



## 77 The Cotillion

"Congratulations, Mr. Bennett! It is only partially a happy occasion because of the unfortunate passing of your brother, but we still have to move on and keep on living, am I right?" 1

A short, rather haughty-looking middle-aged man in a black suit shook Liam's hand and patted him on the back, offering him an unusually white smile with the full set of his teeth. Liam accepted his congratulations and nodded, moving over to the next person in line, eager to shake his hand.

"Your very first job and already a president of one of the largest companies in the country... The Bennett family is indeed remarkable! Regardless of your age, we are all convinced that you will be just as good--if not better--than your later brother, Mr. Bennett."

At some point, Lim could no longer differentiate between the faces of the people talking to him. The conference hall where his appointment was held place was filled with the people he knew by name only and frankly, didn't have the slightest desire to remember by anything else.



But there was nothing he could do anymore; now, it was his job. Now, he was the president of the Diamond Group. It had finally happened.

Later on, when all the formalities of the appointment ceremony were over, Liam walked into his new office on the very last floor of the business building that belonged to his company and slowly looked around.

He wasn't used to this; it didn't feel right. Not yet.

*'Somehow, I can still smell Noah's cologne in here...'*

He took a seat behind the wide black desk with a new shiny plaque with his name on it and leaned in the leather chair, tightly shutting his eyes in an attempt to get rid of a growing headache.

Austin Hall waited for his boss to get a bit of much-needed rest before finally approaching the desk and starting a conversation.

"It wasn't that bad, you were prepared. I think the business partners were quite satisfied with the way you presented yourself."

With his eyes still closed, Liam nodded and let out a tired sigh.

"Ever since I returned to this country, all I have been doing is meeting people I don't know and shaking their hands while ripping my face in half, smiling like an idiot."

"If you are complaining already, I don't think you understand what is waiting for you from now on, Mr. Bennett. You can no longer act like a spoiled teenager, it's time to grow up."

Liam finally opened his eyes and offered his assistant an irritated glare. "It's this annoying nagging that makes me feel AND act like a spoiled teenager. Anyway, is there something you wanted to tell me?"

Austin frowned but decided to ignore the arrogance in Liam's voice. Instead, he placed a thin folder in front of him and said calmly, "He did exactly what we expected him to do. Now, the only thing left is to make sure the selling point remains the same." 2

Liam opened the folder and quickly scanned the printouts that were hidden there, a pleased smile appearing on his face. "Good. We are



almost there."

\*\*\*

This year's debutante ball was held in Emerald Hotel, following Amelie's initiative to help the organizers of the event.

The entire event hall was designed in white colors to symbolize the purity of the debutantes as they formally entered high society, facing their unmarred and hopeful future.

The guests were already taking their seats while the young girls and their escorts were still going over the finishing touches of their preparations in the specially designated hotel rooms, generously offered to their families for free by Amelie herself.

*'I can't believe she managed to weasel her way here as well... That Kyle Marshall sure knows how to get anything he wants.'* Amelie frowned as she noticed Samantha sitting proudly in the guest area of the hall.

*'I thought she would try to stay away from Penelope as soon as I get closer to her, but she is way more daring than I thought.'*

"Here they come," Lauren lightly nudged Aelie on the side with her elbow, jerking her chin in the direction of the ten girls dressed in beautiful white dresses as they were lined before the entrance to the hall.

Suddenly, their elegant entrance was interrupted by the sound of two girls arguing at the back of the line.

"Are you fucking kidding me?! How the fuck did you even get your fat hands on this dress?! Take it off right now!"

One of the girls grabbed the sleeve of Penelope's dress and started pulling it down while the latter struggled to push her away.

"What is going on there?"

Jennifer Mariano, the host of the event, rushed to the girl, offering them a warning glare from behind her thin spectacles. The first girl finally let go of Penelope's sleeve and complained in a loud tone,

"Mrs. Mariano! She is wearing the same dress as I am! We can't proceed like this; two girls can't make their debut wearing the same dresses, this



is so humiliating!"

"Lower your voice, Miss Jones!" The woman stood in between two girls and examined their appearance. "Miss Sanson, how on earth did it turn out like this? Are your guardians here? Who is your mentor? She was supposed to make sure nothing like this happens!"

"Mrs. Ashford!" Penelope ran to Amelie and hid behind her back, her eyes veiled with a thin layer of tears. "Mrs. Ashford, I'm so sorry! I had no idea another girl was wearing this dress today, I simply asked someone to buy it for me!"

Amelie raised her eyebrows. "Who did you ask to buy you this dress?"

"It was me. I bought her this dress."

Everyone turned their heads to Samantha who stood behind them with a large paper bag from a designer store hanging from her forearm.

"You!" Penelope exclaimed, peeking from behind Amelie's back. "You did it on purpose!"

She wanted to insult Samantha but held back as she noticed Amelie's eyes firmly glued to her.



Her cheeks flushed red and she looked down, hiding behind the woman once again.

"Miss Blackwood," Amelie started, "Is it true that you bought this dress for Penelope?"

Samantha nodded. "I did, but I was only trying to be nice. You see, Mrs. Ashford, Penelope's parents can't afford to buy a luxurious dress and since I learned that all other debutantes would be wearing very expensive dresses, I decided to help her and simply bought the most expensive dress I could find in her size."

Amelie's eyes narrowed but Samantha ignored her suspicious expression. She approached Penelope and offered her a big smile. "Don't worry, Penelope, I came prepared."

She tapped the bag with her manicured fingers and added. "Anything could have happened to your dress: a spilled drink, a lipstick stain, deodorant marks... Luckily, I took this into consideration and brought another beautiful dress just in case."

"You did?" Jennifer took a step closer to Samantha and lowered her eyes to the paper bag she was holding. Then, she turned back to



Amelie and asked in a somewhat cold voice, "Mrs. Ashford, how come this woman is better prepared than Miss Sanson's own mentor? I was under the impression it was your job to make sure a mishap like this doesn't happen."

Amelie was rendered speechless.

*'I was aware of the dress Penelope was supposed to wear just as I was aware of the dresses prepared by other girls. Miss Jones had a different dress she was supposed to wear.'*

She moved her eyes back to smiling Samantha and finally realized what was going on.

*'So when I try to warn you by getting closer to people you are wary of, you try to warn me by putting me on the spot and pretending to be better than me. Or... Ah, I see.'*

No, Samantha was not trying to show others that she could be better than Amelie. She wanted to show them that she could be no worse. She could be just as good; just as considerate; just as prepared for anything.

"Well," Jennifer Mariano chimed in again, dispelling the awkward tension that formed



between them. "We can't stand here all evening long! The event is already being delayed and since we have a solution to our problem, I suggest that you, Miss Blackwood, take Miss Sanson back to the room and help her get changed promptly."

"Of course! Follow me, Penelope!"

Samantha gestured for the girl to come with her while Jennifer shook her head in disappointment.

"Not a single year without an incident. Girls," she nodded at the debutantes and sighed, "Please wait a little longer until Miss Sanson comes back. Mrs. Ashford," now, she looked at Amelie from behind her glasses as if the latter had made a grave mistake. "Please return to your seat. We will discuss this incident after the event is over."

"What was that all about?" Lauren leaned closer to Amelie the moment she sat down on her chair. "I can't believe that bitch tried to humiliate you like this! She wasn't even invited to this cotillion at first... Damn, the venom from this snake just keeps smearing the floor around her."

Amelie was glad that her friend could see

through Samantha's intentions too but an unpleasant, suffocating feeling deep inside her chest didn't allow her to enjoy it.

'Yes... It surely does...'

Comment

View All >



(Post your first comment!)



2

Vote



1

Fandom



1

Send Gift