



106 The Kiss ³

The evening sun cast long shadows across the room as Amelie sat by the window, her hands clutching a closed book. It had been a while since she felt so calm and at peace and yet, her mind was still too restless as she was trying to get used to her new, rather idle lifestyle. ¹

She looked at the time and sighed, feeling the weight of isolation settle on her shoulders.

'It's nice to have more time off to rest and recharge but I am beginning to get really bored. I wish I could talk to Lizzy; she suddenly stopped answering my texts and disappeared. I hope everything is fine.'

A soft knock on the door broke her reverie. It was too late for a housekeeping staff to trouble her so it could only be someone from the family.

"Come in." She turned to see Liam standing in the doorway and let out a strangely loud breath of relief which Liam politely ignored.

"I heard you ate alone again," he said, stepping inside. "Vanessa is out every night these days.



"Why aren't you meeting your friends?"

Amelie gave him a wistful smile. "My friends were Richard's friends too. Their husbands are putting a lot of pressure on them not to meet with me until all the buzz about the divorce and remarriage settles down. I have to be content with loneliness for now." 3

Liam's brow furrowed with frustration. "That's not fair to you, Amelie."

It annoyed him because he realized that he, too, was making her feel alone.

She shrugged, trying to seem nonchalant, but the hurt in her eyes was unmistakable. "It's just how things are."

Liam took a seat beside her and placed a bottle of red wine on the small, tall, round table next to her armchair, smiling somewhat bitterly. "Would you like to have a drink?"

Amelie nodded. "Sure, why not?"

When both glasses were filled, the awkward silence between them reigned again, filled with unspoken words. They sipped their drinks, the



atmosphere slightly awkward yet tinged with a sense of shared understanding.

Liam decided to speak first. "Grandpa is going to leave again soon. One of his friends bought a resort in Thailand, so a bunch of his friends are going to spend the autumn there."

Amelie smiled. "Your grandpa sure leads an active life. He appears to be very popular too."

Liam nodded, though the thought of his grandfather being popular still made him cringe a little.

"Yeah, he likes to be always out and about; always be around someone or something which is not this house or this family... I guess it's his way of coping with everything that has happened in his life."

Amelie's thoughts turned inward, reflecting on her knowledge of the Bennett family's trials. She nodded in silent agreement, acknowledging that Oscar Bennett deserved some peaceful, relaxing time after all he had endured.

'Oscar has lost everyone except Liam, I suppose now, everything is tinged with painful memories

for him. When Richard's parents died, he wanted to move out of their house too but I convinced him to stay and renovate instead. I wonder if this was the reason why this mansion was renovated too...'

Then, her mind wandered to the night when she realized that Liam had a problem with sleepwalking. She wanted to address it, but something held her back. Perhaps they needed more time to get comfortable with each other before she could pry into something this personal; she didn't want to overstep.

Suddenly, she felt slight shivers covering her entire body. The memory of him sleeping next to her that night made her blush. It had been a while since she last shared a bed with someone, and the thought stirred a mix of emotions within her.

She took a sip of her wine in an attempt to compose her racing heart but her mind was already all over the place.

'This marriage is supposed to stick which means that after the wedding, the two of us will have to start trying for an heir right away. I am older and

since Richard and I couldn't conceive a child for so long, with Liam... not being able to have a child with Liam will definitely be a problem.' ²

The realization made her choke on her drink. She coughed, startled, as wine spilled down her chin.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I got distracted..."

Liam was at her side in an instant, gently patting her face with a handkerchief he pulled out of his pocket, while his other hand was gently cupping Amelie's left cheek.

His touch was tender and even a little too cautious as if he was scared to cause her any pain. Amelie realized how close he was, even closer than that night he held her hand against his lips, but since right now he was awake and well aware of his actions, she couldn't help but feel embarrassed.

It was sad how even such a simple gesture of care was making her uncomfortable because she had spent almost her entire life devoid of genuine love.

Suddenly, Liam looked up at her, his gaze



locking with hers, and for a long moment, everything else faded away completely.

Finally, Liam swallowed hard, his voice barely above a whisper, and Amelie felt his warm breath linger on her skin with the poignant scent of rich red wine. "Amelie... now that we are married, I thought that maybe... well, there is something I wanted to do, but I don't know..." 2

Amelie's eyes widened for a moment, a trembling realization settling in her heart. Was it already the time? How did it happen with Richard? The loud noise of her racing heart prevented her from forming coherent thoughts.

Liam parted his lips again but before he could say anything else, Amelie leaned forward, her soft lips meeting his in a tender kiss. 1

It was soft at first, tentative, but quickly deepened as they both gave in to the emotions they had been holding back. Liam's arms wrapped around her, pulling her closer, and she melted into his embrace. 6

