

Chapter 432 Single Apartment

Lorraine's grip on the steering wheel tightened, an inexplicable anxiety coursing through her.

It was quite natural for her to drop by his apartment and spend some time chatting after driving Marco home. There was no reason for overthinking...

Besides, she had intended to assist Marco in applying medicine to his wound.

Given Marco's nature, if left alone, he would probably bear the pain and neglect to medicate his injury.

Fortifying herself mentally, Lorraine parked the car and accompanied Marco inside his apartment.

The decor of Marco's place was simple, yet expansive. It was evident that he had invested some thought into it. Much like him, the house emanated a certain cold aesthetic.

This was her first time stepping foot in a man's bachelor pad, and coincidentally, it was Marco's first time bringing someone home. The unfamiliar situation left them both slightly on edge.

As Lorraine surveyed the apartment, she couldn't help but sigh internally.

During their three-year marriage, she had remained within the confines of the Bryant family residence, busying herself

with household chores, never truly drawing close to Marco.

Now, post-divorce, she had crossed into Marco's personal domain.

A myriad of emotions bubbled up within her, leading to yet another heartfelt sigh.

Marco had been leading the way, opening doors, glancing back at Loraine intermittently, a nervous yet expectant look on his face.

Upon entering the foyer, Loraine paused at the sight of the shoe cabinet.

Among the footwear was a pair of light pink women's slippers. Had Marco entertained a woman in his apartment before?

A sinking feeling took hold of Loraine. She pursed her lips, halting at the doorstep.

In the midst of her discomfort and confusion, Marco softly called out her name. He reached into the shoe cabinet, retrieved the slippers, and knelt before her.

As he looked up at her, his handsome features were beautifully sculpted, his gaze serene and earnest.

"Loraine, I've always wanted to invite you over, but I never found the right words. These... these were prepared especially for you."

Furthermore, he had taken the time to arrange everything Loraine might need within the apartment.

He had been eagerly anticipating the day Loraine would step into his world and they could lead a normal couple's life

together.

This stark apartment, in his dreams of cohabitation with Loraine, had slowly been transformed into a home.

Taken aback by his candidness, Loraine found herself at a crossroads. She began, "You..."

Before she could formulate a coherent response, Marco had already crouched down, proceeding to change her footwear.

She had never envisioned a scene like this.

Somehow, Loraine found herself accepting his actions.

Marco delicately handled her ankle, helping her out of her high-heeled shoes and into the soft slippers.

Loraine's willingness to accompany him inside and acquiesce to such intimate behavior left Marco feeling elated, sensing that he was drawing closer to her.

However, the next instant, Loraine snapped back to reality, retracting her foot awkwardly and clearing her throat.

"Well... Where's your first-aid kit? Let me apply some ointment to your wound."

Marco had been contemplating how to prolong Loraine's stay. Upon hearing her inquiry, he pointed towards the location of the first-aid kit.

Loraine crossed over to the medicine box and picked it up. As she turned around, she noticed Marco's unblinking gaze fixated on her. A flush crept up her cheeks, and she made an effort to maintain a serious demeanor. "Come and sit," she instructed.

Marco complied without hesitation, ambling over to the sofa and taking a seat. Loraine intended to ask him to roll up his sleeve so that she could tend to his wound, but Marco had preemptively removed his shirt entirely.

Suddenly, Loraine found herself face-to-face with Marco's sculpted physique.

Taken aback, she instinctively spun around, her ears tinged a deep shade of red and her breath coming in short gasps.

Behind her, Marco's teasing laughter filled the room.

"Loraine, weren't you going to dress my wound? Moreover, you've seen me naked before. Why so bashful now?"

Caught off guard, Loraine bit her lip and shot him a glare, retorting, "Come on! Who cares about your naked body?"

Faced with such a display of perfection, she composed herself, closing her eyes for a moment. Then, she retrieved the ointment from the box and began applying it to his wound.

A strange feeling swirled in her heart.

His body felt solid and the sensation of touch was intense.

Loraine had medicated Marco's wounds before and had caught glimpses of his body several times.

However, this setting was different. They were the only two present in Marco's apartment. The lighting was subdued, and their breathing echoed in the stillness of the room. Marco's abdominal muscles undulated before her eyes.

Swallowing hard, Loraine concentrated on the task at hand, focusing solely on the wound.

But the sight of his injury stirred a pang of sympathy within her. In a subdued voice, she chided him, "You knew the wound hadn't fully healed. Why would you go and pick a fight?"

Marco's eyes clouded over, and he blurted out, "How was I supposed to remain calm in that situation? Those scoundrels intended to..."

At his words, Loraine's face blanched, her fists clenching tightly.

She had believed herself to be strong. Yet, when confronted with such a situation again, she couldn't help but be reminded of the time Keely had publicly humiliated her in the hotel.

If not for Marco, she would've been...

Suddenly, she felt a warm pressure enveloping her hand.

Marco grasped her hand, gently pulling her into his embrace.

"Loraine, I'm sorry. I failed to protect you. But it's all behind us now. I won't let it happen again."

Loraine was momentarily stunned, flashes of times when Marco had stepped up to shield her flitting across her mind.

He had stayed true to his promise of protecting her.

It was only when she discerned the steady thump of a heart that Loraine realized she was nestled in the arms of a half-naked Marco.

Instantly, a blush bloomed across her face.

Chapter 433 Remembrance

Lorraine's initial instinct was to push Marco away.

But when she reached out to do so, her hand accidentally made contact with his muscular chest. Suddenly, a series of indescribable images flooded her mind uncontrollably.

Blushing, she said, "All right, I understand. You can let go of me now..."

However, Marco didn't release his grip. Instead, he held her even tighter.

Revealing his true emotions, every word Marco spoke was sincere and filled with warmth. "Lorraine, please listen to me. I genuinely want to be by your side and protect you."

Hearing this, Lorraine felt bashful and attempted to push him away again. But Marco responded by wrapping his arm around her waist and holding her hand with his other hand.

They remained tightly intertwined, forcing Lorraine to tilt her head up to look at him. She said, "Are you finished? How much longer do you plan on holding onto me?"

Although she complained, her face was flushed, and her eyes reflected deep emotions, as if silently requesting a kiss.

After observing her for a moment, Marco chuckled and slowly lowered his head.

Seeing his thin lips inching closer and closer, Lorraine grew nervous and widened her eyes. Then suddenly, she pushed

him away and stood up hastily.

As she stood up, she heard a sharp sound. Her pocket watch had slipped out of her pocket and fallen out.

After Loraine regained her composure, she instinctively bent down to retrieve it.

However, Marco was fast and picked it up first.

Holding the watch chain, he looked at it keenly. Squinting his eyes with a tinge of jealousy, he asked, "Did you get this from the Cruz family's exhibition?"

Loraine tried to reclaim it, but Marco sidestepped her. His jealousy was heightened.

"Did Grady give it to you?"

Interrupted by his accusations, Loraine calmed down. She glanced at him and replied, "I bought it myself!"

Marco hesitated, his hand instinctively reaching up to touch the tip of his nose, a sign of guilt creeping onto his face.

At that moment, a coat landed on his arm. Loraine raised her chin, indicating that the ointment had been applied, and gesturing for him to put it on quickly.

Silently, Marco complied and wore the coat, but he couldn't resist asking, "Why did you suddenly buy a pocket watch? Do you have a preference for mechanical watches?"

Loraine explained, "This watch was designed by Endy."

Marco was momentarily taken aback before exclaiming, "You like Endy? I will buy all his designs for you!"

Helpless and at a loss for words, Loraine realized he was as extravagant as ever when it came to spending money. After all, he possessed wealth and capability and could easily replenish his funds.

She sighed and gazed at the pocket watch, lost in thought. After a long pause, she said slowly, "It's not that I like Endy, but my father did. My father also had a pocket watch with the same design, but it broke."

Unconsciously holding his breath, Marco listened intently.

"After my parents passed away... Everyone in my family was devastated. When they found me, they poured all their love onto me. So, I bought this pocket watch not only to bring joy to my grandfather but also as a keepsake to remember my parents."

Although she couldn't recall her parents' faces, Loraine knew from her family members' accounts that they loved her deeply.

Consequently, whenever Loraine came across anything related to her parents, her attention would be involuntarily drawn to it.

Silently, Marco listened. Though he only heard a few words, he sensed that the bond within the Torres family ran deep, thicker than water.

Aldo had spent his entire life in the business world, exuding dignity. Yet, in Loraine's presence, he transformed into a kind and jovial old man, fiercely protective of his granddaughter.

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Loraine. Their close relationship often led to misunderstandings from outsiders.

Even though Loraine's parents had passed away over a decade ago, their absence was still deeply felt within the family.

Thus, despite Loraine not having vivid memories of her parents, she naturally longed for their presence.

This was the essence of what a family should be.

Marco couldn't help but draw a parallel with the Bryant family.

Loraine had a family that loved her unconditionally, while she had endured much suffering after marrying into the Bryant family.

He had grown up within the confines of such a suffocating family. He became accustomed to it, turned a blind eye to the hardships Loraine endured, and allowed her to be ridiculed and mistreated.

If he had made an effort to understand Loraine more in the past three years, she wouldn't have undergone such suffering.

He could have been there for Loraine earlier, experiencing the warmth of a family.

Marco cast his gaze downward, suppressing the surge of emotions within him, and said calmly, "Loraine, even though your parents have passed away, you still have numerous family members who love you. You will live a happy life."

Loraine furrowed her brows upon hearing his words.

Once again, she noticed the disparity in Marco's demeanor.

Every time there was a mention of family, he became despondent.

It seemed that there was a profound conflict between him and his family, to the point where he refused to even return home. What had transpired between Marco and the Bryant family?

Just as she was about to inquire, Marco's phone rang.

Loraine snapped back to reality and pressed her lips together, refraining from asking.

Similarly, Marco regained his composure and answered the call.

It was a video call from Carl.

"Mr. Bryant, the rascals you asked me to investigate have been captured!"



Chapter 434 Dealing With Rascals

Marco initiated a video call, presenting the screen to Loraine.

She glanced at the phone and noticed Carl standing in a dimly lit alley.

Behind him, a faint street lamp revealed a patchy, aged wall.

Half a dozen rascals bore the marks of a brutal beating on their faces and bodies, cowering under the looming presence of bodyguards.

As Carl relayed the situation to Marco, he moved closer to the subdued rascals, their whimpering cries amplifying.

"Hold your positions and seal your lips!"

Carl's expression hardened as he barked his orders. The bodyguards took turns kicking the once cocky rascals, who now huddled together, quivering in terror.

Tears of fear marred their faces.

Seizing one of the rascals by the throat, Carl forced him to look up. "Mr. Bryant, meet Brody Harrison. He's the leader of these rascals. After he graduated from high school, Brody had been jobless. He formed a crew to swindle and blackmail people, usually targeting the common folk. But now, they've inexplicably decided to harass the Cruz family."

Brody's face was a mess of fear and mucus. As he looked up, he saw Loraine's icy expression on the screen.

She was still in the same outfit.

The woman he had tormented not long ago was now in a position to effortlessly doom them.

This realization struck a brutal blow to Brody's pride, sparking a frantic struggle to rise.

"Bitch, you really think you can mess with us? Just wait. I've got people. If you don't release me, there will be retribution!"

Lorraine's face darkened and a hand reached out from her side, grabbing the phone.

Marco's face was void of emotion, his voice chilling.

"Who exactly are you threatening?"

While the rascals lurked around the Cruz family's residence, darkness had veiled the surroundings. Moreover, Marco's swift action had created a disarray, preventing Brody from getting a good look at him.

Now, Marco's face filled the screen, crystal clear.

Brody's eyes widened gradually, followed by an unmistakable look of sheer terror.

He retreated as if he'd encountered a ghastly apparition.

Carl scowled, kicking Brody down and planting a foot on his chest.

"My boss posed a question. Are you suddenly mute?"

Tears streamed down Brody's face as he kowtowed incessantly on the gravel.

"Mr. Bryant, we were foolish to cross you. Please spare us!"

Brody's audacity had stemmed from the belief that if caught, he would face just a few years in prison.

But now Marco was provoked.

Everyone knew the consequences.

Upsetting Marco wasn't a mild matter that could be sorted out with ease.

His buddies, who were equally surprised, pleaded for their lives.

Observing them, Marco's anger flared, tempting him to slice them up and serve them as dog food.

He suppressed his deadly desire and coldly questioned, "Who gave the command for your intrusion tonight?"

Brody, eyes wild with fear, swallowed hard, mustered some courage and turned to Marco.

"Well... Mr. Bryant, promise us freedom and bury this incident, and I will give you the information you seek!"

Marco scoffed, "Even without your words, I'll figure out who plotted this. It's only a question of when. Share the information now and you may suffer less, or else..."

Marco's gaze grew menacingly narrow.

"Carl, snap his arm."

Upon Marco's command, Carl obliged. Subsequently, Brody screamed in agony, reminiscent of a slaughtered pig.

"I... I'll spill the beans. Mr. Bryant, pardon me. I'll disclose all!"

With his arm fractured, Brody's face turned ashen from the pain. His encounter with Marco's brutality had silenced his playful nature.

Unmoved, Marco stated, "Too late. You were the one spewing filth about Loraine, weren't you? If you've lost your ability to talk sensibly, perhaps you don't need your mouth anymore."

As Marco's chilling words hung in the air, his bodyguard forcefully clamped Brody's jaw, rendering him unconscious and silent.

A cold silence fell over the remaining rascals, their fear palpable.

One look from Marco and the rascals hastened to clarify their position.

"Mr. Bryant, we were only hired hands, clueless about the client's identity!"

"Exactly, Brody was the one who received the call. A woman promised us a generous reward for tarnishing a lady's reputation outside the Cruz residence. She even wanted photos sent to her!"

"Mr. Bryant, we didn't realize we had upset you. The woman simply provided us with a description of our target. We were ignorant of the identity of this beautiful lady beside you..."

Marco's fury intensified as the rascals cowered, finally offering a pertinent piece of information.

"Mr. Bryant, there is a transaction history in Brody's phone. The woman only communicated with him. We were not involved!"

On hearing this, Marco instructed Carl to trace the origin of the transaction.



Chapter 435 The Person Behind The Assault

When Loraine heard what the rascals had said, she was lost in thought. A woman had instructed the rascals to humiliate her?

She recollected the events of the evening.

It seemed that someone who knew when she attended the Cruz family exhibition and when she left held a grudge against her.

Florence and Cassidy came to mind as the two individuals who could possibly cause trouble for her.

These were the only two people who had a motive to make things difficult for her.

Although Loraine doubted Florence's involvement in such a foolish act, she couldn't be certain if Florence would engage in any reckless behavior.

After ending the video call, Marco thought about the exhibition organized by the Cruz family.

"Loraine, what transpired at the banquet tonight?"

The rascals seemed to be hired temporarily. Their performance wouldn't have been so lacking if they had a well-thought-out plan.

Loraine's adversary couldn't be limited to such low-level

rascals.

This meant that someone at the banquet had a grudge against her.

Lorraine hesitated. Marco had already helped her greatly. Did she want to involve him further?

In the end, she replied, "It's fine. It was just a minor dispute. I can handle it myself."

Marco's expression darkened, and he silently sighed. However, he didn't pressure Lorraine to disclose details about the banquet.

Furthermore, even without Lorraine's input, he could deduce that the person responsible had some connection to the Cruz family.

As for Grady...

Marco clenched his fists discreetly. Lorraine attended the Cruz family's banquet, and her life was put in danger. But Grady didn't even escort her at all!

If he were in Grady's position, he wouldn't have allowed Lorraine to return alone, let alone let such a dangerous incident occur.

Soon, Marco received a message from Carl on his phone. It took less than half an hour.

"Boss, I've traced the source of the money transfer. It originated from the foundation established by the Rivera Group for Cassidy Rivera, who happens to be a member of the Rivera family. Additionally, Cassidy Rivera was present at the Cruz family's banquet in the evening."

Marco narrowed his eyes and said coldly, "Kassidy Rivera? What is her connection to the Cruz family?"

Loraine was taken aback upon hearing their conversation.

She didn't expect Marco to uncover the truth so quickly and immediately focus on Kassidy.

Upon hearing Marco's inquiry regarding the connection between Kassidy and the Cruz family, Loraine became apprehensive that Marco might misconstrue Grady's involvement. To prevent any misunderstanding, she clarified, "Kassidy is a relative of the Cruz family, specifically Grady's cousin."

Marco's expression turned into a frown. "Then why would she want to harm you? Is Grady unaware of or indifferent to his cousin's actions?"

Loraine sighed, "Well... She's just a distant relative on Grady's mother's side."

Initially, Loraine herself was puzzled as to why Kassidy harbored such animosity towards her.

It wasn't until Florence revealed Kassidy's identity and hinted that Grady would marry Kassidy in the future that Loraine understood. Kassidy saw her as a rival.

Marco was taken aback. Once he comprehended the situation, his face darkened.

"So it's all Grady's fault!"

Loraine asked bitterly, "How is it his fault?"

"He has ill intentions towards you, and he is a coward who can't stand up to his own relatives when they harm you. If



it's not his fault, then whose is it?" Marco mercilessly belittled Grady in front of Loraine. "Furthermore, you've been home for so long, and he hasn't even bothered to call you. If I hadn't gone there tonight, how would he and his dear cousin have dealt with this assault?"

Loraine couldn't ignore Marco's words, and simultaneously, she felt a chilling sensation in her heart.

This was the first time Loraine had encountered Cassidy. There had been no prior animosity between them. It was shocking for her to realize that Cassidy had devised such a malicious plan.

If Cassidy had succeeded tonight, one could only imagine the torment Loraine would have endured.

Clearly, Cassidy had no intention of showing mercy. She wanted to make Loraine suffer.

Loraine's eyes darkened. Did Cassidy truly believe that she had no means to fight back?

As soon as Marco finished speaking, Loraine's phone rang.

Loraine picked it up and looked at the caller's name displayed on the screen.

Immediately, Marco's face darkened.

After a brief moment of hesitation, Loraine answered the phone.

As soon as the line connected, a slightly worried voice came from the other end of the line, "Loraine..."

Loraine replied, and Grady found himself at a loss for words.



Actually, he had been troubled ever since Loraine left.

Recalling Cassidy and Florence's disrespectful behavior at the banquet, Grady feared that Loraine would have a worse opinion of him, so he called her as soon as he finished his work.

After a brief pause, he continued, "Loraine, have you reached home?"

Loraine glanced at Marco and replied, "Yes."

"I'm truly sorry for what happened tonight. I just want to assure you that I have nothing to do with Cassidy. And I had no idea what my mother said..."

As Grady continued to explain, Marco's expression grew increasingly grim.

It sounded like Loraine had suffered greatly tonight!

Marco couldn't bear it any longer and interrupted Grady bluntly, "Grady, can you just shut up?!"

