

The Ashes 951

Chapter 951

Sighing, Irene said, "Christie, you might not want to hear this, but you and Andrew, you two are from completely different worlds now!"

Her words were hard for Christina to swallow. She never expected that her mother, who always looked down on Andrew, was now admitting defeat.

Leroy snorted, "Mom, I can't agree with you on this one. Sure, Andrew's successful, but it's not as exaggerated as you're making it sound, okay?"

"You only see him putting on airs, but did you ever think that by annoying all the big shots in Blumedale, he's going to have to pay the price sooner or later? And now Mr. Wright has set his sights on him. As I see it, Andrew's time's up."

Irene snapped, "You little brat, when adults are talking, you'd better keep your mouth shut! Don't think I don't know what's on your mind. You're always thinking about using Christie to live in luxury, hang out with celebrities, and drive a sports car!"

"But have you ever thought about it? You're a man. How can you be so pathetic? Andrew made his fortune, and now he's on top of the world. What about you? You're still a useless waste!"

Leroy turned red with anger. "After all that's happened, you're really going to tell me I'm the problem? Mom, don't forget, it was you who looked down on Andrew in the beginning and didn't want him with Christie!"

"You missed out on so many good things Andrew had to offer. Like that insanely expensive diamond ring and now all his wealth!"

Irene was furious, the regret eating her up inside. Her heart ached with regret, but she would never admit it. She did not expect Leroy, her own son, to call her out like this.

She shouted, "Y-You brat! So now you're some big shot, huh? From now on, don't think you can get a single cent from me. If you don't get a job, I'll starve you to death!"

Leroy scoffed, "Fine, if you won't give me anything, I don't want it anyway! Anyway, no matter what you two think, Quinton's the most impressive big shot I've ever met. I'm telling you now, I've locked in on Quinton's side! Shawn's been riding his coattails, acting like a big deal, so fdon't see why I can't do the same!"

Hearing Irene and Leroy argue, Christina felt her head spinning. She snapped, "Enough! Can you both just stop? I'll think about whether to join Quinton in Blumedale tonight. But before I decide, I'm going to talk to Andrew."

Irene was ecstatic. "Christie, have you finally come to your senses? Are you going to apologize and beg Andrew for forgiveness? Great, with you. We'll make it clear to

Andrew and get him to

and work for the Stevens Corporation so we can grow stronger!"

Leroy reluctantly added, "Well, it's not like I'm against it. If Andrew comes back and gets together with Christie, plus gives me that G-Wagon of his, I'll grudgingly accept him as my brother-in-law!"

Christina shook her head coldly.

"You're all thinking too much. I'm not going there to apologize, and I'm definitely not begging him. I'm just going to let him know that people with more power and better opportunities are trying to recruit me. If he doesn't grab this chance, then I will go straight to Quinton's side."

Irene stared at her, stunned. "Christie, what's the point of all this? Are you really not willing to let go of your pride? Not willing to drop your arrogance?"

Christina snorted. "My pride and arrogance are everything to me. I can't let them go. If he was smart, he'd take my offer, come back, and help me build the Stevens Corporation!"

Leroy asked, "But what if Andrew doesn't appreciate it?"

Christina smirked. "Then we go our separate ways. I'll make sure he sees that

one day, I'll crush him."

Chapter 952

The next day, Andrew and Francesca had just arrived at Moonlit Apothecary when Phantom Eye spoke up.

"Mr. Lloyd, someone caused trouble here last night. They even tried to set the place on fire!"

Andrew let out a cold chuckle. "Must've been Quinton's men, huh?"

Phantom Eye nodded. "That's right, it was that little coward, Shawn. He showed up with a few guys carrying gas cans, planning to burn the place down. But I caught them in the act and sent them running!"

Francesca fumed. "Phantom Eye, you should've taught them a real lesson."

Phantom Eye smirked. "No worries, Ms. Aicker. That Shawn punk already got a hole stabbed through his hand-he probably can't even hold anything now!"

Francesca scoffed. "Serves him right!"

Nyla looked at her curiously. "Dr. Aicker, you seem a little cranky today. Didn't sleep well last night?"

Francesca's face turned red as she stammered, "What? N-No way, Nyla, you're imagining things!"

Then, she shot a sharp glare at Andrew. It was all his fault-he spent the whole night training, making her restless and unable to sleep until the middle of the night.

Andrew smirked to himself. This little brat was already acting up after just one night without sex. It seemed like he would have to remind her who was in charge tonight.

Shaking off his amusement, Andrew clapped his hands. "Nyla, go call Shiloh and Mr. Aicker over."

Nyla blinked. "Is something big happening?"

Andrew grinned. "Not really, just time to hand out paychecks."

Nyla was stunned for a second. Then, her face lit up with excitement. She immediately ran off to notify everyone.

Before joining Moonlit Apothecary, she was just a low-level nurse at Jayrodale General Hospital, and her pay was not special.

Yet, ever since coming here, she had worked tirelessly, keeping everything in perfect order, so hearing that payday had finally arrived made her genuinely happy.

Francesca beamed. "Andrew, you're handing out paychecks? Then what about mine?"

Andrew smirked. "Fran, you're not getting one."

Francesca immediately pouted. "Why not? I've worked hard for Moonlit Apothecary too!"

Andrew chuckled. "As my woman, this place is yours too. So, you don't need a paycheck, do you?"

Francesca froze. "Your woman?"

Then, it hit her what Andrew meant, and her innocent face instantly flushed red. Her heart felt as sweet as honey, but she still huffed in.

mock annoyance. "Who's not

woman? I don't care about that title!"

Phantom Eye grinned. "Uh, Mr. Lloyd, I'm getting a paycheck, right?"

Andrew waved him off. "Not a chance. You've only been here a day and already want a paycheck? Keep dreaming!"

A martial arts master feared across Blumedale, Phantom Eye's face instantly fell. He looked like a scolded child, utterly dejected.

Francesca giggled and patted his shoulder. "Don't worry, Phantom Eye. Once you've worked a full month, you'll definitely get paid, and I'll even give you a high salary!"

Phantom Eye brightened up. "Well, in that case, thanks in advance, Mrs. Lloyd!"

Francesca's cheeks turned even redder, but she could not hide the joy bubbling inside her.

Being called "Mrs. Lloyd" meant people were acknowledging her as Andrew's

woman.

"Hah! It's just a tiny little clinic, and you're acting like it's some grand business empire," a mocking voice suddenly rang out.

Andrew's expression darkened as he turned toward the entrance.

Christina and her family had walked in, each wearing a different expression. The one who had just spoken was Leroy, standing at the front with a smug smirk.

Francesca instantly stepped forward, standing protectively in front of Andrew as she glared at Christina.

"Ms. Stevens, what brings your family here? If there's no real reason, then please leave!"

Christina frowned. "Ms. Aicker, you seem to have some misunderstanding about me."

Francesca scoffed. "No misunderstanding—I just don't like you!"

Chapter 953

Leroy's face twisted in anger. "Francesca, who do you think you are? You don't like Christie? You think she cares whether you do or not?"

Francesca smirked. "The Stevens family sure gets riled up easily. If you've got the guts, just stay away from Andrew for good-I'd be impressed!"

Leroy stiffened and turned to Christina in frustration. "Christie, did you hear that? They don't want us here!"

He huffed. "It's ridiculous. Whatever, we're leaving. The Stevens family has better options now anyway-we don't need this lousy place!"

Christina ignored her noisy little brother and kept her gaze on Andrew. "Andrew, I came here to discuss something with you. Step outside with me for a moment."

Andrew's expression remained indifferent. "Sorry, I'm busy. If you have something urgent, you can either wait or leave."

Christina clenched her teeth. "Andrew"

She knew Andrew was doing this on purpose, deliberately making her wait and giving her the cold shoulder. A real man would not be so petty about the past.

Christina sneered to herself. 'Fine, Andrew, enjoy being on top while you can. One day, our roles will be reversed!'

Irene, however, had completely dropped her arrogant attitude and now put on a flattering smile. "No worries, we'll just sit and wait. Go ahead with what you're doing, don't mind us!"

Leroy scoffed. "Mom, there's no need to lower yourself like this! If Andrew doesn't appreciate it, we can always go with Mr. Wright instead. It's not like we'll never have a better opportunity. Who knows? Our turn might come soon enough."

At that moment, Shiloh and Cedric walked into the front hall. Andrew had no interest in wasting his breath on the Stevens family, so he turned to them with a smile. "It's payday. Have a seat!"

Shiloh's eyes lit up. She did not say anything, but the way she quickly sat down made it obvious she was looking forward to it.

Cedric chuckled and waved a hand. "I won't be taking a paycheck. The Aickers have already made a fortune from the profit shares on those two miracle medicines."

Francesca nodded. "That's right, Andrew. The Aickers don't need to take any more money from you- you've given us plenty already."

Andrew shook his head. "That's a separate matter. Moonlit Apothecary relies on Mr. Aicker to hold down the fort. Paying you is non-negotiable!"

With that, Andrew pulled out a stack of cash from a briefcase and tossed it to Cedric.

"Mr. Aicker, this is half a million. No strings attached-it's your salary for running the clinic!"

Before Cedric could even start refusing, Andrew pulled out another bundle of bills and handed it to Nyla.

"Nyla, catch. This is yours!"

Nyla stared at the thick stack in shock. "How much is this? This seems way too much!"

Andrew grinned. "Not much, just 100 grand. From now on, as Moonlit Apothecary expands, you'll be in charge of overall management. Your pay will only go up!"

Lastly, he pulled out 20 thousand

dollars and handed it to Shiloh. "Heh, Shiloh, since you're only in charge of

keeping the place clean, your pay is a lot lower."

Shiloh shook her head eagerly. "This is more than enough! It's way better than washing dishes at some restaurant. Thanks!"

Andrew chuckled. Shiloh was always amusing. She might be a martial king, but

give her money, and she would be loyal like a grateful worker.

"Alright, that wraps up payroll. Next

month, Moonlit Apothecary's

revenue will be even higher!"

Clapping his hands, Andrew sent

Cedric and the others back to their tasks.

Meanwhile, the Stevens family sat there in stunned silence.

They had never imagined Moonlit Apothecary would pay this well; a senior doctor would make half a million just for seeing patients; nurse would earn 100 grand a month. Even a janitor got paid 20 grand.

This kind of salary was unheard of-even the top hospitals in Holtrien could not

compete.

Chapter 954

Leroy's eyes burned with jealousy, and he shamelessly said "Andrew, I'm not a doctor, but I could work here as a male nurse. You could pay me 100 grand a month too, right?"

Irene quickly chimed in, laughing awkwardly. "Andrew, you know I'm getting older, and I've been scammed out of a lot of money over the years. I don't even have enough saved for retirement! How about you hire me to cook for the clinic? I won't ask for much-50 grand a month will do

The sight of the mother and son practically groveling made Francesca sick to her stomach.

"Sorry, we're full," Andrew rejected them without hesitation.

Leroy refused to give up. "Andrew, your business is booming, and this place is huge. There's no way you're at full capacity! Hire me, and I promise I'll work hard!"

Andrew's tone remained indifferent. "We might hire more people in the future, but there's one requirement-no hiring lazy slackers with bad character."

Leroy's face instantly turned red with anger. "Andrew, just say it-you don't want me here because you think I'm a piece of trash, right?"

Andrew shot him a cold glance. "Yeah, so what? I don't like you, and I think you're worthless-what are you gonna do about it?"

Leroy fumed, but he forced himself to hold back. Right now, he could talk big, but if he actually tried to start a fight, he would just embarrass himself.

Christina spoke up, her voice steady. "Andrew, you have no experience running a business. From what I see, your payroll is completely unreasonable!"

Andrew sneered. "Oh? Ms. Stevens, the all-knowing corporate executive, please enlighten me."

Christina replied coolly, "I wouldn't call it enlightening-I just want to point out some basic common sense. If you're paying out hundreds of thousands in salaries every month, then Moonlit Apothecary needs to be making at least two million to break even!"

Her implication was clear-Andrew was handing out fat paychecks, but the clinic's revenue could not possibly support it. In other words, he was just trying to look rich.

Leroy scoffed. "Yeah, right! This run-down little clinic making two million a month? If it even makes

half a million, I'll chop my head off and kick it like a soccer ball

Andrew chuckled and could not be bothered to argue with such short-sighted

fools.

Francesca, on the other hand, was not having it. "The Stevens family sure loves looking down on people! Well, let me set the record

straight-Moonlit Apothecary has only been open for about a month. But as for revenue? It's already passed five million! Two million? Please, don't insult us."

Irene and Leroy's jaws dropped. They wondered if that was even possible. Could

this place really be making that much money?

Christina remained composed. "If

what Ms. Aicker is saying is true, then Moonlit Apothecary must be generating nearly 20 grand in business every single day. From a professional standpoint, that sounds absolutely ridiculous."

Francesca scoffed. "I knew you wouldn't believe it, Christina. Nyla, bring out the tax records!"

Nyla smirked proudly and immediately went to retrieve the documents. Determined to prove them wrong, Christina leaned in to examine the records.

The moment she saw the numbers, her body stiffened. Based on the tax filings, she could easily calculate Moonlit Apothecary's total monthly revenue.

Sure enough, it really did exceed five million. Looking at the numbers, it was clear-Andrew's high salaries were not unreasonable at all!

Francesca smirked. "Ms. Stevens, do you still have something to say?"

Christina's face turned red with embarrassment, and for once, she was at a complete loss for words.

Chapter 955

Leroy's jealousy burned even hotter as he glared at Andrew Andrew, look at you now! Not only are you getting girls left and right, but your business is booming too! Moonlit Apothecary is making you a fortune every month. If you count the profits, you could buy a brand-new G-Wagon monthly, huh?"

Andrew smirked. "So what? What does that have to do with you?"

Leroy fumed. "Of course, it has something to do with me! Andrew, you and Christie were meant to be together! Our family came here today to ask-when are you marrying her?"

Andrew frowned. "Leroy, have you lost your damn mind?"

Marriage? He had to give it to the Stevens family-they were shameless beyond belief.

Irene forced a smile and said, "Andrew, we came here with sincerity. We truly want to make peace with you! You and Christie can still get back together-most of what happened was just a misunderstanding!"

Before Andrew could even respond, Francesca had already stepped in. She stomped up front and glared at the Stevens family.

"Sorry, but Andrew is taken! Ms. Stevens, you're beautiful and a CEO-you could have any man you want. But when it comes to Andrew, your family can forget about it!"

Her fierce little stance even took Andrew by surprise.

From the back, Cedric was thoroughly entertained. He silently praised, 'Good girl! I've raised you right!'

He was proud that his precious granddaughter knew how to fight for her man.

Irene's face twisted with anger. "Francesca, we came to talk to Andrew-who the hell do you think you are, butting in? Get lost! This has nothing to do with you!"

She would not dare speak to Andrew like that. However, when it came to Francesca, especially since Andrew was a golden ticket, Irene could not hold back her nasty side.

Francesca straightened her chest and stood her ground. "Oh, maybe you didn't hear-I'm Andrew's woman now! Not just me, but also Lauren, my best friend. Andrew belongs to both of us!

"So now you understand why I have a say in this, right? You're an elder, yet you have no shame trying to steal someone else's man. If anyone should get lost, it's you!"

Irene was livid. "Y-You... How dare you! The Aickers are supposed to be a respectable family, yet you act so shamelessly!"

Francesca shot back without hesitation. "Oh? And Christina has shame? She dumped Andrew, chased after wealth, and threw herself at Harvey Weller!

"In the end, she nearly got used up and tossed aside, and your whole damn company almost got taken from you! Now that she has nothing left, she wants to crawl back to Andrew? Please, your whole family is the real definition of shameless!"

Irene's face turned beet red as she exploded with rage. Her teeth clenched, and she looked like she was ready to bite someone.

Leroy's face was just as flushed. He rolled up his sleeves, ready to throw a punch.

Phantom Eye, who had been

enjoying the show, finally chuckled and spoke up. "Kid, I'd think twice before trying to act tough here. Just last night, Shawn left this place with his head covered in blood and a hole through his damn

palm. If you so much as lift a finger, I'll make sure you see your own brain matter splattered on the floor," The Stevens family froze in terror

Only now did they realize

Shawn's miserable state last night had been Phantom Eye's handiwork.

They were stunned. Even the security guard at Moonlit Apothecary was this ruthless. At this point, the Stevens family could not go anywhere without embarrassing themselves.

Christina's face darkened, and she gritted her teeth. "Andrew, I didn't come here

to watch you flaunt your success! I just want a straight answer-are you coming

back or not?

Chapter 956

Andrew let out a cold chuckle. "Come back? You don't mean the Stevens family, do you?"

Christina lifted her chin. "That's right. As long as you come back and help me build my career to the top, I'll be with you!"

Andrew waved a hand like he was shooing away a fly. "Christina, have you had too much to drink? Go home and sleep it off. Help you reach the top, and in return, you'll be with me? Let me ask you one thing-do I even care?"

He scoffed outright.

Even now, Christina was still living in a world where everything revolved around her. This woman was beyond hopeless.

"Andrew, you might not care, but plenty of people do! Quinton Wright from Blumedale has already extended an invitation to me. He wants Stevens Corporation to expand there, and his Wright family is willing to fully support us!"

Christina's tone carried an unmistakable air of superiority. "But I haven't agreed yet. And the reason is-I wanted to give you one last chance. As long as you say yes, not only will I be yours, but the Stevens family and Stevens Corporation will welcome you back with open arms!"

Andrew sneered. "So let me get this straight-you're telling me you're doing me a favor? If I say no, then I miss out on this 'amazing opportunity', and you'll just run off with Quinton instead?"

Christina nodded, her expression serious. "That's right. I'm giving you a chance- or rather, I'm giving us a chance to start over. Otherwise, Quinton's offer is something no one in their right mind would refuse!"

Andrew smirked. "Well, congratulations to Ms. Stevens and the entire Stevens family. It looks like you've finally found yourself a strong backer! Quinton is amazing, Quinton is unstoppable, the golden boy of Blumedale! "So what are you still waiting for? Hurry up and throw yourself at him- make sure to serve him well." Christina stomped her foot. "Andrew, are you really going to be this stubborn and let such a golden opportunity slip away?"

Leroy sneered. "Christie, I saw this coming before we even got here. This guy doesn't know what's good for him- we've been way too nice! Just wait till our family makes it big in Blumedale. When we come back to Jayrodale, let's see how hard he cries!"

Andrew felt downright nauseous. The Stevens family just never learned, always digging their own graves. If he did not put an end to this now, Christina was bound to get devoured whole by Quinton, that wolf in sheep's clothing.

"Security, throw them out. I don't want these people disrupting business at Moonlit Apothecary!" Andrew waved Phantom Eye over, his patience completely gone.

He could not care less about the Stevens family's fate anymore.

"You heard Mr. Lloyd, didn't you? Please leave!" Phantom Eye wasted no time and shoved Leroy out the door first.

Leroy landed hard on his backside,

cursing as he scrambled up to fight back. However, before he could

make a move, Phantom Eye's palm made a crack across his face, sending

him reeling.

If this had been the old Phantom Eye, with his short temper and hatred for scum

like Leroy, he would have taken him out on the spot.

"Alright, Andrew, just you wait!" Leroy clutched his stinging cheek, seething with rage but too scared to retaliate.

With no choice, he turned tail and fled in humiliation. Christina did not say a word

as she stormed out of Moonlit Apothecary.

She had enough-enough of lowering herself, only for Andrew to brush her off like she was nothing. Grabbing her phone, she deliberately made a show of it right in front of Andrew.

"Mr. Wright, I accept your offer. I'll go to Blumedale with you! In return, I'm willing to follow you for life!" Hanging up, she looked back at Andrew with a cold smirk. "Andrew, you forced me to do this."

Andrew remained unfazed and said flatly, "Idiot."

Seeing Christina secure a powerful connection with Quinton while Andrew refused

to give them the time of day, Irene finally dropped the act.

She put her hands on her hips and screeched, "Andrew, you little bastard, mark

my words-you're gonna regret this one day!"

Chapter 957

Irene spat, "With Mr. Wright backing our Christie, she's going to be way more powerful than you! She'll crush you under her feet—just wait and see!"

With that, the three members of the Stevens family scurried away, tails between their legs.

Francesca, still fuming, crossed her arms. "What is wrong with these people? Christina is getting more twisted by the day! That Quinton guy is ambitious as hell. The moment he set foot in Jayrodale, he tried to snatch the Titan Essence Pill and the Vitality Pill by force!

"And yet, Christina actually trusts him? Quinton is going to be even worse than Harvey—he'll devour her whole!"

Andrew shrugged. "That's her problem, not mine. You can't wake someone up if they're determined to keep pretending they're in a dream."

Francesca's eyes flickered with thought. "Andrew, Quinton isn't just some random guy. Maybe you should at least try to warn Christina, considering... you two had that kind of history?"

Andrew shook his head. "It's pointless trying to talk sense into someone hell-bent on destruction. Besides, I'm not interested."

Francesca smirked and let out a playful hum. "That's more like it. Honestly, I was just throwing that out there. If you'd actually said yes and tried to meddle, I would've been really pissed!"

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "So you were setting me up, hoping I'd fall into the trap?"

Francesca giggled smugly. "And if I was? I'm not some clueless, naive girl!"

Andrew let out a low chuckle. "Well then, you're getting the punishment stick tonight."

Francesca gasped and pinched his waist hard, huffing, "You old perv! One day, Lauren and I are going to team up and drain you dry!"

Just then, a sleek luxury car pulled up outside Moonlit Apothecary, and a pregnant woman stepped out, holding an umbrella.

She did not walk in immediately but stood at the entrance, scanning the place with a critical eye. Then, with a lukewarm tone, she muttered, "I've heard so much about Moonlit Apothecary-how exclusive and high-class it supposedly is. But now that I see it in person... it's really nothing special."

Francesca's expression darkened. She did not appreciate the insult, but she held her tongue since the woman was pregnant.

"Hello, ma'am. Are you here for a consultation or to pick up medicine?"

The pregnant woman scoffed. "Neither. My child is going to be the heir of our family. I wouldn't dare use medicine from a small place like this!"

Francesca frowned. Something about this woman's attitude seriously rubbed her the wrong way.

The woman waved a hand dismissively. "Go get Nyla for me. Tell her that her stepmother is here."

Francesca blinked in surprise. "You're Nyla's stepmother?"

The woman lifted her hand, flashing an enormous diamond ring. "Is that a problem? The new Mrs. Goth of Jayrodale-you seriously don't recognize me? Your world must be awfully small."

At that moment, Nyla rushed out, her expression uneasy the second she saw the woman. "Camilla, what brings

you here?"

Camilla White shot Nyla an impatient glare. "How many times do I have to tell you? Don't call

Camilla Address me properly ant

Madam! I'm the lady of the house. you mess it up again, I'll make sure you never forget!

Her fierce tone made Nyla flinch.

"I-I understand, Madam. I'll remember next time!"

Camilla extended her hand

expectantly heard today is payday for you. Your dad works tirelessly to run the family business, while I am carrying the next heir to the Goth family. And yet, you-you're the most useless of all!

"You live off the family, eat off the family, and you don't even have a decent career. You're just wasting time here at Moonlit Apothecary! But fine, we've given up on expecting anything from you. Just hand over your paycheck- it's the least you can do to contribute."

Chapter 958

A flicker of resistance flashed across Nyla's face, but it quickly faded. She obediently handed over her freshly earned paycheck to Camilla, who grinned as she began counting.

Once she finished, her eyes lit up with delight, "100 grand? Nyla, does Moonlit Apothecary really pay you this much?"

Nyla lowered her voice. "Dr. Lloyd gave it to me. He's a really kind person... he takes good care of me."

Camilla turned to Andrew, eyeing him with uncertainty. Before stepping inside, she had spoken poorly of Moonlit Apothecary, though it had only been out of jealousy.

In reality, Moonlit Apothecary was one of the most well-known establishments in Jayrodale, with a miracle doctor treating patients. Wealthy and powerful families flocked here in droves.

Camilla's expression quickly shifted as she put on a flattering smile. "You must be the owner of Moonlit Apothecary. Nyla works under you, so feel free to use her however you see fit-hard labor, long hours, whatever."

She chuckled, her voice syrupy sweet. "Just as long as you keep being generous and paying her well every month, Dr. Lloyd!"

Andrew remained indifferent. "The Goth family is a well-established name in Jayrodale. Are you saying you're short on money?"

Camilla let out a huff. "Of course not! The Goth family is wealthy! But Nyla is just a useless burden. She's going to get married off eventually!

"Now that I'm pregnant, my son will inherit the Goth family. As for Nyla's wedding gifts and any other expenses, she'll have to earn those herself. She shouldn't expect a single cent from us."

Francesca's irritation deepened. As a woman, she had experienced firsthand what it was like to be treated as a financial burden by her own family, and the outdated mindset disgusted her.

With a cold laugh, she snapped, "If she's expected to earn her own wedding gifts, then shouldn't she be allowed to keep her paycheck instead of handing it all over to you?"

Her sharp words sparked a heated argument between her and Camilla.

Camilla, completely unfazed, said matter-of-factly, "I'm her stepmother. She's still young and irresponsible. If she has money in her hands, she'll just waste it on food and nonsense! I'm only doing this for her own good. I won't spend a dime of her money-just keeping it safe until she gets married."

Francesca scoffed. ed. "That's what a

lot of parents say, but in the end, they treat their kids like cash cows They claim they're 'holding onto it for them, but when the time comes, they pocket every cent and give nothing back!"

Camilla's expression darkened as she snapped, "What are you trying to say? You think I'm after Nyla's paycheck? Let me tell you

something-I'm the lady of the Goth family! Do you really think I need her money?

"I spend tens, even hundreds of thousands every time I go shopping! A measly 100 grand is nothing-it wouldn't even buy me a decent handbag!"

She tilted her chin up arrogantly, throwing Francesca a condescending glance.

Francesca's patience finally snapped. This woman was the textbook definition of an evil stepmother. The way she greedily counted the money earlier made it obvious she was lying through her teeth.

Not only was Camilla shameless, but she was also disgustingly two-faced-acting like she was 'helping' Nyla when all she was doing was stealing from her.

Nyla had worked hard as a nurse at Jayrodale General Hospital before joining Moonlit Apothecary. There was no way Francesca would let someone like Camilla bully her.

She crossed her arms and smirked coldly. "Since 100 grand means nothing to you, why don't you just give it back to Nyla?"

Camilla's face turned stormy. "How we handle money in the Goth family is none of your business! I am still technically her mother! Are you saying I don't have the right to manage her finances?"

Francesca clenched her teeth, ready to fire back, but Nyla lowered her head and

murmured softly, "Dr. Aicker, just let it go."

Chapter 959

"I've always handed over my paycheck. I'm used to it," Nyla murmured.

Andrew gave Francesca a small smile. "Fran, let's drop it for now. This is between

Nyla and her stepmother-we shouldn't interfere too much."

Camilla smirked. "At least Dr. Lloyd knows how to behave. Well then, I'll be heading out."

She stood up and, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, ordered, "Nyla, help me to the car."

Then, in a warning tone, she added, "I'll be back this time next month, so don't even think about hiding your paycheck. If you don't have the full amount ready, don't bother trying to step foot in the Goth family's house."

Nyla quickly nodded. "I understand, Madam. Don't worry 'll give you everything."

Camilla nodded in satisfaction, putting on a fake, affectionate smile. "That's a good girl. At least my efforts in raising you haven't been in vain. You know how busy your father is, and I'm the only one managing the household. Even in my rare moments of rest, I still have to look after you."

"So Nyla, you should understand just how much effort I've put into you."

Nyla opened her mouth slightly but said nothing. After seeing Camilla off, she walked back in looking utterly dejected.

Francesca's patience finally snapped. "Nyla, be honest with me-is that bitch abusing you? Is she manipulating you?"

Nyla avoided her gaze. "Dr. Aicker, please don't ask. I don't want to talk about my family."

Francesca grew even more frustrated. "Nyla, I'm asking you one last time-is she mistreating you? Has she been controlling and pressuring you this whole time? If you don't speak up, no one will be able to help you. If we don't step in, you'll be stuck living like this forever!"

Nyla pressed her lips together, remaining silent for a long time. Then, tears welled up in her eyes as she choked out, "I appreciate your concern, Dr. Aicker... Andy..."

I really do. But right now, I don't want to talk about it. I just want to be alone."

Francesca looked heartbroken and furious, ready to press further.

However, Andrew held her back, shaking his head. "Let her be for now. She's too proud to air her family's dirty laundry. If you keep pushing, you'll only hurt her more-it won't help."

Francesca clenched her fists. "So what, we're just supposed to stand by and watch that witch steal everything she's worked for?"

Andrew remained calm. "At the end of the day, this all comes down to the head of the Goth family. We should find him and see what's going on."

Francesca scoffed. "Dominic Goth? He's known for being spineless in Jayrodale's elite circles. Talking to him probably won't change a thing!"

Andrew and Francesca both knew this was not an easy situation to meddle in.

After all, it was an internal matter within the Goth family, and Nyla was refusing to say anything.

Andrew decided it was best to wait and observe for now, keeping Francesca from getting further involved. Just then, his phone rang-it was Natasha.

The moment he answered, her voice came through, cold and sharp. "Darling, Quinton is using his status as the heir of the Wright family to summon all the major players in Jayrodale for a meeting. From the looks of it, he's trying to use the Wright family's influence to stir up trouble and put pressure on you."

Andrew, however, remained unfazed. He chuckled. "Then you and Dylan should

go and listen. Let's see if Mr. Wright has anything worthwhile to say."

Quinton was clearly still unwilling to give up. He was dead set on getting his hands on the Vitality Pill and

Titan Essence Pill. If that was the

to play this game to the endomet

case, Andrew was more than ready

Chapter 960

The massive conference room was buzzing with activity.

Quinton sat back with one leg crossed over the other, his polished branded loafers casually propped up on the large round table. He looked completely at ease, though it was clear he was putting on a show.

People continued arriving for his so-called roundtable meeting, including some of the most influential figures in Jayrodale. Among them were Natasha, Dylan, and Harvey the head of the Weller family-as well as representatives from Madblade Martial Academy and the Goth family.

Shawn, ever the suckup, leaned forward with a flattering grin. "Mr. Wright, your influence is truly unmatched. Look around-everyone who holds real power in Jayrodale, from the high society elites to the underground forces, has shown up just for you!"

Quinton did not respond, but the smirk on his lips grew even more noticeable. Sitting beside him, apart from Shawn, was another notable figure-Christina.

She had not spoken a word, but internally, she was reeling. The level of power Quinton wielded as the heir of the Blumedale Wright family was staggering.

With nothing more than a single announcement-without even making a personal call-he had summoned Jayrodale's most formidable forces, and they had all obediently come running.

Even Dylan and Natasha, the dominant figures in the city's underground world, had no choice but to sit at this table with him. That alone convinced Christina that she had made the right choice in siding with him.

In the past, she had hoped the Weller family would help propel Stevens Corporation to new heights, or that Aspen's influence could strengthen the Stevens family. But now, looking at the bigger picture, both Harvey and Aspen seemed insignificant.

It was Quinton alone who stood at the top-someone with the kind of power that could truly shape the future. She had struggled and hesitated so many times before, but this time, she was sure of it.

This time, fate had finally placed her on the winning side.

As more people settled in, Quinton still did not bother moving his foot from the table. It was not just arrogance- he knew exactly what he was doing. Handling the power players of Jayrodale required a different approach. If he acted too civilized, they would not take him seriously.

Sometimes, the best way to control people was to make a statement-one so blatant that they had no choice but to acknowledge it.

And it worked. He had them right where he wanted them.

"Since everyone is here, I won't waste time with pleasantries," Quinton said, his tone distant and commanding.

There was no need for him to thank them for attending or act politely. As the heir to the Wright family, he had no obligation to play nice with a bunch of small-time power brokers.

Christina watched, more convinced than ever. Quinton was leagues above these people, completely unfazed, completely in control.

His ability to manipulate people-his precision in reading the room-was flawless.

Following him, she knew she would learn a great deal.

Compared to him, whatever charm or brilliance Andrew once had now seemed utterly cheap and forgettable.

Rodney, however, was not impressed. He did not like Quinton's smug attitude, but he was not foolish enough to

provoke him outright.

So, with a fake grin, he chuckled. "Mr. Wright, you must have some grand plans for coming all the way to little old Jayrodale. But before anything else, it seems you've e already made your first big achievement-capturing the heart of Jayrodale's beloved Ice Queen. So tell us, Mr. Wright, how does she taste? Or are you planning to share?" The crude, suggestive remark sent the room into fits of laughter as several men joined in, jeering and snickering. Christina's face turned bright red. Humiliation and rage surged through her, but she did not dare lash out. After all, Madblade Martial Academy was not an opponent the Stevens family could afford to offend.

Quinton, however, remained completely unfazed. He spoke in an even, casual tone. "I'd say, Mr. Sanford, that making such a vulgar joke in this setting is highly inappropriate.

"Ms. Stevens is a woman of

intelligence and grace-someonez worthy of admiration and respect. So, I suggest you take back your words, and I don't want to hear anything like that again."