

## Chapter 1241 A Gathering Of Friends

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Marco paused to reconsider his initial doubts.

Perhaps there was no deeper significance; maybe Jorge simply wanted to reconnect after their previous gatherings were interrupted.

Moreover, even if Jorge hadn't mentioned it, Loraine had already expressed her disinterest in attending such events again.

No matter what, Marco knew meeting Jorge was inevitable.

Without further thought, he consented to the meeting.

The following day at the Riley family villa, Marco, Slater, and Jimmie arrived sequentially. They exchanged brief looks before diverting their eyes.

A subtle shift hung in the air, most notably around Slater.

Gone was his typical exuberance; instead, he approached quietly and knocked on the door.

Jorge greeted them, opening the door with a steady demeanor, seemingly unaffected by time.

Upon seeing Slater, Jorge embraced him without hesitation, laughing heartily. "It's good to see you! I've missed you these past gatherings. I thought you had become elusive."

This genuine interaction lifted some of Slater's solitude.

With a smile, he responded, "Things have been tough. It took me a moment to accept you were still alive, haha! It's a relief to know you're okay, Jorge."

Marco stepped up, patting Slater's shoulder. "Let's make today worthwhile and catch up on lost time."

Slater's initial surprise gave way to a broad smile, erasing any past grievances.

He looped an arm around Jimmie and the other around Jorge, entering with an infectious grin.

The group quickly rekindled their familiar dynamic, sharing memories filled with both joy and a touch of nostalgia.

During their conversation, Jorge glanced at Marco and shared, "These memories are from long ago. My biggest fear in returning was that you might no longer see me as a friend. I've noticed a few things that seem to confirm my concerns."

Silence enveloped the group. Jimmie, sensing the tension in Jorge's tone, adjusted his glasses and chuckled lightly. "Why would you think that?"

Slater caught Jorge's glance towards Marco and spoke frankly. "Marco has always been like this. He can be exasperating and misunderstood! But to doubt your friendship? Come on, he knows he owes you his life; he hasn't forgotten that."

Slater, despite his own past grievances, held firm in his belief in Marco.

Marco, understanding the deeper implication of Jorge's words, nodded in agreement with Slater, then faced Jorge. "If there's something on your mind, just say it. We don't need to skirt around the issue."

Jorge offered a smile, which quickly shifted to a more solemn

expression. "I don't like Loraine. Can you break up with her?"

Slater choked on his water, surprised, while Jimmie's eyes widened in shock.

Marco had wanted Jorge to be straightforward, yet this directness was startling!

Marco's expression tightened, his hands tensing.

"Jorge, you..." Jimmie started, attempting to defuse the situation, but Jorge, still smiling, added, "And to be honest, I'm not fond of Jennie either."

Jimmie's demeanor shifted sharply.

Slater scratched his nose and muttered, "I'm not keen on them either. They've always looked down on me, and I've done nothing to provoke them."

His voice faded, not just from Jimmie's stern look but also from Marco's impassive stare.

Jorge maintained his smile, seemingly oblivious to their shocked reactions.

Marco felt a tension throbbing at his temple. Struggling to maintain composure, he said, "If this was the purpose of our meeting, then I think it's best I leave."

Jimmie grabbed Marco's arm, his expression tense. "Jorge, are you still upset about the accident with Keely? This isn't like you."

As Jorge's smile disappeared, his expression cooled. He paused, then signaled someone.

A servant soon appeared, guiding Keely towards them. Keely looked up timidly, taking refuge behind Jorge.

Jorge encouraged her gently. "Keely, can you tell everyone

about last night?"

Tears welled up in Keely's eyes as she remembered the distressing event. "I... I just wanted to play with Loraine, but she... she said I was annoying. She didn't want to play and kept giving me food. Then I had a stomachache..."

Her account was childlike and disjointed, yet the gravity of her words resonated with everyone.

Jorge's gaze hardened as he turned to Marco. "It wasn't just overeating; Keely had an allergic reaction to something she was given. If it had been worse, she might not be with us today."



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Marco slowly furrowed his brows, casting doubt on Keely's story.

If Loraine truly wanted to avoid Keely, she wouldn't have bothered to offer her food merely to appease her.

At the mention of an allergic reaction, Jimmie and Slater exchanged uncertain glances.

Recognizing tactics similar to those used by Trudy, and recalling Keely's past deceptive behaviors, Slater scrutinized Keely.

Keely maintained a pitiful, bewildered look; such genuine confusion seemed unlikely to be an act.

Amidst the tension, Slater's frown deepened, signaling his hesitation. Jimmie appeared reflective.

Jorge, annoyed by their skeptical expressions, demanded sternly, "What are you thinking about?"

Marco voiced his suspicions. Jimmie reasoned, "I doubt Loraine acted intentionally. Perhaps it was just a coincidence."

Slater, nodding firmly, added, "I may not like Loraine much, but she isn't one to do such a thing. Jorge, she has been wrongly blamed for causing an allergic reaction in someone before. In light of that, she would have been more cautious and likely asked about any allergies. She's not stupid!"

Jorge, shifting his focus to the servant, noticed her become pale. She stammered, "I—I don't remember..."

Jorge scowled, considering the servant's negligence too great, thinking of replacing her. And Slater's argument in defense of Loraine, despite his personal dislike for her, seemed convincing.

Still, Jorge persisted, "Whether Loraine did it or not, I believe she still harbors a grudge against Keely!"

The others were silent, thinking there might be some truth to Jorge's words.

After all, who could really let go after everything that happened?

Jorge turned to Marco and firmly stated, "Just make it clear to her that the past is the past. No matter what Keely has done, she has paid her dues. There's no need to keep targeting her."

Marco felt a slight tension in his muscles at these words. He managed to suppress his irritation, remaining silent but tacitly agreeing.

He was confident that Loraine would steer clear of Keely in the future, thus avoiding further incidents that could be wrongly attributed to her.

The atmosphere had already become uncomfortably tense, and pushing this topic further might escalate into a real conflict.

Due to his friendship with Jorge and the fact that Jorge had once saved his life, Marco chose to restrain himself.

Desiring to shift away from the current conversation, he abruptly introduced a new topic. "I heard Clifford approached you recently?"

He then briefly outlined the current situation within the Cruz family. Jorge listened with concern, his brow furrowing when he heard about the potential poisoning of Melvin. "I'll reconsider my collaboration with Clifford," he remarked. "However, this matter was entrusted to me by my uncle, so I'll

need to discuss it with him first."

Given the complex nature of the Riley family's extensive international dealings and numerous relatives, Marco and the others were unaware of the uncle to whom Jorge was referring.

As such, they did not react significantly, recognizing the delicacy of familial obligations. Marco nodded, showing his understanding of Jorge's position.

Jorge then added, "If I agree to help you, you must ensure Loraine leaves Keely alone."

Marco looked at him intently and replied coolly, "Don't worry, she has no intention of involving herself further."

Jorge snorted, his skepticism apparent. The conversation then drifted to lighter topics, and after a while, Marco rose to leave.

The others followed suit, with Jorge escorting them to the door personally.

At that moment, Keely appeared, her face radiating innocence. She approached Marco and gazed up at him earnestly. "Marco, when are you coming back to play with me?" she asked innocently.

Despite his initial reluctance, her question made him pause, reflecting on the innocence of her inquiry.

He recalled how she used to trail behind him and Jorge when they were children. Back then, Marco treated Keely almost like a sister, sharing with her as freely as he did with Marina.

Caught in a moment of nostalgia, Marco's voice softened slightly as he replied, "I'll come by when I have time."

Whether he actually intended to visit was another matter.

As Marco's figure slowly faded into the distance, Jorge tenderly

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patted Keely's head.

 +120 Points at most

She snuggled into his arms obediently.

Deep within, a dark, twisted voice hissed, "Marco, why can you be so gentle now, when you were so cruel before? I won't let either of you find peace..."

