

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1641

Still, Andrew had no reason to question Chantelle over something like that, so he could only keep it to himself.

On the other hand, Chantelle had never looked him in the eye. Her posture remained straight and composed.

Andrew could not stand the weird tension in the room anymore, so he stood up and said, "Well then, Ms. Garcia, once you're done cleaning up, you should get some rest. I'm going to bed now."

Chantelle stood up with him and laughed lightly. "Alright, Mr. Lloyd, good night!"

Andrew headed upstairs, turned off the lights, and lay down. Since Chantelle was staying overnight at Serenity Villa, he could not have the three girls join him tonight.

Otherwise, if things got noisy, Chantelle would inevitably hear everything, which would be rather awkward.

Lauren, Francesca, and Aspen were thinking the same thing. Soon after everything was cleaned up, they each returned to their respective rooms and obediently went to sleep.

Andrew had already fallen asleep, but his phone received a message. He smiled, figuring it must be from Lauren, Francesca, or Aspen.

The three ladies clearly could not handle being left alone either.

However, when he squinted and opened his phone to check, it was not from any of his three beloved ladies.

[Mr. Lloyd, are you asleep yet?]

The message was simple, just those few words. However, it was the sender's name that made Andrew look several times just to confirm he was seeing it right.

It was from Chantelle, the ice queen.

[I'm already asleep. Do you need something?] Andrew replied and put his phone down.

Chantelle texted back almost instantly, [It's nothing major, but I was wondering if I could trouble you for a moment. The window in my room won't close, and cold air keeps blowing in. It's really uncomfortable!]

Andrew could not help but frown. [The window won't close? Hold on, I'll come take a look!]

Chantelle replied, [That would be great. Thank you so much! But Mr. Lloyd, please keep it quiet. I don't want to disturb Ms. Rhodes and the others!]

Andrew got up and immediately headed to Chantelle's room. He moved very quietly, also worried about disturbing everyone else's rest.

Chantelle's bedroom door opened with just a gentle push. He carefully walked inside, where it was pitch black with no lights on.

"Ms. Garcia, turn on the lights so I can help you with the window."

No one responded, and the room remained completely silent.

Andrew called out again about turning on the lights, but Chantelle still did not respond, so he walked over to turn them on himself.

The moment the lights came on, he saw a figure sprawled across the bed, her nightgown pulled up, revealing soft curves and bare skin glowing under the light.

Chantelle's face was flushed red, though whether from alcohol or embarrassment was unclear.

Biting her lower lip, she looked at Andrew with shy, coy eyes. "Mr. Lloyd, you came!"

Andrew was completely speechless. He looked toward the window, which was closed perfectly fine. In other words, there was absolutely no problem with it not closing properly.

He instantly realized what this supposedly aloof woman was trying to do. "Ms. Garcia, you've got guts, I'll give you that!"

Chantelle's eyes darted away nervously. "I don't even know why I'm acting so crazy like this! Anyway, Mr. Lloyd, it's up to you. Either give it to me or don't, and if you won't, I'll get dressed and leave right now!"

Andrew felt frustrated. "I can give it to you, but you didn't need to come to my place for this, did you? Don't tell me you're like Aspen, enjoying the thrill and excitement of risky situations?"

Chantelle's face turned red with

shame and anger. "I'm nothing like your little servant girl! Anyway, back when we were treasure hunting in that remote wilderness, you took my virginity. So from now on, you can't refuse me." sŵnovel

Andrew shook his head and replied in a serious tone, "Ms. Garcia, I don't even understand the relationship between us myself! The main issue is that I'm not clear on your attitude.

I'm genuinely sincere with Fran, Lauren, and Aspen; they're truly my women."

He continued, "But with you, if it's just a physical transaction, I don't think it's necessary!"

Chantelle panicked. "But what if I'm being serious?"

Andrew was stunned. "You're being serious?"

Chantelle stammered, her heart racing. "I don't know if I'm being serious or not! Anyway, I want you to sleep with me. I know making this request makes me seem pathetic and shameless, and you'll think I have no dignity!

"But I'm 30 years old now, and ever since that time with you, I can't stop thinking about it! I'm not the type of person who likes to suppress myself, so come here!"

Andrew chuckled bitterly. "So you're treating me like a friends-with-benefits situation!"

Chantelle lifted her head defiantly, her pale neck tilted in pride. "Even if it's just friends with benefits, you're the one getting the better deal! Are you going to tell me sleeping with me wasn't enjoyable? Didn't stroke that oversized ego of yours?"

Andrew did not respond but instead stared at this woman, giving her a thorough once-over. Finally, he walked over and clicked off the lights.

The room fell into silence.

Then, Andrew's calm voice slowly emerged from the darkness. "You'd better prepare yourself for wobbly legs at work tomorrow! Also, keep it down later, or else Fran and the others will all know about it tomorrow!"

Chantelle felt like her entire body was on fire, her heart nearly beating out of her chest.

"I'll try my best, but if I can't help myself, don't blame me!"

What followed was another long, tangled night of passion.

Through this night of intimate communication, Andrew discovered a huge secret.

Chantelle, like Aspen, very likely suffered from the same condition. Both had developed serious issues, and their cases were not mild.

She enjoyed being dominated, being overwhelmed, and liked it when Andrew used force until she was crying and screaming.

Andrew was absolutely sure that Chantelle had Stockholm Syndrome, too, and her case was just as severe as Aspen's.

Chapter 1642

Late at night, the study in Driscoll residence was dimly lit. Maurice, who seemed

to always hide in the shadows, asked in a low voice, "Joe hasn't stepped out since he came back this afternoon?"

Walter, the head of the Driscoll family's Shadow Division, whispered back, "That's correct, sir. He has remained in his room since returning during the day!"

Maurice frowned. "Did you send anyone to check on what's going on?"

Walter shook his head with a bitter smile. "I sent three different groups, sir. None of them got in. He even turned away his sisters."

Maurice let out a cold snort. "Something's off with him since he returned this afternoon, and I can feel it. Walter, tell him I want to see him."

Walter hesitated. "Sir, it's already pretty late. Maybe we should wait till morning?"

Maurice's voice turned sharp. "I know what time it is. But I can't sit back and watch Joe lose his focus just because of a girl. Go now. I need to hear from him what exactly is going on in his head!"

Walter bowed slightly. "Yes, sir."

However, before he could even reach the door, it swung open.

Walter jumped.

After all, Maurice's study was not a place just anyone could enter, especially not this late.

However, when he saw who it was, his eyes widened in shock, but he quickly relaxed. "Mr. Joe, what are you doing here?"

Joe walked in without a word, his in with expression blank. He did not even glance at Walter, just saying, "If I didn't come, Dad probably wouldn't be able to sleep tonight. By the looks of it, you were just about to come bother me too, weren't you?"

Walter lowered his head and chuckled awkwardly. Joe was as sharp as they came, as if no one could ever hide a thought from him.

Maurice smiled as he looked at Joe. "Joe, didn't you go out to handle some personal matters today? How did it go?"

Joe's tone was flat. "Three days from now, I'll settle things with Andrew at the club. A duel-one-on-one. That'll determine who truly deserves Lauren."

Maurice's expression shifted into a frown. "You're going to fight over who gets to be her man? That's absurd! Do you have any idea who you are? What status you carry?"

He continued, "Andrew has no right to challenge you! And besides, Lauren is barely above average! I've told you before that if you want a woman, I can find you any kind you like. Why are you so obsessed with this one?"

Maurice was truly furious. He felt like this whole situation was an insult to the Driscoll name. Some no-name nobody had actually pushed his son, the most dangerous prodigy in the entire family, into lowering himself for a fight.

And for what? A woman who did not even matter.

Joe remained ice-cold. "I know doing this will definitely displease you, Dad. But I like Lauren, so I don't want to use my family's power to pressure others. Andrew is worthy of making me take action!"

Maurice slammed the table, his anger intensifying. "How is he worthy? What qualifications does that ignorant brat have? If I weren't considering your feelings, I could crush him with a single slap!"

Joe said in a deep voice, "Dad, I've already said don't want to use family power to pressure others.

Doing so would make me appear only
be nothing but a loser who can only rely on the family! I want to show the world that the Driscoll family's strength belongs to the Driscoll family, and that's your achievement, Dad."

He continued, "As for me, I have my own pride, and I'll protect that myself. I don't need to borrow the family's power!"

Maurice sneered. "Of course, I won't interfere with your pride! But I'll say it again -none of this is worth it for a woman who doesn't even matter. Moreover, Andrew isn't worthy to be your opponent!"

Chapter 1643

Maurice said, "Let's not even talk about the Driscoll family's reputation, just your name alone isn't something that Andrew has the right to challenge!"

Joe shook his head. "For Lauren, I'm willing to swallow my pride, no matter how far I have to lower myself. Besides, I really think you're all underestimating Andrew. I don't know much about his martial skills just yet.

"But earlier today, I saw him strike with a needle. His speed was insane, almost too fast to see, and the impact was undeniable. Plus, his medical expertise is unmatched. Even specialists from the Advanced Medical Institute, like Dr. Lake and his peers, have admitted defeat to him."

He continued, "Furthermore, his reputation in Blumedale keeps growing, and I hear he's highly regarded by the Keller family and even Governor McCormick! While I haven't overestimated him or particularly regard him highly, facts are facts. I think the family should acknowledge that."

Maurice replied flatly, "We've already looked into everything you've just said, and his background and files are right here on my desk. But so what? I'll give him the credit for making it this far, especially since he came from a small place like Jayrodale, but that's just it.

"A jungle king is still just a small piece of nature's vast web. Beyond the forest are towering mountains, frozen tundras, scorching deserts, endless oceans- and above them all, the vast skies.

"Joe, you're the ruler of the sea, the eagle of the skies! Andrew is dominant in his tiny circle, and maybe he's a top-tier prodigy for this generation. But people, like products, only shine until they're compared. And once compared to you, Andrew loses all his luster in a heartbeat."

Walter chuckled. "Sir, you're absolutely right. Mr. Joe's talent is unmatched, and only Ms. Phelan in all of Gabo Creek province could even be considered a peer. That's why Andrew doesn't stand a chance. He's not even qualified to fight Mr. Joe over a woman!"

Maurice snorted coldly. "That settles it, then! Joe, you don't need to worry about this anymore. If you have time, you should connect with the Phela and Drache families. Also, the southern martial arts world has recently started getting turbulent, with various sects and factions showing signs of major conflicts. Keep an eye on that and seize opportunities to take action! As for Lauren and Andrew, I'll handle it personally!"

Joe frowned. "Dad, I've already said I don't want the family interfering in my affairs! If the family insists on getting involved, I'm sorry, but whoever dares to meddle will have to answer me!"

By the time he finished, his tone had turned ice cold, his face frozen in a deadly calm. Then, he turned and walked right out of Maurice's study.

Maurice was stunned for a second. After that, he let out a sharp, angry laugh. "Well, look at that! My own son dares to defy me now!"

Walter offered a weak smile. "Sir, Mr. Joe takes after Mrs. Driscoll. He's got that same cold-blooded streak. Don't take it to heart. Besides, if a prodigious genius like Mr. Joe can't be arrogant, then what's the point of capping the Driscoll family one of the Three Titans?"

Maurice chuckled. "You've got a point. The kid really is arrogant, and he's earned the right to be."

Walter's smile faded into something darker. "So, should I take care of that Andrew situation?"

Maurice's eyes turned icy. "Yes."

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Handle it. Joe is still young and talks about honor codes and settling things through duels! But in our eyes, only results and benefits matter most. Send people over there and make this boy disappear from the world first!"

Walter flashed a vicious grin. "On it, sir!"