**Bedroom**

I wake up to a text from Mara, telling me that she’d be going to school later in the day because of a stomachache. Knowing that I’ll probably be late for school if I go back to sleep, I unenthusiastically pull myself out of bed, drowsy and a little put out that I’ll have to make the walk by myself.

Is it alright to not want to be alone? I think it’s human nature to want to be around others, but does that mean we’re allowed to be unsatisfied when we aren’t? Since I have no siblings and my mom works, I’ve had my fair share of solitude, but I don’t think I’ve ever truly been alone.

**Nostalgia Scene - Mara’s Frog**

The only times I’ve really come close to feeling lonely were years ago, and each time without fail a peppy, pink-haired neighbour would uncannily knock on my door, clutching a terrified frog or a bundle of flowers from someone’s garden.

**Bedroom**

No, Mara’s never allowed me to feel lonely, which really is a blessing. But even though I’ve walked to school plenty of times by myself before, today I feel…

…strangely alone.

**Neighbourhood Road 1**

Perhaps because it’s a Monday, it took a while for me to get out of the house. Everything from putting on my uniform, to eating breakfast, to taking care of my dental hygiene seemed uninteresting and tedious, and thus I didn’t really strive to do them particularly efficiently.

Eventually I find myself walking down the sidewalk, looking around aimlessly but not really seeing anything. Still lost in my thoughts, I don’t notice as a peppy, not-so-pink-haired peer slides beside me until she taps on my shoulder, causing me to jolt back to reality.

Petra: Morning.

Petra: …

Petra: Are you alright?

Pro: Actually, I guess if you look at it a certain way your hair could be considered a shade of pink…

Petra: Huh? What are you talking about?

Pro: Nothing important. Morning.

Petra: Morning…

Petra wipes the incredulously look off her face, apparently deciding not to let my odd behaviour faze her.

Petra: What were you thinking about?

Pro: Nothing much.

Pro: Anyways, why are you here? I’ve never seen you walk this way before.

Petra: Ah, I was staying over at a friend’s place.

Petra: A girl.

Pro: I didn’t ask, but okay…

Pro: If you stayed over at her place, wouldn’t you go to school together?

Petra: She ran off to meet her boyfriend.

Pro: Oh. How tragic.

Petra: Right…?

She sighs dejectedly, and I do my best not to let my amusement show.

Petra: I wish I had a boyfriend. I wanna meet up in the morning, go on fun dates, be treated to good food, laugh at all my friends…

Petra: But instead I have to walk to school with *you*, buy my own food, and be a laughingstock for all my classmates with significant others.

Petra: You’re the boy I interact the most with, you know. Couldn’t you be a little better looking, or a little more athletic, or smarter, or something?

Pro: Well excuse me…

Petra: I’ll consider it if you buy me a pudding from the convenience store.

Pro: No can do.

Petra: Then you aren’t excused. Your loss.

After a moment of silence Petra’s expression softens, done with her little tantrum.

Petra: Well, all jokes aside…

Petra: Even if you were the most attractive guy in the world I wouldn’t even consider going for you. You belong to…

She trails off, her eyes widening.

Lilith: It’s been a while.

Petra: Lilith…?

It takes a while for her to fully process what she’s seeing, but once she does Petra let’s out a joyful noise and jumps towards Lilith. However, she stops herself right before making contact, something that her target notices.

Lilith: Um…

Lilith: It’s fine. Just this once.

Shocked and unsure exactly what to do, Petra awkwardly embraces Lilith before quickly retracting her arms and backing off.

Petra: Um…

Petra: Are you back for good?

Lilith: Yeah. I’m back for good.

Petra: Thank goodness…

Lilith glances at me as Petra wipes away the tears forming in her eyes.

Pro: How was the rest of your weekend?

Lilith: It was good. I was looking forward to today, though.

Lilith: Um…

Lilith: We’re still meeting at lunch, right?

Pro: Yeah. Unless you don’t want to.

Lilith: No, I do…

Petra: Um…

Petra: Did something happen?

Pro: I mean, a lot happened…

Petra: No, I meant…

Petra: Did you know she was coming back today?

Pro: Huh? Yeah, I did.

Petra: And you didn’t let me know…?

Pro: Uh, no. It slipped my mind.

Suddenly annoyed, Petra puts herself in between me and Lilith, monopolizing her attention for the rest of our trip to school. I don’t really fight back, though, knowing that Petra’s been plenty worried as well.

And besides, Lilith’s back for good. We’ll have plenty to chances to talk.