**Cafe**

Three slices of cake, two iced coffees, and a cup of tea. By the time I finish up my first math assignment, Mara’s eaten all of the above and is now eyeing my half-eaten fruit tart voraciously.

Mara (surprise surprise):

Pro: You can’t have it, you know.

Mara (neutral expressionless): Huh…?

Mara: Who taught you to be so stingy?

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Aren’t you worried about your weight?

Mara (neutral fufu): Nope. Even lost a few pounds the other day.

Pro: Really…?

I glance at the mess of empty plates and cups scattered around Mara’s notes.

Mara (surprise surprise):

Pro: For some reason, I sort of doubt that…

Mara (arms\_crossed put\_out): How rude.

Mara (eating happy):

Before I can react, Mara grabs her fork and steals a piece of my tart, swooping in and out with surprisingly quickness.

Pro: Hey-

Mara: Your punishment.

Mara (surprise surprise): …!

Mara: Wait, this is really good.

Mara (surprise neutral):

Pro: …

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): Ah, don’t be like that. It was just a bite.

Mara (neutral smiling): Here, I’ll even feed you the rest as an apology.

Mara: Say ahh-

Mara (eating happy):

Despite still being a bit put out, I reluctantly give in and open my mouth, only for her to quickly pull her hand away and eat it herself.

Pro: ...

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Pro: Never enough, huh?

Mara: Never.

Mara (neutral curious):

Perhaps wanting to change the subject, she reaches over and grabs a page of my notes.

Mara: Ah, I think I remember this…

Mara: You having any trouble? Want me to teach you?

Pro: I’d say yes, but I don’t think my pride would allow it.

Mara (neutral hmph): Boo.

Mara (neutral sigh):

She slumps back into her chair and sighs.

Pro: Besides, shouldn’t you be studying as well?

Mara (neutral expressionless): Geh.

Mara: I mean, I guess…

Mara (neutral neutral):

She hands me back the page, and after a brief moment of hesitation she starts packing up her things…

Mara: Good thing I always come prepared for moments like these.

...and pulls out a manga volume.

Pro: You’re gonna leave me to study alone…?

Mara (neutral confused): I’ll be studying too, you know.

Pro: Studying manga.

Mara (neutral earnest): That’s right. What if I’ve decided to become a manga author?

Pro: Right. Because you can totally write and draw.

Mara (neutral neutral): Yeah…

Mara: Minor detail.

Mara: Anyways, I’ll stop bothering you for now. Go finish up your work.

Pro: Not sure if I wanna hear that from you, but okay.

Mara: Shh.

Mara (neutral curious):

With a sigh I turn back to my math homework, a little envious of Mara’s carefree attitude but knowing I should get work done all the same.

For the next few hours we continue on like this, and eventually I find myself falling into a rhythm, listening to nothing but the occasional sound from Mara.

Flipped pages, sips of tea, small laughs or sighs here or there…

All surprisingly comforting.

**Cafe**

Finally finished all my math work, I stretch my arms above my head, letting out a small sound of victory that, unfortunately, Mara notices.

Mara (neutral neutral): …

Mara (neutral fufu): What was that?

Pro: I don’t wanna talk about it.

Mara: Fufu.

Mara (neutral curious):

She notices the stack of papers neatly stacked to my right, picking it up to take a look.

Mara (neutral surprise): …!

Mara: Did you finish all of these?!?!

Pro: Correct.

Mara: That’s actually kinda impressive...

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

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

She pats my head in reward, causing me to smile instinctively.

Pro: Enough of that…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Anyways, what do you wanna do now? It’s already getting dark, so should we head back?

Mara (neutral thinking): Mmm…

Mara (neutral neutral):

She pauses, all of a sudden unexpectedly sober.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Actually, there’s somewhere else I wanna go today. Come with me?

Pro: Of course.

Mara: Thanks.

Mara (neutral smiling): Well, we should get going then. Let’s pay the bill and get going then.

Mara (exit):

Mara goes to the front to pay for her food as I start to pack up my things, a little worried about her sudden change in mood.

Where does she want to go?