**Front of School**

After a long, gruelling two and a half hours I trudge my way to the front gate, finding Prim, who seems to be faring much better off.

Prim: Um…

Prim: Are you alright?

Pro: Kinda…

Pro: For a sport where they stay in a ten by ten meter box, they do an awful lot of running…

Prim: Yeah…

We spent the first half hour or so warming up, which included running around the track several times, footwork drills, and even a few strengthening exercises. Needless to say, I could barely make it through those alone without collapsing.

We then did a bunch of tennis drills, and for the last hour they let us play practice games against each other. Since Prim and I were the only beginners we naturally played each other, but I could barely get a single point off of her by myself, instead relying on her mistakes to maintain face. Or at least some semblance of face.

I wouldn’t exactly say that she’s athletic, but despite how small and timid she is her coordination is really on another level…

Prim: Um…

Prim: If you’d like you can take this…

Becoming even more reserved than usual, she slips a canned drink into my hand. The tin is cool and pleasant to touch, and I instinctively hold it up to my cheek.

Prim: I didn’t know what you’d like, so I bought you an iced coffee…

Pro: Oh, thanks. Iced coffee is good.

Pro: How much do I owe you?

Prim: Oh, um, it’s okay.

Prim: It’s my thanks. For coming with me today.

My face suddenly feels a lot warmer than before…

Pro: It’s, um, no problem.

Prim: Did you…

Prim: Did you have fun?

Pro: I, uh…

Well, I certainly did not have any fun running around for a few hours, but…

“Yeah, I had fun.” **OR** “I can’t really say that I did…”

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Pro: Yeah, I had fun.

Pro: It was a little grueling, but in the end it felt pretty rewarding. I guess.

A blatant lie. The only feelings I felt during today’s club visit were embarrassment, exhaustion, and physical pain due to soreness.

But it’s not like I could tell her that, right…?

Prim: Oh, that’s good to hear.

Prim: I think it was okay. It was pretty tiring, though…

Pro: Yeah…

I pause, realizing that my stomach feels empty. Before I can suggest getting something to eat, however, we’re interrupted.

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Pro: I can’t really say that I did…

Pro: …but I guess that’s why we’re visiting a bunch of clubs. To see what we like, what we don’t like, and what we think we could enjoy doing.

Prim: …

Prim: Yeah, you’re right.

Prim: I didn’t like it much either, so I don’t think I’ll join.

Pro: Yeah, me neither. I don’t think my legs would hold up…

Prim: Neither would mine.

We share a laugh, an exhausted laugh but a laugh nonetheless. Wanting to talk a little more, I decide to suggest getting something to eat on our way home, but before I can vocalize my idea we’re interrupted.

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Iris: There you are.

Prim: Iris…

I stare at the two of them in confusion, questions popping up in my head left and right. Who’s “Iris,” and why was she looking for Prim? Why does she have a cast, and why…

Why does the air feel so cold now?

Iris: Mom and Dad were worried about you. You didn’t let them know that you’d be staying late at school.

Prim: Um, I forgot…

Iris, whom I now assume to be Prim’s sister, let’s out a long, drawn-out sigh.

Iris: Of course you did.

Iris: Well, let’s go home then. Unless you have something else you wanna do?

Prim: Um, no, I don’t…

Prim turns to me timidly, but this time it’s a different kind of timid, one that makes me nothing but worried…

Prim: Sorry, I have to go.

Prim: Thanks for coming with me. I’ll see you later.

Pro: Oh, right. See you.

She shuffles over to her sister’s side, and after a brief nod from Iris they walk off.

I’ve never had a sibling, but I’m pretty sure the way Prim’s older sister treated her just now was unusually cold. It’s unsettling, and for some reason it feels oddly familiar, like déjà vu…

Oh, right.

Lilith’s dad was like that too, when I first ran into him. And even though Iris wasn’t openly hostile, the mood that she gave off was pretty similar…

…

I hope Prim will be alright.