**Burger Emperor**

Half an hour later I find myself with a tray holding two sets of hamburgers, fries, and drinks. Mara waves at me from the table she secured, and as I sit down she swipes a fry and not-so-sneakily sticks it in her mouth.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed):

Pro: Can’t even wait, huh?

Mara (neutral tongue):

Instead of responding, she sticks out her tongue and swipes another one, prompting me to sigh.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: So anyways…

Pro: How’d you get so good at all these games?

Mara (neutral curious): Hm?

Mara (excited earnest): Hard work!

Mara (excited neutral): You just don’t study games enough, Pro.

Pro: So basically, you’ve been playing games instead of doing school.

Mara (neutral expressionless): That’s a pretty boring way of putting it.

Mara (neutral skeptical): And I don’t wanna hear that from someone perpetually stuck in supplementary classes.

Pro: That’s fair…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: And besides, I’m pretty sure I play more games than you do though…

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Mara: Maybe I’m just naturally talented.

Mara (neutral smiling):

I let out another sigh.

Pro: We’re the same age, grew up in the same environment, had the same education…

Pro: How is it that our abilities are so different?

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Cheer up, you have your good points too.

Mara (neutral smiling): Like…

Mara: …

Mara (neutral thinking): …

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): You’re nice?

Pro: Why do you sound so unsure…?

Mara (laughing laughing):

Mara bursts out laughing, and I dejectedly reach out to grab a few fries.

Mara (laughing recovering):

Pro: How’s school for you, though?

Mara (neutral curious):

Mara looks up in the middle of taking a bite out of her hamburger.

Mara: Hm?

Pro: I mean, your program’s a lot tougher than mine, with a lot more competition. How are you managing? Are you getting along with your classmates?

Mara (neutral neutral): Oh.

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): I’m doing fine, don’t worry, don’t worry.

She avoids my gaze, apparently having found something interesting about her burger.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Mara...

When you brush things off like that, I can’t help but worry you know.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Never mind that.

Mara (excited excited): I wanna know about you and Prim!

Pro: ...

Pro: Huh?

Mara: You guys are getting closer, right?

Pro: I mean…

Pro: Isn’t that to be expected? Since I’m going with her to practice and everything.

Pro: And besides, I feel like we’ve talked about it extensively already.

Mara (neutral neutral): Well, you know…

Mara (neutral pensive): Our little Pro has grown up. He’s no longer the scrawny shrimp he once was, and he’s making friends, hanging out with new people...and with a girl like her too.

She dramatically wipes an imaginary tear from her eye.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed)): I’m so proud.

Pro: …

Pro: Thanks…?

Mara (neutral fufu):

She leans in to whisper something, and I immediately tense up.

Mara: I won’t let you forget about me, though.

Her breath tickles my ear, sending multiple shudders down my body.

Pro: S-Seriously, what’s gotten into you today…?

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

And instead of answering she returns her focus back to her meal, choosing to leave the reasoning behind her behaviour a mystery.