

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1446

At a secluded villa on the outskirts of the city, Mosby and Rafael sat brooding, their faces dark and twisted with frustration.

Rafael muttered through gritted teeth, "We're still missing the final fragment. And the one we snatched from the Rhodes family? Completely blank. All that effort and the map's still incomplete-and I got stabbed in the damn groin for it! Screw this!"

A thick cigar dangled from his lips as he cursed loudly, wincing as a sharp pain from his crotch shot through his body again.

It was pure bad luck. Andrew had aimed that golden acupuncture needle straight at Rafael's vital point, but Mosby had yanked him aside at the last second. The needle missed his heart, only to land squarely in a far more sensitive spot.

Though Mosby had pulled it out quickly after, Rafael still felt sore and twitchy every time he moved.

"Mr. Driscoll, good things take time. We're closer than ever to uncovering the treasure vault of the Fallen Crimson Dynasty," Mosby said calmly.

He added, "Think about it-this is said to be half the national treasury of an ancient empire. They say the secrets of immortality are buried with it! No matter the setbacks, it's worth the chase, isn't it?"

Mosby was trying to talk Rafael down, keeping him focused.

In truth, Mosby knew far more about the treasure than he let on. What he said just now was only a fraction of what he believed. The real vault held things

even more maddening and unbelievable, but those details he kept close to his chest.

Rafael snorted. "Those legends are nearly a century old. No one even knows if they're real. Even if we do find the treasure, what makes you think we'll walk away alive, let alone rich?"

Mosby gave a cold smirk. "Alive? You're thinking too small. You said you loved money, didn't you? How about becoming the wealthiest man on Earth? Forget all the current billionaires, what I'm offering is wealth that makes all of them look poor."

Rafael's scowl finally softened.

"Alright. You're starting to talk sense. So then how do we get the last fragment? And how the hell do we make this blank Rhodes piece show anything?"

Mosby fell silent. The truth was, he did not know either. However, he knew someone who did.

He said, "Mr. Driscoll, Andrew's tied closely to the Rhodes family. That woman, Tiana, is like a tigress on steroids. Her martial strength is nearing martial king level. Not

someone we want to tangle with. So, our only angle of attack is Andrew himself."

Rafael's eyes narrowed. "That little punk actually stabbed me. The look in his eyes-he wasn't just trying to scare me, he meant to kill me I swear, I'm going to tear him apart."

Mosby held up a hand. "Not yet. Before we take his life, we need him to unlock the Rhodes fragment."

Rafael nodded grudgingly. "Fair point. But how do we make him play along?"

Mosby did not have an answer to that.

Just then, a smooth, unfamiliar voice floated in from the front gate.

"Mr. Driscoll. Dr. Lake. Perhaps I can help with that."

Both men turned sharply toward the door, watching as a figure strolled in calmly- Quinton from the Wrights.

Rafael's eyes lit up with surprise, then amusement. "Quinton... perfect timing."

Chapter 1447

Rafael said with a cigar hanging from his lips, "I was just thinking. Mosby and I could really use someone with a head full of dirty tricks right about now."

Mosby chuckled. "Exactly. No one plays dirty like you do, Quinton. Without your help, grabbing Aspen would've been a lot messier."

Quinton replied coolly, "Dr. Lake, Mr. Driscoll, my little schemes are nothing compared to what that bastard Andrew's capable of. Compared to him, I'm a harmless kitten."

Rafael grinned. "Quinton, sounds like you've got a bit of rage bottled up there."

Quinton's eyes darkened with venom as he ground his teeth. "Rage doesn't even begin to cover it. I want to eat that bastard's flesh, drink his blood, and rip his damn spine out. Neither of you probably know this, but that son of a bitch actually forced me to regard him as my godfather.

"On top of that, the feud between the Wrights and Grand Viper? That bastard Andrew orchestrated the whole thing."

Mosby flinched, then gave a dry laugh. "You're his godson? Yeah, I'll admit, that's a new level of humiliation."

Rafael waved dismissively. "I don't care about all that. What's this business about Grand Viper? What happened between him and the Wrights?"

Quinton's face contorted with fury. "You don't know the half of it. Grand Viper's two apprentices-White Viper and Black Viper-weren't killed by the Wrights.

"But White Viper died first, and just before I came here, Black Viper was confirmed dead too—our guards found the body. Now Grand Viper has gone completely unhinged. He stormed up to the Wright estate, accusing us of killing his people and vowing to wipe us out."

Rafael's eyes widened. "He actually attacked your family head-on?"

Quinton nodded grimly, his face pale with rage. "He's not just mouthing off. Two of our guards are already dead at his hands. Black Viper also killed two of ours earlier. Now, the blood feud's real-there's no turning back."

Mosby cursed. "Damn it! Grand Viper was supposed to be our ace-the martial king-level force to keep Andrew in check. But now he's clashing with the Wrights? This complicates everything!"

Rafael's expression turned dark as he pulled out his phone. "I'll call him right now. He needs to calm the hell down if he turns the Wrights into enemies, he's doing Andrew a huge favor."

The line rang only once before it connected, and Rafael asked quickly, "Grand Viper, where the hell are you?"

A chilling voice replied, "I'm returning now."

Before anyone could say more, the front door flew open, and in walked Grand Viper. His robes were soaked in blood, and the sheer savagery in his eyes made all three men freeze on the spot.

Mosby let out a strangled yelp. "Grand Viper, w-why are you covered in blood?"

Grand Viper sneered. "It's not mine. It belongs to those filthy Wright bastards. They killed my two best disciples. From now on, anyone from the Wrights I lay eyes on-dies."

The words had barely left his mouth when he spotted Quinton standing there, pale and frozen. Without hesitation, his eyes flared, and he stepped forward and slapped Quinton across the face.

Blood sprayed from Quinton's nose and mouth as he was sent flying across the room.

Rafael jumped up in horror. "Grand Viper-stop! Stop! Quinton's with us! What the hell are you doing?"

Chapter 1448

Grand Viper roared, "If he's part of the Wrights, I'll personally send him to the afterlife! Just because they're one of the Five Apex Families, they think they can look down on me, Grand Viper?

"I've dominated the southern martial arts world for decades-when have I ever swallowed humiliation like this?"

Quinton scrambled to his feet, terrified, his voice trembling as he begged, "Sir, please! Have mercy! Your two apprentices-White Viper and Black Viper-they weren't killed by my family! It was Andrew! That bastard set the whole thing up to frame us and pit us against each other!"

However, Grand Viper's eyes blazed even hotter. "Bullshit! When I arrived at the scene, your Wrights' head guard-Tora-was right there, cleaning up Black Viper's corpse! Your people wouldn't even leave his body alone and now you want to talk peace? I swear, I'll make the Wrights repay this blood debt a hundredfold!"

As Grand Viper raised his hand again, clearly intending to kill Quinton on the spot, Rafael finally snapped.

"Grand Viper! That's enough-I'm ordering you to stop!"

Grand Viper spun around, his withered face twisted with rage. "Mr. Driscoll, don't forget-you don't command me! I've shown you respect because you're with the Driscolls.

"But don't push your luck. If I feel like it, I'll crush you here and now, then vanish from Gabo Creek Province forever! And your Driscolls won't be able to lift a finger against me!"

Rafael was so furious he nearly exploded on the spot. However, he forced himself to hold back.

Grand Viper was stubborn, old, brutal, and deeply prideful. Arguing with someone like him would only make things worse.

Rafael said quickly, "Grand Viper, just hear me out. You can't kill Quinton. He's here to help us complete the treasure map. Besides, the whole feud between you and the Wrights-Andrew is the one who lit that fire. If you really want revenge, go kill him!"

However, Grand Viper was not listening, and his face was still twisted with rage. "No. I'm killing the Wrights. That's final. I already took out two of them—and I'm not done yet. They'll pay-in blood."

Both Rafael and Mosby were left with throbbing headaches. Fortunately, Grand Viper eventually stomped upstairs to rest after throwing his tantrum.

Rafael growled through clenched teeth, "That bastard, Andrew! He really played it smart Using the Wrights to get Grand Viper allied up-keeping himself completely out of the crossfire. That dirty, underhanded scum!"

Mosby nodded bitterly. "Forget blaming him... Quinton, you said earlier you had a solution. What is it? Right now, not only is the Rhodes fragment still blank but we're also still missing the final piece of the treasure map."

Quinton wiped the blood from his mouth, ignoring the pain, and slowly smiled. "The final fragment... to tell you the truth, it's already in my hands."

He reached into his jacket and pulled out a piece of aged beast-hide, revealing a partial map.

Rafael and Mosby's eyes lit up instantly, blazing with greed.

Rafael said with a grin, "Quinton, you sly devil. Didn't expect you to be the one holding the last piece!"

Quinton clutched the fragment

tightly and stepped back with a widening smirk. "Mr. Driscoll, Dr. Lake-let me be clear. I'm showing you this map because intend fo claim a share of the treasure f either of you plans to cut me out, well... then this piece stays right where it is."

Rafael and Mosby exchanged a glance and burst into laughter.

Mosby said heartily, "Simple! Quinton, that's more than fair! You've got the last

piece of the puzzle. Of course, you get a share of the treasure!"

"Hand it over. Let me piece the full map together," Rafael said, extending his palm.

However, Quinton did not budge-in fact, he took a step back, his whole body edging closer to the front door.

Rafael's eyes narrowed, and a cold gleam flashed in them. "Quinton, what do you think you're doing? Are you playing games with me now?"

Quinton smiled harmlessly. "Mr. Driscoll, I wouldn't dare play games with you. But you know how it is-it never hurts to be cautious. If I just hand this over and you two decide to go back on your word, then I'd be handing steak to wolves."

Mosby chuckled. "Relax, Quinton. We promised you a share of the treasure, and we'll honor that."

Quinton snorted. "I want more than a share. I have two conditions. First, Grand Viper is your man. You're going to get him to kill Andrew for me. I don't care what it takes-I want that bastard dead. Every second he's still breathing, I feel like the sky's collapsing on me."

Mosby agreed immediately, "Done. No problem at all."

He sneered inwardly. 'Quinton's got that same bitter fire... guess he's tasted Andrew's wrath too. Finally, someone else who's been through the same hell as me.'

He actually felt a bit comforted. Misery really did love company.

Quinton clenched his fists. "Second condition-Grand Viper also has to kill the head of the Wright family."

Rafael blinked, then gave a twisted grin. "The head of the Wright family? You're planning to off your own father?"

Quinton let out a guttural scream.

"That senile bastard is not my father! The moment he made me regard Andrew as my godfather, he lost that title for good. He's been riding high as family head long enough. The second he drops dead, the Wrights are mine. Then, I'll be the one living large."

His smile twisted into something unhinged, eyes gleaming with lunacy.

Mosby did not even flinch. "Of course, Quinton. Consider it done. But now that your conditions are out in the open, it's time to hand over that final piece on the map, yes?"

Quinton hesitated for a second, then clenched his jaw and stepped forward. "Fine. I'm trusting you with this. Don't make me regret it."

Trying to suppress his excitement, Mosby kept his face neutral as he accepted the final fragment. He laid it out on the table, and at that moment the complete treasure map was finally assembled.

"Mr. Driscoll, we're good!" Mosby said cheerfully, forming an okay with his fingers

and snapping once toward Rafael.

That snap was not just a celebration. It was their private signal, hinting that the

deal was done, and it was time to clean up.

Rafael's smile

darkened. He glanced

up toward the second floor and shouted, "Grand Viper! Do you still want to kill the Wrights? Well, guess what this one's useless now. This idiot wanted a share of the treasure-he's not worth the air he breathes. Come down. Take your time. Kill him, torture him-whatever makes you happy."

With that, Rafael and Mosby turned away, already immersed in analyzing the full map. They completely ignored Quinton and the look of betrayal that was burning in his eyes.

"Y-You lying bastards!" Quinton screamed. His legs gave out, and a stream of urine trickled down his pants as he collapsed in horror, voice breaking into a howl.

"You treacherous bastards! Screw you all!"

Chapter 1450

Grand Viper descended the stairs, step by step, wearing a twisted grin on his face. "Brat, I may not be able to kill your old man, but taking out a little rat like you? That's nothing."

Quinton shrank back, crawling in a panic. "You damn bastards, all of you may you die horrible deaths! I swear, even if I become a ghost, I'll haunt every last one

of you!"

His screams were filled with panic, regret, and hatred. It was the sound of a man who finally realized just how badly he had miscalculated.

With a cold snort, Grand Viper vanished in a blur and reappeared right beside Quinton. The coiled serpent draped around him and bared its fangs with a hiss, lunging for Quinton's throat.

'Am I really going to die here? Am I really going to die before I've claimed what's mine before I've buried Andrew with my own hands?' Quinton thought.

For a moment, he drowned in despair.

Suddenly, Rafael lifted a hand and said with a slow smile, "Grand Viper, let's keep this one alive for now. He might still be useful."

Grand Viper paused reluctantly, then pulled his serpent back and stomped back upstairs in frustration.

Quinton wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and looked at Rafael, his voice trembling. "Mr. Driscoll, what do you want from me?"

Rafael sneered. "What do I want? I want to remind you of your place, you pathetic little mutt. Did you really think you were on our level? You thought just because you handed over one fragment, you earned the right to a piece of the treasure? Please."

Quinton's face went dark, his tone icy. "I gave you the final piece of the map. Why the hell shouldn't I be part of this? Mr. Driscoll, Dr. Lake, there's a line between ambition and greed-don't cross it."

Mosby smirked. "Spare us the speech, Quinton. A man who isn't selfish gets eaten alive. And you? You're as greedy as they come. So, don't throw rocks when you live in a glass house. Now enough talk. You're still alive because we need you for something."

He waved Quinton over.

Quinton hesitated, knowing full well that running meant instant death. So, swallowing his pride, he stepped up to the table.

Mosby pointed at the one

incomplete piece on the table-the blank fragment from the Rhodes family and spat, "This is the only one without any markings. Daran thing's useless unless we can reveal the map. Quinton, you know how to make the hidden ink appear, don't you?"

Quinton furrowed his brow. "Judging from the material, it doesn't look fake. But unlike the other pieces, there's no visible writing. That has to mean it's somehow tied to the Rhodes family."

Rafael rolled his eyes. "Of course it is. Do you think we don't know that already? What we need you to do is make the damn thing show something."

Quinton stroked his chin. "Based on ancient concealment techniques, we could try soaking it in warm water, applying a solvent, or heating it gently over flame..."

Rafael slowly nodded. "Might be worth a shot."

However, Mosby scoffed. "A shot at ruining everything. This fragment might be made from sheepskin, but it's over a hundred years old. It won't survive soaking of fire. Are you trying to uncover the map- incinerate it?"

Rafael gave an awkward laugh. "Okay, fair point."

Quinton sighed. "In that case... there may not be any other way. At least not for now."

Mosby's voice dropped into a growl. "Then you're useless again."

Seeing the murderous gleam in his eyes, Quinton went pale. "Wait! Wait! Mr. Driscoll, Dr. Lake, I'll think of something! I've got it! Andrew. That bastard Andrew -he must know the method!"

Mosby's expression shifted. "Now

you're thinking. We've suspected the same. That's why we're putting this Rhodes fragment in your hands You're going to see Andrew, talk to him, and convince him to reveal the true markings on this map.

Quinton stared, stunned. "You want me to do it? But even if he does know how to, there's no way he'll help me!"

Rafael grinned darkly. "That's your problem, not ours. Just get it done, Quinton. Make it happen, and maybe you'll walk away from all this in one piece."