

Chapter 552 Disturbance On The Internet

At this point, there was a lot of bustling on the internet.

After learning the truth, netizens who wanted to apologize to Loraine did not do it directly. Instead, they began to search for the paid users who had smeared her so they could seek justice for her.

There were a lot of talented people online, so such a small task was nothing to them.

Before long, those who had a lot of experience in internet usage had successfully dug out the paid users and all the details about them and the payments. The moment they saw the transaction details, it became clear who was behind it.

"Look, I've found something shocking! Remember that bank account that was used to pay users to slander Loraine? It has happened again, and now look at this account. Isn't it the same account as Mrs. Bryant's?"

When netizens became convinced that Laura and Marina were also involved in this latest case, the outrage was immediate, and they expressed it in their comments.

"Are they both stupid? Marco is trying his best to ingratiate himself with Loraine, but they're working hard to ruin his efforts. Poor man. He must be so miserable."

"Don't bring Marco into this. He's already done his best by restricting them as much as he could. What they did has

nothing to do with him at all."

"Am I the only one who wants to know why they hate Loraine so much? They've trampled on her again and again. Even though their movement and spending have been restricted, they've still refused to leave her alone. I think they should be found guilty of the same crime as Keely. We just can't let them go away scot-free again!"

All the netizens who saw this comment agreed with it. They began to tag Laura and Marina indiscriminately, demanding that they apologize.

All of a sudden, both women were being heavily criticized across social media.

Watching the angry and insulting comments, Marina was so flustered that her face turned pale.

All along, she and Laura had been untouched by all the fighting going on. But they had just been unexpectedly pulled into it!

When she saw that netizens wouldn't let her go scot-free, Marina became so scared that she shouted at Laura, piling all the blame on her.

"Mom, didn't you say that it was safe to hire those paid users? Why did this happen? Now, we've been exposed and a lot of people are asking us to apologize!"

Laura looked at the comments online and read a few of them to understand what was really going on. Her face also looked gloomy, but she was still able to paste a smile on her face to comfort Marina.

"Don't be scared. What do these netizens know? They are just a group of filthy flies. After a few days, they'll get bored and move on to something else," she assured her.

Marina nodded in understanding. She could remember very well that they had been attacked by netizens before, but nothing really happened at the end of the day.

With this in mind, Marina could now breathe a sigh of relief, and she said to Laura, "These people can scold us as much as they want. At the end of the day, there's really nothing they can do to us. Besides, my brother has already found out about the issue and his anger towards us has expired. So, he won't pursue it any further."

Laura nodded in concurrence, and followed it with a grumble, "Don't call that bastard your brother in private. He doesn't deserve it at all."

But Marina simply laughed it off. Then she grabbed Laura's arm and began to act like a spoiled child.

"Mom, give me some money. I haven't bought clothes or bags in a long time. I've been grounded for so long. I'm very bored. I really want to go out and have fun."

But she'd hardly finished the statement when she was hit by a crutch and she cried out in pain.

She wanted to scream profanities at whoever hit her, but when she looked behind her, she saw that it was Liza. The old woman was standing behind them, sporting a long face.

Marina screamed, as if she had just seen a ghost, and threw herself into Laura's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Feeling sorry for Marina, Laura raised her head and questioned angrily, "Mom, why would you hit her like that? What if she gets injured?"

The wrinkled corners of Liza's mouth twitched when she heard

this. With hands trembling in fury, she pointed her crutch at them and shouted, "Injured? Frankly, I think I hit her too lightly! Look at you pair of losers. You've caused so much trouble. How dare you seek to go out and have fun?"

They couldn't help but shrink back and lower their heads in guilt and shame as she railed at them.

Liza was so furious that her chest was heaving rapidly.

"The rumor about Loraine's plagiarism has just been dispelled," she went on. "Professor Zizka has publicly apologized to Loraine and even appointed her as a guest designer with a high salary. The White Cloud Airport project has also been settled. She is now swimming in fame and glory. Now that it's all over the place that Bryant family was done her dirty, how do you think we will be allowed to be partners in the project?"


Though Marina had committed such grievous acts, Liza's scolding still made her very angry and she couldn't help retorting, "Grandma, though we hired those paid accounts, it was just like adding fuel to an already existing fire. The real culprit is Keely. So, why should we suffer as a result of it?"

Laura nodded in agreement and quickly added her voice, "Marina is right. Even if someone should be blamed, it should be Keely. By the way, mom, why do you always attack members of your own family?"

Seeing them refuse to take responsibility, Liza became even angrier and smashed her crutch on the floor. "How dare you say that?! If you hadn't been so senseless enough to conspire with Keely to attack Loraine, would we have ended up in this situation? Can't you see what's currently going on?"


The more she kept shouting at them, the angrier she became. "Marco has even refused to call or come back home because he's angry with you! You know how much he cares about

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Lorraine, don't you? So, why did you do that to her? Both of you must apologize to her or I'll teach you a bitter lesson!"



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Chapter 553 Rules

Engulfed in pain, Marina wrestled with the feelings of bitterness swelling within her. Her mind grappled with the injustice of the situation.

She didn't believe she had done anything wrong this time. She simply felt that Liza had displayed excessive favoritism. Unable to contain herself, she retorted, "Grandma, what gives you the authority to demand apologies from us? The mess is all on Keely. Why isn't she the one apologizing? And my brother, he let Keely come home and he still keeps in touch with her. He clearly doesn't blame her for the past. For all we know, he might still harbor affection for her!"

The more Marina voiced her frustrations, the more she found herself convinced. The seeds of indignation sprouted within her, nourished by Marco's actions. It appeared that Liza was teaming up with strangers to target her and Laura. Now, they were being made scapegoats for Keely's errors.

Why was she, the legitimate daughter of the Bryant family, subjected to this?

In the midst of her outrage, Marina heard Liza's scornful laughter. "Fool, you still don't understand, do you?"

Caught off guard, Marina felt a pang in her heart. She turned to Liza with a puzzled look. "What are you talking about?" she inquired.

With a gaze brimming with pity, Liza stared at them. Her aged face sported an air of contempt as she let out a soft sigh. "Keely, having lost her sanity, was exiled from the country

overnight. She's likely already in a facility getting help. Yet here you two are, blaming Marco for protecting Keely? Utterly ridiculous!"

Laura gasped, her eyes wide in surprise. Marina, too, was taken aback.

"She's... she's mentally ill? What happened exactly?"

Liza let out a derisive snort. "She had these ridiculous fantasies about tying the knot with Marco. Naturally, she would fail! She even concocted the absurd idea of live-streaming her suicide to manipulate Marco."

Marina's mind spun in turmoil, and her disbelief sparked a defensive response. "That can't be right! How can such a significant event leave no evidence? Grandma, are you trying to trick us?"

Liza glanced at her, her scorn intensifying. "All you and your mother ever do is smear Loraine's name. What would you know about real issues? The event spiraled out of control, and the authorities intervened to keep it under wraps. Any online discussion related to it has been censored."

However, Marina remained skeptical. "But how can you be certain? Doesn't my brother avoid calling home?"

Liza's face took on a stern expression, her cane resonating a sharp clack against the floor. The sound made Marina jump, and her voice faltered.

With a dismissive snort, Liza said, "Though the news isn't widespread online, it's well-known within our elite circle. The only ones still clueless are you two!"

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It was a pity that it reflected their current standing, a mere shadow of their past glory. In the face of such a major event, none of the other wealthy ladies had contacted them.

However, Marina seemed oblivious to this. Staring blankly, she muttered to herself, "This can't be. Keely was just fine before. How did she suddenly lose her mind?"

Suddenly, a dreadful thought crossed her mind. Her complexion drained, and she trembled, turning towards Liza.

"No, it wasn't my brother and Loraine, was it? They didn't push Keely over the edge for vengeance, did they?"

Liza considered the mother-daughter pair before her, a thought crossing her mind. They seemed to be repeating their past mistakes, stirring up even more trouble. If she could scare them into submission, it would be for the best.

She didn't deny it but instead seemed to confirm it with a cryptic response, "Yes, it was Marco who dealt with the deranged Keely personally."

The color drained from Laura's and Marina's faces, their bodies trembling as they exchanged glances.

Marco... Could he have gone that far?

In the past, even at his coldest, Marco had always abided by the rules. At most, he would confine Laura and Marina or cut back on their allowances. Even when he'd sent Keely to prison, he'd done so legally, leaving the law to take its course.

But this time, the situation was fundamentally different. If Liza's words were to be believed, then Marco had driven someone to insanity!

Could Marco have resorted to such methods to help Loraine?

Laura swallowed hard, her heart pounding with fear.

She couldn't help but think that Marco knew she wasn't his biological mother. If he could do this to Keely, then he might do the same to her and Marina...

The image of a merciless Marco sent chills down Laura's spine. She quickly grabbed Marina, softened her tone, and forced a smile. "Mother, don't worry. Marina and I will apologize promptly. Whatever it takes, we'll win back Marco's and Loraine's forgiveness!"

Hearing the response she wanted, Liza's lips curled into a satisfied smile as she turned to leave. But she didn't utter a word to reassure Laura and Marina, leaving them frozen in a state of dread, staring blankly at each other.



Chapter 554 Seeking Clarity

Following Liza's departure, Marina's mind was flooded with alarming visions. Paralyzed by terror, she overlooked her own hurt, hurling herself into Laura's comforting hug, weeping without restraint.

"Mom, we must find a solution swiftly. I can't stand the thought of being thrown into a mental hospital! What if he truly commits us there just for Loraine's sake?"

Marina voiced her fears through her tears. Laura, although scared, put on a brave face. "Don't be absurd. No matter how intimidating Marco might be, he can't just toss you into a mental hospital!"

Laura pacified Marina with soft words once she regained some composure. "Don't worry. We just need to say sorry. I knew it would come to this. He's still family. Even if Loraine wishes to punish us, she wouldn't go too far, out of respect for Marco."

With tear-streaked cheeks, Marina nodded, her eyes puffy. She spoke with lingering fear. "So... what's the right way to apologize?"

To which Laura answered straightforwardly, "Just post an apology online. That worked perfectly fine when we falsely accused Loraine of enticing Davy Jones, didn't it?"

Marina nodded timidly, recalling Marco's reaction during that event.

Even though Marco had warned that it would be the last time he would clean up their mess and that he wouldn't let them off

the hook for any future misdeeds, she clung onto a glimmer of hope.

Although Marco's aloofness often bothered them, they understood that their lifestyle was supported by him. Their privileged lifestyle was all thanks to Marco's financial assistance.

Despite his harsh methods, he was reliable when it came to family and friends. How could Keely be compared to her? After all, she was Marco's half-sister, not sharing the same mother, but he couldn't possibly be so callous towards her.

These thoughts brought her some solace.

However, when she retired to her room and tried to sleep, she found it evasive.

Liza's words still lingered, not entirely trustworthy. What if the mental illness story was just a scare tactic?

Determined not to be influenced, Marina sat up, grabbed her phone, and began an internet search.

However, no matter what she typed in, no relevant results showed up.

It seemed as if everything had been carefully concealed, assuming Liza was truthful.

With a determined spirit, she opened her contacts, calling and texting various people in the hope that someone would confirm it was a lie. But after going through her list, she received no response. Her past "friends" either abruptly hung up or ignored her calls.

Feeling desperate, Marina suddenly had a thought. With a steadfast mind, she reluctantly opened a group chat that she

hadn't used for ages.

It was her old close friends group, who had ignored her since her downfall. The group chat had become a place for mockery, and Marina had blocked it out of annoyance.

When she opened it now, Marina found that the chat had been silent for some time. She paused before gathering the courage to send a message, seeking some clarity.

"Hey, I heard that Keely Haywood lost her mind and was sent to a mental institution. Is it true or just a rumor?"

However, after hitting send, her message was met with a prolonged silence.

The longer Marina was left waiting, the more her fury grew. On the brink of hurling her phone away in frustration, she clenched her jaw and growled, "A bunch of opportunistic hypocrites! They fawned over me like loyal pets when they needed something. Now, just because Marco has put me on a financial leash and I had a couple of scandals, they treat me like I'm invisible?"

However, she knew deep down that they were nothing but a group of false friends. Reprimanding them would serve no purpose and would only instigate further ridicule.

In the midst of her disappointment, a private message suddenly flashed on her screen.

Upon seeing the sender's name, Marina's expression grew complex.

It was a message from Colette, who also shared a notorious reputation.

Once close friends, they hadn't spoken in a while following their failed attempt to take down Loraine and join the food court

project.

Colette, in their private chat, seemed as warm and friendly as ever, as if nothing had transpired. After a bit of chit-chat, she moved to address Marina's query.

"Marina, the rumors about Keely are true. A friend of mine studying abroad visited the Conning Rehabilitation Center, where Keely is indeed residing. Other than looking a bit haggard, she appeared pretty normal, not like someone suffering from a mental illness."

The words turned Marina's face even paler. She stared at the message, a lump forming in her throat.

Could it be true that Keely wasn't insane? Had Loraine and Marco used some tactic to directly commit her to the rehabilitation center?

As she pondered this, another message from Colette arrived.

"Reflecting now, my situation isn't as grim as Keely's. At least I haven't been incarcerated in a mental hospital."

Marina's face was a picture of horror.

She wasn't the only one harboring these thoughts! Colette too had the same concerns!

Although Colette had crossed Loraine in the past, she had never committed offenses as grave as those of Marina and Laura. Marina's mind was a whirlwind of worry, unable to hold back her plea for help. "Colette, what should I do now? If Loraine comes after me, will I end up confined in a mental hospital too?"

Colette, seemingly unbothered, shot back, "Keely is Loraine's romantic rival, but you're not. You're Marco's biological sister.

"What are you scared of? Even if you blunder big time, your blood ties will serve as a safety net. Loraine won't do that to you!"

Marina was at a loss for words. She couldn't reveal the truth to Colette that she was, in fact, Marco's half-sister.

With Laura and Marco's relationship in ruins, she feared Marco might harbor resentment towards her too.

What if she ended up being committed to a mental institution, courtesy of Marco?



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Chapter 555 Confession

Unaware, Colette failed to grasp the turmoil tumbling inside Marina's head. Her decision to reach out was not born out of profound friendship.

Soon enough, Colette revealed her true intentions. Hesitant, she probed, "Marina, I confess that I made mistakes. Would you consider connecting me to your brother so I can apologize and mend fences?"

Following some unfortunate incidents, the Moreau Group was close to crumbling in Vagow. Colette desperately needed to find a solution, seeking a potential lifeline through Marina.

As if doubting the value of her proposal, she hurriedly continued, "Marina, I promise you, if the Moreau Group can resurface, I will assist you. From now on, I will be at your service!"

Amidst her distress, Marina briefly glanced at the flood of messages. With her safety at stake, she had no mental capacity to consider Colette.

Exhaling a sigh, Marina cast her phone away. Unnoticed, Laura had entered the room and picked up the device.

A quick scan of the phone's screen caused Laura's eyes to twinkle. Without waiting for Marina's reaction, she promptly typed a reply.

"Alright, I'll assist you!"

Marina was flabbergasted upon seeing Laura with her phone. "Mom, what are you up to?" she asked, baffled.

Laura returned the phone to Marina, enveloping her in a hug. "Marina, I'm seeking help for you. Don't worry, I won't let you endure hardship for much longer!"

At the same time, the online criticism became more and more intense, forcing the mother-daughter duo to issue public apologies. The issue even topped trending discussions.

Shortly afterwards, Laura and Marina released back-to-back apology notes, candidly admitting their part in the earlier plagiarism scandal and their attempts to defame Loraine using paid internet trolls.

Their apologies exuded sincerity, as if they had thoroughly contemplated their errors.

"Over the past few days, we've read the netizens' comments and recognized our errors. We offer our apologies to Loraine! We shouldn't have clung to past issues with Loraine and nurtured grudges. This time, Keely fooled us. Ultimately, our failure to scrutinize the situation and misjudge people led to our mistakes. We deeply apologize for our actions!"

Despite some attempts at shifting blame in the duo's statements, they still issued apologies for their actions against Loraine. While some netizens accepted them, others criticized them, and a few remained doubtful about the authenticity of their repentance.

There were all sorts of comments online, but Loraine found it amusing as she read through them and the duo's apologies.

They folded even before she had played her hand.

Were they finally frightened?

Loraine didn't believe that these obstinate individuals had

genuinely reconsidered their actions. A thought crept into her mind. Was this Marco's influence?

The thought had barely formed when Marco called her.

Loraine hesitated, recalling the kiss she had left on his cheek that evening.

She bit her lip, and without noticing, a gentle smile graced her face. After a moment's pause, she picked up the call. "Hello?"

Marco's steady breath resonated on the other end, followed by his resonant voice. "Loraine, have you come across the apologies circulating online? Are you satisfied?"

Was he behind his family's public apologies?

A warm sensation enveloped Loraine's heart. With the Keely issue resolved and their relationship deepening, she decided to playfully provoke him. "What if I'm not satisfied? What can you possibly do? They are, after all, your family."

Marco's breathing hitched slightly, and in a dedicated tone, he quickly countered, "If you're dissatisfied, we can take them to court! Furthermore, they've now confessed to their libel and slander against you, eliminating the need to gather evidence. In case you require, I can furnish evidence for the lawsuit."

Caught off guard, Loraine fell silent for a while before asking, "This time, you're not protecting your mother and sister?"

From the other side, Marco's voice was firm. "That was the last time! I vowed to you that I won't let anyone harm you, not even my own family!"

Loraine's heart stirred. In that moment, an overwhelming urge to see Marco filled her. Even though they had only been apart for a short while.

Just then, a sound echoed from outside the window. Loraine turned around to find a red balloon bobbing outside.

Why was there a balloon here?

Loraine, momentarily perplexed, strolled to the window. Shortly, a second, third, and then an army of balloons ascended towards the sky, dominating her field of view.

The balloons weren't randomly scattered, but arranged meticulously to form an enormous heart.

This colossal heart of red balloons faced her directly, and one of the balloons drifted towards her. Loraine reached out and grasped it. As the balloon swayed in her grip, words on the other side revealed themselves. "I was wrong."

Then, another balloon rotated, displaying the inscription, "I will never repeat this mistake."

Each balloon was a proclamation of love. The massive heart formation revolved, and in the center, three prominent words spelled out, glowing brightly for her to see.

They read, "I love you!"

