

Chapter 667 Who Dares To Touch Her !

On the playground of the orphanage, Loraine was immersed in play with a group of gleeful children, their laughter ringing in the air.

Suddenly, the sound of angry shouts disrupted the harmony, and a commotion from afar caught Loraine's attention.

Her eyes narrowed as she sensed trouble brewing, and with calming words, she reassured the children before moving toward the disturbance.

Outside the orphanage gates, a throng of villagers had gathered, their faces twisted with anger and resentment. Some brandished wooden sticks, their threatening gestures mirroring their hostility.

Loraine halted, momentarily taken aback by the unexpected confrontation. Before she could grasp the situation, a young man with a shaved head advanced, pointing an accusatory finger at her.

"Loraine, how can you be so heartless? We trusted you, and you deceived us with empty promises! You couldn't survive in the city with your feckless companion, so you returned to our village to deceive and betray us!"

Others joined in, their voices building to a furious crescendo. "You're wicked, Loraine! You want to see us lose everything, don't you? We won't let you escape unpunished!"

"Don't let her escape! She took our hard-earned money! We can't let her off the hook that easily!"

"Make her pay! Make her pay!" the crowd chanted, their wrath unabated.

Loraine's brow furrowed as she recognized the malicious eyes of the ringleader, Vinnie Branco, a figure from her past she could never forget.

The cries of distressed children pulled her from her thoughts.

The menacing display had terrified them, and they were now sobbing uncontrollably.

With urgency, Loraine steadied herself and knelt to comfort the children.

"Dillon, Giovanni, please take your younger siblings back to the house and find Mrs. Harvey, okay?" she instructed, her voice gentle but firm.

The two children, their faces flushed with fear, nodded bravely, determination in their eyes.

"Good kids," Loraine said, her smile warm. "I'll have some candy waiting for you later."

With the children safely inside, Loraine's smile vanished, replaced by a cold, resolute gaze aimed at the villagers.

"Can't we discuss this matter calmly? Is this any way to act in front of children?"

Vinnie sneered, puffing out his chest. "Who cares about them? Your deceit matters more, Loraine! No one's well-being matters more to me than my money!"

Lorraine's posture relaxed slightly as the children were safely out of sight. Though she was uncertain why the villagers had become so incensed, she understood that money must be at the heart of their fury.

Despite her distaste for their avarice and hostile attitudes, Lorraine addressed the crowd with measured patience. "Friends, I understand your eagerness to prosper. But please, be patient; creating wealth takes time. The engineers I've engaged are on their way, and they'll soon begin work on the road. We'll move forward with the construction plan as swiftly as possible."

Vinnie's eyes flickered with suspicion as he sneered, "Lies! You think we're fools to be tricked? If you genuinely intended to build the road, why bring a man instead of engineers? Are you summoning engineers just to hoodwink us? Pay us now!"

Some villagers, momentarily mollified by Lorraine's words, were once again swayed by Vinnie's outburst. They resumed their demands for compensation, ignoring Lorraine's explanations.

Lorraine's brow creased in confusion. Vinnie had previously been eager to invest in the stall deposit. Why was he suddenly making trouble now?

And the others – their words seemed rehearsed, not their own. Was someone behind this, manipulating them?

The crowd pressed closer, their faces twisted with anger, and Lorraine instinctively retreated a step.

Vinnie's eyes, alight with greed, stayed fixed on her as he taunted, "Look at her clothes, everyone! That fabric is no doubt costly. She flaunts her wealth while seeking to swindle us. Shall we let her get away with this? If she won't pay, we'll seize her clothes and sell them!"

He thrust out his coarse hand, leering at Loraine. "After all, we've seen her undress before. What we left undone then, I'll finish now!"

Recognition of Vinnie had already left Loraine deeply unsettled, but his words triggered a torrent of traumatic memories. Her stomach clenched, and her face paled to an ashen hue.

These weren't merely disgruntled villagers; they were acting like lawless hooligans.

Emotion overwhelmed her, and in a moment of vulnerability, she was shoved by the surging crowd, losing her balance and tumbling to the ground, her hair a wild tangle around her.

Vinnie's eyes widened at the sight of her, now stripped of youthful naivete, radiating a mature and fragile beauty, even in disarray.

Capturing a woman like her would make even a lifetime of poverty worth enduring.

With a predatory grin, Vinnie lunged at Loraine.

But just as he was about to lay hands on her, a sharp pain erupted in his abdomen. In an instant, he was violently kicked away, sent reeling several feet backward.

A voice, frigid and unyielding, rang out, "Who dares to touch her?!"



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Chapter 668 Past And Present

The tall and unyielding figure of a man stood before Loraine, a protective shield against any harm that might befall her.

With a single decisive strike, he had almost crippled Vinnie, radiating a chilling aura that sent the previously boisterous villagers stumbling back in terror.

His expression stern, Marco fixed them with a forbidding glare and commanded, "Leave!"

The words were so filled with menace that the villagers at the front hastily scattered, and the rest followed suit, fleeing like terrified creatures of the wild. Vinnie, lying incapacitated on the ground, was abandoned and forgotten.

Marco's fists were clenched tight, his anger barely contained, but he swiftly shifted his attention back to Loraine.

As he saw her bewildered expression, his heart twisted with concern. He helped her to her feet, holding her securely in his arms. "Loraine, are you alright? I'm here now. Don't be afraid."

Loraine's head shook almost imperceptibly, her mind adrift, pulled back to a time long past. She remembered an evening that seemed both distant and close, and an image of a proud young boy superimposed upon the handsome face filled with worry before her.

Her first meeting with Marco had occurred much earlier than he realized.

It wasn't during the time the Bryant family sought a wife for Marco, nor the occasion of their first meeting after marriage. Their connection went back to their youth.

A situation from their past had astonishing parallels with the present.

In their village, where there was no school, children had to travel to town for their education. During junior high, as boys and girls began to change, their interactions grew complicated. The boys, prodded by a misguided sense of humor, enjoyed embarrassing the girls, who whispered amongst themselves about their secret transformations.

Loraine, an outsider at school thanks to Judie's persistent slander, had concentrated on her studies. Aware that her bodily changes were a natural part of growing up, she was undaunted.

But Judie and others targeted her, subjecting her to humiliation.

The boys became bolder, crossing lines with their behavior.

One Friday evening, Loraine found herself encircled by a group of boys egged on by Judie as she walked home from school.

They trapped her, their laughter coarse, their eyes gleaming with indecent intent.

"Loraine, you're just an orphan. No amount of study will help. My dad says women must rely on men, and we're men. You can depend on us. Ha-ha!"

"We're saving you from the wrong path. When you turn to prostitution, we'll be your first customers!"

Though Loraine's maturity set her apart from her peers, she was still a child. Their vulgar taunts struck terror into her heart,

tears welling in her eyes as she clutched her small school bag, feeling utterly trapped.

But when the boys lunged at her, their intentions all too clear, Loraine's survival instinct awakened. Fighting back with all her might, she bit, scratched, and kicked until she broke free.

With tears streaming down her face and no thought to direction, she knew only that she had to run, to put as much distance as possible between herself and those who would harm her.

In her blind panic, Loraine found herself on a remote country road.

It was an infrequently traversed path, and fate intervened that day when a Rolls-Royce approached and halted abruptly in front of her.

The driver, surprised by Loraine's sudden appearance, hit the brakes hard and uttered a string of expletives. Dazed, she looked up to hear a calm voice from inside the car, directing the driver to navigate around her.

But the group of boys had caught up to her.

Summoning strength from a place she didn't know existed, Loraine reached out to stop the car, her tears flowing freely as she cried out to the unseen occupant, "Save me!"

And then, as if he had stepped from the pages of a fairy tale, a young boy emerged, his presence protecting her from harm.

He possessed a refined elegance that seemed almost otherworldly, coupled with an unwavering self-assurance. After ensuring her safety, he handed her a business card and said composedly, "If they dare bully you again, come find me."

Lorraine's memory of that moment was indelible.

From then on, she cherished the business card, whispering Marco Bryant's name into the night, imprinting it on her soul.

However, before she could seek his help again, her family discovered her and took her back home.

Afterward, news emerged about Marco's search for a wife.

With a pang of emotion she could hardly contain, Lorraine closed her eyes, hearing the deep concern in Marco's voice as he asked, "Lorraine, what's wrong?"

His embrace was warm, reassuring, comforting.

Looking up at him with misty eyes, she managed a smile and shook her head. "It's nothing."

Nothing, she thought, except a profound gratitude that she hadn't missed her chance to connect with him once more, her heart stirring with newfound affection.

After making sure she was unhurt, Marco kissed her forehead and rose, dealing a disdainful kick to the semi-conscious Vinnie. He then removed his suit jacket and gently placed it around Lorraine's shoulders.

She looked up at him, her face glowing with trust.

The scene struck a chord in Marco.

It reminded him of a distant memory, a time when he had rescued another girl in a village's outskirts, another soul almost subjected to violation and humiliation.

This recollection deepened his tenderness towards Lorraine, and he pulled her gently into his arms, thinking of the difficulties

she had overcome.

"These villagers really don't know what's good for them, given everything you've done," he said, his voice tinged with cold fury as his eyes fixed on Vinnie, now stirring on the ground.

"Anyone who dares bully my girlfriend, do you wish to die?"

Vinnie, hearing these words as he regained consciousness, felt a shiver of fear. Seeing that his fellow villagers had abandoned him, he attempted to muster a defiant facade, blustering, "What do you want? It was you who first deceived us innocent country folks!"

Chapter 669 Ignorance And Poverty

Innocent?

Marco's cold gaze swept over the reluctant and furtive villagers who lingered outside the iron gate, and a scornful laugh escaped his lips.

"Is this your definition of innocence? So innocent that a group of grown men think it fitting to surround and torment a woman, to lay hands on her?"

When he had rushed over and glimpsed those grimy, repulsive hands nearly touching Loraine, his fury had ignited, a fire that threatened to consume all reason.

He had wanted to kill them on the spot!

He had been charmed by the warmth of Henna and Eloise, led to believe that the rural folk were sincere and honorable. He had anticipated visiting the place where Loraine had grown up with a sense of longing. Yet he had not dismissed Henna's cautionary words about this "backwater filled with petty-minded people." Recent events had underscored the truth in that statement.

Loraine had worked tirelessly, engaging construction teams and spending her own money repairing the road. Yet these villagers had turned callous, displaying a cold indifference when immediate benefits eluded them.

They were indeed a group of ingrates.

But Marco had no interest in judging their morality. As a businessman, he appreciated the multifaceted nature of humanity. None among them were purely evil; they were driven by self-interest.

What incensed him was the injustice done to Loraine. She didn't deserve such contempt.

Through overheard snippets of conversation, he had pieced together a vivid picture of Loraine's earlier life.

The harsh, self-serving words spoken to her face were bad enough; he shuddered to think of the venom spewed behind her back.

Once, Marco would not have spared these people a second thought. Their lives, their deaths, why should he care? Let them wallow in their ignorance and poverty.

But now, things had changed. This was Loraine's birthplace, and he wanted to dispel the rumors and eradicate anything that might harm her.

The crowd fell silent, shame-faced and unable to meet his eye.

Only Vinnie, nursing his injuries, seethed with resentment. Through gritted teeth, he spat, "Why did you deceive us first? You come back in fancy attire, acting rich, trying to fool us. We're not imbeciles! Loraine, you don't have the money, do you? Even if you did, you were taunted here in the past. Do you really harbor enough kindness to invest in repairing the village road?"

Loraine's stomach turned as she looked at Vinnie, disbelieving the venom in his words.

Hadn't he been one of her tormentors back then? How dare he say such things now?

As for the others, even if they hadn't directly bullied Loraine, they had certainly gossiped and spread rumors. Now, guilt gnawing at them, they found themselves swayed by Vinnie's accusations, secretly agreeing with his twisted logic.

People were inherently self-serving. Had they suffered ridicule and abuse like Loraine, would they still feel obliged to assist the village?

Marco's sneer deepened. "So now you realize that you've wronged Loraine, yet you have the audacity to come here and create a scene. The extent of your shamelessness is truly astounding!"

The villagers muttered among themselves, discontent coloring their whispers, "We merely spoke idle words about her; we never harmed her. But we've invested real money here, and we can't even get an explanation?"

Even Marco found himself taken aback by their blatant disregard for decency. Their audacity in feeling justified was almost laughable. He chuckled dryly, "Rest assured, we are not fixing this road for you, you pack of wolves. Though you are devoid of honor and unworthy of Loraine's goodwill, there are still people like Mrs. Harvey and the children at the orphanage who matter. If only to ease their way to school, we will see this road repaired!"

Shame crept across the faces of the villagers. When Marco framed it in this manner, they recognized their pettiness. Having been likened to wolves and realizing that they had exploited Loraine's kindness, they felt a twinge of remorse. Some contemplated backing down.

Worried about losing his audience, Vinnie shouted, "Don't allow him to distract you! His words are meaningless! Tell us, can Loraine really come up with the money? If not, she's deceiving

us! You think we fabricated the gossip about her? There's no smoke without fire! She vowed to fix the road. We didn't coerce her. How are we wolves? We've invested genuine money, and we are entitled to protect our interests!"

Vinnie's shrewd tactics created distance between himself and the villagers, making his argument sound logical. After all, they weren't the ones who pressured Loraine to fix the road!

Marco's sneer turned icy. "You people are truly amusing. You've been accusing Loraine of deception since I arrived. Tell me, how exactly has Loraine deceived you?"

Vinnie's smug face twisted into a triumphant grin. "There's evidence aplenty. Don't think we're ignorant of who you are! You're Marco Bryant, the disgraced CEO ousted from his wealthy family. A rogue like you surely has no money. If Loraine had funds, she would've fixed the road long ago. Why wait until now to summon help?"

Marco glanced at him with contempt and jeered, "Fix the road long ago? In this insular village, I, Loraine's boyfriend, was interrogated just to attend a banquet. How could an outsider enter the village so swiftly to begin construction?"

Vinnie's mouth snapped shut, his words dying on his tongue. As he struggled to find a response, Marco continued, "As soon as the villagers consented, Loraine contacted the construction team. If all goes as planned, they'll be here shortly."

His words were punctuated by the cries of villagers rushing over from the entrance, their voices tinged with excitement. "People are arriving at the entrance! There are city folks among them!"

Chapter 670 Undeniable Evidence

A convoy of construction vehicles rumbled into the village, navigating the muddy dirt road. The curious villagers gaped at the city folks, their eyes wide with astonishment.

People who were introduced as engineers disembarked from the vehicles. Dressed in blue uniforms and wearing safety glasses typical of construction sites, they exuded an extraordinary professional demeanor.

The vehicles halted in front of the orphanage, and a man, sharply dressed in a suit, confidently made his way towards the entrance, effortlessly parting the crowd of villagers as he went.

Upon spotting Loraine from a distance, he quickened his pace and approached her, bowing respectfully. "Miss Torres, I am Nicholas Bellic, the team leader of the engineering group. You can call me Niko."

Nicholas's eyes darted to Marco, who was standing beside Loraine, a flicker of surprise in his eyes. Tactfully, he ignored it and turned his attention back to Loraine. Seeing her with slightly bent legs and clothes smudged with dust, he asked anxiously, "President, are you injured? Are you alright?"

Loraine shook her head, reassuring him that she was unharmed.

The nearby villagers, however, were wide-eyed and dumbfounded.

Who was this team leader, addressing Loraine as "President"?

Though not well-versed in the ways of the world, the villagers had seen enough movies and television shows to know that such titles were reserved for influential figures, like business magnates.

Vinnie, in particular, was flustered and disbelieving. "President? Are you mistaken? Loraine is just an ordinary woman from this village. How could she be a president?"

He regarded Nicholas with a skeptical eye. "Is your company merely a two-person operation? Or perhaps you're an actor hired by Loraine, playing a role? You're quite convincing, I must say!"

An actor?

Nicholas's face twisted into a look of incredulity as he assessed the rural youth, whose demeanor resembled that of a small-time troublemaker. The accusation was both vulgar and contemptible.

Initially, Nicholas had assumed this individual was a friend of Loraine's, so he had endured the disrespect. However, it was now clear that the young man had no regard for Loraine at all.

Before Nicholas could respond, Marco's voice cut in. Recognizing Marco, Nicholas wisely stepped aside.

Marco's tone was cool, tinged with disdain. "You seem to have quite the imagination, assuming it's a two-person company... Hmm."

He gestured to Nicholas and the row of vehicles outside, smirking, "These people and all this equipment are part of the company. Why don't you ask this gentleman where he comes

from?"

Nicholas, quickly grasping the situation, pulled out his work credentials with a serious expression. "I am Nicholas Bellic, a senior engineer responsible for construction at the Universe Group."

Vinnie's face blanched as he took in the work credentials handed to him. The impressive title, along with the distinguished gold-embossed logo in the top right corner, struck terror into his heart.

It was the logo of the Universe Group!

Even with his limited education and exposure to the broader world, Vinnie knew what the Universe Group signified in Vagow.

Nicholas's satisfaction at Vinnie's reaction was apparent as he put away the credentials and stated with authority, "Earlier, Miss Torres contacted us to undertake the road construction in this village. We rushed here without delay, but the road from the town to the village proved difficult to traverse. Additionally, securing government approval required navigating a series of bureaucratic procedures, causing some delay."

He turned to Loraine and bowed respectfully. "Miss Torres, my apologies for keeping you waiting."

Vinnie's face turned ashen, and he felt a buzzing sensation in his head.

The villagers were well aware that the village roads were not easy to navigate, and the logo of the Universe Group was recognized even in the countryside. The undeniable evidence was right before their eyes, leaving no room for doubt or denial.

All the reasons they had to doubt Loraine vanished in an instant. They had assumed she couldn't produce the money,

but now they knew that not only did she have the necessary funds, but she also held a position of significant authority. Who would dare to oppose Loraine now?

One by one, the villagers adopted expressions of guilt, whether genuine or feigned, and began to apologize to Loraine.

Vinnie felt adrift, his mind consumed by the realization that he had nearly ruined Loraine's reputation.

If she truly were a high-ranking executive in the Universe Group, would she even spare him?

Fear and confusion drove him to lash out, yelling, "It's impossible! Loraine is just a village woman; how could she be a president? I don't believe it! Even if it's true, she must have relied on some men to get there!"

As if belittling Loraine would somehow vindicate him, Vinnie appeared intent on disparaging her name.

Nicholas frowned at Vinnie's words, his expression growing stern.

Marco's glance turned cold as he sneered at Vinnie, "If you don't believe it, then forget it. Since you all doubt our intentions, there's no need for this road or the market. Mr. Bellic, lead the team; let's leave."

The villagers were struck with alarm at Marco's words. These projects were crucial to their livelihoods!

Aside from a few cronies who often associated with Vinnie, the majority began to berate him, urging him to be quiet. They adopted a more humble attitude, pleading with Loraine to overlook their earlier rudeness.

Loraine, witnessing the stark contrast in their behavior, felt a


mix of sadness and resignation. She reached for Marco's hand and said calmly, "Let it be. It's my fault for not informing the villagers in advance and setting their minds at ease. Since I promised to build the road, I will fulfill my commitment."

The villagers, including Vinnie, exhaled a collective sigh of relief.

However, Loraine's next words, delivered with a cold gaze and a voice edged with resolve, caused the sighs to catch in their throats. She turned to Vinnie and said, "But..."

Her words hung heavily in the air, and the villagers waited, tension mounting, for her to continue.



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Chapter 671 A Fitting Lesson For Her

Vinnie squirmed under the scrutinizing gaze, swallowing hard to muster courage. With a defiant tone and a rigid posture, he retorted, "Why are you staring at me? What do you want?"

The more arrogant he became, the clearer Loraine's memories of the group that had cornered her, their grins menacing, grew.

Some people could commit heinous acts yet remain unabashed and impudent.

Loraine averted her eyes and chuckled softly, "It's not about what I want, but about you instigating trouble here today. Your actions are reprehensible, and the police will deal with you as required."

Vinnie, a petty thug, was petrified of entanglement with the police. His understanding of the law was scant, and his fear was evident. Regardless, he refused to back off. "You... don't try to intimidate me. I swear, I haven't done anything illegal!"

"Really? Your behavior today could land you behind bars for a couple of years."

Hearing this, Vinnie blanched. "You're spouting nonsense! There's no way I'll be jailed. I didn't even lay a finger on you... You're bluffing to scare me, you cold-hearted witch!"

Before he could complete his sentence, Loraine dialed the police emergency number in his presence and put it on speaker, politely asking if the police would apprehend someone for

causing a disturbance.

The police confirmed they would.

Vinnie, terrified, almost crumpled to the ground, his eyes darting. However, a spark of hope remained, considering that perhaps Loraine would spare him for the villagers' sake, even if he was sentenced.

But that hope was swiftly crushed. Loraine, cool-headed and collected, methodically relayed the recent events and even disclosed the location of the village.

The moment the construction team from the city entered this village, all levels of the county administration were alert. Upon hearing about the situation, the police promptly dispatched officers to the location.

Trembling, Vinnie stammered, "Lo-Lorraine, we're all familiar faces here. Is this really necessary?"

Lorraine ended the call, smiled, and casually retorted, "You can plead with the police. I won't be pressing charges."

She was serene, but within her heart, she revisited the memories of a young, helpless Loraine forced onto the road.

Finally, she had her retribution.

Soon, the police arrived, took a brief statement, and handcuffed Vinnie. They glanced at the crowd of villagers gathered outside the orphanage and queried, "Is he the only one causing a scene? What are these people doing here?"

The villagers' complexions drained, and they descended into chaos. Pointing at Vinnie, they stuttered, "It's him! He urged us to come here. We were merely spectators. Observing isn't a crime, is it?"

The police narrowed their eyes, and Loraine waved her hand, grinning. "Punishing the instigator is sufficient. Thank you."

Upon hearing this, the police asked no further questions. They entered their vehicle and drove away, leaving the remaining villagers scrambling to assert their innocence to Loraine.

Loraine fixed a chilly stare at a few individuals who had been particularly troublesome alongside Vinnie. Her face hardened as she declared in a frosty tone, "I won't hold you responsible for prior offenses, but I do not wish to see you here again. From this point on, you are unwelcome at the market in the orphanage."

Those who had been causing trouble with Vinnie were accustomed to acting brazenly, but now they felt relieved, having avoided jail and only been banned from the orphanage. They showered Loraine with gratitude before hurriedly departing.

The remaining villagers were apprehensive, dreading being held accountable.

Loraine then softened her tone and began to reassure them. "I understand that not everyone agreed with Vinnie's ideas. Your concerns about the money you invested in the stalls being wasted, leading you to follow him, are valid. I appreciate that."

A collective sigh of relief washed over the villagers, and Loraine continued, "As long as everyone conducts their business with integrity and goodwill, I won't interfere, nor will I penalize you for the actions of a handful of individuals. However, those with malicious intent, seeking to harm me, will find no mercy."

Her voice was gentle and soothing, but it was juxtaposed against the recent image of her sending Vinnie to jail without a second thought, leaving everyone uncertain about his

possible duration of imprisonment.

This stark contrast served as a reminder that they should not underestimate her.

Gratitude was expressed by the villagers. "Loraine, we now understand who truly has our interests at heart. To be honest, we were swayed into creating this commotion today by Judie Cooper!"

"Indeed! The Cooper family fed us all sorts of slanders about you. We were hoodwinked. But when the trouble brewed, Judie was conspicuously absent! Now, I see through their charade. The Coopers' promises are hollow, and we were merely pawns in their game!"

Upon hearing this, Loraine couldn't help but glance at Marco. He wore a stern expression, his eyes icy and composed, lips firmly pressed together.

It appeared that Marco was not inclined to let the Cooper family off easily this time. She gently squeezed his hand, with no intention to dissuade him, and asserted, "Judie instigated all of this just to see me fail and usurp control of the orphanage. Our best retort will be to repair the road, safeguard the orphanage, and ensure everyone here enjoys a better life than the Coopers. That would be a fitting lesson for her!"



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