

Chapter 352 Conspiracy

Restlessly pacing to and fro, Laura clutched her phone in her hand. Her brow furrowed as she muttered, "How could there be no commotion?"

The anticipated viral fire of Loraine and Rowan's photo on the internet was conspicuously absent, mentioned only within the city's affluent families.

However, these people would never personally criticize Loraine.

Laura clenched her teeth. Angry black clouds practically swirled over her head.

It appeared that Rowan and Loraine held a more formidable status than she had anticipated. The media dared not report the photo.

Having worked hard to obtain incriminating material on Loraine, Laura couldn't afford to squander it.

Laura sent a message to the paparazzo who had aided her in spreading the photo. "I'll compensate you generously this time. But you must ensure that this photo goes viral."

The paparazzo, however, played dumb. "What photo?"

Laura's disbelief was palpable. "What are you talking about? Don't forget that I've paid you handsomely!"

The man's lips curled into a contemptuous smirk. After all, the Torres family had paid him a million dollars to intercept

this very photo. What significance did Laura's meager payment hold?

"I'm sorry. I will gladly return your money, but I have no recollection of the photo you're referring to."

Laura seethed with anger and anxiety as the paparazzo sought to get rid of her.

"What's wrong with you? Don't you want to break this news?"

The man was compelled to confess. "Currently, Rowan Torres and Macro Bryant are tracing the origins of the photo. No one dares to cross their paths."

As soon as the message was delivered, the paparazzo blocked Laura's number.

Laura's face turned ashen with fear as she read the words, her cheeks draining of color.

Marco was also investigating the photo!

Her mind wheeled back to Marco's warning earlier that day. Laura panicked and quickly warned the other paparazzi she had contacted, hoping to prevent any potential betrayal.

Shortly, she came to a humbling realization.

Why would Marco be involved in an investigation with Rowan?

Shouldn't he be angry at Rowan for his association with Loraine?

Promptly, Laura dialed a friend, who was well-informed, to inquire about the situation.

After exchanging pleasantries, Laura cut to the chase. "I just saw the photo you shared in the group chat..."

"You saw it? We were afraid it would agitate you, so we didn't dare to inform you!"

Laura replied, "Why not? Marco has nothing to do with Loraine anymore. Loraine is truly debauched. Thankfully, Marco divorced her long ago. Otherwise, I can't imagine how awkward the situation would be now!"

"Indeed, this woman is shrewd and cunning. I have heard that Ashton Riley, along with other esteemed political figures, made a visit to Rowan at the hospital. Guess what?"

"What is it? Do tell!" Laura implored anxiously.

"I overheard that it was Loraine who received Ashton, which greatly angered him, leading him to depart in a fit of rage!"

Laura was taken aback by this revelation, her brows shooting up. So Loraine had somehow offended Ashton!

Despite Ashton's role as the adjutant, he had influential connections in Vagow and was known to be more approachable than Rowan.

Besides, it was rumored that his relationship with Rowan was strained. If Laura were to reach out to Ashton...

She suppressed the elation surging in her heart and inquired, "Is that true?"

"Without a doubt!"

After concluding the call, Laura wasted no time in contacting Ashton, urgently requesting a private meeting.

On Ashton's end, he received word from an associate that Laura sought to meet him. He was perplexed as he did not have a close association with the Bryant family, and he wondered why Laura sought him out at this particular moment.

Considering the esteemed status of the Bryant family in Vagow, Ashton acquiesced to her request.

The following day, they arranged to rendezvous in a cafe.

Upon their first meeting, Laura sympathized with Ashton's situation in the hospital. She couldn't help but share her own experience as well.

"Rowan is supercilious. Even I failed to visit him. My son is still hospitalized, yet I am denied visitation."

As Laura recounted how she was driven out, her jaw clenched and she purposely revealed that Loraine had instructed the soldiers to do so.

Ashton's mood darkened as he recalled his own unpleasant encounter at the hospital.

He felt humiliated by Loraine's public actions and Marco's warning. With a disdainful snort, he remarked, "You have a good son. He's aiding his ex-wife in turning away visitors from the hospital."

Laura continued her tale of woe. "Neither Marco nor Loraine respects me. And now that Rowan is involved, Loraine's arrogance is bound to increase."

Ashton's eyes narrowed as he retorted, "That won't be the case. Rowan's career has come to an end."

Laura's eyes sparkled with hope as she implored, "What can you do? Don't worry. As long as I hold power in the future, Bryant Group will always stand by your side!"

"You're smarter than your son. This time, Rowan suffered severe injuries, and the mission might have failed. His chances of undertaking future tasks and making contributions are slim, especially with a tarnished reputation. He wouldn't be so close to Loraine, otherwise."

Laura's heart raced with anticipation as she exclaimed, "We can utilize the rumors to expose their collusion beyond doubt! The photo is undeniable evidence!"

Ashton nodded in satisfaction, his eyes briefly revealing a lecherous glint as he patted her hand while admiring her well-maintained appearance.

"The position of commander will be mine once Rowan is defeated. I won't forget your support."

Laura understood his insinuation all too well.

As a widow who had been struggling for a long time with an unreliable son, Laura had been seeking a man to rely on, and now the opportunity was right in front of her. She felt a surge of excitement as she aligned herself with Ashton's plans.

Since the paparazzi refrained from spreading the photo, Laura decided to take matters into her own hands.



Chapter 353 Expose The Photo

Laura posted an update on her social media account as soon as she returned home. The update implied that a commander and a female CEO had colluded to prevent anyone from reporting their intimate photo.

While Laura refrained from mentioning any names, she mentioned their background.

It wasn't long before someone in the comment section speculated that she was referring to Loraine and Rowan.

However, not many people were willing to believe Laura's claims. She and her daughter had spread rumors in the past, and none of them had turned out to be true.

"Here comes Laura again, always picking on Loraine. It seems she just can't stand to see Loraine living a better life."

"That's just another baseless accusation from Laura. She's not exactly known for her imagination or credibility. Don't take her words at face value."

"Laura will probably post some doctored photos later and make a fool of herself once again. It's hilarious, really. She's become the laughingstock of the internet."

The onlookers in the comment section mocked Laura, and they didn't believe her for a second. Frustrated, Laura tried to defend herself by replying to each comment individually.

"I went to the hospital to visit Rowan in person, but Loraine stopped me and even prevented his colleagues from entering. What does that tell you? She must have some special connection with him."

Laura posted a photo of Loraine and Rowan online. "Look at this! Those who accused me of spreading false rumors can examine the photo and see if it's fake or not."

People were eager to get to the bottom of the matter, and some experts in the photography industry analyzed the photo and confirmed that it was authentic.

"I can't believe it! The photo is real this time!"

Just when the onlookers were starting to doubt Laura's accusations, Ashton came forward and testified on her behalf. He confirmed that he had seen Loraine in Rowan's ward.

Ashton's credentials as an adjutant lent credibility to his testimony and convinced many people of its veracity.

Meanwhile, several media outlets began to report on the scandal, leading to even more intense public scrutiny.

"The photo has actually been circulating for a while, but due to the status of the people involved, no one dared to share it until now."

The onlookers wasted no time analyzing the relationship between Loraine and Rowan, which quickly became a trending topic.

However, the focus of their discussions soon shifted from the private lives of Loraine and Rowan to suspicions about his accomplishments.

"Rowan has always been a mysterious figure. Previously, we thought it was Loraine who pursued him, but now it looks like he was the one taking advantage of her!"

"That's very possible. I always felt his accomplishments were too remarkable to be true. It seems Loraine is his backer."

Some comments even took the lead in expressing their doubts.

"Does anyone remember when Rowan was suddenly transferred to Vagow to inspect Universe Group's project? Is there a collusion between government and business going on here?"

At this point, someone who claimed to know the truth spoke up. "I made a special account to reveal this information. I work in the government and can confirm that Rowan took someone else's position when he came to Vagow!"

Instead of acknowledging Rowan's merits, he even went as far as to say, "How can an ordinary man with no background jump into this position? It must be the Torres family's doing, right? No wonder he found a wealthy woman to boost his career."

People then started targeting Rowan. Eventually, the smarter ones figured out that it was a plot.

At the hospital

Loraine's face turned livid with anger as she witnessed people targeting Rowan. She knew it was a matter of time before the rumors spread and tarnished his reputation.

Jennie's warning had been right all along.

Loraine didn't care if people targeted her, but she couldn't stand to see Rowan being slandered.

Taking a deep breath, Loraine logged into her personal account and replied to the comments.

"Spreading rumors and tarnishing the reputation of Universe Group and a government official? Your statements will be kept as evidence, and we will sue you and uphold justice!"

Meanwhile, in the next ward, Rowan lay in his bed with his eyes closed, his face dark and his breath cold.

Hubert read the comments to him, stumbling over some of the more malicious ones.

When Rowan opened his eyes, his face was as cold as ice. "Dispose of these dirty words and use tough methods if necessary."

Hubert nodded solemnly, though he couldn't understand why anyone would dare to offend Rowan.

However, as he was about to deal with the comments, he realized they had all been cleared.

Both Rowan and Hubert were stunned. "We didn't do it," Hubert said.

Rowan's face darkened. "What happened?"

Hubert made several phone calls and then returned with the news. "It seems that Bryant Group cleared the comments."

Chapter 354 Unfounded Charges

The opinion of internet users were in her favor, just like Laura had planned. As a result, she felt very complacent.

But all of a sudden, she could no longer find the comments of the people she had hired. All the comments had disappeared.

She refreshed the app several times, but nothing changed. Apparently, all comments on the page had been blocked.

Laura was frustrated.

"Lorraine, you swung into action very quickly, eh? Just wait and see!"

The reason why she was able to find people to make those comments was due to Ashton's connections. She was now heavily reliant on him and contacted him to find out what should be done next.

Despite her reliance on Ashton, Laura knew that she couldn't pin all her hopes on one person. So, after contacting Ashton, she went to tell Liza.

Exaggerating the entire story, she said, "Lorraine not only has affairs with Rowan, but she now openly controls public opinion. Bryant Group partnering with such a person is not a good thing at all!"

But Liza said nothing. She just held her cane and stared

straight ahead with a long face.

Laura didn't stop talking. "I think Loraine has been with Rowan for a long time. She's just using Marco for the sake of business partnership. This kind of woman is an expert at scheming. I'm sure she wants to take revenge on our family and humiliate us all."

Just as Laura expected, Liza's face darkened when she heard this.

The old woman was clearly displeased. She had thought that since Loraine had regained her identity as a Torres, she was now deserving of her grandson. And now that the partnership between the two companies was going smoothly, Loraine would be able to get back together with Marco and join hands with him.

But with such an ongoing scandal, she wouldn't want the Bryant family to get any more involved with Loraine than it already was.

Despite these thoughts running through her head, Liza glanced at Laura indifferently and scolded her. "Aren't you ashamed to be peddling these rumors?"

Now, Bryant Group was involved again.

"But I'm helping the Bryant family! Don't you know that Marco is being played by Loraine? He even wanted to give Bryant Group to her! Loraine and Rowan have already had such a scandal. Yet, Marco is still guarding her at the hospital!"

"Really?" Liza asked in surprise.

"If you don't believe me, you can call him yourself. He must still be at the hospital now," Laura quickly said.

Liza picked up the phone and called Marco. As soon as he answered the call, she asked, "Where are you? Are you at the hospital?"

Marco kept quiet for a while before answering, "Yes."

Liza became furious. She didn't care why Marco was at the hospital. She just came to the conclusion that everything Laura had said was true.

"Come back right now!"

But Marco responded in a cold tone, "Grandma, I can't come back for the time being."

This response made Liza so angry that her chest was practically heaving. But she managed to take a deep breath before asking angrily, "Is Loraine also at the hospital? Are you there because of her?"

Without even waiting for his answer, she scolded him harshly. "When you know that Loraine has a close relationship with Rowan, why are you still doing this?"

Laura quickly chipped in, "Yes, that's right. Marco, I'm telling you, Loraine and Rowan are even blocking comments on social media. You need to stay away from such lawless people."

When Marco heard her voice, he responded with a sneer, "Mom, I told you not to go about talking nonsense. But you refused to listen to me, and now, you're even telling Grandma."

Laura shuddered and unconsciously moved closer to Liza. Trying to sound calm, she scolded him sharply, "You'd better mind your manners, Marco! All of this is because of



Lorraine and Rowan. I just don't want you to be deceived."

Marco kept quiet. He didn't tell them about the relationship between Lorraine and Rowan. Since Lorraine and Rowan hadn't announced it to the public, he didn't want to be the one to expose it.

"I'm the one who removed those comments," Marco suddenly said after a lengthy pause. "Mom, I've warned you several times to control yourself. Since you've refused to listen, I'm done saying it nicely."

Laura was shocked to hear this and she stammered in confusion. "Marco, I...I'm your mother. Have you forgotten that? I'm doing all this for you and the Bryant family."

"For the Bryant family? Were you not the one who ran to the hospital in the middle of the night to curry favor with Rowan and got driven away by Lorraine? So, I guess this is you taking revenge, right?"

Liza's eyes widened in shock when she heard this and she quickly turned to look at Laura.

Laura almost wished that the floor would just open and swallow her. But just then, her phone suddenly began to vibrate. She looked at it and saw that it was a reply from Ashton. Immediately, her face lit up in joy.



Chapter 355 Investigation Team

Ashton's response had an empowering effect on Laura, causing her to straighten her back and retort, "Curry favor with Rowan? Why would I do that now that his future is uncertain?"

Marco replied coldly, "I don't understand what you're talking about."

"I'm not talking nonsense. Rowan is going to be investigated soon, mark my words!"

Laura felt a surge of pride, and she couldn't resist sharing the news.

Marco's heart sank at her confident tone.

Liza was also stunned. "How did you come to know this classified information? Where did you hear it?"

Laura didn't dare to reveal her connection with Ashton and instead rolled her eyes and coughed.

"I just read about it on the internet and made an educated guess. Even if the comments are silenced, it won't make a difference. The authorities will definitely investigate if they detect public opinion."

Liza agreed with Laura's reasoning and couldn't help but worry.

"Marco, this is not just any public opinion. We need to distance ourselves from this matter immediately. Suspend cooperation with Universe Group and protect Bryant Group's interests. We can't allow those two people to drag us down!"

Marco frowned.

He contemplated whether to tell Liza about Loraine and Rowan's relationship to calm her fears. However, he decided against it due to her current attitude.

He perceived Liza as someone who had a narrow vision and was unable to see long-term interests. Her main concern was whether this issue would have a short-term impact on Bryant Group.

"Grandma, I won't cancel our cooperation," he replied coldly.

"Marco! Are you out of your mind? This is not the time to act impulsively!"

Laura exclaimed in anger, "Don't risk the entire Bryant Group for a divorced woman."

With Liza on her side, Laura felt emboldened and spoke with dripping sarcasm. "I don't think Loraine cares about you at all, Marco. She only cares about Rowan, who is injured and has no future. Why would you—"

Before she could finish her words, Marco hung up the phone. His expression darkened.

It wasn't jealousy of Rowan that made him upset. He suddenly realized that over the years, he had only caused harm to Loraine, which weighed heavily on his heart.

If there was a man like Rowan, who treated Loraine well and had no blood relationship with her, would she still have feelings for him?

Marco's heart ached, and he took a deep breath before getting out of bed.

He was eager to see Loraine.

As he walked out the door, he saw a group of well-dressed men in suits presenting their credentials to the soldiers guarding Rowan's ward and forcefully entering the room.

Marco furrowed his brow and hurried over.

When he entered the room, he saw the group trying to take Loraine and Rowan away.

Without hesitation, Marco stepped forward, pulled Loraine behind him, and gave the group a cold stare.

"Who are you? Why are you taking them away? What do you want?"

The man at the front pushed his glasses up and said politely, "You must be Marco Bryant. Please don't misunderstand. We're from the investigation team, and we need to ask Rowan Torres and Loraine Torres a few questions."

He showed his identification to Marco, signaling him to let go of Loraine.

Laura's words echoed in Marco's mind once more, and his heart sank.

Laura's words rang true, and the investigation team arrived soon after.



However, even after learning their identities, Marco refused to back down and stood steadfastly in front of Loraine.

"It has nothing to do with Loraine. You can't take her away."

The members of the investigation team exchanged confused glances.

"This is our duty. Please don't interfere with our work."

Despite their insistence, Marco remained unmoved. He stood before Loraine, his face icy and muscles bulging under his hospital gown, creating a tense atmosphere.

Loraine was touched by his protective gesture, even though she was still upset about his earlier lies. The way he stood up for her softened her heart again.

"Marco, you can go back first. I'll handle it myself."

Marco hesitated, looking back at her.

Loraine nodded, standing tall and self-assured.

For a moment, Marco hesitated, but eventually, he let out a sigh and stepped aside. His eyes followed Loraine closely.

As Loraine and Rowan were escorted out of the hospital by the investigation team, Marco's face darkened.

Someone was manipulating the events behind the scenes.

The investigation team would not release Loraine and Rowan so easily.

He needed to rescue Loraine as soon as possible.