

Chapter 1125 Engagement Preparations

If Loraine still held any respect for the Wilson family, it would be divided between Vincent and Joseph, the latter whom she once saw crying solitarily in the antique shop.

She remembered Vincent mentioning that Joseph had been hospitalized following the shocking news of her mother's possible death.

It was likely that Joseph had longed for his daughter over the years, and the message she brought—that her mother had indeed died—was unbearably cruel.

Aside from this, the Wilson family held little importance in Loraine's heart.

After they left the hospital, Marco did everything to cheer her up, and with her busy work schedule, Loraine soon put the Wilson family out of her mind.

Her and Marco's top priority now was organizing their engagement party.

They both invested considerable effort into the preparations, with friends and family members set to attend.

Loraine realized Marco was right; she was surrounded by people who loved her and whom she loved in return. Life was pretty great as it was. Why bother about the Wilsons?

With this in mind, she concentrated on the engagement party preparations.

As they finalized some minor details, a critical question came up: When should the engagement party take place?

Their hectic schedules had previously prevented them from setting a



date, but now they could finally relax and make plans.

After a lengthy discussion, Loraine paused and then suggested, "After we resolved the expansion of the park, the government has taken an increased interest in the park project. The current park can't handle the growing number of visitors."

She concluded, "The government's involvement makes expanding the park seem inevitable."

She had already brought this up several times at Universe Group, and as expected, Marco was supportive, and said, "The theme park is important to us. Hosting the engagement party in the new park would be very meaningful, wouldn't you agree?"

Loraine smiled and said, "I would like to design a water park with a beach-like atmosphere. It should be ready by mid-summer. That would be perfect timing."

Marco always supported her ideas, especially when they were as delightful and romantic as this one. He immediately agreed and went on to refine Qbot's algorithm accordingly.

Though they were together daily, they never tired of each other's company.

During their conversation, they gradually drew closer until Marco was only inches away from Loraine, sharing a moment of close intimacy.

Even with their frequent intimate moments, Loraine's heart still fluttered when they were this close.

Her cheeks turned pink, and as she tried to step back, Marco held her firmly around the waist. He whispered in her ear with a child-like whine, "Why is the government all of a sudden so interested in the theme park? It will be months before we can get engaged, and I couldn't wait."

Loraine's body went limp at his touch. She breathed heavily and leaned into his arms. With teary eyes but still smiling, she reassured him and said, "An engagement in the summer would also be lovely. We could pick a beach theme for our engagement outfits."

She whispered softly, "But this means we'll have to go over the menu





with Odom again. It'd be great to include some surprise elements. When I think about it, there's still so much to arrange. A few months might not be enough."

As she spoke, she gently pushed the eager Marco back, signaling him to keep calm.

Yet, Marco seized the moment, whispering back, "We can rush the engagement, but we have a lifetime to take care of everything else slowly."

Despite the government's sudden interest causing a delay in their engagement party, the planning went on.

Both remained eager about the preparations, with Marco supportively accompanying Loraine on shopping trips, carrying her bags.

Wherever they went, they turned heads as the picture-perfect couple.

One day, while shopping for clothes, Loraine decided they should pick out their engagement outfits first. She selected a subtle yet luxurious summer outfit for Marco to try on.

After Marco changed, his appearance drew surprised gasps from others in the store. Loraine's eyes sparkled as she grabbed a matching dress to try on herself.

However, when she reappeared, Marco, full of admiration, embraced her tightly, unwilling to share her stunning look with anyone else.

Amid Loraine's blushing and the playful teasing from the store staff, nobody noticed Marco's phone vibrating insistently to the side.



Chapter 1126 Betrayal

At the Cruz family's house, Clifford watched with a gloomy expression as his subordinate delivered the news. Out of frustration, he slammed his fist onto the table.

"You still haven't found Ariadna? What have you been doing? With so many of you, how can you fail to find my daughter?"

His subordinate shivered with fear. "We really haven't uncovered any leads... Mr. Cruz, could someone be hiding her?"

Clifford narrowed his eyes, pondering who could assist Ariadna in Zodiac and evade the Cruz family's pursuit.

Just then, another man rushed in and said, "Mr. Cruz, I still can't reach Marco!"

Clifford's gaze turned serious as a plan formed in his mind. After scolding his men again, he stood and made his way to the study.

In the study, Melvin was busy working.

Clifford knocked on the door and entered. He lowered his head politely but concealed his irritation. He said gently, "Melvin, we can't find any trace of Ariadna. I hope you can help."

Melvin frowned slightly, looked at Clifford, and responded coldly, "I'll assign more people. Marco isn't ready to return yet. He probably has a bad impression of you. Try being kinder to him to convince him to come back."

Immediately, Clifford felt a rush of anger.

While Marco was out enjoying his success and happiness, his daughter's whereabouts were still unknown, and yet Melvin was only concerned about Marco's return.

Clifford's frustration and worry about Ariadna's disappearance finally overwhelmed him. He snapped, "I'm concerned about Aria, not Marco. He's just an ungrateful man! We have been so nice to him, yet he shows no gratitude. Melvin, don't forget that Ariadna is your niece!"

Upon hearing that, Melvin gave Clifford an indifferent glance until he settled down.

However, Clifford continued to glare at him, filled with anger.

In a firm and cold tone, Melvin said, "Clifford, out of respect for our brotherhood, I will refrain from harsh words. I have overlooked your past actions, but that doesn't mean I'm unaware. Be careful how you speak of Marco. Marco is my son. Regardless of the circumstances, you have no authority to criticize him."

At that point, Clifford was sweating profusely.

He tightly clenched his fists and gave Melvin a resentful look for a moment before he left, slamming the door behind him.

In the study, Melvin had a thoughtful expression, his eyes intense and focused.

Despite their relationship, he and Clifford were not particularly close. Although they were brothers, it was unclear if Clifford had played a role in the risky conflict over the family leadership in the past.

However, once he secured his position as the family head, Clifford's support solidified, leading him to treat Clifford well.

As for the present... It was difficult to discern Clifford's intentions.

Clifford left the study with a gloomy expression, harboring feelings of resentment.

Despite his elevated status, Melvin still reprimanded him as if he were a mere subordinate.

In a moment of frustration, Clifford halted and said coldly to himself, "Melvin, if you can be so heartless, then don't expect any brotherly affection from me!"

He turned on his phone and focused on a number. After a lengthy pause, he made the call.

When the call connected, he got straight to the point. "Alright. I agree to your proposal. But I need to know where my daughter is."

A bizarre, electronically distorted voice chuckled coarsely from the other end. "No problem. I'm looking forward to our successful collaboration!"

To Clifford's astonishment, the voice added, "As for Ariadna, don't worry. She's under my protection."

Clifford's eyes widened as he said, "You!"

"I think you should trust me now that we are allies. I didn't kidnap Ariadna. She was meeting someone and got into trouble. I happened to help."

The electronic voice had a ghostly quality as it whispered, "By the way, she mentioned that the person who harmed her was someone close. You must watch out for those around you. For her protection, you should allow me to continue looking after her."

Clifford's brow furrowed in concern despite having secured Ariadna's whereabouts. The cryptic warning increased his worry.

The person who harmed her was someone close?

It couldn't have been him who had harmed Ariadna. Being young, she didn't socialize much at events, which led to having few friends. So, it must have been Loraine.

That naive girl put her trust in Loraine. It made sense for her to consider Loraine a close friend!

Clifford quickly reached a conclusion and accepted it without any doubts.

Ariadna had probably gone to meet Loraine, who then harmed her. That's when Ariadna encountered Mr. K while she was escaping!

Holding his phone tightly, Clifford clenched his teeth and said, "Take good care of Ariadna. I'll remove Melvin from his leadership role in the family, just as you wanted!"

Chapter 1127 The Unrelated Niece

In the hospital ward, Joseph lay in a coma. The machines monitoring his vital signs showed they were stable, so all there was left to do was wait for him to wake.

Initially, the Wilsons took shifts watching over him. After several days, reassured by his stable condition, they assumed his coma was temporary and resumed their normal lives.

Of all the Wilsons, only Kaley and Damon could visit the hospital daily. Kaley had ample free time, while Damon was on suspension.

One day, after finishing his duties at work, Francis headed to the hospital. Upon arriving, he saw Kaley and Damon sitting outside the room.

He didn't make a sound and watched them from a distance. He observed Kaley crying softly while Damon comforted her gently.

Damon mindlessly agreed to everything Kaley said, behaving like a gullible fool.

Francis' expression grew cold as he figured out why Damon had been suspended. Damon was easily swayed and failed to manage his men, leading Terry to suspend him as a lesson.

Francis looked intently at Kaley, feeling somewhat irritated.

He was at the hospital because he had discovered something concerning her.

He was indifferent towards her. She could do as she pleased, provided the Wilson family's business remained safe.

But... Kaley's naive actions were jeopardizing their business!



That alone put her no match for Loraine, especially considering Loraine's stellar performance at Universe Group.

Reflecting on this, Francis sighed and shook his head. As someone not related by blood to the Wilsons, Kaley's underwhelming performance was disappointing but not surprising.

Kaley felt his disapproving gaze. She stiffened, feeling resentment grow inside her, yet managed to muster a look of sorrow and fear as she softly said, "Uncle Francis."

Seeing her fearful expression, Damon turned and scowled at Francis. "Ease up with that stern look, Francis. Our younger sister must have been startled by that when she returned!"

Francis glanced at Damon with a roll of his eyes and bluntly said, "She left because you're foolish. You show kindness to the unrelated niece while giving the cold shoulder to your own blood relative."

Upon hearing that, Kaley's face paled as she clenched her fingers, her eyes brimming with sadness.

Damon was visibly upset and about to retort when Francis walked past them into the ward. Kaley reached out and grabbed Damon's hand, her eyes brimming with tears, on the verge of weeping.

Damon had no other option but to turn back and reassure her gently, "Kaley, don't take it personally. Who knows what's gotten into him today?"

Kaley bit her lower lip. Her voice was shaky and tears were forming in her eyes as she asked, "Uncle Damon, do you agree with him? Will you stop caring for me because we're not related by blood?"

"Nonsense!" Damon said, clearly upset and worried. He looked towards the ward and soothed her. "You will always be my niece. No one can change that!"

Kaley bowed her head, her shoulders shaking as she cried. Comforted by his words, she wiped away her tears and looked up, managing a smile.

"Thank you, Uncle Damon. It really means a lot. I promise I'll get along with Loraine. I won't cause any trouble for you and Uncle Francis."



Damon felt a pang in his heart when he heard this. He wanted to speak but found himself at a loss for words. He let out a heavy sigh.

Despite Kaley's calm smile, beneath the surface, she harbored intense hatred and envy. She was determined to destroy Loraine's reputation and ensure Loraine could never return to the Wilson family.

This was her only chance to remain the family's sole daughter!

Francis walked into the ward and stood by the bed. He looked at Joseph sleeping and stayed quiet for a moment. Then he sighed, "Dad, your aide betrayed you... I found out. It's Lennox."

He frowned, thinking it was a bit strange. Then he said thoughtfully, "He took the blame, claiming it was because he had a grudge against Loraine. But..."

He shook his head, not wanting to dig into it. Then he smiled bitterly and said, "Loraine doesn't want to go back. We can't blame her. We did make a mistake, didn't we?"

He missed Joseph's fingertips twitching after he finished speaking. In the next moment, Joseph fought to open his eyes, his gaze showing unyielding determination.

"I'm not going to let Loraine suffer anymore. I will have her return to the Wilson family!"



Chapter 1128 Last Wish

When Francis heard Joseph's voice, he was taken aback. Quickly, he moved to assist Joseph to sit up and said, "Dad, you're awake!"

Joseph nodded, his energy still low, but his eyes were bright and alert.

Francis was ready to call the doctor, but Joseph stopped him. He appeared to have something on his mind. Therefore, Francis then adjusted the bed to a more upright position for Joseph.

Joseph took a slow, deep breath, and firmly said, "I will have Loraine return to the Wilson family!"

Francis nodded, his face breaking into a smile of relief. "Loraine stopped by while you were unconscious. She mentioned she would come again if you woke up. I'll call her now."

Meanwhile, outside the hospital room, Damon was keeping Kaley company and was now at a vending machine nearby buying water.

Kaley's phone rang. Glancing down, she saw it was a text from a friend. "Kaley, I saw a couple trying on wedding outfits today. I think the guy is the one you like."

She then received a video. Opening it, she saw a man and a woman in wedding attire—him in a suit and her in a dress—laughing together in the store. He was tall and handsome, and she was stunningly beautiful.

The shop assistants around them were exclaiming and offering their blessings. The couple exchanged loving glances, and he carefully adjusted her hair. Their chemistry was undeniable. They looked like the perfect match.

Yet, as Kaley watched, rage ignited within her. She clenched her jaw tight.

It was Loraine and Marco!

While she had to pretend to be dutiful and stay at the hospital to please the Wilsons, Loraine and Marco were lovingly picking out their wedding attire. The anger swelled inside her.

Anxiety soon followed her anger.

Now, the Wilsons knew that Loraine was part of them. Therefore, she had a lower chance of taking Marco away from Loraine.

Kaley's expression shifted at the thought. She felt compelled to take action and find a way to remove Loraine!

Just then, the door to the ward opened and Francis stepped out. Kaley flashed him a smile, but Francis passed by without a glance her way.

Her face darkened. Moments later, she noticed a nurse and a doctor heading into the ward, raising her suspicions that Joseph might have awakened.

Just then, Damon returned with the water. Seizing the opportunity, Kaley feigned concern, grabbed his arm, and said, "Uncle Damon, I think Grandpa's awake. Let's go check on him!"

Surprised by her words, Damon quickly accompanied her into the ward.

Inside, they found Joseph awake but still visibly weak. His face brightened when he saw Kaley and Damon enter.

Damon showed his concern openly, while Kaley timidly lingered behind him, seemingly hesitant to approach.

Joseph gestured for her to come closer and gently stroked her hair.

"Kaley, you'll always be my granddaughter, that won't change. But I need to bring Loraine back into our family. It was your grandmother's last wish."

Kaley bowed her head, showing her usual obedience and consideration. She spoke softly. "When Loraine returns, I'll treat her like my own sister. You can count on me, Grandpa."

Joseph's face lit up with relief at her words. Meanwhile, Damon, sensing her sacrifice, praised her consideration and recounted to Joseph how worried Kaley had been during his coma.



Joseph sighed contentedly. "Kaley, you've grown up. That makes me very happy."

Kaley blushed and then furrowed her brow. It seemed like she remembered something and wanted to speak up, but she held her words back.

She did it intentionally, wanting Joseph to notice, and he did. Thinking she was upset and hesitant to speak, he furrowed his brow and said earnestly, "Kaley, if there's something on your mind, speak up. I'll fix things for you!"

She glanced up at him, then said her concerns with hesitation, "Grandpa, I think I know why Loraine doesn't want to return. She... It appears she's about to be engaged to Mr. Cruz, recently reclaimed by the Cruz family."



Chapter 1129 Stirring Up Trouble

Upon hearing Kaley's words, Joseph frowned. He knew nothing about Marco besides the fact that Melvin had proposed a marriage between Marco and Kaley.

Despite not knowing much about Marco, Joseph already subconsciously considered him to be Kaley's husband since she had mentioned how much she liked him.

As a result, his first reaction was to say, "Isn't he supposed to be engaged to you? Why's he with Loraine? And they're getting engaged?"

Joseph felt he was out of the loop on many recent developments. Perhaps it was because he had fallen ill.

Lennox had deceived him with fake news, and he had no idea that Loraine, his granddaughter, was about to be engaged.

Kaley's eyes flickered with cunning as she took the opportunity to exaggerate the gossip she had heard. "I heard that they were once married but later got a divorce. Now that Marco has been found by his family, it looks like they're back together."

She deliberately wanted Joseph to think Loraine was chasing after wealth. In her version of events, Loraine had chosen to be with Marco because of his money rather than who he was.

After saying that, she deliberately put on an aggrieved expression. "I don't understand. If they got a divorce, it means they weren't right for each other. Why would they ever get engaged? But... If Loraine insists on being with Marco, I won't stand in her way."

She spoke meekly with tears running down her cheeks. Wiping them away, she continued, "It's just... This is the first time I've had feelings for someone. I'll need some time to pull myself together."

Seeing Kaley cry so pitifully, Damon felt deeply sorry for her. He took her words to heart and couldn't help but blame Loraine.

Now, he had the impression that Loraine was a snob who stood in Kaley's way, causing her immense distress.

He quickly comforted Kaley and promised to help her find a better man.

After hearing Kaley's words, Joseph remained silent for a while. Then, he finally said, "Kaley, your happiness will always be my priority, whether Marco is in the picture or not. I promise to find you the perfect man who'll make you happy."

Wiping away her tears, Kaley suppressed the feelings of bitterness and resentment that boiled within her. Afterwards, she said obediently, "Thank you, Grandpa. I... I let my emotions get the better of me... Get some rest now. I'll be on my way."

Joseph nodded in agreement. Concerned about Kaley's current emotional state, Damon followed her.

Gazing at Kaley's retreating figure, Joseph let out a deep sigh. After a while, he called Francis.

"Francis, find out what transpired between Loraine and Marco in the past. I heard they're getting engaged..."

Francis was momentarily taken aback, but obliged him. After inquiring with his sources, he confirmed that it was true — Marco and Loraine were indeed getting engaged.

He pondered for a while. Marco was now a member of the Cruz family, and Solar Company, owned by Marco, was quite formidable.

If Marco and Loraine got engaged, they'd form a strong alliance. Even from a business standpoint, it made perfect sense.

In spite of that, he still had someone investigate further. Only then did he discover that they had been married and later gotten a divorce.

He suddenly furrowed his brow as he recalled something.

When he had advised other enterprises to target Universe Group, he



noticed that another force also had it in its sights, absorbing many of its small projects. It was Marco's company, Solar Company!

Was Loraine aware of that? Did Marco really love her, or was he up to something?

Francis was now looking out for both Loraine and the entire Wilson family. He was slightly displeased by the fact that Solar Company had once targeted Universe Group.

Furthermore, their previous divorce indicated that their marriage had not been a happy one, implying that they were not a good fit.

Moreover, Marco was a member of the Cruz family, and Melvin had arranged for him to get engaged to Kaley, who really seemed to like him. She had gone to great lengths to be with him.

Finally, Francis made up his mind, resolving that Kaley needed to marry Marco in order to unite the two families. He, on the other hand, was going to do his best to ensure that Loraine found someone better and more suitable for her.

After he had made up his mind, he turned to his subordinate who had arrived to report to him and gave some instructions.

Meanwhile, outside the office, Edwin, who had arrived to drop off a document, wore a sullen expression. His face went through several changes until finally, he decided not to knock on the door.

Just as he had lifted his hand to knock on the door, he had overheard Loraine's name being mentioned, prompting him to lower his hand and eavesdrop instead.

He then left the premises before anyone emerged from the office and went to tell Kaley everything he had heard, ignoring previous Francis ' warning.

Observing Kaley's pitiful expression, which clearly showed that she was on the brink of tears, he said gently, "Kaley, maybe it's best to move on from Marco. From the looks of it, he doesn't seem like a good man."

Chapter 1130 Pampered

After accompanying Loraine to try on their wedding attire, Marco drove her back home.

Loraine initially felt guilty about delaying the wedding, but when she talked to Rowan and Wesley, she found out that they were in Zodiac for themselves. They hadn't seen each other lately due to their busy schedules.

While still in the car, Loraine received a call from Rowan and Wesley, who were both free today and planned to visit her. She beamed at that, her smile pure and joyful.

Driving, Marco glanced at her and became distracted. Seeing her happiness, he felt relieved and warm.

During these days, he was always with her other than at work. Things between them were going better, and he felt more and more grateful for his life.

Soon, they arrived home. Loraine hurriedly jumped out of the car and ran upstairs. She threw herself into the arms of the man waiting for her at the door.

"Wesley!"

Wesley smiled gently, held Loraine in his arms, and stroked her head. Upon learning the truth behind Loraine's parents' death, he was visibly relieved.

He teasingly said, "You're still like a teenage girl, easily thrilled."

Loraine frowned and snorted, behaving like a spoiled child. "Wesley, I picked out some clothes today. Can you design accessories with me?"

Wesley glanced at Marco, who was following behind, and rolled his eyes. "Seriously? I've asked you countless times to design with me, and you



never agreed. Now you invite me because of your engagement party? You're breaking my heart!"

Despite his words, he followed her upstairs willingly.

Loraine was as lively as a little girl. Halfway up the stairs, she leaned out and called with a smile, "Rowan, I'm heading upstairs!"

Rowan, sitting calmly on the sofa, shook his head and reminded her, "Be careful. Don't fall!"

With a smile, she leaned back and bounded up the stairs.

Sipping his tea, Rowan sighed with emotion. It was the first time he had seen Loraine so lively and happy.

She had been sensitive and introverted as a child. Despite the Torres family's efforts to pamper and spoil her, she had always been sensible. As she grew older, she became even more mature.

And now, Marco was pampering her as if she were a little girl.

Setting down his teacup, Rowan looked at Marco and smiled with relief. "Since she's been with you, she's become more and more cheerful."

Marco lowered his head. "But I still caused her pain... I haven't done enough."

Rowan smiled with satisfaction and said, "Despite the setbacks she's faced, Loraine is more successful than ever before, and as her family, we're greatly relieved. I won't deny that part of this is thanks to you."

Marco smiled, pleased to receive praise from Loraine's family.

Suddenly, his phone buzzed. He took it out and saw a text from Carl.

"Boss, it appears that the Wilson family is looking into you."

Marco's expression turned steely. He sneered, tapped the screen with his fingertips, and replied, "Then proceed as we discussed. Teach them a lesson."

Rowan observed him quietly and asked after he finished texting, "What's



wrong?"

After a brief pause, Marco decided there was no reason to hide it from Rowan and told him all about what the Wilsons had done.

Rowan's face darkened. After a moment, Marco added, "Lorrie's mother is part of the Wilson family."

To put it simply, Loraine and the Wilsons were related by blood.

With a meaningful smile, Rowan said, "Speaking of which, the government has called me back. They inform me that I'm replacing someone who's been suspended. His last name is Wilson, I believe."

Marco knew exactly who it was. He sneered and replied, "He's the second son of the Wilson family, the one holding back the Universe Group's project."

Rowan remained expressionless and stated calmly, "The Wilson family has been asserting their influence in Zodiac for too long. They need to learn that they don't hold all the power."

He looked at Marco and sneered, "Now that I know, I won't go easy on them. And I don't want to see them at the engagement party."

Without hesitation, Marco nodded and replied, "Whatever you do, just let me know if you need my help."

Upstairs, Loraine and Wesley were deep in discussion about jewelry design when her phone suddenly rang.

Pausing as she saw an unfamiliar number, Loraine hesitated briefly before answering. It was Ariadna on the line.

"Lorrie!"

