

Chapter 410 Romantic Atmosphere

Marco's response took Reynolds by surprise. In spite of knowing when to swallow his pride and when to strut around, he couldn't help but feel humiliated.

His features darkened as he attempted to muster words.

Lorraine chimed in, her tone cold as she said, "Reynolds, if you truly pledge your allegiance to the company, you can rest assured that fairness will be your companion. If you find yourself with no pressing tasks at the moment, feel free to retreat and indulge in some well-deserved rest."

Uncertainty washed over Reynolds and he looked at them, fear flickering in his eyes.

Marco was unlikely to cut him any slack. Lorraine was known for her sarcastic remarks, and Jennie was champing at the bit to berate him.

It was clear that if he stuck around, he would only be opening himself up to more criticism.

With a forced smile and gritted teeth, Reynolds bid them goodbye.

His footsteps receded and Marco's gaze found its way to Lorraine.

A tinge of embarrassment lingered around Lorraine. She avoided his gaze, cleared her throat and said, "Thank you."

Marco responded, "Don't mention it. It was my duty to do so. I'm just glad I decided to wait instead of leaving."

Relief flooded him, thankful that he had accompanied her.

Moreover, he had witnessed the determined stand Loraine had taken in the meeting room.

As Marco's gaze fell upon Loraine, a subtle change occurred in his expression. His eyes softened, revealing a newfound affection for her.

His understanding of Loraine had been limited until now. The more he discovered about her, the more he realized how remarkably compelling she was.

Their eyes met and the atmosphere suddenly turned suggestive.

Jennie watched this silent exchange between them with an understanding grin.

Despite her previous anger at Marco for underestimating her, Loraine's feelings underwent a transformation as he learned the truth and offered a sincere apology. She began to perceive him as a much more trustworthy and dependable individual compared to Jimmie.

Plus, his heroic intervention to defend Loraine added to his charming allure.

A chuckle escaped Jennie's lips as she said, "Lorrie, I just recalled an urgent matter I need to attend to. I'll take my leave now. Don't bother dropping me off!"

Just as she finished, the elevator arrived conveniently. Jennie darted into it and before Loraine could respond, she

swiftly pressed the close button, waving them off.

Lorraine couldn't help but shake her head at Jennie's hasty exit.

With the elevator doors shut, they were left waiting. Lorraine coughed. When her eyes met Marco's, she saw a smear of blood on his face.

His face must have been scratched by the pen just now. And now it began to bleed.

Touched by the sight, Lorraine gestured towards Marco's face, her voice tender. "Marco, you've been hurt."

Dismissing the blood with a nonchalant wipe, Marco responded coolly, "It's nothing serious."

Lorraine shot him a disapproving look.

He had once risked injury to rescue Rowan. Even then, he had braved it out. Why couldn't he understand the importance of taking care of himself?

Unable to put her worry into words, she hesitated before speaking up. "This isn't a minor matter. Your face is your key asset. If it gets scarred, you'll be left with no strengths."

Marco's eyes twinkled with amusement as he leaned in closer to her. "So you're saying I have a handsome face?"

Feeling the pressure, Lorraine stepped aside and shifted her gaze to avoid eye contact.

Should any staff from Universe Group walk by, they would witness their CEO, blushing bashfully, cornered at the elevator.

Collecting her composure, Loraine nudged Marco aside, stating stubbornly, "Stop making absurd remarks. Follow me unless you fancy a scarred face."

She eased out of Marco's embrace, feigning tranquility, and guided him to her office.

Marco paused for a moment before obediently trailing after Loraine.

Once in the office, Loraine fetched the first-aid kit. As she turned around, she noticed Marco's expectant gaze and her heart fluttered. His intense gaze followed her every move, akin to a charming puppy.

Taking a deep breath to soothe her nerves, she assured herself that Marco had hurt himself for her sake and she was merely offering some help. Nothing more.

As per her directions, Marco seated himself on the sofa. With a cotton swab soaked in antiseptic, Loraine meticulously cleaned his wound.

A peaceful silence engulfed the office, as the duo shared a tranquil moment together.

While dabbing the cotton swab, Loraine's fingertips brushed against his face accidentally.

The chilling sensation of the medicine contrasted with the warm, smooth skin of Marco's face, evoking a peculiar emotion within her.

She blinked, her fingertips instinctively recoiling.

She gazed into Marco's eyes.

In a sudden instant, his hand reached out and grasped hers,

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catching her off guard.

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Chapter 411 The Celebration Party

Marco and Loraine held hands, but his palm emitted such intense heat that it made her shiver with unease.

Startled, she quickly withdrew her hand.

Realizing he had crossed a boundary, Marco was keen on avoiding any resistance from Loraine.

He hurriedly clarified, "I didn't mean anything else. I just remembered that I have something important to discuss with you."

Loraine's heart raced, not daring to admit her distraction earlier.

Marco provided an opportunity for her to shift the focus, and she promptly followed along.

She asked, "What is it?"

Marco fell silent momentarily, then came up with a topic worth discussing. "The first phase of the new business district has been successfully completed. I believe our two companies should host a joint celebration to boost morale and attract other companies to join us."

Although this was an impromptu excuse, it was also a genuine consideration for their next steps.

Loraine, feeling more anxious than Marco to divert the

focus, quickly considered the situation and agreed without any hesitation.

Luckily, Marco's facial injury was minor and received prompt treatment.

Loraine withdrew her hand, cleared her throat, and put away the first-aid box. "Well, Marco, you can leave now."

Marco was taken aback. He wished to spend more time with her.

Being alone with Loraine, in a calm and composed atmosphere, was a rare occurrence for him. Even without speaking, he savored the moment and longed to be close to her.

However, there was no valid reason for him to stay.

Furthermore, Loraine had just forgiven him and was willing to converse with him. What if he upset her again?

Marco had never felt so subservient to anyone before.

Reluctantly, Marco rose slowly. Observing his sluggishness, Loraine couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong?" Hearing this, Marco grew serious and said, "Loraine, Universe Group is not as united as you believe. Conspiracies are emerging that could harm you. You must be cautious."

Loraine was taken aback.

"If incidents like today occur again, you can contact me at any time. I know you're capable of handling things on your own, but having a reliable person by your side would be better..."

Marco rambled on, something he had never done before,

fearing that Loraine might misunderstand him.

He added clarifications to prevent her from finding his advice bothersome.

However, Loraine listened attentively, not refuting him, and nodded to indicate her understanding.

"Alright, I understand. I will be careful."

Marco was taken aback and moved slowly. "Then I'll take my leave."

"Okay."

As he made his way to the door, Loraine suddenly said, "Thank you, Marco. And..." She took a deep breath and continued, "Be careful on the way."

Marco's heart leaped in his chest, a wild flutter that momentarily disrupted the rhythm of his steady pulse.

After he departed, Loraine took the celebration party he had casually mentioned to heart.

She believed it was necessary to hold such an event and thus meticulously arranged for its preparation.

With Marco's direction, Bryant Group naturally collaborated with Universe Group.

On the day of the celebration party, the guests congregated and raised their glasses in a toast, filling the air with the clinking of crystal and the cheerful hum of celebration.

Loraine and Marco, as the esteemed hosts, graced the party with their presence, commanding attention as they moved through the crowd in seamless synchrony.

They were designed to complement any clothing style and appeared stunning even without makeup.

They immediately became the center of attention that evening.

Loraine wore an elegant and opulent long white gown, exuding dignity. Marco, dressed in a sophisticated grey suit, displayed an air of nobility and charm.

Loraine didn't know if Marco intentionally coordinated their attire, but it seemed as if they were dressed as a couple. This troubled her, but she couldn't lose her composure amidst the crowd. Also, there was no time to change her outfit. She had to maintain the facade of normalcy and attempt to keep her distance from Marco.

Yet, it appeared that Marco had purposefully orchestrated this. He persistently accompanied her and steered conversations toward the business district, making it challenging for her to refuse his inquiries.

Consequently, everyone assumed she was Marco's partner and refrained from interrupting them.

Observing Marco's strategy, Loraine felt both angry and helpless. She had to find ways to avoid him and engage in conversations with representatives from other companies.

At this moment, a man entered the hall.

Loraine noticed Cayson, clad in a light-colored suit that softened his appearance. His usual gentle smile adorned his face. As soon as he spotted Loraine, Cayson approached with an even brighter smile.

"Lorrie, congratulations! The success of the new

Loraine reciprocated the smile and replied, "You have also contributed significantly. We achieved this together."

Cayson extended his hand with a smile. "Since we are celebrating together, may I invite you to accompany me for the evening?"

Chapter 412 A Storm Of Jealousy

With an expectant gleam, Cayson extended his hand to Loraine.

Caught off guard, Loraine hesitated. At that moment, a firm, icy voice interjected.

"No need, Loraine already has a partner."

Wearing a scowl, Marco quickly stepped in front of Loraine, positioning himself protectively as if staking his claim.

He met Cayson's gaze defiantly as if he were the host welcoming a guest, and stated with a note of arrogance, "While your presence at the celebration party is appreciated, attempting to whisk away my companion is hardly gentlemanly."

The mood on Cayson's face shifted into a colder tone as he retorted, "Marco, let's not forget I'm the acting CEO of Universe Group. You're merely a partner. It's not really your place to make such comments, is it?"

Marco narrowed his eyes, his presence radiating authority as he retorted, "It appears you've overlooked the nature of this event. Tonight's celebration party is hosted by both Bryant Group and Universe Group. In that regard, Loraine and I hold the highest authority here!"

As the exchange between the two men unfolded, Loraine felt a headache coming on.

She had intentionally kept Cayson out of the loop to let him rest and to avoid precisely this kind of situation.

It seemed inevitable that whenever the two crossed paths, they would end up clashing, with her caught in the middle.

At this moment, Cayson shifted his attention to her and gently inquired, "Lorrie, do you have an escort?"

Their interaction had drawn the attention of the surrounding guests, who were now watching the scene unfold with bated breath.

Marco also gazed at her intensely.

A simple nod from her would suggest she belonged to him.

Lorraine shook her head in denial, clarifying, "No."

It was the truth. While she and Marco had organized the party together, she had never agreed to be his date.

At her response, Marco's face clouded over while Cayson's lips curled into a triumphant smirk.

"Did you hear that, Marco? Lorrie clarified that she doesn't have a partner. Don't flatter yourself!"

Cayson then turned to Lorraine once more, offering his hand. "Lorrie, since you're partner-less, would you allow me the honor of escorting you?"

Lorraine glanced at Marco's sullen expression and his tense posture, anticipating an outburst if she agreed.

With a resigned smile, she declined, "Cayson, this is a celebration party. I am here to mingle with all the guests, not just one partner. Thank you."

With a swift intervention, Marco stepped between Loraine and Cayson, stating, "You've heard her. Loraine doesn't need you. You may leave."

Cayson's smile faltered, and he posed another question. "Lorrie, would you prefer Marco as your partner?"

Marco scoffed, "And why wouldn't she? I am far more suitable than you."

Loraine was momentarily at a loss for words, but she eventually said sternly to both men, "I said, I don't need a partner. Neither of you! Who says a woman must have a male companion to stand with her at a business banquet? I certainly don't!"

Her declaration was laced with confidence and defiance. On hearing her words, both men stood flabbergasted, admiration gleaming in their eyes.

Having had enough of the squabble, Loraine chose not to engage any further. She turned and made her way to the center of the party to mingle with the guests.

With her glass raised, she moved confidently through the crowd. Her calm demeanor and assertive presence were enough to outshine those around her.

Despite her clear statement of not wanting a male companion, both Marco and Cayson were not ready to back down. They trailed closely behind Loraine, almost as if they were engaging in a silent competition.

The spectacle of the two most eligible men at the party vying for Loraine's attention was intriguing to behold. One was suave and gentle, the other stern and domineering. Loraine became the envy of all women present. The other

men, fully aware they could not compete with Marco and Cayson, made no attempt to approach Loraine.

However, the one in the spotlight, Loraine, was anything but pleased.

When the two men beside her quarreled, they resembled nothing more than feuding schoolboys.

Cayson scoffed, "Marco, let me remind you, Lorrie and I grew up together. We're practically family, and now we're both presidents of Universe Group. It's only natural for me to accompany Loraine. You have no say here."

Marco shot back, "You're merely an acting CEO. This party is jointly hosted by Bryant Group and Universe Group. If anyone should leave, it's you. I'm the one who should be with Loraine!"

Were these two in grade school?

Listening to their bickering, Loraine found herself speechless.

Given the importance of the occasion, she knew she had to be polite and couldn't afford to act rashly. The last thing she wanted was to give the crowd a reason to mock them. Otherwise, she would have already thrown Marco and Cayson out.



Chapter 413 Fowler Family

Loraine kept her face impassive, quickening her pace as she brainstormed on how to dodge the duo trailing her.

Then, amongst the bustling crowd, she noticed her radiant best friend, Jennie, approaching her.

To Loraine, Jennie sparkled like a priceless gem.

Jennie, arm linked with an elegant gentleman, was caught off guard when her hand was suddenly snatched.

Recognizing Loraine's familiar face, she gasped. "Lorrie, what's the matter?"

Loraine's sudden fervor surprised her.

Clearing her throat, Loraine subtly gestured toward the men lingering behind her.

Jennie's eyes widened in realization upon spotting them, a wave of empathy washing over her.

After all, being relentlessly pursued due to one's exceptional charm was a predicament in itself.

Registering Loraine's silent plea for aid, Jennie decided to step in. Pulling the man beside her closer, she said, "Lorrie, meet my father."

Loraine swiftly extended her hand. "It's a pleasure to see you again, Mr. Fowler."

The gentleman was none other than Jennie's father, Patrick Fowler.

Sporting gold-rimmed glasses, Patrick exuded a graceful air despite his age. His warmth was as infectious as ever.

The sight of his daughter exchanging knowing glances with Loraine amused him, and he graciously returned Loraine's greeting.

"Lorrie, you've truly come a long way. I genuinely wish Jennie could follow in your footsteps," he said, admiration seeping into his words.

Jennie frowned, feigning annoyance. "Dad, is it too much to ask for a little praise? It's as if Lorrie is your flesh and blood."

"If you exhibited even a fraction of Lorrie's excellence, I'd wake up smiling every day," Patrick shot back, his gaze softening as he turned to Loraine. "Lorrie, you're remarkably gifted and driven. Jennie is fortunate to have you as her friend."

Jennie playfully stuck her tongue out.

A wave of laughter bubbled up from Loraine's chest at this.

"Naughty girl!" Patrick shot a mock glare at his daughter before turning to Loraine. "Lorrie, I appreciate your support for Jennie. I'm relieved she's involved in the new business district. The Fowler family plans to expand our investment, particularly in jewelry, in this new district!"

The Fowler family, known for their dominance in the jewelry business, were far from rigid entrepreneurs. Seeing the promising prospects of the new business district, Patrick didn't want to miss this opportunity.

Lorraine was delighted by this revelation. Her initial plan to use Jennie as a cover was replaced by her genuine interest in the topic Patrick introduced.

"That's wonderful news!"

Marco watched Lorraine's beaming face with a hint of jealousy, regardless of Patrick's seniority.

He cleared his throat, hoping to catch their attention.

"Mr. Fowler, as the president of Bryant Group, I'd be more than happy to address any queries you have about the new business district since you seem quite invested in it."

Patrick, having been briefed by his daughter about the intricate dynamics between Lorraine and Marco, was certain something was afoot.

Marco, a daring young man with a fountain of innovative ideas, had steered Bryant Group to prosperity. His influence was slowly spreading across Vagow and would soon permeate the entire state. With Bryant Group collaborating with Universe Group, it was only a matter of time before Marco ascended the ranks of global business leaders.

Such foresight was not common amongst his contemporaries.

This very quality made Patrick eager to establish a camaraderie with Marco. Noticing the hint of discontent in Marco's eyes, Patrick laughed heartily. "My goodness! I was so engrossed, I forgot we're here to celebrate! Let's set aside business matters for now. We'll have ample time to discuss our potential partnership in the future!"

Recognizing Patrick's conciliatory gesture, Marco grinned.

"It's not that we shouldn't discuss business. But Loraine has had a long day. If you've got any questions, feel free to direct them to Cayson. He's also the CEO of Universe Group, right?"

A shadow of annoyance passed over Cayson's face. It was apparent that Marco was trying to push him aside to claim Loraine's attention for himself.