

Chapter 581 Bloodline

The online commotion soon caused a stir, and before long, word of the issue got to Liza.

Like Marco had anticipated, Liza immediately suspected that Laura and Marina were the ones behind all the turmoil. Filled with anger, she went over to confront them.

When she saw them lying leisurely on the sofa, absorbed in their phones, Liza became furious and slammed her cane on the floor, producing a thunderous sound.

"It seems I was too lenient with you two the last time. You have no memory, do you?" she shrieked at them in fury.

At the sight of the notorious cane in her hand, Marina quickly shrank back and hid behind Laura.

Laura, on the other hand, forced herself to remain calm and pasted a smile on her face, saying, "Mother, what have we done to anger you again?"

Liza shouted at her in a cold and stern voice, "Stop pretending! What have you and your useless daughter done this time? Don't you have any common sense? Is it only when I disregard family ties and drive you two out of this house that you will come to your senses?"

Liza was very regretful of her decision to repeatedly tolerate Laura just for the sake of preserving the reputation of the Bryant family.

It had now become clear to her that if she didn't take severe





measures against Laura and Marina, they would never learn their lessons.

But Laura refused to take the insult lying down and she swiftly retorted, "Yes, we were the ones who released the news online, but everything we said was the truth!"

This angered Liza so much that her breath caught in her throat. She raised her cane, intending to strike Laura, but Marina quickly summoned up courage and snatched the paternity test report from the table and showed it to Liza. "Grandma, calm down and read this first!"

Liza was slightly startled and she stared at Marina with suspicion. "What kind of nonsense are you two up to again? Who gave you the guts to use my DNA file for a test? Isn't the commotion you've created enough?"

She came to confront Laura and Marina the moment she heard rumors online about Marco not being a member of the Bryant family. She had not really taken the time to read the details, so seeing the test now, she felt quite confused.

When Laura saw that Liza had calmed down a bit, she breathed a sigh of relief and said with a proud smile, "Mother, please read it first. Marina and I just want to prove to you that you have been deceived for so many years."

Liza was suspicious of them, but she took the report and read it anyway. The more she read, the darker her face became.

Observing her expression, Laura couldn't help but smile in satisfaction and even added fuel to the fire, "Mother, you didn't expect this, did you? Marco is not Winfred's son. He's just a bastard from God knows where!"

Liza didn't know what to say. As a result, the room fell into total silence. But all of a sudden, there was a blast of thunder



outside which shattered the silence, quickly followed by a flash of lightning that cast an eerie light on Liza's gloomy face.

Her fingers remained frozen on the file. It contained a set of documents from a hospital affiliated with Bryant Group, and her own records had been attached to it.

The words "No blood relationship confirmed" had hit her hard.

Could it be that the exceptional grandson that had grown right before her eyes for the last twenty years plus was actually a bastard?

No, no, she couldn't just believe it. Laura and Marina were lying.

She turned to the pair and scolded them again, "Couldn't you two troublemakers stop sowing discord? How can you make up such a story?"

Deep down, she didn't want to believe it. The thought of the story being true in any way scared her a lot.

Even if she wanted to ignore Marco's contributions to the Bryant family over the years, she couldn't forget when, decades ago, her son, Winfred, returned home with this child, entrusting him to her and asking her to take care of him.

If it was not his own child, whose child was deserving of such protection from Winfred?

All along, Liza had firmly believed in Winfred being Marco's father, but now, her perception had been shattered.

If the story was true, then it meant that the Bryant family had been raising someone else's son for the last twenty years! In fact, they had nearly even handed over the family business!

Liza's chest started heaving rapidly. Still, she fought against



her mind. She just couldn't accept this new story. She could only keep telling herself that this was a scheme that Laura and Marina had come up with to deceive her.

Meanwhile, Marina, seeing that Liza didn't believe them, pursed her lips in dissatisfaction and said, "Grandma, the report is clear. Why are you still deceiving yourself? What's so good about that bastard that you're bent on being so favorable towards him? Do you want Bryant Group to fall into the hands of an outsider?"

That question struck a nerve with Liza, and it sent her heart aching. "Shut up!" she shouted.

Laura and Marina were not people she could trust, but the Bryant family bloodline was not to be messed with!

Taking a deep breath, Liza grabbed her phone and dialed Marco's number.



Chapter 582 Candlelight Dinner

The turmoil within the Bryant family and the online controversy did not faze Marco. In his perspective, it was merely another senseless and futile conflict orchestrated by Laura and Marina.

In his heart, Loraine stood far above them in significance.

After successfully eliminating Keely as a threat, Loraine had started warming up to him. She had even agreed to dine with him.

This dinner was their first formal meeting after their divorce. It was of utmost importance to Marco, and he made sure to arrive early at the high-end restaurant they had reserved, organizing everything himself.

Being the prestigious CEO of Bryant Group didn't stop Marco from handling every minute detail of the dinner personally. He handpicked the venue, organized the decor, all with the intention to present Loraine with a flawless candlelight dinner.

Upon the delivery of fresh roses to the restaurant, Marco insisted on arranging them himself. The blooming roses were full of life, reminding him of Loraine's lips.

Marco's eyes had a thoughtful gaze as he, guided by the waiter, sprinkled dew on the roses.

The roses, adorned with dewdrops, seemed to have captured the essence of the morning's first light, radiating an



intoxicating aroma and a mesmerizing allure.

Marco's lips formed a satisfied smile. Just as he did this, he heard the rhythmic sound of high heels tapping on the floor behind him.

He turned around and found himself unable to look away, lost in a dazed state of astonishment.

Loraine had put in a special effort to dress up for the night. Clad in a beautiful wine-red gown, she looked elegant and charming, as if she had just stepped out of a painting from the last century.

Seeing Loraine in her stunning attire caused Marco's heart to flutter, and he forgot he was still holding a watering can, resembling a lovesick teenager who had just spotted his crush.

Loraine, noticing his stupefied expression, held back her shyness and playfully remarked, "Mr. Bryant, if you continue watering them like this, you'll drown these beautiful roses. That would be quite unfortunate."

Marco, snapping out of his reverie, swiftly handed the watering can to the waiter. A blush tinted his typically composed and attractive face, giving him a somewhat youthful and endearing appearance.

As Loraine neared, Marco noticed the subtle rose patterns on her dress.

Indeed, she looked more radiant than the flowers.

Emotionally stirred, Marco picked the most vibrant rose and walked over to Loraine. With a slight hesitation, he held out the flower to her.

Loraine lightly bit her lip and placed her hand in his.



Marco, the ever-so-gentleman, bent down to softly kiss her hand. He looked up at her, his eyes mirroring her beauty. Then, he pinned the rose he had chosen on her dress.

The rose seemed to come alive on her gown, reflecting the grace of the lady who wore it.

The man, who was usually economical with words, huskily murmured, "No flower could ever outshine your beauty."

His words made Loraine blush. She quickly brushed his hand away, teasingly reprimanding him, "Smooth talker."

But she couldn't help touching the rose gently, her heart swelling with a warm feeling.

Marco, aware of her reserved nature, decided to drop the sweet talk. He courteously pulled out the chair for her, inviting her to sit.

Loraine accepted his offer with a pleased smile. As she glanced at the restaurant's interior, a glimmer of recognition flickered in her eyes.

The restaurant stood out with its abundance of considerate details, which were not commonly found in such establishments. Suspecting that Marco had made prior arrangements, especially with the talkative waiter's interference, she couldn't help but wonder if everything had been planned in advance.

Lost in her pondering, she barely noticed Marco taking his seat opposite her, their gazes accidentally locking and igniting sparks in the air.

Marco, with his refined hand, extended the menu to her.



"I've chosen some appetizing desserts for you already. However, feel free to ask for anything else you fancy. The chefs here hail from every corner of the world, I promise you'll relish the experience." His words flowed as he casually draped his hand over Loraine's. She didn't pull away.

Her eyes fell onto the menu, yet her mind focused on the warm sensation radiating from his grip. As their skins mingled, a subtle tension quietly built up.

At that very moment, Marco's phone, positioned nearby, abruptly vibrated, emitting a disruptive ringtone that shattered the otherwise perfect sweetness of the moment.

A look of irritation crossed his face as he silenced the call.

Yet, the phone was determined, ringing once more.

The palpable tension dissipated, and Loraine paused before suggesting, "You might want to take that. It could be something urgent."

Marco sent an apologetic look her way but didn't step away. He answered the call right there, speaker mode on.

On the other line, Liza's somber voice commanded, "Marco, you need to get to the Bryant family's hospital immediately!"

She didn't question his whereabouts or schedule. Her tone was stern, her command unflinching.

Marco guessed it had something to do with the paternity test. He was about to reject, but Liza cut him off, her voice grave.

"I don't care where you are or what you're doing. Get here! Now! You have to! Marco, if you hold any regard for your late father, you'll listen to me!"



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The words made Marco pause, his brow furrowed.

But before he could reply, Liza ended the call, uninterested in his response.


As the dial tone buzzed, Loraine looked at him, worry evident in her gaze.

Feeling something amiss with Liza's behavior, she inquired, "Marco, are you okay?"

Casually, Marco put the phone aside, pushed down his emotions and smiled at her. "It's nothing serious... Not worth a mention. Tonight, our date is what truly matters."

Yet, Loraine remained silent. Could an issue serious enough to invoke Marco's late father really be brushed off as unimportant?



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Chapter 583 How Could She Remain Idle!

Loraine contemplated for a moment before advising Marco, "You should go. I can wait here for you."

Noticing Loraine's steadfast gaze, Marco recognized her genuine concern for him, prompting a wistful smile.

Internally, he mused in self-derision. Perhaps it was due to the countless times he had wounded Loraine throughout their three-year marriage that every attempt to mend and improve their relationship was met with various impediments.

However, Loraine remained oblivious to Marco's introspective thoughts. Seeing his silence, she feared he might misconstrue her intentions, so she interjected, "We have ample time in the future. It's only a dinner, and there will be many more opportunities to come."

Hearing her words, a glimmer of hope ignited in Marco's eyes, and he nodded in agreement.

Indeed, the journey ahead for him and Loraine was long. Addressing the situation at the hospital now would ensure uninterrupted quality time between them, away from the meddling Bryant women.

Resolute in his decision, Marco glanced at Loraine with a sigh. "Wait for me at the restaurant. If you're hungry, feel free to order something. I won't be long."

Loraine offered a gentle smile and nodded as the man before



her rose from his seat.

However, just as he approached her, he halted unexpectedly. Under Loraine's puzzled gaze, Marco leaned over, depositing a light kiss on her cheek.

"A goodbye kiss, consider it compensation for my abrupt departure, okay?"

At these ambiguous words, Loraine's cheeks flushed. But before she could react, he chuckled and left, confidently striding out of the restaurant.

The exclusive restaurant had been reserved solely for them, and the staff, understanding the circumstances, refrained from disturbing Loraine. Now, with Marco's exit, she was the sole occupant.

A wave of relief washed over her.

At least, now no one would witness her flushed face.

Loraine gingerly raised her hand, her fingertips brushing the spot Marco had kissed. The unexpected warmth caused her to withdraw her hand abruptly, only to move it to her chest, touching the dew-kissed flower he had given her.

Its intoxicating scent enveloped her, making Marco's presence linger in her senses, virtually accompanying her. Loraine blushed further, her smile reflecting the joy of experiencing a date for the first time.

She realized she had never been in a serious relationship before. Even during their marriage, she and Marco had spent more time apart than together.

Following their divorce, Marco seized every opportunity for solitude with her, though she often found him as sticky as

chewing gum.

Now, their relationship had advanced, and she had tasted a hint of love.

But her elation was short-lived. Suddenly, Loraine recalled the stern tone of Liza over the phone.

The memory felt like a cold shower, dousing her newfound happiness. Her brows furrowed in worry for Marco.

Having dedicated the entire day to getting ready for the night's date, Loraine had bypassed all work-related matters, leaving her uninformed about the outside happenings.

Her mind was clouded with anxious thoughts, spinning a whirlwind of baseless worries.

Could the issue of the illegitimate child have resurfaced?

That situation should have been resolved by now, and Liza's stance seemed unambiguous, didn't it?

Loraine mulled over these thoughts before abruptly slapping her forehead, feeling foolish. She chuckled to herself, "How silly of me! I can just check directly!"

Reaching into her bag, she pulled out her phone, which had been ignored all day. She intended to uncover the latest with the Bryant family. However, as soon as she unlocked her device, she was swamped with an avalanche of information.

Half of the barrage was from individuals seeking information from her, while the remainder consisted of notifications for trending news.

Loraine's expression grew stern as she clicked open a few messages, browsing them with a shocked countenance.



How could so many marketing accounts be circulating rumors about Marco's lineage online?

These messages weren't created out of the blue. Loraine immediately thought of Laura and Marina.

Glancing at the paternity test report disseminated by these accounts, it was clearly indicated that it originated from a hospital under the Bryant Group. Suddenly, Loraine recalled having spotted Marina at the hospital previously.

And where had she headed? The laboratory department!

Without a moment's delay, Loraine contacted her assistant, asking in a grave tone, "What's the latest on your surveillance of Marina? What have you discovered?"

"Miss Torres, after spending approximately four to five hours at the hospital the last time, Miss Bryant left. However, she returned to the hospital recently, accompanied by Madam Liza Bryant and Mrs. Laura Bryant," the assistant replied.

After the phone call, Loraine stared at the malicious comments flooding her phone screen, a sinking sensation tugging at her heart.

It appeared Marco had been summoned to the hospital due to this issue.

Familiar with the Bryant family's antics, she knew achieving a peaceful resolution would be challenging.

Reflecting on it, Marco must have been aware of this development long before, right? Yet, he had carried on as if nothing was amiss, focusing only on pleasing her...

Loraine's emotions churned, a mix of heartache and concern.

The more she ruminated, the more restless she grew. How could she remain idle? She immediately rose from her seat, ready to rush to the hospital.



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Chapter 584 Do It Again

Inside the Bryant Group's hospital.

During the evening, the corridor of the laboratory department was scarcely populated. The doctor on duty was fighting off sleep.

Suddenly, the sound of Reech's obsequious voice echoed through the corridor. Even though the doctor didn't know who was on the receiving end of Reech's flattery, he sneered subconsciously.

The following instant, upon seeing the person Reech was addressing, the doctor snapped to attention. He swiftly stood up and bowed respectfully. "Good evening, Mrs. Bryant!"

Liza, who led the group, was white-haired yet robust. Using a dragon-headed walking stick, she moved briskly, leaving the ever-smiling and nodding Reech almost struggling to keep pace.

Liza bore a somber expression. She surveyed the area imperiously, causing the on-duty personnel to snap to attention. Sensing the tense atmosphere, they respectfully made way.

Only Reech seemed oblivious to the ominous atmosphere. Instead, he persisted in his attempts to curry favor with Liza.

With Marina's departure the day before and Liza's arrival today, Reech was delighted. He assumed his diligent work had impressed Marina so much that she had recommended a promotion and a raise to Liza.

Reech was eager to make a good impression on Liza, his face



beaming as he subtly reminded her of his efforts.

"Did Miss Marina tell you about the work I've done for you? Well, you need not worry. It's my duty to serve the Bryant family. I've been a loyal vice director for many years..."

Liza finally cast a glance at the babbling Reech. She had no recollection of this sycophantic character, but it appeared he was the one responsible for the paternity test performed earlier.

"I am here today for the test report."

Reech was momentarily taken aback before his face crinkled into a grin. "Yes, that report was prepared here!"

Before he could add more, a frosty voice resonated from the doorway, "Grandmother."

Marco was on the threshold, ready to enter, when he saw Liza's icy stare.

Her cold and distant eyes brought him to a halt. His heart sank.

Even before the report was confirmed, Liza treated him thus?

Unaware of her ruthless demeanor, Liza inquired coldly, "You are aware of the paternity test results, correct?"

Marco nodded. Liza sneered, "To think the child I've cherished all these years isn't my grandson!"

Cherished?

Recalling his stifling and somber childhood, Marco remained silent, his gaze falling on Marina and Laura who trailed Liza, their faces brimming with triumph.

The pair didn't even attempt to hide their contempt for him.

Observing Liza's readiness to sever ties with him, he felt a pang of sorrow.

Marina and Laura's animosity towards him was blatant, yet Liza readily trusted them while distancing herself from him.

Had all his years of dedication and hard work for the Bryant Group been trivialized by their baseless gossip?

Although feelings of disappointment and sadness seeped in, Marco managed to maintain a stoic countenance, his expression unreadable.

When Marina had mentioned taking a strand of his hair, he had anticipated this.

With a sardonic smile, Marco responded nonchalantly, "Grandmother, judging my identity based solely on their narrative seems a tad hasty, don't you think?"

Liza's expression softened, revealing a hint of hesitation. Without uttering another word, Marco summoned in a resonant voice, "Carl!"

Carl, who was waiting just outside, entered. Taken aback and irate, Marina questioned, her eyes wide in disbelief, "Why are you here?"

"Mr. Bryant requested my presence. Hence, I am here."

After this brief explanation, Carl respectfully bowed to Liza before presenting the evidence. "Mrs. Bryant, this is the chat log between Miss Marina and myself. I assure you that nothing has been altered or deleted. Please review it."

Liza accepted the evidence, her face devoid of emotion as she

skimmed through the lewd chat records.

Upon seeing Marina's provocative images sent in an attempt to bribe Carl, Liza's expression transformed into one of stark disgust. She spun around, pointed an accusing finger at Marina, and exclaimed, "You have disgraced our family!"

The moment the chat logs were unveiled, Liza's allegiance shifted towards Marco. She felt a pang of regret for ever believing the fabrications spun by Marina and Laura.

Observing the uncomfortable situation unfold, Liza's fury reached its peak. She raised her cane, poised to strike Marina. The hospital personnel, unaccustomed to such drama, intervened hastily to prevent the assault.

Hiding amidst the crowd, Marina was filled with anxiety. She hadn't anticipated Marco turning the tables so swiftly or that Carl had been deceiving her all along. Carl hadn't betrayed Marco in the slightest!

Marina's face turned ashen.

God! If Marco knew about their plan, could he have deceived her with someone else's hair sample? If so, Liza would show me her mercy!

She couldn't bear the brunt of this alone. She needed to deflect the blame as quickly as possible!

In an uncharacteristically sharp move, Marina swiftly fell to her knees, pleading, "Grandmother, brother, I apologize. This was all mother's doing."

Witnessing Liza's wrathful glare, Laura collapsed, her body trembling with fear. But she refused to accept total defeat.

Laura screamed in desperation, her voice hoarse, "Mother, trust



Chapter 584 Do It Again

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me! I did this to preserve the Bryant family's bloodline. I don't want others to get the wrong idea! Since we are all here, if you want to convince everyone, let's conduct another paternity test!"



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