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### Educational Injustice Story - Draft No. 2

He smiled. “Oh, I’m actually a junior”, he replies with a welcoming smile.

Complete silence. After a moment or two they’re both looking at one another like they have seven heads. I’m too far away to interject, and the last thing I want to do is sound like I’m talking over my RA or trying to mansplain to my mother. For the record, she asked if he was new to the school like I am.

I walk over like I haven’t heard anything. Finally he speaks up.

“It’s my fifth semester here”. He’s still very positive but that’s really not helping to clear the air. Mom doesn’t realize that I’m getting closer. RA’s pupils start to drift to the left of their eyeballs, homing in on my location. His head hasn’t moved at all though, much less the rest of his posture.

It’s me to the rescue.

I manage to conjure up something to break the silence “It’s, uhh, their third year at the university”, I muster up, praying I didn’t hear the conversation incorrectly or use a tone that might come off condescending.

RA finally moves their neck to address me. Took long enough. He does one of those chuckles that’s more akin to exhaling from your nose.

“What he said”, he replies. That response really wasn’t what I expected, but frankly I suppose it works. At least it still feels like they’re pretty pleasant, and not just in the customer-service kind of way.

I’m certainly not embarrassed by my mother’s confusion, nor do I have any contempt for the RA or their response. Coming from someone who’s not exactly a career conversationalist, I can completely understand not knowing what to do when the air just hangs like this.

The issue is that it’s different now; we’re in a new place that’s supposed to be bereft of judgment. That certainly can’t be the whole truth, but it’s frustrating that I’ve already had to *show* so much. RA’s understanding of who I am has most likely drastically changed. He’s going to have so much more to explain to me, so many questions to answer, and “incidents” to “report”. He might not even be dreading doing that, but they might be prepared to talk about it in other people to help explain just how overworked they are, maybe even complain about it in private as “the hard part of their job”. I’m starting out as the problem.

Still complete silence. RA is looking at their phone now but tentatively shifting their gaze back and forth from it to my mother and myself like a chameleon with their eyes askew.

He's also like a chameleon because he's doing that animal thing where you have no idea what they're thinking at any point in time. If RA is trying to tell me he's busy with something, he's doing a very

Still *still* complete silence.

"I'm going to put my room together some more". I really only manage to blurt it out, and louder than expected. Simultaneously I begin to hope that RA doesn't think I don't know how to speak like a normal human being and my mother doesn't think I have no manners, much less feel inclined to scold me in front of the people I'm living with on day zero.

For some reason, Mom isn't coming with me.

They're still talking about something, I'm not certain if I should walk back or not.

Somehow I'm already marching back, this time I'm pretty sure that it's more that I'm not entirely composed. I just need to know what they could be talking about. Mom's probably warning them about me— all the issues that I had in school and why I'm going to need extra help. Maybe she wants him to remember to tell me to call her.

"It's like, one half of the school year", RA explains. "Err, uh, the length of a class, like fall semester and spring semester". My mom is nodding. She chimes in.

"I was a university student in another country", she tells him. "It's all very different and new to me now."

"Where did you attend college?" he asks.

"India", she replies with a bit of a laugh. "Many, many years ago. I really loved my time there, but this is all...", she trails off, "it's nothing like what it was like for me. I'm just happy that my kid is here."

Don't get me wrong, I'm really happy that it turned out that they weren't talking about me and managed to get along so well. I'm also ready to move in. I gently tug at Mom's arm and try to elicit a laugh as I cautiously urge her to follow me to my room.

RA says something about being happy to help us move anything if need be. I'm just happy to be home.