

38 A Special Gift

The day of Amelie's birthday approached so fast, that she didn't even realize that it was already the time to turn over yet another calendar page of her life. 1

The gift deliveries began early in the morning and since most of the people were still under the impression that Amelie still lived in the Clark mansion, she had to spend the night before her birthday there so that she could personally receive the presents delivered by the personal assistants of those who were close with her and her family.

"The last thing I need right now is to create even more gossip around myself." That was the only thought that helped her go through the ordeal of staying in that house.

The gifts she received were almost the same as the ones sent to her last year. They were bound to be the same. Getting any kind of present in a high society meant getting a thoughtless sentiment picked up by a personal shopper according to the basic public knowledge learned

about the receiver.

Amelie didn't mind that. After all, when it came to buying gifts for someone other than Richard or her friends, she did exactly the same. 1

'A box from my favorite clothing brand?' Her eyes landed on the large white box from the Weil Department Store. She knew exactly who the sender of the gift was. *'Richard even bought a dress I should wear for tonight's dinner. How typical.'* 1

She opened the box and pulled out a knee-long wrap dress of a darker shade of teal. While she was taking out the dress, a smaller square-shaped box fell right in front of her feet. Surprised, Amelie picked it up and opened it. 4

'Diamond earrings?'

Indeed, inside the box was a pair of beautiful star-shaped diamond earrings that shone with a rainbow of colors under the morning sunlight. They were beautiful, but they were thoughtless, just like the rest of the jewelry Richard had ever given her.

'Does he really believe that diamonds are the



woman's best friends? I'd prefer to still have him as my friend, though.' 1

Amelie never complained about the gifts he gave her, however, this year, everything was different. Somehow, she felt offended. Perhaps it was because she knew that she would not be the only one receiving gifts from him anymore.

As she put the earrings back in the box, Amelie's phone vibrated with an incoming call notification. It was from Richard.

"Hello?"

"Amelie... I have arranged for the reporters from a few media sources to come to the restaurant and take some pictures of us together. Please don't be late."

"Alright." Amelie's reply was brief and dry but Richard didn't hang up right away. After a rather long pause, he finally said, "Happy birthday, Lily." 1

"Uhm... Thank you." 1

Somehow, Amelie didn't know if she could say anything else; thankfully, Richard ended the call right away.



Hiding the dress back into the box together with the earrings, she sighed and looked at her reflection in the mirror. She turned thirty-one today, but she couldn't help but feel that her life stopped the day she married Richard.

"I need to get out of here." Her words were but mere whisper and yet it seemed as if they echoed through her bedroom like relentless thunder. That was how quiet her life was. Or rather, that was her whole existence in that mansion. 1

So her mind was made up. She had already spent more time outside the house than inside it, leaving it today was nothing special except for one thing -- Amelie didn't want to meet Samantha and ruin that little birthday mood she had.

It was strange. These days she felt more comfortable staying at the penthouse suite of her hotel rather than at the place that was supposed to be her home.

The elevator doors opened with a loud "ding!" and Amelie stepped outside, carrying the box



with the dress gifted by Richard. Her light steps brought her to the door of her suite and the scene she saw there left her dumbfounded, to say the least.

Right in front of her room was little Captain Pantaloons, sitting surprisingly obediently with a small pink paper bag in his teeth, his floppy ears moving cheerfully every time he tilted his head from side to side. 6

The moment he noticed Amelie, he jumped to his stubby legs and wiggled his tiny tail, happy to see her.

"Captain Pantaloons! What a pleasant surprise! How are you doing today, buddy?"

She crouched before the happy dog and offered him a gentle pat on his soft head, giggling at the sound of his name that had just escaped her lips. She rarely had a chance to call the puppy by his name and every time she did, it felt both strange and funny as the name was something she could have never thought of if she were to name a pet.

'Mr. Bennett senior must be quite a peculiar man to come up with a name like this.'



As Amelie finished patting the dog, Captain Pantaloons barked excitedly and dropped the paper bag right at her feet.

"Is this for me?"

The puppy pushed the bag closer to her with his nose and fell on his fluffy butt, patiently waiting for her reaction. Amelie released a soft chuckle and carefully looked inside the bag. There, she found a small pink card with a bunch of tacky sparkly flowers all over it and a "Happy Birthday!" written beautifully in red ink.

She turned her head to look at the door to the suite next to hers and clicked her tongue.

'Shameless. He could have brought this to me himself instead of making this poor puppy do the work for him.' 2

Under the card, Amelie found a small pink silk-covered jewelry box with a thin golden ribbon wrapped around it. She looked down at Captain Pantaloons and asked him playfully, "Looks very pretty, doesn't it? Shall we open it and see what's inside?"

Somehow, the woman felt a tinge of genuine



excitement course through her body. It had been quite a while since the last time she felt this way about a gift. Was it because it was from Liam? Strangely, she couldn't help but think that his present would be special.

And it really was.

As Amelie's fingers carefully snapped the box opened, her eyes ran over its content, widening in shock.

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