

The Ashes 851

Chapter 851

It was another beautiful night, the kind with a bright moon and clear skies. Andrew had gone to bed early, hoping to finally get some rest.

Honestly, he had not been sleeping well these past few days. Especially last night-after punishing Francesca the entire night, she had begged for mercy, her legs too weak to stand.

Andrew was not made of steel either, and the fatigue was starting to catch up to him. Just as he turned off the lights and settled in, he heard the door outside

creak open.

His ears twitched as he frowned, thinking, "This is the most high-end private villa in Moonlit Sanctuary-there's no way some random thief would just break in, right?"

Then, the light in the outer room switched on, and there was the soft rustling sound of someone changing into slippers. With the sound of another click, the light went off again.

A shadow carefully tiptoed across the floor, each step so light it sounded like a cat sneaking around.

Andrew smirked in the darkness. "Wow, a considerate thief. The intruder is even changing into house slippers- clearly, this is a thief with some class!"

Whoever it was, they crept straight toward Andrew's bedroom. Before he could react, the person dove under his

covers.

"You jerk, I'm sleeping with you tonight!"

The familiar scent of sweet milk filled Andrew's nose. He did not even need to guess-he reached out, grabbed the soft little body, and pulled her out of the covers.

He asked, "Fran, didn't you say you weren't coming tonight?"

Francesca huffed. "What's it to you?"

"Alright, but if you're staying, aren't you going to undress?"

"Nope! You're not touching me tonight!"

"If I'm not allowed to touch you, then why are you even here?"

"I came to sleep! What, is that not allowed? You gave me the key, so I can come and go as I please."

"Fine, you can sleep, but can you stop grabbing me down there?"

"I refuse!"

Just like that, the night turned into another wild storm. At this rate, Andrew figured his king-sized bed would not last much longer-he'd probably have to buy a new

one soon.

Meanwhile, Finley arrived with his crew at the Stevens mansion, and Irene greeted them warmly as they stepped inside.

The men of the Hidden Dragons had spent years training in martial arts and running the streets, so they were all broad-shouldered, rough around the edges, and had absolutely no manners.

The moment they entered the Stevens mansion, they headed straight for the living room and sank into the plush couches like they owned the place.

Each of them lit a cigarette, puffing clouds of smoke into the air.

Finley leaned back against the soft leather sofa, completely at ease, and shot Christina a smirk. "Ms. Stevens, I hope you don't mind. My guys are a little uncultured. They don't care much for formalities like you high-society folks, so I'll apologize in advance."

Christina found them repulsive, but she did not let it show instead, she offered a polite smile and said, "Mr. Moore, you're too kind. Having you as our guest is an honor for the Stevens family."

Finley chuckled, his gaze sweeping shamelessly over Christina's figure. From the moment he had arrived in Jayrodale, he had wanted to get his hands on this woman. Too bad he had not found the right opportunity yet.

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Christina felt the heat of his stare, and a shiver of unease ran down her spine. However, she knew better than to let it show. After all, they had invited these men as guests, so no matter how uncomfortable she felt, she had to endure until they left.

Meanwhile, Irene busied herself in the kitchen, bringing out dishes with the help of two housekeepers.

Leroy grabbed a box of high-end cigars and a selection of expensive liquor, eagerly serving Finley and his men. He was practically groveling, his every move screaming flattery and desperation.

Yet, Finley did not even spare Leroy a glance. His eyes never left Christina.

Once everything was set, Irene took a seat and smiled. "Mr. Moore, gentlemen, please help yourselves."

Before she even finished speaking, Finley and his five men were already digging in, devouring the meal without a single care for the Stevens family.

Irene's smile froze briefly, but she quickly covered it with an awkward laugh. She picked up her spoon and reached for a dish, pretending nothing was wrong.

Chapter 852

In just a few minutes, Finley and his men had completely wiped out every dish on the table. All that was left were scraps and cold broth-not even a bite worth eating

'Had these guys not eaten in months?' Irene cursed them in her head, though she forced a polite smile.

On the other hand, Christina had not touched her utensils. She could not stand any of them except for Finley, and even he was not much better.

One look at the rest of the Hidden Dragons, and it was obvious-they were nothing but brainless thugs, leering at her with disgusting eyes.

Leroy let out an awkward laugh. "Mr. Moore, If the food wasn't enough, I'll have the housekeepers whip up some more. Come on, let's drink instead! Tonight, we're drinking until we drop!"

Finley smirked. "My boys measure their alcohol in barrels, not glasses. You're Christina's little brother, right? I'd hate to see you end up in the hospital."

Leroy was desperate to get on Finley's good side, so there was no way he would back down.

He pounded his chest and said, "Come on, Mr. Moore, don't underestimate me! I might not be a match for you in a fight, but when it comes to drinking? In Jayrodale, I've never lost!"

Finley let out a low chuckle. To him, Leroy was nothing more than an eager little lackey-not even worth his time. Still, since he was here to eat at the Stevens mansion, he had to at least play along, so he turned to his crew and said, "Alright, boys, keep him company. But don't overdo it—we wouldn't want the kid ending up in the ER."

His men said nothing; they just poured the drinks and started knocking them back.

Leroy refused to admit defeat, gulping down glass after glass, matching them round for round.

Meanwhile, Finley turned his attention back to Christina and smiled. "Ms. Stevens, why don't you have a drink with me too?"

Christina shook her head. "Sorry, Mr. Moore, I don't drink."

Originally, the plan was to invite the Hidden Dragons over and see if they could form a connection.

However, she had not expected Finley and his crew to be so crude, spending the whole night stuffing their faces, getting wasted, and throwing around dirty jokes that made her sick to her stomach.

At this point, she regretted ever listening to Irene and letting these men into her home.

The way they acted-like wild beasts-gave her a terrible feeling.

Finley's smirk deepened. "Ms. Stevens really is untouchable, huh? Like some ethereal being who doesn't mingle with us mere

mortals. If you won't even have net

drink with me, then why did you

invite me here in the first place?"

As he spoke, he slid a full glass of liquor across the table and placed it in front of her. He added, "Drink with me, and we'll talk business. If you refuse, then I'll take that as an

insult like you're looking down on me.

"And if that's the case, then tell me, Ms. Stevens-why did you even invite me

here, if all you're gonna do is disrespect me?"

By the time he finished speaking, his expression had darkened, his tone laced with warning.

Christina could not believe the bastard was sitting in her home and still had the audacity to threaten her.

Irene, afraid her daughter would make things worse, quickly forced a laugh and tried to smooth things

over. "Mr. Moore, please don't get

upset. Christina is a lady, after all. She really doesn't drink much. Look at that full glass, there's no way she can handle that."

Finley's grin was all teeth. "Fine, then let her pour her own. I came here out of respect, Ms. Stevens, so the least you can do is have one drink with me."

His tone made it clear this was not a request.

Christina had already been holding back all night, but this was the final straw. She was one second away from pointing at the door and telling Finley to get the hell

out.

Chapter 853

Irene quickly picked up the glass, smiling as she said, "Mr. Moore, no need to get upset. I'll drink in Christina's place."

She tilted her head back and downed the entire glass in one go, then turned the empty cup upside down to show Finley.

Finley's brows furrowed with clear displeasure. "Impressive drinking, ma'am, but I was asking for Ms. Stevens, not some washed-up old woman."

Irene's smile immediately vanished as her face darkened. Mr. Moore, the Stevens family welcomed you and your men with food and drinks. Is this how you talk to your host? Back in my day, I was quite the beauty. Just because I'm older now doesn't mean I'm some 'washed-up old woman'!"

A sharp glint flickered in Finley's eyes as he scoffed. "Lady, just because you gave birth to a stunning daughter doesn't mean you get to bask in the same glory. Let's be real-if it weren't for Christina, do you think I'd waste my time stepping foot into this sad excuse of a mansion?"

He added, "Be smart and tell your daughter to sit down and have a drink with me. Otherwise, I can make sure the Stevens family disappears with just a word."

His tone had shifted from playful arrogance to an outright threat.

Irene's face flushed with anger and shock as she pointed at him. "Finley, I never expected you to be this shameless! Fine, the Stevens family doesn't need any favors from the Hidden Dragons. Take your men and get the hell out of my house! I must have been blind to invite a pack of ungrateful wolves into my home!"

Her voice shook with fury, and she was barely holding herself back from screaming.

She had tolerated their crudeness, but she would not stand for this level of arrogance, this blatant disrespect. Now, she regretted not listening to Christina in the first place.

Christina, her face ice-cold, stood firm. "Mr. Moore, it's late. I think it's best if you and your men leave. If our hospitality wasn't up to your standards, I'll make it up to you another day."

However, Finley did not even budge. He simply swirled the drink in his hand, sipping it slowly as if he had not heard a word they said.

Irene's patience snapped. She yelled, "Finley, what's your problem? Didn't you hear me? Get out of my house, now!"

Finley's lips curled into a smirk as he turned to his crew. "Boys, you hear that? This old lady wants us gone. But we're not even full yet. Are you really willing to just walk away?"

The other five men exchanged glances before bursting into wild, predatory grins. "Leave? Hell no! Since we're already here, we might as well enjoy ourselves."

"That's right! We came to eat, drink, and have a little fun. No way we're leaving empty-handed!"

Christina shot up from her seat, her voice sharp as ice. "Finley, are you seriously trying to pull this stunt in my house?"

Before she could say another word Finley let his glass slip from his fingers. The crystal glass shattered against the floor, the sound echoing through the room.

He licked his lips, his smile widening into something twisted. "Ms. Stevens, come from a world where there's no such thing as 'guest' or 'host' in my world, if you want something, you take it. And right now, I want you. So

either you behave, or things get real messy."

His men roared with laughter, their eyes gleaming with wicked anticipation as they

stared at Christina.

Their expressions were full of dark, unhidden desire.

Christina's heart pounded violently, a deep sense of dread settling in. She realized she had made a terrible mistake inviting these thugs into her home.

Chapter 854

Christina kept telling herself to stay calm-she had to stay calm. If she panicked, these Hidden Dragons thugs could easily overpower her without breaking a sweat.

However, Irene was too furious to think straight. She yanked out her phone and snapped, "Finley, you bastard- are you leaving or not? If you don't get out right now, I'm calling the cops! Let's see how you like spending the night in jail!"

Finley let out a mocking laugh. "Call the cops?"

Irene clenched her teeth and said coldly, "Damn right, I am. You animals think you can do whatever you want? You're in my house, trying to force yourselves on my daughter-do you have a death wish?"

Finley's gaze turned ice-cold. Without warning, he swung his hand across her face.

The slap was so brutal that Irene went flying, her phone slipping from her grip and crashing onto the floor, shattering on impact. She did not even have time to cry out her body hit the ground with a thud, and she passed out instantly.

"Mom!" Christina's breath hitched as sheer terror took over. She never expected Finley to actually hit someone.

The Stevens family had no one who could fight back against these brutes-if they tried, they would be crushed in an instant.

Finley took a step forward, his arm reaching out to grab her by the waist. With a vile grin, he sneered, "Christina, I never got the chance before, but tonight... oh, tonight, I'm finally going to enjoy you to my heart's content. Right here in your own mansion, I'll make sure you remember this night for the rest of your life."

Christina stumbled back, pressing her arms over her chest as her heart pounded in panic. "Finley, don't do this! I'm warning you- the Stevens family in Bridgefields won't let you get away with this!"

Finley froze for a second before bursting into laughter. "Christina, quit trying to scare me. The Stevens family marched into Jayrodale, acting all high and mighty, thinking they could take down Andrew. And what happened?

"They got their asses handed to them. Aspen is probably lying on her back for Andrew right now, legs spread while he pounds her into the mattress. So don't waste your breath. The Stevens family here in Jayrodale is nothing but a bunch of weaklings. I can do whatever I want with you, and no one can stop me."

Christina's face turned deathly pale as her nails dug into her palms. "Finley, don't forget-you promised Aspen that the Stevens family was your ally. We're supposed

to fight the Wellers, Rhodes, and Andrew-not each other!"

Finley rolled his eyes, his patience wearing thin. Christina, are you stupid or just hopelessly naive? I had to play nice when Aspen was around because she had backing from Bridgefields. But now? You have no

Why the hell should I still treat you as a friend?"

He cracked his knuckles and

smirked. "Be a good girl-get on your knees, stick that ass up, and make- me happy. If you do that, maybe consider giving your family some protection. But if you resist,

promise you tonight, you'll be

screaming until your voice is gone."

His disgusting grin widened as he started unbuckling his belt. The moment his fingers pulled it loose, his men erupted into cheers and laughter, whistling like wild animals.

Christina nearly gagged as nausea surged up her throat. Panic and fury warred inside her as she cursed at her luck, wondering why it always ended like this, and why these monsters always came after her.

Leroy, meanwhile, was slumped over in a drunken haze, his face flushed red, his eyes glassy. However, when he saw Irene collapse and Christina trapped with nowhere to run, his blurry mind snapped into focus.

Desperate he forced himself to his feet and pleaded, "Mr. Moore, please, just let it go. If you and your men want to have fun, I'll take you out. My treat. She's my sister. Doing this is just wrong."

In his heart, Leroy wanted nothing more than to kill Finley and his filthy crew. Nonetheless, he knew the truth- Finley could break him with a single punch.

So instead, he swallowed his rage, forcing a smile and hoping-praying-that Finley would back off.

Finley's expression darkened as he sneered, "The Stevens family really doesn't know what's good for them. What's wrong with me taking Christina? I'm a top disciple of the Hidden Dragons. She should consider it an honor

Leroy's heart pounded with panic. He grabbed Finley's sleeve, forcing a smile as he pleaded, "Mr. Moore, please, listen to me—just hear me out. This is my home. You making a move on Christie is just too much.

"Let's take this outside. Whatever kind of fun you're looking for, I'll pay for it. I guarantee you and your men will have a great time."

His stomach churned with regret. Just hours ago, he thought befriending Finley and making him his brother-in-law would be smart. Now, he wished he could go back in time and beat some sense into himself.

Leroy wanted nothing more than to find the courage to put a bullet in Finley's head. Nevertheless, wanting and doing were two different things-and he simply was not brave enough.

His desperate attempt to pull Finley away only made things worse.

Finley's temper flared as he shoved Leroy back. "Get this little punk out of my sight. If it weren't for the fact that Christina is worth my time, I wouldn't even bother looking in his direction."

At Finley's command, two of his men seized Leroy by the hair.

Leroy cried out in pain as they dragged him across the floor, ignoring his frantic struggles.

Christina clenched her fists, her nails digging into her palms. "Finley, let him go! You're crossing a line-you will face consequences for this!"

Finley chuckled, his eyes glinting with cruel amusement. "Christina, stop wasting your breath. Consequences? Punishment? What can you do? You Stevens are nothing but insects to me. And in my world, insects get crushed."

Leroy barely had time to take a breath before one of the Hidden Dragons forced a bottle between his lips. The sharp burn of alcohol flooded his throat as they poured an entire bottle of red wine down his gullet.

Leroy was nothing more than a plaything to the Hidden Dragons, a dog for them to toy with. One swung his hand and slapped him across the face-twice, hard. His head snapped to the side, and he immediately doubled over, gagging and vomiting afPover the ground.

"Jacob, let's keep going!"

"Hold this little punk down. Let me have some real fun with him-I'll make sure he drinks till he can't take it anymore!"

One of the gang members sneered

as he signaled to another who grabbed a fistful of Leroy's hair and yanked his head back. Then, he took off his pants, exposing his lower body, and urinated into Leroy's mouth.

"Stop! Stop right now! You bastards, let him go!" Christina screamed, her voice raw with desperation as she tried to rush forward to save Leroy.

Finley, looking irritated, slapped her hard across the face, sending her sprawling to the ground before kicking her aside and stepping forward with a sneer.

Leroy's eyes widened in sheer terror and rage. He wanted to fight back, but the pain from his scalp was unbearable

his hair felt like it was being ripped straight from his skull,

Then-gagging, choking-his mouth. was suddenly flooded with

something vile and putrid. He wanted so badly to end his life then. He had never suffered such

humiliation, such complete and utter degradation in his entire life.

However, just as he thought it could not get any worse, another one of the Hidden Dragons stepped forward,

ripping his part with a cruel Laugh

"You're Gone? Now it's my turn Hall My piss is light-legal. Don't worry, kid, you won't get diabetes from! Grading

Leroy's mind speed into a dark aby. Was this really his only way out? Was he truly going to have to drink their ps just to purvive?

Chapter 856

'No!' Leroy screamed in his head, his entire body trembling

On the other side of the room, Christina clutched her face, tears streaming down her cheeks as her clothes were ripped apart by Finley. He grabbed one of her flailing legs and dragged her toward the couch.

Despair flooded her face-this was it. They had invited the wolves into their home and brought this humiliation upon themselves. Their family never learned, and they always had to push until disaster struck.

"Stop! Stop right now!" A deep, commanding voice thundered from the doorway- Douglas had arrived.

Finley, irritated at the interruption, turned and sneered. "Old man, get the hell out of here before I break every brittle bone in your body."

Douglas took one look at the scene in the living room, and his face contorted in fury. His voice boomed with rage. You filthy animals! Do you think the Stevens family is defenseless? I'm warning you-I already called Andy. The second he gets here, you're all dead!" 1

Finley scoffed. "Andy? Who's that nobody? Unless you're calling in the mayor of Jayrodale himself, I swear, old man, I'm not leaving here without having my way with Christina. She's practically begging for it!"

Douglas's expression darkened as he bellowed, "Andy is Andrew Lloyd! You punks better start praying, because once he gets here, not a single one of you will walk out of here alive!"

Finley's entire body went stiff. His stomach lurched, and his knees almost gave out. His face twisted in shock as he stammered, "Y-You called Andrew?"

Douglas glared. "Let go of Christie and Leroy. That's right. Andrew is on his way, and when he gets here, this house will be your grave."

For the first time, Finley's arrogance wavered. He looked at Christina, her tear-streaked face trembling with terror, and clenched his fists. He had already unzipped his pants.

He was so close, yet he had to back down. No man could swallow that kind of humiliation.

"Mr. Moore, we gotta go. Now."

"Yeah, are you crazy? Andrew is not someone we wanna mess with!"

"Mr. Moore, what the hell are you waiting for? Women are everywhere, but if Andrew shows up, do you really think your dick is gonna stay attached?"

Unlike Finley, the other Hidden Dragons had zero hesitation. They had already learned the hard way when Moonlit Apothecary opened-Andrew had crushed them before.

Back then, they still had their gang's best fighters and plenty of arrogance, so they did not take him seriously. Nonetheless, they were well aware that the entire Stevens family had gone up against Andrew, and he nearly wiped them out.

They were not stupid. They knew that if Andrew wanted them dead, he would not even have to break a sweat. One by one, they bolted for the door, shoving past each other in their desperation to escape.

"You cowards! Wait for me!" Finley cursed under his breath, furious that his men had abandoned him so fast.

He yanked his pants back up and rushed after them. For so long, he had avoided a direct confrontation with Andrew. As time passed, he only grew more reluctant to face him.

Andrew's power in Jayrodale was massive now-too massive. Even thinking about going up against him made

Finley's stomach turn.

Once, he had allies. Aspen had been a strong connection, someone who could tip the scales. But now? Aspen was nothing more than Andrew's lackey Meanwhile, his old friend, Atlas, the one he had once relied on the most was dead.

Now, Finley was a ghost in Jayrodale, lurking in the shadows, hiding like a rat in the sewers. He

only came out at nigerbet

slipping

through the city's underbelly, desperate for some sense control.

He knew that as long as Andrew was awake, there was no place for him in this

world.

Chapter 857

The second Finley and his men bolted, Leroy collapsed to the ground and vomited stately, ging as he emptied his stomach.

It was not enough he shoved his fingers down his throat forcing himself to pole even more. He kept going, dey heaving until there was nothing left inside him, until he Legion thus eald flone, gasping for breath like a dying

animal.

"Finley... you Hidden Dragons bastards... you forced me to drink piss. I wear, I kill every single one of you!"

The sheer humiliation of it made Leroy's blood boil as he clenched his fists and slammed them into the ground,

Douglas, trembling with rage, walked up to Christina, his face as dark as a storm cloud

Christina hurriedly pulled her torn clothes together, her lips trembling, "Grandpa..."

Douglas struck her across the face hard. "You disgraceful fool! You're the CEO of a company, the face of the Stevens family! And yet, look at what you've done- inviting wolves into your home, practically throwing yourself into their jaws. Christina, your entire family has disappointed me beyond belief!"

His fury was so intense that his whole body shook.

Christina's eyes widened in shock as she stammered, "Grandpa, please. You're not in good healthcalm down, sit down, and rest."

Douglas shoved her hand away, his voice sharp. "If I hadn't shown up tonight, do you have any idea what would've happened to you? To your foolish mother? To your useless, disgraceful little brother?"

Christina's throat tightened, and no words came out. She could not even bear to imagine the consequences if Douglas had not arrived in time.

Hugging her legs, still clad in her torn dress, she broke down, sobbing uncontrollably.

Tonight had shattered her. For the first time, she realized how weak she truly was and how weak the Stevens family had become.

From the corner of the room, a faint groan sounded as Irene stirred, regaining consciousness. "Finley, you bastard! I'll kill you!"

The moment she woke up, she screamed, her eyes darting around as she searched for Finley.

Douglas glanced at her, his face full of disgust. "You damn fool. Do you even realize how close your stupidity came to destroying the Stevens family tonight?"

Irene, still groggy, looked at Douglas in confusion before her expression twisted into anger. "Dad, why are

whole tife worrying about this fat

you scolding me? I've spent my

Everything I do is for the Stevens-"

Douglas did not let her finish. With a sharp swing of his cane, he struck her hard

across the back.

Irene shrieked in pain.

"You greedy, brainless woman! Do

you even know what almost

happened to Christina just now?" Douglas hit her again, his voice thundering through the room. "She was seconds away from being violated by those Hidden Dragons scum!"

Irene froze. Her face went pale. "What? Finley tried to force himself on Christina?",

She turned, eyes wide, and finally saw her daughter-curled up on the floor, hugging her knees, sobbing like a

lost child.

For a split second, Irene's world stopped. Then, her expression twisted in horror. She let out a wail, clutching her chest.

"Christic... No! This is my fault... I should've listened to you I should've never let those monsters into our home! Finley and those bastards... they'll burn in hell for this!"

Douglas scoffed coldly. "If words could fix things, you'd be running the world by now, you stupid woman."

His anger only grew as he thought about what could have happened. Without hesitation, he raised his hand and slapped Irene across the face-again and again, the sharp cracks echoing through the room.

Irene yelped with every hit, but she did not dare fight back, she had no choice but to take it. Her greed had blinded her. All she wanted was to curry favor with the Hidden Dragons, to climb higher by entertaining them.

Instead, she nearly destroyed the Stevens family. She had reached for the prize-

only to fall into the abyss.

Chapter 858

Christina wiped her tears and shook her head, "Grandpa, stop hitting Mom. I'm fine!"

Douglas finally lowered his hand and let out a long, exhausted sigh as he sank onto the couch.

Irene, still shaken, crawled toward Leroy, her face full of panic when she saw him lying motionless on the floor." Leroy, are you okay? Please, don't scare me like this what did those bastards do to you?"

Tears of humiliation welled in Leroy's eyes as he suddenly threw his arms around Irene, sobbing, "Mom, I don't want to live anymore! I want to jump off a building! I'll never be clean again!"

A terrible thought flashed through Irene's mind, making her heart drop. She immediately reached out, checking his body with trembling hands.

"Leroy, did those monsters... did they do that to you?" Her voice cracked as she struggled to get the words out. Did they... violate you?"

If Leroy had been assaulted like that, she had no idea how she would even begin to comfort him.

Leroy shook his head but continued sobbing. "No, my ass is fine... but my

mouth... I can still taste it! It's filthy, it's disgusting-I feel like I'll never get it out of me!"

Irene shuddered, a chill running down her spine. "Wait... so they didn't touch your ass, but your mouth? Those

sick bastards-they did it in your mouth?!"

Her voice was a mix of shock and fury. "Hold on, honey, I'm taking you to the hospital. We'll clean it out, we'll fix this, I swear!"

She grabbed Leroy and tried to drag him toward the door. However, he was too weak to stand. He pulled away and shook his head.

"No, Mom, let go of me! I don't want to see anyone-I don't want to go outside! Those bastards forced me to drink piss. Piss, Mom! I'm a man-I have my pride! How the hell am I supposed to live with this?"

Irene froze. "Wait... what?"

She blinked at him in disbelief. "You're saying they made you drink piss?"

Leroy clenched his teeth, his expression filled with fury. "Yeah! Those Hidden Dragons scumbags forced me! If you don't believe me, smell my breath!"

He opened his mouth, and a wave of foul stench hit Irene's face. She

gagged and recoiled so fast that she nearly fell over, covering her nose as she stumbled away.

“Damn it, Leroy! Why the hell would you make me smell it?” Her voice was full of

both disgust and irritation. She shot him a look of pure disappointment.

She thought she could deal with this as long as he had not been assaulted in the worst way and nothing had been

done to him.

Douglas, who had been silently watching, finally spoke, his tone cold. "Are you two idiots done embarrassing yourselves? If you're finished making a scene, tell me what's the next step for the Stevens family?" .

Irene awkwardly chuckled, clearly unsure of how to respond.

Christina hesitated before asking, "Grandpa, did you really call Andrew?"

Douglas's eyes flashed with anger as he snapped, "What the hell do you think? You heartless little fool-you

treated him like garbage, and now you expect me to go begging him for help?"

Christina's face paled. "Wait... so you didn't call Andrew?"

Douglas sighed deeply. "Of course not. I've already troubled him enough he's done more than enough for this family. But imagine that just hearing his name was enough send those Hidden Dragons

cowards running for their lives.

Andrew's out of our league now."

Irene pursed her lips, frowning. She crossed her arms and scoffed. "Oh, come on!

You're exaggerating. He's not that big of a deal."

Chapter 859

Douglas shot Irene a cold glance and sneered. "You fool. Your brain is filled with nothing but greed and shallow ambition-have you ever thought beyond that? You, Leroy and Christina are all blind to who Andrew truly is and his potential.

"Only I saw it. Your arrogant daughter? She was lucky to be with him-she was the one reaching up, not the other way around. But now, it's too late. You let a wonderful man slip through your fingers.

"The Stevens family had a chance to rise, and you all threw it away. You deserve your downfall"

His voice was filled with regret and disappointment.

Christina clenched her fists, her nails digging into her palms. "Grandpa, listen to me-Stevens Corporation will still thrive, even without Andrew. I just need time." Douglas scoffed, disinterested, as he stood up and walked toward the door. "Christie, you're just a woman; I know exactly how capable you are. So do me a favor-stop wasting your time fighting meaningless battles and making reckless choices.

"Andrew is gone. He was a dragon in a cage when he was with us, but now? Now he's free, soaring to heights we'll never reach. That's our fate. We

change it."

"Focus on running Stevens Corporation properly. I don't care if you become rich and powerful-I just want this family to have stability, to stick together, and to live a peaceful life."

There was a deep sadness in his voice, the weight of a missed opportunity he knew would never come again.

Christina gritted her teeth, anger burning in her chest.

Was she really that much worse than Andrew? Even her own grandfather did not believe in her. 2

Irene suddenly collapsed onto the floor, wiping her tears as she sobbed. "Christie... Leroy... we almost died tonight! To be honest, I'm terrified. I don't ever want to go through that again!"

Leroy, still gagging, kept forcing his fingers down his throat, trying to purge himself of the filth. His voice was hoarse as he whimpered, "Mom, I'm scared too... The Stevens family is too weak. If we don't have someone to back us up, we're nothing in front of guys like Finley and the Hidden Dragons."

Irene turned to Christina, her tear-streaked face twisting into a desperate smile. "Christie, we need to go find Andrew. He's the only one who can protect us now."

Christina's face hardened. "Mom, you're not actually thinking of begging him, are you?"

Irene let out a bitter laugh. "Before tonight? No, never would have lowered myself like that. But after what just happened... I see everything clearly now. Andrew has already risen far beyond us-so high that we can't even look up to him anymore."

"And all this time, I was too blind to acknowledge it. I kept ignoring the truth, refusing to see his worth. That's why the Stevens family has been left to rot-why we almost got destroyed tonight."

She added, "I can't live like this

anymore. I won't let this family suffer again. I won't let you be treated like dirt again. So, Christina.... we need to beg Andrew for mercy. For the sake of the past, maybe-just maybe he'll grant us his protection.'

Irene sat there, her plump body trembling uncontrollably, still paralyzed by fear.

Leroy looked up, his eyes hollow. "Christie, listen to Mom. Let's go beg Andrew. Hell, I'll kneel if I have to. I'm really scared. If something like this happens again... the Hidden Dragons won't just humiliate me next time."

They'll kill me.

"If we don't have someone strong to protect us, they can do whatever the hell they want to us. They can end us anytime they want-and there won't be a damn thing we can do about it."

Chapter 860

Leroy clutched his head, shouting, "I can't live like this anymore!"

His body shook as he sobbed harder than any woman ever could. His broad shoulders trembled uncontrollably, his entire frame wracked with helplessness.

Christina stood frozen, staring at her mother and brother. The sheer terror and despair in their eyes made her chest tighten, leaving a bitter taste in her mouth. She had never wanted to admit it, never wanted to acknowledge that she was weak or that the Stevens family was weak.

She always believed that, with her talent and hard work, she could catch up to Andrew and maybe even surpass him someday. However, the reality was brutal.

Just the mention of Andrew's name had been enough to send the Hidden Dragons running in terror. Finley had practically pissed himself and bolted.

If it had not been for Andrew's reputation, Christina would be dead by now-Finley would have destroyed her. "You think just begging him, kneeling before him, will make him take you back?" Christina's voice was sharp as she scoffed. "I already begged him once. He didn't give me a chance. What the hell do you want me to do?"

Irene sighed. "Sweetheart, what you did before doesn't count as begging. Anyone could see that you still had your pride. You still thought Andrew should listen to you-should be beneath you.

"But Christina, you need to face the truth. Andrew has risen too high-so high that the Stevens family can only look up to him now."

Leroy wiped his eyes and spoke through gritted teeth. "Christie, Andrew isn't heartless. Look at how he treats Lauren and Francesca. Last time, Grandpa was able to convince him to help us. That means there's still a chance. "I know Andrew. If you really humbled yourself, if you swallowed your

pride and showed him absolute sincerity, he wouldn't just ignore us. He may not take you back, but he'd at least protect the Stevens family!"

Christina's entire body tensed. She turned her head away, her face unreadable. You can go beg if you want to, but I won't. Grandpa doesn't believe in me. Now, even you two don't believe in me. Fine. Then I prove you all wrong. I'll lead Stevens Corporation to success. I'll bring the Stevens family back to the top, with or without Andrew!"

Irene and Leroy fell silent. They had already lowered themselves, but if Christina refused to bow her head, then there was nothing they could do.

The next day, Francesca limped her way down from the mountaintop estate once again. She had stormed up that hill for three days in a row, determined to prove she could handle Andrew

And for three days in a row, she had stumbled back down, exhausted, her legs trembling.

Andrew's relentless "attacks" only grew fiercer each night. Each time, she swore it would be the last.

Each time, she thought that was the end of her. Yet, when nightfall came and as she lay in bed, alone in her house, a restless itch would crawl through her veins.

A deep, gnawing hunger that she could not shake.

By the time her cheeks burned and frustration overwhelmed her, she would grit

her teeth-and charge right back up that mountain.

Her goal? To conquer that bastard, to turn the tables, and to pin him beneath her and make him break.

*her frownlines were beaut