

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1196

Everyone could tell Andrew was no ordinary martial artist. After all, he had taken down the Hopkins men like it was nothing.

Nonetheless, the fact that he kept going and even dared to lay hands on Archie was pure suicide.

"That little bastard is dead meat! Archie's gonna skin him alive!" someone hissed.

"Yeah! It's one thing to slap us around, but hitting Mr. Hopkins? Does he think he's untouchable?"

"Just wait. This fool's been used like a pawn by Mrs. Rhodes. Once the real Hopkins heavy hitters show up, he's gonna get slaughtered right here at The Palace!"

Meanwhile, Archie caught another few brutal slaps from Andrew. Chunks of his thick beard went flying through the air.

Archie howled, "You little punk! You've pushed it too far! If I don't kill you tonight, I'll change my damn last name to yours!"

Grimacing with rage, Archie pulled out his phone and snarled into it. "I just got attacked at The Palace. Bring the whole crew over-now!"

"Yeah, you heard me. Tonight, I'm wiping out the Rhodes family and this punk bastard too. None of them are leaving alive!"

Jameson's face darkened as he watched Archie make the call. He turned stiffly to Tiana. "Look what you've done. There was no need for this. You've dragged Andrew into our fight for nothing."

Tiana just smirked. "Jameson, open your eyes and watch carefully. You've got no idea how much more capable our precious son-in-law is compared to you."

With a bright smile, she strolled over to Andrew and gave him a dazzling look. "Andy, thank you for saving me tonight."

"When we get home, I'll make you some special soup-to help boost your energy," she added with a wink.

Andrew said nothing, but deep down, he sighed and muttered silently, 'This crazy

woman...'

Tiana suddenly lifted her high heel and drove it straight into Archie's groin with a vicious stomp. A loud, stomach-churning crack echoed through the courtyard, and every man who heard it visibly winced and recoiled.

"Y-You... bitch, you're heartless!" Archie gasped, face turning from bright red to a purplish-black.

Then, under the sheer agony, he let out a guttural scream, his eyes rolled back, and he passed out cold on the ground.

Everyone around them stumbled backward, sucking in sharp breaths of horror. It finally hit them that Tiana really was as terrifying as the rumors said.

Yet, none of them could figure out where the Rhodes family found the audacity to treat the Hopkins like garbage, stomping Archie's manhood into a pulp.

This was practically declaring all-out war.

Tiana turned around with a cheerful grin. "Andy, you might want to get ready. The Hopkins are about to roll in full force!"

Andrew glared at her. "Mrs. Rhodes, was it really necessary to push things this far?"

Tiana raised a brow and said lightly, "Why not? You're invincible anyway. At the very least, ruling all of Blumedale here in Gabo Creek should be a piece of cake, right?"

Andrew took a long breath. Honestly, he could not even argue.

Tiana knew his true identity-he was the Dragon Prince of the Lloyds. In a small city like Blumedale, he really could do whatever he wanted.

"Fine," Andrew said at last. He turned to Jameson, Lauren, and CJ and said, "Let's go inside and first. We'll deal with the rest after dinner."

There was no point bickering with Tiana anymore. Besides, it was pointless to delay since trouble would come soon enough anyway.

Cecelia flashed a brilliant smile and said brightly, "You're amazing, Andrew!"

Tiana chuckled. "That's right, little one! Keep calling him sweetly enough, and if you ask him nicely,

he'll probably pull the stars

out of

the sky for you!"

Andrew rubbed his forehead, feeling a headache coming on. At this rate, this wild

tigress of a mother-in-law was going to squeeze him dry.

"This way, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Rhodes, Mrs. Rhodes, and Ms. Rhodes-please!" Justin had completely changed his attitude, now grinning with over-the-top enthusiasm.

He was practically bowing, a world apart from the snobby arrogance he had shown earlier.

Tiana smiled faintly and said, "We'll be dining in the Celestial Suite now. That won't be a problem, right?"

The manager nodded so fast it looked painful. "No problem at all, Mrs. Rhodes. Please, right this way!"

Jameson patted Andrew's shoulder reassuringly and whispered, "Andy, don't worry. I already called our people. Jerry and the others are on their way."

Andrew chuckled lightly. "Mr. Rhodes, there's no need to mobilize the whole family.

The Hopkins? I can handle them myself."

Jameson shook his head, thinking Andrew was just putting on a brave face. He believed Andrew, being new to Blumedale, could not possibly fend off the Hopkins on his own.

Meanwhile, Andrew casually excused himself during dinner to make a quick call to the Keller family.

The moment Logan heard the Hopkins were causing trouble, he just laughed and said, "Andy, I'll bring our men over immediately. If you want, we can flatten the Hopkins tonight!"

Tiana, elegant as ever, ate gracefully while discreetly keeping an eye on Andrew. She was clearly trying to gauge just how many hidden cards this young man still had up his sleeve.

Lauren gave Andrew a bright smile. "Andrew, you really don't have to worry. No matter what happens, as long as my mom's here, the Hopkins wouldn't dare act recklessly."

Tiana might have been crazy sometimes, but when it came to pure strength, she was absolutely the Rhodes family's trump card.

...

The dinner dragged on for nearly two full hours. Originally, Jameson intended to introduce Andrew to several of Blumedale's top figures to help him build connections.

However, with the Hopkins people looming outside like vultures, no one was in the mood for polite networking anymore.

During the meal, Andrew casually asked, "Mr. Rhodes, you mentioned earlier someone had rare herbs. Who exactly?"

As he spoke, he picked up some food for Lauren and placed it on her plate.

Jameson replied, "Rare medicinal herbs are hard to come by. Usually, only top-tier families or skilled- doctors have them. The director of

Mercy Hospital, Dr. Malcolm Goddard, is a good friend of mine.

"He has some in his private collection. Unfortunately, after tonight's drama, I didn't think it was a good idea to invite him here. I'll personally take you to meet him another day."

Andrew smiled and said, "No need to trouble yourself. As long as I know where to find him, I'll make the trip myself."

Jameson nodded. "That works too."

Tiana set down her utensils and clapped her hands lightly. "Alright, everybody's eaten. Let's head home."

Cecelia grinned from ear to ear. "Yay! But before we go home, I want to see Andrew beat up some bad guys!"

Andrew glanced at Lauren and chuckled softly. "You girls really do take after your mom. All three of you are born troublemakers."

...

Outside The Palace, Archie was still hanging around, face swollen and missing teeth, cursing up a storm as he waited for the Rhodes family to finish eating.

Behind him, a massive force had assembled over 100 Hopkins thugs, plus more than a dozen elite fighters, some even at semi-martial king level, breathing heavily with deadly sharp eyes.

Though the Hopkins family head had not shown up himself, sending such a massive squad made it clear how furious they were about Archie getting beaten up.

One of them growled, "Here they come! Time for the real show! That little punk who beat up Mr. Hopkins? He's gonna be ripped to shreds!"

Another chimed in, "Yeah, Mr. Hopkins, you have to avenge us! That bastard slapped every single one of us earlier. Tonight, we want to see him grovel on the ground, begging for his life!"

Archie's face twisted into a savage grin as he spotted Andrew and the others stepping out of The Palace's front doors.

He hissed, "Tiana, you're not getting away tonight. And as for that little bastard beside you, I'm gonna slice him into pieces."

The words barely left his mouth

before his face contorted in fresh pain. Laughing too hard had tugged at his already shattered crotch-courtesy of Tiana's brutal high-heeled stomp earlier.

Chapter 1198

By some twisted stroke of luck, Archie's manhood-though bruised and swollen- had not been completely destroyed. While he silently thanked the heavens, his hatred for Tiana grew even deeper.

That seductive married woman? He was determined to have her tonight, no matter what it took.

Just then, Jerry and a dozen of the Rhodes family's top fighters finally arrived on

the scene.

Jameson, seeing that his people were in place, narrowed his eyes and said coldly, "Mr. Hopkins, you really want to keep pushing this?"

Archie let out a twisted laugh. "Mr. Rhodes, your wife hit me. That punk by your side hit me too! Do you really think someone like me, who cares this much about his reputation, is just going to let that go?"

Tiana scoffed. "So what if we don't let it go? Mr. Hopkins, you're nothing more than a disgusting maggot. What are you going to do about it?"

Archie screamed, his face flushed with rage. "Tiana, you filthy bitch! Do you think you're better than me? Tonight, I'll make sure you beg me to stop!"

Tiana smiled slyly. "My precious son-in-law could wipe out your entire Hopkins crew all by himself. Want to test that theory?"

Archie froze for a beat, then turned to look at Andrew and burst into mocking laughter. "A nobody with decent fists? Kid, you're nothing compared to the experts the Hopkins brought tonight."

Immediately, over a dozen of the Hopkins elite turned their steely gazes on Andrew. The weight of their collective pressure was intense.

Even so, Andrew stood there unfazed-calm, collected, completely unshaken.

Jameson stepped in. "Andy, fall back. I will handle this."

Andrew smiled faintly. "No rush, Mr. Rhodes. My people are on the way."

Jameson blinked in confusion. "Your people?"

He found it hard to believe. Andrew had barely gotten his footing in Blumedale, how could he have anyone under his command?

Archie, already seething, snapped, "Hopkins crew, attack! That punk especially—I want every inch of him broken!"

But before the Hopkins men could move, a fleet of black Mercedes vans roared up to the entrance of The Palace, blocking the road completely.

One after another, fierce-looking men in black uniforms stepped out, each one buzz-cut, stone-faced, and radiating deadly intent.

The doors kept opening, with each van packed to capacity. It took more than ten full seconds for them all to unload.

The sight stunned everyone in the crowd, including the Hopkins experts and the Rhodes family.

Jameson and Tiana both froze, their eyes wide in disbelief.

Lauren turned to Andrew in shock. "Andrew... did you call these people?"

Andrew replied calmly, "I wouldn't say I called them. I just asked them to come talk some sense into the Hopkins."

At last, over 100 Keller family fighters assembled neatly at the entrance. Logan walked to the front, his face stone-cold, his aura menacing.

"By blood and oath, the Kellers stand with Mr. Andrew Lloyd-my brother in all but name!"

A hundred voices roared back, shaking the ground. "The Kellers honor Mr. Lloyd!" The sheer force of it made people go pale on the spot. And the direction of their salute? It was not toward Jameson or Tiana. It was Andrew-just Andrew.

Even Lauren was speechless, staring at Andrew as if she had never seen him before.

Tiana's face twisted with disbelief.

.n

"The Keller family... damn! This little bastard is actually close to the Keller family, the top of the Five Apex. Families! I thought I was already giving him enough credit. But now? I stilfunderestimated him!"

Someone gulped audibly

somewhere in the crowd, the sound jarringly loud in the silence. The bystanders who had previously been mocking Andrew started backing away quickly, their knees shaking uncontrollably.

Another whispered, "We're screwed... we're so screwed... That kid called in the Keller family. And not just anyone-Logan, their heir, even calls him brother? What the hell is this, an action movie?"

Someone said, "Let's get out of here. Quit staring like idiots! I don't care how strong the Hopkins are in front of the Keller family, they're just ants."

"Tonight, the Hopkins are gonna take a massive loss. They messed with the wrong man!"

Chapter 1199

"Andy, I'm here!" In the midst of the tense, frozen atmosphere, only Logan and Andrew seemed relaxed, chatting like old friends without a care in the world.

Andrew chuckled. "Logan, you're acting way too friendly!"

For once, Logan's face flushed slightly red with embarrassment. Truth be told, he and Andrew were not actually that close.

However, orders were orders-George had made it clear that they had to secure Andrew's favor no matter what it took. If Andrew did not show much enthusiasm toward the Keller family, then Logan had no choice but to make up for it by being overly enthusiastic himself.

"If you don't like it, how about you be the older brother and I'll be the younger one?"

Logan's attitude was ridiculously accommodating as if he had no pride left to defend. No matter how awkward it felt, Andrew was someone the Keller family absolutely had to win over.

Watching all this unfold, Tiana, Jameson, and the Hopkins crowd were even more stunned. It almost seemed like Logan, the heir to the Keller family, was trying to please Andrew.

Andrew waved him off. "You're older, so you should be the older brother. Anyway, enough small talk. Come, let me introduce you to a few people."

Without wasting time, Andrew gestured toward Jameson and Tiana.

"This is Mr. Jameson Rhodes, and this is his wife, Tiana Lambert."

Logan smiled warmly. "Mr. Rhodes, Mrs. Rhodes, I've heard much about you both. And Mrs. Rhodes in particular, your reputation for courage and strength precedes you. You have my respect."

Tiana, flattered and caught slightly off guard, gave a modest smile. "Mr. Keller, you're too kind. I'm just a reckless woman, nothing more."

Andrew continued the introductions smoothly. "And these two are their daughters, Lauren and Cecelia."

Logan bowed politely. "It's a pleasure, ladies. If you ever encounter any trouble here in Blumedale, just reach out. If it's something the Keller family can solve, it's as good as done."

Such a heavy promise right at the first meeting—an unmistakable show of allegiance.

However, Lauren did not look too thrilled. She knew full well the favor was not for them personally. It was all because of their connection to Andrew.

After the introductions, Andrew slipped his hands into his pockets and said lazily, "Logan, from here on, I'll leave everything to you. Hope that's not a problem?"

Logan grinned widely. "Andy, even if the sky falls, I'll be the one holding it up first. You do whatever you need to. Leave the rest to me."

Meanwhile, Jameson, Tiana, and the two sisters watched as Logan strode straight toward Archie.

Archie plastered a fake smile on his battered face. "Mr. Keller! What a surprise. If I had known you were connected to Mr. Lloyd, I never have made such a would re.

mess

If I'd known you and him were tight like this, I wouldn't have gone picking fights with our own family."

Logan chuckled coldly. "Mr. Hopkins, you're pretty bold, huh? Since when did the Hopkins family qualify to call themselves 'family' with the Keller family?"

The slap in the face was loud and merciless.

Archie's expression shifted from forced smiles to pure humiliation, his face turning beet red. He had intended to back down gracefully, to save face. However, Logan had no intention of letting him save anything.

Behind Archie, the Hopkins fighters all dropped their gazes to the ground, not daring to make a sound. When facing the Keller family, the Hopkins were not even qualified to grovel.

"Get on your knees!" Logan's voice dropped several octaves, carrying a deadly chill.

Archie gritted his teeth and

protested. "Mr. Keller, surely there's no bad blood between the Hopkins and the Kellers? And you want me to kneel over one insignificant little punk? Don't you think that's a bit much?"

Without warning, Logan slapped Archie across the face so hard it echoed through the night. He roared, "How dare you call him a punk in front of me? When you insult him, you insult me! What are you saying then, Mr. Hopkins—that I'm a bigger punk than he is?"

Before Archie could even steady himself, Logan followed up with a brutal kick.

Chapter 1200

With a sickening snap, several bones shattered under Logan's brutal kick, and Archie let out a bloodcurdling scream that made everyone's scalp tingle.

"Mr. Keller, please, stop! I'm begging you! I was wrong! I was talking shit! I apologize—I apologize!"

Archie flailed on the ground like a dying animal, completely stripped of his earlier arrogance. His body trembled violently, his face twisted in agony, but he did not dare show the slightest bit of temper as he groveled before Logan, crying and pleading.

Logan casually strolled over and slapped him twice more across the face, with ruthless, bone-jarring force.

Archie's head snapped to the side so hard it almost seemed like his neck would break, and his screams grew even more pitiful. Yet, not a single Hopkins fighter moved to help him.

All of them stood frozen, faces pale with fear, too terrified to even breathe loudly.

Logan's voice was calm but icy. "Tonight, if Andrew doesn't accept your apology, not a single one of you is leaving this place whole. Every damn one of you will be leaving with broken arms and legs."

Archie howled in desperation. "Mr. Keller, please! No!"

Logan's face remained utterly emotionless. "Then start begging. Beg him for forgiveness. If he accepts your apology, tonight's incident can be forgotten. If he doesn't... well, by tomorrow morning, you'll be down in hell."

The words slammed into Archie like a hammer to the chest, making him nearly faint from terror.

Was Logan really about to destroy him over some no-name punk like Andrew? He wondered who Andrew was, and why Logan was his sworn brother.

Archie could not wrap his head around it, but under the crushing weight of fear, he dropped to his knees and started slamming his forehead against the ground in front of Andrew.

He wailed, "Mr. Lloyd, please have mercy! I was wrong! I was blind and ignorant. I'm kneeling here, begging you! Please, be generous and don't stoop to the level of a piece of trash like me..."

The sight of Archie reduced to a pathetic mess left the entire Rhodes family speechless.

Lauren and Cecelia, being more simple-hearted, only thought, 'Andrew is amazing. He called the Keller family and handled everything without breaking a sweat!'

However, Jameson and Tiana saw something deeper.

Jameson let out a complicated sigh. "Tiana, I finally understand why you kept saying Andy isn't simple. Clearly, I made a fool of myself trying to treat him like a junior."

Jameson had always been an open-minded man. However, even he could not deny the blow to his pride, seeing how Andrew did not even need to lift a hand to bring Archie to his knees.

The realization hit hard-this young man, whom he had once envisioned as his future son-in-law, might now be far beyond his ability to even claim as family.

If Andrew ever turned against him one day, Jameson would have no choice but to beg for mercy himself.

Meanwhile, Tiana stood stiffly, her slender figure trembling slightly, her fists clenched tight.

She ignored Jameson completely. Instead, she gazed at Andrew's tall, commanding back, lost deep in thought.

Once upon a time, Reginald had

been just like this. A man who moved through the world quietly, only to unleash thunderous power when needed, overwhelming everyone she had ever known.

Now, decades later, his son stood before her, bearing that same unmatched strength, that same hidden sharpness. Even his quick wit, effortless charm, and the way he smiled were all hauntingly familiar.

For a fleeting moment, Tiana's mind blurred, and Andrew's towering figure overlapped with the image of the man she had once loved with all her heart.

However, in the very next second, she forcefully snapped herself out of it. A stern warning echoed inside her mind.

'No. You can't lose yourself again.

Not this time. Between you and Andrew lies the unbridgeable gap of generation, ethics, and blood ties. You must remain dignified. Otherwise, you will be spat on by the world.'

ve