

The Ashes 1041

Chapter 1041

Aspen said, "But you're the CEO. So, what do you think? Should we just make a casual gesture and write a check for a million? Or should we step it up a notch, maybe throw in roughly eight million to try and make a name for our company?"

Andrew shook his head and said, "Eight million? That's not enough. It lacks impact."

Aspen was stunned. "That's still not enough? Come on, this is just a regular charity event. Even those filthy rich legacy families only drop five million tops, just to show some goodwill. And you think even eight million isn't enough?"

"If we go too high, we'll end up at the top of the donor list and stand out way too much. That kind of attention might actually backfire."

She clearly disagreed with Andrew's idea.

However, Andrew waved it off. "Don't overthink it. Just spend the money. I'll deal with the consequences. Screw it, let's just go with 50 million."

Aspen froze, completely in disbelief. "50 million? Are you out of your mind? If we go that high, there's no way we won't be at the top of the list."

"It's not just the money. What if a few of those big-name families or corporations notice us? They might see Supreme Capital Group as a threat and think we're out to steal their market share!"

Andrew replied calmly, "Then let them think that. If I've already joined this game, why would I fear making enemies? Go on, it's not like that 50 million is being wasted."

"Best case, it sparks something bigger. Worst case, even if it doesn't do a thing, it still goes to people who need it. That's charity, and that's good karma."

Aspen was exasperated, but somehow, he had convinced her. "Fine, it's your money. However you want to spend it, that's your call."

With that, she stood up, walked over, and signed 50 million dollars.

On the other side, Quinton chuckled and said, "Christie, you're new to the capital, and you haven't really gotten to know the business and political big shots here yet. Go ahead and put down 20 million for us-the Wrights. Might as well show your face while you're at it."

Christina looked surprised. "It's just a charity event. I saw several donors only putting in a few hundred thousand, maybe two million at most. Mr. Wright, don't you think 20 million is a bit too much?"

However, Quinton had that calculating look in his eyes and smiled lazily. "It's only 20 million, hardly over the top. The real reason? The state governor's office is planning to outsource a few of their official projects.

"Hardly anyone knows about this yet. This donation isn't just for helping the poor or feeding the hungry. It's a message, aimed directly at the governor-to make a good impression."

Christina's eyes lit up as she immediately caught on. "Smart move. In that case, the 20 million is more like laying the groundwork. If we can win the governor's favor, then you'll have a real shot at landing those projects, Mr. Wright."

Quinton laughed. "Exactly. You're sharp-that's the idea. Now, go knock their socks off and make an impression. You probably didn't notice, but several of the top dogs in the room were eyeing you earlier, and from the looks of it, they're quite taken with you."

At first, Christina was not into any of this. Nonetheless, this was the capital-the highest rung she could ever hope to reach in her life. Now, with people starting to pay attention to her, she could not help it her vanity swelled a little, and she felt just a bit more alive.

She glanced over at Andrew's seat, where he sat alone, isolated and ignored, like some nobody in the corner. She silently mocked at how, in a place dripping with wealth and power, where titans mingled freely, Andrew's glow from Jayrodale looked utterly dull.

Meanwhile, she was riding the Wrights' coattails and flying straight past him.

Chapter 1042

After all the moguls, elites, and legacy families finished flexing their generosity at the charity event, the venue transitioned into a lavish buffet-style dinner.

With her stunning looks and classy aura, Aspen turned heads everywhere she went. She held a glass of red wine and chatted gracefully with several older men, most balding and sporting sizable beer bellies.

Meanwhile, Andrew looked utterly bored. He had filled a plate with food and was sitting alone, eating away like he had not had a proper meal in days.

Aspen caught a glimpse of him across the room and nearly lost it. She was working her tail off trying to network and promote Supreme Capital Group, while this so-called CEO was sitting on the sidelines, stuffing his face and acting like none of it mattered.

She could not help but wonder what he was even thinking. Ignoring Andrew's protests, she marched over, grabbed his arm, and dragged him across the room to introduce him to a balding man named Harry Dunham.

"Mr. Dunham, let me introduce you this is Mr. Lloyd from Supreme Capital Group. Mr. Lloyd, this is Mr. Dunham, a major player in Gabo Creek's grocery and food industry. His group is currently valued at over ten billion."

Harry gave Andrew a quick glance, then looked back at Aspen with a frown. "Ms. Aspen, you brought a date tonight?"

Aspen smiled and said, "Mr. Dunham, this is our CEO, Mr. Lloyd. He's not my date."

Harry scoffed. "Mr. Lloyd, huh? Sorry, but I've never heard of that company in our business circle. Excuse me."

With that, he stormed off, clearly annoyed.

Aspen gritted her teeth. "That bald old mutt! No sense of class whatsoever. We were having a good conversation-I was even thinking of investing in his food group. I didn't expect him to flip like that."

Andrew shrugged. "Isn't it obvious? That old perv had his eyes on you. When I showed up, he realized he had no chance, got embarrassed, and left in a huff."

Aspen stomped her foot. "Then what do you suggest we do? Our company doesn't even have a single solid project yet. Events like this are perfect for business talk we can't just waste the opportunity!"

Andrew scanned the room and grabbed her by the hand. "Come with me. If you're going to talk business, you need to pick better net

targets. As for that old creep, didn't you notice how wasted he was from booze and other indulgences?

"The guy could barely breathe between sentences. You'd get more out of handing him a roast chicken than pitching him business."

Aspen could not help but smirk

coldly. She was curious to see just

how much this so-called CEO could actually do. In her mind, Andrew was just a rich brute who enjoyed tormenting her—she did not think he had any real skill.

They stopped just outside a circle of high-level guests, and Andrew stood quietly, eavesdropping.

Aspen tensed up and whispered, "What are you doing? That group includes heads from The Five Apex Families. They're the biggest players here—there's no way we can get in!"

Andrew smiled casually and did not say a word. He simply gestured for her to stay calm and listen.

One said, "Business has been rough this year. That diamond mine I invested in abroad? Lost 100 billion when that coup broke out-damn it!"

Another chimed in, "Tell me about it. Our family shifted its whole strategy overseas. We spent five years building things up, and now we're not just making zero profit-we're also caught up in legal trouble with the local government. Screw this!"

A man whispered, "Oh, please. Was your operation even legit? You guys were tricking Holtrien citizens into shady deals, selling organs, and running scams."

"Exactly. Honestly, you're lucky it's just foreign charges. Once those guys return to the country, they're definitely gonna face trial here too!"

As Andrew listened, his expression turned oddly amused. So this was what the capital's elites were up to-not all that wealth came from clean hands, apparently.

Nonetheless, the more he thought about it, the less surprised he was.

Chapter 1043 Nowadays, among the wealthy and the ultra-rich, there were barely any whose fortune came from a spotless, clean slate.

Aspen stood frozen, utterly shocked.

The same legacy heads and well-known moguls she had always looked up to were now casually spitting out crude, foul-mouthed complaints like street punks.

Their behavior was downright disappointing definitely not what she had imagined of the elite.

Just then, Andrew cleared his throat with a light cough.

The powerful men instantly went quiet and turned toward him, their faces filled with annoyance.

"Sorry, this is a private circle.

We don't welcome outsiders," one stern-looking middle-aged man said coldly.

Andrew smiled and replied, "My apologies for interrupting.

I'm Andrew Lloyd from Supreme Capital Group.

It's my first time bringing business to the capital, and I was hoping to have a chat with you gentlemen." The group immediately burst out laughing.

"Supreme Capital Group? What kind of backwater scam company is that? Never heard of it." One of the men mocked, "Kid, you're in the wrong room.

With that little pocket change, maybe open a smoothie stand or a breakfast ---- joint.

The things we discuss herewell, you'll probably never even get close in your lifetime." "Why are we even wasting breath on him? Get lost.

Anyone here could name their net worth and scare the hell out of you." "Do you think you're qualified to have a conversation with us? Their harsh, dismissive words made Aspen's face flush with embarrassment.

She felt absolutely humiliated.

However, Andrew stayed perfectly calm and kept on smiling.

"Alright then, I suppose I really am interrupting.

They always say the elites and moguls in the capital are known for sharp investment instincts.

But from the looks of it, all I see are a bunch of narrow-minded fools." The men's faces darkened instantly.

The same middle-aged man with the commanding presence gave a sharp grunt.

"What's that supposed to mean? Do you really think you can come in here and talk trash without paying the price?" Aspen was nearly trembling from panic.

She was screaming internally, 'What the hell is Andrew doing, calling these guys fools? Is this how he planned to pitch business and find partners? This isn't negotiating it's starting a fire!' "Let's go.

Now!" she whispered harshly, tugging at him, desperate to leave.

---- Yet, Andrew did not budge.

He stood firm and smiled as he said, " Gentlemen, I have an up-and-coming project on hand.

If I share it, and you're not interested, I'll drop it.

No hard feelings." The middle-aged man remained cold.

"Kid, walk away while you still can.

Our patience is wearing thin.

Do you think some slick words and flashy nonsense are gonna get you our money? Let's be real if we did give it to you, you probably wouldn't even have the guts to accept it. The others also sneered, clearly amused by what they saw as a total joke.

To them, Andrew was a nobody.

Everyone in that circle was either a patriarch of a top-tier family or a billionaire listed on the national ranking.

So, who did this guy think he was, trying to squeeze into their conversation? Andrew spoke calmly.

"A lot of successful people hit a wall because they become arrogant and close- minded.

You've probably heard about the two

miracle supplements from

Jayrodale that recently made waves in the capital Vitality Pill and Titan Essence Pill?" He added, "To be frank Supreme Capital Group holds exclusive rights to manufacture and distribute both." The second he said that, the sneers and mocking smiles froze on the men's faces.

A flicker of surprise flashed in their eyes.

Andrew acted as if he had not noticed.

He simply sighed and said, " ---- Originally, I wanted to partner with some capable investors and build something big.

But now it seems like the so-called elites of Gabo Creek's capital aren't quite as sharp as their reputation suggests.

"There's no shortage of mediocrity and inflated egos here either.

Well, if that's the case, I won't waste any more time.

Sorry to bother you all." With that, Andrew let out a long, regretful sigh, turned around with Aspen in tow, and walked away without another word.

Chapter 1044 Aspen's legs had already gone numb, and she could not even find the strength to move.

She thought Andrew was too bold, too outrageous.

Talking to those powerhouses in that tone was practically asking to get smacked down.

However, the very next second, her ears caught something completely unexpected eager voices calling out to stop him.

Hey, young man, hold on! We may have been a bit rude just now!" Aman said, "Supreme Capital Group, was it? No hard feelings, alright? The name's impressive! I'll have my secretary reach out first thing tomorrow." "Mr.

Lloyd, since you're already here, come chat with us.

You mentioned partnering up to make money, right? That's exactly the kind of thing we love to hear!" Another chimed in, "You actually secured Jayrodale's Vitality Pill and the legendary Titan Essence Pill? Mr.

Lloyd, clearly you're full of surprises.

We're impressed!" Two of the bigwigs even rushed forward and grabbed Andrew's arm, afraid he might slip away.

Aspen stood there dumbfounded, frozen like a statue.

She could not believe what was happening.

---- Andrew shot her a subtle smile, though his face held a look of feigned annoyance.

"Gentlemen, didn't you just say I wasn't qualified to be here? So why the sudden change of heart? Let go.

If you don't want to make money, I'll find someone else." He added, "Those two pills are already selling like crazy.

And the capital's market is still wide open once we launch here, it'll be a gold mine." The group immediately began apologizing, wearing nothing but wide, enthusiastic grins on their faces.

The authoritative middle-aged man even set his wine glass down and stepped forward to grip Andrew's hand, his voice firm and filled with sincerity.

"Mr.

Lloyd, come on now, no need for hard feelingsfortune comes with harmony.

Let me introduce myself.

I'm Richard, head of the Golding family here in the capital." That one line stunned Andrew into silence.

He felt an actual headache forming as he asked, "You're the head of the Golding family? The famous one from The Five Apex Families?" Richard chuckled modestly.

"Famous is too generous.

The Goldings are merely somewhat known here in the capital." Andrew knew his own smile must have looked strained.

"Word is, you've got a son Elonwho's

had a bit of a rough patch lately,

right? Richard's expression darkened slightly, and he snorted coldly." Since you asked, Mr.

Lloyd, there's no point hiding it.

Yes, my useless son did run into some trouble recently.

And it wasn't a bit of troubleit was a lot.

He's been lying at home, moping around, and talking about ending it all." Andrew

put on a look of mock concern.

"Seriously? Oh man, poor guy...

that's tough." Richard's face twitched, but he forced a smile.

"Anyway, no need to get into details.

Let's focus on business, Mr.

Lloyd.

Tell me more about this Vitality

and Titan Essence Pill you

d." Andrew fought the

Purge

his eyes.

No need to get into details? Please.

He knew exactly what happened Richard's son, that fatty Elon, had eaten literal

shit.

What was so hard to say about that? Off to the side, Aspen looked like she was about to pass out.

Her face had gone pale and kept shifting from white to ash.

She could not help wondering if Andrew had somehow pissed off the heavens in a past life.

How else could the universe be this cruel, putting him face to face with the very head of the Golding family? Those two in the same room? The exact man on Golding's family wide kill order was standing right before them, and now they were talking about business reaching an agreement seemed impossible.

If someone spilled the truth, this whole place would instantly blow up into a full-on war.

Chapter 1045 Andrew spoke with ease and confidence.

"To be honest with you all, the Vitality Pill and Titan Essence Pill are hot commodities around Jayrodale. From what I know, both miracle supplements came from a medical institute called Moonlit Apothecary.

Ever since they hit the market, they've exploded in popularity, and it's no surprise a lot of people have been trying to get their hands on them.

"Hidden Dragons was the first to make a move, and as for the capital, those shameless Wrights were the quickest to act but from the looks of it, they walked away empty-handed." While speaking, Andrew intentionally glanced at Richard, who was smiling politely.

Richard immediately nodded.

"Mr.

Lloyd is right.

These two miracle drugs indeed came out of a place called Moonlit Apothecary." The other tycoons chimed in quickly after.

"Mr.

Lloyd sure knows a lot of behind-the-scenes details.

He even knew the Wrights tried to swoop in early on those pills." Right now, there's no bigger business opportunity in all of Gabo Creek than these two pills.

Mr.

Lloyd, you really are our lucky star!" ----

"Now we can see that when Mr.

Lloyd said he secured production and distribution rights, he wasn't bluffing at all." Andrew smiled and said, "Of course, I wasn't bluffing.

Without something solid backing me, I wouldn't have the confidence to show up and talk business with you, right?" With that, he pulled two small bottles from his pocket and casually rolled them around in his hand.

One of the tycoons looked at him with curiosity.

that you've got there?"

Lloyd, what's Andrew said calmly, "Oh, nothing too special.

Just a bottle of each of the Vitality Pill and Titan Essence Pill.

But these aren't the ones you'll find on shelves.

These two bottles are internal reserve stock from Moonlit Apothecary each pill here packs six times the potency of a regular one!" Richard's eyes lit up.

"Mr.

Lloyd, if it's not too much to ask, could my people take a closer look at those?" Without hesitation, Andrew tossed the bottles over.

"Go ahead, Mr.

Golding.

I understand wanting to verify it take your time.

Richard caught the bottles with excitement and immediately signaled for one of his men.

The aide quickly returned after a brief inspection and leaned in close to whisper, "Sir, Dr.

Newman confirmed it.

These are ----

premium-grade Vitality Pills.

The effect is incredible we absolutely can't miss out." Upon hearing that, Richard's hands actually trembled slightly.

The Golding family, just like the Wrights, had long been eyeing those miracle pills from Jayrodale.

Though they had only just launched, their unbelievable results had already sent shockwaves across every circle that mattered.

For someone like Richard, who oversaw an entire household empire, there was

no way he would not take this seriously.

In fact, he had been secretly running scenarios in his head for weeks.

If the Golding family could get

control over these miracle pills, then in a few short years, they could be going toe-to-toe with even the Three Titans of Gabo Creek.

The other tycoons were now all staring at Richard, eyes wide with anticipation.

The latter subtly made a hand gesture, silently confirming that Andrew's bottles were the real deal.

The others instantly perked up, excitement flashing across their faces.

None of them could have imagined that a random charity gala would lead them straight to someone like Andrew walking gold mine.

They had all pegged him as some cocky kid with a little cash and a lot of nerve.

However, it turned out he was directly tied to the most profitable breakthrough in the market.

Moreover, if they could go through him, getting access to the Vitality Pill and Titan Essence Pill would not be a pipe dream.

Even if they could not get the full formula, just landing production or distribution rights would be enough to make a fortune.

suddenly, every single one of those moguls swarmed Andrew like long-lost friends.

One asked, "Mr.

Lloyd, do you have a business card? Let's swap one right now!" "Eorget business card here's my personal number.

And actually, I'd like to swing by Supreme Capital Group tonight to talk about the partnership."
"Mr.

Lloyd, I move fast, alright? I'm all about action.

How about this I wire you 100 million on the spot.

No strings just your nod that when

these pills hit the capital's market, the Golding family gets a slice." Once they realized there was serious profit involved, they all jumped into motion.

However, as expected, Richard was the boldest he was already throwing cash at Andrew without blinking.

Aspen watched it all unfold from the sidelines, her head spinning as her brain struggled to keep up.

She mumbled, "What the hell is happening?" These top-level moguls were getting sweet-talked out of their wallets in just a few casual sentences.

She was seriously starting to question everything.

Had Andrew secretly turned Supreme Capital Group, the company she had personally registered here in the

capital into

a scam business? Otherwise, how else could he get someone like Richard to line up and throw money at him? Meanwhile, Andrew's face remained calm and indifferent, like none of it even fazed him.

Chapter 1046

fool.

Chapter 1046 It was not that Richard and the others were gullible or easy to

It was just that the offer Andrew had laid on the table was simply too tempting to

resist.

These two miracle supplements were not just on the radar of the Five Apex Families even the Three Titans of the capital were probably drooling over them.

Meanwhile, Andrew was not just a middleman he was the one holding the cards. If his words did not stir the room, then nobody else's would even matter.

"Mr.

Golding Senior, transferring funds this early? Isn't that a little too soon?" Andrew said, looking hesitant.

Richard waved it off with a generous tone.

"What's the problem? Mr.

Lloyd, don't worry.

This 100 million isn't about the deal it's simply my way of building friendships.

Even if you end up not working with the Golding family, just consider this a goodwill gift between friends." As head of one of the Five Apex Families, Richard's words and actions naturally carried extra weight Andrew gave a warm smile.

"We'll definitely be getting the rights to produce or sell the pills.

It's just a matter of timing." Richard immediately said, "That's all I needed to hear.

I'll just wait for your good news, Mr.

Lloyd.

Now, come on give me your company's wire details so I can send the money over.

If you keep

stalling, I'll feel insulted, like you're looking down on me." Andrew let out a sigh and put on an expression of helplessness.

"since Mr.

Golding Senior has gone this far, how could I say no now? If I keep refusing, I'd be the one in the wrong.

Ms.

Stevens, come over here and give Mr.

Golding Senior our company's bank info." Hearing her name, Aspen froze for a second.

She could not believe Andrew had actually dared to take the Golding family's money.

"Sure! One moment, Mr.

Lloyd.

This is our account number!" she said with a forced smile.

Though unsure whether this was brilliant or completely insane, Aspen still obediently displayed the company account.

Richard raised a hand, signaling one of his aides, and within minutes, a confirmation pinged on Aspen's phone100 million had just been transferred.

The moment the other moguls saw that, they could not sit still.

They rushed toward Andrew, suddenly unable to contain themselves.

"Mr.

Lloyd, our Silver Lining Corporation would also like to make a deposit.

No strings, just a friendly gesture." "Exactly.

Just a show of friendship, Mr.

Lloyd.

Money's not even the point."

"Mr.

Lloyd, our Everbright Group already has a strong pharmaceutical division.

Here's another 100 millionand don't you dare turn it down, or I'll take it as a personal insult!"
Andrew scratched his head and gave a wry smile.

"Oh man, you guys are all following Mr.

Golding Senior's lead like this? You're making things really awkward for me.

Aren't any of you worried this could all be a scam? What if your money just vanishes into thin air?"
However, the tycoons all waved off the

concern with casual laughs.

just pocket changeno big deal." "Right.

And, like we said, it's all about building rapport with you, Mr.

Lloyd.

Whether or not anything comes out of this, that's not the point." "Mr. Lloyd, come on.

A guy like you who holds the rights to those miracle pills? As if you'd bother running a con for this kind of money! You're funny!" They all laughed heartily, utterly relaxed.

To them, even a sliver of access to those two pills would be a license to print

money.

While sizable, the cash they were throwing around now was chump change compared to what they would make later.

Andrew chuckled.

"Well, if you're all being this generous...

Then alright I'll take the money.

But just so we're clear, I don't have a timeline for when these pills will be available

in the capital.

So

you'll all need to manage your expectations." Richard led the response,

laughing boldly.

"Not a problemreally, it's no big deal.

Honestly, even if the deal falls through, this was still a great way to connect with

Mr.

Lloyd.

Money has a pricebut friendship? That's priceless!" His speech was smooth and well-delivered, earning immediate nods and praise from the others.

Andrew gave a thumbs-up.

"Mr.

Golding Senior, it's no wonder you're such a legend in the capital.

You're a class act!" Aspen stared blankly at her phone, not quite sure whether she was dreaming.

She silently muttered, 'Holy hell! We just collected another 400 million.

That's 500 million total, and it had landed so fast, so effortlessly!" She looked up again to see Andrew already shoulder-to-shoulder with Richard and the others, chatting, laughing, and carrying on like good friends.

Her eyes twitched violently, completely in disbelief.

When it came to Andrew, she was out of words.

There was not a single adjective in her vocabulary that felt adequate anymore.

If she had to sum him up, only two words came to mind: absolutely badass.

Chapter 1047

"Mr.

Chapter 1047 Andrew chuckled as he waved at the group.

Golding Senior, gentlemen if you'll excuse me, I need to step away for a moment.

Richard and the others chuckled and quickly gestured for him to go ahead, assuring him he did not need to be formal.

However, the moment Andrew walked away, all their smiles vanished.

Now that kid's taken our money, he better move heaven and earth to get us those miracle pills.

I don't care what it takes." "Exactly.

Our money doesn't come easy.

He better not get cocky." "Relax.

From my perspective, Mr.

Lloyd actually knows his stuff.

Most people wouldn't have such detailed insight into those two pills." That last comment came from Richard himself.

He looked calm and confident, completely in control.

Since someone as influential as Richard was this certain, the other moguls finally smiled as well.

Truth be told, none of them had been willing to hand Andrew money so casually at first.

However, because Richard made the first move, they followed.

As the saying: "Follow the leader, and you're guaranteed a piece of the pie." Meanwhile, Andrew led Aspen toward the hallway that led to the restrooms. Halfway there, he suddenly changed direction, barely holding back his grin.

"We're leaving." Aspen was stupefied.

"Leaving? What about the money you just took? "You're not even going to explain anything to Mr.

Golding Senior and the others?" Andrew smirked.

"Explain what? Do I owe them a fruit basket or something? The Golding family and I already have bad blood.

If they don't flip the table afterward, I'll count my blessings." Aspen was stunned.

"Wait you knew you were enemies with the Golding family? Then why the hell would you still take their money?" Andrew chuckled casually.

"Did you not see who came running to hand it to me? I didn't beg, and I sure didn't force anyone.

They gave it willingly." That smug, totally justified attitude left Aspen completely speechless, and mind was buzzing.

Eventually, she asked, "So what you're just walking off with Mr.

Golding Senior's money and everyone else's too?" Andrew shook his head, smiling calmly.

"I wouldn't call it 'walking off...

[was very clearly, I took their money.

But I also told them I couldn't

promise when the partnership would

--

start, if at all "and you heard it yourself every last one of them said it wasn't about the deal, just about building a friendship with me.

So, if a friend wants to give me a gift, of course, I'll accept it.

Who am I to say no?" To Aspen, it sounded like robbery wrapped in poetic logic.

Yet, once again, she could not come up with a single solid counterargument. This guy was incredibly insane.

He had already wrecked Elon and was now scamming Richard for millions. Andrew let out a cold snort.

""""They put a bounty on my head, Aspen.

The Golding family literally issued a blood hunt.

Do you seriously think I'm gonna play Mr.

Nice Guy now? Be all respectful and grateful? This isn't payment it's interest." Aspen had no words left.

Collecting 'interest' from the head of the Golding family was unbelievable.

She did not even want to imagine Richard's face when he found out the truth.

The longer they stayed, the more risk they faced.

So, the two of them picked up the

pane

prize t

hell

all, when you've taken

smart move is to geree

out.

However, just as they rounded the corner, someone stepped into their path, smiling.

"Mr.

Lloydand Ms.

Aspen, right?"

Chapter 1048 "Mr.

McCormick would like to see you both.

Please come with me," the man said politely.

Andrew's smile froze for a second, and he silently cursed, 'Damn it.' Aspen quickly covered her mouth, nearly bursting into laughter.

This guy thought he could just pocket the cash and sneak out? Not a chance.

Just when one wave had passed, another one hit.

Derek himself had extended the invitation, and there was no way Andrew could slip away now.

"Well then, if Mr.

McCormick is asking, of course we'll go.

Please, lead the way," Andrew said with a suave smile, his composure quickly returning.

Aspen shot him a sideways glare, part irritated, part amused.

She thought, 'Keep pretending, Mr.

Calm-and-Collected." Inside a spacious and stately conference room, Derek sat at the head of the long table, observing everyone entering.

Andrew and Aspen were the last to walk in.

Once seated, Derek smiled and said, "There's nothing urgent.

I just wanted to speak to you all briefly.

The government currently has a few open infrastructure and development projects that we're looking to ---- hand off to private partners.

I figured I'd invite a few of our top business leaders to see who might be

interested." At once, the energy in the room changed, and eyes began to gleam with ambition.

It was no secret government contracts were goldmines, which was why half the people showed up at this charity event in the first place.

"Mr.

McCormick, say the word.

No matter how difficult the task or challenging the circumstances, the Wrights will always be the first to contribute to the great state of Gabo Creek!" Quinton declared, puffing his chest like a patriotic soldier.

His tone dripped with loyalty and pride, as if he were here for the good of the people.

The other moguls quickly followed suit, all sporting fake smiles and speaking with the same over-the-top sincerity.

"Mr.

McCormick, you just tell us what needs doing.

We'll handle the rest." That's right projects or no projects, we just want to give back

to the state!" "Please don't hesitate.

Just assign them.

We're honored to serve Gabo Creek

s we can." Andrew !

shead slightly, fought to

it all and could not help but shake his head slightly, fighting back a grin.

They were all fighting for government contracts, yet they were acting so righteous and noble.

It was laughable.

What Andrew did not realize was that Derek noticed his amused smirk.

The latter looked over at Andrew and casually asked, "Mr.

Lloyd from Supreme Capital Group...

may I ask what you're smiling at? Is something amusing?" Andrew blinked, caught off guard.

He had not expected Derek to be so sharp, let alone spot him in that moment.

Aspen, on the other hand, nearly had a heart attack.

In her mind, she was already praying to every God she knew to save them.

Messing with Richard had been wild enough.

But now Andrew was casually

grinning in front of the governoret

Was he actively trying to get himself killed? All eyes in the room now turned toward Andrew.

Quinton looked visibly annoyed, wondering how a nobody like Andrew even got a seat at this table.

Nonetheless, he was not concerned.

Once the government rolled out

those billion-dollar contracts and

handed them to him, Andrew would be nothing but a spectatorjealous and powerless.

Christina let out a faint scoff.

Even back in Jayrodale, she had found Andrew immature and unserious.

Now, he was standing in front of a powerful state governor and still acting smug.

She thought this man was hopeless.

---- "My apologies, Mr.

McCormick," Andrew said, still smiling.

"I wasn't laughing at you.

It's just that...

some of the things being said felt a little...

disingenuous." Derek raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

"Disingenuous? In what way? Are you implying that my words as governor are

fake?"

Chapter 1049 Or are you suggesting I'm being disingenuous?" Derek added

with a raised brow.

Andrew quickly shook his head.

"Not at all, Mr.

McCormick.

I admire your words and leadership.

But as for a few others in the room...

I can't say the same." Quinton immediately slammed the table and sneered.

"Mr.

Lloyd, you should take a look at who you're talking to.

Do you even deserve to speak here? You say you don't respect us? You think we'd ever look at someone like you seriously?" Andrew remained unfazed.

"Of course, I'm new to the capital.

I know I'm not in your circle.

But that doesn't stop me from seeing through the fake nobility and phony virtue

some of you keep flaunting." Quinton's face turned red with rage.

"You son of a"" Before he could finish, Derek calmly raised a hand.

"Let him speak.

I'm curious what this newcomer has to say." Andrew did not hold back.

"Mr.

McCormick, those projects you're offering everyone in here wants them like they're starving.

But instead of saying that, they keep pretending it's all about doing good for the
area.

"Some even dropped the old cliché about 'being of service to the ---- people'.

No offense, Mr.

McCormick, but if I have one flaw, it's that I can't stand fake smiles and empty talk. When I see people acting like that, I can't help but laugh.

Not on purpose, just a reflex I've never been able to fix." His blunt and unapologetic words sent a chill down Aspen's spine.

she thought, 'Damn it, does he even hear himself?! She lowered her head slightly and glanced around.

As expected, every face in the room had darkened with restrained fury. Quinton gritted his teeth.

"Mr.

McCormick, with all due respect, I ask that you have this man removed. Everyone here today represents the dignity and reputation of the capital.

But this man? He spews insults, speaks out of turn, and clearly lacks the class to be in your presence." Several others echoed the sentiment, all voices rising in anger.

Andrew's words had hit a nerve, exposing the very hypocrisy they tried to cloak

with practiced smiles.

There was no way they could let that slide.

Surprisingly, Derek did not seem angry.

Instead, he let the room quiet down before breaking into a light smile.

"Actually, I think Mr.

Lloyd made some valid points." In an instant, the room fell completely silent.

Quinton and the others sat stunned, their expressions frozen when they heard Derek actually agreed with Andrew.

After all, it only meant that he also thought they were being disingenuous and that they were just putting on a show.

Their faces instantly flushed with embarrassment and fury.

They silently cursed at the colossal embarrassment this would absolutely cost them points with Derek.

Just then, Richard cleared his throat, trying to change the subject.

" Mr.

McCormick, perhaps we can get back to the matter at hand.

What are your plans for the official projects? Derek raised his hand slowly, pausing midair as dozens of

eyes stared at him with t

When his hand dropped, all heads subtly leaned forward.

Then, to Quinton's sheer disbelief, Derek gestured toward Andrew.

Quinton nearly choked, mumbling, "What's happening right now?" "There are

several projects," Derek said with a pleasant tone.

"But the biggest and most important one I'm giving that to you, Mr.

Lloyd, and the Supreme Capital Group.

Do you have any objections? The silence in the room was deafening, and not a single person could hide their disbelief.

These long-standing tycoons of the

capitalmen who had been dominating the business scene for decades had just been passed over for Andrew and a company they had never even heard of until today.

Chapter 1050 Aspen was absolutely stunned.

All Andrew did was throw out a few bold, borderline-offensive remarks, and Derek rewarded him for it.

She started to question whether she was dreaming.

since when did the world start handing out favors for calling people fake?

Christina's face turned a shade darker as she exchanged a look with Quinton.

He gritted his teeth and muttered, "Don't rush.

Let's just wait and see.

Mr.

McCormick's decision isn't something we can challenge outright.

Damn it...

this kid really stumbled into the jackpot." Andrew straightened his suit jacket at the center of it all and stood up with a bright, unbothered grin.

"Well then, thank you, Mr.

McCormick, for the trust.

In that case, Supreme Capital Group is honored to accept the offer!" He added, "Don't worry we'll make sure the job gets done right." Before Derek could respond, one of the old family heads shot up from his seat, clearly displeased.

"Mr.

McCormick, with all due respect, I really don't understand why you'd assign such an important project to an entirely new company.

"As far as I know, Supreme Capital Group has no real history in the capital.

We've never even heard of them before today.

Handing a ---- high-level government project to them feels like a slap in the face to every seasoned business here." Quinton seized the opportunity and added more fuel to the fire.

Exactly, Mr.

McCormick.

While I know your decisions are always sound, I have to sayneither their qualifications nor their track record add up.

By any measure, I don't think they're suited for this role." A few others chimed in as well.

"Sir, the donations at this charity event were meant to showcase each group's capability.

This Supreme Capital Group is just a tiny firm.

Every other company in this room is more qualified." Derek gave them a cool look.

"You're all trying to make this about how much each company donated, right?" No one responded, but the answer was clearthey were.

To them, Supreme Capital Group was nothing more than a flashy startup.

The idea of it standing shoulder to shoulder with the old powerhouses felt ridiculous.

Quinton chuckled dryly.

"Governor, I think you're joking.

Donations come from the heart.

Take our family, for instancewe only donated 20 million.

Not a huge amount, sure.

"But strictly speaking, we still donated more than Supreme Capital Group could ever dream of.

So if we're talking capability and

loyalty, think we've proven our

worth." Derek's smile thinned.

"Alright then.

Since you're all making this ---- about numbers, let me be direct.

Supreme Capital Group donated 50 million more than any of you so-called established players in the capital. The room went dead quiet

when they heard the amount.

They could not fathom the possibility that Supreme Capital Group had that kind of money.

Derek went on, "To be honest, I didn't want to base my decision on money.

Talking about donations makes this feel transactional, and Thate that.

But since Mr.

Wright and a few others insisted on using that as a benchmark, I figured I'd give you a clear answer so no one questions the decision." Quinton slammed his fist on the armrest, his whole body tense with rage.

He had personally instructed Christina to donate 20 million.

At the time, he thought it was a bold move a clear advantage.

He never imagined Supreme Capital Group would outbid him, and win Derek's favor.

He had miscalculated big time.

The others were left speechless too.

Supreme Capital Group had just pulled off the unthinkable.

They showed up out of nowhere, made one move, and instantly became the focus of the entire capital.

With Derek's backing, their future looked unstoppable.