**Neighbourhood Road 2**

Mara: Well, I’m glad we were able to find something nice. I think anybody would be happy to receive this as a gift.

Pro: Do you think it really counts, though? You found it, not me…

Mara: I’m sure it’ll be fine. Besides, you picked out which one to get.

Mara: And you made a rather poetic choice. Makes me proud.

Pro: Yup…

I gingerly put the small box the store gave us in my bag, still unsure whether or not Prim would like it.

Well, I guess it’s too late now.

Mara: By the way, are you alright? You looked a little shaken when I found you.

Pro: Huh? Yeah, I’m fine. Just a little tired.

Mara: I see…

Mara looks at me carefully, probably knowing that I’m hiding something. She doesn’t comment on it, however, and instead changes the subject.

Mara: Well, it’s good that we were able to find something so quickly. Wouldn’t wanna be late for afternoon classes.

Pro: Was it really that quick, though?

Mara: Hm? Wasn’t it?

She pulls out her phone to check the time, paling once she realizes that we definitely won’t be on time.

Pro: Sorry, I thought you accepted it…

Mara: No time for that, let’s go!!

**Teacher’s Office**

Teacher: So…

Teacher: Not only were you late by an entire period yesterday, today you somehow managed to forget about class while you were still at school.

Teacher: Care to explain yourself?

Mara made me swear that I’d run to school, but even then I was still around fifteen minutes late for class. Of course, Ms. Tran wasn’t exactly impressed, and told me to see her in her office at the end of the day.

Pro: Um…

I consider my options, trying to determine the path that will result in as little suffering as possible. Students aren’t technically allowed to leave the school grounds without permission, so telling her the truth might get me into a lot of trouble…

“I was buying a birthday gift for a friend.” **OR** “I was taking a nap.”

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Pro: I was buying a birthday gift for a friend.

I bow my head, hoping that a sincere apology will lessen my punishment.

Teacher: Why today during lunch? Why not yesterday or after school?

Pro: I went yesterday, but because of various reasons I wasn’t able to find a proper present. And I wanted to give it to her today before she left.

Teacher: I see. And who is this friend?

Pro: Um…

Pro: Do I really have to tell you?

Teacher: Of course.

Yikes…

Pro: I was getting a gift for Prim. She’s a first year.

Teacher: Is that so…?

She goes onto her computer and pulls up Prim’s file.

Teacher: Well, it actually is her birthday today. Did you manage to find something for her?

Pro: Um, yeah.

Teacher: I see.

To my surprise, her expression softens into a smile.

Teacher: Well, since you went through all the trouble, I suppose I should let you give her your gift.

Teacher: Go find her. But make sure you come back here afterwards…

Teacher: …or they’ll never find your body.

Pro: Yes ma’am. And thank you.

Teacher: Don’t mention it. And get going. You wanna catch her before she leaves, right?

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Pro: I was taking a nap.

Pro: I’m sorry.

Teacher: Napping in class isn’t enough for you?

Pro: Apparently not.

Ms. Tran sighs, both annoyed and disappointed.

Teacher: See that truck outside? We ordered a bunch of computers, so go help them carry everything inside. You’re not allowed to go home until that truck leaves.

Pro: Yes ma’am.

I turn around to leave, but she stops me before I can walk away.

Teacher: Try not to do this again, okay? Being chronically late is a bad habit.

Pro: I’m sorry. It won’t happen again.

Teacher: For some reason I find that a little hard to believe, but for now I’ll take your word.

Teacher: Get going, then. And come back here when you finish, okay?

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