The Ashes 281

Chapter 281 In the West End district, Andrew and Dylan received a grand welcome from Natasha. Mr.

Lloyd, I never expected you to make such bold moves.

You even managed to shock someone like me, Dylan admitted, still in awe of Andrews earlier actions and words

Dylan could not shake off the memory of how Andrew had brazenly called Natasha an airhead and lectured her to read more books as if she were just one of his men.

He found it incredible that Andrew dared to act this way on someone elses turf, surrounded by their elite fighters.

What bewildered Dylan even more was that Natasha did not get angry after being scolded.

Instead, she switched sides, driving Atlas and Finley away while graciously hosting him and Andrew.

As one of Jayrodales crime lords, Dylan had never felt this triumphant.

Im not as remarkable as you suggest, Andrew said calmly.

She simply came to her senses and realized she couldnt let Northern District become too powerful, and once I pointed that out, Atlas and Finleys scheme fell apart on its own.

Dylans mouth twitched before he could not help but say, Even so, Mr.

Lloyd, you didnt have to insult her in front of all West Ends top fighters.

Though shes West Ends leader, shes still a woman at heart, and women tend to hold grudges Im

worried she might Youre afraid shell come after me later? Andrew asked with a smile.
Dylan gave a bitter laugh and stayed silent, which was answer enough.
Youre only half right, Andrew said dismissively
Yes, women hold grudges, but they als love getting results.
Once Northern District falls and Natasha tastes success, do you want to bet she wont just forgive me but will come thanking me with joy ? Mr.
Lloyd, youre absolutely brilliant! Dylan gave him a thumbs up, thoroughly convinced.
A flirtatious laugh interrupted them as Natasha walked in, wearing a sexy dress with a high slit, her steps graceful and alluring.
Mr.
Lloyd, Mr.
Garner, lets drink to our hearts content tonight! Natashas radiant smile made her look completely
different from her earlier fierce demeanor
Madam Vostokoff, youre not mad at our Mr.
Lloyd anymore? Dylan teased
Natasha rolled her eyes playfully.
Mr.

Lloyds abilities are extraordinary I was blind not to see it before.

Now that I understand, how could I be mad? Im eager to follow his lead

Natasha did not hesitate to sit right next to Andrew, her intoxicating perfume filling the air

Dylan smiled knowingly, easily spotting that this widow had likely set her sights on Andrew.noveldrama

Nonetheless, he also knew this widow was dangerous, and no ordinary man could handle her.

Andrew replied, Madam Vostokoff, its too early for compliments.

Now that Atlas and Finleys plan has failed, you two are in danger.

Natasha dropped her flirtatious manner and asked seriously, Mr.

Lloyd, please explain! Dylan also grew serious, waiting for Andrew to continue.

Andrew explained, Atlass Northern District is much stronger than both your territories combined,

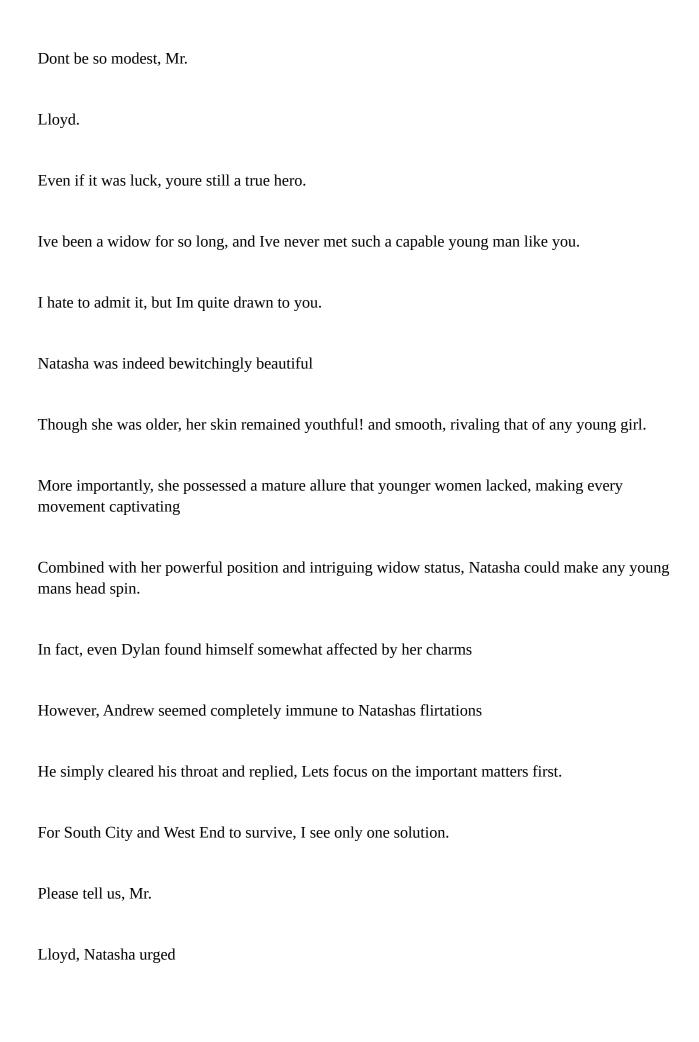
especially with Finleys elite sect backing them.

Since they failed to convince you to stay neutral, Atlas will definitely strike first and try to eliminate one of you when you least expect it.

That bastard wouldnt dare! Natasha slammed the table in anger.

Its not about guts its what he must do, Andrew said gravely.

If Atlas doesnt act immediately, once you two join forces, his dream of controlling Jayrodales underworld becomes much harder.



While she was indeed flirting with Andrew, she immediately became serious about West Ends survival, revealing there was more to this widow than met the eye.
Right now, an alliance between your two territories is inevitable, Andrew stated.
Without joining forces, youll be sitting ducks neither of you can match Atlas and Finley alone.
After a moment of silence, Natasha gritted her teeth and said, Atlas is a wolf in sheeps clothing, and I almost fell for his trap
Fine, for West Ends future, Im willing to ally with Mr.
Garners South City.noveldrama
Thats exactly the attitude I was hoping for when I came to East Side tonight, Dylan exclaimed joyfully. Natasha turned to Andrew with a playful pout.
But whats next? Mr.
Lloyd, you need to find us a way to survive.
Andrews eyes narrowed as he said coldly, The next step, naturally, is to find a way to take down
Northern District.
Natasha frowned.
Northern District is powerful and they have Hidden Dragons Finley stirring up trouble.
Even if Mr.
Garner and I join forces, our chances of winning a war against them are slim.



As it should, Natasha nodded

She no longer dared to underestimate Andrew, knowing that capable people always had their own terms. Deliberately pulling down her neckline to reveal more cleavage, Natasha smiled flirtatiously at Andrew.

Mr.

Lloyd, youre a young man in your prime.

Usually, men want either money or women.

I wonder if my beauty catches your eye.

If youre interested, Id be willing to warm your bed tonight.

Dylan watched with envy

Natasha was a stunning widow with both power and influence.

When he saw Natasha offering herself to Andrew, he could not help but think Andrew was a lucky man. However, Dylan remained cautious.

Natashas usual strategy involved using her body to attract talented young men and skilled fighters, making them devoted to her through their desire for her charms.

South City might lose its favored position with West End if Andrew fell for her.

To his surprise, Andrew just shook his head with a smile and said, Madam Vostokoff, youre indeed stunning, but I prefer rare medicinal herbs.

Natasha was deeply disappointed and readjusted her dress.

She had already lowered herself multiple times tonight to flirt with Andrew, but this young man not only rejected her verbally -his eyes had remained indifferent throughout.

Natasha knew such men were the hardest to manipulate, and trying to win them over with beauty was pointless

After thinking momentarily, she said, We dont have medicinal herbs in West End since weve never needed them

However, I know people who have them, and once you tell us how to bring down Northern District, Ill get them for you

Andrew set down his teacup and said, With your word, Ill get straight to the point.

First, we can be certain that neither of your territories can match Atlas in a direct confrontation.

Therefore, we must rule out a head on fight with Northern District! Correct, Natasha agreed

West End would never engage in such a costly battle.

But I cant think of any other way to bring Atlass Northern District down.

She continued, In Jayrodales underworld, Atlas has been as steady as a rock for years.

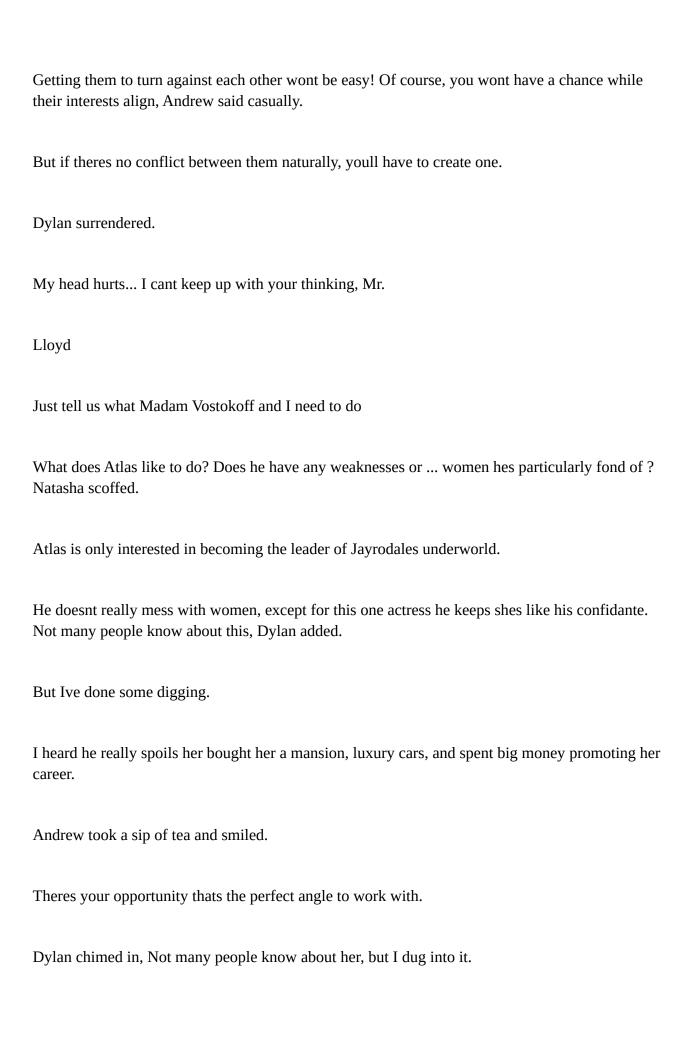
Many have tried various schemes to eliminate him, but they all failed and ended up destroying

themselves instead! I once sent assassins after Atlas, Dylan said gravely ..noveldrama

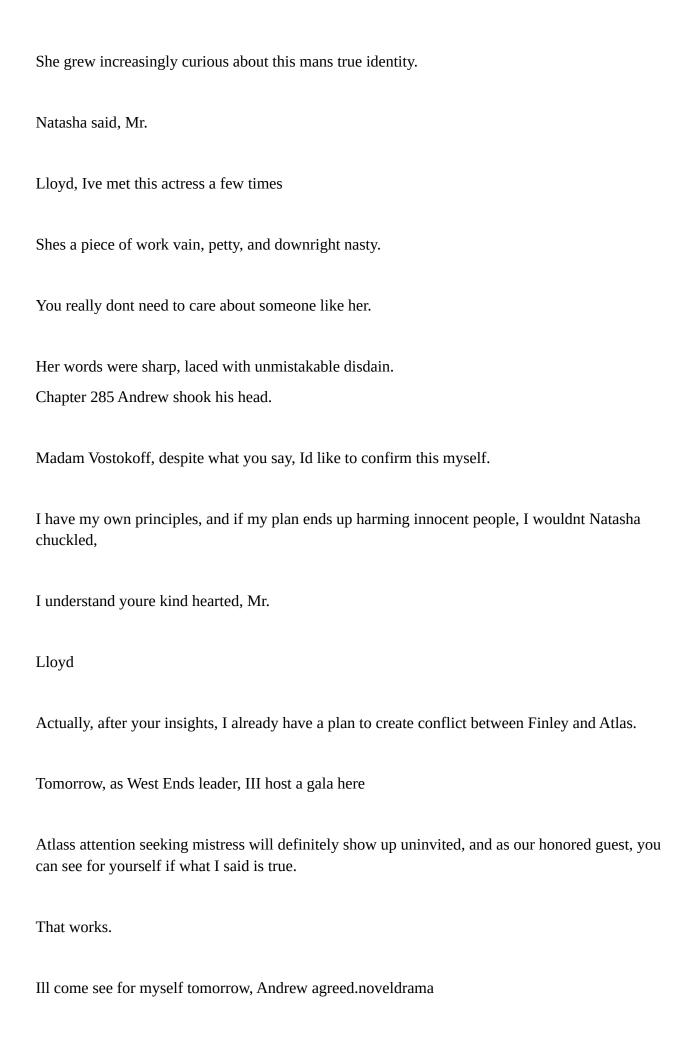
But it was useless because Atlas is too powerful, even stronger than both me and Madam Vostokoff.

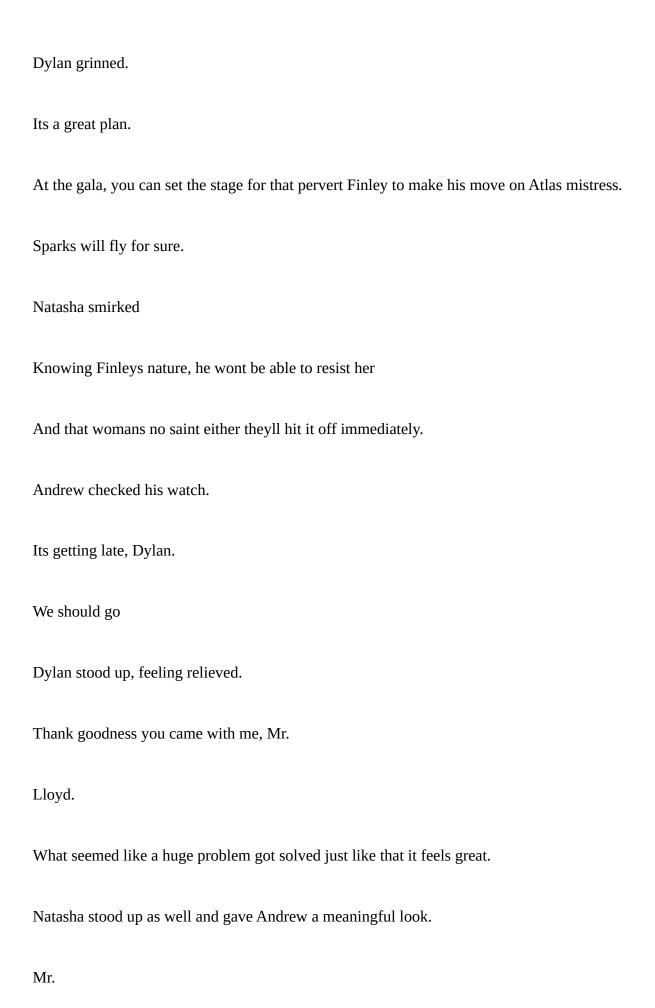
All the assassins ended up dead

And then theres Finley, that playboy from Hidden Dragons, Natasha added seriously.
Despite his vices, hes at least a junior grandmaster in combat.
These two alone are more than either West End or South City can handle individually.
Chapter 284 Not to mention, Atlas has many other skilled fighters under his command, Natasha added. Andrews eyes gleamed as he replied, Thats why a direct confrontation with Northern District wont work you need to play it smart
History shows that even the most impenetrable walls arent broken from the outside, but rather crumble from within.
Mr.
Lloyd, are you suggesting we target Northern Districts internal personnel? Dylan asked with furrowed brows.
Andrew smiled.
More specifically, you need to target the relationship between Atlas and Finley.
Theyre the two pillars of the Northern District together, you cant beat them
But if they turn against each other and start fighting among themselves, wouldnt that be your opportunity
? Natasha pouted.
Mr.
Lloyd, sowing discord between them might sound simple, but its impossible.
Atlas relies heavily on Finley, and though Finley is arrogant, he respects Atlas.noveldrama



Atlas spoils her.
He -bought her fancy houses and luxury cars, and he even spent big money to support her career. Andrew took a sip of tea and smiled.
Theres your opportunity
Its the perfect angle to work with
Natashas eyes lit up as she caught on.
Mr.
Lloyd, are you suggesting we use this actress to create a scandal with Finley, then make sure Atlas finds out about it? Something like that, Andrew replied.
However, your conflict with Northern District.
shouldnt harm the actress.
Though people in your world might not care about honor, youll need to respect my principles on this.
Andrews expression turned serious as he spoke, and his commanding presence made Dylan instinctively lower his head.
On the other hand, Natashas heart skipped a beat, finding his serious demeanor quite intimidating
As someone trained in martial arts, Natasha knew that only highly skilled fighters could project such an
aura





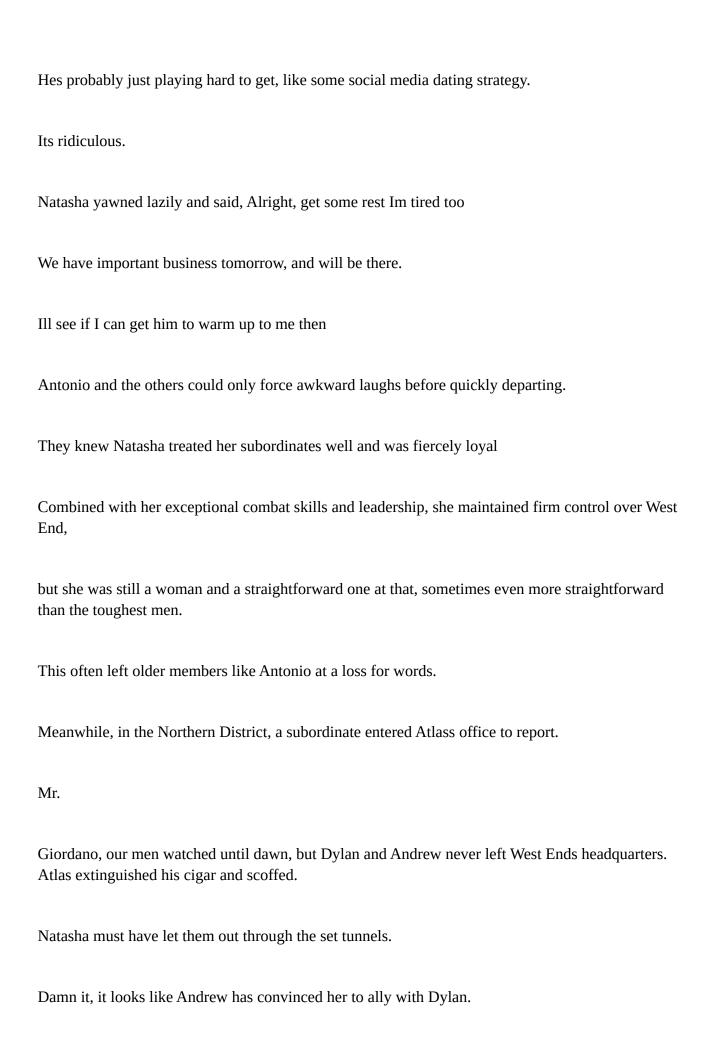
Lloyd, its so late.
Why dont you stay here in West End for the night? What about me, Madam Vostokoff? Dylan joked.
The warmth drained from Natashas smile as she said flatly, Mr.
Garner, I think youd be more comfortable heading back to South City.
My place is a little too modest to host you.
Dylan was stunned but then shook his head with a forced laugh.
The difference in treatment was truly something else.
Mr.
Lloyd, would you like to stay? Dylan asked Andrew.
In his view, since Natasha was being so forward, Andrew might as well stay and enjoy himself with her. Though Natashas intentions were not innocent, Andrew had nothing to lose he could have a passionate night with the infamous black widow and gain closer ties with West End.
Andrew just felt a headache coming on.
While Natasha had been dropping hints all night; Lauren and Francesca had been bombarding his phone with messages
Hence, he had no interest in anything happening with Natasha.
After Andrew and Dylan left, Natasha called out to the hallway, You can all come in now.

West Ends top fighters, who had been waiting outside, immediately entered the conference room	
Madam, are you really going to ally with South City against Northern District? Antonio Torres, an elderly man with graying facial hair asked.	
Yes, Natasha replied seriously.	
We almost fell for Atlass scheme	
If it werent for Andrew, who came with Dylan and opened my eyes, West End might have been in danger	
Antonio was a highly respected figure in West End, and he scoffed.	
In my opinion, Dylan and Andrew probably dont have good intentions either.	
Every organization in Jayrodales underworld is just waiting for others to fall so they can take over.	
Natasha waved dismissively.	
Antonio, thats unfair.	
That pretty boy isnt just good looking- his insight and knowledge are extraordinary.	
More importantly, Dylan accidentally revealed that Andrew was the one who killed Griffin.	
Dont you think theres more to this young man than meets the eye? Chapter 286 Antonio trembled in anger as he exclaimed in disbelief, That pretty boy is stick thin! How could he possibly take down Griffin? It must be Dylan spreading smoke and mirrors	
Natasha smirked with a shake of her head.	

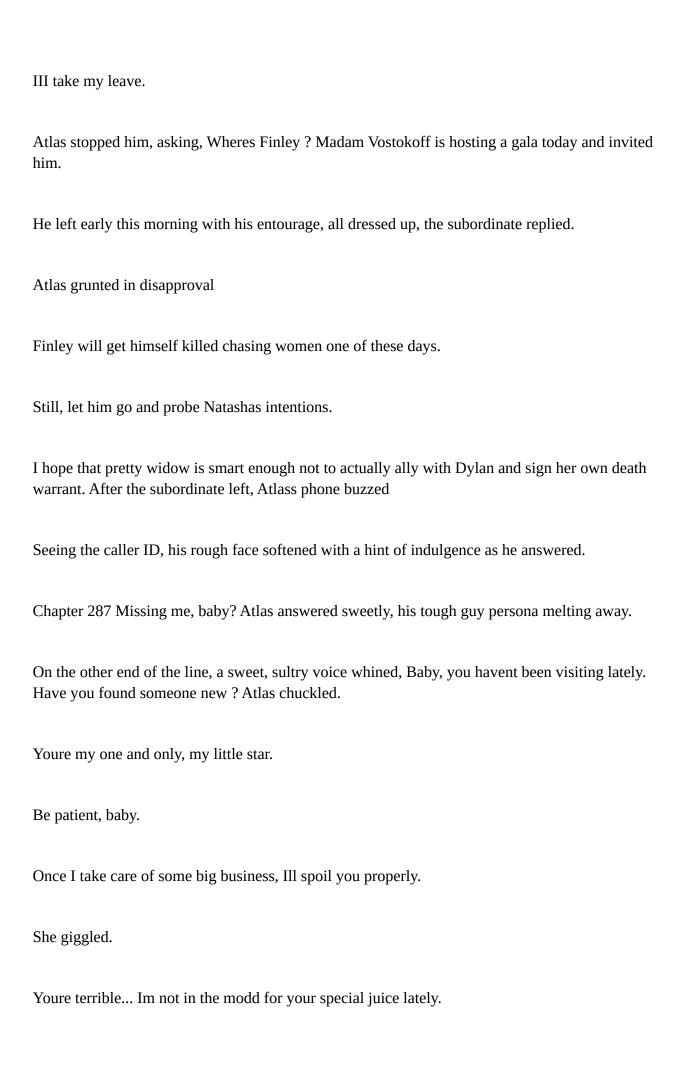
I doubt it.
Andrew has already proven himself at the Weller residence.noveldrama
He faced off against their senior fighter and walked away unscathed
How many people do you think could manage that? Antonio fell silent, his brow furrowing in thought. Someone spoke up, But Madam, the Northern District is incredibly powerful.
We were better off staying neutral allying with Dylans South City is practically declaring war on Atlas.
I thought the same way before, Natasha replied.
But Andrew was right Atlas is ambitious and cunning.
If we do nothing while he takes down Dylan, West End will be next on his list.
Antonio voiced his concerns, Thats true, but Northern District isnt just Atlas theres also Finley.
How confident can we be even with South Citys help? Natasha smiled mysteriously and said casually, Everyone, get some rest.
Dont worry about our chances.
Just trust me.
Andrew really opened my eyes tonight.
His strategic mind is truly terrifying! Antonio frowned, noticing Natashas flushed cheeks and subtle allure

Madam, you've been single for years... youre not actually interested in that pretty boy, are you? Natashas blush deepened as she snapped, Antonio, arent you overstepping? Besides, as a widow running this massive West End operation do you know how much pressure Im under? Is it really too much to have some fun with a man I like? Antonio cleared his throat awkwardly. Madam, we understand your position. But someone of your status can have fun; just dont get serious. Andrew might be clever and have some combat skills, but hes a nobody. You deserve at least a prominent familys son or a powerful leader. The other executives chimed in Exactly! Madam, your status demands someone from our level, someone worthy of West End. What if I just happen to like Andrew? Natasha purred with aradiant smile. Antonio scoffed heavily. If he wants into your bed, that boy better bring something valuable to West End. A pretty face and smooth talk arent enough Enough, you all look pathetic, Natasha said in frustration. I really did want to get him into bed tonight, but the damned boy kept refusing me it was almost humiliating. Antonio stroked his beard and sneered.

Young people these days think theyre so clever.

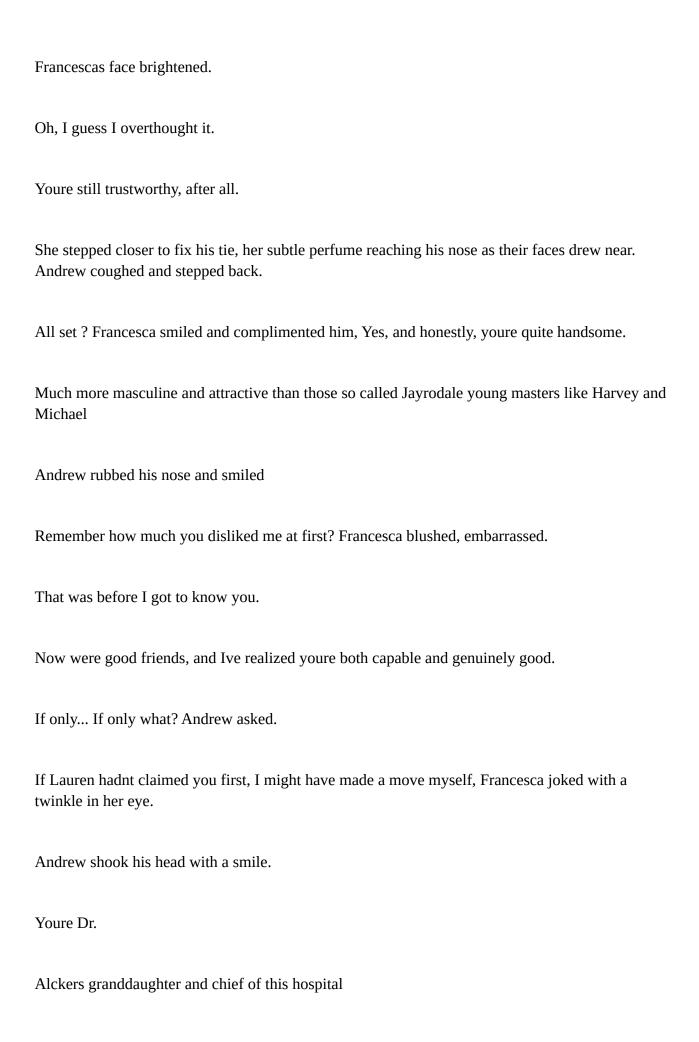


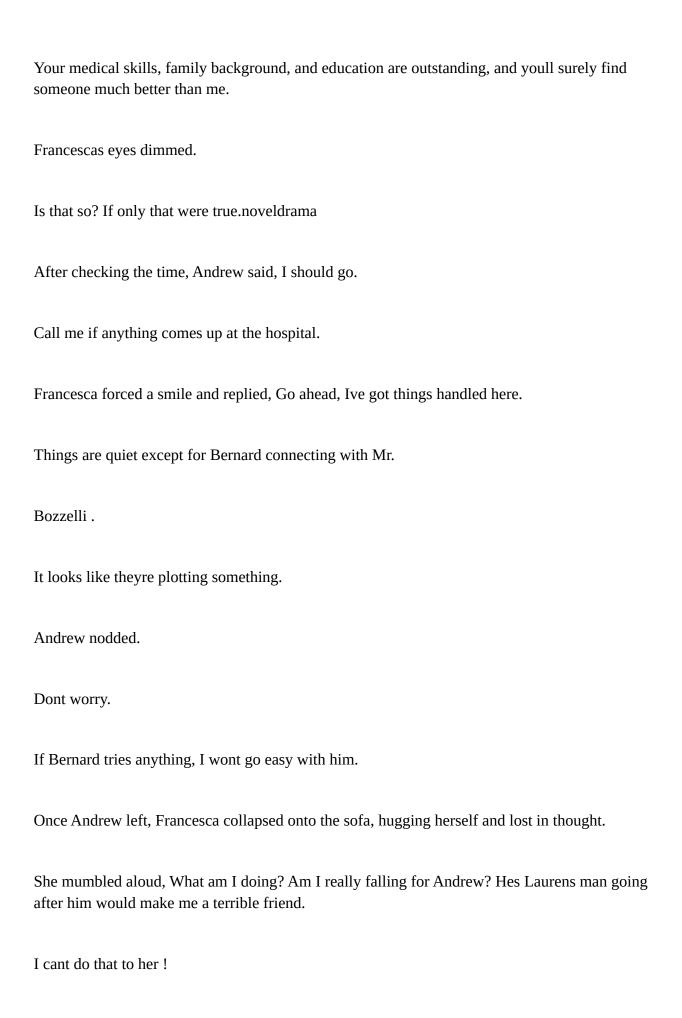
Should we proceed with the assassination attempts on Dylan and Andrew, Mr.
Giordano ? the subordinate asked.
Atlas waved dismissively.noveldrama
Dylan will be on high alert, so sending assassins would be suicide.
As for Andrew, I dont know his true capabilities yet.
Well hold off to avoid tipping our hand.
The subordinate sneered
He looks like a weakling to me just a smooth talker with a pretty face. Give me a few good men, and III take care of him for you.
Atlas laughed coldly.
You fool.
Though I havent gauged his strength yet, youd just get yourself killed. Our priority is taking down either West End or South City first.
Once I control Jayrodales underworld, that boy will be at my mercy.
The subordinate flushed red
Of course, Mr.
Giordano.



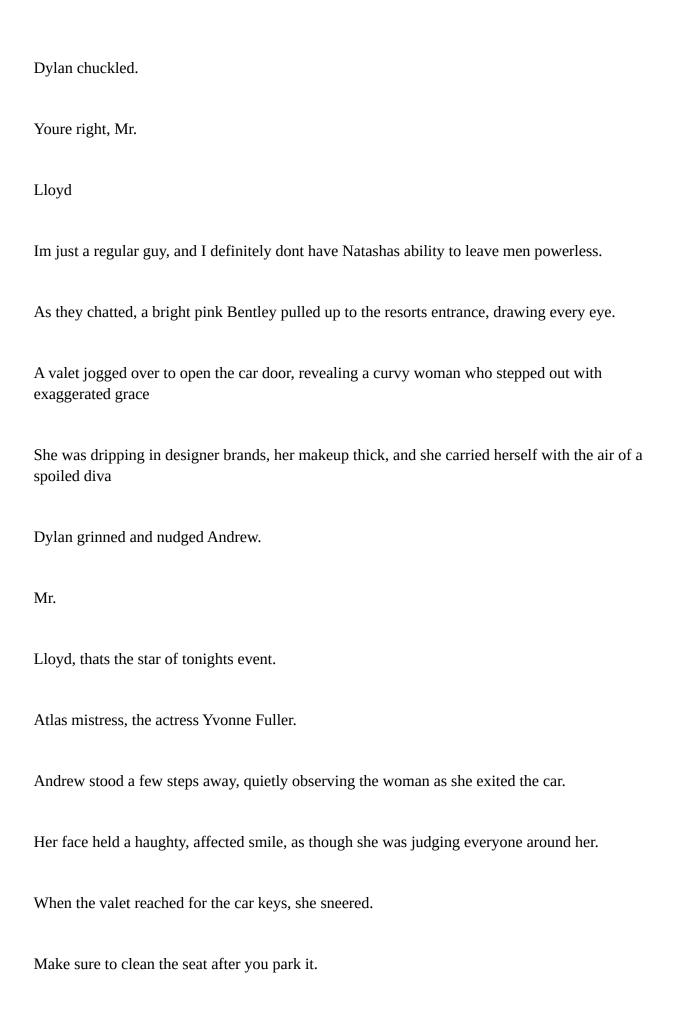
Atlas roared with laughter.
It was moments like these that made her his favorite she always knew how to keep things playful and exciting.
Im going to a gala today, she continued, sounding pitiful.
Everyone there will be rich and powerful.
III look so plain, and theyll all look down on me its making me anxious.
Atlas made a grand gesture.
Baby, youre my woman.
Anyone who dares disrespect you must be tired of living.
Enjoy yourself and spend whatever you want.
III transfer money to you right now.
Chapter 288 Atlas mistress was overjoyed, showering him with sweet words over the phone.
Thank you, baby! III dress up beautifully for when you come Oh, Ive bought several sets of sexy lingerie -come rip them off me soon! 'Atlas laughed happily.
Dont worry, baby.
Once handle these important matters, III keep you busy for days.
After hanging up, Atlas felt deeply satisfied.

His empire was rising, with Northern District at its peak, and soon, he would devour both Natashas West End and Dylans South City
Then, he would rule Jayrodales underworld as its sole king, crushing Marvin, the Wellers, and Rhodes beneath his feet.
Meanwhile, in Andrews office at Jayrodale General Hospital, Francesca walked in to find Andrew in a sharp suit
Do you have a meeting or event? she asked with a smile behind her hand, admiring his tall, elegant figure
Neither just attending à gala, Andrew replied with a smile.
Francescas eyebrows furrowed with concern.
Are you going to a gala? Does Lauren know? Ms.
Rhodes doesnt know, but why do you ask? Andrew responded, surprised.
Are you really clueless or just pretending? Francesca pouted.
Youre Laurens man now.
Is it appropriate to go to a gala without her knowing ? Come on, Dr.
Aicker, Andrew said exasperatedly.
Theres nothing between Ms.
Rhodes and me dont play matchmaker.
Besides, Im going for business, not what you think.





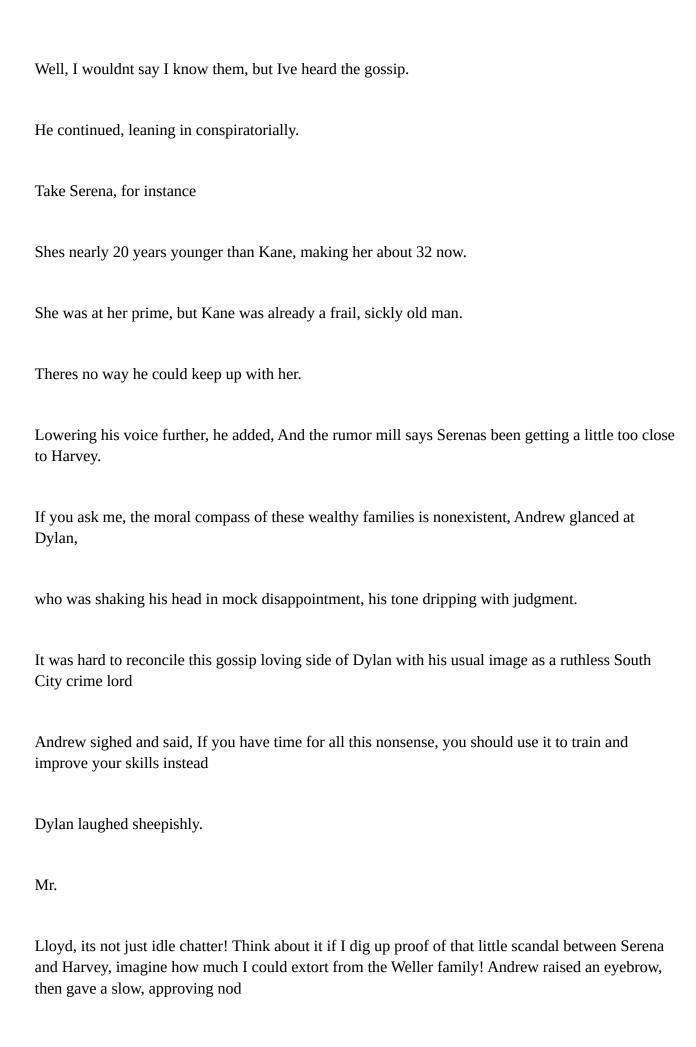
Chapter 289 Meanwhile in Scarlet Lounge, West End Natasha had rented out the entire luxury resort for the event. When Andrew and Dylan arrived, they saw that the entrance was lined with high end cars. Stunning women in designer dresses and sharp looking men in tailored suits moved in and out of the venue, all exuding power and wealth. Dylan leaned closer and whispered, Mr. Lloyd, you might not know this, but Natashas not as conventional as she seems. Shes been keeping West End in check for years, but behind the scenes, shes got ties with several high ranking officials and wealthy benefactors in Jayrodale. A lot of the men here might just be lier ... admirers. Andrew adjusted his crisp suit and replied casually, It was obvious last night Natasha knows how to use her charm to her advantage.noveldrama Dylan smirked. No doubt about it. Those legs of hers? God knows how many men shes brought to their knees with them, willing to do anything for her Andrew smiled faintly. Smart women always know how to use their assets. Thats not something someone like you, with all your bluntness, would understand.





Giordano.
III make sure we tear up the dance floor together! Andrew and Dylan watched as the two strutted inside, laughing and flirting.
Dylan snorted.
Honestly, with or without this gala, Id bet Finley and Yvonne are already involved.
Theres no way those two keep it clean behind closed doors.
Andrew raised an eyebrow.
If Yvonnes Atlass mistress, why didnt Atlas come with her? Dylan hesitated, clearly caught off guard by the question.
Mr.
Lloyd, youre misunderstanding.
Yvonne and Atlas its an affair.
Atlas likes to keep up appearances and protect his image.
Wonnes just another plaything hes had his fun with.
He continued with a smirk.
If you asked Atlas about Yvonne, hed deny everything and claim he never associates with actresses or models.
Andrew chuckled.

So, hes the type wholl enjoy it in secret but wont admit it publicly? Dylan nodded eagerly. Exactly.
Thats what makes her his mistress
Yvonnes just a trophy a pampered little pet that Atlas spoils when hes in the mood.
Chapter 290 Dylan said, Atlas would never lower himself to be seen publicly with Yvonne, no matter how much fun she was behind closed doors.
Andrew nodded.
Lets head inside and meet with Madam Vostokoff.
Dylan was just about to agree when he suddenly stopped and let out a sharp, Huh? Mr.
Lloyd, check that out another attention seeking divajust showed up.
Andrew followed Dylans gaze and frowned.
She looks familiar.
Dylan smirked
Thats Serena Halbert, the widow of the late Kane.
Shes got quite a reputation.
Andrews expression turned curious.
You seem to know quite a lot about these women
Π Dylan scratched his head awkwardly, blushing slightly.



Dylan, youre a genius
As they spoke, Serena entered the resort, exuding charm in a high slit dress that accentuated every
curve
Halfway to the entrance, a young man appeared out of nowhere and exchanged a few whispered jokes with her
He made her laugh so hard that she playfully punched him in the arm.
Dylans eyes widened, and he let out a theatrical gasp.
Mr.
Lloyd, this is unbelievable! That guy who just popped up? Thats Michael! Is Michael about to become Harveys stepfather! Andrew could not help rolling his eyes.
Dylan, who was supposed to be focused on their business here, had turned into a walking tabloid.
Nonetheless, even he could not deny the strange dynamic between Serena and Michael, whose flirtatious gestures and lingering touches screamed anything but platonic
Rich people are a mess, Andrew muttered under his breath, shaking his head.
Before he could say more, another luxury car pulled up
The door opened, revealing a striking woman in a flowing white dress.
Andrew stiffened
Dylan, lets go.

Now
However, it was too late.
The woman spotted him and quickly walked over, lighting up
Andrew, I didnt expect to see you here! her expression Andrews face remained neutral as he turned to her.
Ms.
Stevens, do you need something? Christina opened her mouth to respond, but before she could say a word, the other side of the car opened.
Another woman stepped out, her expression cold and her posture haughty.
With a sharp glance, she sneered.
So, youre the Andrew Lloyd that Christina ke mentioning? She chuckled dryly.noveldrama
Well, III admit, you dont look terrible, but lets be real youre nowhere near good enough for someone like Christina.