

## Chapter 459 Dancing Partner

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Loraine exhaled deeply. She was here at Cayson's request. Snubbing him for the first dance and accepting the hand of an unknown man instead felt out of place.

Still, the silver fox-masked man had just come to her aid...

Loraine found herself teetering between two choices.

Out of nowhere, her hand was engulfed in a wide, warm grip.

The fox-masked man rasped, "I was ahead of him to offer you my brooch, right? That means you should join me for the opening dance."

Loraine's heart rate quickened at the familiarity of his touch.

Cayson shot him a glare and growled, "Hold on, she isn't obligated to dance with you. A gentleman extends an invitation and the lady is at liberty to accept or decline."

The man simply arched his eyebrows and turned to Loraine. "Would you prefer dancing with him instead? He appears quite fond of you. If you accept his offer, he might continue his pursuit. Be cautious of misunderstandings."

A wave of melancholy swept over Loraine. Holding his hand, she replied, "I consent to your dance invite."

The man laughed softly, leading Loraine onto the dance

floor, where they began their dance.

As if by instinct, Loraine moved to the beat, casting a regretful smile at Cayson.

Cayson's expression grew thunderous. He watched the couple, fists clenched tight.

On the dance floor, the gems on Loraine's dress sparkled like a constellation. Her steps synchronized with the man's. Their dance was visually pleasing and became the center of attention.

Jennie, standing beside Cayson, offered, "Don't lose heart. It's natural you're finding it hard to compete; Lorrie is in high demand."

Cayson, however, derived no comfort from her words.

Watching Loraine shimmer on the dance floor, his gaze softened.

"Lorrie has always been a person of principle. She sticks to the rule of first come, first served."

Upon hearing this, Jennie offered a sympathetic pat to his shoulder.

"You understand Lorrie really well."

Yet, she personally dismissed the 'first come, first served' principle. Touching her nose, she muttered, "Even being childhood friends doesn't assure you victory over the admirer."

She was unaware that Cayson had heard her words. His features hardened once more and he discreetly distanced himself from Jennie.

Indeed, Cayson and Loraine had grown up together, childhood sweethearts in each other's eyes. But Loraine's heart now belonged to Marco!

And then this silver fox-masked man had entered the picture, challenging him.

Cayson found himself glaring at the man who was now by Loraine's side, irritation mounting.

Jennie's loyalty to Cayson was unshaken. She eyed Cayson with a sense of compassion, a sorrow filling her as she saw him isolate himself. She understood he was wrestling with inner pain, and she felt the need to reach out to him.

Gently patting her chest, Lorrie reassured Cayson, saying, "Cheer up, Cayson. If you don't have anyone to dance with you tonight, I'll be there for you, okay?"

A barely noticeable smile appeared on Cayson's face as he responded, "No need..."

At that moment, a man donned in a fox mask emerged from the crowd, approaching them. He made an inviting gesture towards Jennie.

"Fair maiden, I've been admiring you from afar. Would you grant me a dance?"

"Certainly!" Jennie swiftly accepted the brooch the man offered as an invitation. Her acceptance was filled with uncontained enthusiasm.

Cayson watched as she left, a tight-lipped silence overwhelming him as he retreated to a corner.

On the other side, Loraine found herself engaged in a dance



with a silver-masked man. To her surprise, their synchrony was remarkable.

Swaying with the rhythm, the duo's dance movements seemed rehearsed, their harmony unanticipated yet natural.

Although the man's identity was concealed, Loraine was astonished at the unity they experienced on the dance floor.

He held her by the waist, his manners impeccable, his actions devoid of impropriety. Leaning close, he complimented, "You're a splendid dancer."

Under the influence of the ambiance, Loraine found herself conversing with him. "The steps are quite similar to my routine practice. You've got some moves too."

The man's deep-set eyes gazed at her gently as he beamed.

The conversation transitioned from dance and music to history and architectural landmarks.

He spoke with such confidence and ease that it didn't unsettle Loraine in the slightest. Furthermore, she could sense that he had made thorough preparations for the situation at hand. He responded promptly to every word that Loraine uttered, showing a remarkable alignment of views between the two of them.

The man's proficiency took Loraine by surprise. The familiarity they shared seemed as if they had been acquainted for years.

She couldn't help but compare him to Marco.

Marco's earlier indifference had softened, his interest now only directed towards work. Despite his recent kindness, he



retained his typical dullness, showing no regard for art. Only when he assumed his role as Obot, did he engage her in pleasant conversations.

Lost in her thoughts, Loraine accidentally stumbled, unintentionally stepping on the man's foot. A low grunt escaped him, capturing her attention and drawing her awareness to her misstep.

"I am sorry!" Loraine quickly expressed her regret, her thoughts of Marco causing the accident.

She couldn't shake off the resemblance between the masked man and Marco.

However, the masked man surpassed Marco in many ways, and their attire tonight was different. The possibility that he was Marco seemed unlikely.



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## Chapter 460 Taking Off The Mask

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Listening to Loraine's words of regret, the man concealed behind the mask merely moved his head side to side, a silent communication of his nonchalance. He whispered to Loraine, "Feeling fatigued? We can retreat to the lounge for a breather."

Loraine hesitated, but ultimately signaled her agreement.

They exited the bustling dance floor, their fingers entwined, and made their way towards the lounge. Unexpectedly, they caught sight of Cayson deflecting an eager lady's advances.

Cayson's smile remained gentle and polite, yet a subtle trace of impatience flickered in his eyes.

The hopeful woman, oblivious to Cayson's concealed discomfort, persisted in offering her brooch, hoping to coax an affirmative response from him.

All of a sudden, Cayson lifted his gaze and spotted Loraine approaching. Wearing an amused grin, he excused himself, "I beg your pardon. My dance partner has returned."

The woman glanced back, discovering Loraine. Even without a clear view of her face, Loraine's stunning physique made the woman feel incomparable. With a sullen shrug, she conceded and retreated.

Cayson, wearing a warm smile, drew nearer to Loraine and asked expectantly, "Lorrie, may I have the pleasure of this

dance with you?"

Loraine paused for a moment, her mind flashing back to the roses Cayson had sent her and his confrontation with Marco in the corridor.

The fact that Cayson had feelings for her beyond those of a brother was clear, contrary to his earlier claims.

Despite Loraine's occasional insensitivity towards affection, she couldn't deny the fact that she could sense Cayson's unwavering intention to pursue her and express his love.

"I'm afraid I can't, Cayson. I'm weary," Loraine expressed her declination.

"Is it just fatigue? Or, Lorrie, is it that you don't wish to dance with me?"

As Loraine watched Cayson lower his head and appear dejected, she found herself in a dilemma. Just then, a plump figure managed to squeeze into the scene.

Through half-shut, narrow eyes, a plump old man, his mask struggling to cover his expansive face, ogled Loraine as he held out his brooch to her.

"Darling, as the boss of the Wanhua Group, would you care to share a dance with me?"

Suddenly, the two men ceased their rivalry and stood united, their faces reflecting an unmistakable hostility.

Cayson, stepping in for Loraine, declined on her behalf, "Regrettably, she needs to rest."

In a frosty voice, the man in the silver fox mask said, "Get lost!"

The boss of the Wanhua Group gulped. Behind the mask, he sensed the chilling gaze of the man in the silver fox mask.

Dealing with this character would be no walk in the park.

The boss, understanding the situation, swiftly excused himself with a smile and said, "Apologies for the interruption. I'll take my leave now!"

Several others tried their luck, hoping to woo Loraine. They'd been entranced by her ever since her mesmerizing entrance. All had been patiently waiting for her first dance to conclude so they could seize their chance.

But between the imposing presence of the man in the silver fox mask and Cayson, all were kept at bay.

A short distance away, the sight of it all made Paige's teeth grind. How did Loraine command such attention?

Moments ago, the boss of the Wanhua Group had left his previous partner for her after being enticed by her.

Paige found it distasteful, unable to digest the reality of her man being smitten with Loraine.

She was determined to find a way to get back at Loraine!

In the lounge of the ball, with gratitude in her eyes, Loraine turned to the man in the silver fox mask and said, "Thank you for helping me turn down other people's invitations."

She then glanced at Cayson, offering an apology under the pretext of the masked man's comment, "Cayson, I'm sorry I can't accept your invitation to dance. I need a break."

Cayson, attempting to respond, was unwilling to let her go but couldn't bear to see Loraine in discomfort. He put on a



forced smile and stated, "Alright, Lorrie, rest up."

As Loraine settled in her seat, the two gentlemen claimed spots on either side of her, promptly.

Cayson reached for a beverage nearby, offering it to her, while the man in the silver fox mask passed her a napkin to dab her sweat.

Feeling awkward, Loraine surveyed the room.

Without uttering a word, she sipped her drink, pretending to fade into the background.

The men's rivalry adapted to the situation, amplifying their efforts to provide her with drinks, even to the point of topping up her glass before she could empty it.

In the blink of an eye, she found herself downing three glasses of wine.

Loraine, feeling uncomfortable, took this as an opportunity to excuse herself to the restroom and flee.

In the restroom, Loraine unmasked herself, gazed at her reflection, and exhaled a sigh of relief. Such a relief to have lost them.

However, Loraine couldn't help but feel a sense of familiarity in the interaction between Cayson and the man in the silver fox mask.

She dismissed her thoughts as overthinking and proceeded to wash her hands.

As she shut off the faucet and lifted her gaze, she noticed another figure reflected in the mirror.



It was the woman wearing the peacock mask.

She lounged against the door, smirking disdainfully, "Loraine, you're quite the attention-seeker. Men are easily in love with you!"

Loraine squinted, observing the woman in the mirror.

This woman was familiar and seemed to have recognized her from the very beginning.

But who could she be? The woman's familiar silhouette caught Loraine's eye. However, the unfamiliar outfit and distorted voice made it difficult to identify her.

With audacity, Paige taunted, "I bet the ventures you've led as CEO of the Universe Group are nothing but deceptions. You're far more skilled at deceiving men than running a successful business... Ah!"

Paige's words were cut short by a splash of cold water dousing her, soaking her attire.

Livid, Paige hoisted her sodden dress and roared, "Have you lost your mind, Loraine?"

Loraine, impassive, flicked the water off her hand and strolled leisurely towards the woman.

"Your mouth is dirty, so I decided to cleanse it for you. You're welcome!"

Her confident stride startled Paige who recoiled and trembled until her back hit the wall.

At this moment, Loraine extended her hand to remove her mask. Paige shrieked, "Don't!"

If Loraine uncovered her identity, she'd be in deep waters.

But she was powerless to stop it, and Loraine took off her peacock mask.



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## Chapter 461 Meteor Shower

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An anxious visage appeared before her, prompting Loraine's brows to elevate. It wasn't what she had anticipated, yet she wasn't entirely taken aback.

"It's you?"

With her disguise removed, Paige stood fully revealed. Realizing her secrecy was shattered, she summoned her bravery and hurled herself towards Loraine with a cry. "Loraine, screw you!"

She blamed Loraine for the severe downfall of Johnathan Group's share price and her expulsion from the family.

Dislike for Loraine, fueled by past and recent grievances, welled up within her, and Paige lunged to scratch Loraine's face.

She was adamant to disfigure Loraine's beautiful visage to ensure men would find her unappealing in the future!

Lucky for Loraine, she had learned self-defense from Rowan. Paige's actions appeared no different from a schoolyard brawl in her eyes. She merely placed a hand on Paige's forehead.

Unable to reach Loraine due to her shorter reach, Paige growled uselessly. Her garments, already damp from water, slid slightly down.

Recognizing her ridiculous behavior, Paige snapped, "You're picking on me! This corridor has cameras. I'll expose you on the internet!"

Loraine released her hold, causing Paige to stumble backwards from the sudden release. She spoke nonchalantly. "Suit yourself. But it's beneath me to harass you."

Then, she casually tossed a shawl onto Paige's face, leaving her bewildered. In her confusion, she clutched the shawl, her heart stirred.

Was Loraine showing kindness by not exploiting her weakness and providing her with shawl?

As she pondered, Loraine's icy, harsh voice broke her thoughts.

"It's getting chilly. The Johnathan Group is teetering on the edge of bankruptcy."

Paige's eyes bulged and she immediately forgot about Loraine's kindness when she heard the news.

"What are you implying? What do you intend to do to my company?"

Loraine's sneer was the answer. "Are you unaware that the Johnathan Group is swamped with legal issues and on the brink of collapse? I had chosen to forget the past, but I've decided to revisit it. Considering your current predicament, I doubt the Johnathan Group can survive for long, right?"

Paige's complexion drained, her eyes darted nervously. She fumbled to grab Loraine's hands, pleading for mercy. "Loraine, I didn't intend to harm you tonight. Please, don't..."

Lorraine detached her hands icily and left the restroom without a backward glance.

Paige slumped onto the frosty restroom tiles, overwhelmed. She was aware of the struggles Johnathan Group was grappling with, yet the severity of it all was beyond her expectations.

Her impressive family would crumble if their company went bankrupt. Would any respectable man look at her then?

Lorraine, oblivious to Paige's remorse and unconcerned, had other things on her mind.

Exiting the restroom, she had no desire to rejoin the ball or face the dueling pair of suitors again. The inviting pathway to the open garden provided a welcome escape. A breath of fresh air was just what she needed.

Under the chilly moonlight, with a cool breeze sweeping by, Lorraine wrapped herself in her arms. She found refuge in a flower nursery, settling down in solitude.

She lamented her decision to hand over the shawl to Paige. Would that woman even value her gesture? Why was she so accommodating?

A sigh escaped Lorraine. Despite her reflections, she knew she would repeat her actions given similar circumstances.

Suddenly, a comforting warmth engulfed her. Startled, Lorraine looked up to find the man in the silver fox mask.

He removed his silver-gray suit, draping it over her. His gaze was warm and gentle. He didn't ask about her sudden departure, nor did he explain how he'd found her.

Loraine intended to reject his kindness, ready to remove the suit and return it, but he halted her.

"Keep it on. It's quite chilly out here."

"L... I should return..."

A soft chuckle escaped the man as he settled next to her. "Well, a meteor shower is expected tonight. Wouldn't you want to witness it?"

Surprised, Loraine found herself gently directed to gaze upwards.

The man stood in close proximity to her, his voice hoarse as he whispered, "Look."

This closeness was somewhat personal, yet it didn't make Loraine uncomfortable. As she lifted her eyes, she was greeted by a spectacle of glimmering beauty.

Above the vast, dark blue canvas, a flurry of stars danced, with streaks of meteor leaving trails of magnificence.

The man's attention was not on the sky, however; he was entranced by Loraine.

Her eyes, glowing with enthusiasm, outshone the twinkling celestial bodies.

"Care to make a wish?" He suggested in a soft whisper.

A wave of childlike excitement swept over Loraine as she nodded, folding her arms and closing her eyes, entrusting her wish to the shooting stars.

The suddenness of it left Loraine flustered. Eyes shut, she pondered before voicing her deepest wish.

"I hope that Grandpa, Rowan, and Wesley stay safe and healthy, and..."

An image of a man flashed in her mind. Suddenly opening her eyes, she caught sight of the final meteor cutting a path through the night.

Her words choked in her throat, replaced by a silent plea.

"I also wish for a smooth partnership between Marco and myself. No unnecessary complications, please."

The meteor shower, in all its fleeting beauty, captivated Loraine. But when she finally turned her attention back to the man, she found his gaze fixed on her, undisturbed.

A sense of unease crept in her heart. She averted her gaze and managed to ask, "Why didn't you wish upon the meteors, but just kept looking at me?"



## Chapter 462 The Universe And Stars

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Gazing at her, the man spoke softly. "Meteors that vanish in a blink don't captivate me. It's the stars that hold my heart."

Upon hearing this, Loraine expressed her puzzlement, "Stars?"

His voice sounded gruff, altered by a voice changer, yet a hint of tenderness seeped through.

"I've been told that darkness is the permanent state of the universe. Only the radiance of stars, their energy, can cut through this dark abyss, reaching far and wide, brightening the cosmos. As long as the universe thrives, the stars continue to twinkle. Stars, they exist for the universe."

Loraine couldn't suppress a chuckle at his cosmic musings. Why was he rambling about stars and the universe?

Suddenly, it dawned on her.

The Solar Company and The Universe Group? The sun was a star. Was this mere coincidence?

A gulp ran down her throat. An idea began to form in her head but was cut short before she could explore it further.

In the midst of the undefined ambiance, the man hidden behind the mask leaned in closer to her.

Entranced by his captivating allure, Loraine allowed him to

approach.

The gap between them was slowly diminishing, and she could sense the warm breath from behind his mask.

Just as their faces were about to meet, Loraine locked eyes with him and called out a name with certainty. "Marco."

It wasn't a question, but an affirmation.

A flicker of surprise sparked in the eyes behind the mask. He backed away, sighed, and slowly revealed his face.

As expected, it was Marco.

Loraine narrowed her gaze and crossed her arms, maintaining a calm composure as she observed him.

Even from the first encounter, a sense of familiarity had stirred within her. She had, after all, been deeply in love with him. Even the mask and the disguised voice couldn't entirely mask his characteristic figure and breath.

Furthermore, even if his eyes were reduced to ashes, she would still recognize them.

He had picked up the art of eloquent speech from somewhere, weaving tales about art and literature. Initially, he had fooled Loraine. But during their second meeting, Loraine sensed something amiss.

She held her silence, as she was unsure, and also curious to see the game Marco was playing.

With a sigh, Marco looked somewhat remorseful. "As expected, I was recognized."

Loraine huffed, reluctantly acknowledging that her ability to

recognize him wasn't due to his underwhelming disguise, but rather her intimate knowledge of him. With a smirk, she playfully challenged, "Your disguise is far from impressive, isn't it? I mean, those prominent hands and lengthy fingers of yours aren't exactly inconspicuous, are they?"

She started to list several distinctive features of Marco, but suddenly realized she shouldn't bring them up. Realizing her mistake, she immediately fell silent.

But her words had already touched someone's heart. Marco gazed at her fondly and murmured, "So you recall my details quite vividly."

Clearly, Loraine still held a place for him in her heart. She not only remembered his preferences and traits but could also identify him even behind a mask and a voice changer.

A warm rush surged within Marco, his gaze ablaze with a resolve that was unwavering and radiant.

His resolve to win Loraine back had never faltered, but now, it was amplified!

Shying away from his gaze, Loraine bit her lip, a mix of embarrassment and annoyance written on her face. Breaking the silence, he confessed, "Loraine, there's another reason why I haven't made a wish."

Seeing her curiosity piqued, he leaned in and whispered, "I prefer to chase my desires directly. What I want, Loraine, is simple yet challenging."

With a hand resting on Loraine's shoulder, he implored her to look up at him.

"I'm in love with you, Loraine. Deeply. I want to reclaim

your affection, reclaim you, and start over."

His direct gaze left Loraine in a state of rare disarray. She hastily freed herself from his grasp, stammering, "I must return, it's getting late."

She could never erase the memory of their three-year union from her mind. Even if they were to restart, she knew she couldn't revert to their past selves.

She recalled Cayson's words. They were like marred timber, forever altered and unable to revert to their original form.

With a surge of emotion, Loraine dashed from the garden.

Marco watched her receding figure and let out a sigh.

Was it too soon for him to have revealed his feelings?

Back in the dance hall, Loraine hastily donned her mask, attempting to regain her composure before returning to her seat.

With neither Cayson nor Jennie in sight, a hint of unease stirred within her, prompting her to seek Jennie and head home.

She scanned the dance floor and eventually found Jennie, who seemed utterly engrossed in her dance.

The man accompanying Jennie sported a fox mask and stood tall and lean, making Jennie appear even more delicate.

Her friend's neck glistened with a thin layer of sweat, evidence of a prolonged dance. Her eyes were locked onto her dance partner, drawing an image in Loraine's mind of an innocent rabbit being watched by a predatory wolf.

Lorraine knew Jennie like the back of her hand. Despite her outward feistiness, Jennie was naive and easily manipulated. Had she fallen prey to this stranger's charm?

Suspicious, Lorraine inspected the duo.

The longer she observed, the more peculiar it seemed.

Was it merely her imagination, or was it residual anxiety from her encounter with Marco?

She felt an uncanny familiarity with Jennie's dance partner. And the more she scrutinized the fox-masked man, the more it reminded her of Marco's silver fox mask. Could they be a matching set?

The man, donning a fox mask even more flamboyant than Marco's, danced with Jennie, smiling like a cunning fox attempting to lure an innocent, endearing girl.

Lorraine scoffed. Marco was truly a piece of work! He had deceived her and had even enlisted his friend to deceive her innocent and adorable best friend.

