**Bedroom**

I allow myself to sleep in a little bit, making sure I wake up a couple hours before noon. The prospect of failing the entire year really shook me, and in order to avoid that outcome I’ll do whatever is necessary.

However, fighting on an empty stomach is ill-advised, and, knowing this, I head downstairs before even looking at my school bag, wanting to start off my day properly.

**Kitchen**

I find my mom at the kitchen table, seeing her for the first time in a few days. She looks up at me as I approach, greeting me tiredly.

Mom (neutral yawn): Good morning.

Mom (neutral neutral):

Pro: Morning.

I sit down across from her and start eating the plate of toast that’s been set out.

Pro: You’ve been working a lot recently.

Mom (neutral smiling\_worried): Yeah…

Mom (neutral worried\_slightly): Sorry about that. Did you feel lonely?

Pro: Not really. Kind of, I guess.

Mom (neutral smiling): That’s good to hear.

There are bags under her eyes…

Mom (neutral curious):

Pro: Um…

Pro: Are you okay?

Mom (neutral confused): Hm? Of course.

Pro: Really? You look really tired…

Mom (neutral frown): Well, I’ve been working a lot of overtime recently.

Pro: Overtime? Why?

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): That’s just how things turned out, I guess. It’s part of life as an adult.

Life as an adult? I bite my lip in frustration, knowing that many adults don’t work nearly as much.

Mom (neutral neutral):

Pro: Couldn’t you find another job, one that’s less taxing? Or maybe you could request to have a different position, or-

I stop, realizing that what I’m saying is both naïve and insensitive. Of course things aren’t that convenient, and given how I’m not doing anything to help, it’s beyond rude…

Mom (neutral worried\_slightly):

Pro: I’m sorry.

Pro: Let me get a job or something. To help out.

Mom (neutral worried): …

Mom (neutral sincere): No, you’re not allowed.

Mom: Taking care and providing for the household is the parent’s job, not the child’s. I want you to be able to look back and remember your childhood and youth as things that were filled with joy, not worry. And I think I’ve made you worry too much already.

Mom (neutral disappointed): You may think it’s unfair, but when I was your age I didn’t have a care in the world. Even your father, he…

Mom (neutral worried):

She trails off, unable to continue. Even now, it’s still hard for her to talk about him.

Pro: Mom…

Mom (neutral smiling\_worried): I’m fine, don’t worry.

Mom (neutral stern): In short, you’re not allowed to work, so try to do well in school and make memories, alright? Good ones.

I pause for a moment, stunned by her philosophy and resolve.

Mom (neutral curious):

Pro: Alright. But at least let me run more errands for you. Like shopping, and stuff.

Mom (neutral frown): …

Mom (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Alright, I’ll take you up on that offer. Thank you.

Mom (neutral smiling): Could you go shopping later today? We’re running low on a few things.

Pro: Alright.

Mom: I’ll text you the list later.

Mom (neutral curious):

Pro: Okay. Are you gonna go back to work?

Mom (neutral yawn): Hm? Not today.

Mom (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I intend to catch up on all the sleep I’ve missed this week.

Oh. That was unexpected.

Mom (neutral smiling): I work a lot, but I also know how to relax, so don’t worry. I was once a free-spirited high schooler like you.

Pro: That’s something I don’t really wanna think about.

Mom (neutral smiling\_nervous): Sorry, sorry…

Mom: (neutral smiling): Well, I think I’m gonna go ahead and start. Could you wash your plate when you finish?

Pro: Sure.

Mom: Thanks. Wake me up if you need anything.

Mom (exit):

She gets up and starts to leave, popping her head back into the kitchen one last time before she heads upstairs.

Mom (neutral neutral): And Pro…

Mom (neutral sincere): When you have kids one day, you’ll understand everything.

Mom (neutral hehe): But don’t rush, okay? I’m too young to have grandkids.

Mom (exit):

Too surprised and flustered by her comment to come up with a witty retort, I watch as she disappears up the stairs, chuckling to herself.

I don’t know why I was worried. She seems to have plenty of energy.

Too much, maybe.