



124 Rats Sink Along With The Ship

Apologizing repeatedly, Samantha gritted her teeth and pulled Penelope out of the tea house, slamming the door behind them. The man who was introduced to her as her father, seemed confused and even a little intimidated; he had been silent ever since. 1

Ignoring his presence, she pushed Penelope against the wall, towering over her with her glare burning with malice.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?! Have you and your stupid family completely lost it?!"

The girl scoffed at Samantha's loud but clearly nervous voice. Just like her uncle Jason, she loved to see her scowl at people like a cornered animal.

"What does it look like I'm doing, Sam? This man has been dying to see his long-lost daughter, don't you think it's a tad too cruel to accept his generous investment under your name but completely ignore his existence?"



Samantha offered the old man a brief, careless look, then turned back to Penelope and asked now more calmly, "Is this really the same man hired by Richard Clark? Wasn't he just a reliable proxy?"

The girl couldn't help but burst into uncontrollable laughter.

"Are you an idiot? Do you really think we would be able to get the very same man? I'm pretty sure that man only exists on paper!"

Samantha finally lost it completely. With her face distorted by anger and frustration, she grabbed Penelope by the collar of her knitted dress and hissed at her like a snake, "Are you really this dumb, you little bitch?"

Penelope recoiled from Samantha's sudden display of anger; she had to admit that seeing her lose it like this was something she had never expected before. If Samantha could spit venom, it would have been burning her skin.

The woman continued her threats, "Do you really think I won't do anything to you just because you are a kid? Then think again, you fucking idiot! I now have enough money to destroy both you



and your moron of an uncle. Don't you ever try crossing me like this again!"

Penelope looked Samantha in the eyes and smiled as she noticed the subtle trembling of her eyelashes. Just like always, she was only pretending to be strong.

The girl pulled out a polaroid photo with a baby and a DNA test next to it and waved it between their faces, making sure that Samantha understood what she meant by this little action. She, too, could hiss like a snake.

"Yes, Sam, you know damn well how easy it is to bring someone down. But don't you forget one important thing--rats sink along with the ship, Samantha. If we go down, you are going down with us." 1

Samantha frowned again but still let go of Penelope's collar, taking a step away from her.

"What the hell do you want from me now, you goddamn parasite?"

The girl fixed her clothes and hair, then threw the old man a quick glance, and grinned again.



"Uncle Jason only wishes to help. Go back to those old hags sipping tea and tell them this man was trying to scam you for money pretending to be your father. This way, this news will spread around and people will pity you for even having scammers swarming around you now, thinking that they can take advantage of you because you are an orphan. Don't you think it's going to help that little Cinderella farce you have going on for you?"

A deep crease etched between Samantha's neatly-shaped eyebrows as she mumbled with annoyance, "The only people who are constantly trying to scam me are your fucking family."

Penelope shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly and stretched out her opened palm.

"Birds of a feather, Sam, birds of a feather."

Samantha had no choice but to comply; she really didn't need any more trouble now that things had finally begun going well for her.

Clicking her tongue, she opened her wallet and placed several large bills in Penelope's hand.

"Take it and get lost."



"Gladly!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Clark, but Mrs. Bennett refused to see me again. I have left dozens of messages to her assistant but she doesn't want to get in touch either with me or you."

Ron looked at Richard from under his thick eyebrows, waiting for his boss to throw another angry tantrum but Richard only sighed and shook his head, silently admitting defeat.

He expected it to be this hard but he had never thought Amelie would be prideful enough to ignore him like this. Unfortunately, he, too, had too much pride to chase her around the city himself.

"Mr. Clark," Ron carefully interrupted his silent contemplations, "There is something else I have to inform you about."

Richard cocked his eyebrow. "What is it?"

"I have been notified this morning that Daphne, one of the ballerinas supported by Mrs. Bennett is coming back from France soon to take a



vacation. Since the charity that is responsible for these girls now belongs solely to you, they had to contact me instead.

According to her guardian in Paris, the girl had some health issues and has been granted a vacation to rest and restore her strength. They are inquiring if the girl could stay at your place while she's back in the country?"

Richard was still confused. "Why at my place?"

"Apparently," Ron hurried to explain, "Mrs. Bennett granted all the girls she had been supporting permission to visit her at your mansion and stay there if needed. The guardian also added that Mrs. Bennett specifically requested Daphne to stay at your place once the girl's health issues were discovered. It happened prior to your divorce, so--"

"Excellent!" A clever idea popped into Richard's head the moment he heard his assistant's explanation. "Contact that guardian and that girl and tell them that they have my permission for her to stay in my mansion."

It was a simple idea--if Amelie learned that one of the girls she had been caring for so deeply



was now staying at his place, eventually, she would have no choice but to seek an opportunity to meet her. Especially if Richard would not let that girl look for Amelie on her own.

'If she finds out that I still care about her work just as much as she did... She might eventually forgive me. And give me a chance to make things right.'

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"What?!" Samantha almost crushed her phone inside her hand as she heard Jason's voice on the other end of the line. "If this is one of your idiotic plots to piss me off or get more money from me, I swear to God, I will not let it slide!"

Jason's reply was preceded by a loud snort which annoyed Samantha even more.

"This is just something I heard, Sam, and I thought I'd let you know about it before it happens. The girl's name is Daphne Merigold; she is nineteen years old and according to my sources, she had some kind of severe gastric disorder that prevented her from dancing for a while. Her guardian suggested a vacation and Mr. Clark was gracious enough to offer his



mansion for that."

Samantha bit the nail on her left thumb and frowned. It was not just annoying anymore; it was absolutely maddening.

"I can't believe this!" She groaned, "The moment I think I have gotten rid of anything related to that woman, something else pops up; like mushrooms after the rain! I simply cannot catch a break!" 3

She was especially angry because it was Richard who agreed to it and on top of him looking for ways to make amends with his ex-wife, it seemed that he still harbored the hope of them staying dangerously close to one another.

Jason, on the other hand, couldn't conceal his joy--he truly enjoyed witnessing Samantha in such an unsettling agony and was glad that he could contribute to it.

"Be careful, Samantha," he started again, "The girl is already nineteen. You started clawing your way to the top when you were even younger than that. Besides, ballerinas usually have quite spectacular bodies. I bet she knows how to do more than just dance with it. Especially since she



knows that she only survives thanks to his money." 1

He hung up on her right away but his almost sinister laughter continued to ring in Samantha's ears for minutes after.

The woman knitted her eyebrows together, nervously tapping her manicured fingers on the chair's arm. Rebeccah, the young maid who had been dusting the furniture in the living room all this time and happened to hear Samantha's conversation with Jason, looked at Miss Blackwood with rather sympathetic eyes and made a reckless decision to comfort her. 2

"Miss Blackwood," she approached Samantha's chair and said carefully, "I don't think you should worry about this so much. Mr. Clark is a very good person and only has eyes for you; he would never do anything to compromise your relationship."

Her words, however, had the opposite effect.

Widening her eyes at the girl, Samantha almost jumped to her feet and grabbed the maid by her hair, pulling her face down to her own level.



"What did you just say? What the hell do you even know about Mr. Clark, you sneaky bitch? What--have you tried something with him already and he rejected you saying that he only loves me?!" 1

Frightened, the maid frantically shook her head despite the pain it caused her and apologized repeatedly, begging Samantha not to fire her for her mistake. Samantha pushed the girl down, watching as she stumbled and fell, then threw a stack of magazines at her and hissed loudly,

"Get out of my sight! Get lost, now!" 1

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