

# RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

## Chapter 1221



Andrew waved his hand with a smile and said, "Mr. Bates, I'm not worthy of being compared to those so-called prodigies you mentioned. I just don't like being pushed around, that's all."

Ronan gave a bitter smile and said, "In times like these, not being pushed around has practically become a luxury. A lot of folks just want some basic fairness and justice, but even that feels impossible to get."

"And someone like you, Mr. Lloyd, who dares to fight back against the big, powerful families—well, people like that are few and far between."

Andrew caught a deeper meaning behind Ronan's words. "Mr. Bates, did something happen to you and Janice? Something you can't face alone?"

"If so, don't hold back—I'm just one man, but I'm not afraid to speak up for what's right," Andrew said, his voice steady and firm.

Ronan hesitated, clearly torn, and after a long pause, let out a tired smile. "We are facing something we can't survive on our own. But I've been struggling with whether or not to tell you, Mr. Lloyd. Because this matter is serious, and once you're involved, the consequences could be... unpredictable."

Andrew let out a quiet laugh, his tone calm but tinged with defiance. "You don't have to worry, Mr. Bates. I may not have any strong ties in Blumedale... But if there's really something in this little Gabo Creek region that could stop me, I'd honestly like to see it."

Ronan blinked, caught off guard, and looked at him with deep admiration. "Mr. Lloyd, you carry the kind of righteousness and courage that generations of Holtrien's noble souls have always strived for.

"Alright then I'll tell you the truth. My granddaughter and I... we're hanging by a thread."

Andrew was visibly surprised. "But Oak Apothecary's got a solid reputation in Blumedale's traditional medicine circles. You and Janice aren't short on money, and you don't have any major enemies, so how could your lives be in danger?"

Ronan's voice dropped low. "It's a long story, but the root of it all... is tied to one single thing. Tell me, Mr. Lloyd have you ever heard of the legend of the Ten Great Treasures from the Fallen Crimson Dynasty?"

Andrew nodded. "Yeah, back when the dynasty fell, there were all kinds of rumors about the Demon Queen, her high-ranking officials, and that ruthless general Gideon Thorne.

"Out of everything, the legend of the Ten Great Treasures seemed the most believable and definitely the most captivating. But later on, some parts turned out to be true... and others were just wild stories."

"Exactly," Ronan said. "Some of them are real, some of them are pure fiction. And

as for the Bates family... we've been tasked with protecting one of the real ones."

As Andrew studied him intently, Ronan slowly pulled a piece of aged leather parchment from inside his clothes.

The moment he unrolled it, Andrew immediately recognized what it was. "A treasure map... and it's only a partial one."

Ronan's eyes held a complicated emotion. "That's right. It's a treasure map—a torn-up old scrap of paper, but it nearly destroyed the Bates family. Four generations, Mr. Lloyd.

"Four generations were nearly wiped out because of this cursed thing. And now, it's just me—an old man barely hanging on—and Janice, who has no idea what she's really guarding."

Andrew understood this map had to be the root of the Bates family's rise and fall. Nonetheless, he was wise enough not to press for more.

Instead, he said, "Mr. Bates, the fact that you're showing me this map means you trust me. I'm guessing you want me to help in some way?"

Before Andrew

could react, Ronan

suddenly shoved the map into his hands. His voice was filled with pain. "This treasure nearly shattered my family. From now on, it's yours, Mr. Lloyd. All I ask is that in the days ahead, you look after Janice. Help her find a good future... Help her live a happy life."

## Chapter 1222



Naturally, Andrew refused and said, "Mr. Bates, this treasure map has been tied to your family's legacy for generations. You can't just hand over something this important to me. I can't accept it."

However, Ronan shook his head. "Mr. Lloyd, don't think of this as something you're unworthy of or need to feel guilty about taking. This partial map—rather

than calling it a gift, it's more like we're transferring a curse. Only by passing it on can we hope to survive."

Still, Andrew did not take it. Instead, he asked, "So someone's already after the map, aren't they?"

Ronan's eyes filled with seething hatred as he gritted his teeth. "You're right. And the one after this partial map isn't just anyone-it's Mosby himself. People thought he kept attacking Oak Apothecary because he wanted to take over my practice.

"But that was just smoke and mirrors to distract the other big families. Mosby's real goal has always been to get his hands on our family's treasure map." Andrew's expression darkened. "So that means... very few people know the Bates family has the map, right?"

After all, a treasure map-especially one tied to the Crimson Dynasty's Ten Great Treasures-was the kind of thing people would kill for. If it really led to one of those treasures, anyone who found it could become rich beyond imagination.

Yet somehow, the Bates family, with no real power or influence, had managed to hold onto it for this long. That could only mean one thing-very few people knew it even existed.

Ronan chuckled. "You catch on fast, Mr. Lloyd. You're absolutely right. Hardly anyone knows the Bates family is in possession of a partial treasure map.

"If it were common knowledge, those greedy elite families and power-hungry sects would've already snatched it from us. Mosby only found out by accident. It was never something we intended to reveal."

He paused, and a sorrowful smile appeared on his face. "Janice's father, Peter, was supposed to be my successor. But back then, my foolish son admired Mosby's medical skill and insisted on becoming his apprentice.

"Mosby may be talented, but he's also manipulative and ruthless. He used Peter

to dig up the truth about our family's map. And once he knew... he started plotting

to steal it.

"In the end, he tried to pressure Peter, using their relationship as mentor and apprentice, to betray t

and take the map. Thankfully, my boy had a shred of conscience left and never stole it. But because of that... because of that..."

Ronan's voice cracked, and he choked back sobs.

However, Andrew already knew how that story ended. His voice turned cold.

"So Peter stayed loyal. He didn't steal the map... and Mosby punished him for it. He killed Janice's dad, didn't he?"

Ronan broke down in tears, his voice hoarse. "He whipped Peter for three days and nights, trying to force me to hand over the map. I was ready to give it up, just to save Peter's life.

"But Mosby wasn't satisfied—he wanted to humiliate us. He ordered that Ellis—you know, the punk you dealt with—break Peter's arms and legs...and cut out his tongue. My poor son couldn't take the pain anymore. He swallowed poison and took his own life..."

Andrew had seen all kinds of power struggles and grudges in his time, but the tragedy of Ronan's family lit a fire in his chest. His fury surged like a sudden explosion.

He growled, "Mosby is a vicious, power-hungry monster. He deserves to die!"

Ronan said grimly, "I can feel it—he's running out of patience. Seems like he's about to come after the map with everything he's got. That's why, Mr. Lloyd... you need to take the map and leave, now."

## Chapter 1223



"I'd rather hand it to you for free than let that scumbag Mosby get his hands on it!" Ronan said firmly.

Andrew finally took the partial map and tucked it away carefully. He promised, "Don't worry, Mr. Bates. I'm just holding onto it for now. Even if this treasure is real and ever uncovered, it still belongs to you and Janice."

Ronan gave a weary smile. "That treasure isn't so easy to find. To be honest, I've spent years secretly investigating it myself. But I haven't found much. This is only a piece of the map.

"In other words, we'd need to gather the rest of the fragments before we could even begin to figure out where the treasure's actually hidden."

Andrew chuckled. "So this was passed down through your family and dates back to the fall of the Crimson Dynasty, right? That means it's been over a century. Finding the rest of the pieces seems like a lost cause."

Surprisingly, Ronan shook his head. "That's where you're wrong, Mr. Lloyd. From what I know, this treasure is tied to five pieces in total. The one in our hands is just one of them, passed down through the Bates family. And as far as I'm aware, two other families currently hold parts of the map as well."

Andrew's interest sparked. "Oh? Would you mind telling me which two families?"

Ronan nodded. "One of them is the Page family here in Blumedale. Just like the Bates family, they inherited theirs from their ancestors. So in a way, the Page family and the Bates family are both legacy guardians of this treasure.

"The other family originally came from Jayrodale, but they've since expanded their roots into Blumedale. I'm talking about the Rhodes family of Jayrodale. Mr. Lloyd, I believe you're familiar with them."

Wait, what?

That caught Andrew off guard. He had not expected that Lauren's family would be tied to the treasure too.

No wonder they clawed their way into Blumedale—maybe they were hoping to track down the other pieces of the map and unlock the treasure.

If the Rhodes family actually found it, they would instantly rise to the level of the Five Apex families, if not higher.

Clearly, both Jameson and Tiana were ambitious-especially Tiana, who was cunning, unpredictable, and sharp enough to run circles around most men.

For all Andrew knew, Jameson was just a pawn she was maneuvering to chase after this legendary treasure.

"Mr. Bates, you and Janice should just focus on living peacefully," Andrew said.

With everything settled, he prepared to leave. "As for Mosby... I'll handle him. If he dares lay a hand on either of you, I'll make him pay in blood."

Ronan looked deeply moved. "Mr. Lloyd, I believe you with all my heart. But about those medicinal herbs that you asked for... I'm truly sorry. I wasn't able to get them for you."

Andrew waved it off. "It's fine. They're not essential. Besides, didn't you say Genesis Dispensary had some in stock? I'll go pick them up myself later."

Ronan gave a bitter smile. He could not help but think Andrew was really bold to the bone. He had just turned Genesis Dispensary into an enemy, and now casually talked about walking in there to grab what he needed.

Kon

Ronan could not tell if Mosby was too easy to mess with—or if Andrew was just a wild tiger who took what he wanted, no questions asked.

When Andrew returned to The Sovereign Residences, he told Natasha to quietly assign a few people to keep Ronan and Janice under protection for a while.

According to Ronan, Mosby was growing impatient and might make a move to snatch the map soon. So, Andrew was more than ready to teach that bastard a lesson he

would not forget.

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Meanwhile, over at Genesis Dispensary...

Mosby was shaking with rage. "It was Andrew who trashed the place? That little

bastard actually had the nerve to come after me?"

## Chapter 1224



Mosby's second apprentice, Old Hayface, had bandages wrapped around his swollen face and a freshly splinted arm.



He screamed through gritted teeth, "Yeah, it was that little bastard! Mr. Lake, you've ruled Blumedale for years—when have we ever been humiliated like this? We've got to kill Andrew. Not just kill-wipe him off the face of the earth!"

Mosby's face was dark as thunder, his fists clenching so tight that his knuckles cracked. "Andrew, you arrogant little runt... you've gone too far. Way too far."

With rage in his eyes like flames ready to erupt, he pulled out his phone and dialed a number.

He called Richard, patriarch of the Golding family.

"Mr. Golding Senior, I want to increase the payment-add another 500 million!" Mosby growled. I want that punk Andrew dead by tomorrow. No tonight. I want his body in pieces!"

His furious roar was so loud it nearly burst Richard's eardrum on the other end. "Dr. Lake, calm down! Lower your damn voice!" Richard snapped.

"You already know-we've canceled the Golding family's hit order. No matter how much you add, we can't help you."

His tone was full of helplessness, but firm.

Mosby growled low. "Mr. Golding Senior, I'm not talking about pocket change here -I'm offering 500 million more! With the 100 million I already paid, that's 600 million in total! That's enough to hire any top-tier assassin on the dark web and still have leftovers. Killing Andrew with that should be easy!"

Richard sighed. "Yeah, that's a crazy amount. You could probably hire one of those legendary killers from the black market with that much. But even, our family really can't get involved right now. The Kellers already spoke to us, and at the

moment, we can't afford to go

toe-to-toe with them."

Mosby scoffed coldly. "Mr. Golding Senior, you don't strike me as the type to back down from a fight. If the Kellers want to protect Andrew, does that mean the Golding@just

throw in the towel?

"Doesn't your family care about its reputation? You're really gonna let that scandal with Elon eating shit slide like it never happened?"

Richard's voice turned icy. "Dr. Lake, make no mistake-our family's pride will be restored. And what happened with my son? That humiliation will be paid back, in full.

"But as for Andrew... at least for now, we can't make a move publicly. I hope you understand—we've got to balance getting revenge on Andrew while preserving our ties with the Kellers."

Richard silently cursed at Mosby for pushing his buttons. Just when he had finally started to forget about that disgusting mess with Elon, Mosby had to bring it up again.

He had been forcing himself to share meals with Elon for days-breakfast, lunch, and dinner—and now, thanks to Mosby, the memory came roaring back.

Richard gagged quietly, suddenly feeling like his mouth still had that taste in it. Mosby snarled. "Fine! If the Goldings are backing out, then I'll handle it myself! I won't play the coward like you, Mr. Golding Senior!"

Richard clenched his jaw to hold back his fury. "You're really going all-in, huh? Why are you bleeding so much money just to kill Andrew? What the hell did he do to you?"

Mosby growled, voice dripping with venom. "What do you think he did? That little bastard showed up at my place and smashed Genesis Dispensary to

pieces! You think I can just let that go? If I don't retaliate, how the hell am I supposed to keep my place in Blumedale?"

## Chapter 1225



Richard stayed silent for a long moment, then clenched his jaw and muttered with a complicated expression, "This kid keeps making enemies left and right—either he's messing with major families or provoking big names like you, Dr. Lake.

"You'd think he's courting death, yet somehow, he's still alive and kicking. But if you say he's unbeatable or has god-tier power, he doesn't exactly live up to that either. I just don't get why he'd go out of his way to pick a fight with someone like you."

Mosby sneered. "The wise adapt to the times, but this arrogant little bastard clearly thinks he's untouchable-like he doesn't have to respect anyone. Well then, I'll be the one to teach him a lesson. I may not command a powerful family...

"But my influence and pull in this city? It's scarier than half the legacy clans put together. I could destroy him ten thousand ways and not repeat a single one."

With a huff, Mosby hung up the call. Richard's indecisiveness had irritated him to the core.

Meanwhile, Richard stared at his phone and let out a laugh full of disdain.

"Mosby, oh Mosby... fame's gone to your head these past few years. You've got unmatched skills, sure, and the big houses in Blumedale treat you like some living saint, showering you with praise and favors.

"But if you think that makes you equal to a legacy bloodline, then you've really overestimated yourself. If the Kellers are willing to suppress the Goldings just to protect Andrew, then crippling you wouldn't be beyond them either."

As Richard muttered to himself, Elon walked into the room.

"Dad, why do you look so pissed off? Did you just get into it with Mosby?"  
Elon asked, looking suspicious.

Richard gave his son a sideways glance full of disgust. "Get out of my face. I'm in a bad mood today because of you! Starting now, you're banned from eating at the same table as me!"

Elon looked hurt. "What? Why? I'm not sick. I don't even have bad breath  
Okay, maybe I eat a little too much, but come on, that's not some big problem!"

Richard let out a cold laugh. "You want to know why? Why? Because you ate shit.

And I don't want any of that rubbing off on me."

Elon stood there, frozen in place, eyes wide with disbelief, practically on the verge of tears. They were supposed to bury the whole 'eating shit' scandal, and the entire Golding household agreed never to speak of it again.

So, why did they keep bringing it up, reopening his wound, and stabbing at his pride again and again?

Elon wanted to scream-eating that crap had been a desperate decision, and he had his reasons.

As Richard stormed off, Elon stood there stewing in humiliation and rage.

At that moment, he snapped. A vengeful, irrational thought bubbled up from his gut.

If Richard had not been his father, he might have tackled the old man right there, pinned him to the ground, and shoved his mouth into a kiss.

He thought, "You hate me because I'm filthy? Because I ate shit? Then fine—I'll make you taste what you're so disgusted by! Let's see how high and mighty you feel after that!"

Elon was not thinking straight—he just wanted to lash out. He wanted to punish.

What he did not pause to consider... was that charging your own father and kissing him out of revenge?

Well, that might just land you in court and therapy.

## Chapter 1226



Mosby had failed to convince the Golding family, and his mood had hit rock bottom. Given his status, he did not have the authority to issue a bounty backed by the major houses.

In other words, he could not rally the underground assassins under the name of a bloodline clan to hunt down Andrew.

So now, he had no choice but to take an alternative route.

Old Hayface, still battered and cautious, spoke up carefully. "Mr. Lake, we really can't afford to take this lightly. This Andrew guy is no joke. Even Ellis

couldn't beat him. If we're going after him, your average martial artist won't cut it."

Mosby shot him a frosty glare and snapped, "Do I need you to remind me? The kid's arrogant, sure-but he's got the strength to back it up. To bring him down, we'll have to be strategic. That's why I said earlier-I'm willing to spend 500 million!

"With that kind of money, I could buy the lives of half the thugs in this city like it's nothing..."

Old Hayface hesitated, then suddenly perked up. "Mr. Lake, wait! Isn't the Grand Medical Summit just around the corner here in Blumedale? Carl should be returning soon from the Advanced Medical Institute to prep for it! With his skills, he could definitely avenge you!"

Mosby's eyes lit up, and then he let out a loud laugh. "You're absolutely right! It's been what-almost two years since Carl went off to the Institute? I nearly forgot I had such a powerful apprentice under my wing!"

Old Hayface rubbed his hands together with a mix of awe and unease on his face.

"Carl's the most gifted among your students, both in martial arts and medicine! If he steps in to handle Andrew, not only would it be justified-but it would restore your name and prestige. That Andrew punk won't last long!"

Mosby's sour mood finally lifted. He grinned. "Indeed. Carl's talent rivals that of the heirs of the Five Apex Families. In combat alone, he's nearly on par with Xavier Haywood, and having him kill Andrew is absolutely fitting."

Old Hayface sheered. "That little bastard thought he was untouchable just because he's got a bit of skill. Not only did he act all high and mighty but he even stood up for that old fossil Ronan! Once Carl returns, it'll be his judgment day!"

Mosby's eyes narrowed, his voice low and dangerous. "Speaking of Ronan-what

I asked you and your fellow apprentices to take care of earlier needs to happen tonight."

Old Hayface frowned. "Mr. Lake, shouldn't we hold off a little longer? If we openly go after the partial map in Ronan's hands, the other big families might catch wind of it.

"And if word gets out, your plan to keep the treasure for yourself? That'll go straight out the window. The Goldings, the Haywoods, the Wrights-none of them would hesitate to swoop in and demand a cut."

Mosby scoffed. "You think I haven't already considered that? But we can't afford to wait anymore. That stubborn old man, Mr. Bates, has refused every offer. At this point, we need to use force. I'm not risking another delay-who knows what tricks that geezer might pull if we wait too long."


Old Hayface's voice dropped to a menacing whisper. "Alright. I'll take a team tonight and make our move. If that old bastard dares resist, I'll kill him on the spot!"

Mosby raised his hand sharply. "Not until the map is in our hands. No killing. If Ronan dies before we secure the piece, we risk losing all leads Do this-pressure him hard. If he still refuses, grab Janice. She's the leverage we need to break him."

Old Hayface grinned wickedly. "Brilliant as always, Mr. Lake. Understood. I'll follow your orders to the letter."

Chapter 1227





Suddenly, a thought sparked in Mosby's mind, and his entire face lit up as he burst into laughter. "The Crimson Dynasty's Ten Great Treasures... now that's an absolute fortune.

"Sure, most treasure stories through the ages are nothing but legends. People have always said the Ten Great Treasures were just old myths. But more often than not, even lies can carry fragments of reality.

"The treasure map held by the Bates family is one of those fragments-hidden in plain sight, woven in half-truths. And if I get my hands on it, then riches beyond imagination are already within reach!"

As he finished speaking, Mosby clenched his raised fist as though he could already feel mountains of gold and silver folding into his palm.

Old Hayface was staring with wide-eyed greed. He licked his lips and asked eagerly, "Mr. Lake, is the treasure held by the Bates family really that miraculous? I mean... what if it's just another fantasy? Something someone made up to throw people off?"

Mosby gave him a rare approving nod. "It's good that you're thinking critically. That means you're not completely hopeless. But don't forget-our Holtrien ancestors were no fools. Just like I said earlier, truth and lies often blur together. That's what makes things so hard to pin down.

"Most folks today think treasure tales are played out, just superstitions. But it's exactly that dismissiveness that allowed families like the Bates to safeguard the real thing through generations.

"I'm telling you—there's no doubt. Because I've already traced the whereabouts of a few more missing map fragments. The others are hard to get at for now... but Ronan? He's the softest target on the board."



Old Hayface's excitement nearly made him tremble. He leaned in, eyes gleaming. "Mr. Lake, you already have leads on the other pieces? Could you maybe just maybe satisfy your loyal apprentice's curiosity and tell me what you've found?"

Mosby smirked and shot him a look. Then, with agonizing slowness, he uttered just two words. "Not... happening."

Old Hayface blinked. "Huh?"

He fumed silently, cursing Mosby in his heart. The old man was tight-lipped as ever, paranoid and guarded like a fox.

Mosby let out a cold snort. He knew exactly what was going through his apprentice's head.

These so-called students of his? They would all turn on him the second he let his guard down.

There were people out there who would murder a family member over a few thousand bucks, so with something as massive as this treasure on the line? Please.

If he so much as whispered the full truth, his dozen apprentices would probably join forces, kill him in his sleep, and split the prize among themselves.

Mosby was not naive. In his downtime when he was not treating patients—he would browse the web, read stories, and keep up with trends.

It did not take long for him to realize that loyalty was a myth these days, and a sense of gratitude and responsibility was just a joke

-where the more loyal you act).r

the more likely you were to stab your parents in the back.

Sure, his apprentices acted like they respected him. But the moment he slipped up, they'd be the first to ransack his assets, steal his heirlooms, and probably even run off with his mistresses. Hell, they would probably rob his damn casket too.

So, no-Mosby was not about to share a single clue about the treasure map's deeper secrets.

Just then, one of the apprentices burst into the room, yelling like a man possessed. "Mr. Lake! Something's happened! It's Ellis! He... he... he's—"

Mosby frowned in disgust at the boy's panicked face and cut him off with a snort: "What, you think the sky's falling? With me here, do you really think anything could go that wrong? Let's go. I'll check on Ellis myself."

#### Chapter 1228



Inside one of Genesis Dispensary's private wards, Mosby stood over his third apprentice, Ellis. He only needed a glance before saying coldly, "Start preparing for the funeral."

Old Hayface and the rest of the gathered disciples froze like statues.

"Mr. Lake, even with your skills... you can't save Ellis?" Old Hayface asked in disbelief.

Mosby scoffed. "I can't. That punk Andrew shattered every meridian in Ellis's body. Most critically, his brain took a major blow—he suffered a severe concussion. Right now, he's no different from a vegetable."

The more Mosby spoke, the angrier he became. He silently cursed, 'Andrew, you little bastard... your death is coming.'

A young apprentice, no older than a teenager and clearly unaware of Mosby's true nature, asked innocently, "But Mr. Lake, Ellis isn't dead, right? We could take care of him here at Genesis Dispensary until he wakes up! Even if he never wakes up, you're rich, Mr. Lake—you could support him for the rest of his life!"

The room fell silent. Then, both Mosby and Old Hayface burst into laughter.

Old Hayface chuckled cruelly. "Kid, you're so pure it's almost adorable."

Mosby sneered. "Why the hell would I waste money caring for a useless lump like him?"

"Hayface, send Ellis off—make it peaceful."

Old Hayface grinned. "On it!"

Under the terrified gaze of the young apprentice, who looked like he might pee himself, Old Hayface stepped forward. He pulled out a small vial filled with a bright green liquid and poured it straight into Ellis's slack mouth.

Within seconds, Ellis's body began to twitch violently. Then, he went completely still. Dead.

Old Hayface beamed. "Mr. Lake, that was my newest creation—a lethal toxin, flavored like soda. Ellis was the first to try it. He died calmly and quietly. Nice, right?"

Mosby stroked his beard and nodded. "Not bad. I'm satisfied."

The young apprentice's worldview shattered right then and there. Clutching his head, he cried out in shock. "Mr. Lake, we studied medicine to save lives and help people! Isn't that what we're supposed to do? Hayface, Mr. Lake... how could you do something like this? Ellis was our fellow apprentice!"

Old Hayface's expression darkened as he barked, "Watch your mouth, kid! Do you think you have the right to question Mr. Lake?"

Mosby raised a hand, signaling him to stop. He walked over to the young apprentice and gently patted the boy's small shoulder, smiling like a kindly grandfather.

He said slowly, "My child, remember this. Yes, we practice medicine to save lives and bring healing. But that only applies to people who can pay us in cold, hard cash. If they can't, then too bad-our medicine isn't for broke nobodies.

"Our needles, our skills, and our hospital beds-they're not for freeloaders. That,

my dear disciple, is the real truth of modern medicine."

The young boy blinked, wide-eyed, nodding slowly as if trying to absorb it.

Then, he hesitated, still struggling, and asked, "But... Mr. Lake, what if there's a patient who doesn't have money, but it's an emergency-life or death In a case like that... shouldn't we help first, and deal with the rest later?"

Mosby leaned in, his eyes gleaming with sharp intent. "In that case, remember- there's one simple solution."

"Mr. Lake, please teach me. What's the solution?" the young disciple asked.

Mosby grinned darkly. "Simple. Let them... die."

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At The Sovereign Residences, Andrew pushed open the door to Aspen's room— only to find it empty.

He turned sharply, frowning. "Didn't I tell you guys to keep an eye on Aspen? I said don't let her jump off the damn building!"

Dylan gave an awkward laugh. "Come on, Mr. Lloyd, isn't that a bit dramatic? I really don't think she's that unstable."

Andrew sneered. "Says the guy who's still single at your age. Figures."

Dylan blinked. "Excuse me?"

What happened to having a normal conversation? Did Andrew have to aim straight for the personal wounds?

Still, Andrew could not shake the worry gnawing at his chest. He really was concerned that Aspen might have done something reckless. That woman had always been a little unstable, and the stuff that happened between them in the car recently? Yeah, not exactly therapy-approved.

If Aspen got caught in a spiral and decided to jump from a building or into a river, that guilt would land squarely on his shoulders.

He pulled out his phone, ready to call her-only for it to start ringing first. Aspen had beaten him to it.

"Come to the office," her voice snapped. "Someone from the Wrights is here, making a scene."

Then, without giving him a chance to reply, the little brat hung up on him.

Andrew let out a cold laugh.

So, Christina had gone crying to Quinton after what happened at Phoenixdream Enterprises—playing with wolves like that? She was bound to get bitten eventually.

Ten minutes later, Andrew arrived at Supreme Capital Group. He scanned the room—no Christina or Quinton. The only ones present were Aspen and a tall, ice-cold woman with a face that screamed, 'I'm better than you.'

Andrew sized her up instantly. Another heiress from one of those high-ranking families, carrying herself like the world owed her something just for existing.

"So you're the owner of Supreme Capital Group?" she asked, her tone sharp and mocking. "The guy who made my brother—and even the Haywoods and the Goldings—look like amateurs?"

Andrew didn't flinch. His face remained expressionless. "Yeah, I'm Andrew Lloyd. And you are?"

The woman extended her hand. "Yara Wrights. Quinton's sister. Well, half-sister, to be exact."

Andrew gave a flat reply. "Ms. Wright, let's stick to business. I'm not interested in your family drama."

Yara retracted her hand with poise. "I only brought it up to make one thing clear—I'm not on Quinton's side."

Andrew raised a brow but said nothing. He turned to glance at Aspen.

Aspen looked uneasy and muttered, "Ms. Wright didn't come here to pick a fight, it seems. She came to talk business... with you."

Andrew was caught off guard. "Business?"

He turned back to Yara, who had just crossed the room and seated herself without invitation. She casually crossed her long legs, putting them on full display—her sheer black stockings extending all the way up, and those tiny shorts doing little to hide anything.

From the right angle, anyone could see straight into her most private territory, not that she cared. She sat facing Andrew, completely unbothered, and said coolly, "That's right. I'm here to discuss a partnership, Mr. Lloyd."

Andrew narrowed his eyes. "What kind of partnership? Let's hear it."

Yara paused for a moment, then spoke without a shred of emotion. "A joint venture..... to kill Quinton. Tell me, Mr. Lloyd—would you be interested in that sort of project?"

## Chapter 1230



Aspen was utterly stunned. Yara—Quinton's own sister—had come to Andrew with a proposal to kill him.

She actually wanted her brother dead?

Andrew, however, did not look the least bit surprised. Instead, he chuckled. "Mind telling me why you'd want to partner with me—someone your Wright family considers an enemy? Shouldn't you be here trying to settle a score?"

Yara shook her head. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend. You're a smart man, Mr. Lloyd. I know you understand exactly what I mean."

Andrew gave a nod. "So what you're really saying is—you and Quinton are enemies."

Yara's eyes turned icy cold. "Like I said, Quinton is my half-brother. But if I had it my way, he'd be dead and buried without a trace."

Aspen, clearly uncomfortable, finally couldn't help but ask, "Ms. Wright... do you mind if I ask why you hate your brother so much?"

Yara's tone stayed flat. "Sorry, that's personal. Not something I care to share."

She turned back to Andrew. "So, Mr. Lloyd, yes or no? Give me a straight answer."

Andrew smirked. "Sure, here's my answer-no."

Yara froze, clearly caught off guard. "I came here offering to help you take down

Quinton. And you, are actually turning me down?"

Andrew let out a cold snort.

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"Quinton? In my eyes, he's nothing more than a clown. If I really wanted to crush him, it wouldn't even take effort And you-coming here out of nowhere, offering a partnership without any clear motive? Please. You think I'd trust someone I can't even tell is friend or foe?"

The disdain creeping across Andrew's face made Yara's expression darken. She snapped back, stunned. "Mr. Lloyd, surely you know your own limits. What gives you the confidence to dismiss Quinton like he's nothing? You do realize he's the most cunning and dangerous contender to take over the Wright family, don't you?"

Andrew gave her a sidelong glance. "And? So what if he does take control of the Wrights? Does that mean I'm supposed to be scared of him?"



Yara was so infuriated she laughed. "Everyone always said you were arrogant, Mr. Lloyd. Meeting you today proves it. The Wrights are one of the Five Apex Families—we have networks, power, and wealth that you couldn't even begin to comprehend!

"Most importantly, we have martial kings in our ranks-top-tier fighters that could erase entire organizations! Tell me, where the hell does your confidence come from? How dare you speak like that?"

Aspen did not get it either. To her, this was a golden opportunity-Yara had basically handed Andrew an inroad straight into the Wright family. If Quinton made

a move, Andrew could easily use Yara to strike back from within.

It was a chance handed to him on a silver platter-why not take it?

However, Andrew's voice was as cold as ever. "First of all, the Wright family might be impressive, but in my eyes? You're nothing special. Second, I have no idea what your real motive is in coming to me with this offer to go after Quinton.

"For all I know, you're just a pawn he sent to bait me into a trap. And finally..."

Andrew paused, his eyes narrowing as he looked Yara dead in the eye. Then, he smirked.

"Even if everything you just said is true... Why the hell should I agree to partner with you? You know exactly what Supreme Capital is capable of. So tell me, Ms. Wright-what exactly do you bring to the table that makes you qualified to negotiate with me?"