**Bedroom**

I end up not doing much of anything for the rest of the evening, spending around an hour blankly staring at an English reading that we were assigned to do.

Right before I decide to give up, though, my phone buzzes, and once I check who the notification is from, my jaw drops.

Lilith: *Could you meet me in the coffee shop by the station?*

Stunned, I stare at the message, unable to fully believe what I’m reading.

Is she…

…

I pull myself to my feet and scramble to the door, quickly telling my mom where I’m going before I leave. Now is no time to be sitting around.

**Coffee Shop**

I run as fast as I can towards the station, stopping only to try to recall where exactly the coffee shop is. Thankfully, I eventually find it and burst inside, scanning the area for a hint of blonde…

And in the corner I find it.

Lilith (neutral relief):

Pro: Lilith…

I make my way over, my knees starting to shake from the relief.

Lilith: …

Lilith (worried gentle): It’s you, huh.

Lilith: Long time no see.

Pro: Yeah.

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: Um, is everything gonna be alright? Are you coming back to-

Lilith (worried apologetic):

She stops me before I release a torrent of questions.

Lilith (worried gentle): I’ll tell you everything you wanna know, but first, um…

Lilith (worried bashful): …

Lilith (worried embarrassed): Did you miss me?

Pro: Huh? Uh…

I freeze, too flustered to think straight.

Pro: Yeah, I did.

Lilith: …

Lilith (worried relief): I’ve missed you quite a bit, too.

Lilith (worried gentle): Alright, that’s all I wanted to know. Go ahead.

Pro: That’s it?

Lilith (worried worried\_slightly): Yeah. Um…

Lilith (worried embarrassed): Were you expecting something else?

Pro: Um, no, not really.

I stare at Lilith, who seems uncharacteristically Prim-like today.

But that doesn’t really matter right now.

Pro: So, um…

Lilith (worried relief):

Pro: What happened?

Lilith: So…

Lilith (neutral neutral): The day after you left my mom’s younger sister, my aunt, came over. She received a call from my dad, asking her to take care of me in his place. I was a little surprised, since I’ve only met her once when I was really little, and I think she was a teenager then.

Lilith: So she flew in, and after we talked it over she decided to move in and become my official guardian. This past week we’ve been going through paperwork and getting her settled in. It’s not all finished yet, but the rest of the process will be a lot of waiting, apparently.

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: What about her work? Did she have to find a new job here?

Lilith (neutral neutral): She’s a manga author, so she usually works from home anyways. And her publisher has an office here too, so it all works out, I guess.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Pro: What’s living with her like?

Lilith (neutral sigh):

To my surprise, Lilith let’s out a drained sigh.

Lilith (neutral disappointed): She’s a little, um…

Lilith (neutral embarrassed): …strange. She’s not married, and she’s really, really clingy…

Oh, yeah. I can see how Lilith would find that tiring.

Lilith (neutral expressionless): Sometimes she grabs me and won’t let go, saying that she needs to recharge, or something like that.

Lilith (worried bashful): But…

Lilith (worried gentle): I guess she’s also very kind. And warm.

That’s right. Lilith didn’t really have a family for so long…

Lilith (worried hehe): Although I wish she’d be less clingy. Then she’d be perfect.

Pro: Right…

Lilith (neutral curious): She seems to be really interested in you, though.

Pro: …

Pro: Huh? In me?

Lilith: She says that she wants to meet you in person, and that I should bring you over one day.

Pro: Oh, okay. That’d be fine.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Although if I were you I’d be cautious. She gets this really weird expression whenever you come up in a conversation, one that sends shivers down my spine…

Pro: Ah…

Pro: I’ll keep that in mind.

Yikes. Will Lilith really be alright…?

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: Oh yeah, are you coming back to school? Now that everything’s more or less settled down.

Lilith: I talked it over with my aunt, and we decided that I’ll go back next week. Starting Monday.

Pro: Really?

Lilith (neutral smiling\_slightly): Really.

I turn away, trying to hide the smile that’s creeped its way onto my face. Finally, after what felt like eternity, everything will go back to normal…

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): I guess I’ll have to apologize to Petra and the others, huh. For worrying them.

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Pro: That might be a good idea. Although I think they’d be happy enough just to see you again.

Lilith (neutral wishful): That’s good to hear. It’ll be nice to see them all again, too. And to go to class again, and to swing a baseball bat…

Pro: Yeah. It’ll be good to have you back.

Lilith (drinking\_coffee satisfied):

Lilith smiles appreciatively and takes a sip of coffee before continuing on.

Lilith (neutral curious): So? Anything else to ask?

Pro: Um…

Pro: How’ve you been recently? You know, with everything happening…

Lilith (neutral disappointed): …

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): I’ve been doing alright. It still hurts sometimes, but…

Lilith (neutral worried): …

Lilith (neutral gentle): I think it’ll get better. Over time.

Lilith (neutral neutral): How about you? What’ve you been up to?

Pro: Oh, uh, not much.

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: Actually, I’ve been looking around at clubs.

Lilith: Really? Which ones?

Pro: Uh, so far we’ve been to the girls baseball team, the tennis club, and the literature club…

Lilith (neutral confused): We? And why would you go to the *girls* baseball team?

Pro: Huh? Uh…

I stop, realizing that I may have accidentally put myself in a precarious situation. My first instinct is to try to cover up my slip of the tongue, but after thinking it through I instead decide to come clean.

Pro: Do you know Prim?

Lilith (neutral thinking): Prim? Isn’t that the girl Petra always talks about?

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: Yeah. Well…

I give her a brief overview of everything that happened, starting with how we went to the batting cage all the way to our literature club visit.

Lilith (neutral neutral): I see.

Pro: So going to the girls baseball team wasn’t really for me…

Lilith (neutral curious): You know, you *could* join if you wanted to.

Huh?

Pro: Um, I know I’m not athletic at all, but…

Lilith: No, not as a player. As a manager.

Pro: A manager?

Lilith: Yeah. You’d help out the coaches and take on administrative tasks, like organizing transportation for games or helping to move equipment.

Pro: Would I be allowed to do that?

Lilith (drinking\_coffee satisfied): Why not? The boys team have a girl as their manager, so I don’t see why you couldn’t be ours.

Pro: That’s fair…

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: I guess I’ll give it some thought.

Lilith (neutral smiling): Alright. Let me know when you decide.

Lilith (neutral thinking): Actually…

Lilith (neutral smiling\_nervous): Now that I think about it, you might not be allowed to.

Pro: Huh? Why not?

Lilith (neutral disappointed): Well…

Lilith (neutral neutral): Aren’t you on the verge of failing?

Oof… I was hoping to avoid this topic today, but life often isn’t kind, as per usual…

Pro: Um, yeah, I guess.

Lilith (neutral curious): Do you still sleep in class?

Pro: Sometimes…

Lilith (neutral sigh):

Lilith sighs, her disappointment almost palpable.

Lilith (neutral disappointed):

Pro: I’m sorry, I’ll do better…

Lilith: Well, I guess it’s fine once and a while. As long as you pass.

Lilith (neutral frowning): You wouldn’t wanna be in the same year as Petra, right?

Pro: Actually, the fear of that happening has been my primary motivation…

Lilith (neutral hehe):

We both look at each other before breaking out in laughter, temporarily ignoring all the cares and worries we have.

Being able to see Lilith laugh and smile and enjoy herself this genuinely, especially given all that she’s been through…

It really is a small miracle.