

Chapter 471 We Can't Lend It to Others

Lorraine's eyes widened in surprise as she looked at Marco, held in place by sheer disbelief.

"What other secrets are you keeping from me?"

Despite his outward composure, Marco was internally grappling with his own thoughts. He feared that Sullivan might disclose his position as the president of Solar Company.

He wasn't ready for such a revelation just yet.

It slipped Marco's mind that Sullivan could have been either in the laboratory or in the office during this time, with the emblem of Solar Company prominently displayed behind him.

Understanding the situation, Sullivan gave Marco a quick glance, and then turned to Lorraine.

"In fact, Solar Company is pioneering the future of surgical robotics, and Bryant Group is playing a part as well."

Lorraine had harbored suspicions about Marco's ties with the Solar Company ever since he recommended their mutual friend Davy to meet with representatives there. Suddenly, everything clicked into place.

"I was oblivious to the fact that you've been associated with Solar Company for such a long time." Her respect for

Marco's business savvy was evident in her words, "Solar Company is a global front-runner in research and development, especially in the realm of smart healthcare. Their ninth generation medical robot is truly a revolutionary marvel."

Relieved that Loraine was not suspicious of him, Marco felt a smile tug at the corners of his mouth as he heard her accolades for his company. His eyes sparkled with delight, his grin broadened as he responded, "As long as it helps you."

Sullivan was quietly observing their conversation, carefully gauging their reactions.

Crossing his arms and shaking his head lightly, Sullivan interjected, "However, it's not so straightforward to lend you the ninth generation medical robot."

Taken aback, Loraine queried nervously, "Why? Is it a financial issue, Dr. Palmer? My family has no issue with..."

Interrupting her with a playful grin, Sullivan shook his head.

"I'm well aware of the wealth of the Torres family. But, we've only constructed one ninth generation medical robot, and it's highly treasured. Not just our team, the entire company holds it in high esteem. We're prohibited from lending it to anyone outside our team. If our president discovers this, he's likely to be livid."

At this, Loraine felt a wave of disappointment wash over her. She had heard that the president of Solar Company was an enigma, even to his own top executives. This made her task of convincing him seem all the more daunting.

Marco shot Sullivan a withering look, his displeasure palpable. He wondered why Sullivan would make such a statement in his presence.

"Dr. Palmer, say what you want, but don't complicate things for her."

However, Loraine, caught in fear, quickly intervened, "Marco, refrain from that! Show some courtesy to Dr. Palmer!"

In her mind, Sullivan was not just Marco's friend but also a part of Solar Company. Angering Sullivan would risk their chance to borrow the robot.

Laughing and touching his nose, Sullivan responded, "Marco, you seem quite fond of this woman. Is she your girlfriend?"

Loraine was taken aback yet resigned to the fact that Sullivan chose to jest at such a moment.

Marco's eyes took on a stern look.

Only then, noticing Marco's cautious demeanor, Sullivan got serious. His deep blue eyes peeking from beneath his untamed hair seemed filled with wisdom and honesty.

"Okay, no more fun and games. Our president has given the green light to lend you our medical robot. This video conference is to finalize the contractual terms and sign a non-disclosure agreement. Please feel at ease."

Loraine was speechless for a while before she could whisper, "Thank you..."

After the contract was signed, Loraine felt a sense of relief, as if she had achieved a major accomplishment.

As she thought about the medical robot, a product of Solar Company, her curiosity was piqued. She asked Marco, "How did they come up with this robot? Was it the same process

as creating Qbot?"

Before Marco could answer, his phone started ringing. Both were taken aback when Qbot blurted out, "No, Mommy! I'm unique!"

Having not seen Qbot for a while, Loraine greeted it, "Hello, Qbot, do you also know the ninth generation medical robot?"


Unintentionally, Loraine had triggered the system's keyword, and Qbot, eager to assert its superiority over the medical robot, quickly responded, "Absolutely! The ninth generation medical robot is actually a product of Sullivan and Dad's work..."

"Enough, Qbot!" Marco cut it off abruptly. "You should be in your lab right now! Don't be lingering on my phone! Get back in there!"

In an attempt to avoid further revelations from Qbot, Marco unlocked his phone and tapped it a few times. Loraine was suspicious that he was trying to silence Qbot.

Upon raising his head, he caught Loraine casting him a questioning glance.



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Chapter 472 Being Disappointed

Seeing her suspicious look, Marco was ready to divert Loraine's attention with another topic. He chimed in, "Truth be told, the Bryant Group has been in talks with Solar Company for a while now. Our alliance has been long-standing."

Loraine didn't miss a beat at his revelation.

She'd had her suspicions about the depth of Marco and Solar Company's alliance, and his admission was the missing piece of the puzzle. There was more to this partnership than met the eye.

She threw a teasing glance at Marco, an unspoken question hanging in the air.

"Mr. Bryant, you've managed to keep this under wraps so well. There's been nary a whisper in the industry about this. Had I not been present to witness this firsthand, I would've remained oblivious to your ties with Solar Company."

A shadow of surprise crossed Marco's face. He collected his thoughts and responded tentatively, "Well, I didn't mention it because we hadn't reached a desirable outcome yet."

Seeing his honest reaction, any hint of Loraine's irritation vanished. "Well, it's not like you owe me this information. Congratulations. This alliance with Solar Company will undoubtedly catapult the Bryant Group to greater heights!"



Yet, Marco's tone was sober as he countered, "Not just me, it's us who are rising together."

Loraine was taken aback. She thought he was jesting until she noticed the earnestness in his gaze.

His eyes held a warmth, a sincerity, as if she were a cherished gem in his possession.

Loraine felt her heart flutter under his gaze. This time, she did not shy away from the intense affection reflected in his dark eyes.

His eyes wavered when he noticed her unabashed look, and then he broke into a smile.

Upon noticing the signs of fatigue under his eyes, Loraine was reminded of his persistent efforts the night before. His initiative in reaching out to the research and development team of the surgical robot for her and his transparency in sharing partnership details stirred both worry and affection within her.

Suddenly, her gaze landed on his slightly crooked tie.

The impeccably groomed Marco wouldn't let such a minor detail slide unless he had spent the entire night working tirelessly on her account.

Loraine was reminded of their early married life when she would help him get dressed.

Spontaneously, she reached up to adjust his tie.

Caught off guard, Marco instinctively tilted his head down to allow her access. In that moment, their eyes connected.

As Loraine caught sight of his subtle gesture, astonishment

washed over her, leaving her just as stunned as Marco.

Coughing to mask her surprise, she quickly averted her eyes and was about to pull her hand back. She hastily defended her actions, "Don't misunderstand. I just didn't want you to be the butt of jokes at the office."

Yet, Marco held her hand firmly. After a slight struggle, Loraine ceased her attempts to withdraw.

The mood was hazy. Anticipation tingled within her, but its source was unclear.

Her heart played an accelerating rhythm while Marco's face loomed closer, and without realizing it, Loraine's breath caught in her chest.

However, Marco came to a halt just inches away. He gently took hold of her hand and guided it to rest upon his right chest.

A robust heartbeat thrummed beneath his chest.

"Loraine," Marco called out in a raspy voice, his tone filled with solemnity. "I promise, starting now, I will love you wholeheartedly and ensure that sorrow never finds its way to you again. All I ask is a chance, a single chance for us to rebuild..."

The sudden declaration left Loraine dumbfounded. She struggled to grasp the meaning behind his unexpected proclamation.

Yet, her heart pulsed erratically. She couldn't deny that his words stirred something within her.

Could they truly find a way to start over?



Her uncertainty teetered on the brink of affirmation when an abrasive ringtone shattered the moment.

Reality crashed back onto Loraine.

A frown creased Marco's brow as he dismissed the call without even a glance, yet the persistence of the ringtone lingered.

"Answer it. What if it's something important?" Loraine inhaled deeply, centering herself.

A deeper frown etched into Marco's face at the sight of an unfamiliar foreign number. He threw an apologetic look at Loraine and accepted the call.

Their proximity was such that the silence in the study was deafening.

The moment the call connected, a flirty, enticing voice slipped into the quiet, reaching both their ears.

"Marco, I miss you so much..."

Marco's expression shifted dramatically as he cast a subconscious glance at Loraine.

Loraine's face turned pale instantly.

If that voice wasn't Keely's, then whose could it possibly be!



Chapter 473 Back to Square One

With a cold air enveloping her, Loraine disentangled her hand from Marco's, cautiously retreating a step back. It seemed she had fortified her defense against him.

His continued communication with Keely left her in shock.

Despite Keely successfully pitting the entire Bryant family against Loraine, Marco remained her unwavering pillar of support. The pressure led Loraine to seek the path of divorce. In time, Keely resorted to a plot to tarnish Loraine's standing. Marco then swore to never extend forgiveness to Keely.

Loraine had faith in Marco's transformation after he expelled Keely from the country and handed over incriminating proof of her misdeeds to the police.

However, this unexpected call shattered her illusion.

She found the situation drenched in bitter irony.

A wave of panic swept over Marco. He scurried to grasp Loraine's hand, disregarding the phone call, and desperately yearned to explain the situation.

"Loraine, I swear I didn't recognize Keely's number! Believe me. If I'd known it was her, I wouldn't have picked up!"

Loraine receded, her face impassive. She queried with a deceptive smile, "Is that so? You needn't justify this to me



as it bears no relevance to me. Thank you for your aid to my grandfather. We will duly compensate you later. It would be best if you leave now, I have tasks to attend to."

Marco clumsily stumbled over his words. Unwittingly, he had left the phone connected and by an accidental press of the speakerphone button, Keely's sobs reverberated through the room.

"Marco, are you still harboring anger towards me? I've suffered enough and borne my due punishment. Remember, the day that holds significance to us both is merely two months away. I comprehend your unwillingness to forgive me, but why do you deny my return home?"

Marco stood frozen, his features clouded with uncertainty and indecision.

Loraine's frustration deepened. Keely's words resonated in her mind, stirring feelings of disquiet.

She wondered what this shared significant day could be.

She sensed that Marco still nurtured affection for Keely.

His kindness towards her, his promises to her, left her perplexed.

Once he had collected himself, Marco bellowed into the phone, "Enough! I'll contact you later."

He disconnected the call and cautiously advanced towards Loraine, reaching out to her. "Loraine, please hear me out!"

Loraine retreated to the door, shaking her head, a sarcastic smile on her lips.



Perceiving Marco's unwavering weakness for Keely, she concluded that his assurances to protect her from harm were nothing but empty promises.

With a sigh, Loraine swung open the door and voiced her exhaustion to the world beyond, "Uncle Wesley, I've had enough. Kindly escort him out for me."

Wesley, unwilling to abandon them in solitude, remained a silent sentinel outside the study during their exchange. He unintentionally eavesdropped on nearly every word.

In a tone laced with sarcasm, he offered his hand and declared, "Marco, after you."

Grinding his teeth, Marco locked eyes with Loraine before gradually retreating from the study.

The door closed after him.

He halted in his tracks, threw a lingering glance at the study, and gripped his fists tight.

"Loraine... Perhaps my words are unwanted at this moment, but I plead for your patience. I will confront Keely about this. Whenever you're ready to hear me out, I'll make everything clear!"

No reply came from the other end of the study. With a downcast expression, Marco walked away from the house.

As night deepened, he spent countless hours immersed in silence and smoke outside Loraine's dwelling. Only as dawn broke did he start his car and head for the Bryant Group.

As Carl, holding a cup of coffee, entered the office, he couldn't help but sigh at the exhaustion evident beneath

Marco's eyes. Offering Marco the coffee, he expressed his concern, "Mr. Bryant, your schedule is empty for today. Why not take some time off and recharge? If any urgent matters arise that need your attention, I'll make sure to inform you."

Marco shook his head and gently massaged his mildly aching forehead.

Even when he returned home, sleep eluded him. Work remained the only distraction capable of occupying his troubled thoughts.

"I need all the documents I'm supposed to review today."

It was only at that moment that he became aware of the huskiness in his voice.

With a cautionary advice about his health, Carl passed him the compiled papers, "Mr. Bryant, your well-being should be a priority. You've been skimping on sleep over concerns for Miss Torres."

At the mention of Loraine's name, Marco stiffened. After a brief pause, he dismissed it with a shake of his head.

"I'm good. You may leave now."

With a sigh of acceptance, Carl brought up a pending business matter, "Mr. Bryant, we were scheduled to have a meeting with Universe Group and Cheap and Fine Group to finalize the proposal. When would you like to arrange that?"

Brightening at the idea, Marco replied with enthusiasm, "As soon as possible would be best!"

He wagered that Loraine wouldn't decline a professional encounter. He could only hope to clarify his actions when given a chance to meet her.

Departing the office, Carl felt a sense of relief seeing Marco regain some of his usual vigor.

Fully engrossed in his work, Marco found a respite from his lingering thoughts, making him feel somewhat better.

Before long, his desk phone interrupted the silence. Carl relayed the message over the call, "Mr. Bryant, Ms. Hoffman from Solar Company wishes to arrange a video call with you. Do you have the time now?"

A frown crept onto Marco's face.

He was at a loss as to why Doris would seek him out at this moment.



Chapter 474 A Sense of Panic

Marco wanted to turn Doris down.

He knew that she had feelings for him, and would've preferred that she communicate with Carl instead, if the matter concerning the Solar Company wasn't too important.

On second thought, however, Marco realized that he had to tell Doris about the transportation of the ninth-generation operating robot. Knowing that he'd have to contact her sooner or later, he reluctantly agreed, "Put her through, please."

As soon as the video call was connected, a beautiful face appeared on the screen. Doris gazed at him for a few seconds, her red lips subtly curving in excitement. "Long time no see, Marco."

Despite the previous awkwardness between them, Doris remained an essential partner overseas and Marco's trusted right-hand subordinate.

Moreover, she was a hard worker and hadn't pursued him further in all these years. It was Marco, instead, who had been avoiding her excessively.

After letting out a sigh of relief, he acknowledged her with a nod.

Doris managed to suppress her lingering emotions just in

time, and swiftly shifted her focus to business.

"I heard that you've sent the ninth-generation robot back. Why didn't you discuss such an important decision with me in advance?"

"I apologize," Marco admitted, his hand gently rubbing his eyebrows. "It was urgent..."

Doris cast a reproachful look at him before continuing with her inquiry. "As the president of the Solar Company, you have the authority to make decisions without going through formalities, and I understand that. However, considering the significance of the ninth-generation robot, I'd like to ask you about it."

Upon noticing Marco's signal for her to go on, she continued, "The ninth-generation surgical robot is one of the Solar Company's core projects. You know that. Its security level is almost on par with that of the Qbot. If the news gets leaked or the media gets wind of it, it'll have a huge impact on the subsequent mass production and market launch. Countless researchers in the field of intelligent medical technology are dedicated to developing the next generation of surgical robots, and it's disconcerting that you intend to transfer it away at such a critical juncture..."

Doris let out a sigh, maintaining eye contact with Marco as she uttered her final statement. "All for the sake of operating on a nobody?"

Marco's expression immediately turned dark, and he retorted in a cold voice, "A nobody? Since when did you consider human life as something unimportant, Doris? Moreover, the members of the Torres family are very dear to me!"

Doris was taken aback by Marco's response and apologized

in a somber tone. "I'm sorry, Marco. I didn't mean it that way... I sincerely apologize. I was a bit too agitated."

Upon learning the real reason for Marco's decision to return the ninth-generation robot from Sullivan, Doris felt an overwhelming sense of panic.

So far, the research and development of the robot was yet to go through clinical trials. Without the involvement of the head of the Torres family, however, they still would've found several suitable people across the world to perform surgeries on.

What concerned her the most was Marco's urgency to transport it back solely for the sake of Loraine. He didn't even plan on telling her about it!

Why did he care so much about his ex-wife?

Doris knew that Marco had gotten married to Loraine. Three years since Loraine's marriage into the Bryant family, however, Doris had never felt a sense of panic.

Despite being overseas managing the Solar Company, she had an intimate understanding of Marco's personal life. She knew that he didn't love Loraine at all, and that he'd married her just to navigate the complexities of his family.

Doris was uninterested in Marco's wife's title; her sole focus was on winning Marco's heart.

After Marco's divorce, however, she couldn't help but become very wary of Marco's erratic behavior.

Marco, on the other hand, had no clue what was running through Doris's mind, and simply thought that she was worried about the Solar Company. Realizing that his tone had been too harsh, he made the effort to speak in a softer

voice.

"Doris, I've consulted Dr. Palmer about the robot, and it's currently stuck at the clinical trial stage. Although I have my own personal reason for wanting it returned, it doesn't go against the company's best interests."

With an understanding look on her face, Doris smiled and said, "I understand. I was a bit impulsive earlier. The ninth-generation robot is equally important to me. Since you've decided to bring it back to the country, I also have a request."

Marco was confused and asked, "What?"

"It's a very important project, so I'd like to be the one to transport it back personally."

Doris looked at Marco, with a mixture of admiration and greed gleaming in her eyes.

After several years of being kept at a distance by this powerful man due to her unsuccessful confession, she couldn't help but seek out an opportunity to regain her place by his side.

Marco pursed his lips and hesitated. "Doris..."

Worried that he'd figure out her true intentions, Doris quickly neutralized the expression on her face and interrupted him with a smile, "Are you thinking that I came back for you, Marco? Back then, I confessed my love to you, and you rejected me. After thinking that through, I decided that I wasn't going to bother you anymore. I want to come back solely for the benefit of the Solar Company. It has a well-established market overseas, so I'd like to come back and help you expand the business locally."

After a short pause, Marco still didn't think it was a good

idea, and refused her subconsciously, "No, thanks. I can handle it with Carl's help. Also, considering your abilities, wouldn't it be a waste for you to come back just to help me? If you want to return, I suggest you go to Zodiac to develop and expand the business of the Solar Company."

With a lowering of her gaze, Doris realized that Marco was rejecting her.

She didn't often do things she wasn't sure she could succeed in. After impulsively confessing her love to Marco and feeling the subsequent distance that he put between them, she'd learned her lesson.

With a smile, she said, "Alright, I'll take your advice."

Deep inside, however, she clenched her teeth intensely in frustration, even tasting a bit of blood in her mouth.

Chapter 475 See You At The Conference

Once the video call was concluded, Doris stared at her computer screen, a bitter grimace framing her features. Suddenly, she yanked open a drawer and pulled out a picture.

The photograph depicted a radiant woman, who was none other than Loraine, but Doris, a hardened mask of resentment replacing her former expression, picked up a pen and began to violently etch across Loraine's face.

Only when Loraine's face was barely discernable, disfigured and pocked, did Doris allow a grotesque smile of satisfaction to creep across her lips.

She stared at the photograph and murmured, "Loraine, just wait and observe. I will eventually win over Marco!"

Meanwhile, in the heart of Bryant Group, the CEO's office, Carl tapped lightly on the door before striding in to update Marco on the day's tasks.

"Mr. Bryant, tomorrow's itinerary is ready. If there are no changes, I'll go ahead and inform Miss Torres about the scheduled meeting."

Hearing this, Marco cleared his throat and said, "No, I will take up the matter with the Universe Group. They deserve to know our intentions."

"Understood, Mr. Bryant." Carl perceived Marco's intent but

kept his mouth sealed.

Marco wasn't concerned with Carl's thoughts, as his primary focus was on Loraine.

It had been two days since Loraine had reached out to Marco. The silence was making him edgy. Although his intention was to discuss business, he found himself shaving off bits of his original text. He repeatedly reviewed his message before finally hitting send.

But to his dismay, his message bounced back, marked with a glaring red exclamation.

Marco's expression soured as he stared at the screen, "The message was sent but rejected." He felt a twinge in his chest at the sight.

Loraine had blocked him!

Carl failed to suppress his amusement and chuckled.

His amusement was met with a frosty glare from Marco, whose face was now etched with disappointment and frustration.

In an attempt to lighten the mood, Carl offered up his mobile to Marco, stating, "Mr. Bryant, Loraine hasn't blocked my work number."

His phone screen showed a recently forwarded message to Loraine. "Miss Torres, let's discuss the partnership with the Cheap and Fine Group. Can we schedule a meeting for tomorrow?"

"Yes," came Loraine's response.

Marco's gaze flitted between Carl's ongoing chat with

Loraine and the red exclamation on his own phone screen. His grip tightened around his phone, almost as if he wished to crush it.

Carl, perceiving Marco's frustration, quickly handed over his phone, saying obsequiously, "Mr. Bryant, consider this your phone now."

Grumbling, Marco snatched the phone and sent his carefully crafted message to Loraine.

The ensuing seconds were torturous as he feared rejection or that Loraine would suspect his identity and dismiss him. Thoughts of Loraine sent his heart on a rollercoaster ride.

Contrary to his fears, Loraine responded promptly, "Alright, but we may need to adjust the time. Davy is catching a flight into town. Let's meet in three days instead."

Exhaling deeply, Marco agreed without hesitation.

Three days later, in the senior meeting room of the Universe Group.

Having resolved the internal crisis within the Cheap and Fine Group, Davy was in high spirits. Upon entering the room, he greeted Loraine and Marco warmly, eager to engage in conversation.

However, both Loraine and Marco remained silent, choosing not to engage in conversation with him.

The ambiance was unusually tense.

Davy touched his nose and glanced at Loraine, then shifted his gaze to Marco. "Did you two have a disagreement?"

"Personal affairs have no place in a business meeting."

Lorraine's demeanor was all business, her expression frigid.

Marco, on the other hand, seemed as though he was on the verge of speaking but held back, his gaze lost in Lorraine, clearly preoccupied.

Unaware of the specifics of their situation, Davy cleared his throat, opened the contract, and commenced a serious discussion with Lorraine and Marco, delving into the details at hand.

He had presumed that their disagreement would divert their attention, enabling him to breeze through the specifics.

Much to his surprise, they chorused, "Hold on."

Showing his knack for multitasking, Marco pinpointed the discrepancies in Davy's discourse without foregoing a shred of the profit he was entitled to.

As Marco made his points, Lorraine found herself nodding in agreement.

Caught off-guard, Davy paused, grinned sheepishly, and offered, "You two are quite the pair, simultaneously distant and sharp on the details. Glad I didn't try to pull a fast one on you."

Davy tried to lighten the mood with humor, but it fell flat.

Only Marco mustered a faint smile, evidently pleased to hear him and Lorraine referred to as a couple.

Lorraine, however, furrowed her brows and corrected him frostily, "Davy, Marco and I are strictly business partners. There's no personal entanglement."

This caught Davy off guard. He'd previously sensed a budding romance between them and had even idly speculated with his wife about when they'd make their relationship official.

It appeared they had hit a rough patch.

Surveying the tension hanging in the air, Davy smirked knowingly, "Well, you young lovers are quite fickle..."

Seeing Loraine's expression darken, he hastily rose to his feet.

"Now that we've ironed out the contract details, I'd better be off. I won't intrude further. Reach out if anything else pops up!"

With that, he beat a hasty retreat, swiftly exiting the room. Carl, stationed at the doorway, followed suit, leaving Loraine and Marco in an awkward standoff.

Left in a state of unease, Loraine was unsure how to proceed.

Now, it was up to her to confront Marco once again.



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