

The Ashes 811

Chapter 811

They chatted idly on the way back. Before long, they arrived in downtown

Jayrodale, and Andrew drove straight to the Rhodes Corporation building, pulling up in front.

A security guard jogged over with a big smile. "Mr. Lloyd, you're back!"

As Andrew and Shiloh stepped out of the car, he handed over the keys to the guard and said, "Park it for me."

The company's security guards practically worshiped Andrew now. Their respect for him was just as strong compared to Tiana's.

"Of course, Mr. Lloyd, don't worry! I'll take good care of your car!"

Just then, a weak knocking sound came from the trunk, along with what sounded like muffled cursing. However, with the noise of traffic all around, it was hard to make out

The security guard frowned and asked, "Uh... Mr. Lloyd, I think something's moving in the trunk."

Andrew waved it off. "We picked up a wild boar on the way back. The kind that roams the mountains-mean as hell."

The security guard's eyes widened. "A wild boar? Oh man, those things can fight tigers! You're incredible, Mr. Lloyd!"

Andrew nodded seriously. "You should probably call a few guys over before opening the trunk. Don't want it going berserk on you. By the way, wild boar meat is amazing-great for BBQ. You guys should clean it up for me, and I'll treat everyone to a feast later."

The security guard grinned so wide his cheeks practically split. "Haha! Mr. Lloyd, you're the best! Leave it to us!"

Andrew gave him an approving nod, then headed inside the building with Shiloh.

Shiloh glanced back at the car, her brows slightly furrowed. "Mr. Lloyd, do you have a grudge against that guy named Michael?"

Andrew chuckled. "Of course. A deep one."

Shiloh thought for a moment before casually saying, "Do you want me to kill him? It'll only cost you ten grand."

Andrew twitched. "Shiloh, are you really that desperate for money?"

Shiloh answered seriously, "Obviously. Why else would I jump at the 20 million dollars you offered? Honestly, I still don't completely trust you. But with that kind of money, I had no choice but to take the risk."

Andrew was at a loss for words. She was a full-fledged martial king-an unstoppable force who could dominate anywhere. If she wanted the elite families of Jayrodale would worship her. Even at the state level, hell across the entire southern martial arts world, she could live like royalty.

Instead, Shiloh was a blank slate with no memories, no concept of the modern world, and no idea how to navigate it. That made her an easy target for con artists and dangerous people.

It was almost tragic for a martial king to be struggling to make ends meet.

Andrew said, "Shiloh, you don't have to worry about money anymore. If you need it, I'll give it to you."

As they stepped into the elevator, Shiloh glanced at him and shook her head. "No need. I don't like owing people. Besides, we just met. If

you're being this generous for monet

reason I have to wonder what you want from me.” Andrew felt a headache coming on. He should have known Shiloh was not easy to

fool. In truth, he did have an

agenda-he wanted to keep this terrifying martial king close.

If things ever went south, he would just send her in like a human nuke, and his problem would be solved. Nonetheless, it was clear that trying to sweet-talk this

blank slate-yet-sharp-as-hell woman was not going to work.

Shiloh might not remember her past or know how to blend into modern society,

but she was not a stupid person.

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The elevator bell rang, and the doors slid open.

Andrew stepped out with Shiloh, walking toward Lauren's office under the employees' curious gazes and polite greetings.

On the way, they ran into Tiana. She eyed Shiloh up and down, her gaze carrying

a hint of doubt as she asked, “Mr. Lloyd, is this the Master Shiloh you went to recruit?”

Andrew nodded. "That's right, this is Ms. Shiloh Greene."

He secretly let out a breath of relief-he had almost called her Master again. The last thing he wanted was to end up like Michael, who got slapped across the face for it.

Tiana, exuding her usual cold and commanding presence, stepped closer to

Shiloh and said, "Take off your veil. Let me see what you look like. If you're going to represent Rhodes Corporation, you can't be someone who doesn't look the part."

Shiloh met her gaze calmly and replied, "Wearing a veil won't stop me from endorsing your products."

Tiana's brows furrowed, her voice taking on a sharper edge. "Even so, I'd still like to see your face. Come on, we're both women. What's with all the mystery?"

Shiloh responded bluntly, "Get lost."

"Huh?" Tiana's eyebrows shot up as anger flashed across her face. She could not believe that some random influencer Andrew brought back dared to speak to her like that.

Andrew quickly stepped between them before Tiana could do something reckless and get herself killed. "Mrs. Rhodes, please respect Shiloh's privacy and personal choices. We hired her for her reputation and online influence. She's always worn a veil in her videos, so making her take it off would ruin the whole effect."

Tiana's expression darkened. "Mr. Lloyd, did you bring back some kind of royalty? I just asked to see her face, and she told me to get lost. Don't you think she's a little too arrogant?"

Andrew replied seriously, "Mrs. Rhodes, Shiloh isn't some girl you can boss around. She's over 80 years old, so technically, you should be the one showing your respect!"

Tiana paused for a second, then shot him a look like he had lost his mind. "Ridiculous. I swear, you came back from this trip acting completely deranged. If she's over 80, then I must be at least 200."

She added, "But since the company's affairs are in your hands, I won't interfere too much. Just don't disappoint me."

With that, she let out a cold scoff, turned on her heel, and walked away.

Jerry followed behind her, but as he passed Andrew, he said casually, "Mrs. Rhodes is going to settle things with Aspen."

Andrew was surprised that Tiana was going after Aspen. That had to mean she was going to hold Aspen accountable for stealing Rhodes Pharmaceutical's formulas

Andrew suddenly felt a lot more cheerful as he thought about how Aspen was in for one hell of a reckoning. He turned to Shiloh with a grin and said, "Come on, let's go see Ms. Rhodes."

Shiloh's voice was cold. "That

stuck-up bitch just now? I don't like her. Tell her to keep her attitude in check around me. If she doesn't, I won't mind teaching her a lesson."

Andrew felt a shiver down his spine and let out a nervous chuckle. "Shiloh, that woman is the head of Rhodes Corporation. Even I have to give her some leeway. She has a nasty temper and acts all high and mighty, but she's not bad.

"Do me a favor and don't start anything, okay? If you beat her up, I'm afraid she might not take it well."

Tiana was tough, but there would not even be a fair fight if things got physical.

Andrew could already picture

it-Tiana getting absolutely

demolished, slammed into the floor

with no chance to fight back. With

how proud and stubborn she was,

getting her face rearranged by Shiloh might actually send her over the edge.

In fact, there was a chance Tiana would end her life out of sheer humiliation.

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Shiloh nodded. "Fine, I'll give you some leeway. But I act based on my mood. If I'm in a bad mood, even you won't be spared."

Andrew raised his hands in surrender and chuckled nervously, saying, "Whatever you say. So please, make sure to stay in a great mood!"

Lauren was drowning in work, her stress levels through the roof. However, the moment she saw Andrew walk in, she immediately brightened up and was about to greet him with a kiss.

Then, her gaze shifted, and she spotted Shiloh standing behind him. She asked, "Dr. Lloyd, is this the wellness guru, Ms. Shiloh Greene?"

Lauren, all warmth and enthusiasm, stepped forward with a bright smile and extended her hand. "Hello, I'm Lauren Rhodes, Dr. Lloyd's girlfriend."

Shiloh reached out and shook her hand. "Nice to meet you, Ms. Rhodes."

Andrew noticed something odd-Shiloh did not seem nearly as distant with Lauren as she had with everyone else. That made him curious. "Shiloh, you seem to like Lauren, don't you?"

Shiloh answered without hesitation. "I like all beautiful women. Besides, she's not annoying like you people. She doesn't call me Master or Madam every two seconds. She called me Miss, which felt just right. It made me happy."

Lauren huffed. "Who's been calling you Master or Madam? I'll rip their mouths off. Seriously, you look so young! And oh my, your skin is flawless-it's practically glowing! Shiloh, you have to teach me your skincare secrets!"

Shiloh chuckled. "I don't do skincare. My skin is just naturally perfect. But if you want to learn about wellness and skincare, I can help. Just so you know, though— I charge a fee."

Lauren burst into laughter. "Good! If it were free, I'd be worried it wouldn't work. Name your price!"

Shiloh's straightforward and unfiltered nature was oddly charming, and Lauren found it hilarious.

Andrew, on the other hand, just shook his head and sighed. He thought, 'A martial king, reduced to worrying about money... What a world.'

It finally made sense why people often joked that even an international genius or

brilliant individuals would have to go all out, joining so social events or even bribing officials just to get a teaching job in Holtrien or Etharia.

The real world was really just too damn tough.

Andrew pulled himself from his thoughts and said, "Lauren, I'll leave Shiloh in your hands. You can start arranging her commercial shoot right away. She's going to be to turning around the

Love key

pharmaceutical division's stump and clearing up the bad press.

Lauren nodded. "Got it. I'll set up the studio and call in the photographers immediately. Shiloh is a huge wellness influencer online. With her endorsing our two flagship products, I'm confident the pharmaceutical division can bounce back!"

Andrew turned to Shiloh. "Shiloh, from now on, just follow Lauren's schedule. I won't be tagging along."

Shiloh's expression darkened. "That

won't do. We agreed on 20 million

upfront. Mr. Lloyd, where's my

money? You need to pay up first. Also, I'm not going back to that broken-down monastery. The city is way more fun, with good food everywhere. I want to live here-get me a place."

Andrew did not think her demands were unreasonable. He had promised to pay her upfront, after all.

Lauren laughed. "Dr. Lloyd, I'll handle it. Shiloh's 20 million should come from the company anyway."

Then, she turned to Shiloh, adding, "Just give me half a day, and I'll have the funds transferred to your account!"

Shiloh nodded. "Alright, then I'll wait half a day. But not a minute longer."

Lauren covered her mouth, giggling at how serious she was.

However, Andrew knew that Shiloh was dead serious. When she said half a day, she meant it. She was not the type to tolerate delays, especially when it came to money.

So, he gave Lauren a heads-up. "Lauren, make sure you get it done within half a day. She doesn't like being kept waiting, especially when it involves money. If you drag this out, the consequences won't be pretty."

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Lauren assured him, "Don't worry, I'll get it done!"

Andrew turned to Shiloh and asked, "As for where you'll stay... I have no idea where to put you. How about I just buy you a place?"

Shiloh immediately shook her head. "No way! City housing prices are insane. I checked online, and in Jayrodale, it's over 15 grand per square foot. I'm not buying!"

Andrew laughed. "Relax, I'll pay for it. You can just live there for free!"

Shiloh shook her head even harder. "That's even worse! I don't like owing people!"

Andrew felt a headache coming on. "Didn't you just make 20 million? Use your own money to buy a place."

Shiloh's eyes burned with outrage. "Absolutely not! I just earned a fortune, and the first thing you want me to do is dump it into real estate? Mr. Lloyd, you've got capitalism running through your veins. Evil, evil, big bad energy-do you get that?"

Andrew just stared at her, speechless. He had no counter for that.

Meanwhile, Lauren could not hold it in anymore. She doubled over laughing, nearly gasping for breath. This was the first time she had ever seen Andrew lose an argument.

"Oh my! I can't breathe... Alright, Dr. Lloyd, how about this-Shiloh likes wellness, herbal medicine, and making videos."

Struggling to suppress her laughter, Lauren continued, "Why don't we let her stay at your place at Moonlit Apothecary? The backyard is big, and it's nice and quiet!"

Andrew thought about it and agreed it actually made sense. Moonlit Apothecary had been rebuilt on the foundation of the Wellers' old clubhouse, and there was still plenty of unused space.

It would be a perfect place for Shiloh to stay, and she could also help keep an eye on the shop. It was a win-win.

"Alright, Shiloh, you can live at Moonlit Apothecary!" Andrew said.

Shiloh frowned. "I'll stay, but are you charging rent? If it's too expensive, I'm not doing it."

Andrew sighed. "I'm not charging a dime!"

Shiloh finally agreed. "Good. Then I'll move in. And so you don't think I'm just

freeloading, I'll handle the shop's cleaning and maintenance."

Finally, the overly meticulous yet broke martial king was settled.

Andrew was beyond exhausted. He waved goodbye to Lauren and clocked out for the day, ready to go home and actually rest for once.

At the entrance of Rhodes Corporation, a group of security guards stood armed with poles and plastic batons, approaching cautiously. They had been trained for security emergencies, so their movements were coordinated and professional.

"The moment we open the trunk, hit it fast. We have to pin this thing down. If a wild boar gets loose in the city, people are going to get hurt," the head of security, Jamie Holt, instructed. en

One of the guards, a burly guy, pounded his chest. "Don't worry, Captain! Even if

it's a bull in there, we'll take it down!"

The three guards nodded confidently, gripping their weapons, ready to strike. Then, Jamie reached for the car, took a deep breath, and yanked the trunk open.

The burly guard roared and lunged forward, stabbing his pole into the trunk. The others followed suit,

charging in and swinging their

batons at whatever was inside

without hesitation.

A bloodcurdling scream tore through the air, so shrill and desperate it sounded

like an animal was being slaughtered.

Jamie froze. "Wait a minute... that scream... why does it sound human?"

One of the other guards suddenly shouted, "Captain, there's no boar at all! There's a man in there!"

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Jamie gasped and immediately shouted for his men to stop. He stepped forward, and what he saw made his scalp tingle-curling up inside the trunk was a man so battered and bloodied that his face was completely unrecognizable.

The man was barely clinging to consciousness, struggling to breathe.

Jamie asked, "Sir, who are you? And why are you in Mr. Lloyd's car?"

He kept his weapon pointed at the man, his tone sharp. "Where's the wild boar? Mr. Lloyd said he brought one back-did you let it escape?"

Michael was already half-dead, barely holding on to his sanity. During the ride, he had vomited every last drop of fluid in his stomach, nearly passing out from exhaustion.

When the trunk finally opened, he had been ecstatic, thinking he was finally free. Yet, before he could even take a breath, he was met with a brutal, merciless beating-one so bad that he nearly pissed himself.

His hatred for Andrew burned so deep it could have swallowed him whole. He clutched his head and let out a miserable wail. "Andrew, you goddamn bastard... I-I will never forgive you!"

Jamie frowned. "Oh? So not only did you let Mr. Lloyd's wild boar escape, but now you have the nerve to insult him? Screw it-boys, get him!"

Seeing that another round of beatings was about to start, Michael suddenly found a burst of strength. He jerked his head up, revealing his swollen, misshapen face, and snarled, "Back off, you blind morons!"

He shouted, "Are you all dumb? Do you even know who I am? Open your damn eyes and take a good look! I'm Michael Rhodes the heir of the Rhodes family! I'm not a wild boar, you brainless bastards!"

After his furious outburst, his chest burned with pain. He clutched his ribs and trembled violently.

The security guards were stunned, their confidence immediately wavering. They quickly lifted him out of the trunk.

"Mr. Rhodes? You're Mr. Rhodes?" One of the guards stammered. "Then... why were you in Mr. Lloyd's trunk?"

Michael's eyes were bloodshot, his voice weak but filled with rage. "I didn't get in there willingly, you idiots! That bastard Andrew stuffed me in Now... hurry up and get me to a hospital. I'm dying here... Get moving!"

The guards exchanged uneasy glances. They all wondered if the wild boar Andrew mentioned was actually Michael.

A shudder ran through them as the realization hit: they had just given Michael a merciless round of beating. Without wasting another second, they carefully lifted Michael and rushed him to the hospital.

On the way, they could not help but glance at him with sympathy. After all, the heir of the Rhodes family was locked in a trunk and mistaken for livestock. It seemed that Andrew sure knew how to have fun.

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Meanwhile, on the other side of Jayrodale. Christina and Aspen had just returned to the city.

Aspen's driving skills were average at best, nowhere near Andrew's level. Since it was already late, and the mountain roads were tricky to navigate, their trip back had taken longer than expected.

"Christie, let's grab something to eat first. I'm starving!" Aspen groaned, barely holding herself together.

Christina, however, looked tense and unamused. "I have no appetite. Just thinking about how Andrew stole Shiloh right from under us makes me sick!"

Aspen gritted her teeth, equally

furiously. "I still don't get it. What does Shiloh even see in Andrew? Back when she stayed at the Stevens family estate in Bridgefields, my father pulled every trick in the book to recruit her.

"He went all out, trying everything to get her to stay and work for us. But none of it worked. And now, Andrew gets to have her just like that? That bastard hit the jackpot!"

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Christina said flatly, "Let's grab a bite first. We can deal with everything else after. Andrew is even taking the people I set my sights on now. Fine. If he wants to force my hand, then I have no choice but to go against him."

Aspen hesitated for a moment before sighing. "Christie, have you considered that maybe Andrew really isn't on the same level as us anymore?"

Failing time and time again, getting crushed by Andrew repeatedly-it had shattered Aspen's once-proud and confident heart. Whenever she faced him, she found herself losing the drive to compete. Instead, she just wanted to keep her distance.

Aspen did not want to admit it, but deep down, she knew she was scared of him

now.

Christina's voice was icy. "No. I don't think he's that impressive. I'll admit, he's changed. He's become more powerful and holds much more influence now. But I'll never bow to him. I'll prove to him that if he can thrive, I can do even better."

Aspen parted her lips, about to say something when suddenly, a scornful chuckle interrupted them.

"A woman with this much jealousy and resentment? That's not a good look."

Both Aspen and Christina whipped their heads around in anger. The moment they saw who it was, their eyes widened in shock.

Tiana, flanked by Jerry and seven other boys, was gracefully walking toward them.

Aspen's entire body tensed as she instinctively lowered her head. "Good evening, Mrs. Rhodes.

Even Christina did not dare act out. She respectfully greeted her, "Good evening, Mrs. Rhodes."

Tiana studied Christina for a moment before nodding slightly. "Not bad. In Jayrodale, there are very few women who can stand on equal footing with Lauren

in terms of beauty. You're certainly one of them."

Christina replied modestly, "Compared to Ms. Rhodes, I still have a long way to go."

Tiana gave a faint smile. "You definitely have a long way to go. Otherwise, Andrew wouldn't have ignored you and gone after my Lauren instead."

Christina froze, then immediately scowled. "Mrs. Rhodes, what do you mean by that?"

Tiana let out a cold snort. "Exactly what I said no hidden meaning. Christina, we're both women, so I'll give you some advice: jealousy and a need to constantly compete aren't good traits for a woman to have.

"Especially not for someone who has nothing but looks. A woman like you, all beauty and no substance? You're just a pretty decoration. So if you insist on going after Andrew, constantly looking down on him, and trying to make trouble for him..."

She scoffed before adding, "Then I think you'll end up losing in the most humiliating way possible. I don't particularly like Andrew, but that

doesn't stop me from admiring

If you think you can compete with him, you're nothing more than a fool throwing herself into a losing battle.”

Tiana's blunt words hit Christina like a slap to the face. Her cheeks burned red with fury glaring at Tiana but not daring to talk back.

as she clenched her fists,

Meanwhile, Tiana was unfazed by her anger and continued coldly, "Christina, aside from your decent looks, your character is honestly pathetic. I know exactly how your mind works.

"Back when you were with Andrew, he spoiled you, always putting you first. You took it for granted. But now that

he's moved on, acting distant-maybe even disgusted with you. You can't handle

the shift, so instead of accepting it, you want revenge.

"I don't claim to be a good person. But you? Take a good look at yourself. Do you even have any room left to fall lower than this?"

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Christina gritted her teeth, refusing to say a word. She hated the idea that anyone could think she was beneath Andrew. Deep down, there was a dark, bitter part of her that would never accept that he was doing better than her.

After all, admitting it would mean that leaving him had been a monumental mistake-one of the dumbest decisions she had ever made.

Christina was too proud to ever acknowledge that. Even if she said it out loud, she would never truly believe it in her heart.

Tiana scoffed. "Forget it. I only said all that because I found you incredibly irritating. But I'm actually here for Aspen."

As she spoke, her icy gaze shifted to Aspen.

Aspen, already trembling, started shaking even harder. She stammered, "M-Mrs. Rhodes, what can I do for you?"

Tiana took two slow steps forward, her smile sharp and merciless. "I never expected the Stevens family to produce someone like you, nor did I think Zephyr would raise such a thieving daughter!"

Aspen swallowed her anger and tried to keep her composure. "Mrs. Rhodes, I have never wronged you. Don't you think your words are a little too much?"

Tiana let out a cold laugh. "Too much? Aspen, are you really going to keep playing dumb? Are you seriously going to pretend you had nothing to do with the Rhodes Pharmaceutical's stolen formula?"

Aspen had already expected this confrontation, but she was confident that Tiana had no proof. So, she gritted her teeth and stuck to denial. "Mrs. Rhodes, I have no idea what you're talking about!"

Tiana's expression turned even colder. "Of course. I knew you'd deny it. Jerry, hold her down."

Aspen's eyes widened in horror. Before she could react, Jerry had already grabbed her arm and twisted it behind her back.

"Mrs. Rhodes! If you treat me like this, the Stevens family won't just sit back and watch!" Aspen shouted, fear creeping into her voice.

Tiana scoffed "The Stevens family?"

Even with Gordon backing you, I don't give a damn. Besides, you clearly don't understand why people call me the Iron Lady. It's because when handle things, I don't show mercy."

Tiana raised her hand and landed two crisp slaps across Aspen's face.

Aspen had no strength to resist. All she could do was clench her jaw as blood filled her mouth.

Christina's fury exploded. "Mrs. Rhodes! You're just bullying the weak! Don't you care about fairness?"

Tiana snapped, "Stay out of this, you little brat. You're no better than her. Do you really think the Stevens Corporation's pharmaceutical success had nothing to do with Aspen's thieving ways? Let

me tell you the truth- your company's products are nothing more than knockoffs of Rhodes Pharmaceutical's originals. To put it simply, you're eating off my plate."

Christina's face turned red with shame as she stared at Aspen in shock. She had asked Aspen before where the formulas had come from.

Aspen had confidently claimed they came from the Stevens family's main branch, but now it was clear she had lied, and those formulas had been stolen.

Tiana landed another two slaps.

"These are on your parents'

behalf-I'm teaching you a lesson for being a disgraceful, shameless thief! And these are from Andrew! I heard that ever since you arrived in Jayrodale, you've been constantly trying to provoke him- yet every time, you end up humiliating yourself."

Chapter 818

Tiana said coldly, "And these last two are from Rhodes Corporation. Aspen, do you have any idea how much damage you've caused? Because of you, Rhodes Pharmaceutical has taken hit after hit. We're barely hanging on! "Now get lost. Go back to Bridgefields, and don't ever set foot in Jayrodale again. Otherwise, if I'm ever in a bad mood, I'll make sure to slap you every time I see you!"

Exuding pure dominance, Tiana let out a disdainful scoff before turning on her heel and walking away with her entourage.

Aspen collapsed to the ground like a pile of broken rubble. Her whole body trembled as tears streamed down her face. The pain was unbearable-not just physically, but mentally.

"W-why... why did it come to this?" she choked out. "Why, of all people, is it me? First, Andrew torments me, and now Tiana! Why?"

She lay there, shoulders shaking violently as sobs racked her body. Tiana had completely destroyed her face, but that was not the worst part-the worst part was that her spirit was shattered.

In Jayrodale, Andrew had her completely crushed. She was losing at every turn, barely keeping her head above water. Moreover, with Tiana breathing down her neck, she did not even dare to imagine what her future in this city would look like.

Christina remained silent, her face eerily dark under the dim night sky. She pulled out her phone and quietly recorded Aspen's breakdown-the way she lay there, sobbing, broken beyond repair.

"Andrew," she muttered coldly. "You even managed to bring Tiana into this? You've truly burned every bridge with the Stevens family."

Her expression twisted into something dark and menacing as she mumbled, "Fine. If that's the case, then don't blame me for what happens next. You're flying high now, aren't you? Enjoy it while you can, because I'm going to ruin you."

Without a word, Christina sent the video directly to Zephyr, the head of the Stevens family in Bridgefields. However, it was not just the footage of Aspen sobbing on the ground-she also attached photos of Aspen's injuries from the last time she was hospitalized.

Along with them, she wrote a message, [Aspen has been repeatedly humiliated, beaten, and oppressed by a man named Andrew Lloyd in Jayrodale. This is not the first time it has happened. Mr. Stevens, you must come to Jayrodale and seek justice for her!]

After sending it, she quietly put her phone away. Then, she bent down and helped Aspen up.

She said, "Aspen, Andrew even has Tiana backing him now. We can't beat him like this. Why don't you

reach out to the Stevens family in et

Bridgefields? With the main family stepping in, Andrew has no choice but to bow his head to you.

Aspen's face paled instantly. "No way, Christie Absolutely not! I've already failed completely in Jayrodale-I have nothing to show for my time here. If they find out, they might destroy Andrew, but they'll punish me too!"

Christina did not respond. Instead, she smirked in the darkness, her expression cold and indifferent. She did not care what Aspen wanted and was simply using her. If she could leverage the Stevens family's power to crush Andrew, she would not hesitate.

And if it also took down Rhodes Corporation and the Wellers along with him? Even better.

Christina could not care less about Aspen's feelings or her fears. While she had once been a woman with some

kindness, some decency, that version of her was long gone. Now, she had stepped onto the path of no return- fully embracing her darkness.

Chapter 819

The following day, the morning light streamed through the windows as Andrew woke up feeling completely refreshed. Beside him, a delicate figure lay curled up beneath the sheets, her porcelain skin bearing faint traces of last night's intensity.

A soft murmur broke the silence as Francesca stirred awake She turned her head, meeting Andrew's amused gaze, and immediately pouted in frustration.

She grumbled, "You're unbelievable. You kept me up all night again! Look at me- bruises everywhere! Ugh, Andrew, can't you be a little gentler?"

Andrew feigned innocence. "Hey, don't blame me! I was being gentle. But you were the one insisting halfway through that I go harder. And honestly, with how easily you bruise, I was holding back."

Francesca's face turned beet red as she clenched the sheets. "Y-You're lying! I never said that! You're an absolute jerk!"

Andrew casually got dressed and got out of bed, saying nonchalantly, "You were the one asking me to go harder last night, you know that. All I remember is a certain busty lady repeatedly saying that word."

Francesca blushed deeply, the heat spreading from her face down to her neck and ears. She felt utterly embarrassed.

"Andrew, don't you dare tell anyone. If you do, I'll never be able to face anyone again," she protested, clutching the blanket to cover her cleavage.

Andrew picked up her bra from the floor and handed it to her, flashing a smile so charming it could rival any movie heartthrob. He promised, "Don't worry, I absolutely won't tell anyone."

Francesca was not convinced and demanded, "Then swear it."

Andrew raised one hand and declared, "I swear I will never tell anyone that Ms. Francesca Aicker kept asking me to go harder even while she was sleeping." Francesca froze for a moment, then suddenly jumped up and lunged at Andrew like a whirlwind.

"Andrew, I don't care about embarrassing myself anymore! I'm going to fight you! You shameless pervert, you jerk, you did that on purpose!" she yelled. ighty wok

Andrew caught her in his arms and playfully pushed her back onto the bed. "I just woke up, so I have plenty of energy right now. If you keep misbehaving, you might not make it to work today!" he teased.

Francesca's eyes widened, a flicker of panic flashing across her face. She immediately waved the white flag, squirming under him. "No, no! Please, no more-I'm still sore! Andrew, let me go. I won't fight you anymore!"

Andrew raised a brow. "You sure about that?"

Gritting her teeth, she huffed, "Positive!"

Suddenly, his palm landed on her curves with a crisp slap, the sound echoing in the room.

Francesca jolted, her face instantly flushing crimson as she glared at him. "I just

said I was sure! Why did you still smack me?!"

Andrew chuckled. "Because it felt good."

Francesca let out a small, indignant

huff, her cheeks burning as she

quickly turned her head away,

refusing to meet his gaze. Truthfully, she was not really mad. If anything, her heart pounded even harder, and she felt an

inexplicable heat spreading through her chest.

Andrew studied her for a moment, his smirk deepening. She looked way too tempting right now, and for a second, he seriously considered starting something again. Then, he thought about how he had already made her cry last night.

It was still early, so he decided to give her a little break. After all, even the finest

meals should be savored, not devoured, and even the best wine should be enjoyed in moderation- any true gentleman knew that much.

Chapter 820

"Be good. I'll make us breakfast-get dressed and come eat." Andrew's voice was warm as he pointed to his cheek, waiting expectantly.

Francesca's round face was still flushed pink. Seeing his playful gesture, she let out an exasperated huff, pursing her lips as if she were reluctant. Even so, she leaned in and pressed a light kiss against his skin.

Andrew grinned. "That's more like it."

Francesca shot him an annoyed glare, but he only chuckled before leaving the bedroom.

When he first moved into the secluded hilltop villa of Moonlit Sanctuary, he had found the place too big, too empty. However, with Francesca occasionally staying over, the once-lonely space felt pretty good. Actually, scratch that-it felt pretty damn amazing.

A house without a woman was not much of a home, after all. A proper balance between men and women made life way more enjoyable.

Andrew had never considered himself the kind of man who got carried away with romance, but Francesca and Lauren were not just any women. So really, this was not his fault.

Any normal guy would have ended up in the same situation. Even if God Himself descended from the heavens, Andrew was sure he would be forgiven.

At least, that was how he reassured himself.

Breakfast was simple but nutritious, and by the time it was ready, Francesca had already gotten dressed and freshened up. However, she was walking with an awkward little limp.

She shot Andrew a death glare as she carefully sat down, only perching on one side of the chair.

Andrew smirked from across the table. "Still sore?"

Francesca puffed out her cheeks in frustration and let out a huffy little sound, refusing to answer.

Andrew sighed. "Fine, I'll be gentler next time."

Francesca gritted her teeth. "That's exactly what you said last time, you jerk!" Andrew arched a brow. "So... does that mean you don't like it?"

Francesca's face froze. "I-I... Forget it! I don't want to talk about this anymore! You're the worst! A total pervert!"

Andrew chuckled but did not push further, letting her win this round. Honestly, for someone so small, Francesca had impressive stamina. She might look all delicate and pitiful now, but he knew better.

If he ever dropped the ball or lost his edge, she would probably flip

tables and turn the game around

on

him. Nevertheless, that was not an outcome he wanted to risk

After breakfast, Francesca grabbed her purse, ready to head to Jayrodale General Hospital for work. Just as she reached the door, she hesitated, then turned back.

"Andrew, why don't you give me a spare key to this place? Her voice was casual, but her expression was anything but.

Before he could say anything, she quickly added, "Don't get the wrong idea! It's just, you know, for safety! Like, if you ever forget your key, you can come to me for the spare!

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Her big, innocent eyes made her excuse almost convincing. Andrew could have called her out on it, but he decided to play along.

"You're right," he said with a straight face. "It's always good to have a backup key."

As he handed her the spare, he added with a smirk, "So, I'm guessing you'll be back tonight?"

Francesca snatched the key, her face instantly burning red. She stomped her foot. "No! You're so full of yourself! Goodbye!"

Andrew watched her retreating figure with an amused chuckle. Then, he pulled a coin from his pocket, flicked it into the air, and let it land on the table.

Heads.

He clicked his tongue. "Damn it... looks like I'm in for another long night. Sigh... What a toll this takes on the body.

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Meanwhile, in Bridgefields. Unlike Andrew, who had spent the night in the warm embrace of soft blankets and ever softer company, Zephyr the head of the Stevens family, had been up all night in a storm rage.

His eyes were bloodshot as he roared, "mon the two guest elders! Gather every martial artist in the family!

We are heading to Jayrodale! "That bastard Andrew-he's got a death wish! I'll personally send him six feet under!