

RIISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1201



Andrew ignored Archie's desperate pleas for mercy and turned to Cecelia with a grin. "Cece, what do you think? Should we spare this big, bad guy?"

Cecelia pumped her fist excitedly and shouted, "Andrew, I don't think we should! We should string him up and hit him with every torture technique from the Dark Ages! That would be so much more satisfying!"

Andrew froze for a moment, thinking to himself that this little girl had quite a vicious streak.

Lauren scolded playfully, "Cece, hush! You're a girl! Where do you even come up with such twisted ideas?"

Tiana also called out, "Cece, come here, sweetheart! You need to remember that those old, brutal punishments are outdated and barbaric. They have no place in today's world!"

Cecelia pouted and muttered, "But Mom, Lauren, don't you even want to see it just once? I saw the drawings in a history book—it looked so bloody and wild!"

Jameson's face twitched as he forced a smile and said to Andrew, "Andy, you better take it from here. This kid... her mom and I have definitely spoiled her rotten!"

Cecelia lifted her chin proudly and giggled, "Dad, you got it all wrong! What you should say is: 'Well, we botched this character build with her. Guess it's

time to start a new save file!' That way, you guys can just give me a baby brother already!"

Lauren chuckled helplessly and quickly explained to Andrew, "Andrew, I'm sorry you had to see this. Cece's been begging for a little brother for years!"

Of course, Andrew just laughed it off and did not take a child's words seriously. He turned to Logan and said casually, "Alright, that's enough. I didn't really lose anything here anyway, so I'll head out."

After saying that, he got into the car with the Rhodes family and drove away.

Logan called out with a laugh, "Hey, Andrew, come by the house sometime! Father keeps asking about you!"

Andrew said, "We'll see."

The car started up and soon disappeared down the road.

One of the Keller family's bodyguards frowned and said cautiously, "Sir, I know you and Mr. Lloyd call each other brothers now... But if I may speak frankly, he's being a little too casual and disrespectful."

Logan smiled and replied, "It's fine. Real masters always have their own temperaments. If he acted all fake and tried too hard to kiss up to me just because we're brothers, then I'd start doubting his skills."

The bodyguard stayed quiet after that, but deep down, he still felt uncomfortable.

After all, Logan was no ordinary figure-he was the next heir to the Keller family, the brightest rising star among the Five Apex Families. Yet, even with all that status, Andrew treated him so lightly, as if he could take him or leave him.

Was Andrew really that untouchable?

Archie watched Andrew's car leave and let out a massive sigh of relief, managing

a weak, bitter smile. "Mr. Keller, can I go now? I really need to get to a hospital before things get worse!"

Logan replied coolly, "Break one of your legs yourself, then you can go to the hospital."

Archie's whole body trembled as he wailed, "Logan, are you really going to push me this far? That guy's already left! Is it really worth it for you to keep fighting for him?"

Logan sneered and said, "Mr. Hopkins, don't blame me for this. Honestly, if you had pissed off one of our regular family members, a few words would've settled it. I wouldn't have cared.

"But what you did wrong-what you

really shouldn't have done-was messing with Andrew. My father made it very clear that I had to

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handle this properly. I'm under

orders not to let anyone mistreat

him. So... sorry, but you brought this on yourself."

As he finished speaking, Logan lifted his foot and ruthlessly stomped down, shattering Archie's leg.

"My leg..." Archie's blood-curdling scream tore through the air, but he did not dare voice a single complaint.

Instead, the shock inside him kept growing, wave after wave. Even the head of the Keller family had personally ordered protection for Andrew-there was no way Archie would ever find justice for himself now.

Chapter 1202



Archie knew he had no choice but to swallow his anger and live with the humiliation for the rest of his life. Unless one day, the Hopkins family could surpass the Keller family, he would never have a shot at revenge.

But deep down, Archie understood that day would probably never come in his lifetime.

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After Andrew and the Rhodes family returned home, he was ready to leave again. However, Lauren stopped him with a look full of longing.

Andrew laughed and said, "I almost forgot. There's still something important I haven't done yet."

He pulled the mischievous lady into his arms, grabbing her soft waist, and before she could even squeal, he carried her straight into a room. The two of them were wrapped up in each other, kissing passionately without a care in the world.

Outside the door, Tiana called out flatly, "Alright, that's enough. If you keep going, your mouths are gonna fall apart!"

Lauren huffed back, "Mom, can you give us a minute? We just got started!"

Tiana gritted her teeth and snapped, "You little brat! There's plenty of time for that later! Let him come out now-I have something to talk to him about!"

Reluctantly, Lauren let go of Andrew but made sure to sneak a shameless grab at him on the way out.

Andrew chuckled and stepped outside, still not sure what Tiana wanted. Without a word, Tiana turned and said, "Follow me."

They walked one behind the other until they reached the Rhodes family's back garden. This place was usually quiet and empty, but Andrew was very familiar with

it.

After all, this was the spot where he had sparred with Tiana last time—and not just any sparring either.

That day, Tiana had insisted on testing his skills personally, and she ended up getting thoroughly beaten in a real hand-to-hand fight.

Tiana stopped walking and got straight to the point. "You didn't seem too thrilled about Logan trying to buddy up with you."

Andrew shrugged and replied, "The Keller family wants to build a relationship, but I don't really want to get too tangled up with these big dynasties."

Tiana smiled and said, "Sometimes getting close isn't a bad thing. You're still new in Blumedale and don't have strong roots here. If you have the Keller family backing you, a lot of things will get easier."

Andrew answered flatly, "With or without the Keller family, things will always be easy for me."

Tiana nodded without arguing. If anyone else had said that, she would have laughed in their face, but she knew what Andrew was capable of. He truly did not need to bow to

anyone, not even their family.

"Andrew, you and your father are cut from the same cloth-both incredibly capable men," she said, her eyes shining with admiration.

"I hate complimenting people, especially when it's fake, and most of the time, I won't waste words on useless fools. But you're different. I'm praising you from the bottom of my heart."

Andrew stayed silent, waiting to hear what else she had to say.

Tiana huffed in annoyance. "You don't need to look at me like that, like I'm some scheming cougar trying to eat you alive! I know what you're thinking-you probably see me as a shameless woman,@ total joke, right?"

She crossed her arms and said sharply, "Well, if that's what you think, you're wrong. I only lost my composure before because of the feelings I had for your father. But now I'm clearheaded.

"I only see you as my good son-in-law, Lauren's boyfriend. Nothing more, nothing less. You get that, right?"

Hearing her say that, Andrew finally relaxed and smiled. "I understand, Mrs. Rhodes. It was just a moment of impulsiveness back then. In the end, it's all because of my dad, So don't worry. I'll forget it ever happened."

Tiana's cheeks flushed slightly, and even though she was in her 40s, she still had

a charming, captivating beauty.

After a beat, she suddenly asked, "Andrew, between me and Lauren, who do you think is prettier?"

Without missing a beat, Andrew grinned and said, "Of course, Lauren is the prettiest. But Mrs. Rhodes, you're still as stunning as ever!"

It was the kind of easy question he would never mess up.

Tiana smiled in satisfaction and teased, "At least you know how to talk smart. Actually, the real reason I brought you here is because I have a favor to ask."

Chapter 1203



Andrew nodded and said, "Go ahead, Mrs. Rhodes. I'm listening."

Tiana said seriously, "When you treated me before, I'm sure you noticed how agitated my inner energy was, right? That's actually because of the martial arts method I practice.

"I've been stuck at the semi-martial king level for almost five years, and I haven't found a way or opportunity to break through. So, I wanted to ask for your help."

Andrew frowned and replied, "Mrs. Rhodes, breaking into the martial king level isn't something to take lightly. If your foundation isn't solid or the timing isn't right, forcing a breakthrough could cause serious problems."

Tiana snorted proudly and said, "I'm well aware of the risks, but if I'm asking, it's because I have a level of certainty you don't know about. To be honest, my martial lineage isn't ordinary.

"Before I left my sect, my mentor taught me a secret method that could open a shortcut to the martial king level. However, the technique requires external forces and help from outside.

"And looking around the entire Rhodes family, not one person has the strength to meet my requirements. So, in the end, I had no choice but to turn to you."

Andrew raised an eyebrow and said, "I'm curious-what kind of method could actually make that happen?"

After all, reaching the martial king level meant stepping into the ranks of true powerhouses. It was rare to see even one martial king, and based on Tiana's natural talent, Andrew had estimated she would not make that leap until she was at least 60.

Yet now, she was saying she had a shortcut, and even Andrew, with all his experience, could not help but be intrigued.

Tiana's expression shifted slightly, a faint hint of awkwardness crossing her face.

She shook her head and said, "Don't ask about the method right now. You'll see for yourself when the time comes.

"What I need from you is simple: I need you to craft three different pills for me. They can't be low quality, though. Think you can manage?"

Andrew thought for a moment

before replying, "As long as you don't need pills beyond

eighth-grade-those that can literally

bring back the dead or regrow

limbs then it shouldn't be a

problem."

Tiana froze, clearly surprised, and looked at him with genuine admiration.

"You

little rascal, you really do keep surprising me."

"If you're confident about everything

up to eighth-grade... then does that mean you can already craft eighth-grade pills? That kind of skill would make you a prized guest even in top cities like Chetvine or Terror Town, never mind Gabo Creek."

Andrew simply smiled without saying anything. Since Tiana was family, he did not mind letting her know a little about his real abilities.

Soon, Tiana handed him a list of the three pills she needed. She had already gathered materials for two of them; the third one still needed Andrew's help with sourcing.

"Andrew, I don't want you to think I'm just using you because I'm your mother-in-law," Tiana said, sounding a little embarrassed. "Once I break through to the Martial King level, I'll be yours to command-you can use me however you want..."

The moment the words left her mouth, Tiana regretted it. 'Damn it, what kind of nonsense am I spouting?'

She had always been sharp-tongued and composed, the type of woman who never lost her cool. But somehow, around Andrew, she kept slipping up.

Luckily, Andrew simply ignored the hidden suggestiveness in her words and agreed to everything calmly. After all, if he wanted to marry Lauren, there was no way he could just take without giving.

"Mrs. Rhodes, if there's nothing else, I'll head back now," Andrew said with a small smile.





Whenever Andrew was alone with Tiana, he could not help but feel a little uneasy. Seeing that Tiana had nothing more to say, he quickly took the chance to excuse himself.

However, Tiana hesitated. Then, she smiled slyly and asked, "Hold on, let me ask you-have you and Lauren... done it?"

Andrew blinked, confused. "Done what?"

Tiana rolled her eyes and snapped, "Don't play dumb, Andrew. You know exactly what I'm asking."

Andrew finally caught on and answered honestly, "Lauren and I have done pretty much everything, but we haven't crossed the final line."

Tiana nodded approvingly. "Good. You need to remember that you can't go that far until you're married. I made sure to tell her that too, and she understands."

Andrew's face darkened a little. "Mrs. Rhodes, seriously? This isn't the Dark Ages anymore. We're in a real relationship, and sometimes things get a little... heated."

Tiana shook her head firmly. "It's not about being old-fashioned. There are other reasons, but I can't explain them to you yet."

Andrew could tell that Tiana, as sharp as ever, would not give up any more information. So, after saying a few polite words to Lauren and Jameson, he left the Rhodes residence.

As the sky dimmed, Tiana stood alone in the garden for a long time, lost deep in thought. She murmured to herself, "Andrew is just like his father-destined to never have just one woman by his side."

"Lauren will have a good life with him, no doubt. But it's always been this way-heroes are rarely loyal to just one. The more powerful and magnetic a man is, the more women will naturally flock to him."

She smiled faintly as she reached out and plucked a vibrant red flower from the garden, twirling it in her fingers.

"Luckily, I can see it clearly-Andrew might be passionate, but he isn't heartless like his father. Lauren won't suffer the way I did. And another good thing-Andrew isn't greedy. He knows when to say no.

"If he weren't, with the way I've been throwing myself at him, he would've already dragged me off and had his way."

She chuckled to herself. "Any other young
would've lost it long ago,
especially with me preget
serving myself up on as
platter."

"Ugh, if that little bastard really dared to think of crossing that line... I'd never forgive him," Tiana cursed under her breath.

Deep down, she knew the truth-if Andrew had actually made a move, she probably wouldn't have fought him off.

Throughout history, passionate women have always been like that. Their icy facades were just masks; inside, their hearts burned hotter
than anyone knew.

The next morning, Andrew woke up right on time in the grand bed at Serenity Villa.

Now that the Haywoods and Goldings had officially dropped their bounty orders, he could finally relax and breathe easy.

When he came out, Aspen already had breakfast ready and waiting.

"Where are Natasha and Dylan?" he asked casually, happily digging into the delicious meal.

The more time he spent around Aspen, the more satisfied he became with her.

Without looking up from the stove, Aspen said flatly, "Breakfast? I only cook for you. Everyone else can fend for themselves."

Andrew clicked his tongue and said, "You're so heartless."

With a loud clatter, Aspen tossed the spatula down and sneered, "Oh, you're the model of loyalty and affection, huh? Then you

them!" .ne

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Andrew answered with a perfectly serious face, "No need. I've got plenty of money. I'll just give them cash to eat out."

Aspen could not help but laugh and muttered under her breath, "Typical jerk."

Chapter 1205



After breakfast, Andrew, the ever-hands-off boss, got strong-armed by Aspen into actually going to work.

Otherwise, Supreme Capital Group, a company sitting on billions in investments, would end up being nothing more than a shiny nameplate.

Aspen's exact words were, "If you keep ignoring everything and leave me to worry about it alone, I'd rather go sell myself on the street than keep slaving away for you! At least if I'm selling, I'll make some money. Meanwhile, I'll probably die broke working for you or just die!"

Andrew winced when he heard that. Realizing that his little maid was seriously holding some grudges, he quickly agreed to tag along to the office.

"Give me a minute. I'm gonna change," Aspen said before disappearing into her room.

A few minutes later, she strutted out-black stockings, high heels, and a sleek blue business suit that shimmered slightly under the light. She was absolutely stunning, and even Andrew had to admit it.

Aspen smirked inwardly. 'Yep, the old 'business bombshell' look never failed.'

She had long figured out that Andrew, the blockheaded steel wall, usually treated her with zero romantic interest. Yet, it was a different story when she wore her work attire,

Especially when it came to her legs, this guy seemed way too interested. So, Aspen doubled down, practicing yoga religiously every day to keep her long, toned legs in top form.

She even went as far as insuring those gorgeous legs for three million. Every day, she made sure to flaunt them right under his nose-close enough to tempt, but far enough to stay just out of reach.

Aspen chuckled to herself at the thought.

Just then, Andrew suddenly reached out toward her.

Aspen stiffened, face flushing pink. This bastard was always pulling sneaky moves without warning.

Instinctively, she pressed her legs together tightly and growled, "It's too early for this! I swear I'll scream..."

However, Andrew ignored her little tantrum. Instead, he gently brushed a few stray strands of hair off her forehead.

"There. Now you're perfect," he said with a grin. "Aspen, if you ever decided to really sell, you'd be a total knockout. Guys would line up just to throw money at you."

Andrew chuckled as he teased her.

Aspen nearly exploded and snapped, "Sell yourself! If you can't say anything nice, just keep your mouth shut!"

Andrew sighed. "I didn't say anything wrong. You're the one who said you'd rather sell yourself than keep working for me."

Aspen snorted and rolled her eyes hard enough to strain something. "You've seriously got issues. I was talking about setting up a street stall, selling flowers, coffee, or something else! But no, with your filthy little mind, everything's gotta be twisted!"

Andrew flashed her a dazzling, devil-may-care smile. "I'll give you one more chance to rephrase that properly."

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jumped slightly. She

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smile all too well-it was

e move right before
to 'teach her a lesson.'

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Without hesitation, Aspen bent slightly at the waist, tilted her head down, and said sweetly, "Sir, I'm

sorry for acting foolish. Please don't
be angry." Śwnovel

Andrew sighed and let it go. There was no point in getting into it; this woman had him completely figured out.

No matter how much she stirred trouble, he could not bring himself to be harsh with her.

After that, they drove out of The Sovereign Residences together.

Before heading to the company, Andrew made a quick detour, pulling into a small place called Oak Apothecary.

"Mr. Lloyd! Welcome! Come on in!" The shop assistant spotted him getting out of the car and hurried over to greet him with utmost respect.

Andrew gave the guy a casual pat on the shoulder and stepped inside. The owner was an older man in his 60s named Ronan Bates.

Andrew walked straight over and said bluntly, "Mr. Bates, I need a few herbs. Could you keep an eye out for me?"

Ronan, peering over his reading glasses and a medical book, nodded. "Write them down for me. I'll find them when I have some time."

Andrew did not waste words. He quickly jotted down the list, handed it over, and then headed back out to the car with Aspen.

As they pulled away, Aspen asked curiously, "Since when are you so tight with Mr. Bates over at Oak Apothecary?"

The small traditional shop had a decent reputation around Blumedale, and Aspen had clearly taken notice.

Chapter 1206



Aspen knew that Ronan charged a reasonable medical fee, and his medical skills were also quite good.

Andrew started the car and sped off while answering casually, "I met Mr. Bates by chance. Showed him a few tricks, and he was so impressed by my skills that he practically worships me now. He even offered to introduce me to his granddaughter."

Aspen let out a sharp laugh. "Just met by chance, and he's ready to hand over his granddaughter? Come on, if you're going to brag, at least make it believable!"

Andrew just smiled, not bothering to argue with her. He and Ronan had bonded over their shared passion for medicine-it was nothing unusual.

In truth, after witnessing Andrew's medical skills firsthand, Ronan nearly dropped to his knees, begging to become his disciple, though Andrew firmly refused.

And yes, Ronan did have a granddaughter who was currently attending college.

Ronan had hinted that if Andrew did not already have a girlfriend, he should consider his granddaughter.

Andrew, of course, brushed him off. He was not about to fall into the same trap again.

Back in Jayrodale, Cedric had almost trapped him by dangling his busty, baby-faced granddaughter in front of him.

Here in Blumedale, Andrew was not about to let history repeat itself. Francesca had already dragged him deep enough once, and it had been a damn miracle he had pulled himself out.

If Ronan's granddaughter were anywhere near as dangerous, Andrew knew he would be finished.

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The red LaFerrari roared once before pulling smoothly to a stop in front of a company building.

Andrew looked up and raised an eyebrow, mumbling, "Phoenixdream Enterprises... sounds kinda familiar."

Aspen replied coldly, "Davon Parks-the one who used to hang around Seth-is the VP here. He's the one who set up today's meeting."

Andrew nodded and followed Aspen upstairs.

Davon was still the same-greasy, overweight, and nearly bald. As soon as he spotted Andrew, he rushed over, bowing and nodding so fast it was a wonder his head did not fall off.

"Mr. Lloyd, what an honor! You're really gracing Phoenixdream Enterprises with your presence today!"

Andrew gave him a half-smirk. "Davon, tone it down. You're laying it on so thick it's making me uncomfortable. You sure you didn't just call us here to hit on Aspen again?"

Davon let out a high-pitched yelp,

nearly tripping over himself. He wiped the sweat off his forehead frantically and stammered, "M-M Lloyd no way! Even if you gave me a thousand lives, I wouldn't dare think like that! I swear, today's meeting is all about business. Nothing else!"

Andrew's smile cooled into a faint sneer. "I gave you a chance before, and you

blew it. If you're not serious this time, don't blame me for being ruthless."

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Davon practically collapsed from fear. "Mr. Lloyd, I swear, I even pulled a few extra partners together for you! We've taken care of every need you might have for that big government project Supreme Capital Group secured! If you're not happy with anything, I will personally cut off my manhood!"

Andrew snorted. "I'll believe it for now. But if you screw up, don't bother cutting anything off. I'll have my guys tear you apart instead."

Davon's face twitched uncontrollably, and his smile looked more painful than anything else. He did not dare get cocky in front of this demon.

Andrew had casually wiped out Seth from the Haywoods without blinking, and nothing ever came of it.

Among the so-called partners Davon had arranged, he spotted a familiar face— Christina.

Aspen saw her too, and her face immediately turned icy cold. Without hesitation, she turned to Davon and said sharply, "Get that woman out of here. Supreme Capital Group doesn't do business with bitch." Content S belongs to

Chapter 1207



Davon blinked in confusion and asked, "Ms. Aspen, who exactly are you calling bitch'?"

Aspen smirked coldly and pointed straight at Christina. The latter's face darkened as she stood up stiffly.

"Aspen, you're going too far!" Christina snapped. "If I had known Supreme Capital Group was the major client here, do you really think I'd have bothered showing up?"

Her tone was sharp, but there was a flicker of unease in her eyes.

Aspen remained utterly indifferent. "Since you don't care, then do us all a favor and leave. Christina, I told you once that I would make sure your entire family would struggle in Blumedale. And when I say something, I mean it."

Christina's face turned from merely unpleasant to downright ugly. She turned sharply to Davon and demanded, "You're the one who invited us here. Now what's your decision?"

It was a clever move, throwing the ball back into Davon's court. After all, they were on Phoenixdream Enterprises' turf-surely Aspen and Andrew could not completely run wild here, right?

Davon forced a dry laugh and looked over at Andrew, stammering, "Uh, Mr. Lloyd, is there... some kind of misunderstanding with Ms. Christina?"

Andrew just shrugged lazily. "Don't ask me. Today, Aspen's handling everything. Her word is my word."

Davon immediately turned toward Aspen, trying to smile. "Ms. Aspen, you know, Ms. Christina's backed by the Wrights.

"And the Wrights are one of the Five Apex Families in Blumedale... maybe it's not worth making enemies?"

Aspen shot him a frosty glance. "Are you trying to teach me how to do my job?" Davon's eyelid twitched. 'Damn it, this woman's presence is terrifying!'

Even Andrew lifted a brow slightly, feeling a bit amused. This little maid of his was really channeling the vibe of one of those ruthless crime bosses from old movies.

Christina sneered. "Mr. Parks, think carefully don't give a damn about this deal, but if you kick me out, the Wrights-and Mr. Wright himself-won't be pleased. Choose wisely."

For once, Christina actually held her ground. She refused to believe Aspen could keep steamrolling her every single time.

Even with Andrew standing there, Christina did not think he would tip the scales enough to change the game.

Davon wiped the sweat that was breaking out on his forehead. He silently cursed, 'Holy hell, these two crazy women are going to get him killed either way!'

Aspen stayed perfectly composed, a hint of mockery in her voice. "So you're scared of the Wrights, but you're not scared of Mr. Lloyd?"

Slowly, she sauntered over to Andrew and lovingly straightened his suit collar, then wrapped her arms around one of his.

She cooed sweetly, "Davon, maybe

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you didn't know-but Mr. Lloyd is sworn brothers with Mr. Logan Keller, heir to the Keller family, the number one of the Five Apex Families. And not just that-be's also a personal favorite of Governor McCormick.

"And the Haywoods? The Goldings? They're powerful too, right? But look-could

they do a damn thing to Mr. Lloyd? Nope. Not a chance."

Aspen laid out Andrew's legendary connections with zero hesitation, each word making Davon's fat face twitch harder.

She let out a soft, chilling laugh and added, "Oh, and one more thing, Davon-something you really need to keep in mind. Recently, Mr. Lloyd hasn't been sleeping well or eating right. He's been itching to find some clowns in Blumedale to crush for

fun. éwnovel

"Just took out Seth not long ago, but it wasn't enough. His hands are still itching

for more."

Chapter 1208



"And since Mr. Lloyd needs a new target to let off some steam, maybe you should volunteer, Davon," Aspen said sweetly.

The moment those words landed, Davon jumped up in pure panic, wailing, "Ms. Aspen, no, no, please! Don't say another word. I'll do exactly what you say— everything, exactly as you want!"

After groveling, Davon's plump face darkened in shame. He spun around toward Christina, pointed straight at the door, and roared, "Christina, you worthless tramp, get out! Right now! You heard Ms. Aspen. Get the hell out of Phoenixdream Enterprises!"

Christina's eyes widened. She could not believe that Davon was this spineless, that easy to terrify.

She hissed, "Davon, you'd better think twice about what you're doing! If you throw me out, do you really think Mr. Wright will let you off afterward?"

She barked a bitter laugh, furious to the core, and deep inside, her hatred for Aspen grew even sharper. Being thrown out in front of everyone, this humiliation would haunt her in Blumedale forever.

Surprisingly, Davon doubled down, his voice booming, "I said get out-now!"

There was not a shred of mercy in his tone. He did not give a damn about Quinton. At worst, he figured he would just lose his job.

But if he crossed Andrew, he would not just lose a job. He could lose his life, and maybe worse.

Davon was not stupid. He knew exactly which was the bigger threat.

Christina's face twisted, dark as a thundercloud. If she left, she would be nothing but a joke. Yet, if she stayed, Davon clearly was not bluffing—he might have her thrown out by force, which would be even more humiliating.

At a complete loss, Christina turned her desperate eyes to Andrew and cried out, "Andrew, are you really going to let Aspen bully people like this? Are you just going to stand there and watch?"

Andrew chuckled lightly. "This is between you two. What does it have to do with me?"

Christina nearly screamed, "If you hadn't given her the authority or backed her, do you think she would even dare to challenge me?"

Andrew sneered. "You had no problem using Quinton's support for yourself. So, why can't Aspen lean

on me? Do you think I'd help you over my own maid?"

The words hit like a knife straight into Christina's heart. For a second, the stabbing

pain nearly made her bite through her own lip.

Andrew truly doted on Aspen-there was no denying it.

As for her? There was nothing left but coldness and mockery.

The bitterness, jealousy, and resentment all twisted together inside Christina until

it became a burning, searing ache.

Everything Aspen had now should have been hers.

Regret, hatred, and despair overwhelmed her to the point that for a moment, Christina even thought about throwing herself off the building.

Aspen pointed coldly at the door. "Christina, get out. If you don't, I'll gladly slap you across the face and throw you out myself."

Christina's vision blurred with tears she could no longer hold back. She gritted her teeth and hissed,

"Andrew, Aspen, fine-you win today! But this isn't over!"

Snatching up her purse, she stumbled out of Phoenixdream Enterprises, looking utterly broken.

In her panic, her high heel twisted wrong, and she crashed to the ground hard. Her ankle immed

swelled red and angry, but no one moved to help her.

No one pitied her, nor did anyone offer a helping hand.

Tears of shame streamed down her cheeks as Christina sat there, humiliated beyond words.

Was this what her life had become trampled under the boots of Andrew and Aspen, powerless to fight back?

She refused to accept it, nor would she accept it.

Chapter 1209



"You two went from loving each other to trying to kill each other. Pretty entertaining," Andrew said with a glance at Aspen, smiling faintly.

Aspen's face stayed cold. She snapped, "She deserved it, and besides, isn't everything that happened because of you?"

Andrew replied calmly, "Had nothing to do with me. I never touched your Bridgefields' Stevens family."

Aspen secretly gritted her teeth. Sure, he had not moved against the Stevens family directly.

But her? She had been forced to sell herself into slavery, body and soul.

Was that not tragic enough?

Moreover, who knew when she might completely fall into his hands, devoured, with nothing left?

Davon, wiping cold sweat from his forehead, squeezed out a smile. "Mr. Lloyd, Ms. Aspen, I've already taken care of that issue. Should we get down to proper business now?"

Andrew nodded. "Okay, let's talk business."

Immediately, the business partners who had been waiting nearby all jumped to their feet, smiling brightly and eagerly handing over their business cards.

"Mr. Lloyd, our company can absolutely meet all your requirements!"

"Mr. Lloyd, about that government project you secured we would be honored to handle it for you. We'll deliver top-notch results!"

"Whether we make a profit or not doesn't matter. Our CEO said what's important is building a relationship with you!"

Their enthusiasm was over the top, with everyone practically falling over themselves to flatter him.

They did not have much of a choice-Supreme Capital Group might still be low-profile in Blumedale, but Andrew's name was already making waves.

After all, anyone who could survive a double bounty from two major noble families without blinking was no ordinary man.

Anyone with half a brain could see that Andrew's arrival was about to turn Blumedale's whole power structure upside down.

It was not obvious yet, but the signs were there. The fact that both the Keller family, the leader of the Five Apex Families, and Gabo Creek Province's governor, Derek, had thrown their weight behind Andrew was proof enough.

Anyone with a survival instinct was already adjusting their sails.

By the end of the negotiations, Aspen's wrist was nearly cramping from signing so

many agreements. There were simply too many companies scrambling to curry favor with Supreme Capital Group."

Once business was wrapped up, it was time for the "bonding" phase drinks, laughs, and letting loose.

Davon winked slyly and chuckled.

"Mr. Lloyd, got any free time later? Maybe head over to the club with us? You're our top client now! Whether you want something Classy or... Spicy, just say the word. I'll cover everything!"

Another executive, a

glasses-wearing man who looked

scholarly but grinned like a creep,

chimed in eagerly. "Mr. Lloyd, join us!

I booked two foreign girls at the

Harmonia Club-guaranteed satisfaction! If not, you can hold me

personally responsible!"

Others rushed in too, not wanting to be left behind, each one sucking up more shamelessly than the last.

Aspen stared in disbelief. These bastards were all about "integrity" and "principles" when they were talking about business.

But now? Their true colors were worse than those of animals.

She shot Andrew a disgusted look and said, "If you want to party, go ahead. I'm heading back to the office."

Andrew smiled. "Gentlemen, I appreciate the kind offers! But as you can see, my little secretary here keeps me on a very short leash. Maybe next time... yeah, next time we'll party."

Davon sighed dramatically. "Mr. Lloyd, you're a man managing billions-you deserve to enjoy yourself!"

Chapter 1210



Someone joked loudly, "But we get it... I mean, with a secretary like that, why would you even look at anyone else?"

The others burst into raucous laughter, not bothering to hide it even in front of Aspen's increasingly dark expression.

"Exactly!" another chimed in. "Mr. Lloyd is living the dream. Damn, I look at my office girl and suddenly feel dead inside!"

"Mr. Lloyd's not just talented-he's got the best of both worlds. That little secretary of his is a top-tier beauty!"

A bespectacled executive chuckled crudely and added, "Mr. Lloyd, let me give you a piece of advice: when there's work, let the secretary handle it; when there's no work, handle the secretary! That line fits you perfectly!"

The entire room erupted in laughter as Aspen's face flushed deep red, her cheeks burning. Furious, she shot Andrew a murderous glare, then stormed out of the room in her heels without a word.

Andrew, looking utterly unbothered, leisurely followed behind. He even muttered to himself, "Handle the secretary, huh? Not a bad idea."

The two of them walked out of Phoenixdream Enterprises one after the other.

Aspen stopped suddenly, spun around, and sneered, "You seemed to enjoy all that flattery from those disgusting pigs."

Andrew just shrugged and said calmly, "Come on, it's all just part of the negotiation. You didn't seriously take any of that to heart, did you?"

Aspen was seething inside. Of course, she did not believe them, but that did not mean she was not furious. They had treated her like Andrew's property, like some cheap plaything he could use whenever he pleased.

The thought left a bitter, nasty feeling burning in her chest.

Andrew strolled toward the car, speaking lazily over his shoulder. "Don't go sulking over nothing. You're not that important."

"And besides," he said without a hint of mercy, "if I ever decided to take you, to

claim your body, you'd have no choice but to accept it."

"Y-You bastard!" Aspen stuttered, her shame and anger boiling over.

Andrew opened the car door and said coldly, "Get in."

One look at his expression, and Aspen knew the devil was getting impatient. Reluctantly, she lifted her skirt with both hands, carefully backing herself into the car, her curves outlined perfectly.

Every time she did this, she could practically feel Andrew's predatory gaze devouring her. It made her want to sink through the floor in embarrassment.

The door slammed shut.

Andrew slid into the driver's seat beside her. Before Aspen could even react, he grabbed her and pulled her over with one hand, so effortlessly it was like picking up a feather.

Aspen's body, soft and pliant, landed directly on Andrew's lap. More precisely, right across his thighs.

She knelt there, straddling him, her hands braced against his chest. Her cherry lips were barely an inch away from Andrew's mouth.

"W-What are you doing?" Aspen stammered, panic rising fast. "Andrew, I'm warning you... Don't you dare... I-I mean it..."

Her mind spun wildly. What the hell was this devil trying to do now?

Was he really planning to do it right here, in the car?