**Bookstore**

Pro: The bookstore?

Petra: Correct.

Petra: You see Ms. Saito, the author of one of Prim’s favourite manga series, is doing a signing today, so I’ll be getting her a signed copy of her newest work, *Weathering with Yi*.

Pro: Huh. That’s actually a really good idea.

Petra: Isn’t it?

Lilith: There’s a pretty huge line, though.

Petra: Yeah, um…

Petra morosely peers towards the back of the line, which almost makes a full loop around the store.

Petra: If you want you guys can go look around, and I’ll wait…

Lilith: It’s fine. There’s nothing I really want, so I’ll wait with you.

Pro: Um…

Pro: I want a signed copy too, so I’ll also wait with you.

Petra: Oh, okay.

Petra and I both grab a copy of the first volume of *Weathering with Yi*, paying for them before we join the queue. Thankfully the author doesn’t seem to be one for conversation, though, and the line moves unexpectedly quickly.

Petra: Imagine being a manga author, huh? Being paid to come up with a story and draw it, and then becoming famous? Doesn’t sound too bad.

Lilith: I don’t think it’s that easy, though.

Pro: Oh yeah, didn’t you say your aunt was a manga author, Lilith?

Lilith: Yeah.

Petra: Huh?!? Really?!? What did she write?!?

Lilith: Dunno.

Petra and I both stare at Lilith, waiting for further explanation, but nothing comes.

Before the silence can get too awkward, however, we’re unexpectedly interrupted by the last person I would’ve expected to see here.

Iris: Pro?

A wild Iris appears. She puts back the book she was perusing and walks over to us, her expression one of muted curiosity.

Iris: Mmm...

Iris: You’re Prim’s classmate, right? Your name was, um...

Iris: ...

Iris: Metro?

Petra: It’s Petra.

Iris: My apologies.

Her gaze shifts over to Lilith and lingers, her eyebrows raising ever so slightly.

Iris: Sorry, I don’t think I’ve met you before. What’s your name?

Lilith: I’m Lilith.

Iris: Nice to meet you. I’m Iris, Prim’s older sister.

Lilith: Nice to meet you too.

Iris looks Lilith up and down, but Lilith stares back, of course unfazed. After another few slightly tense moments, though, Iris returns her attention back to me.

Iris: What are you doing here?

Pro: I’m, uh, getting this signed.

I hold up the manga volume in my hands, showing it to her.

Iris: Oh, what a coincidence. Prim really wanted the same thing, so our entire family came downtown for the day.

She gestures ahead of us, where I indeed spot a shy, purple-haired figure waiting in between two of the largest people in the line, making her look almost comically small.

Petra: ...

Petra: You mean Prim’s already getting a signed copy?

Iris: That’s right.

Petra: ...

Petra: I need to find something else, so I’ll be back.

Utterly dejected, she hands me her copy of *Weathering with Yi*, her expression dead.

Petra: I guess I’ll take this copy then, so get it signed for me?

Pro: Oh, right.

And she slumps away, all of her previous vitality gone. I actually feel bad for her - she probably thought long and hard about what to get Prim, but all that’s gone to waste...

Iris: Um...

Iris: Is she alright?

Pro: Huh? Oh, yeah. She was gonna give this copy to Prim for her birthday, but if she already has one then, well...

Iris: Ah, that’s too bad...

Iris: Hopefully she’ll be able to find something else.

Iris glances back towards her sister, a touch of concern showing itself as she watches Prim waiting nervously.

Iris: I think I’ll join Prim again. We’ll wait for you guys before leaving, though.

Pro: Oh, alright. See you in a bit then.

Iris: Yeah, see you.

In a slight hurry, she half-walks half-trots her way to Prim, leaving me and Lilith alone.

Lilith: Um...

Lilith: You two seemed pretty familiar with each other. How do you know her?

Pro: Iris? Well...

Pro: Through Prim, I guess.

Lilith: I think I heard something about that. Something about you going with her to her practices or something.

She looks at me expectantly, her eyes asking for further elaboration.

It should be fine to give her a general overview of what happened, right?

Pro: Um...

I briefly explain everything that happened over the past few weeks, how my unlikely arrangement with Prim started and what’s happened since then. Of course, I leave out a bunch of the crucial details, though. Most of them, actually.

Lilith: So that’s the story, huh? It’s a little different than I expected.

Pro: What did you expect?

Lilith: ...

Lilith: Don’t worry about it.

Lilith asks me questions about Prim for the rest of our time in line, pausing only to watch Prim embarrassedly (but also happily) greet the manga author once it’s her turn to go up.

After what seems to be a while it eventually becomes our turn too, and Lilith and I head up to the front desk. Ms. Saito’s eyebrows raise ever so slightly when we approach, her attention directed to the girl standing to my left.

Ms. Saito: Are you alright? You look like you’ve seen a ghost...

Huh?

I look over at Lilith, my stomach dropping once I see what Ms. Saito’s talking about...

Lilith’s face is pale. Her usual cool demeanor has vanished entirely, replaced with one I can only describe as utter shock.

Lilith: ...

Lilith: I-I’m sorry, but have we met before?

Ms. Saito: Sorry, I don’t think we have.

Lilith: Oh...

Lilith takes a deep breath, trying to regain her composure.

Lilith: Sorry, I thought you were someone else.

Ms. Saito: Don’t worry about it. You actually remind me of someone I know, too.

Ms. Saito: Your hair, is it naturally blonde?

Lilith: Yeah. I’m mixed.

Ms. Saito: Hmm...

Ms. Saito: Well, it looks good on you.

Lilith: Thanks...

The misunderstanding now cleared up, Ms. Saito looks at me for the first time.

Ms. Saito: Would you like me to sign those?

Pro: Huh? Oh, yes please.

She takes the books from my hand and signs them swiftly and efficiently, as if it’s something she’s done thousands of times before. Honestly, it wouldn’t surprise me if that were the case given how popular her works are.

Pro: Thank you so much.

Ms. Saito: My pleasure. Which of my series have you read?

Pro: Huh?!? Oh, uh...

Pro: I’ve read a bunch of them, but the one I liked best was *Yi’s Lie in April.*

Ms. Saito: That’s one of my favourites too.

Ms. Saito: And you?

Lilith: Me? I don’t read manga.

Ms. Saito: Oh?

Ms. Saito: So you’re here to accompany your boyfriend, huh? Must be nice, being young.

Pro: Huh?!? U-Um, I’m not her boyfriend...

My voice comes out a few tones higher than it normally is, and I hide my face in embarrassment.

Ms. Saito: My mistake, sorry.

Ms. Saito: Well, thank you for buying my newest work. I’m looking forward to your support going forward.

Pro: Oh, yeah. Looking forward to reading it.

Taking that as our cue to leave, Lilith and I shuffle away silently, both of us not really in the mood for any more discussion.

After a bit of searching we spot Prim and Petra at the front, the former unusually cheerful and the latter awfully dejected. To my surprise, Prim isn’t fazed at all by our appearance and waves as we approach, as if she were waiting for us all along.

Pro: Hey, Prim.

Prim: Hi, Pro.

Pro: You got a signed copy too?

Prim: Yeah. I’ve wanted one for a while.

Pro: Oh, that’s good to hear.

Iris: Did you want anything else?

Iris appears from the side, seemingly out of nowhere.

Prim: Oh, um, that’s okay.

Iris: Alright.

Iris: I’m going to go for lunch with Mom and Dad then. We’ll be in the area for the rest of the day, so let us know when you’re done your karaoke session.

Huh?

Iris: If you want I can put that in the car for you.

Prim: Oh, okay. Thanks.

Iris: See you later.

Iris waves goodbye, and once she’s gone all eyes lock onto Petra, who looks away suspiciously nervously.

Lilith: I thought it was supposed to be a surprise?

Petra: Huh?!? Uh...

Petra: Sometimes it’s nice to know what’s ahead of you, right? Like sometimes it’s best to read the synopsis of a horror movie before going in so you know when all the scares are.

Lilith: ...

Petra: Hehe...

Petra: I’m sorry. I let it slip.

Pro: It’s okay, at the end of the day I don’t think it matters too much.

I turn to Prim, who’s been watching our entire exchange basically silently.

Pro: When did you find out?

Prim: Yesterday, right after school.

Pro: Ah...

Prim: I think it was my fault though, I overheard Petra talking about it with some of her friends...

Well, it was definitely Petra’s fault for discussing it in the open, but I’m not gonna point that out...

Prim: And I don’t really mind it not being a surprise.

Prim: I’m just happy that...

Prim trails off, unable to finish her sentence out of embarrassment. Moments like these remind me of how incredibly cute she is, and as she looks away my heart squeezes as if she took an arrow and shot it straight through my chest. Despite my skeptical disappointment I forgive Petra for everything she’s done and everything she will do...

But then I come back to my senses, remembering that Lilith’s also here. Charming me into submission is one thing, but Lilith...?

However, a glance in her direction tells me that Lilith has fallen as well. Her face is a lot softer than it was mere seconds ago, and even though her voice betrays a touch of impatience she successfully manages to give off an air of indifference.

Lilith: Well, I guess it’s fine. As long as you’re okay with it.

Lilith: Anyways, isn’t our reservation soon? We should get going.

Petra: Oh shoot, you’re right.

Petra: It’s not too far though, so if Madame Prim would like a complimentary drink on the way there as thanks for saving my life, that would not be out of the question...

Lilith: We can get drinks there. Unless...

Lilith: ...

Lilith: ...unless Prim wants one.

Prim: Huh?!? Uh...

Prim: It’s okay. Let’s go to the karaoke place.