

From Ashes of Scandal to His Embrace (Laurinda)

Chapter 401

[640 words]

Laurinda felt uneasy under Adolphus's gaze. She let out a frustrated groan and spoke up, not even caring if she sounded unreasonable.

"Just tell me, are you going to let me see him or not? I don't care what you say, I'm getting him out. I already checked with Kinsey. They finished investigating. The Gates family thing had nothing to do with him. He's a victim too."

Adolphus couldn't bring himself to say no to her. The guy was right under his nose anyway, so what could really go wrong? As long as Laurinda was happy, that was enough.

"I'll set it up. We'll go tomorrow."

Laurinda jumped up from her chair and walked over to him, pressing herself into his arms. She wrapped her arms around his neck, her voice suddenly sweet and teasing. "I knew you'd come through for me."

The next morning, Laurinda walked into the visitation room. When Harden saw her, he looked like he was seeing a ghost. He'd imagined plenty of people might visit, but Laurinda was the last person he expected.

"You... Why are you here? Don't you hate me?"

He sat across from her, eyes full of sadness he couldn't shake. He knew he'd brought this on himself, and he'd totally misjudged Finn.

Laurinda got right to the point. "I'm here to get you out. A friend of mine owns a pro esports team. Do you want in?"

She sounded all business, like this was just another task to check off her list.

Harden was stunned. He'd given up his career for fame and money, and now, out of everyone, Laurinda was the one offering him a second chance.

"I... I'm not sure I can. It's been a long time since I trained."

He stumbled over his words, unable to look her in the eye. He'd once convinced himself he could be the one for her, but after everything that happened, he realized she probably just saw him as a joke.

Laurinda didn't bother to sugarcoat it. "Just say yes or no. No need for all the extra talk."

She didn't have the patience to comfort him. The only reason she was helping was because she'd been the one to set up his meeting with Finn in the first place. Things had spiraled way beyond what she planned, and now she just wanted to fix it. Harden deserved better.

He lowered his head, thinking hard. After a moment, he looked up, a real smile breaking through for the first time in ages.

"I want to. I'm in."

"Great. My people will handle everything. Someone will come get you and take you straight to the training base."

With her answer settled, Laurinda didn't stick around. She stood up and headed for the door.

Just as she was leaving, she heard Harden call after her, his voice quiet and unsure. "If... I mean, if I get to compete again... would you come watch me, if you could?"

Laurinda stopped and turned

around. Harden still wouldn't look at

her. She suddenly remembered the first time she watched him play before everything got so complicated. After all the twists and turns, he was finally going back to where he belonged. That felt right. He was finding his way again.

"If I get the chance, I will. Play your heart out."

Outside, Adolphus was waiting. When he saw her, he hurried over, draped his jacket over her shoulders, and took her hand to help her into the wheelchair.

"Want to have lunch at Balaam's place?" he asked, sounding like he was giving her a choice.

Laurinda frowned and thought for a second.

"I want to go back to school first. I still haven't given Shirley and the girls their welcome-back gifts. And I want to see them."

The spring breeze felt so good on

her face. Laurinda just wanted to wander for a while. She wasn't ready to go home yet. After being stuck inside for so long, she needed to breathe and feel free.

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 402

[586 words]

When Adolphus noticed Laurinda dragging her feet about going home, he couldn't help but smile. The weather was perfect, so he figured there was no harm in letting her have her way.

"Come on, I'll take you back to school," he said. "I need to talk to them about the clinic, anyway. Neither Arrow nor Foley can stay on as the school nurse forever."

He already had a plan in mind. He wanted Arrow to stick close to Laurinda. That way, he could relax a little, knowing she'd be safe.

"You're not planning to go back to classes here, are you?"

Laurinda had already secured her spot at Cabinda University, so Adolphus didn't see any point in her returning. Right now, he just wanted her to focus on getting better. Everything else could wait.

She leaned back in her wheelchair, looking completely at ease, and shook her head. "No, I'm done. The Charles and Gates families are all sorted now. Once I'm healed,

I need to hit the books. I promised Fraser I'd get into the lab on my own, no shortcuts."

This was news to Adolphus, and he frowned, surprised. "Do you have a mentor lined up?"

"Not yet. Fraser gave me a whole list of books to read first. He said to dive into those and really get the theory down. Once I have that sorted, I can start working on hands-on stuff. No need to rush finding a mentor."

Laurinda made it sound simple, but she knew this decision was going to be tough. It would take everything she had.

They slipped in through the back entrance of the school. Foley and Arrow were in the infirmary, tidying up medical supplies. When they saw Laurinda and Adolphus, both looked surprised and stood up quickly.

"Adolphus, Laurinda."

"Laurinda, Adolphus."

Adolphus helped Laurinda out of her wheelchair, holding her hand as they walked into the infirmary. He made sure she was comfortable on the sofa before turning to the others. "I'm going to talk to the principal about bringing in a new school nurse. Foley, I want you to stay here until the new nurse arrives and help with the transition. Arrow, from now on, you'll be with Laurinda."

Laurinda paused, a piece of pineapple halfway to her mouth, frowning at Adolphus. She didn't get why he wanted Arrow to be her shadow. "I already have people with me."

"You mean Renata?" Adolphus guessed. After Bonnie's accident, she was still in rehab, and Harrell had taken her abroad. There was no telling when they'd be back.

Laurinda knew Adolphus didn't totally trust Renata, even if he didn't say it outright. She pressed her lips together. "No, I've got others..."

"Others? When you got hurt, Renata was the only one with you. I didn't see anyone else. Arrow's staying with you from now on, just to be safe."

Laurinda wasn't really upset, but she couldn't resist pushing back a little. "So... does that mean Arrow's going to sleep with me, too?"

The word "sleep" made Adolphus's eyes narrow. His gaze went dark and unreadable for a second, but Laurinda could tell he wasn't thrilled.

He stared at her for a moment, then laughed, reaching out to gently tap her forehead. "Dream on. Who else would put up with how much you toss and turn at night. Anywa that's settled. I'm heading to the principal's office."

Laurinda felt her cheeks flush with embarrassment. She waved him off and went back to her pineapple and her phone, watching short videos. Since she'd started recovering, she'd realized that sometimes, mindless little shows were the best kind of distraction.

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[644 words]

Laurinda was glued to her phone again, completely lost in another short video.

Adolphus let out a helpless sigh and said, "Since you're not coming back to school anymore, I'll talk to the principal about your diploma and student records. I'll get everything sorted so you don't have to worry about it."

"Alright, thanks for handling it," Laurinda replied without even looking up.

Adolphus couldn't help but laugh, half annoyed and half amused by how casually she brushed him off. Still, there wasn't much he could do. He turned and walked straight out.

Arrow came over with a glass of warm water, setting it down gently beside Laurinda. In a soft voice, she reminded her, "Laurinda, go easy on the pineapple. It's really acidic."

"Okay," Laurinda said, glancing at her with a small smile.

She'd always had a good impression of Arrow. Back when Arrow worked as Bonnie's private nurse at her house, they'd gotten along really well. Having her around now felt pretty comforting. Thinking about all her stuff still in the dorm, Laurinda looked up. "Can you come with me to pack up my things later? I'm not coming back to school after this."

"Sure, just let me know when you're ready," Arrow replied.

When the lunch bell rang, Laurinda took Arrow with her to the dorm. Arrow was almost done packing Laurinda's things when loud voices started echoing down the hallway. Laurinda recognized the sounds of her roommates and stepped outside her door to wait for them.

Shirley was the first to spot Laurinda and hurried over, ready to throw her arms around her. Right before she could, Arrow stopped her, lightly grabbing Shirley's

arm.

Shirley looked at Arrow, confused. "What are you doing?"

"Laurinda's hurt. She shouldn't be hugged right now," Arrow explained quietly.

Suddenly, everyone crowded around, voices full of concern.

Laurinda just gave them a light laugh and shook her head. "It's nothing serious. Just bumped myself, that's all. No need to worry."

Right as she finished talking, a sneer came from down the hallway. Laurinda glanced over and spotted one of Laura's old classmates, staring at her with a smirk.

"What are you staring at? Acting like a princess when you're not one. So dramatic."

Laurinda narrowed her eyes, honestly confused by the girl's attitude. She couldn't figure out why she was so hostile.

still

The girl went on, "Why are you looking at me? Am I wrong? Sure, you grew up with the Austins, but did you know Laura's the real princess? The Austins are basically done for now, but Laura? She's the crown princess of Stonehaven. Ever heard of Stonehaven? I bet you haven't. Otherwise how could you have spent all those years with the Austins and not known about their

connection to Stonehaven?"

Laurinda hadn't planned on responding, but something about hearing Stonehaven made her pause. She found herself curious about Laura's life now.

"Oh? Sounds like you know a lot about Laura. Is she doing well?" Laurinda asked with a little smile.

"Of course she is. Laura's always sharing stuff in our group chat. She even sent out gifts the other day. Want to see? This is from Queen's latest collection. The girl pulled out a delicate necklace from under her shirt, holding it up for Laurinda to see.

Everyone knew Laurinda used to give her roommates gifts too, but hers were just small, inexpensive things. Not like this.

Laurinda watched the showy display, her smile lingering. She couldn't quite figure out what Laura was up to, using her Stonehaven status like this. What was she really trying to do?

"Oh, and I guess you haven't heard. Stonehaven University is opening up admissions to students from here this year. Laura said she could get us recommendation spots. Laurinda, do you regret how you treated Laura now?"

FindNovel.net

"If you hadn't bullied her, with how sweet Laura is, she probably would've given you

a spot too. But with your grades, you'll be lucky to get into some second-rate school around here."

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 404

[648 words]

Laurinda narrowed her eyes. A recommendation spot? Since when did Laura have the final say on things like that? Was this just another one of Baily's tricks? What was he up to this time?

She didn't bother looking at the smug expression on the girl's face. Instead, Laurinda replied, her tone steady and calm. "You really don't need to worry about me. I hope you actually get into Stonehaven University."

Without saying anything more, Laurinda turned away, leading her roommates back to their dorm. Once inside, she closed the door behind them and reached into her backpack. She pulled out five beautifully wrapped little boxes and handed them out, one by one. "These are for you. A little back-to-school gift. Work hard for your college entrance exams. I'll be waiting for you all in Cabinda."

Her roommates lit up with excitement as they accepted their gifts. In the next moment, though, their attention shifted to the suitcase sitting by Laurinda's bed.

Shirley pointed at it. "Laurinda, what's with the suitcase?"

Laurinda smiled. "Oh, I'm not living at school anymore. I came back to give you your gifts and to pack up my stuff. I won't be coming back to school, but you can always reach me."

The words had barely left her mouth when her friends' eyes turned red. When Arrow had helped Laurinda pack, she'd noticed Laurinda's desk was spotless. Clearly, someone had been cleaning it every day, just waiting for her to return.

"Laurinda..... I... I'm really going to miss you," one of them choked out, her voice thick with emotion.

Seeing them all on the verge of tears, Laurinda grabbed a box of tissues from her desk and passed them around, a gentle smile on her lips. "If you're going to cry, you better hurry. You don't want to be late for class."

"Seriously, Laurinda, you always know how to ruin the mood," someone teased, half laughing, half crying.

Her joke eased the heaviness in the room. When Laurinda saw they were all feeling a little better, she smiled softly "Don't worry I'll come back to visit. promise be here before the big exams."

"Laurinda, you have to come back. Don't forget about us, okay?"

"How could I ever forget you?" Laurinda grinned, her eyes warm. "I told you, I'll be waiting for you in Cabinda. Just keep working hard. Once you're there, we can hang out whenever we want."

She looked at her friends, these girls she'd shared so many days and nights with. They'd always treated each other with nothing but honesty and care.

"Alright, enough with the sad faces. I'm not going back to class today. No need to upset everyone. And don't tell the others I'm not coming back. I want to surprise them when I visit before the exams."

Shirley couldn't hold back anymore. She flung her arms around Laurinda. This time, Arrow didn't try to stop her. She just watched, noticing how gentle Shirley was being.

"Laurinda, I'm really going to miss you," Shirley whispered.

Laurinda pinched Shirley's cheek, laughing. "Come on, do we really have to get this dramatic? We can see each other anytime once you're in Cabinda."

Suddenly, Shirley remembered her dad was in Cabinda too. She let out an awkward laugh and released Laurinda. "I almost forgot my dad's there."

Laurinda watched her friend bounce between laughing and crying, and couldn't help but think Shirley was adorable. She gave her cheek another gentle pinch and added "Now that I'm not around, you need to calm down a bit. Don't go charging into things like you always do. If you run into trouble you can't handle, just call me. Even if I'm not here, I still have some connections."

She glanced at the rest of her roommates. That goes for all of you. Look out for yourselves. We

don't go looking for trouble beet

we're not afraid of it either. If

anything happens in the cafeteria, just call me. I'll make sure someone takes care of it."

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 405

[702 words]

Laurinda checked in with everyone, making sure they knew what mattered most. She just wanted them all to stay focused for this final stretch and not let any drama get in the way.

They barely had time for small talk before the afternoon classes were about to start, so Laurinda grabbed her things and headed out of the dorm with the others.

As they made their way downstairs, they ran right into that same girl who'd been picking a fight earlier. She glanced at the suitcase Arrow was holding and smirked, her voice full of sarcasm. "Wow, are you so broke you have to drop out and go back to your tiny hometown? Laura told me her place is dirt poor. I wonder if Laurinda can handle being that broke."

She leaned in a little, still sneering. "Maybe you should beg Laura for help. If you're lucky, she might let a few crumbs fall your way. That should be enough for someone

like you."

Gordon—because of course it was Gordon—laughed loud and obnoxious as she strutted toward the stairs. But just as she put her foot down, her leg seemed to go numb. Without warning, she pitched forward and tumbled down, her scream echoing through the whole stairwell.

Everyone froze, staring in shock as Gordon landed hard at the bottom. Only Laurinda looked over at Arrow, a small, knowing smile tugging at her lips. Now she was starting to get why Adolphus wanted Arrow by her side.

"Gordon, are you okay?" One of the girls from their dorm rushed down to help. When she lifted Gordon up and saw blood all over her mouth, she panicked, her hands unsure where to go.

"Where are you hurt? Why is there so much blood?"

Gordon just sat there, dazed. She touched her lips, saw her bloodied fingers, then shrieked even louder. Her teeth felt loose, and for a second, she looked like she might faint.

"What even happened, Gordon? How did you fall?"

"Someone pushed me!" Gordon's words slurred, barely making sense. She didn't really know how she'd fallen, but she was convinced someone had shoved her.

Laurinda stayed at the top of the stairs, looking down with a cold, distant expression. She didn't need to guess where this was going-it was obvious Gordon was about to pin this on her.

"How is that possible? You were right in the middle of all of us. Are you seriously saying one of us pushed you?" The girl who helped Gordon was the first to snap back. She'd rushed over to help, and now she was being accused? Ever since Gordon had started hanging out with Laura again, she'd been acting like she owned the place-always trying to be the center of attention, always pushing to the front, even on the stairs.

As soon as one girl spoke up, the others jumped in, all of them talking over each other, insisting there was no way any of them did it. No one wanted to be blamed. Everyone knew Gordon's reputation for making drama and blaming anyone but herself.

With everyone denying it, Gordon's head started to pound. She shoved her friends away and jabbed her finger right at Laurinda. "It was her! Laurinda pushed me!"

Laurinda just let out a cold laugh. She didn't even give her friends a chance to defend her. "Are you really sure you want to accuse me? If this wasn't my fault, are you ready to deal with what comes next?"

Her words hung in the air, icy and sharp. Gordon met Laurinda's eyes for a split second, then looked away, a shiver running through her. She knew she couldn't win if Laurinda really went after her.

She mumbled, almost sulking, "Who else could it be? You're the only one here who's got a problem with me. I was just making fun of you, and now I'm supposed to believe you didn't push me?"

The more she spoke, the more convinced she sounded, like she was building her own case just by saying it out loud. In her mind, it had to be Laurinda.

"Fine," Laurinda said, her voice

steady. "Let's get the administration involved. They can figure out what really happened. But if they can't prove I touched you, then you're the one who needs to leave this school."

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 406

[589 words]

Laurinda spoke with a steady calm, but to Gordon, every word sounded like a warning. She immediately assumed Laurinda was feeling guilty.

Pushing herself up from the floor, Gordon looked every bit the stubborn, wronged heroine. "Go ahead, let's see what you find. I'm not scared of you," she said, her voice trembling with anger. "I'm the one who got hurt here. I don't believe this school is just your playground, where you decide who stays and who leaves."

Blood streaked Gordon's face, and the wild look in her eyes made everyone around them edge back, uneasy. Even her own roommates seemed rattled, exchanging nervous glances. Quietly, they made up their minds. There was no way they could let Gordon stay in their dorm any longer-maybe not even in the school.

"I'll get the principal," Shirley spoke up, her patience snapped by Gordon's wild accusations. It was bad enough that Gordon kept picking fights with Laurinda, but now she was lying about Laurinda pushing her? Everyone knew Laurinda had been at the back of the group, with several people between them. There was no way she could have touched Gordon.

"No need, I've got the principal's number," Laurinda said, stopping Shirley in her tracks. She pulled out her phone and dialed. The principal answered right away, his voice warm and friendly.

"Laurinda, your early graduation papers are all set. Is there something else you need?"

The group fell silent. No one had expected the principal to be so respectful toward Laurinda. Gordon's roommates, who had believed Gordon's story about Laurinda falling from grace, suddenly felt uncertain. They hadn't exactly looked down on her, but they'd never imagined she was important enough to get this kind of attention.

Laurinda shot Gordon a quiet, knowing smile. Then she calmly explained everything to the principal.

"Could you come here and help sort this out? I want my name cleared, and Gordon deserves a fair explanation too."

The principal didn't waste a second. He hurried over with the dean beside him.

As soon as they arrived, the principal questioned the ten students who had been with Laurinda and Gordon. Their stories matched perfectly. Laurinda had been too far away to have pushed Gordon.

Finally, the principal looked at Arrow, clearly recognizing him from somewhere. "Adolphus, you're here too. Can you tell us what happened?"

Arrow glanced at Gordon, who glared back with pure resentment. Calmly, he described how Gordon had started provoking Laurinda from the very beginning.

The principal's face grew more and more serious as he listened. When Arrow finished, the principal scoffed at Gordon.

"So that's what's been stirring up all this trouble with the seniors. You're part of it? What, Laura's so powerful she can just get a recommendation to The Stonehaven University out of thin air? Come on, Gordon, are you sure Laura isn't running some kind of scam, and you're just helping spread her lies?"

Gordon's roommates suddenly saw everything in a new light. The way Laura operated was exactly like scammer Even calling herself "Eldest Princess" sounded ridiculous now. The more they thought about it, the more alarming it all seemed. Content

Laurinda stood off to the side, quietly watching as shock and suspicion spread through the crowd. Now they saw Gordon as an accomplice to a fraud. That was fine with Laurinda. At least it would make them more careful in the future.

Honestly, Laurinda had always felt Laura had another agenda. She suspected Baily was the one pulling the strings. Whatever he was planning, whether it was for his

lab or something else, he needed a lot of people involved.

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 407

[665 words]

The principal felt a chill run down his spine the more he thought about it. All these brilliant students they worked so hard to nurture—if any of them were tricked into leaving the country and got hurt, how many families would be torn apart? How much would it hurt the country as a whole? He couldn't let this happen, not even once.

Without waiting for anyone's reaction, the principal grabbed Gordon by the collar and started dragging her downstairs. Gordon tried to struggle, but she was dizzy and weak, so she could only let herself be pulled along.

In the hallway, everyone looked at each other in confusion. Shirley glanced at the dean, her voice small. "Dean, what should we do now?"

The dean waved at them. "Your group, get to class. Gordon's roommates, come with me to the office. We'll need to see what the principal decides. You might need to share what you know about Gordon's recent behavior."

He paused, then turned to Laurinda, choosing his words carefully. "Laurinda, you've already graduated. Unless there's something important, you really shouldn't be coming back to the school. If anything comes up, someone will let you know."

"We looked into it. What happened to Gordon today has nothing to do with you. You can go home. If we need your help, we'll reach out."

The dean glanced at everyone else, his face stern. "The rest of you, get on with your business."

As the dean led Gordon's five roommates away, Laurinda nudged Shirley and the others. "Hurry to class. Also, Shirley, remind everyone to focus on studying instead of thinking about shortcuts. The country's doing well, education is getting better, and honestly, local universities are your best bet."

Shirley nodded seriously. "Don't worry, I'll talk to them. I'm sure the principal will call a meeting about this soon anyway."

Laurinda smiled. "Alright. Get to class."

Once Shirley and her group left, Laurinda and Arrow made their way to the infirmary. Arrow kept glancing at Laurinda, guilt written all over her face.

"Laurinda, I'm sorry. If it wasn't for me..."

Laurinda cut her off gently. "No need to apologize. You didn't do anything wrong. Still, it's better to handle this kind of thing when no one's around. Saves everyone a lot of trouble."

Back at the infirmary, Adolphus stood up as soon as he saw Laurinda. His voice was soft. "Have you eaten lunch yet?"

She shook her head. "No. You told me to avoid anything too greasy or spicy. I'm afraid if I go to the cafeteria, I'll lose control."

The truth was, Laurinda was craving some of the cafeteria food, but her wound was healing slowly. Even with special medicine, it wasn't

getting better as fast as she wanted

so she was careful with wanted

meals.

She just wanted to recover quickly.

Adolphus looked at her, a smile tugging at his lips. He leaned in a little and asked what she wanted eat. After a bit of back and forth they decided on mushroom rice noodles. It would be light enough for her and still satisfy her craving.

Adolphus drove Laurinda off campus, telling Arrow to head back to the manor on her own.

Foley came over to Arrow, giving her shoulder a gentle pat. He spoke quietly. "When you're with Laurinda, your main job is to keep her safe. Don't let what happened today happen again."

Arrow bowed her head, voice barely above a whisper. "I'll accept whatever punishment you give me."

Foley shook his head. "That's not necessary. Adolphus knows you just couldn't stand watching Laurinda get picked on. Just don't let it happen again. Go on, head home."

He gave her shoulder another pat. Foley understood Arrow well. She was young and proud, never able to watch Laurinda suffer. Maybe she used to do things her own way but now that she was with Laurinda, she had to learn to be careful.

In the car, Laurinda leaned back in the passenger seat, looking at Adolphus out of the corner of her eye. Her voice was playful. "Why do I feel like you're getting more handsome every day?"

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 408

[597 words]

Adolphus turned his head, giving her a sideways glance and a little laugh. "What's this? Trying to win me over?"

Laurinda rolled her eyes. "Please. What would I even get out of that? I haven't done anything wrong. I'm just being honest. The guy I picked just keeps getting better looking, that's all."

She leaned in, looking completely smitten, her hand sliding onto his leg as she absentmindedly traced little circles with her fingertips.

He felt a spark run through him at her touch. Grabbing her wandering hand, Adolphus arched an eyebrow. "So you only like me because I'm good-looking?"

She grinned. "That's not it. You're also way too good to me. You spoil me more than my own dad ever did."

That made Adolphus laugh, even as he shook his head in disbelief. While waiting for the light to change, he turned, leaned over, and pressed his lips to hers, silencing her with a kiss.

"You know, your mouth is much better for kissing. The things you say sometimes really get under my skin."

Laurinda laughed, eyes shining. "Well, you could always just kiss me more. Maybe then I'll talk less."

She looked at him with so much affection that Adolphus couldn't help but feel lucky. No matter how annoyed he got, he never once lost his temper with her. Honestly, she wouldn't mind if he kissed her a little more often.

A week later, Laurinda heard from Shirley about the school assembly.

At the assembly, the principal had called out Gordon in front of everyone, turning her into a cautionary tale. The punishment was swift. Gordon was expelled on the spot.

Laurinda wasn't surprised at all. These days, everyone was on high alert for scams, and there was no way the principal would let someone risky stay at the school. If something happened, he'd be the one to take the fall.

Shirley messaged her, curious as ever. Laurinda could practically see her friend's wide-eyed, catlike curiosity through the screen.

Laurinda, can you find out what's up with Gordon? Is she really mixed up in all that? And is Laura actually some kind of scammer?

Laurinda quickly typed back. I'll see what I can find out. I'll let you know soon.

She was just as curious. Would Laura step in to help Gordon?

If Laura came forward and cleared things up, Gordon would probably be fine. Right now, Laura really was Ms. Austin from Stonehaven. But if she helped out, Stonehaven would hear about it, and anything to do with these students would have to be done out in the open. Laurinda doubted Baily would go for something that risky.

She found the old detective's number and called him. He was in the middle of his tea when he saw who was calling. Nearly spilled the cup, too. He had no idea what Laurinda could possibly want this time.

"Well, well, what's up, little troublemaker? Calling me at this hour?"

Laurinda could hear the fond exasperation in his voice and

grinned. "Don't worry, I'm not calling because I need you to bail me out of anything. I just wanted to ask if you know anything about a student named Gordon. Our principal sent her to the police for fraud."

The detective sounded surprised, but he was intrigued. "That girl? She's with the anti-fraud team now. Been there a week already. They question her every day, but she won't budge. Keeps insisting she didn't do anything wrong. Even when my colleagues showed her Laura's record, she refused to believe it. Swore up and down that Laura wouldn't trick her."

Laurinda blinked. "Record? Laura has a criminal record?"

She hadn't known anything about that.

"What's on her record?"

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 409

[611 words]

"You haven't heard? She's got two charges against her. First, she stole Baily's stuff. Second, she helped Bagot drug Aggie and Lawrence, so now she's considered an accomplice. There's already a warrant out for her arrest."

Laurinda listened to the officer's explanation, her feelings all tangled up. Laura really was capable of anything. Baily would have to look out for himself now. Laurinda could only hope he'd manage to hang on until she made it back to Stonehaven.

The officer, noticing her silence, reminded her, "There are still some outside forces from the Charles family that haven't been dealt with yet. You need to stay alert and be careful when you go out."

"Alright, I understand. Thank you for warning me."

After hanging up, Laurinda finally got why Adolphus was so set on having Arrow stay by her side. She pushed herself up from her chair, hurried into Adolphus's study, and wrapped her arms around him, kissing his cheek.

"Adolphus, thank you for loving me so much."

Adolphus looked a bit dazed from her sudden affection, but it didn't stop him from gently holding her face and kissing her back.

On the other end of his video call, someone sat in stunned silence. Nobody had ever seen the usually cool and reserved Adolphus show this much tenderness.

A moment later, the video call ended.

In the living room, Laurinda stretched out with her head in Adolphus's lap, reading while he scrolled through a meeting on his tablet.

It wasn't long before they heard voices outside. Adolphus helped Laurinda sit up, and they saw Fidelia and York coming in together.

Laurinda's eyes sparkled when she saw Fidelia. It was her first day back at work, and Laurinda was dying to know how it went.

"Fidelia, how was your first day back at the office?"

"It was actually really good. I feel like I've found myself again."

Fidelia took a glass of water from the butler, sat down across from Laurinda, and continued, "So much has changed while was away. The world moves se fast, and honestly, the studying I did before just wasn't enough. I'm planning to spend my days

getting used to work again and then take night classes to catch up with everything I've missed."

Seeing Fidelia so full of energy made Laurinda genuinely happy. Not everyone could let go of the past and start over. She was relieved Fidelia hadn't given up on herself.

Fidelia glanced at Laurinda, checking her complexion. She looked healthy, which put Fidelia at ease but she still had to ask "How are you feeling lately? I've been

busy, I haven't had time to check in. York said you're not going back to school. Did you get everything sorted out?"

Laurinda smiled at Fidelia's quick-fire questions.

"I'm doing pretty well. As long as I don't overdo it, I feel fine. I've arranged for an early graduation, so I'm not going to take the college entrance exams."

She didn't say much about her plans. She didn't want to give other people more to worry about. Some things, she knew, were better left unsaid.

Fidelia didn't totally agree with Laurinda skipping the exams, but she respected her decision and had a pretty good idea what was behind it.

"If you've made up your mind, then go for it. I just hope everything goes smoothly for you from here on out."

Laurinda smiled and nodded. She hoped for the same thing, as long as she could take care of the Stonehaven mess first.

While they were talking, there was more noise outside. York stood up to check it out.

The commotion grew louder. Laurinda sat up straighter and looked out the window. A few familiar figures came into view, and her expression softened automatically.

"Jasper's back. Is his training over?"

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[565 words]

Adolphus paused, clearly caught off guard. He hadn't known Jasper was back either.

"I knew his training was finished, but I had no idea he actually came home. Locke mentioned sending him to Flame Training Camp. Maybe this is just a couple days off for him."

Laurinda blinked in surprise. She'd heard of Flame Training Camp. It wasn't quite as brutal as Stonehaven, but it was still the kind of place that haunted people in their dreams. Now, she felt a little worried about Jasper.

Adolphus noticed her unease. He slipped his arm around her waist and pressed close, his voice gentle. "Don't worry. If Jasper couldn't handle it, Locke would never even consider sending him. He's a lot tougher than you think."

Laurinda glanced back at him, searching his eyes for reassurance.

The confidence in his gaze made her believe him. Maybe she really had underestimated Jasper. Somewhere along the way, he'd grown up without her noticing.

"Laurinda!"

Jasper came running in from outside and stopped just a few steps away. His eyes were red, and he looked at her with a wounded, worried expression.

"Laurinda, why didn't you tell me you got hurt? Aren't I your brother?"

Laurinda's heart squeezed at the sight of him. He was taller now, leaner, stronger. She felt a rush of emotions she couldn't quite name and reached out her hand.

"I'm really okay. I just didn't want you to worry."

Jasper didn't take her hand. He straightened his back, put on his most serious face, and said, "Do you still think I'm a little kid? Is that why you Hide things from me? Sis don't you see how hard I'm working? I don't want to be your weakness. I can protect you too."

His stubborn look was exactly like Laurinda's when she got worked up. Adolphus couldn't help but smile a little as he stood up, walked over, and crouched beside Jasper. He gently touched Jasper's wrist.

"And when you got hurt, did you tell your sister?"

Jasper scowled at him, indignant. They'd promised not to mention his injury. How could Adolphus just throw him under the bus like that?

Once he was sure Jasper was fine, Adolphus raised an eyebrow, a teasing smile tugging at his lips. "I did promise to keep your secret from your sister, but I never said I'd keep it forever. So, who said you could scold her like that?"

He tapped Jasper's nose, playful but firm. No one got to talk to Laurinda that way, not even her little brother. The two of them were too much alike. There were better ways to show you care.

With Adolphus stepping in, Jasper's bravado faded in a heartbeat. He could sense trouble and

immediately dropped his gaze admitting quietly, "I got reckless during the finals. Tried to lure the opponent and ended up falling out of a tree. Hurt my arm, but it's

healed now, really."

Laurinda ignored Jasper's attempt at an apology and turned to Adolphus instead.

He knew it was his turn to face the music. He gave her his most apologetic smile.

"As soon as he got hurt, Locke called me. You'd just woken up and I didn't want to upset you or make things worse. But I promise, as soon as you were asleep, I went straight to the hospital to check on him myself.

made sure everything was okay

before I left."

He reached for Laurinda's hand, eyes soft and full of hope that she wouldn't be angry with him.

Share to your friends

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.