**Hospital**

The train ride over feels like an eternity, and as soon as it arrives at the station closest to the hospital I run as fast as I can outside, needing to make sure that she’s alright.

I quickly find the receptionist desk after entering, asking as calmly as possible which room she’s staying at. Once I find out, I head towards the elevators, still finding it difficult to breathe.

**Hospital Room**

Once I find her room, I open the door and rush inside, only to find her sitting up and looking out the window.

Mom (neutral neutral): …

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): Hey, Pro.

Pro: Mom…

I go over to her side, relieved that she seems alright.

Pro: What happened?

Mom (neutral neutral): I don’t really remember too much, but I collapsed on my way home from work. The doctor said it was because of exhaustion.

Exhaustion…?

Mom (neutral neutral): I’m so sorry about this.

Pro: Why are you sorry? I’m the one who should apologize…

Mom (neutral neutral): Apologize for what?

Pro: If…

Pro: If you didn’t have to take care of me, you wouldn’t have to work this hard…

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): Please don’t talk like that.

She pulls my head towards herself and wraps it in her arms. All my anxiety and worry starts to dissipate, leaving me in the form of tears that start streaming down my cheeks.

Pro: I’m gonna get a job. I’m not doing well in school, so it’s the least I could do…

Mom (neutral neutral): If you get a job, I’ll start working another one.

Pro: But…

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): No buts. Working to provide is the parent’s responsibility, not the child’s.

She strokes my hair gently.

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): When your father left, I vowed to make you happier than you would’ve been if he hadn’t.

Mom (neutral frown): But I know I’m not very good with promises, and sometimes I feel like I’ve robbed you of important parts of your childhood…

Mom (neutral frown): I can tell, you know? That you were thrust into the real world too quickly, that when you’re hurting you desperately try to convince yourself otherwise.

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): But recently, it seems like you’ve been enjoying yourself more. That you’ve been looking up and towards your future, and that makes me really happy, especially after…

She trails off, apparently deciding against finishing her sentence.

After what…?

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): So please, let me at least do all this for you.

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): Otherwise I wouldn’t be much of a mother, would I?

We stay like this until the nurse comes to inform us that visitor hours are ending and that I’ll need to go home soon. After assuring me I’ll be fine, my mom lets me go and I head home, wondering what it’d be like to be a parent.

**Outside Hospital**

After talking to a doctor briefly I make my way outside, finding that I’ve missed several messages from Mara. It seems like she got frustrated with my silence and started spam texting, which causes me to smile a little in spite of myself.

I text her a quick apology, explaining to her what happened.

Her reply is almost immediate.

Mara (text): Is she gonna be okay?

Pro (text): Yeah, probably.

Mara (text): How are you doing?

I pause, a little uncertain on how to answer.

Pro (text): I’m alright.

She doesn’t reply after that, and I spend the rest of the trip home idly scrolling through my phone.