**Home Station**

After fooling around at my place for a bit, Asher and I headed over to the café Petra told us to be. It’s the same place that I’ve met up with her both yesterday and the day before, but for some reason the storefront seems much, much more daunting today.

The other two guys are already there when we arrive, and, predictably, I don’t know either of them. They seem friendly enough though, and they greet us as we approach.

??? (Brad): Hey there. How’ve you been?

Asher (neutral smiling): Not bad. You?

??? (Brad): Pretty good.

He turns to me, and I tense up automatically. Like Asher, it’s pretty obvious that he’s popular and confident, but unlike Asher he’s completely unknown to me.

??? (Brad): You’re the other guy? I’m Brad.

??? (Chad): I’m Chad.

I try to reply, but my answer gets caught in my throat. Thankfully Asher is there to save the day.

Asher (neutral smiling): This is Pro. Sorry, he’s a little shy.

Pro: Hey there…

Brad: Hey. You go to Yi Secondary too?

Pro: Yeah. You guys too?

Brad: No, we go to a different school. Yi High.

Yi High. I think I’ve heard about it, but I’m not too sure.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Lilith (neutral neutral):

We’re interrupted by the arrival of Petra and the others, who’ve just arrived.

Petra (waving smile): Hey there!

Brad: Hey Petra. It’s been a while.

Petra (neutral grin): Since middle school, right? I was really surprised when you messaged me all of a sudden.

Brad: You were surprised? When I saw that photo of you, I couldn’t believe my-

Petra (neutral yelling): Ah-

She cuts him off before he could finish his sentence, apparently determined to keep her dark past away from us.

Brad: Sorry about that…I forgot.

Petra (neutral sweat\_smile): Don’t worry about it.

Petra (exit):

While they continue to catch up, I turn to Lilith, who notices me as well.

Lilith (neutral curious): You’re here, huh?

Pro: Hey Lilith. You got shanghaied into coming too, huh?

Lilith (neutral disappointed):

She nods, looking defeated.

Pro: Well, let’s get through this then.

Lilith: Yeah.

We make small talk until Petra finishes talking with her friends and calls for us, telling us that we can go inside now. I pause before following the others inside, and after a brief moment of hesitation I hold my breath and head inside.

**Café**

It actually doesn’t turn out to be too bad. I chose a seat at the end of the table across from Lilith, who also doesn’t look too keen on socializing, and after introducing ourselves we mainly just eat, letting the others talk amongst themselves.

It seems that Brad and Chad are pretty happy with the people that Petra brought, and after a few minutes of listening in I notice that Kari and Sara seem pretty interested too. Well, they seem pretty interested, but based on what Asher told me earlier they probably aren’t.

I kinda feel bad for the other two guys – if I were in their place, I’d probably definitely fall head over heels.

Lilith (neutral worried\_slightly):

Lilith: What’s wrong? You look a little red.

I realize that I’ve started to blush a little, embarrassed about my current train of thought.

Pro: Uh, nothing. Just a little hot I guess.

Lilith: I see.

Lilith (neutral neutral):

She reaches over for a pitcher of water and hands it to me.

Lilith: Here.

Pro: Oh, thanks.

Lilith (drinking\_soda neutral):

I pour myself a glass and periodically take sips to both cool down. Lilith follows suit, and for a while we silently half-listen to the others discussing their schools, lives, and whatever else cool kids like to talk about these days. It’s a little boring, but at least the food’s pretty good.

I wonder if one day I’ll attend a mixer voluntarily, looking for someone to meet and potentially date. It’s not that I haven’t thought about those kinds of things, but when I do the idea of having a girlfriend seems almost fantastical.

It’s not that I don’t want a girlfriend, but at some point I’d probably have to choose between spending time with her and spending time with Mara. And as of now, I think I’d probably choose Mara. She means so much to me, and I probably wouldn’t be able to choose a life where she slowly disappears into the background.

I stir around the ice cubes in my drink before taking another sip, realizing that I’ve been lost in my thoughts for a while. A little disoriented, I make an attempt to rejoin the conversation. Or to continue listening to the conversation.

Brad: You’re still playing baseball?

Petra (neutral smile): Yup. Do you guys still play?

Chad: Ah, we quit a while ago.

Petra (neutral smile): Oh, that’s too bad.

Petra (neutral smug): Actually, we’re all from the baseball team at our school.

Brad: Really? What positions do you guys play?

Kari: Ah, we’re all benchwarmers…

Kari: Well, except for Lilith. She starts.

Now interested, he turns to Lilith.

Petra (exit):

Lilith (neutral neutral):

Brad: That’s pretty impressive. What position do you play?

Lilith (neutral icy): …

Lilith: Outfield.

I glance at Asher, who chuckles a little nervously. Honestly, I was worried that she might not respond…

Brad: I played outfield back in middle school too.

Lilith (neutral annoyed):

He continues to ask Lilith questions, despite Petra, Kari, and Sara’s attempts to change the topic. Lilith takes it well at first, but as he continues to press on it becomes more and more obvious that she’s becoming more and more annoyed…

Lilith (neutral annoyed\_really):

Finally, apparently unable to take it anymore, she stands up abruptly.

Lilith: Sorry, washroom.

Brad: Wait, hold on…

He reaches out and grabs Lilith’s hand…

**Cutscene**

*Crash noise*

Angered, Lilith pushes him away and throws her cup at him, hitting him squarely in the face and soaking him and his friend.

Lilith: …

Lilith: I’m leaving.

Kari: Wait, Lilith-

She grabs her bag and heads towards the exit. Instinctively I reach out my hands towards her…

…but she slaps it away.

Lilith: …

After pausing for a moment, she turns around and leaves, and I sink back into my chair, stunned. Around me is commotion – Kari and Sara go after Lilith, Petra calls for her to come back, Asher is trying to calm everyone down…

But everything is muffled, as if I were underwater.

All I feel is my stinging hand and a horrible, sinking feeling in my chest.