

Chapter 490 Plagiarism

Leopold's response caught everyone off guard.

Lorraine's blueprint was exceptional, earning the admiration of the expert cohort present.

Leopold, despite his high standing as a world-class architect, acted unbecomingly when he stormed out due to his distaste for Lorraine's blueprint.

This left Lorraine in a state of confusion and grievance.

Given his position as a top-notch architect, Leopold could have constructively criticized Lorraine's design, but to dismiss her as devoid of architectural talent was unprofessional.

A blunt criticism from an eminent architect amounted to a total negation of her skills.

Had she not been president of the Universe Group, Leopold's scathing words could have jeopardized her future in the field.

Lorraine felt unjustly treated. She did not see herself as a prodigy, but she was assured of her competence.

Moreover, her design was a product of countless sleepless nights. She didn't think she deserved any form of derision.

She would have appreciated and duly considered professional criticism of her work from Leopold.

However, Leopold showed bias against her right from the beginning. Loraine didn't want a subjective critique based on preconceived notions to taint her work.

She queried, "Professor Zizka, could you justify your assertion that I'm ill-suited for a career in architecture? Do my designs fall short in some aspects? I'd like you to show me the specifics. If not, I am left with the conclusion that your animosity toward me stems from the personal disagreements between your student and me!"

The room filled with gasps upon hearing her words.

Knowing of the previous disagreements between Loraine and Keely, the attendees began to whisper.

The idea that an industry titan like Leopold would bear a grudge against Loraine simply because Keely was his student was unbelievable.

It was unthinkable to them that he could stoop so low.

Upon hearing the murmurs, Leopold grew increasingly disturbed. Keely stood up and angrily pointed at Loraine.

"Loraine, your design is fraught with flaws. Why are you so resistant to accepting criticism? Do you want everyone to shower you with praises, proclaiming you a genius? You think that would do you justice, right? My mentor has more than enough qualifications to evaluate your work! No matter how you feel, you have no right to berate him!"

Leopold lifted his palm, signaling her to cease. Keely, however, remained resolute, her language growing increasingly insolent.

"Miss Torres, you're clueless when it comes to treating



people respectfully. How in the world did you make it this far without your family's backing? Do you even have a right to question my mentor?"

In response, Loraine, seething with anger, surprisingly chuckled. "Well done, Professor Zizka. You truly deserve to be a top-tier architect," she declared with a nod and a smirk. "You don't just tolerate your student's discourtesy. You concoct stories to assist her in damaging others. You two seem to be colluding to obscure the reality!"

"Choose your words wisely, Miss Torres," Leopold cautioned, irritation seeping into his voice. "I don't want this to descend into chaos."

"Aren't things chaotic enough already? As a guest here, Professor Zizka, I should have shown you respect. However, your behavior has left me with no desire to extend you any courtesy."

After a brief pause, Loraine stated solemnly, "Professor Zizka, you're leveraging your profession to settle personal scores, encouraging your student to slander others. You've utterly twisted the truth! Your actions are despicable. Regardless of your reputation, I refuse to endorse your claims. You're unfit to appraise my work."

No one anticipated Loraine's audacious retort to Leopold.

His face flushed crimson with fury.

Keely, unfazed by the escalating tension, cried out, "Professor! Loraine's audacity is staggering. It's common knowledge in our field that you're a man of honor. Her accusations are an affront to your personal integrity and industry standing!"

Matching Loraine's intense gaze, Leopold's eyes flickered



with a fiery determination.

"Miss Torres, I extended you courtesy out of respect. Yet, you're the one refusing it. You've copied someone's creation, thus you're unfit to call yourself an architect! Am I wrong?"

Upon uttering these words, Leopold felt a wave of dizziness, as though the room were spinning. He stumbled, nearly falling.

Keely rushed to his aid, trying to comfort him, "Professor, please don't take her words to heart. She's malevolent through and through. Your wellbeing is my primary concern."

As Keely helped Leopold regain his balance, she shot Loraine a triumphant and vindictive glare, as if proclaiming Loraine's imminent downfall.

The room filled with silent contemplation as everyone digested Leopold's accusation.

In the design world, plagiarism was an unforgivable sin. Loraine's swift rise from obscurity to fame raised questions about the originality of her designs.

All eyes were fixated on Loraine, their gazes tinged with doubt.



Chapter 491 Prejudice

Loraine's heart skipped a beat; she hadn't anticipated Leopold's accusation that she had mirrored another's design.

The accusation, coming from Leopold, felt like a cruel joke without a punch line.

This accusation from a respected academic could bring an abrupt halt to her promising design career.

Simultaneously dumbfounded and incensed, Loraine found herself at a loss.

Her dream had always been to craft an airport blueprint, a project she had painstakingly worked on during her marriage with Marco. Many a day and night she spent honing it, never once catching a glimpse of anything similar in the public eye.

Leopold's audacious claim of plagiarism caught her off guard. She was no copycat.

Klein turned to soothe Loraine, only to be startled by her grim departure.

"Lorraine! Where might you be heading?"

Klein's worry seeped in, instigating a pounding headache.

Facing Leopold, who was standing only due to Keely's assistance, she declared, "I'm off to gather my design work. I intend to provide evidence against your claim of plagiarism."



I want the world to witness that you, the 'master,' are falsely accusing me!"

In spite of her boiling anger, she remained composed. She was well aware that disputing Leopold now would only cement suspicions of her supposed plagiarism.

The best way to establish her innocence, she knew, was to expose her original drafts to the public.

Keely, after a moment of stunned silence, sneered and retorted, "How could he falsely accuse you? He's a renowned designer. How could you make such an accusation, Loraine?"

Ignoring Keely's reproach, Loraine exited the hall.

Knowing he couldn't deter Loraine, Klein promptly messaged Marco. In a brief text, he summarized the situation and implored Marco to arrive as swiftly as possible.

The crowd's whispers grew louder and louder, swirling in a symphony of speculation. Despite his own worries, Klein made sure to comfort Leopold.

"I believe there's a misunderstanding here, Professor Zizka. Please, don't let it upset you. I've reached out to another key player in this project. He'll be here shortly. We can revisit the discussion upon his arrival..."

Keely was about to coax Leopold into leaving, but her interest piqued at Klein's news. She suggested, "Professor, we shouldn't let Loraine's situation disband us. Why don't we meet with this other president instead?"

Leopold agreed with a stern nod. The last person he wished to confront at that moment was Loraine.



The door to the meeting hall swung open to reveal a suave man in a suit. All eyes pivoted towards him.

Leopold surmised that this man must be Marco.

With a swift stride, Klein made his way to Marco. Marco's first words were, "Where's Loraine?"

Klein exhaled deeply, saying, "Loraine was livid. She stormed off without even a farewell."

Marco appeared taken aback but quickly composed himself, ready to chase after Loraine. But Klein held him back.

"Come on, I shouldn't have been left alone to handle this disaster. Marco, I need you on this. The priority is pacifying the professor."

Klein's text to Marco had only shared a quick summary of events, so Marco was struggling to grasp the entirety of the situation. Upon learning that Leopold had upset Loraine, Marco's courtesy towards him dissipated.

He was stunned to see Keely siding with Leopold.

The sight of Marco brought tears to Keely's eyes. Feigning vulnerability, she murmured his name with a hint of affection.

"Marco..."

Marco's attention shifted, taken aback that Loraine had encountered Keely. He was clueless about when Keely had returned.

"What's your purpose here?" he scoffed.

Keely dropped her gaze, giving off an innocent vibe. "Marco,

I've joined Professor Zizka as his student. I returned with him. I was planning to inform you about my return, but I didn't wish to intrude..."

"Enough. Maintain your distance from me," Marco cut her off abruptly, disinterested in her explanation.

Leopold was unsatisfied with Marco's attitude towards Keely, his brow furrowed. "Why are you being so rude to my student?"

Marco turned to Leopold, managed to keep his emotions in check and offered a greeting. "Hello, Professor Zizka. I'm Marco Bryant, president of the Bryant Group. It's nice to meet you."

Leopold had caught Keely observing Marco ever since he'd walked in.

He surmised from Keely's behavior that this young man must be her romantic interest, her inspiration.

"I recognize you. Keely has mentioned you." Leopold's tone became welcoming.

Unexpectedly, Marco responded bluntly, "Professor Zizka, I'm unsure of what Keely has told you. But, I can guarantee that Loraine has never stolen anyone's work. Her talent is acknowledged across our industry."

"Mr. Bryant, it appears you've got a skewed perspective about Loraine. I suggest you appreciate the person in your presence rather than that plagiarizing woman!" retorted Leopold, a scowl on his face.

His words carried an underlying message as his gaze shifted to Keely, who was eyeing Marco affectionately.

Marco's brows furrowed as he gazed at the stubborn elderly professor before him, completely baffled by the incomprehensible words coming from his mouth.



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Chapter 492 The Fool

Nonetheless, Marco maintained his composure and told Leopold, "I can personally guarantee Loraine's trustworthiness based on the reputation of the Bryant Group."

Leopold, upon seeing Marco's disregard for Keely, responded with a disapproving shake of his head.

He let out a chilling sigh. "Now that you won't listen to my opinion on Loraine, there's not much left for me to say. Drive me back to the hotel, Keely. I'm drained."

Keely wished she could stay longer with Marco. However, knowing that antagonizing Leopold would be disastrous, she agreed and aided him to his feet.

Marco found himself filled with puzzlement, questioning if Leopold was out of his mind.

"Hold on, Professor Zizka!" Marco called out, trying to catch up with him.

Leopold's expression remained stern. With a wave of his hand, he indicated to Marco that he had no interest in hearing any further justification.

Keely, contrastingly, kept stealing glances back at Marco. She whispered something to Leopold before heading back to Marco's side.

She offered Marco a kind gaze, hinting at her affection towards him. "Don't fret, Marco. I'll do my utmost to sway

him."

However, Marco was well aware of Keely's true nature. He inquired with a detached expression, "Is that so? I still vividly recall what you did to Loraine earlier. It's hard to believe you'd be willing to assist her now."

Keely's face turned white, and she broke into tears instantly. "I'm not doing this to help her, Marco. I'm doing this for you. I would do anything for you, even things I may not particularly want to."

Marco's brow furrowed as he took in Keely's pitiful countenance.

"I accept that my past actions were wrong. I served my time in prison. Now, I'm studying under Professor Zizka in an attempt to start anew. Will you give me a chance to change, Marco? For the sake of Jorge..."

Marco was reminded of a vow he made to his dear friend Jorge many years ago upon hearing Keely's plea. He recognized that he wasn't callous enough to turn her away.

In the end, he agreed to accept Keely's help.

As Keely walked away, Marco observed her with a frosty expression. He hoped she was genuinely committed to helping him persuade Leopold.

He resolved to uncover whether Keely played any role in Leopold's discord with Loraine.

Keely journeyed back to Leopold's hotel.

However, instead of attempting to persuade Leopold as she'd promised, she walked into Leopold's room with tear-streaked cheeks immediately upon arriving back at the



hotel.

"Professor, your support today meant the world to me. However, it's hard to watch Loraine demean you because of me..."

Leopold sighed in response. He reassured her briefly, but his curiosity drove him to speak his mind.

"Keely, her words don't faze me. My heart aches for you. The man you adore is unworthy of your affections. After observing him today, it's clear he's not concerned about you. His mind is consumed by Loraine!"

Keely's gaze drifted. She feigned wiping away her tears, masking her emotions, before succumbing to even deeper sobs.

"Professor, Marco and I were very much in love at first, and he was incredibly kind to me. Later, Loraine meddled with our love and skillfully tarnished my reputation. She manipulated Marco into believing I was wicked and malevolent, making him think I was the one causing all the chaos... I don't hold him responsible! I blame my circumstances for not being born into wealth like Loraine. She thinks her wealth and power grant her the liberty to do anything, even snatch away the man I love."

Leopold trembled with rage. "This is preposterous! It's hard to fathom she did this to you!"

He looked at Keely and sighed with empathy. "You youngsters are so swept away by love. Keely, you possess a tremendous talent, yet you let a man bring you sorrow? Marco is infatuated with that vile woman! He's blind to your virtues!"

Keely, biting her lip, responded with a heavy heart, "But if I

lose my love, I fear I'll lose the ability to create beautiful designs. I apologize, but I simply cannot let go of him. Could you assist me once more?"

Leonard sighed deeply, yet nodded in agreement. "I understand. Those with exceptional gifts often endure tremendous emotional torment. It isn't my role to convince you to abandon Marco since he is your muse. All I can do is help you overcome these hurdles."

Keely's face lit up as she replied, "Thank you! Please don't worry. If I can remain by Marco's side, I'm confident I can create even better designs!"

Leopold, relieved, nodded.

The next day, a statement appeared on Leopold's social media page.

"I was requested to consult on the redevelopment of White Cloud Airport in Vagow. Yet, during yesterday's program guidance meeting, I was appalled to witness a young designer shamelessly plagiarizing another's work! I loathe plagiarism. It's a sin I cannot forgive. I will not tolerate such ethical bankruptcy, corroding the integrity of our industry. Therefore, I implore the public and my peers to refrain from stealing others' creations. If not, the stain of such an act will tarnish your reputation forever!"



Chapter 493 Accusation

Leopold refrained from pointing fingers, but given his influence in the architectural world, his post sparked immediate public debate.

The curious crowd speculated on the individual Leopold hinted at, while rallying behind him and publicly shaming the anonymous plagiarist.

Only those who shared the meeting with Leopold that day knew that he was referring to Loraine, yet they collectively chose silence.

They were fully aware that displeasing either Leopold or Loraine was a luxury they couldn't afford.

Moreover, even Leopold himself chose not to unmask the plagiarist. To them, there would be no benefit in doing that. It would just bring them trouble.

The primary reason Leopold refrained from naming Loraine directly had to do with his own standing. He didn't want his words to irreparably damage someone's future. Despite viewing Loraine as morally deficient, he hoped to grant her another chance.

Simultaneously, he wanted Loraine to comprehend the seriousness of the situation before it spiraled out of control. He yearned for her to voluntarily admit her mistakes, step down from the project, and distance herself from Marco.

Since he refrained from naming the plagiarist, internet users started making their own connections and



recognizing the plagiarism. Designers began voicing their disdain for plagiarism across social media platforms.

When Keely saw the news online, she was torn between feelings of elation and fear.

She knew all too well who the real plagiarist was.

Keely understood that waiting idly for Loraine to stumble upon evidence proving her innocence was not an option. She needed to stoke the flames further to confirm Loraine's guilt.

Now that she saw a golden opportunity to bring Loraine down once and for all, she must ensure that Loraine couldn't flip the situation to her advantage!

That night, Keely hailed a taxi and headed towards a particular building.

She found herself at the doorstep of the Bryants' house.

Keely was invited inside, although she could sense the tension hanging in the air.

Upon seeing Marina, she couldn't help but say, "Marina, it's been ages! Have you missed me?"

Marina responded with a disinterested smile.

Liza had ordered Marina and Laura to stay at home and not go out since they had made the secret about Marco's birth public. Grounding them was a kind of punishment.

Marina hadn't shopped for designer clothes or visited the salon to keep her hair looking fresh in what felt like forever. She was slowly losing her sanity in this enforced isolation, feeling like a rose that had lost its beauty.



Yet, seeing Keely, a wave of self-satisfaction washed over her.

Marina had once admired Keely, seeing in her a grace and nobility that she believed Marco cherished. She had envisioned Keely marrying Marco and ousting Loraine in due course. However, Keely's constant blunders and subsequent incarceration had defied her expectations. Even Marco had forsaken her.

Marina struggled to conceal her dislike for Keely, but social etiquette demanded she maintain a polite demeanor. With a slight stumble in her words, she mustered, "Keely, when did you come back? And why wasn't I informed of your release from jail?"

At that moment, Laura descended the staircase. Unlike Marina, she showed no semblance of politeness towards Keely. She addressed Marina dismissively, "Not everyone deserves a welcome in our house, Marina. Kindly ask her to leave. I fear her presence might bring us bad fortune."

Unfazed by their contempt, Keely responded with a soft smile, "Mrs. Bryant, Marina, it's delightful to see you both once more. I came back as a student of Professor Zizka. My mentor has been given the important task of leading the redesign of the White Cloud Airport in Vagow, and he has brought me along. I visited because I wished to express my gratitude for your past kindness. However, it seems that you're too busy to entertain me. Do not worry, I will take my leave immediately."

Laura and Marina exchanged surprised looks.

Even with their limited knowledge, they recognized Leopold as an internationally renowned architect.

They were clueless about how and when Keely had become his student.

Laura's demeanor changed abruptly. With a forced smile, she took Keely's hand and led her to the couch.

"Keely, we're practically family. I will always have time for you, no matter how busy I might be. You mentioned that you and Leopold are here for the airport project, right? Could you share more about it?"

Keely agreed with a nod, her demeanor demure and amicable, despite her intense dislike for them.

"Yes, I got the opportunity to study under Professor Zizka after he endorsed one of my airport design proposals. Therefore, my proposal might be used for the future airport project. The Bryant Group could even potentially collaborate with us."

Laura's eyes widened in astonishment, her heart racing.

Despite her disdain for Keely, she hoped that through her, she could establish a connection with Leopold and secure the airport project for the Bryant Group. She believed this might absolve her and Marina in Liza's eyes.

Keely discerned Laura's intentions. With a gentle smile, she murmured, "The most joyful part of my return has been seeing Marco again. In fact, I've always coveted Loraine's place of having you as a mother-in-law. It's unfortunate she doesn't appreciate you. If I were in her shoes..."



Chapter 494 Slander

Laura found herself feeling empathy. "Why on earth would Loraine even be in the same league as you, Keely?"

Even with Keely's bad reputation, she excelled at charming people. To Laura, this seemed to give Keely an advantage over Loraine, a woman who didn't give a damn about her or Marina.

In Laura's eyes, Keely was superior, not least because she had carved a niche for herself as a designer. She harbored hopes that Marco's affection for Keely hadn't faded.

Laura recalled the times when Marco's adoration for Keely was palpable. He would travel to another country just to visit her in the hospital, often neglecting his newlywed wife.

A spark of hope ignited in Laura's eyes as she pondered on these memories. Keely's words hinted at an unextinguished flame for Marco.

Laura was convinced that if she could intervene, there would be a chance for Marco and Keely to rekindle their past love. This way, Marco wouldn't constantly be in Loraine's company.

If Marco were to marry Keely, Laura envisioned a compliant daughter-in-law. She felt it would be helpful to have another person by her side to manage her troublesome son.

Thus, Laura found herself nodding along when Keely spoke ill of Loraine.

"Keely, had Marco chosen you as his life partner, all these subsequent issues wouldn't have surfaced. Loraine is a troublemaker! She's cut ties with Marco, yet she continues to be a thorn in my side! But Marco insists he has to collaborate with her this time!"

"Madam, there's something I'm uncertain whether I should disclose," Keely sighed, feigning concern.

Eagerly, Laura inquired, "What is it? Out with it! What's the matter?"

"It's about Loraine... I'm hesitant about discussing it.

Marina, who was sitting adjacent to them, couldn't resist the curiosity. "Did Loraine cause some trouble? Please share the details!"

Keely appeared torn but finally produced the statement that Leopold had released after persistent coaxing from both of them.

Upon seeing the statement, Marina instantly understood the gravity of the situation. "The person Leopold is referring to is..."

Affirming Marina's suspicions, Keely replied, "Indeed, he's pointing fingers at Loraine. Although he was furious, he refrained from tarnishing her image, hence he didn't mention her by name..."

Indignant, Marina retorted, "Why did he withhold her name? Loraine had the audacity to rip off someone else's work! He should have exposed her, letting everyone see her true colors!"

Laura nodded in agreement, affirming her words.

Keely blinked, releasing a heavy sigh. "He's so benevolent, isn't he? Even when Loraine did such a thing, he refrained from shattering her image entirely. Oh, if only someone had the courage to expose the truth about this!"

Marina's face lit up with joy, and her eyes shone like diamonds. "What if I spill the beans to everyone?" she proposed.

Laura held Marina's hand, offering a reassuring smile to Keely. "Don't mind her words. Marina was just joking."

In spite of her words, Laura did not blame Marina for her bold words.

She was aware of Leopold's strong dislike for Loraine. If they were to defame Loraine, it would result in the Universe Group being disqualified from the airport project, giving the Bryant Group complete control.

If she could help the Bryant Group undertake this colossal venture by themselves, maybe Liza would forgive her! Laura thought to herself.

The thrill of the upcoming events was visible as Laura and Marina exchanged knowing looks.

When she understood that her plan was taking shape, Keely's face lit up with satisfaction. She engaged in a friendly chat with them before taking her leave.

Marina was itching to divulge the news the moment Keely's figure faded away. But Laura restrained her.

Laura's past experiences had made her wiser. She advised, "Patience, darling! We should not do it ourselves, but we can enlist someone who can. We need to sit back and watch

the show."

Marina instantly comprehended Laura's intentions and responded with an enthusiastic nod.

Laura quickly got in touch with some internet trolls and asked them to send direct messages to a few renowned influencers, initiating the unveiling of the truth.

"Some people are terrified to reveal the truth, but I'm not one of them. Just keep my identity hidden. Loraine Torres is the plagiarist that Leopold mentioned!"

This individual claimed to have witnessed everything at the meeting. She claimed her silence was due to a prohibition on spreading the tale, but her conscience forced her to call out Loraine's plagiarism.

Leopold's previous announcement had already brought plagiarism into the limelight. The revelation of the "truth" stirred even more heated discussions.

Although baffled and doubtful, the majority of the netizens tended to lean towards the "truth".

The situation worsened with an influx of comments from all corners of the internet.

"So that's why Leopold didn't expose the identity of the plagiarist earlier! He kept quiet, fearing the backlash on the Torres family!"

"It's strange, isn't it? Loraine only became a known figure in the architectural scene after associating with the Torres family, didn't she? How on earth did she ascend to fame so swiftly?"

"I bet she purchased or copied others on previous designs

for those smart city and new business district projects! That's the only plausible explanation!"

These sentiments reverberated across the internet, resulting in an uproar on Universe Group and Loraine's social media profiles.

"Copycat! If you lack originality, stop flaunting yourself online! Absolutely distasteful!"

"You're exploiting other people's efforts simply because you're the president of the Universe Group and a Torres family member!"

Loraine boiled with anger at the sight of the inflammatory comments, but she managed to keep her composure and refrained from responding.

Leopold had intentionally refrained from revealing the identity of the plagiarist to prevent further controversy.

She was intrigued about who had blown the whistle on the whole affair.

