

Illusions 491

Chapter 491

Remington returned to Oakridge Heights as the night had completely settled in.

It had been two days and two nights since Lizetta left. Exhausted, the man stepped out of his car, only to be surprised by the lights on in the mansion. Remington trembled, his fists clenching suddenly.

In a moment, his dim eyes seemed to fall into the Starlight Group. He quickened his pace, gradually turning into a run as he pushed open the entrance door. The living room was brightly lit, yet empty.

Just as Remington was about to dash upstairs, he heard sounds coming from the kitchen.

He paused, quickly heading towards the kitchen.

Standing at the kitchen entrance, he saw a slender figure at the counter, the kitchen dimly lit, casting a soft halo around the woman.

Her hair fell in soft waves, shimmering gently in the light.

For a moment, Remington felt a moment of dizziness and disbelief, his eyes burning, his voice hoarse to the extreme.

"Honey."

His voice startled the busy figure, who turned around with a beaming smile.

But to Remington, it felt like his vision shattered, blown away by the wind.

Clarity returned to his eyes. A whirlpool of disappointment and frustration swallowed him.

It wasn't Lizetta.

It was Stella.

Yes, the woman who had meticulously planned her departure, how could she suddenly change her mind and return to their home?

"Remington, I'm sorry, did I disturb you?" Stella asked nervously.

Remington quickly composed himself, reaching to turn on the main light.

The incandescent light illuminated the surroundings, casting light on the man's cold and handsome features, his brows furrowed slightly.

He questioned sternly, "What are you doing here? How did you get in?"

Stella seemed startled by his icy tone, looking slightly uneasy.

"Your mom brought me over. She went upstairs + knew Liz was missing, and you were worried and restless, not sleeping for the past two days. I was worried about you and brought some nutritious food for you. You hadn't returned, so I thought I'd heat them up. Are you hungry? Shall I prepare you some soup first?" Stella's eyes were full of concern as she smiled and asked.

She stood there, resembling a wife waiting for her husband to return home, ready to offer care and comfort.

But Remington thought of how Lizetta used to wait for him in the same way, day after day.

He glanced down, concealing the sorrow in his eyes, no longer looking at Stella, and said coldly.

"Please leave."

His tone was too cold, leaving Stella stiff and embarrassed.

She thought with Lizetta gone, she'd have her chance, eagerly wanting to be the one to comfort him in his time of distress.

But Remington's attitude towards her was even colder and more distant, keeping her at arm's length.

Biting her lip, she felt humiliated.

Just then, Hanna's voice came from

the living room, "Remington, how

can you talk to Stella like that? She

cares about you. Did she do

e

something wrong by cooking for you and showing concern?"

Remington turned to Hanna, "What are you doing here?"

Hanna frowned, "Of course, I came. to see for myself if Lizetta really left!

It's sun one,

a big deal, and you've been hiding it from the family!

I went upstairs, Lizetta's things are still there. Did she really leave, or is she up to something?

What about Joseph's illness if she's gone? Did she leave because she didn't want to save Joseph? Remington, you must find her."

Hanna's face was full of anger as she continued to speak incessantly.

Remington stood still, his shadow cast on the polished floor like a cold silhouette.

His hand, hanging by his side, slowly clenched tighter.

Chapter 492

The wound in the palm of his hand, which was left untreated, began to bleed again, the congealed blood dripping down along his fingers.

"Remington, what happened to your hand? My God, you're bleeding a lot."

Stella hurried over, reaching for Remington's bleeding hand.

But before she could touch him, Remington abruptly raised his hand and pushed her away.

Stella nearly stumbled backward, her face turning pale.

"Remington." Her eyes reddened.

But Remington didn't look at her, his gaze fixed on Hanna, a cold sneer pulling at his lips. "I was hesitating whether to bring her back or not. But now I think it's better she's gone, so our baby won't be treated as a blood bag even before it's born."

Remington stepped forward, walking past Hanna, his voice cold. "I've decided to respect Liz's wishes and not search for her anymore. As for your own son, you figure out how to save him. It's not Liz's responsibility!"

With that, he strode upstairs, commanding Lina, "Please ask them to leave and don't just open the door to anyone next time."

He climbed the stairs, and only then did Hanna react, her voice filled with shock and anger. "What do you mean by figuring it out myself? That's your brother! Remington!"

But Remington didn't turn back, and when Hanna tried to follow, Lina stopped her.

"Ma'am, you know the young master's temper. Please, you and Ms. West should leave now."

Hanna glared at Lina while Stella stepped forward to soothe, "Aunt Hanna, let's just go for now. Liz has left, and Remington is in a bad mood. He didn't mean to upset you." Hanna held her head feeling dizzy, "Stella, do you think Remington has really given up on finding Lizetta?"

Stella supported Hanna as they walked outside, comforting her gently. "No, Remington cares too much about Joseph. Even if Lizetta has left, Remington will surely find another match for Joseph. Don't worry, Aunt Hanna, I will also mobilize all of the West family's resources to help find a suitable match."

Stella's eyes were filled with fervor, pondering Remington's words. Could it be he's genuinely disheartened and troubled, deciding to let Lizetta go and not search for her anymore? "You're so kind, unlike Lizetta. Joseph trusted her so much, and the Dashiell family took her in; but the one time she could be of use, she heartlessly ran away."

Stella pursed her lips and smiled, then glanced back at Oakridge Heights.

Tonight, Remington had sent her away, but it was because Lizetta had just left, and the man was drowning in regret and resentment.

But men can't stand loneliness, she believed. As long as Lizetta stayed away, she would eventually take her place, becoming the new lady of this house.

Upstairs.

Remington stood before the floor-to-ceiling window, silently watching Stella and Hanna leave the courtyard.

As their car drove away, he picked

up his phone and instructed,

eli

"Twenty days ago, Liz and Stella had coffee together at the café across from the hospital. Check the surveillance footage from that day

and ask if any of the staff overheard their conversation."

At that time, Remington hadn't thought much of seeing them together for coffee.

But now, considering Lizetta always

seemed to keep her distance from

Stella, it was odd for them to share a

coffee. It dawned on him that it was after that day that Lizetta's attitude had changed somewhat,

When she spoke to him, there were no longer barbs in every sentence, as if softening little by little.

Chapter 493

After hanging up the phone, the man turned around, his gaze methodically sweeping through the bedroom.

Hanna had said that Lizetta's things were all still there, and indeed they were.

A cashmere shawl she often wore was strewn across the sofa, and her vanity table was still cluttered with her frequently used belongings.

Remington walked over, opening the jewelry box on the vanity. Inside, neatly arrayed, were the gardenia earrings, their wedding bands, and the pink diamond necklace he had recently given her. She hadn't taken any of it with her.

Yolanda mentioned that these items weren't what Lizetta wanted, but having them laid out in front of him felt like a silent slap across Remington's face.

He picked up the earrings, accidentally staining them with blood from his hand.

A pang of panic crossed Remington's eyes as he stroked the earrings.

He wanted to wipe the blood away. But it only seemed to spread more, impossible to be cleaned.

Just like their relationship, now riddled with cracks.

For the first time in his life, he was utterly uncertain about something, doubting whether their fractured relationship could ever be mended.

"Liz, have you already concluded that our relationship is beyond repair? Have you, in your heart, already sentenced me to death? Is that why you've abandoned everything here so easily, including me?" Remington murmured to himself self-mockingly, but no one replied.

The silence felt like the most fitting response.

Clutching the earrings, he felt as though his spine had snapped, and he bended slowly under the weight of his sorrow.

In the days that followed, Remington kept himself busy with work.

He stopped sending people to look for her, and those who had been sent to Summer City before were all recalled. Instead, more people were sent out to find a match for Joseph.

Martin wanted Stella to follow Remington and learn to practice managing the company's affairs.

Remington agreed, and Stella began to follow him around.

Rumors of an impending alliance between the Dashiell and the West families began to circulate in Zion City, all signs pointing to Remington moving on from Liz, proceeding with his life. Two months passed in a blink.

One evening, Stella returned home late to find Barbara lounging on the sofa, listening to music.

"Is Stella back? Why so late today?"

"Mom, there was a business dinner tonight, and Remington asked me to accompany him. He introduced me to a lot of people, and he even drove me home himself," Stella excitedly shared, sitting down beside Barbara and chatting non-stop about the evening's events.

Barbara listened with a smile, her expression softening as she held Stella's hand.

"It seems like things between you and Remington are progressing well. You two have a childhood foundation, and he has spent so much effort trying to find you over the years.

That Lizetta was just a substitute

that slipped in during your absence.

Well, men do develop some feelings after being with someone for a while. But now that she's gone, I knew things between you and Remington would go smoothly! In Zion City, there's no better match than the Dashiells, and no man more worthy of trust than Remington. You must seize this opportunity; your happiness is all I need to be able to leave this world in peace."

Stella smiled, leaning into Barbara's embrace.

"Mom, but Lizetta is still carrying Remington's child. That child will be a huge bond between them. It's so frustrating that they lost track of a pregnant woman! And we still haven't found her"

Barbara gently patted Stella's shoulder, smoothing down her hair.

"Evercrestia isn't that big. I've been cautious not to make scenes about the search; it might alert Remington."

Chapter 494

"But now, it seems Lizetta doesn't hold that special place in Remington's heart anymore. It's time to step up the search efforts. This is the chance to get rid of her once and for all." Barbara held Stella's hand, her fingers brushing over Stella's missing digit, her face a mix of concern and love.

"Stella, don't you worry. You've suffered so much, and I won't let anyone come between my daughter's happiness!

This time, I'll have your cousin personally handle this. Before I leave this world, I'll remove all obstacles for you and ensure that you marry Remington in peace."

Stella turned and hugged Barbara around the waist, nuzzling affectionately.

"Mom, thank you. You're the greatest mom ever."

The quiet of Oakridge Heights at night was almost eerie.

Ray hurried up the stairs, noticing only a faint light coming from the opposite room on the second floor.

Ray walked over, pushed the door open, and saw a silent figure sitting on the floor with their back turned.

Remington, dressed in casual clothes with rolled-up sleeves, had a pile of wood next to him.

He was carefully assembling a crib with his own hands.

He didn't turn at the sound of the door, only pausing when Ray spoke.

"Mr. Remington Dashiell, Barbara's nephew, Ralap, took a few people on a flight out of Zion City."

Remington paused, "Where did they go?"

"They said it was a business trip to Solstice Kingdom. There was indeed some minor issues with the West family's project there."

A cold glint appeared in Remington's eyes as he spoke in a chilly tone, "Keep a close eye on them."

Ray nodded, "Already on it. Also,

we've got news from Tranquil Meadows. Interestingly, today

also took a private flight out

of the country, heading to Celestia."

Ray paused before adding, "Mr. Remington Dashiell, we checked all the airport surveillance in Summer City for when madam disappeared. We saw no sign of her. S

But during that time, there were no flights to Solstice Kingdom, yet there were two flights to Celestia.

The West family hasn't shown any suspicious activity during this time. Could we be mistaken, and madam actually conspired with Jerome."

The chill in Remington's eyes deepened. He had asked Ray to check the café's surveillance, and by a stroke of bad luck, it was malfunctioning that day. Remington had been closely monitoring the West family. He had been unusually lenient with their requests, but there had been no abnormalities. Ray was beginning to doubt their approach.

However, Remington narrowed his

no

eyes, saying, "Even though there were no flights to Solstice Kingdom during that period, there was one to Evercrestia, which borders it."

Ray, surprised, hurriedly responded, "Rest assured, Mr. Remington Dashiell, I'll double-check. We won't lose track of Ralap and his people!"

As Ray left the room, closing the door behind him, Remington continued to work on the crib, his silhouette solemn like a statue.

He knew Lizetta didn't want him to find her.

And it felt as if everything and everyone was telling him it was time to let go.

But he simply couldn't.

Even if he had to let go, he had to find her first.

He needed to see for himself that she and their child were absolutely safe, or he wouldn't be able to rest.

If the West family dared to harbor ill will or overreach, they should be prepared for the consequences.

No one could touch Remington's family. The West family had better be ready for the fallout.

Chapter 495

Lizetta had only been in Evercrestia for about two weeks, as the West family had been tirelessly searching for her.

Dora helped Lizetta leave, and they eventually settled down in a quaint town called Luminesia.

The town was nestled among mountains, with homes built along the lakeside. Colorful rooftops dotted the landscape, covered in snow during the winter months, making it feel like something out of a fairy tale. The locals were warm and friendly, making Lizetta's days there peaceful and serene.

However, as April approached, an unexpected snowstorm hit the town, causing a sudden drop in temperature and a shortage in heating supply.

"The fireplace must be broken; it's letting smoke into the room," Dora said, frowning as she tried to light the living room's fireplace.

Lizetta sat cross-legged on the carpet, following a video tutorial to knit a beanie, a new hobby she had recently fallen in love with. She wanted to make a cashmere beanie for Daisy, smiling at Dora when she heard her comment.

"Let's just put it out; it's not that cold. I'll wear an extra layer. Oh, and don't forget to deliver some of the cookies I baked to Nolan."

Nolan was a neighbor's young boy who often visited Lizetta. With Lizetta's beauty, gentle personality, and knack for baking delicious treats, she quickly became a favorite among the local children. Nolan and his pet forest cat, Daisy, were regular visitors.

"I'll head over now, better than having him come over in the snow."

As Dora got up, Lizetta also stood up to help her fetch a down jacket and scarf.

Watching Dora leave, Lizetta's gaze fell on the two trays of heather in the yard. The plant was cold-resistant, but perhaps not enough to withstand such heavy snowfall.

She put on her coat and stepped outside, reaching for the flower pots when she heard the crunch of footsteps in the snow.

Thinking Dora had returned, Lizetta turned with a smile, only to freeze at the sight of a tall, imposing figure.

The man's short hair, illuminated by the indoor lighting, was a stark black, unlike that of the locals.

Startled, Lizetta's grip loosened, and a flower pot fell from the shelf, heading straight for her.

"Watch out!"

The man's deep, mellow voice rang

out as he quickly closed the

, pulling Lizetta away ne

the shelf and blocking the

Hom

with his hand.

pot

The pot shattered, and Lizetta's heart raced as she looked up to see his handsome face, her expression shifting from shock to surprise.

"Mr. Madden?"

It turned out to be Jerome, not the person she had initially thought.

With her heart still fluttering, Lizetta managed to say, "What brings you here?"

He lowered his gaze with a smile, "You should wear a scarf when you come out. Where's Dora? Let's go inside and talk."

"Right, let's go inside."

Despite the snowy night, Lizetta was happy to have an unexpected visitor.

She smiled, nodding eagerly as she led Jerome inside.

After making Jerome a cup of hot tea, Lizetta turned to find his gaze upon her, deep and contemplative in the dim light.

"You look well," Jerome said, breaking the silence and dispelling any awkwardness.

Lizetta nodded, her tone light yet

polite. "Dora has been taking great care of me. Thank you, Mr. Madden. Without your help, I don't know where my baby and I would be."

Placing the coffee in front of Jerome, she maintained a courteous distance.

Jerome sensed her formality and

said after taking his coffee, "You've

thanked me enough. If you're truly

grateful, treat me as a friend and call me by my name, not Mr. Madden."

Sitting there, his demeanor was relaxed and inviting, effortlessly making Lizetta feel at ease.

"Jerome? That's a nice name. What brings you here all of a sudden?"

Chapter 496

"The Wests sent some folks to Evercrestia again a few days back. I'm a bit worried about it." Jerome said, his legs crossed.

Lizetta's eyebrows furrowed in surprise. She hadn't expected that two months on, not only had the Wests not given up on searching for her, but they had also increased their efforts. What were they planning? Were they relentless?

A chill ran through Lizetta, her hands on her lap trembling slightly without her noticing. She was both afraid and angry.

The warmth from Jerome's hand enveloped hers as he set down his coffee mug and leaned in to give her hand a reassuring squeeze.

Looking up, Lizetta met his comforting, smiling gaze. "Don't worry. I've set up a few obstacles and distractions in Evercrestia to lead them off your trail. They won't find their way here."

Lizetta's heart gradually calmed, and she nodded.

But at that moment, she realized they were sitting a little too close.

The snow continued to fall outside, casting a serene, dim glow in the living room. The quiet of the night was inherently romantic, perhaps too conducive to unintended intimacies. Feeling suddenly uncomfortable, Lizetta instinctively pulled back slightly, her fingers curling up. But before she could withdraw her hand completely, Jerome let go.

Standing up, he said, "Oh, I brought something for you. It's outside the door, I'll go get it."

With that, he turned and strode out.

He did indeed bring a suitcase, and he had nearly been hit by a flowerpot at the door when he saw Lizetta.

As he left, a gust of cold wind swept in. Lizetta let out a sigh and a small laugh. She felt like she had been away from men for too long and had started to overthink things.

Outside the door, Jerome picked up the suitcase and strode toward the two-story villa, then abruptly halted.

Turning around, he looked around and saw only the snow sweeping across the silent, deserted path.

There was nothing out of the ordinary.

He turned back and quickened his pace, soon disappearing into the yard.

"Mr. Remington Dashiell, it's really Jerome! Madam must be here. I' call our guys over," Ray's voice emerged from behind a low wall, moments after Jerome had disappeared.

In the shadow beside Ray, a man stood silently, his gaze piercing through the snow and walls into the house. Clenching his leather-gloved hands to resist the urge to barge in, he was close to finding the one he had been searching for two months.

He didn't want to scare her, or worse, drive her further away.

He turned back and quickened his pace, soon disappearing into the yard, "Not now. Find a place where we can keep an eye on her."

Ray turned back in surprised, "We finally found Madam, aren't we taking her with us now?"

Jerome's distractions in Evercrestia had led Ralap and his men on a wild goose chase.

But Remington wasn't that foolish. He immediately realized that it was a smokescreen set up by Jerome. He also guessed that Lizetta might have already left Evercrestia, and since Luminesia was adjacent to Evercrestia and the languages were similar, both being of the Northern Germanic language group, it was likely she had gone there.

Although Lizetta had only studied it in the past, she had a talent for languages and had no problem with everyday communication.

Remington had his people watch Luminesia and had indeed discovered Jerome's presence there. But Jerome was very cautious, and their people had lost track of him. Fortunately, they had a general idea of his whereabouts.

Remington circled a few possible locations, ruled out several nearby bustling tourist towns, and finally thought this small town was the most likely.

He brought Ray here personally, initially just taking a chance, but it seemed like luck was on their side.

It was a gamble coming here, but luck seemed to be on Remington's side on this snowy night.

Liz, I've finally found you.

Our connection hasn't broken, and I won't let it.

Chapter 497

"Finding her is all that matters, no rush."

Remington held back his emotions, his voice hoarse as he spoke.

Ray couldn't fathom what Remington was hesitating for.

He had seen how Remington had struggled these past two months.

Severe insomnia, suppressed emotions, and withering away.

For days on end, aside from the necessary work conversations, he had been incredibly silent. Ray felt that if they didn't find Lizetta soon, Remington's pent-up emotions were going to reach a breaking point. And now, they had finally found his wife.

Moreover, she was currently sharing a room with a man who had his sights set on her.

Based on Ray's knowing of Remington, Remington should've already drawn his gun from his hip, charged in with him, and taken his wife back by now.

But Remington had instead instructed him not to alert anyone else and to find a place to stay?

Were they not planning to act tonight and just watching from afar?

And he's not in a rush?

Ray had never heard anything so absurd.

"Mr. Remington Dashiell."

Ray stood still, tempted to check if Remington had a fever or was delirious, or perhaps had given the wrong orders.

"Go quickly."

Only when Remington heavily patted Ray's shoulder did Ray nod and leave quickly.

Remington couldn't help but take steps closer to the villa where Lizetta was.

The villa's outer wall was low, hardly blocking a man's line of sight.

Through the dancing snow, Remington's gaze landed on the window that leaked light.

He could even make out vague shadows, though not clearly.

But the

exceptionally bright yellow sweate

occasionally getting up and around. Remington knew

her.

He stared at that blurred figure, the depths of his eyes slowly warming.

The snow fell heavier, covering his shoulders and eyelashes, and he forgot to move a step.

Until the crunch of footsteps on snow sounded, Remington glanced to see a figure walking along the path.

It wasn't Ray; it must be a woman.

Remington stepped aside to hide, and the woman hurried over, pushed open the gate, and went in.

Remington sighed with relief, at least the villa wasn't just inhabited by Lizetta and Jerome.

What Remington didn't know was, with Dora's return, Lizetta also breathed a sigh of relief.

"Dora, look, Mr. Madden brought us lots of treats, come try some."

Lizetta waved Dora over, but Dora glanced at the array of pastries on the table without moving to grab any.

"Mr. Madden brought those for you, Liz, I shouldn't just help myself. You two talk, I'm heading to my room."

Dora's gaze quickly swept over Lizetta and Jerome before turning to leave.

Lizetta sensed a teasing tone in her words and wasn't that grateful for Dora's quick return.

Feeling awkward, Dora paused, then turned back to ask.

"The snow's getting heavier, is Mr. Madden staying over? I'll prepare a room."

Jerome looked at Lizetta, his smile gentle, "Would that be alright?"

In this heavy snow, Lizetta naturally couldn't kick him out.

Especially since Jerome had arranged this place to begin with.

She smiled and waved it off, "You're the host here, of course, it's fine." Standing up, she added, "I'll help Dora prepare."

As she stepped forward, Jerome

You need to take yourself and the baby."

Chapter 498

Dora quickly assured she could handle it and pushed open the door and entered the room across from Lizetta's.

Lizetta settled back into her chair, her gaze drifting over the array of vitamins, pastries, and snacks piled on the table. She looked at Jerome and said, "These count as your second gift to me. I still haven't found a way to return the favor for that bouquet you gave me last time. I'm really sorry about that."

She was reminded of the bouquet that got ruined by Remington right in front of Jerome, which made her feel somewhat guilty.

Jerome, however, spoke up, "Last time wasn't the first."

"Huh?" Lizetta was surprised.

Jerome arched an eyebrow, "The first thing I ever gave you was a tube of anti-inflammatory ointment. I wonder if you remember?"

That year, Jerome had personally visited the dance academy to scout for talent.

As his car entered the academy, the driver, not at his best, nearly hit a child who darted out unexpectedly.

At the critical moment, a slender figure rushed forward to pull the child to safety.

When Jerome got out of the car, he saw the girl and the child had both fallen to the ground.

The child was unharmed and quickly ran off, but the girl had twisted her ankle. Jerome wanted to take her to the infirmary, but she hastily waved him off and limped away.

Unexpectedly, he soon saw her again on the stage of the dance audition.

Despite her injury, she danced with more passion and grace than anyone else.

Later, he had the driver buy some ointment, intending to personally deliver it to her, especially since he had already decided to recruit her.

But he worried that personally delivering it might make her subject to misunderstandings among her peers, suggesting she had gotten the position through personal connections rather than talent. So, he handed the ointment to a passing student, asking them to give it to her.

Now, looking at Lizetta, Jerome felt a twinge of regret.

If he had personally delivered the cream back then, maybe they could have gotten acquainted sooner.

"The ointment." Lizetta faintly remembered.

She looked at Jerome in surprise, "Ah! So it was your car that almost hit someone that day!"

Although their first encounter hadn't left a deep impression on her, she hadn't recognized him until now which showed she didn't remember much about him.

But she did remember, and Jerome found this somewhat comforting. He smiled softly and nodded.

"The way you danced that day despite being injured, showed me how much you love dance and that you have a strong character. I admire you."

He said he admired her, but there was a hint of warmth in his eyes.

Lizetta's eyelashes fluttered, and she tensed slightly, avoiding his gaze as she stood up, "I should go check on how Dora is getting on."

She moved quickly, leaving Jerome sitting there, his gaze following her hasty retreat with a slight smile playing on his lips.

He didn't press further but stood up, put on his gloves, and left the villa.

Approaching the flower stand, he

retrieved an unused flowerpot from

underneath, transferring the

shattered flowers into the new pot

before carrying two pots back

inside.

Just a wall away, Remington's imposing figure was nearly buried in the thick snow, standing like a snowman.

Watching Jerome move in and out

as if he owned the place stirred something in Remington. Suddenly, he clenched his fist and punched a nearby tree, causing snow to cascade down upon him. S

The snow penetrated through his collar, chilling him to the bone and deepening his sense of loss.

But he couldn't move, realizing for the first time that love could make one feel cowardly when faced with the familiar.

Chapter 499

Jerome's room was right next to Liz's.

After chatting for a bit, they both headed to their own rooms.

Liz was about to enter her room when she heard Jerome's voice from behind.

"Aren't you going to ask about him?"

Since Liz went abroad, she had only called Jerome once and hadn't contacted anyone else after that.

Jerome had just updated Liz about Yolanda, telling her that after she left, Remington hadn't done anything to Yolanda. Yolanda had just successfully wrapped up her latest fantasy series.

He also mentioned that Fiona and Joy were both in good health, and her older brother's treatment was going as planned.

But Liz hadn't asked about Remington, not even once.

Now, Jerome didn't mention that name, but Liz stiffened for a moment, knowing exactly who he meant.

She slowly turned around, meeting Jerome's gaze with a smile.

"He's irrelevant now. I don't want to know. Goodnight."

She waved at Jerome, who looked at her with a slightly deeper gaze, pondering the gentle serenity of her smile.

True letting go and moving on should be as natural as breathing, leaving no trace.

Not like this, deliberately avoiding, which often reveals more than it hides.

But he didn't call her out on it, nor did he say more. He just slightly raised his eyebrows, nodded at Liz with a warm smile, and replied. "Goodnight, sweet dreams."

"You too."

Liz smiled, turned, and entered her room.

She closed the door behind her, leaning slowly against it.

She didn't want to care about what happened to Remington after she left, whether he was still looking for her or had completely let go.

That name had slowly turned into the deepest wound in her heart.

Unmentioned, untouched, it wouldn't hurt.

Suddenly, she felt a strange sensation in her belly-it was her baby turning over and giving her a little kick.

Liz chuckled and rubbed her stomach, saying, "It's bedtime. Are you messing with mommy again? Just so you know, you better behave tonight!" Five months in, and the baby movements had become quite frequent.

But lately, Joy seemed to have

turned into a night owl, always

At that moment, Liz had no idea that the person she avoided talking about was just on the other side of the wall.

Standing alone in the cold winter night, he looked towards her room's light, his eyelashes gathering frost.

It wasn't until all the lights in the villa

had been out for a while that he finally

moved, overcoming the

numbness in his body as the ne

he

stealthily made his way inside.

The night was silent.

The window was quietly opened, and a tall figure slipped in from behind the curtains, soundlessly.

On the bed, Liz lay on her side, sleeping peacefully.

Remington stood there for who knows how long, waiting until the chill on his body had dissipated before he slowly approached. Kneeling by the bed, he held his breath, gazing at her blurred face in the dim light.

It was unclear whether the melting frost from his eyelashes or something else caused it, but his eyes gradually filled with warmth.

Suddenly, Liz furrowed her brows, murmured something in her sleep, and shifted uncomfortably.

Remington froze, panic-stricken. He thought of retreating but then heard her sleep talk.

"Remi..." she was calling for him.

In her dreams, Liz was actually calling out for him!

She still remembered him!

A surge of emotion lit up Remington's deep eyes, his

heartbeat racing uncontrollably. He almost couldn't stop himself from reaching out to embrace her.

But then, he froze.

Because he heard her next mumbled words.

"Go away, don't touch me, I hate you."

Chapter 500

His fingers trembled slightly, and for a moment, he thought she had awoken.

But she hadn't. It was just the restlessness of dreams, her eyes closed as she turned in her sleep.

Yet, the taste of bitterness swelled in Remington's heart, the agony and pain torturing him, driving him to the brink of madness.

Liz, do you despise me that much?

Even in your dreams, you're repelling and detesting me.

But what can I do when even entering your dreams brings me a slight thrill of joy?

Lizetta's discomfort pulled Remington back to reality.

She lay on her back, her brow furrowed even tighter, seemingly uncomfortable as she shifted to her side, her legs twitching slightly under the covers.

Remington had carefully read through pregnancy guides and remembered reading that during the second trimester, it's common for expectant mothers to experience numbness in their legs.

He gently warmed his hands and cautiously reached under the covers, tenderly massaging her legs.

It was dawn when Remington finally left.

As he departed, he used his jacket to brush away his footprints in the snow.

The wind picked up, swirling the snow, quickly covering all traces.

Lizetta woke up late the next day.

She had thought the news about the West family hunting her down would disturb her sleep, but surprisingly, even Joy had been calm.

Lizetta had slept soundly, feeling refreshed. She opened the curtains to a pristine white landscape.

The sky was clear, the snow had stopped.

Stretching, her gaze suddenly froze.

She saw a snowman, placed on the terrace of the neighbor's house about twenty meters away, facing her window.

The snowman, about half her height, had a round head topped with a crooked red woolen hat, wrapped in a red scarf, with a row of heart-shaped buttons.

In front of the snowman was a bunch of fresh "Angel's Tears," the bell-shaped flowers swaying gently.

Lizetta stared, feeling as if her heart was being tightly squeezed.

As a child, Remington would also build her a snowman every year, always placing it outside her window.

But he had little patience, and his snowmen were always lopsided and undeveloped, never this adorable.

Lizetta blinked away her emotions, quickly

regaining composure, and

waved at the snowman through the opened window.

A knock on the door brought her back, and she closed the window.

Opening the door, she was greeted by Jerome's tall figure.

"I have to go now."

Lizetta blinked in surprise, saying, "So soon?"

She felt slightly apologetic, realizing she had woken up too late, not even having breakfast with her guest.

Jerome's eyes deepened, a smile playing on his lips.

"Is that your way of asking me to stay?"

His voice was low and magnetic, with a slight uptick in tone.

Lizetta's ears warmed up, and she hurriedly shook her head, clarifying.

"No. What I mean is, you just got here yesterday. Wouldn't you like to stay a bit longer, enjoy the scenery, maybe explore a bit? The weather is clear today, we might even see the polar lights tonight."

Seeing her rush to explain, the amusement in Jerome's eyes grew.

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"I have other matters to attend to, this trip was just to check on you, not a vacation. I know you're not entirely comfortable with me here. But hearing you say that makes me happy, at least it shows I'm not entirely unwelcome?"

Lizetta's cheeks flushed with embarrassment.

She hadn't realized Jerome could sense her discomfort so acutely.

Lost for words and facing Jerome's amused, deep gaze, she blurted out.

"Do you, maybe, like me?"

The surprise and pause that flashed across Jerome's handsome face made Lizetta realize what she had just said.

Her face turned an even deeper shade of red, wishing she could bite off her own tongue.

The question was too arrogant, too embarrassingly cringe-worthy.

Especially now, heavily pregnant, she felt like a complete narcissist.