**School Library**

I sigh as I place yet another “modern literature” novel on one of many, many bookshelves. I’ve been here for an hour, but based on the gigantic stack left sitting beside the library front desk I’ll probably be here for at least another one.

I almost unintentionally skipped out on detention earlier – I forgot about it and tried to leave early as usual, but before I could walk out the front a menacing predator in the form of Ms. Tran dragged me away...

And now I’m here putting away books, a task which for some reason our library committee hasn’t been doing. It’s actually not that bad, but there’s another person helping out and his presence makes things more than awkward.

Mick: ...

Mick: What?

Pro: Nothing. Just lost in thought.

Mick: Sure...

He looks tired. And a little annoyed, but thankfully he’s not being openly hostile like the last time I saw him.

Mick: Hey, um...

Pro: Hm? What’s up?

I stick the last book in my hands onto the shelf and face him, a mixture of apprehension and curiosity accumulating in my stomach.

Mick: I’m, uh...

Mick: ...

Mick: I’m-

But before he can get the words out we’re interrupted by Prim accompanied by a person I didn’t expect to see today.

Iris: Hey, Pro.

Iris: Oh, and Mick’s here too.

Mick: H-Hey, Iris...

Mick: Why are you here?

Iris: Huh? Why shouldn’t I be here?

Mick: Because...

He trails off, visibly nervous. Is he scared of Iris? Seems like it. It’s a little odd seeing him this sheepish, but at the same time I can’t deny that I find it at least a tiny bit funny...

Mick: Shouldn’t you have better things to do?

Iris: ...

Iris: Of course I do. But once I heard that a certain someone had detention, out of the goodness of my heart I wanted to make sure that he would be *properly* reformed afterwards.

Iris: Any more questions?

Mick: Um...

Mick: No, not really.

Without another word he resumes the task at hand, working twice as fast as he was previously. He’s surprisingly efficient, but who wouldn’t be under Iris’ watchful gaze?

I pause for a few moments, waiting to see if she’ll make me get back to work as well, but she doesn’t say anything so I instead turn to Prim.

Pro: Hey, Prim. Long time no see.

Prim: Long time no see.

Pro: Taking out a book?

She shakes her head, glancing towards her sister and Mick. The stack of books left to put away is shrinking freakishly fast thanks to the former’s supervision, but I feel a little bad for the guy...

Prim: Mick asked me to come.

Pro: Oh, I see. Uh...

Pro: Is he gonna be alright? They don’t seem to get along too well.

Prim: Ah...

Prim: They’ve been like that for as long as I can remember. Iris always gives Mick a hard time, especially when he gets in trouble...

Prim: She said it’s because he doesn’t have any older siblings to keep him in line, or something like that. Since he’s an only child.

Pro: Is she tough on you too?

Prim: Um...

Prim: Kind of. When it comes to piano she’s always really strict, but otherwise she’s usually pretty kind.

That makes sense. Despite her standoffish nature, Iris does seem to care a lot about her little sister. Mick might be another story, though.

Prim: What about you? Are you taking out a book?

Pro: Huh? No, uh...

Pro: I have detention too. I fell asleep in class this morning.

Prim: Oh, I see.

Now paranoid, I turn around to glance at Iris, who stares back with an eyebrow raised. I’ve pretty sure she heard what I said, but for some reason she doesn’t do anything about it.

Pro: I should probably help out, so um...

Pro: I’ll talk to you in a bit.

Prim: Oh, okay. I can help out if you want.

A tempting offer, but I definitely can’t make Prim do my punishment for me...

Pro: It’s fine, don’t worry. It looks like we’re almost done.

**School Library**

It takes us less than half an hour to finish up, less than half the amount of time I initially thought it’d take. All thanks to Iris, of course.

Mick: So Prim, um...

Mick: ...

Mick: Do you guys have to watch?

Iris: Of course I do.

Mick: ...

Mick: Leave.

Iris: Huh? If you don’t like us being around, then *you* leave.

Mick: Fine.

He walks towards the door and enters the hallway, gesturing for Prim to follow him.

Prim: Um...

Iris: Don’t worry about us, we’ll wait here.

Prim: Okay. See you in a bit.

We watch as Prim catches up to him, and the pair disappears into the hallway.

Iris: So you fell asleep in class, huh.

Geh.

Pro: Um, yeah. My bad.

Iris: I’m just joking, don’t worry. I can’t blame you, school sucks.

Iris: And it’s not really any of my business what you do. Your life, not mine.

Pro: You didn’t seem too thrilled with Mick, though.

Iris: Mmm...

Iris: I was already pretty annoyed with him. He has a lot of attitude, after all.

Iris: And besides, our parents are friends so we’ve known each other forever. It’s my responsibility to make sure he shapes up.

Pro: I see.

Iris chuckles, apparently amused by my less-than-convinced reaction.

Iris: Well, he’s not all bad. Or at least he’s not as bad as I make him out to be.

Iris: I heard that he hasn’t been the kindest to you, though, but I hope you can find it in yourself to forgive him. He’s not a bad kid, he’s just immature and gets worked up too easily.

Iris: And he’s really awkward, which doesn’t help at all.

Pro: Yeah. I’ll try.

Iris: Thanks.

Iris: By the way, if you said no then I would’ve forced you to throw up that bento you had for lunch.

Pro: The bento?

Pro: Oh, right.

Iris: How was it?

Pro: It was really good. Thanks a bunch.

Iris: You’re welcome. They cost a fortune, though.

Pro: Yeah, I figured...

Pro: How much?

Iris: Let’s just say it was the largest non-piano related purchase I’ve made for a couple years.

Pro: Was it really okay for me to have one, then...?

To my surprise, Iris shrugs off my concern.

Iris: It’s Prim’s birthday. Whatever makes her happiest.

Before I can respond, Prim and Mick re-enter the room, the latter looking uncharacteristically embarrassed.

Mick: We’re done.

Mick: I have stuff to do, so I’m going home. See you guys.

Prim: Oh, um...

Prim: Thanks. Again.

Mick: No problem.

He heads out, leaving me with Prim and Iris. Once he’s out of sight, the older of the two turns to the younger, an alarmingly mischievous gleam in her eyes.

Iris: So? What happened?

Prim: He gave me a birthday gift. A notebook.

Iris: That’s surprisingly thoughtful of him.

Iris: Mr. Chaperone, what did you ge-

She stops, however, once she sees the look of pure nervousness that’s surely on my face. Petra, Mick, and even Lilith were all able to pick something out for Prim, but I still don’t have the faintest idea of what to get her. And I’m running out of time.

Iris: Well, let’s get going then. Don’t wanna make Mom wait too much.

Prim: Huh? Oh, right.

Prim: Bye, Pro.

Pro: See you.

Iris: See you around, I guess.

The pair start to leave, but before they do Iris leans in and whispers into my ear, her voice barely audible.

Iris: Better get shopping. At least top the notebook.

And with a faint smile she ushers Prim away.