**Home Station**

I hurry to the station, finding Mara waiting at the front. Trying to get off the hook even a little bit, I sprint the last bit, trying to make myself seem as exhausted as possible.

Mara (arms\_crossed put\_out):

Pro: Hey…Mara…

Mara: You have some nerve making me wait half an hour, especially after I told you not to be late.

Pro: Sorry, sorry…

Pro: Had to deal with some things.

Mara: …

Mara (arms\_crossed hmph): You look awfully happy for someone who had to deal with some things.

Pro: Do I?

Mara’s right. Being able to make up with Lilith put me in a good mood, and apparently my relief shows on my face.

Mara (arms\_crossed put\_out):

Pro: Well, I wouldn’t exactly say I’m happy…

Pro: More like relieved. Actually, I guess I’m pretty happy too.

Mara: Hmm…

Mara (neutral sigh): Well, I’m glad things worked out then.

Mara (neutral neutral): Are you hungry?

Pro: Um…

Pro: Not really, to be honest. I ate a lot.

Mara (neutral skeptical): You knew we were eating sushi, and you ate a lot?

Pro: Um, yeah.

Mara stares incredulously at me for a few moments.

Mara (neutral sigh): Well, more for me. I’ll gladly help you finish anything.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Let’s go eat!

**Sushi Restaurant**

One bus ride later I find myself following Mara into a sushi restaurant I’ve never been to before. How does she keep finding all of these places?

Mara (neutral curious): Apparently this place is really good. I’ve never been before, though.

We take our seats and browse through menus, taking our time deciding what we wanna eat. If I recall correctly, Mara said she’d pay, but looking at the prices of each item…

Mara (neutral neutral): Hey.

Mara: Do you wanna share a big platter?

Pro: Hm?

Pro: Let’s see…

Mara (excited excited): The 50-piece one looks really good.

I take a look, instinctively cringing at the price.

Pro: Uh…

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Don’t worry, I’ll pay today. I brought my wallet, see?

Mara (neutral neutral):

She reaches for her bag and rummages around in it.

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): I…brought it…

Mara (neutral expressionless): …

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): How much do you have on you?

Pro: …

I take out my wallet, finding with a mixture of relief and reluctance that I barely have enough for what Mara wants to order.

Pro: Just enough.

Mara (neutral sigh): Phew…

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): I’ll pay you back another time.

Pro: It’s fine don’t wo-

Mara (neutral neutral): No.

Mara: It’s nice and all that you’re willing to pay for everything…

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): …but at least once in a while let me spoil you too, okay?

Pro: Alright, alright.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Doesn’t really feel like you’re treating me though since I’m the one dishing out cash…

Mara (neutral bashful): I’ll pay you back, though…

Pro: I’m joking, I’m joking.

Mara (neutral pout):

I start laughing at the look on Mara’s face, causing her to pout more.

Mara: You know, sometimes you…

Mara (neutral sigh):

She lets out a sigh, which causes me to laugh more.

Mara (neutral bashful): Seriously…

Mara: You’re something else, aren’t you?

Pro: Yup, yup. That’s right.

Mara (neutral neutral):

I flag down a waiter and place our order, and after he leaves we sip on tea to pass the time.

Mara (neutral curious): So? Are you gonna tell me what happened? How was your mixer?

Pro: Um…

Pro: Well it started off pretty well.

I explain everything that happened to Mara, starting from when Asher and I arrived at the café to when I found Lilith at the park. Mara is a good listener as always, intently soaking in every detail I tell her.

Mara (neutral thinking): ...

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): I find it a little odd how you somehow managed to bring me up in your conversation, though…

Pro: It kinda just came out.

Mara (neutral expressionless): I see…

Mara (neutral bashful): …

Mara: Was I really that bossy?

Pro: Huh? Ah…

Slowly realizing my mistake, I try to come up with an honest but flattering response.

Pro: You were…

Pro: …but in a good way.

Mara (neutral pout): What’s that even supposed to mean? Can someone be bossy in a good way?

Geh.

Pro: Well, I mean…

Pro: Sure we basically did whatever you wanted to do, but I still had a lotta fun.

Mara (neutral bashful): …

Mara (arms\_crossed put\_out): Failing grade.

Pro: Huh…?

Mara (arms\_crossed hmph): You were close, but not quite there. Try again next time.

Pro: Yes ma’am.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Mara lightly karate chops my head.

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): Well, it looks like you’ve been through a lot today.

Pro: Yeah. You wouldn’t believe how worried I was…

Mara (neutral smiling):

To my surprise, Mara smiles unexpectedly.

Pro: Oi. Why are you enjoying my distress?

Mara: Oh, it’s just that…

Pro: That?

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’m glad there’s someone else you care so deeply about. That’s all.

Pro: Oh.

Mara (neutral earnest): But I’m still the most important. Got it?

Pro: Yup, yup.

Mara (excited excited):

Mara spots the waiter coming out of the kitchen, and sure enough, a few moments later we’re interrupted by an incoming sushi platter. Putting our conversation on hold, we start to dig in without further ado.