

Chapter 610 A Significant Surprise

Loraine glanced at Marco's phone resting in the car console and cleared her throat lightly. "Perhaps you should take that call."

In truth, she was relieved the call had arrived at such a moment. If they had delved any deeper into their discussion, she risked being swayed further by Marco.

Picking up the phone, Marco was greeted by Carl's voice, "Mr. Bryant."

Marco's demeanor shifted, his voice returning to its customary detachment. "What is it?"

Carl, used to Marco's icy tone and oblivious to the preceding events, barely registered the slight rasp in Marco's voice. He reported in his usual efficient manner, "Jefferson has just contacted me regarding the 15% shares. I quoted the price as Miss Torres instructed, and he agreed to proceed with the purchase if we drop it by another twenty million. He asserted he's ready to buy them all now."

Marco's expression suggested he'd anticipated this, and he smirked, "Given Jefferson's assets, this is probably the most generous offer he can manage."

Jefferson had recently incurred a significant loss in his dealings with Loraine. He must have realized that he didn't want to get ripped off again, and it was doubtful they could extract more money from him.



With this in mind, Marco nonchalantly instructed, "Let's accept his offer and sell the shares right away."

Hearing this, Loraine was taken aback. The price was merely average, yet Marco had agreed so readily?

She couldn't help but recall her earlier negotiation with Jefferson and felt a pang of guilt. Clearing her throat, she ventured, "Did I drive too hard a bargain with Jefferson earlier, causing him to pressure you into dropping the price?"

Marco simply smiled, "No. When selling such a large quantity of shares at once, besides Jefferson, there may not be another buyer on the market. Lowering the price under pressure is a given. Moreover, his offer exceeded my expectations. Your earlier negotiation probably prompted him to concede so quickly."

Both he and Loraine knew that the Bryant Group's stock price was on the verge of plummeting, so it was in their best interest to sell the shares promptly. Plus, Jefferson's rash decision to purchase such a substantial amount of shares could result in a total loss on his part. He would reap what he had sown.

Thinking this, Marco smirked, "Jefferson's probably cleaned out his coffers this time. You already took a chunk out of him with your sale. I shouldn't be too greedy."

Loraine fell silent. This man might claim not to be greedy, yet he exhibited no remorse for his strategic maneuverings.

She finally grasped why people cautioned against crossing paths with Marco in the business world.

Although many perceived him as a washed-up CEO, he was orchestrating the entire Bryant Group's fate from behind the scenes effortlessly.



Fortunately, she and Marco were on the same side.

Loraine was jolted back into the present and queried, "Now that all the shares are sold, what's your next course of action?"

At her question, Marco hesitated momentarily, a glacial gleam flickering in his eyes. "Naturally, I will present the Bryant family with a significant surprise."

"A significant surprise?"

Feeling a shiver down her spine at his ominous expression, Loraine understood that Marco's surprise was unlikely to be pleasant!

Marco's gaze was indifferent as it landed in the direction of the Bryant Group, his smile failing to reach his eyes.

"Does Marina really believe that by acquiring that 25% of shares from me, she can rest easy as CEO? Her naivety and ignorance persist, limiting her to daydreams. I hadn't initially intended to target the Bryant family, but she dared to destroy your photograph... She won't be left unpunished!"

Observing his lingering anger over the damaged photo, Loraine was touched. She swiftly shifted the topic. "So, what's your plan? Will you use the profits from the shares to stage a comeback and rival the Bryant Group?"

"To rival the Bryant Group in the short term is still unrealistic." Marco dismissed the idea with a shake of his head. "I've wasted too much time dealing with those fools in the Bryant Group. I lack the patience to continue skirmishing with them."

Loraine had originally assumed he'd sold the shares for the much-needed cash. Now, hearing that he didn't intend to utilize the money in the manner she'd presumed, she was somewhat



perplexed. So what was this 'significant surprise' he'd alluded to?

Marco's smirk widened. "Jefferson's covert acquisition of such a substantial volume of shares will undoubtedly have raised Marina's suspicions. Liza won't be able to sit idle for long. And when the Bryant Group's stock price crashes, can you imagine their response? Just wait and watch. With a little nudge from me, they'll soon be at each other's throats."

Had she been told this in the past, Loraine might have found his words cryptic. However, now, as the CEO of the Universe Group, her insights and comprehension were on par with Marco's. Upon hearing him outline his strategy, she immediately grasped his intentions.

As she regarded Marco's nonchalant demeanor, Loraine realized that the Bryant Group was living on borrowed time, given his planned provocation.

Holding no affection for the Bryant family or the Bryant Group, she found her heart filled with anticipation. "Indeed, it's quite the surprise. I'm eager to see their reactions upon receiving this unexpected gift."



Chapter 611 Change In Ownership Of The Bryant...

In the high-rise suite that housed the Bryant Group's leadership, Marina was basking in the thrill of landing her position as CEO, oblivious to the underlying turmoil that bubbled beneath the surface. She was high on success, relishing her victory over Marco.

She perched comfortably in the grand leather chair reserved for the CEO, her phone in hand. She resumed her interrupted selfie session, a wide smile gracing her face.

Marina adjusted her angle, making sure the prominent Bryant Group emblem featured in the frame. With a triumphant pose and a press of a button, she had her trophy photo. A few swipes and edits later, she was itching to plaster it on her social media, a blatant display of her achievement.

"I am now the CEO of the Bryant Group!"

Laura radiated an even brighter glow of pride, relishing the taste of victory. She proclaimed Marina's success to anyone who would listen, that her flesh and blood now controlled the Bryant Group.

High society ladies who had once given Laura the cold shoulder now rushed to get in her good books.

Laura reveled in the shift of power, ignoring those who had once ignored her, basking in the sweet taste of revenge.

For days on end, the mother-daughter duo reveled in their



Chapter 611 Change In Ownership Of The Bryant 🎁 +120 Points at most
newfound status, neglecting the actual responsibility that
came with it.

However, this honeymoon period was short-lived.

One day, as Marina was primping herself in the CEO's office, the
door burst open. In stomped Jefferson, his face contorted in
rage.

Startled, Marina's hand jerked, almost ruining her meticulously
drawn eyeliner. She shot a venomous look at Jefferson.
"Respect, please. You're in the CEO's office. Ever heard of
knocking?"

Jefferson's scowl deepened, his temper flaring. "Enough with
the CEO act, Marina. Don't forget, you're in this seat because I
backed you! How dare you conspire with Marco against me?"

Marina struggled to comprehend Jefferson's accusations, but
she had a keen memory for grudges. Hearing him take credit
for her position reminded her of the time he'd had her tossed
out of a shareholders' meeting.

She retorted with a sneer, "Are you hallucinating, old man?
Who's conspiring? You should be enjoying your retirement with
your bonus. Instead, you're here, becoming a daily nuisance!"

Jefferson's face reddened, his temper reaching the boiling
point. His accusations gained more weight as he jabbed a
finger towards Marina.

"Are you denying it? Huh! Don't play dumb with me! The Bryant
Group's stock price plunged by half when the market opened
today! After Marco left, there was a flurry of resignations. Our
company has become a ghost town, with ongoing projects
stalled, leading to this financial catastrophe. Are you telling me
you had no idea?"

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Marina was stumped by Jefferson's revelation, left speechless with shock, her face a picture of clueless innocence. "I... I had no idea."

Since her induction into the company, Marina had primarily concerned herself with selfies and boasting. She never took the time to familiarize herself with her team or sift through the paperwork piling on her desk. As a result, the string of resignations remained unbeknownst to her.

She dismissed Jefferson with a casual wave. "You're making a mountain out of a molehill. A few employees quit a behemoth like Bryant Group? We can always replace them."

Jefferson's anger flared as he realized Marina's ignorance of the current predicament.


What an idiot! His disdain for Marina increased as he wondered how the Bryants could produce such a clueless heiress.

His grievances were less about caring for the Bryant family and more about the inconvenience Marina's incompetence had caused him since she took over the Bryant Group.

The more he dwelled on the situation, the more his anger grew exponentially. "You reckless fool! You fired Carl on a whim and even denied him his pay! Can you fathom the disheartening effect that has on our key employees? He was Marco's right-hand man, having good interactions with various departments. His influence was vast. His departure triggered a talent exodus, and you're to blame!"

The thought of eliminating Marina crossed Jefferson's mind, his eyes red with rage.

He had staked his entire fortune on the Bryant Group, even mortgaging his properties and depleting his cash reserves to

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secure that 15% share.

With the current stock market turmoil, he was a few hundred million in the hole.

Marina, however, remained defiant. "It can't be as grave as you suggest. Plus, as CEO, I call the shots. Why should it concern you?"

Jefferson sneered, his rage intensifying. "You, the CEO? Not for long! For your information, I now own a 36% stake, surpassing your grandmother. I'm now the principal shareholder of Bryant Group. It's mine!"


Despite her shortcomings, Marina understood the weight of ownership stakes. Her eyes bulged in disbelief. "Impossible! You're bluffing!"

Jefferson snorted dismissively, ignoring her protest. He called security and ordered them to escort her out of the CEO's office.

The guards swiftly grabbed Marina, and as they hauled her away, she yelled in a blend of humiliation and fury. "Unhand me! I am the CEO of Bryant Group, a Bryant by blood! Let me go now!"

She wasn't aware of the backhanders Jefferson had given the security personnel. So despite her loud protests, she was evicted from the Bryant Group premises.



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Chapter 612 10% Shares

After being ousted from the Bryant Group headquarters, Marina stood stupefied.

Only moments earlier, she had been relishing the luxury of the CEO's office, surrounded by sycophancy. Now, she found herself abruptly exiled.

The fear finally set in as Jefferson's words echoed in her mind; her face drained of color.

While Marina's knowledge of corporate affairs was limited, she grasped the fundamental principle: larger shareholding equated to larger control. It was the reason she had pressured Liza to transfer Marco's shares to her name.

Jefferson now claimed 36% of Bryant Group's shares.

Marina couldn't fathom how he had amassed such a sizable stake. Still, the chilling reality set in: he had effectively commandeered the Bryant Group right under her nose, and she was none the wiser. If Liza discovered this, she was in for a world of hurt.

Her fear wasn't only rooted in Liza's imminent scolding, but also in the potential loss of the Bryant Group. She and Laura would be at the mercy of others once again, living days spent kowtowing to others' demands.

Marina eventually plucked up the courage to return to the Bryant household, tearfully recounting Jefferson's audacious plot to Liza.

"Grandma, that conniving old man Jefferson..."

Though Marina lacked most skills, she was a master at instigating drama. She tactfully omitted her own negligence regarding Jefferson's scheme, instead focusing on his disrespectful tirade against the Bryant family.

Hearing Marina's embellished recounting, Liza was on the verge of fainting in rage.

Expelling Marco from the Bryant Group had already taken its toll on Liza. Despite her efforts to safeguard the Bryant lineage, her health had been on the decline. She'd spent the last few days convalescing at the Bryant residence, deliberately isolating herself from the world.

She had believed Marina could maintain control temporarily with Marco's foundation, at least until her health recuperated. She hadn't anticipated Jefferson's swift and covert accumulation of shares, aiming to seize power.

Although Liza was incensed, she wasn't entirely hoodwinked by Marina. Shooting Marina a frigid look, she asked, "Why did things get out of control after you became CEO? How did Jefferson's actions escape your notice? You're utterly useless!"

Marina, feeling unjustly accused, retorted, "Grandma, I've been tirelessly working to steady the Bryant Group these past few days. Jefferson has long been part of the company, and I trusted him. How is this my fault? If anyone is to blame, it's that vile traitor Marco. Why didn't he foresee Jefferson's ill intentions when he was still with the Bryant Group?"

Liza was well acquainted with Marina's nature.

Working tirelessly? Inwardly, she scoffed at Marina's ludicrous claim of diligent work.

Liza regretted appointing Marina as the CEO and, displaying a disinterested demeanor, closed her eyes. "Since you've proven incapable of holding this position, transfer your shares to me. That way, I'll retain the majority stake, thwarting Jefferson's plans."

Marina's refusal was instantaneous. "No! Why should I surrender my shares? I won't!"

She had worked strenuously to amass her shares and was just starting to savor the power and admiration they brought. If she surrendered her shares, she'd be left with nothing. Her fair-weather friends would scorn her for her loss of power. She was unwilling to return to a life of destitution.

Liza opened her eyes, her gaze icy and unyielding. "You refuse? The shares are wasted in your possession. You're not surrendering them to a stranger!"

Marina's plea continued. When Laura heard the commotion, she arrived and attempted to coax Liza without openly contradicting her. "Mom, Marina is a novice at running the company. It's understandable that she's made some errors. If you abruptly confiscate her shares, she'll lose the chance to learn and improve. It will also impede her future succession of the Bryant Group."

Liza remained indifferent to their pleas and retorted icily, "Marco was also a first-timer, and we never faced such issues back then."

The mention of Marco muted everyone. Liza's mood darkened further, and she sighed, "Fine, since Marina is eager to learn and grow, I won't demand too much. Transfer 10% of the shares to me, and we'll confront Jefferson as a united front."

Liza glanced at the disgruntled Marina, asserting, "If you



persist in your refusal, I won't hesitate to retrieve them forcibly!"

Marina's face turned ashen, and Laura forced a conciliatory smile, stating, "We'll respect your decision. The final call is yours."

Content with their responses, Liza departed. Once she was gone, Marina expressed her frustration, "Mom, why should I relinquish my shares? They're rightfully mine! And 10% represents a significant amount!"

Laura, too, was discontented but attempted to soothe Marina. "It's only temporary. Let your grandmother deal with Jefferson first. Marina, you're now the Bryant Group's sole heir. Are you afraid it won't be yours eventually? Your grandmother doesn't have many years left, and when she passes, even her shares will fall into our hands!"

Marina couldn't help but imagine a future where she'd inherit Liza's shares. Coupled with her current stake, she'd hold a whopping 60%! Nobody, not even Jefferson, would dare to cross her!

Marina's reluctance subsided at this enticing prospect, and she begrudgingly agreed, "Fine, I'll bide my time."



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Chapter 613 The Ownership Of Qbot

Inside the CEO's office at the Bryant Group headquarters, Jefferson paced nervously, a somber look on his face, his brow slick with sweat. His desktop computer screen displayed the fluctuating share prices of the Bryant Group.

His victory over Marina offered scant satisfaction as he realized that the current situation was getting out of hand.

He knew very well that Carl's departure was not the main reason for the mass departure of key talents.

The root cause was Marco's removal from his position!

Unless this issue was properly addressed, the stock prices would continue their precipitous decline!

The prospect of his wealth disappearing caused Jefferson considerable distress.

He couldn't let this continue. His immense efforts to secure the Bryant Group weren't for the acquisition of a money-hemorrhaging shell!

To regain his investment, the most expedient approach was to seize the Bryant Group's highly profitable core projects. With these assets in his possession, he could disregard whether the Bryant Group deteriorated into an empty shell. After all, he possessed the resources to start anew.

Jefferson made a swift decision and directed his subordinates



to contact the pivotal research and development team at the Bryant Group, particularly the lab developing Qbot.

In no time, his subordinate returned to the CEO's office, visibly rattled.

"B-boss, the researchers and staff in the lab have also tendered their resignations."

Jefferson's pupils widened as he boomed, "What did you say?"

This was inconceivable!

The Qbot project was the cornerstone of the Bryant Group, and its research team consisted of elite scientists. If they had also resigned, it would spell catastrophe for the Bryant Group.

Jefferson sank back into his chair, his gaze hollow, his complexion pallid.

He had gambled his entire fortune on acquiring the Bryant Group, not to watch his wealth dissipate!

"How many personnel remain in the lab?" Jefferson asked, his voice devoid of hope.

His subordinate hesitated before revealing, "All the key members of the project have resigned, and even the ancillary staff have submitted their resignations."

Upon hearing this, Jefferson's rage ignited. He rose abruptly and stormed towards the lab.

Inside the lab, most of the equipment was dormant. The previously vibrant research facility, buzzing with the hum of machinery and diligent scientists, now housed only a handful of technicians. Some of them had already resigned and were packing up their belongings.



Marcel Crassus, the project development supervisor, was one of them.

With a blaze in his eyes, Jefferson confronted Marcel, his voice laced with anger, "What's the meaning of this? Your mass resignations are causing severe financial damage to the Bryant Group! I'll sue all of you!"

Marcel adjusted his glasses and replied composedly, "Mr. Foster, we've resigned in accordance with our contracts. Even if you sue us, you'll have no legal grounds."

Jefferson's face twitched, and he ground his teeth. "What contract? I wasn't informed about any such agreement!"

"Understandably, you're unaware. Qbot is the most advanced artificial intelligence technology. Our involvement in this project is based on a provision in our original contract. If Qbot's ownership doesn't rest with the Bryant Group, all project members reserve the right to end their association with the company immediately. Essentially, we scientists are devoted to the development of the Qbot. We're indifferent to the corporation's internal affairs, but we're obliged to follow Qbot," Marcel explained placidly.

Jefferson's countenance shifted, his voice strained with disbelief. "How is it possible that Qbot doesn't belong to the Bryant Group? Qbot is a Bryant Group initiative, conceived by the Bryant Group. Naturally, it belongs to the Bryant Group!"

Marcel regarded him with a surprised expression, as if he was dealing with an unreasonable individual. "Aren't you shareholders informed? Qbot's ownership has always been vested personally with Mr. Marco Bryant."

Jefferson was taken aback, his face contorting with displeasure.



Marco Bryant, it was always Marco!

He brushed past Marcel, unwilling to accept the revelation, and stormed into the lab, bellowing, "Qbot! Show yourself!"

The wall indicator light flickered on, and soon after, Qbot responded in its clear voice, "Did you summon me? What can I assist you with?"

Qbot's sudden response startled Jefferson, but recognizing it was still functional, his expression swiftly transformed from surprise to delight. He rushed forward, asserting, "Qbot, the Bryant Group engineered you. You belong to the Bryant Group. You cannot side with Marco!"

Once Jefferson finished speaking, an incensed emoji materialized on the expansive tech wall screen, and Qbot retorted indignantly, "Old man! I'm not a possession! I'm the progeny of my creators! You're indifferent to Qbot! I've never even dealt with you, yet you dare assert your ownership over me! My daddy brought me into existence. Humph! Now that my daddy seeks my mommy, I'm leaving with them!"

With those words, Qbot abruptly went offline and vanished. The entire tech wall reverted to a flat gray hue. In a panic, Jefferson pounded on the walls, yelling and cursing, frantically attempting to resurrect Qbot.

Seeing this, Marcel offered a sympathetic yet scornful reminder, "Mr. Foster, don't exert yourself. Qbot's main program was extracted when Mr. Bryant departed. It left a subsidiary program here merely to accompany us, the remaining personnel. Now that you enrage it, naturally, it won't return."

Regret washed over Jefferson, but he was powerless. After a long silence, he clenched his teeth and reassured himself, "It's just a flawed AI. Even though it's gone, I don't give a damn. The



Bryant Group has other lucrative projects!"

As long as he could recoup his investment, he wouldn't consider it a total loss!

Reflecting on the next significant Bryant Group project, second only to Qbot, there was the partnership with Universe Group on the Smart City and CBD development scheme. Jefferson regained his composure, spun around, and exited the lab to arrange a meeting with Universe Group for their joint venture.

He figured it was not over yet. Once he recovered the investment, the Bryant Group would eventually be his!



Chapter 614 Fraternity

The tumult within the Bryant Group had no bearing on Marco.

Currently, in a private club located on a bustling Vagow street, three men were convening after a considerable hiatus.

This club was Marco's personal property, its finances circumventing the Bryant Group, thus its ownership remained a secret to many.

Inside the private room, Jimmie produced a pile of documents from his briefcase, adjusted his gold-rimmed spectacles, and cast a smile at the man lounging nonchalantly on the sofa.

"Marco, I've inked all the contracts for the new recruits at Solar Company's laboratory, consistent with the previous agreements at the Bryant Group. Care to review them?"

Marco dismissed the offer with a shake of his head, replying composedly, "You manage it. I trust your judgment."

Jimmie chuckled, tidied the documents, snatched a glass of liquor from Slater's grasp, and sprawled leisurely on the sofa. "Given the mass exodus of Bryant Group employees, they'll be reluctant to approve any more resignations without scrutiny. If anyone wants to resign from the Bryant Group but is blocked, delegate the case to me. My legal team will handle it."

Marco acknowledged with a slight nod, paused momentarily, then stated, "I appreciate it."

Jimmie's grin broadened as he casually slung his arm over Marco's shoulder. "Why the formality? We share a strong



camaraderie. There's no need for gratitude."

Having said that, Jimmie nudged Slater, who had remained mum throughout, and teased, "What's up with you? You're usually quite the chatterbox. Why so glum today?"

Stung by the jibe, Slater, his brow furrowed, slammed his glass onto the table, retorting irritably, "I'm livid! Marco, I can't reconcile with the fact that you're no longer a Bryant... Well, that's not exactly what I'm irate about. It's the ungratefulness of the Bryant family that riles me. Despite your numerous contributions, they treated you with such disdain!"

Jimmie's smile waned, his gaze shifting to Marco.

Although his sentiments were not as overt as Slater's, they mirrored the same concern. He believed Marco deserved better.

Marco took a sip of his beverage, lowered his eyes, and maintained his silence.

Observing this, Slater withheld the tirade on his tongue. He understood that berating wouldn't resolve the issue and risked offending his friend.

The circumstances had transpired, and he had no intention of further dampening Marco's feelings. He cleared his throat, swiftly shifting gears to a lighter topic in an attempt to seem nonchalant.

"Marco, once you were ousted by the Bryant family, did they reclaim your assets? How about crashing at my place for the time being?"

"Do you reckon Marco is akin to you, relying on his family's financial support, left destitute when it ceases? The Bryant family's properties might be recouped, but Marco owns additional assets." Jimmie retorted, his eyes rolling towards



Slater. "Moreover, aren't you afraid of your father's reprimand if you openly provide shelter for Marco?"

Slater's complexion swiftly reddened, his frustration escalating as he poured out his grievances to the pair. "You have no idea, my father is an absolute asshole! I had no idea he was such a social climber. He used to encourage me to spend more time with Marco, now he's dictating that I sever ties with him!"

Marco cast his gaze downward, his tone laden with self-derision as he uttered, "That's just human nature. Don't harbor resentment towards your father."

Slater shook his head in defiance. "I refuse to heed his advice. Our friendship spans many years. If I abandon you due to a shift in your status, it would be a disservice to the notion of fraternity!"

Jimmie couldn't help but pat Slater's head, following it up with a smile directed at Marco. "Despite his limited intellect, Slater has a point. Marco, I echo his sentiments. We will forever remain brothers. Should you need anything, don't hesitate to reach out."

Marco raised his gaze to meet theirs, his emotions a tangled web. After a lengthy silence, he expressed his gratitude with a smile. "Thank you. I'm fortunate to count you both as my friends."

Slater gaped at him in surprise, dramatically taking cover behind Jimmie, exclaiming, "What's happening? Is this still our old stoic and reserved Marco? He never used to show gratitude like this. It's giving me the chills!"

Marco chuckled in response, and Jimmie, unable to contain his mirth, shoved Slater aside. He then turned to Marco, his tone sincere yet thoughtful, "Marco, being with Loraine has brought about significant changes in you."



In the past, regardless of the emotional turmoil Marco faced, he kept his composure. Sometimes they even questioned whether anything held value to Marco.

But now, he openly conveyed gratitude.

At the mention of Loraine, Marco's countenance softened, offering no rebuttal. He nodded and admitted, "Loraine has taught me much. To me... she holds a unique place."

"That's certainly true. It's remarkable how Loraine has coaxed a gentler side out of you... I have great admiration for her! Especially when juxtaposed against the Bryant family, she has proven to be your rock in both good times and bad. No wonder you've fallen for her!" Slater chimed in, his head bobbing in approval. "Marco, I'm fully supportive of your reconciliation! I was mistaken in my initial perception of Loraine, but now she strikes me as the perfect woman to be your wife!"

Jimmie also smiled and teased, "Marco, should you encounter any roadblocks in your romantic endeavors, I'd be happy to offer advice on wooing her."



