

## Chapter 1243 Collaboration Goals Attained

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Loraine was largely unaware of Marco's recent gathering with his friends. Marco had briefly mentioned it to her afterwards.

She had long stopped concerning herself with their opinions. Over three years of marriage had taught her that while it was painful to know Marco's friends did not think highly of her, it was essential for a couple to maintain their individuality grounded in honesty.

She was Marco's partner, not his possession. She could hang out with his friends, but pleasing them was not her priority.

The issue of Keely's allergy was not her concern; she decided to distance herself from Keely moving forward.

She had assumed Edwin's plan was an impromptu idea with no further consequences, yet the very next day, a representative from Star Group approached her to discuss a partnership—it was Edwin himself.

Loraine now was convinced that Edwin had genuinely changed.

Watching through the security camera as Edwin sat patiently in the lobby, she felt pleased. She instructed the receptionist to escort him to the conference room where she would meet him personally.

Upon her entrance, Edwin's composure wavered. He attempted to charm her with a smile. "Loraine..."

Clad in a business suit, Loraine met his gaze with a frosty look.

He immediately tensed, his expression shifting as if he were facing someone as formidable as Francis.

Loraine was not interested in pleasantries. She addressed him crisply, "This is a professional setting. If you wish to discuss personal matters, that won't be possible here."

Edwin quickly adjusted, addressing her formally, "Ms. Torres."

He straightened, opened his laptop, and began his presentation. "Ms. Torres, please review the proposal. I will explain the details, including our budget."

Edwin's professionalism surfaced, shaped by years of elite education.

Loraine watched, her face unreadable, yet she was actually rather intrigued by his proposal.

As Edwin concluded, he noticed her still and unresponsive demeanor. The weight of her scrutiny made him nervous. He forced a smile. "Is the pricing too steep?"

Edwin was aware that he was inexperienced. His connection to the Wilson family undeniably opened doors for him, including the opportunity to negotiate with Loraine, or he might not get a chance to work with her.

He cautiously ventured, "Ms. Torres, we've devoted considerable effort to this proposal. Our inexperience may reflect in the pricing. If it seems excessive, I'm open to discussion."

In his mind, he was prepared to fund the shortfall personally if necessary. After all, this was his inaugural project, and he was determined to succeed.

Loraine observed him, noting the flicker of hesitancy on his face that betrayed his thoughts.



She suppressed a smile and, clearing her throat, responded, "The plan is solid, but the pricing needs reconsideration."

Edwin, anxious, leaned forward. "What price are you considering?"

Loraine smiled gently. "I'm not here to exploit you."

The figure she proposed was higher than Edwin had anticipated.

His eyes widened in disbelief. Despite knowing he shouldn't react this way, it was, after all, his first project and the proposal had been written by him.

Loraine, noticing his astonishment, offered a chuckle before adopting a stern tone. "You're the eldest grandson and future head of the Wilson family. Don't appear timid with potential business partners. It's unbecoming."

Edwin scratched his head and chuckled, his facade of composure slipping momentarily before he regained his poise.

"Well, since we're in agreement, why don't we celebrate with dinner tonight?" he suggested.

Loraine hesitated, pondering if her kindness had encouraged his forwardness.

Edwin added earnestly, "Grandpa has been asking about you. We could dine together and have a video call with him. He's felt much better since his last conversation with you."

After a moment's pause, Loraine nodded. "Since we're partners, it does make sense to share a meal."

Elated, Edwin promised to handle the arrangements and left.

That evening, Loraine headed to the restaurant as planned. Settling into the back seat of her car, she closed her eyes to rest, unaware that a car equipped with a camera had started


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## Chapter 1244 Reconciliation

At the restaurant, Loraine exited her car and noticed Edwin standing at the entrance, his smile beaming as he waved.

Before he could address her as Loraine, she quickly stated, "Remember, dinner with a business partner is still a professional commitment."

Edwin's smile faltered slightly, but he quickly regained his composure, guiding Loraine to their reserved table and promptly steering the conversation towards business.

He had learned that engaging Loraine effectively meant discussing topics of her interest; otherwise, she would remain detached.

Unbeknownst to Edwin, Marco had long since adopted this tactic with her.

As their meal progressed, Loraine's initial reserve began to ease. Seizing the moment, Edwin ventured, "Loraine, how are things with you and Marco?"

With a light chuckle, Loraine glanced at him and responded, "We're doing wonderfully."

She remembered that Edwin hadn't been at their engagement party and shared a few details about her relationship with Marco.

Edwin listened, visibly taken aback. Even from these brief insights, he could appreciate the challenges Loraine had faced, not just in her youth but also in her efforts to establish herself within the Torres family.

To Edwin, who had experienced a relatively trouble-free life, Loraine's understated recount was striking. He blurted out, "Damn, I must've been blind back then, treating you so poorly..."

Maybe Marco was right; he was too naive, believing every lie told to him.

Frowning slightly, Edwin continued, "It seems Marco truly matches you well, but I heard you two had a divorce back then..."

After hearing her explain the misunderstandings during their first marriage, and while Marco's behavior was somewhat justified, Edwin now found himself firmly on Loraine's side.

He paused, then spoke with sincerity. "Loraine, I may not be as capable as you, but if Marco ever wrongs you again, I won't stand by."

Many had expressed similar sentiments to Loraine, yet hearing these words from Edwin touched her. She softly replied, "Thank you, Edwin... my dear cousin."

Edwin's face brightened with delight. "What did you call me? Could you say it again?"

Loraine pressed her lips together, reverting to her typically composed self. "The project proposal is impressive, so I called you my cousin. If you want me to continue acknowledging you that way, you'll need to keep proving yourself!"

Edwin grinned. "Alright, I'll strive to genuinely earn your recognition as a cousin!"

He momentarily considered recording her admission to play back to their uncles and his father, amusing himself with the thought.

Loraine noticed his chuckle, finding it slightly irritating.

Despite her cool exterior, the dinner marked a reconciliation. Edwin dominated the conversation, but Loraine engaged more than usual.

Pleased with the evening, Edwin chatted a bit longer before they prepared to depart.

As they stepped outside, Edwin halted. "Wait here a moment. I have something for you."

Curiosity piqued, Loraine watched as Edwin dashed to his car and returned, concealing something behind his back. With a flourish, he presented two gifts.

"Ta-da! One is from me, and the other is from Grandpa."

He held out a bouquet of flowers and a plush toy. "Grandpa always had this for you but never got the chance to give it. As for me, I gave you these flowers today—the day you finally called me 'cousin'..."

Loraine chuckled, touched by the gesture and aware of Joseph's tentative approach, cautious not to upset her. She sighed, accepted the gifts, and expressed her gratitude to Edwin.

From afar, a flash sparked. Loraine glanced around, sensing something amiss, but saw nothing.

Meanwhile, at the Riley family villa, Keely, pretending to seethe in her room, received a photograph.

It depicted Loraine accepting the bouquet from a young man, both beaming, their closeness evident.

Keely's expression morphed into a malevolent smile as she whispered, "Caught you, Loraine. Now that I have something on you, I will teach you a lesson!"