

## 43 I'm Not A Creep, I Swear

Richard slowly opened his eyes and saw an unfamiliar white ceiling looming grimly over him. He knew what each room of the Emerald Hotel looked like and this ceiling was not a part of it. He wasn't home either. 1

He tried to move but his body felt painfully heavy. Turning his head to his right, he saw Amelie sleeping peacefully in the armchair, all curled up with her knees tucked to her chest and her head resting on her hands.

Now, he finally realized where he was -- it was a hospital room. 1

The memories of the last night came rushing to his head along with the awareness of his own body. He felt weak, feverish, and heavy; his muscles ached and he felt a little cold. He then saw an IV drip connected to his left arm and let out a long sigh.

*'I guess I overdid it last night in the end...'*

"Amelie?" Richard had to say her name several times before his voice finally cracked and

became audible. The harsh raspiness that disturbed the silence within the room reached Amelie's ears and she woke up.

"Richard? Are you feeling better?" The moment she saw that he was awake, these words escaped her lips on their own. She got up from the armchair and walked up to him, assessing his pale appearance.

"Doctor said that you fainted because you had a high fever. He said you must have been sick for quite a while, you just never addressed it properly until your body finally gave up. You also appear to be malnourished. Have you not been eating well?" 2

"I've been busy." These were the only words Richard could squeeze out of himself. Amelie decided to leave it alone. At least now she understood why he behaved so childishly last night. 1

"Well... In any case, you should stay here for another day to get some shots and another vitamin drip. Get some rest once you're discharged too. I will take care of some of your tasks for you at work."

Richard's eyes were locked on his wife's face the entire time she was talking and when she stopped, he spoke immediately, as if he was desperately waiting for his turn. "Why did you stay here? Why didn't you go back to the hotel?"

Amelie looked him in the eyes, thinking, *'I was asking myself the same question all night until I finally fell asleep. I don't know why I stayed. Perhaps I'm just too kind to leave the only member of my family all alone in the time of need.'* <sup>2</sup>

Without saying a word, she returned to the armchair and started gathering her things into her purse, her voice echoing nonchalantly as she finally replied, "I wanted to rest for a few minutes and fell asleep. I guess I was just tired." <sup>1</sup>

Watching his wife getting ready to leave, Richard noticed that the diamond bracelet he had given her for her birthday was no longer on her wrist. Suddenly, he realized why.

"You took it off because you don't like to wear things on your wrists. I should have been smarter. I have ruined your birthday, Amelie. I'm sorry." <sup>3</sup>



"It's fine. I will have another one next year."

Richard shifted his body into an upward position and asked somewhat miserably, "Can you... Can you stay here a little longer?"

Amelie widened her eyes at first, but then she remembered something about him too.

*'Ah, Richard is scared of hospitals even now; he never sees a doctor unless someone else insists on it. He is too proud to admit it but I can see it even now - he is scared like a little kid.'*

She looked at her wrist to check the time and saw that it was empty. She didn't wear anything to the restaurant and the bracelet gifted by her husband was now resting somewhere inside her purse. She sighed.

"Richard, I need to get back to work, the company can't be left without two executives at once. I'm sure... your friend will be here any minute, the visiting hours must have started already."

Just as she finished that sentence, the door swung open and Samantha's loud gasp thundered in as she saw Richard's pale face and

an IV drip connected to his arm. She rushed towards him completely ignoring Amelie and almost cried out, "Oh my god! Are you alright? Look at you, you are so pale! I told you you should have stayed at home instead of--" 1

She bit her tongue and offered Amelie a guilty look. Mrs. Ashford grabbed her bag and only said a casual "Get well soon" before leaving.

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Perhaps it was Samantha's magic charm that influenced Richard but Mr. Clark decided to be prudent and took several days off to rest and get better. As a trusted business partner, Amelie shouldered some of his responsibilities and tasks, offering her help to her husband's executive assistants and other members of his team. 1

She had just finished a late lunch meeting with one of Richard's business partners at a renowned Japanese restaurant and was on her way out when her attention was caught by a sudden loud chatter and laughter coming from another closed VIP room of the establishment.

Amelie turned to see what was all that clamor



about and saw Kyle Marshall amidst the cheering company that surrounded him. Suddenly, their eyes met and Kyle's face lightened up with a strange excitement.

Quickly, he waved at his company and ran towards Amelie, his pouty lips stretched into a wide smile.

"Mrs. Amelie Ashford? God, you look even better in person than in all the pictures I've ever seen in the fancy magazines!"

Amelie recoiled a little from that unexpected greeting and arched her eyebrows in surprise.

"You know me?"

Kyle laughed somewhat nervously. "Well, now I'm embarrassed. You see, keeping my eye on beautiful women is a hobby of mine." Then, he realized what he had just said and waved his hands at her apologetically "Oh no, don't get me wrong, I'm not a creep or anything, I swear!" 1

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