

Chapter 363 Crimes

Hearts leapt as Marco's gaze swept over them. They instinctively straightened, fearing that Marco might single them out for some longstanding vendetta.

Ultimately, Marco's stare settled on a corner.

Laura, seated in that direction, jolted alert and involuntarily shifted to the side.

Thanks to her, Ashton, who was sitting several seats away, suddenly came into view.

Anxiety quickened Ashton's pulse as his eyelid twitched. He bowed his head, feigning distraction, all the while praying that Marco would never discover his misdeeds.

Smirking, Marco pointed at him. "I intend to report Ashton Riley."

Trembling, Ashton countered in a panic, "Marco Bryant, don't spout nonsense without evidence! The investigation team is here. I could sue you for slander!"

Marco scoffed, "Who said I lack evidence?"

He requested Brady's permission to use the venue's computer. After receiving approval, Marco tapped something on his phone.

Moments later, a plethora of evidence implicating Ashton in corruption and bribery materialized on the screen.

"Three years ago, during the highway construction, Ashton accepted money from a disreputable company, aiding them in securing the bid. He allowed them to use subpar cable, which later caused several accidents."

"Ashton exploited his connections to help a real estate developer acquire land adjacent to Vagow Park. The project has since become an abandoned structure, as a migrant worker, unable to collect his wages, perished there."

With just a few messages, Marco ignited a wave of disbelief and horror among the onlookers.

This wasn't a simple case of corruption and bribery. It was something severe and dire!

They couldn't believe that such atrocities had occurred right under their noses. It was staggering that Ashton maintained his position until now.

Klein was astonished but also relieved that he had declined Ashton's invitation to join his illicit endeavors.

Ashton's lust for wealth and power was insatiable. Had Klein been closer to him, he might have been dragged into this mess.

Brady's face grew ashen. Ashton's crimes had gravely violated the law, and he hadn't known about any of it until this moment. It was unfathomable how brazen Ashton had been in recent years.

The audacity to report Rowan and accuse him of conspiring with Loraine!

Brady hesitated no longer, ordering his men to apprehend Ashton immediately.

However, before the investigation team could act, the Cheetah Command members had already surrounded Ashton at Rowan's order.

Ashton paled, bolting from his seat and sprinting away amid the startled cries of the crowd.

The venue teemed with people, forcing Ashton to push and weave his way through the crowd. To avoid harming innocent bystanders, the soldiers couldn't apprehend him immediately.

Chaos erupted as the crowd scattered in all directions.

Laura, rooted to the spot in terror, watched Ashton sprint to her. Fearing that he would drag her down with him, she shoved him away. "Stay away from me!"

Ashton stared at her in disbelief, tumbling awkwardly amidst the scattered chairs before soldiers pinned him down.

Enraged, he yelled at Laura, "You traitor! You dare to turn your back on me after taking my money!"

He tried to rise, lunging at Laura with bloodshot eyes. "This woman is in league with me!"

Marina, who had been hiding behind Laura, trembled. As Ashton's words sank in, her expression shifted. The more she thought about Laura's recent generosity, the more she realized something was amiss.

"What a despicable man! Even now, you try to drag innocent people down with you! Don't you dare slander me! I don't know him. Please, take him away!" Laura denied everything, urging them to act.

As the soldiers escorted Ashton from the hall, his curses echoed behind him. Laura patted her chest, catching her breath. When she looked up, she found everyone staring at her, their eyes filled with doubt.

Humiliated, Laura grabbed Marina's hand, lowered her head, and tried to flee. But Loraine stopped them.

"What more do you want, Loraine Torres? Who gave you the right to stop us?" She spun around, glaring at Loraine.

Loraine sneered, "I still have a score to settle with you. You secretly took photos of me and posted them without my consent. Moreover, you spread rumors about my uncle and me. Have you forgotten all this?"

"You and Rowan have kept your relationship private. How can you blame me for some misunderstanding?" Laura shot back.

Loraine scoffed, "What about violating my privacy and portrait rights? Furthermore, you slandered a military official. Are all these mere misunderstandings?"

Rowan narrowed his piercing eyes, asking in a low voice, "What's the punishment for damaging my reputation?"

Brady replied gravely, "It's a serious offense, and the perpetrator must be held accountable. Laura Bryant's actions indeed amount to slander. Given what Ashton said earlier, we have grounds to suspect her involvement in his criminal activities. Consequently, she must come with us for further investigation."

Laura's panic intensified. She looked around, her gaze falling on Marco.

"Marco, help me! I'm innocent. Please, help me! I'm your mother, please!"

Marco stared at her impassively. "I've warned you more than once, but you never listened. You've brought this on yourself."

Meanwhile, Marina, petrified, fled the scene.

No one stepped in to help Laura, and the investigation team took her away.



Chapter 364 He Had Done So Much

As the investigation results were revealed, the press conference concluded smoothly. Everyone but Laura, her daughter, and Ashton departed in high spirits, exchanging pleasantries with Loraine and Marco, trying to curry favor.

When most of the audience had left, Brady approached Loraine, Macro, and Rowan, laughing heartily. "A simple commendation hardly seems enough. Allow me to invite you to a meal in gratitude!"

Loraine replied with a smile, "Thank you for your generosity, but I'd like to take my uncle back to the hospital for a check-up."

Concerned for Rowan, who had suffered severe injuries and was hastily removed from the hospital, Loraine prioritized getting him a proper examination.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed, Brady reassured her, "We've already made arrangements for the check-up. All of the patients will receive the highest level of medical treatment, and they will have access to the most advanced medical equipment. Additionally, we will be providing dedicated caregivers to take care of their needs. So, please don't worry."

Loraine glanced at Rowan, who nodded in agreement.

"Well, thank you, then."

The investigation team took charge of Rowan's wheelchair and escorted him to the hospital, with the Cheetah Command soldiers following closely behind.

Meanwhile, Marco remained beside Loraine.

Looking at him quizzically, Loraine said, "You're injured too. You should go to the hospital for a re-examination."

Marco shook his head. "No need. I'm feeling much better. Your uncle needs attention more than I do. I'll have my people take care of him."

His ulterior motive to dine with Loraine was apparent.

He was quite cunning!

Rowan narrowed his eyes, annoyed by Marco's audacity. However, since he had promised Brady, he didn't want to renege. He motioned for Hubert to join them.

"Stay with them and keep a close eye on Lorrie. Don't let anyone with hidden intentions get near her!"

Rowan shot Marco a meaningful glance, clearly wary of his intentions.

Hubert nodded, sticking close to Loraine, leaving no room for Marco to close the gap.

Marco's expression darkened, but he couldn't send Hubert away. Spotting Klein, he called him over.

"Klein, perhaps we could discuss some finer details of the smart city project? Why don't we all dine together?"

The government project had been settled ages ago; what was left to discuss?

Nevertheless, Klein was moved by the invitation. Nodding at Marco, he said, "Excellent idea! Let's go."

He felt grateful that Marco had not forgotten him.

He had tried to build a relationship with Rowan but failed. This unexpected turn of events presented a new opportunity to do so.

Furthermore, Klein understood Marco's pursuit of his ex-wife, so he engaged Hubert in conversation. "It's been too long since our last encounter. Join us please."

Hubert, a soldier, found himself outmatched by Klein's charm and was easily entangled in the conversation.

Seizing the moment, Marco sidled up beside Loraine, walking in stride with her.

The shadows of the two people stretched long under the street lamp. As Brady went to get the car and Hubert was preoccupied with Klein, Marco found himself with a rare opportunity to be alone with Loraine.

Loraine seemed to sense his intentions. She coughed unconsciously, lowered her head to avoid Marco's gaze, and absently tucked her hair behind her ear with one hand.

Marco said softly, "Loraine, how have you been since you were taken away?"

Loraine replied, "Brady has been kind. He didn't make things difficult for Uncle Rowan and me."

"I'm just glad you're alright, Loraine..."

Loraine laughed. "I told you I could handle it."

She then turned to look at Marco.

"Why didn't you go to the hospital? Have you really recovered? Didn't you just say that you were in pain?"

Marco coughed, and Klein's voice chimed in from behind.

"Marco has been worried about you these past few days, which has affected his recovery."

Brady approached just in time and sighed. "Marco has used considerable resources and connections, even coming to me for help. If it weren't for the fact that you and Rowan are safe, I suspect Marco might have stormed the investigation team's office."

Hearing this, Loraine was taken aback. Marco had done so much behind the scenes.

She suddenly regretted not being more direct with him earlier. But then again, Marco had deceived her by pretending to be Obot. They were even now.



Chapter 365 Ownership

Loraine's gaze dropped, her eyes lingering on Marco and the tangled shadows they cast, an echo of her entwined thoughts.

Despite Marco's deception with Obot, he had risked his life to save Rowan.

Without his aid, Ashton's downfall might have been delayed.

Loraine's heart stuttered. She blinked, murmuring softly, "Thank you, Marco."

"You don't need to thank me, Loraine. I'd do anything for you," Marco replied, his voice low and tender, his eyes ablaze with passion, causing her heart to race.

Unmistakable romance hung between them.

Klein grinned, sharing a knowing wink with Brady and Hubert. Brady's expression said it all as they shared a smile and watched the scene unfold.

But Hubert was in no mood for spectating. Recalling Rowan's instructions, he steeled himself to break the spell that enveloped Marco and Loraine.

Clearing his throat, Hubert announced, "Ahem! Mr. Bryant, our commander wishes to express his gratitude. An award will be sent to the Bryant family. Please accept it."

Marco's face clouded over. Clenching his teeth, he muttered, "Please thank him for me."



Lorraine coughed, saying nothing more.

Soon, they arrived at the lavish restaurant Brady had reserved.

Opulently adorned and providing impeccable service, the establishment offered the utmost privacy.

Upon entering the secluded room, Hubert pulled out a chair for Loraine. After a moment's consideration, she chose to sit beside Marco.

Hubert, unable to prevent her decision, could only stare in disbelief and dismay. "Miss..."

To mask her embarrassment, Loraine touched her nose, explaining, "Marco's arm hasn't fully healed. Sitting here makes it easier for me to help him."

"I can assist him. Please, sit here," Hubert offered hastily.

Marco shot him a dangerous glare.

Observing the situation, Klein intervened, holding Hubert back and laughing, "Women tend to be more attentive than men, don't you agree? Besides, Loraine knows Marco well since they used to be a couple. Let them be."

Hubert's face flushed crimson as he awaited Loraine's response.

Marco watched her nervously.

"It's fine. I'll help Marco." Loraine shook her head at Hubert, remaining in her seat.

Relieved, Marco couldn't help but smile.

Lorraine poured him a glass of water, which he accepted with ease.

Not a trace of serious injury marred Marco's features.

Hubert seethed in silence, suspicions brewing but lacking evidence. He could only watch as Lorraine cared for Marco with tenderness.

At least Rowan couldn't witness this scene, he consoled himself.

To Lorraine, it was simply a matter of cutting steak and passing the pepper. No big deal. Marco had aided her and her uncle, and she refused to be indebted to him.

Witnessing Hubert's pained expression, Marco felt not satisfaction, but a twinge of sadness.

If even one of Rowan's aides doted on Lorraine so, one could only imagine the adoration she received from the Torres family.

Lorraine had endured so much during their three-year marriage.

The initial sweetness had soured abruptly. Marco's heart ached, and he clenched his fists beneath the table, unnoticed.

He longed to offer Lorraine everything he had as recompense, but feared it was too late.

Once the dishes were served, the waiter closed the door.

Brady dabbed at his lips and regarded the group with a grave expression.

"Friends, besides expressing gratitude, I have another matter to discuss with you."

He powered off his phone, placed it on the table, and smiled. "For the sake of confidentiality."

The others exchanged glances and followed suit, switching off their devices.

Sensing the gravity of the situation, Loraine ventured a guess. "Is this about my uncle's mission? Haven't the criminals been apprehended?"

Brady nodded, then shook his head, his face etched with concern. "There's more to it than meets the eye. We can't close the case just yet. But rest assured, we'll continue our investigation."

He paused before adding, "I've heard that the artificial intelligence Qbot, developed by Bryant Group, played a crucial role in the operation and in saving Rowan. Its contribution was invaluable."

Marco acknowledged the statement with a composed nod, then corrected him. "Qbot isn't solely owned by Bryant Group. Loraine has half of its ownership."

The revelation left the others at the table stunned and speechless, their faces a mosaic of shock and bewilderment.

The importance of artificial intelligence was undeniable, but Marco willingly shared such a priceless achievement with Loraine.

Chapter 366 You Have A Baby

Cradling the cup in her hands, Loraine stared in disbelief for a few moments. Realizing that Marco wasn't joking, she immediately declined.

"Marco, what are you talking about? I haven't been involved in Qbot's research and development. How can I have half of its ownership?"

Marco fixed her with a serious gaze. "Loraine, I mean it. You may not have participated before, but you will now and in the future. Tell me, isn't Qbot evolving and upgrading as we interact with it?"

Loraine averted her gaze, taking a sip of water.

She didn't know how to respond or refute his claim.

Klein, who had never seen Qbot, was puzzled. Wasn't it artificial intelligence? It sounded like they were raising a child.

Perplexed, Klein inquired, "You two have a baby?"

Hubert's expression darkened. "No!"

He knew Rowan held Loraine in high regard and wouldn't want to hear such rumors.

Hubert explained, "Qbot is a cutting-edge artificial intelligence. It can even control drones on its own.



Comparing it to a human child would be underestimation of it."

Having read the combat report, Brady knew Hubert wasn't boasting. He expressed his admiration.

"Qbot's performance is truly extraordinary. It outshines any existing AI. I've heard that the Johnathan family, who invested heavily in a similar project in Bluhm, was utterly outmatched by Qbot."

With even Brady offering such high praise, Klein couldn't help but whisper to Marco, "You've been keeping this incredible technology hidden. If we had access to it earlier, our smart city project would have progressed much smoother!"

"Construction projects are long-term endeavors. As technology advances, other aspects of the project will be updated and integrated accordingly," Loraine interjected, addressing Klein's remark to Marco.

Nodding in agreement, Klein grinned contentedly.

Marco's silence signified his acquiescence to Loraine's arrangement, leaving the decision to her.

Seizing the opportunity, Brady proposed, "Given the impressive impact of artificial intelligence, do you plan to further develop it for military security applications?"

Marco glanced at Loraine before responding, "In light of recent events, I share that intention. I don't want those important to me to face danger again."

His sentiment was rooted in the hijacking and Loraine's risky efforts to rescue Rowan.

He didn't want Loraine to face danger again.

Loraine's heart skipped a beat as Marco glanced at her.

Hearing Marco's words, Brady laughed and said, "It's great that Bryant Group and Universe Group are eager to help. Rest assured; you will be rewarded handsomely."

Marco added, "I hope the technology can be implemented in airport security checks first."

All those present were aware of the hijacking incident, and their gazes naturally fell on Loraine

.Loraine's heart raced. She picked up a bottle of wine, poured it into a glass, and took a sip, which helped calm her nerves.

Observing the pair, Brady understood and smiled. "Of course, there's no problem. We'll proceed as you suggest."

He had heard various rumors about Loraine but found she wasn't as bad as they portrayed.

However, it seemed Marco was pursuing her.

Noticing Brady's curious gaze, Loraine cleared her throat and reminded him earnestly, "The hijackers managed to infiltrate White Cloud Airport. This exposes not only a flaw in the security system but also highlights the airport's deteriorating condition."

Upon hearing this, Klein immediately slapped his thigh and promised, "Don't worry. I'll apply to the government for airport renovations, and you two will oversee the project!"

Brady was taken aback. He hadn't expected such a significant development project to be approved so readily.

