

Illusions 241

Chapter 241

Remington, clearly impatient, yanked Joseph up by the collar.

Remington thought “What’s with this like or dislike stuff? Does he think we’re still in elementary school?”

The mess between him and Lizetta was way too complicated to be summed up with a simple like or dislike

“Remi, you’re beyond help!”

Joseph grunted and shoved Remington away, then bolted towards Lizetta, who wasn’t too far off.

“Liz, you better get a divorce and find someone else to crush on. Liking just one person is way too exhausting. You gotta go for, like, seventy or eighty.”

Lizetta caught him as he ran up to her, squatting down to dust him off.

She rubbed her chest nonchalantly, feeling an odd, hollow sensation there—not painful, but definitely there.

She grinned at Joseph, “Alright, I will give it a shot, try a mixed bag of types.”

Remington turned around and walked over, looking down at Lizetta.

“Liking one person is tiring, liking a whole crowd is gonna be a killer”

Lizetta stood up with a smirk.

“Well, you never know, I might just be capable of loving a bunch of guys.”

She took Joseph’s hand and they started walking away, with Joseph rolling his eyes dramatically at Remington.

Total lost cause. Can’t deal with him!

Remington went ahead and opened the back door of the car for them, then looked at Lizetta.

“It’s late. rii drive you home.”

He was still driving that Cullinan that Evelina had ridden in before, which made Lizetta feel a bit queasy.

She shook her head, “Jo needs rest. If you drive me and then him, it’ll be too late. No need for the hassle, I can easily call a cab.”

But Remington’s expression turned serious, insisting,

“Get in the car! No way y I’m leaving you here this late.”

Lizetta pouted, thinking to herself that it wasn’t like he hadn’t ditched her before.

Last time she was just chilling at home, and he had the nerve to drag her out and make her get out of the car barefoot,

“Liz, I’m not going back! I want to stay with you tonight!”

Joseph clung to Lizetta’s waist, refusing to let go and cooing for attention, his head burrowed into her

He'd gotten taller, up to Lizetta's chest now.

Remington's handsome face darkened as he pulled Joseph away by the scruff of his neck and dumped

Joseph scrambled up, protesting loudly.

"Remi, are you the devil or what?"

"Boys don't whine!" Remington's voice was stern as he slammed the car door shut.

But then Joseph slid down the window, poked his head out and pleaded.

to the back seat.

"Remi, you just don't get it. The boys who know how to sweet talk are the luckiest. Liz, let me come home with you, please!"

The little guy pouted, clinging

g to the window, the picture of misery.

Holding Joseph just now, Lizetta had felt how despite his growth, he was still just a bag of bones underneath his clothes, all frail and

empty.

He must have suffered a lot being sick lately, and with her going abroad in a few days, who knew when she'd see Joseph again.

She nodded, "Get back inside, don't catch a cold. I promise you"

“Yay! See that?” Joseph shot a triumphant look at Remington and closed the window.

Remington let out a chuckle, guiding Lizetta by the arm towards the passenger side and said.

“Let’s not drag this out. Have him lie down in the back and get some sleep.

Lizetta nodded and took her place in the passenger seat.

On the road, Joseph must have really been tired, as he lay quietly in the back, fast asleep.

Lizetta whispered to Remington, “How’s Joseph’s health?”

“A special medical team’s on it, and things are under control for now. They’re working on a new drug, but progress is slow

Remington spoke calmly, but the slight tension in his jawline weighed on Lizetta’s heart

She turned to look at Joseph.

Remington caught a glimpse of the worry and compassion brimming in her eyes.

A pang of jealousy hit him hard. He used to be the one she cared about the most.

But now, it seemed everyone else took precedence.

“I had wounds that wouldn’t heal for ages, and you weren’t half as worried.”

He blurted it out, and Lizetta laughed, looking at him.

“How can you even bring that up? Lucky for me I didn’t worry, or I’d be the biggest fool around!”

And it wasn’t like she hadn’t been worried; she was very concerned those days, only to find out he and Cedric had been pulling her leg.

Chapter 242

Remington eyed Lizetta’s icy face, grip on the steering wheel but let out a light chuckle

“Don’t care at all, huh?”

Lizetta glanced at him, meeting his gaze, and felt her heart uncontrollably skip a beat.

But her response was simple, “Not a bit”

Once bitten, twice shy, she couldn’t help but suspect he was pulling the wool over her eyes again.

Remington felt as if he’d been struck by an invisible arrow in the chest, and he scoffed softly, saying.

“Great, you just forget how I mined you”

Lizetta had been called an ingrate by him before, and this comment wasn’t far off, but it oddly carried an indescribable extra layer of affection and indulgence

Remington seemed a bit different tonight.

Her ears tingled, her heart raced, she feigned a yawn, and then she closed

“So sleepy, gonna catch some z

Remington didn't respond, and after a while, he turned to look at the woman's closed eyes and the slightly trembling lashes, his lips curling slightly

Downstairs now.

Remington leaned over to pick up Joseph, and Lizetta led the way to lay him on her bed.

"There, you better scoot now, just have someone pick up Joseph in the morning."

Lizetta was quick to shoo him away, not even offering a drop of water as hospitality.

Remington's gaze swept across the small bedroom, settling on two large boxes and a suitcase in the corner

"Packing up already?" he inquired

Joseph stirred on the bed, and Lizetta, worried about waking him, gestured for Remington to talk in the living room.

After closing the bedroom door, she turned and said, "Yeah, slowly getting things sorted."

Remington thought about her imminent departure, a gloom settling in his eyes,

He turned and strode over surprisingly taking a seat on the couch.

Lizetta frowned. "Didn't say you could sit."

Tim thirsty, it's not too much to fetch a glass of

of water for me, right?"

Grinding her teeth, Lizetta turned to pour him water and handed it over, urging. "Drink up."

Remington took it with a frown, "Cold?"

So Lizetta snatched the glass back, saying, "Forget it if you don't

Remington clicked his tongue but didn't let go, "I'll drink."

He took a sip, then declared, "I'm staying over tonight"

I want it."

Lizetta hadn't expected him to push his luck, and her face turned frosty

"No way, finish your water and get lost!"

Even if Yolanda wasn't coming back from the set tonight, there's no way Lizetta would let Remington stay.

They had just signed their divorce papers, for crying out loud!

Remington leisurely took another sip, then set the glass on the coffee table, leaned back on the sofa, loosened his tie, and crossed his legs as he said.

"I didn't ask for your permission"

Lizetta burst out laughing in disbelief, "Mr. Dashiell, before you start barking orders, please remember, this ain't the Starlight Group, nor is it the Dashiell family home."

Remington nodded, "But this is Zion City, and I call the shots in Zion City."

Lizetta was speechless.

In Zion City, he indeed had the final say; even if Lizetta called the cops, they wouldn't dare evict this big shot.

Lizetta's face was a picture of bottled up fury, while a hint of amusement flashed in

*Joseph's condition is unstable, he could get a fever at any time during the night. If he kicks up a fuss, you won't be able to get him to the hospital on time by yourself.

Lizetta thought about the scenes he described, her expression torn with

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Remington stood up, "Forget it, I'll step in the car, just tell me if you need anything"

Saying so, he made his way to the entrance, tall and straight, quickly reaching a foyer

He seemed to be genuinely concerned about Joseph, with no ulterior motives

But it was winter now, and the car

If he kept the heater on in the

Lizetta thought about the video Joseph had sent her, about Remington standing up for her today, and with gritted teeth, that finally spoke up.

Tine, do whatever you want, but I don't have a bed for you if you're willing to rough it on the court then

Tine by me

Before she could finish, the man turned and headed for the couch, casually tossing his suit jacket to the side

He made himself at home with such ease, as if he were in his own place.

Lizetta was speechless

Why did it feel like she'd been tricked?

Lizetta's face was a picture of bottled-up fury, while a glint of amusement flashed in Remington's eyes before he spoke.

"Joseph's condition is unstable, he could get a fever or a nosebleed any time during the night. If he kicks up a fuss, you won't be able to get him to the hospital on time by yourself"

Lizetta thought about the scenarios he described, her expression torn with hesitation.

Remington stood up, Torged it. Mi sleep in the car, just holler if you need anything"

Saying so, he made his way to the entrance, his tall and straight silhouette quickly reaching the foyer.

He seemed to be genuinely concerned about Joseph, with no ulterior motives

But it was winter now, and the car would be freezing at night; plus, Remington was only wearing a suit.

If he kept the heater on in the car, it would be even more risky

Lizetta thought about the video Joseph had sent her, about Remington standing up for her today, and with gritted teeth, she finally spoke up.

“Fine, do whatever you want, but I don’t have a bed for you. If you’re willing to rough it on the couch then...”

“Fine by me.

Before she could finish, the man turned and headed for the couch, casually tossing his suit jacket to the side.

He made himself at home with such ease, as if he were in his own place.

Lizetta was speechless.

Why did it feel like she’d been tricked?

Chapter 243

But once she said something, it was kinda hard to take it back.

Lizetta trying to keep her cool, trudged back to her room and, without much fanfare, tossed a blanket at Remington, who was sprawled

on the couch

With her face set in a pout, she was about to turn on her heel and leave when suddenly, a weird noise cut through the silence

It was so loud in the quiet room.

Lizetta and Remington exchanged puzzled looks as the sound made a comeback, twisting and turning through the air.

It took a moment for Lizetta to realize it was her stomach growling

Her cheeks instantly turned beet red.

Talk about embarrassing, especially when she was trying to play it all ice queen!

Just as she was about to cover her belly and make a break for it, the guy lifted his hand, and his big palm unexpectedly landed on Lizetta's tummy, giving it a couple of gentle pats.

Lizetta had shrugged off her coat, leaving her in just a thin, clingy knit top, so the warmth and pressure from his hand were unmistakably felt

And geet, he was patting her baby bump!

In that instant, Lizetta was like frozen in place, totally tense, with her heart racing a mile a minute.

It wasn't until Remington let out a chuckle, looked up at her, and teased, "Since when did you get such a sweet tooth? No wonder you seem a bit plumper"

Lizetta was a mix of flustered and miffed, and she pushed Remington away sharply.

"You're the one who's plump! I'm off to bed!"

She spun around and stormed off, leaving Remington with a smirk tugging at his lips as he watched her slightly annoyed departure.

Slamming her bedroom door shut with a vengeance and double-locking it, Lizetta flopped onto the bed, still fuming and clutching her

stomach

But trying to sleep when she was starving was so hard. She tossed and turned for ages, getting hungrier by the minute.

She could handle the hunger, but the baby couldn't.

Reluctantly, Lizetta crawled out of bed again. She sneaked open the door just a crack, peeking out to see if Remington was asleep so she could scavenge for some snacks.

But the couch was empty, and the air was filled with the tantalizing aroma of something delicious.

Lizetta sniffed curiously and tiptoed toward the kitchen.

Her footsteps caused the tall figure in the kitchen to turn and look her way,

There he was, in a white shirt and black trousers, the top buttons undone, sleeves casually rolled up to the elbows, revealing a nicely defined collarbone and toned forearms, all bathed in the soft, yellow glow of the overhead light. He was surrounded by the homely scent of cooking. It was like a scene out of a dream.

Lizetta stood there, dumbstruck at the doorway, until Remington's calm voice invited her in.

"The pasta will be ready soon, grab the tableware."

"Oh, Lizetta snapped out of her daze and, with a quick bow of her head and rapid blinking, she scurried over.

Remington had made two bowls of pastas with beef and tomatoes. He brought them to the table—an enticing feast for the eyes and

It was a familiar taste.

Back when Lizetta was a growing girl who was always hungry, she wasn't the real deal in the Dashiell family. Even though Remington had her back and Fiona doted on her, she was still under someone else's roof

Lizetta didn't dare to bother the servants for more food at night, and after Remington caught her sneaking into the kitchen a couple of times looking for snacks, he instructed the staff to prepare a late night meal for her.

instructed

The servants took the order seriously, but Lizetta couldn't relax, preferring to go hungry rather than sneak into the kitchen again.

When Remington later discovered her midnight raiding for junk food to stave off hunger, he was at his wit's end.

So he learned how to make pastas himself, personally feeding Lizetta

Hanna had once asked him about his late-night cooking sessions. Remington brushed it off, claiming he was the hungry one, and Hanna, taking him at his word, let it be

During that time, whenever Lizetta was hungry at night, she'd sneak over and knock on Remington's door. He'd whip up some pastas and even bring them upstairs for her

She'd hide in Remington's room, slurping them down with gusto. After she left, Remington would have to clean up, air out the room. It was like waiting on a queen.

Chapter 244

Gaeta stammy thankty at the how of pastas as if they sprouted flowers. Remington couldn't help but flick her on the forehead.

then did last pick up her tensis, ter pace lowered. She took a bite of pastas, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears.

crest to Let's nose, and she began to eat heartily

bought is no wonder she fell for him

Once upon a time he was realy great the kind to treasure her as his only cherished jewel

It was just too bat it was meant for her sister

She was ton greedy always wanting more toping for eternal love.

Even during these four years, besides for loving her and neglecting her, he never really did anything too out of line, never let her want for anything marenaly

He just didn't love her

But he didn't marry her wilingy either, and he wasnt obligated to love her.

It was her own unrequited love that comented ter

Compared to that, the outside world and other people did her more harm, but she could handle that.

Yet with HR, STE was actually a bit spoiled, muy couldn't handle even the slightest grievance without blowing it out of proportion.

"Stop eating

Suddenly Remington grasped Lizata's hand.

Lizetta smuggled. No, it's good, Im not full yet. I haven't finished, let go!"

She broke free from Remingtons grasp and picked up another strand of pastas to eat, but suddenly she found it hard to swallow.

It was delicious, and she wanted to eat.

What was happening to her?

Crying while eating, yet you say you want to eat? I won't get mad if you don't want to eat!"

In a deep voice Remington took the utensils from Lizetta's hands, pinched her chin with one hand, and wiped her cheeks with the other. That was when Lizetta realized), she had been crying, choking back sobs.

She felt weak, it was just a bowl of pastes, wasn't it?

Lizama turned her head away awkwardly, not wanting to show Remington her messy state.

But he wouldn't let go. He leaned in closet, his lips nearing her, as if he was about to kiss away her tears.

The familiar hot breath brushed against her, and as Lizetta gazed at the handsome face so close to hers, a mix of sadness and panic weled up in her eyes

She pushed him away fiercely, standing up from her chair.

'I'm done eating, thanks, goodnight'

She turned around, rubbing her face forcefully, and ran into her room, slamming the door shut.

Remington remained seated, his gaze settling on the closed bedroom door, his fingertips still damp, his eyes dark and brooding.

In the dead of night, Remington lay on the couch

The couch was too short for him, his legs dangling off the edge, making it impossible to get a good night's sleep.

He grabbed his phone and opened up the group chat.

Pamington: Why would a woman cry over pasta?

Cassidy: Maybe the pasta tastes terrible?

[Remington: She said they were good]

[Cassidy: Then it's the pasta maker she can't stand]

Remington was left speechless

Annoyed, he tossed the phone aside, but just as he closed his eyes, the phone lit up again.

He glanced over, Timothy was also chiming in.

(Timothy Could be cause of love)

Remington's grip on the phone tightened, and Timothy messaged him privately.

Liz cried eating your pastas? Jeez, I'm reasonably suspicious you're showing off your love life in the middle of the night, Remi]

Remington's gaze shifted from his phone, as if trying to see through the bedroom door, a faint glimmer of light flickering in his eyes

Chapter 245

Lizetta barely caught any Zs last night, tossing and turning, and even woke up at the witching hour to check on Joseph's noggin.

Come morning, she woke up to full daylight streaming through the window and craned her neck.

Joseph was all snuggled up in the blanket, back turned to her and not moving a muscle.

Lizetta reached out and gave the boy's head a little rub.

"The sun's shining on our butts; time for us slackers to roll out of bed!"

But Joseph was still out like a light, and Lizetta propped herself up with a chuckle.

the act, get up. Gobble up breakfast and I'll drop you off..."

She froze mid-sentence, her face going pale.

Joseph's little face was burning up, and turning him over, she saw a crimson mess under his nose a nosebleed had soaked through half the pillowcase.

"Joseph, wake up! Remi!"

Lizetta was scared witless, propping Joseph up and grabbing tissues to dab at the nosebleed, shouting for Remington.

Remington responded and pushed at the door, but it was locked from the inside.

Just as Lizetta was about to hop out of bed to unlock it, bam! Remington burst through the door.

Seeing Lizetta perched on the bed, panic-stricken, cradling an unconscious Joseph, his brows furrowed slightly, and he swiftly wrapped Joseph in the thin blanket and scooped them both up.

"Don't freak out, just bundle up and come downstairs."

His voice was a calm anchor in the storm.

Lizetta dashed to the door and hurriedly got dressed.

When she got downstairs, Remington had already tucked Joseph into the back seat of the car and was on the phone, seemingly with a doctor.

Lizetta climbed in, holding Joseph, and the man floored it.

At the hospital, Joseph was whisked straight into the ER, and Lizetta, watching the closed door, felt her legs turn to jelly.

Remington's warm, broad chest pressed against her back as he wrapped his arms around her waist, steadying her.

"Got scared?"

His voice was a soothing rumble, and Lizetta let out a faint grunt, leaning on him for strength.

She'd never seen Joseph have an episode before, never imagined it could be so terrifying.

All the way to the hospital, she'd held Joseph, unable to rouse him, his nosebleed relentless.

"Joseph's going to be okay, right?"

Lizetta looked up, her heart in knots.

Remington guided her to a chair, took an alcohol wipe and carefully started cleaning the blood off her hands, one by one.

"Who doesn't know he's the Dashiell family's troublemaker? What could possibly happen to him?"

Perhaps his teasing tone eased her a bit, and she snapped back,

"What kind of brother talks about his own sibling like that? If the Dashiell family has a troublemaker, it's you. Joseph's always been the angel."

"Sure, whatever you say. So, did I manage wreak havoc on you?"

After cleaning her hands, Remington tossed the tissue away, gave her hand a squeeze, and looked up at her.

The intensity in his eyes made Lizetta's heart race.

She thought, isn't he the biggest disaster of them all? She'd fallen head over heels for him, utterly bewitched.

It was only then she realized how close they were, and she tried to pull her hand back in a panic, but Remington suddenly tightened his grip.

Looking up, he asked,

"Why the tears over pastas last night?"

Uretta's eyes darted around, feigning nonchalance.

Oh nothing really, just sometimes us women get like that, tear up for no good reason." Remington gazed at her intently. "Crying because of some feelings stirred up by the pastas, what was it?" Feeling the weight of his probing stare, Lizetta was almost at her limit. She tugged at her hand, irked.

"Joseph's still in the ER, and you're asking me about pasta-induced feelings? There's nothing."

She tried to stand, but Remington suddenly interlaced their fingers tightly.

"If there's nothing, what are you running from?"

I'm not running from anything!"

"But you can't even look me in the eye."

His voice deep, Lizetta took a deep breath and finally met his gaze head-on.

Her lips, pale, trembled slightly, “Yes, I do miss that flavor, the memory of your cooking. Thinking I might never taste it again made me a tad sad, that’s all.”

Chapter 246

“Pfft, my cooking? Is that really all there is to 117 Remington said icily.

He never expected that the answer that formented him and kept him from a peaceful sleep would turn out to be just this.

In the end, it was all just his own wishful thinking.

Lizetta felt awful inside. She had no clue what he was trying to achieve by pressing her for answers.

Was she supposed to tell him that her emotional breakdown and tears were because she loved him, because she was too attached to

bim?

She didn’t want to be the butt of his jokes once again.

They were on the brink of divorce, what was the point of talking about love now?

It would only make her look more embarrassed, more pitiful and laughable.

“Yeah!” Lizetta frowned, clearly showing her impatience.

Remington’s handsome face turned frosty. He wanted to say something more, but the sound of hurried and disordered footsteps echoed down the hallway

It was Hanna and Nathan, rushing over with two servants in tow.

It was only this morning that the servants realized Joseph wasn't at home, causing the household to turn upside down.

Right on cue, Remington's phone rang with a call concerning Joseph.

Hanna, frantic with worry, stormed over and glared at Lizetta as if she were an enemy who had wronged her child.

"Lizetta, isn't it enough that you've cost me one son! Are you trying to harm Joseph too? In this freezing weather, don't you know Joseph can't handle it? You made him go out in the middle of the night to look for you, what on earth were you thinking?"

Lizetta took the verbal lashing without showing much reaction, her head bowed in silence.

No matter what she said, Hanna would blame her for this incident anyway.

And Lizetta did feel a bit guilty, after all, Joseph had indeed sneaked out because of her, and she felt troubled about the little guy's state. But Remington slightly furrowed his brows, shifting his stance to shield Lizetta behind him, and said coldly.

"Do you have any idea why Joseph ran out?"

"How should I know! It must be Lizetta, she-"

Hanna was cut off mid-sentence by Remington, "He ran out after overhearing you and Hilary talking about Liz and my divorce. It has nothing to do with anyone else."

Hanna's face soured, "So you're saying it's all my fault now?"

She was livid, and Nathan spoke up with a stern voice.

“Enough. What’s the use in pointing fingers now? Everyone just quiet down and wait for the doctor’s assessment.”

He then turned to Remington with a harsh tone, “And you, watch how you speak to your mother!”

Seeing this, Lizetta didn’t want to stay any longer.

“I need some air,” she murmured softly.

She turned and headed toward the direction of the elevator. Remington turned to follow but was stopped by Nathan asking about the symptoms Joseph had before being admitted.

By the time Remington looked back, Lizetta’s figure was nowhere to be seen.

Lizetta found herself in the downstairs garden, sitting on a bench, her hand resting on her abdomen.

She wasn’t sure if the baby inside could help in treating Joseph but had already decided.

No matter what, when it was time to give birth abroad, she’d have the doctors secretly do a compatibility test.

If it was a match, it would be a safeguard.

“Baby, you want to help your uncle too, right? If you can save him, then my baby would be born a real-life superhero.”

“Liz? What are you doing sitting out here?”

Lizetta was whispering to her belly when she suddenly heard a familiar voice not far away.

She looked up to see Hogan. He wasn't wearing his white coat, instead a dark grey long coat, giving him an air of scholarly elegance,

his light gold glasses catching the sunlight with a faint shimmer.

It was the first time she had seen him since she heard about the White family's marriage proposal four years ago.

She instantly masked the soft smile on her face, stood up, and instinctively stepped to one side of the bench.

Hogan noticed her body language, and the smile gradually faded.

Chapter 247

Joseph's under the weather, so I brought him over

Lizetta felt a bit out of her depth facing Hogan

Seeing her on edge, Hogan didn't try to close the gap.

"I've been trying to reach you these past few days to discuss Thaddeus transfer to another hospital, but your phone's been off the god

Lizetta pursed her lips. "Hogan, I'm worried that Thaddeus won't be able to handle the flight or the vibes abroad, so I've decided to keep

him here"

Hogan was taken aback. “But we had a deal, right? The Lab was all set up to welcome him.”

Lizetta shook her head firmly. “Don’t sweat it, Hogan. I’ve made up my mind, sorry”

As she turned to leave, Hogan frowned slightly and called out with a hint of urgency in his voice.

“Liz, you in the know about something?”

Lizetta stopped in her tracks. Since Hogan had brought it up, she wanted some answers too.

She turned around, locking eyes with Hogan.

*Are you talking about that car crash you had four years ago, the marriage proposal from Helen, or the fact that you’ve been footing the bill for Astoria Medical Lab just for Thaddeus?”

Her gaze was frosty.

She wasn’t born yesterday, Hogan’s motives were as clear as day.

But Lizetta didn’t feel honored—just baffled, offended, and uneasy.

Hogan looked flustered and took a step forward.

Instinctively, Lizetta stepped back. She didn’t even know what to make of Hogan anymore.

Was his whole stint as her brother’s doc a calculated move?

Hogan gave a bitter chuckle, his Adam’s apple bobbing as he spoke with resignation.

*I've played out confessing to you in my head a million times, but it never looked like this. What a mess, sorry.

He spread his hands, then straightened up.

"Maybe you think the first time we met was that mix-up back when you were a freshman and I was a junior. But actually, that wasn't our first encounter."

Lizetta was stunned. She racked her brain but couldn't remember meeting him before that.

Seeing her blank look, Hogan pulled out his phone, opened his WhatsApp, and enlarged his profile picture to show her.

"Look familiar?"

Lizetta took it, seeing a profile picture of a small orange cat, looking cozy and well-behaved in Hogan's large hand.

It must be Hogan's pet, but she didn't get why he was asking her about familiarity. Did she and the cat have a history?

Hogan would have been a sophomore when she was in middle school.

She thought hard, then a memory flashed.

One year, she found a wounded orange kitten in the school woods and took it to the infirmary. The doctor wasn't there, but she bumped into a senior from the high school.

The senior helped her stitch up the kitten and apply medication. She named the kitten CoCo and temporarily placed it in a cardboard box, feeding it regularly.

Sometimes she'd bump into the senior checking on the cat. She wanted to keep CoCo, but Hanna hated pets, so she couldn't.

Then came a downpour, and worried about CoCo, she went to check with her umbrella and saw the senior again.

CoCo's cardboard home had collapsed, and the kitten was a pitiful sight. She asked the senior to take CoCo in, and he agreed.

"This is CoCo?"

"You remember?" Hogan's lips curled slightly.

Lizetta felt sheepish. She did remember the cat but only had a vague recollection of Hogan.

"That year you were a freshman, and I was learning to dance with Younne because I heard you wanted to study with her. I got there first. We were just students then, and I didn't want to disturb you, so I kept my feelings under wraps. I figured once you were in college, I'd

definitely confess and pursue you properly. But then, I had that accident and lost feeling in my legs.

Hogan was the big man on campus, with an Ivy League education. Lizetta was finishing up freshman year when he graduated and went

abroad.

His accident overseas was kept hush-hush around school.

Lizetta remembered how teachers and classmates would often reminisce about the brilliant and exceptional student

While everyone thought he was making waves overseas, he was actually enduring the pain of his disability. She felt a wave of emotion.

“You’re strong Hogan. You got back on your feet.”

Hogan’s smile remained warm, as if he had weathered many storms and was now at peace.

“I was in despair, too, you know I even popped sleeping pills at my lowest. My mom found my diary after that scare.”

Hogan locked eyes with Lizetta. “She saw you as my hope for recovery and went to the Dashiell family to propose marriage. When I found out, I talked to her and promised to get my act together. She cleared things up with the Dashiell family, but by that time you had already...”

Chapter 248

Hogan didn’t spell it out, but Lizetta got the drift – he was hinting at the scandal with Remington that had blown up in her face back

then.

Whenever that episode was brought up, Lizetta couldn’t keep her cool completely; a slight pallor crept over her face.

“Mom guessed you might’ve done something foolish to dodge the matchmaking, and felt super guilty about it. I felt like crud too, never dared to reach out to you again.”

Lizetta remembered getting the odd text from Hogan early on, but then they petered out. Friends going abroad and drifting apart was nothing new, so she never made a big deal out of it.

“Later on, I fixed up my legs and switched to medicine, came back from abroad just when Thaddeus hit a rough patch. I wanted to make amends for the past, so I became his doc. Seeing you again, I wanted to say sorry, but then I realized you seemed out of the loop about the matchmaking biz. Couldn’t make heads or tails of it, so I dropped it and never revealed my cards these past two years.”

After laying it out, Hogan looked at Lizetta earnestly, eyes brimming with regret, “Lizetta, I’m really sorry for the crap I pulled back in the day and for keeping you in the dark. I’m not expecting forgiveness, just hoping for a shot at making things right. The gig at the Lab is a real break for Thaddeus, and I want to help snap him out of it.”

Lizetta shook her head, and Hogan’s face fell, but then she said, “I’ve forgiven you, Hogan, so no need for all this. As for Thaddeus, I can’t take you up on your offer, sorry.”

Lizetta didn’t hold much of a grudge against Hogan; she probably knew what it was like to have a crush.

Just like how she could only spill her guts to her diary in the dead of night and then stash it away.

She felt a kindred spirit in Hogan, a bit more understanding and forgiving.

The one who spiked the drink wasn’t a White family insider; that night’s mess didn’t tie back to the Whites’ matchmaking.

Even if the Whites’ proposal was a bit disrespectful, Hogan was clueless, and his dedication over the past year more than made up for

1. it.

“You really don’t blame me?” Hogan was all agog.

Lizetta nodded with a smile, “All’s well that ends well, and you don’t need to beat yourself up because,” She locked eyes with Hogan, unwavering, and added, “that thing back then had nothing to do with the proposal; it was all me, totally willing.”

Hogan's fingers clenched. He got the message – Lizetta was brushing him off.

She said she willingly hooked up with Remington, had nothing to do with him or the matchmaking.

She was rejecting him again, crystal clear.

Hogan managed a wry smile, "Okay, got it. My mom's been meaning to apologize to you in person too."

He didn't finish because something suddenly sprang from the flower bed, startling Lizetta so much she nearly toppled over.

Hogan was quick on his feet and steadied her. Lizetta was still shaken, "Thanks."

Turned out to be a frisky stray cat climbing a tree.

Lizetta looked up to find Hogan's gaze fixed on her belly, her hands instinctively crossed over it.

"Does Mr. Dashiell know you're pregnant?" Hogan blurted out.

He'd seen Lizetta touching her stomach and talking to herself, so he had his suspicions.

Lizetta was taken aback, "How did you find it?"

"I've seen enough expectant mothers at the hospital to recognize that protective gesture. Just guessed."

Lizetta quickly grabbed Hogan's arm, "He doesn't know, and you better keep it hush–hush."

Hogan's expression was complex, "But Liz, being a single mom is tough, especially abroad, all alone. Mr. Dashiell doesn't seem like the type to shirk responsibility. Maybe you two should hash it out. Running away overseas isn't the answer, and kids need their dads."

Lizetta didn't expect him to be the one to give her advice. She shook her head and withdrew her hand.

"I've made up my mind, Hogan. I need some space to myself."

"Alright then." Hogan backed off and left.

Just as he reached the entrance to the ward, he bumped into Remington hurrying out.

They stared at each other, and Remington headed his way.

'She's in the garden," Hogan offered.

Remingtons cold gaze pinned him down, Spare me your high and mighty act, it's superfluous.

As the man passed by, Hogan hesitated but still stepped in his way.

Facing the joy Remington, he said, "Mr. Dashiell, Instead of getting jealous and cutting off your rivals, maybe pay a bit more attention to Liza well-being, give her a sense of security."

Remington's eyes narrowed, a blend of danger and frost, "What are you getting at?"

Chapter 249

Hogan's eyes were cool behind his glasses

"Liz had no clue about the proposal early on, nor later, but somehow she finds out right when you guys are about to sign the divorce papers and she and I are headed to Astoria. Mr. Dashiell, you gonna tell me that wasn't planned?"

Of course Remington did it on purpose, he said coldly.

That thing from four years ago, I haven't even settled the score with you, and you better stay away from her now!"

The friendly look on Hogan's face had long vanished, "The White family made a legit proposal, what's wrong with that? Four years ago, Liz wasn't your property"

"Ha, a legit proposal? Sounds nice! But you knew the deal with her situation in the Dashiell family, didn't you? Grandma already said no, then you went behind her back to my parents, how's that any different from forcing a marriage?"

Only Grandma and he in the Dashiell family would look out for Lizetta. The Whites made their move while he was away in Zion City, got shot down by Grandma, and then went after his parents.

Was it not obvious that Nathan and Hanna would push Lizetta out front when their interests were at stake?

Hogan's handsome face turned pale as he averted his gaze from Remington's sharp, knife-like stare.

But Remington didn't let up, a mocking smile playing at the corner of his thin lips.

"Liz was under eighteen back then, you sent her abroad to take care of a disabled person and called it a proposal. The White family sure has guts. Mr. Hogan, you think because you're broken and ruined, other people's daughters are less than you and should be dragged down with you?"

Hogan's fists clenched suddenly, he was well aware his mother had messed up with that move back in the day. If not for that, he wouldn't have been hiding his identity all these years.

He felt guilty and feared Lizetta's resentment.

Remington's eyes narrowed as he added coldly.

“But she’s not just any girl, she’s my Liz from the Dashiell family! She’s mine, Remington’s, and if the White family touched her, they’d face the consequences!”

Even if Hogan had been in perfect shape, it wouldn’t mean the White family could just waltz in and take Remington’s woman.

Hogan also narrowed his eyes, picking up on something else in Remington’s words.

“The hero behind the White family’s withdrawal from the Veridia market seems to be you, Mr. Dashiell.”

Three years ago, when the White family was breaking into the Veridia car market, it was a golden opportunity, and everything smoothly until they were suddenly met with obstacles.

After a couple of slip-ups, they missed the prime time and had to pull out of the Veridia market last year, losing a lot.

Remington didn’t deny it, and Hogan nodded, but then said.

was

going

“The White family has paid its dues, and I’ve just received Liz’s forgiveness. Liz is twenty-two now, she has the right to choose who she wants to be with in the future. Mr. Dashiell, I hope you won’t be too hypocritical, and when the time comes, you’ll choose to respect and let go.”

With a slight nod, Hogan stepped aside and walked past Remington.

His handsome face darkened as he kept calling her Liz, his brow furrowing slightly.

What did Hogan mean by asking him to check on Lizetta’s health just now?

Damn it, he got sidetracked and didn't get a clear answer.

Remington walked off towards the garden to look for her.

There, Lizetta had separated from Hogan and was wandering around the garden to clear her head.

She reached a corner and suddenly heard a familiar female voice coming from behind a nearby flower wall.

'Let go! Stop it, what if someone sees Us?'

"Does it feel bad? If someone sees us, so be it. I'll just go to your house to propose and then I can have my way with you every day, you won't be able to get out of bed because you're so spoiled, wouldn't that be great?"

*Cut it out! Get lost, I have to go for a prenatal check-up. Get your hand out of there! Mmm, mmm, oh, be gentle."

Lizetta was shocked.

She couldn't be mistaken, that was Evelina's voice.

The other man's voice sounded young and kind of familiar, probably someone she knew.

Chapter 250

But Lizetta couldn't for the life of her remember who it was.

Whoever it was, though, Evelina was preggers and here hooking up with some dude?

Was she really cheating on Remington? And clearly, this guy knew Evelina was expecting.

Weren't Evelina at risk of losing the baby just a while back? How could she still be getting her kicks like this?

Lizetta whipped out her phone, muted it, and cautiously squatted down to sneak towards the flower wall.

"Ugh. this is so annoying, a little smooching and petting is fine, but you wanna go all the way? Dude, I'm pregnant, you beast!"

"Pregnancy makes it more sensitive, look at you, you're practically wet. Bet Remington hasn't laid a finger on you, huh?"

"Shut your mouth!"

Evelina's light panting and sounds of resistance started to make Lizetta's scalp tingle.

The pair behind the flower wall were evidently not done, still tangled up in the heat of the moment.

"Why can't I mention him? The kid in your belly isn't Remington's seed, are you actually daydreaming he's gonna marry you? Dream on, even if you did push me out, you're never gonna be Mrs. Dashiell. You'd be better off with me—I love you more than he does."

In a flash, Lizetta's grip on her phone tightened, her heart rocked by the revelation.

Turns out, Evelina's baby really wasn't Remington's!

But why did Remington still care so much about Evelina's kid?

Could there be some misunderstanding? Maybe Evelina had deceived Remington into thinking the kid was his?

Considering Evelina's scheming nature, spitting out lies like they were nothing, Lizetta thought it was entirely possible.

But that didn't quite add up either; Remington wasn't the type to be easily fooled.

Plus, Remington had mentioned something similar to Hanna before, about the kid not being his.

Lizetta's mind was a tangled mess, no clue where to start.

But then Evelina's mocking voice rose again.

"Go with you? Can you pump billions into the Hawthorne family to help us out of a tight spot? You really wouldn't mind my child being born? Even if you didn't mind, your family would, and besides, if the Hawthorne family goes bust, what am I? Just a mistress then, right? I don't believe in the 'love' you men talk about—I only trust what I can get my hands on."

"You're brutally honest, but that's what I like about you. Let's just seize the moment and enjoy, babe, don't move, let me just rub against you."

Lizetta was about to hurl, she felt it was about time to retract her probing hand, when suddenly a kid popped out from the bushes beside her, staring at her wide-eyed.

Lizetta quickly put a finger to her lips, shushing the kid.

The kid grinned and nodded like crazy. Lizetta just breathed a sigh of relief when the kid suddenly yelled out.

"Granny, I wanna play hide and seek with this pretty woman!"

Lizetta was speechless.

“Who’s there? Come out!”

The two behind the flower wall were obviously startled. Lizetta, scared witless, quickly pulled back her hand and scrambled up to beat a hasty retreat, phone in hand.

The sound of rushing footsteps signaled the man had spotted her and was giving chase around the flower wall.

Lizetta panicked, not daring to look back, just keeping her head down and speeding up.

Until she smacked right into a wall of flesh.

Her instinct was to turn and run, but the person caught her waist in a vice grip.

The path was all twists and turns, and Lizetta figured she’d been outflanked.

Her face drained of color, she opened her mouth to scream for help, but the person seemed to anticipate her reaction and clamped a

hand over her mouth.

Without hesitation, Lizetta bit down hard.