

## Chapter 692 Pain Reliever

Loraine's disbelief gripped her. What had these men been discussing in her absence?

The words she had overheard had shaken her, and she urgently pushed open the door, demanding, "What do you mean by marrying into the Torres family? What are you all talking about?"

Rowan and Wesley looked at each other guiltily, their expressions akin to children caught in mischief.

Marco, however, met Loraine's eyes directly and calmly said, "I told your uncles that I'm willing to marry into your family. As long as your family accepts me, I'm open to anything."

"Marry into my family? But... don't you care what others might think of you?" Loraine stammered, taken aback.

Marco had just parted ways with the Bryant family, and now whispers and rumors were likely to swirl about him living off others. Marrying into the Torres family would only attract more spiteful talk.

Marco's face grew serious, sincerity shining in his eyes. "I don't care what others think of me. As long as I can be with you, I'm willing to do anything."

He paused and smiled, softening his tone. "But, even if I won't formally marry into your family, I'll still listen to you and respect your opinions. You'll always be my priority."

His words left Loraine blushing, her shyness unable to escape the keen eyes of her uncles.

She cast a sidelong glance at her uncles and whispered, "Don't talk nonsense!"

Her expression was careful, but they noticed her shyness nonetheless.

Wesley, who considered himself quite knowledgeable in romantic matters, felt a touch of sadness.

Now, the girl he had cherished for over a decade was about to be swept away by Marco.

Both Wesley and Rowan knew that Loraine had never shown interest in anyone before. Her sudden connection with Marco was a game-changer, and their attempts to stop it were in vain.

Feeling resentful, Wesley tried to speak, but Rowan grabbed him by the collar and led him out of the room.

"What are you doing, Rowan?"

Once they were outside, Wesley freed himself from Rowan's grip and fixed his collar, visibly unhappy.

Rowan looked at him sharply. "Can't you keep quiet? Talking about marriage and the family? Dad's in the dark. Look what a mess you've made!"

Hearing that, Wesley sighed in frustration. "Dad will say no once he knows of this, but if we separate them, Lorrie will be mad. It's an insoluble dilemma. What do we do?"

The time of sadness that followed Loraine's divorce had affected the Torres family deeply. Rowan fell silent, lost in contemplation.

Yet, inside the hospital room, Loraine and Marco remained unaware of the concerns outside, untouched by the turmoil.

In the room, Loraine sat by the bedside and smiled timidly. "Did my uncles upset you? I'm sorry; they mean well."

Marco shook his head, showing that he wasn't too bothered. "No, they're fair. If they made it hard for me, I guess it's my fault."

Loraine looked at his slightly disheveled collar and smiled, sensing playfulness in his words.

Capitalizing on her guilt, Marco turned a bit whimsical. "Loraine, I'm in pain."

Considering how he had endured the bone-setting procedure without even a groan, his claim startled Loraine. Concern filled her face as she leaned closer, asking, "Is it hurting badly? Should I call the doctor?"

Marco shook his head and gently tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear, his voice tender. "No need for the doctor. I just want another dose of pain reliever."

Hearing this, Loraine was momentarily stunned. She pondered the doctor's warning about anesthesia and nerve damage but thought pain reliever now would be fine.

Before she could think further, Marco's hand, imbued with intimacy, caressed her lips, applying a gentle pressure that sent a shiver through her. He continued in a more alluring tone, "The pain reliever you gave during the bone-setting earlier was so effective. I want more."

The pain reliever she gave...

Suddenly, Loraine understood. Her cheeks turned red, and she felt as if a wave had hit her. Before she could respond, Marco's lips were on hers, a passionate and teasing kiss.



When it ended, Loraine's heart was pounding; Marco looked content. A lazy smile spread across his face. "I'm feeling much better now."

Torn between embarrassment and wanting to speak her mind, she was about to respond when Marco's eyes began to close with weariness.

Resignation washed over her as she helped him lie down, tucking him in carefully. She covered him with the sheets, creating a warm cocoon, and left the room, tiptoeing so as not to disturb his sleep.

Her uncles had considerably brought the food in insulated containers, ensuring a meal would await him.

As Loraine grappled with her emotions from the kiss, a familiar voice with a trace of recognition interrupted her thoughts. "Loraine?"



## Chapter 693 Meeting Ariadna Again

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Loraine turned around and found a girl in a hospital gown, her arm raised in a wave.

Walking over in surprise, Loraine greeted her with a smile, "Ariadna? It's nice to see you again."

It seemed like fate. She had encountered Ariadna in this hospital before, but she hadn't expected that the girl hadn't been transferred elsewhere.

Ariadna took Loraine's hand joyfully; her eyes sparkled.

Loneliness had been her constant companion in the hospital. Seeing the sterile white of the ward day after day had taken its toll on her spirits. To meet an acquaintance was both surprising and uplifting.

"Loraine, why are you here? Are you unwell again?" she asked, standing on her toes to peer behind Loraine curiously. "Where is your boyfriend?"

A cough of embarrassment escaped Loraine's lips as memories of a previous cold came back to her.

At that time, Ariadna had mistaken Marco for her boyfriend. Somehow, that misunderstanding had solidified into fact. It made Loraine reflect on the whims of fate.

With a smile, she explained, "He's the one who's injured and hospitalized this time. I'm taking care of him."

Ariadna had left an impression on her; she was an optimistic and bright girl despite her serious illness. Loraine couldn't help but like her.

Now, Ariadna looked frailer and paler. The smallest hospital gown hung loosely on her, making her appear like a child in adult clothing.

A softness settled in Loraine's heart, and she asked with genuine concern, "Are you doing better now?"

Ariadna only shrugged, but before she could answer, a middle-aged woman rushed over.

The hurried woman was none other than Tillie, whom Loraine had met before. Upon seeing Ariadna, Tillie exhaled in relief. Her eyes narrowing at the sight of Loraine, she addressed Ariadna with clear disapproval, "Miss Ariadna, you need to be careful with your health. Don't linger outside. Back to the ward with you!"

She snorted, her eyes fixed on Loraine as she added in a peculiar tone, "Outside, there are many viruses, ever persistent, always lurking. One must be cautious not to get infected."

Loraine's response was a quiet amusement, choosing to ignore the comment.

Her stance regarding Ariadna was clear, and Tillie's disdain for her mattered little.

Ariadna, understanding Tillie's underlying message, blushed and took Tillie's hand, whispering, "Tillie, please don't be this way. I ran into Loraine, and I stopped her first."

Tillie's eyes narrowed further. "So many coincidences? Miss Ariadna, you are too trusting! With all the hospitals in Vagow,

why does she find you every time? Those with malicious intent can find any excuse, without shame."

Since the time Loraine had made contact with Ariadna, Tillie had been on high alert. She feared an ordinary woman like Loraine might exploit the girl and scrutinized every contact Ariadna added, vigilant as a hen protecting her chick. Tillie had always been wary of Loraine, concerned she might ingratiate herself with Ariadna. Yet, she hadn't expected that Loraine would meet Ariadna again!

Though insulted by Tillie, Loraine remained composed. For Ariadna's sake, she chose to ignore Tillie's behavior and calmly told Ariadna, "Return to your ward and rest. I'll visit you if I have the chance."

Tillie's vigilance spiked at Loraine's words. She pulled Ariadna behind her with the protective instinct of a mother hen, as though eager to shield the girl at once.

Ariadna shot an apologetic glance back at Loraine, who responded with a reassuring smile.

Once Ariadna was out of sight, Loraine sighed, troubled by the sense that Ariadna's condition had worsened.

In the intensive care unit, Ariadna's face was flushed with anger as she complained in a hushed tone, "Tillie, you had no right to treat my friend that way."

Tillie's eyes widened, her voice edged with frustration. "Miss Ariadna, I'm doing this for your own good! Your health is fragile. Why would you risk it by staying outside for Loraine?"

Ariadna lowered her head, her pale feet swaying slightly, and said with a self-deprecating smile, "I won't be cured anyway."

Tillie cut in sharply, "Don't talk like that. The ninth-generation

robot is here in Vagow. Isn't that why we journeyed from Zodiac? With that technology, your operation is sure to succeed. How can you not be cured?"

Ariadna's lips tightened, her voice low. "Tillie, don't patronize me. I know the robot doesn't belong to the hospital. It's borrowed; Solar Company developed it but hasn't released it to the market. How could they lend it to us?"


Tillie's anxiety heightened at Ariadna's words. "We're still looking into it. If the hospital could borrow the robot from Solar Company, surely they must have a way to contact them. Since the hospital could manage it, wouldn't the Cruz family also be able to?"

Ariadna remained silent, only to bury herself unhappily in her quilt and say, "I need to rest now, Tillie. You should go."

A choked sigh escaped Tillie as she tucked Ariadna in and closed the door quietly behind her.

At that moment, a servant of the Cruz family rushed over, his voice quivering with excitement. "Tillie, I've found it. The robot was borrowed by Aldo from the Torres family!"



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## Chapter 694 Creating A Spectacle

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Tillie fixed a sharp gaze at the servant, her voice stern. "Miss Ariadna is resting; keep your voice down!"

The servant stiffened, assuming a posture as meek as a frightened bird. Tillie ushered him a few paces away before eagerly pressing him, "Tell me the details!"

Finally, a breakthrough!

The thought of Ariadna enduring such tribulations in Vagow, only to glimpse a ray of hope, brought a tear to Tillie's eye.

The servant quickly handed over the information, elucidating, "The ninth-generation robot is a rare treasure, thanks to its intricate design. All the doctors involved have signed stringent confidentiality agreements, so our investigation was no small feat. However, we found that after the robot was brought to our country, it was used for a surgery on only one individual, the chairman of Universe Group, Aldo Torres!"

Tillie's heart skipped a beat. The Universe Group? Was that not Loraine's family business?

The documents confirmed her suspicion: Aldo Torres was Loraine's grandfather.

This discovery was unexpected. Tillie sneered, "So Loraine has been plotting all this while to infiltrate the hospital, aiming to use this situation against the Cruz family for her own gain?"

But this revelation was promising. If the matter could be resolved through money and power, it wasn't an issue. As long as Loraine wanted something from them, Tillie felt confident she could handle it.

Tillie's face twisted into a sly grin as she ordered, "Find out Loraine Torres's room number at once. I'll visit her myself."

Her words dripped with condescension.

The servant lost no time in carrying out her command.

Loraine had registered for a companion bed while arranging hospital procedures for Marco, making the room easy to find. In moments, Tillie stood at the threshold.

Loraine happened to be returning from outside.

Seeing her, Tillie's face transformed from smug satisfaction to sheer delight. Abandoning any pretense of superiority, she hastened to block Loraine's way.

Loraine was puzzled. Why had Tillie sought her out? Hadn't she just avoided her earlier?

Maintaining a courteous demeanor, Loraine asked coolly, "Can I help you?"

Tillie's scoff betrayed her disdain. She was more convinced than ever that Loraine was playacting. Lifting her chin haughtily, she snapped, "Did your grandfather's surgery employ the Solar Company's surgical robot?"

Loraine, stung by Tillie's arrogance, allowed a hint of ice to creep into her voice, replying, "Why should that concern you?"

Tillie's impatience flared, her voice rising in imperiousness. "I have a task for you. Surrender the surgical robot at once!"



Lorraine's eyebrows drew together in consternation. Initially, she had deemed Tillie as merely rude, but now she considered her behavior entirely out of line.

How could this servant speak to her in such a commanding tone? Many prominent officials and dignitaries would think twice before addressing Lorraine in such a manner, yet here was Tillie, treating her like a mere underling.

A soft chuckle escaped Lorraine's lips as she responded, unvarnished, "It seems as though you're asking for a favor, but your approach leaves much to be desired. I'm sorry, but I have other commitments. I'm taking lunch to my boyfriend, so please move aside."

For the first time, Tillie noticed the insulated containers in Lorraine's hand.

Caught unawares by Lorraine's denial, Tillie stood momentarily bewildered.

In Zodiac, anyone connected with the Cruz family enjoyed elevated status, even a servant. And yet, here was Lorraine, dismissing her so brazenly. Tillie had always been used to commanding others; the idea that she might need to plead for assistance was unfathomable.

Recovering from her shock, Tillie was flooded with indignation, and she blocked Lorraine's path, her voice brimming with anger. "Lorraine, I'm offering you an opportunity here. Don't be foolishly ungrateful. Are you not ingratiating yourself with Miss Ariadna to ascend the social ranks and gain favor with the Cruz family? Yet now you ignore my request. Forget Miss Ariadna's friendship; even a connection to the Cruz family will remain out of your reach!"

She added with contempt, "And you don't even recognize your

place!"

Lorraine laughed lightly. "Oh? Then enlighten me; what is my place?"

A passing nurse noticed the confrontation and hurriedly alerted a colleague, "Quick, inform the hospital director. The Cruz family is at it again!"

Tillie's haughty attitude and suspicion of anyone nearing Ariadna was a known issue. This wasn't her first disturbance in the hospital. However, the staff understood the Cruz family's clout and sought to avoid a feud. Their immediate reaction was to notify the hospital director to limit any fallout.

Cornered by Lorraine's retort, Tillie fumed before snapping, "You're a lowly opportunist, desperately courting favor with the Cruz family. You're nothing but a commoner clawing at prestige!"

Lorraine's face clouded at those words. "No matter how humble my origins may be, I would never sink to your level, creating a public spectacle in a hospital like a quarrelsome market-woman, imploring favors from others!"



## Chapter 695 Using The Influence

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The disturbance attracted a crowd of intrigued onlookers from within the hospital rooms, heads craning to witness the unfolding drama.

Adorned in attire and accessories rivaling those of opulent matrons, thanks to the Cruz family's generous treatment of their staff, Tillie cut a striking figure.

In contrast, Loraine's composed elegance, combined with her tall and attractive appearance, crafted a mesmerizing tableau that naturally drew the eye.

Tillie's face, flushed with anger, her foot stomping in vexation, only added to the crowd's excitement. The situation seemed to align perfectly with Loraine's earlier comparison to a fishwife's noisy dispute – the only missing element was a hand-on-hip posture.

"Lorraine, do you even comprehend who you're addressing? To offend me is to affront the Cruz family. Surely you're not so uninformed as to disregard their influence?"

Lorraine's patience was wearing thin, her eyes rolling at Tillie's arrogance. Of course, she knew of the Cruz family's prominence, but she hardly considered Tillie their spokesperson.

Undeterred, Tillie launched into her fervent speech. "The Cruz family's reach extends far and wide in Zodiac, a dynasty that has thrived for generations. They stand as a beacon of affluence and status! Are you oblivious to their power and

riches? Vagow is beneath their concern. Their enterprises span the globe, alliances forged with European royalty. Don't delude yourself into believing that your role as CEO of the Universe Group puts you on their level! The Cruz family's wealth transcends anything the Torres family could hope to match!"

Loraine found herself amused by this grandstanding. Was this a requisite recitation for Cruz family members? Florence had regaled her with the same tale, and now Tillie followed suit.

Tillie's voice, tinged with satisfaction, continued, "Despite your humble origins, the Cruz family is willing to grant you a ladder to social advancement. Consider it a blessing from a past life! Show gratitude for the chance to assist the Cruz family. Hand over the surgical robot without delay!"

Loraine's response was a wry chuckle, her tone laced with irony. "You speak as if the Cruz family were your personal possession. Quite the display."

At this, Tillie's frustration peaked. Loraine's sneer lingered as she added, "Moreover, who claimed the surgical robot was mine? Even if it were, your lamentable attitude would hardly compel me to lend it."

Loraine's impression of the Cruz family had not been favorable due to Florence's influence, and Tillie's behavior further soured her view. While individuals with Cruz blood, like Ariadna and Grady, exhibited reason and courtesy, why did those orbiting them act so pretentious and haughty?

Tillie's exasperation reached its peak. "You... you're tempting fate. Just you wait; I'll find the hospital director right away and have you all thrown out!"

Her words had barely escaped her lips when the hospital director, Harlem White, approached in haste.

Upon reaching the scene, he inclined his body slightly, addressing Loraine with an air of contrition. "Miss Torres, I must beg your forgiveness for my oversight. I've been so occupied that I was unaware of your presence in the hospital. It's entirely inexcusable!"

The hospital had previously performed surgery on Loraine's grandfather, a landmark procedure utilizing the world's first ninth-generation surgical robot. This groundbreaking event, coupled with the Torres family's influence, had elevated Loraine to a status of near-reverence in Harlem's eyes, extending beyond mere matters of prestige.

Hence, when news of a quarrel involving the Cruz family and Loraine reached him, Harlem perceived it as a critical issue and hastened to intervene.

Following a brief exchange of pleasantries with Loraine, Harlem directed his attention to Tillie, his smile becoming more guarded as he offered a measured courtesy. "Ms. Castro, would you be kind enough to explain the problem?"

Tillie's irritation was apparent as she gestured at Loraine and spoke disdainfully. "Director White, your timing is impeccable. This woman is overstepping her bounds. She has affronted the Cruz family. You must remove her from the hospital at once!"

Harlem's face registered a moment of surprise, and he hesitated before casting a glance at Loraine.

Tillie's reliance on the Cruz family's clout to assert her authority was not lost on him. Although she had breached decorum on several occasions, he had chosen to turn a blind eye, wary of incurring the Cruz family's wrath.

But Loraine was an altogether different matter. Harlem understood that their access to the cutting-edge ninth-

generation surgical robot was indebted to her.

The appeal of this advanced technology had drawn a throng of experts to their hospital, all eager to observe the robot's prowess and scrutinize data from the prior surgery.

A single surgical robot had magnified the hospital's renown and standing, and Harlem's enthusiasm for emerging medical technologies was genuine. Should he offend Loraine at this delicate moment, would he not risk estranging both the eminent professionals and the sought-after ninth-generation robot?

After thoughtful consideration of the situation's nuances, Harlem opted for a diplomatic stance, his smile touched with regret. "Ms. Castro, I'm afraid that course of action is not within our purview. It would be unseemly for a hospital to dismiss a patient in such a manner."



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## Chapter 696 Loraine's Importance

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Tillie, having grown accustomed to flattery, found the repeated setbacks at this hospital intolerable. Her anger erupted as she exclaimed, "Director, surely you recognize the Cruz family's standing in Zodiac? Given our influence, we have come to this outlying town solely for that surgical robot! Your hospital's refusal to lend it to the Cruz family is unwise; are you seeking to defy us?"

Harlem shook his head, his expression one of helplessness. "I've already elucidated; we merely borrowed the ninth-generation surgical robot. We lack the authority to utilize it without the owner's permission."

Tillie's voice hardened as she persisted, "So you're aligning with Loraine against the Cruz family?"

Harlem's frustration grew. Though the young lady of the Cruz family was endearing and affable, her attendant's aggressiveness was disconcerting.

From the moment of her arrival at the hospital, Tillie had proven to be fastidious, faulting everything in sight. Even though Harlem's establishment was renowned as a top-tier medical facility in the country, she had reduced its stature to insignificance.

He had endured her criticisms, mindful of the necessity to avoid upsetting someone from Zodiac. Yet, he soon grasped that Tillie was purposefully belittling, holding that Vagow paled in comparison to Zodiac.



In truth, Vagow stood as a premier metropolis, its development rivaling Zodiac, especially in light of recent strides in smart city initiatives and the booming construction of the new CBD project, all contributing to GDP growth.

Tillie, however, remained blind to these accomplishments. To her, beyond Zodiac and the Cruz family, all else was insignificant.

Observing Tillie's lofty and dismissive manner, Harlem's well-mannered patience began to fray.

With a forced smile, he replied, "You're entirely correct. We are but a humble and undeveloped locale, ill-equipped to attend to a distinguished patient from the Cruz family. Perhaps it would be best for you to transport your patient back to Zodiac, avoiding any further delays in treatment."

As a physician, his desire to heal Ariadna's ailment was sincere, yet doctors were not devoid of self-respect. Tillie's high-handed and imperious attitude had nettled him.

Tillie's eyes widened, her shock giving way to fury. "Do you presume I willingly subjected our Miss Ariadna to this forsaken place? It is solely for that ninth-generation surgical robot! Deliver it forthwith, and I shall depart at once. I wouldn't endure another moment here!"

Harlem's countenance chilled as he stressed, "I have made my position abundantly clear. The surgical robot is not ours to offer. And, were it not for Miss Torres, the Solar Company would never have granted the hospital access to the ninth-generation robot!"

Harlem continued, his eyes resting momentarily on Loraine, a hint of gratitude coloring his words, "Miss Torres has a generous heart. Had you approached this matter with sincerity,



she might still have offered her aid. Let me be clear: without her influence, our hospital would never have had the opportunity to utilize the ninth-generation surgical robot. Thus, I cannot dismiss Miss Torres."

Tillie stood aghast, her thoughts reeling. Was Loraine indeed so crucial? This revelation sharply contrasted her assumptions.

In her mind, no matter how sophisticated or costly the surgical robot was, its existence was merely the product of profit-driven motives.

As she had found herself unable to engage the Solar Company directly, she had believed that negotiating with domestic hospitals would be a convenient alternative, even if it necessitated paying for the privilege.

But now, Harlem's words painted a more intricate picture, and Tillie's certainty began to falter.

"If you wish to depart, you are free to do so," Harlem continued, his voice steady. "If Vagow holds no value for you, and the robot remains beyond your reach for treatment, why linger here?"

Harlem's blunt suggestion that they leave left Tillie incredulous. "You dare to send us away? Do you not fear the consequences of offending the Cruz family?"

Her confidence was shaken, her voice lacking its previous conviction.

The realization that the hospital too had relied upon Loraine's goodwill to access the surgical robot brought a disconcerting truth to light: had her previous altercation with Loraine closed doors they now needed open?

Tillie struggled to accept this reality, and pride kept an apology at bay. After a pause, her tone modulated slightly, losing some


of its edge. "If that's the situation, Loraine, go consult the Solar Company regarding the robot. Rest assured, the Cruz family will act honorably. We'll bear all necessary costs."

Loraine remained silent, her expression unreadable.

In seeking assistance, humility is often the key. Yet Tillie's haughtiness persisted, rendering her plea unconvincing and unattractive.

Her anxiety mounting as Loraine's silence stretched on, Tillie's voice cracked with indignation. "Don't be overly avaricious! I see through your game; you were the one hindering us from obtaining the robot. You wanted to inflate the cost, courting favor with the Cruz family, didn't you? Such underhanded tactics!"



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