

## Chapter 953 By Accident

Kaley's eyes widened in disbelief as she asked, "Why?"

She had humbly accepted a minor role within the crew, but rather than appreciation, she felt slighted by the director's apparent disdain for her performances!

Aziel gave a strained smile and explained with a tinge of frustration, "This decision came from your uncle. You'll need to ask him for the specifics."

Feeling genuinely aggrieved, Aziel reflected on his longstanding collaboration with Vincent. He was baffled by Vincent's sudden and irrational decisions to change actresses without clear justification.

Initially, the replacement of the first actress with Loraine had seemed reasonable. Loraine was both skilled and charismatic, and Aziel had been pleased with her performance.

However, the situation took another turn when Vincent abruptly decided to replace Loraine with Kaley due to issues related to her character.

Aziel was inwardly frustrated when Vincent later reconsidered, opting to withdraw this latest replacement, effectively nullifying an entire day's work.

With rising irritation, Aziel advised, "You and your uncle need to resolve this among yourselves. Please, don't disrupt the production until you've sorted it out."

Confused by the director's words, Kaley wondered about Vincent's motives. Did he still favor Loraine even after the

recent scandal?

Fuming, Kaley dropped the microphone she was holding and stormed off to confront Vincent backstage.

Facing her uncle, she adopted a look of innocence and asked, "Uncle, what do you mean? Do you think I haven't performed well enough? I know I'm new to this industry and have much to learn, but..."

Vincent cut her off, his voice weary. "Loraine performed better than you. After reconsidering, I see no need to reshoot the scenes."

Kaley's eyes flickered with concealed anger as she adopted a sorrowful tone. "But there are rumors swirling about you and Loraine online. She spread them on purpose. Are you really going to ignore them?"

Vincent's brow furrowed slightly as he feigned contemplation. "Perhaps I've been too quick to judge Loraine. She has cleared up the accusations herself. It likely wasn't her doing. Maybe it's the work of someone who bears her ill will..."

He turned to look at Kaley, then offered a small smile and asked, "What do you think?"

Feeling the pressure, Kaley struggled to maintain her composure and replied respectfully, "You have always shown great judgment. If that's what you believe, there might well be more to the story."

Vincent felt a twinge of relief internally. He had harbored doubts about Kaley's involvement in the scandals. Her restraint from emotional outbursts at that moment reassured him further.

Recognizing that he had indeed invalidated her efforts, Vincent felt a pang of guilt and decided to make amends. "You liked

that necklace from the exposition, didn't you? I'll give it to you as compensation. And if you're still interested in acting, I'll help you network. You should head home now."

Kaley's face lit up with a forced smile as she nodded in agreement. However, the moment she turned away, her expression darkened dramatically, a stark mix of anger and reluctance.

Once home, Kaley dropped all pretenses. She began furiously throwing things around her room, venting her frustration aloud. "As a Wilson, how can he settle for being a lowly actor? Does he really think I want this acting career? Fool!"

Deep down, she despised the profession and had never truly wanted to be an actress. Her motivation for accepting the role was solely to outshine Loraine and snatch it from her.

But now, faced with Vincent's lack of faith in her talents, Kaley's rage boiled over. In a fit of anger, she hurled a doll across the room. It flew through the air and landed abruptly before a pair of elegant high-heeled shoes.

A beautiful woman gently bent down to retrieve the doll. With a warm smile, she approached and inquired, "Who has upset my dear daughter?"

Kaley's eyes brimmed with tears as she pouted, saying, "Mom, someone is snatching my things!"

To Kaley, no man was more than an object to flaunt, regardless of his merits.

Upon hearing this, Jaylah's expression hardened as she asked sternly, "Who would dare? Tell me their name, and I'll handle them for you!"

Fuelled by her emotions, Kaley embellished her story, painting Loraine as a malevolent schemer responsible for various



misdeeds. She claimed, with a look of distress, "It's not just Marco, but even Uncle Vincent fell for her tricks and joined her in tormenting me!"

Jaylah's face grew colder with each word.

With a reassuring tone, she comforted her daughter and immediately began making arrangements to investigate Loraine further.

Shortly thereafter, an update from the Wilson family's informants came in, leaving Jaylah visibly shocked.

"What's wrong?" Kaley asked, noticing her mother's reaction.

Jaylah hesitated, then her expression turned fierce as she assured, "Don't worry, my dear. I will take care of this problem for you."

Unexpectedly, the individual assigned to probe into Loraine's background had crossed paths with the same person Jaylah had previously sent to investigate the necklace incident.

It turned out Loraine was the same adversary Jaylah had been wary of all along!

With a derisive sneer, Jaylah realized that Loraine was not only a thorn in her side but also her daughter's greatest hurdle. She was determined not to let such a threat linger.



## Chapter 954 The Scheme Of Jaden

---

In the Universe Group branch office, Loraine sat, frowning at the documents in front of her. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't focus on the words.

It had been two whole days since she last heard from Marco!

She was sure that the Cruz family had something to do with Marco's sudden disappearance. He must have been caught off guard, with no time to react.

Loraine's expression darkened. Her priority was to reach out to the Cruz family and make sure Marco was safe!

While Loraine was contemplating her next move, the office door suddenly swung open. Jaden barged in, his face beaming with excitement. "Good news, Lorrie!"

Loraine, initially annoyed by the interruption, couldn't hold onto her irritation for long. A small smile crept onto her face. "Mr. Benton, what has you so thrilled?"

"It's amazing news! The Cruz family from Zodiac wants to collaborate with our branch!"

Loraine was taken aback. She had been pondering how to approach the Cruz family when Jaden delivered this unexpected news, surprising and enlightening her.

Despite her surprise, Loraine remained cautious. Without a written agreement, Jaden's words weren't enough to put her at ease.



"How did you find out?" she asked, her tone guarded.

Jaden chuckled, a self-satisfied grin spreading across his face. He looked down modestly. "The Cruz family is a prestigious name in Zodiac. If Universe Group partners with them, it'll be a huge advantage. As an old man, I felt I needed to contribute something. So, I reached out to them. Surprisingly, they responded positively!"

Jaden then turned to Loraine, showering her with praise and giving her all the credit. "I believe it's because the Cruz family recognized your abilities and your recognition by the government. They want to work with you."

Loraine accepted the compliment graciously. "Thank you, Mr. Benton."

If this collaboration worked out, it would be a significant achievement for both the Benton family and the Universe Group. Loraine felt she might have misjudged the Benton family.

However, Jaden modestly waved his hand, covering his mouth as he coughed, his face showing signs of distress. He sighed and said, "I've scheduled a meeting with the Cruz family. But I'm getting old, and I've caught a cold in the last two days. I'm worried that I'm not strong enough, and I might mess up the cooperation."

He began, looking earnestly at Loraine, "Loraine, the future of the Universe Group rests in your hands. Your involvement will not only benefit our company but also earn respect from the Cruz family. Will you help me?"

Loraine noticed Jaden's pale complexion and the deepening lines on his forehead.

Despite any potential issues within the Zodiac branch, Jaden and the Benton family had been loyal contributors to the



Universe Group for years. She trusted that Jaden's intentions were sincere. Such an important matter couldn't be a lie.

Besides, she needed a way to reach out to the Cruz family to ask about Marco.

With this in mind, she nodded and replied, "Mr. Benton, I appreciate your efforts. I will do what I can. Your contribution won't be forgotten if this collaboration succeeds."

Jaden expressed his gratitude and provided her with the meeting details.

Without delay, Loraine instructed her assistant to make the necessary arrangements before heading to the meeting.

After they hurried away, Jaden's humble expression transformed into a proud smile.

Watching Loraine's figure fade, he took out his phone and called Cayson. Smiling, he said, "Cayson, I've sorted everything out for you. Just wait for the chance to save Loraine and win her heart!"

Cayson was taken aback. "Dad, what do you mean? What are you planning to do to Loraine?"

Jaden smiled but didn't answer. Cayson stood up in a hurry and said anxiously, "I'm going now. Dad, please don't harm her!"

Hearing his son's worry, Jaden snorted coldly, "Well, you know how my niece is, so full of herself she doesn't even hold back at Zodiac. It's only natural that someone wants to teach her a lesson, and I'm just seizing the opportunity."

Then he added, "Cayson, you need to take advantage of this. Since you like her so much, go get her and make her my daughter-in-law instead of standing in my way!"



And if Loraine became his daughter-in-law, the Universe Group would naturally be under his control.

Jaden smiled faintly, thinking that it would save him a lot of trouble.

He just hoped that after this "accident," Loraine wouldn't be ungrateful.





## Chapter 955 A Premeditated Car Accident

---

Loraine sat in the car, diligently examining the Cruz family's information.

She aimed to avoid showing any ignorance during the negotiations and needed to cleverly steer the conversation towards discovering Marco's whereabouts without alarming the Cruz family or causing him any trouble.

She turned a page and glanced up inadvertently. The view outside caught her attention, and she frowned.

Were they leaving the downtown area? Surely, the meeting wasn't in a remote area.

Her suspicion grew just as the car braked abruptly. Despite being buckled in, the sudden stop sent her lurching forward due to inertia.

The soft leather seat offered little comfort, leaving her dizzy for a moment.

Shaking off the disorientation, she noticed with alarm that they were heading straight towards a truck.

Instantly sober, Loraine urged the driver to stop the car. Through the rearview mirror, she could only see his sweat-drenched forehead and intense gaze.

The driver met her eyes briefly, his face contorting as he reached out a trembling hand to lock the door.

Loraine reacted immediately, trying to open the door, but it was already too late.

The driver, seeming relieved that she couldn't escape, slumped in his seat and resignedly watched as the car continued forward.

In that critical moment, a thought struck Loraine. The driver must be working for the Universe Group branch.

Her survival instincts overpowering her panic, she swiftly looked for the emergency hammer, only to find its holder empty.

The driver let out a hoarse chuckle. "Give it up, Miss Torres. You can't escape. It's a privilege to meet my end alongside you, such a distinguished lady," he said.

Loraine realized there was no personal grudge involved. Someone must have bribed him.

Loraine had no time to question who had bribed the driver to risk both their lives.

He had already released his hand from the steering wheel and floored the accelerator. The distance between their car and the oncoming truck was rapidly closing.

Death seemed inevitable.

With little time left, Loraine removed her high heels, leaned over the window, and used them to smash the glass.

Her movements became steadier as the urgency of the moment sank in, and with a sharp click, the glass shattered.

The driver, who had resigned himself to death, opened his eyes in shock, attempting to stop her. But Loraine had already shattered the glass and made an escape.

She hit the ground rolling. Though the car wasn't moving fast, the impact tore at her skin as she skidded across the asphalt, the pain searing through her.

Ignoring the discomfort, she focused solely on the looming truck now just meters away.

With gritted teeth, she limped away from the wreckage. Behind her, the driver's roars of anger and disbelief faded into the background. She didn't look back.

Reaching a road sign, a loud explosion echoed behind her. The sound was stark in the near-empty street, the heat from the blast brushing against her face.

Disheveled and shaken, Loraine pressed forward without daring to glance back at the fiery scene. Tears streaked her face as she wiped them away, the reality of her narrow escape sinking in.

Someone had targeted her life today, and she knew lingering near the scene would only invite further danger. If they discovered she had survived, they would surely finish the job.

Her previously pristine clothes were now marred with dust and bloodstains from her fall. Loraine felt the raw abrasions on her hands, arms, and back—each a searing reminder of her ordeal. Ignoring the pain, she pulled out her phone and dialed Marco as she walked.

In moments of peril, Loraine instinctively reached out to Marco. He had always assured her that he was just a call away if she needed help.

Yet, as death loomed close today, he was unreachable—his phone just rang unanswered.

The physical pain was bearable compared to the emotional toll. Even Loraine, usually so composed, couldn't stifle her sobs. She

whispered into the phone, "Marco, what's happening to you? Where are you?"

Overwhelmed by the accumulated strain and sorrow, Loraine leaned against a wall and slowly slid to the ground. Clutching her phone to her knees, she wept.

She knew Marco hadn't intentionally ignored her. Had he been able, he would never have let their connection lapse for so long.

Yet, she felt very sad.

If she had been accustomed to facing everything alone, she would have clenched her teeth, sought medical care, and then isolated herself to recover at home. But Marco's constant protection had altered her resilience. His presence had always been a source of comfort and companionship in her times of vulnerability.

Why had he vanished now, when she needed him most?

Lost in her distress, Loraine didn't notice how much time had passed until a gentle, caring voice broke through her reverie. "What happened to you? Why are you here?"



## Chapter 956 The Choice Of Loraine

---

At that moment, Loraine's mind was a jumble. When she heard someone speak, she instinctively thought it was Marco. Lifting her head, she cried out, "Marco..."

But instead of Marco, it was Vincent's concerned face that greeted her tear-streaked eyes.

The sight of him only deepened her disappointment. Remembering their argument from two days prior, her expression turned icy, her usual courtesy evaporating.

She wiped away her tears, intending to stand and leave without a backward glance, but a sharp pain in her legs reminded her of her current predicament.

Fighting back a surge of emotion, Loraine refused to show her vulnerability in front of Vincent. With a sniff, she stood, ignoring the pain.

Her voice was cold and defiant as she spoke. "Is there any reason you should care about my whereabouts, Mr. Wilson? Remember, we must maintain a distance to avoid further rumors!"

Vincent's expression stiffened at her words, his eyes filled with sadness and guilt.

He felt an inexplicable discomfort at Loraine's coldness, though they hadn't known each other long.

He recognized this was not about romantic feelings, but rather



resembled the sadness of seeing a once-favored junior turn away after feeling wronged.

Vincent understood that his previous words had hurt Loraine deeply.

This time, instead of arguing, he simply observed her.

He noticed her injuries, the absence of her shoes, and her once delicate feet now marred by dust and blood.

Vincent was struck by the gravity of the situation. It was clear that Loraine had just escaped from something perilous, evidenced by her solitary presence on this remote road.

Had he not been passing by, he might never have encountered her here.

With a deep sigh, Vincent removed his coat and draped it over Loraine's shoulders, his tone gentle. "No matter what happened before, you need help now. Don't be so stubborn."

Then, a thought seemed to trouble him. He frowned and asked, "Where's your boyfriend? He was quick to come to your rescue last time. Why isn't he here today?"

Loraine reacted sharply, her posture tensing like a cat on edge. Without a word, she shrugged off the coat and handed it back to Vincent with a chilly look. Then she turned and walked away.

Despite her limp, her posture remained defiant.

Vincent heard her shakily calling a subordinate to pick her up and couldn't help feeling a mix of frustration and concern.

Why was Loraine so determined to reject help? She was as unyielding as...

A vague memory flickered through his mind, but his concern





for Loraine cut the thought short. He followed her at a distance and said softly, "Let me drive you to the hospital. My car is nearby. You're seriously injured. What if it gets worse?"

But Loraine remained stoic and unresponsive.

Vincent shook his head, puzzled by her stubbornness, and murmured, "Who did she learn this stubbornness from?"

Just then, a voice called out, "Lorrie!"

Vincent looked up to see a young man running towards them, sweat beading on his forehead. He approached with obvious concern, asking, "Lorrie, are you okay? Does it hurt?"

Vincent narrowed his eyes and clicked his tongue, sensing that the man had an interest in Loraine, yet his observation skills seemed lacking. With her injuries so apparent, how could he still ask if it hurt?

Upon seeing Cayson, Loraine too appeared slightly taken aback. A thought flashed through her mind—why was he here?

Suddenly, she felt overwhelmed and her thoughts jumbled. She had no desire to ponder Cayson or Jaden's intentions; she simply yearned for a quiet place to rest.

Yet, Cayson and Vincent continued to follow her.

After a brief silence, Loraine chose to follow Cayson into his car, finding Vincent's presence more irksome by comparison.

Left standing alone, Vincent scratched his head, curious about the identity of the man who had picked up Loraine.

Although the newcomer wasn't as striking as Marco, his handsome features and the way he looked at Loraine suggested his feelings were far from simple.



It seemed Loraine had caught the attention of multiple admirers...

However, it dawned on Vincent that Marco was still absent!

Reflecting on the events at the film crew that day, he admired Marco. As Loraine's boyfriend, Marco's ignorance of her predicament and another man whisking her away seemed highly inappropriate. Vincent attempted to call Marco but couldn't reach him.

Frowning, Vincent speculated on Marco's absence.

Being a member of the Wilson family, Vincent typically had easier access to the Cruz family compared to Loraine.

When Vincent finally reached the Cruz family's residence, he was met with chaos!

The reason soon became clear: Marco, who had been confined to a room, was missing!





## Chapter 957 The Escape Of Marco

---

At that moment, the Cruz family was in complete disarray. No one had seen it coming, that under such tight security, Marco could still manage to escape.

The bodyguards were mute with shock. With so many eyes on him, Marco's escape made them all look incompetent. They braced themselves for Melvin's wrath.

Melvin, meanwhile, sat upright in his study, his eyes shut, an inscrutable expression on his face. Time seemed to stand still until, abruptly, he opened his eyes and issued a cold command. "Find him!"

Marco, who had thrown the entire Cruz family into turmoil, was now disguised, strolling down a street free from surveillance cameras.

Marco appeared extremely pale. The careful planning of every move to elude the watchful gaze of numerous bodyguards had left him exhausted, both physically and mentally.

He had been isolated for two days with no contact with the outside world. He couldn't reach out to Solar Company for help, nor could he reassure Loraine of his safety.

The thought of Loraine gave him a slight boost. Adjusting the brim of his cap, he headed toward Solar Company.

Avoiding any place that could reveal his presence, Marco arrived at Solar Company discreetly and completely worn out. He collapsed the moment he informed Carl of his arrival.

When he regained consciousness, he was inside the building of Solar Company.

Carl, with tears in his eyes, greeted him. "Mr. Bryant, you've endured so much!"

Marco looked disheveled. During his confinement, the Cruz family hadn't reduced his basic needs, but they had laced his food with a small amount of sedative to weaken him and prevent any escape attempts.

To conserve energy for his escape, he had stopped eating the meals provided a few days earlier, surviving only on his determination.

Now, his face was ghostly pale, and he was still regaining his strength. He closed his eyes and asked faintly, "How long was I out?"

"I came to get you as soon as I heard the news, and you woke up the moment we got here," Carl replied.

Marco gave a faint smile. Until he felt secure, he was too anxious to stay unconscious for long.

Looking at Marco's face, Carl felt uneasy. His boss had never appeared so haggard, not even during the early days of setting up the Solar Company abroad.

The Cruz family was prestigious, yet it seemed Marco had endured greater hardships there than in the Bryant family.

Reflecting on this, Carl paused before asking respectfully, "Boss, what's our next move?"

He was aware that Marco was not one to quietly accept defeat. He would surely seek retribution against the Cruz family.

Marco's eyes flared with a cold resolve as he declared, "I have



no plans to return to the Cruz family, but I certainly won't let them off easily!"

Initially, he thought compromising would allow him a peaceful life with Loraine, but his time in Zodiac proved him wrong.

In this situation, he couldn't depend on outside influences. Only by being strong enough could he ensure that he wouldn't be manipulated by others!

Marco's voice turned cold as he stated, "I'm aware that the Cruz family's primary business lately has been their partnership with the Amito Group. The Cruz family was very conceited, believing they could certainly secure the cooperation. But..."

Carl sensed he had a plan, so he asked eagerly, "What do we do now?"

"The head of the Amito Group values his family highly, and his mother is very ill. I've discovered that the ninth-generation robot model could assist. This is where Solar Company excels. Let's not waste this chance."

Carl quickly nodded. Marco, massaging his temples wearily, instructed, "Keep my location a secret until you finalize the deal. Otherwise, you'll tip them off."

Holding on had been tough for him. As his eyelids drooped, Marco's last thoughts before sleep were of Loraine. He murmured, "And, get me a new phone. I left the old one at the Cruz family's house..."

Before he could finish, he was deep in sleep, his brows furrowed, his rest uneasy.

Carl felt sorry for him. He took care of Marco carefully and asked his assistant to buy a new phone.

Then he said thoughtfully, "After you buy the phone, text Miss



Torres from the Universe Group. Tell her Mr. Bryant is at Solar Company and ask her to come over as soon as she can."

When the assistant heard it was for the big boss, he grew nervous. He took the order seriously and hurried out, nearly running into someone.

The woman's eyes, bright yet cold, looked at him sternly. The assistant's face turned pale. "Miss Hoffman..."

Doris looked at him and asked sharply, "Why are you rushing like that?"

The assistant explained what Carl had instructed him to do. Hearing this, Doris gave a gentle smile and said, "I'll handle it. I know what the boss likes."

Soon after, she purchased a new phone and started transferring data. When the assistant mentioned the message to Loraine, an idea struck Doris, and she sent the message using the new phone.

With a confident smile, Doris murmured to herself, "Loraine, I'll show you that I'm the only one who deserves to stand next to Marco!"

