

# Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

## 1121-1130

Andrew replied coolly, "Alright, fine. I did do it on purpose. But the only reason I chose the room next to yours was so it'd be easier for you to wake me up in the mornings. Nothing more-so don't go overthinking it."

Aspen crossed her arms and let out a cold laugh. "You think I'm buying that?"

Andrew shrugged. "Whether you believe it or not doesn't matter. Even if I asked you to warm my bed at night, would you dare say no?"

"You..." Aspen was instantly at a loss for words. Her cheeks turned pink as she silently fumed.

She was sure that the bastard Andrew was still lusting after her body.

Andrew seemed to read her mind and scoffed, "You dumb woman. Don't flatter yourself. Do you really think the only reason I went through the trouble of snatching Serenity Villa from Zachary and picked the room next to yours was just to sleep with you?"

As Aspen let out a sarcastic chuckle, Andrew headed downstairs, adding, "I did it because you're weak. If you got yourself killed because of one careless mistake, I wouldn't even know where to find another secretary servant like you."

So, he did all this for her safety?

Aspen froze in place, struggling to believe it. Yet, when she replayed Andrew's earlier expression in her head, he really did not seem like he was scheming to get her into bed.

For some bizarre reason, her heart started beating faster as she wondered if Andrew was actually worried about her.

Aspen refused to accept that and gave her cheeks a light slap, muttering, "Snap out of it. Aspen, do not get moved by this. It's all in your head. He does one remotely nice thing, and you start catching feelings? Girl, this is textbook Stockholm syndrome. You need to stay grounded. Get a grip!"

Just then, Andrew's impatient voice echoed from downstairs. "Quit dragging your feet. Let's go!"

Aspen rushed down the stairs in her heels. She did not even realize that by now, Andrew's random commands had become something she instinctively obeyed without protest.

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Outside Serenity Villa, Xavier and his group were already growing restless. As soon as they saw Andrew come out, they strode up to him.

"Name your price. I want the house," Xavier said bluntly, his tone icy and direct.

Andrew smiled. "That doesn't seem very reasonable. I just bought the place why would I turn around and give it to you?"

A wealthy heir named Ethan Walker scoffed. Colonel Haywood giving you the time of day means he

some value in you. So you'des

better

show respect and cut the crap."

The others quickly chimed in. "Exactly. You're not the kind of guy who can handle a place like Serenity Villa."

"If you hand it over to Mr. Haywood now, you might earn some goodwill—which could turn into a fortune. Isn't that a sweet deal?"

"Kid, we know exactly who you are.

Right now, in Blumedale, you're basically being hunted-everyone wants a piece of you. So, hand over Serenity Villa to Colonel Haywood. That's your only option. Otherwise, if something happens to you, who is going to own the house? Ghosts?"

That last line was pure venom-a blatant, open-ended threat. However, Andrew simply shook his head.

Ethan scowled. "What the hell does that mean? Yes or no-give us a straight answer!"

Andrew looked him dead in the eye, then suddenly laughed. "My straight answer? Go screw yourself."

Ethan's face turned beet red. "What did you just say, you son of a—"

Aspen felt her scalp tingle. This devil really did not hold back at all.

After all, across from them stood a

in

in the military-that was

. If things escalated, the ne

army

actually get involved

"I said, go screw yourself. Do you have a hearing problem now?" Andrew replied

coldly, his eyes flashing with danger.

Unlike Aspen, he did not give a damn about titles like 'Colonel.' That meant nothing to him.

Ethan was about to explode and call reinforcements, but Xavier's face had gone dark as he barked, "Ethan, drop it!"

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Ethan refused to let it go. He pointed at Andrew, cursing under his breath. "Kid, I'm not gonna stoop to your level. But if I actually wanted to deal with you, you wouldn't even live to see the sunrise tomorrow. You better believe that."

Xavier stepped forward and looked down at Andrew with a calm, superior gaze. "I can see you've got some skill. Otherwise, you wouldn't have been able to stand up to my younger brother, Seth.

"But here's a word of advice-you've made too many enemies. And your attitude? It's practically begging for trouble. Sooner or later, it'll catch up to you."

Andrew raised a brow. "So that scumbag Seth is your little brother, huh? That means you're from the Haywoods."

Although Xavier tried maintaining a cool, aloof front, a hint of arrogance still slipped through his mask. "I'm the eldest son of the Haywoods. Go ask anyone on the streets of Blumedale-see if there's a soul who doesn't know the name Xavier Haywood."

Andrew shook his head. "Sorry, but I'm not bored enough to waste time asking strangers about you. Now move. Serenity Villa isn't for sale."

A shadow of menace crossed Xavier's face. "You sure you don't want to reconsider? I'm willing to offer you a price so astronomical, you and your descendants wouldn't be able to spend it in ten lifetimes.

"On top of that, I'll make all your problems in Blumedale disappear. In other words, give me the house, and I'll save your life."

A playful smirk tugged at his lips, confident that no low-level nobody like Andrew could resist such a golden offer. After all, Xavier had pull in the military and was backed by the full force of the Haywoods. To him, Andrew's fate could be decided with a single gesture.

Yet, Andrew just laughed. "Colonel Xavier, gotta say you really think you're hot shit, huh? You've gone through all this trouble for Serenity Villa. I'm guessing it's because of Ms. Phelan, right?"

Xavier did not deny it. He chuckled proudly. "Good. Saves me the trouble of explaining. Luna is the moon in the heavens, and I, Xavier, believe I'm no less than the sun itself.

"The sun and moon have always belonged together. So, if Luna wants something, I'll make damn sure she gets it."

Andrew outright laughed. "Luna, sure, you could maybe compare her to the moon -she's got something special going on. But you? No offense, Colonel Haywood, but maybe look in the mirror before calling yourself the sun."

Xavier's pleasant mood immediately shattered. His face turned stormy. "Are you mocking me?"

Andrew answered coolly, "Not mocking. Just pointing out that you're seriously overestimating

yourself Throughout history, vernet

few have dared to compare themselves to the sun. And you, Colonel Haywood, you're really just putting on a show."

With that, Andrew strolled off with Aspen at his side, not even glancing at Xavier's furious expression.

The young heirs behind him grit their teeth, their eyes burning with venom. One asked, "Mr. Haywood, since that punk clearly doesn't know his place, why not just end him already? Simple."

Another agreed. "Yeah, he just disrespected Colonel Haywood to his face. That's basically a death wish."

"Mr. Haywood, among the younger generation in Blumedale, you've always stood miles above the rest. Aside from Lady Aurora, who could even compare?"

"This Andrew guy? He's a clown. A broke little nobody throwing shade just because he can't have what you have..."

Their flattery came flooding in like a pack of desperate lapdogs, but Xavier's face did not soften in the slightest. In fact, his expression grew darker-so cold and stormy it felt like the air itself had turned to ice.

"Very well. Very well," Xavier said, his voice low and dangerous.

He hissed, "In Blumedale, aside from the old farts who still hold power, there's hardly anyone in the younger generation who dares disrespect me. I tried playing nice. He didn't listen. So I've got nothing else to say. When his body turns up in a ditch, Serenity Villa will still end up in my hands."

The words were delivered casually, but Xavier's face was slowly curling into a twisted grin. The young heirs all shivered slightly, a single thought rising in every one of their

minds-that punk named Above's

Lloyd was already as good as dead. Content belongs to

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

The red Ferrari sped down from the mountaintop of The Sovereign Residences, tires slicing through the breeze with precision.

Aspen sat in the passenger seat, hesitating for a while before finally speaking. "That Xavier... turns out he's Seth's older brother, and even worse-he's a full-blown colonel. Andrew, a colonel in the military is basically a god to most people. You'd better... watch your back."

Andrew hit the brakes and stopped right in front of the gated entrance of The Sovereign Residences. He turned with a grin. "Aspen, are you worried about my safety?"

Aspen scoffed, gritting her teeth a little. "Worried is a stretch. I'm just giving you a heads-up. And don't act like it's nothing. We haven't even cleaned up the mess with Seth and Mr. Parks."

She added, "And now you've provoked the Haywoods' golden boy too? All I can say is way to add fuel to the fire."

Andrew said flatly, "One loser or 100 losers, there's no real difference."

At that moment, the two martial arts guards at the gate stepped forward to open the doors. Their expressions were mixed as they offered a reluctant bow.

Andrew did not drive through immediately. Instead, he chuckled. "Not long ago, you two wouldn't even let us in, and now I'm the new owner of Serenity Villa. Must sting a little, huh?"

The guards exchanged glances. They said nothing, but their expressions said it all —yeah, it stung, and they thought the turn of events simply did not make sense.

Andrew smiled wider and said, "Don't fall for me—I'm just a legend."

With that, he floored the accelerator and drove off in a flash.

Aspen sat in the passenger seat and buried her face in her hands.

What now? This man was downright embarrassing, and she did not want to be seen in the same car with him.

Back at the entrance of The Sovereign Residences, the two guards could not help but sigh.

"Man, strange things are happening left and right these days," one muttered.

"Seriously. I didn't expect Serenity Villa to change owners this quickly. You think that guy might be some hidden big shot?"

"Hidden my ass," the other scoffed. "It's either dumb luck or something shady going on behind the scenes."

"I'm with you. When Mr. Fischer owned Serenity Villa, no one dared question it. But now, some no-name kid has the keys? No idea if that's a good thing or a disaster waiting to happen..."

Andrew had no idea people were already gossiping behind his back about how he had taken over Serenity Villa. Then again, if he had known, he would not have cared either way.

Half an hour later, he stepped into the official administrative tower in Blumedale. He was there on invitation from Derek himself.

Aspen had already driven off in her own car to handle matters at Supreme Capital Group.

"Mr. McCormick's been waiting on you for 30 minutes, Mr. Lloyd," a sharp voice greeted him before he even made it inside the office.

"Seems like your ego might be even bigger than that of The Five Apex Families-or the Three Titans, for that matter."

It was none other than Derek's secretary, Chantelle. Unsurprisingly, she still carried that frosty, emotionless vibe. And as usual, she came in with claws out.

Andrew chuckled. "Ms. Garcia, you look stunning today."

Chantelle's expression did not budge. "I didn't dress up for you."

Andrew's smile did not waver. He clicked his tongue and said, "Oh, I know. You're dressed up for Mr. McCormick, right? That man's taste-flawless as always."

Chantelle's cold face froze for a

second. Her eyes narrowed as she said, "Andrew, Mr. McCormick is a married man, and he's the governor. You should really watch your jokes—unless you want to end up in prison without even realizing how you got there."

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Andrew said indifferently, "I was just being honest. I don't see how that counts as a joke. And besides, didn't you dress up to please Mr. McCormick's eyes?"

Chantelle, who usually stayed cool as ice, immediately felt her temper flare. "You..."

Andrew could not be bothered to deal with her. Without waiting for any announcement, he pushed open Derek's office door and swaggered in.

"Uncouth brute..." Chantelle gritted her teeth and followed behind him with a scowl.

Derek's office, just like his reputation, was simple and understated. Aside from two traditional landscape paintings and a few framed family photos, Andrew did not see a single decorative item inside.

"Mr. Lloyd, you're here-please, have a seat!" Derek stood up with a warm smile the moment Andrew walked in.

Andrew chuckled. "Mr. McCormick, you're the top official in Gabo Creek Province. If you're personally welcoming me, I might start getting a big head. You go ahead and sit—I'll manage just fine."

Derek took his seat and casually poured a cup of tea for Andrew.

Andrew sat down in the chair beside him without the slightest hesitation and lifted the teacup for a sip.

Chantelle watched it all in silence, her eyes nearly spitting fire. She thought not only was this guy rude, he was completely uncultured. If someone like him could run a business in Blumedale, it had to be pure dumb luck, or he was just another loud-mouthed, nouveau riche nobody.

Her disdain for Andrew grew even stronger.

Derek, on the other hand, clearly appreciated Andrew's lack of pretense and smiled. "Mr. Lloyd, how's that public project your company took on during the charity event coming along?"

Andrew set the teacup down and shook his head. "Total disaster-practically no progress at all."

Derek did not look the least bit angry or surprised. In fact, he chuckled and said, "Oh? Did you run into some difficulties? Or is there something else going on? Tell me."

Andrew answered directly,

"Internally, we've had zero issues at

Supreme Capital Group. Our

strength speaks for itself. But while

we've been solid on our end, the external problems? Those are massive.

"Like the Goldings, the Haywoods, and that rich brat Quinton Wright-Mr. McCormick, you wouldn't believe it. Every single one of them seems hell-bent on trying to bury me alive!

"So if I can't even guarantee my own safety, how the hell am I supposed to focus and get things done for you?"

He looked genuinely aggrieved, and Chantelle's disdain deepened. What a pitiful excuse of a man. She had known that he would not last three days before crawling to Derek to whine and beg.

Derek's expression darkened. His tone was cold as he asked, "Is that true? Ms. Garcia, is there any merit to what Mr. Lloyd is saying? I want a full report—now." Chantelle replied in a steady tone, "Mr. McCormick, Supreme Capital Group has indeed been facing a number of challenges. But as far as I know, most of them were caused by Mr. Lloyd himself.



"And the situation isn't nearly as dramatic as he makes it sound. It's far from being a disaster. It's more like a few local families in Blumedale got jealous after seeing Supreme Capital land the contract, so they started meddling."

Derek gave a sharp snort. "The

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project we handed to Supreme Capital is crucial. It's tied directly to public welfare. Anyone trying to sabotage that for personal reasons clearly doesn't understand the bigger picture—and that's utterly reckless."

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Derek said coldly, "These elite families and old-money clans have been feasting

off Blumedale like it's their private banquet. They think they can gorge themselves for life, rule without question, and remain unchallenged.

"But as long as I'm the one calling the shots in this province, they don't get to do as they please!"

Chantelle was startled. She had not expected Andrew to actually ignite Derek's fury. She silently cursed, "This idiot is already useless on his own, and now even worse, he's using Mr. McCormick as his shield? It's despicable!"

Derek turned to Andrew. "Mr. Lloyd, don't worry. Those arrogant bastards—I'll handle them and make sure you get justice. But the reason I brought you here today is something more urgent. There's a matter I need your help with."

Andrew lifted a hand and said, "Mr. McCormick, say the word. If I can help, I will."

Derek nodded. "Here's the situation—an old friend of mine suddenly found himself fighting for his life. We've brought in nearly every top medical expert in Blumedale, but nothing's worked so far. So I was hoping, Mr. Lloyd, that you could step in personally."

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "Mr. McCormick, you knew I practiced medicine?"

Derek smiled with a knowing look. "Mr. Lloyd, you may not know this, but the mayor of Jayrodale, Mark Thatcher, is one of my former students. He's told me plenty about you.

"And truthfully, when I awarded that high-profile project to your company without hesitation, most of that decision came down to Mark's recommendation."

Andrew gave a small smile. "Is that so? Now I'm genuinely curious-how exactly did Mr. Thatcher describe me to you?"

Derek paused for a moment, then slowly said Mark's exact words were: 'Professor, this young man is rare genius, brilliant in both strategy and strength, flawless in character. He is a true national treasure. Mr. Lloyd, that's about as high of a recommendation as one can get.'

For once, Andrew's face turned red. He could not believe Mark would say something so outrageously accurate. Now look-he was getting roped into even more trouble.

Chantelle let out a soft snort of laughter from the side. "A 'national treasure' is someone who can defend the nation in battle and bring peace at home. Tell me, Mr. Lloyd... which part of you even remotely fits that title?"

Andrew stood and smiled. "All of me, actually-every single part."

Derek laughed heartily and clapped him on the shoulder. "Good! Bold and unapologetic, and you speak with no pretense. Even if you're not a national treasure yet, you're certainly a top-tier talent!"

Chantelle's disdain could not have been more obvious now. The sheer shamelessness of this man was ridiculous, and she believed that one day, Derek would see it too-that this man was nothing more than a puffed-up pretender with no substance.

A 'national treasure'? In Chantelle's mind, that title held serious weight. Only a handful deserved it-like the heads of Chetvine's most powerful families, the founders of the ancient

houses, or the patriarchs of the royal clans.

Even Derek himself did not qualify.

Well, there was one who would qualify for the title The Dragon Prince of the Lloyds, the legendary prodigy who once made waves across Chetvine and Holtrien.

She had never seen him in person, but to Chantelle, he was the perfect man— someone she had admired from afar and dreamed of countless times in silence.

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Chantelle was behind the wheel while Andrew rode along in the passenger seat as they headed out to treat Derek's old friend, George Keller.

The atmosphere inside the car was tense, with Chantelle's resting expression as frosty and detached as ever, her face practically carved from ice.

Andrew was not the kind of guy to throw warmth at a wall of cold, so he simply stayed quiet, staring out the window at the passing streets. After holding back for a while, Chantelle finally could not resist and let out a mocking laugh.

"Mr. Lloyd, what a clever move-create your own mess, then try to get Mr. McCormick to step in and clean it up for you. Don't you think you're playing with fire?"

Andrew smiled. "Playing with fire? Nah, I don't see it that way. At this point, I'm pretty much one of Mr. McCormick's trusted men. So if the little guy's getting targeted, doesn't it make perfect sense for the boss to step in and fix it?"

Chantelle was momentarily stunned before letting out a scoff. "Andrew, do you have any idea how many people in Blumedale line up just to get a minute of Mr. McCormick's time?"

"It's a line long enough to stretch all the way to Jayrodale. And in that line, there are plenty who are smarter, more capable, and many times more respectable than you."

She paused, then turned slightly to glance at him with narrowed eyes before continuing. "The only reason Mr. McCormick picked you was because of his respect for Mr. Thatcher from Jayrodale. And let's be honest-you got lucky and caught a break.

"But luck only lasts so long. If you don't have the strength to back it up, you'll get tossed aside when things cool off. That's your fate."

Andrew shrugged. "I'm doing work for Mr. McCormick. So when I run into roadblocks, asking for help isn't exactly outrageous, is it? And besides, I'm not showing up empty-handed. I already agreed to treat his old friend-if that's not pulling my weight, I don't know what is."

Chantelle blinked, and then her smirk grew even more mocking. "You don't seriously believe Mr. McCormick expects you to actually heal Mr. Keller Senior, do you? He's just doing what's expected of him. His hands are tied.

"Every renowned doctor in Blumedale has already visited the Keller residence, and not a single one had any solutions. So what makes you think you're any different?"

Andrew smiled. "So what I'm hearing is-you don't think much of my medical skills, Ms. Garcia?"

Chantelle let out a cold snort, saying nothing, but her expression made her opinion crystal clear. Medicine and martial arts were considered twin pillars of prestige in today's world.

Sure, Andrew might know a thing or two, but in a city like Blumedale, where elite physicians gathered from across the nation, his level of skill was hardly worth a second glance.

Andrew's voice turned casual. "Well then, how about a wager? If I cure Mr. Keller Senior, you owe me one request any request."

Chantelle narrowed her eyes and replied icily, "And if you fail, you'll withdraw from the project Mr. McCormick granted your company, and you'll vanish from his world entirely-no more asking for favors. Can you deliver on that?"

Andrew grinned. "Deal. You've got yourself a bet."

Chantelle was momentarily stunned. That condition was not some minor forfeit-it

had real consequences. Yet, he agreed so easily.

As she wondered if Andrew might actually be capable of curing

George, she shook her head, brushing the thought aside. She concluded that she was overthinking it. After all, the best doctors in Blumedale, legends like Mosby, had already visited the Keller residence. If there had been any cure, they would have acted by now.

Meanwhile, what did Andrew have other than a big mouth?

Soon, the car pulled up at the gates of the Keller residence.

Chantelle stepped out and offered a sharp warning. "Listen-this is the Keller family. Among the Five Apex Families, they're the most discreet, but also the most deeply rooted.

"Mr. Keller Senior is one of Mr. McCormick's closest confidants. Our visit today is mainly out of respect, just to offer well wishes. Do not act out of turn and embarrass Mr. McCormick."

Andrew replied calmly, "This visit is about treating a patient, and when it comes to treatment, I call the shots. So from this point forward, you take your orders from me."

With that, he did not even wait to see Chantelle's furrowed brow or her jaw practically locking with frustration. Andrew simply strode forward and

stepped confidently into the Keller residence.

## **Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)**

Chantelle could not lash out, so she gritted her teeth and quickly followed behind. Inwardly, she made a mental note to report this arrogant clown to Derek later. To her, Andrew was reckless, so full of hot air, and completely unworthy of trust- nothing but a showboating jester.

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Inside the main hall of the Keller residence, the place was packed with people coming and going. A group of specialists and renowned doctors stood gathered, their brows furrowed as they exchanged anxious whispers.

One commented, "Mr. Keller Senior's condition is strange-truly bizarre!"

"Exactly. His entire face is paralyzed. Even his tongue won't move. He can't swallow even a spoonful of medicine!"

Another chimed in, "And the worst part? No one can get within three feet of him. The second anyone tries, they get attacked-some left with cracked skulls, others... well, some didn't make it."

"Jeez! That serious? Who would dare try to treat him now? No matter how much the Keller family is offering, it's not worth your life!"

Hearing all that chatter, Andrew's eyes glinted with amusement, and a mysterious smile curved across his lips.

Chantelle frowned. "What are you smiling at?"

Andrew replied, "I'm smiling because I think I've already figured out the nature of Mr. Keller Senior's condition."

Chantelle's expression turned even colder. "Andrew, it's one thing to spout nonsense in public, but to run your mouth in someone else's house? I'm warning you-don't act like a fool. It's humiliating."

He had not even examined the patient and was already claiming he knew the diagnosis? It was completely hopeless.

Andrew narrowed his eyes. "Chantelle, your attitude is starting to piss me off. You've got no idea how long I've been tolerating you."

Without caring about the storm brewing on her face, Andrew snorted coldly and added, "I've decided that once I cure Mr. Keller Senior, my request is that you strip for me."

Chantelle's always-composed face turned beet red in an instant. Her eyes shot daggers. "What did you just say?"

Andrew met her gaze with a smirk full of menace. "I said, when I win our bet, you owe me a favor, and I've decided I want you to strip down right in front of me."

Chantelle was furious. She had not expected this bastard to actually lust after her body.

But before she could explode, a middle-aged man from the Keller family approached with a stiff smile. "Ms. Garcia, you're here."

Chantelle shot Andrew a vicious glare before nodding to the man. "Mr. McCormick asked me to check on Mr. Keller Senior. Mr. Keller, how is he doing?"

The man, Logan Keller-the Keller

family's eldest son-looked grimet

"My father's condition is

deteriorating fast. If this keeps up... we fear the worst."

Chantelle opened her mouth, ready to offer a few polite words of comfort.

However, Andrew jumped in, asking, "How long has it been since the symptoms started?"

Logan blinked, clearly confused by this unfamiliar face. Still, he answered, "Almost three days now."

Andrew nodded. "During those three days, has he been unable to sleep, and his eyes bloodshot? Maybe even murmuring to himself now and then?"

Logan's eyes widened. "Yes... That's exactly right."

Andrew continued, "And I'm guessing the most alarming partús that he suddenly flies into violent rages, his body stiffens, and he starts attacking anyone nearby, right?"

Logan's expression darkened as his guard instantly went up. "How do you know that?"

The fact that George had gone into violent fits had not been disclosed outside the family—they had kept that under wraps.

Publicly, the Keller family only admitted that George was seriously ill. After all, if word got out that he had gone berserk and injured people, it would be a stain on the family's prestige.

Chantelle snapped, "Andrew, you're out of line! Who gave you the right to eavesdrop on private matters?"

Andrew replied flatly, "I wasn't eavesdropping. I simply picked up on some clues from the discussions happening just now."

Logan stared, dumbfounded. "You deduced my father's symptoms... from that?"

He could not believe it, and his face clearly said, "Is this guy for real?"

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Andrew waved a hand dismissively. "I don't have time to explain everything to you, and even if I did, you wouldn't understand it anyway. You just need to know this—if you want to save your father, then do exactly what I tell you to."

Logan looked uncertain and shot a quick glance at Chantelle as if to ask, "Who is this guy you brought along, and what's with the ego?"

Chantelle's face darkened. "Mr. Keller, this man is Andrew Lloyd—he came at Mr. McCormick's recommendation. But honestly, you don't have to take him seriously. Just carry on with your own plans—ignore him."

However, Logan shook his head and turned toward Andrew. "Dr. Lloyd, go ahead. Tell me what you need. As long as it'll help my father, I'll make it happen."

His respectful tone stunned Chantelle. She wondered if Logan was out of his mind for believing Andrew just like that.

Andrew smiled. "My request is actually pretty simple. If I'm going to treat your father, I expect to be compensated. So, I want access to all the rare herbs and elixirs your Keller family has stored."

Logan thought it over, then nodded. "That's not an issue. We've got a few rare items in the vault."

Andrew added, "Bring them all. I'll pick just one."

Logan immediately gave the order without hesitation, completely cooperative.

Chantelle could not hold back any longer. "Mr. Keller, you're set to become the future head of the Keller family. How can you place your trust in Andrew so easily? That's incredibly reckless—it's nothing like the careful judgment you're known for."

As George's successor, Logan was destined to lead the most fearsome of the Five Apex Families. If he were this gullible, the Keller family would be doomed. Nonetheless, Chantelle knew full well that Logan's gentle exterior was deceptive. Among Blumedale's

younger generation, there were few who could truly match him. Of course, that was without counting the heirs of the Three Titans.

Logan chuckled and replied, "Ms. Garcia, before I answer that, I need one thing from you-please promise me you won't get angry when I say it."

Chantelle frowned, unsure where this was going, and coldly said, "Go ahead. I don't get angry easily."

Logan glanced at Andrew, a sly smile playing on his lips. "To be honest, the reason I believe Dr. Lloyd might actually be legit... is because I overheard your conversation earlier.

"A man who dares to ask you to strip for him is either completely insane and suicidal, or he's the kind of calm, calculating beast who hides his strength and plays the fool. And I'd rather believe Dr. Lloyd is the second kind."

The moment those words left his mouth, Chantelle was stunned. These shameless men were treating her body like part of some private bet.

Andrew laughed out loud. "Mr. Keller, well said. You've got sharp eyes."

Logan smiled back. "Dr. Lloyd, you flatter me. Compared to your guts, I've got a long way to go."

To be bold enough to demand a glimpse of Chantelle's body? Logan could not help but admire him.

In Blumedale, Chantelle was no ordinary woman. She was Derek's top aide-his trusted right hand.

She was the perfect paradox: cold as ice, and breathtakingly beautiful. No man could look at her and not be tempted. Yet, temptation was useless as no one would dare to act on it.

Few could even handle her rarely-displayed but terrifying combat skills. Yet,

Andrew had walked straight into the fire without hesitation.

Even Logan, born into power, had to give the man credit.

Just then, a loud shout erupted from deep within the estate, followed by the sounds of a violent scuffle.

Logan's face changed. He sprinted forward. "Damn it, Father's having another episode!"



Andrew and Chantelle immediately followed close behind. They rushed into the inner chambers and found the space deserted-except for two people.

An elderly man with silver hair, dressed in a light robe, stood at the center. His features strongly resembled Logan's, though his presence was far more commanding.

This was the Keller family patriarch, George.

The second figure was none other than Mosby, the famed doctor of Blumedale, whom Andrew had once seen at the Phelan estate.

Mosby stood with one arm behind his back, the other extended as he gripped a few silver needles. His voice rose in a desperate shout, "Mr. Keller Senior, please-calm yourself! If you don't calm down, I can't treat you!" sŵnovel

George's face was twisted with tension, his eyes clouded by madness. He did not hear a word

Mosby said. Instead, he roared and

launched both fists at the doctor in a full on rage.

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Logan instinctively stepped forward, panicked, ready to intervene. However, Andrew stopped him. "No rush. Mr. Keller Senior needs to burn off some of that energy first. That way, it'll be easier for me to treat him afterward."

Logan's voice trembled. "Dr. Lloyd, my father is not going to get hurt, right?"

Andrew smirked. "Relax. Mr. Keller Senior will be fine. If anyone's in danger, it's probably Dr. Lake."

Mosby and George had already gone head-to-head in combat. However, George looked completely possessed, growling like a wild beast, clearly stripped of rationality. His physical strength was nothing short of monstrous.

Every vase, table, and piece of furniture in the room that stood in his way was shattered to dust under his fists. He held nothing back.

Chantelle's eyes widened. "That strength... Has Mr. Keller Senior reached martial king level?"

Logan sighed, conflicted. "That was originally a tightly guarded secret of the Keller family. No outsiders were supposed to know. But now that he's lost control like this... there's no point hiding it anymore.

"Yes. My father was attempting to break through into the martial king level. He wanted to become the strongest leader in our family's history-but that's what caused this."

Andrew's tone turned cold. "So your father isn't sick at all. He just went off course during his training. This is energy corruption-a botched cultivation that's turned inward. You've been wasting your time bringing in those so-called medical experts.

"In the end, not only did they fail to help him, but a few of them might end up losing their lives right here."

Logan forced a bitter smile. "That's pretty much the situation. Dr. Lloyd... do you have a solution?"

Andrew shrugged. "Sure, I do. But for now, let's enjoy Dr. Lake's performance."

Chantelle warned sharply, "Andrew, don't act so smug. If even Dr. Lake can't handle it, then you should be the last person talking. If you get yourself killed trying to act important, no one will bother saving you."

Andrew replied lightly, "Don't worry, Ms. Garcia. I'll protect my life very carefully- for the sake of seeing you naked."

Chantelle was livid. Was this bastard really so confident he was going to win that bet?

Logan discreetly wiped the sweat off his forehead. In his heart, there were only three words to describe Andrew: Lust-driven lunatic.

Just then, Mosby and George's fight neared its climax. Mosby was clearly struggling, forced to retreat with each blow, shouting in frustration.

"Mr. Keller Senior, please! You must calm down! If you keep this up, I'll have no choice but to hurt you!"

Andrew said calmly, "Dr. Lake, if you can't take it anymore, just say so. There's no point to all this 'I'll be forced to hurt you' talk. It's not like you actually have the ability to do anything to Mr. Keller Senior."

Mid-fight, Mosby gritted his teeth and glanced toward the voice. When he saw who it was, his face immediately darkened.

He scoffed, "You again, you arrogant little cheat. The Keller family doesn't need you meddling here. As long as I am present, Mr. Keller Senior is in good hands. So go back to wherever you came from!"

Andrew did not seem offended at all. He smiled and said, "Dr. Lake, you might want to focus while you're still on your feet because I'm not sure those old bones of yours can handle what's coming."

Mosby scoffed and stopped holding back-he brought out both fists and launched a full counterattack. His

tone was icy. "I've ruled Ben

medical world for 30 years. I've seen every bizarre illness under the sun. Mr. Keller Senior's condition is tricky, sure, but not beyond me

With a shout, he drove multiple silver needles into George's acupoints. George, who had been rampaging wildly, suddenly froze mid-punch. His body locked into place as if hit with an invisible pause button.

Chantelle clapped her hands, smiling. "Dr. Lake, impressive as always!"

Mosby heard the applause coming from Derek's prized secretary and could not help feeling proud. He stroked his beard and prepared to offer a few modest remarks.

Just then, George's body jolted violently, and the silver needles that had pierced his acupoints were ejected one by one under the surge of powerful inner energy.

Mosby's face twisted. "No!"

He spun around, trying to retreat-but it was too late. George, now completely free and berserk, lunged like a raging bull.

His fists came crashing down like twin avalanches, slamming square into Mosby's chest.

A torrent of blood burst from Mosby's mouth, painting the air. The smugness on his face vanished in an instant, and all that remained was horror and agony.

## **Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)**

Logan shouted, his voice cracking, "Dr. Lake, get out of the way!"

Mosby forced himself to stay conscious, pried his eyes open, and immediately saw death rushing at him. He screamed, "Mr. Keller Senior, please spare me!"

However, George had already charged in, eyes blood-red, and a brutal hand chop was aimed straight for Mosby's skull. If that blow landed, the so-called legend of Blumedale would die right here, with his head cracked open.

Chantelle gritted her teeth and moved in without hesitation. Her long leg, clad in sleek, tailored slacks, swept out in a horizontal arc.

George stumbled back two steps, let out a low, guttural growl, and immediately lunged at her instead.

Logan shouted from the side, trying to talk his father down, yet it was useless. George had fully descended into a killing trance.

"Dr. Lake, get clear!" Chantelle barked as she spun forward. Her pale, graceful hand landed squarely on George's shoulder, and with a sharp twist, she executed a perfect shoulder throw.

Andrew stood at a distance, watching with interest. He thought, 'Not bad. She's got real skill. That classic move was executed with impressive control.'

Still, it was not enough to take George down. So, Andrew called out, "Ms. Garcia, step aside. I'll handle this. Otherwise, someone's going to get hurt-and that'll be a real headache."

Chantelle's face was tense. "Do you seriously think I'm easily injured like you? Letting you step in is as good as sending you to your deathbed!"

Andrew replied flatly, "If you won't listen, suit yourself."

Logan quickly added, "Dr. Lloyd, don't underestimate Ms. Garcia. She's not just Mr. McCormick's secretary, but she also oversees his entire security detail."

Andrew smirked. "And? Even security breaks when they run into someone truly powerful."

Right after he said it, Chantelle let out a muffled grunt.

George had landed a devastating punch, shaking her core. Blood trickled from the corner of her lips as she stumbled back, too stunned to reengage.

Though consumed by madness, George's martial prowess remained razor-sharp. After knocking Chantelle aside, he turned his fury toward Andrew.

With a flick of his wrist, Andrew revealed two gleaming gold needles. They shimmered briefly before he launched them like lightning toward George's eyes. At the same time, he stomped forward.

The marble floor beneath the Keller residence cracked under his feet as he shot forward like a missile.

Mosby had already retreated nearly 100 meters, catching his breath and sneering. "Even I couldn't match Mr. Keller Senior. Andrew, you're asking to die."

Chantelle wiped the blood from her lips and shouted furiously, "Andrew, fall back! Are you trying to get yourself killed?"

George had crushed her, yet Andrew was charging in blind? That was a death wish.

Grinding her teeth, Chantelle made a decision-if he really was about to get himself killed, she would step in and save him. She could not let him die under the Keller roof.

How could she possibly explain that to Derek?

Andrew's twin needles pierced

through the air, forcing George back half a step. Then, in perfect timing, he struck-his palms hitting both George's upper and lower energy cores with pinpoint precision.

What no one noticed was that two more golden needles had silently embedded into George's body at those same points.

Suddenly, George froze mid-lunge. His wild eyes began to clear, and sanity flickered back into them. Then, he collapsed backward in a stiff, controlled fall.

Logan rushed forward and caught him. "Father! Are you alright?"

George's voice was weak but steady. "Logan... I lost control again, didn't I? I have lived an honorable life, but I caused too much bloodshed in my old age. If I can't be cured, don't let me hurt anyone else. Let me go peacefully."

Logan's voice trembled. "Don't worry, Father. I found Dr. Lloyd. If he can stop you, then he can cure you."

Both Chantelle and Mosby stood frozen, shocked, disbelieving that Andrew had taken down George.

How?

They were both top-level martial

practitioners. Chantelle herself was

already a semi-martial king, but George had overpowered her in seconds. Meanwhile, Andrew had

not only survived the encounter but also subdued George.

Mosby's face twisted, stormy and sour. Then, he let out a cold laugh. "Well,

Andrew, you've got some nerve. Always showing up just in time to steal the credit, huh?"

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