving a mess behind, I noted to myself to sort the clothes into the wardrobe a er dinner. Grabbing my phone I reluctantly headed for the door. Throwing a longing glance towards the bed, the warmth of which was very inviting at the time, I opened the door and headed downstairs.

Just as Vegard had mentioned, my family was piled up downstairs, Matthew and Jane rummaging through the pile of gi s under the

three, most likely searching out their own.

When my mum's eyes landed on me, in my – most likely – disheveled state, she asked, "Did you sleep well, honey?" I didn't register the question quickly enough to reply on time. "I would bet," Vegard mumbled out immediately, eyes fixed on me and a well hidden smirk on his lips. I sent him a humorless glare before answering mum's question, "Ja, "Oh, for the love of Pete. Let's sit down at the table before she starts hugging you all again," dad intercepted from somewhere in the kitchen, drawing in a few chuckles from everyone expect mum, who headed to the kitchen, an intention to bicker obvious in her stance. I was partially glad I was saved that hug, since it was almost always the beginning of questions about how I have been, anything new or

interesting in my life, and eventually the unavoidable question, 'So

Using the escape dad provided for me, I snuck out to the living room to locate my bag of gi s and leave them under the tree. When Matthew and Jane saw it however, they took control over it and decided to help me place my gi s in a decorative way, whatever those words meant. Jane, without doubt, was the lead on the job, and Matthew and I had to follow direct orders, which meant us

ending up bossily corrected every few seconds. At least, I was smiling, and had completely forgotten about the upcoming dinner, until Vegard peeked in the room briefly, saying, "Okay, you three kids," he pointed out, sending me a smile. "Dinner is ready, and we are all

what about a gal.'

sitting down. Come on."

simultaneously angry.

you bring her over?"

"She had to go home."

opening.

With a little pouting from Jane, we managed to head for the dining room. Dinner was set, and the very second we sat down, everyone unceremoniously reached out for one dish. It was the one good thing about my family, I didn't have to wait my turn. But, my appetite wasn't particularly present and I ended up trying, and failing for the most part, to fake one. Given the amount I normally ate, it wasn't unusual for mum to take notice. She waited until dinner came close to the very end, to ask, "What is happening with you that you didn't eat anything?" "I am not hungry," I croaked out. "That is a new development," dad spoke up, before I could get another word out. "Did you eat upstairs before you got down?" I knew dad was joking and I knew that was the reason the entire table was laughing, but the lump in my throat didn't allow me to say anything but a single, "No," and even that sounded defeated, whilst

Mum cast me a glance, which spoke she knew something was o, and I averted my eyes hoping it would be enough so that she didn't ask. Even if her intention was to do so, Vegard didn't leave me out with an

To the whole room, he declared, "He is missing his girlfriend and his

I tried sending him a few daggers to stop him, but he didn't seem to

"A girlfriend?" mum exclaimed, clearly enthusiastic, "Well, why didn't

"She is notmy girlfriend," I gritted through clenched teeth, unable to

He didn't seem to hold a care in the world, once again, and he said,

"Oh, that's a shame," dad joined the conversation. "What's her

appetite and mind are not entirely present."

believe Vegard said itdespite everything.

"I don't have a girlfriend," I said, trying to have the subject dropped, but at the same time Jane decided to interrupt us by announcing Catherine's full name. And, from there the table erupted in chatter. My mother was asking why Jane knew of the matter before she was told, dad was congratulating me, Bjarte was mumbling inappropriate jokes – in this instance commenting on how considering her last name we were really meant to be - which usually earned him disapproval from mum, Mary was smiling fondly and Vegard used the opportunity to drive me to the very edge, "So, when are you going to kiss her?" The entire table went silent, everyone turning towards me, and the expectation morphed in their gazes was beyond annoying. Fixing Vegard with a glare, I didn't try to hide the bitterness as I replied, "I tried. She pushed me away." Grasping the napkin, I wiped my mouth and placed it back on the table, and using the silence which had set in the room as a consequence to my last declaration, I le my seat with the words, "Now if we are done here, I am going to bed." I didn't even pay attention whether anyone tried to call a er me, as I stormed up the stairs and into the room, feeling worse than I had felt in days. Locking the door behind me, I leaned against it to try and gather up

my feelings. I hated how easily I was brought to the verge of tears, and if possible it was what made me feel even worse. I changed back into my pajamas, and crawled under the covers with my phone in my hand. Setting the alarm, I didn't want to reach out and place it on the nightstand, so I shoved it under the pillow and tucked myself in,

I groaned against my pillow as a way of diminishing the misery I felt, but that attempt was incredibly unsuccessful, so I tried it once more.

I tried falling asleep, turning and twisting in my bed, and I even tried counting sheep in reminder of the good old times when that actually did the job, but nothing seemed to work. I wasn't itchy and my skin wasn't crawling, so the problem was mostly in the racing of my mind. I turned around, and let my gaze wonder out the window, thinking that might help. The night sky was beautiful and I let the weight of the day fall over my eyelids, and slowly I closed my eyes. The thought

I missed the opening of the presents was the last coherence I

I woke up when a so knock came from the way of the door.

Groaning, I sat up and leaned on the headboard, lulling my head over

"Come in," I called out, my voice a tad too hoarse. It wasn't much of a

At first I thought however was behind the door, couldn't come in, since I had locked it the night before; but then I remembered waking

throwing the duvet over my head.

managed, before I blacked out.

surprise considering how hung-over I felt.

it and against the wall.

with Catherine?"

simply skipped that bit.

"Did you talk to her later on?"

little he, himself, believed the said.

moment, so I rushed to stop him.

exclaimed, half-hissed, "Wait!"

Vegard scowled. "What about her?"

promptly sealed his lips shut.

once more.

"It's about Maya."

And, still nothing.

up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom and recalled leaving the door unlocked. The door cracked open only slightly, and Vegard's curls poked inside. Unable to help it, I raised a questioning eyebrow at him, and prompted him inside with a jerky twitch of my right hand. He stepped inside slowly, closing the door behind him. He stalked forward, pulling up a chair and flopping down on it. "I wanted to apologize about last night. I was being a baggadicks, was it the term?" I laughed, faced with Vegard using a term we used as teenagers, due to a misapprehension of a slip up of mine with the TV's program. "Yes, I believe it was," I confirmed. "I am really sorry, Bård," he provided once more. "I overstepped, and I shouldn't have." I smiled as best as I could manage, but it was considerably weak. "It's okay. No hard feelings."

Vegard seemed hesitant to continue, but nevertheless, he did voice out his next question. "Do you want to talk about what happened

"Nothing particular to talk about, really." I paused, unsure how to proceed. "We went out to a restaurant, and we talked about anything and everything. There was dancing involved at a certain point during

Despite remaining unsaid, Vegard seemed to get my meaning, so I

"I leaned in, but before I could, she pushed me away and with an apology le me standing there." Gulping air around the lump in my

"Hell, maybe it's for the better." Vegard's tone of voice stated just how

I hu ed, but o ered no words to continue our conversation. With a nod, he got up from his seat, and a thought came to me at that

I launched from my position to sit at the edge of the bed, as I half-

"Yes?" he murmured, a confirmation I had his undivided attention

unfamiliar, so it turned out the easiest way to do so was by blurting,

Supporting my elbows on my knees, I clasped my hands together and lowered my head over them, in an attempt to ease the tension in my shoulders. I began, "I know the reason why you keep opening that topic is your belief that I've hidden something from you regarding it."

"Bård," Vegard attempted pleadingly, but I shook my head, and he

"And, you are right," I provided next, looking up to catch my brother's

gaze, finally admitting, "I have not been completely honest."

Breaching the subject a er so long attempting avoidance felt

the evening. And, when I dropped her o, and I figured -"

throat, I informed my brother, "It was pretty bad."

Shrugging, I said, "It was the last time I saw her."

Vegard's brows furrowed, but he sat back down.

Vegard's expression showed exactly how little he was surprised by the fact. My lips quirked against my own volition. "I don't know how to go about this." My brother made an inquiry. "I figured since you approached the matter, you'd already planned it out?" "I didn't exactly," I retorted, "The irony is, it was Kate who told me to be open with you." Vegard's surprise at that was evident. "She knows about Maya?" I nodded briefly. "I might have taken her to the cabin awhile back, and told her about it." "We will get back to that point later." He smirked at me knowingly, before returning to the previous topic with, "Now what was it about Maya you wanted to tell me?"

"What I hid wasn't exactly -" I cut myself o . Instead, "I did stop feeling so for Maya rather soon a er our break up. The way she broke up with me made me realize I could never go back to her, no matter

"Than what was the problem?" Vegard insisted, when I kept silent for

"I didn't grieve a er Maya, I was disappointed over the fact I was

Admitting it both to myself and my brother, I stated, "Quite so."

The shy smile of reassurance which ghosted over my brother's lips informed me he already had a way of fixing it, if it was not already

"That was dumb, but you are known for doing dumb stu ." I tried arguing, but he beat me to the punch, asking, "So, a trip to the cabin,

I didn't even bother to open my eyes, as I tried to sense the phone under my fingers. The buzzing made me curse I actually set an alarm the previous night, but once I had the device in my hand the buzzing stopped. I wasn't expecting it to stop so soon, so I cracked an eye open only to see I had a text message. Both my eyes snapped open, ignoring the inconvenience of the daylight, when I noticed the name

Vegard's voice was full of astonishment, "So, you let the guilt gnaw at

what."

eh?"

following the message.

over a minute.

In a whisper, I provided, "You."

"Me?" Vegard shrieked in surprise, rearing back.

stupid enough to let it a ect our relationship."

you and cast a shadow over what was le?"

Did you send the tree yet? God jul! J My eyebrows furrowed, as my mind tried to fight away the sleepaddled state in which I was and figure out what tree was actually referenced. I was about to give up and text asking what was she referring to when I realized she was talking about the Trafalgar Square Christmas tree, and was clearly joking about it as well. A month ago, yes! Merry Christmas, Kate! The message somehow made me feel better. I closed my eyes, and when another message unexpectedly buzzed, I scrambled to grab the phone immediately. Took you a while to get it, didn't it? I couldn't believe she managed to predict that, but I was feeling defensive. I just woke up L Sue me I held the phone until another message buzzed.

I wouldn't have ground rules for a lawsuit. (Yes, that was sarcasm)

I began laughing, completely unaware of the message which followed that, until my gaze landed on the enlightened screen and I read out,

My fingers were halfway through typing 'I miss you' when I stopped myself, and instead sent, Not as much as you would miss your family

The response was immediate, Valid point. Have a nice day, Bård. You too A er the text I fell down on the pile of pillows again, the day already seeming an improvement from the previous one, and I was willing to put aside the kissing fiasco for long enough to embrace how good I felt at the moment. The loud grumbling in my stomach made

From there my days consisted of spending the mornings in bed, lazily getting up only to spend the rest of it on the sofa staring at the screen of my laptop while working or the screen of the TV, catching some movie or show. The first diversity I got was the occasional message from Vegard, which at the beginning aimed to apologize and lately only to annoy. The other was Catherine, and the texts which we kept

The conversation was as interesting as usual, with the existence of a certain unspoken rule. Ironically, it was a rule about remaining silent

me realize that maybe it was time to get out of bed.

At Trafalgar with Fred. I miss Norway.

if you were here.

exchanging.

on certain topics. We went on a date, as lame as the excuse I provided to cover for it, and we never talked about it. We almost kissed and we never talked about it. And, instead of it bothering me, I found it refreshingly new. What bothered me was I didn't know where I stood, which was something that had never happened to me before and the very novelty of it all, had me at a disadvantage. I was slouching on the sofa one day, my eyelids half closed and my entire body exhausted, torn between reality and sleep, when the phone buzzed on the table. I didn't want to get up so I decided to ignore it, but since I had nothing better to do at the time and curiosity was always my weak spot, it took no more than a couple of minutes before I was moving in attempts to grab the phone. Stop lying around and get to work. You have a paper to publish. For a moment I though the message was from Vegard, so I had to double-check to make sure it was Catherine. Smirking, I typed in a

Mere moments later my phone buzzed with the reply. Were you

Scrunching my nose, I shook my head and texted back. I might have

The response came within moments. I didn't know. I had an idea

reply. I am working, thank you very much!

really? Why do I find that hard to believe?

been lying around. How did you know?

though. How are you passing the time?

up on Catherine's advice and work.

Forcing myself to get out of bed is the main activity most of the time. What about you? The aim of the text was more to amuse than to confess to the truth, which it also did. In a way. I laid back down, throwing my feet over a pillow and fixed my eyes on the screen when a message notification came in. Trying to gain weight, are you? I am working on the presentation for the dissertation. Ha, ha! Is this a way of telling me I am too fat? How is the dissertation going? replied, hastily pressing send, which made me wince. If I had thought it through, I would have probably deleted the first question. I was certain I would have done it. Cursing myself, I stared at the phone, waiting a text from Catherine. When nothing came within five minutes, I childishly began to wonder whether my words caused an insult. When a er another five minutes a message didn't come through, I gave up on receiving a response, but my nerves wouldn't settle in. Pacing helped for a while, but when that didn't work I had to find something else. The show on the TV was no longer spiking my interest as it did at first, so I decided to follow

I fired up my laptop and opened the paper I was working on, going through the last paragraphs before continuing. Surprisingly, work progressed much faster than it usually did. I was almost through with an entire page when my phone buzzed with a message and I perked up, realizing I forgot it was actually anxiety which had me begin

working in the first place. Finishing the sentence I was in the middle of writing, I got up to get my phone from the sofa where I had le it upon getting up. Though I didn't know, I was secretly hoping the message was from Catherine and my heart was fluttering as though I was a teenager. Pleased to discover it was indeed from her, I immediately opened it. I am sorry I ran o, but mum needed help with something. The dissertation is fine, which means it is unfinished, unpolished and I have low hopes for its success at the moment. P.S. It is a crime to use fat and yourself in a line with positive connotation. Now there I have ground rules to work with J Shaking my head, I returned, I'd hate it if you sued, so I will restrain myself from crossing the line. Also, I am sure your work is neither of those things. Would you like me to look over it? The message which followed had me smiling. If I say yes, is it going to appear as though I've texted you for the sole purpose of leading you into o ering help?

I mused to myself how the message suited her personality perfectly. It was the very reserve and shyness, the anxiety and hesitation, all in one. And, it was what made her so special. For the first time since I met her, I got to thinking I actually ended up liking a woman whose personality was entirely opposite of the one my ex had. Maya had been anything but reserved, never hesitant when talking to people. It was as though I needed the change without being entirely aware of it. As confusing as that realization was, I embraced it. Realizing I had been immersed in silly thoughts for a few minutes, I texted right back, not wanting to keep her waiting. I am not a child to be led into such a thing. And, of course not. Mail me the document and I will go through it and write suggestions. Sounds good? By the time the next message buzzed, I was biting my lip. Sounds great actually. I think I will have to take you out for a cup of co ee and cake when I get back to say thanks. Even though I wanted to text 'That could be arranged', I settled on

writing, Now that is all the bribe I need. I'd love to keep chatting, but I think you might have cursed me into inspiration since I ended up writing a page over the last half hour. So, I am going to get back to that and see what I can make work. Sorry. Despite the fact I didn't want my words to sound as though I was ditching the conversation, they still ended up sounding like as such. Catherine didn't seem to mind though. Don't apologize. I am glad I managed to spark something in that rusty brain of yours. Good luck with work. Thanks for your o er. Have a lovely day. Hastily, I typed my reply. Have a lovely day as well. I am warning you, we will be discussing the point where you insulted my brain seriously. When no response came, I dropped the phone down beside me on the table, and turned towards my computer. I ended up working for the rest of the day, which I had to cut short at midnight in order to get

some sleep. I saved my progress, which despite my skepticism, was considerate and headed o on the second floor. Dropping the phone on the nightstand, I dug a new set of clothes from the wardrobe and

A erwards, I ended up falling asleep within minutes. I didn't even remember sleep overpowering me, but I knew it was consequence to the mental exhaustion. I had no recollection of the dreams that night, but I knew they were undisturbed, which was new. I almost always

When I woke up I grabbed my phone to check the time, only to find a message from Kate. Good morning. Hope you had a productive day yesterday. If inspiration is still there, don't waste it on the couch.

Scrambling from under the covers to sit upright, I smirked at the

Continue reading next part □

moved towards the bathroom to shower.

ended up waking at least once during the night.

device mischievously, already forming my reply.

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