

## 181 A Threat

Samantha stood just outside the main entrance of the mansion, tapping her foot impatiently against the cobblestone driveway. She glanced down the long, winding road for what felt like the hundredth time, squinting against the high afternoon sun. 1

It was cold, her nerves were fraying, and the last thing she wanted to do was play hostess to a ballerina she'd never met.

Richard had sent one of his personal drivers to fetch Daphne Stone from the airport, which irked Samantha more than she cared to admit. She still didn't understand why this girl was getting such special treatment, especially from a man who had never even laid eyes on her in the past.

"What could she possibly have done to warrant such attention?" The woman muttered under her breath, crossing her arms tightly over her chest. Her mind whirled with irritation. "What if she goes back to Paris and starts yapping about her stay here? The next thing we know, this house will be flooded with orphaned ballerinas!"

Her face twisted into a scowl as she remembered her brief phone call with Daphne's curator, who had insisted that the girl would need a quiet place to rest and recover from the initial treatment of her condition.

*'I wouldn't mind if she were just some kid,'* Samantha thought, rolling her eyes. *'But she's nineteen already! A grown woman, for God's sake!'*

While Samantha was busy stewing in her thoughts, the sleek black town car approached the mansion's entrance. She was too lost in her irritation to notice its arrival until the sound of the car door shutting snapped her out of her thoughts. Startled, she looked in front of her to see a young woman standing next to the black car.

Samantha's eyes widened as she took in Daphne's appearance.

*'She is... too beautiful!'*

The girl was indeed strikingly beautiful, more so than Samantha had expected.

Daphne had long, straight blonde hair that caught the light just so, framing a face with sharp blue eyes and high cheekbones. Her pink,



pouty lips curved into a slight smile as she met Samantha's gaze.

Daphne's tall, lean frame was accentuated by her fitted black pants, which highlighted the graceful strength of her long legs.

Samantha's stomach twisted with an unfamiliar pang. As she continued to scrutinize the girl, she realized her worst suspicions were confirmed.

Daphne's beauty was understated yet captivating, the kind that drew people in without them even realizing it. 1

At first glance, the girl seemed almost plain, dressed simply with no makeup or bright clothes to speak of. Yet there was something undeniably elegant about her—a quiet confidence that commanded attention. Samantha found herself staring at the girl longer than she intended, and that only deepened her annoyance.

Daphne met Samantha's gaze steadily, saying nothing. Her silence felt intentional, almost challenging. It was as if she were quietly asserting herself, refusing to be intimidated or diminished.

Samantha cleared her throat, trying to mask her irritation with a forced smile. "I am Samantha

Clark, and you must be Daphne Stone. Nice to meet you," she said in a somewhat cold, nonchalant tone.

Daphne nodded but still didn't say anything. Her piercing blue eyes remained fixed on Samantha's, unblinking.

*'What a rude little wench!'* The woman fumed inwardly, feeling her temper flare. Who did this girl think she was, staring her down like that?

Determined to put the girl in her place, Samantha's brows furrowed as she decided to be rude right back.

"Well, what are you standing there for?" she snapped. "Are you expecting someone to carry your things for you? I was already generous enough to allow you to stay here for free. Don't expect any special treatment; you are not really a guest here."

Daphne smirked, a small, knowing smile that only infuriated Samantha more.

"If I am not a guest here, then who are you?"

Samantha's face flushed a deep red at the girl's insolence. She opened her mouth, ready to lash out, but then stopped herself, remembering



Richard's insistence on treating Daphne well. The last thing she needed was for him to get angry at her for making a scene, especially with the maids standing there as witnesses.

Taking a deep breath, Samantha forced herself to calm down. She straightened her posture, lifting her chin defiantly. "I am the mistress of this house," she replied, her voice now steadier. "Mrs. Clark."

Daphne simply picked up her suitcase and started walking toward the mansion, her unharried, graceful movements reflected her long experience of dancing.

As she passed Samantha, she paused for a brief moment, turning her head slightly so that her words were just audible enough for Samantha to hear.

"Mrs. Clark?" She murmured, her tone almost mocking. "The only Mrs. Clark I know is dead."

Samantha's eyes widened in shock, and her mouth fell open as she processed Daphne's words.

The audacity of this girl! She was about to shout something—anything—at her, but before she could gather her thoughts, Daphne had already



disappeared into the mansion, following one of the maids inside.

The woman stood frozen in place, her fists clenched so tightly that her nails dug into her palms.

*'Dead? Was that an attempt to hint that she doesn't accept me as Richard's wife?!'* 1

She felt a surge of anger rise up in her, a hot, blinding fury that made her want to scream. How dare Daphne speak to her like that? How dare she walk into her home and throw around such insults?

For a moment, she regretted that Daphne's words were left unheard by others.

Taking several deep breaths, Samantha struggled to compose herself. She couldn't afford to let Daphne get under her skin. Not here, not now. Not when Richard had made it clear that the girl was to be treated like a guest, regardless of how Samantha felt.

Still, as she watched Daphne walk up the stairs, Samantha couldn't shake the feeling that this girl was more than just a young ballerina looking for a place to rest. There was something else about her, something that made Samantha's instincts

scream that she was a threat.

And Samantha Clark had never been one to back down from a threat.

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