

Chapter 835 Official Declaration Of Love

Upon hearing this, Loraine declared with confidence, "Silliness is my privilege here."

She was the jewel of the Torres household, cherished and doted on by every relative and servant.

It was in this home that Loraine's whims and childlike behavior found their haven.

She often adopted a facade of mock anger, pride, and arrogance, much like the rabbit that was carved on the bracelet.

Marco's smile broadened, feeling his heart warm at Loraine's antics. Grasping her hand tenderly, he reminded her, "Well, it's time for breakfast now."

Loraine playfully tapped her nose, hopped from his embrace, and agreed with a nod, "Okay, I will freshen up!"

Meanwhile, Marco had nearly finished preparing the morning meal, awaiting her at the doorstep. As Loraine emerged, fresh-faced, he welcomed her with open arms, inviting, "Let's go to have breakfast."

Her eyes sparkled, and she embraced Marco with joy.

While her family's affection was abundant, it wasn't the same as the love from a significant other.

The breakfast spread was a testament to Marco's ever-

improving culinary skills.

As he served the eggs, he noticed Loraine nibbling on bread, chuckled, and tenderly wiped away a smudge of toothpaste from her lip.

A blush tinted Loraine's cheeks, and her bite of bread became more delicate. In a fleeting attempt to conceal her emotions, she nearly choked.

Observing her, Marco inquired with concern, "Is the bread a bit too dry? Let me warm some milk for you."

He strode into the kitchen, preparing the milk with the same diligence he'd show at any task. From the kitchen, Loraine overheard him asking the chef for tips on crafting eggs into charming shapes.

Upon witnessing this, Loraine's lips curved into a smile, her gaze serene as she supported her chin, silently contemplating. She mused over the simplicity of her longed-for life. This was her definition of bliss, simple and unadorned.

The phone on the table suddenly buzzed to life. With an indifferent tap, Loraine discovered a message from her assistant, an internet summary attached. "Miss Torres, do you wish to address this?" the assistant inquired at the end.

A chill flashed through Loraine's eyes. She recalled the odd look Marco had given her earlier. Had he caught wind of this?

After a brief pause, she instructed, "Erase any tweets spreading negativity or insults about us. Ignore the rest."

She understood the public's penchant for baseless claims. Eradicating the topic could only fuel misinterpretations of guilt, spawning even more insidious gossip.

As Loraine opened the link and saw the barrage of insults towards Marco, a wave of discomfort washed over her.

Despite anticipating public mockery during Marco's vulnerable moments, the actual sight of such scorn ignited her fury.

In this heated moment, she contemplated their shared future.

Marrying Marco seemed like an inevitable chapter in her life. The revelation of their relationship was only a matter of time. She preferred to seize this moment for a bold confession rather than a passive revelation.

Disregarding the public's prying eyes, she resolved that their genuine affection was beyond reproach.

A smile graced her lips as she observed Marco busily moving in the kitchen. She captured his image, gracefully pouring milk, and shared the snapshot on Twitter, celebrating their togetherness.

"Morning, boyfriend, breakfast," she tweeted succinctly, the photo and her three words a silent proclamation, generating a buzz among the netizens.

"Seriously? She's confirming it?"

"Loraine, you have my respect! How dare anyone label Marco a freeloader? Look, they're truly a couple!"

"Their sweetness is unmatched. Anyone else calling Marco a plaything, brace yourself! Their love is none of your business!"

Loraine's admirers were in an uproar. Of all her alleged lovers, Marco was ranked the lowest in popularity. It was a surprise to them that she picked him.

"Wow, my fantasy's come to life. Now I can leave this world

content."

While Loraine and Marco's cheerers were over the moon, others seethed, lashing out at any comment that rubbed them the wrong way.

"You think you're stunning, Loraine? I'm disgusted. Never have I seen such an idiotic woman! Can't you exist without a man?"

"Did you erase your memory of your divorce? That's a regrettable choice."

"Loraine, you're climbing the ladder of success. How can you toss that away for a guy? You're jeopardizing your future. And for what? As the head of Universe Group, you could pick any man. Why settle for some destitute nobody? It's repugnant, isn't it?"

Loraine had anticipated the backlash before she sent the tweet. She skimmed the comments with a scoff, set aside her toast, and with a flourish, addressed her detractor, "I apologize. I have a preference for 'poor' Marco, who lovingly prepares my breakfast and milk, over the haters who have nothing but insults to offer."



Chapter 836 High-profile Announcement

The detractor, seemingly shocked by Loraine's response, remained silent for an extended period as her words swiftly circulated.

Netizens chimed in with their thoughts, stating, "Truthfully, Loraine's preferences are none of our business. Let's quit the rumors. Just respect and wish them happiness!"

Public sentiment began to sway, favoring the romance between Loraine and Marco. Some enthusiasts even crafted narratives about the pair, adding to their fame.

Avid followers, well-versed in their history, noted ongoing communication post-divorce, speculating a reunion was imminent.

Furthermore, Loraine's statement sparked the trending query, "Does your partner warm up milk for you early in the morning?"

This question went viral, prompting boasts about attentive partners and laments over lazy ones. Amidst this, the majority shrugged off previous accusations against Marco as baseless, with detractors failing to regain the spotlight.

Amidst the shifting tides of opinion, Loraine found contentment. It was then that Marco's voice broke her focus, asking, "What's caught your attention?"

He emerged with a glass of milk and a fresh fried egg, as the prior one had turned cold.

With guidance from the cook, this one was shaped like a heart.

Lorraine's laughter filled the air upon seeing him.

Unbeknownst to him, a milk droplet adorned his face. It was a comical testament to his rushed breakfast preparations.

Marco, puzzled by her amusement and oblivious to the milky blemish, inquired, "Is there something on my face?"

Lorraine falsely claimed, "No."

With a breath of relief, Marco slid the freshly cooked fried egg towards her with a blend of nerves and anticipation. He bowed his head slightly, offering a timid smile. "Try this one. It should taste better than the last."

Yet, Lorraine didn't rush to sample the dish. She playfully prodded, "Which one? The one where you turned the potato into chips? Mr. Bryant, with due respect, your culinary prowess was previously so lacking that any improvement would seem monumental."

Marco cradled his forehead, his face flushed with mortification.

She could be quite sharp-tongued at times.

Observing his embarrassment, Lorraine's lips curved into a smug grin. She beckoned him closer, whispering, "I've got a secret. Lean in."

Despite his wariness, Marco stepped nearer, his suspicion piqued by Aldo's absence, which seemed to embolden Lorraine.

She dabbed a speck of milk from his cheek with a napkin, then burst into hearty laughter.

"Planning to save that drop of milk for dinner, are you, Marco?"

Haha."

As Marco felt his own face, he realized she had deceived him, now cackling at his expense.

After a moment of contemplation, he replied with a composed voice, "I also have a secret. Do you want to hear it?"

Loraine was clever. She shielded her face with her hands like an alert little cat and peered at him. "What? Is there something on my face?"

Marco strode over, took a seat next to her, and teased, "I'll keep it a secret unless you come closer."

Loraine paused, her gaze lingering on the teasing grin playing at the corner of his mouth. She brushed her face tentatively, considering her need to leave for work. Eventually, with a smile, she yielded and moved towards him.

"Let's not harbor any ill feelings. I..."

Before she could finish, Marco wrapped her in his embrace and sealed her words with a fervent kiss.

Marco was not one to let things slide easily. He nibbled at her lips in reprimand, as though he intended to brand her with his mark. Loraine grew anxious, attempting to push him away, but he deepened the kiss instead.

The servants discreetly vanished from sight. Beal, intent on descending for breakfast, thought better of it and retreated.

Moments later, Loraine, gasping for air, shoved Marco back, her face flushed. She murmured a complaint, "Aren't you worried someone might tattle to grandpa?"

She often wielded the threat of Aldo to keep him in check, and

he had no counter.

Marco snickered, not the least bit deterred. He affectionately squeezed her cheek and retorted, "What's given in good manners should be returned. Your grandpa won't hold it against me."

As he spoke, Loraine remained nestled in his arms, their heads close together, sharing an intimate moment in the broad daylight. It was an intimacy that would surely infuriate Aldo and earn Marco a stern rebuke.

By a twist of fate, just as Marco concluded, a car halted outside, heralding Aldo's arrival with the sound of a hearty laugh, as if he was bidding farewell to someone.



Chapter 837 Honing His Culinary Talents

As Aldo's laughter pierced the air, Marco's body stiffened. He didn't shove Loraine aside, opting instead to sit upright promptly. Yet, this sudden change in posture didn't diminish their closeness.

Despite his previous claims of courage and Aldo's blessing on their union, their current closeness sent a ripple of fear through Marco, concerned it might draw Aldo's anger.

Loraine, caught off guard, pondered the timing of Aldo's return.

She considered rising, but it was too late.

Aldo had already entered with a vibrancy that spoke of a pleasant outing with friends. As he strolled into the dining area, he caught sight of them by the table, their proximity intimate.

Upon noticing them, Aldo's demeanor took a sharp turn; his beard bristled in preparation for a reprimand, only for Loraine to push Marco away swiftly.

Marco, regaining his composure, stood tall and greeted Aldo cheerfully, "Good morning."

Aldo's gaze was a mix of anger and scrutiny as he surveyed the modest breakfast spread. His voice laced with disapproval, he questioned, "Lorrie, why such a modest meal today? What have the cooks been up to? How could they serve such substandard food to my granddaughter?"

Despite his age, he wasn't set in his ways. He understood the young couple's need for privacy, likely sharing a deeper intimacy away from his eyes.

His progressive attitude didn't equate to endorsement, however! A hint of envy lingered within him toward Marco, the young man who seduced his granddaughter.

Thus, even without witnessing an embrace upon his return, he'd concoct reasons to challenge Marco.

Regarding the breakfast laid upon the table, Aldo surmised Marco was the chef.

He begrudgingly acknowledged Marco's culinary efforts, yet couldn't help noting the unappealing presentation.

Privately, Loraine might playfully use Aldo's disapproval to tease Marco, but she was quick to defend him when Aldo's teasing turned serious. She interjected, "Grandpa, Marco prepared this tasty breakfast. Won't you try some?"

Confronted with the charred rim of the fried egg, Aldo offered a wry smile and declined, "No thanks. I've lost my appetite!"

Marco, caught in an uncomfortable grin, endured Aldo's scrutinizing gaze and his subsequent cough before the older man acknowledged, "Well, at least you're up making breakfast for Lorrie. That's commendable. But remember, as a future member of the Torres family, you're expected to look after Lorrie properly. Got it?"

Marco assured with a nod, "Don't worry, grandpa. I've got it."

Aldo snorted, pondered for a moment, and remarked, "Since you're often at home, you should hone your culinary talents. You can't continue serving Lorrie such unappetizing meals!"

Marco agreed promptly, vowing, "I'll practice tirelessly to ensure Lorrie enjoys nutritious, healthy, and tasty meals after her work!"

Satisfied, Aldo's eyes crinkled into a smile. His fondness for Marco grew.

Marco's compliance, regardless of his challenges, was precisely what he desired.

Yet, Aldo maintained a stern visage, stating critically, "You probably think I'm interfering too much, don't you? Very well, I'll stop being a nuisance!"

At this, Loraine grasped Aldo's arm, inquiring, "Grandpa, are you leaving us?"

Aldo, softened by his cherished granddaughter's touch, caressed her head, smiling. "I've been enjoying old conversations with a friend lately. Today, we're set for a game of chess!"

Marco and Loraine exchanged a look of surprise.

Only one person engaged in long chess games with Aldo. It was his dearest friend.

Aldo, sensing their thoughts, bristled with annoyance, snorted, and strode into the chess room. He grabbed his prized chess set and departed briskly.

Sharing a knowing smile, Loraine paused, then texted Aldo to enjoy himself but not to remain seated for too long.

After breakfast, as Loraine set off for the company, Marco contemplated Aldo's words, resolved to delve into culinary studies.

But just as he was about to step into the kitchen, his phone

rang.

The caller ID made him frown, yet after a brief hesitation, he answered.

A woman's voice on the other end said, "Marco, if you wish to stay with Loraine, meet with me."

The voice was familiar. It was Florence's, Grady's mother.



Chapter 838 An Invitation From Florence

When Marco heard this, his eyes turned cold and he said in a low voice, "It's not up to you to make any decision on the issue between myself and Loraine."

He had no positive impression of Florence.

Though the branch of the Cruz family that was in Vagow had some connections with the Bryant family, since his childhood, he'd always had a keen intuition. As a result, every time he saw Florence, he always felt uncomfortable.

Underneath her flattering smile, there was a strong jealousy and hatred she had for him.

In the past, he was completely in the dark, but since the moment he found out that he might be a member of the Cruz family, he seemed to have figured out some things.

Perhaps his real father had arranged the connection between the branch of the Cruz family that was in Vagow and the Bryant family. Unfortunately, Winfred had died early, and so had Grady's father, making the arrangement impossible to continue.

Though Florence didn't know about the connection between the Cruzes and Marco, she had been told by her husband, when he was alive, to engage positively with the Bryant family and raise her son to respect Marco. But being an arrogant woman, Florence never accepted this.

And now that Marco had a better understanding of the Cruz

family, it made him hate Florence even more.

He guessed that the reason she had called him was something to do with the direct line of descent of the Cruz family. After all, Clifford, who claimed to be his uncle, had never given up on persuading him to go back to Zodiac.

Meanwhile, Florence, after being turned down so rudely by Marco, gritted her teeth and replied in a voice filled with hatred, "Marco, I know what's on your mind. You..."

She stopped herself in time and swallowed her words before they could leave her mouth. Then, after a moment, she said instead, "You've gone to see members of the Cruz family before, haven't you? Well, I wonder what Loraine would think if she knew about that."

Clearly, Marco's guess was accurate. Florence's purpose for calling was simply about the Cruz family. But she had not called him because Clifford had asked her to. She had done it because she got the news that Marco was asking about the Cruz family in Zodiac.

The humiliation she had received at the hospital some time ago from someone she considered an old servant of the Cruz family was something that she still hadn't forgotten to this day. Marco's participation in that humiliation was the reason why she had been paying so much attention to him lately.

After all, as far as she was concerned, her son would soon become the head of the Cruz family. Their status would be elevated and they would gain a lot of respect. But the fact that he had been humiliated by Loraine and Marco angered her a lot.

That was why when she learned that Marco was investigating the Cruz family, she suddenly began to panic.

She'd even heard that Marco was the one who had turned out



to be a match to Ariadna. Hence, she was wondering if he was beginning to have certain suspicions.

Florence was quite clever. Even though her main aim was to find out about his plans, she didn't go straight to the point by asking him directly. Instead, she decided to use Loraine as a bait to lure him out. Unfortunately, Marco didn't take the bait.

Instead, he was very annoyed. In fact, it suddenly occurred to him that his meeting with Clifford had been known by Florence, so he felt that Clifford was the one who had asked her to persuade him to return to the Cruz family.

He hated having anything to do with people like Florence, even more than he hated interacting with a hypocrite like Clifford.

But then, she was someone who could do absolutely anything to achieve her goal. If things didn't go her way, she might announce to the whole world that he was a member of the Cruz family.

At that point, Loraine would know his identity and ask him why he had hidden it from her.

Thinking about all these, Marco, though he was still annoyed, asked her in a low voice, "What do you want?"

Florence was very glad that he had finally yielded. So, she said to him in an authoritative tone, "Like I told you before, I want to see you. I'll send you the address of where we are to meet. Wait for me there this afternoon."

Marco hung up the phone without saying a word, and just then, he got a text containing the address she had promised to send. It was a coffee shop.

Since he had nothing to do, he went to the place immediately.

As he walked into the coffee shop, he saw an elegantly dressed Florence drinking coffee at a table.

Wearing a straight face, Marco walked up to the table. He didn't sit down. Instead, he just stood in front of Florence.

His tall frame blocked the rays of sun coming in through the door. When Florence felt this dark presence in front of her, she looked up. At the sight of Marco standing there, her hand trembled and she mistakenly spilled the coffee.

She had not expected to see him so soon. He had taken her completely by surprise.

But there was also something else. She had known Marco for a long time, but whenever she saw him, she always had this feeling that he looked like a man she knew. The kind of aura around him could only be found in one other person.

And that person, whom she had only seen once by virtue of her status as a member of the family, was none other than the head of the Cruz family!

In the past, Marco used to be frightening and domineering. But now, after experiencing so much sorrow and joy, he had become calmer. Yet, he still looked frightening, especially to her.

Marco, on his part, frowned in confusion as he watched the strange expression on Florence's face. He didn't know what she was thinking, but he didn't have the patience to wonder. So, he went straight to the point. "Florence, you really think you can threaten me, eh? I'm here to warn you for the last time. Keep your mouth shut and don't say anything you shouldn't!"

Chapter 839 The Purpose Of Florence

Observing the man before her, Florence's body quivered in fear. This sensation curiously imitated the one she had when encountering the Cruz family's master.

Back then, the master's presence was commanding, his gaze aloof and frosty.

Impatient, Marco shifted slightly, casting light on Florence, somewhat softening the overwhelming aura.

It was only then that Florence's breath returned, a sigh of relief escaping her. Doubt flickered in her mind. His resemblance to the Cruz family's master was remarkable.

Perhaps it's all in her mind!

She quickly dismissed the thought, her eyes hardening. A confident smile reclaimed her face as she gestured to the seat across her. "Please, take a seat. Let's discuss."

Marco's brow furrowed. The idea of a calm conversation with Florence seemed unlikely, yet he couldn't risk her becoming a threat to his and Loraine's life.

With reluctance, he sat opposite her, his voice icy. "What is it you wish to discuss?"

Instead of replying, Florence reached for her coffee, using the act of drinking to mask her emotions.

Her thoughts were consumed by recent information.

Marco, a fortunate bastard, appeared to have luck on his side. A man of mysterious origin, raised by the Bryant family as their son for over two decades, was now linked to Ariadna.

Maybe it was this very reason that the Cruz family felt indebted to Marco, granting him the opportunity to cross paths with them.

The guy who encountered Marco had a top-ranking role in the Cruz family, and Florence wasn't allowed to meet him. Yet, she had probed and found out that he was the master's biological sibling!

How had Marco, a mere outcast, acquired such an intimidating presence from a single meeting?

Florence consoled herself with this reasoning, convinced that Marco's true, lowly nature would eventually surface.

With a sneer, she regarded Marco with disdain. He was just an orphan, insignificant despite Loraine's assistance. The Cruz family's influence greatly exceeded that of the Torres family.

Even if he seized the chance to become acquainted with the Cruz family, what difference would it make? A lowly person could never rise to nobility. As long as her plan succeeded, not just Marco, but even Loraine would be forced to bow before her and Grady, grinning all the while.

With a subtly cold smile flickering in her eyes, she put on a friendly facade, instructed the waiter to bring exquisite cakes for Marco, and began to imitate concern for him.

"Marco, learning about your true background filled us with regret. Grady has always seen you as a close friend, and I've

watched you grow. It pains us to see what you've endured."

Marco had readied himself to bear Florence's disdain, but her insincere concern and deceitful words almost made him laugh.

It was clear to him that Florence remained unaware of his ties to the Cruz family. She had approached him today with a different agenda in mind.

Freed from the fear of her threats, Marco reclaimed his usual air of detachment and indifference. He gave her a cold glance and chose not to respond.

Florence, oblivious to the shift in his demeanor, continued, "I saw the news this morning. It's truly saddening. You, once the head of the Bryant Group, are now reduced to purchasing plain jewelry in an unfamiliar store. And it seems Loraine doesn't value you much either."

Marco cut her off, "Mrs. Cruz, my relationship with Loraine is none of your concern. Why not get to the point of why you wished to meet?"

Taken aback by his interruption, Florence managed a strained smile and replied, "Don't be so distant, Marco. I'm here to offer my assistance."

"In what way?" Marco's mocking expression stirred a twinge of guilt within her.

Yet, encouraged by her scheme, she brazenly proposed, "Haven't you been involved with Ariadna? The Cruz family will surely reward you. Just aid Grady in seizing control of the Cruz family, and we'll make it worth your while. After all, you're Grady's best friend."

Laying her cards on the table, she pressed, "Marco, this is in your best interest. Once Grady takes the reins of the Cruz

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+120 Points at most

family, he can improve your status in Loraine's eyes. You won't have to worry about her disdain anymore!"



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