

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1181 "Logan, don't you know Andrew killed my younger brother?" Xavier shouted furiously.

It was understandable for Luna to speak up.

After all, the Phelans owed Andrew a small favor but now even the Keller family was interfering.

If this continued, Andrew would not just remain unharmed; he would likely rise to prominence in Blumedale.

Andrew's rise would be a direct slap in the face to the Haywoods, humiliating them beyond redemption.

Roy spoke grimly, "Logan, you're set to lead the Keller family.

You should know better than to blur right and wrong.

Andrew repeatedly humiliated the Haywoods and even murdered Seth.

Do you expect us to swallow such a huge insult?" Logan replied calmly, "Mr. Haywood Senior, you know exactly why things turned out this way.

I hate to say it, but Seth brought his death upon himself.

Andrew may be impulsive, but he's done nothing wrong in my eyes.

"I'll say this only once: if the Haywoods continue their vendetta against him, the Keller family won't stand idly by," Logan finished decisively before turning around and leaving.

The Haywoods, already dressed in mourning attire, watched Logan depart.

Their gloomy expressions darkened further.

---- "This is going too far!" Xavier roared, his voice echoing like thunder throughout the mansion.

However, everyone could see clearly that the Haywoods' star had lost his former confidence, venting his helpless rage.

Jude's face grew solemn.

"Roy, we can't act on impulse.

The Keller family's growth over recent years has been unstoppable, almost reaching the level of the Three Titans.

We thought they'd weaken with George on his deathbed, but now Andrew has healed him.

That old man might last another decade.

as long as George remains their backbone, we shouldn't provoke the Keller family lightly." Roy gritted his teeth.

"Of course I know that.

George isn't just surviving his skills have likely reached a new peak.

If he truly stepped into the rank of martial king, we Haywoods can't even meet him face-to-face." Xavier clenched his fists, his veins bulging visibly as he said coldly, "The Keller family might be powerful, but we Haywoods aren't pushovers either.

Even if Mr.

Keller Senior stands at the peak today, I'm young.

"Time and potential are on my side.

One day, I'll surpass him, and it won't take long.

When that day comes, I'll return today's humiliation a hundredfold!" Roy sneered, "If the Keller family insists on meddling, they're ---- asking for trouble.

Andrew hasn't just offended us; he's made enemies across Blumedale, including the Goldings and others.

Fine, we'll officially cancel the bountybut that doesn't mean we

can't quietly join forces to eliminate him." Jude chimed in, "Roy, Xavier, there's another perfect chance coming up.

The Grand Medical Summit is right around the corner, and Dr.

Lake has a score to settle with Andrew.

"He'll definitely invite experts from the Advanced Medical Institute.

Considering their ruthless reputation, Andrew won't even see it coming." Roy's expression brightened.

"Exactly! The Grand Medical Summit will gather powerful figures from everywhere.

Andrew has made enemies all over BlumedaleDr.

Lake included.

When the summit begins, he'll be the first to face total annihilation.

Xavier hissed with hate, "I actually hope Andrew lives a bit longer because the satisfaction of killing him with my own hands is the only way to ease my rage." Meanwhile, Logan visited the Goldings, delivering the exact same message he had given the Haywoods.

"I request the Goldings withdraw their bounty immediately.

Andrew is my sworn brother making an enemy of him is making an enemy of the

Keller family.

His voice remained steady, but his words infuriated everyone in the Golding family.

---- Elon clenched his teeth and snapped, "Logan, is even your family determined

to protect Andrew?" Logan replied flatly, "We're not doing this to protect him. It's simply our duty."

Chapter 1182 "He's my sworn brother, then standing up for him no matter the cost is only right," Logan said firmly.

Elon's face instantly darkened, and deep inside, a gnawing jealousy bubbled up.

Despite being the most low-key of the Five Apex Families younger generation, Logan was arguably the most terrifying.

He was about to take over the Keller family, a rising powerhouse.

The Haywoods had Xavier young, sharp, and fierce in combat.

The Wrights had Quinton manipulative, cunning, and notorious for his ruthlessness.

But Elon? He was...

just Elon.

He was overweight, lacked presence, and had just been publicly humiliated when

word spread that his wife had cheated on him.

His reputation was already slipping, and now he had become the joke of Blumedale's elite circle.

Still, no matter how pathetic things seemed, Elon believed he was far better than the man Andrew was.

In his eyes, they were not even in the same league.

So, it burned him even more to see Logan someone he had always tried to impress calling Andrew his sworn brother and being willing to fight for him.

---- Elon could not help thinking why Logan did not respect and defend him like that.

Why Andrew? He clenched his fists inwardly, silently sighing that life really was unfair.

The Goldings' patriarch, Richard, chuckled and said, "So, Logan, I assume this is also George's stance?" Logan nodded.

"That's right.

My father stands by it, too." Alright then," Richard replied with a smile.

"We'll withdraw the bounty on Andrew immediately." Logan gave a respectful nod.

"Much appreciated," he said before turning to leave.

As soon as he was out the door, Elon exploded, "Father, why'd you give in so easily? Sure, the Keller family is powerful and clearly set on protecting Andrew, so maybe we had no choice.

But couldn't we at least show a little backbone?" Richard snapped, "Fool! Don't you get it? Logan came to us after visiting the Haywoods.

That alone says everything.

Do you think Roy and Xavier, with all their pride and ambition, weren't also forced to back down? No one saw it coming, but somehow, Andrew earned a favor strong enough to make even the Ketter

family bow." ---- Elon scratched his head, still confused.

"Okay, but what does that have to do with us? Just because the Haywoods backed off doesn't mean the Goldings have to follow suit so eagerly! We've still got pride, don't we? Richard looked at his son like he was an idiot.

"If we're going to cave, why not do it cleanly? The Haywoods probably acted all high and mighty about it, pretending family honor meant more than anything.

But at the end of the day, did they dare challenge the Keller family? "No.

And we, the Goldings, are hoping to strengthen ties with the Keller family through marriage.

Of course, our attitude needs to be perfectly aligned with theirs.

"You really didn't hear what Logan said, did you? He called Andrew his sworn brother.

And you're always sucking up to the Keller family, sending gifts and doing favors, but has it earned you even a fraction of their respect? "No.

Nothing.

All that effort, all that sucking up, and you still don't even register on their radar.

But Andrew? One move and he's already won their favor.

That's the difference between you two.

So maybe instead of whining, you should think long and hard about what makes Andrew so damn exceptional." Richard was both exhausted and frustrated by his fat son.

He did not even hope for Elon to become some rising star or future legend of the elite families anymore.

---- At this point, he would have been happy if Elon were just a schemer like Quinton from the Wrights at least then he would have some skills.

But Elon? He was just...

mediocre, unremarkable in every possible way.

Except when it came to eating.

The only thing Elon did with any flair was go around shouting that ridiculous line in public, "I'm Elon Golding, the epitome of money,

glory, and power!" Several times

Richard overheard this and would immediately grab his chubby son by the ear, delivering a series of stinging slaps to his face.

"Damn it," he muttered more than once, "where the hell did you even learn that nonsense?" He used to have such high hopes for Elon, only for the boy to grow up parroting the cringiest lines imaginable.

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Elon's face turned red from the scolding, and he muttered bitterly, "I mean, I might not be great, but I'm still better than Andrew, right? Are you really saying that in your eyes, your own son is worth less than that guy?"

Richard let out a cold snort. "You really care about comparing yourself to him? Fine then-do you want the truth or a lie?"

Elon shrank back at his father's sarcastic smile and mumbled, "The lie... I guess."

Richard scoffed, "Alright. If it's lies you want, then sure-you're way more promising than Andrew. That guy doesn't even deserve to be compared to you." Elon's face twitched. He wanted to laugh, but the words tasted bitter in his mouth.

The lie was that he was better than Andrew. But the truth? The truth was that compared to Andrew, he was absolutely nothing.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized either way, he came up short. So what was the point in choosing?

He silently cursed, 'Damn it!'

Richard folded his hands behind his back, his voice chilling. "You're no star, but you're my son-my blood. That alone gives you one thing Andrew will never have: luck.

"He's a nobody. Even if he excels at everything else, without a background like yours, it all amounts to nothing. So even if you lay around and contribute nothing, Andrew still won't measure up to you."

Elon beamed, grinning like a fool. "I knew it! That guy's not even in my league!"

Richard sighed inwardly, watching his son's clueless delight. Elon was, unfortunately, very much his son-otherwise, Richard would've kicked him to the curb ages ago.

However, Andrew had made Elon eat shit and humiliated the Goldings. The Five Apex Families had their pride, and Andrew had crossed the line. There was no way the Goldings would ever let him walk free.

Back at the Keller residence, Logan returned and immediately sought out George. "Father, I've delivered our message to both families," Logan reported.

George lay back in his chair, eyes closed and body frail with age, but his mind still razor-sharp. He gave a soft hum of acknowledgment.

Logan hesitated before speaking again. "Father, the Goldings were easier to handle, but the Haywoods... I don't think they'll just roll over for us."

"It doesn't matter," George said calmly. "Roy knows what to do. If the Haywoods can't cooperate, then they'll be the ones to suffer."

Logan frowned slightly. "But Father, we're forcing both families to drop their vendetta against Andrew. That's bound to earn us their resentment. From the Keller family's standpoint, I'm not sure this is a wise move."

George's eyes suddenly snapped open. A sharp gleam flashed in them, carrying a pressure that made Logan straighten instinctively.

"Of course, Roy and Richard will hold a grudge. We're all Apex Families, and here we are, stepping on their pride, forcing our way into their feud.

"Yes, it's an insult to them. But so what? In any power game, remember this: as long as you're standing with the winning side, you're never wrong."

His voice carried a chilling kind of confidence and arrogance. Even in his mid-70s, with his body still recovering from being healed by Andrew, George had not lost an ounce of his old dominance.

Logan bowed lower, a flicker of awe in his eyes. "So, from what you're saying, you place a lot of trust in Andrew?"

George chuckled, his gaze sharp. "Trust? No. I plan to bet the entire Keller legacy on that boy. And that's the difference between us and families like the Haywoods or Goldings-we dare to go all in."

Logan was not just surprised-he was completely floored. His father had only met Andrew once, yet he was willing to entrust the entire Keller family's fate to him.

George's face took on a mysterious smile. "I can see your confusion. You're wondering why someone like Andrew deserves such commitment, right? Let me remind you-I've run the Keller family for over 50 years. I've made countless small mistakes, but never a major one.

"Even though I've begun handing power over to you, my judgment hasn't failed me yet. As for Derek, he didn't say much about Andrew, but I've known that man for decades. One glance, and I can tell-he's grooming Andrew as his right-hand man.

"But that's not the main reason. I've got my own take on the boy. I don't fully understand the depth of his medical skills, but for someone his age to treat Mosby like a joke?¶¶n Blumedale, there aren't many young elites with that kind of nerve."

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Logan nodded and smiled. "Andrew's medical skills really are rare. Medicine is a deep and complex field, and among the younger generation in Blumedale, hardly anyone has any decent understanding of it.

"Even top talents like Joe Driscoll or Luna Phelan from the three major families are focused on martial arts. When it comes to healing, there's nothing to talk about."

George beamed. "What makes Andrew truly special is that he's not only exceptional in medicine, but his martial prowess is also extraordinary. Just the fact that he's survived the joint manhunt from two powerful families already tells me he's not to be underestimated."

Logan frowned. "There's a rumor going around that Andrew survived only because someone powerful is secretly protecting him."

George scoffed. "That's just idle gossip from nobodies parroting what they hear. If Andrew were weak, no amount of backing could keep him alive.

Logan,

remember this-life throws us many challenges, but there's one hurdle you must learn to clear: you have to be willing to acknowledge when someone else is better than you."

Logan nodded respectfully. "Thank you for the wisdom, Father. I promise you—I'll never take Andrew's talents for granted."

George smiled knowingly. "What you're seeing right now is probably just the tip of the iceberg. I won't say too much, or it might cloud your judgment. Just remember one thing—don't let go of your bond with Andrew. That kid is a gift from heaven to our family."

Logan chuckled helplessly. "The thing is, Father, I've tried to connect with him more, but Andrew doesn't seem very interested."

George laughed heartily. "That's exactly why I had to shamelessly step in and make waves for you. As his sworn brother, you ran around on his behalf—risking your neck, confronting both the Goldings and the Haywoods, forcing them to back off.

"That's a huge favor. Whether he wants to accept it or not, he owes us now. And when the day comes that you're leading this family and you need help, I guarantee he won't be able to look the other way."

Logan nodded thoughtfully, deeply moved. Over the years, the Keller family's rise had relied entirely on George, the rock holding it all together. He knew better than anyone that his father was not easily impressed.

Yet, ever since Andrew entered the picture, George's entire attitude had shifted, like he had discovered a hidden treasure.

Nothing else had brought George this much joy in years. Not business growth, not political wins, not even crushing the other Apex Families.

And now, George was even working behind the scenes to build a closer bond between Logan and Andrew.

That was simply unheard of.

Usually, people were the ones trying to curry favor with the Keller family, not the other way around. But now? The Kellers were the ones making the first move, even going so far as to put themselves in Andrew's debt.

To some observers, this would definitely make the Kellers look like they were lowering themselves. It might even damage their image as one of the Five Apex Families, but George clearly did not care.

Logan understood why-it was all because of Andrew.

"Alright, now go," George said, waving him off. "Make sure to keep in touch with Andrew, and don't be shy-invite him over. And while you're at it, find out if he has a girlfriend. If not, take your sisters along next time and let them meet him."

George waved a hand, but the warning was real.

Logan sighed. "Father, you've spoiled my sisters rotten. They've all set their sights

on heirs from the Driscolls or the Phelans. Andrew's from Jayrodale—I'm afraid they might not be interested."

He had put it as politely as he could, but the implication was clear: the girls probably saw Andrew as too lowborn.

George's tone turned cold. "Then make my intentions clear to them. If Andrew visits, they are to treat him with full courtesy-no attitude, no snobbery. And if anyone dares act out, they'll answer me personally."

Logan's heart skipped a beat. His father threatened them with family punishment, which was serious.

The favoritism toward Andrew was getting a little extreme.

Still, Logan did not dare argue. "Understood. I'll make sure they behave."

George nodded. "Off you go then. I still have to speak with Derek. He's a crafty one. He's been cagey about Andrew and won't tell me much. But that only confirms my suspicions.

"The more he hides, the more certain I am that he's been keeping Andrew under wraps on purpose. After all these years of being friends, I know exactly how that man thinks."

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Andrew finally paid a visit to the Rhodes family.

"Andy, you're here! Come in, have a seat," Jameson greeted warmly, his tone unusually enthusiastic.

The way he looked at Andrew was not just the admiration of a family elder-it was the hopeful gaze of someone eyeing a perfect son-in-law.

Lauren giggled behind her hand. "Andrew, you've become quite the welcome guest around here. Everyone in the Rhodes family is thrilled you came."

Andrew glanced around casually and noticed several of the Rhodes family's core members smiling and nodding in greeting. A few girls around Lauren's age were sneaking glances his way, their cheeks tinged pink.

Cecelia, the youngest among them, blurted out, "Andrew, when are you marrying Lauren?"

Andrew laughed and replied, "Anytime works for me."

Cecelia clapped her hands excitedly. "Great! Let's do the wedding today and the honeymoon tonight!"

Jameson's eyes widened. "Cece! Stop saying nonsense!"

His youngest daughter was a wild one—always blurting things out and giving him endless headaches.

Lauren, thoroughly embarrassed, quickly added, "Andrew, please don't mind Cece. Her mouth works faster than her brain."

Andrew chuckled. "I don't mind at all. In fact, her idea about the honeymoon tonight... sounds pretty good, if you ask me."

The entire Rhodes household burst into laughter. Andrew's laid-back, approachable personality had clearly won everyone over.

Lauren, on the other hand, was flustered. She pouted playfully and said, "Andrew, you've gotten so shameless!"

Andrew smiled, then asked, "I haven't seen Mrs. Rhodes. Is she not around?"

The real reason for his visit today was, in fact, Tiana.

Jameson replied, "She's been feeling under the weather-migraine. She's resting in her room. We actually asked you here to see if you could check on her." Lauren added, "Andrew, could you please take a look at my mom? She hasn't been looking well lately, and we're worried it might be something serious."

Andrew stood and nodded. "Sure. Lauren, would you mind showing me the way?"

She shook her head. "Mom said herself that you could just go to the room in the back garden. She's waiting there."

Jameson smiled. "Yeah, Andy, just head on back. Relax-you're family now."

Andrew did not think much of it and headed toward the back wing of the estate. Now that Tiana knew who he really was, she would not dare pull anything. And if she did, Andrew was more than capable of handling her.

In the rear courtyard, nestled among blooming flowers, sat a cozy little villa. Andrew pushed open the gate and called out, "Mrs. Rhodes? It's me, Andrew."

A calm voice came from inside the house. "Come in."

He stepped through the door and found Tiana sitting by the window in a blend of red-and-white attire.

It was her, but the way she was dressed was strange. She wore a full vintage-style dress usually reserved for young women doing costume play. Her hair was elegantly styled with crystal hairpins, and her makeup was pristine.

This look might have been charming on a teenage girl, but on Tiana—a stunning woman in her early 40s—it felt oddly theatrical.

Andrew frowned slightly as he looked at the woman who had always given him trouble. He had no idea what game she was about to play this time.

Still facing the mirror and applying lipstick, Tiana set the tube down and turned with a soft smile. "Andrew, tell me do you think I'm beautiful?"

To be fair, Tiana's beauty had not faded with age. If Lauren embodied youthful charm and vitality, Tiana possessed the sultry elegance and allure of a mature woman.

And that allure could drive men mad.

There was something dangerous about her. Her icy, untouchable demeanor gave her a divine, almost sacred aura, which only made her more irresistible to the wrong kind of man.

Especially those who craved the thrill of conquering something pure and cold.

From the side, even with her loose robes, Andrew could tell that Tiana had kept her figure remarkably well her waist was narrow, and her curves flowed in all the right places.

She was, without question, still an absolute stunner.

However, Andrew was not some hormone-driven fool. More importantly, Tiana was someone he had to treat with distance and respect.

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"If you called me here just to ask something this ridiculous, Mrs. Rhodes, then I'll be going now," Andrew said flatly as he turned toward the door.

He did not dare stay a second longer, worried Tiana might start acting crazy like she did last time. If things spiraled out of control and someone like Jameson walked in on them, not even a hundred confessions could clear his name.

"Stop right there!" Tiana snapped, her brows raised in defiance. "What's the matter? Are you that scared of being alone with me?"

Andrew paused and looked back, his brows still tightly furrowed. "Mrs. Rhodes, you and I both know this isn't appropriate."

Tiana stepped forward with a graceful sway, a trace of perfume trailing in her wake as she stopped right beside him. Her lips curled in a playful smile.

"What's not appropriate? Can't a mother-in-law spend a little one-on-one time with her future son-in-law?"

Andrew fell silent, exasperated. "You said you weren't feeling well. If you need help, I'll take a look. But if not, I'm going to find Lauren."

Tiana's eyes sparkled as she stared directly at him. "Always thinking about my precious daughter the moment you walk in, huh? Tell me, Andrew-between me and Lauren, which one do you like more?"

Andrew's tone dropped. "Mrs. Rhodes, that's enough. Don't you think this kind of question is beneath you?"

Tiana scoffed and rolled her eyes. "Boring. You're way too uptight. You're nothing like your father was back in the day. When he wanted to make me smile, he'd lay on the sweet talk like a pro. That's why I gave myself to him; to this day, I don't regret it."

Andrew replied coolly, "If you enjoy hearing sweet words, that's your thing. But I'm not my father."

Suddenly, Tiana lunged forward with one hand, trying to tug at his shirt.

"Take it off," she said boldly. "I want to see that Black Dragon tattoo of yours." Andrew grabbed her wrist mid-motion, gripping it with enough force to make her wince. "Sorry, Mrs. Rhodes. If you want a peek, go find my dad. I'm not in the mood to humor you."

Tiana's face twisted with pain, her voice sharp. "Let go! Are you seriously hurting me right now? Do you want me to scream and get everyone's attention?"

Andrew let go, his jaw tightening. For a moment, he genuinely wanted to slam her to the floor and end this madness.

Tiana smirked through the discomfort. "I bet you'd love to be rid of me, huh? But Andrew, you're the prestigious heir of the Lloyds your status is beyond anything I could ever dream of."

"But here's the thing-both you and your father owe me. That's why I'm not afraid of you. Controlling you? That's easy."

She stepped in closer, her breath brushing against his skin as she stared up at him, completely unbothered. Her eyes dared him to do something-anything.

Andrew narrowed his gaze. "If my father owes you, I get it. But me? You're reaching, Mrs. Rhodes."

She snapped, "You owe me everything. You want to take my daughter away from me—that's the most precious thing I have. And now you want to act like that doesn't count as a debt?"

Andrew could not find words fast enough. He inhaled deeply, trying to calm the anger boiling in his chest.

"What is it you want, exactly?" he asked, voice clipped. "I'm not my father. If you miss him that much and want to rekindle whatever twisted thing you had, go find him.

But don't waste my time dragging me into it."

Tiana gave a soft laugh, her face suddenly flushed with warmth. "No one even knows if he's dead or alive. Even if I wanted to find him, I'd have to search the ends of the earth. But you? You're right here.

"Andrew, if I can't have him, then you'll do. You and I don't share a drop of blood-there's no law stopping us. The only thing in the way is society's judgment, and I've never cared about that.

"I've always lived by my own rules. So why should I care now? And really, you should be flattered. A mother-daughter duo? Do you know how many men would kill for that kind of fantasy?"

Her voice softened into a whisper, her gaze seductive, her whole demeanor dripping with temptation. She was all but oozing desire.

Andrew took a breath, his voice cold as steel. "You need help, Mrs. Rhodes. You're sick."

Then, without warning, he slapped her clean across the face.

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Tiana flinched, both shocked and furious, but she had no chance of dodging him.

Under Andrew's hand, she did not stand a chance. However, the loud smack that followed was not across her face—it landed squarely on a pressure point along her waist.

A wave of sharp pain shot through her body like a crashing tide. She gasped, "Ah... Andrew, you... stop, that hurts..."

A strange moan escaped her lips, echoing awkwardly in the quiet room.

Andrew muttered under his breath, cursing her madness. Without wasting time, he lifted her up and laid her down across the bed.

Tiana stared up at him in disbelief, her eyes wide-until he pulled out a slim, metallic object.

A gleaming golden acupuncture needle.

"Mrs. Rhodes, your speech is erratic, your energy's spiking. I'll give you a few needles to stabilize your condition," Andrew said calmly.

With that, he plunged the first needle into a targeted spot on her body. Tiana's breath hitched as her lips parted, and her reaction was a mix of pain and surprise. The sharp sting had her reeling.

This little punk actually had the nerve to stick her like that.

Andrew placed a hand on her wrist to feel her pulse. "Physically, you're in good shape overall. But your liver and heart energy-way too pent-up. You've been bottling it up for too long. So, I'm going to help you release it. Cool you off."

With two fingers pressed together, Andrew began applying firm pressure on her body's key meridian points, hitting nerves tied to the internal organs.

A mix of numbness, tingling, and heat surged through Tiana's body. It was intense -so intense her entire body broke out in sweat.

"Andrew, stop! I was just testing you, okay?" she shouted, her voice growing shrill. "I'm fine! I'm not sick-just stop already!"

The physical sensation was becoming unbearable. Her words may have been playful earlier, but Andrew's treatment had crossed a line she had not expected.

Andrew was younger, a junior in her eyes. She had no problem teasing him a little with words.

However, physical contact was a whole different boundary.

Truthfully, Tiana was far from the reckless woman she pretended to be. She came from the Lambert family, a traditional household. At heart, she was always reserved.

Now here she was, pinned beneath Andrew, being treated—but also touched in places she never expected. Her pride flared, but so did a strange, shameful pleasure.

She bit her tongue to keep from making a sound.

Had it been Jameson-her husband-she would not have held back. But this was Andrew-Lauren's future husband.

The idea of moaning in front of him? It made her want to crawl into a hole and die from shame.

At the same time, she wanted to slap Andrew senseless.

Was he really taking advantage of her under the guise of treatment?

If he was doing this on purpose, what could she even do afterward?

Call him out? No chance. Not publicly. She would only end up humiliating herself.

And Andrew's father-her first love-still had a hold on her emotions. Because of that man, she could never truly be cruel to Andrew.

Then, there was that strange, complicated pull inside her. Every time she looked at Andrew, she saw traces of the man who once made her heart race, who once made her lose all control.

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So, no-she did not see Andrew as just a junior. She did not say it aloud and fought to bury those dangerous thoughts. Nonetheless, the truth sat heavy on her heart.

Worse, Andrew was the man her daughter loved.

If she really fell into his hands and lost control, would that mean that mother and

daughter fell for the same man?

The mere thought made Tiana's entire sense of self reel. She had always prided herself on discipline and moral clarity, but now, she felt like she was

teetering on the edge of chaos. A storm she might not be able to pull herself back from.

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It felt to Tiana like she had fallen into a vast, unfamiliar net-one she had never experienced before. She was sinking, drifting, wanting to break free. Yet, she was addicted to the thrill of it all.

All these conflicting emotions passed through her in the blink of an eye, though they were layered and complex.

Meanwhile, Andrew was completely unaware of the chaotic thoughts swirling inside her. To him, this was just another straightforward medical procedure. He was careful and respectful. He only touched what he had to, avoiding sensitive areas entirely.

As a doctor, Andrew had no sense of guilt about what he was doing. Illness knew no gender; treatment was treatment. That was how he saw it.

Whether others saw it the same way was not his concern.

He calmly explained, "Stimulating your pressure points with needles and smoothing the meridians with massage helped your condition today.

"But in the end, to restore proper balance, you'll still need a medicinal remedy to regulate the five organ systems. I'll send the prescription to Lauren. She can have the herbs prepared for you."

As he spoke, Andrew removed the needle and straightened her robe neatly.

Just like that, the treatment was over.

Tiana slowly sat up from the bed, her face burning with shame. Without warning, she slapped Andrew.

"You little bastard!" she growled through clenched teeth. "You had the nerve to disrespect your future mother-in-law-groping and getting handsy like some pervert!"

Andrew caught her wrist effortlessly and stepped back, his expression calm and detached. "Mrs. Rhodes, I don't follow. First of all, I was treating you, not taking advantage of you.

"Second, you invited me here. And as for the things you said earlier, you know exactly what came out of your mouth. Even if you drag me in front of Mr Rhodes or Lauren and demand answers, I have a clear conscience."

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Tiana gritted her teeth at his composed face. "I already told you-what I said earlier was just a test. That wasn't real!"

"A test, huh?" Andrew scoffed. "And what exactly were you testing?"

"Whether or not you're truly committed to my daughter, of course!"

"Fine. Let's say it was about Lauren. But did you really need to put yourself on the line like that? Mrs. Rhodes, you're her mother-a

respected elder. That method was

completely out of line."

"Hmph, I'll decide what's out of line. And you, you've always lacked basic respect for me!" she snapped.

They kept arguing, both unwilling to back down-until Lauren's voice rang in from outside the room.

"Andrew, if you're done treating my mom, could you come to the front room?"

Inside, Tiana froze and quickly fell silent, a trace of panic flashing across her face. Thankfully, Lauren did not come in-she simply passed the message and left.

Andrew exhaled coldly. "This nonsense ends now. You're her mother, and I don't want to escalate things. But I sincerely hope this never happens again."

Tiana sneered "Oh? Are you hoping there will be a next time? Why not just follow in your dad's footsteps and add me to the collection? That way, you'd outdo him. He only managed a single conquest you'd score both mother and daughter. What a feat! Think of the glory!"

Andrew knew she was talking nonsense, lashing out in frustration. But still, her

words lit a fire in his chest. It took everything in him not to explode.

Chapter 1189

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Truthfully, Tiana was by far the most challenging woman Andrew had ever dealt with.

He could not hit her or offend her.

To make things worse, she was Lauren's mother and Jameson's wife. No matter what insanity she pulled, Andrew could not actually do anything to her.

Seeing Andrew so obviously trapped, Tiana felt an overwhelming sense of satisfaction. She chuckled smugly. "Andrew, you're the Dragon Prince of the Lloyds. There's no way I could ever win against you-not in a million years.

"But you lost the moment you started dating my daughter. I'm your mother-in-law. That means I can mess with you, tease you, and you won't be able to lift a finger."

Andrew replied evenly, "You're right—I can't fight you. But if I can't win, I can still walk away."

Tiana waved her hand. "Alright, alright. Let's stop arguing. Just promise me one thing—what happened here today stays between us. Lauren can never find out."

Andrew let out a dry laugh. "You're only worried about Lauren? What about Mr. Rhodes? Mrs. Rhodes, I really don't get it. You and Mr. Rhodes are supposed to have this deep, devoted marriage, and yet you keep pulling these stunts. Aren't you afraid he'll be hurt? Or worse-jealous?"

Tiana scoffed. "Please. You don't get it. Jameson and I? Our bond is solid. But I've always had a wild streak-worse than Lauren, honestly. I've done weird things all my life, and he's long since stopped questioning it."

Andrew winced. "You say 'weird' like it's just quirky. You talk like a temptress and act like one too. That's not weird-that's borderline insane."

Even then, Andrew was still being polite. If it were anyone else, he would have summed her up in two blunt words: absolute menace.

Tiana snorted. "Only in front of you, you little brat. Do you think I'm like this with everyone? Out there, I'm a nightmare. People avoid me like the plague."

Without hesitation, she slipped off her elaborate vintage robe with almost ceremonial care, right in front of him. Beneath it, she wore nothing but a sheer silk nightgown.

"I used to wear this for Reginald," she said, totally unbothered. "He loved it. Said I looked stunning in it. But clearly, you don't share his taste. So there's no point in holding on to it."

The moment she started undressing, Andrew turned and left without another word.

As he walked out, his voice echoed back over his shoulder. "Mrs. Rhodes, clinging to the past does no one any good. You have a husband and two daughters-a whole family. Whatever you and my father had, it's time to let it go."

Tiana let out a soft laugh. "Of course. I've already moved on from your dad. But you... when I'm in the mood, I'm not letting you off that easy. Andrew, from now on, I'll treat you like I treated him.

"You don't have to worry-I'll stay within the boundaries of ethics and decency. But I'm an emotional woman. When those feelings swell, I need somewhere to let them out. And when that happens, I won't care whether you're my future son-in-law or not."

Andrew had already stepped out of the room, but for the first time, he felt an actual urge to turn back and end this lunatic.

This woman was not just toxic-she was a damn demon.

Other people seduced good women into doing bad things.

But Tiana? She was out here trying to drag innocent men into the abyss-and she

made it look like a sport. It was almost inhuman.



"Andrew, my mom didn't give you a hard time, did she?" Lauren asked as they stepped into the Rhodes residence's front parlor.

She had noticed right away that Andrew did not look so great.

"It's fine. Your mother was... gracious enough," Andrew said with a small smile.

There was no need to bring up Tiana's moment of madness-it was better buried.

Jameson chuckled. "Andy, sorry to trouble you again! But today wasn't just about getting your help with her condition."

Lauren beamed. "That's right, Andrew. Now that you're part of the family, you're not an outsider anymore. So, Dad planned a little family dinner. We thought we'd introduce you to some people too, help you make some connections around Blumedale."

Jameson added, "Exactly! And I heard from Lauren that you've been looking for some rare medicinal herbs. Well, turns out, I know some folks who might be holding on to a few."

Andrew nodded thoughtfully. "I am looking for rare herbs, that's true. But as for opening doors, Mr. Rhodes, I really don't want to trouble you. I've got things pretty much under control."

Jameson waved him off. "Come on, Andy. You're a young man building something from scratch-I respect that. But Blumedale's no easy place to break into. This city's crawling with powerful players. You're running a startup, right? Trust me, if there's anything I can do, I won't hold back."

Andrew was about to insist again that he did not need any help. But Tiana, now dressed in an elegant black evening gown, walked in and interrupted him.

"If Jameson wants to help, then you should just take it. You may be capable, but we're family now. Supporting each other is how it should be."

Jameson smiled admiringly. "That dress is stunning, hun. You look like a movie star."

Tiana shot him a glare. "Keep sweet-talking all you want, but don't expect to sleep in my bed tonight."

Jameson laughed it off with grace. He was not offended-the truth was, he did not want to sleep with her anyway. That pill Andrew had given him a while back? Worked wonders.

However, he had taken too much of it, night after night, and now he was completely drained. His energy was shot.

Meanwhile, Tiana looked younger and more radiant by the day, glowing with vitality. Jameson, on the other hand, was pale and weak. That was enough to get him to cut back on everything.

Andrew glanced at Tiana with a complicated expression. She really did look good in that dress. The hem swept the floor, sleek and elegant, and the fabric shimmered with a refined sense of luxury.

It was the first time Andrew had seen her this fashion-forward. The entire back was exposed,

showcasing the smooth curve of her spine and skin that looked soft enough to melt against silk.

Lauren stepped over to help adjust Tiana's hair, smiling. "Mom, you haven't worn

this in ages. You still look just as stunning."

Tiana chuckled. "Please, I'm way past my prime. Compared to my beautiful daughter, I'm nothing special."

Lauren shook her head. "Don't say that. I only look like this because I have such a gorgeous mom."

Cecelia chimed in with a grin. "No kidding! Mom, women like you are all the rage online right now. If you open TikTok, you'll see that men are crazy @bout mature beauties with class. They don't care about the young ones anymore."

Tiana's face turned pink as she scolded, "Watch your mouth, brat. You should be studying, not wasting time on TikTok! No more watching that garbage. Don't grow up to be like your dad!"

Cecelia pouted and mumbled an 'okay,' clearly bummed.

Jameson, completely innocent in the matter, gave Andrew a helpless shrug.

Lauren had also gone to change, putting on a soft, flowing dress and touching up her makeup. Then, the whole family-plus Andrew-headed out in a whirlwind of motion.

Jameson drove one car with Tiana and Cecelia in tow. Meanwhile, Lauren and Andrew rode together in another vehicle, just the two of them.