

189 Once And For All

"I am fine, Liam, it's really not a big deal!" Amelie moved up in the hospital bed but her husband gently pressed her back down, shaking his head almost scoldingly. 1

"You are fine now, but people don't just get sick right away after standing in cold water! I want you to stay under the doctor's supervision until tomorrow evening at least and only then will I think what to do about you."

His nagging tone made Amelie chuckle for a brief second before the man shot her a stern, warning glance which made her immediately assume a serious expression.

He liked that her husband was worried about her, but sometimes it was just too much.

"Why did you jump after that stupid dog anyway?" Liam continued, "He might look useless but he can swim!" 2

Amelie sighed and shook her head, "The waves were just too strong, he was drowning!"

The man sighed as well. "Like I said, you are just too kind... I really hope you won't get sick, Lily."

Not because there is a possibility that you are already pregnant, but because I genuinely worry for you."

With a soft smile tugging at the corners of her lips, Amelie cupped Liam's cheek, and he instantly caught it, flinging slightly as he felt the coldness of his wife's skin.

"I will go get some hot tea," he told her, leaving his seat beside her, "You just rest and don't worry about anything."

"Alright."

Liam offered the woman a short wave and left the room, sliding the door shut behind him. He turned to the right to see if there was someone who could direct him to the cafeteria when his eyes met Richard's dark glare.

Marching angrily past him, Liam grabbed the man by the wrist and pulled him around the closest corner.

"What the hell are you doing next to her room?" Liam scowled, almost growling but Richard only looked back at him with empty eyes. "How is she?"

"None of your damn business! Go back to that

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witch you call your wife and don't you dare show yourself around Lily's room again!"

"Samantha got hurt too, you know!" Richard tried to retort but the weakness of his voice betrayed his real feelings. "You are lucky that I am not going to press charges against you for letting that mutt of yours attack my pregnant wife! My child could have been endangered!"

"Ah, yes, your child," Liam couldn't help but scoff. "But you know, Mr. Clark, as a future father myself, I can tell you the same thing. Your wife provoked my wife and my baby could have been endangered." 1

"What?" Richard's face turned even paler from shock. "Amelie... is pregnant?"

"Whether she is pregnant or not is none of your business. But I do want to warn you, Mr. Clark," Liam took a step forward, closing the distance between them, his dark gray eyes flickering with menace. "If you or anyone related to you dares to do anything remotely harmful to Amelie again, I swear to God, I will destroy you." 2

With that, he offered the man one last dangerous grin, before walking away from him, leaving Richard alone, listening to the loud drumming in

paused, turning back to look at his wife. "What's wrong?"

"I think I want to spend the night here," Samantha replied in a quiet voice.

"You said you were scared of hospitals," Richard answered almost carelessly.

"Yes, but... Well, I am worried about the baby too, you know... I think it's better to be safe."

"Fine," Richard sighed and slid the door open. "I will send someone to fetch you tomorrow then."

He left without even giving Sam an opportunity to say anything else. The woman watched the closed door silently for several long moments before narrowing her eyes, her fists clenching at the edge of the soft blanket.

'He doesn't care anymore, huh?' Samantha's lips stretched into a bitter smile. 'Yes, I am only of value to him right now because I am pregnant. Soon, he will discard me like I am absolutely nothing and I won't let him do that, no matter what.'

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190 One Step Farther

Samantha watched an old maid in a strict but loose black uniform arrange the tea set on the coffee table in front of her.

'I did not want to come here, I'd rather we met in a public place but Kyle insisted on my meeting him here to protect my privacy, so here I am... God, after Richard's mansion, this place feels suffocating.'

Sipping on her tea, Samantha took a quick look around the living room, grimacing in clear disgust.

Jason's apartment was not small; it actually looked just as she imagined it, however, it was still rather plain compared to the places she had visited so far.

The surrounding design was simple yet tasteful--a clear indication of hire professionalism rather than personal taste. A few antique pieces stood out drastically, looking somewhat out of place, but the woman ignored them as she understood the rich people's need to flex with such useless things.

"So, to what do I owe such a *pleasure*?" Jason



finally broke the silence, posing a question in a mocking tone.

Jason, too, did not like to see Sam in his house but when she buzzed his intercom and demanded to see him right away, he had no choice but to let her in.

Samantha offered him another disgusted look, placing her cup back on the table. "I don't care for your sarcasm, so save it. I came here to give you a warning. The games are over, Jason. Leave me alone and I will do you no harm."

"Harm?" The man almost choked on his drink, spilling it all over his chin. "Since when are you so brave, Sam? What kind of harm can you even cause me?"

His laughter cut through the living room like resounding steel but Samantha did not care for it. A slight flicker of worry behind Jason's scoff made her realize that he still got nervous.

"Laugh all you want, but if you don't play your cards right, I can guarantee you that you will regret it."

"Oho!" Jason let out another scoff which made the woman frown. "Whatever do you mean, Mrs. Clark?"

With an arrogant smirk playing on her lips, Samantha reached for her purse and retrieved a couple of printed pictures, sliding them toward the man over the coffee table.

Jason hesitated, assessing Sam's composed face with a long, suspicious look. Then, releasing a heavy sigh, he picked up the pictures, his eyebrows shooting up as his eyes registered their contents.

"Don't tell me you haven't noticed that Penelope has not been home in a while. I don't think a sixteen-year-old can be out of the house freely for so long."

Jason was stunned and speechless, his wide eyes running over the pictures, and Samantha truly enjoyed that sight.

Indeed, the pictures were shocking; they showcased both Tyler and Penelope in a dark, empty room, their eyes covered with a piece of black cloth, their legs and arms tied up behind their backs.

The more Jason looked at them, the more his mind refused to understand what was happening.

"You are insane!" Finally, he was able to force

himself to speak again. "What kind of psycho is even capable of something like that?"

"Psycho?" Samantha couldn't help but laugh in his face. "You are such a hypocrite, Jason. Weren't you the one who had threatened to do the same thing to me before? Now, how does it feel to be on the receiving end of that deal?"

She leaned back on the couch, clasping her hands on top of her round stomach, her lips spreading into a wider grin. "And if you still think I am joking around here, I guess I can do the same thing to your brother William too. What do you think about that?"

Jason finally got a hold of himself, his fingers clenching, trembling with rage. "You crazy bitch! Do you really think something like that could scare me?!"

"You should be scared," the woman's face suddenly grew dark and cold, "or perhaps I should take it one step farther? How would you feel if your niece Penelope became a prostitute too? I have my connections too, you know. One phone call and she will be sold to prostitution somewhere abroad. Left in a poor foreign country with no passport and no one to go to. Will you be okay knowing that it all happened to

her because of you?"

"You filthy, evil witch..." Jason hissed through gritted teeth but Samantha was left unaffected. She only shrugged her shoulders, offering him a careless response. "I have turned into this witch thanks to people like you."

"Fine," the man tossed the pictures onto the table and they slid down to the floor right away.

Samantha ignored that and Jason continued.

"You won. I won't bother you ever again. Happy?"

"Almost," Sam pulled out a notebook, a pen, and a stamping kit from her purse, handing it over to Jason. "Write it down, sign it, and leave your thumbprint next to it. Then, we will be even."

Jason was left with no choice but to follow her demands. Once the statement was signed, Samantha quickly hid the notebook back in her purse and smiled again.

"One last thing... Give me back all the money I have given you."

"What?! This money--"

"Don't make me angry again, you moron,"

Samantha pointed at the pictures on the floor,

"All of it. Now."

"Fine," Jason scowled, rising to his feet. He walked up to the TV stand, casting a brief glance at a small picture frame next to it, then picked up his wallet, and started counting the bills. "I don't have all of it in cash on me. Can I transfer the rest of it later?"

"Sure," she replied, snatching the bills from the man's hands. "I will text you the bank account number later today."

With that, Samantha offered him one last fake smile and left Jason's apartment, shutting the door behind her back with a resounding thud.

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