

## 151 Nothing Changed

Einar paced the length of his guest bedroom, his footsteps a steady rhythm on the polished wooden floor. The stylish room which, as he was informed, had been once occupied by Amelie herself, now felt more like a cage with every passing minute. Somehow, he could feel her presence still lingering inside its walls. 1

He had been cooped up in here since he arrived, unable to bring himself to leave, to face the reality of where he was and, more importantly, who he was staying with.

He felt like an utter fool.

He had agreed to Liam's invitation out of a sense of duty—an effort to repair their relations, for Amelie's sake of course—but now, standing here alone, Einar felt like an idiot. Meeting Amelie again, seeing her so radiant and content in her new life, had shattered his heart into a million pieces. Every reserved smile she had given him, every word she had spoken with such careful politeness, felt like salt in a wound that had never fully healed.



He stopped in front of the large window in the middle of the wall, staring out without really seeing. His thoughts were a chaotic mess, and he struggled to find a way to make sense of them.

*'Ugh... I should have stayed in that hotel after all. Or better yet... I shouldn't have come to this country in the first place.'*

Finally, his eyes focused on the garden below.

Despite it being autumn, with most of the foliage turning brown and lifeless, the garden still held an unexpected beauty. The trees, though their branches were mostly bare, stretched gracefully up toward his window. The flower beds, already sparse, were meticulously cared for, with late blooms adding small splashes of color amid the otherwise fading greenery. It was clear that the gardeners had worked tirelessly to preserve what beauty they could as the season turned cold.

Einar found a strange comfort in the scene. He stood there, lost in thought, until a soft knock at the door jolted him back to reality.

"Come in."

The door opened to reveal Mary, one of the maids assigned to him. She carried a tray with a steaming cup of coffee, its refreshing aroma filling the room.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Ingvarsson," she said with a polite smile as she approached. "I've brought your coffee."

"Thank you," Einar replied, forcing a smile in return.

As she set the tray down on a side table, Mary observed the man carefully. She had noticed how grim and reserved he had been since his arrival. He rarely left the room and had yet to join the family for any meals, preferring instead to eat alone and outside the house. It was depressing, she thought, to see a man so isolated in a house full of life.

Noticing him looking at the garden again, she hesitated before speaking. "It's a beautiful view, isn't it?"

Einar nodded absently, taking a sip of his coffee.

"If you'd like," Mary continued reluctantly, "you could enjoy your coffee out in the garden. We





have heating lamps and comfortable seating arrangements out there. Mrs. Bennett spends a lot of her time there when it doesn't rain."

At the mention of Amelie's name, Einar flinched slightly. His grip tightened on the cup, and for a moment, he considered refusing. But then he caught the maid's earnest expression, her desire to offer him some small comfort, and he found himself reconsidering. Perhaps the fresh air would do him some good after all.

"Alright," he said quietly. "Let's go see the garden. Please, lead the way."

Mary's face lit up with a smile, and she gestured for him to follow her. As they exited the room, they nearly bumped into Vanessa Bennett walking through the hallway, followed by one of the maids.

"Mr. Ingvarsson," she greeted with a polite nod as she paused in her steps. "I'm Vanessa Bennett--"

Einar offered a small smile and a nod in return. "Yes, I know who you are. A pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Bennett."

Vanessa's gaze flicked to the tray of coffee in Mary's hands. "Are you perhaps heading to the garden? It's lovely out there even during this time of year. May I join you?"

Einar hesitated, not wanting to seem impolite, but also unsure if he wanted company. After a brief pause, he nodded. "Of course."

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*'Why is he so quiet again?'*

Samantha sat on the edge of her chair in Richard's study, her heart pounding with anxiety. She had been worried since Richard had called her earlier, his tone stern and distant, asking her to meet him here. Now, as she waited for him to speak, the tension in the room was almost palpable.

Richard was sitting solemnly behind his desk, his expression hard. Finally, he turned to his wife, his voice exposing his frustration. "Samantha, from now on, your expenses will be handled by one of my accountants."

Samantha's eyes widened in surprise. "What? Why?!"

Richard sighed, running a hand through his dark brown hair. "Because you've been spending money carelessly, and it's put us in trouble with the tax authorities. We're being audited, Samantha."

Samantha felt a cold wave of panic wash over her. "But... it's my money. Why should that be a problem?" she tried to argue, but her voice trembled. 2

Richard cut her off with a sharp look. "This is my decision, and you need to accept it. There's nothing more to discuss." His tone was final, leaving no room for debate.

Feeling utterly dismissed, Samantha could only nod, swallowing the lump in her throat. "Alright," she submitted in a whisper.

Richard, seemingly satisfied, turned back to his work. "You can leave now. I have more work to do."

Samantha stood up slowly, her heart heavy with a mix of anger and hurt.

Ever since their wedding, it seemed that all Richard did was scold her, no matter how hard

she tried to be the perfect wife.

As she left the study, she pulled out her phone, her fingers trembling while she texted Kyle, hoping for some comfort or advice.

When his reply came, it was swift and sympathetic, offering her the support she needed. "Just like before, I'm here for you, Sam. If you need money, I'm willing to help."

But instead of feeling comforted, Samantha felt a surge of annoyance. She shouldn't need someone else's money anymore. She was Mrs. Richard Clark, and yet here she was, still being treated like she couldn't manage her own life. 3

In a fit of frustration, she threw her phone against the wall, the device clattering to the floor with a loud crash.

*'Nothing has changed... Nothing has fucking changed!'*

