

Chapter 476 I Do Care

Indeed, Loraine found herself nursing a tinge of remorse for her biting words to Marco previously. In truth, their relationship was presently devoid of any romantic undertones.

She should not have cared about Marco's private connections and preferences.

Conversely, Marco had arrived just in time with the rare blood type Aldo needed. He had even reached out to a scientific team, procuring a surgical robot, significantly assisting her. Besides, his brave rescue of Rowan meant the Torres family was considerably in his debt.

Could she really harbor resentment towards him?

When Loraine made the decision to attend the meeting that day, she was determined to confront Marco with composure and self-possession.

However, once confronted with his presence, she realized that maintaining such emotional detachment was beyond her capabilities.

Despite her attempts to convince herself that her association with Marco was immaterial, their past moments of mutual help and the blurred lines of their relationship swirled in her mind at his sight.

Her nerves refused to settle in his presence. Keely persistently stood as the wall between them.

Keely's deeds were undeniably more malicious than what the Bryant family members had perpetrated, and the stain of her crimes seemed indelible.

And now, Keely, who had committed such a grave error, was out of prison, enjoying herself overseas, and was audaciously planning to return and flaunt her liberty in Loraine's face.

The mere thought of it ignited Loraine's anger.

Lost in her reverie, Loraine remained seated despite her icy countenance, not abruptly leaving the meeting.

In response, Marco's gaze softened as he looked at her, a spark of optimism flickering in his eyes.

"Loraine, what are you thinking about for now?"

Marco rose from his chair and ambled towards Loraine. He then knelt and locked his eyes with hers.

Suddenly, a shadow loomed before Loraine. As she regained her focus, she found herself confined between her chair and Marco.

His gaze was intense, piercing her.

"Loraine, can we have a discussion?"

Loraine unconsciously swallowed.

Being cornered, like a prey, triggered a warning bell in Loraine's mind.

The man before her was the predator, his warm breath tantalizingly near, almost as if he was ready to consume her.

Her heart pounded as she feigned serenity. "Discuss about what? What's there for us to discuss anyway?"

Letting out a sigh, Marco said in a subdued tone, "Loraine, I promised to sever ties with Keely. My agreeing to her return was only to conclusively put an end to her meddling. I assure you, Keely will not be an impediment between us in the future."

The moment he uttered "Keely," Loraine was filled with an absurd amusement.

A sense of familiarity engulfed her. It was as if they were reliving the same tragic events that occurred during their three-year marriage. It seemed that Marco, once again, inflicted pain upon her repeatedly for the sake of Keely.

Loraine's hands balled into fists, the knuckles turning bone white. She outstretched her arms, endeavoring to shove Marco aside.

However, the man remained an unmovable force, her own strength paling in comparison to his.

A feeling of despair began to well up within Loraine's heart. She bit down on her lower lip hard, eyes welling up with tears. She held Marco's gaze and asserted, "Why should I care if you invite her back into your life? I couldn't care less!"

"But I do care!"

Marco's voice was filled with urgency. He gripped her hand with a desperate intensity, his whisper almost a plea. "I care. I care so deeply about how you feel. I don't give a damn when Keely is set free or if she decides to come back. I've barred her from my life. She switched her phone number just to get through to me. We've come so far, Loraine, and

I won't let misconceptions hinder us any further."

"Are you serious about this?" His words sent shockwaves through Loraine's heart. She looked at him, teary-eyed, feeling a loss for words.

In Marco's eyes, Loraine was a blend of innocence, purity, and allure.

Drawing his lips together, Marco leaned in and pressed his lips to hers.

This was no tentative exploration but an assertive, overwhelming assault, claiming even the air she breathed.

The overwhelming intensity quickened Loraine's heartbeat. Surprisingly, she found herself not loathing this kiss. Instead, it seemed to provide an outlet for the sadness within her.

And so, she gripped Marco's shoulder and bit back.

This was more a fierce bite than a tender kiss, leading both of them to the sharp taste of blood.

The taste of blood caught Marco off guard, but he didn't release Loraine. His grip on her tightened, yet his kiss became softer.

Feeling the man's gentle touch, Loraine's eyelashes fluttered. She closed her eyes, surrendering to the kiss slowly.

In the midst of their passionate encounter, a sudden interruption came.

There were two knocks on the door.

"Miss Torres, are you there?"

As the doorknob began to turn, Marco and Loraine's movements came to an abrupt halt, their bodies frozen in place.

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Chapter 477 Be Caught On Spot

In a blink of an eye, Loraine thrust Marco aside forcefully and exclaimed, "Wait outside!"

A confused response echoed from Jolie on the other side of the door, "Okay, okay, Miss Torres."

With a jittery demeanor, Loraine straightened her attire, and the realization hit her. Why did she feel as if she'd been caught in the act?

A flush tinted her cheeks, and she bestowed Marco with a bashful stare.

Marco took a gulp, accepting his blunder candidly, "I apologize, Loraine. I simply couldn't control myself..."

Upon hearing this, Loraine's hand stilled. She too had succumbed to an uncontrollable urge moments ago.

She shook off the thought, distanced herself from Marco, stood upright, and adjusted her outfit.

Her lipstick smeared, tears shimmering in her eyes, her face an open book revealing their recent endeavor.

Rectifying her appearance was out of the question. Loraine made a quick effort to look less disheveled before approaching the door.

Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Marco rooted in

place, his thoughts wandering, a cryptic smile playing on his lips, oblivious to his disheveled collar.

Loraine, in her frustration, moved towards him to fix his collar. She bit her lip and uttered, "Who would have thought Mr. Bryant could be so careless while discussing business?"

Marco's grin grew broader. As he attempted to speak, a sudden pang made him wince.

Loraine was taken aback and blurted out, "What happened?"

Regardless of how much she feigned indifference, her instinctual response unveiled her concern.

Marco felt his heart melt at the sight of Loraine's worried countenance. He mumbled, "It's nothing. A kitten just bit me."

Loraine was taken aback for a moment, and when his words registered, her cheeks flushed a deeper shade of red.

Standing by the door, Jolie had been patient for a while. With no response, she mustered the courage to call out again, "Miss Torres, are you still in there? We require your immediate attention to handle an urgent situation. "

Grasping the situation, Loraine shot Marco a disapproving look, fixed his tie with more force than necessary, and sternly instructed, "Get yourself sorted!"

With that, she pivoted on her heel and moved towards the door.

Marco's tie felt constricting, suffocating his breath. He let out a cough, but his eyes sparkled with amusement. He adjusted his outfit and followed Loraine with a relaxed

stride.

Upon opening the door, Loraine found Jolie poised to knock once more. Seeing Loraine, her eyes also fell on Marco, lingering just behind Loraine.

Startled, Jolie's apology came naturally as she bowed in response. "Forgive me, I wasn't aware that Mr. Bryant was present. I didn't mean to intrude. I'll take my leave now!"

She had presumed Marco had departed with Davy, and Loraine remained in solitude within the office.

Marco's presence caught her off guard!

Stealing a quick glance at them, she was bemused.

Their outfits were disheveled and peculiar.

Her usually imposing and frosty boss now had smeared makeup, reddened corners of her eyes, as though she had been through some ordeal.

Jolie felt like she had stumbled upon a clandestine secret and inadvertently disrupted a romantic rendezvous of her boss...

Noticing the alterations on Jolie's countenance, Loraine's lips quivered with a suppressed smirk, perplexed about the whirlwind of thoughts in her mind.

With a firm grip, Loraine yanked Jolie back by the collar. She touched her forehead in exasperation and demanded, "What's going on in your head? You said there was an urgent matter. What is it?"

Jolie looked apprehensively at both of their faces, gulped nervously and announced gravely, "There's a man outside,

a peculiar looking young man, who says he has a package for you and insists on handing it to you personally."

A package? Loraine was taken aback. What was so extraordinary about this package?

She cast a sidelong glance at Marco. Had he made another frivolous purchase?

Marco, with a hint of innocence, shrugged, "Wasn't me..."

With no other option, Loraine proceeded downstairs, escorted by Jolie.

Upon laying eyes on the young man, Loraine instantly comprehended Jolie's description of the man's eccentric demeanor.

He was a towering figure, powerfully built, with sunglasses on. He stood erect, his body taut, constantly surveying his surroundings with vigilance.

This level of alertness was something Loraine had only seen in Rowan's people. Moreover, his arms were adorned with tattoos and a grizzled beard added to his intimidating demeanor, making him seem more formidable than an average soldier.

This didn't seem like an ordinary package delivery.

Chapter 478 Express Package

With a suspicious gaze, Loraine studied the stranger before her. He reciprocated her curious look before raising his voice, "Loraine Torres, correct? We have a package that needs your signature."

Marco gave the man a scrutinizing look. He whispered into Loraine's ear, "He is a mercenary."

Despite her best efforts to remain composed, she felt her confusion growing. What could possibly require the escort of a mercenary?

Then it dawned on her.

Could it be the surgical robot she had borrowed from Solar Company under a confidential agreement?

"Who amongst you is Loraine?" The man's wary gaze bounced between the three of them.

Stepping forward, Loraine handed the man her business card with a polite smile. "I'm Loraine. The gentleman here is Marco, CEO of the Bryant Group, and Jolie is a friend. You can trust them."

Upon confirming her identity, the man's tension eased. He extended his hand towards Loraine, introducing himself, "Nice to meet you, Miss Torres. I'm in charge of the ninth-generation robot's escort from Solar Company."

The details of the ninth-generation surgical robot were top secret. One of Solar Company's conditions for lending it was complete discretion, so only Loraine could sign off on its arrival.

Having briefly greeted him, Loraine glanced past him with a sense of urgency. "Where's the surgical robot? Wasn't it supposed to be delivered directly to the hospital?"

"No, Miss Torres, we first bring the robot to the Universe Group for your confirmation. Once everything is in order, we'll accompany you to the hospital."

Loraine nodded in understanding and silently sighed, acknowledging the Solar Company's meticulous approach to their work.

She then followed the man to the Universe Group's rooftop helipad for the inspection.

As a black helicopter descended onto the landing pad, a group of mercenaries emerged, carrying a square metal container.

The sight of it awed Loraine. She had never truly grasped the significance of the ninth-generation surgical robot until now. Solar Company's show of force was a testament to the robot's worth.

A mercenary unlocked the box using a temporary key, only to reveal another lockbox within. After several more layers of security, they finally unveiled a precise surgical arm, gleaming in the darkness of the metal box.

Behold, the ninth-generation surgical robot!

Loraine was buzzing with anticipation. This robot, she

thought, might be the long-awaited cure for Aldo's affliction.

Marco took her hand, offering her a reassuring grin.

His eyes held an unspoken promise. He would remain by her side, always.

This moved Loraine, causing a moment of indecision.

Just then, an official approached, carrying a small parcel.

"Mr. Bryant, another parcel awaits your acceptance. Kindly sign for it."

Had Marco also received a package?

Curiosity piqued, Loraine observed the package. It appeared to be from the Solar Company. Perhaps it was sent by Sullivan?

Marco, knitting his brows, expressed surprise too. Swiftly, he accepted the package and scribbled his signature.

The package was compact, taking on a rectangular form.

Upon unwrapping it, Marco discovered an anniversary album.

It bore the Solar Company's logo, and in the top-right corner were embossed golden words: "The Solar Company's anniversary album."

Bemusement clouded Marco's face. Why was he the recipient of a commemorative album?

But he shrugged it off and proceeded to turn to the album's first page.

Though she didn't want to intrude, Loraine couldn't help but sneak a peek at the album, since Marco didn't seem to mind.

The first page presented a group photograph.

Instantly, Loraine's eyes were drawn to a radiant woman. In the picture, this lady was happily ensconced behind a man, her arm draped around his neck and a cheerful toast being offered to the camera. The intimacy between them was evident.

A caption below revealed that this was the founding team of the Solar Company.

Loraine sighed and commented, "She's incredibly beautiful. I'm not sure what her role is at the Solar Company, but it appears that she has a close relationship with them."

It struck her as odd. Would a corporation display such private moments in their official albums?

There was something oddly familiar about the man in the lady's embrace. As she leaned in for a closer look, Marco's expression turned sour. With a flick of his wrist, the album was promptly closed.

Chapter 479 The Operation Was Successful

Loraine had an odd sensation. She voiced her concern, "I'm not quite done yet."

Marco managed to muster a faint smile upon noticing Loraine's puzzled expression and diverted the topic, "We ought to get to the hospital."

Loraine was initially indifferent, but Marco's weird demeanor stirred a sense of unease in her. "Is something wrong, Marco?"

Marco responded with a composed grin, his lips pursed. "It's nothing serious. Just taken aback by the unexpected album."

Loraine could sense an undercurrent of tension. Persisting, she queried, "Why would they send an album your way? Merely because of a business collaboration?"

At this, Marco's face tensed up. "Actually, my trip overseas years ago coincided with Solar Company's inception. Courtesy of Sullivan, I was present at its inaugural event..."

While the conversation felt offbeat to Loraine, she chose not to overthink it. She responded, "That explains your close ties with Solar Company. You've been working with them since then. No wonder there is no news in the industry."

When Marco ventured abroad, he had the chance to

stumble upon the birth of the Solar Company. He truly was a fortunate individual, blessed with both resilience and good fortune.

Marco returned a smile, silent, while internally cursing the individual who'd dispatched the photo album.

Without wasting a moment, they boarded the helicopter, transporting the robot to the hospital.

They were reassured by the hospital's confidentiality agreement, with only a handful of doctors privy to the situation and awaiting their arrival on the rooftop.

The medical team assigned to Aldo's surgery comprised leading figures in the field. Despite their stature, the sight of the ninth-generation robot stirred a palpable excitement in them.

"Behold the first successfully developed ninth-generation robot! We are truly privileged to be its inaugural users. Mr. Bryant, Miss Torres, you have our gratitude for this unique opportunity!"

With enthusiasm, the elderly director with white hair warmly shook hands with Loraine. Loraine expressed her gratitude sincerely, saying, "We are deeply indebted to you. Please do everything you can to save my grandfather. The entire Torres family will be immensely grateful!"

The doctors nodded, moving beyond formal pleasantries. They prepared the ninth-generation robot for surgery and outlined their operation plan.

With the surgery underway, Rowan and Wesley were alerted and promptly made their way to the hospital, arriving breathless in front of the operating room. The news of the surgical robot's arrival had thrilled them.

Noticing Marco alongside Loraine outside the operating room, Rowan and Wesley were taken aback. Yet, they were indebted to Marco for procuring the surgical robot and hence held their peace.

The family, filled with anticipation and anxiety, gathered outside the operating room, their thoughts filled with prayers.

After enduring several agonizing hours, the surgery light flickered to green.

A surgeon emerged, his expression stern. This sight caused their hearts to skip a beat.

"Congratulations. The surgery was a success. All residual clots have been eradicated. The patient should regain consciousness post-anesthesia."

Sighing with relief, Loraine's legs gave way. The man standing beside her quickly reached out, steadying her.

With tear-brimmed eyes, she gave Marco a watery smile. "Marco, thank you," she said.

Memories of their recent arguments faded as Marco embraced her, feeling a deep sense of contentment.

He wasn't ready to let go of her just yet. In a soft whisper, he replied, "Expressing gratitude goes beyond mere words. How else can you demonstrate your appreciation?"

As Marco's gaze lingered on her lips, Loraine stiffened.

Her cheeks flushed as she remembered their heated exchange in the meeting room. Annoyed yet shy, she shoved him, extracting herself from his grasp.

"Relax about the thank you gift. The Torres family will make sure to compensate you generously..."

"Lorraine, you know that's not what I'm after."

As Lorraine's heart pounded, she was at a loss for what to do next. Rowan and Wesley stepped in, coughing conspicuously.

With pointed looks at Lorraine and Marco, they cautioned, "This is a hospital. Behave yourselves."

A grin playing on his lips, Marco noted a slight change in the two elders' attitude towards him.

If he'd acted like this before, they would have yanked Lorraine away instantly.

It seemed his standing within the Torres family had improved.

Feeling rather chipper, Marco prudently released Lorraine, though he remained by her side, posing like a dutiful prospective son-in-law.

Rowan and Wesley maintained a tight-lipped silence.

Despite their misgivings about Marco, they held back their criticism.

Feeling awkward, Lorraine made up an excuse to get out of sight of her two uncles. Marco trailed after her.

Rowan and Wesley watched them go, helplessness etched on their faces.

Although Lorraine hadn't given Marco a definitive response, the good news about Aldo's successful surgery had lifted

her spirits.

Marco followed her.

After a few steps, he seized her arm, pinning her against the wall. "Now we're alone, with no one to interrupt us."

Her face flushed, Loraine didn't resist. The man's eyes smoldered with intensity, and an electric tension hung in the air between them.

Right at that moment, Loraine's phone started ringing.



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Chapter 480 The Airport Project

Lorraine's reverie was interrupted by the insistent melody of the phone, jolting her awake. Her voice quivered as she mustered the courage to say, "I... I must pick up that call."

The incoming call felt like a lifeline, arriving just as she grappled with the prospect of conceding to Marco...

Observing her retreat from his grasp, Marco looked on helplessly, making no attempt to retain her.

She pulled out her phone, identifying the caller as Klein from Vagow's city hall.

There hadn't been any contact from Klein since their last encounter, during which he had expressed intentions to propose a project revamping the White Cloud Airport.

A considerable amount of time had passed, and Lorraine's assumption was that the airport project had hit a snag.

When Lorraine answered the phone, Klein announced, "Lorraine, the makeover of Vagow's White Cloud Airport got the green light."

Caught off guard, Lorraine queried, "Really?"

Klein chuckled, "Absolutely. The delay was a result of the higher-ups taking a keen interest in the project! They've not only approved the reconstruction of White Cloud Airport, but also enlisted the revered architectural maestro,

Professor Leopold Zizka from Dukeland, as our advisor."

Lorraine's astonishment multiplied.

Professor Leopold Zizka!

Any architecture student would be familiar with that name. Leopold's contributions to the construction field were globally recognized. If Leopold had not resigned from the university during Lorraine's overseas study, she would have been part of his team.

This could be her golden chance to interact with Leopold and glean professional insights, a priceless opportunity indeed.

Klein added, "That's the inside scoop. Professor Zizka will land in Vagow in three days. I've been tasked with airport pickup."

His intent to relay the news at this point was evidently an opportunity for Lorraine.

Lorraine was quick on the uptake and responded instantly, "I am free that day. Mr. Moore, if it's alright with you, I can be your chauffeur."

The fact that the CEO of Universe Group was willing to drive them personally was a clear sign of respect and high regard.

Clearly pleased with Lorraine's reaction, Klein replied with a smile, "Alright, I'll gladly accept your offer. See you in three days."

With a light laugh, Lorraine added, "I've booked a private eatery. Perhaps we could invite Professor Zizka to sample some top-notch local cuisine."

Klein's satisfaction with her grew and he commended, "Lorraine, you're a shrewd one. You've lived up to my expectations. Do ensure you're well prepared over the coming days. Professor Zizka has direct oversight over the project."

Although Klein hadn't explicitly outlined what Lorraine should get ready for, she had a clear understanding of the mission ahead.

Even if Klein wanted to collaborate with Lorraine, securing such a significant government project was no easy feat. Leopold, who held the authority to make decisions, had the final say due to his quota.

Winning Leopold's endorsement could directly propel her into the airport project's heart.

Lorraine felt a surge of gratitude towards Klein for this golden opportunity. She resolved to gear up for the task ahead and meet Klein's faith in her.

Once she expressed her thanks to Klein and ended the call, she plunged into deep thought.

Marco, who had been privy to the entire conversation, realized he had lost a chance to make a pass at Lorraine. Yet, witnessing Lorraine's earnestness tugged at his heartstrings.

His voice husky, he ventured, "Lorraine, do you need my help?"

With a twinkle in her eye and a smile on her face, Lorraine queried, "And what might Mr. Bryant offer me?"

She was in high spirits, her playfulness emerging naturally.

Marco, furrowing his brow, took a moment before

responding, "My skills lie in modeling and rendering. I could assist you with that."

Upon hearing that, Loraine burst into laughter. Marco, with his thin lips pursed, asked, "What's so funny?"

"Oh, nothing, I was just reminded of something amusing..."

Loraine struggled to suppress her giggles. Marco's words had whisked her back to her college days.

Back then, the inexperienced college boys would woo her in much the same way.

The thought that the billionaire CEO of Bryant Group would employ similar tactics amused her to no end.

However, at times, Marco displayed his fondness for her in a manner reminiscent of college students.

Despite being somewhat clumsy, it held a certain charm and cuteness to it.

Still trying to contain her laughter, Loraine managed to get out, "I appreciate the offer, Mr. Bryant, but I've got a competent architectural design team. There's no need for you to personally handle modeling and rendering."

Marco's countenance fell at this rejection, yet Loraine's joyous laughter brought him no embarrassment. Instead, it was an excuse to get closer to her.

"I just want to be of help. Let me know what you need."

Feeling a flutter in her heart at Marco's words, Loraine quickly looked away from his intense gaze and managed a soft reply, "I don't need anything, Marco. But thank you."

Another rejection stung Marco.

With a wistful smile and a rasp in his voice, he asked, "Why, Loraine? Are you still upset with me?"

Just a while ago, they were engulfed in a delightful mood. The nature of his mistake remained a mystery to him once more.