## The Ashes 551

Chapter 551 Ruby bit her lip, struggling to speak.

The truth is ... I have some health issues.

After I ... was with Troy, he got tested and found out he caught a disease

He freaked out and turned on me completely, calling me to scream and curse, saying I was a disgusting tramp who had been with too many men

In the end, Troy went to Andrew and begged him for treatment.

Under Andrews manipulative demands, Troy confessed everything to him.

Aspens face darkened with rage.

Andrew again? Why is it that every single one of my failures has his shadow looming over it? And you youre just as useless! I spent so much effort and money getting you out of prison, not so you could mess everything up! Ruby held back her anger and muttered, I didnt want things to turn out like this.

Its all because of Andrew-hes the real culprit.

H Aspen cut her off impatiently.

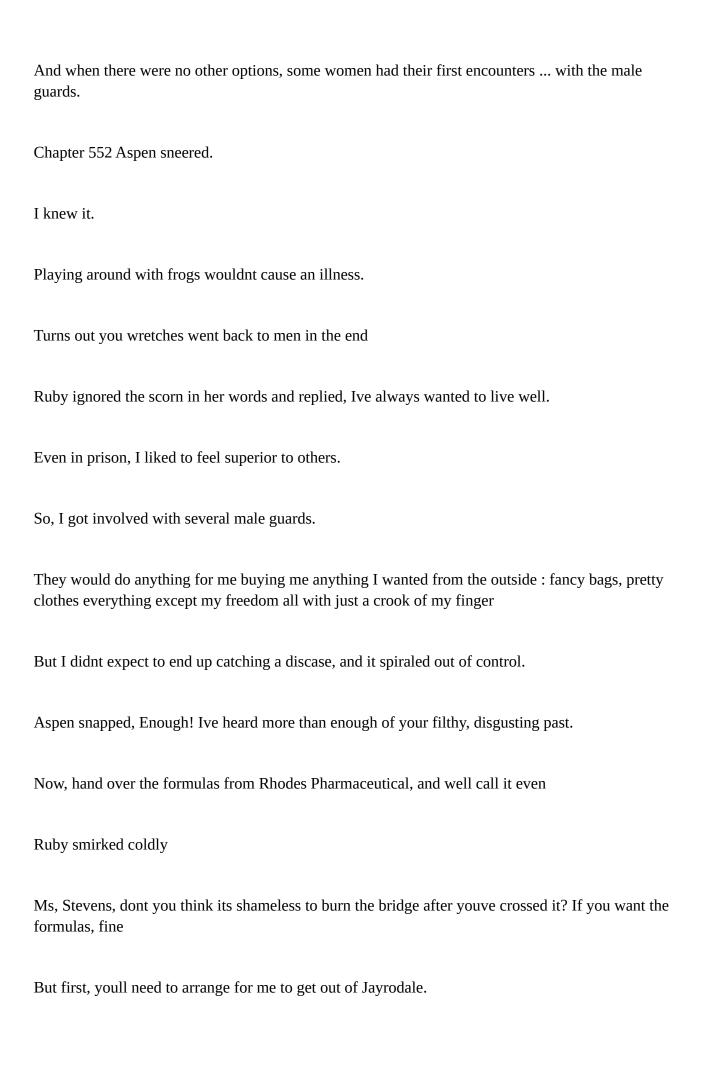
Enough! Let me ask you, this disease is it from reckless behavior? Ruby blushied deeply and, with great reluctance, admitted, Yes, its that kind.

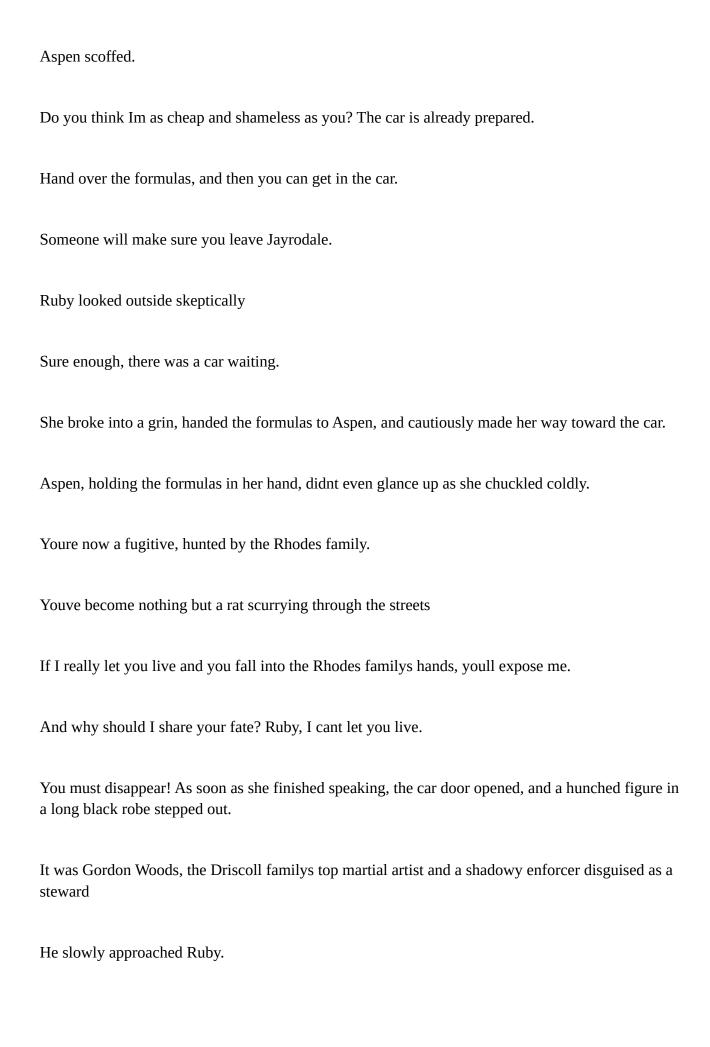
I went to a gynecologist as soon as I was released from prison for treatment

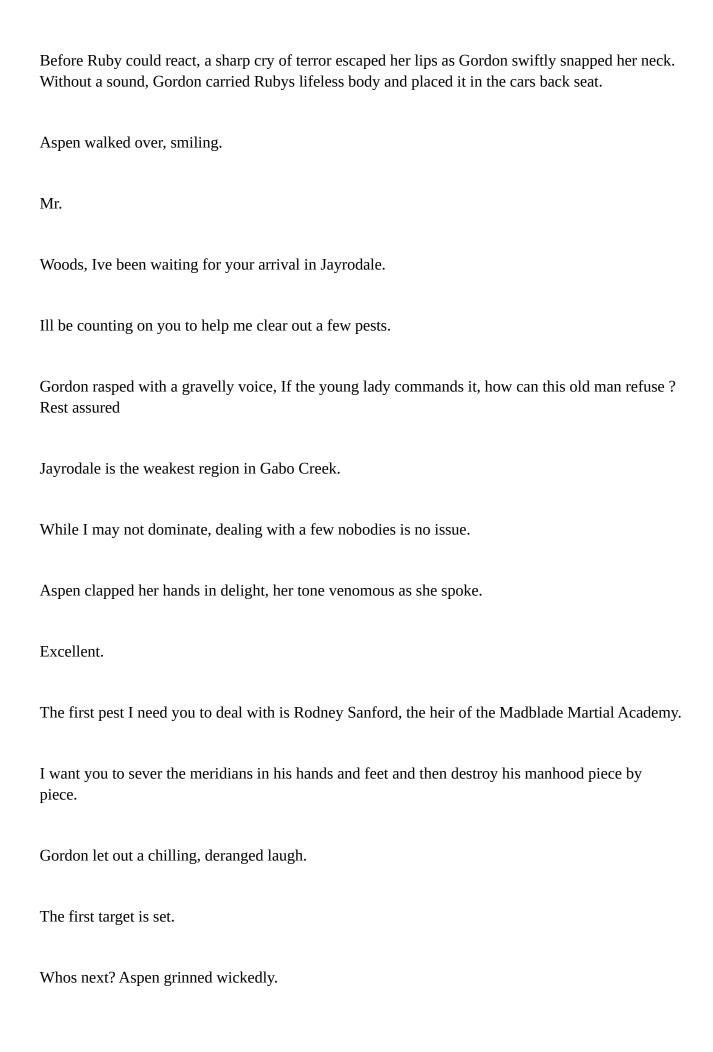
The doctor assured me it wouldnt flare up again in the short term, but I .didnt expect the symptoms to return so soon

She clenched her fists in frustration. The doctor who treated her was now the object of her deepest resentment. Nowadays, she couldnt leave the house without dousing herself in strong perfume to mask the unbearable, fishy! stench that emanated from her. Aspen, utterly disgusted, scolded, You have no shame. Even in prison, you couldnt control yourself and still sought out men? Ruby felt insulted and snapped back, Ms. Stevens, not everyone is as fortunate as you During those years in prison, I did what I had to do to survive. If Id had any other choice, I wouldnt have let those men use me! Aspen sneered. Do you take me for a fool? You were in a womens prison. How could there possibly have been men? Tell me what really happened. Ruby smirked coldly Why hide it? In a womens prison, there are no men, so the inmates become desperate Many women whod been locked up for years couldnt handle the loneliness, so we helped each other out But lets be real women cant satisfy each other the way men can.

Its just not the same
Eventually, during one of the outdoor breaks, a woman came up with a new trick and taught us. Aspenraised an eyebrow, her curiosity piqued
What kind of trick? After hesitating for a moment, Ruby decided to spill everything.
One day, a woman caught a frog during an outdoor break.
She She inserted it into herself
From then on, we we learned the trick, and it made things a lot easier to bear.
Aspen inhaled sharply, utterly horrified.
You wretches were you really that desperate ? Ruby sneered.
Ms.
Stevens, dont try to act like youre a saint.
Youve never experienced life in prison.
You dont understand how suffocating and lonely it can be.
Theres a saying that men are lustful creatures, always thinking with their lower halves.
But in truth, womens desires are no less intense perhaps even greater.
So eventually, in the prison, we ran out of frogs.







The second target is Andrew Lloyd.
He was my first choice to eliminate, but theres no rush.
Mr.
Woods, you can deal with Rodney first, then take care of Andrew later.
Hes the biggest obstacle standing in the way of my ambitions in Jayrodale, Until hes reduced to ashes, I wont sleep soundly! Gordons tone was menacingly confident.
Rest assured, Ms.
Stevens.
With a snap of my fingers, these little nuisances will vanish into thin air!
Chapter 553 The fact that Gordon Woods, a martial arts master from Bridgefields, had secretly infiltrated Jayrodale went unnoticed by Andrew.
Even if Andrew had known, he likely wouldnt have cared.
Over the years, Andrew had collected nearly 30 rare medicinal herbs, all of which he had refined into a single golden pill, glimmering like a piece of yellow crystal.
The Five Convergence Pill! In the martial arts world, it also went by more illustrious names such as the Ascension Pill or Immortal Pill
As the name suggests, consuming it was said to grant one immortality.
Of course, this was merely a romanticized and exaggerated notion within martial circles.

While the Ascension Pill was extraordinary, it wasnt a magical elixir that could defy death or wrest control of life from the heavens

If it truly granted immortality, the world would have been overrun with immortals by now

In truth, the pills effects, while not literally divine, were indeed transformative, capable of turning the ordinary into the extraordinary with ease.

In this age of dwindling martial traditions, knowledge of alchemy was exceedingly rare.

Most people, living their mundane lives, adhered to the natural cycle of birth, aging, illness, and death, completing their journeys in relative obscurity

However, martial artists, though few in number, had glimpsed the path to mastering life itself

By cultivating their energy, refining their bodies, and enhancing their essence, they attained great strength and prolonged lifespans

That was why martial artists were often more powerful than ordinary people and controlled far more

resources

Among martial artists, one profession stood out as the rarest, most revered, and highly sought after the alchemist.

In todays world, alchemists capable of refining pills were a rarity.

Thus, in the martial arts world, every alchemist was a prized figure

High ranking alchemists, capable of refining fifth grade pills or higher, were considered true powerhouses

Such alchemists were often recruited by regional governors becoming their indispensable allies

Others were surrounded by top tier martial artists, traveling the martial world with unparalleled influence and grandeur.

The most prominent among them, with great renown and influence, might even establish their own families or martial arts sects, ruling over entire territories and expanding their legacies across generations

Due to the unique nature of their craft, many high ranking alchemists chose to align themselves with powerful families, noble houses, or even royal clans in Holtrien

The reason was simple: such families and clans controlled immense resources and wielded vast influence

By pledging loyalty to these colossal families, alchemists gained access to an endless supply of ingredients for their craft, along with boundless respect and honor. Andrew, whether in martial arts or alchemy, had already astonished the imperial capital a decade ago. As a prodigy of the Lloyd family, Andrew was a genius in every discipline he pursued.

If news spread across the southern martial world that a Flv Convergence Pill had appeared in Jayrodale, it would undoubtedly spark a bloody frenzy.

Even powerful figures from beyond the southern region would come rushing at the scent of such an opportunity.

And if word got out that Andrew, still so young, had personally refined this extraordinary pill, jaws would surely drop

This Ascension Pill he refined was of excellent quality and was classified as an eighth grade pill.

Currently, across the entire Holtrien continent, the number of eighth grade alchemists could be counted on two hands

Each one was a reclusive master, either buried in ancient archives, poring over ancient texts, or revered as a sage within powerful noble houses or royal courts.

Some, exceptionally gifted and renowned, might even serve as the national advisors to the ruling hierarchy of Holtrien individuals second only to the sovereign, commanding respect and authority from all

Chapter 554 But those who reached the level of an eighth grade alchemist paid unimaginable prices in effort and hardship.

They had faced countless life and death crises and needed immense fortune to encounter rare

opportunities and profound enlightenment to become an eighth grade alchemist.

Andrew, however, had walked the path others spent their entire lives treading, finishing it over a decade ago

As per the old saying, The tallest tree in the forest is always the first to be felled.

Ten years ago, Andrew had been forced to carve a bloody path out of Chetvine, vanishing into obscurity. Now, seated calmly in his meditation chamber, Andrew took a deep breath and swallowed the Ascension Pill in one go.

A surge of immense heat rushed to his head and spread through every part of his body.

Break! he muttered

Andrews eyes glowed with a faint golden hue as he clenched his teeth and let out a low growl.

The roaring sound of thunder coursed through his twin core meridians first, then surged into his twelve primary meridians and spread across the network of his entire body.

The three seals that had locked away his martial strength since he fled the imperial capital began to react

The first seal started to crumble

The second seal loosened ever so slightly.

But the third seal remained immovable, tightly binding the final layer of his martial strength with no room for escape.

Finally, the first seal in Andrews lower energy core shattered completely.

The immense power of the pill converged in his energy core, like countless rivers pouring into the ocean. His aura and latent combat strength, dormant for years, began to awaken with a series of crisp popping sounds.

No one knew how much time had passed before Andrew, sitting cross legged, opened his eyes and exhaled a long breath.

His eyes sparkled like the morning star, clear and radiant

A faint smile played on his lips as he stood and stretched his body

The first seal was broken! The second seal had loosened, ready to be shattered with further effort.

All he needed was to collect more rare medicinal herbs and refine an even stronger pill to break through completely

Once the second seal is broken, I can return to Chetvine and settle the debts of the past! And when the third seal

is broken ... According to what my master once said, I will no longer belong to this world.

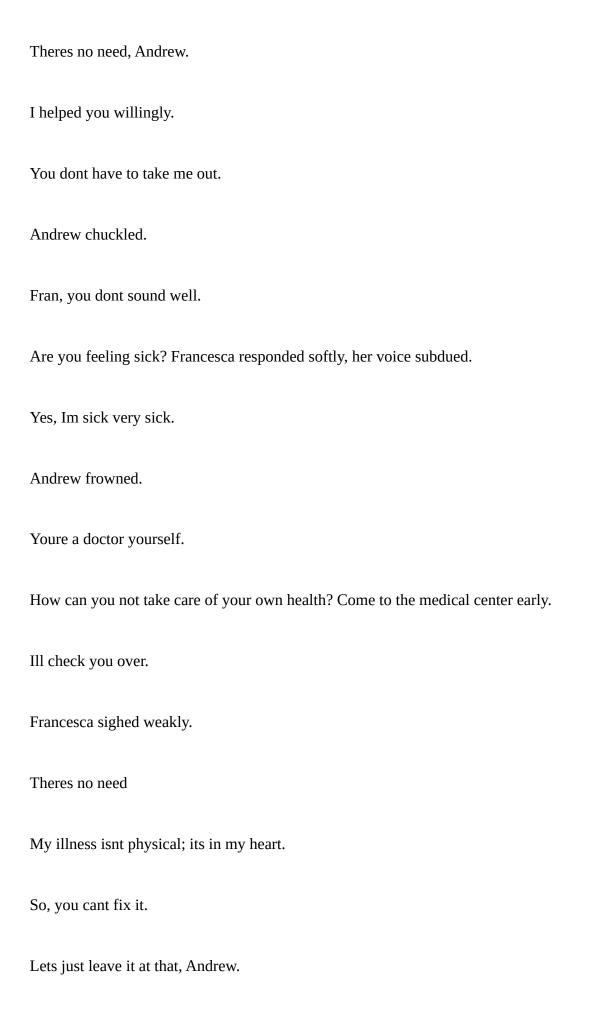
Even now, I still dont understand what he meant.

Andrew murmured quietly, feeling the boundless power flowing within him.

Deciding not to dwell on it, he set the thought aside.

At that moment, his phone rang- Dr.
Lloyd, today is a perfect day! Fran and I have already made arrangements for a grand opening ceremony for your medical center, Lauren said cheerfully, her laughter nging through the phone. Andrew raised an eyebrow.
An opening ceremony? I dont think thats necessary.
Theres no need to make a big fuss.
Lauren teased, Its not a big fuss at all! Fran and I have invited distinguished guests from all over.
You just need to relax and play the role of the brilliant director of the medical center, saving lives and leaving a legacy
I wouldnt dream of burdening you with all the trivial arrangements, Andrew replied, chuckling wryly.
He hadnt expected Lauren and Francesca to take care of everything for the clinics opening, even going as far as inviting the guests.
Alright then.
Thank you, my two lovely ladies.
Lauren giggled
You dont need to thank me, Dr.
Lloyd.
After all, you just gave me such precious formulas

Compared to what youve done for me, this is barely worth mentioning! 1 As for Fran well, thats up to you.
Shes been a bit upset since she found out about us confirming our relationship.
Andrew was surprised
Fran is upset? Why? Shouldnt she be happy and congratulating us?
Chapter 555 Lauren giggled and said, Dr.
Lloyd, you silly man, you can even figure out something as obvious as a girls feelings.
Im not explaining it to you see you at the medical center later.
With that, she hung up.
Andrew thought for a moment.
Why was Francesca upset? Could it have something to do with Simon? But that didnt seem right.
Francesca had mentioned before that Simon had come to terms with her decision and had even offered his blessings.
After mulling it over, Andrew decided to call Francesca.
Fran, Id like to thank you and Lauren for taking care of everything for the medical center.
After the opening ceremony, let me treat you to dinner.
Francescas tone tone was lackluster, almost lethargic.



Ill see you later.
Before Andrew could say anything else, Francesca hung up.
Andrew was puzzled
Although Francesca still answered his questions, her tone clearly conveyed a sense of distance and hesitation, as if she was avoiding him.
And her mention of her illness being in her heart rather than her body? That sounded like a broken heart. Silly girl, Andrew muttered with a small smile, beginning to piece together her feelings.
But he knew he had no easy solution to this.
All he could do was take it one step at a time.
After all, he couldnt start a relationship with Lauren and then turn around and add Francesca to the mix. That would be far too much
Moreover, Andrew couldnt quite read Francescas heart.
The two of them had always been close, existing in a delicate balance.
Yet Francesca had never truly opened her heart to him.
Despite their deep connection one that could be considered extraordinary Francesca had kept her feelings guarded.
He remembered treating Francescas condition.
Even while he was blindfolded, he could feel her voluptuous figure due to their physical proximity with each other during the treatment.

Because of her unique medical condition, Andrew had even touched areas no one else had.
In terms of closeness, they were practically beyond what most couples experienced.
But actions didnt necessarily define relationships
Andrew wasnt the type to greedily claim Francesca as his without her consent.
Shaking off his thoughts, Andrew picked up his phone and dialed Natashas number.
Bring the West End gang to my medical center later for a feast, he said bluntly.
Natasha sounded surprised.
Oh, my darling, youve opened a new medical center? Andrew laughed.
Yep.
You probably know the location- Let Dylan know, too.
Pass along the message for me
Natasha agreed enthusiastically.
Got it
Ill let him know.
where the Weller familys Oakridge Club used to be.
Youre amazing, darling! Youve just become our boss, and now youve opened a medical center. Youre living the dream!

Chapter 556 From Natashas tone, it seemed like she was even more excited about the medical centers opening than Andrew himself. Andrew chuckled.
Its just a small medical center, nothingas grand as youre Imagining.
Dont forget to bring ur people from West End
Think of it as giving everyone a day offi Natasha laughed, covering her mouth
Are you sure you want all of them there? Thats several hundred, close to a thousand people.
Do you even have space for everyone? Andrew grinned.
Im your boss, after all
If I cant even arrange seats for my people, what kind of leader would! be? Natasha teased, No way, my darling isnt that incompetent.
Alright, Ill let Dylan know, pick out a fitting opening gift for you, and then bring everyone over.
Andrew quickly interjected.
No gifts, really.
Dont make it too formal
Just come by and join the fun.
Natasha huffed.
That wont do .

Youre our boss, and proper respect must be shown.
Im not just picking any gift -Im going to get you an extravagant one! Andrew realized there was no point
in arguing further; once Natasha made up her mind, there was no changing it.
Meanwhile, when Dylan from South City heard about the medical centers opening, his reaction was even more over the top than Natashas.
Mr.
Lloyd changed my life.
For the opening of his medical center, Im going to show my absolute sincerity! Brimming with
enthusiasm, Dylan gathered his trusted men and subordinates, asking for suggestions gift to get for Andrew, One of his top men eagerly volunteered, Mr.
Garner, I suggest we get Mr.
Lloyd a female celebrity.
what Dylan shot him a glance and shook his head.
That wont do Mr.
Lloyd already has Ms.
Rhodes, Ms.
Aicker, and Elsie by his side hes certainly not lacking for companions.



Given Marvins close relationship with Andrew, Dylan was confident the tycoon could guide him on what would make the perfect gift.
Chapter 557 Meanwhile, at Rhodes Corporation.
Lauren checked the time.
There were still two hours until the grand opening of the medical center
III head to the Pharmaceutical Division first and hand over the two formulas Dr. Lloyd gave me to Mr.
Chapman
Then III head to the medical center, she muttered to herself.
With her her plan set, Lauren made her way to the Pharmaceutical Division.
Marcus greeted her with a smile.
Ms.
Rhodes, what brings you here personally? Lauren replied, Lets talk in your office.
Marcus immediately realized this must be important and promptly invited her in.
Lauren wasted no time, pulling out two sheets of paper and handing them to Marcus with great care. Mr.
Chapman, these are from Dr.
Lloyd

The value of these two formulas far exceeds the three we previously lost

In fact, you could say that all the research and development achieved by Rhodes Pharmaceutical over

the past decades doesnt even compare to just one of these formulas.

Make sure to keep these absolutely confidential.

We cannot afford another disaster like Troys betrayal! she added

Marcus, fumbling nervously, took the formulas, his disbelief evident

Is this even possible? He had anticipated that Andrew might be able to provide a formula, but he never imagined Andrew could deliver something so extraordinary

If what Lauren said was true, and one formula alone was more valuable than the three they had lost,

then these werent just formulas they were recipes for miraculous medicines! Lauren smiled

Youll understand once you review them and send them to the lab for verification by the experts.

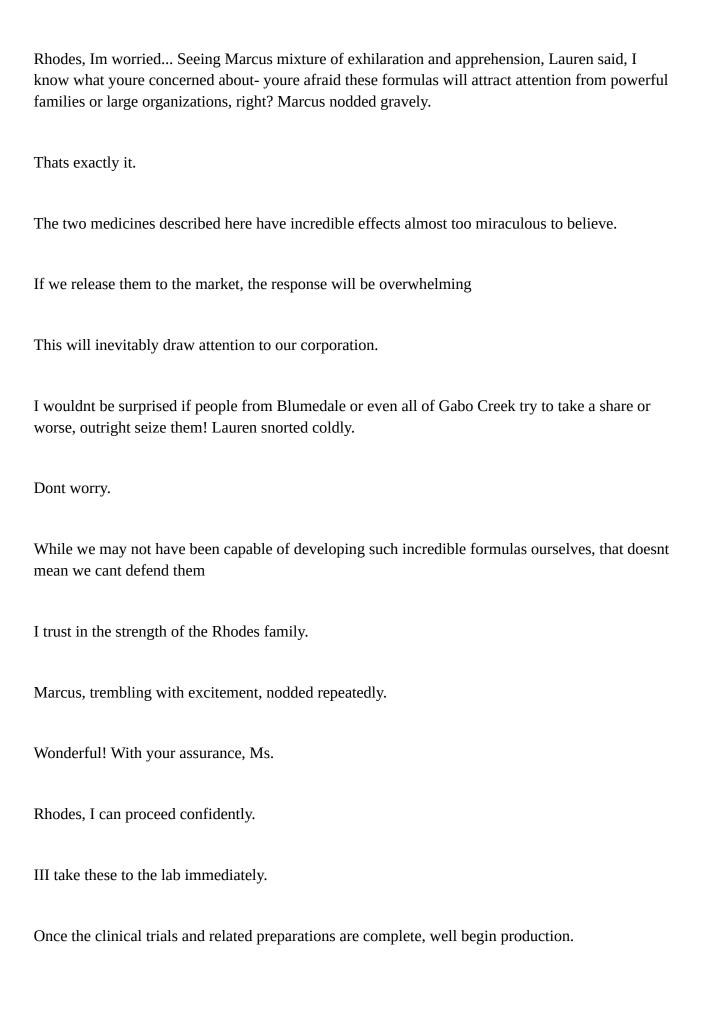
Being in charge of the Pharmaceutical Division, Marcus had a foundational understanding of medicine. Without delay, he began examining the formulas.

After a moment, he gasped, his face pale with shock.

These are ancient formulas some of the rarest passed

down over millennia in Holtrien! My god, Dr.

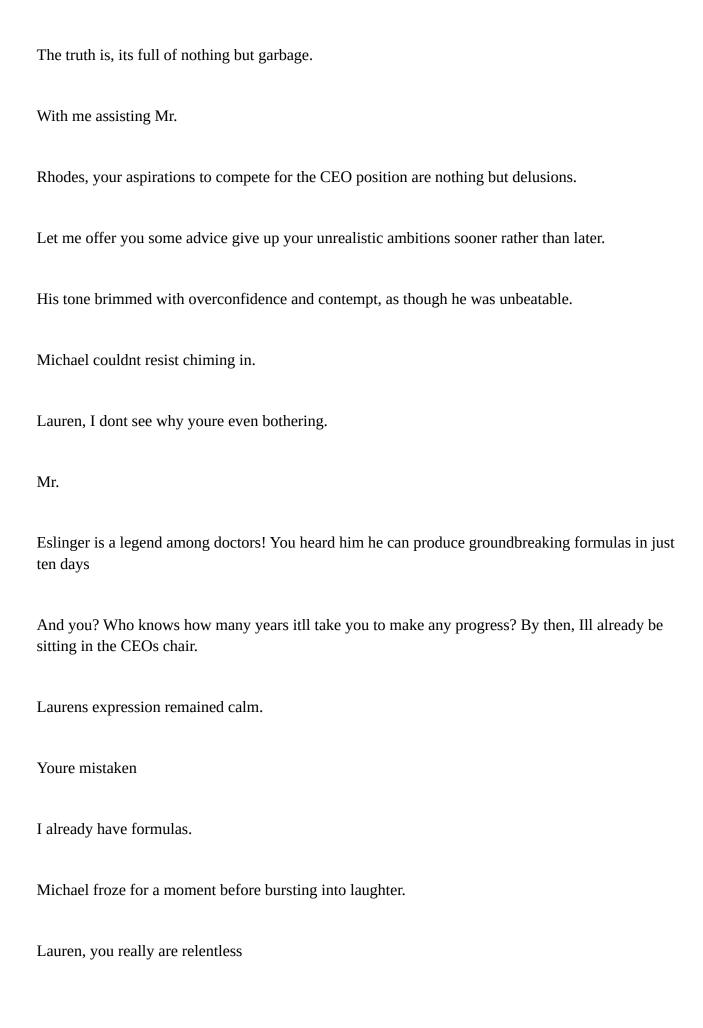
Lloyd actually entrusted us with such priceless knowledge ... Ms.

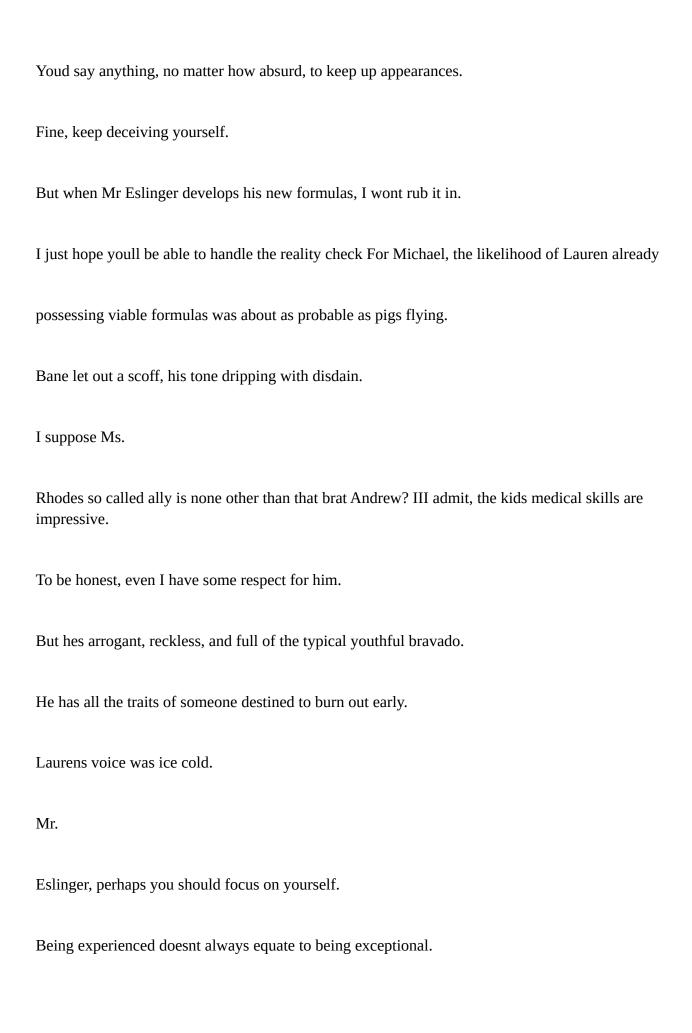


Go ahead! Lauren replied with a smile.
As Marcus opened the door to leave, however, they found themselves face to face with Tiana, Michael, and a group of bodyguards entering the office.
What immediately caught Laurens attention was the presence of a pockmarked man with an arrogant demeanor standing next to Michael the Master of Poisons, Bane Eslinger.
Mrs.
Rhodes! Marcus greeted Tiana hastily
Tiana nodded lightly
Ive brought an expert to assist the Pharmaceutical Division.
Mr.
Chapman, let me introduce you.
Michael jumped in quickly.
Mr.
Chapman, allow me to introduce Mr.
Eslinger, or as hes better known, the Master of Poisons.
Even our famed Dr.
Aicker is his junior.

With Mr.
Eslinger joining our Pharmaceutical Division, no one not even the Weller family will dare challenge us! Marcus was stunned.
Mr.
Eslinger is actually Dr.
Aickers senior? Even Lauren was momentarily taken aback.
She hadnt expected this pockmarked old man to have such a formidable reputation.
Chapter 558 Michael grinned smugly.
Of course! In front of Mr.
Eslinger, even the renowned Dr.
Aicker must step aside
Whether its medical skill or the art of poison, Mr.
Eslingers unparalleled! Bane ignored Marcus entirely, addressing Tiana instead.
Mrs.
Rhodes, you know the price of engaging my services isnt small.
Tiana smiled graciously.
Mr.

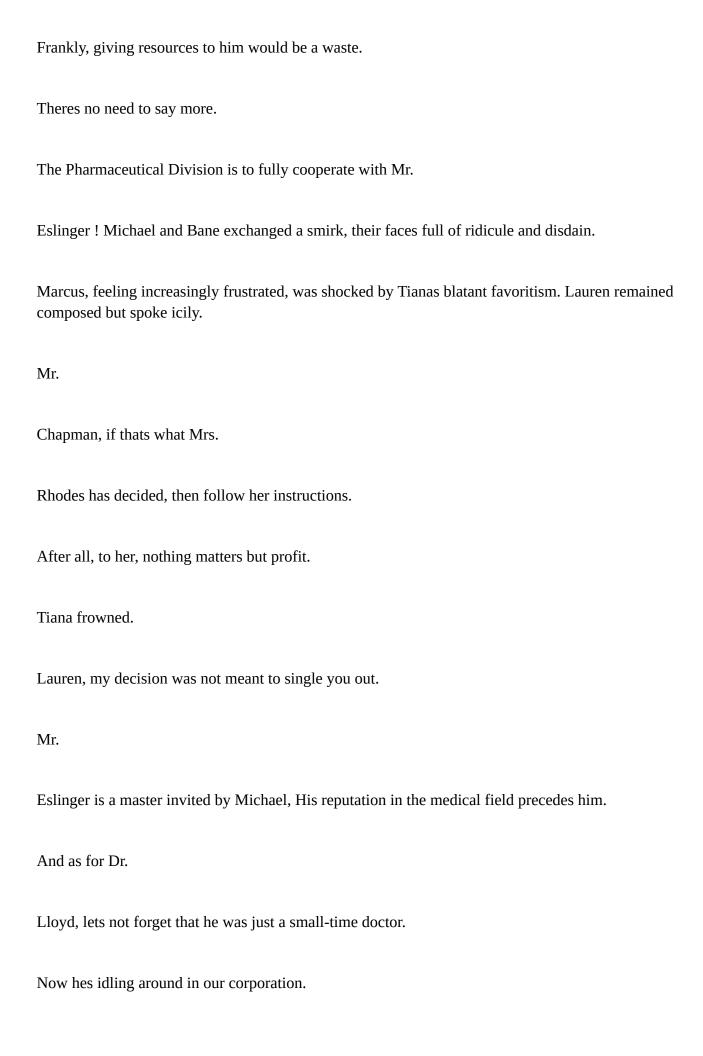
Eslinger, as a highly regarded disciple of the Advanced Medical Institute and a true master of medicine, any price is well worth it.
Bane laughed heartily, clearly pleased with her flattery.
With an air of arrogance, he said, Since youve spoken so kindly, consider it done.
Give me at most a month or as little as ten days and I will deliver two top tier formulas to Rhodes Pharmaceutical.
Theyll restore your departments reputation and bring in immense profits! Marcus was stunned.
Ten days to develop formulas ? That seems impossible! Bane cast him a disdainful glance and sneered.
The mysteries and prowess of someone like me, a master beyond worldly bounds, are beyond your comprehension.
Youre nothing more than an ant.
How could you grasp the heights of heaven or the depths of earth? Lauren couldnt hold back a scoff.
Mr.
Eslinger may be a medical genius, but that doesnt mean we cant develop formulas ourselves.
Bane smirked dismissively.
Ms.
Rhodes, Im not looking down on your Pharmaceutical Division.





By your logic, shouldn those thousand year old turtles in the pond be far more accomplished than you, Mr.
Eslinger ? Banes face darkened in fury.
You insolent girl! Are you mocking me? Lauren remained unfazed, her tone sharp
Im not mocking you, Mr.
Eslinger.
Im simply advising you not to lean on your age and experience as a crutch.
Medical expertise isnt always a matter of years lived its about genuine ability! Bane sneered.
You make a fair point.
There are indeed prodigles with unparalleled talent in medicine.
But as for Andrew, what qualifications does he have? Hes just a small time doctor at best, he knows a few tricks.
Once Ive developed my formulas, Ill make sure you and that boy understand what it means to have a reputation built on real skill!
Chapter 559 Lauren felt indignant and wanted to say more, but Tianas cold voice cut her off. Enough.
Mr.
Eslinger is a specially appointed consultant for the Pharmaceutical Division

He is the foundation of Rhodes Corporations efforts to regain a foothold in the medical market and strengthen our competitiveness, From today onward, Marcus, all resources of the Pharmaceutical Division are to be fully allocated to Mr. Eslinger! Marcus glanced at Lauren and said gravely, But Mrs. Rhodes, Ms. Rhodes also needs the Pharmaceutical Divisions resources. Dr. Lloyd is fully supporting her and will be developing new formulas. If all resources are given to Mr. Eslinger, it could impact this competition Although Andrew had already provided formulas, Marcus wasnt foolish. He knew it was wiser to keep things understated for now. The formulas Andrew had given were too valuable rare ancient formulas, nearly unheard of. Making them public prematurely could lead to serious consequences. Tiana dismissed his concerns coldly The immediate priority is for the Pharmaceutical Division to recover and regain its strength. As for Dr. Lloyd, I have little faith in him.



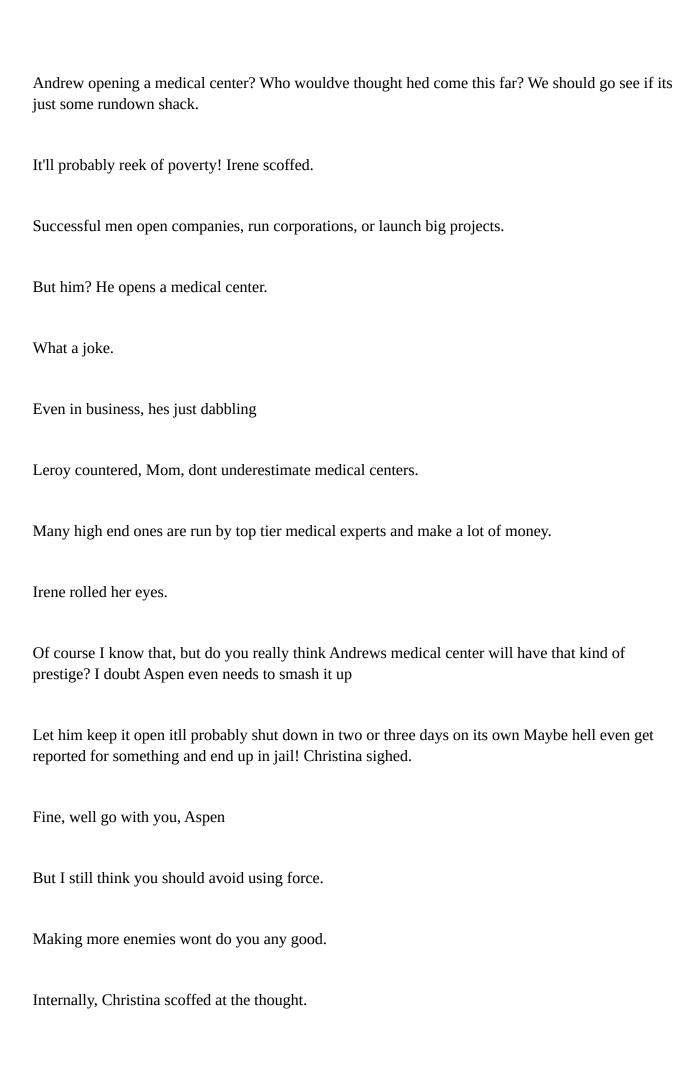


So, it seems Marvin is giving his pawn a new role to play.
Does he not understand that piling too much on Andrew will overwhelm him? In the end, itll all collapse
like a house of cards and make him a laughingstock
Lauren replied indifferently, Thats none of your concern Tiana suddenly grinned.
I have some free time
Ill join you to congratulate him.
With me there, I can help raise his profile and lend him some credibility.
Lauren looked at her warily.
What are you planning to d Tianas smile deepened.
You think Im going there to e Rhodes Corporation
Over the years, hes done some thin Lauren sighed, exasperated.
Do as you wish.
Meanwhile, at the Stevens family residence in Jayrodale.
Bruce, Jackie, gather the car.
Were heading out, Asper Lauren looked at her warily.
What are you planning to do? Tianas smile deepened



Aspen, its just some low level marketing Why even bother paying attention to it? Andrew has the backing of Lauren, Francesca, and, apparently, even Marvin now. So yes, his career is starting to gain traction, and he finally managed to open a medical center of his own But at the end of the day, its just a small medical center a place for treating patients and making some money Its no different from a roadside clinic. Nothing special In my opinion, theres no need to wade into these waters. Isnt your focus on setting up a pharmaceutical plant in Jayrodale? The Stevens family could collaborate with you on that. Aspen raised a hand, signaling Christina to stop. Her voice was sharp and cold I know youre making serise, Christina. Andrew can do whatever he likes. To us, hes nothing more than a minor character who cant even make it to the main stage! But every time I think about the humiliation hes caused me, I cant just let it go

No matter what, Im heading over today to completely destroy his medical center. Lets see what Lauren and Francesca can do about it! Christina grew serious. Aspen, I really think you should reconsider. Smashing up the medical center might be too impulsive. Also, dont forget that Andrew has Marvin, the wealthiest man in Jayrodale, backing him. If you act recklessly, itll definitely attract his attention. Aspen sneered So what if Marvin backs him? Im not afraid of him. Worst case, III leave Jayrodale Ill rake in some serious money here and head back to Blumedale. Who can stop me then? Christina couldnt help but worry. Aspen had arrived in Jayrodale full of ambition and confidence, but repeated setbacks had left her impatient and quick tempered. If this continued, Aspen might end up suffering a huge loss. At that moment, Irene and Leroy entered the room. Christie, lets go check out the scene too, Leroy suggested with a grin.



Andrew, youre opening a medical center and making such a huge spectacle of it, flaunting your success so ostentatiously.
Well, now youve drawn Aspens ire.
Maybe even the Weller family or others like Finley will show up to cause trouble.
Youre practically inviting humiliation upon yourself.