

# SHATTERED ILLUSIONS: LOVE, LIES, AND REDEMPTION

## Chapter 2

He was there for her first parent-teacher conference, taught her how to ride a bike, and even did her first hair

braid.

Even when she got her first period or needed a bra, it was he who braved the store to get her pads and training bras. For ten years, he was like a brother, like a father to her.

At eighteen, Remington would go to the ends of the earth for Lizetta. At eighteen, Lizetta climbed into his bed, got caught, and it sparked a major scandal in Zion City. Fiona Dashiell, his grandma, beat him black and blue, forcing him to marry her.

His girlfriend, Evelina Hawthorne, left the country heartbroken.

He married Lizetta but didn't love her, playing house without any real affection. A year ago, in a drunken haze, he made a move without a shred of emotion and refused to have children with her.

He resented her for ruining everything and wouldn't let her call him "Remi" anymore. Yet, although she loved him deeply, she kept her feelings hidden, terrified of tainting his image - how could she ever drug him and climb into his bed?

Four years ago, that night, she had no idea what happened. Since then, everyone laughed at her for being promiscuous, and the Dashiell family never accepted her.

She was always compliant and trod carefully. She thought when her mother-in-law brought out the family bracelet and Remington spent their anniversary with her, it was a sign that she was finally accepted and liked by him. But it was all just her foolish fantasy.

Hope and despair were only a hair's breadth apart. Everything that happened today was like a silent slap, waking her up completely.

She didn't want to go on like this. She wanted a divorce - to set him free and to free herself!

"Mrs. Dashiell, why are you sitting on the floor?" Edith stood at the door, looking surprised.

Lizetta turned away, quickly blinked away her tears, and stood up.

"What's up?"

"Before Mr. Dashiell left, he asked me to bring medicine up."

Edith held a glass of water and a pill, and Lizetta knew it was birth control. She took it and swallowed it in front of Edith.

After Edith left, Lizetta closed the door and numbly started to tidy up the mess on the floor. It was only when she saw the bloodstains on the floor that she realized a piece of broken glass had pierced her foot, smearing blood all over her sole.

She laughed at herself mockingly, cleaned the floor, and then attended to her wound.

Descending the stairs to the dining room, the candlelit dinner and cake she had prepared were still neatly laid

out.

Lizetta sat down alone, picked up the utensils, and slowly ate, as if paying last respects to her failed marriage. In the living room, Edith's panicked voice rang out, "Something's wrong; Mr. Joseph Dashiell has a high fever!"

Yesterday, her eight-year-old brother-in-law Joseph was sick and insisted on meeting Lizetta. The bracelet incident, it was he who spilled the beans to Lizetta.

Lizetta's face changed, "You go start the car; I'll take Joseph out right away."

"Liz, I feel bad."

Lizetta rushed into the room; the child's forehead was burning up, feverishly clinging to her palm.

23:25

Chapter 2

2

"I'm here; don't be scared, Joseph. We'll go to the hospital right away."

By the time they reached the hospital, it was nearly midnight, and after a series of checks, Joseph was admitted.

Hanna and Wilma rushed over to keep watch, and Lizetta went to get the medical report. Thinking Joseph might fuss when he woke up in the night, Lizetta decided to go back to the ward to grab her bag and buy some snacks.

The door to the ward was ajar, and she could hear crying and talking.

"Don't worry too much, Mrs. Hanna Dashiell. The doctors say Joseph's leukemia isn't high risk, and he might not need a bone marrow transplant."

"I know, but Joseph has rare blood type. We can't avoid transfusions. If Lizetta could have a matching child, it NO would at least mean she's somewhat useful. The Dashiell family hasn't

been supporting her for nothing." Read

the latest chapter there!

In an instant, Lizetta felt like she'd been struck by lightning. She understood then

- Joseph was the apple of her mother-in-law's eye, born in her old age.

Hanna didn't want her to get pregnant; she wanted her to bear a savior for

Joseph, a living donor.

Chilled to the bone, Lizetta turned numbly and walked to the outpatient hall.

She thought the night couldn't get any more absurd, but then she

O

m

looked up to see hexhusband. Remington was with another woman, both wearing glowing headbands, looking like a couple of lovebirds. Read

the latest chapter there!

He was looking at his phone while the woman playfully reached up to tweak a wolf ear on his headband. The family jade bracelet glittered on her wrist - the Dashiell family heirloom. The content is on

Read the latest

chapter there!

Lizetta's world spun, and she felt nauseous, turning her head to retch.

Remington

looked up and saw Lizetta.

Their eyes met, and Lizetta froze.

Remington's expression was unchanged; he said something to the woman,  
who

then looked over.

Only then did Lizetta see her face clearly - the fair, innocent and comely.

It was Evelina; she had come back!

### Chapter 3

Lizetta watched their side-by-side figures, feeling a chill in her heart. No wonder she mentioned divorce and he didn't even turn his head. Turned out his old flame was back.

Remington strode over, his gaze sweeping across Lizetta's overly pale face, frowning, "Feeling under the weather?"-

Evelina also came over, grabbing Lizetta's hand with concern.

"Your hand is freezing, Lizetta. Don't tell me you got the wrong idea. Today's my birthday, see, and after being away for four years, my folks insisted on throwing a birthday bash. Who knew right after the cake I'd get a tummy ache, so Remi had to accompany me to the hospital."

Lizetta swiftly withdrew her hand, moving so fast that Evelina's hand was left hanging in the air, causing Remington to disapprove with a darkened gaze.

Lizetta noticed and felt a wave of bitterness swell in her heart.

She shared a birthday with Evelina, and it wasn't that Remington had forgotten or hadn't prepared a gift, it was just that he had someone more important to be with, someone more important to pamper.

Hiding her fragility, Lizetta forced a smile and tiptoed to remove the headband from the man's head.

"This doesn't suit you," with a casual flick, she tossed the headband straight into the trash can.

Evelina's smile froze on her face.

"Joseph's sick, in the pediatric ward; we have his brain CT scan."

Lizetta handed the report to Remington and then bolted, her steps quickening. She stepped out of the outpatient hall and couldn't help but look back.

Remington was accompanying Evelina upstairs, and from start to finish, he hadn't looked back at her even

once.

Eyes brimming, Lizetta spun around only to bump into someone head-on. She fell to the ground, the familiar voice of a middle-aged woman scolding from above.

"Young people these days! Can't you watch where you're going? Honestly!"

"Forget it, Eve's waiting for us."

Regaining her senses from the pain, Lizetta looked up only to see the anxious backs of the Hawthorne parents as they hurried away.

Memories flooded back of when she was a child, sick and rushed to the hospital late at night in her father's arms. Elara Hawthorne would hold her little hand and say, "Be brave, Liz, mom and dad are here."

She and Evelina were the true and false heiresses switched at birth, and once discovered, the families had immediately swapped the children back.

At six, she lost the parents who loved her and gained an abusive father and a selfish mother.

At eight, Lizetta nearly died at the hands of the abusive Hans Gardenia, and at ten, her older brother Thaddeus Gardenia carried her, who was bloodied, to kneel at the Dashiell family's mansion doorstep.

Begging Fiona to adopt Lizetta out of an old friendship with the grandmother,

Remington braved the snowstorm to bring Lizetta back to the Dashiell family.

Sixteen years ago, Evelina appeared, and Lizetta lost her home. Now, Evelina had reappeared.

Like fate, Lizetta sensed she would lose everything. But she was too weary to hold on any longer.

Late summer, clouds heavy, tree branches dense overhead, the evening breeze already cool, Lizetta, holding her shoulder and limping, walked down the street, passing young dancers laughing and joking loudly as they went

1/2

23.26

Chapter 3

2

1. by.

Lizetta stopped and stared blankly.

She was six years younger than Remington and had skipped grades to catch up with him, getting into the top dance academy by fifteen.

Graduated at eighteen, her professor recommended she study abroad, but Lizetta had declined.

For the past four years, she did just one thing - waiting for Remington, waiting for him to turn around and marry her, clinging to the shell of a marriage, day after

day, year after year.

Now twenty-two, compared to her peers brimming with youth, she felt like an old soul.

Last month, her senior mentioned

that a world-class dance master Dories, was taking on mentee, golden opportunity. He offered to help her apply for an interview.

Lizetta had hesitated, but tonight, she had her answer.

A taxi pulled up, honking and snapping Lizetta out of her thoughts, the driver

poking his head out, "Need a

ride?"

Lizetta stepped off the curb and bent down, "I'm broke, but will this do? It's

platinum with diamonds."

She took off her small earring and handed it over.

The diamond sparkled, even an amateur could tell it was something special. The

middle-aged driver took it, "Hop in."

Lizetta gave the address, and the

driver clutched the pricey earring, O "Oakridge Heights, Where every inch of land is worth a fortune; you're loaded, huh? How much could this earring sell for?"

Lizetta leaned against the window, eyes closed, "Six figures."

The driver didn't buy it, "Miss, you've got jokes."

Lizetta didn't continue the conversation, her thoughts drifting far away.



That year she was twelve, at the age

when little girls yearn for beauty, she and Yolanda had planned to get their ears pierced.

#### Chapter 4

But back in the day, she got pricked by her mom Jolin Gardenia with a needle and it left her with some serious mental scars. She tried to get her ears pierced three times and chickened out every time, yet she was green with envy seeing others rock some snazzy studs

Remington was off studying in Astoria and somehow caught wind of this. He came back for Christmas and, out of the blue, whipped out an ear piercing gun, claiming it was just a toy, and duped her into giving it a whirl-

The guy brushed her hair aside, the gun aimed at her lobes, and before she knew it -bam, bam- she had pierced ears.

Fuming, she chased after him swinging her fists, "I hate you, Remi!"

He turned around, she stumbled into his arms, and under the warm sun, he bent down and tenderly wiped away the tears at the corner of her eyes.

"Little Liz, such a drama queen."

Later on, Remington went all out and had the world-renowned designer Jonathan whip up a custom pair of earrings just for her.

A masterpiece, starting at six figures, no less. She wasn't one for bling, but she wore those earrings for ten years straight, never taking them off.

A decade. She'd think something that felt like a part of her, in her flesh and blood, would be excruciating to let go. Turned out, not so much.

On the big screen at the street corner, some gossip news was playing, and a reporter cornered Evelina at the airport, grilling her about her love life.

"Yeah, there's a guy I'm mad about. We split over a misunderstanding four years ago, but I believe true lovers will eventually reunite."

She turned to the guy next to her with a smile, and the gutsy reporter shoved the mic his way.

"Mr. Dashiell, are you the man Ms. Hawthorne is head over heels for?"

The guy signaled his bodyguard to step up, and with a protective hand, he whisked Evelina away.

Lizetta looked away, a sarcastic smile on her lips. Happily ever after, how lovely. Turned out, as usual, the wife was the last to know when the hubby strayed. Just then, the driver piped up. "Miss, there's a car tailing us, someone after you?"

Lizetta glanced back, a black Bentley on their tail with a license plate too bold to ignore. In a blink, the Bentley sped up, tires screeching in a drift, blocking their way.

The driver slammed the brakes; Lizetta lurched forward, then snapped back by the seatbelt, her head spinning.

Then came the tapping on the window. Deliberate and rhythmic, it struck a chord in Lizetta's heart.

Her knuckles went white gripping the seatbelt, refusing to look over.

Remington's lips barely parted, his gaze sweeping towards the driver, who, caught in that icy stare, felt like prey under the gaze of an alpha wolf and quickly unlocked the door.

The door swung open, and Remington leaned inside.

With a click, he yanked off her seatbelt, his hand pressing against the inside of the seat, his eyes piercing into

Lizetta

He was so close she thought he might kiss her, but all he did was sneer,

"Lizetta, playing possum? That fun for you?"

## Chapter 4

Lizetta. Since that night, he hadn't called her "Liz" with that affectionate tone, nor had he let her call him "Remi".

A dull ache in her chest, Lizetta turned her head, "Playing possum sure beats your time-management show."

Her voice was hoarse, and without another word, Remington scooped her out of the car.

"Let go!" She struggled.

"Chill out!" His grip on her hip was firm and unyielding, as if scorching her skin; she fell silent.

"What's with the foot?" His voice was deep.

Lizetta slipped off her flats, revealing a bandaged foot stained with blood. She stayed quiet; Remington's expression turned dark as he stuffed her into the backseat and folded himself in alongside her.

The door slam shut, the cramped space filled with his brooding presence.

Lizetta barely moved when his hand reached over, brushing her hair aside, his intense gaze landing on her now empty earlobe, suddenly sharp.

"Where are the earrings?"

He pinched her soft lobe, twisting it cruelly.

"Ouch, lost them," Lizetta winced in pain.

Remington let go, took hold of her chin, and forced her to look at him. Out of the corner of her eye, Lizetta saw the taxi speeding away around the corner; taking with it was her broken heart. Read the latest

chapter there!

Remington's voice was laced with anger, "Lost it? What's that supposed to mean,

huh?"

Tears welled up in Lizetta's eyes, her

voice steady, "Lost it means I don't want it anymore! Remington Dashiell, I'm not joking, and it's not just a spat. Let's get a divorce." Read the latest

chapter there!

She didn't want the earrings he gave her! And she didn't want him either!

## Chapter 5

The silence in the compartment hit like a ton of bricks as a dangerous whirlpool seemed to swirl in Remington's eyes.

"What did you just call me? Say that again!"

Lizetta used to call him "Remi" all the time. But after that night, he forbade her from calling him that.

Marriage was supposed to be the epitome of equality, yet this was the first time Lizetta addressed him by his name. How ironic and sad.

Lizetta faced his icy glare, her pale lips trembling as they parted, her voice crystal clear despite the nerves.

"I said, Remington Dashiell, let's get a divorce."

As soon as the words left her mouth, everything went black before her eyes, followed by two loud slaps.

By the time Lizetta realized what happened, she was sprawled across Remington's lap, her rear end smarting from two firm spansks that he had delivered with real force.

Frozen in disbelief, Lizetta was a cocktail of shame and anger, "Let me go! Remington, you jerk! What gives you the right to hit me, mmp!"

Lizetta struggled and kicked only to receive even more forceful spansks in return.

The pain in her butt brought back memories of the last time she got a spanking - when she was fifteen and developing fast, so she bound her chest tightly with cloth, not out of shame but for fear her dancing wouldn't look good if she grew too large.

Remington discovered her secret after over a month, and after getting scolded by the doctor for the hard lumps that formed, she ended up over the arm of the sofa in the study getting her rear end swelled up.

The pain in her chest and butt was so bad she had to lie on her side for days, walking around like a zombie, mercilessly mocked by him.

Spanking was his way of teaching his little sister a lesson, but she was no longer his little sister.

"Lizetta, use your brain to think before you speak! Do you think marriage and divorce are some kind of joke?\*" His warning voice boomed above her, "Tell me! Where are the earrings?!"

Remington sneered, knowing just how much she treasured that pair of earrings. He was also well aware of how much she relished being called "Mrs. Dashiell".

Now she was casually saying she lost them and wanted a divorce did he look like someone who would buy that?

"I lost them! Are you getting deaf in your old age?!"

"Fine, Lizetta, you'd better hope I don't find them!"

He yanked her up from his lap and pinned her hands behind her with one hand, suddenly leaning in to press her

against the car seat.

Lizetta fought back, but the difference in strength between men and women made her helpless under his weight.

His large hand slid under her thin chiffon dress, beginning a thorough search from the neckline down. It grazed her chest, then her slender waist.

Suddenly, his knee parted Lizetta's legs, and his searching hand slipped further in, inch by inch. Through the thin fabric, it felt less like a search and more like a humiliating tease.

Who would hide earrings in such a place! Lizetta let out a high-pitched moan, "Ah, they're really not on me; stop touching, ah, let go!"

1/2

23:26

## Chapter 5

Remington's patience was wearing thin with every word from her. Her dress was torn open from the neckline, instantly splitting down to her navel.

Lizetta turned pale, frantically trying to cover herself, "We're in the street!"

But then, two more sounds, and her dress was completely torn, falling away from her body. Before she knew it, Lizetta was hoisted up and straddling his lap.

Her bare legs against the cool fabric of his suit pants, her exposed back to the air, she struggled briefly only to be held down even tighter.

It was clear that he was getting hot under the collar, pinching her waist and

deliberately making her feel it.

"You're insane!"

"So this is just because I won't have kids with you, this whole charade?"

Anyone passing by the window could

see her, looking indecent sitting top of a man, Just like the high eman Just li society rumors, Lizetta was a born seductress, climbing into

Remington's bed at eighteen. The

Read

the latest chapter there!

Overwhelmed with shame and anger, her

Lizetta shook her head, her words

weak, "It's not about having kids. I already told you, I didn't mess with

the condoms!" Read the latest

chapter there!

The sound of a zipper being pulled open was amplified in her ears, and Lizetta

hadn't expected him to get serious.

She used her hands and feet, struggling fiercely, "Let me go! You bastard!"

She lifted her right foot to kick him, but her ankle was suddenly caught firmly in

his grasp, his voice laced with a hint of menace.

"Need that foot? Want to dance in the future? Don't you want to have kids?  
Now

that I'm offering, you don't want it?"

The pain in her foot was nothing compared to the agony in her heart.

He had been keeping his distance

on

since they got married, unwilling to be close or have children. But now he seemed to have changed his tune - did he find out about Joseph's condition in the hospital room?