

Chapter 1021 Arrangement

Marco's expression turned cold, and a hint of murderous intent flashed in his eyes.

The idea had occurred to him when he found out Loraine had been drugged, yet he restrained himself for her benefit.

Death in the shadowy basements of Zodiac seemed as insignificant as one might imagine.

Marco's fingertips twitched, suggesting he was contemplating the most fitting method of dealing with Cayson.

However, at that moment, a hand grabbed his.

Loraine looked at him with slight annoyance and said softly, "He's just trying to provoke you. Don't be fooled by him."

"I wouldn't mind fulfilling his wish," Marco said with a softer touch of attitude.

Loraine was at a loss for words. She turned and gave Cayson a look of disappointment. "For the sake of our shared history, Cayson, I don't want you to die. I'll arrange for you to go abroad, and I can handle everything for you father. But I do hope we never cross paths again."

Cayson went pale as a ghost. He preferred to meet a tragic end, leaving a haunting memory in Loraine's heart forever.

If he were sent abroad, his presence in Loraine's memories and even her resentment might gradually subside.

Facing exile would be far worse for him, one of the most

famous young men around, than death itself!

Cayson trembled and begged spontaneously, "Think of our friendship, Lorrie. I believe you're not that heartless, and I doubt your family would approve of this either."

Marco cut into his daydream with a scoff. "If they knew what you did to Lorrie, they'd be even more ruthless than I am!"

Cayson stood frozen, unable to argue.

Unable to watch any longer, Loraine turned away and whispered to Marco, audible only to him, "I'm tired. Let's leave."

Marco nodded and gently helped her out of the basement.

After a long and trying day, Loraine was exhausted. With just the two of them remaining, she finally allowed herself to reveal her exhaustion and uncertainty by resting against Marco's chest.

Reflecting on the past, she whispered, "Cayson was the first to talk to me when I joined the Torres family. He's been looking out for me since I was a kid, and I've always seen him as a brother. I never expected it to end like this."

Marco comforted her with a soft pat on the back. "Let it go. It's done now."

She snuggled into his arms without noticing, looking even more vulnerable and delicate. Marco became more affectionate; in this peaceful, gentle vibe, Loraine soon drifted off to sleep.

Noticing her furrowed brow as if troubled in her dreams, Marco softly smoothed out her creased forehead. Then, he nestled her in his arms and gently laid her on the bed. After tucking her in with care, he quietly left the room.

The moment he emerged, his expression turned stern. His team,

waiting outside, approached him with respect.

He said coldly, "Find Cayson something to keep him busy abroad. Make sure he doesn't just idle around. And ensure someone watches him; I don't want him contacting home."

His men nodded and departed.

The next morning, Loraine woke up to find Marco missing. She felt a bit disappointed, but upon rising, she spotted neatly folded fresh clothes at the foot of her bed, along with a note on the desk in familiar handwriting, mentioning that her breakfast was in the fridge.

Loraine's mood lightened with a smile as she entered the bathroom to find fresh toiletries.

Yesterday, she returned with Marco to his place at Zodiac. She hadn't brought anything along, but Marco was thoughtful enough to have everything she needed ready.

Loraine headed downstairs, took her breakfast from the fridge, and smiled mischievously. "Don't think this makes up for everything," she mused.

As if he knew her thoughts, another note under the plate appeared. It read, "I won't ask for your forgiveness. I'll do everything to make it up to you, and I hope you can be happy. However, the choice is yours; I won't interfere with your choice."

Loraine felt a mix of warmth and tenderness as she read the note, biting her lip.

After breakfast, her friend Jennie called, insisting on meeting for coffee because she had important news.

As soon as Loraine sat down in the cafe, Jennie slammed the table in anger and shouted, "I've heard everything, Lorrie. That jerk broke up with you again, right? It's infuriating. Can you

believe he's the CEO of the Solar Company? How could he play poor and fool you like that? Congratulations on getting rid of him!"



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Chapter 1022 Standing Up For Loraine

Jennie arrived at Zodiac punctually, intending not only to lend a helping hand but also to familiarize herself with the Fowler Group's jewelry business operations in the city.

Raised in luxury and well-educated in the family business, Jennie often felt preoccupied with numerous tasks. However, she always made time to check in with her friend, Loraine.

Before Loraine could respond, Jennie launched into a passionate scolding, her words tumbling out one after another. It took a significant effort from Loraine to interject and coax her friend to sit down. "It's not quite what you think," Loraine sighed, attempting to clarify.

Frustration colored Jennie's expression. "Lorrie, you're too close to see the truth. You think he's changed, but he hasn't. Do you not remember how he treated you these past three years?" she argued, shaking her head disapprovingly. "He's not the man you believe him to be, no matter which way you slice it," Jennie said earnestly, her gaze fixed on Loraine. "Remember, I'm here for you, no matter what."

Loraine couldn't help but chuckle, imagining Marco's reaction if he knew Jennie's opinion of him had soured yet again.

Trying to maintain her composure, Loraine asked, "How did you come to know all this?"

Jennie hesitated before revealing. "I overheard Marco asking Jimmie for advice on how to patch things up with you."

Loraine raised an eyebrow, amused at how quickly Jennie had managed to get close enough to eavesdrop on their conversation.

Fuming, Jennie added, "And before I confronted Jimmie, I didn't know that Marco had lied about being the president of the Solar Company! I'm here to support you, and I've cut Jimmie off for his role in this deceit."

Only then did Loraine truly understand the extent of Jennie's revelations, and despite the circumstances, she felt a pang of sympathy for Jimmie, who had been dragged into the situation.

After the waiter brought them two steaming cups of coffee, Jennie's agitation began to subside. Once settled, Loraine took a deep breath and recounted the distressing events of the previous night.

When Loraine mentioned the sexual encounter, Jennie reacted with shock and outrage. "How could Marco do such a thing! How dare he take advantage of you!"

Loraine, her cheeks flushing with embarrassment, hastened to clarify. "He was actually trying to help me. The doctor warned that if the medication wasn't administered, it could cause severe harm to my body."

Jennie's anger softened slightly as she processed Loraine's words. Still concerned, she leaned in and asked, "It must have been horrible for you, especially at the Wilson family's banquet. Did you confront them for an explanation?"

Loraine paused, her expression turning sardonic. "Confront them? It was Cayson who drugged me."

Jennie's shock was palpable; her words faltered. "Cayson? But... how is that possible?"

She struggled to reconcile this revelation with her image of

Cayson, who had always seemed so considerate and caring towards Loraine.

Who would have thought that Cayson was the orchestrator behind this?

After a moment of stunned silence, Jennie's outrage flared anew. "That bastard! He's a wolf in sheep's clothing. Where is he now? I need to confront him!"

Quickly, Loraine took Jennie's hand, urging calm. "Marco has already handled it. Cayson is being sent abroad and won't be coming back."

Jennie reclined in her seat, taking a moment to process everything. Then she remarked, "I really respect how Marco stepped in to help you last night."

Noticing Loraine's reluctance to discuss Cayson further, Jennie tactfully shifted the conversation. "Lorrie, are you still upset with Marco?"

In light of recent events, Marco almost seemed commendable compared to Cayson.

What Jennie truly cared about was Loraine's emotional well-being.

Loraine, still processing, turned to Jennie. "I'm torn. I was angry that he didn't tell me everything, but he has also saved me more than once. Do you think I should give him another chance?"

Jennie sighed deeply and wrapped Loraine in a comforting embrace. "We've known each other all our lives. I've seen all you've endured. I'm not a fan of Marco's past actions, but you need to consider your own happiness. Are you truly happy with him?"

After a moment of reflection, Loraine's expression softened,

and she nodded. Marco had been her longtime love, and even in her drugged state, he was the one she had thought of.

Jennie, decisive, said confidently, "Then that settles it. Give him another chance! But take it slow. Don't let him off too easily. You're important to your family, and as the CEO of the Universe Group, you deserve someone who truly values you."

Encouraged by Jennie's support, Loraine nodded and sent a thoughtful message to Marco.

Chapter 1023 An Affectionate Boyfriend

At that moment, Marco was in a meeting when his phone vibrated.

He had set his phone to do-not-disturb, allowing only messages from Loraine to come through via Qbot.

Startled, Marco gestured for a brief pause and checked his phone.

The senior executives of the Solar Company were then surprised to see their usually composed president stand up, his face alight with excitement and joy.

Including Carl, who was mid-report, everyone was taken aback. However, Carl, understanding Marco better, guessed the cause and quietly reminded him.

Barely containing his happiness, Marco cleared his throat and casually announced, "My girlfriend has asked me to come home for dinner tonight."

Carl knew the significance of this change. Loraine had previously been distant, but her invitation indicated that Marco's persistent efforts had touched her heart.

While Carl was in the know, the rest of the room exchanged puzzled glances.

Except for Doris, whose beautiful face twisted in anger at the news.

After the meeting concluded, word quickly spread throughout the Solar Company that their boss, Marco, was in an exceptionally good mood because his girlfriend had invited him home for dinner.

This sparked a rumor that Marco was an affectionate boyfriend, which circulated swiftly throughout the company. By the afternoon, everyone from the break room to the canteen and even the restrooms was buzzing with chatter about it.

In the restroom, Doris dried her hands with a somber look on her face. Clenching a piece of tissue, she crushed it into a tight ball and hurled it into the trash with frustration.

Under her breath, she whispered Loraine's name. Her voice laced with envy and bitterness.

As Doris exited the restroom, her eyes landed on a young girl in the lobby. She had wide, bright eyes and an air of innocence about her.

Approaching the girl, Doris inquired in a frosty tone, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

The girl turned, her cheeks coloring as she smiled timidly. "Hello, I'm here to see Marco. The receptionist told me to wait here."

Upon hearing Marco's name, Doris's expression soured.

Her usual self-assurance was eroded by jealousy, and she didn't hide her disdain. "Little girl, don't get involved in matters too complex for your age. This isn't a place for you..."

"Doris." The sharp voice of Marco cut through the lobby. He walked up, frowning. "Since when have you started handling reception duties at the Solar Company?"

Doris blanched, fearing Marco still held a grudge for a past

mistake. She opened her mouth to explain, but Marco was already engaging the girl, guiding her towards his office.

The girl was Aria. Marco had agreed to meet her because she had assisted him at a recent banquet.

In his office, Aria hesitantly stated her reason for visiting. "Marco, my father and uncle are concerned about your wellbeing and urge you to return..."

The night Marco attended the Wilson family's banquet, his presence had caused a stir among the Cruz family's relatives, prompting them to contact their family head.

Despite previous attempts by Melvin to reconnect, Marco had been unresponsive. It seemed only Aria could reach him now.

Marco listened without much reaction. "Sit here for a while. I'll arrange for someone to take you back soon," he responded evenly.

Aria's reaction was tinged with resignation. She offered a bittersweet smile and quipped mischievously, "I'm just the messenger. If you're not interested, there's not much else I can do."

Marco, caught off guard, glanced up and caught her playful smile.

Recalling Loraine's words—that Aria was unlike the rest of the Cruz family—Marco's demeanor softened, and a reluctant smile formed on his face. He was beginning to see her as a cousin.

Whether it was her assistance at the banquet or her current playful defiance, Aria clearly stood apart from her family's typical machinations.

As he walked her out, Marco paused and said, "Feel free to visit Loraine anytime. But please, tell the Cruz family to stop trying

to bring me back. I'm not going back.*

Aria nodded, a touch of sadness in her eyes.

Marco added sincerely, "Thank you for your help. If you ever need anything, come to me. I'll help you, for Loraine's sake."

Surprised, Aria's hand drifted to her abdomen, her expression shifting as if she wanted to reveal something. But then, resigning herself, she simply forced a smile.

"I don't need help. I just wish you and Lorrie happiness. Even if you don't see me as your cousin, I'm still her friend."

Touched by her words, Marco felt a warmth spread through him. He nodded affirmatively. "I know."

Unseen in the background, Doris watched the exchange with a growing bitterness in her gaze.

Chapter 1024 The Two Of Them Finally Reconciled

By Loraine's orders, Marco couldn't work overtime tonight. As soon as he wrapped up with work, he hurried straight back home.

As he opened the door, he was greeted by the soft, inviting light and the delicious aroma of home-cooked dishes. The happiness he felt, which he hadn't experienced in a long time, left him momentarily stunned.

Since moving to Zodiac, they had barely had the opportunity to spend time together. He had believed it would take a long time for them to recapture the happiness they once shared.

Yet, at the moment, Loraine sat patiently waiting for him at the table.

Marco walked over and gazed at the delicious homemade dishes on the table. He was deeply moved and stood in silence for a while.

Loraine, amused by his reaction, joked, "Is it not to your taste? Well, don't eat then. I'll..."

Marco quickly sat down and, without a second thought about his image or table manners, ate several mouthfuls of the food. "Delicious! This is so good!" he exclaimed.

With a warm smile, Loraine dished out a bowl of soup for him and teased, "Slow down. No one's going to take it from you."

Together, they silently savored the happiness that had eluded

them for so long. Reflecting on what had happened recently, they both sighed deeply, their hearts laden with emotion.

Marco took a sip of soup and leaned in closer to Loraine, speaking in a hushed tone as he recounted the events of the day at work. He told her about Aria coming to visit him and what she had said to him.

With a sigh, Loraine said, "I haven't had the chance to see her since we came to Zodiac. I really need to thank her. It's definitely not easy for her to stay with the Cruz family."

As she said this, she cast a glance at Marco with a faint smile and added, "By the way, Jennie came to visit me today and had some not-so-nice things to say about you."

Marco froze. After Loraine recounted Jennie's words, he felt a bit embarrassed. "I was too anxious back then. But I really want to apologize!"

Looking at Loraine with longing in his eyes, he said sincerely, "Loraine, I'll understand if you hit me, scold me, or give me orders, but please don't ignore me!"

Loraine couldn't help but recall the pain of their recent silent treatment. After a moment of contemplation, she said with a stern expression, "I can forgive you, but only on one condition. You must resolve not to hide anything from me in the future. On my end, I'll also be transparent and discuss everything with you. Since we're going to spend the rest of our lives together, there shouldn't be any secrets between us. If you can't go by that, or if something like that ever happens again, I'll never forgive you."

Marco nodded earnestly. In truth, he had long regretted his lack of transparency with Loraine in a moment of stupidity and had missed many opportunities to confess it.

Taking hold of her hand, he said, "Whatever, you need from me,

don't hesitate to ask. We're in this together. I'm going to do everything I can to ensure that we solve all our problems."

Upon hearing this, Loraine felt a warmth spread through her heart and nodded in agreement.

The two of them finally reconciled. Since they had been apart for so long, their relationship became deeper than before, and they naturally found themselves passionately yearning for each other.

By the end of the dinner, the table was a mess. Loraine had even abandoned her seat to sit in Marco's warm embrace.

With a flushed face and heavy breaths, Loraine stopped his naughty advances, casting a reproachful glance at him.

Marco managed to restrain himself slightly. In a bid to redirect his own attention, he quickly brought up another topic. "How're you going to deal with the company's staff now that Cayson has been dealt with?"

Understanding that Marco was referring to Jaden, Loraine fell silent.

She was awaiting Jaden's response in order to see clearly the role he played in the matter.

Jaden, on the other hand, kept his cool and refrained from saying anything.

Loraine had been working at the Zodiac branch for over a month, and every employee there had gotten used to her being the president of the headquarters. No one understood why Jaden had voluntarily taken a back seat and stopped coming to the office as much as he used to.

After a busy morning, it was finally time for lunch. Loraine stretched and picked up her phone, noticing that she'd received

a message from Marco.

With a smile, she opened the message and found that it was him boasting about something.

The night before, he had complained about being too busy at work to have dinner and not wanting to eat out, so she made him a meal to take to the office. It turned out that Marco, being the president of the company, had deliberately showed off the food in front of the senior executives, behaving as childishly as a little boy.

Upon seeing this, Loraine became ecstatic and replied to him immediately.

At that moment, Remy, her assistant, arrived to deliver a document. Upon seeing the excited look on Lorraine's face, she jokingly remarked, "You've been quite chipper lately, Miss Torres. Is something good happening?"

Remy could still vividly remember Loraine's gloomy expression when she had been working an obscene amount of overtime a few days prior. Now, however, it seemed she had returned to her cheerful self.

Lorraine tightened her lips and smiled, silently acknowledging Remy's observation. Then, a thought suddenly crossed her mind. "How were the two injured workers from the accident at the construction site dealt with?"

Remy quickly pulled out her phone to check the progress of the situation. Suddenly, her face turned pale. She looked up, her eyes completely blank, and said in a daze, "Miss Torres, the government just announced that they're revoking the Advanced Enterprise awards they've given us in the past..."

Chapter 1025 Victoria

Hearing this, Loraine was taken aback. She frowned and asked, "Did they provide a reason?"

Remy hurriedly replied to the message, seeking clarification. After a brief pause, she returned with a troubled look. "They mentioned it's due to the incident at our construction site earlier. The government feels that the Universe Group hasn't managed it adequately and doesn't set a good example," she explained.

Loraine narrowed her eyes, deep in thought. "Could it be because the actual perpetrator hasn't been apprehended yet? Simply calming the rioters won't remove the underlying threat."

Remy hesitated to respond, knowing she had taken over the investigation previously and was aware that Loraine had ceased pursuing leads after Jaden emerged as a likely suspect.

Dealing with a power struggle among the company's upper echelons was beyond her role as an assistant.

Loraine, sensing Remy's discomfort, rubbed her temples and dismissed her with a wave, sparing her from further discussion.

Privately, Loraine suspected Jaden, an elder she had once trusted, might be involved.

Yet, her evidence, while suggestive, was not concrete enough to confidently accuse him.

The previous ordeal with Cayson and the Benton family had left her weary, and the prospect of delving into an investigation against Jaden was daunting.

Given Jaden's familiarity with the company's investigatory methods, Loraine knew he could easily obstruct her efforts.

Recalling her recent conversation with Marco, Loraine decided it might be wise to seek his counsel.

She picked up her phone and dialed Marco, saying, "I have a matter I'd like your opinion on."

Elsewhere, Jaden paced anxiously in his villa, troubled by the unfolding events.

Although he had orchestrated the plot at the Wilson family banquet, Jaden had been cautious not to deploy much of his own resources due to the event being held on Wilson territory. Additionally, he was concerned that Loraine might eventually uncover his involvement.

The success of his scheme hinged entirely on his son, Cayson.

Yet, once the banquet concluded, Jaden found himself unable to contact Cayson.

His son had neither returned to the company nor to his home, seemingly disappearing without a trace.

Jaden's anxiety grew as he failed to glean any information from Jaylah, who rebuked him sharply, leaving him to assume that the plan had backfired, possibly due to Cayson's misstep.

Unable to reach Cayson, Jaden's speculations hung in limbo.

Amidst his growing fear of Loraine's potential retaliation, he was puzzled by her apparent indifference, unaware of her reasons for remaining silent.

During his mounting panic, a servant interrupted to announce that a woman named Victoria was at the door, claiming to have ties with Cayson and requesting a meeting.

Eager for any lead, Jaden had her ushered into his study.

However, his expectations fell flat when he met Victoria—a woman adorned in heavy makeup and flashy, garish clothing.

Suppressing his displeasure, Jaden inquired coldly, "Were you sent by Cayson? Where is he?"

In response, Victoria merely smiled and slid a stack of photos across the table towards him.

Upon examining the photos, Jaden's demeanor chilled. The images before him revealed compromising scenes involving Cayson. Jaden recognized Victoria as nothing more than a bar girl attempting to leverage scandalous photos.

Unfazed by such extortion, Jaden scoffed, looking disdainfully at her, "I don't know how you came by these photos of my son, but let me be clear—the Benton family will not be intimidated by someone of your standing!"

Victoria, still new to her role as a bar girl, felt a sting of anger at Jaden's demeaning words, but she quickly masked it with a soft smile. In a gentle voice, she responded, "Though I come from modest beginnings, I can ensure the Wilson family will not cause you any trouble."

Jaden, surprised that such an ordinary bar girl could be aware of his dealings with the Wilson family, narrowed his eyes and finally gave her his full attention. After a pause, he said, "Tell me what you want."

With a poised smile that belied her inner turmoil, Victoria's eyes shimmered with a cold, serpentine resentment.

"My request is simple. I would like to be placed as a receptionist at the Universe Group. That's an easy task for you, right?"

Jaden was relieved yet puzzled by her modest demand, having

braced himself for something far more consequential.

Given that Loraine had assumed leadership at Zodiac, the company wasn't entirely under his control anymore, but arranging a receptionist role was still within his power.

Could this girl, who had come threatening him over such a minor position, really be just a receptionist?

He scrutinized Victoria, then nodded in agreement.

Her demeanor was more akin to that of a well-bred socialite than a bar girl. Satisfied with his consent, she added, "You might want to have someone else handle the arrangements for my employment, to avoid any complications if Loraine were to find out. It seems my employer wouldn't appreciate the scrutiny."

Jaden realized she must have a powerful backer; her confidence wasn't unfounded. He forced a polite smile and agreed.

As Victoria turned to leave, stepping out of the Benton residence, she brushed a hand across her marred face and murmured, "Loraine, you didn't expect me to return, did you?"

