

## 164 Concern

Liam met Einar's intense blue gaze, his heart pounding in his chest. He could see the fierce protectiveness in the man's eyes, the depth of his care for Amelie. It was a stark reminder of how much she meant to the people around her, how much she had been through, and how much she still had to endure. 1

But none of that would be Liam's fault anymore. And he had to make sure his opponent knew that.

"Yes, Mr. Ingvarsson," Liam replied standing up and leveling himself with the man, his voice steady but low. "You've made yourself perfectly clear. And I understand the gravity of what you're saying. I will do everything in my power to ensure that Amelie is never hurt because of me. Or anyone else."

Einar straightened up, his expression softening slightly, though the tension in his posture still remained. "Good. Because I won't hesitate to step in if I think you're not capable of keeping her safe." 1

With that, Einar turned on his heel and walked toward the door, leaving Liam standing behind his desk. The office felt suffocating, and Liam could not tell whether he felt hot from the boiling anger or the arrogance that had still managed to hurt his pride.

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Liam spent the rest of the day cooped up in his office, tension hanging over him like a dark cloud.

He buried himself in work, trying to take care of the tasks that Amelie had been forced to leave unfinished when she had to attend to some urgent matters at the hotel. But no matter how hard he tried to focus, his thoughts kept drifting back to Vanessa and the events of the previous night.

His phone buzzed on his desk, Amelie's name flashing on the screen. He ignored it, just as he had ignored her previous calls and messages. 2

He didn't know what to say to her—didn't know how to explain what had happened or why he hadn't been there when she woke up. He hoped that by ignoring her messages, she would simply



assume he was busy with work and leave it at that.

But even as he thought this, a pang of guilt twisted in his stomach. He hated keeping things from her, but right now, he had no idea how to handle the truth.

The intercom on his desk buzzed, and his secretary's voice crackled through the speaker. "Mr. Bennett, Mrs. Vanessa Bennett is here to see you. Should I send her in?"

Liam hesitated; he had indeed sent Vanessa a message asking her to come by so they could talk, but now that she was actually here, he wasn't sure he was ready for the conversation that awaited them. He knew it wouldn't be pleasant—knew that they needed to address what had happened, but the thought of facing her now made his stomach churn.

After a brief pause, Liam pressed the button on the intercom and finally replied. "Yes, send her in."

The door to his office opened, and Vanessa stepped inside, her expression calm and somewhat unreadable.





She moved with her usual grace, but Liam noticed a slight tension in her shoulders, a stiffness that betrayed her discomfort. He gestured for her to take a seat across from him, and once she was seated, he leaned forward, not giving her a chance to speak first.

"What happened last night," he began, "was something I never thought you were capable of, Vanessa. Not only have you betrayed the memory of my late brother, but you also tried to create a grave misunderstanding that could have resulted in something neither of us would be capable of handling. Whether your intentions last night were good or bad, what you did was inappropriate and unacceptable." 1

Vanessa lowered her eyes, her nails digging into the skin of her palms as she clenched her hands into fists. *'He has changed so much...'* she thought, *'He would never talk so boldly to me in the past, but now... Inappropriate? Unacceptable? If I tell him that he was the one who forced himself onto me—'*

Her train of thought was abruptly cut off when Liam sighed and spoke again,

"Don't even think about gaslighting me into believing this was my fault, Vanessa. You know that I have never harmed anyone while sleepwalking before. So choose your words carefully before you say anything in retort."

Vanessa bit her lower lip, her fists tightening as her fingers clenched around the fabric of her pants. Her body trembled with frustration, but she managed to regain her composure, her voice low and tense as she spoke through gritted teeth. "I'm sorry, Liam. I was drunk... I made a huge mistake."

Liam sighed again; he leaned back in his chair and dismissed her with a wave of his hand. "I will think about a suitable solution for this and let you know later. For now... Please keep your distance from both me and my wife. You may go now." 3

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Back at the mansion, Amelie sat on the edge of their bed, pressing her phone against her chin while she stared out the window.

She was worried sick about Liam—worried about his silence. He hadn't replied to any of her



messages or calls, and though she wanted to trust that he was simply busy with work, his lack of communication gnawed at her like a hungry beast.

*'He usually tries to inform me when he's running late because of work, but today... having spent the night away while still in such a fragile condition and then burying himself in work... I just can't understand what is happening to him at this point, and I am worried...'*

Her thoughts were interrupted by a soft knock on the door. Assuming it was one of the maids, she automatically called out, "Come in."

To her great surprise, it was Liam who stepped inside.

He looked pale and fidgety, his eyes avoiding hers as he closed the door behind him. Amelie stood up from the bed, her eyes wide with concern. "Liam? Why did you knock? Is everything alright?"

her husband didn't answer immediately. He hesitated, his gaze shifting to the floor as if he couldn't bear to look at her.





Amelie's worry deepened, and she quickly crossed the room to him, gently placing her hands on his shoulders. "Liam? What is it?"

Liam finally looked at his wife's face, his stormy eyes burning with anguish. He opened his mouth to speak, but his voice came out as a whisper, barely audible. "I am the biggest scum there is, Lily... No, I don't even have the right to call you that anymore..."

Amelie felt her heart drop, a wave of fear washing over her as she took in the pain etched across his face.

She, too, turned pale, her voice trembling while she reached up to gently cup his cheek. "I don't understand... What is it? Talk to me, Liam, please."