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"THIS counts as a friggin' house?" Yuuto cried, staring at the mansion before him. Standing at four stories tall and covering an area of over 100,000 square feet, the mansion would have easily stood out amongst the regular houses in the city. Yuuto and Sayaka stood in the heart of the city's richest district, filled with mansions and luxury villas, and even then this monster of a building towered above the rest.

Each and every room seemed to come with a balcony, and there were a porte-cochère complete with beautiful arches by the front gate, carefully crafted to perfection by what were likely expert artisans. A long, red carpet extended itself from the door to the bottom of the staircase beneath the arches. A long path, perpendicular to the carpet, extended from either side of the porte-cochère, presumably not only for people to walk on but also for cars to drive on, making the whole building resemble a hotel. The two paths each led to one of two giant metal gates, with a speaker found by the rightmost gate to request entrance.

Yuuto's eyes scanned the area. Many of the mansions resembled the one Sayaka claimed to be her home, but none were nearly as large or as grand. As he turned his head back to look once more at the gates, he noticed that a security camera had mysteriously turned towards him and seemed to be eyeing him down. He gulped. "W-well then, I guess we're here...alright, have a nice day, class rep. B-bye—"

As he waved nervously and turned to leave, Sayaka reached over and grabbed his arm. Yuuto froze in place, feeling cold sweat forming on the back of his neck. He could only hear one thought ringing through his head: *God, please don't ask me to go inside—*

"I'd love for you to come in for a bit," Sayaka offered timidly. "I'll make some tea..."

Shit, I jinxed it! Yuuto thought. "U-umm...I'm not sure if—"

"Oh, don't be silly," Sayaka giggled. "I would feel guilty if I dragged you all the way out here and didn't at least offer you a drink! C'mon, please?"

Yuuto gulped once more. "S-sure, sounds nice," he replied. *I'm gonna regret this, aren't I?* he asked himself.

Sayaka took a deep breath as she carefully placed the tea leaves into the pot. She poured some hot water in, closed the lid and picked the entire tray up, walking over to Yuuto who sat at the table. She lay the tray down on the table carefully. Both of them fidgeted nervously for a moment.

"Y'know, it's the first time I've had anyone outside of the family besides Kaho in my room," Sayaka admitted, breaking the silence. "I used to go to a private school, and she was my only friend way back then. We both transferred to a public school in the eighth grade, but we couldn't get along with anyone so we kept to ourselves...and

to each other. Do you know how that feels? Oh, of course you don't. You seem popular—"

"You kidding?" Yuuto laughed. "I was pretty much the opposite of popular. Before I moved to this city, I only had a small group of friends. I'll admit that we weren't the *best* students; though we never broke the law or anything, we also never paid attention in class—that is, if we even showed up. We ended up skipping a lot, particularly in history 'cause our teacher literally gave us worksheets and then when on *her* phone for the rest of the class. Ultimately, we were known as delinquents and ended up with a bad rep. Not to say we didn't deserve it."

"Really? I mean, I know you're not good at academics, but I didn't take you for that kinda person."

"Well, like I said, we didn't break any real laws or anything. We just didn't see a point in learning too much. We around for math class and the language classes like Japanese and English, and we'd show up to most of the science classes, but subjects like history and art were ones we'd skip quite regularly."

"So anything that isn't a core subject," Sayaka summarized.

"Yeah, pretty much," Yuuto nodded. "My little group was kinda antisocial, so we'd spend our time away from other people as much as possible. We knew we'd need to be literate, use math and likely use some science in the future so we stuck around. Otherwise, though, we just stayed away from school. I've never been all that good at relationships. Heck, even after some of my friends got girlfriends, I still stayed single and boring. I tried asking a girl out once. Got slapped with a purse. It friggin' hurt."

Sayaka giggled. "Well, *duh*! It's a purse! We have a ton of stuff in there, so of course it'll hurt!" She took a deep breath before continuing. "However, once again, that's unexpected. You don't seem to be that bad with relationships or anything."

"Well, to be honest, I'm pushing myself way outta my comfort zone nowadays by talking to people a lot more and trying to resolve things with a smile on my face and reason on my mind. After all, when I moved here I made a promise to myself to start over and get better at having a social life, and hopefully to get a girlfriend on top of it. I forced myself to talk to people more. I think it's paying off."

"Agreed. I would never have been able to tell had you not mentioned it. But that being said, I guess you *do* know how I felt, huh?"

"Kinda," Yuuto chuckled. "I mean, I just didn't know how to be social. I was an outcast and honestly, kind of a loser. However, I feel like you have a slightly different problem when it comes to your social life and why you only had one friend."

"Oh?" Sayaka raised an eyebrow. "What may that be?"

"If you'll pardon me for being straightforward," Yuuto answered, "it's likely thanks to your upbringing. Think about it like this: you've been raised like a princess, thinking you're always right. On top of that, you're strict and disciplined, but perhaps too much so. Put those together and what do you get?"

"A person who seems...overly arrogant and stuck-up," Sayaka said. "W-wait, seriously? Do people think I'm like that?"

"I'm pretty sure Kaho has it worse than you, but yeah, that seems to be the first impression you give people thanks to your attitude. I mean, think back to that first argument you had with Hanae on her first day. Y'know, in phys ed? She felt like you were trying to control her. Sure, she wasn't exactly following school morality codes, but nonetheless the way you put it made her feel like she was being forced to comply with a system that does nothing but oppress people. She felt like she was being controlled by one single oppressor: you."

Sayaka put a finger to her lip. "Huh," she mumbled. "I guess you're right. That would make sense, actually. What, with all the people telling me to stop ordering them around like I owned them..." She paused, seemingly deep in thought. "Y'know, I learned a lot about you, Yuuto," she concluded, "as well as a lot about myself. Thank you." She smiled warmly.

"Glad to help," Yuuto answered, "but on a different note, I think our tea's gotten cold."

"Dammit," Sayaka giggled, "alright, I'll go get some hot water, just wait for another minut—"

"Sayaka, do you have a guest over?" a voice called from the door.

Sayaka turned and froze in place nervously. "M-Mother!" she cried.