

Moments III: Post Office

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Moments of the relationship of high schoolers Lily Andrews and Jake Harrison.

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Lily was standing in line at the post office behind an elderly woman with a pink and white striped sweater, holding the most important envelope she had ever held when she heard the soft tinkle of the bell and felt the breeze at her back as the door swung open and someone stepped inside. She read the text on the envelope for the thousandth time, contemplating her decision, but never doubting it. She knew what she had to do, but she had no idea how to go about it. She was so lost in thought that she did not hear the very familiar clearing of a throat from three feet behind her.

Only when she felt a tap on her shoulder did she turn around, expecting to see the face of someone asking to use a pen or to move over so they could reach the shipping boxes. But instead of a face, she saw a broad expanse of dark gray. Looking up, she saw the familiar neck, jaw, cheekbones and blue eyes of Jake Harrison, the boy who had stomped on her heart time and time again without even knowing it was there, before his feet, waiting to be picked up and carried away.

"Yes? Can I help you?" Lily was appropriately curt. Inwardly, she knew she had forgiven him for everything he had done to her as soon as he reached out and tapped her shoulder. One proactive movement was all it took for her to feel a rush of happiness instead of dread when she recognized him. But far be it from her to open herself so vulnerably again. Or, at least, to let him know that she had.

"Lily, look. I need to talk to you. Can we talk?" He had the look on his face that she had always imagined: pleading, smiling, and more than a little regretful. Lily wanted nothing more than to talk to him, to fix things, but she had resolved to allow him to do all of the talking this time, to make him say how he truly felt before she showed him.

"I need to send this. It's kind of important- my college forms? So can it wait?"

"Oh...which college?" Jake knew the decision that had faced her in terms of where she would go- it was either with him, on the same campus, or across the country, where her family would then move, taking her away from him forever.

"I don't think that's any of your concern. We aren't anything to each other any more, just the way you wanted it, remember?"

"But Lily, I need to know. And there's something I need you to know too. And it can't wait until you send that envelope." With that, Jake grabbed her elbow and used his far superior strength to drag her to the back of the store as the three other people in line watched with wide eyes and intently curious looks.

"Jake, let go." Lily had been determined to be relaxed and mature about the situation, but tears had sprung to her eyes and she had slipped into a cold fury at his audacity, his assumption that he did not need to apologize for what he had done. Or, as the case was, what he had not done.

"Look, I just need to talk to you. Just give me five minutes, I-"

"No, Jake. You've had more than five minutes. You've had an entire year, and nothing. So excuse me if I have more important things to do than listen to you." She turned away from him so he could not see her wiping her tears furiously and got back in line, biting back a remark about him making her lose her place and waste her time.

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"Lily, I'm sorry." It was a whisper, as nervous as she had ever heard him, and it was all she needed to hear. Turning around, she stared him straight in the face, squaring her shoulders to face him.

"What did you say?"

"I'm sorry. For everything. For hurting you, for ending our friendship. I can't explain what happened, because I don't know. But I just need you to know it was never your fault. It was me... my own issues. I know I messed it up, and I understand if you aren't ready to forgive me. Just know, I really want to mean something to each other again."

Lily let her tears fall freely this time, because she was no longer afraid. No longer hurt, no longer angry. Happiness flooded her veins and it was all she could do not to throw herself at him into a tight embrace.

"Oh, and you think that makes it all better?" Her tone gave away the fact that, indeed, it had made everything better. Jake picked up immediately. His shoulders sagged with a release of the tension he had been carrying. His black eyes lit up and turned her favorite light but soft blue shade as his dimples emerged in her favorite smile.

"Well, you know, I am kind of a big deal, Lil." He used her least favorite abbreviation of her name, knowing that she would swat his arm, and wanting nothing more than to feel her hand against it.

"Oh, stop." She did just what he expected, and he took his chance to grab hold of her arm and pull her into a hug that made both of them feel the best they had felt in months. Lily's arms went as far around him as they could, and she rested her forehead against his chest as he cleared his throat again as he remembered the most important part of this mission.

"But you forgave me too easily."

"What?"

"I had this next part ready to go... pretend to still be mad."

"Okay..." She stepped away from him and pursed her lips as best she could over her smile.

"That was so unconvincing, Lily. You can do better- you took theater, remember?"

"You're going to choose right now to criticize my acting? You'll take what you can get, Jakey."

"I will ignore that blatant attack at my masculinity and continue. So, assuming you're still mad... wait, cross your arms." She did.

"Better. Okay. Lily, you have to know why I chose to apologize a year after you started to hate me. Now ask me why."

"Okay... Why?"

"It's because I know you have to decide between two schools. And I know which one will make it so I probably will never see you again. But you can't choose that one."

Lily said nothing, unable to do anything but smile up at hearing the words she had always wanted to hear from this boy that she had known for years, who had been the most constant thought she had thought since meeting

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him.

"Ask me why not. Jeez, Lily, work with me here."

"Sorry...why not?"

"Be madder."

"Why not?"

"Because... I need you. I realized that never seeing you would be so much worse than going to school every day and never speaking, which was pretty bad. I need to see you, because I need you to slowly fall in love with me. Like I've fallen in love with you."

Lily's quiet sobs exploded, and her shoulders heaved with her crying. Jake stood there, expectant as she composed herself to respond. She needed no direction this time.

"But I already have..." She looked up at him, unable to finish the sentence for her nerves. He just smiled knowingly, a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"I know. Emily told me when I called to ask where you were. She wanted me to make sure I told you she was very stern with me before she caved, though. So don't be too mad."

Lily laughed, sniffing and wiping her eyes. "Okay, I'll be sure to not speak to her for the next 29 years instead of 30."

"So... can I see the envelope now?"

"Oh, I guess so. I think I had faith in you," Lily said as she showed Jake the envelope. "PRINCETON UNIVERSITY" was written neatly in her handwriting on the address line.

"I was hoping you would," Jake said with a rush of excitement and emotion as he swept her into another embrace, this time lifting her up off the floor, both laughing together.

Jake felt a soft tap on his shoulder, and put Lily on the floor, just then remembering where they were. He looked down to see a wiry man with thinning red hair and glasses staring nervously at Lily with his hand outstretched.

"I'd love to send that envelope for you dear, free of charge," he smiled knowingly at the both of them, and took the envelope from Lily's hand.

"Thank you!" Lily and Jake said in unison as they left the post office, holding hands.

Lily Andrews and Jake Harrison both knew what they had found.

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