

The Ashes 1001

Chapter 1001

Quinton's aggressive and domineering voice thundered through the air—he was practically roaring. However, the very next second, he awkwardly realized that Harvey had already stopped bullying the Stevens family before he got there.

Now, Harvey was standing off to the side, looking sheepish and awkward.

Irene and Leroy were in bad shape—one had passed out cold, and the other was bawling their eyes out. Only Christina was still standing. She looked up at Quinton but did not say a word.

Still, the cold indifference and mockery in her eyes were impossible to miss.

Quinton's heart sank. Did Christina see through him? Could she tell this was all just an act?

He refused to believe it, knowing he had to do something fast to fix this. Thankfully, he was quick on his feet. He kept his face cold and serious, stormed over to Harvey, and slapped him hard across the face.

Harvey was stunned, then instantly furious. They agreed this whole thing was just for show, but now Quinton had the nerve to actually slap him for real.

"Harvey, that slap was a lesson on behalf of the Weller family," Quinton said coldly. "Now take your people and get out of here. If you ever mess with Ms. Stevens or her family again, next time it won't just be a slap!"

Christina, whether genuinely grateful or just pretending, responded calmly, "Thanks for stepping in, Mr. Wright."

Quinton smiled and said, "Christie, from now on, just call me Winston, alright? Since you're coming with me to Blumedale to start fresh, your problems are my problems now. Don't worry. With me around, nobody will dare lay a finger on the Stevens family again!"

Suddenly, a sharp, sarcastic round of applause rang out, breaking the moment.

Quinton turned and snorted. "Andrew, what the hell are you clapping for?"

Andrew smiled coolly. "Oh, nothing. Just thought your whole 'heroic' act was pretty damn cringe. I mean, she was nearly beaten to death, and then you decided to show up looking like a knight in shining armor? Don't you think you were just a bit late to the show?"

Quinton cursed him silently, 'Damn Andrew and his big mouth!'

Nonetheless, he kept his tone even as he replied, "I have no idea what you're trying to say. I came here to save Christie and her family, not to show off."

Andrew raised a brow. "Really? Because to me, it kinda looked like you hired Harvey to beat them up just so you could come swooping in and play the hero."

Quinton's face darkened. "Andrew,

do you seriously think I'd stoop that low? Pulling off some cheesy,

overused trick like that? And

besides, hiring someone to hurt the

Stevens family? That's beneath me. I'd never do something that disgusting."

Andrew shrugged. "Whether you would or wouldn't... only you know the truth.

Actually, Harvey probably knows too."

He turned to Harvey, smiling. "Right, Harvey?"

Harvey's face twitched. "Andrew,

you've got Quinton all wrong! He's

the heir of a major Blumedale

family he doesn't need to pull cheap stunts like that! I went after

the Stevens family on my own. That was my personal decision!" .net

Andrew chuckled. "So what you're saying is... you're not Quinton's hired lapdog?"

Harvey gritted his teeth. "Of course not!"

Andrew turned to Quinton, his voice dripping with sarcasm. "Well,

Quinton, the Stevens family is

them are on their way to the ER. And all you've got to offer is a single slap?

basically yours now, and two of net

"Come on, for the beautiful Ms. Stevens, shouldn't you beat the crap out of the guy who actually did the hitting?"

Quinton's expression instantly soured. He had only planned to make a quick appearance and put on a show. He had not expected Andrew to force him to take it this far.

Just then, he noticed Christina eyeing him with suspicion.

This was bad-she clearly was not buying it. Quinton knew he needed to go all in if he wanted to win her over.

"Harvey! And the punk from the Weller family who laid hands on the Stevens-get over here!" Quinton barked, his tone fierce and commanding.

Harvey's face turned pale. "Quinton, you-"

However, Quinton did not wait. He smacked Harvey across the face again, and again.

Harvey's nose burst open, blood shooting out as he staggered. He silently cursed, 'Quinton, you son of a bitch! All this just so you can play the hero in front of Christina?'

This was not part of their deal, but Harvey did not dare expose their plan in front

of everyone. So, with gritted teeth, he stood there and took it-letting Quinton slap him until he was satisfied.

Chapter 1002

Quinton did not stop after slapping Harvey. Still filled with aggression, he turned around and violently beat down the Weller family thug who had attacked the Stevens earlier.

He did not let up until Christina finally shouted, "Quinton, our family appreciates what you have done. But right now, Leroy needs to get to the hospital!"

Only then did Quinton stop, turning to Harvey with a fierce warning, "Remember, there better not be a next time. If there is, I promise your entire Weller family will pay!"

Harvey was beyond furious. He had shown up today in good faith, just trying to help Quinton stage his little performance.

He willingly played along just to make Quinton look good, but he never imagined he would end up being the victim himself. This whole act was turning into nothing but a massive loss for him.

Andrew clapped sarcastically again, grinning as he said, "Bravo, Quinton, bravo! You did not hesitate to throw Harvey under the bus to look cool!"

"Other guys show off by blowing cash or lighting cigars, but you sacrifice your buddies-look how badly you messed Harvey up!"

Quinton glared and hissed through clenched teeth, "Andrew, that is enough. Take my advice and leave this does not concern you!"

Andrew ignored him completely, turning to Harvey instead. He smirked and asked mockingly, "Hey Harvey, that beating you just got how did it feel? I have to say, you really put up with a lot to stay on Quinton's good side. You are practically unrecognizable at this point!"

Harvey exploded angrily, "Andrew, getting beaten up is my business-not yours! So shut your damn mouth!"

He was already humiliated after being randomly smacked around by Quinton. Now Andrew was throwing fuel to the fire, openly mocking him right there, causing Harvey's self-control to crumble completely.

Christina suddenly snapped at Andrew, "Andrew, it is bad enough that you stood there and did nothing, but now you are questioning Quinton's intentions too? You really disgust me!"

Andrew sneered back, "No wonder the Stevens family keeps getting crushed. Christina, I finally figured it out-you really are blind!"

Without paying any attention to Christina's angry expression, Andrew turned toward Harvey and motioned with his hand. "Come here, Harvey."

Harvey immediately tensed up and said defensively, "What are you up to, Andrew? You better watch yourself the two elders from the Weller family are both here today!"

Andrew's voice turned icy cold as he replied, "While Quinton has given you a beating, have yet to do so. It is about time we settled our score with the Weller family. Even though your family does not mean anything to me these days, you still deserve a proper lesson."

Harvey panicked, roaring, "Andrew, are you threatening me? Do not forget, I'm head of the Weller family now! Fouch me, and you are declaring war against our entire family! You son of a-"

He did not get to finish, because Andrew suddenly planted a vicious kick right into Harvey's stomach.

Harvey howled as blood spewed from his mouth. He flew back and crashed into a car wheel parked nearby, hitting his head and immediately starting to bleed heavily.

"Y-You actually dare to hit me! Ian, Ted, get him! Crush this bastard!" Harvey screamed, clutching his stomach in agony.

Ian, Ted, and the rest of the Weller family's men exploded in fury. Shouting aggressively, the two elders immediately charged Andrew, attacking him from both sides.

"You little punk, Andrew! Last time,

you humiliated me with a single strike back at the Weller residence Today, I'm going to make you pay for that!" yelled the elder who

Andrew had previously defeated so humiliatingly.

Andrew merely laughed dismissively, replying coldly, "You old fools never learn!"

Chapter 1003

With both palms slamming forward, Andrew unleashed a terrifying force, blasting straight at Ian and Ted like a crashing tidal wave.

Blood splattered, and screams pierced the air. One of the elders, who had actually reached peak grandmaster level, was sent flying with blood gushing from his mouth-completely overwhelmed.

In just one move, Andrew had struck both of them down effortlessly.

Harvey's eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets. He could hardly believe it-those two elders were the backbone of the Weller family, and they were taken down just like that.

With just one strike, both were defeated.

The rest of the Weller family, who had started charging forward, immediately froze. Fear took hold, and they backed away in panic, too afraid to even try another step."

Even Quinton narrowed his eyes, frowning as he glanced at Andrew. He wondered if Andrew had already surpassed the grandmaster level. If so, did that mean he had reached the level of a semi-martial king?

No. That was impossible.

Andrew came from Jayrodale—a backwater place. How could someone from there ever compare to him, Quinton?

Quinton had spent his entire life training under strict discipline, receiving elite family guidance, endless resources, and rare medicinal herbs. There was no way someone from a rural dump could match him.

He could only assume the Weller elders looked tough but were useless in a real fight.

Andrew walked over to the fallen Harvey, towering above him like a shadow. His expression was calm and emotionless as he said, "Get on your knees."

Harvey trembled all over, his eyes bloodshot as he roared, "Andrew, don't push it!"

Without a word, Andrew stomped his foot down on Harvey's head, smashing his face into the dirt like he was nothing.

"Harvey, this right here—this is the gap between you and me now. Do you see it? So kneel and remember it. Next time you see me, you better keep your head down."

Andrew's voice was smooth and cold, but to Harvey, it sounded like the devil whispering straight into his soul.

"I'll kneel... I'll kneel!" he choked out, forcing the words through clenched teeth.

Then, right in front of everyone, Harvey dropped to his knees at Andrew's feet. That single gesture marked the end of the Weller

family's pride in Jayrodale ind

would never stand tall in front of Andrew again.

Christina stood frozen, staring at the scene in disbelief. She vividly remembered the moment she broke up with Andrew, choosing instead to accept an arranged marriage with Harvey.

Back then, she saw Harvey as a perfect man—well-bred, strong, and

accomplished. Andrew, by contrast, had

him felt like the smartest choice she had ever made.

always rubbed her the wrong way, and leaving

Yet, that so-called perfect man—the one she once held in such high regard was kneeling like a beaten dog in front of the very man she had thrown away. Moreover, he did not even have the guts to fight back.

"Pathetic," Andrew muttered, curling his lip in disgust as he walked away.

He had only taken a couple of steps when he turned his head and spotted Shawn trembling beside Quinton's

luxury car trying hard to hide his fear.

Just like before with Harvey, Andrew lifted a hand and motioned him over casually.

Shawn stiffened, doing his best to stop his knees from shaking. "Andrew, I'm warning you... I'm under Quinton's protection now...

Andrew did not waste his breath. He slapped Shawn across the face so hard the guy fell flat on his butt, holding his cheek in silence-furious but too scared to speak.

After all the slapping, Andrew flexed his hand a little, feeling a slight sting in his

palm. He glanced at Shawn and asked calmly, almost bored.

"Listen to me carefully: crawl back to your Fields family, and don't let me see your face again. Because if do... there won't be any reason for your family to keep existing okay?"

Chapter 1004

Tears of humiliation welled up in Shawn's eyes as he clenched his teeth and muttered, "Got it!" Andrew slapped him again, harder this time. "I didn't ask if you got it. I asked if it's okay."

The weight of shame nearly crushed Shawn from the inside out. Nonetheless, he did not dare resist. He did not even flinch as he squeezed out, "Okay!"

No one missed how low he had sunk. Even Quinton, the proud heir of Blumedale, had lost all his swagger, and now Shawn had no one to count on. He was completely on his own.

Andrew looked down at him and said coldly, "You can fuck off now."

Shawn acted like he had just been pardoned from death row. He scrambled to his feet and bolted straight back to the Fields family.

From that day on, he swore he would check the stars before leaving his house, and he would make damn sure Andrew was not in the same zip code. If their paths might cross, he would rather stay home or take a two-hour detour.

"Alright, Fran, let's go," Andrew said, brushing off his hands like the whole thing had been a waste of time.

Quinton's voice darkened. "Andrew, are you seriously going to pretend you don't know Shawn is one of my men?"

Andrew glanced sideways and replied coolly, "Yeah, I know. So?"

Quinton snapped, "Then how dare you lay a hand on him?"

Andrew snorted. "Cut the crap, Quinton. When I slapped him just now, you didn't say a word. Now that it's over, now you want to step up and act like you're backing him? Doesn't that make you look kinda pathetic?"

Quinton choked on his fury. "You-"

Andrew jabbed a finger right at his nose, voice sharp and menacing. "And you! Pack your crap and haul your ass back to Blumedale. Jayrodale isn't your playground, and if you so much as touch my Moonlit Apothecary again or keep scheming after my medicine...

"Then the same fate that hit Elon and your dumbass little brother, Winston-yeah, that's gonna be yours too."

Without waiting for a response, Andrew yanked open the door of his G-Wagon, got in with Francesca, and gunned it down the street, leaving only a thick cloud of exhaust behind.

Quinton stood there, breathing in the fumes, his eyes burning with murderous rage. However, he did not show a thing-he kept it buried deep, hidden beneath a tight-lipped expression.

He would not strike now, but once he got back to Blumedale, he swore that the bastard Andrew was as good as dead.

"Christie, pack your things. We're leaving for Blumedale today," he said through clenched teeth, clearly in a foul mood.

Christina replied, "Quinton, I still have

several business deals at Stevens

Corporation that I need to handle personally. Besides, we're leaving way too suddenly. There's still a lot I haven't had time to sort out."

Quinton frowned and said, "That's not necessary. You can manage Stevens Corporation remotely from Blumedale. The sooner we leave, the better. Who knows what the lunatic Andrew will pull next?"

Christina looked at him in surprise. "Wait... Quinton, are you afraid of him?"

Quinton's face twitched with frustration, but he smirked and said coldly, "There might be people on this earth who can scare me... But Andrew? He's not one of them."

Even though he said that, Christina could tell Quinton was in a rush to get out of Jayrodale. Deep down, she knew it had everything to do with Andrew throwing him out just moments ago..

Chapter 1005

In Blumedale, Michael's funeral, arranged by Kenny, had already ended, yet Andrew never showed up. Kenny and Sherilyn grew furious, and Sherilyn, backed by the Goldings, boldly offered 300 million dollars to launch a vendetta against Andrew.

The entire Blumedale power structure buzzed with rumors and speculation, wondering what kind of man from Jayrodale had incited the wrath of the Rhodes family elder and the Goldings.

The so-called family vendetta was a killing order issued by the top-tier families, a deadly move targeting an enemy's life. Once activated, anyone allied with those families could hunt down the fugitive for the 300 million dollar reward, and if successful, the money would be theirs.

With the combined might of these influential families and their alliances, the order was terrifying, as being targeted meant being hunted by a dozen or more powerful Houses, a true death sentence.

Tiana personally called Andrew to warn him that he either had to hide out in Jayrodale forever and never show his face again, or escape from Jayrodale and Gabo Creek to live under a new identity.

With Marvin, the wealthiest tycoon, and the forces in Andrew's corner, he could live out the rest of his life laying low. But if he dared show up, death was certain.

Whether Tiana meant well or was just trying to scare him, Andrew simply laughed it off and replied, "Mrs. Rhodes, don't forget I already paid the wedding gift to the Rhodes family."

He continued coldly, "I gave Rhodes Corporation a 50 billion share deal and assigned 20% of the sales of my two miracle drugs to the Pharmaceutical Division, and I won't sweat the little stuff."

"I believe that is enough to win Lauren's genuine affection,' he added. His words

sent shivers down Tiana's spine as she gripped the phone tightly.

"Andrew, do you really want to keep meddling?" Tiana snapped, "I can't

understand why, when your life is already in danger, you still obsess over Lauren."

Andrew snorted dismissively and said, "If Lauren isn't interested, I'm not in the mood to tangle with the Rhodes family. But she truly cares for me, and I can't just stand-by and watch you drag her into a living hell."

Tiana's tone turned icy as she warned, "I'm doing this for her own good, do you understand? If you really love her, you should support my decision, because if Lauren ends up with you, she'll only suffer alongside you, and in the end, she might not even survive."

Andrew replied flatly, "I already told you, whether it's the Rhodes family, the

Goldings, or the Driscolls, they are all insignificant to me."

He declared, "Mrs. Rhodes, I have no

intention of feuding with you or the Rhodes family, but one thing is clear: I do what I want, and no one can

control me. Anyone who dares to control me or try to kill me will be the first to die.

Andrew's firm words left Tiana momentarily speechless, as she felt both admiration and frustration toward him. Yet, her stance remained unchanged.

"Fine, you are as stubborn as ever and refuse to change. So does that mean you really plan on coming to Blumedale to court your own demise?" she asked.

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Andrew replied calmly, "Plan on coming? Oh, no... I'm already on my way."

Tiana inhaled sharply, completely stunned. Gritting her teeth, she repeated the same word three times, each one colder than the last. "Fine. Fine. Fine... You really are the kind of fool who won't turn back until he slams into a brick wall, who won't give up until he drowns!

"You have no idea what kind of death trap Blumedale is! It is the heart of Gabo Creek-the political and economic center of the region, Holtrien's southern metropolis!

"You coming here is like a small fish diving into the open ocean... or a lamb wandering into a den of lions! What awaits you is a shredded body and a death so brutal, no one will even recognize your corpse!"

Andrew's gaze sharpened as he replied coolly, "Is that so? Because in my eyes, Gabo Creek's Blumedale is nothing more than a slightly bigger jungle. And an elite hunter doesn't just take down rats and stray dogs... they can gut tigers and rip open lions too."

With that, Andrew ended the call. He was not interested in arguing any further.

In the car speeding toward Blumedale, he leaned back, closed his eyes, and let himself rest. Flashes of steel and fire played across his mind-like echoes of past wars long fought.

He had once stirred up chaos in Chetvine, so what did he have to fear from Blumedale, a mere central hub of Gabo Creek?

Marvin had said it best-it was time for him to sharpen the blade again. The sword that had been hidden for a decade was finally ready to shine.

Meanwhile, deep within Blumedale-at the core of the Rhodes family's luxurious estate-Tiana stood in the grand hall, trembling with rage as she hurled her phone to the marble floor, shattering it into pieces.

Across the room, Jameson sat relaxed on the couch, listening to the butler's report before waving him away. Once the butler left, he sighed and said, "Tiana, you really need to chill. This is the family headquarters. You can't just smash things whenever you lose your temper-what do you think the staff will say?"

Tiana bit down hard and growled, "I don't give a damn what anyone thinks! Hmph, maybe you haven't heard- Andrew, that little bastard, is already on his way to Blumedale!"

Jameson's brow lifted in surprise. "Are you serious?"

Tiana did not bother responding and just sneered twice in frustration.

Jameson clapped his hands and let out a hearty laugh. "Now that's what I call bold. No wonder I liked him from the start-he's got at least a third of the guts I had back when I marched into the Lambert family to ask for your hand!"

Tiana snapped, "Ugh, nothing but trash coming out of your mouth! You see Andrew coming, and suddenly, you're all fired up, aren't you? Let me tell you, if he sets foot here, he's going to get himself killed!"

Jameson scoffed, "I'm sending people to pick him up at the station. Then, I'm bringing him straight here to the Rhodes estate. If anyone wants to touch him, they'll have to go through me first."

Tiana stared at him in disbelief. "Jameson, have you lost your mind? Are you seriously thinking about bringing him here? You just want to sit around and wait for Sherilyn to storm in with the Goldings and start a war?"

Jameson answered coldly, "If they dare bring the fight here I'll go straight to the governor."

Tiana shot back, "You're delusional!"

Do you think you can just call in

favors from the governor's office like

it's nothing? If it's not a

life-and-death emergency for the

fantly, don't you dare use that card!"

Jameson shrugged and said, "Then what do you want? You can't seriously expect

me to stand by while my future son-in-law gets ganged up on, can you?"

Tiana glared, fuming. "Do you really like Andrew that much? You've met the guy once, had dinner with him and that's it! But Joe? He comes by every month, bringing you premium tea, antiques, and all sorts of rare and valuable treasures! Does none of that mean anything to you

Chapter 1007

Jameson nodded, looking quite pleased with himself. "Now Joe-he's definitely an exceptional young man. I'm satisfied with him, no doubt. But being satisfied doesn't mean he's to my taste!

"Andrew, on the other hand, first of all-he's handsome, just like I was back in my prime. Second, he's got charm. Talking with him is actually fun, and that's rare these days

"But most importantly..." Jameson leaned in like he was about to share a state secret.

Tiana scowled. "Let me guess-because he lacks ambition and has no shame?"

Jameson grinned shamelessly. "Wrong! That kid gave me a pill that... let's just say it brought my manhood back to life! And the best part? Not only did I benefit, but you did too!

"So if we're being honest here, we both ought to be thanking him-and treating him right!"

Tiana's face flushed bright red. In the blink of an eye, she stormed over and smacked Jameson across the face. She shouted, "Disgusting! Filthy pig! I have no idea what I was thinking when I agreed to marry you in the first place! Jameson, you're absolutely revolting!"

Her strike came fast and fierce, fueled by the power of a semi-martial king-far more than an ordinary person could take.

However, like he had eyes in the back of his head, Jameson ducked just in time. He laughed, dodging with ease.

"I knew you were gonna go for the face! Nope-not today!"

He wore that same greasy grin as if it were his favorite accessory, while Tiana clenched her fists in frustration but did not follow up with another hit. Deep down, she still could not bring herself to really hurt him.

She huffed, "That kid can come if he wants, whether he lives or dies is on him. The Rhodes family won't lift a finger to protect him. We're not getting dragged into that mess."

With those words thrown over her shoulder, she turned and stormed out of the room, unwilling to spend another second in Jameson's company. As he watched her leave, the mischievous smile on Jameson's face slowly faded. A sharp gleam flickered in his eyes.

He muttered to himself, "Kid, there's only so much I can do to help from here, but I've gotta say I respect your guts. If the moment comes when your life's truly on the line... I'll step in. I'll make sure you don't go down alone.

"But for the most part, you're gonna have to carry your own weight. If you can't... then maybe you and Lauren were just never meant to be."

By four o'clock in the afternoon, the sun had already started leaning westward as Andrew finally arrived in Blumedale, the heart of Gabo Creek. Cars flooded the streets, skyscrapers loomed in every direction, and it was clear this city outshined Jayrodale in wealth and modernity.

As he crossed a plaza, a woman caked in heavy makeup stepped up to him with a flirty smile. "Hey there, handsome-looking for a hotel? I've got special services if you're interested!"

Andrew glanced at her. She was clearly older, and though her skin was starting to sag beneath the makeup, there were hints she had once been quite attractive.

"Sorry, ma'am, I've got a girlfriend," he replied with a casual grin.

The woman was not discouraged at all. She leaned closer and purred, "So what? You're out here all alone, no one

watching. Why not relax a little? Come on, we've got great rates-and even roleplay options! I promise, for just a little money, I'll give you a lot of pleasure!"

She reached out, trying to tug at his arm.

Just then, a sleek Rolls-Royce pulled up to the curb.

Andrew stepped away from her touch, smoothly walking toward the car. As he moved, he looked back and said, Look, ma'am, this line of work (not built to last. If you've saved up enough, it might be time to walk away."

The woman's eyes widened when she realized the luxury car had come for him.

Her demeanor changed instantly as she scrambled to smile and bow slightly.

She replied, "You're right,

handsome ve actually been

thinking the same! Hey, why don't you leave me your number? I'll keep you company for a few years, then go find a decent guy and settle down!"

Andrew slid into the car without looking back. As the window rolled up, he said flatly, "No need for that. Just take care of yourself, ma'am. Time to move on."

Chapter 1008

Andrew said to the lady, "And don't go looking for a nice, honest man. What did an honest man ever do to deserve you?"

As the Rolls-Royce drove off, the woman on the plaza stomped her foot in frustration. "Hmph! Acting all high and mighty. You rich guys walk around in suits like you're so proper, but once the clothes come off, you're worse than animals!

"And what's wrong with liking an honest guy, huh? Plenty of them love women like me!"

Muttering to herself, she swayed her hips and went off to reel in her next customer.

Inside the Rolls-Royce, the driver was an elderly man dressed simply—plain shirt, cloth shoes, nothing flashy. However, he was impeccably neat and carried an unmistakable air of dignity.

This type of low-key appearance was common among the long-established elite. It looked humble, but in reality, it spoke volumes.

"You must be Andrew Lloyd, the one from Jayrodale, right?" he asked without turning his head.

Andrew nodded. "Yeah, that's me."

The old man snorted. "First time in a big city? You'd better learn to keep your impulses and distractions in check. Don't go getting all flustered over some cheap street hooker. You were recommended by Marvin himself—so don't embarrass the man."

Andrew frowned but chose not to reply. The man continued, "You can call me Francis. Marvin should've already told you who I am, yeah?"

Andrew nodded again. "He did. You're the Phelan family's butler. Personal attendant to Mr. Montgomery Phelan." When Montgomery's name came up, Francis Tucker's voice took on a hint of pride.

He said, "Well, at least you're not totally clueless. The Phelans are one of the Three Titans of Blumedale. Mr. Phelan Senior is a major political and financial force across southern Holtrien. Serving at his side is no small honor; you should know that better than anyone."

Andrew did not bother responding. Truthfully, if Marvin had not repeatedly asked him to swing by and check on Montgomery's health, Andrew would not have gone anywhere near the Phelans.

He shot a quick message to Francesca. [I've arrived in Blumedale safe and sound. No need to worry.]

Just as he lowered the phone, another call came in-it was Aspen.

Andrew picked up. "What's up?"

Aspen sounded frantic. "Andrew, are you already in Blumedale?"

"Yeah, just got here," Andrew replied casually.

Aspen snapped, "And you didn't think to tell me? Do you have any idea how dangerous this place is for you right now?"

Andrew chuckled lightly. "You're being too paranoid. It's not that serious."

Aspen shouted, "You're too careless! You won't even know what hit you if you're not careful! Kenny and Sherilyn, together with the Goldings, already issued a family vendetta. That bounty's live, and it's for 300 million dollars,

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Andrew. That's enough to turn every mercenary, thug, and assassin into your enemy."

Before Andrew could respond, Aspen continued, "Just sit tight. Find somewhere quiet to hide, and send me your location. I'm coming to get you."

Yet, Andrew remained calm. "Don't worry about me. I've got something to take

care of with the Phelans. I'll find you afterward."

He hung up the call just as the Rolls-Royce began pulling into an enormous private estate nestled against natural cliffs and waterfalls.

They passed through iron gates and cruised down a tree-lined driveway for nearly ten minutes before reaching the main residence.

Francis parked the car, stepped out, and gestured for Andrew to do the same. He smiled with a hint of superiority and said, "Kid, first time in a place like this, huh? Pretty impressive, right?"

Andrew casually glanced at the mansion and replied, "It's got some character."

Chapter 1009

"A bit of character?" Francis paused, clearly displeased, and his tone quickly turned sharp. "Listen—if you don't understand something, don't go throwing opinions around."

"The Phelans are the pinnacle of prestige in Gabo Creek. And this estate you're looking at? Do you have any idea how far back it goes? During The Solarian Period, it was the residence of a high-ranking statesman!"

His words dripped with pride as though he was speaking of sacred history.

Andrew replied casually, "The renovation and design definitely have that classic charm. But the layout feels a bit unbalanced, geomancy-wise. And the gardens? A little too flashy, too much Valemonian style. It's missing that Holtrien grace—that quiet, dignified simplicity. It just doesn't flow."

Francis' face darkened. He had not expected Andrew to double down—much less critique his work directly.

The idea of a kid from Jayrodale thinking he knew anything about geomancy or landscape design was laughable. Francis snapped, "You're saying the garden I personally designed is too loud and not refined enough? Alright then -enlighten me. What brilliant ideas do you have?"

Just then, a soft yet commanding female voice echoed across the gravel path, followed by the sharp click-clack of tall boots on stone. Andrew turned his head and saw a tall woman in full military dress approaching.

Though the uniform leaned masculine, there was no hiding her striking beauty- almost dangerously so. However, what caught his attention was the gold star on her shoulder.

She was a major general.

Francis' attitude shifted immediately. He bowed slightly and said with reverence, "Miss, you've arrived."

Luna Phelan gave a small nod, her gaze already locked onto Andrew, calm and unwavering. Her eyes reminded him of a deep, still lake-tranquil on the surface, impossible to read beneath.

Francis turned and barked, "What are you doing just standing there? You need to greet her properly!"

However, Luna raised a hand slightly, signaling she did not need the formality.

She asked, "What's wrong? Speechless at the sight of a uniform?"

There was no mockery in her tone-no sarcasm, no prideful smirk. Just cold neutrality.

Andrew thought to himself, "This woman isn't just proud. She's absolute."

He had known plenty of confident women-Christina, Aspen, even Francesca in her sharpest moments.

Yet, Luna was not dramatic, nor was she loud she was still. Still in a way that said nothing could touch her. That level of calm did not come from confidence-it came from an unshakable sense of superiority.

"Nice uniform-you wear it better than most," Andrew said, his voice calm but firm. "To be a major general at your age? That's rare even

in Holtrien's military."

Luna corrected him without missing a beat. "No. Not 'rare' extraordinarily rare.

Though personally, I prefer words like 'one of a kind'... or 'unrivaled.'"

Andrew shook his head. "Great words. Just not quite earned yet-not by

That flawless face of hers tightened just slightly. The first crack in her polished composure.

Francis, meanwhile, nearly exploded. "How dare you speak to Ms. Phelan like that! Are you tired of living? She's

Mr. Phelan Senior's most beloved granddaughter! She's the crown jewel of the family-and one of the top military prodigies in all of Holtrien! And you've got the gall to say she's not worthy?"

Francis was livid. In a city like Blumedale, saying something like that out loud could get Andrew ripped apart by Luna's admirers in a heartbeat.

However, Andrew remained perfectly calm. "Just speaking honestly. The Phelans are supposed to be a noble family-don't tell me they can't handle a little truth?"

Francis' eyes burned with fury, and he raised his hand, clearly ready to strike.

Just then, Luna's voice cut through like a blade. "Francis. Don't forget your manners."

Luna said, "He's a guest Marvin personally recommended to the family-we can't treat him with disrespect. Francis grumbled as he lowered his hand. He clenched his jaw and said, "You're lucky Miss is composed and gracious. Otherwise, with that arrogant mouth of yours, you'd be in serious trouble by now."

Andrew curled his lip. "Save the lecture. Just take me to see Mr. Phelan Senior. I've got more important things to do afterward."

Luna's voice came quietly, cool as deep water. "Not so fast. You said my garden lacks elegance and composure. I'm curious-were you just trying to get attention, or do you actually know what you're talking about?"

Andrew replied without hesitation. "I was totally bluffing. Don't know a thing, really. So let's not waste time. Take me to Mr. Phelan Senior already."

Francis scoffed. "Miss, there's no point arguing with someone so half-baked. Just report back to Mr. Phelan Senior, then toss him out of the estate."

Luna narrowed her eyes and said calmly, "I asked you a question. You'd better answer properly. Because if you don't... I guarantee the moment you step outside the Phelan estate, the Goldings' enforcers and the Wrights' people will be waiting.

"And that's just the start. A 300-million bounty means there are plenty of mercenaries ready to trade your life for a payday. You might want to reconsider your attitude."

Andrew's gaze turned cold. So, she was exactly what he expected-overconfident and completely unwilling to be challenged. However, she also had information, and she clearly was not bluffing.

She knew all about his conflicts with the big players in Blumedale, and she was not afraid to use it.

"Alright," he said slowly. "Since you're so eager to learn, I'll offer a quick crash course."

Ignoring Francis' grim expression, Andrew continued, "In Holtrien, traditional landscaping values two key principles-natural harmony and cultural expression.

"You don't need gaudy layouts or excessive trimming and decoration. What matters is that every tree, plant, and stone complements each other and blends into the whole.

"It's about harmony between people and nature. The garden should feel alive, not just look pretty. That philosophy connects with both Torasesy flow and the classical unity of man and nature."

Luna's eyes flickered thoughtfully.

Andrew kept going. "Your garden here is flawless in structure—like a finely carved statue. But that's exactly the problem. It looks more like a Valemontian art piece, all about form and showmanship.

"In Holtrien tradition, it's the feeling that counts more than the design—the emotional resonance should outweigh the ornamental appeal."

Luna listened intently, and despite herself, even nodded a little. Just right as she

was getting into it, Andrew abruptly stopped.

Luna lifted her head, slightly frowning. "Go on."

Andrew shrugged. "I'm here to check on Mr. Phalen Senior's health, not to give you a landscaping seminar. And knowledge like this? It's not free. If you want me to teach you, I Charge for it." ,

Francis laughed mockingly. "What kind of ego trip are you on? Ms. Phelan doesn't need lessons from you! She

could ask for the stars, and someone would get them for her!"

Andrew replied calmly, "And what's that got to do with me?"

Francis almost choked. This guy really had no filter, and he thought it was a miracle that he had survived this long. Luna, however, gave Andrew a slight nod. "You've got some insight, after all. Marvin wasn't wrong about you. I'm Luna Phelan. You've earned the right to know my name."

She turned on her heel and started walking, expecting Andrew to follow.

Andrew just sighed internally, thinking, 'Seriously? It's just a name-not some sacred relic.'

Then again, this kind of posturing

and rigid etiquette was exactly what he expected from a place like this. After all, big families loved making everything more complicated than it needed to be.