

## 170 Little Stunt

Liam's finger pressed on the computer mouse as yet another document was added to his confidential folder. He let out a long, tired sigh, and moved his eyes to Austin, whose fingers were almost flying over the keyboard of his laptop. 1

"How many of these emails do you still need to send out?"

Austin, his eyes still glued to the laptop screen, released a quiet groan and answered in a somewhat miserable tone. "I don't think I will be done before lunch, Mr. Bennett. Now that people know that you are back at work, this correspondence just never stops!"

Liam sighed again; there was too much to be done.

It was not only his absence that had made his work pile up, but also the unexpected passing of Oscar Bennett that left him with tons of unresolved matters both in his unfinished business ventures and his active personal life.



In an attempt to divert Austin's attention from his laptop and help him go over some of his grandfather's issues, Liam started an hours-long discussion, and eventually, their discussion led to Vanessa.

"She doesn't even leave the house anymore," Austin said, his voice low and concerned. "That's how ashamed of herself she is. Her assistant is doing everything on her behalf, but this cannot go on like that. What's worse is that Mr. Ingvarsson was a witness to that incident... Nothing stops him from using it against you."

Liam's jaw tightened. "If he hurts me, he hurts Amelie, and he won't do anything to hurt her," he said firmly. "But what Vanessa did was more than simply out of line and needs to be taken care of as soon as possible."

He paused, his eyes narrowing as he looked at his assistant's worried face. "Austin... send some of the housekeeping staff back to Noah's mansion right away."

Austin's eyes widened in surprise. "Does this mean you—"

Liam nodded, his expression darkening. "Yes. It



was Grandpa's gentle heart that allowed her to be here, but I won't be this lenient. I can't let anyone mess with my marriage. Even if I have to go against the wishes of those who are no longer here." 2

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Samantha sat in the small coffee shop, a place she hadn't visited since she was still trying to get into Amelie's good graces.

She remembered the last time she had been here, how she had sat in this very chair, only to have Amelie ask her to leave.

Back then, she thought of this place as something forbidden; something she could never have until she stole it from someone else, and now, though, the charm of the spot had faded. The bright greens of spring and summer were long gone, replaced by the dull, fading browns and grays of late autumn.

But Samantha wasn't here for the ambiance.

The satisfaction she felt came from something much simpler: she could sit here now without anyone telling her to leave. The sheer fact that

she could claim this spot, once a place of exclusion, now a place of defiance, filled her with a petty joy.

She took a sip of her herbal tea, the warmth spreading through her, and smiled to herself.

She was about to order a cupcake to go with her tea when something caught her eye. Off to her left, two people had taken seats at a table near the fence. As she squinted to get a better look, her heart skipped a beat. She recognized them instantly—Rebeccah, her maid, and Jonathan Radcliffe, Elizabeth Gilmore's lover.

Samantha's eyes widened in surprise.

*'What on earth are they doing together?'* she thought, her unease growing. She watched as they settled in, their heads close together, speaking in low voices.

Her curiosity piqued, and a knot of suspicion formed in her stomach. She needed to know what they were talking about in such a secretive manner.

Quietly, she got up from her armchair and moved behind a large potted plant near the



fence, hiding herself from their view. She positioned herself carefully, ensuring she could hear their conversation without being seen.

Rebeccah's careful voice floated over to her, quiet and nervous. "Thank you for meeting me on such short notice, John. I really appreciate this."

The man smiled reassuringly. "It's no problem, Becky. When you mentioned it was about Samantha Blackwood, I couldn't simply shrug you off."

Samantha's eyebrows shot up. *"They're meeting to talk about me?!"* She pressed herself closer to the plant, straining to hear more.

Rebeccah glanced around, her entire body looked tense and uncomfortable. "I heard from someone that you have been collecting dirt on her, so I guess you're the best person for me to turn to with what I have, but..."

"But?" John prompted, leaning in. "Oh, I guess you can't trust me simply because you heard this about me... Well, if it helps, I can say something I know about her, and you can treat it as an information exchange."



Rebecca seemed to consider this for a while, then nodded. "Yes... I guess that would be fine."

John leaned back in his chair, his voice low.

"Samantha Blackwood used to be a prostitute in a hostess bar. There is proof of it—her employer has the original employee contract with her ID details and her signature on it. I know that because I've seen a copy of that contract myself."

Samantha's hand flew to her mouth, stifling a gasp. *'That moron! He never destroyed my contract after all!'* The anger coursed through her veins, making her grip the edge of the plant pot so hard her knuckles turned white.

Rebecca hesitated for a moment, then pulled out her phone. She slid it across the table towards her companion, her expression serious and tense. The man quickly covered it with a napkin, pulling it closer to him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's a recording of Mrs. Clark harassing the dressmaker she hired," Rebecca replied, her voice barely above a whisper. "The video is shaky, but you can clearly tell it's her."

Samantha's eyes narrowed in fury. *'That bitch! I knew she was bad news when I noticed the way she was looking at Richard. Well, we'll see how far this little stunt will take you.'*

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