**Kitchen**

Mara starts cooking as soon as we get home, enlisting my help to make an unusually complicated dish. Thankfully she does most of the heavy lifting though, only getting me to do rather trivial things like make rice or squeeze lemons.

Mara (neutral smiling): And it’s done! Doesn’t it smell good?

It does smell good. Really good.

Pro: What is it?

Mara (neutral curious): It’s called “lemon chicken” or something. You deep-fry chicken, coat it with a lemon sauce, and then eat it with rice.

Pro: Huh…

Mara (neutral smiling): Well, let’s eat then. And then we can start studying.

Mara (eating happy):

We both sit down and start to dig in, enjoying ourselves greatly.

Mara (eating curious):

Pro: Have you ever thought about being a professional chef?

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe. Is it that good?

Pro: It’s really good.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Thank you, thank you.

Mara (neutral thinking): I’ve thought about it, but I dunno if I’d enjoy it. Too much stress every day.

Mara (neutral curious):

Pro: I guess that’s true. I think you’d be good at it, though.

Mara (neutral smiling): Fufu. There are other jobs that involve cooking, though.

Pro: Really? Like what?

Mara: Well, for example, I could be a house-

Mara (neutral neutral):

She stops abruptly, looking away a little bashfully.

Mara (neutral bashful):

Pro: A house?

Mara: …

Mara (neutral smiling): Never mind.

Pro: Huh? I’m actually a little curious no-

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Forget it.

Pro: Yes ma’am.

Mara (neutral curious):

Pro: Oh yeah, I’ve been meaning to ask…

Pro: It’s Prim’s birthday on Friday, and apparently I have to get her a gift…

Pro: Do you think a gift card will do?

Mara (neutral skeptical): A gift card…?

Mara (neutral expressionless): Well, it’s probably good enough for *you*, but…

I let out a sigh, disappointed that Petra’s not the only one who finds my taste in presents tasteless.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: Could you explain what, exactly, is wrong with a gift card?

Mara (neutral thinking): It’s just…

Mara (neutral neutral): It’s just kinda thoughtless. Low effort.

Mara: It kinda screams “I picked this out at the last minute,” you know?

Pro: I still don’t really get it…

Mara (neutral thinking): Well, just don’t get her one. Go shopping and pick something nice for her, something that she’ll use but also something that she’ll remember…

Mara (neutral curious):

I sigh again, having already heard this lecture.

Pro: Alright, alright.

Pro: I have no idea where to even start, though.

Mara: Don’t look at me. I’ve never even met her.

Mara (neutral fufu): You should think about all the times you’ve talked, and pick out something based on what you’ve noticed.

Sage advice. Although it probably would’ve had more impact if she were a little less smug about it…

Mara (neutral curious): Anyways, have you checked out any clubs yet? With Prim.

Pro: Actually, yes.

Mara: Which one?

Pro: Um, tennis.

Mara (neutral skeptical): Tennis.

Pro: That’s right.

Mara (laughing laughing):

Predictably, Mara bursts out laughing, displaying an absolute disregard for my fragile feelings.

Mara (laughing recovering): I wish I could’ve seen it…

Mara (neutral smiling): How’d it go?

Pro: About as well as you’d expect.

Pro: It was basically a gruelling, extended gym class. My legs are still a little sore.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I noticed you were walking a little funnily this morning, but I didn’t wanna mention anything.

Mara (neutral hehe):

She starts having another fit of giggles, apparently overwhelmed by the thought of me playing a sport.

Mara (neutral smiling): Well, at least you tried it out. What’s next on the menu?

Pro: Asher’s club. Whatever that is.

Mara (neutral curious): You don’t know?

Pro: Nope. He doesn’t go anyways, so it’s basically like he’s not in one at all.

Mara: I see, I see.

Mara (neutral thinking): He’s a typical popular guy, right? So maybe he’s in a sports club?

Mara (neutral curious):

Pro: Um, I don’t think so. Sports teams usually require a bit more participation.

Mara: Oh, that’s right. Maybe he’s in a cultural club then, like a music or research club.

Pro: Maybe. I dunno, I can’t really imagine him doing anything like that…

Mara (neutral thinking): Hmm…

Mara (neutral smiling): Well, I guess you’ll find out tomorrow, right?

Pro: Yeah. Speaking of which, I still need to ask him.

Pro: Give me a second.

Mara (neutral nervous):

I pull out my phone to send a quick text to Asher, but the next time I look at my plate my last few pieces of chicken are gone.

Pro: Hey.

Mara: Hm? What’s up?

Pro: Glutton.

Mara (neutral surprise): Huh?!?!?

**Cutscene** **– Mara Actually Jumps Pro**

She abruptly stands up and jumps me, twisting my arm with a murderous gleam in her eye.

Pro: I’m too young to die…

Mara: That’s out of your control now.

Mara: I hope you’re prepared. Reflect on your actions while you still can.

Pro: …

Pro: Yes ma’am.