**Bedroom**

Instead of waking up to an alarm, I wake up to someone’s finger poking my cheek. A little irritated, I try to shake it off, but instead of solving the problem it only makes that someone more persistent.

Mara: Oh, you’re finally awake.

Mara: Morning.

Pro: …

Pro: Again?

Mara: What do you mean?

Pro: Why are you in my room again? At this time?

Mara: Hehe.

Mara: Anyways, you should get up soon. It won’t do to be late two days in a row.

Pro: Huh? How do you know I was late yesterday?

Mara: I bet you were like, “Mara’s not there to make me on time, so I’m gonna sleep in.”

Yikes…

Mara: Right on the money, huh?

Pro: …

Pro: Maybe.

Mara: How much did you miss?

Pro: The entirety of first period.

Mara: Oh my. What would you do without me?

Pro: Probably nothing.

Mara: That wouldn’t be good.

Mara stands up and stretches her arms above her head, inducing me to sit up and stretch as well.

Mara: Well, thankfully you have me to make sure that you live your life on the straight and narrow. And to that end…

Without any warning she grabs my outstretched arm and mercilessly pulls me to my feet, forcing my lethargic legs to adapt at an astonishing rate just for me to survive.

Mara: Your mom left breakfast on the table before she left, so get changed and then go down and eat, okay?

Pro: Okay…

Mara: Well then, I’ll leave you to it.

She leaves the room to give me a bit of privacy, and for a split second I consider hopping back in bed for a few minutes. I ultimately decide that it wouldn’t be worth dying over, though, and thus I pull on my uniform and follow after her.

**Neighbourhood Road 1**

Despite being woken up and quite literally dragged out of bed, I’m actually able to enjoy a relatively unhurried and leisurely morning. Of course, I still had to hurry somewhat at Mara’s insistence, but I was nowhere near as rushed as I was, for example, yesterday.

Mara: It’s a nice day, huh? It’s a little chilly though, although not as cold as it was earlier this morning.

Pro: Oh yeah, you got to my house pretty early, huh. How long did you have to wait?

Mara: Mmm, I dunno the exact time…

Mara: But when I got here your mom was leaving.

Pro: Did you say hi?

Mara: I didn’t.

Pro: It’s been a while since you’ve talked to her.

Mara: Yeah, I know, but it becomes harder and harder as time passes…

Pro: Yeah, I get that.

Mara: Your mom left pretty early, though. At least half an hour before you woke up.

Pro: Really…?

Pro: To be honest, I haven’t really seen her for a few days. She’s been getting up early and coming home late.

Mara: I see…

Mara: That doesn’t sound good.

Pro: Yeah, it isn’t…

I trail off, a sense of worry starting to build up in my chest. I’m pretty sure that nothing good will come from this, but as the reason why my mom’s been working so much I’m not sure if I have any right to do anything.

Mara, sensing that something’s wrong, pulls on my sleeve to bring me back to reality.

Mara: Oh yeah, I forgot to ask you, but did you figure out what you’re getting for Prim? It’s her birthday today, right?

Pro: Huh? Actually, it’s a funny story…

I explain to her what happened yesterday, how Petra and I went to buy Prim a gift but then ran into her, and how we all ended up going for dinner together.

Mara: So you forgot…

Pro: Um, yeah.

Mara: Hmm…

Mara: Well I guess you can’t really do anything about it now.

Pro: Yeah, probably not. Unless I run over to the shopping district or something during lunch.

Mara: Wouldn’t you have to sneak out then?

Pro: Yeah. I don’t think it’d be too difficult, though. Although it’d probably be a bit risky.

Mara looks at me with a curious light in her eyes.

Mara: It’d probably be more enjoyable with an accomplice, huh.

Pro: Huh? Where’s that coming from?

Mara: Hehe.

Mara: If you manage to sneak out, text me and I’ll meet you in the shopping district.

Pro: …

Pro: For real?

Mara: For real. Our lunch breaks start at the same time, so it works out.

Pro: But wouldn’t you have to sneak out as well? And isn’t your school stricter?

Mara: It’ll be fine. Probably.

Pro: Probably.

Mara: Yup.

Mara: Ah, you worry too much. C’mon, it’ll be fun!

I pause to think, wondering if I should encourage this kind of behaviour. Which is hypocritical, of course, but doing something questionable yourself is one thing, while dragging others into something is another.

I eventually give in, though.

Pro: Alright, alright, suit yourself.

Mara: Yay!

Mara: I’ll meet you at the entrance, okay? And text me when you get out.

Mara: I’m gonna go this way, so see you.

Pro: Oh, okay. See you.

Mara dashes off to the side, bouncily skipping down the sidewalk in an exceptionally good mood. I do still have reservations about her joining me, but it’s too late to take my words back, and I have a sneaking suspicion that she’d show up even if I told her no.

Ah well. I guess it’s fine, as long as she’s happy.