

## Love Slave 280

### 280 Harsh Reminder

That was when I gasped in shock as I started to see people standing up from their seat. A moment later, the sound of applaud erupted throughout the auditorium. It was the loudest round of applaud that I had ever heard in my life, and I couldn't believe it at first that they were applauding our work.

If there was such a thing as a 'dream come true' moment, then I was pretty sure that that was it.

I had to admit that I was extremely worried if the commercial that we had made would be able to connect emotionally with the audiences. As my eyes adjusted a little to the bright light that now lit up the entire auditorium, I could tell from the faces of the audience that there was nothing for me to worry about anymore on that front.

We did it. We've connected it.

The story and the emotions that we wanted to portray, I believed that the audiences understood it and that they felt exactly what we wanted them to feel. The change that came about as time changes things. The bond between man and man's best friend throughout their various stages of life. I felt tears sting the back of my eyes and I had to sniff a little to hold my tears back. My emotions threatened to overwhelm me, and I had to struggle to hold them all back. To say that I was proud of myself and what everyone had managed to achieve would be an utter understatement. So many emotions flooded my chest that I found it hard to breathe.

The rounds of applaud wouldn't stop. Although we have just launched the commercial and we had no idea if we would be victorious in the competition or not, I was already satisfied with this first reaction that our work had received. Everyone only settled down again and sat down in their seats when Ace came up onto the stage again. He waved like a celebrity and smiled at everyone before he headed to the same place behind the podium.

This was going to be the most challenging part of the launch event and we had to place our trust in Ace to get through this. After watching the commercial, now was the audiences' chance to ask Ace whatever question that they had. I was certain that Ace had anticipated their questions already and he must have prepared some answers. Either that, or he could be trusted to come up with some acceptable answer on the spot. With that thought in mind, I was very surprised at the first question that was hurled at him from the crowd.

"At your birthday party, you mentioned that you would be stepping down from your position as CEO, are you still planning to do that?" a middle-aged man asked loud and clear.

I gasped as my hand flew to cover my mouth to prevent unnecessary noises from escaping from my lips. It seemed like the press had other curiosities in mind that had nothing to do with the launch of our commercial or supporting the end of the dog meat trade. My lips went dry as I waited for Ace's response. Ace didn't seem shocked by the question at all and that probably meant that he had anticipated something like this to happen. He did mention that he would quit after the end of this competition so I guess it made sense that they were bringing up this issue now.

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“Thank you for your question. That is correct. I did say that I would be stepping down from my position as CEO and I still intend to keep my word. There has not been a change in plans,” Ace replied calmly before he smiled politely at the crowd.

His straightforward answer sent the crowd into another kind of uproar that felt very different from their excitement earlier over the commercial. It was like the dam had broken as members of the press stood up from their seats and started shouting out questions at Ace about his retirement from the company. Everything was suddenly so chaotic that I started to fear for Ace’s safety for a moment. Thankfully, it didn’t take long for the security team to form a line in front of the audience seat to stop the reporters from approaching the stage and getting close to Ace.

It took a long while before they all calmed down again and began asking their questions in an orderly manner. There were many questions about Ace’s sudden retirement, most of which he answered by smartly dodging the question. In other words, he didn’t really answer to their question at all besides confirming that he still intended to quit his job when the Ashford competition came to an end.

Even though I already knew what Ace intended to do, it still made my heart sink to hear him repeat it again. It was probably because I didn’t want to believe it that I found it so hard to accept that soon he would no longer be the CEO of this company. Even if he did say that nothing would change between us, I doubt that that would really be the case. If I tried my best to be optimistic about it, then perhaps there would be many positive changes that would come about for us based on the decision that he’d made. However, no one really knew what the future would hold.

Other members of the CEO’s Office must have felt the same way as I did about Ace leaving the company so suddenly. The atmosphere around where I was seated felt stifling and suddenly much heavier as Ace continued to deal with the questions hurled at him from the crowd of reporters. I was certain that everyone else on the team was just as shocked as I was to hear his announcement about this and now that they were being reminded of it again, they were probably just as depressed about it.

Hang in there, Rina....

I spoke to myself inside my head as my hands clenched together tightly on my lap.