

The Ashes 521

Chapter 521 Michael cut through the growing tension with a sharp tone. Thats enough.

Todays meeting is over.

What matters to me is your ability to do your job and make money for the company.

Your personal lives and relationships are of no interest to me as CEO

He started to walk away but paused after a few steps, gesturing for Troy.

Mr.

MacAfee, come to my office.

Id like to clarify a few details about the collaboration with you.

Troy smirked, glancing at Andrew with a look of triumph.

The unspoken message was clear

So what if you caught me fooling around with Ruby? You cant touch me if the CEO has my back.

Ruby stood to leave, but as she passed Lauren, she leaned in with a cold smile.

Ms.

Rhodes, I havent forgotten my grudge against you.

Be careful not to make a mistake youll regret for the rest of your life.

Lauren shot back without missing a beat.

Dont worry, Ms.

Dickinson.

Id be happy to send you back for another helping of prison meals on the house.

Rubys smile turned icy as she clicked away in her high heels, leaving the meeting room.

The rest of the executives quickly followed suit, leaving only Andrew and Lauren behind.

Laurens face darkened as she muttered, Ruby is a master manipulator.

Her specialty is seduction using her body to achieve her shady goals.

She clenched her fists

Troy must have fallen for her act.

Hes probably completely under her spell now.

And as for that Amberpeak Corporation deal? The more I think about it, the more it screams fraud
Andrews expression remained calm.

Its not just a fraud

Its a complete fabrication not even a shred of it is real.

Lauren looked at him in surprise.

Dr.

Lloyd, what did you notice? She had suspicions about Ruby, but she could not make a strong case without concrete evidence.

Ruby had come prepared, even presenting what appeared to be authentic Amberpeak Corporation documents

Andrew smiled lightly.

Do you remember the questions I asked Ruby earlier? Before Lauren could reply, Andrew continued, She answered smoothly, as if she had everything under control.

But to someone with expertise like me it was obvious she was trying to cover something up.

Lauren chuckled, amused.

Dr.

Lloyd, youre incredible.

So, tell me how did you see through her ? Andrew smirked.

First, I asked about the specifics of the collaboration.

She dodged the details and instead threw out a flashy number two billion.

Its a figure designed to impress, but its all surface-level He leaned forward slightly.

Think about it, Lauren.

That two billion isnt an investment from Amberpeak Corporation.

They're expecting Rhodes Corporation to front the money, manufacture the products, and only then will they pay.

H Lauren nodded.

Exactly.

It's a classic scam, just like construction projects where the client promises big payouts to get the contractor to start work, only to vanish without paying a dime once the job is done.

The contractor ends up losing everything

Andrew continued, Now, if Amberpeak Corporation's reputation and credibility were genuinely behind this, it might convince some pharmaceutical companies to take that risk

After all, they have a strong foundation and wouldn't usually default.

But, he added, his eyes narrowing, the real issue here is whether Ruby is truly an Amberpeak Corporation representative.

Lauren frowned.

She just got out of prison, and we're supposed to believe she's suddenly earned the trust of Amberpeak's chairman? That sounds completely unrealistic

But she came prepared, she admitted, frustration creeping into her voice

The documents she presented looked legitimate so convincing that I couldn't find a single flaw. Andrew shrugged.

Let's assume, for argument's sake that she really does represent Amberpeak Corporation.

His voice took on a sharper edge.

The real red flag came when I checked the documents she mentioned about the pills Amberpeak Corporation supposedly wants us to manufacture.

That's where the lie unraveled.

Chapter 522 Lauren looked puzzled

There's an issue with that document? I didn't notice anything off.

Andrew smiled knowingly.

It's normal you catch it.

The problem lies in Ruby's formula for the pill she wants Rhodes Corporation to produce.

He paused briefly before continuing in a colder tone.

Ruby requested the Pharmaceutical Division to manufacture a so-called miracle anti-cancer drug.

It's positioned as an exclusive, high-end product designed for the wealthy and elite families rare, valuable, and groundbreaking.

But here's the catch, he said, his voice sharp.

While the formula lists over 30 premium ingredients that appear highly effective on their own, they turn into a lethal poison when combined.

And not just any poison it's a slow-acting, insidious toxin.

Anyone who takes it will suffer without even realizing the cause.

Andrew's gaze darkened.

Now, imagine if Rhodes Corporation went ahead and produced this pill, selling it to affluent clients and major figures.

When those people start dying en masse, the fallout wouldnt just destroy the Pharmaceutical Division it would bankrupt the Rhodes family and invite ruthless retaliation from those affected.

Laurens body shivered slightly, and her face paled as the weight of Andrews words sank in.

Fear flickered across her usually composed expression.

Ruby ... that bitch! Lauren spat, her voice trembling with rage.

I cant believe how vile she is

She isnt just targeting our Pharmaceutical Division shes aiming to bring down the entire Rhodes family! Her hands clenched into fists.

Im going to Michael and Troy right now.

They need to cancel this partnership immediately.

And Ill make sure Ruby pays for this

Ill sue her into oblivion shell rot in prison for life! Andrew stopped her, his expression calm but firm. That wont work

Right now, Michael wont listen to a word you say.

If you demand he cancel the partnership, hell think youre undermining his authority.

Hell double down out of pride, and thatll only make things worse for you.

Laurens eyes turned icy as she gritted her teeth.

Then its simple III send Jerry to deal with her permanently! Andrew blinked, then sighed, his tone exasperated.

My dear Ms.

Rhodes, must everything come down to violence with you? Besides, we dont have enough solid evidence to bring Ruby down legally, let alone justify drastic measures like that.

Seeing Laurens puffed cheeks and frustrated glare, Andrew chuckled softly.

Most importantly, youre mine now.

Laurens breath hitched as her heart skipped a beat.

Andrews voice was deep and steady as he continued, Since youre mine, I wont let you be harsh and reckless

And I absolutely wont let anyone hurt you.

Trust me well figure out a way to make Rubys twisted plan fall apart before it even begins.

Laurens gaze met his, and the intensity in his eyes made her heart flutter

For a moment, her thoughts spiraled was he really going to try something right here in the conference room? Dr.

Lloyd, she stammered, her voice barely above a whisper, III listen to you.

Just... calm down.

Feeling her cheeks flush, the usually confident Lauren quickly escaped, leaving Andrew chuckling behind her.

Andrew leaned back, smiling to himself.

Having a girlfriend isnt so bad after all.

He couldnt help but recall Laurens soft lips, delicate perfume, and those long, black stockinged legs.

He thought, Maybe next time, Ill explore those legs a little more.

Or perhaps... some other areas? He thought, Maybe next time, II The thought amused him greatly that would definitely be fun.

Chapter 523 Michael called Troy in and personally locked the door behind him. Troy, shifting uneasily, spoke first.

Mr.

Rhodes, about Ruby and me... We did go to the hotel yesterday.

But aside from... well, you know... I was genuinely there to discuss business.

Honestly, if I hadnt kept her happy, we wouldnt have secured the Amberpeak Corporation deal so easily

Michael waved dismissively.

I didnt call you here to scold you.

Troy froze, caught off guard.

I thought you would scold me for mixing personal matters with work! In truth, Troy had not gone to the hotel to talk business at all

Rubys stunning beauty had completely captivated him.

Their initial flirtation quickly escalated into something far more intimate, and the deal came up only afterward

By chance, Troy learned that Ruby was a representative for Amberpeak Corporation.

The realization thrilled him sealing such a significant partnership would be the perfect way to prove himself as the new head of the Pharmaceutical Division

It felt like fate itself had handed him this golden opportunity, and he could not help but feel triumphant. Michael clasped his hands together, his expression stern.

Troy, regarding our collaboration with Ms.

Dickinson, there are some critical details I need to know every single one of them.

Leave nothing out.

Troy straightened up, suddenly serious.

Of course, Mr.

Rhodes.

Ill report everything to you in full detail.

With a project worth two billion, I understand how important it is to get everything right! Michael nodded thoughtfully, then hesitated before speaking again.

Good

Now, tell me everything about your ... time with Ruby at the Stanton Hotel.

And I mean everything.

Troy's jaw dropped.

Mr.

Rhodes, you... 11 Michael cut him off.

Don't ask why.

Just think of it as a personal preference

You know how sometimes, after indulging in too much, you just enjoy watching others eat? It's like that.

You get what I mean, don't you ? Troy, confused and a bit disturbed, reluctantly nodded.

He did not fully understand but dared not refuse.

Sighing inwardly, he began recounting his time with Ruby, sparing no detail.

Michael listened intently, his eyes glinting with interest.

On the other hand, Troy felt increasingly uneasy, wondering if Michael might actually be some kind of creep

After leaving Rhodes Corporation, Ruby hailed a cab and returned to her hotel.

Waiting for her in the room was someone standing by the window, admiring the city skyline.

The person did not turn around but asked, You're back.

How did things go with Rhodes Corporation ? Rubys posture became careful and deferential. Just as you predicted, Ms.

Stevens

Rhodes Corporation is on board and has agreed to the collaboration.

Troy, in particular, is entirely under my control.

He'll do whatever I tell him.

The figure by the window turned to face her it was Aspen.

She gestured for Ruby to sit down

Aspen said with a faint smile, Well done.

It seems my efforts to get you out of prison weren't wasted.

Ruby, however, did not dare sit and remained standing.

I owe you everything, Ms.

Stevens.

I'll do whatever it takes to repay your kindness.

1 Aspen's smile remained faint.

Spare me the gratitude.

We both know the truth.

All you need to remember is that I'm the one who gave you this second chance.

I can help you get your revenge on Lauren.

Her tone grew colder.

After all, those years in prison weren't easy for you, were they? Ruby's eyes filled with venomous hatred

Exactly.

It's because of that bitch Lauren that I'm willing to stoop so low as to sleep with someone like Troy just to set my plan in motion.

Chapter 524 I want Lauren to experience true despair and unrelenting pain, Ruby hissed, her eyes alight with malice

When the Rhodes family collapses completely, when their legacy is destroyed, I bet her anguished screams will sound like music to my ears.

Aspen, standing calmly by the window, gave a faint smile

Hatred is indeed a powerful motivator, but you can't rely solely on it.

The brain, Ruby, is the deadliest weapon of all.

Ruby hesitated, then bowed her head respectfully.

Please, Ms.

Stevens, enlighten me.

Aspens cold smile deepened.

The Weller family is currently under the spotlight, drawing public scrutiny and outrage.

Its the perfect distraction for us Everyone thinks the crisis in Rhodes Corporations Pharmaceutical Division is over, but this lull in vigilance is precisely when I strike.

She turned to Ruby, her tone laced with pride.

The key is to attack your prey when they least expect it, when their guard is down thats when its most fatal With a light laugh, she added, I imagine neither Rhodes Corporation nor the Weller family has realized that I am the one orchestrating this chaos.

Rubys expression faltered as she spoke cautiously.

Ms.

Stevens, the entire Rhodes Corporation, including Michael, trusts me completely now.

But theres a man by Laurens side Andrew Lloyd.

Hes proving to be... difficult to deal with.

Aspens face darkened instantly, her icy demeanor growing even colder.

Andrew again? Dont worry about him.

III take care of that pest myself

Ruby glanced at Aspen, noticing a subtle shift in her as she mentioned Andrew.

Curious, she could not resist asking, Ms.

Stevens, did Andrew offend you in the past? Aspens voice was as sharp as a blade.

Offend me? That man ruined everything.

In Jayrodale, he almost turned my plans into a joke, leaving me humiliated.

Her tone grew even colder.

But soon, reinforcements from Bridgefields Stevens family will arrive.

Andrew has tested my patience too many times.

This time, Ill eliminate him with decisive force.

Ruby could not hide the shiver that ran down her spine.

She had not known Aspen for long, but she had.

witnessed this womans sheer ruthlessness and cunning in that short time.

It was Aspens overwhelming dominance that had compelled Ruby to submit so quickly.

Aspen continued, her words deliberate

After I leave, contact Troy and have him secure the formula from Stevens Corporations
Pharmaceutical Division

Thats your next step.

She shot Ruby a meaningful look and added with a sly smile, As a woman, you must learn to use your beauty especially beautiful women

The power they wield between their legs can make even the most untouchable men grovel.

Ruby chuckled seductively.

You're absolutely right, Ms.

Stevens.

I got Troy wrapped around my finger.

When we're in bed, if I told him to eat dirt, he'd do it without hesitation! And when Troy is no longer useful

, she continued with a wicked grin, I'll move on to Michael.

That man is just as desperate as the rest.

During today's meeting, he couldn't stop staring at my chest at least ten times! Aspen shook her head, her voice steady.

I only care about Rhodes Corporation's most valuable asset: the Pharmaceutical Division's formulas.

Once we have that and Rhodes Corporation takes a catastrophic hit, the chaos in Jayrodale's business world will be unstoppable.

As for the rest, she added with a dismissive wave, do what you want.

Sleep with whomever won't interfere.

With that, Aspen left the hotel, her figure elegant yet imposing.

Beneath her composed exterior, however, was a deep seated disdain for men a lingering trauma. like.

I Her distrust stemmed from the harrowing encounter she had barely escaped with Rodney a moment that had left scars far deeper than she cared to admit.

from a medical perspective, it could even be described as androphobia, an intense fear and revulsion toward men

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In the hotel room, Ruby stripped off her clothes and enjoyed a luxurious rose-scented bath. Afterward she sprayed perfume generously around the room, filling the air with a sweet, seductive arros

She picked up her phone and dialed Troy.

"Troy, when are you coming over? I miss you!" she cooed, her voice dripping with allure.

Busy at work, Troy felt a shiver run through him when he heard her sultry tone. He laughed, half-joking, "What's gotten into you, baby? Feeling frisky again?"

Ruby pouted playfully. "You're the one feeling frisky! already told you I miss you. Are you coming over or not? I just finished a bath, and now I'm all soft and smooth... and smelling divine.

Troy hesitated. "How about tonight, baby? It's broad daylight, and I'm now swamped with work."

Ruby's tone turned cold as she huffed. "Fine, then. You stay busy with your work, and don't bother coming tonight either. I have a dinner meeting with some executives later anyway, so I won't have time for you. Bye!"

The irritation in her voice turned Troy into a groveling mess. "No, no, baby! Don't be mad, okay? I'll come right now! Just give me 20 minutes-I'll be there. Please don't get mad at me."

Ruby smirked, triumphant. Men like Troy were so easy to manipulate. "Alright," she said sweetly, "but don't forget to bring me what I asked for."

Troy paused, confused. "Baby, what do you mean? What do you need me to bring?"

Ruby feigned exasperation. "You're really going to play dumb with me, huh? After everything I've done for you? Didn't we agree that you'd let me see the formulas for the Pharmaceutical Division's top three products once the collaboration was sealed?"

Troy hesitated, his tone turning serious. "Ruby, those aren't ordinary things. Even though I'm the head of the division, sharing those formulas would be against the rules."

Ruby sighed dramatically, her voice turning icy. "Fine then, If rules are more important than me, I won't argue. But don't bother getting in my bed again. I even bought some special lingerie just for you- lace, frills, everything. I even picked up two soft whips and your favorite-the 'plug'."

"But I guess I overestimated you. Goodbye, Troy," she said before hanging up, pretending to be furious. Ruby's face, however, was filled with smug satisfaction as she stared at her phone, counting down softly. "Three, two..."

Before she could even reach one, her phone rang again. Troy's panicked voice blared through the speaker. "Alright, alright, my queen! Why do you always get so angry? You win, okay? I'll show you the formulas."

"But," he added firmly, "you have to promise me not to share or copy them."

Ruby giggled, her voice sweet as honey. "Of course, Troy. I'm just curious! Once I've satisfied my curiosity, I'll forget all about them. Besides, we're partners now. Once our collaboration deepens, Amberpeak Corporation will be selling your products anyway-I'll eventually know the formulas." Troy chuckled. "You're right, baby. Okay, just wait fo I'll grab the formulas from the lab and head straight His voice grew increasingly lecherous, his excitement cackle that sounded like a giddy duck. Ruby giggled coyly. "Hurry up, Troy! I've been dying together."

Ruby's face twisted into

Venomous smile as she en

Troy chuckled. "You're right, baby. Okay, just wait for me-wash up, get naked, and get the toys ready. I'll grab the formulas from the lab and head straight to you. We're going to have a lot of fun tonight!"

His voice grew increasingly lecherous, his excitement turning into an embarrassing, high-pitched cackle that sounded like a giddy duck.

Ruby giggled coyly, "Hurry up, Troy! I've been dying to see you. Let's have an unforgettable night together."

Ruby's face twisted into a venomous smile as she ended the call.

Chapter 526 Ruby's smile widened as she thought, 'The fish has taken the bait. Troy is just as predictable as I expected. However, as the grin lingered, a sudden itch below made her uncomfortable, dampening her excitement.

Her mood instantly darkened as she wondered if that disease was coming back again.

Meanwhile, Troy's car sped out of the Rhodes Corporation parking garage, rushing toward its destination. Andrew and Lauren, already in their SUV quickly followed.

"Dr. Lloyd, just as you predicted-Troy leaving work during office hours is definitely suspicious," Lauren said with a cold smirk.

Andrew, keeping his eyes on the road, replied, "A spy like Ruby will always look for the easiest way to infiltrate a company, and her best target is someone she can easily manipulate from the inside. Since she's already slept with Troy, it's no surprise she's using him as her pawn."

Lauren frowned. "Dr. Lloyd, you mentioned earlier that both Troy and Ruby have the same foul smell. What exactly did you mean by that?"

Andrew explained casually, "Yes, both of them carry a distinctive odor, which is associated with a specific type of sexually transmitted disease."

Lauren stared at him, wide-eyed. "A sexually transmitted disease? You can actually smell that?"

Andrew nodded calmly. "Humans can typically distinguish around 4,000 scents, but professionals like chefs or perfumers can identify tens of thousands. As for me, I've trained to recognize not only ordinary smells but also those of medicines, toxins, and diseases. The scent on Ruby and Troy falls into the category of pathological odors-it's not hard for me to detect."

Lauren shook her head in astonishment but did not doubt him for a second. She was well aware of how extraordinary Andrew's medical skills were.

As they tailed Troy, the car eventually stopped in front of a hotel. After parking, Lauren glanced at the building and chuckled. "Troy really does seem to think hotels are great places for... business negotiations."

Andrew turned to her. "You still have Troy's number, right?"

Lauren nodded. "Of course. He used to be my subordinate, so I have it saved."

Andrew smiled. "Good. Once the timing feels right, give him a call and ask what he's up to."

Lauren's eyes up mischievously. "Got it. I'll wait until he's right in the middle of things. That'll scare him so bad he might lose his erection and can't get hard again!"

The moment Troy entered Ruby's room, he began tearing off his clothes, practically leaping onto the bed where Ruby lay in a barely-there nightgown. Her curvaceous figure was almost fully exposed, and she exuded an intoxicating allure.

"Baby, I missed you so much! Come here and let me take care of you," he said, his voice thick with lust. "After getting a taste of you last night, I couldn't sleep a wink. Compared to you, the old hag I have at home is nothing but trash!"

Ruby giggled seductively, lifting her bare foot to press against Troy's face, stopping him in his tracks. Not so fast, lover boy. You came running here to do bad things to me, but don't you think you should show a little sincerity first?"

Her sultry tone was like a siren's call, driving Troy nearly mad with desire. "Oh, right! Sincerity!" he blurted, pulling a document from his bag. "Here, baby-the formulas you wanted. Take a look!" Ruby's eyes gleamed with greed as she took the formulas from him, though she quickly masked her excitement with feigned modesty.

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After confirming the formula was legitimate, Ruby handed it back to Troy, her face lighting up with a seductive smile. She said, "So this is one of Rhodes Corporation Pharmaceutical Division's legendary formulas?

"I heard they're worth more than gold, but honestly, it's not as impressive as I imagined. Compared to Amberpeak Corporation's products, well, let's just say it falls short."

Troy, now completely naked and clutching Ruby's feet laughed nervously, too infatuated to notice her subtle jab. "Of course, baby, you're right. Rhodes Corporation's products are decent in Jayrodale, but Amberpeak Corporation sets the industry standard. We could never compare."

Ruby's lips curved into a silent sneer, thinking, "This fool has no idea I've already memorized the formula.' With a practiced move, she shifted her body slightly, dodging Troy's slobbering kisses. Ruby was a master of the game, seasoned in dealing with men like him. She knew better than to let him have everything at

once.

Keeping him hungry and desperate was key-teasing him just enough to drive him wild before offering a taste. She let him indulge only when he was at his breaking point, ensuring she remained in complete control.

"Don't pull away, baby!" Troy panted, his face red and sweaty. "Come here and let me take good care of you!"

Ruby giggled as she loosened her nearly transparent nightgown, revealing just enough to make Troy's breath hitch. "No way. You'll have to catch me first. If you do, you can have me... however you want." Troy swallowed hard, his excitement boiling over. "And if I can't catch you?"

Ruby covered her mouth with a mock pout. "Then you won't get to touch me, silly."

Troy growled like a starved animal. "Oh, I'm catching you, alright. And when I do, I'll devour you completely-there won't be a scrap of you left!"

Ruby led him on a wild chase, dodging and teasing as Troy stumbled after her like a dog chasing a treat. When she finally sensed he was completely exhausted, she stopped resisting, lying back with her arms and legs outstretched, letting Troy pounce on her in a frenzy.

He moved like a man deprived of water in a desert, drenched in sweat, his tongue hanging out as he succumbed to his base instincts. Ruby's seductive demeanor faded entirely, her face growing cold with disdain and disgust. She found his desperate, animalistic behavior repulsive, but she endured it with calculated patience.

As Troy reached his limit, barely able to breathe, Ruby discreetly grabbed her phone and snapped pictures of the formula while he was too preoccupied to notice. Though she had already committed it to memory, having photographic evidence felt like an added layer of security. After all, Aspen would demand hard proof, and Ruby did not dare risk disappointing her.

Aspen was someone who inspired genuine fear in Ruby-a rare feeling for someone as cunning and shameless as herself.

Still, Ruby reassured herself that risk was part of the game, and the rewards would be worth it. She imagined the destruction of the Rhodes family, watching Lauren lose her status and become a disgraced, humiliated outcast. When it was all over, Ruby planned to disappear with her profits, starting fresh in another city, free from the chains of her past.

Meanwhile, Troy, already drenched in sweat and panting like a dying beast, lasted no more than two minutes. His red face contorted in a mix of pain and ecstasy as he collapsed, utterly spent.

Ruby held back a wave of nausea as she glanced at his pathetic state. How revolting, she thought. Troy, who had a strict, domineering wife at home, had probably gone years without indulging his desires. It only took a spark from Ruby to turn him into a slaving, obedient lapdog.

Troy let out a guttural groan, his face a grotesque mixture of suffering and pleasure. Ruby knew this was

his final moment of "glory" before he succumbed to exhaustion, looking as pitiful as ever.

Chapter 528 Though the time was short, Troy had managed to satisfy Ruby to some extent.

Those brief bursts of intense effort had at least brought her a flicker of enjoyment.

However, just as they were reaching the peak of the moment, Troys phone rang loudly.

Neither of them paid attention at first they were too caught up to care.

The phone refused to stop.

It kept ringing persistently over and over again, as if determined not to give up until someone answered. Troy let out a sudden yelp of frustration, his face contorting with both anger and despair.

Ruby, startled, asked, Whats wrong? Troys expression was a mix of fury and helplessness as he gestured downward

See for yourself! Ruby glanced down and immediately froze, disbelief spreading across her face.

Troy had completely deflated his once enthusiastic presence reduced to a soft, limp failure.

The repeated phone calls had dealt a devastating blow, killing the mood entirely.

Grabbing his phone with a vengeance, Troy answered, practically shouting into the receiver. Who the hell is this? Laurens icy voice came through the line.

Mr.

MacAfee, watch your tone.

Where are you right now? I have something urgent to discuss with you.

Troy was stunned it was Lauren

While he had shifted his allegiance to Michael and often disrespected Lauren, the memory of working under her lingered

Deep down, he still feared her commanding presence.

His defiance crumbled instantly.

After a brief pause, he forced an apologetic laugh.

Oh, Im so sorry, Ms.

Rhodes! I didnt realize it was you.

Laurens tone was sharp.

What were you doing that was so important you couldnt pick up my call? Troy glanced at Ruby, who was glaring at him, her displeasure evident.

He stammered, trying to sound calm.

Ms.

Rhodes, Im not at the office right now.

Im meeting with an important client at a restaurant to discuss a deal.

Its been a hectic meeting I didnt realize youd called.

Laurens voice turned unexpectedly cheerful.

Oh, really? Youre not, by any chance, meeting Ruby? At, say, a hotel suite, perhaps? Troy cursed Lauren silently, but outwardly, he forced a strained laugh.

Ms.

Rhodes, youve got it all wrong.

The last time Ms.

Dickinson and I were at a hotel was a total misunderstanding.

Right now, Im meeting with a different client definitely not her.

Lauren chuckled lightly.

Alright then, carry on with your meeting.

I called because I needed to discuss something urgent, but after talking to you, I seem to have forgotten what it was

Ill call you back when I remember.

Sure thing, Ms.

Rhodes

Take your time! Troy said hastily before hanging up.

He slammed the phone down, his face dark with irritation.

Lauren, youre playing games while I try to enjoy myself.

Great for you, but not for me, he thought bitterly.

Turning back to Ruby, Troy plastered on a grin.

Baby that was just a little hiccup

Lets pick up where we left off! Ruby, now reclined against the headboard with a cigarette in hand, her bare body still exposed, waved him off lazily.

Forget it, Mr.

MacAfee.

Your stamina is awful you cant give me what I want.

Lets just call it a day

Her cold dismissal left Troy stunned for a moment before his face flushed red with anger.

What did you say? Are you saying Im not good enough? Like most men, Troys ego could not tolerate

any implication of inadequacy, especially not in this department.

In a rage, he grabbed Ruby and tried to rekindle the moment.

But no matter how hard he tried or how desperate his attempts were, the issue persisted his dear buddy simply refused to cooperate.

His frustrations boiled over as he shouted at himself, Get up! Get up, dammit! In a panic, Troy even resorted to slapping himself below in an attempt to force a response.

Yet, the result was the same nothing

His buddy remained limp, his efforts utterly futile.

Chapter 529 Rubys gaze lingered on Troy with a mix of pity and ridicule.

She said, Mr.

MacAfee, some things cant be forced.

A mans body doesnt lie.

Once age catches up with you and especially if youve overindulged in wine and women its no use pretending

When it stops working, it stops working.

Troy roared in frustration.

No! My heart still burns with passion! Im still ready for battle! Ruby let out a light laugh.

Ah, but your weapon is rusted and brittle.

Its no longer fit for combat.

Tell me, how can a knight without a proper sword hope to ride onto the battlefield? Troy slumped on the bed, looking like the life had been drained out of him.

He could not stand it he was sitting in front of a feast, yet his body refused to let him enjoy it.

No matter how much his pride resisted, his bodys limits were absolute.

Pulling his clothes on hastily, Troy muttered, Baby, give me a few days to recover, and well go again.

I promise III make you beg for mercy next time

Ruby, exhaling a puff of smoke, replied with indifference, Mr.

MacAfee, perhaps you should go home and focus on your health first.

Troy grabbed his briefcase and left the hotel, shoulders slumped in defeat.

As he stepped out the door, a familiar voice greeted him with a light chuckle.

Well, Mr.

MacAfee, isnt this a coincidence? Troy froze, looking up to see Lauren with Andrew beside her, both regarding him with amused expressions.

M Ms.

Rhodes... What ... what are you doing here? Troy stammered, his voice trembling.

Laurens smile was as cold as ice

What Im doing here isnt important

Whats important is that, when I called you earlier, you said you were at a restaurant discussing business with a client, didnt you? Troys palms began to sweat as he secretly cursed his rotten luck, Why is it always these two? Well, I ... Yes, I was... discussing business

Its just that... Troy chuckled nervously as he fumbled for words.

Laurens smile widened into a sharp smirk.

Let me guess business discussions that conveniently ended up in a hotel suite ? Troy, lets not beat around the bush.

Do you think I don't know what you're doing here? Troy's face darkened, and he growled, Ms. Rhodes, even if you do know, so what? Mr.

Rhodes already stated he wouldn't interfere in my personal life.

Whether I'm meeting a client or doing something else, it's none of your concern.

7 He was already frustrated by Ruby's dismissive attitude and could not bear to grovel any further.

He thought, So what if Lauren knows I was here with Ruby? This is my private life, and she has no right

to meddle in it! Lauren's voice turned calm and cutting.

Mr.

MacAfee there's no need to get so defensive.

Who you sleep with and who you cheat with is your business honestly couldn't care less.

But let me remind you, she added, her tone sharp as a blade, you hold a critical position at Rhodes Corporation.

If you ever confuse personal pleasures with professional responsibilities if you dare sell out the company for what's between your legs you'll be seeing the inside of a courtroom.

Troy's face flushed with anger as he snapped, Ms.

Rhodes, if you're accusing me of leaking company secrets or betraying corporate interests, then you'd better have evidence to back it up! Otherwise, don't waste my time with baseless accusations.

Lauren smiled sweetly, her eyes gleaming with mockery.

Oh, my dear Mr.

MacAfee, you seem awfully nervous.

Are you feeling guilty about something? Troys heart raced, but he forced himself to maintain his composure

Ive done nothing wrong, Ms.

Rhodes.

A clean conscience fears no shadow.

If you have doubts about me, Im more than willing to submit to an investigation by Mr. Rhodes

Lauren waved him off with a smirk.

Dont try to use Michael to intimidate me.

Ive said all I need to say -take care of yourself.

As she turned to Andrew, she asked with a teasing smile, Dr.

Lloyd, Ive heard that people who indulge in promiscuity often end up catching ... diseases.

Is that true? Andrew nodded, his tone matter of fact.

Its not guaranteed, but yes, people who are reckless in their relationships are at a much higher risk of contracting diseases.

Lauren raised an eyebrow, her smirk widening, as Troys face flushed an even deeper shade of red.

His fists clenched tightly around his briefcase as he hurried away, muttering curses under his breath.

Chapter 530 As Troy hurried away, his thoughts churned in turmoil.

He told himself that Ruby was no ordinary woman she was the representative of Amberpeak Corporation a business elite, not some streetwalker or barfly.

That image of Ruby, so perfect in every way her explosive figure, sharp intellect, and prestigious position was precisely what had captivated him.

Sleeping with someone like her made him feel like he was on top of the world, better than even Michael. Lauren watched Troy retreat and then turned to Andrew, her expression playful yet curious.

Dr.

Lloyd, if someone does catch something from sleeping around, what kinds of diseases are we talking about? Are they as terrifying as people say? Andrews tone turned serious, his face grim.

Terrifying? Absolutely

These diseases can ruin lives.

Common ones include gonorrhea, syphilis, and other infections that cause ulcers or discharge.

But the deadliest, of course, is HIV/AIDS.

In its early stages, the symptoms are often subtle things like premature ejaculation or erectile dysfunction are some of the first signs

Unfortunately, many people dismiss these symptoms, thinking theyre insignificant.

He continued, his tone weighty.

Thats the dangerous misconception.

Those early signs are the bodys alarm bells, warning you of something much worse.

If left untreated, the consequences are irreversible, and by the time the disease fully manifests, its often too late

Lauren winced, visibly unsettled

Ive seen pictures of those diseases online syphilis and stuff.

Ugh, theyre so gross, like nightmares come to life but HIV is the scariest.

Once youre infected, theres no cure, right? And Ive heard the process of dying from it is agonizing rotting flesh, oozing sores, decaying organs.

On top of that, your family shuns you, and society treats you like an outcast.

I even read about cases where some patients abroad couldnt take the suffering anymore and... well, cut off their parts.

Troy, standing nearby, felt a chill run down his spine.

He audibly gasped, his mind racing as he kept denying the possibility of it happening himself. However, Andrews words struck a nerve.

The mention of erectile dysfunction as an early symptom hit too close to home.

Recalling his recent issues, Troy felt like a fire had ignited inside him a fire that he could not put out without doing something about it.

Andrew turned his gaze to Troy, his voice calm yet probing.

Mr.

MacAfee, you look a little pale

Is something wrong? Troy forced a weak smile.

No... No, of course not.

Mr.

Lloyd, you must be mistaken.

Trying to brush it off, Troy added, Well, Ms.

Rhodes, Mr.

Lloyd, Ill leave you two to your business.

Ive got something I need to take care of.

Yet, Andrew was not done.

He said in a firm tone, Mr.

MacAfee, one last thing.

Troy froze mid step, his breath catching.

What is it? Andrews expression grew more serious.

As a doctor, need to give you a warning

Your complexion and energy levels are severely depleted classic signs of kidney dysfunction.

And more concerning- theres a faint but distinct smell on you, like decaying fish.

That smell is a telltale sign of infection.

Troys face went white.

Youre joking, right? Andrew dont mess with me like that.

Andrew patted him sympathetically on the shoulder.

You dont have to take my word for it.

Go to the hospital and get checked out.

But Im telling you, Mr.

MacAfee, the odds arent in your favor.

Youve likely caught something.

He added with a sigh, Sneaking around may feel great in the moment, but the suffering that comes afterward? Believe me, itll stay with you longer than the thrill ever will.

Troys face turned a sickly green, his hands trembling Internally, he screamed, Suffering, my ass, you bastard! But his panic was undeniable.

Without a word, he bolted, running toward the nearest hospital as fast as his legs could carry him. Every second felt like a lifetime as his mind spiraled

He did not want to believe Andrews words, but he could not ignore them either.

Andrew was known for his exceptional medical skills, and if he said something was wrong, there probably was

The thought of his body rotting, sores spreading, and the humiliation of explaining it all to his wife-Troy felt like his world was crashing down.