**Classroom**

I arrive at school to find a drained Ms. Tran standing outside our classroom, apparently as thrilled about being back in class as the rest of us are. After what seems to be an inner pep talk, she walks inside and tells us all to take our seats, with me sheepishly following behind her.

Morning lessons are pretty typical. I spend most of the time zoning in and out, ultimately retaining almost no information, and an endless eternity later the lunch bell rings.

Asher (waving playful):

Once we’re dismissed, Asher makes his way over, waving with an unusually cheeky grin on his face.

Asher: Hey.

Asher (neutral smiling):

Pro: Hey.

Asher (neutral thinking): Ms. Tran seemed kinda out of it today, huh?

Pro: Yeah. Teachers are humans too, huh.

Asher (neutral smiling): Yup. Anyways…

Asher (neutral playful): Petra told me everything that happened yesterday. Who knew you were such a player?

Pro: Right…

Asher (neutral thinking): Using an unfamiliar situation to get closer to Prim…

Asher (neutral smirk): An underhanded but surprisingly effective tactic. I didn’t think you were someone who’d pull something like that off.

I sigh and start to unbox my lunch, my resistance to this kind of teasing having been increased drastically as of late.

Asher (neutral curious):

Pro: For someone who doesn’t have a girlfriend, you seem to know a lot about this kinda stuff.

Pro: Were you a player in the past, or something?

Asher (neutral confused): Hm? Nope. I’ve never been with anyone.

Pro: Right, like I’d believe that-

Asher (neutral curious):

The door to our class opens rather loudly, causing me to start. And inside peeks Petra, who looks around until she spots Asher and me.

Petra (waving grinning): Heya.

Asher (neutral smiling): Hey. What’s up?

Petra (neutral smiling): Not much.

Asher (neutral curious):

Petra (neutral curious):

Pro: Hey, Petra, I have a question.

Petra: Hm? Sure.

Asher (neutral skeptical):

Petra (neutral confused):

Pro: Would you believe me if I told you that Asher’s never had a girlfriend?

Petra (surprise surprise): Huh?!?!?

Petra (neutral confused): You’ve never had a girlfriend?!?!?

Asher (neutral expressionless): No…

Petra (neutral skeptical):

She looks at me with a mixture of annoyance and appreciation on her face.

Asher (neutral frowning):

Petra (neutral expressionless): No, I wouldn’t believe it.

Pro: See?

Petra (neutral curious):

Asher (neutral expressionless): You can believe whatever you want, but the truth won’t change…

Pro: Right, right, whatever you say.

Asher (neutral sigh):

Petra (neutral skeptical):

Petra looks between us incredulously, probably trying to figure out if Asher’s lying. After a while she gives up, though.

Asher (neutral neutral):

Petra (arms\_crossed curious): Anyways, did you get a new phone yesterday?

Pro: Yeah, I did.

Petra: Same number as before?

Pro: Yeah.

Petra (neutral smiling): Okay, great. That’s all I wanted to know.

Asher (neutral curious):

Petra (neutral curious): Now, if you’ll excuse me I have a few things I wanna do, so I’ll see you guys later.

Petra (waving grinning): Bye!

Asher (waving smiling): See you.

Petra (exit):

We watch as she leaves before turning back to each other.

Asher (neutral curious): A new phone?

Pro: Oh, yeah. I broke it on Friday.

Asher (neutral neutral): I see. When you visited Lilith?

Pro: Yeah.

Asher (neutral worried\_slightly): Have you heard from her since then?

Pro: Nope. Still nothing.

Asher (neutral neutral): I see.

Asher (neutral hopeful): Well, hopefully she’ll come back soon.

Pro: Yeah.

Asher (neutral curious): By the way, can I see your new phone?

Pro: Hm? Oh, sure.

I hand it over to him, and he inspects it for a few seconds before giving it back.

Asher (neutral neutral): I guess it’s nothing too special, huh. Where’d you get the case though?

Pro: My friend made it for me.

Asher (neutral smirk): Your friend, huh?

Pro: Uh…

I decide not to say anything else, but Asher, picking up on this, decides to press on. I spend the rest of my free time dodging his questions, finding myself wishing for the maybe first time ever that lunch was shorter.