

SHATTERED ILLUSIONS: LOVE, LIES, AND REDEMPTION

Chapter 8

“April? Isn’t she Evelina’s agent? What does she want with you?”

“She wants to set up a songwriting session.”

“For Evelina? Wow, talk about dropping 100 grand right off the bat.”

“Uh–huh,” Lizetta nodded and casually blacklisted April’s number.

Yolanda couldn’t help but crack up, “Evelina’s got some nerve, with her mediocre chops!”

Lizetta dropped her bags off at Yolanda’s place and hopped a cab to Starlight.

The Dashiell Group, a hundred–year–old empire, was like an aging aircraft carrier showing its flaws, hard to turn around. Eight years back, Remington made some bold moves, carving out the Starlight Group from the Dashiell Group, infusing it with fresh lifeblood.

Under his guidance, the Starlight Group rode the waves, gobbling up growth at a pace that left the Dashiell Group in the dust.

Nowadays, the Dashiell Group was still in the hands of Remington’s dad, Nathan, but it was Remington who was the star player at the helm of the Starlight Group, outshining his old man. They said he was the heir of the Dashiell Group, but it was pretty clear they were riding on his coattails now.

A year ago, Fiona, wanting to foster some marital bonding, had Lizetta join the Starlight Group’s president’s office as a lowly clerk.

The office was buzzing today, with secretary Lydia handing out wedding candies because she was pregnant and leaving.

Lizetta snagged some candy, offering her congrats. Back at her desk, she started typing up her resignation letter.

Lydia spotted this and blurted out in surprise, “Lizetta, you got a bun in the oven too?”

All eyes were on her, as usual. Beauties always got the spotlight.

Since Lizetta started, her looks had drawn a slew of admirers, till Remington caught sight of her desk buried in roses and was in a funk for days.

Declaring herself married had finally fended off the suitors, though nobody knew she was hitched to Remington.

“Nope, I’m quitting for a different reason.”

“So when are you guys planning on having kids? Makes sense, you’re still young.”

“I’d love to start early, get back in shape sooner rather than later, but oh well.” Lizetta kept typing away, casually responding.

But Lydia, ever so perceptive, got the wrong end of the stick, “Your hubby’s shooting blanks?”

“Not exactly, he’s quite capable; it’s just that it’s all for naught.”

Lydia was gobsmacked.

“You mean your man’s got azoospermia?! And bad breath on top of that? Girl, you gotta know when to cut your losses.”

Previously, Lydia had seen a couple kissing in the parking lot and thought the woman looked like Lizetta, so she asked if it was Lizetta’s hubby picking her up. This material belongs to

Lizetta had joked that she and her husband had never kissed, which somehow spiraled into the office joke that her husband had severe halitosis.

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Now, with no way to clear the air, Lizetta found herself saddled with another rumor. She gotta hand it to Lydia for her top-notch reading comprehension skills.

As Lizetta thought of Remington’s cold, aristocratic face and slapped this new label on him, she couldn’t suppress a snort.

“Is this how you work now? The Starlight Group doesn’t pay you to loaf around!”

Lizetta turned to see the stony-faced Remington, her smile freezing on her face.

Cedric, who knew Lizetta’s true identity, had spoken up, and then glanced at the boss nervously, breaking out in a cold sweat.

Lydia went pale. The boss' aura was just like some drama's leading man.

Worried Lydia might be startled, Lizetta was about to intervene when Remington spoke up, "Thanks for your hard work. Hand out the resignation bonus; might as well spread some joy."

After he instructed Cedric, Lydia quickly thanked him, relieved. The tension in the room melted away, but the man's frosty gaze was locked on Lizetta.

"Lizetta, come in for a sec," he walked into his office.

"Good Lord, Mr. Dashiell is as charming as ever." Lydia nudged Lizetta, "You're so gorgeous; why not ditch your sterile hubby and go for Mr. Dashiell?"

"Lizetta? Yeah right, she's been under Mr. Dashiell's nose for a year. If he was interested, would he wait till now?"

"Don't you follow the news? Mr. Dashiell and Ms. Hawthorne are often seen together."

"Mr. Dashiell must be in love. Getting some of Lydia's good fortune must mean he's planning to have kids with Ms. Hawthorne, right?"

Lizetta felt the sting of their casual remarks.

It was not like she'd just been there a year. When she was born, just three days old, Remington had visited the hospital with Fiona and even held her, only to be peed on by the tiny girl.

So really, she'd been "around" for twenty-two years. No love was just that, no love. There wouldn't be a day of it

in her lifetime.

After printing out her resignation letter, Lizetta walked into his office.

The man sat behind his desk, looking through documents, exuding an air of noble detachment. Without even lifting his head at the sound of her footsteps, he asked coldly, "Is this how you reflect?"

Before the echo faded, Lizetta placed two documents in front of him. One was a divorce agreement, the other her resignation letter.

"Mr. Dashiell, if you could sign both, that would be great. Thanks."

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Remington looked up, his gaze icy cold.

“I don’t have time for your make-believe games. Take it back.”

“I’m serious.”

Remington tossed the pen he was holding without a hint of emotion. The steel pen clattered on the desk, striking a chord in Lizetta’s heart.

“Divorce reasons, huh? Bad breath and azoospermia? You know spreading rumors comes with consequences,” his voice was chilly.

Lizetta felt a twinge of guilt about this, her eyelashes fluttering slightly.

“I didn’t start those rumors. I’ve spelled out the reasons for the divorce clearly.”

Remington flipped through the papers, his eyes landing on the annotated reasons for divorce, his look growing even colder.

“Huh, care to explain what ‘no love, no sex, a marriage in name only’ means?”

Lizetta pressed her lips, “Just stating the facts.”

Remington stood up, his long legs taking him around the desk. His towering presence forced Lizetta to sidestep until her lower back was pressed against the solid desk.

With a stretch of his arm, he easily cornered her with nowhere to retreat. He leaned in close, his voice simmering with fury by Lizetta’s ear.

“Stating the fact? Who was the man last night who made you moan non-stop, the one you clung to, begging him not to leave?”

Thinking about last night brought tears to Lizetta’s eyes. The more fiery the start, the more desolate the end.

She put her hand against his chest, “Severely underperforming, are you saying a ninety-year-old man who’s good to go once every three years should shout about his sex life through a megaphone?”

Last night was an exception, and besides, her husband wouldn’t even kiss her.

A vein throbbed in Remington’s forehead; this woman dared to mock his manhood. Her pushing only fueled his anger further. He gripped her wrist, his chest pressing forward.

Lizetta was forced to lean back; years of dance training made her back as flexible as a willow branch against the desk, her hair spilling across it. This position caused Lizetta’s chest to heave against his sturdy torso.

Remington's voice was cold, "I had no idea you were so needy. Who are you planning to find to satisfy you after the divorce, Mrs. Dashiell?"

Lizetta, infuriated, tried to kick him, but her leg was trapped by his long limb. His legs were like iron bars, and Lizetta couldn't break free, accidentally brushing against something she shouldn't have and freezing up

She was discussing divorce, and Remington was getting a reaction.

"You jerk!" Lizetta was red-faced with frustration.

Remington sneered, "Mrs. Dashiell, your unsatisfied desires isn't this exactly what you've been scheming for? You trapped me four years ago; you should be prepared to atone for a lifetime!"

Lizetta's face went pale; he had always blamed her.

"That night, I truly didn't know what happened."

"The drink was handed to me by you, and only you registered your fingerprint to enter the bedroom besides me. Who else could it be if not you?"

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Lizetta choked up; no more explanations would work. He was convinced she had betrayed his trust, and she was at a loss for words.

They went from being as close as siblings to complete strangers. She felt as if she was back on that morning, waking up to his fury and his piercing words.

"Lizetta, I didn't fricking raise you all prim and proper just for you to climb into my bed!"

Tears welled up in Lizetta's eyes, her pale face reflecting her pain, "I regret it, okay? Take that as me being regretted."

Remington's scoff was cold.

"Knowing you're the sinner, just be a good Mrs. Dashiell! Besides, look at yourself – which part of you wasn't given by the Dashiell family? A thousand square meter villa, jewels and clothes galore, a no-limit credit card to swipe as you please. Living in the lap of luxury like this, can you survive without me?"

Lizetta's throat felt like it was filled with hot gravel as she murmured.

"So even you never respected me."

He thought she was just a parasite, leeching off the Dashiell family, unworthy of her own life. Even if she left with nothing after the divorce, she still wouldn't be in the same league!

Her voice was so low that Remington, even close, couldn't make it out.

He frowned slightly; seeing her pale, fragile demeanor, he felt a twinge of pain in his own heart. He had spoken too harshly in his anger, and just as he was about to explain, a knock on the door sounded.

Lizetta snapped back to reality; pushing Remington away with reddened eyes, she blurted out, "Then just watch – let's see if I can survive without you!" This belongs to : ©.

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Lizetta bolted out, shoving the door open, but froze in her tracks as she looked up.

Standing there was Evelina! She asked with concern, "Sis, why the waterworks? Did Remi chew you out? I'll have a word with him for you."

Though they'd never been sisters for a day, Evelina always put on this insincere act, calling Lizetta "Sis".

The embarrassment of being caught in her mess by her arch nemesis just cranked up Lizetta's discomfort a

notch.

The man's steady footsteps approached, his composure and dignity stark against Lizetta's disarray; he seemed utterly unfazed.

"I told you I'll go to the hospital to see you? How come you're here already?" His tone with Evelina was a complete 180 from the cold-hearted vibe just moments before.

Evelina cracked a smile, "I got discharged already. Just came to save you the trip."

Lizetta didn't want to stick around for their lovey-dovey show and was about to split when Remington grabbed her wrist, "Whip up some watermelon juice."

Evelina loved watermelon juice; Lizetta hated it with a passion.

As kids, Hans and Jolin got into a fistfight, blood splattering on the sliced watermelon, making it hard to tell what was redder.

Remington knew that full well! And he still had the nerve to make his wife wait on his mistress. Lizetta felt like her heart was being carved out, thinking he had rocks for brains.

“Did you suddenly lose your hands or something, Mr. Dashiell?!”

She yanked her wrist away and stormed off, Evelina’s anxious voice trailing behind her.

“Remington, she is delicate and can’t handle the stress. Go talk with her.”

“Leave her be!”

Bursting out of the building, Lizetta hugged herself and slowly crouched down on the sidewalk.

Her vision blurred as she kept telling herself over and over, “It’s okay, Lizetta. Show them what you’re made of; let everyone see!”

Her phone rang. Wiping away her tears, she answered, “Uh—huh, okay, I’ll be right there.”

What Remington didn’t know was that since she turned fourteen, she hadn’t used a dime from the Dashiell family, always hustling to make her own money.

Now with divorce, studying abroad, and her brother’s hospital bills looming, Lizetta needed to save up more than ever. No need to stick around at the Starlight Group; her days were her own now, ripe for the planning.

No time for tears, she sprinted for the bus stop.

Top floor office.

The man’s silhouette was tall and imposing; he stood by the floor-to-ceiling windows, like a ruler looking down on his subjects with cold indifference. Yet, his back seemed to carry a hint of loneliness.

“Remi, are you and Lizetta fighting over Lucian coming back?” Evelina, lounging on the sofa sipping her juice, suddenly popped the question.

Remington’s eyes sharpened as he turned around, “No, it’s just the usual spats between husband and wife. We’ll be good later. Totally normal.”

They’d be good later.

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Evelina's grip on the cup tightened as she remembered how she had complained about stomach pains in the hospital room yesterday, hoping to keep Remington by her side. But he had just told her to buzz the nurse and went chasing after Lizetta.

Pushing down her bitterness, Evelina nodded with a forced smile, "That's a relief. I thought maybe she found out about Lucian's return."

Seeing Remington's face turn even colder, Evelina quickly dropped the subject.

"The baby's all good, right?" Remington broke the silence.

Evelina caressed her belly with a sweet smile, "Oh, this little troublemaker's keeping me on my toes."

"Take good care of the baby," Remington instructed.

Evelina played the victim, "Remington, is it just the baby you care about? What about me?"

Remington just looked at Evelina without a word. She knew she'd overstepped, so she chuckled nervously to change the subject.

"By the way. My agent's been having a tough time getting Maestro Adagio's new song. They're really digging. their heels in. Maestro Adagio's style would be perfect for me, especially as the opener for my homecoming solo concert. It would be stunning. I've been fretting over this, tossing and turning at night. Can you help me get that song?"

Evelina not getting her beauty sleep wasn't good for the baby. Remington nodded, "I'll see what I can do."

Her face lit up with joy, and just then, Cedric walked in, "Boss, the meeting's about to start."

Evelina urged him, "Go ahead. Can I finish my juice first? The acidity's just right, and you know I haven't had much of an appetite these days."

Remington nodded again and left with Cedric. Evelina, holding her juice, wandered around the office, her eyes full of longing. She made her way to the desk, her gaze landing on that divorce agreement.

