

Beyond Frontiers

Part 6

Morning arrives, and with it, the rays of sunshine illuminate my sleeping face with dark circles under my eyes; my head hurts, and my body feels like I haven't rested enough. I feel like a zombie, and in the same way, I get out of bed and drag my feet across the floor with my head down and my eyes narrowed. Even in these conditions, I make my way to the bathroom. With considerable exertion, I take off my clothes and continue to the shower. I hope a cold bath can wake me up. No, it's winter. If I take a cold bath, I will die of hypothermia. With fatigue regaining strength, I shower and turn on the hot water. The heat of the water suddenly replaces the cold of the atmosphere and melts me externally.

Adrien: "I think I'll sleep in class today and apologize to the teacher later. It doesn't matter if he gives me more homework."

When I finish my bath, I think about the possibility as I pick up a towel outside the shower to dry off and cover myself from the cold outside.

I recharge my energy as I leave the bathroom toward the closet; I need appropriate clothing for this weather. I think of something that will keep me warm for the rest of the day but won't make me sweat too much and that won't obstruct my movements.

Finally, I chose a thick T-shirt, a sweatshirt, socks, and shoes made for cold days. Last but not least, I take a jacket, the inside of which is plush, and put it on me, immediately feeling a warmth similar to someone's hug.

Adrien: "Perfect. I'm ready to get on with my day... Or so I think."

On my way to the dining room, I smell coffee and toast; I know it's my mom making me breakfast before leaving for school. The scent reactivates my brain, my body responds better, and my walk is more natural. It's too bad that the smell only serves to cheer me up but doesn't eliminate the dark circles under my eyes.

I watch breakfast in the dining room; as expected, it's toast and coffee, a little fruit on the side, and jam to spread on the toast. What better breakfast to liven up my day a little more? With hunger creeping into my mind and my energy soaring, I rush to eat this

delicacy of the gods. In a matter of minutes, the breakfast in front of me disappears from my sight, falling splendidly into my stomach.

After washing the dishes, I said goodbye to my parents and went to school. On the way, I see snow falling slightly, enough not to obstruct the classes but to cover the ground with a thin white layer. I hope there is no ice on the road because my movements are not agile enough to keep my balance if I slip.

On the way, I catch a glimpse of my friends; Soren is among them, accompanied by Wendy and Calux. The three of them turn the corner to take the same route I'm heading. Soren, with a sixth sense, turns his head and sees me before they finish turning the corner.

Soren: "Adrien, come!"

Adrien: "Hey guys, how are you?"

Wendy: "Hi, Adrien, good, pretty good, I would say. I can't say the same for you. You look like a zombie."

Adrien: "Is it so noticeable?"

Calux: "More than you think."

Soren: "Didn't you sleep well?"

Adrien: "Let's just say I was able to fall asleep when I got home. But a few hours later, I woke up and couldn't go back to sleep."

Calux: "Was the journey with Julien so difficult?"

Adrien: "How do you know I was traveling with Julien?"

Wendy: "We all know that. Julien contacted us and talked about the trip he had with you. He also told us about your terrible physical condition."

Adrien: "Hey... He's right about that... But you don't get much exercise either."

Wendy: "That doesn't apply to me, but I understand. Although I played sports seriously as a child, I'm still training at least three days a week."

Soren: "No, Wendy. He's just weak. How hard can it be to climb a mountain? If that can be considered a mountain, the place they went to looks more like a hill."

Calux: "You don't have much right to speak, Soren. You don't leave your house much unless it's to buy things at the corner supermarket or to go to school."

Soren: "My point still stands; it shouldn't be that hard to climb a mountain occasionally."

Adrien: "Since you're so sure, let's do something. I proposed to Julien that I would go with him on the next trip he wanted to plan, on one condition: That one of you go with us. Since you're so eager and you know you'll endure, Soren, you come with us."

Wendy: "Hey! If you're going to make a plan with friends, don't leave us out, either. Sounds interesting."

Calux: "I'm going too if everyone goes."

When Wendy and Calux respond, I immediately challenge Soren with my gaze, provoking him to follow through on what he said so that he can swallow his words.

Adrien: "Well, Soren? Are you going to be the only one who won't go with us?"

Soren: "I haven't recanted; I'll go just to show you how easy a hike is."

Adrien: "I'll see you in a similar state as me at the end of the day."

As we walked to school, we bumped into a familiar face. Julien appears behind us like a ghost, clinging to Soren and me from behind. The action briefly makes me jump out of fright; my gaze becomes menacing as I look back, only to notice the big smile behind us. My heart races fearlessly, if only for a moment. On the contrary, Soren remained calm and intently watched as if he knew what was coming.

Julien: "Hey guys! How are you today?"

As reality brings him back to earth, Soren gives him a gentle fist on the shoulder. My heart continues to pound while Julien keeps holding me.

Wendy: "Julien! What a joy to see you. How was your trip?"

Julien: "Excellent, Wendy; I'm feeling pretty encouraged today. I was able to sleep through the night without interruptions; I feel like someone new."

Calux: "You can tell that immediately. Although it's not uncommon to see you cheered up today, you're much happier than usual."

Julien: "And how could you not be? My trip with Adrien and the view we had was worth it."

Soren: "Speaking of trips, Julien, Adrien mentioned you're planning another one soon. We all discussed it and decided to go after hearing the proposal."

Julien: "Adrien, I'm surprised you invited them so quickly."

Adrien: "They kept bothering me with my physical condition on the trip. At least Soren didn't stop doing it, so I challenged him to go. Wendy and Calux, hearing the challenge, also joined the plan."

Wendy: "I don't want to miss another trip after hearing about that experience; I'm pretty encouraged."

Calux: "I didn't want to be left behind either. A change of scenery is not a bad idea occasionally."

Julien: "I'm glad to hear them! I will gladly think of a landscape that will blow your mind. If they want, we can go camping."

Wendy: "I'm going camping!"

Calux: "I'm going camping too!"

Julien: "Adrien, Soren, what do you guys say?"

Soren: "I- If everyone wants to camp, I won't be the killjoy. I'm going too."

Soren responds nervously, perhaps thinking it will be his first time camping and unsure of the experience. I can't blame him; I haven't camped in my life either, which makes me nervous for a moment, but after considering it, I pluck up the courage and respond bravely.

Adrien: "I want to camp too. It will be my first time, but it's not bad to learn either."

Julien: "That's the attitude! I can't wait for the weekend to go camping."

Adrien: "This weekend? Are we going to take a trip so close to each other?"

Julien: "Do you have any problems this weekend?"

Adrien: "N- No, that's not the case..."

Before I finish my sentence, Julien responds again with the enthusiasm that characterizes him so much.

Julien: "So nothing is stopping us. We're going camping this weekend."

My words of concern immediately disappear when I see the mood that Julien emanates. A weekend to camp together... I'm worried about where Julien will get us to keep these plans going. After all, he is the most adventurous of us all. It would be very hypocritical of me to say that someone is more interesting than him. He doesn't show our geeky tastes, but I know he considerably likes them. His relaxed and active attitude makes him an extroverted person, everyone's friend, but instead of hanging out with everybody, he gets together with us. He makes us feel important and appreciated, or at least that's what I think and feel when I'm around him.

Our conversation continues as we get closer and closer to the school. On several occasions, I see Soren or Calux try to keep their balance by taking steps through the thin layer of ice that covers the ground; even I feel indecisive with every step I take. Luckily for us, Wendy and Julien are on top of any mishaps. The uncertainty of the situation makes us smile every time we witness the wobble and dances created by the slippery ground.

Julien: "Guys, you should exercise a little more. You can't possibly slip so often."

Wendy: "You must give them a chance, Julien. Never in their lives have they exercised. I'm amazed that they can walk on this ground."

Soren: "They're not helping, you know? I feel bad just listening to them."

Julien: "On the contrary, you should motivate yourself first."

Calux: "You make it sound so easy, but it's not."

Julien: "If they get motivated, I can help them. I'm sure Wendy would be interested too. Isn't that right, Wendy?"

Wendy: "While I don't exercise continuously, I wouldn't mind spending more time with all of you. I don't have a problem doing more routines."

Adrien: "You two want to change our rules of the game. They want to get us to exercise!"

Wendy: "While I don't exercise continuously, I wouldn't mind spending more time with all of you. I don't have a problem doing more routines."

Adrien: "You two want to change our rules of the game. They want to get us to exercise!"

Wendy: "You make it look like it's the worst thing in the world, Adrien. It's a nice change to their rhythm of life, and I'm sure you'll feel better."

Adrien: "Not if I end up as shattered as yesterday. These dark circles are not free."

Julien: "Hey, I hadn't noticed it until you mentioned it. But credit to those who deserve it. Being your first time, you didn't do badly."

Adrien: "Thank you... I think..."

The atmosphere becomes livelier and more enthusiastic as we discuss exercise or sport. The idea is spreading and filling our heads. I won't deny it; seeing them so animated makes me feel euphoric and want to exercise. After all, if I spent more time surrounded by my friends, my day would be more bearable.

Just before entering the school, I tap Julien's shoulder to let him know if I can talk to him alone for a moment.

Julien: "Keep going, guys; we'll catch up with you later."