The Ashes 291

Chapter 291 Andrew frowned as he glanced at the arrogant woman before him.
Though attractive, her superiority complex was something he could not stand.
Ilan asked in I suppose this is Aspen Stevens from the Bridgefields Stevens family? surprise. Asper smiled condescendingly and replied, Mr.
Garner, Im surprised you know who I am.
I didnt realize my reputation had spread so far into Jayrodale.
Youre indeed well known for both your business acumen and martial arts skills, Dylan said coldly.
However, this isnt Bridgefields its Jayrodale, and such a high profile attitude might not serve you well here
Aspen responded with unwavering confidence, Mr.
Garner, you should worry about yourself first.
I hear South City is about to fall into Mr.
Giordanos hands from the Northern District
She paused before adding, As it happens, I have quite a good relationship with Mr.
Giordano.
If you ask nicely, I might put in a good word for South City.

Dylan scoffed
Who do you think you are? Even with your capabilities, youre still an outsider, and Jayrodales
underground affairs dont need your interference
Aspens eyes turned cold as she mocked, No wonder youve amounted to nothing.
Instead of properly managing South City, youre here defending some kept man.
Dont you think thats beneath your position as South Citys leader? Dylan was furious that this insufferable woman dared disrespect Andrew.
Lets go handle our business
Theres no need to stoop to their level and be as petty, Andrew said calmly.
Dylan laughed, Youre right, Mr.
Lloyd, though that bite did sting
You should know, a bitchs bites hurt the most.
What did you just say ? Aspens face turned ice cold.
Christinas expression changed, and she angrily said, Andrew, dont you think that was going too far? Apologize to Aspen right now, and III make sure she lets this go.

Apologize ? For what? Andrew replied with a wry smile.

If I recall correctly, your dear Aspen was the one who started this, not us.

Christina gritted her teeth and said, Aspen may be outspoken, but she meant no harm.

Do you think its appropriate to speak about a woman that way? Christie, dont waste your breath on such crude, low class people, Aspen interrupted with a cold laugh.

She turned to Andrew and continued, I heard you helped the Steven family by driving Harvey away from the Weller family.

On our way here, Christie couldnt stop singing your praises, and I thought you might have some potential.

She paused before adding, I was even considering that if you proved worthy, Christie getting back together with you wouldnt be such a bad thing.

But now I see youre nothing special- just a manipulative opportunist with a petty heart.

What kind of person I am isnt your concern, Andrew shrugged, And are all you Stevens this brainless? Who told you I wanted to get back together with Christina? Aspen sneered.

Oh, dont you? If you didnt, why did you go to such lengths to get Mr.

Stevens Senior involved? When did I ever approach Mr.

Stevens Senior? Andrew asked with furrowed brows.

Still denying it? Aspen crossed her arms mockingly

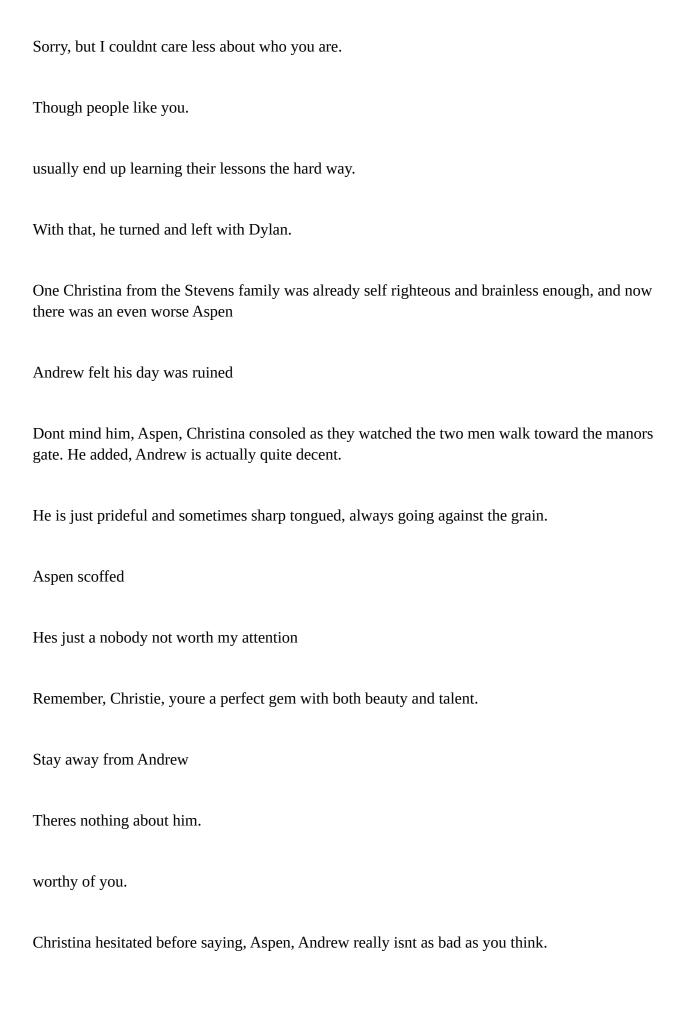
Christie might be too naive to see through your schemes, but Im not so easily fooled.

Chapter 292 Aspen said, Ive just arrived in Jayrodale, but Ive already investigated everything thoroughly You helped Stevens Corporation, and then Mr.

Stevens Senior spoke up for you at the family dinner, trying to get you and Christie back together.

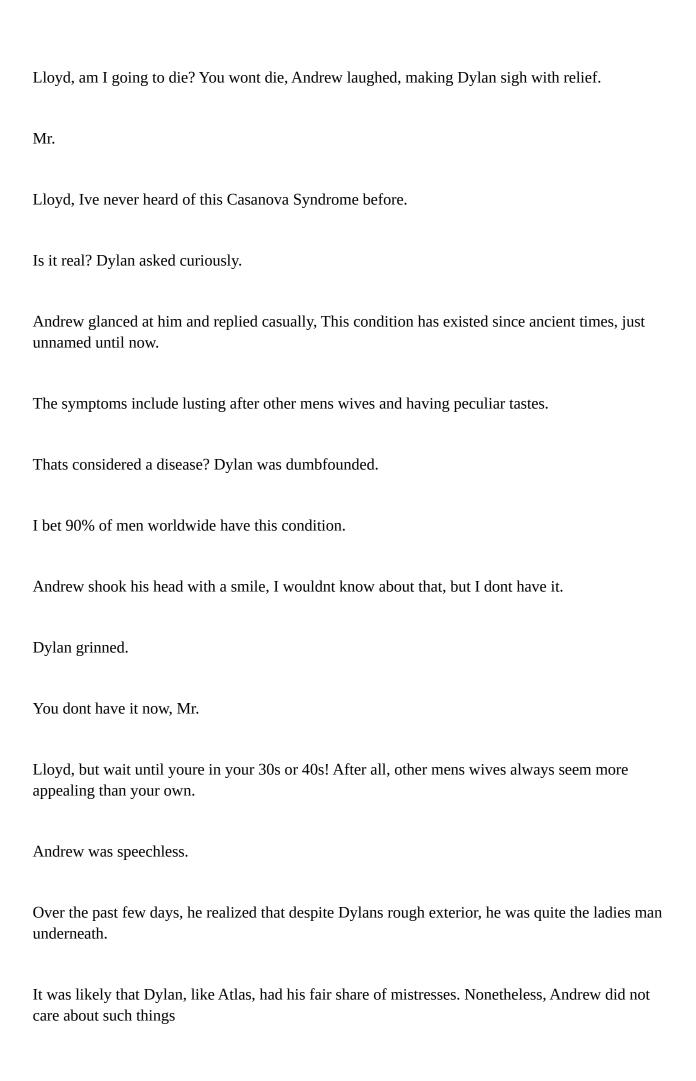
Tell me, is this true or false? The event happened, but I had no prior knowledge of Mr.

Stevens Seniors intentions, Andrew replied coldly.
Excuses! Aspen laughed mockingly
The truth is clear you used your favor to manipulate Mr.
Stevens Senior into speaking up for you, all to get back with Christie.
Your help to the family wasnt genuine; you had ulterior motives: Christie would be blind to choose someone like you
Andrew shook his head and clapped sarcastically.
Aspen, though this is our first meeting, I must say Im truly impressed with you.
What? Impressed that I exposed your true colors? Aspen sneered
Andrew smiled.
Yes, genuinely impressed! I never thought Id meet someone as idiotic as you.
Its truly rare I cant help but be impressed.
Aspen fumed.
Andrew, dont think Christies presence will stop me from teaching you a lesson.
You should ask around about who Aspen from Bridgefields Stevens family really is.
Andrew shrugged



Aspen retorted dismissively, Im never wrong about people, and I can tell that man is absolutely worthless.
Besides, with your qualities, you could have any good man.
Once we deal with that scoundrel from the Weller family, III introduce you to some proper gentlemen from Bridgefields or Blumedale
Christina shook her head and replied, Im not interested in relationships right now.
Maybe later.
Aspen smiled.
Thats fine, I wont pressure you
Come on, Ill introduce you to Natasha Vostokoff, the queen of West End
She invited me as soon as I arrived in Jayrodale.
This Black Widow is well informed, and it seems she wants to connect with our Bridgefields mair family through me
Christina was a little uneasy.
Maybe we shouldnt, Aspen.
Madam Vostokoff is the most powerful woman in Jayrodale.
Would she even acknowledge me? Aspen declared proudly, Dont worry, Natasha wouldnt dare refuse
me

I plan to establish connections with all major powers in Jayrodale.
With me here, the Weller family wont cause any trouble.
Chapter 293 The gala officially began at six in the evening.
Since Andrew and Dylan were not there to dance, they found a spot to sit down and sample the gourmet offerings while keeping an eye on Finley and Yvonnes movements.
The West End gala attracted Jayrodales elite society, and the dining area showcased nothing
but premium delicacies.
There are some real beauties here, like that Serena, Dylan said admiringly.
I wouldnt mind getting to know such a sultry woman.
Andrew gave him an odd look and said, Youre sick youve got the Casanova Syndrome.
Mr.
Lloyd, is this Casanova Syndrome serious? Dylan asked anxiously, knowing that Andrew was a brilliant physician whose diagnoses were never to be taken lightly
Andrew peeled a lobster tail, popped it in his mouth, and shook his head.
This condition is usually incurable
Incurable ? Dylans face turned pale.
Mr.



It would have been more surprising if Dylan, as a local power player, was completely pure and innocent. My apologies for keeping everyone waiting, Natasha announced as she made her grand entrance.

Please, enjoy yourselves! She was dressed elegantly in a designer evening gown that was both alluring and sophisticated

All eyes were immediately drawn to her, particularly her curves, though she maintained an air of dignified aloofness befitting the queen of West End, Madam Vostokoff, may I have the honor of your first dance? Finley approached her with a smile.

Natasha batted her eyelashes and replied with a sile, Mr.

Moore, dont you have Ms.

Puller as your partner? Wouldnt she be upset if you asked a widow like me to dance? Finley replied shanielessly, No worries, I can dance with you first, then with her

Though still smiling, Natasha declined, Although you look quite dashing tonight, Mr.

Moore, 1 already have another dance partner in mind.

Finleys grin turned mischievous

Who else here is worthy of dancing with you besides me? Surely you must be joking? Before Natasha could respond, several voices chimed in to flatter Finley

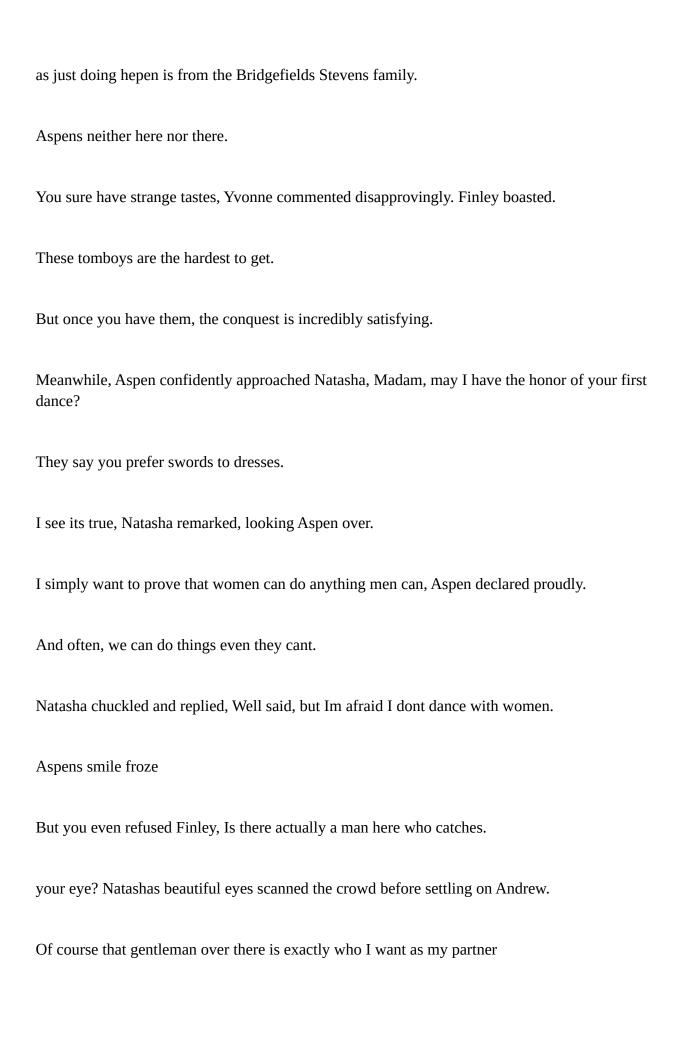
Thats right! No one is more qualified to dance with Madam Vostokoff tonight than Mr.

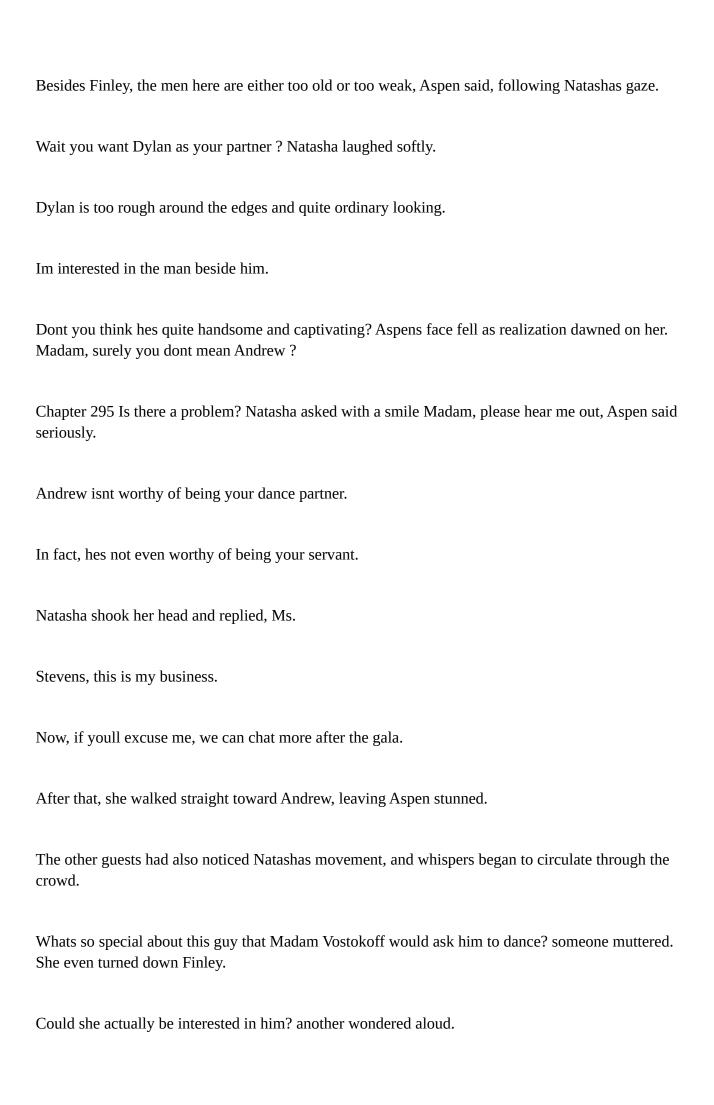
Moore.

Finley is young, wealthy, and skilled in martial arts not to mention his extraordinary background.

Hes the only perfect match to be Madam Vostokoffs partner! Madam Vostokoff is a queen in her own right, and Mr.
Moore is a dashing prince
Together, theyd be nothing short of perfection! Dylan spat out his drink and muttered, These bootlickers really have no shame or principles when it comes to sucking up to Finley.
Andrew chuckled, noting how many people were eager to curry favor with Finley.
Chapter 294 It was clear that Natasha did not want Finley touching her, but he basked in the attention, beaming as he said, Madam, youve heard everyones requests
Since they all want to see us dance, how can you refuse? Natasha frowned slightly.
Finley was annoying as a persistent pest, but she worried that refusing him outright in front of everyone might cause a scene
Just then, a female voice cut through the tension.
If Madam Vostokoff doesnt want to dance with Mr.
Moore, shouldnt a true gentleman step back rather than put her in an awkward position? Who do you think you are to meddle in my affairs? Finley turned with displeasure.
Aspen smiled, looking sharp in her tailored suit.
Mr.
Moore, you seem quite temperamental
Im Aspen from the Bridgefields Stevens family, Finley nodded thoughtfully and said, Ah, Ms. Stevens.

Dont tell me youre also vying to be Madam Vostokoffs dance partner? And why not? Aspen lifted her chin proudly.
Who says Madam Vostokoffs partner has to be male? In my eyes, we women are every bit as capable
as men.
Finley laughed.
I like a feisty woman
Anyway, if you want to dance with Madam Vostokoff, III graciously step aside.
Though such a beauty shouldnt always dress like a man perhaps we could get to know each other better sometime? Sure, III treat you to dinner someday, Aspen replied with a smile.
Finley returned to Yvonnes side, wrapping an arm around her waist.
Did you miss me? Couldnt wait any longer? Youre such a player! Yvonne pinched him hard as they began dancing
She purred, First, you get me hot and bothered, then you go after Madam Vostokoff.
And now that Aspen girl.
Have you set your sights on her too? Finley chuckled in her ear as they danced, Shes quite famous.
I was just doing her a favor.
But dont worry
Ill have her in my bed soon enough





Thats no ordinary guy thats Andrew Lloyd, and rumor has it that he doesnt even bow down to Finley or Atlas! someone explained.

The crowd buzzed with gossip, especially the men who watched jealousy as Natasha smiled at Andrew like a lovesick teenager.

Finley squeezed Yvonnes bottom roughly as they danced, grinding his teeth in anger.

I cant believe that bitch is interested in Andrew.

What does that gold digger have that I dont? Finley, whats wrong with you? Yvonne snapped in pain. Instead of sulking here, why dont you teach that pretty boy a lesson? If youre so tough, go slap him around! Finley was at a loss for words.

He wanted to deal with Andrew, but this was Natashas territory, and with Dylan present, he did not dare make a move alone.

Aspen returned to Christinas side with an icy expression.

Christina noticed her foul mood and asked, Aspen, whats wrong ? Aspen laughed coldly, Did you see that, Christie ? Madam Vostokoff actually invited that gold- digger Andrew to dance.

He must have some tricks up his sleeve to even seduce the Black Widow.

What? Madam Vostokoff invited Andrew to dance with her? Thats impossible! Christina exclaimed in disbelief.

Andrews friendship with Lauren and Francesca had already surprised her, but the idea of him catching the eye of Natasha, the queen of West End, seemed unthinkable.

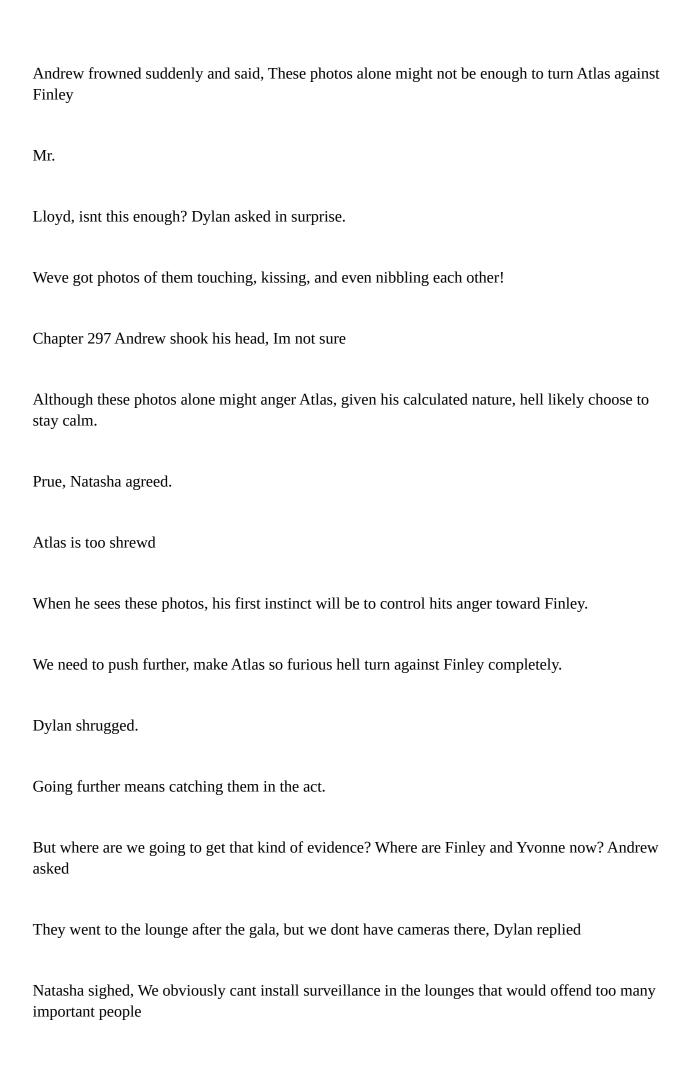
Aspen took a drink of water to calm her irritation Go see for yourself theyre out on the lawn, wrapped up in each other.

I was hoping to discuss important matters with Natasha, but Andrew ruined everything.

Ch	nristina hurried out to the lawn and saw Natasha and Andrew slow dancing together.
Na	atasha was giggling like a schoolgirl in Andrews arms.
	he really that appealing to women? Christina mumbled, feeling an uncomfortable twinge in her eart.
	napter 296 Christina could not understand how Andrew had such an effect on these exceptional omen
	rst Lauren, then Francesca, and now someone even more remarkable Natasha, the powerful idow who ruled West End
Re	eturning to the lounge, she said to Aspen, Aspen, lets just head home.
As	spen shook her head.
No	ot yet, Christie.
Yo	ou need to learn to handle these situations, even if you dont like them.
I d	dont want to breathe the same air as Andrew, Christina replied coldly
	hats wrong? Does it bother you that this worthless gold digger is suddenly so successful? Aspen ked with a knowing smile
Ch	nristina responded stiffly, If he can climb the social ladder through women, thats his talent.
It o	doesnt bother me.
As	spen said seriously.

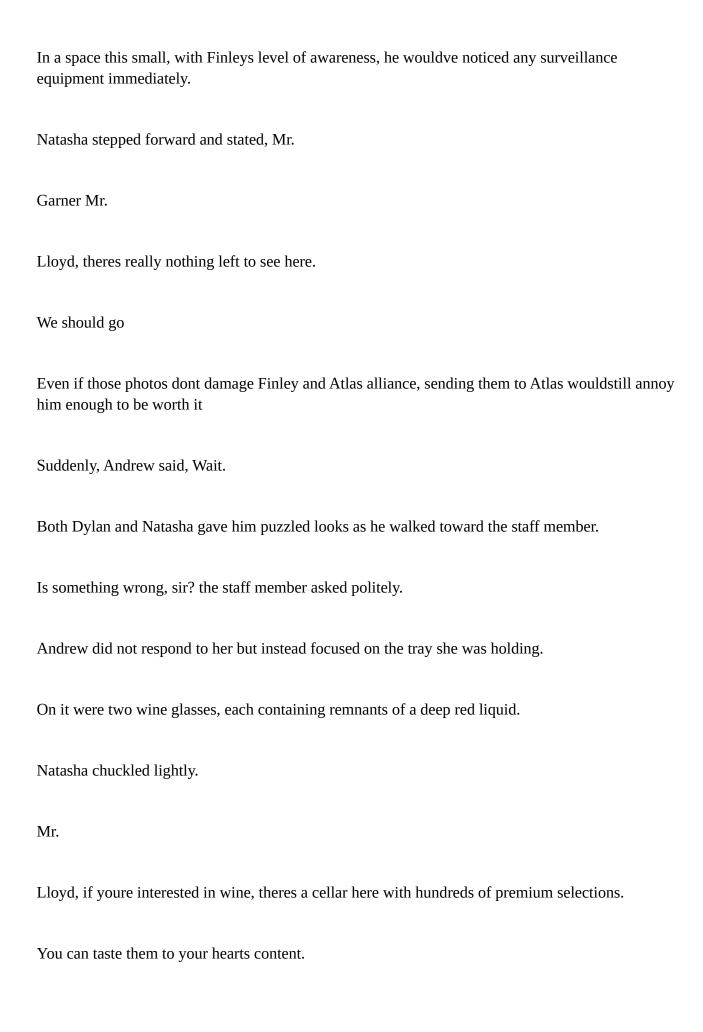
No, Christie, youre wrong.
Hes not moving up his status he simply doesnt know his place.
Once powerful women like Madam Vostokoff get bored with this nobody, theyll kick him fp the curb. Ive seen it happen countless times.
Out on the lawn, Andrew found the woman before him increasingly troublesome
Whenever he tried to leave, Natasha threatened, If you leave, you can forget about that rare medicine I promised to get you.
Madam Vostokoff, surely youre not really wasting your time on me? Andrew asked wearily.
This isnt a waste of time.
Im genuinely interested in you, Natasha snapped.
If you work for me in West End, Ill give you not just the medicine, but myself as well.
Hows that? Im not interested.
Andrew shook his head.
Natasha laughed angrily, Arent you afraid of making me angry by constantly rejecting me? Even if youre angry, I cant help that.
I cant help that.
Andrew remained unmoved
Antonio told me yesterday that you were playing hard to get, Natasha said with a bitter laugh.

She huffed and added, But now I see you genuinely arent interested in me. Youre such an arrogant man! Do you know how many men are lined up just to get into my bed? Well, Im definitely not one of them, Andrew said with a smirk. Natasha gritted her teeth and said, Okay, you are stubborn, but Im not a person without a temper. The more I cant get something, the more I want to get it. She added, Anyway, you should finish this dance with me. Meanwhile, Dylan and the others can record more of Finley and Yvonnes intimate actions. Andrew nodded. If thats the reason, sure. The gala continued until 10 p.m. before finally ending Natasha remained furious throughout, unable to believe Andrew had rejected her. She vowed to teach this ungrateful bastard a lesson later. Nonetheless, their plan proved to be a success, as they managed to capture plenty of intimate photos of Finley and Yvonne. Dylan laughed, saying, I wonder what Atlas will think when he sees these photos on his desk tomorrow. That perverted Finley is even lusting after his friends woman. How disgusting, Natasha remarked disdainfully as she flipped through the photos.

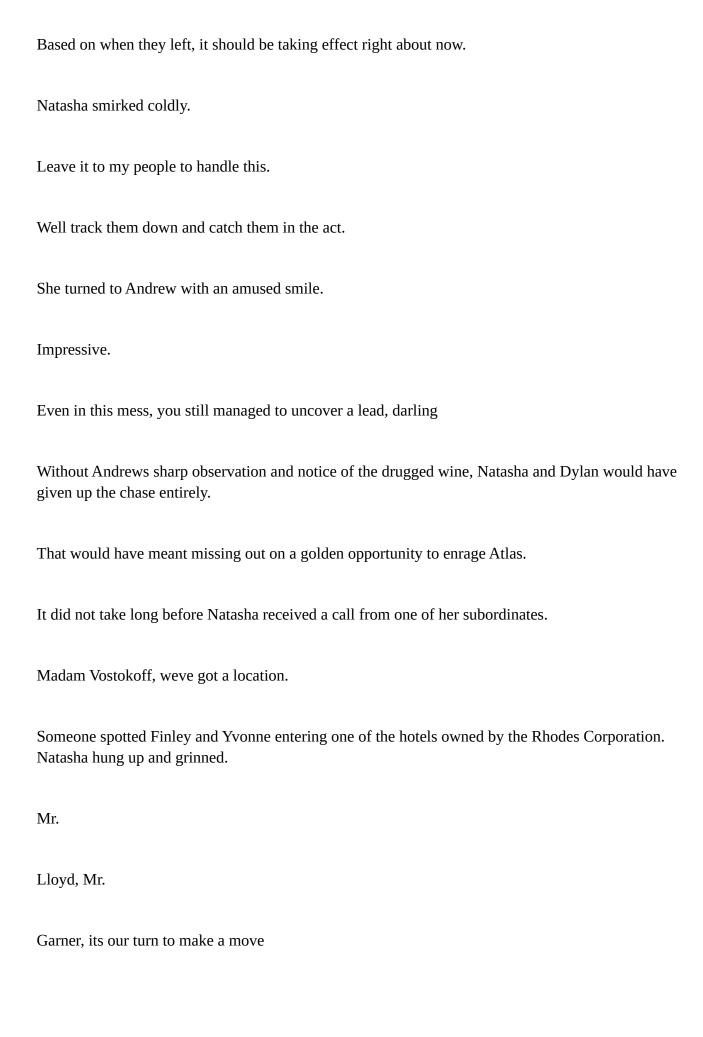




Lloyd wants to show off in front of Madam Vostokoff, he should bring something substantial.
These amateur tricks just show your inexperience
Natasha, your subordinate seems to have a death wish, Dylan said grimly.
Who does this old fool think he is to disrespect Mr.
Lloyd? Mr.
Lloyd, I apologize for my subordinates behavior, Natasha said sincerely.
Lets check Finleys lounge, Andrew suggested, waving off the apology.
Natasha hesitated for a moment.
Theyre already gone.
Whats the point of looking now? Before long, the three of them arrived at one of the villas guest lounges
Andrew pushed the door open, revealing a staff member inside, tidying up the room.
Dylan glanced around and commented, This is the room where Finley and Yvonne were staying earlier.
If we had set up a camera here beforehand, we mightve captured something spicy. Andrew shook his head.
Thats unrealistic



Andrew remained silent.
Then, he picked up the two glasses and held them up to his nose
He sniffed them carefully, his expression growing serious as he exclaimed, Cantharides! Natashas smile froze
Cantharides ? Isnt that a potent aphrodisiac ? Dylans face turned pale.
Mr.
Lloyd, are you saying this wine had cantharides in it?
Chaptér 298 Andrew set down the glasses and nodded to them both.
Both glasses contain traces of the drug.
Since Finley and Yvonne used this lounge, s safe to assume they both consumed it.
So, Finley drugged Yvonne, Natasha blurted out.
Which means he wanted to He wanted to sleep with her, Dylan cut in eagerly.
Everything before was just an act.
He secretly drugged Yvonne, and they might be in the middle of it right now! Natashas face lit up with excitement.
Thats got to be it! That sly bastard Finley really knows how to play dirty.
Quick, we need to find out where Finley and Yvonne went, Andrew urged. The drug acts fast.



The three of them quickly piled into the car and headed toward the hotel.
However, as they reached the gates of the villa, Aspen and Christina stepped in front of Natashas car, blocking the way.
Ms.
Vostokoff, wed like to have another word with you, Aspen said with a calm, confident smile.
The Stevens family of Bridgefields is seeking a high level partner in Jayrodale.
I imagine thats something youd be interested in Aspen carried herself with the poise of someone born to command attention
As the pride of the Stevens family, she considered herself a woman destined to achieve greater things than most men ever could.
To her, men like Andrew were hardly worth a second glance.
However, Natashas patience was already wearing thin.
Ms.
Stevens, I have urgent matters to attend to.
Lets talk another time
Completely oblivious to Natashas annoyance, Aspen continued to block the road with an air of superiority
She continued, What could be more important than partnering with the Stevens family? Lets handle this

Of course, Ill need you to dismiss a certain... unnecessary individual

Por instance, that pretty boy beside you who seems to be good for nothing more than entertaining Women

As she spoke, Aspen cast a dismissive glance at Andrew, tilting her chin high.

Her expression seemed to say, You may have your moment of favor, but in the presence of someone like me, youre still a nobody.

However, Natashas expression turned icy as she snapped, Aspen, cant you read the room? I told you I have something to do, and here you are, still standing in the middle of the road like an idiot.

She mocked, Looks like the Stevens familys golden girl has more than a few screws loose.

Aspens smug smile froze, and even Christina, who stood beside her, looked utterly humiliated. Natashas voice dropped to a cutting tone.

And one more thing, Aspen listen carefully

Andrew is my chosen man, and if you dare insult him or look down on him again, III slap your smug face so hard youll be crying all the way back to Bridgefields.

Now get out of my way! The car roared to life and sped off, leaving a trail of exhaust fumes.

The cloud of smoke hit Aspen square in the face, her once pristine complexion turning shades of red and white from sheer frustration.

For a moment, Aspens mind went blank.

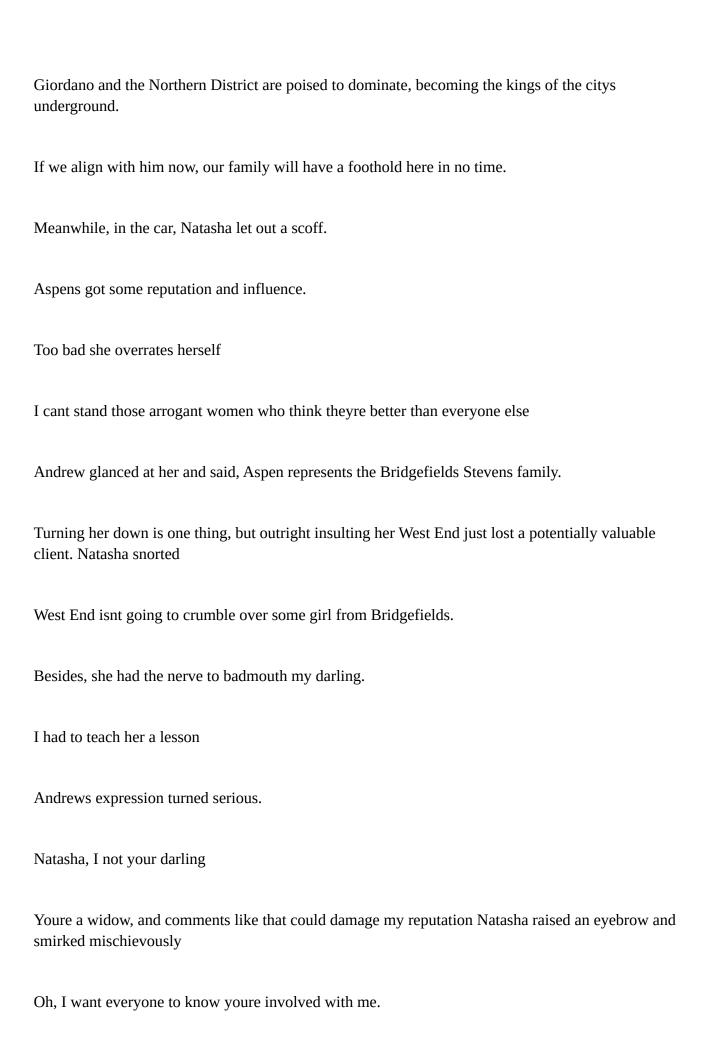
Natasha, the formidable woman of West End, had just publicly berated her for Andrew, of all people Moreover, it was not just any scolding Natasha had chosen him over her, Aspen Stevens, the pride of the Bridgefields Stevens family! Chapter 299 I cant believe a powerful woman like Madam Vostokoff would lose her head over a worthless man How disappointing, Aspen muttered, finally suppressing her humiliation and anger. Come on, Christie If she doesnt recognize our value, well go to Mr. Giordano in the Northern District, she declared. Aspen, there are many ways to expand our familys business into Jayrodale, Christina said worriedly. I dont think you need to deal with underground figures like them. Their methods are often questionable, and Im concerned Aspen interrupted with a dismissive laugh, I know what youre worried about, Christie. Youre afraid Im too naïve and might get played by them, right? Dont underestimate me.

Christina frowned slightly, her instincts telling her that her cousin from the main family was being too hasty

Just watch soon, the two of us will make such a name for ourselves in Jayrodale that no one will

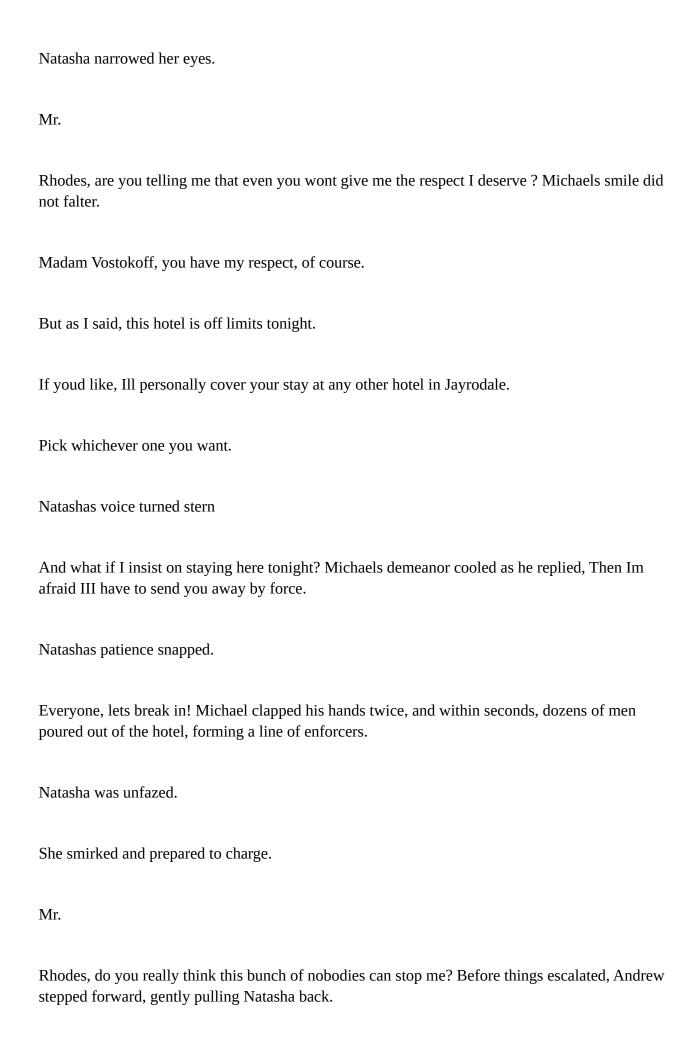
dare look down on us.

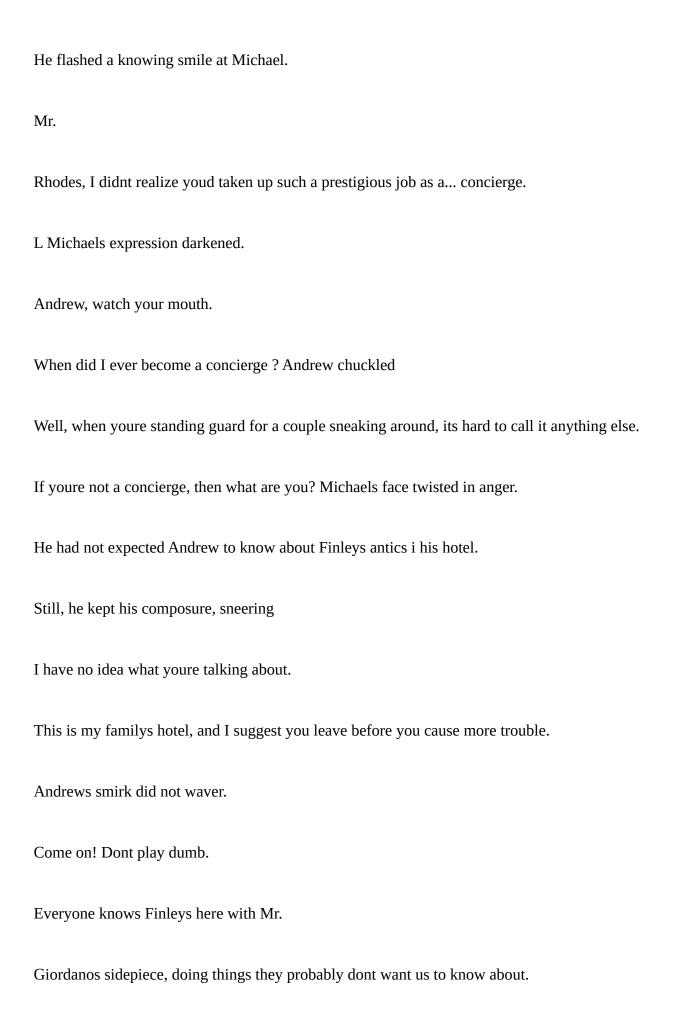
Nonetheless, given Aspens headstrong nature, which was even more assertive than most men, she decided to keep her thoughts to herself.
Christie, you saw how your ex has won Natashas favor, Aspen remarked with a mocking smile. Christinas voice turned cold.
Hes made his choices.
It has nothing to do with me.
Aspen said in a playful tone, The underground forces in Jayrodale are shifting.
Mr.
Giordano from the Northern District and Mr.
Moore from Hidden Dragons will emerge victorious
Madam Vostokoff will regret rejecting our alliance, and when she falls, Andrew will suffer the consequences.
Christina hesitated for a moment before advising Aspen, I really think you should avoid getting involved with people like Mr.
Giordano
Aspen waved her hand confidently.
Relax, Christie.
Before I even set foot in Jayrodale, I studied everything about its power dynamics.
Mr.



Youve been rejecting me over and over, but once the rumors spread, lets see how you handle it. 10 Andrews face darkened slightly, but he chose not to argue with her. After all, while Natasha could be overbearing, she had never truly crossed the line with him. He wanted to her place but could not find a good enough reason to make a move. put her in Before long, the car came to a stop, and Andrew stepped out, looking at an upscale hotel before him. Chapter 300 Members of West End were already negotiating with the hotels security staff at the entrance However, the hotels security guards were clearly unfazed by West Ends reputation and blocked the entrance without hesitation Dylans face darkened, and he stepped forward, ready to force their way in Andrew quickly stopped him, saying, Dont make a scene! Dylan argued, Mr. Lloyd, if we dont get in now, Finley might be slipping away soon! Andrew shook his head. Relax, the effects of cantharides last at least half a day Natasha chimed in, This hotel belongs to the Rhodes family, and West End has a decent relationship with them. Let me try. She approached the entrance with a cold expression.

Move aside
Im Natasha Vostokoff from West End
The guards exchanged uneasy glances, clearly intimidated by her commanding presence.
One of them finally mustered the courage to say, Madam Vostokoff, the hotel has been reserved for the night.
Mr.
Rhodes has ordered that no one is allowed to enter or disturb our special guests.
Natasha raised an eyebrow, a sly smile playing on her lips.
Oh? Who has the kind of pull to book out an entire hotel? Id love to meet them.
The guard firmly replied, Im sorry, Madam Vostokoff, but their identity is confidential. We cant disclose that information.
Natashas smile vanished as her tone turned icy
And what if I decide to go in anyway? Are you going to stop me? The guards stiffened and took a collective step back but remained firm, blocking the entrance.
Madam Vostokoff, please, theres no need to get angry.
A smooth voice broke the tension as Michael strode out of the hotel with a calm, confident air.
My apologies, but the hotel really is unfavailable tonight
We have special guests, and it wouldnt be appropriate to disturb them.





Michael exploded
Andrew, get out of here right now! Or else dont blame me if my men dont hold back.
Natasha stepped forward, her voice like ice.
If your men even think about laying a hand on Andrew, theyll regret it.
Michael was seething with rage.
Even Natasha, a figure he had always respected, was defending Andrew.
He could not help but wonder what kind of spell this freeloader cast to make these powerful women so
fiercely loyal to him