

Chapter 397 Two People At The Back Stage

The auction room bustled with representatives from nearly all of Vagow's renowned corporations.

They eagerly sought a presence in the new business district, and the atmosphere was lively with conversation and networking.

It was evident that the joint venture between Bryant Group and Universe Group had generated significant interest.

Onstage, the emcee warmed up the crowd and outlined the bidding process.

"Attention, everyone. The bidding process will take place through a blind auction. Each participating merchant will have the opportunity to bid on the storefronts within the new commercial area. The highest bidder will secure the location."

In this manner, only the final outcome would be revealed. Company representatives eagerly strategized, aiming to secure the most advantageous locations with the most reasonable investments.

The commercial street's layout was essentially complete, making the stores near entrances and intersections particularly desirable.

As the discussions continued, Loraine readied herself for her speech.

The auction was orchestrated by Bryant Group and Universe Group, so she and Marco were expected to take the stage together and introduce the commercial block.

Backstage in the lounge, tension filled the air.

Loraine sat stone-faced, reviewing her speech, seemingly unapproachable.

Marco, eager to speak with her, was blocked by Cayson.

The makeup artist, feeling the pressure, glanced toward Marco's assistant, Carl, for assistance.

Carl coughed before suggesting, "Miss Torres, perhaps you should review the speech with Mr. Bryant?"

The day's auction was crucial, and Loraine had already scrutinized the speech several times to minimize errors.

Yet, she hesitated.

Her eyes remained on the script, not uttering a word.

Wasn't Marco fond of playing dumb? If he wouldn't clarify everything, she'd not initiate conversation with him again.

As their stage entrance neared, Marco pursed his lips and addressed Cayson in a low tone, "I need to review the script with Loraine. Please step out."

Cayson scoffed, "I suggest you refrain from scheming. I'm not leaving."

It was evident that Marco desired to be alone with Loraine.

Cayson wouldn't give him that opportunity.

At this critical moment, Carl proved reliable. He offered an awkward smile and said, "Mr. Benton, I just recalled that someone mentioned an issue with the auction equipment. Neither Mr. Bryant nor Miss Torres are available, and only you hold the highest authority. Would you mind accompanying me?"

Cayson furrowed his brow, asking, "Can't you handle it yourself?"

Upon hearing of potential equipment problems, Loraine grew concerned.

"Cayson, why don't you accompany him? The bidding is at stake, and this isn't a minor issue."

Though reluctant, Cayson agreed upon hearing Loraine's plea. "Alright."

But before leaving, Cayson shot Marco a warning glare.

Marco paid no attention to him but instead positioned himself beside Loraine. The makeup artist, not wishing to upset Marco, quickly finished her work and exited.

Soon, only Marco and Loraine remained in the backstage lounge.

Eager to break the silence, Marco sought a conversation topic with Loraine. "Loraine, umm..."

She tilted her head, casting a glance at him.

"Did you have breakfast today?" he asked.

Loraine's fists tightened as she scoffed.

She had no interest in speaking with him!

Ignoring Marco entirely, she focused on preparing for her upcoming speech.

He attempted to speak again, but received no response. He sighed inwardly.

However, he couldn't pass up this opportunity to be alone with Loraine.

The tall, dashing man took a deep breath, touched Loraine's arm, and whispered, "You can't do this."

"What can't I do?" she asked impatiently.

He hesitated before replying, "We have to go on stage together. We need to interact."

Loraine had no patience left. She gestured towards the door, coldly stating, "If you're not ready, I'll go on stage alone. If you've got nothing else to do, you can go out and see if the equipment issue is resolved."

Naturally, Marco was aware that the equipment issue was just an excuse to send Cayson away.

But he couldn't reveal this truth to Loraine.

In that moment, the CEO of Bryant Group, usually a decisive and energetic businessman, was left speechless. He stood there for a moment before leaving the room, his head hanging low.

Loraine was seething with anger, so much so that she retrieved the script and continued to read it, grinding her teeth in frustration.

Watching her back from the doorway, Marco suddenly remembered something. He activated his phone and sent

her a message via Obot.

"Lorraine, are you still mad at Marco? He's just an idiot. Don't stoop to his level."

In the lounge, Lorraine couldn't help but chuckle at the message.

He was more than just an idiot.

Without Obot, he was practically mute. He had no voice!



Chapter 398 Play Cute

Loraine believed she couldn't continue like this with Marco.

Furthermore, she was enraged by Marco's seemingly fawning but actually perplexing behavior.

Regarding the collaboration between both groups, if they persisted in interacting with one another in such an odd manner, their cooperation would be in trouble.

Setting aside her speech draft, Loraine carried on conversing with Obot, holding her phone as she exited the room.

"Marco refuses to share anything with me. Why must I be upset with him?"

Obot responded, "It's not that he's unwilling to discuss it. He just hasn't determined the best way to express it yet. He confided in me when he was alone in the lab."

Loraine sneered, "If he's undecided, he needn't mention it to me. I have no desire to hear it."

Grasping his phone, Marco appeared solemn.

"Loraine, do you dislike Marco?" Marco inquired as Obot. "Why didn't you bring Marco along today?"

Believing Loraine favored the more animated Qbot, he converted his voice to an AI tone, contemplated for a moment, and added a crying emoji.

Lorraine's eyebrows lifted slightly.

She made her way out through the backstage corridor and spotted Marco not far away, engrossed in his phone.

Unaware of her presence, Marco anxiously awaited Lorraine's response.

Luckily, no one else was around, so no one knew that the esteemed CEO of Bryant Group sent a crying emoji.

Yet, Lorraine's response never came. Growing restless, Marco couldn't resist glancing back to witness Lorraine's reaction firsthand.

However, as soon as he turned, he saw Lorraine leaning against the door, observing him while raising her phone.

"Should I address you as Obot? Or perhaps Mr. Bryant?"

Marco's expression stiffened.

Had she discovered his Obot impersonation? Would Lorraine be furious with him?

Lorraine approached him slowly, a chat with Obot displayed on her phone screen.

"Wow, I never thought you'd be so adorable."

This was incredibly humiliating for Marco.

Lowering his head, Marco uttered, "Lorraine, I..."

Lorraine sneered, "Marco, I've saved our chat history. If you dare to deceive me again, I'll upload the video online, showing the entire internet how the stoic Mr. Bryant masquerades as an AI, uttering foolish things!"

Marco's gaze locked onto her.

"Finally, a conversation with you, Loraine."

Her demeanor suggested that she wasn't purposefully avoiding him or maintaining her distance anymore.

Marco didn't mind if Loraine shared their chat logs online. What surprised him was her willingness to speak with him.

It felt as though the clouds had parted, revealing the luminous moon.

Loraine, taken aback by his words, ceased smiling abruptly.

Grinning, Marco approached Loraine and murmured an apology. "I'm sorry, Loraine. I never meant to deceive you with Obot."

He had feared it would be challenging to keep up the charade with Loraine, but now that she had discovered the truth, he felt relieved.

His tone grew more earnest as he said, "I made a mistake. When you ignored me, I created a persona you couldn't resist, so I could get closer to you. I envied your connection with Qbot, so I created Obot. But once the lie began, it became harder to stop. I'm sorry I've hidden this from you until now."

Loraine didn't reveal that she had known the truth a long time ago.

Nonetheless, his explanation eased her mind.

She kept her emotions hidden, responding with a sneer, "Do you know why I ignored you?"

Marco lowered his head and apologized sincerely.

"It's entirely my fault. I wasn't there for you when you needed me most. But I promise this is the last time. I won't let anyone hurt you, even my own family."

Loraine's heart wavered, and she bit her lip, retorting, "You always claim it's the last time. But the outcome never changes, does it?"

"No, that won't happen again."

Marco's expression grew somber for a moment before resolving with determination.

Loraine, startled, was about to inquire further when she was interrupted by a shout.

"Mr. Bryant, Miss Torres, your speeches are up next!"

A staff member rushed over to usher them onto the stage.

Loraine had neglected to check the time when she left the dressing room, not anticipating that their turn would arrive so quickly.

Now, she was in a rush. Worried about the distance to the stage, Loraine's anxiety grew.

"Let's head to the stage!"

Suddenly, Marco grabbed her hand and began to run. Before she could object, Loraine found herself being pulled forward.

His grip was firm, transferring the warmth of his palm to hers, enveloping her hand securely.

Her previously somber mood seemed to brighten up slightly.