
Laurel Scoresby is leaning against the edge of the bathtub. She's submerged in the sudsy water, as Tom Wreke washes her hair for her- scrubbing his fingers gently through her red curls to massage her scalp. His back is bowed, the mirror of the bathroom fogged over with steam from the hot water.

LAUREL SCORESBY

Thank you for this, Tom.

Tom smiles, drops a kiss to Laurel's forehead.

TOM WREKE

No need to thank me. I'm glad to be of help.

He cups his hand over her eyes like an impromptu shield, as he pours a cupful of water over her hair to rinse out the bubbles.

He repeats this motion patiently, careful to not get soap into her eyes.

His voice is quiet, when he speaks.

TOM WREKE

You scared me.

Laurel is closing her eyes, leaning her head back into Tom's gentle touch.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

Tom breathes out a sigh. Laurel turns around, her torso conveniently covered by the bath curtains that are slanted slightly sideways in the room. The foamy bubbles linger on her collarbones, the suds velvety, leaving little sparkles of body shimmer against her bare skin. She touches the side of Tom's face tenderly, thumb rasping against day old stubble as she strokes her thumb along the edge of his cheekbone.

TOM WREKE

I know you didn't. But I was afraid, Laurel. In the anatomy lab, today, I-

Tom cuts himself off, as if it's too terrible to voice. He covers her hand with his own, eyes wistful. He presses a kiss into her palm.

TOM WREKE

Please don't do something like that again. Don't put yourself at risk like that- not for me.

Laurel laughs quietly, but her eyes are sad. The crinkle of smile lines doesn't touch her eyes.

LAUREL SCORESBY

If not for you- who, then?

Tom's voice is almost guttural, in it's lowness, the raw edge of pain hidden inside of it.

TOM WREKE

I can take care of myself, Laurel. No one. No one's worth it. I couldn't stand losing you, Laurel- anyone but you. I could survive the loss of anyone but you.

He leans down to press a kiss to her forehead, shoulders trembling a little as he tries not to cry- a single tear rolling down her face to slide over her lips, salty. It disappears into the bath.

TOM WREKE

Be selfish, please. For me. My heart couldn't stand you not being here, with me. Living wouldn't be living without you in my life. Please don't ever do that to me. Don't ever break my heart like that- I could not abide it, do you understand me? It would ruin me beyond redemption.

Laurel sighs again, deeper this time- before reaching up to pull him into the water, soaking his tank top and boxers. He's startled, nearly smacking into the tiles of the adjacent wall, but as uncomfortable as it is to be wet and clothed, he settles, shoulders squared, Laurel moving to rest her head on his chest. He moves one of his hands to rest over her shoulder blades, as if to press her into place- afraid of losing her. Her voice is low, quiet, as she speaks.

LAUREL SCORESBY

I promise, Tom. For you.
