Bård: Loneliness

I threw the pencil on the table and simultaneously jumped out of my chair. It was far too much and it was making me irritated. Driving me crazy even… Annoying me to the last nerve cell in my body. “It is enough for tonight. No more exams and no more of this shit.” - I thought to myself, while running my hand through my hair which by now was a mess, and thus my fingers tangled in it unavoidably. I did that when I was on edge, and certainly, tonight I did it quite often. Therefore it was more than obvious that I needed a break and I could feel that sensation throughout my entire body. The fact that I just got pissed over a blank page from a random student that couldn’t answer my question at the exam; was saying more than enough about my state.

I looked at the clock that was over the mantelpiece in my living room. Jesus, I have been working on this for more than ten hours. No wonder it was nerve-wrecking. Surely, it was not such a surprise considering that I spent the entire day checking exams, the same exercises over and over again, correcting mistakes and adding up points. The worst of this entire situation is that it was only the beginning. The exam session for September just ended and these were the first forty notebooks from the pile of five hundred that laid on my desk, the majority of them untouched. Only a week to go through them all and I dreaded it already. Man, if I continue continue in this pace—which I have to in order to finish them in time—I will go crazy.

Pacing down the room back and forth, I was considering which object to throw against the wall in my rage. But, instead my more rational half took over, so I made up my mind to go for a walk. But with whom? My brother was probably at home watching his wife tucking their kids in before going to bed or maybe he was already tucked in bed in his wife himself. I just couldn’t call him at this late time. Couldn’t call my parents either, since they had a tendency to worry about me constantly, like any other parent I suppose. Even though I was a grown up person, perfectly capable of taking care of myself. I couldn’t disturb their peace. They were surely at home, laughing over some silly thing. Maybe dad lost his glasses behind the sofa again or mum ruined some sock trying to sow it back to its original state. And besides, the very fact that I even considered calling my parents screamed desperation.

And me? Damn it, I was all alone since my ex-girlfriend dumped me for, in her opinion which she cheerfully shared with me, someone less boring. Someone who apparently was there for her all the time and who cared more about her needs and as it would seem whims, rather than their job. Only she forgot to share one thing, which was the job she minded more. I never found out whether she referred to the summer season talk show or my work at the university. I moved along soon after that and I knew I could never love or be with somebody who cannot accept me for who I am. Rather, I promised myself I would never allow such a thing to happen. But despite these thoughts, I have to admit that I was desperately in need of a lady’s smile.

My brain started collapsing because of its need of fresh air, so I grabbed my leather jacket from the hook in the hallway and since the keys were in my left pocket, I exited the house and locked the door behind me. I left my phone inside, but I had no intention to go back in so that I could take it. Whichever disturbance it might bring along wasn’t welcome. Who would call me, anyway? It there was anyone who’d enjoy my company in this late hour, I would have definitely thought to call them up myself. The weather outside was somewhat chilly, entirely not for just a thinly jacket; but not unsupportable so I climbed down the stairs. Like all the people in Norway, I was used to the cold, piercing air as well. Besides even though the weather was not exactly for a spring jacket, I didn’t go back to change it being aware and rather hoping that I would have my senses frozen. At the present it was kind of a requirement.

I had no idea where I was going. I had nothing fixed, and therefore I was walking through the streets entirely unaware of their appearance. I just realized that I was slowly relaxing as I wondered in the night like a man without a home. And was I more? Not really… I had no home, no one to go back to – my entire life was now the university and communicating to my family from time to time. My everyday life turned into sleeping, going to work and back, staring at the TV screen persistently hoping that it would keep me company, calling on my family for a casual lunch and back to sleeping once again. It was just waste.

My feet now stopped in front of a small restaurant which besides meals, served few drinks as well. I’d seen it before, having walked by it several times, but never actually took any interest in it. The very name “Frogner Bistro” had a ring of a place that I wouldn’t normally visit. Considering that, I decided that it would be good to do something new tonight.I entered inside with the hope that no one would recognize me at this morbid evening. The last thing I wanted to deal with right now was fame and fans. This melancholic state of mine could bear no more irritation.

I sat on the bar swiftly and waited for the bartender to notice my presence. It took him a long while to see me, because he had his eyes fixed on some game on the TV in the corner. And to the bargain he had his back turned towards me. I usually didn’t mind so much when the service was poor; but now because of the lack of good company and the strong feeling of wretchedness it was getting to me very quickly. Furthermore my nerves began defrosting and I was feeling every annoying sound from another continent. I intentionally coughed quite loudly with the intention of making him take his eyes of the screen. I wasn’t planning to be the only irritated guy in the place the entire night. And then I noticed that he was watching football. Oh, man this was going to take a while. I coughed again, this time even louder and it seemed as if I managed to attract his attention. Or maybe he was just planning to throw out the idiot that was disturbing the peace in the restaurant and preventing him from watching the game peacefully. However as soon as he realized that a new customer was present he smiled at me saying:

“Why didn’t you call, man? I was watching that thing.”- He shortly pointed back at the corner where he was bundled up with his friends or whoever they were. “Thank God that you have a cold or you would have stayed there all night waiting for your drink.”

If only the thing I had was a cold and not these episodes of going mad. And about staying all night at your place, don’t mind if I do. I thought it would ease my soul to share this thing with the guy, but I noted to myself that for one I shouldn’t push it and for the other I wasn’t going to share my troubles with a stranger who could sell the story to a local newspaper for as much as they would offer. It was astonishingly amazing how ironic my life was. The tabloids could figure out every move I made if they cared to do so, but the people around me saw nothing that was happening with me. It was though as they were just looking through a figure, completely dismissing the fact that a person might be inhibiting it.So instead of opening up to a random guy at a bar that didn’t care about me, through a smile I just replied: “Yeah, thank God.” The service might have been horrible, but it made me laugh and that was a start. Even though the laugh was on my expense.

“What are you having?” – The bartender asked swiftly, presumably impatient to return to his game. I gave it a little thought and I decided I should order beer. I was never into heavy alcohol anyway, and after all, the first thing that always pops to a man’s head is this particular beverage I just ordered.He took a glass from under the counter and poured the drink in it, leaving it in front of me as he moved away in a quick manner to go back to his place. I hesitated not to pick up the glass, hoping that all the confusing thoughts could be drowned in the scent of the alcohol. Nevertheless, I emptied the content of the scratched out glass and placed it back on the counter. The guy, who was just beginning to enjoy his game again, somewhat irritatingly turned at the thump. Realizing that I had my gaze fixed on him craving for a refill he moved towards me once again, pouring me yet another drink wordlessly. Only this time around I didn’t let him leave so easily. In fact I hastily added: “Sorry, but can I just get pay for the entire bottle? That way I can pour my own drinks and won’t have to disturb you from the comfort of your seat all the time.”

He looked at me as if he doubted my honesty and his appearance now showed me that he was beginning to insinuate that I was hustling him.

“Do you have money?” – He doubtfully asked, raising his eyebrow.

“Yeah, of course I do.” – I replied as he just deeply insulted me. But then another thought came to me, that if he had recognized me, he wouldn’t have dared to ask that question. My lips twisted in a small smile as I began to feel like a normal, regular man for a short moment.

He then passed me the bottle a little too happily, now aware that he could watch his game without disturbances. I knew he was straight on the point with his question and I remembered now that I left the house without my wallet or any money whatsoever. I touched my pockets just to manage to find some money, at least enough to cover this expense. To my adversity, my pockets were empty except for my keys and some rubbish. How lame was that, but I did just plan to go for a walk. This getting drunk at a bar just happened accidentally, out of the blue. Impulsive decisions do tend to have their downsides.

Now that I was beginning to relax there was no way that I would let this chance of getting drunk slip by me. It helped me and at the present I cared not for the consequences nor for the feeling of regret, which I was bound to feel in the morning. I will leave that for when I am sober and willing to go back to self-pity and depression. Therefore since my point was fixed, as soon as I felt the bottle under my fingertips I poured another drink. Since I was served for a good while; I was left at peace now and could fall into the labyrinth of thoughts that were circling inside my mind like a black river of disease over the last few months.

Oh, it would be a story if my brother happened to just pass here and see me in this place, doing what I was doing. Certainly, he would be more than prepared to give some of his familiar lectures and here was I thinking that lectures were a job of a professor. I even knew what his first assumption would be. He would think that I was still trying to get over my ex. Even now, after nearly a whole year had passed.And it would hurt him to bone to see me like this and I didn’t want that to happen. But I must admit that if I were in his position and he was the one standing here I would feel the exact same way. He never approved on this sort of behavior and neither did I, but sometimes it was a required operation to prevent misery and sleepless nights. Nights that were spent thinking about the worst day in my life. And unavoidably, my mind began to replay it with the fullest of details.

It happened out of the blue. I heard some rumors that she was sleeping with someone else, but I was so childishly naive. I was blindly in love and there was no way to see what she was doing right in front of my face. I didn’t even believe it when people started telling me, thinking that they were jealous of our happiness. I was so foolish, that I wouldn’t have seen it even if it was thrown in my face. I was so lost in that relationship that I saw marriage in the near future. I saw everything, except what I should have seen and my blindness haunts me to this day.

One morning all hell broke loose. I could feel my heart fastening as she was climbing down the stairs. It was always like that. Breakfast was ready and I was hoping for one of the most romantic days ever. Every single day spent with her felt like that for me. I took a day off from work to share it with the one I loved and I didn’t regret it a bit.

However when she entered the living room everything went downhill. She had that serious face which could be frightening, although that morning was much more than simply scary. It was lethal. For me, at the very least. I wanted to cheer her up and teased her by asking whether I was in trouble. But instead of a proper reply or something sweet or even a tiny smile, she announced that she was leaving me for somebody else, someone better who didn’t want to get rid of her all the time and that on top of all that she was carrying his child. She said it so lightly, so easily that it felt like all of our years spent together were of no significance to her. She was sweet enough to inform me about that herself, so that I didn't learn about it from another source. I imagine she managed to ease the pain by throwing it in my face so abruptly. She was completely wrong to think that I would have been glad to get rid of her.

Through my wounded pride and childishly pure love, I thought we could maybe even find a way to work it out eventually. My mind pondered for ideas to solve things with the speed of light. When I enquired about how she knew that the child wasn’t mine, she told me that she found out few days after I returned from the tour and that she was a month off and considering that I was gone for more than two, there was absolutely no way I was the father. That information stroke me so hard, shocking my every cell and ruining every shine of light in my soul. I felt as if a truck hit me, shattering every bone and ruining every hope. I stayed breathlessly stunned in our living room as she was leaving the house taking her suitcase. I couldn’t move or say anything. My senses were paralyzed, my blood motionless. I didn’t register anything else. I was only aware that the thing I cherished so much and was building hope into was dragged away in an instant. A child, dear God… And I saw nothing.

But this grand presentation was just between the two of us; it was held only once in our home, which after that scene I rushed to sell, and she managed to make a spectacle out of it right then and there. Whether it was the hormones or herself, in which case I would have to admit I knew her far too little; I knew not. But I still recall the cracking sound of my heart shattering in million little pieces.

Under which falsehood she imposed on my brother and his wife I had no idea. I knew that since Mary was her friend she would have believed every word uttered. Besides she was naive enough to believe that donkey can fly despite the opposition of all the laws of nature. However my brother’s behavior back then was another blow for my already shaken nerves. He never even allowed me tell him my side of the story, he was completely blind and focused on my (as he called it) “idiotic” behavior; which was driving me insane back in the day.

I should have supposed that he would judge me. Vegard was so lucky in his choice of bride, so he never could understand the fickleness that could hide behind a lady’s appearance. He would never have been able to see through a compulsive liar as my ex. For that matter neither could I and I was far more observant about that sort of stuff. I suppose, that his gullibility was the reason he blamed me for the entire thing in the beginning. Obviously, dating the sweetest and most charming person and later marrying her could have that effect on you and make you believe that no lady could ever hurt a guy. He imagined it to be quite the opposite and that I was the cause for her devastation. He thought that our relationship ended because I was tired of it at the moment and not because of the fact that she ruined a perfectly promising relationship by sleeping around with every guy that came her way.

They were, of course, unaware of the child until she gave birth and they confronted her about not telling them that she was carrying my child. Then she just confessed that I was not the father. I admit she did that thing right at least, as they were bound to figure it out sooner or later – Vegard at least, since he knew my desire for a kid and knew that I would never walk out on her if it was mine. It was a shock for them and as soon as they found out they broke all contact with her and came calling on me to ask for forgiveness and to offer as shoulders I could cry on. But they were far too late for that. By that time I already learned how to live with it and had somewhat forgotten the most painful parts and was quite recovered. When the break up took place he was on and on about me taking her back and not selling the house but when the truth was revealed that talk stopped. My brother went back to being the person I knew, the person who supported me no matter what, with a promise he wouldn’t doubt me as much in the future.

This trying time brought us closer and now we are closer than ever, I just only think that he can’t understand me, well honestly said, all together. Just when I thought that his reproaches and remarks had come to an end; he started to constantly go on and on about burying myself in work and not going out to have fun and go on dates, as I used to. Trying to help me, my sweetheart of a brother kept saying:

“You have to try again, Bård. Life isn’t over yet, you know.” – He would just insist and I knew him to be right. I just wanted for that to happen spontaneously and not to do my best to fix happiness. From all my previous experiences fixing up happiness was never ending up nicely. For me at least.

The drink was getting to me, since I opened memories which were sealed a long time ago. Just as I was getting ready to drift away in yet another painful memory I heard my name being called. The bartender was far away and even if he were close; I was entirely skeptical and doubtful upon him knowing my name. Besides this was a girl’s voice, but no one was sitting on the counter, so I turned around. And my astonishment was enormous, since no one was nowhere near me. Before allowing myself to ridicule my silliness in hearing voices, I lowered my head a little bit. And there was she – a tiny little princess full looking at me with big bright brown eyes. I smiled a bit more at the sight, rather than to anything else and addressed her respectfully: “Was it you young lady that addressed me with such royal countenance?”

Then I playfully raised my eyebrow addressing her the sweetest smile I could at that point produce. Maybe it was just the liquor that was having me behave in such a silly was, but I would like to flatter myself that I was irrevocably sober. Although I should have guessed I was not, judging by what and how much I drank. This tiny person who stood in front of me with such determination was not taking the smile of her face. Then she said a short yes, as if she had gone shy all of the sudden.

She handed me a magazine with me on the cover and considering all the photos of us, Vegard and I, which were out there this one could have been considered as quite decent. She said:

“Can I get your autograph?” – While I was taking the magazine out of her hands, realizing that she was barely holding to it. – “I really love you and Vegard. I always watch your show. You guys are the best. Please…”

It was good. As it would seem at least I was still charming to someone, even though it was just a little girl.

“What is your name?” - I gently asked, trying to hide the smell of alcohol in my mouth.

“I am Clarice.” – She replied with the same tone of voice.

“You have a lovely name, Clarice.” – I said to her and the reason was not just to make a little girl smile. I meant it, truly meant it. I touched my pocket in search of my pen since that was the place where it usually ended up automatically, recalling that only half an hour ago I threw it out of my hand to hell knows where. This was embarrassing, but I had to ask a little child to borrow me a pen or something, so I did.

“I don’t have one, but mum does…” – She winked at me, as she turned away in search of the object. Her action was so innocent and sweet, that I once again recalled the time when I wanted an angel like this one of my own. Only I was left without anyone anywhere and that dream soon fell apart and turned into ashes. My fatherly instinct started dying off when I was thrown out of the normal course of my life and this girl made it wake up for a little while with a simple smile.

Her “Here you go…” snapped me out of my dreams and she handed me the pen she was previously clasping in her hand. I took it realizing that once again I found myself with no idea what to write in the dedication. What could I say to a little girl? A girl that I didn’t know anything about, only that she liked the show. Not that she cared about the dedication, she was most likely going to be more than happy for the signature. Therefore I just wrote “To the cutest little princess on the planet.” and signed my name. I handed her back the magazine and the pen. I thought that I was done, but she now required a picture. I made her wish come true.

Soon after that I noticed that her mother took her by the hand and they both left the place. I was left to my worries, my getting drunk and my self-pity. There was a lot of the last one, a bit far too much for my own personal taste. And I usually tolerated quite a discrepancy, but this one was far too much. I breathed in and was about to sink myself in another drink, when the bartender moved towards me:

“Yo, man… Maybe you should just stop and leave… We are closing up soon anyway…” – He said, his deep raucous voice reaching my ears.

Ha, the moment was there. I had to tell him about my not having a wallet when only some time ago I was insistent upon being offended by his insinuation. And on top of that, I had to explain everything to him while being half drunk and at the same time confused and messed up. This is going to be a walk in the park, isn’t it?

It seemed impossible to clarify things to someone who didn’t care about your life and problems and just wanted to be paid for his work and it was, given that only moments later I was picked up like a feather by this robust guy by the collar on my jacket and was cold-heartedly thrown out on the street. I ended up rolling on the ground and when I fell from the sidewalk on the street I felt pain travelling throughout my entire body as if the alcohol wasn’t killing me enough. However, I was grateful that my head remained well above the ground and I was not hurt, aside some possible appearance of bruises in the next week or so. Nonetheless, I began feeling the regret, regret that was sooner or later bound to happen, for each sip I took. All I wanted now was to pick myself up and get home before something else happened like someone taking a photo of a drunk Bård Ylvisåker and making a national scandal out of it. My mind was now set on a warm bed and the sleep I so desperately needed.

I checked my pockets to make sure that I lost nothing during the flight I so unexpectedly just took. Because it was a flight, since he threw me out of the door well above the ground. Damn, that landing was painful. I only now becoming aware of how much. After I made sure that everything was on its place, I began my slow walk towards home.

The night, although chilly, was clear and beautiful. The fresh air was cleaning up my head as much as it could have been achieved after so many drinks. I was at some point fully motivated to think of how to organize my time. Instead I let the night ahead capture my partial attention, leaving the slight wind make me feel better while at the same time leaving it rumple my hair removing it from my face. This drinking expedition proved to be useful, albeit painful. Maybe I should apply it more often. Or maybe not. Who knows? Cause, I didn’t…

I looked at the starry sky above in hope of some reply from somewhere. It was the perfect moment for the universe to send me some form of a sign. A sign, or rather a promise, that things in my life would get back on track somehow. I kept walking like this hoping that I wouldn’t trip on something, like my own feet. But the view was so breathtaking that I couldn’t allow myself to look down. And I didn’t, not even while I was turning on the corner and then as if once was not enough I bumped into something or rather someone and found myself on the ground again. As I heard that person’s thud, who was taking the falling down so quietly, my brain was preparing to curse everything, so I just mumbled:

“Faen, gjør vondt det. Oh, dritt.” And after that added: “Faen, hva er problemet?”

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