

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1504

"Alright then, I should be back in a couple of days," Andrew said before ending the call.

He returned to the table and began eating.

Tiana carried more authority than most in the Rhodes family, including even Jameson, the head of the house. So, when Jerry and the other Rhodes family fighters sat at the table with her, they were painfully cautious, practically eating in fear.

Even Natasha was not spared. Her hand trembled as she reached for food.

Seeing this, Andrew chuckled helplessly and picked up several large servings, placing them onto Natasha's plate. She glanced up at him with a grateful and pitiful look, then bowed her head and ate in silence.

Tiana barely touched her food before putting down her utensils, clearly uninterested.

Andrew said, "Mrs. Rhodes, you really should eat more. Finding decent food won't be easy once we get deep into the mountains."

Tiana replied flatly, "I can't stomach these bland local dishes."

Andrew did not press further.

Even at Tiana's age, she always carried herself with the elegance and pride of aristocracy. Sometimes, she was even more willful than a teenage girl—something Andrew had experienced firsthand.

"Mrs. Rhodes, I hope I'm not interrupting your meal," Chantelle's voice rang out as she walked over.

Tiana smiled politely. "Of course not, Ms. Garcia. Please, have a seat."

Chantelle sat down and glanced toward Andrew. "Mr. Lloyd, I'd like to discuss our next steps."

Andrew kept eating, not even looking up. "There's nothing to discuss. You ignored my arrangement and brought two useless tagalongs. So from here on, we go our separate ways."

Chantelle frowned. "Are you seriously still holding a grudge over that? Come on, you're a grown man. Don't be so petty."

Andrew let out a cold scoff. "Better to be petty than to be stupid. I already warned you—this treasure hunt will be full of danger. And what did you do? You brought two liabilities. Whether they help or not is one thing, but they could very well end up dragging us all down."

Chantelle let out a bitter laugh. "Mr. Lloyd, I've tried to be patient and polite with you. But you're still this arrogant, self-important jerk who thinks everything has to go his way. Fine, maybe the people I brought aren't perfect, but I am not some helpless little girl. My presence should count for something, no?"

Andrew smirked. "You want the truth or a lie? Actually, it doesn't matter. The truth

is, whether you're here or not doesn't really change much for me. I only brought you along because of your government ties.

"I needed a backup plan in case things went south. Otherwise, to put it bluntly, I neither need nor care whether you come or not!"

Chantelle shot up from her seat, her face flushed with fury. "You're sick!"

With that, she stormed off, fuming.

Andrew simply rolled his eyes and continued eating.

Tiana chuckled. "Andy, you drove her off on purpose, didn't you?"

Andrew shrugged. "There's nothing deliberate about it—I just can't stand that stupid woman."

Tiana laughed coldly. "Stop

pretending! Do you think I can't see

through you? You wanted to drive

Ms. Garcia away so she wouldn't follow us into danger, right? Especially since the two people she brought might even be safety hazards. You chose to be the bad guy to protect both her and

ourselves by trying to force her to leave."

Andrew finally put down his utensils and sighed. "Her position is delicate. She's tied to Governor McCormick. If anything happens to her, we'll be dealing with serious government heat.

"As for those two, one's an ex-special forces guy who looks good on paper but is probably useless under pressure. The other is an old man I can't fully read, but nine times out of ten, he's just a swindler.

"And when we're deep underground, in the heart of the treasure site, if things go wrong, who's going to be responsible for keeping them alive? I'm no saint, but I'd really prefer if no one dies."

Tiana nodded "You're right. But you

also need to accept a hard

truth-some people are beyond reasoning. And Ms. Garcia represents Governor Derek. This expedition to explore the great treasure of the Fallen Crimson Dynasty might have been fine if he hadn't known about it. But now that he knows, it's impossible to expect him to stay out of it completely."

Andrew stopped talking and pulled out the treasure map to continue studying it. He tapped on the table thoughtfully and murmured, "The Fallen Crimson Dynasty treasure, 'The Underworld Kingdom of the Dead, the bliss of the fallen, the hell of the living'... This phrase clearly shows ominous signs!"