**Stairwell**

I slip out of class as soon as the lunch bell rings, making a beeline for our meeting stairwell. It’s empty when I get there, though, and I end up waiting for another five minutes or so before Lilith arrives.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Sorry for making you wait…

Pro: Oh, no problem. Had trouble getting out?

Lilith (neutral sigh): Yeah…

Lilith (neutral smiling\_nervous): I told them that I needed to go to the office, but they still might come looking later…

Pro: I guess we’ll cross that bridge when we get there.

Lilith (neutral smiling): Yeah.

Lilith (worried neutral):

She sits down beside me, her feet resting a few steps below.

Lilith: So…

Lilith (worried curious): How are you?

Pro: Oh, um…

Pro: I’m doing fine. How about you?

Lilith: …

Lilith (arms\_crossed avoidance\_blushing): I’m fine, but you know…

Lilith (arms\_crossed annoyed\_blushing): We talked recently, so when I ask how you’re doing I’m looking for a bit more.

Pro: Oh, uh, okay.

Lilith (worried curious): What did you do yesterday?

Pro: Me? Um, I studied. At the library. With a friend.

For some reason, my words come out stiff and choppy, my heart unusually fluttery.

Pro: How about you?

Lilith (neutral thinking): Um…

Lilith (neutral neutral): Me and my aunt spent the entire day cooking. Gyoza.

Pro: Gyoza? From scratch?

Lilith: Yeah. We bought wrappers and made the filling from scratch, and then spent most of the day putting them together.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_slightly): We didn’t cook all of them, though. Most of them went straight into the freezer for later.

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: Into the freezer? Why?

Lilith: Um, to save them for later. You can actually cook them when frozen, so whenever we need a quick meal we can just pull them from the freezer and fry them.

Pro: Oh, that’s actually pretty smart.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_nervous): Yeah. Apparently my aunt’s been basically living off them ever since she started living by herself.

Pro: Huh? Wouldn’t she get tired of them?

Lilith: I guess not…

Lilith (neutral surprise):

Pro: They must be really good, then.

Lilith (worried bashful\_blushing): They are. Um, if you’d like…

She opens her lunch box, revealing two neatly arranged rows of warm, glistening gyoza.

Lilith (worried embarrassed\_blushing): …you can have some.

Pro: Huh? Are you sure?

Lilith (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Yeah. My aunt made sure I packed more for you, so you can have as many as you’d like.

Pro: Oh, okay. Thank you for the food, then.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly):

I pick up a gyoza with my chopsticks and bring it to my mouth, delighted to find that they are indeed really, really good. Despite having been in a lunch box for hours the wrapper is warm and crunchy, while the inside is incredibly tender.

Lilith: Um, do you like it?

Pro: Yeah, it’s really good. How’d you make these?

Lilith (neutral embarrassed\_blushing): You’re not allowed to know.

Pro: …

Pro: Huh?

Lilith (worried bashful\_blushing): …

Lilith (worried embarrassed\_blushing): If you want more, than you can come ov-

Lilith (neutral surprise\_blushing):

Petra (waving grinning): Hey!!!

Lilith (neutral annoyed\_blushing):

Prim (surprise panic):

Petra bursts onto the scene, followed by a panicked Prim.

Petra (neutral fufu):

Prim (surprise embarrassed): P-Petra, they’re…

Petra (excited grinning): Wow, gyoza? Looks good. Can I have one?

Prim (surprise surprise):

Lilith (neutral death):

Petra (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed):

Without waiting for an answer, she takes one and pops it in her mouth.

Prim (surprise panic):

Petra (excited excited): It’s so good!!!

Petra: What did you put in it…?

Lilith: Petra…

Petra (excited neutral): …

Prim (shy embarrassed):

Petra (neutral smiling\_nervous): I’m sorry.

Petra (exit):

Lilith (exit):

Prim (shy shy):

While Petra tries to appease Lilith’s wrath, I tentatively turn to Prim, who seems to want to talk.

Pro: Hey.

Prim (shy bambi): Hey…

Prim (shy worried\_slightly): Are you busy?

Pro: Kinda…

Prim (shy shy):

Pro: It seems they’re really going at it, though. What’s up?

Prim (shy down): Do you wanna, um…

Prim (shy shy): Do you wanna visit a club today? After school.

Pro: Hm? Sure, I guess. Which club do you wanna go to?

Prim (shy confused): Huh? Um, I’m not sure. I just felt like doing something today.

I see. In that case…

Prim (shy curious):

Pro: Oh, I actually have a club that-

Prim (shy eek):

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Petra (neutral curious): Oh, are you guys gonna go club visiting today?

Prim (shy shy): Um, yeah.

Petra (neutral smiling): I’ll join you guys, then. We don’t have practice today.

Petra (neutral curious):

Lilith (neutral curious): Which club are you going to?

Pro: Well…

Lilith (neutral confused):

Prim (surprise eek):

Petra (neutral surprise): AH!!!

Petra suddenly stands up straight, causing both Prim and I to start.

Lilith (neutral sigh):

Prim (surprise embarrassed):

Petra (neutral groan): I forgot to grab the printouts from the office. And Ms. Tran said she’d exorcise me if I didn’t get them to her on time…

Lilith (neutral curious):

Pro: Exorcise…?

Petra (surprise panic): Sorry, I gotta go!!!

Petra (exit):

She runs out of the stairwell as fast as she can, leaving the rest of us watching in mild confusion.

Prim (shy curious):

Lilith (neutral confused): That’s your homeroom teacher, right…?

Pro: Yeah. Surprisingly, that sounds like something she’d actually say.

Lilith (neutral curious)

Prim (shy smiling\_nervous): She got mad at Petra yesterday for forgetting to run and errand.

Pushing her tasks on first years now too, huh…

Prim (shy shy):

Lilith: I see.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_slightly):

Lilith smiles dryly, possibly amused by the fact that someone else also isn’t a fan of Petra’s antics.

Lilith (neutral curious):

Prim (shy embarrassed\_blushing): Um…

Prim (shy shy\_blushing): I should probably get going, too. Sorry for disturbing you.

Pro: Oh, no, it’s alright.

Prim (shy eek):

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Um, if you’d like…

Lilith (neutral smiling\_slightly):

Prim (shy embarrassed):

Sensing Prim’s unease, Lilith holds out her lunchbox towards her.

Lilith: You can try one.

Prim (shy confused): Huh? It’s alright, you don’t have to…

Lilith (neutral smiling\_nervous): I mean, Petra already took one, so I guess I should get everyone’s opinion…

Prim (shy bambi): Oh, um, okay. Thank you then.

Lilith (neutral curious):

Prim (shy shy):

She hesitantly eats one, trying to hide how much she enjoys it.

Prim (shy neutral): It’s really good.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Really? I’m glad to hear that.

Prim nods politely, a lot more relaxed than before.

Lilith (neutral smiling):

Prim (shy shy): Thanks again.

Lilith: No problem.

Prim (arms\_behind down): Um, if you don’t mind, I think I’ll head back to my classroom now.

Prim (arms\_behind smiling): See you.

Lilith (waving smiling): See you.

Pro: Yeah, see you.

Prim (exit):

Prim smiles shyly one last time before turning around and heading down the stairs, leaving Lilith and me alone yet again.

Lilith (neutral curious): So…

Lilith: Which club are you guys gonna visit?

Pro: Oh, sorry. I wanted to check out the gardening club.

Lilith (neutral confused): The gardening club? Why?

Pro: Ah, it was recommended to me by a friend.

Lilith (neutral curious): I see.

Lilith (neutral bashful): Um…

Lilith (neutral embarrassed): Could I go with you guys, too?

Pro: Hm? Of course.

Lilith (neutral smiling): Thanks.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’ll meet you outside your classroom after school then.