



73 A Particular Name

Amelie felt as if the very essence of her life had been drained from her body. She refused to believe it at first, but Richard's serious expression was definitive proof that what he said was true. 1

Her husband's mistress was pregnant. What did this mean for her?

She didn't know how many long minutes she had spent standing silently in Richard's office, her heart pounding in her ears. At last, she swallowed hard, trying to rid herself of the sharp, invisible object lodged in her throat, and asked quietly, "Is it your child?"

Richard confirmed with a brief nod. "Yes."

In that moment, Amelie's heart shattered, sending painful chills coursing through her body.

She suddenly recalled everything that had happened in the past month. Lizzy's child with another man, Edward Harris' pregnant second wife, another unpleasant talk with Mr. Collins, one of the company's partners about her own



delayed pregnancy... And now, the woman her husband loved was pregnant with his first child.

From this moment on, things would only get more complicated.

"Amelie," Richard's low voice finally reached her ears again. He left his seat and started walking toward her, but Amelie didn't want to stay in his presence any longer. She felt physically sick, her stomach tied in knots, and she was scared she might end up throwing up.

She didn't know what she could do anymore, but one thing was crystal clear: she had to leave this room and find a way to calm down.

Richard's attempts to say something more were no longer important. Amelie dashed out of his office and ran straight to the bathroom. She turned on the cold water and splashed it over her face repeatedly until both her face and hands started feeling numb.

Then, Amelie looked at her reflection in the mirror. Her face was as white as a sheet, and her wet, fair hair contrasted starkly against her cold skin. She looked terrible, but at least her heart was no longer trying to rip out of her chest.



Finally feeling able to walk again, Amelie went to her study and locked the door behind her with a key. Slowly, she approached her desk and took a seat, leaning heavily against the back of the chair.

Despite the throbbing pain in the right side of her head from the pressure of holding back tears, she finally felt composed; she could think clearly again.

'Just because Richard and I don't have a child together doesn't mean her pregnancy poses a real threat to me. However...' Amelie tapped her fingertips on the cold surface of the wooden desk and sighed. *'This woman is not as transparent as I thought she was.'*

Her mind drifted back to the words the housekeeper had relayed when she got home this evening.

'Food poisoning. I feel foolish even thinking about it. Even if she is pregnant, it means she's probably sensitive to certain foods, but to accuse the chef of serving her a bad meal... She must have really thought it all through.'

It wasn't entirely ridiculous to suspect that

Samantha had staged the whole thing to make everyone nervous. Amelie didn't even exclude the possibility that Samantha might have poisoned herself for this specific purpose too.

But was it really her intention for Richard to let Amelie know that Samantha was pregnant?

'Knowing Richard, I would assume he said it to make me feel bad, and yet... No, this makes perfect sense. If Richard chooses to keep her pregnancy a secret from the public, I will still have to be careful around that woman because I am aware of her condition. One of her intentions was to protect herself from me and get Richard to be cautious around her too.' 1

Still, it was painfully obvious that getting Amelie to learn about Samantha's pregnancy was only one of her devious plans.

'She knew that Richard would overreact and do something drastic with the staff. I would have assumed he would only fire the chef, but I guess she relied on his fiery personality. She's already seen him treat one of the maids poorly, even in my presence.'

Replacing the entire staff is the first step in

trying to phase me out and show authority she doesn't really have. And if Richard allows her to hire new help instead... it will definitely push me halfway out the door of this mansion.' 1

It was indeed a perfect plan. This way, Richard would show his wife that she shouldn't be so arrogant and assume she had any control over their marriage. And as for Samantha, she would demonstrate to Amelie that she could take her place, especially now that she had a significant advantage over her.

The headache inside Amelie's skull was becoming unbearable.

She opened the first drawer of her desk and retrieved a white bottle of painkillers, swallowing two bitter white pills without water. Amelie was about to close the drawer when she noticed a thin beige envelope with carefully written letters in delicate golden ink.

"The DDS... It's a formal reminder of the upcoming cotillion. I almost forgot about it."

Amelie opened the envelope and pulled out a neatly folded sheet of paper from inside, placing it carefully on the desk.

The Daughters of Dignified Standing, or the DDS as it was commonly known, was one of the formal organizations to which Amelie belonged as well. It was involved in numerous charitable activities, but its main focus was the support and patronage of women born into upper-class families who expressed their desire to be part of such a prestigious group.

The annual debutante ball was also organized by the DDS. Amelie, like other members who enjoyed guiding young ladies of high society, had to choose one girl to help make her glamorous debut at this year's cotillion.

The sheet of paper delivered to her in the envelope listed all the girls making their debut this year.

Amelie slowly looked over the names until she paused at one in particular, her eyes widening.

"Penelope Sanson?"

