



208 Side Story: The Words You Can't Say Out Loud

The venue hall at the Prime Plaza Hotel, the usual hot spot for most of the events that celebrated talented people and their achievements, was bustling with numerous guests, mingling around in anticipation. **1**

Dozens of famous artists, sculptors, performers, and writers, along with renowned publishers were gathered under one roof to celebrate one man--Johnathan Radcliffe. Tonight, everything was in his honor.

Johnathan Radcliffe, a rather modest author in terms of the sold copies of his first book, had recently published his second novel based on his relationship with Elizabeth. Filled with intriguing and heart-throbbing romance, never-ending drama, and a wholesome happy end, the copies of his novel were being sold like hotcakes and just in one month, the sales crossed a one million point, instantly putting him in line for receiving a "Book of the Year" award.

Needless to say, Elizabeth was John's biggest inspiration and his biggest fan; she was on cloud



nine when she heard the news and quickly arranged such a grand event to celebrate her husband's incredible achievement.

Tonight, one would not see a woman more proud and happy than Elizabeth.

Little Oscar Bennett, wearing a small formal black tuxedo and his favorite red bowtie, ran through the hall, followed by Emma and Sebastian, Elizabeth's second child. Barking happily, Captain Pantaloons ran right after them, a red bowtie wrapped around his neck as well. The corgi was officially invited, therefore, had to look presentable too.

"Be careful! Don't run too fast, there are too many people for that!" Liam yelled at his son, but when the latter ignored him, he let out a defeated sigh and shook his head, returning to his wife. "He sure is one active kid, exactly like my grandpa! Naming him Oscar was fate!"

Amelie laughed and nodded in agreement. "By the way, have you noticed that Captain Pantaloons lost weight? I kind of miss his chubby belly now."

"That's because our son keeps chasing him around the house," Liam noted and his wife



noticed a subtle hint of gloating in his tone. "While Oscar the First treated him like a prince and fed him the finest delicacies that only made him fatter, Oscar the Second, though still so evidently in love with the dog, wants to get him slimmer. I must admit, I like this arrangement better."

He scoffed and Amelie rolled her eyes. She still could not grasp the reason for her husband's displeasure with the poor and no longer so chunky dog.

"Oscar seems to like Emma too; they get along pretty well even though Emma is more than a year older. I guess children just don't really care about that."

Amelie smiled as she noticed another friendly banter between their son and Elizabeth's daughter.

Liam followed his wife's gaze and smiled as well, wrapping his arm around her waist and pulling her closer as he whispered in her ear. "I think liking older women is in his blood."

Amelie blushed and lightly slapped the man on his shoulder, but Liam only hugged her closer, planting a light kiss on her rosy cheek.



"Look at you, all lovey-dovey! I guess romance just does not die between you two."

Elizabeth snuck up on them without being noticed and her sudden appearance made Ameli flinch and push Liam away in embarrassment which only made her best friend laugh.

"Oh, don't be so shy! We are celebrating one of the most romantic books of the year tonight, so affection is a must, just like formal attire!"

"The book was truly amazing," Amelie nodded, "I could not put it down until I finished it! Every single word was chosen so carefully; it really showed how much John cares for you. I could literally see you in every single sentence!"

Finally, it was Lizzy's turn to get a little shy. "I am so happy for him... I have never thought that I could influence a man so much. I mean... my husband wrote a whole book about us! This is the most romantic thing a man has ever done for me!"

She blushed and Amelie smiled at her kindly. "I am glad to finally see you so happy. You deserve to have a million books written about you, Lizzy!"

"The most romantic thing, huh?" Liam pouted



slightly, "Should I do that as well? Lily likes books and while I am not a writer... I mean, you never know, right?"

The women laughed, but Elizabeth's joy was cut abruptly when her eyes noticed a familiar figure lingering among the crowd. "What is she doing here?"

Both Liam and Amelie turned around in unison and Amelie instantly understood the bitterness in Elizabeth's voice.

There, among the chipper chatters of the mingling guests, stood Elizabeth's mother, Mrs. Cathrine Gilmore.

"Excuse me for a moment," Lizzy, her eyes still firmly glued to her mother's face, stepped away from her friends and started walking toward Cathrine, not entirely sure why.

"Lizzy," the woman said warmly as her daughter stood before her. "It's... a lovely gathering you've arranged here."

Elizabeth did not really care about the woman's praise. "What are you doing here? I don't remember signing the Gilmore name on any of the invitations."



Cathrine sighed, her eyes filled with regret. "Can we... talk somewhere private? I promise I won't take much of your time."

Elizabeth sighed as well. "Fine. I'll give you ten minutes. My husband is about to go up on the stage."

Her mother nodded and the two of them went outside of the hall, hiding behind one of the hallway corners.

"Your children look lovely," Cathrine started rather timidly, "your son looks a lot like Johnathan."

Elizabeth tapped her foot impatiently, giving her mother a scornful look. "Well, John is more of a man than my previous husband was."

"Lizzy..." The woman wanted to add something to that response, but in the end, all she did was bite her tongue, and her daughter really appreciated it.

"You never called me once when I was away... All of you... Father, Grandpa, you... you tossed me away like I was garbage; you did not even care that I had a newborn daughter..."

Elizabeth's eyes welled with tears and she had to



make a lot of effort to stop herself from crying. "When I gave birth to Sebastian, although I was still incredibly hurt, I sent you a message that you now had another grandchild, but you... you ignored that too. So whatever it was that forced you to leave your ivory tower and come here tonight... I don't think it would matter to me. Or anyone else for that matter."

Elizabeth was determined to stay cold and detached, but the moment she heard her mother sob, her heart melted instantly, and her eyes grew wide with concern.

"I am sorry, Lizzy," Cathrine started in a trembling voice, "I tried to make amends so many times, but..." She paused because she could no longer fight back her emotions. tears streamed down her face, and although Elizabeth wanted to comfort her, the bitter feeling of betrayal made her stop, and she clenched her fists instead.

Her mother continued. "I don't really know what to say... Like any other mother, I wanted to be there for you all the time. You are my pride and joy, you have always been. But you know what it's like to be born into our world. I went from my parents' house to the university, and from



there, straight to my husband's home... All my life was scripted beforehand, predetermined. And anything deviating from that script was simply terrifying and wrong.

When you did what you did... I got scared and frustrated. You set off to live the life you wanted instead of the life we chose for you, so in the end, I had to ask myself: was I upset because you acted foolishly or because you acted the way I never could?"

She paused again, unable to control her emotions any longer. Heavy tears began to stream down her face and Elizabeth felt a sharp pang of regret piercing her heart.

All her life, she regarded her mother as nothing more but her family's puppet; a heartless doll who was content with living the life that was served to her on a silver platter. She got married, gave birth to her, and led a quiet life, devoid of excitement or happiness, but most importantly, a life devoid of true love.

And now, when she was standing before all the people who had gathered to celebrate nothing but love, Cathrine felt that she could no longer be fake.



"I am leaving your father, Lizzy," she finally spoke again and her daughter's eyes grew wide. "I can no longer lead this fake existence. I want what you have... real friends, real family, real love... So if you can find it in your heart to forgive my timidity and give me a second chance, I will dedicate the rest of my life to paying you back for your kindness."

At first, Elizabeth had no idea what to say. Her mother, a prime example of the classic upper-class wife, was standing before her, telling her that she was about to get divorced while asking for her forgiveness at the same time.

'So she never resented me for my choice... Or rather, she did, but simply because she was jealous that she could not make the same choice herself.'

Elizabeth closed her eyes and took a deep breath to soothe her nerves. She had only spent three minutes talking to her mother but it was already enough to turn her world upside down.

It was too much to handle at that moment, but she still knew that shrugging her mother off, even though she was feeling extremely bitter, was not something she could do. Not when the



woman standing in front of her had tears running down her face and her hands shaking.

Letting out a long sigh, Elizabeth shook her head, gently grabbing her mother's hand. "Let's go. John is about to get on the stage and I think you will feel better once you meet Sebastian. He is a cute kid; his smile alone is contagious enough."

Cathrine smiled through tears, squeezing her daughter's hand as she followed her back to the venue hall.

"Thank you, Lizzy..." She could not say those words out loud, but she did not really mind that. From now on, there would be enough time to say them over and over again.

