

The Ashes 961

Chapter 961

Rodney let out a cold snort and said nothing more.

Plenty of people around could not help but be shocked-Quinton was really something else. After all, Rodney was usually wild and arrogant, never caring about anyone, but Quinton shut him right down with just a few words.

Now, that was what you called true dominance,

Christina leaned toward Quinton and whispered gratefully, "Thank you, Mr. Wright, for stepping in."

Quinton flashed a charming smile and replied, "It's nothing. Since you've already decided to join me for the development project in Blumedale, you'll be under my care from now on. Naturally, I have to keep you well protected."

His words were laced with an obvious flirtation, like a possessive man doting on his favorite girl.

Christina did not say anything, but Quinton was secretly feeling very pleased with himself.

He believed a true master never showed all his cards and had no doubt he would win Christina over eventually. There was no rush-when the time came, the famous Ice Queen would melt on her own and give herself to him completely.

Off to the side, Shawn watched with a bitter mix of envy and frustration. He had been lusting after Christina for a while, but now it was clear that Quinton had his eye on her too.

That meant Shawn's little fantasy was nothing more than wishful thinking. The more he thought about it, the more bitter he felt.

Nonetheless, that bitterness quickly turned into a burning hatred toward Andrew. He thought if he could bring down Andrew, Quinton would be pleased. Then, once Quinton got bored of Christina-because guys like him always did he would probably be generous enough to toss her his way.

Shawn figured that would not be so bad.

Meanwhile, Natasha rolled her eyes and said impatiently, "Mr. Wright, you've been talking for a while now, but when are you actually going to get to the point?"

Quinton let out a light laugh and responded politely, "Madam Vostokoff, no need to be anxious. Forgive me for the delay-let's get started."

However, Natasha felt disgusted by his fake smile. With her experience, she could spot a player a mile away.

Quinton, in her book, was a first-rate womanizer In other words, he was premium grade trash. And

Christina? In her eyes, that girl was a high-level manipulator too. The fact that the two of them had ended up orbiting each other actually

surprised her.

"I came to Jayrodale with plans to invest somewhere between five to ten billion dollars," Quinton announced. "And I'm talking about a major, full-scale investment."

He purposely paused and scanned the room. He looked very satisfied when he saw the stunned expressions of all the local Jayrodale representatives.

The amount was not just a big investment-it was massive

Harvey from the Weller family was quickly intrigued. He leaned forward eagerly and asked, "Mr. Wright, may I ask which industries you plan to invest in with such a huge amount?"

The others perked up instantly, all ears. If the Wrights were planning to put that kind of money into their

particular industries, it would only mean that they were getting rich.

"I already have a clear idea of which sectors and markets this money will go into,"

Quinton said, teasing them a little longer.

Then, his tone changed, and his

expression darkened as he let out a cold scoff. "However, before the investment could even begin, I was met with some very unpleasant treatment here in Jayrodale. was rudely pushed aside and made to feel unwelcome.

"Because of that, my original enthusiasm for investing here has started to seriously waver. So tell me, everyone- can you understand how I'm feeling right

now? It's complicated. Very, very complicated.

"On one hand, want to put this

money into your city and give you all the opportunity to grow and build strong ties with the Wrights. But on the other hand, I feel disrespected. Because someone in Jayrodale had the nerve to treat me like I didn't even matter."

He asked, "So, ladies and gentlemen, while I can tolerate that kind of treatment,

can you?"

Chapter 962

The moment Quinton said that, several people in the room erupted in outrage.

Dominic, the head of the Goth family, slammed his hand on the table and declared, "Mr. Wright, you're an honored guest from Blumedale, bringing billions to help revitalize Jayrodale!

"We're beyond grateful you'd even consider investing here and yet someone actually had the nerve to offend you? Mr. Wright, if you just say the word, the Goth family will be the first to deal with whoever that bastard is!"

Harvey was not about to fall behind and quickly chimed in, Mr. Wright, you're our meal ticket-our livelihood depends on you. Who the hell was blind enough to cross you? The Weller family would walk through fire for you, no hesitation!" Everyone else immediately jumped in, each one eager to win Quinton's favor.

"Mr. Wright, just tell us-who was it? Which family or which group pissed you off? Whoever it was, we'll drag them out and make them get on their knees in front of you and beg for forgiveness!"

"Seriously, are they stupid or what? When someone like Mr Wright shows up-a walking jackpot-you roll out the red carpet, not insult him!"

However, not everyone joined in on the outrage.

Rodney, Dylan, Natasha, and Stephen all stayed seated, watching the scene unfold like it was just another show. They were curious about what Quinton was really playing at.

As Quinton glanced around the room, he was filled with disdain and silent laughter. With just a few loaded words, these small-time players were falling over themselves, ready to die for him.

That was the power of the Wright family name-the effect of being that guy.

His eyes briefly lingered on Christina, and he noticed that she seemed affected by his presence. That filled him with even more smug satisfaction-though part of him also started feeling bored.

He loved the thrill of the hunt, especially when the prize was something rare and untouchable. However, once the prize came too easily and lost its challenge, it also lost its flavor.

He just hoped Christina would not fall for him too quickly if she held out a little longer, the game would stay exciting.

"Alright," Quinton finally said, sighing dramatically. "Since so many of you insist on knowing, I won't hide it

anymore.

"I came to Jayrodale with good

intentions, but I didn't expect to bump into someone so

unreasonable right off the bat. I've always believed that bullying the weak isn't the mark of a true gentleman, so I tried to let it go.

"But if I'm going to invest in this city, I need to do some cleaning first. So, unfortunately, I have no choice but to name him and let everyone judge for themselves."

Harvey's face darkened as he said, "Mr. Wright, just say the name. If this guy dares retaliate, the Weller family will crush him first."

Quinton shook his head with a heavy sigh as if the whole thing pained him deeply. He said slowly, "Some of you in this room probably know him already. His name is Andrew Lloyd, and he runs the Moonlit Apothecary.

"For some reason, he seems to have a major problem with me. He's been opposing me at every turn. When I looked into it, I discovered that Andrew actually has ambitions of taking over Jayrodale.

"And suddenly, everything made sense. This guy has a serious appetite—too ambitious for his own good. My arrival in Jayrodale probably threatened his personal interests. That's why he's targeting me instead of seeing the bigger picture."

After smearing Andrew with that long-winded, twisted version of events, Quinton finally fell silent.

Of course, he did not mention that he had first gone to the Moonlit Apothecary,

trying to snatch up two of their most valuable medicines—and stirred up trouble when they refused.

Quinton had painted himself as the poor victim, skillfully drawing out sympathy

from the room. He had gone all in, dangling a massive investment as bait. He was convinced the power players of Jayrodale would be fired up, rally to his side, and join forces to crush Andrew completely

The more he thought about it, the more impressed he was with himself. After all, using others to do the dirty work and riding the wave of influence was downright masterful.

Andrew thought he was untouchable, clinging to those two miracle medicines like a dragon hoarding treasure. However, once Quinton boxed him into a corner, left him begging for air, and drained every last drop of business out of him, he would see Andrew on his knees, pleading for mercy from the Wrights, just for a sip of water.

The fantasy alone made Quinton grin smugly. He half-expected applause at that moment, maybe some shouting, some outrage, someone grabbing their team and storming off to Moonlit Apothecary to cause trouble.

Yet, as Quinton looked around the room with a proud smile, he was hit with an awkward realization that not a single person had moved. Even Harvey, the loudest voice just moments ago, had gone completely silent, sitting stiffly like a statue.

The others who had been eagerly pledging their loyalty suddenly looked like they were trying to disappear into their chairs.

Quinton was baffled, wondering what the hell was going on. Were these people just putting on a show to humor him earlier and only pretended to back him up?

Suddenly, a heavy-set man got up and turned to leave. "I'm sorry, Mr. Wright. Something urgent came up at home. I've got to head out."

The man's face looked tense and uneasy, maybe even a little scared. He was one of Jayrodale's wealthier businessmen, and Quinton vaguely remembered his name Raymond, something Chapman.

"Mr. Chapman, what's the meaning of this?" Quinton called after him, clearly annoyed. "This meeting has barely started. Is your family no longer interested in the investment?"

Raymond did not even look back. He shook his head and muttered, "Forget it. The Chapmans don't want any part of this. Give the money to someone else. We're not about to get rich by digging our own graves!"

He walked right out the door without another word. He did not even offer a proper goodbye.

Quinton scoffed. "Ungrateful idiot. Fine, walk out if you want. You don't want the Wrights' money? Trust me, plenty of others do!"

He shrugged it off and turned back to Harvey with a friendly grin. "Mr. Weller, I've always admired your

decisiveness. How about you lead the charge? Andrew dared to cross me. What do you think we should do about it?

Harvey chuckled awkwardly and stammered, Well... um... about that... Maybe it's better to change the subject? Quinton's smile faded as his brow furrowed. "Change the subject? Andrew offended me. That is the subject. Tell you what-if you help me deal with Andrew properly, I'll invest half of my total funds directly into the Weller family's

businesses. How does that sound?"

Quinton thought that offer was more

than generous. Even if Harvey was a coward, this should have been enough to make him stand up and fight.

However, before Harvey could speak, two of the Weller family's senior elders stepped forward and answered firmly, "Sorry, Mr. Wright. Investment is one thing-we're open to a win-win partnership. But now that we see

your real motive is to use us as your enforcers... we'll have to pass!"

Chapter 964

Quinton exploded, slamming the table. "Is this the best the Weller family can do?"

He sneered, "Mr. Weller, you're supposed to be young and capable, right? You landed the head position at such a young age, and this is all the guts you've got?"

What angered Quinton the most was Harvey's next response.

Harvey just nodded and admitted bluntly, "You're right, Mr Wright. I really do lack guts and boldness."

Now Quinton was seething with rage. He shouted, "I invited you all here out of goodwill, giving you the chance to get rich, and this is how you repay me?"

His gaze swept across the room, his expression turning sharp and threatening. These guys were supposed to be the top dogs of Jayrodale. With this many major figures in the room, how was it possible that not even one of them had the spine to act?

In Quinton's mind, Andrew was just the owner of a local apothecary. All it would take was a united public statement, and Moonlit Apothecary would be done for in Jayrodale.

Then, Andrew would be crawling back, begging for mercy, sobbing and desperate for forgiveness.

Just then, a few people from Madblade Martial Academy stood up.

Quinton lit up with excitement. "Mr. Sanford, I knew I could count on you. Out of Jayrodale's four young elites, you're the boldest, the one with true backbone. So, what do you say? Can your academy teach that Andrew a lesson?"

He continued, "If you do, I'll release the investment funds immediately, all to Madblade Martial Academy."

Rodney casually picked his teeth and replied with complete disinterest, "Sorry. We at Madblade Martial Academy aren't counting on your investment. Let me give you a piece of advice-go back to where you came from.

"Sending blind followers to jump off cliffs for you? That kind of thing comes back around. Keep it up, and you're messing with your own karma."

Quinton froze, then flew into a fury. He could not believe Rodney had not only refused but also had the nerve to lecture him in front of everyone. After all, he regarded Rodney as a second-rate martial arts heir-what gave that punk the confidence to talk down to him?

Before Quinton could respond, the Madblade Martial Academy group was already gone-clean, swift, and without a glance back.

Quinton was fuming, choking on his own frustration.

If this were any other time and place,

those nobodies would not have

dared ignore him. They would all be on their knees, groveling. Unfortunately for him, his priority was Andrew.

Taking down Andrew and securing the formulas for those two legendary medicines was the only thing that mattered.

Quinton took two deep breaths, trying to calm the fire boiling in his chest.

Then, he forced a grin and turned toward Dylan and Natasha

"Mr. Garner, Madam Vostokoff," he said, laying on the charm. "You two run Jayrodale's underground scene, live on the edge, dance with death. If you take care of this for me, the Wrights' investment goes fully to you no strings attached."

Dylan's face stayed cold as ice. "Not interested."

Natasha did not even waste time with words. She gave a little sway of her hips and walked straight out.

Quinton slammed his fist into the table and roared, "Stop right there! What the hell is this supposed to mean?"

Natasha just said 'not interested' and walked off like it was nothing.

Quinton was absolutely fuming-he

was the heir of the Wrights.

gave these nobodies the

disrespect him like this?

Natasha glanced back with a smirk full of disdain and said, "It means 'fuck off!'"

Chapter 965

Quinton was in disbelief, and his face twisted with rage, veins bulging at his temples as if they were about to burst. The humiliation, the burning fury, and the sheer frustration had his whole body trembling.

He had just been insulted-him, the heir of the Wrights, who came to Jayrodale bringing both power and wealth, and now a bunch of low-level underground thugs had just cursed him in front of everyone.

Christina's expression was conflicted as she said calmly, "Mr. Wright, please calm down. I think you need to understand the current situation in Jayrodale."

Quinton snapped, "What damn situation? If it weren't for my self-control, those cowards-those worthless losers -would've all been dead where they sat!"

His face had darkened so much that it looked like a thunderstorm was about to roll in. Everyone he had summoned had either abandoned him or turned on him. The grand effect he envisioned-rallying everyone to crush Andrew- was unraveling fast.

Christina spoke firmly, "Mr. Wright, maybe you don't know this yet, but Dylan and Natasha are both loyal to Andrew. Right now, he's the real power in Jayrodale. He's the underground ruler, the king without a crown."

For the first time, Quinton felt like the situation was slipping out of his grasp. He frowned and muttered, "That bastard really has that kind of reach?"

Coming from Blumedale, he knew how unruly the underground scene could be- full of dangerous people who answered to no one. You could pay them, and they might stab you in the back anyway. You could suppress them with force, but fear only worked for so long-eventually, they would turn on you.

Hence, Quinton did not fully buy what Christina was saying. To him, Andrew did not look like the kind of guy who could control an entire city's

underworld.

Nonetheless, Christina had no idea what Quinton was thinking. She simply continued, "It's not just the

underground. Madblade Martial Academy and Glorious Pharmaceuticals are also more or less under his influence."

Quinton sneered, "That explains why that punk Rodney had the balls to defy me like that."

He narrowed his eyes and asked, "What about Raymond? The guy looked like someone had killed his whole family. Don't tell me he's one of Andrew's people too?"

This time, it was Harvey who spoke up. He let out a bitter sigh and said, "Raymond isn't directly tied to

Andrew. But a while back, he did butt heads with him, thinking he had Winston-your little brother-as backup.

"In the end, Andrew crushed him so hard that to this day, the guy doesn't dare show his face. Dream

Paradise? Shut down. They switched to a quieter business and now keep everything low-profile."

Quinton opened his mouth, but for once, had no words.

"Are you saying," he finally said after a long pause, voice sharp with disbelief, "that this Andrew guy really has Jayrodale eating out of his hand?"

Either you were working for Andrew, or you would be beaten down so badly that you felt that you were living in a hell on earth.

'What the hell? Is everyone in Jayrodale full of spineless pigs?' Quinton thought.

Harvey clenched his jaw and said through gritted teeth, "Right now, the Weller family doesn't dare challenge him head-on. But I'm waiting. Once our family grows strong enough, the first one we'll take out is Andrew."

Quinton's eyes lit up, his energy suddenly surging back. "Mr. Weller, then let's join

forces. Together, we'll destroy

Andrew. You take everything he owns-I just want the two formulas."

Chapter 966

Harvey shook his head and said, "Sorry, Mr. Wright, I appreciate the offer, but the Weller family truly can't help you. I can only express my regrets."

Quinton clenched his jaw and snapped, "So you're admitting you're just as

spineless as the others? No different from that bunch of cowards who just walked out?"

Harvey's face darkened-he had not expected Quinton to speak so bluntly and with such blatant disrespect.

Harvey said coldly, "Heh, coward or not, call me whatever you want. But the Weller family is staying out of this. Because I have no interest in throwing myself into a pit I can't climb out of."

It was a direct declaration, and Harvey clearly was not holding back anymore. He had already learned his lesson the hard way from crossing Andrew-he had paid for it, suffered for it, and was not about to make the same mistake again.

Unless he had the power and a surefire win, Harvey was not going to make a single move.

Quinton turned to glance at Christina, but she looked away. His face twitched, and then he turned his eyes to Shawn

Meanwhile, Shawn, looking like death warmed over, simply raised his bandaged hand and shrugged, clearly saying he was in no shape to fight anyone.

"Useless. Every damn one of you is useless," Quinton cursed under his breath. "Jayrodale's nothing but a city full of cowards, losers, and paper tigers..."

He was boiling on the inside. He had gathered all these people and put on a show of power and wealth, yet not one of them had stood up to back him.

It was a total flop-a grand meeting that ended in complete embarrassment.

Just thinking about it made Quinton want to punch through the wall.

Christina offered gently, "Mr. Wright, if you ask me, there's really no need to butt heads with Andrew here in Jayrodale. This is his territory, while your home turf is Blumedale. Someone of your status shouldn't waste your time on someone like him."

Quinton let out a cold snort. "So what if Andrew is running wild in Jayrodale? He's still a nobody. If this were Blumedale, I'd crush him in a heartbeat. The only reason I'm still dealing with this mess is because he's got something I absolutely must have."

Harvey spoke up again, "Quinton, with all due respect-those two miracle pills Andrew holds? They're already blowing up across the entire region, and everyone's after them. Trying to get the formulas all by yourself? That's practically impossible."

Quinton's eyes turned sharp and venomous. "I know it's tough. But impossible? I don't think so."

Harvey shook his head. "Quinton, there's something else you should know-Hidden Dragons have also taken an interest in those pills. One of their elders even came to Jayrodale and personally showed up at Moonlit Apothecary, trying to take the formulas by force."

Quinton's eyes widened. "Wait, Hidden Dragons sent an elder? Then Andrew must've gotten wrecked, right?"

Harvey gave a slow, amused grin.

"Actually, quite the opposite.

thought the same thing at first. Figured that elder would bulldoze Moonlit Apothecary and maybe even kill Andrew on the spot.

"But it turns out, Hidden Dragons' Finley was beaten to an inch of his life by Andrew. And that elder? He stormed

off in a fury and went back to Hidden Dragons, but no one knows what happened to him after that."

For a long moment, Quinton said nothing. In fact, he was completely speechless.

An elder from Hidden Dragons meant a powerhouse-someone at least on the level of a semi-martial king. Yet, even he walked away empty-handed. Clearly, Quinton had seriously underestimated the situation, and he was beginning to regret it.

Just then, Dominic-the head of the Goth family-who had been frowning and thinking for some time, suddenly looked up, eyes gleaming. "Mr. Wright, I might have a way to help you."

Chapter 967

Quinton glanced over, not thinking much of Dominic since the latter was just another small-time family head.

He replied flatly, "Speak, Mr. Goth. If you really have a way to get me what I want, then I'll make you a promise right here. The Goth family will become the number one family in Jayrodale, and I'll personally make it happen."

Dominic lit up with excitement. "Mr. Wright, you might not know this, but my daughter is currently working at Moonlit Apothecary. If you want the formulas for those two miracle pills, I just might be able to get them through her."

Quinton's eyes widened, and a look of shock turned into overwhelming joy. "What did you say? Your daughter works at Moonlit Apothecary?"

"What's her name? How much does Andrew trust her? Is she part of the inner circle or just another employee?"

He fired off questions without pausing, his mind spinning. It would not be useful if she was just a background worker or someone sweeping floors. He needed someone Andrew actually trusted—someone close.

Dominic responded with full confidence, "Don't worry, Quinton. My daughter Nyla has Andrew's full trust. Back when she used to work at Jayrodale General Hospital, word had it Andrew already had his eyes on her.

"But as her father, and also the head of the Goth family, I kept a tight grip on things. I don't let just anyone rear my daughter. Now, the timing is perfect. Andrew already had feelings for her, so if she gives him a little nudge, just a bit of seduction...

"Then, getting those formulas should be as easy as reaching out and plucking fruit off a tree."

He smiled slyly as if he was proud of using Nyla as bait—like it was some clever business tactic.

Quinton had not expected it. Just when things looked hopeless, when every door had slammed in his face, this window suddenly cracked open. It felt as if a dead end had turned into a golden opportunity.

He burst out laughing, walked over, and patted Dominic on the shoulder. "Mr. Goth, you've raised one hell of a daughter. Perfect. This is perfect. If she can get me those formulas, then every penny of the investment I promised will go straight to the Goth family—no exceptions."

Dominic nodded eagerly, his face glowing with pride. "That's all I ask for, Mr. Wright. I'll go start making arrangements right away."

Quinton grinned. "Good. Get to it, Mr. Goth.

ce it's done, I'll personally invite you to our family estate in Blumedale for a private banquet. We'll honor you properly."

As Dominic rushed off, clearly thrilled, Shawn muttered sarcastically, "Using your

own daughter like that just to get what you want... How classy."

Quinton's face turned cold. "What did you say?"

Realizing he had slipped, Shawn gave a dry laugh and waved it off. "Nothing. I didn't say anything."

Quinton snorted. "You're just mad

because you're all a bunch of

useless nobodies. You're jealous now that someone's finally stepping up to help me? Let me make this clear if anyone dares to sabotage this, or tries to rum my plans in any way, I'll wipe out their entire family. No mercy."

His voice was ice-cold, and his expression looked downright terrifying.

Christina said calmly, "Nyla, Dominic's daughter, works at Moonlit Apothecary. But from what I've seen, it's Nyla who has a thing for Andrew-not the other way around."

Quinton shrugged dismissively. "Doesn't matter. As long as there's a connection, it's enough. Being close makes it easy to reach the prize. Besides, Dominic is not losing

in return, he gets a

anything. He trades a daer

and

multi-billion-dollar investment from

the Wrights.

"Call it selling her off if you want-but let's be real, getting that kind of price for a daughter? That's a win."

Chapter 968

Harvey stood up and said, "Mr. Wright, since the Weller family can't be of help, we'll be taking our leave."

However, Quinton raised his hand. "Hold on. I've got something to discuss with you, Mr. Weller. Shawn, Christina -go on ahead. I just need a private word with Mr. Weller."

Christina did not think twice and left right away.

However, Shawn frowned. He wondered why Quinton was pulling Harvey aside instead of discussing it with him, his most trusted man. He felt slighted, but he did not dare show it. With a tight expression, he quietly walked out.

Once everyone else had gone, only Harvey and a few of the Weller family's elders remained with Quinton.

Harvey crossed his arms. "Alright, Quinton. Now that it's just us, what is it you need? If you're still trying to drag the Weller family into a fight with Andrew, then forget it. That's not happening.

He locked eyes with Quinton, clearly on guard.

Quinton shook his head, his face cold and composed. "Relax, Harvey. I don't need you to take on Andrew. This is something else—just a small game. I need you to play along."

Harvey raised an eyebrow. "A game? Quinton, if it's something reasonable, I'm happy to help."

Quinton's grin turned sly. "It's about Christina. She's got a strong guard up. She's sharp and careful. If I want to win her over-completely make her mine-I'll need a little help from you."

Harvey's face darkened. "Quinton, you're not seriously trying to get your hands on Christina, are you?"

Quinton lifted a brow. "Is there a problem with that?"

Harvey gritted his teeth. "You're the heir to the Wrights in Blumedale. A man like you deserves a proper lady from high society-someone from your world. Christina's never going to be that."

"So please, drop this. She's been the one person I could never win, and if I can't have her, at least let me move on without this hanging over me."

Quinton let out a cold snort. "Too late, Harvey Christina is with me now. I'll be taking her back to

Blumedale soon, where she'll help me

grow my empire. So stop thinking about her. If you want a woman, I'll send you two-top-shelf,

guaranteed."

Still bitter, Harvey pushed back. "Quinton, this is an abuse of power, and you know it. Besides, Christina used to be Andrew's. Are you really okay with chasing after someone he's already been with?"

Quinton gave a twisted chuckle. "Funny enough, yeah-I actually like breaking in someone else's favorite toy. And trust me, I've got a good eye. Christina's got plenty of untapped potential."

Harvey took a deep breath. He knew there was no point in arguing anymore. He had tried reason, guilt, even throwing Andrew's name into the mix, but Quinton was hell-bent.

Twisted, entitled, and

arrogant-there was no stopping him now. "Fine," Harvey finally said.

"You'd better keep your word

though You promised me twoe

top-tier women-don't backout.

One isn't enough. If I'm helping with the stunt, I expect two."

Quinton grinned wickedly. "Two? Please. If you can handle it, I'll get you 200. You'll die buried in pleasure. What I need from you is simple set the stage for me to swoop in like a hero saving the damsel.

Harvey's eyes narrowed. "You mean... you want me to stage a confrontation with

the Stevens family and Christina, and then you come in to save the day?"

Quinton nodded with satisfaction. "Exactly. I'll make my entrance at just the right

moment to deliver the biggest emotional hit to that Ice Queen.

Chapter 969

Quinton muttered, "Christina's a tough one. She's still on guard and clearly doesn't trust me fully yet. So before I can truly get her under my thumb, I need to hit her with something big-something she won't see coming."

Harvey chuckled coldly. "Fine, Quinton. I'll play along. I've been itching to make a move on the Stevens family anyway."

Quinton nodded. "Good. Then wait for my signal, and act when the moment's right."

Meanwhile, over at Moonlit Apothecary, closing time had arrived.

"Dr. Aicker, Dr. Lloyd, I'm heading home for the night!" Nyla said cheerfully.

It was as if Camilla stealing her paycheck had never happened. Andrew smiled warmly. "Alright, Nyla. Get home safe."

Nyla gave him a bright smile and walked out with her bag swinging gently by her side.

Francesca watched her go and scoffed. "I can't believe how naive that girl is. She's being walked all over and doesn't even make a sound. Honestly, I don't get her."

Andrew spoke softly, "Nyla's a kind girl. She clearly doesn't want to burden us by sharing too much-she's probably thinking of her family."

Francesca snorted. "Thinking of them? Please. I'm telling you, her father— Dominic, head of the Goth family-is one of the worst people I've ever met. In our social circle, no one takes him seriously. He's a total joke.

"I really don't know how that girl manages to live with a vile stepmother and a father like that, especially without a biological mom around."

Andrew sighed lightly. "That's exactly why I say she's kind. To survive all that and still stay gentle... that's rare."

Francesca crossed her arms. "Sometimes kindness isn't a strength. When you let yourself get stepped on without ever pushing back, what's the point of it?"

Andrew chuckled. "Alright, don't get all worked up. I know you care about Nyla. Come on, we're off the clock. Let me treat you to some grilled skewers." Francesca's mood softened instantly. "Fine, but I'm ordering a lot of barbecue."

After feeding the busty little firecracker a table full of meat, it was already well past seven. When Andrew returned to his hilltop villa, his phone started ringing-it was Natasha.

"So, let me guess," Andrew said with a smirk. "All that drama Quinton stirred up was his attempt to rally the city's powers and come after me?"

Natasha's voice was ice-cold. "Exactly, darling. Just like you guessed, Quinton called in pretty much every heavyweight in Jayrodale, anyone who had a shred of influence.

"But in the end, that spoiled prince from Blumedale became the laughingstock of the night. No one gave a damn. I even told him off straight to his face and dropped a 'fuck you' on my way out."

Andrew laughed. "That sounds like you-no filter, no mercy."

Natasha gritted her teeth. "That bastard wanted to use us to take you down. He seriously needs to look in the mirror. Does he look like someone who's in our league?"

Andrew's eyes turned cold. "Besides you and our people, did anyone else agree to be his pawn? Anyone willing to die for him?"

Natasha let out a dry laugh. "Not a single one. Raymond practically ran off mid-meeting, looking like he was about to wet himself. Even

Harvey that slippery little

weasel-turned him down flat. He's

too scared to mess with you again."

Then, in a teasing voice, she added, "Darling, you don't even

dare

realize-around here, you're like a walking nightmare. No one come at you. Quinton offered up billions in investment deals, and not

one person gave a damn."

Chapter 970

Andrew chuckled mockingly. "Looks like Harvey and the rest have finally learned their lesson."

After hanging up the phone, Andrew did not spare another thought for Quinton. Right now, in Jayrodale, it did not matter whether it was Quinton or even his father -the head of one of the Five Apex Families-if Andrew did not feel like showing respect, he would not even blink.

Meanwhile, Francesca was in the shower, her curvy silhouette faintly visible behind the frosted glass. Andrew saw it every day, so he was completely unfazed by now.

Before the busty little troublemaker came out and started clinging to him again, Andrew made another call-this time to Aspen.

"What do you want?" Aspen snapped the moment she picked up. "Calling at this hour-don't you think that's incredibly rude?"

Andrew smirked. "It's barely past eight-how is that rude? Or wait... are you with some pretty boy over in Blumedale right now? You two in the middle of something?"

Aspen was furious and shouted, "You're disgusting, Andrew! Do you think everyone's as shameless and horny as you are? I'm at a yoga class, and it's with a female instructor. So if you've got nothing useful to say, don't go running your mouth."

Andrew's tone stayed flat. "Yoga's good for you. I heard it's a real man-slayer. Anyway, let's cut to the chase. Two things. First-what's the update on the Rhodes family?"

Aspen sneered. "What, you nervous now? Hmph. Kenny just wrapped up the funeral for Michael, so things are winding down over there. It won't be long now before it's officially over.

"And his eldest daughter, Sherilyn-you know, the Goldings' daughter-in-law— she's already making moves. Word is, she's pulling every string she has to flatten Jayrodale and bury you."

Andrew replied indifferently, "If the Goldings show up, I'll kill every last one of them. Second-check your account. I just wired more money for the new company's operations. Use it wisely."

With that, he hung up. He thought she was getting bolder by the day. It had only been three days without a smack, and she was ready to tear the roof off.

That spoiled heiress of the Bridgefields Stevens family had barely landed in Blumedale before she started acting out again. At this point, Andrew figured he would have to go there soon and put her in her place.

If he did not, she might really have the guts to burn through his money like it grew on trees.

At that exact moment, Aspen was doing yoga. As a high-society heiress with big ambitions and zero tolerance for mediocrity, she never wasted a second of her day not even after work.

Dressed in tight-fitting yoga pants, Aspen followed her instructor's guidance, lifting

one leg high in the air as her graceful curves stretched into full view.

Yoga, though originally a

philosophical practice from Asaimo, had become something entirely different in modern Holtrien. In theory, it was supposed to promote health and mindfulness

reality, it had become

hyper-sexualized.

Nowadays, if you scrolled through any short video platform, every clip of someone

doing yoga came with an endless stream of thirsty comments.

"Ms. Aspen, something bothering you?" her instructor asked, gently pressing

down on Aspen's raised leg, bending her deeper into the stretch.

The move put her body on full display-hips elevated, legs fully spread, suspended mid-air like a living sculpture.

Aspen winced slightly from the stretch but forced a small smile. "I'm fine, don't worry."

But in her mind, she was screaming-hurling every insult she could think of at Andrew. 'Tyrant. Capitalist pig. Arrogant asshole. Absolute menace...'