

## Chapter 590 Free From The Bryant Family

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Marco abruptly positioned himself in front of Loraine, leaving her momentarily dumbstruck.

Though he was still internally unsettled, he refused to let anyone berate Loraine.

Marina, on the other hand, clutched her aching wrist as her eyes welled up with tears. "Marco, how dare you push me!"

Upon witnessing this, Laura rushed over to assist Marina.

Marco had only intended to protect Loraine, not to hurt Marina, who merely had a reddened mark on her wrist. Yet Laura reacted as though she'd seen a grave injury, her face twisting in fury as she roared, "Marco, how dare you hurt my daughter? You insolent man, how dare you!"

Marco's bloodshot eyes flickered as he cast a cold glance at Laura.

His intense gaze silenced Laura, causing her to momentarily choke on her words. Despite their newfound assurance, an innate fear of Marco lingered.

Laura instinctively stepped back with Marina, then proclaimed defiantly, "You've harmed Marina, and everyone here witnessed it! You'll pay for this!"

"Marco, enough is enough. Stop now," Liza suddenly commanded, her voice resolute. "Leave, leave this place and



leave the Bryant Group behind."

Marco stared blankly at Liza, his thoughts muddled and slow. It was as if he was watching everything through a hazy curtain. Except for the warmth of Loraine's hand in his, everything felt surreal.

Previously, whenever Laura and Marina engaged in such foolish antics, Liza would promptly intervene. But now, she was shielding them.

Marco understood. She wanted him to leave. How callous.

Liberated from the shackles of familial obligations, Marco saw things in a new light.

He no longer held any expectations for this family. He wouldn't continue to passively endure the distress caused to the woman he loved deeply.

Looking at Loraine beside him, Marco's eyes sparked to life. He then cast a frigid glance at the Bryants, a disdainful smirk gracing his lips. In a frosty tone, he stated, "The Bryant Group? Mrs. Bryant, don't overestimate your importance, assuming everyone is as money-driven as you."

The remote address of "Mrs. Bryant" could have referred to either Laura or Liza. The latter's complexion visibly altered upon hearing it.

Marco remained impassive. "If you want the Bryant Group, take it. I couldn't care less."

His voice was strikingly serene, signaling to everyone that this was not a display of false bravado. He genuinely didn't care.

The once formidable Bryant family now seemed ludicrous, like a troupe of clowns.



Liza finally spoke. "Since you've consented, I will compensate you. Name your terms."

A sarcastic smile played on Marco's lips as he retorted, "Mrs. Bryant, when I assumed leadership of the company, you persistently claimed it was the legacy of the late Mr. Bryant... that he had sacrificed his life for my sake. Therefore, I was obliged to uphold the family, handling all responsibilities to ensure his peace in the afterlife."

He enunciated each word with precision, "And so... that's why, ever since assuming control of the company, I've worked tirelessly and diligently. Step by step, I've guided us to where we are now. I believe I haven't disappointed you. Yet, after investing so much in the Bryant Group only to be met with your merciless betrayal, it's best to sever those ties once and for all!"

Marco wasn't seeking sympathy or attempting to stir any dormant conscience within Liza. He just didn't comprehend their ruthlessness.

Feeling the gentle warmth of Loraine's hand in his, Marco's hardened demeanor softened. He squeezed her hand reassuringly.

Liza's expression flickered in response to Marco's words. "You!"

Undeterred, Marco continued, "The Bryant Group, I can surrender it. But you, all of you, must apologize for your slander against Loraine. Otherwise, even if I relinquish the Bryant Group, I will ensure it faces severe repercussions. I trust you understand that I am capable of such."

Upon hearing this, Laura and Marina bristled with indignation, retorting, "On what authority?"

A single look from Liza silenced them. She was acutely aware





of Marco's capabilities and tactics.

If Marco was prepared to abandon the Bryant Group, she could accept that. The only stipulation was for them to apologize to Loraine, a minor inconvenience. Having issued numerous harsh remarks earlier, she was naturally reluctant.

In the end, Liza measured the pros and cons and opted to swallow her pride. With visible reluctance, she mustered an insincere apology.

"Loraine, events unfolded unexpectedly, involving the Bryant family lineage. I reacted impulsively and uttered some harsh words. I hope you won't hold it against me."

Hearing this, Marco turned his attention to the visibly irked mother-daughter duo.

Initially, Laura and Marina were resistant, but under Liza's intense glare, they begrudgingly capitulated.

"Alright, we're sorry," they mumbled reluctantly.

Loraine was taken aback. She hadn't anticipated that Marco wasn't advocating for his interests but solely seeking vindication for her.

"Marco..."

She began, but before she could finish her sentence, Marco had already taken her hand and was turning to leave. "Let's go."

Loraine glanced at him. "Is it okay to leave just like this?"

"Yes, it's fine," Marco reassured her. He cast a final look at the Bryants, paused momentarily, and articulated in an icy tone, "From this point onwards, I hold no ties with the Bryant family."



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 +120 Points at most

The realization that he was no longer bound by the chains of familial affection was liberating for Marco. With no lingering attachments, he confidently strode away, hand in hand with Loraine.

Having Loraine by his side was all he needed.



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## Chapter 591 Cyberbullying

Marco gently clasped Loraine's hand as they rode the elevator straight to the parking lot.

Fortunately, the quietude of the night provided cover, sparing them from any unwanted attention.

Loraine couldn't help but notice a significant shift in Marco's demeanor. It was as if a burdensome weight had been lifted off his shoulders, the chronic crease of his brow seeming less pronounced.

Suddenly, she found herself believing that the evening's events might not have been entirely unfortunate.

The silence that enveloped them as they walked hand in hand to the parking lot was comfortable rather than awkward. Loraine, who had arrived in haste, had simply flagged down a taxi. Without any hesitation, she trailed behind Marco towards his sleek black Lincoln.

As Marco produced the keys to unlock the car, a hand abruptly barred the door from opening.

The intruder, garbed in a security guard uniform, had a somewhat suspicious look about him. He cast a scornful glance at Marco, affecting an air of regret yet emitting a sarcastic tone. "Sir, I'm sorry, but I've received orders from higher-ups. You're no longer considered part of the Bryant family, so you have no right to utilize any assets tied to the Bryant family, including this car!"

Marco stared back at him, his expression impassive. His gaze

instilled a sense of unease in the security guard.

Internally, Marco couldn't help but scoff. The car hadn't been bought using the Bryant family's funds but his own personal savings.

However, laying out the facts at this juncture seemed futile. The Bryant family's actions had made their intent to cut all ties abundantly clear.

Lorraine's temper flared. Since when had someone like Marco been subjected to humiliation by a mere parking lot security guard?

She let out a cold, derisive laugh. "Is the Bryant family so petty? Who sent you? Mrs. Bryant? Laura Bryant? Or perhaps Marina?"

The security guard, already unnerved by Marco's penetrating gaze, forced himself to maintain a defiant demeanor. He retorted disdainfully, "It doesn't matter who handed down the orders. Regardless, their authority far outweighs that of a person with uncertain origins. I'm an employee of the Bryant Group and it's only natural that I follow the Bryant family's directives."

"I see, as obedient as a dog, aren't you?"

Lorraine's frustration mounted, and she was ready to continue her verbal duel with the security guard. However, Marco lightly tugged her hand, halting her.

His expression hardened, taking on a wearied look, as he glanced at Lorraine. "There's no need to waste energy on someone like him."

Lorraine inhaled deeply, reigning in her anger, and nodded. "You're right. It's not worth stooping low to engage with such petty individuals."

Throwing the haughty security guard a frosty glance, Loraine led Marco away from the parking lot.

She didn't believe that they wouldn't be able to secure another vehicle or hail a taxi.

Once they exited the parking lot, they managed to flag down a taxi without much delay. The frustration Loraine harbored was palpable. The duo shared the back seat, falling into a silence that stretched out for a considerable length of time.

The driver, perceptive to the uneasy atmosphere enveloping his passengers, refrained from initiating conversation. Yet, his occasional glances at Marco through the rearview mirror indicated recognition, mingled with a touch of curiosity.

Noticing the driver's probing looks, Loraine turned her gaze to Marco, concern filling her eyes. At that moment, Marco had his eyes shut and was leaning against the seat, his lips pressed together tightly and his brow furrowed. Respecting his silence, Loraine quietly pulled out her phone to browse the latest online news.

As she sifted through various articles, a spark of anger ignited in her eyes.

In a remarkably brief amount of time, the Bryant Group had already made a public statement declaring Marco's impending expulsion from his post.

Utterly shameless!

While they had expected Marco to tender his resignation voluntarily, they had preemptively released the news to forestall any resistance from his end.

Once the statement was issued, it sparked a tumultuous





uproar online, with discussions revolving around Marco's background spiraling into a viral debate.

The comment section was brimming with deliberate instigations.

"With the news of his expulsion, it's now confirmed. Marco is indeed not a true member of the Bryant family!"

There was even an individual claiming to be an employee of the Bryant Group who posted disparaging comments such as, "I work at the Bryant Group, and frankly, the rank-and-file employees have harbored resentment towards Marco for a while. He is overbearing and dogmatic, turning a deaf ear to any input from others. His demeanor resembles that of a dictator. Additionally, his personal conduct leaves much to be desired. Despite his affluence, he treats his own family poorly, curtailing their rightful expenses!"

The issue surrounding Laura and Marina's restricted expenditure was no secret. With this fabricated narrative now in circulation, netizens became all the more convinced. A bandwagon effect ensued, with a majority joining the torrent of negativity or purposefully tarnishing Marco's reputation. For a time, the internet was awash with unfavorable reports about him.

Lorraine's expression hardened as she read through the vitriolic comments.

Having previously been a victim of cyberbullying herself, she was acutely aware of the sting such disparaging remarks could deliver. Now, as these insults were directed at Marco, she felt an even deeper pang of sorrow.

Unable to stomach the distressing content any longer, Lorraine cast her phone aside, silently seething with frustration.



The man beside her, eyes still closed, seemed aware of her inner turmoil. Suddenly, he grasped her hand.

Startled, Loraine's instinct was to pull away, but she felt Marco's hand subtly trembling. It conveyed a raw vulnerability, as if he was fearful she would retract her hand.

This unexpected reaction caught Loraine off guard. She gently held his hand, moving closer to him.

The icy silence Marco had upheld throughout the journey was merely a facade. It was only in her presence that this hardened veneer began to soften.

As she studied Marco's impassive yet profound profile, a wave of sympathy washed over Loraine. In a soft voice, she asked, "Marco, do you still plan on taking me out for dinner tonight?"



## Chapter 592 Strolling On The Street

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Marco's dense black eyelashes trembled, but he managed to open his eyes to look at her.

Loraine saw the confusion and unease in his eyes.

He resembled an injured beast, vigilant of his surroundings and using a cold, fierce facade to protect himself. It was only in her presence that he revealed a vulnerable side, seeking comfort like a domesticated dog.

Loraine's heart melted when she saw these feelings in his eyes, and she looked at him with even more tenderness.

"Dinner?" Marco suddenly asked her.

Loraine smiled and pointed at the single rose flower that was still pinned to her gown. "You invited me, but since one rose doesn't count as a meal, you owe me a proper dinner."

Marco seemed momentarily taken aback by this, but he quickly regained his composure and said in a hoarse voice, "The restaurant we previously booked is also under Bryant Group... Let me find another one."

He had just suddenly realized that he had made her wait for too long, and he felt a little annoyed with himself. He immediately reached for his phone so he could make a new reservation.

But Loraine's thoughts were elsewhere. She was thinking about how Marco had devoted so much to Bryant Group, pouring all





his time and efforts into it. And what did he get in return at the end of the day? The family turned on him, leaving him without even a car to ride.

She couldn't help but worry if Marco still had any money of his own left.

Not wanting to crush his self-esteem, she decided to change her mind and said instead, "I'm hungry. It's too much trouble to make another restaurant reservation, and I don't want to wait any longer."

Marco felt even more guilty than before and began to rack his brain, trying to come up with a solution. Seeing his expression, Loraine chuckled and said, "I know a great place we could go to. Would you like to go?"

Marco stared at her in surprise, but eventually, he nodded in agreement.

Loraine gave the driver the address, and not long after, the car rolled to a stop on a busy street.

The lively chatter of people and the aroma of street food created a cocktail of feelings.

The entire street was filled with young people coming and going.

Street stalls and food carts lined both sides of the road and the dim lighting gave it a nostalgic feel, almost like scenes from an old movie.

Throughout his life, Marco had always frequented high-end restaurants and five-star hotels, even adhering to the dining etiquette of the upper class when dining at home. He had never seen this world of roadside stalls before. He found it very strange and surprising, and he asked Loraine in a whisper, "How





did you know about such a place? Have you been here before?"

Lorraine gave him a sidelong glance and smiled.

"Before I went back to the Torres family, I lived a life just like this. So, of course, it's not surprising for me to know about places like this."

With this simple sentence, she had just painted a picture of her past that Marco never knew.

Not wasting any more time, Lorraine grabbed his hand and led him through the crowd at a leisurely pace. As she looked around, she couldn't help but exclaim, "It's been a long time since the last time I came here. The street seems particularly lively today."

Someone beside them kindly explained, "That's because there's a food exhibition happening here. It's quite a large-scale event. You can go check it out. There are many delicious and fun things lined up."

Lorraine was pleasantly surprised to hear this, and after thanking the man, she led Marco in the direction the crowd was headed.

Before coming to this street, she had thrown on a windbreaker over her evening gown, but Marco was still in his tailored suit, and in addition to his towering stature, he looked out of place in this snack street. Occasionally, people glanced at him, whispering and chuckling as if they were discussing something about him. Though he knew they had no ill intentions, it still made him feel uneasy.

Nevertheless, he let Lorraine lead him, watching her as she came alive in the environment, her smile becoming more vibrant and radiant as she introduced him to foods he'd never heard of before. Soon, his mind became relaxed, and he found



himself smiling.

All of these things were new to him. The inexpensive food from these small stalls left him speechless. In the past, he wouldn't have given them a second glance.

But now, after strolling around with Loraine for a while and perceiving the aroma of so many great dishes while listening to Loraine's descriptions, he actually began to feel a bit hungry.

As they walked past a particular small stall, they saw an amiable old lady in it. She was clearly the one minding the stall and she was being supported by a cute, skillful little girl.

Seeing the two of them approaching, the little girl wiped the sweat off her nose and beamed, "Sir, miss, would you like to buy some crepes? My grandmother makes them delicious. We even have a discount today. If you buy one, you get the second one for half-price!"

Marco looked closely at the stall. Though he could tell it had been tidied up meticulously, it was inevitable for such a place and their equipment to accumulate some grime over the years, especially the crepe pan, which had become quite dark.

He furrowed his brow, feeling a bit hesitant, but Loraine had already stopped at the stall and was saying with a smile, "It smells so good. Let's get two."

"Loraine, let's not..."

But before he could finish the statement, the quick-witted little girl had deftly prepared a crepe. She smiled at him and said, "Sir, you and miss look so well-matched. Since you're buying two, I'll make them a couple's special and draw a heart in the middle. How about that?"

When Marco heard this, he didn't try to stop her anymore. He



coughed lightly and said reluctantly, "Um... thank you."

Seeing Loraine smiling at him playfully, he quickly looked away shyly. A faint blush swept across his finely chiseled face, making him look even more cute.



## Chapter 593 Indirect Kiss

The crepes were promptly prepared and encased in parchment paper before being passed over to the duo.

With an appetizing aroma wafting around them, Loraine and Marco each held a crepe in their hands.

Although Marco was indeed famished, he stared at the food in his hand, seemingly at a loss.

Shouldn't such dishes be served on a plate, dissected into manageable pieces with a knife and fork, akin to a steak?

Loraine glanced over to find him scrutinizing the crepe, his brow furrowed as if confronted with an intricate conundrum.

It made sense. As the former CEO, Marco had never consumed such commonplace fare. It was akin to a novice diner uncertain about which hand to wield the cutlery with.

The sight of his perplexity provoked a chuckle from Loraine. She then playfully shook her crepe in front of Marco, gesturing for him to observe her. Lowering her head, she bit into the edge of the crepe before raising the partially consumed treat to Marco with a grin. "This is how it's done. See?"

Marco turned his gaze to the crepe Loraine was exhibiting, his eyes slightly confused. He observed the faint indentation on the crepe's surface, marking where Loraine had taken her bite.

What was the implication of Loraine offering him a portion of her half-eaten food?



Although Marco was somewhat bewildered, he didn't hesitate. He bowed his head and took a bite from the crepe Loraine was holding, aligning his bite with the spot where she had bitten previously.

Caught off guard, Loraine froze, a blush immediately suffusing her face. She stammered, "What... why did you eat from mine?"

Marco's expression was one of pure innocence, clearly misinterpreting the situation and assuming Loraine wanted him to sample her portion.

He blinked and earnestly offered his untouched crepe to Loraine. "Then take mine, have a bite in return?"

Loraine spluttered, a flurry of embarrassment and bewilderment seizing her. She was at a loss for how to respond.

After a brief pause, she threw Marco a faux-irritated glance and said, "Who wants to eat your food? Let's move."

With that, she swiveled around and took a step forward, though she held onto the crepe that Marco had taken a bite from, instead of discarding it.

Watching Loraine's reaction, Marco, initially befuddled, could not fathom what had transpired. But then, he chanced upon a young couple on the street, intimately feeding each other snacks, their lips indirectly meeting through the shared morsels. Suddenly, the realization struck him.

Had he inadvertently shared an indirect kiss with Loraine?

A smile lit up Marco's eyes as he grasped the root of Loraine's discomfiture. His earlier gloomy demeanor, weighed down by his past, noticeably lightened. He watched Loraine's retreating back and hastened his pace to join her.



Loraine walked briskly, but she stealthily kept him in her peripheral vision, concerned about losing sight of him. Seeing him closing the gap, she pressed onward without casting a glance his way, feigning indifference.

It wasn't long before Marco reached Loraine and blocked her path, a mischievous, teasing smile gracing his features. He purposefully extended his share of the crepe towards Loraine's lips and said, "Apologies for the misunderstanding earlier. Since I've sampled your portion, it's only fair you try mine."

Loraine's brows knitted in hesitation and uncertainty. But confronted with his resolute demeanor, which hinted he wouldn't yield until she complied, she exhaled a sigh of surrender and reluctantly took a bite.

As she was about to admonish Marco for his antics, she observed him once again replicating her bite mark on his crepe.

This time, his action appeared deliberate. In full view, he painstakingly aligned his bite with her indentations and took another bite.

Loraine's cheeks flushed immediately, and Marco, unsatisfied, continued to fan the flames. "Why so bashful? The crepe vendor specifically mentioned it was intended for couples. Isn't it common for couples to share their food?"

He delivered these playful words with a veneer of seriousness, almost causing Loraine to sputter. She shot him a look of exasperation, but the sight of his smirking lips quelled her rising irritation.

Loraine had chosen this spot not only to safeguard Marco's pride and sidestep potential backlash from an extravagant restaurant visit at such a critical juncture, but also to offer him some relaxation.



And her plan seemed successful as Marco's spirits visibly lifted.

With a soft huff, Loraine responded, "What couples? Are you taking the crepe vendor's words at face value? Never mind, I won't bicker with you today."

But Marco was determined to test the waters. "Aren't we a couple? What exactly are we engaged in right now? Isn't this a date?"

Loraine diverted her gaze uncomfortably, evading his probing stare. "We're simply sharing a meal... Anyway, let's move on to something else."

Marco simply smiled, not calling out Loraine's tough facade. He gently clasped her hand and continued their stroll.

Suddenly, a woman beside them stumbled, letting out a delicate gasp, and was about to fall directly into Marco's arms!



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