**Train**

The first half of the train ride back is silent. Lilith looks out the window the entire time, remaining almost completely motionless as her eyes gloss over the moving landscape outside.

But around halfway to our destination, she suddenly speaks, her voice unusually soft and her gaze still fixed at the passing scenery.

Lilith: Prim’s a really good girl, huh? She’s hard-working, considerate, and cute to boot...

Lilith: No wonder why everyone around her loves her.

I open my mouth to agree, but when I see her expression I trail off, unable to say anything. It’s the same expression that I’ve seen occasionally before but have never been able to get a handle on…

Lilith: I’ve only really known her for a week, and I’m already fond of her…

Lilith: Is it really that easy?

The pain in her voice is barely evident, mixed in with tinges of jealousy and bitterness. But most prominent is an overwhelming sense of tiredness, and suddenly the face she’s making seems very, very familiar…

Pro: Lilith…?

But, already lost back in her thoughts, she doesn’t reply, and the rest of the trip passes by as if she didn’t say anything at all.

**Home Station**

Once we get off the train and out of the station, a quick, stealthy inspection of Lilith’s demeanor tells me that she’s back to normal. Or at least she seems normal on the surface, which means that it’s impossible to tell what’s going on inside.

Lilith: I’ll be going home now.

Lilith: Um…

Lilith: Forget about what I said earlier. I was acting strangely.

Lilith: Actually, I guess I’ve been acting strangely all day. First in the bookstore, and now…

Lilith: Forget about it, okay?

Now that I think about it, she *did* have quite the reaction to that manga author…

I want to ask her about it. I know that’s the last thing I should do, but for some reason I really want to ask her about it…

“About that manga author earlier…”

{

Pro: Um, about that manga author earlier…

Pro: You said she reminded you of someone.

Lilith stares at me blankly, as if not understanding what I’m saying.

Lilith: Oh, that…

Lilith: That was nothing. Don’t worry about it.

Figures…

}

“Alright.”

{

Pro: Alright.

Lilith: Thanks.

}

Lilith: Um…

Lilith: Also, we’re done tutoring now, so about the payment…

My heart sinks when I remember what she’s talking about, the answer to that question she had. I’ve forgotten about it, or maybe I’ve purposefully avoided thinking of an answer.

If I had to say goodbye to someone close to me, how would I do it? Of the few people that fit the bill, even the thought of losing one of them is unbearable…

The person that comes immediately to mind is, of course, Mara. Could I live life without her? I’m not sure. A life without her stupidly persistent smile waiting for at every turn…

It sounds incredibly lonely.

And if we had to part ways, I’m not confident that I’d be able to say goodbye at all.

Pro: I don’t think I’d say goodbye at all. I’d probably try to disappear, or something.

Lilith pauses, still processing my response. Was that the answer she was looking for?

Lilith: That was my answer too.

Lilith: Thanks, Pro. For answering honestly.

She smiles strangely, and suddenly it hits me. That strange expression…

Lilith: Well, I’ll see you around.

Lilith: Bye.

Pro: See you.

Wistfulness. A longing for better days, or for a happier life…

It’s a feeling I’m not a stranger to, to say the least. It was a pretty common experience I had growing up without a dad, and even though that’s more or less done recently-

…

Recently?

\*$blurry\_vision

I’m suddenly hit with a sharp bout of nausea, causing me to stumble to the side…

…but just as instantaneously it disappears, leaving me only uncomfortably slanted.

Maybe I’m tired. It’s been a long day, and I haven’t even napped once…

Yeah. Time to go home.