



156 The Brooch

'The invitation we sent to the Clarks... They never RSVP'd. It is not as if I want to see him—far from it—but the sheer audacity of leaving us in suspense is just unbearable.' 1

Amelie sighed, tapping her fingers on top of the desk.

She couldn't help but wonder how furious it must have made Samantha. Amelie imagined the younger woman seething with anger, her frustration boiling over as she waited for her husband to make a decision whether to come to his ex-wife's wedding or not.

A small, almost guilty smile played on Amelie's lips at the thought. But she quickly pushed it aside and turned her attention to the present.

She glanced around her new office at Diamond Group Headquarters, feeling a sense of contentment she hadn't felt in years. The office, designed exactly to her specifications, was a blend of modern elegance and personal touches that made her feel at ease. The soft lighting, the

deep hues of the furniture, the large windows that bathed the room in natural light—everything was perfect.

She'd spent countless hours in her office at JFC Group, but it had never truly felt like hers. It was a space tied to Clark's family's legacy, to expectations she never felt she could fully live up to. It was one of the reasons she had often preferred working from her office at the Emerald Hotel, a place that felt more like a sanctuary than a workplace. Here, at Diamond Group, however, everything was different.

It finally felt like home.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a soft knock on the door. Amelie straightened in her chair and called out, "Come in."

"Mrs. Bennett, Julia Ashford, is here to see you." Anna stepped inside with her usual efficiency.

Amelie blinked in surprise but then looked at the time on her computer screen and realized that it was indeed the time for their scheduled meeting.

"Please, invite her in."



A moment later, Julia entered the room, looking the same as always.

She wore a black pantsuit, paired with a black shirt buttoned all the way to her neck. Her short hair was sleek, freshly cut, even shorter now, and she carried a black leather jacket draped over her right arm.

Amelie's eyes lingered on a small pink paper bag in Julia's other hand, her fingers fidgeting with it in a way that seemed almost nervous.

"Julia," Amelie greeted her sister warmly, though with a hint of agitation. "Please, have a seat."

Julia nodded and took the chair opposite Amelie. She placed the paper bag on the desk and, with a slight push, slid it toward her sister.

"It's... a little something to congratulate you on your wedding," she said, her tone unexpectedly hesitant. "I wanted to wait for the ceremony, but it arrived today, and I couldn't resist."

Amelie's eyes widened in surprise. Julia had never been one for sentimental gestures, and this unexpected show of thoughtfulness made her heart soften. She carefully reached for the

bag and pulled out a pink velvet box, tied with a delicate white ribbon. The logo on the box was instantly recognizable—a jewelry brand their mother used to adore.

She untied the ribbon and opened the box to reveal a stunning brooch. It was crafted in the shape of a delicate rose, the petals made of pale pink sapphires, each one intricately set in a bed of gleaming white gold. The leaves were small emeralds, catching the light with every subtle movement. Amelie's breath hitched as she stared at the beautiful piece, her heart swelling with emotion.

Tears welled up in her eyes as she looked back at Julia, who simply shrugged, trying to appear nonchalant but failing to hide the glimmer of affection in her eyes.

"Mom had a similar one when we were kids," Julia began, "I remember you always wanted it. She said you'd get it after you got married, and it made me so mad that she was already planning your wedding that I... I snuck into her closet one day when she was away and stole it. I threw it in a garbage can near the school. That caused a huge mess." 1



Amelie let out a soft chuckle. "Yes, I remember. Mom was furious, and I cried my eyes out because I somehow believed that without that brooch, I wouldn't be able to get married." 1

Julia smiled, a rare, genuine smile that softened her usually stern features. "And now look at you... You've been married twice."

A sudden silence settled between them after those words were uttered. Julia shifted slightly in her seat, clearing her throat as if preparing to say something difficult.

"I was never really mad at you, Lily," she said, using the childhood nickname that made Amelie's heart ache with nostalgia.

Amelie flinched slightly at the name, her eyes widening as she listened.

Julia continued. "You were too young to understand me, and I was too different to understand you. The truth is... I never hated you. I only ever hated our parents. And, well, it goes without saying that I loathed the Clarks.

I felt trapped around them, like I was suffocating. Running away was the only way I knew to find

myself, to figure out who I wanted to be. And while I was watching you from afar, becoming that perfect woman, that perfect wife they all wanted you to be... I knew it wasn't my place to come back and interfere. But now... now I see that no matter what I had planned, I would have failed you as your big sister anyway. I'm just... I'm just glad you got your second chance, Lily."

Amelie was at a loss for words.

She had never truly hated Julia too, not even after she had left. There were moments when she felt abandoned, especially during the hardest times in her life, but she had never blamed Julia for her choices. Still, she had always assumed that her sister resented her instead, that their relationship was too fractured to ever mend.

Amelie opened her mouth to respond, but Julia, sensing the emotional weight of the moment, stood up abruptly, interrupting her.

She slipped her leather jacket back on and spoke again. "Anyway... regarding your request... I'll have my people look into Oscar Bennett's whereabouts. Luckily, I have enough employees around the world, so the report will be on your



desk in less than thirty-six hours."

Amelie nodded. "Thank you," she said softly. "I don't want to alarm the police or the consulate just yet. It would create unwanted noise, and we don't need that so close to the wedding."

Julia nodded too, her expression turning serious again. She turned to leave, her hand on the door when Amelie called out, "Julia."

The woman paused, looking over her shoulder with a raised eyebrow.

"Thank you for this gift," Amelie said, holding up the brooch. "I love it."

Julia offered her a subtle smile and walked out of the door.

