SHATTERED

Written by April Marcom

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CHAPTER ONE

**BROKEN HEART**

A week ago it all began. This crazy agony-filled whirlwind that's overtaken my life.

I was washing the dishes before I went to bed, when Simon, my fiancé, called me and broke the news. We were through. Wedding invitations have been sent out. A chapel has already been rented. The elaborate and very expensive white dress is hanging gloriously in my closet. And suddenly he wants to call the whole thing off.

Perhaps I should have seen it coming. The endless fighting that had somehow crept into our conversations recently was a sure sign. It’s always over silly things, like choosing a restaurant to eat at or which of our bank accounts we should keep as our mutual account. It's lost to me exactly when it all began.

Still, somehow the news came as a shock. We'd made the promise months ago to love and care for each other our entire lives. No matter how infuriating he is or how much I can't stand him at times, I've never even considered breaking up an option.

Maybe there’s someone else. I'll probably never know. That heartbreaking phone call is the last time I heard from him. After two solid years together, that's how he ended it.

I tried calling him and dropping by his house several times, hoping for some sort of explanation or to find a way for us to make up. But he seems to have fallen off the face of this earth. Even his parents and sister won't take my calls.

For days I've locked myself in this little blue house that was supposed to be our home. Fits of crying, tantrums, and long tearful phone calls to my mother have consumed the last seven days of my life. Broken dishes litter my kitchen floor. The trashcans are overflowing. But I don’t care. I will never care about anything ever again.

Today I’ve taken to sitting in the antique rocking chair I bought the day before he broke my heart. It’s where I'd hoped to rock our children to sleep one day.

Finally my tears have all dried up. My throat hurts badly enough from screaming at inanimate objects that I’ve stopped. Smashing things Simon and I bought together has lost its appeal.

And now this house is only still and quiet. So very quiet. Deathly quiet.

I see Sandra next door through the window. She's pruning her beautiful orange roses in her beautiful orange dress. I hate her. Envy has made her my enemy. We'd been good friends until the break up. Now every time she speaks to me or even looks my way it feel like she’s rubbing her recent marriage to a handsome, wealthy, loving man in my face. I am certain we will never be friends again.

Suddenly the silence is shattered. There's a knock at my door.

I am grateful that I have cried out every single tear I have in my body as I stand and walk numbly to see who's disturbed my grieving. My body aches with the pain of crushing sorrow as I climb the single step that separates my living room from the foyer.

I lean forward to look out the peephole, desperate for the distraction of whomever is on the other side of the door and hating them for not being as miserable as me. I stand on my tiptoes and see Brad, a guy who moved in down the street a few weeks ago.

We've never spoken, but Sandra stopped by to welcome him to the neighborhood the day he moved in. She said he works at a rock quarry just outside of town and that it’s a shame she wasn't single anymore because he reminded her so much of Dwayne Johnson. I have no idea what he's doing here.

The door squeaks softly when I open it, glancing at his white U.S. Army T-shirt before looking into his onyx eyes.

"Morning," he says with a smile.

I love his Southern accent. It makes me want to smile back. Too much pain is beating through my heart for this.

"The mailman dropped this off at my place by mistake so I thought I’d bring it on over." He holds out my phone bill, making me feel even worse. "You all right?"

The tears are returning. I try to force them back and thank him. All I can do is take in a long, deep breath as the waterworks break free.

"What's a matter?" He puts the hand holding the letter on my shoulder.

"I, I was supposed to get married next week, but—" I put my hand over my mouth, not willing to hear the mention of my great loss one more time.

His thumb strokes the blue cotton fabric resting over my skin gently. His forehead creases knowingly as he nods.

I want to move closer to him. Even with the long hours I've already spent crying to my girlfriends, I could really use a warm hug and a shoulder to cry on. But I hardly know the man.

"Believe it or not, I've been there," Brad says solemnly. "You wanna know what made me feel better?"

"Yeah." Although nothing will make me feel any better.

"Actually, it'd probably be easier to show you." He pushes the door open all the way and walks into my house without warning.

"What are you doing?" I ask in alarm.

"Well you're gonna need a sturdy pair a shoes...These should do just fine." He goes to the dusty fireplace my rocking chair sits in front of and picks up my running shoes. He carries them to me and sits on the floor before taking my foot and slipping one on over my sock. It seems strange, but I'm too upset to care much. As he slips the second shoe on, I feel a little like Cinderella. "All right, let's go." Brad stands up and puts his hand on the doorknob, waiting for me to move so he can close the door.