**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.

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...

Mara (exit):

?Prim (shy shy):

?Mick (neutral neutral):

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

?Prim (exit):

?Mick (exit):

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

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

Mara (excited excited):

I point towards them, and when she sees them Mara’s eyes widen.

Mara: She’s so cute!

Mara (excited earnest): Your secret girlfriend?

Pro: What? I don’t even know her name...

Mara (neutral curious): Then how’d you meet her?

Pro: Well…

Pro: I didn’t exactly meet her. It was more like, uh…

Mara (neutral earnest): Like…?

Pro: I, uh, knocked her over.

Mara (neutral surprise): ...

Mara (neutral skeptical): You knocked her over.

Pro: Yeah.

Mara: ...

Mara (neutral sigh): Well, that’s one way to meet new people.

Pro: It wasn’t on purpose...

Mara (arms\_crossed indifferent): Yup. You do you, Pro.

Pro: ...

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Anyways...

Mara (neutral hehe):

Pro: I think I scared her or something. I apologized, but then she kind of ran away from me.

Mara (laughing holding\_back):

Mara’s barely able to contain her laughter.

Mara: Who wouldn’t?

Pro: I—

Mara (laughing laughing): Kidding, kidding!

Pro: ...

Mara (laughing recovering): Sorry, sorry.

Mara: You just always leave yourself wide open to these attacks, Pro.

Mara (arms\_crossed lecturing): A true soldier never lowers his defenses!

Pro: Yes ma’am…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Still though...

Pro: I hope that she doesn't hate me or something. I think she might, though.

Mara (neutral fufu):

Mara stares at me for a few moments before smiling. I’m suddenly overcome by a sense of déjà vu...

Mara: You should go talk to her.

There it is.

Pro: What…?

Mara (neutral neutral): My road is up ahead anyway, see?

Pro: Oh... well, if you’re okay with it.

Pro: Wait, that’s not the point. Wouldn’t it be really awkward?

Pro: And besides, she’s with someone already.

Mara (neutral sigh):

Mara sighs as if she expected me to try to make an excuse but still hoped that I wouldn’t.

Mara (neutral neutral): It’ll be good for you to go out and talk to new people, you know.

Mara: And besides…

Mara (excited excited): She’s really cute!

Mara (waving smiling\_eyes\_closed):

Mara dashes ahead and makes a right turn at the intersection. Before she disappears down the road, she gives me a wave.

Mara (waving happy): Have fun!

Mara (exit):

I glance at the pair across the road, hoping that I can sneak away before they notice me. Yesterday was really uncomfortable, and I’d like to avoid a repeat of what happened if possible.

However, they’re not there anymore…

?Mick (neutral neutral):

?Prim (shy eek):

I turn around and come face to face with the very person I was trying to avoid.

?Prim (shy shy):

Pro: Oh, um, hi there.

?Prim (shy down):

?Mick (neutral confused):

Her friend eyes me, visibly confused.

?Mick (neutral skeptical): Do you know him?

Pro: Ah, we ran into each other at the library yesterday.

The girl stiffens as I mention her.

?Mick (arms\_crossed annoyed): I see. Did you need something?

Pro: No, nothing. I just wanted to apologize again and make sure that I didn’t offend you or anything.

I face the girl, hoping for a response, but she refuses to look me in the eyes.

Pro: Um...

?Mick (neutral sigh): Sorry about that. She isn’t very comfortable with strangers.

“What do you mean?” **OR** “Sorry if I’m being too pushy.”

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?Mick (neutral confused):

Pro: What do you mean?

?Mick (neutral cold): What kind of question is that?

?Mick (arms\_crossed annoyed): She’s not comfortable with strangers.

Pro: Oh, okay...

?Mick (neutral cold): Now if you’ll excuse us, we’ll be on our way to school. We don’t want to be late.

?Prim (exit):

?Mick (exit):

The girl gives me one last quick wary glance before the two of them turn away and walk down the sidewalk. I watch them as they go, unintentionally replaying the conversation I just had in my head.

Man. Mara’s gonna be *pretty* disappointed in me when I tell her how it went...

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?Mick (neutral annoyed):

?Prim (shy shy):

Pro: Oh, sorry if I’m being too pushy then. I guess I didn’t consider that.

?Prim (shy curious):

?Mick (neutral sigh):

The guy sighs, but the girl glances at me curiously. Suddenly, she speaks with a voice as small and timid as a mouse.

?Mick (neutral neutral):

?Prim (shy down): It’s…

?Prim (shy shy): It’s okay.

Relief fills my chest, and I try not to smile ecstatically.

Pro: You weren’t hurt or anything, right?

?Prim: No.

Pro: Just making sure, since our encounter yesterday was pretty quick.

?Prim (shy down): Yeah.

?Mick (ahem ahem):

The guy clears his throat.

?Mick (neutral annoyed): We’d better get going, or we’re gonna be late.

?Mick (neutral cold): Sorry, but if you’d excuse us...

Pro: Um…

?Prim (shy shy):

Pro: I think we’re going the same way. So, uh…

Remembering Mara’s advice, I decide to put myself out there and hope that I don’t get rejected.

?Mick (neutral neutral):

Pro: Could I join you guys?

Both of them pause for a second, and then the girl slowly nods.

?Mick (neutral annoyed):

?Prim: Yeah, I... don’t mind.

Phew. I give her a grateful smile.

?Prim (shy embarrassed):

Pro: Thanks!

?Mick (neutral sigh): Let’s get going, then.

Prim (shy shy):

?Mick (neutral neutral):

The three of us head to school together, and for a moment I’m filled with a sense of accomplishment. I can’t wait to tell Mara about my exploits.

However, that feeling quickly dies as we walk down the road in silence. All of a sudden, though, the guy speaks up.

?Mick (arms\_crossed skeptical): So, what’s your name?

Pro: I’m Pro. Sorry, I don’t know your names either.

?Mick (neutral neutral): I’m Mick, and this is Prim.

Prim gives me a small nod.

Pro: Ah, okay. What class are you guys in?

Mick: I’m in 1C, and she’s in…

Prim: 1A.

Pro: Oh, so you’re first-years, huh? I’m in 2B.

Mick (neutral amused):

Mick glances at me with a mixture of surprise and slight amusement on his face.

Mick: I thought you were in first year, like us.

Pro: Huh…

Another moment of awkward silence, undoubtedly out of respect for my injured pride.

Mick (neutral neutral):

Pro: Um, do you two normally go this way?

Prim (shy down): We do.

Pro: Really? I don’t think I’ve seen you guys on my way to school before.

Prim (shy shy): We usually leave earlier.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Pro: Usually I’m always just a bit later, which probably explains why we’ve never run into each other.

Mick (neutral thinking): Yeah, I don’t think I’ve seen you before either.

Prim (shy curious):

Prim looks at me curiously.

Mick (neutral neutral):

Prim: Later? It’s already pretty late though…

Pro: Ah...

Pro: I’m a little too fond of sleeping in to pay attention to my alarm clock. How about you guys?

Pro: ...

Pro: Is it just me…?

Prim: ...

There’s yet another pause, and part of me starts wishing that I’d just walked by myself instead of subjecting myself to such an uncomfortable situation.

Prim: It’s—

Mick (neutral smug): It’s just you.

Mick (neutral surprise):

Prim (shy embarrassed): ...not just you…

Mick (neutral annoyed):

I accidentally let out a small laugh.

Prim (shy smiling\_eyes\_closed): I like to sleep, too.

Pro: And you’re normally on your way to school even earlier than now, huh? That’s admirable. I could never have that much willpower.

Prim (shy shy): It’s not that bad…

Prim (shy down): ...

Prim (shy shy): I like being at school early.

Prim: It’s quieter.

Pro: Oh true. Must be really peaceful, huh. And you’d never have to rush.

Pro: Wait, that actually doesn’t sound bad.

Prim (shy smiling\_eyes\_closed): You should try it.

Pro: Hm…

Prim (shy smiling):

Pro: No, I don’t think I could do it.

Prim (shy hehe): I see.

**Front of School**

Prim and I chat for the rest of the way to school, and it turns out that she can be surprisingly talkative, considering how shy she seems to be.

Prim (shy shy):

Pro: And today I—

Mick (neutral annoyed): Prim, our first class is on the far side of the school.

Mick: We should probably hurry up, or we’ll get in trouble.

Prim (shy disappointed): Ah... okay.

Mick (waving smug): Sorry, but we gotta go. See you around, I guess.

Pro: Oh, okay. It was nice meeting you guys today. See you, then!

Prim (waving shy):

Mick gives me a nod, while Prim turns to face me and gives me a small wave.

Prim: See you.

Prim (exit):

Mick (exit):

I watch as the two of them head along the side of the building to the other side, and then I continue towards the front.

Neither of them seemed too outgoing, but as far as getting to know them goes, I don’t think that was a bad start. At the very least, it was better than yesterday.

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