

maya's friendship part 1



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January, one year prior

"Het op een-na-ergste moment was toen ik de bassist tegenkwam toen ik naar de wc ging. ik luister voordat ik ga altijd aan de muren af of de kust veilig is, maar zij zegt juist bijna nooit wat dus ik maakte een foute gok. ik deed mijn deur open en BOEM oogcontact. begroetingen zijn mijn achilleshiel dus ik stond daar als een mongool te staren tot zij als eerste hoi zou zeggen. dat deed ze niet en ze liep gewoon terug coco's kamer in. onbeleefde bitch. zij praat minstens zo weinig als ik, maar zij heeft wel vrienden en zit in een band? zie ik eruit alsof ik uit tsjernobyl kom ofzo?"

March...

Should I make a goal to socialise more?

No.

That's already a stupid idea.

Like actually think about it for more than five seconds. Socialising requires other people. Other people require effort. Effort requires energy. I do not have energy.

Also, socialising implies that there is someone who would actually want to socialise with me in the first place, which is already where the plan completely falls apart.

But then again... Mymy has friends. Which is insane. Like, objectively insane.

She is one of the most annoying people I have ever met in my entire life. Loud, obsessed with stupid historical shit, constantly talking about the VOC like it personally pays her rent. If she says "VOC" one more time I am going to lose it.

And yet somehow, despite all that, she has friends. Multiple. Plural. Why? How? What is the system here? Because if she qualifies, then the bar is clearly not that high. And yet I am still below it. So there has to be a reason. There is always a reason.

And I think I know what it is.

Me.

Which is annoying because that means I can't blame anyone else. Coco tries though. Of course she does. Coco tries everything. That's her whole thing. Trying. Helping. Caring. Being nice. Being perfect. Being unbelievably fucking annoying. She acts like I can't do anything myself. Like I'm some kind of broken object she has to fix or maintain or constantly check up on. I understand that she is trying to be nice. I do. I'm not completely stupid.

But there's a limit.

And she passed that limit a long time ago.

There are moments where I just want to tell her to FUCK OFF and leave me alone for five minutes without turning it into some kind of emotional support session. Stupid adopted sisters. A few weeks ago, I "forgot" to do an assignment. Which is technically not even a lie because I forget everything.

But this time I definitely did it on purpose.

And instead of just letting me fail like a normal person, they did it for me. Just... did it. Like I'm incapable. Which... okay, maybe I am, but still. I guess it's a good thing? Free grade. Minimal effort. But it also makes me feel like shit.

So, I don't know. I have school today. I don't want to go. Like always. Nothing new there. But if I stay home today it will be my third "sick day" this week, and I need to save those. Sick days are a resource. You don't waste them on random days. You save them for emergencies. Like presentations. Or group work. Or existing. School is pointless. We go there for six hours a day, every day, just to learn basic shit that we are never

going to use in real life. Coco always says, "It's very important." Blah blah blah. Important for what? To become another Coco? Because that seems to be the end goal of the entire education system. Take a bunch of normal people and slowly turn them into overly motivated, overly social, overly productive robots who actually enjoy participating. No thanks. One Coco is already too much. We do not need more. And Mymy? Well... She's just annoying. But in a different way. Less invasive. More... background noise. She doesn't constantly try to "fix" me. Which automatically makes her more tolerable than Coco. She just shows up, says something stupid about history, and leaves again.

Honestly, I respect that. Now that I think about it, she's actually not that bad. She can be nice sometimes. Like... genuinely nice. But not in a Coco way where it feels like she's trying to solve you. More like... she just is. And then she leaves. Which is perfect. Because I get space. I don't get space with Coco. Ever.

I've never really said this out loud but... There are times where I feel really bad for getting so annoyed with Coco. Because I know why she does it. She cares. She actually cares. About everyone. All the time. She always puts others before herself. She always has patience. She doesn't get annoyed. She doesn't snap. Well... Except that one time. A few weeks back. When she dangled me out a window a few stories up. So, I guess there is a different Coco. Somewhere. Hidden. Waiting. But overall, she's just... good. Which makes it worse. Because I'm not. But hey. That doesn't change the fact that she is still ANNOYING AS FUCK.

Next day,

March 13th,

It's Friday.

Most people say Friday is their favourite day of the week. I have never understood why. Yes, it's the last day of the school week. But you still have to go to school. That already disqualifies it from being the best day. Personally, Saturday is superior. No school. No obligations. No "you have to wake up early tomorrow." Just... nothing. Which is perfect. Sunday

would be good too, but it's ruined by the constant dread of Monday. The anxiety just sits there all day. Like a countdown. Ticking. Louder and louder. Until you can't ignore it anymore. I am hoping today is a good day. Yesterday was... fine? Which is already above average. So, expectations are low. Vera is such a bad teacher. She expects so much from me. Which is already her first mistake. Even though I don't do the work most of the time, she still acts like I'm capable of something. Like... why. Let me fail. It's my life. I don't care. It's not like anyone else does either. At school, all I do is wait for break. That's it. That's the entire system. Wait through lessons. Wait through noise. Wait through people. Until I can finally be alone again. Away from everyone. They're all so clueless. Just sitting there, listening to a teacher talk about pointless shit, absorbing it like it matters. Like it's going to change anything. Like they're not all just being trained to become more Cocos.

Update.

Ten minutes into the day. And it has already gone to shit. I walk into class. Sit down. Think I might survive this day. And then- "Alright everyone, we're doing a partner assignment." Of course we are. Of course. Why wouldn't we be. Why would anything ever go my way. The assignment itself isn't even the problem. It's actually... kind of good. History and creation of video games. Which is something I actually care about. Which immediately means I won't enjoy it. Because that's how this works. The problem is who I got paired with... Zoey. The last time I interacted with her was over a year ago. When Coco invited her over. And she was just... weird. Not in a bad way. Just... quiet. Too quiet. Like me. Which is already suspicious. Because how does someone like that have friends? She talks as little as I do. She barely reacts. She just exists. And yet she's in a band. She has people. That doesn't make sense. We sit down together. And as expected... silence. Complete silence. For like twenty minutes. She's playing something on her laptop. I'm staring at the wall. This is going great. Then out of nowhere— "So... you're Coco's quiet sister." Of course. That's my identity. Not Maya. Not a person. Just "Coco's quiet sister." "Y-yeah..." Great response. Amazing. Really contributed to the conversation there. She starts talking about her band. I don't really respond. She asks if I play any

instruments. I say I don't have time. Which is a lie. A very obvious lie. But still better than the truth.

The truth is: I don't want Coco hovering over me. I don't want Mymy making comments. I don't want attention. I don't want to be seen trying. Because if you try and fail, it's worse than not trying at all. But the real truth? I've always wanted to play something. I just never did. Then she asks: "Well, if you had the time, what would you want to learn?" And my brain just... dies. No thoughts. No preparation. Nothing. So, I say the first thing that comes to mind. "Bass guitar." Worst mistake of my life. The second I said "bass guitar," I knew I fucked up. Not immediately. There was like a half-second delay where my brain hadn't caught up yet. But then it hit. Hard. Because of course she plays bass. Of course that's the one thing I had to say. Out of every possible instrument in existence. Piano? Safe. Guitar? Generic. Drums? Loud but acceptable. But no. I had to pick bass. And suddenly she was talking. A lot. Like... way more than before. Which is terrifying, because she usually barely talks at all. So, this must be serious. She starts going on about how fun it is. How underrated it is. How people don't understand how important bass is in a band. Something about rhythm and groove and foundation. I don't know. I stopped processing halfway through. Not because I didn't want to listen. But because my brain was too busy panicking. I just kept nodding. Every few seconds. Like an idiot. Hoping she would eventually stop. But she didn't. She just kept going. Still with that same half-asleep expression. Like she wasn't even putting effort into being enthusiastic. It was just... natural. How do people do that? Care about something that much? Talk about it without overthinking every word? Eventually she stopped. Thank fuck. And then... "Hey, if you ever decide to pick it up, I can teach you." And just like that, my brain shut down completely.

Teach me? No. No no no no no. That is not happening. That involves: Interaction, repeated interaction, expectations, embarrassment, failure in front of another human being, Absolutely not. But instead of saying any of that, I said: "U-uh... thanks..." Which is basically the worst possible response. Because it's not a yes. But it's definitely not a no. Which means this is now a possibility.

And then the bell rang. Saved. I didn't even pack my stuff properly. I just grabbed everything and left. Fast. Too fast. Probably suspiciously fast. I went straight to the bathroom. My usual hiding spot. Locked myself in a stall. And just stood there.

What the fuck was that.

I replayed the conversation. Over and over. Analysing every word. Every pause. Every tone. Did she mean it? Was she just being polite? Does she expect me to actually do it? What happens if I do? What happens if I don't? I stayed there until the bell rang again. And then for the rest of the day I avoided her. Successfully. Which is honestly impressive.

Later that day

Dinner.

Worst part of the day. Because talking is required. Coco, of course, starts the conversation. She always does. "How was your day?" Mymy immediately starts talking about her assignment. Something about pirates. Something about the VOC. Of course. Always the VOC. I tune out halfway through. Then Coco turns to me. And I immediately regret existing. Because she noticed. Of course she noticed. "You were paired with Zoey, right? How did that go?" I could lie. I should lie. I was going to lie. But then for some reason... I didn't. I told her. About the conversation. About the bass. About the offer. Worst decision of the day. Her face lit up instantly. Like I just told her I found the cure for cancer.

"That's amazing, Maya!"

No. No, it's not. Stop.

"You should totally try it!"

No.

"It could be really good for you!"

No.

"You could make a friend!"

Absolutely not. But she didn't stop. Of course she didn't stop. For the rest of the night, she kept coming into my room. Every fifteen minutes. Like clockwork. Each time with a new reason. A new argument. A new way to convince me.

"Maya, it would help you express yourself!"

Leave.

"Maya, music is really good for stress!"

Leave.

"Maya, Zoey seems really nice!"

Leave.

"Maya, this could be your thing!"

LEAVE.

It did not stop. By the time I went to sleep, I was more exhausted from Coco than from school.

Which is impressive.

Saturday,

March 14th,

I woke up expecting Coco to continue.

Because she usually does. Once she gets an idea, she doesn't let go.

But... nothing.

Peace. Silence. No interruptions. Suspicious. Very suspicious. I had breakfast. Alone. Which never happens. I almost started to relax. Which was a mistake. Because then she sat down. Of course she did. And I immediately prepared for another round. But instead...

she said something different. Something... reasonable.

"If you tried bass... and got lessons from Zoey... that could be a way to make a friend."

...

That's it? No speech? No pressure? Just... logic?

I hate it.

Because she's right. That's the worst part.

If I learn bass = I interact with Zoey

If I interact with Zoey = I might become less socially useless

If I become less socially useless = maybe I don't die alone

It makes sense. Which is annoying. I didn't respond. I just sat there. Thinking. And then I went back to my room. But I couldn't stop thinking about it. Hours passed. And it was still there. In the back of my head. What if she's right? No. She's Coco. She's always "right" in a way that's incredibly annoying. But still. I kept thinking about it. And eventually against my better judgement I went to her. "I-I've been t-thinking about it..." Why am I doing this. "I m-might try..." Too late now. Her face immediately lit up again. Of course it did. And before I could change my mind "We should go to the music store!" And somehow I agreed. Why. So off we went. To the music store. Together. Voluntarily. Which already makes this one of the strangest days of my life. The entire walk there was awkward. Not because Coco was being annoying. But because she was trying not to be. Which is somehow worse. She kept glancing at me like she wanted to say something. Encouraging. Motivational. Coco things. But she held it back. Barely. Like she was physically restraining herself. And I could tell. Which made it even more uncomfortable. Eventually she said, "You don't

have to buy anything if you don't want to." Which is a trap. Because if I say "okay" then I look like I wasted her time. And if I say "I want to" then I'm committing to this. So, I said nothing. Which is my default solution to everything.

We got there. The music store. And immediately I regretted everything. Too many people. Too many sounds. Too many things happening at once. Guitars, drums, random noises from people who actually know what they're doing. I don't belong here. Everyone here probably plays something. Everyone here probably knows something. Everyone here is probably judging me. I almost turned around. Seriously. I was like one step away from just leaving. But Coco was already inside. Looking around. Smiling. So, I followed. Because of course I did. We walked past rows of guitars. Acoustic. Electric. Bass. Things I don't understand. Things I will never understand. Coco kept pointing things out. "This one looks nice!" "This brand is really good!" "You should try this!"

I nodded. Did nothing. Understood nothing. And then... I saw it.

One bass. Just sitting there. Candy Cola Red. I don't know why. But it stood out. Like it was the only thing in the store that wasn't overwhelming. I walked over. Slowly. Like it might disappear if I moved too fast. Picked it up. It felt... weird. Heavy. But not in a bad way. Just... real. "This one?" Coco asked. I nodded. Of course she smiled. Of course she did. "Good choice," she said. Which means nothing because she would say that about anything I picked. But still. I asked how we were going to pay for it. Because that seems important. She just said, "Don't worry about it." Which is not reassuring. At all. But before I could question it. She was already talking to the cashier. Too late. We also got an amp. Small one. Beginner. Which is code for "you will not sound good but at least you can hear yourself fail." And a strap. Red and white. Because apparently aesthetics matter now. And a case. Because of course. By the time we left, it was done. I owned a bass. Which is still insane to me.

Later,

The second we got home, Coco expected something.

Not verbally. She didn't say anything. But I could feel it. Expectation. So, I went to my room. Closed the door. Sat down. And just stared at it. My bass. Mine. This is a mistake. I picked it up. Plugged it in. Turned on the amp. And then... nothing. I had no idea what I was doing. I tried pressing a string. Plucked it. It made a sound. A bad sound. I tried again. Still bad. I spent hours like that. Just... trying. Failing. Trying again. My fingers started hurting. Which I did not expect. Everything sounded wrong. Everything felt wrong. But I kept going. Why? I don't know. At some point I remembered something. Smoke on the Water. The easiest thing in existence. So, I tried. And after way too long. I got it. Not well. Not clean. But... recognisable. Which is more than I expected. I sat there. Staring at my hands. I did that. Not well. But still. And for a second... just a second. it didn't feel terrible. Then reality came back. I still suck. And now there's a bigger problem.

Monday.

I have to talk to Zoey. About this...

Because she offered and now I actually have something. Which means I can't pretend anymore. And that is terrifying. Because talking is hard. Starting conversations is harder. And both of us are bad at it. So, what happens? Do we just sit there? Again? For hours? Probably. I need to prepare. But how do you prepare for talking? You don't. Great.

Sunday,

March 15th,

Big problem. I stayed up way too late. Because I kept thinking. About everything. Bass. Zoey. Monday. All possible scenarios. All possible failures. And then I slept through the entire day. I woke up at 3PM.

3PM.

Half the day gone. No preparation. No plan. I'm surprised Coco didn't wake me up. Actually no, I'm not. She probably thought I needed rest or something. Great. Now I'm unprepared AND rested. Worst combination. I

spent the rest of the day practicing. Which is weird. Because I didn't have to. But I did. And I still suck. But slightly less. Which I guess is something.

Monday is going to be a disaster.

Monday,

March 16th,

Today is the day.

I woke up already stressed. No gradual build-up. Just immediate anxiety. I got ready. Ate breakfast. Barely. And then left. The bike ride was horrible. Constant overthinking. Every possible scenario. Every possible mistake. Every possible way to ruin everything. What if she changed her mind? What if she regrets talking to me? What if I say something wrong? What if I don't say anything at all? At one point I genuinely considered crashing my bike. Not even joking. Like just... fall. Injure something. Stay home. Avoid everything. But before I could fully commit. I was already at school.

Too late.

I walked in. Put my stuff in my locker. Everything felt heavier. Like something was about to happen. I went to class. Sat down. And then... no Zoey. Everyone else was there. In pairs. Talking. Working. And I was alone. Of course. I knew it. I knew this would happen. She realised. She changed her mind. She doesn't want to work with me. I ruin everything. This is why I don't have friends. I should've never said anything. I should've never agreed. I should've— Oh. She walked in. Late. Just late. I'm an idiot. She sat down. Looked at me. "Hey." Like nothing happened. Like I didn't just mentally spiral into oblivion for five minutes. "h-hi..." She asked about the bass. Immediately. Which is both good and terrifying. I told her. About Saturday. About practicing. About Smoke on the Water. She seemed... impressed. Which is confusing. Because it's not impressive. But I'll take it. We talked. Actually talked. Not much. But more than before. And then...

she said it.

"Hey, wanna come by my place after school? I can show you the basics."

...

This is it. Decision time.

Say no = safe, alone, same as always

Say yes = unknown, terrifying, possible humiliation

So obviously, "U-uh... y-yeah... sure..."

...

I have made a mistake. Or the best decision of my life. No in-between. And I have no idea which one it is. Right after school I went home to grab my stuff and immediately started questioning every decision I've ever made in my entire life. Like, seriously, what the fuck am I doing? Going to someone else's house? Voluntarily? To "learn" something? With another human being present the entire time? This is how people get kidnapped or worse, socially interact. But it's too late now. I already said yes. And if I cancel now, I will look like an even bigger idiot than I already am, which I didn't even think was possible, but apparently, we are still discovering new depths. So, I grab my bass, avoid Coco (successfully, somehow), and leave before anyone can stop me or ask questions or be supportive. The bike ride there was horrible. Not in a dramatic way. Just constant, quiet panic. Every possible scenario playing out in my head.

What if I say something stupid.

What if I do something stupid.

What if I just stand there in silence for three hours.

What if she realises, I'm actually unbearable and regrets ever talking to me.

By the time I got there I was already exhausted. And I hadn't even knocked yet. I stood in front of her door for way too long. Not even doing anything. Just standing there. Like if I waited long enough, time would reverse and I wouldn't have to be here. It didn't. So, I knocked. She opened the door almost immediately. "Oh hey" Why is she so calm. How is this normal for her. I just said "h-hi..." and held up my bass like some kind of offering. Like

"please accept this and don't judge me." She just nodded and let me in. No big reaction. No awkwardness. Just... normal. Her house was normal too. Which is weird. I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't that. Everything just looked... lived in. Comfortable. Not like mine, where everything feels slightly tense all the time. We went up to her room. She sat down. I stood there for a second, not knowing what to do, until she said: "You can sit"

Right. Of course. Sitting. Normal human behaviour.

I sat down. Plugged in my bass. Hands already shaking slightly. "Alright, show me what you got" That sentence should be illegal. So, I played. Smoke on the Water. The only thing I know. And I played it badly. Very badly. Like, noticeably bad. Wrong notes, weird timing, fingers slipping, everything. I wanted to stop halfway through. But that would be worse. So, I finished it. Silence. This is it. This is where she realises. "Not bad" Not bad? Either she's lying or her standards are underground. Probably both. But I'll take it. Then she adjusted my hands. Like physically. Moved my fingers slightly. Showed me where to press. And for a second my brain just completely stopped working. Because that's not something that normally happens. "Try again" So, I did. And it sounded... slightly less terrible. She nodded. "better"

That's it. No lecture. No "you should believe in yourself." No "great job keep going." Just... better. Which is weirdly more effective.

She started showing me basics. Simple things. Finger placement. Timing. How to actually press the strings properly. Things that should be obvious but aren't. And every time I messed up... which was often... she just said: "again" or "Like this" No judgement. No reaction. No disappointment. Just... neutral. And that made it easier. Because I didn't feel like I was being evaluated. I was just... doing something.

We practiced for a while. I don't know how long.

Time kind of stopped existing.

Which NEVER happens.

Usually, I am painfully aware of every second. But this was different. At one point I actually played something correctly. Like fully correctly. Clean. Recognisable. And she said: "See?" Just that. And for a second just a second I felt something. Not pride. That's too strong. But something close to it. Then it went away. Obviously. After a while we stopped. Just sat there. Silence. But not awkward. Just... silence. Which is new. Because silence is usually the worst part. But now it wasn't. It was just... there. Before I left, she said: "You learn pretty fast" Which is objectively false. But I didn't argue. "t-thanks..." And then I left. Before I could ruin it. The bike ride home felt different. Still thinking. Still overthinking. But not in a "I want to disappear" way. More like... "What just happened" When I got home, Coco immediately noticed. Of course she did. She always does.

"How was it???"

I just said: "fine" And went to my room. But the problem is... fine is actually accurate. Which is new.

Tuesday,

March 17th,

I expected everything to reset.

Like yesterday was some kind of glitch. And now we go back to normal. Silence. Avoidance. Nothing. But it didn't. I got to class. She said "hey." Like always. Like yesterday didn't mean anything. Like this is just normal. I said "h-hi" again. Of course. We worked. Actually worked. No long silence. No staring at walls. Just... working. And again— it wasn't terrible. Which is becoming a pattern. And I don't trust patterns. After class, I expected everything to just... end. Like the assignment is done, so there's no reason to interact anymore. That's how these things usually go.

Temporary proximity = forced interaction = over = forgotten.

That's the system. But instead, when the bell rang, she packed her stuff and said: "You practicing today?" Again, with that. It's such a simple question. But it feels like something more. Like a test. Not in a judging way. Just...

checking. I froze for a second. Because I hadn't actually planned to. Which means if I say yes, I have to. And if I say no, then... I don't know. It feels like the wrong answer. "y-yeah" Great. Now I have to. She nodded. "nice" That's it. Conversation over. Why is that enough. Why does that feel like enough. We walked out of class. Together. TOGETHER. That word feels wrong. Like I'm misusing it. We didn't say anything. Just walked. Side by side. And it wasn't awkward. Which is deeply concerning. At some point we split off. Naturally. No weird goodbye. No "see you." Just... separate directions. Normal.

Why is everything suddenly normal.

Later,

I got home. Went to my room. Sat down. Stared at my bass. And realised something. I actually meant it. When I said "yeah." So now I have to practice. I picked it up. Plugged it in. My fingers still hurt. Which is great. Love that. I tried the same thing as yesterday. Still bad. But less bad. Which is... progress? I hate progress. Because it means there's improvement. And improvement means expectation. I played for a while. Longer than I expected. At some point I stopped thinking about how bad I was. And just... focused. Which is new.

Usually, my brain doesn't shut up. Ever.

But this time it did. Not completely. But enough. And that's... dangerous. Because it felt good. And I don't trust things that feel good.

Wednesday,

March 18th,

I woke up and immediately checked if I still wanted to go to school.

Which is new. Normally it's a solid "no." Always. Today it was... less no. Not yes. Never yes. But less no. Which is already suspicious. I got ready. Left. Bike ride still bad. But not unbearable. I got to class. She was already there. "hey" "H-hi" Revolutionary. We sat down. No assignment today.

Just... nothing. Which should be awkward. But wasn't. She opened her laptop. Started doing something. I sat there. Pretending to do something. After a while, she turned the screen slightly. "look" I leaned in. Too close. Way too close. Immediately aware of everything. Distance. Movement. Breathing. But I didn't move away. Because that would be weird. So, I stayed. She showed me something. I don't even remember what. Game-related. Something. I nodded. Said something. I think. I don't remember. But she didn't react like it was weird. So, I guess it was fine. At some point there was silence. And I waited for it to become awkward. But it didn't. It just... stayed silence. Neutral. I didn't feel the need to fill it. She didn't either. And that's when I realised something. Maybe the problem isn't silence. Maybe the problem is me overthinking silence.

Great.

Now I have a new thing to overthink.

Break,

I went to my spot. Automatically. She followed. Didn't ask. Didn't say anything. Just... followed. And sat down. Like it's normal. We sat there. Again. This is becoming a pattern. Patterns are dangerous. She asked about practice again. I answered. Less stuttering this time. Progress. Again. I hate that word. At some point she said: "you're getting better" Which is... incorrect. But I didn't argue. Because part of me... very small part... wanted to believe it. And that part is stupid. After school she said: "You can come over again sometime if you want" If I want. She's giving me a choice. That's new. Usually, things just happen. Or are forced. This is optional. Which makes it harder. Because now I have to decide. I nodded. Of course. Words still not working.

Thursday,

March 19th,

Something is definitely wrong with the universe.

Today during break, she came to me. Not followed. Not coincidental. Came to me. Before I even reached my spot.

"hey"

"H-hi..."

"You always sit here?"

"...y-yeah"

Lie.

"Mind if I join?"

Mind if she joins? This is my place. My one place. Where I don't have to think about people. Where I don't have to exist socially. And now. she's asking to be here. With me. On purpose. I froze. Because this is not something I planned for.

"...o-okay"

Great. Now it's happening. She sat down. Next to me. Close. Not too close. Just... normal distance. We didn't talk. For like a minute. And I waited. For the awkwardness. But it didn't come. Instead, she just started talking. Random things. I don't even remember what. Because my brain was busy processing something else. Someone is choosing to be here. With me. Not forced. Not required. Just... choosing. And I didn't feel like running away. Which is the craziest part. We stayed there until the bell rang. And before leaving she said:

"Same tomorrow?"

Same? This is becoming routine. Routine with another person. What. I nodded. Again. Because apparently that's my entire personality now.

Friday,

March 20th,

I woke up and immediately realised something horrible.

I was looking forward to today.

Not fully.

Not in a "yay school" kind of way because that would mean I've completely lost it.

But... there was something. Something small. Something quiet. Something I didn't hate. And that's worse. Because if you hate everything, it's simple. You avoid it. You survive it. You get through it. But if there's something you don't hate— then suddenly it matters. And I don't like things that matter. I got ready slower than usual. Not on purpose. Just... slower. Like my body didn't know whether to go forward or not. The bike ride felt weird. Not as heavy. Still bad. Still full of overthinking. But not unbearable. And that's how I knew something was different. I got to school. Put my stuff away. Walked to class. She was already there. Of course she was.

"hey"

"H-hi"

Same as always. But not the same. Because now there's... something behind it. We sat down. Started doing nothing. Like yesterday. At one point she asked: "You practiced?" I said "yeah." No stutter. That surprised me more than anything else this week. She nodded. "nice" Again, with that word. Why does "nice" feel like something. We didn't talk much after that. Just sat there. Occasional comments. Small things. But it wasn't empty. It felt... stable. Which is new.

Break,

This is it.

The moment.

I walked out of class. Not rushing. Not hiding. Just... walking. She was already there. Again. Same spot. Waiting. For me. I stopped for a second.

Just... stood there. Because this is where I usually turn away. Go somewhere else. Disappear. But I didn't. I walked over. "hey" "H-hi" And sat down. No hesitation. That's new. We sat there. Silence for a bit. Then she started talking again. Something about her band. Something about messing up timing. I actually responded. Not just nodding. Not just "yeah." Actual sentences. Short. But real. And she didn't react like it was weird. Which is still confusing. At some point, people walked past. Groups. Laughing. Talking. Existing loudly. Normally that would be enough. Enough to make me shut down. Enough to make me leave. But I didn't. I stayed. I felt it. That panic. That familiar "everyone is looking at me" feeling. But it didn't take over. It was just... there. In the background. And I ignored it. Or maybe... I just didn't care as much. Which is even worse. Because that means something changed. We stayed there until the bell rang. And for once... I didn't want it to. That's when I knew.

Something is definitely wrong.

After school,

We walked out together again.

Not planned. Not discussed. Just... happened. At the gates, she stopped. "You coming this weekend?" I froze for a second. Because now it's becoming a thing. Not just once. Not just random. A thing. "...yeah" I said it before I could overthink it. Which is probably a mistake. But also... I didn't immediately regret it. Which is worse. She nodded. "cool" And then just left. Like that. No pressure. No expectations. Just... normal.

Later,

I got home. Coco noticed immediately. Of course she did. "You seem happier." No, I don't. "I'm not." Which is technically true. I'm not happy. I'm just... not as bad. Which is different. And I don't know what to do with that. I went to my room. Picked up my bass. Practiced. Again. Voluntarily. Again. And this time... something clicked. Not perfectly. Not cleanly. But enough. Enough that it sounded like music. Barely. But still. I stopped. Just sat there. Holding it. And thought: What if this keeps happening? What if

tomorrow is like today? What if next week is like this? What if... this doesn't go wrong?

...

No.

It always goes wrong.

It has to.

That's how it works.

But for now... it hasn't.

Monday,

March 23rd,

I woke up before my alarm.

Which is illegal. And the first thing I thought was:

lunch

...

What.

Since when do I think about lunch. Since when do I think about anything at school that isn't leaving. I got ready faster than usual. Which is also suspicious. Bike ride felt shorter. Which is impossible. I got to school. Walked to class. She was there. "hey" "H-hi" We sat down. Nothing special. But something was coming. I could feel it. Like waiting for something to happen. Class went by slower than usual. Which is new. Normally I want it to go faster.

Now...

I was waiting. For break. Which is insane.

Break,

I walked out. She was already there. Of course.

"hey"

"H-hi"

We sat down. Silence. Short. Then... "You wanna sit together at lunch too?"

...

My brain stopped. Completely. No thoughts. No words. No reaction. Just... what. Lunch. With her. On purpose. Not because of class. Not because of Coco. Not because of anything else.

Just... because...

I felt something. Not panic. Not exactly. Something bigger. Something heavier. Something that made everything else go quiet. Because this... this doesn't happen. Not to me. Ever. And all I could think was: wow, I can't believe this is happening. actually happening. not forced. not accidental. real. I nodded. Of course I did. Because words still don't work. And she just said: "cool" Like it's nothing. Like this isn't completely changing everything.

wow

I can't believe this is happening

Is this me?

Credits,

Studio Massa - Characters, references.

_i99Official - The whole book I guess

Skye - Amazing cover art

Thank you for reading

I wrote this short story in the format of Maya's Diary (MayaMail), and this was sort of like a Pilot/Part 1 to see if anyone is actually interested. If this book gets positive reviews i will continue to make more, that being continuing this book, and writing other Ongezellig books and Comics. Any future releases I will make sure are much more in depth. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated. I also want to give a massive shout out to Skye for her awesome work on the cover art! I appreciate her amazing work so much and she did an absolutely amazing job! Thank you so much Skye!

Thank you all for reading!!!