**Dream Sequence**

The wind howls, rushing through my ears.

I try to look around, to regain my bearings, but everything’s a blur of colours and light. My stomach lurches as I tumble through nothingness faster and faster...

...until everything is dark.

**Bedroom**

My eyes snap open, and after a brief moment I realize that I’m looking at my bedroom ceiling, which is dimly lit up by the faint morning light.

Pro: ...

Pro: The same dream, huh…

As my panic subsides, I start to notice a tinge of curiosity in the back of my mind.

It’s strange. Having the same dream several times, each time feeling more real than the last…

I roll over, trying to remember anything that would have prompted them. Maybe I actually did fall off a bridge in my previous life.

But then my curiosity is replaced again by panic when I pick up my phone, checking the time.

Now is not the time to be contemplating my past existence. Now is the time to get out the door as soon as I can.

**Front of House**

After pushing myself out of bed and rushing to put everything together, I stumble my way outside, grabbing a piece of toast and stuffing it in my mouth on my way out.

Mara (waving happy): Morning!!

Mara (neutral curious):

Pro: Hey there...

I hunch over, trying to catch my breath and swallow the rest of my food at the same time.

Mara: You just wake up? Your hair is…

Mara (neutral pensive): …

Mara (neutral hehe): ...more artistic than usual.

Mara (neutral smiling):

Pro: Yeah, well…

I straighten up, trying to think up a retort.

Pro: I was feeling a bit creative today.

Mara (neutral curious): Is that so?

Mara (patting\_head smiling\_eyes\_closed):

Without hesitation she reaches up and fiddles with my hair, a gleeful smile stuck onto her face.

Mara: Nothing a little rearranging can’t fix.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Quelling my artistic expression, huh…?

Mara (neutral thinking): I wouldn’t exactly say that. I left a little bit of bedhead for you.

Mara (neutral neutral): You wouldn’t feel the same without at least a little bit, you know.

Pro: Yup, yup that’s right…

Pro: My only defining character trait is that I have perpetually messy hair.

Mara (arms\_crossed pensive):

Mara nods sagely.

Mara: That’s right. It’s always important for characters to know their roles in the story, especially the minor ones.

Pro: I’m a minor character now…?

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Mara (neutral neutral): Well, I’m probably a minor character too.

Mara (neutral thinking): And right now, our role is to go to school so that the scene with the protagonist walking to school can have other students in the background.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): So let’s go!

**Neighbourhood Road 1**

Mara doesn’t say much at first, but it’s pretty obvious what she’s thinking. Even though she tries to hide behind a hastily-donned mask of defiance she can’t fully erase all hints of her grin, and after a while she eventually breaks.

Mara (neutral fufu): So…

Mara looks at me rather mischievously, and I feel a shiver down my spine.

Pro: So…?

Mara (neutral sigh):

She sighs, disappointed.

Mara (neutral disappointed): Trying to play dumb, huh…

Mara: Aren’t we past this?

Pro: I don’t think I’ll ever get past this stage…

Mara (neutral expressionless): That’s not good…

Mara (neutral neutral):

She pauses to recollect herself and tries again, taking a more direct approach.

Mara: So…

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): How was your date with Prim?

Pro: My what with Prim?

Mara: Your date.

Pro: I wouldn’t really call it a date…

Pro: I felt obligated to go with her. And besides, I was only chaperoning her to practice.

Mara (neutral fufu): Well, take away the obligation and add the fact that she didn’t actually do any practicing, and what do you have?

Mara (neutral happy): A date!

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: So you did read my texts…

Mara: I did.

Mara: I wanted to hear everything directly from you, though.

Mara (neutral curious):

She pokes my face.

Mara: And besides, was it *really* obligation that pushed you to go with her? Are you sure it wasn’t like…

Mara (neutral fufu): ...the fact that she’s actually really cute?

I feel the heat starting to rise in my cheeks.

Pro: No idea what you’re talking about.

Mara (neutral hehe): You’re blushing.

Pro: Bite me.

Mara (neutral curious):

I turn away, trying to hide my face.

Mara (neutral fufu): You know, when you blush you blush all the way to your ears…

Mara: So there’s really no point in trying to hide it.

Mara (neutral smiling): Don’t worry, you’ll get to see her more often now. Didn’t you agree to go with her to all her practices?

Pro: Out of obligation. And besides, it wasn’t really like I had a choice, not with her parents thanking me and everything…

Well, technically I did have a choice. Technically.

Mara (neutral neutral): That sounds like a bit too much dedication towards someone you feel pure obligation towards, you know.

Mara (neutral fufu): Are you sure there isn’t anything else? Not a single part of you thinks she’s cute?

Pro: …

Pro: Well…

I stop, instantly realizing my mistake, but it’s too late.

Mara (excited excited): What’s this? I thought it was pure obligation? Having second thoughts?

She leans in, and I try desperately to lower my face temperature.

Mara (arms\_crossed fufu): Acceptance is the first step, you know.

Pro: Alright, alright I get it.

Pro: Fine, she’s cute.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed):

Apparently satisfied, she backs off a little.

Mara (neutral neutral): You know…

Mara (neutral hehe): You’re pretty cute too. When you’re embarrassed.

Mara (neutral smiling): Not as cute as me, though.

Pro: Yup, yup, that’s right. Cutest in the world.

I let out a sigh, already feeling worn out despite the fact that the day’s just begun.

Mara (neutral curious): Well, anyways…

Mara: Tomorrow do you wanna do something? Or are you gonna be going to practice with Prim?

Pro: Uh…

Pro: I’m actually not sure.

Mara: When will you find out?

Pro: Um…

Pro: I dunno actually.

Mara (neutral neutral): I see.

Pro: Maybe we shouldn’t make any plans for now. Until I find out more.

Mara (neutral pout): Huh…?

Mara (neutral disappointed): I mean…

Mara: I guess that makes sense. Kind of.

Mara (neutral expressionless): It gets pretty boring being by myself at home though, you know?

Pro: Sorry…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Mara takes a few steps ahead before turning back to face me.

Mara: But since you committed to doing this…

Mara (neutral smiling): Make sure you see it through, alright?

Pro: Yeah, I will.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Good for you.

Mara (exit):

We don’t talk much more for the rest of our walk, and eventually we part ways, each of us going to our own school. I could tell that she seemed a tiny bit disappointed, but it’s not like I’ll be going to practice every day, right? There’ll still be plenty of time for Mara.

Probably.