**Home Station**

After fooling around at my place for a bit, Asher and I headed over to the café Petra told us to be. It’s the same place that I’ve met up with her both yesterday and the day before, but for some reason the storefront seems much, much more daunting today.

The other two guys are already there when we arrive, and, predictably, I don’t know either of them. They seem friendly enough, but as they greet us I find myself stiffening up. I’m barely able to give an acknowledging wave, and soon find myself looking around awkwardly as Asher keeps them company.

They’re definitely the popular type, the type of people I tend to be uncomfortable around. Or so I’d say, but considering the amount of time I’ve spent with Asher, Lilith, Petra, and their friends recently I’m not sure if that’s exactly true…

Thankfully, we’re soon interrupted by the arrival of Petra and the others.

Kari (waving smiling\_eyes\_closed):

Petra (waving smiling): Hey there!

Petra (exit):

Kari (exit):

Predictably, Petra bounds towards her friends and starts chatting away, her movements as animated as ever. Her two other friends strike up a conversation with Asher, leaving me with…

While they continue to catch up, I turn to Lilith, who notices me as well.

Lilith (neutral curious): You’re here, huh?

Pro: Hey Lilith. You got shanghaied into coming too, huh?

Lilith (neutral disappointed):

She nods, looking defeated.

Pro: Well, let’s get this over with, then.

Lilith: Yeah.

We make small talk until Petra finishes talking with her friends and calls for us, telling us that we can go inside now. I pause before following the others inside, and after a brief moment of hesitation I hold my breath and head inside.

**Cafe 2**

It actually doesn’t turn out to be too bad. I chose a seat at the end of the table across from Lilith, who also doesn’t look too keen on socializing, and after introducing ourselves we mainly just eat, letting the others talk amongst themselves.

It seems that the two other guys are pretty happy with the people that Petra brought, and after a few minutes of listening in I notice that Kari and her friend seem pretty interested too. Well, they *seem* pretty interested, but based on what Asher told me earlier they probably aren’t.

It’s a little scary how engaging they are, though. Everything they do, from the way they talk to their posture, seems designed to draw you in. I kinda feel bad for the two guys sitting across from them – if I were in their place, I’d probably fall head over heels.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly):

Lilith: What’s wrong? You look a little red.

I realize that I’ve started to blush a little, embarrassed about my current train of thought.

Pro: Uh, nothing. Just a little hot I guess.

Lilith: I see.

Lilith (neutral neutral):

She reaches over for a pitcher of water and hands it to me.

Lilith: Here.

Pro: Oh, thanks.

Lilith (drinking\_soda neutral):

I pour myself a glass and periodically take sips to both cool down. Lilith follows suit, and for a while we silently half-listen to the others discussing their schools, lives, and whatever else cool kids like to talk about these days. It’s a little boring, but at least the food’s pretty good.

Lilith (exit):

I wonder if one day I’ll attend a mixer voluntarily, looking for someone to meet and potentially date. It’s not that I haven’t thought about those kinds of things, but the idea of having a girlfriend seems almost fantastical.

It’s not that I don’t want a girlfriend, but at some point I’d probably have to choose between spending time with her and spending time with Mara. And as of now, I think I’d probably choose Mara. She means so much to me, and I probably wouldn’t be able to choose a life where she slowly disappears into the background.

I stir around the ice cubes in my drink before taking another sip, realizing that I’ve been lost in my thoughts for a while. A little disoriented, I make an attempt to rejoin the conversation. Or to continue listening to the conversation.

They’re talking about baseball. About how Petra didn’t play in middle school, how the girls’ baseball team at our school is better than most, how their baseball uniforms are the same colour scheme as their school uniforms…

It’s mildly interesting, but after a while I start to zone out again. Why did I agree to come, again?

Lilith. That’s right. But right now she’s preoccupied, and…

…she doesn’t seem too happy.

Lilith (neutral icy): Outfield.

She looks at Petra’s friend with obvious disdain, but he doesn’t get the hint. I glance at Asher, who chuckles a little nervously, but he doesn’t intervene so I don’t either.

He continues to ask Lilith questions, despite Petra and Kari’s attempts to change the topic. Lilith takes it well at first, but as he continues to press on it becomes more and more obvious that she’s becoming more and more annoyed…

Lilith (neutral annoyed\_really):

Finally, apparently unable to take it anymore, she stands up abruptly.

Lilith: Sorry, washroom.

But after telling her to wait he reaches out to grab her hand…

**Cutscene**

\*^crash

Angered, Lilith pushes him away and throws her cup at him, hitting him squarely in the face and soaking him and his friend.

Lilith: …

Lilith: I’m leaving.

Kari: Wait, Lilith-

She grabs her bag and heads towards the exit. Instinctively I reach out my hands towards her…

\*^slap

…but she slaps it away.

Lilith: …

After pausing for a moment, she turns around and leaves, and I sink back into my chair, stunned. Around me is commotion – Kari goes after Lilith, Petra calls for her to come back, Asher’s trying to calm everyone down…

But everything is muffled, as if I were underwater.

All I feel is my stinging hand and a horrible, sinking feeling in my chest.