

Chapter 414 Grady Came

Clearly, Cayson wasn't keen on discussing business with Patrick.

However, before he could politely decline, Marco interjected, "Aren't you and Loraine co-presidents of the Universe Group? Are you going to let her shoulder the entire workload?"

Cayson's eyes lacked their usual warmth. "What are you suggesting?"

"Given that Loraine is spearheading this project, she's been putting in more effort, while I see you..." Marco subtly trailed off, hinting at something before turning to Loraine. "I don't mean to criticize Cayson, but perhaps you could delegate some of your tasks. You don't want to overwork yourself."

Loraine sensed an undercurrent, though she couldn't quite decipher it.

Continuing, Marco said, "In fact, a few new companies are eager to meet with you, Loraine. Would you like to see them? Let Cayson converse with Mr. Fowler."

Marco understood Loraine's character well. Jealous antics would yield him nothing; it was through business that he could truly pique her interest.

As expected, Loraine hesitated before conceding.

Given Marco's suggestions, she realized she couldn't

monopolize all the work and needed to share the responsibilities with Cayson, who, after all, was the acting CEO of Universe Group.

Patrick, adjusting his glasses, wore a sly smile. He strolled up to Cayson, saying, "I've heard you're quite exceptional. Indeed, you seem very accomplished. I happen to have a few queries regarding the new business district."

As Marco subtly sidestepped with Loraine, under the guise of Patrick's favor, Cayson found himself tied up with Patrick. However, his gaze remained unwaveringly fixed on Loraine.

Watching Loraine and Marco grow increasingly comfortable together, conversing and laughing, Cayson felt a dark cloud descend upon his mood.

Perhaps even Loraine hadn't noticed it herself. Since her divorce, she had become gradually more open to Marco's presence.

On the other hand, Marco was quite pleased with himself for successfully diverting Cayson.

He stayed close to Loraine, ensuring he maintained a balance between proximity and respect.

Despite this, he couldn't help but strut a bit, like a peacock showcasing its splendid feathers to Loraine.

"Might I have the pleasure of a dance later?" he asked.

Loraine asked, "Didn't you say you'd introduce me to potential collaborators? Why this sudden desire to dance?"

"Work and recreation go hand in hand. After the business discussions, consider a dance with me as your way of thanking me."

Undeterred by her lukewarm response, Marco continued his courteous behavior, fetching her drinks, introducing her to various people. Through him, Loraine met numerous individuals and gathered valuable insights to enhance the new business district.

Consequently, she found herself growing less resistant to Marco's company.

With the atmosphere between them becoming more harmonious, Marco contemplated capitalizing on this moment.

"Shall we dance now?"

Before Loraine could respond, a familiar voice called out from a distance, "Loraine!"

She looked up to see Grady waving enthusiastically, his handsome face a blend of excitement and shyness.

Grady!

He was here too!

Loraine hadn't seen Grady in quite a while. His presence took her by surprise, and she greeted him with a warm smile.

As she was about to approach Grady, Marco intervened, his expression stern.

However, Grady had already made his way over. Taken aback by Marco's frosty demeanor, he stuttered out a greeting, "Marco."

In a chilly tone, Marco responded, "What brings you here? This is a celebration for Bryant Group and Universe Group.

I don't see how the Cruz family fits into this equation."

Grady visibly flinched. His deep-seated respect for Marco was almost instinctual. However, he managed to summon his courage upon spotting Loraine standing behind Marco.

"Marco, in truth, the Cruz family also participated in the bidding and managed to secure a storefront in the business district!"

Since the falling-out with the Cruz family, Loraine hadn't had any dealings with them. Upon hearing this, she felt compelled to inquire, "Grady, was this your initiative?"

If the Cruz family had seriously participated, she should have been aware of it. This suggested Grady had clandestinely arranged for someone else to bid. Loraine had no qualms with Grady, but if he acted independently and his family caused her trouble later, it would be a headache.

Grady pondered for a moment before saying, "I just wanted to make amends for my and my mother's past indiscretions."

Marco arched an eyebrow, retorting with a scoff, "Apologies notwithstanding, don't stir up any more trouble."

Loraine felt a tad awkward. She had already put those incidents behind her and held no grudges against Grady.

"Grady, I don't expect you to make amends in this manner. The shops in the new commercial area play a pivotal role in our future plans. They should serve their intended purpose, not act as an instrument of apology," she explained.

Eagerly, Grady reassured her, "I won't leave my shop idle. I've planned to set up a new antique store and an associated gallery. Rest assured, I'll take it very seriously!"

His earnest declaration somewhat mollified Loraine, and she offered him a nod and a smile, saying, "That's good."

Grady breathed a sigh of relief. Nervously fiddling with his fingers, he looked at Loraine with bright, hopeful eyes. "Loraine, can we still be friends?"

Loraine responded with a smile, "Of course, we are."

She never blamed Grady for his mother's actions.

Grady's eyes lit up with a mix of excitement and shyness, reminiscent of an eager puppy.

Marco's gaze hardened, and a chill seemed to envelop him.



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Chapter 415

Possessiveness

Grady looked at Loraine with unspoken fondness.

Marco possessed a sharp intuition.

He could discern that Grady still harbored feelings for Loraine.

Despite the sour history between Loraine and the Cruz family, Grady audaciously presented himself to Loraine.

Marco snorted contemptuously. His distaste for Grady amplified the more he observed him, feeling his precious Loraine was under threat.

His frosty stare fell on Grady as he scoffed, "Grady, has your mother been informed about your recent splurge on a store in Universe Group's business district? Would she punish you for such extravagance once you return home?"

Marco's sarcasm was a jab at Grady's lack of independence, a mere puppet who always sought his mother's permission.

In reality, Marco's scorn for Grady stemmed not from disdain but from the concern that Grady could potentially bring trouble to Loraine.

Grady's cheeks flushed with embarrassment. He defended himself in a murmur, "That was also my mother's suggestion. She was the one who asked me to attend tonight's party."

Astonished, Loraine queried, "Your mother?"

Loraine believed that after the previous incident, Florence would never desire any association with her.

"So, it's a directive from your mother then." Marco's voice chilled further, reinforcing his earlier tease that Grady was a mama's boy, forever heeding his mother's commands.

Grady's blush deepened, but he found the courage to speak louder, addressing Loraine, "Loraine, my mother genuinely wants to extend her apologies to you! The Cruz family is planning another banquet. She wishes to personally express her regrets over the previous incident. Would you consider attending, Loraine?"

Grady anxiously awaited her response, fearful of rejection.

Loraine returned a strained smile.

She couldn't discern the reason behind Florence's sudden change of demeanor but her gut warned her of potential complications; she had no desire to engage with the Cruz family.

"Apologies, Grady. My schedule is packed with the new business district project; I can't spare any time."

Her refusal left Grady crestfallen. "Are you still holding a grudge over past events?" he queried dejectedly.

Loraine remained silent, unsure how to respond.

She wasn't angry but was unwilling to re-engage with the Cruz family.

Grady knew what his mother had done was too much, so he didn't dare to force her.

A faint clearing of the throat, and Loraine cheerfully announced, "Tonight marks the grand bash of both Bryant Group and Universe Group. Let's put all serious matters aside, shall we? Enjoy the evening. Feel free to reach out to the attendants for any help you may need."

Her manners were impeccable, treating him as an esteemed guest.

Observing her in that state, Marco felt no trace of jealousy whatsoever. In fact, he didn't even harbor any dislike towards Grady anymore.

Loraine had no semblance of interest in Grady!

Among the sea of guests, only he and Loraine were the true stars, the hosts of the event.

Loraine remained clueless to Marco's internal musings, but his unexpected grin left her bewildered, catching the attention of all the female attendees.

Given all guests had arrived, as event hosts, Loraine and Marco were expected to take the stage and address the crowd.

However, Marco refrained from taking the spotlight. With a smile, he graciously bestowed the opportunity upon Loraine.

"The project unfolded without a hitch, and it was your efforts that made it possible. You are the true hero of this party."

The clock chimed the time for the address, leaving Loraine no choice but to ascend the stage alone. Marco sat down amongst the crowd, eyes fixated on the radiant woman on

stage.

Donning a floor-length gown, Loraine stood tall in the heart of the stage, a vision of grace and elegance.

All eyes were fixed on Loraine. Whether it was individuals envious of the triumph of the new commercial district or those who held preconceived notions about Loraine, they had no choice but to acknowledge that they were utterly captivated by her presence and demeanor at that moment.

Marco genuinely wished for all the glory to be bestowed upon Loraine.

Under the collective scrutiny of numerous attendees, Loraine's poise and tranquility were imprinted in Marco's memory, his admiration for her intensifying with each passing day.

"She's breathtaking..." Marco almost believed he had unintentionally revealed his true feelings. However, as he turned around, he discovered that it was Grady who had uttered those words. His expression darkened.

Grady was spellbound by Loraine, his gaze locked onto her, filled with awe.

Suddenly, his field of vision darkened.

When he raised his eyes, he saw Marco looming over him.

"Marco?"

Marco leaned in closer, a formidable aura radiating off him, his low voice carrying an unspoken threat. "Grady, bear in mind what you've said. You wish to be Loraine's friend, and that's all you should aspire to be. No ulterior motives."

Grady remained silent, keeping his head lowered. Just as Marco began to think that Grady might surrender, Grady abruptly raised his gaze and locked eyes with him.

"Marco, you're Loraine's ex-husband. You two are divorced."

Marco's countenance darkened.

Indeed, it appeared the young man had finally decided to show his true colors.

