**Classroom**

Asher is waiting for me when I get back to class, and he observes me in mild confusion as I dejectedly start to eat my lunch.

Pro: Hey.

Asher (neutral concern): What happened to you…?

Pro: Am I like, creepy, or something?

Asher (neutral curious): Not really. Why do you ask?

Pro: No reason. Just wondering.

Asher (exit):

We pass the rest of our remaining free time discussing a new game that came out next week, but eventually, lunch ends and is replaced with class. After struggling to keep my eyes open for around half an hour I give in to my desires and start to doze off.

Teacher (arms\_crossed stern): Pro?

I jolt upwards, almost jumping out of my seat. Beside me, I hear Asher suppressing a laugh.

Pro: Oh, uh, yeah?

Teacher (arms\_crossed menacing): I was just making sure you weren’t sleeping in class again. After all, since we just talked about that yesterday, you wouldn’t dream of it, right?

Pro: Yes, that’s right.

Teacher (arms\_crossed sigh):

She sighs.

Teacher (neutral disappointed): Alright. Let’s continue then.

Teacher (exit):

That was close. If she called my name five seconds later, I would’ve been asleep already and probably wouldn’t have heard her. What would’ve happened afterwards is something I don’t want to think about.

Unsurprisingly, I manage to stay awake for the rest of the school day, and when Ms. Tran dismisses us I get up to stretch.

Asher (neutral smirk): That was close, wasn’t it?

Pro: Too close…

Asher (neutral smiling): At least you weren’t asleep yet.

Pro: Yeah…

Asher (neutral neutral):

Asher starts to pack up his things.

Asher (neutral curious): You going straight home?

Pro: Probably. How about you?

Asher (neutral thoughtful): Some of us are gonna go grab something to eat. I’d invite you, but I don’t think you’d accept.

I appreciate that Asher is trying to look out for me, but the idea of going out with a bunch of popular kids doesn’t sit well with me.

Pro: Yeah, I wouldn’t.

Asher (neutral disappointed): I see.

Asher (waving smiling): Well I better get going. I’ll see you later, okay?

Asher (exit):

Asher leaves the classroom, and shortly after I pack my bags and leave as well. What will I do when I get home today?

Probably nothing.

**Front of School**

However, as I leave school, an interruption to my plans appears in the form of Mara.

Mara (waving smiling\_eyes\_closed): Hello!

Mara (neutral smiling): You’re on time for once.

Pro: You know…

Pro: I’m sometimes late in the morning, but when it comes to leaving school that’s another story.

Mara (neutral pensive): Of course. As expected from you.

Pro: What’s that supposed to mean?

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe. Nothing.

Mara (excited excited): Anyways, let’s do something today!

Pro: We did something yesterday, though.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I know.

She excitedly grabs me by the arm and pulls me along.

Pro: Where are we even going?

Mara: You’ll see when we get there.

**Riverside**

Once she’s certain that I won’t get away, Mara let’s go of my arm and we walk along the riverside.

It’s strange how different the scenery is here compared to the rest of the region. Most of it is clean, bright, and friendly, but along the river the streets are dirty, the buildings are old, and a grey gloominess seems to always hang in the air.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed):

None of this seems to bother Mara, however, who happily hums to herself as we walk. I wonder if she even notices how derelict this area is.

Pro: Are we there yet?

Mara: Soon, soon! I promise.

We keep walking, and after a few minutes, we reach the bridge that connects both sides of the river.

**Bridge**

As I glance at the rows of steel wires that stretch across the bridge, the distant roar of crashing waves grows louder…

It’s too loud.

The air thickens, and I clutch at my chest, unable to breathe...

Mara (neutral worried): Pro?

Mara grabs my shoulder, and all of a sudden the feeling passes and I’m able to breathe normally again. What was that?

Mara: Are you okay?

Pro: Yeah, I’m fine.

Mara concernedly looks into my eyes, and I feel a bit of guilt for making her worry about me.

Pro: Don’t worry about it, I’m fine. Really.

Mara: ...

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): Alright then.

Mara (exit):

Eventually, Mara forgets about my sudden spasm and starts to hum cheerfully again, and as we continue on our way I manage to push it to the back of my mind as well.