**Cutscene - Riverside Talk**

Twenty minutes later we find ourselves sitting by the river, watching the water flow by as the sun sets.

Mara: Wow, it’s so pretty.

Mara’s right. For some reason I’ve recently been getting a bad feeling around this area, but I can’t deny that today it looks beautiful.

Pro: Yeah.

For a little while longer we watch the sun dip towards the horizon, tinting the sky a delicate orange.

Mara: So…

Mara: Something happened yesterday, right?

Pro: Um…

Pro: Yeah.

Mara: I feel like we’ve known this intuitively since we were kids, but I’ll say it anyways.

Mara: You’ll feel better if you share.

Pro: I’m pretty sure I said that to someone recently and instantly regretted it.

Mara doesn’t respond, prompting me to go on.

Pro: Yesterday…

Pro: Lilith didn’t seem normal. She looked like she was hiding something, and she wore this headband.

Pro: After discussing it with some of our mutual friends, we decided that I should go and talk to her about it, to try and see what was going on.

Pro: So after school I found her and asked to talk, and we did but…

I take a deep breath, trying to loosen my tightening chest.

Pro: After a while I managed to persuade her to tell me what happened. She took of her headband, and…

Pro: …

Pro: …there was a bruise there. She told me about her family, and how it was her father that…

^$screen\_darken

I trail off, unable to go on. I can’t breathe, as if I were underwater…

Mara: Pro.

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Mara: It’s alright, you don’t have to tell me the rest.

Pro: No…

Pro: I feel like I have to.

After a gulp of air I continue on.

Pro: She told me to forget about her, that it’d be better for both of us that way. And then she left. I knew if she left she probably wouldn’t come back, but I couldn’t do anything but watch…

Mara: And you regret that.

I nod.

Mara: I see.

Pro: I know I should’ve done something, anything, but I couldn’t. I just couldn’t, and now I won’t ever see her again. Now she’ll be stuck with her dad, and-

Mara: Pro. Look at me.

I stop, startled by Mara’s sudden assertiveness.

After a pause to make sure I’m focusing on her, she takes a few steps out, appreciating the painted sky for a few seconds before speaking again.

Mara: A while ago, whenever I saw a sunset I’d get the urge to take a picture, but every time it would turn out to be a lot less beautiful than the original.

Mara: So now whenever I see a sunset I stop to appreciate it, knowing that even if I were able to take the perfect picture, looking at a photo just isn’t the same as looking at the real thing.

Mara: I think life’s like that too. Sometimes we get so caught up with the past that we can’t look ahead. We look back so much that we forget to see what’s in front of us.

Mara: Today I got that feeling from you. It seems like you’re trapped in the past, that you can’t get over something.

Mara: It’s good to reflect, but not to the point where you can’t look forward. Saying things like “I should’ve” or “I could’ve” doesn’t change anything that’s already happened. No matter how much we wish things were different, we can’t change the past.

Pro: Mara…

Mara: But we can change the future. Instead of thinking about past regrets, it might be good for you to think about things you can do.

Mara: Whether that be trying to support Lilith, respecting what she wanted and doing your best to forget her and live life to the fullest, or something else, whatever choice you make will help you to move on, help your life continue to flow.

Mara pauses for a moment, turning back to me while she considers her words.

Mara: It makes me happy, you know. To see you agonize over someone this much. It shows how much you’ve grown to care for them, how much you cherish them.

Mara: And honestly, I think I’d be fine with whatever decision you make.

Mara: But I think that whatever you choose to do, do what you believe is right. Then, even if things turn out badly you can at least live knowing that you thought about and chose this path, doing your utmost to do what’s best for everyone.

Mara: And if things actually don’t turn out well…

Mara: …

Mara: Well, if it comes to that, you can cry on my shoulder.

Mara: So? What will you do?

Pro: I’ll…

Support Lilith **OR** Respect her wishes

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Pro: I’ll support Lilith.

Pro: Even if it makes it hurt more, even if everything goes wrong in the end…

Pro: I want to help her. To see her smile genuinely again. I know it’s selfish, but that’s what I think I should do.

Mara: I see.

Mara: …

Mara: See? That wasn’t so hard, was it?

Pro: I dunno. It was pretty hard.

She laughs and ruffles my hair gently.

Mara: Well, good on you for sticking it out.

Mara: So? What’s your plan?

Pro: I’m, uh…

Mara:

Pro: I’m still working on that.

Mara: Really…?

Pro: I apologize for my brain’s poor processing ability.

Mara: I’m just joking. Take your time to think it through.

Pro: Yeah.

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Pro: I’ll respect her wishes.

Pro: In the end, I don’t think I’ll be able to do much, and desperately trying to hold Lilith back will probably hurt her more.

Mara: I see.

Mara: …

Mara: If that’s your decision, then I’ll stand by it.

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