

## 100 The Widow 2

As Amelie exited Oscar's study, she found herself in an empty hallway on the second floor of the Bennet residence. The conversation she had just had weighed heavily on her mind and she soon realized that she had forgotten which way she was supposed to go to reach Liam's bedroom. 1

'Should I go back and ask Mr. Bennett to show me the way? And not a maid in sight.'

Fortunately, Amelie didn't have to ask for help as another woman's voice called for her from behind her back.

"Miss Ashford?"

Surprised, she turned around and saw a woman approximately her age, with short straight blonde hair that barely reached her shoulders in one straight line. She had narrow blue eyes, and rather pale skin, and was dressed in a designer pantsuit which indicated that she was not part of the housekeeping staff.

The woman smiled at Amelie's confused expression and introduced herself, "Hello. My



name is Vanessa Bennett. I am Noah Bennett's widow. I recognized you right away, Miss Ashford. You are still wearing the same dress..." 1

The woman's eyes moved down to Amelie's dress and Amelie felt a little embarrassed that she didn't change her attire before she came to this house. Nevertheless, she smiled as well and tried to sound as friendly as she could,

"It's nice to meet you, Mrs. Bennett. I am late because we have never met before, but please accept my condolences. I know your late husband was a great man."

Vanessa nodded while Amelie was battling with her own thoughts.

*'I didn't expect to see Noah's widow in this house. Liam didn't tell me anything either. I know some families allow the widows to remain at their husbands' homes but this is making me a little uncomfortable. It's like... I came to take her place here.'*

As if having read her thoughts, Vanessa smiled somewhat bitterly and said,

"I heard that you were forced to stay in the guest





room instead of the master bedroom. I'm sorry, this is all because of me. You see, initially, I was supposed to stay at our villa abroad but I felt too lonely there so I decided to join the rest of the family here and took the bedroom that was meant to be yours." 2

*'Ah, there it is. She really thinks I am replacing her for some reason.'*

Amelie shook her head. "It's alright. My husband offered me his bedroom in the meantime."

Vanessa's face briefly distorted with a flicker of a frown which Amelie's perceptive eyes still managed to notice. Was she disappointed or annoyed? She had to be careful of this woman until she would be able to figure out what exactly was on her mind. 3

The woman then stood right next to Amelie and asked, "Are you lost? Would you like me to show you the way to his bedroom? This place is huge, I know. I had to draw my own map and navigate with it for the first month of my stay here."

Amelie politely accepted her invitation to guide her and the two of them started slowly walking through the hallway as if they were taking a

stroll.

A couple of maids who were finishing their work exited one of the rooms and bowed to both Amelie and Vanessa, sizing the first woman up with their curious eyes, and when they passed them, Amelie heard a joined suppressed whispering which was clearly directed at her.

Vanessa smiled again. "Don't pay too much attention to them, Miss Ashford. It was bound to happen. You were the toast of the town before, and now you are in the middle of all the gossip. It will die down soon." 1

Amelie's face remained emotionless. She didn't mind people talking behind her back but she preferred not to be that talk's direct witness. Somehow, it felt a little humiliating. She knew she was probably overreacting but she couldn't help it. With Vanessa's voice sounding so condescending, she felt as if the entire household was there to mock her.

As they reached the door to Liam's bedroom, Vanessa paused and faced Amelie.

"Miss Ashford, may I ask for a favor?"





Amelie's eyebrows arched. "Yes?"

"I know you are the new mistress of the house but could you please not replace the help? They have been with us for many years while we were living abroad and I would be very grateful if you could let them continue working here." 4

Amelie took a moment to think about Vanessa's request before finally answering, "The last thing I want is to have people lose their jobs on my account. I will not fire anyone unless they fail to do their job. However, I will hire additional staff regardless and they will be the ones who will answer directly to me." 2

Amelie felt that such a decision was reasonable, especially after what happened to the help at her previous mansion when Samantha decided to interfere. Although she wanted to remain level-headed, she needed her own people in this house too. Just to be safe.

"Yes, of course," Vanessa agreed but Amelie saw that her expression was tense.

"Well, it's getting late, I'd like to take a bath and get some sleep. It was nice meeting you, Mrs. Bennett. Thank you for escorting me to my

room."

"Likewise. Good night, Miss Ashford."

"It's Mrs. Bennett now. I am married, after all."

Vanessa nodded at Amelie's rightful correction. "Perhaps we should call each other by our first names then. We are a family now. What do you think?"

Amelie agreed. "Yes, that would help avoid confusion."

Vanessa nodded again and watched as she disappeared inside Liam's bedroom. The moment she closed the doors, Vanessa turned around and started walking towards her own room.

Her mind was in disarray.

*'From what I've learned about her, I didn't expect her to start feeling so comfortable in this mansion from the very first day. Why didn't she accept to stay in the guest room? Why did it have to be his room instead? Damn it... It really is over for me now, isn't it?'* 11

