

## Chapter 682 Catching

Vinnie was no fool, and he had quickly identified the person who had facilitated his release as one of the Cooper family's bodyguards.

This task served dual purposes for him. First, it allowed him to vent his frustrations on Loraine, a chance to settle his personal grudge. Second, he could easily shift the blame to the Cooper family, pocketing the money while remaining obscured.

Upon observing Vinnie's demeanor, Loraine's lips curled into a sneer of disdain.

Yet, when Vinnie implicated the Cooper family, she didn't express surprise.

Among those in the village who harbored resentment against her and persistently sought to undermine the orphanage, only the Cooper family seemed capable of such a plot.

But she hadn't anticipated the Coopers being so brazen and foolish, directly hiring someone to commit arson.

Could they honestly believe they could act without consequence in this village?

Casting a sidelong glance at the self-satisfied Vinnie, Loraine let out a cold, contemptuous scoff.

Though intent on holding the Cooper family responsible, she had no intention of letting the primary arsonist escape punishment.

"Vinnie, are you confessing to starting the fire?" she inquired, her voice edged with determination.

Confronted with Loraine's unyielding stare, Vinnie stammered,



"I, I already said it was the Cooper family..."

Her face darkened further, her voice taking on a forbidding tone. "You were bailed out once for causing trouble; but now you're implicated in arson and inflicting injuries. Do you think escape will be so easy? Hit him; keep hitting him until the truth emerges!"

Among Nicholas's team were not only designers but also bodyguards to ensure Loraine's safety.

Without hesitation, eight imposing men encircled Vinnie, their faces impassive as they beat him like a rogue animal.

Their massive fists descended in a furious flurry, and Vinnie's hopes were soon replaced by cries and tears. "Loraine, I know I was wrong! Please stop!" he pleaded through his sobs, "I was blind in the past, I..."

His pleas were quickly drowned out by agonized screams, his words becoming an incoherent jumble.

Loraine's face remained unmoved, her heart devoid of compassion, a flicker of amusement playing across her lips.

How dared he invoke the past now? The fact that she hadn't permitted them to beat Vinnie to death already spoke to her restraint.

As she surveyed Vinnie's battered and bruised form sprawled on the ground, Loraine's voice turned frigid. "In the past, I showed mercy and didn't press matters; but you've failed to learn. Reflect on your deeds in prison. This time, don't hope for bail."

Vinnie's hope plummeted, the realization dawning too late that his remorse was now futile.

Two of the team remained to watch over Vinnie, as Loraine's thoughts turned to her next target: the Cooper family.

But she wasn't in haste to confront them, a plan forming in her

mind instead.

For the puppeteers orchestrating these events, Loraine yearned to see them unravel into panic and disarray.

Meanwhile, within the confines of the Cooper family's residence, a scene of chaos unfolded.

Zaria burst into the house, her face etched with dread and sorrow, breathlessly addressing her husband, "Becker, what are we to do? That Loraine survived the fire! The men we sent have just reported that she's discovered Vinnie's involvement, and he's been apprehended!"

Upon hearing this news, Becker's hand quivered, causing water to splash from his cup. His countenance turned stormy, and he roared in fury, "Where did you find those people? How could they fail so miserably?"

A stab of guilt struck Zaria, and she faltered, "I... I believed that, since Vinnie harbored resentment towards Loraine and had no connections, we could exploit him. If things went awry, we could always lay the blame on him. Who could have foreseen that Loraine would escape unscathed?"

Frustration and anger creased Becker's forehead as he massaged his temples, his teeth clenched. "Fool! Vinnie is worthless, and you're no different! Now see the mess you've made. Loraine survived, and that blabbermouth Vinnie will surely implicate us!"

A frantic Zaria responded, "But the fire was his doing. What do we have to do with it?"

"Shut up! You paid him to ignite the flames; do you think Loraine will overlook our involvement? It's futile to lament now. We must act. Before Loraine arrives at our doorstep, gather your belongings. We must leave immediately!" Becker ordered, his voice unwavering.

With a sense of resolve, Becker strode upstairs to assemble their possessions. Money would afford them comfort



elsewhere, but should they fall into Loraine's grasp, their future would be behind bars.

Although perplexed, Zaria commenced packing, tugging a confused Judie along with her.

Ignorant of the true crime, and witnessing her parents' flight, Judie objected, "Father, mother, why do we flee from Loraine? Who is she to intimidate us? Why should we fear her?"

As she stood in the doorway, attempting to restrain Zaria, Becker's fury ignited. Without pausing to think, he delivered a stinging slap to her cheek.

"Silence! Cease this spectacle! Would you have Loraine find us here?"

His words had scarcely left his lips when a delicate laughter drifted from nearby. Becker's body tensed, his head turning to find Loraine poised on the path, her smile twisted with irony. "No need for such commotion," she said, her voice dripping with scorn, "I've been awaiting you right here."



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## Chapter 683 Wrong In The Past

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Becker's eyes widened momentarily as they fell upon Loraine, his body halting in shock.

Loraine, perceptive to his reaction, sensed it wasn't as overstated as Zaria's but it clearly signified something untoward within the Cooper family.

Soon regaining his composure, Becker's face shifted into a disingenuous smile filled with feigned warmth. "Is this really Loraine? Look at you! It's been years since we last met. When Zaria spoke of your return, I found it hard to believe. How you've grown!"

Loraine's laughter escaped at his facade. Although she vaguely recalled seeing Zaria hovering near the orphanage entrance in her youth, Becker was a complete stranger to her. Now, he was attempting to ingratiate himself.

"Mr. Cooper, let's not pretend familiarity. I'm certain you know why I'm here today. You hired an arsonist to set a fire, to commit murder. Now, you plan to run away?"

Becker hadn't anticipated such directness. A flicker of concern crossed his face, and he instinctively concealed the luggage behind him. With feigned confusion and a nervous chuckle, he said, "Loraine, I can't quite grasp what you mean. Must a family justify a simple trip? Is that now a crime?"

His voice then turned falsely stern. "Words are potent, young lady. One must be careful with what one says. The Cooper name is respected in this village. Wild allegations can be dangerous. Don't fault me if I fail to hold back."

Loraine's laughter rang out briefly before her face turned

solemn. She tossed an item in front of Becker, her voice resolute. "Enough with this playacting. If you hope to shirk responsibility, remember that when you targeted me, you should have considered what might happen if you failed."

Becker's countenance darkened as he recognized the object she'd thrown. His irritation surged, and he cast a reproachful look at his wife.

The item was a cheque, proof of payment to Vinnie, made from the Cooper family's account. What truly infuriated Becker was Zaria's audacity in using their family's name!

Unable to deny her accusations but equally unwilling to concede, Becker's face twisted into a grimace as he fell into a stony silence.

The room seemed to freeze in that moment, with only Judie remaining in confusion. Her eyes darted between everyone, her voice laced with perplexity. "Father, what is she accusing us of? What does she mean we targeted her?"

Judie knew of the orphanage fire and had initially taken malicious pleasure in the notion of Loraine's demise.

Yet now, Loraine stood before her, demanding justice, and her parents appeared as guilty as charged.

Finally, comprehension dawned on Judie's naive mind, her face turning ashen. "The fire at the orphanage... Did you cause it?"

She retreated hastily, her eyes locked on Loraine, her voice filled with desperation. "I had no part in this! I knew nothing! If you want to arrest someone, take them, not me!"

Zaria's eyes widened in disbelief as she looked at her daughter. The child she had always showered with love was now quick to distance herself from her own family at the first hint of danger?

Becker's face paled, then flushed with anger as he yelled, "You ungrateful child, I'll punish you severely!"

As the family's tension reached a fevered pitch, Loraine's brows knitted together, and her authoritative voice sliced through the chaos. "Enough of this quarreling! You're all embroiled in this situation together, and none can escape the repercussions. If one goes to jail, all will suffer the consequences!"

Her stern reprimand brought a temporary halt to the fighting. Becker was jerked back to the present, his face pallid as he retorted with defiance, "You think your presence frightens me? Even if I did plan the fire, what can you possibly do?"

In this remote village, the Cooper family had wielded power for a couple of decades, granting Becker a false sense of invincibility. While Loraine's identity did cause him concern, the battle lines were now drawn.

A spark of determination ignited in Becker's eyes; he knew he had to resolve this matter today.

With a brisk wave, he signaled the black-clad bodyguards behind him. "Secure her!"

He refused to believe that Loraine would remain bold once she was in his control.

Eyeing Loraine's small party, who looked more like delicate scholars than fighters, the bodyguards approached with smirks.

Yet Loraine remained unmoved, offering only a scornful glance at the approaching men, followed by a light laugh.

"I neglected to tell you that I alerted the police before arriving. They're stationed outside right now. So, please, go ahead, restrain me. Illegal detention might add a few more years to your sentence."

The bodyguards stopped in their tracks, their uncertainty plain to see as they looked at each other, taking hesitant steps back.

The sound of police sirens from outside only heightened the shock for Becker and his henchmen.

In a flash, Becker's face turned a ghostly white.

While Judie had often wielded her family's influence within the village, she was out of her depth now, and the wail of sirens caused her to break down, sobbing. She spun toward Zaria, pleading, "Mother, I don't want to go to jail! You must do something!"

Panicked, Zaria's eyes darted to Becker, but her once-strong husband seemed paralyzed, without a plan. Her thoughts in turmoil, Zaria reached desperately for any hope, turning imploring eyes on Loraine.

"Loraine, we were wrong in the past, but Judie was merely a child then. She's not implicated in this. Please, let her be!"

Becker's face twisted in anger, his voice a snarl. "Silence! What idiocy is this?"

With narrowed eyes, Loraine advanced, her presence towering over them as she posed a chilling question. "You were wrong? Just what was it that you did back then?"



## Chapter 684 The Truth

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The way the Coopers behaved in her presence confirmed Loraine's suspicions that they were somehow involved with what happened to her parents years ago.

Even while she voiced her query, her heart raced with nervousness, but her facial expression stayed calm and composed.

As for Zaria, over the years, she had become so heavily consumed by guilt, forcing her to assume that Loraine was probing their past misdeeds.

But before she could utter a word, Becker's face assumed a furious expression, and he charged forward, clearly determined to prevent her from saying anything.

Sensing his intentions, Loraine quickly issued a sharp command to her bodyguards, "Hold him back!"

Her bodyguards swiftly intervened and restrained Becker, preventing him from reaching his wife. Their earlier intimidation had already instilled enough fear in the minds of the Cooper family's own black-clad security personnel who now watched in silence, unable to come to their master's aid. Becker was left to struggle against Loraine's bodyguards by himself, but he remained unsuccessful.

Zaria was right beside him, cowering in fear. She stole a quick glance at him and looked down again. All the time she'd known him, Zaria had always relied on her husband's authority, so she never had freedom to make her own decisions.

But now, since she was desperate to avoid going to prison, she had no choice but to go against Becker's wishes.

Zaria's voice trembled as she looked up at Loraine and asked,

"If I tell you, will you spare me from going to jail?"

Loraine let out a disdainful snort. "If you don't talk, I can guarantee that your whole family will spend the rest of their lives in prison," she threatened, instead of the direct answer that Zaria expected.

Zaria's face turned pale with fear when she heard this declaration. Without thinking twice, she hurriedly blurted out, "I'll tell you. I'll tell you everything you want to know!"

Becker clenched his teeth in fury and growled at his wife, "How dare you promise to betray me by agreeing to tell lies?"

Loraine gave her bodyguards a brief glance and they understood immediately. Acting in unison, they landed two heavy punches on Becker's face, leaving him dazed and short of words.

Zaria's fear intensified when she saw what they had done to her husband. With a teary face and in a quivering voice, she immediately began to confess, "We... we were foolish and greedy back then. We had nothing, so we were very desperate to make money and we couldn't resist the temptation to covet the valuable things we saw. I shouldn't have taken your necklace and sold it, but... we badly needed the money."

Loraine's eyebrows furrowed in confusion. Eloise had told her that when she was found, she had no possessions on her at all.

Could it be that the Coopers had taken something from her before she entered the orphanage?

Eager to understand the true situation and hoping to force more information out of Zaria, Loraine barked at her, "The necklace?"

Zaria trembled visibly, but she was smart enough to suspect that perhaps Loraine might not know much about what she had just confessed to her, so she kept her mouth shut.

Becker, on the other hand, spat out a mouthful of blood and



curled his lips into a twisted grin. "You little bastard," he snarled at Loraine. "If it wasn't for us, you would've kicked the bucket along with your unlucky parents in that car. I never demanded money from you in exchange for saving your life, nor did I make you kneel down to thank me. So, what's the fuss about that darn necklace?"

Hearing this, Loraine's mind buzzed, leaving her momentarily dazed.

Did these two individuals really come in contact with her parents many years ago?

For so long, her family had been investigating the circumstances surrounding the deaths of her parents, and now, at last, a new lead had emerged!

Loraine's heartbeat quickened, almost affecting her ability to breathe. She marched up to Becker, grabbed his collar and began to interrogate him, her voice tinged with menace. "Were you in any way involved with my parents' deaths? Were you the ones who caused their deaths?"

Becker struggled briefly against her tight grip on his neck and collar. Eventually, he blurted out to her, "No! We didn't kill anyone!"

With her voice trembling, Zaria quickly spoke up in support. "Exactly! We just saw something burning at the bottom of the cliff and we were curious, that's all. By the time we reached the car, the people in it were already dead, and you..."

"What do you mean?" Loraine quickly demanded.

"The woman in the car... she fought very hard to protect you. That's why you were the only one left alive in the car. I swear, we didn't harm your parents in any way. In fact, we even saved you!"

Loraine's gaze turned icy as she continued to stare at Zaria, replaying her words in her mind over and over again before suddenly bursting into a cold, bitter laugh.

"You're a liar!" Loraine barked angrily.

She was dead sure that the situation back then was certainly not as simple as Zaria had described.

If it was just a simple car accident, why would her uncles relentlessly seek for answers all these years?

Moreover, based on the results of the Torres family's investigation so far, the car was already reduced to a charred metal when it was discovered.

The fire was so intense that even if Loraine's mother had sacrificed herself to shield her, there was no way Loraine could have survived.

Meanwhile, Zaria's face had turned pale in panic when she realized that Loraine had seen through her story. Seeing her in this state, Loraine quickly seized the opportunity and intensified the pressure. "You're still lying to me, aren't you? Then it's clear that we really have nothing more to discuss. See you in court. Even based on the fact alone that you orchestrated the arson attack, your entire family is bound to end up in prison, I'm sure. You and your husband might endure having to spend your old age behind bars, but it's a pity for Judie. She's so young. She had her whole life ahead of her, but now, she would spend all of it languishing in prison."

When Judie heard this, her face turned ashen with fright, and Zaria, caught in a combination of guilt and anxiety, hastened to interject, "I haven't finished telling you all I know! After we pulled you out of the car, we took some valuables. But my husband thought it wasn't safe, so... we set the car on fire."

Zaria's tearful voice had a clear tinge of regret. "I know I was wrong," she wailed pitifully. "Every time I think about it, I'm always filled with regret! Loraine, I even went to the orphanage once just to see you. I truly felt sorry for everything I did! I still feel very sorry for it. The records from the pawn shop back then are still with me. If you don't believe me, you can check for yourself. I swear, I've told you everything about the incident."

Chapter 684 The Truth



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Judie was so young at that time. She didn't know anything about the incident. Please don't send her to prison. She's innocent."



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## Chapter 685 The Consequences

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Reeling from Zaria's words, Loraine found herself at a loss, unable to take in any more of the revelations.

Never had she imagined that the truth of her parents' car accident would be unveiled by others.

Zaria persisted, her voice laced with desperation, attempting to shift the entire blame onto Becker. She asserted that the decision to torch the car and seize the necklace had been Becker's alone, casting herself as a mere accomplice.

Becker's face twisted with fury, his body writhing against those who held him. His trembling finger pointed at Zaria as he spat venomous words at her, "You treacherous woman! Without my actions then, you would still be a nobody in this village! Would you have tasted a life of luxury all these years? You pitiful wretch! I knew this day would come. You're nothing but a failure. You couldn't even keep your secrets before anyone asked!"

His rage escalated, his voice climbing in pitch. Loraine regarded him with an icy stare, finding his ranting tiresome. She signaled for someone to silence him, then turned her attention back to Zaria.

"Where are the pawnshop records?"

"They're... on the second floor, in the drawer of my bedside table," Zaria stammered.

Loraine nodded, her face void of emotion, and made her way into the villa. There, she discovered a yellowed record in the drawer.

Upon opening it, she found the words, "One necklace, valued at two thousand dollars."

Two thousand dollars. Loraine let out a bitter laugh, words failing her.

For a paltry sum of two thousand dollars, her parents' remains had been cremated after the accident.

A horrific realization chilled her to the bone.

Could her parents have survived that crash? Could they have been saved if only they'd been given medical attention in time?

If so, the truth was grotesque beyond belief. Had the Cooper family set aside their petty greed to help, the gratitude of the Torres family would have far surpassed a mere two thousand dollars.

Yet for such an insignificant amount, all possibilities were crushed by the avarice of a couple in this isolated village.

Loraine's hand tightened around the pawnshop record as she closed her eyes, drawing a steady breath.

When she opened her eyes again, her calm had returned.

The past was irrevocable, and she could not lose herself in what might have been.

She resolved to recover that necklace, the last connection to her parents.

As for the Coopers...

Her expression frigid, Loraine descended the stairs, fixing her gaze on the three people who awaited her.

Becker's anger had been tamed, though his face still bore a wicked glower. Zaria wiped at her tears, maintaining a veneer of vulnerability, while Judie continued to whine, casting blame on her parents for her entanglement in this sordid affair.

Loraine released a scornful laugh, then turned to her subordinates and commanded, "Contact a lawyer. I want them arrested, and I intend to press charges!"

Indeed, greed must have its reckoning.

Zaria's eyes widened in disbelief, and her face contorted into a mask of tears and hysteria. "Loraine, you're betraying your word! You've obtained what you wanted, and I've revealed everything I know. Why arrest us now? Surely Judie and I are innocent!"

She lunged forward, her eyes brimming with tears, reaching for Loraine's hand. "Loraine, had I not shown compassion and saved you then, you would have perished in that car too. I'm the one who spared your life!"

Loraine recoiled, avoiding Zaria's touch. She looked at her with cold amusement. "You're well aware of your deeds. Aside from the past, orchestrating the arson of an orphanage is a heinous act. Whether you're innocent or not, the court will decide."

"However," she continued, "given your candid confession, I will instruct my lawyer to be lenient with you and your daughter. As for the others... I won't show mercy. Those who commit a wrong must face the consequences."

The meaning behind "the others" was clear. Becker's rage was uncontainable, his face twisting, veins throbbing. He lunged at Loraine, his words dripping with malice. "You insignificant pest, I should've ended your life back then!"

Seemingly resigned to his fate, Becker's fury intensified. He shouted at his henchmen, "What are you fools waiting for? Do you think you can escape this unscathed? This woman is a threat. Whoever doesn't want to be behind bars, seize her! I'll reward you handsomely. Don't just stand there, waiting to be arrested!"

The bodyguards shared a glance, uncertainty in their eyes. Becker's eyes sparkled, sensing an opportunity. "This is Cooper family territory. If you deal with this woman and her police, no



one will ever find out. Act now!"


Lorraine's eyes widened, disbelief coloring her face. Was Becker so audacious as to lay hands on law enforcement?

Yet his bodyguards appeared swayed, quickening their steps to close in on her.

The tension escalated, the atmosphere charged with impending danger, when a familiar voice suddenly rang out.

"No one is to move!"



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## Chapter 686 The Epitome Of Gallantry

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As the voice resonated, Loraine's eyes turned, and she spotted Marco making his way toward them, his weight leaning on a makeshift cane – a mere piece of wood from the village.

Despite his injury being hastily bandaged, how could he attempt to walk so soon?

Before Loraine could voice her concern, her eyes locked with Marco's, and his face conveyed a silent understanding. "Desperate times call for desperate measures." A regretful smile followed, as if to whisper, "I had no choice."

Lorraine's emotions wavered between frustration and helplessness as she hastened to support him.

She found herself in awe of Marco's resilience. Even with that crudely fashioned cane, he managed to maintain a proud posture. Though his face was ashen, his dignity was unbroken.

His sudden emergence startled everyone, taking them by surprise. As Becker gathered his wits and took in Marco's current state, he nearly succumbed to laughter.

He was on the verge of uttering a taunt, but a group of individuals entered the scene, surrounding the members of the Cooper family.

Lorraine recognized some of the faces but had no time to ponder their identities. Marco gave an order, and, in an instant, the Coopers were subdued.

The local police arrived shortly after, offering much-needed support.

Once strutting like proud roosters, the members of the Cooper family were now cornered like hapless mice. Becker's enraged cries and oaths went unheard, feeble and tardy.

One by one, they were led away and handed over to the authorities. The legal consequences that awaited them would be determined through the proper channels.

Lorraine's gaze shifted to the man beside her, her attention now solely on Marco.

His lips were pallid, a soft smile gracing his features as he began to speak, but Lorraine's eyes, tinged with red, interrupted him, her voice trembling. "Why did you come out? Don't you know you're seriously wounded? Why didn't you stay at the clinic?"

Marco's heart ached, and he responded tenderly, "I'm fine. The doctor said if I made it through the night, there was no danger."

He knew his words might not fully assuage Lorraine, so he quickly diverted the conversation. "I knew you were going to face the Cooper family. Fearing you'd be in trouble, I gathered some people."

He was grateful to have organized reinforcements near the village. Otherwise, given Becker's frenzied behavior, who could say what might have happened if they were outnumbered?

Recalling her earlier uncertainty, Lorraine asked, "Where did you find these individuals?"

The people from before were evidently well-trained. When had so many arrived in the village?

Marco's words hung in the air momentarily before Nicholas strode into the room, his face adorned with a smile. "Miss Torres, please don't reproach Mr. Bryant. I was worried that the Cooper family might attack you, so I sent for reinforcements. Mr. Bryant suggested additional bodyguards, and so I accompanied them," he explained.

Nicholas, serving under the Universe Group, found genuine satisfaction in the rapport between Loraine and the renowned former president of the Bryant Group. Coming to Loraine's rescue while bearing serious injuries and thinking ahead – Marco was indeed the epitome of gallantry.

Loraine's eyes widened in surprise, believing these people to be newly hired bodyguards from the Universe Group. Given the number of unfamiliar faces, her confusion seemed understandable.

A sudden chill ran through her, and she clung to Marco, whispering, "I'm relieved you came. The fear that Becker might resort to violence was haunting me. In the city, we're governed by laws and norms, but here in these isolated, treacherous areas, people like them are capable of anything."

Marco's eyes softened, and a tender smile spread across his lips as he brushed a gentle kiss on her hair. "Don't be afraid," he reassured her, his voice warm and comforting. "I'll always be with you, no matter what."

His words touched a raw nerve in Loraine, causing her to lose control of her emotions. She grasped Marco's shirt and buried her face in his chest, her body trembling faintly.

The revelations about her parents' deaths had left her feeling adrift. Facing such tumult alone was overwhelming, even though she had tried to prepare herself. Marco's presence had been her sanctuary, a place to reveal her vulnerability.

He held her, patiently and gently calming her until her emotions steadied. Then, it occurred to Loraine that she'd had Marco standing there and comforting her all this while, despite his injured leg.

Loraine's face turned pink with embarrassment, but the others in the room had discreetly given them space, leaving them alone.

Clearing her throat, she helped Marco to his feet and asked with

concern, "Are you hungry? I can make something for you."

A playful grin played on Marco's lips. "Sure."

Back at the clinic, Loraine assisted Marco onto the bed and made her way to the kitchen.

Unfortunately, the rural pantry was sparse, and the cupboards were nearly empty. After rummaging around, she found a couple of eggs. Feeling somewhat disheartened, she boiled the eggs and warmed a bowl of milk for him.

Marco sat on the bed, his lips pursing as he studied the simple meal, yet he made no move to take it.

Loraine looked at him, a puzzled expression on her face. Adopting an exaggerated, pitiable demeanor, Marco met her gaze and said, "I'm injured; could you possibly feed me?"