

## RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

### Chapter 1631

Joe's face darkened for the first time, cold as ice. He said flatly, "Andrew, I never wanted to lay a hand on you. Because if I did, Lauren would think less of me. She'd think I'm a bully, that I'm using my power to crush an outsider like you." He continued, "But Andrew, you really don't know your place. In all of Gabo Creek and the southern region of Holtrien, there aren't more than people who would dare to stand up to me like this. And you? You're nowhere near that level." Andrew slowly rose to his feet, calm and unfazed. "Whether I'm qualified or not, Mr. Driscoll, why don't you enlighten me?: He was not interested in playing games anymore. The tension between the two men snapped like a rubber band. They were like two raging lions on the plains, both dominant and ready to kill for their pride and their woman. Andrew was more than ready to throw down, no tricks, no nonsense. He was eager for a clean, brutal fight.

However, Liliana finally lost it. She jabbed a finger toward Andrew and yelled, "You

really don't know your place, do you? Joe comes from one of the Three Titans families and has been in the spotlight since childhood.

"Now he's recognized as a powerhouse on Holtrien's Titan List, and he's the future leader of the Driscoll family, for crying out loud! He's got everything, yet he

still lowered himself to reason with you!

"And you? You ungrateful idiot, you disrespected him over and over again! Do you

even realize you're digging your own grave? You're playing with fire!"

Leon completely lost his temper. "Mr. Driscoll! Ms. Peck! Why waste words with

this clown? Let me put a bullet in his thick skull! This piece of trash thinks he can

steal Mr. Driscoll's woman? Hell no! I'll send him straight to hell!"

A flash of gold streaked through the air, moving faster than the eye could follow.

Joe barked, "Leon! Get out of the way!"

However, Leon just stood there, confused, still holding the gun. A heartbeat later,

searing pain shot through his gun hand as a golden needle pierced straight through his palm.

The sudden agony made him drop his revolver, and it clattered to the floor. He

screamed in pain, "My hand! Mr. Driscoll, save me, please save me!"

Joe moved like lightning, grabbing Leon's wounded hand and pushing upward with tremendous force. His powerful energy blast forced the golden needle out through the air, sending it flying away from the wound.

Andrew shrugged casually, a mocking smile on his face. "Well, well, Mr. Driscoll's speed and power are truly impressive! Too bad I coated that needle with arsenic, and this foul-mouthed little punk has about 30 seconds left to live."

Leon's face instantly turned white as a sheet. Looking at Andrew, all his earlier arrogance vanished, replaced by pure terror and desperate pleading. The other people in the room backed away in fear, shocked by Andrew's decisive and ruthless action.

With her hands on her hips, Liliana shouted, "Andrew, give him the antidote right now!"

Andrew glanced at her dismissively. "Arsenic kills instantly, and death is certain.

An antidote? Liliana, are you that dumb? When have you ever heard of an antidote for this stuff?"

Liliana choked on her words. Her vision went dark for a second.

Joe suddenly turned around, eyes locked on Andrew like a predator. "Save him.

Whatever issues we have, don't drag others into it."

Andrew's tone turned ice-cold.

"You've got it wrong. I didn't drag anyone in. But that dumbass kept pointing a gun at my face, and that pissed me off. I made a promise a long time ago that never again would I let anyone aim a gun at my head."

Joe's mouth twitched. "Isn't that last line from an old movie?"

Andrew laughed. "Yup. I borrowed it just to sound badass."

He walked up to Leon, eyes chillingly sharp. "Give me one good reason why I should save your life."

Leon sobbed. "Andrew, I never did anything to you! Why are you trying to kill me?

This is murder!"

Andrew leaned down and patted Leon's face mockingly. "Weren't you acting all tough and badass just a minute ago? What happened to all that attitude? The beef between Mr. Driscoll and me is none of your business, you piece of trash.

"What gives you the right to get involved? Huh? I'm asking you, what makes you think you qualify?"

Leon shouted, "I'm the eldest son of the Mercer family! Our family runs Blumedale, we-"

Before he could finish, Andrew slapped him twice, and blood immediately gushed from Leon's nose and mouth.

Liliana, Gary, and the others stood frozen in shock. They all wondered where Andrew got this kind of nerve, especially with Joe still standing there.

"So what if the Mercer family runs Blumedale?" Andrew growled, yanking Leon up by the collar. "You might be a Mercer, but what does that have to do with me?"

He hissed, "You think you can act tough in front of me, you worthless piece of garbage? Believe me, I could kill you in a heartbeat! If you have a problem with that, call your family's enforcers. Let's see if I even break a sweat dealing with them!"

Leon's mouth went dry, and he stammered weakly, "M-Mr. Lloyd, I-I was wrong. I won't do it again!"

Away from his family's protection, spoiled rich kids like him were nothing but parasites who lived off their family's reputation. When faced with a real killer, Leon's borrowed authority meant absolutely nothing, and he was ready to wet himself with fear.

And Andrew? He was not just a fighter—he was a damn savage. In a place like Blumedale, a family like the Mercers did not even register on Andrew's radar.

Liliana panicked. "Andrew, just save him first! Leon is the Mercer family's only son. If something happens to him, their bloodline ends!"

Andrew chuckled darkly. "And how exactly is that my problem? And you, you stupid woman, weren't you running your mouth pretty loudly just now? Go on then, be a hero and save your precious idiot!"

Liliana's face turned red with rage, and she gritted her teeth, fuming. "If I knew medicine, I wouldn't be asking for your help! And Andrew, you're the stupid one here!"

Andrew looked at her with contempt and kicked Leon square in the chest.

Leon let out a wail and spat up a mouthful of dark blood before flying backward and hitting the ground hard.

"There, you're saved. But next time you see me, I expect you to walk the other way."

Leon clutched his chest, struggling to get up. "M-Mr. Lloyd... I get it now... I'll never cross the line again..."

Andrew's cold stare swept across the room.

Gary and the rest of the little brats swallowed hard and quickly looked away. None of them dared meet his eyes.

Liliana shrieked, "Andrew, you've gone too far! Joe, Leon can't just take this beating for nothing. You have to get justice for him!"

Joe said coldly, "Andrew, there wasn't any arsenic on that needle, was there?"

Andrew

mained calm even when

his bluff was called. "Mr. I

you

e live up to your net

You saw right through that trick."

Joe took a deep breath and spoke indifferently. "Three days from now, right here in this fight club, we'll settle this like men. Whoever loses walks away from Lauren

permanently."

He added, "Don't worry, I won't use my superior martial arts level to bully you.

When the time comes, I'll fight you with just one hand."

Andrew yawned, looking completely bored by the whole situation. "No need for that, Mr. Driscoll. Just give it everything you've got. I'm afraid when you lose, you'll go crying to Lauren and refuse to honor the deal."

When those words left his mouth, Liliana and the others were completely stunned.

Where the hell did this bastard get the confidence to talk trash to a powerhouse from the Titan List?

Joe's expression darkened. "It's a deal then!"

For the first time in his life, someone had challenged not just his power, but his

pride.

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Andrew had already left Nova Fight Club. He exited the same way he came, calm

and unbothered.

No one even dared to stop him.

Liliana said angrily, "Joe, why? With your personality, there's no way you'd tolerate

such an insignificant bug acting so arrogantly! You could have crushed him with a

single slap!"

Joe's eyes were deep and thoughtful as he shook his head. "Liliana, none of you

really understand me. Everyone thinks I'm the Driscoll family heir, a peerless genius, an untouchable golden boy!

"Maybe the old me enjoyed all that vanity and those titles. But my excellence and

talent don't need other people's applause to validate them. My path in life doesn't

need my family's background to prop me up so I can bully others and lord over them."

He added, "Andrew has every right to compete with me for Lauren. So I'll defeat

him fair and square, openly and honestly, and tear him apart! I won't look down on



him just because he's a nobody. This is the insight my recent martial arts breakthrough has given me."

When Liliana heard this, her face immediately filled with adoration, practically swooning. "Joe, you're the most amazing and charming guy I've ever met! You

know what? Seeing how incredible you are makes me half proud and happy, but

the other half of me feels so sad."

Joe smiled, and he looked incredibly handsome. "Why would you feel sad? You're

my good friend, and I want you to be happy for me!"

Liliana bit her red lips, looking pitiful and vulnerable. "Because I like you, and seeing you suffering over Ms. Rhodes breaks my heart. I can't help but wonder if

I'm really so much worse than her?"

Joe shook his head seriously. "I'm sorry, Liliana. I know how you feel about me,

but Lauren is different... no, she's absolutely unique. She's the only person who

has ever won my heart."

Jealousy and hatred flashed in Liliana's eyes. But in the end, she said nothing and

ran downstairs with tears streaming down her face.

Gary laughed awkwardly. "Mr. Driscoll, aren't you going to go after her?"

Joe's expression remained ice-cold. "No, I'm not going after her. Running after a

woman I don't love would be cruel to myself."

Leon could not help but speak up.

"Mr. Driscoll, honestly, with your

status as the Driscoll family heir,

Andrew isn't even qualified to share

a stage with you. If the media or

other elite families found out about

this, they might mock you for

lowering yourself and degrading

your position."

Joe frowned. "That is a problem, so none of you are allowed to mention that

Andrew and I will be facing off in three days! Not a word to anyone!"

Gary and the others nodded repeatedly. "Understood! Three days from now, that

bastard's as good as dead!"

"Hey, you, stop right there!" Andrew had just walked out of the club's front

entrance when he heard an angry female voice behind him.

He turned, surprised, and saw Liliana storming toward him, her eyes still rimmed

with red.

Andrew mocked, "What's wrong? Are you crying because your precious Mr.

Driscoll doesn't seem so godly anymore?"

Liliana stopped right in front of him, face full of hatred. "Andrew, compared to Joe, you're nothing but a bug! The only reason I called out to you is to tell you not to bite off more than you can chew. He only has room in his heart for one woman-Lauren. If you dare get in their way, I will make you pay!"

Andrew did not get mad. Instead, he looked genuinely puzzled. "Liliana, are you okay? Did you hit your head or something? It's obvious you're head-over-heels for Joe. You practically worship the guy! So why are you suddenly acting like some noble peacekeeper?"

Liliana pressed her lips together, and a bitter smile tugged at the corner of her mouth.

"I love him. But unfortunately, sometimes love is one-sided. To Joe, no one else

matters. It's Lauren or nothing."

Andrew looked even more confused and could not help but blurt out, "A rich guy

like Mr. Driscoll doesn't strike me as someone loyal. I'd be more inclined to believe

he's a player who enjoys toying with women!"

Liliana scoffed. "If that's really what you think, then you're just projecting your own

petty mindset onto a gentleman. Joe's excellence is perfect and flawless.

Otherwise, I never could have fallen so deeply in love with him."

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#### Chapter 1634

Liliana declared, "I'd be willing to do anything for Joe!"

Andrew smirked. "Well, Ms. Peck, aren't you quite the romantic! Let me congratulate you in advance on winning your prince charming."

Liliana snorted coldly. "Hold on, don't rush off just yet. I'm not done yet!"

Andrew, who had been about to leave, stopped again, and his expression darkened. "Liliana, you talk way too much. I'm giving you one last chance, so speak up!"

Liliana was secretly furious at his dismissive tone, as if he was telling her to hurry up and say her piece. Andrew really disgusted her to no end, and she found him absolutely repulsive.

"Don't get cocky, Andrew. Your lucky streak is about to end! Nobody has a chance of winning against Joe in combat, but I want you to voluntarily give up this match with him."

Now it was Andrew's turn to look confused. "And why would I do that?"

Liliana's eyes darted around as she looked Andrew up and down, then her expression turned contemptuous. "The reason, of course, is that you're not qualified to fight Joe! If it weren't for Lauren, he would never lower himself to play these childish games with you.

"He's the Driscoll family's greatest prodigy, and if word got out that he got into a brawl with a nobody like you over some woman, it would undoubtedly damage Joe's reputation. So I'm asking you to back down and surrender.

"I don't want his brilliant reputation tainted in the slightest! Even if that stain would only happen because he was forced to acknowledge a nobody like you, I'll still do everything I can to protect his image from any damage."

The more Liliana spoke, the more worked up she became, and her sense of superiority was on full display.

Andrew remained silent at first, but gradually a brilliant smile spread across his face.

Liliana frowned. "What's so funny? You're not actually thinking of refusing, are you?"

Andrew chuckled. "It's not that I'm unwilling, it's just that I can't agree to something for nothing, right?"

Liliana was stunned. Then, she laughed with disdain. "Just as I thought-you're the kind of small-time loser who never moves unless there's a reward involved."

Andrew stepped forward, towering over her as he stared at her smug face.

Liliana instinctively tensed up. "W-What are you doing?"

His smile turned icy. "Nothing. Just wanted to take a good look at you. Ms. Peck, who gave you the confidence to stand in front of me and spout nonsense like

that? You're asking me to surrender? Seriously?"

He scoffed. "Liliana, what is it? Do

you think you're royalty or something? And even if you were a damn princess, you'd still mean nothing to me. Sure, your family babies you. Your father and brother might treat you like gold at home.

"But out here? In the real world? You're just another spoiled idiot. And I can make sure you hit rock bottom any time I feel like it."

Andrew had finally had enough of her. Liliana had been bouncing around, trying to force herself into every scene, desperate for attention. And now, his patience has worn thin.

She may not have been his enemy, but she was like a buzzing fly-loud, useless, and asking to be squashed.

That cold, almost amused smile on Andrew's face made Liliana shiver. She shouted, "H-How dare you yell at me? A nobody like you dares to talk to me like that? Fine, Andrew! Just you wait! Miles is on his way right now. Didn't you say he owed you money?"

She huffed and added, "I'd love to see how he crushes you into dust!"

She was practically jumping up and down with rage, her face twisted with anger and grinding teeth. As the heiress of the Peck family, she had never encountered such a bold man in all of Blumedale who dared treat her this way. s̄novel

Just then, a black Range Rover pulled up in front of the club.

Miles stuck his head out the window. "Liliana, didn't you say someone was causing trouble at the club? I came to see which bastard has the balls to do that!"

Liliana sneered and pointed at Andrew. "Miles, it's this punk! He insulted me, tried to grope me, and claims you owe eight million dollars! You absolutely have to destroy this brainless piece of trash!"

Miles snorted coldly and looked toward Andrew, pulling the car door handle to get out. Then, his movements froze, and his face went blank with shock and panic.

"Mr. Lloyd! I-It's actually you! If I'd known such an important person was visiting, I would have made proper arrangements ahead of time!"

He quickly scrambled out of the car with a fawning, apologetic expression that stunned Liliana.

## Chapter 1635

Miles was a privileged heir from the Peck family, one of the Five Apex Families, and was on the same level as people like Elon from the Golding family. In Blumedale, he was naturally considered a top-tier second-generation elite.

Lately, Miles had even started his own company, trying to break away from his family and build something on his own. That kind of ambition was not unusual among young heirs. After all, none of them wanted to be seen as soft trust-fund kids with no bite.

Everyone wanted to prove themselves without leaning on their last name.

Then again, most of the time, the smartest thing a wealthy heir could do was not start a business. Instead, they should just live comfortably off their family's wealth and assets. More often than not, once they started entrepreneurial

ventures, even the most substantial family fortunes could not withstand the losses.

While Miles was not reckless, his company's financial situation was dire, and he could barely make payroll anymore. Hence, he had turned to Supreme Capital Group and secured an eight-million-dollar financing.

In other words, Andrew was now his financial lifeline.

After getting out of his car, Miles jogged over to Andrew and started bowing and scraping. "Mr. Lloyd, this isn't the place to talk. Let's go inside!"

His attitude was extremely humble, showing none of the arrogance typical of Five Apex Families heirs.

Andrew waved his hand casually. "Mr. Peck, your timing is perfect! Your company needs to start paying me back by the end of this month, so make sure you have the funds ready in advance. I don't want to have to track you down at your company like I did with the Ackermann family."

Miles' eyelid twitched, and he laughed nervously. "Of course! Mr. Lloyd, please don't worry. My company will absolutely honor our agreement! The Ackermann family was completely dumb for trying to scam you. Frankly, it's a miracle any of them made it out alive."

Andrew gave a soft grunt, then glanced at Liliana. "So, do you believe me now?"

Andrew nodded and looked at Liliana. "Now, do you believe what I told you earlier?"

Liliana stood there dumbfounded, her eyes widened in disbelief. "Miles, did you really borrow money from this guy? And did you call him Mr. Lloyd?"

Miles frowned. "Liliana, don't you know that Mr. Lloyd is currently the Chairman of the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce? Dad has



been working for years trying to met  
get

us accepted into the Chamber, and Mr. Lloyd is now one of the most influential figures in our province's business community!"

Liliana stammered, "B-But-"

Miles interrupted her impatiently. "There's no but' about it. You're being a spoiled brat again, aren't you? I'm warning you to be respectful toward Mr. Lloyd from now on! Stop throwing these princess tantrums, because if Dad finds out you've been this rude, the family will pull funding from your club and you won't be able to keep it running!"

Liliana's face immediately turned

deathly pale. She appeared

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glamorous on the surface, carrying the Peck family heiress title and running a luxurious fight club frequented by skilled fighters However, without the Peck family's connections and financial backing, her own abilities alone would have led to the club's bankruptcy and closure long ago.

Being exposed by her own brother in front of Andrew made her face burn with shame, and she wanted to crawl into a hole and disappear.

It was just too humiliating.

Andrew smirked. "Mr. Peck, your sister was threatening to deal with me earlier! Ever since I became Chairman of the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce and won the Grand Medical Summit championship, I've received plenty of threats, but Ms. Peck might be the most aggressive one yet."