**Music School Area**

After leaving the school, Mara takes me to an unfamiliar area. We turn down so many little side streets that I lose track of where we are, and I have a sneaking suspicion that Mara has as well.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: We’ll be able to find our way back, right?

Mara (neutral thinking): Um…

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): No guarantees.

Pro: Huh…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: I still need to go back with Prim, you know.

Mara (arms\_crossed smiling): You’ll be fine.

Mara (arms\_crossed thinking):

She pauses, thinking.

Mara (arms\_crossed neutral): Probably.

Mara (neutral curious): But anyways, where’s your sense of adventure?

Mara (neutral earnest): Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

I let out a resigned sigh, noting that her melancholy from this morning seems to have completely disappeared. Was it really nothing?

Pro: I feel like that saying isn’t quite right here...

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): No point crying over spilt milk.

Pro: …

Mara (laughing laughing):

Mara bursts out laughing and doesn’t stop for a while. I let her at it, happy that she seems to be in a better mood despite her improper usage of quotes.

Mara (laughing recovering): Ah…

Mara (neutral hehe): Haven’t laughed that much in a while. My chest kinda hurts now.

Pro: Serves you right.

Mara (neutral smiling): Yup, yup.

Pro: Well…

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: At any rate, it makes me glad that you seem a little happier now.

Mara (neutral smiling\_nervous): Ah…

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Sorry about this morning.

Pro: Had something on your mind?

Mara (neutral smiling): Something like that.

Mara (neutral curious): But anyways, you seem like you’re brooding over something too.

Pro: Huh? Me?

She pokes my face in between my eyebrows.

Mara (neutral skeptical): When you’re worried about something, this area gets all scrunched up.

Pro: Wait, for real...?

Mara (neutral neutral): Yup.

Pro: …

Pro: It’s kinda creepy how you notice things like that.

Mara: …

Mara (neutral expressionless): Well, excuse me for being so observant.

Mara (neutral neutral):

It’s my turn to laugh a little.

Pro: I’m kidding, I’m kidding.

Pro: But yeah, I guess you could say I’m brooding about something…

Mara (neutral curious): Prim?

Pro: Um, yeah.

Mara (neutral fufu): Young Pro is going through the pangs of love.

Pro: That’s really not the case, but okay.

Mara (neutral hehe): Hehe.

Mara (neutral curious):

All of a sudden, Mara stops.

Pro: Hm? What’s up.

Mara: Let’s go there.

I look to see what she’s pointing at.

Pro: A pawn shop?

Mara: Yup. I’ve never been inside one, and I’m a little curious.

To be honest, my interest is somewhat piqued as well.

Pro: Why don’t we check it out, then?

**Pawn Shop**

The first thing I notice when we walk inside is the hint of mustiness in the air, likely because of the dust that many of the items likely collect. The walls are lined with shelves stacked with various different things, from guitars, to books, to even dolls.

Mara (neutral curious): So?

Mara catches me fooling around with an electric keyboard, aimlessly pressing the soundless keys.

Pro: Um…

I glance towards the counter, but there doesn’t seem to be anyone there.

Pro: Do you remember Mick? The guy that’s sometimes with Prim.

Mara (neutral thinking): I think so.

Mara (neutral curious):

Pro: Well…

I tell her about how I ran into the two of them in the stairwell earlier today, and how I overheard something I probably shouldn’t have. About how Mick told Prim that she was trusting me too easily, and that if I were actually just a nice guy she’d be inconveniencing me.

Pro: And then she didn’t really talk to me the entire way down. I mean, she’s usually quiet, but not this quiet...

Mara (neutral worried\_slightly): Yikes…

Mara: What did Prim say?

Pro: Oh, um…

Pro: Something about how she trusts me.

Mara (neutral thinking): Hmm…

Mara (neutral hehe):

I start to regret saying that last bit once I notice the mischievous look on Mara’s face.

Mara (neutral smiling): Well, that’s that I guess.

Mara (neutral neutral): At least she didn’t agree with him. That would’ve been heartbreaking.

Pro: Yeah…

Mara: As for why she doesn’t really wanna talk to you…

Mara (neutral pensive): Mmm…

Mara (neutral neutral): I think she probably feels guilty.

Pro: Guilty?

Mara: Yeah.

Mara (neutral thinking): You know, I don’t think Mick’s exactly wrong. It’s a little strange how far you’re willing to go for someone who you barely know, and it’s a pretty big commitment to go with her to each of her practices.

Mara (neutral neutral): Also, she shanghaied you into doing this for her instead of properly asking, so she probably already felt bad about this entire thing. And talking to Mick probably made her feel worse.

Pro: That actually kinda makes sense…

Pro: So what do you-

Mara (excited excited):

All of a sudden Mara perks up, having apparently forgotten about our conversation.

Mara: Look, look, look!

She points towards one of the shelves, and I spot a figurine that I vaguely remember from an anime we watched as kids.

Mara: I don’t think they make those anymore.

Mara (excited earnest):

Unsurprisingly, she turns to me pleadingly.

Mara: I’ll pay you back?

Pro: Seriously…?

Mara (excited geh):

Pro: Aren’t you a little old to be buying figurines?

Mara (neutral tongue): I don’t wanna hear that from you.

Pro: …

Mara (neutral earnest):

Pro: Fair.

Mara (neutral neutral):

Pro: But don’t you have better things to be spending your money on?

Mara: I mean…

Mara: There’s food, and then that’s about it.

Pro: I see. Well…

Mara (neutral smiling):

I hand her my wallet, which she cheerfully accepts.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’ll be right back.

Mara (exit):

She takes the figurine off the shelf and brings it to the counter, to an employee I swear wasn’t there a few minutes ago.

**Station**

After Mara pays I walk her to the train station so she can get home in time for dinner. She cheerfully hums the entire way, clutching her purchase tightly.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): I’m so happy I came. You can’t find these anywhere anymore.

Pro: Well, at least you got something out of this trip…

Mara: Yup!

Mara (neutral curious):

She suddenly stops humming and looks at me inquiringly.

Mara: You’re gonna go back to pick up Prim?

Pro: Yeah.

Mara (neutral smiling): Make sure to be honest with her, okay?

Pro: What do you mean?

Mara (neutral neutral): …

Mara (neutral skeptical): Tell the truth. Don’t lie.

I blink at her.

Mara (neutral hmph): This is important, you know. Promise me you will.

Pro: Oh, okay. I promise.

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Good.

Mara (neutral smiling):

We pause outside the station, both of us knowing that our short excursion has come to an end.

Mara: Well, I’ll see you tomorrow then.

Pro: Yeah, I’ll see you. Text me when you get home, alright?

Mara (neutral smiling\_eyes\_closed): Alright.

Mara (exit):

And with a wave, she happily trots inside and out of sight. In the end, I wasn’t able to find out what was bothering her, and instead she ended up counseling me instead. Some childhood friend I am…

I wonder what she meant about being honest, though.