

## RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

### Chapter 1636

Miles' face immediately darkened. He turned to Liliana and demanded, "Is what Mr. Lloyd said true?"

Liliana felt her chest tighten and snapped at Andrew, "You seriously ran off and ratted on me?"

Andrew chuckled coldly. "Nope. I said it right to your face. Didn't hide a thing."

Liliana choked on her words. "You..."

Miles' voice dropped, razor-sharp. "Liliana, pack your things and get your ass home. Then, go straight to Dad and tell him what you did. And after that, you'll buy something decent and take it to Mr. Lloyd's house to formally apologize."

Liliana felt utterly humiliated and screamed, "Miles, I won't do it! Even if this guy is some kind of chairman, I'm still the heiress of the Peck family. Who is he to demand an apology from me?"

Miles flew into a rage and slapped her hard across the face. "Shut up, you stupid brat. If you insult Mr. Lloyd again, I swear I'll stop treating you like a sister and beat some sense into you right now."

Holding her stinging cheek, Liliana was completely in disbelief as tears poured from her eyes. "You hit me? Even Dad couldn't bear to hit me, but you actually hit me? Miles, you might be afraid of him, but I'm not. Just wait and see!"

Sobbing hysterically, Liliana turned and ran back into the club, tears pouring down her face.

Miles looked utterly miserable as he turned to Andrew. He apologized, "I'm sorry, Mr. Lloyd. It's the Peck family's fault for failing to raise her properly. I'll apologize on her behalf."

Andrew gave a faint, dismissive smile. "No need. I'm not the type to get worked up over a clueless girl."

And with that, he ignored Miles' embarrassed grin, flagged down a car, and left without another word.

Miles instinctively moved to walk him out, but Andrew did not even glance back.

Left standing there awkwardly, Miles clenched his jaw. He thought, 'Liliana, you dumb girl... Do you really think I wanted to hit you? But you're so damn clueless, and you have no idea what kind of man Andrew is

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now.

'Just his role as Chairman of the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce puts him on equal footing with the Peck family. Plus, he has connections with Governor McCormick and the Keller family, not to mention his rapidly expanding business empire.

'In the future, this person will definitely become a major power player in Gabo Creek Province! By provoking him like this, you're creating future problems for our family!'

With a heavy heart and mixed emotions, Miles stood dazed by the roadside for a long time. After snapping back to reality, he immediately got in his car and sped toward the Peck residence.

He needed to find his father, the head of the Reck family, and report today's events. Although Andrew might not really hold a grudge against Liliana, the Peck family needed to apologize where O appropriate and show the right attitude.

They could not be careless about this.

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When Andrew returned to Serenity Villa, he was surprised to find that even the usually cold Chantelle was there.

"Andrew, you're finally back! Are you okay?" She breathed a huge sigh of relief, and her full chest visibly rose and fell twice.

Andrew smiled. "I'm fine, thanks for your concern, Ms. Garcia!"

Lauren, Francesca, and Aspen were all equally anxious and worried.

Aspen asked, "Andrew, Ms. Garcia said you went to meet Joe from the Driscoll family. You two didn't fight, did you?"

Andrew ruffled her hair and smiled warmly. "If we had fought, do you think I could have come back safe and sound?"

Lauren's expression turned somewhat cold. "Joe actually arranged a private meeting with you... I won't let this slide. I'll be speaking to him myself. He better have a good excuse for this."

#### Chapter 1637

Andrew smiled. "Speaking of which, Lauren, I actually think Mr. Driscoll is a pretty decent guy! At least he's not like Elon from the Goldings or Xavier from the

Haywoods, those brainless idiots who come out swinging and acting all high and mighty from the start."

Lauren hesitated, seeming like she wanted to say something but held back.

Francesca had a strange expression on her face and giggled. "Joe, the heir of the Driscoll family, definitely can't be compared to people like Elon and Xavier. If it weren't for you, I actually think Lauren and Joe getting together would have made a beautiful love story!"

Andrew's face darkened. "Fran, are you saying that compared to Joe, I'm not good enough for Lauren?"

Francesca quickly said, "Look at you, getting all jealous over nothing! If you hadn't appeared, Lauren and Joe being together would have been perfectly fine. But the problem is that you, Lauren's true prince charming, showed up. So naturally you're better than Joe!"

Aspen asked tentatively, "Fran, does this mean Lauren was actually with Joe before?"

Francesca kept her mouth shut and looked toward Lauren for permission.

Lauren smiled bitterly. "Go ahead and tell him, Fran. It's not really a secret anyway, and Andrew has the right to know."

Francesca said, "Alright then, Lauren and Joe did have some history. But this all happened when Lauren was still in Blumedale, before she went to Jayrodale and before she met Andrew."

Andrew said coldly, "Cut the irrelevant details. I just want to know if Lauren and Joe were actually together or not!"

Francesca pouted. "Andrew, you're not going to be so controlling that you want to manage everything about Lauren's life before she even knew you, are you?"

Andrew shot back aggressively, "Why not? Can't I? I'm her husband. Can't I ask questions and care about these things?"

Francesca was taken aback and stuck out her tongue. "You men really have no limits when it comes to possessiveness!"

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Lauren's gaze grew gentle as she actively took Andrew's arm and said sweetly, "Honey, don't be angry! I promise, before you and I were together, I never gave myself to anyone, ever. And as for Joe our relationship wasn't what you imagined."

Andrew was still visibly annoyed. "Then what was it? If you don't tell me everything tonight, don't even think about getting into my bed."

Lauren was caught off guard by that one.

Aspen and Francesca both looked wide-eyed, and even Chantelle raised a brow.

This was the first time they had ever seen Andrew lose his cool. After all, he was usually calm and unshakable, always composed.

But now? He was being straight-up petty and unreasonable.

Lauren's heart bloomed with joy, and she smiled radiantly. "Andrew, are you really jealous?"

She giggled and added, "I love it when you get jealous. It shows that you truly care about me! Okay, okay, my darling husband. Don't be mad. I'll tell you everything, I swear, no secrets."

Chantelle watched from the side, feeling nauseated by the display. "Ms. Rhodes, Mr. Lloyd, are you two always like this?"

Lauren replied matter-of-factly, "Of course! What's wrong with that? Andrew is my husband, and it's only natural that I want to act all sweet and clingy!"

Chantelle's face twitched as she thought to herself that Andrew, that pervert, really was incredibly lucky. There was no way she could ever act like Lauren did.

Later, after some back-and-forth

between Lauren and Francesca, Andrew finally got the full picture of what had really happened between his woman and the Driscoll family's golden boy.

### Chapter 1638

The whole situation was pretty simple.

Joe had been infatuated with Lauren, completely one-sided.

As for Lauren, she treated him with kindness and respect and admired his talents, but she never once felt any romantic pull.

The golden boy of the Driscoll family really was the whole package. His looks, his martial prowess, and his intellect were unmatched.

Even Andrew had to give him that.

Though he casually said with a smirk, "Mr. Driscoll is pretty much perfect, maybe

the finest man out there... but he's still just a notch below me."

Whenever Andrew said things like this, Francesca would roll her eyes in exasperation, whereas Aspen would nod in complete agreement, unconditionally defending her master.

Lauren got all fired up and planted a kiss right on Andrew's lips.

Only Chantelle could not help but make sarcastic comments. She knew Andrew was amazing, but she just did not like hearing him say it.

Or rather, she did not like seeing Andrew surrounded by three gorgeous women, having the time of his life while she had no place in the picture.

Francesca sighed and remarked, "Joe was actually really devoted to her! When Lauren was in Blumedale, he would visit the Rhodes family almost constantly, bringing all sorts of gifts. Despite being this golden heir, he never put on any airs, and he was incredibly polite to everyone in the household."

She continued, "So back then, Mrs. Rhodes absolutely adored Joe, thinking he was perfect in every way! That's why when the Driscoll family came to propose marriage, she agreed immediately despite Mr. Rhodes' objections."

Lauren looked apologetic. "Andrew, if I could have met you earlier, none of this would have happened! Actually, I never disliked Joe because he was always very respectful toward me."

She explained, "But it was different with you. I didn't feel that passionate, intimate, reckless kind of love for him that I feel for you."

Andrew smiled. "So Lauren, why didn't you agree to be with Joe back then? According to Fran, he sounds like the perfect man that no woman could possibly refuse!"

Lauren looked

somewhat confused.

"Honestly, don't really know myself! When I was around Joe, I mostly kept my distance out of respect. But after meeting you in Jayrodale, became completely head-over-heels! Later, I clearly realized that you were my true soulmate."

Francesca said pitifully, "Honey, please don't blame me for painting Joe in such a good light just now! It's just that there's no need for us to badmouth him behind his back To be fair, he really was flawless in how he treated Lauren, and he really is a good man. But I know that compared to you, he's obviously lacking in so many ways!"

Andrew said helplessly, "Do I really seem that petty to you? I already said Mr. Driscoll seems like a decent guy. I'm not too proud to acknowledge his good qualities! Since we've cleared everything up, let's not dwell on it anymore. Come on, let's have dinner first!"

Aspen smiled. "Honey, tonight's dinner was made by Ms. Garcia! You have to try it! Her cooking puts the three of us to shame!"

Andrew looked intrigued and slightly amused. "Ms. Garcia cooked?"

He glanced over at Chantelle. Dressed in her usual modest and buttoned-up outfit, Chantelle remained stone-faced as she replied, "Think of it as a small thank-you for taking care of me during the expedition, Mr. Lloyd."

#### Chapter 1639

Chantelle said, "Plus, I'm borrowing your kitchen and using your ingredients. So, Mr. Lloyd, just eat up. No need to thank me or anything!"

Andrew smiled. "Come on, having someone of your stature cook dinner for me is truly an honor!"

The dining table was loaded with about 15 dishes, all specialty cuisine.

Lauren and the other two girls kept nodding as they ate, constantly praising Chantelle's cooking skills. Andrew also gave her a thumbs up, agreeing that she really knew her way around the kitchen.

After dinner, it was already past 8:00 p.m.



Chantelle stood up and said, "I'll wash the dishes and then head home."

Lauren said in surprise, "No way, Ms. Garcia! We can't possibly let you do the dishes!"

Aspen quickly added, "Ms. Garcia, don't worry about it. Just rest for a bit, I'll wash the dishes!"

Francesca nodded in agreement. "Exactly! Just relax, Ms. Garcia. Aspen and I will handle the dishes!"

Chantelle started clearing the plates and insisted, "No way! I've already troubled you all enough today. I must wash these dishes, so don't fight me on this!"

All three girls found this rather strange, wondering what was going on because Chantelle was acting pretty unusual. However, they could not quite put their finger on what exactly seemed off about her behavior.

Andrew could not figure out what was up with Chantelle either. Then again, her insistence on washing dishes might have been due to her perfectionist personality demanding that everything be properly finished.

So, Andrew and his three beauties settled in the living room to watch TV and snack on fruit.

Meanwhile, Chantelle was alone in the kitchen, working away at washing the dishes.

Francesca glanced toward the kitchen and said, "Ms. Garcia has been washing dishes for over half an hour now. How is she still not done?"

Lauren looked thoughtful and replied, "I should check on her."

Andrew stood up instead. "I'll go. You girls keep watching."

Lauren perked up. "Sure! Thanks!"

They were currently watching The Royal Diaries, a historical drama they were so addicted to, they could watch it straight through the night.

If Andrew did not stop them, they would binge the whole series and then start over from episode one the next day.

And the deeper they got into it, the weirder they got.

Sometimes, Andrew would come home and hear dramatic lines echoing through

the house from the most unexpected places.

From the bedroom, the balcony, or even from the bathroom.

"I can't live like this!"

"You scheming bitch!"

"You wicked whore!"

When Andrew walked into the kitchen, he saw that the dishes were already done. However, Chantelle was actually mopping the floor.

"Ms. Garcia, what are you doing?" Andrew was completely confused.

Chantelle laughed awkwardly. "Sorry about this, Mr. Lloyd. I accidentally the floor wet while washing up.

Just give me a second to mop it dry, and then I'll leave!" fo

Andrew looked at the floor. "The floor isn't wet, though. Come on, put down the mop and come rest for a bit!"

Chantelle refused to let go. "Don't worry about me. If I get it wet, then I need to clean it up properly. That's just how I do things!"

Andrew felt a headache coming on

"Fine, but hurry up and come out to

rest when you're done. It's getting late, and you still need to drive home!"

Half an hour later, Chantelle still hadn't come out of the kitchen.

Meanwhile, the three women in the living room had just finished the latest episode of The Royal Diaries and were clapping and cheering, celebrating the emperor's death.

They thought he got what he deserved. After all, all men were trash and deserved

to be taken down and cheated on while they were at it.

#### Chapter 1640

Andrew found himself taking the jab out of nowhere and could only laugh awkwardly.

Aspen looked up from the couch and gasped, "Oh my goodness! It's almost 11 p.m., and Ms. Garcia's still in the kitchen?"

Lauren jumped up in alarm. "Wait... you're right! We totally forgot. Let's check on her!"

Francesca, wearing her cartoon slippers, was already rushing toward the kitchen. "Ms. Garcia, please don't tell me you passed out from exhaustion!"

Just then, Chantelle finally emerged, her cheeks flushed a soft red. She was clearly embarrassed as she said, "S-Sorry about that, everyone. I just finished cleaning up, I'll be taking my leave now."

Lauren looked apologetic. "Ms. Garcia, I'm so sorry. We got so caught up in the show that we forgot about you!"

Aspen said, "Ms. Garcia, we'll walk you to the door!"

Chantelle waved her hand. "No need, I can manage by myself. It's already late, so you all should get some rest!"

She took two steps forward but suddenly grabbed onto the door frame, looking a bit dizzy.

Lauren was startled and rushed over. "Ms. Garcia, are you okay?"

Chantelle waved to indicate she was fine. Then, she suddenly cried out, "Oh no, I forgot that we can't drive after drinking!"

Francesca looked suspicious. "But we didn't drink any alcohol during dinner!"

Chantelle said regretfully, "We didn't drink during dinner, but while I was cleaning in the kitchen, I noticed Mr. Lloyd had some really nice wine and couldn't help but taste a couple of sips! My bad... I shouldn't have indulged!"

Her face was now clearly flushed from the alcohol, and her slightly wobbly posture said she could not handle liquor well at all.

Aspen shrugged. "Well, if you've been drinking, you absolutely can't drive."

She turned to the group and said, "How about we just let Ms. Garcia crash here tonight?"

Francesca thought for a moment. "I mean, why not? Depends on whether she's okay with it."

Chantelle quickly replied, "Totally okay! I just... don't want to trouble anyone."

Lauren smiled warmly. "You're not troubling anyone. We've got more than enough rooms. Besides, we're all girls here, so it's no big deal!"

Francesca said, "Aspen, let's go upstairs and get a room ready!"

Aspen replied, "Awesome, let's go!"

Lauren added, "Andrew, you chat with Ms. Garcia for a bit! While they set up the room, I'll go get some bedding."

Andrew smiled. "Sounds good, go ahead!"

Once the three women left, Andrew's gaze immediately returned to Chantelle with extreme suspicion.

Chantelle felt an inexplicable chill

and tried to appear calm. "Mr. Lloyd, I hope you don't mind! If I hadn't be king, I definitely would have home."

Andrew nodded. "It's fine-no need to be so formal. We're friends now, right? But

Ms. Garcia, will this mess with your work schedule tomorrow?"

Chantelle shook her head. "Not at all. I'll leave early in the morning."

An awkward silence fell between them. Neither of them knew what to say next, but Andrew could note

the feeling that something

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was not adding up.

Could this woman have deliberately drunk alcohol so she could not drive, giving

her a perfect excuse to stay overnight?

From her volunteering to wash

dishes in the kitchen to later making

a fuss about needing to mop the

floor, this whole series of actions looked to Andrew like she was deliberately stalling for time.