

## The Ashes 381

Chapter 381 Aspen spoke with unwavering confidence, Youre practically family, Christies brother and mother

It would be heartless of me to refuse your investment

Besides, the Northern District has been growing rapidly, maintaining steady control over the other two factions.

At this rate, Atlas will dominate the underground scene in no time.

She continued, Your investment comes at the perfect moment youll be counting profits while sitting back and relaxing! Leroy expressed his gratitude with excitement.

Thanks, Aspen! Finally, someones helping me level up in this game! Irene said hopefully, At last, my retirement is secured! The last time I trusted that bastard Harvey, he nearly cost me my life savings. Aspen replied contemptuously, Christie told me all about Harveys scheme.

That manipulative fraud only gained your trust to scam you.

Rest assured, the Weller family will pay for every penny they took! Andrew couldnt stand it anymore and stood up

Fran, lets go.

Before Francesca could respond, Christina spotted him and mocked, Andrew, youre quite the player, arent you? One minute its Ms.

Rhodes, the next its Ms.

Aicker.

As a man, dont you think this behavior is trashy and irresponsible? Christina was already uncomfortable with Andrews closeness to Lauren, and now he was meeting Francesca privately.

Ms.

Stevens, Andrew and I met privately to discuss business matters, Francesca defended Andrew.

Besides, your past relationship with Andrew is ancient history.

If Im not complaining, why are you being so nosy? Christina replied seriously, Ms.

Aicker, Im only trying to help

Since Andrew is already with Ms.

Rhodes, he shouldnt be leading you on.

Even if you mean well, I dont need your concern! Francesca snapped

I invited Andrew here, and if I want to be with him, thats none of your business! Christina stood frozen,

at a loss for words.

Christie, dont waste your kindness on ungrateful people, Aspen chimed in with a smirk.

Cant you see? Some players like to keep their options open, working multiple angles at once.

Christina shot Andrew with a disgusted look.

Andrew, youre truly beyond redemption ! Thats exactly what I wanted to tell Ms.

Stevens you and your family are the hopeless ones, Andrew replied calmly.

You barely recovered from Harveys scam, and here you are, jumping into another fire.

Your stubbornness and eagerness to throw away money is truly remarkable.

What are you trying to say? Christina frowned Andrew replied casually, Im saying the Northern District is about to collapse.

Your familys investment with Aspen is like throwing money into a black hole its never coming back. Christina laughed coldly.

Andrew, if youre trying to get attention, at least pick a more convincing topic.

Aspens capabilities and vision have always matched mine, so calling it a dangerous investment is ridiculous.

Besides, you seem rather shortsighted about Jayrodales underground scene.

Atlas power is dominant and growing

Soon, theyll control the entire underground.

Christina continued, Do you even comprehend how vast the Northern Districts territory and market will become? Do you understand how brilliant Aspens move is ? Andrew paused before bursting into laughter

Have you been caught up in Aspens delusions of grandeur too? Andrew, you can look down on me, but show some basic respect for Aspen, replied, her expression growing colder.

Christin Andrew shook his head

Well, its just like the situation with the Weller family.

I've warned you whether you listen up to you.

Chapter 382 Christina let out a cold laugh and countered, Warning me? Since when did you become so caring? Or is this just another attempt to get my attention? Can you honestly deny that? Andrews expression grew distant

I only have one reason for doing this.

Its out of respect for Mr.

Stevens Senior, and because it would be a shame to see the Stevehs Corporation fall apart in your hands

Christina responded with a mocking smile, her silence speaking volumes of her contempt. Leroy sneered.

Andrew, you might be riding high in your G Wagon and dating rich women now, but do you have any idea who youre dealing with? Andrew scoffed.

I couldnt care less about your background.

All I know is that youre just another sore loser a wannabe who can dish it out but cant take it.

Leroy snapped.

Watch your attitude, Andrew.

Let me tell you something Aspen is from our main Stevens family branch

Do you know how powerful they are ? Anyone from our family could make you bow down in an instant. Andrew smirked.

Youre right about everything except I seem to remember when two of your familys top fighters got knocked flat by the Weller familys elder.

Leroys face turned red, lost for words.

He had gotten carried away bragging, having blind faith in the Bridgefields Stevens family, but faced with Andrew who knew the truth, his facade crumbled instantly.

past.

Seeing her son defeated, Irene jumped in with blazing eyes

Andrew, stop living in the Your abilities havent exactly helped us much, have they? Tell you what to keep your from spreading rumors, Ill give you a chance to invest in Aspens partnership with the Northern District.

Well help you make some serious money as payback for your previous help.

Hows that sound? Andrew was amazed at the Stevens familys twisted logic and their determination to self-destruct.

Sorry, but I dont do losing investments, especially when it comes to repeatedly jumping into the fire.

He flat out rejected Irenes condescending offer, knowing that once Atlas fell, the Northern District would crumble like a house of cards

He was not foolish enough to throw money at a sinking ship.

Irene sneered.

Your loss ! When opportunity knocks, and you cant answer, it just shows your bad luck.

Aunt Irene, Leroy, theres no point arguing with an amateur, Aspen interjected calmly

My major play lies in the Northern District hardly anyone in Jayrodale understands it, let alone certain people

She turned to Andrew with a mocking smile and added, Andrew, you say I'm a sore loser? Well, besides your little tricks with gems and antiques, what else can you really bring to the table?  
Andrew turned to Francesca.

Fran, let's go

I recently read that spending too much time with fools, breathing the same air, and engaging in conversation, might actually make you lose brain cells.

Honestly, I'm getting worried.

Francesca let out a laugh and playfully punched Andrew's arm as they left together, clearly enjoying themselves.

Aspen's face darkened as she watched them disappear.

Then, she immediately pulled out her phone and called Donald

Aspen demanded, What's the deal, Donald? I told you I wanted to see Andrew behind bars, doing hard time.

So why was he just out and about, bothering me?

Chapter 383 Aspen's tone over the phone was aggressive and accusatory.

Meanwhile, Donald sat in his office, still writing his disciplinary report, filled with frustration

Mark had given strict orders that Donald's report needed to show deep reflection and sincere remorse for his actions against Andrew.

Hence, when Aspen's call came in, Donald found the perfect outlet for his pent-up anger.

Taking a deep breath, Donald unleashed a thunderous roar into the phone, Aspen, you absolute nightmare !! Aspen winced at the outburst, and she scolded, Dons are you insane? Why are you screaming? What did you just say? I couldnt hear you over all that yelling.

Donald gritted his teeth and snarled, I said youre a nightmare! Did you hear me clearly this time? Aspen frowned, suspecting Donald was insulting her, but she was not quite sure

Cant you speak properly? I dont understand what youre trying to say! Donald spat out, Aspen, you bitch ! Youve got some nerve calling me.

Im telling you to go fuck yourself is that clear enough? Aspens anger flared instantly as she realized he was indeed insulting her.

Donald, have you lost your mind? I called about Andrew, not to hear your garbage talk.

As a privileged daughter of the Bridgefields Stevens family, she was used to handling conflicts with grace and poise.

She had never dealt with someone as crude as Donald, which strengthened her resolve to cut ties with him after using him to deal with Andrew.

Donald laughed bitterly.

Youre still asking about him? Listen here, Aspen you nearly got me killed because of your schemes. Whatever friendship we had is over.

Stay away from me.

Im done with your mess, he continued, his voice crackling with rage and resentment, like a volcano about to erupt.

Aspens expression darkened, but seeing Donalds intense reaction, she tried to maintain composure. What happened? Dont you want to have dinner anymore? Dinner? Go to hell, you troublemaker ! Donald snapped

And Aspen, dont call me again, got it? I want to keep my position as chief commissioner for a few more years.

I wont let you ruin me

The line went dead with a sharp click.

had Aspen stood frozen, her face alternating between pale and flushed

Donald, that fat pig, become uncontrollable, and by cutting ties with her, she had lost a powerful ally in Jayrodale

While Donald disgusted her, his position as chief commissioner had been valuable.

Yet, it was all slipping from her grasp, and she could not help but wonder what had happened.

As Aspen calmed down and thought it through, she sensed that Donald was afraid of something or someone.

Could it be Andrew? The thought made her laugh in disdain.

Chapter 384 Aspen reasoned that if Andrew truly had the power to make Donald submit, he would not be living off rich women.

She had witnessed it herself at the appraisal convention Andrew did not even dare resist when Donald took him away Aspen, whats wrong? Christina asked, noticing her troubled expression.

Aspen sneered

Dont worry, Christie, its nothing.

Andrew just got lucky again the Jayrodale Police Department decided to let him off the hook.



Christina said mockingly, Try not to let it bother you, Aspen.

Its probably Francesca, Lauren, or even Marvin pulling strings for him again.

He keeps relying on others to clean up his messes while sinking lower.

Im done caring about him.

Aspen gritted her teeth.

I couldnt care less about Andrew.

Hes just a nobody who got lucky because heaven took pity on him

What really stings is all the money I wasted on those high-grade pieces at the appraisal convention  
What she did not mention was how Andrew had humiliated her at the convention, and Donald had failed to help her get revenge.

Instead, her former admirer had cursed her out.

The whole situation left a bitter taste in her mouth.

You really did take a big hit at the convention, Christina sympathized

The total losses exceeded ten million dollars, and while that was not much for the Bridgefields  
Stevens family, Aspen had not brought unlimited funds to Jayrodale.

She had arrived with 12 million, already investing ten million in Atlas Northern District operation.

Between networking expenses and losses to Andrew, Aspen was practically broke

Soon, Atlas will hand me control of Jayrodales entire underground scene, Aspen declared.

Then III make back hundreds of millions.

She lifted her chin with her characteristic arrogant smile.

While she admitted Andrew had dealt her a serious blow, her foundation remained rock solid Atlas Northern District would give her a perfect score.

Irene said, Aspen, dear, Ive transferred the money to you.

Now, I just have to sit back and wait for the profits to roll in.

Leroy chimed in eagerly, I sent mine too! Youve got to help me strike it rich this time! That jerk Andrew acts so high and mighty with his G Wagon.

When you make me rich, Ill get a Ferrari and really show him up ! Aunt Irene, Leroy, your trust in me wont be misplaced.

Youll be rolling in money soon enough! Aspen promised

Christina smiled and added, Aspen, the Stevens Corporations finances are tight right now, but once I free up some capital, Id like to invest with you too, Christie, you dont even have to ask.

You know Ive got you covered! Aspen smiled.

The family continued their cheerful celebration, completely unaware of the devastating news about to crash down on their heads, news that would bring the Stevens family to their knees.

Chapter 385 The next morning, Andrew woke up in his luxurious bed at the Moonlit Sanctuary and noticed.

several missed calls on his phone.

When he called back, Dylans voice came through, weak but filled with excitement.

Mr.

Lloyd, we succeeded! Dylan exclaimed.

Andrew remained surprisingly calm and replied with a smile, Well then, congratulations, Dylan.  
No, Mr.

Lloyd, you deserve the most credit, Dylan said.

These results are all thanks to you.

Andrew responded, It still depended on your teams performance.

The Blood Surge Pill has quite an intense aftereffect.

Rest up and recover well

When you're back on your feet, South City will be ready for its rise.

Understood, Mr.

Lloyd ! Dylan laughed respectfully before hanging up.

After some thought, Andrew tried calling Natasha, but her phone was turned off.

He tried another number with the same result

Interesting, Andrew smiled casually as he set his phone aside and went to freshen up.

While it was normal for a crime lord's phone to be off occasionally, the timing of Natasha's disconnection right after taking down Atlas seemed suspicious, especially cutting contact with him.

Andrew understood what game the widow was playing, and he hoped her scheming nature would not be her downfall.

After breakfast at home, Andrew arrived at Jayrodale General Hospital for work, where he ran into a cheerful Francesca at the entrance.

Andrew ! the petite beauty called out happily as she approached him.

Though Francesca was only around 53, anyone who did not consider her stunning would have to be blind

She had an incredible figure paired with an angelic face that turned heads wherever she went. Fran, youre in good spirits today, Andrew smiled

Francesca said excitedly, After our talk last night, I went back to the Aickers and told Simon everything about us.

He took it hard at first but eventually calmed down and even wished us happiness! Andrew frowned slightly at this news, as it did not match Simons character to be so gracious.

Its such a relief to finally break free, Francesca continued happily

We grew up together as senior junior, and he always looked after me as his junior.

I never wanted things to get ugly between us and split up the Aickers, but now hes finally let go of his obsession

Congratulations, Fran! Andrew smiled, seeing her genuine relief and joy. You know what they say persistence pays off.

If he had kept pursuing you, who knows what might have happened? Thats not true at all! Francesca protested with a cute pout.

He was never ... never the one in my heart!

Chapter 386 After her confession, Francescas face turned bright red as she huffed and walked into the hospital ahead of Andrew.

Fran, are you saying you have someone special? Andrew asked as he caught up with her.

Francesca replied seriously, Dr.

Lloyd, were at work now.

Please refrain from asking personal questions in the hospital.

As you wish, Dr.

Aicker, Andrew smiled with a playful bow.

The morning passed quickly as Andrew saw a few scheduled patients.

During a lull, Bernard, who had been absent for a while, approached him with a fake smile.

Dr.

Lloyd, I hear youre doing quite well lately.

Congratulations! Its nothing special just slightly better than your situation, Andrew replied with a smirk. Bernards face darkened instantly.

Andrew, pride comes before a fall

Youre so young to be promoted to deputy chief I worry youll lose control, and everything will come crashing down.

No need for your concern, Dr.

Hackett, Andrew said with a slight smile.

By the your dear son doing these days? Andrew, you just had to bring that up, didnt you ? Bernard exploded.

way, hows Philip had been caught attempting to assault a young nurse named Nyla, and when Andrew intervened, Philip suffered some permanent consequences.

Bernard had spent the past few months taking Philip to various specialists, and while his ns condition showed slight improvement, he would never fully recover.

Mr.

Bozzelli has already expressed his support for me, Bernard said with a sinister smile.

Andrew, get ready to pack your bags youll be out of here soon.

Andrew ignored his threats

After all, Andrew could buy the entire hospital in a heartbeat if he wanted to

At lunchtime, Francesca invited Andrew to the hospital cafeteria, but he declined, staying in his office to try calling Natasha again

Her phone remained off, making it clear the cunning widow was determined to go behind his back. Grabbing his jacket, Andrew smirked as he drove his G Wagon toward West End

Meanwhile, at the Stevens mansion, Aspens face had turned ghostly pale as she processed the shocking news.

She mumbled, How is this possible ? Atlas couldnt have been assassinated! Hes almost at the senior grandmaster level and had dozens of elite fighters, not to mention hundreds of men under him... The morning news and major magazines were all reporting the same story a violent incident at a suburban villa the previous night had left the infamous Atlas, crime lord of Jayrodales Northern District, dead with his heart destroyed.

Christinas family sat around their dining table for lunch, but no one could eat another bite as the devastating news sank in.

Chapter 387 Leroy's soup dripped onto the table as he anxiously asked, Aspen, now that Atlas is dead, what about our money? Shut up! Christina kicked him under the table.

How can you think about money at a time like this? With a grave expression, Christina turned to Aspen. We need to act fast.

Contact someone in the Northern District and get your investment back immediately.

Aspen snapped out of her daze and quickly dialed Atlas office number.

A raspy voice answered, Who are you looking for? This is Aspen from the Bridgefields Stevens family, I need to speak with Mr.

Atlas Giordano, she said urgently, Are you stupid? Mn Giordano is as dead as he can be.

If you want to find him, try looking in hell, the voice sneered.

Aspen snapped, Watch your tone! Who do you think you are to speak to me like that? III speak however I want, lady.

Like I said, Mr.

Giordanos dead, and hes finished, the voice replied coldly.

Aspen gritted her teeth.

Atlas may be dead, but the Northern District needs to return my ten- million dollar investment immediately

The voice laughed.

Sorry, but Atlas and the Northern District are gone.

As for your ten million, I have no idea where to find it.

Aspen felt her vision blur as she trembled with rage.

What did you just say? Say that again! The voice replied impatiently, Look, Im done wasting time with you.

Everything in the Northern District is gone.

If you want your ten million back, good luck other groups have already cleaned the place out.

Maybe if you come now, you can grab some chairs, leftover cutlery, or a toilet... The line went dead, and Aspen would have collapsed if Christina had not caught her.

Aspen, what... what happened? Christina asked.

Though she could tell from Aspens face.

that the ten million was likely gone.

Aspen pushed her away and rushed out of the Stevenstmansion like a mad woman.

Im going to the Northern District right now! Those bastards better return my money, or theyll regret it! The family watched in shock at Aspens uncharacteristic breakdown.



Even Christina was stunned was this really the same composed, proud Aspen who had arrived in Jayrodale just recently? Irene threw down her bowl and ran out the door in tears, losing a shoe in the process.

Quick, Christie, Leroy, we have to go too! That was my life savings! Id rather die than lose it all! First, that beast Harvey scammed me, and now this! Is heaven playing some cruel joke on me? 11 Christina knew this situation was far more serious than anyone had imagined.

Chapter 388 Aspen had invested ten million dollars in Atlass operation, and if it were all gone, there would be serious consequences

They immediately got into the car with Irene and Leroy, heading toward Jayrodale's Northern District, Meanwhile, Andrews G Wagon drifted to a smooth stop in front of the West End headquarters.

Unlike usual, the building was surrounded by guards in black suits, dark ties, and sunglasses, creating an intimidating atmosphere

One of Natashas top enforcers blocked Andrews path.

Sorry, Mr.

Lloyd, but you right now! cant enter Im here to see Madam Vostokoff.

Is there a problem? Andrew asked with a smile as he sized up the man.

The enforcer was a muscular giant with a crew cut and tattoos covering his neck, chest, and arms.

His bulging muscles and fists the size of melons marked him as someone not to be messed with.

Mr.

Lloyd, please understand that Madam Vostokoff isnt available right now, the man chuckled, pushing Andrew back.

You're an honored guest of West End, so come back another day, and we'll talk properly then. What if I insist on seeing her now? Andrew's smile remained unchanged.

The tattooed giant forced a polite smile.

Mr.

Lloyd, it's really not possible.

How about I treat you to coffee next door while you wait for Madam Vostokoff to finish her business? Andrew glanced at the hand pushing him, and his smile faded.

Remove your hand and get

out of my way.

The man's fake smile disappeared as his face darkened.

Listen, Mr.

Lloyd

We're being respectful because you're a capable man who has Madam Vostokoff's favor.

But if you overestimate your importance, I won't be so nice anymore.

The enforcer looked at Andrew contemptuously, thinking he was just a pretty boy who had caught Natasha's eye.

L Before Atlas fell, they had needed his strategic advice to take down the Northern District.

Still, now that Atlas was dead and West End had claimed the territory, Natasha was practically the underground queen of Jayrodale.

Is West End really going to be so shameless as to burn bridges and take everything for themselves? Andrew asked, his eyes narrowing dangerously.

The man growled, Watch your mouth, Andrew! This is West End headquarters if you dont choose your words carefully, youll regret it! With a wave of his hand, about 60 guards in sunglasses surrounded Andrew, looking at him with disdain.

They thought he was suicidal to challenge West End alone.

Ready to leave quietly now? Let me give you some advice know your place.

When a little rabbit tries to provoke a pack of wolves, it wont end well.

West End had mounted this show of force to discourage troublemakers.

They were prepared to turn away anyone who came looking for trouble, even if it was the Weller family or Finley himself.

Chapter 389 Andrews patience had run out as he spoke in a cold tone.

One last time tell Natasha to come.

out and talk now.

The tattooed giant mocked, Or what? What can you do? Andrew, you might have some history with West End, but if you think that gives you the right to make tlemands, youre in the wrong place.

As he moved to push Andrew away again, the other guards snickered.

With Atlas fall, Natasha had become Jayrodales most powerful underground leader, and they could not believe this mans audacity in challenging West End.

Suddenly, a sharp crack echoed through the air the sound of a wrist being broken.

The tattooed giant let out an agonizing scream.

My hand! You broke my hand! Get him! Attack! The fifty over guards stood shocked for a moment before charging forward with angry shouts.

Andrews face turned cold as his leg swept out.

Screams filled the air as the first wave of guards went flying, their faces meeting Andrews foot.

The tattooed giant, his wrist still in Andrews grip, growled through the pain.

Andrew, do you know what it means to attack West Ends men? Andrew responded with a swift kick to the back of the giants knee.

The man collapsed with a howl of pain, feeling as if his kneecap had been shattered.

Any friendship between you and West End ends here, the giant snarled through gritted teeth.

Madam Vostokoff and her thousands of followers wont let this slide.

Instead of a response, he received a vicious slap that left his head ringing and vision blurred.

The remaining guards stepped back in terror, shocked by Andrews explosive display of power.

I despise people telling me what I can or cant do, Andrew said calmly into the giants ear as he kept him pinned to the ground.

I admit I underestimated you, the giant struggled to speak.

But have you considered the consequences of making an enemy of West End? Your mighty West End

and all powerful Natasha are nothing but ants to me, Andrew replied coldly.

You refused my courtesy earlier, and its too late for reasoning now.

Sensing Andrews killing intent, the giant trembled and cried out, Mr.

Lloyd, please calm down! Lets talk this through !

Chapter 390 At this point, West End cant even send out a proper representative, Andrew stated emotionlessly

Since youre treating me like I dont exist, Ill kill you first, then have a chat with Natasha.

Mr.

Lloyd, please dont go too far! a voice suddenly thundered from behind

Conan, done watching the show from your hiding spot? Andrew smirked as he released his grip and kicked the tattooed giant toward Conan.

Conans face twitched.

He knew the tattooed giant was one of Natashas most fearless fighters, young and skilled in hand to hand combat, yet Andrew had broken him so effortlessly.

Please follow me, Mr.

Lloyd

Madam Vostokoff will see you now, Conan said coldly.

Andrew sneered.

Oh, now shes willing to meet after this show of force ? Mr.

Lloyd, West End has already absorbed Atlass territory, Conan stated angrily.

If you were smart, you wouldnt have come here.

So, if I hadnt shown up, Natasha would just take everything herself? Andrews face remained expressionless.

He continued, I dont care about Atlass death or the Northern Districts assets, but Dylan is my man. What about his share? Natashas actions have pissed me off, and when Im angry, do you think West End can enjoy their spoils in peace ? Conans face twitched harder, but he could not respond Andrews words had blocked every possible argument, whether based on business, personal relationships, or moral grounds

This time, Andrew met Natasha in an elegantly decorated room instead of the usual conference room. She was reclining on a sandalwood sofa with her eyes closed.

Madam Vostokoff! Conan announced as he brought Andrew in.

Conan, you may leave.

Close the door behind you.

Natasha opened her eyes.

But Madam, youre injured from fighting Atlas ! You shouldnt be alone with outsiders! Conan protested. Its fine.

If he wants to be rough with me, Ill accept whatever he decides to do.

Natasha waved Conan away.

After Conan left with a hostile glance at Andrew, Natasha forced a smile.

Why such anger? Im here let me make it up to you.

Drop the act, Andrew said flatly.

Dylans exhaustion is real, but yours is just a performance, isnt it? Natashas smile froze and disappeared as her face turned expressionless

How did you know I was faking? Andrew smirked, The Blood Surge Pill does cause temporary weakness.

But you seem to have forgotten that Im a master physician.

I can spot a fake condition instantly.

Natashas composed expression suddenly turned to shock