**Teacher’s Office**

Resisting the urge to sprint in the opposite direction, I stiffly open the door the office. To my dismay, Ms. Tran is, of course, sitting at her desk, a less-than-friendly scowl on her face.

Actually, that might be her resting face. Who knows.

Pro: Um, excuse me…

Teacher (neutral neutral): Yes, who is it?

Teacher: …

Teacher (neutral sigh): Come here and take a seat.

Pro: Yes ma’am…

Teacher (neutral disappointed):

Making sure to breathe deeply, I slowly walk over and pull over a chair, my knees shaking a little as I sit down.

Teacher: So…

Teacher (neutral curious): How do you think you did on yesterday’s test?

Pro: Um…

Pro: I have no idea, but if I had to guess I’d say I probably failed?

Teacher (neutral disappointed): Correct.

Whatever sliver of hope I had before disappears, leaving me broken inside.

Teacher (neutral neutral): To be honest, you didn’t do as badly as I expected, though. You failed, but barely.

Teacher (arms\_crossed thinking): If I were a nicer marker, you probably would’ve passed.

Teacher (arms\_crossed neutral):

Pro: You couldn’t give me a break…?

Teacher (arms\_crossed menacing): Of course not.

Pro: Figured…

Teacher (neutral sigh): Regardless of how close you were to passing, though, this time you were the only student in your class to fail.

Teacher (neutral annoyed): And if that weren’t bad enough, you also went ahead and skipped your remedial classes.

Pro: Yeah, um…

Teacher (neutral menacing):

I accidentally let out a sigh, which doesn’t exactly please Ms. Tran but thankfully she doesn’t say anything.

Teacher (neutral neutral):

Pro: I’m sorry. I didn’t find out until around half an hour ago.

Teacher: Your mom didn’t tell you?

Pro: She didn’t.

Teacher (neutral sigh): I see.

Teacher (neutral embarrassed): Well, if that’s actually the case then I can’t really get mad…

Pro: You’re gonna just believe me?

Teacher (neutral menacing): I mean, would you even *dare* to lie to me?

Teacher (neutral smirk):

Pro: I wouldn’t…

Teacher: See?

Teacher: Don’t complain about being let off the hook or I might change my mind.

Pro: Yes ma’am.

Teacher (neutral curious): Also, did you fill out your career form yet?

Pro: I didn’t.

Teacher (neutral gentle):

Ms. Tran looks at me as if she were seriously considering reversing my pardon, but eventually her expression softens again.

Teacher: Why not?

Pro: Um…

Pro: I’m not sure.

Teacher (neutral concerned):

Pro: Whenever I think about what I want to do, my mind just kind of goes blank. I wanna take it seriously, but whenever I think about the future, well…

Pro: I find that I just can’t.

Teacher: I see…

Teacher (neutral embarrassed): I guess that’s also why you haven’t been doing well in school, huh?

Teacher (neutral gentle): You weren’t by any means a bad student last year, so it makes sense.

Teacher (neutral thinking) Still, though…

Teacher (neutral sincere): Even if you don’t have any motivation at all to study, please do your best to at least try to. Pushing through when things are tough, when you feel like doing anything else, well…

Teacher (neutral smiling\_slightly): That’s how you learn and grow. Both as a student, and as a person.

Amazed by her words, I can’t do anything but nod slowly. I guess despite everything, at the end of the day she’s still a teacher, huh?

Pro: I will.

Teacher (neutral smiling): Good.

Teacher (arms\_crossed curious): Now, I wonder what you were doing earlier today. Were you sleeping in, or…?

Pro: Oh, uh…

I frown, knowing that she almost definitely knows where I was but is making me answer her regardless.

Pro: I went to Prim’s concert.

Teacher (arms\_crossed smug): Mhm.

Teacher (arms\_crossed smiling): Must be nice, being at that age where those kinds of things are common. And you were invited by a cute girl, too, huh? Lucky you.

Teacher (neutral smiling\_dark):

She smiles sweetly, a stark contrast to the dark miasma that seems to ooze out of her.

Teacher: Must be nice, being a student. I wish I were your age.

Pro: Well, sadly you already wasted your adolescence away. Too bad.

Teacher (neutral neutral): …

Teacher (neutral death): I am so, so close to making you take remedial lessons every single weekend for the rest of the year.

Pro: Wouldn’t that be rough on you, too? Since you’d also have to come in.

Teacher (neutral smiling\_dark): You’d think that, but I’m an old lady with nothing but work to look forward to, after all. You’d be amazed at the lengths I’d be willing to go for my students.

Pro: Right…

Worried that she actually might be serious, I try to smooth things over.

Teacher (neutral neutral):

Pro: I wouldn’t say you’re exactly an old lady, though. You seem relatively young to me…

Teacher (arms\_crossed menacing): Relatively? What’s that supposed to mean?

Pro: Um…

Teacher (arms\_crossed sigh): Ah whatever. I don’t care anymore.

Teacher (arms\_crossed disappointed): Get out of here before I change my mind.

Pro: Yes ma’am.

Teacher (exit):

I hurriedly stand up and return my chair to its original spot, half-jogging my way to the door without daring to look back.

I’ve been given a get-out-of-jail-free card after all, and there’s no way that I’m gonna let it slip through my hands.