

Illusions 541

Chapter 541

Lizzie's deepest, most hidden emotions, the ones she'd buried far from sight, were ruthlessly torn open by him, leaving her raw and exposed. She glared at him, frustration boiling over. "Remington, you're so full of yourself!"

"You push away my kiss, yet you don't despise it. I can tell," he said, his words a cold, cruel revelation.

Even through the pain, even if it suffocated him, he was determined to awaken her love for him.

His stance had been unwavering from the start.

Foolishly, she had thought his agreement to divorce meant he had seen reason, that he was finally letting her go, no longer clinging to her.

Lizzie's face paled in an instant, despair in her gaze as she looked at Remington.

Her lips trembled, words failing her.

Remington gently caressed her chilled cheek, "You want a divorce, custody of Daisy, your freedom; I'll grant it all.

But you need to give me something in return, let me know I'm doing the right thing, not just pushing you further away!"

He was letting go just enough to hopefully win her back, not to truly lose her to another.

Lizzie saw the possessive madness in his eyes, her own eyes beginning to sting with tears.

Remington, stroking the redness under her eyes, softly said, "Liz, after the divorce, let's bury all our past grievances. Let's start over, this time I'll be the one courting you, from scratch, okay?"

Courtship, romance...

Such beautiful concepts.

Especially coming from a man like Remington, from the man she'd been infatuated with for so many years.

Like the sweetest honey, tempting.

Lizzie was speechless, her usual refusals and cold words locked away, unspoken.

She thought of the times he had appeared out of nowhere to protect her and Daisy when they were in dire need.

Remembered his joyous shock at Daisy's first kick, like a child's delight.

Her heart wasn't untouched, but she was someone who couldn't stand even a speck of dust in her eye.

His attempts at warmth couldn't sustain her through another moth-to-flame ordeal.

After a long pause, she still shook her head at Remington.

"A relationship with three is too crowded, you can't ignore Stella, can you?"

Remington fell silent for a moment.

Lizzie wasn't surprised by his reaction, she laughed bitterly.

"That day, when Yoli fell down the stairs right in front of me, I felt such regret and guilt, just like I could never ignore Yoli's matters in this lifetime, you can't ignore Stella's either it's a deadlock. I don't want to live in a love triangle, always entangled, always on guard, and

always suspicious."

Barbara was gone, but Stella, motherless, still wouldn't let go of Remington.

And Remington had to take

responsibility for Stella for life, no woman could accept her man

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woman.

Especially when that woman was still deeply in love with him, determined to have him.

"Remington, I'm begging you, let me go, please stop bothering me, okay?"

Remington gazed at her dimmed

get

face, but his mind flashed back to

the moments she and Yolanda were

together, how she radiated

happiness.

His throat felt choked with grit, grinding painfully.

Looking into her eyes, welling up with tears again, he asked, "What if I send Stella abroad?"

Lizzie froze, her heart skipping a beat before racing uncontrollably.

But she dared not let herself hope too easily, steadying her breath as she looked at Remington.

"Then come find me once you've sorted things out with Stella."

Whether he could truly do it remained to be seen, for Lizzie felt this was no simple matter.

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Stella was never going to agree to move abroad.

Remington raised his hand and gently patted Lizetta's head, his voice slow and deep.

"Alright, I promise. But you also need to keep your distance from those men with ill intentions!"

He paused, then added, "Especially Jerome."

Lizetta blinked in confusion. She had just met Hogan and Hamilton, and she wondered why he specifically emphasized Jerome.

Her puzzlement was clear, and Remington explained in a grave tone.

"In Evercrestia, Ralap was led astray. Later, someone sent an anonymous message to Ralap, and that's how he found you."

This information had come out during Ralap's interrogation.

But Ralap didn't know who had sent the message.

Lizetta furrowed her brow. "You think Jerome is connected to the person who sent the message to Ralap?"

Remington let out a light chuckle. "Jerome was the only one who knew your location. Even I found you by following Jerome's trail. What do you think? I warned you before to stay away from Jerome!" Lizetta's frown deepened, remembering Remington's warning before she left Zion City.

"Do you suspect Ms. Madden was the one who passed the message to Ralap?"

Lizetta was somewhat alarmed; she had never met Florence Madden in person.

If merely because Jerome had helped her, Florence would go to such lengths to get rid of her, it was terrifying.

"Stay away from men who are taken!" Remington said sternly.

Lizetta nodded. "I understand."

Still, Remington took Lizetta to the Dashiell hospital; she was 26 weeks pregnant.

Back in Luminesia, she was supposed to have her 4D ultrasound, but it was postponed due to a sudden heavy snowfall.

The doctor set up the appointment, and it was the first time Remington accompanied Lizetta for a prenatal checkup.

The man was clearly more nervous

and excited than Lizetta. The doctor recommended preparing some

warm cookies and chocolate, along with

some gentle exercises,

beneficial for the checkup.

Remington didn't send someone else; he personally went downstairs to buy these items and then walked with Lizetta in the corridor for a long time. Family members usually aren't allowed during the 4D scans, but the hospital made an exception, and no one dared to stop Remington from entering.

Lizetta lay down with Remington's assistance, and the doctor, with a friendly and reassuring smile, told her.

"Don't be nervous, just relax. First, we'll see if the baby cooperates. If the baby is shy, it's normal to try a few times..."

Lizetta nodded, her heart skipping a beat at the thought of soon seeing Daisy's face, feeling a mix of anticipation and nervousness.

Remington bent down, holding Lizetta's hand, gently scratching the palm of her hand.

Lizetta stiffened slightly; this was the first time she exposed her belly in front of Remington since it had grown larger.

She felt a bit uncomfortable, but the doctor's words soon captured her full attention.

"The baby is so cooperative, in a great position, not hiding the face, everything's very clear, wonderful. Mr. Dashiell, Mrs. Dashiell, look how well the baby is growing..."

Lizetta looked over and immediately saw the little one with closed eyes, a tiny fist clenched tightly near its face, as if sleeping or deep in thought.

In that moment, Lizetta instinctively

tightened her grip on Remington's hand, her eyes welling up with tears, spontaneously turning her head to look at him with excitement.

But he, too, was looking back at her.

His handsome face bore an almost identical silly smile, his deep eyes turbulent with emotion, slightly red.

That unexpected eye contact made Lizetta's heart clench, stirring an indescribable warmth and excitement. At least for that moment, they were in perfect emotional sync, soul to soul.

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The doctor snapped a bunch of photos of Daisyy making various faces-sticking out her tongue, wide-eyed, grinning, yawning... Lizetta held the printout dearly, barely having warmed it up when Remington leaned over and snatched it away.

"What the heck?"

Lizetta instinctively reached to grab it back, but the man quickly folded the paper.

"I'll keep it safe."

Lizetta was not pleased, spreading her hands, "If you want one, go ask the doctor for another copy. This one's mine, give it back."

She cherished it and wanted to keep it, to show it to Yoli later, and someday to Daisyy too.

But Remington, ignoring her, had already tucked the printout safely into his suit pocket.

The man raised an eyebrow at Lizetta, "You're with Daisyy all the time. What's the big deal if I take one report? If you wanna see it, just call me, I can bring it over anytime." Lizetta was frustrated. She certainly didn't need such an excuse to meet.

"I'll take it back to grandma; she'd be thrilled."

Seeing her puffing her cheeks in displeasure, Remington finally softened his tone, gently ruffling Lizetta's hair.

Lizetta also wanted Fiona to be happy, so she nodded.

She was off to see Thaddeus Gardenia, and Remington had business to attend to; Cedric had already been waiting for a while.

As they stood in front of the elevator, about to part ways, Lizetta made to step in but was suddenly pulled back by the man.

Spinning uncontrollably into Remington's arms, she was gently embraced.

Lizetta pushed against his chest, but Remington seemed oblivious to her resistance, leaning down to whisper in her ear.

"I promised I'd sort out Stella's business before bothering you again. Just remember what you promised me."

"Got it, can you let go now?" Lizetta responded.

All she had agreed to was not to get too close to other men.

Being heavily pregnant and hardly in a position to start a new relationship, agreeing or not didn't make much of a difference to her.

Hearing her somewhat compliant response, Remington felt a pang of reluctance.

Sending Stella abroad would take at

least until Barbara's week-long

vacation.

Mourning was over, smoothly

speaking, that's ten days to half a

month.

Not being able to see her for so long, he already felt like a year would pass before they could meet again.

"Will you miss me?" he asked, holding her, a hint of longing in his voice.

Lizetta found it hard to believe these words were coming from Remington without looking at his face.

She didn't answer, but her silence was answer enough.

Remington's lips curved slightly, releasing her as a faint joy twinkled in his eyes.

"I'll take that as a yes."

Lizetta thought he was quite good at comforting himself. She turned and stepped into the elevator.

As the elevator doors slowly closed, hiding the figure standing outside, her expression gradually turned cold.

Any softening of her heart towards Remington, like Cinderella's glass slipper, was temporary.

When emotions in a relationship shift from being more emotional to more rational, it's harder to get hurt.

She didn't believe Remington could really send Stella away; she just didn't want to provoke Remington or have him constantly show up.

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She was worried about not being able to smoothly get the divorce papers like last time, deceiving him, but she hadn't expected Remington to suddenly become so gullible.

He seemed to truly believe they could start over after the divorce, that she would accept his pursuit.

Lizetta frowned, feeling inexplicably irritable again.

Thaddeus's room was as tidy as ever, with fresh flowers on the bedside table.

The caretaker, always diligent, was surprised to see Lizetta.

"Ma'am! I was wondering why you hadn't come by lately; it's been Mr Dashiell visiting. Turns out you were pregnant, taking care of yourself. That's wonderful."

Lizetta, whose trip abroad was unknown to the caretaker, walked over and took the towel from her hand.

"Remington has been to see my brother?"

The caretaker found her question odd, assuming the visits were at Lizetta's request, not knowing the complexities of their relationship.

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"Mr. Dashiell drops by every week, always taking the time to chat with the doc, asking about Mr. Gardenia's condition in detail."

Lizetta lowered her gaze, wiping Thaddeus's face gently, her eyelashes fluttering upon hearing the update.

Remington's usually swamped with work. Even though the hospital is part of the Dashiell Group's portfolio, Remington oversees the Starlight Group. His involvement with the Dashiell Group's assets is minimal that's Nathan's domain.

So, his visits to the hospital are purely for Thadieu's sake.

Lost in thought while cleaning Thaddeus's hands, Lizetta was startled when she felt a gentle tap from his palm.

She snapped back to reality, looking down in surprise, "Thad just moved his hand!"

"Ma'am, lately Mr. Gardenia has been quite responsive to external stimuli. His fingers twitch often, and the doc says there's a good chance he might wake up. It's important to keep interacting with Mr. Gardenia don't miss out on the opportunity."

The caregiver's words filled Lizetta with excitement and guilt. She held Thaddeus's hand tighter.

"Big bro, Liz is here. I haven't been able to visit for a while, are you mad?"

But I've got good news, little Daisy's growing up so fast and healthy. In just over three months, Daisy will be able to meet you."

"Big bro, you have to wake up soon. Don't you want to teach Daisy to call you uncle yourself?"

"Big bro, I'm about to divorce Remington. I'm worried I won't be able to take care of Daisy properly. You promised to always have my back, to give me a family to turn to. Don't just lie there, being lazy..."
Thaddeus's hand twitched again, freezing Lizetta in place before she burst into a smile.

"Big bro, you heard all that, didn't you? Keep fighting! You have to wake up!"

"Liz... Liz?" A voice called from the doorway.

Lizetta looked up to see Daisylin Gardenia. She looked drastically different after some time apart.

Her face bore some scars from burns, she wore a wig cap, and without makeup, she appeared aged and worn.

"Liz, where have you been? And your belly... it's so big now, is it Mr. Dashiell's
Daisylin stared incredulously at Lizetta's stomach, who frowned in response.

"What are you doing here?"

"Your brother's been reacting a lot lately. As his mother, I naturally want to be here for him, in case he wakes up. He'd surely want to see his mom first, right?"

"You can stay then." Lizetta didn't want to deal with Daisylin and stood up to leave.

But Daisylin grabbed her, attempting a pleading smile, which Lizetta cut off coldly.

"If it's about money, don't bother asking."

"Liz, you can't just leave me in the lurch. You have no idea what I've been through lately. My brother's business went under, and he's drowned in debt. Even my house was swindled away.

I can barely afford to eat. Do you want me to die on the streets? You're a mother now; you must understand how hard it is to carry a child for nine months. You wouldn't want your child to treat you with the same coldness, would you?

Lizetta stared at Daisylin's pitiful face, "What, isn't Evelina Hawthorne sending you money anymore? It's easy to get some cash, just tell me, why was Evelina sending yo@money every month?"

Daisylin's eyes darted around, quickly letting go of Lizetta's hand.

"What else could it be? I raised her. Now, the Hawthorne family's done for, Eve's been missing for ages. Liz, I'm really starving. I don't need much, just give me ten thousand, no, five thousand..."

Lizetta's lips curved slightly, saying, "I'm heartless and cold, not even truthful, clearly not starving yet."

She walked away, leaving Daisylin wanting to cling but recalling the painful burns, she clenched her teeth and stopped.

Outside the room, Lizetta whispered to the caregiver.

"I've hidden a voice recorder under the pillow. Once Daisylin leaves, take it out. And remember to record if she comes back again."

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Liz had prepared the voice recorder the day she flew back home, a precaution she kept in her purse just in case.

If Liz hadn't thought letting Daisy speak to her big brother might help him wake up, she would have preferred Daisy not to linger. But Liz had her reservations about Daisy, sensing something off about her.

If Daisy truly cared about whether her son would wake, why hadn't she visited more when Thaddeus first fell into a coma? "Alright, ma'am, rest assured."

In the hospital room, Daisy, fuming, shut the door and glared at Thaddeus.

"Such a heartless girl, treating your stepbrother so well! But don't forget, you're my flesh and blood. If you wake up, don't go siding against your own family!"

Two years ago, if you hadn't eavesdropped on me talking to your uncle, insisting on snitching to that girl, would you have ended up in that accident?"

After leaving the hospital, Liz returned to the Pine Villa apartment where Yolanda was staying. It was a place Hanna had compensated Yolanda with, and she had been living there for a while.

When Liz signed the divorce papers, Remington insisted she choose a property, and she picked an apartment in Pine Villa, right above Yolanda's. But it wasn't ready yet, so Liz was going to stay with Yolanda for the time being.

That night, they were in bed together, playing games on their phones and chatting away.

Upon hearing Liz had gone for a 4D ultrasound, Yolanda, excited, tossed her phone aside and sat up.

"Where's the scan? Come on, show me Daisy's pretty pictures!"

Liz, pulled by her enthusiasm, also quit her game.

"Remington took it with him."

Yolanda kicked the blankets, "Typical Remington, acting all high and mighty just for accompanying you to a prenatal checkup and even snatching the loot!"

Liz laughed, "Alright, let's sleep. It's been a while since I've slept with my godmother. Daisy's happy, right?"

She placed Yolanda's hand on her belly, and Daisy immediately started kicking happily.

Yolanda was overjoyed, "Did the doctor say if our Daisy's a little prince or princess?"

Liz shook her head, "I didn't ask."

To her, whether it was a boy or girl, Daisy was her surprise, her joy.

Remington hadn't asked either, but coming out of the exam room, he had hugged her, wishing for a sweet and lovely daughter. "Good, we'll have a surprise to look forward to."

Yolanda laid back down, then suddenly pulled off a wig piece, revealing a scar underneath where her hair hadn't grown back.

Liz leaned in to inspect the scar.

"Stop looking!"

Yolanda struggled, but Liz touched the scar, murmuring.

"I need to see."

Not just to see, but to remember, to harden her heart when she shouldn't be soft.

Yolanda, thinking Liz felt guilty again, chuckled and pushed her away.

"This scar is my golden ticket to financial freedom, you can't even begin to envy it."

They turned off the lights and settled down, but Yolanda's phone buzzed several times.

She silenced it, turning to Liz's curious gaze and explained, "Just spam."

Then, quickly stuffing the phone under her pillow, she closed her eyes.

The night she wrapped up her shoot, she and Cassius had a one-night stand on set.

She still remembered Cassius's words, drenched in sweat, pressing down on her.

"What do you want? The role of a second lead in a big production, will that satisfy you?"

He had defined their relationship in clear terms.

In the entertainment world, such

à knew she shouldn't get

be too

surprised.

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Having seen Liz suffer over the years, Yolanda knew she and Cassius were not meant for a love story.

Their beginning was best kept away from notions of romance.

So, she turned the tables on him,

and Cassius indeed enjoyed the

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of the night even more, holdingst

tightly.

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That's men for you, always enjoying a relationship they can control while seeking thrills.

So, at dawn, Yolanda packed up and left, decisively.

Neither contacted the other after that night.

Half a month later, she received a WhatsApp invite from Cassius for a wrap party.

She declined, but Cassius persisted.

Typical, men always crave what they can't have.

Downstairs, Cassius's luxury car was parked by the flowerbed.

Wrapped in a black coat, wearing a hat and mask, he leaned against his car, incessantly sending messages to Yolanda, begging her to let him in, all to no avail.

Suddenly, headlights flashed towards him, causing him to shield his eyes and squint into the distance.

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Cassius couldn't help but notice, not too far off in the shadows, there was a beat-up Audi that looked like it had seen better days, probably worth around \$20k.

Someone dared to mess with him!

Already in a foul mood, Cassius adjusted his baseball cap and strode over to the car.

He leaned in and knocked hard on the driver's side window.

As the window rolled down, he didn't even glance inside; he just gestured with his hand.

"Get out here. Showing off your fancy headlights, huh? You believe I won't show you..."

Before he could finish, a hand with distinct knuckles reached out from the window, grabbed his wrist, and twisted it hard.

Cassius, caught off guard, grunted as he was pulled down, his body hitting the car door.

He pulled down his face mask, about to explode in anger, when a familiar deep, magnetic voice came from inside the car.

"Who the hell do you think you are?"

Cassius's eyes widened as he recognized the stern-faced man sitting in the driver's seat, lost for words.

"Remi? You playing tough guy now? Let go, you're breaking my hand."

Remington let go, and Cassius flexed his wrist, taking a step back.

Only then did Remington step out of the car, and Cassius couldn't help but look at the car that seemed so at odds with the man's aura.

"Remi, what, you're slumming it now?"

Remington shot him a glance. "What about you, playing peeping Tom?"

"I'm not spying; I was just about to head up." Cassius raised an eyebrow, feeling strangely superior.

It was clear as day that Remington was on a mission to win back his wife, sadly sitting in his car, waiting for a glimpse of the wife who wouldn't even look out the window to see him.

He didn't even dare let Lizetta know he was there, opting instead for a disguise in a beaten-up car.

Cassius was different though; he had sent Yolanda a message on WhatsApp.

"Need me to remind you how long you've been standing there? At least half an hour," Remington scoffed coldly, but Cassius remained defiant.

"She's probably taking a shower. She'll open the door for me, then I'll bring you up."

Remington mercilessly pointed out, "The lights upstairs are already off."

Cassius was speechless.

He couldn't understand it; why did men have to be so cruel to each other?

Yet, the real blow was still to come.

Remington pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket and unfolded it with great care, leaning against the car to catch the light, examining it as

if it

were a treasure.

Cassius, curious, leaned in, but Remington blocked him with his hand.

"A love letter to Lizetta?" Cassius chuckled.

Remington glanced at him disdainfully before returning his attention to the paper, a bizarre smile creeping onto his usually cold face, giving Cassius the chills. "Or is it from Lizetta to you?"

That didn't make sense; Lizetta was probably fed up with Remi by now, Cassius thought to himself.

Seeing that Cassius would never guess, Remington finally moved his hand away, smirking. "It's my daughter Daisyy. Look how cute and pretty she is." Cassius was genuinely surprised; he hadn't expected this. He tried to take the paper, but Remington blocked him.

"Just look; don't smudge it."

Cassius was baffled.

A sonogram, treated as if it were a competition for his daughter's affection.

"She's adorable. Did the doctor say it's a girl? Congrats, Remi, you're getting a little princess."

"The doctor didn't say, but I knew it

was a girl the moment I saw her. Look at Daisy's big eyes, just like Liz's. And this tiny mouth and nose, so delicate. See this soft smile? Can you spot the dimple here?

Daisy's got my hands, strong fists, she'll surely pack a punch, won't take any grief. And her ears, see? The shape's just like mine..."

Cassius touched his own ear, thinking, aren't all ears located there?

"Daughters are great; they're the most obedient and dependant on their dads."

A son might compete with him for Liz's attention, possibly even sabotaging his efforts to woo his wife back. A daughter was definitely more endearing.

Remington's demeanor softened as

he proudly pointed out each feature

on the sonogram to Cassius. In nearly three decades of friendship,

Cassius had never seen Remington talk so much.

Yet, despite Cassius's intense scrutiny, he couldn't make heads or tails of the image.

To him, the sonogram barely resembled a child, and upon closer inspection, it seemed rather unattractive.

But, of course, he wouldn't dare voice this opinion.

That night, neither man made it into the building. Cassius, intimidated by Remington's gaze, spent half the night studying the ultrasound image.

If it weren't for the fact that Remington didn't smell of alcohol, Cassius would have sworn he was drunk.

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A week had passed since Remington had last shown his face to Lizetta.

Lizetta herself had been laying low, only sharing a couple of songs she had composed while in Luminesia online, enjoying a rare moment of tranquility.

Barbara's funeral had been carried out with little fanfare.

On the day of the funeral, Stella and Martin had tried calling Remington several times, but he never picked up.

He missed the funeral, but Nathan and Hanna were there, supporting each other. A few photos from the funeral had leaked online.

In one of them, Hanna was holding Stella, gently patting her back in comfort, while Nathan and Martin looked on, grief-stricken.

The bond between the Dashiell and West families seemed unshaken.

The media had even speculated that the two families had already joined forces through marriage.

After Barbara's first week memorial, Stella headed to the Starlight Group office early in the morning.

She was dressed in a black dress, her right hand covered with a specially designed glove, her arm adorned with a black mourning band, and a small white chrysanthemum clip in her hair, which made her look even more delicate and pitiable.

She was followed by a servant, carrying two large bags of stuff.

Upon arriving at the CEO's office, she was immediately surrounded by colleagues offering their condolences.

"Miss West, please accept our deepest sympathies. You've lost weight."

"Why are you back at work so soon? You're so dedicated. Mr. Dashiell should really take care of you."

"Miss West, please take a seat. I'll go warm up some milk for you."

Stella had been working at the CEO's office for over a month and had made sure everyone knew she was the heiress of the West family and Remington's childhood sweetheart.

Once, while trying to make coffee in the break room, she clumsily burned her hand and had to remove her glove, revealing a missing finger.

Her heroic tale of saving Remington when they were kids and their life-and-death bond quickly became the talk of the town at Starlight Group.

Since Stella had never mentioned she was only recently reconnected with the West family, everyone assumed she was actually Remington's secret wife. They believed Remington had kept their marriage under wraps to protect Stella, given her traumatic past, safeguarding Mrs. Dashiell.

As Stella stood there surrounded, trying to hold back tears yet smiling bravely, she began to speak.

"Thank you all for your concern, I'm here today to..."

Before she could finish, a cough from the back of the crowd caught everyone's attention.

Turning around, they saw Remington, his handsome face set in a cold expression, walking towards them with his hand in his pocket.

Behind him, Cedric, who had coughed to signal the danger, was now frowning, trying to convey to his colleagues they should scatter and save themselves. But the employees, clustered around Stella, didn't think Mr. Dashiell would be upset.

After all, Stella was Mr. Dashiell's secret wife, and her mother-in-law had just passed away. If anything, they thought Mr. Dashiell would be too heartbroken to be angry.

They even fancied they might get a bonus for comforting his wife during work hours.

They stayed put around Stella, who turned to face Remington with tears welling up in her eyes, looking slightly anxious.

She softly said, "Mr. Dashiell, I came to thank everyone for attending my mother's funeral."

Everyone exchanged knowing glances, understanding the need for secrecy in their boss's marriage. It was all about keeping a low profile.

However, their shared

understanding shattered when

Remington, with an icy demeanor, commanded, "Gathering and

chatting during work hours net

will be

noted. Expect a deduction from this month's bonus."

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As the man finished speaking, he didn't glance back at Stella before striding confidently into the office.

Cedric shook his head slightly, quickly following behind.

The office door closed, leaving the secretary's area in utter silence.

Stella stood there, her face pale, unable to believe that Remington had just publicly embarrassed her like that.

She felt as if the gazes of those around her, who had just been singing her praises, were now filled with doubt and condemnation, almost burning through her skin.

One of the female secretaries, unable to hide her frustration, spoke up, "Ma'am, what happened?"

Stella, with an awkward expression, corrected her, "Ma'am? Please, don't call me that! Mr. Dashiell keeps work and personal life separate. This is an office, and he doesn't like it when people gather around for a chat during work hours. Let's get back to work, I won't keep you any longer."

With those words, she attempted to leave.

The female secretary grabbed her arm, "Ms. West, we're all in this because of you. Could you please talk to Mr. Dashiell and ask him to let this slide for us?"

The others echoed her plea, but Stella didn't dare agree.

Just as she was feeling trapped and unsure of how to extricate herself, the office door opened, and Cedric spoke up.

"Ms. West, the president would like to see you."

The mood among the staff shifted instantly.

Seeing her chance, Stella quickly nodded with a smile.

"I'll be right there." She hurried towards the office.

Remington was sitting at his desk, reviewing a document, as Stella approached him.

"Remington, you wanted to see me about..."

But before she could finish, Remington, without looking up, said, "Cedric."

Cedric immediately stepped forward, blocking Stella's path, and gestured.

"Ms. West, please take a seat on the couch. I'll explain."

Stella looked at Remington, who was as immovable and distant as a mountain, feeling a sourness in her nose.

However, she didn't dare to test

Remington's patience any further et So quietly followed Cedric to the

sofa area.

As soon as she sat down, Cedric placed a stack of neatly compiled documents in front of her.

"Ms. West, please take a look."

When Stella saw that the documents were about various management schools abroad, her hands trembled slightly. "Remington, these are..."

She looked up, confused, and Remington finally put down the document, turned to her, and said,

"You can take your time, choose a school you like, and head abroad to study as soon as possible."

Stella's face turned even paler, "Last time, when you and dad talked about this, I also discussed it with him. I've just returned to my family, and after

losing mom, I don't want to go abroad. I just want to spend more time with dad, and he feels the same."

Saying so, she stood up, walked over to Remington, pushed the documents back to him, and continued to refuse.

"Remington, these schools are great, but they're beyond my capabilities..."

"If that's the case, just pick one, and I'll arrange everything. You'll be enrolled successfully."

Remington closed his pen with a finality, his tone more of a declaration than a discussion.

Stella choked up, tears welling in her eyes, shaking her head in fear.

"If I hadn't been lost these years, these schools would have been my dream. But now..."

She lowered her head in embarrassment, tears falling.

"I can barely speak the language fluently now. Being abroad, with the language barrier, I can't even begin to imagine what I'd face. I won't be able to adapt! Remington, please spare me."

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Remington watched Stella's tear-streaked face, her anxious and furrowed brow, feeling a mix of impatience and sympathy.

He couldn't help but think of Liz, who, despite her delicate appearance, had bravely left with her unborn child, managing to take care of herself and little Daisy admirably.

He wished Liz would show some vulnerability, some need for him, but she seemed only to want distance.

"Remington, please, don't make me leave," Stella's pleading voice snapped him back to reality.

He looked at her with a mix of annoyance and pity. Considering the hardships and trauma she'd endured over the years, he tried to suppress his irritation, speaking more gently. "You're the West family's heiress. Your brother's gone, and your father's getting older and his health isn't great. Who else is going to carry the West family legacy?"

He picked up the documents, walked around his desk, and handed them back to Stella.

"Take a good look at these. I've got another meeting, so I can't keep you."

As he turned to leave, Stella suddenly wrapped her arms around his waist from behind.

Clinging to him, she sobbed, "Remington, can't you help me? The collaboration between Starlight Group and the West family has been going well. I heard you and Liz are getting a divorce. Can't you consider me...?"

Before she could finish, Remington sternly removed her arms and stepped away, causing Stella to stumble and fall.

Looking up at him, her eyes were filled with hurt.

Remington's voice was cold and firm, "Even if Liz and I were to part ways, you and I wouldn't be possible."

Stella shook her head in disbelief, "I can't believe you feel nothing for me. After all these years, you even named the corporation after me, and for my sake, you nearly missed your own wedding..." She couldn't accept that all his actions were out of guilt rather than affection.

But Remington cut her off again, his tone leaving no room for doubt, "It's just guilt, nothing more."

Stella's eyes brimmed with tears as she struggled to her feet, choking on her words.

"But Liz doesn't love you. She's

trying to escape, to divorce you. I'm the one who loves you! Do you think I'm tainted? That's not true. Despite the beatings and the cold, it was because I fought back against that foot they wanted me to marry. I've never been touched; I'm still pure..."

Stella frantically tried to defend her honor.

Remington was well aware of

Stella's plight controlled by a family whose hopes rested on a

simple-minded heir. Stella's defiance had made her a target of their resentment, leading to years of

abuse and even a broken leg in her attempts to escape.

Seeing her so vulnerable and self-deprecating, Remington softened.

He stepped forward, offering her a tissue.

Stella's tears flowed even more freely, though her smile hinted at a fleeting hope.

However, Remington's next words dashed that hope entirely.

"Stella, if a man truly loves a woman, he wouldn't care about such things. If his loved one was mistreated, he'd feel compassion, not disdain. By degrading yourself this way, you're not only insulting yourself but me as well.

We were like siblings in our youth. After so many years apart, we've only been reunited for a few months. How could you possibly love me?"

Chapter 550

"You're just dependent on me because I saved you, that's all."

Stella stared at Remington, her eyes a mix of struggle and confusion.

"Is that so?" she asked after a moment, visibly shocked.

Remington nodded, and Stella bit her lip, looking down before asking again.

"And do you love Liz, Remington?"

"Yes, I love her. We had our misunderstandings in the past, and I've hurt her a lot, which led us to the brink of divorce. But I never thought about really leaving her, nor did I think about giving any other woman a chance. My wife, my love, it's always going to be her."

Remington's words were firm and unequivocal.

Stella's face turned even paler, and she took a step back, leaning on the desk. After a moment, she managed a bitter smile.

"I really envy Liz..."

Remington's lips tightened in a self-deprecating smile. "But she's not happy."

Stella sniffled and bent down to pick up the documents that had scattered on the floor.

"I understand now. I have my pride, Remington. Don't worry, I'll seriously consider going abroad.

Before I make my decision, I won't bother you anymore. I'm sorry for the trouble I've caused during this time."

Her expression was lonely and sad, tears still visible on her face, but her eyes seemed somehow clearer.

Remington let out a sigh of relief and nodded.

"Stella, the reason I brought you back is so you can get back on the right track. Going abroad to enhance your skills, to catch up on the knowledge you've missed, and to come back to take control of the West family, that's what you should really be doing.

If you're worried about living

overseas, I can arrange for a couple

of more personal assistants for you, introduce you to some friends abroad who will look after you. You were so bright and talented as a child; once you regain your confidence, you'll adapt quickly."

Stella looked at Remington and then suddenly chuckled.

"You've never talked this much in one go to convince me of anything. You're really going out of your way to persuade me to go abroad."

"I'm not trying to force you," said Remington gravely.

But Stella read between the lines; he was being nice now, but if she ultimately refused, he might resort to more forceful means.

Stella's breath hitched, and she

gripped the documents tighter. "I'm not familiar with these schools, I'll take them home and discuss them with my dad. You go ahead with your meeting; I won't disturb you."

As Stella left the office, Remington massaged his temples and instructed Cedric.

"She's no longer working at Starlight Group. Remind her to go to HR to process her resignation."

Cedric got the message; once

Stella's resignation was processed, any future visits would require a formal appointment, no more dropping by unannounced

Cedric nodded and hurried after Stella.

He caught up with her by the elevator, and Stella, seemingly resigned, nodded and headed to HR without making a scene.

Cedric, however, turned and quickly entered the stairwell, taking out his earpiece and phone.

He opened his photo gallery and played a video he had secretly recorded from the corner of the office.

After hesitating, he bit the bullet and sent the video to Lizetta.

Spying on the CEO and secretly sending it to his wife could get him in trouble if discovered.

But as a fan of the CEO and his wife's relationship, and tired of the CEO's gloomy mood, he felt compelled to act.

Cedric hoped the video would bolster Lizetta's confidence in Remington, believing their current issue was a lack of trust.