

Chapter 404 The Argument

That day in Universe Group, Marco's attempt to sway Loraine ended not only in failure but also in sparking her ire.

Upon returning to Bryant Group, Marco's unease persisted, his mind plagued by the looming wager.

Despite his concerns, he dared not broach the subject with Loraine once more.

He understood Loraine's stubborn streak all too well. When she made a decision, it was set in stone, beyond the influence of anyone else.

Persistent nagging would only incur her disdain, and that was a risk Marco was unwilling to take.

Having already made Herculean efforts to engage Loraine, he was hesitant to stir the waters of their relationship again.

The shadow of this concern loomed over Marco for two agonizing days. Seeing this, Carl felt compelled to offer some advice. "If you're so worried Jennie will bungle it, why not handle it covertly?"

Caught off guard, Marco hesitated, then slowly shook his head.

Such a course of action had crossed his mind, but the fear of Loraine's disappointment if she discovered his behind-the-scenes meddling held him back.

Carl was taken aback by Marco's hesitation—a rarity in the

years he had known him.

Leafing through his chat history with Loraine, Marco's emotions mingled in a bittersweet cocktail.

This was a novel experience for him.

In the past, decisions were followed by immediate action.

Now, he found himself in a game of waiting, treading with caution, because this concerned Loraine.

Finally, Marco resigned himself to a darker path.

He convinced himself that Loraine wouldn't blame him, as long as he kept his hands clean.

Once the decision was made, Marco reached out to Jimmie.

He knew Jimmie had been in contact with Jennie.

Jimmie answered almost instantly, his voice laced with a smile. "Marco, I'm genuinely surprised you called me. You were the one who bailed early last time we went for drinks. How have you been? Did you sort out your family issues?"

A bitter chuckle escaped Marco at the memory. "Not yet, but that's not the point. I'm calling about Jennie."

Jimmie was surprised. "What? What about Jennie?"

Marco's eyebrow arched and proceeded to relay what had happened at the shareholders' meeting in Universe Group.

A moment of silence followed, then understanding dawned on Jimmie. "So, you want to keep Loraine out of this and need me to help Jennie."

"Exactly. I hope you won't let anyone know I requested this," Marco confirmed. "Given your closeness with Jennie, it's natural for you to lend her a hand."

Jimmie's grin was audible. "Understood. I know what to do."

Jimmie hadn't heard from Jennie in a while.

And now, it clicked. She was in a bind.

After hanging up, he sent Jennie a message. "Jennie, free tonight? Let's grab dinner."

Half an hour later, her response popped up. "Why the sudden invite? You can't just ask me out to dinner without reason. Spill the beans."

Jimmie shot back a message. "Honestly, it's just dinner. We've been out of touch for a while."

"Alright. I haven't experienced fine dining in ages. I'm game for a lavish dinner, especially since you're footing the bill. See you there!"

Jimmie couldn't help but chuckle at her response.

By evening, they found themselves seated in the restaurant.

Jimmie could sense something was off with Jennie. Her usual vibrant smile was subdued, tugging at his sympathy.

In an effort to brighten her mood, he ordered her favorite dessert, leaning in with a gentle smile. "What's been keeping you busy? You've been awfully quiet."

Jennie seemed to perk up a bit after a few bites of dessert. She sighed. "Succeeding isn't a cakewalk."

Jimmie adjusted his glasses, his smile unwavering. Pouring a drink for Jennie, he offered, "I stumbled upon a piece about you online today. Hurley is stirring the pot. I could lend you a hand? You do know I'm a fairly successful attorney, right?"

Jennie paused, her smile returning as she shook her head.

"I appreciate it, but I've got to face this alone."

She was hell-bent on triumphing over this challenge. It was crucial for her to prove to those who scorned her that Loraine's faith in her wasn't misplaced.

Jimmie furrowed his brows. "Wouldn't my assistance make things a tad easier?"

His concern wasn't solely based on Marco's request. Seeing this vivacious woman grappling with her situation tugged at his heartstrings. He didn't want her reputation sullied.

Jennie shook her head, a serious look in her eyes. "It's different. It's not the same as me figuring it out by myself."

"Why do you have to be as headstrong as Loraine? If it weren't for Marco..." Jimmie began, but then hastily tried to explain. "No, I didn't mean that!"

Though Jennie was always candid, Jimmie, being a lawyer, usually measured his words. However, in her company, he found himself being more open.

It was too late to explain now.

Jennie's frown deepened as she set down her glass, but she forced a smile.

"So, it was Marco who wanted you to help me. He's worried



about Loraine shouldering the blame because of me, isn't he?"

Jimmie denied, "No! That's not what I..."

Jennie stood abruptly, her laughter cold and bitter. Picking up her bag, she said, "Don't fret. Even if I fail, I won't drag Loraine down. And you don't need to feign concern."

Her joy at Jimmie's invite had soured into disappointment.

Without a backward glance, Jennie exited the restaurant. Just as Jimmie was about to follow her, his phone buzzed with a call from Marco.

"How are things? Did you manage?"

Jimmie slumped, a rueful smile playing on his lips. "Marco, you've really put me in a tight spot this time."



Chapter 405 Strength

As Jennie pondered further, her fury grew.

She'd spent the last couple of days accumulating various resources and doing her homework exhaustively. When she was almost at her breaking point, Jimmie called her and invited her to dinner.

It was a heartwarming surprise that brought immense joy.

She was overjoyed when Jimmie promised to help her.

But it turned out he was only doing so on Marco's behalf.

In a fit of rage, Jennie harshly squeezed the stuffed rabbit on her bed.

How dare Jimmie and Marco underestimate her!

She had even vouched for Marco to Loraine! Yet, this man harbored disdain for her, Loraine's best friend!

Jennie resolved to report Marco's actions to Loraine from then on.

She vowed to succeed, proving Marco and Jimmie wrong about her.

Her preparations were nearly complete. Jennie couldn't wait any longer, so she contacted her PR team members.

It was time for retaliation!

Shortly after, Fowler Group posted their bid online. The lengthy string of numbers was striking, and even for the best storefront, the price seemed astronomically high.

Simultaneously, Jennie reached out to Hurley online, intent on giving him a taste of his own medicine.

"Hurley Castro, correct? You can stop pestering Universe Group for my bid price. I'll tell you personally. Didn't you allege that insider dealing would affect the bidding outcome? I'm curious about your bid. If it's higher than mine, let's see it!"

Since the Fowler family revealed the price, it didn't involve Universe Group or impact other bidding companies.

The bid first stunned people, then Jennie's bold words won her many supporters, who eagerly awaited Hurley's reply.

Upon seeing the post, Hurley was taken aback. He called an emergency meeting with his PR team, but they continued to slander Jennie, "Is this number legitimate? This is absurd! Perhaps you fabricated the information to deceive the online audience!"

"Do you have any evidence to dispute the legitimacy of this price? Why don't you reveal your bid first?"

Hurley clenched his jaw, seething with frustration. He didn't dare to suggest a figure as sky-high as Jennie's.

Avoiding her question, Hurley veered off-topic, targeting Jennie.

"Evidence? Is it truly needed? The Fowler family isn't a band of fools! Why would they squander so much on a woman of no worth? Money doesn't just sprout from the ground, you

know."

Jennie shot back, "Who are you calling worthless? Your family is a pile of garbage! My professional credentials could bury you!"

She then unveiled an impressive stack of professional certificates, including a jewelry appraisal qualification and a senior technician certificate, among others.

Most notably, her stint at a top global gem accreditation body stood out.

When it came to social status and financial means, Jennie was in a different league altogether compared to Hurley, who relied on a wealthy woman for support.

"Impossible. I've told you, Loraine's best friend is no ordinary woman. She truly is extraordinary. These certificates aren't easily obtainable. If she wasn't skilled, she wouldn't have them."

"Moreover, the accreditation body is an internationally recognized authority. It's no small feat to be a part of it!"

People were swayed by Jennie's impressive credentials.

After some individuals uncovered Hurley's background, the online comments showed even greater favoritism towards Jennie.

Loraine, too, chimed in with a supportive remark.

"That's my girl. You're exceptional!"

She entrusted Jennie with this matter not solely based on blind trust in her friend, but for other reasons as well.

Having spent numerous years together, Loraine was well aware of Jennie's capabilities.

As a member of the Fowler family, Jennie, despite her laid-back nature, had been groomed to be a top-tier professional.

How could anyone from such an affluent family be an imbecile?

Jennie possessed a simple and innocent character.

With her brother poised to take over the family enterprise, she was free of worries.

This time, it wasn't just Jennie, but even the Fowler family reached their breaking point.

If Jennie hadn't insisted on resolving the issue on her own, her brother would have already taught Hurley a lesson.

Public sentiment started to skew in favor of Jennie and Universe Group, while Hurley was reduced to a bystander. He refrained from posting anything for a while and notably, didn't disclose his bid either.

This silence was evidence enough of Hurley's inability to match the Fowlers, leading to his attempt to spread rumors online. Society mocked him, and it was clear that he was on the path to his downfall.



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Chapter 406 Burn The Bridge After Crossing It

The shares of Hurley's jewelry company plummeted overnight and reached an unprecedented low.

Hurley's heart surged with anxiety at the thought of his vulnerability. He was practically a sitting duck, exposed and defenseless.

Despite his initial skepticism, he decided against publicly challenging the powerful Fowler family and Universe Group.

It was all because of the man who had pledged to help him. His promises had convinced Hurley to change his mind.

However, the situation had taken a turn for the worse and Hurley found himself shouldering the entirety of the blame.

In a frenzied flurry, Hurley punched a number into his phone, his fingers tapping the screen rapidly.

The man had left him his number that day.

After a few heart-pounding moments, a gruff voice answered on the other end. Hurley wasted no time in blurting out his urgent plea. "Duran, I've done everything you asked of me. Now that things have turned out this way, you can't just sit there and do nothing. You have to help me!"

Silence hung on the line for what felt like an eternity before the voice on the other end erupted in derisive laughter.

"What are you on about? What did I supposedly ask you to do? I've done nothing."

Hurley froze, dumbfounded. Anger surged through his veins. "You swore to grant me ownership of a shop in the new commercial district once everything was settled. That's the reason I agreed to assist you!"

But before he could voice any more grievances, the line abruptly went dead. Hurley dialed the number again, desperately hoping for a response, only to be met with the cold, mechanical voice of the system, stating that the phone had been switched off.

In Universe Group, Reynolds snatched the phone from Duran's grasp, his face masked with indifference. Swiftly, he severed the connection by removing the SIM card.

Duran looked at Reynolds, a wave of embarrassment washing over him. "Reynolds, you assured me that this time we would succeed. It was because of that assurance that I made a commitment to Hurley. What are we going to do now? Loraine has managed to slip away again."

A scornful snort escaped Reynolds' lips. "She won't be fortunate enough to escape next time. It's all Hurley's fault, a worthless piece of trash! Clean up this mess and don't let him get under your skin."

Meanwhile, the CEO's office exuded an eerie calmness. The peacefulness followed the recent resolution of a treacherous crisis that had loomed over them.

Jolie turned to Loraine and said cheerfully, "The tides of public opinion have taken a thrilling turn in favor of the new business district, all thanks to this calamity. It appears to have been a hidden blessing!"

However, Loraine's expression betrayed no hint of joy. Her face, etched with worry lines, was masked with gravity and deep concern.

Perplexed, Jolie arched an inquisitive brow. "Are there any other problems?"

Lorraine gave a solemn nod in response.

"The pieces of this puzzling puzzle fit together too neatly. There must be an enigmatic puppeteer, pulling the strings behind the curtain, manipulating Hurley and his affairs."

Jolie's eyes widened in surprise. "What on earth makes you say that?"

"Sure, Hurley has been trying to one-up the Fowlers, but he's small-time. This latest attack, though, is different. He was aiming straight at Universe Group. It's clear someone was behind this."

In her estimation, Hurley's assault was merely a diversion to distract attention away from the Fowlers and onto Universe Group.

She deduced that Hurley was just a pawn in a larger scheme.

Just as Loraine's mind raced with thoughts of who could be behind the plot, the receptionist told her Marco was here.

At the mention of his name, Loraine was a little embarrassed.

She had already realized that Marco only possessed a genuine desire to lend a helping hand. Her own reaction, however, seemed slightly exaggerated.

As Loraine wrestled with the dilemma of facing Marco, a

Chapter 406 Burn The Bridge After Crossing It 🎁 +120 Points at most
resounding knock reverberated through the door and Marco stepped through the threshold. With bated breath, Jolie swiftly lowered her gaze and silently left the office.

Loraine cleared her throat and posed a question, her voice laced with constraint. "What may I do for you, Marco?"

Marco's eyes darted around her office, lingering on various objects, his silence unsettling. Sensing Loraine's mounting frustration, he mustered a grave tone and uttered, "I went to Hurley's place to look for clues. I stumbled upon something of interest that I want to share."

Stunned, Loraine's mind momentarily faltered. Could it be that Marco and she were once again synchronized in their pursuits?

Her mind had been churning out ways to interrogate Hurley. Little did she know, Marco had already made his move, staying one stride ahead.

Marco continued, "I think it's obvious that Hurley targeted Universe Group this time, so I sent someone to restrain him. I hadn't expected him to confess immediately and hand over the evidence that Duran was the true mastermind."

At his words, a shadow loomed across Loraine's face, a veil of darkness enveloping her features.



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Chapter 407 Change

Marco continued, "Hurley wasn't able to get in touch with Duran after the accident, and he was forced to stop working since the company put so much pressure on him. My people found him and promised to give him benefits, and he spilled everything."

Hurley was lucky to meet a rich woman, but he was also quite resourceful and scheming. As soon as Duran found him, Hurley remained alert. He was greedy, but he wasn't stupid. He understood that nothing good would come to him for no reason.

"Hurley said that he only met Duran, who promised to give him a good storefront. He insisted on reading the information of the storefront promised to give him before he agreed to Duran."

Marco set the U disk loaded with information on the desk, sliding it to Loraine.

Loraine inserted the disk into the laptop, sneering as she opened the file.

"How bold Duran is! I specially reserved this shop to sell Universe Group's products. That information is only available to a few shareholders. It's extremely confidential. How dare that cunning old fox give that information to anyone?"

"Duran must need his consent, so he showed Hurley the information. But he wouldn't have expected that Hurley would copy it."

Loraine clicked around, noticing an audio file on the disk.

Marco spoke up as he watched. "That's the recording of the conversation between Duran and Hurley. It includes how Duran pushed him to slander you and Jennie."

Duran was an ambitious director, and held a high position for a long time, so he wasn't that vigilant. That was why Hurley was able to record their conversation.

Loraine had mixed feelings. She wasn't surprised that Duran would do something like that.

Duran and Reynolds were senior shareholders of Universe Group. They'd done a lot of bad things in secret.

She was surprised that Marco had done so well as preparing the details and giving them to her so swiftly. He didn't take the opportunity to take advantage of Universe Group. It seemed as though they weren't rivals at all.

Marco suddenly felt nervous as he saw Loraine's expression.

If this had happened a long time ago, he would have done this secretly and given her the details anonymously. But now, Jimmie had told him what he should do after complaining that Marco sold his own friend out.

"You have to tell her what you did for her. You know that it isn't popular to be an unknown hero now. If you do something and don't tell her, she'll just trust you less and think you're holding things from her!"

Marco thought about it, and it made sense.

Jimmie added, "You can help her, but you can't arrange this without permission. I've already learned my lesson."

Marco decided to take what Jimmie told him to heart, acting on his advice. "Lorraine, I know that without me, you'll just find out yourself. I just want to apologize for underestimating your best friend."

Lorraine was shocked.

Did she hear him wrong? Had Marco just apologized to her?

Marco became confused at her silence. "What's wrong?"

Lorraine quickly shook her head. "I'm fine... Thank you, Marco."

She thought for a moment before being appreciative. After all, she always thought that he was domineering and ignored everyone else's feelings.

It seemed like he was really thinking of others now.

Lorraine decided that she might as well forsake her worries, and accepted Marco's help.

He felt his heart beating quicker as a smile grew on his face.

It turned out to be effortless to get Lorraine on board.

For the first time, Jimmie was right.

Lorraine coughed, suddenly uncomfortable under his intense gaze. She looked to the information in his notebook.

Now, it was time to settle this.

Lorraine made a call to Jennie, after asking for another shareholders' meeting.

While she was busy, Marco stayed by her side in silence,

not disturbing her.

By the afternoon, each shareholder arrived, feeling the uncomfortable atmosphere in the meeting room.

Lorraine came through the doors, followed by Jennie shortly afterward.

No one dared to look down to Jennie now.

Duran and Reynolds both had long faces.

Duran smiled sarcastically. "Lorraine, although the crisis was resolved this time, you shouldn't damage the company's interests for private ventures in the future."

Lorraine sneered at Duran's sarcasm. "Who on earth is damaging the company's interests? I think you know better than I do!"

Reynolds' and Duran's hearts jolted as they heard what she said.

What did Lorraine mean by that?

