

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1406

Kevin punched the wall and roared, "Unforgivable! Grand Viper, you rotten bastard-you've gone too far this time!"

His face twisted in rage, so contorted it was barely recognizable.

Tora bellowed behind him, "He didn't just kill our men-he even left a message in blood! That's the same as spitting in our faces! Mr. Wright, we have to go to war with that vile creature!"

Quinton stumbled back several steps, completely shell-shocked.

Andrew gave a cold smile. "Quinton, you believe me now? Still think I lied to your father-lied to the Wrights?"

Quinton's fingers trembled as he pointed at Andrew, but he could not form a single word. Grand Viper's men had come right to their gates and left undeniable proof, and nothing he said would matter now.

Even so, deep down, Quinton knew the truth that Grand Viper had no prior feud with the Wrights. There was no reason for them to ever clash, especially since he had secretly teamed up with Rafael, Mosby, and Grand Viper-they were all on the same side.

This chaos, this full-on blood feud, had to be Andrew's doing.

The devil had manipulated both sides, lighting the fuse and sitting back to enjoy the explosion.

"You snake!" Quinton howled, his eyes bloodshot. "You brought a monster to our doorstep! I hope you rot in hell!"

Aspen's voice rang out cold and clear. "Mr. Wright, what the hell do you mean by that? Hasn't Mr. Lloyd already done enough for your family?"

Andrew raised a hand and said hoarsely, "Let it go, Aspen. Don't say another word. If the Wrights can't appreciate what I've done... if my precious godson still holds a grudge against me... Then fine, we'll just leave."

He turned to go, shoulders slumped, his back full of silent sorrow.

Kevin watched him walk away, and a wave of frustration twisted through his chest. He lunged forward, grabbed Quinton by the collar, and slapped him across the face-three times, hard and fast.

"You little bastard! You disrespectful punk! Even now, you dare talk back? You don't see Andrew as your elder? I swear to God, I'll beat you to death myself!"

Quinton staggered in disbelief, still recovering from the last time he got slapped. Stars danced before his eyes as blood gushed out from his mouth.

Kevin snarled, "Kneel and apologize to Andrew right now! If he doesn't forgive you, I'll chop you up personally!"

Quinton's pride was shattered, and tears of humiliation welled up in his eyes. He was a grown man, and among the younger generation in Blumedale, he also believed he ranked in the top three.

Yet now, he was being beaten mercilessly in front of the entire family.

"This is the second time," he growled, trembling. "For that bastard Andrew... you're hitting me again! Kevin, who's your real son? For this scheming

outsider, you've turned into a senile fool! Open your damn eyes! Andrew is the devil-he's the curse that'll ruin the Wrights!"

Quinton's voice cracked into a crazed scream, spit flying from his lips as he completely lost it.

Tora and the others looked stunned-no one had expected him to outright shout Kevin's name.

"Quinton, you insolent brat!" Tora snapped. "Say another word, and we'll drag you to the punishment room ourselves!"

Kevin was shaking with fury. "You little piece of shit... What did you just call me? A senile old fool? Hah If I had known you'd turn up like this, I should've shot you into a napkin instead!"

He lunged again, smacking Quinton's face again and again.

Andrew quickly stepped forward to pull Kevin back, wearing a look of pained concern. "Come on, Kevin-enough, that's enough! He's still a kid. He doesn't understand half of what's happening. For my sake, cool off. You can't keep hitting him like this! If you do, I'll lose my godson!"

Tora and the others all exchanged awkward glances. Andrew's speech made their skin crawl.

Seriously? This young man here was lecturing everyone else like a saintly elder. It did not feel like he was stopping the fight. In fact, it felt like he was just using it to cozy up to Kevin.

Kevin was still furious, struggling to break free. "Let go, Andrew-let go of me! I swear I'm gonna teach this ungrateful brat a lesson today!"

With a sigh, Andrew grabbed the waist blade hanging from Tora's side. Then, he calmly handed it to Kevin.

With an exaggerated seriousness, Andrew handed over the blade and said, "Kevin, since you're determined to purge your house and serve justice impartially... then fists and kicks won't cut it-use this. It's sharp, clean, and gets the job done in one swing!"

Kevin and Tora were left speechless.

Meanwhile, Quinton internally screamed, 'You motherf*cker, Andrew. You're f*cking inhuman!'

Aspen could not take it anymore. She turned around, her back facing the entire Wright family. Then, she burst out laughing, tears spilling from her eyes.

The chaos Andrew stirred up made her pity the Wrights. He was terrifying, like a devil playing dress-up.

Of course, Kevin did not actually end up killing his eldest son on the spot.

However, his disappointment and disgust toward Quinton were written all over his face.

And just like that, an opportunity opened-a perfect time for Yara to rise.

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Back in the car after leaving the Wrights estate, Andrew leaned back in his seat and said to Aspen, "Tomorrow, take Yara out. Get closer to some of the Blumedale officials. See if Ms. Garcia's connections have any projects Yara can get involved in."

Aspen frowned. "You jerk. Don't tell me this is all just to get in Yara's good graces... or get in her bed?"

Andrew burst out laughing and flicked her on the forehead. "What's going on in that head of yours? Do you think I'm that insatiable?"

Aspen replied flatly, "Yes, you are. Even after resting for a day, Fran and Lauren are still sore everywhere. You tell me!"

Andrew coughed, slightly embarrassed. He thought he had gone easy that night.

Just then, he realized Aspen seemed fine. He asked, "What about you? Don't your legs hurt?"

Aspen blushed, then grumbled softly, "Of course they do. They're sore... and a little raw. But my tolerance is better than theirs."

Andrew nodded knowingly. "Makes sense. You're into it when I go hard. If I'm not rough, you're not satisfied-so yeah, your endurance is on another level."

Aspen turned red from head to toe. "Please shut up!"

It was true that she liked it when he was forceful-a full-on case of Stockholm syndrome. The more Andrew broke her, the more alive she felt.

Aspen also knew that it was not healthy; it was warped. Over time, her pleasure threshold would keep rising. Eventually, a simple smack on the butt or a squeeze of her chest would not do it anymore. She would need more intensity, more pain... more everything.

The shame made her cheeks burn. Yet deep down, she craved it.

Meanwhile, Andrew looked at her thoughtfully. "Putting Yara to work has nothing to do with me wanting her. It's about raising her value within the Wrights. Quinton was useful, but I've already crushed him.

"Now, it's Yara's turn to rise. If we can get her to the top-make her the new head of the Wrights-then I basically control the whole family."

He did not usually explain this kind of thing to anyone, but Aspen had earned his trust. She was not just a servant anymore—they were bonded in every way.

Aspen's eyes widened, horrified. "You want to take over the Wrights? That's one of the Five Apex Families, and they have a martial king guarding them!"

Andrew scoffed. "Take over is a strong word. Let's call it a small investment. The real threat is the Driscoll family."

At that name, Aspen fell silent. After

all, the Driscolls were one of the Three Titans, and she wondered if Andrew could actually go toe-to-toe with them. Even with her unconditional loyalty, a flicker of doubt crept in.

Andrew had originally been waiting to see if Black Viper would make a move. Yet, nothing happened—no message, no movement.

So, he gave up and drove back to The Sovereign Residences. As the car's headlights swept over the entrance of Serenity Villa, three figures came into view, kneeling on the ground.

Lauren and Francesca were beside them, trying to persuade them gently, but clearly helpless.

The three remained silent, unmoving.

Aspen glanced toward Andrew, her

voice complicated. "It's Christina,

Irene, and Leroy... the whole Stevens family. Stevens Corporation has been completely taken over in Jayrodale. They've lost everything and don't even have a place to stay anymore."

Andrew's face remained cold as stone. His foot never left the gas pedal, and he drove the Ferrari straight at them.

"Stop!" Aspen shrieked.

With a harsh screech, the car came to a halt mere inches from Christina's face. The high beams were blinding, forcing the once-proud ice queen to squint. Her face was ghostly pale, without a trace of color.

Andrew stepped out of the car, his voice chillier than the night wind. "Get up and get the hell out."

However, Christina and her family did not move. They kept kneeling in silence.

Irene gave a broken laugh, her voice cracking. "Andrew... please help us. Help Christie, just this once... Jayrodale's Stevens family is gone. We've lost everything! We don't even have a place to sleep tonight."

Andrew let out a sharp scoff. "And what's that got to do with me? You're homeless now? Why not crawl to Quinton for shelter?"

Leroy clutched his stomach, which had been growling nonstop. He was clearly starving.

In a pitiful voice, he said, "We did go to him. But... that bastard tried to force himself on Christie. She refused, so he threw us out. Andrew, we were wrong. Our whole family was wrong. Please... just let us stay. Please..."

Leroy collapsed in tears, a grown adult sobbing at Andrew's feet. His swollen face and trembling limbs made it clear that he was not just hungry, but someone had beaten him to a pulp.

Still, Andrew's expression remained blank. "This isn't a charity shelter. I already told you-we have nothing to do with each other anymore. So, get up

and get the hell off my property, unless you want to see what 'unforgiving' really looks like."

Irene and Leroy began wailing, slamming their heads into the pavement over and over again.

They refused to rise because they knew that if they left now, they would not survive the night. With nowhere to go, their fate would be nothing short of tragic.

Lauren stepped in front of Andrew, smiling sweetly. "Andrew, it's already so late... how about just letting Ms. Stevens and her family stay for one night?"

Francesca joined her, her voice was soft but uneasy. "Andrew... it's true. The Stevens family in Jayrodale no longer exists. If we turn them away now, then they'll very likely."

She did not finish the sentence, but the implication was obvious.

If they did not take them in tonight, Christina's family might starve in the streets, or

worse.

Andrew's face twisted in disgust. "Enough. I'll call security and have all the useless freeloaders in Sovereign Residences evicted-right now."

Christina slowly looked up. Her face was worn and haggard, but she forced a smile. "Andrew, don't worry. I'll leave. But please, just one small request... Could you let my mom and Leroy stay a while longer?"

She continued, "Especially my mom. I know you hate her I get that. But she's not young anymore. She won't survive out there if she has to keep moving with me."

Andrew suddenly laughed a cold, vicious sound. He stepped forward and grabbed Christina by the chin, lifting her face sharply until she had no choice but to look him dead in the eye.

He sneered. "Oh, so now you care about how fragile your mom is? You know she's too old to take the hit, yet you still chose this part."

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Andrew continued his insults. "Weren't you the one who always thought you were better than everyone else? Even after we split, you couldn't help but go against me-jealous, bitter, convinced I didn't deserve to rise higher than you.

"And now? You come crawling to me on your knees. Don't you think that's pathetic? Disgraceful?"

Tears slid silently down Christina's face. She broke down in sobs, the pain in her chest unbearable. "I know... I know how worthless I am. I've lost my pride. I've lost my dignity. This is all my fault.

"Andrew... I'm not asking for anything else. I know you hate me. I know you've long stopped caring. But I've run out of options. My mom is too old to survive on the streets, and Leroy's body is falling apart since he lost a kidney. You're the only one who can save us now."

Andrew pulled his hand back and flicked his fingers in disgust as if her very touch tainted him. Instead, he asked, "What's the situation with Mr. Stevens Senior in Jayrodale?"

Christina wiped her tears and answered quickly. "It was the corporation that collapsed-Grandpa's okay. He moved in with some relatives for now."

Andrew sneered. "Wow. Look at you, the 'golden granddaughter CEO.' Your grandfather gave you his life's work, and you left him squatting in someone

else's guest room. Christina, you're not just a disappointment-you're an utter failure." Christina said nothing more. Her head stayed low as tears streamed down her cheeks. At that moment, she truly understood what she meant to Andrew: nothing. Less than nothing. To him, she was dust. She was shame wrapped in human skin.

With a cold grunt, Andrew turned to Aspen. "Get in touch with Marvin in Jayrodale. Tell him I want him to take care of Mr. Stevens Senior on my behalf."

Aspen, ever obedient, nodded instantly. "Understood."

Andrew did not spare the Stevens family another glance and walked straight into Serenity Villa, his back tall and unyielding.

Outside, Lauren let out a sigh.

"That's just how Andrew is. If you're good to him, he'll repay you a hundredfold. He never forgets

kindness. But if you break his he

he won't ever look back. He's not someone who plays the saint."

Francesca nodded seriously. "Yeah. That's Andrew. Passionate, intense, and loyal

-to the right people. You can see it in how he treats us three."

Lauren turned to the Stevens family and softened her voice. "Ms. Stevens, you should stand up. You used to be a strong, capable woman. Kneeling like this just doesn't suit you."

Christina bit her lip, and her eyes, were swollen red. "Ms. Rhodes, just let me kneel. If Andrew won't help me, I can take it. But if something happens to my mom or Leroy... I won't be able to live with it."

Her voice broke again as fresh sobs escaped her throat.

Francesca hesitated. "Lauren, Aspen... what do we do? We can't just leave them here all night. It's freezing out."

Aspen's reply was flat and cold. "I'm already doing the most I can by not kicking them while they're down. Lauren, Fran, please don't ask me for compassion I don't have. Honestly, I'm a very petty person. Apart from Andrew and you two, I don't feel generous toward anyone?"

Lauren and Francesca both nodded, understanding. They knew the history between Christina and Aspen. The tension was not new—it ran deep.

Lauren clenched her jaw, made a choice, and spoke firmly. "Let them in. If Andrew has a problem with it, I'll take full responsibility."

Chapter 1410

Francesca looked shocked. "Lauren, you can't be serious—we're not letting you take all the blame alone!"

Aspen quickly chimed in, "She's right. If Andrew does get upset, we're not going to leave you out there on your own!"

Lauren held her head high, her expression firm. "I'd never want to disappoint Andrew, but honestly, I don't think he truly cares about the Stevens family anymore. Think about it—he's grown so powerful now. People like them barely register on his radar anymore. He's just annoyed by their presence, not hurt."

Francesca clapped her hands and grinned. "Exactly! I've been thinking the same. Andrew belongs to the three of us now. He doesn't have the energy to waste on others."

Lauren's eyes gleamed mischievously as she made the call. "Alright then-it's settled. We'll let Ms. Stevens and her family stay. Fran, prepare some food and get the rooms ready for them. Just make sure they don't disturb Andrew's rest.

"Aspen, go keep him company. Stick close and keep him busy from coming downstairs. The rest can wait until morning. It's too late for drama."

Francesca laughed. "Got it. Leave everything to me!"

Aspen gave Christina a long, unreadable glance, her expression a mix of emotions.

Eventually, she nodded and said quietly, "Alright, Lauren. I'll stay with him. Just... don't expect me to be nice to them."

And with that, Christina and her family were finally welcomed inside Serenity Villa.

As clever as she was kind, Lauren did not make a fuss about Christina's past with Andrew. She simply fed the family and settled them into rooms where they could rest for the night.

Irene and Leroy were thrilled. They had never set foot in a home as luxurious as Serenity Villa.

They wanted to wander around and admire everything, but Christina stopped them.

She was terrified they would embarrass themselves.

When the night had quieted down and everyone had retreated to their rooms, Christina hesitated in the hallway.

With her fingers twisted together, she turned to Lauren and spoke softly. "Ms. Rhodes... thank you."

Her eyes shimmered again with unshed tears.

Lauren let out a quiet sigh. "Ms. Stevens, there's something I've always wanted to ask you. How does it feel to see Andrew so successful and admired, surrounded by powerful people and beautiful women?"

Christina bit down on her lip, eyes lowered, her voice filled with shame. "All I feel is regret-so much regret I can't even sleep at night. It haunts me constantly. A kind of torment I can't put into words."

Lauren gave a soft hum, then offered a faint smile. "I see. Alright then go get some rest."

Christina paused, then hesitantly

added, "Ms. Rhodes... I do have one more favor to ask. My mom and brother might need to stay here a while longer. As for me, I'll start job hunting first thing tomorrow'll earn money, support them, and once we've saved up... we'll leave. I promise not to bother you again."

Lauren gave her a kind smile. "Let's talk about that later. Don't push yourself too hard, okay? You used to be the picture-perfect

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CEO-pampered, poised, untouched by hardship. Starting over from nothing won't be easy. There's no need to rush into it like it's a punishment."