

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1136

"Andrew, do you even realize you're playing with fire right now?" Chantelle, just about to start the car, froze and turned to him with furious eyes.

Andrew raised a brow with a smirk. "What's wrong? Is the great Ms. Garcia-the darling of Mr. McCormick-planning to go back on her word now?"

Chantelle stiffened, her face darkened, clearly ready to argue back. Before she could, a crowd had already gathered around the vehicle.

"Dr. Lloyd, please wait-we have some medical puzzles we'd love your insight on!"

Someone said, "Your skills today were extraordinary, Dr. Lloyd. I'd be honored to call myself your student!"

"Who would've thought that someone like you would appear in Blumedale? One day, Dr. Lloyd, you'll be leading all of Gabo Creek Province's medical field!"

Even Andrew had not expected this wave of praise. These elite doctors had specifically come to celebrate his success, and he was rather amused.

"Please, everyone, make way. My medical skills really aren't anything special." Then, he glanced sideways at Mosby, whose face had turned a sickly shade, and added, "They're just slightly better than Dr. Lake's, that's all."

Mosby let out a harsh snort. "Don't get cocky, Andrew! If I'd been allowed near Mr. Keller Senior, you wouldn't have had the chance to show off!"

Andrew replied coolly, "Whatever you say, Dr. Lake. All I know is—you failed to save him and nearly got yourself killed in the process."

Mosby exploded. "You're deliberately trying to ruin my reputation! Fine! One month from now, at the Gabo Creek Grand Medical Summit, which is held every

five years-

"You and I, on stage. We'll settle this once and for all!"

Andrew scoffed. "Sorry, I'm not into childish showboating for fame."

Mosby sneered. "That's just coward talk. Say what you want!"

An older physician piped up, "Dr. Lloyd, with your skills, I'd say you have to participate in the summit! The prize for winning it is insane! They say even thousand-year medicinal herbs could be part of the reward!"

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The moment Andrew heard the mention of thousand-year medicinal herbs, a gleam lit up in his eyes. He said, "Alright, Dr. Lake. You've got yourself a deal! Better brush up on your skills this month because I'm going to flatten you."

Mosby sneered. "We'll see who ends up flat. Before you showed up, I was the top medical figure for all the families in Blumedale. And now that you've ruined everything for me, don't blame me when I show no mercy!"

Andrew laughed dismissively. "You're going to have to try harder than that to scare me. If you want to be ruthless, I can play that game better than anyone."

Without giving Mosby another look, Andrew gestured for Chantelle to drive.

Mosby stood there fuming, an uncontrollable wave of frustration bubbling up. He glanced around at the doctors and scholars nearby and scoffed, "Bunch of amateurs. I'm ashamed to even breathe the same air as you."

That triggered a chorus of anger. Someone hissed, "Dr. Lake, you used to act high and mighty, and we had no choice but to follow your lead. But now that Andrew's here-young, brilliant, and humble-we don't have to put up with your crap anymore!"

Another chimed in, "Exactly! Dr. Lloyd just showed up and completely crushed you. Why would anyone still kiss your ass? Get lost already!"

Mosby's face flushed red, his jaw clenched so tight it twitched. These were the very people he had invited, hoping they would witness Andrew embarrass himself. Instead, he had ended up making a fool of himself.

Fuming, he turned with a huff and stormed off.

Nonetheless, the truth was clear that Andrew's reputation as a miracle doctor was bound to spread across Blumedale, and that meant only one thing: Mosby's name, position, and prestige were officially in danger.

This was exactly why Mosby must find ways to get rid of Andrew.

"Mr. Golding Senior, this is Mosby Lake. I'm calling on behalf of the bounty. I want

to personally add another 100 million to the contract on Andrew's head."

He growled into his phone, "Just make sure it stays anonymous. No one is to know this offer came from me-understood?"

"Dr. Lake, if you want to add more, go ahead," Richard replied coldly over the phone. "Money talks-and the more you offer, the faster that punk dies."

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"Andrew, going up against Mosby brings you nothing but trouble," Chantelle said with a frown as they drove.

Andrew's tone turned sharp. "He's the one who keeps provoking me—I didn't ask for this."

Chantelle shook her head. "Even so, you should've handled it with more discretion. Mosby's been in Blumedale for years. His connections, his influence- you can't just sweep that aside.

"Even if you want to challenge his reputation in the medical field, it doesn't have to happen overnight."

Andrew scoffed. "Mosby? A respected authority? Let me be blunt, Ms. Garcia- you won't believe me, but to me, Mosby's just another loudmouthed nobody."

Chantelle blinked, then let out a laugh, though it was laced with anger. "You're right. I don't believe you."

Sure, Andrew had performed brilliantly today by saving George, and it was indeed an impressive feat. However, to disregard Mosby altogether after just one

success?

To her, that was not confidence-it was arrogance. He was bound to crash and burn at this rate.

"This isn't the route back to the government office, is it?" Andrew asked, glancing at her sideways with a knowing smile. "Don't tell me you've forgotten- we're supposed to be heading to my place."

Chantelle slammed on the brakes right there in the middle of traffic. Ignoring the honking horns and shouting from surrounding drivers, she turned and glared at him coldly. "You seriously still want to see my body?"

Andrew shook his head. "No. I have zero interest in your body. I just want you to honor your word. A bet's a bet. You lost-so keep up your end of the deal."

Chantelle gritted her teeth. "Andrew, do you have any idea how badly I want to kill you right now?"

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Andrew spread his hands. "Go ahead and kill me. But once I'm dead, M. McCormick will find out. You're his official secretary. Breaking your word and covering up a murder? That's treason.

"And let's not forget-Logan is my sworn brother now. You can try to take me out, but do you really think the Keller family will just let that slide?"

Each word hit its mark. Chantelle's expression shifted again and again as the weight of Andrew's words sank in. This bastard knew exactly where to strike.

As Derek's secretary, what she valued most was his trust. If there was one thing Derek despised, it was dishonesty.

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She snapped, Fine. I'll strip. You can stare all you want. Take a good, long look. Enjoy it. But you better bury this moment deep in your damn stomach. If this ever gets out or if you so much as hint about it to Mr. McCormick, I will hunt you down to the ends of the earth."

Her tone was venomous, her glare filled with hate.

Backed into a corner like a deer surrounded by wolves, Chantelle had run out of exits. She had tried to find a loophole, a way out-but Andrew was not budging.

So, unless he miraculously changed his mind, she had only two choices: beg for mercy or follow through.

Yet, Andrew was the kind of man who would rather laugh at a forest fire than bend. Hence, she had no choice but to strip before him. Just the thought of it made her feel` ridiculous-like she had stepped into a nightmare she could not wake up from.

The car sped along, silent and tense, until they finally arrived at the top of The Sovereign Residences.

Chantelle eyed the grand building suspiciously. "You seriously live here? Did you rob someone to get in?"

Andrew responded flatly, "You really aren't as smart as you look, Ms. Garcia. Are you seriously still trying to mouth off at this point? Clearly, being nice to you was a mistake."

He shoved her lightly on the back and pushed her through the front door of the villa.

Chantelle spun around, furious. "Andrew! What the hell are you doing?"

Andrew's voice was calm and cold. "Strip."

Chapter 1138

Just the word 'strip' was enough to make Chantelle's face instantly flush a deep red. She never imagined that one day, she would be forced to strip in front of a man, especially one she had always looked down on and dismissed without a

second thought.

She noticed Andrew adjusting a phone on a stand nearby, and a sudden wave of dread washed over her.

"What are you doing? Don't tell me you're planning to record this," she said, her voice sharp with suspicion.

Andrew nodded with satisfaction, checking the perfect angle on his phone. "Of course. A beautiful moment like this deserves to be captured. This way, I can replay it whenever I feel nostalgic."

Chantelle's eyes flared with anger and embarrassment. "You're lucky I'm even letting you look. Recording it? Forget it."

Andrew shrugged casually. "I knew you'd say that. That's why the setup's just for show. Now... your performance, if you would."

He leaned against the doorway, arms crossed, expression smug.

Chantelle's fingers trembled slightly as she removed her blazer, revealing a crisp white blouse underneath. Her outfit was typical of a high-level government official - minimalist and clean.

Nonetheless, even through the buttoned shirt, her tall, toned figure could not be hidden.

One glance and Andrew had already judged-her waist could rival that of that seductress, Lauren.

Still watching her hesitation, he clicked his tongue. "Can you speed it up? My time's valuable."

Without a word, Chantelle gritted her teeth and began unbuttoning her shirt. "Huh?" Andrew blinked in surprise. She had barely undone half of it when her chest suddenly seemed to spring forward with a surprising bounce.

It was like watching a tightly bound pillow burst into bloom, unexpected and unmissable.

"I'm wearing a custom-made tactical vest. It compresses the chest," she said indifferently.

It was unclear if she had just given up caring or had entered an emotionally detached zone.

Andrew nodded thoughtfully. "You've got quite the chest-reminds me of Fran. Though between the two of you, yours is perkier, hers is rounder."

Chantelle yanked off her shirt entirely, leaving only her compressed upper body partially covered. With a cold sneer, she said proudly, "I don't know who Fran is. But if we're talking about body comparison, I doubt she measures up."

Andrew laughed. "You'd be surprised. Fran's the kind of girl who looks sweet and innocent-makes you want to hold her forever. But once you see her body, the only thought that comes to minds bending her over and breaking all sense of control."

Chantelle actually nodded. "I know the type. Angelic face, sinful curves. A lot of

the rich kids around Blumedale are addicted to that contrast."

Andrew looked at her, smirking. "Ms. Garcia, less talking, more action. Keep going."

Chantelle ground her teeth. This bastard really had no patience, did he?

He could at least let her stall for a bit and ease the tension she was drowning in. She began unzipping her black trousers.

Andrew raised a brow. "Why not start with the vest? Top to bottom feels more complete."

Chantelle replied, each word sharp as a knife. "I do what I want."

There was no way she would expose her chest first-not yet. That would mean total vulnerability. At this point, the only tactic left was to stall for as long as she could. She was already deeply regretting the bet that got her here.

Finally, she slipped off her trousers, folded them neatly, and placed them on the desk. Her long, porcelain legs stood tall before Andrew.

Andrew gave them a casual glance, then shook his head.

Chantelle narrowed her eyes. "What's with the head shake? They don't meet your standards?"

Andrew replied, "They're good legs, no doubt. But they're a little too lean. Add a bit of curve, and they'd be perfect to touch and admire."

Chantelle snorted. "Seriously? You're complaining about legs like this? Then tell me-whose legs do measure up?"

Chapter 1139

"Not many people have legs that can rival yours," Andrew admitted, gaze trailing down. "But as it happens, I know one. Lauren Rhodes the Rhodes family's eldest daughter. Her legs are... something else."

Chantelle narrowed her eyes. "I've heard of her. But you're talking like you've seen them for yourself."

Andrew smirked. "Oh, I haven't just seen them. I've felt them."

Their back-and-forth continued as Chantelle's layers disappeared one by one until

she stood in only her undergarments. She took a deep breath, wanting desperately to disappear.

After all, it was the final layer, and her private parts would be exposed.

Andrew's voice cut in, calm as ever. "If I may suggest... start with the top."

Chantelle glared. "Why?"

He replied evenly, "Because if I'm not impressed, I might not ask for anything more."

Surprisingly, that made some kind of warped sense. If this shameless man found her average, maybe just maybe she would not have to bare it all.

Chantelle took a breath, bit her lip, and slowly unfastened the compression vest beneath her blouse.

"You're the first man to ever see me like this, Andrew," she said, her voice barely audible.

Andrew said nothing at first. He rested his chin in his hand, eyes unreadable. He had not expected much, but he had to admit that Chantelle was full of surprises. Her breasts were even bigger than Francesca's.

"Not bad," he muttered. "Keep going."

That made her snap. "Didn't you just say if you weren't impressed, we'd stop there?"

Andrew nodded, still unfazed. "Exactly. But I was impressed. Frankly, I think there might be even more surprises below. Why stop when we're on a roll?"

Chantelle's eyes narrowed like daggers. "You know I work in government, right? I'm a secretary, not a stage performer. So maybe think before throwing phrases like 'more surprises below' at me."

Andrew raised his hands mockingly. "You're right, Ms. Garcia. Poor phrasing. My bad. I'll reword it—how about 'a path with depth worth exploring'?"

Chantelle gave him a look that could have frozen a fire. She was not stupid—she knew exactly what he meant.

"Fine," she said through gritted teeth. "You've already seen this much, km not backing out now. But Andrew, I hope you're ready to deal with the hopquences."

Without waiting, she slid the final piece away, standing tall and defiant, her entire body on display.

She was Derek's secretary, the voice of the administration. Yet, right now, she had never felt more exposed.

Andrew did not gawk. His gaze remained steady, calm, and unshaken. However, his words still held a sharp edge as he said, "Ms.

Garcia... you're still a virgin, aren't you?"

That single question knocked the air from her lungs.

"You arrogant-" Chantelle's voice caught in her throat. Her expression turned icy as her voice lowered

"Whether I am or not is none of your business."

"What's next? You planning to 'test' that too?"

Andrew shook his head and chuckled. "Tempting, but no. Truth is, I've already had better than you, Ms. Garcia."

That did it. Chantelle snapped her head away, counted to three in her head, and scrambled to collect her clothes.

Andrew did not stop her. He simply leaned back and watched, as if everything had gone exactly according to plan. She dressed in stiff silence, seething.

"Andrew, do you know what I was thinking just now?" she asked coldly once she had buttoned her final button.

He tilted his head. "What?"

Her eyes burned. "I was hoping you'd try something stupid-like pushing your luck further and just rape me."

Andrew was stunned. "Ms. Garcia, is that your weird kink?"

Chapter 1140

"No, that's not my kink." Chantelle's voice was sharp as she glared at him with clenched teeth. "I just figured that if you were stupid enough to try something on me, I'd finally have a reason to end you myself."

Andrew raised a brow, still amused. "Can I ask... have you ever actually dated anyone before?"

Her tone went cold. "Once. It didn't last."

"Only once?" Andrew said, surprised. "Sounds like the guy couldn't keep up."

Chantelle gave a humorless laugh. "He couldn't. Before we got together, I made the rules clear-no touching without permission. But that jerk was even worse

than you.

"The moment we were official, he tried to grab my chest and whispered disgusting things. So I broke both his arms, shattered his legs, and dumped him into the water."

Andrew winced. "So... you killed the guy?"

She scoffed. "I wanted to. Unfortunately, he got lucky. Some fishing boat pulled him out of the water before he drowned."

Andrew shook his head. "Still can't figure out how Mr. McCormick decided you of all people should be his right hand."

Chantelle headed for the front door. "That's because I earned it. You don't need to understand. And now that you've seen what you wanted, can I leave?"

Andrew was about to give a casual 'sure' when his phone rang.

The screen showed Aspen's name, but the voice on the other end was not hers. It was a smug, mocking male voice that instantly turned Andrew's blood to ice.

"Hey, Andrew. Thought you were good at hiding, didn't you? Why don't you come on over and kneel in front of me like the little dog you are? Otherwise, I'll have some real fun with Aspen. Inside and out, I'll break her in ways you can't imagine." Andrew's voice dropped to a chilling monotone. "Seth?"

The voice on the other end laughed. "That's right. It's me. You and Aspen can run all you want, but you'll never escape me. You humiliated me in front of Quinton and made me look like a joke.

"Now I'm sitting in your company, big guy. Come here and beg for my forgiveness. You've got ten minutes. If you don't show, I'm taking Aspen and Supreme Capital with me."

The line went dead as Seth's wild laughter echoed one last time.

Andrew stared at the blank screen and muttered darkly, "Don't worry, I won't need ten minutes. I'm not coming to beg for your forgiveness-I'm coming to take

your damn head."

A dangerous energy burst from him so suddenly that Chantelle froze in place. She

looked at him in alarm. "What happened?"

Andrew pushed past her and threw open the door. "My people are in trouble. I

need to go now."

Without hesitation, Chantelle followed. "Wait. I'll drive."

Moments later, her car roared down

from The Sovereign Residences. As they sped through the city, she glanced at him and asked, "It's your assistant, right? Ms. Aspen Stevens? I warned you not to let your guard down. Who's behind this?"

Andrew's gaze darkened. "Seth Haywood."

Chantelle's grip tightened on the wheel. "One of the Haywoods? Andrew, that's serious. If this gets out of hand, you could find yourself at war with the entire family."

Andrew's tone was ice-cold. "Relax. I won't make it that big. I just plan to end Seth."

At Supreme Capital Group's headquarters, several employees huddled in a corner, trembling. Meanwhile, Seth's men stood over them and guarded them.