

## Chapter 426 Refusal

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Loraine had no intention of conversing with Florence any further. Having accomplished her objective, she had no desire to prolong her stay. All she wanted was to bid farewell and depart.

"Excuse me, but I must leave. I have other matters that demand my attention."

Grady's complexion turned pale as he realized that his hopes of fostering a deeper connection with Loraine this time were shattered.

Yet again, he had failed in his attempts.

On hearing Loraine's impending departure, a spark ignited in his mind. He blurted out in desperation, "Loraine, wouldn't you like to take a peek? We have more extraordinary exhibits that you seldom encounter..."

For Loraine, accessing rare art pieces was a simple matter of notifying Wesley. He would accommodate her with an array of masterpieces.

Her attendance at the exhibition was out of obligation, as her parents were guests of the Cruz family's event.

Once she owned an Endy-designed watch, matching her father's style, she yearned to escape this place where she felt like a mere object under constant scrutiny.

Politely, Loraine declined, her smile still in place, "I appreciate the offer, but we can discuss it some

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Politely, Loraine declined, her smile still in place, "I appreciate the offer, but we can discuss it some other time."

Loraine's exit brought immense joy to Cassidy, who was brimming with elation.

She eagerly awaited Loraine's swift departure and fervently hoped she would never return!

She held the conviction that Loraine was the root cause of Florence's shift in attitude towards her. With Loraine's exit, she anticipated a restoration of normalcy.

Despite Loraine's disregard, Florence's irritation was palpable. Her expression hardened, yet the thought of losing a prospective daughter-in-law of Loraine's caliber held her back. Suppressing her indignation, she offered, "Loraine, allow me to walk you out."

Grady's unease heightened, fearing further complications. He interjected hurriedly, "Mother, I'll accompany Loraine."

But Florence rebuffed him with a frosty gaze, "I will handle it. Grady, you stay here and entertain the guests."

Grady was taken aback, as defiance was not his nature. Caught in a moment of uncertainty, Loraine

offered him a comforting gaze. Witnessing her reassuring expression, he responded with a nod.

Understanding that Florence desired a private word with her, Loraine decided to confront her in an effort to avoid any potential complications.

She walked away with a serene smile. As the pair retreated from view, Grady was engulfed in concern, oblivious to Cassidy's departure.

After escorting Loraine out of the banquet room, Florence came to a halt at an isolated corner.

"My apologies, Loraine. I may have been too abrupt in my words. It's understandable if you need some time to process this." She looked at Loraine with a sincerity in her eyes, continuing, "I am aware that you hold resentment against me, based on my past actions. I wasn't the kindest person towards you. Yet, I've pondered over it quite a bit. Actually, you and Grady would make a splendid pair, and both our families are on par in terms of power and status. Should you join our family, I can foresee you leading a content life with Grady."

Caught off guard, Loraine found herself at a loss for words.

Florence suggested she become part of their family, and it made Loraine wonder where Florence got the audacity from.

How could Florence assume she'd be agreeable to become a part of the Cruz family?

Regarding family background, Loraine would never even give a second thought to the Cruz family in Vagow. This branch was nothing compared to their counterparts in Zodiac. Did Florence view her own family, the Torres, as inferior, even though they held a significant place in Vagow?

Florence, oblivious to Loraine's displeasure, grew more passionate as she continued her monologue. She even mentioned Cassidy.

"Cassidy is a distant relative whom I have met only a few times. Please don't misconstrue anything, Loraine. Grady is firmly by your side. You're remarkably accomplished. I couldn't ask for more. Once you become part of the Cruz family, we'll join forces, and, without a doubt, we'll surpass the Bryant Group eventually."

The more Florence spoke, the more ludicrous she sounded. At her wits' end, Loraine cut her off, setting the record straight.

With no other ears to witness the conversation, she saw no need to spare any feelings for the Cruz family.

"Mrs. Cruz, I must make it clear. I don't have any romantic feelings for Grady. I won't consider marrying him in the future. I urge you to seek a suitable partner for your son elsewhere." Pausing briefly, Loraine added, "Concerning the potential collaboration, my assistant or someone from the Universe Group can set up a meeting. We can discuss the specifics then."

Florence had steeled herself to display humility, but Loraine's rejection was even more explicit than she had anticipated. Her frustration was evident on her face, darkening her expression.

"Do you believe your association with Marco allows you to dismiss the Cruz family?"

As Florence ruminated on her words, they began to make sense to her. She scoffed, "My suggestion, Loraine, is not to place all your bets on Marco. He's

Chapter 426 Refusal

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impressive, no doubt, but the tragic reality is... He's bound by a family that never fails to impede his progress. Who knows what clandestine dealings they might have? Are you really willing to tie the knot with him again and endure a strenuous life in the Bryant family?"

## Chapter 427 Fearless

Lorraine's expression morphed into a scowl upon hearing Florence's disparaging comments about Marco.

"Mrs. Cruz, ponder over what Marco might feel if he caught wind of your words."

Florence, jolted by Lorraine's words, was caught off guard. Rumors of Bryant family had reached her, but she didn't dare to cross Marco.

Lorraine's tone chilled. "My rejection of Grady isn't Marco's problem. I simply don't have feelings for Grady. Moreover, Marco's families aren't all saints. Do you consider yourself superior? While you remain, Mrs. Cruz, I vow to never join the Cruz family."

Florence, quaking with rage, retorted, "Bravo, Lorraine! Don't cry foul in the future now that I've warned you. Neither you nor Marco can afford to challenge the Cruz family! I will patiently await the day you rue this!"

Lorraine scoffed. Florence simply had the backing of the Cruz family in Zodiac. What made her so arrogant?

"Don't worry, Mrs. Cruz. Such a day won't arise."

With those words, Lorraine took her leave, her exit radiating defiance.

The severing of their relationship was now out in the open, thanks to Lorraine's clear stance.

Unfazed, Lorraine strolled away, her demeanor still

brazen.

Florence, left behind, was seething. With no witnesses present, she began to curse freely.

Meanwhile, Cassidy, who had been secretly observing from a corner, was buzzing with excitement. She sensed an opportunity!

She had overheard the entire exchange.

With Loraine's full-blown affront to Florence, there was no longer a possibility of Loraine entering the Cruz family.

A chuckle escaped Cassidy as she stepped out from her hiding spot to console Florence.

"Dear Aunt, please try to keep calm. Loraine is quite the ingrate. She disregards a fine man like Grady. She's disrespecting Grady and the Cruz family!"

Though internally convinced that Loraine stood no chance with Grady, Cassidy persisted in denigrating her, aiming to worsen Florence's already poor opinion of Loraine.

Fuming, Florence paid no mind to Cassidy's sudden appearance, but instead found the truth in her words.

Cassidy stoked the fire. "Loraine is blinded by false perception. That's why she thinks Marco trumps Grady. Grady, with his handsome features, gentle nature, and noble lineage, is far superior. Loraine doesn't deserve him!"

Florence was of the same mind. Her face was a mask of displeasure. She snorted and spat out, "Loraine, such audacity from a Torres woman! She's merely a

divorcee. How dare she flaunt such arrogance!"

Kassidy seized the moment and said, "Aunt, a woman with such disregard for you doesn't deserve to become a Cruz. She doesn't respect you in the slightest!"

Florence, her pride evident, nodded in agreement. She declared, "Lorraine will be filled with regret in due time. Kassidy, I'm only sharing this with you. In reality, the Cruz family's eldest son has been missing for years and remains unfound. The family is now in search of a successor from among its branches. Among all contenders, only our Grady shines bright enough!"

Should Grady secure his position as the Cruz family successor, even the queen of Eplistan would have to treat her with courtesy, let alone Marco!

Florence was in a rush to find a suitable daughter-in-law, having heard about recent events in the Cruz family. She needed to make early preparations to enhance Grady's chances of securing the heir position.

Upon hearing this, a spark ignited in Kassidy's eyes.

Her family resided in Oldwell, lacking access to vital information, and their business was deteriorating. The only way she could benefit was through her relationship with Florence. However, Florence's attitude towards their family had turned sour, and she was growing increasingly impatient with them.

Prior to arriving in Vagow, she had done her research on the Cruz family. She was well aware of their dominance in Zodiac.

And her speculations were now confirmed by Florence



herself.

Florence hinted at Grady's potential to become the Cruz family heir in Zodiac. Cassidy held her words as truth.

If she were to become Grady's wife, she would not only be the youthful daughter-in-law of the Cruz family, but also the lady of the leading wealthy family in Zodiac!

Picturing this scenario, Cassidy felt a wave of exhilaration. Her heartbeat quickened, and her resolve to marry Grady solidified.

She went out of her way to win Florence's favor.

"Aunt, given Grady's talents and the stature of the Cruz family, he has the luxury to choose any woman he desires. Loraine lacks refinement. She isn't deserving of being your daughter-in-law. It's truly a privilege to be a part of your family!"

Flattery at its finest, Florence responded with a snort of agreement.

Seizing this opportune moment, Cassidy showered Florence with due respect.

"Aunt, in my eyes, Grady is second to none. If I am lucky enough to be his wife, I will heed your advice, nurture our family and take care of him..."

Florence's eyes sparkled. She offered a forced smile and grasped Cassidy's hand.

"My dear, I understand your affection for Grady. But his marriage is a matter that requires careful consideration."

With these words, Florence took her leave, remaining non-committal. Cassidy was left standing, clenching her teeth in silent frustration.

Why was it that she couldn't join the Cruz family? Regardless of her introspection, she refused to accept that the fault was hers.

The obstacle had to be Loraine!

If she could entirely sever the ties between Loraine and Grady, she believed Florence would select her as Grady's wife.

A scheme began to form in Cassidy's mind, and she couldn't help but smirk.

She had made a call while eavesdropping, which would come in handy now.

Once Loraine's reputation was shredded beyond repair, the Cruz family wouldn't consider her for Grady.

This was Cassidy's first visit to Vagow. She had learned about Loraine's influential background at the party. But she didn't take it seriously. She simply regarded it as an empty boast.

No matter how influential Loraine was, she was just a wealthy heiress. Once her reputation was tarnished, what else would she have left to boast about?

On the other side, Loraine was departing from the Cruz family estate, ready to return home.

However, just as she was about to get into the car, a group of obscene men intercepted her at the intersection.