

70 Big Shoes To Fill

The baby shower was held in the reception hall of the Sunrise Hotel, owned by Mr. Edward Harris, the proprietor of H Constructions and one of Richard Clark's business partners. 1

Despite being a celebration of a joyous occasion, the party stirred quite a buzz in high society, all because of the woman at the center of it all.

The woman in question was Shelly Grant, Edward's second wife, who had once been his mistress. Edward had gone through a rather messy divorce with his first wife, Lucy Stiles, when Shelly became pregnant and demanded that he marry her instead. Since it was well-known that Lucy was unable to have children, and given that Shelly was considered to be of respectable breeding, Edward's parents insisted on the divorce, though Lucy did not agree to it.

After three long months of navigating the court system, Edward was finally able to marry Shelly. Now, the crème de la crème of socialites was attending his second wife's baby shower.

"Rumor has it that before demanding a divorce, Edward had the audacity to ask Lucy to adopt that woman's child," Lauren said, grabbing a glass of champagne from a passing waiter's tray. She looked back at her friends and added. "Of course, she refused, but can you believe the nerve of that man?"

Emily nodded and leaned closer to the group, lowering her voice even though it was already masked by the cacophony of surrounding conversations.

"Lucy was never a fool. Imagine the humiliation of raising the child of someone your husband slept with behind your back—that's just outrageous. And to think that the child would then inherit all of your money in the end, while his real mother looks down on you for the rest of your life."

"Still," Lauren nodded, "Shelly might come from a good family, but she's just a kid—and not even a bright one. I heard her parents were desperate to marry her off to a better family because they knew she was only fit to be a child-bearing housewife."

As soon as she said this, she noticed Amelie's stern look drilling into her. Lauren had a tendency to become overly bitter when talking about people she didn't respect, and she often relied on her friend to keep her behavior in check.

"Ugh, I better go mingle with others. I'd like to hear someone else being bitter for a change," she said with a smile, leaving the table. Emily stood up as well. "I need to make a call to the nanny. Niles is sick with chickenpox, and I want to check on him."

"Of course, go ahead," Amelie offered her a light smile. "I'll stay here; my headache is killing me."

Once she was left alone at the table, Amelie hoped she could finally get some long-awaited rest. However, her hopes were dashed when Richard pulled up a chair and took a seat beside her.

"Would you like a glass of wine?" he asked, offering her a drink. Amelie shook her head. "No, thanks. I'm having a headache."

He set the rejected glass aside and drank his wine in silence for a while, observing the

mingling crowd.

"I didn't know your friend was invited too," Amelie finally spoke, her eyes still fixed on the people in the hall.

"She came with a friend of her own," her husband replied calmly.

"Yes, I think I know who that friend is," Amelie nodded, spotting Kyle Marshall offering Samantha a glass of iced tea.

Richard's gaze shifted to Shelly, who was seated on the large light-blue couch in the center of the room like a queen. He then looked back at Amelie and asked, "Do you... do you also want this?"

Amelie gave him a confused look. "This? What do you mean?"

"Do you want to be a mother? To have kids... a real family?"

Amelie curled her lips into a sarcastic smile.

"Yes, I've always wanted to have a real family."

The emphasis on the word "real" made Richard let out a long sigh. He decided that saying

anything else would be redundant.

As they continued to sit in silence, a slight commotion at the entrance of the celebration hall caught their attention. They simultaneously turned their heads to the source of the noise and saw Lucy Stiles walking gracefully toward Shelly, carrying a large light-blue paper bag from a famous clothing brand.

"What are you doing here?" Edward stepped in front of her, blocking her path. The guests fell silent, eagerly anticipating the unfolding drama.

Lucy smirked at his unnecessary anger. "Relax, it was your wife who invited me. I only came to give her my gift and leave."

A wave of suppressed whispers rippled through the crowd; everyone was shocked that his second wife had the nerve to invite the woman he divorced because of her. Edward frowned.

"Leave. Don't cause a scandal."

"Honey, it's okay!" Shelly called out to her husband, stretching her lips into a friendly smile as she greeted Lucy with a wave. "Don't kick her out; that's impolite. She even brought a gift for

the baby. We should at least accept it, right?"

Edward sighed but complied with Shelly's decision, allowing his ex-wife to approach the couch. Lucy smiled, handed the paper bag to Shelly, and said in a polite tone, "Congratulations. I put a lot of thought into this gift."

Shelly's eyes shone with excitement. She opened the bag and retrieved a pair of neat designer loafers, clearly too big for a baby. Nevertheless, she looked genuinely pleased with the gift.

"Thank you, Miss Stiles. It is indeed a very thoughtful gift! This will be the first pair of shoes our child wears when he grows bigger."

Lucy smiled and left the hall without saying a word while the rest of the guests returned to mingling.

Richard looked at Amelie with a flicker of hope in his eyes. "That was a rather nice gesture, don't you think?" 1

Amelie let out a hearty chuckle and nodded. "Yes. Of course, you wouldn't get it." 1



Richard widened his eyes in bewilderment.

"What do you mean?"

His wife shifted her eyes back to the crowd.

"Look at every woman in this hall. Can you see what all of them are doing?"

Richard followed her suggestion and took a moment to scan through the crowd. It was weird; the women were standing in small groups, snickering and whispering while throwing mocking glances at Shelly who was still holding the pair of loafers in her hands.

Seeing how her husband was still confused, Amelie explained.

"It was not a mistake nor a genuine consideration that prompted Miss Stiles to buy the shoes that were bigger in size. These shoes are not for when the child grows bigger either. By giving her this gift Lucy wanted to tell her 'You have taken my place because you had only one thing I couldn't have; but you still have quite big shoes to fill. And so does your child.'" 3

Richard instantly moved his eyes toward Samantha who was already sitting next to Shelly, admiring the beautiful loafers meant for her

child. He watched as the two of them reveled in their ignorance while his blood was boiling underneath his skin. 2

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