

# SHATTERED ILLUSIONS: LOVE, LIES, AND REDEMPTION

## **Shattered Illusions: Love, Lies, and Redemption** **#Chapter 11 - Read Shattered Illusions: Love, Lies, and Redemption Chapter 11**

### Chapter 11

Lizetta wrapped up her side gig at the dance training center as the evening crept in. She'd been shaking it as a dance instructor at this joint for a year now, teaching adult modern dance on evenings and weekends.

Today, the manager roped her in last minute to cover for a kids' class, and boy, was she a hit! With solid skills plus being easy on the eyes and super patient, the kiddos totally dug her, and the feedback was off the charts. She stepped out of the locker room, and the manager handed her an envelope with money in it, "Lizetta, you were a real lifesaver today. How about jumping ship to the kids' crew? We'll bump your hourly rate by a bill."

Lizetta's eyes sparkled, "Count me in. I'm free as a bird these days."

After leaving the center, Lizetta hopped in a cab to the hospital. Hanna's words from last night had rattled her, and she'd been stewing about Joseph ever since.

When she got to his room, the help was fussing over Joseph trying to feed him, but the tyke was having none of it.

He was the Dashiell family's little tyrant, and the servant didn't stand a chance. Spotting Lizetta, they bolted, relieved.

"You heartbreaker! Why'd it take you ages to come see me?"

Lizetta sauntered over, "Here I am now; eat up."

"How come you didn't come with my brother? Did he give you grief again? Liz, you're such a knockout. Dump him and find someone who's attentive. Or hey, wait for me to grow up; that works too."

Lizetta couldn't help but chuckle. The kid was barely out of short pants and he was talking about being attentive?

But she played along with a nod, “Yeah, that’s the plan.”

Before she knew it, Joseph fished out a phone from under the covers and hollered into it, “Remington, you hear that? Liz is over you!”

Joseph hung up, grinning at Lizetta, “If you’re ticked off, he’s gotta know. You can’t bottle it up; that way, he can come and sweet-talk you.”

“Look at you, all wise beyond your years,” Lizetta gave the boy’s head a gentle smack.

As if Remington would ever sweet-talk her.

“Ageism, much? Us grade-schoolers know all about romance.”

“That’s puppy love, and it’s a no-go. You’re not allowed!”

“I wouldn’t give the snot-nosed girls at school the time of day.”

“As if you’re not a snot-nosed kid yourself.”

“I’m not.”

Joseph’s comeback was cut short by a loud, uncontrollable fart. Lizetta just shook her head, laughing

Joseph buried himself under the covers in a huff, and Lizetta went to pull the blanket back, “You’re not actually enjoying the smell, aren’t you? Come on, lift it up.”

Out of the seven Dashiell kids, Joseph was the baby and way younger than the rest. He’d always been super clingy with Lizetta; they were tight like siblings.

Joseph kicked around under the covers, and then popped his head out, sneakily sidling up to Lizetta.

“Liz, did my brother give you the jade bracelet yesterday?”

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Lizetta froze, and then swiftly changed the subject, holds this content.

“Still got a fever today?” She reached out to check his forehead

But Joseph wasn't easily fooled. He grabbed Lizetta's hand and started rolling her sleeve up

"How come it's not there? I'm gonna grill him about this!"

The kid was about to vault off the bed when Lizetta felt a warm rush of concern for his illness.

Just then, a man's voice came from the door, "What are you gonna grill me about?"

Lizetta turned to see Remington striding in. He was talking to Joseph, but his deep eyes were locked on Lizetta.

Lizetta quickly looked away, not keen on sharing the same air with him

"I'm off to wash some fruit."

She brushed past Remington and headed to the mini-kitchen, with Joseph's voice trailing behind her.

"Remington, you didn't give Liz our family's heirloom bracelet? I'm telling you, I'd only let it go if it's for Liz. Otherwise, I'd make Mom save it for my future bride."

Lizetta had just reached the kitchen when she froze at the sound of Joseph's yelp.

"Ow!"

Remington had smacked the back of the little rascal's head.

"Kids should butt out of grown-ups' business!"

Lizetta closed the kitchen door, her lips pressed white. The bracelet went to Evelina. So, Remington didn't even think it was worth explaining or giving his own wife the time of day, huh?

But what Lizetta couldn't fathom was why Remington wouldn't just sign the divorce papers and marry Evelina already.

"I get it. If you like a girl, you gotta treat her right, or careful, Liz will bolt, and then it'll be a Herculean task for you to win back her heart!"

Remington sat on the couch, legs crossed, replying to emails, clearly not giving a rat's about the kiddo's advice. Joseph felt slighted and couldn't resist the gossip.

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“Don’t kid yourself, girls these days are running the show. In our class, Lisa and Leo were an item, but when Leo shared his only piece of chocolate with Ella, Lisa dumped him after class and hooked up with Jerry. She even ratted Leo out to the teacher for sneaking his phone into class to play games. Now Leo’s parents are being called in! Scary, right?”

Remington couldn’t care less about the drama over a piece of chocolate. He stood up, his gaze slightly darkening, “Zip it!”

Joseph was still a bit scared of him, pouting and muttering. “You’ll regret this.”

Lizetta was peeling an apple when a pair of arms reached around from behind and tightened around her waist.

Her back was suddenly pressed against the broad, firm chest of a man, and his scent filled her nostrils.

Lizetta stiffened, and Remington rested his head on her slender shoulders, his voice cold and low in her ear, “Who’re you planning to hook up with after dumping me?”

Lizetta pressed her lips, “Once we’re divorced, it’s none of your business who I’m with!”

“We’re not getting divorced!”

He said it with such conviction, as if Lizetta had no say in the matter concerning their marriage.

Lizetta slammed the fruit knife into the apple, “Whether we divorce or not isn’t just up to you.”

She broke free from Remington and left the room with the fruit plate, grabbing her bag on the way out and patting Joseph on the head.

“I’ll come to see you tomorrow.” holds this content.

Joseph blinked, “Liz, you’re not going home with Remington?”

“He just got here; let him spend some time with you,” Lizetta didn’t glance at Remington, who was emerging from the kitchen, and walked out.

“Remington, is Liz really over you?” The door closed, and Joseph’s eyes widened in concern.

“We’re fine; just do what the doctor says.”

He was about to leave, and of course, Joseph wouldn't stop him but couldn't help worrying.

"Remington, charm Liz a little; she's easy to win over!"

As Remington left the hospital room, he ran into a nurse pushing a medical cart to draw blood from Joseph.

Watching the nurse go in, Remington narrowed his eyes and instructed Cedric, "Check into Joseph's illness."

Just a common cold, why the daily blood tests?

After a day of classes, Lizetta's foot injury had worsened.

She had intended to catch the subway after leaving the hospital, but severe foot pain made her call a rideshare instead.

She leaned against a tree, waiting by the roadside.

A black Bentley slowed to a stop, the window halfway down. Under the dim light before the street lamps were lit, the driver's chiseled profile and cool, jade-like fingers resting on the steering wheel

were distinctly visible.

He glanced over, "Come home with me."

Lizetta looked through the car window at the man, wondering if it was her decision to divorce that made her feel so distant from him, despite being so close.

She shook her head at Remington, "I've ordered a ride, and I've already moved my stuff out. I won't be coming

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back."

His fingers tapped on the steering wheel a few times, a sign of his growing impatience.

"Lizetta, get in the car; do as you're told!"

Lizetta had followed Remington's words for fourteen years, but he never fell for her. She'd grown up now and didn't want to obey anymore.

Lizetta suppressed the sourness at the tip of her nose and shook her head firmly at Remington, "Check your schedule and let's go get the papers to end this."

Divorce was mentioned three times in as many sentences, and Remington's handsome face visibly darkened.

Another car came from behind and honked.

Remington had probably run out of patience with her. He looked away, rolled up the window, and drove off. Lizetta's clenched fist slowly relaxed, she bowed her head to hide her teary eyes.

A low-key white BMW pulled up in front of her, and the man who stepped out was lean and well-proportioned, with refined features and silver-rimmed glasses adding a touch of gentle scholarly charm.

"Hogan?"

As Lizetta expressed her surprise, Hogan had already walked around the car and opened the passenger door.

"Where are you headed, Lizetta? Get in, I'll give you a ride."

"It's okay. I've ordered a ride; it should be here any time."

"I've got some new information about your brother to share with you."

Hogan was Lizetta's senior in high school and studied dance under the same teacher as her, Yovvne. He was also the primary doctor treating her older brother, Thaddeus, who had been in a vegetative state after a car accident a year ago, with Hogan tirelessly working on his case.

Lizetta canceled the rideshare and got into the car, immediately anxious to know more.

"Hogan, what's happened to my brother?"

She'd been too busy the past few days and hadn't had time to visit Thaddeus.

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Thaddeus was the only one in the Gardenia family who was decent to Lizetta.

Hans was a boozing gambler who beat his wife, and Jolin was a selfish jerk who only looked out for number.

one.

At ten, Thaddeus was Lizetta's lifeline, and when they couldn't escape, he'd just hug her tight and take the beating with her. Property of Nô)(velDr(a)ma.

One blizzard night, Hans lost big at gambling and, drunk as a skunk, beat Lizetta to within an inch of her life.

Thaddeus, hearing the news, hopped the school fence and raced home to find Lizetta had chomped off one of Hans' ears but was also nearly beaten to death herself, with blood everywhere.

Thaddeus carried Lizetta on his back and scampered to the Hawthorne family mansion for help, yet the latter were busy throwing a fancy shindig on a yacht for Evelina's first violin gig.

With no other choice, he trudged three hours in the night to the Dashiell family villa, kneeling outside that was how Lizetta ended up getting taken in.

Time flew, and fourteen years zoomed by. Back then, Thaddeus fought for a chance at life for Lizetta, and now she wasn't about to give up on him.

"Don't sweat it, your brother's stable, and Astoria's setting up a lab specially for waking coma patients. I'm thinking of sending your brother there, especially since you aced Master Dories' interview and you're heading. to Astoria too."

"Being a medical guinea pig?" Lizetta hesitated.

Hogan nodded, "The lead prof, Professor Cohen, is a brain whiz. I swear, your brother won't be worse off there. And I wouldn't dare pull a fast one on you, tough girl."

Hogan feigned fear.

Lizetta thought back to when they first met in the first year, taking shelter from the rain under an eave. She mistook him for a creep copping a feel and slapped him hard, telling him to get lost.

He didn't even explain, just walked off into the rain, and only then did she realize a broken sign was to blame. for the "assault".

The next day, she ran into Hogan again, and they were both wearing the same hoodie by coincidence. She rushed over to apologize, but he backed off defensively, pointing at his clothes..

“I’m really not a creep.”

Lizetta was mortified, even thinking about it made her face turn red. She covered her face, “Hogan, let’s not bring that up.”

Hogan chuckled, his eyes twinkling behind his glasses.

“By the way, won’t the treatment cost a fortune?”

“Don’t worry, it won’t break the bank. Plus, I’m planning to hit the books again and might join the institute.”

“That’s amazing! Hogan, I can’t thank you enough!” Lizetta was over the moon, a huge weight lifted off her shoulders.

Thaddeus had been out for a year, and with each passing day, the odds of waking up dwindled. Now, at least there was a glimmer of hope.

“Maybe treat me to a meal? But you gotta cook it yourself. We’ll be schoolmates again in Astoria, so I’ll be expecting you to look out for me.”

Hogan glanced at her with a smile as refreshing as a gentle breeze. Both Hogan and Master Dories had the

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same alma mater.

“No prob,” Lizetta nodded, her smile beaming with hope for the future.

“Did you pick your audition piece yet?”

“I haven’t even made it past the resume.”

“No way you won’t make it. Get ready for the audition, Master Dories’ tour is hitting our country next month, and the audition might just be then.”

Lizetta figured Hogan made sense and nodded.

“I’ve composed a new piece, thinking of choreographing it for the dance. What do you think, Hogan?”

“Sounds like a stellar idea.”

They chatted away, oblivious to the icy gaze of a man in a black Bentley, who watched them through two panes of glass.

When the car pulled up to Yolanda complex, Lizetta fumbled with her seatbelt, caught on her clothes.

“Let me check.”

Hogan leaned over to help her out.

“All good,” he smiled at her, their faces inches apart for a moment.

Feeling a tad uncomfortable, Lizetta quickly thanked him and got out, waving through the window.

“Drive safe on your way back, Hogan.”

The old complex’s driveway was tight, and Lizetta watched until Hogan safely drove off before heading inside.

It was pitch black; the motion–sensor light was kaput. Just as Lizetta reached for her phone for light, a strong force suddenly gripped her waist.

“Ah!” Lizetta cried out, her back slamming against the wall.

“So lovey–dovey, can’t bear to part, huh? Is he your new sugar daddy? Dumbass, you think he’s Mr. Nice Guy?” Came the chilling voice of a man.

Lizetta recognized the voice, her legs giving out before being hoisted back against the wall by her waist. She glared at his blurry handsome face and, peeved, decided to rile him up with some biting sarcasm.

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“So what? He might not be great, but he’s still better than you!”

“Ha, better than me? And you let him kiss you? Don’t forget, Mrs. Dashiell, we’re not divorced yet!”

Lizetta froze, realizing that Remington had gotten the wrong idea.

She instinctively wanted to explain, her lips barely parting when she heard the man’s chilly voice again, “Can’t stand being alone, huh? No wonder you dared to jump into my bed at eighteen!”

Lizetta's eyes trembled; her blood ran cold. Holding back tears, she said, "Yeah, so you better sign the agreement fast, to save yourself from getting cuckolded. Ah!"

Before she could finish, he pinched her jaw with his fingers, "Is divorce the only thing you've got to talk to me about now?"

Lizetta's lips curled slightly, "Right, why would I keep around a man who won't even kiss me? To watch him turn into a grumpy old man?"

Remington's aura grew even colder, his fingers lifting her chin slightly.

She was forced to tilt her head back; her slender neck stretched to a nearly breaking curve, reflecting a soft glow in the dim light.

His thumb and forefinger applied a little pressure, and Lizetta's lips uncontrollably parted like a fish gasping for air.

"You're that desperate for a man's kiss? Fine, I'll indulge you."

His voice was cold, but the breath on Lizetta's nose was scorching.

Adjusting to the dim light, Lizetta glared, watching as his handsome and unapproachable face drew closer.

Her heart pounded like a drum, yet tears filled her eyes. How much she had once longed for his kiss. But not like this, not with such humiliating cruelty.

The crisp sound of a slap echoed in the dim hallway, and the faulty sensor light, joining in at the wrong time, suddenly lit up.

The man tilted his head slightly, his thin lips pressed into an unhappy line, his sharp jawline even more resolute, his pale cheek flushed red, as if a cold mist hovered around him.

Lizetta's face turned pale as tears streamed down her cheeks.

The air seemed to stop flowing. The sensor light went out silently again, as if even it was intimidated by the man's formidable presence.

Just as Lizetta felt she couldn't bear the oppressive atmosphere any longer, Remington let her go.

Without a word, he turned and walked out of the building.

His tall silhouette blocked the moonlight, casting a silvery glow on his broad shoulders, silent and traceless.

Only when he disappeared did Lizetta gasp for air; hands trembling, she collapsed to the ground. After a while, she got up and climbed the stairs.

In the car, Remington lit a cigarette, took a deep drag, and the smoke drifted from his thin lips. He touched his slightly numb right cheek with his tongue.

The little lady sure packed a punch. He looked up, his deep eyes reflecting a dim light. Seeing the sixth-floor light turn on, he reached out to crush the cigarette butt, and drove away.

“I think I saw Remington’s car. Did he give you a ride home?”

Yolanda asked loudly as she walked in the door. Lizetta, sitting on the sofa applying medicine, flinched at the

thought of that slap.

“Ouch.”

“You’re such a klutz; don’t move. I’ll do it!”

Yolanda hurried over, took the cotton swab, and carefully treated Lizetta’s wounds.

Lizetta smiled, “Yoli, what would I do without you?”

Hans was abusive, and Lizetta often hid at Yolanda’s place in the same building. Yolanda’s parents favored sons over daughters and were not well-off, so Yolanda saved her own food for Lizetta.

The two girls, bonded through hardships, were as close as sisters. They were the same age, and while Lizetta had skipped grades and graduated in four years, Yolanda was still a junior. She rented this one-bedroom apartment to make working easier.

“Glad that you know it; you’re the genius beauty, and I’m determined to cling to your coattails, so get your act together and repay me! If you ask me, you should take a good chunk out of Remington in the divorce, why let that witch benefit?”

Lizetta gave a bitter smile. If she and Remington were a normal couple, she certainly wouldn’t walk away empty-handed.

But she was raised by the Dashiell family, and that debt of gratitude weighed too heavy. She couldn’t hold her head high in this marriage, and she had no right to claim any property.

“He won’t sign the divorce papers.”

“Tsk, he doesn’t want you, but you can’t dump him first. The prouder the man, the more it’s like this. Remington’s just a common Joe!”

Yolanda shook her head, feeling Lizetta deserved better. Lizetta’s eyes dimmed.  
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Yeah, she thought so too. Remington wouldn’t care for her, and he certainly wouldn’t suddenly fall in love with her. It was just a bruised ego.

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Remington hit the road, and before he knew it, he was cruising into Oakridge Heights.

Oakridge Heights was pitch black, not a single light on. He kinda regretted coming back here, but since he was already here, he got out of the car and walked into the foyer.

After getting hitched, he didn’t come back here that often, but whenever he did, the place was always lit up like a Christmas tree, with a cheery little lady rushing to greet him, fussing over whether he was hungry or cold.

Back in the day, he thought he wasn’t cut out for that kind of doting wife waiting for him at home, but now he realized, he didn’t get used to this desolation.

It was so cold it chilled him to the bone.

“Mr. Dashiell? I’m sorry. I didn’t know you’d be coming home tonight.”

The lights flickered on with a click. It was Edith who had heard the car and scurried over from the guest house.

Edith was kinda puzzled why he was stumbling around in the dark, and she tentatively asked, “Have you had dinner? Shall I whip something up?”

The man climbed the spiral staircase without looking back, leaving just a few words behind, “No need, go get

some rest.”

Remington pushed open the master bedroom door; the room was tidy, no different from usual. Except for the absence of that graceful figure, it felt hollow. His gaze swept around, finally landing on the vanity.

On the rosewood surface lay two pieces of jewelry, resting silently. Besides the earrings, there was also a wedding ring. Sparkling and splendid, yet unadmired.  
Content protected by Nôv/el(D)rama.

Remington let out a cold laugh and muttered under his breath, “Easy to win her over? My foot.”

He couldn't win her over, and instead got slapped by her. Now he truly believed that woman was dead set on getting a divorce!

Just then, Remington's phone buzzed. It was Cedric calling, “Boss, Joseph's condition has taken a turn for the worse. The medical team is all here. You should come and talk to them for the details.”

After rushing to the hospital and talking with the medical team until past midnight, the man stood alone by the window, his expression heavy. He hadn't expected his brother's illness to be so stubborn, and the doctor's words weighed heavily on him.

He probably got it wrong about the condoms and Lizetta. Thinking of the woman who had stormed out, Remington pinched the bridge of his nose.

In the dead of night, Lizetta was half-asleep when her phone kept buzzing. She rolled over, grabbed her phone. and saw that Remington had sent her a photo.

In the picture, a man's strong, attractive fingers were playing with a pair of diamond earrings. The earrings and the wedding ring on his finger were reflecting each other in a weirdly intimate way.

[I'll hold onto these for you.]

[Let me know when you're coming back; I'll pick you up.]

Lizetta stared at the screen, a bit taken aback. She thought Remington would be furious after the slap, or at least he wouldn't bother with her anymore.

She let out a cynical snort. Back when she used to wait for him day and night at Oakridge Heights, he hardly ever came back. Now that she was gone, he suddenly decided to return.

Couldn't sleep without her? Who was he trying to fool?

Just then, news about Remington returning from the airport with Evelina popped up again. Evelina wasn't a big

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star, and the fact that the gossip was still hopping around after all this time meant someone must've paid to keep it hot.

But it also meant Remington was playing along, right? Feeling stuffy inside, Lizetta chucked her phone back on the nightstand, rolled over, and pulled the covers over her head, trying to get back to sleep.

The next day.

After wrapping up her morning tutoring session, Lizetta headed back to her modest apartment, whipped up a few dishes, and then went to see Joseph.

She had the servants feed Joseph, while she sought out his doctor.

Fiona was in poor health, and probably kept in the dark to avoid a shock. The doctors were tight-lipped about Joseph's condition, only hinting at a common cold.

Lizetta took the initiative to bring about what she knew, and only then did the doctor reveal the severity of the situation.

Exiting the doctor's office, she bumped into Hanna, who had come over. It was rare for Hanna to acknowledge Lizetta with a nod, but she did, instructing her, "Come sit with me at the café across the street."

Lizetta followed her to the coffee shop, and they sat down facing each other. Hanna got straight to the point.