



## 96 Divorce <sup>1</sup>

The court building was unusually quiet. <sup>1</sup>

Although the divorce between Richard Clark and Amelie Ashford was supposed to be held in secret, a couple of nosy reporters still managed to find out both the date and the time of the process, and were now waiting outside for it to be finally over.

A short, middle-aged guard escorted Amelie to the room where her meeting was about to begin, and as she entered, she saw that everyone was already waiting for her.

*'I can't believe he had the audacity to bring that woman here with him,'* Amelie fumed internally when she noticed Samantha sitting right beside Richard. <sup>2</sup>

*'I wonder if she insisted on coming with him because she wanted to gloat... Because if he brought her here today for "moral support" then he is even more pathetic than I could have ever imagined.'*

Taking a seat across the table from the couple,

Amelie took another look at Samantha.

'She is dressed properly this time; modestly even. But the jewelry...' For a split second, her heart trembled with a blend of irritation and hurt. 'She is wearing late Mrs. Clark's diamonds. Unbelievable. I can only hope that Richard simply didn't notice her wearing them because if he did and still let her come here looking like this, then he is more than just pathetic. He is a total scum.' 2

"Now that we are all here, let's begin."

Benjamin Andersen, a court judge and a trusted friend of the family for many years, offered everyone a brief smile and cleared his throat, shifting his eyes back to the papers on the table below.

"Since the formal contractual union was ended by mutual agreement and neither of the sides has any additional claims, this is now an official formality. So..." 1

Somehow, it felt that Benjamin refused to believe that this divorce was happening. His eyes kept running over the same sentences while words struggled to exit his mouth. Finally, after another deep inhale, he continued,



"For the official record, I need you to say it one more time. Mrs. Amelie Ashford, do you agree to this divorce?"

He then lifted his eyes from the divorce papers and gripped the pen, ready to hand it over. He took a moment to look at the woman sitting next to him—truthfully, she didn't look like she came to get divorced. If anything, she looked like she came to rub someone's face in it, perhaps even to take her revenge.

Amelie's eyes were fixed on the wall behind the judge. All she had to do was say yes—she was ready for it anyway—yet something deep inside was preventing her from saying it. It was ridiculously absurd.

Richard Clark shifted uncomfortably in his seat and released an irritated, though suppressed, groan. Samantha placed her manicured hand on the desk and started nervously tapping her fingernails. Each time they touched the polished wood, it sounded like gunshots.

The combination of their joined impatience jolted Amelie back to her senses. Moving her eyes back to the judge, she took another



moment to savor the silence and finally answered, "Yes. I agree to this divorce."

A flicker of a hidden smile graced Samantha's lips while Richard sighed in relief. They both were already aware of Amelie's firm decision, but now it was finally official.

Richard was the first to put his signature on the document, then it was Amelie's turn. She placed the documents in front of her and looked at her ex-husband-to-be's name written in black ink by his hand. She was already used to it; managing the company together had made her look over thousands of documents signed by Richard. Yet she had never once considered that there would be a time when she would see his signature on divorce papers.

*'Here go the years I wasted on this marriage... ending with just one stroke of my pen. I guess it was smart of me not to take his last name after all.'* 1

Amelie released a subtle exhale of regret and finally moved her hand over the page. It was done. She signed it. Now, she was divorced.

The judge put his seal on each page to make it



final and was about to put the documents in his briefcase when Amelie moved her hand over the desk, almost as if she wanted to grab the papers, and asked, "Could you not hide your seal just yet?"

The conference room grew silent once again. Mr. Andersen, Richard, and Samantha fixed their widened eyes on Miss Ashford, their bewilderment was almost palpable.

At last, Richard leaned over the desk and narrowed his eyes. "What is that supposed to mean? What do you need his seal for?"

With a light smile on her pinkish lips, Amelie pulled a few documents out of her purse and placed them on the desk in front of the judge. Without even looking at her now ex-husband, she explained, "I need his seal to stamp my marriage certificate."

"What?!" Richard jumped from his seat, his face turning red. "Amelie, what the hell are you talking about?!" 4

Miss Ashford knitted her brows as she watched her ex-husband's reaction. Why did he even care? His mistress was right next to him, yet he



acted as if she were betraying him.

With a long sigh, she opened a small front pocket of her purse, took out a rose gold diamond engagement ring, and put it on her ring finger. Her voice steady and cold, she finally replied, "I am getting married, Richard. My new husband is about to make an entrance."

As soon as she finished that sentence, the door to the room swung open, inviting a tall, neatly dressed man with hair as black as the raven's feather. Richard's face turned pale in disbelief while Samantha almost jumped from her seat, her eyes refusing to believe what she was witnessing.

"Am I on time?" Liam's tone was a melodic mockery while his lips curled into a wide grin. 3

"This can't be... Amelie, what the hell is going on here?!"

Richard's voice was bordering with a growl which made Liam stand between him and his now ex-wife. He glared at him with a glint of warning menace and Richard had to make an effort to compose himself.





"Please keep your emotions in check, Mr. Clark. You are now a legal witness." Liam placed his own copy of the marriage certificate in front of the judge and smiled. "Do us a favor, Mr. Andersen. We are in a hurry." 6

Confused, Benjamin looked at Amelie and she nodded too, confirming her desire to get remarried right away. Richard, however, made another attempt to protest.

"Amelie, you can't do this! I cannot allow you to get married to this man!" 5

The judge chimed in with a loud grunt and took both marriage licenses into his hands, scanning them quickly before answering Richard, "Calm down, Mr. Clark. Mrs. Ashford is now a single woman and this is up to her to decide whether she wants to get married or not. I, as a judge, have no objections." 8

With that, he stamped the documents and smiled at Amelie. 1

"Congratulations, Amelie. I will be waiting for a wedding invitation." 9

