



60 Prepare To Pay Through The Nose

Amelie slid her finger over the rim of the tall glass of lemon water and returned her eyes to the closed door of the hotel's restaurant. She chose this location on purpose -- she didn't want to be seen with the person she was planning to meet today. 1

Finally, the terrace door opened and Jason Sanson walked inside, his beady eyes scanning the place in search of his companion. Once his eyes laid on Amelie's face, she felt her body tensing up in discomfort.

Wearing a wide grin on his face, Jason took a seat across the table and grabbed the menu with his stubby fingers, casually flipping through the glossy pages.

"So, what would you recommend, Mrs. Ashford? I've never eaten here before, you see."

Amelie yanked the menu from his grip and placed it next to her own, a deep crease etching between her eyebrows. "You can order anything



you want after we're done talking. It's on the house." 1

Mr. Sanson wiped the grin off his face and leaned back in his chair. "Very well. Then I hope our conversation will be short because I'm starving."

Not willing to spend any more time in his company than needed, Amelie began. "Samantha Blackwood used to work in your hostess bar, is that right?"

A tiny flinch shook Jason's body; he tried to cover it up by shifting in his seat but Mrs. Ashford noticed it. Clearing his throat, he nodded. "Perhaps? I'm not sure."

The woman sighed and slid an envelope full of cash across the table. "Maybe this will refresh your memory a little."

Mr. Sanson grinned and quickly hid the envelope under the table without even checking its contents. He was sure that someone like Amelie Ashford would not be too stingy with bribes. Too bad for her.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Ashford, but you know how it is

with establishments like mine. The women who come to work for me are in desperate situations; some are hiding from their parents; some - from abusive men; and some - from money collectors. So... what I'm trying to say is, we check their IDs to make sure they are of legal age but we do not keep records of them working there. And during work... they all use fake names."

Amelie smiled and fidgeted with the teaspoon in her hands, assessing the man with a piercing gaze. She then leisurely retrieved Johnathan's phone from her purse, placed it on the table, and asked, "Then, would you care to explain this?" She pressed the play button next to the opened recording, returning her eyes to scrutinize Jason's reaction.

At first, the recording was nothing but a cacophony of sounds until it toned down to only two people talking; and as their conversation progressed, Mr. Sanson's face turned visibly pale once the sound of his name was repeated in a female voice several times.

The man's eyes narrowed. "Where did you get this?"



Amelie shook her head. "It doesn't matter where I got it. What matters is why in the world someone like you would spread the rumors about Elizabeth Gilmore."

Jason let out a nervous chuckle and tried to explain himself. "Girls in the bar... well, you heard it yourself! She is clearly drunk in this recording, she is not aware of what she's saying!"

His hand reached across the table in a sly attempt to snatch the phone but Amelie's reaction was faster. She hid the phone back inside her purse and continued. "Mr. Sanson, I know it was Samantha who started the rumor. Why are you protecting her? How are you connected? Does she have something on you?"

The man couldn't help but laugh. "Mrs. Ashford, people like me are loyal to no one but it doesn't mean we betray each other too. Yes, perhaps you are right. Perhaps it is Samantha who has something on me, or perhaps it is me who has something on her. Whichever it is, it is between me and her." 1

Amelie sighed and leaned over the table gesturing for Jason to do the same. Once the



distance between them shortened, she said in a lower tone, "Mr. Sanson, because of this rumor, several people might end up in court and thanks to this," she pointed at her purse to remind him of the recording, "You will be dragged into this mess as well. Do you really want to get involved?"

Jason offered her a subtle smile. He understood her game and he had to agree with her; he didn't need to be dragged into this at all.

He leaned back in his chair again, then tapped his fingers on the table for some time, thinking about his options before finally replying. "Very well, Mrs. Ashford. You win. I won't tell you how I am connected to Samantha or whether or not she was one of my girls, but I will admit to this - it was she who spread the rumors about Mrs. Gilmore. Happy now?"

Amelie nodded. "Yes, that's all I needed, Mr. Sanson." She then took out her own phone from the pocket of her blazer and pressed the record button on the screen. "I have this conversation recorder so please keep this in mind in case you decide to back out." 1

Unwilling to spend any more time in Jason's company, she left her seat, pushed the menu closer to the man's hand, and smiled. "Today's specials are the caramelized salmon in garlic sauce and grilled chicken fillet. I'd recommend you try both, it's all paid for after all. Please enjoy your lunch."

Offering him one last fake but polite smile, she turned around and left the restaurant, disappearing into the fresh greenery of the terrace. It was an elegant exit but it left Jason livid. 1

He continued to stare at the door that separated him from Mrs. Ashford, clenching his fists on top of the table; his jaw was so tense that it started to hurt.

'Well, Samantha... prepare to pay me through the nose for this.' 1

