

## **RIISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)**

### **C 701-710**

#### Chapter 701

Bane clenched his jaw, forcing himself to suppress his anger. He growled, "Fine. You've got a sharp tongue, I'll give you that. But what makes you so sure my products don't meet the standards you're talking about?"

Andrew looked at him like he was the village idiot and let out a mocking chuckle. "I might not have seen your formulas, but I've seen the raw materials you're using."

He said, "The recent budget reports from the Pharmaceutical Division? The massive procurement lists? Even just skimming through those documents was enough for me to tell you that your three new products are doomed to fail.

"Because the production costs are ridiculously high-even I was shocked when I saw the numbers. You're basically bleeding Rhodes Corporation dry!"

Bane gave a dismissive snort. "Cost is not my concern. My job is to produce results."

Michael sneered. "Andrew, the Pharmaceutical Division has more than enough capital to handle those costs. Why are you so worried? Feeling jealous already because you know we're about to crush you?"

Andrew's eyes narrowed. "You're an idiot. I honestly can't believe Rhodes Corporation would even consider putting someone as brainless as you in charge. Anyone with half a business brain knows that costs have to be the top priority. Even high-end brands like Chanel and Louis Vuitton, with their sky-high prices, still keep their production costs shockingly low. That's the secret to real profits.

"But with your genius strategy of ignoring production costs, the moment the market rejects these products, the company will crash. And it won't just be a minor loss—you'll be bankrupt so fast, you won't have anything left but regret."

He continued, "Sure, Rhodes Corporation is a powerhouse that can afford to burn some cash. But when you're selling medication at luxury prices, who exactly do you think is going to buy it?"

Michael's smile faltered, and his eyes darkened. "Andrew, you're still too green to challenge me about business. Our high costs come from our high-quality ingredients. And high quality is meant for wealthy customers who don't blink at premium prices."

He taunted, "You think we're developing products for broke nobodies who can't afford decent healthcare? Please. Our target is the upper class the ones with deep pockets and no hesitation to spend when it comes to their health and lifestyle. That's where the real money is, and that's the foundation of our strategy."

Michael leaned back, scoffing as his gaze swept over Andrew with disdain. "Andrew, you might be talented in some areas, but when it comes to understanding products, markets, and business dynamics—you're completely out of your depth."

"The principles I just laid out? They apply everywhere, across industries and markets. That's what we call business acumen. You're just a clueless amateur pretending to be an expert."

Several of the senior executives began applauding, nodding in agreement.

"Mr. Rhodes, that was brilliant! Your insights into the luxury market are truly enlightening!"

"Absolutely! Focusing on wealthy customers is the smartest move. Why waste resources catering to people who can barely afford their prescriptions?"

"With Mr. Rhodes leading us, Rhodes Corporation is destined to reach new heights!"

Even Tiana gave a subtle nod of approval. "Not bad, Michael. I have to admit, your perspective here is solid. In today's market, low-end products offer little profit. Targeting middle and upper-income

Venet

customers with premium products is the smarter path forward. You've definitely matured."

## Chapter 702

Michael beamed with pride at the praise and quickly responded with false humility.

"Aunt Tiana, you flatter me. What I shared just now is only the tip of the iceberg. I'll prepare a detailed market analysis for you later—a summary of everything I've learned during my time at the company. It's the least I can do."

Lauren shook her head and let out a quiet snort. "Showboating. I bet that 'research' was just copy-pasted off the internet. You're not fooling anyone."

Michael, unfazed, grinned smugly. "So what if it was? Everything's on the internet these days. I learn from what I find there, and I think it's brilliant!"

Lauren's lips twitched into a cold smile. "Learning? Is that what you call hiding in your office watching Estonian adult films all day?"

Michael's face turned beet red. He clenched his fists and snapped, "Lauren, this is a professional meeting. I'd appreciate it if you stuck to relevant topics!"

Tiana's gaze shifted to Andrew, her expression amused. "Mr. Lloyd, what happened to that sharp tongue of yours? Didn't you just have a lot to say about our strategy? Why so quiet all of a sudden?"

Andrew sighed, shaking his head as if bored. "Talking to idiots is exhausting. Might as well save my breath."

Tiana's gaze darkened. "Andrew, if you really know what you're talking about, then speak up. Otherwise, stop pretending to be some enlightened genius. I can't stand people who act profound when they have nothing of substance to offer."

Andrew gave a cold laugh. "So, all of you are Rhodes Corporation executives, right? People with impressive resumes, top-tier degrees, and years of corporate experience? Yet when Michael spouted his idiotic theory just now, you clapped like a bunch of trained seals. 1

"Honestly, I'm starting to think Rhodes Corporation isn't a top-three company in Jayrodale after all. It's more like a flashy pyramid scheme with better branding. All of you here are mediocre at best."

Tiana slammed her hand on the table, her face twisted with rage. "What did you just say? Who the hell are you calling mediocre?"

The other executives also bristled with anger.

Andrew's expression remained calm as he locked eyes with Tiana. "Whoever agreed with Michael's nonsense. If you stood with that trash logic, congratulations—you're part of the mediocrity. Any objections?"

Tiana's body trembled with barely contained fury. "All right, then. If you think Michael's ideas are so stupid, prove it. Go ahead. Enlighten us with your brilliance. Otherwise, I swear I'll teach you a lesson about running your mouth in my boardroom."

Andrew shrugged. "Mrs. Rhodes, I don't talk big. I just have a low tolerance for stupidity. And by the way, I've invested five billion dollars into Rhodes Corporation. Do you really think I'm going to sit back and let you guys flush it down the drain?"

Michael forced himself to smile, though his eyes were venomous. "Andrew, enough with the theatrics. If you've got something to say, spit it out. Because when it comes to products, markets, and business strategy, I'm in the stratosphere while you're still stuck in the dirt."

Andrew gave him a long, emotionless stare. "Let me get this straight—you said the key to success is targeting the wealthy because rich people don't care about price, right?"

out. Because when it comes to products, markets, and business strategy, I'm in the stratosphere while you're still stuck in the dirt."

Andrew gave him a long, emotionless stare. "Let me get this straight—you said the key to success is targeting the wealthy because rich people don't care about price, right?"

Michael lifted his chin. "Exactly. That's what I call superior business acumen."



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## Chapter 703

Michael let out a cold snort. "That's right. This is my top-tier business insight. Short and simple. Quality is found in simplicity."

He continued, "Take everyone here, for example. None of you are exactly broke. If you see a car you like, are you really going to sit there crunching numbers? No—you'll sign the papers and drive off."

"When you go out to eat, does it really matter if the bill's 1000 dollars or even 5000 dollars? As long as the food's good and you're enjoying yourself, you'll happily pay, right?"

One of the executives immediately chimed in, "Mr. Rhodes is absolutely right. These days, I don't even look at price tags. If I like something, I buy it."

Another manager eagerly added, "Exactly. Wealthy customers don't stress about prices. The only thing that matters is whether they want it."

A third executive even went as far as bragging about their extravagant lifestyle, boasting about how easily they spent money without batting an eye.

Andrew shook his head and laughed. "I don't know whether to call you guys clueless or just plain dense. You all keep talking about how wealthy people buy things because they like them. But what makes someone like a product? It's not the price tag—it's the quality, the appeal, and the craftsmanship."

"Now let me ask you something—are Bane's three so-called miracle products actually top-tier? Are they game-changers in the market? Do they outperform the competition so convincingly that people can't resist



buying them?"

The room instantly fell into silence, and even Tiana was frowning.

Michael, however, gritted his teeth and snapped, "Our products may not be the absolute best on the market, but they're definitely top-tier. And more importantly, we're targeting high-income customers."

Andrew gave a mocking nod. "Okay, let's assume you're right and call them top-tier. Now answer me this—if your production costs are sky-high, that means your prices will be, too, right?"

Michael straightened his back and smirked. "Of course. High production costs mean higher pricing. And higher prices mean more money out of those wealthy wallets. That's the whole point."

Andrew clicked his tongue, shaking his head in disbelief. "Wow. I'm genuinely impressed. I didn't think anyone could publicly admit to being this dumb and still sound so proud about it."

"Look around you—countless pharmaceutical companies are producing better-quality products at a fraction of your costs. And you know what? They don't jack their prices through the roof."


"Why? Because even the most successful companies know that price gouging is a surefire way to lose customers. But here you are, with ridiculously high costs, deciding to go head-to-head with established competitors by slapping luxury price tags on your products."

"Honestly, whoever came up with this strategy must've spent years recovering from a brain injury."

Lauren cleared her throat and said, "Dr. Lloyd has a valid point. If our costs are that high, our profit margins will automatically shrink. And



with our premium pricing, why would customers choose our products when equally good—if not better—options are available for less?

"Consumers aren't stupid. They'll always go for high-quality products at fair prices. That's how the pharmaceutical market works." 

Andrew let out a low chuckle. "Exactly. It doesn't matter if you're rich or broke—nobody likes feeling ripped off. Why would a wealthy customer pay a thousand dollars for medication when they can get an equally effective alternative for half the price?"

Michael's face twisted with frustration. "That's not a big deal! If necessary, we'll match our prices to the competition's. We'll sell at the same premium rates as the top brands, and since our products are just as good, we'll still maintain a competitive edge. It'll be an even playing field at worst."



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## Chapter 704

Andrew sneered. "I call you an idiot, and you're still trying to argue. Amazing. You've got sky-high production costs, and now you're planning to get into a price war with competitors who can undercut you without breaking a sweat. The moment they lower their prices, your so-called strategy will collapse like a house of cards."

Michael opened his mouth to respond but came up empty. His face darkened as he struggled to find a comeback.

The other executives exchanged uneasy glances. They wanted to defend Michael's point, but they simply did not have the knowledge to counter Andrew's logic.

Even Tiana's eyes narrowed slightly as she mentally reviewed the Pharmaceutical Division's current situation. Andrew's analysis had exposed a glaring flaw she had not fully considered before.

"All right, Mr. Lloyd," Tiana said, leaning slightly forward. "Since you see the problem so clearly, what would you suggest we do to gain an advantage?"

Andrew stretched and gave a lazy yawn. "The solution's pretty obvious. Either reduce production costs or develop high-quality products that nobody else can replicate. Everybody knows there's only one guaranteed path to massive profits—offering something no one else can. In other words, what you need is... a monopoly."

The word seemed to suck the air out of the room. A monopoly?

Rhodes Corporation did not have the power to pull that off. In fact, few companies did. Even the wealthiest families hesitated to claim control

over an entire industry or market.

Andrew smirked as he took in their stunned faces. "Since we're on the topic, let me give Mr. Rhodes and the rest of you 'high-level experts' a free lesson."

Michael's face darkened further.

The executives bristled at the condescending tone but did not dare speak up. Andrew had already left them speechless once, and nobody wanted to step into the line of fire again.

Even Tiana shifted in her chair, her curiosity piqued.

However, Andrew did not immediately continue. He simply leaned back, crossed his arms, and yawned again, looking completely uninterested in the discussion.

Sitting beside him, Lauren raised an eyebrow, torn between amusement and frustration.

The rest of the boardroom grew increasingly tense.

One of the executives snapped, "What the hell is this? Mr. Lloyd, if you have something to say, then say it. Can't you see Mrs. Rhodes is waiting?"

Andrew slowly turned his gaze toward the man. "Where are your manners? I'm offering you a free lecture, yet you can't even pour me a cup of tea?"

The executive's face turned bright red. "What did you just say? You want me to serve you tea? Who the hell do you think you are?"

Andrew shrugged. "Suit yourself. If you're not willing to show basic

respect, then let's just end the meeting here. Honestly, with your attitude, it's no wonder you've spent decades stuck in the same position without a single promotion."

The man slammed his palm on the table. "Andrew, who the hell do you think you are to act like my superior? I've been with Rhodes Corporation for decades. I helped build this company alongside the family. And you—you're just a rookie who showed up yesterday!"

Andrew lifted a finger and wagged it slowly. "Let me break this down for you. I've been here for only a few months, and I'm already a board member. You've been here for decades and are still just a glorified corporate fossil."

He added, "Face it—you're just another overworked, underappreciated employee still grinding away when you should be retired and living the good life. If that isn't the definition of failure, I don't know what is."

The man's breathing turned ragged, and his hand trembled as he pointed at Andrew. "Y-You...!"

His face went pale, and for a second, everyone thought he might pass out on the spot.

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## Chapter 705

Andrew remained unfazed as he continued, "And one more thing—true wisdom has nothing to do with age. If you've lived all these decades and still haven't figured that out, then congratulations—you've basically wasted your entire life. Next time you want to learn something, start by showing a little humility."

The elderly executive was livid. He shot up from his chair, turning to Tiana with a furious glare, ready to demand justice. However, the sudden surge of anger proved too much. With a guttural groan, his face contorted, and he collapsed with a loud thud under the table.

Michael and the others gasped in shock. "Did... did Andrew just argue him into unconsciousness?"

Tiana's face remained stone-cold. "Take him to the medical wing. Don't let this disrupt the meeting."

A team of security staff quickly entered the room, lifted the unconscious executive, and carried him away.

Lauren discreetly gave Andrew a thumbs-up, her eyes glimmering with amusement. She thought, 'Dr. Lloyd, you're incredible. You sure know how to piss people off.'

Andrew stretched his arms lazily. "Well, since everyone seems so eager to hear me out, I'll go ahead and share some real business insights."

Tiana's patience was wearing thin. She clenched her jaw and snapped, "Mr. Lloyd, let me remind you—this is a boardroom meeting, not your personal talk show."

Andrew chuckled, taking a sip of water. "Apologies, Mrs. Rhodes. Can't



help it sometimes. When you're as articulate as I am, the ideas just keep flowing."

He set the glass down and smirked. "If being brilliant is a crime, then I plead guilty and beg to be sentenced to life without parole."

Lauren burst into laughter, nearly choking on her water. Marcus stifled a chuckle, shaking his head. Andrew's audacity never ceased to amaze him.

Tiana, on the other hand, was not amused. Her voice dropped to a warning tone. "Andrew, if you want to clown around, do it outside. This is your last warning."

Michael's fists clenched under the table. The meeting had turned into Andrew's one-man show, and he was losing his grip on the narrative.

Andrew's gaze shifted to him. "Michael, sit back and let me teach you what real business strategy looks like."

He explained, "Look at PinterBuy—a discount marketplace that took over the market by focusing on massive inventory and rock-bottom prices. People share referral links just to knock a few dollars off a blender.

"Or look at Crystal Springs. A company that sells bottled water. That's it. And they turned that into a billion-dollar empire. Water! Something you can literally get for free from the tap. Both of these examples crush your 'luxury-only' strategy. And you know why?

"Because smart businesses don't limit themselves to rich customers. Real success comes when you create products everyone is willing to pay for—rich or poor. That's how you build an empire."

Lauren and Marcus both applauded without hesitation. Tiana surprised everyone by joining in with two slow, deliberate claps.

"Well, well, Mr. Lloyd. I didn't expect it, but you might actually know a thing or two."

Her tone was a mix of skepticism and reluctant respect.

Bane snorted loudly. "What a load of nonsense. I don't care about markets, pricing, or branding. My job is to develop effective medicine—something you, Andrew, could never match."

Michael seized the moment. "Exactly! Andrew, you can talk circles around us all you want, but this industry isn't won through speeches. Our success will be decided by the products we develop. And when the time comes, I'll enjoy watching you eat every arrogant word you've said."

Andrew smiled faintly. "Michael, you're not even qualified to be my rival. If you weren't riding the Rhodes family name like a free pass, you'd be begging for spare change on the street right now."



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## Chapter 706

Michael was furious. After being repeatedly belittled by Andrew today, he was already boiling with rage. He growled, "Alright, we'll see soon enough. I want to see how long you can keep up that arrogance!"

He stood up, threw down those harsh words, and stormed out with Bane trailing behind him.

"Meeting adjourned!" Tiana announced.

The other senior executives followed suit, leaving one after the other. As they walked out, most instinctively kept their distance from Andrew.

They had finally realized that Andrew was an unrelenting, shameless troublemaker. He showed no respect for Michael, even though Michael came from a powerful family, and he even dared to openly mock Tiana.

That kind of audacity was not something ordinary people could stomach.

Tiana was the last to leave. She turned to Andrew with a taunting smile. "Mr. Lloyd, I heard the Jayrodale Grand Hotel has arranged a 'Reckoning Toast' just for you. You act all high and mighty in front of me—I just hope you won't be too scared to even show up. Or worse, wet your pants when you get there!"

Andrew's expression remained calm. "Just a small fry—not worth my time."

Tiana let out a cold laugh. "Raymond may be a small fry, but Winston from the Wright family? Now, that's a shark that kills."

Andrew chuckled. "And what difference does that make in the eyes of a soaring predator? Whether it's a shark or a small fry, they're both

nothing more than insects to me."

Tiana scoffed. "Arrogance leads to disaster, Mr. Lloyd. You'd better hurry and beg Marvin to spend some money and clean up your mess!"

With that, she turned and walked away.

The Reckoning Toast that Raymond had set up at Jayrodale Grand Hotel was already the talk of high society. Tiana had known about it for a while now, and she was also well aware that Raymond had Winston from the Wright family backing him up.

Winston had the worst reputation in Blumedale—an infamous second-generation heir and a complete disgrace to his family.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day, his parents and his family's power made up for all of that. Even Tiana had to treat Winston with courtesy, simply because the Wright family's influence was far too great to ignore.

Yet, Andrew did not seem to care. The Reckoning Toast had been going on for two days now, and he remained completely unfazed.

Tiana could already picture the scene—when Andrew finally came face-to-face with Winston, he would be beaten so badly that he would not even recognize himself in the mirror.

Not that she planned to intervene.

After all, Andrew had dug his own grave—he could lie in it himself. If anything, she was actually hoping Winston would take him down a notch. Only by crushing Andrew could she finally get Lauren to come to her senses.

Compared to Joe, Andrew was nothing more than a passing storm. In

front of real elite heirs, he was nobody.

Meanwhile, Andrew returned to Lauren's office, where Marcus was anxiously pacing.

"Mr. Lloyd, tomorrow's the last day of the Reckoning Toast," Marcus reminded him. "Traditionally, you're supposed to show up and apologize on the first day to prove your sincerity."

He added, "If you wait until the third day, it'll be seen as disrespectful—people will think you don't take the apology seriously, and it'll stir up even more trouble!"

Andrew smiled. "So what if it does? I'm not going there to apologize anyway."

Marcus was stunned. "You're not going to apologize? Then... what exactly are you going for?"

Andrew's eyes turned ice-cold. "Isn't it obvious? I'm going to make Raymond apologize to me!"

Marcus was utterly speechless, thinking, 'Mr. Lloyd, are you sure you want to play this game?'

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## Chapter 707

Lauren said, "Dr. Lloyd, I'm going with you to the Jayrodale Grand Hotel tomorrow!"

Andrew waved his hand dismissively. "No need. We're at a critical stage with our pharmaceutical product launch right now. You and Mr. Chapman are already swamped, so just stay focused on the product!"

Lauren frowned with concern. "But I don't feel comfortable letting you go alone!"

Andrew replied calmly, "Relax. I'm going there to reason with Raymond. We've got the facts on our side, so there's nothing to fear, no matter how many people he brings."

Lauren could not hold back her anxiety. "Raymond's got Winston backing him up, and they have no intention of playing fair. They're just trying to strong-arm us, Dr. Lloyd. You know that better than anyone!"

Andrew's eyes darkened, but his tone remained steady. "In this world, everything should be resolved through reason. But if brute force is the solution, then I prefer it that way."

That was his principle: if no one messed with Andrew, he would not mess with them. However, if some entitled rich kid thought he could show up and start throwing his weight around, Andrew could not care what his background was—he would stomp him into the ground just the same.

After work, Andrew drove straight to Moonlit Sanctuary, planning to get some rest. Just then, his phone rang.

Stephen's anxious voice came through the line. "Mr. Lloyd, you've been quiet for the past two days, but Raymond is absolutely furious!"

Andrew remained indifferent. "Let him rage. What does that have to do with me?"

Stephen let out a bitter chuckle. "Raymond's going all out to put on a show. Not only did he invite Winston, but a bunch of Jayrodale's most influential people were also attending.

"You ignoring him for two days has humiliated him in front of everyone. If you show up tomorrow, he's definitely going to get physical. Maybe you should just skip the meeting altogether."

Andrew sneered. "Are you suggesting I back down like a coward?"

Stephen quickly corrected himself. "Of course not! I just think the Reckoning Toast is probably ruined anyway, so there's no point in confronting Raymond head-on. Once he cools off, I can step in and try to negotiate. Maybe we can smooth things over—"

Andrew cut him off. "There's nothing to smooth over. He went out of his way to make this a big deal. Honestly, it saves me the trouble of doing it myself. With everyone watching, I'll show up tomorrow and accept an apology from the Chapmans."

With that, Andrew hung up. Sleep was far more important to him, and everything else was just noise.


...

At Glorious Pharmaceuticals, Stephen held his phone with a deep sigh. He had just pledged loyalty to Andrew, and now trouble had come knocking. If Andrew got crushed by Raymond and Winston, then he had bet on the wrong side.

"Should I pull out now and cut ties with Andrew and Rhodes Corporation?"



"He muttered to himself, torn between choices.

Finally, his expression hardened. "Screw it. They say loyalty is tested in tough times. Maybe Mr. Lloyd really has a hidden ace up his sleeve to deal with the Chapmans and Winston. If that's the case, my loyalty now will earn me his trust in the long run." 

Stephen had been playing the game long enough to know how to survive. Right now, everyone in Jayrodale thought Andrew was doomed. By all logic, he should quietly back away from this mess.


Nonetheless, fortune favored the bold, and high risk meant high reward.

Stephen had made it this far by taking risks; this time, he was going all in.

In the worst-case scenario, he would end up broke and begging on the streets. However, if he won, he would be living the high life, with money and power at his fingertips.

...

A notification beep interrupted Andrew's sleep, and he grumbled, "Who the hell is texting me at this hour?"

Squinting, he unlocked his phone—it was Francesca. 

[Andrew, I can't sleep.]

Andrew immediately knew what this meant. That big-breasted little tease was trying to seduce him again in the middle of the night.

## Chapter 708

At times like this, the smartest move was not to respond—so Andrew put down his phone and went back to sleep.

Yet, Francesca kept bombarding him with messages. [Andrew, I know you're not asleep. You jerk! You used my body and then tossed me aside like nothing!]

Andrew's temper flared. When had he ever used her body? He had not even gotten that far, and it was a ridiculous accusation.

So, he replied, [Fran, get some rest. It's late. We can talk tomorrow.]

Francesca fired back immediately. [Ha! I knew it! You were awake, you scumbag. Andrew, I took a bunch of pictures today. Want me to share them with you?]

Andrew did not want to kill her excitement, so he played along. [Sure, let me admire the gorgeous face of our little princess.]

Within seconds, a photo popped up. Andrew took one look, and his heart skipped a beat.

It was a bikini shot, and her generous curves strained against the tiny two-piece. Her fair, soft skin glowed in the dim lighting, and that adorable pout on her lips—pure innocence mixed with dangerous temptation—an angelic face paired with a devilish body.

[Francesca: Okay, I'm off to bed. Goodnight, Andrew!]

Feeling utterly frustrated, Andrew texted back, [Fran, you did that on purpose, didn't you?]



Francesca responded proudly, [Of course I did! I want you to toss and turn all night, burning with frustration. That's what you get for playing innocent after teasing me!]

Andrew sent a smirking emoji along with his response. [You must not realize, Fran, that a picture like this can be... pretty useful to a guy. With a bit of imagination and experience, I bet some guys would find your photo ... very satisfying.]

Francesca read the message and instantly panicked. Her cheeks were burning as she frantically tried to unsend the photo—but it was too late. The damage was done.

She practically screamed into her pillow, her legs kicking wildly. "No way! I can't let that bastard use my picture for... that!"

Her next message was three angry, flame-filled emojis followed by a threat. [You perv! If you dare do that with my picture, I swear I'll make you pay!]

[Andrew: Oops. Too late. Already done.]

Francesca was fuming. [You jerk! Just wait until tomorrow—I'm gonna make you regret it!]

She flopped onto her bed, buried her face in her pillow, and groaned. Goosebumps raced up her arms as she squirmed in embarrassment.

Of course, Andrew had not done anything with Francesca's pictures. First of all, he was not that desperate. Second, there was no need to settle for a picture when the real thing was just a phone call away.

The next morning, Andrew woke up feeling refreshed and headed out to visit the Moonlit Apothecary. Cedric was already there, running the

medical center, while a long line of patients stretched outside.

Francesca had personally driven Cedric over, and when she saw Andrew, her face immediately turned red with embarrassment and anger.

Andrew looked at her with exaggerated confusion. "Fran, what's wrong? Toothache? Cramps?"

Francesca's tiny fist shot toward him. "You're such a scumbag!"

Andrew easily caught her hand and laughed. "Relax. I didn't do anything last night. You can stop worrying."

Francesca hesitated. "Really? You're not lying?"

Andrew gave her a casual shrug. "Why would I lie? I mean, come on—doing it myself would be an insult to a gentleman like me."

Francesca's pout twisted into a reluctant smile. "Ha! Gentleman? You? Please. You're a total perv."

"Andrew grinned. "Yeah, but a classy perv."

Before Francesca could respond, Stephen's sleek black Maybach rolled up to the curb. He shouted, "Mr. Lloyd, we need to go!"

Andrew released Francesca's hand, climbed into the car, and the Maybach glided toward the Jayrodale Grand Hotel.

Meanwhile, inside the hotel, Raymond got word of Andrew's arrival. He cracked a wicked grin. "I'll make sure that bastard learns his lesson today!"

Chapter 709 Today marked the final day of the Reckoning Toast.

Raymond had never expected Andrew to show him such blatant disregard, showing up this late and making such an entrance. In the center of the hotels grand hall, Winston sat slouched in his chair, looking thoroughly bored.

Every now and then, locals from Jayrodale came over to toast him, but he either ignored them or responded with dismissive nods. It was clear he didnt take anyone here seriously.

Standing stiffly behind Winston was an older man with a lean frame and a stone cold expression.

He was known as Jason Lowell, one of the Wright familys top enforcers sent as Winstons personal bodyguard .

Raymond approached with a polite smile.

Mr.

Lowell, youve been standing there all night.

Please, sit down and rest for a bit .

Jason responded flatly, Mr.

Chapman, just handle your business.

Ill handle mine.

Raymond bowed slightly, eager to please.

Of course,

Lowell .

Mr.

You're absolutely right.

I just worry that Andrew might show up with Jayrodale's underground forces.

If that happens, I might need to rely on you.

Jason let out a cold snort.

I'll step in when necessary.

But Jayrodale is a tiny town there's barely anyone here worth my effort.

Raymond nodded in agreement, plastering on a sycophantic grin.

Mr.

Lowell, you're absolutely right.

Nobody here can match you.

And that Andrew... he's not even worth mentioning.

Winston tapped his glass on the table, his patience running thin.

Where the hell is this Andrew guy? I heard he's some notorious sugar baby who lives off rich women. Nothing disgusts me more than a man who can't stand on his own two feet.

Raymond gave a quick laugh.

Don't worry, Mr.

Wright.

I just heard from Stephen they're on their way.

Winston grunted and swept his gaze across the room.

Suddenly, his eyes widened, and a lecherous grin spread across his face.

Well, well... now that's a surprise, he muttered.

Didn't expect to see that kind of beauty here.

Raymond followed Winstons gaze and immediately chuckled knowingly.

Ah, I see Mr.

Wright has good taste, Raymond said with a sleazy grin.

Allow me to introduce them to you.

11 He straightened his suit and gestured toward the two women Winston had his eyes on .

Those two beauties are Christina Stevens, CEO of Jayrodales Stevens Corporation, known as the Ice

Queen of the corporate work fel.

Raymond explained.

The other is Aspen Stevens, from Bridgefields prestigious Stevens family a true socialite.

Winstons eyes gleamed with interest.

Theyre both from the Stevens family? Damn ... imagine landing both women.

Thatd be a dream come true.

Raymonds smile widened.

With your charm and family name, Mr.

Wright,

, theyll be yours in no time.

He added styly, By the way, the man standing with them? Thats

Moore from Hidden Dragons el

Youve met before, havent you? Winston sneered.

Of course, I know that old perv.

swnovelhe

Hes practically a friend when it comes to ... extracurricular activities.

Raymond laughed and strode over to the group.

Mr.

Finley, Aspen, Christina, Raymond greeted them with a 1/2 Chapter 709 practiced smile.

Allow me to introduce you to Mr.

Winston Wright.

Hes been eager to meet you.

Finley raised his glass, giving Winston a knowing smirk.

Mr.

Wright, long time no see.

We havent ... crossed swords since that night in Blumedale.

Winston let out a sleazy chuckle.

Youve always had a quick draw, Finley.

Makes the rest of us look bad.

Finley tilted his glass toward him.

Nonsense.

Your technique is famous.

Short and thin, but deadly when it counts.

Winstons eyes darkened, but he let the jab slide, turning his attention to Christina and Aspen instead

sw noveling

He straightened his posture and flashed what he believed was a charming smile .

Good evening, ladies.

My name is Winston.

Winston Wright, from the Wright family.

He practically growled the last two words, emphasizing his family name.

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Winstons intentions were obvious he wanted Christina and Aspen to know just how significant his status was. Aspen gave a demure smile.

Ah, so youre the young heir of the Wright family.

Its a pleasure to meet you,

Wright.

Mr.

Christina, feeling a bit nervous, gave a small nod. Hello, Mr.

Wright.

Winston laughed heartily.

Ladies, I assume youre here today to witness the grand finale of Mr.

Chapmans Reckoning Toast ? Aspen tilted her head with a playful smile. Mr.

Wright, youre so sharp ! Yes, we did come to join the fun.

But honestly, we dont really understand these kinds of events.

Were just here to watch.

Winstons chest swelled with pride.

Well, youre in for a treat.

Sit back and enjoy the show Im about to deal with that nobody, Andrew.

Aspens eyes widened in mock surprise as she parted her soft, red lips.



Wait... Mr.

Wright, are you really going to step in on Mr.

Chapmans behalf? Winston let out a disdainful snort, his expression turning cold. Of course.

Raymonds basically my dog.

When someone kicks my dog without asking me first, theyre disrespecting me.

And you know... if I dont teach that Andrew a lesson, people might start thinking Im weak. Aspen covered her mouth with a charming laugh.

Wow,

Mr.

Wright! Youve barely arrived in Jayrodale, and youve already stirred up such a storm.

With someone like you supporting Mr.

Chapman, hell be able to walk all over this city from now on.

Winston was practically glowing from the flattery .

His smile stretched even wider, his confidence soaring.

He loved how easily women were drawn to him once they caught a hint of his familys power. As the young heir of the Wright family, Winston believed his life was nothing short of perfect .

After all, in his mind, there was was a single beautiful woman in this world e could not get if he wenet

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her

Meanwhile, Raymond stood awkwardly to the side, forcing a stiff smile.

He had just been called a dog right in front of everyone.

Yet, what could he do? Against the Wright family from Blumedale, he really was a nobody.

Hence, despite the humiliation

burning in his chest, Raymond told himself it was a privilege to serve a man like Winston. Content Belongs

1 Aspen raised her glass, her smile bright and playful .

Mr.

Wright, Im surprised someone of your status would even bother coming to a small town like Jayrodale.

Im curious... how are you planning to show off your strength today? I cant wait to see.

Winstons ego inflated even more under her attention.

He downed a shot of whiskey and grinned.

Simple, he declared.

As soon as that punk Andrew walks in, Ill make him get on his knees.

And after that? Ill do whatever the hell I want with him.

Aspens eyes sparkled .

Oh, Mr.

Wright, you better not let me down.

Ill be watching closely the whole time ! Winston gave a confident wave of his hand

Dont worry, sweetheart.

You two are in for quite a show.

Finley stood off to the side, lazily swirling his drink with an amused smirk.

He thought Aspen was impressive- dangerously so.

With just a few playful words, she had Winston wrapped around her finger.

In just a few minutes, Aspen had

inflated Winstons ego and subtly et

ignited his resentment toward Andrew.

What a clever little snake, Finley mused, A textbook case of using one mans sword to kill another.

1/2 Chapter 710 Too bad Winston was too stupid to notice.

For all his familys wealth and power, Winston had the intelligence of a blunt knife.

Aspen had barely even tried, yet he was already putty in her hands.



