

The Ashes 421

Chapter 421 Michael had already claimed the head position in the large conference room, surrounded by his suckups, who wore ingratiating smiles.

Lauren, its been a while since youve been to the corporation.

Do you even remember how to work? Michael said with exaggerated cheerfulness when Lauren entered. He added, If not, you can just stay in your office, get your nails done, take care of your skin, and leave when the days over.

I dont want to pressure you.

The room fell silent instantly as the executives sensed the tension between Michael and Lauren

Lauren stared at Michael coldly and retorted, Michael, youve just taken my position, and youre already acting like someone drunk on their newfound power.

Lauren smirked as Michaels expression darkened

Everyone in the family and company knows which of us is more qualified to be CEO.

Youve only been in charge for a couple of weeks, and youre already so full of yourself clearly, youll never amount to much.

Michael snorted.

Lauren, watch your tone.

At the end of the day, Im not only your cousin, but Im also your superior.

I can discipline you for your disobedience! Go ahead, do it now, Lauren challenged fearlessly.

Remove me from my vice CEO position, and then the company will be all yours.

Michael's hand on the table tensed visibly, revealing his inner rage.

He quickly composed himself and replied, Lauren, were family

Even though you speak to me like this, I can't bring myself to do that.

Besides, if I didn't even leave you a position, those old folks in the family would give me grief.

Lauren remained silent, feeling helpless and wronged beneath her icy exterior.

In the end, the family gradually stripped away everything she owned simply because she was a woman. She had devoted so much to Rhodes Corporation, and now Michael was reaping all the benefits. Andrew suddenly laughed from his seat beside Lauren.

How interesting

An incompetent fool sits in the CEO's chair, throwing his weight around and persecuting his own family. Meanwhile, Ms.

Rhodes, who's proven herself in both capability and talent, is forced to step down.

Are the decision makers at Rhodes Corporation and the Rhodes family all blind? After his statement, the entire room fell so silent you could hear a pin drop.

Eunice's face pale with fear, was the first to react angrily.

What nonsense are you spouting? Apologize to Mr.

Rhodes and get out right now! Marcus sat nearby, his face dark with worry.

Though he had already overestimated Andrew's boldness and recklessness, he now realized the man

was a complete madman who did not care about consequences.

After all, this was Rhodes Corporations conference room, filled with the citys most influential executives each one a power player Jayrodale.

Chapter 422 Not to mention that Michael at the head of the table was the Rhodes familys heir apparent. For Andrew, a mere deputy chief, to dare call him incompetent was unthinkable.

Marcus kept his mouth firmly shut this time.

Though he admired Andrew, he was not about to get dragged down by someone bent on self destruction

A heavy thud echoed through the room as one of the veteran executives, a burly man, slammed his palm on the table.

Edward Hills roared, Wheres security? Get this awless thug out of here right now! And get the legal team here were pressing charges for his outrageous slander against Mr.

Rhodes

III make sure this arrogant punk rots in jail! Edward was Michaels devoted follower, and no one dared speak up when he exploded

Everyone stared at Andrew with mockery in their eyes.

Anyone who touches my man will regret it, Lauren said icily.

The security and legal staff who had rushed to the door hesitated, unsure whose orders to follow. Edward asked grimly, Ms.

Rhodes, what exactly are you implying? This man insulted Mr.

face the consequences ? Rhodes shouldnt he Lauren was secretly annoyed.

In the past, none of these so called veterans would have dared speak to her this way.

However, they had switched allegiance to Michael and were showing their fangs.

I apologize, but you have no authority over me since Im Ms.

Rhodes driver and bodyguard, Andrew stated calmly.

Lauren quickly added, Thats right, Ive hired Andrew.

Hes not only my employee but also part of Rhodes Corporation, which gives him the right to speak his mind you cant stop him from exercising his right.

However, Edward was not ready to let it go.

He taunted, Even if what you say is true, hes just a driver and hired muscle.

For such a low level employee to speak so disrespectfully and insult his superior in a high level corporate meeting hell still end up in jail

Eunice broke out in a cold sweat.

Andrew, apologize to Mr.

Rhodes right now! Do you want to drag Ms.

Rhodes down with you? Michael sat with his arms crossed, enjoying the show.

He deliberately stayed silent, wanting to watch his subordinates tear apart Lauren and Andrew.

The thrill of absolute power was simply intoxicating.

Andrew smirked.

Apologize to him? Why would anyone apologize to garbage? The room exploded in chaos.

Even Laurens expression changed slightly the normally composed Andrew

had somehow transformed into a fierce warrior in just a few days.

Meanwhile, Eunices chest heaved with panic as she was nearly scared senseless.

Marcus furrowed his brow, thinking this was definitely going to end badly with Michaels temperament, he would fly into a rage

Andrew might not make it out of Rhodes Corporation in one piece.

Chapter 423 Security, arrest him immediately! came the shouts from around the room.

Take him away and hand him over to the police use the companys connections to make sure he rots in jail ! Michaels loyal followers on either side of him jumped to their feet, looking at Andrew as if he were already dead.

This was their chance to prove their loyalty to Michael, and in their this foolish young man was nothing but dust to hodes Corporation.

eyes, Well, well, Rhodes Corporations executives are supposed to be sophisticated, high income individuals, Andrew said calmly, not moving an inch.

But right now, all I see is a pack of dogs barking.

Marcus nearly fell out of his chair in shock.

He figured Andrew had given up and decided to antagonize the entire executive board since he was headed for jail anyway a reckless and foolish move, in his opinion.

Take him to the police, Michael ordered, his eyes cold as ice.

As CEO, I have only one demand make him disappear from this world.

Edward cheered, Thats exactly what we should do, Mr.

Rhodes! For someone who dares to your authority so brazenly, theres only one path straight to hell. Kid, dont blame us for being cruel.

You brought this on yourself by messing with the wrong people.

Several other executives grinned, already imagining Andrew being destroyed by Rhodes Corporations influence and connections.

To them, a nobody fighting against Jayrodales premier company was pure suicide.

Dozens of Rhodes Corporation security guards stormed into the room menacingly.

Suddenly, a cold, sharp aura emanated from Andrews body.

The two muscular ex special forces men at the front felt suffocated and did not dare take another step toward Andrew.

Something about this man gave them the terrifying feeling of being stalked by an apex predator.

Edward shouted, what are you waiting for? Get moving! 1 Andrew raised his hand and commanded, Stop! Since when did mere security guards have the authority to manhandle a corporate director? Everyone froze in confusion, while Edward scoffed.

Corporate director? You must be so scared youve lost your mind.

Marcus shook his head, disappointed at how clueless Andrew was being.

The Rhodes.

Corporation directors were all powerful figures.

Yet, a mere doctor was claiming he was one too it was too ridiculous.

+10 BONUS Lauren, understanding the situation, smiled.

Michael, you'd better not touch Andrew- because he is, in fact, our corporation's director.

Lauren, have you lost your mind too ? Michael mocked.

What makes this nobody qualified to be a Rhodes Corporation director? If you don't believe me, check the corporate website right now, Lauren replied coldly.

Chapter 424 Lauren addressed the executives with conviction You all remember how the corporation successfully acquired that large plot of land in West Ends development zone Edward frowned.

Ms.

Rhodes, bringing up irrelevant matters won't help.

We're discussing how to deal with this man right now.

It's not irrelevant, Lauren snapped That land deal was secured through Mr.

Lloyd's connections, and in return, the corporation granted him a director position.

The executives exchanged uncertain glances.

If Lauren was telling, the truth, they had to give to touch a corporate director.

Have you found anything? Michael asked darkly.

His secretary shifted uncomfortably.

Mr.

Rhodes... it's true

Michael grabbed the laptop to check the corporate website himself, and his expression grew increasingly grim

He owns 1% of the company shares, Michael gritted out.

Now you have nothing to say, do you? Lauren said coolly.

Mr.

Lloyd isn't just my dad, he's a corporate shareholder, so you have no authority over him.

Marcus was stunned.

Although 1% seemed small in actual money, it amounted to hundreds of millions.

Lauren, you planned this quite thoroughly! Michael seethed.

Michael, when it comes to being underhanded, I'm nowhere near your level, Lauren said with contempt.

Andrew's 1% was rightfully his from the beginning - it just hadn't been made public until now.

Remembering Andrews earlier dismissive attitude, Michael exploded

So you think just because he got lucky and became a director, I cant touch him? Michael sneered, Im not just the CEO I own 15 % of the company.

I can still have him arrested for insulting his superior and major shareholder.

Edward chimed in with a smirk.

I also own more shares than this arrogant kid

Between M Rhodes and me, we have enough power to throw this one percent shareholder in jail for a te days

Michaels lackeys burst into laughter, and they all cheered.

Well done, Mr.

Hills youre a true role model

Andrew, you should know Mr.

Hills reputation in our company.

Hes known for his iron- fisted methods and absolute loyalty to Mr.

Rhodes.

Anyone who dares to harm or even whisper about Mr.

Rhodes faces serious consequences! The executives continued praising Edward while mocking Andrew.

Even if he was a director, 1 % ownership was nothing, and they could still easily crush him.

Chapter 425 Michael grinned with confidence

Lauren, I warned you before If you just quietly played your role as Vice CEO, no one would bother you. But if you challenge my authority as CEO, I'll show you who really runs this corporation.

Michael, do you really want to take it this far? Lauren asked icily.

Michael's eyes turned bloodshot as he remembered how Andrew had humiliated him in the past. No, you're wrong

This bastard is the one who took things too far, making my life hell.

I won't rest until I see him behind bars! Edward sneered.

The police commissioner is an old friend of mine.

With just one call from me, Donald will make sure to give Director Lloyd special treatment.

Her He emphasized Director Lloyd mockingly, dripping with sarcasm

The executives continued their taunts

Your 1 % shareholding might save your life, but you won't escape punishment entirely! Though Andrew's director status was confirmed, Michael and Edwards' joint attack gave the executives new hope.

They all joined in verbally attacking Andrew.

Marcus was speechless.

He finally understood that Andrews 1 % stake had given him the courage to speak out, but he had severely underestimated Michaels influence as CEO.

Andrew, what other tricks do you have up your sleeve? Show us everything youve got, Michael smirked confidently.

Even if they go through legal channels, I wont let you touch Dr.

Lloyd, Lauren gritted out

Anyone who dares touch him will lose their hands! Michael replied with disdain, Lauren, stop trying to protect your pretty boy

The laws are beyond our companys rules.

Do you think your influence will change the outcome? Eunice leaned close to Laurens ear anxiously. Miss, you should stop defending Andrew.

Lauren was annoyed.

Are you also going against me? Eunice quickly waved her hands, saying, No.

I wouldnt dare.

Mrs.

Rhodes is watching through the surveillance cameras.

Lauren cursed internally.

She was not afraid of Michael but of Tiana, who currently ran things.

in Jayrodale.

If Tiana saw Andrew fail this first challenge, the ruthless mother would never give either of them another chance.

Just as Lauren was about to make emergency calls to Marvin and Mark for backup, Andrew spoke up casually.

Ms.

Rhodes, let me ask you something my 1 % shareholding doesnt carry much weight in your family corporation, right?

Dr.

Lloyd, 1 % of Rhodes Corporation isnt cheap Lauren explained with a bitter smile.

Chapter 426 Lauren explained, But according to corporate bylaws, shareholders with higher stakes have more authority and priority than you.

Since Michael is both CEO and has more shares than you, he technically can take legal action.

I see, Andrew nodded

So if I had more shares than Michael and Mr.

Hills, I could overrule them? Thats true, but even if we combined our shares, we still wouldnt match them, Lauren replied.

This is getting complicated maybe we should call Mr.

Yates for help

Andrew appreciated Laurens suggestion but smiled slightly.

No need for that.

If its just about having more shares than these two, I can simply buy more right now.

Laurens beautiful face showed confusion, while Eunice scoffed.

Andrew, stop pretending

You want to buy more shares ? Michael and Mr.

Hills together own 20% percent, which is worth about three billion dollars.

Do you think this is like shopping at a grocery store? Marcus could not stay silent anymore and moved next to Andrew

Even if you could raise a few million, that would only get you a fraction of 1%.

Even 3 % percent would cost you half a billion dollars! He thought Andrew would be shocked, but the latter was unfazed.

me Andrew smiled and replied, Mr.

Chapman, 3% wouldnt give me an advantage.

Ill need at least 30% to overrule their combined 20 %.

Didnt you hear what I just said? Marcus asked desperately.

Just a few percent costs half a billion.

Do you realize what 30 % means? Whats the big deal? Its only about five billion dollars not that much, Andrew replied with a smile.

Marcus nearly choked

How could five billion dollars not be much? Even as a deputy chief at Jayrodale General Hospital with a high income, the idea of investing five billion dollars in Rhodes Corporation shares seemed like an impossible dream.

Nonetheless, Andrew kept things simple.

He took out his phone, found Rhodes Corporations stock trading portal, and made a few quick transactions

Suddenly, an alert appeared in Rhodes Corporations stock trading data center.

[Shareholder Mr.

Andrew Lloyd has purchased the companys shares for five billion dollars.

Mr.

Lloyd is now the fifth major shareholder, holding 35 % of corporate shares.

] The news hit the executive room like a thunderbolt.

Everyone, including Lauren, stared at Andrew in complete disbelief.

Chapter 427 Mr.

Lloyd, d did you really just invest... five billion dollars in the corporation? Marcus stammered, his mind reeling from the absurdity of what had just happened.

Eunices previous hostility and condescension toward Andrew instantly vanished, replaced by shock and disbelief.

Edward shook his head.

No way! That's absolutely impossible! Even most successful financiers couldn't pull out five billion dollars for an investment without preparation.

Check if hackers have attacked our network and caused this data anomaly.

Michael's face showed uncertainty as he barked at his secretary, Verify this immediately! The sweating secretary worked frantically at her computer and made several urgent calls.

Two minutes later, she looked at Michael with a pale face.

Mr.

Rhodes, it's confirmed.

The stock exchange has verified Mr.

Lloyd's purchase of five billion dollars worth of shares, and... Michael exploded.

And what? Are you all brainless? This kind of thing only happens in movies and TV shows, you idiots!

He had carefully orchestrated this meeting on his turf, rallying nearly all of the company's top executives

to pressure Lauren and her thorn in his side pretty boy, Andrew.

If he could not crush these two here and now, then he might as well throw himself off a cliff.

The attractive secretary in her pencil skirt was nearly in tears after being yelled at.

And ... the Chairwoman has confirmed that the situation is ... genuine.

Michael had to swallow hard.

The Chairwoman, who controlled the largest share of the corporation, was none other than Tiana, the Rhodes family matriarch who had been supporting Michael.

Noticing Michaels expression, Edward stuttered, M Mr.

Rhodes, you dont actually... believe.

this? Lets welcome our fifth major shareholder, Mr.

Lloyd, to our noon meeting, Michael gritted out through clenched teeth.

He did not want to believe it, but with Tianas confirmation, he had no choice.

L Only Laurens applause echoed in the room, as the other executives were either still processing the news or too shocked to move.

Lauren beamed with pride and happiness.

Dr.

Lloyd, congratulations on becoming our fifth major shareholder.

Your stake in the corporation now exceeds even mine! This was the man she had fallen for always finding

a way to turn things around with spectacular moves that left everyone speechless.

Chapter 428 Andrew stood up, and his previously friendly smile had vanished, replaced by an icy demeanor.

The shift in his expression sent chills through the boardroom, making everyone uneasy.

He stated coldly, Since my shares now exceed both the CEOS and Mr.

Hills, doesnt that give me the greatest authority and priority in todays lunch meeting? Michaels face twitched

In principle, yes, thats correct.

Edward was not having it, his face contorted with anger.

Kid, I didnt expect you to pull something like this

But five billion in funding you must have misappropriated it from somewhere

With your position and background, even if your family saved for generations, they couldnt come up with that kind of astronomical sum.

Many heads nodded in agreement around the table.

Edwards logic seemed sound, as instantly injecting fifty billion dollars to become the fifth major shareholder was suspicious.

However, Andrew could not care less about their suspicions.

He slowly walked over to Michael, his footsteps echoing in the tense silence.

Michael flinched.

Mr.

Lloyd, what are you doing? Relax, Andrew replied blankly.

You're the CEO of the group, and I'm just a board member.

What could I possibly do to you? I'm simply exercising my rights as the group's fifth major shareholder.

! Edward shouted angrily, Mr.

Lloyd, get back to your seat! You might have lucked into becoming the fifth director, but you still need to follow basic protocols

Andrew nodded calmly

You're right basic protocols must be followed

He paused before saying, So when a minor shareholder like yourself shouts at me, the fifth director,

aren't you overstepping your bounds? Edward froze, his lips moving to deliver an angry retort before catching himself

He mocked, Well, well, Mr.

Lloyd.

You're showing your true colors on your first day.

I'd love to see what you plan to do about it.

He leaned back in his chair with contempt.

As a founding member who had built the company alongside Laurens' father, he did not view this new shareholder as a threat.

Meanwhile, Lauren, Marcus, and Eunice watched Andrew with confusion, wondering what his next move would be.

Mr.

Hills, you were quite bold earlier, threatening to have me arrested and even making me disappear from this world, right? Andrew asked with a deceptively pleasant smile

Edward lifted his chin haughtily.

So what if I did? Though now that youve shown your deep pockets and become a major shareholder, I suppose I cant touch you anymore

Andrew nodded.

Im glad you understand that, Mr.

Hills.

Now its time for me to settle the score.

Mr.

Lloyd, thats enough, Edward scoffed.

Ive been plenty patient with you.

Settling scores? Arent you being childish? Andrew shook his head.

Not at all.

Without warning, he delivered a powerful slap across Edwards plump face.

The impact was explosive.

Edwards 200 pound frame, along with his chair, went flying across the room.

The chair shattered against the wall, while Edward let out a painful groan before his eyes rolled back, and he passed out.

The boardroom fell into a deathly silence.

Chapter 429 Edward the company veteran, the CEOS right hand man, the head of corporate security, and a board member had just been knocked out cold with a single slap.

The shocking display of power left everyone in the boardroom stunned and speechless.

Mr.

Lloyd, you ... Marcus scalp tingled as words falled him completely.

Eunice stared in disbelief.

She mumbled, This is terrible.

We finally had things under control, and now hes ruined everything.

Mr.

Lloyd, do you realize how serious it is to assault a board member and disrespect a company veteran ? Even Lauren had not expected Andrew to make such a bold move.

Slapping Edward across the room was something she had not dared to consider, even when she was CEO with absolute authority at Rhodes Corporation.

Michael jumped to his feet, his face dark with anger.

What the hell are you doing? How dare you assault our company veteran ! Are you trying to land yourself in prison ? Is there a problem with me slapping this old fool ? Andrew asked calmly

He repeatedly targeted me as a director and showed zero respect, constantly insulting me.

Mr.

Rhodes, with my current shareholding, dont you think Im entitled to collect some interest on that disrespect ? Michael gritted his teeth.

Andrew- As Rhodes Corporations fifth major shareholder, Andrew cut him off, my shareholding and my dignity absolutely cannot tolerate any insults

Insulting me is equivalent to insulting the company, so I believe that slap was completely justified

One executive burst out angrily, Even so, you cant just hit people! Others chimed in, Violence is bad enough, but you hit him so hard that he passed out.

Even if youve got money and are now a director, well never accept such lawless and arrogant behavior. Immediately, several other company veterans spoke up in support of Edward.

As veterans themselves, they were used to commanding respect even the CEO had to show them consideration

Yet, this upstart, who had been a director for mere minutes, had openly attacked Edward in broad daylight.

To them, this was a clear sign that he held no respect for their senior status.

Lauren said firmly.

I believe Mr.

Lloyds actions were completely justified.

Everyone witnessed, and the surveillance cameras recorded, that Mr.

Hills disrespected Mr.

Lloyd first.

Mr.

Lloyd controls such a large portion of our companys shares that his reputation is the companys reputation

Mr.

Hills overstepped his bounds he brought this on himself.

Andrew laughed coldly.

Mr.

Rhodes, you can call the police right now if you want to arrest me

for assault.

But consider this Im a company director, and If I get arrested, Its the companys reputation that suffers. Plus, I can file lawsuits about Mr.

Hills previous actions

And those managers and executives who just spoke up? Ive taken note of every word.

None of them will escape consequences

Immediately, Michaels supporters panicked, their faces turning pale as they looked to him for help.

With Andrews current share percentage, dealing with a few employees would not take much effort at all. Michaels expressions fluctuated between rage and forced composure.

Finally, he shot Andrew a hateful glance and said icily, Mr.

Lloyd, I hope this kind of barbaric behavior wont be repeated in our company.

Chapter 430 Andrew walked back to Laurens side and sat down with a casual smile.

He said, Youre the CEO, its your call.

But please understand, I just joined the Rhodes Corporation today, so I got a bit carried away and gave

Mr.

Hills quite a shock ! Many people gritted their teeth in silence.

Andrews nonchalant attitude hardly seemed apologetic, and calling it quite a shock when Edward had to be rushed to the hospital was a massive understatement.

Michael slammed his hand on the table.

Enough Lets get down to business.

Everyone, quiet! Andrew and Lauren exchanged glances, their expressions innocent.

Lauren was secretly delighted, as Andrews performance deserved full marks.

She could only imagine how furious Tiana must have been while watching all of this unfold through the surveillance cameras.

Do we have any updates on the Northern District case ? Michael turned to an executive.

Atlas may be dead, but we havent recovered a single penny from our two investments in Northern District

I wont tolerate this situation! The executive stammered nervously, M Mr.

Rhodes, the people from the Northern District have scattered like birds.

We cant even find anyone in charge our employees dont know who to approach for the money, so...
So

, you useless piece of shit, youre telling me that 60 million dollars from those two projects just vanished into thin air? Michaels cold laugh cut through the room.

The executive lowered his head, his face burning red.

You worthless fool! Michael snapped, his burning gaze sweeping across the executives.

No one dared to meet his eyes, quickly looking down at their feet.

Atlas was long dead, and getting the 60 million dollars back was impossible.

Lauren, since these incompetent fools cant handle it, this is now your responsibility, given that youre the

Vice CEO, Michael suddenly announced, glancing maliciously toward Andrew and Lauren.

Lauren scoffed

Sorry, but Im not accepting this assignment.

Atlas is dead, and Northern District is destroyed where exactly am I supposed to find this 60 million ?

Thats for you to figure out, Michael replied dismissively.

Im the CEO I handle the big picture and make decisions.

Your job is simply to execute them! Laurens temper flared, but Andrew gently squeezed her hand before she could explode

Its okay, Ill go with you, he said with a smile.

Marcus and Eunice watched anxiously from the side, worried that Andrew was once again putting himself in the line of fire.

They wondered if he was too blind to see that Michael was deliberately trying to make things difficult for Lauren

Michael smirked.

Good, since youve agreed, then its settled.

But let me be clear.

These 60 million dollars are crucial

If you cant recover them, youll face consequences, regardless of your status, Lauren.

Dont worry, Lauren replied with disgust.

Im not as incompetent as some people

Michael laughed inwardly, knowing the 60 million had long since disappeared without a trace.

It would take a miracle to recover it now, and he could not wait to see the look on Laurens face when she returned empty handed.