

Bård: The Weight

I was beyond nervous, ringing on the bell of Adela's house unannounced. Kate didn't know I was coming over to take her to the airport – I had not called, but there was no way I was letting that scene at the mall be our last interaction. There was no way I was letting her go without trying to apologize first, even if the try was desultory. I loved her too much to be able to leave without one last attempt at making it work.

When Adela opened the door, I felt my heart skip a beat. I knew I was early, but there was still the fear of them having le earlier. I sagged in relief, providing a greeting, "Hey."

"Bård, hi," she greeted back with a small smile tugging her lips, resting her head on the edge of the doorframe. If she was at all surprised to see me standing there, she didn't show it. "What can I do for you?"

"I was hoping you'd let me in so I could talk to Kate." I hopefully provided, my eyebrows twitching in a restless way which I was convinced looked ludicrous.

"You can come in, but Kate already le for England."

"Oh," I responded, already mapping the closest route to the airport in my mind, "well in that case I will try and catch her at the airport."

"No, Bård, she le three days ago," Adela provided.

Chills ran down my body. "She is gone?"

"Yeah, she said she didn't have a reason to stay anymore and rebooked the flight," Adela elaborated, stepping aside and inviting me in with a simple head tilt.

I had a feeling it wasn't going to be a good conversation. But, I still stepped inside.

I threw the keys in the bowl the second I stepped through the door, and began tearing o one article of clothing a er another, heading upstairs for the shower. I dumped the pile on my bed, unmade as it was, and headed in the bathroom.

Standing under a hot spray of water, I finally allowed myself to think back to Adela's words from earlier. She only stayed that long because of you, Bård.

Reaching for the shampoo, I squeezed a generous amount on my palm and delved in my hair, trying to sort my messy thoughts through digging my fingers in my skull.

I think they wanted her back a month ago or so. She only stayed for you.

My eyes burned under the spray of water rolling over me, as I tried to hold on to the scream threatening to slip from my lips and drown in the noisy fall of water. I scrubbed all sweat from my body, aching at the memory of Adela's painful words.

She said she was right to assume it was just for a little while. I tried talking sense into her, but...

I remembered how Adela's headshake was both disappointed and dismissive at the same time, and my heart lurched in my chest anew, just as it had done when she had spoken those words the first time.

I turned o the water, a er rinsing my body, and shook my head to splatter the droplets of water hanging on the strands of my hair. I stepped out the shower cabin, running my hand over my face, resulting in forcing small springs of water from what had gathered in my eyebrows to end up trailing down my neck.

Snatching a clean towel from the cupboard, I wrapped it around my waist, and proceeded to dig out another in order to have it thrown over my shoulder. I returned back to the bedroom, all the while rolling strands of hairs between two ends of the towel, feeling the material soaking in the water under my fingertips. Grabbing the towel firmly with my le hand, I pulled a drawer open to dig through my clothes, in order to snatch out a pair of boxers.

Continuing to dry my hair, I twisted my fingers in the other towel, untying it from around my hips, only to let it drop around my ankles.

Shi ing my weight, I pulled them on, and a er giving my hair one last tug, threw myself under the covers and dozed o in a restless slumber.

A er all, when nothing goes right – go to sleep.

I woke up with a pounding head, and the constant ringing of the doorbell didn't help my headache in the slightest. I groaned as I flipped the covers over the edge of the bed, not bothering to prevent them from crumbling to the floor.

"Ughh," I sounded.

I groaned as I rose from the bed, paddling down the stairs and ripping the door open with a stressed, "What."

Vegard's quirked eyebrow and his calculating expression greeted me. He didn't even blink at the lack of punctuation in my greeting. His voice sounded a thin line away from menacing, "Well, I was wondering where my brother was." With those words he pushed past me inside, leaving me no choice but to close the door, which I slammed in order to prove a point, and then I followed him inside.

The reproaches came the second I stepped inside my living room. Vegard was already seated, and he stated, "Is there are a reason I can't get in touch with you a couple of days in a row?"

"None of your business, Vegard," I couldn't help but snarl, before heading for the kitchen and grabbing a bottle of beer from the fridge.

Vegard's voice greeted my turned back from the doorway, "It is when I leave messages, and he doesn't respond." He followed my lead and grabbed a beer for himself, just as I popped my own open. Snatching the beer opener from me, he used the moment, to make me look at him and declared, "I worry you bastard."

I snorted.

A hand collided with the back of my head, hard and unyielding, snapping me out of my rudeness. And then my ear shell was twisted, and I was being dragged back in the living room and deposited on the sofa, Vegard's voice determined, "Now talk."

"Nothing to talk about," I stated, lamely and unconvincingly, rubbing my reddened ear shell once it was released.

I didn't meet Vegard's eyes, since I knew just how unbelieving his expression was. His next words confirmed my thoughts, "You know I can bully if I need to and I am not giving up on this until I receive a reply which I deem convincing enough."

I took one deep breath and informed him, "Kate broke up with me." "What? Why?"

Humming sarcastically, I said, "Because I was a dick, and said something I shouldn't have."

"Did you try and talk to her?" Vegard inquired, "Did you apologize?"

"I tried the second I said the words, but she didn't," I trailed o , knowing Vegard would understand. "I went to pick her up for the airport on time for the scheduled flight, but –"

A er few moments of silence, my brother carefully prompted, "But?"

I swallowed around the lump in my throat, responding, "She had moved the flight and was already home at the time."

Vegard's eyebrows furrowed on their own accord. "Did you call her?"

"I don't think this conversation should be over the phone, ironically."

Vegard hummed as a response, before inquiring, "So, I take it you have a plan?"

He knew me so well, and I appreciated that at the moment more than I thought I would. "Yeah, I was thinking I should go when she is supposed to defend her dissertation?"

"Are you sure that is best?" he wondered, thoughtful. "The audience and the stress, what if she blocks when she sees you?"

I wasn't denying the thought had crossed my mind, and I had already preceded Vegard's thinking, so I had an idea regarding that already. "I will scamper in the back, and talk to her a erward." As an

erthammer, I added, "Besides, then it would be a lesser likelihood she would punch me in the face."

Vegard chuckled, stating, "It wouldn't stop most people, but I don't think she would, even if it were in private."

"I know," I murmured, nodding my agreement as well.

Vegard gulped a drink from his bottle, his Adam's apple bobbing as he swallowed. "So, when are you going to England?"

"Something over two weeks." I stopped a beat, before stating, a little longingly, "I'm going to get her back."

"I am sure you will," Vegard stated, dropping his bottle on the table, before slapping his palms over his thighs and wondering, "So, how about I get you completely wasted tonight?"

"I thought such fiascos were forbidden," I stated.

Vegard smirked. "Not under my watch, and this is a di erent circumstance. Your pining can be sensed all the way to my house. So –" he trailed o .

My response was but a whisper. "Yeah. Okay."

I did need it, and if it would stop the ache for even a little, then I was willing. And, since Vegard approved, I knew it would be good for us to relieve our teenage years, even for one night.

"I am going to get the leather pants out," I proclaimed, much to Vegard's amusement, since he grinned at me his flamboyant smile and winked approvingly.

I knew I was going to regret it once the hangover hit me like a freight train.

I couldn't care less.

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