

78 Unstable Situation

Once the mishap with Penelope's dress was taken care of, the debutante ball faced no more inconveniences, and the unpleasant incident was quickly forgotten by everyone except for Jason Sanson who saw it as Samantha's attempt to mess with his family. 1

"Miss Blackwood was seen to meet Jason Sanson again at the Black Velvet restaurant," Ron's steady tone dissolved the quite humming sound of the car engine.

Richard, his chin resting on his palm, moved his dark brown eyes over the restaurant sign that quickly switched to a tall building of a shopping mall as his car drove past the busy evening street.

"I see," were the only two words he could push out of his mouth. His mind was way too busy preparing for his dinner with his wife.

"It also seems that Anna Hayden has been visiting the hostess bars owned by Mr. Sanson. I think she is trying to find out something about

him," Ron added carefully and Richard frowned.

'It's not him she is trying to learn more about... I know Sam is hiding something from me but I would prefer to be the first and only one to find out whether it's true or not.' 1

"Thank you," he finally answered out loud. "I'll look into it myself."

"Why did you choose to have our dinner at the hotel's restaurant? I wanted to take you to Mr. Smith's new place, the menu looked interesting."

Richard poured his wife a glass of red wine and waited for her reaction but Amelie simply continued cutting her steak, offering the man absolutely no emotion.

"I am too tired to drive around. I'd like to discuss the business matters and get some rest."

Richard took a better look at his wife's face; even in the dimmed romantic lights of the restaurant, he could see the unhealthy paleness on her usually radiant complexion.

"You do look unwell, Lily. Has work been hard

lately? I guess preparing for cotillion can be stressful, these women like to suck each other's blood for no good reason."

"No," Amelie's tone remained unbothered. "I am not doing anything out of the ordinary."

Her reply and careless, even cold tone, made Richard resort to something he had hoped would remain unspoken simply because he wanted a different reaction from the woman sitting across the table. 1

"Really? And I heard your 'spy' has been poking around Jason Sanson's business. Unless Anna is now a regular at the hostess bars, I'd say she is trying to dig dirt on him and... his surroundings."

He paused and observed Amelie's pale face, however, there was still no emotion to indicate that she was bothered by his words. He continued,

"Are you trying to dig dirt on Samantha again? Will you really let your jealousy push you this low?" 1

Finally, Amelie lost her cool and dropped her silverware, offering her husband a somewhat

angry smirk.

"Jealousy?"

Richard's lips curled into a bitter grin. "Ah, yes, you can't get jealous because you don't love me. I keep forgetting that part."

Amelie couldn't help but laugh. "I don't think you're lacking love these days, Richard, so I forgive you for forgetting that there still can be someone who can afford to not love you." 1

There it was again, something unexpectedly new; something Amelie would never say before, no matter how many times she was hurt by him or others. Her tongue had been turning into a scalpel, a fine blade that didn't hesitate to hurt back.

'If she is not jealous and not bitter, then what is it all about?'

Richard didn't want to keep going in the same ugly direction for the rest of the evening. There were still quite a few important things he needed to discuss with his wife and some important questions to ask her.

After all, she was still one of his most trusted partners if no longer in life, then in business, at least.

"I am going on a business trip to K City to discuss the financial situation of JFC with the rest of the shareholders."

Amelie raised her eyebrows; she didn't expect him to resort to discussing this matter directly with the shareholders while things inside the company were still rather unstable. This could only mean one thing -- it was becoming serious.

"Are you going to brainstorm the investment opportunities together? How bad is the situation exactly?"

"We keep losing lucrative projects at the last minute as if there is someone snatching those interested in working with JFC, it bothers me... There is a potential partner we lost a week ago so I am going to meet with him to discuss his reasons for rejecting our offer." 1

Richard's words made Amelie feel very uneasy.

She, too, knew that the deal with Einar

Ingvarsson was not the only potential partnership that slipped right through their fingers.

And not only that; there was something weird going on with the stock market with a lot of new, seemingly fast-rising companies appearing and disappearing almost every week, making the market fluctuate even more than before.

Moreover, the charity organizations Amelie was in charge of, started receiving anonymous offers to diversify their structure, and Amelie couldn't help but feel as if someone was trying to push her off her position or even take her place there instead.

'It cannot be Samantha, even with Richard's money, there is no way she would resort to "buying" her place in this manner; it's just too much money to be playing with.'

In addition, just a week ago, I received an anonymous offer to buy Emerald Hotel from me entirely, there is no way Richard would want to buy the hotel that technically already belongs to him. Something really strange is going on here.' 2

"Would you like to go with me?" Richard's voice



broke through the fog of contemplation surrounding Amelie and she offered him a confused expression. 1

"I think it will do you some good to take some time off work."

He smiled but Amelie only shook her head. "This is not the time to take vacations, Richard. Especially when JFC is in such an unstable financial situation. You go ahead and rest after your meetings; if you're so eager to spend some quality time in the company of a female, you can always take your friend with you. I am sure she would love that."

Richard tightened his grip around his fork but decided against any retort. The rest of the dinner went by in complete silence. 1

