

Chapter 826 Successful Surgery

Before Loraine could reply, a merry voice echoed from afar, bringing an air of cheerfulness. "Miss Torres, Marco, what are you doing here?"

They turned to find Clifford approaching, his smile radiating warmth.

His grin was meticulously calibrated, as though tailored to perfection. He spoke with an ease that belied the recent strain in their relations.

As he neared them, his demeanor remained affable, yet his eyes betrayed no genuine warmth. While projecting an air of geniality, a discreet barrier lingered in his presence.

Underneath his cordial mask, his inherent arrogance and disdain for them simmered.

Loraine and Marco shared a brief look, Marco's expression hardening noticeably. His body language made it clear he had no interest in conversing with Clifford. Loraine, however, mustered a courteous smile and moved towards Clifford, exchanging small talk. "Mr. Cruz, can we help you with something?"

Despite his recent altercation with Marco, Clifford's outward charm was flawless.

He glanced at Marco and grinned, remarking, "Oh, nothing particular. I just noticed you here and thought to join in. I hope I'm not intruding."

Loraine, too, adopted a facade of business-like cordiality, engaging in polite conversation. She skillfully navigated the dialogue until Clifford finally took his leave.

As soon as he was out of sight, Loraine's professional smile vanished, replaced by an eye roll. Turning to Marco with a touch of annoyance, she said, "Such a hypocrite."

Marco, who had restrained his disdain for Clifford, let out a small laugh at Loraine's comment, nodding in agreement. "Absolutely, the hypocrisy is astounding."

Loraine lightly tapped her nose, deep in thought. "Clifford's attitude towards us is notably frosty. I always thought it was just Tillie who acted that way... It seems, except for Ariadna, the rest of the Cruz family share a similar oddity."

She found herself pondering how Tillie's initial mistrust was hardly surprising, given that her master was Clifford.

Her only motivation for enduring these thankless jobs was Ariadna's well-being, and with Ariadna's surgery on the horizon, Loraine had no desire to stick around for further unfounded accusations.

She told Marco, "Let's wait until Ariadna's surgery is finished, then we can head out."

Adding a playful twist, she teased, "I have a special place in mind to take you!"

As time slowly passed, the red light outside the operating room eventually turned green, signaling the end of the surgery as the doors opened.

A wave of emotions swept through the crowd waiting outside. They stood, converging around the doorway, forming an aisle in the middle.

Loraine was about to step forward when Clifford, anxious, beat her to it. He rushed to the doctor, asking eagerly, "Doctor, how's my daughter? Was the surgery successful?"

The doctor, whom Clifford had eagerly approached, was Harlem, the esteemed director of the hospital. Harlem had long since stepped back from performing surgeries, his role as director taking precedence. But the significance of this particular robotic surgery had drawn him back into the fray.

Wearing a gentle smile and a contented look, Harlem wasn't perturbed by Clifford's urgency. Instead, he reassured him calmly, "The surgery went wonderfully. There's no cause for concern."

Clifford breathed a sigh of relief, his legs nearly giving way under him. He was quickly supported by his aides and hastened towards Ariadna. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Harlem approaching Loraine, his brow creasing slightly as he divided his attention.

Harlem, with a flushed and slightly exhilarated face, reached Loraine and announced, "Miss Torres, the surgery was an astounding success! This will certainly put our hospital on the map. We owe you a great deal of gratitude. Your contribution

has given us this invaluable chance!"

Clifford maintained his composure, yet a trace of irritation simmered beneath the surface.

Harlem regarded Clifford highly, but his admiration for Loraine was even stronger.

Clifford pondered what remarkable trait Loraine had that earned such fervent respect from Harlem.

Meanwhile, Loraine was behind them, offering comfort to Harlem through conversation. Clifford, on the other hand, walked with the nurses as they wheeled Ariadna back to her room. He found a moment to covertly contact a subordinate, ordering, "Delve into the connection between this hospital and Loraine."

Clifford always harbored a deep skepticism about coincidences. Learning that Loraine was acquainted with both Marco and Ariadna deepened his suspicions. Was their presence in this particular hospital, capable of treating Ariadna's ailment, really just a coincidence?

A connection between this hospital and Loraine... That would confirm his doubts.

Observing his daughter, Ariadna, as she rested in the aftermath of surgery, her skin pale but her face peaceful with a faint smile, Clifford's expression softened.

With Ariadna's peaceful sleep before him, Clifford's eyes gentled, and he silently promised, "Ariadna, I'll do everything to keep you safe and sound."

Chapter 827 Mysterious Alley

Elsewhere, Harlem and Loraine engaged in a deep conversation. Harlem noted, "This surgery's outcome has truly surpassed our expectations. Miss Cruz's situation was dire, and we braced for the worst during our initial discussions. Yet, during the operation, the patient's remarkable resilience, coupled with the Solar Company's support and cooperation, played a crucial role."

In such major surgeries, luck is always a factor, but Loraine's vital contribution was undeniable.

She reduced the risks, calmed the patient, and negotiated compromises with the Solar Company's representatives.

Harlem offered Loraine his heartfelt thanks. Had it not been for the upcoming post-surgery tasks, he would have spent much more time expressing his appreciation.

After thanking her, Harlem excused himself, "I must attend a post-operative meeting with the other doctors, Miss Torres. I'll have to leave now."

Loraine encouraged him to go, secretly touched by his sincere acknowledgment.

Rushing out with the surgical files, Harlem left. On the sidelines, Marco observed everything, his eyes twinkling with admiration as he complimented, "Loraine, you've been exceptional."

Blushing, Loraine playfully retorted, "Joining in on the praises, are you? I merely played a small part. The surgery's success is a testament to the medical team's hard work. And it's the Solar Company that deserves our thanks for providing the surgical robot."

While downplaying her involvement, the mention of the Solar Company jogged her memory.

"Speaking of which, Sullivan and Jeroy said the CEO of the Solar Company personally approved the loan of the surgical robots. Although he was indecisive about working with Universe Group, we owe him gratitude for his commitment to saving Ariadna in this instance."

A stir of emotions rose in Marco, yet he chose to keep his true identity under wraps for the time being, believing it was best to foster goodwill under his alternate persona.

During a moment of calm, he gravitated toward Loraine, gently taking her hand, and whispered, "Later, we can show our appreciation to the Solar Company. For now, what should we do? Maybe check on Ariadna?"

Loraine paused, considering the situation. The surgery had been successful. Ariadna was out of immediate peril, but awakening soon seemed improbable.

Recalling Clifford's wary gaze upon seeing them together sparked a dry chuckle in her. "Let's wait for Ariadna to stabilize more. Now's a good time to leave the father and daughter alone. We can leave for the time being."

Loraine's reply was perfectly in sync with his hopes. His eyes sparkled, and a puppy-like grin spread across his face as he asked, "So, where are we off to? You promised to take me somewhere special!"

Loraine sensed he had been anticipating her to utter those words. She couldn't help but be filled with a mix of amusement and warmth when she noticed the eager look on Marco's face.

His expression reminded her of a dog pulling at its owner's clothing, ready for a joyful outing. Imagining him with a wagging tail seemed fitting.

Despite the urge to affectionately tousle his hair or pat his head, Loraine stayed her hand, aware of their public surroundings. Instead, she interlaced her fingers with his, laughing softly. "The place is a bit of a secret. Hold on tight to my hand so you don't lose your way."

Their hands intertwined seamlessly, Marco's significantly larger hand enveloping hers with ease. Despite the size difference, their fingers seemed perfectly aligned, as if destined to fit together.

The warmth flowed from their hands, their heartbeats seemed to synchronize, intertwined in their chests. Marco's gaze dropped, veiling the flutter in his heart, akin to a naive boy's. Claspng Loraine's hand, he offered her assurance, "I won't lose my way. I'll hold tightly."

His words held a trace of innocence, yet his quickened heartbeat echoed in Loraine's ear as she pressed close to his

chest.

Lorraine's lips curved into a smile, and she guided him from the hospital.

Vagow teemed with activity. Marco had once occupied the highest position in this city's social order, but he had to acknowledge its vastness, with numerous corners he had never explored.

Until he met Lorraine, he hadn't envisioned the city harboring a life so distinctly different in one of its corners.

Soon, Lorraine led him to a dim alley. Bicycles and motorcycles bustled by, small shops buzzed with light and swarmed with customers.

The air was alive with the din of traffic, chatter, and laughter, forming a vivid, lively painting.

Marco paused, taken aback by the scene. Where were they, and for what reason had Lorraine brought him to this secluded spot?



Chapter 828 Accessories

As Marco absorbed their surroundings, he was startled by the sudden sound of a bicycle bell, swiftly moving past him. Reflexively, he shifted aside and then cast a puzzled glance at Loraine, his face a picture of confusion.

Loraine struggled to stifle a chuckle. Seeing Marco, usually so astute, this taken aback was indeed a rare occurrence. Rather than explaining, she simply linked her fingers with his and guided him further down the alley.

The deeper they went, the more the alleyway became a haven of quiet, the lively city noises turning into a soft murmur in the distance. Tucked away in a quiet nook was a small, unobtrusive shop.

This shop boasted a quaint, old-world allure. Rose vines climbed the timber beams, framing sturdy wooden doorways. A sign hung near the entrance, its elegant script spelling out the shop's name in a pleasing manner.

Upon Loraine's gentle push, the wooden door swung open, releasing a stream of cozy, golden light. The sound of the door opening stirred a middle-aged woman dozing on a sofa. Her eyes crinkled into a welcoming smile as she stood to greet them.

"Welcome, please look around. If you need help, I'm here," she offered warmly.

Handcrafted items and framed photos adorned the shop walls, each snapshot featuring the shopkeeper with various customers and their touching notes. The ambiance radiated both warmth and style, fostering a tranquil vibe.

Loraine had done her homework prior to their visit. Despite its hidden spot, this shop was a favorite among the younger crowd.

It didn't just sell unique crafts but also provided a space for DIY creativity. The shopkeeper was known for her impeccable service, perfectly balancing attentiveness and discretion.

As expected, Loraine felt an immediate ease envelop her upon entering. The shopkeeper's genuine, amiable manner gave the impression of a long-standing friendship.

With a word of thanks to the owner, Loraine and Marco settled into a cozy corner to browse the adornments.

While these trinkets didn't match the grandeur of Loraine's usual accessories, their inventive and distinctive designs set them apart, catching the eye.

Marco abruptly emerged from his reverie, noticing Loraine's fascination with the selection of bracelets and ornaments. He paused briefly before asking, "Do you find these appealing?"

In his mind, he thought if Loraine showed any liking, he would buy out the whole store just to present it to her.

Loraine, however, didn't answer directly. She said in a gentle tone, "As a child in a destitute orphanage, we girls started to value beauty as we grew. With no money, we crafted our own

adornments. Even after the Torres family took me back, my affection for these things persisted. My uncles and grandfather, concerned for my safety, discouraged visits to places like this. I wasn't fond of the lavish workshops either, so..."

Her words trailed off, but Marco understood her implication.

He realized that Loraine's talent in design was partially rooted in her challenging childhood. Hearing her story, his heart swelled with empathy. He responded tenderly, "From this moment on, I'll be by your side in the places you cherish, purchase whatever catches your eye, and make sure you're forever joyful and lovely."

Loraine blinked, a hint of mischief in her eyes. With a playful smirk, she said, "You've gifted me plenty, but they're not my true desire. Right now, I want you to craft a bracelet for me."

This request surprised Marco. Crafting, especially intricate jewelry, was unfamiliar territory for him.

Yet, wanting to fulfill Loraine's wish, he nodded in agreement, replying, "Alright."

Observing the pair, the shopkeeper maintained a respectful distance, gauging their intent to create something personal. At the right moment, she gracefully approached and guided them towards the raw materials section.

Marco displayed exceptional care in choosing materials. This jewelry piece, his first creation for Loraine, held extra significance. He'd consider a material, and then seek Loraine's view.

"How do you feel about this color? Would you lean towards agate or jade?"

Their quiet discussions led to the selection of a modest assortment of raw materials. The shop owner, lighting a cigarette, leaned on the counter with a sly smile. "Young lady, you're in luck. You're gorgeous, and your partner's quite the looker. How about trying some of our couple-themed pieces?"

At her words, Marco and Loraine turned to each other, their hands unintentionally touching the same bead, causing a gentle collision.

The shop owner, a natural flirt, laughed softly, her hand over her mouth. She caught their subtle exchange and playfully nudged them, her eyes twinkling with kindness.

Loraine, her cheeks coloring, tried to pull away her hand. But Marco held it steady. Though he remained motionless, his usually calm expression revealed a touch of shyness, like a young, bashful lad unsure where to rest his eyes.

The shop owner, amused by their reaction, continued her playful banter. "Is this love new to you, kids? Don't be so shy!"

Loraine and Marco, now deeply flushed, quickly chose their materials and moved to the crafting section to start their project.

In the brightly lit crafting area, as the shop owner observed them settling down, she suddenly frowned and murmured to herself, "They look familiar. Where have I seen them before?"

Chapter 829 Please Help

Loraine and Marco both remained oblivious. Ignoring the shop owner, they sat and put their whole attention on crafting.

Loraine didn't just want Marco to make a bracelet for her. She was also making something for him in return. All the materials she chose were in his preferred colors, sticking to the cooler shades.

Loraine began to assemble all the materials, and within a few minutes, she was able to make a small silver wolf head figurine. It was frozen mid snarl, but due to the size, its ferocious snarl just made it appear playful and cute.

Her heart warmed the more she looked at it. It reminded her of Marco. After he left the Bryant family, everyone else saw him as a ferocious wolf, but he had always been cute and playful with her.

It seemed she was the only one who knew him for him. At first, she believed she was only fond of him because of her gratitude towards him, but as time passed, she realized that she had fallen deeply in love with every single detail about him.

Loraine looked up at him. He was too immersed in his work to notice her gaze. She silently got off her chair to go find the shopkeeper.

Once the shopkeeper was done polishing Loraine's figurine,

she pointed at Marco and asked, "Miss, shouldn't you help your boyfriend out? He seems to be having some issues."

Loraine's cheeks grew warm at the fact that the shopkeeper had easily read the relationship between her and Marco. She glanced over at where Marco was sitting.

She couldn't help but smile. When Marco took over the bankrupt Bryant Group, he did not show any signs of worry or trouble at all. But here he was, struggling over a tiny figurine. She dropped the small wolf figurine on the counter and walked over to Marco. Not wanting to disrupt his focus, she quietly bent down beside him.

Marco had laser focus, his gaze honed on the red agate bead he held, and his jaw clenched as he tried to get a thin thread through it. Because of how focused he was, he didn't even notice Loraine. His main goal was to get the thread through the hole of the bead. He smirked as the thin thread was about to pass... But unfortunately for him, it went in the wrong direction.

Marco's eyes widened in pure disbelief and embarrassment. How could he have failed so many times? He'd overcome so many great obstacles in his life, but he was losing to a single thin thread?

Unable to withhold herself any longer, Loraine burst out in laughter.

Marco jumped in his seat slightly, finally noticing her presence. His cheeks turned bright pink. "Stop laughing! I'm trying to do the best I can. The gift has to be utterly perfect!"

Loraine pressed her lips tightly together to restrain her laughter. "Oh, I see, you haven't been failing. You've just been practicing, right?"

Embarrassed, Marco turned back to the beads, determined to get it right this time.

Loraine couldn't stop the smile from creeping up her face. Apparently, it was easier for Marco to handle multimillion dollar deals than to pass a single thread through a small bead hole.

Marco's face remained blank, and he did his very best to avoid her gaze. Suddenly, Loraine took his hand in hers. His body stiffened for a brief second, but he soon relaxed into her touch.

"Marco, I know you're doing this for me, but I would be more than happy to help you..."

There was barely any distance between the two. If he turned his head, they would be less than an inch apart. Why did she smell so good? It was intoxicating. He gazed at her intensely... What was going on with him? What was this feeling?

He turned back to the beads as he cleared his throat. "Okay. Miss Torres, please help. I promise to be a diligent student and a quick learner."

