**Front of Convenience Store**

I run back to the convenience store, but the kid is no longer there. The clerk doesn’t know where he went either, and as I dash out a feeling of guilt settles in my chest.

I keep looking around the area, checking in stores and asking everyone I meet if they’ve seen Petrov anywhere. Nobody has, though, and as I continue to search things start to seem more and more hopeless…

?Mara: Pro??

Mara (surprise ouch):

I look up and run into Mara, who’s carrying a bag of groceries.

Mara: Ow…

Mara (neutral skeptical): Why are you in such a rush…?

Pro: Mara? What are you doing here?

Mara (neutral neutral): Shopping.

Oh.

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): Anyways, why are you running around? Aren’t you supposed to be with Lilith? Ah, you’re sweating!

Pro: Well…

Mara (neutral worried):

I explain everything that has happened to Mara, who listens concernedly.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: It’s my fault, though. I should’ve made sure he was alright…

Mara (neutral thinking): Well, I wouldn’t say it was your fault…

Mara (neutral neutral): But I do think you probably should’ve done something.

My heart starts to sink…

Mara (neutral earnest): However!

Huh…?

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Now you know for next time, right?

Pro: Mara…

Mara (surprise surprise):

Mara reaches out to pat my head, but before she can connect I get a call.

Mara (neutral embarrassed\_blushing): Ah. Your phone’s ringing.

Pro: Yeah.

Mara (neutral bashful\_blushing):

I answer the phone, and it turns out to be Lilith.

Lilith: Pro?

Pro: Yeah?

Lilith: We found him.

Lilith: Could you meet us by the station?

Mara (neutral curious):

Pro: Alright, I’m on my way.

Lilith: See you, then.

Lilith hangs up, and I let out an audible sigh of relief.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): It seemed like everything worked out in the end, huh?

Pro: Yeah…

Mara (neutral smiling): You should get going, then.

Pro: Are you gonna be okay? Do you want me to carry those?

Mara: I’ll be fine. Go on.

Pro: Alright. Thanks, Mara.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): No problem. I’ll see you later.

Pro: See you.

Mara (exit):

Reinvigorated, I start to run towards the station, although I feel a little bad about leaving Mara behind. She’s managed to cheer me up yet again, but instead of properly showing my gratitude I’m running off.

I’ll buy her some sort of food later to thank her.

**Home Station**

Petra (waving neutral): Pro!! Over here!!

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Petra (neutral neutral):

Petrov (popsicle eating):

?Greta (neutral embarrassed):

Petra spots me as I arrive at the station, ragged and out of breath. With her are Lilith and two others that I’d assume are her younger siblings. Sure enough, the boy I saw earlier ended up being Petrov, who’s nonchalantly eating a popsicle.

Petra (neutral frowning): Gwah, you’re sweating.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Are you okay?

Pro: I’m fine…

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Pro: Where’d you find him?

Petra (neutral nervous): Oh, uh…

Petra (neutral expressionless): He was in a convenience store looking at ice cream, the little rascal…

Pro: Really…?

Petra: Yeah.

Petra (neutral neutral):

?Greta (neutral worried): I’m really sorry, Petra…

Petra (neutral smiling\_nervous): It’s fine, it’s fine. Next time keep a closer eye on him.

?Greta (neutral embarrassed): I will…

Petra (neutral neutral): Well, we should probably get going then. Mom should get here at any moment.

Petra (neutral smiling): You guys go on and have fun.

Pro: I’m really sorry…

Petra (neutral curious): Sorry for what?

Petra (neutral sigh):

I explain how I saw Petrov earlier, and Petra sighs.

Petra (neutral smiling\_nervous): Ah, it’s fine. It probably would’ve been confusing anyways, since this one doesn’t talk.

Petra (neutral expressionless):

She pokes Petrov, who pokes her back.

Petra (neutral smiling): Don’t worry about it.

Petra (neutral neutral): Ah, Mom’s here. We gotta go.

Petra (waving smiling): See you guys!

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly)

Petra (exit):

?Greta (exit):

Petrov (exit):

We watch as Petra heads to the station parking lot with her siblings in tow, and once they disappear from sight Lilith turns to me looking a little worried.

Lilith: Um, are you alright?

Pro: I’m fine…

Pro: Sorry about this…

Lilith (neutral sigh): It’s fine. I might’ve done the same.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Anyways, we should probably get you something to drink.

Pro: Oh, uh…

Lilith: How about we go to MacDonald’s and see if anybody is still there?

Pro: Sure. Sounds good to me.

**MacDonald’s Seating**

It turns out that everyone already left, but we decide to get something to eat anyways. After washing my face in the washroom, I pick up my order and look for Lilith, who went ahead to secure a seat.

Lilith (neutral neutral): Well, it seems like you got plenty of exercise today.

Pro: Yeah…

Lilith: Gotta stay healthy.

Lilith (drinking\_soda neutral):

Lilith starts to eat her hamburger, and I start to eat as well. Running around made me a lot hungrier than I usually get, and before I know it my food is gone, leaving me wishing that I ordered more.

Lilith (stretching satisfied): That was good. I didn’t eat lunch, so I was really hungry.

Pro: You didn’t eat before the game?

Lilith (neutral neutral): I slept in by accident today.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Pro: Yeah, sometimes I sleep in too much as well. Especially on school days.

Lilith: Do you set an alarm?

Pro: I do.

Lilith: I see.

Pro: But even then, I still fall asleep in class…

Lilith (neutral expressionless): I think I’m starting to understand why your grades are so low…

Pro: Hey, they weren’t always this bad. Last year I did better…

Lilith (neutral suspicious): And this year?

Pro: Uh…

Lilith (neutral sigh):

Lilith sighs.

Lilith (neutral disappointed): Are you gonna pass at this rate? What if you get held back?

Pro: I don’t think I’ll get held back. Probably.

Lilith (neutral suspicious): Probably…?

She eyes me carefully, as if trying to decide what words to say.

Lilith (neutral embarrassed\_slightly): If you’d like…

Lilith (neutral embarrassed): I could tutor you.

Pro: Actually?

Lilith: Actually.

Pro: Um…

Pro: We’ll see, I guess.

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Pro: By the way, what did you put on your career form?

Lilith (neutral confused\_slightly): Career form?

Pro: Oh sorry, if you don’t wanna tell me you don’t have to.

Lilith (neutral neutral): It’s okay. I put down that I’m going to university, but honestly I didn’t put too much thought into it.

Pro: Nothing baseball related?

Lilith (neutral thinking): Mmm…

Lilith (neutral neutral): I don’t think I’m good enough to play professionally, but I guess I could always study something baseball-related after high school. Something like physio.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Lilith (neutral curious): What did you put down?

Pro: Ah, I don’t have anything yet…

Lilith: Wasn’t it due a while ago?

Pro: Yeah…

Lilith (neutral neutral): I see. You’re putting a lot of thought into it, then?

Pro: I guess…

Lilith: Maybe I should’ve taken it more seriously.

Pro: Maybe.

We continue to talk about school, and after a while I start to relax. Lilith really is easy to talk to, and as we discuss our classes, teachers, and classmates, all my worries from before start to dissipate away.

**Home Station**

The streets are busy and bustling by the time we leave MacDonald’s, full of people making the rush hour commute home. Lilith looks around, taking it all in.

Lilith (neutral neutral): Lots of people, huh?

Pro: Yeah.

Lilith (neutral curious): What are you gonna do after this?

Pro: Ah, I should probably go home and finish my career form.

Lilith (neutral neutral): Yeah, you should probably do that.

Pro: How about you?

Lilith (neutral thinking): Mmm…

Lilith (neutral neutral): I’ll probably go to a café for a bit.

Pro: That sounds nice.

Lilith: Yeah.

Lilith: Well, I guess you should get going, right?

Pro: Yeah…

Pro: Sorry.

Lilith: Don’t apologize.

Lilith (neutral smiling): Thanks for coming. I had fun.

Pro: I had fun too.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’m glad.

Lilith (neutral smiling): I’ll see you later, then.

Pro: Yeah, see you.