

The Ashes 1031

Chapter 1031

Aspen could only imagine how terrifying Andrew's real identity was.

Everyone knew that Holtrien had no shortage of prodigies, but those who made it onto the Titan List were monsters in human form-true legends among legends.

Take Aspen, for example. In her hometown of Bridgefields, she was the pride of the city, admired by everyone. Yet, not a single person from Bridgefields had ever qualified for the Titan List.

Even the Underworld Index only had at most two names from there, and they were way at the bottom.

Andrew stood up and said, "Alright then, I should head back and get some rest. Thanks for the hospitality, by the way."

Zachary stood up right after him, eyes blazing with passion. "Come back with us. Let's rise again together. Once the old crew hears you're back, they'll drop everything and come running!"

Andrew chuckled and replied, "Don't exaggerate. I'm just a regular guy, just trying to live a simple, quiet life. All that talk about fighting and war? I'm not into that anymore."

He patted Aspen on the head, hinting at her to snap out of her daze and hurry up.

Zachary shifted to block Andrew's way, his expression deep and serious. "General, your stage is not this tiny corner of the world. You were the most monstrous genius in the entire organization. How could you let that talent go to waste?"

Andrew replied flatly, "From now on, just call me Mr. Lloyd-or Andrew is fine, too. Anything else, I don't want to hear again. Got it? This is the last time."

With that, he turned and walked off with Aspen.

Aspen smiled sheepishly and said, "Mr. Fischer, please don't take it personally. He's always been like that-stubborn as a mule."

Zachary did not respond. He just stood there, staring hard at Andrew's retreating figure, jaw clenched tight.

Andrew had told him not to push it, so he dared not say another word. However, the frustration and longing on his face were impossible to hide.

Ruth got up too and could not help asking, "Zac, who exactly is that Andrew guy?"

Zachary grabbed a bottle from the

met

table, took a deep swig, then exhaled sharply and said in a low voice, "You're not qualified to know who he is. All you need to know is-whether it's you, your family, or anyone you've ever met-you can't afford to mess with him."

Ruth felt a jolt in her chest and was left speechless. If anyone else had said that, she would have thought they were insane. However, it was coming from the man she admired the most, the one she respected above all. So, she had no choice but to believe him.

"Zac, did I almost mess things up today?" she asked, now realizing just how serious the situation might've been.

Zachary replied, "Relax. You're a nobody to him. Mess things up? Please, don't flatter yourself."

He suddenly shoved Ruth's head down and commanded, "Use your mouth to please me. I need to let off some steam."

Ruth glanced around, blushing. "Right here? Shouldn't we go into the bedroom?"

Zachary gritted his teeth. "Right here. If I don't screw you, I'll go insane from frustration. I just don't get it Why would someone like him choose to fade into the crowd? He could've ruled the world if he wanted to?"

Ruth did not fully understand, but she had a gut feeling Zachary was still talking about Andrew. She did not dare ask more, so she threw him a flirty glance and opened her mouth to start pleasing him.

Chapter 1032

After leaving the Aroma Exchange, Andrew got into the car and said, "Drive. I'm tired and just want to rest."

However, Aspen did not start the engine. She had been holding back her curiosity all evening and finally asked, "Was Mr. Fischer really your subordinate?"

Andrew kept his eyes on the window and replied calmly, "Something like that."

Aspen's heart skipped a beat. She had suspected that Andrew was not an ordinary man. She pressed on, "Mr. Fischer called you... General. Andrew, were you some kind of military general before?"

Andrew glanced at her and said, "Why the interrogation? Are you trying to run a background check?"

The Ferrari shot forward with a roar, and Aspen huffed, "Fine, don't tell me. It's not like I'm dying to know anyway."

Andrew said, "The more you know, the more dangerous it gets for you."

Aspen scoffed, "There it is. The mysterious act. You think you're in a movie or something?"

A vein popped on Andrew's forehead. "Aspen, I just complimented your performance. Don't push me, or I'll have to deal with you."

The car suddenly fell silent. Whenever Andrew got serious, Aspen still got a little scared.

Andrew chuckled and said, "That Seth guy looked pretty into you. He even came to me trying to 'negotiate' for you. Think it over. If you're actually into the Haywoods' golden boy, I can sell you to them, no problem."

Aspen's grip on the wheel tightened, and through clenched teeth, she spat out, "No need!"

Andrew glanced over. "So you're saying you don't like Mr. Haywood?"

Aspen snapped, "Like him? Are you trying to gross me out? It's Seth who keeps pestering me. I've rejected him so many times, but the guy's full of himself and just won't give up."

Andrew nodded. "Makes sense. I mean, you've got a few issues arrogant, dumb—but you're definitely hot. Nice figure, great skin, and most importantly, a pretty face."

He sighed like he genuinely felt bad. "If you really wanted to marry into the Haywoods, I'd give you the green light, so long as they're willing to cough up the cash."

Hearing that smug tone, Aspen slammed on the gas, gritted her teeth, and said, "If you keep treating me like trash, I swear I'll take us both down!"

Seeing she was actually about to lose it, Andrew quickly shouted, "Alright alright, I won't bring it up again! Just slow the hell down! If something happens to me, you'll never be able to afford the bill!"

Aspen cracked a small smile. Beating the devil at his own game, even just once, gave her a little sense of victory.

Soon, the Ferrari pulled into an upscale residential area and finally stopped in front of a stunning, luxury villa. Andrew stepped out, gave it a once-over, and whistled. "Let me guess-this mansion was paid for with my money, wasn't it?"

Aspen let out a proud snort. "Wrong this time! The capital loves big investors like you. This house? Basically free. The taxes our company pays, plus your returns here, already cover the entire lease."

Andrew gave her an approving nod. "Not bad. Finally doing something useful with the money instead of blowing it."

After stepping inside, Andrew took a cold shower. Then, he walked out with just a towel wrapped around his waist and asked, "Where's my room?"

Aspen was on the balcony doing yoga, wearing a sleek yoga set that hugged every curve. Her long legs looked flawless-toned, shapely, and graceful.

Even her modest chest stood out with every subtle movement, trembling slightly as she switched positions. She quickly stopped, stood up a little awkwardly, and said, "Um... your room's upstairs, left side."

The moment she got home, she had changed and started her yoga routine, totally forgetting she was not alone tonight.

Andrew let out a casual hum but did not move.

Aspen looked up and saw him staring. Then, blushing and irritated, she snapped, "What are you looking at?"

Andrew shrugged. "Nothing."

Aspen's cheeks burned, thinking, "This pervert clearly has his eyes all over me, yet he has the nerve to say it was nothing!"

She squared her shoulders, smirked coldly, and said, "Whatever. I'm your property now, right? Stare all you want. I don't care. In fact, if you want to mess around, I'm game. Anytime."

Andrew replied flatly, "You're too small. Fran's way better. Your legs don't even come close to Lauren's. And your face? You look like a half-dead zombie, just tired and uninterested in life. I'm not into that."

Chapter 1033

Aspen was so furious, and she shouted, "Andrew, you're such a bastard!"

Nonetheless, Andrew stayed calm and replied, "Using yoga to try and reach senior grandmaster level? It's not a bad approach. However, your method is flawed.

"You should try activating your twin core meridians and running your energy through the full-body cycle. It'll get you results with half the effort."

With that, he turned and went upstairs to rest.

Aspen stood frozen in place, full of shock and suspicion. "So he wasn't staring at my body... he was analyzing my training? Hmph, acting all high and mighty as if his advice would actually help!"

She did not want to admit it, but deep down, she was tempted to try what he said. So, she adjusted her posture and started cultivating again, following his method.

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Upstairs, Andrew collapsed onto the huge bed in his room. He had just arrived in the capital and had already run into trouble-no wonder he felt drained. Still, there were things he needed to keep up with.

He grabbed his phone and started a video call with Francesca.

She picked up right away. The busty little minx was in a silk nightgown, lounging against the headboard, her cleavage barely hidden.

"You jerk. I'm sleeping alone again tonight. Looks like another restless night for me," Francesca said with a sulky pout.

Andrew grinned. "You finally got a few days off, so don't waste it. Once I'm back, you'll be so sore every night, you won't be able to walk straight!"

Francesca blushed, let out a playful hum through her nose, and teased, "Then come back already! I'm not afraid of you-I'll squeeze you dry!"

Andrew raised an eyebrow, thinking the girl was getting bolder by the day. He simply said, "Alright, get some rest. Once I wrap things up here, I'll head back to Jayrodale. And from now on, don't go back to your place. Just stay at mine and help me take care of the house."

Francesca nodded sweetly. "Alright, I got it. I'll keep it spotless and wait for you. Oh, by the way- did you visit Lauren yet?"

Andrew shook his head. "Haven't had the time. Maybe tomorrow or the day after. So far, the Rhodes family has been quiet. I'm guessing Lauren's fine."

Francesca gave a small hum and stuck her tongue out. "Pervert... hurry back! I've made up my mind!"

Then, in a flustered rush, she hung up the video call.

Andrew blinked. What did she mean by she had made up her mind?

The night passed without further incident.

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The next morning, when Andrew opened the door, he nearly jumped. Aspen was standing right outside, caught between knocking and hesitating.

"What are you doing? Planning to sneak in and pull something shady while I'm asleep?" he asked warily.

Aspen's chest rose with anger. She sneered, "Relax. I'm not that desperate."

Andrew ignored her sass and asked, "Is breakfast ready?"

Rolling her eyes, Aspen snapped, "It's been ready. I came to tell you to eat!"

Soon after Andrew was seated at

the table, eating his meal.

played the part of a proper

housekeeper, clearing plates refilling food, and even washing dishes.

"This isn't bad. Pretty tasty," Andrew said as he wiped his mouth, finishing up.

Aspen hesitated, then muttered under her breath, "Thanks... for last night. I followed your suggestion and actually broke through."

Andrew shook his head. "You were close, but still lacking something Honestly, the Bridgefields' Stevens family method is garbage. Come here. I'll give you a hand."

Still unsure what he meant, Aspen stepped closer. Suddenly, Andrew wrapped his arms around her waist from behind and bent her forward in one swift motion.

Then, he placed both palms on her lower back and slid them up along her sides, finally stopping at the front of her chest.

She felt the warmth and weight of his firm body pressing behind her, and those hot hands on her chest-Aspen's mind raced with panic and fury.

She silently cursed, 'What the hell is this pervert trying to do? Is he seriously trying to force himself on me first thing in the morning?'

Aspen thought Andrew was

unbelievable she had just thanked him a second ago. She could not believe how quickly he revealed

his

true colors. Her face twisted in rage, and she struggled as hard as she could.

However, Andrew pressed his knee against the curve of her hips, making her collapse from the pain-tears welled in her eyes.

"Andrew, you're despicable! You bastard, let me go! If you're gonna do this, I at least need time to mentally prepare! Let me go!"

Andrew frowned. "Stop moving. This'll only take a second. Just hold still and endure it."

Suddenly, there was a loud rip, as if something had torn inside her.

Aspen's face went blank, her whole body stiffening in shock. She slowly turned her head, looking back at Andrew in disbelief.

Chapter 1034

Andrew let her go and said casually, "Your twin core meridians were never fully opened. That's why your skills have always been so underwhelming. But now, I've fixed that for you.

"From here on out, your cultivation will be a lot faster. And you've officially broken through to the senior grandmaster level."

Feeling the new surge of power running through her body, Aspen gasped, "But... opening the twin core meridians is something only a martial king could do, and even then, with rare medicinal aids! H-How did you pull it off?"

Andrew answered calmly, "Just gave it a strong push. It hurts a little, but you already lived through it, didn't you?"

Aspen's face turned red hot as she gritted her teeth. "You sound like a damn pervert, you sleazy jerk!"

She said that, but deep down, she was genuinely grateful to him. Reaching senior grandmaster so quickly was partly thanks to her own hard work, but mostly, it was Andrew's guidance.

Aspen knew how rare this kind of hands-on instruction was. If she had not met Andrew, she might have gone her whole life without a true master showing her the way.

Andrew smirked and added, "Not gonna lie, that felt pretty good. That punk Rodney was lucky he got a squeeze once."

The air instantly turned icy.

Aspen said coldly, "Don't ever mention Rodney in front of me. If I ever see that scumbag again, I'll snap his neck myself."

She looked like she could kill.

However, Andrew gave her a reality check. "You shouldn't blame him too much. Back then, you practically asked for it—too arrogant, and way too cocky. For a woman, being full of herself isn't always cute. Hopefully, you've learned your lesson."

Aspen clenched her jaw and stayed silent. Of course, she had learned it—the hard way. She had lost her freedom, and sold herself into servitude—how could she not have learned?

She replied coldly, "I've prepared a suit for you. There's a citywide charity event today, backed by the capital's main officials. If we want Supreme Capital Group to root itself here, official ties are everything! As the CEO, you'd better show up and represent us."

She tossed that sentence over her shoulder and stormed back into her room—clearly still mad.

Andrew did not care one bit. She was just a glorified servant. Whether she was pissed or not did not matter. What mattered was she would do whatever he needed her to do.

After changing into a sharp business suit, Andrew headed out to the car parked in front of the villa. He waited a good while before Aspen finally came down, her high heels clicking against the floor as she moved at a deliberately slow pace.

Andrew raised a brow when he saw her, his eyes scanning her from head to toe.

Aspen wore a form-fitting pencil skirt with a sleek blazer, paired with killer heels and sheer black stockings. Her hair was styled into loose curls, giving her the sultry vibe of a modern city goddess,

Her makeup was on point-just enough to be seductive but still gave off an innocent edge.

Andrew chuckled. "That yoga you've been doing is paying off. Not

bad-hot figure, and you're no longer

giving off that clueless vibe. No

wonder those spoiled wealthy Brats in the capital are all drooling over you."

He opened the car door, slid in, and slammed it shut.

Aspen did not say a word. She realized talking to Andrew only raised her blood pressure. Nonetheless, she noticed he had looked at her twice.

That was rare.

This man never paid attention to other women-only Lauren and Francesca ever seemed to exist in his eyes.

Aspen smirked, a little proud. Even if it was just two glances, it still meant her charm was holding up.

This was Andrew's first time visiting his own company. The office took up over 2,000 square feet in the most elite part of the capital's central business district.

Aspen had clearly handled everything with precision and order. She was highly educated and competent-there was no doubt about her capabilities.

But her taste in spending? That was another matter.

Even Andrew winced at how lavish the place was. Looking around the office, he asked, "Couldn't you have picked a more affordable location? This area can't be cheap."

Aspen lifted her chin a little. Seeing

Andrew worry about money gave her

a wicked sense of satisfaction. She

said smugly, "Supreme Capital

Group holds over 50 billion in assets, and we're an investment firm.

"If we don't show off a little, and instead rent a place in some sketchy corner of town, who would even take us seriously? People might think we're running a pyramid scheme!"

She said this while adjusting a giant crystal centerpiece sitting on the welcome desk, clearly proud of her choices.

Andrew eyed the shiny thing and asked, "How much did that thing cost?"

Chapter 1035

Aspen smirked. "Not much, just a little over 30 grand."

Andrew let out a cold chuckle. "You sure know how to burn through my money like it grows on trees. But it's fine-if you ever drain me dry, I'll just sell you off to cover the losses."

That wiped the smug look right off Aspen's face, leaving her gritting her teeth.

Andrew had absolute control over her now. If he did sell her, she would have no one to complain to not even a court that would listen.

She huffed, "The ones draining you dry are Lauren and Francesca. I haven't even touched a penny..."

Her heart shrank a little, but her mouth still refused to back down.

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After finishing the company tour, Andrew barely took a breath before heading to the charity event hosted by the local government. Aspen's competence clearly was not just for show.

All the way there, she gave Andrew a crash course on the capital's complicated business networks and behind-the-scenes power plays.

She said, "In a bit, Governor Derek McCormick will show up. Word is, he's a straight shooter who hates corruption and despises nepotism. So, we need to rely on real performance. If we try too hard to flatter him, it'll just backfire."

Andrew nodded while listening, replying casually, "Perfect. I'm good at a lot of things-kissing ass just isn't one of them."

Aspen went on, "Even though it's just a charity event, most of the guests will be elites from the capital's wealthiest families, plus top people from both business and politics. These people don't show up without incentive.

"The moment a major figure like the governor appears, they circle like sharks smelling blood. Our goal today is simple-get familiar, make a solid first impression, and set the stage for future partnerships. If any official projects are announced, we observe first-don't jump in."

Andrew raised a brow and cut in, "Why not? If there's a good project, shouldn't we strike while the iron's hot?"

Aspen shook her head. "We're still

the new kids in the investment game. The best deals will always go to the old money and the local titans first. We only get to take a slice of what's left. That's just how it works, no matter where you go."

Andrew let out a cold laugh. "Business is war without the blood. Whoever has the sharper bite and deeper pockets wins-letting them eat their fill first? What's the

point of me even showing up? Might as well close shop."

Seeing the shift in his tone, Aspen, for once, did not fire back. She sighed instead. "A little low-key presence never hurts. This is the capital after all. Every major in Gabo Creek Province is clustered right here. We just got here. Sometimes, we have to hold back—whether we like it or not."

Andrew snorted. "When it comes to your business skills, I've got no complaints. But when it comes to long-term strategy, you're still a little green. Remember- whenever the opportunity's there, take it.

"Rules only exist for the timid and the slow. When you break the rules and prove your strength, the same people who tried to suppress you will come crawling back, desperate to suck up."

Aspen opened her mouth, wanting to argue, but could not find a single point to refute. Eventually, she replied, "Fine, your call. You're the CEO, after all."

They pulled up in front of the venue—a modern glass high-rise downtown, hosting the event. Every man and woman in sight was dressed to impress, all polished, poised, and clearly among the capital's elite.

The curb was packed with rows of high-end luxury cars, each more extravagant than the last. The atmosphere alone made it clear that this was not Jayrodale anymore.

Andrew took a breath, sniffed the air, and chuckled. "Even the air smells like money here..."

Aspen nearly facepalmed, wondering what the hell Andrew was doing. They were surrounded by high society, and this was what he said out loud.

Just then, a mocking voice rang out with biting sarcasm, "Well, well. Looks like a gutter pheasant finally stumbled into the elite's territory. How... unexpected."

Aspen's expression instantly darkened. She turned her head—then froze. Her pupils shrank.

It was Quinton, the eldest son of the Wright family, standing there with a cold, mocking smirk. Next to him stood Christina, dressed in an elegant designer gown-her gaze a toxic cocktail of ice, jealousy and barely concealed disdain fixed directly on Aspen.

Chapter 1036

"Aspen, long time no see." Christina was the first to speak, smiling as she broke the awkward silence.

Aspen's expression turned icy. "You don't need to call me. I don't recognize you as family. Your family is in Jayrodale, and mine's in Bridgefields. We were never close, and we never will be."

Christina kept her smile steady. "It's been so long, and you're still holding a grudge? But don't forget-when the main family fell apart, and you ended up as Andrew's servant, that was mostly your own doing."

Aspen let out a bitter laugh. "Yeah, I'll admit it. Everything back then was my own fault. But Christina, do you dare say you didn't stir the pot from behind the scenes with that sweet, scheming smile of yours? I know it was you who lured the main Stevens family to Jayrodale, just to use them against Andrew."

Christina did not even try to deny it. "You're absolutely right. I brought them there. But I only did it to help you to settle the score on your behalf. Things just didn't go how I expected, and you got burned instead."

Aspen looked at her with disgust. "So you admit it. You really are a manipulative, two-faced woman. I know how big your ambitions are. You want to prove yourself, turn the Stevens Corporation into an empire, and crown yourself a business queen."

She added, "Once upon a time, I was just like you. I believed in myself, too. But now, Christina, let me give you one piece of advice-quit while you're ahead and stay in your lane. Otherwise, you'll destroy the Jayrodale branch and take yourself down with it."

Christina tilted her head, her eyes full of mockery as she laughed softly. "Aspen, maybe you should focus on your own life first. You're out here playing loyal little servant to Andrew, doing whatever he says like a glorified maid. So, really, what right do you have to lecture me like you're still standing on some kind of high ground?"

Aspen bit her lip, filled with a mix of humiliation and anger. She had once been just as admired as Christina-if not more. They were cousins, and they had even talked about taking over the business world together.

Nonetheless, fate had different plans. Andrew nearly wiped out the Bridgefields Stevens family, and to save what little was left, Aspen had handed herself over to him. She had come to accept it as

karma-punishment for her arrogance and pride.

Meeting Andrew was her misfortune.

However, realizing that

Christina-her own cousin-had exploited their family during its

lowest moment, that wound had

never healed. Whatever sisterhood they once shared was long gone. Now, there was only rivalry and hatred.

Just then, a warm hand gently landed on Aspen's shoulder. She turned and froze it was Andrew.

He said with a relaxed smile, "What's there to be upset about? You're now managing a multi-billion dollar investment firm, expanding into the capital. That's growth-a massive upgrade from your days in Jayrodale or Bridgefields, wouldn't you say?"

Aspen's thoughts spun, seemingly unable to process the possibility of Andrew comforting and standing up for her. A strange warmth bloomed in her chest, and she thought maybe the demon of a man was not always cruel.

Christina watched the subtle exchange between them, and the look in her eyes grew even colder.

She mocked, "Andrew, don't tell me you've got your eye on Aspen too, now? How interesting-you seem to have a thing for women from the Stevens family."

Her voice was dipped in sarcasm, but there was no mistaking the jealousy laced between the lines.

Chapter 1037

In truth, Christina was jealous and furious. Andrew had accepted Aspen, yet refused to give her a second chance.

Was Aspen really better than her? That could not be right. In looks, status, and ability, she was never inferior to Aspen.

She believed there could only be one explanation-Andrew still had feelings for her, but was using Aspen to replace her.

The moment that thought clicked, Christina suddenly felt clear-headed.

Otherwise, why would Andrew treat Aspen so well now? The two had once been bitter enemies. Moreover, Aspen's family had even provoked him, and they had nearly gone to war.

"Obsessed with Stevens family women? Please, Christina, you're hilarious," Andrew said with an amused smile. "But you did get one thing right-I am willing to treat Aspen well. Because, whether you like it or not, she's mine now."

Christina's jaw clenched. "I reached out to you, and you turned me away. But Aspen? You welcomed her with open arms. Can I ask why?"

Andrew answered without hesitation. "Isn't it obvious? Aspen's better than you- and unlike you, I still think she has potential."

Christina let out a dry laugh. "You think I'm buying that? Andrew, I know you too well. You're just trying to use Aspen to replace me, aren't you? You won't accept me on the surface, but deep down, you're still holding a grudge-still hung up on me. You can't let go, so you're using her to fill that void in your heart, right?"

Andrew froze, staring at her like he could not believe what he was hearing.

Aspen also stood still, her expression instantly shifting to rage. So, this bastard was using her as a stand-in for Christina. He was just treating her as a substitute.

Christina saw the change on his

face and smiled in satisfaction. She said sweetly, "What's wrong? Did he hit the nail on the head? Andrew, let's be honest-forgetting each other was never really possible. But if you're willing to come back to me, I'll take you back without hesitation."

Andrew shook his head. "You're seriously confused. I was only surprised because

I didn't expect you to become this delusional."

Christina's smile dropped. "Excuse me?"

Andrew scoffed. "I said, I didn't expect you to become this

brain-dead and ridiculous. Aspen? A replacement for you? Christina, how much bootleg wine have you been drinking to think like that? Let me be perfectly clear: I think Aspen is way better than you.

"And if I were looking for a woman from the Stevens family, it sure as hell wouldn't

be you. My first pick? That would be Aspen and those killer long legs of hers!"

As he said that, Andrew pulled Aspen close without warning. His large hand landed firmly around her waist.

Aspen's face burned red as she

struggled to pull away. However, Andrew's voice dropped low and cold. "You better stay still. If you don't, next time you get bullied, don't expect me to step in."

Aspen immediately froze. She did not dare move again, but her body tingled uncomfortably. Her heart raced, and her emotions were all over the place.

Ever since the humiliation with Rodney, she had developed an aversion to being touched by men. Yet, after being around Andrew—again and again—she was starting to get used to it.

And the worst part? It was not even that unpleasant anymore.

"Ugh, fine," she muttered, gritting her teeth. "Since you helped me, I guess I'll let you cop a feel... this time."

She gave a huff, flustered and annoyed.

Chapter 1038

Christina had not expected the two of them to be that close already.

"Andrew, you're going to regret what you've done!" she snapped coldly before looping her arm around Quinton's and striking a deliberately intimate pose.

Quinton smirked. He knew Christina was using him, but he did not care. For someone like him, the thrill was in the chase. When the thrill was gone, he would have no problem tossing her aside or forcing things if it amused him.

Quinton said with a smile, "Ms. Aspen, Christie's mentioned you before. But sticking with Andrew will only bring you down. Why not join me? Serve under the Wrights, and I promise you a spot among the capital's elite socialites."

It was a tempting offer, made with a wolfish grin. If he could really win Aspen over, having both Stevens beauties serve him would be a fantasy come true.

Especially since Aspen had a figure that made him burn with desire. Hell, she was playing housemaid for Andrew—that was practically a crime in Quinton's book.

"Mr. Wright, I appreciate your offer, but I already have a master. I only serve one, so I'm afraid I'll have to decline."

Her tone was respectful, but the message was clear. She could not afford to offend the Wrights, but she also was not about to stoop to Christina's level. More importantly, she believed that sticking with Andrew-despite his cruel ways-was her best shot at a real future, even if the man drove her crazy.

Quinton looked disappointed. "Just wait and see, Ms. Aspen. The man you're following will be crushed in this city. Someone will take him down eventually. When that happens, I might consider giving you a second chance to switch sides."

Aspen flashed a dazzling smile. "I don't think I'll need your pity invitation. No matter what happens to Andrew, I'll stay with him. Sure, he's a jerk sometimes-it makes me grind my teeth in frustration.

"But let's not pretend he's not a great man. Just ask Christina how in-demand Andrew really is!"

She tossed that last line out like a knife, right into Christina's pride. Then, she let out a cold laugh, hooked her arm around Andrew's, and strolled into the building.

Andrew raised a brow. "You say I'm annoying, but you still said all that back there. Why?"

Aspen rolled her eyes. "Because you are annoying. I really can't stand you most of the time. But compared to Christina and that creep Quinton? I'll take your unapologetic villainy any day."

Andrew nodded approvingly. "Exactly. I am a villain. Which is why tonight, when we get home, you're stripping down and warming my bed. That's your reward for having my back today."

Aspen's face fumed scarlet. She leaned in, hissing through clenched teeth, "Andrew, are you insane? Doz you know where we are right now? How can you say stuff like that in public? You're such a jerk! I'll serve you as a maid or whatever, but not surrender my body!"

Andrew gave her a playful look. "What you allow doesn't really matter, does it? You belong to me now. Asking you to keep me warm at night isn't that outrageous, is it?"

Aspen looked like she wanted to explode. "You're disgusting!"

Andrew shrugged like it was the most normal thing in the world. "Come on, it's the modern age. 'Warming the bed' basically means getting real cozy, you know Aspen, you've been around long enough to know the game. Don't act all innocent now."

Chapter 1039

Aspen's ears and neck turned bright red as she glared at him. She snapped, "I-I'll never sleep with you, Andrew! You can make me do anything else, but not that. My body is off-limits!"

She blurted, nearly shouting, "I'm still a virgin! I made a vow years ago I'll only give myself to my future husband!"

Andrew stared at her like she had just grown wings. After all, she had to be in her late 20s. With how long she had been in the game, always networking, always flirting with powerful men—he never would have guessed.

But now? Turned out this wildcat had never been touched. It was like walking into

a chicken coop and finding a hidden phoenix—ridiculous, but rare as hell.

Aspen noticed the way he was looking at her and instantly blew up.

"The hell's that look for? I'm telling the truth, you bastard!" Aspen snapped, misreading his stunned silence.

Andrew leaned in and whispered by her ear, voice full of mischief. "All the better. Every man wants to be the first, you know that, right?"

Aspen clenched her teeth, furious, but could not argue back. For one, they were already inside the event hall, and people were everywhere. For another, she instantly regretted saying anything.

If she had known this would be his reaction, she would have just lied and told him she had been around, had a few wild years, maybe even picked up something contagious—just to throw him off. She silently scolded herself for being stupid for not thinking about it through.

Meanwhile, not far behind, Quinton and Christina followed them in.

"You saw that, right? Flirting like a couple of horny teenagers in the middle of a formal event," Quinton said, his tone lazy but laced with irritation. "Looks like your dear cousin's already in bed with Andrew."

Christina was unfazed. "A good man will attract women no matter where he goes. I'll admit that Aspen was right about one thing-Andrew is in high demand these days."

Quinton scoffed. "High demand? Please. I don't see it. One thing's for sure, though he doesn't have you. You're with me now."

Christina calmly released his arm and shook her head. "Mr. Wright, I think you're misunderstanding something. We're business partners-that's it. No romance, no feelings involved. I made that clear the moment we left Jayrodale."

Quinton's face darkened immediately. He had never taken Christina seriously- not as a real partner, and certainly not as someone to respect. To him, she was just another pretty toy to be played with and discarded when bored.

Yet, now that Andrew was in the picture? He was pissed. Both Stevens beauties had their eyes locked on Andrew.

What about him? Was he just some side character in their story?

Hell no. He was Quinton Wright, and there was no way Andrew outshined him.

"This charity event? Let's see if he even makes it out in one piece," Quinton said solemnly. "Between the Golding family's bounty and the assassins already crawling through this city waiting for him to show his face, he's living on borrowed time. He won't survive the week."

Christina did not reply right away. Her voice was quiet when she finally spoke. "If you'd said that a year ago I would've agreed. But now? No matter what happens... Andrew always ends up winning. I'm starting to think the guy's invincible."

Quinton sneered. "That's only because all his opponents so far have been small-timers from Jayrodale-useless clowns. But here in the capital? Guys who could end him are on every street corner."

Chapter 1040

Not long after Andrew and Aspen arrived, a middle-aged man in a formal robe stepped onto the stage and addressed the room.

"Thank you all for coming to the capital's official charity event. As always, I'm Derek McCormick. No long speeches-everyone, just show your sincerity. I hope we can all give something back and help those struggling in the poorer regions of Gabo Creek Province."

He did not say much-just brief sentences-before setting down the mic and stepping off. And yet, no one had a single complaint. On the contrary, the room erupted into applause, with waves of praise echoing throughout the hall.

The reason was simple: the man was Derek McCormick, Governor of Gabo Creek -one of the highest-ranking officials in the province. He was a true regional powerhouse.

Andrew nodded with interest. "You can tell. The guy actually seems like a good leader."

Aspen rolled her eyes with a half-laugh. "Can you not act like that? Mr. McCormick is way above your league, and you talk like you're some kind of political analyst. Do you even realize how ridiculous you sound?"

Sometimes, she honestly could not believe this man. It was like Andrew did not take anything seriously-not the rules, not the hierarchy, not even the unspoken codes of elite society.

Where others would act cautious or deferential, Andrew walked through life like he owned the place.

Then he tilted his head, gave it a thought, and said seriously, "Technically speaking, I'm probably on the same level as him."

Aspen scoffed, but the way her voice faltered gave her away. Suddenly, her mind drifted back to what Zachary had addressed Andrew as General the night before at Aroma Exchange.

If the man standing beside her really had once held a general's rank in Holtrien's military, then yes—strictly by classification, he might actually be on par with Governor McCormick.

However, Aspen quickly dismissed the idea, believing it was too absurd. A general was in a whole different league.

Even if Andrew had been born training from the womb, it still would not add up, especially not in Holtrien, where every military general was an elite figure of national importance.

So, how could someone like that end up playing kingpin in some remote place like Jayrodale? It just did not make sense.

As she mulled it over, a wave of people began rising from their seats and heading toward the registration booth at the front of the stage.

Andrew glanced over. "What's everyone doing?"

Aspen leaned in and whispered, "It's a charity event, remember? This is the part where all the rich folks, old families, big investors, and politicians show off their generosity."

Andrew gave a light chuckle. "So, plain and simple-it's a donation drive, and Mr. McCormick personally came on stage just to urge people to give?"

Aspen quickly looked around, making sure no one overheard him, then hissed; "Could you not talk soz loud? You can make comments like that in private, sure-but saying it in public? Are you trying to commit career suicide?"

Andrew raised a hand in mock surrender and laughed. "Fair point. It's rude to

discuss the governor like that in front of everyone."

Aspen nodded. "Exactly. That's what makes Mr. McCormick so unique. Most high level officials try to act modestly and avoid asking for money directly to preserve the image. But he's different-he's all

about action. If it helps the people, he's willing to step forward himself and doesn't care how it looks."

Andrew gave a rare look of approval. "That's the kind of official people respect.

You should go up and make a contribution too."

Aspen stood and smiled. "Of course.

Supreme Capital Group has to be listed on the donation board. If Mr. McCormick sees us showing up and showing heart, it opens the door to future opportunities."