

Chapter 1134 Meeting The Wilsons

Loraine and Jennie were oblivious to the events surrounding Ariadna.

In their group chat, Jennie, exhausted from her reprimands, was gearing up to offer some kind words about Ariadna. She brought up Ariadna's name several times, but received no reply. Concerned, she sent a private message to Loraine, inquiring if Ariadna did not like her because of her earlier emotional outpouring in the group chat.

Loraine doubted that was the case and replied, "Maybe she's just caught up with something."

No sooner had she sent the message than her phone chimed. It was a call from Francis.

They had swapped numbers during her visit to the hospital ward, where Francis promised to update her on Joseph's condition.

"My dad is awake and he's asking for you," Francis informed her with a steady voice.

Recently, only Vincent had made occasional efforts to contact her. The rest of the Wilson family seemed as distant as ever, seemingly indifferent to their familial ties with Loraine.

In some ways, Loraine preferred it this way.

She hadn't intended to entangle herself deeply with them.

Upon hearing that Joseph was awake, she hesitated, then replied to Francis, "I'll think about it."

After ending the call, she shared the details with Marco.

They often discussed matters together. He reached out to her directly, his voice gentle and sincere as he advised, "I don't think it's a good idea for you to go."

He added, "But I know you're too kind to stay away. If you decide to go, I'll be there with you."

Loraine felt a surge of warmth and agreed. Once they settled on a time, they continued their conversation for a while before reluctantly bidding each other goodnight and retiring for the evening.

The following morning, Marco picked her up from her apartment, and together they headed to the hospital.

At the hospital, outside the ward, the Wilsons blocked Marco's entry. Francis glanced at him with a dismissive air and stated coldly, "Family only."

Loraine's brow furrowed as she clutched Marco's hand. She declared, "If my fiancé is considered an outsider here, then so am I."

The remark darkened Francis's expression. It was clear her words were more than an idle threat. Loraine tightened her grip on Marco's hand, ready to leave.

Left with no choice, Francis relented. "Alright, let's all

go in together," he conceded.

The more Francis stared at Marco, the deeper his dissatisfaction grew. He secretly blamed Marco for encouraging Loraine's rebellious and thoughtless behavior.

Marco's charming ways had clearly won Loraine over. Otherwise, how could he have possibly reclaimed her heart after their divorce? Especially now that she was openly siding with him!

Frustration washed over Francis as he thought about Melvin, his lifelong rival.

Melvin was just as crafty—a shrewd old fox. For decades, Francis and Melvin had been business adversaries, yet neither had managed to outdo the other.

Like father, like son. Marco, Melvin's offspring, was equally shrewd!

Annoyed though Francis was, the Wilson and Cruz families had not yet finalized the marriage arrangement, and Loraine had not formally returned to the Wilson family. Given this, he felt powerless to intervene.

Therefore, his only recourse was to deliberately overlook Marco when he spoke to Loraine.

Today, the entire Wilson family had gathered. Although most were already acquainted with Loraine, Francis took the opportunity to formally introduce her to everyone.

As he introduced a gentle woman in the group, he paused briefly before continuing in a calm tone, "This is your Aunt Jaylah, and Kaley here is her daughter."

Loraine observed Jaylah closely. She noticed that Jaylah bore no resemblance to her mother, nor did she feel the same familiarity that came when meeting other Wilson family members.

Instead, Jaylah bore an unmistakable resemblance to Kaley, being more skilled at controlling her expression. Her smile was warm and tender as she approached.

"I was heartbroken when Tessa left. But seeing how grown up and lovely you've become, my worries are eased."

She reached for Loraine's hand, but Loraine pulled away.

A flicker of embarrassment crossed Jaylah's face, but she quickly masked it with a smile. "Loraine, how is Tessa doing?"

Loraine instinctively stepped back, uneasy with the touch of someone she barely knew, especially someone she distrusted.

Moreover, Kaley was at odds with her. And Jaylah's recent public interrogation at the Wilson family's party had only added to her wariness. She doubted Jaylah's sincerity.

When Jaylah inquired about Tessa, Loraine hesitated. She decided against revealing that her mother had passed away, aware that the Wilson family's

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information was outdated and possibly incorrect. Even Joseph had only heard rumors of Tessa's possible demise in Vagow—a stronghold of the Torres family, where details were tightly controlled. The Wilsons, despite their influence, would have struggled to uncover the full truth there.

Silently, Loraine turned to Francis, her expression firm. "I'm here to see Joseph. I don't need to discuss anything else."

Jaylah paused, a hint of awkwardness in her smile. "I'm just concerned about Tessa," she insisted. "She was kind to me once."

Yet, as she spoke, a brief flash of hatred crossed her eyes, which was caught by Loraine.

Although outwardly composed, Loraine's instincts screamed caution. She sensed an underlying tension between Jaylah and Tessa.

Chapter 1135 My Daughter

Observing Jaylah's insincere soft smile, Loraine reciprocated with a smile of her own and responded vaguely, "I'll have a word with my mom when I return. If she's on board, I'll make sure she drops by to see you."

The shift in Jaylah's expression was unmistakable.

Tessa was still alive?!

Jaylah almost ruined her new manicure in her shock, but quickly masked her surprise with a forced smile and nodded. "Okay."

Loraine's suspicion of Jaylah deepened. She gave Jaylah a knowing half-smile, turned, and started towards the ward.

As Marco made to follow, he was stopped yet again.

Francis frowned, "Loraine should go in alone. After all, you and Loraine aren't married yet, and my dad's health is fragile. What if he becomes agitated again?"

His reasoning this time was sound, and Marco's expression darkened.

Watching the varied reactions of the Wilsons, Loraine reached out to comfort Marco with a pat on the shoulder and whispered, "Let it go. Remember how Aldo reacted? You managed then, right? Just wait here for me. I'll be out of the ward soon enough."

She wanted to wrap things up quickly, eager to avoid further complications and distance herself from the Wilson family.

Frowning, Marco murmured back, "It's different. Aldo was kind to you, but with Joseph, I'm not so sure."

Francis stood to the side, irritation flickering across his face as he heard Marco address Joseph in such a disrespectful manner. His eyelids twitched with barely contained fury.

Lorraine shook her head. "It's okay. I've met Joseph before. He's not a bad person."

She cast a pointed look at Francis and added with a hint of irony, "At least he's more decent than some other members of the Wilson family."

Marco's smile was faint as he nodded in agreement. "I'll wait by the door. Go ahead."

Lorraine turned and walked into the ward. True to his word, Marco positioned himself by the door, standing guard like a sentinel.

Francis's expression soured further, yet he held his tongue. In contrast, Edwin, who was young and more hot-headed, couldn't restrain himself. "Marco, what are you implying? This is our territory! And Lorraine is our family! Are you insinuating that we would harm her?"

Marco gave him a dismissive glance and a smirk of contempt. "Who can be sure? We are both aware of the actions taken against Lorraine by you guys."

Edwin's face flushed a deep red, veins throbbing at his temples, especially as memories of his recent actions at the auction surfaced, leaving him speechless.

With a slow, mocking sneer, Marco added, "Looks like you're out of meaningful tasks. Maybe you should focus on managing the land west of town. Isn't the construction of that chemical plant already underway?"

At that moment, the Wilsons' expressions turned odd. They all shot covert glances at Marco.

This was the first time they had faced such a significant setback in their official dealings. Clearly, the mastermind had struck them a swift and precise blow while Damon was suspended.

Usually adept with government information and quick decision-making, the Wilsons were now on high alert.

Edwin was the first to connect the dots to Marco.

He recalled being sharply rebuked in his office, which ignited his fury. Overwhelmed by anger, he momentarily considered confronting Marco, forgetting his previous humiliation at the auction.

Marco remained composed, almost disdainfully so, not bothering to move an inch. At this moment, Francis intervened sternly, "Edwin, stop!"

Edwin respected Francis deeply and immediately halted, though he shot Marco a resentful look, unaware of Francis's protective motives.

Francis sensed trouble. If Edwin escalated things

physically, it would only end in more embarrassment for him.

He shot Marco a chilling look and warned in a grave tone, "Young man, know when to stop."

Marco ignored the admonition and treated the Wilsons as if they were invisible. He casually leaned against the hospital room's wall, infuriating them further; their faces grew dark with rage.

Inside the hospital room, Loraine approached the bed and silently observed Joseph.

His face was deathly pale, and he seemed fragile, his sleep troubled by a deep frown.

Suddenly, Joseph gasped and awoke as though from a nightmare.

Panting, he lifted his head and saw Loraine by his bed. Tears immediately welled up in his cloudy eyes, and he weakly murmured, "My... My daughter!"

Chapter 1136 You're One Of Us

Joseph just awoke from his nightmare in a panic, seeing a figure by his bedside that looked like Tessa. In his confusion, he mistook Loraine for her.

Loraine, understanding Joseph's subconscious reaction, felt a pang in her heart, convinced that he had never truly forgotten Tessa all these years. She sighed softly, approached the bedside, and poured a glass of water. Helping him sit up, she gently wiped the tears from his eyes with a clean handkerchief and offered him water.

Joseph slowly regained his composure. After staring at Loraine for a few moments, he managed a bitter smile. "You look just like her... No wonder I mistook you for her."

Loraine bit her lip, unsure of what to say. When she didn't know him, comforting him had been easy. Now, words failed her.

Thankfully, Joseph didn't notice her hesitation. Tears still glistening in his eyes, he gazed at her intently, as if trying to make amends for lost time. The longer he looked at her, the gentler his expression became.

"From the moment I saw you, I knew you had a connection to her," Joseph confessed, his voice trembling. "When I returned, I tried to investigate, but I was misled. I... I was blinded by my desire to reclaim

the Tear of the Sea. Now that the truth is out and Tessa has entrusted you with the necklace, I won't defy her wishes."

Loraine had already learned from Vincent that Joseph had been deceived by his own people. Though it seemed unbelievable, hearing Joseph admit it made her believe it.

His candid admission of his mistakes left her speechless. What more could she say?

Furthermore, the first time she saw Joseph, he reminded her of Aldo. Seeing him now, ill and vulnerable in bed, only evoked memories of Aldo battling serious illness in the past.

Her heart softened, and finally, she found her voice. "Rest well. Take care."

Joseph's eyes filled with tears instantly. He turned his head away, wiping them hastily, nodding repeatedly. His grip on the quilt tightened nervously as he dared not face her. With a mix of hope and fear, he asked, "Is... Tessa alright?"

Quickly, he added, "I received false information, so I never believed it. She has taught you so well. Of course, she's fine, too!"

Loraine struggled inwardly, biting her lip as she looked at Joseph's back turned towards her. She felt he was clinging to a sliver of hope, and she couldn't bring herself to shatter it.

He had crafted a beautiful fantasy for himself, and she decided to continue the white lie.

Recalling the image of her parents, the clues in the necklace, the painting within the rose pocket watch, and Tessa's delicate handwriting, Loraine smiled softly. "She's fine."

Joseph tensed briefly before visibly relaxing. Turning back towards her eagerly, he asked, "Could you... tell me about her? About your life?"

He carried a heavy burden of guilt for being absent from Tessa's life for decades.

Loraine was momentarily stunned by his request, then fell into deep thought.

She had never experienced life with her parents, but she had often daydreamed about what it might be like.

Recalling fragments of imagined memories, Loraine spoke softly. "My dad and mom love each other very much. Dad studied engineering and is quite academic. Mom adores art and children, so she became a teacher."

With a gentle smile, she continued, "They take me to the movies and out to dinner every weekend. Sometimes they argue over even a few dollars, but they've never fought. They are always kind to me, finding time to visit the park and help with my homework..."

It was a simple, warm life that she had envisioned countless times.

Tears welled up in Joseph's eyes as he listened. He clenched his fists, finding it hard to believe that Tessa,



his beloved, had to argue over a few dollars.

It seemed Tessa hadn't married into wealth, which made Loraine's success at Universe Group all the more impressive. Feeling both remorseful and proud, Joseph couldn't help but reach out and gently take Loraine's hands. "Lorrie, come back to the Wilson family. I promise you won't suffer anymore. Change your last name. From now on, you're one of us."

Loraine was taken aback for a moment, understanding his motives behind the suggestion. She declined him politely. "My life is great, and I have no financial concerns. Thank you."

Afraid that he might want to involve her parents, Loraine quickly added, "My parents are happy where they are. They don't want to leave their home. You don't have to worry about them. I'll come to see you as often as I can... But I won't change my last name, and I hope you'll let us continue living our lives as they are."

Joseph felt a twinge of disappointment, but he reasoned that Loraine's reluctance stemmed from Tessa's lingering resentment towards him. Reluctantly agreeing, he persisted like a stubborn child, "Deal. You must visit me frequently."