

136 Whose Claws Are Sharper

The rest of the car ride to the hotel went by in complete silence. Although neither Liam nor Amelie wanted that shirtless incident to affect their relationship again, simply forgetting it and moving on seemed like a childish yet reasonable idea. 1

In the end, they decided to act like nothing happened, and that worked.

As they arrived at the hotel, they noticed that Richard was standing in the lobby and greeting the guests together with his soon-to-be wife. Liam looked at Amelie with a somewhat worried expression on his handsome face but Amelie remained stoic.

"If you don't want to see him right now, we can just go through the restaurant's entrance," her husband made a considerate suggestion to which Amelie responded with a short sigh and a reserved smile. "It's alright. We will only come off as rude if we don't greet him personally. After all, we accepted his invitation, we shouldn't neglect the formalities."

Liam sighed as well. While he loved that his wife always knew how to look strong to others, he secretly wished she would still be mad at Richard so that he wouldn't be alone in his resentment towards him.

The moment they entered the lobby, all eyes were fixed on them. Amelie had expected this much and thought she was prepared for that, but a slight feeling of discomfort still grazed her heart as she made her way closer to her ex-husband.

Richard locked his dark brown eyes on hers and Amelie winced although just a split second later, her entire body felt unbelievably light--his glare evoked no emotion in her. She felt absolutely nothing.

"Good afternoon," he cleared his throat and forced his lips to form a smile. "I am glad you could make it. I hope the flight was not troublesome."

Amelie nodded and forced a polite smile too. "Thank you for inviting us, Mr. Clark. Congratulations on your wedding."

A brief frown appeared on Richard's face as he

heard his ex-wife call him "Mr. Clark" in a cold, detached tone. Forcing another smile onto his lips, he shifted his eyes to Liam and Amelie smirked at his familiar ability to remain professional.

Samantha, however, had her emotions written all over her face. She kept her eyebrows pushed together the entire time while glaring at Amelie as if she were her mortal enemy.

Amelie couldn't help but feel strangely disappointed.

'Even after all this time, he still hasn't managed to teach her how to hold herself in public. And to think that this woman is about to become the face of the Clark family...'

Amelie stepped onto the balcony of the hotel room she had to share with Liam and looked down at the garden stretching all around the building.

The night had already shrouded everything in darkness but the bright lights of the street lamps were enough to unveil the beauty of such a

carefully decorated place. Everything was ready for tomorrow's celebration.

A bitter sense of nostalgia stung her chest and she had to take a few deep breaths to compose her emotions.

'I still remember how much time I spent browsing through brochures and magazines while preparing for my wedding with Richard... It was my dream to get married in this hotel; it was every girl's dream back then, and I was the only one who got close to making it come true. Now,' she sighed and closed her eyes, letting the refreshingly cool wind rustle through her loose hair. *'Richard stomped over my dream by letting his mistress get **my** wedding instead.'*

"Lily?" Liam's voice broke Amelie's musings, prompting her to turn around. Her husband had just taken a shower and was now wearing black loose pajama pants and a plain white t-shirt. He swept a small white towel over his damp hair, then tossed it onto the chair and hugged his wife from behind, placing his chin on her right shoulder.

"You shouldn't be standing here like this, it's too

cold," he murmured into her neck and Amelie winced from the tickling sensation made by his breath.

She let out a soft chuckle and covered his hands with hers, "What about you? You will catch a cold if you stay here while your hair is still wet!"

"Will never happen!" Liam pouted and Amelie felt his lips on her skin again while he continued, wrapping his arms even tighter around her waist. "Your warmth will protect me!"

Amelie giggled at his adorable childishness but still pushed him away and back inside the room, frowning playfully, "Get your hair blowdried and get some sleep. Even my friends noticed how tired you look, I want you to have proper rest before the wedding."

The corners of Liam's lips dropped as he almost whimpered in disappointment. He obediently walked towards the bathroom and pulled out a hairdryer from the cabinet next to the sink.

"What about you? Aren't you going to sleep?"

Amelie looked at the separate bed that was supposed to be hers, then checked the time on

the electric alarm clock on the bedstand next to it, and sighed. She was feeling a little restless still and decided that the only way she could calm down her nerves was with a glass of good wine.

"I'll have one drink at a bar and will go to sleep too," she shouted as her husband was already drying his hair and heard a loud "Okay" back, smiling to herself because even sharing a room with Liam like this felt like they had been married for years now.

It was a pleasantly comfortable feeling.

As she entered the bar on the third floor of the hotel, Amelie quickly scanned the room to see whether she would catch someone she knew having a restless drink of their own, and ironically enough, she did.

Richard.

With his black shirt crumpled and his brown hair falling over his eyes, he was leaning over the bar, tapping his fingers on a half-empty glass of whiskey.

His face was pale while his eyes were half-closed

and Amelie realized it right away--he had already had more than just a few drinks in him and was about to collapse.

At first, Amelie wanted to leave; after all, he no longer was her problem when he was drunk like this. And yet, perhaps the lingering feelings of connection which her heart still refused to dissolve, made her approach the bar and tap him on the shoulder.

"Amelie?" The man widened his hazy eyes in shock but then offered her a wide smile and leaned on his elbow, motioning with his other hand for her to join him. Amelie took a seat on the barstool next to him and ran her eyes over his appearance, assessing his state.

"Do you think you should be getting this drunk before your wedding? And completely alone at that?"

Richard chuckled somewhat nervously and snapped his fingers at the bartender, asking for a glass of red wine for his new companion.

"I am no longer alone, am I?" He almost sang those words as he struggled to remain seated on the stool. "Would you like to drink with me, Lily?"

You remember, don't you? This bar has excellent Merlot."

Amelie clicked her tongue and grabbed Richard's jacket from the stool next to him, diving her hands into the pockets in search of his cell phone. "Is the lock pattern still the same? I am going to send a text to your assistant and I suggest that you spend the night in his room instead of submitting your future wife to such a pathetic display right before her wedding day."

She was right, the lock pattern on Richard's phone was still the same and she was grateful that it never changed. Amelie quickly typed a message to Ron and pressed "send", hiding the phone back into the pocket of her ex-husband's jacket, instructing the bartender as she was about to leave, "Please make sure this man leaves the bar before someone sends an envoy looking for a missing groom."

The bartender nodded with a grin and Amelie rushed to leave the bar, her thoughts in disarray.

'What is his problem now? He was so eager to marry her and now he is acting like he is being

forced to do that. There are so many sides of him I never knew...'

"Mr. Clark!" Ron shook Richard's shoulders, desperately trying to wake him up, "Mr. Clark, wake up, please! We need to go, Miss Blackwood is dead worried about you!"

As the man refused to open his eyes, Ron offered the bartender a hopeless look, mumbling under his breath, "How did he even text me if he is so wasted?"

The bartender scoffed and said, "It was not him, a woman did it. I think he called her "Amelie"."

"Amelie?" Ron repeated the name.

"Amelie?!" Samantha's loud voice made him flinch in surprise, turning around to witness her fuming face.

The woman nudged Richard's assistant on the shoulder and continued, "Has he been drinking with her? Was that her attempt to ruin my wedding--get him senselessly drunk so he would look like hell during the ceremony?!"

Ron didn't know what to say; he was genuinely shocked by her raging reaction.

"I really have no idea, Miss Blackwood, I have just come here myself--"

"God, how useless can you be?!" She interrupted him again, her voice only getting louder. "Well, don't just stand here like a fool! Grab him and take him to the room! Toss him in the cold bath or something, I don't care! make sure he is sober before the wedding, understood?!"

Ron could only nod and Samantha was already on her way back to her hotel suite.

'I'm getting tired of this bitch always managing to make her way back into his life! Well, if she is bold enough to annoy me, then I can do the same! We shall see whose claws are sharper!' 2