**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.

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

Asher (waving smiling): Hey.

Pro: Hey.

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

Pro: Yeah. Teachers are humans too, huh.

Asher (neutral neutral): Yup. Anyways…

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

Pro: Right…

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

Asher (excited grinning): 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.

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 eyes\_rolling): Hm? Nope. I’ve never been with anyone.

Pro: Right, like I’d believe that-

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: Heya.

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

Petra: Not much.

Pro: Hey, Petra, I have a question.

Petra: Hm? Sure.

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

Petra: Huh?!?!?

Petra: You’ve never had a girlfriend?!?!?

Asher (neutral expressionless): No…

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

Petra: No, I wouldn’t believe it.

Pro: See?

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

Pro: Right, right, whatever you say.

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

Petra: Anyways, did you get a new phone yesterday?

Pro: Yeah, I did.

Petra: Same number as before?

Pro: Yeah.

Petra: Okay, great. That’s all I wanted to know.

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

Petra: Bye!

Asher (waving smiling): See you.

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 curious): I see. When you visited Lilith?

Pro: Yeah.

Asher (neutral curious): Have you heard from her since then?

Pro: Nope. Still nothing.

Asher (neutral neutral): I see.

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

Pro: Yeah.

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

Pro: My friend made it for me.

Asher (neutral curious): 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 first time ever that lunch was shorter.