



139 Do You Have Any Regrets?

Part I

"Please don't pout," Amelie glanced at Liam with a hint of condescension in her bright eyes and her husband only pouted more. 1

Although their official visit was over, the couple decided to stay in Paris a little longer. Amelie wanted to visit the school of ballet which had been so graciously sheltering the girls who received her scholarship while Liam simply wanted to spend more time with his wife because her attention had been held captive exclusively by her friends the entire time.

Right now, Liam was not pouting because Amelie had chosen to see someone else instead of spending the rest of the day with him; he was actually glad that she could always find a way to keep herself busy and he felt lucky to be included in her activities.

What was the pouting all about? He simply liked to tease her and he knew that she knew that too.



He leaned back in the car seat, his arms folded at his chest, and turned his head to the side, watching the blur of the city pass by as the car moved through the streets. Amelie let out a defeated sigh and tried again, "What do you want to do after I'm done visiting Mrs. Hauet? The weather is warmer here, we could stay outside for a while if you'd like."

Liam, still averting his eyes, shrugged his broad shoulders and mumbled, "A nice dinner in Eiffel Tower, maybe..."

Amelie's expression softened as she stretched her lips into a big smile. "It's a date, then! Let me ask Anna to arrange that--"

"No need," he interrupted her, his voice getting a little warmer too, yet he was still struggling to suppress a smile of his own. "Everything has been already arranged. Who do you think your husband is?"

Now, Amelie let out a loud chuckle, nodding her head enthusiastically. "My husband is a very strange man but it's his antics that make him look so cute."

Distinct blush covered Liam's entire face and

ears and Amelie laughed again.

"Cute" was not something Liam wanted to be perceived as but he was still glad that Amelie could discern the subtle qualities of his personality that others failed to notice.

Mrs. Hauet's school of ballet was located in the older part of the city and reminded one of an exclusive boarding school which it was, to a certain extent.

Elise Hauet was a retired prima ballerina, who used to be famous around the world for her unmatched performances that brimmed with elegance and grace.

Once retired at the age of thirty-five, Elise did not want to say goodbye to dancing just yet, thus, with the help of her own funds and a generous donation from her husband, she opened a ballet school where talented children from around the world could train and study under her guidance as well as the tutoring of other teachers.

Her school was private and due to the high

standard of education and the job security afterward, the tuition was rather high, however, every year, Mrs. Hauet allocated ten scholarship slots for less fortunate children.

Two of these slots she covered herself and the rest were up to other sponsorships. Amelie's fund was one of them.

Most of the girls Amelie sent to the school were still relatively young and since they all were orphans, she tried to visit them once a year, however, she failed to come to France during the last two years due to her packed schedule, but now that she was there, it was imperative that she checked on her children.

And her visit caused quite an uproar among the students.

'Liam's good looks sure translate across the world. The girls are practically hanging over his arms.'

Amelie did not mind such attention even though her husband was clearly not happy about it. She waved her hand playfully at him, ignoring his silent pleading to rescue him, then turned back to Mrs. Hauet who had come to escort her into

her office.

"I'm glad to finally see you, Mrs. Ashford--oh, pardon me!" Elise slapped herself on the forehead, cursing her forgetfulness under her breath. "I am yet to get used to your new name, Mrs. Bennett, I'm sorry."

"That's alright," Amelie reassured her with a friendly smile, "I have been struggling with the same problem myself. It's not easy to suddenly start calling myself a different name after so many years of wearing another."

Mrs. Hauet offered her an understanding smile, then sighed, and clasped her hands together on top of her desk, shifting the topic of their conversation to a more professional one.

"The girls really missed you! Not a month goes by without them inquiring about you. And with the two girls having issues with their health, some of the children feel a little demoralized."

Amelie looked down at her own hands, her expression darkening. It happened to two of her girls in the last year: Sophie broke her ankle while Daphne was diagnosed with a chronic illness.

She was about to ask Elise about Daphne's vacation but Mrs. Hauet spoke before her, "The things you have been going through lately must have been very vexing on you, and I don't really want to pour oil on the fire by making you feel responsible for this. It happens; ballet dancing is very hard. I should know. Some children snap while some struggle and flourish. They start too young for anyone to know that something might be wrong."

Somehow, Amelie felt like these words were directed at her.

Her fate was sealed the day she was born. She had to struggle and meet everyone's expectations even when she felt broken or sick. And while people like Julia had the guts to break free, people like her were not brave enough to do that.

Or if she had to be even more truthful with herself--they were not brave enough to even imagine that they could do something else if they failed.

"Mr. Bennett seems like a good man," Elise spoke again, her soft voice jolting Amelie out of her

depressing musings. "Do you have any regrets?"

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2

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