**Kitchen**

Mara falls asleep shortly after we finish washing all the dishes, her head nestled in her arms and my blanket draped over her shoulders. It was a tiny bit amusing watching trying to not nod off, but she ultimately lost the battle as soon as she closed her eyes for a few seconds.

Her breathing is gentle, and every so often she murmurs something in her sleep, a small, content smile on her face. It makes me a little envious, actually, seeing her enjoy her nap so much. Whatever she’s dreaming about, I want in.

Still though, seeing her like this really makes her seem like she couldn’t have a care in the world. Actually, most of the time she seems so happy and carefree, but in reality I know there are a lot of trying things going on that she doesn’t show.

But even so, she’s always the encouraging one. Always smiling, always making sure that I keep my head up…

It really is a blessing.

**Kitchen**

I manage to get through all the material on tomorrow’s test before Mara wakes up, and, mentally drained, I end up drifting off myself.

Mara (neutral neutral):

A stinging sensation on my cheek wakes me up, and after groggily opening my eyes I find that Mara has been pulling it.

Pro: Ow…

Mara (neutral curious): Oh, you’re finally awake.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Morning.

Mara (neutral neutral):

A little put out, I sit up and rub my eyes. However, my annoyance dissolves once I notice that I’m wrapped in my blanket, Mara having apparently returned the favour.

Pro: I let you sleep all that time, you know…

Mara (neutral expressionless): Yeah, but I have to go home soon.

I glance towards the window, surprised to see that it’s dark out.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: How long was I out?

Mara (neutral thinking): Mmm, I dunno…

Mara: I woke up about an hour ago, and you were fast asleep.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: An hour, huh…?

I stand up and stretch, feeling oddly awake.

Pro: Dunno if I’ll be able to sleep tonight.

Mara (neutral skeptical): Well, considering the amount you sleep…

Pro: Fair.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Mara gathers her notes and stuffs them in her bag before moving towards the front door to put on her shoes.

Mara (neutral curious): What were you dreaming about?

Pro: Huh?

Mara: You looked a little stressed out when you were sleeping.

Pro: Really…?

Mara: Really.

I try to remember what it was, but nothing comes up.

Pro: No idea.

Mara (neutral fufu): Prim, maybe?

Pro: Maybe.

Mara (neutral neutral): …

Mara (neutral fufu): What’s this? Even dreaming about her now?

Mara (neutral hehe):

She breaks into laughter before I can come up with a witty retort.

Mara (neutral smiling): I’m just kidding.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’m glad that you’re worried, though. Shows that you’ve been doing your best to make new friends.

Pro: I guess…

Mara: Makes me happy.

Mara (stretching neutral):

She pauses for a moment to stretch before turning towards the door.

Mara (waving neutral): Well, I’m off.

Mara (neutral neutral): Oh yeah, tomorrow I won’t be able to walk with you, so don’t wait…

Mara: …

Mara (neutral confused): What’s with that look? It’s not me you should be worrying about.

It takes a second for me to realize that my face feels tense. It’s already late, and now that I know there’s a stalker out...

Pro: Oh, um…

Mara (neutral smiling): I’ll be fine, I’ll be fine...

Mara (neutral pensive): …

Mara (neutral bashful): On second thought, I’ll allow you to be my bodyguard. Just for today.

Mara (neutral embarrassed): Consider yourself lucky.

Pro: Huh? Oh, alright.

Pro: Lemme grab a sweater or something, though.

Mara (exit):

I trot upstairs, thankful for Mara’s uncanny ability to tell what I’m thinking. I know that it’s unlikely that anything would’ve happened, but I’d never forgive myself if something did.

**Mara’s Apartment**

We make small talk on the way to Mara’s place, enjoying the nighttime air. The streets are unusually peaceful, even for this time, and we manage to make it to our destination without seeing anybody else.

I’ve actually only been here a few times, and I’ve only gone inside twice. Mara and her family moved here right before we started high school for reasons she’s never really disclosed, and ever since she’s been a little reluctant to allow me anywhere near her new home.

Mara (neutral neutral): We’re here.

Pro: We’re here.

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): Um, tomorrow…

Mara (neutral worried): Are you and Prim gonna still head down? To her practice.

Pro: Yeah.

Mara (neutral neutral): I see. That’s good.

Mara (neutral smiling\_forced):

She smiles, but I can tell that she’s holding back something.

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): Just make sure to stay safe, alright? And if you have to, make sure you protect yourself along with Prim.

Pro: Yeah, I will.

Mara (patting\_head smiling):

Apparently satisfied, she reaches out to pat my head.

Mara (neutral smiling\_gentle): Thanks for walking me home.

Mara: I’ll see you later, I guess.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Have a good night.

Pro: Yeah. Good night.

Mara (exit):

For good measure, I make sure she gets inside before heading back home.

Protect both Prim and myself, huh? If it comes down to it, would I even be able to?

…

Well, hopefully it won’t come to that. Hopefully.