

## 162 Empty Bed

Carla hummed a soft, cheerful melody under her breath as she made her way back to the Bennett mansion. 1

She felt lighter than she had in weeks, her footsteps almost bouncing off the floor as she moved through the quiet halls. Her day off had been magical, much more so than she had expected.

She had been on a secret date with Julia Ashford, and while Julia had insisted it wasn't a real date and told Carla not to get any wrong ideas, the maid couldn't help but feel a flutter of hope in her chest.

She had enjoyed every moment of their time together, from the quiet dinner to the walk along the waterfront. Julia even took her for a ride on her incredibly expensive and wild-looking bike through the night city! That was one of the most romantic and thrilling dates in Carla's entire life.

Even though Julia had kept her distance, her presence had filled Carla with warmth, and she

found herself replaying the evening in her mind, hoping they could do it again soon.

As the young woman reached the second floor, she continued humming, her eyes scanning the hallway to make sure everything was in order--that was her sister's request and she was determined to comply just to avoid her nagging in the morning.

It was already past midnight, and the mansion was dead quiet, the only sounds being the faint rustle of leaves outside and the occasional creak of the old house settling.

Having almost reached the end of the hall, Carla was about to turn around when she noticed that the door to Vanessa's room was slightly ajar. A sliver of darkness stretched out from the doorway, and she could hear faint murmurs coming from inside.

*'What is going on in there?'*

Curious and sneaky as she was, Carla tiptoed closer to the room, her movements careful and quiet. Vanessa rarely left her door open, especially this late at night, and once Carla reached the doorway, she pressed herself

against the wall and leaned in, trying to catch a glimpse of what was going on inside.

Through the narrow gap, the maid could make out Vanessa's silhouette in the dim light, and her heart nearly stopped when she saw that Vanessa wasn't alone. The widow was speaking softly, her words interrupted by heavy breathing. "Here you go... careful... you only need to stay here until the morning... Just like that..."

Carla squinted into the darkness, her eyes slowly adjusting. As the scene came into focus, her jaw nearly dropped in shock.

*'What the... hell..?'*

She recognized Liam Bennett, and he was clearly unconscious. Vanessa was carefully lowering him onto her bed, making sure that the man would not wake up.

The maid instantly froze, her heartbeat drumming in her ears.

What was Liam doing here? Why was he in Vanessa's room, and why did he look like he was out cold?

So she stood there for a while, rooted to the spot as if under a spell, her thoughts spinning while she tried to make sense of what she was seeing.

*'I don't understand it... No, I don't believe it! Why would he be in her bedroom? I was certain he was head over heels for Mrs. Amelie Bennett, so why the hell would he..?'*

Then, a sudden realization finally hit her—her sister Mary had mentioned that Liam sleepwalked sometimes and it all began to make perfect sense to her.

Carla held her breath and looked back into the room, noting Liam's closed eyes and the way he seemed half-awake, obedient, and limp.

It was clear he wasn't fully conscious, but what worried Carla even more was Vanessa's behavior. She watched as the woman leaned in and kissed Liam's face, her actions intimate and affectionate, as if he were her lover.

Carla felt a cold sweat run down her back.

She didn't understand what she was witnessing, but she knew it wasn't right. 1



Her mind screamed at her to do something, to intervene, but her body refused to move. Instead, she slowly backed away from the door and started quietly making her way back to the staircase. She needed to tell someone, to find help.

Once the maid finally reached the first floor, Carla almost collided with Einar, who was just coming around the corner. He caught her before she could hit the floor, his hands steadying her as she regained her balance.

"Whoa, easy there," the man said, his eyes filled with concern. "Are you alright? You look like you've seen a ghost."

Carla's face was indeed as white as a sheet but her heart was galloping way too loudly.

She looked up at Einar, her eyes blinking rapidly, unable to focus on her handsome face.

At first, she hesitated, unsure if she could trust him with what she had seen. But then she remembered that Einar was a friend of Amelie's, and a flicker of hope ignited within her trembling chest.

"I... I don't know what to do," Carla stammered, her voice barely above a whisper. She glanced around, making sure no one was listening, then pulled Einar behind the corner of the living room, away from prying eyes and ears. "Mr. Ingvarsson, what do we do? It looks like Mr. Bennett is in big trouble!"

Einar's eyebrows shot up in surprise. "What do you mean? Where is he?"

Carla leaned in closer, her voice dropping to a frantic whisper. "He's in Mrs. Vanessa Bennett's room! He was sleepwalking!"

Einar's eyes widened, and he looked at Carla, clearly taken aback. *'Sleepwalking? I didn't know he had such a condition... So did he walk into her room by mistake or...?'*

Einar composed himself, focusing on Carla's panicked expression. "What exactly did you see?" he asked, his shining blue eyes narrowing with the blend of worry and suspicion.

There was definitely something strange about this situation.

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Amelie entered the Bennett mansion, dragging her heavy feet as she slowly made her way toward the stairs.

Every step felt like a monumental effort, her limbs aching from the long day at work. She had barely managed to keep herself together at the office, but now that she was home, all she wanted to do was collapse into bed.

*'I can't even think of taking a shower... I need to make sure to set the alarm clock to the right time and wash myself in the morning.'*

As she walked towards the bedroom, Amelie noticed that the door was slightly open.

A sense of unease crept over her as she went inside, only to find the bed empty, though with a clear sign that Liam had slept in it before.

Amelie's heart skipped a beat, panic beginning to rise in her chest.

*'Where is Liam? It's way too late for him to be out and I am sure he would have notified me if he did.'*

Given her husband's fragile state after his



grandfather's death, Amelie couldn't help but worry.

Turning on her heel, Amelie made her way down the hallway, her eyes scanning for any sign of Liam's presence. As she passed one of the guest rooms, she saw Einar stepping out, his expression unusually tense.

"Mr. Ingvarsson?" she called, utterly surprised to see him there, and at such an hour. "What are you doing here? Have you seen Liam perhaps?"

Einar hesitated, his bright eyes flickering as he mulled over his response.

He knew he couldn't keep this from her, this matter was way too delicate and it was not that heartless to use it to his own benefit, no matter how tempting it was.

Taking a deep breath, the man sighed and finally said, "One of the maids and I saw your husband sleepwalking. We helped him get to the closest room he was near when we noticed him... I guess he will have to spend the rest of the night there. I hope it won't be a problem."

Amelie's shoulders sagged with relief, though



worry still gnawed at her. *'Sleepwalking again? I guess the condition is triggered by stress... Well, as long as he's alright...'*

She looked back at Einar, her eyes searching his for reassurance. "How was he? Was he okay? I hope he didn't hurt himself or—"

Einar cut her off gently, his voice cold but soothing. "He was alright. The maid and I just saw him standing in the hallway next to the room, and we carefully brought him there. Let him sleep, Mrs. Bennett. He will be alright once he wakes up."

Amelie nodded, letting out a sigh as she tried to ease the knot of anxiety in her chest. "Yes, you are right... Thank you, Mr. Ingvarsson. It's a very delicate matter, and I am grateful that you handled it without prejudice."

Einar opened his mouth as if to say something more, but then he thought better of it. He sighed and ran his fingers through his blond hair as he added, "You are welcome, Mrs. Bennett. Have a good night." 1

