

Shields to Maximum

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Summary: Gustav had been drawing into himself and away from the rest of the band because he's afraid of something. The problem is, Bill has noticed.

Author's Notes: This is for the lovely lirren; here's hoping things improve at work soon *hugs*. Thanks to Soph for the beta.

Gustav looked up, quite surprised when Bill sat down next to him; he had thought the twins were about to disappear off somewhere, since the two had been talking quietly for ages. Usually that meant Bill and Tom were conspiring about something and would go off to do whatever it was.

"What can I do for you, Bill?" he asked, since Bill just sat there looking at him.

"What's wrong?" Bill asked after a moment's silence that Gustav was positive went on for almost ever.

It was rather an odd question and he really didn't know how to answer it. Sometimes Bill could be a little bit random, so he wasn't sure what this was about.

"Wrong with what?" he asked, unsure how to proceed.

"You," Bill said in a very direct manner. "Is it me and Tom, because I know we can be full on, but if you just tell us to stop we will. You keep getting more and more distant and we're worried that we're driving you away and you're such an important part of this band that we don't want you to feel that. If we're doing something please tell me and we'll do our very best to stop."

Bill took a breath and was about to go on, but Gustav leapt in while he could.

"It's not you," he said, since he did not want Bill working himself up into a frenzy. "I just need a little space sometimes, that's all."

Bill pursed his lips and Gustav knew his friend was not going to let this drop. When Bill had an idea in his head it was virtually impossible to shift it.

"This isn't a little space," Bill said with a frown; "it's like you've cut yourself off from us. You've always been the sensible one, but it's like you're moving away from us or something."

Gustav tried to think of something to say; he didn't want the others thinking he didn't like them; that was so far from the truth it was silly.

"The problem's me, not any of you," he said, before he really thought about it.

Bill frowned even more and it was not a good sign. When Bill reached out and took his hand he was rather stuck.

"Tell me," Bill said, and it was not a command, but an invitation, "and I'll help."

That was the thing about Bill, half the time Bill seemed to be in his own little world, but when he wasn't you couldn't get anything past him. Gustav felt his flight response coming on.

"No you don't," Bill said, refusing to let him go; "even Georg's worried about you."

Gustav felt himself blanch and he froze, which Bill picked up on immediately.

"This is something to do with Georg," Bill said with complete certainty and Gustav begged the floor to open up and swallow him.

The problem with Bill was he had a brain, a very clever, analytical brain that spent most of the time distracted by music. When it was put to use on other things there was no hiding and he could see the wheels turning in Bill's head.

"Georg hasn't offended you or annoyed you because you'd be yelling at him," Bill said quietly and thoughtfully, "so it has to be something else."

Tom would never had suspected the truth, neither would Georg, but Bill was the one person who might and he could see the light going on in his friend's head.

"Tell me," Bill said in a level only just above a whisper and Gustav could not look away from his friend's eyes.

"I can't," was all he could say.

So many terrible possibilities crowded into his head that he wanted to run away, but Bill had him pinned down with those damnable, all seeing eyes.

"If I guess, can you tell me yes or no?"

He had no choice, he had to nod.

Bill sat there for a while just looking at him and he felt as if his soul was on display. All the barriers he had carefully built were worth nothing under the full onslaught of a Kaulitz; especially this Kaulitz.

"You care for Georg as more than a friend," Bill said eventually and Gustav felt the bottom drop out of the safe little world he had been creating.

He could not move; for long seconds he was frozen as too many fears made themselves known, but eventually he nodded, just a little. For that Bill gave him a little smile.

"But what are you afraid of?" Bill asked, still in the quiet voice.

Now Gustav found his voice: "That I'll do something to make him hate me," he said and then he told Bill everything. All his walls came tumbling down and he confessed the whole thing: how he had found himself looking at Georg as more than a friend; how he had thought it was just a phase, but it kept getting stronger; how he had almost reached out and touched and scared himself; and how he had started to shut himself off to prevent it ever happening again.

He really didn't keep track of what he was saying or how long, but Bill sat there holding his hand, listening and nodding and not being remotely distracted the entire time.

"He won't hate you," was what Bill chose to say when he finally fell silent.

Gustav had spent so long convincing himself that Georg would be completely disgusted with him that he could not believe that.

"He's so straight you could draw lines with him," he said, knowing that Bill was just trying to make him feel better.

"You're thinking of Tom," Bill said with a little smile, "now my brother wouldn't know a nice looking bloke if he jumped up and tried to shag him. With Georg it's more difficult to tell, but if the number of times he has groped my backside in a photo session is anything to go by, I don't think he's completely oblivious."

A red hot spike of jealousy surged through Gustav with such strength that he almost growled.

"He probably thought you'd punch his lights out and Tom would kick him in the nuts if he tried it on either of you," Bill said as if he had taken up reading minds now; "I'm a soft target; it's not like I could break a nail in front of the camera is it?"

Gustav was so mixed up mentally by that point that he laughed, more because he realised he had no idea if Bill was serious or not than anything else.

Bill leaned forward so that they were only millimetres apart.

"You want to catch him?" Bill asked and Gustav felt momentarily light-headed.

He wanted to laugh hysterically and run away screaming at the same time, because his dream looked remotely possible and absolutely terrifying at the same time.

"Tell me and I'll butt out," Bill said quietly, "but you can't keep shutting yourself off and if you want my help, I'm here."

Bill believed in true love; the whole world knew that and unlike other things that were said about them, it was true, and Gustav knew it. That his friend was offering to help him in this meant a lot; it meant for a start that Bill believed there really was something there. The drawback of course was that Bill was a romantic; it was possible Bill was seeing things that could not possibly be true.

He was terrified and excited all at the same time as he totally failed to come to a decision as to what to tell Bill.

"Think about it," his friend said eventually and patted him on the hand in a very motherly fashion, that given this was Bill and Bill was a teenage male, was a little unsettling.

Then Bill was gone as quickly as he had arrived and Gustav was left with the thoughts whirling around in his head.

Bill found Tom in the kitchen.

"So what is it?" Tom asked without any preamble.

"He's in love with Georg," Bill said, since there wasn't any other way he could think of putting it.

Tom looked rather like he'd been hit in the face with a brick.

"Oh snap out of it," Bill said and prodded his twin on the shoulder; "it's not that far fetched and it does explain his behaviour, because he's convinced if he lets it slip Georg will hate him."

That made Tom blink and come back to life.

"That's silly," Tom said and Bill nodded, "Georg doesn't understand the meaning of the word."

"You know that, I know that and deep down Gustav knows that, but he's terrified," he said, leaning up against the counter. "I said I'd help if he wanted me to; are you in as well?"

Tom looked thoughtful and didn't say 'no' outright which was a good sign.

"You really think they could work?" Tom asked eventually.

Bill nodded again.

"Can you think of a better match," he asked; "Gustav is wound so tight sometimes he squeaks and Georg doesn't know the meaning of the words 'stressed out'. They would balance each other perfectly."

"Yeah," Tom agreed, "but until just now, I'd have said they were both straight."

Bill grinned at that.

"Love knows no boundaries, Tomi," he said cheerfully and received the eye roll he expected from his bother. "Besides it might stop Georg groping my bum ..."

"He's not doing that again is he?" Tom sounded scandalised. "I'm gonna have to have words."

"...which," Bill continued, refusing to be interrupted, "is clearly an outlet for his pent up bi-sexual impulses and Gustav's so far gone he probably doesn't remember what gender is."

Tom just looked at him for a while, but eventually sighed.

"Okay," Tom said, "I'm in; what are we going to do?"

"Only if Gustav wants us to," Bill said in a warning tone and Tom lifted an eyebrow. "Okay," he admitted defeat, "this is the plan I have so far..."

Gustav knew he was in trouble. He wasn't surprised that Bill had told Tom, that was pretty much a given, but he could see the plans forming in their eyes every time he looked at them. Eventually he couldn't take it anymore and marched up to them after Georg had climbed off the bus.

"I want right of veto," he said firmly and added a glare to be sure.

The twins just looked at him, the picture of innocence.

"I know I can't stop you planning, but I want to know in advance and I want to be able to say no if it's too crazy," he said, refusing to back down.

Bill gave him the sweetest smile.

"Of course," was all his friend said and he knew he was in even bigger trouble.

"Stuck in a lift," Bill said quietly as they were walking from a venue to the bus.

Gustav shuddered at the thought.

"Georg would be a shuddering wreck," he pointed out at what was about the fifth ridiculous plan; "you know he's okay with confined spaces until he thinks he can't get out; then he freaks."

Bill looked crest fallen. So far he had vetoed every idea because each had had a fatal flaw. The first had been lock him and Georg in a hotel room by breaking the lock; he had pointed out that Georg was more likely to break down the door than listen to declarations of undying love. Then there had been the sabotaging bunks on the bus idea and they had just gone downhill from there. It was becoming very silly and Gustav wasn't sure he could take anymore.

He watched Georg climbing onto the bus and he stopped walking; he was going crazy. What he wanted was being dangled in front of him like a carrot, just out of his reach and he'd let himself hope and it was making it worse all the time. He was going to end up in a padded cell if it went on. That really left him only one choice and he began walking a little faster, his decision made.

He caught up with Georg before anyone else made it onto the bus.

"Hey," Georg greeted with a grin while sitting down.

"Hi," Gustav said, gathering his courage and refusing to let his nerve break. "Um, I need to say something."

Georg sat back and nodded for him to go on.

"Look," he said, not sure how to say it, "it's that," he felt silly; "I think I'm in love with you and I don't expect anything back, but Bill and Tom know and they keep coming up with ridiculous ideas to get us together and I thought you should know before they do anything stupid and one of us gets hurt."

It all came out in one big rush and then he fled. He gave himself just enough time to see a completely stunned expression on Georg's face and then he was gone and into his bunk with the curtains closed before his friend could say anything. His heart was beating so fast it felt like it was coming out of his chest. He had done it; he had told Georg the truth and now there was nothing he could do about it, except wait.

"Took long enough," Tom said quietly.

Bill watched Gustav retreating and nodded.

"Yeah, but we had to build up to the really idiotic ideas or he would have smelt a rat," he pointed out. "A week's nothing for a plan like this really though."

"I suppose," Tom acquiesced.

He turned to look at his twin and they shared a grin.

"Let's go make sure Georg isn't catatonic," he said and walked the rest of the way into the seating area.

All in all it had worked out exactly as expected.

It was when he woke up after a fitful night's sleep and passed Bill on the way back from the bathroom, and his friend gave him a huge smile, that the penny dropped.

"Oh god," he said, feeling like he wanted to hit his head against the wall.

He turned to find Bill looking at him, eyes twinkling with achievement.

"That was the plan," he said, feeling like a bit of an idiot; it was so obvious now. "You never were going to do anything and you wanted me to."

Bill smiled again.

"Of course it was," his friend said and patted him on the arm sympathetically; "it always had to be you. You think too hard, Gustav; sometimes you just have to act, so we decided to push you into it. You really don't want to know what the next plan was going to be."

Gustav groaned; he had been played and played well and now everything was out in the open. He had no idea what was going to come of it, but he had to admit that he felt relieved. No matter what happened now that tension he had been carrying around for months was gone. There were other fears, but at least now he wasn't carrying around the secret that had been weighing him down.

"It'll be okay," Bill said and gave him another quick little smile before heading back towards the bunks.

Gustav continued to the bathroom, praying that Bill was right.

In the end Georg did not emerge from his bunk until nearly midday and when his friend came to sit down to have breakfast, Gustav suddenly realised that the twins had mysteriously disappeared, leaving them all on their own. Georg sat down opposite him with an empty bowl and a spoon and looked at him in a thoughtful manner. He felt like a deer in headlights.

"How long," Georg asked eventually, "how long have you been hiding this?"

It wasn't quite what Gustav had been expecting, but Georg did deserve an explanation.

"About eight months," he replied, doing his best not to sound like a complete moron.

Georg's eyes widened for a moment in surprise and then his friend shook his head.

"No point in me asking if this is a phase then," Georg said, looking down at the table for a while.

Gustav's heart was in his throat and his ability to read people seemed to have completely fled; he had no idea what Georg was thinking.

"I meant what I said," he decided he had to say something; "I don't expect anything back, I just wanted to save you, well us, from the twins. Turns out that was their plan all along."

"I know," Georg said and smiled just a little; "they told me last night."

The silence descended again as Gustav failed to find anything to say next.

"I've never thought of you like that," Georg finally spoke again, "no blokes actually, groping Bill's arse was more of a game than anything else."

Gustav's heart fell through the floor; he had known, but the confirmation was almost more than he could take.

"But we could try."

The four words caught him completely off guard and his brain refused to process them properly.

"What?" he asked in what his higher brain decided was an utterly stupid manner.

"We could try," Georg replied, giving him a little smile. "I've been thinking about it and I think I like the idea. I mean I don't know how it will pan out; we might kiss and hate it, but..."

Gustav didn't need to hear anymore and Bill's words from that morning were ringing in his ears: 'Sometime you just have to act.' He stood up, leaned over the table, grabbed Georg's t-shirt and pulled his friend towards him. Their lips met, fireworks went off in his head as he finally had what he had been pining for over months and he put everything he had into the kiss. When he finally sat back and let Georg go, his friend looked dazed and mused and thankfully, happy.

"Okay," Georg said, blinking and appearing to gather his wits, "not going to hate that. Wow, Juschtel, where have you been hiding that passion?"

About all Gustav could do was grin stupidly; there wasn't a sensible thought in his brain. If he wasn't very careful he was going to giggle like one of the fangirls and that would just about destroy what reputation he had left. The only thing going through his head was 'I kissed Georg', over and over, and there was nothing he could do about it. It was wonderful.

The End