

184 Unfortunate Situation

Samantha sat elegantly on the plush, cream-colored sofa in her lavish living room, the morning December sun streaming through the tall windows, casting a warm glow over the room's luxurious furnishings. 1

Across from her, Shelly Grant nearly slammed her cup of coffee onto the glass coffee table, her face flushed with anger.

"I can't believe Mr. Clark agreed for that girl to stay in your house! Does he not understand how bad it reflects on him?" Shelly huffed, her voice rising in disbelief. "If my husband were to allow anything like that, I'd throw the biggest tantrum of my life!"

Samantha hid a small, satisfied smile behind her own cup, sipping her tea with practiced grace.

Since learning that Kyle wasn't as simple as she had once thought, she had quickly realized the need to gather allies she could trust—or at least manipulate. Shelly, with her impulsive nature and simple opinions, was the perfect candidate for that. Samantha had subtly encouraged Shelly's indignation, hoping to use it to her

advantage.

When Shelly had heard about Daphne staying in the Clark mansion, her outrage had been immediate, and to Samantha's pleasant surprise, she had eagerly invited herself over for brunch to discuss the "unfortunate situation" in person.

Now, as they sat together, sharing pastries and steaming cups of coffee and fragrant tea, Samantha finally allowed herself to relax. She needed someone simple on her side, and Shelly's support was proving more useful than she had anticipated.

"Honestly, Samantha," Shelly continued, still irritated, "you have been far too patient with that girl. She is a nobody, and yet she thinks she can just waltz in here and take advantage of your hospitality?"

Samantha smiled coolly, carefully maintaining her composed exterior while internally relishing Shelly's reaction. "I am doing what I can, Shelly. But you know how Richard is. He has a soft spot for anyone in need. Just like his gullible ex-wife."

Shelly snorted, her anger simmering just below the surface. "A soft spot? Please, that's not what this is about. She's clearly aiming to use him."

And you."

Just then, the sound of quiet footsteps descending the grand staircase echoed almost inaudibly through the hall. Daphne appeared at the top of the stairs, her lips curling into a smug grin as she spotted the two women in the living room.

'Well, isn't this perfect?' she thought, her eyes gleaming with mischief. 'Two witches with one stone.' 1

She moved quietly, her steps deliberate as she reached into her pocket and retrieved a small camera that Kyle had given her.

Careful not to be noticed or heard, she placed it atop a picture frame on the wall, angling it just right to capture everything that would happen in the room. Satisfied, she descended the rest of the stairs and strode into the living room, her expression turning haughty as she faced the two women.

"Idle morning, huh?" Daphne remarked, her voice dripping with sarcasm. "Nothing can compare to a life of luxury, especially when you don't even have to lift a finger to get it." 1

She grabbed a small dessert fork from the coffee

table and casually pierced a slice of apple with it, holding the fruit up to her lips as she looked down on Samantha and Shelly with an air of condescension.

Samantha's calm demeanor wavered for a moment and she frowned, giving Daphne a sharp, warning look.

"I don't know how they do things in France, but here, you are to respect your hosts, young lady! No matter the case, you should watch your manners while you are here!"

Daphne chewed the apple slice slowly, her grin widening as she swallowed. "Manners? Don't be like that, Sam. We are practically of the same standing here, wouldn't you agree?"

Samantha's eyes widened in shock, and she nearly jumped to her feet, her face flushed with annoyance. "What did you say?!"

Shelly, who had been watching the exchange with growing anger, stood up and took a step closer to Daphne, her eyes narrowing in fury. "For someone who spent most of her life in France, you are awfully rude, young lady!"

Daphne smirked, casting a brief glance in the direction of the hidden camera, making sure

both women were clearly in the shot.

She then looked back at Shelly and shrugged nonchalantly. "What did I say that was so wrong, though? Did you really think Mr. Clark allowed me to stay here simply out of the goodness of his heart?"

Samantha's face turned an alarming shade of purple as her rage boiled over. Before she could respond, Shelly's temper snapped instead. She raised her hand and slapped Daphne hard across the face, the sound echoing sharply through the room.

"How dare you?!" the woman screeched, "Mrs. Clark was so kind to let you stay in her home, and yet you dare to be so rude and disrespectful toward her? Where do you get the nerve?!"

Samantha hurried to Shelly's side, her expression one of concern as she tried to soothe her friend, though she could barely conceal the flicker of amusement dancing in her eyes.

"Oh my, Shelly! Don't be so harsh! The girl is an orphan; even the most prestigious foreign schools cannot cross that out! Don't be so mean to her!" 1

Shelly turned back to Samantha, her eyes filled

with frustration and disbelief. "You are way too kind, Sam! She comes to stay with you and yet she dares to be so rude! I would never tolerate such insolence!"

Samantha nearly let out a giggle but managed to hold it in, nodding sympathetically at her friend. "Come now, Shelly, let's not spoil our mood with this. She made a mistake, and I'm sure she will come to her senses!"

Samantha glanced at Daphne, who was pressing a cold hand against her stinging cheek.

The ballerina's eyes were filled with a mix of anger and malice, and Samantha couldn't help but feel a twisted sense of satisfaction.

As she guided Shelly toward the stairs, she gave Daphne another arrogant smirk. "Let's continue this in my study, where we won't be interrupted by anyone."

The two women walked away, leaving Daphne standing alone in the living room. As soon as they were out of sight, Daphne turned her attention back to the picture frame, her frown deepening.

'Damn it! If only that wench had been the one to slap me instead!'

