

Chapter 449 Screwing Things Up

Kassidy felt a wave of confusion wash over her as she stared at Loraine's reply.

How did Loraine manage to be filled with such unwavering confidence and resilience?

Moreover, her words were not mere gossip, but undeniable truth!

Thoughts of Ella's assurances emboldened Kassidy, convincing her that Loraine's bravado was just an act.

She reached for her phone, ready to fire back a retort. But, an overwhelming influx of direct messages urging her to check the trending topics grabbed her attention.

Kassidy clicked on the trending item. Horror washed over her, draining her color and causing her to drop her phone in fright.

A string of related trending topics followed, elevating the issue to a new level of public interest.

"Loraine strikes back against the rumor?"

"Partnerships persist for Cheap and Fine Group, Bryant Group, and Universe Group?"

"Cheap and Fine Group gears up for a major global collaboration with Solar Company?"

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Solar Company?

Even for someone as uninformed as Cassidy, the significance and influence of the Solar Company was evident. Fear gripped her. How could this be happening?

Wasn't the Cheap and Fine Group's president at a dead-end due to board pressure? What was Solar Company's role in this?

Could this mean that the Cheap and Fine Group would still continue their alliance with the Bryant and Universe groups unscathed?

Staggered by the cascade of information, Cassidy took a moment to digest the situation. Swiftly, she picked up her phone and dialed Ella's number.

Upon hearing the voice on the other end, she swallowed hard, ready to talk. But it wasn't Ella who answered; it was Onyx, her brother-in-law!

"You fool, Cassidy. Who allowed you to strut around so recklessly? You went around spewing half-baked news. Do you even realize the humiliating position I am in at the company due to your reckless actions?"

Kassidy found herself paralyzed by fear, unable to respond.

Gasping for breath, Onyx paced anxiously. His anger seemed to grow with each passing moment. He halted, and then resumed his tirade, "Look at the mess you've created! The Cheap and Fine Group's capital chain is back on track now. I'm being held accountable by the board for losing a major client! Your premature leak of information is to blame. Had you kept quiet, there could have been a possibility of negotiating. But now, all is lost. Brace yourself, I'll be suing you for spreading these rumors!"

Onyx's final words sent Cassidy into a panic.

"Onyx, please, I didn't mean for this to happen! Please, for Ella's sake, help me..."

Her plea was cut short as Onyx bellowed, "You have the audacity to ask for my help? If it weren't for your and Ella's scheme to pick on the Cheap and Fine Group's president, would I be in this



mess? Don't even think about involving Ella. We're struggling to keep our heads above water, let alone assist you!"

With that, Onyx hung up the phone and exited his office in a huff.

Kassidy found herself slumped on the floor. With Ella and Onyx abandoning her, she was left wondering who could come to her aid.

Glancing at her phone, her eyes flashed with rage and bitterness.

Lorraine! She was to blame!

Kassidy decided to pour out her wrath on Lorraine.

Fingers flying over the keyboard, she typed out a flurry of harsh words on her social media app. But just as she was about to hit send, an alert popped up on the screen.

"Your account has been revoked due to involvement in jeopardizing public cyber security."

At the same time, there was a knock on the door.

Two uniformed police officers stood at her hotel room door, their badges held high. "Miss Rivera, we request your presence at the police station."

"Oh no, this can't be happening!"

Overwhelmed by disbelief, Kassidy's face turned pale as she collapsed, unable to comprehend what was unfolding before her.

Meanwhile, in the Universe Group's office, Lorraine was being briefed on public sentiment by the PR department.

"Miss Torres, the online rumors have been addressed. Our partnership statement has reassured those partner companies, and buzz around the new business district is at an all-time high."

Nodding absently, Lorraine scrolled through messages on her



laptop. "Alright, good work. You may leave."

This time she let Marco handle the issue as he had promised to take care of it.

Lorraine found herself deep in thought, her chin gently cradled in her hands.

Fortunately, the Cheap and Fine Group regained its usual course, with the Solar Company playing a significant role in this positive shift.

Pausing her thoughts, Lorraine dialed Davy to congratulate him, "Mr. Jones, here's to your successful partnership with the Solar Company."

Davy responded with a wide grin, "I appreciate it. But this was a close one. I had doubts about the Solar Company collaboration. Glad I listened to Marco's advice and pursued the opportunity. They came on board quite easily, which I didn't expect. Thank you both for stepping in to resolve this."

Lorraine offered a small chuckle but said nothing. She couldn't shake off the lingering confusion.

How did Marco know the Solar Company would come on board?

A growing suspicion pointed towards Marco's involvement in the Solar Company's agreement to work with the Cheap and Fine Group.

Marco's exploration of the international market was evidently more profound than she had imagined. Did he have a previously undisclosed tie with the Solar Company?

Midway through her musings, her phone vibrated. It was a call from Marco.



Chapter 450 Conflicting Emotions

Pondering about Marco's involvement in the current situation, Loraine was startled when Marco suddenly called her. It seemed that the two of them shared some sort of mutual telepathy.

After saying goodbye to Davy, she picked up Marco's incoming call.

A deep voice travelled through the line. "Loraine, the internet issue has been taken care of. I apologize for not addressing it promptly as I was trying to draw out a few people. I'm sorry you were subjected to uncalled-for comments."

Remaining nonchalant, Loraine responded, "It's no big deal. I don't bother with online remarks."

"That's reassuring," replied Marco, his voice still hushed.

Choosing her words carefully, she probed, "Marco, were you aware of the alliance between the Cheap and Fine Group and the Solar Company? Had it not been for your push, Davy wouldn't have approached the Solar Company. How certain were you of their agreement?"

Marco, sounding composed, answered, "I simply suggested Davy give it a shot. Doesn't the agreement with the Solar Company please everyone?"

Hastily diverting the conversation, as if afraid she would continue the questioning, he added, "By the way, Loraine, considering our ongoing collaboration, there are a few matters we should iron out if we persist in doing business with the Cheap and Fine Group in the new business district."

Lorraine curtly responded, "Fine."

Deep down, she yearned for Marco's honesty. She understood him like no one else.

It was unusual for him to mention the Solar Company out of the blue or encourage Davy without certainty.

Her dissatisfaction wasn't about Marco's ties with the Solar Company, rather it was about her suspicion that he was concealing something.

But since he didn't wish to share, she decided not to pry further.

After all, she had no right to demand explanations for his actions.

Feeling her discontent through her cold tone, Marco's heart fluttered.

It wasn't his intention to keep secrets from Lorraine. The Solar Company was his own venture overseas, but due to his status as an illegitimate son of the Bryant family and the complex web of relations within the family, he found it difficult to find the right time to tell Lorraine the truth.

Suppressing his thoughts, Marco continued his composed conversation with Lorraine. However, immediately after ending the call, he gestured for Carl to come over.

"As for the alliance between the Solar Company and the Cheap and Fine Group, make sure Lorraine doesn't find out about my involvement." He was determined to keep this secret until he found the right moment to reveal the truth.

Wearing a mixed expression, Carl nodded and accepted the order.

As he brushed past a well-dressed man wearing gold-rimmed glasses, a shared understanding passed between them. "Mr. Bryant, Mr. Todd has arrived," Carl informed.

"Let him in."

Upon hearing that, Jimmie advanced, pushed open the door, sauntered up to the desk, poured himself a drink from the bottle on the table, sipped the wine from the glass, and flashed a teasing smile.

"Heroes do have a penchant for lovely damsels, don't they? Marco, Loraine just lobbed a few curious questions your way. But, look at you... you're already all flustered."

Marco shot a sideways glance and snorted, "Shut up. Weren't you tied up with your law practice? What brought you here today?"

Jimmie's smile froze in place as he instinctively adjusted his glasses. Speaking in a hushed tone, he revealed, "Marco, I received news today that Keely was actually released on bail some time ago."

Marco's expression shifted to a darker hue.

"And... She managed to navigate the necessary procedures for her return home with the help of certain connections. What's your take, Marco?"

Marco's lips pressed into a firm line. After an eternity, he let out a sigh, frostily declaring, "Her retribution isn't over yet."

Jimmie hadn't anticipated that Marco's fury towards Keely was still simmering. He exhaled in resignation.

"But Marco, don't forget one thing. Two months later, it will be Jorge's death anniversary. And..." Studying his friend's grim countenance, Jimmie paused for a moment before continuing, "Keely is engaged to Jorge, after all. She'll have to return to pay her respects."

Upon hearing Jimmie's words, Marco fell silent, his tall figure seemingly merging with the frigid atmosphere of the office.

Jorge... The name left him with no room for objection.

Unconsciously, his fingers brushed over his phone, and the screen sprang to life. It was an emoticon from Loraine, sporting a sulky expression.

Instantly, Marco's eyes twinkled with amusement.

Meanwhile, in Loraine's office at the Universe Group.

Only after hitting send did she register the content of her message. Loraine pondered whether or not to proceed with the withdrawal. However, once she finally resolved to do so, she realized that the withdrawal window had already closed.

She stayed silent, blaming Qbot entirely. Her frequent chats with the bot had resulted in her unwitting use of memes!

If Marco made fun of her...

While Loraine was contemplating an excuse, she noticed that Marco hadn't responded for a while. Biting her lip, she was genuinely exasperated.

He had initiated the conversation, and now he was giving her the silent treatment. What was going on?

Shaking her head, Loraine decided to put these thoughts aside and get back to work. That's when the revving of a car engine disrupted the tranquility of her office. Who had the audacity to honk their car near the Universe Group building?

Rising from her chair, she ambled to the window. Peering down, she thought she spotted Marco's black Lincoln stationed outside the building.

Chapter 451 Being Jealous Secretly

Did Marco pass by?

With the phone in her grip, a thrill rippled through Loraine. Her pulse quickened.

The individual she'd been speaking to over the phone just now appeared before her. She couldn't muster any plausible explanation.

Shouldn't they involve Davy if the new commercial district was the topic at hand...

Loraine clenched her teeth, deciding to head downstairs and seek answers. She was determined not to harbor secrets like Marco!

Just as she was about to proceed downstairs, a knock resonated from the door.

Leaning nonchalantly against the door, Cayson flashed a gentle smile. "Lorrie, I gather the internet scandal has blown over. Congratulations."

Wearing a faint smile, Loraine snuck a glance out the window, responding, "I appreciate that, Cayson. And I owe you for buffering the board's pressure."

The silence from Universe Group during this wave of public outcry was noteworthy. The shareholders hadn't acted up, partially due to the recent Duran issue and the circumspect behavior of the shrewd old hands. In addition, Cayson's support for her played a significant role.



Cayson, a hint of a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth, began to approach her.

"Lorrie, let's commemorate this satisfactory resolution with a dinner, shall we?"

Loraine hesitated at the proposal.

Detecting her reluctance, Cayson's mood dipped. He dropped his gaze, feigning disappointment, and then murmured, "It's been a while since we spent quality time, Lorrie. Plus, Jennie will join us this time..."

Loraine's resolve melted and she offered a nod in consent.

It was true, they had grown up together like siblings. They used to spend their days together, but ever since she married into the Bryant family, the three of them hadn't been able to relish those cherished moments together.

With a grin, Cayson courteously gestured her towards the exit, leading her downstairs.

His car was stationed right under the Universe Group building. A thought struck Loraine: She wanted to check the location of Marco's car. But as she began to scan the area, Jennie popped out of Cayson's car, waving with unabashed enthusiasm. She yelled, "Lorrie!"

Loraine's focus shifted instantly. Jennie beamed, giddy with excitement, exclaiming, "Over here, Lorrie. I've got a surprise for you!"

Seizing the moment, Cayson sauntered to the side of the car and opened the door for Loraine, uttering, "Hop in, Lorrie."

The rear seat was a mountain range of presents crowding beside Jennie, leaving no room for Loraine to settle. Without a moment's pause, Loraine slid into the passenger seat.

Once she was in the car, Jennie held her hand, feigning mystery



but instead chattering like an excited bird.

"Lorrie, try guessing what amazing surprise awaits you!"

Arching her eyebrows, Loraine's gaze fell on the stack of gift boxes in the back seat, speculating, "Could it be clothes?"

Jennie's response was a playful shake of her head, eyes wide as saucers.

Engrossed in their lively conversation, Loraine remained oblivious to the fact that Cayson had stealthily slipped into the car from the opposite side.

He leaned over in a well-practiced and seamless motion, halting at an uncomfortably intimate distance, and reached over to secure her seatbelt.

To any onlookers, it would appear as though they were leaning in for a kiss.

Caught off guard, Loraine was taken aback and attempted to evade, but the confined space within the car restricted her movements. It seemed more like the two of them were flirting and teasing.

Cayson, sensing her discomfort, made a respectful retreat. He softened his voice, "You've truly matured, Lorrie. I remember the days when I buckled you in as a child, but now you push me away so fiercely."

Taken aback, Loraine scrambled for an explanation, "I didn't mean to offend, Cayson. You just surprised me."

Cayson chuckled, giving her nose a gentle rub, his tone affectionate, "Just think of me as your brother for now. Ease up."

Loraine wrestled with the odd sensation but managed a smile.

She chose to trust Cayson's words rather than overthink.

The car started, but Loraine remained oblivious to the sight of Marco in his low-profile, black luxury car in the corner, eyes locked on their departure, his hands, veins popping, clenched around the steering wheel.

Displayed on Marco's phone was an unsent text, "Loraine, I am close to your office. Could we meet downstairs?"

He hadn't imagined that Cayson would have invited Loraine out before he could hit the 'send' button.

The sight of Cayson and Loraine's intimate interaction fueled Marco's rage. He stomped on the accelerator, tailing their vehicle.



Chapter 452 VIP Room

The recent turn of events hadn't soured the mood. Jennie was inattentive, seemingly oblivious to any issue. She had clutched Loraine's hand, seeking clarity.

Struggling to keep her emotions at bay, Loraine, with a subtle smile, confessed her lack of knowledge, "My guessing game seems weak today. Enlighten me, please."

Jennie, like a child on Christmas morning, eagerly reached for a gift box. She unwrapped it and revealed a vibrant red fox mask.

"Surprise! Bet you didn't guess that, did you? It's a party mask!"

Loraine, caught between amusement and confusion, donned a smile and queried, "Is this some kind of get-together? A ball perhaps?"

"Exactly!" Jennie's enthusiasm was palpable. She then started to vent. The demands of the Fowler Group had confined her indoors for too long. Now that she had some leisure time, she was adamant on enjoying the upcoming ball to its fullest.

Loraine, as expected, agreed to accompany her.

As Jennie blabbered away, their vehicle pulled up at the grand ballroom situated in a lavish five-star hotel.

Jennie had arranged Loraine's evening attire and mask, and a VIP room was made ready for Loraine to freshen up.

It was clear Jennie was a frequent visitor here. Upon her arrival, an employee promptly approached, greeting her warmly before escorting Loraine to the VIP room.

However, when they entered the VIP room, they discovered

someone was already inside.

The employee froze, also not seeing it coming.

The woman inside abruptly turned around, her face adorned with heavy makeup, her hair voluminous and fluffy, while an air of arrogance adorned her expression.

On seeing Loraine, her expression shifted dramatically.

With a shriek resembling someone witnessing a ghost, she exclaimed, "Loraine? What brings you here?"

Loraine arched her eyebrows, shock evident in her voice, "Paige? Quite a coincidence!"

Paige seemed less than thrilled about this unexpected reunion in Vagow. Despite their shared location, she had hoped to avoid Loraine altogether.

Observing the staff member escort Loraine, Paige inferred Loraine's intention to utilize the dressing room. Taking matters into her own hands, she turned to the staff and reprimanded, "This is a VIP room! Why did you bring her here?"

Caught off guard by the sudden confrontation, the staff member apologized, "I'm sorry, Miss, but this room was booked by the lady accompanying me..."

Paige dismissed her explanation with an air of arrogance, "Are you new here? Don't you know this room has always been for my use?"

The pressure was starting to get to the staff member, causing her to break into a nervous sweat. She was scared of causing any friction with Paige, who seemed affluent or influential, if not both. She was on the verge of tears.

Suddenly, a cold but comforting hand rested on hers. Loraine reassured her with a smile and suggested, "Don't worry. Just call your manager."

The employee's face brightened. She gave a firm nod, and then quickly darted away to summon the manager.

As Loraine leaned casually against the wall, a subtle grin on her face made Paige squirm with guilt.

"Loraine, why that smirk?"

"Ah, Paige, I remember your family kicking you out and your money tight? I'm rather surprised you can still pay the bill for a VIP room. That's quite impressive!"

Paige's expression froze. Of course, she couldn't afford it...

Yet, she was determined not to show defeat. She stiffened her posture, scoffed, and retorted, "Loraine, do you assume everyone is as petty as you? Only the well-born and wealthy are familiar with this place. How'd you manage to sneak in here? You're just a newcomer, after all! Stop embarrassing yourself!"

As if on cue, Jennie and Cayson, both concerned for Loraine, arrived at the scene. Upon hearing Paige's harsh words, Jennie was livid.

The petite girl stood in front of Loraine, shoved Paige with force, and spat out indignantly, "Who the hell do you think you are? How can you speak to Lorrie in such a disrespectful manner? Don't you recognize who Lorrie is?"

She and Cayson had reserved the VIP room. They could overlook this woman usurping the entire space, but her audacity to disrespect Loraine was simply unacceptable!

Paige stumbled backwards, her temper flaring. Hands on her hips, she bellowed, "I'm aware, alright. Loraine is the daughter of the Torres family, known only in Vagow. But do you know me? I am the daughter of the Johnathan lineage of Bluhm! How could you Vagow bumpkins ever be a match for me?"

Just as the tension between the two was reaching a boiling point, the hotel manager finally made his entrance.

Upon spotting the manager, the young waitress heaved a sigh of relief. She quickly approached him and laid out the situation.

The manager was well aware of the importance of not offending his guests. He wiped the sweat off his brow, forced a smile, and stepped in to mediate, "Please, ladies, you are all esteemed guests. Calm down and have a good talk, please."

Paige crossed her arms defiantly and snorted, "Get these bumpkins out of here, then we'll talk."

The manager responded with a subtle smile.

He was well aware that Paige had been unable to maintain her VIP status for quite some time. His courteous treatment towards her was merely a professional courtesy.

He had been patient with her, respecting her despite her constant coldness. But his establishment was a leader in its industry and had a reputation to uphold.

"Miss Johnathan, I regret to inform you that Miss Fowler and her friends have already reserved this VIP room. I must ask you to leave."

Paige shot him a furious look and said, "You're kicking me out? I am a VIP here!"

The manager, his patience worn thin, replied with a strained smile, "I'm afraid your VIP privileges have expired, Miss Johnathan. If you continue to resist, I'll be compelled to call security."

Paige was taken aback, her face turning a deep shade of red. She made an attempt to argue but was quickly surrounded by several security guards, their faces stern.

Despite her protests, she had no choice but to leave under Loraine's triumphant gaze.