

Chapter 439 Refusing To Admit Her Fault

The ruffians completely lost their nerve. Huddled together on the ground, they trembled like frightened birds, complying with every order given to them.

Then, Carl approached Loraine, mobile phone in hand, displaying the evidence he'd unearthed.

It was the chat logs between Cassidy and Brody, along with the source of the funds.

Cassidy was flabbergasted, her mind racing to find an explanation.

She knew she couldn't confess, for that would tarnish her reputation beyond repair. Not only would her chances with the Cruz family be obliterated, but she could also be held accountable!

"Are you trying to frame me with a few screenshots? I'm not responsible for this fund! Moreover, the money wasn't transferred directly from my personal account. How can you be so certain it was me?" she retorted.

Fortunately, she'd taken precautions, ensuring that she never directly interacted with these ruffians.

This realization bolstered her confidence. She shouted, "Did you dredge up these goons just to slander me? I don't even know them! Ask them if they've seen me before. You can't frame me so easily!"

The ruffians became infuriated upon hearing her attempt to distance herself from them. They glared at her in collective

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Brody gritted his teeth in resentment. He'd only taken this job for the money, but he hadn't received a dime yet. Worse, he had a broken arm, a dislocated jaw, and now he was being mocked and belittled by Cassidy.

He had suffered both mentally and physically.

Brody's anger was reflected in his bloodshot eyes. In a fit of rage, he shrugged off the bodyguards, lunged at Cassidy, yanking her hair and slapping her with his uninjured hand, his voice a hoarse snarl.

"This is all your fault! How dare you claim you don't know me?"

"Ah! Help! This man is insane!" Cassidy cried out in shock.

Lorraine was taken aback.

It took her a moment to comprehend the scene before her. Hastily, she instructed her men to pull Brody away.

Cassidy, reeling from Brody's attack, fell to the ground.

Her face was red and swollen, her hair in disarray, and her clothes tattered.

Lorraine had merely intended to scare Cassidy, but Brody's impassioned retaliation had escalated matters. He had let loose his fury on her without holding back.

Lorraine had intended to lure Cassidy here to make her realize her mistake. She did not anticipate the scene that had just unfolded before her.

Sulkily, she touched the tip of her nose and instructed Carl to untie Cassidy.

Cassidy was on the verge of hysteria, her lips trembling as she sobbed, "I've been bullied by a thug. I'm no longer pure..."

Loraine instructed Carl to escort Cassidy home, but not before delivering a warning, "Cassidy, consider this a small lesson. If you cross me again, I won't be so lenient!"

Cassidy wished to retort, but the sight of Carl and the bodyguards silenced her.

Wincing in pain throughout the journey, she dashed into the Cruz family's villa the moment Carl let her out of the car.

Cassidy didn't need to feign her anguish. She went straight to Florence, bursting into a dramatic tirade.

Florence was taken aback by Cassidy's pitiful state and inquired, "Cassidy, who did this to you?"

As a relative of the Cruz family, how could anyone treat her so brutally!

"Aunt, it's Loraine! Everything's because of that wretched bitch!"

Florence reacted with disbelief, "Loraine? How could that be possible?"

"It's her! Aunt, I'm merely fed up with her constant slander of Grady and the Cruz family. I intended to give her a reality check and ended up in an argument with her. I didn't expect her fury to escalate to such an extent that she beat me like this!" Cassidy addressed Florence seriously, almost as if her version of the story was the absolute truth.

Florence was seething with rage at her words. She pounded her fist on the table. "What is Loraine trying to imply by assaulting a member of my family? Does she mean to humiliate me through this action? How arrogant she is! I must confront her!"

The commotion attracted Grady who rushed over to hold Florence back.

He spared a glance at Cassidy before addressing Florence calmly, "Mom, I have faith that Loraine would not engage in such



actions. Let's not act on impulse. Allow me to verify the situation with Loraine first, alright?"

Despite her anger, Florence found Grady's suggestion to be rational and nodded in agreement.

Feeling cornered, Cassidy wailed, "Grady, look at the state I'm in. Don't you believe me? Why are you so defensive of that woman?"

Grady frowned and replied in a subdued tone, "The truth can easily be discerned. If you've truly been wronged, why would you fear my request for confirmation?" He then signaled the awaiting servant. "Help her clean up and tend to her wounds."

Kassidy sobbed uncontrollably, unable to do anything but watch as Grady placed a call.

The moment the call connected, she suddenly wriggled out of the servant's grip, seized the phone, and activated the speaker mode.

"Loraine, did you arrange for my kidnapping?"

Grady frowned, holding his breath involuntarily, nervously awaiting Loraine's response.

On the other end of the line, Loraine admitted outright. "Yes, I did."

Kassidy breathed a sigh of relief, raising her eyebrows in triumph.

Grady clenched his fists in disbelief.

How could this be possible?

How could Loraine be capable of such an act?

On hearing Loraine's confession, Florence was livid. She slammed her hand on the table, standing up abruptly.

"Loraine, just because you are the CEO of Universe Group and




Chapter 439 Refusing To Admit Her Fault

 +120 Points at most

have garnered some success, you assume you can act uncontrollably. Mark my words, I'll ensure you face legal consequences for this! Even the Torres family won't be able to shield you this time!"



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Chapter 440 Kick Her Out

Although Florence had hoped for Loraine to marry into the Cruz family, they had a conflict at the banquet the previous night.

Specifically, Loraine publicly admitted to kidnapping Cassidy, which was essentially a challenge to Florence and the Cruz family.

Florence didn't care about the well-being of Cassidy, but she had to consider her own dignity.

Upon hearing that Florence intended to sue Loraine, Cassidy felt relieved and quickly echoed, "Aunt, you must stand up for me."

Suddenly, Loraine chuckled, "Mrs. Cruz, you've got it all wrong. It's Miss Rivera who deserves to be put in jail."

Florence asked angrily, "Loraine, what do you mean? Do you still want to use your power to bully us and twist the truth?"

Kassidy seized the chance to throw herself into Grady's embrace.

Without much time to react, Grady found himself being held by Cassidy, who gazed up at him with tearful eyes, trying to evoke sympathy.

"Grady, did you hear that? I've told you before that Loraine is a deceitful woman!"

Still in shock, Grady failed to push her away as her words registered in his mind.

Yet, he couldn't bring himself to believe that Loraine would be capable of such actions. In disbelief, he murmured, "No, Loraine. How could you have kidnapped Cassidy? There must be some mistake, right?"

Lorraine remained silent, leaving Grady in a state of confusion.

Florence, thinking she had nothing more to say and ready to condemn Lorraine, declared, "Alright, Lorraine, let's settle this in court!"

However, before she could end the call, a cry erupted from the other end of the phone.

Confused, Florence was about to inquire about Lorraine's actions when a woman's voice screamed.

"Go after Lorraine! She's a notorious socialite in Vagow! She'll give you what you want..."

It was evidently Cassidy's voice.

In an instant, Cassidy's face turned pale and she froze.

Once the recording concluded, Lorraine said calmly, "Mrs. Cruz, does this mean that Miss Rivera represents the Cruz family and is acting on your behalf? Cassidy spread damaging rumors about me. Does the Cruz family condone such behavior?"

Caught off guard, Florence quickly distanced herself from Cassidy and said, "Wait! That's not what I was implying!" She glared at Cassidy fiercely and demanded, "What's going on?"

Panic-stricken, Cassidy hastily defended herself, "I... I was scared at that time. I was just speaking without thinking!"

However, Lorraine sneered, "Speaking without thinking? Miss Rivera, you were quite specific in your accusations, even planning to reveal my address. I don't believe it was mere thoughtlessness on your part."

Kassidy felt choked by Lorraine's words. She rolled her eyes and exclaimed, "You kidnapped me and forced me to say those things. You recorded it deliberately to blackmail me!"

Lorraine sneered and retorted in a cold voice, "I'm not as



malicious as you are! And I certainly don't have as much free time as you do!"

Refusing to engage further with Cassidy, Loraine abruptly ended the call.

Florence was bewildered and flustered. Grady shook off Cassidy's grip, his face turning stern as he asked coldly, "Cassidy, what happened?"

Cassidy swallowed nervously and attempted to defend herself. It was at this moment that Grady suddenly recalled what Marco had mentioned earlier.

What had happened outside the Cruz family's residence last night?

Grady's face hardened as he firmly ordered the servant, "Retrieve the surveillance footage from outside the gate of last night."

When she heard that, Cassidy's heart sank. She knew she was in deep trouble.

Soon, the complete footage was brought. Cassidy had acted impulsively, forgetting to instruct the goons to avoid the surveillance camera.

The recording clearly showed the moment when Brody and the others intercepted Loraine, intending to humiliate her.

Florence, witnessing the scene, was also taken aback. Last night, Cassidy had promised to help her vent her anger. Did that mean she had planned to arrange for someone to assault Loraine?

If any harm befell Loraine within the Cruz family's territory, the Cruz family would bear the blame.

Cassidy wasn't helping her! Instead, she wanted to harm the Cruz family!



Shock and anger surged within Florence, her facial expression changing drastically.

At this point, Loraine must have realized that Cassidy was behind this, and if she investigated further, it would implicate the Cruz family.

Moreover, Grady was also displeased with Cassidy. By siding with her, Florence would only worsen the rift between her and her son.

In a moment of decision, Florence resolved to forsake Cassidy.

Observing Florence's increasingly cold demeanor, Cassidy panicked and pleaded, "Aunt, please listen to my explanation!"

Florence waved her hand dismissively and declared, "No need for explanations, Cassidy. You've stayed in the Cruz family's house long enough. It's time for you to pack up and leave!" Without caring about the wound on Cassidy's face, she instructed the servants to forcefully remove Cassidy from the Cruz family's residence along with her belongings.

No matter how desperately Cassidy begged Florence, the doors of the Cruz family's house were mercilessly shut in her face.

Cassidy's voice grew hoarse, and she had to halt her curses. She stared resentfully at the closed doors, and then took out her phone and dialed a number.

The call connected, and Cassidy said in a raspy voice, "Please help me..."

Meanwhile, after settling matters with Cassidy, Loraine sent Marco's black-clad bodyguards away.

She went to the Bryant Group to find Marco. Marco focused his gaze on her and asked gently, "Is everything resolved?"

Loraine raised an eyebrow and smiled.

"Absolutely," she replied.

He could feel his pulse racing in his chest.

It was the first time he had seen such a smug expression on Loraine's face. She looked like a mischievous child who had succeeded in a prank.

In comparison to the indifferent and distant Loraine she had become after their divorce, he found this livelier and lovelier version of Loraine captivating.

Marco was drawn to her, and before he realized it, his hand had already reached out to touch Loraine's head.

Her hair was soft and fluffy, eliciting a pleasant sensation. Unable to resist, Marco gently ruffled her hair.

"Loraine, you've done well," he remarked.



Chapter 441 Couple Watch

Loraine was startled by Marco's touch on her head. After a moment, she regained her composure and awkwardly pushed Marco away. "Stop it, I'm not a child anymore."

Marco didn't argue but simply smiled.

With a hint of hesitation in her eyes, Loraine looked up at him, seemingly confused.

"Marco, I had Cassidy kidnapped. Don't you think I went too far?"

Marco's smile faded, his gaze turned frosty.

"She deserved it. In my opinion, you've been too lenient. If it were up to me... I'd give her a harsh lesson, not just a kidnapping."

Loraine was taken aback. She had felt nothing when Grady had confronted her in disbelief over the phone.

But now, Marco's completely contrasting response stirred something within her, instilling a peculiar and unfamiliar sensation.

Marco gave her an illusion. It was as though no matter what she did, he would endlessly tolerate and understand her.

As Marco's gaze lingered on her, the atmosphere turned somewhat different.

Lowering her eyes to break the eye contact with Marco, Loraine said, "Marco, thank you for lending your men for the act. I... I should head back now."

Without waiting for Marco's response, Loraine quickly left

Bryant Group.

Her heart pounded all the way back to the Torres family home, her mind filled with thoughts of Marco.

The man who had rescued her last night, appearing like a deity, the affectionate way he'd stroked her hair, his raspy voice praising her...

Loraine shook her head, attempting to dispel these images.

Coincidentally, as she entered, Aldo was descending the stairs. Noticing Loraine's flushed face and unusual demeanor, he approached her in concern.

"What's the matter, Lorrie? Your face is so red. Are you unwell?"

Only then did Loraine realize that her intense thoughts of Marco had her face flushed further, heat radiating from her cheeks in embarrassment.

"I'm fine, Grandpa. But there's something I want to show you."

She quickly diverted the topic and presented the pocket watch to Aldo, her eyes filled with anticipation.

"Grandpa, is this the same as the pocket watch my father treasured?"

Aldo froze at the sight of the watch.

His eyes reflected a flurry of emotions, his lips trembling. After a while, he extended his shaky hand to accept the watch.

The next moment, he hunched over it.

As he traced the rose pattern on the watch, tears welled up in his eyes.

Upon opening the pocket watch, a little rotating angel within created a clear, chiming sound.

A tender smile spread across his wrinkled face as Aldo whispered hoarsely, "Yes, it's very similar to your father's watch."

It was merely similar, not the same one.

Hearing Aldo's words, Loraine's eyes dropped, a hint of disappointment crossing her face.

Noticing her dismay, Aldo contained his emotions and gently comforted her, "Lorrie, how did you come across this watch? You've done a wonderful job! This must be the other one of the pair of watches your father was looking for for your mother."

Taken aback, Loraine asked, "Pair of watches?"

"Yes, take a look, Lorrie." Aldo gestured towards the rose pattern on the watch, explaining, "On your father's watch, besides the rose pattern, there was also an image of a robin, which was your mother's favorite."

Loraine only knew that her mother, Tessa, had a gentle, warm smile in the aged photo she had seen.

In the picture, she was adorned in an elegant cheongsam embroidered with a trailing pattern of roses, with a robin perched on the branches, rendered with striking realism.

While her father had never been able to locate the pocket watch, she had stumbled upon it by chance.

Such a coincidence left Aldo sighing in remembrance.

He hadn't indulged in the past for a long time, being an elderly man. But the sight of the pocket watch now invoked dormant memories, leaving his heart aching with nostalgia.

"Had we dispatched someone to keep an eye on you three when your parents went out, maybe they wouldn't have... And we wouldn't have lost you for all those years!"

Aldo had replayed these thoughts countless times, each day

filled with guilt and regret.

Yet this was the first time Aldo had displayed such vulnerability in front of Loraine.

Moved to tears, Loraine was unsure how to console him. Wordlessly, she stepped forward and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder.

After a while, Aldo recovered his composure and gave her a comforting pat. He then retrieved the other pocket watch from within the room.

The pocket watch showcased a robin, perched amidst the rose pattern. The timepiece was shattered, the clock mechanism no longer functional.

Aldo handed the intricately crafted but broken pocket watch to Loraine solemnly.

He smiled, saying, "My child, though your father's watch is broken, it holds significant meaning for our family. Now that you've found the other one of the pair, it's as if it was meant to be yours. If you encounter someone you love in the future, give him this pocket watch and keep the one you found for yourself. Consider it... your parents' blessing for you."

Somehow, thoughts of Marco surfaced in Loraine's mind.

The way he saved her years ago; his stoic silence during their marriage; his anger at their divorce; and now his kindness, promising to protect her...

Every memory of Marco was etched deep within her, vividly clear. Suddenly, she felt a pang of sadness.

Loraine closed her eyes, carefully storing the watch away, and murmured, "Thank you, Grandpa."

A few days later...

Just as Loraine had decided to spend a few days at home with Aldo, a startling piece of news appeared online.

"Hot Issue! The Cheap and Fine Group is planning to withdraw its investment from the new commercial district in Vagow!"



Chapter 442 The Crisis In The New Central Busine...

"The Cheap and Fine Group Ends Cooperation" swiftly became a trending topic, sparking vigorous debates online.

The hottest topic currently on everyone's lips was about the new central business district being developed by the Bryant Group and the Universe Group in Vagow.

The involvement of the Cheap and Fine Group had previously propelled the new central business district to the status of the city's most anticipated large-scale project. Naturally, the news of the Cheap and Fine Group's withdrawal from the partnership caused quite a stir. Amplified by a calculated spin, the public opinion only escalated.

An insider revealed, "The news is indeed true. A number of the Cheap and Fine Group's directors have been at odds with the company's president, Davy, for quite some time. Davy's insistence on establishing a branch of the Cheap and Fine Group in Vagow, instead of the economically advanced Bluhm or Zodiac, the political and economic hub, has led to shareholder dissatisfaction. The members of the Cheap and Fine Group are now banding together to exert pressure on Davy to capitulate."

The source provided a vivid account of the situation, and several commentators began disparaging the new central business district.

Companies that had initially planned to invest began to waiver, while those who had already invested in the new district became increasingly nervous. They persistently sought out more information, ready to pull their investments at the first sign of trouble.

Upon hearing the news, Loraine immediately arranged a meeting with Davy.

The meeting was scheduled at a private club.

When Loraine arrived, she found Marco and Davy already seated across from each other, their expressions stern.

Marco rose to his feet and pulled out a chair for Loraine, gesturing for her to sit beside him.

Without hesitation, Loraine quickly took the seat and addressed the two men.

"What's going on? What's this about the news online?"

Davy scratched his nose and gave a wry smile. "Well... The online news isn't far from the truth, to be honest."

Loraine frowned at his response, and Davy sighed, proceeding to share the full story.

"A good number of the major shareholders in the Cheap and Fine Group are indeed unhappy with my decision to open a branch in Vagow. But due to my position, they've been biting their tongues. However, after I arrived in Vagow, they started scheming behind the scenes."

Davy was unfazed by their underhanded tactics. However, a peculiar incident occurred a few days ago.

"Something odd happened recently. A partner suddenly did an about-face. He declined to sign the contract, stating that he didn't understand why I chose to partner with the Universe Group, and needed to reassess our collaboration. This gave the dissenting shareholders an opportunity to force me to reconsider my decision."

Loraine paused for a moment, and then asked, "Why did he change his mind so abruptly? Who is this partner?"

Given the international standing of the Cheap and Fine Group, no one would willingly cross them.

Moreover, the timing of this partner's change of heart seemed too convenient to be a mere coincidence.

Davy seemed to have expected the question. He shook his head and sighed. "It's the Telan Technology Company. They have a new president who was appointed not too long ago. His name is Onyx Webster."

Loraine contemplated having someone investigate Onyx. After all, financial interests often held the greatest sway. The key figure in this might well be Onyx.

She attempted to reassure Davy, "I understand your apprehensions and concerns, Davy. I promise you that the success of this project will prove those dissenting shareholders wrong. You won't regret choosing the Universe Group and the Bryant Group. The final product, a smart city project and the digital technology blueprint in Vagow, will be testament to that!"

Davy's expression shifted slightly, but he didn't respond.

In truth, the CBD project in Vagow was still in its nascent stages. Nobody could guarantee its future. Despite the appeal of Loraine's words, they painted nothing more than a potential scenario.

Davy was their friend, but business interests took precedence. He couldn't take risks that might antagonize the board of directors, not even for friendship's sake.

Loraine's heart sank, yet she didn't want to put Davy in a difficult position.

Such was the nature of the business world. If a partnership was beneficial, they would proceed. If not, they would halt and minimize losses in a timely manner.

She exhaled deeply, offering Davy a smile. "Davy, we understand

Chapter 442 The Crisis In The New Central Busin 🎁 +120 Points at most and support any decision you choose to make."

Despite this, she had a nagging feeling that the partnership with the Cheap and Fine Group was nearing its end. Even though they had a contract, Loraine didn't plan on holding them responsible for its breach.

After all, Davy was not only a good partner but also a friend.

While the situation was regrettable, Loraine wasn't disheartened. She believed that she could find another company to partner with just as they had with the Cheap and Fine Group!

As she pondered over who the next potential collaborator could be to compensate for the departure of the Cheap and Fine Group, Marco suddenly reached for her hand under the table and gently squeezed it twice.

Looking up, Loraine saw him mouthing the words.

"Don't worry. I'll handle it."

