

Chapter 1026 The Scapegoat

As Aldo's most trusted subordinate, Jaden had been managing the Universe Group's branch office in Zodiac for over a decade, establishing deep roots within the company.

Despite Loraine holding the position of president at the Universe Group, her authority in Zodiac was somewhat limited, especially when it came to dealing with Jaden.

Thus, she turned to Marco for assistance.

Following an initial investigation orchestrated by Loraine's team, Marco's men quickly identified a suspect, although it turned out not to be Jaden.

Loraine studied the name that came up in the report: Ewing Perez.

He was a department manager at the branch office— not very high-ranking but a veteran at the Universe Group and known to be one of Jaden's close associates.

The investigation seemed to hit a dead end with Ewing, pointing to him potentially being a scapegoat. Even Marco's skilled operatives couldn't unearth further evidence.

Increasingly, Loraine suspected Jaden was the true culprit, yet she lacked concrete proof. Moreover, her suspicions alone wouldn't hold up in court.

Adding to the pressure, Remy relayed that the authorities were demanding a swift explanation from the Universe Group, or they risked having their awards revoked.

In a moment of inspiration, Loraine messaged Jennie. "Is your Jimmie around? I need his help with the lawsuit."

Jennie quickly responded with an emoji of frustration, then typed. "Jimmie just told me Marco sent him to assist you! Marco's expecting you'll owe him one!"

Surprised, Loraine pondered whether Marco had anticipated her moves after the investigation findings.

Jennie added, "No worries, though. I can get Jimmie to refuse Marco, then help you directly. That way, you don't owe Marco anything."

Loraine chuckled at Jennie's maneuvering, appreciating her friend's shrewdness in handling delicate situations.

Deciding against such roundabout tactics, Loraine thanked Jennie and declined the offer. After ending the call, she felt a sweet sense of gratitude.

Marco and Loraine were indeed on the same wavelength, and his consideration was evident.

Soon after, Jimmie, having been briefed by Marco, arrived at Loraine's office.

Known as a top lawyer, he was immediately business-like and wasted no time detailing his preparations for the case.

Previously, Loraine had only known Jimmie for his sly and flirtatious demeanor. Now, witnessing his sharp legal acumen firsthand, she gained a new respect for his professional capabilities.

After listening to Jimmie's outline, Loraine pondered briefly before deciding. "We need to file a public lawsuit against Ewing and frame it as gravely as possible. The more severe it appears and the more people it reaches, the more likely the authorities

will take it seriously. This could also provide a solid pretext to dismiss Jaden from the board of directors."

Jimmie adjusted his glasses and remarked with a hint of intrigue, "Miss Torres, your growing expertise reminds me of someone."

Loraine smiled, recalling the extensive discussions and strategic planning she had engaged in with Marco.

His longer tenure as president and deeper insights had been invaluable to her development.

She responded openly, "That's because I have an excellent 'mentor,' and I'm an eager learner."

Jimmie laughed heartily at her admission. His task completed, he leaned back comfortably in his chair and passed the organized notes to Loraine.

As Loraine meticulously read through the documents, she was struck by Jimmie's incisive and forceful language. Impressed, she couldn't help but express her admiration. "You truly exemplify what it means to be a top lawyer."

Jimmie responded with a smile, his eyes narrowing slightly as he accepted the compliment with a nod of appreciation.

With all the necessary evidence collected and Jimmie representing her, Loraine, a decisive leader, initiated the lawsuit. Consequently, the long-dormant case regarding the construction site accident at the Universe Group was thrust into the public eye.

Initially, Loraine had managed the aftermath of the accident adeptly, preventing it from stirring public uproar by controlling the information. However, with the commencement of the trial, the incident was revealed to a wider audience.

The trial was intentionally publicized, causing quite a stir among the public, who became engrossed not only in the details of the accident but also in how the Universe Group was handling the situation.

The Universe Group presented clear evidence indicating that the mismanagement by one of its managers had caused the accident. The company took stern action against the responsible manager, ensuring he faced legal consequences, and it provided full legal compensation to the injured workers.

This approach garnered significant attention online. When netizens discovered that Loraine had historically taken firm action against any wrongdoing within her company, their respect for her grew. Many applauded the Universe Group for not shielding the guilty, lauding Loraine as a conscientious and ethical business leader.



Chapter 1027 The Prejudice

Lorraine had no idea that a member of the Wilson family was orchestrating the government's sudden crackdown on the Universe Group.

Even the government officer in charge of the situation was baffled. Why had their supervisor suddenly decided to target the Universe Group? The company was a significant taxpayer in both Vagow and Zodiac, always law-abiding and maintaining a cordial relationship with the government.

Upon a second review, the government officer noticed that Lorraine had provided a flawless response and that online reviews were overwhelmingly positive. He realized there was no justification to revoke the Universe Group's status as an advanced enterprise.

The officer acknowledged Lorraine's adept handling of the situation, stating, "Miss Torres, you swiftly addressed the company's internal issues and ensured adequate compensation for the victims. This is truly commendable."

Lorraine responded with a balanced modesty, neither humble nor arrogant. The government officer scrutinized her actions but found no fault. Reluctantly, he offered a brief commendation and left empty-handed.

Upon returning to his office, the officer was summoned by a powerful figure.

The Wilson family, a formidable force in the Zodiac, excelled in military, political, and business arenas. However, they adhered to strict rules: no family member was permitted to exploit their power to bully others.

As a result, Damon was actually quite gentle with his subordinates.

Damon was engrossed in his work, head bowed over his documents. When his subordinate knocked and entered, he merely gestured for them to take a seat without looking up. After a moment, he raised his head and inquired, "What's the progress on the incident at the Universe Group's construction site?"

That day, following Kaley's mention of the incident at the Universe Group's construction site, Damon immediately directed his subordinates to launch a comprehensive investigation. He vowed never to allow an undeserving enterprise to retain the title of an advanced enterprise.

The subordinate, known for his honesty, took a moment to consider and made a fair assessment. "After thoroughly investigating, I can confidently say that the Universe Group is faultless and truly deserving of the title of an advanced enterprise."

Damon was mildly surprised but refrained from probing further, acknowledging with a nod that he understood.

When he arrived home from work, Kaley approached him with concern. Damon broached the subject, feeling a twinge of regret towards his niece as he suspected he might not uncover any irregularities with the Universe Group.

Kaley, showing her wisdom, advised, "Uncle, I've been following the news today. Perhaps it's time to halt the investigation into the Universe Group. Their reputation has improved, and they've managed the aftermath admirably."

Damon's expression turned stern as he pondered, seemingly realizing that the Universe Group had only hurriedly addressed the aftermath after government intervention.

Kaley sighed, her expression soft and compassionate, expressing, "I can't help but feel sorry for the injured individuals. If only the Universe Group could exercise more caution in other areas..."

Damon's brow furrowed as he considered a more troubling possibility. Could it be that the Universe Group orchestrated the accident to enhance their reputation through their subsequent actions?

If that were the case, then the president of the Universe Group, named Loraine, would indeed be incredibly cunning and ruthless!

Damon held a deep disdain for such individuals and his tone turned cold as he sneered, "An enterprise like that will face its reckoning sooner or later. I'll make sure the Universe Group is closely monitored to prevent any further harm to others!"

Kaley's face lit up with joy, and she offered Damon a gentle compliment.

Meanwhile, the Universe Group convened a board meeting during this pivotal moment.

Many shareholders from the Zodiac branch were unfamiliar with Loraine's approach to work and felt puzzled.

With the online reputation restored and the perpetrator addressed, why was there an abrupt call for a board meeting?

As confusion lingered in the room, Loraine pushed open the door and made her entrance. The steady click of her high heels, neither rushed nor languid, seemed to echo in everyone's hearts. Impeccably dressed and flawlessly made up, she exuded an air of refinement.

Standing beside the main seat, Loraine cast a disdainful gaze around the room. Suddenly, she tossed a stack of documents

onto the table and spoke in a cold, sharp tone. "Surely everyone is aware of the events that transpired on the construction site beforehand, correct?"

Seated in the first chair to her right was Jaden. A bead of cold sweat quietly traced down from his forehead, yet he steeled himself to stay composed with no movement at all.

As murmurs started to ripple through the crowd, they gradually hushed under the weight of Loraine's sweeping gaze.

Since Loraine had arrived from headquarters, she took charge of several key matters personally. For some shareholders who had never met her, witnessing her commanding presence and assertiveness was enough to deter any challenges to her authority at that moment.

After a pause, Loraine spoke slowly. "While the main perpetrator has been identified, the accomplice... deserves punishment too!"

Upon hearing this, a palpable tension filled the room, and all eyes turned to Jaden as they realized that Loraine's gaze was fixed squarely upon him!

"Mr. Benton, given your advanced age, the role of the vice president might be too demanding. Perhaps I should consider arranging a less strenuous position for you," Loraine suggested calmly.



Chapter 1028 Jaden Resigned Himself To The Demotion

A heavy silence fell over the room as Loraine finished speaking.

No one had anticipated that Loraine would ever confront Jaden.

For the past twelve years, Jaden had led the branch office in Zodiac, wielding the connections and authority necessary to maintain his position. Loraine seemed powerless against such a formidable opponent.

Jaden's face hardened as he looked at Loraine. His expression was grim, his smile forced as he remarked, "Lorrie, I've watched you grow from a child. This is a low blow. You'll find I'm not easily replaced."

The people around him nodded, some quietly trying to dissuade Loraine from her course of action.

Jaden had been instrumental to the company's success, and it pained everyone to think that Loraine might be ungrateful. Why would she want to undermine him?

With an icy gaze, Loraine replied, "I have no intention of undermining your contributions, but you've also caused significant harm to our group's interests. Stepping down gracefully might be your best option."

Jaden was stunned, memories of his covert actions flashing through his mind. He had been cautious, leaving no direct evidence that could implicate him. How could Loraine be so certain?

He realized that his carefully laid plans were starting to come apart, filling him with a sense of unease. Loraine, with a dismissive snort, continued, "Ewing, your subordinate, has brought severe damage upon us. It's baffling that you didn't see it earlier. If only you had acted sooner, we might have been able to avoid the damage."

Hearing that, Jaden couldn't help but sneer, feeling a wave of relief wash over him. He mused that despite Loraine's long tenure as president, she still possessed the naivety of a child. Could she really believe such accusations would undermine his standing?

He remained seated, his tone officious as he responded, "You're correct. I apologize. I will ensure stricter control over my team. Ewing has faced the consequences of his actions. It's unjust to hold me accountable for his wrongdoings."

Jaden thought to accuse him in such a manner only served to make Loraine look foolish. After all, he was an influential figure in the Zodiac branch office. People respected him. Plus, he's a seasoned veteran who once walked in Aldo's shadow.


The shareholders' silence echoed their disapproval.

With a mocking smirk, Loraine sighed deeply before dropping her bombshell.

"Alright, then what about Cayson's scandal at the Wilson family's party? It's stirred up trouble, impacting the Universe Group's relationship with the Wilson family. How do you plan to distance yourself from that mess? What a shame," Loraine said, regretting the necessity of her actions.

Despite maintaining his smile, Jaden's expression was visibly tense. He turned around to face Loraine, his words coming out through clenched teeth. "What are you implying?"

Loraine gazed at him with a mix of pity and sternness. "Are you

Chapter 1028 Jaden Resigned Himself To The De  +120 Points at most
sure you want to have this discussion here?"

Jaden's demeanor faltered, his guilt evident in his wavering gaze.

He was fully aware of the implications of his involvement with the Wilson family. The disappearance of his son served as a stark warning.

Consequently, he resigned himself to the demotion.

The board meeting concluded abruptly. The shareholders scattered swiftly, eager to distance themselves from the situation. Only Loraine and Jaden remained in the room.

Despite his deep-seated dislike for Loraine, Jaden masked his emotions, adopting the role of a concerned father. He looked at her with desperate eyes and pleaded, "Lorrie, please, where is my son? You and Cayson grew up together. You can't harm him."

Loraine, intent on keeping him in the dark, paused before responding with a believable lie, "I've sent Cayson overseas for work."

With no desire to continue the conversation, Loraine spun around and exited the meeting room. Jaden watched her departing figure, his face twisted in unrestrained anger.


It was evident that a significant upheaval had taken place within the Universe Group, yet the full extent of the situation remained shrouded in secrecy.

Meanwhile, Kaley stood on a busy street corner, dressed in a charming white skirt. She spoke on her phone with growing impatience, scanning her surroundings intermittently.

"Mom, will he show up?" she inquired, her voice tinged with frustration. "I've been waiting for a long time."

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"Be patient. I'm pretty sure he will show up soon. Just a little more effort, and the Universe Group will be on the verge of bankruptcy." Jaylah encouraged. "By then, Loraine will be vulnerable."

Kaley pouted, staying silent. She glanced at the photo on her cell phone, then scanned the faces of people passing by on the street, searching for her target.

Just then, the coffee shop's door swung open, and a man stepped out. It was the very person Kaley had been looking for.

Spotting him, Kaley's face lit up with a confident smile, and she hurried over to greet him. As she neared the man, she twisted her ankle and nearly stumbled.

A hand reached out to steady her. "Are you okay?" a concerned voice asked.

Keeping her head down to conceal her smile, Kaley replied softly, "Thank you, I'm fine."



Chapter 1029 I'm Grateful You're Sharing Your Concer...

Kaley had the delicate appearance of a porcelain doll, which, combined with her vulnerable demeanor, made her quite captivating.

As she bit her lower lip and mustered a show of strength, Kaley stood up to see who had come to her aid. Upon looking up, her surprise was evident. "Are you... are you Zach?"

The man seemed taken aback as well. He paused, then recognition dawned. Wasn't she Damon's niece?

Although Damon was typically reserved, his affection for his niece was well-known, and he had once brought her along to the office, which was how Zach remembered her.

Realizing this, Zach smiled warmly, "You are Kaley, right? I'm surprised you remember me."

A shy smile played across Kaley's face, her youthful charm evident. "My uncle mentions you often. He says you're a capable assistant and that his business thrives because of your support!"

Zach was visibly pleased by the compliment and responded with a modest gesture, "No, no, it's all because we have a great leader!"

He then shifted his concern to her immediate needs. "Are you okay? You just sprained your ankle, and it's hard to find a taxi around here. Let me give you a ride!"

Gratefully, Kaley nodded her thanks. As they drove, Zach's thoughts wandered.

Aware of Damon's no-nonsense attitude, Zach knew that mere flattery of Damon's family wouldn't advance his career. Yet, he faced a perplexing task at work and struggled to decipher Damon's intentions. Given Kaley's closeness to Damon, perhaps she held some insights.

With a calculated smile, Zach broached a topic of potential interest. "Kaley, have you ever heard of the Universe Group?"

"The Universe Group?" Kaley feigned confusion while blinking innocently, yet inwardly she was delighted that Zach had taken the bait. Her smile widened as she replied, "Are you talking about the company?"

"Yes, yes!" Zach was so elated that he almost felt like thanking the heavens. Sensing a stroke of luck, he smiled and asked, "Kaley, have you heard anything about the Universe Group at home?"

After a moment's thought, Kaley frowned slightly and said with a hint of displeasure, "I don't know much about what kind of company the Universe Group is, but my uncle seemed quite upset about something that happened at their construction site recently."

Zach's eyes sparkled with realization. So that was why Damon wanted him to keep tabs on the Universe Group! It seemed Damon had his reservations about the company.

He looked at Kaley with newfound appreciation.

Grateful for the insight she provided, Zach felt more prepared. Knowing Damon's displeasure could help him avoid making misguided decisions concerning the Universe Group, potentially averting a major fallout with Damon.

After he dropped Kaley off at the Wilson residence, she offered him more flattering remarks, leaving Zach feeling satisfied as he departed.

Once back in his car, Zach received a message from one of his subordinates. The message informed him that a road construction project in a suburban area of Zodiac was open for bidding, and the Universe Group intended to participate.

Recalling Kaley's words, Zach's expression turned stern. He replied, "Do whatever it takes to stall the Universe Group's application!"

A few days later, in an office at the Universe Group headquarters, Loraine sat wearily in front of her computer. Jaden's recent demotion had clearly left him disgruntled, leading to both covert and overt disruptions.

She was still measuring how to handle Jaden without escalating the conflict.


At that moment, Remy knocked and entered her office, looking troubled. "Miss Torres," she reported, "the government hasn't approved our road construction plan yet."

Loraine's brow furrowed in confusion. "This is the third plan they've rejected, right? I've reviewed it myself; there are no issues. Why was it rejected?"

After the first rejection, Loraine had replaced the original proposal with a more cautious version. Their cost control was notably superior compared to that of their competitors, which logically should have satisfied any government reservations.

Remy nodded somberly, sharing in the frustration. "Exactly, and that's what's so baffling."

The Universe Group had a history of successful collaborations with the government under Loraine's leadership, maintaining

Chapter 1029 I'm Grateful You're Sharing Your Co  +120 Points at most
a positive relationship.

Previously, the team at the Universe Group had anticipated various potential challenges with the project but failing the government's review had not been one of them.

"Did they provide a reason this time?" Loraine asked, still puzzled.

Remy hesitated before answering, "They cited a lack of experience on our part..."

Loraine scoffed at the excuse. The Universe Group had ample experience with government projects—this reason seemed dismissive and unfounded.

As she contemplated her next steps, her phone rang. It was Marco.

After a brief exchange, Loraine shared her current predicament.

Marco took a moment to think, then replied, "Comfort the team for now. I'll have someone look into this. We can discuss more details when I pick you up after work."

Relieved by his support, Loraine's expression softened slightly. Marco's voice lowered as he added, "Loraine, I'm grateful you're sharing your concerns with me."



Chapter 1030 The Wilson Family Again

Hearing Marco's words, Loraine couldn't help but smile, feeling relaxed and happy.

Ever since Marco left the Bryant Group, Loraine had grown accustomed to consulting him on challenging issues, and he invariably provided her with innovative insights and valuable advice.

This exchange wasn't just about sharing emotions; it also subtly deepened her dependence on him, making his presence in her life feel increasingly indispensable.

With a playful tone, Loraine remarked, "With such a reliable person at my side, of course, I'm going to make the most of it!"

Marco's deep, muffled laughter came through the phone. He then lowered his voice playfully. "I'm at your service. Just make sure you provide enough 'reward' later tonight, and you can use me however you wish."

The innuendo in Marco's words caused Loraine's cheeks to turn crimson.

Remy, who was nearby, coughed awkwardly a few times and swiftly exited the room, pretending she hadn't heard a thing.

Feeling both annoyed and embarrassed, Loraine scolded, "Marco!" He realized someone was with her and let out an insincere chuckle of apology.

After a bit more playful banter, Loraine, overwhelmed by

annoyance and embarrassment, ended the call.

Marco chuckled to himself as he hung up, but his expression quickly turned serious. "Check on what's happening with the government regarding this project," he instructed firmly.

Carl, observing the swift change in his boss's demeanor, was internally impressed but promptly nodded and went to carry out the investigation.

Shortly after, Carl returned with his findings and reported, "Mr. Bryant, the official who rejected the Universe Group's project is named Zach, and he reports directly to Damon Wilson."

Marco's expression darkened further. "The Wilson family again? It seems they haven't learned their lesson from our last encounters!"

Marco had assumed that the public debacle at the banquet would deter the Wilson family from causing trouble, at least for a while.

However, to his dismay, they had resumed their underhanded tactics sooner than expected.

With a steely expression, Marco glanced at Carl and commanded, "Snatch a few small projects from the Wilson family. It should serve as a reminder to them."

Carl nodded without showing any surprise at his boss's directive—as if snatching projects from the prestigious Wilson family in Zodiac was as routine as dealing with any minor company.

Yet the gravity of targeting projects from the Wilsons, only spoken so casually and decisively by Marco in Zodiac, underscored his unique audacity.

But then, Marco's stern demeanor softened as he added with



affection, "Also, cancel tonight's meeting. I'm going to pick up Loraine."

The corners of Carl's mouth twitched slightly, though he was well accustomed to such shifts in priorities. He made a mental note to adjust the day's schedule accordingly.

Meanwhile, at the Universe Group, the usual receptionist had been quietly replaced by a notably attractive woman named Victoria. Her graceful demeanor and charming presence subtly stirred discussions among the lower-level employees.

It was rumored that Victoria had secured her position through the recommendation of a high-ranking executive, but since she was only a receptionist, there were no significant objections.

At that moment, Victoria, carrying a stack of documents, approached Jaden's office with a poised walk. She knocked and, upon receiving a response, opened the door and stepped inside.

As the door closed behind her, several sheets of paper were flung in her direction.

Jaden, recently demoted, was seething with frustration. Clenching his teeth, he vented his anger. "I followed your advice and pushed the scapegoat out, but in the end, I was still demoted!"

Victoria's face held an enigmatic smile as she looked at Jaden and sneered, "Had you not followed my advice, demotion would be the least of your worries. You'd likely be in prison by now!"

Jaden's expression tightened momentarily, then softened as he pleaded, "I'll listen to you, but can you help me find Cayson first? Loraine is far more ruthless than I expected. I suspect something's happened to Cayson, but all I know is that he's supposedly gone abroad."

His remarks about Loraine sparked a flicker of resentment in



Victoria's eyes. She snorted dismissively, "I'll need to get approval from my boss on this, but after that, don't contact me for anything trivial—you might blow our cover."

The change in their dynamics was palpable; Jaden, once a man of power, now found himself groveling before someone he would have otherwise disregarded. Under the circumstances, he had little choice but to comply.

Victoria issued a few concise instructions, savoring the power shift, then sauntered out of the office back to her station at the front desk.

Settling back into her role, she glanced at the cosmetics on her desk, her expression momentarily distant before it hardened. She pulled out her phone and began composing a message. Just as she typed the word "boss," a noise at the door caught her attention.

Looking up, she saw a tall, handsome man entering with a bouquet of flowers.

Her eyes narrowed, focusing as she recognized him, and they lit up with a mix of anticipation and feverish excitement.

She finally saw him.

