**Bedroom**

I wake up, and as usual, I feel like I could’ve used another few hours of sleep. With a groan, I push myself out of my bed in a... creative half-rolling half-flopping motion. I probably look ridiculous. And Mara would definitely have laughed at me if she could see me.

As I groggily stand up and pull my school uniform on, I notice the clock and freeze up. It’s pretty late, and Mara’s probably been waiting for a while.

**Kitchen**

In a panic, I dash out of my room and into the kitchen, where a plate of eggs and toast waits for me on the table. I grab a slice of toast and stick it in my mouth as I put on my shoes and run out the door.

**Front of House**

As expected, Mara’s already waiting for me.

Mara (waving happy): Good moooorning!

Mara (surprise geh): Geh, did you just wake up?

Mara (neutral thinking): You look really…

Mara: ...

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Cliché.

Mara (patting\_head smiling):

Mara reaches for my hair and fiddles with it yet again.

Mara: You should really wake up earlier, though. To eat and brush your teeth and stuff.

Mara (neutral fufu): Do you want me to sneak in and wake you up every morning?

I try to speak, forgetting that I still have a piece of toast in my mouth.

Pro (muffled): No fanks.

Mara (neutral giggling): You should swallow before you talk, you know.

Mara (patting\_head smiling):

Mara finishes up with my hair as I wolf down my toast, still a little tired.

Mara (neutral smiling): There we go. Since that’s out of the way, let’s get going, okay?

**Neighbourhood Road 1**

Strangely enough, Mara doesn’t seem bothered that I barely left the house on time today. Not that I’m complaining, of course, but it’s still a little odd. However, since she seems like she’s in an exceptionally good mood today, I decide to leave it be.

Mara (neutral neutral): Hey, Pro. Remember that idol group that I really like?

Pro: Mmm… the one with the sunglasses girl?

Mara (excited excited): Yeah, that one. They released a new single yesterday, and it’s so good!

Mara (neutral smiling): They’ve come so far, even though they only debuted a couple years ago.

Pro: Their debut song, huh? Yeah, it was pretty catchy.

Mara (neutral happy): Yup! I’m so proud of them.

Pro: You’ve been a fan from the start, right?

Mara (neutral fufu): Of course.

Pro: And now they’re one of the more popular groups.

Mara (neutral smiling): Yep, yep.

Mara (neutral neutral): Oh, look over there.

Mara stops to admire a particularly colourful flower bed. She’s always been especially fond of flowers.

Mara: Roses, tulips, even hibiscus...

Mara (neutral smiling): Isn’t it pretty?

Pro: Yeah, it is...

I trail off, distracted by the figure that appeared on the other side of the road.

Mara (neutral curious): Hm? What’s up?

Pro: Over there, that girl. I met her yesterday.

Mara: Who?

Mara (neutral surprise):

Mara looks over, and her eyes widen.

Lilith (holding\_bat neutral):

Mara (neutral earnest): Whoa, her hair’s so pretty! Do you think she’s foreign? Or did she dye it?

Pro: I’m not sure.

Lilith (exit):

Mara (neutral curious): How’d you meet her? Is she in your class, or…

Mara (neutral fufu): …maybe a secret lover?

Pro: I don’t even know her name…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: She kinda, uh, threatened me, I guess? Cause I was staring at her. A little.

Mara (neutral skeptical): …

Mara: What…?

Mara (neutral neutral):

Mara looks at Lilith again, and eventually the realization hits her.

Mara: Oh. She has a baseball bat.

Pro: She has a baseball bat.

Mara: I see.

Mara (neutral hehe):

Mara glances at me a certain way, and suddenly I feel a sense of déjà vu...

Mara: …

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): You should go talk to her.

Ah, yes. There it is.

Mara (neutral smiling):

Pro: …

Pro: Could you explain how exactly you came to that conclusion?

Mara: She’s probably just pretending to be a delinquent and is actually really soft inside. You know, that common trope. I think.

Pro: You think.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Yup! Soft and squishy.

Pro: …

Mara (neutral pensive): And besides, you should learn to get to know new people anyways. You’ve already met her, so now’s a perfect chance to *actually* meet her, you know?

Pro: Yesterday it seemed like she didn’t like me at all…

Mara (arms\_crossed fufu): It’s fine, it’s fine, don’t sweat the small details. Now, I’m gonna take this road to school, so you go talk to her, okay?

Mara (exit):

And with that, Mara shuffles down a side road, leaving me alone. As luck would have it, the girl chose that exact moment to cross the street, and eventually we come face to face.

?Lilith (holding\_bat cold): It’s you again, huh?

Pro: Oh… hello.

She stops and stares at me, and I uncomfortably stare back. I have no idea what’s going through her mind, but I really hope that it has nothing to do with her baseball bat.

Pro: Um…

“I’m really sorry about yesterday.”

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Pro: I’m really sorry about yesterday. I didn’t mean to stare, it’s just that…

?Lilith: That…?

Pro: …

Pro: You have a baseball bat.

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): …

?Lilith (holding\_bat thinking): I guess it would have been pretty unsettling.

Pro: Yeah...

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): …

?Lilith: Sorry about that. It was pretty rude of me.

Taken aback, I take a while to respond.

Pro: Oh, don’t worry about it. It was a misunderstanding.

Pro: Why do you have a bat though? It’s an odd accessory to have on hand.

?Lilith (holding\_bat confused):

She looks at me as if I just said the earth is flat.

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): I’m on the baseball team, and we have practice after school sometimes.

Ah. Baseball bat. Baseball. Makes sense.

Pro: Oh, I see.

?Lilith (holding\_bat curious): What did you think it was for?

Pro: I wasn’t sure.

I can’t really tell her that I thought she was a delinquent.

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): I see.

?Lilith (holding\_bat thinking): I guess it kind of makes me look like a delinquent, huh?

She said it.

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral):

Pro: Yeah, I guess.

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): I get that a lot.

Pro: Oh, I see.

**Front of School**

We walk in silence for the rest of the way to school, and when we arrive the girl suddenly stops and turns towards me.

?Lilith (holding\_bat curious): You’re Pro, right? In class 2B?

Pro: Yeah, I am. How’d you know?

?Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): I’ve seen you with Asher before.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Pro: Um…

Pro: Sorry, I don’t know who you are.

Lilith: I’m Lilith from class 2A.

That name sounds familiar. Have I really never seen her around?

I stand there, trying to think of where I might’ve seen her before, but she interrupts my thoughts.

Lilith: We should probably get to class now.

Pro: Oh, you’re right.

Lilith: I’ll see you later, then.

Pro: See you.

Lilith (exit):

Lilith walks around the building, presumably to enter through a side door, while I go straight to the front doors. As she disappears around the corner, I realize that my original perception of her was completely wrong – it turns out that Mara was right after all.

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“How are you?”

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?Lilith: I’m fine, thank you.

?Lilith (exit):

After giving me one last icy look, she turns and heads to school. I decide to stay behind for a bit so I don’t run into her again, and as I wait I think about Mara’s words.

Soft and squishy, huh?

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