**Kitchen**

Even though she said we’d be studying, I still can’t believe my eyes when Mara takes out her notes and starts going through them. Feeling a little left behind, I follow suit and start studying as well, resolving to make up for the classes I zoned out in today.

However, whenever I stop to take a short break my mind drifts to Prim, and the worry starts to eat away at me…

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly):

...but every time Mara notices and pinches my cheek, bringing me back to reality.

Mara: She’s at home right now. It’s probably the safest place to be.

Pro: Yeah, I know.

Mara (neutral earnest): So focus. It’s out of your hands for now.

Pro: Yeah.

Mara (neutral bashful):

After a while I start to feel more at ease, and I start to wonder if Mara’s actually studying. Her pencil is moving, but whenever I glance at her she quickly looks down.

You don’t have to worry about me that much, you know.

**Kitchen**

After a while I start to get hungry, and once my stomach growls audibly we decide to take a break and eat dinner.

Mara (neutral curious): Do you wanna order something, or should I cook?

Pro: Dunno. What do you wanna do?

Mara (neutral thinking): Mmm…

Mara (neutral curious): You have any leftover rice?

Pro: Maybe in the fridge?

Mara (neutral happy):

She checks, and with a delighted noise pulls out a large bowl.

Mara (neutral smiling): I’ll make something. Wanna help?

Pro: Sure.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Mara starts pulling things out of the fridge one by one, placing them all on the counter.

Mara: Could you wash those?

Pro: Oh, alright.

Mara (exit):

I head over to the sink to wash the vegetables she gestured towards while she grabs a knife and starts chopping things up with a speed that makes me a little worried for her fingers. But everything turns out alright, and after around ten minutes or so all of the ingredients have been finely cubed.

Mara (neutral fufu): How’s that?

Pro: Such mechanical precision…

Mara (neutral surprise):

Pro: It’s kinda creepy.

Mara (neutral pout): …

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: I’m joking, I’m joking. You can actually be pretty amazing sometimes.

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Mara: That’ll do.

Mara (neutral neutral): Now...

**Cutscene - Mara Wok**

Mara finds our wok in one of the cupboards and immediately gets to work, frying the meat first and then tossing in the rice and other ingredients. She cooks with such cheerful abandon that I can’t take my eyes off her, a small smile forming on my face.

**Kitchen**

After finishing up with the stove she plates everything and we sit down, bowls of steaming fried rice sitting in front of us.

Mara (neutral happy): Time to eat!

Mara (eating thinking):

She starts to dig in, but unexpectedly instead of happily wolfing down everything like she usually does she takes a moment to study its flavour.

Mara: Mmm…

Mara (neutral neutral): More soya sauce maybe. And a bit too many onions…

Curious as to what she’s talking about, I try it myself but can’t find anything wrong with it.

Pro: I think it’s pretty good.

Mara (neutral earnest): Really?

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Praise me more.

Pro: …

Mara: …

Pro: So amazing.

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Mara (neutral thinking): But I do think that my cooking still has a long way to go. Gotta hone my craft, you know?

Pro: You’re really into it, huh?

Mara (neutral neutral): Well, to be honest, most of the time cooking is a pretty big chore…

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): But when I cook for those I care about…

Mara (neutral embarrassed\_blushing): …

Mara (neutral bashful\_blushing): Not that I care that much about you, or anything.

Pro: Right, right…

There it is. The hidden tsundere unexpectedly rears its head again.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Well, at any rate I’m glad you like it.

Mara (neutral smiling): Eat up, okay? There’s a lot left, and you need to gain some weight.

Pro: Huh? I don’t think I’m that skinny…

Mara (neutral expressionless): I mean…

Mara (neutral fufu): You say that, but in reality you have a waistline that most girls would be envious of.

Mara (laughing laughing):

Mara breaks out laughing, leaving me to wonder whether or not she was serious or not. Regardless of whether or not she was, though, she makes sure that I eat as much as she does, which is no small feat.

Mara (neutral hehe):

The rest of our meal is filled with jokes and laughter, a strange but welcome departure from our gloomy study session. Even though the worry is still there, each of Mara’s smiles make me feel that maybe everything will be alright.

It really is nice, having someone to laugh with.