**Bedroom**

After a sound night of sleep, I wake up, appreciative of the gentle light filtering through my curtains. Hopefully it’ll be as warm outside as it looks from here.

It turns out that I didn’t need to set an alarm after all, as I wake up a solid two hours before the game starts. It should take twenty minutes or so to walk there, which leaves me an hour and a half to get out of the house. Child’s play for an expert at rushing outside in the morning.

As I stretch, I notice a piece of paper sticking out of my bag, and after working up the will to get out of bed I go over to see what it is.

It turns out to be my career form, which has grown crumpled and tattered due to its constant trips between here and school. I stare at it for a few seconds, still unsure of exactly what I’ll put on it. Maybe I’ll write down something random. It’s not like I’ll have to follow through on it anyways.

But on the other hand, I really should be thinking about my future. In under a year I’ll have to make a decision, and it would be good to have something to work towards. But even though I know that, for some reason, I just can’t bring myself to come up with anything.

Ah well. I guess I’ll put some more thought into when I get back later today.

**Kitchen**

I head down to the kitchen, where breakfast waits but my mom is nowhere to be found. Hopefully she went back to bed, since she came home pretty late last night as well.

As I eat my meal made from yesterday’s leftover ingredients, I think about yesterday’s dinner. Even though it was overcooked and missing a few key components, it wasn’t bad. Mara’s a really good cook, which is strange since she’s told me her mom usually cooks for her family. Is cooking something some people are just naturally good at?

It would be nice to be able to make good food easily, though. Maybe I’ll become a chef.

As if.

**Front of Convenience Store**

After an hour or so of mulling around, I get changed and head out. Thankfully, it actually is a beautiful day – the sky is clear of any clouds, and the temperature is just right for a walk. It’s probably good for baseball too, which is good for Lilith and the others since playing baseball in the cold sounds miserable.

I wonder what Lilith put on her career form. She seems like she could probably get into college, but maybe she wants to keep playing baseball.

Hmm…

Being a professional athlete would be pretty cool.

?Petrov (neutral neutral):

As I pass by the convenience store, I notice a small figure staring at me from across the street, a young boy who couldn’t be more than two or three years old. There seems to be nobody else around, but maybe his parent is inside?

Go check on him. **OR** Keep walking.

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Well, even if his parent is inside the store, it’d probably be a good idea to make sure he doesn’t wander off or something.

I cross the street and head towards him, hoping that nobody will get the wrong idea. He watches me intently as I approach, unfazed.

Pro: Um…

I freeze up, unsure of what to say. I don’t have any siblings or cousins, so this is the first I’ve talked to someone this young in a while.

Pro: Are you lost?

?Petrov: …

I wait for him to respond, but all he does is stare.

Pro: Uh…

?Petrov (pointing neutral):

All of a sudden, he taps on the convenience store window.

Pro: Hm?

Pro: Ice cream?

He nods, and my mind automatically reminds me of how much I spent on groceries yesterday.

Pro: Really…?

He nods again, and I sigh.

Pro: Aren’t you gonna eat lunch soon, though? You don’t wanna spoil your appetite, right?

?Petrov (neutral crying\_holding\_back):

Apparently he could understand that, because tears start to well up in his eyes. He genuinely looks like he’s trying to hold it in though, and I start to feel guilty even though technically I didn’t do anything wrong.

Aw man.

Pro: Alright, alright. Just wait here, okay?

?Petrov (neutral tears):

He nods, and with another sigh I step into the store.

**Front of Convenience Store**

A few minutes later I hand him a cheap popsicle, which, fortunately, he accepts. However, before I can ask him where his parents are again, he runs off at an alarmingly fast speed.

Pro: Hey, hold on!

**Neighbourhood Road 2**

Petrov (popsicle eating):

I chase him as he runs down the sidewalk, and after a bit of struggling I catch up to him, pick him up, and place him on a bench. He peacefully sits down and starts to eat his popsicle while I try to catch my breath.

Pro: You know…

Petrov (popsicle neutral):

?Greta: Hey you!

?Greta (protecting angry):

I turn around to see who was shouting at me and get nailed in the face with a shoe. When I recover, I come face to face with an angry elementary school student, who has positioned herself in between me and the other kid.

?Greta (protecting angry): What are you doing with my brother???

?Greta (protecting angry\_really): You were planning to kidnap him, weren’t you!?!?!?

Ugh.

Pro: I wasn’t gonna do anything with him. I just saw a random kid by himself, and I was concerned so I decided to check up on him, but he ran off.

?Greta (protecting confused): Huh?

?Greta (neutral neutral): Oh.

?Greta (neutral geh):

Pro: Besides, why’d you leave him alone? Isn’t that dangerous?

?Greta (embarrassed embarrassed): I… uh…

?Greta (neutral deflated):

?Petrov (popsicle eating):

A hint of smug satisfaction rising in my chest as I watch as she tries to work things through in her head. After a few moments she deflates and turns towards her brother.

?Greta (neutral worried): You bought him a popsicle…?

?Greta (neutral deflated): Ah, Mom’s gonna be so mad at me…

?Greta (neutral expressionless): Well, thank you for looking after my brother.

Pro: Don’t worry about it. Make sure to keep an eye on him next time, okay?

?Greta: I will.

?Greta (exit):

?Petrov (exit):

I check the time as I walk away, hoping that I won’t be late. It’s a good thing I left early today, otherwise I probably would’ve been.

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?Petrov (exit):

Well, I’m sure that no parent would just leave their two-year-old by themselves in the middle of nowhere. They’re probably nearby, and I don’t really wanna have to explain why I approached their kid while they weren’t around.

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