

The Ashes 1577

Chapter 1577

Stanley's brow furrowed. "Andrew, what's that supposed to mean? Are you saying I made all this up?"

Andrew turned his eyes toward the other end of the crypt, where the royal throne stood. "Why don't we let your Little Emperor friend explain it himself—and see if you're the one telling stories?"

The puppet seated on the throne had somehow stood up. Its decapitated wooden head, which had been blasted off during the earlier gunfire, was now fully reattached.

A raspy, grinding voice scraped through the air, like rusted metal scraping against steel.

"Stanley, we meet again."

The puppet, carved entirely from wood, had no facial muscles. Yet somehow, at that moment, Andrew could swear its face came alive.

It stared at Stanley with a gaze so filled with hatred and bitterness that it could curdle blood.

Stanley froze, his entire expression locking in place. He stammered, "H-How is this possible? No! It's impossible! You've been dead for 100 years! You can't be alive-you can't!"

His voice cracked as he staggered back a few steps, fear evident on his face for the first time.

Tiana and Chantelle looked stunned, whispering among themselves.

"What the hell is happening? I-Is that really the Little Emperor?"

"But that puppet was ruined. I saw it myself—it was torn apart."

"How did it fix itself? And who's doing the talking?"

"There's a ghost in this crypt! There has to be!"

Logan's man, Lenny, shrieked, his face pale as a sheet.

Andrew's brows knitted tightly as he stared at the puppet, his guard rising even higher. He glanced around at the bodies of Mosby, Grand Viper, Rafael, Stanley's subordinates, and Rafael's men.

All the corpses were lying there peacefully, looking almost serene in death.

So, had this puppet truly come to life, or was it just another person in disguise like before?

"Stanley... my old friend," the puppet croaked, its voice dragging like rusted hinges. "Thanks for coming back to see me, even after 100 years."

He continued, "You always wanted the Elixir of Immortality... even back then. You craved eternal life. That's why you snuck into Mother's bedchamber and stole the Elixir for yourself.

"But when they found out, and the threat of execution loomed, you came crawling back to me. You

handed me the Elixir, pretending met

was a gift of loyalty when really, you were just framing me for the crime that would cost someone their head. Good job, old friend. You really earned your place in history."

The puppet's voice was broken and halting like it had not spoken for a long time. Every word ground out with effort, made worse by the cracking of its joints and the slowly splitting corners of its wooden mouth.

Stanley's face turned ghost-white, and his tall frame began to shake. "It's you... It's really you! But that can't be..... You were dead. You died! U-Unless you really did take the Elixir of Immortality?"

The puppet continued, grinding

through its speech. "Of course I died! Back then, Mother was furious that the Elixir of Immortality had been stolen, and she was ready to kil anyone over it. And you, while seemingly showing loyalty to me, immediately went behind my back to report me to Mother!

"You told her that I was the one who stole the Elixir of Immortality, trying to curry favor with her and gain. credit for the information! Stanley you escaped safely while I, your good friend, lost my life taking the blame for you. My teacher always said that foreigners couldn't be trusted, but I still chose to be your friend.

"During those years, I even gave you my favorite fighting cock! But I never imagined that my good friend

would be the very person who caused my death—I never saw it coming..."