

The Ashes 861

Chapter 861

Andrew was not in a hurry. Before heading to Rhodes Corporation, he made a quick stop at Natasha's place. Just in time, he caught sight of Aspen changing into a training outfit. Her toned figure and long, straight legs were stretched taut as she trained.

The moment Aspen saw Andrew, her attacks on the training dummy became even fiercer. First came the elbow strike and sweeping kick, then a relentless barrage of punches straight to the dummy's face!

"Take this! And this!" Aspen shouted, her fists slamming into the dummy over and over again. It was obvious that she was imagining the dummy as Andrew.

Natasha strolled over with a smirk and said, "She's certainly training hard, darling, but let me remind you- women can be the definition of ruthless."

She continued, "Take Aspen, for example, or the heiress of the Bridgefields' Stevens family. The more you crush her, the more she'll hate you. Hatred fuels ambition. If she ever grows strong enough, she might just turn against you."

Andrew remained unfazed by Natasha's warning. "An ant, no matter how hard it works or how strong it becomes, will always be an ant. My only concern is that Aspen is useless and a waste of resources."

Natasha scoffed. "Well, she's your slave, so it's your call. But you do have a point. If she ended up with someone else, I could see her rebelling. But under your control? She'll just go from being a weak slave to a powerful one. At the end of the day, she's still a slave."

Andrew raised a hand and called out to Aspen, who was still venting her rage on the dummy. "Come here."

Just two words-spoken in the tone of someone commanding a servant.

Aspen's expression darkened. She wanted to ignore him, but after hesitating for two seconds, she clenched her jaw and walked over. She asked irritably, "What?"

Andrew smiled. "I know you're still bitter about losing yesterday. So, how about another challenge today? I won't use my hands or feet this time-you can attack however you want."

Aspen was tempted, but the look on Andrew's face made her instinctively wary. "And if I lose? What's the punishment?"

Andrew's smile remained unchanged. "Same as yesterday a good beating."

Aspen flinched, fear flickering across her face before she gritted her teeth. "Andrew, I've never met a man like you who actually lay their hands on other women."

Andrew remained indifferent. "A kind, beautiful, and sweet woman? Of course, I wouldn't lay a finger on her. But you're not that. You're petty and vindictive, with an inflated ego and no real skills. Should I pamper a woman like you instead of disciplining you?"

Aspen burned with anger but swallowed it down, letting out a cold snort. "I know exactly what you're trying to do. You just want another excuse to torture me. Too bad. I'm not playing your game. So, no, I refuse."

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "So, you're chickening out?"

Aspen realized she was running out of comebacks. With a sigh, she muttered, "Think whatever you want. I'm not falling into your trap again."

Andrew nodded approvingly. "Not bad. You're learning. I thought you'd still be as stubborn as ever, acting like some spoiled heiress. If that were the case, I'd have no choice but to take time every day to show you just how

brutal reality can be."

Aspen clenched her fists, hatred flashing in her eyes. "Andrew, everything you've

done to me-I'll make sure to pay you back one day."

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Andrew chuckled, finding her words utterly lame. "You always say that, but you don't even know when 'someday' will be, do you?"

Aspen froze, her face flushing red. Of course, she refused to admit defeat out loud, but deep down, she was suffocating with the realization that there might never be someday'. Even if there was, she could not see a single shred of hope that she would ever turn the tables on Andrew.

Right now, his power was so overwhelming that it seemed impossible for her to reach the same level. Moreover, it was not just his insane combat skills-it was the way he toyed with people, the way he always had control, that truly made her shudder.

Andrew's smile faded, and his tone turned serious. "You're familiar with Blumedale, right?"

Aspen was caught off guard but reluctantly answered, "Bridgefields is right next to Blumedale. I basically grew up there, so yeah, I know it well."

Andrew nodded. "Good. Pack up-you're heading there soon."

Aspen's eyes widened. "You're sending me to Blumedale? For what?"

Andrew pulled a sleek black card from his pocket and handed it to her. "There's ten billion on this card. I want you to go to Blumedale, register a company under my name, and scale it up as fast as possible. Also, keep an eye on the Driscoll and Golding families for me."

Aspen stared at the black card, her face full of disbelief. "Ten billion dollars? Andrew, you actually have that much money?"

Ten billion dollars was enough to buy out her entire family's estate in Bridgefields. Besides, no matter where in the world, ten billion was a staggering amount of money.

She could not wrap her head around how Andrew had that much wealth. Even if he was close with Jayrodale's richest man, Marvin, there was no way he could casually pull out that kind of cash.

Everyone knew that cash was king, and for him to carry around ten billion like pocket change was unimaginable. Even if his father was the wealthiest man alive, that level of extravagance was unheard of.

Meanwhile, Natasha let out a quiet sigh as she realized that Andrew was already making moves in Blumedale for Lauren.

However, Blumedale was crawling with powerful players. Just the Driscoll and Golding families alone were like immovable mountains-he was not going to have an easy time there.

Andrew handed Aspen the card and said flatly, "Don't look so shocked. Do you have any idea how embarrassing you look right now?"

Aspen's face burned with a mix of anger and humiliation, but she had no choice but to stand there and take the scolding.

After all, Andrew's wealth and power hit her in waves, each one slamming against her, making her question her past self. Seriously, what had made her think she could ever challenge this devil? en

Aspen finally said, "Fine. I'll go to Blumédale and build your empire."

"But..." She twirled the black card between her fingers, a sly smile appearing on her lips. "Aren't you afraid I'll just take the money and disappear? Leave you high and dry?"

Andrew shrugged, unfazed. "Go ahead. Run off with my ten billion if you want. Worst case, I'll just pay your

dearest family in Bridgefields a visit and take back both my money and you.

"I could wipe out your entire family and sell every last one of you to

some helthole where they carve out kidneys and force people into

prostitution. Either way, my billion will find its way back

me.

"Besides, the Stevens family has been around for, what, a hundred years? I could just dig up your ancestors graves, auction off the heirlooms, and sell your family's burial grounds for real estate. That alone would make me a fortune. So, really, I have nothing to worry about. Isn't that right?"

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Aspen clenched her teeth, fury blazing in her eyes as her chest rose and fell with anger. She thought, 'This bastard is despicable, ruthless, and downright vile. I can't believe he actually has the audacity to talk about digging up my family's graves!'

She silently cursed at Andrew for being inhuman, scolding him a thousand times in her head. Nonetheless, all that came out of her mouth was a deflated sigh. "Relax. With my skills and connections in Blumedale, I'll have your company up and running in no time."

She added, "But here's a piece of advice-money doesn't mean you can do whatever you want. The Driscoll family and the Golding family aren't just some random nobodies. You're just a big shot in Jayrodale, but in Blumedale, you're nothing more than a small-time boss.

"If the Driscoll family or any of those powerful clans take an interest in you... Not only will you lose your people, but your money might vanish into thin air too."

Aspen smirked as she said it. It was as if she were waiting for him to realize that his arrogance would only get him so far. Sure, Andrew might be able to throw his weight around in Jayrodale, but in Blumedale? He would have to lay low and act humble.

"Just focus on completing the task I gave you. Everything else isn't your concern." Andrew waved her off like it was nothing.

He continued, "And while you're at it, buy yourself a decent dress or some professional attire. Right now, you look like a construction worker or some kind of brute. It's an eyesore."

Aspen fumed, but she did not dare talk back. Was he actually calling her ugly?

She thought he must be blind. After all, she was the heiress of the Bridgefields' Stevens family, and she could stand toe-to-toe with Francesca or Lauren any day. Andrew did not bother with her reaction. He simply waved her away, signaling that their conversation was over.

Just as she was about to leave, Aspen suddenly smirked. "One last thing—you might want to keep an eye on your dearest Christina. That innocent-looking CEO may seem harmless, but did you know it was her who tipped off my father?"

"She's the one who leaked the information that led the entire Stevens family to storm into Jayrodale, all guns blazing. You outplayed us, and we lost. But Christina? She was more than happy to sit back and to get someone else to do her dirty work."

With that, Aspen turned and walked away.

Andrew's expression did not change, but a dark glint flickered in his eyes. Christina had become nothing like the woman he used to know. She had turned into something venomous, as deadly as a viper.

Natasha let out a soft chuckle. "I told you, your ex had the makings of a first-class manipulator. Turns out, she's not just manipulative—she's a scorned woman who turned into a full-blown vengeful bitch."

Andrew scoffed. "I've already gone easy on the Stevens family. If that idiot tries anything again, I won't hesitate to teach her a lesson."

Natasha smirked. "Do you want me to go to Blumedale with Aspen? Just in case?"

Andrew raised a brow. "You're worried she might run?"

Natasha nodded. "Exactly. She acts like you have her completely under control, but that girl is sharp. You just handed her ten billion; that's a

lot of money. I wouldn't be surprised if she's tempted to disappear"

Andrew remained indifferent. "Let her run. She might get away, but her family won't. If she dares betray me, I'll make sure the entire Bridgefields' Stevens family goes bankrupt just to pay me back.

"Aspen might be cunning, but she knows better-she can run, but her family will always be there."

Natasha's eye's gleamed with anticipation. So, are we finally extending our reach to Blumedale For years, Blumedale's elites have been suppressing everyone beneath them. No one has ever dared to challenge them."

Andrew shook his head. "No rush. I'm just putting things in place-just in case. The Driscoll and Golding

families haven't done anything toet

me. If they don't stand in my way, we can all make money in peace."

Natasha chuckled. "And if they do?"

Andrew smirked. "Then I'll get on my knees and beg them for mercy."

Natasha burst into laughter. Andrew always acted courteously when, in reality, he was the most ruthless one of all.

Chapter 864

Andrew left West End and drove straight to Rhodes Corporation. By the time he arrived, Tiana had already gathered all the company's top executives in the main conference room.

As soon as Andrew stepped in, Tiana took the lead in applauding with a bright smile. "There's our hero, the savior of Rhodes Corporation-Mr. Andrew Lloyd!"

Applause rang out in the room. Marcus, his people, Lauren, and Tiana's assistant, Eunice, clapped the loudest.

Michael and his faction, however, only gave a few half-hearted claps, their expressions far from pleasant.

Andrew took a seat and spoke casually. "Hero? Hardly, Mrs. Rhodes. After everything I've done for Rhodes Corporation, I think you already know my intentions."

Tiana smiled. "Mr. Lloyd, don't be so formal. You're part of this company, and helping Rhodes Corporation is really just helping yourself, isn't it?"

Andrew cut straight to the point. "Not at all. If it weren't for Lauren, I wouldn't have batted an eye even if Rhodes Corporation went up in flames."

Tiana's smile froze for a second before she let out a cold, sarcastic laugh. "You really have a way with words-always so damn nauseating."

Andrew remained indifferent. "Mrs. Rhodes, you can keep up the corporate pleasantries and pretend you don't know what I'm talking about. But if that's the case, I'll just be blunt. Though, no matter what I say, you'll always find something to nitpick."

Tiana let out a sharp breath. "I know exactly what you want. You want me to step down as CEO and hand the position to Lauren, right?"

Andrew nodded. "That's right. You've seen for yourself how crucial Lauren has been to Rhodes Corporation. During the company's crisis, she was the one holding everything together. If it weren't for her, there's no way Rhodes Corporation would have recovered so quickly."

Hearing Andrew's straightforward praise, Lauren's cheeks flushed slightly. Even so, she did not try to act humble-she knew how much effort she had put in.

Michael let out a mocking laugh. "Mr. Lloyd, how biased can you get? You just dump all the credit onto the woman you like? Rhodes Corporation is a massive company with hundreds of employees and executives. If Lauren did everything, then what does that make the rest of us? Invisible?"

His lackeys immediately chimed in.

"Exactly! Mr. Lloyd, you're completely ignoring everyone else's contributions!"

"Mr. Rhodes played a huge role in getting us through this crisis. In fact, his efforts are just as important as Ms. Rhodes'!"

"If we're talking about merit, at most, Ms. Rhodes and Mr. Rhodes should share the credit equally. Giving it all to her is just ridiculous!"

They went on and on, their shamelessness on full display, not even the slightest bit embarrassed by their own words.

Michael grinned. "Mr. Lloyd, did you hear that? The people have spoken. They all agree that I played a major role. They can't all be wrong, can they?"

Andrew smirked. "Oh, of course, Mr. Rhodes, you absolutely made a contribution. That little scandal video of yours? It completely shifted the media's attention and saved the company from the worst of the PR crisis.

"I honestly think you're wasting your talents here. You should consider going into adult films, or better yet, move to Eastonia-you might even win an award someday!"

"You son of a-" Michael's face turned bright red with rage.

There was nothing he hated more than people bringing up that video, and Andrew had thrown it in his face, right in front of the entire board, with Tiana sitting right there.

The humiliation made him want to crawl under the table and disappear.

The rest of the executives struggled to keep their laughter in check. None of them dared to mock Michael directly, but Andrew? He had no

problem putting it all out in the open.

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It was indeed a satisfying treat.

Tiana's voice turned sharp. "Enough! Like it or not, Michael played his part in saving the company. Now, let's move on. It's time to announce the final decision for the company's CEO."

Everyone straightened in their seats, their eyes fixed on Tiana.

Lauren, Michael, and Marcus all sat up, waiting anxiously for the verdict.

Andrew, however, remained as relaxed as ever, lounging in his chair without a care in the world. All he hoped was that Tiana would not do anything foolish.

Chapter 865

Eunice smiled reassuringly and said, "Ms. Rhodes, don't worry-the CEO position is yours for sure!"

Marcus nodded in agreement. "That's right, Ms. Rhodes. We all saw the effort you put in. As per our original agreement, you and Mr. Lloyd were the ones who saved the Pharmaceutical Division. So, if anyone deserves to be CEO, it's you."

Despite their confidence, Lauren still felt a knot of anxiety in her chest. She did not care about the title of CEO; what mattered was that if she became the CEO, she could stay in Jayrodale and take control of Rhodes Corporation.

In other words, she could escape being used as a pawn in her family's arranged marriage plans; she would not have to be shipped off to marry into the Driscoll family in Blumedale.

Lauren made up her mind, thinking, 'As long as I can avoid marrying into the Driscoll family, I'll give myself to Dr. Lloyd. From now on, I'll belong to him alone.'

Tiana's gaze slowly swept across the entire conference room. Finally, her eyes landed on Andrew for a brief moment, and there was something mocking and playful in her expression.

Andrew's chest tightened as a bad feeling crept in, knowing she was about to make a bold move.

"The final decision for the CEO position," Tiana announced, her voice firm and unquestionable, "has been made by the senior leadership of the Rhodes family, and the new CEO of Rhodes Corporation will be... Michael."

Silence crashed over the room like a thunderclap. Both sides-Michael's supporters and Lauren's allies-were instantly thrown into an uproar.

Marcus shot up in rage. "Mrs. Rhodes, how could you make this decision? This is completely unfair!"

Tiana gave him a cold glance, her face expressionless. "This decision wasn't mine alone. It was made by the entire senior leadership of the Rhodes family."

Marcus looked stunned. "Even Mr. Jameson agreed to this?"

Tiana scoffed. "What do you think? My announcement is also his decision."

Michael burst into laughter, his face flushed red with excitement. His lackeys wasted no time showering him with flattery.

"Congratulations, Mr. Rhodes! Welcome back as CEO!"

"True talent always shines. I knew from the start that Mr. Rhodes was destined to lead us!"

"The future of the company looks brighter than ever! The Rhodes family is in good hands under your leadership!"

Michael's triumphant laughter grew louder and more unrestrained.

Meanwhile, Lauren's face turned pale. She stared at Tiana in disbelief, the pain and disappointment in her eyes growing stronger by the

second. She had done so much, and so did Andrew. Yet Tiana still chose

to a blind eye and be this

ruthless.

Eunice clenched her fists, her eyes red with frustration as she glared at Michael's group. Yet, she was just a secretary-there was nothing she could do to change Tiana's decision.

"Why?" Lauren's voice was hoarse, barely more than a whisper.

She refused to accept this.

Tiana remained emotionless. "There is no 'why'. This was a unanimous decision by the family. You have no choice but to accept it."

Lauren gritted her teeth. "And if I don't?"

Tiana's expression turned sharp. "As a daughter of the Rhodes family, you will accept it. If you refuse, then I will have no choice but to enforce the family rules."

Michael let out another loud laugh. "Lauren, let me tell you why. First, it's obvious I'm a man. It's my duty to carry the Rhodes family's legacy on my shoulders. "You, on the other hand, are just a woman. No matter how capable you are, you're meant to be married off, so the CEO position was never meant for you."

He glanced at Andrew, deliberately

drawing out his next words with a smug grin. "And second... it's because my product was a massive success. Thanks to me, the Pharmaceutical Division made a complete turnaround."

Chapter 866

"I don't think you all understand the situation yet," Michael said smugly. "Right now, our Pharmaceutical Division's products are blowing up again-this time, even bigger than before!"

Tiana nodded in agreement. "That's right. The latest sales reports for Michael's three products just came in. In just one week, revenue exceeded 100 million dollars. That's why, as per our agreement, I awarded him the CEO position."

She glanced at Lauren and added, "So, this isn't unfair to you. He truly outperformed your products."

Several department heads gasped when they heard the amount, their faces filled with disbelief as they turned to Michael.

"Mr. Rhodes, you actually pulled off a record-breaking achievement in the Pharmaceutical Division?"

"With 100 million in a week... that's at least 400 million a month! Goodness, the division's success is reaching levels comparable to the most profitable companies in the world!"

"Looking at these numbers, it's hard to argue. Ms. Rhodes really did lose fair and square. Mr. Rhodes is a powerhouse-he's like a walking money-making machine!!

Hearing the murmurs of astonishment around the room, Michael could barely contain his excitement. For so long, he had been nothing but a joke.

Tiana stripped him of his authority, Andrew crushed him at every turn, and he was almost completely ruined. Then, the humiliating scandal-his infamous video-had turned him into a global laughingstock.

But now, the tables had turned, and his suffering had finally paid off.

Michael sneered, "Andrew, I told you-you'd never beat me. So, do you admit defeat now?"

With a smug grin, he turned to Andrew, eyes gleaming with arrogance.

Andrew simply shook his head and let out a short laugh. "Are you sure you're the one who made that 100 million dollars in a week happen?"

Michael's smile faltered for a second before he scoffed. "Oh You don't believe it? Fine. I'll slap you in the face with hard facts, then."

With a wave of his hand, his secretary, Cindy-dressed in an eye-catching, figure-hugging dress-stepped forward and distributed the reports. The documents clearly displayed the latest sales statistics for Rhodes Corporation's Pharmaceutical Division.

"That's right. The numbers don't lie-sales exceeded 100 million dollars in just one week!"

"Who would've thought? Our products went from the brink of failure to an absolute sensation!"

"If we keep growing at this pace, Rhodes Corporation will easily surpass Wealthroller Investments."

"At this rate, even Marvin might lose his spot as the wealthiest man. Soon

enough, the Rhodes family will be sitting at the top!"

After reviewing the reports, the

entire room looked at Michael with

newfound admiration. The numbers were printed in black and

white-there was no denying them.

Michael grinned triumphantly. "Well, Andrew? Do you have anything to say now? Do you see what real money making looks like? You and Lauren launched your own products too, didn't you?

"You even wasted 20 million to hire some nun for marketing. But in the end, it was

a joke. Nothing but a complete failure!"

Michael's face was full of mockery and disdain.

Tiana gave Andrew a half-smile. "Mr. Lloyd, if you have nothing else to add, I

think we can wrap up this meeting"

Andrew raised a hand. "Hold on."

Tiana's eyes flashed coldly as she let out a sharp breath. "What now, Andrew?"

You're a smart man-I suggest you don't push me."

Andrew smiled, but there was something menacing beneath it.

"That's funny, Mrs. Rhodes. Was.

just about to say the same thing to you-don't push me."

He slowly stood up, and the air in the room tensed as everyone's eyes locked onto him.

Without even glancing at it, Andrew grabbed the report in front of him and tore it to shreds.

Chapter 867

Michael's expression darkened as he snapped, "What's this Andrew? Can't handle losing?"

Andrew glanced at him like he was looking at a corpse. "The one who can't handle it is you, idiot."

With a slight motion of his hand, Marcus immediately stepped forward and handed him a stack of documents.

"This is the real financial report for the Pharmaceutical Division," Andrew declared. "Mrs. Rhodes, gentlemen- open your eyes and take a good look!"

He tossed the files onto the conference table with a loud slap.

Tiana let out a cold chuckle. "More theatrics?"

She grabbed a report and flipped it open. The moment she read it, her expression completely changed.

Michael scoffed and took a copy for himself. A second later, his smug face twisted in shock.

"H-How is this possible? No! Andrew, this has to be fake! There's no way this is real!"

The other executives immediately sensed that something was off.

One after another, they snatched up the reports and started reading. Within seconds, their eyes widened in disbelief-mirroring Michael's reaction.

"The Pharmaceutical Division's revenue... was generated by Vitality Pill and Titan Essence Pill?"

"Wait-does that mean Michael's financial report was fake?"

"What the hell is going on? Who are we supposed to believe?"

Holding the reports, the executives were visibly shaken. Some turned toward Andrew, while others darted uneasy glances at Michael.

Tiana's voice dropped into a sharp tone. "Mr. Chapman, explain this right now." Marcus shot Michael a cold look before responding. "Mrs. Rhodes, perhaps you've forgotten... I am the director of the Pharmaceutical Division. When it comes to revenue reports, my data is the only official and accurate record!"

He continued, "Now, let me tell everyone the truth. Michael's three pharmaceutical products were developed by Bane. In the past seven days, their total revenue was... less than one million dollars."

Michael's face twisted with rage. "That's bullshit!"

Marcus smirked but did not even bother looking at him. He simply said, "What you all just saw were actually the sales figures for Mr. Lloyd's two products. That was the real weekly revenue report."

“And after bringing in Master Shiloh as the brand ambassador, sales skyrocketed even more. The 100 million dollars weekly revenue was entirely thanks to Ms. Rhodes and Mr. Loyd. It had absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Rhodes.”

Tiana frowned. "Mr. Chapman, clarify this immediately."

Michael exploded. "Aunt Tiana, there's no need to listen to this nonsense! Marcus

is just Andrew's lapdog- they're conspiring to deceive us!"

Tiana's voice turned cold. "Everyone sit down. I want the truth."

Marcus let out a small laugh before turning to the room. He explained, "It's quite simple. Mr. Lloyd's two best-

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selling pharmaceuticals were also registered under Rhodes Pharmaceuticals for distribution.

"So, when revenue reports were compiled, his and Mr. Rhodes' products were all lumped together under the same division's financial

summary. He saw the num. He

assumed all the profits came from his products and got excited. But in reality, his three products couldn't even come close to Mr. Lloyd's two bestsellers."

The room fell into dead silence.

Tiana clenched the report in her hands, her expression shifting as countless thoughts raced through her mind.

Everyone else wore different reactions on their faces.

Michael's cronies looked like they had just swallowed a truckload of dirt.

Meanwhile, the other department heads were stunned, their eyes locked on Andrew. No one had expected his two products to perform so well.

A moment ago, they had been celebrating the wrong person

The real winner in the room was not Michael. It was Andrew-calm, silent, and unshaken, as if he had been in control the entire time.

Andrew spoke in an even tone. "Let me give you all a simple example to clear up this confusion once and for all."

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Andrew explained, "Michael's so-called 'miracle products are like a homeless man under a bridge in Jayrodale- his pockets hold barely a few bucks, yet he thinks he's a billionaire.

"But my two products? The revenue they generated is like Marvin's wealth- dominating, undeniable, and known across the financial world. And when you put these two together-one beggar, one tycoon-you get Michael's financial report.

"It looks impressive, but in reality, his part in it is just a couple of crumpled bills. Yet here he is, strutting around like his products are a massive hit, completely unaware that he's just riding on the success of my products to put on this ridiculous show."

The room erupted into laughter.

Even Lauren, whose mood had been at rock bottom, could not help but giggle at Andrew's sharp wit.

Michael's face darkened with rage, his eyes burning with fury. "Andrew, you always have some smartass

comeback! Then tell me how do you know that your so-called miracle drugs aren't the real garbage here, while my products are the true game-changers?"

Andrew smirked. "I knew you'd ask that. Mr. Chapman, show him the proof." Marcus did not waste any time.

With a few swift keystrokes on his laptop, a large chunk of funds of 100 million dollars suddenly drained from the Rhodes Corporation Pharmaceutical Division's main account.

Tiana immediately received an alert on her device, her face darkening. "Mr. Chapman, what the hell do you think you're doing? You do not have the authority to move company funds!"

Marcus shook his head. "Mrs. Rhodes, I don't have the authority to move company assets. What I transferred just now was the revenue generated by Mr. Lloyd's two pharmaceuticals over the past seven days."

Tiana's already grim expression turned even colder. Her eyes locked onto Andrew as realization dawned. "So that's what you were planning all along. You secretly set up a separate sub-account under the main financial system, didn't you?"

Andrew remained unfazed. "I had to. I was worried you might try something reckless. And clearly, I was right to be cautious."

Marcus cleared his throat and raised his voice. "Mr. Rhodes, are you seeing this now? Now that we've moved Mr. Lloyd's revenue out of the main account... take a look at what's left. Just one million dollars-dry as dust."

He added, "Tsk, tsk. Your products barely covered their own manufacturing costs. So tell me, what exactly are you planning to use to compete with Ms. Rhodes and MLloyd?"

Michael sat there, silent. There was nothing left to say, and his mind spun in chaos, but his fury and frustration only grew stronger.

He thought, 'What the hell? How has things turned out like this?' He had been celebrating his so-called victory just moments ago, but it was all a joke.

"Mr. Lloyd... Ms. Rhodes... you were the true masterminds behind this success!"

There's no doubt about it-when it comes to the CEO position, you two are the rightful winners!"

"We support Mr. Lloyd and Ms. Rhodes! Rhodes Corporation has been filled with corruption for too long-it's time for justice to be served!"

No one paid attention to Michael anymore, especially not the

executives who actually cared about the company's future. At that

moment, they all turned their eyes to Andrew-filled with admiration and respect.

If Michael had not been a Rhodes family member, they would have abandoned

him in a heartbeat. It was all so ridiculous.

No matter how one looked at it, Michael could never measure up to Andrew. As

for Lauren, everyone had seen her abilities with their own eyes.

"Laure

Andrew gently squeezed Lauren's hand, giving her a reassuring smile. I told you-I'd make sure you got the fairness and justice you deserved."

Lauren nodded firmly, holding back tears. "Thank you, Dr. Lloyd."

Andrew turned his gaze to Tiana and smirked. "Mrs. Rhodes, if you don't mind- how about making that CEO announcement one more time?"

Tiana's expression remained cold as she gritted her teeth, saying nothing. She was completely cornered.

Michael roared, "Andrew, are you deaf? Didn't you hear Aunt Tiana already announce me as the new CEO?"

Andrew let out a mocking laugh. "Michael, it's broad daylight, and you're already dreaming. Do your parents know about this delusion? Besides, what makes you think you deserve to be CEO? You lost the bet.

"You pranced around in lingerie, pretending to be some kind of drag queen, and that humiliating video is still making rounds on the internet. Doesn't anyone think it would be a huge embarrassment for Rhodes Corporation to have someone like that as its CEO?"

Marcus was the first to step up. "That's right. From every perspective, Ms. Rhodes is the rightful CEO."

Another executive spoke up. "Mrs. Rhodes, Mr. Lloyd and Ms. Rhodes have done too much for this company. You must handle this fairly."

"Mrs. Rhodes, we fully support Ms. Rhodes and Mr. Lloyd-please do the right thing!"

"I only recognize Ms. Rhodes as CEO. Anyone else? Not happening!"

Tiana's anger boiled beneath the surface. Andrew had barely been at Rhodes Corporation, yet with sheer power and ability, he had already won over so many people.

At this rate, was she even really in charge anymore?

Would Rhodes Corporation even belong to the Rhodes family much longer?

Michael's voice grew frantic. "Aunt Tiana, I don't care! If you don't give me the CEO position, you won't like the consequences!"

His eyes burned with jealousy and rage, his entire expression twisting into something almost rabid.

Tiana snapped, her tone laced with venom. "You little brat, are you threatening me?"

Michael's smirk was sharp and condescending. "I would never threaten you, Aunt Tiana. I'm just reminding you to think carefully before doing something stupid." Andrew narrowed his eyes as Michael had finally dropped the act. It seemed like his father, Kenny, had given him a lot of confidence.

The question was-how would Tiana balance this?

Just then, Tiana let out a sharp huff and commanded, "Everyone, silence!"

Immediately, the room fell quiet. No matter how much people doubted her, the Iron Lady still had authority.

Tiana scanned the room and then announced, "The final decision for CEO is as follows-as per our prior agreement, the winner is Lauren."

She made the declaration swiftly and decisively.

Andrew was genuinely surprised. He had expected her to fold under the pressure of Michael's threats. Yet, she had chosen to do the right thing and give Lauren what she had earned.

Applause erupted across the conference room. Except for Michael and his

lackeys, everyone genuinely celebrated for Lauren.

Eunice beamed with joy. "Ms. Rhodes, you did it! You won!"

Marcus let out a deep sigh of relief and nodded. "Congratulations, Ms. Rhodes. And congratulations to you too, Mr. Lloyd!"

Lauren, overwhelmed with gratitude and emotion, suddenly threw herself into Andrew's arms. "Thank you, Dr. Lloyd!"

Tears welled up in her eyes as she clung to him. After so much struggle and effort, she had finally won the freedom she had been fighting for.

Andrew inhaled the soft scent of her hair, his voice filled with warmth. "You don't need to thank me. I wanted to do this for you. As long as you're happy, that's all that matters."

He did not notice how Tiana's eyes flickered with amusement as she watched him and Lauren embrace.

Michael, who had been silent for a few seconds, suddenly let out a vicious snarl.

"Everyone better not move a muscle! Anyone who moves-dies!"

Chapter 870

Seeing Lauren in Andrew's arms, crying tears of joy-watching as everyone

rushed forward to congratulate them-Michael knew it was over, and the tide had turned against him.

However, he had not lost yet because he had prepared a backup plan long ago. If he could not win fair and square, he would take power by force.

"Mr. Rhodes, what the hell are you doing?"

"Did you just say you'll kill anyone who moves? What a joke."

"You can't win, so now you're throwing a tantrum? Mr. Rhodes, I never thought you'd stoop this low."

Disgusted by Michael's behavior, several senior executives finally spoke up, openly reprimanding him.

Lauren stepped out of Andrew's embrace, her voice sharp. "Michael, I strongly suggest you don't do something stupid."

Michael's face twisted with pure hatred. He pointed a shaking finger first at Lauren, then at Andrew.

"You two... you two bastards," he snarled. "I swear, I've wanted to get rid of you for so long. Everything... everything is because of you! Andrew, you might think you're invincible, but today, I'm going to prove that you're just as mortal as the rest of us!"

As soon as his words fell, the conference room doors slammed open. Bane, his face dark and menacing, stormed in with a squad of men right behind him.

A senior executive's face contorted with rage. "Mr. Rhodes, what are you doing?"

Michael immediately slapped the old man across the face, sending him flying backward.

"Shut the hell up, you old bastard!" Michael sneered. "I already brought my people in, and you still have the nerve to ask me what I'm doing? Are you stupid?"

The entire room froze. No one had expected Michael to actually lay hands on someone. One by one, the executives instinctively took a step back, distancing themselves from him.

Michael ignored them all. He turned his attention to Tiana, his voice dark with warning. "Aunt Tiana, you have two choices. Either hand over the CEO position to me right now... Or don't blame me for what happens next."

Tiana's fury erupted. "Michael, think about what you're doing right now!"

Michael let out a cold, sinister laugh. "Originally, I didn't want things to get ugly. "But that was under the assumption that you would be smart enough to hand over the position without a fight. Clearly, Aunt Tiana, you've failed to meet my

no

expectations. So now? Now, I have to take what's mine!"

Lauren was shocked and furious. She was about to speak when Andrew caught her wrist and shook his head. He wanted to see how far Michael really planned to take this. With Tiana here, there was no way Michael would succeed.

Tiana's voice turned ice cold. "So, you're telling me that you're really going to turn against me just for the sake of a title? Use force against your own family?"

Michael's smile twisted into something unhinged. "And what if I am? I'm done pretending to respect you. Everyone else might fear you, but my father and I don't."

Tiana's gaze turned murderous.

"Even Kenny wouldn't dare speak to me like this, Michael. Are you really so unafraid of death?" Do you actually think that just because you brought in a low-level thug like Bane, you can overthrow me?"

Seeing Tiana's unwavering stance, the rest of the executives felt a surge of confidence. One by one, they started shouting.

"Mr. Rhodes, you're a disgrace! How dare you defy Mrs. Rhodes? You're finished!"

"Do you think bringing in some hired muscle makes a difference? Mrs. Rhodes is still in charge here! You will fail!"

"Mrs. Rhodes, why waste time arguing? Just have him arrested and let the authorities handle it!"

Yet, Michael just laughed a deep, guttural laugh—like he had just heard the funniest joke in the world.

Bane and his men smirked along with him, their expressions full of scorn. Not a single one of them seemed the least bit concerned.