

## 131 Eye Opener

Richard had been on edge the entire day. The moment he saw the news, he couldn't take his mind off one single person--his ex-wife Amelie.

*'First, that moron Bennett proudly announces his wedding date, making everyone believe that he is absolutely fine to have it after mine, and now this again...'*

Just this morning, another article was released, praising Amelie Bennett's new astonishing philanthropic endeavor--another supporting program for aspiring and talented individuals whose dream was to become writers.

Richard emptied yet another glass of whiskey and slammed it loudly on the desk, the sound of it meeting its surface cut abruptly through the silence in his study.

*'And to top it off, the International Writers' Association is going to have a special award named after her. Hah! Gilmore's ex-husband was completely useless. His timid attempts to ruin Johnathan Radcliffe's career abroad failed*



*miserably, just like his marriage. I knew I shouldn't have trusted him with that.'* 2

He poured himself another full glass of whiskey and threw the empty ball onto the leather couch, frowning as the slightly bitter liquid warmed up his insides once again.

What annoyed him the most was not the news about Amelie's new projects or even the date of her wedding; Richard hated that she was now the center of everyone's attention again, and her social position was strengthening, with each new piece of news or gossip slowly erasing all the stains that had marred her image when she jumped from one marriage to the next one.

His frustration was interrupted by a persistent vibration of his smartphone. With a deep frown of irritation, he reached inside the pocket of his pants and pulled out his phone, noticing several new messages from his assistant.

"Check out the newest article in the candid section, please. It's important."

Richard read Ron's message out loud and tapped on the link at the bottom of the text bubble. The link redirected him to the newspaper website

and his eyes widened as he read the title of the article that had been released just minutes ago.

"Iceland's most successful business investor Einar Ingvarsson has been spotted leaving TK Airport after landing there in his private jet. As his international investment deal with JFC Group failed, could it be that he found another potential partner? And could this partner be the newly announced smart technology tycoon?" 1

Richard's lips trembled as he mouthed every single word from the article over and over, fisting his left hand around the glass until he finally heard it crack.

It was clear why Einar was back in the country; he wasn't there to strike a deal with Liam, he was invited to attend their wedding. Or, if it was the opposite, he came back to sucker punch Amelie's new husband one more time.

Whatever the reason was, it was beginning to get disturbing.

*'Weil and Crane's women have already forced them to accept that they are switching over to Amelie's side. It will only be a matter of time before their husbands will toss their loyalty aside*





*and do the same. Now this... northern tycoon, fuck!"*

Angered, he pushed the glass off the desk, ignoring the shattering sound made by the broken shards.

He couldn't understand it. Why was it so easy for Amelie to keep drawing people back to her? Yes, she was a somewhat special woman; she was generous and well-respected and she had never made a single mistake--anything, really, that could have put her reputation or the reputation of those around her in danger. But was it really everything? 3

Samantha was kind and people liked the way she seemed so innocent and unspoiled by money. She appreciated little things and praised others for their achievements. Surely, she needed time and education before she could reach the same level as other women surrounding her, but was it really that important? 3

Finally, Richard realized what had been bothering him so much about Amelie's exit from his life.

Throughout the years they had spent together,

he had grown numb toward her and in the end, he could no longer see her the way she saw him. She was not his friend. She was not his wife either. She was his partner. His supporter. His shield.

He was so used to relying on her in everything that he failed to notice that everything depended on her.

And now that she was gone, his eyes were finally open. 5

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Richard snapped his fingers at one of the maids he spotted in the hallway and motioned for her to go into his study and clean up the mess.

Once the maid disappeared inside the room, he turned around and started walking through the long corridor of the second floor, both his eyes and mind blurry from alcohol and all-consuming frustration.

The fog inside his head thickened and Richard realized that he was no longer walking. Now, he stood in front of Amelie's bedroom, struggling to focus his vision as he noticed the lights shining



through the gap of the slightly opened door.

For a moment, he felt his heart sink. His ex-wife's name flashed through his mind and he caught himself hoping that Amelie was back, in her bedroom, sitting in the armchair next to the window, with one of her favorite books in her hands.

In that bizarre state of frenzy, Richard pushed the door open and stepped inside, his dark eyes shining with anticipation and hope.

To his disappointment, the person who greeted him there was not Amelie.

"Richard!"

Samantha turned around and offered him a wide smile but Richard only frowned at her.

He slowly glanced around the room, noticing Amelie's old clothes and shoes scattered all around, turning her bedroom into a complete mess. Was Samantha trying them on? Couldn't she be more careful with them? Did she really have to throw things on the floor so carelessly?

Richard wanted to pick one of Amelie's dresses



from the floor but Samantha stood in his way, pressing a long and rather fluffy white dress against her chest, its skirt making a subtle rustling noise every time she moved even a little.

"What's this?"

His eyes moved over the dress which he didn't recognize. Samantha pulled a part of the skirt aside and did a little twirl, smiling as she waited for Richard's reaction.

"What do you think about it? It's my wedding dress! Don't you just love it?"

Richard raised his eyebrows as he finally understood what had happened.

"This is not the dress I wanted you to wear, Sam. Why did you change the design? I thought I made it clear that I want you to wear a simple dress. The wedding planner has everything set already, you can't have a dress that doesn't go with the palette she has chosen."

Samantha's lips pouted as she stepped away from the man and her eyes brimmed with tears.



"Why do I have to care about the palette some woman chose? This is my wedding; my first wedding, if you have forgotten! Don't I deserve a fancy dress? I've seen the dress your ex-wife is going to wear for her wedding. She is having her wedding after ours, don't you think I need to look better than her?" 1

Richard examined Samantha's appearance again and sighed.

*"The dress looks good, but... I specifically consulted with the designer about the current trends so that Samantha doesn't look ridiculous in the eyes of others. This dress is too much but I can't have her throwing tantrums like this, especially in her current state."*

As if having read his mind, Samantha, still pouting and sniffing like a child, stepped closer to Richard and locked her eyes on his.

"Every girl dreams of a perfect wedding. I have always dreamed of it too. What bothers me the most is the way I look..."

Richard's eyes widened again. "What do you mean? What's wrong with the way you look?"





Samantha gently took his hand in hers and placed it on her already round stomach, smiling through tears.

"I don't want people to look at me and think 'Oh, she is pregnant, that's why she is getting married.' I want them to look at me and think 'She is the most beautiful bride I've seen.' The fluffy skirt and all this lace are to conceal my stomach, that's all. Can't you let me have it, please?" 1

Richard's face softened as his hand moved slightly over Sam's belly. He was so busy getting angry with Amelie that he had completely forgotten that there was another person next to him; someone who saw this wedding as her special day and not something she could use to rub someone's face in it.

His selfishness was now appalling and he couldn't help but resent himself for nearly ruining Samantha's dream. 1

Removing his hand from Samantha's stomach, he let out a short sigh and finally smiled, wiping tears from her cheeks.

"Alright. I'm sorry. You can have the dress you

want, Sam."

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