

Chapter 1257 The Opening Of The Banquet

Marco's words were aimed at Wesley and Vincent, but his eyes were fixed on Loraine, his voice deep and captivating as though he whispered sweet nothings just for her.

Loraine's cheeks warmed under his gaze, especially with Wesley and Vincent standing close by.

She shyly tried to avoid his intense look, but a glimpse of Wesley's and Vincent's amused expressions turned her face the color of a ripe tomato.

With a light chuckle, Marco glanced at them and, receiving a nod, he gently took Loraine's hand and suggested, "The banquet is about to start. Let's head out."

Loraine gave a small nod in agreement.

Outside, the murmur of guests filled the air. The moment Marco and Loraine stepped into view, the room fell silent, then burst into whispers of admiration and applause.

Onstage, Marco and Loraine were undoubtedly the center of attention. Their striking presence and aura, aside from their illustrious family backgrounds, drew all eyes to them.

Among the guests were seasoned and composed attendees, veterans of many such gatherings. They had mastered the art of concealing their emotions, not easily swayed by mere appearances. Yet, when they scrutinized Marco and Loraine, their minds raced with thoughts of potential alliances and rivalries.

Members of the Cruz family, scattered throughout the venue, reacted variously. An elder discreetly sipped his drink, his eyes betraying deep thoughts about his branch's future in the family dynamics.

Since Melvin's illness, the Cruz family had faced uncertainty, with various branches seeking alliances outside the family, hoping to use their status for personal advantage.

Each Cruz family member had their own agenda. However, seeing Marco and Loraine, who was from the influential Wilson family, alongside the distinguished guests, made some reconsider their strategies to avoid missing out on emerging opportunities.

Everyone harbored their own agendas, yet outwardly, nothing appeared to have shifted.

Onstage, Marco and Loraine surveyed the guests before offering a gracious bow and expressing their gratitude. Marco then announced in a steady tone, "Due to my father's ill health, I will be assuming leadership of the Cruz family."

Whispers and speculations instantly spread through the crowd, filling the air. An attendee eventually mustered the courage to inquire, "Mr. Cruz, will the existing agreements with the Cruz family remain in effect?"

The question was particularly poignant given the recent news of Clifford's arrest. In his brief tenure managing the family's affairs, Clifford had secured numerous deals of varying merit, seemingly leveraging the family's interests to solidify alliances.

Marco responded with composed assurance, "All reasonable and beneficial partnerships will certainly continue. My approach is always centered on mutual gains. However, it's unfortunate that some deals do not meet our standards."

This response stirred another wave of murmurs among the



crowd, especially from those partners feeling uneasy about their deals. Someone challenged, "Mr. Cruz, how will you determine the value of these partnerships? Due to your youth and relative inexperience, we find it difficult to accept your cancellation of some contracts previously signed by your uncle..."

With a serene smile, Marco replied, "If you doubt my capabilities and wish to dissolve our partnership, that is your prerogative. What I can offer is my commitment to prove, through my future actions, that I am capable of steering the Cruz family and Solar Company towards continued success."

Marco's mention of the Solar Company effectively silenced any further dissent; his proven track record with the company was undeniable.

The crowd quickly shifted, voicing their confidence in Marco and affirming their desire to maintain partnerships with the Cruz family.

As the banquet continued, Marco formally introduced Loraine as his fiancée and the future lady of the house, prompting a wave of applause and cheers. The couple's commanding presence on stage caused Keely to seethe with envy from a shadowed corner below.

Meanwhile, Jorge was swept up by old acquaintances of the Riley family for a reunion, leaving Keely to sit quietly in the corner with her maid, picking at her food.

Keely's frustration was palpable. She glared at Marco and Loraine's clasped hands on stage, her utensils mangling the dessert on her plate.

During this, a young man walked by and paused, his eyes lingering on Keely with a flicker of recognition before moving on.

It was Edwin. He thought Keely looked familiar but couldn't recognize her immediately, and soon continued his search for



Vincent in the crowd.

After Marco concluded his introductory remarks, the banquet officially commenced. The atmosphere surged with excitement, and the younger guests eagerly took to the dance floor.

As the host, Marco invited Loraine for the opening dance. They moved gracefully together, drawing the admiration of many.

Keely, her anger momentarily set aside, scanned the room. Her eyes landed on something that brought a sly smile to her face.



Chapter 1258 The Banquet

The venue for the banquet, owned by the Cruz family, was a rarity open to the public. Its opulent décor featured handrails of expensive solid wood winding up the staircases and luxurious, soft cashmere carpets lining the banquet hall. The celebrities in attendance moved with grace under the soft lighting, evoking the grandeur of aristocratic banquets from the previous century.

After the opening dance, Marco engaged with some business partners of the Cruz family to nurture relationships. Loraine stood by his side for a time before discreetly stepping aside to rest.

Jennie approached with a glass of wine, her smile beaming. "Lorrie, you look stunning tonight. You're the brightest star at the banquet."

Loraine smiled and clinked glasses with her, sipping her low-alcohol cocktail and settling into a more relaxed pose as they chatted casually.

Jennie's eyes then darted to Jimmie, who was conversing with Marco across the room. Her expression brightened before she turned back to admire Loraine's attire, raising an eyebrow playfully. "Lorrie, your outfit and Marco's are styled like a couple's! You two look perfect together!"

Loraine touched the brooch on her chest, smiling. "This is Wesley's latest design. He and Vincent coordinated our outfits."

"No wonder I find your outfits stunning! Both Wesley and Vincent have good taste!"



Loraine chuckled inwardly at her friend's blunt manner, pondering the undercurrents of unspoken envy Jimmie might be feeling. She imagined Jennie would innocently blink away any tension, oblivious to Jimmie's any discomfort. "He is upset? I didn't notice. He's jealous? Of what?"

Meanwhile, Jimmie, sensing Jennie's earlier gaze, flashed a charming smile her way, but Jennie had already turned, pointing at a dashing man to Loraine in her excitement. Jimmie's smile faded slightly, and he gave Loraine a nod that seemed to say, "Please, keep an eye on her for me."

Loraine found amusement in the dynamics at play; Jennie's candid nature was the perfect foil for Jimmie's cunning.

Perhaps it was this balance of traits that drew Jimmie to Jennie. And if Jennie could maintain her spirited joy, Loraine would be nothing but happy for her.

As Loraine gently touched Jennie's luxuriously curly hair, she was about to playfully inquire about Jennie's marriage plans with Jimmie when she noticed Keely approaching with an awkward gait. Keely halted in front of Loraine, her expression forlorn, and said, "Loraine, my foot feels uncomfortable. Could you take me upstairs to rest?"

Jennie's demeanor shifted instantly, her body tensing as she interposed herself between Loraine and Keely, her gaze wary. With a frown, she retorted sharply, "We're in the middle of something. Go find Jorge or ask a waiter for help."

Keely's lips quivered as if she were on the verge of tears.

Loraine, sensing the potential for a scene at this crucial banquet for Marco, decided to intervene before any misunderstanding could escalate, potentially embarrassing them.

"I'll take her," she offered.



Jennie, clearly disappointed yet still concerned, quickly stood and declared, "I'll come with you."

Her presence would serve as a safeguard, ensuring that if any complications arose, Jorge could not unjustly blame Loraine.

Loraine made no objection, but Keely seemed visibly uncomfortable with Jennie joining them. Clinging closer to Loraine, Keely looked up fearfully and pleaded, "No, I don't like her..."

Jennie's expression darkened. She was on the brink of scolding Keely for her theatrics when the escalating noise caught the attention of several men nearby, who began to drift over, drawn by the unfolding drama.

Upon noticing them together, Jorge's expression turned stern, concern flickering across his face at the thought that Keely might be mistreated. He quickly approached, taking Keely's hand protectively, and asked with a guarded tone, "What's happening here?"

Next to Loraine, Marco clasped her hand, his gaze searching for answers. Meanwhile, Jimmie was trying to calm an agitated Jennie.

Jennie, clearly upset with Jorge, barely restrained herself from rolling her eyes. "She said her foot hurts and came to ask Loraine to help her upstairs. I offered to accompany them, but she refused. Make sure you understand the situation. Don't later misplace any blame about her foot pain on Loraine."

Jorge's eyebrows knit together in discomfort, finding Jennie's tone brash and disrespectful, while Keely clung to him, visibly scared of Jennie.

Realizing the tension, Jorge tried to soothe Keely, "What's wrong with your foot? Should I take you upstairs to rest?"

But Keely, acting petulant, insisted, "No, I want Loraine to come with me!"

Jorge looked helplessly towards Loraine, his expression almost pleading. After a brief pause, Loraine agreed, "I'll go with her."

Jorge's face softened as he thanked Loraine, his worry evident. "Thank you. Please take good care of her."

Loraine, feeling a mix of responsibility and discomfort, gave a slight nod. At her agreement, Keely brightened considerably, excitedly grabbing Loraine's arm and leading the way upstairs.



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