

## RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

### Chapter 1436

Andrew raised an eyebrow. Among the Keller sisters, Freya was the only one he found remotely tolerable.

He said, "Ms. Freya, you're too kind. I'm just a nobody, not worthy of an apology. Anyway, I'll be on my way."

Without saying more, Andrew turned to leave.

However, Hannah suddenly stepped forward, flashing a flirtatious smile. She purred, "Mr. Lloyd, I just wanted to apologize for being rude earlier. How about we exchange contacts?"

"I've got a party coming up and I need a plus-one... thought you could be my boyfriend for the night."

She even grabbed the hem of her dress and twirled it coyly, trying to act like a bashful girl next door.

Yet Andrew only felt nauseated watching her performance. Of the Keller sisters, Hannah was the most two-faced and scheming, and he had absolutely no interest in women like that.

"Sorry, but I'm not interested in pretending to be your boyfriend. Besides, I already have girlfriends. It wouldn't be appropriate."

After rejecting her, Andrew got into a cab and left without looking back.

Hannah stomped her foot and shouted, both embarrassed and angry. "Ugh, so

what if he knows a bit of martial arts and got elected Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce? It doesn't make him some big deal!"

She huffed. "He's acting like I was actually into him or something. What an arrogant jerk!"

Logan sneered. "If you weren't into him, then good. Because clearly, Andrew's not into you either."

Hannah pouted. "Logan, why are you taking his side? He's not even family!"

Logan shot her a cold look. "You better remember something, Hannah. Andrew isn't just some outsider anymore. Right now, he's the one running the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce, and you better start showing some respect.

"Even the Irvings mean nothing in his eyes. Do you really think he'd ever notice you if it weren't for the Keller name?"

Hannah clamped her mouth shut,

her teeth grinding in frustration, Her face twisted between humiliati and unwillingness to accept it.

Emily let out a conflicted sigh. "We really misjudged him. We should've just listened to Dad in the first place."

Hannah shot her a mocking look. "Are you regretting it now? Falling for him already?"

Emily flushed with anger and shame. "You're the one in love with him! I just think... we may have screwed this up."

Freya bit her lip and turned to Logan.

"ciamant to add Mr. Lloyd on

social media. Can you send me h his profile?"

Emily and Hannah immediately turned to stare at her, their expressions weird and guarded.

Was Freya seriously trying to make a move behind their backs? Suddenly, both Emily and Hannah felt a jolt of panic.

There was no way they would let Freya get ahead of them. So, they rushed in, talking over each other.

"Logan, we want to add Mr. Lloyd too!"

"I'm sending him a pic of me in a bikini!"

"Hannah, have you no shame? Then, I'm sending him a selfie from the hot tub!"

"Please, you're the shameless one! Fine, I'll send him a sexy photoshoot!"

Meanwhile, not far from the Keller residence, one more person had yet to leave. It was Rachel whom Andrew had slapped earlier. She had stayed behind, originally hoping to watch Duncan put Andrew in his place. s̄wnovel

Instead, she witnessed Duncan nearly get killed.

"Drive," she muttered to her driver. As the car pulled away, she slumped back in

her seat, pale and trembling.

## Chapter 1437

Rachel was not just any woman—she was a high-society heiress worth billions and the wealthiest divorcee in all of Blumedale. If she so much as lifted a finger, powerful men would line up just to kiss her feet.

But right now, she had only one thought in her mind-total submission to Andrew. She knew from this moment on, that she would never overstep again.

If it meant staying in his good graces, she was willing to humble herself completely.

If he wanted her body, she would give it—one night, two nights, as many nights as he pleased.

After all, no woman could resist men like him.

Once her initial fear faded, Rachel realized something even more intense had taken its place—she had completely fallen for him. She was ready to hand over everything her heart, her body, even her fortune—if only he would cherish her for the rest of her life.

Like Aspen, Rachel craved to be conquered by a powerful man. However, her obsession came from pure awe, while Aspen's came from something far darker and more unhinged.

Rachel admired strength, while Aspen was rough, volatile, and shameless in her desires. Yet, when it came to Andrew, both of them yearned to be dominated, to be utterly broken by him.

Unlike Rachel's obsession, which was driven by admiration, Aspen's feelings were twisted, intense, and disturbingly deranged. Truth be told, her Stockholm syndrome had already reached the point of no return.

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Meanwhile, Andrew had no idea that the Keller sisters were now secretly competing for his attention. Nor did he realize that Rachel, the famously untouchable widow, had also set her sights on him.

Frankly, he had no interest in any of these shallow, painted women.

Just then, Lauren called. "Andrew, have you heard from Aspen?"

Andrew sounded surprised. "She's not back yet? I'm almost home."

Lauren's voice was tight with worry. "Fran and I tried calling her multiple times, but her phone keeps going straight to voicemail!"

Andrew replied calmly, "Don't panic. I'll head to the company and check in."

However, Lauren stopped him. "No need. I already went by the office-they said she left early and hasn't come back."

Andrew's face darkened. "Stay home with Fran and don't worry. I'll take care of it."

After ending the call, a cold gleam began to rise in Andrew's eyes. He tried calling Aspen's phone

again once, twice, three times-but each time, the result was the same: shut off.

That alone told him something had gone terribly wrong.

Moments later, his phone rang-it was Aspen's number.

Andrew answered, his voice flat. "Just name your terms, Mr. Driscoll."

There was a pause, and then a dark chuckle from Rafael. "Didn't expect you to be this sharp. Figured out it was me already, huh?"

Andrew replied, voice like ice. "Not only do I know it was you, I also know exactly how miserably you're going to die."

Rafael scoffed. "Cut the tough guy act, Andrew. You're nothing in my eyes. Now listen up-follow the GPS coordinates I sent. There's an old abandoned warehouse on the outskirts. That's where your little girlfriend is.

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"Bring me both pieces of the map, or you can kiss her goodbye. And I gotta say, you've got great taste. That girl's got me tempted to mess her up myself."

He let out a sleazy laugh, then ended the call.

A location pinged on Andrew's phone immediately after. His face showed no emotion as he ordered the driver to head to that spot.

Sitting silently in the backseat, he closed his eyes to rest. He knew the moment he opened them again, blood would flow.

Whoever laid a hand on his little servant would die in his hands.

### Chapter 1438

In a crumbling warehouse on the outskirts of town, Rafael, Mosby, and Black Viper stood grinning as if they had already won. Tied up tightly in front of them, Aspen was bound hand and foot, unable to move an inch.

Black Viper sneered. "She's got some fight in her. Almost landed a hit on me when we caught her."

As he spoke, he hooked a finger under Aspen's chin and lifted her face in a vulgar gesture.

Aspen tried to turn her head away, but his grip tightened, making her jaw turn red from the pressure.

"Let her go," Mosby said with a frown.

Black Viper scoffed. "What's the matter, Mosby? Feeling soft for her now?"

Mosby shook his head. "It's not about pity. I just don't want you pushing Andrew too far. Our goal is to get the map fragments. Once we have them, we let her go."

Black Viper's eyes burned with hatred. "Let her go? You really are naive, Mosby. My beloved junior, White Viper, died because of that bastard Andrew. When Mr. Driscoll gets what he wants, you two can leave. But me? I want to make sure Andrew begs for death before I'm done with him."

Rafael's voice was cold. "Do whatever you want with him. I only care about the map."

Aspen spat, "You're not getting anything from us! Andrew would never cave to scum like you!"

Black Viper slapped her twice across the face, leaving bright red marks on her cheeks. "Stupid bitch, shut your mouth. Keep running it, and I'll make you regret being born."

Rafael chuckled darkly. "Relax, little girl. Your precious Andrew is already on his way here. You should've heard him when he found out you were in trouble. He tried to sound calm, but I could hear the panic in his voice."

Aspen's heart sank. The last thing she wanted was for Andrew to walk into this trap, especially with Black Viper in the mix. He was terrifying, and her own senior grandmaster-level skills had not lasted a single round against him.

As she worried that Andrew would not survive against him, tears welled up in Aspen's eyes. She began struggling against the ropes, but it was hopeless—there was no way out.

Mosby snorted. "Just cooperate and you'll walk out of here alive."

Aspen clenched her teeth. "Mosby, you call yourself a miracle doctor? You lost to Andrew, and now you're resorting to gutter tricks like this? Even if you get the map, you'll be a disgrace. You've already thrown your honor in the trash."

Mosby's face twisted with fury. "You little bitch, don't you dare lecture me! If it weren't for Andrew, I wouldn't be in this position! He stole my glory and reputation, and also killed my prized disciple! All those old O grudges—I swear I'll tear him to pieces!"

Aspen stared at him. "Mosby, ask yourself honestly-has my master ever once come looking for trouble? You're the one who provoked him at every turn. You brought everything that's happened onto yourself."

Black Viper let out a twisted laugh. "Master? Aren't you and Andrew a kinky pair? What, you call him that while he whips your ass and then screws you till you cry?"

He cackled shamelessly, eyeing Aspen's curves and long, toned legs with a look that made the air feel dirty.

Rafael grinned. "You know what? Maybe I'll take my turn with her before that punk even gets here."

Black Viper's face lit up. "Don't forget me, Mr. Driscoll! I want a turn too!"

However, Rafael shoved him aside, his pants already tenting. "Get in line. A woman like this? I'm going first."

Mosby frowned. "Mr. Driscoll, Andrew is almost here. This isn't the time to make things worse."

Rafael was already unbuckling his belt, revealing a pair of loud, red boxer briefs. "Relax, I'm quick. Three seconds, tops!"

The moment he said it, both Mosby and Black Viper gave him a weird look.

Rafael realized his slip-up instantly. He silently cursed, 'Damn it!'

Years of booze and women had wrecked his body, and lasting three seconds was already pushing it. If he skipped his meds, his pants would not even be halfway down before he lost his erection.

Seeing Rafael already stripping, Aspen's face flushed with shame and rage. "I'd rather die than let filth like you touch me!"



Black Viper grinned wickedly. "You think you have a choice? Mosby, do us a favor give the girl a little taste of that special drug!"

#### Chapter 1439

"She'll be way more fun once it kicks in!" Black Viper laughed maniacally.

Now fully hyped, Rafael chuckled and barked, "Hell yeah! Mosby, bring out your special blend-the real wild one! I want this little slut to turn into the dirtiest, most desperate whore alive!"

Mosby frowned. "Mr. Driscoll, are you seriously going through with this?"

Rafael snapped, "What do you think? Hurry up and do it already! Quit pretending you're some saint, old man. Everyone knows you've got mistresses tucked away in half the luxury clubs across Blumedale."

Called out, Mosby flushed with embarrassment. "Fine then. Drugging her will definitely make things more exciting. But if you get the first turn, I'm going second."

"Whatever!" Rafael grunted, growing impatient. "You two can fight over second and third. Just give me three undisturbed seconds with her first!"

With a flick of his wrist, Mosby pulled out a pouch of powder and shoved it down Aspen's throat. The moment it hit, her body instantly flushed, heat surging through every nerve.

She thought, 'Master... I belong to you and only you. I'd rather die than let these monsters touch me...'

Tears streamed down her face as she bit down hard on her lips. She twisted violently, then hurled herself toward a concrete pillar, ready to smash her head.

Black Viper sneered. "Trying to end your life? It won't be that easy."

He reached out to yank her hair when a cold voice suddenly cut through the air.

"You touch her, and I'll kill you right here and now."

The three men froze and snapped their heads around.

Andrew had arrived-calm, quiet, deadly-taking slow steps toward them like a storm brewing.

"Goddammit. Way to ruin the mood," Rafael cursed. He fumbled to pull his pants back on and held out a hand. "Andrew, hand over the maps!"

Andrew lifted the two fragments in his hand. "Release her first, then I'll give them to you."

Rafael's eyes darkened. In a flash, he pulled out a sharp dagger and pressed it hard against Aspen's pale, exposed neck. "You worthless little bastard. Do you think you can negotiate with me? If it weren't for that map, I wouldn't even spit in your direction. Toss them over now or I'll slit her throat."

He was fuming, rage bursting out as Black Viper and Mosby grinned behind him.

"Where's all that swagger now, Andrew?" Mosby taunted. "Did you run out of gas? Where's your tough talk now?"

The hatred bubbling inside him felt delicious. For the first time in a while, Mosby felt vindicated.

Andrew looked at him steadily. "Mosby, one day, you'll die by my hands. Remember that."

Under Andrew's cold, deadly gaze, Mosby's body involuntarily trembled. "Shut up and toss me the map! Or I'll kill the little slut right here!"

Furious and panicked, he was ready to snap.

Andrew suddenly raised his hand and threw the maps-but not to them. He hurled them straight out the broken window of the abandoned building.

"You son of a bitch!" Rafael roared.

Abandoning Aspen, he sprinted after it with Mosby right behind him.

Andrew launched into action instantly.

Black Viper stepped forward with a crazed grin. "You're mine today, Andrew. This is your grave!"

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In a flash, their palms clashed mid-air Black Viper felt a tidal wave of force slam into him, launching him backward and dragging him across the dusty floor for over 30 feet.

Andrew did not stop-he dove straight for Aspen, now burning up in fever. In a blur, he pulled her into his arms and threw two golden acupuncture needles with deadly precision at Mošty and Rafael' backs, stopping them from walking away.

"Mr. Driscoll, look out!" Mosby shouted, his reflexes saving them both. He grabbed

Rafael and yanked him aside just in time.

The needles missed their hearts, but Rafael was not so lucky as one needle struck him square in the groin.

"Let's leave, now!" he yelled.

Despite the sharp pain, Rafael gritted his teeth and made a quick decision: Get

the map and escape now.

Back inside the warehouse, Black Viper gritted his teeth and gripped his daggers tightly. "You killed white

Viper

Andrew! I'm going to kill you

for it!"

Andrew laid Aspen gently down and was about to finish the job when two delicate

arms suddenly wrapped around his neck.

"Master... please... I'm burning... I need you now..."

Andrew froze instantly and cursed internally, 'Damn it... who the hell can resist this?'

#### Chapter 1440

At that moment, Aspen was soaked in sweat, her skin flushed, and her breath ragged. The drug coursing through her veins set every nerve on fire with desire, and her eyes glazed with heat. Since she had always been attracted to Andrew, this chemical storm only made her crave him more-desperately, wildly.

However, Andrew frowned, holding back his impulse. "Be good. Let me take care of these bastards first!"

He tapped several pressure points on her body to suppress the drug's effects, calming her spiraling arousal. Then, he gently laid her down before standing up straight.

His elbow caught Black Viper's incoming blade, deflecting the strike.

Dropping his shoulder, Andrew stepped in hard and threw a straight punch aimed at Black Viper's skull. He hissed, "You should've run with Rafael and Mosby when you had the chance, but now, it's too late. Go join your dear White Viper."

The calm in Andrew's voice only made Black Viper more enraged. With a guttural roar, he launched a storm of dagger strikes, fast as rainfall, his movements blurring around Andrew.

"How dare you look down on me! I'm Black Viper, the deadliest killer under Grand Viper! My Serpent's Silent Strike technique will drain every drop of blood from the body-if even a single drop remains in yours, then I've failed!"

With a wild grin, he accelerated again, unleashing a vicious flurry of attacks.

Aspen gasped from the floor, her voice shaky and heated. "Master, be careful! He's strong... and that tongue of his can stretch really far!"

Andrew slammed his fist into Black Viper, forcing him backward, though the man's dagger skimmed his wrist in the process.

Andrew was caught off guard. 'His tongue can stretch really far? Wait a minute. Isn't that Aspen's signature trick?'

Among Lauren, Francesca, and Aspen, it was Aspen who had the most flexible tongue, and he knew that very well.

Black Viper licked his dagger with a split, snake like tongue, cackling. "That last slash? You're gonna feel it real soon! My blade's laced with poison the more you move, the faster it'll spread. The harder you fight, the quicker you die."

Andrew glanced back at Aspen, who had started shamelessly pawing at her chest, lost in drugged pleasure. It was a scene too sensual for him to share with anyone else.

Annoyed, he charged forward with brutal speed, launching a fierce assault on Black Viper. Three moves in, he nearly had the slippery assassin on the ropes.

Black Viper's eyes widened in disbelief. "What the hell? Why aren't you affected? Did the poison not work?"

Andrew raised his wrist and smirked coldly. "You really thought that little toy of yours could hurt me?"

Black Viper stared and gasped. "Your skin didn't even break? No way... H- Have you already stepped into the realm of a martial king?"

That moment of shock cost him dearly-his hands faltered, his movements slowed. Against someone like Andrew, even a flicker of hesitation was a death sentence.

Then, two sharp cracks echoed through the room-Andrew had smashed through Black Viper's crossed arms like they were twigs.

"My chest, my ribs!" Black Viper screamed, stumbling backward, agony warping his face.

Even so, he did not give up. With a last-ditch snarl, his split tongue suddenly shot out, just like Aspen had warned-like a dart, it launched straight at Andrew's eye. It looked like flesh, but it was sharp enough to pierce metal.

Unfortunately for Black Viper, he was going up against Andrew.