

Chapter 1114 The Real Chef

Judging by the stunning presentation and the overwhelming aroma, any normal person would know instantly that Loraine's "Phoenix in Flames" was the genuine one!

On the other hand, the other "Phoenix in Flames," which was drowned in tomato sauce, looked exquisite but tasted poorly, leaving people who ate it with no appetite. The difference was very clear.

Someone started clapping, and soon, cheers and praises from everyone in the venue filled the air.

The elegant woman who had earlier recognized Marco stepped forward with a graceful smile and inquired, "Miss Torres, can you sell me this 'Phoenix in Flames'? I would be honored to taste such a delicacy."

Several other people immediately echoed her sentiment, expressing their willingness to pay any amount just for a taste.

Loraine had only come out to have a meal, not to sell food. She couldn't help but laugh when she began to get all these offers. "Well, since everyone likes it, let's just share it together then," she said, and began by serving a portion to the woman.

The crowd were very excited and they quickly formed a queue to wait for their share. As Loraine distributed the meal, she warned them, "This food is a bit spicy and hot. Please be careful when eating it."

Since everyone in the restaurant had gathered around Loraine, the restaurant's food was left untouched.

The manager was not happy with this at all. He stepped forward and declared angrily, "This food was made with ingredients from our restaurant. If you all want to eat it, you have to pay the same amount as the price of our 'Phoenix in Flames!'"

"So, you've finally admitted that what I made is the real 'Phoenix in Flames?'" Loraine asked him in a mocking tone.

The manager suddenly realized his mistake and became lost for words.

"Well, I don't need you to bow. Just apologize briefly and let the guests

enjoy their meal in peace," Loraine sneered at him.

The manager had no choice but to agree. He knew that if word of this situation got out, it would destroy the reputation of the restaurant.

People would come to the conclusion that the food in the restaurant was of poor taste and inauthentic!

So, because of this, even if he was accused of being shameless, he had to keep insisting that what Loraine had made was not the real "Phoenix in Flames."

Looking at the food she had prepared, he suddenly thought of something and shouted excitedly, "This is not the real 'Phoenix in Flames!' Chef Odom is from Presal. Presalian prefer light food. How can a Presalian make a dish that's covered in chili oil? Even if your dish tastes nice, it's still not the real thing. Nevertheless, customers must still pay for it!"

Loraine couldn't help but laugh when she heard this. But then, she noticed the dark expression on Marco's face. It looked as if his patience with the manager had worn out.

In order to calm Marco, she handed him a plate of the food she had prepared with a soothing smile on her face.

As a result, Marco's expression eased slightly, but his gaze on the manager remained icy.

"Marco, my phone is with you, right?" Loraine asked. "Please make a call to Odom for me."

Everyone heard what she said. The manager's face twitched at first, but then he sneered contemptuously, "Don't be ridiculous. Do you know who Odom is? He's not someone you can just contact simply because you have a little money."

Before he could finish the statement, Marco had already found and called Odom's number on Loraine's phone.

In fact, the manager was still speaking when the call connected and a man's voice came through, sounding both confused and delighted.

Loraine quickly took the phone from Marco and communicated fluently in Presalian with the man on the other end of the line. The people around could only understand one word: "Odom!"

They looked at one another in surprise. Even the restaurant manager

was shocked at the familiar manner in which Loraine called Odom's name.

Just like he said earlier, Odom was not someone one could easily contact. Even foreign royal families had difficulty getting him to render his services to them.

Yet, Loraine was calling him and talking to him in such a tone of familiarity.

At this point, everyone could hear Odom on the other end of the phone speaking angrily in a rapid stream of words. Though the manager couldn't understand Presalian, he easily guessed that the ongoing discussion would not be beneficial to him.

Already, beads of sweat were trickling down his forehead. It had now become clear to him that he was really in trouble this time. But when he remembered the background of the restaurant owner, he summoned up some courage and asked Loraine, "Is this... is this some actor that you hired?"


Loraine didn't say anything in response. She just switched the screen to landscape mode and turned it to a video call.

By now, the events that had been playing out in the dining area had reached the kitchen. When the head chef heard of the matter, he immediately rushed out to confront the person that was causing all the trouble.

He rushed out at the exact same time the call was switched to a video call. On the screen was a foreigner with a gray beard and a serious expression on his face.

When the head chef saw him, he panicked and unintentionally blurted out his name. "Chef Odom!"



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Chapter 1115 Engagement Dinner Chef

The name revealed by the restaurant chef confirmed that the person on the video call with Loraine was indeed the famous chef Odom, a figure rarely encountered by the public!

Instantly, the manager's face turned pale, and the chef appeared visibly distressed.

Everyone, including Odom who was on the video call, stared at him with suspicion.

Odom narrowed his eyes and, upon recognizing the chef's face, his face flushed with anger. He spat out a few heated words in Presalian.

Then, upon realizing the environment Loraine was in, he stopped and said in Kitay language with a grave tone, "I have never taken any other apprentices! The only apprentice I acknowledge is Loraine, and no one else!"

After a bystander who understood Presalian clarified Odom's words, the situation became clear to everyone.

The so-called apprentice was merely a kitchen helper who had briefly worked at the Geranium. He wasn't even a qualified chef overseas, yet back in Kitay, he had posed as Odom's apprentice.

Realizing they had paid premium prices for food prepared by just a kitchen helper, the patrons' expressions soured, and they angrily demanded their money back from the restaurant!

With public discontent mounting, the manager looked pale. Despite his regret over the situation with Loraine, he began processing refunds.

The guests then rallied around Loraine, commending her culinary skills and her bright future.

Naturally, many were also intrigued by Odom, still visible on the video call, hoping to connect with him through Loraine.

Loraine, not wanting to trouble Odom further, ended the call after a quick

chat in Presalian, politely acknowledging the admirers.

After the crowd dispersed, she excitedly grabbed Marco's arm and said, "Today brought an unexpected bonus! I just asked Odom if he'd consider cooking for our engagement dinner, and he said yes!"

She continued cheerfully, "I'll go over some details with him. Could you manage things here for a bit?"

Marco, equally amazed, nodded and smiled in agreement.

As Loraine exited the establishment, Marco's smile disappeared, and his gaze grew icy as he turned towards the chef and manager.

Odom was a well-regarded mentor to Loraine and had supported her. The restaurant had exploited his name for profit, damaging his good name. Marco, understandably, was not going to overlook this.

He checked his phone, and upon looking up, his expression had turned cold.

The usually arrogant manager was now ghostly pale, and the chef looked both terrified and bewildered. Both shivered under Marco's cold stare.

Right when the manager was about to beg for leniency, Marco said in a calm tone, "I've just learned that this establishment is backed by the Wilson family, correct?"

Seeing a glimmer of hope, the manager quickly responded with a nervous smile, "Yes, yes, Mr. Bryant, please show mercy. The Wilson family will certainly..."

However, Marco cut him off, saying, "I was just looking for an excuse to confront the Wilson family. Thanks for providing one."

Meanwhile, outside, Loraine had joyfully finalized the time of Odom's arrival and felt uplifted. She was about to return to check on Marco when she saw him stepping outside.

She happily linked arms with Marco, saying, "Odom will be here in a few days. That's fantastic. Our engagement celebration just got even better!"

Marco returned her smile warmly, hiding any sign of his earlier severity. He pretended to be a little jealous and said, "'Phoenix in Flames' was so tough to prepare, and you ended up sharing it with everyone. I barely got a taste."

Lorraine laughed and assured him, "There's plenty of time ahead. I can cook countless more meals for you, each more stunning and tastier than the 'Phoenix in Flames!'"

Marco's mood lifted as he gently held Lorraine's hand, asking, "Are you tired? I've made a reservation at another restaurant. Let's go have a meal."

Lorraine agreed. She had intended to dine out anyway, but the day's events and all the commotion had worn her out.

They reached the restaurant Marco had booked, but at the entrance, he paused and mysteriously mentioned, "I've arranged a surprise for you. Please go inside and wait for me for a moment."

Accustomed to his surprises and always excited by them, Lorraine nodded and made her way to the private room.

Upon opening the door, she was greeted by a middle-aged man who looked up and inquired, "You are Lorraine, correct?"

Chapter 1116 I Have No Intention Of Returning To Th...

The man possessed a remarkable presence, his attire crafted from fine materials and distinct designs, undoubtedly custom-made. His eyes seemed unassuming at first, but they hinted at a sharp and perceptive mind.

Based on Loraine's experience in the business world, she instantly realized that this was not a man to be underestimated.

Lorraine was briefly taken by surprise. She checked the room number, which was the same one Marco had given her, confirming she was in the correct location. Additionally, the man had called her by name.

It was evident this man had sought her out intentionally, and his motives were not good.

His eyes seemed to read her thoughts, and he chuckled, "My name is Francis Wilson. You're at the right place. I knew you'd be here and waited to talk to you. We need to discuss something."

At the mention of the surname Wilson, Loraine's face clouded over, and she turned to leave without a word.

Yet, Francis called out in a calm voice, "Walking away now would only show you have something to hide. If not, why refuse to sit and talk?"

He continued in a measured tone, "We haven't met before, and there's no personal grudges between us."

Francis was indeed more composed and mature compared to his younger brothers.

Lorraine stopped, turned back, and scoffed, "Why are the Wilsons so arrogant? Interrupting my dinner and then expecting a warm welcome?"

Francis merely raised an eyebrow, his expression unreadable, but his eyes briefly widened upon seeing her face.

Lorraine's face was alert and defiant, like a cat with its back arched and teeth bared. While not particularly threatening, her eyes were cold. "Did

you come here to speak on Kaley's behalf too?"

Seeing her expression, Francis was reminded of his youngest sister when she was first found years ago, curled up defensively, wary and distrustful of everyone.

It was no wonder Joseph had been confused, and the investigative report had mentioned she had undergone surgery to look like the Wilson family's youngest daughter.

Indeed, Loraine bore a striking resemblance to his sister, whom he had met only a few times.

After thinking it over for a moment, he continued in a relaxed tone, "I know about the situation with Damon, but he didn't order the action against the Universe Group. It was a misunderstanding by someone on his team who acted independently. The most he can be accused of is poor management."

Loraine frowned, feeling somewhat puzzled.

Why would he go out of his way to clarify this to her?

Additionally, this explanation wasn't all that convincing. If Damon hadn't openly shown hostility towards the Universe Group, his team wouldn't have dared to sabotage a major company's project on their own initiative.

Loraine remained vigilant, a reaction Francis found somewhat amusing. He said casually, "To be honest, I'm here today to ask you to return with me for a DNA test."

Loraine felt her heart jump, and she nearly lost her composed facade. Could it be that the Wilsons had uncovered her connection to them?

However, she quickly calmed down.

She thought sarcastically that perhaps her appearance and the Tear of Sea had sparked the Wilsons' curiosity. They probably still suspected she had undergone plastic surgery to forge a link with their illustrious family, prompting their request for a DNA test to verify this.

But why should she comply? She had already resolved to reject this family on her mother's behalf, not to mention confirm any genetic ties.

Loraine's expression became even colder. "Why should I go just because you say so? Mr. Wilson, it seems you've forgotten that we have a personal grudge! Even if Damon didn't intentionally cause the issue with

the Universe Group, wasn't it the Wilsons who asked my partners to end their agreements with me? Your son even raised the price on purpose at the land auction, right?"

Francis's brow creased, displeased with Loraine's focus on past grievances.

He had come in person to demonstrate the Wilsons' sincerity and goodwill, yet Loraine's preoccupation with old wounds struck him as petty.

Therefore, he also cooled his expression. "Loraine, the only reason I'm taking the time to explain this face-to-face is because you might be related to the Wilsons. This isn't about owing you anything. Don't be ungrateful."

Loraine clenched her fist and fixed Francis with an intense gaze, saying coldly, "I am not a Wilson! I have a loving family and someone I intend to be with for the rest of my life! The Wilsons may be wealthy and powerful, but so what? I don't care, and I have no intention of returning to the Wilson family!"

Chapter 1117 A Check

Francis' words ignited not just anger and disappointment in Loraine but also a deep, unspoken sense of grievance.

She wished she had remained ignorant of her ties to the Wilson family rather than discovering her kin were such heartless and arrogant individuals.

Francis's frown deepened upon hearing her response.

He reflected inwardly that Kaley had at least gotten one thing right—Loraine certainly had a spirited disposition.

Nonetheless, Francis wasn't particularly concerned about whether Loraine was related to the Wilson family by blood. His involvement was motivated partly by Joseph's obsession with locating his long-lost relative and partly by a desire to maintain the Wilson family's prestige, ensuring that their assets didn't fall into the wrong hands.

He signaled with a hand gesture, and his assistant, who had been quietly standing by, stepped forward and placed a check on the table, sliding it towards Loraine.

Tapping the table with his fingers, Francis took on a formal tone, saying, "If you don't wish to return, I won't force you. However, the Tear of the Sea in your possession is a Wilson family heirloom, and I intend to reclaim it. Tell me your price."

Loraine's heart raced, a mix of anger and bitterness welling up inside her.

It was clear the Wilson family had no interest in her mother's well-being; their only concern was for the artifact that symbolized their status!

Loraine looked at Francis's arrogant behavior with detachment, slowly regaining her composure. With a slight chuckle, she said, "I believe I was quite clear with Damon earlier. The Tear of the Sea now belongs to me, and I'm not interested in selling it. You might as well abandon the idea. Besides, I don't need the money."

Francis' eyebrows knitted together upon hearing this, though his expression soon relaxed. "Is it because my offer isn't enough?"

He shook his head, smiling as he casually referenced several significant ventures, then glanced at Loraine. "Just hand over the Tear of the Sea, and these opportunities are yours."

He added pointedly, "Miss Torres, I'm not unreasonable. I actually respect ambition, but there's a limit to everything. These opportunities could propel the Universe Group to the top in Zodiac. Even if you keep the necklace and force us to recognize you, you wouldn't gain more than this."

Loraine's disillusionment with the Wilsons had grown, leaving her unfazed by such insults. She remained expressionless and rejected him outright once more.

Francis' displeasure was evident in his eyes.

Before he could make a better offer, Loraine said firmly, "No matter what you propose, the Tear of the Sea is not for sale. Mr. Wilson, it's time for you to leave."

Francis' expression grew stern. He tapped the table lightly with his fingers, his eyes narrowing in a mix of threat and warning. "Loraine, don't let greed get the best of you. It can lead to serious consequences!"

As the eldest son, Francis had been steering the Wilson family business and had been entrenched in the chase for profit for decades. He had grown to believe that no one could resist the allure of material gain.

In his opinion, if someone appeared resistant, it merely meant the price wasn't high enough.

Therefore, he was convinced that Loraine was merely holding out for more.

Loraine was growing increasingly frustrated. Beyond everything else, the persistent nagging from the Wilson family, like an annoying leech, was enough to test anyone's patience.

Without holding back, she retorted, "It's your Wilson family who's greedy! Kaley set her sights on my fiancé. When she failed to lure him away, she called in backup. A group of grown men, taking turns meddling in what is essentially a petty affair! Now, you're after the Tear of the Sea that I possess. Are all of you, from the youngest to the eldest, going to take turns negotiating with me?"

As she said this, Loraine couldn't help but scoff, "Your ethical standards certainly don't live up to your stature. Your greed will only lead you to ruin!"

With each word Loraine uttered, Francis' expression grew darker, and he felt a mix of shame and irritation.

Indeed, they had compromised their dignity in their dealings with Loraine, particularly over the issue involving Kaley. He was even embarrassed that senior family members had gotten involved in a childish romantic issue.

But as these incidents became fodder for Loraine's mockery of the Wilson family, his anger intensified.

Were it not for this troublesome woman, Loraine, would there even be such problems?

Francis' face flushed with a mix of emotions. Though he couldn't dispute her accusations, one thing was clear: the Wilson family couldn't afford to lose face to Loraine again!

He gestured to his assistant behind him. Franklin then motioned, summoning several bodyguards to attempt to control Loraine.

At that moment, the door burst open, and several bodyguards entered, positioning themselves to confront the Wilson family's bodyguards!

And at this moment, Marco walked in.

He was holding a delicate cake, but his face was marked by displeasure. Clearly, he hadn't expected the Wilson family to exploit the situation while he was away preparing a gift.

Marco handed the cake to Loraine, reassuringly squeezing her hand, then turned to Francis, saying coldly, "Is the Wilson family now openly challenging me?"

Chapter 1118 A Lesson For The Wilsons

The young man standing before Francis represented not only the powerful Cruz family, a formidable rival to the Wilsons, but also the Solar Company, a competitor to Francis's Star Group on an international level. Even Francis couldn't dare openly oppose Marco.

Francis' face darkened as Marco questioned him, and he suddenly understood why Damon had stormed back home in anger.

Avoiding the question, he said, "Marco, the Tear of the Sea originally belongs to the Wilsons. I'm offering a very high price to get it back. You should stay out of this. It isn't any of your business. The Wilsons and the Cruzs have been friends for generations. I can show some respect to your elders, but you really should quit thinking so highly of yourself."

Ignoring the veiled warnings and threats in Francis' words, Marco coldly replied, "I only know that in my booked room, you came uninvited and acted like you own the place, pressuring my fiancée."

He paused and bluntly added, "I believe that even Melvin wouldn't approve this sort of 'generational friendship.'"

Francis hesitated, then tried another angle, adding a major project as a bargaining chip.

"Miss Torres, we are sincere. As long as you are willing to part with the Tear of the Sea and return it to us, not only will these projects belong to the Universe Group, but everything that happened before will be forgiven, and we won't make things difficult for you."

Loraine lowered her eyes, smiled, and asked in a cold voice, "And if I don't?"

Her tone was calm, but her words were filled with meaning. "How do you plan to make things difficult? Are you going to steal the Universe Group's projects again, or are you going to continue to abuse your power in the government to cause trouble for the Universe Group?"

Francis coughed uncomfortably, and said, "We have our ways!"

"I look forward to seeing them," Loraine responded with a serene smile.

She wasn't really afraid of the Wilson family anymore, and the fact that Marco had arrived at just the right time only gave her more confidence.

She spoke again, her confidence unwavering. "The Universe Group has dealt with such difficulties before, and with the theme park project, we'll be even less vulnerable to these tactics."

As expected, she noticed the ever composed eldest Wilson son's temples twitch in anger.

She couldn't help but smile as Francis glared at her with a mix of anger and helplessness. He snorted coldly, "Fine, I've learned from your sharp tongue. Let's see how it goes!"

Francis turned around to leave, but was stopped at the door by Marco.

Glaring at him, he said, "Anything else you want to say to me?"

Marco brushed off his sleeves as if removing something dirty and spoke calmly. "On your way home, make sure to check your own construction site. If you ever think about giving others a hard time again, you won't be let off this easy."

Francis frowned but didn't take the young man's threat seriously.

Marco was indeed very different from the men he dealt with on the daily, and over time, he might become someone Francis would have to respect.

But right now, he was nothing but a naive young man. Francis couldn't care less about his stupid threats. He snorted looking at Marco's face, and left.

However, as soon as he sat in the car, he received an urgent call from one of his men. "Mr. Wilson, there's been an incident at the land your son purchased!"

Francis frowned. "What happened?"

Edwin had bought that land at a high price and it had earned him an earful from Francis. However, Francis had managed to remedy the situation and maximize profits, so they hadn't actually lost much. This was the same land Francis planned to develop into a high-end resort villa area on the outskirts.

"The government has bought the nearby land for a chemical plant. If a

factory is built there, our plans for the villa area will be ruined!"

Francis, who had always prided himself on his self-control, was once again furious. "Why didn't you tell me this earlier?"

"I'm sorry. The information was released after Mr. Damon Wilson was suspended. We only found out through other channels."

Francis suddenly understood what Marco had meant earlier. Rubbing his aching temples, he laughed bitterly, his eyes darkening. He felt a deep sense of apprehension toward these two young people.

Having such enemies was not good for the Wilsons.