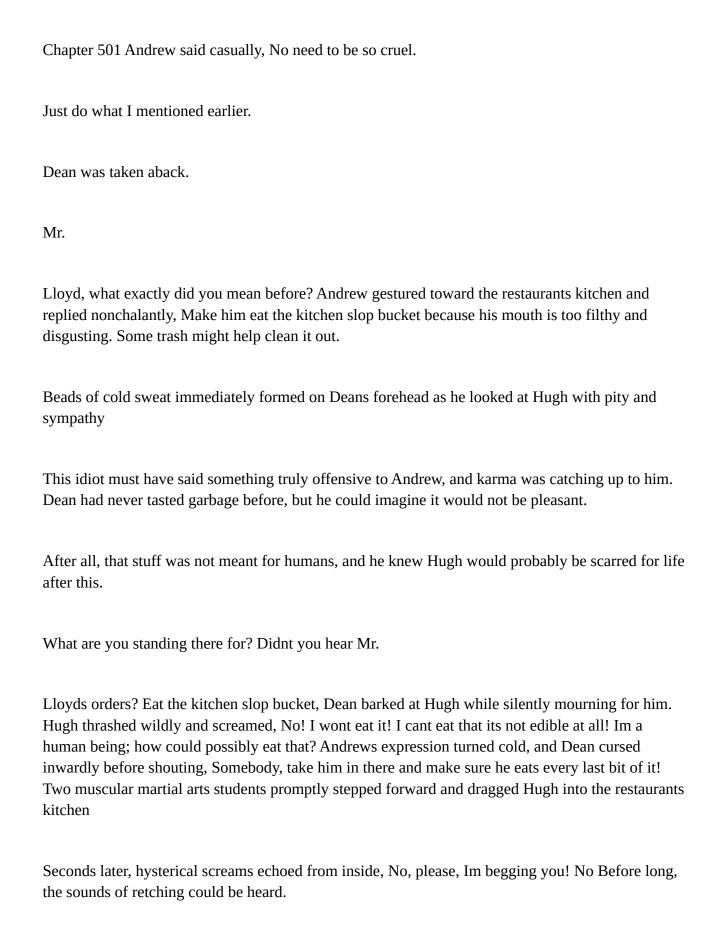
The Ashes 501



The restaurant owner approached Andrew, trembling.
Sir, please reconsider.
Our waste is extremely foul even animals might have trouble swallowing it.
How could a person possibly eat this ? Andrew showed no sympathy for Hughs predicament.
He simply smiled and replied, Dont worry about it.
Just dont think of him as human.
After a pause, he added, Oh, and Hugh will be paying for everyones meal today.
Dean quickly chimed in, Of course, Mr.
Lloyd
III make sure that piece of trash pays for your meal, Ms.
Rhodes meal, and everyone elses bills too
Andrew nodded and said, In that case, well be leaving now.
Then, he gathered his things and left the restaurant with Lauren, who was doubled over with laughter.
The remaining customers in the restaurant could not believe how things had turned out.
Even the Madblade Martial Academys representative could not handle that handsome guy and instead treated him with utmost respect.

More shockingly, Hugh, the local troublemaker, was being forced to eat the kitchen slop. As Hughs desperate pleas and retching sounds continued to echo from the kitchen, Dean maintained a stoic expression while dialing Rodneys number. Well? Did you handle the mess that worthless guy caused? Rodney asked. Dean replied, Mr. Sanford, the situation couldnt be resolved. Rodneys voice turned cold. What do you mean? Is someone actually daring to disrespect the Madblade Martial Academy? Deans expression turned grim as he answered, Your supposedly untouchable cousin didnt just mess with anyone he picked a fight with Andrew and Lauren Honestly, this is beyond my ability to handle. Perhaps youd like to come and resolve it yourself, Mr. Sanford? The other end of the line went silent. Rodney was utterly speechless. Chapter 502 After a long silence, Rodney finally growled through gritted teeth, Just forget about it. Dont bother with him anymore Let Andrew deal with him however he wants- might as well let him kill that troublemaking idiot! That cursed fool brings nothing but disaster! Of all the people he could provoke, why did he have to mess with Andrew? Dean said, I didnt intervene, but Mr. Lloyd ordered him to eat the kitchen slop.

Rodney quickly responded, Good, good, thats perfect! Make sure he eats until Andrew is satisfied.
Do you hear me? If there isnt enough trash, get people to buy more from other places III cover the costs! Dean chuckled.
Dont worry, Mr.
Sanford
III make sure hes well fed.
Dr.
Lloyd, do you think Hugh can actually swallow that kitchen slop? Lauren asked playfully.
Her eyes glimmered with amusement, as their shopping trip had turned out to be more entertaining than expected
Andrew placed their shopping bags in the back of his G Wagon and said with mock seriousness, This restaurants kitchen slop is particularly nasty compared to others.
Though we shouldnt underestimate Hugh given how foul his mouth is, he might actually enjoy it and ask for seconds
Lauren burst out laughing, clutching her waist.
Dr.
Lloyd, stop it! My sides hurt from laughing! Andrew smiled and said, Get in.
Ill drop you off at the Rhodes residence before heading home.
With Dean supervising, Hugh would have no choice but to finish all the waste, and whether he was

Nasty Hugh or the king himself, he would end up vomiting and getting his stomach pumped at the hospital.

As Lauren opened the car door, she spotted a familiar face across the street at the hotel and let out a surprised sound

Andrew looked over and was equally taken aback.

A couple was coming out of the Stanton Hotel across the street, holding each other intimately.

Both appeared quite drunk, their faces pressed close together.

While Andrew did not recognize the woman he knew the man.

It was Troy MacAfee, the newly appointed head of the Pharmaceutical Division at Rhodes Corporation. Lauren smirked

Troy just became the head of the Pharmaceutical Division, and hes already getting cocky enough to hang around with that woman.

After getting in the car, Andrew asked, Do you know that woman? It was clear that Lauren had strong feelings of dislike toward Troys companion.

Lauren shut her door and scoffed, Thats Ruby Dickinson, a notorious business broker in Jayrodales corporate world.

Andrew nodded, understanding.

Brokers were an age old profession, typically involved in connecting people and facilitating deals.

In modern terms, it was akin to a professional public relations consultant or a corporate mediator. Lauren continued, But Ruby is no ordinary broker

She doesnt just dabble in shady deals shes also a corporate spy.

Over the years, shes caused companies like Jayrodale Bank and Mr.

Yates Wealthroller Investments to lose billions through her schemes.

However, shes incredibly cunning and has powerful backers.

Shes managed to avoid getting caught in several major financial scandals, which has only added to her notorious reputation, Lauren explained with disdain.

Andrew chuckled, Sounds like shes quite skilled at what she does

Lauren scoffed, Skills? Please! She scammed banks, then wealthy families, then Mr.

Yates, and when she got too confident, she tried to target our corporation

She paused for a moment, then continued, Want to know what happened? This shameless woman

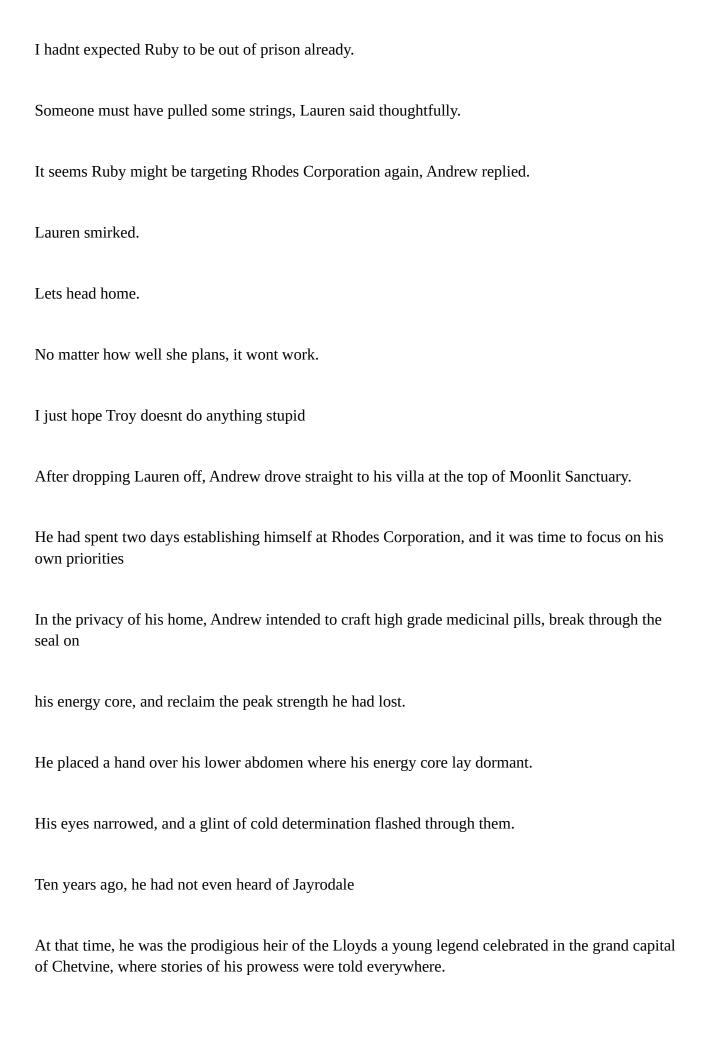
attempted to secure five billion dollars from Rhodes Corporation through a fake project, but I exposed her scheme and got her locked up for a few years.

Chapter 503 Andrew exclaimed in surprise, Lauren, I didnt realize you had that in you! Lauren smiled sweetly.

Of course! Im not just a pretty face.

Remember, I was the one who chased Michael around with a knife, threatening his manhood! Andrew could imagine Michaels miserable situation back when Lauren was at the height of her influence at Rhodes Corporation

That man was probably living in constant fear of losing everything at any moment.



Unfortunately, fate had played a cruel joke on him.

A haunting event had destroyed everything and nearly killed him.

They had declared, The Lloyds Dragon Prince must be eliminated... The Lloyds are thousand year Holtrien royalty with pure bloodlines.

A creature like you, a freak, a curse your very existence is a crime! Even his mentor had betrayed him. Andy, Im sorry.

Ive completely sealed your energy core.

Whether you live or die now is up to fate... Kill him! Slay this monster! Throw him into the abyss slay the dragon, rid the world of the Lloyds horror! Even after ten years, those cursed, venomous voices still echoed in his ears.

Taking a deep breath, Andrew muttered coldly, What doesnt kill me only makes me stronger.

Some justice cant come from the Gods it must come from your own hands and the blade you wield! On the workbench, Andrew laid out rare ingredients: Seventh Heaven Quince, Aurora Lotus, and the Morlic Root he had acquired from the Aicker family.

He opened secure vault and retrieved dozens of precious herbs, meticulously gathered over ten long years

These represented ten years of blood, sweat, and achievement

Some were bought with money, others seized through bloodshed, and some were gifts from grateful patients he had healed... Every herb was a testament to his struggles and sacrifices.

Now that everything was ready, Andrew began his work.

His goal was to create a pill so extraordinary that even the elite of the Sacred City and Terror Town, the superpowers of Chetvine, or the top tier Advanced Medical Institute would fight tooth and nail for it. He had spent ten years preparing for this moment

Lauren returned home in high spirits, carrying her shopping bags toward her bedroom.

Even though we havent made it official, Andrew and I are pretty much a couple now, right? she thought happily as she reached for her bedroom door

She realized that being with Andrew was the only time she felt truly carefree and happy.

So, this was what being in love felt like no wonder everyone yearned for it.

You seem quite happy.

Looks like Andrew knows how to charm you, a mocking voice called out as she opened the door.

Lauren set down her bags and said, Its late.

Why arent you in bed? Tiana sat on Laurens bed with her arms crossed, cold as ice, If I had gone to bed, who wouldve noticed you sneaking home so late?

Chapter 504 If I wasnt here, were you planning to spend your nights out with Andrew instead of coming home? Tianas voice grew sharper with every word, each sentence harsher than the last.

Lauren looked at her calmly and asked, What are you trying to say? I want you to show some restraint, Tiana snapped.

Remember, youre the heiress of Rhodes Corporation, not some wild party girl with no self respect. Lauren let out a cold laugh and said dismissively, Everything I do appears wrong in your eyes

You even want to control who I date, but what I cant tolerate is what makes you think being with Andrew means I have no self respect? Tiana sneered, her voice dripping with sarcasm.

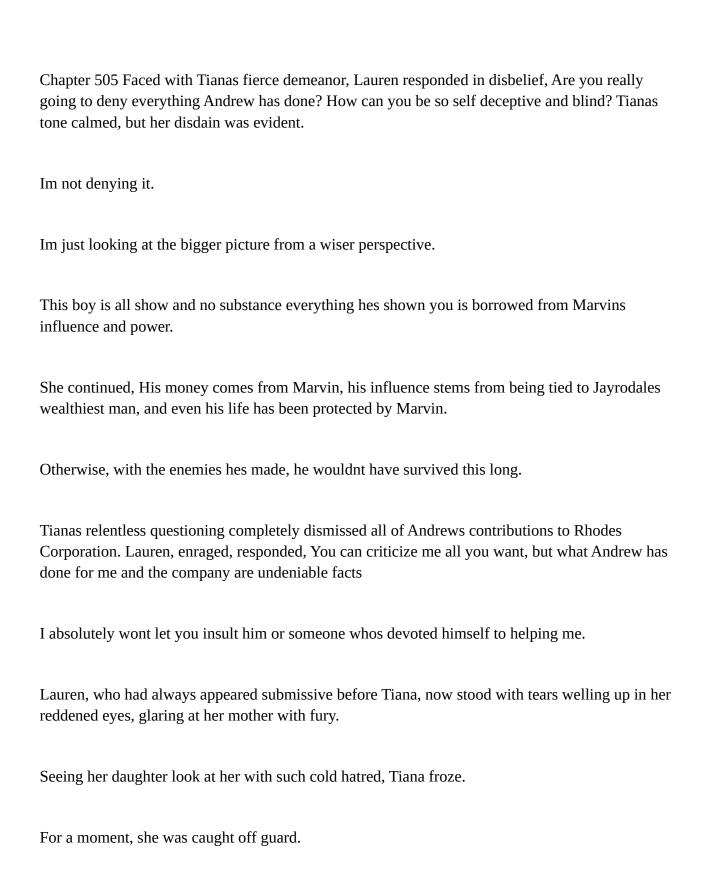
Do you think Im blind? Youre out there shopping, holding hands, whispering sweet nothings to each other in public I know about your every move

Laurens voice dropped, laced with accusation So, you let me go out, but then you spy on me? Im not spying Im preventing you from doing something youll regret, Tiana retorted. Lauren scoffed. Lets be honest youre just worried III sleep with Andrew, arent you? Well, rest assured, Im planning to jump into his bed and give myself to him completely at the first opportunity. This time, Tiana did not get angry but responded with a smirk. If you do that, no one can stop Joe. Once he learns how you treated him and his family, I imagine their fury will destroy Andrew before he even knows what hit him. Laurens face paled slightly as she gritted her teeth. You promised not to use the Driscoll family to threaten Andrew again. Tianas expression was stone cold And you promised not to cross the line. Lauren sighed wearily and said, You must have heard about Andrews outstanding performance. How can such a capable man with unlimited potential not satisfy you as a son in law? Tiana gave a nonchalant shrug. His actions have surprised me, Ill admit. But theyre far from impressive.

Lauren scoffed. Since when did you become incapable of acknowledging someones excellence, Mom? Tiana stood and replied with a detached tone If someone is truly remarkable, they dont need anyones acknowledgment. But if its all just a facade, no amount of praise will make it real Lauren took a deep breath, meeting her mothers gaze head on. Fine. Then let me ask you this hasnt Andrews performance at the company over the past two days been worthy of recognition? Hes quite wealthy, managing to invest five billion to become a shareholder, Tiana said calmly And hes quite capable, making Madblade Martial Academy bow down. But arent these just illusions you two young people created to fool me? Lauren frowned, How are they illusions? Andrews achievements are there for everyone to see how could they be fake? Tiana let out a disdainful laugh Let me ask you something. How old is Andrew? Lauren replied, Hes 26! Then tell me, where is he from? Tianas voice rose. Lauren hesitated before saying, He should be from Jayrodale. Tianas anger flared. Exactly! A 26 year old from a small, backwater town like Jayrodale where does someone like that

get five billion dollars? Where does he find the power to make Madblade Martial Academy bow

down? Tell me, Lauren! Explain it!



Hes the only man Ive ever loved, she declared firmly, without hesitation or fear.

Lauren Tiana began, but Lauren cut her off as tears streamed down her face.

But no matter what he does, he cant win your approval or the familys acceptance. Since youre being so unreasonable and pushy, I have nothing more to say except this -I wont marry anyone but Andrew Tianas momentary guilt and hesitation vanished, replaced by a cold smirk. How foolish Youre completely duped, and yet youre still defending him Lauren, wheres your intelligence? Wheres your pride as the Rhodes Corporation heiress? She added, If youre so determined to stay blind, then III give you the truth, no sugarcoating. Her expression turned frighteningly grim as she raised her voice. Listen carefully Andrew is nothing more than Marvins pawn, a piece in his game to trap the Rhodes family Do you get it? Tlana explained, Marvin is a criminal fugitive from Chetvine He offended someone so powerful that he can never recover and is trapped in this backwater town of Jayrodale Thats why he groomed Andrew as his puppet, his pawn, to lure in you, Francesca from the legendary Aicker family, and even Christina from the Stevens family Under Laurens incredulous gaze, Tiana smirked contemptuously.

Others might not be able to uncover his background, but Rhodes family can.

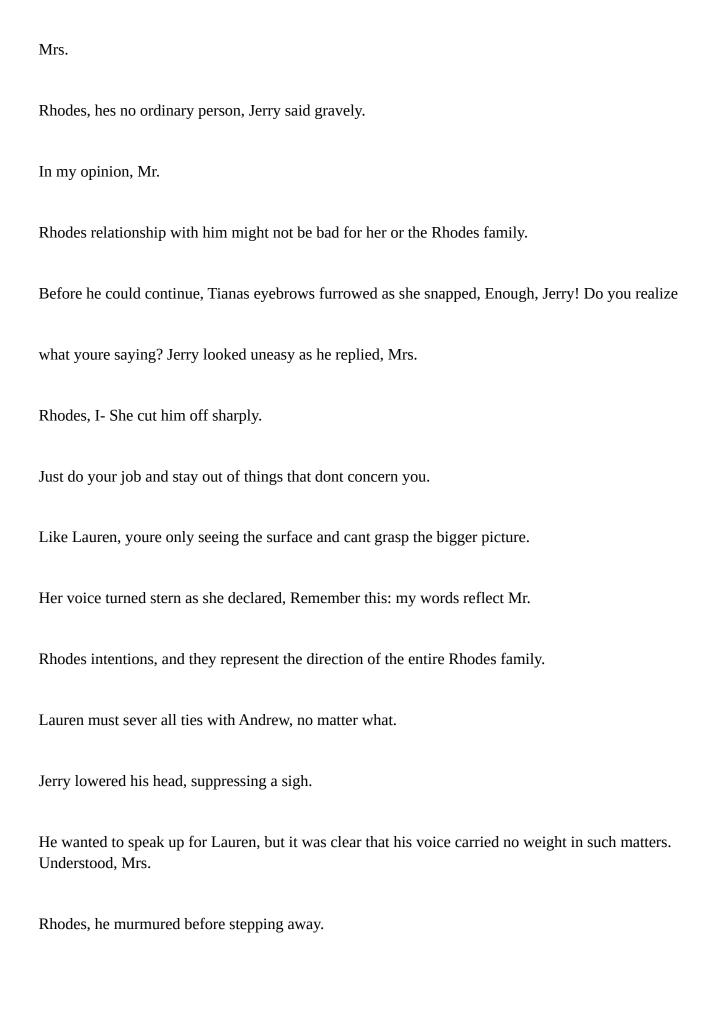
In just over ten days since arriving in Jayrodale, Ive thoroughly investigated this boys past. Let me tell you Andrew has no verifiable identity in Jayrodale. He appeared out of nowhere, Tiana revealed Given Marvins fugitive status, what else could Andrew be but Marvins puppet, his pawn in a larger game ? But thats not how things are at all, Lauren protested in disbelief. Marvin and Andrew are probably father and son, Lauren said hesitantly. Tiana scoffed, her tone dripping with disdain. Youre overthinking it. When Marvin escaped from Chetvine, no one even knew the scale of the forces he had crossed. But one things certain he was already in his 50s and gravely injured. Do you really think a man in that condition could father a child? She continued, And Andrew is 26, isnt he? Theres no way hes Marvins son Hes just a smoke screen a decoy Marvin set up to confuse his enemies, or worse, a pawn to execute Marvins schemes. Tiana paused, her gaze growing colder and more penetrating. Now, do you finally understand the lengths Ive gone to for your sake? Im not just doing this for you- Im doing it for the entire Rhodes family. Marvins criminal past will catch up with him sooner or later.

She added, The forces he angered are unimaginably powerful, far beyond anything you or I can comprehend, and certainly beyond what the Rhodes family can handle.
These people could destroy our family with a flick of their finger.
She explained, her voice sharp and resolute.
Marvins whole plan is to use Andrew to drag our Rhodes family into his mess and align us with his doomed fate
He can dream all he wants, but we will never fall for it.
Tiana gripped Laurens shoulders firmly but not harshly, her tone softening just enough to sound maternal
Andrew is nothing but a puppet, manipulated and disposable
Do you still love him? Are you still so infatuated with him that you cant see the truth? Her voice dropped
to a gentler tone as she sighed and added, Youre my daughter.
No matter our differences or disagreements, nothing can sever the bond we share.
I would never harm you.
Everything I do is for your own good, for the good of our family.
She let her hands fall to her sides, her eyes unwavering as she delivered her final ultimatum.
The choice has always been yours, Lauren

Will you choose a pawn a man who only seems impressive but is hollow beneath the surface or Joe from the Blumedale Driscoll family? Hes a man of true caliber, a leader among leaders who can elevate you to heights youve never imagined. Laurens face was expressionless as she quietly mumbled, Leave. I want to be alone. I dont believe a word youve said. Tiana left with a silent smirk. She had planted the seeds of doubt, and the fire would spread eventually. She was confident her precious daughter would make the right choice about this puppet of Marvins, this clown who would eventually be exposed and eliminated. Lauren stood alone in her room, her mind in chaos. She wondered if Andrew was really Marvins puppet, used to trap and manipulate her. Was he really as worthless and fake as Tiana claimed? She had originally thought Andrew was Marvins illegitimate son, but now things seemed different. Her mind raced, but then a small sense of relief washed over her as she remembered something She thought, At least, when Im with Andrew, he never hurt me, nor did he try to take advantage of me. Meanwhile, Mom has constantly targeted him, trying to destroy him and my love for him while pushing Joe on me. So I wont believe her words ... I wont...

After leaving Laurens bedroom, Tiana made her way through various corridors to another wing of the mansion.
Mrs.
Rhodes! Jerry greeted respectfully in the dimly lit hallway.
Tianas expression was indifferent as she asked, Jerry, is there something you need? Jerry hesitated for a moment before speaking.
Mrs.
Rhodes, theres something I want to say, but Im not sure if I should.
Tiana raised a brow and stated coldly, If youre here to tell me to stop meddling in Laurens matters then save your breath
Jerry carefully chose his words, lowering his voice.
Mrs.
Rhodes, I wouldnt dare interfere in Ms.
Rhodes affairs, especially since this involves the familys leadership decisions and Mr.
Rhodes intentions.
I wanted to discuss something else about Andrew.
Oh? What about that boy? Tiana asked, slightly surprised.
Tiana raised a brow and stated coldly, If youre here to tell me to stop meddling in Laurens matters then save your breath Jerry carefully chose his words, lowering his voice. Mrs. Rhodes, I wouldnt dare interfere in Ms. Rhodes affairs, especially since this involves the familys leadership decisions and Mr. Rhodes intentions. I wanted to discuss something else about Andrew.

Chapter 507 The Rhodes residence was massive



** From his perspective, Jerry genuinely believed that Andrew was not as bad as Tiana made him out to be

While the Blumedale Driscoll family was an elite dynasty with influence throughout the state, Andrews extraordinary talent, especially his exceptional combat skills, could even benefit the Rhodes family.

Jerry truly believed Andrew was no less impressive than Joe.

Unfortunately, Tiana was adamant, and the Rhodes familys leadership was determined to use Lauren as a bridge for their alliance with the Driscoll family.

Against such powerful family politics, individual desires and struggles were like ripples in a vast ocean fleeting and insignificant.

The next morning, chaos erupted within the Weller family.

That idiot Brad, that fool! How could he get caught by the police? Harveys furious roars echoed through the family hall

Everything Ive built with the Rhodes Corporation is ruined because of him.

Damn Brad he deserves to die! When Donald personally called him, Harvey knew something serious had happened.

Donalds questioning made it clear that this was not a minor issue it was a disaster During the call, Harvey played completely ignorant, claiming a prestigious family like the Wellers would never stoop to such despicable acts and that Brad had acted alone, deserving his arrest

He even claimed that, as head of the family, he would have punished Brad himself for tarnishing their name if the police had not caught him first.

Harvey thought his display of righteous indignation would solve the problem.

Yet, by the next morning, Jayrodales major media outlets and newspapers had updated their front pages with a shocking scandal

The headlines read: [Harvey Weller, New Head of the Weller Family, Exposed for- Affair with Stepmother Serena Halbert.

] The source of this bombshell? None other than Brad, who had spilled everything during police interrogation

The details were so thorough and damning that there was no room for doubt the evidence was irrefutable

Chapter 508 Before Harvey could even use his familys influence to suppress the negative online news, he had become Jayrodales hottest headline.

Social media erupted with comments.

[What an absolute animal! How could such scum become the head of the Weller family? Its ridiculous!] Is this a moral failure or a loss of humanity? How could he sleep with his stepmother? Isnt he afraid his father will crawl out of the grave to haunt him?][Man, the scandals in their circles are wild! Honestly, Id pay 50 bucks to see a video of Harvey and his stepmother hooking up

Anybody got one? DM me!] [Ive seen Serena before, and shes definitely still got it curvy, voluptuous, and oozing mature charm.

When she wears those body hugging dresses, she could drive any man crazy!] [Honestly, this isnt even surprising.

A playboy like Harvey would sleep with anything that moves!] This is a PR nightmare for the Weller family, though.

Let this be a lesson for all of us: keep your pants zipped and your urges in check! As Harvey read through the comments and posts, his expression changed from rage to pure madness.

He knew this scandal would completely destroy his reputation, as not even his familys influence could erase such a taboo relationship with his stepmother.

Slamming his fist on the desk, Harvey roared, Caught at our own bar during a secret meeting Brad, you absolute moron! Youre nothing but a worthless, brain dead fool! His fury had no outlet, and it simmered dangerously as his bloodshot eyes scanned the room.

He growled, Send me the surveillance footage from Dillons Bar, where Brad got arrested.

Now! Moments later, his computer pinged with a new video file.

Harvey clicked on it, and the footage showed Brad drinking alone at the bar before the police apprehended him.

However, what caught his attention were the events leading up to Brads arrest- other people were involved.

Harvey realized Brad actually had a chance to escape before the police arrived, but unfortunately, he was tripped by a man at the bar.

He paused the video and zoomed in, only to discover with shock that the person who tripped Brad was a familiar face.

Andrew and Lauren! It was you two behind this, after all! You both deserve to die! Harvey exploded with uncontrollable rage

Now he understood why his simple plan to have Brad make contact had failed- Andrew had interfered, and Brad was no match for that psychopaths abilities

Fine! If you want to play dirty, dont blame me for being ruthless! Harveys face twisted into a wicked sneer, and his eyes glinted with malice

He grabbed his phone and dialed a number without hesitation.

There was no room for negotiation now he would retaliate.

He thought Lucy was still in their custody, which was the perfect leverage.

Since Andrew had used Marcus to put the Weller family in the spotlight and send his people to jail,

Harvey would make him taste the unstoppable fury of his revenge

As long as Marcuss daughter remained in his custody, Harvey believed he still held the winning hand.

Chapter 509 When the call connected, a voice answered, Who is this? Are you kidding me? You dont know who fam? Harvey exploded.

Kill Marcuss daughter and dump her body at Rhodes Corporation! I want Marcus, Andrew, and Lauren to learn their lesson! Sorry, but the Jayrodale Police Department only catches criminals we dont do murder for hire, the voice replied coldly.

This is Donald, the police commissioner, and Im ordering you to identify yourself and your location immediately, then turn yourself in

Harvey froze, his heart nearly stopped as the blood drained from his face.

It felt like his entire body turned to ice

What the hell just happened? He had clearly dialed the number of those hired thugs, but how on earth

did Donald answer the call instead? Donald barked through the phone, III repeat myself: state your identity and address, then surrender at the station.

If we have to catch you ourselves, youll face serious jail time!.

Harvey threw his phone down as if it had burned him.

Then, he frantically stomped on it until it was completely destroyed.

He gasped for air, trying to calm his racing heart. Breathing heavily, Harvey muttered to himself, Thank goodness I didnt give my name. His chest heaved as he tried to calm down, sweat pouring down his face. That had been far too close If he had said anything incriminating, not even divine intervention could have saved him. The realization hit him like a truck he had accidentally called the police commissioner to order a hit. The absurdity of it all made him almost want to laugh, but the weight of the situation crushed any humor he might have found. His face darkened as he reflected on his string of misfortunes. First, Brads screw up had exposed his affair with Serena, dragging the Weller family into a massive scandal. Then, it turned out that even the thugs he hired had been arrested. This meant that Marcuss daughter, Lucy his leverage was now completely out of his control. Andrew! Harvey growled through gritted teeth.

It has to be that bastard Andrew! No one else would dare pull off something this calculated! Harvey did not need a genius to piece it all together.

Andrew must have orchestrated everything having the hired thugs arrested, rescuing Lucy, and personally helping the police take Brad down.

From there, they used Brads testimony to unravel the Weller familys plans and hit them where it hurt. It was a brutal and masterful move.

Even Harvey had to begrudgingly admit it was impressive though it only fueled his hatred further.

Before he could fully process his next steps, his butler burst into the room, pale and frantic ..

Sir, we have a problem! The police are here! Harveys heart sank, but he forced himself to stay calm.

He wondered if Donald had somehow identified him.

Then again, that was impossible because he had not given his name during the call.

Soon, more than a dozen fully armed police officers entered the Weller family living room.

One officer, standing at the front, declared, Mr.

Weller, your family has been implicated in hiring criminals to kidnap Marcus Chapmans daughter in an attempt to steal trade secrets

You need to come with us immediately.

Harveys face turned grim as the officers cold, formal tone echoed in the room.

What should have been a perfect plan had completely backfired.

His chest burned with fury, and he clenched his fists so tightly his knuckles turned white.

He thought, Andrew, I swear... this isnt over.

Ill see to it that one of us doesnt live to see the end of this!

Chapter 510 Sorry, I have no idea what youre talking about, Harvey said calmly.

He added in a steady tone, As far as I know the one responsible for such an appalling act in our family is my uncle, Brad and hes already been taken into custody by your department.

Now youre here again so I have to ask, do you even have evidence? Harvey forced himself to remain composed, ensuring he did not give anything away.

After all, he had only issued orders and stayed in the shadows.

As long as no one caught him red handed, his position as the head of the Weller family would shield him from arrest.

One of the officers spoke coldly, We do have evidence.

According to the kidnappers confessions, they were hired by your familys butler.

The officer continued, So, well be taking Mr.

Alfie Daves, your butler, into custody

You dont have any objections to that, do you, Mr.

Weller? Harvey clenched his teeth and said nothing, though rage boiled inside him.

Suddenly, with a loud thud, Alfie dropped to his knees, trembling, his lips pale as he looked up at Harvey with desperate, pleading eyes.

Harvey wanted nothing more than to kick Alfie why was this fool begging him? Did he want to drag him down with him? Take him away! barked the officer, motioning for his team.

As Alfie was dragged off, he cried out in desperation, Sir, please save me! You promised Id be safe!

Ive served the Weller family faithfully for years are you really just going to let me lose everything like this?

His wails were pitiful, echoing through the room, but Harvey kept his face stoic and cold.

He knew saying too much would only expose himself further.

Harvey, you monster! How could you do this to me? Alfie suddenly exploded: You ordered me to hire those kidnappers! Everything was done under your command

Why should I sacrifice myself for you? The officers paused, looking at Harvey.

Mr.

Weller, is this true? Harvey thundered, Absolutely not! Every word from this traitors mouth is a lie. He ate our food and lived off our familys generosity

I only kept him as a butler out of respect for my late father.

Now he not only shows no gratitude but tries to frame me! Even if you werent arresting him, the Weller family would never tolerate such a person! The officers said nothing more and continued escorting the butler out.

Even as they reached the driveway, Alifes angry screams echoed back into the mansion

Harvey, youre a murderer, a traitor, and a disgrace! You and that whore Serena killed your own father! He continued, You think your filthy secrets can stay buried forever? III make sure everyone knows about your affair with her and all the rotten things youve done! Youre a fraud, a snake! The Weller family is doomed under you! The curses clawed at Harveys mind, making him shake with unbridled rage.

His entire body trembled, and his fists clenched tightly enough to crack bone.

If he could, he would have stormed outside and torn the man apart limb by limb.

Brad was already behind bars, and now Alfie had followed.

Harvey himself was precariously dancing on the edge of the abyss, one misstep away from ruin. No, Brad and Alfie have to go, Harvey murmured, having decided instantly.

He knew he had to silence them permanently.