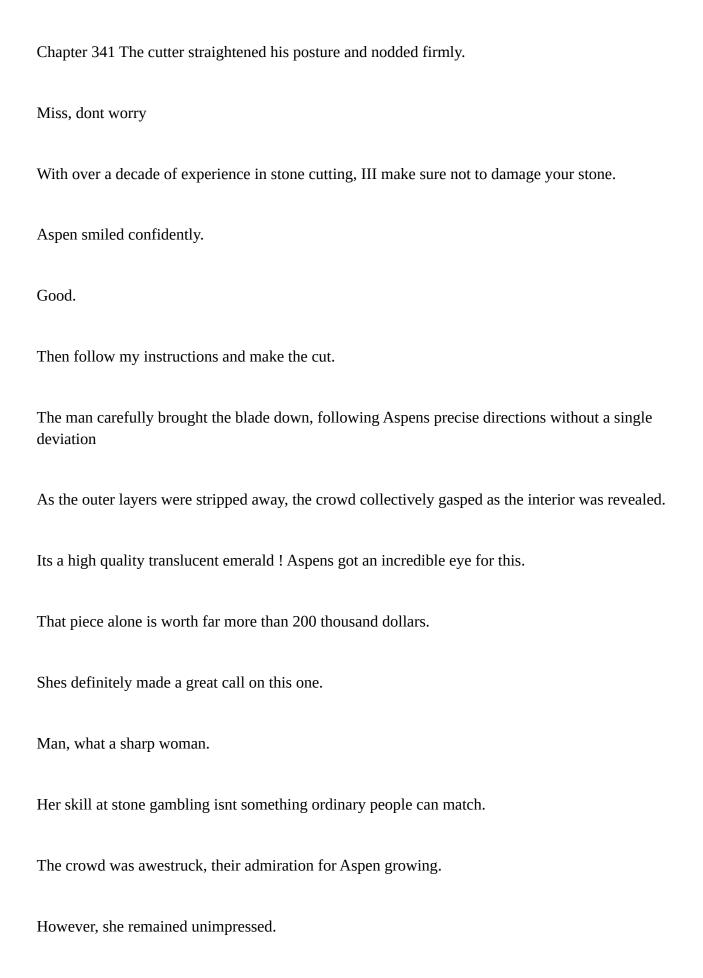
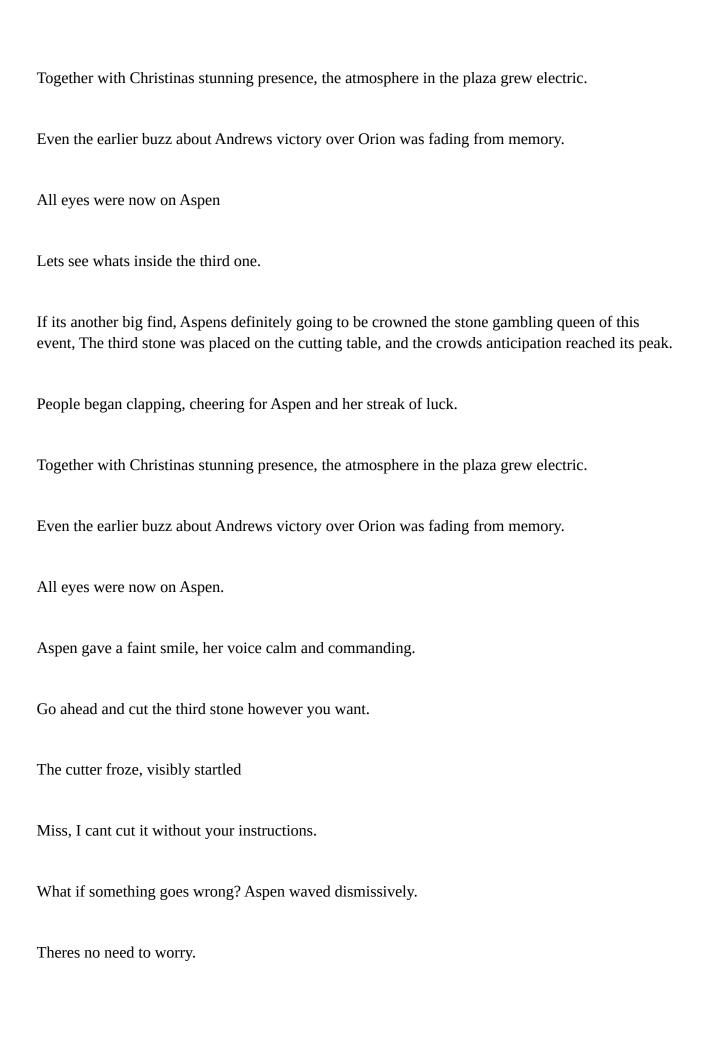
## The Ashes 341



In her mind, this was only a warm up. Cut this one next, Aspeh instructed, pointing to another stone. And those three over there -open them all One after another, she directed the cutting of three additional stones, each with a price tag totaling over a million dollars The audacity of her moves left the spectators in stunned silence. Suddenly, all the attention in the plaza turned to Aspen. People flocked to her side, their excitement palpable What a bold play! She doesnt hold back, someone murmured, awe clear in their voice. Most stone gamblers would spend hours examining a single stone, analyzing it from every angle. But Aspen? She seemed to pick stones on a whim as if she barely cared. Shes just showing off, scoffed a young man from the crowd. I bet those next three stones wont amount to anything. If she strikes it big again, III kneel and drink the water she washes her feet with! The cutter glanced at Aspen, recognizing her as a serious player He knew he could not afford to make any mistakes. People like her could easily attract the attention of someone as powerful as Silas, the head of Radiant Group

Watching the scene unfold, Christina could not help but feel anxious. Aspen, I dont really understand stone gambling, but isnt cutting three stones at once a bit too risky? Aspen laughed lightly, brushing off the concern. Relax, Christie Trust me I have the skill and the eye for this. Cutting three stones is nothing Her gaze swept across the crowd, now numbering in the thousands, all hanging on her move Aspen nodded subtly to herself. every This was exactly what she wanted an audience to witness Andrews impending humiliation. She was determined to crush his earlier success and make sure no one remembered his name. The cutter worked diligently, and soon, the second stone was revealed. Gasps erupted again. Its the white opal with a pearlescent sheen! Shes hit the jackpot again! Lets see whats inside the third one. If Its another big find, Aspens definitely going to be crowned the stone gambling queen of this event The third stone was placed on the cutting table, and the crowds anticipation reached its peak. People began clapping, cheering for Aspen and her streak of luck.



I already know whats inside this stone.
Her casual confidence left the crowd reeling
Did she just say she knows whats inside? Does she have x ray vision? How else could she see through
the stones outer layers? The crowd buzzed with disbelief and excitement.
Chapter 342 Wow, Aspen truly lives up to her name as Bridgefields Stevens familys golden girl. Shes got more guts and precision than most men out here Shes in a league of her own no one in Jayrodale could match her confidence and skill in this game.
Aspens boldness and undeniable charm captured everyones attention.
Some men could not help but look at her longingly, practically ready to bow down at her feet.
She scanned the area with a sharp gaze but did not see Andrew anywhere.
She smirked and mumbled, Looks like someone finally realized theyre out of their depth.
He mustve decided to hide rather than embarrass himself in front of me.
The master gem cutter began working on the third gemstone
With years of experience behind him, he carefully shaved away the outer layers without making any bold
cuts
Two thirds of the stone was removed, yet nothing remarkable was revealed.
A tense silence fell over the crowd.

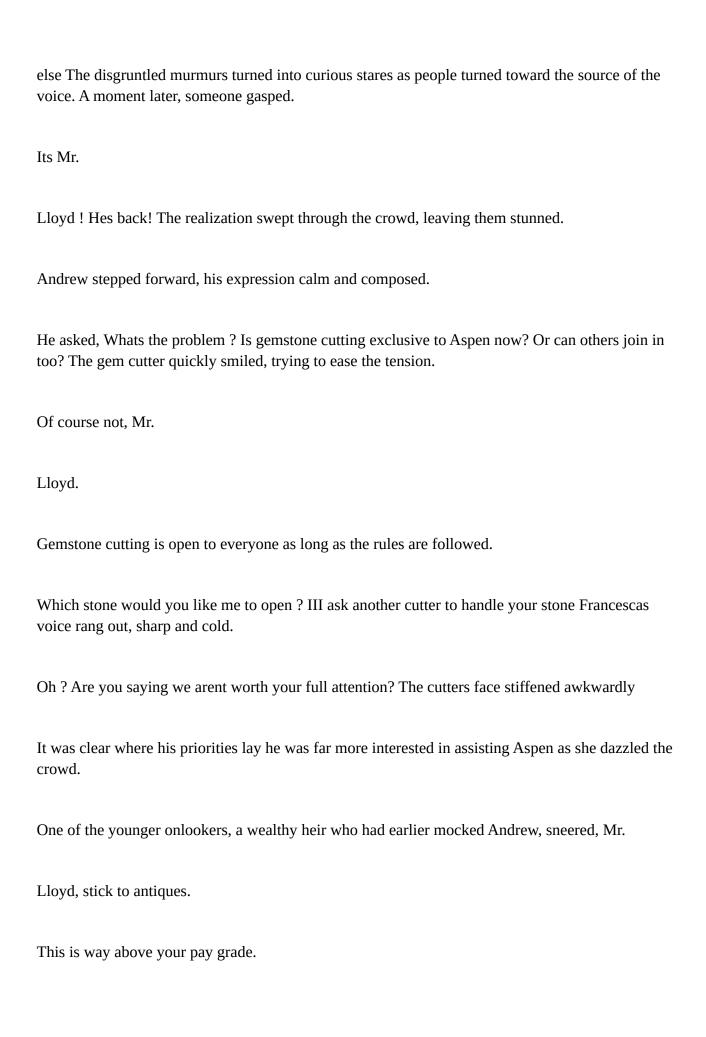
Could Aspen actually fail this time? Even so, her calm and confident expression did not waver for a moment. The cutter pressed on, and finally, the stone split open completely. At its core was a small, dazzling ruby, a deep crimson color that seemed to glow under the sunlight. Gasps echoed through the crowd. Unbelievable! Its a blood ruby, and one of the finest grades Ive ever seen! It might be small, but its value easily exceeds three million dollars. This womans skills are unreal! Shes not gambling shes practically seeing through the stone!! With all three gemstones yielding exceptional treasures, Aspens reputation skyrocketed. The crowd roared in approval, hailing her as a legend. The gem cutter wiped the sweat from his brow and said with a respectful smile, Ms. Stevens, the combined value of these stones exceeds ten million dollars. Congratulations! In all my years, Ive never worked with someone as extraordinary as you. Praise poured in from every direction, but Aspens smile remained composed. To her, this was just another showcase of her abilities. Christinas eyes sparkled with admiration. Aspen, youre absolutely incredible. Aspen smiled faintly. Christie, youll need to pick this up too.

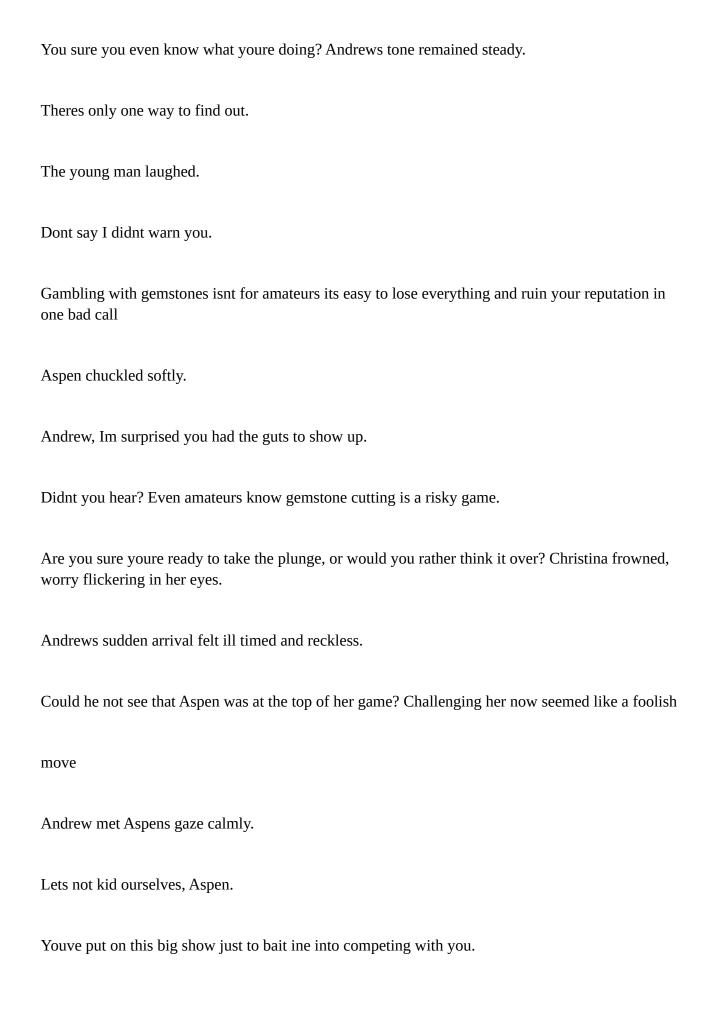
With your intelligence, it wont take you long to master.
Her gaze swept over the crowd again
As for Andrew, I wonder if hes hiding in shame or has already run off completely, too embarrassed to show his face
Christina smirked
He probably doesnt have the guts to come back.
Aspen, youve got the whole crowd on your side now.
If Andrew dared to show up, hed only make a fool of himself.
Aspen chuckled coldly.
I warned him before Id crush his arrogance.
It seems he finally realized hes no match for me and took the cowards way out.
Christina nodded.
Theres no point even mentioning him.
Andrews win before was just luck.
When it comes to real talent, hes not even in the same league as you, Aspen
Aspens dominance over the gemstone event left no doubt no one dared to challenge her, alone Andrew.

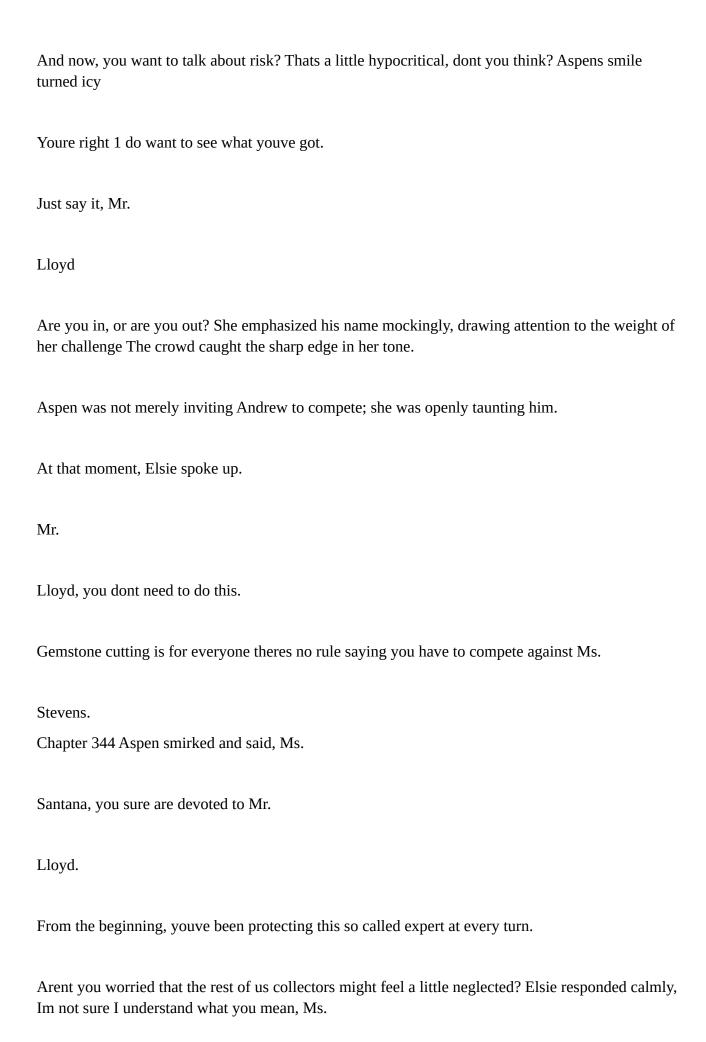
let Christina found the situation almost laughable Earlier, Andrew had strutted around, forcing others to bow to him with his smug attitude And now? The once bold Andrew had vanished, avoiding Aspens commanding presence with his tail tucked between his legs. Chapter 343 Its a shame theres no real competition, Aspen said lazily, stifling a yawn. Lets open two more stones for fun, and then well head out. She lifted a finger, casually signaling the gem cutter to begin again. Her every movement captivated the crowd, who watched eagerly, anticipating another jaw dropping display of her talent. Before the cutter could start, a calm but distinct voice cut through the chatter. Excuse me, could you help me cut this stone? Though the voice was not particularly loud, it seemed to pierce through the noise, drawing everyones attention. Instantly, the crowd erupted in irritation. Whos this clown? Cant they see Ms. Stevens is about to make her move? Ms. Stevens is playing at the highest level why waste time with someone else cutting a stone thats probably worthless? Whoever it is, they need to leave.

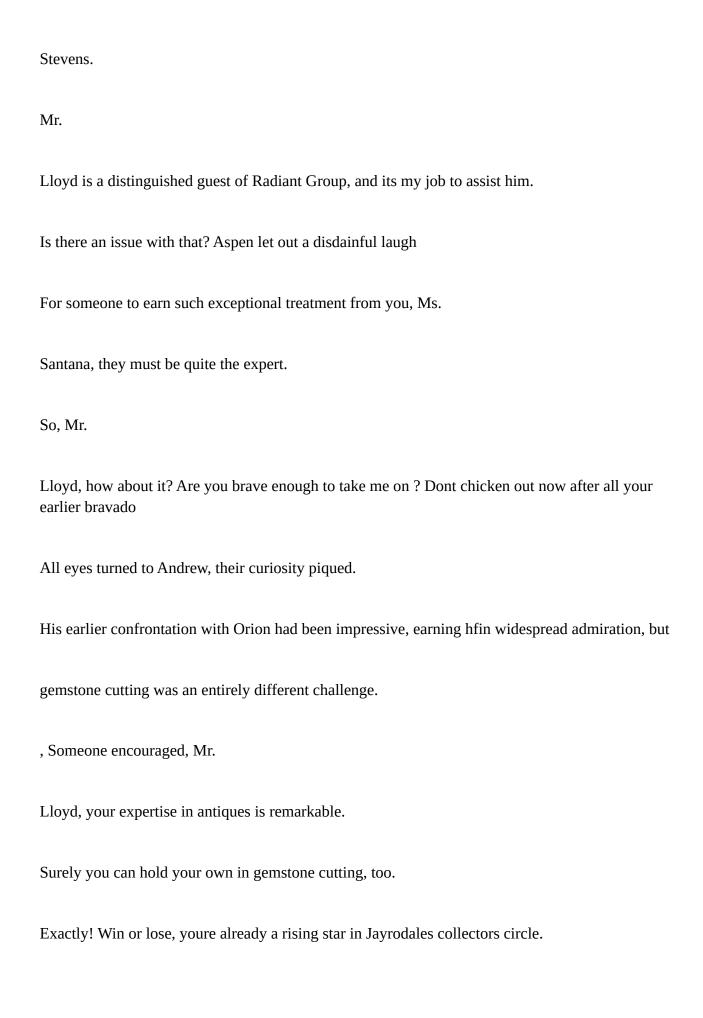
Stevens, and no one should get in the way.

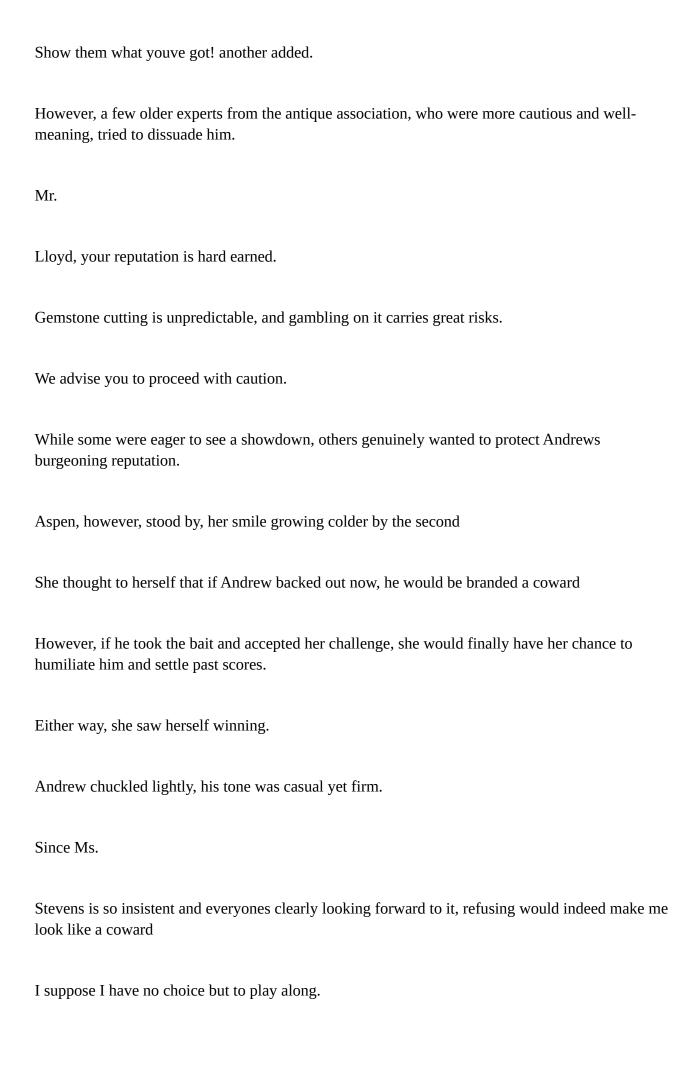
Todays show belongs to Ms.











Aspens smile froze for a moment as she processed his reply. Was he really this fearless or just foolish? Christina shook her head in exasperation. Andrew, cant you see shes goading you? This is exactly what she wants! Elsie, looking anxious, pleaded, Mr. Lloyd, gemstone cutting is far too uncertain Theres not need to engage with Aspen she clearly came prepared, and it wouldnt be a fair match, Andrew smiled reassuringly. Dont worry If anything, Im afraid it might not be fair for her. Elsie stood stunned. Did he really mean what hest sald? Could he truly be that confident? Francesca, torn between excitement and concern chimed in, Andrew, if things go south, promise me well stop before its too late. Andrews eyes gleamed coldly as he replied, Id love to lose, but unfortunately, my skill wont allow it. Aspens voice rang out sharply, cutting through the murmurs. Andrew, Im sure you know how this works Normally, gemstone cutting is about buying a raw stone and gambling, on whether it holds anything valuable inside But our match will be different. Well see who can extract the most valuable and highest quality stone.

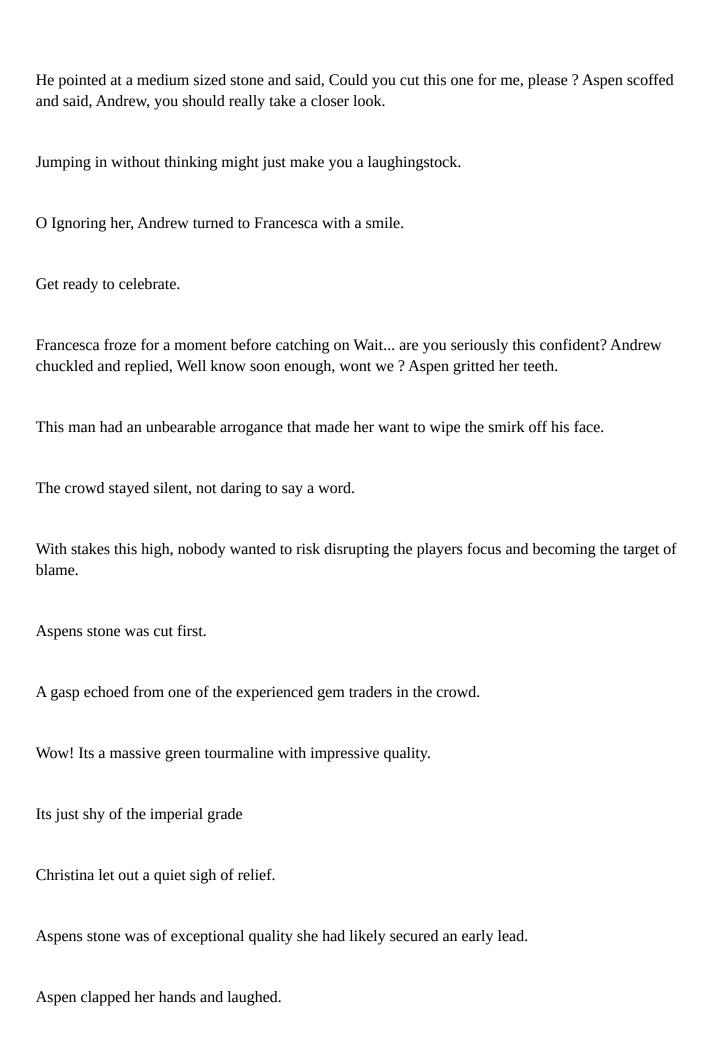
III show you what it truly means to be a master and the kind of precision thats almost magical. Her words drew loud cheers from the crowd, many already betting on Aspen to win. Andrews presence was seen by some as nothing more than a foll to highlight her brilliance. All eyes were now on the two of them, as the atmosphere buzzed with anticipation. need to engage with Aspen she clearly came prepared, and it wouldnt be a fair match. Andrew smiled reassuringly. Dont worry. If anything, Im afraid it might not be fair for her. Elsie stood stunned. Did he really mean what he just said? Could he truly be that confident? Francesca, torn between excitement and concern chimed in, Andrew, if things go south, promise me well stop before its too late. Andrews eyes gleamed coldly as he replied, Id love to lose, but unfortunately, my skill wont allow it. Aspens voice rang out sharply, cutting through the murmurs. Andrew, Im sure you know how this works Normally, gemstone cutting is about buying a raw stone and gambling on whether it holds anything valuable inside But our match will be different. Well see who can extract the most valuable and highest quality stone

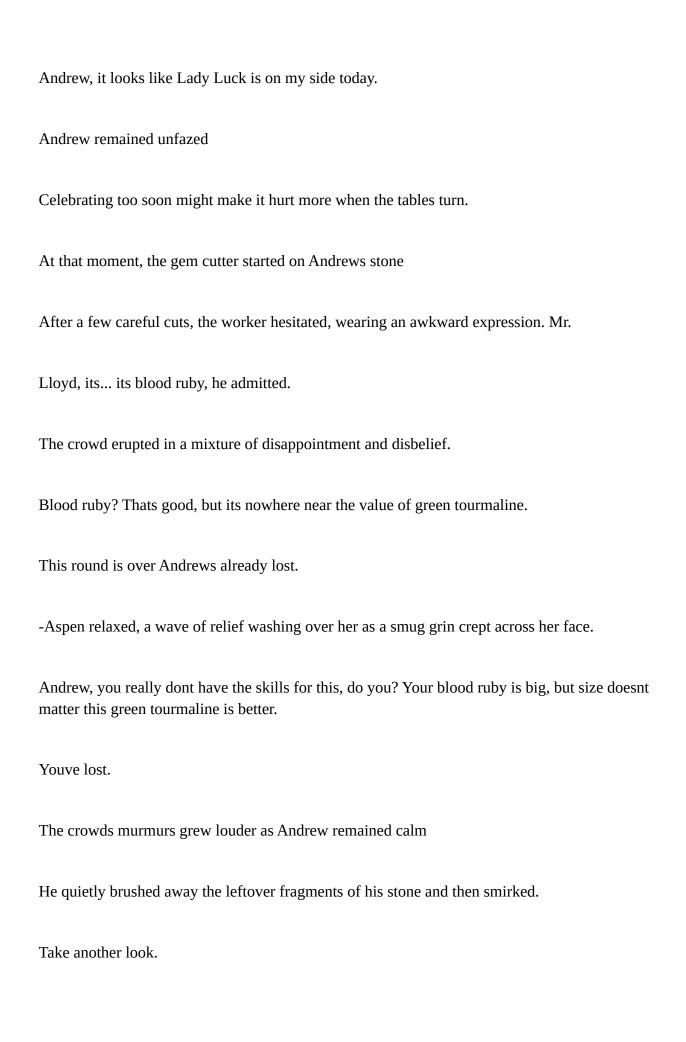
III show you what it truly means to be a master and the kind of precision thats almost magical. Her words drew loud cheers from the crowd, many already betting on Aspen to win. Andrews presence was seen by some as nothing more than a foil to highlight her brilliance. All eyes were now on the two of them, as the atmosphere buzzed with anticipation. Chapter 345 Andrew spoke calmly, his tone steady but cutting Aspen, theres nothing wrong with a woman being proud and confident. As long as she has the right to be proud, thats fine. But if a woman is arrogant and foolish on top of it, shes bound to learn some painful lessons. Aspen sneered, glancing sideways at Christina Christie, did you hear what this man just said? He claims hes going to teach me a painful lesson Honestly, with an ex like that, I cant blame you for kicking him to the curb. If you hadnt, I wouldve stepped in to help straighten him out myself. Christinas face darkened as she cast a worried glance at Andrew. Why was he so bold? It seemed that he did not understand that going up against Aspen in a gamble like this was reckless Everyone, quiet down! The gemstone challenge between Mr. Lloyd and Ms.

Stevens is about to begin, Elsie announced, her voice rising above the crowd.
She turned to Andrew and Aspen, adding, Do either of you have any additional terms to set? Aspen flashed a confident smile
I have nothing to add.
I just hope Mr.
Lloyd wont start crying when this is over.
Andrews voice remained composed.
I do have something to add
He paused briefly, letting the crowds anticipation build.
Whoever loses will forfeit all their winnings to the other person.
And since Ms.
Stevens enjoys excitement, lets make it interesting.
Every gemstone we choose must cost at least ten million dollars.  Is that too much for you, Ms.
Stevens? The crowd erupted in a frenzy.
Ten million per stone? Is Mr.

Lloyd trying to make Aspen gamble away her entire fortune? This isnt just intense, its outright insane!
The winner will walk away filthy rich, while the loser gets completely wiped out.
You cant even call this a gamble anymore.
This is full blown, high stakes warfare! Aspens confident smile began to fade, replaced by a shadow of
unease
She stared at Andrew, her voice sharp
Andrew, are you sure you want to play at this level? Andrew met her gaze, unwavering.
Just answer the question.
Do you dare, or dont you? Aspen gritted her teeth before responding, her tone firm.
Fine.
Ill see this through to the end.
She squared her shoulders and added, You think you can intimidate me? Clearly, youve underestimated me and my family.
The Stevens family doesnt back down.
Inside, Aspens mind raced.
Andrew had upped the stakes to an extreme level, forcing her to amble with stones worth millions.

Losing was not an option not only for her reputation but also for her companys investments.
Her business ventures in Jayrodale and the Northern District were on the line, and failure here could mean financial disaster.
Christinas heart pounded as she looked at Andrew
His wager was enormous, raising more questions than answers.
Did he truly have the money to back this up, or was he bluffing? Aspen, Im worried Christina started, hoping to caution Aspen.
But Aspen held up a hand, her expression resolute.
Relax, Christie.
I started this, and III finish it.
Andrew is just trying to rattle me with his theatrics, but Im not so easily shaken.
Still stunned by the sudden escalation, Elsie motioned toward the raw gemstones. The terms are set.
Both competitors may now begin selecting their stones.
Her voice trembled slightly, even as she tried to maintain composure
Aspen strode forward without hesitation, pointing to a stone she had chosen in advance.
Im ready.
This is the one.  Chapter 346 Andrew did not waste any time.

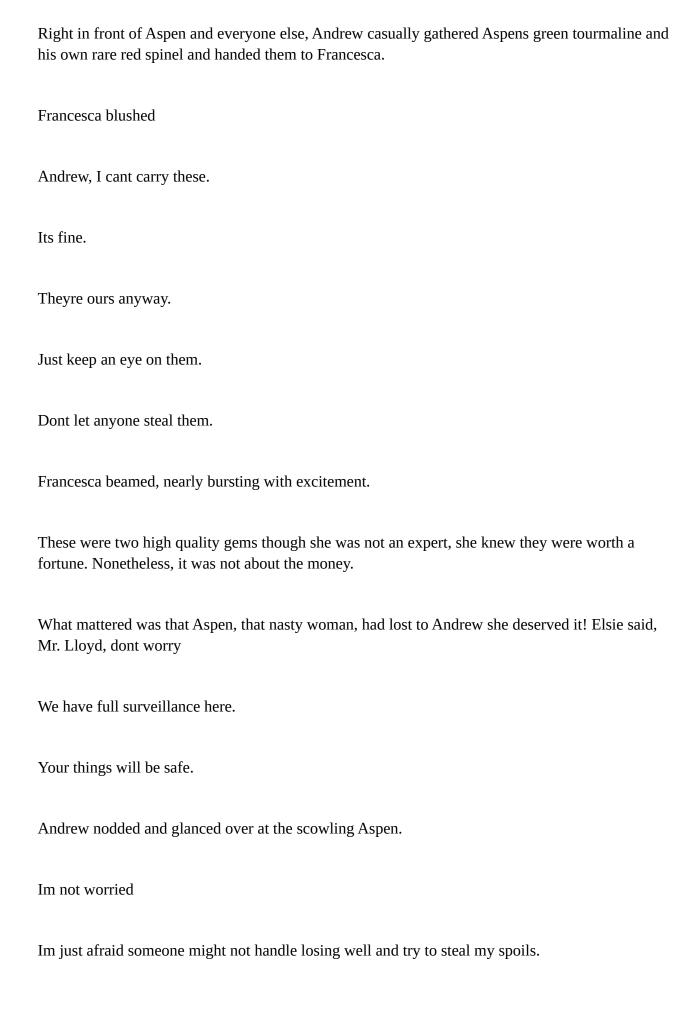




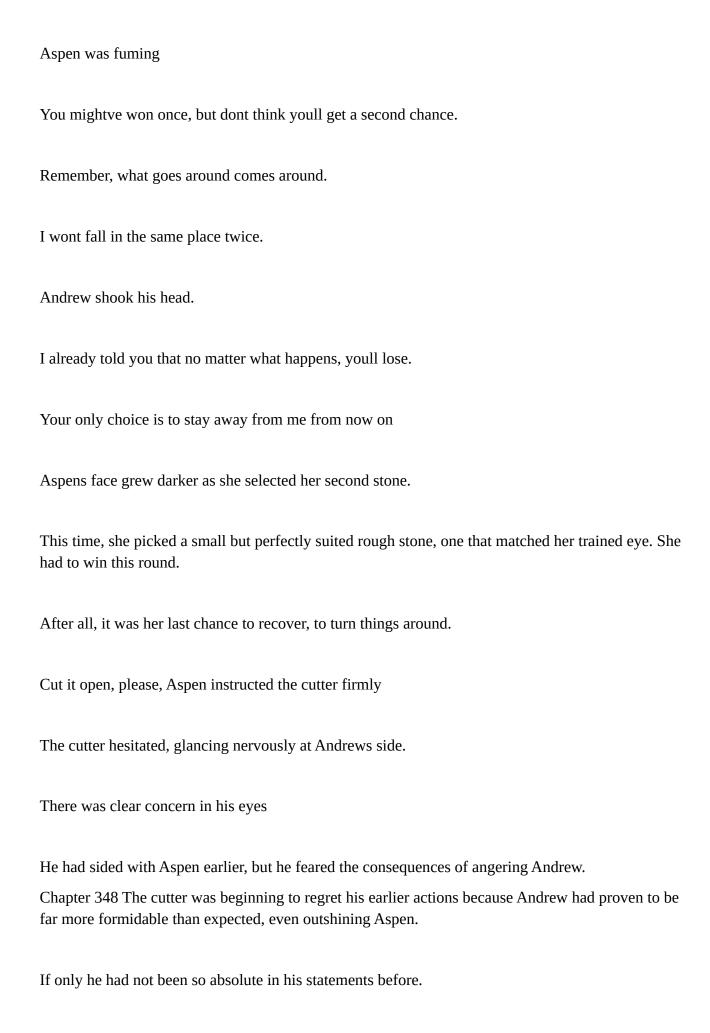
Are you sure this is just blood ruby? The gem cutter leaned in, his eyes widening in shock.
Wait this isnt blood ruby.
Its- Elsie was watching nervously and rushed over to inspect the stone herself.
Her face lit up with excitement.
Its not blood ruby! Its rare blood spinel! She gestured to the crowd, explaining, The first cut only revealed a small section, which led to the wrong conclusion
But this is undeniably blood spinel, one of the most valuable kinds of gem on the market.
The onlookers surged forward, eager to confirm for themselves.
It really is blood spinel! This stuff is even rarer than green tourmaline, and its worth far more.
Plus, look at the size of Andrews piece its way bigger than Aspens! This round isnt even close
Aspen lost the first round? No way! Aspens face turned pale as she stepped forward to inspect Andrews stone herself
One glance confirmed it, and her stomach sank.
Damn it.
She had lost the very first round! Aspen clenched her fists so tightly that her nails dug into her palms. She fought hard to keep her expression neutral, though her mind was racing.
Elsie raised her voice.
The results are clear.

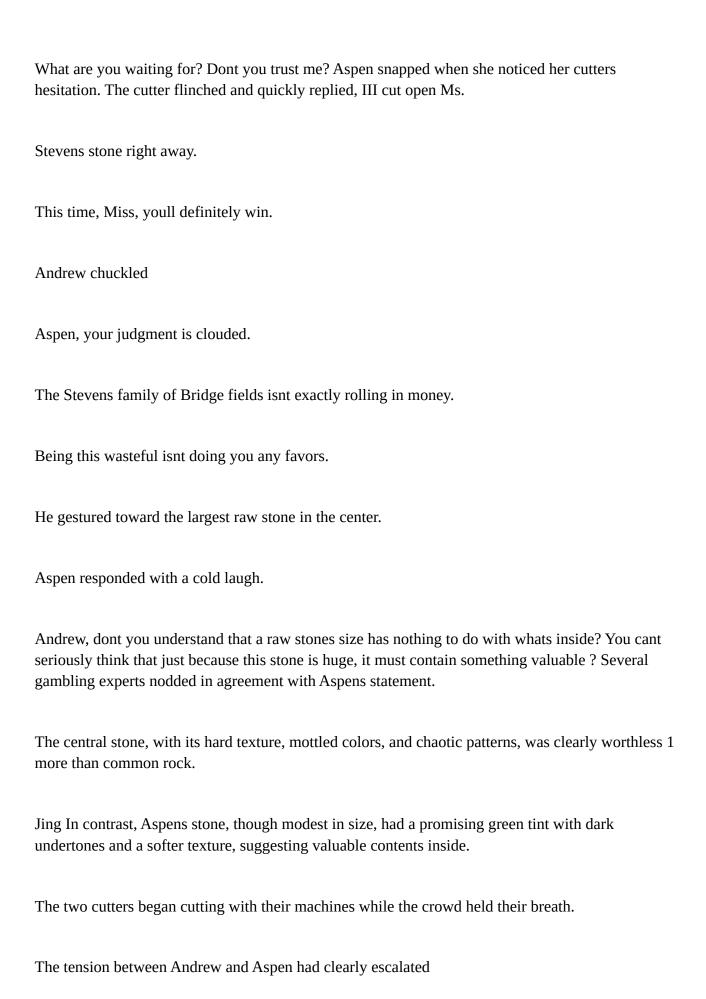
IVIS.
Stevens, youve lost this round
Andrew remained composed, his tone calm but sharp.
These gems are both treasures, but even without ranking them, my red spinel is larger than your green tourmaline.
Do you have anything else to say? The gem cutter leaned in, his eyes widening in shock.
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Stevens, youve lost this round.
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Do you have anything else to say?
Chapter 347 Aspen felt a sharp, burning pain on her face.
Christina was stunned too, unable to believe the sudden turn of events.
Aspen had opened such a good gem, so how could she still lose? Fine, III admit defeat for the first round, Aspen said, her voice cold as she could not bear the eyes of the crowd anymore.
Andrew, do you dare to go for another round? Andrew waved her off.
Theres no need to hurry, Ill deal with things first.



Aspen fumed, her face turning red with rage.
Andrew, youre getting too cocky now.
When did I ever not handle losing? You won, so take everything as per the agreement.
She could tell Andrew was intentionally provoking her, but in that moment, Aspen could barely hold herself back.
This bastard was pushing her buttons.
Christina added coldly, Andrew, just because you won one round doesnt mean youll keep winning.
1 Only the one who laughs last is truly victorious, just like you said getting too happy too soon will lead to tears
Andrew smirked
Youre right, but thats just who I am.
When I feel like being arrogant, I cant stop myself.
Christina gritted her teeth, unsure how to respond.
She did not like Andrews arrogance, but she was powerless to do anything about it.
Aspen, her face darkened, said, Andrew, are you going to play again or not? If youre scared, 1/2 go home and keep celebrating your win.
Andrew shrugged.
If youve got endless money to burn and want to give it to me, Im happy to take it.





If the Stevens familys golden girl lost this round, she would share Orions fate losing both money and reputation
Meanwhile, Andrews loss would not matter much
In stone gambling, wins and losses were expected maintaining a winning record was enough to keep his reputation as a master intact
Andrew, I went first in the last round, Aspen said, signaling her cutter to stop.
This time, youll open yours first.
Thats fine by me, Andrew replied casually.
Soon, the outer layer of the largest stone was cut away, revealing a multicolored piece of inside.
gem Just as expected low grade material.
Look at those colors and that surface area.
Mr.
Lloyd made a mistake this time, someone in the crowd commented
Others added that this piece was even worse than Andrews previous stone, barely qualifying as scrap material.
Dont worry about it, Andrew.
Weve already won once, Francesca consoled him.
On the other hand, Aspen finally breathed a sigh of relief.

With Andrew revealing such a worthless piece, she could not lose

Just as Aspen was about to order her stone to be cut open, displaying a winners smile, Andrew called out, Wait! What now? Aspen sneered.

Are you admitting defeat before I even reveal mine? If so, this stone is too worthless for my victory to mean anything youll need to compensate me with an additional 50 million.

Chapter 349 Stupid woman, I just asked you to wait, not admitting defeat, Andrew said with a smirk Why are you already counting your money? Running low on funds? Aspens face turned red with anger. Fine, lets see what trick youre trying to pull here, she spat, knowing she was running out of money. Even if she won, claiming Andrews worthless stone would be like taking home garbage. Mr.

Lloyd, what else would you like me to do? the cutter asked

The crowd watched curiously, wondering what Andrew could possibly do at this point.

This stone can be cut further, dont you think? Andrew smiled, pointing at the multicolored piece. The cutter was taken aback and replied, Mr.

Lloyd, weve already reached the core layer.

Further cutting would be pointless

Elsie and the others frowned deeply at Andrews suggestion.

The massive stone had already yielded worthless material and cutting it further would only destroy its integrity and a rease its value even more.

Mr.

Lloyd, in my opinion, cutting it further will only make it mot not help but say.

worthless, Elsie could Andrew smiled and replied, On the contrary, I think continuing might lead us to an unexpected treasure Elsie was stunned by Andrews unusual thinking Meanwhile, Aspen could barely contain her laughter. She taunted, Andrew, the outcome is already decided. Why struggle so pointlessly? Looking for hidden treasure? Arent you afraid youll just turn your waste into complete garbage? Turning to the cutter, Andrew said, Sir, just cut boldly. If its ruined, its on me, not you. Well, its time to show everyone whats inside my stone. Since he wants to fight to the bitter end, III make him regret it, Aspen stated. The cutter cut open her stone, revealing a brilliant gem with a soft violet hue.

Someone in the crowd gasped

Oh my God, could that be the legendary Royal Violet Crystal? Thats incredibly rare! The exclamations continued as others confirmed, It is the Royal Violet Crystal! In some ways, its even more prestigious than the imperial grade emerald

Aspen really hit the jackpot this time! Amid the amazed exclamations and shocked voices, Aspens confident smile returned.

She had not expected to find a Royal Violet Crystal, thinking it would be just a regular emerald at best, but fortune had smiled upon her with this exceptionally rare gem. Aspen, you truly have a gift with gems, Christina said, her voice trembling with excitement. Each time you find something even more valuable than the last.

The only other Royal Violet Crystal in existence is worth 600 million! Indeed, the Royal Violet Crystal is considered nobility among gems, Aspen stated, finally relaxing.

Though mine isnt quite as valuable as the one Christina mentioned, this small piece is more than enough to cover all my previous losses.

She turned toward Andrew, waiting for Elsie to declare her the winner.

Elsie could only smile wryly the comparison between Aspens Royal Violet Crystal and Andrews worthless stone could not have been more stark.

Chapter 350 At this point, there was nothing else Elsie could do.

The situation seemed hopeless for Andrew.

What a shame for Mr.

Lloyd this round, someone remarked, while others chimed in, Why choose such an obviously worthless large stone when there were so many better options? The antique experts shook their heads in disappointment, having hoped to see Andrew triumph over the Bridgefields heiress.

Yet, Andrew did not even glance at Aspens Royal Violet Crystal.

Instead, he carefully guided the crafts mans cutting, and as the waste material fell away, a mysterious red glow began to emerge.

The craftsmans heart skipped a beat such a lustrous glow should not appear in worthless material.

Elsie noticed something unusual too, and quickly moved to Andrews side, crouching down for a closer look.

The red glow intensified, revealing a transparent red gem standing out prominently among the debris. For a moment, even the experienced Elsie was left speechless.

Well, what do we have here? A Blood Phoenix Agate quite rare indeed, Andrew said va smile as he picked up the thumb sized red gem.

Ms.
Santana, would you mind checking if theres a cicada with spread wings inside? Elsie carefully accepted the gem and examined it with a magnifying glass.
Sure enough, inside the agate was an incredibly lifelike cicada with spread wings.
Mr.
Lloyd, youve unlocked natures treasure vault! Elsie exclaimed, her voice trembling.
This is definitely another Blood Phoenix Miracle.
In both the collectors and antique markets, this agate would easily fetch over 100 million! The crowd, which had been cheering for Aspen moments ago, fell dead silent at Elsies announcement.
Then, the room erupted with wild discussions and incredulous shouts.
The Blood Phoenix Miracle? Im Harrison Blake, a private collector, and Im offering 200 million! one voice called out.
Another bid came from Blumedale Antiquities.
300 million, Mr.
Lloyd, and well make you our Vice Chairman! The scene became chaotic as countless collectors experts, and enthusiasts rushed toward Andrew.
Even elderly connoisseurs were pushing through the crowd with surprising vigor.
As the situation threatened to turn into a stampede, Elsie looked helplessly at Andrew for assistance.

He pulled her behind him alongside Francesca and shouted, Everyone, step back now! Dont make me

use force! Only Aspen and Christina remained frozen in place, isolated from the commotion.

Christinas mind went blank as she felt the sudden chill around them.

Christina whispered in disbelief, Aspen, the Blood Phoenix Miracle? Isnt that supposedly the rarest stone in history? How could Andrew possibly have found one?