



200 Christmas Benefit

The guests began to gather at the appointed time, eager to plunge into the enchanting atmosphere of Christmas Eve meticulously prepared by the skillful hands of the best hostess in town: Amelie Bennett. 1

Everyone was excited to finally visit the famous Bennett mansion. It was already known to many as flawlessly decorated and astonishingly beautiful, but now that it was also generously sprinkled with classy Christmas decorations, it resembled a mansion from a magic fairytale, evoking warm and pleasantly nostalgic feelings in every person who stepped into the house.

The benefit itself was even more grand than all the previous ones combined.

Apart from regular mandatory donations made by the guests, people could buy useful and heartwarming gifts for children in the orphanages; subsidize soup kitchens and individual welfare projects; educational scholarships, healthcare access, clean water initiatives, and housing programs, -- Christmas was the best time to show one's generosity and Amelie Bennett was always on top of that



notion.

"The atmosphere here is so magical, that I feel overwhelmed with Christmas spirit! I want to give and give non-stop; it has to do something with the way Amelie affects people. She is definitely a charmer!"

"Have you seen that giant Christmas tree in the middle of the living room? I think it looks better than the one they put in the central square of the city! The mayor should definitely be ashamed of himself this year around!"

"And it is snowing today, too! What a magical evening. This must be the best Christmas benefit yet!"

People continued to praise Amelie's efforts, wandering around her huge mansion and gasping in awe at every little yet thoughtful detail put into its party ensemble.

The event was loud and active, with so many happy guests mingling around and sharing the joy of the upcoming holidays.

And yet, one person still remained restless with anxiety.

'I wonder if I'm going in the right direction,'



Samantha carefully looked around, making sure that her nervous fidgeting was still left unnoticed.

She tried her best to hide amongst the circulating crowd in search of Amelie's study and now it finally seemed like she could start doing what she had come here to do.

'I guess I could be upset about people not wanting to talk to me, but it can definitely wait til I'm done.'

Having reached the second floor of the mansion unbothered, Samantha started slowly walking through the long and wide hallway, looking around and pretending to do what everybody else did--admire the beautiful interior.

From time to time, she would catch someone giving her a brief judgmental look, but it did not bother her at all; tonight, she would accept anything so long as it meant that she would get what she wanted in the end.

At last, she stopped, her heart racing in her chest. *'It must be it,'* she grabbed the round doorknob of the wide, tall wooden door, but hesitated to open it.

She looked around one more time. There were



only two doors in this wing of the building and they looked different from the doors that lead to the bedrooms. Samantha's logic dictated that those rooms must be the offices but which one was which?

Luck smiled at her once again.

The doorknob turned which made the woman flinch and step away, startled, while the door to the room swung open, and a tall, rather stern-looking woman walked out of it, closing the door behind her back.

"Oh? Mrs. Clark? What are you doing here?" The housekeeper, Mrs. Geller, offered Sam a cold look, but her voice still sounded forcefully polite.

Samantha frowned for a second but then decided that it was better to play nice. "Uhm... I was looking for a bathroom."

"This is not a bathroom, Mrs. Clark. This is Mrs. Bennett's study. The guest bathroom is on the first floor, both sides of the living room."

'Perfect!'

Samantha grinned which alerted the housekeeper. She turned around and locked the



door with a small key, then offered Sam one last cold look, and walked away, leaving Samantha to stand there alone.

'Nasty old hag! Still salty about my firing her, huh?'

She tried to turn the doorknob a few times but to no avail. Still, there was little room for disappointment; not for someone like Samantha at least.

'Pickpocketing is not the only thing I am good at. Good thing I've come prepared!'

With a wide grin still tugging at the corners of her lips, the woman pulled out two hairpins from her bun and shoved them into the lock, twisting them both around with practiced precision. And after just a couple of minutes, the lock clicked open, and Samantha slipped inside the room like a skilled burglar.

'Alright, let's see what we can get here!'

Samantha had no idea how much time she had spent in the room, frantically going through Amelie's stuff, but no matter how hard she looked, the document she needed was nowhere to be found.



Glancing at an old clock ticking menacingly on the wall, she was now beginning to get even more anxious.

'Damn it! I can't stay here too long, what if Richard starts looking for me?'

It seemed like a desperate situation, but even as she continued her search, the failure seemed to be inevitable.

'I guess it is not here after all. She does not even have a safe in here or a locked drawer. Nothing to hide, huh?'

There was no helping it, Samantha had to stop and leave the room.

With a long, defeated sigh, she snuck out of the study and was about to go back to the living room when she noticed Elizabeth and John exchanging words in a hushed tone.

"So, is everything ready with the gossip feed and the media?" John asked, throwing a quick look around. His wife nodded. "The press is also already waiting in one of the guest rooms. It will be a huge thing for sure."

"It was a rather bold move--to expose Richard and that woman in front of so many people



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tonight. And the police too! I can't believe we will witness both of them getting arrested together!" 1

"Yes, that Samantha deserves to be thrown in jail, I don't even care that she is pregnant!"

Samantha closed her mouth with both hands to stop herself from screaming. Her heart was drumming in her ears while her entire body seemed to be frozen.

'Arrested? They are going to arrest me tonight? This... this can't be right!'

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