

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren) 1371-1380

On the platform, Mosby and Andrew stood on opposite ends, locked in a silent stare. The original third contender, Thomas, had already left in quiet defeat.

Mosby said, "Andrew, a shared first place is a win-win for both of us. Why not just take the prize and walk away happy? That way, we both leave this on a high note."

He was still trying to talk Andrew out of the final match.

Andrew glanced at him and replied with a light laugh. "Dr. Lake, are you chickening out?"

Mosby's face darkened. "Me? Scared? You think that's possible? I'm suggesting this for our benefit. I've seen your skills now-they're no less than mine. But if you want to surpass me, you'd need at least another ten, maybe 20 years."

Andrew rolled his eyes, clearly losing patience. "Mosby, quit blowing smoke. You know damn well that when it comes to medicine, you're not even fit to carry my bag."

That blatant slap in the face sent Mosby into a rage. His eyes flared, and he roared, "Fine! Then I'll fight you to the bitter end! If I don't make you taste humiliating defeat today, I'm not worthy of being called a medical master!"

To be honest, if this were not the Grand Medical Summit, and more like an underground brawl, he might have already gone for Andrew's throat. The kid was just that insufferable.

Of course, going off-script like that would have only backfired he would get destroyed either way.

On the judges' platform, Preston and Clifford leaned forward and asked, "Gentlemen, how would you like to compete?"

This was uncharted territory. In the Summit's entire history, a Round 11 had never happened before, so they looked completely lost.

Mosby scoffed and clasped his hands behind his back, striking a poised and dignified stance. "As the senior here, I'll give you the first move. Andrew, don't go telling others I bullied you. Go ahead-whatever tricks you've got, I'll take them all."

That pretentious air somehow won him a few nods of approval from the crowd- he still carried the aura of a medical master.

Andrew replied flatly, "Why don't you go ahead and pick the challenge? If I do it, it might be too hard, and you'll just say I'm being unfair."

Mosby's face flushed. It felt like getting slapped across the face in front of a full house. His hand trembled as he pointed at Andrew. "You little punk, how dare you! Name the challenge. If you can stump me, I'll give you the win, no questions asked. You'll be the sole champion of this Grand Medical Summit-I'll concede without hesitation!"

After all, he was able to pass the most difficult alchemy in ancient medical practice and brew the Golden Cure. There was no way he would let himself believe Andrew

could actually come up withou

something to beat him.

In the worst-case scenario, he would still push through and survive. As long as he made it through, he would not lose.

Andrew tilted his head and thought for a moment before speaking. "How about... acupuncture techniques?"

Mosby flicked his sleeve dramatically, and a line of silver needles rolled out. He scoffed. "Acupuncture? Bring it on. I'm not afraid of you."

However, Andrew shook his head. "No, acupuncture's flashy and gimmicky. Kinda boring."

Mosby clenched his fists and forced himself not to explode. "Fine. No acupuncture. Then what? Hurry up and decide already!"

Andrew tapped his chin, then said, "Alright, let's test pressure-point control specifically, accuracy over the 12 primary meridians and the full cycle of 360 acupoints in the human body."

Mosby let out a derisive laugh. "Child's play. I could do that blindfolded when I was 15. Watch yourself you're about to embarrass yourself."

Andrew waved him off. "Eh, never mind. Let's go with something else."

The veins on Mosby's forehead bulged. "Can you make up your mind already? First this, then that—are you stalling because you're scared?"

Laughter erupted from the audience.

At this rate, Mosby might not even get the chance to compete-Andrew would piss him off to death first.

Quinton, Christina, and Rafael, who had all been rooting against Andrew, chuckled coldly from the sidelines.

Dragging it out like this? Clearly, this kid did not have anything planned; he was just a flashy clown.

However, Andrew calmly said, "I've

got it, Dr. Lake. Let's settle this with this one challenge. It'll decide not just who's better, but who walks away alive as well."

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Andrew said coldly, "Just like you said, the other challenges are child's play. If we're going to compete, let's make it thrilling."

The sudden chill in his eyes made Mosby instinctively tense. "What kind of challenge?" he asked, trying to keep his voice steady. "You'd better spell it out— what exactly are we talking about here?"

Since life and death had been brought up, he could not help but feel nervous.

Andrew slowly raised a finger and pointed at his forehead, grinning sinisterly. "We're going to test poisons. The rules are simple—you make a bowl of poison, and I make one too. Then, we drink each other's concoction. Whoever's still standing in the end... wins."

Before Mosby could even respond, the crowd let out a collective gasp, hairs standing on end.

A guy exclaimed, "Drink poison? Is Andrew insane?"

"This is practically a death match. He's really pushing Dr. Lake to the edge. Is he so skilled, so fearless, that he sees life and death as a game now? No way—I refuse to believe it!"

Someone murmured, "He's gone too far. T-This is playing with fire."

"Drinking each other's poison—this is the most hardcore, high-stakes duel in the entire medical world. It's like gambling. Andrew isn't leaving Mosby any room to retreat!"

The place exploded with uproar. Not just Andrew's supporters—even those from Mosby's Advanced Medical Institute were visibly shaken by the intensity of the challenge.

Derek frowned deeply. "That was a bad move from Andrew. Mosby has nothing to lose—he's the kind of guy who'd go all in even if the price is death. Life isn't a joke."

Chantelle crossed her arms and huffed. "I just started to respect him, and now he pulls this reckless stunt? Unreal."

Quinton burst into laughter. "Dr. Lake, don't back out! Play the game! If you die, I'll cover the funeral!"

Mosby's face twitched so hard it almost locked in place he wanted nothing more than to climb up the platform and beat the crap out of Quinton. He thought that little bastard was enjoying the show a little too much.

Quinton was gambling with Mosby's life from the safety of the sidelines, of course he wanted the drama to play out.

However, if Mosby refused the challenge now, there was no saving face. He was the one who just minutes ago kept pressing Andrew to bring it on, insisting he would accept anything.

Mosby said through clenched teeth, "Andrew, are you really willing to risk it all?"

He added, "I've lived decades longer

than you. You'd better think this

through, I don't mind dying. But you—such a bright future ahead of You really want to throw it all away?"

you...

He tried one last time to appeal to Andrew on a personal level.

Andrew simply smiled and said, "No worries. Drinking poison is like sipping tea for me. You, on the other hand, are obviously tired of living. Well, let me help you out."

Mosby nearly exploded. "You son of a—"

Every organ in his body felt like it was being set on fire by rage.

Tired of living? The hell he was. He had not even fulfilled his ambition of

dominating Gabo Creek's medical world yet.

He had tried to play it noble, acting like he was advising Andrew for his own good, telling him not to take the poison duel. However, the truth was that he was terrified.

He might be a Medical Master, sure-but if Andrew slipped in two ounces of deadly aconite or arsenic. It would not matter if he were the second coming of Hippocrates he would still be on a one-way trip to the morgue.

Now, the roles had flipped. Andrew leaned forward and pressed, "So Mosby? What's your answer? Decide now. If you're too scared, then go ahead and surrender-like you said earlier."

People across the arena winced. They all thought Andrew was ruthless and bold, not even afraid of putting his or anyone's life at stake.

The crowd's murmurs were growing louder, and they were mostly turning against Mosby.

He felt the pressure building and snapped, shouting at Andrew, "You little brat, stop screeching like a damn monkey!"

Andrew glared at him. "No, you stop screeching. What's wrong, scared?"

The crowd erupted-only Andrew would trash-talk in a moment like this.

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Rafael could not take it anymore and shouted, "Mosby, just accept the challenge already! You've got decades of medical mastery-what's there to fear? Kill him with it!"

Quinton, ever the chaos-stirrer, chimed in again. "Exactly, Dr. Lake! Believe in yourself. Andrew is bluffing-no way he'd really go all in! But hey, if he does... well then, pretend I didn't say anything."

Mosby's apprentices all turned to glare at Quinton, seething with rage. Then, they turned back toward their mentor, bowing respectfully.

"Dr. Lake, go forth with confidence! No matter what happens, even if something... unfortunate occurs, we'll take care of all the madams-day and night, with full devotion!"

Mosby's body trembled. For a fleeting moment, he seriously considered conceding to Andrew on the spot-just to survive this madness. Then, maybe sprint up to the stands and dismember every single one of those so-called apprentices.

As for that bastard Quinton? He wanted to castrate him, then force-feed him his own manhood.

He thought they were a bunch of heartless beasts-just to bring down Andrew, they clearly did not care whether he lived or died.

Mosby wanted to scream, to howl, to unleash all the rage churning in his gut. Meanwhile, Preston and Clifford both let out cold, synchronized grunts.

"Mosby, you've crossed the Rubicon-you can't turn back now. Either surrender right now, hand over the title of Grand Physician and let the Lazarus Blueprint fall into new hands... Or you fight-right here, right now-and send that boy to hell."

They added, "With your decades of expertise and our backup, as long as you don't drop dead instantly, victory's on your side. You have the advantage. There's no reason to hesitate. So, face Andrew head-on!"

Unlike the rest of the crowd, who were just there for the drama, Preston and Clifford's reasoning was sharp and strategic, brutal, but sound.

Mosby paused, realizing that time had run out. If he stalled any longer, he would be branded a coward by everyone present. Grinding his teeth, he finally snarled at Andrew, "Fine! I'll do this, Andrew! Let's take it to the end! Today, either you die— or I do!"

Andrew could not even be bothered to respond. He simply picked up the glass of clear water in front of him and began tossing things in.

As he did, he muttered casually under his breath, "A bit of Necrotic Dust to ensure complete decay... A dash of Seven-Tailed Centipede venom, and some rattlesnake extract. Peaceful passing, you know?"

"Oh, can't forget the parasite poison. That stuff's great-should be enough to let your brain incubate a nest of worms. But the sweetest and most delicious has to be Nightshade f the Grim Reaper wants you dead by midnight, you won't make it past 11.00 p.m.!"

With every sentence, Mosby's face twitched harder than the last. This little monster was not just trying to kill him he wanted to annihilate him, body and soul. With that deadly combo, even an immortal would have to take a step back.

Fueled by pure fury and desperation, Mosby finally made his move. A cloud of toxic powders rained into his own glass, thick and dense like smoke.

"Andrew, you asked for this!" he bellowed. His voice cracked into a guttural roar, like a beast driven into a corner.

Then, Andrew calmly walked over and shoved the rest of his poisons into Mosby's hands.

Mosby froze. "What are you doing?"

The entire crowd was dumbfounded, wondering what Andrew was doing.

Andrew flashed a bright smile. "Oh,

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I'm basically done here. But your mixture's kinda weak. So, I'm donating these for free. Toss them in! That way, it'll actually have some flavor when I drink it later."

Everyone was stunned.

This was not just being aggressive; this was untouchable arrogance. It was like Andrew no longer recognized fear, consequence, or mortality.

Even Preston and Clifford, who had been confident they could rescue Mosby in time, felt their souls leaving their bodies!

Was Andrew really not afraid of death? Or did he truly have the confidence to treat the Grim Reaper as nothing?

"Alright, now let's start drinking-cheers!"

Seeing Mosby hesitate, Andrew handed over the toxic water in his hand straight to him.

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Mosby did not take the cup because he was afraid. Seeing this, Andrew ran out of patience and shoved the poisoned concoction straight into his hands.

Mosby nearly burst into tears. "Andrew, d-don't touch me!"

However, Andrew ignored him completely. After handing over his poison, he casually reached for the one Mosby had prepared.

Then, with a chilling grin, he raised his glass toward Mosby. "Cheers!"

Mosby held Andrew's poison in trembling hands, his entire body shaking. "Andrew, are you really planning to die with me?"

Andrew shook his head. "No. I'm sending you off. Trust me, if I'm playing this game with you, then there's only one ending-you're the one who dies."

With that, he raised his glass and tilted it toward his lips.

Mosby did not move. Deep down, he was banking on Andrew's death—if the kid dropped, victory was his.

Just right as Andrew's lips touched the cup, he paused, lowered it, and gave Mosby a smirk full of wicked amusement. "What's going on? I'm already ready to toast—don't tell

me you're chickening out now. If you're too scared, go ahead and surrender. I might even be kind enough to let you walk away."

Mosby snapped, "I'll drink it! I'm drinking now!"

Yet, just as he stared into the murky liquid Andrew had handed him, cold sweat poured down his back. After all, just a sip of this stuff could send him straight to the afterlife.

That so-called backup plan Preston and Clifford mentioned-saving him in time? Total bullshit. He knew those two old bastards did not care whether he lived or died.

Suddenly, everyone in the arena held their breath-Andrew had taken the lead and downed a small sip from Mosby's poison.

Then, he calmly set the cup down. "The taste is a bit odd... but manageable."

As he tilted his head and smacked his lips like he was sampling wine, Mosby felt his world collapse. 'What the hell? Why's he still standing? Is he immune to poison? How is he fine?'

Shocked out of his senses, Mosby's hands shook violently, and some of the poison sloshed over the rim, dripping onto the floor. The stone floor immediately hissed and sizzled as it corroded, holes and smoke appearing right away.

That was the last straw, and Mosby's courage shattered in an instant. The cup slipped from his hands, smashing into pieces on the floor.

"I won't drink it! I can't drink it! I surrender-I admit defeat!!" Mosby

screa before collapsing onto the

knees hitting the stone

with a dull thud.

That poison had eaten through marble. If he drank it, his insides would have turned to sludge.

The arena erupted into the loudest roar yet, and everyone stood, thundering applause ringing through the air.

"The champion of the Grand Medical Summit... Andrew Lloyd! Congratulations!" Preston and Clifford had to muster every ounce of energy just to get the words out. Their wrinkled faces were stiff with rage and humiliation, but there was nothing they could do.

If they had been in Mosby's shoes, they would have pissed themselves before even holding the cup.



Rafael pointed furiously at Andrew, roaring, "That drink wasn't even poisonous, was it?!"

Derek's expression hardened. "Mr. Driscoll, watch your words! The poison Andrew drank was prepared by Dr. Lake in front of everyone. How could it not be toxic?"

Rafael snapped, "Then how the hell is Andrew still standing? I don't know what kind of trick this is, but that cup needs to be inspected!"

Andrew scoffed. "I didn't expect the Driscoll family to produce someone who talks this much crap with a straight face."

With Rafael practically breathing fire, Andrew casually raised the cup and slammed it to the ground. Just like Mosby's, the floor beneath hissed and smoked, corroding instantly.

It was pure poison.

Rafael, Derek, and half the arena were left speechless.

Was Andrew even human?

Just like that, the match was settled, and all that remained was the award

ceremony. Andrew accepted everything without hesitation, claiming every prize in full.

Most importantly, he snatched the fragmented treasure map straight from

Clifford's hand and shoved it into his pocket.

Clifford gave a sheepish smile and muttered, "Andrew, that map's useless to you, you know."

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Clifford suggested, "How about you sell that map to our Advanced Medical Institute?"

Andrew did not even bother looking at him, simply replying, "Sure. Like I said before—just make me the head of your institute and we've got a deal."

Clifford roared, "You're delusional!"

Andrew sneered. "If I'm delusional, then so are you."

Down below, Mosby staggered off the platform like a broken man. Rafael rushed up to him, his voice tight with urgency. "Mosby, I only brought that map out because of you! Yet

you just stood there and let it fall into Andrew's hands! Do you realize how big a loss this is?"

Mosby's lips trembled. "Mr. Driscoll... I tried my best."

"I know you tried," Rafael growled. "But we have to take the map back!"

Mosby's eyes drifted toward Andrew, still surrounded by the roaring crowd, and his expression twisted with hatred. "Don't worry. The humiliation and disgrace I suffered because of him, I'll return it all with a hundredfold. If I don't see that brat dead, then I'm no man!"

In one lonely corner of the stands, Christina and her family, plus Quinton, sat stiffly like a group of washed-up fools.

Leroy muttered, "Christie, Mom... So, from today onward, Andrew's the Grand Physician? If we see him again, do we have to bow to him or something?"

Irene fidgeted and stammered, "I-I don't think so... I mean, Grand Physician is just a title, right? It's not that big of a deal..."

However, all the color had already drained from Christina's face.

She stared blankly ahead and said, "Sure, the title alone might not mean much. But starting today, Andrew's name will echo across Blumedale-through Gabo Creek and all of Southern Holtrien. He's already soared. To him, we're nothing but ants."

Irene shut her mouth tight, too terrified to speak. Her short, pudgy body trembled. "Christie, let's go. Let's just leave and never cross him again. Hurry!"

Quinton's face had already turned pitch black.

"Let's go," he muttered bitterly, rising to his feet. Deep in his chest, regret burned like fire. He should have listened to Christina and bailed earlier.

Now, watching Andrew bask in glory, with everyone cheering his name, made him feel worse than if someone had put a bullet through his heart.

"Hold on, Quinton, Yara—you two come with me to congratulate Mr. Lloyd."

Kevin, the Wrights' patriarch, burst into hearty laughter.

"Oh, wait—not Mr. Lloyd. I should say, Dr. Lloyd, Grand Physician Lloyd, hahaha!"

Quinton had not even gotten the chance to turn away when Kevin clapped a hand on his shoulder.

Yara giggled. "I wouldn't mind congratulating Dr. Lloyd! But it looks like my dear brother isn't exactly thrilled about it."

Kevin's smile vanished. His tone turned firm. "You're going-no discussion. And especially you, Quinton. When you see Dr. Lloyd, make sure to be respectful."

Quinton stared at him like he had just been stabbed in the back.

Kevin beamed. "I've decided to follow the Keller family's lead and form a sworn brotherhood with Dr. Lloyd. From now on, he's going to be like an uncle to you. fo

"But honestly?+don't think that's close enough. We need to be even tighter than the Keller family. And since you're my most outstanding son, I want you to show our

sincerity... by making Dr. Lloyd your godfather."

Something inside Quinton's mind snapped, and he felt like the entire sky was collapsing on him. "No! I won't! Absolutely not!"

His scream echoed across the stands like a man being dragged to the gallows.

Yara could not help it anymore and burst into a fit of laughter, tears streaming from her eyes.

Meanwhile, Christina and her family just stood there, frozen in place like stone statues. They had followed Quinton around Blumedale like he was a god. But now, their "god" was about to bow and call Andrew his godfather.

So, what did that make them?

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

On Andrew's side, it took quite some effort to finally break free from the swarm of admirers. There was no helping it because he was officially famous now. He was not just the youngest Grand Physician in history, but also the man who single-handedly forced the legendary Mosby to his knees in the Summit's unprecedented eleventh round.

If Derek's people had not cleared a path for his exit, Andrew feared he would have been swallowed alive by the crowd.

"Alright then, bring out that pot of the Golden Cure. Let's split it up," Andrew said, smiling.

Chantelle, who had just helped pave the way for his exit, was still wiping sweat from her brow. She quickly chimed in, "Dr. Lloyd, I know that your Golden Cure is priceless, but we're all on the same team here. You better not leave anyone out!"

The others did not speak, but the gleam in their eyes said it all-they were thinking exactly the same thing. Everyone wanted a taste of the legendary medicinal brew.

Andrew looked at the total volume of the brew, stroked his chin thoughtfully, and replied, "We should have just enough. Everyone close to me ought to get at least a little. Alright let's begin."

He began carefully ladling the Golden Cure into bottles, one after another. Then, he handed them out in order to those who stepped forward to receive them.

He had not realized it before, but now that he was distributing the cure, the size of his inner circle in Blumedale startled even him.

The Kellers, the Rhodes family, and Derek's people alone took up a chunk. Francesca, Lauren, and Aspen each got their share too no question about it. These three women were top priority.

At first, Aspen hesitated. As Andrew's personal servant, most people only saw her as his secretary, or at worst, his plaything. However, her heart suddenly jolted when Andrew pressed a bottle of the Golden Cure into her hands without hesitation.

She had not expected this, and it could only mean she was not just some indulgence he truly counted her as one of his own.

The Golden Cure was miraculous for martial artists, purifying and reshaping the body's foundation. For ordinary people, it still had incredible effects-boosting longevity, strengthening the body, and enhancing vitality.

Since George was much older, Andrew handed him an extra bottle without a second thought.

George chuckled. "You're so thoughtful! Not bad, kid. I've moved my whole family's security detail to protect you in case someone tries to take a shot. Guess it wasn't for nothing!"

Andrew smiled. "You've always backed me, and I don't forget that."

Derek did not say a word, but the longing in his eyes said plenty.

Andrew was not about to ignore him. Picking up a few of the last remaining bottles, he walked over and handed him one, then another.

"Mr. Lloyd, I can understand why you gave Mr. Keller Senior an extra bottle," Derek said with a smile, not even pretending to be modest. "He treats you like his own son. But what about this bonus one you're giving me? Should I be suspicious?"

Andrew grinned. "Governor McCormick, you're both the people's leader and my business supporter. Of course, I had to show you some appreciation."

Derek burst out laughing. "You've got charm, Mr. Lloyd. Looks like my judgment was right all along."

Tiana watched quietly from the side, nodding in approval. This future son-in-law of hers really knew how to play the game-charming both giants like George and Derek without missing a beat.

If Andrew wanted to expand in Blumedale going forward, the road would be wide open.

The more she looked at him, the more she liked what she saw. A soft, knowing smile played on her lips, though no one could tell exactly what she was thinking about.

Meanwhile, the Zephyr family stood

awkwardly in the back, completely

invisible. They had no choice as Andrew was surrounded by the

crème de la crème of Gabo

Creek-the elites and heads

vel

families.

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## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Zephyr and Esther thought the Stevens family of Bridgefields barely had the qualifications to show their faces, let alone speak up. However, when they saw Aspen receive a bottle of the Golden Cure from Andrew himself, both lit up with joy.

Just then, Andrew picked up another small bottle and casually walked over in their direction.

Zephyr immediately stepped forward. "Mr. Lloyd, what's the matter?"

His tone was careful.

Andrew smiled warmly. "Mr. Stevens, no need for all that formality. Just call me Andrew from now on. There's not much of the brew left, and Aspen already got her share. But

since your family came all the way from Bridgefields, it must've been tiring. This little bottle is for you. It should help with your upcoming martial breakthrough."

Zephyr's hands shook, unsure whether to take it or not. It was not until Aspen gave a small, encouraging nod that he finally reached out, clutched it like treasure, and bowed deeply.

He said, "I won't waste words. Just know I'm endlessly grateful."

Esther quickly followed suit, bowing low without even daring to look Andrew in the eye.

By now, Andrew's status had reached untouchable levels, especially under the spotlight of the Grand Medical Summit. It was no exaggeration that if he so much as said the word, he would not even need to lift a finger, and the Stevens family of Bridgefields could be wiped from existence overnight.

"Alright. That's the last of it. Everyone, go home. This year's Grand Medical Summit is officially over."

With a casual clap of his hands, Andrew turned to leave.

However, a cold scoff sliced through the air, and Rafael, Mosby, and their

entourage from the Advanced Medical Institute stormed forward, forcing their way through the crowd like a tidal wave.

No one dared stop them.

The usual warm smile was gone from Rafael's face, replaced by an icy glare. He growled, "Dr. Lloyd, why didn't I get any of that Golden Cure?"

His tone was not polite-it was aggressive. He was demanding it outright.

George sneered. "Mr. Driscoll, isn't that obvious? You didn't get any because you don't deserve any."

Derek frowned. "The brew's all gone, Mr. Driscoll. Let it go."

Rafael gave a twisted smile. "Governor McCormick. Mr. Keller Senior, please step aside. I still have business to discuss with Dr. Lloyd. One way or another, I will get my share of that brew-just like said before."

George's expression turned dark, his anger boiling over.

Andrew raised a hand, stopping him with a calm smile. "No need, Mr. Keller Senior. Let me handle Mr. Driscoll."

Turning to Rafael, Andrew's face remained calm. "Mr. Driscoll, the Golden Cure was limited, and it's all been distributed. Of course, I do still have a few spare bottles. And if you really want them, I might be open to it. sw̥hovel

Rafael scoffed. "There's no 'might' about it. Whatever you've got left, hand it over. I want them all."

Andrew chuckled and extended a hand. "Sure. But first, hand me something."

Rafael narrowed his eyes. "Hand you what?"

Andrew's voice was soft, but firm. "You want something from me, you pay for it. It's 100 million per bottle-however many bottles you want, that's how many hundreds of millions you pay!"

The outrageous price made everyone's eyelids twitch violently. They all thought Andrew was ruthless, as he was basically shooting fish in a barrel.

Preston and Clifford both erupted. "Andrew, you arrogant brat—how dare you price it that high? This is outrageous!"

Andrew shrugged with a wide grin. "Too expensive? Then walk away Besides, Isn't Mr. Driscoll one of the richest men in all of Gabo Creek? A few billion is just pocket change for you, isn't it?"

Rafael glared at Andrew. After a while, he said, "Dr. Lloyd, you really have it out for me, don't you? You keep disrespecting me. Did you forget who my family is? You don't get to act up here."

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The outrageous price made everyone's eyelids twitch violently. They all thought Andrew was ruthless, as he was basically shooting fish in a barrel.

Preston and Clifford both erupted. "Andrew, you arrogant brat—how dare you price it that high? This is outrageous!"

Andrew shrugged with a wide grin. "Too expensive? Then walk away Besides, Isn't Mr. Driscoll one of the richest men in all of Gabo Creek? A few billion is just pocket change for you, isn't it?"

Rafael glared at Andrew. After a while, he said, "Dr. Lloyd, you really have it out for me, don't you? You keep disrespecting me. Did you forget who my family is? You don't get to act up here."

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Andrew chuckled coldly. "Sorry, but the Driscoll family's so-called prestige means nothing to me. What, you think I need to survive in Blumedale by sucking up to the Driscolls? Did I ever beg your family for help? Have I ever taken anything from you?"

His smile faded completely, his voice cold. He had tolerated Rafael's posturing long enough. If it were not for the Grand Medical Summit, he would have kicked him out long ago.

Rafael sneered. "You really think that you can do whatever the hell you want now just because you took the crown at the Grand Medical Summit and beat Mosby, that you're untouchable in front of me?"

Andrew remained unfazed. "Rafael, most people kiss up to your family and you, but I'm not most people. So, if you think you can come in here, throw your weight around, and hide behind your family's reputation...

"Well, you came to the wrong place. Now get lost. The door's to the left, and we won't be seeing you out."

A flash of murderous intent crossed Rafael's eyes. "Alright, Andrew. Just like Mosby said—you're arrogant, reckless, and completely blind to consequences. Let's see if this so-called Grand Physician of yours can heal his own damn wounds."

Furious and humiliated, Rafael spun on his heel and stormed off. It was the first time in years that the Driscoll family name had been publicly dismissed in Blumedale.

He could not believe Andrew actually humiliated him in front of everyone. If this were the case, he would make sure Andrew pays with his life.

As for that treasure map? He would be taking that back too.

Mosby followed behind, but not before flashing a venomous smirk at Andrew. "Our feud isn't over. You've got two pieces of the treasure map now, right? Some things are too hot to hold. One slip, and you could lose more than just your fortune."

Andrew raised a brow, then suddenly laughed. "A defeated mutt barking at the victor—how pathetic. Mosby, you used to be Blumedale's Medical Master. But remember this—from today on, you're just a loser. The next time you see me, you better step aside or drop to your knees."

Mosby clenched his fists so hard they cracked. The shame burned through every inch of him. Even so, he did not dare retaliate. He turned and slunk away with his tail between his legs.

George's voice cut through the tension, cold and sharp. "The Driscoll family is getting outrageous."

Derek sneered. "If Rafael wants to act tough, I'd be more than happy to give his whole family a reason to stretch their muscles—underground."

Jameson sighed. "Mr. Keller, Governor McCormick... it's not that easy. The Driscoll family's roots run deep. Andrew will need to stay alert. Rafael's greedy—he won't let this go."

George nodded. "Well said, Mr. Rhodes. I feel the same. Don't worry. My entire family stands behind Andrew."

Derek grinned. "After everything I've

gotten from Mr. Lloyd, it'd be

criminal for me not to return the

favor Andrew, go ahead and take on Rafael however you want. If things go south, I have your back!

However, Andrew remained unconcerned. He was already planning to confront the Driscolls one day because of Lauren.

Rafael making the first move just meant the war started earlier than expected, and it was fine by him.

Armed with prizes and power, Andrew prepared to return to The Sovereign Residences with Aspen and Francesca. He had been too occupied at the Summit to sort through everything. But once they got home, he could have both girls help him tally up the rewards.

The title of Grand Physician? Just empty praise.

What he truly valued were the top-tier herbs, rare ingredients, and, most of all- the treasure map.

Francesca and Aspen begged

Lauren to come back with them to Serenity Villa, but she hesitated. Tiana had made it clear-if Lauren

left her line of sight, she was sure Andrew would claim her.

Andrew was just about to start the car when a familiar face appeared outside his window.

Kevin came running over excitedly. Behind him, a group of Wrights' men-more than a dozen-rushed forward and surrounded Andrew's car completely.

Andrew arched a brow from the driver's seat. "Mr. Wright, are you trying to rob me?"

Kevin flinched, suddenly realizing how bad this looked. His own people had just blocked the Grand Physician's car like a bunch of street thugs.

"Get out of the way! All of you! Are you crazy?! Why are you blocking Dr. Lloyd's car?"

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Kevin introduced himself, "Dr. Lloyd, I'm Kevin, head of the Wrights family. I was hoping to introduce myself through my daughter, Yara."

Given Kevin's polite tone and out of respect for Yara, Andrew did not put on a cold face right away.

He stepped out of the car with a smile. "Mr. Wright. Nice to meet you. But if we're just making introductions, then we've already met. And now, I'm going home. Take care."

Andrew's dismissive tone toward one of the Five Apex Family patriarchs stunned Kevin a little. He did not feel insulted-no, what he felt was dread.

Kevin thought, 'Damn it. The Wrights' status really doesn't mean anything to this kid anymore.'

However, Quinton was not nearly as self-aware. He chimed in gloomily. "Andrew, what's with the attitude? Do you even know what kind of power our family holds in Blumedale?"

Andrew sneered. "Power? I didn't even give a damn about Rafael. What makes you think the Wrights are more important than the Driscolls?"

Quinton was stunned. "Y-You ignored Mr. Driscoll? Andrew, if you've crossed him, you're dead. You've got no idea what you're in for!"

Andrew's eyes swept to Kevin, and he said slowly, "Mr. Wright, your son talks more than you do. He's loud and arrogant. Look at how he's already threatening me! I'm shaking in my boots."

The corner of Kevin's lips twitched slightly. As if Andrew would ever be scared- no one would buy that.

Without another word, he slapped Quinton hard across the face. "You little brat! Who the hell gave you the right to act up in front of Dr. Lloyd? Now get your ass over here and greet your godfather!"

Quinton's glare could have burned through steel, but Kevin did not care.

Andrew raised a hand. "Hold on, Mr. Wright. What did you just say? Godfather?"

Kevin chuckled. "That's right, Dr. Lloyd. I plan to become sworn brothers with you. Which means my good-for-nothing son here becomes your son too. Once we're bound, our families become one. Your business becomes our business. And if anything threatens you, the Wrights will fight to the death at your side."

Andrew felt his head spin. The generational mess this would create was absurd.

He was about to decline when Yara

about to

slid up beside him with a sugary voice. "Mr. Lloyd, my father came with sincere intentions. It's just. that... this isn't really the place for a proper talk. Why don't we go somewhere private? Share a meal while we chat?"

Kevin immediately chimed in, "Yes, that's right! Andy, let's move somewhere quiet.

If you like, we can even throw a banquet-invite all of Blumedale's elites to witness our brotherhood!"

Andrew did not budge-until Yara leaned in, her curves brushing against his arm a not-so-subtle rub. He sighed and waved Aspen and Francesca off. "You two head back first."

Then, he followed the Wrights' entourage to one of their family-owned restaurants.

Once alone with Yara in a side room, his tone shifted cold. "Ms. Wright, you'd better give me a real explanation. Because no matter how much you tease or flirt, I'm not the kind of man who gets distracted by a pretty face."

Yara pouted, as if hurt. "Mr. Lloyd, please hear me out. I genuinely believe that forming a brotherhood with my father is a brilliant move. Think about it-the connection gives you another ally in Blumedale."

Andrew smirked faintly. "Sounds lovely... but let's be honest. You're not doing this for unity. You want me to help you become the next head of the Wrights and crush Quinton."

Even though her intention was exposed, Yara remained calm, just blushing slightly. Then, she walked slowly toward him, heels clicking softly, and gently grabbed Andrew's hand.

He frowned. "What are you doing?"

Yara bit her lip and slid his hand down into her blouse. "Mr. Lloyd, help me take the Wrights. Crush Quinton, and the entire family will be mine, while I become yours. I think..... that's a deal that benefits both of us, don't you?"

Feeling the soft, warm curves beneath his palm, Andrew could not help but glance

at her. "Ms. Wright... didn't think you were this much of a slut."

The bluntness nearly broke Yara. Her face flushed beet red, half from

shame, half from fury. She he

her teeth and whispered, voice shaking, "Mr. Lloyd, if you're not interested... then would you kindly stop squeezing?"

She was breathless, legs weak, eyes hazy.

## Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Andrew pulled his hand back, his face calm. "Ms. Wright, you need to see a doctor."

Yara flushed. "Andrew, if you're not interested, fine-but what's with the attitude? You're calling me sick now? Just say it—you think I'm too slutty, right?"

Andrew blinked in confusion. "What? No-I meant it literally. I think you've got a medical issue. I felt a slight irregularity just now. It could be early-stage hyperplasia. You should get it checked at a hospital."

Yara froze, her eyes suddenly filled with tears. "Wait... that's what that was about? You weren't... You didn't mean anything else?"

Andrew sighed. "What did you think I was doing? You seriously thought, with your brother, your father, and half the Wrights in the room next door, I'd do that right here?"

Realization hit Yara like a slap. God-what the hell had she been thinking?

She had completely lost her mind. Acting like that, throwing herself at him like she was possessed. Her chest still tingled faintly where Andrew had touched her, and her heart started racing again.

Yara asked, "So, Mr. Lloyd... what do you think about my earlier offer?"

Andrew shook his head. "I think nothing of it."

He walked over to the sink and began washing his hands.

Yara was fuming. "Seriously? I let you touch me, and you go wash your hands? What's that supposed to mean? You think I'm dirty?"

Andrew let out a slow breath. "That's not it. It's just... your scent is really strong. My little servant girl at home got a bloodhound's nose. If I go home with this scent on my hands, she'll sniff it out immediately and go into full meltdown mode."

Yara bit her lip and inched closer, voice soft and pleading. "Then why not... take me instead? I'm willing to be your little servant too. No-your slave if that's what you want. Whatever you need, whenever you need it... I'll be there to serve you. Completely."

Andrew raised a hand. "Ms. Wright, you come from a prestigious family. You don't need to sell yourself like this. I'll agree to the brotherhood with your father. But I hope you understand what that means for you and me."

Yara's eyes lit up instantly, fluttering with excitement. She smiled seductively. "Of course I understand. Even if become the head of the Wrights and have the entire family's power behind me, I will still belong to you. Whatever you want from

me-whenever you want it's yours. Even if you want me to lie back and open my legs, I'll do it without question."

Andrew groaned, reaching over to flick her forehead. "Can you not say things like that? I'm just a regular guy, not a superhero. My stamina has limits, alright?"

Yara burst into giggles, her pride fully restored. She thought, 'Once take control of the Wrights, I'll make sure this man has no choice but to take me. Only then will my power be truly unshakable.'

Back in the upscale dining room, Andrew returned with a smile. "Apologies, Mr. Wright. I got caught on a call."

Kevin beamed. "No worries at all, Andy! Come, sit-let's toast!"

Andrew waved it off. "Just a bite to eat is fine. But about this brotherhood-Mr.

Wright, are you sure you're okay lowering your status like this?"

Kevin straightened up. "Hey now, don't say things like that. Becoming sworn brothers with you is not a downgrade for me. Honestly? It's an honor. A once-in-a-lifetime blessing."

His sincerity was so overflowing that even Christina's entire family, seated nearby, fell into stunned silence. Even Irene, usually the first to shoot her mouth off, did not dare make a sound.

To them, Kevin Wright was a towering figure-untouchable. But now, he was grinning like a schoolboy trying to impress Andrew.

Quinton, on the other hand, was visibly sour. "Father, maybe you and Yara should continue hosting Dr. Lloyd. I've got some errands to run."

Kevin's smile faded. "Quinton, what's gotten into you today? I've noticed your attitude around Andy has been downright disrespectful."

Quinton clenched his teeth. "Dad, you do remember that our family has a history with this guy, right? Winston got wrecked by Andrew in Jayrodale and came home barely functioning!"

Kevin snorted. "And? It's not like he died. Stop being dramatic."

