**Batting Cage**

An hour later, I’ve not only bought Lilith a drink, but also fries and ice cream. After the first set was somewhat close, my competitive side got the better of me, and I challenged Lilith again but was crushed the next two times.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Um, I feel like I should apologize…

Pro: It’s alright…

Pro: It was my fault for getting cocky.

Lilith: No, I mean…

Lilith (neutral expressionless): I went easy on you the first time, and I think you got the wrong idea and challenged me again.

Pro: Geh…

Pro: That’s evil…

Lilith: Well…

Lilith (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Thanks for the food, I guess.

Lilith (drinking\_soda satisfied):

Lilith starts to enjoy her winnings while I mourn my wallet.

Lilith (drinking\_soda neutral):

Pro: Still though, you’re pretty impressive, huh?

Lilith (neutral confused\_slightly):

Lilith looks at me, a little confused.

Pro: Oh, like…

Pro: It’s really impressive how you were able to hit over half of the balls.

Lilith (neutral neutral): Oh. Thanks.

Pro: You were also pretty amazing yesterday as well.

Lilith (neutral confused\_slightly): Yesterday?

Lilith (neutral surprise):

Pro: Yeah, when you hit that home run.

Lilith (neutral embarrassed): You were watching...?

Realizing the implications of what I just said, I try to smooth things over.

Pro: Oh, I wasn’t like stalking you guys or anything. I just happened to pass by…

Lilith (neutral sigh):

She eyes me carefully, before letting out a sigh.

Lilith (neutral neutral): I’ve been here a lot and played a lot of baseball, so it gets easier over time. Most professionals are able to hit every ball that comes out of a pitching machine effortlessly, you know.

Pro: Really? Wait, then why do most players only get one or two hits a game?

Lilith: It only counts as a hit if they get on base. And also, the pitcher can decide to throw a variety of different pitches, while the machine can only throw a fastball.

Pro: Oh, that makes sense.

Lilith (drinking\_soda neutral):

I lean back, wondering what it’d be like to be a professional athlete. Must be nice, being able to make a living off a sport.

Pro: Do you wanna be a professional?

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Lilith shakes her head.

Lilith: When I was little I wanted to. Not anymore, though.

Pro: Oh, I see.

I try to imagine Lilith as a daydreaming child, but after a few moments I give up.

Pro: Who got you into baseball? Was it your parents, or…?

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly): Um…

Lilith: …

Lilith (neutral neutral): Yeah.

Lilith (stretching stretching):

All of a sudden she stands up, stretches, and reaches for her rental bat.

Lilith (holding\_bat neutral): I think I’m gonna try to get a few more rounds in. You wanna do some more, too?

Pro: Oh, I think I’m done for the day. You go ahead.

Lilith: Alright.

Lilith (exit):

She heads towards the machines, and I watch as she starts hitting again. For some reason, though, she seems a little different this time around, and even though she hits ball after ball, it feels like she isn’t really into it.

Maybe she’s just a little tired. Or maybe it’s just me.

**Riverside**

After half an hour or so, Lilith puts her bat away with an exhausted but satisfied look and we head back. Despite my earlier misgivings, she seems to be in a good mood. I think.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_slightly): Thanks for coming along with me. I had a lot of fun.

Remembering what Petra told me earlier today, I smile in spite of myself.

Pro: I had a lot of fun too. Although…

Pro: …losing all those bets wasn’t too enjoyable.

Lilith (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Well, that was kinda your fault.

Pro: Yeah, yeah…

Lilith (stretching yawning):

Lilith stretches her arms in the air, letting out a contented sigh.

Lilith (neutral satisfied): I did pretty well today. Although it would’ve been nice to use my own bat.

Pro: Oh yeah, you mentioned that you weren’t gonna use it. Why not?

Lilith (neutral neutral): Kari told me not to. Said it’d be weird if I brought it.

Pro: I guess that makes sense.

Lilith: Yeah.

We pass by the bridge, but this time I don’t pay it much attention. Even though it was definitely strange, what happened last week was probably a coincidence.

Lilith (neutral curious): What are you gonna do when we get back? Go home?

Pro: Yeah, probably. Did you wanna do something else?

Lilith (neutral neutral): Sorry, but I think I’m gonna go meet up with the others.

Pro: Oh, I see. You guys are really close, huh?

Lilith: I guess.

Lilith (neutral embarrassed): That reminds me, this Saturday…

Lilith: Um…

I look over at Lilith, who to my surprise seems a little fidgety.

Lilith (neutral embarrassed\_blushing): This Saturday, we have a game. Do you wanna come watch?

Saturday, huh? Mara’s dispirited face suddenly appears in my mind. Sure, I’m gonna hang out with her tomorrow, but will that be enough?

“Sure, I’ll go.” **OR** “Sorry, I might have something that day."

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But then again, if she found out that I turned down Lilith to make her feel better, she’d probably feel even worse…

Lilith (neutral sigh):

Pro: Sure, I’ll go. What time and where?

Lilith (neutral embarrassed\_slightly): 1:00 at Yi High.

Yi High. I think that’s the same distance from my place to school, except in the other direction.

Lilith (neutral relief):

Pro: Alright, sounds good.

Lilith (exit):

We talk about her upcoming game for the rest of the way back, and eventually we reach the plaza that her teammates are at. After bidding me goodbye, Lilith goes off to join them, and I make my way home.

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Pro: Sorry, I might have something that day.

Lilith (neutral disappointed): Oh, I see.

Lilith: That’s fine, don’t worry about it.

As much as I want to go, I know that my priority right now should be Mara, and nothing else. Even if I make new friends and meet new people, she’s the one person that should never come second.

Lilith (exit):

Lilith and I make small talk about her upcoming game for the rest of the way back, and eventually we reach the plaza that her teammates are at. After bidding me goodbye, she goes off to join them, and I make my way home.

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