

50 Elizabeth Gilmore's Lover

Amelie entered her empty hotel room and immediately found herself enveloped in the soothing darkness of the night, which veiled the space with its comforting mystery. 1

She decided against turning on the lights; her eyes were already weary from the day's artificial glare. What she craved was a few moments of tranquil solitude, a brief respite from the busy hours spent preparing paperwork for Brittany's journey to France.

As she rested her head on the pillow, a pleasant heaviness settled over her body like a cozy wool blanket. She was on the brink of sleep when suddenly, she remembered something important.

'I was supposed to call Lizzy tonight. God, I almost fell asleep!'

Amelie retrieved her phone from the handbag and tapped on the messenger she used to chat with her best friend. She spent some time going over the last few messages she sent to her -- all

left unanswered; all ignored.

She moved her body into an upright position and crossed her legs, resting her chin on her palm as her elbow touched the top of her thigh. She was a little concerned.

'I haven't had an opportunity to talk to her properly but ignoring my messages... She has never done this before.'

Mrs. Ashford checked the time and sighed. It wasn't that late, she could still pick up. Thus, she pressed the call button next to Lizzy's name and listened to the dial tone of the outgoing call.

"She's not picking up..." Amelie whispered as the call finally ended with the operator's reassuring suggestion to try again later.

Was she busy? Her baby was not yet a year old so she required a lot of care but even when she was just a newborn, Elizabeth never passed on an opportunity to talk to her best friend.

It was truly worrisome.

Releasing another sigh, Amelie fidgeted with her phone for a few more minutes before she



decided to call someone else instead.

Emily picked up her phone almost right away.

"Lily! Long time no talk! How are you doing?"

"I'm alright, just busy with work. What about you?"

"Same old, same old, you know how it is when you have a house full of relatives."

Emily laughed but it was evident that she, too, was exhausted. After going over her issues for several minutes, she finally took a break to let Amelie talk as well. Then, she asked, "Are you wondering about Lizzy?"

Mrs. Ashford rose to her feet simply because she couldn't control her emotions while sitting. "Yes. Have you heard from her lately?"

"Not really... But I heard **about** her."

Amelie raised her eyebrows. That response was not at all a positive one. "What do you mean?"

Emily sighed. "You must have heard the rumors too... She has been fighting with her husband quite a lot because of them. Moreover, she has gone completely off the radar too. She was

invited to quite a number of parties, you know, she has always been quite a desirable guest at every gathering, but she rejected them all, which is very unusual for her. I'm afraid she might be getting depressed. Or even worse... Threatened by her husband."

Amelie closed her eyes as she could no longer listen to that calmly. She was worried that it was the worst-case scenario -- the rumors had finally reached her family and now she had to face the consequences.

"What about your husband? I know he golfs with Lizzy's husband quite often."

"Victor says he doesn't know anything. Her husband hasn't visited the golf course in the last couple of weeks too."

"Alright..." Amelie said in a quiet voice, "Let's give them some pace for now, I'm sure they need it. Thank you, Emily." 2

The other line responded with a loud whining of a child followed by Emily's loud exhale. "I gotta go now, Lily. Have a good night."

"You too."



Amelie ended the call and pressed the phone against her chin. She didn't have much choice; if Elizabeth's fighting with her husband was indeed related to the rumors spread by Samantha, then, if they were not true, it would all be settled pretty soon. However...

'She never told me about any of her lovers, all the men I know about were before she got married. Could the rumors be true after all? And if yes, how did Samantha find out about it?' 1

"I was surprised when you called me this morning, Mr. Marshall. I am usually the first one to contact you."

Samantha crossed her arms in front of her chest and offered Kyle a curious expression. Kyle stretched his lips into a wide grin and pushed a steaming cup of aromatic black coffee closer to Miss Blackwood.

"First of all, you can call me Kyle. We are of the same age, after all. You calling me a "Mister" makes me feel uncomfortable and, worst of all, old. Secondly, staying in touch with pretty women is something I am very good at."



He laughed but Samantha didn't reciprocate his enthusiasm. She silently sipped on her beverage while avoiding looking directly at the man sitting in front of her. Kyle, of course, saw through her acting but still decided to play along.

"You look like something is weighing on your mind. It can't be the Gilmore rumor since it worked out pretty well for you, so... Care to share with me?"

Samantha set her cup aside and assessed the man's expression with a long, silent look. She wanted to see if he was a fool enough to fall under her charms. Only after that, she got courageous enough to answer, "Well... I am a little embarrassed to say it but... I have someone I'd like to help... financially, but I have no money of my own to do that. Mr. Clark is already taking care of me and giving me so much, I can't possibly be so greedy..."

"Oh? So you're having some money troubles? That can be easily resolved!"

Kyle retrieved a leather wallet from the pocket of his pants and started skimming through all the cash he had there. "How much do you need? I

don't have a lot on me right now, but I'm sure I can scrap a couple of thousands right away."

Samantha watched as he stacked one bill on top of another right on the restaurant's table and felt her insides tremble. She was both annoyed and excited. Annoyed, because it was so easy for Kyle to flaunt this kind of money as if it was nothing; excited because he was indeed a fool to offer it to her so eagerly.

"Are you really okay with lending me all this money?"

Kyle smirked, then pushed the cash towards Samantha, and added, "Yes. But on one condition."

Miss Blackwood narrowed her eyes in suspicion. "What kind of condition?"

The man let out a lighthearted chuckle as if to reassure Samantha that he meant nothing bad.

"You will have to promise to come to my next party, that's all!"

"A party?" Sam raised her eyebrows, still not fully convinced, "That doesn't sound like a condition. Who wouldn't want to attend your party?"

Kyle leaned over the table, his lips still curled into a sly smirk, and whispered, "Your attendance is obligatory, Samantha, because there will be someone you'd really want to meet."

Sam lowered her voice as well. "And who is that?"

"The very same man you spread the rumors about. Elizabeth Gilmore's lover." 1

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