

Mr. Chairman's Devious Wife by Brey Mitchylle

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"Why cannot you take me out of this place?" Lawrence hissed at Mr. Thompson, the legal head of LH GROUP. Next to Mr. Thompson was another lawyer that is working with him. He glared at the two. "What they have were all hearsay!"

Mr. Thompson held Lawrence's gaze with a steely glint in his eyes. "We understand your frustration, Mr. Lockhart. We are already working on getting you out as soon as possible," he said, his voice calm but firm. "However, the FBI does not operate on hunches. They have evidence, and unfortunately, it's quite damning."

Atty. Arian Smith, the other lawyer that he hired, chimed in. "The witness testimonies, financial records, and even those seemingly insignificant documents you dismissed as 'hearsay' – they all paint a very clear picture, Mr. Lockhart."

"I am paying you for these things. Can you not make it go away? I am innocent. I have nothing to do with smuggling and those other things that they accused me of doing!" Lawrence gritted his teeth. He was not upset about these accusations as he was almost positive that they had nothing against him. What he was angry about was seeing Sofia's face when they arrested him. "Those things were just pictures anyone can paint! Lies and exaggerations to bring me down!"

Mr. Thompson leaned forward, his voice dropping to a low murmur. "The picture they've painted, Mr. Lockhart, involves a complex web of shell companies, suspicious money transfers, and shipments arriving from known smuggling routes. It's a web that, unfortunately, seems to lead directly back to you."

Lawrence's face flushed a deep crimson, his bluster fading. The color drained from his knuckles as he gripped the armrest of the chair.

"There's no way they can prove I knew anything about this!" he sputtered, but the defiance in his voice lacked its earlier conviction.

“The burden of proof lies with the prosecution,” Mr. Thompson acknowledged. “Our job is to poke holes in their case, to raise doubts. But right now, Mr. Lockhart, the evidence is stacked against you. Our best hope lies in convincing the judge that the case is weak enough to be thrown out before trial.

He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in. “However, if the case goes to trial, and they manage to present a compelling narrative with all this evidence...well, let’s just say the future for LH Group, and for you, Mr. Lockhart, wouldn’t be pretty.”

“What do you mean compelling evidence? They can’t have any evidence since I had nothing to do with it!” Lawrence said. He made sure to get rid of any evidence that included Mrs. Phelps who stumbled upon their operation by accident. Everything has been taken care of.

“The evidence-”

“What evidence are you talking about!?”

“We understand your anger, Mr. Lockhart. But anger won’t help us here. We need to focus on the facts, and the facts they’ve presented paint a very different picture.” Mr. Thompson said.

“What facts?” Lawrence roared, his voice laced with desperation. They are pulling things out of thin air! I have been framed, I tell you! Framed by Sofia, that ungrateful little-” Lawrence took a deep breath as he tried to calm himself down. “Tell me about the company...” he had been in this place for hours now. Moreover, the shareholders saw his arrests. He was certain that this would have certain effects on his relationship with them! “What about Sofia? Did she do anything?”

No. His current concern was not Sofia but that smirking man who stood behind him during his arrest. Alexander Beaumont. It was not a coincidence that Dr. Mulach was arrested by the FBI just a few months ago. The one behind everything must be Alexander Beaumont.

“Miss Lockhart is currently not doing anything. However, we need to focus on more pressing matters.” Atty Smith said.

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Lawrence glared at her. “More pressing? What could be more pressing than this.... this lie they’ve concocted?”

Mr. Thompson sighed, his shoulders slumping slightly. “The news of our arrest has become a media frenzy. News vans are swarming the building, reporters are camped outside, and the shareholders are in an uproar.”

Lawrence’s face went pale. He had not considered the public fallout. Images of him in handcuffs, plastered across every news channel – the thought was sickening.

“The shareholders?” he croaked, his voice barely a whisper. “What are they saying?”

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“Panic, mostly,” Mr. Thompson said grimly. “The stock price is plummeting. Investors are pulling out. It’s a full-blown crisis, Mr. Lockhart.”

Lawrence sank back in his chair, the bravado he had displayed earlier completely gone. This was not just about the accusations anymore. His carefully crafted image, his power, his entire empire it was all crumbling around him.

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“This was all Sofia’s work!” he rasped. “This must be that little witch’s scheme!” She must be laughing at home now. He was certain of it.

“The media tried to get a hold of her during the funeral, but Mr. Beaumont seemed to have increased all security personnel and the media were thrown out. I tried to see her, but Mr. Beaumont is currently doing everything to stop anyone from seeing her. Apparently, she was mourning for her grandmother’s death.”

Grandmother...

Lawrence frowned.

Was it possible that it was Eulanda who did this instead?

“I want you to find out everything about the evidence that they were talking about,” Lawrence said. “And do everything that you can to take me out of this place. Do you understand me?” Lawrence hissed. First and foremost, he needed to get out of this hell hole. He will take care of Sofia once he is out.

“Also... I need something to cover up the news.” The news about his arrest was not good. He needed some diversion— something that the PR of the company could easily solve. Covering up a scandal with another scandal has been normalized in the industry. “And I want it to last for a week...” at least.

“Yes, sir.” Mr. Thompson said. “I am already working on the specifics. Right now... we are going to wait for the agent in charge to take you to bookings and then here’s what’s going to happen next...”

Lawrence listened with a dull ache in his head as Mr. Thompson outlined the next steps. The lawyer’s calm demeanor was a stark contrast to the storm raging inside Lawrence. He felt like a general who had just lost a crucial battle, his meticulously planned campaign falling apart at the seams.

“First things first,” Mr. Thompson said, “the FBI will take fingerprints, and photos, and get your basic information. Then, they’ll decide whether to hold you overnight or release you on bail.”

“Bail?” Lawrence scoffed. “Of course, I will get bail! How much?”

Mr. Thompson hesitated. “The amount will depend on the severity of the charges. But considering the nature of the accusations...” he trailed off,

leaving the sentence unfinished. “However, smuggling charges are usually bailable so we do not have to worry about that.”

Lawrence’s scoff died in his throat.

“Next

“Mr. Thompson continued, “we’ll fight for your release. We’ll need to see the evidence the FBI has against you and start

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building a defense strategy,

Lawrence nodded curtly, a sliver of hope flickering within him. Lawyers. Strategies. Maybe, just maybe, they could weasel him out of this mess.

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“As for the media firestorm,” Atty. Smith chimed in, “We’re working on a damage control plan. We can’t erase your arrest, but we can try to manage the narrative.”

“How?” Lawrence asked, desperate for any crumb of good news.

Atty. Smith pursed her lips. “We’re exploring options. Perhaps a pre-emptive press conference announcing your full cooperation with the investigation. Or a strategic leak about a new philanthropic venture by LH Group to distract the public.”

Lawrence grimaced. A press conference? Philanthropic ventures Those were all bandages on a gaping wound. But in the absence of better options, he would not object.

Just then, the metallic clang of the door opening pierced the tense silence. A familiar FBI agent stood there.

“Mr. Lockhart,” he said, his voice flat. “Time for booking. Please follow me.”

Lawrence tossed aside the folders given to him by Mr. Thompson. “What is this?” Since prosecutors were legally obligated to provide copies of all

evidence, including witness statements, financial records, documents seized during the investigation, and physical evidence, Lawrence and his team of lawyers were able to review a list of what they would present in court.

“You’re telling me that Mr. Oh... made a deal? He made a deal?”

“Mr. Lockhart,” Mr. Thompson began, his voice calm despite the storm brewing, “the evidence is clear. Mr. Oh has cut a deal with the prosecution. He’s agreed to testify against you in exchange for leniency in his own sentencing.”

Lawrence shoved the papers away with a disgusted flick of his wrist. The folders tumbled to the floor, spewing documents like a burst piñata. “That sniveling coward!” he spat. “He knew everything! Everything! We practically built the damn company together!”

“Apparently, Mr. Oh’s loyalty has its limits,” Attorney Smith said.

Lawrence let out a humorless bark of a laugh. “Loyalty? What loyalty? That weasel was swimming in the same pool of money as me! Now he’s spilling it all just to save his own skin!”

He paced the room like a caged lion. Mr. Oh’s betrayal was a fresh wound on top of the gaping hole in his carefully constructed world. “This changes everything! We need to re-strategize. We can’t trust anyone!” Lawrence exclaimed. He never expected that guy to just immediately give him up! What a coward!

What he didn’t know was the fact that Mr. Oh was currently receiving his visitor at that moment. Mr. Oh glanced at Alexander Beaumont, his gaze complicated.

“You promised to protect my family. Lawrence is probably going to kill them to stop me from talking. I need you to do it as soon as possible,” Mr. Oh said.

“I already took care of that,” Alexander smirked. Mr. Oh nodded, his shoulders a little slumped. His gaze then landed on the woman sitting next to Alexander. Sofia Lockhart.

For years, he had underestimated the woman and thought she was not capable of what her grandmother could do. He was

wrong.

Oh. So wrong.

Until now, Mr. Oh could still recall what happened just a few days ago. To be exact, this happened before Eulanda's demise. As always, Mr. Oh was late for dinner.

He had just finished doing a lot of things for Lawrence. It was already ten in the evening when he pulled up outside his house. To his surprise, however, his wife was still enjoying some wine with none other than Sofia Lockhart.

The moment he saw Sofia laughing with his wife, Mr. Oh froze, his eyes wide.

Who would have thought that she would dare come into his house and even to his family?

"Honey, I've been calling you," his wife, Kenny, smiled as she walked towards him, a half-filled wine glass in her hand. "I tried to tell you that Miss Lockhart came to visit for some important files." Kenny widened her eyes on him as if she was trying to tell him something. "Did you know that she designed that bag that you gifted me on our anniversary? How come you failed to mention this to me? I have been telling you that I like that bag so much!"

"I-You know that I have been busy," Mr. Oh said. To be honest, he doesn't know what Sofia is currently doing here; however, he knows that it wouldn't be anything good. "I Miss Lockhart, I didn't know you would come to my humble