



53 The Hospital

Richard watched as the city lights blurred outside the car window as his vehicle moved through the lethargic night streets. 1

Friday nights seemed to be the busiest; the nightlife in the city was bustling with young party people and aged socialites seeking to unwind after a long, stressful week.

Mr. Clark rubbed his red stinging eyes and leaned back in the car seat, eager to finally get back home and get some sleep. Samantha was supposed to attend some kind of a party so he didn't expect her to greet him tonight, which he actually found relieving. 1

He liked her; compared to Amelie's reserved and somewhat cold persona, Samantha was bright, lively, cheerful, and warm. When he was with her, he felt at ease; there was something carefree about her which always made him feel relaxed; as if he was back in his early twenties again; unburdened by responsibilities.

But tonight was different. Tonight, he craved



something calm and quiet. And somehow, it made him think about his wife.

Richard's mind was shaken out of his sleepy state when he felt a sharp vibration coming from the pocket of his suit. He reached inside to retrieve the buzzing phone and noticed that he didn't recognize the number on the screen.

"Hello?"

The female voice on the other line sounded a bit too chipper for such a late hour.

"Mr. Clark? I'm calling you from the SH Hospital. You are a registered guardian for Mrs. Amelie Ashford and... Miss Samantha Blackwood, is that right?"

"SH Hospital?" Richard widened his eyes and jerked his body into an upright position. "Yes. You are right. Did something happen?"

"They both fell into a pool. Miss Blackwood hit her head and has a mild concussion while Mrs. Ashford is recovering from shock. They both are under the care of Dr. Bavel. The doctor granted you permission to visit both of them right now. Should we expect your arrival any time soon?"

Richard pulled his phone away from his ear and tapped his driver on the shoulder. "Max, change the route to SH Hospital." He then pressed the phone back to his ear. "Yes, I will be there as soon as I can."

The sliding doors opened and Richard marched through the half-asleep lobby of SH Hospital. He walked straight to the register stand and demanded the room numbers of both Samantha and Amelie.

"They are both resting in VIP rooms, Mr. Clark," a short but skinny nurse said as she looked through the notes on her computer screen, "Miss Blackwood is in room 701 and Mrs. Ashford is in room 704."

"Thank you." Richard nodded at the nurse and dashed to the elevators, frantically pressing the button with the number seven on it.

"The woman on the phone said that Sam had a concussion. I should visit her first." 4

The doors of the elevator finally opened and Richard headed straight to Samantha's room. He

knocked his knuckles lightly against the beige surface of the door but no one answered, thus, trying to be as quiet as possible, the man slid the door open and carefully stepped inside.

'She's sleeping.'

He stood above her bed and looked at her pale but serene face. Samantha's hair was still damp but it didn't look like she was either cold or feverish.

He sighed in relief.

The room door slid open once again, inviting Dr. Bavel inside. He whispered, "Mr. Clark? Let's step outside for now."

As they exited the room, the doctor put his small round glasses on the bridge of his nose and started reading from the chart. "Miss Blackwood was conscious when she was brought here. She has a mild concussion but after a few days of complete rest, she will be fine. I gave her a sedative to make sure she had a good night's sleep. We will run some routine tests tomorrow once the lab is opened." 1

Richard nodded. "What about Amelie?"

Dr. Bavel switched the charts. "Mrs. Ashford is fine. She suffered from shock though, the man who brought her here said she can't swim so falling into the pool took a toll on her emotional state."

"Yes, she never learned to swim..." Richard mumbled under his nose, then tapped the doctor on his shoulder and offered him a faint smile.

"Thank you, Dr. Bavel. I'll check on my wife now."

As Richard pushed the door sideways and entered his wife's room, he noticed Einar Ingvarsson sitting in the chair beside Amelie's bed. The woman was sound asleep too.

The deemed orange lights in the room concealed the foreigner's appearance at first but as Richard's eyes finally examined his body, he noticed that his hair was damp and so were his clothes.

Mr. Clark quietly walked up to the bed and stood behind Einar, addressing him in a reserved tone.

"Mr. Ingvarsson? I didn't expect you to still be here." 1

Einar didn't grace Richard with his attention; his eyes were glued to the sleeping Amelie and he



remained silent for quite some time. Then, still not looking at Mr. Clark, he finally said, "The nurse must have called you more than an hour ago. I guess this is not the first room you visited." 2

His words made Richard feel extremely annoyed. "I don't want to come off as rude but I don't think this is any of your business, Mr. Ingvarsson." 1

Einar leaned back in the chair and sighed. "It is my business when it's related to the people I'm trying to partner with. You see, Mr. Clark, I only do business with those whom I consider my friends." 1

Then, he suddenly stood up, turned his entire body around, and looked Richard straight in the eyes; his expression tinged with both animosity and disappointment. "And while Mrs. Ashford is my friend, you, on the other hand, are very far away from that." 2

Richard found his words completely out of line. He cleared his throat in an attempt to conceal his growing irritation and finally replied, "I heard you saved both Amelie and Samantha when they fell. I am grateful for that. Right now, however,

you shouldn't be here. This is my place." 2

Einar scoffed and said carelessly as he walked away, "I don't really think it is."

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