

Chapter 1067 The Universe Group Has Angered Someone

Suppliers of raw materials often seemed to lack a significant presence most of the time, but any issues during this stage could cause severe problems for even the largest companies.

Without delay, Loraine asked Nicol for the contact details of the boss at Integrity Materials. She then took it upon herself to arrange a meeting with him at a nearby restaurant.

He readily agreed. As Loraine arrived at the restaurant, she didn't have to wait long before a middle-aged man, sporting a friendly smile and a bit of a belly, strolled in and headed straight towards her table.

However, when Harold Moreno noticed Loraine's casual attire, his expression soured, feeling slighted and interpreting it as a lack of respect towards him.

He might have built his wealth from scratch, but in Zodiac, mere money didn't grant access to the elite circles. The established families, deeply rooted in society, looked down upon upstarts like him.

The more Harold encountered such disdain, the more sensitive he grew. He would show his displeasure at any perceived disrespect from others.

As for Loraine, although she hailed from a prestigious family, she was not a native of Zodiac. Moreover, Harold had heard that Loraine was not raised within the Torres family; at best, she was seen as a latecomer to the elite ranks.

Thus, Harold felt even more affronted by what he perceived as Loraine's lack of respect.

However, he couldn't help but be captivated by Loraine's striking beauty. As he took his seat across from her, he adjusted his suit jacket, attempting to maintain an air of sophistication despite his protruding belly. With a smirk, he remarked, "Miss Torres, what brings you to grace a humble fellow like me with your presence today?"

Sensing his gaze, Loraine furrowed her brow, trying to conceal her distaste as she replied with courteous yet insincere flattery, "If you consider yourself insignificant, then half the businesses in Zodiac would be left without building materials. You're being too modest."

Harold chuckled heartily, clearly pleased by the compliment. Then, adopting a somewhat ambiguous tone, he said, "I've heard of you for quite some time and always desired to be acquainted with you, but circumstances never allowed it. However, better late than never, wouldn't you say?"

As he spoke, his gestures hinted at something more with Loraine. Seeing this, Loraine's expression turned icy, and she stated firmly, "It's always a good time to forge friendships based on honesty and mutual gain. But individuals like you, who are capricious and cancel cooperation on a whim, don't seem to embody friendship."

Seeing that Loraine wasn't receptive to his advances, Harold abandoned his charade. Leaning back in his chair, he adopted a helpless expression, lamenting, "I'm facing difficulties too. But what can I do when the Universe Group has angered someone? I'm just a small player with limited resources. How can I take on the big shots?"

Loraine squinted, her mind instantly suspecting the Wilson family, which left her feeling somewhat irritated.

Now, it appeared that the Wilsons were interfering even in these minor projects. Had they become indifferent to their reputation?

Observing the subtle changes in Loraine's demeanor, Harold presumed she was intimidated. He grew bolder in his advances, suggesting, "But if you are willing to spend one night with me... Then, even if it means upsetting a big shot, I might reconsider working with the Universe Group."

He hinted, "What do you think about that?"

Loraine's disgust was palpable. She slammed her coffee cup onto the table, spilling its contents and mirroring her increasingly icy demeanor. Firmly, she said, "You've crossed a line, Mr. Moreno."

Harold's expression soured. He scoffed, "Miss Torres, being haughty in business all the time isn't wise. It's the Universe Group seeking my assistance now!"

Loraine had no desire to waste any more words on him. She rose with the intention of leaving.

Even if the Universe Group would decline, she would never compromise her self-respect. This confidence and support were instilled in her by the Torres family.

Seeing that Loraine was determined to ignore him and leave, Harold couldn't resist but comment, "You've made enemies left and right without even realizing it. The Universe Group is bound to collapse eventually! Who else do you think will want to work with you?"

Loraine glanced at him, but before she could respond, Harold interjected with a smirk. "But then again, I'm just a man. I can understand why that guy did what he did."

With a lascivious gleam in his eyes, he leered at Loraine and

remarked, "After all, someone like you would be better off staying home like a pet canary. Why bother venturing out?"

Perplexed, Loraine furrowed her brow, wondering what Harold was insinuating with his words.

Lost in thought, Loraine was startled when she heard Harold's voice, tinged with malice, saying, "I reckon Marco shares the same sentiments. Otherwise, he wouldn't have approached me to team up against the Universe Group."

At the mention of the name, Loraine froze, finding it difficult to process as she questioned, "What did you just say?"

Witnessing the shift in her demeanor, Harold felt an odd sense of satisfaction as he smirked. "You're not aware yet, are you? It was the Solar Company that offered me a high price to break the contract."

Chapter 1068 Sow Seeds Of Doubt

Loraine's shock was evident, her complexion draining of color as she fixed Harold with a cold stare. "Impossible," she declared, her voice steady despite the turmoil within.

The bond she shared with Marco, forged through countless shared moments of joy and sorrow, was unshakeable.

How could Harold think he could sow seeds of doubt so easily?

Taking a deep breath to steady herself, Loraine resolved not to waste any more time on Harold's futile attempts to drive a wedge between her and Marco. With a swift motion, she slung her bag over her shoulder and turned to leave.

But Harold, persistent as ever, caught up with her, his voice tinged with unpleasantness. "Do you doubt my words, Miss Torres?" He challenged. "Why not check the transfer records? The audacity of the Solar Company, using their own account without a hint of discretion!"

Loraine felt a chill run down her spine at his words, her complexion growing even paler as the implications sank in.

With a smug smirk, Harold said, "You still haven't learned the nature of men. How can you blindly trust their words? Haven't you heard Marco's heartfelt vows and promises to you in the past?"

Loraine fought to maintain her composure, reminding herself not to succumb to Harold's manipulations. Yet, memories of Marco's affectionate declarations crept into her mind, stirring

conflicting emotions within her.

Observing her reaction, Harold pressed on, determined to drive a wedge between her and Marco. "Don't delude yourself into thinking you're exempt from the norm. Do you really believe you understand men better than a man does?" he sneered. "Marco's scheming to dismantle the Universe Group, only to swoop in as the hero. You'll be so captivated that you'll willingly become his devoted wife, bearing his children and tending to his every need. That's just how men operate."

Loraine's fists clenched, her breath catching in her throat as she struggled to contain her rising frustration. A sudden realization struck her as she contemplated the recent contract debacle. She had instinctively turned to Marco for support when things went awry.

After all, the Solar Company was Marco's brainchild, and his loyal subordinates far surpassed those of the Bryant Group. Despite operating from the shadows for years, Marco's control over the Solar Company remained unshaken. Could anyone within the Solar Company truly dare to betray or deceive him?

Or was it possible that Marco himself orchestrated the contract mishap to manipulate her into gratitude?

Loraine shut her eyes tightly, attempting to banish these unsettling thoughts and cease her suspicions of Marco. But try as she might, she couldn't shake off the doubts that plagued her mind.

Just then, Harold interjected with a slick tone, "Why not choose me? Unlike Marco, I won't confine you like a caged bird. I'll treat you far better..."

Loraine snapped out of her reverie, realizing the perilous trap she found herself in. Before Harold could make a move, she swung her bag fiercely, striking him with all her might. Then, without a second thought, she bolted from the scene, heedless

of the consequences.

Moments later, Harold's enraged voice echoed behind her as he gave chase, his threats ringing in her ears. "How could a naive woman like you ever become a CEO? Have you even considered Nicol's role in setting you up? He was bought off too! My associates are everywhere. There's nowhere for you to hide!"

Frustration boiled within Loraine at Harold's relentless pursuit, but her primary concern remained her escape from his clutches.

As Loraine stood frozen, her gaze locked on the figure emerging from around the corner, she couldn't help but halt in her tracks, her mind reeling with confusion.

Behind her, Harold's sinister grin spread as he taunted. "So now you're ready to surrender, huh? Come here, and I'll treat you like my sweetheart..."

Before Harold could finish his menacing words, his expression morphed into one of shock as he caught sight of Marco standing stoically in front of Loraine, his temples glistening with sweat, his gaze piercing through Harold with icy resolve. Harold faltered, his tongue tied momentarily. After a beat, he stuttered, "Mr.... Mr. Bryant, I didn't realize you were dining here as well..."

With a swift shift in tone driven by survival instinct, Harold hurriedly continued, "Miss Torres and I were just concluding our business discussion. I was about to escort her back. Now that you're here, I should take my leave. Goodbye!"

As Harold hastily retreated, Marco's cold stare followed him, his words dripping with menace. "So, he's Harold, the CEO of Integrity Materials? Noted. Rest assured, his company will have no place in Zodiac's future."

Hearing Marco's ominous declaration, Loraine's feelings toward

him grew even more conflicted. Was Harold right? Did Marco orchestrate her downfall only to swoop in as her savior?

And how did he know where she was, appearing at just the right moment?

Loraine's gaze shifted to Marco, her expression a whirlwind of uncertainty as she regarded him as if he were a stranger, her trust in him shattered.

Sensing her distress, Marco's demeanor softened, concern etched on his features as he reached out to her. "What's bothering you?"

Loraine recoiled instinctively, her voice trembling as she posed the question that weighed heavily on her mind. "Are you in cahoots with Harold?"

