**Downtown**

A walk to the station and several subway delays later, we reach the station where Mara says the store is.

Mara (stretching satisfaction): We’re finally here! We’re lucky it wasn’t too crowded and there were still seats, huh? I don’t think I would’ve lasted standing for that long.

Pro: Yeah, that would’ve been a little rough. Where’s the store?

Mara (neutral thinking): Mmm… I think it’s this way.

Pro: You think?

Mara: Like…

Mara (neutral neutral): 80% sure?

Mara: ...

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Yeah, I’m pretty sure!

Pro: Hmm…

Pro: Alright, let’s head over then.

**Clothes Store 1**

Mara (excited excited): This is it! We finally made it. Look, it’s huge!

She’s right, it is huge. The store has three floors, all of which are packed with trendy clothes and droves of customers. However, it looks a bit too fancy for the wallet of two unemployed high school students, so I go to a clothes rack and check one of the price tags.

Pro: Um, Mara?

Mara (excited neutral): What’s up?

Pro: Check the price on anything here.

Mara (holding\_something neutral):

She takes something off a rack too, looking at the tag.

Mara (holding\_something geh): Geh…

Mara: Three hundred…

Mara (holding\_something neutral): …

Mara (holding\_something fufu): Pro, you still have so much to learn.

Pro: Huh?

Mara: Girls don’t go shopping to buy things.

Mara: We go to look around and sometimes, if we feel like it, we’ll buy something. Buying is an afterthought.

Pro: Is that how it is?

Mara (holding\_something earnest): Of course. Haven’t you heard of window shopping?

Pro: Um, maybe…

Mara (holding\_something disappointment): …

Mara: Sometimes you’re kinda disappointing.

Pro: Yup, yup…

Pro: Anyways, how long are you gonna hold onto that?

Mara (holding\_something neutral): Hm?

Mara (holding\_something embarassed\_blushing): …

Without another word, she quickly returns it to where she found it, doing her best to recover.

Mara (ahem ahem): Ahem…

Mara (neutral neutral): Anyways, let’s go and see what they have.

Mara takes me by the hand and excitedly pulls me through the store. We traverse all three levels and find that things aren’t as pricey on the top one, so Mara starts to shuffle through clothes racks.

Mara (holding\_something neutral): Hey, Pro, what do you think of this?

Pro: You’re asking me?

Mara: Well, who else would I ask?

Pro: Couldn’t you just try it on? The changing rooms are right there, you know.

Mara (holding\_something embarrassed): It’s a little embarrassing, though…

Seems like I’m not getting out of this one.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: I think you’d look fine.

Mara (neutral disappointment): Just fine…?

Pro: Ah, alright. You’d look pretty good in it. I think. It matches your hair.

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I think I’ll buy this one. Wait here, okay?

Mara (exit):

I sigh as Mara skips off to pay for the shirt. To be honest, I think Mara would look pretty good in anything, but of course, I’d never tell her that. And she probably wouldn’t believe me, anyway.

Mara (neutral frowning):

Then, to my surprise, she returns with a small frown on her face.

Pro: What’s wrong?

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): I, um...

Mara: ...

Mara: I forgot to bring my wallet.

Pro: You—

I let out a sigh.

Pro: Seriously…?

Mara (neutral excuses): Well, we did decide to go shopping on a whim...

Mara: ...

Pro: ...

Pro: Do you want me to buy it for you?

Mara (neutral earnest): Would you?

Mara: I promise to pay you back!

Pro: All right, all right.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed):

I take the shirt and go up to the counter to make the purchase, followed by a very happy Mara.

Mara (neutral happy): Thank you for your kindness, good sir. I am in your debt.

Mara (holding\_something smiling):

She grabs the bag with her new piece of clothing, seemingly content.

Mara: Now, shall we leave?

Pro: Yes, we shall. Did you wanna take a look around the area?

Mara (holding\_something excited): Can we?

Pro: Well, we’re already here, so we might as well.

Mara (holding\_something smiling\_eyes\_closed): Ok, sounds good! Let’s go!

**Cafe 1**

After walking around for a couple of hours, we decide to head back home. However, Mara spots a café advertising half-price parfaits on the way to the station, and sure enough, we end up there instead.

Mara (neutral pensive): We’ve been out for a long time, you know. It’s important to take breaks and relax.

Pro: You would’ve been able to take a break on the subway as well.

Mara (neutral thinking): Well…

Mara: Um...

Mara (excited earnest): Gotta stay hydrated as well.

Mara (excited geh):

Pro: Yup, that’s right. We’re definitely not here so you can eat parfaits.

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): Th-That’s right…

Mara (neutral panic):

Pro: Yep. Well then, let’s get glasses of water and then go home.

Mara: But…

Mara (neutral thinking): …

Mara (excited earnest): Wouldn’t it be a shame if we didn’t get them, though? They’re cheaper than usual today.

Mara (neutral pensive): And besides, isn’t it our duty as consumers to circulate money through the economy?

Mara (neutral earnest): So you could say that by getting parfaits, we benefit society as well.

Mara (laughing laughing):

I try to find a retort to respond with, but after a pause, we both burst out laughing. It really is nice to have someone to joke around like this with.

Mara (eating happy):

A waiter comes and takes our orders, and soon after they arrive – a strawberry parfait for Mara, and an iced tea for me. She devours it with so much obvious enjoyment I find myself wishing I bought one of them for myself, and by the time I’m halfway done my drink she finishes.

Mara (stretching satisfaction): Ah, ice cream is the best! I should’ve ordered another one.

Mara (stretching neutral):

Pro: Imagine if you suddenly became lactose intolerant.

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): That wouldn’t be good…

Mara (neutral neutral): Ah, hold on, I’ll be right back.

Mara (exit):

Mara stands up and heads to what I presume would be the washroom, and I’m left alone to finish my iced tea.

Despite the advertisement for half-priced ice cream, there aren’t very many people in the café. I guess it’s a little colder at this time of the year, but even then wouldn’t people still come for the warm stuff? Times must be tough.

**Cutscene - Meeting Prim**

My thoughts are interrupted by an innocent-looking girl who stops in front of our table. She’s glancing around, but then she looks in my direction, and before I realize it, we’ve locked eyes. We stare at each other for a few seconds before I realize that she’s wearing a uniform from the same school I go to.

Pro: Oh, um…

Pro: Do you also go to Yi Centennial College?

?Prim: …

?Prim: Oh!

?Prim: Um…

?Prim: Yes, I do.

We stare at each other for a few more seconds.

Pro: Uh, I’m Pro. I’m in class 2B.

?Prim: I’m… Prim. I’m in 1A.

Pro: A first year, huh? So that means you just started high school. How you finding it?

Prim: It’s…

Prim: …alright, I guess.

Pro: Oh, I see.

Prim: …

Prim: Well, I better leave now.

Prim: Bye.

**Cafe 1**

And with that, she shuffles towards and outside the door. What a strange girl. I sit there, thinking about our strange interaction when Mara taps me on the shoulder.

Mara (neutral neutral): You ready to go?

Pro: Oh, yeah. Let’s go.

Mara (neutral curious): By the way, who were you talking to? Does she go to your school?

Pro: Apparently. I just met her today though.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Is that so? Well, maybe you’ll see her more from now on.

Pro: Maybe…

But I have a feeling that she’ll be pretty hard to notice at school.

**Home Station**

After we pay the bill, Mara and I head back home via subway – thankfully, there are no delays this time. By the time we arrive at the station closest to our homes, the sky is already dark.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Well, that was fun. It’s time to go eat dinner, I guess.

Pro: Will you be able to eat? Didn’t you just have that giant parfait?

Mara (neutral neutral): It depends on what we’re having for dinner. What are you gonna have tonight?

Pro: Mmm, noodle soup I think?

Mara (neutral wishful): Ah, lucky.

Invite Mara over for dinner **OR** Ask Mara what she’s having

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Pro: You wanna come over for dinner?

Mara (excited excited): Really? Can I?

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): Actually, I should probably go home today. I have some stuff I need to do.

Pro: Ah, alright then.

Mara (neutral smiling): Maybe next time.

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Pro: What are you guys having?

Mara (neutral disappointed): Chicken. I wish we were having noodle soup, though.

Pro: If you guys are having chicken today, you could boil the leftovers and have soup later.

Mara (neutral neutral): Oh, that’s right.

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**Intersection 2**

Mara (neutral yawn):

We chat about our families’ different ways of making noodle soup the rest of the way, and eventually, we reach the place where Mara and I part ways. She lets out a small yawn.

Pro: You tired?

Mara (neutral tired): Yeah, a little. Can’t go to sleep yet, though.

Pro: Will you be alright on the way back?

Mara: I think I’ll be fine.

Mara (neutral smiling): Well, I had a lot of fun today. Thanks for coming with me!

Mara (waving smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’ll see you tomorrow!

Pro: Yeah, I’ll see you.

Mara (exit):

Mara goes off to the right, and after waving one last time, I continue walking ahead. I realize that I’m completely drained as well, and by the time I reach home my eyelids already feel heavy. Maybe, like her smiles, Mara’s yawns are a little contagious too.