

Chapter 56 Can't Afford It

The staff on the side politely put the emerald pipe in front of Nicole, who picked it up and looked at it. There was a small red spot at the bottom of the tobacco pipe.

'So it is the real deal...' Nicole thought.

"Thank you," Nicole said to the staff.

She simply ignored the two women who were on the side. Quinn could not stand it anymore and coldly snorted. "Nicole, are your eyes on your feet? Don't you know how to be polite when you see your elders?"

'How did she treat me back then? She never treated me properly when I was her daughter-in-law and expects me to treat



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00:06 / 07:54

her like an elder now?'

Nicole's eyes flickered. She raised an eyebrow and said, "Oh, Mrs. Ferguson, you're here too. What a coincidence!"

Her words were enough to make Quinn die from exasperation.

Quinn's face turned red with anger. "You think that just because you have a backer, you don't need to respect me? Don't forget that I'm your mother-in-law!"

Before Nicole and Eric's divorce, Quinn had never considered herself as Nicole's mother-in-law. Instead, Quinn only thought of herself as a master and treated Nicole as if she was a servant.

Whenever Nicole went back to the Ferguson Villa, Quinn would always find ways to mock Nicole's lowly ingratiation. She would make Nicole do housework



and chores, and find excuses to reprimand and punish Nicole. Quinn would often bring back other young single ladies from other affluent families to hang around in front of Nicole and even gave those ladies Eric's private numbers so that Nicole would know what to do and back off by herself.

At that time, Nicole was a thorn in Quinn's side.

Nicole could not help but laugh lightly. "Have you gone senile? I divorced your son long ago. You can find someone else to be your daughter-in-law..."

"Nicole, you're so rude! How can you talk to your elders like that?" Ingrid could not help but speak up. She was greatly humiliated by Nicole on several occasions, so when she saw Nicole again, she began to fear her.



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"Nicole, you're so rude! How can you talk to your elders like that?" Ingrid could not help but speak up. She was greatly humiliated by Nicole on several occasions, so when she saw Nicole again, she began to fear her.



Fortunately, her mother was here, so Ingrid worked up the courage to speak.

The atmosphere felt heavy for a moment. Nicole's smile faded as she swept a cold glance at Ingrid. "Are you trying to teach me what to do?"

Ingrid shrank to the back and dared not make another sound. She just looked at her mother helplessly.

The Ferguson mother-daughter pair originally wanted to pull Nicole off her high horse, then coax her and take the emerald pipe away, but it turned out that Nicole did not do anything as they had planned.

If not for the staff in the room, Quinn would have been more straightforward and would not have the patience to babble on with Nicole.



Quinn was a little nervous and said, "Nicole, I'll give you \$30 million. I must take the pipe!"

She had already contacted her son because she knew that she could not hide it any longer. If Nicole really took their family heirloom away, not to mention her father-in-law, even her husband would not forgive her!

Nicole paused for a moment and laughed. "If you had \$30 million, you could've raised the bid earlier when it was still fair play. Now it's too late."

"I've contacted Eric. He'll be here soon."

Quinn knew how obsessed Nicole was with her son. Once Eric was here, she was certain that Nicole would compromise just to see him.

"Whether he comes or not doesn't



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00:54 / 07:54

change the fact that this emerald pipe is now mine.”

Nicole laughed. ‘Does she still think that I’m the stupid woman from three years ago? Does she think that I’ll forgive and forget everything when I hear Eric’s name?’

“Nicole, \$30 million is not a small amount. Can you even afford it?”

Quinn did not believe that the penniless Nicole could fork out \$30 million so easily.

Back then, Nicole married into the Ferguson family without a penny to her name. Quinn was laughed at by other high-society women for having such a poor daughter-in-law, so Nicole was a disgrace to her.

Although Ingrid said that Nicole now had a lot of men backing her, why would they



spend so much money on a divorced woman? Were those men dumb?

Nicole hooked her lips, took out the black card from her purse, and handed it to the staff at the side. "Swipe it."

There was no hesitation.

"Yes, Ms. Nicole." The staff member took the card with both hands.

Quinn and Ingrid stared at Nicole with their pale faces. Ingrid felt so antsy and kept clutching her phone to call someone.

'Who is she calling? Eric Ferguson?'

Nicole smiled faintly. 'It's useless regardless of who shows up!'

She could spend \$30 million in a second without the slightest hesitation and could even afford to pay more than \$30 million as long as she wanted to!



"It's useless for you to take this pipe. What's the point of spending so much on it?" Quinn softened her attitude and used a roundabout way.

"I only took it out so that everyone could see it. You know that this is the old man's life. He'll die without this pipe. Do you want to see him suffer at such an old age?" Quinn said and began to cry.

'Who are you acting for?' Nicole looked at Quinn with a cold gaze and wanted to laugh.

"Since you said so yourself that this is Old Master Ferguson's life, were you thinking of killing him by putting it on auction? You're the reason for his suffering at his old age. So... What do I have to worry about? I bought this through the proper channels with real money. Anyone here can testify to it. The old man is quite



revered in the industry, so I believe that he'll understand what integrity means."

"Ms. Nicole, the transaction is complete."
The staff carefully handed her the card.

Nicole took it and signed her name on the relevant documents. This emerald pipe officially belonged to her now.

At that moment, the door was suddenly pushed open...



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01:41 / 07:54

Chapter 57 How Much Do You Want

Seeing the oncoming person, Quinn's eyes immediately turned red as she walked over emotionally. "Eric..."

"Brother, Nicole snatched away the pipe! That's Grandpa's favorite. If he can't find it, he'll surely make a big fuss!" Ingrid spoke in a panic.

Eric Ferguson stood in the doorway looking very tall and handsome. His body was half-hidden in the shadows as he stared at the people in the room with cold eyes.

"Shut up! How dare you steal from Grandpa?"

He spoke in a harsh tone and scolded Ingrid, who shuddered in fear and hid



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01:54 / 07:54

behind her mother, not daring to look up.

Behind Eric was the person in charge of this event, who stood there with trepidation. The organizer glanced at the staff on the side and asked, "Are the formalities done?"

"Yes, everything is settled." The staff replied cautiously.

Since everything was done and dusted, Nicole was not afraid of anything. After all, their precious family heirloom was in her hands, so she could call the shots.

Nicole looked at Roman, who was next to her. "Let's go. We shouldn't disturb their family reunion."

She did not even care to greet them and turned on her heels to leave.

"Nicole, you can't take it away," Eric spoke in a cold tone.



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02:05 / 07:54

Quinn hurriedly added, "Yeah, we can't let her take it away!"

With her son's presence, Quinn was no longer afraid and did not want to act in front of Nicole anymore.

Nicole raised her eyebrows, laughed, and raised the document in her hand. "Look, you don't have a say here. The emerald pipe is mine now."

She swept a glance at Eric's glum face and was in an inexplicably good mood!

"Mrs. Ferguson, you should just save your energy and think about how you'll explain this to Old Master Ferguson. I'm sure he's very curious to know how his family heirloom appeared at a charity auction. I wonder what he'll do if he knew that this emerald pipe no longer belonged to him..."

Quinn's face was pale. She regretted



hiding this from her father-in-law. She was afraid and frustrated as she could imagine the old man's thunderous fit of anger. She might even get kicked out of the Ferguson family!

"Eric..."

Eric's eyes were deep and the air around him felt cold. "Nicole, how much do you want to leave this behind?"

Nicole laughed lightly. 'He thinks I want money? Do I look like I'm short of money?'

Her eyes lightly swept across the man's cold face. She raised the emerald pipe in her hand and said, "Leave this behind? Dream on!"

She then grunted and left the room. Roman hurriedly followed after her.

Quinn anxiously tugged on Eric's arm. "How can you let her go like this? We must



take it back from her..."

"Brother, we must! Otherwise, Grandpa will kill us!" Ingrid looked at him nervously.

Eric raised his eyes and looked at Nicole's departing back with his eyebrows slightly knitted. He looked at the two women in front of him indifferently and said in a cold voice, "I'll find a way to get it back, but you should think about how to explain this to Grandpa."

He straightened the cuffs of his suit and turned to leave.

Perhaps the old man already knew that his beloved pipe was missing by now. Thus, Eric did not intend to hide this matter from his grandfather. They should learn to bear the consequences of their actions.



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02:43 / 07:54

"What?" Quinn's eyes flipped back as she fainted. Ingrid hurriedly caught her mother and called out to her several times, but Eric did not turn back. Only a staff member came forward to ask if they needed help.

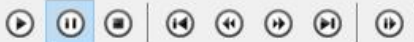
With such a valuable item, the organizer politely asked Nicole whether she needed a security escort, but she politely refused. She only wanted to spite Quinn and Ingrid and did not actually care about the pipe itself.

Seeing the elevator door opening, Nicole walked in and heard Roman's reminder from the side. "Is that Mr. Ferguson?"

Eric was walking towards them.

'He still doesn't wanna give up?' Nicole thought.

Nicole did not want to share an elevator



with that man, so she decisively pressed the close button.



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03:10 / 07:54

Chapter 58 Cost So Little

Nicole glanced at the man outside the elevator like he was a stranger. The man finally disappeared from her sight as the elevator door closed.

When they were in Roman's flashy sports car, he finally asked the question that had been bugging him. "Is this thing worth a lot of money? Why do the Fergusons want it so badly?"

Nicole laughed and looked at the box in her hand. "This thing is a thousand years old. I heard it came out from a royal palace and had been the Fergusons' family heirloom for almost eight hundred years. Do you think it's worth a lot?"

Roman's driving speed obviously slowed down as he was dumbfounded and



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03:21 / 07:54

shocked. 'This is simply priceless! They auctioned off such a valuable thing? No wonder Eric Ferguson asked Nicole to state her price. If Nicole asked for nine figures, Eric probably won't even have the slightest hesitation!'

Nicole's phone suddenly rang. She looked at it and saw that it was Grant, so she happily picked up the call. "Brother, I bought a little toy..."

Grant paused on the other side of the phone and let out a stifled laugh. "I heard ... It only costs so little to spite the Fergusons, huh?"

Nicole could not help but laugh when she thought about Quinn and Ingrid's impending doom. "Anyway, it's mine now, so I won't let go of it easily."

Grant knew his sister's temperament. She must have been so disappointed with the



Fergusons that she wanted to vent it out on them whenever she had a chance. It was indeed a rare opportunity.

'Forget it... Nothing else matters as long as she's happy...'

It was very sunny the next morning. Nicole went into the office to deal with some work matters. Recently, Samantha Lindt had been glaring at Nicole like she wanted to kill her, but she did not dare to act rashly because Nicole had something over her.

Logan knocked on the door to deliver some documents. "Vice President Nicole, the company has begun to investigate Samantha Lindt receiving kickbacks in various projects."

Hearing Logan's words, Nicole looked up at him. "My brother's ready to take action?"



"Yes. Micah Zielinski, who's backing Samantha Lindt, has already started to make his move, so President Stanton said that he'd no longer tolerate it."

To remove Micah Zielinski, they must first investigate Samantha Lindt. Samantha probably knew about it by now and that she was powerless. No wonder she did not pester Nicole about being part of the project team with J&L Corporation.

Nicole tucked her hair behind her ear. "Then hand over what we have to add fuel to the fire."

It was a recording of what Samantha said during the dinner with Nicole and Flint Zeller.

"Yes, ma'am." Logan stood there and paused for a moment. "There's one more thing. Mr. Ferguson's secretary called



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03:57 / 07:54

saying that Mr. Ferguson would like to make an appointment with you for a meal."

Nicole sneered and leaned back in her chair with her arms clasped. Her gaze was clear and cold.

"Say that I'm busy and push it. In the future, just push off any meals with him. You don't need to ask me anymore."

"Yes, ma'am."

At noon, Nicole was planning to grab lunch when there was a knock at the door. Logan stood at the door holding a bouquet of flowers. "Vice President Nicole ..."

Nicole looked up and frowned. "I thought I told you to just throw it away?"

"Nikki, how could you hurt me like that? I carefully selected these for you. You



didn't even act surprised and even wanted to throw it out?!"

Ian Carter suddenly popped out from behind Logan, walked into Nicole's office angrily, and questioned her.

Nicole paused and glanced at Logan, who apologetically lowered his head and kept quiet.

'Forget it...this must've been Ian's idea.' Nicole was feeling a little guilty, so she could not blame Ian for feeling hurt.

"You can leave us," Nicole said to Logan.

Logan nodded and left with a sigh of relief.

Nicole reached out and rubbed her brow, then smiled at Ian. "Carter, why'd you come over today?"

"I came to ask you out for lunch. I didn't



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04:21 / 07:54

expect you to give me such a big surprise!" Ian said with gritted teeth as he glared at her.

Nicole smiled apologetically. "You know how much everyone will talk if I keep getting flowers!"

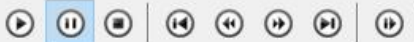
"I sent you flowers just to let everyone know that you have a boyfriend!"

'So that they'll know they don't stand a chance!' Ian thought.

Ian was unabashed as he said that. Nicole felt a little helpless and said, "Ian, don't waste your time on me."

"I want to. Whether it's a waste of time is up to me."

Ian was not truly angry with her. He smiled devilishly and said, "Since you're a t fault, you gotta buy me lunch!"



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04:34 / 07:54

Nicole raised her eyebrows, took her purse, and walked out of her office. "Fine. You decide on the place."

When they arrived at the restaurant, they once again bumped into the people they did not want to see.

Keith Ludwig snorted. "Nicole, didn't you say that you have an important project? So... You pushed off Eric for a date with Second Young Master Carter? Grant Stanton, Roman, Ian Carter... You sure change men like you change clothes! I guess you do have your hands full, huh?"



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04:45 / 07:54

Chapter 59 It Means Rejection

Eric Ferguson did not make a sound on the side, but his eyes had a chill in them.

Nicole laughed lightly and took Ian's arm. She raised an eyebrow and said, "What does it matter to you how many men I change or how many people I date? Mr. Ludwig, do you wanna date me too?"

Keith was dissed and felt infuriated. 'Why do I always get bullied by Nicole?!

"You? You're not my type!"

"To be honest, the last time I saw your body, it's not that great. You'd better date women with no taste. I'm very strict about my requirements on men's physique."

'How dare you say my body's not great!'



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04:57 / 07:54

Keith's face turned red and white as he shook with anger, but he did not dare to say another word. His nudes were in her hands, so it left him with no choice but to retreat.

He also heard what Nicole implied. 'Is this woman threatening me?'

Ian laughed at the side. "Her standards have always been very high. Mr. Ludwig, if we continue talking, it'll affect my boo's appetite!"

One glance at Eric was enough to affect Nicole's mood!

Nicole coldly glanced at Keith, ignored the man beside him, then walked inside.

Keith was so infuriated that he almost jumped up behind them. "This woman is too much! How dare she insult me for having a bad figure? Is my body not



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05:09 / 07:54

great?"

Eric's face was surprisingly cold. He snorted lightly. "You think it's good?"

He was very annoyed that nothing was going his way lately. He did not get an appointment with Nicole and that matter with the emerald pipe was still unresolved. When he recalled the scene where Nicole had seen Keith running naked, the dreary feeling lingered in his heart. He felt inexplicably frustrated.

Keith was once again defeated. He did not know why Eric was throwing shade at him and blamed it all on Nicole.

When he went to Eric's office to look for him, he coincidentally ran into Eric's secretary, Mitchell, who was contacting Nicole's secretary, but unexpectedly, he was rejected!



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05:21 / 07:54

The two of them then came out for lunch and saw Nicole on a date with Ian Carter, so how could Eric be in a good mood?

Suddenly remembering something, Keith hurriedly asked, "I heard that your family heirloom was auctioned off by your mother and sister?"

At the mention of this, Eric's face became even colder and he did not speak.

"Who bought it? Why don't you just spend more money to buy it back?"

Eric glanced coldly at Keith. "Nicole bought it."

Keith did not know what to say and only let out a faint "oh". 'That would be difficult ...'

Perhaps after seeing those two men that Nicole despised, she did not have much o



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05:34 / 07:54

f an appetite and felt uninterested in the meal.

They had some wine, so Nicole planned on going home to rest after lunch. The wine Ian recommended was sweet in the mouth yet it burned her throat. It also had a high alcohol percentage because she felt tipsy after just one glass.

Nicole would have suspected that Ian had spiked the wine if it were not for him being tipsier than she was at the moment.

She held her forehead, called Logan, and told him to get someone to pick her up. She then intended to go to the bathroom to wash her face and sober up a bit.

Nicole did not walk very steadily, but she still managed to make her way to the bathroom and wash her face. After she sobered up, she regretted coming out with Ian.



She remembered the route back to the private room, but when she turned a corner, she bumped into someone.

"Sorry..."

As soon as she raised her eyes, Nicole saw Eric's cold face with his eyebrows tightly knitted together. She instantly sobered up and immediately took a step back to keep her distance.

"Mr. Ferguson?"

Eric noticed her movement and his eyes sank slightly. "What a coincidence, Nicole."

Nicole raised her eyebrows. "It's not. I was about to leave."

She was stopped by him before she could walk past him.

"Let's talk."



"Talk about what?" Nicole looked at him puzzled.

"You know what," Eric spoke and locked his eyes onto her.

Nicole laughed and no longer felt tipsy. "I don't think there's anything to talk about between us. For work matters, please contact my assistant."

Her phone rang at that time. It was probably the driver. Just as Nicole was about to leave, Eric said, "You can state any condition you like, but I must take the pipe."

'So he's here for the emerald pipe. Old Master Ferguson must've found out since it's been a day. I guess Quinn and Ingrid must be pretty miserable now...'

"Mr. Ferguson, do you still not understand? Since yesterday, I ignored



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06:09 / 07:54

you guys no matter what conditions you offered. It means rejection." Nicole smiled brightly.



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06:21 / 07:54

Chapter 60 She's Coming Back to the Country

After Nicole said her piece, she went back to the private room to call Ian and leave.

Before she got into the car, it suddenly occurred to her that she had left her bag in the private room.

She wanted to go back to get it, but Ian stopped her. "I'll get it. You can wait in the car."

Ian left without another word. Nicole thought about it and followed him, but did not expect to run into Eric and Keith, who were both just leaving.

To avoid unnecessary trouble, Nicole did not go forward and waited on the other



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06:31 / 07:54

side of the fountain at the entrance.

Keith said, "I heard that Wendy's coming back soon?"

Eric gave a deep "mm".

Keith smiled and said, "I haven't seen her in so long. I kinda miss her. Although she was at fault, your punishment was a little too heavy. She's one of us, so you should just forgive her..."

The two men walked and talked, then got into the car and left.

The afternoon sky was gloomy, and the air was chilly.

Nicole retracted her gaze. She was a little lost in thought as she looked in the direction of that car. Her chest felt stuffy and painful.

'Wendy Quade is one of them, but no



matter how hard I try, I'm only an outsider to Eric Ferguson.'

Wendy Quade's name was like a curse that haunted her for three years. Nicole thought that she was finally free of it and never thought that hearing this name again would still bring out this suffocating feeling.

'I'm so useless!' Nicole thought.

Nicole knew that Wendy Quade had gone abroad after that party. Since Wendy was out of her sight, she did not want to pursue it.

'Getting Wendy Quade to leave the country is a punishment to them? Her return to the country is just a matter of a word of forgiveness from Eric Ferguson?'

Nicole suddenly felt that it was laughable. 'What about the three years of her



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06:55 / 07:54

sucking my blood dry? I might be able to forgive others, but not her! So she's coming back? I'll welcome her with a big gift then...'

Ian walked over to Nicole with her purse in hand and saw her pale and glum face. "What's wrong? Are you not feeling well?"

Hearing his words, Nicole came back to her senses and smiled. "No, I'm going back. My driver is here."

"I'll send you back." Ian pushed Nicole into the car and sat beside her without giving her a chance to refuse.

Nicole nodded, smiled, and did not mind it.

Ian wanted to say something, but he still held back after giving Nicole a deep look.

When they arrived at Nicole's apartment building, Nicole asked the driver to send



Ian back and went straight upstairs.

In less than ten minutes, the doorbell rang, so Nicole went over to open the door.

When she opened the door, a bouquet of beautiful red roses appeared in front of her eyes, accompanied by Ian's charming face behind. Nicole looked at him helplessly. "Carter...I'm really tired today."

Her intention of sending him off could not be more obvious.

Ian raised his eyebrows. "I know. This bouquet isn't for my future girlfriend. It's for our Lil N who's upset today."

Nicole paused and looked up at him. Ian seemed a little less rambunctious at this moment.

"Since I'm already here, you're not gonna invite me in?"



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07:19 / 07:54

She had faith in Ian's character, so she made way for him.

Ian walked in and said, "Nicole, even if you have one less Eric Ferguson by your side, you still have many people around you. Don't be upset because of him. He's not worthy of your attention."

'Yeah, to others, Eric is not worthy of me, but to Eric, I'm not worthy of him...'

Nicole poured Ian a glass of water and leaned back on the sofa lazily. "You saw through it? I'm so useless, huh?"

News of Wendy Quade's return made Nicole angry. Her so-called insouciance suddenly did not seem so frank anymore.

"Yeah, a little." Ian smiled. His eyes were extraordinarily alluring.

"Get lost!" Nicole snorted lightly. Her



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07:31 / 07:54

heart inexplicably felt a lot better.

Ian laughed a little. He suddenly stood up, went over to Nicole, and insistently pulled her into his arms. When Nicole was about to struggle, he suddenly let go.

With a serious smile in his eyes, Ian leaned down and lowered his head to look at her. "He has no right to make you mad anymore. Lil N, you'll forever be my queen."

The sudden proximity between them stunned Nicole. His faint agarwood scent filled her nose cavity and made her heart jump violently.



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07:43 / 07:54