





PHEW!

HMM... YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE THE KIND OF GIRL WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN GUYS LIKE HIM.



WELL, I'M NOT JUDGING YOU...
EVERYONE HAS DIFFERENT TASTES.

JUST A SUGGESTION,
IF YOU ARE REALLY LOOKING TO DATE
SOMEONE FROM THE SENIOR CLASSES,
JUST BE CAUTIOUS. MAKE SURE YOU
FIND A GOOD ONE.

ANYWAY, I'VE GOT TO RUN
TO CLASS. SEE YOU AROUND!

HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN...

DID SHE.. SHE
JUST GAVE ME DATING ADVICE...

AFTER SOME HOURS...

FINALLY,
THE FIRST DAY IS OVER...

ALRIGHT, STUDENTS!
CLASS IS OVER. MAKE SURE TO REVIEW
YOUR NOTES. SEE YOU TOMORROW!



UGH, THESE GIRLS AGAIN...

I GUESS THERE'S NO HARM IN BEFRIENDING THEM. I STILL NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH BOYS IN SCHOOL. STICKING WITH THEM FOR NOW WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA.

HEY!

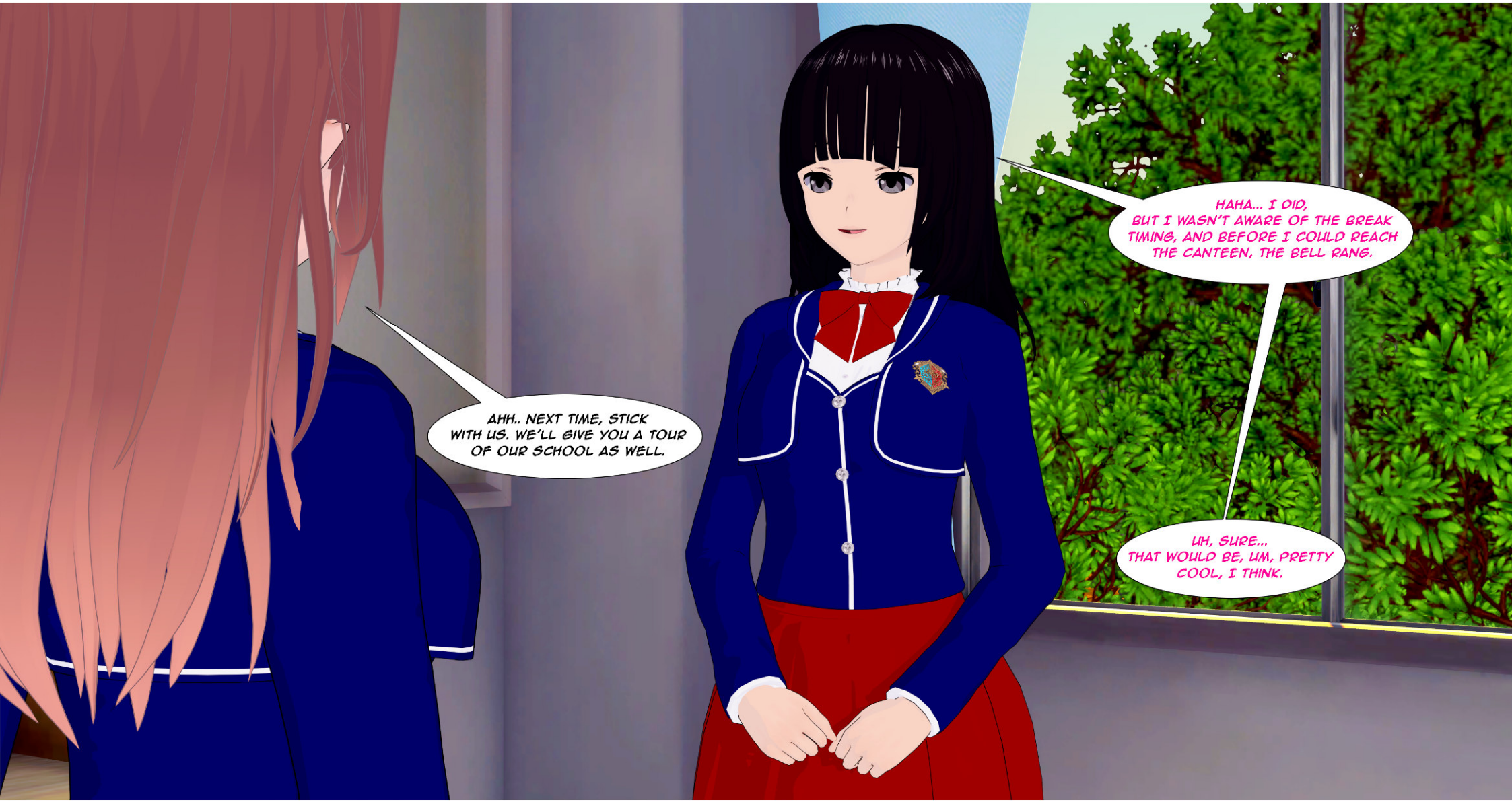


FEW MINUTES LATER...

YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED SOMEONE FOR DIRECTIONS.

HIHH... YOU SPENT THE ENTIRE BREAK LOOKING FOR THE CANTEEN...





AHH.. NEXT TIME, STICK WITH US. WE'LL GIVE YOU A TOUR OF OUR SCHOOL AS WELL.

HAHA... I DID, BUT I WASN'T AWARE OF THE BREAK TIMING, AND BEFORE I COULD REACH THE CANTEEN, THE BELL RANG.

UH, SURE... THAT WOULD BE, UH, PRETTY COOL, I THINK.

AFTER SOMETIME...





WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR?

THAT HOW I SURVIVED THE ENTIRE DAY IN THIS SKIRT AMONG ALL THOSE GOOFY KIDS?

SO, YOU DON'T WANT TO TELL ME HOW YOUR FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL WENT?

HAHA... THIS WAS JUST YOUR FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, AND YOU'RE ALREADY SO FRUSTRATED... BY THE WAY, DID YOU MEET JACK?



HUH JACK? NO... I MEAN,
I SAW HIM, BUT WE DIDN'T TALK.

SOMEONE CALLED HIM BY
HIS NAME, SO I FIGURED IT MUST
BE HIM. AND WHY ARE YOU ASKING
ME ABOUT HIM?

AREH.. BANYWAYS,
WHERE'S MY PHONE? YOU SAID YOU'D
RETURN IT TO ME AFTER SCHOOL.

THEN HOW DID YOU RECOGNIZE HIM?
YOU'VE NEVER MET HIM BEFORE.

WELL, HE'S MY FRIEND'S
BROTHER AND NOW YOUR CLASSMATE
TOO. SO, WHY CAN'T I ASK...

YEAH.. YOUR PHONE...
DON'T WORRY I'LL GIVE IT TO
YOU ONCE WE GET HOME.



LATER AT NIGHT...

I SHOULD PROBABLY
CALL CLARA NOW... HOPE THAT
EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE.

I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR SO LONG,
BUT ANDREW'S NUMBER STILL SHOWS AS
UNREACHABLE, AND HE HASN'T REPLIED
TO MY TEXT YET.





HUH... UNKNOWN NUMBER..



HEY EMMA!

YEAH.. IT'S ME...

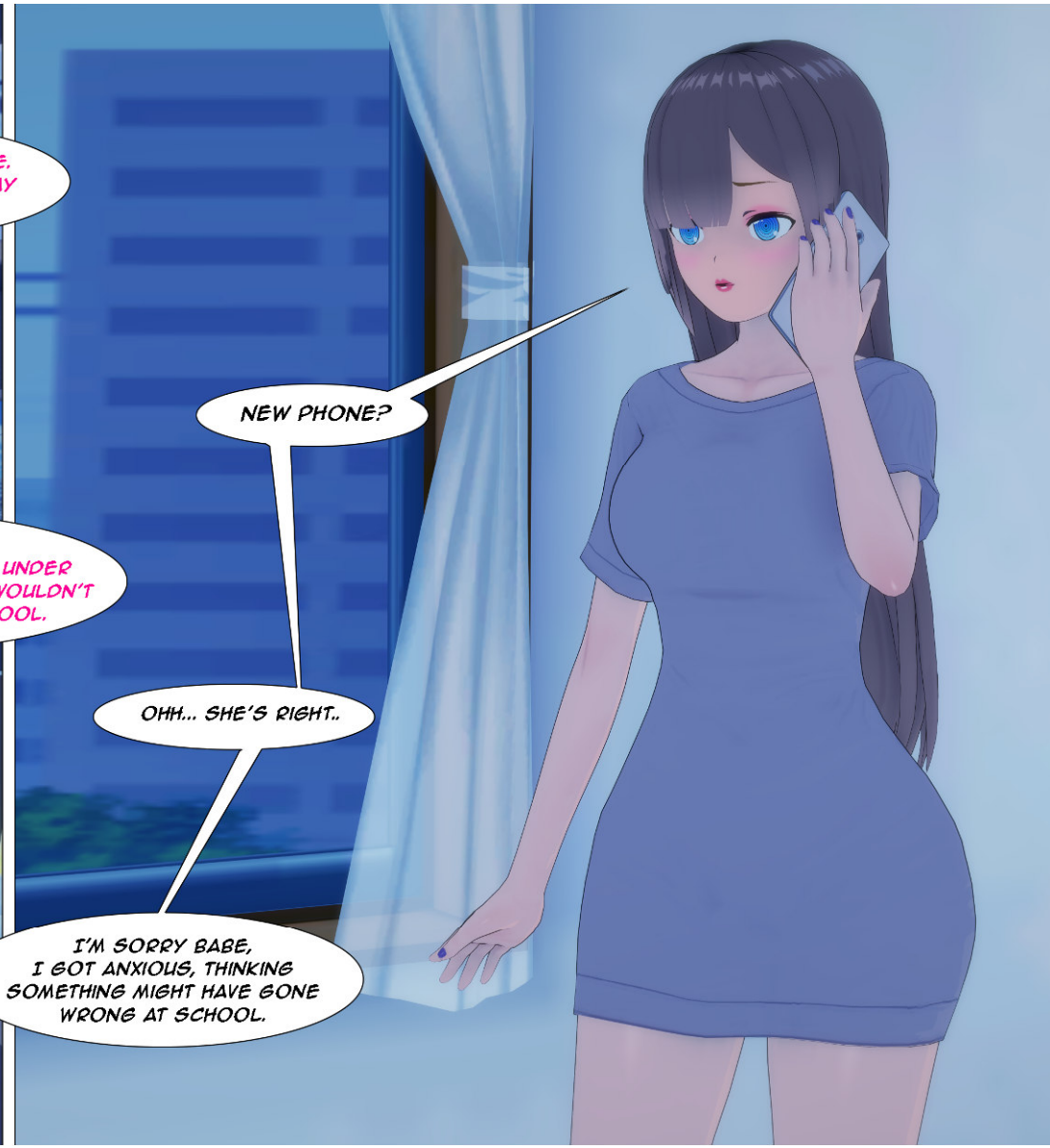
ANDREW, IS THIS YOU?

WHERE IS YOUR PHONE?
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW LONG
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CALL YOU?
I WAS GETTING WORRIED.



HEY, CALM DOWN, I'M FINE.
I WAS JUST SETTING UP MY
NEW PHONE.

YEAH.. MY OLD PHONE
AND NUMBER ARE REGISTERED UNDER
ANDREW'S NAME. CLARA SAID IT WOULDN'T
BE SAFE TO USE IT FOR SCHOOL.



NEW PHONE?

OH.. SHE'S RIGHT..

I'M SORRY BABE,
I GOT ANXIOUS, THINKING
SOMETHING MIGHT HAVE GONE
WRONG AT SCHOOL.



MIA, ARE YOU STILL SETTING UP YOUR PHONE?

HEY BABE! SORRY, GOTTA GO. CLARA'S CALLING ME, MIGHT BE SOMETHING URGENT. I'LL CALL YOU LATER, BYE.

HAHA... IT'S MY FAULT, I SHOULD HAVE TEXTED OR CALLED YOU WITH THIS NEW NUMBER EARLIER.

HMM... BY THE WAY, BABE, YOU REMEMBER MY BIRTHDAY IS COMING UP IN A FEW DAYS..

AND LAST YEAR WE PRO....





HUH... DOES HE REALLY FORGET WHAT PROMISE WE MADE A YEAR AGO...

I'M SORRY EMMA...


*HEY! I'VE BEEN YELLING
MY LUNGS OUT. CAN'T YOU HEAR ME?
IF YOU'RE DONE SETTING UP YOUR PHONE,
COME HELP WITH DINNER.*

*SORRY, JUST GIVE ME
A MINUTE, I'M COMING...*

*NO, IT'S NOTHING LIKE
THAT. JUST LET ME BE ALONE
FOR A BIT.*

*HUH, YOU CRYING...
YOU WERE TALKING TO EMMA, RIGHT?
WHAT HAPPENED? DID YOU GUYS HAVE A
FIGHT OR SOMETHING?*

*COME ON, TELL ME
WHAT'S WRONG. MAYBE I CAN
HELP YOU SOMEHOW.*



EMMA'S BIRTHDAY IS COMING UP IN A FEW DAYS. SO, THAT'S WHY YOU'RE CRYING LIKE A LITTLE GIRL BECAUSE SHE WON'T BE HERE TO CELEBRATE HER BIRTHDAY WITH YOU.

UGH... THAT'S NOT THE ISSUE HERE. FIRST, HEAR ME OUT ENTIRELY.



YOU MEAN MARRIAGE?

ACTUALLY, AFTER HER COLLEGE, EMMA HAS BEEN GETTING ANXIOUS ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP. SHE WANTED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

SO, I PROMISED HER THAT DAY THAT BY HER NEXT BIRTHDAY, I'LL HAVE EVERYTHING SORTED.

I HAD PLANNED TO PROPOSE TO HER FOR MARRIAGE ON HER NEXT BIRTHDAY. THAT'S WHY I STARTED GAMBLING MORE, SO I COULD PROVIDE EMMA WITH A GOOD FUTURE.



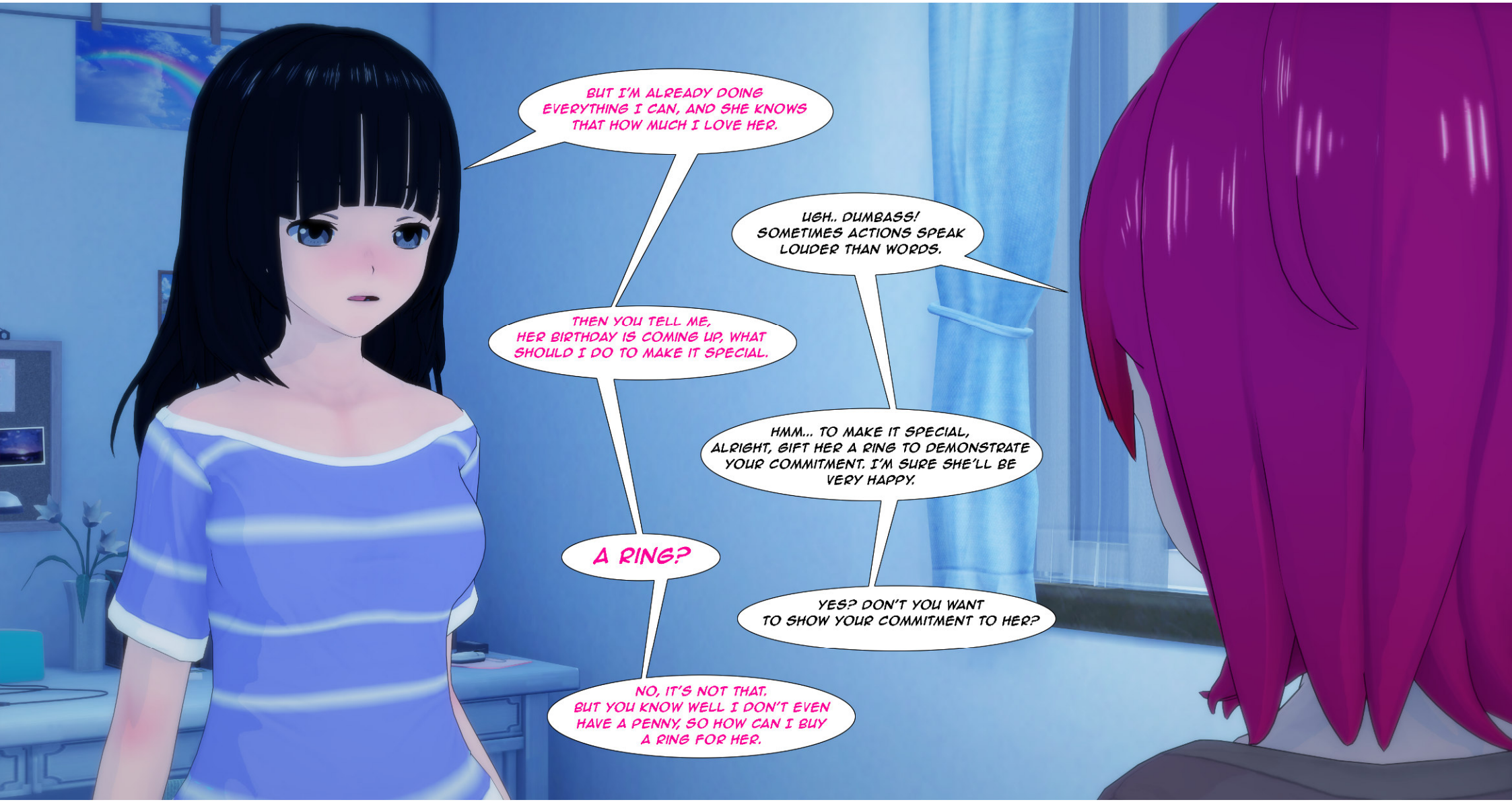
ON CALL, SHE WAS ABOUT TO TALK ABOUT THE SAME THING. AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

I FEEL TERRIBLE THAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH SO MUCH BECAUSE OF ME, AND I CAN'T EVEN FULFILL THE PROMISE I MADE.

BUT THINGS DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED, AND NOW YOU'RE HERE.

HAHA... YOU'RE EVEN MORE FOOLISH THAN I THOUGHT. DO YOU REALLY THINK SHE WANTS YOU TO FULFILL YOUR PROMISE RIGHT NOW...

IMAGINE YOURSELF IN HER POSITION FOR ONCE. WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR PARTNER IN SUCH A SITUATION?



BUT I'M ALREADY DOING EVERYTHING I CAN, AND SHE KNOWS THAT HOW MUCH I LOVE HER.

UGH.. DUMBASS! SOMETIMES ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

THEN YOU TELL ME, HER BIRTHDAY IS COMING UP, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO MAKE IT SPECIAL.

HMM... TO MAKE IT SPECIAL, ALRIGHT, GIFT HER A RING TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR COMMITMENT. I'M SURE SHE'LL BE VERY HAPPY.

A RING?

YES? DON'T YOU WANT TO SHOW YOUR COMMITMENT TO HER?

NO, IT'S NOT THAT, BUT YOU KNOW WELL I DON'T EVEN HAVE A PENNY, SO HOW CAN I BUY A RING FOR HER.

I THINK NOW I CAN SHOW AUNT
HOW MUCH PROGRESS WE'VE MADE.

A JOB... YEAH,
I'M READY. WHAT DO I NEED
TO DO?

ALRIGHT, I CAN HELP YOU
WITH THIS TOO. I HAVE A JOB FOR
YOU, AND IF YOU DO IT, I'LL PAY
YOU IN RETURN.

YOU KNOW MY AUNT LIVES ALONE,
THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO GO TO HER PLACE
EVERY WEEK. BUT THIS WEEK, IF I HAVE TO GO
OUT OF THE CITY FOR SOME WORK, I WON'T
BE ABLE TO GO THERE, AND YOU'LL HAVE TO
STAY HERE ALONE TOO.

SO, YOU'LL HAVE TO GO TO
MY AUNT'S PLACE INSTEAD OF ME.



WHAT...

BU... BUT WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO THERE?

HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO STAY THERE?

YEAH... I'VE TOLD HER THAT EMMA'S SISTER STAYS WITH ME HERE. SHE'S MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES THAT SHE'D LIKE TO INVITE YOU OVER.

NOTHING... JUST ACT THERE LIKE YOU DO AT SCHOOL, AS MIA. AND DON'T WORRY, SHE'S VERY SWEET, SHE LIKES IT WHEN SOMEONE IS AROUND HER.

HMM... I HAVE TO LEAVE TOMORROW EVENING, SO I'LL DROP YOU OFF THERE AFTER SCHOOL, AND I'LL PICK YOU UP THE NEXT DAY WHEN I RETURN.



SO, ARE YOU READY FOR THIS JOB?

NOD

HAHA.. I KNOW GOOD RINGS CAN BE PRICEY, BUT DON'T SWEAT IT. IF YOU PLAY THE PART OF A NICE GIRL, I'LL SLIP YOU SOME EXTRA CASH. SO WE'LL BE ABLE TO BUY A DECENT ONE.

NEXT DAY...



SO, HOW WAS THE TOUR OF OUR SCHOOL? I KNOW WE'RE NOT THE BEST GUIDES, BUT WE TRIED OUR BEST. AT LEAST YOU WON'T GET LOST AGAIN.

I UNDERSTAND IT TAKES SOME TIME TO ADJUST TO A NEW SCHOOL, AND THAT MUST BE TOUGH, LEAVING YOUR OLD FRIENDS AND ALL.

OH, WAIT, WE FORGOT TO SHOW YOU THE ROOFTOP OF OUR SCHOOL. YOU KNOW, IT OFFERS A FANTASTIC VIEW FROM UP THERE.

I WISH ALL OUR CLASSES COULD BE HELD THERE, HAHA, BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

WELL, YOU'VE ALREADY GOT US! AND WE'RE THE COOLEST GIRLS IN SCHOOL, HAHA.. JUST SAYING.



DO THESE GIRLS ALWAYS TALK THIS MUCH? I'M GETTING TIRED JUST LISTENING TO THEM

LMM.. THANKS.. YOU GUYS ARE, LIKE, SERIOUSLY AWESOME.

YEAH, I DO...

BY THE WAY, DO YOU LIKE LISTENING TO MUSIC?

SO, WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE GROUP OR ARTIST?

HUH, MY FAVORITE ARTISTS?

WHAT SHOULD I TELL THEM NOW? I ONLY LISTEN TO JDREAMERS' WHEN IT COMES TO MUSIC... IF I TELL THEM THIS, THEY MIGHT THINK I'M WEIRD...

COME ON TELL US WE WON'T JUDGE YOU...

LMMM.. JDREAMER'S

OH MY GOD, REALLY?
ARE YOU SERIOUS... THAT'S MY
FAVORITE GROUP TOO.

THEY'RE DISBANDING
THEIR GROUP?

YEAH, DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
THEY MADE AN OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
THROUGH A POST LAST WEEK. DON'T YOU
FOLLOW THEM ON SOCIAL-GRAM?

WOW.. SEEMS LIKE YOU
TWO HAVE SIMILAR TASTES!
BUT I SAW A POST RELATED TO
THEIR GROUP DISBANDING.





YOU DON'T USE SOCIAL-GRAM?
THAT'S SURPRISING. IT'S OKAY, GIVE
YOUR PHONE, I'LL HELP YOU SET UP
YOUR ACCOUNT RIGHT NOW.

SERIOUSLY, IT'S SO MUCH FUN!
PLUS, WE CAN ALL FOLLOW EACH OTHER
AND KEEP UP WITH WHAT'S GOING ON.

HAHA... GOOD..
NOW GIVE ME YOUR PHONE...

I'M NOT ON
SOCIAL-GRAM, ACTUALLY.

UM... I DON'T THINK
I NEED IT, ACTUALLY.

I THINK THAT'S FINE.
I CAN USE MY NEW PHONE
AND NUMBER.

WELL, ALRIGHT...

AFTER A FEW HOURS...

DID YOU MANAGE TO SPEAK WITH MR. RODRIGUEZ? WHAT DID HE SAY?

WELL, I GUESS YOU HAVE TO MAKE SURE THINGS GO SMOOTHLY THIS TIME.

AFTER MUCH PLEADING, HE AGREED TO ONE SHOW. BUT HE WARNED THAT IF I CANCEL AGAIN LIKE LAST TIME, HE WON'T LET ME PERFORM ANYWHERE IN THIS CITY.

YEAH, I KNOW.





HEY, IT'S NOT MY PHONE RINGING. MY PHONE IS IN MY LOCKER DOWNSTAIRS.

YOU BROUGHT YOUR PHONE INTO THE CLASSROOM AGAIN. YOU KNOW IF THE TEACHER FINDS OUT, IT'S GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.

~RING

~RING



THERE... SOMEONE ELSE
BROUGHT THEIR PHONE HERE AND
SEEMS TO HAVE FORGOTTEN IT.

WHO USUALLY
SITS IN THAT SEAT?

RING

RING




OH... THIS IS CLARA'S PHONE.
HER PHOTO IS ON THE WALLPAPER.

WHOA... IT'S UNLOCKED.

YOU FORGET HOW SHE
EMBARRASSED US IN FRONT OF THE
JUNIOR YESTERDAY? MAYBE THIS IS OUR
CHANCE TO GET BACK AT HER.

CLARA'S PHONE...
SCHOOL IS OVER, SHE MIGHT HAVE
ALREADY LEFT.

HEY.. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WE SHOULD JUST GIVE IT TO THE
SCHOOL OFFICE.



NO WAY, MAN. JUST DROP IT.
LET'S NOT CREATE UNNECESSARY
DRAMA. NOW GIVE IT TO ME, I'LL GO TAKE
IT TO THE OFFICE.

ARGH, FINE...
I'LL JUST WAIT HERE THEN.

AT THE SAME TIME, IN SCHOOL LOBBY...





ALICE AND JULIA ARE REALLY NICE GIRLS... BUT SOMETIMES THEY GET TOO CLOSE TO ME.

UGH... LET'S NOT THINK ABOUT IT...

AHH.. I NEED TO MAKE SURE THEY DON'T FIND OUT WHAT'S UNDER THE SKIRT. OTHERWISE...

TODAY, I HAVE TO GO TO CLARA'S AUNT'S PLACE TOO... UHH.. OKAY.. IT'S ONLY FOR ONE DAY.



HUH... THIS GIRL...
SHE'S CLARA'S FRIEND...

AHH... WHAT'S HER
NAME... YEAH...

TAP

TAP



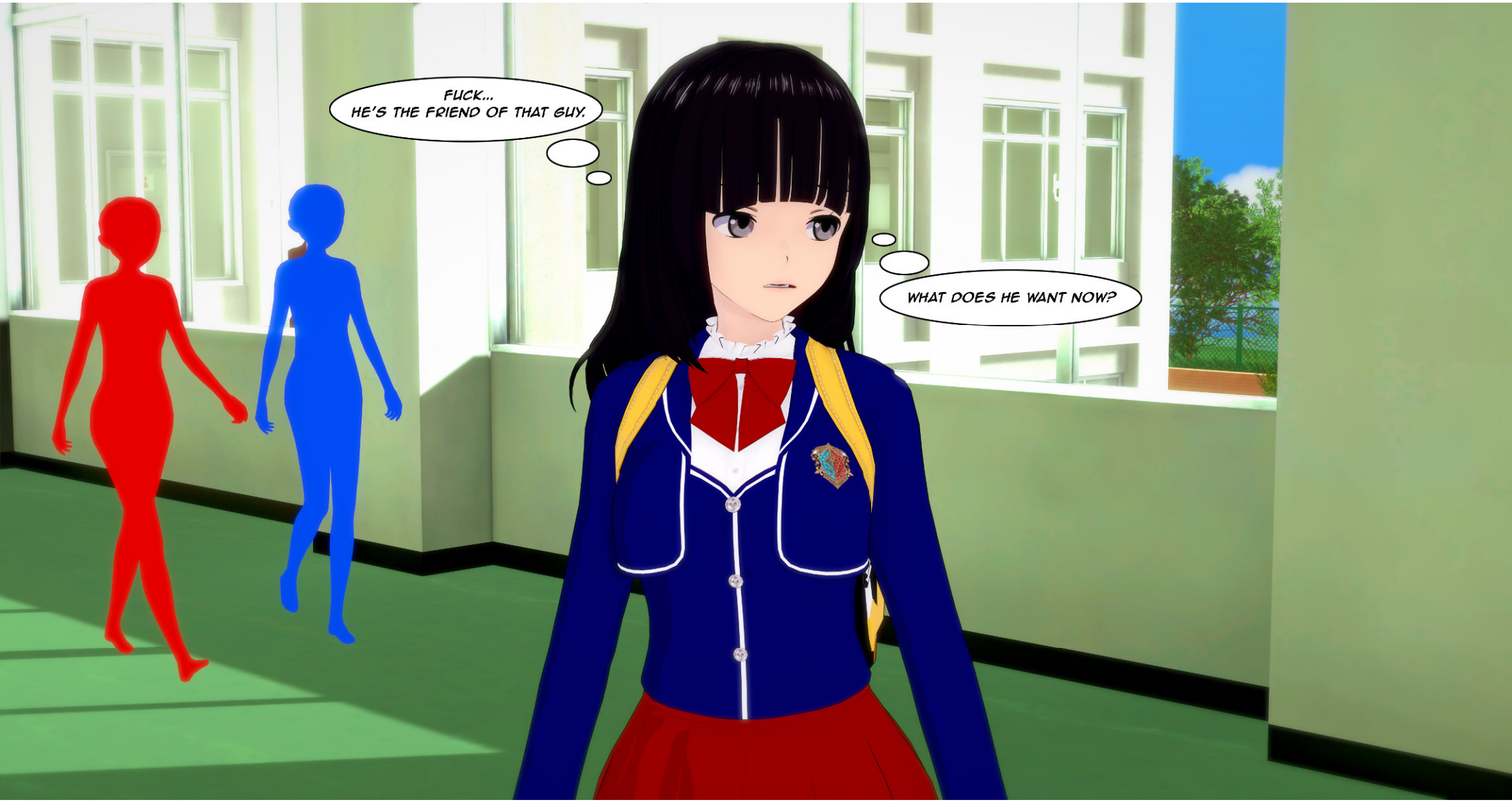
HEY MIA!

HUI?

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FUCK...
HE'S THE FRIEND OF THAT GUY.

WHAT DOES HE WANT NOW?

HOLD ON, I'M NOT HERE TO BOTHER YOU.

I HAVE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO YOUR FRIEND..



TESSA! YEAH, THAT'S THE NAME OF THE GIRL WHO SAVED ME FROM THIS GUY'S FRIEND YESTERDAY. HE THINKS SHE'S REALLY MY FRIEND.

OH, UM... WHY ARE YOU GIVING THIS TO ME? MAYBE, UM, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU GIVE IT TO A TEACHER OR YOU CAN GIVE IT TO HER YOURSELF TOMORROW.

UM, MAYBE YOU COULD, LIKE, TELL THE TEACHER YOU FOUND THIS PHONE, YOU KNOW, EITHER ON THE GROUND OR NEAR THE LOCKERS

THIS IS TESSA'S PHONE, SHE FORGOT IT IN THE CLASSROOM. AND I THINK SHE MIGHT HAVE LEFT ALREADY.

EVEN THOUGH WE'RE CLASSMATES, WE DON'T GET ALONG WELL WITH EACH OTHER. SO I CAN'T KEEP HER PHONE WITH ME. AND YOU KNOW BRINGING PHONES INTO THE CLASSROOM ISN'T ALLOWED, SO IF I GIVE IT TO A TEACHER, SHE MIGHT GET PUNISHED.



HLIH... AREN'T YOU HER FRIEND?

WHY DON'T YOU JUST HOLD ONTO THIS PHONE FOR TODAY AND GIVE IT BACK TO HER TOMORROW?



HMM.. IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL..
SINCE THAT GIRL HELPED ME YESTERDAY,
I CAN AT LEAST DO THIS MUCH FOR HER.

ALRIGHT, GIVE IT TO ME,
I'LL PASS IT ON TO HER.




THESE KIDS, WHAT ARE THEY EATING?
UGH! MY HAND LOOKS SO SMALL COMPARED TO HIS.
AND IN THIS WHOLE SCHOOL, I HAVEN'T SEEN A
SINGLE BOY YET WHO MATCHES MY HEIGHT.



AND I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR YESTERDAY. I KNOW THINGS GOT A BIT AWKWARD WHEN MY FRIEND WAS BEING OVERLY PUSHY WITH ALL THAT GOING-OUT THING.

HOPE IT DIDN'T RUIN YOUR DAY. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO MAKE IT UP TO YOU OR IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO, PLEASE LET ME KNOW.



HE SEEMS COMPLETELY
OPPOSITE FROM HIS FRIEND. AHH...
WHATEVER, I SHOULDN'T WASTE ANY
MORE TIME HERE.

HAHA... IT'S ALRIGHT..
I SHOULD GO NOW. CLA., I MEAN...
MY SISTER MUST BE WAITING OUTSIDE
FOR ME.

OH, SURE.. SORRY FOR
TAKING UP TOO MUCH OF YOUR TIME.
SEE YOU AROUND.

MEANWHILE...

SO, YOU'RE NOW THE VICE-CAPTAIN OF THE SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM. THAT'S GREAT! YOU MUST HAVE WORKED HARD FOR THIS POSITION.

GREAT BUT MAKE SURE TO FOCUS ON STUDIES ALONG WITH SPORTS; OTHERWISE, YOU KNOW BETTY... AND THIS TIME EVEN KEN WON'T BE HERE TO SAVE YOU.

YEAH, BASED ON MY PERFORMANCE IN LAST YEAR'S MATCHES, THE COACH THOUGHT I DESERVED THIS POSITION.

HAHA... YOU'RE RIGHT. SHE'S ALREADY WARNED ME THAT IF MY PRE-EXAM SCORES ARE LOW, SHE'LL SNATCH AWAY MY FOOTBALL.



SHE MIGHT BE WITH HER FRIENDS.

WELL, IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE SINCE THE SCHOOL BELL RANG, AND MIA STILL HASN'T COME OUT.



YEAH, ALICE AND JULIA...
THEY'RE IN OUR CLASS. WHY ARE
YOU SO SURPRISED?

HER FRIENDS?

NO, I'M NOT SURPRISED,
JUST CONCERNED. DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT
MIA IS QUITE SHY AND DOESN'T MAKE
FRIENDS EASILY?

OH, THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY.
I KNOW THOSE TWO VERY WELL; THEY'RE
BOTH REALLY NICE GIRLS. I BELIEVE MIA
GETS ALONG WELL WITH THEM.

IT'S NICE TO HEAR THAT.
NOW I FEEL RELIEVED.



WHAT ARE THEY DOING TOGETHER?

LOOK, SHE'S HERE!



HEY MIA! OVER HERE...

UEH... JUST STOP SHOUTING MY NAME ALREADY.

GRRR...

TO BE CONTINUED...