

MERE INTERFERENCE

Written by

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EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK SIDEWALK - DAY

We open on a close up of a **heart-shaped rock** laying on the sidewalk until it's suddenly kicked off screen.

CUT TO:

INT. PHYSICS LAB - DAY

WILLOW (19, plainly dressed, hair uptight) rushes into an **empty white classroom** containing rows of tables holding **identical scientific apparatuses**.

She picks a seat at the front and immediately opens up her **laptop** to complete a round of **Zetamac** (an online mental math drill game) as other students pile in.

One student approaches Willow's table. Then, sensing a chill in her rigid movements, decides to find another seat.

PETER (27, exuberant, Hawaiian shirt) enters and writes on the **chalkboard**: "LAB 1- WHAT IS LIGHT?"

PETER
Welcome to first-year physics lab
everyone!

XYLA (19, alluring but disordered, hair tousled) rushes in and quickly sits at the **last open seat** next to Willow, still drilling math.

Two **philosophy books** (Simone de Beauvoir's *The Inseparables* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*) spill onto the table as she's pulling out her **yellow paged notebook**.

PETER (CONT'D)
Great! So even if this is just a required course, my goals are to teach y'all how to ask good questions and make good friends! All reports will be graded as a team.

Willow and Xyla finally exchange their first looks.

Xyla offers a warm smile. Willow does a double take, gives a small nod and turns back forward with her eyebrows raised. She shakes off her apprehension to type in the answer to $184/23=?$.

PETER (CONT'D)
Alright, have fun and wave me down if you have any light questions.

Peter winks. The students quickly shift to begin working.

XYLA
Hey I'm Xyla!

Xyla eagerly reaches out her hand. Willow ignores it and shuts her computer.

WILLOW
I'm Willow. Did you pre-read the lab manual for today?

Xyla reaches back with her hand and starts searching for the **lab manual** in her **satchel**.

XYLA
Uh, was I suppose to do that?

Xyla starts skimming and quickly gets visibly confused. She leans in towards Willow who tilts back caught off guard.

XYLA (CONT'D)
I'm kind of a philosophy major...
I'm not the best at science. But I can promise you that I'll be a reliable partner or labmate, I guess.

Xyla laughs. Willow stares.

WILLOW
Can you set up the filter?

Xyla nods energetically. She looks around before picking up a **6x6 inch metal sheet** with two parallel **1 inch** slits cut out the middle.

Willow starts lining up the **laser pointer** and measuring the distance between it and the filter.

XYLA
So do you know what you're majoring in yet?

WILLOW
Applied Mathematics with a double minor in Computer Science and Financial Engineering.

XYLA
Wow! What got you interested in all that?

Willow takes a second. She rotates the filter which Xyla placed in the wrong direction.

WILLOW
I've always liked math. I'm planning to do quant.

Xyla pretends to know what that means.

XYLA
Ooh I see.

Willow powers on the laser. A **thin red beam** of light shines out and splits into two after passing the double slit filter.

Xyla attentively watches the **monitor**, expecting two bright spots to appear. Instead, the light paints a **horizontal barcode-like pattern** of bright and dark bands.

XYLA (CONT'D)
Whoa, is the light somehow coming back to-

WILLOW
It's just the result of two light waves constructively and destructively interfering with each other, demonstrating the wave-particle duality of light.

Xyla turns her head to Willow looking with awe.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
I did this experiment in middle school. Can you pass me the light sensor?

Xyla grabs the **light sensor** and hands it to Willow.

XYLA
Well I'm very grateful to be interfering with you then-

Willow perks her ears and takes a quick, shy glance at Xyla.

XYLA (CONT'D)
Because you seem way better at physics than me.

Willow relaxes.

WILLOW
Right... Thanks.

Willow and Xyla complete the experiment and start cleaning up. Xyla accidentally knocks the sensor onto the ground.

Both girls reach for it at once- Willow's hand landing beneath Xyla's.

A beat of panic. Willow quickly retreats and Xyla blushes.

XYLA
(softly)
Oops.

Willow quickly packs up her computer and rushes out of the room. Xyla chases her down out the hallway.

XYLA (CONT'D)
Hey! Willow! Do you want to meet up
this weekend?

Willow turns her head back slightly.

XYLA (CONT'D)
To work on the report, I mean-

Willow lets out a shallow breath then turns back around straight-faced.

WILLOW
I blocked some time Saturday from 2 PM to 3 PM. I was going to send you an email. Does that time work?

XYLA
Yeah, I'm sure it does. Look forward to your correspondence!

Xyla does a cute curtsy. Willow nods vigorously, turns back and speed walks away, fighting back a small smile.

OFF on Xyla looking at Willow then back at the classroom with amused disbelief.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDENT LOUNGE - DAY

Xyla lounges on the **sofa** next to Willow sitting up perfectly straight at a **table**.

Xyla slyly peeks over at one of the browser tabs Willow has open titled: "**7-YEAR-PLAN**".

XYLA

No way, you have a 7-year plan?!

WILLOW

(defensive)

Yes.

XYLA

Can I see it?

Xyla gets up and leans in close to Willow's face, puppy-eyed. Willow shakes her head, Xyla frowns dramatically, Willow sighs and finally clicks on the tab in defeat.

WILLOW

It's nothing much to see-

Xyla takes over Willow's trackpad and scrolls to the bottom.

XYLA

77 pages long?!?!

A beat.

WILLOW

One needs to be detailed with one's life.

Xyla snorts and leans back into the sofa couch. Willow readjusts her computer.

XYLA

I don't even know what I'm going to do tomorrow...

A beat. Willow looks over hesitantly wanting to say something... shakes her head and looks back at her computer.

WILLOW

Did you finish writing Methods yet?

XYLA

Almost.

WILLOW

Okay. I'm finishing up the graphs.

A beat.

XYLA

I admire your discipline and all but I have to ask... In your plan, how do you account for something unexpected or... someone...

Xyla looks down smiling before glancing over. Willow considers this, hesitates before opening up **Google Calendar**.

WILLOW

I leave one hour open on Sundays.

Xyla looks at Willow's tightly-packed, color-coordinated calendar and suddenly bursts into hysterical laughter.

Willow is first shocked, then annoyed, then... can't help but join in with a chuckle.

CUT TO:

INT. PHYSICS LAB - DAY

INSERT: Match cut of lab titles 2-5 and then: "LAB 6- WHAT IS CONSERVED?" written on chalkboard.

Xyla slips into class, late as usual. Willow smiles excitedly when their eyes meet. Their **stools** are set closer together.

XYLA

Sorry was talking to someone outside. She was so nice but then asked to connect on LinkedIn.

WILLOW

(smiling)

It's fine. Honestly, this would probably go faster if I did it myself.

XYLA

Shut up, that was one time!

On the table lies a **linear air track** with **two carts** on it.

They each grab a cart, grazing fingers, before rolling them to opposite ends of the track. **Metal springs** creak as they pull back, building up the tension.

When they simultaneously release, the carts race towards each other, crashing with a dull thud. They lock together, stopping dead in the middle of the track.

XYLA (CONT'D)

(arm-gesturing)

"In love, one and one are one."

Willow looks perplexedly at Xyla.

XYLA (CONT'D)
Jean-Paul Sartre.

WILLOW
(sarcastic)
He couldn't do simple math?

The pair repeat the experiment. The carts colliding again.

XYLA
What's something about you that
people wouldn't expect?

A beat.

WILLOW
I use to write poetry.

XYLA
Really?! Why'd you stop?

WILLOW
I was better at science and I
wasn't going to make any money from
my poems.

Another collision.

XYLA
(flirty)
I'd pay for your poems.

WILLOW
(flustered)
I'll tell my parents that. Anyways,
I don't have the time now.

XYLA
Right, with your 7-year plan.

WILLOW
Exactly.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLOW'S DORM ROOM - DAY

XYLA
(O.S)
Hey Will! It's me!

Willow frantically looks around her room and shoves her copy of **The Inseparables** laying on her bed into her **bedside caddy**.

WILLOW

Come in.

Xyla excitedly bursts through.

XYLA

So I finally get to see the Willow Chen's dorm room.

Xyla looks around at Willow's **bare walls**. It feels like an office cubicle, with only a few **handwritten motivational quotes** hanging above her desk.

XYLA (CONT'D)

It's so... minimalist! Yikes, mine's a mess.

Xyla hops onto Willow's **well-made bed** and pulls out her **notebook**. Willow winces but decides to let it slide.

Xyla looks up to see Willow who seems like she hasn't slept for days.

XYLA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

WILLOW

I have my interview at 3 so we should get started now. Well, really we should have 17 minutes ago.

A beat.

XYLA

You seem really tired. Maybe we should go out for a walk... We can always drop this report.

WILLOW

(under her breath)

What?

XYLA

It's super nice out.

WILLOW

I can't go out for a walk.

Xyla starts to put on her satchel.

XYLA

Why not? We've been getting all A+'s, one drop won't hurt us.

WILLOW

I don't drop things. I don't just do whatever I want because I feel like it. Some of us have to be committed to things and actually do the work.

A beat.

XYLA

Are you serious? I've worked hard to get in here and even if I don't have a stupid 7-year-plan or anything, I also have life goals. Is that really how you see me?

A beat.

WILLOW

I see you as a distraction Xyla.

Xyla jumps off the bed angered, leaving her **notebook** behind.

XYLA

Have you ever asked yourself why you're creating this facade of control and not letting anyone else in?

A beat. Willow looks at her computer searching for an answer. She lands on the title of their **lab report**.

WILLOW

(solemn)

The conservation of momentum.

XYLA

Oh my god, whatever Will.

Xyla storms out shutting the door behind her.

WILLOW

Fuck.

Willow looks at the closed door longingly. When she finally turns back towards her computer she opens up a Google Doc titled "**Final Round Interview Prep**".

INSERT: Top of the page: "Why are you interested in Quant?"

She stares blankly then looks away towards her bedside caddy.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK SIDEWALK - DAY

Xyla walks slowly kicking the **loose leaves** and **rocks** on the sidewalk. She takes a look at the **couples** sitting on the benches around her and frowns.

Suddenly she trips on a rock stuck between two tiles and groans out loud.

Xyla kicks at the sharp-pointed rock three times before it finally lets loose.

The rocks tumbles forward until it lays flat revealing its heart-shape.

She picks it up and slowly grins.

CUT TO:

INT. PHYSICS LAB - DAY

INSERT: "LAB 7- WHAT IS ENTANGLEMENT?" written on chalkboard.

Willow(hair down) rushes into the classroom. The class is empty as usual except for **Xyla**, seated at their table.

They both go tense when they lock eyes, staying silent until Willow sits down.

WILLOW
This one's for free.

Willow nervously puts a folded up **yellow paper** on the table. Xyla opens it up to see inside: a **poem** written by Willow.

When Xyla finishes reading she pulls out the heart-shaped rock from her pocket and places it between them.

XYLA
Found this on my walk.

They stare at each other with warmth and apology in their eyes.

XYLA (CONT'D)
(sweetly)
Do you still have your hour open
this Sunday?

Willow smiles.

THE END