

As evening fell, Aspen and Dylan returned to Serenity Villa. The front gate stood wide open, and Andrew sat squarely in a chair in the middle of the first-floor lobby. Aspen frowned as she stepped inside. "Why are you sitting here?"

Andrew replied, "Waiting for guests."

"Who?"

"Assassins from the Haywoods and the Goldings."

Her face darkened when she heard his words. She could not help but think Andrew had lost his damn mind for leaving the front door wide open for killers.

He glanced at her and asked, "Weren't you meeting a client? How'd it go?"

Aspen's voice turned icy. "Turns out, Christina was the one looking for investors."

Andrew raised a brow. "So? You turned her down?"

She sneered as she said, "More than that. I made sure all three of them left humiliated. That old hag Irene even got a slap from me."

Andrew simply shrugged. Aspen had never been the merciful type, and none of this surprised him. He simply ordered, "Go make something to eat. I'm hungry."

Aspen scowled. "Just order takeout. With all these people you've invited over, I can't handle cooking alone."

She pulled out her phone, only to find every restaurant refusing delivery to The Sovereign Residences.

Watching her frustration mount, Andrew smirked. "Save your energy. If takeout were an option, I'd have done it hours ago. No delivery driver in their right mind would step foot here right now. Don't torture them."

Aspen finally realized what was going on. Of course thanks to Andrew, The Sovereign Residences had become a no-go zone. At this point, even birds probably avoided flying overhead, lest they get plucked mid-flight.

"Fine. I'll cook for you, but I'm not feeding everyone else," she muttered.

The pointed remark made Natasha glance up from the couch, where she had been watching TV. She

teased, "Wow, someone's feisty net

Don't worry, just make enough for darling here. I'll... share his plate later."
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She added, "It's perfect. If I eat after him, it's basically an indirect kiss."

Natasha effortlessly turned the tables with the practiced ease of a Black Widow.

Aspen gritted her teeth, muttering

"bitch" under her breath before

responding flatly, "Fine. I'll make two

portions. We can't have our

esteemed guest, Madam Vostokoff,

eating leftovers."

Reuben and the rest of the men still needed to be fed, and even Andrew could not let Aspen handle it all alone.

Feeling slightly guilty, he sent Dylan on another errand, leaving The Sovereign Residences once more to grab food for the group.

Dinner came and went, and darkness settled over the estate. The grounds of Serenity Villa stretched out in vast expanses

manicured lawns, dotted with net

artificial rock formations and a serene artificial lake, leaving the property feeling eerily exposed.

Only a handful of scattered streetlamps stood guard, their faint glow doing little to push back the encroaching night.

Aspen descended the stairs in her thin sleepwear, the night breeze from the open doorway causing her thin nightdress to flutter suggestively around her silhouette.

She walked next to Andrew and whispered, "Why don't you get some rest? I'll take over the watch for a while."

Andrew shook his head without looking up. "Go to bed. I'm fine."

Aspen clenched her jaw. He had been sitting motionless all day, so how could he not be tired?

She insisted, "I won't let you down. I know I'm nowhere near your level, but keeping watch is something I can handle."

Andrew's gaze flickered over her revealing attire, a smirk playing at his lips. "Planning to stand guard in your nightwear? Is that your strategy?"

His eyes traveled pointedly downward. "I don't even see a bra. Do you really think you could fight if trouble shows up?"



Aspen's face burned crimson as she instinctively crossed her arms over her chest. Damn it—her habit of going braless after showers had become second nature, and Andrew had seen her in this state.

Humiliated, she spat, "Fine! Since my kindness is wasted on you, I'm going to bed!"

She turned to stomp upstairs in a huff. However, Andrew suddenly sprang from his chair and tackled her to the ground. His arm locked around her slender waist as they rolled across the floor.

Aspen's shock quickly turned to fury, wondering what the hell this bastard was doing.

Was he actually trying to take advantage of her in the dark?

She silently cursed herself for being dumb and wandered around practically naked in front of this pervert. She was basically giving him a chance to pounce at her.

Just as she began struggling in earnest, Andrew's growl cut through the night. "Stop moving unless you want to die!"

The next moment, a hail of gunfire erupted, muzzle flashes lighting up the darkness as bullets shredded through Serenity Villa's entrance. Andrew shielded Aspen behind the couch as the once-elegant furnishings exploded into splinters under the barrage.

The ambush sent Natasha and others scrambling for cover from their hidden positions. Some of their men were not fast enough, and their agonized screams pierced through the gunfire.

Aspen's face paled as the relentless gunfire echoed through the villa. She gasped in disbelief, "That's a heavy machine gun! How could banned military-grade weapons appear so easily in our country?"

Andrew's expression turned icy as he replied, "It's possible that these aren't Holtrien's assassins. This kind of indiscriminate firepower reeks of foreign mercenary tactics."

He smirked and said, "Seems like the Haywoods and Goldings have decided to play for keeps."

Aspen shivered as Andrew's warm breath tickled her ear, sending unwelcome tingles down her spine. She snapped irritably, "Could you let go of me now?"

Andrew replied flatly, "So you can stand up and get holes all over your body?"

Aspen fell silent, acutely aware of the large, warm hand splayed across her bare waist. The intimate contact felt disturbingly wrong. Yet, here she was, pressed flush against his body in what could only be described as a compromising position.

Against her will, inappropriate thoughts began swirling through her mind, painting her cheeks a telltale pink.

Outside, the deafening barrage lasted nearly 30 seconds before ceasing abruptly. A dozen masked mercenaries in full combat gear moved cautiously through the mansion.

At the center of the mercenary formation stood a man built like a grizzly bear: His attire was starkly

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different from that of the

comrades. He wore only

camouflage pants, combat boots, and a sleeveless vest that stretched taut over obscenely swollen arm

muscles.

He barked in guttural Srovikian, "Leave no survivors and find Andrew's corpse!"

his squad moved upstairs,

With that, his

weapons ready, only to be met with gunfire from Reuben and Natasha's ambush. A few sharp exchanges of bullets curses, and dying screams later, silence reclaimed the upper floor.

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Downstairs, the mercenary leader's face darkened. He could not believe there were actually survivors. He crouched slightly, Desert Eagles in hand, preparing to launch himself upstairs and support his men.

Just as he was about to move, something felt off. He sensed a threat from behind the couch where Andrew and Aspen were hiding. Without hesitation, he raised both pistols.

A rapid barrage tore through the couch, sending foam and shredded fabric flying everywhere.

Chapter 1166



Aspen's scream pierced the night. For a moment, she was certain bullets would tear through her. However, Andrew's arms locked around her, shielding her completely as he kicked the shredded sofa aside.

Then, a gold needle flashed from Andrew's fingers. The burly and tall Andarov Markovic snarled as his right wrist erupted in pain, and his Desert Eagle clattered to the floor.

Shocked and angry, Andarov quickly raised his other gun, ready to continue firing. Just then, Andrew blurred across the room and crushed an uppercut into his jaw.

"You're alive! Good. I'll peel your spine out myself and avenge my subordinates!" Andarov yelled. He dumped his remaining gun, elbows smashing Andrew's strikes.

Just like that, the two started fighting in the lobby on the first floor.

Srovikan fighters were already brutes, but Andarov was a wrecking ball. Every collision splintered walls, and every missed punch cratered the floor. Before long, the villa, already in ruins, was destroyed further.

Aspen's nightwear was already torn in several places, revealing her smooth skin. Seeing that Andrew seemed to be at a disadvantage, she exclaimed anxiously, "I'll help!"

"Stay down!" Natasha snapped, rushing downstairs. "You'll just get in his way."

Andarov swung a brutal punch straight at Andrew's head, but Andrew tilted just enough to avoid it-clean and precise.

The punch did not stop there. It smashed straight through the villa's outer wall, exploding stone and dust in a violent display of raw power.

Andarov sneered, "You Holtrien soldiers probably don't know my name. I'm the commander of the Blood Wolf Mercenaries. Before I retired, I served in the Eclipse Protocol, and there's actual footage of me standing guard outside the Zlatodvor Court! But unfortunately for you, you won't live long enough to appreciate any of my former glory."

With a vicious grin, a combat knife suddenly slid into Andarov's hand. He spun it with expert precision, slicing the air with ghostly afterimages as he launched a relentless series of attacks.

Each strike came fast and deadly, but Andrew dodged every single one by the skin of his teeth, his movements so smooth and precise that Aspen and Natasha watched with bated breath, palms slick with cold sweat.

Two minutes in, Andarov was panting like a wild beast, his knife hand trembling from fatigue.

He roared in frustration. "You Holtrien monkeys—endurance is all you've got! Andrew, if you've got any guts, fight me head-on!"

Andrew stepped from the shadows, his face unreadable and calm. "All we have is endurance? Fine. Let me show you what else we're capable of. And since you clearly look down on Holtrien fighters..."

"Let me just say, from where I stand, Srovika Federation soldiers like you—mercenaries without honor or loyalty—you're nothing more than vultures. No better than mangy strays scavenging on the roadside."

Andarov howled. "Bastard! How dare you insult our sacred soldiers? I'll make you pay for that!"

Andrew did not waste another breath and charged forward like a cannonball, his fist winding up and slicing through the air with terrifying force, straight toward Andarov's chest.

Andarov raised his own fist to counter the blow, grinning arrogantly as if he could already hear Andrew's bones cracking under the impact.

Their fists collided with a loud bang, and a shockwave burst through the grand lobby like a sudden gust of wind.

Andrew stood still after the punch, unmoving as stone. Andarov, on the other hand, froze as he stared down in disbelief. His forearm had exploded-muscle fibers shredded, bone shards flying like shrapnel.

Then, came the scream. A deep, guttural howl of pure pain.

Aspen and Natasha were stunned beyond words. Andrew had blown apart Andarov's entire arm with just one punch, and they wondered how that was even humanly possible.

"Iron Avalanche..." Andarov gasped, face blanching. "A killing strike from Dragon Fist. Who the hell are you?"

Clutching the bloody stump of his ruined arm, he stumbled back, a flicker of raw fear flashing across his rugged face. It was like he had come face to face with something beyond human.

Andrew replied flatly, "I'm surprised you recognized it."

"Impossible!" Andarov backed away, voice fraying.

"Dragon Fist is restricted-only Holtrien's royal bloodlines learn it! That technique... It once took down our strongest presidential guard! Andrew, you can't possibly know that move unless you're "

Before he could finish, Andrew's

hand slashed forward like a blade. In a final desperate surge, Andarov unleashed everything he had leftnet?

roaring and raising his one remaining arm to block the

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incoming strike.

Chapter 1167



Andarov could not care less about anything else and turned to flee, trying to blast through the villa wall and make his escape. However, Andrew's attacks were relentless, like crashing waves, giving him no chance to run.

With perfect aim, Andrew struck the center of Andarov's back with a palm strike that exploded like a thunderclap.

Bones shattered with a sickening crunch, and nearly two-thirds of Andarov's skeleton was crushed in an instant. Then, blood gushed out from his mouth as he collapsed, his massive eight-foot frame crashing to the floor.

Raising his trembling, blood-soaked hand, he pointed at Andrew, gasping, "You're not... not just some ordinary man. You're from... Holtrien's Chetvine... You're part of the royal fa—"

He never got to finish the sentence. Before the final word left his lips, Andarov exhaled his last breath and died on the spot.

A single drop of blood fell from Andrew's waist, and part of his shirt had already soaked through with red.

Natasha rushed over in alarm. "Darling, did you get shot?"

Andrew sank into the ruins of the couch and waved her off. "It's nothing serious."

He ripped open the fabric around the wound and calmly inserted two golden acupuncture needles. After that, he fished the bullet out like it was no big deal. He did not even flinch, nor did he twitch in pain. It was as if the injury was just a scratch.

Aspen watched in stunned silence, her heart pounding. She thought, 'Is he always this ruthless, even toward himself?'

Natasha barked, "What are you standing there for? Aspen, grab the bandages! If it weren't for him protecting you, do you really think a man like him would've been injured?"

Aspen finally realized that Andarov had spotted their hiding place only because of the noise she had made, and Andrew's first instinct had been to throw himself over her and take the hit.

She thought, 'Did this man actually take a bullet for me?'

Biting her lip, she hurried upstairs, grabbed the first-aid kit, and knelt to carefully bandage Andrew's wound. However, the more she wrapped, the more her anger flared.

She demanded, "Why did you protect me? If that bullet had hit somewhere worse, even you wouldn't have walked away from it!"

Andrew replied coldly, "If I hadn't protected you, you'd be dead by now. Is this how you treat someone who just saved your life?"

Aspen was speechless. She clenched her jaw as emotion boiled up inside her, wondering why it made her so angry to see him hurt. Moreover, why was she angry at herself?

She was angry that she was powerless and seemed to be just a burden to him.

Natasha sneered. "Aspen, if it weren't for him, you'd be six feet under by now. Maybe even a dozen times over. So, do us all a favor and drop the attitude. Start acting like someone who knows how to take care of her man.

"Do you really think everyone out there is going to be this patient with you? If it weren't for Andrew, you'd be nothing but a rich man's plaything by now. Or worse-Gust another body in the morgue."

This time, Aspen did not talk back. She kept her head down, hiding her expression as she quietly cleaned the blood around his wound.

Andrew gently pushed her hand away and stood up. "No need to fuss. Get someone to dispose of the body. Then, lock this place down. More assassins are bound to come."

As he finished speaking, a shadow suddenly dropped from a shattered second- floor window.

Andrew instantly raised his head and barked, "Who's there?"

The figure crouched on the railing, mocking, "So, you can bleed. Guess you're not as untouchable as you think."

Then, the person descended the stairs slowly-it was Chantelle.

For once, Aspen found herself stepping forward to defend Andrew. "Ms. Garcia, Andrew got that wound protecting me."

The mocking tone in Chantelle's voice had seriously rubbed her the wrong way.

Chantelle gave her a once-over,

smiling faintly. "Ms. Stevens, are you

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actually defending the man who keeps you on a leash? Tsk, tsk. J'a say your condition is terminal,

Maybe schedule yourself a visit to a therapist?"

Aspen's face turned crimson in an instant. She knew exactly what Chantelle meant-Stockholm Syndrome, full-blown.

Yet, she refused to admit it. Her voice was frosty. "My mental health isn't your concern, Ms. Garcia."

Chantelle was unfazed. "Andrew, I've already posted a security team around Serenity Villa. You're hurt. Go rest. I'll handle what comes next."

Andrew smirked. "Perfect. That means my safety is now your responsibility, Ms. Garcia."

Chantelle smirked. Just as she thought-Andrew was spineless.

Chapter 1168



Through the second half of the night, Serenity Villa remained eerily quiet.

Chantelle stepped out from her lookout post and announced, "Looks like no one else is coming tonight. Everyone should get some rest."

Andrew stopped her. "Hold up. You all stay on watch—I'll go rest."

Chantelle narrowed her eyes. "Are you giving me orders like I'm your subordinate?"

Andrew responded calmly, "Not at all. I just want to isolate myself and draw the next assassin in alone."

Chantelle frowned. "So, you're planning to be alone in a room and give the assassin a shot at you? You're using yourself as bait?"

Andrew replied, "Exactly. One mercenary commander from the Srovika Federation is dead, but with the Haywoods and Goldings both after my head, there's no way they'd just send one decent hitter and be done."

Chantelle nodded. "That... makes sense. But you're injured. What happens if something unexpected comes up? Can you really handle it?"

Before Andrew could answer, Aspen blurted, "It's fine. I'll stay with him!"

She said it way too fast-no thought, pure impulse. The moment the words left her mouth, she regretted it because all eyes turned to her.

Natasha, Chantelle, and Dylan all stared at Aspen with unreadable expressions, making her wish she could disappear.

Chantelle looked over at Andrew and said flatly, "Having someone with you might actually be safer."

Natasha chuckled. "Since Andrew is injured, he'll need someone to take care of him. But just don't go doing anything extra. Some activities take a serious toll on stamina, you know!"

Aspen pretended not to hear it, but her jaw clenched so hard her teeth nearly cracked. She knew exactly what Natasha was insinuating—a warning not to get into Andrew's bed.

If they got intimate, it could easily sap Andrew's energy.

Without another word, Aspen stepped up and helped support Andrew as they walked off to the bedroom.

Once inside, Andrew said, "Don't turn on the lights. Just sleep."

Aspen quickly made her stance clear. "You sleep. I'll stay up and keep watch."

Andrew snapped, "If I told you to sleep, then sleep. You staying up like that might alert someone out there."

Without bothering to ask again, he shoved her straight onto the bed. Aspen's long, bare legs were instantly exposed, and she yanked the blanket over herself with a hiss. "Jerk! Can't you be a little gentler?"

Andrew did not respond. He simply lay down on his side, facing away.

Aspen lay there, heart racing, feeling completely rattled. She did not know whether to sit up or stay down. Right next to her-just inches away was a man who terrified and confused her more than anyone. '

Was she really about to sleep in the same bed with him?

In the dark room, Andrew said evenly, "Go to sleep. I'm not going to touch you. If you sit up like that and there's a sniper outside, you'll be an easy headshot."

That hit Aspen like a bucket of ice.

Heavy weaponry had already been in play-snipers were not a stretch. She realized how exposed she was sitting upright in front of a window.

"Fine. I'll lie down," she muttered, shifting under the blanket. "But I'm warning you if you try anything, I'll... I'll fight back."

Andrew let out a quiet, amused breath. "If I really wanted you, do you think fighting back would make a difference?"

Aspen's heart thudded, realizing he was not wrong. With his strength, if he wanted

to force himself on her, she probably could not stop him.

Luckily, Andrew did not make a move even after a long stretch of silence and tension.

Aspen lay perfectly still under the covers, not daring to shift. However, her body soon began to ache from the tension and awkward posture.

Chapter 1169



Aspen could not help leaning closer to see what Andrew was doing. To her surprise, his breathing was steady-he was already asleep.

She stared at him, both amused and annoyed as she thought, 'I'm lying right next to him, and he still manages to fall asleep? Am I not attractive enough? Or does this guy just not find me worth the effort?'

That split second of realization triggered an unexpected wave of disappointment and frustration in her.

Meanwhile, outside Serenity Villa, a black figure moved silently across the ruined outer wall, climbing with inhuman ease. It was Black Wolf-Elon's secret weapon, a top-tier assassin with a reputation to match.

A matte-finished blade dangled from his lips as he surveyed the building, swiftly memorizing the layout of the damaged villa. He was not alone. At least a dozen other men hid in the dark, surrounding the perimeter and lying in wait.

Nonetheless, they were not predators, at least not to him. He scoffed, thinking, 'They're the bait, and I'm the one doing the hunting!'

He sneered at the broken state of the villa. It had clearly been torn apart by the earlier mercenary team.

He silently mocked them for being a bunch of amateurs. It was obvious that even with the impressive firepower, the group only managed to charge in but never came back out.

In his mind, true assassination was not about brute force. Instead, it was about silence, precision, and timing. Moreover, he had no doubt that those hired guns were already dead.

Weightless as smoke, Black Wolf reached Andrew's window in seconds. From the shadows, he could make out the shape of his target, Andrew, asleep in bed. To his amusement, there was a beautiful woman lying beside him.

Black Wolf shook his head, almost impressed. 'This guy's about to die, and he still finds time to bed a woman. Some men really can't resist their vices.'

But then again, he thought maybe Andrew believed he was finally in the clear, so he decided to enjoy himself while he could. As a man himself, he understood it well.

After all, he did the same after every mission. He would find a lonely wife and have a wild night to blow off steam.

Gripping his dagger, Black Wolf picked the lock and quietly slipped into the room. As a seasoned killer

Years of success behind him,
wasted time with chatter.

'Villains die from running their mouths,' he silently reminded himself.

So, it was best to have no speeches or hesitation. Once he saw the opening, he would strike first and hard.

He crossed the room in three long strides and plunged the dagger down toward Andrew.

But in a flash, Andrew's eyes snapped open. With one sharp kick, he knocked the blade straight from Black Wolf's hand.

Black Wolf's heart sank. "You were faking sleep?"

Andrew smirked. "What do you think?"

From the other side of the bed, Aspen suddenly screamed at the top of her lungs, "Intruder! Someone grab the assassin!"

Black Wolf cursed. "You filthy pair! I swear, I'm gonna kill you both myself!"

According to the second rule of the assassin's code, you should not stick around if you missed your first strike. Instead, you had to retreat to ensure survival and live to strike again.

He lunged toward the window to escape, but Chantelle's long leg shot through it like a missile, catching him mid-step.

Caught off guard, Black Wolf staggered back. At the same moment, Reuben burst in, flanked by Dylan and Natasha.

Chantelle vaulted through the window and landed smoothly inside. In seconds, the four surrounded him, launching a coordinated assault.

Even for someone as lethal as Black Wolf, the onslaught was too much.

In a few moments, both his legs were


cut off, and he collapsed to the

floor, groaning in pain.

"You had this many elite fighters hidden in here?" he gasped in shock.

Chapter 1170





On the ground, Black Wolf writhed in pain, howling in disbelief. He finally understood why that last squad of heavily armed mercenaries had vanished without a trace after storming Serenity Villa.

This place was not just a house-it was a damn death trap.

"Who sent you to kill me?" Andrew asked calmly as he twirled the dagger Black Wolf had dropped.

Pinned down by Natasha and Dylan, Black Wolf was drenched in sweat, his shattered legs leaving him gasping in agony.

He growled, "Why the hell should I tell you? You should know exactly who you've pissed off. Even if I'm in your hands, kid, if you lay a finger on me, the consequences-"

Andrew did not let him finish. Instead, he drove the blade straight into Black Wolf's chest. Whatever threat Black Wolf was about to spit out died on his tongue. His eyes bulged in shock before his head slumped to the side-dead.

"If you didn't have the sense to act like a prisoner, then I did you a favor and sent you straight to hell. Next time, try being smarter in your next life," Andrew said coldly.

Killing an assassin of semi-martial king rank? Andrew made it look as easy as ABC.

Everyone in the room was stunned. No one had expected him to act that fast-or that decisively.

Reuben was shaken, and he muttered, "Mr. Lloyd... Black Wolf's skills were on par with mine. His assassination techniques were refined to perfection. And you just... killed him? Isn't that a waste?"

Andrew replied without flinching. "What's there to waste? I've taken out plenty of small-timers like him."

No one spoke, and even Aspen did not dare make a sound.

There was something chilling about Andrew in that moment-something that left everyone uneasy.

Chantelle gritted her teeth and snapped, "We could've interrogated him! Why go straight for the kill?"

Andrew glanced at her. "Are you being serious right now? Someone tries to murder me, ends up in my grasp, and I don't kill him? You think that's not justified?"

Chantelle was momentarily speechless her chest tight with suppressed fury. "Andrew, your bloodlust is out of control! First Seth, now Black Wolf-do you even realize who these men were? They aren't random nobodies in Blumedale! Taking them out so cleanly could bring real consequences!"

She was nearly shouting at him, angry beyond belief.

However, Andrew just scoffed. "Consequences? The Haywoods and Goldings are sending assassins right to my door. If I showed even a shred of weakness, I'd be dead already. And now you want to talk to me about caution? About consequences? You think I care?"

Chantelle bit her lip, unable to find a single word to argue back. She knew Andrew was right-those families had crossed the line. Moreover, he was not just fighting back. In fact, he was drawing a line in blood.

Without sparing her another glance, Andrew turned to Dylan. "Clean up the bodies. Dump them in the sewer. Then, get in touch with the management at The Sovereign Residences.

"My house has been trashed. I want it restored to perfect condition within three days. If they can't manage that, then no one's walking away happy."

Dylan and Natasha immediately rushed to carry out his orders.

It might have been the middle of the night, but when Andrew was this pissed, nobody dared drag their feet.