

The Ashes 871

Chapter 871

Tiana narrowed her eyes. "You little bastard, I'll give you one chance. Get on your knees, admit your mistake, and wait for the family's punishment. Otherwise, even Kenny won't be able to save you from the consequences of threatening me with force."

Michael smirked confidently. "Aunt Tiana, if we went head-to-head, I know I wouldn't stand a chance against you. I'm not that stupid. You're a tough Iron Lady —not so easy to take down, but what you don't know is that this room is already poisoned."

His words sent a shockwave through the room.

"What? You poisoned us beforehand?"

"Check! Where's the source?"

"Stay calm! He could just be bluffing to throw us off!"

Some executives panicked immediately, frantically looking around. Others scoffed, refusing to believe him, until one of them suddenly collapsed, groaning in pain and clutching his stomach.

Then, a second, and a third. One by one, the top executives who had attended the meeting doubled over, sweating profusely as they crumpled to the floor.

Lauren and Eunice were among them, their faces paling as they clutched their stomachs and sank to their knees.

Michael burst into laughter, his arrogance on full display. "All of you stay down! When this is over, if you prove your loyalty, I may consider sparing you. But if you refuse to comply? Well, let's just say it'll be your last day on earth."

Tiana's face darkened as she grabbed the cup of tea on the table and took a deep sniff.

A second later, she gritted her teeth. "You poisoned the damn tea!"

Michael chuckled. "Wow, Aunt Tiana, you're sharp! You figured that out so quickly. Impressive, truly impressive!"

Tiana's body swayed, her balance faltering. She slumped back into her chair, clutching her chest as pain spread through her veins.

Bane let out a sinister laugh. "Mrs. Rhodes, I strongly advise against trying to purge the poison from your system. The more you circulate your blood, the faster the toxin spreads. If you keep resisting, you might just die sooner."

Tiana clenched her jaw and gave up, her limbs going limp as she glared at him. "Bane, have you thought about what happens after this? Do you even know what kind of

consequences you might

for

helping Michael?"

Bane waved a hand dismissively. "Mrs. Rhodes, I don't make moves unless I've already calculated the risks. So, no need to waste your breath worrying about me. Worry about yourself."

Tiana's gaze flicked toward Andrew, and then she froze. She noticed that while everyone else had collapsed, he was still standing, seemingly unaffected.

"Mr. Lloyd-help us! Please!" A flicker of hope flashed in Tiana's eyes as she immediately called out to him.

Hearing Tiana's desperate plea, both Michael and Bane snapped their heads toward Andrew. What they saw made their stomachs drop.

Andrew was just standing there and looking perfectly fine.

Michael's face twisted in disbelief. "Andrew, why the hell are you still on your feet?!"

"That's impossible!" Bane growled. "Even a peak senior grandmaster couldn't withstand my poison. You have to be faking it!"

Michael's expression turned panicked. "There's no way you didn't get poisoned! How the hell are you still standing?!"

Andrew remained calm, watching their panic unfold with amusement. He asked casually, "Why would I be poisoned? I never drank the tea."

Bane let out a sharp laugh. "Don't be stupid. Do you really think I only poisoned the tea? You're just holding on, but trust me, the effects will hit you soon!"

His confidence was absolute. He was certain Andrew had been poisoned and was just pretending to be fine.

Andrew smirked. "Bane, I know you poisoned more than just the tea. You also burned a colorless toxin in the air-hidden behind that plant in the corner of the room."

Chapter 872

Andrew smirked. "Poisoning the air ensures that even those who didn't drink the tea would still be affected. This was the brilliant master plan you and Michael were so confident about, wasn't it?"

His casual, almost mocking tone sent a chill through the room.

Michael was not the only one looking shaken now. Even Bane, who had been grinning wickedly before, had gone completely silent. His expression darkened, filled with unease.

"You actually noticed the colorless poison? Impressive, Andrew. You continue to surprise me," Bane admitted.

He was shocked but refused to let it show. Men like him had spent their lives in the underworld, and they were masters of deception, skilled at keeping their emotions hidden.

"But even if you did figure it out and even if you didn't get poisoned, it doesn't change a thing," Bane sneered. Michael grinned menacingly. "Yeah, Andrew, you might've dodged the poison, but so what? Bane and I have more than enough people here to take you down."

Bane chuckled. "We don't even need all of us. Just me and one of my men will be more than enough to finish you off."

Tiana's voice was sharp and urgent. "Mr. Lloyd, the safety of everyone in this company is now in your hands. If you can get us out of this, I'll agree to anything you ask for!"

Lauren, breathing heavily from the poison's effects, shook her head. "Dr. Lloyd, don't worry about us. Just run- get out of here and call the police. That's the best chance to save everyone!"

Marcus agreed. "Mr. Lloyd, you're outnumbered. Fighting them head-on is too risky. Forget us. If you call the authorities, Michael and his thugs won't escape." Michael scoffed. "Call the cops? Do you think I'd give you that chance? Right now, all of you are too weak to move, and only Andrew is still standing."

His grin widened as he pulled out a gleaming knife, holding it against Lauren's throat. "And Andrew-if you so much as twitch, I'll slit her throat."

Lauren's eyes burned with fury. "Michael, you coward! You have no shame!"

Michael sneered. "Like I had a choice! You all forced me into this! And especially you, Andrew. Today is the day you die!"

Andrew remained unfazed. "You've been ranting for so long about how you're going to kill me. But if that's the case, why haven't you done it yet? Or is it that you're just all talk-too much of a coward to actually make a move?"

Michael's face twisted in rage. "Bane! Get rid of him! Now! Once he's crippled, I'll finish him off myself!"

Andrew chuckled. "Oh? So you're scared, Michael? You want Bane to die first just so you don't have to face me yourself?"

Bane's expression darkened.

"Andrew, you're getting way too cocky. I've been waiting for a chance to teach yo lesson. Finally, the

chance has come for you to learn

that experience always bene

tafent!"

He snapped his fingers. "Simon-do it!"

raw

At his command, a thin, frail-looking man stepped out of the shadows. His face was gaunt, his eyes sunken, his figure almost sickly. He slowly pulled down the hood of his cloak, revealing his skeletal face, and let out a low,

sinister duckde.

"Andrew, I've waited for this moment for so long, You dyed me, shutter my red pandexing me i shell of a man. 1 swear, I'll make you pay in blood today

Andrew raised a brow, looking him up and down. Then, wizi wprice, he muttered, "Sin? You will alive?"

Simon's eyes blazed with fury, "You're still alive, so why the hell would be dead!! You stole

Francesca from me and exiled me from the Alckers. I'm here to settle our scor

The moment the words left his mouth, his hands turned back, coated in a toxic

sheen as he lunged at Andrew with a feral rage.

"Andrew, maybe I wasn't your equal before, but after being trained and empowered by Mr. Ealinger-if I don't kill you tonight, then I'm not a man!"

Chapter 873

Andrew said, "You were never

man to begin with."

Simon lunged forward, his attacks filled with venomous force. Yet, Andrew did not even flinch. Instead, he let out a mocking chuckle. Then, without hesitation, he met the attack head-on, throwing out both fists to counter.

Tiana's voice rang out urgently. "Mr. Lloyd, be careful! His hands are laced with poison! You can't make direct contact!"

Bane sneered. "Ah, Mrs. Rhodes, always so sharp-eyed and observant. But unfortunately, even if you see it coming, it changes nothing. Simon has mastered a lethal poison technique.

"Even if Andrew manages to dodge his strikes, his fate is already sealed. No matter what, his body will rot from the inside out!"

Simon's poison was indeed insidious. His attacks carried a toxic force; even his breath could spread venomous particles into the air. In other words, there was virtually no way to defend against it.

But Andrew? Andrew never feared poison. He had shrugged off far worse before. Not even Gordon's deathly poison affected him.

So, what was Simon's poison compared to that?

Andrew caught Simon's fists mid-air, then cracked him across the face twice, sending Simon flying.

Lauren gasped. "Dr. Lloyd, watch out for the poison!"

Andrew remained calm. "Relax."

Simon groaned as he struggled back to his feet, spitting out a mouthful of thick, black blood.

"You can hit as hard as you want," Simon rasped, his lips twisting into a grin. "But every time you strike me, the poison seeps deeper into your body. Let's see who lasts longer, Andrew. Will you kill me first-or will my poison kill you?"

His bloodshot eyes gleamed with madness. Cultivating poison techniques had twisted his very nature. Now, he fought like a rabid animal, completely unafraid of death, lunging at Andrew once more.

Andrew snorted, unfazed. With a single step, he planted a devastating kick into Simon's chest.

A thud echoed through the room as Simon spat another mouthful of blood-this time a deep, sickly black. Andrew instinctively lifted his sleeve to shield his face, but even so, a few drops splattered onto his clothes. Simon clutched his chest, coughing violently, before looking up with a sinister smile.

"You didn't see that coming, did you? My blood is pure poison. Do you know how deadly a single drop of cobra venom is? It can kill 20 grown men. But my blood? It can take down 50. Andrew, your time is up!"

Andrew smirked. "Oh, really?"

He stepped forward, his fist moving like a gust of wind, and the punches rained down. Each strike landed with brutal force, slamming into Simon's chest, face, and skull.

Simon gritted his teeth through the onslaught, spitting up blood yet still laughing like a madman. He howled "Go ahead, Andrew! Keep hitting me! Every second, the poison in my body leaks into the air-and you'll never escape it!"

Michael frowned, turning to Bane. "Bane, is Simon really going to win? Because honestly,.. it kinda looks like

Andrew's beating him to death."

Bane stood with his hands behind his back, completely unbothered. "He was just a pawn to begin with. If he dies, so be it. But don't worry-his body is already filled with lethal poison. If Andrew kills him, he'll be infected too. He won't escape unscathed."

Michael let out a slow breath, then grinned. "Good. A one-for-one trade isn't bad. I've waited for this bastard to die for so long. I've counted the damn days for it to happen

Bane scoffed. "Originally, Simon was supposed to be my tool against Tiana, but it seems that's no longer necessary. Tiana is already helpless. Once Andrew is dead, I'll snap her neck myself."

Suddenly, a sharp sound sliced through the air. It was the unmistakable whistle of a needle moving at lethal speed.

Chapter 874

A tiny, almost imperceptible dot of blood appeared between Simon's brows. His eyes glazed over, his crazed, venomous grin freezing on his face.

Then, his lifeless body collapsed to the ground with a loud thud, stiff as a board. His eyes remained wide unblinking in death.

open,

Andrew's silver needle had shot straight through his skull. The onlookers gasped, cold dread washing over them. Andrew had taken a life in mere moments, with almost no effort at all. It was a shocking contrast to his usual mild-mannered and courteous image.

Lauren, her voice thick with worry, cried out, "Dr. Lloyd, are you okay? Forget about us-just take care of yourself first!"

Andrew turned back with a reassuring smile. "Don't worry. I can ignore anyone else, but you? Never."

Lauren's heart clenched at his words, emotion surging through her. Even in a life- or-death moment, Andrew had never considered abandoning her. For that alone, she was willing to entrust her body to him, to be with him for a lifetime.

Michael scoffed coldly. "Andrew, you're ruthless when it comes to killing. Too bad it won't matter-you're already beyond saving. Hah, I'm guessing you can barely stand right now, huh?"

Andrew sneered. "Oh yeah? Then why don't you come over and test that theory?"

Michael gripped his dagger, stepping forward as he ran his tongue over his lips with a bloodthirsty grin. "Fine, I'll test it. You're already halfway into your grave anyway. Heh, don't worry. Before the poison kills you, I'll make sure you get a taste of being skinned alive."

Bane frowned. "Mr. Rhodes, you should wait until he collapses. Strike when the poison fully kicks in."

Michael waved off the warning with a smirk. "Bane, can't you see it? The bastard's already too scared to move. Relax. According to you, the poison must have spread deep by now. Even Tiana couldn't withstand this level of venom-Andrew has no chance. He's just waiting to die."

Bane thought about it and nodded. Simon had cultivated his poison under his guidance, and it had been strong enough to take down Tiana. If it worked on her, then Andrew was as good as dead.

Michael took a few steps closer,

stopping just a few feet away from Andrew. He twirled the dagger in his

hand and sneered. "I'm standing right here, Andrew. Go ahead-make a move."

Andrew remained completely still, his expression unreadable. He did not react at all, almost as if he truly could

not move.

Michael's confidence swelled as he believed Andrew had to be paralyzed by the poison. Despite Andrew's taunts, he had been careful and not stepped directly into Andrew's

attack range.

If Andrew had been faking it, he would not be struck by now. Since he had not made any move, Michael thought Andrew was done for.

A cruel grin spread across Michael's face as he could no longer suppress his glee and hatred. He stepped right up to Andrew, mere inches away.

Lauren's heart pounded as she yelled, "Michael! If you dare lay a finger on Dr. Lloyd, I'll make sure you regret it!"

Michael lifted his dagger, aiming straight for Andrew's face. He let out a wicked laugh. "Oh, I'm not just gonna hurt him. I'm gonna make him wish he was never born."

The thought of finally killing his greatest enemy filled Michael with pure, unfiltered satisfaction. Andrew had humiliated him so many times, over and over again. Now, the tables had turned, and vengeance

belonged to him."

Chapter 875

Tiana's face darkened as she cursed Andrew in her mind for ignoring her warnings. He knew Simon was covered in poison, yet he still dared to make direct contact. Now, he was paying the price for it.

Just then, Andrew's hand suddenly shot up, moving as fast as a lightning strike. In an instant, he snatched the incoming dagger right out of the air and, with a swift motion, plunged it deep into Michael's arm.

"My hand! My arm!" Michael's mind went blank, struggling to process what had just happened.

However, the searing pain in his body was all too real, and in the next second, a bloodcurdling scream tore from his throat. His eyes widened as he shouted, "Bane! Help me! Kill him-kill him now!"

The sudden turn of events left everyone in utter disbelief as they realized Andrew was not poisoned. Tiana's expression twisted in pure shock; even she had been fooled. She thought Andrew was indeed full of surprises, and she needed to be even more cautious.

Bane hesitated for a brief moment before launching himself at Andrew with deadly force. "You sneaky little bastard! I'll end you myself!"

With the dagger still in hand, Andrew immediately twisted the blade deeper into Michael's flesh.

Another agonized scream ripped from Michael's throat, his voice trembling with pain as he growled, "D-Damn you, Andrew! You tricked me! Bane, hurry! Kill him! Just kill him already!"

Regret consumed Michael, eating him alive from the inside out. He had wanted to torture Andrew before letting him die. Yet, he had walked right into his own trap, and the unbearable pain shooting through his shoulder made his entire world spin.

Andrew scoffed and, without warning, drove his foot straight into Michael's crotch.

Michael's face turned from red to deathly white in an instant, then from white to a sickly shade of purple. For a split second, he swore he heard the horrifying crack of something shattering.

His body curled up instinctively, and he let out a piercing scream as he flew backward, clutching between his legs.

Bane, however, had already closed the distance and was aiming a powerful strike straight at Andrew's head.

Andrew did not even turn to look. Instead, he simply raised his hand and struck back.

Bane roared, "You're looking for death!"

He thought there was no way a kid like Andrew would dare to go head-to-head with him.

A deep, muffled boom echoed as Bane's palm collided-not with flesh-but with something that felt like the mouth of an erupting volcano. Meanwhile, a violent surge of energy shot up from Andrew's body, flooding through Bane's limbs and meridians in an instant.

"What... How?!" Bane exclaimed, his face twisted in sheer horror as his entire body felt like it was being torn apart.

He barely managed to suppress the hot rush of blood rising in his throat, but he could not stop himself from stumbling backward, his boots skidding several feet across the floor.

Andre was unbeatable, and the only option left was to run!

Bane was not just some common thug-he was a seasoned martial artist. In that instant, he knew without a doubt that he was not Andrew's match.

This man had already surpassed the level of a senior grandmaster. No he was at least halfway to becoming a martial king.

The realization sent a violent tremor through Bane's body. Fear flickered in his

eyes for the briefest moment before he snapped his gaze toward the exit.

Yet, before he could move, Andrew smirked and took a single step, effortlessly blocking the doorway.

Bane's expression turned as dark as

a storm cloud. With the door sealed

off, his only option was the windows However, this building was over 20 stories high-even as a senior grandmaster, there was no way he could jump out and survive.

Chapter 876

That was like an old man tying a noose around his own neck, sealing his own fate.

"Kid, you've got some skill, I'll give you that. Blocking my attack head-on was no small feat," Bane sneered, though panic gnawed at his gut.

"But that was just a warm-up. Now, I'm coming at you with everything I've got. If you can withstand one more strike, I'll walk away from this martial arts world forever!"

Michael clutched his groin, his face twisted in agony, looking as if he were on the verge of death. He howled, "Bane! I want him torn to shreds-I want him in pieces! My manhood! Andrew, I swear I'll kill you!"

Michael's pitiful wails sent a fresh wave of pressure surging through Bane's chest. He had to escape. If he stayed, the injuries he was barely suppressing would spiral out of control.

As for Michael or the entire plan to take over The Aickers? Well, screw it all. None of that mattered anymore-staying alive was the only thing that counted!

With a vicious glare, Bane let out a roar, his sleeves billowing as he launched himself forward like a raging storm. His fists blasted toward Andrew with the full force of his body's potential.

This was his do-or-die moment-an all-out strike that would leave him completely drained afterward, possibly even unconscious.

However, there was no other choice. If he did not go all in and create an opening to escape, then the outcome was clear-best case, he died on the spot. Worst case, there would not even be a corpse left to bury.

How could he have been so blind? A man already halfway from reaching Martial King-Bane should have seen it coming!

Andrew did not flinch. He met Bane's devastating fists head-on, his expression as cold as steel.

Bane's face flushed a deep red-an ominous sign that blood was about to spew from his mouth. In a last-ditch effort, he suddenly parted his lips and spewed out a thick cloud of green poison straight at Andrew!

Andrew instantly retreated, creating distance in a flash. Despite stepping back, he still held his ground in front of the door, refusing to let Bane escape.

Bane erupted into a fit of crazed laughter. "You fell right into my trap!"

Ignoring the dizziness creeping into his vision, he did not make a run for the door. Instead, in a blur of motion, he lunged at Tiana, clamping two sharp fingers around her throat.

With just a little pressure, his fingers could turn razor-sharp-sharp enough to puncture her windpipe in an instant.

"Andrew, you better not take another step. Otherwise, I'll kill her right now!" Bane snarled, his expression menacing.

Andrew's face remained ice-cold as he strode forward, unfazed by the threat.

"Let go of Mrs. Rhodes, you filthy old dog!"

"Yeah, Bane! Let go of Mrs. Rhodes, or you'll die without a grave to be buried in!"

"Mr. Lloyd, what are you doing? Don't you see Mrs. Rhodes is being held hostage?"

"Mr. Lloyd, stop! Mrs. Rhodes is in danger!"

The executives lying helplessly on the ground cursed at Bane, but their voices quickly shifted to disbelief as Andrew advanced without hesitation.

Lauren could not hold back any longer. "Dr. Lloyd, don't—"

After all, Tiana was her mother. No matter what, she could not just stand by and watch her die.

Bane's confidence wavered when he

saw Andrew walking straight toward him. Panic shot through his veins. "Andrew, do you really not care if Tiana dies?!"

Andrew finally stopped, his gaze settling on Bane. However, it was just a brief glance.

Then, he turned to Tiana and said flatly, "Mrs. Rhodes, you've been pretending long enough. Isn't it time to do something?"

Chapter 877

Everyone froze, wondering what Andrew meant by Tiana was pretending. Meanwhile, Bane's heart skipped a beat as a terrifying realization crept into his mind.

However, it was already too late. Before he could react, Tiana—who had been slumped in apparent weakness—suddenly tensed. Her fingers spread wide, a razor-sharp energy coiling around her fingertips, dark and lethal.

Then, with a sickening rip, her entire hand plunged into Bane's chest.

A garbled gasp escaped Bane's throat as blood gurgled up, spilling from his lips. His eyes widened in disbelief as he looked down, only to see Tiana's hand inside his chest—clutching his still-beating heart.

She insulted, "A runaway dog from the Advanced Medical Institute, a disgrace to the martial world. Did you really think you could outplay me?"

With a cold laugh, Tiana yanked her hand back through Bane's body, her fingers squeezing as she pulled his heart free.

She casually tossed the organ aside, letting it hit the floor with a wet splat.

Bane's vacant eyes lost their final flicker of life. He collapsed, lifeless, his body crumpling to the ground in a heap.

Tiana had taken him down in an instant.

Somewhere in the room, someone audibly gulped. Everyone stood in stunned silence, staring at Tiana in shock.

This woman-when she did make a move was more ruthless and terrifying than anyone had ever imagined. The fear she invoked in that moment was far greater than anything Bane had ever commanded.

Lauren's voice trembled. "Y-You were never poisoned?"

Tiana smiled sweetly. "Of course not, my dearest. Did you really think I'd let myself be caught off guard and leave you exposed to a monster like Bane?"

Andrew scoffed. "What a pointless charade."

Tiana's expression darkened as she let out a sharp laugh. "Andrew, I have to know-how did you see through my act?"

Andrew shrugged. "Was it really that hard?"

Tiana's eyes flashed with irritation. "Even Bane and the others couldn't see through my disguise. Yet you did? Should I assume you were just taking a wild guess, hoping Bane would finish me off?"

It was no secret that Andrew and Tiana had never gotten along.

Was it possible he had been trying to use Bane to get rid of her? If so, it was an incredibly ruthless move.

Still weak but furious, Jerry growled, "Andrew, never thought you'd be this vicious. Mrs. Rhodes may be ruthless, but no matter what, she's still Ms. Rhodes' mother. Don't you think you went too far?"

Tiana sneered at Andrew. Killing Bane was nothing-she wanted more. Andrew had gained far too much influence in Rhodes Corporation, and today was the perfect opportunity to put him in his place.

However, Lauren stepped forward, her expression cold. "I believe in Dr. Lloyd. He never intended to harm Mrs. Rhodes. If anything, without him, do you really think we'd still be standing here? We all owe Dr Lloyd our lives."

At that moment, a team of security personnel rushed into the room. They quickly searched Bane's body, retrieving antidotes and distributing them to the poisoned executives.

One by one, the once-helpless executives began regaining their strength, slowly getting back on their feet.

Marcus stretched his sore limbs, his tone firm. "I trust Mr. Lloyd as well. He wouldn't have stayed behind to fight if he had truly wanted to harm Mrs. Rhodes. He could've left earlier and let Bane do as he pleased."

Lauren's reasoning, combined with Marcus' support, made the others hesitate.

She was right—if Andrew had truly wanted Tiana dead, the simplest solution

would have been to walk away and let the massacre happen.

Why would he fight so hard if that had been his plan?

Andrew snorted. "Mrs. Rhodes, there's no need to turn the crowd against me just to push your own agenda."

Chapter 878

Andrew said, "I didn't call your bluff without reason. From the very beginning, I knew you were faking it."

Tiana's expression darkened. She hated when people saw through her, especially someone younger than her. If Andrew could see past her deception, did that mean he was smarter than she was?

With a chilling smile, she replied, "Oh? Then, by all means, enlighten me. But I suggest you don't try to make something up just to smooth things over."

There was amusement in her tone, but her eyes were ice-cold. Andrew shook his head, looking unimpressed "First of all, you knew the tea was poisoned, which is why you never took a single sip. No-actually, to be more precise, you wouldn't have touched anything in this conference room, poisoned or not.

"You were already on guard the moment Bane showed up because you knew that snake was always playing dirty. You were ready for him at every turn, weren't you?"

Tiana let out a low huff. "Fine. I'll give you that. The second I realized Bane was by Michael's side, I knew he'd try to poison me at some point."

She paused for a moment before pressing further. "But even if I didn't drink the tea, the colorless fragrance in the room had already spread into the air."

There was no way I wouldn't have inhaled it. So tell me, Andrew-how could you be so sure I wasn't poisoned?" The others shared the same question, turning to Andrew in curiosity.

Tiana was human, and she obviously needed to breathe. Hence, she would have surely inhaled the poison, but- there was no way around it.

By all logic, she should have been poisoned like everyone else.

Andrew shrugged. "It wasn't that hard to figure out. After all, I didn't get poisoned; Mrs. Rhodes didn't get poisoned. And Michael and Bane? They didn't get poisoned either. That only left one possibility-Michael and Bane had already taken an antidote beforehand."

He continued, "And as for Mrs. Rhodes-someone as cautious as you would've taken precautions. Whether it was an advanced detoxifying pill or some kind of immunity booster, you would have prepared for this moment."

Lauren's eyes widened as realization hit her. "That actually makes perfect sense!"

The others quickly nodded in agreement. It was clear now-Tiana had been prepared all along.

Andrew met Tiana's sharp gaze and continued, ignoring the storm brewing in her expression.

"Today was a pivotal moment in deciding who would take control of Rhodes Corporation. Given your nature, do you really expect me to believe you didn't prepare for the unexpected? Come on. Maybe the others believe that, but I sure as hell don't."

Sow

Tiana let out a low, dangerous chuckle. She was furious-but at the same time, she had to admit, she was impressed.

"Alright, I'll give you credit where it's due. You really did see right through me."

"But do you know what I hate the most?" she asked, her voice dropping to a chilling whisper. "People who aren't under my control knowing too much."

Andrew raised a brow. "So what? Are you planning to get rid of me now? Just toss me aside like a tool you no

Chapter 878 longer need?"

Tiana scoffed. "Andrew, you saw what I'm capable of. Bane was a ruthless killer,

and I took him down with one hand. You, on the other hand-"

She narrowed her eyes. "You've

never played by my rules. You refuse to be controlled by me. So tell, wouldn't it only be natural forme to you down next?"

The second those words left her lips, Lauren and Marcus' expressions

cally changed. Even the others

looked unsettled, their gazes darting between Andrew and Tiana.

They wondered if she was really going to go that far.

Chapter 879

Lauren stepped forward, her gaze locked onto Tiana. "If you want to lay a hand on Dr. Lloyd, you'll have to go through me first!"

Tiana's face hardened. "Foolish girl! Do you have any idea what you're doing? This man has no respect for me, worse-he's a direct threat to Rhodes Corporation.

"If I let him live, no one in Jayrodale's younger generation will be able to rival him- not even you. If he ever decides to target you, do you even realize how easily he could manipulate you in your current state?"

Lauren stood firm. "I don't care if he has ulterior motives. Even if he does, I'd accept them willingly!"

Tiana took a deep breath, suppressing the rage burning inside her. She knew her daughter was already too far gone -too deeply entangled in this mess.

She had been young once too, falling for a man of unparalleled talent, completely losing herself in the process. So on some level, she understood Lauren's stubbornness.

Marvin's carefully cultivated pawn had proven to be far more dangerous than expected. Nonetheless, compared to Joe from the Driscoll family, Andrew was still lacking.

Her decision remained unchanged, and there was no way she would let Lauren end up with this man.

"Jerry, bring Michael over," she ordered.

With both Bane and Simon dead, Michael had lost his last line of defense. His face was filled with terror as Jerry dragged him forward.

"Aunt Tiana! You can't kill me! If you do, my father won't let this slide!" Michael screamed.

Tiana let out a cold laugh. "You tried to kill me, and you think I'll just let that go? I don't care if Kenny holds influence over the Blumedale's Rhodes family. You defied me, and for that alone, I can make sure both of you pay dearly!"

Michael knew there was no turning back now. He cursed Bane and Simon in his mind for being such useless fools, but he no longer held back.

He spat, "Go ahead, then! Try and kill me! If anything happens to me in Jayrodale, my father in Blumedale won't stand by and do nothing. You know exactly how he'll react.

"And don't forget-my sister is married to the Golding family. If anything happens to me, not only will you suffer, but the entire Rhodes family will pay the price!"

Blood was still pouring from his wounded shoulder, but Michael no longer cared. Instead, he sneered with open

arrogance.

Tiana's expression darkened, saying nothing. She was weighing her options.

Lauren scoffed. "You attacked my mother and poisoned every executive in this company. Michael, that alone is enough to bury you.'

and Michael shoved Jerry aside, wincing from the pain in his shoulder but still smirking. He moe that matters? My sister is part of the Golding family. My dad? He holds

half of Rhodes Corpoon's power

"Do you think

resources.

"So what if I used force? Do you think your father can actually do anything to me even though he's the head of the family? Yeah, I ordered Bane to use poison, but did I kill anyone? I fought, but did I injure anyone?"

"Everything I did was to fight for what was rightfully mine. Even if the family wants to punish me, they don't have a single legitimate reason to truly harm me. So tell me what the hell are you and that little bastard Andrew gonna do about it? Huh?"

His voice rose to a defiant roar, filled with unhinged arrogance.

Michael turned to the room, sneering at everyone as if daring them to challenge him. Then, he locked eyes with Tiana, deliberately holding her gaze with mocking defiance.

She was the strongest person here, the most ruthless. Yet, Michael was not afraid.

Instead, he wanted her to know that if she dared to make a move against him, then not just her, but Jameson, Lauren, and their entire family would be dragged into hell with him.

Chapter 880

"You're completely insane!" Lauren's anger exploded on the spot.

Michael sneered, his face twisted with arrogance. "So what I have the power to be arrogant! I've put up with your entire family long enough!"

He spat, "And you, Tiana-I'm not afraid of you just because you're the lady of the family. Who becomes the true leader of the Rhodes family is still up for debate!"

Lauren's face darkened. "So that's it-you and your father are plotting to take the family head position for yourselves?"

Michael let out a low, mocking laugh. "And what if we are? Leadership belongs to whoever earns it. Right now, the Rhodes family's power in Blumedale is far greater than what your father has here. Compared to my father, he's nothing. So, Lauren, I'd say your days of luxury are coming to an end."

The executives in the room exchanged uneasy glances. Some of them subtly turned toward Tiana, while others eyed Michael's blatant confidence.

Was the Rhodes family truly about to face a major power shift?"

If that was the case, they needed to pick sides-and fast.

Michael then turned to Andrew, his lips curling into a vicious smirk. "Come here. Get down on your knees and crawl under my legs!"

Marcus scoffed. "Mr. Rhodes, have you lost your damn mind?"

Michael ignored him, pointing a finger at Andrew with contempt. "Andrew, this time, you're going to learn your place. You will kneel before me like the pathetic mutt you are. I'm giving you one last chance. Get on your knees, or I'll kill you on the spot."

Lauren snapped, "Michael, you're nothing but a rabid dog! Dr. Lloyd, don't waste your breath on him!"

Michael pulled out his phone, grinning. "See this, Andrew? With one call to my father, he can reach the Driscoll family in an instant. If Joe-the Joe Driscoll-hears about you and Lauren getting all cozy... Trust me, he'll have his personal guards marching into Jayrodale tonight to bury you alive!"

Even Tiana's expression shifted at those words. She ordered, "Michael, put down your phone! This is an internal family matter-there's no need to drag the Driscolls into this!"

Michael grinned smugly. "Oh? So

even you dont

don't want them to know about Andrew and Lauren's little affair? Fine, then let's make a deal Have Andrew crawl over here and beg for mercy. I'll let him live-but I want him half-dead before I'm satisfied."

Lauren clenched her fists. "Michael, you're shameless! You're hiding behind the

Driscoll family like a coward- what kind of man does that?"

Michael snorted. "I already told you-Andrew is nothing. He's a mere insect who isn't even worth my time. But he keeps getting in my way.

"And you-you had the audacity to name Lauren as the next CEO? Well, guess what? I don't have to hold back anymore. If I'm not happy, none of you will be."

His eyes locked onto Andrew, glinting with sadistic pleasure. "Especially you, Andrew. I may not be able to beat you myself, but getting rid of you? That's child's play for me I told you before no matter how strong you think you are, you can't compete with my connections. You can't compete with Blumedale's influence.

"All I have to do is whisper the right words to Mr. Driscoll, and before you know it, you'll wish you were never

With that, Michael straightened up, convinced that the entire conference room was now under his control-he had the power and the leverage.

Tiana's expression flickered between hesitation and calculation before she finally spoke.

"Andrew," she said coldly. "Apologize to Michael. Do what he says. Otherwise, no one in Jayrodale will be able to save you."