

A Love Forgotten (Arianna and Elijah)

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Teuldn't believe my cats. I asked again, "What? Elijah, what did you just say?"

Elijah adjusted his fie, glaring at me with a cold, penetrating look. That expression-it was like he had finally seen the worst side of me, and he couldn't be more disappointed.

said that the mat on the head, didn't he teeted 'Everything you've done has been to louce me to change my mind.

"Ariana, you're still the same. You're just as impulsive, onions, and clorless as ever. And let's not forget how clingy you are still refusing to let me go!"

I was so angry I actually laughed. It was the kind of laugh that cater out when you were so sprechless there was nothing else you could do

He shot back, "Isn't it? Why else would you make such a scene? You even dragged my great-grandfather into this. I've got to give it to you, Ariana-you've leveled up. You're craftier than you used to be

"Tirst, you made me behave you were serious about the divorce. Then, you blew things up so ble it's all over town.

"Because of you, several of my projects are on hold. And now, you've brought my great-grandfather into this mess to try to weasel your way into the company.

Elijah scoffed, his tone dripping with sarcas "What's your best move? You think joining the board of directors will give you enough leverage to take your shares and push me to leave And there it w

It all clicked Elijah actually thought I reached out to Mr. Linden Senior to wiggle my way into the boardroom, humiliate him, and them force him to leave ocelyn.

The steer absurdity of it left me momentarily speechless.

I stared at Elijah, the realization dawning like a slap in the face. Not only must I have been under some kind of curse to fall for him back then, but I must've been blind, dead, and downright brain-dead.

The old Ariana, the one before I lost my memory? She must've been possessed or something. How else could I have ever been into someone so self-absorbed and delusional?

I shoved Elijah aside. "Move. If that's what you think, Mr. Linden, then, by all means, stay tuned. I have nothing to explain."

Of course, Elijah wasn't going to let me just walk away. He grabbed my arm, leaning in close to deliver his next line with all the subtlety of a hammer,

"Linden Group is my last line in the sand. You could play your games before, but I won't let you touch my company."

I gave him a sharp, icy smile. "Oh, neatly? Absolute confidence, huh? Let's see if you're still feeling so sure of yourself in a little while."

I yanked my arm free and pulled open his office door. But before I could take a step, someone came charging at me.

A hand swung toward my face, along with a screeching voice, "Ariana, you little bitch. How dare you storm into the company like this?"

Beflexively, I grabbed the wrist mid-air.

It was Max. Linden. Her hair was disheveled, and her usually pristine outfit looked thrown together in a rush. She must've come straight here after hearing the commotion. She glared daggers at me. "Get out! Get the hell out of here!" Her free hand lunged at me, trying to claw at me, but I showed her back.

Nevertheless, Quista wasn't one to back down. She came at me again, wild

and flailing, swinging to slap me with a full-blown maniac

That was it. I'd had enough. I caught her hand and slapped her hard across the face. The sound echoed. A sharp, resounding crack.

Everything stopped.

Quista cupped her cheek, staring at me in complete disbelief. "You hit me? Did you actually hit me? I'm your mother-in-law, and you -"

Elijah was on her side in an instant, repping in front of her. His face was a storm cloud, fists clenching and unclenching as if he were deciding whether not to hit me.

I squared up, glaring back at both of them. My art was pounding, but I wasn't going to show an ounce of fear. If they made even one wrong move, I was ready to throw down. Elijah's knuckles ranked as his hands tensed again, but he didn't say a word.

I took a deep breath, keeping my composure. This wasn't just about standing my ground. If they forced me out of Linden Group today, there was no way I'd ever step foot over to where Mr. Linden Bed, watching the whole thing unfold. Foot in here again.

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Mr. Linden Senior immediately addressed the security guards who had rushed over. "Separate them. Take Mrs. Linden downstairs to cool off with some tea."

Elijah was livid. "Great-grandfather, how can you side with an outside like this?"

Finally, Mr. Linden Senior displayed the authority that came with being the elder of the Linden family. His voice was calm but commanding.

"I am not tiding with anyone," he said, his tone leaving no room for argument. "Let me make an introduction. Ariana is one of the largest shareholders in Linden Group. Along with Mr. Comer and three other shareholders, I fully endorse her participation in the board of directors."

As he finished, his assistant handed Elijah a formal letter of recommendation.

Ta's face turned ashen as he snatched the document and scanned it. His expression darkened even more when he saw the signatures of the five veteran shareholders. He stood frozen for a few seconds, then turned his gaze on me. However, he didn't say a word.

Suddenly, Elijah smirked. "Congratulations, Ariana. You've won." With that, he tossed the letter at me and seemed into the boardroom, slamming the door behind him.

I picked up the letter and turned to Mr. Linden Senior. "Thank you." I said softly.

But there was no trace of joy on his face. He shook his head, sighing.

"I'm deeply disappointed in Elijah. I never thought he would turn out to be so." He trailed off, leaving the rest of the sentence hanging, but the unsaid words were anything but flat.

I told him into the boardroom. I knew the real battle was only just beginning

The board meeting lasted four grueling hours. From 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, the room was a battlefield of heated arguments and harsh accusations

For the first time, I truly felt the weight of corporate warfare. The pressure was suffocating, but thankfully, Mr. Linden Senior and the other veteran shareholders backed me up. I also had the support of Mr. Webb and Camden, who were lifesavers in navigating the chaos.

By the end of it, I had achieved what I came for I was officially a member of the board of directors and had reclaimed my voice regarding my shares.

As the meeting adjourned, the veteran shareholders, including Mr. Linden Senior, left. They rarely attended board meetings in person, but they had made an exception for the

I was utterly exhausted. Every bone in my body ached as if I'd just run a marathon. Even Mr. Webb and Camden, both of whom were usually full of energy, looked drained. That's when Elijah's

Is secretary, Cory, approached me. "Ms. Ariana, Mr. Linden would like to speak with you."

I shook my head "No I'm too tired. Maybe another time."

Cory frowned, clearly displeased. "Ms. Ariana, Mr. Linden wants to clear up some misunderstandings. He's already made an effort to lower himself to speak with you. Why not show some appreciation?"

His words hit me gasoline on a fire. I was already starving and drained, and his tone just pushed me over the edge

I let out a cold laugh. "Show him appreciation? Why should I? Who does he think he won't forget-after today's meeting, he doesn't even control half the shares I do. Does he really think he can deride me around? Cory looked stunned, his face frozen in disbelief."Ms. Ariana, how can you talk about Mr. Linden like that?

I shot back, "And how dare you talk to me like this? Who are you? You're his secretary, not mine. You have no right to raise your voice at me.

I back the word leave-barely. Between hunger and exhaustion, I had zero patience left

With my departure, Cory left, his retreat looking a little too much like a walk of shame. Watching him go, a vague memory flashed in my mind. I glanced at Camden.

However, Camden simply shrugged "Maybe he's just not used to the new you, Ms. York"

_night. I remembered now. I must have been so spineless around Cory before, constantly trying to win his approval. No wonder he thought he could talk down to me now.

Sowling, I muttered, "Let's get out of here. This place reeks of bad vibes. I'd never set foot here if it weren't about getting my money back"

Without waiting for a reply, I grabbed my things and left Linden Group with Mr. Webb and Camden in tow

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When I got home, the first thing I did was devour a full meal. Then, for the first time in ages, I poured myself a giant glass of red wine and drank it all in one go

As I let out a tipy little burp, it felt like all the frustration bottled up inside me was finally starting to ease. So, I poured myself another glass.

Man, the wine Logan kapt stashed here is incredible. Smooth, rich, and-wow-seriously strong. Before I knew it, I'd finished one glass, then two, then three. By the third, I was pleasantly buzzed and feeling bold enough to pick up my phone and dial a member The call connected, and Legan's calm and warm voice came through. "Ari? What's up?"

Wow, that voice. Deep, soothing, and oh-so-attractive. Honestly, Logan was the full package-porgeous, kind, rich. Why did I ever waste my time on someone like Elijah when a guy like Logan was right these all along?

with a giggly, stred laugh, blurted out, "Logan, I like you"

There was a pause.

"What?" His tone was still composed, but I could tell 'caught him off guard.

like you, Logan. Like, I really like you. Why do like you so much?" 1 babbled

"Ari, have you been drinking?" His voice was calm but with a hint of concern. "Where are you right now?"

"Here! A home!" I yelled gleefully.

"Home" "You're drinking at home?" Histone grew sharper. "Are you really at home? just tell me where you are. I'll come get you."

"I'm home, promise! You've got good wine here, do you know? I drank it. Logan, guess what really pissed off Elijah today. He was so mad. It was hilarious."

The line went quiet. Did he mute himself? Hang up? No clue. I didn't care- I kept rambling.

"He was so mad, Logan. He thought I did everything just to make him miserable, and he even accused me of trying to win him back! Can you believe that? Like I'd want that!" I ended back to my bed, laughing so hard I started pounding the mattress like a kid having a tantrum. Go lie down and get some rest. We talk when I get back, Logan said, his voice steady but firm

"No" I protested, stubborn as ever. "You have to listen to me! Why aren't you listening? You don't love me anymore!"

"Ari, that's not

"You don't love me anymore!" I wailed, my voice bouncing between crying and laughing. "You're lying! You don't love me."

I could almost hear Logan's exasperation through the phone. "Ari, listen to me. Go ask Lora to make you something to sober up, okay?"

"I don't want to!" I protested, my words tumbling out in a slur. "Say you like me! Right now!"

"What meeting!" I demanded. "What could be more important than me? Huh? Tell me

There was a pause. Then Logan chuckled softly. "Nothing Nothing's more important than you."

Satisfied for a moment, I frowned "Wait. No. That's not enough. You didn't say you love me! Say it! Say you love me!"

"Alright I love you."

But I wasn't buying it "That was too fast! You're lying! You're just saying it to shut me up!"

"Don't be lying Ari! Now, be good and rest for a bit. I'll be home soon."

"Nope! That's not good enough You don't even sound sincere. Don't you know love needs to feel real? You've gotta mean it, Logan!"

He sighed, and when he spoke again, his tone was slower, deeper. "ALL, I love you."

Finally, I smiled "Okay. That's better"

"Great Can I go back to my meeting now? You've already held me up for 20 minutes. Aren't you thirsty or something?"

The moment he said it, I realized my throat was dry. "Oh... yeah. Maybe a little."

Good Go get some water. I've already asked Lora to make you some soup to help you sober up. Make sure you drink it." "Okay," I mumbled, waving him off even though he couldn't see me. "Bye!"

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A repeating it way too many times, I finally hung up the phone

Soen, a knock came at the door, and Leca walked in, trying hard not to laugh

into two people. Can you shapeshift?"

Tinked at her, then frowned, she looked like she had split into two-no, three-people. I mumbled, "Lora, you've turned into

She chuckled, carrying a steaming bowl in her hands. "oh my goodness, sweetheart, barely stepped into the kitchen, and you've already drunk so much. Come on, drink this soup I'll help

I stared at her for a moment, then, without warning, burst into tears

Startled, she nearly dropped the bowl. "oh no, sweet little Al, what's wrong? Why are you crying all of a sudden?"

want my mom..... I miss my mom and my grandma. "I wailed.

When I woke up, the sky was pitch black outside. My head felt like it had been stuffed with cotton, and my mouth was as dry as the desert.

with a click, a warm glow from the floor lamp filled the room

I winced, groaning "Too bright and shielded my eyes.

The bed ripped slightly beside me as someone leaned in and helped me sit up. That was when I noticed Logan, who was dressed in comfortable loungewear, sitting at my bedside. He reached out to touch my forehead "Good, Natever." I wanted his hand away. I don't get levers. I'm just thirsty."

A glass of warm honey water appeared in my lips, and I eagerly gulped it down. As soon as finished, I licked my parched lips and mumbled, "I want more."

Without a word. Logan poured me another glass,

After three straight glasses, finally started to feel human again. My mind cleared, and I noticed Logan watching me with an unreadable expression. His eyes held a mix of amusement, curiosity, and a touch of irritation. Feeling guilty, I lowered my head. "Uh.. I didn't mean to get drunk."

He raised

eyebrow. "So you got drunk on purpose?"

I shook my head loudly, "no! I just wanted to celebrate a little, but the wine was so good, I didn't realize I'd done

Some of the annoyance in his eyes softened, and he reached for a warm towel, gently wiping my face.

"Are you feeling better?" he asked

I nodded quickly. "Yep. Totally awake. Wide awake, Couldn't be more awake,"

Setting the towel aside, Logan crossed his arms and leaned back slightly, his one calm but firm "Good. Then you can start apologizing now."

"Huh? Apologize? I'm blanked in confusion. "For what? What did I do?"

"You called me while you were drunk and kept me on the phone for over 30 minutes," he said dryly. "That happened to be during an international executive meeting "

Oh no. The memory hit me like a freight train. Why did I call him of all people? And during a meeting? I groaned inwardly, wishing I could turn back time and stop myself. Logan's voice interrupted my self-loathing. Do you remember what you said?- My mind went blank

Let me jog your memory," he said, a faint smirk tugging at the corner of his lips. "You kept saying I don't like you, don't love you. My jaw dropped "lmao?"

love you, and that I'm lying to you."

"Oli, prodid, "Ke said, the riding "You were drunk, not suffering from asia Don't pretend you 1 beded up at halus, as serious at Frould manage, barked out. Do you believe me? u don't remember"

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she slammed me against the bed, pinning me firmly beneath him. His face, annoyingly handsome to the point of Logan's response to my excuse of "blacking out" was swift and merciless- being undali, loomed inches from mine "Blacked out, huh?" His voice dipped low, teasing, with a slight upward lift at the end

The shees weight of his presence was overwhelming. I felt cometed, utterly defenseless under his piercing gaze "T-yeah,"1 stammered, trying to sound convincing "I don't remember a thing"

Hipcurled into a smick, his eyes glinting with mischief. "Do you want me to help you for your memory?"

As his face inched closer, I swallowed hard. "No need Really, no need th, maybe you should, you know, get off me? You're... kinda heavy..."

Before I could finish, his lips crushed against mine, silencing me with a kiss that was as intense as it was unrelenting. It was a brazen, unapologetic claim that left me breathless and dazed. When he finally pulled away, he took a deep breath and sat up. I stared at his rigid, well-built back and, despite the situation, couldn't help but admire how annoyingly perfect he looked Feeling bold, I offered some unsolicited advice.

"Why do you do this to yourself?" I teased. "Every time you kiss me, you're the one who ends up Suffering

I didn't get to finish. Logan turned back, his susia k still intact, and his gaze shut me up faster than words even could.

With that, he walked into the bathroom, and soon, I heard the sound of running water. My face burned as 1 threw on a jacket and bolted from the room. Staying in close quarters with Logan was like playing with fire-Eddn't trust myself not to get burned The aftermath of my new position at Linden Group hit quickly.

Soling through Elijah's Twitter, I stumbled upon a post of him and Jocelyn flaunting their relationship for the first time. The comments section was a mess, with people reading

them apart. It was comforting to see that most netizens had their moral compass intact. For some reason, Elijah decided to jump into the fray and respond to the criticism himself.

His reply read. "The divorce between and is already in court, What's wrong with being with the person love? She's moved on too, hasn't she?"

The comments were relentless, "She ended one relationship before starting another. What about you? Cheating while married and flaunting it? Disgusting"

Elijah shot back, "Disgusting? What's it got to do with you?"

Another netizen replied, both are a scumbag and homewrecker-a match made in hell Please, just stay out of society."

Elijah dapped back. Thanks for the Messings. We'll stay together forever!TM

1 stated at try seen, stunned Elijah's temper tantrum was unreal. He had to be livid-there was no other reason he'd pick this moment to go public with Jocelyn, argue with strangers online, and basically dig his own grave, Was this all to spite me!

"It's absolutely to spite you," Willie confirmed over coffee, not missing a beat "Honestly, he's so immature. Does he really think posting some ugly pictures with Jocelyn is going to break your resolve? I mean, come. The guy's an idiot. He remained silent

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Watie sipped her coffee elegantly, then added, "It's not surprising, though. His reputation's already in tatters, and he's out of moves. This is probably his last-ditch effort to get a reaction out of you. He turned to her. "Do you really think so

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She smiled knowingly. "Men are dumb when it comes to emotions. They only have a few tricks up their sleeve, and that's it. I've yet to meet a man who's truly smooth in handling relationships I thought for a moment and then added that Norman was the exception.

Thinking of Norman, I shot him a quick message. As expected, his response was calm and nonchalant, "Don't worry,

orry, Ariana. I've already got Jocelyn handled. Sit right and wait for the show."

I replied, "Handled Really? She and Elijah just went public. It feels like they'll be announcing a wedding any day now."

He sent back a laughing emoji, followed by a chat screenshot. I opsed it and stared at the screen, my expression wisting into something between shock and disbelief

Jocelyn was venting to Logan in the chat, complaining tearfully, "Elijas forced me to go public. I can tell he's still in love with Ariana. He's just using me as a pawn. We haven't men had real feelings for each other in years!TM She went on to say that she felt like nothing more than a tool in Elijah's scheme.