

## Chapter 428 A Group Of Rascals Blocked The Way

These unsavory individuals wore expressions of vulgar desire.

Circling Loraine, their gaze shamelessly traveled the length of her form.

A wave of unease washed over Loraine. She gripped her car key tighter, cautiously stepping backward.

Her retreat was abruptly halted by the wall behind her, a stern reminder that escape was not an option.

Despite her sinking heart, Loraine maintained her composure. In a hushed voice, she questioned, "Who are you? What are you planning?"

The men exchanged glances before erupting into boisterous laughter.

One, with hair as yellow as straw, ran his tongue across his lips, his voice a low, creepy whisper, "Can't you guess, lovely? I'm going to fuck you!"

Their laughter grew bolder, faces contorting with distasteful expressions, their eyes alive with unchained lust.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. You'll be begging for more before long."

"I've never had such a beauty before. I'm a lucky man tonight, even death won't dull the thrill!"

Loraine's expression hardened at their crude remarks. She wracked her brain for a plan.



How could such lowlives be in the vicinity of the Cruz estate?

Could they have been sent?

The key dug into her palm, its sharpness hurting her.

She inhaled deeply, putting on a brave facade.

"Who sent you?" she demanded.

Caught off guard, the ruffians faltered. The blond one spat defiantly, "You're the one dressed to kill, aren't you? Who else is to blame now that you have lured us here? I'll teach you a lesson!"

Their hesitation was a silent affirmation to Loraine.

Loraine scoffed, "You do realize this is Cruz territory, right? No matter who set you on this path, aren't you worried about the Cruz family's retribution?"

Her conviction that this was not Florence's doing was reinforced by their location.

An incident immediately after her departure from the party would undoubtedly put the Cruz family in the crosshairs, and the Torres family would never let such an offense slide. Florence might have had her differences with Loraine, but she was not a fool.

Being born to affluence, it was beneath Florence to employ such vagabonds for a smear campaign.

The miscreants hesitated briefly. But seeing his mates withdraw, the blond one barked defiantly, "What are we afraid of? A few years in prison. It is a small price for a night with a beauty like her!"

With a shake of his yellow locks, he approached Loraine, a disgusting smile on his face.

"Smart girls make it all the more exciting, don't they? Don't

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blame us, blame your own misfortune!"

Sweat trickled down Loraine's forehead. Her anxiety grew. If it had been a pair of these miscreants, Loraine would have had the upper hand. However, facing more than five of them was a situation not even she could effortlessly resolve.

Earlier, her bold statements were merely a ruse to buy time. With her hands hidden behind her back, she was attempting to alert the police.

But to her dismay, her phone had run out of charge!

It turned off!

The mobs advanced steadily. As they drew nearer, Loraine's vision swirled. The scene invoked a chilling memory of a past assault orchestrated by Keely.

The terror from the past threatened to overwhelm her, a surge of helplessness threatening to drown her.

Summoning her last ounce of courage, Loraine yelled, "Stop! Don't come any closer!"

But her voice, thin and shaky, betrayed her fear.

The blond man chuckled, "There's no point in fighting. It'll be easier if you comply. No one's coming to save you."

Loraine drew in a steadying breath.

"You're after money, right? How much did they promise you? I can double it. Five million dollars, perhaps?"

Her words gave the men pause. They slowed, exchanging looks of surprise.

The blond man studied Loraine carefully.

Observing Loraine's composed demeanor, a stark contrast to the desperate pleas he was accustomed to, he suspected she was no

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Chapter 428 A Group Of Rascals Blocked The Wa 🎁 +120 Points at most ordinary woman. Despite her precarious situation, she demonstrated an unexpected knack for negotiation.

However, beneath Loraine's calm facade, he noticed her trembling fingers. Despite her fear, her beauty remained undiminished.

Her allure was undeniable, tempting to anyone who laid eyes on her.

He prided himself on his cunning. If this woman had influential connections, their unveiled presence tonight would ensure there was no easy escape.

But why not enjoy themselves while they could?

"Do you take us for fools, darling? Hard cash is the only guarantee. If we let you go, you'll just get the cops on us." His laughter was short-lived. "Forget her offer! Even a stint in jail would be worth a night with her!"

Realizing that reasoning was futile, Loraine attempted to break through their circle.

Their reactions were swift, barring her way out.

Despite her self-defense training, Loraine was vastly outnumbered.

Seizing the moment, the blond man grabbed her, a gruesome grin on his face, as his hand moved towards her chest.

Unable to watch, Loraine shut her eyes tightly.

A sudden yelp snapped her eyes open.

Marco held the blond man by his throat, throwing him aside as if he were nothing more than trash.

"How dare you touch her? Rot in hell!"

Marco, the tall man in a suit, exuded a lethal coldness.

Chapter 428 A Group Of Rascals Blocked The Wa 🎁 +120 Points at most

His appearance scared the living daylights out of the goons. The blond one scrambled to his feet, attempting to flee.

But before he could take a step, Marco's foot connected with his chest, sending him sprawling on the ground, gasping in pain.

Relief flooded Loraine, her mind blanking momentarily.

Next second, she found herself enveloped in a broad, comforting embrace. It was Marco who cradled her close.



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## Chapter 429 Protect Her

Marco enveloped Loraine in a protective embrace, anxiously assessing her condition.

The blond man finally managed to pull himself together, howling in protest. How could he linger after what he'd done?

Observing Marco's concern for Loraine, he swiftly fled with all his might.

Witnessing this, the remaining rascals managed to stand, escaping in a hasty retreat, their faces blushing with shame.

Marco had no desire to catch up with them. He just held Loraine tightly, his heart heavy with sorrow. However, all he could do was patiently and gently comfort the woman in his arms, offering solace repeatedly.

"Loraine, there's no need to fear. I'm right here."

Loraine clung to Marco's clothes with one hand, seeking comfort in his hold.

He could feel her body shivering with fear.

It took a considerable while for Loraine to regain herself.

As she lifted her gaze, she found Marco's face, her eyes filling with unshed tears. His name slipped from her lips as if in a dream, "Marco?"

Patient as ever, Marco reassured her, his eyes soft. "Yes, right here."

He looked at Loraine with a careful gaze, taking in her reddened eyes and messy hair, his heart throbbing with sorrow.

Once he had tidied her hair, Marco asked with genuine concern, "Did they harm you?"

Noticing the evidence of struggle on Loraine's hands, he berated himself for not having been there sooner, for allowing her to fend off the rascals herself.

She shook her head, her voice raw from crying, "No. I'm alright. Thank you, Marco."

Suddenly aware of their close proximity, she pushed him away, flustered by their intimacy.

Understanding her recent distress, Marco gently let her go, not wanting to cause any further anxiety.

He remained by her side, his gaze never leaving her.

Clearing her throat, Loraine steered the conversation. "Marco, what... What brought you here?"

Tonight's party was exclusive to female guests. Even the women of the Bryant family weren't present. Why had Marco come?

Could he... Could he have come for her?

Her heart fluttered at the thought.

With a tender gaze, Marco responded without hesitation, "I was waiting for you."

As her heart pounded, Loraine asked, her voice rough, "Why were you waiting for me?"

Afraid to stir her anger, Marco scrambled for a justification. "The Cruz family harbored resentment towards you, remember? I was worried about you being alone and falling into trouble. Hence, I decided to wait for you here."

Marco averted his gaze as he spoke.

He couldn't bring himself to confess to Loraine that his focus had been scattered all day, consumed by thoughts of her during his working hours.

The notion of Loraine visiting the Cruz's residence with Grady rattled him.

What if Grady seized the opportunity to ensnare Loraine and propose to her once more?

Could it be possible that the smooth-talking Grady might actually win Loraine over?

His concern extended beyond Grady to Florence. He was apprehensive about Florence making life difficult for Loraine like the previous instance.

The more these thoughts spun in Marco's mind, the more he found himself unable to resist the urge to leave his office early and drive straight to the vicinity of the Cruz family's house.

Right now, he felt a wave of relief wash over him for having made that decision.

If he hadn't shown up, Loraine could've fallen prey to those rascals.

As thoughts of those rascals who had escaped ran through his mind, Marco's anger flared, his face turning dark with intensity.

If Loraine hadn't been there, he would've pursued and dealt with them.

Even though they fled, Marco wasn't planning on letting them off the hook.

Marco cast a glance at Loraine, his voice husky, "Loraine, rest assured. I won't let those culprits escape. I will track them down and make things right for you."

Reflecting on the incident, Loraine could still feel the fear



creeping in.

She was fortunate that Marco was there.

At her lowest point, Marco appeared.

Once again, he had come to her rescue. A debt of gratitude she felt incapable of repaying.

Mixed emotions swirled within Loraine. She didn't want to be in Marco's debt any longer. She feared that as Rowan predicted, she might eventually lose herself.

"Marco, I appreciate your help. But, I will investigate this matter myself. If someone did conspire against me, I won't let it pass."

Marco's face turned stone cold. He was aware Loraine hadn't fully accepted him, but hearing her reject his help was a sucker punch to his heart.

Left with no choice, Marco awkwardly shifted the conversation. "How was the event?"

Simultaneously, Loraine too questioned him, "You... How long were you waiting out here?"

At that moment, they found themselves staring at each other, taken aback.



## Chapter 430 Recurrence Of The Old Wound

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At last, Loraine could no longer bear his gaze, and her eyes darted away first.

A heavy quiet hung between them. After a beat, Marco breathed out deeply and muttered, "The night air carries a chill. That dress isn't quite warm enough. We should get in the car."

Without uttering a response, Loraine simply trailed him towards the parking area.

Midway, out of the blue, she voiced out, "The exhibition was impressive."

Caught off guard, Marco took a second before understanding that Loraine was responding to his previous question. He spun to face her.

Quickly, Loraine averted her gaze, her eyes dodging his.

"I am glad that you have a good time," Marco responded, his voice trailing off into a cough. Then he added, "I just arrived. Heard a commotion and decided to check it out."

As they exchanged words, they arrived at his vehicle.

The black Lincoln car blended with the night's darkness. By contrast, the metallic surface of the adjacent trash can was littered with cigarette stubs.

The lingering scent of smoke revealed the truth. He had been lying all along. Clearly, he had been waiting for Loraine outside the Cruz family's residence all along.

Loraine stood in silence, her gaze fixed upon the discarded cigarette stubs, rendered speechless.

"Only just arrived?"

In response, Marco fell silent, looking somewhat flustered.

An inexplicable atmosphere hung between them, tinged with a hint of awkwardness and subtle tension.

Loraine dropped her gaze and maintained her silence.

Marco turned his head to catch a glimpse of her gentle and serene profile. His heart softened, and his eyes lingered, reluctant to look away even for a moment, as if captivated by her presence.

His look was so intense. It felt palpable, like it could sear right through her.

Loraine couldn't dismiss this feeling. She could sense her own pulse pounding against her chest.

Memories of Marco's sudden appearance and her rescue replayed in her mind.

Unable to resist, memories of the past flooded her mind. The emotions she had once harbored for Marco appeared to resurface, stirring within her once more.

And they felt stronger.

Loraine shook her head, attempting to dispel these confusing thoughts.

Concern etched onto Marco's face as he watched her.

Feeling her heart thump erratically and fearing her thoughts might be transparent, she blurted out hastily, "Alright, Marco. You can leave now. I have my own car and I can manage to get home by myself."



With that, she quickly turned to head to her vehicle.

Taken aback, Marco stood rooted for a moment. As she reached for her keys and began to open her car door, he snapped out of his senses and quickly stretched his hand to gently grasp Loraine's arm.

"The events of tonight... I can't let you drive back alone."

Considering the audacity of the rascals to invade the Cruz property, the situation seemed more than ordinary, and Loraine's safety was of concern to him.

Still shaken from the earlier incident, Loraine flinched when Marco caught her hand, her instincts nudging her to pull away.

"Hands off!"

The moment she applied pressure, a stifled grunt resonated from the person next to her.

Taken aback, Loraine inquired, "What happened?"

Marco quickly concealed his hand and responded with a dismissive shake of his head, "Nothing."

Her concern rose at his response. Her expression turned grave as she demanded, "Show me your hand."

Known for his high pain threshold, Marco wouldn't have let out a peep if he hadn't felt a piercing sting.

Loraine suspected he might have been injured during their recent confrontation with the rascals and had kept it to himself.

It wouldn't have been the first time he had done so. He had concealed his wounds after helping her rescue Rowan. If she hadn't discovered it, he would have kept it a secret.

With her stern face, Loraine looked to Marco like an adorable kitten baring her fangs. A sight that was not only harmless, but

also somewhat endearing.

Despite her expression, Marco stayed silent, continuing to keep his hand out of sight.

He had already noticed his old wound flaring up during their recent fight while he was protecting Loraine. Ignoring the doctor's advice of taking ample rest probably worsened the situation.

However, he felt it was a minor issue and didn't want to burden Loraine who already seemed upset.

Provoked, Loraine forcibly grasped his shoulder, lifting his jacket and shirt sleeve to inspect.

Stunned, Marco didn't move an inch.

His once pristine shirt now bore blood stains.

Seeing his innocent expression, Loraine felt a mix of anger and despair. After a long silence, she let out a sigh.

"Why... Why didn't you mention you were hurt?"

Marco merely lowered his gaze, offering no response.

Once she spotted the bleeding, Loraine asked, "Is this the injury from the time you saved Rowan?"

She had tended to his wounds in the hospital back then, so the sight was all too familiar to her.

"I'm nearly healed. I'm okay..."

Loraine lifted her head and shot him a piercing glare.

Was he okay?

He didn't care about his health at all!

She was aware that Marco had discharged himself prematurely

from the hospital after his last visit. His injury hadn't healed fully, as evidenced by its recurrence.

Yet, it seemed he kept getting hurt for her sake.

This realization left Loraine feeling conflicted. She instructed him, "If you're against going to the hospital, at least apply some medication once you reach home!"

"I'll take you home first. I'm concerned about you," Marco assured her softly.

His response left her fuming, but she decided not to argue further. She briskly moved towards his Lincoln car and coldly demanded Marco to unlock it.

Marco, slightly taken aback, found himself following her orders. A role reversal he wasn't accustomed to.

Loraine directly slid into the driver's seat.

Looking at the bewildered Marco, she coolly ordered, "Get in the car."

How could she let an injured man drive?

She didn't need him to drive her home, but she had to ensure he got home safely.



## Chapter 431 Move Out Of Bryant Family

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Marco was taken aback.

It wasn't Loraine's assertive demeanor that startled him, but the concealed concern she had for him.

This was the first instance where someone had expressed a desire to look after him. Traditionally, Marco was the one providing care, and he had become well-adjusted to the role.

To others, Marco was seen as an unassailable figure.

His grandmother had thrust upon him the mantle of leadership for the Bryant Group, laden with countless responsibilities. But she never spared a moment to consider if he was weary or overwhelmed.

Then there were Laura and Marina, only seeking him out when they required assistance.

Everyone tacitly accepted his seemingly limitless capabilities, consequently presuming he could handle everything. It scarcely occurred to them that Marco, as a human, also yearned for protection, love, and care.

However, he had grown accustomed to his role over the years, acting as a sentinel for those around him.

To him, the injury was insignificant. Despite being wounded, Marco had planned to drive himself back, as if unscathed.

Nonetheless, Loraine, consumed by concern, insisted on escorting him home.

Marco was flabbergasted and remained silent for a moment, only snapping back to reality when Loraine addressed him.

"Marco? Why aren't you getting in the car? You don't want to go home?"

Marco's eyes sparkled as he smiled, opened the passenger door, and climbed in.

Starting the engine, Loraine shot a quick glance at Marco while reversing the car, "Where to? The Bryant family villa or the mansion?"

Previously, Marco rarely spent time at home, possibly a day or two in a month, with the rest of his days spent at the company.

But post-divorce, Marco seemed less preoccupied and visited Loraine nearly every day.

Loraine was unsure about Marco's current residence.

However, without missing a beat, Marco replied, "Anywhere but the Bryant family villa."

After a pause, he added, "There's no need for you to drop me home. Let's head to your apartment first. Then I'll arrange for Carl to pick me up."

Loraine simply gazed at him in silence.

Overwhelmed by Loraine's intense scrutiny, Marco ended up revealing the address of a private residence.

Loraine was slightly taken aback. The address was conveniently located near the Bryant Group but significantly distant from the Bryant family villa.

Most importantly...

"When did you move out of the Bryant family villa?" Loraine inquired.



Marco's expression shifted, but he remained quiet. He simply responded ambiguously, "It's more convenient for work."

Lorraine cast a doubtful look at him. Clearly, she wasn't buying his explanation.

Marco averted his gaze.

Lorraine then recalled Marco's solemn vow about severing ties with Laura and Marina, promising that he would no longer clean up their mess.

The Marco she knew was a man of his word. Yet his sudden decision to help Laura and Marina, coupled with his peculiar behavior during that period, struck her as suspicious.

Could there have been a compelling reason for Marco to assist Laura and Marina?

Recalling his melancholic demeanor over the past few days, Lorraine's heart softened. She refrained from probing further, remarking instead, "That's good. It's better to move out. There's a certain comfort to living alone."

Marco felt a surge of warmth and appreciated Lorraine's understanding as he began to relax. Then it occurred to him that Lorraine also lived by herself.

Living alone wasn't always easy, especially for a woman. The events of the night suggested that someone intended to harm Lorraine.

This time, he had fortuitously been there to rescue her. But who knew what might happen next?

Since Lorraine lived alone, he felt obligated to ensure her safety.

With a grim expression, Marco promptly called Carl.

"A group of thugs harassed Lorraine near the Cruz family property. Investigate who's behind this."

Lorraine appeared taken aback. "Marco, didn't I tell you that I would handle this myself?"

Marco fixed a sincere and steadfast gaze on her.

"Lorraine, I'm not trying to interfere. I know you're capable of discovering the truth on your own, sooner or later. However, I can't stand the thought of an unknown threat hovering over you. I need to identify and confront the person behind this myself!"

At this juncture, Marco simply wished to resolve the situation swiftly.

He couldn't bear to wait any longer, especially given that these individuals had intended to harm Lorraine. He desired nothing more than to locate them immediately!

"You..." Lorraine's heart fluttered.

In her dazed state, she noticed Marco's gaze mirroring the image of her rescuer from past dangers.

It was this protective demeanor that had initially drawn her towards him. When she learned that Marco was seeking a partner, she had married him without a moment's hesitation.

Lorraine's heart pounded in her chest. She forced her focus back on the wheel, and then pulled out of the Cruz family's driveway.

Following Marco's directions, she pulled up in front of a villa. Its simple, luminous exterior didn't quite match Marco's style. It seemed as though he had made the purchase in a rush.

"Here we are," Lorraine indicated for him to exit the car.

Yet, Marco didn't immediately step out. Instead, he swiveled to face her, his eyes alight with intensity. "Lorraine, would you like to come in for a cup of tea?"