

114 The Wedding Dress

"Mrs. Bennett, Miss Nadine Hills is here to see you!" Mary's cheerful voice broke the silence of the living room where Amelie was having her second cup of coffee. She lifted her eyes from the book she was reading and nodded at the maid. 1

"Thank you, please invite her in."

Amelie was expecting Nadine today. Miss Hills was a famous wedding dress designer who was known for making one-of-a-kind dresses and had never used even a single element of an already-used design in her future creations.

Nadine never took more than two orders at the same time and her service was always impeccable. Amelie didn't hire her to design her first wedding dress because she wore the dress her late mother wore on her wedding day, but this time, she wanted to have something different; something of her own.

And thankfully, Liam found a way to get Miss Hills to cancel her other orders and place her on

top of her priority list.

"Good morning, Mrs. Bennett! You look absolutely lovely, just like always! I am so happy that you chose me to design your dress; your future--oh, pardon me! Your husband must be doting on you so much, he almost chewed my ear off while we were talking on the phone!"

Nadine was very loud but still respectful in her behavior which Amelie found as something that was fit for a person of her artistic nature. She offered the designer a warm greeting and invited her to join her for a cup of coffee which Nadine politely declined.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Bennett, but I still have another client I have to meet today before noon, so I would like to jump right into it if you don't mind." 3

Amelie smiled and nodded. "Not at all, Miss Hills. Let us begin, then."

Nadine retrieved a stack of large pastel pink folders from her giant leather bag and placed them on the table before her client, skillfully flipping through the glossy pages of numerous drawings until she finally paused and showed Amelie a sketch of a dress she had in mind for

her.

"What do you think about this design, Mrs. Bennett? Mr. Bennett asked me for something flashy but I decided that for someone of your delicate figure and elegant complexion, something like this would work better."

Amelie slowly examined the sketch presented to her, a light smile appearing on her beautiful face.

"I think this is very beautiful, Miss Hills. I am too old for flashy dresses, I'd like to stick to something more elegant and humble."

Nadine, however, didn't seem happy with her client's reserved reaction. She removed the sketchbook from Amelie's hands and frowned, twirling a pencil between the fingers of her right hand.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Bennett but Nadine Hills doesn't design dresses that look "just beautiful"; Nadine Hills designs dresses that are perfect!"

She briefly examined Amelie's face, then let out a long humming sound, and started frantically sketching something over the existing dress.

"Miss Hills, it's alright, I don't really need something--"

"Sorry, could you please stay quiet for just a few moments?"

As if scolded, Amelie awkwardly pressed her lips together and silently watched as the woman continued to move the pencil over the page of her sketchbook. At last, she unglued her eyes from the page and pushed it toward Amelie once again.

"What do you think about these additions? It's the same elements but readjusted into a completely new design. With the right accessories, you will turn into the epitome of elegance and charm, Mrs. Bennett."

Amelie looked down at the new design and almost gasped in awe. The woman was right--the new design looked absolutely stunning as if Nadine was able to read her mind in its entirety and transform her hidden ideas into something visible; something real.

Still amazed, Amelie offered Nadine a big smile and announced her verdict. "It's perfect."

"Is this the final design?"

Samantha shifted her eyes to Nadine and offered her a somewhat frustrated look. After visiting Amelie Bennett first, Nadine couldn't help but compare this woman to her, and the results were nothing but appalling. 3

With a long sigh, she nodded and replied rather coldly. "Yes, Miss Blackwood, this is the final design for your wedding dress."

"I don't like it. It's too simple."

Samantha almost tossed the folder on the coffee table of the living room in Richard's mansion and pouted, crossing her arms in front of her chest in a defensive manner.

Nadine couldn't help but sigh again. "This design was selected by Mr. Richard Clark himself; he said that a simpler dress might suit you better and I agree with him. You have soft features and a delicate build so you need a dress that would compliment that."

Samantha found no comfort in Nadine's

explanation.

'This is just a basic dress in eggshell white! It doesn't even have a proper silhouette for it! This is my first wedding and my future husband is an extremely rich man, so I want a wedding dress to die for. I want to look incredible. I want all eyes on me.'

Still pouting, Samantha continued to flip through the sketches until she finally paused, her eyes widening.

'This is... This dress has Amelie Bennett written next to it!'

Lifting her eyes, she finally asked Nadine, "Is this Amelie Bennett's wedding dress design? For her wedding with Liam Bennett?"

Nadine briefly looked at the page Sam was pointing at and nodded. "Yes, it is."

Samantha's brows knitted together in yet another fit of annoyance.

"So you are telling me that this woman gets to wear such a beautiful dress for her wedding while I have to wear these rags?! Are you trying

to turn me into a laughing stock?! Am I a joke to you?! My wedding is earlier than hers which means that what I wear will be discussed over what she wears! I want people's eyes to be on me for the months to come! Make a better dress for me! Make it stand out! Make sure she will pale in comparison to me! Take this thing away from me!"

Samantha pushed the sketchbook off the table and looked at Nadine with her eyes filled with fury. Nadine frowned and picked up her sketchbook. She was desperate to tell this woman that she would not design a dress for her but since she did not want to ruin her relationship with Richard, she took out her measuring tape and faked a smile.

"Very well, Miss Blackwood. Let's take some measurements then."