

76 An Idol

The woman raised her eyebrows, unsure about the meaning behind his words. 1

Kyle explained. "You already know that people like me enjoy each other's drama more than anything. How about you get them another juicy bit to savor?"

He returned to the couch and added, "Ask Mr. Clark to set a secret fund for you and then unveil it to others as if it was your money all along. This way, you can come up with a tear-jerking story about how you were secretly rich all along thanks to your wits and hard work and didn't want to reveal it to anyone because you wanted people to like you for who you were and not because you were rich too." 2

Samantha's eyes sparked with excitement. It was perfect; a Cinderella story that would be eagerly consumed by the media and everyone, not just high society, as long as they enjoyed the gossip.

She smiled, and this time, it was a genuine emotion.



Natalie brought two cups of tea into Amelie's office and placed a tray of assorted cookies and candy on the coffee table next to Penelope. As she left, Amelie gestured for the girl to eat whatever she liked and the latter gladly accepted that offer, even though her entire face was red from blushing so much.

"I'm glad you are not trying to starve yourself for the cotillion," Amelie started as she tasted the tea in her cup. "When I was about to make my debut, I was under the wing of Mrs. Virginia Weil, Lauren Weil's mother. Since she couldn't get her daughter as her protege, she sunk her claws into me and I was only allowed to eat plain salads twice a day for two months! I almost fainted when I had to do the fan dance with other girls!"

Penelope blushed again and resonated with her mentor's story. "She even squeezed you into a very suffocating corset and after the formal part of the evening was over, Mr. Clark sneaked you to the changing room and cut the corset strings with the steak knife he stole from the kitchen."

Amelie arched her eyebrows and Penelope almost exploded as she realized what she had just said.

"This is from the interview I once gave to the 'High Brow' magazine several years ago... You read that article?"

Penelope nodded awkwardly and lowered her gaze to her feet. "Yes... I have read every single article about you, Mrs. Ashford. You are... kind of like an idol to me, you see. I have more than a dozen scrapbooks with your pictures and interviews plastered all over the pages."

At first, Amelie was not sure how to react; this was the first time she had met someone who saw her as a celebrity or even an "idol". But it was somewhat flattering regardless.

"Oh my, I had no idea!" She laughed wholeheartedly to help the girl get rid of her persistent shyness. "I guess I should be glad that I have managed to become a positive example to young ladies like you."

Penelope's cheeks turned red again but it was evident that she started feeling a lot more relaxed in Amelie's presence.



"Please don't take it the wrong way, Mrs. Ashford! I am not really obsessed or anything... It's just that you are so beautiful and have such a good personality that... Well, I just want to be like you in every aspect of my life. I am truly grateful that you have chosen me as your protege. I promise I won't let you down!"

Now, Amelie felt a little guilty for trying to use this girl against Samantha. Everything she said to her seemed genuine and she caught herself regretting that it was Penelope who chose her to be her idol. 1

'If you only knew... Neither my life nor my personality turned out to be quite so good.'

"Are these the papers from the accountant you hired?"

Richard accepted the documents from his assistant's hands and started going over them with a serious expression. Ron nodded in confirmation.

"Yes, everything has been set up according to your instructions, Sir."



"Good. Well done."

Richard's eyes were still leisurely gliding over the papers but his mind was miles away. He recalled the conversation he had with Samantha several days ago which prompted him to resort to such unorthodox measures in the first place.

'Regardless of the outcome, Samantha needs her own money to take care of the child, this is just a proper thing to do. And even if... No, her idea was not entirely strange. With Samantha having my child, I would like to keep her as close to me as possible, and if I have to fabricate some aspects of her identity to make others accept her, then this is what I am going to do. If not for her, then for my child.'

Simply transferring her some of his money did not seem that wise to him; what he wanted was to ensure that, if worse came to worst, Samantha would never feel abandoned and always have enough--if not more than enough--money to ensure that their child would never have to struggle.

Thus, he made a decision to hire an outside accountant to help him move some of his money,

including his recent investments, around and transfer a part of his shares to a newly created, secret account.

'JFC Group has been struggling with big investments in the last few years so I have been trying to bring money in by using the inside leads of the growing startups to ensure that our position on the market remains stable... My current lead seems to be quite reliable so if things continue to work out well, in just a few months, Sam will have a whole trust fund to flaunt.' ¹

Richard remained quiet for quite some time and Ron decided to interrupt the silence first.

"Mr. Clark... Perhaps it is not my place, but I must warn you. This "lead" you trust so much, seems rather shady to me. With each investment intel he gives us, it looks to me more like stock market manipulation and insider trading rather than a mere hunch." ³

Richard hid the documents in the drawer of his desk and shook his head. "Don't think too much into it. He was recommended to me by someone I can trust so I am certain there is nothing



"shady" going on here." 1

Although still not convinced, Ron decided to bite his tongue and let the matter go. He offered his boss a nod and left his office, his mind still heavy with uncertainty.

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