

Chapter 585 Liza's Decision

Laura's hysterical cries echoed all over the laboratory, leaving everyone in shock and confusion.

Liza looked up at Marco, her mind occupied with various calculations.

Common sense told her that since those idiots, Marina and Laura, were capable of doing something so embarrassing, it was to be expected that the paternity test report they had presented could well be fake too.

And if she let this groundless issue sour Marco's heart, it would push him further away from the family more than he had ever been. What would happen to Bryant Group then?

But at the same time, a part of her remained skeptical of all these, which, frankly, was her usual nature.

What if... what if this paternity test result was not fake?

On second thought, Laura's words did make some sense. This was a very significant matter, and if Marco truly wasn't a member of the Bryant family, wouldn't handing over the company to him effectively mean giving it to an outsider?

This handsome and upright young man had grown up right before her eyes, until he had now become so outstanding to the point where he was known far and wide. He had surpassed all the previous heirs of the Bryant family in every aspect.

For some reason, Liza suddenly felt that Marco did look quite different from her son, Winfred.

With a gloomy expression, she pondered for a while before nodding with a sigh. "Very well then. Let's do it again, just to be safe."

When Marco heard these words, he seemed to be stunned, at least for a moment. A trace of disbelief had flashed across his eyes. But he quickly concealed his emotions and looked at Liza's face. "Grandma, do you really distrust me?"

Even though he had presented evidence to show that Marina had framed him, was Liza still doubting him?

He suddenly felt a pang of desolation in his heart. Every time he compromised and endured all sorts of things just to support his family, all he received in return were schemes and suspicion.

Meanwhile, Liza, being met by his unwavering gaze, began to hesitate once again.

If Laura had not brought this matter to light, she wasn't certain how she would have handled it.

After all, she knew for a fact that Bryant Group currently couldn't do without Marco.

But as she continued to hesitate, Laura cut in, "Mom, you have to consider the interests of Bryant Group! What if he really isn't a biological member of the family? Are you really willing to take the risk? Can you allow someone who isn't a member of the Bryant family to take over the family's enterprise?"

When Liza heard this, her eyes turned cold, and immediately, it was clear that she had made up her mind.

She glanced at Marco and tried to appease him, "Marco, the bloodline of the Bryant family must not be muddled. I'm sure

you also understand the significance of this matter. I'm not doubting you, I just want everyone to see things clearly and stop smearing your name! If the result really ends up proving you innocent, I'll make sure whoever is behind all this pays the price they deserve!"

As she said this, she glanced at Laura and Marina, making it clear that her words were not just an empty threat.

Laura wanted to speak up in protest, but Liza looked away from her and turned her gaze back to Marco.

"However," she continued, "if you really aren't a member of the Bryant family, don't blame me for being heartless. You'll have to vacate the position of the Group's CEO. The Bryant family business can only be held by Bryant family members. I hope you understand."

The moment they heard this, Laura and Marina looked at Marco's face, happily gloating at his predicament.

But Marco's expression remained indifferent, as if he was not the one in the center of the current storm.

He looked at Liza, and suddenly, several thoughts floated into his mind.

Loraine had never acted like this towards him.

Whenever she was mad at him, she never hid it and neither did she ever pretend to be affectionate and intimate. And whenever she was happy with him, she showed it passionately. She had gone ahead to disregard everything and marry him, thereby giving him another chance after going through various trials.

Even the Torres family wouldn't wield a false smile while stabbing their loved ones like this. He had witnessed how they

protected Loraine. Perhaps only a family like that was capable of nurturing a treasure like Loraine.

Unfortunately for him, he didn't have such a family. He grew up in the Bryant family and developed a cold heart because that was the only thing he witnessed.

But Liza saw his silence as a refusal, so she said in a gentle persuading tone, "Marco, doing it again is just for the purpose of being safe. Right now, there are rumors spreading all around, so we need to redo the test and issue a statement to clarify the matter once and for all. You..."

But Marco didn't let her finish.

"Fine," he said in an icy tone.

The sooner the issue was resolved, the better. If he really did not have any blood ties to the Bryant family, it would not really be a bad thing either.

Seeing his icy expression, Liza hesitated for a moment.

She had a gut feeling that after everything, Marco would keep himself away from the Bryant family and she would be the one to blame for that.

But Laura, seeing her still hesitating, urged her anxiously, "Mom, what are you still hesitating for? Remember, we are talking about the position of the Bryant Group's CEO! If you fail to act now, how will you explain it to the next generation of the family?"

Having devoted her entire life to the family, Liza always cared about her reputation and legacy. When she heard Laura's words, she stopped hesitating and nodded decisively. "Let's proceed then."

Everyone else in the lab did not dare make a sound. From what





was happening right before their eyes, it was clear that all was not well within the Bryant family. Only Reech, who was busy ingratiating himself, seemed very enthusiastic.

To ensure accuracy, both Marco and Liza had their blood samples taken on the spot. The entire lab department worked quickly, and soon, the test results were out.

Reech personally came in with the report, and when she saw him, Laura rushed forward to meet him. "What does the test reveal?" she asked eagerly.

Reech was now even more ingratiating towards her than even before, and when his eyes caught sight of Marco, an unavoidable hint of contempt appeared in his eyes.

"The results clearly state that Marco and Mrs. Bryant are not related by blood," he proudly announced.



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Chapter 586 Nobody Can Banish Him!

In the past, individuals like Reech, who generally carried favor with Marco, wouldn't have dared to utter his name directly, even if they possessed tenfold courage.

But now, upon discovering the truth, Reech scornfully regarded the tall, impassive man standing at the department's center and suddenly mustered the audacity.

Without the Bryant family, what was Marco Bryant's worth?

He was negligible!

Upon hearing this revelation, the person who felt the utmost joy was Marina. As though the humiliation she had endured during the shareholders' meeting was completely nullified, she reveled in delight.

"Did you all hear that? Every one of you! I have been saying it for a long time. Marco is merely a bastard. He doesn't belong to our family at all!"

At her words, disdainful or sympathetic glances fell upon Marco, the silent man who finally demonstrated a reaction.

In that instant, Marco's face blanched.

He stood there, embodying dignity and calm, but no one observed the bewilderment in his eyes.

He observed the figures before him, slowly feeling his vision

blur. Marina's words seemed to echo from a distant realm.

When he initially discovered that he was the illegitimate child of the Bryant family, he hadn't felt as powerless and shocked as he did now.

He had always believed that regardless of the circumstances, he was a part of the Bryant family. But now he discovered that he had no blood connection with the Bryant family at all.

Were all his years of efforts for the Bryant family... just a cruel jest?

Abruptly, Marco remembered everything that had transpired before.

For the sake of the Bryant family, for upholding the reputation of the Bryant Group in Liza's eyes, he had relinquished so much since his childhood. He grew up like a cold automaton, fitted with a "for the Bryant Group" cog.

Through the years, he shouldered these burdens, opposing his own desires, even alienating Loraine to the point of inflicting harm, which ultimately led to their divorce.

Now, these people were informing him that all his actions were futile because he had no ties to this family.

Marco felt a perverse urge to laugh, but when he attempted to lift the corners of his mouth, he discovered his face had petrified.

So, he ceased attempting to smile. His gaze drifted momentarily before refocusing, settling on the victorious Laura and Marina, as well as Liza.

For as long as Marco could remember, Liza had always been austere and rigid, scrutinizing him as if fearing he would



commit an error. Yet, she had never regarded him with such alienation as she did now.

In the split second when Liza saw the paternity test report, she aged substantially, trembling as she accepted the piece of paper that seemed to weigh immensely. She scrutinized it repeatedly, only to meet deep disappointment.

The validity of the report was indisputable, leaving her with no room for self-delusion.

Following disappointment, ferocious anger welled up within her.

She had diligently groomed the successor of the Bryant Group for over two decades, only to uncover that he was an illegitimate child of unknown origin! She had been on the verge of bequeathing the Bryant Group to this illegitimate offspring!

Detecting Marco's gaze, Liza countered with an icy stare.

No wonder Marco's nasal bridge was more pronounced, and his brow ridge was deeper than Winfred's. His stature was taller, and every aspect of him differed from her son.

"Marco... Now that the results are public, I won't elaborate. Given our past familial relations, gather your belongings and leave. The Bryant family won't shortchange you financially."

Liza felt she was being benevolent and sighed. "However, you must relinquish control of the Bryant Group. It's a domain outsiders like you should not interfere with."

Upon hearing Liza's words, Laura and Marina reveled in their triumph. Laura ardently agreed, "Exactly, Mom. We can't possibly allow an illegitimate child to control the Bryant Group!"

As Marco observed this family who had abruptly altered their stance, his heart frosted over, and he lost all hope in Liza.



He had long realized that Liza harbored no genuine affection for him.

Her concern stemmed solely from the fact he was her grandson and that he benefited the Bryant family.

Now that she discovered he had no biological connection to the Bryant family and that there was a potential threat to the family's assets, Liza immediately adopted a ruthless demeanor, eager to cut ties with him.

Marco laughed bitterly. All the sacrifices he had made for this family, all the sentiments he held for them, were deemed worthless in their eyes.

Seeing him standing there motionless, Marina seized the opportunity and hollered, "Hey, this is a hospital under the Bryant Group's jurisdiction. You're no longer associated with it! Leave immediately, or I'll have security escort you out!"

After being dismissed numerous times, Marina finally had the chance to banish Marco, feeling a sense of vindication.

Reech, who stood aside, knew that once Marco was gone, Marina would be the sole heiress of the Bryant family, so naturally, he fawned and complied. He raised his voice, "Didn't you hear what Miss Bryant commanded? Security, come and escort Marco out!"

Liza watched the unfolding spectacle but refrained from intervening.

Marco's eyes frosted over, and he remained motionless, showing no signs of reaction.

Just as the security guards approached to forcibly evict him, a firm and resolute female voice echoed from the doorway,



Chapter 586 Nobody Can Banish Him!



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Chapter 587 The Defense Of Loraine

As heads swiveled towards the sound, they saw Loraine striding in, clad in a windbreaker. Her face was etched with a frosty displeasure, and the burgundy gown underneath her windbreaker swished gracefully, indicating her hurried arrival.

Once Loraine entered, the security guards naturally halted their actions. Reech, who had just summoned guards, immediately fell silent and stealthily retreated to a corner.

Casting a frosty gaze, Loraine scrutinized the three Bryant family members, her eyes ablaze with frigid fury.

Marina grumbled discontentedly, "Loraine Torres, what business do you have in my family's hospital?"

Disregarding her, Loraine marched directly to Marco's side.

He exuded an aura of icy detachment, as if he had severed all emotional ties.

But Loraine knew him better. Even though Marina and Laura had been berating him openly, he remained impassive; however, deep down, he was far from serene.

That was Marco's way. The more emotionally affected he was, the more he resisted showing it.

In that moment, Loraine was torn between feeling sorry for him and harboring anger. But in front of onlookers, she should set these emotions aside.

Loraine extended her hand and grasped his, as if imparting encouragement, and then pivoted her gaze towards the Bryant family members, her presence suddenly brimming with resolve.

"Why are you banishing Marco?"

Marina retorted, "It's not your place to interfere. What, do you wish to be banished alongside him?"

Loraine's brow furrowed. She knew that Marco had come to the hospital for the paternity test, and she understood it must involve Laura and Marina. However, she was oblivious to the specific details of the incident.

Witnessing Liza's indifferent attitude coupled with Marina's loud and domineering demeanor, Loraine cast another anxious glance at Marco. She was apprehensive that he would be tormented by the so-called familial bonds. But now that she was present, these people wouldn't be able to bully him any further.

With an icy stare, Loraine turned to Marina and retorted sarcastically, "This is a hospital, open to anyone. Likewise, no one has the authority to banish anyone!"

However, Marina, shirking her usual deferential demeanor in Marco's presence, defiantly shouted, "This is a hospital under the Bryant Group. I am the heiress of the Bryant family. I have the power to banish anyone I choose!"

Loraine scoffed, "I wasn't aware that the Bryant family was so overbearing, even banishing patients. Is this how you display your authority?"

Marina, emboldened by the results of the paternity test, had grown more assertive, but her intellect hadn't matured accordingly. She retorted impatiently, "Are you a patient? Have





you been admitted here? Moreover, I don't want you as a patient, so don't even consider staying!"

Loraine sneered in disdain and pulled out her phone.

"Coincidentally, a few days ago, I scheduled an appointment with Dr. Coleman for my grandfather's check-up. Dr. Coleman is a renowned authority in surgical practice at this hospital. So, Marina, are you intending to cancel that appointment or expel my grandfather? If such news leaks out, not only will Dr. Coleman likely leave your hospital, but the reputation of the Bryant Group will also take a hit!"

Upon hearing her words, Marina's and Laura's expressions shifted dramatically.

The blow such news could inflict on public sentiment would be severely damaging.

Laura grew increasingly anxious. With Marco's downfall in sight, Marina was in line to take over the Bryant Group. Laura didn't want Loraine to impede her progress in any way.

If they antagonized an eminent surgeon and the CEO of the Universe Group over this matter, the repercussions would eclipse the benefits.

Marina was about to retort, but Laura tugged her back and plastered a feigned smile on her face as she addressed Loraine, "Since you and your grandfather have sought treatment at our hospital, we won't create any difficulties. But as for banishing Marco, that doesn't involve you, does it?"

Loraine held her ground, standing protectively in front of Marco, and took a step forward. Her voice was frosty as she countered, "Who do you think you are to banish him?"

"It's not your concern, Loraine. We're merely showing respect to





your grandfather. If you believe we're intimidated by you, then we won't hold back!"

Laura's sanctimonious demeanor caused Loraine's brows to crease even more.

At this juncture, Liza, who had maintained silence all this while, finally chimed in. With a weary glance at Marco, she stated, "Marco, I'm giving you leeway. We won't banish you. You can depart of your own accord. However, you should willingly resign from the position of CEO of the Bryant Group. As for tonight's events, I will keep them under wraps."

What?

Loraine almost thought she had misheard.

Not only was Liza siding with Laura and Marina, but she was also demanding Marco to voluntarily resign as CEO of the Bryant Group!



Chapter 588 I'm By Your Side

Loraine responded indignantly, "Mrs. Bryant, I'm astounded that even after all these years, your dictatorial and irrational tendencies persist! You leveraged Marco to rescue the Bryant Group from the brink of insolvency, and now that it has flourished, you intend to expel him? It appears age has caused you to disregard all norms of propriety!"

Liza's cheeks quivered with wrath. "Loraine, you have no right to interfere! The Bryant Group is an asset of the Bryant family, and it's not your concern as a Torres family member!"

Unintimidated, Loraine countered with a sarcastic retort, "If that's your perspective, then allow me to remind you that I currently own 1% of the shares in the Bryant Group. Also, not all shareholders are Bryants, correct? Are you suggesting that we, as shareholders, don't even possess the right to propose? The privilege of expression within the Bryant Group seems exceptionally rare, doesn't it?"

Upon hearing this barbed comment, Liza's chest swelled with rage. She gritted her teeth and coldly scoffed, "Your tongue is as sharp as ever. Are you aware that even your grandfather wouldn't dare address me in such a manner?"

Loraine parried, "My grandfather simply chose not to waste his breath on you. If you're eager to be reprimanded by him, I can ring him up right now. I assure you that he would scold you far more severely than I ever could."

Liza was left speechless, her face fluctuating between shades of blue and purple, as she was unable to formulate a counter.



She was well aware that given Aldo's fiery temperament, Loraine's statement rang true.

Upon realizing she had been outwitted verbally by Loraine, Liza's expression hardened. She deliberately adopted a haughty stance once again.

"You naive girl, I'll overlook your ignorance. The Bryant Group bears our family name because it's our family's enterprise. Regarding share ownership, the Bryant family possesses over 60% of the shares. Other shareholders can't hold a candle to us."

Marina, daydreaming about how all those shares would soon belong to her, eagerly joined in, "Exactly! Besides, Marco is nothing more than an illegitimate child, his origins a mystery. He masqueraded as the Bryant family's young master, reaping the benefits for over twenty years. Our family has been exceedingly generous to him. Rather than expressing gratitude for this benevolence, he dared to meddle with the family business and usurp the CEO position!"

Gazing at Marina's detestable expression, Loraine felt revulsion. The Bryants seemed to have forgotten how they had implored Marco for assistance, crying and begging.

However, Marina's words caused her alarm once again.

Illegitimate child? Masqueraded as the Bryant family's young master?

Casting a glance at the unmoving and unresponsive man beside her, Loraine understood that Marco would only adopt such a demeanor if he had received a massive shock.

At that moment, Laura smiled slyly and chimed in, "Loraine, you're unaware, aren't you? Were you under the impression that Marco was some sort of Bryant family heir, the CEO of the

Bryant Group, and an ideal match for you? Well, that will change soon! This illegitimate child isn't even a member of the Bryant family. Your attempts to defend him are futile. He's merely a mixed-blood child of unknown parentage!"

The words were piercing, each one seeming to strike directly into Marco's ears. His eyes fluttered slightly, a minute gesture that only Loraine, standing closest to him, noticed.

Loraine's eyes widened in shock. Although she had seen online speculation and harbored her own doubts, hearing the accusations aloud was still a jolt to her system.

Could the online rumors be accurate?

However, Loraine was unwilling to accept the Bryant family's version of events. She remained frozen for a moment, and then pivoted towards Marco, peering into his vacant, numb gaze. Treading lightly, she queried, "Marco, is there any truth to what they're claiming?"

Marco's eyes lifted and met hers. His usually vibrant, captivating gaze was now as lifeless as a stagnant pond.

He had heard her clearly, but instead of offering a response, he remained silent and slowly shut his eyes.

His silence was an admission!

For a fleeting moment, Loraine's thoughts ground to a halt. How could such a dignified man be compelled to publicly accept that he was not only unrelated by blood to the Bryant family but also an illegitimate child of questionable origins?

She regretted posing the question almost immediately.

She should have taken Marco by the hand and left the room, putting distance between them and these repugnant faces!

Witnessing Marco's reaction, Laura continued her taunting triumphantly, "Loraine, I suggest you cease wasting your time on him. You are now the heiress of the Torres family, and he is beneath you. His biological parents could be anyone. They might even be destitute. It's no wonder he developed such penny-pinching tendencies. Despite our benevolence, he even had the gall to restrict our spending!"

Marina, recalling the days when Marco had limited her expenditures, nodded in bitter agreement. "He's nothing more than an ungrateful miser!"

As the two of them persisted in hurling increasingly vulgar insults, their language devolved to the level of market-place gossip. It was utterly offensive to the ears.

"Shut up!"

Loraine was furious at the Bryants' despicable conduct, but her main concern was Marco.

Throughout her acquaintance with him, Marco had been a beacon of respect and admiration for all. He was, in her mind, a protector — strong and dependable.

Now, his own family was berating him, casting aspersions on his character.

Despite his reticence and difficulty in expressing emotions, that didn't grant them the right to slander him without restraint.

Loraine quickly reconsidered her plan. She couldn't just leave with Marco under these circumstances. She needed to restore his dignity, to compensate for the insults he had been subjected to.



"I don't care about any of that, Marco. I'm always with you." She gripped Marco's hand tightly, unintentionally exerting pressure.

Marco seemed to register her words, slowly shifting his gaze towards her. With a voice barely audible, he murmured, "Lorraine..."



Chapter 589 Five Million Dollars

Hearing Marco's strained voice, Loraine's heart clenched.

It was as if she had penetrated Marco's cold, unyielding exterior, glimpsing the concealed vulnerability and turmoil hidden behind his typically poised facade.

If anyone had previously suggested that Marco possessed a fragile side, Loraine would have dismissed it. However, after their shared experiences, she came to realize that this outwardly resilient man also harbored softness, a side that required protection and care.

Family and emotional bonds were his greatest vulnerabilities.

Loraine understood the tremendous toll the evening's events would have on Marco, deepening her resentment towards the Bryant family.

She offered Marco a comforting smile, then turned an icy, merciless glare on Laura and Marina.

"Despite previous demonstrations of your lack of shame, I'm still astounded by your audacity now. Do I need to enlighten you on the history of the Bryant Group's evolution?"

Loraine's fury mounted as she continued, "Even an outsider like me knows the Bryant Group was saved by Marco's diligence. Without him, the group may have crumbled long ago, never reaching its current prominence. Regardless of blood ties, Marco has played an indisputably crucial role in the Bryant



Group's success. By treating him in such a manner, aren't you concerned about alienating all the shareholders?"

Marina was momentarily unnerved, recalling the supportive speeches delivered by Marco's proponents during the shareholders' meeting.

Could she be certain... that they would take her side?

Upon hearing Loraine's warning, Liza cast her a glance, then responded with a derisive sneer, "Oh, don't misunderstand. If the Bryant family hadn't entrusted such a substantial enterprise to Marco, what could he have achieved as an inexperienced youth? It's the Bryant Group's robust foundation that has allowed it to flourish. Even with a different CEO, the Bryant Group would have still reached its present stature!"

Loraine almost laughed out loud at the audacious claim, but Liza unabashedly continued, "Loraine, you needn't defend him. We, the Bryant family, have not wronged him. Marina's father passed away unexpectedly without leaving a will, and we believed that Marco was his son, so we temporarily put Marco in charge of the Bryant Group.

Now, with irrefutable evidence that Marco is not a Bryant, he naturally has no right to inherit the Bryant assets. I'm merely reclaiming control of the Bryant Group, which is both fair and legal. Conversely, are you aiding him in unlawfully seizing another's assets?"

Loraine met Liza's assertion with silence. Liza's confident words seemed to assuage Marina's previous apprehension.

Indeed, she was the only direct descendent of the Bryant family, and the Bryant Group should rightfully be hers. Even if Liza had reservations, she had no option but to begrudgingly back her!

Marina's arrogance resurfaced, and even the sight of Marco,

standing silent and inert, no longer instilled fear in her.

Marco must have been unnerved by the imminent threat of being expelled from the Bryant family and left penniless. Why else would he remain silent?

Marina, never one to resist exploiting an opportunity, strode toward Marco with a self-satisfied grin.

However, before she could close the distance, Loraine intercepted her. With a stern look, Loraine questioned, "What is it you want?"

Marina scoffed arrogantly, "As the rightful heir of the Bryant family, can't I express some concern for the once-celebrated hero?"

She didn't dare advance further and maintained her distance, her voice laden with mockery, "Brother, this will be the last time I address you as such. But you know, Loraine has a point. You have indeed made significant contributions to the company, and we can't have you living on the streets. So, how about this? I'll grant you some money!"

Resting her chin on her hand, Marina feigned contemplation before offering a cunning smile. "Five million should suffice! For someone like you, an orphan with unknown parentage, this sum should provide a comfortable existence for the rest of your life, right?"

Loraine had heard enough. Her countenance grew stormy, and she positioned herself protectively in front of Marco, fixing Marina with an icy stare. She responded in a frosty tone, "Marina, if I recall correctly, haven't you been so financially strapped lately that you've resorted to sporting counterfeit designer items? Don't bother with your generous offer of five million. I'll provide you with ten million. Let's see if you can transform a decrepit factory into the thriving Bryant Group



within a few short years! I suspect it won't take more than six months before you're facing bankruptcy and dissolution!"

Marina was momentarily silenced by Loraine's biting comeback. After a beat, she managed to shoot back, "Are you so sure you can deliver on your claims? Who knows, I might prove to be a far superior CEO than you ever were!"

Loraine merely scoffed. Her accomplishments spoke for themselves; she had no need to compete with someone as naive as Marina.

However, Marina seemed only further incensed, slinging more insults and even pointing an accusatory finger at Loraine.

"What are you so proud of, Loraine? Don't fool yourself into thinking that being accepted back by the Torres family elevates you. It doesn't erase the fact that you were raised in the sticks! Ha! A country bumpkin and an enigmatic outcast, you two are indeed a perfect match!"

Loraine was repulsed and wished she could wipe the smug smile off Marina's face.

Yet, someone beat her to it.

Before she could react, Marco had already seized Marina's pointing hand and briskly shoved it aside.



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