

Illusions 91

Chapter 91

Lizetta recognized that voice and it sent shivers down her spine, but she forced herself to go all limp and leaned into the man behind her.

Her bold move of throwing herself into his arms caught Daniel off-guard for a sec, but then his blood-statted pumping and he seriously couldn't wait to get down to business right there in the hallway.

Lizetta turned her head, signaling for Daniel to let her go.

Sure enough, Daniel took his hand off her mouth. Lizetta, gasping for air, rested on the stairs to recover from her dizziness before speaking up.

"So Mr. March, now that you know the kind of gal I am, I hope you've come prepared with something to sweeten the pot?"

Her voice was dripping with allure, melting half of Daniel's body, and he loosened his grip on her hair.

Lizetta twisted her waist, turned around, and gave him a nudge, her hair casually brushing against Daniel's neck. "Don't be so rough, I'm not into that."

She pushed him gently on the chest with her small hand, and the other half of Daniel's body turned to mush.

He grabbed her wrist, pinned her against the wall, and leaned in for a kiss.

The scent of some random guy's cologne was nauseating to Lizetta.

Her face turned ashen as she squirmed to escape.

“Not here, let’s go to my place.”

“The thrill is right here, right now, so soft, so enticing. I just can’t wait.”

Daniel got even closer, rubbing against her like he was in heat, while Lizetta bit her tongue hard, fighting the urge to struggle.

“I’ve got toys at my place, even more exciting.”

Anticipation and excitement got the better of Daniel, and he let her go. As Lizetta bent down to pick up her phone from the floor, Daniel kicked it away with one swift move.

The phone tumbled down the stairs with a crushing sound.

Chilled to the bone. Lizetta didn’t expect him to be so on guard. She turned around and pouted playfully.

“Are you gonna make it up to me?”

“Make it up to you? As long as you take good care of me tonight, I’ll not only replace your phone, I’ll buy you a house and a car!”

“Don’t believe you for a second. If you try to fob me off with just a bouquet of flowers again, don’t bother showing your face around me ever again.” Lizetta laughed lightly, her eyes flirtatious as silk.

Daniel remembered the last time she coldly told him to keep the flowers and stay out of her sight, and he couldn’t help but find the humor in the situation. This woman sure knew how to reel ‘em in – he’d seen plenty of gold diggers like her.

His guard dropped by a good seventy, eighty percent, and he straightened his shirt, trying to look like the big spender he was.

“Don’t worry, just play nice with me, and I might even make an honest woman out of you.”

Lizetta led him upstairs, key in hand to open the door.

Daniel stayed close, his hand on her shoulder to prevent any tricks:

Once they were inside, she’d have no chance to call for help – she’d be his for the taking.

Lizetta stepped in, turned around, and grabbed Daniel’s tie.

Her enthusiasm put Daniel totally at ease.

He couldn’t wait to shut the door, throw his arms around Lizetta, and start ripping off her clothes, biting at her neck.

Lizetta stumbled backward, dodging and fumbling for something.

“Turn on the lights, will ya? I like it with the lights on.”

Daniel chuckled, “I like your style, so wild.”

Bang!

A dull thud of impact suddenly echoed in the darkness.

At the Hawthorne family mansion.

Remington walked out of the bathroom with a stern face, his suit pants soaked through.

Half an hour earlier, he had received a message that Evelina had gone to the hospital to inquire about an abortion. He rushed there, intercepted Evelina, and brought her back home.

A servant brought Evelina some warm milk, which she knocked over in a fit of anger, splashing it all over Remington. He had gone to clean up.

“Mr. Dashiell, Eve’s been helped back to her room and she’s still crying. Maybe you could talk to her again.”

The servant approached, and Remington frowned slightly, following the servant upstairs.

He entered the bedroom, and as the servant was about to close the door, Remington glanced over.

“Leave it open.”

The servant hesitantly glanced at Evelina, left the door open, and departed.

Evelina sat on the bed, eyes red, her emotions seemingly calmed down.

“Remington, I’m sorry. I was just too upset earlier, these are my father’s dress pants, he never wore them. Why don’t you go and change in the bathroom?”

She said, picking up the suit pants next to her and walking towards Remington, who replied coldly.

“No need.”

Evelina froze. “But it’s getting cold, and you can’t stay in wet pants, Remi you really should change it. Ah!”

She insisted, stepping forward to touch the wet waistband of Remington’s pants, but the man suddenly grabbed her wrist tightly.

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Evelina yelped in pain, exerting quite a bit of effort as she lifted her teary, mascara-streaked eyes.

“I just feel so crappy for caring about you. What else is a pregnant woman supposed to think about? It hurts so much.”

Only then did Remington let go and back off, his voice tinged with an edge of harshness.

“You should be well aware that all my promises to you are mostly because of the kid you’re carrying. If there’s another abortion, I’ll take back everything, got it?”

Evelina bit her lip. “Remington, four years ago, you pretty much agreed to be with me. If it weren’t for my sister butting in.”

“She’s not an intruder, and we were never really an item, you know that.”

Evelina’s face went pale, she choked up a bit and seeing the man’s handsome face turn stern with impatience, she went back and sat by the bed.

“I get it. This baby was an accident, not something I wanted, but it’s growing inside me. I’m its mother. How could I cruelly abandon it unless I had no choice? But being a single mom is so tough. You clearly promised me you’d treat this child as your own. My sister has bullied me over and over, and you’ve turned a blind eye. How can I trust you’ll always look after us?”

She stroked her belly as tears splashed onto her dress.

Remington softened a bit for the sake of the child.

“Just stay away from Lizetta, and you won’t get hurt.”

Evelina nearly choked on those words, her eyes welling up with injustice. She opened her mouth to counter, but Remington interjected.

“I won’t neglect the child when it’s born. The support I promised you, and the funding for the Hawthorne family will be delivered. You should know the Hawthorne family’s current situation. Don’t make the wrong choice and regret it later!”

With that, he turned and left.

Downstairs, he picked up his phone from the coffee table and strode

away.

His pants had gotten wet earlier, and he’d taken out his phone and set it down without a second thought, never expecting to miss out on something significant in just that short time.

At the police station.

A silver sports car screeched to a halt at the entrance.

The scissor doors opened, and a tall, lean man stepped out from the driver’s seat, his face frosty, and he strode into the police station like a gust of wind.

“Litchi!”

When Lucian saw Lizetta, she was curled up in a chair, a senior policewoman comforting her non-stop.

Lizetta was head-down, her long hair hanging down, shivering.

She seemed lost in her own world, unresponsive to the policewoman’s consolations.

Her hands were clasped over her head, those beautiful, unblemished hands stained with dark, blotchy blood.

Lucian paused for a moment, emotion and severity swirling in his eyes, before stepping forward and calling out.

“I’m her brother,” he told the policewoman.

The policewoman nodded and stepped aside.

Lucian crouched in front of Lizetta, carefully reaching for her bloodied hands.

“Ah! Don’t touch me! Let go! Get away!”

Lizetta reacted violently, flailing and scratching with her hands.

Lucian grasped her hands firmly, “Litchi, it’s me, Lucian! Lucian’s here, can you look up at me?”

He held her hands tightly, his large palm enveloping hers, trying to transfer warmth.

Slowly, Lizetta lifted her head, her eyes focusing on Lucian’s face, seeing the concern in his eyes.

The tears she had been holding back tumbled down, and her lips quivered.

“Lucian, I think I killed someone! He’s dead, he’s not moving, not breathing, I’ve killed someone.”

Lizetta had used a dumbbell, usually kept by the door for arm workouts by Yolanda, to hit Daniel. She had to strike true, using all her strength to bring it down on his head.

Daniel had fallen and lay motionless. In a panic, Lizetta ran outside, tripped, and her hands were covered in sticky blood.

There was so much of it, warm and thick, the smell of blood overwhelming.

She trembled as she checked for Daniel's breath, but there was none.

She stumbled down to call the police. At the station, after a brief statement, they asked her to contact a family member. Lizetta gave them Lucian's number.

Now, all that was on Lizetta's mind was one thought: she had killed someone.

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"No worries, you were just defending yourself, not committing murder! You did an awesome job, Liz, super brave, protecting yourself. That guy had it coming!"

Lucian wrapped his arms around Lizetta, comforting her, and gradually she calmed down.

A female cop approached, "She still needs to undergo a medical examination; she wasn't cooperating earlier."

Lucian stroked Lizetta's head, "Don't be scared. I will be right here with you."

Lizetta nodded with teary eyes, "I can do it."

Lucian let her go, stood up, took off his trench coat, draped it over her, and then helped her to her feet.

Lizetta tried to walk on her own, but her legs buckled.

Lucian caught her, "Let's go."

His phone rang: just as he was about to answer, Lizetta suddenly clutched his arm tightly. She was gripping so hard: Lucian looked at her, bewildered.

Lizetta's pale face was filled with tension and urgency, her voice hoarse and trembling, "Luc! Don't tell Remi!"

Lucian paused, and then, as if remembering something, he gritted his teeth, "You're almost falling apart, and yet you're worried about someone else. Lizetta, you're silly!"

All Lizetta did was hold onto him, "Don't tell him."

Lucian sighed in resignation, gently patting her hand, and showed her the phone screen, "See? It's not Remi's call; it's the lawyer I got for you. Relax, if you don't want to tell him, I'll keep it under wraps for sure."

Lizetta let go only after confirming it wasn't Remington who had called. She followed the female cop to get the examination done.

Lucian communicated with the lawyer, his gaze lingering on her frail figure, his feelings mixed. He knew why Lizetta had reached out to him tonight instead of Remington.

Ten years ago, Lizetta had gone through something similar. A twelve-year-old girl nearly molested by a staff member at a dance institute; too scared to speak up afterward, she hid in the bathroom, helplessly and silently crying.

It was eventually Remington who noticed something was wrong and after pressing her, found out. Remington grabbed a golf club and nearly beat the man to death in public.

The incident blew up big time, and if Remington hadn't been a month shy of adulthood, even the formidable influence of the Dashiell family might not have been enough to hush it up.

That incident made it well-known in Zion City's upper echelons that in the Dashiell family, Lizetta was Remington's cherished little sister, untouchable by anyone.

Lizetta was worried about history repeating itself, which was why she didn't want Remington to find out.

After Lizetta was done with the medical examination and the lawyer had sorted everything out, completing the bail process, Lucian took her straight out of the police station. He left his sports car at the station and took Lizetta in the lawyer's car for convenience.

In the backseat, he pulled out an alcohol wipe to clean her hands.

"Lucian, I'm okay now. I can do it myself," Lizetta took the wet wipe.

Lucian didn't insist, and just held the box of wipes for her, clicking his tongue. "When you need something, it's Luc, when you don't, it's Lucian? Litchi, you sure know how to be practical."

He raised his hand, playfully mussing Lizetta's hair. Lizetta hissed, 'shrinking her neck.

"Head hurt? To the hospital!"

"No, I'm fine. I just want to go home! Luc, take me back," Lizetta shook her head, not wanting to go anywhere

else.

When they arrived at Oakridge Heights, Lucian got out first and went around to open the door to help Lizetta.

As Lizetta got out, she felt dizzy and wobbled. She had been hit in the head by Daniel earlier, and Lucian immediately bent down and picked her up.

They had only taken a few steps when a beam of car headlights came their way, glaring intensely.

Lucian stopped in his tracks, squinting to look.

The Bentley pulled up, the door swung open, and Remington stepped out with his long legs, walking towards them.

Lizetta saw the tall figure approaching, her eyes nearly instantly hot with tears. Instinctively, she wanted to reach out to him, but remembering the call that had cut her off earlier, her heart turned cold.

She turned her head away, tugging at Lucian's collar, urging him, "Lucian, take me inside."

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Lucian nodded at Remington, "Remi, Liz took a hit. I'm gonna take her inside first."

He made to step forward, but Remington's long legs had already closed the distance, stepping right in front of Lucian, blocking his path.

The man's face was calm, but his eyes in the night were deep, like a treacherous sea lurking with danger.

*Liz? She's your sister-in-law!"

His voice was deep as he reached out to take Lizetta from Lucian.

Almost instinctively, Lizetta ducked her head into Lucian's chest to hide. She didn't want to face Remington right

now.

Seeing him just reminded her of how he was all cozied up with Evelina, when she was feeling her most vulnerable.

Her dodging move turned Remington's handsome face cold as ice in an instant. His voice carried a flame of anger, "Lizetta, get it straight who your husband is!"

He forcefully took Lizetta from Lucian's arms, and Lucian, worried about her getting hurt again, let go.

Frowning, he said to Remington, "Remi, Lizetta ran into some trouble tonight."

He wanted to tell Remington about how she was mugged and how she got hurt. But Lizetta thought Lucian was going to spill the beans to Remington, and she started to struggle in Remington's arms.

"Lucian! Does he look like he has time for my issues? He's busy as hell! Drop it, my stuff's got nothing to do with him!"

Remington caught the sharp tone in her voice, one that seemed to draw a clear line between them, and he let out a snort of laughter, "Of course!"

He let go, and Lizetta, caught off guard, almost fell straight to the ground; she wobbled, only to be steadied by Lucian's hands. Holding onto Lucian, Lizetta felt dizzy and nauseous.

Remington had already turned and walked away, leaving her behind to enter first. Lizetta watched his indifferent back until her vision blurred.

"Litchi, what's going on with you and Remi? I think you should probably tell Remi, you know? Keeping him in the dark about something this big, he's gonna blow his top when he finds out."

Lizetta looked up, "Lucian, help me, and he won't find out!"

Her eyes pleaded, but Lucian kept on trying to convince her, "Remi's not the hot-headed teenager he used to be: you telling him won't make a difference."

Tears fell from her eyes. "Lucian, are you refusing to help me?"

Back when Daniel had her pinned against the wall, she felt nothing but terror, and yet she thought that she couldn't let Daniel succeed, because Remi would go nuts.

He would surely avenge her, just like he did back then, his hands stained with blood. So she had to protect herself and deal with Daniel on her own.

That was what she was thinking, and she didn't hold back at all when she fought back. In that moment, Remington was Lizetta's armor, making her fearless.

But now, as she saw Remington's indifferent departure, she felt herself ridiculous.

When she was in trouble, Remington was with Evelina, while the Remington of her teenage years would have

risked his life for his sister.

Would Remington, now with Evelina, do the same? Probably not.

Perhaps all her worries and fears were just her wishful thinking.

Remington was already pissed about her mermaid gig, and knowing about this would just add to the cold remarks, something Lizetta couldn't beat anymore.

Besides, they were heading for divorce. If Remington knew and did something about it, she didn't want to owe

him even more.

And if he did nothing, would it mean she had even lost her brother? Lizetta feared she couldn't handle that outcome either. Better to keep him in the dark, let this all blow over.

"Okay, okay, I'll do it your way. Stop the waterworks; you're making it look like I'm the bad guy here."

She couldn't help her tears, and Lucian surrendered completely, wiping them away for her as Lizetta broke into a smile through her fears.

Back in the hallway, Remington stopped dead in his tracks, turned around, and saw this entire scene.

That image, like an arrow through the eyes, was particularly hard to take. Remington clenched his fists tight,

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Lizetta was just about to say goodbye to Lucian when she suddenly felt a chill run down her spine.

She turned around in shock, only to see Remington had doubled back.

He yanked off the coat belonging to Lucian that she was wearing and tossed it back to him. Before Lizetta could even process what was happening, Remington scooped her up again.

The man was cold as ice all over, his jaw clenched tight, his gaze on Lucian icy and distant, "Aren't you leaving? Need an invite for a cup of tea or something?"

His disdain was as plain as day, and Lucian was lost for words.

"Speaking of which, I've been away for years. You and Liz got hitched, and I've never even dropped by. It's not too much to ask for a cup of tea, right?"

Lucian took a step forward, but Remington stood there expressionless, like an insurmountable iceberg.

Lucian stopped in his tracks, resigned, "Alright, alright, I'll go. Liz has a head injury, Remi; don't forget to take care of it later."

He voiced his concerns, but Remington shot back coldly. "And why are you so concerned about her?"

"Come on, I'm her brother, duh." Lucian merely thought the question was weird.

Remington's gaze turned colder. "She's your sister-in-law. Don't make me say it a third time."

Lucian was speechless as Remington added, "I can take care of my own wife. No need for outsiders to fret."

With that, Remington turned and carried Lizetta towards the villa. Lucian was left standing there, taking a moment before he raised his eyebrows with a chuckle. "Seriously, jealous over that?"

Shaking his head, he got into his car and said to his lawyer, "Let's head to the hospital."

He had to see if his rescue attempt was successful. Hopefully, it was; otherwise, Lizetta might not get over the hurdle of taking a life, casting a lifelong shadow. Plus, it would be too easy an out for that bastard.

Remington strode with long, quick steps. Lizetta, fearing she might fall, silently wrapped her arms around his neck, a frown on her face.

"Lucian was helping me out tonight. Even if you're not happy with me, you shouldn't have just snapped and sent him packing!"

Remington glanced down with a cold snort, "If he's so great, why on earth did you climb into my bed in the first place? You should've climbed into his and married him instead. Grandma and his mom would've been thrilled."

Lizetta felt as if her heart had been torn open, the cold wind cutting through.

Lucian's father was the youngest son of the old lady and had passed away young. His mother lived a secluded life, uncompetitive and always fond of Lizetta.

Lizetta and Lucian were about the same age, and Fiona had indeed wanted to match them up back in the day. but unfortunately, Lizetta and Lucian had no interest in each other, and then that incident happened.

Lizetta clenched her fists, "Yeah, I should have married Lucian. Maybe I could have been a champion's wife, mmm!"

Her words were cut off as Remington suddenly bent down and sealed her lips with a fierce and urgent kiss.

He sucked on her lips with a force that was rough and wild, stealing away all her thoughts and pulling her into his breath.

Lizetta's head spun; she gasped for air, pushing against Remington's chest, trying to break free. But her rejection

and resistance only fueled the man's anger and Jealousy even more.

He had already carried her into the foyer, placing her on the narrow shoe cabinet, kissing her deeper and leaving no room for resistance.

The shoe cabinet was so narrow that Lizetta was forced to wrap her legs around his lean waist. After what she had been through that night, she had no mood for this, and his forcefulness brought back all the bad memories.

Tears threatened to fall, and cold sweat beaded on her forehead as she bit Remington hard, "Mmm, stop!"

The taste of blood filled his mouth, and Remington also smelled a strange men's cologne on her. He thought it was Lucian's scent, and his eyes narrowed with cold fury.

"Stop? After all the tricks you pulled to lure me back, now you want to play hard to get again?" He scoffed coldly. and then he seemed to lose all control, pressing down on her with a heavy breath.

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His hand, bold and invasive, snuck up Lizetta's dress hem to the softness beneath, grabbing hold and kneading without restraint.

The heat from his palm sent shivers down Lizetta's spine, triggering broken whimpers to escape from her throat.

The air itself seemed to catch fire. But then, the massive crystal chandelier in the living room suddenly flicked on, its blinding light shattering all that had been suggestive and intimate.

Before Lizetta could even get her bearings, a snarky, mocking voice echoed from the direction of the couch.

"Well, no wonder no one's picking up the phone, you two seem to be quite the busy bees! Even if you're in a rush, pick a better spot, for heaven's sake! Talk about indecent!"

It was Hanna's voice.

Busted by the mother-in-law in the act, Lizetta was a mix of embarrassment and indignation. She pushed against Remington, trying to straighten her messed-up clothes, aiming to hop down to the ground.

Remington just knitted his brows for a second, and then cool as a cucumber, he chimed in, "This is our house, and the one who needs to mind the occasion is you, Mom! And if you knew we were busy, you shouldn't have barged in uninvited!"

With that, the man scooped Lizetta up and strode toward the staircase.

Hanna, her face turning white with rage, retorted, "What on earth are you saying! And what, she can't walk on her own two legs? You've been carrying her since she was little!"

Lizetta had indeed been carried by Remington a lot over the years, but that was always just brotherly love.

Hanna's words, on the other hand, clearly had a subtext.

Lizetta had married Remington and had heard far dirtier gossip than this, but no one dared to say such things to Remington's face.

Remington's expression darkened, but before he could speak, Lizetta snuggled into his embrace, flashing a sickly sweet smile.

She shot back at Hanna, "I heard that Remi picked me up when I was just three days old. Not everyone's that lucky or blessed, to be carried by their husband frequently, right, Hanna?"

Hanna came here to split them up, not to give them blessings. First, her son pissed her off, and now her daughter-in-law was adding insult to injury, making her complexion even worse.

Lizetta, feeling under the weather and emotionally drained, just wanted to retreat to her room for a shower and a change of clothes.

"Put me down; you two talk. I'm heading upstairs."

Lizetta struggled a bit, but Remington didn't let go. He addressed Hanna firmly, "She's injured. Today's not a good day to entertain you. I'll have someone take you home."

As he was about to carry Lizetta upstairs, Hanna wouldn't have it. She had called Remington that day, got hung

on after a few words, and when she tried a few more times, he didn't pick up. Calling Lizetta resulted in the same; her phone was unreachable.

That was why Hanna had shown up in person and waited, only to find that after waiting for so long, they just got home and now wanted to shoo her away

Hanna slammed her hand on the coffee table, "Neither of you is going anywhere! I have things to say, and we're going to clear the air today!"

Remington, as if deaf, continued upstairs with Lizetta in his arms. Hanna stood up from the couch, raising her

voice.

"I went to the hospital today to get medicine for Joseph and happened to see Evelina heading to the maternity ward with her assistant. I found it odd, so I followed and asked the doctor. Turned out Evelina has been pregnant for over a month! How long were you planning to keep this a secret?"

Lizetta was taken aback. No wonder Hanna was waiting here; she knew about Evelina's pregnancy.

Any normal parent would scold their son for infidelity and feel sorry for the daughter-in-law, right?

But clearly, Hanna didn't see it that way. She thought it was justified, because in her eyes, Lizetta never deserved respect to begin with.

Lizetta's lips curled into a cold, mocking smile, "I know why you've come. I can get a di..."

Her sentence was cut off by Remington, who frowned at Hanna and asked sternly, "Who exactly told you that the child in her belly is mine?"

n't his?

Lizetta was stunned. What did he mean by that? Could it be that Evelina's child really wasn't his?

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Hanna was stunned. When she called earlier, Remington had questioned her who told her that. But she read it as the kid was definitely Remington's; he just wanted to keep it hush-hush for now.

"The kid isn't yours? Then whose could it be?"

After all, Evelina was Remington's ex, and she only went abroad because Lizetta swooped in and snatched Remington, leaving Evelina heartbroken.

And now Evelina's flying back home on Remington's private jet. If the kid wasn't his, then who else?

Remington frowned slightly, "That's a weird question, Mom. I'm a married man; my wife is right here. You should've asked me that when your daughter-in-law's pregnant."

Lizetta's heart was racing, and she grabbed onto Remington's shirt, her breath catching in her throat.

"Remington, are you refusing to admit it because you don't want Evelina to be labeled as a home wrecker? Or is it because you don't want a divorce from Lizetta? You can't do this! The kid is flesh and blood of the Dashiell family, and right now, the Dashiell family needs this child! Joseph's illness..."

Hanna didn't buy any of Remington's words. She had checked with the hospital, and since Evelina came back to the country, all the hospital and medical expenses were being paid from Remington's personal account.

Remington was even accompanying Evelina to the doctor's appointments. The nurses said he seemed very concerned about the child, and Evelina herself hinted that the child was indeed Remington's.

Remington cut Hanna off, his voice suddenly turned ice-cold, "I've already said, Joseph's illness doesn't need a bone marrow transplant, and Evelina's child is none of my business. Stop eyeballing

that kid!"

Hanna was taken aback by his tone, her face turning sour.

Lizetta was shocked. The mother-son relationship between Hanna and Remington wasn't exactly warm and fuzzy, but Remington had always shown respect to his parents.

At least Lizetta had never heard him speak to Hanna with such severity. To protect Evelina's baby, he was willing to throw shade at Hanna.

Was he worried that Hanna was eyeing Evelina's child as a potential cure for Joseph's ailment, and that was why he was denying the child was his?

Lizetta's pounding heart gradually calmed down.

Remington didn't say anything more. He scooped Lizetta up and headed upstairs, their figures quickly disappearing around the stairwell.

Hanna was breathing heavily, leaning on the stair railing.

But she and Lizetta were on the same page. As soon as Joseph's illness was mentioned, Remington got all worked up about Evelina's child. The kid had to be Remington's, no doubt about it.

Hanna scoffed coldly and, grabbing her purse, stormed out.

Upstairs.

Lizetta was carried into the bedroom by Remington. He tried to put her down on the bed, but she wriggled free.

“I feel dirty and want to shower first. Put me down.”

She was still reeking of some strange man’s cologne, and Remington was suddenly reminded of it, the scent seemingly growing stronger.

The man looked down and sneered, “You realize you’re dirty, huh?”

He was offhand about it, but she took it to heart. She felt like she had plunged into icy waters, the image of being pinned against the wall by Daniel flashing before her eyes again.

Yes, he was right; she was dirty. Her face turned pale, and with a sudden burst of strength, she pushed Remington away fiercely.

“I might be dirty, but I’m nowhere near as filthy as you! Go take care of your Evelina and her child!”*

She dashed into the bathroom, seemingly deeply unsettled. Remington staggered back a few steps, his handsome face cold as ice; then he walked over to the bathroom door to turn the handle.

Lizetta had locked the door from inside, and the sound of rushing water was loud. The water was so loud that Remington frowned and knocked twice on the door, but whether she couldn’t hear or just didn’t want to respond, there was no reaction.

Biting down on his back teeth, Remington barely managed to suppress his anger and left the master bedroom.

Inside the bathroom.

Lizetta turned on the shower, cranking it up to full blast. Not waiting for the water to warm, she stood under the showerhead, letting the cold water drench her from head to toe.

She scrubbed at herself forcefully, but that sticky, nauseating feeling seemed to cling to her skin, as if it would never wash away.

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Her hands always seemed to have this lingering stench of blood. Lizetta, with her head tilted back, let her tears mix with the water and disappear without a trace.

She felt pretty pathetic. Even when Evelina had answered her desperate call for help, she couldn't bring herself to hate Remington.

Because even though Remington didn't come to her rescue, it was him who taught her how to survive on her

own.

That incident when she was twelve left a dark shadow in her heart. For a while at school, she'd freak out whenever a middle-aged male teacher got too close – so much so that she couldn't even function normally at school.

It was Remington who would cycle with her every day to clear her head and take her to see a therapist.

She didn't have much faith in therapists, so Remington learned about desensitization therapy by shadowing one and did a ton of research.

Eventually, he took it upon himself to guide her through the desensitization exercises. In the dark, he'd play different roles, pushing her to face and overcome her fears.

He'd then take her out to meet all sorts of middle-aged men, offering encouragement and support until she got better.

If not for that, she would have been a complete mess tonight, trapped in her painful memories with no fight in her.

Her ability to stay calm and composed under pressure came from the patience and care her brother had shown her in the past.

How could she possibly hate him? He was her brother, after all.

But it was that same tender care that turned the past four years of cold treatment into a bunch of knives, slashing Lizetta to ribbons.

The taste of having and then losing was like a slow poison, spreading every moment.

A loud knock at the door jarred Lizetta from her thoughts. By then, she was completely drained, slumped in a corner against the wall.

“Lizetta!? Open up, did you fall asleep?”

Forty minutes had passed since Remington had finished showering in the guest bathroom, and Lizetta still hadn't emerged.

Remington knocked vigorously, yet only the sound of running water answered from inside. Frowning, the man stepped back, ready to kick the door in, but just then, the bathroom door swung open.

Lizetta was wrapped in a towel, her face ashen and her hair still dripping wet.

Remington's face turned stormy, “Lizetta, what the hell were you doing in there?”

Lizetta shook her head slightly at Remington, flinging droplets from her hair onto Remington's neck, cold as ice.

Remington grabbed her wrist in a tight grip and sure enough, it was bone-chilling. "Lizetta! Are you trying to kill yourself? You were showering with cold water!"

Looking at the furious Remington, Lizetta appeared somewhat innocent and dazed, "Was I using cold water?"

She had just stood under the showerhead feeling dirty. So filthy dirty, and she had scrubbed herself so hard that she didn't even feel the cold.

At the sight of her lips trembling and her whole body on the verge of collapsing, Remington's instinct was to pin her down on the bed and spank her senseless.

Annoyed, he picked her up. "Has the cold water destroyed your brain? Just keep it up!"

He tucked her into the covers and went back to the bathroom to fill the tub with hot water.

Coming out of the bathroom, Lizetta hugged herself under the covers, shivering from the cold. Remington was grinding his teeth, tempted to just throw her out, covers and all, to save himself the headache.

But that thought lasted less than half a minute in his mind. NôvelDrama.Org holds © this.

When he snapped back to reality, his body seemed to have its own response, already stripped down and lying in the covers, having also stripped her bathrobe and holding her tightly in his arms.

Like he was hugging a snowman, the contrast of hot and cold made even Remington shiver.

He lowered his head, his voice angry as he pressed against her cold ear, "What the hell happened tonight?"

Lizetta was way too out of it!

Curled up in Remington's embrace, surrounded by a warmth and a familiarity that enveloped her, she closed her eyes, feeling her stiff body warming up and coming back to life.

Remington waited impatiently for Lizetta to speak up, his voice stern, "Talk!"

Chapter 99

Lizetta sniffled and nuzzled her little face against Remington's chest, her damp hair sticking to his skin, tickling him with a cool itch.

Remington pressed his lips slightly, "Cut the act; it won't work! Do I need to list your recent shenanigans?"

Lizetta wrapped her arms around Remington's waist, feeling his warmth seep into her, all that comforting, familiar scent.

Her eyes brimming with heat, "Don't wanna talk."

As her body warmed up, she belatedly felt an extreme chill Lizetta snuggled closer into Remington's embrace, clinging tighter. He looked down at her with those deep, inscrutable eyes and didn't press further.

His body was like a big ol' furnace, not losing any heat to Lizetta, but seeming to get even toastier.

Lying there in his arms, Lizetta stopped shivering and felt a cozy comfort, like she was back in the womb. Eyes closed, the exhaustion from her fear and tension washed over her.

"Lizetta, just try falling asleep on me!"

Thinking she could just snooze her way out without explaining anything? As if! Remington gave her a nudge, and Lizetta looked up at him, her eyebrows and eyes curving.

“Remi, you remind me of someone.”

Something seemed to click in Remington, his eyes flickering, his voice tense, “Who?”

Lizetta smiled, “Mama Bird.”

His reaction to her unexpected answer was a moment of silence, then his lips pressed together in a sharp curve of restrained irritation.

“Mama Bird’s a person?”

Mama Bird, what the heck, wasn’t that just a fancy way of calling someone a beast? He suspected she was implying he wasn’t human and scoffed, tossing her aside, “Let go! Scram.”

Lizetta chuckled softly, her laugh tinged with a bitter sweetness.

Sometimes she truly felt like Remington was her Mama Bird, simply because he had scooped her up from the snowstorm when she was barely alive. Just like a chick imprinting on the first thing it saw, she had latched onto him, and he had taken on the role of protector and caretaker.

Like now, warming her with his body, he did it so naturally, as if it was an instinct etched in his bones.

But he wasn’t Mama Bird, and he had no obligation to her. It had always been unfair to him. Could it be that one day, if she got over her chick complex, she’d stop loving him?

‘Fine. I’ll scram.’

Lizetta let go and rolled to the other side of the bed, but before she got far, Remington pulled her back by the

waist.

He leaned over to grab a bottle of whiskey from the nightstand, flicked off the cap with his thumb, took a swig, and then leaned down to block Lizetta's lips with his own.

The rich scent of alcohol and his breath overwhelmed her in an instant. Startled, Lizetta clenched her teeth, turning her head to dodge.

"Mmm, no, let go."

She struggled fiercely, and after swallowing the liquor, Remington gripped her chin.

"Didn't you said I'm Mama Bird, so why the fuss?"

Lizetta's face flushed red from the struggle, her pale complexion receding, her moist eyes reflecting her damp hair like dewy begonia blossoms.

Remington's eyes darkened, and Lizetta quickly panted out an excuse.

"I can't drink."

His deep gaze narrowed sarcastically, "Oh, your intermittent alcohol allergy acting up again?"

Lizetta pressed her lips, "I've got a bit of a cold; took some antibiotics this afternoon.

Remington scrutinized her, his piercing gaze almost tangible. Lizetta bit her tongue, managing not to shy away guiltily from his stare.

Just then, the phone rang abruptly.

Remington was only trying to warm her up with the booze, not really digging into whether she had actually taken any antibiotics, so he put the bottle back and picked up the phone..

It was Lucian calling. Before Remington could answer, Lizetta suddenly lifted her head from his chest.

“Come on, answer it!”

She urged; her own phone was busted and left at the police station’s evidence room.

Lucian calling at this time must be about something important, possibly concerning Daniel, and naturally, Lizetta was anxious.

Remington saw her eagerness and kept a cool face, though his eyes turned icy as he said, “You want to talk to him so badly; shall I hand you the phone?”

His tone was dripping with irony, but Lizetta, in her haste, didn’t catch it and reached for the phone he offered to swipe the answer.

“Lucian, it’s me.”

Before she could finish, the phone was snatched away.

Remington’s face slightly stern, “Been back a few days and your body clock still off? Still on overseas time?”

“Did I interrupt your rest, Remi?”

“Glad you know!”

“I just have a few words to say to Litchi; can you pass her the phone?”

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"Did I interrupt your rest, Remi?"

"Glad you know!"

"I just have a few words to say to Litchi; can you pass her the phone?"

Chapter 100

"If you've got something to say, talk with me," before Remington's voice trailed off, Lizetta, draped in a bathrobe, got up and swiped the phone away.

Lizetta hopped off the bed and strutted over to the balcony, her voice tight with tension.

“Is he dead?”

“He’s been revived and is out of danger, moved to a regular ward.”

Lucian, standing at the end of the hospital hallway, heard Lizetta’s long sigh of relief through the phone and arched his lips upwards, “Feeling better now? Get some rest; I’ll take care of the rest for you.”

“Thanks, Lucian,” Lizetta, leaning on the railing, let out a relieved smile. No matter what, the guy didn’t kick the bucket, and that took a load off her mind.

Lucian, however, touched his nose, “Did I just rain on your parade with Remi? Remi’s got quite the temper. Better hang up now.”

Before Lizetta could even catch on, the call was ended. Lizetta clutched the phone, her cheeks turned a shade of red as she realized Lucian got the wrong end of the stick.

She turned and walked back into the room, only to find Remington stepping out of the dressing room.

Stunned by his ready-to-go outfit, she approached him, handing back the phone as she explained, “I ran into some bikers today, got mugged, lost my phone and bag. Just now Lucian called to say they found my bag.”

Remington took the phone, seemingly unfazed by the danger she had faced tonight. With a cold face, he snatched the phone, tucked it into his suit pocket, and strode off.

Lizetta caught his sleeve, “Heading out this late? Oh, did you change the dressing? Let me do it for you.”

She hadn’t forgotten her promise to temporarily return to Oakridge Heights was all because of the gash on Remington’s arm. Plus, she was a bit scared tonight and wished Remington would stay.

But Remington pulled his sleeve back, “No need, who doesn’t know how to change a dressing?”

With that, he didn’t give Lizetta another chance to keep him and walked away with long strides. Lizetta watched his fading figure, feeling as cold as she had felt warm in his arms just moments ago.

Downstairs, a car sound faded into silence.

Hadn’t he told Lucian that he’d take care of his own wife? Had he forgotten? Lizetta swayed slightly, realizing she had been standing frozen for far too long.

The sound of running water in the bathroom was still going. She stepped inside; the hot water had already filled the tub.

She soaked in a hot bath anyway, lying in bed afterward with her eyes closed, but all she could see were unpleasant images.

The scent of Remington seemed to linger on the pillows and blankets. Tossing and turning, she eventually fell asleep clutching a pillow.

Thick fog, barefoot, she ran through maze–like alleys, footsteps shadowing her relentlessly. No matter how she tried to escape, she couldn’t shake or outrun it, and suddenly a bloodied, ghastly face lunged

out of the mist, choking her.

“Ahh!”

Lizetta screamed, sitting up abruptly, drenched in a cold sweat as if she had been pulled from water.

Collecting herself, she went downstairs to find Edith emerging from the dining room. “Mrs. Dashiell, breakfast is ready. Would you like to have it now?”

Lizetta nodded, and Edith pointed to the coffee table, “The two boxes together were sent over by Lucian this morning, and the other one beside them is from Mr. Dashiell for you.”

Lizetta walked over, opening Lucian’s box first- inside was a new purse and a brand–new phone with her SIM card already fitted, just like her old model.

A smile curled on her lips as she wanted to send a message to thank Lucian. As she was about to close the app., she instinctively glanced at Facebook, and immediately her feed showed Evelina’s post.

[In this world, when you’re hurt, there’s always someone who feels it more.]

The photo was of blood–stained gauze, and in the comments, Shirley asked.

[Who’s the one that makes Eve’s heart ache? I know, it’s Remi!]

As Lizetta recalled Remington’s parting words from the night before about everyone knowing how to change the dressing, her lips curled sarcastically, and she logged off Facebook without a trace of emotion.

She didn’t even want to look at the box Remington left, but curiosity got the better of her because of its size, and she still lifted the lid.