

Chapter 1112 Uphold The Reputation Of Odom

Amidst the fervent praise swirling around the restaurant, Loraine's dissent cut through the chatter with a calm and assured tone, causing the boastful talkers to awkwardly fall silent.

As the silence lingered, the atmosphere in the room shifted with whispers of speculation. Visitors scrutinized the "Phoenix in Flames" with a critical eye, eager to discern any flaws and avoid appearing gullible or lacking in discernment.

The restaurant manager, visibly flustered by Loraine's disagreement, felt a surge of anger within him. The mocking whispers only exacerbated his discomfort, fueling his frustration.

He cast a malevolent gaze in Loraine's direction, noting her and Marco's unassuming attire, which, despite their striking presence and confident demeanor, seemed to imply they were mere bystanders rather than influential figures.

Convinced of their insignificance, the manager's expression twisted into a contemptuous sneer as he addressed Loraine. "And what qualifies you to challenge the authenticity of our dish? Do you even understand what 'Phoenix in Flames' is?"

His tone dripped with displeasure as he continued, "Are you attempting to gain attention by stirring up trouble? Our establishment is not a playground for the likes of you, nor is it a venue for disruptive behavior. I won't entertain your baseless claims. I suggest you leave promptly unless you find yourself unable to even afford a cup of tea, which would be quite embarrassing."

Loraine regarded the manager's arrogance with disgust, her features tightening into a cold frown. "I assure you, this is not

'Phoenix in Flames.' I played a role in creating that dish, so I am well acquainted with it," she stated firmly.

Her assertion momentarily took the crowd aback before the manager burst into laughter. His amusement was quickly echoed by disdainful smiles from those around him. They had already dismissed Loraine as a naive troublemaker.

Wiping tears of laughter from his eyes, the manager chuckled incredulously, "You claim to have helped design 'Phoenix in Flames'? Why not simply say you know Chef Odom? This is utterly absurd!"

Maintaining her composure, Loraine met the manager's incredulous gaze with a calm nod. "I do know him," she affirmed quietly.

The manager snorted derisively, his impatience palpable, "So you're nothing but a delusional liar. Leave now and refrain from disrupting our business any further!"

Loraine's frown deepened as she pointed assertively at the dish, her tone grave. "A true 'Phoenix in Flames' symbolizes rebirth through fire, characterized by the fragrance of boiling chili oil. Yet, this dish lacks any discernible aroma. How dare you use Chef Odom's name as a mere gimmick?"

The manager's expression soured, his discomfort evident as Loraine stepped closer to examine the dish. Suddenly, a small smile played on her lips as she made an observation. "Ah, I see... While the appearance may bear a resemblance to that of 'Phoenix in Flames,' the chili oil has been substituted with tomato sauce," she remarked coolly.

Fixing the manager with a steely gaze, she continued, "Furthermore, the main body of the 'phoenix' is comprised of potatoes. So, what sets this apart from mere potato chunks dipped in ketchup? It lacks the allure and quality of true culinary artistry, resembling nothing more than cheap fast food fries."

With Loraine's astute observations, the perception of the dish underwent a dramatic shift, plummeting from a high-status

"Phoenix in Flames" to the level of common fast food fries.

The revelation proved to be a significant blow, prompting many diners—some of whom held notable positions—to lose their appetite. Even those who had ordered the dish swiftly summoned the waiter to cancel their orders.

The manager's face paled, then flushed crimson with anger. He looked disdainfully at Loraine, his voice sharp with reproach. "Where did you come from, spouting such nonsense? This is the renowned 'Phoenix in Flames'!"

Reluctantly, he argued, "Moreover, isn't all cuisine essentially a fusion of commonplace ingredients? The essence of 'Phoenix in Flames' lies in its artistic presentation!"

Loraine's frown deepened at his retort. Her mind drifted back to her time studying under Odom, where they shared a similar philosophy. Odom had always advocated for simplicity in cooking, emphasizing the importance of preserving the essence of food as something to be enjoyed.

Loraine had long held the belief that the primary purpose of food was its taste and nourishment rather than its appearance alone.

However, as she scrutinized the dish before her, it became apparent that the chef had sacrificed taste for visual appeal. The decision to use tomato sauce instead of chili oil to maintain the shape of the 'phoenix' clearly indicated a lack of skill, a compromise that undermined the dish's flavor.

Loraine rebutted sharply. "While artistic value is important, the 'Phoenix in Flames' is also meant to be a delicious dish. This one lacks two out of three essential elements: color, aroma, and taste. It doesn't deserve to be called 'Phoenix in Flames.'"

Growing increasingly flustered, the manager spoke impulsively. "Our chef is Odom's esteemed apprentice! Who are you to pass judgment? You've belittled this dish to nothing. Why don't you make a real 'Phoenix in Flames' yourself!"

Loraine arched an eyebrow, determined to uphold the

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reputation of her mentor. Turning to Marco, she posed a question. "Would you like to see what a real 'Phoenix in Flames' looks like?"

Marco met her gaze, a smile playing on his lips. "Yes, dear, please show me what a true 'Phoenix in Flames' entails."

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Lorraine then turned to the manager with a sly grin that only those close to her could understand, mixed with a playful sense of victory.

"Given the circumstances, may I have a moment to use your kitchen?" she asked.

The manager appeared surprised, casting a suspicious glance her way. "Young lady, don't try to be a hero just to prove a point. It's okay to admit your ignorance."

At that moment, a woman in the crowd squinted at Marco, who was dressed casually, and gasped in surprise. "Isn't that Marco Bryant? Why is he dressed like that and out here?"

At this time, the Solar Company was thriving, and the Cruz family still publicly referred to him as the young heir, so nobody believed Marco was in trouble. They simply assumed this affluent individual had decided to venture out incognito.

Once Marco's identity became known, Lorraine, standing next to him, was also recognized.

A few people who were aware of Lorraine's recent troubles couldn't resist smirking with satisfaction.

Someone even teased, "Perhaps she can indeed pull off a real 'Phoenix in Flames.' Let her give it a try!"

Hearing the murmurs of the crowd, the manager grew increasingly uneasy. Though he didn't know these affluent guests personally, he had heard of Marco and Lorraine.

Now, he faced a dilemma. If he backed down, wouldn't he be embarrassing his boss?

However, he thought that if these two were indeed wealthy, their culinary skills were likely lacking.

Observing Loraine's delicate hands, which seemed unaccustomed to a kitchen knife, the manager felt confident and scoffed, "Alright, but if you want to make this interesting – if you fail, you will owe us for the damage to our reputation, and you must bow and apologize!"

At this, Marco's expression turned stern, and he stepped forward, warning in an irritated tone, "Don't overstep!"

Loraine gently patted him, showing no signs of worry, and asked with a smile, "And what if I succeed? Will you then bow and apologize to me?"

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, the manager felt a rush of heat to his head and sneered, "Obviously."

Loraine nodded, gave Marco a comforting glance, and walked confidently into the open kitchen.

She didn't pay attention to the crowd's gaze, just focused on putting on her apron and skillfully working with the ingredients.

Watching her skilled movements, the manager's complexion went white, suddenly fearful that he might have made a wrong bet. Damn it! This wasn't a beginner hesitant to wield a kitchen knife; this was undoubtedly a master chef at work!

Inside the kitchen, Loraine quickly gathered her needed ingredients. In her hands, these ordinary items transformed, taking on impressive forms.

The audience watched in awe as she meticulously carved the phoenix parts with her refined knife skills. They were captivated, silent, afraid to blink and miss a detail.

Yet, it felt like in a mere moment, they couldn't grasp which step they had overlooked. How had those simple ingredients suddenly transformed into a majestic, lifelike phoenix ready to take flight?

Many were left speechless, whispering in disbelief.

Marco heard those exclamations and grinned, gazing affectionately at Loraine, who was fully focused on her cooking.

He felt proud of her and honored to be by her side. She was his remarkable and incredible girlfriend.

After sculpting the phoenix, Loraine moved on to decorating it. She sliced soft, delicate tofu into thin strips that blossomed into a white flower in her hand.

Starting with a traditional tofu dish, she added water, giving the tofu strips a bit of springiness. She then adorned the phoenix's crest with these strips and some vegetarian meat derived from soy.

To those outside the kitchen, every move she made appeared like magic. They couldn't understand how the tofu strips were sliced so thinly and managed to stay unbroken, adhering perfectly to the phoenix.

Time seemed to slip away unnoticed, but Loraine eventually emerged from the kitchen with the dish. It still carried a subtle scent of beans, leaving the crowd in awe of its stunning appearance.

The manager's expression darkened. He knew he had underestimated the situation, but he refused to back down, complaining and saying, "Our 'Phoenix in Flames' is vibrant and appealing in bright red. What's the point of your dish, even if the carving is excellent? It does not match the real thing at all!"

The real thing? Loraine chuckled softly, then scooped up some chili oil and poured it over the phoenix.

Instantly, the phoenix's surface transformed into scaly, crispy textures, and the spicy, enticing aroma filled the air. The chili-soaked tofu strips took on a reddish hue.

The phoenix seemed to raise its head, its feathers fluttering as if it were about to soar skyward. To the crowd, it appeared as though they were witnessing a real phoenix rising from the

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flames.

Loraine declared confidently, "This is the real 'Phoenix in Flames!"