**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: And it’s done! Doesn’t it smell good?

It does smell good. Really good.

Pro: What is it?

Mara: 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: Well, let’s eat then. And then we can start studying.

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

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

Mara: Hehe. Is it that good?

Pro: It’s really good.

Mara: Thank you, thank you.

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

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

Mara: Fufu. There are other jobs that involve cooking, though.

Pro: Really? Like what?

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

She stops abruptly, looking away a little bashfully.

Pro: A house?

Mara: …

Mara: Never mind.

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

Mara: Forget it.

Pro: Yes ma’am.

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: A gift card…?

Mara: 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.

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

Mara: It’s just…

Mara: 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: 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…

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: 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: Anyways, have you checked out any clubs yet? With Prim.

Pro: Actually, yes.

Mara: Which one?

Pro: Um, tennis.

Mara: Tennis.

Pro: That’s right.

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

Mara: I wish I could’ve seen it…

Mara: 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: I noticed you were walking a little funnily this morning, but I didn’t wanna mention anything.

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

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

Pro: Asher’s club. Whatever that is.

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

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: Hmm…

Mara: 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.

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: 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.