



152 Remnants Of Power

The soft golden light from the heating lamps created a warm glow around Einar and Vanessa as they both took their seats under the old and mighty oak tree in the depths of the garden. The autumn air was crisp, and the leaves that still clung to the branches rustled gently in the breeze. The rich aroma of coffee filled the space between him and the woman, who sat across from him, her posture poised and elegant.

For several minutes, they had sat in silence, each sip of coffee punctuated by the occasional sound of birds or the distant hum of the mansion's activities. Einar was not usually one to feel uncomfortable, but Vanessa's quiet presence was disconcerting.

Finally, unable to stand it any longer, he broke the silence first. "You are awfully quiet for someone who offered their company to me."

Vanessa looked up from her cup, a sheepish smile tugging at her lips.

"I'm sorry," she said, setting her cup on the small

round table that separated them. "I wasn't sure how to start a conversation with you. I still consider you one of the most intimidating people in the business world. Even though some have proven that my opinion has been wrong this whole time."

Einar' caught the subtle implication in her words immediately. He had learned to read between the lines in business, where nothing was ever said directly.

'So, she doesn't accept Amelie as the new mistress and that remark was at her expense,' he thought. 'It seems she is clinging to whatever remnants of power she can find. Even the maids in this house are divided.'

His gaze shifted to the maid standing quietly behind Vanessa, her eyes downcast, her face expressionless.

Vanessa continued in the same seemingly friendly tone, her eyes never leaving the man's face. "How do you like staying in this mansion? I've heard you've been treating it less like a home and more like a hotel room. Is something bothering you? You can tell me, and I will take



care of it right away."

Einar allowed a small grin to form on his lips, but there was no warmth in it. "Thank you, but I don't want to bother you, Mrs. Bennett. If there is indeed something I require, I will make sure to ask the mistress of this house for help." 4

Vanessa flinched at his words, her expression momentarily faltering. Einar noticed the subtle change, the way her eyes narrowed ever so slightly before she quickly masked her reaction.

'So Estelle was right,' she thought. 'This man has a deeper attachment to Amelie than I realized. He doesn't even care that he's being openly rude to me right now.'

As Vanessa observed Einar's stoic expression and unwavering gaze, her mind raced. She had to figure out how to turn this situation to her advantage.

'What do I do? How do I use this to gain control?'

Just then, Rachel, Vanessa's assistant, approached them. She bent down to whisper something into Vanessa's ear, her words too



quiet for Einar to catch. Vanessa listened intently, then nodded, her face smoothing into an unreadable mask.

Rising to her feet, she offered Einar a polite smile and said, "I apologize, Mr. Ingvarsson, but it seems I am urgently needed elsewhere. Please, enjoy your coffee and... the rest of your day."

Meanwhile, across town, Amelie sat in her office at the Emerald Hotel, tapping her pen rhythmically against the polished surface of her desk. Her chin rested in her hand as she gazed absently at the papers in front of her, though her mind was miles away.

The past few days had been a whirlwind of activity, with Liam's guests arriving from abroad for the wedding. She had spent the entire day greeting them, ensuring they were comfortable and well-accommodated. It was the only thing Liam had allowed her to do, much to her frustration.

'He's being ridiculous,' she thought, a slight frown creasing her brow. 'Sheltering me like this... But every time I press him on it, he pouts

and starts acting all clingy and child-like. And of course, I give in. How can I not when he is like that?'

Her thoughts drifted to Elizabeth, who had been instrumental in managing the more delicate aspects of the wedding preparations.

Elizabeth had been working wonders, especially in her dealings with Angelina Castillo's circle of friends. Although Elizabeth's methods were not exactly above board—she had been sharing secrets and rumors to gain their favor—Amelie couldn't deny the positive outcomes.

Still, despite everything running smoothly, there was one thing that continued to bother her. Mr. Oscar Bennett, Liam's grandfather, had not RSVP'd to the wedding invitation. In fact, he had gone completely off the radar for some time now.

'Liam told me that he does this all the time, especially when he is with his friends, but still...'
Amelie chewed on her bottom lip, a nagging feeling growing stronger with each passing moment. Something about Oscar's silence felt different this time—more ominous even.



She leaned back in her chair, staring up at the ceiling as she tried to shake off the unease. But it clung to her, a persistent worry gnawing at the back of her mind. *'I don't like this feeling... What if something is wrong?'*

Her phone buzzed on the desk, snapping her out of her thoughts. She picked it up, seeing a message from Liam. "I'll be home late tonight again. Don't wait up for me."

Amelie sighed, but her lips involuntarily stretched into a subtle smile as the disappointing message was followed by a cute animated sticker of a corgi dog that was wiggling his short tail at her, almost mockingly.

It instantly made her think of Oscar Bennett again but she shook her head, dismissing all nervous thoughts.

She quickly typed a response and set her phone aside, sighing again as she returned to her paperwork.

'I will get Julia to look into this. For now... Let's get back to work.'

