



Lilac, 16

I met Lilac while she was working at a fast-food restaurant.

What have you been doing this week?

Swimming. I'm on the school swim team and we just won conference.* First place! It's like the third most intense meet* of the whole season, and we won.

What's happening at school?

We just had exams, midterms,* and it was crazy.* Now I have SATs* coming up and I've got to take SATs classes.

Is there anything else coming up?

My birthday is in two months and I'll be seventeen and I'm going to buy a car. It's an 89 Toyota with four wheel drive and 33x12.50 tires and four-inch lifters and a roll bar.* I have to pay for it myself. I have to pay for the insurance, which is expensive, but I don't mind. I work and I've been saving for it.

Do you like working here?

I get paid to smile and talk to people. I like this job. It's fun. The bosses train us to do second mile* service. They teach us the best ways to talk to the customers. We have to say, "How may I serve you?" not "Can I help you?" and when we carry something for our customer we always say, "I'll carry this for you" not "May I carry this for you?" because people don't like to ask for help.

What are you looking forward to this year?

Well, next year I have to make some big decisions. After high school I might train to be a CNA* and an EMT* and join the Air Force, or I could commit to the Army and they would pay for me to train as a nurse. Right now I'm an explorer at the Fire Academy, where we learn about being a firefighter and an EMT. I get to ride along on the rescue and fire trucks and learn what they do.

Is there anything you'd like to say to kids in other countries?

Hey! What's up?*

A Few Words

Conference: A group of schools that compete against each other in sports.

Meet: Swimming competitions are usually called meets.

Midterms: Tests that happen in the middle of a school term. Tests at the end of the term are called finals.

Crazy: Young people often say "crazy" when they mean "very busy, lots of work to do."

SAT: A very important test for students who want to go to university. SAT stands for Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Lifters and roll bar: This equipment and very big tires allow the car to travel on very bad roads or places without roads.

Second mile: The phrase "second mile" means doing more than you have to. It comes from a saying of Jesus when he taught that we should help other people, including people that we don't like. Sometimes the phrase is "go the extra mile."

CNA: Certified Nursing Assistant

EMT: Emergency Medical Technician

What's up?: This is the usual way that young Americans say hello to each other. It means "What is happening? How are you?"

Discussion Questions

1. Lilac is working and saving her money so that she can buy a car, and she knows exactly the kind of car that she wants. What would you like to buy? (Please describe it very clearly.) Why do you want to buy it?
2. Lilac seems to want a very active life, and she wants to do work that only men did in the past. Does this seem good to you? Do you think that working in the Army, the Air Force, or the fire department would be a good career for her? For you? Why?