It was the perfect moment and yet why were the words so hard to find, she just had to say a few words; a sentences maybe even less.

(Are you free this weekend or next week, no rush if you’re busy or something...?) That was it, that was all he had to say and yet it was causing him so much trouble.

It was causing the two of them trouble so they just sat their awkwardly stewing in an odd shared feeling that the other had something to say... But neither spoke as rain just pleasantly knocked away on Maria’s jalopy, contrasting against the horrid pained groans and puffs the little yellow car made though Milo oh so politely avoided brining attention to it.

“Hey – uh... Thanks again for the lift...” (you doing anything tomorrow?) He couldn’t get out the last part.

Maria’s ears still perked up, “o – oh it’s no problem um...” (we could do this more often) she could feel her face fluster... She was flustering and she hadn’t even said it; thank God for fur. Milo luckily couldn’t tell though Maria was begging her tail to stop as it continued to energetically whack on part of her seat.

Luckily though her tail was being stifled by the groans and sputters of her car... Well it was either that or maybe like the car noises Milo was also politely not questioning it... It wasn’t as if it were subtle.

But to the rescue a loud clasp of thunder had both the human and collie jumping as a clear spark clashed the ground somewhere in the distance ahead. That helped to restart everything and took the edge off the situation and once calm return the two shared a laugh.

“I don’t know what’s up with this weather” Maria commented, now unable to knock a little smile from her face.

“It’s pretty funny like; Sometimes it just hell let loose but it gets really nice sometimes...” Milo stopped for second thinking and finally committing, “you ever been down to the lake during the sunny days; the one down N22 you come off at Alose?” surprisingly he got it all out without tripping up though he was soft spoken.

Maria kind of knew it, someone suggested it before but that was on a busy day and the couple of nature zones planet side had a way of blending together... “I don’t think so, it sounds kind of nice...” was he going too? She could feel her own words tug on her tongue (would you take me there?)

Milo sat their quietly just for a moment as the words ran through his head, “It really is...Maybe you’d like to c-”.

This time around the thunder did not break the conversation, rather just a single loud bang. A much closer bang followed by unhealthy plumes of smoke coming from under the bonnet... Milo had never seen a person go through so many emotions in one time. At first Maria puffed with every fibre of fur standing on end in fear followed by it all quickly falling in despair and it was only as she put the car into park at the side of the road did she place her head flat against the steering wheel.

Now awkward silence came back as Milo tried to find the words though only one thing kept banging on the inside of his skull: (should have said something about that check engine light...)

After about two minutes of silent regret Maria finally raised her head from the steering wheel; embarrassed and apologetic as she tried to stutter out some kind of apology. “I – I – I’m really sorry, this is just so – so embarrassing” she was quite upset at this outcome and Milo couldn’t help but feel sorry.

“H – Hey now it’s really fine, you’ve nothing to apologise for” he spoke sincerely and to that her ears perked up though her face was still clearly a soft disappointment.

Milo was quick to try and move the situation forward: “let’s have a look at the engine maybe it’s something we could fix”. Maria nodded her head acceptingly and the two of them quickly adorned what water proofs they had and clambered out of the little jalopy into the rain.

The two of them quickly made a way to the front of the little yellow car as Maria lifted the bonnet greeting the two with a pleasant souring gust of smoke though luckily the bulk of it was pushed away by the wind and not into the wind screen.

“It’s going to be the manifold” Maria was quick to say “that damned thing is always getting gummed up” though to that Milo just seemed to get closer to the engine as he looked about the car.

Maria just watched slightly perplexed; she struggled to tell if he really knew what he was doing or if he just pretending.

He finally pulled back pointing out an issue but one Maria was well aware of, “nah nah, I think it might be the oil, look like you’ve got some oil leakage”.

Maria was quick to shake her head, she was certain to the issue being the manifold... But for some reason once she stopped Milo was quick to fire back “no no, am still certain it’s the oil, probably not getting enough lubrication”.

Maria was just shaking her head “nnnooooo... The manifold clogs with carbon, if am getting excess oil in the manifold something fuckier is going on... But I know the oil needs work I can agree on that” Maria concede but Milo slicked out;

“Ah so you agree it’s the oil...”

She was growling now just lightly in absent frustration, “no” she said back snidely feeling as if now she was having an argument with a child...

“Are you a mechanic” Milo said clearly playful in his tone having fun pushing buttons; but Maria couldn’t deny her frustration that Milo just wouldn’t concede the issue was the manifold... Though she had to admit: “no am not... But it’s not like you’re a mechanic”.

Now it seemed it was Maria who was acting the child as she folded her arms and looked away. It was funny getting into an ‘argument’ and now they were talking so smoothly with no concern given to neither the rain nor the thunder nor the awkward feelings.

Milo finally spoke up trying to keep a certain tone, “I think I know enough to know what am doing” he said back smugly with a smile though Maria was quick to retort “know enough to think and still little enough to fuck it up”.

That came out slightly spiteful and in realisation Maria’s ears and tail drooped but Milo brushed it off putting both hand up innocently as if washing himself of the car.

“Fine, fine... You think it’s the manifold, I think it’s the oil; so how’s about we get this thing to a mechanic and let the professional say who’s right?” That sounded like a challenge and in the tone Milo said it, Maria ears’ perked right back up.

“Well if you want the professional to tell you you’re wrong” she said back with now with a sly little smile. Though like her Milo was quick on the draw with own response; “oh no my dear am sure you’ll find the only one who’ll be proven wrong here is you”

“Is that so?” she growled back.

“Yeah!” he fired in responses.

“Then will take it to mechanic tomorrow if you’re so certain”

“Sounds great; I’ll meet you for 10:00...”

“Yeah! Sou - Sounds l – like a...Like a date...”

“...”

Well the playful hostility melted away as that youthful awkwardness took over once again though luckily the date was set and there was no backing out now.

At this point the two were bashfully looking away, Milo kicking a bit of tarmac off to the side looking at the road while Maria seemed to stare into the engine. She couldn’t help but smile but as always her now ballistic tail was the greatest sign of wonderful feelings she was going through.

(He’d see me again...) her fluttered with joy.

“WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TWO DOING?”

ah just like the thunder and the engine a third party seemed to slide into scene to press everything forward and as Milo and Maria looked to the sound they were both greet with a reunion of Dan’s presences though he was across the road and still walking though his pace slowed.

Seemingly he only done that to make sure what was on the side of the road was really what he thought it was... “Car’s broke” Milo shouted back as the old man stared for a moment before shaking his head.

“Ah fuck it... Did you do it?!” Dan shouted from across the road. Milo realised the question wasn’t directed at him and he looked to Maria: the reality of what was going on started to click into place. Her ears flattened embarrassed as her tail dropped; that sneaky doggo.

“Aye Dan; we’re going out tomorrow” Milo said on Maria behalf as the collie closed up seemingly tempted to squeak out *It’s not a date; it’s not a date...* But she didn’t really she was quite happy, she was very happy.

“Ah ha! Wonderful news” Dan seemed to wave pausing for a moment before going on his way. Both Maria and Milo shared a glance with each other before they called to the old man “ain’t you going to help with the car?”... They were going to have to push it.

“Nah you two got it and I’ve got some *buns* waiting for me” the old man called euphemistically. It was lost on Milo though at this point Dan was already off at quite the pace for such an old man.

The dark night seemed to be winning the battle of time but luckily as Milo and Maria pushed the jalopy into eye line of the pack of tower blocks they knew it would be just an hour at most and luckily the rain had stopped.

They were quiet again, though unlike the last few time it hadn’t settled out of awkwardness rather just a simple pleasant moment. Once Dan had disappeared down the road they started to laugh though neither expressed their own secret collusion with the old man, though Milo was having a poke about.

“So how long had you planned that out?” Milo questioned as he called over the car roof; the two of them committed to a side. Her face furrowed and her ears twitched shyly “I’d – er – I’d rather not say” she mumbled.

“So you’d had it in mind for a while?” Milo said, she didn’t respond to that only giving a soft whine before defending “No... Put together the bus plan last Wednesday” that wasn’t the defence she might have thought it was but Milo just smiled.

They finally got the little car back pushing into a space just outside the monstrous concrete structure of apartments. Must have finally got late, the sky and land was finally dark and limp street lights let out gloomy glows from lamps that were well in need of replacing.

“Th – Thank you for the help; you really got me out of tricky spot there” Maria said, smiling as she rubbed her hand against the back of her head while her floppier ear twitched.

“Hey it’s no trouble; I’ll look forward to seeing which one of us known’s their stuff come tomorrow” Milo joked with a little teasing smile which seemed to gain him a couple of soft growls, “yeah will see” Maria said back.

With that it seemed the two would part ways for the night but as Milo turned to walk away he felt a hand grab at his wrist softly tugging him back.

“Do you want to stay the night?” a bit like when she asked if he wanted the lift she seemed to spill the question out as if pushed from an internal conflict of if she should or shouldn’t.

As Milo turned around Maria was quick to spill out some explanation, “just don’t want you bumbling yourself back to block in the dark and yours is across the main road... Sh-shouldn’t be crossing that in the dark”.

She let go seeming regretful of her choice pondering if she might have been pushing a little over the bounds; they hadn’t even been on their first date... First date... She took a slight step back keeping her gaze to the ground as Milo continued to watch her.

He didn’t speak, but he also didn’t walk away, rather he just waited watching her. A happy little smile curling across his face, he couldn’t help it she was so adorable when she acted so coy... She finally looked back up accepting of what was to be the outcome of her choice. Her little heart fluttered as their eyes meant.

He didn’t need to say anything just an accepting smile, nod of the head and a gesture of the hand for her to lead the way.

Her eyes lit up as broad elated smile curled across her muzzle. She couldn’t think of the words but she knew she didn’t need to say anything, the two just walked inside quietly side by side with only the swishing of Maria’s tail breaking the silences.