

**Title:** The Weight Of It

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**Rating:** General

**Characters:** Tig, Tara

**Warnings/labels:** None

**Spoilers:** 5.07 *Toad's Wild Ride*

**Word count:** 1,679

**Author notes:** Since nobody's writing me any Tig 'n Tara fic, I have to write my own :) Missing scene for *Toad's Wild Ride*. Thanks to Tanaqui for betaing.

**Summary:** Tig was the last person Tara would've expected to understand her fears, let alone give her advice on how to deal with them.

## The Weight Of It By Scribblesinink

Night had fallen by the time Tara pulled up at the cabin. Shutting off the engine, she climbed out of the car, stretching and filling her lungs. The air smelled of the surrounding forest, of pine and resin—clean, healthy. The quiet surrounding her was intense: nothing but wind rustling through the underbrush, the soft tick of a cooling engine, a small animal rooting through the grass. Charming was never this silent; there were always cars roaring by, planes passing overhead, an ambulance's siren heading for St. Thomas.

She took another deep breath. It'd be good to get away from the madness for a few days. To be alone: just her and Jax.

The cabin was a black hulk against the star-studded sky, its windows shuttered. Nobody had been up here for weeks; it would be dank and musty inside. She'd better open the windows and let it air out before she did anything else.

"Wait." Boots crunching closer on the dirt as she started for the porch reminded her she wasn't alone, and that the man with her wasn't Jax.

She paused mid-step and turned her head toward Tig, arching an eyebrow. "Really?"

He shrugged, the gesture both conveying an apology as well as dismissing her skepticism.

"Just lemme check it, 'kay?"

Though voiced as a question, it was only partly a request; the remainder was a command. Tara rolled her eyes; seemed Tig was taking his assignment very seriously.

Holding up one hand toward her to underscore his order for her to stay put, Tig stalked past her where she stood beside the car, his gun out. He'd probably already scoped out the surrounding area.

She leaned against the car, watching him creep up the porch more quietly than she'd have given him credit for, inch open the door and disappear inside.

To be completely honest, she didn't mind the escort. These last weeks, and months—years, actually; ever since the day she returned to Charming—it had been one crisis after another disaster. It never let up. Frankly, this life scared her to death. She fought hard not to show Jax, tried not to burden him with her terror and panic that something would happen to him or their boys, but it wasn't easy. For all Gemma's faults, one thing Tara had to give the woman: she offered a great role model on how to be a strong, unshakeable Old Lady who let her man handle business while she dealt with the fall-out back home.

So, though she might be rolling her eyes at Jax for sending Tig with her, or at Tig for demanding she let him check the cabin before allowing her inside, she had to admit: the steady circle of his bike's headlight following her in her rear view mirror had been reassuring.

"Clear." Tig reappeared at the door, putting his gun back into his cut, his posture more relaxed than when he went in.

"No snakes in the cabinets?" Tara crossed her arms in front of her chest as he ambled back toward her. "Or bears under the beds?"

"Nope." Tig grinned as she threw his words back at him. "Did remove a big-ass spider from the shower for ya." He held his hands wide enough apart to hold a dinner plate.

A laugh burst out of her. "Thanks."

Tig's expression softened ever so slightly. "Welcome." He dipped his head toward the trunk of the car, where she'd stashed a half dozen bags filled with groceries, expecting the cabin to be lacking in essentials. "Need a hand with that?"

"Please." Tara rounded the car and opened the trunk. She dragged one of the bags closer with her left hand, crooking it in her right arm so she could lift it.

Her hand was healing, doing better than she'd expected, but she needed to regain her strength and fine motor skills still escaped her.

"I got it." Tig took the bag from her, gathered another in his other arm, and indicated she should lead the way up the porch steps.

As she crossed the threshold, her nose wrinkled involuntarily. Her estimate had been correct: the cabin reeked. "Can you put those in the kitchen?" she asked. "I'm gonna—" She jerked her head toward the windows.

"Sure thing."

Five minutes later, a gentle draft was carrying the musty smell from the cabin, filling it with the scent of the forest instead. Tig had emptied out the car, carrying groceries into the kitchen and duffels into the bedroom. Job done, he hovered in the kitchen doorway, seemingly at a loss, as Tara put away the contents of the first bag.

"There's beer in one of those." She indicated the collection of bags waiting for her attention. "Won't be cold anymore but should still be cool enough." She'd only pulled the bottles from the supermarket cooler a hour or two back.

"Thanks." Tig walked to the kitchen table and rooted through the bags, quickly unearthing the bottles. Keeping hold of one, he put the rest in the fridge, before digging through the kitchen drawers for a bottle opener. There was a quiet *crack* and then a soft *chink* as he threw the cap onto the counter.

"Oh, heh." Tara nearly bumped into Tig as he aimed for the door the same time she stepped back from the cabinet. They found themselves engaged in one of those awkward left-right dances people unerringly end up doing when trying to move through the same small space at the same time.

"Sorry." Tig brushed past her.

Tara chuckled. "No problem."

"Yeh." Tig half-turned back to her, jerking with a thumb. "I'mma be outside." The tension was back in his tone, in the line of his shoulders.

Tara paused in putting away the box of cereal she'd grabbed. Nobody knew she was at the cabin, did they?

"What's got you so wired?" Even as the words left her mouth, she mentally kicked herself. If anyone had any right to be uptight, it was Tig. "Sorry, that was a dumb question." She drew in a shaky breath. Jax hadn't shared the details of

what had happened with Dawn, but she'd gotten pretty good at reading between the lines.

"No...." Tig licked his lips. "No, it isn't. It's—." He shrugged, leaving the rest of his sentence unspoken.

Tara kept looking at him. Tig was to blame for much of the latest shit storm to hit the club. And why? Because of Clay. He'd done what he'd done because of her stepfather-in-law: a man she'd happily have injected with the blood thinner herself if she'd had the chance.

But Tig didn't know the things Clay had done: to Jax, to her, to others. Just as Tig wouldn't know the reason Jax had held back from killing Clay, why he'd let the bastard live. She heaved a sigh. So many secrets. Some were even hers. At least Jax was being honest with her, telling her everything that was going on, explaining all the horrible deeds and dirty little secrets. Often, what he told her made her skin crawl and in need of a shower. At other times, she reminded herself that not knowing would be worse—if marginally.

A noise bubbled up in her chest, somewhere between a sob and a laugh.

Tig's eyebrows shot up, and he looked decidedly uncomfortable, clearly torn between wanting to flee the scene and asking if she was alright.

"How d'you do it?" she asked, before he could make a decision, a hitch in her voice.

"Do what?" Tig's expression changed to one of confusion.

Tara lifted a shoulder, gesturing with a sweep of her arm. "Deal with all the shit. Sleep at night." Another shuddering breath filled her lungs. "Not go crazy with grief. If something happened to my babies—."

"Shit." Tig muttered the expletive under his breath, more at himself than at her. He took the few steps it required to close the distance between them. Planting his beer back on the table with one hand, he reached out with the other, brushing loose strands of hair from her face with a gentleness that belied the killer she knew lived inside that same body. "Nothin's gonna happen to those boys. No way."

"Okay." She closed her eyes, struggling to get her emotions back under control. If losing it in front of Jax was bad, doing so in front of Tig would be worse. She couldn't afford for any of them to see her as weak, unfit to be an Old Lady for their club president. "Okay."

Tig's touch fell from her face. Tara opened her eyes. Tig hadn't moved; he was still standing a foot away, the blue eyes boring into her burning with a fire she'd rarely, if ever, seen in them. He gave a start, breaking the spell, and took a step back. Tara breathed out.

She thought he'd leave without saying anything else, but he spoke again. His voice was so soft she could barely hear the words, despite the silence of the forest. "Wall it off."

"What?"

"The pain, the grief, the fear. All of it. Put it in a box, in the back of your mind. Build a wall around it, and forget about it until it don't mean shit no more. Then do what you gotta do."

"Is that how you—?"

"No," Tig broke in harshly. "No. Still lookin' for a box for that one."

Tara swallowed, tears clogging her throat. "I'm sorry."

"Me too." Tig was quiet for a minute, before he flicked a hand toward the forgotten groceries. "Should get that stashed, 'fore Jax gets here."

Tara instinctively looked where he indicated. "Right." When she looked back, he was gone from the kitchen. An instant later, she heard the door mechanism click; a couple moments after that, his silhouette passed in front of the kitchen window. She leaned on the counter to peer out and saw he'd sat down, looking outward as he slouched, beer in one hand, gun in the other: a silent sentinel keeping her safe where he'd failed his daughter.

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